

For top-notch tax advice, turn to the women

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State of the 2016 race

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By **Joann Weiner** February 5, 2014

While a lot of people dread filing their income tax returns, many people cheered on Jan. 31 when the IRS announced that tax season is now open.

In case you're confused, don't be. If the IRS is giving you money back, you want to file your tax return as soon as possible. If you owe the IRS, you want to file as late as possible, which the law sets as [April 15](#) (Unless April 15 falls on a weekend or on the District of Columbia's Emancipation Day, which may delay tax day to as late as April 18. No luck this year; April 15 is a Tuesday.)

So, now that tax season is upon us, it's time to start thinking about getting that return filed. Doing that can be tricky and filled with anxiety, especially since developments in 2013 raised some big questions. Do same-sex couples who got married in 2013 have to [file](#) a joint return? What happens if they live in a state that doesn't recognize their marriage? Are medical expenses high enough to pass the new itemized medical deduction threshold? How much investment income will be subject to tax under the Affordable Care Act?

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Of course, it's possible to call the IRS and get the answers. But, if you do, you better be patient. Last year, only six out of 10 calls to the IRS reached a live person and those who got through had to wait almost [18 minutes](#).

That's why the Web is becoming a better and better option for many — even the IRS recommends that you go to [IRS.gov](#) instead of calling them.

The Web is also where women are writing some of the most informative and entertaining tax blogs. Here's a rundown of some of those blogs (and Twitter handles) and what kind of information you can find there. (This list is just a start.)

One of my favorites is Kay Bell (@taxtweet). She's funny, smart and good. Her blog won the National Association for

Women in Communications [Clarion Award](#) in 2012 as the year's best Personal Blog. She recently explained the potential tax liability for people who bet on the Super Bowl (In case you've been out of touch, the Seattle Seahawks crushed the Denver Broncos) and used the late Pete Seeger as a hook to talk about the tax liability of married couples who file jointly (Hint: they share it). She's also a generous blogger, giving a shout-out to Mary O'Keefe, who blogs at the hilariously-named "[Bed buffaloes in your tax code](#)," for the piece on Seeger. If you want a respite from the drudgery of taxes, turn here. She also has a really cool Web site called "[Don't mess with taxes](#)." Those from Texas — Bell's a native Texan — will love the name of her Web site, the rest of us will love her tax commentary.

I've been covering taxes for quite a few years, and one of the first Web sites I started reading because of its intelligent commentary on the arcane tax world is "A Taxing Matter" by Linda M. Beale. She covers taxes from a progressive point of view as shown, for example, by her argument that the tax break for [carried interest](#) is "a tax privilege for the rich whose end time has come." Likewise, her blog posts during the 2008 financial crisis questioned some provisions of the taxpayer bailouts of the big banks and the lack of such bailouts (at the time) for the auto industry. Beale told me that she's not yet tweeting, but I hope she joins the Twittersphere soon.

Then there is Tax Mama. She's Eva Rosenberg, and you can follow her @TaxMama. In addition to writing for Dow Jones's [MarketWatch](#), she has a pretty cool Web site called [taxmama.com](#) where she engages with people in real time on the "TaxQuips Forum." In today's world where so much communicating takes place via e-mail, it's rather refreshing to hear a real person providing tax advice in a voice that sounds more like a mom reading a bedtime story than an MBA decoding the tax law.

Another great blogger with insightful tax commentary is Kelly Phillips Erb, an attorney who [blogs](#) as Forbes magazine's "tax girl." (@taxgirl). Erb explains the tax consequences of everyday things, such as the tax breaks you may get by replacing your storm windows so that you can stay warm during this winter's interminable snowstorms, or more esoteric issues, such as the huge tax deduction that Super Bowl advertisers may claim for their cute Budweiser puppy and Cheerios ads, or the fact that the IRS hasn't yet figured out whether to tax bitcoins or not.

I'd like to mention a blogger over at Tax.org, the free Web site for the "tax experts' experts" at the nonprofit tax organization Tax Analysts (disclosure: I used to write for them). Tax Analysts has many great bloggers, including the incomparable Martin Sullivan, although they have only one female blogger, Cara Griffith, who's their state and local tax expert. Griffith's pieces remind us that the United States is a federal country, and many of our taxes arise at the state and local level. A recent [post](#), for example, warned that a proposal in Chicago to levy a \$25 annual "cycling tax," might make bicyclists the next great source of tax revenue.

It's worth noting that the IRS has a number of spokespersons. One of them is Anabel Marquez (@Anabel_IRS). She passes on helpful IRS tips and links, indicating with pride that she also tweets "en espanol," as she made clear in her tweet that "IRS Free File es la forma mas rapida y mas segura para presentar su declaracion de #impuestos."

Finally, although bloggers are really helpful in understanding taxes, if you really want to know how to comply with the law, follow the IRS @IRSnews. If you'd like a bit more personal touch with the IRS, follow its Taxpayer Advocate @YourVoiceAtIRS.

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