

2020

Tax Time Toolkit

Retail



Australian Government
Australian Taxation Office

Helpful occupation guides and information for tax time

We encourage you to share this information with your staff, clients, members and networks.

The following pages contain practical and tailored information to help retail employees (such as hospitality workers, retail staff and sales professionals) understand what they can and can't claim in their tax return.

You'll find tips as well as 'ready to use' messages you can adapt for your own communication channels.

Occupation guides:

- [Cleaner](#)
- [Hospitality worker](#)
- [Office worker](#)
- [Retail](#)
- [Sales and marketing](#)

Common claims:

- [Clothing and laundry](#)
- [Gifts and donations](#)

Ready-to-use messages:

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If you're a cleaner, it pays to learn what you can claim at tax time



To claim a deduction for work-related expenses

- you must have spent the money yourself and weren't reimbursed
- it must be directly related to earning your income
- you must have a record to prove it.*

You can only claim the work-related part of expenses. You can't claim a deduction for any part of the expense that relates to personal use.

*You can use the ATO app myDeductions tool to keep track of your expenses and receipts throughout the year.

Clothing expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of buying, hiring, mending or cleaning certain uniforms that are unique and distinctive to your job, or protective clothing that your employer requires you to wear. This may include an apron or overalls to protect your ordinary clothes from soiling or damage, or gloves or breathing masks to provide protection from chemicals.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of buying or cleaning plain clothing worn at work, even if your employer tells you to wear it, and even if you only wear it for work - eg jeans or shoes.

Car expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction when you:
 - drive between separate jobs on the same day – eg traveling to your second job as a waiter.
 - drive to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – eg traveling to different houses that you clean.
- ✗ **You generally can't claim** the cost of trips between home and work, even if you live a long way from your usual workplace or have to work outside normal business hours – eg night cleaning shifts.

There are limited circumstances where you can claim the cost of trips between home and work, such as where you carry bulky tools or equipment for work – eg an extension ladder used for cleaning windows. The cost of these trips is deductible only if:

- your employer requires you to transport the equipment for work
- the equipment was essential to earning your income
- there was no secure area to store the equipment at the work location, and
- the equipment is bulky – at least 20kg or cumbersome to transport.

If you claim car expenses, you need to keep a logbook to determine the work-related percentage, or be able to demonstrate to the ATO a reasonable calculation if you use the cents per kilometre method to claim.

Meal expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of overtime meals on those occasions where:
 - you worked overtime and took an overtime meal break, and
 - your employer paid you an overtime meal allowance under an industrial law, award or agreement.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of meals eaten during a normal working day as it is a private expense, even if you receive an allowance to cover the meal expense.

Tools and equipment expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for tools or equipment you are required to purchase for your job.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction relating to any private use of the equipment (eg, if you have a vacuum cleaner that is used for private purposes for half of the time you can only deduct 50% of the cost) or if the tools and equipment are supplied by your employer or another person.

If a tool or item of work equipment used for work:

- cost more than \$300 – you claim a deduction for the cost over a number of years (depreciation)
- cost \$300 or less – you can claim an immediate deduction for the whole cost.

Other common deductible work-related expenses



- ✓ **Other expenses** you can claim a deduction for include:
 - union fees
 - the work-related portion of phone expenses if you have to make phone calls or send texts for work.



This is a general summary only.
For more information, go to ato.gov.au/occupations



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If you're a hospitality worker, it pays to learn what you can claim at tax time



To claim a deduction for work-related expenses

- you must have spent the money yourself and weren't reimbursed
- it must be directly related to earning your income
- you must have a record to prove it.*

You can only claim the work-related part of expenses. You can't claim a deduction for any part of the expense that relates to personal use.

* You can use the ATO app myDeductions tool to keep track of your expenses and receipts throughout the year.

Clothing and grooming expenses

- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of buying, hiring, mending or cleaning certain uniforms that are unique and distinctive to your job - eg chef's checked pants and chef's hat, or protective clothing like aprons that your employer requires you to wear.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of buying or cleaning plain clothing worn at work, even if your employer tells you to wear it, and even if you only wear it for work (eg black pants and a white shirt).
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for hairdressing, cosmetics, hair and skin care products, even if your employer expects you to be well groomed. All grooming products are private expenses.

Car expenses

- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction when you:
 - drive between separate jobs on the same day – eg travelling from your job as a waiter to a second job as a cleaner.
 - drive to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – eg travelling from the restaurant you work at to a catering function.

- ✗ **You generally can't claim** the cost of trips between home and work, even if you live a long way from your usual workplace or have to work outside normal business hours – eg public holidays or night shifts.

There are limited circumstances where you can claim the cost of trips between home and work, such as where you carry bulky tools or equipment for work – eg a bain-marie needed for a catering function. The cost of these trips is deductible only if:

- your employer requires you to transport the equipment for work
- the equipment was essential to earning your income
- there was no secure area to store the equipment at the work location, and
- the equipment is bulky – at least 20kg or cumbersome to transport.

If you claim car expenses, you need to keep a logbook to determine the work-related percentage, or be able to demonstrate to the ATO a reasonable calculation if you use the cents per kilometre method to claim.

Tools and equipment expenses

- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of the purchase of tools and equipment you are required to use for work, eg chef knives. You can't claim a deduction relating to any private use of the equipment or if the tools and equipment are supplied by your employer or another person.

If a tool or item of work equipment used for work:

- cost more than \$300 – you claim a deduction for the cost over a number of years (depreciation)
- cost \$300 or less – you can claim an immediate deduction for the whole cost.

- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of repairing tools and equipment for work. If the tools or equipment were also used for private purposes, you cannot claim a deduction for that part of the repair cost.

Self-education expenses

- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for self-education expenses if your course relates directly to your current job, eg barista course if you are working in a coffee shop.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction if your study is only related in a general way or is designed to help get you a new job, eg you can't claim the cost of study to enable you to move from being a food delivery driver to being a chef.

Other common deductible work-related expenses

- ✓ Other expenses you can claim a deduction for include:

- the work-related portion of phone expenses if you have to make phone calls or send texts for work
- union and professional association fees
- technical or professional publications
- renewing your special employee or gaming licence. You cannot claim a deduction for the cost of getting your initial licence.

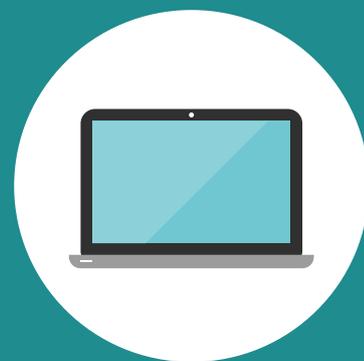


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If you're an office worker it pays to learn what you can claim at tax time



To claim a deduction for work-related expenses

- you must have spent the money yourself and weren't reimbursed
- it must be directly related to earning your income
- you must have a record to prove it.*

You can only claim the work-related part of expenses. You can't claim a deduction for any part of the expense that relates to personal use.

* You can use the ATO app myDeductions tool to keep track of your expenses and receipts throughout the year.

Car expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction when you:
 - drive between separate jobs on the same day – eg from your office job to a second job as a musician
 - drive to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – eg travelling to a different office to attend a meeting for the same employer.

- ✗ **You generally can't claim** the cost of trips between home and work, even if you live a long way from your usual workplace or have to work outside normal business hours – eg having to work late to speak to a colleague in a different time zone.

There are limited circumstances where you can claim the cost of trips between home and work, such as where you carry bulky tools or equipment for work – eg large heavy filing boxes full of records you need for a particular meeting. The cost of these trips is deductible only if:

- your employer requires you to transport the equipment for work
- the equipment was essential to earning your income
- there was no secure area to store the equipment at the work location, and
- the equipment is bulky – at least 20kg or cumbersome to transport.

If you claim car expenses, you need to keep a logbook to determine the work-related percentage, or be able to demonstrate to the ATO a reasonable calculation if you use the cents per kilometre method to claim.

Self-education expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for self-education expenses if your course relates directly to your current job, eg human resource training for a manager.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction if your study is only related in a general way or is designed to help get you a new job, eg a health and wellbeing course.

Travel expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for travel expenses if you are required to travel overnight and don't attend your usual work location – eg travelling to a remote office, provided the cost was incurred while carrying out your work duties. This could include meals, accommodation, fares and incidental expenses that you incurred and your employer has not provided or reimbursed you.
- ✗ Receiving a travel allowance from your employer does not automatically entitle you to a deduction. You still need to show that you were away overnight, you spent the money yourself, and the travel was directly related to earning your income.

Home office expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a percentage of the running costs of your home office if you have to work from home, including depreciation of office equipment, work-related phone calls and internet access charges, and electricity for heating, cooling and lighting costs. If you keep a diary of your home office usage, you can calculate your claim quickly using the home office expenses calculator.
- ✗ **You generally can't claim** the cost of rates, mortgage interest, rent and insurance.

Clothing expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of buying, hiring, mending or cleaning certain uniforms that are unique and distinctive to your job – eg clothing items you're required to wear which have a logo that is unique and distinctive to your employer – or protective clothing that your employer requires you to wear.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of buying or cleaning plain clothing worn at work, even if your employer tells you to wear it, and even if you only wear it for work, eg a business suit.

Other common deductible work-related expenses



- ✓ As long as the expense relates to your employment, **you can claim** a deduction for the cost of seminars and conferences, technical or professional publications, union and professional association fees.



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If you work in retail it pays to learn what you can claim at tax time



To claim a deduction for work-related expenses

- you must have spent the money yourself and weren't reimbursed
- it must be directly related to earning your income
- you must have a record to prove it.*

You can only claim the work-related part of expenses. You can't claim a deduction for any part of the expense that relates to personal use.

* You can use the ATO app myDeductions tool to keep track of your expenses and receipts throughout the year.

Car expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction when you:
 - drive between separate jobs on the same day – eg travelling to your second job as a waiter
 - drive to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – eg driving between separate retail stores for the same employer.
- ✗ **You generally can't claim** the cost of trips between home and work, even if you live a long way from your usual workplace or have to work outside normal business hours – eg late night shopping or weekend shifts.

If you claim car expenses, you need to keep a logbook to determine the work-related percentage, or be able to demonstrate to the ATO a reasonable calculation if you use the cents per kilometre method to claim.¹

Clothing expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of buying, hiring, mending or cleaning certain uniforms that are unique and distinctive to your job, or protective clothing that your employer requires you to wear.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of buying or cleaning plain clothing worn at work, even if your employer tells you to wear it, and even if you only wear it for work, eg, black pants and a white shirt or everyday clothing—even if it's sold at the store you work for.

Meal expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of overtime meals on those occasions where:
 - you worked overtime and took an overtime meal break, and
 - your employer paid you an overtime meal allowance under an industrial law, award or agreement.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of meals eaten during a normal working day as it is a private expense, even if you receive an allowance to cover the meal expense.

Self-education expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for self-education expenses if your course relates directly to your current job, eg a customer service course.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction if your study is only related in a general way or is designed to help get you a new job, eg a health and wellbeing course.

Personal grooming



- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for hairdressing, cosmetics, hair and skin care products, even if your employer tells you to use them and you work in a store that sells them – they are personal expenses.

Other common deductions



- ✓ As long as the expense relates to your employment, **you can claim** a deduction for the work-related portion of the cost of:
 - seminars and conferences
 - technical or professional publications
 - union and professional association fees
 - phone and internet usage if your employer needs you to use your personal devices for work.



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If you work in sales and marketing it pays to learn what you can claim at tax time



To claim a deduction for work-related expenses

- you must have spent the money yourself and weren't reimbursed
- it must be directly related to earning your income
- you must have a record to prove it.*

You can only claim the work-related part of expenses. You can't claim a deduction for any part of the expense that relates to personal use.

* You can use the ATO app myDeductions tool to keep track of your expenses and receipts throughout the year.

Car expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction when you:
 - drive between separate jobs on the same day – eg travelling from your job in sales to a second job as a waiter.
 - drive to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – eg driving to a client's office for a meeting.
- ✗ **You generally can't claim** the cost of trips between home and work, even if you live a long way from your usual workplace or have to work outside normal business hours – eg having to work late to attend a sales event.

There are limited circumstances where you can claim the cost of trips between home and work, such as where you carry bulky tools or equipment for work – eg a set of pull-up banners for a marketing display. The cost of these trips is deductible only if:

- your employer requires you to transport the equipment for work
- the equipment was essential to earning your income
- there was no secure area to store the equipment at the work location, and
- the equipment is bulky – at least 20kg or cumbersome to transport.

If you claim car expenses, you need to keep a logbook to determine the work-related percentage, or be able to demonstrate to the ATO a reasonable calculation if you use the cents per kilometre method to claim.

Clothing expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for the cost of buying, hiring, mending or cleaning certain uniforms that are unique and distinctive to your job – eg clothing items you're required to wear which have a logo that is unique and distinctive to your employer – or protective clothing that your employer requires you to wear.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of buying or cleaning plain clothing worn at work, even if your employer tells you to wear it, eg a business suit.

Travel expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a deduction for travel expenses if you are required to travel overnight and don't attend your usual work location – eg for a sales conference, provided the cost was incurred while carrying out your work duties. This could include meals, accommodation, fares and incidental expenses that you incurred and your employer has not provided or reimbursed you.
- ✗ Receiving a travel allowance from your employer does not automatically entitle you to a deduction. You still need to show that you were away overnight, you spent the money yourself, and the travel was directly related to earning your income.

Self-education expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** for self-education expenses if your course relates directly to your current job, eg a marketing course.
- ✗ **You can't claim** a deduction if your study is only related in a general way or is designed to help get you a new job – eg you can't claim the cost of study to enable you to move from working in sales to being a real estate agent.

Home office expenses



- ✓ **You can claim** a percentage of the running costs of your home office if you have to work from home, including depreciation of office equipment, work-related phone calls and internet access charges, and electricity for heating, cooling and lighting costs.

If you are required to purchase equipment for your work and it costs more than \$300, you can claim a deduction for this cost spread over a number of years (depreciation).

If you keep a diary of your home office usage, you can calculate your claim quickly using the home office expenses calculator.

- ✓ **You generally can't claim** the cost of rates, mortgage interest, rent and insurance.





Clothing and laundry

It pays to learn what you can claim at tax time

You can claim a deduction for the cost of buying and cleaning:
occupation-specific clothing, protective clothing and unique, distinctive uniforms.

✔ **You can claim** a deduction for occupation-specific clothing. This means it is specific to your occupation, is not everyday in nature and allows the public to easily recognise your occupation.

An example is the checked pants a chef wears.

✔ **You can claim** a deduction for **protective clothing and footwear** you wear to protect yourself from the risk of illness or injury posed by the activities you undertake to earn your income. The clothing must provide a sufficient degree of protection against that risk.

Examples include:

- fire-resistant and sun-protection clothing
- hi-vis safety vests
- non-slip nurse's shoes
- steel-capped boots
- overalls, smocks and aprons you wear to protect your ordinary clothes from soiling or damage.

✔ **You can claim** a deduction for a **compulsory or non-compulsory uniform** that is unique and distinctive to the organisation you work for.

Clothing is:

- **unique** if it has been designed and made only for the employer
- **distinctive** if it has the employer's logo permanently attached and the clothing is not available to the public.

✘ **You can't claim** a deduction for the cost of purchasing or cleaning clothes you bought to wear for work that are not specific to your occupation, such as black trousers and a white shirt, or a suit, even if your employer says this is compulsory.

These items are conventional, not usually a specific type and not sufficiently distinctive or unique to your employer.

✘ **You can't claim** a deduction for ordinary clothes (such as jeans, drill shirts, shorts, trousers, socks or closed shoes) as they lack protective qualities designed for the risks of your work.



A **compulsory work uniform** is a set of clothing that identifies you as an employee of an organisation with a strictly enforced policy that makes it compulsory for you to wear the uniform while you're at work.

✔ **You can claim** a deduction for shoes, socks and stockings where they are an essential part of a distinctive, compulsory uniform, and where their characteristics (colour, style and type) are specified in your employer's uniform policy.

✔ **You can claim** a deduction for a single item of distinctive clothing, such as a jumper, if it's compulsory for you to wear it at work.



A **non-compulsory uniform** is a set of clothing and accessory items (not protective or occupation-specific) that:

- distinctly identifies a particular employer, product or service
- is not compulsory for employees to wear to work.

✔ **You can only claim** expenses incurred for a **non-compulsory work uniform** if your employer has registered the design with AusIndustry.

✘ Shoes, socks and stockings **can never** form part of a **non-compulsory work uniform**.

✘ **You can't claim** a deduction for a single item of **non-compulsory uniform**, such as a jumper.

Situation	Clothing deductible	Laundry deductible	Reason
Your employer tells you to wear plain black pants and a black polo shirt	✗	✗	Conventional clothing that is not distinctive to your employer
Your employer tells you to wear plain black pants and supplies a top with a logo that is unique and distinctive to your employer	✗	✓ Top	<p>Top</p> <p>You are required to wear the top and it is unique and distinctive to the organisation you work for</p> <p>Pants</p> <p>Black pants are everyday in nature and not sufficiently distinctive or unique to your employer – a colour requirement is not enough</p>
Your employer tells you to purchase and wear a specific top with a logo on it and plain black pants	<p>✓ Top</p> <p>✗ Pants</p>	<p>✓ Top</p> <p>✗ Pants</p>	<p>Top</p> <p>You are required to purchase the top and it is unique and distinctive to the organisation you work for</p> <p>Pants</p> <p>Black pants are everyday in nature and not sufficiently distinctive or unique to your employer – a colour requirement is not enough</p>
Your employer tells you to purchase and wear a specific top with a logo on it and black pants from XYZ retail outlet	<p>✓ Top</p> <p>✗ Pants</p>	<p>✓ Top</p> <p>✗ Pants</p>	<p>Top</p> <p>You are required to purchase the top and the logo makes it unique and distinctive to the organisation you work for</p> <p>Pants</p> <p>Black pants without a logo or other feature are not unique and distinctive to the organisation you work for, even if your employer requires you to purchase them</p>
You are required to purchase a uniform of a certain style and colour that your employer registers, made up of a shirt with a logo and black pants	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>	You are required to purchase a registered uniform that is sufficiently distinctive and unique to your employer
Your employer tells you to purchase and wear the latest line of clothes from the store you work at	✗	✗	You cannot claim for the cost of plain clothing you wear at work, even if it's clothing sold at the store you work at and your employer requires you to wear it

Records

You must have written evidence, such as diary entries (to be kept for a representative period of at least one month) and receipts, for your laundry expenses if both of the following apply:

- The amount of your claim is greater than \$150.
- Your total claim for work-related expenses exceeds \$300.

If you don't need to provide written evidence for your laundry expenses, you may use a reasonable basis to work out your claim. If you wash, dry and iron your clothes yourself, we consider that a reasonable basis for working out your laundry (washing, drying and ironing) claim is:

- \$1 per load if the load is made up only of work-related clothing
- 50 cents per load if you include other laundry items in the load.

Allowances

If you receive an allowance from your employer for laundry expenses:

- you can only claim a deduction for the amount you actually spent, not simply the amount of your allowance
- the allowance is assessable income, which you must include on your tax return.



Gifts and donations

When can I claim?

- ✔ You can claim a deduction for a donation you make to an organisation if the donation meets four conditions:
 - You make it to a deductible gift recipient (DGR)
 - It must truly be a donation. A donation is a voluntary transfer of money or property where you receive no material benefit or advantage*
 - It must be money or property, which includes financial assets such as shares
 - You have a record of the donation such as a receipt.

* If you receive a material benefit – that is if the donor receives something which has a monetary value from the DGR in return for their donation – it is considered a contribution, and extra conditions apply. Visit ato.gov.au/gift-or-contribution for more information.



What is a DGR?

A deductible gift recipient (DGR) is an organisation or fund that can receive tax deductible gifts.

Not all charities are DGRs. For example, in recent times there has been an influx of crowdfunding campaigns. Many of these crowdfunding websites are not run by DGRs.

You can check whether your donation was made to an endorsed DGR on the Australian Business Register website abn.business.gov.au/DgrListing.aspx.



What records do I need?

- ✔ You should keep records of all tax deductible gifts and contributions you make.

When you make a donation, the DGR will usually issue you with a receipt – but they don't have to. If this is the case, in some circumstances, you can still claim a tax deduction by using other records, such as bank statements.

If a DGR issues a receipt for a deductible gift, the receipt must state:

- the name of the fund, authority or institution to which the donation has been made
- the DGR's ABN (if any – some DGRs listed by name might not have an ABN)
- that the receipt is for a gift.

If you give through a workplace giving program your payment summary or a written record from your employer is sufficient evidence.

Bucket donations

- ✔ If you made one or more donations of \$2 or more to bucket collections conducted by an approved organisation for natural disaster victims, you can claim a tax deduction of up to \$10 for the total of those contributions without a receipt. Further information is available on the **ATO website**.



When you can and can't claim a deduction

- ✔ You may be able to claim a deduction when:
 - the gift or donation is \$2 or more and you have a record of the donation
 - you donate property or shares, however special rules apply (see ato.gov.au/gifts-and-fundraising-rules)
 - there are special circumstances under the Heritage and Cultural gift programs where donations can also be deductible (see ato.gov.au/cultural-gifts for more detail).

Token items used to promote a DGR can be claimed as a deduction, such as label pins, wristbands and stickers.

- ✘ You can't claim gifts or donations as a deduction when it is for:
 - the purchase of raffle or art union tickets, such as an RSL Art Union prize home
 - the purchase of fundraising items that have an advertised price and can be used, such as chocolates, mugs, keyrings, caps or toys
 - the cost of attending fundraising dinners, even if the cost exceeds the value of the dinner
 - payments to school building funds made, for example, as an alternative to an increase in school fees
 - gifts to families and friends regardless of the reason
 - donations made under a salary sacrifice arrangement
 - donations made under a will.

Gifts and donations to political parties and independent candidates and members

In some circumstances, your gifts and donations to registered political parties and independent candidates may be claimed as a deduction.

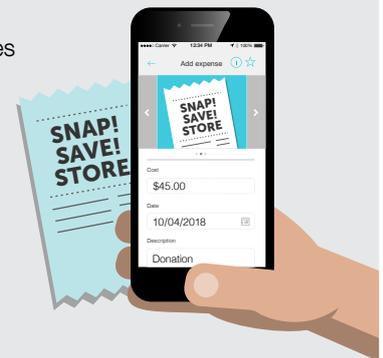
Your gift or donation must be \$2 or more and be money or property that you purchased during the 12 months before making the donation. This includes if you pay a membership subscription to a registered political party. You must also make the gift or donation as an individual, not in the course of carrying on a business, and it can't be a testamentary donation.

The most you can claim in an income year is:

- \$1,500 for contributions and gifts to political parties, and
- \$1,500 for contributions and gifts to independent candidates and members.

To claim a deduction you must keep a written record of your donation.

To find out who is registered, go to ato.gov.au/political-gifts.



Ready-to-use Tax Time messages

Below are a range of messages you can use (or adapt) for your own communication channels, such as websites, intranets, newsletters and social media platforms.

Suggested social media posts for Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn profiles

The ATO wants to help you get across the deductions retail workers can claim this tax time.

- 👍 You can claim a deduction for union and professional association fees.
- 👍 If you work more than one job, you can claim the cost of travelling directly between workplaces on the same day.
- 👎 You generally can't claim the cost of trips between home and work, even if you have to work outside of normal business hours (e.g. late-night shopping).
- 👎 You can't claim the cost of buying or cleaning plain clothing (e.g. black pants, white shirt), even if you're required to wear it or you only wear it for work. This is the case even if you're required to buy and wear clothing sold at the store where you work.
- 👎 You can't claim a deduction for fashion, hair or cosmetics products, even if you work in a store that sells them.

Still unsure about what you can claim? Download the ATO's retail work-related expenses guide at ato.gov.au/retail20

Not sure what deductions you can claim in your tax return? The ATO can help. Download the ATO's retail work-related expenses guide at ato.gov.au/retail20 to understand what you can and can't claim.

Track your car and travel expenses for tax time

When it comes to tax time and claiming work-related expenses in the retail industry, the ATO is here to assist and advise you to make tax time easier.

Let's have a look at the following two work-related expenses.

Car

A key thing to note when claiming car expenses is that simply driving between work and home doesn't warrant a deduction. This is a private expense. You may be able to claim car expenses if you use your car to drive between retail stores for the same employer, or if you are required to transport bulky equipment – such as store furniture, layout materials or stock. If you claim car expenses based on transporting bulky equipment, it's not enough to choose to carry these items. You need to show that your employer required you to transport the items and because of the size and weight they were awkward to transport and could only be transported conveniently by motor vehicle.

An ATO spokesperson said *'While many car expense claims are legitimate, often people are unable to show how they arrived at the amount they are claiming – and as a result, have had their claims reduced or disallowed in full'*. Don't let this happen to you!

'There are two ways to calculate a deduction for car expenses – the cents per km method which is limited to claims for work-related travel up to 5,000kms or the logbook method to determine the work-related percentage of actual expenses incurred' said the spokesperson.

If you follow the three golden rules below – you'll be just fine:

- generally, trips between home and work cannot be claimed, unless you are required to transport bulky equipment
- don't 'double dip' by claiming car expenses paid for or reimbursed by your employer
- make sure you keep records to prove how you worked out your claim.

Travel – what you need to know before you go

When you travel for work and are away from your home overnight, you can claim travel expenses like the cost of driving your car, flights or public transport. You can also claim accommodation, meals and incidental expenses.

Receiving an allowance from your employer doesn't automatically entitle you to a deduction. In all cases, you need to be able to show:

- you were away overnight
- you spent the money
- the allowance was included in your assessable income
- the travel was directly related to earning your employment income
- how you calculated your claim.

Use the myDeductions tool in the ATO app to track your deductions. The app is particularly useful for people who use their car for work, as it helps them track trips using GPS, point-to-point or the odometer method. You can upload your data to pre-fill your myTax return or email it straight to your registered tax agent. Download the app today at ato.gov.au/app

For more information about what you can and can't claim during tax time, go to ato.gov.au/retail20