



Tips to help take the stress out of tax season

COVID Tax Tip 2021-29, March 4, 2021

Every filing season comes with its own set of challenges and 2021 is no different. The IRS wants taxpayers get the information they need as quickly as possible. Taxpayers can keep in mind these tips when they get ready to file. Following them will help get this year's taxes done accurately and refunds issued timely.

- **Gather records.** [Good recordkeeping](#) makes preparing a tax return easier. It can also ensure taxpayers do not overlook deductions and credits.
- **Start with IRS.gov.** IRS.gov is available around-the-clock and it's the fastest way to get assistance. Millions of people use IRS.gov for [filing](#) and paying taxes, getting information about their accounts or answers to tax questions. The [IRS Services Guide](#) [PDF](#) outlines the many ways taxpayers can get help from the IRS.
- **Use online tools.** IRS.gov has [many useful online tools](#). The [Interactive Tax Assistant](#) provides answers to many tax questions specific to an individual's circumstances. It gives the same answers that an IRS representative would give over the phone.
- **Choose a reputable preparer.** Taxpayers can self-prepare or use a tax preparer. IRS.gov has resources to [help people choose a tax pro](#). The [IRS Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers](#) [↗](#) provides information on who has a professional credential or participates in the IRS Annual Filing Season Program.
- **File electronically.** IRS [Free File](#) can help taxpayers figure things like their [earned income tax credit](#), [child and dependent care credit](#), and [recovery rebate credit](#). [MilTax online software](#) [↗](#) is also available for the members of military and certain veterans, regardless of income, and is offered through the Department of Defense. Some Free File options are available in Spanish.
- **Choose direct deposit.** [Filing electronically](#) and choosing [direct deposit](#) is the safest and easiest way to file an accurate tax return and the fastest way to get a refund.
- **Report all income.** Taxpayers must report their income from all sources, including the gig economy, Forms W-2, Wage and Tax Statements, and Forms 1099. [Other income](#) may be reportable as well, even if the taxpayer does not receive a statement.

- **Report unemployment benefits.** Taxpayers who received [unemployment benefits](#) in 2020, must report the amount received as taxable income on their tax return.
- **Avoid errors.** Taxpayers should take extra time to review their tax return so they can file a complete and accurate return and avoid refund delays. Filing electronically is the most accurate way to eliminate many common errors. Check all names and double check all Social Security numbers as well as, account and routing numbers for direct deposit.
- **Review Publication 17.** This [guide](#) is available in English and Spanish on IRS.gov and translations in Russian, Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese - simplified and traditional - will be available soon. The new format makes it easier to navigate and faster to download. The 2020 edition is now accessible on most personal electronic devices as an [eBook \(epub\)](#) [EPUB](#).

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