TAXFILINGS
CANADA

FREE GUIDE, PLAIN LANGUAGE

Tax Deductions & Credits Most Canadians Miss

The tax system will not chase you to give you money back. You have to ask. This little book shows you what to ask for.

Here is the uncomfortable truth: the CRA checks carefully that you reported all your income. It does not check whether you claimed everything you were allowed to. Missed claims mostly stay missed — and many can only be fixed going back ten years. After that, the money is simply gone.

The five most-missed claims — have you checked these?

1	**Medical expenses.** Not just the dentist. Travel health insurance, glasses, therapy, many prescriptions, even the health part of workplace benefit premiums you pay yourself. Families who never add it up often qualify without knowing.
2	**The disability tax credit.** People hear "disability" and assume it is not for them. It also covers long-lasting conditions that make daily life harder — and approval can be claimed back for past years.
3	**Unused credits sitting with a family member.** Some credits can move between spouses, or from a student to a parent. If one of you cannot use a credit, the family may still keep it — but only if someone claims the transfer.
4	**Home office costs.** If you regularly work from home — employed with the right form from your employer, or self-employed — a share of your home costs may count.
5	**Carried-forward amounts from old returns.** Tuition you never used. Donations under the better-together rule. Capital losses from years ago that can cancel out this year's gains. Your old returns are a drawer of coupons that never expire — if you know they are there.

This guide explains how claims work in plain language, on purpose without dollar amounts — the exact figures change over time. Check current numbers at canada.ca, use the free calculators at taxfilings.ca/tools, or ask a tax professional.

01 Two words that sound the same but pay differently

A deduction shrinks your income

Before the tax is worked out. Think of it as the till showing a smaller bill. How much it saves depends on your tax rate — the more you earn, the more each deduction is worth. Examples: RRSP contributions, childcare, moving costs.

A credit shrinks your tax

After the tax is worked out. Most credits save everyone roughly the same amount, whatever they earn. Examples: the medical expense credit, the disability tax credit, tuition, donations.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO YOU

Deductions are usually worth more to the higher earner in a household, and some claims can be made by either spouse. Putting the right claim on the right return — perfectly legal, fully intended by the rules — is often worth real money on its own.

02 Find yourself on this list

- [ ] You work a job: union or professional dues, the employee home-office claim (with your employer's form), some moving costs if you relocated for work
- [ ] You are a parent: childcare so you could work or study, kids' disability-related costs, adoption costs
- [ ] You are a student (or were): tuition credits — including old unused ones, moving for school or a summer job, interest on government student loans
- [ ] You rent or own a home: home-office share if you work from home, energy-retrofit programs where offered, first-home buyer claims when you buy
- [ ] You have health costs: the family medical basket (page 3), premiums you pay yourself, travel for treatment when it is far away
- [ ] You support family: caregiver credits for supporting a relative with a health condition, credits transferred from a spouse or child who cannot use them
- [ ] You give to charity: donations pooled on one return and saved up across years usually pay a better rate
- [ ] You invest or run a side hustle: old capital losses against today's gains, business costs from the first dollar, fees for managing taxable investments
- [ ] You are retired or nearly: pension income splitting with a spouse, the age amount, medical and caregiver claims that often arrive together
- [ ] You are new to Canada: you can usually still claim credits for the part-year, and treaty rules may protect income — worth a one-time professional check

THE CLASSIC MISTAKE

Deciding something is "too small to bother with." Claims stack: a few small ones every year, plus the compounding of an RRSP refund reinvested, is how ordinary filers quietly leave four figures behind over a decade.

03 The most-missed claims, explained simply

Medical expenses — think "family basket," not "receipt"

You can pool the whole family's costs, pick any 12-month window ending in the tax year, and claim them on whichever spouse's return pays better (usually the lower income). Glasses, dental work, physio, therapy, prescriptions, travel insurance, the medical share of benefit premiums — the list is long. Keep one envelope or folder per year and add it up once.

The disability tax credit — broader than its name

It is about how much a condition slows or restricts everyday living — walking, dressing, focus, managing daily life — not about a word on a diagnosis. A doctor certifies a form once; approval can open past years and related benefits. If a "no" feels wrong, it can be appealed.

Donations — better together

The credit rate steps up above a small threshold each year. Couples pooling donations on one return, or saving them up (you may carry them forward up to five years) and claiming in one go, get more back for the same generosity.

Old tuition — the forgotten coupon

Students rarely earn enough to use their tuition credits in the year they study. The unused part carries forward for life, or part can transfer to a parent in the year. Graduates in their first good job often have thousands sitting unclaimed from their student years.

Capital losses — bad years paying for good ones

A loss on investments is painful once — then becomes useful forever. Losses carry back three years and forward indefinitely against gains. The CRA even keeps a running total on your notice of assessment; most people never look.

Ten years to say "I forgot"

Missed a claim? You can ask the CRA to adjust roughly the last ten years of returns. It is a routine request, not a confession. This is where the biggest single recoveries come from.

04 Myth versus fact

MYTH	FACT
"Claiming things makes the CRA come after you."	Claiming what you are entitled to, with receipts, is exactly how the system is meant to work. What attracts attention is claims with no records behind them.
"A bigger refund means a better tax year."	A refund is your own money coming back without interest. The win is paying the right amount all along — claims are how you get there.
"My tax software catches all of this for me."	Software only works with what you type in. It cannot see the receipts in your drawer, your spouse's unused credits, or your old returns.

05 The two-minute self-check

Count your YES answers.

1. I added up my family's medical costs at least once in the last three years.	YES / NO
2. I know whether anyone in my family could qualify for the disability tax credit.	YES / NO
3. Our household decides on purpose whose return each claim goes on.	YES / NO
4. I know if I have unused tuition, donations or losses from past years.	YES / NO
5. I keep receipts somewhere I could actually find them.	YES / NO
6. If I work from home, I know whether I can claim it — and have the form if employed.	YES / NO
7. I have looked at my notice of assessment beyond the refund line.	YES / NO
8. I know I can fix roughly ten years of missed claims — and would recognize one.	YES / NO

7–8 · Green
You are ahead of almost everyone. Keep the receipts flowing.

4–6 · Yellow
Real money is likely sitting in the gaps. Start with medical and carry-forwards.

0–3 · Red
You are almost certainly leaving money behind — possibly years of it. Worth one professional hour.

06 Your one-week plan

Day 1
Start one folder (paper or phone photos) for this year's receipts. That is the whole habit.

Day 2–3
Pull your last notice of assessment. Look for carried-forward tuition, losses and RRSP room.

Day 4–5
Add up the family's medical costs and donations for the past year. Just totals.

Day 6–7
Walk page 2's list with your spouse or a friend. Mark every line that might be you.

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Udit Gupta has over 15 years of experience helping corporations and business owners with corporate structuring, corporate tax filing, bookkeeping, payroll, GST/HST, cross-border tax and CRA representation. Big 4 trained at Ernst & Young and Deloitte, and qualified as a chartered accountant in India and Malaysia, he founded Tax Filings Canada in 2019 to serve entrepreneurs, startups and non-resident business owners across Canada. View Full Member Bio — including step-by-step instructions to verify each membership on the issuing body's public register.

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Editorial policy. Every guide is researched against primary sources — the Income Tax Act, CRA publications and CPA Canada materials — fact-checked by Udit Gupta, and updated when the rules change.

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