

## International Students and U.S. Tax Obligations

If you are an international student in the U.S., you are required to file a tax return each year with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). You must do this even if you do not earn income in the U.S. The good news is that if you overpaid tax, you will get a refund!

### How you are taxed in the U.S:

If you get a job in the U.S., you will be asked to fill out a **W-4 Form** so your employer knows what portion of your income should be withheld as taxes. These taxes are then paid to the U.S. Treasury (and/or the appropriate state agency) on your behalf. At the end of the tax year, you must prove that you paid the correct amount by filing your tax return! Even if you did not have a job, you must still file a tax return each year.

### Generally, you will only be taxed on income based on U.S. sources:

- Off-campus/on-campus employment
- Scholarships, fellowships, graduate assistantships
- Practical or academic training
- Compensation for labor

You need to know if you are a “**resident alien**” or “**non-resident alien**” for tax purposes. Most international students on **F, J, M** or **Q** visas are non-residents for tax purposes. U.S. citizens, legal permanent residents, and non-resident aliens who have met the Substantial Presence Test are considered residents for tax purposes.

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and the Internal Revenue Service use the terms “resident” and “non-resident” to mean different things. Being a resident or non-resident alien for tax purposes is not related to your immigration status.

### Forms to complete:

If you earned U.S. income you should complete **Form 1040NR / Form 1040 NR-EZ** and **Form 8843**. If you did not earn any U.S. income, you still must file **Form 8843**. You can use an online tax preparer such as [Sprintax](http://www.sprintax.com) to help you file your non-resident tax return.

To file your tax return, you will need a Social Security Number or an “**Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN)**”, which is used when you do not have an SSN. If you do not have an ITIN, [Sprintax](http://www.sprintax.com) can organize this for you. If you are only filing Form 8843, you can do so without an SSN or ITIN.

**Tax Treaties:**

If your home country has a tax treaty with the U.S., you may be able to earn a certain amount without paying federal tax, so make sure you research this first! Sprintax can find this out for you when preparing your tax return.

**Important dates:**

**April 15:** In most years April 15 is the last day for residents and non-residents who earned U.S. income to file Federal tax returns for the previous year. However, when April 15 falls on a Friday, tax returns are due the following Monday and when it falls on a Saturday or Sunday, tax returns are due the following Tuesday. The filing date for tax year 2015 is Monday April 18.

**Jun 15:** Deadline to file your tax return if you live outside the U.S. If you applied for an extension, then the deadline is Oct 15.

**Documents/info you may need:**

- SSN or ITIN
- Passport (for ITIN applications only)
- U.S. entry and exit dates
- Tax forms, including Forms W-2, 1042-S and/or 1099 - if you received them
- Visa/Immigration Status information: Including Form DS-2019 (for J visa holders) or Form I-20 (for F visa holders)
- For State Tax Return(s) preparation: copy of your Federal tax return

**Other taxes:**

Students who are not considered residents for tax purposes are generally exempt from paying **Social Security and Medicare taxes** (exemption does not apply to J-2s with work authorization). Social Security tax or **FICA** is a system that provides benefits to retired workers. **H1** scholars and **J-2** dependents with work permission need to pay this but most **F** and **J** students are not subject to this tax.



## Sprintax

333 N. Michigan Avenue  
Suite 2415  
Chicago, IL 60601  
USA

e: [info@sprintax.com](mailto:info@sprintax.com)  
w: [www.sprintax.com](http://www.sprintax.com)

p: 312 781 2700  
f: 312 271 7505

**Sales tax** is similar to value-added tax, but in the U.S. the amount is not included in the advertised price of goods and it also varies depending on the state.

International students are not required to pay tax on **bank interest** earned in U.S. banks, however other types of investment income, which are reported on a 1099, are taxable income and should be included as part of a tax return.

### Filing your tax return

You can use a U.S. tax preparer for international students such as Sprintax to guide you through the process of filing your U.S. tax return.

Here is how it works:

(embed video-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WMf9EFpnyfc&feature=youtu.be>)

**Source:** [www.sprintax.com](http://www.sprintax.com)

If you have any questions about Sprintax, please email [hello@sprintax.com](mailto:hello@sprintax.com) or talk to the friendly team at [24/7 online chat help](#)

### Useful info:

**IRS (general tax info):** 1-800-829-1040

**To order forms:** 1-800-829-3676

[IRS website](#)