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Eight Tips to Help Determine Your Filing Status

Determining your filing status is one of the first steps to filing your federal income tax return. There are five filing statuses: Single, Married Filing Jointly, Married Filing Separately, Head of Household and Qualifying Widow(er) with Dependent Child. Your filing status is used to determine your filing requirements, standard deduction, eligibility for certain credits and deductions, and your correct tax.

Some people may qualify for more than one filing status. Here are eight facts about filing status that the IRS wants you to know so you can choose the best option for your situation.

- 1. Your marital status on the last day of the year determines your marital status for the entire year.**
- 2. If more than one filing status applies to you, choose the one that gives you the lowest tax obligation.**
- 3. Single filing status generally applies to anyone who is unmarried, divorced or legally separated according to state law.**
- 4. A married couple may file a joint return together. The couple's status would be Married Filing Jointly.**
- 5. If your spouse died during the year and you did not remarry during 2011, usually you may still file a joint return with that spouse for the year of death.**
- 6. A married couple may elect to file their returns separately. Each person's filing status would generally be Married Filing Separately.**
- 7. Head of Household generally applies to taxpayers who are unmarried. You must also have paid more than half the cost of maintaining a home for you and a qualifying person to qualify for this filing status.**
- 8. You may be able to choose Qualifying Widow(er) with Dependent Child as your filing status if your spouse died during 2009 or 2010, you have a dependent child, have not remarried and you meet other conditions.**

There's much more information about determining your filing status in IRS Publication 501, Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information. Publication 501 is available at www.irs.gov or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676). You can also use the Interactive Tax Assistant on the IRS website to determine your filing status. The ITA tool is a tax law resource on the IRS website that takes you through a series of questions and provides you with responses to tax law questions.

Link: [IRS Publication 501](#), Exemptions, Standard Deduction, and Filing Information

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