



H&R Block DIY clients asking about tax refunds, extenders, child tax credit

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DIY tax questions and answers help the client who asked and others in the same situation

KANSAS CITY, Mo., March 15, 2018 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- When H&R Block DIY clients have questions, the H&R Block (NYSE:HRB) tax experts give them the answers. With layers of support, DIY clients can access the information they need while they prepare their tax return, making it possible for them to maintain the flexibility and convenience DIY clients want.

"When working on a tax return, some DIY clients find all the information they need within the product itself, while others have questions about how tax law changes impact them," said Heather Watts, senior vice president and general manager of digital at H&R Block. "Even though some of these questions may be more tax planning in nature and not impact their ability to complete their return, between the help center, unlimited chat and [The H&R Block Community](#), our DIY clients can find the information they need to better understand their tax situation."

The questions asked via the free, unlimited, live chat for [online](#) and [installed software](#) clients (it can be added to H&R Block More Zero) go to a team of tax experts at The Tax Institute at H&R Block, staffed by tax attorneys, CPAs, enrolled agents and more. The top tax questions answered by these tax experts often reflect changes made to the tax code.

"This tax season, the topics DIY clients are asking about the most are tax refunds, the extended tax benefits called 'extenders' and the child tax credit," said Lynn Ebel, manager at The Tax Institute at H&R Block. "This tells us that people are paying attention to how tax law impacts them, and we hope that by providing this information they can make changes to improve their tax situation."

Following are some of the questions H&R Block tax experts are hearing most often from DIY clients, and an explanation about the tax and financial consequences.

Tax refunds

Why is my refund higher or lower than last year?

Normally, the reasons for a change in refund would be changes in withholding, deductions, number of exemptions, credits, income or type of income. The best way to assess the difference is to compare the 2017 return to the 2016 and see if there are any lines with dramatic differences.

Why am I not getting all the credits I tried to claim?

"The most common reason a taxpayer is not seeing a tax credit benefit their bottom line is because the credit is nonrefundable, which means it is limited to tax liability. This means if your tax liability is zero, adding a nonrefundable credit won't benefit you, even if you qualify for it. Also, remember that your tax liability is not the same as your tax refund; you could have a tax liability and still get a refund because of [withholdings on your W-4](#)," Ebel said.

Only refundable credits, such as the earned income tax credit or the additional child tax credit, would increase the amount of a tax refund if the tax liability already was eliminated.

Taxpayers who are curious about what tax year 2018 will look for them can use H&R Block's [free tax calculator to estimate their tax refund and tax reform impact](#).

Why didn't my refund amount change when I entered information to get a specific deduction?

Some tax benefits do not benefit everyone's bottom line in the same way, even if the taxpayers meet all the requirements. For example, some taxpayers might not see a change when they enter home mortgage interest as an itemized deduction if they are taking the standard deduction. Or, if taxpayers input stock information, they may not notice a change if their capital losses already exceed \$3,000. This is true of other limited losses as well, such as adding additional rental expenses that are subject to the passive activity loss rules.

Extenders

I was told I'd have to wait to file to claim certain tax benefits – why?

The IRS is updating forms to include legislation passed Feb. 9 as part of the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which retroactively extended numerous tax provisions for tax year 2017, including:

- Mortgage insurance premium
- Discharge of debt on principal residence
- Tuition and fees deduction
- Energy credit

The updated forms will allow taxpayers claiming these tax benefits to e-file their returns, instead of paper-filing them.

"The inclusion of the home energy credit for new furnaces, windows, etc. in the tax legislation that passed in February will have some taxpayers needing to search for their 2017 receipts for to see if they qualify for any of the extended tax benefits," Ebel said.

Child tax credit

Why am I not getting the child tax credit?

Often when a taxpayer no longer sees the child tax credit benefit this year, but they claimed it last year, it is because their child turned 17 and is no longer eligible. In anticipation of this happening in the future, taxpayers can adjust the withholding on their W-4, if they want an outcome like years past. Additionally, taxpayers could also be subject to an income phaseout, which for the child tax credit was \$110,000 for married taxpayers filing jointly for 2017.

“Keep in mind that when claiming the child tax credit, the tax return must also include the name and taxpayer identification number – the Social Security or ITIN – of the qualifying child and the same information for the child must have been issued on or before the due date for filing the return,” Ebel said.

Through April 17, these are the help options available to H&R Block DIY clients:

- Ask a Tax Advisor/live, free, unlimited chat with a tax expert (inside the product) is available weekdays from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT, and on weekends from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT
- The H&R Block Community is available 24/7
- Technical support chat (inside the product) is available 24/7
- Technical support via phone is available weekdays from 7 a.m. to midnight CT, and on weekends from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. CT.

Taxpayers have multiple ways online to access H&R Block, including through the [H&R Block apps](#), [H&R Block DIY online products](#), downloaded [H&R Block DIY software products](#) or an [appointment](#) at an H&R Block retail tax office.

About H&R Block

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