MFA · MERCHANT FINANCIAL ADVISORY · 2026 TAX YEAR

59 small-business write-offs: your checklist

Tick each expense you had this year. "Partly" means only the business share counts, or a limit applies. The last column is the proof to keep. Full answers, limits and IRS sources for every line: **mfa-advisory.com/tools/is-it-deductible**

Yes counts as a business expense **Partly** business share or a limit **Usually not** narrow exceptions only

Home and workspace			
☐	**Home office**	Partly	Measurements of your office and your whole home
☐	**Office rent**	Yes	The signed lease
☐	**Coworking space or shared desk**	Yes	Your membership agreement
☐	**Utilities (electric, gas, water)**	Partly	Utility bills and proof you paid
☐	**Office supplies and postage**	Yes	Receipts showing what you bought and when
☐	**Work clothes and uniforms**	Usually not	Receipts
Car and travel			
☐	**Car mileage (standard rate)**	Partly	A mileage log kept as you go: date, where, why and how many miles
☐	**Car expenses (actual costs)**	Partly	Every car receipt: gas, repairs, insurance
☐	**Parking and tolls**	Yes	Receipts or toll statements
☐	**Business travel (flights, hotels)**	Yes	Hotel receipts and any receipt of $75 or more
☐	**Meals while traveling**	Partly	Meal receipts, or with the daily allowance, the dates, place and reason for the trip
Food and entertaining			
☐	**Business meals**	Partly	The receipt (a must for $75 or more)
☐	**Entertainment (tickets, golf, shows)**	Usually not	Receipts for any food bought separately
☐	**Staff parties and team events**	Yes	Invoices and receipts
☐	**Snacks and meals for employees at work**	Usually not	Invoices, plus what the food was for, so the right rule is used
Phone, internet and software			
☐	**Cell phone and phone service**	Partly	Your phone bills
☐	**Internet service**	Partly	Monthly bills
☐	**Software and subscriptions**	Yes	Invoices or receipts
☐	**Laptop or computer**	Yes	The receipt
Equipment and bigger buys			
☐	**Equipment and machinery (Section 179)**	Yes	Invoices
☐	**Bonus depreciation**	Yes	The purchase contract showing the date you bought it
☐	**Small equipment purchases ($2,500 or less)**	Yes	Invoices
☐	**Tools and small equipment**	Yes	Receipts or invoices
☐	**Repairs vs. improvements**	Yes	Contractor invoices describing the work
Paying people			
☐	**Contractor and freelancer payments**	Yes	A W-9 from each contractor
☐	**Employee wages**	Yes	Payroll records and W-2s
☐	**Employer payroll taxes**	Yes	Payroll tax forms (941 and 940) and state filings
☐	**Employee benefit programs**	Yes	Plan documents
☐	**Employee awards and holiday gifts**	Yes	What you gave, to whom and what it cost

Insurance and health			
☐	**Business insurance**	Yes	The policy's declarations page
☐	**Health insurance (self-employed)**	Yes	Premium statements and proof you paid
☐	**Life insurance premiums**	Usually not	The policy, showing who owns it and who gets paid
Saving for retirement			
☐	**SEP-IRA contributions**	Yes	Plan paperwork (for example, Form 5305-SEP)
☐	**Solo 401(k) contributions**	Yes	Plan paperwork
☐	**Retirement contributions for employees**	Yes	Plan documents
Accountants, lawyers and dues			
☐	**Legal and accounting fees**	Yes	Engagement letters
☐	**Tax preparation fees**	Partly	The preparer's invoice showing the business part
☐	**Professional and trade association dues**	Yes	Membership invoices
Marketing and gifts			
☐	**Advertising and marketing**	Yes	Invoices and ad platform receipts
☐	**Gifts to clients**	Partly	Receipts
☐	**Branded promotional items**	Yes	Invoices showing the cost per item and how many
Courses and learning			
☐	**Courses, training and conferences**	Yes	Receipts
Bank fees, loans and unpaid bills			
☐	**Bank and card processing fees**	Yes	Bank and processor statements (they show the fees)
☐	**Interest on business loans and credit cards**	Partly	Loan agreements and statements
☐	**Unpaid invoices (bad debts)**	Usually not	The invoice and proof it was counted as income
Starting a business			
☐	**Startup costs**	Partly	Receipts dated before you opened
☐	**Business formation costs**	Partly	State filing receipts
Products and shipping			
☐	**Inventory and cost of goods sold**	Yes	Purchase invoices
☐	**Shipping and postage**	Yes	Carrier receipts or account statements
Taxes and licenses			
☐	**Self-employment tax**	Partly	Schedule SE and your Schedule C (tax software or your preparer handles this)
☐	**Business taxes**	Partly	Tax bills and proof you paid
☐	**Business licenses and permits**	Yes	Receipts and renewal notices

Things that usually don't count

☐	**Commuting**	Usually not	If you claim trips, a mileage log showing they weren't commutes
☐	**Fines and penalties**	Usually not	Nothing for a deduction, unless a court order or settlement names part of it as restitution (see the fine print)
☐	**Political contributions and lobbying**	Usually not	Nothing to keep for a deduction
☐	**Club memberships**	Usually not	Nothing to keep for a deduction
☐	**Gym and fitness memberships**	Usually not	Nothing to keep for a deduction
☐	**Personal expenses**	Usually not	Keep business and personal spending in separate accounts
☐	**Charitable donations by your business**	Usually not	A written receipt from the charity

Want this done for you? We set up your books so write-offs are tracked all year, and go through your expenses with you before you file. Book a 30-minute consultation at **mfa-advisory.com/book** or email **info@mfa-advisory.com**.

General information for the 2026 tax year, not tax, legal or accounting advice. Rules depend on your facts. Data checked 2026-10-23. © Merchant Financial Advisory LLC.