

Credit Shelter Trust (aka Bypass Trust, Family Trust)

CONCEPT APPLIED:

Typically, married couples use credit shelter trusts to maximize the benefit the federal estate tax exemption provides to a couple's combined estate. Credit shelter trusts ensure that each estate pays the lowest estate tax possible. A surviving spouse may receive an income for life and limited access to principal, while keeping assets safely outside the estate.

HOW IT WORKS:

At the death of the first spouse, the will divides the estate into two parts:

1. An amount equal to the estate tax exemption (\$13.99 million in 2025) is placed in a credit shelter trust. The estate tax exemption shelters this amount from the estate tax. The surviving spouse has full rights to the trust income and limited access to the principal. When the surviving spouse dies, the trust property is not included in the estate. Rather, it remains in the trust or is distributed to family beneficiaries.
2. The remainder of the estate either passes outright to the surviving spouse or is placed in a marital trust for the spouse's benefit. Either way, it is sheltered by the unlimited marital deduction.

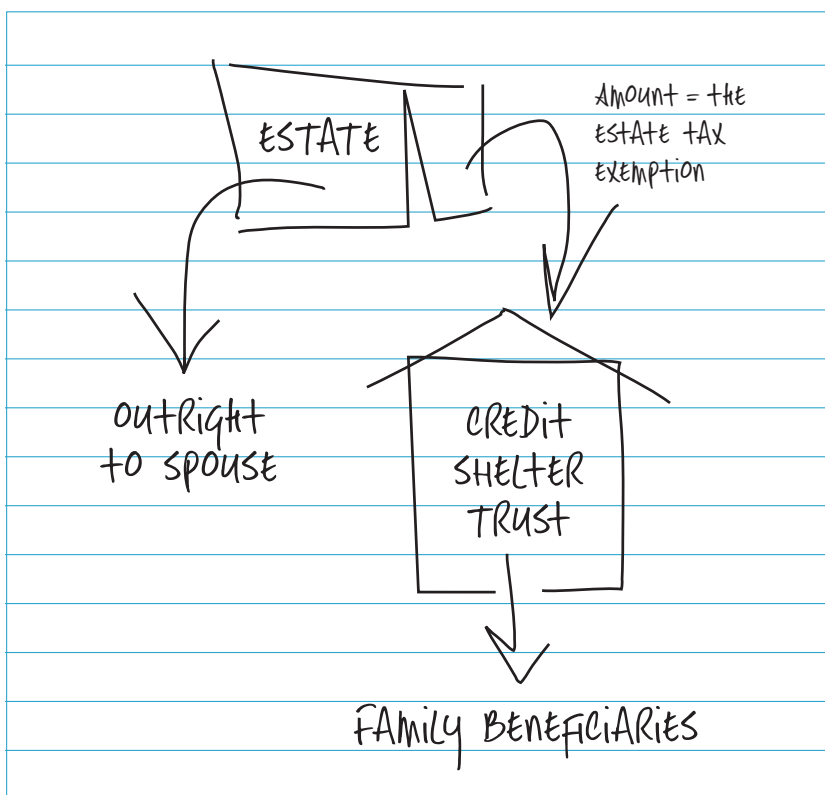
WHY IS IT USEFUL?

Couples use credit shelter trusts to avoid estate taxation (preserving assets for children, grandchildren or other beneficiaries) and protect assets from creditor claims.

50 WORDS OR LESS

An estate plan that uses a credit shelter trust combines the unlimited marital deduction with fully utilized estate tax exemptions to:

- maximize assets distributed to family members and
- minimize estate taxes.



hightoweradvisors.com

**200 W Madison, 25th Floor
Chicago, IL 60606
(312) 962-3800**

**300 Madison Ave, 29th Floor
New York, NY 10017
(917) 286-2717**

**405 Lexington Ave, 42nd Floor
New York, NY 10174
(917) 286-2706**

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