



Read This Before Choosing a Tax Preparer

IRS TAX TIP 2009-07

If you will be paying someone to do your tax return, choose a tax preparer wisely. You are legally responsible for what's on your tax returns even if they are prepared by someone else. So, it's important to find a qualified tax professional.

The most reputable preparers will request to see your records and receipts and will ask you multiple questions to determine your total income and your qualifications for expenses, deductions, and other items. By doing so, they have your best interest in mind and are trying to help you avoid penalties, interest, or additional taxes that could result from later IRS contacts.

Most tax return preparers are professional, honest and provide excellent service to their clients; you can use the following tips to choose a preparer who will offer the best service for their tax preparation needs.

- Find out what the service fees are before the return is prepared. Avoid preparers who base their fee on a percentage of the amount of your refund or who claim they can obtain larger refunds than other preparers.
- Only use a tax professional that signs your tax return and provides you with a copy for your records.
- Avoid tax preparers that ask you to sign a blank tax form.
- Choose a tax preparer that will be around to answer questions after the return has been filed.
- Ask questions. Do you know anyone who has used the tax professional? Were they satisfied with the service they received?
- Check to see if the preparer has any questionable history with the Better Business Bureau, the state's board of accountancy for CPAs or the state's bar association for attorneys. Find out if the preparer belongs to a professional organization that requires its members to pursue continuing education and also holds them accountable to a code of ethics.
- Determine if the preparer's credentials meet your needs. Does your state have licensing or registration requirements for paid preparers? Is he or she an Enrolled Agent, Certified Public Accountant, or Attorney? If so, the preparer can represent taxpayers before the IRS on all matters – including audits, collections, and appeals. Other return preparers can represent taxpayers only in audits regarding a return signed as a preparer.
- Before you sign your tax return, review it and ask questions.

You can report suspected tax fraud and abusive tax preparers to the IRS on Form 3949-A, Information Referral or by sending a letter to Internal Revenue Service, Fresno, CA 93888. Download Form 3949-A from IRS.gov or order by mail at 800-829-3676.

Links:

- [Form 3949-A Information Referral \(PDF 94K\)](#)
- [Where Do You Report Suspected Fraud Activity?](#)

[Subscribe to Tax Tips](#)

Page Last Reviewed or Updated: January 12, 2009