



2015

# Standard vs. Itemized Deduction

# Behling

Small Business Services

P.O. Box 51058  
Idaho Falls, ID 83405-1058  
(208) 557-3013  
[www.behlingbiz.com](http://www.behlingbiz.com)

## Standard Deduction

The standard deduction is a dollar amount that reduces the amount of income on which the taxpayer is taxed. It is a benefit that eliminates the need for many taxpayers to itemize actual deductions, such as medical expenses, charitable contributions, and taxes, on Schedule A (Form 1040). The standard deduction is higher for taxpayers who:

- Are 65 or older, or
- Are blind.

### 2014 Standard Deduction

The basic standard deduction for 2014 is:

Single or MFS .....	\$6,200
MFJ or QW .....	\$12,400
HOH .....	\$9,100

**Age 65 and/or blind.** The additional amounts for age 65 or older and/or blind, per person, per event in 2014 are:

MFJ, QW, or MFS .....	\$1,200
Single or HOH .....	\$1,550

**Dependent.** The standard deduction in 2014 for an individual who may be claimed as a dependent by another taxpayer cannot exceed the greater of \$1,000, or earned income plus \$350.

## Itemized Deduction

Taxpayers must decide whether to itemize deductions or to use the standard deduction. Generally, taxpayers should itemize deductions if the allowable itemized deductions are greater than the standard deduction. Some taxpayers must itemize deductions because they cannot use the standard deduction.

The standard deduction cannot be used if the taxpayer is:

- Married filing as Married Filing Separately, and the spouse itemizes deductions.

- Filing a tax return for a period of less than 12 months because of a change in annual accounting method.
- A nonresident alien or a dual-status alien during the year.

In addition, an estate or trust, common trust fund, or partnership cannot use the standard deduction.

A taxpayer may benefit from itemizing deductions on Form 1040, Schedule A, Itemized Deductions, if he or she:

- Cannot use the standard deduction.
- Had large uninsured medical and dental expenses.
- Paid interest or taxes on a home.
- Had large unreimbursed employee business expenses.
- Had large uninsured casualty or theft losses, or
- Made large charitable contributions.

## Itemized Deductions Limitations

Taxpayers may be subject to limitations on some itemized deductions.

**Adjusted gross income (AGI) limit for medical expenses.** Qualified medical expenses are deductible as itemized deductions to the extent they exceed the annual AGI limit.

Tax Year	Annual AGI Limit
2013–2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 7.5% for taxpayers age 65 or over as of December 31, 2013.</li> <li>• 10% of AGI for all others, unless filing jointly with a spouse who is age 65 or over as of December 31, 2013.</li> </ul>
2017 and after	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10% of AGI for all taxpayers.</li> </ul>

**Miscellaneous itemized deductions subject to the 2% AGI limitation.** Most miscellaneous itemized deductions are deductible to the extent they exceed 2% of AGI.



**Example:** Lucinda has AGI of \$100,000 and unreimbursed employee expenses of \$5,000. She can deduct \$3,000 of those expenses as a miscellaneous itemized deduction.

Unreimbursed expenses.....	\$5,000
Less: 2% of AGI (\$100,000 × 2%).....	(\$2,000)
Allowable deduction.....	\$3,000

**Phaseout.** In addition to these limits, total itemized deductions may be phased out (reduced) if adjusted gross income exceeds the following threshold amounts for the taxpayers filing status:

#### 2014 Itemized Deduction Phaseout

Itemized deductions begin to phase out when modified AGI reaches:	
MFJ, QW.....	\$305,050
HOH.....	\$279,650
Single.....	\$254,200
MFS.....	\$152,525

**Which itemized deductions are limited?** The following deductions are subject to the overall limit on itemized deductions.

- Taxes paid.
- Interest paid.
- Gifts to charity.
- Job expenses and certain miscellaneous deductions.
- Other miscellaneous deductions, excluding gambling and casualty or theft losses.

**Which itemized deductions are not limited?** The following deductions are not subject to the overall limit on itemized deductions. However, they are still subject to other applicable limits.

- Medical and dental expenses.
- Investment interest expense.
- Casualty and theft losses of personal use property.
- Casualty and theft losses of income-producing property.
- Gambling losses.

**Figure the limit.** If itemized deductions are subject to the limit, the total of all itemized deductions is reduced by the smaller of:

- 80% of itemized deductions that are affected by the limit, or
- 3% of the amount by which AGI exceeds phaseout limits.

#### Itemized Deduction or Standard Deduction?

Some taxpayers may decide to take the standard deduction even if the itemized deduction is higher. Conversely, a taxpayer may choose to take the itemized deduction in a lesser amount than the standard deduction.

**Example #1:** David, 45, is single, has AGI of \$50,000, and has the following itemized deductions:

Medical expenses.....	\$6,000
Less: 10% of AGI threshold.....	(\$5,000)
Deductible medical expenses.....	\$1,000
State income tax.....	\$1,500
Real Estate tax.....	\$2,000
Mortgage interest.....	\$1,500
Noncash charitable deductions.....	\$300
Total Itemized Deductions.....	\$6,300

Even though his itemized deductions are greater than the standard deduction by \$100 (\$6,300 minus \$6,200), David chooses to take the standard deduction because he was not able to locate receipts to substantiate all his charitable contributions.

**Example #2:** Assume the same facts as Example #1, however David has no charitable deductions. His total itemized deductions are now \$200 less than the standard deduction (\$6,300 minus \$300 charitable deduction equals \$6,000. David's standard deduction is \$6,200). David chooses to file with the lower itemized deduction because his itemized deductions are higher than his standard deduction for state income tax purposes, yielding a larger net tax refund.

## Contact Us

There are many events that occur during the year that can affect your tax situation. Preparation of your tax return involves summarizing transactions and events that occurred during the prior year. In most situations, treatment is firmly established at the time the transaction occurs. However, negative tax effects can be avoided by proper planning. Please contact us in advance if you have questions about the tax effects of a transaction or event, including the following:

- Pension or IRA distributions.
- Significant change in income or deductions.
- Job change.
- Marriage.
- Attainment of age 59½ or 70½.
- Sale or purchase of a business.
- Sale or purchase of a residence or other real estate.
- Retirement.
- Notice from IRS or other revenue department.
- Divorce or separation.
- Self-employment.
- Charitable contributions of property in excess of \$5,000.

This brochure contains general information for taxpayers and should not be relied upon as the only source of authority. Taxpayers should seek professional tax advice for more information.

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