NEGATIVE GEARING

An oldie but goodie. In case this one has passed you by, accountant David Keddie recalls a typical case: "A client bought a property in the year ended June 30, 2000, for $210,000 including costs and sold it nine years later for $380,000," net of agent fees and so on. He was out of pocket over the time he held the property, supporting the mortgage from his own funds to the tune of $37,000 over nine years. This is negative gearing. After mortgage expenses, he made a $133,000 profit on the property, but he also received tax deductions along the way on the interest costs.

Potential savings: The amount you're out of pocket on the mortgage, after the rent comes in, is deductible. For some, that's tens of thousands of dollars a year.

INCOME PROTECTION

Two good things about income protection insurance: one, it protects you against something you may not have thought about – loss of income in the event of accident or illness; two, the premiums are usually tax deductible, and if you want to, you can usually prepay up to 12 months' worth.

Potential savings: Deductions on all your premiums.

DAMN I'M HUNGRY

Generally, the food you eat at work is considered a private expense and therefore not deductible. But if you work overtime, you can claim a deduction for overtime meal expenses. The ATO deems what's a reasonable "overtime meal allowance" expense if you've had to stay back and "buy out" as a result.

Potential savings: The allowance is now set at $25.80 a meal.

SMART SPLITTING

It is also worth it to think about how you split superannuation contributions: if one partner will reach the cap for concessional contributions but still have money available, put it in the partner's name and let him or her pay it. Splitting might also make sense if one person is approaching retirement and the other is not, so the couple can access the money through the retiree. "Splitting contributions has come back into focus," Andrew Buchan, of HLB Mann Judd Queensland, says. "And it particularly suits a self-managed super fund."

Potential savings: If money that you couldn't otherwise contribute to super can go in through your spouse, your tax savings could be as high as 30 per cent.

BUYING A HOUSE THROUGH A SUPER FUND

Rumour has it this won't be permitted forever, so – if it's something you're interested in – the race is on to buy a property through a self-managed super fund.

One needs a decent-sized fund before trying this, though, to avoid concentration risk. And neither you, nor anyone connected with you, can live in the house.

SMSF Loans uses this example: A 45-year-old in the 46.5 per cent tax bracket buys a $500,000 investment property through her self-managed fund. She takes out a $400,000 loan, which is paid back with rental income ($500 a week, increasing by 2 per cent a year) and superannuation guarantee contributions. The property's value rises 5 per cent a year and the interest on the loan averages 8 per cent. At the age of 60, SMSF Loans says, she's better off by some $146,165 upon the sale of the property than if she'd bought it in her own name – much of that because of the CGT savings.

Potential savings: CGT reduction can amount to tens of thousands of dollars.

WORK GEAR WON'T FIT

Many people try to claim for work clothing but it's not always permitted. A swimming instructor was denied a claim for the swimsuits he used, even though he needed to buy new ones every six to eight weeks because of chlorine damage. You can claim for protective clothing – safety boots, for instance – and for some uniforms.

Potential savings: For most people, nothing.