

Can you get Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)?

There are 2 types of ESA - called 'contribution-based' and 'income-related'. You can be eligible for either, or both at the same time. Universal Credit has replaced income-related ESA for most people. Contribution based ESA or "new style ESA" is dependant on what National Insurance contributions you have made

Have you got:

- an illness
- a health condition, or
- a disability

that means you find it difficult or impossible to work?

If you have, you might be able to get money from the government to help you.

ESA is a payment you could get every 2 weeks to help with your living costs.

Contribution-based or 'new style' ESA

You may be able to get contribution-based ESA if:

- you have a health condition that makes it difficult or impossible to work
- you're not getting Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from an employer (but you can apply up to 3 months before your SSP ends - if you get ESA, it will be paid as soon as your SSP ends)
- you're not old enough to get the State Pension
- you don't work, are going to stop work or the work you do will be 'permitted work' when you claim ESA
- you live in the UK.
- you've paid at least 26 weeks class 1 or class 2 National Insurance (NI) contributions in one of the last 2 complete tax years and have been paid or credited with NI contributions for at least 50 weeks in each of the last 2 complete tax years. The 2 tax years must be the ones that were completed before the benefit year in which your period of limited capability for work began. The benefit year runs from the first Sunday in January. The tax year runs from 6 April to 5 April. You can [check your national insurance record online](#) or call HMRC's helpline on 0300 200 3500 if you're not sure.
- You cannot get contribution-based ESA at the same time as Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or contributory Jobseeker's Allowance. If you get these benefits and want to claim contribution-based ESA instead, you can do, but you'll need to stop your current claim to claim contribution-based ESA instead.

If you have a partner who is getting one of these benefits, you may still be able to get contribution-based ESA at the same time.

If you were self-employed for the tax year 2017 to 2018 and are making an ESA claim in January 2019, you must pay your 2017-18 class 2 NI contributions before you can get contribution-based ESA. You can pay your NI contributions before submitting the rest of your self-assessment tax return if you need to.

Income-related ESA

If you haven't paid enough NI contributions to get contribution-based ESA, you may be able to get income-related ESA.

Universal Credit has replaced income-related ESA for most people. You can make a new claim for income-related ESA if you're getting, or recently stopped getting, a benefit with a **severe disability premium (SDP)**.

You might be getting an SDP with:

- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit

Check your award letter to see if you're getting an SDP.

If you recently stopped getting a benefit with an SDP, and you're still eligible for an SDP, you can make a new claim for income-related ESA. You must claim within a month of your old benefit stopping.

If you can't make a new claim for income-related ESA, you should check if you can apply for [Universal Credit](#).

If you get the severe disability premium

You can make a new claim for income-related ESA if:

- you don't work, are going to stop work or the work you do will be '[permitted work](#)' when you claim ESA
- you live in the UK
- you have savings or investments worth less than £16,000
- your partner works less than 24 hours per week
- you're either a British citizen, you're from the EU, European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland and you have 'settled status', 'pre-settled status' or the 'right to reside', or you're not '[subject to immigration control](#)'

You or your partner can't receive income-related ESA at the same time as Income Support, income-based JSA or Pension Credit. If you or your partner receives Income Support or income-based JSA you'll have to stop the claim and claim income-related ESA instead.