# FERS Pension Planning Toolkit

A checklist and worksheet from MyFederalRetirement.com

Your FERS pension is built from three numbers: your high-3 average salary, your years of creditable service, and your multiplier. This toolkit has two parts: a checklist to make sure you've checked every lever available to you, and a worksheet to compare two possible retirement dates side by side — so you can see, in real numbers, what waiting (or not waiting) is actually worth.

**HIGH-3 SALARY** × **YEARS OF SERVICE** × **MULTIPLIER** = **ANNUAL PENSION**

## How to Use the Worksheet (Page 3)

Pick two retirement dates you're weighing — for example, your Minimum Retirement Age versus age 62, or this year versus two years from now. Fill in your best estimate for each row under both columns, then compare the estimated annual and monthly pension at the bottom.

**Planned retirement age:** Your age on the date you'd separate from federal service.

**Estimated high-3:** Your highest average basic pay (salary + locality pay) over any 3 consecutive years, per OPM's computation rules. Check your SF-50s if you're not sure which 3 years that is.

**Creditable civilian service:** Your total years and months of FERS-covered federal employment as of that retirement date.

**Creditable military service:** Any active-duty time you plan to buy back with a military service deposit. Leave blank if not applicable or not yet bought back.

**Additional sick leave credit:** Your unused sick leave balance converted to months of service, using OPM's 2,087-hour work year (roughly 174 hours per month).

**Applicable multiplier:** 1%, unless you'll be age 62 or older with at least 20 years of total service (including sick leave credit) at that date — then use 1.1%.

**Estimated annual basic annuity:** High-3 × total years of service × multiplier.

**Estimated monthly basic annuity:** Annual amount divided by 12.

*This toolkit is a simplified planning aid, not an official calculation. Request a formal annuity estimate from your HR office as you get closer to retirement.*

## FERS Pension Planning Checklist

Work through these steps to make sure you haven't overlooked a lever that's already available to you — before assuming the only option is to simply work longer.

- [ ] Review your SF-50s and identify the period likely to produce your highest average basic pay.
- [ ] Get a current retirement estimate from your agency and compare it with your own calculation.
- [ ] Check whether upcoming promotions, step increases, or other covered pay changes could materially affect your high-3.
- [ ] Estimate the pension value of one additional year of service at your current high-3.
- [ ] If you have prior military service, determine whether it is eligible for credit and obtain a military service deposit calculation (Standard Form 3108 starts this process).
- [ ] Check your current unused sick leave balance and understand how it may affect your service computation.
- [ ] If you're approaching age 62 with roughly 20 years of service, ask your agency to compare retirement dates on both sides of the threshold.
- [ ] Don't evaluate the pension alone. Consider TSP, Social Security, FEHB, taxes, and the value you place on retiring sooner.

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**Quick reference:** the 1.1% multiplier requires age 62 or older AND at least 20 years of total creditable service (sick leave credit counts toward that 20-year threshold, even though sick leave alone can never establish retirement eligibility). Special provisions employees (law enforcement officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers, Capitol Police, Supreme Court Police, nuclear materials couriers) use 1.7% for their first 20 years and 1% after, with no age-62 increase.

## Worksheet: Your Two Retirement Dates, Side by Side

| | Retirement Date A | Retirement Date B |
|---|---|---|
| **Planned retirement age** | | |
| **Estimated high-3** | $ | $ |
| **Creditable civilian service (yrs)** | | |
| **Creditable military service (yrs)** | | |
| **Additional sick leave credit (mos)** | | |
| **Total years of service** | | |
| **Applicable multiplier (1% or 1.1%)** | | |
| **Estimated annual basic annuity** | **$** | **$** |
| **Estimated monthly basic annuity** | **$** | **$** |

## Quick Reference

**Multiplier:** 1% per year of service, or 1.1% per year if you retire at age 62 or older with at least 20 years of total creditable service (sick leave credit counts toward this 20-year threshold even though it can't be used to establish retirement eligibility in the first place).

**Sick leave conversion:** 2,087 hours = 1 year of service credit (about 174 hours per month). OPM drops any leftover days below a full month.

**Special provisions employees** (law enforcement officers, firefighters, air traffic controllers, Capitol Police, Supreme Court Police, nuclear materials couriers) use 1.7% for the first 20 years of service and 1% for any years beyond that, with no age-62 multiplier increase.

*Sources: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, FERS Information – Computation, Creditable Service, and Eligibility (opm.gov/retirement-center/fers-information); OPM Benefits Administration Letter 18-103, "FERS Unused Sick Leave and the 1.1% Annuity Formula"; Standard Form 3108.*