



• THE 48-HOUR BOOKKEEPING RESET

The Complete Beginner's Guide to Fixing Your Messy Books in **48 Hours**.

No accounting experience required. · Works for digital & paper systems.

What you'll walk away with

- ✓ Organize every receipt (paper or digital)
- ✓ Track every transaction without chaos
- ✓ Calculate your real profit, not a guess
- ✓ Lower your tax bill, legally
- ✓ Finally understand the accounting jargon

48 hrs

AVG. CLEANUP

\$0.00

RECONCILED TO

15-25

RIGHT-SIZED CATEGORIES

A NOTE FROM OLTMAN

Bookkeeping that shows up.

If your books have slipped behind, you don't have a discipline problem — you have a system problem. This guide is the same 48-hour playbook we walk clients through: a weekend of small, doable steps that turn a pile of receipts into clean, reconciled books you can actually use.

Follow it section by section. Do the parts that fit the way you work (QuickBooks, spreadsheet, or paper). When you're done, tax time stops being terrifying — and your weekly finances stop being a guessing game.

How to use this guide

Block two half-days on a weekend. Work through Day 1 (organize) and Day 2 (verify). Use the final Checklist to make sure nothing got skipped, then schedule your monthly 2-hour maintenance.

CHAPTER 01

Accounting Words, Decoded.

Before we start, let's translate the jargon. None of this is complicated — the words just sound fancier than the ideas behind them.

Bookkeeping	Keeping track of money coming in and going out. That's literally it.
Transaction	Anytime money moves. Buy supplies? That's a transaction. Get paid? Transaction.
Receipt	Proof you spent money. Paper, email, or a bank statement line.
Invoice	A bill you send asking someone to pay you.
Expense	Money you spend to run your business (rent, supplies, ads).
Income / Revenue	Money customers pay you.
Profit	Income minus expenses. What you actually made.

Reconciliation	Matching your records to your bank statement. Like balancing a checkbook.
Category	A label grouping similar expenses ('Office Supplies', 'Advertising').
Chart of Accounts	Master list of all your categories.
Bank Feed	Bank automatically sends transactions to your software. Saves typing.
QuickBooks (QBO)	Popular cloud bookkeeping software. Works in a web browser.

CHAPTER 02

Why You've Been Avoiding This.

You're not lazy. When bookkeeping falls months behind, your brain sees overwhelming work and triggers avoidance. But every day you wait costs real money:

- You lose receipts that would have lowered your tax bill
- You forget what charges were for
- You might overpay thousands in taxes
- You risk IRS penalties
- You can't make good decisions without knowing your numbers

Why this guide works

Instead of months of agony, you finish in a weekend using small, doable steps. Momentum beats motivation every time.

GETTING STARTED

Gather everything.

Before the real work begins, we collect. One short sweep now saves hours of back-and-forth later.

Step 1 • Hunt down all financial papers

Spend 2–3 hours finding:

- Bank statements (all accounts)
- Credit card statements
- Receipts (wallet, car, drawers, email)
- Payment processor statements (PayPal, Stripe, Square)
- Invoices you sent
- Bills from vendors
- Last year's tax return

Step 2 • Choose your system

METHOD	BEST FOR	COST
QuickBooks Online	Tech-comfortable, want speed	\$30-90 / month
Spreadsheet	Like Excel, want free	Free
Paper Ledger	Prefer handwriting	~ \$20

We'll show you how to do all three methods in this guide.

Step 3 • Set up receipt storage

Digital (QuickBooks)

- Download QBO app → take photo of each receipt → app saves it automatically → throw away the paper
- Or forward email receipts to your custom @qbodocs.com address (Banking → Receipts tab)

Spreadsheet

- Create folder 'Business Receipts 2024' with 12 monthly subfolders
- Photo paper receipts → email to yourself → save as YYYY-MM-DD Vendor Amount

Paper

- Buy an accordion file with 12 pockets → label each month → file receipts immediately

⚠ **Heads up: thermal paper fades**

Thermal paper receipts fade in 6–12 months. Take photos as backup — a faded receipt is the same as no receipt at tax time.

01 SECTION

DAY 01

Organize every transaction.

Today we put every dollar in its place. Not perfectly — just consistently.

Step 1 · Set up categories

Categories group similar expenses. Start with these:

Advertising	Auto & Vehicle	Bank Fees	Cost of Goods
Insurance	Meals	Office Supplies	Phone & Internet
Rent	Repairs	Software	Utilities

QuickBooks setup

- 1 Log in → gear icon → Chart of Accounts
- 2 Review pre-made list, make duplicates inactive
- 3 Keep 15-25 categories total

Spreadsheet setup

Create columns: Date | Description | Category | Amount In | Amount Out | Receipt?

Paper setup

Buy a ledger book, draw the same columns with ruler and pencil.

Step 2 · Connect your bank (digital only)

QuickBooks

- 1 Banking → Add Account → search your bank → enter login credentials
- 2 Critical: start date = day after last reconciliation (or go back only 3-6 months if never done)
- 3 Select checking and credit card accounts to connect

⚠ Don't over-pull history

Going too far back creates duplicates. Start conservatively — you can always pull earlier months later.

Step 3 · Categorize transactions

QuickBooks bulk method (FAST)

- 1 Banking → Transactions → For Review
- 2 Click 'Description' header to sort alphabetically (groups identical vendors)
- 3 Check first transaction in a vendor group
- 4 Hold SHIFT → check last transaction in group (selects all between)
- 5 Batch Actions → Categorize → choose category → Apply
- 6 Repeat for each vendor group

Turn OFF auto-suggestions

Gear → Banking → uncheck 'Enable suggested categorization'. Auto-suggestions miscategorize silently and cost you accuracy.

Spreadsheet method

- 1 Open bank statement
- 2 For each transaction, add a row: Date, Description, Category, Amount In/Out, Receipt
- 3 Continue for all transactions in the period you're organizing

DAY 01 · CONTINUED

Day 1, part two.

Step 4 · Handle invoices correctly

Common mistake: recording the same income twice — once when invoiced, again when paid.

QuickBooks fix

- 1 Sales → Invoices → find the invoice
- 2 Click invoice → Receive Payment
- 3 Enter amount and date, Deposit to 'Undeposited Funds'
- 4 Banking → For Review → find bank deposit → Match (don't Add)

Spreadsheet

Create a separate 'Invoices' tab. Record income once — either when invoiced OR when paid. Pick one and stick with it.

Step 5 · Find profit leaks

While categorizing, hunt for:

- Subscription creep — multiple similar services. Cancel duplicates.
- Forgotten trials — recurring \$9.99 charges you don't recognize.
- Duplicate payments — same vendor, same amount, same month.
- Unbilled work — did you forget to invoice for completed work?

Most owners find \$200-\$500 / month in waste here

That's \$2,400-\$6,000 per year you were about to lose quietly. This single step often pays for the whole weekend — and then some.

02

SECTION

DAY 02

Verify everything matches.

Now we prove the records are true. Reconciling sounds scary; it's just matching what you wrote down to what the bank actually saw.

Step 6 · Reconcile to bank statements

Reconciling = proving your records match the bank's truth.

QuickBooks

- 1 Get bank statement (paper or PDF)
- 2 Accounting → Reconcile → select account
- 3 Enter ending date and ending balance from statement
- 4 Start Reconciling → check off matching transactions line by line
- 5 Watch the 'Difference' at bottom — must reach \$0.00
- 6 When \$0.00, click Finish

⚠ If the difference isn't zero

Find the error. Never click 'Adjust' or 'Force Balance'. Those buttons hide problems instead of fixing them.

Spreadsheet

Sum all deposits, sum all expenses, then calculate: Start Balance + Deposits – Expenses = Your End Balance. Compare to the bank statement.

Step 7 · Fix common errors

- Uncategorized items — find and assign proper categories.
- Negative in wrong place — refunds should be positive money in, not negative out.
- Personal expenses — categorize as 'Owner Draw' or 'Shareholder Distribution'.

Step 8 · Automate future work (digital)

Create QuickBooks rules

- 1 Banking → Rules → New Rule

- 2 Name it (example: 'Verizon Phone Bill')
- 3 Set conditions: Description contains 'Verizon'
- 4 Set action: Category = Phone & Internet
- 5 Auto-add: check ONLY if the amount is always the same
- 6 Save

Good for auto-add: rent, insurance, fixed subscriptions. Never auto-add: Amazon, gas stations (variable amounts).

Step 9 · Handle loans correctly

Every loan payment = Principal (pays down debt) + Interest (deductible expense).

- QuickBooks: when recording a payment, create 2 lines — Principal to loan liability account, Interest to Interest Expense.
- Spreadsheet: record as 2 separate line items (principal is not an expense; interest is).

Step 10 · Lock your clean books

- QuickBooks: Gear → Account Settings → Advanced → Close the Books → set date + password
- Spreadsheet: make a backup copy with today's date and protect cells
- Paper: draw a line, write 'RECONCILED [DATE]', photocopy all pages

CHAPTER 03

Finding Your TRUE Profit (SDE).

Standard profit reports are misleading. To know what your business really generates for you, we calculate Seller's Discretionary Earnings (SDE) — the total cash benefit you extract from the business.

QuickBooks path

Reports → Profit and Loss → Last 12 Months → Export to Excel.

Spreadsheet path

Calculate Total Income – Total Expenses = Net Income, then add the items below.

Start	Net Income
+	Your salary / wages
+	Interest on loans
+	Depreciation (paper expense)
+	Personal perks (health insurance, car, phone)
+	One-time expenses (lawsuit, moving, equipment)
+	Non-working family wages
=	TRUE PROFIT (SDE)

Example

Net Income looks like \$35K. After add-backs, true SDE = \$94K. Same business, very different story — and a very different conversation with lenders, buyers, and yourself.

CHAPTER 04

Simple Tax Strategies to Keep More Money.

Consult a CPA before implementing

These are overviews to power informed discussions — not tax advice. Every situation is different; loop in a professional before you act.

Strategy 1 • Home office rental (Augusta Rule)

Rent your home to your business up to 14 days/year. The business deducts the expense; you receive the income tax-free.

- Hold board meetings / strategy sessions at home
- Charge a fair market rate (compare to local venue rentals)
- Document with a rental agreement, agendas, and minutes

Example: \$500/day × 10 meetings = \$5,000 tax-free to you, \$5,000 deduction for the business.

Strategy 2 • S-Corporation (cut self-employment tax)

Default LLC = 15.3% self-employment tax on ALL profit. S-Corp splits into:

- Reasonable salary (subject to payroll tax)
- Distributions (EXEMPT from 15.3% tax)

Savings on \$100K profit

LLC pays \$15,300. S-Corp (\$60K salary / \$40K distribution) pays \$9,180. Save \$6,120 / year.

Strategy 3 • Hire your kids

Kids can earn ~\$14,600/year tax-free. The business gets a deduction. If the business is unincorporated and the child is under 18 — no payroll taxes.

- Legitimate work: social media, data entry, modeling, filing, cleaning
- Keep time logs, issue W-2s, pay reasonable rates
- Bonus: fund the child's Roth IRA with earnings = tax-free growth forever

Strategy 4 • Heavy vehicle write-off (Section 179)

Deduct the entire vehicle cost in year 1 (not spread over 5–7 years). Must weigh over 6,000 lbs and be used more than 50% for business.

Example: \$60K truck purchased → full \$60K deduction this year (lowers \$100K profit to \$40K taxable).

YOUR PLAN

Complete checklist.

Print this page. Check each task as you finish. When every box is ticked, your books are clean.

PHASE	TASK	
PREP	Gather all statements, receipts, documents	<input type="checkbox"/>
PREP	Choose system (QuickBooks / Spreadsheet / Paper)	<input type="checkbox"/>
PREP	Set up receipt capture	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 1	Set up 15-25 categories	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 1	Connect bank feeds OR gather statements	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 1	Categorize all transactions	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 1	Turn off auto-suggestions (QB)	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 1	Handle invoices correctly	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 1	Find profit leaks	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 2	Reconcile to \$0.00 difference	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 2	Fix errors (uncategorized, negatives, personal)	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 2	Set up automation rules	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 2	Split loan payments correctly	<input type="checkbox"/>
DAY 2	Lock books	<input type="checkbox"/>
AFTER	Calculate true profit (SDE)	<input type="checkbox"/>
AFTER	Meet with CPA for tax strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>
AFTER	Schedule monthly 2-hour maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>

FINISH LINE

You did it.

You now have clean books, you understand your numbers, and you know your true profitability. The difference between struggling and successful business owners isn't talent — it's having accurate financial information.

Keep going

- 01 Block 2 hours monthly to update your books
- 02 Review profit numbers monthly
- 03 Meet with a CPA for tax strategies
- 04 Set financial goals with real numbers
- 05 Teach a backup person this system

You don't need to be an accountant. You just need organized records and a willingness to look at the numbers regularly. You've got this.

Want a second set of eyes on your books?

At Oltman Bookkeeping Innovations, we untangle messy books, keep them reconciled, and hand you numbers you can actually use — so tax time stops being terrifying.

[Book a free 30-min call](#)

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