

In Business and Incorporated In 8 Steps



A guide from the
entrepreneurship pros at
[incorporate.com](https://www.incorporate.com)



Aha! You are feeling bright, inspired, and ready to start your business.

But where do you start? With this guide, you will be in business and open to the public in eight steps.



Getting Started

What are the key decisions that I need to make?

Step 1: Name your business.

Step 2: Select your state of incorporation.

Step 3: Choose a business structure.

Step 4: Appoint a registered agent.

Get Ready for Growth

What are the next steps I should take?

Step 5: Get ready for the internet.

Step 6: Obtain an EIN to open a bank account.

Step 7: Research business licenses.

Step 8: Stay compliant with annual reports.



1

Name your business.

You have an incredible business idea, the talent to develop it, and the drive to execute it. What will you name your new business?

Get creative, think big, and consider these questions when brainstorming.

- ▶ Does your name align with your brand vision and company goals?
- ▶ What emotion(s) should your name communicate to customers?
- ▶ Does your name appeal to the kind of customer you want to attract?
- ▶ How does your business name sound when you say it out loud?
- ▶ How does your name look in an email subject line?
- ▶ Is your name different than the local competition?
- ▶ Does it stand out from the crowd when searched online?
- ▶ Is it short and sweet?
- ▶ Is it memorable?

Pro Tip: Save time by deciding on two alternate names in your brainstorming session. If your preferred business name is unavailable, you will have two additional names ready.

We can help: The incorporate.com team can conduct a **comprehensive name search** for you to determine if your preferred business name exists as another company in your industry or region.



2

Select your state of incorporation.

Regardless of where you live, you can form an entity in any state. It might be easiest to incorporate where your business is physically located, but it is not always the best option available to you. For instance, many companies choose to **incorporate in Delaware or Nevada** which offer considerable advantages like tax benefits and simpler incorporation processes. That being said, incorporating out of state does not necessarily free you from your home state obligations.

Which state should you incorporate in? Our team of Incorporation Specialists can help you explore the ins and outs of choosing a legal home for your business.



3

Choose a business structure.

Operating your business as a properly structured corporation or Limited Liability Company (LLC) sets boundaries between your personal assets and business liabilities. In addition to protecting your personal property as a business owner, incorporating offers several legal, tax, and business advantages. Compare the entities below and visit our [Business Startup Wizard](#) online to decide which structure is right for you.

We can help: When you are ready to incorporate, our team of Incorporation Specialists can walk you through the entire process.

	C Corp	S Corp	LLC	General Partnership	Sole Proprietor
Owners have limited liability for business debts and obligations	✓	✓	✓		
Created by a state-level registration that usually protects the company name	✓	✓	✓		
Business duration can be perpetual	✓	✓	✓		
May have an unlimited number of owners	✓		✓	✓	
Owners need not be U.S. citizens or residents	✓		✓	✓	✓
May be owned by another business, rather than individuals	✓		✓		
May issue shares of stock to attract investors	✓	✓			
Owners can report business profit and loss on their personal tax returns		✓	✓	✓	✓
Owners can split profit and loss with the business for a lower overall tax rate	✓				
Permitted to distribute special allocations under certain guidelines			✓	✓	
Not required to hold annual meetings or record meeting minutes			✓	✓	✓



4

Appoint a registered agent.

Selecting a registered agent is a required step when incorporating your business. A registered agent is the state's way of communicating with a business entity and is required by law. As the official point of contact for the Secretary of State, the registered agent must be present at a physical address (not a P.O. Box) to sign for and receive legal notices, state mandates, wage garnishments, and tax documents during specific business hours. It is critical for registered agents to be consistently accessible. A missed delivery could jeopardize your company's good standing with the state or enable a lawsuit to proceed against you without your knowledge.

We can help: Meet the state's requirement and stay on track. Available in all fifty states, the [incorporate.com](https://www.incorporate.com) Registered Agent Service will streamline and expedite all state filings, improving your business' overall efficiency.

- ▶ We will notify you of critical, time sensitive deadlines. When applicable, we can complete the paperwork for you.
- ▶ We are available during all business hours, readily accessible to the state and the public for legal engagement.
- ▶ If you step out for a meeting or travel for work, an important notice will still be delivered and not be overlooked or forgotten.
- ▶ With [incorporate.com](https://www.incorporate.com) as the point of contact on public records, you will never run the risk of your customers, vendors, or neighbors seeing a process server deliver legal documents to your place of business or home.
- ▶ Stay on track with Compliance Watch, a convenient online tool that provides you with alerts when filings are due, secure online document storage, a comprehensive task list to help you stay on track, and a business profile to keep your vital company information organized.

5

Get ready for the internet.

Today, having your business online isn't a nice-to-have; it is essential for success. When seeking out a domain name, or website address, aim for something that's as close to your company name as possible.

Depending on your industry and target audience, you might also want to utilize social channels such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Consider the convenience of being online now so your digital presence is ready to launch when the time comes.

We can help: Look like an expert right from the start. Our [incorporate.com](https://www.incorporate.com) Pro annual subscription includes a domain name, simple-to-use website builder, and professional email that matches your brand name.



6

Obtain your EIN to open a bank account

Your Employer Identification Number, or EIN, is like a social security number for your business. This nine-digit number is required to open a business bank account and must be present on all tax filings for the life of your business.

Pro Tip: Keep your business and personal finances separate through dedicated bank accounts and expense tracking to protect your personal assets.

We can help: incorporate.com can work with the IRS and obtain an EIN on your behalf, making the process fast and easy.



7

Research business licenses.

Most state, county, and local governments require companies to have the right licenses and permits in place before they open their doors. There are more than 150,000 filing jurisdictions across the country, all with independent requirements. Depending on your particular industry and where you operate, any number of licenses and permits may apply to your business.

We can help: Our team of Incorporation Specialists can research and provide you with a package of applications for the licenses and permits you need for your industry and location of the business.

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Stay compliant with annual reporting.

Once your business entity is established, you will have to maintain and manage it through business filings like annual reports. Corporations and LLCs are required to submit an annual (or biennial in some states) report to state government entities. By filing an annual report, you are providing the Secretary of State with updated information about your business. The details and deadlines of your annual report may vary from state to state. The Annual Report can be used to evaluate your company's franchise tax, so it is crucial that your report is submitted with accuracy.

We can help: Preparing and filing annual reports for your company demands time, diligence, and expense. Deadlines and filing requirements vary from state to state, and with annual reminders becoming a less-common courtesy, it's easy to be left in the dark about when your annual reports are due. Save time and reduce your chances of filing mishaps by outsourcing your annual report needs to our specialists at incorporate.com.



Helping business owners succeed since 1899.

incorporate.com is the small business division of CSC®, the business behind business. Formed in 1899, CSC is a worldwide leader in business solutions, providing services to over 90 percent of the Fortune 500® companies.

CSC was started by two leading figures of the Delaware legal community, Josiah Marvel and Christopher Ward, to simplify the way corporations are formed, operate, and maintain compliance. Their spark of entrepreneurial innovation and collaboration set a precedent for a better, more efficient way to do business worldwide.

At incorporate.com, we believe in the positive impact of the entrepreneur and know first-hand that every big company starts small. From the first step of incorporation to expansion into additional states, we have helped thousands of small businesses reach the next step of their journey.

Unlimited Support

Our teams are readily available to answer your questions from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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Well, what are you waiting for?

incorporate.com



7

Don't take it from us.

"Extremely friendly, accurate, and knowledgeable. Delivered on all they promised."

MICHAEL EGBERT
Palo Alto, CA

"Your company made it very easy for me to get an LLC, and it saved me a lot of time and frustration."

TERRI MCLEAN
Woodbridge, VA

"Much easier than incorporating on one's own. I've done it both ways and it was well worth the money."

JAMES IRELAND
Las Vegas, NV

"The process was very simple and the price was great!"

MARILYN FIELDS
Middletown, NY

"Great customer support and an amazing range of services offered at the best prices. Add to that the Compliance Watch service and it just can't be beat."

ASHTON E. SMITH
Fairfield, CT





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