Your First 30 Days After Forming an LLC

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Your state approved the LLC. That piece of paper creates the company; it does not set it up. The steps below are the ones that protect you, keep you out of tax trouble, and stop you paying for things that are free. Most take under an hour each.

Week 1: Make the company real

Get your EIN from the IRS, and pay nothing for it. An Employer Identification Number is the company's tax ID. You need it to open a bank account and to give to customers who pay you. The IRS issues it online, immediately, at no charge. In the IRS's own words: "You never have to pay a fee for an EIN." Sites that charge for one are middlemen filling in the same free form. Apply only at irs.gov, and only after your state has approved the LLC.

Open a business bank account and never mix money. The LLC exists to separate the business's debts from your house and savings. That separation is easiest to defend when the money is visibly separate: business income in, business expenses out, and a transfer to yourself when you take pay. Paying for groceries from the business account is the fastest way to weaken it.

Write an operating agreement, even if you are the only owner. It says who owns the company, who can sign for it, and what happens if an owner leaves or dies. Your bank may ask for it. With two or more owners, do not skip this: it is far cheaper to agree on a split now than to argue about one later.

Sign as the company. On contracts, leases and estimates, sign "Jane Doe, Member, Doe Services LLC", not just your name.

Week 2: Know how you are taxed

Forming an LLC does not choose a tax type. The IRS applies a default:

Your LLC has	The IRS treats it as	What that means
One owner	"An entity disregarded as separate from its owner"	The profit goes on your personal return
Two or more owners	A partnership	The LLC files its own return and each owner is taxed on their share

Plan for self-employment tax. If your net earnings are $400 or more, you owe self-employment tax of 15.3% (12.4% Social Security plus 2.9% Medicare) on top of income tax. Nobody withholds it for you.

Pay through the year, not in April. If you expect to owe $1,000 or more when you file, the IRS generally expects estimated payments across four payment periods, and charges a penalty for underpaying. The dates are in the instructions for IRS Form 1040-ES. A simple habit: move a fixed share of every deposit

into a separate savings account, and ask a tax preparer what share fits your situation.

Do not rush into an S corporation. You will hear that an S corp election saves tax. It can, once profit is steady, and it adds payroll and a second tax return. The election is made on IRS Form 2553, due no more than 2 months and 15 days after the start of the tax year it is to take effect. Treat it as a conversation to have with an accountant, not a day-one task.

Week 3: Find your state and local obligations

These differ in every state, so this guide will not guess at yours. Look up each one and write the date on a calendar:

- **Annual report or annual fee.** Many states require one to keep the LLC in good standing. Your Secretary of State's website has the due date and the amount.
- **Sales tax registration.** If you sell goods, or services your state taxes, register with the state revenue department before your first sale.
- **Local business license.** Check with your city or county clerk.
- **Trade or professional license.** Contracting, food, transport, health and personal-care work usually need one. Ask the state board for your trade, not a forum.
- **Registered agent.** Keep the address current. Legal notices go there.

Week 4: Records and protection

Start bookkeeping now. Record every sale and expense as it happens and keep the receipts. Software or a spreadsheet both work; a shoebox in March does not.

Collect a Form W-9 before you pay any contractor. For payments made in 2026 and later, you report nonemployee compensation of $2,000 or more to the IRS on Form 1099-NEC, due January 31. The old $600 threshold no longer applies to these payments. Getting the W-9 up front saves chasing people in January.

Buy general liability insurance before your first job. The LLC protects your personal assets from business debts. It does not pay a claim. If you hire, ask your state about workers' compensation before the first day of work.

What you can ignore

The federal "beneficial ownership" report. You may see warnings that every new LLC must file a BOI report or face fines. FinCEN's interim final rule of March 26, 2025 changed that. FinCEN states: "U.S. companies are exempt from BOI reporting requirements and therefore, are no longer required to file BOI reports." Foreign entities registered in the U.S. are still covered.

Official-looking mail asking for money. New LLCs appear on public lists, and solicitations follow. FinCEN says it "does NOT send correspondence requesting payment", and that mail referencing a "Form 4022" or "Form 5102" is fraudulent. For anything else that asks for a fee, check your Secretary of State's website before paying.

The checklist

Done	Step	Where
___	EIN issued (free)	irs.gov
___	Business bank account open	Your bank
___	Operating agreement signed	Your files
___	Tax default understood; set-aside account open	Tax preparer
___	Estimated tax dates on the calendar	IRS Form 1040-ES
___	Annual report date and fee on the calendar	Secretary of State
___	Sales tax registration checked	State revenue department
___	Local and trade licenses checked	City or county; state board
___	Bookkeeping started; W-9 on file for each contractor	Your files
___	General liability insurance in force	Insurance agent

Sources

- IRS, "Get an employer identification number": irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/get-an-employer-identification-number
- IRS, "Limited liability company (LLC)": irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/limited-liability-company-llc
- IRS, "Self-employment tax" and "Estimated taxes": irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed
- IRS, Instructions for Form 2553, and Instructions for Forms 1099-MISC and 1099-NEC (12/2026): irs.gov/instructions
- FinCEN, "Beneficial Ownership Information Reporting": fincen.gov/boi

This guide is general information, not legal, tax or accounting advice. Rules change and state requirements vary; confirm anything you rely on with the agency named or a licensed professional.

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