

2026 Tax Deduction Checklist

For self-employed realtors, contractors, and freelancers filing Schedule C

Prepared by ProvExpense | provexpense.com | Updated for Tax Year 2026

Vehicle & Mileage

- IRS standard mileage rate: \$0.70/mile for business driving
- Log every trip: date, destination, business purpose, miles
- Keep a contemporaneous mileage log (required by IRS)
- Choose standard mileage OR actual expenses in year 1 per vehicle
- Medical/moving (active military): \$0.21/mile | Charitable: \$0.14/mile

Home Office

- Simplified method: \$5/sq ft, up to 300 sq ft (max \$1,500)
- Regular method: business % of actual home expenses (Form 8829)
- Space must be used regularly and exclusively for business
- If home = principal place of business, all business drives are deductible

Marketing & Advertising

- MLS fees, Zillow/Realtor.com listings, Angi/HomeAdvisor
- Business cards, yard signs, brochures, open house materials
- Social media advertising (Facebook, Instagram, Google Ads)
- Photography, staging, website hosting, CRM subscriptions

Licensing & Professional Fees

- TREC/state license renewal fees
- NAR, TAR, and local board dues
- MLS access fees, contractor license renewals (TDLR)
- Accountant, attorney, and tax preparer fees

Insurance

- E&O insurance (realtors)
- General liability and workers comp (contractors)
- Commercial auto insurance (business-use portion)
- Health insurance premiums (100% deductible — Schedule 1, not C)

Education & Training

- Continuing education courses and exam fees
- Designation courses (ABR, GRI, SRES, etc.)
- Conference and seminar registration fees
- Required textbooks and study materials

Phone, Internet & Office

- Phone bill: deduct business-use percentage (typically 70-80%)
- Internet service: deduct business-use percentage
- Office supplies, printer ink, postage, paper
- Software (DocuSign, zipForm, QuickBooks, etc.)
- Laptop/tablet (business-use portion, or full Section 179)

Materials & Equipment (Contractors)

- Lumber, pipe, wire, concrete, fasteners, consumables
- Hand tools, power tools, testing equipment
- Items under \$2,500: deduct in full via de minimis safe harbor
- Items over \$2,500: Section 179 or depreciate

Meals & Entertainment

- Business meals: 50% deductible — note who attended + topic
- Entertainment expenses: generally NOT deductible (post-2017)
- Keep separate from other expenses for correct 50% calculation

Subcontractor Payments

- Payments to subs are 100% deductible
- Collect W-9 BEFORE first payment to each sub
- Issue 1099-NEC if you pay \$600+ to any sub in a calendar year
- 1099-NEC deadline: January 31 of the following year

Self-Employment Tax

- SE tax rate: 15.3% on net self-employment income
- Deduct 50% of SE tax paid from gross income (Form 1040)
- Pay quarterly estimates: Apr 15, Jun 15, Sep 15, Jan 15
- Set aside 25-30% of each payment for taxes

Other Deductions

- QBI deduction: up to 20% of qualified business income
- Business loan or credit card interest
- Bank fees on business accounts
- Retirement contributions (SEP IRA up to 25% of net SE income)

Start tracking your deductions automatically

ProvExpense logs mileage, receipts, income, and W-9s in one app. Free to start.

provexpense.com/app

Keep all records for at least 3 years (6 years recommended). This checklist is for informational purposes only and is not tax advice. Consult a licensed CPA or tax preparer for your specific situation.