



## News Release

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### IRS Kicks Off 2013 Tax Season

Most Individual Returns Can Be Filed Now; Many Ways To Get Tax Help

**IRS YouTube Videos:**

*Do It Yourself Free Tax Preparation:* [English](#) | [ASL](#)

*When Will I Get My Refund?:* [English](#) | [ASL](#)

*IRS Social Media:* [English](#)

**Podcast:**

[Do It Yourself Free Tax Preparation](#)

IR-2013-14, Jan. 30, 2013

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today opened the 2013 filing season by announcing a variety of enhanced products and services to help taxpayers prepare and file their tax returns by the April 15 deadline.

New and expanded services for taxpayers this year include a redesigned IRS.gov web site that's easier to navigate and improved service options, including more video-conferencing assistance sites and additional social media tools. In addition, the IRS has stepped up its enforcement efforts to protect taxpayers from refund fraud and identity theft.

The IRS began accepting and processing most individual tax returns today after updating forms and completing programming and testing of its processing systems to reflect the American Taxpayer Relief Act (ATRA) that Congress enacted on Jan. 2. The vast majority of taxpayers can file now, but the IRS is continuing to update its systems for some tax filers. The IRS will begin accepting tax returns from people claiming education credits in mid-February while taxpayers claiming depreciation deductions, energy credits and many business credits will be able to file in late February or early March. A [full list](#) of the affected forms is available on IRS.gov.

This year, taxpayers have until Monday, April 15, to file their 2012 tax returns and pay any tax due. The IRS expects to receive more than 147 million individual tax returns this year, with about 75 percent projected to receive a refund.

Last year for the first time, 80 percent of all individual returns were filed electronically. E-file, when combined with direct deposit, is the fastest way to get a refund. Last year, about three out of four refund filers selected direct deposit.

## Assistance Options, Virtual Service Availability

The best way for taxpayers to get answers to their questions is by visiting IRS.gov. Last year, the website received a record 340 million visits, a 17 percent increase over 2011.

This year, the redesigned website makes it easier than ever for taxpayers to get to key forms and vital information. The front page also has links to redesigned pages to help with everything from refunds to specific tax issues as well as easy access to taxpayer-friendly videos on the IRS YouTube channel.

Through IRS.gov, taxpayers can access [Free File](#), which provides options for free brand-name tax software or online Fillable Forms plus free electronic filing. Everyone can use Free File to prepare a federal tax return. Taxpayers who make \$57,000 or less can choose from about 15 commercial software providers. There's no income limit for Free File Fillable Forms, the electronic version of IRS paper forms.

People making \$51,000 or less usually qualify for the [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance](#) program for free tax preparation and electronic filing. Tax Counseling for the Elderly, a similar community-based volunteer program, offers free tax help with priority assistance to people age 60 and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement issues. Information on these programs can be found at IRS.gov.

This year, the IRS is doubling the number of sites where taxpayers can get assistance through two-way video conferencing. During 2012, the program's first year, about 14,000 taxpayers received assistance at 13 locations. Following a strong response to the virtual assistance program, the IRS plans to roll out 14 new sites. A list of the 27 [available locations](#) is on IRS.gov.

For tax law questions or account inquiries, taxpayers can also call the IRS toll-free number 800-829-1040 (7 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time) or visit a [taxpayer assistance center](#). Taxpayers should check IRS.gov for the hours and services offered at the location they intend to visit.

## Apps and Social Media

For the third year, the IRS will offer IRS2Go, its smartphone application, which enables taxpayers to check on the status of their tax refund and obtain helpful tax information. The IRS2Go app, available for Apple and Android users, has been downloaded more than 800,000 times and used by taxpayers millions of times.

More helpful information is available through IRS social media platforms, including:

- YouTube, where viewers can watch more than 100 short, informative videos. They are available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), [American Sign Language](#) and other languages.
- The IRS also has several twitter feeds available for taxpayers in English and Spanish at [@IRSnews](#) or [@IRSenEspanol](#). And [@IRStaxpros](#) covers news for tax professionals.

- For the 2013 filing season, the IRS has added Tumblr to its list of social media platforms. People who want tax information now have another way of accessing and sharing helpful tax tips, videos, podcasts and other information at [www.internalrevenueservice.tumblr.com](http://www.internalrevenueservice.tumblr.com)

The IRS only uses social media tools to share public information, not to answer personal tax or account questions. And the IRS reminds taxpayers to never post confidential information, such as a Social Security Number, on social media sites.

## **Check for a Refund**

Even with the Jan. 30 opening of the tax season, the IRS expects to issue refunds within the usual timeframes. Last year, the IRS issued more than nine out of 10 refunds to taxpayers in less than 21 days, and it expects the same results in 2013.

After taxpayers file a return, they can track the status of the refund with the “[Where’s My Refund?](#)” tool available on the IRS.gov website. New this year, instead of an estimated date, “Where’s My Refund?” will give people an actual personalized refund date after the IRS processes the tax return and approves the refund.

Here are some tips for using “Where’s My Refund?”:

- Initial information will generally be available within 24 hours after the IRS receives the taxpayer’s e-filed return or four weeks after mailing a paper return.
- The system updates every 24 hours, usually overnight. There’s no need to check more than once a day.
- “Where’s My Refund?” provides the most accurate and complete information that the IRS has about the refund, so there is no need to call the IRS unless the web tool says to do so.
- To use the “Where’s My Refund?” tool, taxpayers need to have a copy of their tax return for reference. Taxpayers will need their Social Security Number, filing status and the exact dollar amount of the refund they are expecting.

Taxpayers should remember that while most tax refunds are issued within 21 days, some tax returns need additional time to be reviewed. As part of that effort, the IRS has put in place stronger security filters this filing season to protect against refund fraud and identity theft.

## **Identity Theft**

Stopping identity theft and refund fraud is a top priority for the IRS, and the agency’s work on identity theft and refund fraud continues to grow. For the 2013 filing season, the IRS has expanded these efforts to better protect taxpayers, help victims and detect refund fraud before it occurs.

The effort includes stronger screening filters for incoming tax returns, increased IRS Criminal Investigation activity and expanded partnerships with local law-enforcement

officials and financial institutions. More information is available in [IRS Fact Sheet 2013-2](#).

By late 2012, the IRS assigned more than 3,000 IRS employees — more than double the number from 2011 — to work on identity theft-related issues. IRS employees are working to prevent refund fraud, investigate identity theft-related crimes and help taxpayers who have been victimized by identity thieves. In addition, the IRS has trained 35,000 employees who work with taxpayers to recognize identity theft indicators and help people victimized by identity theft.

The IRS continues to increase its efforts against refund fraud, which includes identity theft. During 2012, the IRS protected \$20 billion of fraudulent refunds, including those related to identity theft, compared with \$14 billion in 2011.

For more information, see the special [identity theft](#) section on IRS.gov.