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THE TAX LAWYER

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# Missing Tax Data? Get A Free IRS Transcript To Untangle The Mess

You should *never* throw out your old tax returns. Keep a copy forever. If the IRS statute of limitations has expired ([3 or 6 years](#) depending on the issue), you may be able to discard your receipts and work-papers. But tax returns themselves? Keep them forever.



Unfortunately, returns may be mislaid, lost or destroyed. There are fires, floods, and other mishaps, as well as plain old poor record-keeping. The IRS has heard every excuse in the book. See [IRS Publication 552, Recordkeeping for Individuals](#). If somehow you don't have an old tax return and need it, you can ask the IRS.

If the IRS doesn't have a copy of your return, you still may be able to get a "transcript" from the IRS of all the key numbers. Here's how.

- [Order a Transcript](#)
- [Form 4506-T-EZD](#), Short Form Request for Individual Tax Return Transcript
- [Form 4506-T](#), Request for Transcript of Tax Return
- [Form 4506](#), Request for Copy of Tax Form

Transcripts are free for the current and past three years. A tax return transcript shows most line items from your tax return as filed including accompanying forms and schedules. It does not reflect changes made after the return was filed. A tax account transcript shows any later adjustments you or the IRS made after you filed. This transcript shows basic data including marital status, type of return filed, adjusted gross income and taxable income.

To request either type, go to IRS.gov and use the [Order a Transcript](#) tool. To order by phone, call 800-908-9946 and follow the prompts. To request a 1040, 1040A or 1040EZ tax return transcript through the mail, complete IRS Form 4506T-EZ. Businesses, partnerships and individuals who need information from other forms or need a tax account transcript must use Form 4506-T.

If you need a copy of a previously filed tax return it costs \$57 for each year. Complete Form 4506 and mail it to the IRS address listed on the form for your area. Copies are generally available for the current year and past six years. The fee for copies of tax returns may be waived if you are in an area declared a federal disaster area. Visit IRS.gov, keyword “disaster,” for more guidance on disaster relief.

**YouTube Video** *How to Request a Copy Your Tax Return:* [English](#) / [Spanish](#) / [ASL](#)

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