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2026 Voluntary Contribution Limits and Annual Catch-up
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Navigating retirement plan contributions can feel complex, especially with annual IRS updates and evolving rules around catch-up contributions. This FAQ is designed to help University of Colorado employees understand the 2026 contribution limits, Roth requirements, and plan-specific options. Whether you are planning your first retirement contribution or adjusting for catch-up eligibility, these answers will guide you through what's allowed, what's required, and how to make informed decisions based on your age and income level.

Q. What is the maximum I can contribute to my retirement plan in 2026?

A. The 2026 limits are $24,500 for standard retirement plan contributions. Visit the Voluntary Retirement website to review all contribution limit information.

Q. What are catch-up contributions, and who qualifies for them?

A. Catch-up contributions are additional amounts employees age 50 or older can contribute beyond the standard limit. These are designed to help save more when approaching retirement age.

Q. How much can I contribute as a catch-up in 2026?

A. The 2026 catch-up contribution limits based on age:

- Age 50-59 & 64+: Up to $8,000
- Age 60-63: Up to $11,250 (additional catch-up allowed under SECURE 2.0 provisions).

Q. If I turn 60 during the year, can I contribute the full catch-up?

A. Yes, the limit is not pro-rated in the year you turn 60. For example, if you turn age 60 on July 1, 2026, you can contribute up to the full limit for 2026 – not just ½ of the full limit.

Q. If I turn 64 during the year, am I eligible for the age 60-63 catch-up?

A. No, you are not eligible. That's the case even if you don't turn 64 until December 31.

Q. Can I choose to make my catch-up contributions as either pre-tax or Roth (after-tax)?

A. Your eligibility to choose between pre-tax or Roth (after-tax) catch-up contributions depends on your CU FICA wages for the 2025 calendar year.

- If your CU FICA wages were $150,000 or less, you can choose to make your catch-up contributions as either pre-tax or Roth (after-tax).
- If your CU FICA wages in 2025 were more than $150,000, and you are not a PERA participant, your catch-up contributions must be made as Roth (after-tax).

Q. What are FICA Wages?

A. FICA wages are the part of your earnings that are taxed to help fund Social Security and Medicare. These wages include most of your regular pay, bonuses, and other compensation that's subject to FICA taxes. They're defined by federal law, but in simple terms, they're the earnings used to calculate your Social Security contributions. PERA participants are not subject to FICA taxes.

Q. What are Roth after-tax contributions?

A. Roth contributions are made with money that has already been taxed (after-tax dollars). That means when you retire, you can take out your Roth savings, including any earnings, tax-free, as long as certain conditions are met. One key condition is the 5-year rule, which requires that your Roth account has been open for at least five years before you take tax-free withdrawals. This is different than pre-tax contributions, which reduce your taxable income now but are taxed when you withdraw them in retirement.

Q. What retirement plans are available at CU?

A. CU offers the following voluntary retirement plans with both pre-tax and Roth options:

- CU 403(b)
- PERA 401(k)
- PERA 457

Q. What is the 457 Plan Special Catch-Up Contribution?

A. This plan lets you save more for retirement if you didn't contribute the maximum in past years, but it is only available in certain plans:

- **PERA 457 plan:** If you're nearing retirement and didn't contribute the full amount in previous years, you may be able to contribute up to $49,000 per year for up to three years before retirement. Please contact PERA to determine eligibility.
- **CU 403(b) or PERA 401(k):** Special catch-up contributions are not available in these plans.

Q. Do all plans share the same contribution limits?

A. No:

- 403(b) and 401(k) share a combined annual limit.
- 457 contributions are tracked separately and do not aggregate with other plans.

Q. How do I know if the Roth contribution rules apply to me?

A. The requirement is based on your CU FICA wages for the 2025 calendar year. If your CU FICA wages in 2025 were more than $150,000, and you are not a PERA participant, your catch-up contributions must be made as Roth (after-tax).

Q Are catch-up contributions mandatory?

A. No, all catch-up contributions are optional, just like your regular contributions made to your 403(b), 401(k) and 457 plans. You can start, stop, or change your contribution amount at any time. Just be sure to be aware of the enrollment deadlines.

Q. Where can I get specific help with the various retirement account options and determine what meets my specific needs?

A. As a CU employee you have access to no-cost financial consultations with TIAA. You can schedule an appointment online or call 1-800-732-8353.

Q. How do I make changes to my 403(b) contributions?

1. Log into the employee portal.
2. Go to the **CU Resources** area. (If you are a CU System Administration employee, this is your homepage.)
3. Open the top left dropdown menu and select **Forms**.
4. Click the **Benefits** tile, then select **CU 403(b): Enroll or update.**

Q. How do I make changes to my 401(k) contributions?

1. Complete the PERAPlus 401(k) Contribution Authorization Form and submit to Employee Services.
2. The PERA 401(k) forms can be found in your employee portal under the CU Resources page by selecting the Benefits & Wellness tile, Benefits Forms, PERA 401k: Enroll or update. OR, on our website at: https://www.cu.edu/docs/pera-401k-voluntary-retirement-plan-how-enroll.
3. Completed forms may be uploaded securely to Employee Services through your employee portal or fax to (303) 860-4299. Submitting your form directly to PERA may delay your enrollment change.

Q. How do I make changes to my 457 contributions?

A. Log into your PERA account, which will take you to the Empower website to make changes.