

VITA FAQ **(Frequently Asked Questions)**

What does VITA do?

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) offers free tax assistance to low- to moderate-income people in the community. Returns are done using computers and are electronically filed with the IRS. Our VITA program provides free tax assistance from February through April 15th at the Fairhaven Public Library, WWU Viking Union, WECU Education Center, and Whatcom Community College Heiner Library.

Do I have to be a WWU Accounting student to volunteer for VITA?

No. Anyone may volunteer! Our volunteers have included students in a wide variety of majors, plus many volunteers in the Bellingham and Whatcom County communities. This is a GREAT opportunity for people to get free tax training and help others in the community!

I'm nervous about helping people with their taxes. What if I make an error?

All returns prepared are reviewed by another VITA volunteer, as part of our 100% Quality Review program (in accordance with IRS guidelines). In addition, the IRS provides a toll-free help hotline for use only by VITA volunteers – to provide volunteers with tax technical assistance.

Is the training free?

Yes! All of the training and training materials are free. WWU's Beta Alpha Psi is sponsoring VITA in cooperation with the IRS. The IRS provides our volunteers with the training materials.

I've taken the basic income tax class (ACCT 375) at WWU. Do I still have to do the VITA training?

Yes. ACCT 375 doesn't cover several issues needed for VITA, such as the Earned Income Credit. In addition, ACCT 375 doesn't cover the TaxWise software used for VITA or the required VITA procedural training.

How is the training done?

The VITA training is a combination of self-study, online training and in-class training. The self-study training materials may be picked up at WWU the first week of December. We'll send you more information on pick-up times and locations after you register, and we'll send you links and instructions for the online training. The in-class training is scheduled for 9am to 4:30pm on 2 Saturdays: January 10th and January 24th at Western Washington University. The training will include computerized tax preparation and VITA procedural training. Before you can start providing tax assistance, you'll take and pass the (open book) online VITA test.

Tell me more about the VITA test.

All of our volunteers complete the Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced training to provide optimal tax help to our community. After you complete the training, you must pass the online VITA tests (Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced) to volunteer. While many people pass the test the first time, you have a total of two attempts to pass each part of the test.

I don't know what my schedule will be yet for Winter. What if I realize that I don't have time to volunteer?

If you can't volunteer, just let us know. That's it – no pressure. You'll still have received the free training, and we hope that it benefits you overall.