



The 401(k) To

GOLD

Transition



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The 401(k) to Gold Transition – Direct and Indirect "Rollover" And "In-Service" Distribution

- **A 401(k) to Gold IRA rollover** lets you move retirement funds into physical gold without triggering taxes or penalties — if you follow IRS rules precisely.
- **The direct rollover method is the safest route**, moving funds from one custodian to another without you ever touching the money.
- **Missing the 60-day window on an indirect rollover can cost you** income taxes plus a 10% early withdrawal penalty — a mistake that's hard to recover from.
- Traditional and Roth 401(k)s must roll into their matching IRA types, or you'll face an unexpected tax bill.
- **Not all gold qualifies for a Gold IRA** — the IRS has strict purity standards, and buying the wrong metals could strip your account of its tax-advantaged status.

Rolling over a 401(k) to gold is one of the most powerful moves you can make for your retirement security — but one wrong step can turn a tax-free transfer into a costly taxable event.

With inflation eating away at purchasing power and stock market volatility becoming the norm, more Americans are questioning whether a portfolio built entirely on paper assets is strong enough to carry them through retirement. Physical gold has served as a store of value for thousands of years, and today, the IRS allows you to hold it inside a tax-advantaged retirement account through a structure called a Self-Directed Gold IRA. Clute Journals, a respected source for gold IRA education, notes that acquiring physical gold through a 401(k) rollover is one of the most popular strategies Americans are using to protect retirement funds right now.

This guide breaks down every method available to you — direct rollover, indirect rollover, and in-service distribution — so you can move your money without losing a dollar to avoidable taxes or penalties.

Move Your 401(k) to Gold Without Losing a Dollar to Taxes

The IRS does not treat a properly executed rollover as a taxable distribution. That means you can reposition your entire 401(k) balance into a Gold IRA and maintain every dollar of your tax-advantaged status — but only if the transfer is handled correctly from start to finish.

Why Investors Are Moving Retirement Funds Into Gold Right Now

Gold has historically moved inversely to the stock market, making it a natural hedge when equity markets turn volatile. When the dollar weakens, gold tends to strengthen. When inflation rises, gold holds its purchasing power in ways that cash and bonds often cannot. For retirement savers watching their 401(k) balances swing with every Federal Reserve announcement, physical gold offers something rare: stability that isn't tied to corporate earnings or government debt.

Direct Rollover vs. Indirect Rollover: The Critical Difference

There are two ways to move your 401(k) funds into a Gold IRA, and the method you choose determines whether you'll owe taxes and penalties. A **direct rollover** sends funds straight from your 401(k) custodian to your new Gold IRA custodian — you never touch the money. An **indirect rollover** sends the funds to you first, and you have exactly 60 days to deposit them into your new account. The direct rollover eliminates almost all risk. The indirect rollover introduces tax withholding, deadlines, and the potential for costly mistakes.

What an In-Service Distribution Is and When You Can Use It

Most people assume you can only roll over a 401(k) after leaving a job. That's not always true. An **in-service distribution** allows certain employees to roll over funds from their active employer-sponsored 401(k) while still employed — without quitting or retiring. Eligibility depends on your plan's specific rules and, in most cases, your age. This option is often overlooked but can be a strategic tool for workers who want to start building a gold position before they separate from their employer.

Direct Rollover: The Safest Way to Move Your 401(k) to Gold

If protecting your retirement balance is the priority — and it should be — the direct rollover is the method to use. It's clean, straightforward, and eliminates the most common risks that derail gold IRA transfers.

How Custodian-to-Custodian Transfers Work

In a direct rollover, your 401(k) plan administrator sends your funds directly to your new Gold IRA custodian. The transfer happens between financial institutions, with your money never passing through your hands. This structure is what makes the transaction invisible to the IRS as a taxable event — the funds stay within the retirement account ecosystem the entire time.

No Tax Withholding, No Penalties, No Stress

Because you never receive the funds personally, the IRS has no basis to apply the mandatory 20% tax withholding that applies to indirect rollovers. There's no 60-day countdown clock, no scramble to cover withheld amounts, and no risk of accidentally triggering an early withdrawal penalty. For investors under age 59½, this distinction is especially critical — an early withdrawal penalty adds 10% on top of ordinary income taxes, which can destroy a significant portion of your savings in one transaction.

This is not just the easiest method — it's the one most Gold IRA companies will actively guide you through because it protects the integrity of your rollover from the very first step.

Step-by-Step: How to Request a Direct Rollover From Your Plan Administrator

Initiating a direct rollover starts with a conversation with your current 401(k) plan administrator. You'll need to formally request a direct rollover and provide the receiving institution's details — your new Gold IRA custodian's name, account number, and transfer instructions. Most Gold IRA companies will assign you a specialist who handles this paperwork on your behalf, coordinating directly with your plan administrator to make the process seamless.

Your plan administrator will then issue a check or wire transfer made payable directly to your new Gold IRA custodian — not to you personally. That distinction is what keeps the transaction classified as a non-taxable rollover rather than a distribution. Once the funds arrive at your Gold IRA custodian, you select your IRS-approved metals, and the purchase is executed on your behalf.

Indirect Rollover: The 60-Day Rule You Cannot Afford to Miss

The indirect rollover gives you temporary access to your retirement funds, but it comes with strict conditions that, if missed, turn your tax-free transfer into a taxable distribution with penalties attached.

- Funds are distributed directly to you, not to a new custodian
- Your plan administrator withholds 20% for federal taxes automatically
- You have exactly 60 days from the date of distribution to deposit the full original amount into your Gold IRA
- You must cover the 20% withheld out-of-pocket to avoid taxes on that portion
- Only one indirect rollover is permitted per 12-month period across all your IRAs

The 60-day window sounds generous until you factor in the withheld 20%. If your 401(k) sends you \$100,000, you'll receive \$80,000 in hand. To complete a penalty-free rollover, you must deposit the full \$100,000 into your Gold IRA within 60 days — meaning you need to come up with \$20,000 from another source to cover what was withheld.

That's a financial hurdle most people aren't prepared for, which is exactly why the indirect rollover catches so many investors off guard.

How the 20% Withholding Works and Why It Catches People Off Guard

The 20% withholding is not optional — your 401(k) administrator is legally required to withhold it the moment funds are distributed to you directly. This is a prepayment toward potential income taxes, and it applies regardless of your intent to roll the funds over. The IRS will refund the withheld amount when you file your taxes — but only if you deposited the full original distribution amount into your new account within 60 days. If

you couldn't cover the withheld portion and only deposited \$80,000, that \$20,000 gap is treated as a taxable distribution.

For investors who weren't expecting this, it often means scrambling to liquidate other assets or simply accepting a smaller rollover — both of which have long-term costs on retirement wealth accumulation.

How to Cover the Withheld Amount Before the Deadline

If you've already initiated an indirect rollover and need to cover the withheld 20%, your options are limited but manageable. You can use personal savings, liquidate a non-retirement investment account, or draw from a taxable brokerage account to make up the difference. The IRS doesn't care where the covering funds come from — they only care that the full original distribution amount lands in your Gold IRA within 60 days.

Once your taxes are filed, you'll recover the withheld amount as a refund — but that's months away, and the 60-day clock doesn't wait. Planning is the only reliable strategy.

What Happens if You Miss the 60-Day Window

Missing the 60-day deadline converts the entire undistributed amount into a taxable event. The IRS will treat it as ordinary income in the year of distribution, and if you're under age 59½, a 10% early withdrawal penalty applies on top of that. On a \$100,000 rollover, a missed deadline could mean owing \$22,000 to \$37,000 or more in combined taxes and penalties, depending on your tax bracket — a devastating outcome for what was supposed to be a tax-free transfer.

The IRS does offer hardship waivers in narrow circumstances — natural disasters, serious illness, or cases where a financial institution made an error — but these are not guaranteed and require documentation. Don't count on a waiver to bail you out of a missed deadline.

In-Service Distribution: Rolling Over While Still Employed

Most 401(k) participants don't realize they may have the option to move retirement funds into a Gold IRA without leaving their current employer. An in-service distribution is a provision some employer plans include that allows active employees to take a distribution — or execute a rollover — from their 401(k) while still on the payroll.

Who Qualifies for an In-Service Distribution

Not every 401(k) plan offers in-service distributions — this is a plan-specific feature, not a universal IRS right. To find out if your plan allows it, you'll need to review your Summary Plan Description (SPD) or speak directly with your HR department or plan administrator. Some plans restrict in-service distributions to specific contribution

sources, such as rollover contributions or after-tax contributions, while prohibiting distributions from employer matching funds or profit-sharing contributions.

If your plan does permit in-service distributions, the rollover process works identically to a standard 401(k)-to-Gold-IRA rollover. You can request a direct rollover to your Gold IRA custodian, avoiding tax withholding and penalties entirely. This option is particularly valuable for employees in their late 50s or early 60s who want to begin diversifying into physical gold while maintaining their current employment and continuing to contribute to their 401(k).

The Age 59½ Rule and Plan-Specific Exceptions

Many plans that allow in-service distributions set age 59½ as the minimum threshold. Once you reach that age, the 10% early withdrawal penalty no longer applies to distributions anyway, which gives plan administrators more flexibility to permit them. However, some plans allow in-service distributions before age 59½ under specific conditions — such as financial hardship, disability, or after a set number of years of plan participation. Always confirm the exact terms with your plan administrator before assuming you qualify.

Traditional vs. Roth 401(k): Match the Right Accounts to Avoid a Tax Bill

The type of 401(k) you're rolling over determines which type of Gold IRA must receive the funds — and getting these wrong triggers an immediate tax liability. A **Traditional 401(k)**, funded with pre-tax dollars, must roll into a **Traditional Gold IRA**. A **Roth 401(k)**, funded with after-tax dollars, must roll into a **Roth Gold IRA**. This matching requirement exists because the IRS tracks the tax treatment of your contributions, and mismatching account types forces a reclassification that creates a taxable event.

Rolling a Traditional 401(k) into a Roth Gold IRA is technically possible — it's called a Roth conversion — but it is a taxable event. The entire converted amount is added to your gross income for that tax year, which can push you into a higher tax bracket and generate a significant tax bill. This strategy can make sense in specific circumstances, such as when you expect to be in a higher tax bracket in retirement or when you want to eliminate required minimum distributions (RMDs) from that portion of your savings.

Unless you've made a deliberate decision to do a Roth conversion with full awareness of the tax consequences, always match account types. Traditional to Traditional. Roth to Roth. It's a simple rule that protects your rollover from becoming an unintentional taxable distribution.

How to Open a Self-Directed Gold IRA to Receive Your Rollover

Before your 401(k) funds can move anywhere, you need a destination account set up and ready to receive them. That account is a Self-Directed IRA (SDIRA) specifically structured to hold physical precious metals — commonly called a Gold IRA. Opening this account is the first practical step in your rollover process, and it needs to happen before you contact your 401(k) plan administrator.

What Makes a Gold IRA "Self-Directed"

A standard IRA — whether through Fidelity, Vanguard, or Schwab — limits your investment options to stocks, bonds, mutual funds, and ETFs. A Self-Directed IRA expands those options to include alternative assets like physical gold, silver, platinum, palladium, real estate, and private equity. The "self-directed" label means you, the account holder, have direct control over what assets go into the account — within IRS-approved boundaries.

The IRS requires that a Self-Directed IRA be held by a qualified custodian — a bank, credit union, or IRS-approved non-bank trustee. The custodian handles all administrative functions: account setup, transaction processing, IRS reporting, and compliance oversight. They do not provide investment advice. Your Gold IRA company, on the other hand, is the dealer who sources and facilitates the purchase of your physical metals. These are two distinct roles, and understanding the difference helps you choose the right partners.

- **Custodian:** Holds the account, handles IRS reporting, and processes transactions — examples include Equity Trust Company and STRATA Trust Company
- **Gold IRA Dealer:** Sources IRS-approved metals, guides product selection, and coordinates with the custodian to execute purchases
- **Depository:** Stores your physical metals in an IRS-approved, insured vault — examples include the Delaware Depository and Brink's Global Services
- **You:** Direct the investment decisions within IRS guidelines while the custodian ensures compliance

Most reputable Gold IRA companies have established relationships with approved custodians and depositories, making the setup process straightforward. They'll typically guide you through account paperwork, coordinate with your custodian, and handle the logistics of purchasing and storing your metals once your rollover funds arrive.

IRS-Approved Gold: What Qualifies and What Does Not

Not every gold coin or bar you can buy at a local dealer qualifies for a Gold IRA. The IRS sets strict purity standards under IRC Section 408(m). Gold must meet a minimum fineness of **.995 (99.5% pure)** to be eligible. This rules out many popular collector coins and older gold coins that fall below that purity threshold.

Approved gold products include the **American Gold Eagle** (the one exception to the .995 rule, approved despite being .9167 fine), the **American Gold Buffalo** (.9999 fine), the **Canadian Gold Maple Leaf** (.9999 fine), the **Austrian Gold Philharmonic** (.9999 fine), and most **gold bars and rounds** produced by NYMEX or COMEX-approved refiners at .995 fineness or higher. What's not allowed includes South African Krugerrands (only .9167 fine and not granted the Eagle exemption), collectible coins, and any gold jewelry or numismatic coins regardless of gold content.

IRS-Approved Depositories: Why Home Storage Is Not an Option

One of the most common misconceptions about Gold IRAs is that you can store the physical gold at home or in a personal safe deposit box. The IRS explicitly prohibits this. Under IRS rules, the physical metals held in a Gold IRA must be stored at an approved depository — a secure, insured, third-party vault facility. Taking personal possession of IRA-held gold, even temporarily, is treated as a distribution, which triggers taxes and potentially penalties.

IRS-approved depositories include facilities like the **Delaware Depository** in Wilmington, Delaware, **Brink's Global Services**, and **CNT Depository**. These facilities offer segregated storage (your metals stored separately under your name) or commingled storage (your metals stored with others of the same type), with segregated storage typically carrying a higher annual fee. Your Gold IRA custodian will work with one or more approved depositories, and your metals will be shipped and stored there directly after purchase.

Fees to Expect: Setup, Maintenance, and Storage Costs

Gold IRAs carry higher operating costs than standard IRAs, and being aware of the full fee structure before you open an account prevents surprises. Typical costs include a one-time account setup fee ranging from \$50 to \$150, an annual custodian maintenance fee between \$75 and \$300, and annual storage fees at the depository ranging from \$100 to \$300, depending on the facility and whether you choose segregated or commingled storage. Some Gold IRA companies also charge a transaction fee or dealer markup when you purchase metals, which can range from 1% to 5% above spot price, depending on the product and dealer.

Step-by-Step: How to Execute a 401(k) to Gold IRA Rollover

Once you understand the mechanics, the actual execution of a 401(k) to Gold IRA rollover follows a logical sequence. Each step builds on the last, and skipping any one of them increases the risk of delays, compliance issues, or unintended tax consequences.

The entire process typically takes between two and six weeks from the time you open your Gold IRA account to the moment your physical metals are purchased and secured in an approved depository. The timeline varies depending on your 401(k) plan

administrator's processing speed and whether you're using a direct or indirect rollover method.

Here's the complete process, broken down into six clear steps.

1. Confirm Eligibility With Your Plan Administrator

Before anything else, contact your 401(k) plan administrator and confirm that your account is eligible for a rollover. If you're no longer with the employer, eligibility is almost always straightforward. If you're still employed, ask specifically about in-service distribution rules. Get confirmation in writing if possible, and ask for your current account balance, any outstanding loan balances that could complicate the rollover, and the plan's preferred process for initiating a direct rollover.

2. Choose a Reputable Gold IRA Company

Your Gold IRA company is the firm that guides you through account setup, helps you select IRS-approved metals, and coordinates with your custodian and depository. Look for companies with strong Better Business Bureau (BBB) ratings, transparent fee disclosures, and a demonstrated track record of IRS-compliant rollovers. Avoid any company that pressures you into high-markup collector coins, promises guaranteed returns on gold, or suggests home storage as a legal option — these are immediate red flags.

3. Open Your Self-Directed Gold IRA Account

Work with your chosen Gold IRA company to complete the account opening paperwork with their affiliated custodian. You'll provide standard identification documentation, choose between a Traditional or Roth Gold IRA (matching your existing 401(k) type), and designate beneficiaries. This step usually takes one to three business days once paperwork is submitted.

Once the account is open and your account number is issued, you're ready to initiate the actual transfer. The account must be active before your 401(k) administrator can send funds — there's no receiving account otherwise.

4. Initiate the Direct Rollover Request

Contact your 401(k) plan administrator with your new Gold IRA account details and formally request a direct rollover. Your Gold IRA company will typically provide a transfer request letter or form that you submit to your plan administrator. The plan administrator will then process the request and issue a check or wire transfer made payable directly to your new custodian — not to you. Confirm with both parties that the transfer is

labeled as a direct rollover to ensure it is processed correctly and doesn't trigger mandatory withholding.

5. Select Your IRS-Approved Precious Metals

Once your rollover funds arrive at your Gold IRA custodian, you'll work with your Gold IRA dealer to select which IRS-approved metals to purchase. This is where your investment strategy takes shape. Most investors allocate the majority of their gold position to bullion coins or bars for their low premiums over spot price and high liquidity. Popular choices include the American Gold Buffalo at .9999 fineness, the Canadian Gold Maple Leaf at .9999 fineness, and PAMP Suisse gold bars at .9999 fineness — all of which meet IRS purity requirements and are widely recognized in the secondary market, which matters when it comes time to sell.

6. Confirm Secure Storage at an Approved Depository

After your metals are purchased, your custodian coordinates shipment directly to your chosen IRS-approved depository. You'll receive confirmation documentation showing exactly what was purchased, the quantity, the weight, and where it's stored. Keep this documentation with your other retirement account records. From this point forward, your Gold IRA operates like any other IRA — you'll receive annual statements, and your custodian will handle all IRS reporting on your behalf.

Common Mistakes That Cost Retirees Thousands

The mechanics of a 401(k) to Gold IRA rollover are straightforward — but three specific mistakes consistently derail investors and turn a tax-free transfer into an expensive lesson. Knowing them in advance is the only reliable protection.

Choosing an Indirect Rollover Without a Plan to Cover Withholding

The most common and costly mistake is initiating an indirect rollover without having liquid funds available to cover the mandatory 20% withholding. When your 401(k) sends you \$150,000 directly, you receive \$120,000 in hand — and you have 60 days to deposit the full \$150,000 into your Gold IRA. That means you need \$30,000 from another source, immediately. Investors who don't plan for this gap either deposit only what they received and trigger taxes on the \$30,000 shortfall, or miss the deadline entirely and owe taxes and penalties on the full amount. Unless you have liquid savings ready to bridge that gap, use a direct rollover — every time.

Mismatching Account Types and Triggering Unexpected Taxes

Rolling a Traditional 401(k) into a Roth Gold IRA without intending to do a Roth conversion is a mistake that generates an immediate and often shocking tax bill. Because Traditional 401(k) contributions were made with pre-tax dollars, converting them to a Roth account requires paying income tax on the full converted amount in the

year of the rollover. On a \$200,000 balance, that could mean owing \$44,000 to \$74,000 in federal income taxes, depending on your bracket — funds that are no longer in your retirement account building wealth.

The fix is simple: always verify your existing 401(k) type before opening your Gold IRA, and make sure your new account matches. If you have both Traditional and Roth balances within the same 401(k), work with your Gold IRA company to open both account types and allocate accordingly. A five-minute conversation prevents a five-figure tax mistake

Buying Non-IRS-Approved Metals and Losing Tax-Advantaged Status

Some gold dealers — particularly those targeting new Gold IRA investors — push rare coins, numismatic coins, or collectibles that carry high dealer markups but do not meet IRS purity standards for IRA inclusion. The South African Krugerrand, for example, is widely sold and genuinely contains one troy ounce of gold, but at .9167 fineness, it falls below the IRS threshold and does not qualify for Gold IRA inclusion.

Purchasing disqualified assets inside your Gold IRA can cause the IRS to treat the account as having made a prohibited transaction, which can disqualify the entire IRA and trigger taxes on the full account value. Stick exclusively to IRS-approved products, and verify eligibility with your custodian before any purchase is finalized.

Your Retirement Savings Deserve a Stronger Foundation Than Stocks Alone

A retirement portfolio built entirely on stocks, bonds, and mutual funds is fully exposed to the same systemic risks — inflation, currency devaluation, and market volatility — that erode purchasing power over time. Gold doesn't eliminate risk, but it introduces a fundamentally different type of asset into your retirement mix: one with a centuries-long track record of preserving value when paper assets struggle. The IRS-compliant structure of a Gold IRA means you don't have to sacrifice tax advantages to access that protection.

The 401(k) to Gold IRA rollover process exists precisely because the retirement system recognizes that diversification beyond conventional assets is a legitimate financial strategy. Whether you use a direct rollover, navigate the 60-day indirect rollover process, or qualify for an in-service distribution while still employed, the path to holding physical gold in a tax-advantaged account is clearly defined and accessible.

The key is executing each step with precision — choosing the right rollover method, matching account types, selecting IRS-approved metals, and partnering with a reputable custodian and Gold IRA company who will keep the process compliant from start to finish.

Frequently Asked Questions

These are the questions investors most commonly ask before initiating a 401(k) to Gold IRA rollover — answered directly, without the ambiguity.

Can I Roll Over My 401(k) to a Gold IRA Without Leaving My Job?

Yes — but only if your employer's 401(k) plan includes an in-service distribution provision. This is a plan-specific feature, not a universal right, so you'll need to review your Summary Plan Description or speak directly with your HR department or plan administrator to confirm eligibility. Many plans that allow in-service distributions set age 59½ as the minimum threshold, though some permit them earlier under specific conditions, such as financial hardship or after a set number of years of participation.

If your plan does not allow in-service distributions, you generally must separate from your employer — through retirement, resignation, or termination — before you can roll over the balance. Once separated, your 401(k) becomes fully eligible for a direct rollover to a Gold IRA regardless of your age, though the 10% early withdrawal penalty still applies to any funds not properly rolled over if you're under 59½.

How Long Does a 401(k) to Gold IRA Rollover Take?

The total timeline from account opening to physical metals secured in an approved depository typically runs two to six weeks. The largest variable is your 401(k) plan administrator's processing speed — some plans process rollover requests within a few business days, while others take two to three weeks to issue the transfer. Once funds arrive at your Gold IRA custodian, the metal purchase and depository transfer usually completes within three to seven business days.

Here's a general breakdown of the timeline by phase:

- Gold IRA account opening: 1 to 3 business days after paperwork submission
- Rollover request processing by 401(k) administrator: 3 to 15 business days, depending on the plan
- Fund transfer from 401(k) to Gold IRA custodian: 1 to 5 business days via wire transfer
- Metal selection and purchase execution: 1 to 2 business days after funds clear
- Shipment and storage confirmation at the depository: 2 to 7 business days

Working with a Gold IRA company that has an established relationship with your custodian and depository will consistently produce faster timelines than going through each party independently.

Is There a Limit on How Much I Can Roll Over Into a Gold IRA?

No. The IRS does not cap the amount you can roll over from a 401(k) into a Gold IRA through a direct or indirect rollover. This is fundamentally different from annual IRA contribution limits, which cap new money going into an IRA at \$7,000 per year in 2024 (\$8,000 if you're age 50 or older). A rollover is a transfer of existing retirement funds — not a new contribution — so it is not subject to those annual limits.

- **Direct rollover:** No dollar limit — your entire 401(k) balance can transfer in one transaction
- **Indirect rollover:** No dollar limit on the amount, but the 60-day rule and one-rollover-per-12-months restriction apply
- **Annual IRA contribution limit (2024):** \$7,000 standard / \$8,000 for age 50+ — applies only to new contributions, not rollovers
- **Roth conversion:** No dollar limit, but the full converted amount becomes taxable income in the year of conversion

If you have multiple 401(k) accounts from previous employers, each can be rolled over into your Gold IRA without the transfers counting against each other's limits — provided you're using direct rollovers. The one-indirect-rollover-per-12-month rule applies across all of your IRAs combined, so if you use an indirect rollover for one account, you cannot use that method for another account within the same 12-month period.

For most investors, rolling over a large balance all at once makes sense for simplicity and to minimize the window of time your funds are out of the market. However, some investors choose to roll over in stages — particularly those doing Roth conversions and managing their taxable income carefully across multiple years.

What Types of Gold Are Allowed in a Gold IRA?

The IRS requires gold held in an IRA to meet a minimum fineness of .995 (99.5% pure), with one exception: the American Gold Eagle, which is approved despite its .9167 fineness due to a specific statutory exemption. Approved products include the American Gold Eagle (all sizes), the American Gold Buffalo (.9999), the Canadian Gold Maple Leaf (.9999), the Austrian Gold Philharmonic (.9999), the Australian Gold Kangaroo (.9999), and gold bars and rounds at .995 fineness or higher produced by NYMEX or COMEX-approved refiners such as PAMP Suisse, Valcambi, and the Royal Canadian Mint. Collectible coins, numismatic coins, South African Krugerrands, and any gold below the required fineness threshold are explicitly excluded.

What Happens to My Gold IRA if the Custodian Goes Out of Business?

Your physical metals are protected even if your custodian ceases operations, because the metals are held at a separate, independent depository — not on the custodian's balance sheet. Your gold is your property, held in your account at the depository, and

cannot be seized to satisfy the custodian's debts or obligations. The depository maintains insurance coverage on all stored metals, and in the event of a custodian failure, the account would typically be transferred to a successor custodian appointed by the IRS or through a court-supervised process.

That said, custodian selection matters significantly. Working with established, well-capitalized custodians — such as Equity Trust Company, which has been in operation since 1974 and administers over \$34 billion in assets, or STRATA Trust Company — substantially reduces the risk of custodian instability. Smaller or newer custodians may carry more operational risk, so vetting your custodian's financial stability and regulatory standing is a worthwhile step before opening your account.

In practical terms, most investors never encounter custodian issues because the Gold IRA industry is regulated, and reputable companies maintain clean compliance records. The structural separation between custodian, depository, and account holder is specifically designed to protect your assets from counterparty risk at any one institution, which is one of the core advantages of holding physical gold in a properly structured IRA over paper gold products like ETFs, where counterparty exposure is inherent in the structure.