Inheritance tax by state: which states charge it, and how much

Key facts

- Only five states charge an inheritance tax on the people who inherit: Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey and Pennsylvania (Tax Foundation, Estate and Inheritance Taxes by State, checked 2026-09-20).
- The federal government has no inheritance tax at all. It only has an estate tax, and that applies only to estates above $15,000,000 for deaths in 2026 (Internal Revenue Service, Estate tax, checked 2026-09-17).
- All five inheritance-tax states fully exempt a surviving spouse, no matter how much that spouse inherits (Tax Foundation, checked 2026-09-20).
- Rates and exemptions are set by your relationship to the person who died, not by how large the whole estate is (Kentucky Department of Revenue; New Jersey Division of Taxation, checked 2026-09-20).
- Twelve states plus the District of Columbia charge a separate estate tax, paid out of the estate itself before anyone inherits (Tax Foundation, checked 2026-09-20).
- Iowa fully repealed its inheritance tax for deaths on or after January 1, 2025 (Nolo, Iowa Inheritance Tax, checked 2026-09-20).
- Maryland is the only state that charges both an estate tax and an inheritance tax on the same estate (Tax Foundation, checked 2026-09-20).

A step-by-step checklist for figuring out what an estate may owe

Work through this for any estate that might touch Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, New Jersey or Pennsylvania. If you don't know which court has jurisdiction, our probate courts by state guide links to each state's self-help page.

- [ ] Confirm the deceased person's state of domicile at death.
- [ ] Check whether that state has an inheritance tax, an estate tax, or neither.
- [ ] List every beneficiary and their exact relationship to the deceased person.
- [ ] Sort each beneficiary into that state's relationship class.
- [ ] Get a fair-market-value figure for what each beneficiary will receive, as of the date of death.
- [ ] Subtract that class's exemption from each beneficiary's share.
- [ ] Apply the class rate or bracket to each beneficiary.
- [ ] Check whether real estate in another state adds a separate filing obligation.
- [ ] Note the filing deadline and any early-payment discount.
- [ ] File the return, pay the tax, and request any waiver needed to transfer property.