

Tax Tips for Teachers

1. Educator Expense Deduction

Teachers are allowed to deduct up to \$250 worth of unreimbursed classroom expenses, such as lesson planning materials and classroom supplies, paid for out of pocket. Other examples include: stationary, classroom prizes, a briefcase, stopwatches or classroom decorations.

This is an above-the-line deduction and can be taken regardless of whether or not you itemize your other deductions. If your spouse is also a teacher, you can potentially deduct up to \$500; the \$250 maximum applies per person.

For example, if you have \$400 in expenses and your spouse has \$100, you can deduct \$250 and your spouse can deduct \$100, for a total of \$350, not \$500.

To qualify as a teacher for the Educators' Expense Deductions, an individual must have worked 900 hours in a school that provides elementary or secondary education, whether public or private, as these terms are defined by state law. These hours must have been worked as a teacher, instructor, counselor, principal or aide.

2. Unreimbursed Employee Deductions

If you itemize your deductions, rather than taking the standard deduction, you can deduct unreimbursed employee expenses as miscellaneous deductions.

Books and Newspapers

By saving the receipts, teachers can claim the cost of books they purchase for either their personal professional library or their classroom library. They can also claim the cost of subscriptions to magazines and newspapers that they can prove they use in the classroom or that are part of their professional development.

Mileage

Track, record and deduct mileage. If your teaching position requires you to travel from school to school (or to students' homes), you can deduct the mileage. If you use your own car for school purposes, like driving to field trips or competitions, the mileage may be deductible.



Software and Computer Equipment

Teachers can claim the cost of classroom software and computer equipment that they use for school planning purposes. By keeping a diary of the amount of time spent in a home office, teachers can claim Internet connection fees used in sending work-related emails or researching online.

Professional Development

The cost of attending professional development events and meetings, and cost associated with the travel such as parking, tolls, taxis, and mileage, as well as meals and lodging, can be applied as tax deductions for teachers. Keep a mileage log of the amount of miles put on a personal vehicle traveling to work and to and from work-related obligations such as meetings or events.

Work Clothing

You may also be able to deduct clothing or safety gear that is required that is required for your job and that you can't wear anywhere else. The cost of cleaning the item can be applied as a tax deduction. Any protective clothing that is required by the school such as laboratory coats, goggles, and steel-toed boots can be claimed.

3. Student Loan Interest

Many teachers have student loans from obtaining their college degree and certain loans are a qualified education expense. A teacher may be able to deduct the interest they paid on certain school loans or up to \$4,000 of higher education expenses accumulated during the year. This is an above-the-line deduction and can be taken regardless of whether or not you itemize your other deductions.

4. Education Credits and Deductions

Teachers and professors who take additional courses to renew their teaching licenses or improve their skills can take either the Lifetime Learning Credit or the tuition and fees deduction. The Lifetime Learning Credit allows you to take a credit equal to 20 percent of the money you spent on college classes. The tuition and fees deduction allows you to deduct up to \$4,000 from your taxable income for money spent on college coursework. Also, teachers can deduct student loan interest paid on student loans during the year.

