



Tax Season Best Practices

We thank you for choosing Schanel & Associates, PA as your tax advisor. We truly appreciate your business, and we look forward to working with you this upcoming season. Below is a list of best practices to keep in mind when working with us to prepare your tax return. We will do our best to give you outstanding service, and if you keep these guidelines in mind, you will help us to do our best work for you.

- 1. Keep your documents organized throughout the year.** We recommend that you have a designated file (either physical or electronic) to store all your tax-related documents as they come in during the year. Increasingly, our clients are scanning their tax documents and maintaining an electronic tax file. Either way, doing it throughout the year is always easier than waiting until the tax season.
- 2. Set up an IRS account.** Dealing with the IRS can be made a little bit easier by setting up an IRS account at [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov). Once your account is established, you can easily access a record of your account, make payments, view transcripts, and grant third party authorization to your tax preparer. Click this link to access instructions: <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p5507.pdf>.
- 3. Complete a tax questionnaire.** Completing our tax questionnaire allow us to better understand your situation and identify any issues that may need to be addressed. The questionnaire, along with our engagement letter, can be completed by using our secure, online "tax portal" from our partners at [Soroban](https://app.soraban.com/). To gain access, click here: <https://app.soraban.com/>.
- 4. Upload your tax documents:** As a matter of necessity, we are a paperless firm. Currently, one of our key team members works from home, and in the future, some of our professional staff will likely be located in a different city or state. Fortunately, uploading your documents is easier than ever. To upload your documents, use the same [tax portal](#) where you complete your questionnaire and engagement letter. The portal allows you to upload your tax documents as you complete the questionnaire, or at your convenience.
- 5. If you are providing physical documents, keep the originals, give us copies.** If you prefer to drop off or mail in your documents, please provide us with copies of your tax documents rather than originals. If you need assistance with copying or scanning, please contact our office and one of our team members can assist you. If you mail in

originals, we will generally scan the documents and send the originals back to you immediately to minimize the physical paperwork in our offices.

- 6. We do not require receipts.** Receipts may be necessary in the event of an IRS audit, but in most cases we do not require any receipts to prepare your tax return. Please provide your deductible expenses using the questionnaire, or in an organized schedule such as a spreadsheet or word document. This will keep your fees lower and allow your tax preparer to focus on providing tax advice and other value-added services.
- 7. Bring us your tax information as early as possible.** If you have your information ready, get your documents to us right away. Once we have your information, this puts you in our queue so we can quickly begin the tax preparation process. If you wait until late March, we may not be able to complete your tax return by the deadline. After April 1st, we ask that you consider waiting until after April 15th to drop off any documents so our team can focus on getting completed returns out. We will file the necessary extensions.
- 8. Appointments are limited between February 15 and April 15th.** During the height of busy season, face-to-face appointment availability is very limited. We generally encourage tax planning meetings in November and December, and review meetings in May and June. If you are part of our year-round subscription tax package, this schedule is built into your service calendar and we will contact you accordingly.
- 9. Designate a primary contact.** If you are married and filing a joint tax return, we ask that you assign one spouse as the main point of contact.
- 10. Provide a narrative if necessary.** In addition to providing your tax documents and completing the tax questionnaire, it is sometimes helpful to provide a narrative explaining your overall situation. This is particularly helpful when something about your tax situation has changed. There is a place at the end of the tax questionnaire to provide such a narrative.
- 11. Review your tax return.** We do our best to prepare an accurate and complete tax return from the information you provide, but we still ask that you review your tax return carefully. Ultimately, it is your responsibility to make sure everything is reported correctly. If you do see an issue or have a question, don't hesitate to contact us and we will address it immediately.
- 12. Follow the filing instructions carefully.** Once we have completed your return, you will receive an email communication that includes detailed filing instructions. Please read and follow these instructions carefully. In most cases you will be required to sign an e-file authorization form electronically.
- 13. Make your tax payments to the IRS.** If you have a balance due, we will provide instructions on how to make your payment to the IRS, which you will need to take care

of on your own. If you are required to make quarterly estimated tax payments, we will provide vouchers and instructions for payment.

14. Don't shoot the messenger. No one likes a surprise tax bill, so if that happens to you, please keep in mind that we have already done everything we can within the law to minimize your tax liability. We will be happy to work with you to reduce the chances of any surprises going forward.

15. Consider contacting us between October and December. One way to avoid tax surprises is to contact us during the last quarter of the year to have us review your tax situation. At that time, we can look at your tax withholding, help you budget for any upcoming tax payments, and look ahead to tax planning opportunities for the coming year. If you are part of our year-round subscription tax package, this offering is included.

16. Become familiar with due dates. Here are some of the due dates you need to be aware of:

- Personal tax returns are due April 15
- Estimated tax payments for personal returns:
 - 1st Quarter due April 15
 - 2nd Quarter due June 15
 - 3rd Quarter due September 15
 - 4th Quarter due January 15
- Partnership and S-corporation tax returns are due March 15
- Corporation tax returns are due April 15
- Estate and Trust tax returns are due April 15.

Six-month extensions are allowed for both personal and business tax returns. However, there is no extension on the time to pay your taxes.

17. Understand how late penalties work. For corporate and partnership filings, there is a penalty for not filing by the deadline even if no tax is due. Therefore, filing your tax return or extension in a timely manner is critical. For personal returns, all penalties are calculated based on any balance due. Therefore, making sure any outstanding tax liabilities are paid by the due date (April 15th) is crucial.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. Do not hesitate to contact our office if you have any questions or concerns.