CV Bookkeeping
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FREE GUIDE FOR SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS

Got a letter from CRA? Your *calm first steps*

An envelope or email from the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) can make your stomach drop. The good news: many CRA letters are routine, and almost all of them tell you exactly what they need and by when. Here's how to take the first few steps calmly, one at a time.

1 Take a breath

Getting a letter doesn't mean something is wrong. CRA itself says a review "is not a tax audit" and is, in most cases, "a routine check." Read the letter once, slowly, before doing anything else.

2 Make sure it's really CRA

CRA may contact you by phone, automated message, letter or email. Most business mail, including notices of assessment, now lands in your online CRA account (My Business Account).

To check: don't use the phone number or link in the message. Sign in to your CRA account yourself, or call CRA's business line at **1-800-959-5525** (individuals: 1-800-959-8281). If something feels off, report it to CRA and the Canadian Anti-Fraud Centre.

CRA says it will never:

- ask you to pay with gift cards or cryptocurrency
- send a refund by e-transfer or text message
- threaten to arrest or deport you
- ask for personal or financial information in a voicemail or email
- start a conversation by text or instant message

3 Figure out what kind of letter it is

LETTER	WHAT IT USUALLY MEANS	WHAT IT USUALLY ASKS
Notice of assessment	CRA's summary after it processes a return	Check it matches what was filed; keep it
Notice of reassessment	CRA changed a return it already assessed	Compare it to the original; ask your accountant if unsure
Review or request for information	A check that your numbers are supported (not an audit)	Receipts, invoices or other documents, by a date
Balance owing or collections letter	There's an unpaid amount on your account	Payment, or a call to talk about your options
Sales tax (GST/HST) notice	A GST/HST return was assessed, or is being reviewed	Payment, or documents for a review
Payroll notice (for example a PIER letter or PD7A statement)	PIER: a check of the CPP and EI on your T4 slips. PD7A: your remittance balance.	PIER: a reply within 30 calendar days if you disagree

PST letters come from your province, but the same steps apply.

4 Find the deadline and write it down

Look for a due date or time frame, and note the date on the letter (time limits often count from it). Put the deadline in your calendar today, with a reminder a week ahead.

5 Gather what it asks for, and only that

List each item the letter names. Send clear copies with the reference number, using the method the letter describes (often an upload in your CRA account). Keep a copy of everything you send. Missing a document? For review letters, CRA says you can send a written explanation or call the number on the letter.

6 Don't ignore it, and don't guess

An unopened letter doesn't go away, and CRA charges interest on most unpaid balances. If you need more time, call the number on the letter and ask. If you're not sure what something means, ask before you answer.

7 Get the right help

- **Your bookkeeper:** finding and organizing the records the letter asks for.
- **Your accountant:** what the letter means for your taxes, and whether you agree with it.
- **Giving someone access:** the fastest way is adding an authorized representative in My Business Account (Form AUT-01 gives offline access only).
- **If you disagree:** formal time limits apply, some as short as 90 days from the date on the notice. Talk to your accountant early.

What to write down

Date on the letter

Which tax or account it's about

Reference or case number

Deadline

What they're asking for

Who you called, when, and what they said

What you sent, how, and when

Next step, and by when

Notes

MY NOTES

Corrie's take: The first thing I do with any CRA letter is find the deadline and put it in my calendar. Once that date is written down, the letter feels a lot smaller.

General information, current as of September 2026. Not tax or legal advice. CRA contact, scam and review details from canada.ca. Check with CRA or your accountant about your situation.

You don't have to handle the next one alone.

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