

# 5 tips to help you file taxes by April 15

The April 15 tax deadline will be here faster than many of us can finish off that last box of Girl Scout cookies.

So we're going to tackle some questions that tax preparers say are top of mind this season.

## USA TODAY

### No. 1: Why do I owe so much for taxes?

Erin Nielsen, an accounting senior at Walsh College in Troy, Mich., volunteers to prepare taxes at the Accounting Aid Society. She has heard complaints from some upset filers who owe taxes, even though their income is low enough to qualify for free tax help. They don't understand why they're not getting a refund.

Some people receive a nasty surprise because they may be claiming too many dependents and don't have enough money for taxes withheld from their paychecks, said Nielsen, 33, who hopes to log about 72 volunteer hours by the end of the tax season.

Or, she said, some filers may owe the city income taxes, again because taxes were not withheld.

Consumers who are in a tight spot might want to resubmit a [W-4 form](#) for the 2015 year and turn that form into one's employer to [change how much tax is withheld](#) from each paycheck. Re-doing the W-4 now might avoid tax headaches next tax season.

### No. 2: Why do I get strange letters from the Internal Revenue Service?

Some taxpayers are concerned about a letter they've received from the IRS called a [5071C Letter](#) that asks the taxpayer to verify that they did indeed file their tax return.

Dan Hoops, associate professor of accounting and taxation at Walsh College and faculty liaison between Walsh and the Accounting Aid Society, said the 5071C letter is sent because the filed return contains various inconsistencies with their tax returns in previous years.

The 5071C letter is part of the IRS effort to crack down on tax scams.

"Receiving this letter is simply a head's-up and something you should be glad to receive," Hoops said.

The letter indicates that the government spotted a possible fraudulent return that contains a real taxpayer's name and/or Social Security number.

The IRS said taxpayers receive a 5071C via the U.S. Postal Service in order to make sure the taxpayer verifies his or her identity. The IRS is not requesting this information via e-mail or telephone. The taxpayers who receive a 5071C in the mail can either call the toll-free number on the letter or verify identification at [idverify.irs.gov](http://idverify.irs.gov). Only taxpayers who receive a letter should go to [idverify.irs.gov](http://idverify.irs.gov).

Taxpayers will need to verify some information during this process, such as name, date of birth, Social Security Number and some key information from your 2014 tax return.