

IRS Notice Response Guide

What to do in the first 48 hours after an IRS letter arrives · Current as of July 2026

The five moves that apply to almost every IRS letter

- **1. Read the deadline first.** Every notice has a respond-by date; options narrow sharply after it passes.
- **2. Do not assume the IRS is right.** Many notices are computer-generated from incomplete matching (a missing cost basis, a form counted twice) and shrink dramatically once answered properly.
- **3. Never ignore it.** Silence converts proposals into assessed tax, then penalties, liens, and levies.
- **4. Respond in writing, keep proof.** Certified mail or the IRS online tools; keep copies of everything.
- **5. Know when to bring representation.** An Enrolled Agent can represent you before the IRS so you do not face collections alone.

Quick reference: common notices

NOTICE	WHAT IT MEANS	FIRST STEP
CP2000	A CP2000 is a proposed change to your return, not an audit and not a final bill. The proposed amount is often wrong, but you have to respond on time.	Do not ignore it
CP14	A CP14 is the first bill the IRS sends when its records show an unpaid balance on your return. It is frequently triggered by a payment that was made but applied to the wrong year or account, so verify before you pay.	Verify the balance before paying
CP504	A CP504 warns that if the balance stays unpaid, the IRS can levy your state income tax refund and start locating other assets. It is a serious escalation, but it is not yet the final levy notice, so there is still room to act.	Confirm which notice you have
LT11	The LT11 (or Letter 1058) is the last required warning before the IRS can levy your bank accounts and wages. The 30-day hearing window is your single best point of leverage, and it is entirely use-it-or-lose-it.	Take the date seriously, today
5071C	A 5071C means the IRS wants to confirm that you, and not someone using your Social Security number, filed a tax return. Your refund is on hold until you verify, but most people can do this themselves for free in a few minutes.	Confirm the letter is real

Plain-language pages for each notice, with deadlines and responses: arcandledger.com/irs-notices/