

IRS News Release

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Tax Time Guide: Use IRS.gov to Find Qualified Tax Professionals

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today reminded taxpayers that IRS.gov offers many useful tips and information to find a qualified tax professional.

This is the third in a series of 10 IRS tips called the [Tax Time Guide](#), designed to help taxpayers navigate common tax issues. This year's tax-filing deadline is April 18.

More than 150 million individual returns were filed last year and over half of those were prepared by a paid return preparer. Taxpayers can use the IRS.gov/chooseataxpro website that includes a list of consumer tips for selecting a tax professional. There is also a page with [IRS Tax Pro Association Partners](#) that includes links to national nonprofit tax professional groups which can help taxpayers seeking the right type of qualified help.

Here are some basic tips to keep in mind when [selecting a tax professional](#):

- Select an ethical preparer. Taxpayers entrust vital personal data with the person preparing their tax return, including income, investments and Social Security numbers.
- Review the tax return and ask questions before signing. Taxpayers are legally responsible for what's on their tax return, regardless of whether someone else prepared it.
- Make sure the preparer signs the return and includes their Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). The vast majority of paid preparers are required to have a valid PTIN.
- Never sign a blank tax return. It's a clear red flag when a taxpayer is asked to sign a blank tax return. The preparer can put anything they want on the return — even their own bank account number for the tax refund.

In 2015, the IRS launched a [Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications](#) on the IRS website to help taxpayers verify credentials and qualifications of tax professionals. The Directory is a searchable, sortable database that includes the name, city, state and zip code of credentialed return preparers who are CPAs, enrolled agents or attorneys, as well as those who have completed the requirements for the IRS [Annual Filing Season Program](#).

The IRS requires anyone who prepares any federal tax return for compensation to obtain a PTIN. Valid PTINs are issued by the IRS. There are almost 700,000 individuals with valid PTINs. Anyone with a valid PTIN can prepare and sign federal tax returns they prepare.

For more information, see:

- [Who can represent you before the IRS?](#)
- [Things to remember when choosing a tax preparer](#)
- [When, and how, do I file a complaint about a tax preparer?](#)

Other tips in the [Tax Time Guide](#) are available on IRS.gov.