

# Things Organizations Should Know About Applying for Tax-Exempt Status

To be tax-exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, an organization must be organized and operated exclusively for any of these purposes: charitable, religious, educational, scientific, literary, testing for public safety, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, or preventing cruelty to children or animals.

Organizations that want to apply for recognition of tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) use a [Form 1023-series application](#).

Here are some key things to know about this process.

- The [application process](#) on IRS.gov includes a step-by-step guide explaining how to apply for tax-exempt status.
- Form 1023-series applications for recognition of exemption must be submitted electronically online at [Pay.gov](#). The application must be complete and include the user fee.
- Some types of organizations don't need to apply for Section 501(c)(3) status to be tax-exempt. These include churches and their [integrated auxiliaries](#), and public charities with annual gross receipts normally no more than \$5,000.
- An employer identification number is a nine-digit number the IRS assigns for tax filing and reporting purposes. Every tax-exempt organization should have an EIN, even if they don't have any employees. An organization must include their EIN on the application. Organizations can [apply online](#) to get an EIN.
- The effective date of an organization's tax-exempt status depends on their approved Form 1023. If they submit this form within 27 months after the month they legally formed, the effective date of their organization's exempt status is the legal date of its formation. If an organization doesn't submit this form within those 27 months, the effective date of its exempt status is the date it files Form 1023.
- Once the IRS determines an organization qualifies for tax-exempt status under the law, it will also be classified as a private foundation unless the organization meets the requirements to be treated as a [public charity](#).
- A charitable organization must make certain documents available to the public. These include its approved application for recognition of exemption with all supporting documents and its last three annual information returns. See [Publication 557, Tax Exempt Status For Your Organization](#) for additional information on public inspection requirements.