



Do Your Federal Taxes for Free with IRS Free File

IR-2012-8, Jan. 17, 2012

WASHINGTON — IRS Free File, which has been making taxes a little less taxing for a decade, opens today, Jan. 17. More than 33 million returns have been filed through Free File since its debut.

Everyone can use Free File, either the brand-name software offered by IRS' commercial partners or the online fillable forms. Individuals or families with 2011 adjusted gross incomes of \$57,000 or less can use Free File software. Free File Fillable Forms, the electronic version of IRS paper forms, has no income restrictions.

"Free File can save you time and money. You can prepare and e-file your tax return at no charge. And, the software helps you find the tax breaks you are due," said Diane Fox, director, Free File program. "Free File helps make taxes less taxing."

Free File software is a product of a public-private partnership between the IRS and the Free File Alliance, LLC. The Alliance is a consortium of approximately 20 tax software providers who make versions of their free-file products available exclusively at www.irs.gov/freefile.

All Free File members must meet certain security requirements and use the latest in encryption technology to protect taxpayers' information. Seventy percent of taxpayers – 100 million people - are eligible for Free File software. It's perfect for first-time filers, families looking to save money or older Americans adept at using the Internet.

People with an adjusted gross income of \$57,000 or less are eligible for at least one software product if not more. Each of the Free File software providers sets their own eligibility requirements, usually based on qualifiers such as income, state residency, age or military status.

The easiest way to locate a software provider is to use the online "get help" tool at www.irs.gov/freefile that, with a little of a taxpayer's information such as income, age and state residency, can identify matching free-file products. Or, taxpayers can review all providers and their offers. Some software providers also offer state income tax preparation for free or for a fee.

Also, the IRS is working with select volunteer tax sites such as Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly. There are 200 locations nationwide that have set up Free File kiosks where taxpayers can use computers to prepare their own returns with Free File.

For taxpayers whose incomes are more than \$57,000, there's Free File Fillable Forms, available only at the IRS website. This program is best for taxpayers experienced in preparing their own federal tax returns. For people who prefer doing their taxes the old fashioned way – by paper – this is an electronic alternative.

Free File Fillable Forms performs some math calculations and provides links to some IRS publications. It does not use the familiar question-and-answer format used by software. Taxpayers can e-file the forms for free. It also does not support state income tax returns.

Taxpayers must access the free-file products through IRS.gov or authorized kiosks to avoid any charges for preparing or e-filing a federal tax return.

Once taxpayers have selected a Free File software product, they will be directed away from IRS.gov to the partner's site to prepare and e-file their returns. The IRS does not retain any personal information from the taxpayers.

The IRS also encourages businesses, state and local governments, charities and churches to inform their employees, clients and customers about Free File.