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Your Social Security Number could be the ticket for a fraudster seeking to claim a false tax refund or worse, according to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). A fraud expert offers some tips for preventing such crime – or at least catching it early.

Bruce Dorris, J.D., CFE, CPA, CVA, is vice president and program director for the Austin, Texas-based Association of Certified Fraud Examiners ([ACFE](#)). With nearly 75,000 members, the ACFE is the world's largest anti-fraud organization and

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other financial information. "This isn't the way the IRS operates, and no one should provide such information over the phone or via email," Dorris said.

3. **Check your credit history.** Free credit reports are available at [annualcreditreport.com](https://annualcreditreport.com). Information in your report can indicate whether a tax fraudster has used your identity for nefarious purposes beyond just refund fraud. "Reviewing your credit report will tip you off if anyone has been opening lines of credit in your name," Dorris said. "Make sure all of your information is accurate and includes only those accounts and transactions you have authorized."
4. **Report anything suspicious.** Emails purporting to be from the IRS, strange phone calls, odd things on your credit report – any of these can be telltale signs of attempted fraud. Also, "if you receive a notice from the IRS that you filed more than one tax return or someone has already filed using your information, that's a big red flag," Dorris said. "If you are informed that you have a mysterious balance due or that you received wages from an employer you have not worked for, it's time to contact the IRS." Call their Identity Protection Specialized Unit at 1-800-908-4490.
5. **If you've been a victim, create an Identity Theft Report.** According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), an Identity Theft Report will help you deal with credit reporting companies, debt collectors and businesses that gave the identity thief credit or opened new accounts in your name. "If you have been the victim of identity theft, having a record on file will help you repair the damage to your credit report and deal with any creditors who are attempting to collect on fraudulent charges," Dorris said. "It will also place an extended fraud alert on your credit report, which can help prevent further fraudulent activity moving forward."

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