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Unit

1

What Is Tax?



Dialogue

Job Interview: Applying for the position of an official of the Internal Revenue Service.

Interviewee: Nice to meet you. I am here for an interview as requested.

Interviewer: Nice to meet you, too. I am Wang Ling, the Personnel Officer. Tell me a little bit about yourself, please.

Interviewee: My name is Li Yu. I was born in 1990 and graduated from Shanxi Finance and Taxation College. My major is taxation.

Interviewer: Our advertisement says English competence is one of the key requirements of this position. Then what do you think of your proficiency in written and spoken English?

Interviewee: I have learned English for 10 years, and I have passed College English Test Band 4 and 6. My spoken English is good enough to express myself fluently and communicate with native speakers.

Interviewer: What special skills do you have?

Interviewee: I have experience in computer operation. I am proficient in Microsoft Office, including Word and Excel.

Interviewer: Have you obtained any certificate of technical qualifications or license?

Interviewee: Yes, I have received a Computer Operation Qualification Certificate and a driver license.

Interviewer: Ok, very good. The staff in our department should be proficient in tax policies, the tax business, the financial accounting methods, the production and management processes in enterprises. How about your academic study?

Interviewee: I have been doing quite well at college and I hope to be able to make practical use of my knowledge in your department. My specialization at the college is just in line with the areas your department deals with.

Interviewer: In addition to the direct tax civil service, employees in the tax authorities should carry out statutory duties and responsibilities, build a harmonious relationship with taxpayers and establish the idea of service for them. What about your ability to communicate with others?

Interviewee: I like meeting various kinds of people and have good interpersonal relationship. So I think I am competent for the job.

Interviewer: All right. We shall inform you as soon as we have made our decision.



Passage

Warm-up

Work in groups to discuss the following questions before reading the passage.

1. *What is tax?*
2. *Why should we pay tax?*

What Is Tax?

The kid had swallowed a coin and it got stuck in his throat, and so his mother ran out in the street yelling for help. A man passing by took the boy by his shoulders and hit him with a few strong strokes on the back, and so he coughed the coin out.

"I don't know how to thank you, doc. ..." his mother started.

"I'm not a doctor", the man replied, "I'm from the IRS".

A nervous taxpayer was unhappily conversing with the IRS Tax auditor who had come to review his records.

At one point the auditor exclaimed, "Mr. Carelton, we feel it is a great privilege to be allowed to live and work in the USA. As a citizen you have an obligation to pay taxes, and we expect you to eagerly pay them with a smile."

"Thank Godness," returned Mr. Carelton, with a giant grin on his face, "I thought you were going to want me to pay with cash."

From the above two stories, we know that tax is everywhere in our daily life. "In this world nothing is certain but death and tax." said by Benjamin Franklin.

Then, what is tax?

Tax is a fee charged by a government on a product, income, or activity.

Why must we pay taxes?

The answer is that the government needs money for many things, for example, to pay its soldiers, sailors and airmen, to build roads, bridges, offices, schools, etc. and to buy goods from abroad; and only the people of the country can supply the money.

One of the most important taxes is income-tax which a person pays according to the amount of his income, whether he



is a merchant, a doctor, a lawyer, a shopkeeper, a miner or anything else. This is called a “direct” tax, because it is levied in money directly to the government.

Another tax is paid on goods such as watches, jewelry, new clothes, tobacco, wine, etc. when they are brought into a country. Such a tax is levied as part of the price of these goods if they are sold in shops. We call it “indirect” tax, because it is paid indirectly through the shopkeepers.

People usually complain about having to pay taxes, but they forget that the money is spent on things that they and their families need. We need policemen to catch thieves, to see that men obey the laws, to direct traffic, etc. and they must be paid what they earn; children need education and there must be schools and teachers; we want our streets to be kept clean, and the wages of men who do this kind of work have to be paid. Above all, the country must always be ready to defend itself against attacking enemies, and we can not have an army without paying for it. Besides, if a country wants to develop, there are many other things to do...

Taxes, therefore, cannot be avoided. We buy our food and clothes and pay for our amusements; but, there are several things that the State finds the money for, and that is necessary for us if our society is to continue. We have no real reason to complain, therefore, when we are asked to supply money to be spent for the good of ourselves and for our fellow-citizens.

税收的天平



Related Terms

yell /jel/ *vi.* 大叫, 叫喊

vt. 喊叫着说

stroke /strəʊk/ *n.* 中风; 打击

revenue /revɪnju:/ *n.* 财政收入, 税收

IRS(Internal Revenue Service) 美国国税局

statutory /'stætjʊt(ə)rɪ/ *adj.* 法令的, 法定的, 触犯法令的

converse /kən'vɜ:s/ *v.* 交谈, 谈话

privilege /'prɪvɪlɪdʒ/ *n.* 特权; 优待; 基本权利

vt. 给予……特权; 特免

income-tax 所得税

merchant /'mɜ:tʃənt/ *n.* 商人, 批发商; 店主

direct tax 直接税

levy /'li:vɪ/ *vt.* 征收(税等); 征集(兵等)

vi. 征税; 征兵

Indirect tax 间接税

amusement /ə'mju:zmənt/ *n.* 消遣, 娱乐; 乐趣

fellow-citizen 住在同一城市的人

After-class Activities

I. Role Play

Directions: For this task, the students are required to work as an interviewee and an interviewer to make up a short conversation according to the situation below.

Situation: An interviewee is applying for the position of an official of the Internal Revenue Service.



II. Vocabulary

1. Use the appropriate forms of the following words to fill in the blanks in the sentences.

interview
levy

competence
converse

qualification
exclaim

establish
stroke

revenue
finance

- 1) The shopkeeper sat directly behind the tax officer and _____ with him.
- 2) What is your highest _____?
- 3) We should _____ a heavy tax on the wealthy men.
- 4) What will matter is not your _____, but your character.
- 5) Part of that _____ loss, however, would be made up for through other taxes.

- 6) The television _____ will be aired to all parts of the country.
- 7) They _____ diplomatic relations (外交关系) with China in 1958.
- 8) _____ is the core of modern economic development.
- 9) "He went back to the lab," Mike _____ impatiently.
- 10) What do you do to lower your risk of _____?

2. Fill in the blanks with the words given below.

- 1) The _____ now takes \$133 each month from her Social Security disability check.
- 2) When our social security model was designed, the proportion between _____ and indirect tax was balanced.
- 3) It's our _____ to pay tax on time.
- 4) A sales tax is a(n) _____ because the tax burden can be shifted to other consumers.
- 5) Every one with an income should pay _____ equal to a modest percentage of his income.

A. income tax
B. indirect tax
C. statutory duty
D. direct tax
E. IRS

III. Translation

1. Translate the following paragraph into Chinese.

Tax is a fee charged by a government on a product, income, or activity. If tax is levied directly on personal or corporate income, then it is a direct tax. If tax is levied on the price of a good or service, then it is called an indirect tax. The purpose of taxation is to finance government expenditure. One of the most important uses of taxes is to finance public goods and services, such as street lighting and street cleaning. Since public goods and services do not allow a non-payer to be excluded, or allow exclusion by a consumer, there cannot be a market in the good or service, and so they need to be provided by the government or a quasi-government agency, which tend to finance themselves largely through taxes.

2. Translate the following paragraph into English.

为了有效地运作, 政府需要资金。税收即是政府接收的来自其公民的钱。税收可以以不同的方式获得, 大多数人通过薪水或以购买东西的方式纳税, 如购买食品, 服装及参加娱乐活动等。不仅联邦政府征税, 州政府和地方政府同样如此。政府的钱用于支付民选官员的工资, 提供道路安全养护并保证地方及国家安全。政府无法生成自己的财富, 它完全依赖于其公民所纳的税收。如果有税务问题或税收收入下降, 政府就可能无法履行公民期待的服务。

Reference:

联邦政府: the Federal Government

保证: guarantee

履行: perform

民选官员: elected officials

国家安全: national security

IV. Reading Comprehension

Directions: After reading the following passage, you will find five statements. You are required to decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F).

All citizens of a country are morally or legally bound to pay their fair share of tax. What is the importance of paying tax to the government and why should we not hide money and avoid taxes? A large percentage of people who pay tax think as if government is trying to steal their hard earned money. It's not true. Money collected from taxes helps a country to become stronger and helps government provide a variety of services to the citizens.

Government provides the following services with our money:

Infrastructure Projects: To build roads, bridges, dams and a number of other projects available to the society as a whole.

Public Security: To provide police and fire departments. It also helps to find money needed to maintain defense forces (army, navy and air-force) and buy arms for them.

General services: To keep roads clean, water treatment, street lights, trash removal and maintenance of public parks requires lot of money.

Health service: Almost all governments provide some level of free or subsidized health

services to its citizens. This may include preventive immunization (免疫) shots, disaster relief and many others. All this money is founded by the tax money you and I paid.

The list goes on: Maintenance of historic monuments, government aid, emergency relief, conduct elections, run several government institutions like department for agriculture, commerce, energy, urban development, treasury (资金, 财政), judiciary (司法, 司法制度), department of motor vehicles, etc.

The tax system is based on “ability to pay”. The more money you earn, the more taxes you pay. And the opposite is also true. If you earn a small income, you pay less taxes.

1. Not in all the countries do the citizens need to pay tax. ☐
2. The money used for building universities comes from the tax we paid. ☐
3. All governments offer their citizens some free or subsidized health services. ☐
4. The money needed only for maintenance of historic monuments, government aid and emergency treatment is founded by the tax. ☐
5. How much tax a person is required to pay very much determined by the government. ☐