



March 2022

Cyber Security Awareness Newsletter

Protecting yourself and information from cyber security threats

Tax Season and Scams

This year tax season started on January 24th and the deadline to complete your filing is April 18th. Tax accountants across the country are ramping up for their busy season and so are the scammers. Below are some basic simple tips to help protect yourself.

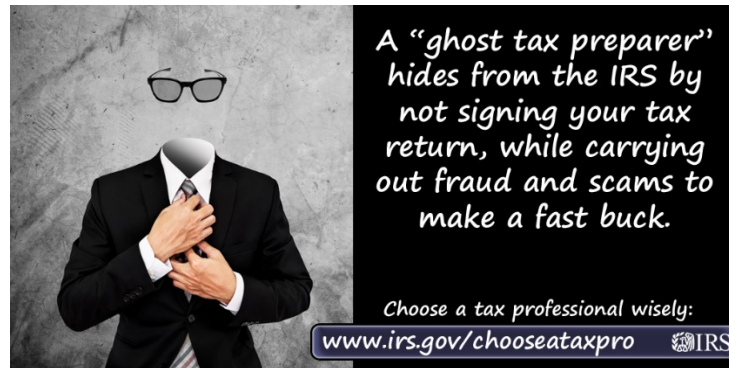


If you are hiring a tax professional, work only with a legitimate and reputable Tax Preparer. You can validate a preparer's credentials with the IRS ([here](#)). By law, anyone who is paid to prepare or assist in preparing federal tax returns must have a valid [Preparer Tax Identification Number](#), or PTIN. Any preparer will have a PTIN you can use to verify and check their reputation. Do not hire anyone who 'promises' a high return and charges a fee based on the return. Avoid a "ghost preparer," or someone who wants to make a fast buck and does not sign a tax return they prepare.

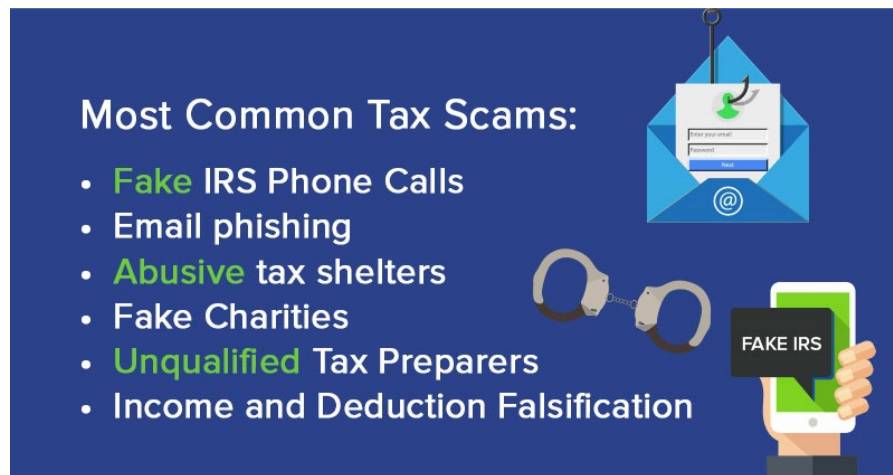
Ghost tax return preparers may also:

- Require payment in cash only and not provide a receipt.
- Invent income to qualify their clients for tax credits.
- Claim fake deductions to boost the size of the refund.

- Direct refunds into their bank account, not the taxpayer's account.

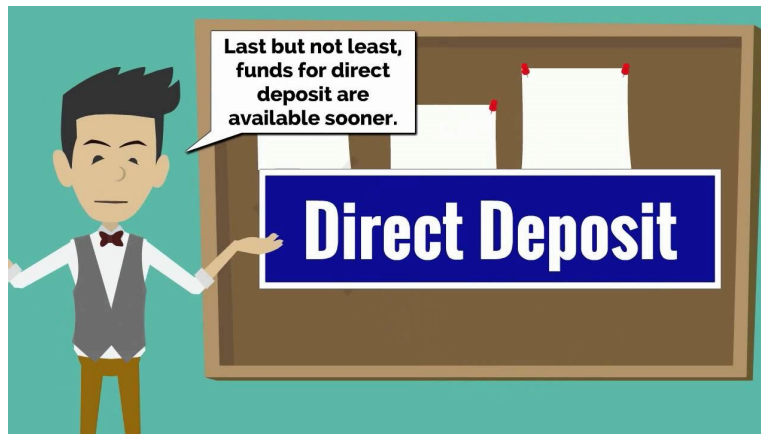


- Never respond to phone calls or voice-messages purporting to be the IRS. The IRS will always contact you by US Mail. Scammers will often use social engineering to create panic in victims, claiming audits, wage garnishment, or other fear inducing terms to trick people into divulging personal information or bank accounts.
- Tax Assistance Program (TAP) scams. Victims receive an offer of assistance in their tax preparation, but after submitting their details, the ghost preparers disappear once they have file the refund, deposit it into their account, or drain the victim's bank account.



- Keep your SSN, W2s and other tax information safe. If your employer offers electronic delivery, opt in, and keep them in a secure personal computer. Do not download personal tax documents on a work or public computer.
- If you receive paper W2s, know when they are expected to arrive and contact your employer if they are not received in time.

- Use direct deposit if you can. Tax refund checks are easily spotted by criminals, and they are aware of when they start to arrive. While the US Postal Service can be relied on to deliver your refund, criminals can often take them from mailboxes.



Q: Where can I find more information?

A: The IRS [website](#) has lots of useful information about current scams and best practices to stay safe.

Q: I think I'm a victim of tax fraud! What do I do?

A: To report tax-related illegal activities, refer to the IRS chart explaining the types of activity and the appropriate forms or other methods to use. You should also report instances of IRS-related phishing attempts and fraud to the [Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration](#) at [800-366-4484](#).

Taxpayers who experience tax-related identity theft may wonder when they should file a Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit.

See: [When to file a Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit](#)