

# Starting a business checklist

This checklist covers the main actions involved in starting a business in Australia.

Some of these steps might not apply to your business. You may also need to do things that aren't listed here.

Use this checklist with the guide to starting a business at <https://business.gov.au/guide/starting>

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# 1. Before you start

## Check if you're ready

- Get the skills you need to run a business
- Research your business idea
- Understand how running a business could affect your lifestyle
- Know where to get help and advice

## Decide if it's a business or a hobby

- Determine if you have a business or a hobby

## Work out if you're a contractor or employee

- Know whether you're an employee or a contractor
- Understand what sham contracting is

## What to do if you're not a citizen or permanent resident

- Get a visa that lets you run a business in Australia

## What to do if you're under 18

- Understand when and how many hours you're legally allowed to work in your state or territory
- Make sure any employees complete a working with children check (or the equivalent in your state or territory)

## 2. Define your business

### Decide on a business structure

Get professional advice if you need it

Choose your business structure

### Choose a business name

Choose an available business name

### Choose a location

Work out what you need for your business location

Decide whether to lease or buy

Choose a location

Get legal advice before signing a contract

Understand your legal, tax and insurance obligations if you're running a business from home

## 3. Plan your business

### Research your market

Understand what customers need from your business

Know who your main competitors are and their strengths and weaknesses

Confirm there is a market for your product or service

### Develop your business plan

Decide who your business plan is for and how you're going to use it

Prepare your financial information

Create your business plan

### Plan how to manage risks

Identify the main risks to your business

Work out how likely each risk is and what the consequence would be

Make a plan to treat each risk

Create policies, procedures and standards to manage your risks

## 4. Register your business

### Get an ABN

Work out if you need and are entitled to an ABN

Apply for an ABN

### Register your business name

Choose a business name

Register your business name if it is different to your own name

### Protect your brand with a trade mark

Decide what to trade mark

Check if your trade marks are available

Apply for trade marks

### Register a company (if you've chosen this business structure)

Apply for a director ID (if you don't already have one)

Register your company

### Register for taxes

Work out the tax registrations you need

Register for all of them

### Get the right licences and permits

Apply for the licences, permits and approvals your business needs

### Get a domain name

Pick a domain name that represents your business

Check it is available

Register your domain name

## 5. Organise your finances

### Calculate your start-up costs

Decide whether to lease or buy any equipment

Calculate your start-up costs, including running costs for the first 6 months

Check your costs with an accountant or other financial professional

### Get funding to start your business

Apply for funding if you need it

### Set up your finances

Create a budget

Set up a business bank account

Choose which payment methods you'll accept

Choose an accounting method and bookkeeping system

Know how to keep business records

### Forecast your cash flow

Set up a cash flow statement to forecast your cash flow

Make sure you'll have enough income to cover your expenses and debts

### Understand tax

Know which taxes you need to pay and when to pay them

Understand what expenses you can claim as tax deductions

Plan to put money aside for taxes

## 6. Get customers

### Market your business

Identify and segment your target customers

Develop a marketing plan

Understand the legal rules for marketing

### Create a website

Choose a host, content management system and ecommerce platform (if needed)

Design your website

Create your website content

Test your website and fix any errors

Make sure your website is secure

Launch your website

### Set up your social media presence

Choose which social media platforms to use

Work out if you need a social media management system

Decide who will manage your social media

### Start advertising

Decide the best types of advertising for your target audience

Tailor your ads to that audience

Follow the laws for advertising

## 7. Hire staff

### Hire employees

Work out your staffing needs

Understand your obligations for pay, leave, superannuation and other entitlements

Recruit the employees you need

Create and sign an employment contract

### Hire contractors

Make sure the worker is a contractor, not an employee

Understand contractor rights and protections

Negotiate and sign a contract for the work

### Hire apprentices or trainees

Decide if an apprentice or trainee is right for your business

Understand your obligations as an employer

Find an apprentice or trainee

Sign and register a formal learning agreement

## 8. Protect your business

### Understand the law

Read the [guide to protecting your business](#)