

LLC Launch Checklist

Everything you need to form your LLC and keep it in good standing, in order. Tick each box as you go. Doing it yourself costs only your state's filing fee.

1 Choose your business structure

Most small businesses pick an LLC. Decide before you file, because the paperwork differs.

- ☐ Compare LLC, S corp, C corp and sole proprietorship
- ☐ Decide how you want to be taxed (an LLC can later elect S corp tax treatment)
- ☐ Decide who the owners (members) are and how much each owns

Not sure? Take the 2-minute quiz: howtoincorporateforfree.com/business-structure-quiz

2 Pick a name and check it's available

Your state won't accept a name that's already taken.

- ☐ Search your state's business name database
- ☐ Include "LLC" or an abbreviation your state allows
- ☐ Check that a matching website domain is free (optional)

3 Choose a registered agent

Every LLC needs someone with a street address in the state to receive legal mail.

- ☐ Decide: yourself, someone you trust, or a registered agent service
- ☐ Confirm the agent has a physical address in your state (not a P.O. box)

4 Look up what your state charges

The state filing fee is the one cost nobody can waive.

- ☐ Find your state on our fees map and write the numbers below
- ☐ Note whether your state requires an annual or biennial report, and when
- ☐ Check for extras such as a newspaper notice or a state minimum tax

All 50 states + DC, checked on official sites: howtoincorporateforfree.com/2026/10/06/llc-filing-fees-by-state

Free guides: howtoincorporateforfree.com/start-here · EIN: [IRS.gov](https://irs.gov) (always free)

Disclaimer: The information in this article is for educational purposes only and does not constitute legal, tax, or financial advice. Business formation rules, fees, and deadlines vary by state and change often. Always consult a qualified attorney, CPA, or tax professional before making decisions about your business.

5 File your formation document

Usually called Articles of Organization (some states say Certificate of Formation or Organization).

- ☐ File online on your state's business filing website, or use a formation service
- ☐ Pay the state filing fee
- ☐ Save the approved filing and your state's confirmation

[Comparing services? howtoincorporateforfree.com/2026/10/04/best-llc-formation-services-2026](https://howtoincorporateforfree.com/2026/10/04/best-llc-formation-services-2026)

6 Get your EIN from the IRS (free)

Your business's federal tax ID. Banks usually ask for it, and you need one to hire employees.

- ☐ Apply on IRS.gov; it's free and takes minutes online
- ☐ Never pay a third-party site for an EIN
- ☐ Save your EIN confirmation letter

7 Set up your paperwork and money

Keeping the business separate from you is what protects you.

- ☐ Write an operating agreement (even for a one-person LLC)
- ☐ Get any business licenses or permits your city, county or state requires
- ☐ Open a separate business bank account
- ☐ Start bookkeeping on day one and decide how you'll pay yourself

8 Stay in good standing

Miss a state report and you can face late fees or lose your LLC's good standing.

- ☐ Put your state report due date in your calendar (see below)
- ☐ Keep your registered agent and addresses current with the state
- ☐ Never mix business and personal money
- ☐ Check whether any federal reporting (like the BOI report) applies to you

[BOI report status: howtoincorporateforfree.com/2026/10/05/boi-report-requirement-2026](https://howtoincorporateforfree.com/2026/10/05/boi-report-requirement-2026)

My LLC at a glance

LLC name: _____ State: _____

Date filed: _____ State filing fee: \$ _____

EIN: _____ Registered agent: _____

Report name: _____ Report fee: \$ _____

Report due: _____ Every: 1 yr / 2 yrs _____

Look up your state's numbers: howtoincorporateforfree.com/2026/10/06/llc-filing-fees-by-state · Total cost calculator: howtoincorporateforfree.com/llc-cost-calculator