

HMRC highlights a decade of bizarre excuses and expense claims

Every year, HMRC receives some imaginative excuses and expense claims following the 31 January Self Assessment deadline.

To wrap up the decade, and with 2 weeks to the deadline, HMRC has highlighted 10 of the most weird and wonderful excuses we have received from customers who missed the deadline over the last 10 years.

The top 10 most bizarre excuses and questionable expenses claims for items, in reverse order, are:

- 10: Caravan rental for the Easter weekend
- 9: I was up a mountain in Wales, and couldn't find a post box or get an internet signal
- 8: My dog ate the post ... again
- 7: Claiming £4.50 for sausage and chips meal expenses for 250 days
- 6: My hamster ate my post
- 5: I've been cruising round the world in my yacht, and only picking up post when I'm on dry land
- 4: A music subscription so I can listen to music while I work
- 3: Pet food for a Shih Tzu 'guard dog'
- 2: A DJ was too busy with a party lifestyle – spinning the deck....in a bowls club
- 1: My mother-in-law is a witch and put a curse on me

All the excuses and expenses listed above were unsuccessful.

[video on the top ten excuses and expenses](#)

[Angela MacDonald](#), HMRC Director General of Customer Services, said:

Each year, we try to make it as easy and simple as possible for our customers to complete their tax returns and the majority make the effort to do theirs right and on time. But, we still come across some unusual excuses and expenses which range from problems with a mother-in-law to yachts set on fire.

We always offer help to those who have a genuine excuse for not submitting their return on time. It is unfair to the majority of honest taxpayers when others make bogus claims.

If you think you might miss the 31 January deadline, get in touch with us now – the earlier we're contacted, the more we can help.

The deadline for sending Self Assessment tax returns for the 2018 to 2019 tax year to HMRC, and paying any tax owed, is 31 January 2020.

Help to complete your return is available:

Notes to editors

- HMRC will treat those with genuine excuses leniently, as we focus our penalties on those who persistently fail to complete their tax returns and deliberate tax evaders. The excuse must be genuine and we might ask for evidence. Those listed above were all declined on the basis that they were either untrue or not good enough reasons.
- Customers who provide HMRC with a reasonable excuse before the 31 January deadline can avoid a penalty after this date.
- The penalties for late tax returns are:
 - an initial £100 fixed penalty, which applies even if there is no tax to pay, or if the tax due is paid on time
 - after 3 months, additional daily penalties of £10 per day may be charged, up to a maximum of £900
 - after 6 months, a further penalty of 5% of the tax due or £300, whichever is greater
 - after 12 months, another 5% or £300 charge, whichever is greater

There are also additional penalties for paying late of 5% of the tax unpaid at 30 days, 6 months and 12 months. Interest will be charged on all late payments.

- Self Assessment guidance is available at – www.gov.uk/self-assessment-tax-returns
- Between 30 January, and 31 January, our phone helplines shut at 8pm – customers can contact us via webchat until midnight both days.
- Tax is automatically deducted from the majority of UK taxpayers' wages, pensions or savings. For people or businesses where tax is not automatically deducted, or when they may have earned additional untaxed income, they are required to complete a Self Assessment tax return each year.
- Be aware of copycat websites and phishing scams – always type in the full online address <http://www.gov.uk/hmrc> to obtain the correct link to file your Self Assessment return online securely and free of charge.

- HMRC uses your home address to determine whether you should be paying UK or Welsh/Scottish Rate of Income Tax, make sure yours is up to date by accessing your Personal Tax Account or www.gov.uk/tell-hmrc-change-of-details
- Customers can also [register for HMRC's help and support email service](#)
- Follow HMRC's Press Office on Twitter [@HMRCpressoffice](https://twitter.com/HMRCpressoffice)
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