

Subject 403

Contributions

Charitable contributions may be claimed only as an itemized deduction. Deductible charitable contributions are those made to qualified organizations including federal, state, and local governments and organizations operated for charitable, religious, educational, scientific or literary purposes, or organizations that work to prevent cruelty to children or animals, or amounts included in an income tax check-off program from the previous tax year. Contact the organization to check whether it has received a qualified tax-exempt status from the IRS, and whether donations to it are deductible.

You may not deduct contributions made to individuals. If you made payments to qualified charitable organizations for a banquet, a ticket for theatrical performance, or a sporting event, you may deduct only the amount that was more than the fair market value of the benefit received.

You may not deduct the cost of lottery tickets, raffle tickets, or games of chance that a qualified organization may sponsor.

You may deduct your cash contributions as well as the fair market value of any property you donated to qualified organizations. The fair market value is what the item would have sold for at a garage sale, a flea market, a second-hand store, or from newspaper classified ads. An appraisal must have been obtained if you made contributions of non-cash property worth more than \$5,000, and an appraisal summary, Federal Form 8283, Non-Cash Charitable Contributions, must be attached to your return. Federal Form 8283 must also be used for non-cash contributions of more than \$500, although an appraisal will not be required.

You may also deduct the expenses you incurred while donating your services to a qualified organization. These expenses, which may include transportation, meals, and lodging while away from home, may only be deducted if there was no significant element of personal pleasure, recreation, or vacation in the travel.

Your meal deduction is limited to 50% of the cost of meals while away from your home donating your services. Actual cost of gas and oil can be deducted, or you can choose to take a per-mile deduction for using your own vehicle. The current mileage for charitable deductions is in the tax booklet, or you may access the information using our website.