



IRS CORRESPONDENCE • CLIENT GUIDE

IRS Notice Received?

What every notice means, what it doesn't, and how to respond without losing a step.



Contact us within 10 days of receiving any IRS correspondence.

Most deadlines on IRS notices run 30 to 90 days from the notice date, not from the day you open the envelope. Acting early keeps every option on the table.

◆ Don't panic, but don't set it aside either

An envelope from the IRS is rarely as bad as it looks, and it is almost never as safe to ignore as it feels in the moment. Most notices are routine: a math correction, a request to verify a figure, a reminder that a balance is due, or a notice that a refund was adjusted. A smaller number are serious: an audit notice, a proposed assessment, or a notice of intent to levy. The letter itself tells you which kind you're holding, if you know where to look.

What all of them share is a clock. Every IRS notice states a response window, and that window is the single most important piece of information on the page. Missing it can convert a disagreement you could have won into a balance you now owe.

◆ Read the notice number first

In the top corner of nearly every IRS notice is a code such as CP2000, CP14, CP504, or a Letter number such as LT11 or Letter 525. That code tells you exactly what the IRS is doing and why. A CP2000, for example, means the income reported on your return didn't match what employers, banks, or brokers reported to the IRS. It is a proposed change, not a bill, and you have the right to respond and disagree with documentation. A CP504 is a final notice before the IRS can levy assets. The right response to each is different, which is why the notice number matters more than the dollar amount printed underneath it.

◆ What to do in the first 48 hours

Open it, read every page, including the enclosures, and note the response deadline on a calendar immediately. Confirm the notice is genuine: the IRS almost never initiates contact by phone, text, or email, and it never demands payment by gift card or wire transfer. If a communication does that, it is not the IRS. Gather the return and records the notice references before you do anything else. You cannot respond accurately without them.

Do not call the number on a notice you have not verified, do not pay a proposed balance before reviewing whether it's correct, and do not assume silence will make it resolve itself. A notice that goes unanswered typically escalates on its own schedule, whether or not you were paying attention.

◆ When to bring in representation

A routine notice with a clear, correct fix can often be handled with a short written response. An audit notice, a proposed assessment you disagree with, a notice involving several tax years, or anything mentioning a levy, lien, or collections referral is where professional representation earns its cost, both in the outcome and in the hours it saves you arguing with an automated system on hold.

◆ Key Takeaways

- Every notice carries a response deadline, and it matters more than the dollar amount printed on it.
- The IRS never initiates contact by phone, text, or email, and never demands gift cards or wire transfers.
- The notice code in the corner (CP2000, CP504, and so on) tells you what's actually happening, read it first.

How Emrys Can Help

Our IRS Letter Review service reads the notice, confirms what it actually requires, checks it against your return, and lays out your options in plain language before anything is sent back to the IRS on your behalf.



This guide is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute tax, legal, or accounting advice for any specific situation. Consult Emrys Tax Advisors before acting on it.