

VITA/TCE Volunteer Orientation

Taxpayer Services Division

We will begin five minutes after the hour

Publication 5451 (Rev. 10-2025) Catalog Number 74931U Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service www.irs.gov

(Five minutes prior to the start)

Host-

Hello everyone, we will begin at the top of the hour. In the meantime, we have loaded under the materials tab today's presentation along with the FAQs (Questions and Answers from previous sessions) for you to review & download for future reference.

(Give a few minutes before the opening)

(Opening)

Welcome! My name is "Host name", I am your host for today's session. We have presenting today, "RM name", and "RM name".

"RM name" is monitoring our chat room for questions submitted during today's presentation. We will have a question-and-answer session at the end of the orientation. You may add questions to the chat box at any time during the presentation.

Thank you everyone for your interest in volunteering with the IRS Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program (we like to refer to it as a cause, not a program).

Our VITA/TCE cause provides a rewarding opportunity to help individuals and families within your community. The goal is to provide free income tax preparation services to our low to moderate income taxpayers throughout rural and urban areas. This includes the elderly, people with disabilities, limited English speaking taxpayers, military communities and more.

As a VITA/TCE volunteer, you will have the opportunity to make a difference in your community to help both individuals and families.

("RM name" - next slide)

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This orientation will familiarize you with the roles and responsibilities of a VITA/TCE volunteers. VITA/TCE is a program available to help taxpayers who may not be able to afford the services of a paid tax preparer. Tax preparation sites are operated by Internal Revenue Service partners and are conveniently located in community centers, libraries, churches, religious centers, schools, and senior citizen centers across the country.

You will receive an email with partner contact information in your requested area. You should reach out to the partner for detailed information and guidance about volunteering with their organization and the VITA/TCE program.

The partner will send you their VITA/TCE volunteer training information to prepare you for completing your certification.

During this orientation, we will give you an overview of the VITA/TCE program and its role in the community, your options in volunteering and how your contribution makes a difference. We will also provide you resources that will allow you to become more familiar with the roles and responsibilities of the VITA/TCE volunteer program.



You Can BE the Difference

- Community Impact
- Helping Families
- Serving for a Cause



Most years, the volunteer return preparation program brings billions in refunds back into communities, by preparing over 2.7 million returns! Many of our partners offer mobile or virtual site preparation, reaching those isolated by health or geographic distance.

Each of those returns represents an average household of 3 people. Over 8 million people benefit from this cause! VITA/TCE sites provide a much-needed service AND save members of your community tax return preparation fees and software costs. VITA/TCE saves taxpayers anywhere between \$200 to \$800 in tax return preparation fees depending upon the complexity of the tax return. That's well over half a BILLION dollars back into the pockets of low-to moderate-income households.

The VITA/TCE program provides a real sense of purpose and pride in serving those in need throughout their community! For many VITA clients, the money they save in preparation fees alone can be the cost of this month's food or medicine. They enjoy peace of mind knowing they're being served by IRS-certified volunteers.



Types of VITA/TCE Services

- Face-to-face (walk-in/appointment)
- Virtual
- Drop-off and pick-up
- Facilitated Self-Assistance (FSA)









Let's spend some time looking at the different ways partners provide **free** tax services.

They include:

- Face-to-face
- Virtual
- Drop-off and Pick-Up, and
- Facilitated Self-Assistance



A Face-to-Face VITA/TCE Site

- Set locations, hours and days
- Interview taxpayers in person
- Prepare returns with taxpayers present
- Quality Review conducted by 2nd volunteer with taxpayers present



First there is the face-to-face VITA/TCE site.

A certified volunteer conducts an in-person interview with the taxpayer as their return is prepared and quality reviewed.

Generally, everything is completed in one visit

Virtual VITA/TCE

Expands Services

- Virtual Intake Sites
- Virtual Preparation Sites
- Virtual Quality Review Site

The IRS offers virtual VITA/TCE to expand access to free tax preparation services for taxpayers who may not have the opportunity to use face-to-face VITA/TCE services due to:

- Location
- Lack of transportation
- Sites operating at capacity, or
- Insufficient number of volunteers

Virtual VITA/TCE sites use the same method as face-to-face services, except the interview, preparation, or quality review process is not done in front of the taxpayer. Depending on the make-up of the virtual site model, one or more parts of the tax preparation process will be performed virtually. Taxpayers must complete a consent form for this virtual tax preparation process.

Many partners use virtual platforms to conduct all or a portion of the process. The volunteers can walk taxpayers through any technology barriers to complete the tax returns. Taxpayers are very pleased to have this option to be able to file their taxes without leaving home.

Here's an example: An elderly couple contacted a virtual VITA site as they were unable to leave home without great difficulty. The volunteers were able to walk the couple through any technology barriers and, as a result, they were able to file their return. The wife said it was so nice to be able to see who was preparing the return over a video conference. Then she began to cry because her husband is bedridden, and she was so happy she was able to complete a return without having to leave home.



Drop-off Sites: How they work

- Volunteers verify the taxpayer's identity
- Taxpayer leaves supporting documents and completes forms, to be stored securely and shared with volunteer preparers
- Taxpayer and volunteer complete virtual consent
- Return preparation and quality reviews are conducted virtually
- Taxpayers return to drop-off sites to authorize e-filing of return and retrieve supporting documents

So how do drop-off sites work?

- · Volunteers first verify the taxpayer's identity.
- Taxpayers must also complete a consent form for this drop-off process.
- Taxpayers are asked to complete the intake and interview form and will leave their tax documents for use by the volunteer preparers.
- These documents are securely stored.
- The preparation and quality review of the tax return are conducted virtually.
- Taxpayers return to the drop-off site to authorize e-filing of their tax return and retrieve their documents in addition to a copy of their tax return.

The drop-off process offers a convenient way for taxpayers to receive service when they don't have the time to wait to receive traditional face-to-face service.

Here's another example: Many of our partners offer a "drive-through, drop-off" VITA service. From the convenience of their vehicles, taxpayers complete the intake form and provide the necessary tax documents to complete their returns. The interview process is conducted by phone and the assigned preparer completes the return. The quality reviewer contacts the taxpayer to review the return and answer any questions. This process ensures the taxpayer understands the return entries and addresses their questions. Once the return is completed, the taxpayer makes an appointment to drive through to pick-up and finalize their return.

What role do community partners play?

Partners provide the support needed to operate tax preparation sites successfully

- Setting up the tax preparation software and registration to e-file tax returns.
- Securing the equipment needed, computers, printers and Wi-Fi connections.
- Recruiting, training and scheduling volunteers.
- Scheduling customer appointments during the filing season.
- · Marketing the sites' services to the community.

Partners are there to provide the support you will need as a VITA/TCE volunteer.

IRS partners with organizations in your community to provide the free VITA/TCE program. As we mentioned before, partners in your community may be social service agencies, religious organizations, libraries, schools, or community centers.

We also have nationwide partners, for example United Way and AARP Foundation-Tax Aide, that sponsor sites throughout the country.

Partners are there to provide the support you will need as a VITA/TCE volunteer.





Why Volunteer?

VITA taxpayers share their experience:

"This is like an annual gift that provides peace of mind."

"We were provided extra information on resources to use next year that we were unaware of before our visit."

"Our preparer was fantastic, very calm and patient. He was willing to explain anything I didn't understand and went out of his way to make sure I got all the deductions owed to me."

"Vita is a VITAL Program. Please never discontinue this necessary program."

Here is some feedback provided by taxpayers. (Read slide)

Also, volunteers benefit from participating in the program.

Here's another example: VITA volunteers gain many types of experiences. A freshman student at a local University VITA site said "Participating in VITA is like no other volunteer experience. Assisting as a Certified VITA volunteer at a free tax preparation site had a meaningful impact on my future career and opened doors for me. I learned how to deal with clients face to face and discussed the return with taxpayers. It is a very fulfilling experience, much more than just passing a course. It is a real-world training!"

Another VITA volunteer stated this about her volunteer experience, "VITA helped me acquire more knowledge on my tax benefits. I really love it because you are learning and helping the community at the same time. It's the best feeling."



inVITA Friend to Join the Cause

We hope that you will also "inVITA" friend to join you!

When you "inVITA" friend to join you as a VITA/TCE volunteer, you can celebrate each other's successes through your shared service to the community.

As you begin your experience as a VITA/TCE volunteer, we encourage you to "inVITA" (invite a) friend to join the cause.

When you "inVITA" friend to join you as a volunteer, you can celebrate each other's successes through your shared service to the community.



You can choose your volunteer role!

- Site Coordinator
- Greeter/Screener
- Tax Return Preparer
- Quality Reviewer
- Marketing

- Instructor
- Translator/Interpreter
- Technology Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator and Recruiter

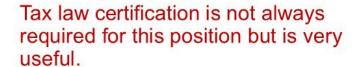
There are many options for volunteers. You can choose a role or roles to match your skills, interests, and time commitment. As you can see, you will be able to find a role that fits you!

Let's talk a little bit about these opportunities.



Site Coordinator

- Primary resource for all site operations
- Must have excellent organizational skills and be a team leader





The site coordinator (local coordinator for AARP) is the manager of the site and must be available to assist with any issues that may arise at the site.

They develop and maintain schedules for volunteers to ensure adequate coverage and make sure the site has all the supplies and equipment needed.

Site coordinator training and certification must be completed prior to performing any site coordinator duties. Tax law certification is not always required for this position but is very useful.







Greeter/Screener

- Greets everyone visiting the site to create a pleasant atmosphere
- Screens taxpayers for scope of service needed
- Ensures the taxpayers have all their required documents
- May schedule or confirm appointments

Tax law certification is not required for this position.

Greeters and/or screeners welcome everyone visiting the site to create a pleasant atmosphere. They also screen taxpayers to determine the type of assistance needed and confirm the necessary tax documents are available to complete their tax returns. Greeters may schedule and confirm appointments.

Tax law certification is not required for this position, but you must certify your knowledge of the VITA/TCE Volunteer Standards of Conduct, which includes ethics training. Some sites may require additional certifications.

Here's another example: One of our sites was short on volunteers and contacted the local high school's National Honor Society to see if they would like to help as part of their community service required hours. They were excited to help but weren't sure if the community would accept them as preparers. So, the coordinator trained their sponsoring teacher, and she trained them to be Greeters. They did a fantastic job making the clients feel welcomed and ensuring they got the volunteer with the right certification level to handle their return. Their energy was contagious and brought new life and volunteers to the site.



IRS Certified Volunteer Preparer

- Interviews taxpayers
- Prepares returns within the scope of their training
- Advises taxpayers they are ultimately responsible for the information on the return

Tax law certification to the Basic or Advanced level is required for this position, based on partner/site needs.



Tax-law certified volunteer preparers do the actual tax return preparation.

As a preparer, you will interview the taxpayer using our intake and interview sheet to determine if all income, deductions, and allowable credits are claimed on the return. You will engage the taxpayer while preparing the tax return to verify the information on the intake form.

You will only prepare returns that are within your training certification and within the scope of the VITA/TCE program.

It will also be your job to ensure due diligence by advising the taxpayer that they are ultimately responsible for the information on the return.

Tax law certification to the basic level, at minimum, is required for this position.

Other specialty certifications are available, such as:

- Foreign Student & Scholar
- International
- Military, and
- Puerto Rico Levels I & II



Quality Reviewer



- Reviews tax returns to ensure they are correct and complete
- Offers training advice to the site coordinator or training coordinator
- Prints the completed return copy for the taxpayer
- May finish the close-out process with the taxpayer

You must be tax-law certified at a level equal to or higher than the level of return you are reviewing.

If you are the quality reviewer, your role is to review tax returns completed by the volunteer tax preparers, ensuring that every taxpayer receives top quality service and that the tax returns are accurate.

Some sites have designated quality reviewers, while others use several preparers for this process.

You must be tax-law certified at a level equal to or higher than the level of the tax return you are reviewing.





- Presents how sites operate and administrative procedures
- Covers the Quality Site Requirements and Volunteer Standards of Conduct
- Teaches tax law needed for VITA/TCE
- Holds interactive training using the tax software in the Practice Lab

Instructor



Tax-law certification to the Advanced or higher level is required for this position.

Instructors complete their online certifications in tax law at the advanced level or higher and familiarize themselves with any software updates before they instruct other volunteers.

Instructors can conduct classes online or in a classroom setting. The training may be broken down into sections. Examples would be operations and administration, quality site requirements, tax law, and software.

If you are a CPA, Attorney, Enrolled Agent, Certified Financial Planner, or a noncredentialled tax return preparer needing Continuing Education (CE) Credits, you could earn up to 18 hours of CE credits for 10 or more hours of volunteering!



Stakeholder Partnerships, Education & Communication

Volunteer positions that do not require tax law certification:

- Greeter/Screener
- Translator/Interpreter
- Technical Support
- Marketing
- Volunteer Recruiter/Coordinator



There are some volunteer positions available at VITA sites that do not require tax law certification, such as:

- Greeters and/or screeners. As mentioned, greeters and/or screeners welcome everyone visiting the site to create a pleasant atmosphere. They also screen taxpayers to determine the type of assistance needed and confirm the necessary tax documents are available to complete their tax returns. Greeters may also schedule and confirm appointments.
- Translators/Interpreters, who provide language services to customers who are not fluent in English. This may be accomplished in-person or by phone. American Sign Language (ASL) Interpreters provide sign language services to the hearing-impaired.
- Technical support volunteers, who assist setting up and maintaining computers, printers, cables, and other technical equipment as needed.
- If you like marketing, many partners would love to use those skills to market their tax-preparation locations to the community.
- Volunteer Coordinator/Recruiters, who assist the partner or site coordinator in recruiting community volunteers to fill
 needed positions. You may also help by welcoming new volunteers and maintaining the volunteer assignment
 schedule.

Some sites may offer additional positions. Please check with your site coordinator if you have interest in additional responsibilities.

Here's another example:

We have one more inspirational story for you. At one of our VITA sites, a young military man came in. His mother told him he was not required to file tax returns since he paid his taxes through his federal withholdings. The volunteer told him that was incorrect. The volunteer offered to complete his required tax return for free and once it was done, he received thousands of dollars back in overpaid taxes. He was thrilled! He said he was now finally able to buy a car, which he really needed.

When you become a volunteer, you will have similar stories to tell!



What training will I need?

- Volunteer Standards of Conduct All Volunteers
- Intake and Interview and Quality Review
- Site Coordinator
- Tax Law



The type of training you will complete depends on the position for which you are volunteering and your site's needs.

All individuals—including IRS employees participating in the VITA/TCE program—who answer tax law questions, instruct tax law, prepare tax returns, or conduct quality reviews of completed tax returns **must** be certified in tax law **each year.**

All Volunteers must certify in the Volunteer Standards of Conduct – Ethics training. This is mandatory for all positions.

Instructors, preparers, site coordinators and quality reviewers are required to complete the Intake/Interview and Quality Review training. Some sites may require greeters and screeners to also complete this training.

Site coordinators are required to complete site coordinator training. Site coordinators must also complete tax law training if they handle electronic filing, answer tax questions, or correct rejected returns.

Tax Law training is required for all volunteer tax preparers and quality reviewers. Certification at the basic level is the minimum requirement for VITA/TCE tax preparers. Some sites may require advanced tax law or additional certifications based on the complexity level of tax returns they prepare.

The sponsoring partner or site coordinator will let you know which certifications you must complete to volunteer for their specific site location.

Volunteers who are CPAs, Attorneys, or Enrolled Agents, who do not request continuing education credits, may certify using the Federal Tax Law Updates Test for Circular 230.

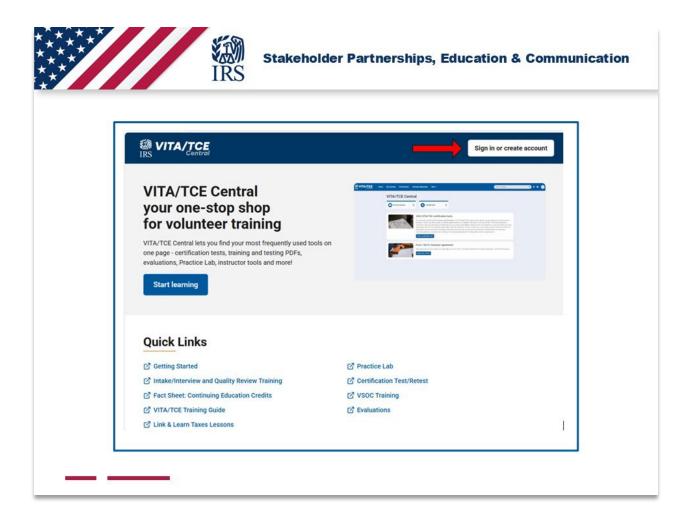


How do you get to the training?

You will have to access the Link and Learn Taxes webpage. Go to the IRS website, www.irs.gov, and type in the search box "Link and Learn". Click the "Link and Learn" button to get to this page.

Link and Learn Taxes is an interactive web-based program providing certification courses for volunteers. This program will guide you through training and tests to learn how to accurately prepare income tax returns for individuals. You can obtain the volunteer certification at your own pace!

From this page you will click on the VITA/TCE Central Link to create your account.



Click on the "Create Account" button to set up your account. Please make note of your username and password to return to your account. Please be sure your e-mail address is input correctly when setting up your account. The e-mail address is used if you need to reset your password.

For certification testing, all volunteers must first pass the Volunteer Standards of Conduct test. Most volunteers will also take the Intake/Interview and Quality Review test. Volunteer tax preparers MUST certify to a **minimum** of Basic tax law but can certify in additional specialty courses.

- The passing test score for each certification level is 80% or higher. You are given two chances to meet this requirement.
- The training is available in English and Spanish.
- All training will be updated in mid-November.
- You do not need to complete the Basic test before taking the Advanced or other specialty tests.
- Returning volunteers as well as all new volunteers must become certified before volunteering.
- Certification is required each year.

This is a home page, a place for volunteers to return to for many tools, quick links, etc.

For further information, refer to Publication 5378, *Link and Learn Taxes Certification Tests: Getting Started*. You can find this on www.irs.gov, and there will be a link in the email you receive with your partner listing.

What about software training?

- TaxSlayer recorded webinars
- Practice Problems
- Practice Lab





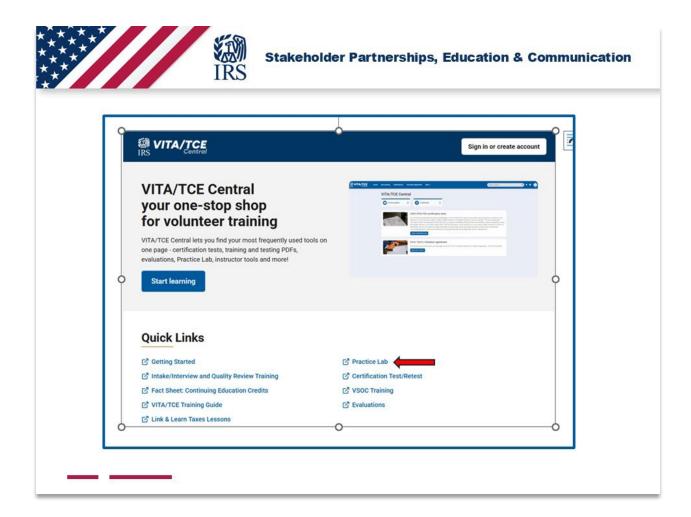


NOTE: Training for other software used will be provided by the partner.

What about tax software training?

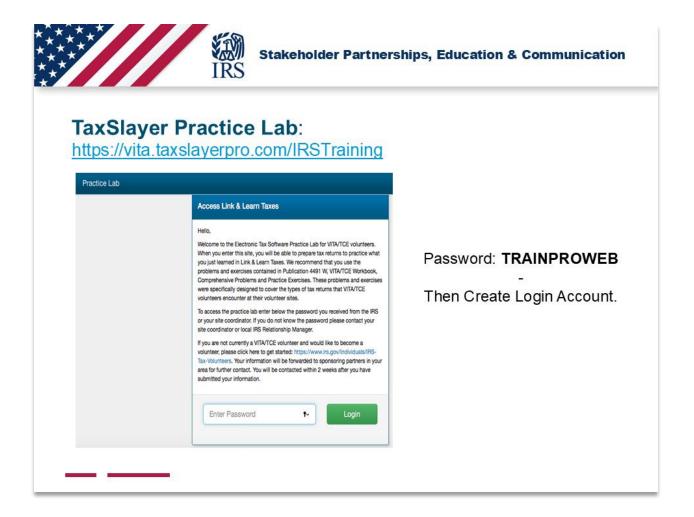
Our VITA/TCE program offers free TaxSlayer Pro Online software to partners. Volunteers can practice using this tax preparation software. You can access the online Practice Lab for the TaxSlayer Pro software through VITA/TCE Central. The Practice Lab provides a simulated VITA/TCE learning environment in the TaxSlayer Pro Online software and is complete with learning tools and TaxSlayer support. This allows you to learn the software and practice in a stress-free environment.

Many partners conduct classroom training for new volunteers.



How do I get to the Practice Lab?

From the VITA/TCE Central page, Click on the Practice Lab button under the Quick Links. The TaxSlayer Practice Lab can also be accessed at vita.taxslayerpro.com/IRSTraining



This is the opening page for the Practice Lab. You will enter the generic password TRAINPROWEB in all CAPS and no spaces.

Then you will be asked to create your own unique account to practice preparing tax returns. You can use the Practice Lab to assist you in completing your Link and Learn certification exams.

For password or login help with the Practice Lab or additional information, go to: vita.taxslayerpro.com.



What training methods may be used?

There are a variety of ways this training can be delivered. Your sponsoring partner or site coordinator will provide the details for your specific site location.

- Online
- Classroom
- Blended
- Self-Study
- Other



There are a variety of ways that training can be delivered. Your sponsoring partner or site coordinator will provide you the details for your specific site location. Training options may include:

- Online
- Classroom
- Self-Study
- Or a combination



Here are some questions we would like for you to consider.

Note: Please read the questions above to give the student time to contemplate.



I know we have shared a lot of information with you today, but don't worry. The IRS and our community partners will set you up for SUCCESS!

- At your site, you will have a coordinator and experienced volunteers to lean on.
- You have access to experienced volunteers to guide you.
- You have access to the Practice Lab to help you get familiar with the software. It includes practice problems and instructional videos on how to prepare the returns.
- And you will always have volunteer reference materials.





We hope that this presentation provided you a better understanding of what the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs are about. Our partners can only be successful with good people like you.

- If you have not already received an e-mail with a listing of partners in your area, then you will soon. Please contact at least one of these partners for the opportunity to volunteer with them.
- If you who did not sign up through the IRS portal or were invited by a friend please go to irs.gov and search for "volunteer" or follow this link in the chat: https://www.irs.gov/individuals/irs-tax-volunteers.
- In the event there is not a tax preparation site available in your local area, we have sites that prepare returns virtually. If you are interested in preparing tax returns virtually, please let us know by sending an email to the email address listed on the following page for your state.

Now back to our host, TM name.

Email Questions to:

TS.VITA.TCE.Growth107@irs.gov: MD/ DC, NJ, DE,VA, TN, WV, KY, NC, SC

TS.VITATCE.Growth108@irs.gov: AR, MO, LA, MS, GA, AL, FL, & PR

TS.VITA.TCE.Growth207@irs.gov: NY, ME, NH, VT, PA, MA, RI, CT

TS.VITA.TCE.Growth208@irs.gov: IL, IN, MI, OH, ND, SD, MN, WI, IA

TS.VITA.TCE.Growth307@irs.gov: WA, OR, WY, ID, MT, HI, CA, AK

TS.VITA.TCE.Growth.308@irs.gov: NV, UT, AZ, CO, NM, TX, OK, KS, NE

We look forward to answering your questions! With the time we have left, let's proceed with the questions we have received in the chat box. If you have a question and didn't submit it, please submit it now through the chat box.

If you have additional questions after this presentation, please contact us at the email address listed on this slide. As a reminder, this webcast will be available for 30 days from today.

If you have not received a response from at least one of the partners you contacted within 14 days, please let us know by e-mailing us at the e-mail listed based on your state.

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(**Host - close out**) - Again, thank you for joining us today and sharing your interest in volunteering. Finally, we appreciate your attendance today and welcome any feedback that you would like to provide. Please let us know if you felt that this training was helpful.

Stakeholder Partnerships, Education & Communication

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