



Beware of tax time scams

English

With only days left before individual tax returns must be lodged, the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) is concerned about the increasing number of people being tricked by scammers.

Scammers will target unsuspecting people at this time of year and will try to trick you into:

- paying them money for a fake tax debt
- giving them your personal information.

If a scammer knows enough about your online identity, they can pretend to be you and:

- take out loans in your name
- lodge false tax returns or BAS statements
- claim government benefits, or
- gain access to your superannuation (super).

How to spot a scam

Tax scams can be difficult to spot but these are some warning signs you can look for:

- unexpected emails, social media or text messages that ask you to click a link or provide copies of identity documents
- job ads that ask for your TFN as part of the application process
- online ads that ask for your personal information.

Also, if a scammer contacts you, they may behave strangely, for example:

- demand immediate payment in unusual ways (like gift cards)
- say that you will be arrested if you don't pay them immediately
- be abusive or threatening.

How to stay safe from scams

Your personal details are very important, so only share them with people you trust. Be careful when sharing your:

- full name
- date of birth
- current address
- tax file number (TFN)
- bank details
- credit card details
- driver's licence or passport details

- myGov login details
- passwords.

What to do if you suspect a scam

Here are some steps you can take if you think you have been contacted by a scammer:

- Delete suspicious emails and text messages
- Hang up the phone if someone says they're from the ATO and the caller is threatening you
- Don't click links asking you to provide personal information.
- Think carefully about responding to an email or text. Always check the contact details first.
- Ask someone you trust if you feel unsure about a scam or call the ATO on **1800 008 540** to check if it is real.

When do I need to lodge my tax return?

If you're doing your own tax return, you need to lodge it by 31 October. If a registered tax agent is helping you, you need to start working with them before 31 October.

Where to get help

For more information about protecting yourself and your family from scams, visit the ATO website at ato.gov.au/scams or talk to a registered tax agent.

See also:

- *Identity crime* at ato.gov.au/IdentityCrime
- *Is it a scam? Easy Read* at ato.gov.au/EasyRead.

Important: some people who charge money to help with your tax return may be trying to scam you. Registered tax agents are the only people allowed to charge a fee to lodge your tax return. You can check whether your tax agent is registered at tpb.gov.au.

Disclaimer: This information is a general summary only and was current at 15 October 2020.

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