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Tax Time Guide: Automatic Tax-Filing Extensions Now Available; Use Free File to Get Six More Months to File

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today reminded taxpayers who are unable to complete their tax returns on time that it's easy to get more time to file their return. In fact, it can even be done online.

This is the ninth in a series of 10 daily IRS tips called the Tax Time Guide. These tips are designed to help taxpayers navigate common tax issues as the April 15 deadline approaches.

For taxpayers who haven't yet filed their taxes, the IRS has this advice: don't panic. Taxpayers who need more time to complete their tax return can request an automatic six-month extension.

The fastest and easiest way to get the extra time is through the [Free File](#) link on IRS.gov. In a matter of minutes, anyone, regardless of income, can use this free service to electronically request an extension on [Form 4868](#).

Filing this form gives taxpayers until Oct. 15 to file a return. To get the extension, taxpayers must estimate their tax liability on this form and should also pay any amount due.

The IRS cautions taxpayers that a request for an extension will give extra time to *file* a tax return; not extra time to *pay* any taxes owed. By filing either a regular tax return or requesting an extension by the April 15 filing deadline, taxpayers will avoid a stiff penalty - the late-filing penalty. Taxpayers should file even if they can't pay the full amount of taxes they owe.

The late-filing penalty, normally five percent per month based on the unpaid tax balance, applies to returns filed after the April 15 filing deadline. In addition, any payment made with an extension request will reduce or eliminate interest and late-payment penalties that apply to payments made after April 15. The interest rate is

currently three percent per year, compounded daily, and the late-payment penalty is normally 0.5 percent per month.

Besides Free File, taxpayers can choose to request an extension through a paid tax preparer, by using tax-preparation software or by filing a paper Form 4868 available on IRS.gov.

Some taxpayers get more time to file without having to ask for an extension. These include:

- [Taxpayers abroad](#). U.S. citizens and resident aliens who live and work abroad, as well as members of the military on duty outside the U.S., have until June 15 to file. Tax payments are still due April 15.
- Members of the military and others serving in Afghanistan or other [combat zone](#) localities. Typically, taxpayers can wait until at least 180 days after they leave the combat zone to file returns and pay any taxes due. For details, see Extensions of Deadlines in [Publication 3](#), Armed Forces' Tax Guide.
- People affected by certain [recent natural disasters](#).

Other tax tips in this Tax Time Guide series are available on IRS.gov.