

# IRS Ready to Start 2016 Tax Season

January 15, 2016

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has announced that the nation's 2016 individual income tax filing season opens January 19, with more than 150 million tax returns expected to be filed this year.

People will have several extra days to file their tax returns this year. Taxpayers have until Monday, April 18, to file their 2015 tax returns and pay any tax due because of the Emancipation Day holiday in Washington, D.C., falling on Friday, April 15. Taxpayers in Maine and Massachusetts will have until Tuesday, April 19 because of Patriot's Day observances on April 18.

The IRS expects more than 70 percent of taxpayers to again receive tax refunds this year. Last year, the IRS issued 109 million refunds, with an average refund of \$2,797.

"IRS employees have been working hard to get ready to help taxpayers this filing season," IRS Commissioner John Koskinen said. "As part of our Security Summit initiative, the IRS has been working closely with the tax industry and state revenue departments to provide taxpayers with stronger protections against identity theft during the tax filing season."

The IRS encouraged taxpayers to plan ahead and take advantage of the online resources available on IRS.gov.

"IRS.gov is the best place for taxpayers to go for information about filing their income tax returns this year," Koskinen said. "Although we will have more people staffing our phone lines this year, we expect those lines to remain busy so we encourage people to visit the web first as the quickest and easiest way to get assistance."

## e-File and Free File

More than four out of five returns are expected to be filed electronically, with a similar proportion of refunds issued through direct deposit.

Choosing [e-file](#) and [direct deposit](#) for refunds remains the fastest and safest way to file an accurate income tax return and receive a refund. The IRS anticipates issuing more than nine out of 10 refunds in less than 21 days.

The IRS [Free File program](#), available at IRS.gov, opens Friday, Jan. 15, and the IRS will begin accepting and processing all tax returns on Tuesday, Jan. 19. Commercial partners of the IRS offer free brand-name software to about 100 million individuals and families with incomes of \$62,000 or less. Seventy percent of the nation's taxpayers are eligible for IRS Free File.

All taxpayers regardless of income will again have access to free online fillable forms, which provide electronic versions of IRS paper forms to complete and file. This option, available through IRS.gov, is free.

The IRS also reminded people to plan ahead, especially students and home buyers who request a copy of a tax transcript or tax return information for a specific year using the online [Get Transcript](#) tool. They should allow five to 10 days from the time they make the request to receive it by mail.

## Protecting Taxpayers from ID-Theft-Related Refund Fraud

The IRS is working diligently with state tax authorities and the tax industry to address tax-related identity

theft and refund fraud. As part of the Security Summit effort, stronger protections for taxpayers and the nation's tax system have gone into effect for the 2016 tax filing season.

The new measures attack tax-related identity theft from multiple sides. Many changes will be invisible to taxpayers but help the IRS, states and the tax industry provide new protections. There will be new security requirements when you're preparing your taxes online, especially when you sign in to your tax software account, to better protect your tax software account and personal information.

Despite these security improvements to fight identity theft issues, the IRS will still process nine out of 10 federal refunds within 21 days. States have their own refund processing timeframes that may vary, and some states may make additional reviews to ensure refunds are being issued properly.

## Health Care Basics

Similar to last year, meeting the tax obligation of the Affordable Care Act for the vast majority of taxpayers will simply mean checking a box to verify everyone on their return has health coverage. For others, [IRS.gov/aca](http://IRS.gov/aca) features useful information, tips and interactive online tools to help taxpayers with the premium tax credit, the individual shared responsibility requirement, and other tax features of the ACA.

The Affordable Care Act requires that a taxpayer and each member of their family either has [qualifying health coverage](#) for each month of the year, qualifies for an [exemption](#), or makes an [individual shared responsibility payment](#) when filing their tax returns.

### Here are some important ACA reminders:

- **Check the box:** Like last year, the vast majority of taxpayers will simply check a box on their tax return to indicate that each member of their family had qualifying health coverage for the whole year. No further action is required to report coverage.
- **Claim a Coverage Exemption if you qualify:** If you or anyone on your return did not have coverage for the entire year, you should determine if you qualify for one of the many coverage exemptions that are available. You can use our online interactive tool to help determine if you qualify.
- **File to reconcile Advance Payments of the Premium Tax Credit:** If you enrolled in coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace during 2015, you most likely received the benefit of advance payments of the premium tax credit. You must file a tax return and submit Form 8962 to reconcile these payments with the actual premium tax credit to which you are entitled. You will need Form 1095-A from the Marketplace to complete Form 8962. Failure to reconcile your advance payments of the premium tax credit on Form 8962 may make you ineligible to receive future advance payments.
- **Don't wait for 1095-B/C:** Many taxpayers will receive a Form 1095-B or 1095-C with information about their health care coverage. You may have heard that the IRS has extended the time for health coverage providers and employers to furnish these forms. You should be aware that you don't have to wait for these forms in order to file your tax return and you don't have to send these forms to the IRS. You can rely on other information to determine your health coverage. The IRS has additional information about these forms in [questions and answers](#) on [IRS.gov/aca](http://IRS.gov/aca).
- **Wait for Form 1095-A:** If you enrolled in coverage through the Marketplace you should receive Form 1095-A from the Marketplace with important information that you need to accurately file your tax return. Unlike the Forms 1095-B and 1095-C, you should wait to file your tax return until you receive your Form 1095-A. Contact your marketplace with questions about your Form 1095-A.

Low-and moderate-income taxpayers can get help meeting this health-care requirement and filing their return for free by visiting one of the more than 12,000 community-based tax help sites staffed by more

than 90,000 volunteers that participate in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (VITA/TCE) programs. To find the nearest site, use the [VITA/TCE Site Locator](#) on IRS.gov.