



States and dates:

The one-stop guide to filing sales tax returns

When you go into business selling products to consumers, you'll also find yourself taking on another business as well – that of sales tax collector. This can often amount to a surprising amount of work, but it's important to get sales taxes right. Mistakes can result in audits, penalties or fines and take up even more of your precious time and resources.

Once you register for a sales tax permit in the states where you have an obligation to collect sales taxes, you are ready to get down to the nitty-gritty of filing sales tax returns and remitting payments. Here's where it can get tricky, as every state can have very different requirements and processes for filing and paying.

It takes some research to make sure you're filing correctly for each state, and that's why we've put together this guide. We outline the basics on what you need to know no matter where you're filing, along with a state-by-state guide to specific rules and information sources. However, although we hope you'll find the information helpful, this guide does not offer a substitute for professional legal or tax advice.

What you need to know about sales tax filing

Nexus: Whose tax do I need to collect?

Getting nexus right is the single most important key to sales tax compliance. Nexus is a relationship that you have with a state that obligates you to collect sales taxes on transactions within that state. In the states where you have nexus, you need to register, collect, file and remit sales taxes, so those are the ones where you need to know the rules.

The most obvious place where you'll have nexus is the state in which you are physically based. But there are plenty of other ways to incur nexus without actually being located in a state. And as states are getting bolder in defining nexus to their advantage, the possibilities for nexus are growing.

For example, you can establish nexus in a state by having branches there, employing people, regularly attending trade shows, using a drop shipper or a distributor based there, storing goods, having online affiliates or even exceeding a certain threshold of sales in a state. And in the few home rule states, you can have nexus not only with the state, but with a local jurisdiction as well that can require separate filing procedures.

It's important to be aware of what kinds of activities can trigger nexus and stay updated on the latest developments so that your understanding of your own nexus obligation is correct and complete.

Filing procedures: How do I send my return and payment to the tax authorities?

For decades, the standard procedure for filing and paying your sales tax involved filling out a form, writing a check, and mailing or delivering both to the correct government agency. In most states, this is still an option. However, technology now offers several other possibilities for getting your return and payment to the tax office.

All states now offer electronic means of filing and paying, which eliminates the steps of filling out paper forms and

mailing them. These include online filing and telefiling (using a phone to file). In some states, electronic filing is now required for all taxpayers, while other states require only certain taxpayers to file electronically (if they are making tax payments over a certain amount, for example).

Requirements for filing electronically may differ from those for paying electronically. In Alabama, for example, all businesses are required to file electronically, but only sales tax payments of \$750 or more must be made electronically.

It's crucial to make sure you understand the correct filing and payment procedures for the individual states where you have nexus, as one size does not fit all.

Filing due dates: When do I need to file and pay?

When you register with a state for a sales tax permit, the state will assign you a filing frequency, commonly based on the amount of sales tax you are projected to owe (your sales tax liability). This could be monthly, quarterly, yearly or other. Your payment will be due on these dates as well.

Generally, the higher your tax liability, the more often you may be required to file. In some states, if you will owe only a small amount of sales tax, you may be only required to file once a year, while businesses collecting high volumes of sales tax could be required to remit several times a month.

While due dates are generally set as a standard day, keep in mind that these dates may be adjusted according to holidays and weekends. For example, many states set the 20th of the month as the due date, but if the 20th is a Sunday, the deadline could actually be Monday the 21st.

If you are making electronic payments, it's also important to know when your payment must actually be submitted in order to meet the deadline on time.

You may or may not get a notice of when your tax is due, so it's important to be aware of both your frequency and your specific due dates in order to make sure you are filing on time and to avoid any late penalties.

Late penalties: What happens if I miss the deadline for filing and payment?

All states impose penalties for late filing and payment, often a percentage of the unpaid tax plus interest. The explanations of how penalties are calculated are often Byzantine, but the important thing to know is that penalties and interest on late tax payments can add up quickly. And even if you are going to miss a payment deadline, it's key to file as soon as possible to minimize late fees.

Some states offer an extra incentive to file and pay on time with a **timely discount** on the amount of tax due, ranging from 0.5% to 5% with various maximum amounts. In some cases, these incentives only apply for taxpayers who file and pay electronically.



Payment options: How can I make my payments?

While many states still accept checks or money orders for sales taxes, there are many options for electronic payments. These may be referred to as electronic funds transfers (ETFs), e-checks or e-payments and may be accomplished by making payments directly from your bank account via American Clearing House (ACH) transfer or other direct-debit systems, or via credit or debit card. Often, credit card payments are processed through outside vendors that may charge a fee for the service.

Some states require businesses with sales tax liability over a certain amount to make prepayments on their tax liability, meaning several payments may be required within a reporting period.

Make sure you know when electronic payments need to be initiated so that they will be credited in time to meet due dates.

Zero-tax filing: What if I'm registered but did not collect any tax?

In most states that have sales tax, if you are registered but didn't actually collect any sales tax, you are still required to file. This is called **zero-tax filing**.

Staying updated

Tax regulations change all the time, and your filing frequency and due dates can change as well as your business circumstances change. It's important to pay attention to any regulation updates sent out from your taxing authority to make sure you know about changes. It's also helpful to review the taxing authority's website or other information sources from time to time just to make sure you are following the latest directives.

Automation: Can I get help filing my taxes?

Automated sales tax filing software, such as Avalara Returns, can help streamline the sales tax filing process for you. With Avalara Returns, you can import transaction data from your ecommerce or accounting platform and prepare all your sales tax returns at once in minutes, whether you are filing in one state or several. Tax content is constantly updated, so you'll always have the latest filing forms, deadlines and instructions.



State-by-state filing guide

The guide below offers some quick answers to some common questions for each state. For comprehensive information, see each state's website.

Alabama

Website: [Alabama Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing: Required for all businesses. [My Alabama Tax ONE SPOT](#).

Electronic payment: Required for payments of \$750 or more.

Credit card payment: No

Timely discount: 5% on the first \$100 of tax due, and 2% of all tax over \$100, up to a discount of \$400 per month, when paid before the 20th.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Other: Many local governments administer their own sales tax. The state of Alabama administers over 200 city and county sales taxes, but for localities it does not administer, taxpayers can file electronically on [My Alabama Tax ONE SPOT](#).

Alaska

Alaska currently does not have sales tax. However, some local jurisdictions impose and administer their own sales taxes.

Arizona

Website: [State of Arizona Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing: Required for businesses with more than one physical location in Arizona. [www.AZTaxes.gov](#)

Electronic payment: Required for taxpayers with \$1 million prior tax year liability.

Credit card payment: No.

Timely discount: 1% with a maximum of \$10,000.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Other: Arizona does not technically have a sales tax; instead it has a gross receipts tax called the transaction privilege tax (TPT), a tax on the privilege of doing business in Arizona, that functions similarly to a sales tax.

Businesses that have nexus in the following cities must file

separate local returns: Apache Junction, Avondale, Chandler, Douglas, Flagstaff, Glendale, Mesa, Nogales, Peoria, Phoenix, Prescott, Scottsdale and Tempe.

Arkansas

Website: [Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#).

Electronic filing: Optional. [Arkansas Taxpayer Access Point](#).

Electronic payment: Required for taxpayers with liability of \$20,000 or more per month or quarter (according to the type of tax).

Credit card payment: No

Timely discount: 2% up to \$1,000 per month.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Other: Arkansas businesses with average net sales of \$200,000 or more per month must make sales tax prepayments. Out-of-state sellers with taxable sales averaging more than \$200,000 per month must make prepayments equal to 80% of the monthly state liability twice each month. Prepayments are due on the 12th and 24th of each month, with the final report due on the 20th of the following month.

California

Website: [California Board of Equalization](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing: [Online Filing Services](#).

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Electronic payment: Required for average monthly payments of \$10,000 or more.

Timely discount: No.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Other: Businesses with average taxable sales of \$17,000 or more per month are required to make prepayments.

Colorado

Website: [Colorado Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing: [Revenue Online](#). If you have more than one business location, you must file a separate return online for each location.

Electronic payment: Required for businesses paying more than



\$75,000 per year in state sales tax.
 Credit card payment: Yes.
 Timely discount: 3.33% with no maximum.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest.](#)

Other: Many local governments impose and administer their own sales tax. Each requires a separate tax return and payment. Local governments who administer their own sales tax have their own nexus rules.

Connecticut

Website: [Connecticut Department of Revenue Services](#)
 Filing: [Due dates.](#) Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Taxpayer Service Center \(TSC\)](#)
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: None
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest.](#)

Delaware

Delaware currently does not have sales tax.

Florida

Website: [Florida Department of Revenue](#)
 Filing: [Due dates.](#) Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [e-Services.](#) Required for taxpayers who paid \$20,000 or more in sales taxes the previous year or who file a consolidated return and have two or more places of business.
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: 2.5% of the first \$1,200 of tax due, not to exceed \$30, for electronic filing.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest.](#)

Other: Optimized for use on a PC with Windows, the eServices website may not work on a Macintosh platform.

Georgia

Website: [Georgia Department of Revenue](#)
 Filing: [Due dates.](#) Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Georgia Tax Center.](#) Required for taxpayers who owe more than \$500.
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: 3% on first \$500 and 0.5% on any remaining

amount with no maximum.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest.](#)

Other: Prepaid estimated tax in the amount of 50% of the tax due is required if tax liability in the preceding calendar year was greater than \$60,000 excluding local sales taxes.

Hawaii

Website: [State of Hawaii Department of Taxation](#)
 Filing: [Due dates.](#) Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Hawaii Tax Online](#)
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: None
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest.](#)

Other: Hawaii doesn't have a sales tax, but it does impose the general excise tax (GET) "at every level of transaction on goods and service."

Idaho

Website: [Idaho State Tax Commission](#)
 Filing: [Due dates.](#) Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Taxpayer Access Point](#)
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: None
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest.](#)

Illinois

Website: [Illinois Department of Revenue](#)
 Filing: [Due dates.](#) Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing: [My Tax Illinois](#)
 Electronic payment: Required with annual liability of \$20,000 or more.
 Credit card payment: No.
 Timely discount: 1.75% with a minimum of \$5 per year and no maximum.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest.](#)

Other: Many local governments have a sales tax, and many of those do not have a use tax. Chicago taxes products and services differently than the state, and has separate sales taxes.



Indiana

Website: [Indiana Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#).

Electronic filing/payment: [INTax](#). Required for all businesses.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: .083% discount if total annual sales tax collected is less than \$60,000; 0.6% discount if total annual sales tax collected is between \$60,000 and \$600,000; 0.3% discount if total annual sales tax collected is more than \$600,000.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Iowa

Website: [Iowa Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#).

Electronic filing: [eFile & Pay](#). Required for all businesses.

Electronic Payment: Required for more than \$60,000 in tax a year.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Kansas

Website: [Kansas Department of Revenue](#).

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [KSWebTax](#). Required for all businesses.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Kentucky

Website: [Kentucky Department of Revenue](#).

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing: [KY e-Tax](#)

Electronic payment: [Electronic payment](#) for direct debit or credit card. [Tax Payment](#) Solution for EFT payments.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 1.75% on first \$1,000 and 1.50% on all remaining sales tax with a maximum of \$50 per month.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Louisiana

Website: [Louisiana Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#).

Electronic filing/payment: [Parish E-file](#).

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 0.935% with no maximum.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Other: Each parish administers its own sales tax.

Maine

Website: [Maine Revenue Services](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Sales, Use and Service Provider Tax Filing System](#).

Credit card payment: No.

Timely discount: None

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Maryland

Website: [Comptroller of Maryland](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [bFile](#). Electronic payment required for payments of \$10,000 or more.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 1.2% on first \$6,000 and 0.9% on the remainder, with a maximum of \$500 per return.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Massachusetts

Website: [Massachusetts Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [MassTaxConnect](#). Required for businesses with annual sales tax liability of \$5,000 or more or applying for an additional registration. Zero-tax returns must be filed electronically.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Michigan

Website: [Michigan Department of Treasury](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.



Electronic filing/payment: [Michigan Treasury Online](#)
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: 0.5% with a maximum of \$15,000 per month and a minimum of \$6 per month.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Minnesota

Website: [Minnesota Department of Revenue](#)
 Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed electronically or by phone. Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Minnesota e-Services](#)
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: None
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Mississippi

Website: [Mississippi Department of Revenue](#)
 Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Taxpayer Access Point](#)
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: 2% with a maximum of \$50 per month.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Missouri

Website: [Missouri Department of Revenue](#)
 Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Missouri Sales/Use Tax Electronic Filing System](#). Required for quarter-monthly filers.
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: 2% with no maximum.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Montana

Montana currently does not have sales tax..

Nebraska

Website: [Nebraska Department of Revenue](#)
 Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [NebFile](#). Required for annual sales tax liability of \$6,000 or more.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: 2.5% with a maximum of \$75 per month.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Nevada

Website: [Nevada Department of Taxation](#)
 Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Nevada Tax Center](#)
 Credit card payment: No.
 Timely discount: 0.25% with no minimum.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

New Hampshire

New Hampshire currently does not have sales tax.

New Jersey

Website: [New Jersey Department of the Treasury](#)
 Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no taxes are due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Filing and payment services](#). All businesses are required to file electronically or by phone.
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: None.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

New Mexico

Website: [New Mexico Taxation & Revenue Department](#)
 Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no taxes are due.
 Electronic filing/payment: [Taxpayer Access Point](#)
 Credit card payment: Yes (fee).
 Timely discount: None.
 Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Other: In New Mexico, rather than sales tax, gross receipts tax is collected on the sale of goods and some services. Although the gross receipts tax is imposed on businesses, it is common for a business to pass the gross receipts tax on to the purchaser either by separately stating it on the invoice or by combining the tax with the selling price.



New York

Website: [New York Department of Taxation & Finance](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Sales Tax Web File](#). Required for most businesses.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 5% with a maximum of \$200 per quarter.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#)

North Carolina

Website: [North Carolina Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Online Filing and Payment](#). Required for monthly with prepayment taxpayers.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

North Dakota

Website: [North Dakota Office of State Tax Commissioner](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Taxpayer Access Point](#).

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 1.5% with a maximum of \$110 per month.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Ohio

Website: [Ohio Department of Taxation](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Ohio Business Gateway](#). Electronic filing or telefiling required for all businesses.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 0.75% with no maximum.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Oklahoma

Website: [Oklahoma Tax Commission](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Oklahoma Taxpayer Access Point](#).

Required for businesses that pay \$2,500 or more per month in

taxes.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 1% with a maximum of \$2,500 per month.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Oregon

Oregon currently does not have sales tax. There are several cities with a sales tax.

Pennsylvania

Website: [Pennsylvania Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing: [e-Tides](#). Electronic filing or telefiling (1-800-748-8299) required for all businesses.

Electronic payment: An approved electronic funds transfer (EFT) method is required for taxpayers remitting payments of \$1,000 or more.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: The lesser of \$25 or 1% of the tax collected for a monthly filer; \$75 or 1% of the tax collected for a quarterly filer, and \$150 or 1% of the tax collected for a semi-annual filer.

Late penalty: [Penalties and interest](#).

Rhode Island

Website: [Rhode Island Division of Taxation](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [RI Business Tax Filings](#). Electronic payment required if a business has 10 or more employees or average monthly tax liability is \$200 or more.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late penalty: [Penalties and interest](#).

South Carolina

Website: [South Carolina Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [MyDORWAY](#).

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 3.0% for the first \$100 of tax due and 2.0% for all remaining sales tax with a maximum of \$3,100 per year.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).



South Dakota

Website: [South Dakota Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [EPath](#).

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 1.5% of the tax due, not to exceed \$70, each reporting period for filing electronically and on time.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Tennessee

Website: [Tennessee Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Sales and Use Tax Online Filing](#).

Required for all businesses.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#)

Texas

Website: [Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Sales Tax Webfile](#). Electronic filing or telefiling (888-434-5464) required for previous annual payment of \$50,000 or more.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 0.5%. Quarterly and monthly filers who prepay 90% of the total sales tax due for the entire reporting period can earn an additional 1.25% discount.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Utah

Website: [Utah State Tax Commission](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing: [Utah's Taxpayer Access Point](#).

Electronic payment: EFT payment required for tax liability of \$96,000 or more for the preceding calendar year.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 1.31% plus an additional vendor discount of 1.25% for local sales tax filing with no maximum.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Vermont

Website: [Vermont Department of Taxes](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#).

Electronic filing/payment: [myVTax](#). Required for businesses that pay sales tax for multiple locations, or total annual sales tax exceeds \$100,000.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Virginia

Website: [Virginia Department of Taxation](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [eForms](#), [Business iFile](#), or [Web Upload](#).

Required for monthly and quarterly filers.

Credit card payment: No.

Timely discount: 1.6% on the first \$62,500 and 0.80% on any remaining tax revenue, plus an additional 1.0% for local tax.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Washington

Website: [Washington State Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [E-file](#).

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

West Virginia

Website: [West Virginia State Tax Department](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [MyTaxes](#). Required for businesses with total payments of \$25,000 during the most recent fiscal year.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).



Wisconsin

Website: [Wisconsin Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [My Tax Account](#), [File Transmission](#), [Telefile](#).

Required for all businesses.

Credit card payment: Yes (fee).

Timely discount: 0.5% with a minimum of \$10 per filing period.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).

Wyoming

Website: [Wyoming Department of Revenue](#)

Filing: [Due dates](#). Returns must be filed even if no tax is due.

Electronic filing/payment: [Wyoming Internet Filing System](#).

Credit card payment: Yes.

Timely discount: None.

Late fees: [Penalties and interest](#).



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