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Taxman Is Funny In UK, Why Not IRS?

Around the world, taxes are ever-present, and no one likes paying them. In the United Kingdom, as in America, taxes are serious, though U.S. taxes are arguably far more so just by virtue of their complexity. In fact, taxes in Britain are vastly simpler than our own moribund system. Even a complex tax return in Britain pales by comparison to its American counterpart.

A U.S. tax return can be inches thick and require hours of professional guidance and numerous judgment calls. Perhaps that simple contrast between simple and complex is a part of the explanation for the strange contrast when it comes to tax humor, er humour. It turns out that Britain's version of the IRS is easier to approach and actually has a sense of humor when it comes to tax administration..

In fact, there's humor in evidence when it comes to taxes on the other side of the pond. Our IRS? Hardly. Britain's HM Revenue and Customs ([HMRC](#)) shows humor (er humour) in ways completely unknown to the IRS. Just take a look at the graphic the UK's clever tax agency uses atop their new [Facebook page](#).



Graphic on HMRC's new Facebook page

On the humor—sorry, humour—consider that Britain's taxman has even posted what it suggests are some David Letterman style [top ten terrible tax excuses](#): Ten of the most terrible excuses for missing the 31 January tax return deadline (their version of our April 15 tax day):

- My pet dog ate my tax return...and all the reminders.
- I was up a mountain in Wales, and couldn't find a postbox or get an internet signal.

I fell in with the wrong crowd.

- I've been travelling the world, trying to escape from a foreign intelligence agency.
- Barack Obama is in charge of my finances.
- I've been busy looking after a flock of escaped parrots and some fox cubs.
- A work colleague borrowed my tax return, to photocopy it, and didn't give it back.
- I live in a camper van in a supermarket car park.
- My girlfriend's pregnant.
- I was in Australia.

Is there any loss of efficiency by the Brits by virtue of this kinder and more clever tax administration? It certainly doesn't appear that way. In fact, quite the contrary, it looks to be the reverse. The UK taxman is more approachable and responsive. They've even started taking tax questions on Twitter ([@HMRCcustomers](#)).

Should the IRS try to emulate the Brits, spicing up American tax law and compliance with a bit of fun? It couldn't hurt. One way of starting might be a humorous version of FATCA, America's global offshore account law. Let's see, any suggestions for making that law a barrel of laughs?

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