



FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION Consumer Information

Tax-Related Identity Theft

An identity thief may use your Social Security number (SSN) to get a tax refund or a job. This is tax-related identity theft. You may not know it has happened until:

- the IRS sends you a letter by mail saying they have gotten a suspicious tax return that uses your SSN, or
- you try to efile your return but it's rejected as a duplicate because a return already has been filed using your SSN

If the IRS sends you a letter, follow the instructions in the letter. Then visit [IdentityTheft.gov](https://www.identitytheft.gov) to report the identity theft to both the IRS and the FTC and get a recovery plan.

Uncovering Tax-Related Identity Theft

If someone uses your SSN to file for a tax refund before you do, here's what happens: When you file your return, IRS records will show that someone else has already filed and gotten a refund. If you file by mail, the IRS will send you a notice or letter in the mail saying that more than one return was filed for you. If you try to efile, the IRS will reject your tax return as a duplicate filing.

If someone uses your SSN to get a job, the employer may report that person's income to the IRS using your SSN. When you file your tax return, you wouldn't have included those earnings. IRS records will show you failed to report all your income. The agency will send you a notice saying you had wages that you didn't report. But the IRS doesn't know those wages were reported by an employer you don't know, for work performed by someone else.

IRS notices about tax-related identity theft are sent by mail. The IRS doesn't initiate contact with a taxpayer by sending an email, text, or social media message that asks for personal or financial information. The IRS also does not call taxpayers with threats of lawsuits or arrests. And, the IRS will never ask you to wire money, pay with a gift card or prepaid debit card, or share your credit card information over the phone.



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If you get an email, text, or other electronic message that claims to be from the IRS, do not reply or click on any links. Instead, forward it to phishing@irs.gov. And report IRS imposters to the US Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration at tigta.gov.

Dealing With Tax-Related Identity Theft

If the IRS sends you a notice or letter saying that someone used your SSN to get a tax refund, or saying there's another problem, respond quickly and follow the instructions in the letter.

- Call the IRS using the telephone number given in the letter. You'll need the letter and a copy of your prior year's tax return when you call to help verify your identity. Visit the IRS's guide, [IRS Identity Theft Victim Assistance: How It Works](#), for more information.

If you think someone used your SSN to file for a tax refund, but you haven't gotten a letter from the IRS, use IdentityTheft.gov to report it to the IRS and FTC and get a recovery plan.

- Visit IdentityTheft.gov to complete an IRS [Identity Theft Affidavit](#) (IRS Form 14039) and submit it to the IRS online so that the IRS can begin resolving your case. You'll also be reporting the identity theft to the FTC.
- File your tax return, and pay any taxes you owe. If you can't efile your tax return, you may need to mail a paper return.

Other Steps to Repair Identity Theft

Next, it's important to limit the potential damage from identity theft.

- Put a [fraud alert](#) on your credit reports.
- [Order your free credit reports](#) and close any new accounts opened in your name.
- Consider placing a [credit freeze](#) on your credit reports.

Visit IdentityTheft.gov for help with these important steps.

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