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What to Do When an IRS Letter Arrives in the Mail

IRS Tax Tip 2017-49, April 18, 2017

[Español](#)

The IRS mails millions of pieces of correspondence every year to taxpayers for a variety of reasons.

Below are some suggestions on how to best handle a letter or notice from the IRS:

1. Do not panic. Simply responding will take care of most IRS letters and notices.
2. Most IRS notices are about federal tax returns or tax accounts. Each notice deals with a specific issue and provides specific instructions on what to do. Careful reading is essential.
3. A notice may likely be about changes to a taxpayers' account, taxes owed or a payment request. Sometimes a notice may ask for more information about a specific issue or item on a tax return.
4. If a notice indicates a changed or corrected tax return, review the information and compare it with your original return.
5. There is usually no need to reply to a notice unless specifically instructed to do so, or to make a payment.
6. Taxpayers must respond to a notice they do not agree with. Mail a letter explaining why there is a disagreement with the IRS. The address to mail the letter is on the contact stub at the bottom of the notice. Include information and documents for the IRS to consider and allow at least 30 days for a response.
7. There is no need to call the IRS or make an appointment at a taxpayer assistance center for most notices. If a call seems necessary, use the phone number in the upper right-hand corner of the notice. Be sure to have a copy of the tax return and notice when calling.
8. Always keep copies of any notices received with tax records.
9. Be alert for [tax scams](#). The IRS sends letters and notices by mail. IRS does not contact people by email or social media to ask for personal or financial information. The IRS will not demand payment a certain way, such as prepaid debit or credit card. Taxpayers have several [payment options](#) for taxes owed.

For more on this topic, visit IRS.gov. Click on the link '[Respond to a Notice](#)' at the bottom center of the home page. Also, see [Publication 594](#), The IRS Collection Process. Get [IRS.gov/forms](#) at any time.

To make a payment, visit [IRS.gov/payments](#) or use the [IRS2Go](#) app to make a payment with [Direct Pay](#) for free, or by debit or credit card through an approved payment processor for a fee.

Taxpayers should keep a copy of their tax return. Beginning in 2017, taxpayers using a software product for the first time may need their Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) amount from their prior-year tax return to verify their identity. Taxpayers can learn more about how to verify their identity and electronically sign tax returns at [Validating Your Electronically Filed Tax Return](#).

Additional IRS Resources:

- [Tax Topic 651](#) – Notices – What to Do

- [Tax Topic 653](#) – IRS Notices and Bills, Penalties, and Interest Charges
- [Understanding Your CP2000 Notice](#)

IRS YouTube Videos:

- Received a Letter from the IRS? – [English](#) | [Spanish](#) | [ASL](#)

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