IRS News Release

Internal Revenue Service
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www.irs.gov/newsroom

IRS announces Jan. 27 start to 2025 tax filing season; agency continues historic improvements to expand, enhance tools and filing options to help taxpayers

Free File program now open; Direct File available starting Jan. 27 for taxpayers in 25 states

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WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service today announced that the nation's 2025 tax season will start on Monday, Jan. 27, 2025, and will feature expanded and enhanced tools to help taxpayers as a result of the agency's historic modernization efforts.

The IRS expects more than 140 million individual tax returns for tax year 2024 to be filed ahead of the Tuesday, April 15 federal deadline. More than half of all tax returns are expected to be filed this year with the help of a tax professional, and the IRS urges people to use a trusted tax pro to avoid potential scams and schemes.

The 2025 tax filing season will reflect continued IRS progress to modernize and add new tools and features to help taxpayers. Since last tax season, the improvements include more access to tax account information from text and voice virtual assistants, expanded features on the IRS Individual Online Account, more access to dozens of tax forms through cell phones and tablets and expanded alerts for scams and schemes that threaten taxpayers.

The IRS has also expanded features and availability of last year's Direct File program. This year, Direct File will be available starting Jan. 27 to taxpayers in 25 states. In addition, the IRS Free File program opens today. Available only on IRS.gov, IRS Free File Guided Tax Software provides millions of taxpayers nationwide access to free software tools offered by trusted IRS Free File partners.

The IRS is also working to continue the success of the 2023 and 2024 tax filing seasons made possible with additional resources. The past two filing seasons saw levels of service at roughly 85% and wait times averaging less than 5 minutes on the main phone lines, as well as significant increases in the number of taxpayers served at Taxpayer Assistance Centers across the country. Based on the IRS' current plan and funding levels, the agency will work to provide similar levels of performance on these key service metrics in the upcoming filing season.

"This has been a historic period of improvement for the IRS, and people will see additional tools and features to help them with filing their taxes this tax season," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. "These taxpayer-focused improvements we've done so far are important, but they are just the beginning of what the IRS needs to do. More can be done with continued investment in the nation's tax system."

The Get Ready page on IRS.gov highlights steps taxpayers can take now to streamline the filing process and the many resources available to interact with the IRS before, during and after filing their federal tax return.

Direct File opens Jan. 27 for taxpayers in 25 states

On the first day of the filing season, Direct File will open to eligible taxpayers in 25 states to file their taxes directly with the IRS for free: 12 states that were part of the pilot last year, plus 13 new states where Direct File will be available in 2025. During last year's pilot, Direct File was available in **Arizona, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Hampshire, New York, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Washington State** and **Wyoming**. For the 2025 tax filing season, Direct File will also be available in **Alaska, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania** and **Wisconsin**.

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Direct File will include new features this year to make filing taxes quicker and easier. Similar to commercial tax software, a data import tool will allow taxpayers to opt-in to automatically import data from their IRS account, including personal information, the taxpayer's IP PIN and some information from the taxpayer's W-2.

This year, Direct File users can try a new chat bot to help guide them through the eligibility checker. Live chat will again be available in English and Spanish, and users can opt into additional authentication and verification, which will allow customer service representatives to provide more information.

Also, this year, Direct File will cover more tax situations. During the pilot, Direct File supported taxpayers claiming the Earned Income Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Credit for Other Dependents. This year, Direct File will also cover taxpayers claiming the:

- Child and Dependent Care Credit
- Premium Tax Credit
- Credit for the Elderly and Disabled
- Retirement Savings Contribution Credits

In addition to covering taxpayers claiming the standard deduction and deductions for student loan interest and educator expenses, this year, Direct File will support taxpayers claiming deductions for Health Savings Accounts. The Treasury Department estimates that more than 30 million taxpayers will be eligible to use Direct File across the 25 states.

Direct File is a web-based service that works on mobile phones, laptops, tablets or desktop computers. It guides taxpayers through a series of questions to prepare their federal tax return step-by-step. Last year, thousands of Direct File users got help from IRS customer service representatives through a live chat feature in English and Spanish. Once taxpayers have completed their federal tax return, the Direct File system automatically guides them to state tools to complete their state tax filings.

Free File program opens early; available in English and Spanish

Although the IRS will not begin accepting tax returns until Jan. 27, taxpayers have several options available now to get a head start on their taxes.

Starting today, almost everyone can file electronically for free by using IRS Free File, available only on IRS.gov. Now in its 23rd year, Free File offers free tax preparation software from eight companies in the public-private partnership between the IRS and Free File Inc. As part of this partnership, tax preparation and filing software partners offer their online products to eligible taxpayers for free. To access these free tools, taxpayers must start from the IRS Free File page on IRS.gov.

This year, eight private-sector partners will provide online guided tax software products for taxpayers with an Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) of $84,000 or less in 2024. Additionally, one partner will offer a product in Spanish.

Although the IRS official tax filing season begins later this month, IRS Free File providers will allow taxpayers to prepare and file returns now and hold them until they can be electronically filed on that date. Many other software companies offer a similar option.

Other free options to file tax returns

In addition to Free File and Direct File, the IRS reminds taxpayers there are important programs available to help taxpayers:

- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance/Tax Counseling for the Elderly.** Taxpayers can find organizations in their community with IRS certified volunteers that provide free tax help for eligible taxpayers including working families, the elderly, the disabled and people who speak limited English.
- **MilTax.** A Department of Defense program, MilTax generally offers free return preparation and electronic filing software for federal income tax returns and up to three state income tax returns for all military members, and some veterans, with no income limit.

Highlights of other IRS changes to help taxpayers

As part of ongoing IRS improvement efforts, the agency is working to build on the success of the 2023 and 2024 filing seasons.

The IRS is once again working to provide taxpayers expanded help in-person through more hours at Taxpayer Assistance Centers nationwide. The IRS also will be focused on continuing high levels of service on its main taxpayer phone lines, with a goal of up to 85% level of service.

The IRS also continues to urge taxpayers to visit a trusted tax professional for help with their taxes or visit IRS.gov first. As part of IRS improvement efforts since 2022, the agency continues to add and expand a variety of online tools and services to help people with their taxes.

Included among the improvements taxpayers will see during the 2025 filing season are:

IRS Individual Online Account: The IRS continues to add more functionality to this important tool. Individuals can create or access their IRS Online Account at Online Account for individuals. With an IRS Online Account, people can:

- View key details from their most recent tax return, such as adjusted gross income.
- Request an Identity Protection PIN.
- Get account transcripts to include wage and income records.
- Sign tax forms like powers of attorney or tax information authorizations.
- View and edit language preferences and alternative media.
- Receive and view over 200 IRS electronic notices.
- View, make and cancel payments.
- Set up or change payment plans and check their balance.

New scam alert available on Individual Online Account: To help protect taxpayers against emerging threats, there's a new banner on the Online Account homepage that alerts taxpayers of potential scams and schemes, along with a link to their Digital Notices and Letters page to view correspondence sent to them from the IRS. The feature helps to educate taxpayers on common scams and fraudulent efforts to steal taxpayer information and provide taxpayers with more ability to validate the legitimacy of IRS communications.

Redesigned Notices: The IRS successfully redesigned 284 notices in 2024, exceeding the agency's 200 notice goal. It is important to note that 200 notices were redesigned and deployed in 2024 and that the 84 additional redesigned notices are in line to be deployed in 2025. All notices will be added to Individual Online Account so taxpayers receiving a specific letter can see them.

Mobile-Adaptive Tax Forms: Taxpayers can now access 67 forms on cell phones and tablets. The most recent forms feature "save and draft" capabilities, which allow the taxpayer to start a form, save it and return to it later. The addition of save and draft allows for future capabilities, including the ability for multiple spouses to sign a form.

Virtual assistants to help with refunds, others questions: Whether a taxpayer uses an online tool or calls the IRS, they will experience upgraded help features. During filing season 2025, the IRS will offer voicebot services to all taxpayers calling the IRS for refund information. The voicebot is available in English and Spanish

and has helped thousands of callers without the need to wait for the next available representative. Taxpayers will have to authenticate their identity to gain access to their refund information by providing select information from their tax return.

Last year the IRS began using online chatbots for various functions. These chatbots use either guided help through choice buttons or an open text box for a customized question. The chatbots use natural language processing and understanding to interpret the input from the taxpayer to provide an appropriate response. To launch the chatbot, the taxpayer simply clicks on the “Chat” button in the lower right corner of the webpage. Currently taxpayers can use chatbots from eight webpages.

Taxpayers should check ‘Where’s My Refund?’ on IRS.gov

Most refunds are issued in less than 21 calendar days. Taxpayers can use Where's My Refund? to check the status of their 2024 income tax refund within 24 hours of e-filing. Refund information is normally available after four weeks for taxpayers who filed a paper return. Information on Where's My Refund? will update overnight so there is no need to check the tool more than once a day.

The easiest, ***safest*** and fastest way to receive a refund is to file electronically (e-file) and select direct deposit. According to Treasury’s Bureau of the Fiscal Service, paper refund checks are 16 times more likely to have an issue, like the check being lost, misdirected, stolen or uncashed. People should check FDIC and National Credit Union Administration websites if they don’t have a bank account. Veterans can use the Veterans Benefits Banking Program to find participating financial institutions.

The IRS also notes that starting Jan. 1, 2025, people will no longer be able to buy paper Series I savings bonds with their tax refund. Instead, Series I bonds are available in electronic format in TreasuryDirect.

Choose a trusted tax professional

More than half of taxpayers turn to a tax professional for help filing a tax return. While most tax preparers deliver exceptional and professional service, selecting the wrong preparer can lead to financial harm.

Taxpayers should review the tips for choosing a tax preparer and learn how to avoid unethical “ghost” return preparers. Taxpayers can also use the IRS Directory of Federal Tax Return Preparers with Credentials and Select Qualifications to find trusted professionals. The IRS also reminds taxpayers that choosing someone affiliated with a recognized national tax association is always a good option.

Tax professionals accepted into the IRS electronic filing program are authorized IRS e-file providers, qualified to prepare, transmit and process electronically filed tax returns.

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