

Six Tax Tips to Make Tax Filing a Breeze

Tax preparation shouldn't be so stressful. The IRS has put together six tips to help make your tax filing experience a breeze this year.

1. Don't Procrastinate Resist the temptation to put off your taxes until the very last minute. Rushing to meet the filing deadline may cause you to overlook potential sources of tax savings and will likely increase your risk of making an error.
2. Visit the IRS Website In 2010, more than 304 million visits were made to <http://www.irs.gov>. Make 1040 Central your first stop to learn the latest news and find answers to your questions about tax filing.
3. Use Free File Let Free File do the hard work for you with brand-name tax software or online fillable forms. It's available exclusively at <http://www.irs.gov>. Everyone can find an option to prepare their tax return and e-file it for free. If you made \$58,000 or less, you qualify for free tax software that is offered through a private-public partnership with manufacturers. If you made more or are comfortable preparing your own tax return, there's Free File Fillable Forms, the electronic versions of IRS paper forms. Visit www.irs.gov/freefile to review your options.
4. Try IRS e-file After 21 years, IRS e-file has become the safe, easy and most common way to file a tax return. Last year, 70 percent of taxpayers -99 million people -used IRS e-file. Starting in 2011, many tax preparers will be required to use e-file and will explain your filing options to you. This is your chance to give it a try. IRS e-file is approaching 1 billion returns processed safely and securely. If you owe taxes, you have payment options to file immediately and pay later (by the tax deadline). Best of all, combine e-file with direct deposit and you can get your refund in as few as 10 days.
5. Don't Panic if You Can't Pay If you cannot pay the full amount of taxes you owe by the mid-April deadline, you should still file your return by the deadline and pay as much as you can to avoid penalties and interest. You should also contact the IRS to discuss your payment options at 800-829-1040. The agency may be able to provide some relief such as an installment agreement. More than 75 percent of taxpayers eligible for an Installment Agreement can apply using the Web-based Online Payment Agreement application available on IRS.gov. To find out more about this simple and convenient process type "Online Payment Agreement" in the search box on the IRS.gov homepage.
6. Request an Extension of Time to File – But Pay on Time If the mid-April tax deadline clock runs out, you can get an automatic six-month extension of time to file through October 17. However, this extension of time to file does not give you more time to pay any taxes due. If you have not paid at least 90 percent of the total tax due by the April deadline you may also be subject to an Estimated Tax Penalty. To obtain an extension, just file Form 4868, Application for Automatic Extension of Time to File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return. The easiest way to file a Form 4868 is through Free File at www.irs.gov/freefile.