

THE OFFICIAL GUIDE TO HOW TO START YOUR SIDE-HUSTLE *(On The Cheap)*

So you want to start a side-hustle? Or maybe you've already begun and want to take your hustling to the next level. Well, you're not alone. **More than 44 million Americans** are taking on side projects to make ends meet or to fulfill their passions. Maybe you have student loans to thank for your entrepreneurial aspirations or maybe you're turning your day job daydreams into a reality. Either way, there's a gig out there that will help you meet your goals and it looks like you're on your way to finding it.

Can we pause for a second to talk about how awesome it is that you're taking this initiative? That elbow grease looks good on you. There is no getting around the fact that this endeavor is going to be hard work, but we can provide you with resources to help make the process a little easier for you. And while we're at it, we'll chat about how you can start your side-hustle on the cheap. Because pursuing your dreams shouldn't hurt your wallet.

- The steps to take to get your side-hustle off the ground
- Tips for how to find balance when you also have a full time job
- Expert advice from women who've found major success
- Template to help you manage your income
- Plenty of helpful resources so you can keep learning and planning



ARE YOU *actually* A SIDE-HUSTLER?

“Side-hustle” has become a sort of catchall for people who work multiple jobs, run small businesses, or pick up extra cash by offering services. Before we really launch into how to start your own, let’s chat about what the differences are between a side-hustle, freelancing, and participating in the gig economy.

For the sake of brevity, throughout this guide we’ll be referring to all of these options as your “side-hustle”, but it’s important to know if you fall into a different category (think: taxes and regulations).

Freelancing:

Traditionally, freelance work is framed as [“a person who pursues a profession without a long-term commitment to any one employer”](#). In other words, you may assist a company with bookkeeping for a few hours a week, but you are generally also allowed to perform the same tasks for other companies. None of which provide you with benefits such as healthcare or a 401(k). Typically as a freelancer, you aren’t selling a product or hiring employees.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Basically taxes can be really messy thanks to your different sources of income. Some clients will provide you with proper tax forms and some will PayPal you for a one-time-project. Oh, and you have to file taxes every quarter because chances are most of your income will be untaxed as a freelancer. [This guide](#) is a good introduction to what you need to know about freelance taxes.

Gig Economy:

Love it or hate it, for now, [the gig economy](#) is here to stay. The gig economy is made up of contract workers. Maybe that’s a part-time job at a retail shop or being a driver for a car-sharing service. Even renting out a room in your house can be considered part of the gig economy. Generally a gig economy job really relies on an app or company to provide you with work, but without a formal agreement. This differs from freelancing, where oftentimes you know if you can consistently expect work or bid on bigger projects.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Like freelancing, you'll need to get your tax ducks in a row, but this should be more simple. Part-time work at an established business should have a formal process for how taxes are managed. So will any apps you're using to get work. When you start working for them, make sure you know what to expect tax-wise. It is also a good idea to see what your liability is, if for example you're driving a car that could get in an accident or walking a dog that could run away. Learn the risks and if the company you're working with will have your back. If you're using a service that helps procure your work like a childcare agency or a food delivery service, learn how much of a cut they're taking and make sure it's an amount you're comfortable with.

Side-Hustle:

While there is no official definition of what constitutes a side-hustle yet, a side-hustle should be thought of more as a small business. And it's totally okay if it's a business of one and your office is your living room. That could mean selling your handmade jewelry at a local street fair or being a marketing consultant for small businesses. You can offer services similar to those seen in the gig economy, but it becomes a side-hustle when you're in control of your future. In the gig economy, if an app you use to procure work shuts down unexpectedly, you can be left with no source of income.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

Do your research when it comes to [small business taxes](#), [insurance](#), and [registering your business](#). There are a lot of variables in play depending on what your side-hustle is, so take your time figuring out how to protect you and your business from future issues.

NOW WHAT?

There is definitely some overlap between these options, but hopefully you have a better idea of which type of work is right for you. Consider this guide a choose your own adventure story.

If you already know what path you want to take, you can skip to **page 6**. But if you are still weighing your options, the quiz on the next page can help point you in the right direction.

HEY YOU! *Are you a side-hustler, freelancer, or part of the gig economy?*

Q: Why are you reading this guide right now? Btw, we're really glad you are!

- A I dream of running my own business one day.
- B I'm looking to make new connections or work in new industries.
- C I want to make a little extra cash, but in a way where I am getting paid for every hour that I work.

Q: Are you unhappy at work? If so why?

- A I'm sick of the status quo. I want to mix things up and be innovative at work.
- B I like aspects of my job, but I'm not doing enough of what I love. I want to keep growing certain skills, but my job doesn't allow that.
- C My job is great, but my salary is lower than I'd like it to be. I need a little extra cash to pay off debt or to fund my next vacation.

Q: What is your ideal work location?

- A In a space I can call my own. I'll work in my garage, as long as I get to call the shots.
- B My couch. Why work in an office when I am more productive working solo in my living room?
- C I'm flexible. An office, a restaurant, on the road, wherever, works for me.

Q: How financially stable are you?

- A I'm in a stable place financially. I wouldn't say 'no' to some extra income, but I'm also comfortable with working on a passion project for free for a while.
- B I live within my means and have a good safety net if I ever decide the 9-5 isn't for me.
- C I have major money stress and some guaranteed, quickly earned income would be a big help.

Q: Where do you see yourself in five years? Dream big.

- A Running my own business. Hopefully with employees who share my vision.
- B Either settling down into my dream job or working remotely while I travel to new places.
- C Debt free. Goodbye car payment and credit card bills.

**IF YOU GOT MOSTLY A:***Side-Hustler*

You're ready to hustle hard. You know that you may not see a financial return on your investment now, but you don't mind working late nights if it means you're working on something that excites you.

IF YOU GOT MOSTLY B:*Freelancer*

Freelancing comes with flexibility, but it can also open many doors that may lead to the job you've always wanted. You're ready to work overtime if it means new opportunities, connections, and skills to add to your resumé.

IF YOU GOT MOSTLY C:*Part of the gig economy*

Guaranteed extra income would take a lot of financial stress off your back. Which is why you're looking for side work that pays. You don't want to spend hours drumming up business for no guarantee of a return. You'll take a smaller, but guaranteed, paycheck any day.

3 STEPS TO *doing* THE DAMN THING

1 FIND CLARITY

Hopefully that quiz helped point you in the right direction, but if not, take some time to consider exactly what kind of work or project you are looking for. Write it down (no really, see below). Tell your friends. Make a vision board. Do whatever you have to do to set goals and start to solidify your plan.

What's your hustle?

How much will you charge?

Do you need supplies?

(WEBSITE, BUSINESS CARDS, HOT GLUE GUN, THE WORKS)

What are your next steps?

2 OWN IT

Once you're ready to take the next steps from fantasy to reality, make your dream your own. Below is a checklist of a few things you may have to do in order to take control of your new side-hustle.

- Register a website domain and set up a basic site with contact information.
- Consider [registering your business as a LLC](#) if you're worried about liability.
- [Submit trademark, patent, or copyright applications](#) for your big idea/witty brand name if you're worried your ideas might be copied.
- Order business cards/stationary/bus benches with your business info on them.
- Register for the app that will help you land new gigs. Get the ball rolling on any approval processes while you're at it.
- Put the word out there. Shout your plans from the rooftops. Or at least LinkedIn and let everyone know you're ready to be hired or change their life with the top secret cookie recipe you've been holding on to.
- Speaking of cookies. If you're looking to sell food-related items, you will want to look into the legality of selling anything consumable. [There are major regulations regarding food sales](#), learn them before you find yourself in hot water.
- Get social. Snag your brand's name (or yours if you're a freelancer) on all the top social media channels even if you aren't planning on using them right away. It would be a bummer if down the line someone got the handle you needed and ruined your marketing plans.

3 MAKE ROOM IN YOUR LIFE

Think about this new adventure like dating. Whenever you're dating someone new and it starts to get serious, you have to reallocate your time. All the time you're spending with bae is probably being transferred from other relationships or activities in your life. We all know how rocky that transition can be. But eventually you adjust and life starts to feel normal relatively quickly.

That's kind of how it feels when you take on work outside of work. It's time to plan date night with your side-hustle. Maybe you book Thursday night for work with no exceptions made. Or perhaps you set your alarm early before work and chip away an hour each day. Time spent strolling through the Sunday farmers market might be replaced with a grocery delivery service and working on client proposals. Find a schedule that works for you, keeps you productive, and doesn't make you feel overwhelmed. Then stick to it.

Do the math

EXAMPLE:

How many hours do you anticipate you'll need to devote to your new hustle every week?

10 hours

How many days a week do you want to work on it?

4 days

Now, divide the number you got from A by the number you got from B. What does that leave you with?

2.5 hours for 4 days a week

Now you try

How many hours do you anticipate you'll need to devote to your new hustle every week?

How many days a week do you want to work on it?

Now, divide the number you got from A by the number you got from B. What does that leave you with?

VOILA!

(You can now easily pencil in the hours for your new schedule.)



Side-Hustler

BUDGETING TEMPLATE

Side-hustling can come with quite a few responsibilities that you may not be paid for. Not upfront anyways. A lot of side-hustling involves investing in yourself and your vision. Sometimes that means money, but you really don't have to spend a ton of money to get a side-hustle up and running. But you will have to invest time (make sure to check out the

free and inexpensive side-hustles we love at the end of this guide!). Because there is no guaranteed side-hustle paycheck automatically deposited into your bank account every two weeks, you'll have to start looking at the income you earn differently. We've created a budget template that will help you reframe how you see your side-hustle income.

How to use this template:

When first launching a side-hustle, you'll likely make less income than you'd like for the time and energy you expend on a project. That's why it's important to track your income and budget over time. You'll be able to clearly see where you need to make changes in how you spend your time, how you charge for services or products, and how much progress you've made towards your goals. This template may not be the perfect fit for your needs, but hopefully it will give you a jumping off point for budgeting and tracking your income.

EXAMPLE

PROJECT	Website redesign for small business
HOURS SPENT INDIRECTLY	1 hour researching potential clients + 1 hour creating pitch + 1 hour lunch interview with client = 3 hours
HOURS SPENT DIRECTLY	27 hours designing website + 3 hours working on client changes to final product = 30 hours
IDEAL HOURLY RATE	My time is worth \$23 per hour
EXPENSES	\$40 on lunch with client + \$20 for design tools used on project
BILLED INCOME	The total project was billed at \$1,200
PROFIT	\$1,200 minus expenses (\$60) and minus time spent on project (33 hours at \$23 per hour = \$749) = a \$391 profit on top of meeting your desired hourly rate!

Now it's your turn!

PROJECT	
HOURS SPENT INDIRECTLY	
HOURS SPENT DIRECTLY	
HOURLY RATE	
EXPENSES	
INCOME	
PROFIT	

Want Google Sheets to do the math for you? Just use [this spreadsheet](#). Open it up, select "File" and then "Make A Copy" and add it to your Google Drive.



Side-Hustle STRUGGLES

Don't let all those fabulous Instagram entrepreneurs fool you. The side-hustle struggle is real. There will be many challenges you face, so we've outlined a few of the big ones you should watch out for and asked successful side-hustlers and entrepreneurs for their advice on how to tackle these issues. What can we say? We like being proactive.

Problem: slow periods

Things are moving. One day you're pulling an all-nighter to keep up with your workload and the next you're free as a bird. Coming off the high of a full-booked calendar can feel really discouraging, but chances are you'll always have slow—or at least slower—times to get through.

Solution: Believe in yourself and be patient. Now that she is a successful entrepreneur, [Nyakio Grieco the founder of Nyakio Beauty](#),

has a new perspective on the challenging moments, "I wish as a woman of color entrepreneur I would have received the following advice before I started my business: Know your worth, trust your instincts, and stay authentic to your vision. What I know now is that I always knew my worth, I had strong and correct instincts, and my vision was on point. It's just now, 16 years later I have gained the confidence to believe it."

Problem: inconsistent income

This is why it's great to start a side-hustle before giving up your day job to start a business. It's very unlikely your income will ever be super consistent, but ideally over time, you will have a reliable amount of income coming from your side-hustle. As a side-hustler, this should be less stress for you, but if your side-hustle requires expenses like website maintenance or marketing services, then this may affect you more. It can also seriously affect your morale if you have a low month.

Solution: An inconsistent income is to be expected, which is why you should not be pricing

your services or products at a rate that only covers your basic needs. The [Head of Communications at QuickBooks Self-Employed](#), [Kimmie Greene](#), warns "By no means should the amount you need to live today, limit what you should make in a given year," she says. "But knowing this baseline is helpful in figuring out what you need to charge, so you aren't surprised down the line." In other words, it's okay to know exactly what you need to make and to strive to hit that goal, but don't let that goal sell yourself short.

Problem: burnout

While your side-hustle may only take up a few hours a week, chances are your day job is taking up most of your time. Work + adulting + your side-hustle can = hitting a wall. It's difficult enough as it is to manage all of life's responsibilities, but throw in a large order or a quickly approaching deadline and you may find yourself resenting the work that you were once so excited about.

Solution: [Singer-songwriter Brynn Elliott](#) earned a philosophy degree from Harvard while hitting the road and performing 250-plus shows for with musicians like Alanis

Morissette, Brandi Carlile, Switchfoot, and Grace Potter. How did she avoid burnout? According to Elliott, strong time management skills and prioritizing her health and wellness were key, "It was a deadline act for sure. And I had to think outside the box to get it all done." Of course a good night's sleep never hurts, "My first secret to making it all work is that I get eight and a half hours of sleep every night. I have to do that. Some people can go five hours and be fine; if I do that, I'm not there. Sleep is my number one priority."

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LET'S KEEP THIS BALL *rolling*

You have a lot of work ahead of you if you want to make your side-hustle a success. We don't want you to do it alone. There are so many great, free or inexpensive resources out there that can help you start your side-hustle and keep you moving in the right direction. Below are a few of our go-to resources.

Free (or pretty darn cheap) side-hustle resources

RESOURCES:

[7 Free E-Courses That'll Help You Start That Side-Hustle](#)
[Books You Need To Read If You're Self-Employed \(Or Want To Be\)](#)
[The Small Business Grants For Women All Hustlers Should Know About](#)

ADVICE:

[How to Manage the Money You Make From your Side Gig](#)
[A Freelancer's Guide to Taxes](#)
[Need An Emergency Fund In Your Life \(And How To Start One\)](#)
[Inexpensive Marketing Ideas For Small Businesses](#)
[The Fastest and Cheapest Way to Build a Great-Looking Website](#)

PODCAST:

[From Idea to Income in 27 Days: How to Turn Your Side-Hustle Into a Reality](#)
[Side-Hustle School](#)
[This Entrepreneur's Guide To Getting Through A Creative Slump](#)

VIDEO:

[How To Start A Side-Hustle For Less Than 50 Bucks A Month](#)
[The Secret To Marketing A Wellness Business From A Founder Who Did It](#)

