

Sample article for organizations to use to reach customers and/or taxpayers (308 word count)

Provide the following article to your customers to help them choose between taking the standard deduction and choosing to itemize.

Do I benefit from itemizing or should I take the standard deduction?

When preparing your federal tax return, you have the option of either taking the standard deduction, or itemizing if you think you may have more qualified expenses than the standard deduction provides.

The amount of the **standard deduction** depends on your filing status. For the 2011 tax year, the standard deduction is:

Single or Married Filing Separately	\$5,800
Married Filing Jointly or Qualifying Widow(er)	\$11,600
Head of Household	\$8,500

The standard deduction is higher for individuals who are 65 or older or who are blind. If you are eligible and choose to file using the standard deduction, based on your filing status, one of the amounts above will be deducted from your income before the amount of tax you owe is calculated.

However, if you have expenses that add up to more than the standard deduction allows, or you are not eligible to use the standard deduction, you may want to itemize your deductions. When itemizing your deductions you can add up your qualifying expenses, such as home mortgage interest, out-of-pocket medical and dental expenses, state and local taxes, real estate taxes, charitable contributions and others.

If you need help, [free tax preparation services](#) are available for qualifying taxpayers in local communities throughout the nation and IRS-certified volunteers can help you decide which deduction method is most beneficial. To find free tax help near you, go to www.irs.gov, type the word *VITA* in the search engine and click on *free tax return preparation for you by volunteers*. From there, a link labeled *Find a VITA site near you* will take you to an application to help you locate a free tax preparation site near your zip code.

NOTE TO EDITOR: *Below are additional items you can use as references:*

[Publication 501](#), Exemptions, Standard Deduction and Filing Information
Publication 17, Your Federal Income Tax (For Individuals) – [English](#) and [Spanish](#)
[Topic 501](#) – Should I itemize?
[Instructions for Schedule A \(Form 1040\)](#) – to figure your itemized deductions