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Here's how to claim work expenses when filing your taxes

You can claim work expenses if you're a freelancer or business owner, but W-2 employees are limited in what they can claim.

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The way we work has shifted significantly over the past two years -- and if you were part of the [Great Resignation](#), you might have even started your own business or opted for a freelance or a remote position. More people have had to navigate [working from home](#) and the workplace expenses that come with it. And currently, the best-

known employment-related tax deduction -- for home office expenses -- is reserved for those who are both self-employed and have a dedicated home space for working.

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Still, there are a handful of other work-related expenses that both corporate employees and the self-employed may be eligible to claim on [their taxes](#) this season. Remember: For most taxpayers, the deadline to submit your 2021 federal tax return or request for an extension is Monday, Apr. 18, 2022.

This story is part of **Taxes 2022**, CNET's coverage of the best tax software and everything else you need to get your return filed quickly, accurately and on-time.

Here's an overview of work expenses and deductions on your taxes.

Claiming work expenses: First, choose a deduction

Before you start going through every line item of every receipt, you may want to save yourself the trouble and figure out which you'll take: the standard deduction or the itemized deduction.

Standard deduction: The standard deduction is an all-encompassing flat rate, no questions asked. For tax year 2021, the flat rate is \$12,550 for single filers and those married filing separately. The rate is \$25,100 for married filing jointly. Taking this route is much easier than itemizing.

Itemized deduction: If you want to claim work expenses, medical payments, charitable contributions or other expenses, you'll use the itemized deduction. It's more time-consuming than the standard deduction -- and you'll need proof of the expenses you wish to deduct.

If you're going to claim and itemize your work expenses, you'll need to complete [Schedule A of Form 1040](#). You need to have sufficient proof for each itemized expense, which means tracking down receipts. If your standard deduction is greater than the sum of your itemized deductions, save yourself the trouble and take the flat rate.

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- [Best tax software for 2022: TurboTax, H&R Block, Jackson Hewitt and others compared](#)

Common tax deductions to claim

Before you start adding up all the line-items, make sure you know what's covered and what isn't. Here are some of the most common deductions for folks working from home.

1. Home office deduction

The [home office deduction](#) may be the largest deduction available if you're self-employed. If you work 100% remotely as a W-2 employee, you **do not** qualify for this deduction. The other main requirement is that the space be reserved for and dedicated entirely to your work.

"Can you deduct a home office if you work at your kitchen table? Unfortunately, no," says Lisa Greene-Lewis, CPA, and tax expert with TurboTax said. "You not only have to be self-employed -- but have a dedicated space in your home that is exclusively related to your business. You can't deduct the space at your kitchen table if your family also eats dinner there."

If you have a dedicated workspace at home, you can use the [IRS regular method or simplified option](#), though you can't use a combination of them in a single tax year. Some things that qualify for home office deductions:

- **Insurance:** You can deduct a percentage of your home insurance that covers the business space in your home.
- **Utilities:** Expenses for utilities, like electricity and gas, can be deducted -- but only the percentage used in your home office.
- **Depreciation:** If you own your home, you can deduct the cost of wear and tear on the portion used exclusively for business.

All of these calculations are based on the percentage of your home that you use for business. To find the percentage, compare the size of space you use for business to that of your entire home, and then apply

the percentage to the specific expenses. For instance, if your home is 1,800 square feet total, and your home office measures 300 square feet, your home office deductions could be applied at a rate of 16%.

Greene-Lewis says that if you take the simplified option, you can deduct \$5 per square foot, up to 300 square feet, or \$1,500 total. This would be an alternative to calculating the various individual home expenses.

2. Travel

If you're self-employed or own your own business, regular commutes from your home to work are considered non-deductible personal expenses. If you have to commute between multiple locations or travel for work, however, some of those costs may be deductible. Flights, hotel rooms, rental cars, meals and tips for service are all considered travel expenses, if they're business-related. If a passport is required for your travel, you can claim that as well.

In the past, mileage accrued while driving your own car for business travel was an expense you could claim on your taxes -- but the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 eliminated that for employees. The self-employed and business owners, however, are still eligible for this deduction.

3. Work uniform

If you have to buy clothes that you only wear for work, some individuals may be able to write off the cost. For example, if you're a qualifying performing artist, you may be able to deduct the cost of costumes or other theatrical clothing that you can't wear everyday. You must fall under one of a few specific categories in order to claim this deduction, though, due to the TCJA tax changes.

4. Continuing education and certifications

If you're self-employed, or work for an employer and fall into one of these IRS categories, you may be able to claim the enrollment cost of any required continuing education courses, classes or certifications. You may also be able to deduct professional organization dues and fees -- as long as the organization isn't political.

If you're a teacher, the Teacher Education Deduction lets you claim up to \$250 of out-of-pocket costs related to teaching supplies. And Green-Lewis says if you and your partner are both teachers, you both can claim the deduction.

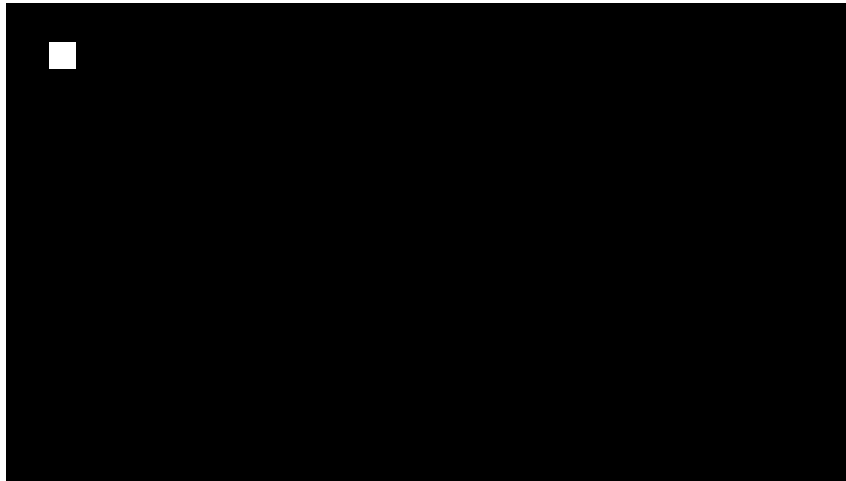
5. Supplies

If you own your own business, you can deduct the cost of some business supplies. And the deduction threshold is generous.

"Self-employed business owners can deduct up to \$1,020,000 for qualified business equipment like computers, printers and office furniture," Greene-Lewis says.

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