

The Internal Revenue Service today opened the 2012 tax filing season by announcing that taxpayers have until April 17 to file their tax returns.

The IRS encourages taxpayers to e-file as it is the best way to ensure accurate tax returns and get faster refunds.

The IRS also announced a number of improvements to help make this tax season easy for taxpayers.

This includes new navigation features and helpful information on IRS.gov and a new pilot to allow taxpayers to use interactive video to get help with tax issues.

“At the IRS, we’re working hard to make the process of filing your taxes as quick and easy as possible,” said IRS Commissioner Doug Shulman. “Providing quality service is one of our top priorities. It not only reduces the burden on taxpayers, but also helps in filing an accurate return right from the start.”

Taxpayers will have until Tuesday, April 17 to file their 2011 tax returns and pay any tax due because April 15 falls on a Sunday, and Emancipation Day, a holiday observed in the District of Columbia, falls this year on Monday, April 16.

According to federal law, District of Columbia holidays impact tax deadlines in the same way that federal holidays do; therefore, all taxpayers will have two extra days to file this year.

Taxpayers requesting an extension will have until Oct. 15 to file their 2011 tax returns.

The IRS expects to receive more than 144 million individual tax returns this year, with most of those being filed by the April 17 deadline.

The IRS will begin accepting e-file and Free File returns on Jan. 17, 2012.

Additional details about e-file and Free File will be announced later this month. IRS Free File provides options for free brand-name tax software or online fillable forms plus free electronic filing.

Everyone can use Free File to prepare a federal tax return. Taxpayers who make \$57,000 or less can choose from approximately 20 commercial software providers.

There’s no income limit for Free File Fillable Forms, the electronic version of IRS paper forms, which also includes free e-filing.

The IRS also reminds paid tax return preparers they must have and include a Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN) on all returns they prepare. All PTINs must be renewed for 2012. Tax return preparers can obtain or renew PTINs online.

### Assistance Options

The IRS continues to focus on taxpayer service. The best way for taxpayers to get answers to their questions is by visiting the IRS website at IRS.gov.

The IRS has updated the front page of the IRS website to make it easier for taxpayers to get key forms, information and file tax returns. The front page also has links to taxpayer-friendly videos on the IRS YouTube channel. More improvements are planned for IRS.gov in the months ahead.

Last year, the IRS unveiled IRS2Go, its first smartphone application that lets taxpayers check on the status of their tax refund and obtain helpful tax information.

The IRS reminds Apple users that they can download the free IRS2Go application by visiting the Apple App Store and Android users can visit the Android Marketplace to download the free IRS2Go app.

Individuals making \$50,000 or less can use the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program for

free tax preparation and, in many cases, free electronic filing.

Individuals age 60 and older can take advantage of free tax counseling and basic income tax preparation through Tax Counseling for the Elderly. Information on these programs can be found at [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

For tax law questions or account inquiries, taxpayers can also call our toll-free number (7 a.m. to 7 p.m. local time) or visit a taxpayer assistance center, the locations of which are listed on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

#### Virtual Service

The IRS has begun a new pilot program where taxpayers can get assistance through two-way video conferencing.

The IRS is conducting a limited roll out of this new video conferencing technology at 10 IRS offices and two other sites, and may expand to further sites in the future. A list of locations is available on [IRS.gov](http://IRS.gov).

#### Check for a Refund

Once taxpayers file their federal return, they can track the status of their refunds by using the "Where's My Refund?" tool, which taxpayers can get to using the IRS2Go phone app or from the front page of [www.IRS.gov](http://www.IRS.gov).

By providing their Taxpayer Identification Numbers, filing status, and the exact whole dollar amount of their anticipated refund taxpayers can generally get information about their refund 72 hours after the IRS acknowledges receipt of their e-filed returns, or three to four weeks after mailing a paper return.