

# NEW BUSINESS GUIDE

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*Having your own business can be one of life's most rewarding experiences. It can also be a disaster.*

*Statistics show there are 15 to 20 million businesses in the United States of which approximately 4 out of 5 are sole proprietorships. 85% of them will fail in the first 5 years. This letter is designed to give you the strategies needed to be one of the survivors.*

*The Sole Proprietor is the simplest form of business organization. YOU are the business. You have control of all business decisions, and you assume all risks to the extent of your assets. As a Sole Proprietor, you have the freedom to take the profits from the business whenever you want. Just remember: **KEEP GOOD RECORDS.***

## RECORDKEEPING BASICS

Good business recordkeeping is essential. The government expects you to pay tax on your profits every year, your banker will expect to see how you are doing if you borrowed money to start your business, and you need to know if you are making a profit or losing money.

**The two items you need to keep track of are income and expense.**

**You can use any system that works for you.** The kind and amount of records you need to maintain depend on the size and nature of your business.

### THE FOLLOWING SYSTEM IS SIMPLE AND EASY TO USE:

**Business checking account:** Deposit all income into the account and write checks for all expenditures.

**Business credit card:** Use this card for business only and make payments to it from the business checking account.

**Cash receipt envelope:** Keep an envelope to collect any expenses that you pay from personal funds and reimburse yourself out of the business account at least monthly.

**Monthly filing system:** In a separate file for each

- Income and sales journals
- Bank deposits

**The following items are helpful in keeping track of expenses:**

- Receipts
- Journals or appointment books
- Check ledgers and cancelled checks

- Credit card statements

**As you design the perfect recordkeeping system for your business, remember to KEEP IT ORGANIZED.**

month, keep the bank statement, cancelled checks, check ledger, charge account statement, receipts, and your envelope with cash receipts.

**Appointment book:** Use it to document everything you do.



*What expenses are deductible?*

*The two key words to remember are **ordinary** and **necessary**.*



*If you keep an appointment book, it already shows where you went, so you can write a mileage total on each day without keeping a separate book. Do whatever works best for you.*

*In general, the standard mileage rate works best if your business mileage is high or your car is economical to operate. The actual expense method works best if your vehicle weighs over 6000 pounds, is costly to run, or you do not drive many miles in total.*



## EXPENSE CHECKLIST

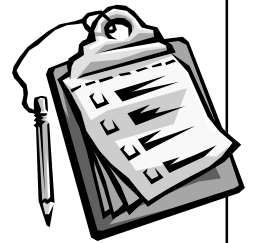
The following list is not all inclusive, but it will give you a good idea of what receipts to save.

Accounting  
Advertising  
Alarm system  
Amortization  
Answering service  
Auto expense  
Bad debts  
Bank charges  
Cash short  
Cleaning  
Commissions  
Consulting  
Conventions  
Data processing  
Delivery  
Depreciation  
Dues  
Education

Employee benefits  
Entertainment  
Equipment  
Fees  
Freight  
Gas and oil  
Gifts  
Insurance  
Interest expense  
Janitorial  
Laundry/uniforms  
Legal  
Licenses  
Maintenance  
Management fees  
Meetings  
Miscellaneous  
Office supplies  
Outside services  
Parking  
Permits  
Postage  
Printing

Professional fees  
Promotion  
Publications  
Rent/lease  
Repairs  
Security  
Seminars  
Shipping  
Stationary  
Storage  
Subscriptions  
Supplies  
Taxes paid  
Telephone  
Tools  
Travel  
Utilities  
Wages

Plus...  
Any other expenses that are ordinary and necessary.



## BUSINESS MILEAGE GUIDE

### **Business mileage requires special record-keeping.**

Whatever method you use, make sure to record the odometer reading at the beginning of the year. Mileage can be calculated for taxes in one of the following two ways:

#### **Standard Mileage Rate:**

This method can be used if you do not use your car for hire or operate a fleet of cars. The *standard mileage* rate is tied to gas prices and updated each year.

#### **Actual Expense Method:**

Records of all vehicle expenses must be maintained and applied to the business percentage. The expenses include gas, oil, lube, repairs, batteries, insurance, supplies, tires, washes and waxes. The business percentage of lease payments or depreciation is also deducted.

**A daily log or record of mileage is essential.** The mileage deduction can save you many dollars in tax. You will probably cheat yourself if you reconstruct at year end.

#### **DEDUCTIBLE MILEAGE**

You can use one of the following three scenarios to determine how many miles you can deduct. Keep in mind that **commuting is not deductible**.

**If you have an office or regular place of business outside of your home,** you may not deduct commuting miles to and from work, or to your first and from your last stop home, but you may deduct mileage to a *temporary* work place and mileage to drive to and from different locations during the day.

**If you have an office in your home that qualifies for a home office deduc-**

**tion** because it is the principal place of business, a place you meet customers, store inventory or samples, or perform substantial administrative or managerial duties for your business, **all** of your business-related mileage is deductible.

**If you work at home, but do not qualify for the home office deduction,** the distance between home and your first stop and between your last stop and home are non-deductible commuting miles. You should plan to have your first and last stops close to home to maximize the mileage deduction. A trip to the bank, post office, or a nearby supplier can help increase deductible business miles.

**The proof is in the documentation.**

## HOME OFFICE BASICS

The home office deduction is allowed for taxpayers who use their home as the principal place of business, store inventory, **or conduct substantial management or administrative actions in the home.**

**If you have an office as described above, you can benefit from the home office deduction.** You will need to measure the square footages of your office and your entire home to arrive at a percentage. This percentage of all the following

expenses can be deducted from your business income:

Rent	Interest
Utilities	Garbage
Repairs	Taxes
Insurance	

You **must** also take depreciation on this percentage of your home. To calculate the deduction you must know your total investment (cost plus improvements) in your home. In most cases the resulting depreciation is small, but a mandatory part of the home office deduction.

When your home is sold,

your gain on the business portion will not have to be taxed separately as it was in the past, it will only be taxed to the extent of depreciation taken since 5/7/97.



*Whether you are a homeowner or you are a renter, the home office will enable you to deduct all of your business-related miles.*

## TRAVEL EXPENSES

Travel expenses are ordinary and necessary living expenses incurred when you are away from your tax home overnight for business.

Your **tax home** is the general area where your business is located, not necessarily where your principal residence is. If you are itinerant and

move with your business from place to place, you will not be able to deduct travel expenses.

### Travel expenses include:

- Transportation
- Cab fare
- Business phone calls
- Laundry/cleaning
- Meals
- Lodging
- Tips & baggage

### Your travel records must show the following information:

- Dates and times of arrival and departure
- Number of days actually spent on business
- Business places visited
- Business reason for travel
- Costs and appropriate receipts



*A well-kept appointment book could be used to record entertainment, travel, and mileage all in one handy spot.*

## MEALS AND ENTERTAINMENT

**Meals and entertainment are only 50% deductible for tax purposes.**

Meals while traveling may be deducted using actual cost or a standard meal rate ranging from \$31 to \$64 a day.

Meals while entertaining must be deducted using actual cost. A log or diary documenting the expense must be maintained and should include

all of the following information:

- Time
- Date
- Place
- Amount spent
- Business purpose
- Person entertained

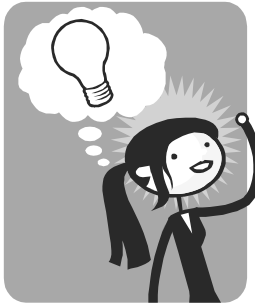
Expenses must be ordinary and necessary and must be directly associated with your business.

Entertainment must be

directly preceded or followed by substantial business discussion.

A receipt is needed for costs over \$75.





MONEY-SAVING IDEAS

**Consider hiring your child and purchasing a Roth IRA with part of the child's earnings. Your contributions may be withdrawn tax free at any time. The earnings will be taxed, but not penalized if invested for 5 years and withdrawn for qualified higher education.**



### SHOULD YOU INCORPORATE?

Most small businesses are better off in the beginning with the simplicity a sole proprietorship affords. Because it's easy to set up, has more flexible recordkeeping rules, and is easy to discontinue, it's a good place to start.

You could consider incorporating if any of the following arise:

- You are unable to raise capital.
- Your customers want to do business with a corporation.
- You feel you need protection from liability that you cannot get with an insurance policy.

Before you incorporate, consider the benefits of a Limited Liability Company (LLC). The LLC entity is now available in all states. The IRS recognizes single owner LLCs as sole proprietorships. If you organize your business as a single owner LLC, you will get the limited liability of a corporation, a legal entity status for your business, and the flexible recordkeeping rules of the sole proprietorship.

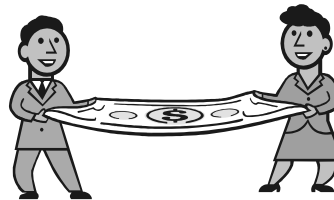
### HIRE THE KIDS

You can save money on your taxes by hiring your minor child. For the tax year 2009, your child can earn up to \$5,700 working in your business before any tax needs to be paid on the earned income. This can be increased to \$10,700 if a \$5,000 traditional IRA is purchased. While your child earns tax free income, you save tax dollars by deducting the wages paid.

In the 25% tax bracket, for example, \$2,675 in Federal tax plus \$1,512 in self-employment tax is saved by paying a wage of \$10,700 to your minor child.

To take advantage of these tax savings, you must be careful that you take all the steps to prove you are entitled to the deduction:

- The child must do the work.
- You should have a written employment agreement.
- You need federal and state IDs.
- You need W-4's, I-9's and the time cards on file. Your child under 18 is exempt from FICA and Medicare tax.
- You must file quarterly and annual payroll returns.



### HIRE THE SPOUSE

Hiring your spouse could enable you to deduct your medical insurance. If you provide medical insurance as an employee benefit, your spouse can elect family coverage and cover you.

You can also deduct all medical costs by setting up a medical reimbursement plan under Code Section 105.

Employing your spouse will also enable you to deduct his or her travel expenses if you travel together for business.

The law enables you to reimburse up to \$230 of parking at or near work, up to \$120 in mass transit expenses, or \$20 to cover bicycle commuting expenses per month for your employees on a pre-tax basis.

### START A PENSION

Save money on your taxes and provide for your retirement at the same time by contributing to a pension plan.

You can put up to 25% of your net income each year into a **SEP**. The decision to contribute can be made as late as the due date of your tax return for the year.

If you are a one person business, or are employing only your spouse, the SEP is great. If you have other employees, you will have to cover them at the same percentage as yourself.

You should consider the **Simple IRA** if you have employees. This plan needs to be set up by October to start it for any year.

Employees can elect to put up to \$11,500 (\$14,000 if age 50 or over) for 2009 into the plan on a pre-tax basis. You must contribute 2% of all employees wages or 3% of contributing employees wages. It's a simple, easy way for a small employer to provide retirement.



### YOUR ESTIMATES

You are a Sole Proprietor, but Uncle Sam is really your business partner and he's waiting for his cut. It is a good idea to set aside 25-30% of each dollar you earn in a separate place for taxes. At the end of March, May, August, and December you should figure net income to calculate and pay your income tax on Form 1040 ES. The IRS may charge a penalty if you do not. You have a much better chance of survival if you do.