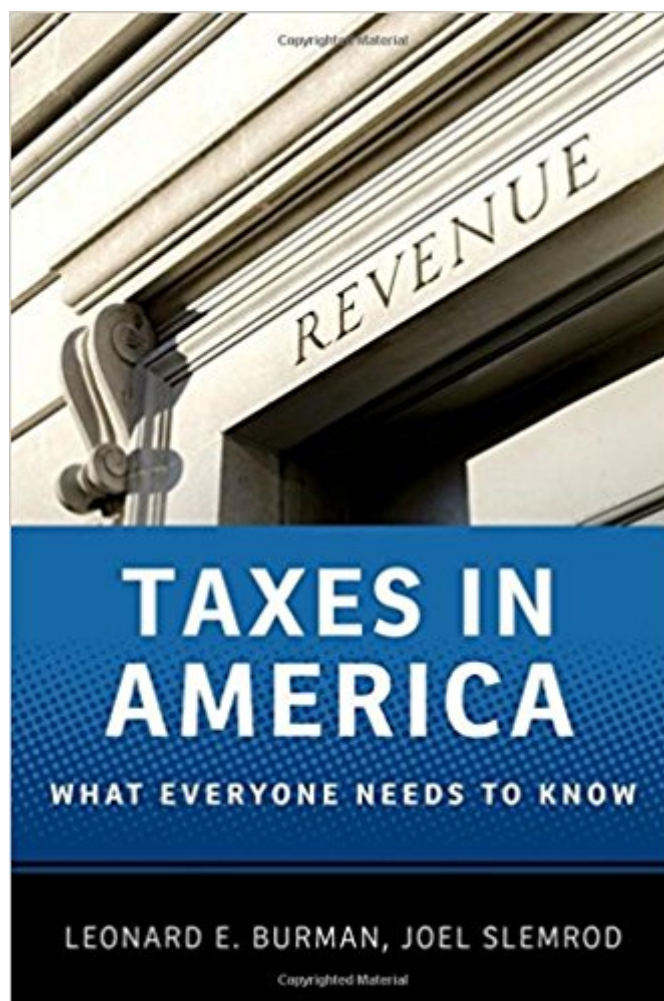


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# Taxes In America: What Everyone Needs To Know<sup>™</sup>



## Synopsis

Despite their passion and fury, contemporary Americans are remarkably clueless about how their tax system works. But with heated debates over taxation now roiling Congress and the nation, an understanding of our tax system is of vital importance. *Taxes in America: What Everyone Needs to Know*™, by preeminent tax scholars Leonard E. Burman and Joel Slemrod, offers a clear, concise explanation of how our tax system works, how it affects people and businesses, and how it might be improved. Accessibly written and organized in a clear, question-and-answer format, the book describes the intricacies of the modern tax system in an easy-to-grasp manner. Burman and Slemrod begin with the basic definitions of taxes and then delve into more complicated and indeed contentious concerns. They address such questions as how to recognize Fool's Gold tax reform plans. How much more tax could the IRS collect with better enforcement? How do tax burdens vary around the world? Why do corporations pay so little tax, even though they earn trillions of dollars every year? And what kind of tax system is most conducive to economic growth? *What Everyone Needs to Know*™ is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

**WHAT EVERYONE NEEDS TO KNOW** About This Series Who it's for: Busy people with diverse interests, ranging from college students to professionals, who wish to inform themselves in a succinct yet authoritative manner about a particular topic. What's inside: An incisive approach to a complex and timely issue, laid out in a straight-forward, question-and-answer format. Meet Our

Authors Top experts in their given fields, ranging from an Economist correspondent to a director at the Council on Foreign Relations, you can trust our authors' expertise and guidance.

Popular Topics in the "What Everyone Needs to Know" Series International Politics Environmental Policies World History Sciences & Math Religion & Spirituality

Burman and Slemrod explain for the average tax payer as well as those seeking more tax information how the U.S. tax system works, how it affects people and businesses, and how it might be improved. They contend that the timing of this book is good because both candidates for president in 2012 embrace tax reform, albeit with very different visions, and the debate about taxes has become a proxy war in the battle about the size and scope of government. Part 1 provides an overview of personal and business taxes in the U.S., and part 2 explains the costs and benefits of taxation. Part 3 reviews tax policies and tax reform. The authors conclude by explaining sensible tax reform ideas, including those developed by President George W. Bush's blue-ribbon panel and President Obama's Bowles-Simpson Commission. This is an excellent, understandable book on a topic important to a wide range of library patrons. --Mary Whaley

I read this book last weekend and I thought it was excellent. The authors did a great job presenting complicated facts about the tax code, specific taxes, the incidence of taxes and more in a simple and neutral way. I say this even more comfortably that I am of a rather different school of thoughts than the authors. If you are interested in tax issues but don't know enough or you know a lot and simply want learn about how to talk about taxes in a way that won't put people to sleep, this book is a must read.

Tax policy and tax reform ideas seem to be a never-ending story in the news these days -- while the public seems more and more confused and lack an understanding about the fundamental principles needed to effectively evaluate tax policies. Burman and Slemrod do an excellent public service by offering this book in an easy to understand manner. The writing is crisp, clear and even at times funny (and not just funny to a tax economist). As the other reviewers on this page have noted, the authors do an excellent job presenting tax concepts in a non-politically biased manner. This book is useful for people on both sides of the political aisle and especially for citizens looking for a book to help explain the economic and public policy tradeoffs associated with tax policy. This book will also make an excellent primer for a public policy class on tax policy...and I will likely use it myself in future classes. Taxes are not only the price we pay for a civilized society, taxes are also the price we

pay as a society that uses the tax code to try and achieve social policy objectives, such as equality, income redistribution, home ownership, savings incentives, work incentives, healthcare coverage, economic stimulus, etc...the list goes on and on. These social policy goals have both economic and societal costs and benefits -- Burman and Slemrod do a good job explaining these tradeoffs. If everyone in this country read this book and came away with a proper understanding of the incidence/burden of various forms of taxation (Chapter 2) or how some tax breaks can rightly be classified as spending (Chapter 7 - Burman's letter to Jon Stewart of "The Daily Show" on tax expenditures is a definite must read), then we might actually be able to pass legislation and institute a tax system that we truly deserve...not the one we currently have.

Interesting and readable guide to taxes. I was surprised how much I didn't know.

With Congress confronting the fiscal cliff when it returns from Thanksgiving break, a book that looks at the US tax system is a timely primer for many of the issues that will be front and center in the budget debate. The book is well written and easy to understand. It provides easy explanations for many different tax structures and leaves the reader with an important understanding that the person who pays a tax may not be the ultimate payer of the tax.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this book to anyone interested in the basics of tax policy. In fact, it should be required reading for everyone. The authors clearly know their stuff and write well. The book is structured as a series of questions and answers that make it a fun, easy read. The authors also do a very good job of trying to be as objective as possible, relying on scholarly studies and reveal-world evidence to explain their points rather than asserting their own beliefs. Highly recommended.

Explains how our tax system works. Describes the taxes and the effects of taxes. Written by two experts in taxes. Easy to understand. Relies heavily on evidence to support their conclusions. I like that they tell what is known and what is unknown. Highly recommended as a quick intro to taxes and tax policy.

Great book on American taxation without boring the reader to death. Even those not involved in tax preparation as a professional will find this book useful and interesting.

Vintage Slemrod. Good stuff. Easy to read, good summary. Completely non-technical. If I were something a bit different, perhaps I would have included a bit more technical stuff, for the geeks and the more technically inclined (like some short references on deadweight loss papers, etc). I did miss, though, at least a short reference on time consistency/inconsistency of fiscal policy. I think the authors should have referenced it.

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