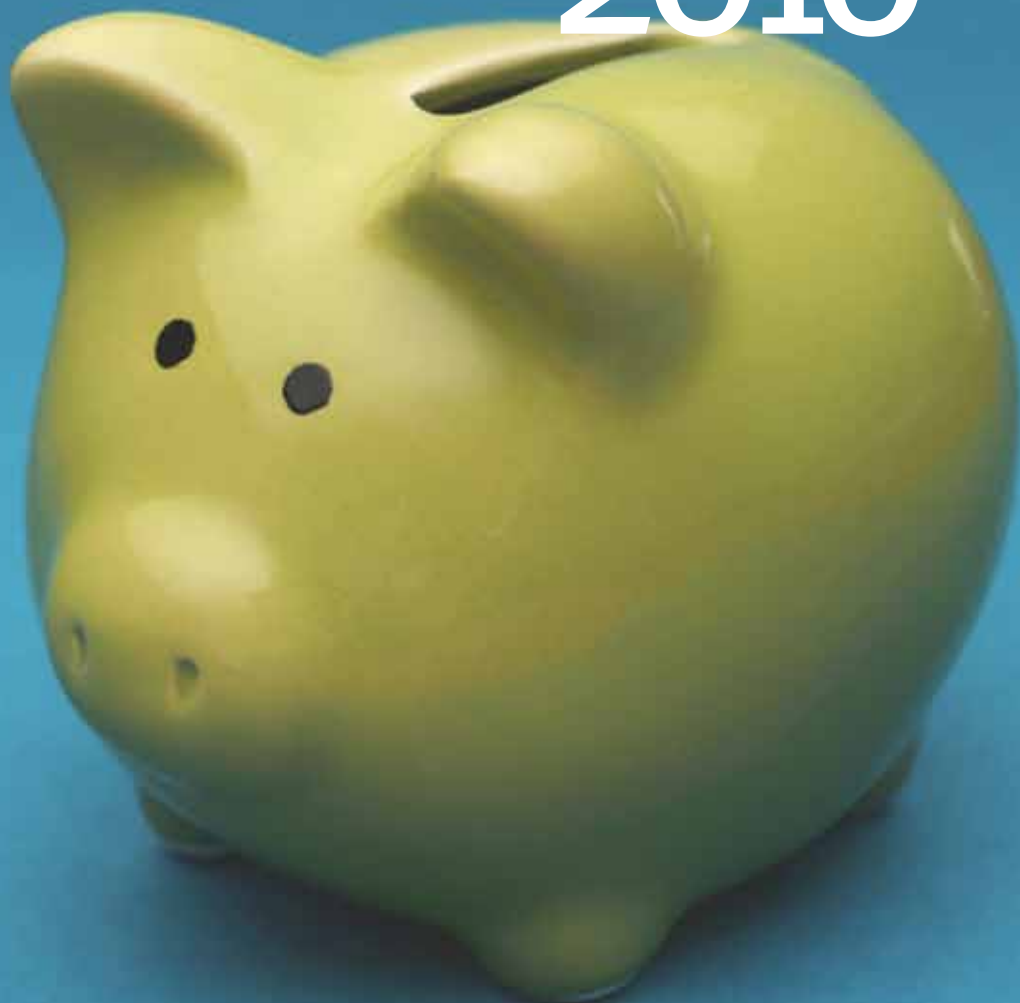


MERCURY

—WEALTH MANAGEMENT—

ISA Guide

2010



Don't forget to take up your ISA allowance for this tax year by 5 April.

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Welcome

Welcome to our Individual Savings Account Guide 2010. An Individual Savings Account (ISA) is not an investment itself. It is a wrapper surrounding your fund choice(s) that makes them more tax-efficient.

When you make an investment in an ISA you pay no income or capital gains tax (CGT) on the returns you receive, no matter how much your investment grows or how much you take out over the years. You don't even have to mention your ISA on your tax return.

An ISA is an ideal way to make the most of your tax-efficient savings limit and save for the future. The value of tax savings and eligibility to invest in an ISA will depend on individual circumstances and all tax rules may change in the future.

“ You have until the close of business on 5 April to use this tax year's Individual Savings Accounts (ISA) allowance or you'll lose it forever ”

ISAs are very flexible, and can be suitable for any long-term savings need. They have no fixed investment term, though we believe that you should only consider investment in equities over a period of five years or more.

Each year you have the option to select how you would like to invest your ISA allowance, either in cash or stocks and shares, or a combination of both. There are rules concerning how much and where you can invest.

AM I ELIGIBLE TO SAVE OR INVEST IN AN ISA?

To pay into an ISA you must be:

- A UK resident
- A Crown employee (such as diplomat)
- A member of the armed forces (who is working overseas but paid by the government), including husbands, wives or civil partners¹
- Aged over 16 years for the cash component, and over 18 years for stocks and shares
- An ISA must be in your name alone; you can't have a joint ISA

WHAT CAN I SAVE OR INVEST IN AN ISA?

ISAs can be used to:

- save cash in an ISA and the interest will be tax-free
- invest in shares or funds in an ISA – any capital growth will be tax-free and there is no further tax to pay on any dividends you receive

You can invest in two separate ISAs in any one tax year: a cash ISA and a stocks and shares ISA. This can be with the same or different providers. By using a stocks and shares ISA you invest in longer-term investments such as individual shares or bonds, or pooled investments (such as open-ended investment funds, life assurance investments or investment trusts).

HOW MUCH CAN I SAVE OR INVEST IN AN ISA?

If you were born on or before 5 April 1960 (that is, aged 50 or over during the current tax year) you can save up to £10,200. The full

£10,200 can be invested in a stocks and shares ISA with one provider or up to £5,100 can be saved in a cash ISA with one provider, with the remainder being saved in a stocks and shares ISA with either the same provider or another

If you were born after 5 April 1960 you can save up to £7,200. The full £7,200 can be invested in a stocks and shares ISA with one provider or up to £3,600 can be saved in a cash ISA with one provider, with the remainder being saved in a stocks and shares ISA with either the same or another provider. From 6 April this year, the ISA limit will increase to £10,200, up to £5,100 of which can be saved in cash for all ISA investors

“ Make sure your ISA is part of your tax-efficient wealth creation portfolio ”

According to the age 50 rule, someone who is currently under age 50 but who will reach age 50 between 6 October 2009 and 5 April 2010 will only be able to pay in more than £7,200 during the 2009/10 tax year (up to a maximum of £10,200) once they have attained their 50th birthday. So, for example, if an investor will not attain age 50 until 1 March 2010, they will not be able to pay in more than £7,200 until 1 March 2010.

From 6 April 2010 the limit is £10,200 (of which £5,100 can be saved in cash) for everyone. If you choose to invest the whole allowance in an investment ISA, this can only be with one provider in any one tax year.



DO I HAVE TO PAY TAX ON MY ISA?

All ISAs are tax-efficient investments with no income tax on any income taken from the ISA. There is no CGT on any gains within an ISA. Interest paid on uninvested cash within the stocks and shares ISA is subject to a 20 per cent HM Revenue & Customs flat rate charge. Interest received in a cash ISA is tax-free. Dividends from equities are paid with a 10 per cent tax credit which cannot be reclaimed in an ISA but there is no additional tax to pay.

CAN I RECEIVE A TAX-EFFICIENT INCOME FROM MY ISA?

If you hold bond funds in your ISA the income generated would be free of income tax. This could be a real benefit if you need to take an income from your investments, perhaps as you near retirement.

Even if you don't want to invest in bonds at the moment, you may want to move money from equity funds into bonds in the future, perhaps when you need to take an income from your investments or if you want to reduce the level of risk in your portfolio as you near retirement.

DO I HAVE TO MENTION MY ISAS ON MY TAX RETURN?

You don't have to tell the taxman about income and capital gains from ISA savings and investments, this makes completing your tax return much simpler.

CAN I TRANSFER MY EXISTING ISA?

If you have money saved from a previous tax year, you can transfer some or all of the money from your existing cash ISA to a stocks and shares ISA without this affecting your annual ISA investment allowance. However, once you have

transferred your cash ISA to a stocks and shares ISA it is not possible to transfer it back into cash.

ISAs must always be transferred, you can't close the old one and start a new one, otherwise you will lose the tax advantage. If appropriate, you may wish to consider switching an existing stocks and shares ISA if you feel the returns are not competitive. But if you have a fixed-rate ISA, you should check whether you may have to pay a penalty when transferring.

IF YOU HAVE SOME MONEY TO SAVE OR INVEST AND WANT SOME SUGGESTIONS ABOUT SUITABLE ISAS, OR PERHAPS YOU WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE INCREASED ISA LIMITS, OR MAYBE YOU ARE INTERESTED IN TRANSFERRING YOUR EXISTING ISAS TO A NEW PROVIDER – PLEASE CONTACT US FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

Content of the articles featured in this 'Individual Savings Account Guide 2010' is for your general information and use only and is not intended to address your particular requirements. They should not be relied upon in their entirety and shall not be deemed to be, or constitute, advice. Although endeavours have been made to provide accurate and timely information, there can be no guarantee that such information is accurate as of the date it is received or that it will continue to be accurate in the future. No individual or company should act upon such information without receiving appropriate professional advice after a thorough examination of their particular situation. We cannot accept responsibility for any loss as a result of acts or omissions taken in respect of any articles. The pension and tax rules are subject to change by the government. Tax reliefs and state benefits referred to are those currently applying. Their value depends on your individual circumstances. The performance of the investment funds will have an impact on the amount of income you receive. If the investments perform poorly, the level of income may not be sustainable.