December 31 action list for the 2026 tax year

Work down the list in November and December. Each line names who acts and the record that closes it; file the records with next year's tax documents.

Client or engagement

Projection (November)

- [ ] Year-to-date pay stubs for each job
  Client: latest stub with year-to-date totals
- [ ] Year-to-date profit and loss for any business
  Client: through October or November
- [ ] Last year's return for the projection
  Preparer: 2025 return with all schedules
- [ ] Withholding Estimator result and new Form W-4 if needed
  Client and preparer: before the last payrolls

By December 31

- [ ] Final pay stub showing 401(k), 403(b) or 457 deferrals
  Client: confirms the 2026 total
- [ ] RMD confirmation from each custodian
  Client: amount and date taken
- [ ] Roth conversion confirmation
  Client: only if a conversion was made this year
- [ ] Realized gain and loss report from each broker
  Client: early December, before loss sales
- [ ] Charity acknowledgments for 2026 gifts
  Client: written letters, with dates and amounts; itemizers compare the total with 0.5% of AGI
- [ ] Qualified charitable distribution confirmation from the IRA custodian
  Client: only if one was paid to a charity

Business owners

- [ ] Invoices and delivery records for equipment bought in 2026
  Client: date placed in service on each
- [ ] Forms W-9 from every contractor paid in 2026
  Client: before the January filing rush
- [ ] Vendor payment report for the year
  Client: shows who crossed the reporting threshold

- [ ] Final payroll register, owner salary included
  Client or payroll provider

Can wait until the April deadline

- [ ] IRA contribution confirmation coded to 2026
  Client: ask the custodian to mark the tax year
- [ ] HSA contribution confirmation coded to 2026
  Client: same, for the HSA
- [ ] Fourth-quarter estimated payment confirmation
  Client: due January 15, 2027