



Bus drivers - income and work-related deductions

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Income-and-deductions/In-detail/Occupation-and-industry-specific-guides/Bus-drivers---income-and-work-related-deductions/>
- Last modified: 19 Feb 2020
- QC 61150

Bus drivers – income and work-related deductions

If you earn your income as an employee bus driver, this information will help you to work out what:

- income and allowances to report
- you can and can't claim as a work-related deduction
- records you need to keep.

Find out about bus drivers':

- [Income – salary and allowances](#)
- [Deductions](#)
- [Record keeping](#)

Income – salary and allowances

Your employer will provide either an income statement or a payment summary that shows all your salary, wages and allowances for the financial year.

Include all of the income you received during the financial year in your tax return, regardless of when you earned it, including:

- [salary and wages](#)
- [allowances](#).

Don't include [reimbursements](#).

Salary and wages

You must include your salary and wages as income in your tax return. Include any bonuses you receive.

See also:

- [Employment income](#)

Allowances

Include all allowances shown on your income statement or payment summary as income in your tax return.

You may receive an allowance to:

- compensate you for an aspect of your work – for example, for driving an articulated bus
- help you pay for certain expenses such as your uniform.

If your employer pays you:

- an amount based on an estimate of what you might spend, such as paying cents per kilometre if you use your car for work, then it's an allowance
- the amount before or after you incurred the expense, such as paying for accommodation and meals when travelling away from home overnight for work, it's a reimbursement.

Allowances on your income statement or payment summary

You may receive allowances:

- for work that may be unpleasant, special or dangerous
- in recognition of holding special skills, such as a first-aid certificate
- to compensate for industry peculiarities, such as for driving a particular type of bus.

These payments don't cover you for expenses you might incur. Include these allowances as income.

If you receive an allowance from your employer, you aren't always entitled to a deduction – it depends on the situation. See [Deductions](#).

Allowances not on your income statement or payment summary

Your employer may not include some allowances on your income statement or payment summary. This can apply to travel allowances and overtime meal allowances paid under an industrial law, award or agreement. You can see these allowances on your payslips.

If the allowance isn't on your income statement or payment summary, and you:

- spent the whole amount on deductible expenses
 - don't include it as income in your tax return
 - you can't claim any deductions for these expenses

- spent more than your allowance
 - include the allowance as income in your tax return
 - claim a deduction for your expense, if you're eligible. See [Deductions](#).

See also:

- [Allowances and other income](#)
- [Employment income](#)

Reimbursements

If your employer pays you the exact amount for expenses you incur either before or after you incur them, the payment is a reimbursement. We don't consider a reimbursement to be an allowance.

If you're reimbursed for expenses you incur:

- don't include the reimbursement as income in your tax return
- you can't claim a deduction for them.

Find out about bus drivers':

- [Deductions](#)
- [Record keeping](#)

Deductions

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Income-and-deductions/In-detail/Occupation-and-industry-specific-guides/Bus-drivers---income-and-work-related-deductions/?page=2>
- Last modified: 19 Feb 2020
- QC 61150


You may be able to claim deductions for your work-related expenses. Work-related expenses are expenses you incur on items used to earn your income as a bus driver.

To claim a deduction for a work-related expense:

- you must have spent the money yourself and weren't reimbursed
- it must directly relate to earning your income
- you must have a record to prove it (usually a receipt).

If the expense was for both work and private purposes, you can only claim a deduction for the work-related part. You can't claim a deduction for any part of the expense that relates to personal use.

You can use the [myDeductions](#) tool in the ATO app to help keep track of your work-related expenses. It's an easy way to capture information on the go and makes tax time quicker by uploading your deductions to your tax return. If you use a tax agent they can access your uploaded data through their practice management software or you can email a copy to them from the app.

For a summary of common deductions for employee bus drivers, see [Bus drivers' deductions \(PDF, 1.0MB\)](#)  .

For, for a detailed list to help you work out if your expense is deductible, and how much you can claim, see:

- A–F
 - [Car expenses](#)
 - [Child care](#)
 - [Cleaning products](#)
 - [Clothing expenses \(including footwear\)](#)
 - [Driver's licence](#)
 - [Fines](#)
- G–O
 - [Glasses, contact lenses and anti-glare glasses](#)
 - [Laundry and maintenance](#)
 - [Meal and snack expenses](#)
 - [Medical and compulsory assessments](#)
 - [Music streaming services, CDs, audio books or podcasts](#)
 - [Overtime meal expenses](#)
- P–S
 - [Phone and internet expenses](#)
 - [Repairs to tools and equipment](#)
 - [Seat covers](#)
 - [Self-education and study expenses](#)
 - [Self-education and training and support loans](#)
 - [Seminars, conferences and training courses](#)
 - [Stationery](#)
 - [Sunglasses and sunscreen](#)
- T–W
 - [Technical or professional publications](#)
 - [Tools and equipment](#)
 - [Travel expenses](#)
 - [Union and professional association fees](#)

See also:

- [Employees guide to work expenses](#)

Common expenses A–F

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Income-and-deductions/In-detail/Occupation-and-industry-specific-guides/Bus-drivers---income-and-work-related-deductions/?page=3>
- Last modified: 19 Feb 2020
- QC 61150

Details on claiming common bus driver expenses for:

- [Car expenses](#)
- [Child care](#)
- [Cleaning products](#)
- [Clothing expenses \(including footwear\)](#)
- [Driver's licence](#)
- [Fines](#)

Car expenses

You can't claim a deduction for normal trips between your home and work, even if you:

- live a long way from your usual workplace
- have to work outside normal business hours
- work split shifts – for example, driving between home and work during your split shift when you drive the school route.

In limited circumstances you can claim the cost of trips between home and work, such as where you carry bulky tools or equipment for work. You can claim a deduction for the cost of these trips if:

- The tools or equipment you carry are essential for the performance of your employment duties.
- The equipment is bulky, meaning that because of its size or weight it is awkward to transport and can only be transported conveniently by motor vehicle.
- There is no secure storage for such items at the workplace.

It is insufficient if you transport tools or equipment as a matter of choice. For example, if your employer provides your tools and equipment or they provide secure storage, your decision to transport items will be a matter of choice.

You can claim a deduction for the cost of using a car you own, lease or hire (under a hire-purchase agreement) when you travel for work and you drive:

- between separate jobs on the same day – for example, finishing your morning bus shift and driving directly to your second job in administration
- to and from an alternate workplace for the same employer on the same day – for example, driving between different depots for the same company or employer.

To claim a deduction you must keep records of your car use. You can choose

between the logbook method or the cents per kilometre method to calculate your deduction.

If you use the logbook method, you need to keep a valid logbook to help you determine the percentage of work-related use along with evidence of your car expenses.

If you use the cents per kilometre method, you need to provide a calculation of your work-related kilometres. You must be able to show that the kilometres travelled were work-related.

The [Work-related car expenses calculator](#) helps calculate the amount you can claim as a deduction for car expenses.

If you own a motorcycle, or a vehicle with a carrying capacity of one tonne or more, or nine passengers or more, you can deduct the actual expenses related to your work travel.

Example: no deduction for home to work travel

Kingsley is a coach driver. His employer keeps a basic tool kit on the bus to fix minor repairs. If the bus breaks down Kingsley calls the duty mechanic to come out and do the repairs. When Kingsley drives from his home to the depot, he carries his own large tool kit because he doesn't like the tools the employer provides. He takes it home with him each night after his shift because there is nowhere to store it securely at the depot.

Even if the tools were bulky, Kingsley can't claim a deduction for the cost of his travel between his home and the depot. It's his personal choice to carry tools that are not relevant to his driving duties and already provided by his employer. His employment has not created the need to transport bulky tools between home and work. The costs of travelling between his home and the depot are private expenses.

See also:

- [Car expenses](#)
- [Travel between home and work and between workplaces](#)

Child care

You can't claim a deduction for child care when you're working. It's a private expense.

Cleaning products

You can claim a deduction for the cost of cleaning products for the bus if one of your duties is to keep the bus clean and your employer doesn't provide the products. You can claim items such as anti-bacterial products, window cleaner and

tissues.

You can't claim cleaning or sanitary products you buy for your personal use such as hand sanitiser.

Example: deduction for cleaning products

Dave drives a school bus. One of his duties is to clean the bus after he has finished his shift each day. Dave's employer doesn't provide any cleaning products. Dave purchases some cleaning clothes, anti-bacterial cleaning spray and some window cleaner so that he can wipe down the seats and clean the windows at the end of his shift. Dave can claim a deduction for the cost of the products he purchases to clean the bus.

If Dave uses these products at home, he will need to apportion the expenses for the work-related use.

Clothing expenses (including footwear)

You can claim a deduction for the cost you incur when you buy, hire, repair or replace clothing, uniforms and footwear you wear at work if it's:

- protective clothing and footwear that provides a sufficient degree of protection against the risk of injury or illness posed by the activities you undertake to earn your income
- occupation specific and not a conventional, everyday piece of clothing
- a compulsory uniform that identifies you as an employee of an organisation with a strictly enforced policy making it compulsory for you to wear the uniform while you're at work
- a non-compulsory uniform, if your employer has registered the design with AusIndustry.

Clothing in a specific colour or brand isn't enough to classify clothing as a uniform. For example, a shirt with the corporate logo on it that your employer strictly requires you to wear when you work is a compulsory uniform. You can claim a deduction for buying and repairing it.

You can claim clothing and footwear that you wear to protect yourself from the risk of illness or injury posed by your income-earning activities or the environment in which you carry them out. Protective items must provide a sufficient degree of protection against risk such as steel-capped boots.

You can't claim a deduction for the cost of buying plain clothing, such as black trousers, plain shirts or black shoes worn at work, even if:

- you only wear it to work
- your employer tells you to wear it.

You can't claim a deduction if your employer buys, repairs or replaces your clothing. These are private expenses.

Example: compulsory uniform with logo

Mike has to buy and wear shirts with his employer's company logo embroidered on it. As part of his uniform, he also has to wear black pants and black shoes.

Mike can claim a deduction for the cost of buying the shirts as they are:

- distinctive items with the employer's logo
- compulsory for him to wear at work.

He can't claim the cost of buying his black pants or shoes as they are items of a conventional nature.

Example: protective clothing

Rajesh is a bus driver for the city council. His employer requires him to purchase and wear steel-capped boots when driving the bus for protection.

The protective nature of the boots and the requirement for Rajesh to wear them while at work means that Rajesh can claim a deduction for the cost of the boots.

If Rajesh's employer provided him the boots or reimbursed him for the cost, Rajesh can't claim a deduction for their purchase.

Example: non-compulsory uniform registered with AusIndustry

Lena is a bus driver with a travel company. She also works in the reception area for a number of hours each day. It is a requirement for reception staff to wear a suit jacket in the company's colours monogrammed with the company logo. It is not compulsory for a staff member to wear the clothing, but the employer encourages staff members to do so.

The AusIndustry register of approved occupational clothing includes the suit jacket therefore Lena can claim a deduction for the cost of buying and maintaining the jacket.

If Lena's employer provided the suit jacket or reimbursed her for the cost she would be unable to claim a deduction for the purchase of the jacket. She would be able to claim a deduction for maintaining the jacket.

See also:

- Bus drivers' [Laundry and maintenance](#)
- [Clothing, laundry and dry-cleaning expenses](#)

Driver's licence

You can't claim a deduction for obtaining or renewing your driver's licence, even if you must have it as a condition of employment. This is a private expense.

You can claim a deduction for additional costs you incur to obtain a special licence or condition on your licence in order to perform your work duties such as a heavy vehicle permit.

Example: heavy vehicle permit

Rhonda is a bus driver who needs a driver's licence and a heavy vehicle permit to work. Her driver's licence renewal costs her \$45 per year and it costs \$73 to apply for the heavy vehicle permit.

Rhonda can't claim a deduction for the \$45 to renew her licence because it is a private expense. Rhonda can claim the cost of the heavy vehicle permit (\$73) as it's an additional expense she must incur to work as a bus driver.

Fines

You can't claim a deduction for any fines you get when you work. Fines may include parking and speeding fines.

For more bus driver expenses, see:

- common expenses [G–O](#)
- common expenses [P–S](#)
- common expenses [T–W](#)

Common expenses G–O

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Income-and-deductions/In-detail/Occupation-and-industry-specific-guides/Bus-drivers---income-and-work->

[related-deductions/?page=4](#)

- Last modified: 19 Feb 2020
- QC 61150

Details on claiming common bus driver expenses for:

- [Glasses, contact lenses and anti-glare glasses](#)
- [Laundry and maintenance](#)
- [Meal and snack expenses](#)
- [Medical and compulsory assessments](#)
- [Music streaming services, CDs, audio books or podcasts](#)
- [Overtime meal expenses](#)

Glasses, contact lenses and anti-glare glasses

You can't claim a deduction for prescription glasses or contact lenses. These are private expenses.

You can claim a deduction for the cost of anti-glare glasses if you wear them to reduce the risk of illness or injury while working as a bus driver.

See also:

- Bus drivers [Sunglasses and sunscreen](#)
- [Glasses, contact lenses and protective glasses](#)

Laundry and maintenance

You can claim a deduction for the cost of washing and drying clothing you wear at work if it's:

- protective
- occupation specific and not a conventional, everyday piece of clothing
- a uniform either compulsory or non-compulsory registered with AusIndustry.

This also includes laundromat and dry cleaning expenses.

If your laundry claim (excluding dry cleaning expenses) is \$150 or less, you don't need to keep records but you will still need to be able to explain how you calculated your claim. This is not an automatic deduction.

Example: laundry expenses

Jelani's employer provides her with a compulsory uniform to wear at work. She washes, dries and irons her uniforms as their own load of washing twice a week. Jelani works 48 weeks during the year. She works out her claim of \$96 for laundry is as follows:

Number of claimable laundry loads per week × Number of weeks =
Total number of claimable laundry loads, that is (2 × 48 = 96)

Total number of claimable laundry loads × Reasonable cost per load =
Total claim amount, that is (96 × \$1 = \$96)

As her total claim for laundry expenses is under \$150 (\$96) Jelani doesn't require written evidence of her laundry expenses. Although she doesn't require evidence to prove her claim for laundry, if asked she will need to explain how she calculated her claim.

See also:

- Bus drivers' [Clothing expenses \(including footwear\)](#)
- [Clothing, laundry and dry-cleaning expenses](#)

Meal and snack expenses

You cannot claim a deduction for the cost of food, drink or snacks you consume during your normal working hours even if you receive a meal allowance. These are private expenses.

You may be able to claim a deduction for meals when you travel for work and for meals when you work overtime.

See also:

- [Travel expenses.](#)
- [Overtime meal expenses.](#)

Example: no deduction for food and drink

Renee is a coach driver for a company that conducts day tours for tourists. Her employer pays her a meal allowance of \$20 per shift which shows on her income statement at the end of the year.

During the course of her shift, Renee buys food and drink. Renee will need to declare the meal allowance she receives from her employer but has no entitlement to a deduction for the amount she spends on food and drink. This is because the consumption of goods was during her normal working day. The expenses are private.

See also:

- [Travel and meal expenses receipts](#)

Medical and compulsory assessments

You can claim a deduction for compulsory assessments and medical examinations you must do to certify that your fitness to drive. This may include working with

children checks.

You can't claim examinations or assessments designed to get you a job as a bus driver. For example, you can't claim an examination or assessment you undertake before you start your role as a bus driver. This includes a pre-employment medical examination, even if you must have it as a condition of employment.

Music streaming services, CDs, audio books or podcasts

You can't claim a deduction for music streaming services, CDs, audio books, podcasts or other devices such as an iPod that you use in the bus. Even if they're used to help relieve fatigue, these items aren't essential to earning your income. They are private expenses.

Overtime meal expenses

If you receive an overtime meal allowance under an industrial law, award or agreement and it's included in your assessable income, you can claim a deduction for the cost of a meal you buy and eat when you work overtime.

If your salary and wages amount includes your overtime meal allowance you can't claim a deduction. This means your income statement or payment summary doesn't show this as a separate allowance.

We generally require you to get and keep written evidence, such as receipts, when you claim a deduction for overtime meal expenses. However, each year we set a reasonable amount you can claim for overtime meal expenses without receipts. If you receive an overtime meal allowance, are claiming a deduction and spent:

- up to the reasonable amount, you don't have to get and keep receipts
- more than the reasonable amount, you must get and keep receipts for all your expenses.

In all cases, you need to be able to show:

- you spent the money
- how you calculated your claim.

Example: deduction for overtime meals

Carlos is a bus driver for the local city council. After his eight hour shift, Carlos agrees to do overtime for two hours to cover for someone who has called in sick. Under his enterprise agreement, Carlos' entitlement to receive an overtime meal allowance of \$15.80 is when he works two hours or more of overtime.

Prior to commencing his break, Carlos gets a 30 minute meal break. While he is on his meal break, Carlos purchases a meal and a drink which costs him \$18.20.

Carlos declares the allowance of \$15.80 and claims a deduction of \$18.20 as his income statement shows the overtime meal allowance. The amount

Carlos is claiming as a deduction is less than the reasonable amount so Carlos doesn't have to keep written evidence. However he will need to be able to show that he spent the money.

See also:

- [Overtime meals](#)
- [TD 2019/11](#) – *Income tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime amounts for the 2019–20 income year?*

For more bus driver expenses, see:

- common expenses [A–F](#)
- common expenses [P–S](#)
- common expenses [T–W](#)

Common expenses P–S

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Income-and-deductions/In-detail/Occupation-and-industry-specific-guides/Bus-drivers---income-and-work-related-deductions/?page=5>
- Last modified: 19 Feb 2020
- QC 61150

Details on claiming common bus driver expenses for:

- [Phone and internet expenses](#)
- [Repairs to tools and equipment](#)
- [Seat covers](#)
- [Self-education and study expenses](#)
- [Self-education and study and training support loans](#)
- [Seminars, conferences and training courses](#)
- [Stationery](#)
- [Sunglasses and sunscreen](#)

Phone and internet expenses

You can claim a deduction for your phone and internet costs associated with the work-related use of your own phone or electronic devices.

You need to keep records to show a detailed pattern for your work use if you claim more than \$50 on phone and internet expenses.

You can't claim a deduction if your employer provides you with a phone for work and pays for the usage or if your employer reimburses you for the costs.

You can't claim a deduction for any phone calls to family and friends even while you're travelling for work. This is because they aren't work-related calls.

Example: calculating phone expenses

George uses his mobile phone for work purposes. He's on a set mobile phone plan of \$49 each month and rarely exceeds the plan cap.

He receives an itemised account from his phone provider each month by email, which includes details of the individual calls he has made. George regularly prints his monthly phone accounts and highlights his work-related calls. He also makes notes on the itemised account about who he has called.

Out of the 300 calls he has made in a four-week period, George works out that 170 (57%) of the individual call expenses billed to him are for work. He then applies that percentage to his cap amount of \$49 a month.

George calculates his calls for work purposes as follows:

$\text{Total work calls} \div \text{Total number of calls} = \text{Work use percentage for calls}$

$170 \div 300 = 57\%$

George can claim 10% of the total bill of \$49 for each month for work purposes.

$\$49 \times 0.57\% = \96.90

Because he worked for 46 weeks of that year (10.6 months), George calculates his work-related mobile phone expense deduction as follows:

- $10.6 \text{ months} \times \$96.90 = \$1,027.14$

Example: work and private use

Suzette uses her computer and personal internet account at home to access her work emails and check her roster. Suzette also uses her computer and the internet for private purposes.

Suzette's internet use diary showed 10% of her internet time was for work-related activities and 90% was for private use. As her internet service provider charge for the year was \$1,200 she can claim:

$\$1,200 \times 10\% = \120 as work-related internet use.

See also:

- [Claiming mobile phone, internet and home phone expenses](#)

Repairs to tools and equipment

You can claim a deduction for repairs to tools and equipment you use for work. If you also use them for private purposes you can only claim the work-related portion.

Seat covers

You can't claim a deduction for the cost of seat covers you use in your bus for work. This is a private expense.

Self-education and study expenses

You can claim a deduction for self-education and study expenses if it's directly related to your current employment as a bus driver and it:

- maintains or improves the skills and knowledge you need for your current duties
- results in or is likely to result in an increase in your income from your current employment such as a training course for snow driving.

You can't claim a deduction if the self-education or study course:

- doesn't have a connection with your current employment
- only relates in a general way to your current employment or profession
- enables you to get employment or change employment..

Self-education expenses include fees, travel expenses (for example, attending a lecture interstate), transport costs, books and equipment. You usually have to reduce your self-education expenses by \$250 – that is, the first \$250 of expenses for self-education aren't deductible.

Example: education doesn't maintain or improve specific skills or knowledge

Jennifer works as a bus driver for the local state high school. Her duties consist of picking up and setting down students before and after school. She drives the bus as a part-time job while she is studying a Masters of Transport logistics.

There is a minor connection between the work she performs and her study however the duties she undertakes in her job don't relate to the specific knowledge she gains from her study.

She can't claim a deduction for the costs of obtaining the Master's degree.

Example: maintains or improves specific skills or knowledge

Cyril is a bus driver for an airport transfer service. His duties include collecting fares, giving change and tickets as well as assisting passengers with baggage. He enrolls in a weekend training course on manual lifting in the workplace. This is part of the duties he performs at work. The course provides him with knowledge on safely lifting, moving and securing luggage and directly ties into the work he does from day to day.

Cyril can claim a deduction for the cost of attending the training course if he incurred the expense. This is as long there was no reimbursement from his employer as it has a sufficient connection with his work duties.

See also:

- [Self-education expenses](#)

Self-education and study and training support loans

You can't claim the repayment of loans you receive to help pay for your self-education or study expenses. This includes:

- Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) loans
- VET Student Loans (VSL)
- the Student Financial Supplement Scheme (SFSS)
- Student Start-up Loan (SSL)
- the Trade Support Loan (TSL) program

You may be able to claim a deduction for course or tuition fees where the self-education expenses directly relate to your current employment as a bus driver.

See also:

- [Self-education expenses](#)

Seminars, conferences and training courses

You can claim for the cost of seminars, conferences and training courses that relate to your work as a bus driver.

Stationery

You can claim a deduction for the cost of logbooks, diaries and pens that you use for work. For example, to record the behaviour of students or damage to vehicles.

You can't claim a deduction if your employer reimburses you for these expenses.

Sunglasses and sunscreen

You can claim a deduction for the cost of sunscreen or sunglasses if you wear them to reduce the risk of illness or injury while driving a bus. This includes prescription sunglasses and anti-glare glasses.

If you also wear them for private purposes, you can only claim a deduction for the work-related portion.

For more bus driver expenses, see:

- common expenses [A–F](#)
- common expenses [G–O](#)
- common expenses [T–W](#)

Common expenses T–W

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Income-and-deductions/In-detail/Occupation-and-industry-specific-guides/Bus-drivers---income-and-work-related-deductions/?page=6>
- Last modified: 19 Feb 2020
- QC 61150

Details on claiming common bus driver expenses for:

- [Technical or professional publications](#)
- [Tools and equipment](#)
- [Travel expenses](#)
- [Union and professional association fees](#)

Technical or professional publications

You can claim a deduction for the cost of journals, periodicals and magazines that have content sufficiently connected to your employment as a bus driver.

Tools and equipment

You can claim a deduction for tools and equipment if you use them to perform your duties as a bus driver.

If a tool or item of equipment cost you \$300 or less, and you use it for work only, you can claim a deduction for the whole cost in the year you purchased it. Otherwise, you can claim a deduction for the cost over the life of the item (that is, decline in value).

If the item is part of a set that together cost more than \$300, you can claim a deduction for the set over the life of the asset.

If you also use the tool or item of equipment for private purposes, you can only claim

the work-related portion.

If you bought the tool or item of equipment part way through the year, you can only claim a deduction for the portion of the year that you owned it.

You can also claim a deduction for the cost of repairs to tools and equipment.

You can't claim a deduction for tools and equipment supplied by your employer or another person.

See also:

- [Depreciation and capital allowances tool](#)
- [Depreciation and capital expenses and allowances](#)

Travel expenses

You can claim a deduction for the costs you incur on accommodation, meals, fares and incidentals when you travel for work and sleep away from your home overnight in the course of performing your employment duties. For example, driving a two-day bus tour group from Newcastle to Canberra and must sleep away from your home overnight.

You can't claim a deduction for travel where you haven't incurred any expenses, because you:

- sleep in accommodation provided by your employer
- receive reimbursement for any costs by your employer or another person.

If you spent and are claiming a deduction up to the reasonable amount we have set for accommodation, meals on a meal by meal basis, and incidental expenses, you don't have to keep receipts.

Each year, we set a reasonable amount for accommodation, meals and incidental expenses. Generally, we require you to get and keep written evidence, such as receipts, when you claim a deduction for travel expenses. However, if you receive a travel allowance, are claiming a deduction and spent:

- up to the reasonable amount, you don't have to get and keep receipts
- more than the reasonable amount, you must get and keep receipts for all your 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 travel directly related to earning your employment income
- how you calculated your claim.

Example: travel away from home overnight

Jules is a bus driver. She lives in Sydney and usually transports primary school children to and from school each day. Once each year she drives the school children to Melbourne for a three-day snow trip with the school. Jules can claim a deduction for the cost of her accommodation, meals and incidental expenses if she incurs the expenses while travelling away from her home overnight in the course of performing her employment duties.

Jules can't claim a deduction if her employer pays for or reimburses her for these expenses.

See also:

- [TD 2019/11](#) – *Income tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime amounts for the 2019–20 income year?*
- [Other travel expenses](#)
- [Travel and meal expenses receipts](#)

Union and professional association fees

You can claim a deduction for union and professional association fees you pay. If your income statement or payment summary shows the amount you paid, you can use it to prove your claim.

See also:

- [Union fees, subscriptions to associations and bargaining agents fees](#)

For more bus driver expenses, see:

- common expenses [A–F](#)
- common expenses [G–O](#)
- common expenses [P–S](#)

Find out about bus driver:

- [Income – salary and allowances](#)
- [Record keeping](#)

Record keeping

- <https://www.ato.gov.au/Individuals/Income-and-deductions/In-detail/Occupation-and-industry-specific-guides/Bus-drivers---income-and-work-related-deductions/?page=7>
- Last modified: 19 Feb 2020
- QC 61150

You need to get and keep records of your expenses for which you want to claim

deductions. This is usually a receipt but can be another form of written evidence such as an invoice.

Records can be electronic such as a photo of your receipt or use an app. The [myDeductions](#) tool in the ATO app can help you to keep track of your work-related expenses. It's an easy way to capture information on the go and uploading your deductions to your tax return. If you use a tax agent they can access your uploaded data through their practice management software or you can email a copy to them from the app.

Records must show what you purchased, when, where, and how much you spent. They must be in English.

There are a few exceptions to this rule:

- [Small expense receipts](#)
- [Hard to get receipts](#)
- [Overtime meal expense receipts](#)
- [Travel and meal expense receipts](#)

Small expense receipts

You don't have to keep a receipt for work-related expenses that are \$10 or less. This is as long as your total claim for small expenses is \$200 or less.

If you don't get a receipt for small expenses you can still claim a deduction as long as you make a record of the small expenses. For example, you can make a record by writing in your diary.

Your record should show what you purchased, when, where, and how much you spent. It must be in English. You can use this to show how you calculated your deduction if we request this information from you.

Hard to get receipts

If you can't get a receipt for a work-related expense, you can still claim a deduction as long as you make a record. For example, you can make a record by writing in your diary.

Your record should show what you purchased, when, where, and how much you spent. It must be in English. You can use this to show how you calculated your deduction if we request this information from you.

Overtime meal expense receipts

You can claim a deduction for your overtime meal expenses including food and drink without keeping all your receipts if you:

- undertake overtime
- receive an overtime meal allowance paid under an industrial law or award
- spent money on meals including food and drink you consumed during your

overtime meal break

- are not claiming more than the reasonable amount we set – see, Bus drivers' [Overtime meal expenses](#).

Even if it is not a requirement to get and keep receipts for your overtime meal expenses, we may check your tax return and ask you to show how you calculated your claim. If we ask, you'll need to provide documents that show:

- when you did overtime
- you purchased a meal
- you correctly declared the overtime meal allowance as income in your tax return.

If you don't receive an overtime meal allowance paid under an industrial award, or are claiming a deduction for more than the reasonable amount, you need to get and keep your receipts for your overtime meal expenses.

You claim what you actually spent, not the reasonable amount.

See also:

- [Overtime meals](#)
- [TD 2019/11](#) – *Income tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime amounts for the 2019–20 income year?*

Travel and meal expense receipts

You can claim a deduction for your accommodation, meal including food and drink, and incidental expenses without keeping all your receipts if your travel is for less than six nights and you:

- receive a travel allowance expected to cover your accommodation, meal and incidental expenses when travelling
- travel for work and have to sleep away from home overnight
- spent money on accommodation, meals including food and drink and incidental expenses while travelling for work
- are not claiming more than the reasonable amount set – see, Bus drivers' [Travel expenses](#).

Even if it isn't a requirement to get and keep receipts for your accommodation, meals and incidental expenses when travelling for work, we may check your tax return and ask you to show how you calculated your claim. If we ask, you'll need to provide documentation showing:

- when you were travelling for work including start and finish times
- you spent money on accommodation, meals and incidental expenses and the cost of those expenses
- you correctly declared the travel allowance as income in your tax return.

If you travel the same route regularly, and have a regular pattern of expenditure, we'll accept written evidence for a three-month representative period.

You will need to maintain and keep all of your records for travel expenses if you're

in one of the following situations:

- You didn't get a travel allowance.
- You received a travel allowance and your claim exceeds the reasonable allowance amount.

The records you need to keep for fares, accommodation, food, drink and incidentals depend on the length of your trip and if it is domestic or international.

If you travel for six or more nights in a row, you may need to keep a travel diary where you record the dates, places, times and duration of your activities and travel.

You don't need to keep a travel diary if your travel away from home is less than six nights in a row.

If it is a requirement to maintain and keep records, the records you keep may include:

- income statement, payment summary or payslips to show the travel allowances you received
- a travel diary, or documents that shows the days you travelled for work, including
 - start and finish times
 - where you travelled
 - when you stopped for meals
- all receipts, invoices or documents for accommodation, meal and incidental expenses showing the
 - name of the supplier
 - amount you spent
 - nature of the good or service
 - date you spent the money
 - creation date of the receipt or other written evidence
- written evidence, such as a bank statement, to show that you were the one who spent the money.

You claim what you actually spent, not the reasonable amount.

Example: records for claiming the reasonable amount or below

Murray is a long distance bus driver who lives in Cairns. Murray's five day roster is as follows:

- Saturday – Cairns to Airlie Beach, overnight in Airlie Beach
- Sunday – Airlie Beach to Cairns
- Monday – Cairns to Airlie Beach, overnight in Airlie Beach
- Tuesday – Airlie Beach to Cairns
- Wednesday – Cairns to Townsville, Townsville to Cairns

On a Saturday and Monday he leaves Cairns at 8am and arrives in Airlie Beach around 4.30pm. On a Sunday and Tuesday he leaves Airlie Beach at 9am and arrives in Cairns around 5.30pm. On a Wednesday he leaves Cairns at 8am and returns at around 6.30pm.

When he travels to Airlie Beach Murray's employer provides accommodation for him to stay in. Murray also receives a travel allowance from his employer to cover his meal expenses. He receives \$18 for breakfast, \$30 for lunch and \$48 for dinner. His income statement at the end of the year shows the total amount of \$12,096.

Murray usually stops at the same places for his meals and short rest breaks when he travels to Airlie Beach. Murray keeps his receipts and bank statements for three months to show that he usually spends:

- \$25 for lunch on both days
- \$45 for dinner on day one
- \$20 for breakfast on day two

As Murray's expenses for each meal are below the reasonable amount he doesn't need to keep receipts. Murray uses the evidence he has kept to determine that he had 192 lunches, 96 dinners and 96 breakfasts while travelling for work during the year. He calculates his deduction for meal expenses as follows:

$$192 \text{ lunches} \times \$25 = \$4800$$

$$96 \text{ dinners} \times \$45 = \$4320$$

$$96 \text{ breakfasts} \times \$20 = \$1920$$

$$\text{Total } \$4800 + \$4320 + \$1920 = \$11040$$

Although Murray purchases meals when he travels to Townsville and back on a Wednesday, he can't claim a deduction for those meals because he isn't away from his home overnight for work. Those meal expenses are private.

At the end of the income year Murray includes the allowance of \$12,096 that he received when travelling as assessable income and claims a deduction of \$11,040.

Example: records for claiming over the reasonable amount

Beatrice is a coach driver in Adelaide for a charter company. She generally does local jobs but when a long distance driver is on leave, Beatrice's

employer asks her to drive a group of people from Adelaide to Melbourne. The group also requires transport while they are in Melbourne for three days.

Beatrice leaves the depot in Adelaide at 8am on Sunday, picks up the group and then heads to Melbourne. They arrive in Melbourne at 6pm on Sunday evening. Beatrice drives the group around Melbourne on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday, Beatrice and the group leave from their hotel at 8am and drive back to Adelaide. They arrive in Adelaide at around 6pm.

Beatrice's employer pays her an allowance to cover her accommodation and meal expenses.

The cost of Beatrice's hotel is \$155 per night. Beatrice ate breakfast in the hotel every morning which cost her \$30 per day and for lunch and dinner she generally spent \$20 and \$25 respectively.

The amount spent by Beatrice on accommodation, lunch and dinner is below the reasonable amount so she doesn't need to keep receipts for those expenses. However, she must be able to show how she calculated her claim. The amount spent by Beatrice on breakfast is more than the reasonable amount. If Beatrice wishes to claim a deduction for the full amount she spent on breakfast, she must keep written evidence to substantiate the cost of that meal for each of the four days.

See also:

- [Keeping travel expense records](#)
- [Exceptions for keeping travel expense records](#)
- [TD 2019/11](#) – *Income tax: what are the reasonable travel and overtime amounts for the 2019–20 income year?*
- General information on [Income and deductions](#)

Find out about bus drivers':

- [Income – salary and allowances](#)
- [Deductions](#)

Our commitment to you

We are committed to providing you with accurate, consistent and clear information to help you understand your rights and entitlements and meet your obligations.

If you follow our information and it turns out to be incorrect, or it is misleading and you make a mistake as a result, we will take that into account when determining what action, if any, we should take.

Some of the information on this website applies to a specific financial year. This is clearly marked. Make sure you have the information for the right year before making decisions based on that information.

If you feel that our information does not fully cover your circumstances, or you are unsure how it applies to you, contact us or seek professional advice.

Copyright notice

© Australian Taxation Office for the Commonwealth of Australia

You are free to copy, adapt, modify, transmit and distribute this material as you wish (but not in any way that suggests the ATO or the Commonwealth endorses you or any of your services or products).