
What is an Enrolled Agent (EA)?

An EA is an individual who has demonstrated technical competence in the field of taxation and can represent taxpayers before all administrative levels of the Internal Revenue Service.

What does the term "Enrolled Agent" mean?

"Enrolled" means EAs are licensed by the federal government. "Agent" means EAs are authorized to appear in place of the taxpayer at the Internal Revenue Service. Only EAs, attorneys and CPAs may represent taxpayers before the IRS. The Enrolled Agent profession dates back to 1884 when, after questionable claims had been presented for Civil War losses, Congress acted to regulate persons who represented citizens in their dealings with the Treasury Department.

How can an EA help me?

EAs advise, represent and prepare tax returns for individuals, partnerships, corporations, estates, trusts and any entities with tax-reporting requirements. EAs prepare millions of tax returns in a typical year. EAs' expertise in the continually changing field of tax law enables them to effectively represent taxpayers audited by the IRS.

What are the differences between EAs and other tax professionals?

Only EAs are required to demonstrate to the Internal Revenue Service their competence in matters of taxation before they may represent a taxpayer before the IRS. Unlike attorneys and CPAs, who may or may not choose to specialize in taxes, *all* EAs specialize in

matters of taxation. EAs are also the only taxpayer representatives who receive their right to practice from the United States government. (CPAs and attorneys are licensed by the states.)

How does one become an EA?

The EA designation is earned in one of two ways: (1) an individual must pass a difficult two-day examination administered by the IRS which covers taxation of individuals, corporations, partnerships, estates and trusts, procedures and ethics. Next, the successful candidates are subjected to a rigorous background check conducted by the Internal Revenue Service; or (2) an individual may become an EA based on employment at the Internal Revenue Service for a minimum of five years in a job where he/she regularly applied and interpreted the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code and regulations.

Are EAs required to take continuing professional education (CPE)?

In addition to the stringent testing and application process, EAs are required to complete 72 hours of CPE, reported every three years, to maintain their status. Because of the difficulty in becoming an EA and keeping up the required credentials, there are fewer than 33,000 EAs in the United States.

Are EAs bound by any ethical standards?

EAs are required to abide by the Standards of Ethical Conduct as published in *U.S. Treasury Department Circular 230*. EAs found to be in violation of the provisions contained in *Circular 230* may be suspended or disbarred.