



The Business Expense Documentation Cheat Sheet

The five things every business expense needs, and the habit that builds them automatically.

The Five Elements

Every deductible business expense, per IRS Publication 463, needs all five of these documented at the time of the expense — not six months later when your accountant asks.

#	Element	What it answers
1	Amount	How much did you spend?
2	Date	When did the expense happen?
3	Place	Where did it happen?
4	Business purpose	Why was this a business expense?
5	Business relationship	Who was there, and how do they connect to your business?

Your credit card statement covers the first three. The last two are on you.

What Your Records Actually Look Like

✗ What your credit card statement says:

03/14/26 JIMMY'S STEAKHOUSE \$187.42

✓ What a defensible record looks like:

3/14/26 Jimmy's Steakhouse, Tampa, FL \$187.42 Dinner with Mark Chen (CFO, Acme Logistics) and Sarah Patel (VP Ops, Acme) to discuss Q3 contract renewal and warehouse-routing scope. Followed up by email 3/15.

Same expense. Same dollar amount. One survives an audit. The other doesn't.

The 30-Second Habit

The trick isn't keeping better records. It's writing them down before you forget. Three places that work:

-  **On the receipt itself.** Flip it over, write purpose + names in pen, photograph it.
-  **In a notes app.** One note titled "Business Expenses [Month]," one line per receipt.
-  **In your expense tracker.** Fill in the "memo" field every single time, the same day.

Pick one. Use it for 30 days. It becomes automatic.

Printable Mini-Log

Keep this in a glove box or meeting notebook and fill it in as expenses happen.

Date	Place	Amount	Purpose	Who was there
		\$		
		\$		
		\$		
		\$		
		\$		
		\$		
		\$		
		\$		

This cheat sheet is for organizational guidance. For specific deduction questions or audit defense, talk to a qualified tax professional. TaxStache is not a CPA firm.