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the advice

## MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CHARITABLE DONATIONS

**YOU'RE A SOLID GUY.** YOU GIVE TO CHARITY. BUT YOU'D BE A FOOL NOT TO CONSIDER THE TAX BREAK THAT ACCOMPANIES YOUR GOODWILL. EVERY YEAR, THE GOVERNMENT REWARDS CHARITABLE GIVING BY LETTING YOU DEDUCT DONATIONS AGAINST YOUR INCOME. YOUR ALLOCATION FOR TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CHARITABLE DONATIONS STARTS OVER EVERY JANUARY. NOW THAT THE SEASON IS UPON US, HERE'S HOW YOU CAN MAKE YOUR GENEROSITY WORK FOR YOU. *VALERIE RAINS*

**CHOOSE THE RIGHT CHARITY.** Be sure to select a tax-deductible organization—or the IRS will view your donation as a gift and won't give you a tax break. A donation to political parties or candidates is never tax-exempt. And watch out for perks: Incentives and thank-you gifts, such as museum memberships, will be deducted from your contribution.

**DECIDE HOW MUCH TO GIVE.** The type of charity you choose determines the limits of your tax-exempt donation. You can give up to half of your income to public charities, like the Red Cross, and claim it as a deduction. The IRS list of such organizations (Publication 78, from [irs.gov](http://irs.gov)) contains some surprises, including museums and philharmonic orchestras.

**GO CASHLESS.** "Give stocks, because you don't have to pay capital gains on them," says Kenneth Gideon, a tax specialist at the law firm Skadden, Arps in Washington, D.C. Also consider a donor-advised mutual fund, such as the Fidelity Charity Gift Fund. You receive the deduction immediately; fund administrators take care of the rest.

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TAX-FRIENDLY CHARITIES WORTHY OF A LITTLE LOVE

if you normally donate to

01. your city's biggest art museum

consider donating to

**DrawBridge** ([drawbridge.org](http://drawbridge.org)), a California-based group that runs arts programs for homeless and at-risk kids

02. a philharmonic orchestra

**Sweet Relief** ([sweetrelief.org](http://sweetrelief.org)), which helps support musicians with illnesses or disabilities

03. your alma mater

**DonorsChoose** ([donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org)), which allows teachers to request specific donations, like frogs for dissection or new books

