

**Abstract:** To support a charitable deduction, taxpayers need to comply with IRS substantiation requirements. But what if you never receive a letter from the charity substantiating a donation? This article explains the rules and notes a valuable tax deduction.

## **Tracking down donation substantiation**

If you're like many Americans, letters from your favorite charities may be appearing in your mailbox acknowledging your 2021 donations. But what happens if you haven't received such a letter? Can you still claim a deduction for the gift on your 2021 income tax return? It depends.

### **What's required**

To support a charitable deduction, you need to comply with IRS substantiation requirements. This generally includes obtaining a contemporaneous written acknowledgment from the charity stating the amount of the donation if it's cash. If the donation is property, the acknowledgment must describe the property, but the charity isn't required to provide a value. The donor must determine the property's value.

“Contemporaneous” means the earlier of the date you file your tax return or the extended due date of your return. So, if you donated in 2021 but haven't yet received substantiation from the charity, it's not too late — as long as you haven't filed your 2021 return. Contact the charity and request a written acknowledgment.

Keep in mind that, if you made a cash gift of under \$250 with a check or credit card, generally a canceled check, bank statement or credit card statement is sufficient. However, if you received something in return for the donation, you generally must reduce your deduction by its value — and the charity is required to provide you a written acknowledgment as described earlier.

### **Deduction for non-itemizers**

Generally, taxpayers who don't itemize their deductions (and instead claim the standard deduction) can't claim a charitable deduction. Under the CARES Act, individuals who didn't itemize deductions could claim a federal income tax write-off for up to \$300 of cash contributions to IRS-approved charities for the 2020 tax year.

Fortunately, this tax break was extended to cover \$300 of cash contributions made in 2021 under the Consolidated Appropriations Act. The law also doubled the deduction limit to \$600 for married joint-filing couples for cash contributions made in 2021.

### **Let us assist you**

Additional substantiation requirements apply to some types of donations. We can help you determine whether you have sufficient substantiation for the donations you hope to deduct on your 2021 income tax return — and guide you on the substantiation you'll need for gifts you're planning this year to ensure you can enjoy the desired deductions on your 2022 return.