

All about Education Maintenance Allowance

connexions

EMA (or Education Maintenance Allowance) is a payment of up to £30 a week paid to some young people to help them continue their learning.



Who can claim EMA?

You can claim EMA if you are:

- Aged 16,17 or 18
- You have left (or about to leave) Year 11 at school
- You are wanting to continue your full-time learning

Who can't claim EMA?

You can't claim EMA if you are:

- Employed
- On an employer-based Apprenticeship or Advanced Modern Apprenticeship
- Getting Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)
- Getting a Dance and Drama Award, or an NHS bursary
- Not in any type of learning (that is, you **must** be in a sixth form, on a college course or on a training programme)
- Do not meet the residency criteria (for more details see the notes in the application pack)

Does everyone get the same amount?

No. The amount you get depends upon how much the responsible adults you live with earned in the previous tax year.

Your 'responsible adults' are the adults you live with and who pay the household bills. For example, they could be your grandparents or another family member.

If you start an E2E programme, then you will automatically be entitled to £30 EMA (although you still have to apply!) - it doesn't matter how much the adults in the household earn. This will last for as long as you are on E2E. Once you move onto a college course or another training programme you will have to go through the assessment and may be paid £10, £20, £30 or nothing depending on the household income.

Does anything affect me getting EMA?

Well, the household income does (some people may not get anything) and if you don't attend then the payment will stop for that week.

You can also get bonus payments - the amount and when they are paid depends on whether you are on a sixth form/college course or a training programme and payment depends on your achievements and attendance. You must be on a full time course that lasts for at least 10 weeks and has at least 12 hours of study each week.

Who is this money paid to?

EMA is a weekly payment - and it's paid direct to you! It is your money to use how you like, but don't forget you only get it if you make sure that you attend all of your classes or your training.

To get this cash you have to have your own bank or building society account that will take electronic payments (BACS payments) in place when you apply for EMA. If you already have an account but don't know if it can take these type of payments, ask at your bank or building society. If you haven't got a bank account and need help opening one, ask your Connexions Personal Adviser. If you tell the bank or building society why you need it they will make sure that you get the right type of account.

Does EMA affect any benefits that I might get or that my parents/carers get?

The short answer is 'No'. You won't be able to get JSA, but if you are living alone or have your own child living with you then you may get Income Support, Child Benefit, Leaving Care Allowance, Care to Learn Grant or anything else you may be entitled to and it won't be affected.

If you are living with parents/carers, then any benefits they are getting (Child Benefit, JSA, Child Tax Credit, etc) will not be affected at all. That's their money and this is yours. It doesn't even affect any part time earnings you might have.

How long do I get this money for?

If you claim at age 16, you will be paid EMA for as long as you are on your course (up to a maximum of three years). If you don't start claiming until you are 17, then you will only get EMA for a maximum of two years. If you wait until you are 18 before claiming, then your payments will finish at the end of the academic year when you become 19, so you'll probably only get EMA for one year, no matter how long the course is.

The amount you are paid will always stay the same - unless the household income goes down. If this happens you can ask to have your EMA re-assessed and hopefully you will get more. **You will never get less** (except where you move from an E2E course, then you might).

From September 2008, any new EMA learners are guaranteed financial support if they go on to University through the Higher Education Student Support Guarantee. So, you could start off on a training programme or a course at sixth form or college and go right through to getting a degree!

How do I apply?

You normally get your application pack from school in Year 11, but they are also available at colleges, Connexions Centres and Training Providers - but make sure that you pick up the right pack! If you are leaving Year 11 in 2009 you must get the 2009/2010 pack. If you left Year 11 in 2008 and started a course before September 2008, then you need the 2008/2009 pack.

The pack has sections in that you need to fill in and sections that your parents/carers need to fill in. There are also Guidance Notes to help you - but if you are not sure ask at the Connexions Centre and we will help.

Once you have your pack, get the forms completed as soon as you are able. There is usually a delay between you sending the form in and them letting you know how much you will get so the sooner you do it, then the sooner you will know. It also means that you are more likely to have everything in place for starting your next learning opportunity and you'll be getting paid right from the start.



So what happens after I send my form in?

Once you and your parents/carers have completed your form, signed it and sent it in with the evidence you need (it tells you what this is on the form), then the Assessment and Payments Body (APB) will look at what you have sent them and make a decision about how much you will be paid. They aim to send you a letter within 10 working days of getting your application. This will be your Notice of Entitlement. You need to keep this safe as you will need it when you start your course. Once you start attending, then you will start getting paid.

If you have a problem with your application and you need help, your Personal Adviser will give you a hand or you can ring the EMA Helpline direct. If you want someone else to do it for you, you need to be present when the call is made as the Helpline operator needs your permission to talk to the other person about you.

What if I apply late?

Don't! You only have four weeks from starting the course to get your application in - if you do that (or you have applied earlier), then you will be paid from the start of the course. If you delay and send your form in late, then they will only pay you from the Monday of the week they received it, so you could end up losing money. If you are entitled to £30 per week that might add up to be a lot of money you have lost.

Where can I get more help?

You can get help from:

- your Careers Teacher or school tutor at school
- your Student Support Service if you are in college
- your Connexions Personal Adviser
- a Personal Adviser at the Connexions Centre
- your Training Provider if you have started training
- the EMA Helpline on **0800 121 8989** between 7am-8pm, Mon-Fri
- the EMA website **www.direct.gov.uk/ema**

All Connexions information products can be supplied in large print, audio, Braille or languages other than English. If you require this service or would like more information please contact your local Connexions Centre.

Connexions Centres

Interchange Centre Gateshead

Direct Line **0191 433 6800**

Opening times

Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm

Sat 10am-3pm

Newbottle Street Houghton-le-Spring

Direct Line **0191 443 2972**

Opening times

Mon and Fri 10am-4pm

Tue and Thur 10am-5pm

Wed appointments only

Percy Street

Newcastle upon Tyne

Direct Line **0191 277 1944**

Opening times

Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm

Sat 10am-5pm

Russell Street

North Shields

Direct Line **0191 290 0415**

Opening times

Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm

Sat 10am-3pm

Ocean Road South Shields

Direct Line **0191 424 6630**

Opening times

Mon-Fri 9.30am-5.30pm

Sat 10am-3pm

Fawcett Street Sunderland

Direct Line **0191 443 2950**

Opening times

Mon, Wed 9.30am-5.30pm

Tue, Thur, Fri 9.30am-5pm

The Galleries Washington

Direct Line **0191 443 2986**

Opening times

Mon, Wed, Thur 10am-5pm

Fri 10am-4pm

Tue appointments only

Connexions Direct

Call free on **080 800 13 2 19**,

text **07766 4 13 21 9** or visit

www.connexions-direct.com.

Open 8am-2am, Mon-Sun

www.connexions-tw.co.uk