



Introduction: Why Do We Pay Taxes?

The next time you make your way through your day, try to think about how often you use government services that are funded by taxes. The following are just a few examples of how taxes may affect your life.

When you wake up in the morning and prepare for the day, it is likely that at some point you turn on your faucet. The availability of clean water that is safe for drinking is made possible by your federal and state taxes.



When you leave your home for work, school, errands or appointments, how do you travel? Do you use roads or highways? Do you take a bus or train? Or how about a bike path? All of these are funded and maintained by your taxes.

Are you taking your children to school today? Or are you a student yourself? Did you ever attend school? Public schools would not exist without taxes. School buildings, desks, lockers, pencil sharpeners, chalk boards, teachers and other school staff are all funded by your taxes.



When you need to study or do research for school or work, do you visit the library? Do you ever checkout books or other materials from your neighborhood library branch? Do your children enjoy readings sponsored by a local library? Public libraries are made possible by your taxes. When tax revenues are down, libraries must cut their hours or close altogether.

While you were out on the roads, did you see any police cars or fire trucks driving by, sirens blaring? Police protection and fire safety are funded by your taxes. When tax revenues drop, police and firefighters may be slower to respond to calls because lack of funding leads to cuts in these services. How might that affect you, your neighbors, your colleagues, your friends?



You've finished work, classes, your errands and appointments. How do you spend your free time? Going for a stroll in your neighborhood park? Taking your kids to the public playground, your dog to the dog park? How about a quick game of baseball or soccer with friends at the local field? None of these would be available without taxes.

So much of our daily life involves the use of government services that are funded by taxes. It is important to understand how the tax system works and why it is necessary to have a system of tax revenue. The following papers will serve as a basic guide for Washingtonians to use in their process of learning about the Washington State tax system and budget process.