

How to Get Organized for Tax Season

by Kathryn Bechen

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Does April 15th strike fear in your heart? Here are some “tongue-in-cheek tips” to help you get to the heart of filing your taxes!

1. Promptly on April 13th gather together the shopping bag of mixed papers you’ve been collecting in your hall closet.
2. Separate the home-based business tax papers from your children’s art work and the dog food coupons. If you become overwhelmed, put everything back in the shopping bags, but leave them on the kitchen table instead of in your home office so you won’t forget about the impending deadline.
3. Next, gather your three preschoolers and run to the Post Office to get the IRS forms you’ll need. Not sure which ones apply to your situation? Grab one of each. They can be easily stored in another shopping bag in the hall closet and retrieved when tax time comes around next year.
4. Head for home. Consider leaving the IRS forms in the backseat of the car since you’ll be on your way to your accountant’s office soon anyway. Be aware that your kids may have used the booklets as coloring books, but most accountants will find this amusing since they’ll use their own computer forms.
5. Don’t forget to ask your accountant if your “inner child” counts as a deduction. Dogs and cats are a definite NO according to a recent IRS ruling for home-based businesses. Double checking never hurts though.
6. Remember to include the receipt for your late Aunt Matilda’s stuffed anteater which you donated to Goodwill last December 31st.
7. On April 14th, immediately call your accountant to set up an appointment to get your taxes done. If your accountant just possibly has a full schedule, call a tax attorney who will be glad to create reams and reams of paper for you and/or find a creative way to get a filing extension. If neither your accountant or tax attorney is available, place a collect call to your brother-in-law

and talk him into doing your taxes. If he's been in the "pen" for tax evasion he'll definitely have an "inside scoop."

8. Figures computed, forms filled out, and envelope sealed, take your taxes to the Post Office box, wait in line, and deposit them @ exactly 11:59 p.m. Take along some reading and a mini-flashlight for while you wait.

9. With smug satisfaction, drive home to rest in deep slumber, but not before you kiss and reassure your spouse, *"Everything's all taken care of honey, and we're getting a refund."*

10. On April 15th, when you realize you forgot to include the whole month of last December's home-based business expenses, immediately PANIC! Try calling your CPA, tax attorney, or brother-in-law ASAP.

Isn't there an old saying "the only thing certain is death and taxes?" Your accountant will know, but just don't call him or her on April 18th and expect an answer...it's National "CPA Goof Off Day" and they'll be on vacation. *How dare they!*

About the Author

Kathryn Bechen founded her own professional organizing and seminar business, *Organized With Ease*, which she managed for several years in the 1990s. She now devotes all of her time to writing about organizing, decorating, and lifestyle topics. Her writing work has been published in national and regional magazines, business journals, newspapers, and online. She confesses that her husband Steve, a veteran banker, prepares their taxes in a meticulous manner, has been filing them as early as possible for many years, and stores them in order by year in a labeled file box.