

Tax Filing Decision Worksheet

Chapter 2.3: Understanding Tax Filing Requirements

Introduction

This worksheet helps you determine whether you need to file a federal income tax return based on your personal situation. By working through each section, you'll identify your filing status, income sources, and whether you meet the filing thresholds.

Important: This worksheet is based on general tax filing requirements and should be used for educational purposes only. Tax laws and filing thresholds change annually. Always verify current requirements on the official IRS website at www.irs.gov.

Section 1: Personal Information

Name:

Tax Year:

Age as of December 31:

Dependency Status:

Can someone else claim you as a dependent?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure

Section 2: Filing Status Determination

Check the box that best describes your situation as of December 31:

☐ **Single:** Unmarried, divorced, or legally separated

☐ **Married:** Legally married and living with spouse

If married, do you plan to file:

☐ Jointly with your spouse ☐ Separately from your spouse

☐ **Head of Household Potential:** Unmarried (or considered unmarried) AND paying more than half the cost of keeping up a home for yourself and a qualifying person

☐ **Qualifying Widow(er) Potential:** Spouse died within the last two years, you haven't remarried, and you have a dependent child

Based on selections above, my likely filing status is:

Section 3: Income Sources

Check all income sources you had this year and provide estimated amounts:

Income Source	Check if Applies	Estimated Amount	Form Typically Received
Wages/Salary	<input type="checkbox"/>		W-2
Self-Employment Income	<input type="checkbox"/>		1099-NEC, 1099-MISC
Interest Income	<input type="checkbox"/>		1099-INT
Dividend Income	<input type="checkbox"/>		1099-DIV
Unemployment Compensation	<input type="checkbox"/>		1099-G
Social Security Benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>		SSA-1099
Scholarships/Grants	<input type="checkbox"/>		1098-T
Other Income:	<input type="checkbox"/>		Varies
Other Income:	<input type="checkbox"/>		Varies
Total Estimated Gross Income:			

Do you have self-employment income of \$400 or more? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Note: If you have self-employment income of \$400 or more, you generally must file a tax return regardless of your total income.

Section 4: Filing Requirement Analysis

Step 1: Enter the minimum filing threshold for your filing status and age:

(e.g., For 2024, Single under 65: \$14,600; Married Filing Jointly both under 65: \$29,200; etc.)

Step 2: Compare your Total Estimated Gross Income to the filing threshold:

☐ My income is **BELOW** the filing threshold ☐ My income is **ABOVE** the filing threshold

Step 3: Check if any special situations apply:

☐ I have self-employment income of \$400 or more ☐ I owe special taxes (alternative minimum tax, household employment taxes, etc.) ☐ I received advance payments of premium tax credit ☐ I have taxable scholarships/fellowships not reported on W-2

Based on the analysis above, do you need to file a federal tax return? ☐ Yes, I am required to file ☐ No, I am not required to file ☐ Not required, but I should file to claim refunds or credits

Section 5: Reasons to File Even If Not Required

Check if any of these situations apply to you:

☐ **Federal income tax was withheld from my pay**

You may be entitled to a refund of this withheld tax.

☐ **You made estimated tax payments or had last year's refund applied to this year's taxes**

You should file to receive any excess payments back as a refund.

☐ **You qualify for the Earned Income Tax Credit**

This is a refundable credit for low to moderate-income workers.

☐ **You qualify for the Additional Child Tax Credit**

This refundable credit may be available if you have qualifying children.

☐ **You qualify for the American Opportunity Education Credit**

This partially refundable credit is for eligible education expenses.

☐ **You qualify for the Premium Tax Credit**

This credit helps eligible individuals and families cover the premiums for health insurance purchased through the Health Insurance Marketplace.

☐ **You want to start the statute of limitations for a tax audit**

The IRS generally has three years from the filing date to audit your return.

Based on checking the boxes above, should you file even if not required? ☐ Yes, I should file to claim refunds or credits ☐ No, I don't need to file

Section 6: Forms You May Need

Based on your situation, check the forms you may need to prepare your tax return:

☐ **Form 1040** - U.S. Individual Income Tax Return (required for all filers)

☐ **Schedule 1** - Additional Income and Adjustments to Income

For reporting business income, unemployment compensation, student loan interest deduction, etc.

☐ **Schedule C** - Profit or Loss From Business

For reporting self-employment income and expenses

☐ **Schedule EIC** - Earned Income Credit

For claiming the Earned Income Credit with a qualifying child

☐ **Schedule SE** - Self-Employment Tax

For calculating self-employment tax if you have self-employment income

☐ **Form 8863** - Education Credits

For claiming education credits like the American Opportunity Credit and Lifetime Learning Credit

Other forms you may need:

Section 7: Action Plan

Based on your answers above, what is your plan for tax filing this year?

What documents do you need to collect?

Questions you still have about your tax filing requirements:

Planned filing method: ☐ File myself using tax software ☐ File myself on paper forms ☐ Use a tax professional ☐ Use free filing assistance (VITA/TCE programs) ☐

Other:

