

Guide to filing your taxes in 2022

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting financial impact, Congress expanded tax benefits which may increase the amount of money you receive through your tax refund. While you may have received some advanced payments during 2021, including the Child Tax Credit, you may be eligible to access other benefits when you file a tax return in 2022.

Whether you've previously filed taxes, or this is your first time, your tax refund can provide a great opportunity to get ahead financially, either by paying down debt or saving for the future.

Here's our guide to filing your taxes in 2022.

- Increased tax benefits
- Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) payments
- Getting ready to file
- How to get your money
- Make a plan for your tax refund
- Watch out for scams

Increased tax benefits

Child Tax Credit (CTC)

The CTC is a tax benefit to families with children. In 2021, this benefit increased, and a portion of the credit - normally only available at tax time - was sent to many families as advance payments throughout the year. For 2021 the CTC is fully refundable, meaning if you don't owe any tax you will get the full amount for which you are eligible as part of your tax refund.

How much you may be eligible to receive

How to claim the CTC through your 2021 taxes

Child and Dependent Care Credit (CDCC)

The CDCC is a tax credit to help families pay for care of their eligible children and other dependents who are not able to care for themselves.

In 2021, the amount of money that taxpayers could receive to reimburse their childcare costs increased. This means if you spent money on childcare expenses while working or actively looking for work, a higher portion of your childcare expenses can be reimbursed. For example, a family with children under age 13 or other qualified dependents may be able to receive 50 percent (increased from 35%) of their 2021 childcare costs, up to a certain amount.

How much you may be eligible to receive

How to claim the CDCC through your 2021 taxes

Earned income tax credit (EITC)

The EITC is a tax benefit for low-to-moderate income workers with earned income, who are generally 19 years old or older. In 2021, the maximum amount of the EITC increased, and more people are eligible to apply for the credit.

How much you may be eligible to receive

Recovery rebate credits (Economic Impact Payments) for 2020 and 2021

To provide financial relief during pandemic, many Americans received three Economic Impact Payments (EIP) in 2020 and 2021. The third payment, which began rolling out in March 2021, served as an advance payment of the 2021 Recovery Rebate Credit.

How much you may be eligible to receive

How to claim the EIP through your 2021 taxes

Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) payments

If you received ERA payments to cover rent, utilities, or home energy expenses in 2021 these payments are not considered taxable income and do not need to be declared on your tax return.

[More information is available from the IRS](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/emergency-rental-assistance-frequently-asked-questions#collapseCollapsible1621359159472) [↗](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/emergency-rental-assistance-frequently-asked-questions#collapseCollapsible1621359159472) (https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/emergency-rental-assistance-frequently-asked-questions#collapseCollapsible1621359159472)

Getting ready to file

Depending on your situation, there may be free or low-cost options for filing your tax return. If you're not preparing and filing your return yourself, it's important to choose a reputable tax preparer that will file an accurate return. Any mistakes could result in additional costs and complications in the future including delays in receiving any tax refund.

You can get free tax preparation assistance by IRS-certified volunteers at a [Volunteer Income Tax Assistance \(VITA\)](https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-you-by-volunteers) [↗](https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-you-by-volunteers) (https://www.irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-you-by-volunteers) or a Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) location if:

- Your income is \$57,000 or less
- You are 60 years old or older, or
- You have a disability or speak limited English

[Find a VITA or TCE site in your community](https://www.getyourrefund.org/en/vita_providers) [↗](https://www.getyourrefund.org/en/vita_providers) (https://www.getyourrefund.org/en/vita_providers)

If you're not eligible for VITA, TCE, or there's not a site in your community, here are additional free resources available for filing your tax return:

- If you earned less than \$73,000 in 2021 and would like assistance so you can prepare and file your own return, you can get support with free tax preparation or software through [MyFreeTaxes](#) ()
- If you're a member of the military or a military dependent, you can get [free tax help](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/military-members-get-free-tax-help) [↗](https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/military-members-get-free-tax-help) (https://www.irs.gov/newsroom/military-members-get-free-tax-help) from the [Military OneSource program](https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/tax-resource-center/miltax-military-tax-services/) [↗](https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/tax-resource-center/miltax-military-tax-services/) (https://www.militaryonesource.mil/financial-legal/tax-resource-center/miltax-military-tax-services/)
- If you are not eligible to file at a VITA or TCE site, or if there is not a site nearby, there are also other free resources available for filing your tax return. If your income is more than \$73,000, you can still [download free tax filing forms](https://www.irs.gov/forms-instructions) [↗](https://www.irs.gov/forms-instructions) (https://www.irs.gov/forms-instructions) through the IRS.

How to get your money

The quickest and safest way to receive your tax refund is through direct deposit. Here are some things to think about before you file your return.

- **If you already have an account with a bank or credit union**, make sure you have your information ready -- including the account number and routing number -- when you file your tax return. You can provide that information on the tax form and the IRS will automatically deposit the funds into your account
- **If you have a prepaid card that accepts direct deposit**, you can also receive your refund on the card. Check with your prepaid card provider to get the routing and account number assigned to the card before you file your return.

[Learn more about choosing the right prepaid card](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/prepaid-cards/choose-the-right-card/) (<https://www.consumerfinance.gov/consumer-tools/prepaid-cards/choose-the-right-card/>)

- **If you don't already have an account or a prepaid card**, you could consider opening an account. Many banks and credit unions offer accounts with low (or no) monthly maintenance fees when you have direct deposit or maintain a minimum balance. These accounts may limit the types of fees you can incur and may also offer free access to in-network automated teller machines (ATMs). You can often open these accounts easily online.

[Learn more about the FDIC's #GetBanked campaign](https://www.fdic.gov/getbanked/index.html) [↗](https://www.fdic.gov/getbanked/index.html) (<https://www.fdic.gov/getbanked/index.html>)

Make a plan for your tax refund

Tax refunds each year often provide an opportunity for people to catch up on bills and even get ahead. With the increased tax benefits, you may be eligible for more money when you file in 2022, providing an opportunity to take care of immediate needs or work towards future goals. The CFPB has some resources to help you make a plan.

1. **Create a cash-flow budget** [↕](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_your-money-your-goals_cash_flow_budget_tool_2018-11_ADA.pdf) (https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_your-money-your-goals_cash_flow_budget_tool_2018-11_ADA.pdf). A cash-flow budget is all about tracking the timing of your income and expenses to make sure you have enough from week to week. Knowing what your normal income and expenses are and when they occur can help you think about how to use your tax refund to fill any gaps. For example, you may want to set aside a portion of your refund just so you have enough to pay the rent or the utility bills because they come due before you get your regular paycheck.
2. **Develop a debt action plan** [↕](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_your-money-your-goals_debt-action-plan_tool_2018-11.pdf) (https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_your-money-your-goals_debt-action-plan_tool_2018-11.pdf). Over the past two years many people have had to borrow money just to get by. And they may also have past debt they are struggling to pay. Picking a strategy to repay your debt can help you start reducing it and make progress toward

achieving your goals. Once you identify all your debt obligations you can consider how your tax refund may help to pay down or even pay off one or more of your debts.

3. **Make a plan to save** [📄](https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_taxtime_worksheet.pdf) (https://files.consumerfinance.gov/f/documents/cfpb_taxtime_worksheet.pdf). If you feel in control of your cash flow, and your debt situation is looking better now may be the time to make a plan to save. You may want to consider setting aside a portion of your tax refund for unexpected expenses that often pop up throughout the year. If you still have money left over, you may want to think about saving for other longer-term goals such as your child's education.
4. **Do something nice for yourself.** It's always good to think about the things you have always wanted but could never quite afford. If you can afford it consider using some of your tax refund to treat yourself or your family to something that will make you happy.

Watch out for scams

Many people have received their advance CTC payments this year, but scammers are taking advantage of this new program by contacting people by phone, text, email, and social media, and pretending to be the IRS, often sending people to a fake IRS website.

[Learn more about CTC scams and how to avoid them](https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2021/11/child-tax-credit-scammers-are-still-reaching-out) [🔗](#) (https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/blog/2021/11/child-tax-credit-scammers-are-still-reaching-out)

Scammers are taking advantage of the coronavirus pandemic to con people into giving up their money. During this time of uncertainty, knowing about possible scams is a good first step toward preventing them

[Learn more about frauds and scams and how to avoid them](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/avoiding-scams/) (https://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/avoiding-scams/)

Submit a complaint

Having a problem with a financial product or service? We have answers to frequently asked questions and can help you connect with companies if you have a complaint.

[Learn more about submitting a complaint](https://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint/) (https://www.consumerfinance.gov/complaint/)

Questions about other financial services

If you have a question about other types of financial services you can find many answers at [AskCFPB](#) ().

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 An official website of the United States government