



What can you claim if you're an Australian Defence Force Member?

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 taxpayers 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.

Australian Defence Force **Members employees: work-related expenses**

1. Common deductions include the following:
You can claim a deduction when you:
 - drive between separate jobs on the same day
 - drive to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – eg if you are required to travel from your normal Army base to another military base to attend a fitness assessment.
2. You can only claim the cost of fitness expenses if your job requires you to maintain a fitness well above the ADF general standard, eg if you are a physical training instructor with the Australian Special Forces.
3. 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 ATO's home office expenses calculator.

4. You can claim a deduction for self-education expenses if your course relates directly to your current job or to the next likely promotion as planned by the ADF.

5. As long as the expense relates to your employment, you can claim a deduction for the work-related portion of the cost of:

- technical or professional publications, and
- compulsory mess subscriptions, and
- union and professional association fees.

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.



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