

Too late for a paper tax return?

The deadline for completing a paper tax return for 2018/19 has now passed and late filing penalties will be charged if you now submit a paper tax return. But there is still time to complete and file a tax return using HMRC's on-line service and avoid a late filing penalty. Registering with HMRC to file online extends the deadline to 31st January 2020, which is the date by which you must have registered, filed your online tax return and paid any tax due.

There are different ways to file online depending on whether you are self-employed, or whether you have completed a tax return previously, and whether you already have a Personal Tax Account or use other Government Gateway Services. However the key steps are:

1. Register for self-assessment. If you have never registered previously then complete form SA1, <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/shortforms/form/SA1> . But if you are self employed or have filed a tax return before but not last year, then use a CWF1. <https://www.tax.service.gov.uk/shortforms/form/CWF1ST?dept-name=CWF1&sub-dep>. Both of these forms can be completed and sent electronically or you can complete them online and print and post them to HMRC.
2. Register for the online self assessment service - how you do this depends on whether you already have a Personal Tax Account and whether you have a government Gateway Account. In all cases, before you can use this online service, HMRC will send an 'activation code' in the post and this can take 10 days.
3. Access the self assessment online service - to do this you will either access the service through your Personal Tax account or the Government Gateway, in either case this involves using/setting up a User ID and Password. Keep this, you will need it each time you access the service.

As these steps take time don't be tempted to delay your tax return until the end of January!

For a more detailed explanation of these steps, please see the guide on our website, it can be found under 'Our Publications', 'Tax Help Guides' and is called 'Complete your online tax return step by step'

When you have managed to gain access to the self assessment online service using the steps above, select the year you wish to file a tax return for, then click on 'file return'. You will need to 'tailor your return' to suit your individual circumstances, depending on what types of income you receive.

You will need details of all your sources of taxable income and it is a good idea to have found the paperwork before you start. This is likely to include : P60s showing income from employment and pensions, P11D showing the value of any workplace benefits/benefits

received in retirement from former employer, State Pension, income and expenses from property, income from overseas pensions, investment income including dividends and interest, self-employment income and expenses.

The online form can be saved as you go, so can be filled in over a number of days. Remember to keep track of your progress by looking at the indicator at the top of each screen which shows how much of your tax return has been completed. After you have entered all of your income figures, it will provide you with a calculation.

Beware though at this stage the tax return has not actually been sent. Keep going until it is submitted to HMRC and then says 100% complete at the top of the screen. When submitted you will receive a submission receipt. Keep this receipt in case there is any dispute with HMRC at a later date.

Any problems you can call HMRC's self-assessment helpline on 0300 200 3310.

Remember, if you have received a 'notice to file' letter but do not think that you need to file a tax return then contact HMRC and if they agree that you do not need to file a tax return, they will cancel it. But if it is not cancelled and not filed, you will be charged penalties.

If you are on a low income you may want to consider contacting one of the tax charities for help: Tax Help for Older People, 01308 488066 or Tax Aid, if you are under 60 years old or self employed, 0345 120 3779.

This article is by Tax Help for Older People Registered Charity no 1102276 (Scotland no SC045819), offering free tax advice to older people on incomes below £20,000 a year. The Helpline number is 01308 488066.