st  Independent  DIY-er 

 Gig Worker  Entrepreneur

ustler  Stride Guide  Side H

 Freelancer  Go-Getter 

The Essential Guide to Independent Work

stridehealth.com

Stride

What's inside.

Being your own boss gives you freedom, flexibility, and control of your time and money. But with this freedom comes challenges like finding insurance, handling taxes, and managing work-life balance. This guide covers all those essentials for self-employment success so you can fully enjoy the flexibility of your lifestyle.

Health insurance

1 The basics

2 Key health insurance terms

3 Tips for affording health insurance

Taxes

4 Self-employment taxes 101

5 Top 10 self-employment tax deductions

6 Tax deadlines

7 How to pay taxes

Work-life balance

8 Tips for work-life balance



About us: In a world built for W-2s, we're here for the 1099s. Stride has the services, tools, and support you need to navigate self-employment with ease — all in one platform. That includes access to affordable insurance; mileage, expense, and income tracking to simplify taxes; free advisors; educational resources; and so much more.

The basics of health insurance for independent workers

I. What it is and why it matters

Health insurance may seem unnecessary when you're healthy and injury-free. But it's critical to protecting yourself, your family, and your wallet against unexpected health problems and hefty medical bills. For example, one vaccine without insurance can cost as much as $495. With insurance, it's typically free.

II. What it covers

Every health plan on the ACA marketplace is slightly different, but all are required by law to cover some or all of the cost of these essential services and preventative care (at minimum — some cover even more!):

- Laboratory services
- Emergency services
- Prescription drugs
- Mental health/substance abuse screenings and counseling
- Maternity and newborn care
- Pediatrics services
- Hospitalization
- Annual checkups from your doctor
- Vaccines
- Contraception
- Blood pressure screenings
- Nutrition and diet counseling

III. How to get it

Employer-based coverage is typically for W-2 workers, leaving independents to find affordable, quality insurance alone. That's where Stride comes in! We're an official partner of HealthCare.gov, and our customizable shopping tool walks you through the process step by step so you find the right plan with ease.

IV. When to get it

You can typically only get insurance during the annual Open Enrollment Period (OEP) from November 1 to January 15. But if you have what's called a "qualifying life event" (like losing job-based coverage or having a baby), you may qualify for a Special Enrollment Period to enroll in a plan outside of Open Enrollment.

TIP: Want insurance that covers a specific doctor, medication, or health concern? Use filters and side-by-side comparisons in our shopping tool to pinpoint plans that meet those (and other) needs.

Health insurance terms, decoded

Premium

The fixed amount you pay the health insurance company each month for your plan. You pay this regardless of how much you use your insurance.

Deductible

The amount of money you have to pay out-of-pocket for health care before your insurance will help cover the cost.

Copay

A set fee (typically a smaller amount, like $20) that you pay for doctor visits and prescriptions. They don't usually count toward your deductible, but do count towards your out-of-pocket maximum.

Coinsurance

The percentage of the doctor's bill you pay after you hit your deductible. Example: If you have a $10,000 surgery, you've met your deductible, and your plan has 20 percent coinsurance, you pay $2,000 maximum.

Health savings account (HSA)

An HSA is a tax-free savings account that lets you reserve funds for a future time when you might have big medical bills. An HSA must be paired with a high-deductible, HSA-eligible health plan.

Metal tier

Plans are categorized as bronze, silver, gold, and platinum to represent different price points and coverage amounts. Bronze plans have lower premiums but more out-of-pocket costs; platinum is the reverse.

Out-of-pocket maximum

This is the highest amount you'll pay for covered medical costs — including deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance — in a year.

Network type

A network is the group of medical providers your insurance company contracts with to get discounted rates on medical services. There are four types, each with its own rules: HMO, PPO, EPO, and POS.

TIP: If you're confused by other terms, you're not alone. Visit our health insurance resource hub to demystify the jargon.



How to make health insurance more affordable

Many independent workers qualify for subsidies, which is government money that covers part or all of your coverage. There are two types:

The premium tax credit subsidy covers a portion of your monthly health insurance payment. Depending on your eligibility, you can pay as little as $0 a month.

The cost-sharing subsidy lowers the insurance expenses you have to pay for, like your deductible, copay / coinsurance, and sometimes your out-of-pocket maximum.

How to know if you qualify:

Income:	Your estimated annual income largely determines the subsidy type(s) and amount you'll receive.
Family size:	Adding people to your coverage can significantly increase your monthly premiums.
Filing status:	If you're married, you'll typically have to file your taxes jointly to qualify for a subsidized health plan.
Citizenship:	Immigrants with green cards, employees or students with visas, and refugees can all apply.
Location:	Health insurance costs vary by location due to living expenses, laws, and insurance options, affecting subsidies.

TIP: It's possible to qualify for both types of subsidies! In fact, if you qualify for a cost-sharing subsidy, you're automatically eligible for a premium subsidy too.

The basics of self-employment taxes

I. What they are

If you work a traditional full-time job (meaning you're a W-2 worker), your employer automatically withholds money from your paycheck to pay taxes. But if you're self-employed, you have to do it all yourself. Typically, that means paying quarterly taxes on your own four times a year (rather than all at once on Tax Day in April).

II. Who has to pay

If you're self-employed and turning a profit, you probably have to file quarterly taxes. If you have more expenses than income, however, you likely don't.

III. How to save

You likely didn't become self-employed because you looked forward to tracking business expenses. But logging work expenses (like mileage, home office supplies, and more) is the key to maximizing your deductions and saving money at tax time. When you don't keep track of expenses, you'll likely overpay — not to mention waste valuable time piecing together your tax return for the April filing deadline.

IV. How to pay

You'll need to file the quarterly tax form for self-employed workers: Form 1040-ES. You can file this form by hand or online with tax-filing software (like TurboTax). Skip to section 7 for step-by-step instructions!

TIP: Our eyes glaze over when we look at tax paperwork, too. Learn about important 1099 forms and how to fill them out in our tax form hub.

The top 10 tax deductions that help you save



Tax deductions (or write-offs) are business expenses that you can subtract from your taxable income to lower the amount you have to pay. But you must track these expenses all year round to maximize your tax savings. Every mile you drive and cent you spend for work — even if it seems small — can add up to hundreds of dollars that stay in your pocket. **Here are the most common 1099 tax deductions to know:**

1. **Car expenses and mileage**
2. **Health insurance premiums**
3. **Home office deduction**
4. **Work supplies**
5. **Travel**
6. **Advertisements**
7. **Cell phone cost**
8. **Business insurance**
9. **Commissions or fees**
10. **Depreciation of assets**

What's a business expense? It's any cost that's ordinary and necessary in the regular course of business — in other words, it's a reasonable, unavoidable expense in your industry. Check out our tax deductions guide to learn more.

TIP: Use the free Stride app to automatically track your business mileage and expenses and store proof of these costs (like receipts and bank statements) in case the IRS needs them.

Quarterly tax deadlines in 2024

The first deadline in 2024 was for your last quarterly payment for 2023. That date was January 16, 2024.

Q1 deadline: April 15, 2024

File estimated taxes for
January 1 – March 31

Q2 deadline: June 17, 2024

File estimated taxes for
April 1 – May 31

Q3 deadline: September 16, 2024

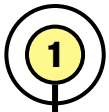
File estimated taxes for
June 1 – August 31

Q4 deadline: January 15, 2025

File estimated taxes for
September 1 – December 31

Note: If you file your 2023 return by January 31, 2024, and ensure that your entire balance owed is submitted with that return, you do not have to make the January 16 payment.

How to pay quarterly taxes



Calculate what you owe.

Calculate your **adjusted gross income (AGI)** to estimate your owed tax on Form 1040-ES. Your AGI from last year is a good starting point to project what you'll make in the upcoming year — just adjust it up or down depending on how much you expect to earn. Don't worry if it's not perfect; you're just trying to give it your best guess.

Once you have your expected AGI, run that number through the appropriate tax rate schedule. This will give you your owed tax. Then divide your owed tax by four to find what you owe for each quarter.



Mail in your Form 1040-ES.

You can find the correct address on the IRS website.



Choose a payment method.

You can select a payment method on the IRS website or mail your check with Form 1040-ES.



You're done!

4 tips to build work-life balance

The life of an independent worker can be summed up in one word: Busy. The lines between work and play often become so blurry that work-life balance gets thrown out the window. Here are four ways you can stay sane and increase your productivity (and happiness!):

Set goals and boundaries.

Set realistic goals for each day or week, taking into account the fluctuating nature of gig work. Say no to gigs that exceed your capacity or interfere with your personal commitments to prevent overwork.

Establish clear work hours.

Sometimes a lack of structure can lead to working round the clock. Define clear boundaries between your work and personal life by setting — and sticking to — consistent work hours.

Practice self-care.

Maintain your physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing with exercise, sleep, and healthy meals. Do what brings you joy and relaxation, whether it's spending time with loved ones, pursuing hobbies, or enjoying nature!

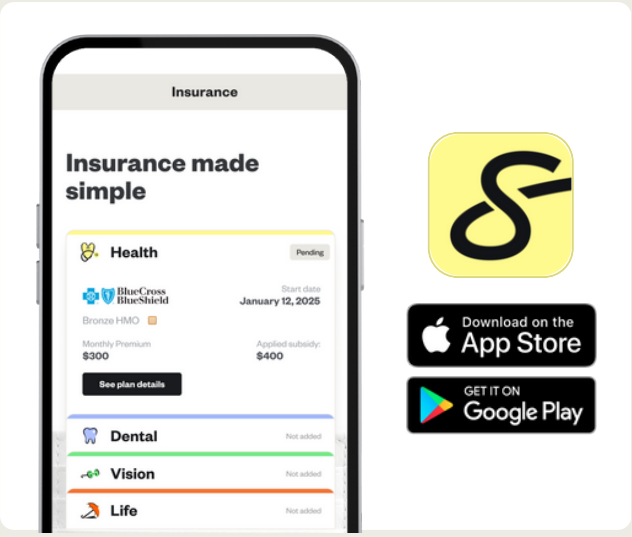
Develop your skills.

This could involve taking online courses, attending workshops, or networking with other gig workers to connect, learn the tricks of the trade, and get tips for optimizing your time and money.

Tell us what you do to stay sane when you work for yourself!

How Stride can help

Your health and financial wellbeing is the priority. Finding health insurance that's right for you, saving money at tax time with 1099 deductions, and mastering work-life balance are all key ways to set yourself up for self-employment success. And Stride is here to help you do it:



Download the FREE Stride app to:

- Slash taxes by an average of $710/year with mileage and expense tracking.
- Get affordable health, dental, vision, and life insurance and manage it in one tab.
- Get more for less with discounts on everyday expenses.
- Consult our free expert support team year-round.

Insurance

As a partner of HealthCare.gov, we offer the same health plans and prices. But we make it simple to find the right one (plus dental, vision, and life coverage to go with it).



Taxes

Stride simplifies 1099 tax prep while maximizing your savings. Track mileage and expenses, link external accounts to uncover deductions, and get IRS-ready reports.



Savings

Stride helps you save on more than just insurance and taxes. Put money back in your pocket with exclusive discounts on gas, prescriptions, food, and more.



We love hearing from you! Contact us at 415-930-9110 and support@stridehealth.com.