The best way to avoid an audit: Preparation

Getting audited by the IRS is no fun. Some dentists are selected for random audits every year, but the chances of that happening to you are very small. You are much more likely to fall under the IRS's gaze if you make one of several common mistakes.

That means your best chance of avoiding an audit is by doing things right *before* you file your return this year. Here are some suggestions:

Don't leave anything out. Missing or incomplete information on your return will trigger an audit letter automatically, since the IRS gets copies of the same tax forms (such as W-2s and 1099s) that you do.

Double-check your numbers. Bad math will get you audited. Dentists often make calculation errors when they do their returns, especially if they do them without assistance. In 2016, the IRS sent out more than 1.6 million examination letters correcting math errors. The most frequent errors occurred in people's calculation of their amount of tax due, as well as the number of exemptions and deductions they claimed.

Don't stand out. The IRS takes a closer look at business expenses, charitable donations and high-value itemized deductions. IRS computers reference statistical data on which amounts of these items are typical for various professions and income levels. If what you are claiming is significantly different from what is typical, it may be flagged for review.

Have your documentation in order. Keep your records in order by being meticulous about your recordkeeping. Items that will support the tax breaks you take include: cancelled checks, receipts, credit card and investment statements, logs for mileage and business meals, and proof of charitable donations. With proper documentation, a correspondence letter from the IRS inquiring about a particular deduction can be quickly resolved before it turns into a full-blown audit.

Remember, the average person has a less than 1 percent chance of being audited. If you prepare now, you can narrow your audit chances even further and rest easy after you've filed.