

IRS TAX TIP 2002-72

ADVICE TO NEWLYWEDS FROM THE IRS

It may not be high on the list of wedding planning activities, but there are a few, simple steps that can help keep tax issues from interrupting newly-wedded bliss, according to the Internal Revenue Service.

With the June wedding season in full swing, the IRS advises the soon-to-be married and the just married to review their changing tax status. Choosing the right tax form and filing status can help save money – and even prevent problems with missing a refund check.

Among those tax-related changes that newlyweds should think about now are notification of change of name and change of address. Later, as filing season approaches, they should consider itemizing their deductions, selecting the right tax return form to use and choosing their filing status.

No one should delay the cake cutting or honeymoon because of taxes. But here are some helpful hints for later:

USE THE CORRECT NAME

Taxpayers must provide correct names and identification numbers to claim personal exemptions or the Earned Income Tax Credit on their tax returns. A taxpayer who changes his or her last name upon marrying should let the Social Security Administration know and should update his or her Social Security card so the number matches the new name. Form SS-5, "Application for a Social Security Card," is available through the SSA Web site at www.ssa.gov or by calling toll-free 1-800-772-1213.

REPORT YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS

If one or both spouses are changing their address, they should notify the IRS, as well as the U.S. Postal Service, to be sure they receive any tax refunds or IRS correspondence. It's a simple process. All they have to do is send in Form 8822, "Change of Address Form," which is available by calling the IRS at 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676), at most local IRS offices, or on the IRS Web site at www.irs.gov. Or they can write to the IRS center where they filed their most recent return. They should include their full name, old and new addresses, SSN and signature. And they should remember to let their employers know about any changes to their name or address so they can receive their paychecks and W-2s.

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GET THAT REFUND CHECK

Each year, thousands of tax refund checks are returned by the Post Office to the IRS as undeliverable, usually because the recipient has moved. Notifying both the Post Office and the IRS of an address change in a timely manner can help ensure the proper delivery of any refund checks. To check the status of a tax refund, use the “Where’s My Refund” service on the IRS Web site or call the toll-free automated refund line at 1-800-829-4477. If a refund check was returned to the IRS as undeliverable, call the IRS toll-free customer service line at 1-800-829-1040 to arrange for reissuance.

SELECT THE RIGHT FORM

Choosing the right individual income tax form can help save money. Newly married taxpayers may find that they now have enough deductions to itemize on their tax returns. Deductions for money paid for medical care, mortgage interest, contributions, casualty losses and certain miscellaneous costs can reduce federal taxes. Form 1040, which is used to report all types of income, deductions and credits, is the one to use if itemizing. Forms 1040EZ and 1040A do not allow such itemization.

Taxpayers who do not receive their preferred form in the tax package sent to them during filing season may obtain the form from the IRS Web site, at a local IRS office, or by calling the toll-free Forms and Publications line at 1-800-TAX-FORM (1-800-829-3676).

CHOOSE THE BEST FILING STATUS

A person’s marital status on December 31 determines whether the person is considered married for that year. The tax law allows married couples to choose to file their federal income tax return either jointly or separately in any given year. Choosing the right filing status can help save money.

- A joint return (Married Filing Jointly) allows spouses to combine their income and to deduct combined deductions and expenses on a single tax return. Both spouses must sign the return and both are held responsible for the contents.
- With separate returns (Married Filing Separately), each spouse signs, files and is responsible for his or her own tax return. Each is taxed on his or her own income, and can take only his or her

individual deductions and credits. If one spouse itemizes deductions, the other must also.

Figuring the tax both ways can determine which filing status will result in the lowest tax – usually, it's filing jointly. More detailed information on filing status can be found in Publication 501, "Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information," on the IRS Web site.

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