



GET READY TO FILE

Take Steps Now to
Get a Jump on Next Year's Taxes



Get ready to file your federal income tax return with these preparation tips



START WITH IRS.GOV WHEN YOU NEED HELP

With social distancing continuing, you can stay home and stay safe with [IRS Online tools](#), including filing resources and other services. IRS.gov has tax information available in up to six languages. Use the “Language” tab located in the header on IRS.gov to select a language other than English. [Accessible](#) forms and publications are available for people with disabilities. The [Let Us Help You](#) page on IRS.gov features links to information and resources on a wide range of topics.

To view your own personal federal tax information, visit [IRS.gov/account](#) and create an account or log in to securely view your balance and payment history. You can also see key information from your most current tax return as originally filed, select an electronic payment option, and go directly to Get Transcript to access your tax records, without having to log in again.

The IRS offers several ways for you to stay updated on important tax information that may help you get ready to file. In addition to [IRS.gov](#), you can download the [IRS2Go app](#), watch [IRS YouTube](#) videos, and follow the IRS on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).



TAKE ADVANTAGE OF E-FILE

Filing electronically is the most accurate way to prepare and file your tax return. Errors delay refunds and the easiest way to avoid them is to [E-file](#). Tax preparation software guides you through the process and does all the math.

Seventy percent of all taxpayers can use free brand-name tax software to prepare and file their federal income tax return electronically using [IRS Free File](#). All taxpayers, regardless of income level, can also use Free File Fillable Forms. Senior citizens, members of the military, and many other taxpayers—depending on their income—may also qualify for free tax return preparation and electronic filing through the [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program](#) or [Tax Counseling for the Elderly](#) programs.

Taxpayers age 65 or older may use the new Form 1040-SR, U.S. Tax Return for Seniors. All others will file Form 1040.



2020 ECONOMIC IMPACT PAYMENTS (EIP)

If you received an Economic Impact Payment (EIP), you will not need to include the payment as taxable income on your 2020 tax return or pay income tax on the payment. The EIP payment will not reduce your refund or increase the amount of tax you owe on your 2020 federal income tax return. Those who received an Economic Impact Payment will also receive Notice 1444, “Your Economic Impact Payment.” Keep a copy of the notice for your tax records. You may be able to claim the Recovery Rebate Credit on your Tax Year 2020 federal income tax return if you met the [eligibility criteria](#) in 2020 and:

- You didn't receive an Economic Impact Payment, or
- Your Economic Impact Payment was less than \$1,200 (\$2,400 if married filing jointly for 2019 or 2018) plus \$500 for each qualifying child you had in 2020.

For additional information about the Economic Impact Payment, visit the [Economic Impact Payment Information Center](#).



UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION

In 2020, many people received unemployment compensation authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES). Unemployment compensation is taxable and must be reported on your income tax return. Unemployment benefit recipients should receive [Form 1099-G, Government Payments](#), from their state tax agency in January 2021 either by mail or electronically. Check your state's unemployment compensation website for more information. Form 1099-G reports the amount of unemployment compensation received in Box 1 and any federal income tax withheld in Box 4. Be sure to include these amounts on your 2020 federal tax return. Find more information on unemployment benefits in [Publication 525](#).



REVIEW YOUR ELIGIBILITY FOR CREDITS AND DEDUCTIONS

Tax credits and deductions can mean more money in your pocket and thinking about your eligibility now can help make filing easier next year. Parents may qualify for credits like the [Child Tax Credit](#) and [Child and Dependent Care Credit](#). Dependents who can't be claimed for the Child Tax Credit may still qualify you for the Credit for Other Dependents. Families with students may qualify for [education credits](#). Low- to moderate-income taxpayers may qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit. Go to [IRS.gov/ita](#) to get answers to your tax questions about credits and deductions. Keep records that show your eligibility for credits you claim.

Life events—purchasing a home, going to college or losing a job—may make you eligible for certain tax benefits. Finding out your eligibility now can help make filing easier next year. Other circumstances, such as getting married or divorced, having a baby or experiencing the death of spouse or a dependent you claim, could also affect your tax benefit eligibility and filing status. To learn more about managing your taxes after a life event, visit [IRS.gov/lifeevents](#).

RENEW EXPIRING ITINs

If you use an ITIN (Individual Tax Identification Number) to file, make sure it hasn't expired. Go to [IRS.gov/ITIN](#) for more information.



GET READY FOR YOUR REFUND

Different factors can affect your refund. Be careful not to count on getting a refund by a certain date, especially when making major purchases or paying other financial obligations. See [IRS.gov/refunds](#) for more information.

The IRS issues most refunds in less than 21 days. However, it's possible your tax return may require additional review and take longer. And, if you claim the [Earned Income Tax Credit](#) or [Additional Child Tax Credit](#), by law, the IRS cannot issue your refund before mid-February. This timeframe applies to the entire refund, not just the portion associated with these credits.

Combining [direct deposit](#) with electronic filing is the fastest way for you to get your refund. With direct deposit, a refund goes directly into your bank account. There's no reason to worry about a lost, stolen or undeliverable refund check.

REFUND INTEREST

The IRS sent [interest payments](#) to individual taxpayers who timely filed their 2019 federal income tax returns by the July 15, 2020, deadline, and received refunds. Most interest payments were received separately from tax refunds.

By law, these interest payments are taxable and taxpayers who receive them must report the interest on the 2020 federal income tax return. In January 2021, the IRS will send a Form 1099-INT to anyone who receives interest totaling at least \$10.

The COVID-19-related July 15 due date was considered a disaster-related postponement of the filing deadline. Where a disaster-related postponement exists, the IRS is required, by law, to pay interest, calculated from the original April 15 filing deadline, as long as an individual filed a 2019 federal income tax return by the postponed deadline.



ADJUST YOUR WITHHOLDING

Did you receive a smaller refund than expected or have an unanticipated tax bill? Use the [IRS Tax Withholding Estimator](#) to help decide if you need to adjust your withholding or make estimated or additional tax payments. Submit a new [Form W-4, Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate](#), to your employer if you need to make an adjustment. You can also make estimated or additional tax payments if the withholding from your salary, pension or other income doesn't cover the income tax that you'll owe for the year. [Form 1040-ES, Estimated Tax for Individuals](#), has a worksheet to help you figure your estimated payments.

To make a payment, go to [IRS.gov/payments](#) or make secure electronic payments with your mobile device using the [IRS2Go app](#).

PROTECT YOUR DATA

The IRS, the states and the tax industry are committed to protecting you from identity theft. Take [these steps](#) to protect yourself from identity thieves.