

You may get a bigger refund in this year's taxes. Here are key points you need to know.

BY SARAH MORENO

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How to get more time to file
your tax return

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You can get an extension to file your tax return but make your tax payment by the April due date. Here are instructions on how to get more time to file.

By Internal Revenue Service

It's tax season, and many people are asking themselves how they will be affected by recent tax-law changes that will impact the 2018 tax returns.

Will there be a bigger refund? Can you still file an itemized deduction? What are the most important tax credits, and how much will they benefit me?

While the process may appear confusing because 2018 is the first year to reflect all the changes — 2017 included only a few changes — the process of filing tax returns is now simpler, said Ana M. Cruz, head of the business department at Miami Dade College (MDC).

With the increase in standard deductions, many taxpayers will not have to itemize their deductions, although that will continue to be an option for those who have lots of expenses, said Cruz.

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She added that most taxpayers can expect to see an increase in their refunds.

Under the new law, the standard deductions nearly doubled from 2017. For 2018, couples who file jointly can take \$24,000 as their standard deduction, up from \$12,700. For single individuals or married persons who file separately, the deduction is \$12,000, up from \$6,350 in 2017. Heads of family will receive a standard deduction of \$18,000.

[The credit for children under 17 years of age will be \\$2,000 this year](#), double the amount from 2017.

Many taxpayers may also qualify for a new \$500 credit — [Credit for Other Dependents](#) — for a dependent in their household who doesn't meet the definition of qualifying child.

Cruz also pointed to a key credit that many people forget, the Earned Income Credit. To be eligible, 2018 income can be no higher than \$54,884. The credit can be used by both individuals and married couples, so the actual limit on income varies. To see an estimate of what this credit could mean to you, [click on this IRS page](#).

The credit may boost your refund from just over \$500 to \$6,431, depending on how many children a taxpayer has. The children have to be 19 or younger, or be no older than 24 if they are full-time students.

Education credits remain in place, with the [American Opportunity Tax Credit](#) allowing taxpayers to deduct \$2,500 for each child enrolled in the first four years of university studies. The credit applies to families whose adjusted gross income is \$80,000 or less for individuals or \$160,000 or less for married filing jointly.

[The Lifetime Learning Tax Credit](#) allows a \$2,000 deduction for graduate and post-graduate studies.

FREE HELP FOR FILING

Cruz said MDC students will be helping the elderly and poor with their tax returns as part of the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA) Feb. 5-April 13 at all MDC campuses.

The returns will be reviewed by professors and sent electronically to the IRS to expedite the refunds.



MDC students and teachers help low-income and elderly people prepare their taxes as part of the VITA program.

MDC

Those interested in the help should bring their Social Security cards and the Social Security cards of any dependents that will be included in the tax return; a valid photo ID; W-2 forms from employers; 1099 forms if they work for themselves; and any documents showing expenses that may be written off. The program also recommends that people bring previous tax returns.

For more information about the [VITA program at MDC](#), call 305-237-3151.

The City of Miami also offers free tax preparation advice to residents. Interested people can call the community service offices at 305-960-5110.

IRS representatives will be available to help at the following locations:

▪ **Grapeland Heights Park:** 1550 NW 37 Ave;

▪ **Jose Marti Park:** 351 SW Fourth St.;

▪ **Moore Park:** 765 NW 36 St.

▪ **Robert King High Park:** 7025 W. Flagler St.

Miami Beach also offers help, at the Office of Housing and Community Services, 555 17th St. Appointments can be made by calling 305-673-7491.

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