

Why You Should File a 2020 Federal Tax Return

Federal verification regulations typically require IRS documentation to satisfy financial aid application requirements - even from students and/or parents who are not required to (and did not) file a tax return.

In addition to a signed statement (the Non-Tax Filer form), you may be required to request a form from the IRS that documents your non-filing status and income. The only way to request this form is by paper form submission (fax or mail). **To simplify your application process and potential delays in receiving aid, we strongly encourage you to file a 2020 federal tax return if you had any income.**

Filing could also result in a tax refund for you if one or more of your employers withheld income tax from your pay. Employers take out a percentage of your pay and give it to the government as pre-payment of tax to ensure you pay what you owe without any penalty.

Do I Have to File A Federal Tax Return?

Per [IRS Publication 17](#), if your parent (or someone else) claims you as a dependent on their federal tax return, then you're required to file if **any** of the following **IRS requirements** are true for you:

IRS Tax Filing Requirement	What does "income" mean?
1. Your unearned income was over \$1,100; or	<i>Unearned income</i> includes taxable interest, ordinary dividends, and capital gain distributions. It also includes unemployment compensation, taxable social security benefits, pensions, annuities, and distributions of unearned income from a trust.
2. Your earned income was over \$12,400; or	<i>Earned income</i> includes salaries, wages, tips, professional fees, and taxable scholarship and fellowship grants. Your Williams W-2 and 1099-MISC earnings plus your taxable scholarship are considered earned income.
3. Your gross income was more than the larger of— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ \$1,100, or ▪ Your earned income (up to \$12,050) plus \$350 	<i>Gross income</i> is the total of your unearned and earned income.

To find out if your parent (or someone else) can claim you as a dependent, see [IRS publication 501](#). This publication also answers general IRS tax filing requirement questions. If the above chart does not apply to you, we encourage you to review Publication 501. For most people (or married couples with both spouses) under the age of 65, the IRS tax filing requirements are as follows:

IF your filing status is . . .	AND your gross income* was at least . . .	THEN . . .
Single	\$ 12,400	File a return
Married filing jointly**	\$ 24,800	File a return

* *Gross income* means all income you received in the form of money, goods, property, and services that is not exempt from tax, including any income from sources outside the United States or from the sale of your main home (even if you can exclude part or all of it). **Your Williams W-2 and 1099-MISC earnings plus your taxable scholarship are considered earned income.**

** If you didn't live with your spouse at the end of 2020 (or on the date your spouse died) and your gross income was at least \$5, you must file a return regardless of your age.