

## 10 Tips to Ease Tax Time for Military

July 20, 2011

Military personnel have some unique duties, expenses and transitions. Some special tax benefits may apply when moving to a new base, traveling to a duty station, returning from active duty and more. These tips may put military members a bit “at ease” when it comes to their taxes.

1. **Moving Expenses** If you are a member of the Armed Forces on active duty and you move because of a permanent change of station, you can deduct the reasonable unreimbursed expenses of moving you and members of your household.
2. **Combat Pay** If you serve in a combat zone as an enlisted person or as a warrant officer for any part of a month, all your military pay received for military service that month is not taxable. For officers, the monthly exclusion is capped at the highest enlisted pay, plus any hostile fire or imminent danger pay received.
3. **Extension of Deadlines** The time for taking care of certain tax matters can be postponed. The deadline for filing tax returns, paying taxes, filing claims for refund, and taking other actions with the IRS is automatically extended for qualifying members of the military.
4. **Uniform Cost and Upkeep** If military regulations prohibit you from wearing certain uniforms when off duty, you can deduct the cost and upkeep of those uniforms, but you must reduce your expenses by any allowance or reimbursement you receive.
5. **Joint Returns** Generally, joint returns must be signed by both spouses. However, when one spouse may not be available due to military duty, a power of attorney may be used to file a joint return.
6. **Travel to Reserve Duty** If you are a member of the US Armed Forces Reserves, you can deduct unreimbursed travel expenses for traveling more than 100 miles away from home to perform your reserve duties.
7. **ROTC Students** Subsistence allowances paid to ROTC students participating in advanced training are not taxable. However, active duty pay – such as pay received during summer advanced camp – is taxable.
8. **Transitioning Back to Civilian Life** You may be able to deduct some costs you incur while looking for a new job. Expenses may include travel, resume preparation fees, and outplacement agency fees. Moving expenses may be deductible if your move is closely related to the start of work at a new job location, and you meet certain tests.
9. **Tax Help** Most military installations offer free tax filing and preparation assistance during the filing season.

Tax Information IRS Publication 3, Armed Forces' Tax Guide, summarizes many important military-related tax topics. Publication 3 can be downloaded from [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) or may be ordered by calling 1-800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).