



News Release

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IRS Kicks Off 2014 Tax Season; Individual Returns Can Be Filed Now; Free Online Services Available to Help With Filing, Refunds, EITC

IRS YouTube Videos:

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

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

IRS Social Media: [English](#)

Podcast:

[*Do It Yourself Free Tax Preparation*](#)

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today opened the 2014 filing season by highlighting a growing array of online services and encouraging taxpayers to check out a variety of tax benefits, such as the often-overlooked Earned Income Tax Credit.

Taxpayers have until Tuesday, April 15, 2014 to file their 2013 tax returns and pay any tax due. The IRS expects to receive more than 148 million individual tax returns this year, and more than four out of five returns are now filed electronically.

About three out of four filers typically get refunds, and the IRS issues more than nine in ten of these refunds in less than 21 days. Last year, taxpayers received an average refund of \$2,744. E-file, when combined with direct deposit, is the fastest way to get a refund. More than three out of four refund recipients now choose direct deposit.

“Tens of millions of people will file their taxes in the next few weeks, and we encourage taxpayers to visit IRS.gov as the best place to get quick help,” said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. “We continue to add features and make it more user-friendly to help taxpayers. People can get everything from answers to tax questions about preparing their tax return to checking the status of their refund after they file.”

The IRS began accepting and processing individual tax returns today after updating tax forms and completing programming and testing of its systems. The IRS also has updated and strengthened its systems to help protect against refund fraud and identity theft. This annual updating process saw delays in October following the 16-day federal government closure.

EITC Awareness Day Highlighted

Today also marks the annual Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day. Koskinen and other IRS officials are joining local leaders and community organizations across the country at news conferences and outreach events highlighting the benefits of EITC, which helps working families with low and moderate incomes. Koskinen attended an EITC event today at Baltimore CASH with a variety of local, state and federal officials.

Although an estimated four out of five eligible workers and families get this key work incentive, one in five miss out on EITC. That's because either they don't claim it when filing or they don't file a tax return at all because their income is below the filing threshold. One-third of the population eligible for EITC shifts each year as their personal circumstances, such as work status or family situation, change and can affect eligibility. "We urge people to look into EITC. Many people don't realize they are eligible and simply overlook this credit," Koskinen said. "There are easy ways to find out more about this credit, either by visiting IRS.gov, or using Free File or a software package. The IRS is working hard to educate people about EITC while also putting in place processes that identify and prevent improper payments."

Online Tools at IRS.gov Available to Help

Aimed at individuals and families who made \$51,567 or less last year, the EITC varies by income, family size and filing status. People can see if they qualify by visiting IRS.gov and answering a few questions using the [EITC Assistant](#), a special online tool. Eligible taxpayers can also use another helpful online resource, the [VITA Site Locator](#) tool to locate one of nearly 13,000 community-based volunteer tax sites consisting of over 90,000 volunteers that can help them file their return for free.

The EITC Assistant and VITA Site Locator are just two of a growing array of online and automated IRS services that can help taxpayers get the information they need to file their returns and get their refunds quickly.

[Tele-Tax](#), for example, help taxpayers see if they qualify for various tax benefits, such as the Child Tax Credit and Additional Child Tax Credit for eligible families, the American Opportunity Tax Credit for parents and college students, the saver's credit for low-and moderate-income workers saving for retirement and energy credits for homeowners making qualifying energy-saving home improvements. The automated IRS services can also help home-based businesses check out the new simplified option for claiming the home office deduction, a straightforward computation that allows eligible taxpayers to claim \$5 per square foot, up to a maximum of \$1,500, instead of filling out a 43-line form ([Form 8829](#)) with often complex calculations.

When taxpayers are ready to fill out and file their returns, another online option, available exclusively on IRS.gov, enables anyone to e-file their returns for free. [Free File](#) offers two free electronic filing options: brand-name tax software or online Fillable Forms. Taxpayers who make \$58,000 or less can choose free options from 14 commercial software providers. There's no income limit for the second option, Free File

Fillable Forms, the electronic version of IRS paper forms, which is best suited to people who are comfortable preparing their own tax return.

Even after taxpayers file, there are more online tools that can provide them with valuable assistance long after tax season ends. One of the most popular is [Where's My Refund?](#) a tool available on IRS.gov that enables taxpayers to track the status of their refund. Initial information will normally be available within 24 hours after the IRS receives the taxpayer's e-filed return or four weeks after the taxpayer mails a paper return to the IRS. The system updates every 24 hours, usually overnight, so there's no need to check more often.

For taxpayers whose concern isn't a refund, but rather, a tax bill they can't pay, the [Online Payment Agreement](#) tool can help them determine whether they qualify for an installment agreement with the IRS. And those whose tax obligation is even more serious, the [Offer in Compromise Pre-Qualifier](#) can help them determine if they qualify for an offer in compromise, an agreement with the IRS that settles their tax liability for less than the full amount owed.

Another useful year-round tool, the [IRS Withholding Calculator](#), helps employees make sure the amount of income tax taken out of their pay is neither too high nor too low. This tool can be particularly useful to taxpayers who, after filling out their tax returns, find that the refund or balance due was higher than expected.

Tax Help Through YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr

The IRS also offers more than 100 short instructional videos, tax tips and other useful resources year-round through a variety of social media platforms. They include:

- YouTube, available in [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [American Sign Language](#).
- Several twitter feeds in English and Spanish at [@IRSnews](#), [@IRSEnEspanol](#) and [@IRStaxpros](#).
- Tumblr at [www.internalrevenueservice.tumblr.com](#).

The IRS only uses social media tools to share information with the public, 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.