



Appendix D - IRS Independent Contractor Test

APPENDIX D

INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR TEST INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

IRS Independent Contractor Test

The IRS formerly used what has become known as the "Twenty Factor" test. Under pressure from Congress and from representatives of labor and business, it has recently attempted to simplify and refine the test, consolidating the twenty factors into eleven main tests, and organizing them into three main groups: behavioral control, financial control, and the type of relationship of the parties. Those factors appear below, along with comments regarding each one (source: IRS Publication 15-A, 2010 Edition, page 6; available for downloading from <http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p15a.pdf> (PDF). Another good IRS resource for understanding the independent contractor tests is at http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/article/0,,id=99921_00.html.

Behavioral control

Facts that show whether the business has a right to direct and control how the worker does the task for which the worker is hired include the type and degree of:

1. *Instructions the business gives the worker.* An employee is generally subject to the business' instructions about when, where, and how to work. All of the following are examples of types of instructions about how to do work:
 - a. When and where to do the work
 - b. What tools or equipment to use
 - c. What workers to hire or to assist with the work
 - d. Where to purchase supplies and services
 - e. What work must be performed by a specified individual
 - f. What order or sequence to follow

The amount of instruction needed varies among different jobs. Even if no instructions are given, sufficient behavioral control may exist if the employer has the right to control how the work results are achieved. A business may lack the knowledge to instruct some highly specialized professionals; in other cases, the task may require little or no instruction. The key consideration is whether the business has retained the right to control the details of a worker's performance or instead has given up that right.

2. *Training the business gives the worker.* An employee may be trained to perform services in a particular manner. Independent contractors ordinarily use their own methods.

Financial control

Facts that show whether the business has a right to control the business aspects of the worker's job include:

3. *The extent to which the worker has unreimbursed business expenses.* Independent contractors are more likely to have unreimbursed expenses than are employees. Fixed ongoing costs that are incurred regardless of whether work is currently being performed are especially important. However, employees may also incur unreimbursed expenses in connection with the services they perform for their business.
4. *The extent of the worker's investment.* An employee usually has no investment in the work other than his or her own time. An independent contractor often has a significant investment in the facilities he or she uses in performing services for someone else. However, a significant investment is not necessary for independent contractor status.
5. *The extent to which the worker makes services available to the relevant market.* An independent contractor is generally free to seek out business opportunities. Independent contractors often advertise, maintain a visible business location, and are available to work in the relevant market.
6. *How the business pays the worker.* An employee is generally guaranteed a regular wage amount for an hourly, weekly, or other period of time. This usually indicates that a worker is an employee, even when the wage or salary is supplemented by a commission. An independent contractor is usually paid by a flat fee for the job. However, it is common in some professions, such as law, to pay independent contractors hourly.
7. *The extent to which the worker can realize a profit or loss.* Since an employer usually provides employees a workplace, tools, materials, equipment, and supplies needed for the work, and generally pays the costs of doing business, employees do not have an opportunity to make a profit or loss. An independent contractor can make a profit or loss.

Type of relationship

Facts that show the parties' type of relationship include:

8. *Written contracts describing the relationship the parties intended to create.* This is probably the least important of the criteria, since what really matters is the nature of the underlying work relationship, not what the parties choose to call it. However, in close cases, the written contract can make a difference.
9. *Whether the business provides the worker with employee-type benefits, such as insurance, a pension plan, vacation pay, or sick pay.* The power to grant benefits carries with it the power to take them away, which is a power generally exercised by employers over employees. A true independent contractor will finance his or her own benefits out of the overall profits of the enterprise.
10. *The permanency of the relationship.* If the company engages a worker with the expectation that the relationship will continue indefinitely, rather than for a specific project or period, this is generally considered evidence that the intent was to create an employer-employee relationship.
11. *The extent to which services performed by the worker are a key aspect of the regular business of the company.* If a worker provides services that are a key aspect of the company's regular business activity, it is more likely that the company will have the right to direct and control his or her activities. For example, if a law firm hires an attorney, it is likely that it will present the attorney's work as its own and would have the right to control or direct that work. This would indicate an employer-employee relationship.

Former IRS Twenty-Factor Test

The previous twenty-factor test used by the IRS can be seen in the test (see [Appendix E](#) of this article) officially adopted by the Texas Workforce Commission, the agency which enforces the state unemployment tax in Texas. That test may be found on the Internet at <http://www.texasworkforce.org/ui/tax/forms/c8.pdf> (PDF). Employers may also request a copy in printed form by asking for Form C-8 from "Texas Workforce Commission, Tax Department, 101 E. 15th Street, Austin, Texas, 78778".

There is a "safe harbor" rule in Section 530(a) of the Revenue Act of 1978 that sometimes allows companies to classify workers in close cases as independent contractors, even if they might be considered employees under the IRS eleven-factor test shown here, as long as such a classification is consistent with the industry practice for such workers, or a previous IRS audit has found that such workers are not employees, or an IRS ruling or opinion letter supports the classification in question, and the worker has been treated all along as an independent contractor. The important thing to remember is that TWC takes the position that the agency is not bound by the safe harbor rule or by any particular ruling that IRS makes under the federal law, reasoning that TWC must follow its own specific Texas statute, Section 201.041 of the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act, which provides the "[direction and control](#)" test explained at the beginning of this article.

Do not underestimate the difficulty of applying these standards to specific individuals performing services. In doubtful cases, always consult a knowledgeable labor and employment law attorney.

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Independent Contractor (Self-Employed) or Employee?

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It is critical that business owners correctly determine whether the individuals providing services are employees or independent contractors.

Generally, you must withhold income taxes, withhold and pay Social Security and Medicare taxes, and pay unemployment tax on wages paid to an employee. You do not generally have to withhold or pay any taxes on payments to independent contractors.

Select the Scenario that Applies to You:

- **I am an independent contractor or in business for myself**
If you are a business owner or contractor who provides services to other businesses, then you are generally considered self-employed. For more information on your tax obligations if you are self-employed (an independent contractor), see our [Self-Employed Tax Center](#).
- **I hire or contract with individuals to provide services to my business**
If you are a business owner hiring or contracting with other individuals to provide services, you must determine whether the individuals providing services are employees or independent contractors. Follow the rest of this page to find out more about this topic and what your responsibilities are.

Determining Whether the Individuals Providing Services are Employees or Independent Contractors

Before you can determine how to treat payments you make for services, you must first know the business relationship that exists between you and the person performing the services. The person performing the services may be -

- An [independent contractor](#)
- An [employee](#) (common-law employee)
- A [statutory employee](#)
- A [statutory nonemployee](#)
- A [government worker](#)

In determining whether the person providing service is an employee or an independent contractor, all information that provides evidence of the degree of control and independence must be considered.

Common Law Rules

Facts that provide evidence of the degree of control and independence fall into three categories:

1. **Behavioral**: Does the company control or have the right to control what the worker does and how the worker does his or her job?
2. **Financial**: Are the business aspects of the worker's job controlled by the payer? (these include things like how worker is paid, whether expenses are reimbursed, who provides tools/supplies, etc.)
3. **Type of Relationship**: Are there written contracts or employee type benefits (i.e. pension plan, insurance, vacation pay, etc.)? Will the relationship continue and is the work performed a key aspect of the business?

Businesses must weigh all these factors when determining whether a worker is an employee or independent contractor. Some factors may indicate that the worker is an employee, while other factors indicate that the worker is an independent contractor. There is no "magic" or set number of factors that "makes" the worker an employee or an independent contractor, and no one factor stands alone in making this determination. Also, factors which are relevant in one situation may not be relevant in another.

The keys are to look at the entire relationship, consider the degree or extent of the right to direct and control, and finally, to document each of the factors used in coming up with the determination.

Form SS-8

If, after reviewing the three categories of evidence, it is still unclear whether a worker is an employee or an independent contractor, [Form SS-8, Determination of Worker Status for Purposes of Federal Employment Taxes and Income Tax Withholding](#) (PDF) can be filed with the IRS. The form may be filed by either the business or the worker. The IRS will review the facts and circumstances and officially determine the worker's status.

Be aware that it can take at least six months to get a determination, but a business that continually hires the same types of workers to perform particular services may want to consider filling the [Form SS-8](#) (PDF).

Employment Tax Obligations

Once a determination is made (whether by the business or by the IRS), the next step is filling the

appropriate forms and paying the associated taxes.

- [Forms and associated taxes for independent contractors](#)
- [Forms and associated taxes for employees](#)

Employment Tax Guidelines

There are specific employment tax guidelines that must be followed for certain industries.

- [Employment Tax Guidelines: Classifying Certain Van Operators in the Moving Industry](#) (PDF)
- [Employment Tax Procedures: Classification of Workers within the Limousine Industry](#) (PDF)

Misclassification of Employees

Consequences of Treating an Employee as an Independent Contractor

If you classify an employee as an independent contractor and you have no reasonable basis for doing so, you may be held liable for employment taxes for that worker (the relief provisions, discussed below, will not apply). See Internal Revenue Code section 3509 for more information.

Relief Provisions

If you have a reasonable basis for not treating a worker as an employee, you may be relieved from having to pay employment taxes for that worker. To get this relief, you must file all required federal information returns on a basis consistent with your treatment of the worker. You (or your predecessor) must not have treated any worker holding a substantially similar position as an employee for any periods beginning after 1977. See [Publication 1976, Section 530 Employment Tax Relief Requirements](#) (PDF) for more information.

Misclassified Workers Can File Social Security Tax Form

Workers who believe they have been improperly classified as independent contractors by an employer can use Form 8919, Uncollected Social Security and Medicare Tax on Wages to figure and report the employee's share of uncollected Social Security and Medicare taxes due on their compensation. See the full article [Misclassified Workers to File New Social Security Tax Form](#) for more information.

Voluntary Classification Settlement Program

The [Voluntary Classification Settlement Program \(VCSP\)](#) is a new optional program that provides taxpayers with an opportunity to reclassify their workers as employees for future tax periods for employment tax purposes with partial relief from federal employment taxes for eligible taxpayers that agree to prospectively treat their workers (or a class or group of workers) as employees. To participate in this new voluntary program, the taxpayer must meet certain eligibility requirements, apply to participate in the VCSP by filing Form 8952, Application for Voluntary Classification Settlement Program, and enter into a closing agreement with the IRS.

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Independent Contractor Defined



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People such as doctors, dentists, veterinarians, lawyers, accountants, contractors, subcontractors, public stenographers, or auctioneers who are in an independent trade, business, or profession in which they offer their services to the general public are generally independent contractors. However, whether these people are independent contractors or employees depends on the facts in each case. The general rule is that an individual is an independent contractor if the payer has the right to control or direct only the result of the work and not what will be done and how it will be done. The earnings of a person who is working as an independent contractor are subject to Self-Employment Tax.

If you are an independent contractor, you are self-employed. To find out what your tax obligations are, visit the [Self-Employed Tax Center](#).

You are not an independent contractor if you perform services that can be controlled by an employer (what will be done and how it will be done). This applies even if you are given freedom of action. What matters is that the employer has the legal right to control the details of how the services are performed.

If an employer-employee relationship exists (regardless of what the relationship is called), you are not an independent contractor and your earnings are generally not subject to [Self-Employment Tax](#).

However, your earnings as an employee may be subject to FICA (Social Security tax and Medicare) and income tax withholding.

For more information on determining whether you are an independent contractor or an employee, refer to the section on [Independent Contractors or Employees](#).

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Behavioral Control



[Español](#)

Behavioral control refers to facts that show whether there is a right to direct or control how the worker does the work. A worker is an employee when the business has the right to direct and control the worker. The business does not have to actually direct or control the way the work is done – as long as the employer has the right to direct and control the work.

The behavioral control factors fall into the categories of:

- Type of instructions given
- Degree of instruction
- Evaluation systems
- Training

Types of Instructions Given

An employee is generally subject to the business's instructions about when, where, and how to work. All of the following are examples of types of instructions about how to do work.

- When and where to do the work.
- What tools or equipment to use.
- What workers to hire or to assist with the work.
- Where to purchase supplies and services.
- What work must be performed by a specified individual.
- What order or sequence to follow when performing the work.

Degree of Instruction

Degree of Instruction means that the more detailed the instructions, the more control the business exercises over the worker. More detailed instructions indicate that the worker is an employee. Less detailed instructions reflects less control, indicating that the worker is more likely an independent contractor.

Note: The amount of instruction needed varies among different jobs. Even if no instructions are given, sufficient behavioral control may exist if the employer has the right to control how the work results are achieved. A business may lack the knowledge to instruct some highly specialized professionals; in other cases, the task may require little or no instruction. The key consideration is whether the business has retained the right to control the details of a worker's performance or instead has given up that right.

Evaluation System

If an evaluation system measures the details of how the work is performed, then these factors would point to an employee.

If the evaluation system measures just the end result, then this can point to either an independent contractor or an employee.

Training

If the business provides the worker with training on how to do the job, this indicates that the business wants the job done in a particular way. This is strong evidence that the worker is an employee. Periodic or on-going training about procedures and methods is even stronger evidence of an employer-employee relationship. However, independent contractors ordinarily use their own methods.

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Financial Control



[Español](#)

Financial control refers to facts that show whether or not the business has the right to control the economic aspects of the worker's job.

The financial control factors fall into the categories of:

- Significant investment
- Unreimbursed expenses
- Opportunity for profit or loss
- Services available to the market
- Method of payment

Significant investment

An independent contractor often has a significant investment in the equipment he or she uses in working for someone else. However, in many occupations, such as construction, workers spend thousands of dollars on the tools and equipment they use and are still considered to be employees. There are no precise dollar limits that must be met in order to have a significant investment. Furthermore, a significant investment is not necessary for independent contractor status as some types of work simply do not require large expenditures.

Unreimbursed expenses

Independent contractors are more likely to have unreimbursed expenses than are employees. Fixed ongoing costs that are incurred regardless of whether work is currently being performed are especially important. However, employees may also incur unreimbursed expenses in connection with the services that they perform for their business.

Opportunity for profit or loss

The opportunity to make a profit or loss is another important factor. If a worker has a significant investment in the tools and equipment used and if the worker has unreimbursed expenses, the worker has a greater opportunity to lose money (i.e., their expenses will exceed their income from the work). Having the possibility of incurring a loss indicates that the worker is an independent contractor.

Services available to the market

An independent contractor is generally free to seek out business opportunities. Independent contractors often advertise, maintain a visible business location, and are available to work in the relevant market.

Method of payment

An employee is generally guaranteed a regular wage amount for an hourly, weekly, or other period of time. This usually indicates that a worker is an employee, even when the wage or salary is supplemented by a commission. An independent contractor is usually paid by a flat fee for the job. However, it is common in some professions, such as law, to pay independent contractors hourly.

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Type of Relationship



[Español](#)

Type of relationship refers to facts that show how the worker and business perceive their relationship to each other.

The factors, for the type of relationship between two parties, generally fall into the categories of:

- Written contracts
- Employee benefits
- Permanency of the relationship
- Services provided as key activity of the business

Written Contracts

Although a contract may state that the worker is an employee or an independent contractor, this is not sufficient to determine the worker's status. The IRS is not required to follow a contract stating that the worker is an independent contractor, responsible for paying his or her own self employment tax. How the parties work together determines whether the worker is an employee or an independent contractor.

Employee Benefits

Employee benefits include things like insurance, pension plans, paid vacation, sick days, and disability insurance. Businesses generally do not grant these benefits to independent contractors. However, the lack of these types of benefits does not necessarily mean the worker is an independent contractor.

Permanency of the Relationship

If you hire a worker with the expectation that the relationship will continue indefinitely, rather than for a specific project or period, this is generally considered evidence that the intent was to create an employer-employee relationship.

Services Provided as Key Activity of the Business

If a worker provides services that are a key aspect of the business, it is more likely that the business will have the right to direct and control his or her activities. For example, if a law firm hires an attorney, it is likely that it will present the attorney's work as its own and would have the right to control or direct that work. This would indicate an employer-employee relationship.

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perform personal services for hourly wages. Jerry Jones and his assistants are employees of Wilma White.

Example 2. Milton Manning, an experienced tile setter, orally agreed with a corporation to perform full-time services at construction sites. He uses his own tools and performs services in the order designated by the corporation and according to its specifications. The corporation supplies all materials, makes frequent inspections of his work, pays him on a piecework basis, and carries workers' compensation insurance on him. He doesn't have a place of business or hold himself out to perform similar services for others. Either party can end the services at any time. Milton Manning is an employee of the corporation.

Example 3. Wallace Black agreed with the Sawdust Co. to supply the construction labor for a group of houses. The company agreed to pay all construction costs. However, he supplies all the tools and equipment. He performs personal services as a carpenter and mechanic for an hourly wage. He also acts as superintendent and foreman and engages other individuals to assist him. The company has the right to select, approve, or discharge any helper. A company representative makes frequent inspections of the construction site. When a house is finished, Wallace is paid a certain percentage of its costs. He isn't responsible for faults, defects of construction, or wasteful operation. At the end of each week, he presents the company with a statement of the amount that he has spent, including the payroll. The company gives him a check for that amount from which he pays the assistants, although he isn't personally liable for their wages. Wallace Black and his assistants are employees of the Sawdust Co.

Example 4. Bill Plum contracted with Elm Corporation to complete the roofing on a housing complex. A signed contract established a flat amount for the services rendered by Bill Plum. Bill is a licensed roofer and carries workers' compensation and liability insurance under the business name, Plum Roofing. He hires his own roofers who are treated as employees for federal employment tax purposes. If there is a problem with the roofing work, Plum Roofing is responsible for paying for any repairs. Bill Plum, doing business as Plum Roofing, is an independent contractor.

Example 5. Vera Elm, an electrician, submitted a job estimate to a housing complex for electrical work at \$16 per hour for 400 hours. She is to receive \$1,280 every 2 weeks for the next 10 weeks. This isn't considered payment by the hour. Even if she works more or less than 400 hours to complete the work, Vera Elm will receive \$6,400. She also performs additional electrical installations under contracts with other companies, that she obtained through advertisements. Vera is an independent contractor.

Trucking Industry

Example. Rose Trucking contracts to deliver material for Forest, Inc., at \$140 per ton. Rose Trucking isn't paid for any articles that aren't delivered. At times, Jan Rose,

who operates as Rose Trucking, may also lease another truck and engage a driver to complete the contract. All operating expenses, including insurance coverage, are paid by Jan Rose. All equipment is owned or rented by Jan and she is responsible for all maintenance. None of the drivers are provided by Forest, Inc. Jan Rose, operating as Rose Trucking, is an independent contractor.

Computer Industry

Example. Steve Smith, a computer programmer, is laid off when Megabyte, Inc., downsizes. Megabyte agrees to pay Steve a flat amount to complete a one-time project to create a certain product. It isn't clear how long that it will take to complete the project, and Steve isn't guaranteed any minimum payment for the hours spent on the program. Megabyte provides Steve with no instructions beyond the specifications for the product itself. Steve and Megabyte have a written contract, which provides that Steve is considered to be an independent contractor, is required to pay federal and state taxes, and receives no benefits from Megabyte. Megabyte will file Form 1099-MISC, Miscellaneous Income, to report the amount paid to Steve. Steve works at home and isn't expected or allowed to attend meetings of the software development group. Steve is an independent contractor.

Automobile Industry

Example 1. Donna Lee is a salesperson employed on a full-time basis by Bob Blue, an auto dealer. She works six days a week and is on duty in Bob's showroom on certain assigned days and times. She appraises trade-ins, but her appraisals are subject to the sales manager's approval. Lists of prospective customers belong to the dealer. She is required to develop leads and report results to the sales manager. Because of her experience, she requires only minimal assistance in closing and financing sales and in other phases of her work. She is paid a commission and is eligible for prizes and bonuses offered by Bob. Bob also pays the cost of health insurance and group-term life insurance for Donna. Donna is an employee of Bob Blue.

Example 2. Sam Sparks performs auto repair services in the repair department of an auto sales company. He works regular hours and is paid on a percentage basis. He has no investment in the repair department. The sales company supplies all facilities, repair parts, and supplies; issues instructions on the amounts to be charged, parts to be used, and the time for completion of each job; and checks all estimates and repair orders. Sam is an employee of the sales company.

Example 3. An auto sales agency furnishes space for Helen Bach to perform auto repair services. She provides her own tools, equipment, and supplies. She seeks out business from insurance adjusters and other individuals and does all of the body and paint work that comes to the agency. She hires and discharges her own helpers, determines her own and her helpers' working hours, quotes prices for repair work, makes all necessary adjustments,

assumes all losses from uncollectible accounts, and receives, as compensation for her services, a large percentage of the gross collections from the auto repair shop. Helen is an independent contractor and the helpers are her employees.

Attorney

Example. Donna Yuma is a sole practitioner who rents office space and pays for the following items: telephone, computer, on-line legal research linkup, fax machine, and photocopier. Donna buys office supplies and pays bar dues and membership dues for three other professional organizations. Donna has a part-time receptionist who also does the bookkeeping. She pays the receptionist, withholds and pays federal and state employment taxes, and files a Form W-2 each year. For the past 2 years, Donna has had only three clients, corporations with which there have been long-standing relationships. Donna charges the corporations an hourly rate for her services, sending monthly bills detailing the work performed for the prior month. The bills include charges for long distance calls, on-line research time, fax charges, photocopies, postage, and travel, costs for which the corporations have agreed to reimburse her. Donna is an independent contractor.

Taxicab Driver

Example. Tom Spruce rents a cab from Taft Cab Co. for \$150 per day. He pays the costs of maintaining and operating the cab. Tom Spruce keeps all fares that he receives from customers. Although he receives the benefit of Taft's two-way radio communication equipment, dispatcher, and advertising, these items benefit both Taft and Tom Spruce. Tom Spruce is an independent contractor.

Salesperson

To determine whether salespersons are employees under the usual common-law rules, you must evaluate each individual case. If a salesperson who works for you doesn't meet the tests for a common-law employee, discussed earlier in this section, you don't have to withhold federal income tax from his or her pay (see *Statutory Employees* in section 1). However, even if a salesperson isn't an employee under the usual common-law rules for income tax withholding, his or her pay may still be subject to social security, Medicare, and FUTA taxes as a statutory employee.

To determine whether a salesperson is an employee for social security, Medicare, and FUTA tax purposes, the salesperson must meet all eight elements of the statutory employee test. A salesperson is a statutory employee for social security, Medicare, and FUTA tax purposes if he or she:

1. Works full time for one person or company except, possibly, for sideline sales activities on behalf of some other person,

2. Sells on behalf of, and turns his or her orders over to, the person or company for which he or she works,
3. Sells to wholesalers, retailers, contractors, or operators of hotels, restaurants, or similar establishments,
4. Sells merchandise for resale, or supplies for use in the customer's business,
5. Agrees to do substantially all of this work personally,
6. Has no substantial investment in the facilities used to do the work, other than in facilities for transportation,
7. Maintains a continuing relationship with the person or company for which he or she works, and
8. Isn't an employee under common-law rules.

3. Employees of Exempt Organizations

Many nonprofit organizations are exempt from federal income tax. Although they don't have to pay federal income tax themselves, they must still withhold federal income tax from the pay of their employees. However, there are special social security, Medicare, and FUTA tax rules that apply to the wages that they pay their employees.

Section 501(c)(3) organizations. Nonprofit organizations that are exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code include any community chest, fund, or foundation organized and operated exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, testing for public safety, literary or educational purposes, fostering national or international amateur sports competition, or for the prevention of cruelty to children or animals. These organizations are usually corporations and are exempt from federal income tax under section 501(a).

Social security and Medicare taxes. Wages paid to employees of section 501(c)(3) organizations are subject to social security and Medicare taxes unless one of the following situations applies.

- The organization pays an employee less than \$100 in a calendar year.
- The organization is a church or church-controlled organization opposed for religious reasons to the payment of social security and Medicare taxes and has filed Form 8274 to elect exemption from social security and Medicare taxes. The organization must have filed for exemption before the first date on which a quarterly employment tax return (Form 941) or annual employment tax return (Form 944) would otherwise be due.

An employee of a church or church-controlled organization that is exempt from social security and Medicare taxes must pay self-employment tax if the employee is paid \$108.28 or more in a year. However, an employee who is a member of a qualified religious sect can apply for an exemption from the self-employment tax by filing Form

Direct sellers. Direct sellers include persons falling within any of the following three groups.

1. Persons engaged in selling (or soliciting the sale of) consumer products in the home or place of business other than in a permanent retail establishment.
2. Persons engaged in selling (or soliciting the sale of) consumer products to any buyer on a buy-sell basis, a deposit-commission basis, or any similar basis prescribed by regulations, for resale in the home or at a place of business other than in a permanent retail establishment.
3. Persons engaged in the trade or business of delivering or distributing newspapers or shopping news (including any services directly related to such delivery or distribution).

Direct selling includes activities of individuals who attempt to increase direct sales activities of their direct sellers and who earn income based on the productivity of their direct sellers. Such activities include providing motivation and encouragement; imparting skills, knowledge, or experience; and recruiting.

Licensed real estate agents. This category includes individuals engaged in appraisal activities for real estate sales if they earn income based on sales or other output.

Companion sitters. Companion sitters are individuals who furnish personal attendance, companionship, or household care services to children or to individuals who are elderly or disabled. A person engaged in the trade or business of putting the sitters in touch with individuals who wish to employ them (that is, a companion sitting placement service) won't be treated as the employer of the sitters if that person doesn't receive or pay the salary or wages of the sitters and is compensated by the sitters or the persons who employ them on a fee basis. Companion sitters who aren't employees of a companion sitting placement service are generally treated as self-employed for all federal tax purposes.

Misclassification of Employees

Consequences of treating an employee as an independent contractor. If you classify an employee as an independent contractor and you have no reasonable basis for doing so, you're liable for employment taxes for that worker and the relief provision, discussed next, won't apply. See section 2 in Pub. 15 for more information.

Relief provision. If you have a reasonable basis for not treating a worker as an employee, you may be relieved from having to pay employment taxes for that worker. To get this relief, you must file all required federal information returns on a basis consistent with your treatment of the worker. You (or your predecessor) must not have treated any worker holding a substantially similar position as an employee for any periods beginning after 1977.

Technical service specialists. This relief provision doesn't apply for a technical services specialist you

provide to another business under an arrangement between you and the other business. A technical service specialist is an engineer, designer, drafter, computer programmer, systems analyst, or other similarly skilled worker engaged in a similar line of work.

This limit on the application of the rule doesn't affect the determination of whether such workers are employees under the common-law rules. The common-law rules control whether the specialist is treated as an employee or an independent contractor. However, if you directly contract with a technical service specialist to provide services for your business and not for another business, you may still be entitled to the relief provision.

Test proctors and room supervisors. The consistent treatment requirement doesn't apply to services performed after December 31, 2006, by an individual as a test proctor or room supervisor assisting in the administration of college entrance or placement examinations if the individual:

- Is performing the services for a section 501(c) organization exempt from tax under section 501(a) of the code, and
- Isn't otherwise treated as an employee of the organization for employment taxes.

Voluntary Classification Settlement Program (VCSP). Employers who are currently treating their workers (or a class or group of workers) as independent contractors or other nonemployees and want to voluntarily reclassify their workers as employees for future tax periods may be eligible to participate in the VCSP if certain requirements are met. File Form 8952 to apply for the VCSP. For more information, visit IRS.gov and enter "VCSP" in the search box.

2. Employee or Independent Contractor?

An employer must generally withhold federal income taxes, withhold and pay over social security and Medicare taxes, and pay unemployment tax on wages paid to an employee. An employer doesn't generally have to withhold or pay over any federal taxes on payments to independent contractors.

Common-Law Rules

To determine whether an individual is an employee or an independent contractor under the common law, the relationship of the worker and the business must be examined. In any employee-independent contractor determination, all information that provides evidence of the degree of control and the degree of independence must be considered.

Facts that provide evidence of the degree of control and independence fall into three categories: behavioral

control, financial control, and the type of relationship of the parties. These facts are discussed next.

Behavioral control. Facts that show whether the business has a right to direct and control how the worker does the task for which the worker is hired include the type and degree of:

Instructions that the business gives to the worker.

An employee is generally subject to the business' instructions about when, where, and how to work. All of the following are examples of types of instructions about how to do work.

- When and where to do the work.
- What tools or equipment to use.
- What workers to hire or to assist with the work.
- Where to purchase supplies and services.
- What work must be performed by a specified individual.
- What order or sequence to follow.

The amount of instruction needed varies among different jobs. Even if no instructions are given, sufficient behavioral control may exist if the employer has the right to control how the work results are achieved. A business may lack the knowledge to instruct some highly specialized professionals; in other cases, the task may require little or no instruction. The key consideration is whether the business has retained the right to control the details of a worker's performance or instead has given up that right.

Training that the business gives to the worker. An employee may be trained to perform services in a particular manner. Independent contractors ordinarily use their own methods.

Financial control. Facts that show whether the business has a right to control the business aspects of the worker's job include:

The extent to which the worker has unreimbursed business expenses. Independent contractors are more likely to have unreimbursed expenses than are employees. Fixed ongoing costs that are incurred regardless of whether work is currently being performed are especially important. However, employees may also incur unreimbursed expenses in connection with the services that they perform for their employer.

The extent of the worker's investment. An independent contractor often has a significant investment in the facilities or tools he or she uses in performing services for someone else. However, a significant investment isn't necessary for independent contractor status.

The extent to which the worker makes his or her services available to the relevant market. An independent contractor is generally free to seek out business opportunities. Independent contractors often advertise, maintain a visible business location, and are available to work in the relevant market.

How the business pays the worker. An employee is generally guaranteed a regular wage amount for an hourly, weekly, or other period of time. This usually indicates that a worker is an employee, even when the wage or salary is supplemented by a commission. An independent contractor is often paid a flat fee or on a time and materials basis for the job. However, it is common in some professions, such as law, to pay independent contractors hourly.

The extent to which the worker can realize a profit or loss. An independent contractor can make a profit or loss.

Type of relationship. Facts that show the parties' type of relationship include:

- ***Written contracts describing the relationship the parties intended to create.***
- ***Whether or not the business provides the worker with employee-type benefits, such as insurance, a pension plan, vacation pay, or sick pay.***
- ***The permanency of the relationship.*** If you engage a worker with the expectation that the relationship will continue indefinitely, rather than for a specific project or period, this is generally considered evidence that your intent was to create an employer-employee relationship.
- ***The extent to which services performed by the worker are a key aspect of the regular business of the company.*** If a worker provides services that are a key aspect of your regular business activity, it is more likely that you'll have the right to direct and control his or her activities. For example, if a law firm hires an attorney, it is likely that it will present the attorney's work as its own and would have the right to control or direct that work. This would indicate an employer-employee relationship.

IRS help. If you want the IRS to determine whether or not a worker is an employee, file Form SS-8 with the IRS.

Industry Examples

The following examples may help you properly classify your workers.

Building and Construction Industry

Example 1. Jerry Jones has an agreement with Wilma White to supervise the remodeling of her house. She didn't advance funds to help him carry on the work. She makes direct payments to the suppliers for all necessary materials. She carries liability and workers' compensation insurance covering Jerry and others that he engaged to assist him. She pays them an hourly rate and exercises almost constant supervision over the work. Jerry isn't free to transfer his assistants to other jobs. He may not work on other jobs while working for Wilma. He assumes no responsibility to complete the work and will incur no contractual liability if he fails to do so. He and his assistants

Section 530 provides
businesses with
relief from federal
employment tax
obligations if certain
requirements are met.



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Do you
Qualify
for Relief
under
Section
530?

SECTION 530 RELIEF REQUIREMENTS

YOUR

business has been selected for an employment

tax examination to determine whether you correctly treated certain workers as independent contractors. However, you will not owe employment taxes for these workers if you meet the **relief requirements** described below. If you do not meet these **relief requirements**, the IRS will need to determine whether the workers are independent contractors or employees and whether you owe employment taxes for those workers.

Section 530 Relief Requirements:

To receive relief, you must meet all three of the following requirements:

I. Reasonable Basis

First, you had a reasonable basis for not treating the workers as employees. To establish that you had a reasonable basis for not treating the workers as employees, you can show that:

- You reasonably relied on a court case about Federal taxes or a ruling issued to you by the IRS; or
- Your business was audited by the IRS at a time when you treated similar workers as independent contractors and the IRS did not reclassify those workers as employees. You may not rely on an audit commenced after December 31, 1996, unless such audit included an examination for employment tax purposes of whether the individual involved (or any other individual holding a substantially similar position) should be treated as your employee; or

- You treated the workers as independent contractors because you knew that was how a significant segment of your industry treated similar workers; or
- You relied on some other reasonable basis. For example, you relied on the advice of a business lawyer or accountant who knew the facts about your business.

If you did not have a reasonable basis for treating the workers as independent contractors, you do not meet the **relief requirements**.

II. Substantive Consistency

In addition, you (and any predecessor business) must have treated the workers, and any similar workers, as independent contractors. If you treated similar workers as employees, this relief provision is not available. If you are paying an individual who is providing services as a test proctor or room supervisor assisting in the administration of college entrance or placements examinations, the substantive consistency requirement does not apply with respect to services performed after December 31, 2006, (and remuneration paid with respect to such services). The provision applies if the individual (1) is performing the services for a tax-exempt organization, and (2) is not otherwise treated as an employee of such organization for purposes of employment taxes.

III. Reporting Consistency

Finally, you must have filed all required federal tax returns (including information returns) consistent with your treatment of each worker as not being employees. This means, for example, that if you treated a worker as an independent contractor and paid him or her \$600 or more, you must have filed Form 1099-MISC for the worker. Relief is not available for any year and for any workers for whom you did not file the required information returns.

The IRS examiner will answer any questions you may have about your eligibility for this relief.

