



# Recognize tax scams and fraud

You can avoid falling for a tax scam. Know what to watch out for and how the IRS contacts you.

## Tax scam warning signs

Scammers mislead you about tax refunds, credits and payments. They pressure you for personal, financial or employment information or money. IRS impersonators try to look like us.

Watch out for:

- **A big payday** - If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Bad tax advice on social media may convince you to lie on tax forms or mislead you about credits you can claim.
- **Demands or threats** - Impersonators want you to pay “now or else.” They threaten arrest or deportation. They don’t let you question or appeal the amount of tax you owe.
- **Website links** - Odd or misspelled web links can take you to harmful sites instead of IRS.gov.

[Payments we accept](#)

[Know your taxpayer rights](#)

## How to know it’s the IRS

Protect yourself from impersonators. [Know how we contact you.](#)

## Common tax scams

Be aware of the signs of tax scams.

### ⊖ Charity impersonators

Your donation or website link doesn’t go where you think it will.

You can’t deduct donations to fake charities.

- [Search for a tax-exempt organization](#)
- [IRS: Beware of fake charities; check before donating](#)
- [IRS joins effort to fight charity fraud during international recognition week](#)
- [How to avoid fraud and scams after a disaster](#)

### ⊖ COVID-19 pandemic schemes

Criminals took advantage of the COVID-19 pandemic to steal taxpayer money.

- [Security Summit warns tax pros to be wary of pandemic-related email schemes](#)
- [Employee Retention Credit \(ERC\)](#)

## ⊖ Credits and refunds misinformation

Incorrect information on how to get a bigger refund misleads you to claim credits you're not eligible for. This leads to a delayed refund, audit or other consequences like fines or imprisonment.

Dishonest or uninformed tax preparers misrepresent rules for claiming credits. Aggressive advertising, mail and online sources mislead you to file an incorrect return. They charge large, upfront fees or a fee based on your refund amount.

### **Clean energy tax credits:**

- [IRS warns of new scam targeting clean energy tax credit](#)

### **Employee Retention Credit (ERC):**

- [IRS alerts businesses, tax-exempt groups of warning signs for misleading Employee Retention scams; simple steps can avoid improperly filing claims](#)
- [IRS issues renewed warning on Employee Retention Credit claims; false claims generate compliance risk for people and businesses claiming credit improperly](#)
- [Employee Retention Credit](#)

### **Fuel Tax Credit:**

- [IRS, CASST announce 2025 filing season changes aimed at preventing spread of scams, schemes; new Fuel Tax Credit statement and increased review of "other withholding" claims among highlights](#)
- [Dirty Dozen: IRS warns about false Fuel Tax Credit claims; taxpayers should be wary of scammers, heightened review](#)
- [About Form 4136, Credit for Federal Tax Paid on Fuels](#)

### **Sick and Family Leave credits; Schedule H refund:**

- [IRS warns taxpayers of new filing season scams involving Form W-2 wages; those filing fake returns face potential penalties, investigation](#)
- [About Form 7202, Credits for Sick Leave and Family Leave for Certain Self-Employed Individuals](#)
- [About Schedule H \(Form 1040\), Household Employment Taxes](#)

## ⊖ Disaster fraud

Scammers want to "help" you file casualty loss claims or get big tax refunds. Impersonators claim to work for or on behalf of the IRS.

- [People should donate carefully after a disaster to avoid scams](#)
- [Disaster assistance and emergency relief for individuals and businesses](#)
- [How to avoid fraud and scams after a disaster](#)
- [Donating to charities](#)

## ⊖ Dishonest tax preparers

Don't trust a tax preparer who:

- [Doesn't sign the return](#)
- [Falsifies tax information](#)
- [Puts your refund in their bank account](#)
- [Requires you to pay in cash or doesn't give you a receipt](#)

[IRS reminds taxpayers: Choose a tax professional carefully](#)

## ➔ Email and text message impersonators

The impersonator wants you to send them money. Opening links and attachments may harm your computer.

[IRS reminds car dealers and sellers to be aware of phishing scams](#)

## ➔ Seniors targeted

Scammers target people over age 65 or nearing retirement for personal or financial information or money. Often, once you give them money, they ask for more. When scammers trick you to withdraw from your retirement account, it could affect your taxes.

- [IRS warns against scams targeting seniors; joins other federal agencies to recognize special awareness day](#)
- [Retirement topics - Exceptions to tax on early distributions](#)

## ➔ Social media bad tax advice and scams

Bad tax advice on social media can mislead you about your credit or refund eligibility. Influencers may convince you to lie on tax forms or suggest the IRS is keeping a tax credit secret from you. Social media posts may put you in touch with scammers.

- [IRS warns taxpayers they may be scam victims if they filed for big refunds; misleading advice leads to false claims for Fuel Tax Credit, Sick and Family Leave Credit, household employment taxes](#)
- [IRS warns taxpayers about misleading claims about non-existent “Self-Employment Tax Credit”; promoters, social media peddling inaccurate eligibility suggestions](#)
- [Misleading social media advice leads to false claims for Fuel Tax Credit, Sick and Family Leave Credit, household employment taxes; FAQs help address common questions, next steps for those receiving IRS letters](#)
- [Dirty Dozen: Taking tax advice on social media can be bad news for taxpayers; schemes circulating involving tax forms](#)

## ➔ Tax debt settlement or relief services

People pressure you to use their services to settle taxes you owe. They promise to relieve your tax debt for “pennies-on-the-dollar.” They rush you to pay them for this service.

You can settle your tax debt directly with us if you’re eligible for an [offer in compromise \(OIC\)](#).

[IRS “dirty dozen” list warns people to watch out for Offer in Compromise ‘mills’ where promoters claim their services are needed to settle IRS debts.](#)

## ➔ Unclaimed tax refund

Impersonation mail misleads you about an unclaimed refund.

[IRS, Security Summit partners warn taxpayers of new scam; unusual delivery service mailing tries to trick people into sending photos, bank account information](#)

## ➔ Unemployment claims identity theft

If Box 1 of [Form 1099-G, Certain Government Payments](#) [PDF](#), shows unemployment compensation you didn’t get, you may be a victim of identity theft. Criminals can use your information to file fake unemployment claims, leaving you with taxable income to report.

## ⊖ Unexpected tax bill

Scammers send you a tax bill to trick you into paying them.

[Taxpayers shouldn't let gift card scammers ruin the holidays](#)

## ⊖ W-2 Form fraud

Incorrect information on how to get a bigger refund misleads you to report fake income, federal income tax withholding and employers on [Form W-2, Wage and Tax Statement](#).

Criminals also target businesses and payroll companies by email to steal Form W-2 data. They file fraudulent returns in other people's names for refunds.

- [IRS warns taxpayers of new filing season scams involving Form W-2 wages; those filing fake returns face potential penalties, investigation](#)
- [Dirty Dozen: Taking tax advice on social media can be bad news for taxpayers; schemes circulating involving tax forms](#)

For tax professionals, businesses and payroll providers:

- [Data theft information for tax professionals](#)
- [Form W-2/SSN Data Theft: Information for Businesses and Payroll Service Providers](#)
- [Protect your clients; protect yourself](#)
- [Identity theft for businesses](#)
- [Identity theft for tax professionals](#)

## Related

[Dirty dozen tax scams](#)

[If you were scammed](#)

[Report a tax scam or fraud](#)

[Get identity theft help](#)