High-3 Average Salary Estimator Worksheet

For Educational Use Only — Estimate your FERS High-3 average salary and projected basic annuity. Your official retirement calculation is performed by your employing agency and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

Important: Your high-3 is not a simple average of your last three annual salary figures. OPM identifies your highest 36 consecutive months of basic pay (78 consecutive biweekly pay periods) and weights each pay rate by exactly how long you held it. If you had a promotion, step increase, or locality change partway through your final three years, your window will include a mix of rates — not one flat number per year.

Step 1: Record Each Basic Pay Rate in Your 36-Month Window

Working backward from your planned retirement date, list every basic pay rate change (step increase, promotion, locality change, special rate change) that occurred during your highest 36 consecutive months. Include locality pay. Do not include overtime, bonuses, awards, travel reimbursements, or other non-retirement-covered pay.

Rate #	Start Date	End Date	Annual Basic Pay (incl. locality)	Months at This Rate
1			$	
2			$	
3			$	
4			$	
5			$	
Total months (should = 36)				

Tip: your SF-50s show the effective date of every pay change. Count months from your retirement date backward to find where your 36-month window begins.

Step 2: Weight Each Rate and Calculate Your High-3

For each rate, multiply the annual basic pay by (months at that rate ÷ 36). Add the weighted amounts together to get your estimated high-3 average salary.

Rate #	Annual Basic Pay	Months ÷ 36	Weighted Amount
1	$	÷ 36 =	$
2	$	÷ 36 =	$
3	$	÷ 36 =	$
4	$	÷ 36 =	$
5	$	÷ 36 =	$
Estimated High-3 Average Salary (sum of weighted amounts)			**$**

Worked Example

Rate	Annual Basic Pay	Time at Rate	Weighting	Weighted Amount
1	$98,000	18 months	18 ÷ 36	$49,000
2	$103,000	12 months	12 ÷ 36	$34,333
3	$109,000	6 months	6 ÷ 36	$18,167
High-3 Average Salary			**36 months**	**$101,500**

Note: this employee's most recent, highest rate ($109,000) was in effect for only 6 of the 36 months. A simple average of the three annual figures ($98,000 + $103,000 + $109,000 ÷ 3 = $103,333) would overstate this employee's true high-3 by about $1,800, because it assumes a full year at each rate.

Step 3: Estimate Your Annual FERS Basic Annuity

Formula: High-3 × Years of Creditable Service × Multiplier

Estimated High-3	$
Years of Creditable Service	
Multiplier	[ ] 1.0% [ ] 1.1% (age 62+ with 20+ years of service)
Estimated Annual Annuity	$
Estimated Monthly Annuity	$

Before You Retire Checklist

[ ] Review your SF-50s for accuracy — confirm effective dates for every pay change.
[ ] Confirm your service history is complete.
[ ] Review which types of pay count toward your high-3.
[ ] Estimate your FERS pension in pay-period terms, not simple annual averages, if you've had a recent pay change.
[ ] Estimate your FERS pension before choosing a retirement date.
[ ] Consult official OPM resources or your HR retirement specialist for a precise calculation.

What Counts Toward Your High-3?

Generally Included	Generally Excluded
Base GS Salary	Overtime
Locality Pay	Bonuses & Awards
Special Salary Rates	Travel Reimbursements
Certain Retirement-Covered Premium Pay (e.g., LEAP, AUO — when retirement deductions are withheld)	Recruitment/Relocation Incentives

This worksheet is for educational purposes only and does not constitute an official retirement calculation, financial advice, or legal advice. Actual high-3 and annuity calculations are performed by OPM using your official personnel and payroll records.