The STR Payout Reconciliation Guide

How to turn lump-sum Airbnb and VRBO deposits into accurate, tax-ready books. Works in QuickBooks Online and Stessa.

Why the lump sum is a problem

Platforms deposit one net number. Inside that number are your real revenue, deductible fees, pass-through cleaning income, refunds, and sometimes occupancy taxes. Book the deposit as "rental income" and your revenue is wrong, your deductions vanish, and your tax exposure is invisible.

The five components of every payout

Component	Where it belongs	Why
Gross booking revenue	Income: Booking Revenue	Your true top line. Pricing and occupancy decisions depend on it.
Cleaning fee income	Income: Cleaning Fees	Track separately; paired with cleaner payments it shows turnover margin.
Platform fees	Expense: Platform Fees	Fully deductible. Invisible if you book the net deposit.
Refunds / adjustments	Contra-income or expense	Guest refunds reduce revenue; damage payouts are separate income.
Occupancy taxes	Liability (if you remit)	Tax you collect is owed to the taxing authority, not earned.

The monthly method, step by step

- [ ] **1. Download the monthly earnings report from each platform**
  Airbnb: Earnings dashboard export. VRBO: Payout summary report. One report per platform per month.
- [ ] **2. Total each component for the month**
  Gross booking revenue, cleaning fees, platform fees, refunds, and occupancy taxes from the report columns.
- [ ] **3. Record one summary entry per platform per month**
  A journal entry or split deposit that books each component to its own account, tagged to the right property.
- [ ] **4. Tie the net to your bank deposits**
  The net of your entry must equal the month's actual deposits from that platform. If it matches, you are reconciled.
- [ ] **5. Note timing differences**
  Stays that span month-end pay out in the following month. Reconcile to payout date, and tell your CPA once at year end.

Worked example

One Airbnb payout month: $4,000 in nightly revenue, $600 cleaning fees, $138 host service fee, one $200 guest refund.

Line	Account	Amount
Booking revenue	Income: Booking Revenue	+$4,000.00
Cleaning fees collected	Income: Cleaning Fees	+$600.00
Host service fee	Expense: Platform Fees	-$138.00
Guest refund	Income: Refunds (contra)	-$200.00
Net deposited to bank	**Checking account**	**$4,262.00**

Your books now show $4,600 of gross income and $338 of deductions, instead of a single $4,262 "rent" line.

Setting it up in QuickBooks Online

Create income accounts for Booking Revenue and Cleaning Fees, an expense account for Platform Fees, and a liability account for occupancy tax you remit yourself. Turn on class tracking and create one class per property. Record the monthly summary as a journal entry, then match it to the bank feed deposits.

Setting it up in Stessa

Use Stessa's built-in categories: split each payout transaction into rent, cleaning fees, and platform fees, and assign every line to the property. For occupancy taxes you remit yourself, track the liability outside Stessa or in a dedicated category, and reconcile it monthly.