

CLARITY GUIDES

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SET UP · REGISTER · GROW

# Starting a Business in Scotland

*A clear guide, from first idea  
to your first 90 days*



Published by Clarity Guides · Phone edition · Education only, not legal, tax or financial advice · Cover: Sir David Wilkie, *Pitlessie Fair*, 1804, National Galleries of Scotland. A Fife village fair, full of traders. Public domain

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## START HERE

# About this guide



**S**tarting a business is less complicated than it looks from the outside. Most of it is a short list of registrations, a few sensible protections and good habits with money. This guide puts that list in order, in plain English, with the Scottish rules where they differ from the rest of the UK.

It is written for anyone thinking of going it alone in Scotland: a side hustle that is growing, a trade you want to work for yourself, a shop, a café, a market stall or an online business. There are five examples throughout, but the rules apply across Scotland.

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### Part one

Choosing your set-up: when a hobby becomes a business, sole trader or limited company, Companies House, costs and a side-by-side comparison.

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## Part two

Tax: registering with HMRC, Self Assessment, National Insurance, Scottish income tax, Making Tax Digital, Corporation Tax, VAT and PAYE.

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## Part three

Premises and protection: business rates and the Small Business Bonus Scheme, licences, insurance, the ICO data protection fee and business banking.

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## Part four

Help and next steps: Business Gateway, grants, a first-90-days checklist, a calendar of key dates and a jargon buster.

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**Education only. Not legal, tax or financial advice.** Every business is different. For decisions about your own tax or structure, talk to a qualified accountant or a solicitor, or get free guidance from Business Gateway. Nothing here is a recommendation to set up in any particular way.

**How we checked.** Every figure comes from an official source (GOV.UK, HMRC, Companies House, mygov.scot, the Scottish Government, the ICO, Business Gateway, Fife Council and others) and was checked on 18 October 2026. Figures are for the 2026–27 tax year (6 April 2026 to 5 April 2027) unless we say otherwise. Taxes, fees and thresholds change, often every April, so check the live figure before you rely on it.

**This guide is free.** Share it with anyone starting out. **Who writes Clarity Guides?** Clarity Guides are independent explainer. We are not accountants, banks or insurers, we take no commission from anyone named here, and a mention is not an endorsement.

## BEFORE YOU SPEND A PENNY

# Free help first



This guide is **free**, and so is most of the help you need to start. Before paying anyone, use these. Every service on this page costs nothing.

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### Business Gateway

Free

Free local advisers, one-to-one meetings, workshops and webinars, a business plan template and market reports. In Fife: Saltire House, Pentland Park, Glenrothes KY6 2AL, 01592 858 333. [bgateway.com](https://www.bgateway.com)

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### Find Business Support

Free

The Scottish Government's search for every public grant, loan and advice service.

[findbusinesssupport.gov.scot](https://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)

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## Your council

**Free**

Fife Council's economic development team (Invest Fife) runs the Fife Start-Up Grant and other schemes through Business Gateway (chapter 13). Licensing and environmental health teams will tell you what you need before you open.

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## HMRC

**Free**

Free live and recorded webinars for the newly self-employed and new employers (search "HMRC help and support" on GOV.UK), the HMRC app, and the Self Assessment helpline on 0300 200 3310.

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## Companies House

**Free**

Step-by-step guidance on GOV.UK and a contact centre on 0303 1234 500. You do not need an agent to form a company.

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## Under 30?

**Free**

The King's Trust (formerly the Prince's Trust) Enterprise programme helps 18 to 30 year olds explore and start a business. [kingstrust.org.uk](https://www.kingstrust.org.uk)

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**Skills** **Free**

Skills Development Scotland's My World of Work has free courses and career and business skills advice.

[myworldofwork.co.uk](https://myworldofwork.co.uk)

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**Other free advice**

**Free**

Acas for staff questions (0300 123 1100), the ICO for data protection (0303 123 1113), Food Standards Scotland for food businesses, and Women's Enterprise Scotland.

**Want hands-on help?** Business Clarity ([clarityhq.uk](https://clarityhq.uk)) offers friendly local support for Fife businesses getting started, from websites to getting found online.

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## FINDING YOUR WAY IN

# Where should I start?



You do not need to read this guide in order.  
Pick the line that sounds most like you.

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|                                          |                                                             |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>“I sell a few things on the side”</b> | Is it a business yet? The £1,000 trading allowance (ch. 1). |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|

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|                                          |                                                             |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>“Sole trader or limited company?”</b> | Chapters 2, 3 and the side-by-side comparison in chapter 4. |
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|                                         |                                                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>“What do I tell HMRC, and when?”</b> | Self Assessment and National Insurance (ch. 5), then Corporation Tax, VAT and PAYE (ch. 6–7). |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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|                                       |                                                             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>“I’m taking on a shop or unit”</b> | Business rates and the Small Business Bonus Scheme (ch. 8). |
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|                                                    |                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>“I’ll be selling food, drink or at markets”</b> | Licences and registrations (ch. 9). |
|----------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

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**“I’m hiring my first person”**

PAYE and pensions (ch. 7) and employers’ liability insurance (ch. 10).

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**“I keep customer details”**

Data protection and the ICO fee (ch. 11).

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**“I need money or advice”**

Free help first (page 5), then Business Gateway and Fife grants (ch. 13).

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**“Just give me the list”**

Your first 90 days (ch. 14) and key dates (ch. 15).

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*“Register on time, keep business money separate, and keep every receipt. Those three habits prevent most early problems.”*

THE SHORT VERSION

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## Is it a business yet?

Lots of businesses start as something on the side: a few cakes for friends, crafts on a market stall, odd jobs at the weekend. At some point the taxman counts it as trading. Knowing where that line is saves worry later.



Adam Smith, born in Kirkcaldy in 1723, wrote *The Wealth of Nations* there. Portrait by an unknown artist, the “Muir portrait”, Scottish National Portrait Gallery. Public domain.

### ■ What counts as trading?

HMRC looks at the whole picture. Signs you are trading include selling regularly, making things in order to sell them, buying things to

sell on at a profit, and charging for a service. Selling off your own unwanted belongings now and then is usually not trading.

## ■ **The £1,000 trading allowance**

If your **total income** (not profit) from self-employment is **£1,000 or less** in a tax year, it is tax-free and you normally do not need to tell HMRC about it. Above £1,000, you need to register for Self Assessment and report it (chapter 5). If your costs are high, you can choose to deduct your real expenses instead of using the allowance.

**Online selling.** Since January 2024, online marketplaces such as eBay, Vinted, Etsy and Airbnb send HMRC details of sellers who make 30 or more sales, or earn about £1,700 or more, in a calendar year. This does not create a new tax; it just means HMRC can see the activity.

## ■ **Your three main choices**

**Sole trader** You are the business. Simple to start, few forms, but you are personally responsible for its debts. Chapter 2.

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## Limited company

The company is a separate legal “person” that you own and run. More paperwork, more privacy and protection in some ways. Chapter 3.

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## Partnership

Two or more people in business together. In Scotland an ordinary partnership is a legal person of its own (unlike in England), but partners are still personally liable for its debts. A limited liability partnership (LLP) is registered at Companies House.

You can start as a sole trader and become a limited company later; many people do.

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Sources: GOV.UK, “Tax-free allowances on property and trading income”; HMRC, “Check if you need to tell HMRC about income from selling online” (digital platform reporting rules); Partnership Act 1890, s.4(2). Checked 18 October 2026.

## Working as a sole trader

**M**ost new businesses in the UK start this way. Being a sole trader means you are self-employed and run the business as yourself. There is nothing to register at Companies House: you tell HMRC and start.



*Newhaven fishwives, near Edinburgh, photographed by Hill & Adamson about 1845. Each sold her own catch door to door: sole traders long before the word. Metropolitan Museum of Art. CC0.*

### ■ How it works

- You keep all the profit after tax, and pay **Income Tax** and **Class 4 National Insurance** on it through a yearly Self Assessment tax return.

- You can trade under your own name or a business name, such as “Lomond Gardening”.
- Your accounts are private. Nothing is published on a public register.
- You can employ staff (chapter 7).

### PLUS POINTS

- Quick and free to set up
- Simple records and one tax return a year
- Private: no public accounts
- Easy to stop

### WATCH OUT FOR

- Unlimited liability: if the business owes money, your home and savings can be at risk
- Tax rises with profit, with Scottish rates up to 48%
- Some bigger clients prefer to deal with a company

## ■ Choosing a business name

A sole trader's name must not include “Limited”, “Ltd”, “LLP” or “plc”, must not be offensive, and must not suggest a link with government or a public body without

permission. Some “sensitive” words, such as “Bank”, “Charity” or “Scottish” in some uses, need approval. If you use a business name, your own name and an address must appear on invoices and letters. Before you choose, search Companies House and trade mark records so you do not tread on someone else’s name.

**Your home is not automatically at risk**, but it can be. If a sole trader cannot pay business debts, creditors can pursue personal assets. Good insurance (chapter 10) and not over-borrowing are the main protections.

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Sources: GOV.UK, “Set up as a sole trader” and “Rules for sole trader business names”; GOV.UK, “Incorporation and names” (sensitive words and expressions); mygov.scot, Scottish Income Tax rates 2026 to 2027. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Setting up a limited company

A private limited company is a separate legal “person”. It owns its money, signs its contracts and owes its own debts. You own it through shares and run it as a director, often both at once.



*The Royal Exchange, Glasgow, a merchants' trading hall, now the Gallery of Modern Art. Print, 19th century. Rijksmuseum. CC0.*

### ■ What you need

- **A name** ending in “Limited” or “Ltd” that is not the same as, or too like, an existing one.
- **At least one director** and at least one shareholder (they can be the same person). Directors must be 16 or over.

- **A registered office address**, which is public. A company registered in Scotland must have its registered office in Scotland, and its number starts “SC”.
- **A registered email address** for Companies House (not published).
- **People with significant control (PSCs)**, usually anyone with over 25% of the shares or votes, listed on the register.
- **Identity verification.** Since **18 November 2025**, every new director and PSC must verify their identity with Companies House (through GOV.UK One Login or an authorised agent) and give their personal code when the company is formed.

## ■ What it costs

| Item                                            | Online fee (from 1 Feb 2026) |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Register a company (incorporation)</b>       | £100                         |
| <b>Confirmation statement, once a year</b>      | £50                          |
| <b>Change of company name</b>                   | £20                          |
| <b>Close the company (voluntary strike-off)</b> | £13                          |

Paper forms cost more. Formation agents and accountants offer packages, but you can register directly on GOV.UK. Many people also pay an accountant to prepare the company's accounts and tax return; get quotes.

## ■ Your ongoing duties as a director

- File **annual accounts** at Companies House (first accounts are due 21 months after the company is formed, then 9 months after each year end). Very small “micro-entities” can file simpler accounts.
- File a **confirmation statement** at least once every 12 months.
- File a **Company Tax Return** with HMRC and pay Corporation Tax (chapter 6).
- Keep company money separate. Money you take out must be salary, dividends, expenses or a properly recorded director's loan.
- Act in the company's interests and avoid conflicts of interest. These are legal duties under the Companies Act 2006.

**“Limited” does not mean no risk.** Banks and landlords often ask small-company directors for a **personal guarantee**, which puts your own money back on the line. Directors who trade on while knowing the company cannot pay its debts can also be made personally liable.

Sources: Companies House, “Companies House fees” (updated 25 September 2026) and “Companies House fees are changing from 1 February 2026”; GOV.UK, “When you need to verify your identity for Companies House”; GOV.UK, “Set up a limited company”, “Accounts and tax returns for private limited companies” and “Micro-entities, small and dormant companies”; Companies Act 2006, ss.171–177. Checked 18 October 2026.



## CHOOSING YOUR SET-UP

### Sole trader or company? Side by side

**T**here is no single right answer. The best choice depends on how much profit you expect, how much risk the work carries, and how much paperwork you are willing to do. Here are the main differences in one place.

|                      | Sole trader                                          | Limited company                                                             |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Set-up</b>        | Register with HMRC. Free.                            | Register at Companies House (£100 online), then HMRC.                       |
| <b>Liability</b>     | Unlimited: you are the business.                     | Limited to what you put in, unless you give personal guarantees.            |
| <b>Tax on profit</b> | Scottish Income Tax plus Class 4 National Insurance. | Corporation Tax (19% to 25%), then tax on salary or dividends you take out. |

|                         |                                                |                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Paperwork</b>        | Records and one Self Assessment return a year. | Company accounts, Company Tax Return, confirmation statement, payroll if you pay a salary, plus your own tax return. |
| <b>Privacy</b>          | Accounts are private.                          | Directors, shareholders and accounts are on the public register.                                                     |
| <b>Image</b>            | Fine for most local trades.                    | Some larger clients and contracts expect it.                                                                         |
| <b>Taking money out</b> | All profit is yours.                           | Only by salary, dividends, expenses or loans, each with its own rules.                                               |

## ■ An illustration: a sole trader in Fife

Morag runs a dog-walking business in Glenrothes. In 2026–27 her profit (income minus allowable expenses) is £30,000 and she has no other income. Using the 2026–27 Scottish rates, her tax would be:

|                                | On      | Tax   |
|--------------------------------|---------|-------|
| <b>Personal Allowance (0%)</b> | £12,570 | £0.00 |

|                                                |         |                  |
|------------------------------------------------|---------|------------------|
| <b>Starter rate 19%</b>                        | £3,967  | £753.73          |
| <b>Scottish basic rate 20%</b>                 | £12,989 | £2,597.80        |
| <b>Intermediate rate 21%</b>                   | £474    | £99.54           |
| <b>Class 4 National Insurance 6%</b>           | £17,430 | £1,045.80        |
| <b>Total Income Tax and National Insurance</b> |         | <b>£4,496.87</b> |

That is about 15% of her profit. Morag is invented; real figures depend on other income, pension payments and allowances.

## ■ When a company is often considered

People commonly look at a company when profits are well above what they need to live on (so some can stay in the business, taxed at Corporation Tax rates), when the work carries real liability risk, or when bringing in investors. Since 2023 the rise in the main Corporation Tax rate to 25%, the cut in the dividend allowance to £500 and higher dividend tax rates (10.75% basic rate from April 2026) have made the tax saving smaller than it used to be, and the extra costs of running a company can wipe it out at lower profits.

**Get advice before you switch.** The tax comparison is personal and changes most Aprils. A qualified accountant can run your real numbers; Business Gateway advisers can explain the options for free.

Sources: mygov.scot, “Current rates: 6 April 2026 to 5 April 2027”; GOV.UK, “Self-employed National Insurance rates” and “Rates and allowances: National Insurance contributions”; GOV.UK, “Corporation Tax rates and allowances”; GOV.UK, “Tax on dividends”. Worked example by Clarity Guides. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Registering with HMRC: Self Assessment

If you are a sole trader (or a partner), you tell HMRC by registering for Self Assessment. You then fill in one tax return a year and pay Income Tax and National Insurance on your profit.

*Figures for 2026–27, checked 18 Oct 2026*



*Marinus van Reymerswaele, Two Tax Collectors, 16th century, National Museum in Warsaw. The ledger is older than the tax return. Photo CC0.*

### ■ When to register

Register by **5 October** after the end of the tax year in which you started. The tax year runs from 6 April to 5 April. So if you start trading

in June 2026 (tax year 2026–27, ending 5 April 2027), you must register by **5 October 2027**. Registering late can mean a penalty. You will get a **Unique Taxpayer Reference (UTR)** by post or in your HMRC app.

## ■ The yearly deadlines

| What                                      | When                                                             |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Online tax return and any tax owed</b> | 31 January after the tax year ends (31 January 2027 for 2025–26) |
| <b>First payment on account</b>           | 31 January, in advance for the current year                      |
| <b>Second payment on account</b>          | 31 July                                                          |

**Payments on account** are two advance payments towards next year's bill, each usually half of last year's. They apply if your last bill was over £1,000, unless more than 80% of your tax was already taken at source (for example through a job). This can make your first January bill feel large, so set money aside from day one. A return filed late gets an automatic £100 penalty, even if you owe nothing.

## ■ Income Tax: Scottish rates

If you live in Scotland you pay **Scottish Income Tax** on your profits, wages and pensions. HMRC collects it, but the rates are set by the Scottish Parliament.

| Taxable income 2026–27 | Band                | Rate |
|------------------------|---------------------|------|
| Up to £12,570          | Personal Allowance  | 0%   |
| £12,571 to £16,537     | Starter rate        | 19%  |
| £16,538 to £29,526     | Scottish basic rate | 20%  |
| £29,527 to £43,662     | Intermediate rate   | 21%  |
| £43,663 to £75,000     | Higher rate         | 42%  |
| £75,001 to £125,140    | Advanced rate       | 45%  |
| Over £125,140          | Top rate            | 48%  |

## ■ National Insurance for the self-employed

- **Class 4:** 6% on profits between £12,570 and £50,270, and 2% above £50,270.
- **Class 2:** no longer charged. If your profit is £7,105 or more you get National Insurance credits for your State Pension

automatically. Below that, you can choose to pay voluntary Class 2 at £3.65 a week to protect your record.

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Sources: GOV.UK, “Check how to register for Self Assessment”, “Self Assessment tax returns: deadlines” and “Understand your Self Assessment tax bill: payments on account”; mygov.scot, “Current rates: 6 April 2026 to 5 April 2027”; GOV.UK, “Self-employed National Insurance rates” and “Voluntary National Insurance: rates”. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Records, expenses and Making Tax Digital



### ■ Keep good records from day one

Record every sale and every business cost, and keep receipts, invoices and bank statements for at least **5 years after the 31 January** filing deadline for that year. A simple spreadsheet or bookkeeping app linked to a separate business bank account (chapter 12) makes this easy.

Most sole traders now use the **cash basis** by default: you count money when it actually comes in and goes out, not when you send an invoice.

## ■ Allowable expenses

You pay tax on profit, not on takings, so claim the costs of running the business. Common ones:

- Stock, materials and goods for resale
- Tools, equipment and computers
- Business insurance
- Phone, broadband and software (the business share)
- Advertising and your website
- Accountant and bank charges
- Travel for work (not your normal commute); mileage at 45p a mile for the first 10,000 business miles in a car
- A share of home costs if you work from home

You cannot claim personal costs, everyday clothes, or entertaining clients.

## ■ Making Tax Digital for Income Tax

HMRC is moving sole traders and landlords to **Making Tax Digital (MTD)**: keeping digital records in compatible software and sending a short update every quarter, plus a final

declaration after the year ends. Whether and when it applies to you depends on your **qualifying income** (your total self-employment and property income before expenses):

| Qualifying income in | Over    | Must use MTD from              |
|----------------------|---------|--------------------------------|
| 2024–25              | £50,000 | 6 April 2026 (already started) |
| 2025–26              | £30,000 | 6 April 2027                   |
| 2026–27              | £20,000 | 6 April 2028                   |

HMRC writes to people who are brought in, but it is your job to check. Some people can get an exemption, for example if they are digitally excluded.

**Using everyday AI tools like Grok?** They can help you draft a budget, a business plan or a list of questions for an accountant. Always check tax rules and figures against GOV.UK or a qualified adviser before you act on them.

Sources: GOV.UK, “Business records if you’re self-employed”, “Expenses if you’re self-employed” and “Simplified expenses”; GOV.UK, “Find out if and when you need to use

Making Tax Digital for Income Tax” (updated 26 March 2026)  
and “Find out if you can get an exemption”. Checked 18  
October 2026.

# Corporation Tax and VAT

A limited company pays Corporation Tax on its profits. Any business, sole trader or company, must register for VAT once its sales pass the threshold.

*Figures for 2026–27, checked 18 Oct 2026*

## ■ Corporation Tax

| Company profits            | Rate                            |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Up to £50,000</b>       | 19% (small profits rate)        |
| <b>£50,001 to £250,000</b> | 25%, reduced by marginal relief |
| <b>Over £250,000</b>       | 25% (main rate)                 |

The £50,000 and £250,000 limits are shared between associated companies and cut for accounting periods shorter than 12 months.

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## Register

Tell HMRC your company is active within **3 months** of starting to do business (trading, buying, selling or earning interest).

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## Pay

Usually **9 months and 1 day** after the end of the company's accounting period.

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## File

The Company Tax Return (CT600) within **12 months** of the end of the accounting period. You file even if there is nothing to pay.

## ■ VAT

You must register for VAT if your **taxable turnover** (sales, not profit) for the **last 12 months** goes over **£90,000**, or if you expect it to go over £90,000 in the **next 30 days** alone. It is a rolling 12 months, not the tax year, so check it every month.

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**Deadline** Register within 30 days of the end of the month you went over. Example from GOV.UK: if you pass £90,000 on 15 July, register by 30 August; you charge VAT from 1 September.

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**Rates** Standard 20%, reduced 5% (for example home energy), and zero (most food, children's clothes, books). Some things are exempt.

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**Leaving** You can ask to deregister if taxable turnover falls below £88,000.

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**Voluntary** You can register below £90,000. It can help if your customers are VAT-registered businesses, because you can reclaim VAT on your costs.

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**Returns** All VAT-registered businesses keep digital records and file through Making Tax Digital software, usually quarterly.

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**Watch the threshold.** A busy summer for a café or a big one-off job can push a small business over £90,000 without warning. Late registration means paying the VAT you should have charged, out of your own pocket, plus penalties.

Sources: GOV.UK, “Corporation Tax rates and allowances”, “Corporation Tax: trading and non-trading” and “Accounts and tax returns for private limited companies”; GOV.UK, “Register for VAT”, “How VAT works: VAT thresholds” and VAT Notice 700/1. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Taking on staff: PAYE, pay and pensions

**Y**our first employee is a big step. It brings a few legal duties at once: payroll, minimum pay, a workplace pension and compulsory insurance. None of them is hard once set up. *(Figures for 2026–27, checked 18 Oct 2026)*

### ■ Register as an employer

Register with HMRC as an employer **before your first payday**; you can register up to two months before you start paying people. It can take up to 15 working days to get your employer PAYE reference. You then run payroll and report each payment to HMRC on or before payday (Real Time Information). Directors paying themselves a salary from their company count too.

### ■ Employer National Insurance

- Employers pay **15% Class 1 National Insurance** on each employee's earnings above **£5,000 a year** (£96 a week, £417 a month).

- **Employment Allowance** can cut your bill by up to **£10,500** a year. A company whose only employee paid above £5,000 is a sole director cannot claim it.

## ■ Minimum pay from 1 April 2026

| Age                                       | Hourly rate |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>21 and over (National Living Wage)</b> | £12.71      |
| <b>18 to 20</b>                           | £10.85      |

## ■ Workplace pension

Under automatic enrolment, you must put eligible staff into a workplace pension: workers aged 22 to State Pension age earning over **£10,000 a year**. You must pay at least **3%** of their qualifying earnings, with a total minimum of 8%. Your duties start on the employee's first day, and you must tell The Pensions Regulator what you have done (the "declaration of compliance").

## ■ Other first-employee duties

- ☐ Check they have the **right to work** in the UK, before they start, and keep a copy.

- ☐ Give a **written statement of employment particulars** (the main terms) on or before day one.
- ☐ Get **employers' liability insurance** and display the certificate (chapter 10).
- ☐ Do a basic **health and safety** risk assessment; with five or more staff it must be written down.

**Free HR help.** Business Gateway and Acas ([acas.org.uk](https://acas.org.uk), helpline 0300 123 1100) give free, impartial advice on contracts, pay and staff problems.

Sources: GOV.UK, "Register as an employer" and "Rates and thresholds for employers 2026 to 2027"; HMRC, "Eligibility for Employment Allowance"; GOV.UK, "National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates"; The Pensions Regulator, "Earnings thresholds" and "Making contributions to your pension scheme"; GOV.UK, "Check an employee's right to work documents"; HSE, "Risk assessment". Checked 18 October 2026.

## Business rates and the Small Business Bonus Scheme

If you take on a shop, office, workshop or unit, you will usually pay non-domestic rates (business rates) to the council. In Scotland, the Small Business Bonus Scheme means many small premises pay nothing at all. *(Figures for 2026–27, checked 18 Oct 2026)*



*The Rent Day, engraving by Abraham Raimbach after Sir David Wilkie, a painter from Cults in Fife. Rijksmuseum. CC0.*

### ■ How the bill is worked out

Each property has a **rateable value**, set by the local assessor (in Fife, the Fife Assessor) and roughly its yearly rent value. Look yours up on the Scottish Assessors website, [saa.gov.uk](http://saa.gov.uk). New values took effect at the **revaluation on 1**

**April 2026.** The council multiplies the rateable value by the national rate, then takes off any reliefs.

| Rateable value                 | Rate<br>2026–27 | Name                |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| <b>Up to £51,000</b>           | 48.1p per<br>£1 | Basic Property Rate |
| <b>£51,001 to<br/>£100,000</b> | 53.5p per<br>£1 | Intermediate        |
| <b>Over £100,000</b>           | 54.8p per<br>£1 | Higher              |

## ■ Small Business Bonus Scheme (SBBS)

You may qualify if the **combined rateable value** of all your business premises in Scotland is **£35,000 or less**, each one is **£20,000 or less**, and the property is actively used.

| If you have one<br>property             | Relief                          |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>Rateable value up to<br/>£12,000</b> | 100%: no rates to pay           |
| <b>£12,001 to £15,000</b>               | Tapers from 100% down<br>to 25% |

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## £15,001 to £20,000

Tapers from 25% down to 0%

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With more than one property: 100% if the combined value is £12,000 or less; otherwise up to 25% on each property worth £15,000 or less, tapering to nothing at £20,000, as long as the total is no more than £35,000. Payday lenders, betting shops, car parks and advertising sites cannot claim; short-term lets need a valid licence. The Scottish Government has said SBBS will stay at these levels for the three years from April 2026.

## Examples from the Scottish Government

- One property, rateable value £10,000: gross bill £4,810 ( $£10,000 \times 48.1p$ ), SBBS 100%, **bill £0**.
- Several properties with a combined value over £12,000; this one is valued at £14,000: gross £6,734, SBBS 25%, **bill £5,050.50**.

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Sources: mygov.scot, “How your rates are calculated” and “Small Business Bonus Scheme” (updated 30 March 2026); Non-Domestic Rate (Scotland) Order 2026 (SSI 2026/39); Non-Domestic Rates (Levying and Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2026 (SSI 2026/68); gov.scot, Local

Government Finance Circular 7/2026, SBBS worked examples;  
Scottish Budget 2026 to 2027, chapter 2. Checked 18 October  
2026.

## Other reliefs, and working from home



### ■ Other reliefs worth asking about

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|                    |                                                                                                                                           |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Fresh Start</b> | 100% off for up to 12 months if you move into a property that has been empty for at least 6 months, with a rateable value up to £100,000. |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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|                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Retail, hospitality and leisure</b> | 15% off in 2026–27 for shops, cafés, pubs and similar with a rateable value up to £100,000 (capped at £110,000 per business), and 100% on the islands and in three named remote areas. |
|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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|                                    |                                                                                                             |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Business Growth Accelerator</b> | Delays rate rises on new-build premises and on improvements to existing ones for a period. Ask the council. |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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|                            |                                                                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Charities and sport</b> | Charities and some community sports clubs can get mandatory relief. |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|

Most reliefs must be **applied for** through your council. In Fife, apply through Fife Council's business rates team ([fife.gov.uk](https://fife.gov.uk)). Tell the assessor and the council when you move in or out, or if the property changes, so you are not backdated a bigger bill.

## ■ Working from home

Most people who run a business from a desk in their home do **not** pay business rates; you pay Council Tax as usual. Rates can apply if part of the home is used only for business or has been changed for it, such as a converted garage workshop, a treatment room with its own entrance, or rooms let as holiday accommodation. If in doubt, ask the assessor.

**Leases.** Before signing a commercial lease, get it checked by a solicitor. Ask who pays rates, repairs and insurance, how long you are tied in, and whether you can leave early. Business Gateway can talk you through what to look for.

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Sources: [mygov.scot](https://mygov.scot), “Fresh Start Relief” and “Business Growth Accelerator”; Scottish Budget 2026 to 2027, chapter 2 (retail, hospitality and leisure relief); Scottish Assessors Association, [saa.gov.uk](https://saa.gov.uk); GOV.UK, “Running your business from home”. Checked 18 October 2026.

**M**any businesses need no licence at all. Others need one before they open, and trading without it can be a criminal offence. In Scotland most licences come from your local council, so the examples here are for Fife Council; other councils work the same way.



*Edinburgh Ale: James Ballantine, Dr George Bell and D. O. Hill, photographed by Hill & Adamson about 1844. Selling drink has needed a licence for centuries. Metropolitan Museum of Art. CC0.*

### ■ Food: register first

Any business that makes, cooks, sells, stores or delivers food, including from home, a van or online, must **register with the council's environmental health team at least 28 days**

**before it starts.** Registration is free. In Fife, register on Fife Council's website. Some businesses handling meat, fish, eggs or dairy need approval instead. Food Standards Scotland has free guidance, including CookSafe food safety records.

## ■ Alcohol

Selling alcohol needs a **premises licence** for the place and a **personal licence** for the person who supervises sales, both from the local **Licensing Board** (in Fife, the Fife Licensing Board). There is also an occasional licence for one-off events. This takes time, so start early.

## ■ **Civic Government licences in Fife**

Under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982, Fife Council licenses activities including:

- Street trading (each person selling in a public place)
- Market operators
- Second-hand dealers (furniture, clothes, books, electricals and more)
- Public entertainment and indoor sports entertainment
- Late hours catering (food sold between 11pm and 5am)
- Taxis and private hire cars
- Window cleaners
- Metal dealers, knife dealers and boat hire
- Skin piercing and tattooing

## ■ **Other permissions to check**

- ☐ **Short-term lets** (holiday lets, B&B, rooms on Airbnb) need a council licence. See our *Letting Your Property in Scotland* guide.

- ☐ **Planning permission** if you change how a building is used, and a **building warrant** for building work. Signs may need advertisement consent.
- ☐ **Playing music** in public (a shop, café or gym) usually needs TheMusicLicence from PPL PRS.
- ☐ **Childminding** and care services must register with the Care Inspectorate.
- ☐ **Animal businesses** such as boarding, breeding and selling pets need a council licence.

**Ask before you spend.** Fees, conditions and waiting times vary. Phone or email the council licensing team before you sign a lease or buy equipment. Business Gateway can tell you which licences your idea needs.

Sources: Food Standards Scotland, “Registering a food business”; mygov.scot, “Starting a food business”; Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005; Fife Council, “Licences and permits” (updated 17 September 2026), “Street trader’s licence” and “Second-hand dealer’s licence”; Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982; mygov.scot, “Short-term lets licensing”; Care Inspectorate; Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Insurance: what is compulsory and what is wise

Only a couple of insurances are required by law, but one claim can sink a small business. Think about what could go wrong, then cover the things you could not afford to pay for yourself.



*A fire mark of the Caledonian Insurance Company, Edinburgh, after 1805. Plates like this showed which insurer's fire brigade would come. Public domain.*

## ■ Compulsory

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### Employers' liability

Required **as soon as you employ someone**, with cover of at least **£5 million** from an authorised insurer. It pays compensation if an employee is hurt or made ill by their work. You can be fined **£2,500 for every day** you are not properly insured, and £1,000 if you do not display the certificate where staff can see it (a website or intranet counts). You do not need it if you only employ close family members.

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### Motor

If you use a vehicle for work, your motor insurance must cover **business use**. Ordinary social cover usually does not.

## ■ Not compulsory, but often needed

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### **Public liability**

Covers claims if a customer or member of the public is injured or their property is damaged because of your work. Not a legal requirement, but councils, markets, event organisers and many clients insist on it, often £1 million to £5 million.

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### **Professional indemnity**

For advice and services: covers claims that your mistake cost a client money. Some professional bodies require it.

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### **Product liability**

If you make or sell goods that could cause harm.

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### **Stock, tools and premises**

Theft, fire and flood. Landlords often require buildings cover.

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### **Business interruption**

Replaces lost income if you cannot trade after an insured event.

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### **Cyber**

Helps if you are hacked or lose customer data.

**Working from home?** Tell your home insurer. Normal home cover may not include business equipment, stock or customers visiting, and not telling them could void a claim.

Check any insurer or broker is on the **FCA Register** ([register.fca.org.uk](https://register.fca.org.uk)). A broker can compare cover for you; the British Insurance Brokers' Association has a Find a Broker search.

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Sources: GOV.UK, "Employers' liability insurance"; HSE, "Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969: a brief guide"; Road Traffic Act 1988, Part VI; Association of British Insurers, business insurance guidance; FCA Register. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Data protection and the ICO fee

If you keep any information about people, such as customer names, phone numbers, emails, staff records or CCTV footage, data protection law applies to you. Most businesses must also pay a small yearly fee to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).



*Gabriel Metsu, Man Writing a Letter, about 1664–66, National Gallery of Ireland. Public domain.*

### ■ The data protection fee

| Tier                            | Who                                                  | Fee |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Tier 1: micro</b>            | Turnover up to £632,000 or no more than 10 staff     | £52 |
| <b>Tier 2: small and medium</b> | Turnover up to £36 million or no more than 250 staff | £78 |

Pay by direct debit and each fee is **£5 less**.

You pay every year. Not paying when you should can lead to a fine.

### ■ Do I have to pay?

Use the ICO's free online **fee self-assessment** ([ico.org.uk/fee-checker](https://ico.org.uk/fee-checker)); it takes a few minutes. Some businesses are exempt, for example if they only use personal data for their own staff administration, accounts and records, or advertising their own goods to their own customers. But using **CCTV**, a dashcam or a video doorbell for business means you are not exempt.

### ■ The basics of UK GDPR, in plain English

- ☐ Only collect what you need, and say why you need it in a short **privacy notice** (on your website or a printed sheet).
- ☐ Keep it secure: passwords, two-step login, locked cabinets.
- ☐ Do not keep it longer than you need.
- ☐ Let people see, correct or delete what you hold about them when they ask.

- ☐ For marketing emails and texts, get consent, or use the “soft opt-in” for existing customers with an easy way to unsubscribe.
- ☐ If you lose data in a way that puts people at risk, you may have to tell the ICO within 72 hours.

**Free help.** The ICO has a small business hub, template privacy notices and a helpline on **0303 123 1113**.

Sources: ICO, “Guide to the data protection fee”, “Data protection fee self-assessment” and “Exemptions”; Data Protection (Charges and Information) Regulations 2018, reg. 3 (as amended from 17 February 2025); GOV.UK, “Pay the data protection fee”; ICO, SME hub and guidance on PECR and personal data breaches. Checked 18 October 2026.

**K**eeping business money separate from your own is the single easiest way to make tax returns, budgeting and any HMRC questions painless.



Quentin Massys, *The Moneylender and his Wife*, 1514, Musée du Louvre. Public domain.

### ■ Do I need a business account?

- **Limited company:** yes in practice. The company is a separate legal person, so its money must go into an account in the company's name.

- **Sole trader:** not required by law, but strongly advised. Many banks' personal account terms do not allow business use, and a separate account keeps your records clean.

## ■ What to compare

- Monthly fees, and charges for cash deposits and card payments
- Free banking periods for start-ups, and what happens after
- Links to bookkeeping and Making Tax Digital software
- Card readers and payment links for taking payments
- Whether you can bank cash locally (Post Office or a bank branch)
- Overdraft and loan options, and any personal guarantee

## ■ How safe is the money?

Deposits with UK-authorised banks and building societies are protected by the **Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS)** up to **£120,000** per person or

business, per banking licence (from 1 December 2025). Some app-based payment firms are e-money institutions; their money is “safeguarded” but not FSCS-protected. Check which yours is.

**Scams aimed at businesses.** Fake invoices, “we’ve changed our bank details” emails, and calls pretending to be your bank or HMRC are common. Always confirm new bank details by phoning a number you already know. Micro-businesses tricked into sending a Faster Payment can usually claim reimbursement from their bank, up to £85,000. Our guide *Money: From Shells to Scams* has a chapter on scams aimed at small businesses.

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Sources: FSCS, “Deposit limit protection increase”; Bank of England, “PRA confirms FSCS deposit limit to be increased to £120,000 from 1 December” (November 2025); FCA, “Electronic money and payment institutions: safeguarding”; Payment Systems Regulator, APP scams reimbursement requirement. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Free help: Business Gateway and grants

**Y**ou do not have to work all this out alone. Scotland has a free, publicly funded business support service, and councils run small grant schemes for new businesses. Advice costs nothing, so use it early.



*Village Politicians, engraving by Abraham Raimbach after Sir David Wilkie, 1813. Talking it through has always helped. Rijksmuseum. CC0.*

### ■ Business Gateway

Business Gateway is run by Scotland's councils and is free for anyone starting or growing a business. It offers:

- one-to-one advice from a local adviser, by phone, video or in person;

- free webinars and workshops, from business plans to marketing on a budget;
- a business plan guide and template, market research reports and online guides;
- a 10-minute online **Business Support Tool** that gives you a personal toolkit and connects you to your local team.

**Business Gateway Fife** is at Saltire House, Pentland Park, Glenrothes KY6 2AL, and on 01592 858 333. Website: [bgateway.com/local-offices/fife](http://bgateway.com/local-offices/fife).

## ■ Money for Fife businesses (October 2026)

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**Fife Start-Up Grant** A small Fife Council grant towards the costs of starting to trade, such as equipment, stock or certification. For people starting in Fife in the next month, or who started in the last 3 months. You must be working with a Business Gateway Fife adviser, who completes the application with you. It is paid **after** you spend: you cannot claim for anything bought before approval, and you have 45 days to claim. Open until **14 February 2027**.

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**Fife Investment Fund** Interest-free **repayable** grants of up to £10,000 for Fife businesses investing to grow or to cut carbon.

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**SME Development Grant** Help for small and medium Fife firms to develop and grow.

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**Enterprise Hub Fife** Affordable offices, hot desks and meeting rooms for start-ups in Glenrothes.

## ■ Elsewhere in Scotland

- **Find Business Support**  
([findbusinesssupport.gov.scot](http://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)) lists every public grant, loan and advice service in one search.
- **Women's Business Centre**, run by Women's Enterprise Scotland, for women starting and growing businesses.
- **Supplier Development Programme**: free training on winning public-sector contracts.
- **Scottish Enterprise** works with businesses aiming for fast growth.

**Local, practical help.** If you are in Fife and want a hand with a website or getting found online, Business Clarity, part of the Clarity family, works with local businesses:  
[clarityhq.uk](http://clarityhq.uk).

**Grants change often.** Schemes open and close and amounts change. Check the current details with Business Gateway or Find Business Support before you plan around any grant.

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Sources: Business Gateway, home page and “Fife” local office page; Find Business Support, “Fife Start-Up Grant” (updated 16 April 2026) and “Grants for Fife businesses”; Women’s Enterprise Scotland; Supplier Development Programme. Checked 18 October 2026.

## Your first 90 days: a checklist

**T**ick these off in roughly this order. Not every line will apply to you, and that is fine.



*The fish market at St Andrews, Fife, photographed by Hill & Adamson in the 1840s. Public domain.*

### ■ Before you trade

- ☐ Talk to Business Gateway (free) and check whether your idea needs any licences (ch. 9).
- ☐ Decide: sole trader or limited company (ch. 2–4). If a company, register at Companies House (£100) and verify your identity.
- ☐ Check your business name is free and not too like anyone else's.

- ☐ Open a separate business bank account (ch. 12).
- ☐ Food business? Register with the council at least **28 days** before you start.
- ☐ Arrange insurance: public liability if you meet the public, business use on your car, and tell your home insurer (ch. 10).
- ☐ Taking a lease? Get it checked, and ask about rates relief (ch. 8).

## ■ **First month**

- ☐ Set up simple bookkeeping: a spreadsheet or app, and a folder for receipts.
- ☐ Register with HMRC: Self Assessment (sole trader) or Corporation Tax within 3 months of starting (company).
- ☐ Do the ICO fee self-assessment and pay if needed (£52 for most micro businesses).
- ☐ Write a short privacy notice and simple terms and conditions.
- ☐ Apply for the Small Business Bonus Scheme or other rates relief if you have premises.

- ☐ Put aside a share of every payment for tax in a separate savings pot, so the January bill is never a shock.

## ■ Months two and three

- ☐ Check your rolling 12-month turnover against the £90,000 VAT threshold each month.
- ☐ Hiring? Register as an employer before the first payday, get employers' liability insurance and set up a workplace pension (ch. 7).
- ☐ Put key dates in your calendar (ch. 15).
- ☐ Review prices and costs: are you actually making a profit after your time and tax?
- ☐ Ask Business Gateway about grants, webinars and a follow-up meeting.
- ☐ Back up your records and turn on two-step login for email and banking.

## Key dates calendar

**P**ut these in your diary now. Most penalties for small businesses are for missing a date, not for getting a sum wrong.

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**Every month** Check your rolling 12-month turnover against the £90,000 VAT threshold.

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**1 April** New rates bills and reliefs; minimum wage rates usually change.

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**6 April** New tax year begins; new tax rates and thresholds apply.

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**31 July** Second Self Assessment payment on account.

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**5 October** Deadline to register for Self Assessment if you started in the last tax year.

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|                                                |                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>31 January</b>                              | Self Assessment online return and balancing payment; first payment on account.     |
| <b>3 months after a company starts trading</b> | Tell HMRC the company is active for Corporation Tax.                               |
| <b>Every 12 months</b>                         | Company confirmation statement (£50); ICO fee renewal; insurance renewal.          |
| <b>9 months after company year end</b>         | Company accounts to Companies House; Corporation Tax payment (9 months and 1 day). |
| <b>12 months after company year end</b>        | Company Tax Return (CT600) to HMRC.                                                |
| <b>Quarterly, if you use MTD</b>               | Making Tax Digital updates; VAT returns if VAT-registered.                         |

**Set reminders.** Sign up for Companies House email reminders, use the HMRC app, and put a reminder a month before each deadline.

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Sources: GOV.UK, “Self Assessment tax returns: deadlines”; GOV.UK, “Accounts and tax returns for private limited companies”; GOV.UK, “Filing your company’s confirmation statement”; ICO, data protection fee; mygov.scot, non-domestic rates. Checked 18 October 2026.

## WORDS YOU WILL HEAR

# Jargon buster



### **Allowable expenses**

Business costs you can take off your takings before working out taxable profit.

### **Assessor**

The official who sets the rateable value of business premises.

### **Cash basis**

Counting income and costs when money actually moves, not when invoiced. The default for most sole traders.

### **Class 4 NI**

National Insurance paid by the self-employed on profits, through Self Assessment.

### **Companies House**

The UK register of companies, where limited companies are formed and file accounts.

### **Confirmation statement**

A yearly check that the company's details on the register are right (£50 online).

### **Corporation Tax**

Tax a limited company pays on its profits.

## **CT600**

The Company Tax Return form.

## **Director**

The person legally responsible for running a company.

## **Dividend**

A share of a company's profit paid to shareholders, after Corporation Tax.

## **Employment Allowance**

A yearly reduction of up to £10,500 in employer National Insurance.

## **FSCS**

The scheme that protects bank deposits up to £120,000 if a bank fails.

## **ICO**

Information Commissioner's Office: the UK data protection regulator.

## **Limited liability**

Owners risk only what they put into the company, not their personal assets.

## **MTD**

Making Tax Digital: digital records and quarterly updates to HMRC.

## **Non-domestic rates**

The Scottish name for business rates on premises.

## **Payments on account**

Two advance Self Assessment payments, on 31 January and 31 July.

## **PAYE**

Pay As You Earn: how employers take tax and National Insurance from wages.

## **Personal guarantee**

A promise to pay a company's debt yourself if the company cannot.

## **Poundage**

The pence-in-the-pound rate used to work out business rates.

## **PSC**

Person with significant control: usually someone with over 25% of a company.

## **Rateable value**

The value the assessor puts on a property for business rates.

## **Registered office**

A company's official, public address.

## **SBBS**

Small Business Bonus Scheme: Scotland's rates relief for small premises.

## **Self Assessment**

The yearly tax return system for the self-employed and others.

## **Sole trader**

A self-employed person who owns and runs a business as an individual.

## **Taxable turnover**

The value of sales that are not VAT-exempt, used for the VAT threshold.

## **Trading allowance**

The first £1,000 of trading income each year, tax-free.

## **UTR**

Unique Taxpayer Reference: your 10-digit Self Assessment number.

## **VAT**

Value Added Tax, charged on most sales once registered; 20% standard rate.

GO FURTHER

## Library and useful links



Tap any link to open it. Our guides live at [goclarity.uk](https://goclarity.uk).

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### Money: From Shells to Scams

How scams work and how to stop them, including fake invoices and other scams aimed at small businesses. [Chapter 12](#)

[goclarity.uk/guides/avoiding-scams.html](https://goclarity.uk/guides/avoiding-scams.html)

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### Letting Your Property in Scotland

Landlord rules, short-term let licences and tax, if your business is letting. [Chapter 9](#)

[goclarity.uk/guides/letting-your-property-scotland.html](https://goclarity.uk/guides/letting-your-property-scotland.html)

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### Business Clarity

Local help for Fife businesses with websites and getting set up online. [Chapter 13](#)

[clarityhq.uk](https://clarityhq.uk)

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## Clarity Guides library

All our guides, each with a phone edition.

Home page

[goclarity.uk](http://goclarity.uk)

### ■ Official and free help

Business Gateway: [www.bgateway.com](http://www.bgateway.com)

Find Business Support:

[findbusinesssupport.gov.scot](http://findbusinesssupport.gov.scot)

GOV.UK: set up a business: [www.gov.uk/set-up-business](http://www.gov.uk/set-up-business)

HMRC: register for Self Assessment: [www.gov.uk/register-for-self-assessment](http://www.gov.uk/register-for-self-assessment)

Companies House: register a company: [www.gov.uk/limited-company-formation](http://www.gov.uk/limited-company-formation)

mygov.scot: non-domestic rates relief: [www.mygov.scot/non-domestic-rates-relief](http://www.mygov.scot/non-domestic-rates-relief)

Scottish Assessors: rateable values: [www.saa.gov.uk](http://www.saa.gov.uk)

ICO: fee self-assessment: [ico.org.uk/fee-checker](http://ico.org.uk/fee-checker)

Food Standards Scotland: [www.foodstandards.gov.scot](http://www.foodstandards.gov.scot)

Fife Council: business and licences: [www.fife.gov.uk](http://www.fife.gov.uk)

Acas: employment advice: [www.acas.org.uk](http://www.acas.org.uk)

FCA Register: [register.fca.org.uk](https://register.fca.org.uk)

## HOW WE CHECKED

# Sources



All sources were checked on **18 October 2026**.

Figures are for the 2026–27 tax year unless stated.

Taxes, fees, reliefs, grants and thresholds change, usually each April; always check the live figure with the source, an accountant or Business Gateway before relying on it.

## HMRC and GOV.UK (all checked 18 October 2026)

GOV.UK: Tax-free allowances on property and trading income; Set up as a sole trader; Rules for sole trader business names; Check how to register for Self Assessment (5 October 2026 deadline for 2025–26); Self Assessment tax returns: deadlines; Payments on account; Business records if you're self-employed; Expenses if you're self-employed; Simplified expenses.

GOV.UK: Self-employed National Insurance rates; Voluntary National Insurance: rates; Rates and allowances: National Insurance contributions (2026–27).

GOV.UK: Find out if and when you need to use Making Tax Digital for Income Tax (updated 26 March 2026); Find out if you can get an exemption from Making Tax Digital for Income Tax.

GOV.UK: Corporation Tax rates and allowances; Corporation Tax: trading and non-trading; Accounts and tax returns for private limited companies; Tax on dividends (2026–27 rates).

GOV.UK: Register for VAT; How VAT works: VAT thresholds; VAT Notice 700/1; Increasing the VAT registration threshold (from 1 April 2024).

GOV.UK: Register as an employer; Rates and thresholds for employers 2026 to 2027; Eligibility for Employment Allowance; National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates (from 1 April 2026); Employers' liability insurance; Check an employee's right to work documents; Running your business from home.

## **Companies House**

Companies House fees (updated 25 September 2026); Companies House fees are changing from 1 February 2026; Registrar of Companies (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2025 (SI 2025/1137).

When you need to verify your identity for Companies House; Companies House confirms identity verification rollout from 18 November 2025; Filing your company's confirmation statement; Micro-entities, small and dormant companies; Companies Act 2006, ss.171–177.

## **Scottish Government, mygov.scot and Scottish law**

mygov.scot: Current Scottish Income Tax rates, 6 April 2026 to 5 April 2027 (updated 6 April 2026).

mygov.scot: How your rates are calculated (2026–27 poundage); Small Business Bonus Scheme (updated 30 March 2026); Fresh Start Relief; Business Growth Accelerator; Short-term lets licensing.

Non-Domestic Rate (Scotland) Order 2026 (SSI 2026/39); Non-Domestic Rates (Levying and Miscellaneous Amendment) (Scotland) Regulations 2026 (SSI 2026/68) and policy note; gov.scot, Local Government Finance Circular 7/2026, SBBS worked examples; Scottish Budget 2026 to 2027, chapter 2: Tax policy.

Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982; Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005; Partnership Act 1890, s.4(2); Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (Scotland) Regulations 2021.

## **Regulators and other official bodies**

ICO: Guide to the data protection fee; Data protection fee self-assessment; Exemptions; Data Protection (Charges and Information) Regulations 2018, reg. 3, as amended from 17 February 2025.

Food Standards Scotland: Registering a food business; mygov.scot, Starting a food business.

The Pensions Regulator: Earnings thresholds (2026–27); Making contributions to your pension scheme.

FSCS: Deposit limit protection increase; Bank of England, PRA confirms FSCS deposit limit to be increased to £120,000 from 1 December (November 2025). FCA Register. Payment Systems Regulator, APP scams reimbursement.

HSE: Employers' Liability (Compulsory Insurance) Act 1969: a brief guide; Risk assessment. Acas.

## **Local support (Fife)**

Business Gateway: home page and Fife local office page (Saltire House, Glenrothes). Find Business Support: Fife Start-Up Grant (updated 16 April 2026; deadline 14 February 2027); Grants for Fife businesses.

Fife Council: Licences and permits (updated 17 September 2026); Street trader's licence; Second-hand dealer's licence; Register a food business.

## CREDITS

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