



# 2016 IRS Refund Information Guidelines for the Tax Preparation Community

## Key Message

The IRS issues more than 9 out of 10 refunds in less than 21 days.

**where's my refund?**

## Use *Where's My Refund?* to Check the Status of Your Refund

*Where's My Refund?* gives you personalized refund information based on the processing of your tax return.

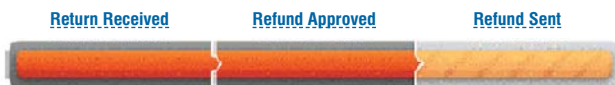
Just use the IRS2Go phone app or go to [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov). Both are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can start checking on the status of your return within 24 hours after we have received your e-filed return or 4 weeks after you mail a paper return. Our phone and walk-in representatives can **only** research the status of your refund if it has been 21 days or more since you filed electronically, more than 6 weeks since you mailed your paper return, or *Where's My Refund?* directs you to contact us.

To use *Where's My Refund?* have your tax return handy so you can provide your Social Security number, filing status and the exact whole dollar amount of your refund.

*Where's My Refund?* includes a tracker that displays progress through 3 stages:

1. Return Received
2. Refund Approved
3. Refund Sent

### Refund Status Results



*Where's My Refund?* provides an actual personalized refund date as soon as the IRS processes your tax return and approves your refund. *Where's My Refund?* is updated no more than once every 24 hours, usually over night. So you don't need to check the status more often. Also, our phone and walk-in assistors can **only** research the status of your refund if it's been 21 days or more since you filed electronically, more than six weeks since you mailed your paper return, or if the *Where's My Refund?* tool directs you to contact us.

## Direct Deposit

The IRS urges you to use direct deposit for refunds. Eight out of 10 taxpayers receiving refunds opt for direct deposit. It's the safest, fastest way to receive refunds. All you need is an account number and routing number. Use Form 8888 to make direct deposits in up to three accounts. Two reminders: Preparers cannot use *Form 8888* to collect fees; and there is a limit of three refunds into a single account. Details at [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

## Take these steps to file an accurate tax return to help your clients get their refund fast

- Using e-file is the best way to file an accurate tax return, and combining e-file with direct deposit is the fastest way for you to get your refund.
- Take these steps to ensure your tax return is processed as quickly as possible.
  - file electronically
  - submit an accurate, error-free return
  - verify the correct Social Security number or Taxpayer Identification Number for yourself, your spouse and your dependents
  - verify that you provide the correct mailing address in case we need to mail the refund check
  - use the correct bank account and routing number if you choose direct deposit
- The IRS works hard to issue refunds as quickly as possible, but some tax returns take longer to process than others for many reasons, including when a return:
  - includes errors
  - is incomplete
  - needs further review
  - is impacted by identity theft or fraud
  - includes Form 8379, which could take up to 14 weeks to process

## Caution

Don't count on getting the refund by a certain date to make major purchases or pay other financial obligations. Even though the IRS issues most refunds in less than 21 days, it's possible your tax return may require additional review and take longer.

**Reminder** Any claims by Providers concerning faster refunds by virtue of electronic filing must be consistent with the language in official IRS publications. Per the advertising standards in Publication 3112, IRS e-file Application and Participation, and Publication 1345, Handbook for Authorized IRS e-file Providers of Individual Income Tax Returns, providers must not use improper or misleading advertising in relation to IRS e-file, including the time frames for refunds or other financial products.

This reminder serves as the IRS's request to the tax preparation community to follow these messaging guidelines. The IRS will monitor Industry practice during filing season, but anticipates and expects voluntary compliance from its partners in support of this important effort to help taxpayers understand their refund status.