

Understand Your Legal Issue

Solve Your Legal Problem

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Have You Filed Your

Have You Filed Your Tax Returns?

Authored By: Florida Legal Services, Inc.

FAQ

Why is it important to file my tax return?

If you're required by law to file a tax return and you do not, the IRS is authorized to prepare a federal income tax return for you based upon the information sent to the IRS from your employers. This may result in the IRS sending you a bill for taxes that it thinks you owe. If you do not file and pay your taxes on time, the IRS charges late filing penalties, late payment penalties, and interest on the amount owed. If you are required to file a federal income tax return and you intentionally do not, you could be charged with a crime. If you are convicted, you can be fined up to \$25,000 and even receive a prison sentence!

If you owe the IRS from a previous year and you can't afford to pay, the IRS will not let you enter into a payment plan or any other collection alternative until you file all the outstanding tax returns you were required to file.

How do I get my W-2 information?

If you have lost your W-2 information, you can contact your previous employers to see if they still have copies of your W-2. Alternatively, you can request the information directly from the IRS—call (800)829-1040 and ask the IRS to send you your “Wage and Income Transcript” for the years in question. This includes W-2 wage information and 1099 self-employment, retirement and pension, and Social Security information. There is no fee for requesting this information.

Am I required to file a tax return?

You must file a federal income tax return if your gross income is equal or greater to the amounts below:

FILING STATUS

Gross Income in 2015

Single	\$10,300
Married Filing Jointly	\$20,600
Married Filing Separately	\$4,000
Head of Household	\$13,250
Qualifying Widower with Children	\$16,600

Can I get help filing my taxes?

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs will help you prepare and file your tax return for FREE. They can even help you file your return electronically. These volunteers undergo training before they are allowed to assist you with your tax preparation. You can contact the VITA program at 1-888-227-7669. You locate the closest TCE program by calling 1-800-829-1040.

My income is very low. Should I file a tax return even if I'm not required to file one?

Probably! If you didn't earn enough income to have a filing requirement, you might want to file if:

- You had taxes withheld from your paycheck (you may be able to get a refund of the amount withheld).
- You might be eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, a special tax credit for working families. You must have a valid social security number, you must have been a U.S. Citizen or resident alien for the entire year, and you must have "earned income." There are certain income and other limitations.
- You were entitled to a refund in a prior year but did not file a return; you may still be able to get your refund by filing your late return within three years after the due date.
- Not filing a tax return can leave you vulnerable to identity theft.

What if my tax preparer makes a mistake?

Unfortunately, sometimes preparers can make mistakes. Once you sign your return, you are solely responsible for everything on the return, even if the preparer makes a mistake. Be sure to:

- Read the return and make sure you understand it and agree with it before you sign;
- Keep a photocopy of the return signed by both you and the preparer;
- Make sure the preparer has inputted his/her name, address, phone number, and preparer ID number on the return.

Beware if your preparer offers you a Refund Anticipation Loan (RAL) or Refund Anticipation Check (RAC). These services have extremely high fees and extremely high interest rates. You will lose a large portion of your refund. Instead, you can get your refund quickly by e-filing and having your refund deposited directly into your bank account.

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Links:

[Have You Filed Your Tax Returns?](http://www.floridalawhelp.org/node/253/have-you-filed-your-tax-returns)

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