



# Here's what taxpayers should do to protect private data

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Taxpayers should protect their personal and financial data from criminals who continue to steal large amounts of information. Thieves use the data to file bogus tax returns and commit crimes while impersonating the victim.

All taxpayers should follow these steps to protect themselves and their data.

## **Keep a secure computer. Taxpayers should:**

- Use security software that updates automatically. Essential tools for keeping a secure computer include a firewall, virus and malware protection, and file encryption for sensitive data.
- Treat personal information like cash; don't leave it lying around.
- Give personal information only over encrypted and trusted websites.
- Use strong passwords and protect them.

## **Avoid Phishing and Malware. Taxpayers should:**

- Not respond to emails, texts or calls that appear to be from the IRS, tax companies and other well-known businesses. Instead, verify contact information about companies or agencies by going directly to their website.
- Be cautious of email attachments. Think twice before opening them.
- Turn off the option to automatically download attachments.
- Download and install software only from known and trusted websites.

## **Protect personal information. Taxpayers should:**

- Not routinely carry a Social Security card or other documents showing a Social Security number.
- Not overshare personal information on social media. This includes information about past addresses, a new car, a new home and children.
- Keep old tax returns and tax records under lock and key.
- Safeguard electronic files by encrypting and properly disposing them.
- Shred tax documents before trashing.

Taxpayers should forward IRS-related scam emails to [phishing@irs.gov](mailto:phishing@irs.gov). They can report IRS

impersonation telephone calls at [www.tigta.gov](http://www.tigta.gov).

## **More Information:**

- Identity Protection: Prevention, Detection and Victim Assistance
- Publication 4524, Security Awareness for Taxpayers
- Taxes. Security. Together.

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