

Should you prepare your income tax returns yourself or outsource (pay someone to do it for you)?

If you decide to do your taxes yourself, choose your tax preparation software from the NETFILE-certified offerings. It has both free and for-fee programs. Go to www.canada.ca, click on Taxes, Personal Income Tax, Tax Software.

- Check reviews online. The most helpful software walks you line by line through the tax return and asks questions to prompt you. But be aware that even the most advanced software will offer suggestions based on general cases - so always think about your particular situation.
- One of the most useful features to look for in the software is the auto-fill function, which will populate your tax return form with the data in the tax slips that your employer and banks submit to the CRA.
- Why would providers offer free software? Many of the free users will eventually buy the fee-version as their financial situation becomes more complicated. There is also some government pressure on the providers to offer a free version to low-income individuals.

If you decide to hire a tax professional, meet your service provider early and establish your game plan.

If you want to prepare further, CRA has instructional videos for students on its website. If you prefer to, you can read the transcripts of these videos.

To find the videos, go to www.canada.ca, click on Taxes and search for 'videos for students'.