

Perseverance Required - Signing Up for the IRS/ID.me Account

by Kristen Howze



The good news: Americans living outside the U.S. will be able view their IRS accounts, gaining access to their tax return transcripts and other useful web tools.

The bad news: Getting verified requires (lots of) perseverance.

Based on my own personal experience and the experiences of other U.S. persons abroad, here are some useful tips for getting verified:

Your first attempt is likely to fail if you do not have a U.S. address and U.S. phone number (Skype "landlines", Google VOIP, etc. are unlikely to work.) At the time of this writing, there was no way to enter a foreign country or get past the requirement to enter a U.S. state in the default address section in the ID.me signup.

Once you fail to get through the default verification process because you can't enter a foreign address or phone number, there are a few options.

1. Keep trying until you fail enough times, and the system offers you the ability to get verified with a Trusted Referee.
2. Contact ID.me via their website or through Facebook messenger.

What constitutes a "failure" isn't obvious because there's no error message; you simply can't move forward. It may be best to contact the help desk to make yourself heard.

Be forewarned, at this first contact with an ID.me customer service agent, incorrect information may be relayed. For example, I received the following message in an email from ID.me:

"Unfortunately, you will need a US address and telephone number to verify your identity."

Don't give up, instead, ask the agent for a link to get verified by a Trusted Referee. You may have to ask numerous times. Once a link for a Trusted Referee is obtained, a foreign address can be entered in your profile. Progress!

When it comes to uploading documents or taking a "selfie" the option to take a picture with your phone isn't going to work if you haven't been able to enter a validated US phone number.

You can get around this using a scanner or taking pictures with your phone, saving them to your computer, and then uploading them.

The next step is digging up the correct identity documents and upload them to ID.me. Read their FAQs carefully to see what kinds of documents are required. Once your documents pass the review process a link will be issued for a video call with a Trusted Referee.

Other complications:

- The address on your account must match the verification documents exactly or they will not pass the review process.
- Documents in a foreign language may be rejected.
- The documents must fall into one of their categories (e.g., gas bill, bank statement).
- Even with clear and readable documents, the upload process often fails. Try saving your documents in different formats.
- During the call with the Trusted Referee, you will also have to show certain physical documents such as your passport and your social security card.



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