

# Set yourself up for success

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I have historically been a hopeless procrastinator when it comes to doing my taxes, which is really frustrating because we typically have a refund coming our way. This year, I was determined to get our taxes done early and realized the best way to do this was to set myself up for success. Here's how I did that:

- Purchased and downloaded the TurboTax software on January 1.
- Stated my intention to have my taxes done by February 15 to a friend I knew would hold me accountable - and provide encouragement if I needed it.
- Designated a folder in the kitchen where both my husband and I could put any tax paperwork that arrived in the mail.
- Set time in January to make sure all expenses and income were properly recorded for our small side businesses. (I really focused on good record-keeping throughout 2016 so this would go more easily than it did last year.)
- Set the stage for a successful afternoon of tax preparation in early February by making sure I had good music, all my paperwork, and a great attitude. I also warned the rest of my family not to interrupt me and committed to focus on only one thing at a time and to be patient if I had to wait for TurboTax updates.

Although I told myself I only had to work on my taxes for an hour, I picked up momentum and could see the end was in sight, so I stayed with it another 20-30 minutes and was able to hit submit. Then it was just a matter of printing out the state taxes (because I didn't want to pay the fee to submit them online) and completing our local taxes. I had everything in the mail on February 10.

The best part about this was that because I didn't procrastinate during any part of the process, the task energized me rather than draining me. And now I'll have my refund about 2 months earlier than usual and can feel good about it every time I see an advertisement for tax preparation or hear others moan about their taxes.

In this particular example, setting myself up for success meant breaking an overwhelming large task into several smaller tasks and then getting myself in the right frame of mind.

How can you set yourself up for success on something that's been a stumbling block? It might mean setting dates for certain tasks well in advance, breaking tasks into smaller chunks, asking for help, getting all your materials together, or carving out time to do something. You've got this!