



# Identity Protection Tips

Tax-related identity theft occurs when someone uses your stolen Social Security number to file a tax return claiming a fraudulent refund. You may be unaware you are a victim until you receive an IRS notice or you file your return, but it is rejected because your SSN already has been used. It's important that you take steps to protect all of your personally identifiable information.

## Don't fall for common scams


- An unexpected email purporting to be from the IRS is always a scam. The IRS does not initiate contact with taxpayers by email or social media to request personal or financial information. If you receive a scam email claiming to be from the IRS, [forward the email](mailto:phishing@irs.gov) to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov).
- An unexpected phone call from someone claiming to be an IRS agent, either threatening you with arrest or deportation if you fail to pay immediately, is a scam. In another variation, the caller requests your financial information in order to send you a refund. Report these calls and other IRS impersonation schemes to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at 1-800-366-4484 or online at [IRS Impersonation Scam Reporting](#) [↗](#).
- If you discover a website that claims to be the IRS but does not begin with 'www.irs.gov,' forward the link to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov) [✉](#).

## Tips to protect your SSN and identifiable information

- Keep your card and any other document that shows your Social Security number in a safe place; DO NOT routinely carry your card or other documents that display your number.
- Be careful about sharing your number, even when you are asked for it; ONLY share your SSN when absolutely necessary.
- Protect your personal financial information at home and on your computer.
- Check your credit report annually.
- Check your Social Security Administration earnings statement annually,
- Protect your personal computers by using firewalls, anti-spam/virus software, update security patches and change passwords for Internet accounts.
- Protect your personally identifiable information; keep it private. Only provide your SSN when YOU initiate the contact or you are sure who you know is asking.

## About data breaches

Not all data breaches or computer hacks result in identity theft and not all identity theft is tax-related identity theft. It's important to know what type of personally identifiable information was stolen. For example, did a data breach compromise your credit card or did it compromise your SSN?

If you've been a victim of a data breach, keep in touch with the company to learn what it is doing to protect you. Follow the steps recommended by the Federal Trade Commission's [www.identitytheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov)  site.

If your SSN was compromised, follow the steps outlined in the [Taxpayer Guide to Identity Theft](#).

Identity Protection [Home](#).

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