

IRS



News Release

Media Relations Office

Washington, D.C.

Media Contact: 202.317.4000

www.irs.gov/newsroom

Public Contact: 800.829.1040

IRS Releases Tax Time Guide: Use IRS.gov Tools to Answer Tax Questions

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WASHINGTON —The Internal Revenue Service today encouraged taxpayers to take advantage of the online tools and resources available on IRS.gov as the IRS expects heavy call volume during the last two weeks of February.

This is the first in a series of 10 IRS tips called the [Tax Time Guide](#). The guide is designed to help taxpayers navigate common tax issues as this year's April 18 deadline approaches.

There are a variety of easy-to-use, online tools on IRS.gov. Through these tools, taxpayers can check the status of their refund, prepare and file their taxes or get answers to tax questions around the clock.

Taxpayers can use the Interactive Tax Assistant (ITA) to get information about credits, deductions and general filing topics. Taxpayers get the same answers as if they'd called and spoken with an IRS representative, and they can print out the answers for their records. IRS information and some tools also are available in [Spanish](#).

Below are a few of the most common tax time queries and the tools to find answers:

Checking on a tax refund?

Taxpayers can easily find information about their refund by using the "[Where's My Refund?](#)" tool. It's available on IRS.gov and on the official IRS mobile app, IRS2Go. Refund information is normally available within 24 hours after the IRS receives a taxpayer's e-filed return or four weeks after the IRS receives a mailed-in paper return. The system is updated daily, so there's no need to check more often.

Taxpayers who have already filed before Feb. 15 and claimed the Earned Income Tax Credit or the Additional Child Tax Credit on their tax returns are reminded that their refunds likely won't arrive into their financial accounts until the week of Feb. 27. By law, [the IRS was required to hold refunds](#) that contain those credits until Feb. 15.

Need help preparing a tax return?

Through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (VITA/TCE) programs, eligible taxpayers can get help filing their return for free at one of several thousand community-based tax help sites. Sites are staffed by IRS trained and

certified volunteers. Low- and moderate-income taxpayers and those age 60 and above can find the nearest site on IRS.gov's [VITA/TCE Site Locator](#).

Want a free do-it-yourself tax option?

Taxpayers doing their own taxes can find free tax preparation help on IRS.gov. Answers to many tax questions are in a user-friendly format. Taxpayers can start by clicking on the [Filing](#) tab on IRS.gov. It's the place to find important updates and information regarding return preparation and electronic filing options.

The [IRS Free File program](#), available at IRS.gov, offers 12 brand-name tax preparation software packages for free to the 70 percent of taxpayers who earned \$64,000 or less in 2016. By answering questions in an interview format, the software does the work of finding deductions, credits and exemptions for which the taxpayer qualifies. For those earning more than \$64,000 who are comfortable preparing their own taxes, IRS.gov offers [Free File Fillable Forms](#). These are the electronic versions of paper IRS tax forms.

Taxpayers can also use Free File to deposit all or part of their refunds into [myRA](#), a retirement savings account from the Treasury Department. Just use [Form 8888](#) or follow the software product's instructions.

Looking for a tax professional for help?

Taxpayers may also use the searchable directory on IRS.gov to [find a tax professional](#). Taxpayers can sort the list of preparers by credentials and qualifications. Taxpayers should choose their return preparer wisely as the taxpayer is ultimately responsible for the accuracy of their return.

Need a tax return transcript?

For those who need a copy of their tax return, the IRS has an online tool to help. Transcripts are free and available for the most current tax year after the IRS has processed the return. [Get Transcript](#) provides online access to transcripts. Taxpayers can view, print or download their transcripts

Need an answer right now to tax law questions?

Have questions about who can be claimed as a dependent, what filing status to choose, or whether to file a tax return? Besides the [Interactive Tax Assistant](#), [Publication 17](#) offers a comprehensive tax guide for individuals. The [IRS Tax Map](#) can also be searched by topic or keyword for single-point access to tax law information.

Need to make a payment?

IRS [Direct Pay](#) offers taxpayers the fastest and easiest way to pay what they owe. Available through the [Pay Your Tax Bill](#) icon on IRS.gov, this free online system allows individuals to securely pay their tax bills or make quarterly estimated tax payments

directly from checking or savings accounts without fees or pre-registration. See [IRS.gov/Payments](https://www.irs.gov/Payments) for information on this and other payment options.

Can't pay a tax bill?

For taxpayers concerned about a tax bill they can't pay, the [Online Payment Agreement](#) tool can help determine if they qualify for a payment plan with the IRS. The [Offer in Compromise Pre-Qualifier](#) can help determine if a taxpayer qualifies for an offer in compromise. An Offer in Compromise is an agreement with the IRS that settles a person's tax liability for less than the full amount owed.

Questions about an amended return?

The "[Where's My Amended Return?](#)" tool provides the status of an amended tax return, Form 1040X. Taxpayers can check on the current year 1040X and up to three prior years. Allow up to three weeks after filing to check on the initial status, and up to 16 weeks for processing.

What about tax withholding?

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 not what they expected.

IRS.gov should be the first stop to get faster help and answers to tax questions

Apart from providing a wide variety of interactive tools, [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov) offers many resources and answers about most tax matters. [Tax Topics](#), [Tax Trails](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#) are usually good places to start.

[IRS2Go](#), the official IRS mobile app, can be used to check a refund's status, make a tax payment, watch the [IRS YouTube channel](#), find free tax preparation help, get the latest IRS news, [subscribe](#) to filing season updates or get daily tax tips. The free app is available through Google Play, the App Store or on Amazon.