



Ohio Revised Code

Section 4735.24 Earnest money to be maintained in special account.

Effective: March 02, 2026

Legislation: Senate Bill 155 - 136th General Assembly

(A) Except as otherwise provided in this section, when earnest money connected to a real estate purchase agreement is deposited in a real estate broker's trust or special account, the broker shall maintain that money in the account in accordance with the terms of the purchase agreement until one of the following occurs:

(1) The transaction closes and the broker disburses the earnest money to the closing or escrow agent or otherwise disburses the money pursuant to the terms of the purchase agreement.

(2) The parties provide the broker with separate written instructions that both parties have signed that specify how the broker is to disburse the earnest money and the broker acts pursuant to those instructions.

(3) The broker receives a copy of a final court order that specifies to whom the earnest money is to be awarded and the broker acts pursuant to the court order.

(4) The transaction is canceled by the record owner of residential property under division (C)(1) of section 5301.95 of the Revised Code, and the broker disburses the earnest money to the record owner pursuant to that division.

(5) The earnest money becomes unclaimed funds as defined in division (M)(2) of section 169.02 of the Revised Code and, after providing the notice that division (E) of section 169.03 of the Revised Code requires, the broker has reported the unclaimed funds to the director of commerce pursuant to section 169.03 of the Revised Code and has remitted all of the earnest money to the director.

(B) A purchase agreement may provide that in the event of a dispute regarding the disbursement of the earnest money, the broker will return the money to the purchaser without notice to the parties unless, within two years from the date the earnest money was deposited in the broker's trust or special account, the broker has received one of the following:

(1) Written instructions signed by both parties specifying how the money is to be disbursed;

(2) Written notice that a court action to resolve the dispute has been filed.

(C)(1) If the parties dispute the disbursement of the earnest money and the purchase agreement contains the provision described in division (B) of this section, not later than the



first day of September following the two year anniversary date of the deposit of the earnest money in the broker's account, the broker shall return the earnest money to the purchaser unless the parties provided the broker with written instructions or a notice of a court action as described in division (B) of this section.

(2) If the broker cannot locate the purchaser at the time the disbursement is due, after providing the notice that division (E) of section 169.03 of the Revised Code requires, the broker shall report the earnest money as unclaimed funds to the director of commerce pursuant to section 169.03 of the Revised Code and remit all of the earnest money to the director.
