

# 6 Ways to Keep Your Identity Safe At Tax Time

Posted by [Chris Miller](#) on Jan 27, 2015

As tax season approaches the thought of piles of paperwork, receipts, and W-2 forms is enough to fluster anyone.

While you're preoccupied with figuring out where your copy of a recent donation went, it's easy to let your guard down, giving plenty of opportunities for identity thieves to obtain your personal information.



It's important to take these necessary steps to make sure your data doesn't fall into the wrong hands.

## 1. Shred

If there are documents you no longer need, don't just tear them up and throw them away. Use a good cross-cut shredder to guarantee your files are destroyed.

## 2. Store

Be careful about storing old receipts and tax returns. Even if your paperwork is several years old, an identity thief can still use it. Use a file cabinet that you can lock up and isn't easily visible.

## 3. Block

Millions of people now file their taxes online. Make sure your computer is protected by a firewall. Elements Financial also recommends using a program like **TurboTax**.

## 4. Mail

Do not leave tax returns or other sensitive information in your out-going mail. Take them directly to the post office and drop them off inside.

## 5. Shorten

Make sure to write only the last four digits of your Social Security number on your check. Wrap your check in a piece of paper so it's not easily visible through an envelope.

## 6. Screen

Be careful about who you use to prepare your taxes. Check out companies with the Better Business Bureau, and ask about security, information storage and background checks.

*This is also the perfect time of year for phishing scammers to send out phony IRS emails. The IRS does not solicit personal or financial information by email, and you should never give out this information unless you have initiated the contact and you're sure who you are dealing with.*