



Tax Scams – Protect Yourself

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Tax Scams – Protect Yourself

There are many tax scams out there with the purpose of stealing your identity, stealing your money, or filing fraudulent tax returns using your private information. Tax scammers work year-round, not just during tax season and target virtually everyone. Stay alert to the ways criminals pose as the IRS to trick you out of your money or personal information.

The best thing to remember to protect yourself is that the IRS will never initiate contact with you via telephone, text message, email, or social media to request personal or financial information. The IRS will always first send a letter requesting information.

IRS-Impersonation Telephone Scam

Callers claim to be employees of the IRS, but are not. These con artists can sound convincing when they call. They use fake names and bogus IRS identification badge numbers. They may know a lot about their targets from information gathered from online resources, and they usually alter the caller ID (caller ID spoofing) to make it look like the IRS is calling. Also, if the phone is not answered, the scammers often leave an urgent callback request.

Victims are often told they owe money to the IRS and it must be paid promptly through a pre-loaded debit card, gift card, or wire transfer. If the victim refuses to cooperate, they are then threatened with arrest, deportation, or suspension of a business or driver's license. In many cases, the caller becomes hostile and insulting.

Alternatively, victims may be told they have a refund due to try to trick them into sharing private financial information.

You should note that the IRS will never:

- Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.

- Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for credit card, debit card, or PIN numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

What to do. If you receive a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS and asking for money, take the following steps.

- Do not provide any information to the caller. Hang up immediately.
- If you know you owe tax, or think you might owe, you should call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040 where you can get help with a payment issue.
- If you know you do not owe any tax, or have no reason to believe that you do, report the incident to TIGTA (Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration) at 1-800-366-4484 or at www.tigta.gov.
- You should also contact the Federal Trade Commission and use the "FTC Complaint Assistant" at www.ftc.gov. When filing the complaint, add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments.

Text Message Scams

Text scams are sent to your smartphone and can reference things like COVID-19 and/or "stimulus payments." These messages often contain bogus links claiming to be IRS websites. Other than IRS Secure Access, the IRS does not use text messages to discuss personal tax issues, such as those involving bills or refunds. The IRS also will not send taxpayers messages via social media platforms.

What to do. If you receive an unsolicited SMS/text that appears to be from either the IRS or a program closely linked