



Department
of the
Treasury

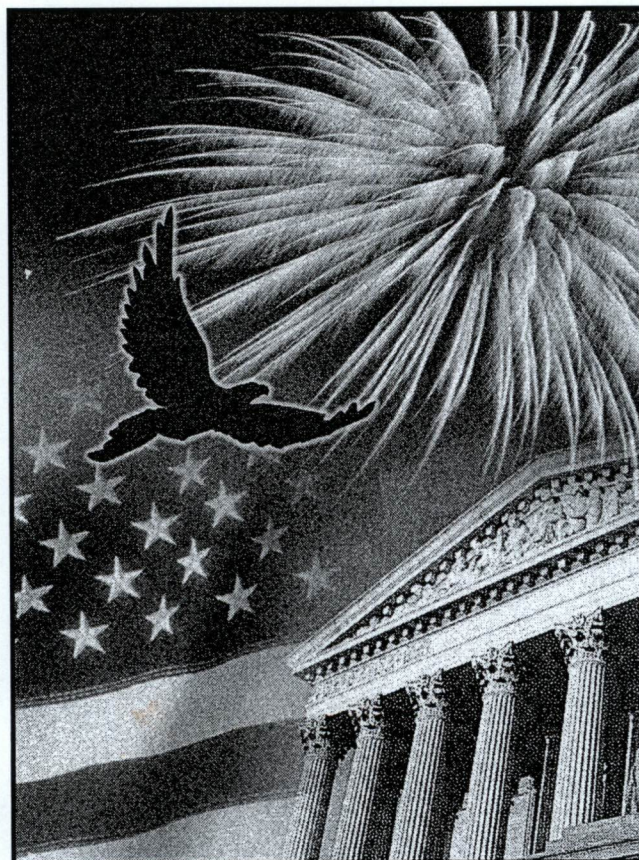
Internal
Revenue
Service

Publication 501

Cat. No. 15000U

Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information

For use in preparing
2011 Returns



Get forms and other information
faster and easier by:

Internet IRS.gov

Contents

<u>What's New</u>	1
<u>Reminders</u>	1
<u>Introduction</u>	2
<u>Who Must File</u>	2
<u>Who Should File</u>	4
<u>Filing Status</u>	5
<u>Exemptions</u>	10
<u>Exemptions for Dependents</u>	10
<u>Social Security Numbers for Dependents</u>	21
<u>Standard Deduction</u>	21
<u>2011 Standard Deduction Tables</u>	24
<u>How To Get Tax Help</u>	25
<u>Index</u>	27

What's New

Future developments. The IRS has created a page on IRS.gov for information about Publication 501 at www.irs.gov/pub501. Information about any future developments affecting Publication 501 (such as legislation enacted after we release it) will be posted on that page.

Who must file. In some cases, the amount of income you can receive before you must file a tax return has increased. [Table 1](#) shows the filing requirements for most taxpayers.

Exemption amount. The amount you can deduct for each exemption has increased from \$3,650 for 2010 to \$3,700 for 2011.

Standard deduction increased. The standard deduction for some taxpayers who do not itemize their deductions on Schedule A of Form 1040 is higher for 2011 than it was for 2010. The amount depends on your filing status. You can use the [2011 Standard Deduction Tables](#) near the end of this publication to figure your standard deduction.

Reminders

Taxpayer identification number for aliens. If you are a nonresident or resident alien and you do not have and are not eligible to get a social security number (SSN), you must apply for an individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN). Your spouse also may need an ITIN if he or she does not have and is not eligible to get an SSN. See Form W-7, Application for IRS Individual Taxpayer Identification Number. Also, see [Social Security Numbers for Dependents](#), later.

Photographs of missing children. The Internal Revenue Service is a proud partner with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Photographs of missing children selected by the Center may appear in this publication on pages that would otherwise be blank. You can

else, you and your spouse cannot claim any dependents on your joint return.

Joint Return Test

You generally cannot claim a married person as a dependent if he or she files a joint return.

An exception to the joint return test applies if your child and his or her spouse file a joint return only as a claim for refund and no tax liability would exist for either spouse on separate returns.

Example 1. You supported your 18-year-old daughter, and she lived with you all year while her husband was in the Armed Forces. The couple files a joint return. You cannot take an exemption for your daughter.

Example 2. Your 18-year-old son and his 17-year-old wife had \$800 of wages from part-time jobs and no other income. Neither is required to file a tax return. They do not have a child. Taxes were taken out of their pay so they file a joint return only to get a refund of the withheld taxes. The exception to the joint return test applies, so you are not disqualified from claiming an exemption for each of them just because they file a joint return. You can claim exemptions for each of them if all the other tests to do so are met.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in Example 2 except your son is 26 years old and had \$2,000 of wages. No taxes were taken out of his pay, and he and his wife are not required to file a tax return. However, they file a joint return to claim an earned income credit of \$155 and get a refund of that amount. They file the return to get the earned income credit, so they are not filing it only as a claim for refund. The exception to the joint return test does not apply, so you cannot claim an exemption for either of them.

Citizen or Resident Test

You cannot claim a person as a dependent unless that person is a U.S. citizen, U.S. resident alien, U.S. national, or a resident of Canada or Mexico. However, there is an exception for certain adopted children, as explained next.

Exception for adopted child. If you are a U.S. citizen or U.S. national who has legally adopted a child who is not a U.S. citizen, U.S. resident alien, or U.S. national, this test is met if the child lived with you as a member of your household all year. This exception also applies if the child was lawfully placed with you for legal adoption.

Child's place of residence. Children usually are citizens or residents of the country of their parents.

If you were a U.S. citizen when your child was born, the child may be a U.S. citizen and meet this test even if the other parent was a nonresident alien and the child was born in a foreign country.

Foreign students' place of residence. Foreign students brought to this country under a

qualified international education exchange program and placed in American homes for a temporary period generally are not U.S. residents and do not meet this test. You cannot claim an exemption for them. However, if you provided a home for a foreign student, you may be able to take a charitable contribution deduction. See *Expenses Paid for Student Living With You* in Publication 526, Charitable Contributions.

U.S. national. A U.S. national is an individual who, although not a U.S. citizen, owes his or her allegiance to the United States. U.S. nationals include American Samoans and Northern Mariana Islanders who chose to become U.S. nationals instead of U.S. citizens.

Qualifying Child

There are five tests that must be met for a child to be your qualifying child. The five tests are:

1. Relationship,
2. Age,
3. Residency,
4. Support, and
5. Joint return.

These tests are explained next.



If a child meets the five tests to be the qualifying child of more than one person, a special rule applies to determine which person can actually treat the child as a qualifying child. See Special Rule for Qualifying Child of More Than One Person, later.

Relationship Test

To meet this test, a child must be:

- Your son, daughter, stepchild, foster child, or a descendant (for example, your grandchild) of any of them, or
- Your brother, sister, half brother, half sister, stepbrother, stepsister, or a descendant (for example, your niece or nephew) of any of them.

Adopted child. An adopted child is always treated as your own child. The term "adopted child" includes a child who was lawfully placed with you for legal adoption.

Foster child. A foster child is an individual who is placed with you by an authorized placement agency or by judgment, decree, or other order of any court of competent jurisdiction.

Age Test

To meet this test, a child must be:

- Under age 19 at the end of the year and younger than you (or your spouse if filing jointly),
- A full-time student under age 24 at the end of the year and younger than you (or your spouse if filing jointly), or
- Permanently and totally disabled at any time during the year, regardless of age.

Example. Your son turned 19 on December 10. Unless he was permanently and totally disabled or a full-time student, he does not meet the age test because, at the end of the year, he was not under age 19.

Child must be younger than you or spouse. To be your qualifying child, a child who is not permanently and totally disabled must be younger than you. However, if you are married filing jointly, the child must be younger than you or your spouse but does not have to be younger than both of you.

Example 1—child not younger than you or spouse. Your 23-year-old brother, who is a full-time student and unmarried, lives with you and your spouse. He is not disabled. Both you and your spouse are 21 years old, and you file a joint return. Your brother is not your qualifying child because he is not younger than you or your spouse.

Example 2—child younger than your spouse but not younger than you. The facts are the same as in Example 1 except that your spouse is 25 years old. Because your brother is younger than your spouse and you and your spouse are filing a joint return, your brother is your qualifying child, even though he is not younger than you.

Full-time student. A full-time student is a student who is enrolled for the number of hours or courses the school considers to be full-time attendance.

Student defined. To qualify as a student, your child must be, during some part of each of any 5 calendar months of the year:

1. A full-time student at a school that has a regular teaching staff, course of study, and a regularly enrolled student body at the school, or
2. A student taking a full-time, on-farm training course given by a school described in (1), or by a state, county, or local government agency.

The 5 calendar months do not have to be consecutive.

School defined. A school can be an elementary school, junior or senior high school, college, university, or technical, trade, or mechanical school. However, an on-the-job training course, correspondence school, or school offering courses only through the Internet does not count as a school.

Vocational high school students. Students who work on "co-op" jobs in private industry as a part of a school's regular course of classroom and practical training are considered full-time students.

Permanently and totally disabled. Your child is permanently and totally disabled if both of the following apply.

- He or she cannot engage in any substantial gainful activity because of a physical or mental condition.
- A doctor determines the condition has lasted or can be expected to last continuously for at least a year or can lead to death.

Table 5. Overview of the Rules for Claiming an Exemption for a Dependent

Caution. This table is only an overview of the rules. For details, see the rest of this publication.

- You cannot claim any dependents if you, or your spouse if filing jointly, could be claimed as a dependent by another taxpayer.
- You cannot claim a married person who files a joint return as a dependent unless that joint return is only a claim for refund and there would be no tax liability for either spouse on separate returns.
- You cannot claim a person as a dependent unless that person is a U.S. citizen, U.S. resident alien, U.S. national, or a resident of Canada or Mexico.¹
- You cannot claim a person as a dependent unless that person is your **qualifying child** or **qualifying relative**.

Tests To Be a Qualifying Child	Tests To Be a Qualifying Relative
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The child must be your son, daughter, stepchild, foster child, brother, sister, half brother, half sister, stepbrother, stepsister, or a descendant of any of them. 2. The child must be (a) under age 19 at the end of the year and younger than you (or your spouse, if filing jointly), (b) under age 24 at the end of the year, a full-time student, and younger than you (or your spouse, if filing jointly), or (c) any age if permanently and totally disabled. 3. The child must have lived with you for more than half of the year.² 4. The child must not have provided more than half of his or her own support for the year. 5. The child is not filing a joint return for the year (unless that joint return is filed only as a claim for refund). <p>If the child meets the rules to be a qualifying child of more than one person, only one person can actually treat the child as a qualifying child. See the <i>Special Rule for Qualifying Child of More Than One Person</i> described later to find out which person is the person entitled to claim the child as a qualifying child.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The person cannot be your qualifying child or the qualifying child of any other taxpayer. 2. The person either (a) must be related to you in one of the ways listed under <i>Relatives who do not have to live with you</i>, or (b) must live with you all year as a member of your household² (and your relationship must not violate local law). 3. The person's gross income for the year must be less than \$3,700.³ 4. You must provide more than half of the person's total support for the year.⁴

¹There is an exception for certain adopted children.

²There are exceptions for temporary absences, children who were born or died during the year, children of divorced or separated parents or parents who live apart, and kidnapped children.

³There is an exception if the person is disabled and has income from a sheltered workshop.

⁴There are exceptions for multiple support agreements, children of divorced or separated parents or parents who live apart, and kidnapped children.

Residency Test

To meet this test, your child must have lived with you for more than half of the year. There are exceptions for temporary absences, children who were born or died during the year, kidnapped children, and children of divorced or separated parents.

Temporary absences. Your child is considered to have lived with you during periods of time when one of you, or both, are temporarily absent due to special circumstances such as:

- Illness,
- Education,
- Business,
- Vacation, or
- Military service.

Death or birth of child. A child who was born or died during the year is treated as having lived with you all year if your home was the child's home the entire time he or she was alive during the year. The same is true if the child lived with you all year except for any required hospital stay following birth.

Child born alive. You may be able to claim an exemption for a child who was born alive during the year, even if the child lived only for a moment. State or local law must treat the child as having been born alive. There must be proof of a live birth shown by an official document, such as a birth certificate. The child must be your qualifying child or qualifying relative, and all the other tests to claim an exemption for a dependent must be met.

Stillborn child. You cannot claim an exemption for a stillborn child.

Kidnapped child. You can treat your child as meeting the residency test even if the child has been kidnapped, but both of the following statements must be true.

1. The child is presumed by law enforcement authorities to have been kidnapped by someone who is not a member of your family or the child's family.
2. In the year the kidnapping occurred, the child lived with you for more than half of the part of the year before the date of the kidnapping.

This treatment applies for all years until the child is returned. However, the last year this treatment can apply is the earlier of:

1. The year there is a determination that the child is dead, or
2. The year the child would have reached age 18.

Children of divorced or separated parents or parents who live apart. In most cases, because of the residency test, a child of divorced or separated parents is the qualifying child of the custodial parent. However, the child will be treated as the qualifying child of the noncustodial parent if all four of the following statements are true.

1. The parents:
 - a. Are divorced or legally separated under a decree of divorce or separate maintenance,
 - b. Are separated under a written separation agreement, or
 - c. Lived apart at all times during the last 6 months of the year, whether or not they are or were married.
2. The child received over half of his or her support for the year from the parents.
3. The child is in the custody of one or both parents for more than half of the year.
4. Either of the following statements is true.
 - a. The custodial parent signs a written declaration, discussed later, that he or she will not claim the child as a dependent for the year, and the noncustodial parent attaches this written declaration to his or her return. (If the decree or agreement went into effect after 1984 and before 2009, see *Post-1984 and pre-2009 divorce decree or separation agreement*, later. If the decree or agreement went into effect after 2008, see *Post-2008 divorce decree or separation agreement*, later.)
 - b. A pre-1985 decree of divorce or separate maintenance or written separation agreement that applies to 2011 states that the noncustodial parent can claim the child as a dependent, the decree or agreement was not changed after 1984 to say the noncustodial parent cannot claim the child as a dependent, and the noncustodial parent provides at least \$600 for the child's support during the year.

Custodial parent and noncustodial parent. The custodial parent is the parent with whom the child lived for the greater number of nights during the year. The other parent is the noncustodial parent.

If the parents divorced or separated during the year and the child lived with both parents before the separation, the custodial parent is the one with whom the child lived for the greater number of nights during the rest of the year.

A child is treated as living with a parent for a night if the child sleeps:

- At that parent's home, whether or not the parent is present, or
- In the company of the parent, when the child does not sleep at a parent's home (for example, the parent and child are on vacation together).

Equal number of nights. If the child lived with each parent for an equal number of nights

during the year, the custodial parent is the parent with the higher adjusted gross income (AGI).

December 31. The night of December 31 is treated as part of the year in which it begins. For example, December 31, 2011, is treated as part of 2011.

Emancipated child. If a child is emancipated under state law, the child is treated as not living with either parent. See Examples 5 and 6.

Absences. If a child was not with either parent on a particular night (because, for example, the child was staying at a friend's house), the child is treated as living with the parent with whom the child normally would have lived for that night, except for the absence. But if it cannot be determined with which parent the child normally would have lived or if the child would not have lived with either parent that night, the child is treated as not living with either parent that night.

Parent works at night. If, due to a parent's nighttime work schedule, a child lives for a greater number of days but not nights with the parent who works at night, that parent is treated as the custodial parent. On a school day, the child is treated as living at the primary residence registered with the school.

Example 1—child lived with one parent greater number of nights. You and your child's other parent are divorced. In 2011, your child lived with you 210 nights and with the other parent 155 nights. You are the custodial parent.

Example 2—child is away at camp. In 2011, your daughter lives with each parent for alternate weeks. In the summer, she spends 6 weeks at summer camp. During the time she is at camp, she is treated as living with you for 3 weeks and with her other parent, your ex-spouse, for 3 weeks because this is how long she would have lived with each parent if she had not attended summer camp.

Example 3—child lived same number of nights with each parent. Your son lived with you 180 nights during the year and lived the same number of nights with his other parent, your ex-spouse. Your AGI is \$40,000. Your ex-spouse's AGI is \$25,000. You are treated as your son's custodial parent because you have the higher AGI.

Example 4—child is at parent's home but with other parent. Your son normally lives with you during the week and with his other parent, your ex-spouse, every other weekend. You become ill and are hospitalized. The other parent lives in your home with your son for 10 consecutive days while you are in the hospital. Your son is treated as living with you during this 10-day period because he was living in your home.

Example 5—child emancipated in May. When your son turned age 18 in May 2011, he became emancipated under the law of the state where he lives. As a result, he is not considered in the custody of his parents for more than half of the year. The special rule for children of divorced or separated parents does not apply.

Example 6—child emancipated in August. Your daughter lives with you from January 1, 2011, until May 31, 2011, and lives with her other parent, your ex-spouse, from June 1, 2011, through the end of the year. She turns 18 and is emancipated under state law on August 1, 2011. Because she is treated as not living with either parent beginning on August 1, she is treated as living with you the greater number of nights in 2011. You are the custodial parent.

Written declaration. The custodial parent may use either Form 8332 or a similar statement (containing the same information required by the form) to make the written declaration to release the exemption to the noncustodial parent. The noncustodial parent must attach a copy of the form or statement to his or her tax return.

The exemption can be released for 1 year, for a number of specified years (for example, alternate years), or for all future years, as specified in the declaration.

Post-1984 and pre-2009 divorce decree or separation agreement. If the divorce decree or separation agreement went into effect after 1984 and before 2009, the noncustodial parent may be able to attach certain pages from the decree or agreement instead of Form 8332. The decree or agreement must state all three of the following.

1. The noncustodial parent can claim the child as a dependent without regard to any condition, such as payment of support.
2. The custodial parent will not claim the child as a dependent for the year.
3. The years for which the noncustodial parent, rather than the custodial parent, can claim the child as a dependent.

The noncustodial parent must attach all of the following pages of the decree or agreement to his or her tax return.

- The cover page (write the other parent's social security number on this page).
- The pages that include all of the information identified in items (1) through (3) above.
- The signature page with the other parent's signature and the date of the agreement.

Post-2008 divorce decree or separation agreement. The noncustodial parent cannot attach pages from the decree or agreement instead of Form 8332 if the decree or agreement went into effect after 2008. The custodial parent must sign either Form 8332 or a similar statement whose only purpose is to release the custodial parent's claim to an exemption for a child, and the noncustodial parent must attach a copy to his or her return. The form or statement must release the custodial parent's claim to the child without any conditions. For example, the release must not depend on the noncustodial parent paying support.



The noncustodial parent must attach the required information even if it was filed with a return in an earlier year.

Revocation of release of claim to an exemption. The custodial parent can revoke a release of claim to an exemption that he or she previously released to the noncustodial parent

on Form 8332 or a similar statement. In order for the revocation to be effective for 2011, the custodial parent must have given (or made reasonable efforts to give) written notice of the revocation to the noncustodial parent in 2010 or earlier. The custodial parent can use Part III of Form 8332 for this purpose and must attach a copy of the revocation to his or her return for each tax year he or she claims the child as a dependent as a result of the revocation.

Remarried parent. If you remarry, the support provided by your new spouse is treated as provided by you.

Parents who never married. This special rule for divorced or separated parents also applies to parents who never married and lived apart at all times during the last 6 months of the year.

Support Test (To Be a Qualifying Child)

To meet this test, the child cannot have provided more than half of his or her own support for the year.

This test is different from the support test to be a qualifying relative, which is described later. However, to see what is or is not support, see *Support Test (To Be a Qualifying Relative)*, later. If you are not sure whether a child provided more than half of his or her own support, you may find [Worksheet 1](#) helpful.

Example. You provided \$4,000 toward your 16-year-old son's support for the year. He has a part-time job and provided \$6,000 to his own support. He provided more than half of his own support for the year. He is not your qualifying child.

Foster care payments and expenses. Payments you receive for the support of a foster child from a child placement agency are considered support provided by the agency. Similarly, payments you receive for the support of a foster child from a state or county are considered support provided by the state or county.

If you are not in the trade or business of providing foster care and your unreimbursed out-of-pocket expenses in caring for a foster child were mainly to benefit an organization qualified to receive deductible charitable contributions, the expenses are deductible as charitable contributions but are not considered support you provided. For more information about the deduction for charitable contributions, see Publication 526. If your unreimbursed expenses are not deductible as charitable contributions, they are considered support you provided.

If you are in the trade or business of providing foster care, your unreimbursed expenses are not considered support provided by you.

Example 1. Lauren, a foster child, lived with Mr. and Mrs. Smith for the last 3 months of the year. The Smiths cared for Lauren because they wanted to adopt her (although she had not been placed with them for adoption). They did not care for her as a trade or business or to benefit the agency that placed her in their home. The Smiths' unreimbursed expenses are not deductible as charitable contributions but are considered support they provided for Lauren.

Example 2. You provided \$3,000 toward your 10-year-old foster child's support for the year. The state government provided \$4,000, which is considered support provided by the state, not by the child. See *Support provided by the state (welfare, food stamps, housing, etc.)*, later. Your foster child did not provide more than half of her own support for the year.

Scholarships. A scholarship received by a child who is a full-time student is not taken into account in determining whether the child provided more than half of his or her own support.

Joint Return Test (To Be a Qualifying Child)

To meet this test, the child cannot file a joint return for the year.

Exception. An exception to the joint return test applies if your child and his or her spouse file a joint return only as a claim for refund.

Example 1. You supported your 18-year-old daughter, and she lived with you all year while her husband was in the Armed Forces. The couple files a joint return. Because your daughter and her husband file a joint return, she is not your qualifying child.

Example 2. Your 18-year-old son and his 17-year-old wife had \$800 of wages from part-time jobs and no other income. Neither is required to file a tax return. They do not have a child. Taxes were taken out of their pay so they file a joint return only to get a refund of the withheld taxes. The exception to the joint return test applies, so your son may be your qualifying child if all the other tests are met.

Example 3. The facts are the same as in Example 2 except your son is 26 years old and had \$2,000 of wages. No taxes were taken out of his pay, and he and his wife were not required to file a tax return. However, they file a joint return to claim an earned income credit of \$155 and get a refund of that amount. They file the return to get the earned income credit, so they are not filing it only as a claim for refund. The exception to the joint return test does not apply, so your son is not your qualifying child.

Special Rule for Qualifying Child of More Than One Person

TIP If your qualifying child is not a qualifying child of anyone else, this special rule does not apply to you and you do not need to read about it. This is also true if your qualifying child is not a qualifying child of anyone else except your spouse with whom you file a joint return.

CAUTION If a child is treated as the qualifying child of the noncustodial parent under the rules for children of divorced or separated parents or parents who live apart, described earlier, see *Applying this special rule to divorced or separated parents or parents who live apart, later*.

Sometimes, a child meets the relationship, age, residency, support, and joint return tests to be a qualifying child of more than one person.

Although the child is a qualifying child of each of these persons, only one person can actually treat the child as a qualifying child to take all of the following tax benefits (provided the person is eligible for each benefit).

1. The exemption for the child.
2. The child tax credit.
3. Head of household filing status.
4. The credit for child and dependent care expenses.
5. The exclusion from income for dependent care benefits.
6. The earned income credit.

The other person cannot take any of these benefits based on this qualifying child. In other words, you and the other person cannot agree to divide these tax benefits between you. The other person cannot take any of these benefits unless he or she has a different qualifying child.

Tiebreaker rules. To determine which person can treat the child as a qualifying child to claim these six tax benefits, the following tiebreaker rules apply.

- If only one of the persons is the child's parent, the child is treated as the qualifying child of the parent.
- If the parents do not file a joint return together but both parents claim the child as a qualifying child, the IRS will treat the child as the qualifying child of the parent with whom the child lived for the longer period of time during the year. If the child lived with each parent for the same amount of time, the IRS will treat the child as the qualifying child of the parent who had the higher adjusted gross income (AGI) for the year.
- If no parent can claim the child as a qualifying child, the child is treated as the qualifying child of the person who had the highest AGI for the year.
- If a parent can claim the child as a qualifying child but no parent does so claim the child, the child is treated as the qualifying child of the person who had the highest AGI for the year, but only if that person's AGI is higher than the highest AGI of any of the child's parents who can claim the child. If the child's parents file a joint return with each other, this rule can be applied by dividing the parents' combined AGI equally between the parents. See [Example 6](#).

Subject to these tiebreaker rules, you and the other person may be able to choose which of you claims the child as a qualifying child.

Example 1—child lived with parent and grandparent. You and your 3-year-old daughter Jane lived with your mother all year. You are 25 years old, unmarried, and your AGI is \$9,000. Your mother's AGI is \$15,000. Jane's father did not live with you or your daughter. The rule explained earlier for *children of divorced or separated parents or parents who live apart* does not apply.