



Homestead Exemption *FAQs*

AS A HOMEOWNER, HOW DO I QUALIFY FOR A PROPERTY TAX BREAK?

A: As a homeowner, you may apply for a homestead exemption on your principal residence. Homestead exemptions remove part of your home's value from taxation, so they lower your taxes. For example, if your home is appraised at \$35,000, and you qualify for a \$15,000 exemption, you will pay taxes on the home as if it was worth only \$20,000.

Contact your local appraisal district to learn more about the following exemptions:

- General Homestead Exemption
 - Over 65 Exemption
 - Disabled Individual
- Disabled Veterans Exemption
 - Agricultural Exemption

WHAT HOMES QUALIFY FOR HOMESTEAD EXEMPTIONS?

A: Not all homes qualify for a homestead exemption. Only the homeowner's principal residence qualifies. The home's owner must be an individual (for example: not a corporation or other business entity) and use the home as his or her principal residence on January 1st of the tax year.

WHAT IS A HOMESTEAD?

A: A homestead can be a separate structure, condominium or a mobile home located on owned or leased land, as long as the individual living in the home owns it. A homestead can include up to 20 acres, if the land is used as a yard or for another purpose related to the residential use of the homestead.

HOW DO I GET A HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION?

A: You must file an Application for Residential Homestead Exemption with the county appraisal district between January 1 and April 30 of the tax year – up to one year after you pay your taxes. During the year, if you turn 65 or become disabled, you must apply for the 65 or older or disabled exemption no later than one year from the qualification date. Once you receive an exemption, you do not need to reapply unless the chief appraiser sends you a new application. In that case, you must file the new application. If you should move or your qualifications end, you must inform the appraisal district in writing before the next May 1.

WHAT IS THE HOMESTEAD SCHOOL TAX CEILING?

A: The homestead tax ceiling is a limit on the amount of school taxes you must pay on your residence. If you qualify your home for a 65 and Over or Disabled Person Homestead Exemption, the school taxes on that home can't increase as long as you own and occupy that home. The tax ceiling freezes your school taxes at the amount you pay in the year that you qualify for the 65 and Over or Disabled Person Homestead Exemption.

The school taxes on your home may go below the ceiling but not above the amount of the ceiling. If you improve the home (other than normal repairs or maintenance), the tax ceiling may go higher for the new additions. For example, if you add on a garage or game room to the house, the tax ceiling will be adjusted to a higher level for the value of the addition. If a 65 and older, disabled, or 55 and older surviving spouse homeowner moves to another home they can transfer the percentage of the tax ceiling to a different home in the same or another school district. The ceiling on the new home would be calculated to give the same percentage of tax paid as the ceiling on the original home. There are several types of homestead exemptions you receive (School and County Tax).

MAY I CONTINUE TO RECEIVE THE RESIDENCE HOMESTEAD EXEMPTION ON MY HOME IF I TEMPORARILY MOVE AWAY?

A: If you temporarily move away from your home, you may continue to receive the exemption if you do not establish a principal residence elsewhere, you intend to return to the home and you are away less than two years. You may continue to receive the exemption if you do not occupy the residence for more than two years only if you are in military service or live in a facility providing services related to health, infirmity or aging from the two-year period.



Property Tax Remedies

When you purchased your property, you likely had it appraised first. This single fee appraisal is very specific to your property. When it comes to property tax appraisal values, the appraisal districts usually use a mass appraisal technique. Both types of appraisals utilize the same basic principles and theories. However, mass appraisals span the entire county, appraising market areas, neighborhoods, subdivisions, and large groupings of similar properties all at one time. Dealing with this type of aggregate data over a large area can result in a few unanticipated discrepancies. Below are some things you can look out for:

Receiving Your Notice of Valuation

- Appraisal districts must send required notices by May 1, or by April 1 if your property is a residential homestead.
- You should verify the appraisal is for the correct property (Lot Size or Legal Description) and that any exemptions filed are included in the assessment. (Homestead, Over 65, etc.)
- If you think the assessment of your home is higher than it should be, you should challenge it immediately. You generally have 30 days to inform the appraisal district of your intent to protest. (In Travis County, you must file by May 31.) Procedures for protest are outlined on the notification.

Should I Protest?

- If you feel the market value of your property is lower than the appraised value, then you should protest. If you are not sure what the appropriate market value for your property is, contact your real estate agent. An agent can access real time comps to help you determine the correct market value of your property.

How to Protest

- Protests must be submitted in writing. Any format is accepted as long as it identifies the owner and the property, as well as states that the owner disagrees with the valuation made. Most counties also offer forms or e-file capabilities.

County Appraisal Districts

Collin 469.742.9200	www.collincad.org
Dallas 214.631.0910	www.dallascad.org
Denton 940.349.3800	www.dentoncad.com
Ellis 972.937.3552	www.ellisgad.org
Fannin 903.583.8701	www.fannincad.org
Grayson 903.893.9673	www.graysonappraisal.org
Henderson 903.675.6134	www.henderson-county.com
Hood 817.573.2471	www.co.hood.tx.us
Hunt 903.454.3510	www.hunt-cad.org
Johnson 817.558.0122	www.johnsoncountytaxoffice.org
Kaufman 972.932.6081	www.kaufman-cad.org
Palo Pinto 940.659.1281	www.co.palo-pinto.tx.us
Parker 817.596.0077	www.parkercountytx.com
Rockwall 972.771.2034	www.rockwallcad.com
Tarrant 817.284.0024	www.tad.org
Wise 940.627.3081	www.co.wise.tx.us

- The benefit of on-line protesting is that appraisal district staffers can review your information and decide whether to offer you a settlement without you having to attend a hearing at all.
- If fill out the form, pay particular attention to which check box or boxes you use stating the reason for your protest. This will affect what kind of evidence you can present later on. If you believe, your assessed value is incorrect, make sure to mark "Value is unequal compared with other properties."

Prepare for Protest Hearing

- First, be prepared to wait. It can often take several months for the appraisal district to schedule an informal hearing. The purpose of this informal hearing is for you to present any evidence you have to support your claim that they have over-valued your property. The following evidence could be valuable for your hearing.

- COMPARABLE MARKET ANALYSIS: A comparison of recent sales for homes that are similar to your property in size, age, location and type of construction. Work with your real estate agent to obtain the most recent comps in your area.
- DOCUMENTATION OF YOUR PROPERTIES CONDITION: Do you have foundation issues or other conditions that would adversely affect your properties value? If so, take photos and bring them with you to your hearing.
- DOCUMENTATION OF YOUR PROPERTIES LOCATION: Bring any documentation concerning the location of your property that could adversely affect it's value to present at the hearing.
- CLOSING STATEMENT, RECENT APPRAISALS OR ENGINEER'S REPORT: If you recently purchased your property and the purchase price or fee appraisal was lower than the current assessed value, bring a copy of your settlement statement or other reports from closing.

What is an Appraisal District Board?

- The Appraisal District Board is a board of citizens that hears the property owner protests. It has the power to order the Appraisal District to make changes. The Appraisal District Board has several options: grant your request, refer you to a hearing of the entire board, schedule a physical inspection of your property, or deny your request. If you are denied, you have the option of filing a lawsuit against the Appraisal District.
- The Appraisal District is responsible for setting the appraised value; they have nothing to do with the tax rate.
- Bring extra copies of your supporting documentation to leave with the Appraisal District Board.

Information is distributed as information only, property owner must verify with the Appraisal District any actions that are appropriate to take in the process of protesting your tax appraisal.