

Capital allowances and balancing charges in a rental business

This Help Sheet gives you information to help you fill in the *UK property* pages in your Tax Return. The box numbers mentioned below refer to those pages.

In working out your rental business profits you must not deduct the cost of buying, altering or improving fixed assets, or depreciation or any losses that arise when you sell them. Instead, you may be able to claim tax allowances called capital allowances. These are deducted in working out your profits in box 30. An adjustment, known as a balancing charge, may arise when you sell, give away or stop using an item in your business. Balancing charges are added to your profits in box 29. These notes explain how you can work out these capital allowances and balancing charges.

What can capital allowances be claimed on?

You can claim capital allowances for the cost of plant and machinery such as vehicles, tools, ladders, computers and business furniture that belongs to you (see 'Plant and machinery' on page 2), and agricultural buildings, industrial buildings and certain other buildings.

If you purchased the assets or equipment using an alternative finance arrangement the capital allowances cost is the original cost of the asset. The original cost does not include any alternative finance payments which are the charges made by your finance provider over and above the original cost of the asset or equipment.

First year allowances are available for most expenditure on plant and machinery apart from expenditure on motor cars (with the following exception) or assets which you lease out. First year allowance is available for cars with low CO₂ emissions, equipment for refuelling vehicles with natural gas or hydrogen fuel, or designated energy-saving or water efficient equipment acquired for use in your business or for leasing out.

The percentage to be used depends on when the item was bought, and where it is to be used, as shown in the table on page 2.

Rate of first year allowance

Cars with low CO₂ emissions 100%

Designated energy-saving or water efficient equipment, equipment for refuelling vehicles with natural gas or hydrogen fuel, for use in your business other than where that business is leasing, letting or hire* 100%

Other items

Small business 50%

Medium-sized businesses 40%

If the asset is used only partly for business the first year allowance is reduced accordingly. For this purpose a business is 'small' or 'medium-sized' if it satisfies at least two of the following conditions for the period of account, or preceding period of account:

	small business	medium-sized business
Annual turnover: not more than	£5.6m	£22.8m
Assets: not more than	£2.8m	£11.4m
Employees: not more than	50	250

* Leasing of designated energy-saving or water efficient equipment may qualify where it forms part of the energy or water supply for a building and is leased with the building to which it relates. Discuss this with your tax adviser if you think allowances may be due.

Where a first year allowance is claimed the balance of the expenditure after deducting the first year allowance is added to the pool for the following year.

If you buy on hire purchase or under an alternative finance arrangement, you can claim capital allowances on the original cost of the item. The interest or alternative finance payments, or other charges, count as business expenses and should be entered in box 24.

You cannot claim for anything bought solely for private use, or for plant and machinery like furniture let for use in a dwelling house.

How to make a claim

Enter in boxes 30 and 29 the amounts you wish to claim or return. These figures should be the amount worked out from the rules set out in these notes unless you choose to claim a lower amount. If you are in doubt, ask us or your tax adviser for help.

Plant and machinery

You can claim plant and machinery allowances for the cost of cars, machines, scaffolding, ladders, tools, equipment, furniture, garden equipment and similar items that you use in your business. The allowances are known as 'writing down allowances'. These are worked out at 25% of the cost of the item or 'pool' of items for each year (unless you are claiming first year allowance - see page 1). Example 1 shows how writing down allowance and first year allowances work.

Example 1

You complete your Tax Return for the year to 5 April 2008. You spend £200 on ladders in May 2007, £600 on lawnmowers in June 2007 and £1,200 on a fax machine in August 2007. Your capital allowance computation for 2007-08 is:

Cost of fax machine	£1,200
First year allowance @ 50%	£600
Value carried forward	£600
Cost of ladders and lawnmowers	£800
(You decide not to claim first year allowance)	
Writing down allowance @ 25%	£200
Value carried forward	£600

The pool to carry forward to 2008-09 is £1,200 (£600 + £600).

The writing down allowance you can claim for 2008-09 is:

Value of pool brought forward	£1,200
Writing down allowance @ 25%	£300
Value of pool carried forward	£900

The 25% rate applies if your business operates throughout the year, even if you only bought the item part way through the year.

If your business starts during the year, the 25% is reduced in proportion. So if you start six months into the tax year, you can only claim 12.5% ($25\% \times \frac{6}{12}$).

Most plant and machinery you buy for your business can be lumped together in a single pool of expenditure with just a single calculation no matter how many items are included. This is known as 'pooling'. (The types of plant and machinery that cannot be pooled are explained later in these notes.)

If you buy something in the period covered by your accounts, the cost is added to the pool unless you claim first year allowance. You can also bring into the pool the value of any items that you used privately before using them in your business. If you sell something, the sale proceeds (or the value, if you gave it away or started to use it for non-business purposes) are deducted from the pool. Once these adjustments have been made, your writing down allowance for those accounts is calculated.

Example 2

Suppose that after the first two years in Example 1 you spend £2,000 and £500 on two new fax machines and you sell your lawnmower for £150. The pool brought forward at 6 April 2009 is £900. The writing down allowance you can claim for 2009-10 is:

Value of pool brought forward	£900
Additions	£2,500
Total	£3,400
Disposals	£150
Pool for 2009-10	£3,250
Writing down allowance @ 25%	£813
Value of pool to carry forward	£2,437

If the sale price is more than the value of the pool, the difference is a balancing charge. This should be entered in box 29.

If your business ceases, you should deduct from the value of the pool the sale prices for any items you sell, or their values if you keep them. If these are more than the value of the pool, the difference is a balancing charge. If there is any value remaining in the pool, do not work out a writing down allowance, but instead claim the value remaining as an additional allowance called a balancing allowance.

The precise way the allowances are worked out depends on the type of item and whether you use it privately as well as for business. The following rules will help you work out how much to claim under each of the headings. However, if:

- you do not want to claim the full amount of allowances, or
- someone else pays part of the cost (for example, by giving you a grant), or
- you had purchases from, or sales to, members of your family or other connected persons, ask us or your tax adviser for advice.

Motors cars

When you use a car for your rental business, capital allowances may be claimed.

If a car costs more than £12,000, the yearly 25% writing down allowance is restricted to £3,000. A separate calculation must be made for each such car - they are not pooled.

When you sell the car, the difference between the sale price and the value brought forward is allowed as a balancing allowance (added to other capital allowances for the year) or, if a profit, is taxable as a balancing charge, subject, in either case, to any necessary restriction for private use.

Example 3

Your accounts are drawn up for the year to 5 April 2008.

You spend £15,000 in that year on a car that is used in your rental business. The business usage is agreed at 30%

Cost of car	£15,000
Writing down allowance @ 25% (restricted)	£3,000
Value to carry forward	£12,000

The writing down allowance you can claim is £3,000 x 30% = £900.

Plant and machinery used only partly for business

These items should not be included in any pool. Instead, the allowances on each item should be worked out separately. The writing down allowance, and any balancing allowance or charge when the item is sold, should be reduced so that only the business use proportion is taken into account.

Example 4

You buy a computer for £9,000 in January 2008 and sell it for £4,000 in March 2009. You use it 50% for rental business. The calculation is:

2007-08	Cost of computer	£9,000
	First year allowance @ 50%	£4,500
	Value to carry forward	£4,500

The first year allowance which can be claimed is £2,250

(£4,500 x 50% business use).

2008-09	Value brought forward	£4,500
	Sale price	£4,000
	Difference	£500

The balancing allowance which can be claimed is £250

(£500 x 50% business use).

Assets leased out

You can claim capital allowances for assets you own and lease out to other users provided the asset is not a long funding lease. If the lease began before 1 April 2006 it cannot be a long funding lease. You should consult us or your tax adviser if you think a lease is a long funding lease. Capital allowances on these assets should be claimed in the same way as for assets you use personally in your rental business. However, if the asset is used by a person who is not resident in the UK, you will need to discuss with us, or your tax adviser, which allowances are due. Unless you are conducting a leasing trade, assets leased out are not pooled. A separate capital allowances calculation should be made for each asset leased out.

Buildings

You can claim capital allowances for the cost of constructing agricultural buildings, industrial buildings, industrial and commercial buildings in Enterprise Zones and certain types of hotel, and the cost of the renovation or conversion of vacant or under-used space above shops and other commercial premises to provide flats for rent.

If you want to claim agricultural buildings allowance, ask the Orderline for Help Sheet 224 *Farmers and market gardeners*. This contains information about the allowance as well as other special rules that apply to farmers and market gardeners.

You can claim industrial buildings allowance if you buy or construct a building used for the purposes of a qualifying trade. Manufacturing is a qualifying trade, as are processing trades and there are certain others. You cannot claim industrial buildings allowance on buildings such as houses, showrooms, offices and shops even if they are used for the purposes of a qualifying trade, or for the land on which the building stands. If you think you may be able to make a claim, ask us or your tax adviser.

You can claim capital allowances at a special rate on industrial and commercial buildings in Enterprise Zones. You can also claim capital allowances for the cost of a qualifying hotel. For information about allowances on these types of building, ask us or your tax adviser.

These notes are for guidance only, and reflect the position at the time of writing.
They do not affect any rights of appeal.