



## How To Pick A Tax Professional

(NAPSA)—If you're like most taxpayers, according to the IRS, you hire a professional to help you file your tax return—after all, a mistake could mean fines, penalties, even prison. If you do hire one, you should know that no matter who prepares the form, you are legally responsible for what's on it.

### **Eight Hints On Tax Help**

Here are eight tips to keep in mind when choosing a tax preparer:

1. Check to be sure the preparer has an IRS Preparer Tax Identification Number (PTIN). Anyone with a valid 2015 PTIN is authorized to prepare federal tax returns.

2. Find out the fees up front. Avoid preparers who base theirs on a percentage of your refund or who say they can get larger refunds than others can.

3. Always make sure any refund due is sent to you or deposited into your bank account, not the preparer's.

4. Be sure your preparer offers IRS e-file and ask that your return be submitted to the IRS electronically. Any tax professional who gets paid to prepare and file more than 10 returns generally must file the returns electronically. It's the safest and most accurate way to file a return, whether you do it alone or pay someone to prepare and file for you.

5. Make sure the preparer will be available. You should be able to contact the tax preparer after you file your return—even after the April 18 due date. This may be helpful in the event questions come up about your tax return.

6. Good preparers will ask to see your records and receipts. They'll ask you questions to determine your total income, deductions, tax credits and other items. Don't rely on a preparer who's willing to e-file your return using your last pay stub instead of your



**Tax return preparers learn your most personal information. It's wise to find one you can trust.**

Form W-2. This is against IRS e-file rules.

7. Don't use a tax preparer who asks you to sign an incomplete or blank tax form.

8. Ask the tax preparer if he or she is an enrolled agent (EA), belongs to a professional organization or attends continuing education classes. A number of tax law changes can be complex. A competent tax professional needs to be up-to-date in these matters. EAs are the only federally licensed tax practitioners who specialize in taxes and have unlimited rights to represent taxpayers before the IRS. Individuals who obtain this elite status must adhere to ethical standards and complete 72 hours of continuing education every three years—90 to be a member of the National Association of Enrolled Agents (NAEA).

“Enrolled agents, America's tax experts, make sure their clients take advantage of all the credits and deductions they're entitled to,” explains NAEA President Terry Durkin, EA. “And, with the IRS's increased emphasis on enforcement, it's more critical than ever to have an EA making sure your taxes are done correctly.”

### **Learn More**

For further facts about enrolled agents, including how to find one nearby, go to [www.eatax.org](http://www.eatax.org).