



What can you claim if you're a Call Centre Operator

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.

Call Centre Operators employees: work-related expenses

Common deductions include the following:

- You can claim the cost of using a car you own when you drive:
 - between separate jobs on the same day – for example, travelling from your job in a call centre to your second job as a waiter
 - to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – for example, travelling from your office to the company training centre. If you claim car expenses, you can use the logbook method or the cents per kilometre method. If you use the logbook method, you need to keep a valid logbook to determine the percentage of work-related use of your car along with evidence of your car expenses. If you use the cents per kilometre method, you need to be able to show how you calculated your work-related kilometres and be able to show that those kilometres were work related. You can claim parking fees and tolls only when the above conditions are met
- You can claim the work-related portion of running expenses for your home office when you work from home, including:

- the decline in value of office equipment
 - electricity for heating, cooling and lighting
 - other running expenses. You can only claim the additional running costs incurred as a result of working from home. For example, if you work in your lounge room when others are also present the cost of lighting and heating or cooling that room is not deductible because there is no additional cost for those expenses as a result of you working from home. To work out your home office expenses, you can use a fixed rate of 52 cents per hour for each hour that you work from home or calculate your actual expenses
- You can claim the cost of buying, hiring, repairing or cleaning clothing that is unique and distinctive to your job. Clothing is unique if it has been designed and made only for the employer. Clothing is distinctive if it has the employer's logo permanently attached and the clothing is not available to the public.
 - You can claim self-education, study, seminars and training if they directly relate to your current job as a call centre operator and they:
 - maintain or improve the skills and knowledge you need for your current duties – for example, training to use new record-keeping software
 - result in or are likely to result in an increase in your income from your current employment – for example, studying for a Certificate III in Customer Engagement. You need to be able to show how the course relates to your employment and have records for the expenses you claim – such as receipts for course fees, text books, stationery and travel expenses
 - You can claim the work-related portion of other expenses if they relate to your employment, including:
 - logbooks, diaries and pens that aren't provided by your employer
 - union and professional association fees
 - phone and internet costs, apportioned for private and work use, with records showing a detailed usage pattern.
- 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.