

Dear Iris Letter # 1

Dear Iris,

My ex-wife and I have two children, both of whom live with her most of the time. I get them every other weekend, and three weeks during the summer. There's nothing in our divorce decree that says anything about taxes, but generally we each claim one of the kids as a dependent.

Last year, I went to one of those free tax places, and they said I couldn't claim my son because he didn't live with me for most of the year. I'm doing my fair share to support my children, and my ex-wife has never disputed that. I don't know why I can't claim at least one of the kids if I'm technically supporting both of them. What am I missing? Or did that volunteer lady have a few screws loose?

Thank you, Iris, for your advice.

Sincerely,
Doing My Part

Dear Iris Letter # 7

Dear Iris,

My five-year-old goes to an afterschool care program when he gets out of school, and I pick him up when I get off of work, usually around 5:30. Can I deduct these expenses on my tax return? It's kind of a lot of money, so if I can somehow claim the expense, I'd really like to know how.

Thanks,
Mom from McIntosh

Dear Iris,

I am seventeen years old, and a junior in high school. I have a son who was born in September of 2019. We live with my Mom. I work at the Chicken Shack to try to bring in some extra money, but Mom pays most of the expenses. I think I made enough that I'm going to have to file taxes though--about \$6,850.

Mom and I are fighting over who can claim my son. I say I can claim him because he's my son. Mom says she can claim him because she's supporting both of us, and he's her grandson. I'm really not trying to take anything away from my Mom, but if I can increase my refund by claiming, I want to do that. Can we both claim him?

Fighting Over a Four Month Old

Dear Iris,

I'm 51, and I live alone in Alabama. My mother is 75, and she lives alone in Florida. Although she lives in her own home, which is paid for, I have had to pay her utility bills, and I buy most of her groceries. Mom ends up sending most of her social security money to charities who solicit her through the mail, and what she doesn't give away she spends on lottery tickets. Please don't get me started, Iris. In short, I'm supporting my mother. Can I claim her as a dependent, even though we don't live together? For that matter, does she qualify me to file as Head of Household?

She Ain't Heavy; She's My Mother

Dear Iris,

My wife and I have one son, ROSS, who turned 17 in November. Ross is a senior in high school, and we are still providing all of his support. When we filed our taxes, our refund took a hit of about \$1,500 compared to last year's return. The person who did our taxes said something about Ross turning 17 causing us to lose some sort of credit. I looked at our old return, and we did receive the Earned Income Credit for both years. What are we missing, and why didn't we get it? Did our preparer do something wrong? Should we amend our return? \$1,500 is a lot to lose if we don't have to.

Still Supporting This Kid

Dear Iris,

My brother said he heard that there weren't going to be exemptions on tax returns any more. What he said was, "They're increasing the standard deductions, but they're getting rid of exemptions." Is that right? And if so, does that mean there's no point in claiming people on your tax return any more? This sounds like the law of diminishing refunds.

Wishing for a Better Answer