

# Teachers - claiming work-related expenses

## About this guide

If you are an employee teacher, this information outlines some of the deductions you may be able to claim.

- ! To navigate through this guide, use the table of contents on the right. General topics lead to more detailed information about your particular situation.

Throughout this guide we highlight:

- key information with the ! symbol
- pointers to more information and extra steps you may need to take with the ➤ symbol.

For a print friendly version of this guide, click on the print icon on the right.

## When you can make a claim

In most situations, you can claim deductions for work-related expenses as long as your claim meets the following conditions:

- you incurred the expense in doing your job
  - the expense is not private
  - you can show you incurred the expense by producing receipts or other written evidence.
- ! If you are claiming a deduction for an expense you incurred for something you used partly for business and partly for personal purposes (such as a laptop), you can only claim that portion of the expense that relates to your business use.

### Reimbursements

You cannot claim a deduction for expenses you incur if those expenses are reimbursed to you by your employer - you do not include a reimbursement on your tax return.

### Evidence to support your claims

If your total claims add up to more than \$300 (excluding claims for car, meal allowance, award transport payment allowance and travel allowance expenses), you must keep written evidence, such as receipts. Your written evidence must show you have incurred the full amount of your claim, not just the amount over the first \$300.

If the total amount you are claiming is \$300 or less, you do not need to keep receipts, but you must be able to show how you worked out your claims.

Written evidence can be:

- a document from the supplier of the goods or services, showing the:
  - supplier's name
  - amount of the expense
  - nature of the goods or services - if this is not shown, you can write this on the document before you lodge your income tax return
  - date you incurred the expense
  - date of the document
- a combination of documents containing this information.

If you use a combination of documents, each document:

- does not need to show the date you obtained it
- must contain the date you incurred the expense.

These documents can be in written or electronic format. They include:

- bank and other financial institution statements
- credit card statements
- BPAY® reference numbers, also called receipt or transaction numbers
- email receipts
- your *PAYG payment summary - individual non-business*, which may show amounts you can claim, such as your total union fees
- paper or electronic copies of documents - these must be true and clear reproductions of the originals.

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- ! You need to keep your written evidence of work-related expenses for five years from the due date for lodging your tax return. If you lodge your return after the due date, the five years start from this later date.

For depreciating assets, you must keep records for a further five years from the date of your last claim for decline in value.

## **Work-related daily travel expenses you can claim**

Generally, the cost of normal trips between your home and work is a private expense you cannot claim an income tax deduction for. However, as an employee teacher, there are certain situations where you may be able to claim deductions for travel between your home and workplace.

Transporting students or bulky equipment

You can claim the cost of using your car to travel between your home and work if you had to transport either of the following:

- students - for example, to a sporting venue

- bulky equipment you needed to use at work and for which there was no secure storage area at your workplace.

### **Example 1 - using your car to transport students**

On Saturday afternoon, the school rugby union team plays a competition match at the sporting field on the school's grounds. As part of his coaching duties, Jeremy collects several students and transports them from their homes to the sporting field. After the match, he then returns the players and continues his journey home.

Jeremy can claim a deduction for the expenses he incurs to transport the students.

### **Example 2 - using your car to transport bulky equipment**

Ric is employed as a drama teacher. Ric transports heavy props and costumes from his home to his regular place of work the day before a school theatre production. In these circumstances, he can claim a deduction for his travelling costs on that day.

#### Travelling between separate workplaces

Work-related car and travel expenses also include the cost of travel directly between two separate workplaces - for example, when you have a second job.

### **Example 3 - travelling between two jobs**

April travels directly from the school where she is employed as a teacher, to the TAFE college where she gives night lectures. Because she travels directly from one workplace to the other, she can claim a deduction for the travel expenses she incurs to do so.

#### Travel to an alternative workplace

Work-related car and travel expenses also include the cost of travel:

- from your normal workplace to an alternative workplace while you are still on duty and back to your normal workplace or directly home - see example 4
- from your home to an alternative workplace and then to your normal workplace or directly home - see example 5.

### **Example 4 - travelling from work to an alternative workplace then home**

Wayne, an employee teacher, travels from his normal school to a regional administrative centre for a meeting. After the meeting, he travels directly home. Wayne can claim a deduction for the expenses he incurs to travel between these workplaces and then home.

### **Example 5 - travelling from home to an alternative workplace then to work**

Zareb, an employee teacher, travels from home to a marking centre to mark exams. He then travels to his normal school. Zareb can claim a deduction for the expenses he

incurs to travel from home to the marking centre and then to his normal school. However, he cannot claim a deduction for the expenses he incurs to travel directly from his normal place of employment to his home.

- ! You claim your car expenses at **D1 Work-related car expenses** on your income tax return.

## Work-related daily travel expenses you cannot claim

Generally, the cost of normal trips between your home and work is a private expense you cannot claim a deduction for, even if:

- you do minor tasks such as picking up the mail on the way to work or home
- you have to travel between your home and work more than once a day - for example, you drive home at the end of the school day and then return to work to attend a school speech night in the evening - see example 6
- you are on call - for example, you are on stand-by relief teaching and your employer contacts you at home to come into work - see example 7
- you work outside normal business hours - for example, you are
  - conducting parent teacher interviews after work hours
  - at school during the school holidays preparing for the next term - see example 8.

### Example 6 - travel between home and work more than once a day

Amanda finishes work at Black Stump Primary School and returns home by car at the end of the school day. At 6.00pm, she returns to school to hold parent-teacher meetings until 9.00pm. Amanda's after-hours travel between her home and the school is a private expense she cannot claim a deduction for.

### Example 7 - on call or relief teaching

Michael is a stand-by relief teacher who works at various schools. Michael is usually contacted at short notice and advised which school he must work at. The schools are located at varying distances from his home. Each day, Michael travels to a single school and returns home each night.

Even though Michael travels from home to the particular school in response to a phone call, his travel is still a private expense which he cannot claim a deduction for.

### Example 8 - working outside normal business hours

Kyoko goes to work the week before the school term starts to prepare for her year 12 geography class. Although Kyoko has travelled to work during her holidays, the travel expense she incurs is a private expense she cannot claim a deduction for.

- For more information about what trips you can claim, refer to [Car and travel expenses](#).

# Claiming home office expenses

What you can claim

Running expenses

If you perform some of your work from your home office, you may be able to claim a deduction for the costs you incur in running your home office, even if the room is not set aside solely for work-related purposes. You may be able to claim:


- the decline in value (depreciation) of home office equipment such as computers and telecommunications equipment - if your equipment costs less than \$300, you can claim a full deduction for the work-related portion
- work-related phone calls, including from mobiles
- work-related phone rental if you can show that either of the following apply:
  - you are on call
  - you have to phone your employer, clients or students regularly while you are away from your workplace - for example, you call parents of your students to discuss behavioural issues
- work-related internet access charges
- the cost of heating, cooling and lighting your home office that is over the amount you would ordinarily have to pay if you did not work from home
- the costs of repairs to your home office furniture and fittings.

## Example 9 - computer used for private and personal use


Rita uses her computer and personal internet account at home to access her work emails to grade her year 12 students' English assignments. Rita uses her computer and the internet:

- 40% for work purposes
- 60% for private purposes.

This means Rita can claim 40% of the depreciation of her computer and 40% of her internet costs.

 A depreciating asset, such as a computer, is an asset that has a limited effective life and can reasonably be expected to decline in value over the time you use it.

If you purchase an item that cost more than \$300, you can only claim a deduction for its decline in value.

 For more information about depreciation, refer to [Work-related expenses - decline in value](#).

To help you work out the depreciation of your items, use the [Decline in value calculator](#).

What you cannot claim

## Occupancy expenses

Occupancy expenses include rent or mortgage interest, council rates and house insurance premiums. You can only claim occupancy expenses where your home office is considered to be a place of business. If your only income is paid to you as an employee, you are generally not able to claim a deduction for your occupancy expenses.

➤ Use our [Home office expenses calculator](#) to help you work out:

- if you can claim your home office expenses
- how much you can claim.

## Keeping records of your home office running expenses

The records you must keep may include:

- receipts or other written evidence of your expenses, including receipts for depreciating assets you have purchased - for example, your computer
- diary entries you make to record your small expenses (\$10 or less) totalling no more than \$200, or expenses you cannot obtain any kind of evidence for, regardless of the amount - for example, stationery
- itemised phone accounts you can identify work-related calls on - see example 12. If you don't receive itemised accounts, you can make a reasonable estimate of your call costs based on diary records you have kept over a four-week period, together with your relevant telephone accounts.

## Working out your claim

To claim a deduction for the electricity and gas you use and the decline in value of your office furniture, you can claim either of the following:

- a deduction for your actual expenses
- a deduction you work out at a rate of [34 cents per hour](#).

To use the 34 cents per hour method of claiming, keep a diary to record the amount of time you use your home office for work purposes. The diary must show a representative period of at least four weeks to establish a pattern of use for the whole year.

### **Example 10 - 34 cents per hour method**

Rita uses a diary to record the time she uses her home office for work purposes. Based on her diary entries, Rita works out she spends an average of three hours each week night working in her home office. Rita works for 38 weeks each year.

Rita chooses to use the fixed rate of 34 cents per hour to work out the amount she can claim for her home office expenses.

Rita calculates her home office running expense deduction as follows:

$$38 \text{ weeks} \times 15 \text{ hours} \times 0.34 \text{ cents} = \$193.80$$

Rita works out the depreciation of her computer separately.

### Example 11 - calculating depreciation of a computer

Rita purchased her computer on 5 September for \$3,000 and has worked out that she uses it 40% for work purposes. Rita looks up the [effective life of depreciating assets](#) on our website, which says the effective life of a computer is four years. Rita uses the [prime cost method](#) to work out the decline in value of her computer:

Asset's cost	X	$\frac{\text{Days held}}{365}$	X	$\frac{100\%}{\text{effective life}}$	X	work use percentage
\$3,000	X	$\frac{299 \text{ (5 Sep - 30 June)}}{365}$	X	$\frac{100\%}{4 \text{ years}}$	X	40%

So, Rita claims \$246 for the depreciation of her computer in the first year.

- ⚠ If you receive a laptop at no cost through a government initiative, you cannot claim a deduction for the cost of the laptop as you have not incurred the expense.

### Example 12 - calculating phone expenses

Rita uses her mobile phone for work purposes. She is on a set mobile phone plan of \$49 a month and rarely exceeds the plan cap.

Rita receives an itemised account from her phone provider each month by email, which includes details of the individual calls she has made.

At least once a year, and sometimes two or three times, Rita prints out her account and highlights the work-related calls she has made. She makes notes on her account for the first month about who she is calling for work - her employer, parents and so on.

She works out that 15% of the individual call expenses are for work and applies that to her cap amount of \$49 a month. The other two months Rita reviews are consistent with this.

Since Rita was only at work for 38 weeks of the year, she calculates her work-related mobile phone expense deduction as follows:

$$8.8 \text{ months} \times \$49 \times 0.15 = \$65$$

- ⚠ You claim your home office expenses at **D5 Other work-related expenses** on your income tax return.

## Other expenses you may be able to claim


Depending on your circumstances, you may be able to claim a deduction for:

- [overnight and overseas travel](#) - this includes fares, accommodation, meals and incidental expenses you incur as an employee teacher when you travel for work purposes - for example, to an interstate conference. You claim these expenses at **D2 Work-related travel expenses** on your income tax return.
- excursions, school trips and camps - you can claim a deduction for the costs you incur when you take students on excursions, educational and sporting trips and camps if these trips
  - have an educational benefit
  - are related to the school's curriculum or extracurricular activities.

You claim these expenses at **D2 Work-related travel expenses** on your income tax return.

- [uniform and laundry](#) - this includes uniforms and protective clothing. You claim these expenses at **D3 Work-related clothing, laundry and dry-cleaning expenses** on your income tax return.
- [self-education](#) - this includes fees, travel, books and equipment if there is a direct connection between the self-education expenses and your current income-earning activities. You claim these expenses at **D4 Self-education expenses** on your income tax return.
- [union fees and subscriptions to associations](#) - this includes union fees and subscriptions to trade, business or professional associations. You claim these expenses at **D5 Other work-related expenses** on your income tax return.
- seminars, conferences or education workshops - you can only claim these expenses if they are connected to your work activities. You claim these expenses at **D5 Other work-related expenses** on your income tax return.
- sunglasses, sunhats and sunscreens - you can claim a deduction for the cost of sunglasses, sunhats and sunscreen lotions if the nature of your work means you
  - must work in the sun for all or part of the day
  - use these items to protect yourself from the sun while at work - for example, if you are a school sporting coach for track and field events as well as your teaching duties.

You claim these expenses at **D5 Other work-related expenses** on your income tax return.

 When you complete the declaration on your income tax return, you are declaring that:

- everything you have told us is true
- you can support your claims with written evidence.

You are responsible for providing proof of your expenses, even if you use a registered tax agent to prepare your return.