

# Consumer Expenditure Online Diary

## User Guide

January 2025  
CE-818

Log in to your Consumer Expenditure (CE) online diary by using the link, <<https://respond.census.gov/diary>>, or scanning the QR code.



### Username and Password

Logging in to the diary requires a unique and secure username and password that is assigned to each household. For security reasons, your password is provided separately by your field representative.


**Respondent Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Username:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please record your expenses and purchases for the following period:**

**Start Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **End Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**I will return or call on:** \_\_\_\_\_ For FR use only



**Login**

  
  
[Forgot your password?](#) [Forgot your username?](#) Login

**Note:** Access the CE Diary quickly by scanning the QR code at the top of the page. You can also review the instructions on the back of this user guide for how to create a shortcut.

**Help Tools:** The online diary has a help menu that contains information on general instructions, how to fill out your diary, diary examples, frequently asked questions, and definitions. To access the desktop version, click on the “Help” link on the top right of the screen. In the mobile version, the “Help” link will appear after you click on “Menu”, which appears as three bars on the top right of the screen.

### Questions?

Field representative’s name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Help Desk:** Call and leave a message at (877) 744-1522 or email us at [census.ce.helpdesk@census.gov](mailto:census.ce.helpdesk@census.gov). We will respond during normal business hours from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (Eastern Time), Monday through Friday.



U.S. Department of Commerce  
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU  
[census.gov](https://www.census.gov)

## What Should I Enter in the CE Diary?

Complete the CE Diary for both weeks. Enter EVERYTHING you and your household members spend money on each day (review exceptions below)—the products you buy, the services you use, and the household expenses you have during the week—regardless of how large or small they are. Do NOT use abbreviations for any item descriptions.

The only items you should **not** include in your diary are:

- Expenses while you were away from home overnight.
- Business or farm operating expenses.
- Sales tax, *except* for meals, snacks, and drinks away from home.

## Start Date and E-mail Address

When you first log in, you will select your scheduled start date listed on the front of this user guide.

Select the date you are scheduled to begin entering expenses into your CE Diary:

E-mail address (optional):

We will not share your e-mail address with any third parties. We ask for your e-mail address only to send reminders regarding your participation in this survey.

[Continue](#)

## Username and Password

To change your username or password, click on the help menu located on the top-right section of your desktop and select “User Settings.” You will be required to enter your email address and select and answer a security question.

In the mobile version, access the menu that appears as the three bars on the top right corner of the screen and select “User Settings.”

## No Expenses During the Diary Week

If you had no expenses during your diary week, log in to the diary on or after the last day of your diary week and you will find the following checkbox. Check the box to confirm that you had no expenses during the week.

You haven't entered any expenses for Week 1 - Feb 06 to Feb 12. If you had no expenses during this week, check here:

## Logout

To protect your privacy, the CE Diary will automatically log you out if there is no activity for more than 15 minutes. You can also log out at any time by clicking on the “Logout” button.

To prevent losing data you have entered, remember to save your entries after recording each purchase.

## Lost Connection Message

If you lose internet connection, you will see the following error message:

You have temporarily lost connection to the server. Please check your internet connection or refresh your browser and try again.

Once you have a good connection, reload the website.

## Entering Expenses

Below are examples of your home screen where you will be able to view a summary of your entered expenses and add new expenses. Please refer to page 4 for more detailed instructions on how to add an expense.

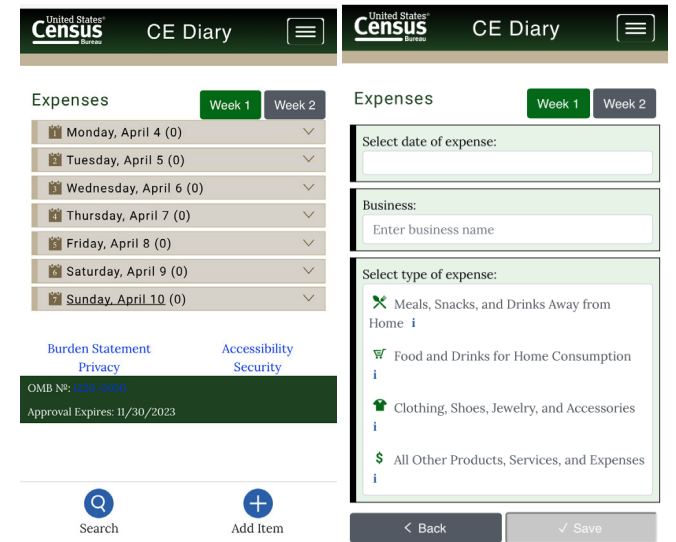
### Desktop Version

To add an expense, you will enter information by first selecting the appropriate week and then the date of the expense on the left side of the screen.



### Mobile Version

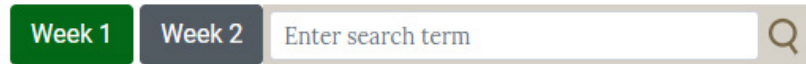
To add an expense, tap on the “Add Item” icon on the bottom right of the summary screen. An expense entry screen will appear allowing you to add a new expense.



(mobile summary screen) (mobile expense entry screen)

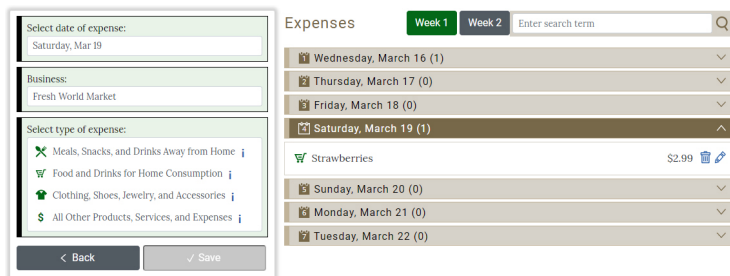
## View, Edit, or Delete an Expense

To help you find a particular entry, you can enter a search term in the search box on the top right of your desktop version. In the mobile version, tap on the “Search” icon on the bottom left of the summary screen. You can view your expenses by selecting Week 1 or Week 2 and clicking on a specific date to expand the selection and view the expenses entered for that date.



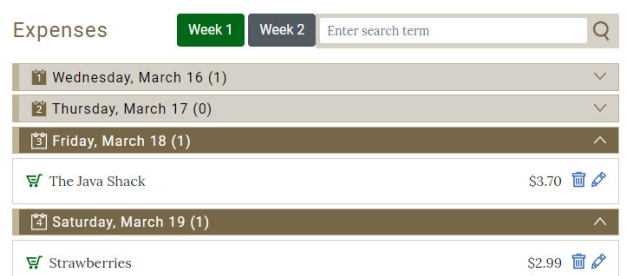
### Desktop Version

To delete an expense, click on the trash can icon to the right of the expense. To view or edit an expense, click on the pencil icon to the far right of the expense. In the left entry space, you will be able to make any changes and select “Save” or “Back” to cancel or “Delete” your entry.



### Mobile Version

To delete an expense, tap on the trash can icon to the right of the expense. To view or edit an expense, tap on the pencil icon to the far right of the expense. When you tap on edit, you will be taken to the expense entry screen where you will be able to make any changes and select “Save” or “Back” to cancel or “Delete” your entry.



## Adding Expenses to Your CE Diary

The expense entry screen on the mobile version is on a separate screen, but the entry fields are the same.

Select the date the purchase was made.

Enter the name of the business.

Select the category.

To cancel and return to your home screen, select "Back."

Select date of expense:

Business:

Select type of expense:

- Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home
- Food and Drinks for Home Consumption
- Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories
- All Other Products, Services, and Expenses

< Back    ✓ Save

Expenses

Week 1    Week 2    Enter search term

- 1 Wednesday, March 16 (1)
- 2 Thursday, March 17 (0)
- 3 Friday, March 18 (0)
- 4 Saturday, March 19 (0)
- 5 Sunday, March 20 (0)
- 6 Monday, March 21 (0)
- 7 Tuesday, March 22 (0)

Select the diary week (1 or 2).

## Category Specific Questions

After you select a category, additional questions specific to that category will appear for you to complete.

### Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away From Home

- Enter the **total cost** (include tax, tip, and fees).
- Select restaurant or vendor type.
- Indicate if alcohol was included and the **cost** of alcohol, if applicable.
- Click the "Save" button to save your expense entry.

Select date of expense:

Business:

Select type of expense:

- Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home
- Food and Drinks for Home Consumption
- Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories
- All Other Products, Services, and Expenses

Total cost (include tax, tip, and fees)

Where did you make this purchase?

- Fast food, Take-out, Delivery, Concession
- Full Service Places
- Vending Machines or Mobile Vendors/Food Trucks
- Employer or School Cafeteria

Were alcoholic beverages included?

- Yes
- No

Cost of alcoholic beverages:

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### Food and Drinks for Home Consumption

- Describe the item or expense.
- Enter the **cost** of each item (do not include tax).
- Select the type of packaging.
- Click the "Save" button to save your expense entry.

Select date of expense:

Business:

Select type of expense:

- Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home
- Food and Drinks for Home Consumption
- Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories
- All Other Products, Services, and Expenses

Describe item or expense

Total cost (do not include tax)

How was the item packaged?

- Fresh
- Frozen
- Bottled/Canned
- Other

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### Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories

- Describe the item or expense.
- Enter the **cost** (do not include tax).
- Select the gender and age.
- Click the "Save" button to save your expense entry.

Select date of expense:

Business:

Select type of expense:

- Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home
- Food and Drinks for Home Consumption
- Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories
- All Other Products, Services, and Expenses

Describe item or expense

Total cost (do not include tax)

Was this item for:

- Child under 2
- Boy 2-15
- Girl 2-15
- Man 16 & over
- Woman 16 & over

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### All Other Products, Services, and Expenses

- Describe the item or expense.
- Enter the **cost** (do not include tax).
- Click the "Save" button to save your expense entry.

Select date of expense:

Business:

Select type of expense:

- Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home
- Food and Drinks for Home Consumption
- Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories
- All Other Products, Services, and Expenses

Describe item or expense

Total cost (do not include tax)

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## Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away From Home vs. All Other Categories

The "Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away From Home" category is different from the other categories. Below are examples with entries in the mobile version.

### Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away From Home

Enter the *entire meal/purchase* as one entry and enter the total cost of the meal including tax, tip, and fees. Include any delivery fees in the total cost.

**Green Onion Bistro**

Artichoke dip	8.00
Beef short rib ravioli	18.00
Ginger lemon chicken	16.00
Berry lemon pie	6.00
Chocolate pudding	6.00
Soda	3.00
Red wine	9.00
Subtotal	66.00
Sales Tax	6.60
Total	72.60
Gratuity	15.00
Total	87.60

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
986 Divine Way  
Washington, DC 20964

**Mobile App Interface:**

- Select date of expense: Thursday, Jun 8
- Business: Green Onion Bistro
- Select type of expense:
  - Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home
  - Food and Drinks for Home Consumption
  - Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories
  - All Other Products, Services, and Expenses
- Total cost (include tax, tip, and fees): \$ 87.60
- Where did you make this purchase?
  - Fast food, Take-out, Delivery, Concession
  - Full Service Places
  - Vending Machines or Mobile Vendors/Food Trucks
  - Employer or School Cafeteria
- Were alcoholic beverages included?
  - Yes
  - No
- Cost of alcoholic beverages: \$ 9.00

### All Other Categories

Enter *each item purchased* as a separate entry and enter the cost of the item without tax.

**VALU MART**  
FALLS CHURCH, VA 23156 - 703.893-8934

267198321	VM WHOLE MILK	3.29
986945631	6-PK SOCKS	7.99
063022838	PAPER TOWELS	11.99
073965782	LAUNDRY DETERGENT	18.99
037121340	SHAMPOO	2.94
037121345	CONDITIONER	2.94
256971531	SZ 3 DIAPERS	41.99
SUBTOTAL		99.30
VA TAX 5.0%		4.97
TOTAL		104.27

SIGN UP FOR A VALUMART CARD  
AND SAVE 5% ON EVERY PURCHASE!

**Mobile App Interface (Multiple Screens):**

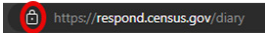
- Screen 1: Select date of expense: Thursday, Mar 17; Business: ValuMart; Select type of expense:  Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home; Describe item or expense: Whole Milk; Total cost (do not include tax): \$ 3.29; How was the item packed?  Fresh; Was this item for?  Child under 2;  Man 16 & over.
- Screen 2: Select date of expense: Thursday, Mar 17; Business: ValuMart; Select type of expense:  Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away from Home; Describe item or expense: 6 pack socks; Total cost (do not include tax): \$ 7.99.
- Screen 3: Select date of expense: Thursday, Mar 17; Business: ValuMart; Select type of expense:  Clothing, Shoes, Jewelry, and Accessories; Describe item or expense: Paper Towels; Total cost (do not include tax): \$ 11.99.

## Adding a CE Diary Shortcut

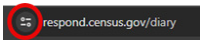
This will make it easier to access your diary each day as you are entering expenses. Although web browsers vary across brands and versions, the steps for creating a shortcut are usually similar.

### Adding a CE Diary Shortcut to Your Computer Desktop Screen

1. Update the desktop shortcut instructions on page 6 of the User Guide.  
See below:
  - a. Open the web browser and enter the URL: <<https://respond.census.gov/diary>>
  - b. Once you have opened the website, find the icon next to the address bar, and drag and drop it onto your desktop.
    - i. In Microsoft Edge, the icon looks like a padlock:




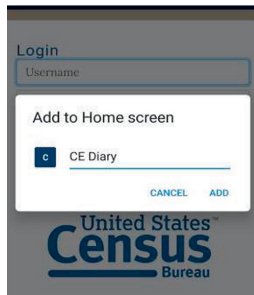
- ii. In Google Chrome, the icon looks like the following:



**Have a QR code reader?**  
Access the CE Diary quickly by scanning this QR code:

### Android Smartphones

1. Open your internet browser.
2. Enter the website address for the CE Diary:  
<<https://respond.census.gov/diary>>
3. Once the website opens, tap on the menu icon at the top right of the screen:  

4. A number of options will appear. Tap on "Add to Home Screen." The screen below will pop up. Tap on "Add."




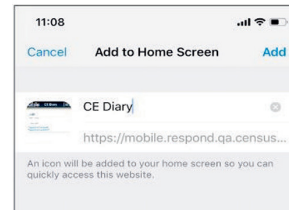
5. When you close the browser and return to your home screen, you will find an icon labeled "CE Diary." To quickly access your CE Diary in the future, simply tap on this shortcut.



CE Diary

### iPhone

1. Open your internet browser.
2. Enter the website address for the CE Diary:  
<<https://respond.census.gov/diary>>
3. Once the website opens, tap on the share icon. The location of the share icon varies depending on the browser used.  

4. A number of options will appear. Scroll to the right in the bottom row of options and tap on "Add to Home Screen." The screen below will pop up. Tap on "Add."



5. When you close the browser and return to your home screen, you will find an icon labeled "CE Diary." To quickly access your CE Diary in the future, simply tap on this shortcut.



## The people on your list:

Record the purchases and expenses made by ALL of these people.


## Keep your records in this pocket.

(These records are only for your reference. We will not keep them.)

- Receipts
- Bills
- Pay stubs
- Bank statements
- Catalog/internet purchases
- Credit card statements



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How should I record multiple quantities?

You may group identical items on the same line and enter a total cost of all the items, or you may write each item on a separate line with the individual cost.

### 2. How should I record prepayments such as a subway fare card?

Record the expense when you pay for it, not when you use it.

### 3. How should I record credit card purchases?

Record the purchase on the day that you use your credit card to pay for it, not on the day you receive or pay your credit card bill.

### 4. Should I record automatic deductions taken from my paycheck or bank account?

Yes, record automatic deductions (such as health insurance premiums taken out of your account or paycheck) only if they are deducted that week.

### 5. Should I record typical monthly bills?

Yes, record typical monthly bills only if you pay them during the week that you have the diary. Write them in the section called *All Other Products, Services, and Expenses*.

### 6. What should I do when I use coupons, discount cards, or loyalty cards?

Subtract the discount from the original price and write the amount that you paid.

### 7. Can I just give you receipts instead of entering the information?

We need you to enter the information in the diary. We encourage you to save your receipts to review them with your field representative at the end of the week. You can use the pocket on the inside of this user guide to store your receipts until you're ready to record your purchases.

### 8. How should I record an item if I don't know if it includes tax?

Enter the amount paid.

### 9. What if I make a contribution or charitable donation?

Record money contributions or donations in the section called *All Other Products, Services, and Expenses*.

### 10. What about gift cards and gift certificates?

If you buy a gift card or gift certificate to give to someone, enter the cost of it in *All Other Products, Services, and Expenses*. If you use a gift card, enter the full amount for your purchase as if paid with cash.

### 11. What do I do about returns and exchanges?

If an item is bought and returned during the diary week, delete the entry. If it was bought outside the week and returned during the week, do not make an entry. If an item is exchanged during the week, delete the entry for the item that was returned and enter the new item on the day the exchange was made.

### 12. How do I categorize the establishment for "Meals, Snacks, and Drinks Away From Home?"

#### Fast Food, Take-Out, Delivery, Concession

You pay BEFORE you eat/drink.

#### Full Service Places

You pay AFTER you eat/drink, if you eat/drink at the establishment.

#### Vending Machines or Mobile Vendors/Food Trucks

Include vending machines, carts, and food trucks that move from place to place.

#### Employer and School Cafeterias

Include school meal plans and prepayments, and school lunch bills.

### 13. What's the difference between a concession stand and a mobile vendor?

A concession stand has to stay in a permanent location and a mobile vendor does not. Some mobile vendors may seem permanent because they are usually in the same location, but they are still considered mobile vendors because they have the option to change locations.

### 14. Should I record subsidized/reimbursed expenses?

Yes, but only record the portion that you or someone on your list has paid.

### 15. What should I do about shipping and handling costs?

Include the shipping and handling costs in the total price of the item. If the shipping and handling covered multiple items, include the shipping and handling in the total price of one item from the order.

Access YouTube How-To videos by scanning this QR code

