



What can you claim if you're an Apprentice

SOURCE: AUSTRALIAN TAXATION OFFICE

With work-related expense claims high on the ATO radar, the Australian Taxation Office is stepping up to help and provide advice for taxpayers who aren't quite sure what they can and cannot claim.

The ATO have already flagged that over-claiming of deductions is a big issue. The ATO wants tax payers to get right what they claim as tax deductions.

We understand tax time can be tricky and taxpayers often ask whether we have advice about what they can and cannot claim based on their job. The good news is that we do. The most popular topics include car, clothing, travel, working from home and self-education expenses.

Getting the right information before you lodge your income tax return is helping

our clients to get their claims right and avoid issues later on.

We want every person to have the information they need to know whether they can make a claim, to get it right, and know what records they need to keep. Understanding what you can and cannot claim will help ensure that your income tax return is processed quickly and any refund is paid as soon as possible. Most people want to lodge their income tax return with the right information and helping people to do that in the first place is the most efficient way to operate.

Our objective is to educate you; this is just part of the process.

What you can and can't claim

Each occupation has specific circumstances which affect what can and cannot be claimed. Here are some snippets from some ATO occupation guides. Remember, regardless of the occupation you are in, you can only claim the work-related part of expenses, and you must meet the three golden rules:

- You must have spent the money yourself and not been reimbursed;
- The claim must be directly related to earning your income; and
- You need a record to prove it.

Apprentice employees: work-related expenses

Common deductions include the following:

- You can claim a deduction for the cost of travel while performing your duties. This includes travel between different work locations, including for different employers.

Normal trips between home and work are private in nature and can't be claimed.

This applies even if you:

- live a long way from your usual workplace, or
- have to work outside normal business hours (eg weekend shifts).

In limited circumstances you can claim the cost of trips between home and work, where:

- > you had shifting places of employment (that is, you regularly worked at more than one site each day before returning home)
- > you were required to carry bulky tools or equipment for work and all of the following conditions were met:
 - > The tools or equipment were essential for you to perform your employment duties and you didn't carry them merely as a matter of choice.

- > The tools or equipment were bulky
 - meaning that because of their size and weight they were awkward to transport and could only be transported conveniently by the use of a motor vehicle.
 - > There was no secure storage for the items at the workplace.
- You can claim a deduction for self-education expenses if your course relates directly to your current job – for example, your apprenticeship course.
 - You can also claim a deduction for the cost of travel from your home to your place of education and back, or your workplace to your place of education and back. You must keep records of your travel expenses to claim a deduction.

If you claim car expenses, you must:

- keep a logbook of your work trips, or
- be able to show us your claim is reasonable if you use the cents per kilometre method (for claims up to 5,000 km only).

Your vehicle is not considered to be a car if it is a vehicle with a carrying capacity of:

- one tonne or more, such as a ute or panel van
- nine passengers or more, such as a minivan.

In these circumstances (eg if you use a ute) you can claim the proportion of your vehicle expenses that relate to work – such as fuel, oil, insurance, repairs and servicing, car loan interest, registration and depreciation.

You need to keep receipts of your actual expenses. You cannot use the cents per kilometre method for these vehicles. While it is not a requirement to keep a logbook, it is the easiest way to show how you have calculated your work-related use of the vehicle.

- You can claim a deduction for tools or equipment you are required to buy for your job.
- If a tool or item of work equipment you only used for work:
 - cost more than \$300 – you can 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 buying, mending and cleaning uniforms that are unique and distinctive to your job – eg a uniform your employer requires you to wear,
 - protective clothing your employer requires you to wear – eg hi-vis vests, steel-capped boots and safety glasses.



• Other work-related expenses you can claim include:

- protective equipment such as sunscreen, sunhats and sunglasses,
- union and professional association fees,
- phone expenses if you have to make phone calls or send texts for work. Remember, you can only claim the work-related part of the expense.

However, you usually cannot claim home to work travel, and you cannot claim clothes or shoes that are not uniform or are not designed to provide you with sufficient protection from the risk of injury at your worksite, even if the item is called 'workwear' or 'tradie wear' by the supplier.

Footnote: Please note that the information here is a general overview. Taxation is a complicated matter and you should seek specific advice from a qualified and experienced professional suited to your circumstances.