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Welcome. We admit it! No one likes doing taxes. Some of you may be done -- congratulations! And some of you may be looking at piles of information from work, banks, and investment firms wondering when you're going to have time to figure it all out. This month we're taking a look at how the new and much improved IRS.gov website can help you. They've even added an app that might make it a little more fun.

The good thing about taxes is that it's a time when you have a good snapshot of all your finances. Take the next steps after you file to improve retirement savings and tune up your spending for 2011. Always remember that we're here to help you stay *On Course*.

-Jennifer Lane, CFP

IRS.gov -- Can filing taxes be fun?

The IRS has improved their website. Here are some highlights.

IRS2Go

If you own a smart phone, the IRS has created an app for you. Go to your app store (iTunes for iPhone; Marketplace for Android) to download IRS2Go. Then you can:

- Get your refund status
- Get tax updates
- Follow the IRS

Electronic filing now requires a PIN

- The IRS is requiring a self-selected PIN in lieu of signature for electronic filing this year.
- You can file electronically if you filed a 2009 Form 1040, 1040-A, 1040-EZ and the IRS processed the form by 12/10/10.
- You need your social security number or TIN, first and last name, date of birth, filing status, and complete mailing address as it appeared on your 2009 tax return.
- Go to [Electronic Filing Pin-Help](#) tool or call 1-866-704-7388.

IRS -- Free File

This year you can file for free with brand-name software or online fillable forms. sorry, this applies only to federal -- not state -- returns.

- Eligibility: Using your 2009 tax return, look at your adjusted gross income (AGI). If it's \$58,000 or less, then you're eligible to use the free file. If your AGI is greater than \$58,000 and you are comfortable preparing your own taxes, you can use the IRS Free File Fillable Forms.
- With e-file, you can file for free, use direct deposit, and pay electronically.

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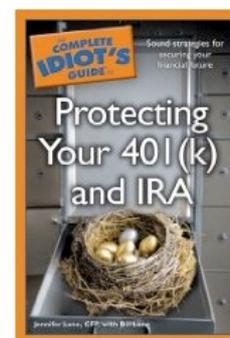
[Monthly Tip](#)



Jennifer's Hint

Your annual contribution limit applies to all your IRA accounts, not each individual account if you have several. You will be penalized for over-contributing only. If you contribute under the maximum, there are no penalties. If you do find that you over-contributed, you can avoid penalties if you withdraw the excess before you file your tax return.

Get more tips in Jennifer's book



[\(click here for link\)](#)

Helpful Websites

And, finally, good news for filing -- this year's deadline for federal filing is April 18, 2011. Note: even though Massachusetts residents can file their state taxes on April 19, they must file their federal taxes on Monday, April 18.

[IRS website](#)

[IRS2Go](#)

[IRS Free File](#)

[Bankrate.com's Tax Guide](#)

Q&A

Q: The tax preparation service I use will charge me \$500 this year. Can I use an online service?

-- Charles from Burlington

A: You need to understand what you're getting with each option. If you have a straightforward situation and understand how the taxes work, then an online service will probably be fine. If you have tax situations with which you're unfamiliar, then it may make more sense to have a tax preparer do them. In some cases, preparers can save you money by finding deductions you missed.

[Ten Key Tax Terms](#)

What's New



- *Jennifer's Compass.* Jennifer recently spoke with NECN on how to plan for buying a home. Click [here](#) to watch the information-packed video on her blog.
- We now have a Facebook page. Visit www.facebook.com/AskJennifer and like us!
- Jennifer is now appearing on NECN every other Monday morning at 9:30 am in addition to her Tuesday 5:00 pm and 6:30 pm appearances.
- On May 12, 2011, Jennifer will be on a panel for Adler Blanchard & Freeman's Entrepreneurial Series: Women in Business -- Startup to Success.

[Compass Planning Associates](#) helps families, individuals, and small-business clients achieve financial security, knowledge, and control over their money. Our **fee-only, client-centered approach** provides education and guidance for achieving financial goals and dreams.

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