**Get Ready for Taxes: Stay home and stay safe with IRS online tools**

The Internal Revenue Service encourages taxpayers to take necessary actions now to help file federal tax returns timely and accurately in 2021. A [special page](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMjcsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2luZGl2aWR1YWxzL3N0ZXBzLXRvLXRha2Utbm93LXRvLWdldC1hLWp1bXAtb24tbmV4dC15ZWFycy10YXhlcyJ9.s_2RdXQsREu8ErRVzHYF0CvZTitzBpLdt7wJRPaAuzY/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l), updated and available on [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/), outlines steps taxpayers can take to make tax filing easier in 2021.

With continued social distancing, taxpayers can stay home and stay safe with IRS [online tools and resources](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMjgsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2hlbHAvdGVsZXBob25lLWFzc2lzdGFuY2UifQ.6PKoUG8qR4dyiZyxn2X7DJN2qxnqV_ng3xRh5dUERWs/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) that help them find the information they need. These [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/) tools are easy to use and available 24 hours a day. Millions of people use them to find information about their accounts, get answers to tax questions or file and pay taxes.

**Free File**

Almost everyone can file electronically for free. The [IRS Free File program](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMjksInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2ZpbGluZy9mcmVlLWZpbGUtZG8teW91ci1mZWRlcmFsLXRheGVzLWZvci1mcmVlIn0.8gpk1hleg2lC_KKlpXTrO6z0IIqSWdAi3lNRs6bbRIc/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l), available only through [IRS.gov](http://irs.gov/) or the [IRS2Go app](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L25ld3Nyb29tL2lyczJnb2FwcCJ9.NyNLlN5HoA9HzK4i3Zp7TIRVndXmaki2_09fylS0E5U/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l), offers brand-name tax preparation software packages at no cost. The software does all the work of finding deductions, credits and exemptions. It‘s free for those who earned $72,000 or less in 2020. Some of the Free File packages also offer free state tax return preparation.

Taxpayers comfortable filling out tax forms electronically, can use [Free File Fillable Forms](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2UtZmlsZS1wcm92aWRlcnMvYmVmb3JlLXN0YXJ0aW5nLWZyZWUtZmlsZS1maWxsYWJsZS1mb3JtcyJ9.6rqvS8E3LKebnpEp8NcUyugOwrgU7OeY-kaT9cDsGr0/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l), regardless of income, to file their tax returns either by mail or online.

**Choosing a preparer**

The IRS has several options for finding a tax preparer. One resource is [Choosing a Tax Professional](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L3RheC1wcm9mZXNzaW9uYWxzL2Nob29zaW5nLWEtdGF4LXByb2Zlc3Npb25hbCJ9.qbvA5PlMXluDQ3glKzOHNajkdGwmhvNBDcYXJJz8G4Y/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l), which offers a wealth of information for selecting a tax professional. The [Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL2lycy50cmVhc3VyeS5nb3YvcnBvL3Jwby5qc2YifQ.tx2IdpEwohZNb_gYwgSQhBu2BhWM0PgZHFK1GP8Xg-g/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) can help taxpayers find preparers in their area who currently hold professional credentials recognized by the IRS, or who hold an Annual Filing Season Program Record of Completion.

**Other online help**

The [Interactive Tax Assistant](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2hlbHAvaXRhIn0.BjZOmV8Dw6DhhaioDiQwl1eAchK0R6eT8oxFrtsklO4/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) answers general tax questions, including helping to determine if a type of income is taxable or if someone is eligible to claim certain credits and deductions. With changes to income and other [life events](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2luZGl2aWR1YWxzL2RpZC15b3Uta25vdy1saWZlLWV2ZW50cy1saWtlLW1hcnJpYWdlLWJpcnRoLWFuZC1kaXZvcmNlLW1heS1oYXZlLWEtc2lnbmlmaWNhbnQtdGF4LWltcGFjdCJ9.4NzY-195FhpgYJtQ3V5bAHPtovQ45yi9398vQ83NnzQ/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) for many in 2020, tax [credits and deductions](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzYsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2NyZWRpdHMtYW5kLWRlZHVjdGlvbnMifQ.caN7PsX-dYh-maiaEdheCXh01RP9AG9jDfci1CsxEp4/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) can mean more money in a taxpayer’s pocket and thinking about eligibility now can help make tax filing easier next year.

Taxpayers may qualify for credits like the [Child Tax Credit](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzcsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2Zvcm1zLXB1YnMvYWJvdXQtcHVibGljYXRpb24tOTcyIn0.eUVMLA029WdGmevG6tfG22bdTZKWdPSbWeWC1hpHwAQ/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) and [Child and Dependent Care Credit](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzgsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L3B1YmxpY2F0aW9ucy9wNTAzIn0.FSXZHJYCcNnCCarihQ0vukzuboLLYm5OqBrMrfK0qO8/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l). Taxpayers whose dependent does not qualify for the CTC might be able to claim the [Credit for Other Dependents](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxMzksInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2Zvcm1zLXB1YnMvYWJvdXQtcHVibGljYXRpb24tOTcyIn0.D9UDuJdanAkea98hIqYaUbJ7xLjhEaDAjO1dasHrYeY/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l). Individuals paying higher education costs for themselves, a spouse or a dependent, may be eligible to save some money with [education tax credits or deductions](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxNDAsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L25ld3Nyb29tL3RheC1iZW5lZml0cy1mb3ItZWR1Y2F0aW9uLWluZm9ybWF0aW9uLWNlbnRlciJ9.9GcdF7x6MXvBs2Bv3VnupF9pVcdoAY_IyKMoP8eoZN8/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l). Additionally, low- to moderate-income taxpayers may qualify for the [Earned Income Tax Credit](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxNDEsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L2NyZWRpdHMtZGVkdWN0aW9ucy9pbmRpdmlkdWFscy9lYXJuZWQtaW5jb21lLXRheC1jcmVkaXQifQ.21uzKc9rKijOH1VOQ5utzcHGW8KgU35QF2571b5VzDI/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l).

Beginning in January 2021, the Interactive Tax Assistant will be updated to include answers to more tax law questions.

Taxpayers can check the status of their refund using the "[Where's My Refund?](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxNDIsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L3JlZnVuZHMifQ.5k--eqArY3jRdl_jlh6Hf9PeT66HvEonIdJU0qaSfzc/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l)" tool. The status is available within 24 hours after the IRS receives their e-filed tax return or up to four weeks after they mailed a paper return. The “Where’s My Refund?” tool updates once every 24 hours, usually overnight, so taxpayers only need to check once a day.

The best and fastest way for taxpayers to get their tax refund is to have it [direct deposited](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxNDMsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L3JlZnVuZHMvZ2V0LXlvdXItcmVmdW5kLWZhc3Rlci10ZWxsLWlycy10by1kaXJlY3QtZGVwb3NpdC15b3VyLXJlZnVuZC10by1vbmUtdHdvLW9yLXRocmVlLWFjY291bnRzIn0.rm3xoigxAMgQ11NVBlBinN8F3GmqKPBxtiSI4BOHsIk/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) into their financial account. Taxpayers who don’t have a financial account can visit the [FDIC website](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxNDQsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5mZGljLmdvdi9jb3JvbmF2aXJ1cy9lY29ub21pYy1pbXBhY3QtcGF5bWVudHMvaW5kZXguaHRtbCJ9.aBLWdhAajeaLiPfxj36XHCETUlj9ax5LA_wa43Ko55M/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l) for information to help open an account online.

For more information about planning ahead, see [Publication 5348](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxNDUsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L3B1Yi9pcnMtcGRmL3A1MzQ4LnBkZiJ9.OveiUNZPJ7d15AOiCtiwDpRzT14BJd3-ucv-W8eTRVM/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l), Get Ready to File, and [Publication 5349](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9.eyJidWxsZXRpbl9saW5rX2lkIjoxNDYsInVyaSI6ImJwMjpjbGljayIsImJ1bGxldGluX2lkIjoiMjAyMDEyMTYuMzIxMTI1MTEiLCJ1cmwiOiJodHRwczovL3d3dy5pcnMuZ292L3B1Yi9pcnMtcGRmL3A1MzQ5LnBkZiJ9.glrFDH6zkfR1jZNNV6dwQPN9aZW2py5cu-QUBRkY-Nk/s/7200614/br/91981925494-l), Year-Round Tax Planning is for Everyone.