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**TAXES**

# Will the Increase in the Teacher Tax Deduction Really Help Educators Much?

Tax pros and educators agree: Even with this year's increase from \$250 to \$300, the deduction falls short.

Jan. 23, 2023



It's tax season. And while this declaration usually comes with a collective groan, K-12 educators have a little something to celebrate on the tax front this year.

For the first time since the IRS enacted the educator expense deduction in 2002, the agency raised it from \$250 to \$300 for the current tax-filing season. But the deduction remains far less than what many teachers spend on out-of-pocket classroom and related expenses annually.

Classroom teachers use around \$550 of their own money each year—and nearly one in five spends upwards of \$1,000—to provide their students with basic supplies, according to data from [savings.com](https://www.savings.com). Financial experts and educators agree: Even with this year's increase, the deduction falls short.

“The amount is just so small, it's a joke,” said Pauline Stavrou, a tax attorney for Frost Tax Law in Baltimore.

Austin Ambrose hadn't heard about the increased deduction until he was asked for his thoughts on the bump. “It just goes to show you it's not being discussed,” said Ambrose, an elementary education teacher-turned-dean of students at Forge International School, a public charter school in Middleton, Idaho.

The increase wasn't the only aspect of the deduction that Ambrose, who is also an advocacy fellow for the Association of American Educators, was unaware of. “I did not know about the [original] teacher deduction until a peer mentioned it,” he said.

“It would be nice if school districts provided financial training and information for teachers,” Ambrose said. Just 22 years old when he entered the profession in 2017, Ambrose recalls having very little understanding of how personal taxes work when he first began his career.

Ambrose said that, as a new classroom teacher just out of college, he would search during tax season for receipts as proof of the money he had spent on his classroom. “As time went on, I knew I was always exceeding the deduction limit,” said Ambrose, who estimates that, as a classroom teacher until 2021, he sometimes spent more than \$500 annually on classroom expenses.

Reflecting on the new tax deduction, Ambrose said: “When it comes to the expense teachers put into their classrooms, it's a small drop in the bucket.”

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