



Avoid Tax Identity Theft

Tax identity theft happens when someone uses your personal information — like your Social Security number to file a phony tax return, to get a job, or claim your child as a dependent on a tax return. Consumer Protection offers the following tips to protect your information.

- File your tax return early in the tax season, if you can, before identity thieves do.
- Use a secure internet connection if you file electronically. Don't use unsecure, publicly available Wi-Fi hotspots at places like coffee shops or a hotel lobby.
- Mail your tax return directly from the post office.
- Shred copies of your tax return, drafts, or calculation sheets you no longer need.
- The IRS won't contact you by email, text, or social media. They also won't call demanding payment for unpaid taxes or threaten arrest. If the IRS needs information, it will first contact you by mail.
- Respond to all mail from the IRS as soon as possible
- Don't give out your Social Security number (SSN) or Medicare number unless necessary. Ask why it's needed, how it's going to be used, and how it will be stored.
- Get recommendations and research a tax preparer thoroughly before you hand over personal information.
- Check your credit report at least once a year for free at annualcreditreport.com to make sure no other accounts have been opened in your name
- If you believe you're a victim of Tax identity theft, contact the IRS Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.
- Pinellas County's *Good to Know* television show on Tax-Related Identity Theft: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xT5ctrY5SQw>