

# Common Phone Scams Explained

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## IRS IMPOSTER SCAM

### HOW IT WORKS:

You get a call from someone claiming to be from the IRS. The caller says you owe back taxes and informs you that you must pay those taxes right away. You're told you can resolve this issue by putting money on a prepaid debit card and providing the caller with the card number over the phone. He or she may also threaten legal action, arrest or deportation if you don't immediately resolve this issue with the caller.

### RED FLAGS TO RECOGNIZE:

1. You're contacted out of the blue. Generally, you should expect to hear about an issue like back taxes through written communication from the IRS prior to receiving a phone call about it.
2. There is a sense of urgency to act. Acting quickly often means people don't have time to fully think through what they're being told and identify red flags that warn them to be cautious.
3. Threatening language. A legitimate IRS agent will not threaten retaliatory action for not handling an issue during your first contact.
4. Untraceable payment methods. The IRS, like most legitimate companies and agencies, would accept payment through traditional, traceable payment methods. Be skeptical of any party that won't.

### HOW TO HANDLE IT:

Hang up! Don't engage or provide any personal information. If you have tax questions or question the legitimacy of the call, go to [irs.gov](https://www.irs.gov) or call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040.

You can report IRS imposter scams to the the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA) by calling 1-800-366-4484. All scams, including IRS scams, can also be reported to the Federal Trade Commission by calling 1-877-382-4357 or visiting their website at [ftc.gov/complaint](https://www.ftc.gov/complaint).