**Everything you need to know about *taxe d’habitation***

It is that time of year when *taxe d’habitation* bills come out and there are lots of questions flying about on forums about this. Here is a q and a to help if you are unsure about anything to do with this residence tax on property.

**Who pays *taxe d’habitation*?**

*Taxe d’habitation* is paid by whoever occupies a residential property on the 1st January of any given year. If you occupy the house yourself (full or part-time), this is you. If you have long-term tenants living in the house then it is them. By this token, if you bought your property on 31st December 2015, you will be liable in 2016 however if you bought on 2nd January 2016, you won’t. This tax is not usually split pro rata between buyer and seller when a property is sold.

**Is there a reduction for a second home?**

No, if your property is a second home you are still liable for this tax.

**What if my house is uninhabitable?**

If your house is uninhabitable you may be exonerated but you need to be able to prove it. Uninhabitable means unfurnished and not connected to utilities. Don’t wait until the bill arrives before you claim exemption, contact the tax office in January of the year concerned as they may want to send the gendarmes round to check your claim.

**What is the *contribution à l’audiovisuel publique*?**

This is the TV licence fee and is automatically added to your bill. The amount for 2016 is 137 euros. If you don’t have a TV and you declare taxes in France there is a box to tick on the income tax declaration form so you don’t get charged this part of the *taxe d’habitation* bill. If you don’t declare taxes in France you should write a registered letter to your local tax office requesting exemption from the licence fee.

**How is my *taxe d’habitation* calculated?**

As with all things tax in France, it’s complicated. Essentially, *taxe d’habitation* is based on a notional rental value set way back in the 1970s called the *valeur locative brute*. The local commune who set the tax will take this figure, apply a formula (seemingly randomly picked out of the air but which must make sense to someone somewhere) take into account the habitable surface area of your property and calculate how much you owe. Generally speaking, this tax is higher in towns and cities than it is in rural areas or small villages although the amount varies hugely from one commune to the next and it is impossible to give an average.

**Why is my *taxe d’habitation* much more than the previous owners?**

If you are buying a house it is a good idea to ask the previous owner how much they pay in *taxe d’habitation* although do bear in mind that they might have certain reductions applied.

Thoseon low incomes can be given a reduction (*allègement)* on their *taxe d’habitation* bills and this could be the case for the previous owner of your property. Families also get relief for children living in the house (*abattement*) if it is a permanent residence so this could be a factor. You will find more information on *allègements* and *abattements* [here](http://droit-finances.commentcamarche.net/faq/7057-exoneration-de-taxe-d-habitation-plafond-de-revenus-2016). These are only applicable to main residences, not second homes.

Another common reason for big changes to this tax is that the previous owners carried out work in the house to increase the habitable surface area (for example by converting an attic or a garage into living space) but didn’t declare this to the tax authorities. These changes may have been picked up during the land registry process leading to a recalculation of the *taxe d’habitation*.

**What can I do if I think I am being overcharged?**

You need to contact your local tax office who will most likely ask you to fill in an [H1](http://www.impots.gouv.fr/portal/deploiement/p1/fichedescriptiveformulaire_3167/fichedescriptiveformulaire_3167.pdf) form detailing room sizes and facilities at your property. Things as simple as adding an extra toilet or washbasin can change the amount of tax you pay.

**Could I be exempt from taxe d’habitation?**

You may be able to claim exemptions in the following circumstances:

* If you are over 60 and not subject to wealth tax
* If you are widowed and not subject to wealth tax
* If you claim certain types of benefit

For more information on this, consult the government [website](http://vosdroits.service-public.fr/particuliers/F42.xhtml).

**How do I pay?**

Your *taxe d’habitation* bill should be sent to you in September/October and is usually payable by mid-November.

If your permanent residence is abroad then the bill should be sent there but I would always recommend checking this if you don’t receive your bill by the expected time in order to avoid any penalty payments. Mistakes are made frequently and bills often go astray.

There are numerous ways to pay – by cheque, by sending the tear off slip (TIP) from the bottom of your bill with a *relevé d’identité bancaire* or even including scanning an AR code and paying via your phone.

Many people prefer to spread payments over the year by setting up monthly direct debit payments. This needs to be done before 31st December for the following year i.e. before the end of 2016 if you want your 2017 bill to be paid monthly. You will also need to have received at least one *taxe d’habitation* bill to have the relevant reference numbers to sign up. This essentially means that you are paying the tax in advance before it is due but you won’t run the risk of missing any deadlines and being charged late payment fees.