



Going out on your own: the first thirty days

A checklist for trades and mobile service owners starting a business in Australia. In the order that saves you doubling back. From No Drama Studios, Melbourne. Free to share.

Most people start with the logo and the Instagram account. Start with the list below instead. Each item is one sitting, and most are free. Tick them in order, because the later ones depend on the earlier ones: you cannot buy a .com.au domain without an ABN, and you cannot get paid properly without a bank account.

Week one: exist on paper

1. **Decide the structure.** Sole trader is free, takes ten minutes, and is right for almost everyone in year one. A company costs money to set up and run, and makes sense once there is real income or real risk. Ask an accountant one question: "Sole trader or company for my situation?" and take the answer.
2. **Get an ABN.** Free, online, same day at abr.gov.au. Everything else needs it.
3. **Register the business name** if you trade under anything other than your own name. ASIC, about \$45 a year. Check the name is free first, and check the domain is free at the same time, before you fall in love with it.
4. **Open a separate bank account.** A plain business transaction account, or a second everyday account in your name if you are a sole trader. Every dollar in and out of the business goes through this one account, and nothing else does. This single habit is the difference between a tidy tax return and a weekend of misery.
5. **Public liability insurance.** Most sites and most customers will ask. Get a quote from two insurers and take the one that answers the phone.
6. **Licences and registrations for your trade.** Whatever your state requires. Write the renewal date in your calendar now.

Week two: be findable

7. **Buy the domain.** Your business name as a .com.au, which needs the ABN from step two. About \$15 a year. Buy it from a registrar you can log in to, and keep that login somewhere safe. It is the one asset you must never lose.
8. **Business email on your own domain.** you@yourbusiness.com.au, not a Gmail address. Google Workspace is about \$10 a month and gives you email, calendar and storage that work on your phone. Set up a signature with your name, trade, phone and area.
9. **A business phone number.** A second SIM or a virtual number, so the business number can go on the ute, the website and the Google listing, and you can turn it off at night. Changing a number later costs you every customer who saved the old one.
10. **Google Business Profile.** Free, and the single most important thing on this list for being found. Fill in every field: category, service area, hours, phone, a few real photos of your work. Verify it. This is what shows up when someone nearby searches your trade.

11. **One page on the web.** Not a website with six sections, one page: what you do, where, your number, three photos, and a button to call. It can be built in a day. It exists so the Google listing and your social accounts have somewhere to point, and so a customer checking you out finds a real business.
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Week three: get paid

12. **Quoting and invoicing from your phone.** The quote should be done before you leave the driveway, not at the kitchen table at ten o'clock. Use a tool built for this. We build UteQuote, which turns a spoken job description into a quote and invoice with payment built in, and we are biased, but whatever you use, it must work on the phone, number your invoices, and show the GST line properly.
 13. **Take card payments.** Tap to Pay on your phone for on-the-spot jobs, and a payment link on every invoice for the rest. People pay faster when paying is easy. A deposit on bigger jobs is normal and professional, so ask for one.
 14. **Decide your payment terms** and put them on every quote. Seven days is fine. Fourteen is common. Thirty is for big companies, not for you.
 15. **Know the GST line.** You must register for GST once turnover passes \$75,000 in a year, and you can register earlier. Registered means you add ten percent to prices and claim it back on what you buy. Until then, no GST on invoices. Ask the accountant from step one which is better for you.
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Week four: run it

16. **Keep every receipt.** Photograph it the day you get it, into one folder. Fuel, tools, phone, insurance, the lot. The folder is your deductions.
 17. **The weekly admin hour.** Same time every week. Send the invoices, chase the unpaid ones, photograph the receipts, reply to the enquiries. One hour a week prevents the ten-hour weekend.
 18. **Ask for the review.** Every finished job, every happy customer: "Would you mind leaving a Google review?" and send them the link. Ten reviews in your first three months is worth more than any advertising.
 19. **One social account, not five.** Pick the one your customers use, post a photo of finished work once a week, and ignore the rest.
 20. **A records folder.** Digital or a shoebox. ABN letter, business name certificate, insurance policy, licences, the domain login, bank details. Everything the government or a customer might ask for, in one place.
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The thing nobody tells you

The business side is not harder than the trade. It is just unfamiliar, and the first time through it feels like a lot. By the second month it is an hour a week. Do the list in order and you will be set up properly, which is more than most people who have been going for years can say.

No Drama Studios Pty Ltd, Melbourne's inner west. We set this up with people, done with you, and the first few are free in return for an honest review. nodramastudios.com/small-business, 0489 229 663, andrew@nodramastudios.com. This guide is general information, not legal, tax or financial advice.