Spectan LLC

CLIENT RESOURCE · 2026 EDITION

The 2026 Tax Readiness Kit

Everything to gather, every deadline to hit, and exactly what to do when the IRS writes to you — prepared by a federally licensed enrolled agent.

The Complete Document Checklist

Walking in organized is the single biggest thing you can do to lower your prep fee and speed up your refund. Gather what applies to you:

Income

- [ ] W-2s from every employer
- [ ] 1099-NEC / 1099-K — freelance & gig income
- [ ] 1099-INT, 1099-DIV — bank & investment income
- [ ] 1099-B — brokerage sales (with cost basis)
- [ ] 1099-R — retirement distributions
- [ ] SSA-1099 — Social Security benefits
- [ ] K-1s — partnerships, S-corps, estates & trusts
- [ ] Rental income records by property
- [ ] Crypto exchange statements & transaction history

Life changes this year

- [ ] Marriage, divorce, or new dependent (SSN needed)
- [ ] Home bought or sold — closing disclosures
- [ ] Moved states — dates and prior-state income
- [ ] Started or closed a business

Deductions & credits

- [ ] 1098 — mortgage interest statement
- [ ] Property tax bills
- [ ] Charitable donation receipts (cash & non-cash)
- [ ] 1098-T — tuition; 1098-E — student loan interest
- [ ] Childcare provider name, EIN & amounts paid
- [ ] Medical expenses (if substantial)
- [ ] IRA / HSA contribution records
- [ ] Estimated tax payments made (dates & amounts)

Self-employed? Add these

- [ ] Profit & loss summary or bookkeeping file
- [ ] Business bank & credit card statements
- [ ] Mileage log (or odometer start/end)
- [ ] Home office square footage
- [ ] Asset purchases over $2,500 (date & price)
- [ ] 1099s you issued to contractors

EA tip: Last year's full tax return is the most useful document of all — it catches carryovers, credits, and errors a fresh start would miss.

Deductions Small Businesses Miss Most

Every year, self-employed taxpayers overpay because legitimate deductions never make it onto the return. The most commonly missed:

Operating costs

- [ ] Business use of your cell phone & internet
- [ ] Software subscriptions & cloud tools
- [ ] Merchant & payment processing fees
- [ ] Business insurance premiums
- [ ] Professional dues, licenses & continuing education
- [ ] Advertising — including website costs

The big structural ones

- [ ] Qualified Business Income (QBI) deduction — up to 20% of qualified income
- [ ] Self-employed health insurance premiums
- [ ] Retirement plans: Solo 401(k) & SEP-IRA contributions
- [ ] Half of your self-employment tax
- [ ] Section 179 / bonus depreciation on equipment

Often forgotten

- [ ] Home office — simplified or actual-expense method
- [ ] Business mileage (rate updates annually — track it!)
- [ ] Startup costs — up to $5,000 in year one
- [ ] Bank fees & business loan interest
- [ ] Bad debts written off
- [ ] Business meals (generally 50%, with records)
- [ ] Contract labor you paid (issue those 1099s)

The rule that saves audits: a deduction is only as good as its record. A receipt, a date, a business purpose — capture those three and the deduction stands.

Bookkeeping is a deduction too. Fees you pay for bookkeeping and tax preparation are themselves deductible business expenses.

When the IRS Writes to You

Millions of notices go out every year — most are routine, and many are wrong. What separates a non-event from a multi-year problem is how you respond in the first 30 days.

Do this

- **Open it immediately.** Every notice has a response deadline — usually 30 days. The clock started when it was mailed.
- **Identify the notice number** (top right — e.g., CP2000, CP14, LT11). It tells you exactly what the IRS wants.
- **Compare their numbers to your return.** CP2000 "proposed changes" are computer-generated and frequently overstated.
- **Respond in writing, keep copies** of everything, and send anything important by certified mail.
- **Get representation early.** An enrolled agent can speak to the IRS on your behalf — you may never have to talk to them at all.

Never do this

- **Don't ignore it.** Silence converts a proposed change into an assessed balance — then penalties, interest, liens, and levies.
- **Don't pay a balance just to make it stop** before someone verifies it's actually correct.
- **Don't call the IRS unprepared** — anything you say is noted in your file.
- **Don't sign an audit report you don't understand** or agree to a "quick resolution" on the phone.
- **Don't fall for notice-themed scams.** The IRS initiates contact by mail — never by text, email, or gift-card demands.

Got a notice in hand right now?

Send us a copy — the case review is free, and most notices are resolved for a modest flat fee.

spectan.com → Get a quote

2026 Deadlines That Matter

Missing a deadline is the most expensive unforced error in tax — late-filing penalties run 5% per month, up to 25% of the tax due. Mark these:

DATE	WHAT'S DUE	WHO IT APPLIES TO
Jan 15, 2026	Q4 2025 estimated tax payment	Self-employed & investors
Feb 2, 2026	W-2s and 1099-NECs must be issued (Jan 31 falls on a weekend)	Employers & anyone who paid contractors
Mar 16, 2026	S-corp (1120-S) & partnership (1065) returns — or extension	S-corps, partnerships, multi-member LLCs
Apr 15, 2026	Individual (1040) & C-corp (1120) returns — or extension; Q1 2026 estimate; 2025 IRA/HSA contribution deadline	Everyone
Jun 15, 2026	Q2 2026 estimated tax payment	Self-employed & investors
Sep 15, 2026	Q3 2026 estimate; extended S-corp & partnership returns	Businesses on extension
Oct 15, 2026	Extended individual & C-corp returns	Anyone who filed an extension
Jan 15, 2027	Q4 2026 estimated tax payment	Self-employed & investors

Remember: an extension extends your time to *file*, not your time to *pay*. Estimate and pay by April 15 to avoid penalties and interest.

Looking Ahead: 2027 Deadlines

These are the dates for tax year 2026 — the return most readers will file next. Put them on the calendar now, especially the quarterly estimates:

DATE	WHAT'S DUE	WHO IT APPLIES TO
Jan 15, 2027	Q4 2026 estimated tax payment	Self-employed & investors
Feb 1, 2027	W-2s and 1099-NECs must be issued (Jan 31 falls on a Sunday)	Employers & anyone who paid contractors
Mar 15, 2027	S-corp (1120-S) & partnership (1065) returns — or extension	S-corps, partnerships, multi-member LLCs
Apr 15, 2027	Individual (1040) & C-corp (1120) returns — or extension; Q1 2027 estimate; 2026 IRA/HSA contribution deadline	Everyone
Jun 15, 2027	Q2 2027 estimated tax payment	Self-employed & investors
Sep 15, 2027	Q3 2027 estimate; extended S-corp & partnership returns	Businesses on extension
Oct 15, 2027	Extended individual & C-corp returns	Anyone who filed an extension
Jan 18, 2028	Q4 2027 estimated tax payment (Jan 15 falls on a weekend, followed by a federal holiday)	Self-employed & investors

Planning tip: the cheapest tax move of the year happens before December 31 — retirement contributions, equipment purchases, and income timing all close when the calendar does. A fall check-in beats an April surprise.