APG FOUNDER TOOLKIT

US Business Tax Toolkit

A practical tax, finance and recordkeeping guide for U.S. small businesses

Updated: 2026

Starting a business means more than registering an entity and opening a bank account. You also need a system for recording income, tracking expenses, keeping documents, meeting tax deadlines and understanding what information your tax preparer needs.

This toolkit is designed to give a business owner one practical place to track the basics.

Important: This toolkit focuses on federal requirements and IRS guidance. State and local tax, registration and filing requirements can be different. Always check the relevant state or local government agency for those requirements.

---

1. BUSINESS TAX CHECKLIST

Use this checklist when starting and operating your business.

A. Business Setup

- ☐ Identify your business structure: sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, S corporation or LLC.
- ☐ Determine how your business is classified for federal tax purposes.
- ☐ Obtain an EIN if your business is required to have one.
- ☐ Keep your EIN confirmation with your permanent business records.
- ☐ Register for applicable state and local tax accounts.
- ☐ Identify whether your business has employees.
- ☐ Identify whether your business makes payments that may require information returns.
- ☐ Set up a business bank account.
- ☐ Establish a bookkeeping system.

The IRS states that the form of business determines which federal income tax return the business must file. An LLC is a state-law business structure that may receive different federal tax classifications.

The SBA states that an EIN is the federal tax ID for a business and may be required for businesses that pay employees, operate as corporations or partnerships, or meet certain other conditions.

B. Income Tracking

- ☐ Record all business income.
- ☐ Keep invoices and sales receipts.
- ☐ Keep records of payment processor receipts.
- ☐ Reconcile business income with bank and payment-platform records.
- ☐ Record refunds, credits and chargebacks.
- ☐ Keep documentation for other business income.

The IRS says business records should clearly show income and expenses and should support amounts reported on tax returns.

C. Expense Tracking

- ☐ Record business expenses as they occur.
- ☐ Keep receipts and invoices.
- ☐ Keep proof of payment.
- ☐ Separate business and personal expenses.
- ☐ Identify expenses that include both business and personal use.
- ☐ Keep documentation for business travel.
- ☐ Keep documentation for business meals where applicable.
- ☐ Track business vehicle use where applicable.
- ☐ Maintain records for business assets and equipment.

For federal tax purposes, the IRS generally defines a deductible business expense as one that is both **ordinary and necessary**. Personal, living and family expenses generally are not deductible as business expenses.

D. Payroll and Workers

If you have employees:

- ☐ Collect required employee information.
- ☐ Complete required employment forms.
- ☐ Calculate payroll correctly.
- ☐ Withhold applicable federal income tax.

- ☐ Account for Social Security and Medicare taxes.
- ☐ Account for applicable federal unemployment tax.
- ☐ Deposit employment taxes according to the applicable deposit schedule.
- ☐ File required employment tax returns.
- ☐ Issue required Forms W-2.
- ☐ Maintain employment tax records.

Employers generally must report wages and related federal employment taxes. The IRS uses Forms such as 941, 943 or 944 depending on the employer’s circumstances.

E. Contractors and Information Returns

- ☐ Keep records of payments to independent contractors.
- ☐ Collect the contractor’s required taxpayer identification information.
- ☐ Review whether payments are reportable.
- ☐ Prepare required Forms 1099.
- ☐ Provide required copies to recipients.
- ☐ File required information returns with the IRS.

Form 1099-NEC is generally used to report qualifying nonemployee compensation. The IRS currently requires Form 1099-NEC to be filed with the IRS and furnished to the recipient by January 31 following the calendar year of payment, subject to applicable exceptions and due-date rules.

---

2. MONTHLY FINANCE CHECKLIST

This is an **APG operating checklist**, not a list of monthly IRS filing requirements. Not every business has a federal tax filing or payment due every month.

Every Month

Bank & Cash

- ☐ Download or retain bank statements.
- ☐ Reconcile every business bank account.
- ☐ Reconcile business credit cards.
- ☐ Review outstanding checks and payments.
- ☐ Review outstanding customer receipts.
- ☐ Review cash balances.

Revenue

- ☐ Record all sales.
- ☐ Match invoices to payments.
- ☐ Review unpaid invoices.
- ☐ Record refunds and credits.
- ☐ Reconcile payment processors.

Expenses

- ☐ Record all business expenses.
- ☐ Attach receipts or supporting documents.
- ☐ Review unusual or duplicate transactions.
- ☐ Separate personal transactions from business transactions.
- ☐ Review recurring subscriptions and vendor payments.

Payroll

If applicable:

- ☐ Reconcile payroll to the accounting records.
- ☐ Confirm payroll tax deposits were made when required.
- ☐ Review payroll liabilities.
- ☐ Retain payroll reports.

Tax Review

- ☐ Review upcoming federal tax deadlines.
- ☐ Review estimated tax requirements where applicable.
- ☐ Review employment tax deadlines where applicable.
- ☐ Review information-return requirements.
- ☐ Check for IRS notices or correspondence.
- ☐ Review state and local tax deadlines separately.

Month-End Reports

- ☐ Profit and loss statement
- ☐ Balance sheet
- ☐ Cash balance
- ☐ Accounts receivable
- ☐ Accounts payable
- ☐ Payroll liabilities
- ☐ Tax liabilities

3. U.S. FEDERAL TAX CALENDAR – 2026

The exact deadlines that apply to a business depend on its structure, tax year, payroll status and other facts.

The IRS publishes its official annual tax calendar in Publication 509.

Date	Common Federal Requirement	Who It May Apply To
January 15, 2026	Fourth 2025 estimated tax payment	Taxpayers required to make estimated payments
January 31, 2026	Various information-return and employment-related deadlines	Businesses with applicable reporting requirements
March 16, 2026	Form 1065 for 2025 calendar-year partnerships	Partnerships
March 16, 2026	Form 1120-S for 2025 calendar-year S corporations	S corporations
April 15, 2026	Form 1040 and Schedule C for calendar-year sole proprietors	Sole proprietors
April 15, 2026	Form 1120 for 2025 calendar-year C corporations	C corporations
April 15, 2026	First 2026 estimated tax payment	Taxpayers required to make estimated payments
April 30, 2026	Form 941 for Q1	Employers filing Form 941
June 15, 2026	Second 2026 estimated tax payment	Taxpayers required to make estimated payments
July 31, 2026	Form 941 for Q2	Employers filing Form 941
September 15, 2026	Third 2026 estimated tax payment	Taxpayers required to make estimated payments
October 15, 2026	Extended individual return deadline where a valid extension was filed	Applicable individual taxpayers
October 15, 2026	Extended calendar-year C corporation return deadline where applicable	C corporations that filed an extension
October 31, 2026	Form 941 for Q3	Employers filing Form 941

Date	Common Federal Requirement	Who It May Apply To
January 15, 2027	Fourth 2026 estimated tax payment	Taxpayers required to make estimated payments
January 31, 2027	Form 941 for Q4	Employers filing Form 941
January 31, 2027	Form 1099-NEC	Businesses with applicable reporting requirements
February 1, 2027	2026 Forms W-2/W-3 with SSA	Employers

The March 16 dates apply to calendar-year 2025 partnerships and S corporations because March 15, 2026 falls on a Sunday.

The April 15, 2026 deadline applies to calendar-year individual returns and calendar-year C corporations.

Form 941 is generally due at the end of the month following each calendar quarter: April 30, July 31, October 31 and January 31.

Forms W-2 for 2026 are due to the Social Security Administration by February 1, 2027.

Important: This table is a practical calendar for common federal deadlines. It is not a complete list of every possible federal business tax deadline. The IRS Tax Calendar and the instructions for each applicable form should be checked for the business's specific situation.

---

4. BUSINESS RECORDS CHECKLIST

Good records are the foundation of accurate bookkeeping and tax reporting.

The IRS does not generally require one specific recordkeeping system. Your system must be appropriate for the business and clearly show income and expenses.

Business Formation

- ☐ Articles or certificate of formation/incorporation
- ☐ EIN confirmation
- ☐ Operating agreement, partnership agreement or corporate documents
- ☐ Business licenses and permits
- ☐ State registration records
- ☐ Ownership records
- ☐ Shareholder or membership records

Banking

- ☐ Business bank statements
- ☐ Credit card statements
- ☐ Loan statements
- ☐ Payment processor statements
- ☐ Deposit records
- ☐ Cancelled checks or electronic payment records

Revenue

- ☐ Customer invoices
- ☐ Sales receipts
- ☐ Payment confirmations
- ☐ Credit notes
- ☐ Refund records
- ☐ 1099 forms received
- ☐ Sales-platform reports

Expenses

- ☐ Vendor invoices
- ☐ Receipts
- ☐ Bills
- ☐ Subscription records
- ☐ Insurance records
- ☐ Professional-service invoices
- ☐ Advertising records
- ☐ Travel records
- ☐ Vehicle records where applicable
- ☐ Business meal records where applicable

Payroll

- ☐ Payroll registers
- ☐ Employee wage records
- ☐ Forms W-4
- ☐ Forms W-2
- ☐ Payroll tax returns
- ☐ Payroll tax deposit records
- ☐ Forms W-3
- ☐ Employment tax correspondence

Contractors

- ☐ Contractor invoices
- ☐ Payment records
- ☐ Form W-9 records
- ☐ Forms 1099 issued
- ☐ Copies of filed information returns

Assets

- ☐ Purchase invoices
- ☐ Closing documents
- ☐ Equipment records
- ☐ Vehicle records
- ☐ Depreciation records
- ☐ Improvement records
- ☐ Sale or disposal records

Property records may need to be kept longer than ordinary operating records because they can be needed to determine depreciation, basis and gain or loss when property is sold or otherwise disposed of.

---

5. HOW LONG SHOULD YOU KEEP BUSINESS RECORDS?

There is no single retention period that applies to every business record.

The IRS states that the required period depends on the document and the transaction it supports. Generally, records supporting income, deductions or credits should be retained until the relevant period of limitations expires.

Record Situation	IRS Record-Retention Rule
General income tax records	Generally 3 years
Claim for credit or refund after filing	Generally 3 years from filing or 2 years from payment, whichever is later
Bad debt or worthless securities loss	7 years
Income omitted by more than 25%	6 years
No tax return filed	Keep indefinitely
Fraudulent return	Keep indefinitely
Employment tax records	At least 4 years after the tax becomes due or is paid, whichever is later
Property records	Generally keep until the period of limitations

Record Situation	IRS Record-Retention Rule
	expires for the year in which the property is disposed of

These are federal IRS retention rules. Other requirements, such as state law, insurance requirements, lender requirements or contractual obligations, can require records to be kept longer.

---

6. QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR ACCOUNTANT

A good accountant should be able to explain what applies to your business in clear terms.

Business Structure

1. What federal tax classification applies to my business?
2. Which federal tax return does my business need to file?
3. Does my business have any additional federal filing requirements?
4. Are there state or local tax registrations I need to monitor?

Bookkeeping

5. Are my books complete and reconciled?
6. Are my business and personal transactions properly separated?
7. What records should I provide each month?
8. What financial reports should I review regularly?
9. Are there transactions in my books that need clarification?

Expenses

10. What documentation should I keep for business expenses?
11. How should mixed business and personal expenses be recorded?
12. How should I record equipment and other business assets?
13. What records should I maintain for business travel or vehicle use?

Estimated Taxes

14. Am I required to make federal estimated tax payments?
15. What payment dates apply to me?
16. What information do you need from my books to calculate estimated payments?

The IRS states that self-employed individuals generally must file an annual income tax return and may need to make quarterly estimated tax payments.

Payroll

17. What federal payroll filings apply to my business?
18. How often do I need to deposit employment taxes?
19. Which payroll records should I retain?
20. What year-end employee and contractor forms apply to me?

Year-End Tax Filing

21. Which tax forms will you prepare?
22. What documents do you need from me?
23. What is the filing deadline for my business?
24. What is the extension deadline if an extension is filed?
25. Are there IRS notices or prior-year items that need attention?

Ongoing Communication

26. What should I tell you when my business changes?
27. Should I notify you when I hire employees?
28. Should I notify you when I open another location or bank account?
29. What happens if I receive an IRS notice?
30. How often should we review my books and tax position?

---

7. FOUNDER’S MONTH-END FILE

A simple monthly folder can contain:

01 — Bank Statements

02 — Credit Cards

03 — Sales & Invoices

04 — Vendor Bills

05 — Receipts

06 — Payroll

07 — Contractors

08 — Taxes

09 — Fixed Assets

10 — Monthly Reports

This structure makes it easier to locate documents when preparing financial statements, tax returns or responding to an information request.

---

8. THE BASIC TAX RECORD FLOW

A simple way to think about your business records is:

Business Activity

↓

Invoice / Receipt / Payment

↓

Bookkeeping Entry

↓

Bank & Account Reconciliation

↓

Financial Reports

↓

Tax Return / Information Return

↓

Supporting Records Retained

The IRS explains that purchases, sales, payroll and other business transactions create supporting documents that contain information needed for the business books.

OFFICIAL REFERENCE SOURCES

For the latest federal requirements, use the official government sources below.

- **IRS — Business Taxes:** Federal business tax categories and filing information.
- **IRS — Small Business & Self-Employed Tax Center:**
- **IRS — Recordkeeping:** Business records and retention requirements.
- **IRS Publication 509 — 2026 Tax Calendars:** Federal filing and payment deadlines.
- **IRS — Employment Tax Due Dates:** Payroll tax reporting and deposit requirements.

- **IRS — Business Structures:** Federal tax treatment by business structure.
- **IRS Publication 334 — Tax Guide for Small Business:**
- **U.S. Small Business Administration — Federal & State Tax IDs:** EIN and tax-ID information.

APG Note

This toolkit is intended as a practical reference for U.S. business owners. Federal tax requirements depend on the business structure, activities, tax year, employees, transactions and other facts. State and local requirements are separate.

For any filing, payment or reporting requirement, use the current IRS form instructions and official IRS guidance applicable to your business.