

#### IN THIS CHAPTER

- » Picking the right subscription plan
- » Tailoring the QuickBooks interface to mimic the way you work
- » Tackling chart of accounts and custom fields
- » Attaching supporting documents to records and transactions
- » Making a change to your subscription

## Chapter **1**

# Setting the Stage in QuickBooks

**B**uying a new pair of shoes can feel great — at least until you try walking in them. Maybe the fit's a little off, or the insoles aren't quite right. Fortunately, most shoes can be broken in or adjusted to suit your stride. The same goes for QuickBooks Online. While the platform comes ready to use, a few thoughtful tweaks can make your accounting experience far more comfortable. In this chapter, I walk you through picking the right subscription plan and key setup steps — like reviewing your chart of accounts and tailoring system settings — so QuickBooks fits your business (or your clients') just right. With a few tweaks, QuickBooks can be like a well-worn pair of sneakers — ready to go the distance.

## Establishing Your Subscription

A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step — or in QuickBooks Online, with picking a subscription level and setting up your Intuit account. Whether you're starting fresh or coming from another system, you can jump into a plan right away or test-drive a Plus or Advanced sample company first.

## Comparing subscription tiers

Cue up “For the Love of Money” by the O’Jays. Intuit wants more of yours, and you’d prefer to keep it for yourself. This section breaks down what each subscription level includes, what it costs, and how many users you can bring along for the ride. Every plan includes at least one accountant user who doesn’t count toward your limit; Simple Start and above include two. From there, the details start to diverge:



REMEMBER

» **Solopreneur** (\$20/month, \$240/year): Formerly known as QuickBooks Online Self-Employed, this plan is aimed at folks running a side hustle or solo gig.

While there’s some feature overlap, Solopreneur uses a separate version of QuickBooks Online not covered in this book.

» **Simple Start** (\$38/month, \$456/year): You get one full-access user. (That’s you!) Ideal for those who just need the basics — sending invoices, receiving payments, paying bills, and tracking bank transactions.

» **Essentials** (\$75/month, \$900/year): Allows one full-access user and two additional users, plus extra time-tracking only users who can log their hours without touching the rest of your books (which stay walled off like Fort Knox).

In QuickBooks lingo, the lone full-access user is known as the primary admin — aka the big cheese, the super user, the Dude (or Dudette). Additional users can be set up as company admins (deputy cheeses, if you will) or limited to just certain areas of your books, depending on how much power you want to give them or how much trouble you’re trying to avoid.

» **Plus** (\$115/month, \$1,380/year): This version pumps up the volume, er, price but allows one full-access user plus four additional users (for a total of five) plus unlimited “track time only” users. But wait, there’s more! You also get unlimited “view company reports” users who can peek at the numbers but not change a thing. This is the level that you need to buy in at if you track inventory, use purchase orders, track transactions by project or class, and create budgets.

» **Advanced** (\$275/month, \$3,300/year): This is it — the whole enchilada when it comes to price and power. This buffet spread allows one full-access user plus 24 additional users (for a total of 25), along with unlimited “track time only” and “view company reports” users. Is it Taco Tuesday yet? Because this plan is fully loaded. At this level, a desktop app makes for more efficient company access. You can back up and restore your data, create custom reports and charts, sync data with Excel, shepherd transactions with workflows, and much more.



TIP

If you’re the type who says, “I’m not gonna pay a lot for this software,” I have good news: An annual subscription knocks 10 percent off your fees at any subscription level. Frugality for the win!



TIP



TIP

» **Accountant** (free for QuickBooks Pro Advisors): This special version is designed for accountants and bookkeepers and includes a free Advanced subscription to manage your own firm's books. You also get practice management tools and single sign-on access to your client's books so that you can hop between companies without playing login roulette.

Visit <https://quickbooks.intuit.com/accountants/proadvisor> to sign up for the QuickBooks ProAdvisor program. No secret handshakes, passwords, credentials, or even credit cards required — just show up and you're in.

Here's how to start a QuickBooks subscription:

1. **Go to <https://quickbooks.intuit.com>, and then click Plans & Pricing.**
2. **Choose between a 30-day free trial or a discounted rate for the first three months.**



TIP

Intuit typically offers 50 percent off for the first three months, but you may be able to score a steeper discount during promotional events — such as a 90 percent Memorial Day Sale offer. Even better, if your accountant is part of Intuit's ProAdvisor program, they can hook you up with a 30 percent discount — either for the first year or indefinitely. Not bad, right? Flip to Chapter 17 for the full scoop on how the magic happens.



REMEMBER

If you go the free trial route, you'll need to circle back in 30 days to officially start your subscription. Choose the discount instead, and your subscription kicks in right away and keeps rolling until you say otherwise.

3. **Click Choose Plan for the subscription level of your choice.**

## TEST-DRIVING THE GOODS

Not quite ready to commit? QuickBooks offers sample companies you can explore — no signup, no credit card, no strings attached. These demo environments are fully loaded with sample data, so you can click around, test features, and see how each version feels before you sign the dotted line. It's like taking a car for a spin, minus the sales pitch and air freshener:

- **Plus:** <https://qbo.intuit.com/redirect/testdrive>
- **Advanced:** <https://quickbooks.intuit.com/accountants/products-solutions/accounting/online>

4. **If you'd like to include payroll, select a payroll plan. Otherwise, click Continue without Payroll.**

Chapter 4 delves into processing payroll in QuickBooks.

5. **Create a new Intuit account, or sign in to an existing one.**
6. **Provide your payment information, and then click Subscribe.**
7. **Click Get Started to launch the onboarding wizard, which entails the following steps:**

- a. Enter your company name.
- b. Indicate how you previously kept your accounting records.

QuickBooks Online can import accounting records from QuickBooks Desktop or Sage 50.

- c. Choose your industry, business type, and last year's revenue range.
- d. Identify your role and the number of employees.
- e. Optionally schedule a setup call with a live expert.
- f. Pick a setup task, such as personalizing invoices or linking a bank or credit card account.

Intuit automatically opts in new subscribers to QuickBooks Payments, which explains the pop-ups urging you to finish setup. QuickBooks Payments lets customers pay you online, while QuickBooks Online Bill Pay (see Chapter 3) lets you pay vendors. Both are optional and carry extra fees, so activate them only if they fit your business needs.

8. **When you see the Let's Go button, congratulations — you've made it through the initial gauntlet, er, setup.**

Click it to launch your QuickBooks dashboard.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF



REMEMBER

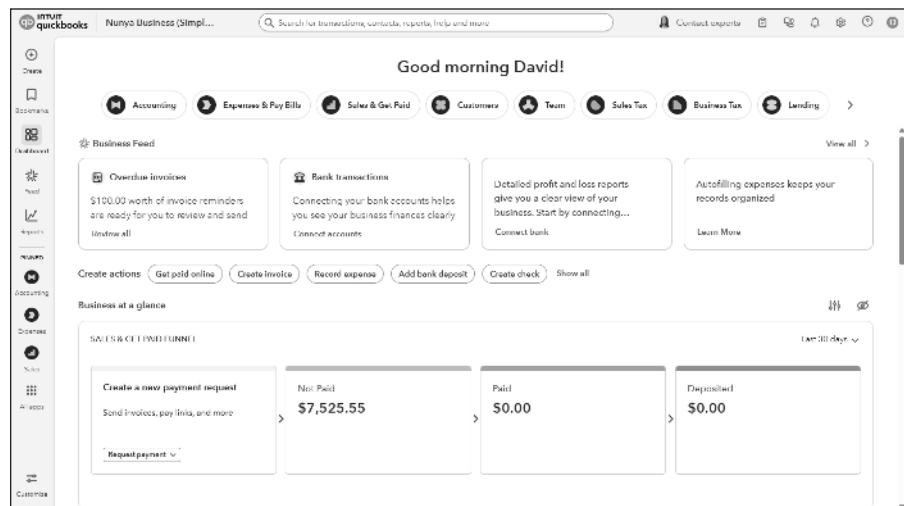
## Seeing Double, Triple, or Not?

- When you log in to your company, you'll see either the new QuickBooks sidebar (Figure 1-1) or the classic sidebar (Figure 1-2). The two look different, but they share the same core features. The new version breaks up the classic sidebar into smaller chunks — now shown as **All Apps** icons on the left and duplicated as buttons across the top. I refer to this throughout the book as *the new sidebar* to distinguish it from the old sidebar.

# MANAGING PASSWORDS WITHOUT LOSING YOUR MIND

If you're logging into QuickBooks regularly, a password manager can make life easier. Tools like 1Password and Dashlane help you create strong, unique passwords for each site and store them behind one master passphrase. Many also store authenticator codes for your Intuit account, which can eliminate the need for QuickBooks to email or text you verification codes every time you log in. I no longer recommend LastPass due to multiple security breaches, including storing user data in unencrypted form. I was a holdout on managing passwords myself until one day a colleague mentioned how much time a password manager saved. That was all it took.

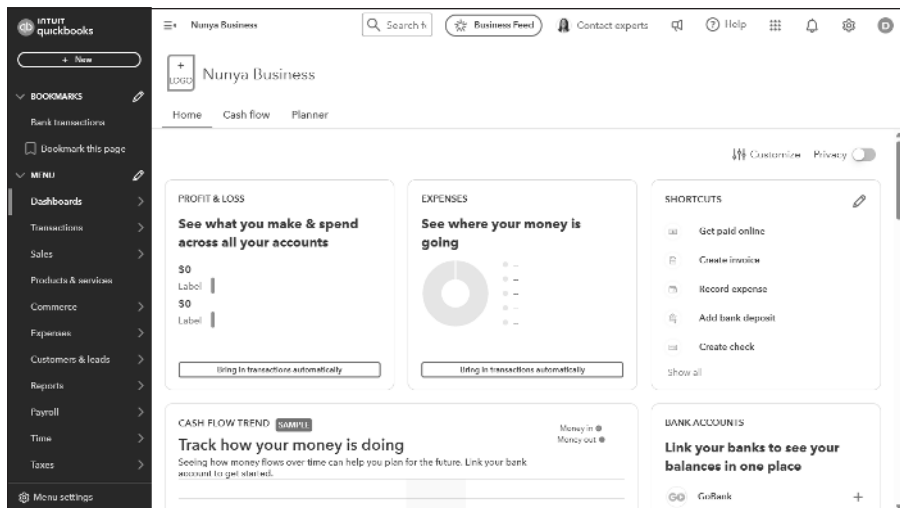
QuickBooks also supports passkeys, which is a newer, more secure way to sign in without typing a password. Instead, you use something like Face ID, a fingerprint, or your device passcode. Passkeys are stored securely, can't be reused or phished, and work well alongside password managers. If your browser or password manager offers to save one, it's worth clicking yes.



**FIGURE 1-1:** The new sidebar interface for QuickBooks Online.

Here's where things get blurry: Features like **Sales**, **Banking**, and **Reports** — once simple menu items — are now called *apps*. That's a big shift from the way QuickBooks used to treat apps as third-party add-ons. Just to be clear: I'm talking about built-in tools, not the marketplace extensions. (Those are still around — see Chapter 7.)

**FIGURE 1-2:**  
The classic sidebar interface in QuickBooks Online.



The result? Two sets of navigation that lead to the same places. If you feel like you're seeing double, you're not imagining things.

## Switching between the interfaces



If you're a seasoned QuickBooks user and feel like you've been dropped into a video game level you never asked to play, relief may be just a couple of clicks away. To try to restore the classic interface, click Settings ⇄ Switch (not Switch Company). Keep in mind that Intuit is threatening to remove this option, although they often miss their own deadlines.

If the switch is available, an optional survey may appear. Just scroll to the bottom and click Skip if you'd rather keep your opinions between you and your beverage of choice. Either way, you'll return to the familiar left-hand navigation panel and the classic QuickBooks layout. And if you ever want to step back into the future, just choose Settings ⇄ Switch again.



REMEMBER

The view you choose doesn't affect your data. It just changes how QuickBooks presents it.

## Working in multiple windows

If you've ever wished you could look at a report while entering a transaction or compare two customers or invoices side by side, you're not alone. The good news: You can open multiple browser windows for the same company.

To do so, just navigate to <https://qbo.intuit.com> in a new browser tab or window, and then sign in as usual. You can work in as many windows as your brain and bandwidth can handle. Want to see the Accounts Receivable Aging Detail report while sending out invoices? No problem. Running a report while reconciling a bank account? Go for it.



REMEMBER

You're still working in a single company file. Any change you make in one window is immediately reflected in the others, so if you're testing something, tread carefully.



TIP

If you're using Chrome, you can right-click a tab and choose Duplicate to quickly spin off a second copy of your session without needing to sign in again.

## Banking on bookmarks

They may not earn interest, but bookmarks — both in QuickBooks *and* in your browser — can save you time every time you log in. Think of them as shortcuts to your favorite corners of QuickBooks, whether you're already signed in or just getting started.

### Creating QuickBooks bookmarks

Here's how to customize your bookmarks:



- 1. Click Edit after you click Bookmarks.**

The Bookmarks dialog box opens.

- 2. Search for and select the pages you want quick access to.**



- 3. Optionally rearrange your list using the drag handles to put your go-to commands at the top.**

- 4. Click Save to apply your changes, or Cancel if you change your mind.**

You can also add bookmarks on the fly — just click + Bookmark This Page. Click Bookmarks to display the option.



TIP

To edit a bookmark, hover over the bookmark and click Edit. An Edit Bookmark dialog box opens, where you can rename or remove the bookmark as needed.



### Adding browser bookmarks

Before you even reach your dashboard, a simple browser bookmark can shave precious clicks off your routine. Bookmarking the QuickBooks login page or, better yet, your company's direct URL, makes it easy to jump in.

To bookmark your QuickBooks company directly:

1. **Sign in to QuickBooks Online at <https://qbo.intuit.com> and wait until your company file is fully open.**
2. **Click the star icon in your browser's address bar:**
  - **Chrome:** It's on the far right of the address bar.
  - **Safari:** Choose Bookmarks ⇨ Add Bookmark.
  - **Firefox:** Click the star and then choose a folder or rename the bookmark.
3. **Rename the bookmark to something clear, like *QuickBooks — [Your Company Name]*.**
4. **Choose a folder — like *Bookmarks Bar* or *Favorites* — for quick access.**
5. **Click Done (or Add), and you're set.**



TIP



REMEMBER

If you're working in multiple companies, save a separate browser bookmark for each one. It's faster than switching between them manually by choosing Settings ⇨ Switch Company, waiting for the company list to load, and then finally making a selection.

To be logged into two companies at the same time, open one in your regular browser window and the other in an incognito or private browsing window. Otherwise, QuickBooks will just switch you back and forth instead of keeping both open. If you're using an Advanced or Accountant subscription, the QuickBooks Online desktop app (see Chapter 13) makes this even easier. You can open windows in multiple companies at once without juggling browser sessions.

## Slimming the sidebar down

If you're sticking with the classic sidebar, you don't have to settle for as-is. QuickBooks lets you tidy things up by hiding what you don't need and bringing your favorite tools to the top. (Users of the new sidebar? Sorry — customization isn't on the menu there. Yet.)

Here's how to customize the sidebar:



1. **Click Edit on the classic sidebar menu.**

The Customize Your Menu dialog box opens.



2. **To rearrange the menu, use the drag handles on the Sections and Menu tabs.**

3. Click Save to apply your changes — or Cancel if you change your mind.



REMEMBER

Turning commands off doesn't remove any functionality from QuickBooks. It just tucks them into the More section at the bottom of the classic sidebar.

## Dolling up your dashboard



Your QuickBooks dashboard is made up of a collection of widgets — small, interactive panels that display key financial info at a glance. Think of them as mini status boards for your money in, money out, bank balances, sales trends, and more. Depending on your subscription and setup, the exact lineup may vary, but commonly available widgets include these:

- » **Invoices:** See which invoices are open, paid, or overdue.
- » **Expenses:** Track recent spending activity.
- » **Bank Accounts:** View balances and reconciliation status.
- » **Profit and Loss:** Get a snapshot of income versus expenses.
- » **Sales:** Monitor recent sales performance.
- » **Tasks:** Stay on top of setup steps or QuickBooks nudges.

To rearrange or hide widgets, click **Customize** on the dashboard to open a task pane or dialog box, where you can toggle widgets on or off and drag them into the order that best suits your workflow. And if someone's peeking over your shoulder, flip the **Privacy** toggle to blur out your financial stats — QuickBooks won't spill your tea unless you say so.

## Silencing the setup task pane

QuickBooks loves to help you get your ducks in a row — sometimes a little *too* eagerly. If your dashboard feels cluttered with onboarding prompts you've already handled (or never plan to), here's how to hush them:



1. **Click Tasks.**  
The Setup task pane appears.
2. **For each category — such as Business Basics or Sales & Get Paid — click the See Tasks dropdown.**
3. **Click Hide Task for any item you don't want to see again.**  
Repeat this step for as many items as you like.

4. **Click Yes on the “Seriously?” prompt that appears.**

(It’s technically an “Are you sure?” message, but still . . .)

5. **When you’re done, close the task pane.**

Your dashboard will breathe easier — and so will you.

To restore hidden tasks, click Tasks, expand the Hidden section, and then scroll down and choose Unhide Task from the See Tasks dropdown.



TIP

## Refining QuickBooks to Fit Your Workflow



Once you’ve chosen a subscription and worked through the setup wizard, QuickBooks is ready to go, but a few small adjustments can make it feel more tailored to the way you work. You can even speed things up with keyboard shortcuts for common tasks, giving your mouse a well-earned break.

For even more ways to streamline your workflow, Chapter 7 introduces automation features available to all users, and Chapter 9 dives into recurring transactions and bundles for those using Essentials, Plus, or Advanced.

### Adjusting company settings



To access global options that you can customize, choose Settings ⇄ Account and Settings. The screen that appears is organized into categories on the left side. Select a category, click Edit within any section to make changes, click Save, and then click Done when you’re finished. Here are some settings worth reviewing:

- » **Company:** Add your logo, or adjust the company name and contact details.
- » **Usage:** See how close you are to limits like the number of users or accounts.
- » **QuickBooks Checking:** Explore QuickBooks’s integrated business bank account.
- » **Sales:** Customize invoices, enable features like progress invoicing or late fees, and set default messages. (See Chapter 2.)
- » **Expenses:** All users can set default bill payment terms. Additional options — available only in Essentials, Plus, and Advanced — are covered in their respective sections later in the book.
- » **Payments:** Activate QuickBooks Payments or link an existing account so you can accept credit cards or bank transfers.

- » **Time:** Set up basic timesheet options, including billable time and service fields. This feature requires the Essentials plan or higher. See Chapter 9 for details.
- » **Advanced:** This is where the more technical settings live — fiscal year start, accounting method (cash or accrual), and your business's tax form.

Let's drill in a little deeper on a few of the Advanced settings that particularly deserve special consideration:

- » **Fiscal Year:** This is the 12-month period your business uses to track income and expenses. In QuickBooks, the fiscal year helps organize your reports and tax documents. It starts in January by default, but you can change it to match your business's reporting cycle — for example, July to June if that's what your accountant uses.
- » **Accounting Method:** This setting in QuickBooks determines *when* your income and expenses appear on reports — not when you're allowed to enter transactions. You can enter invoices, bills, payments, and expenses at any time. QuickBooks uses your accounting method to decide when those entries show up on financial reports:
  - **Cash method:** Income appears when you receive payment, and expenses appear when you pay bills.
  - **Accrual method:** Income appears when you send an invoice, and expenses appear when you record a bill — even if no money has changed hands yet.

You can choose the way reports display your data (cash or accrual) and work with your accountant to select the right method for your business's tax filings.

- » **Sign Me Out if Inactive:** This setting controls how long QuickBooks waits before signing you out automatically. It defaults to one hour, but you can extend it to two or three hours — handy if you step away for a coffee break or lunch. If you're inactive too long, QuickBooks signs you out and tosses whatever you were working on, so adjusting this setting can help you avoid losing work.



TIP

If you're using an Advanced or Accountant subscription, consider switching to the QuickBooks Online desktop app. (See Chapter 13.) It only requires you to sign in once every six months — unless you manually log out.

- » **Communications with Intuit:** Cut down on inbox clutter by adjusting your marketing preferences. Nobody needs more email they didn't sign up for. Now, if only they'd add an option to block pop-up ads in QuickBooks, we might actually get some work done.

# Customizing sales forms

Sales forms in QuickBooks are the documents you send to customers to show what you're billing them for — things like invoices, estimates, and sales receipts. Each type of form serves a different purpose, but all follow a similar format and can be customized to reflect your brand, communication style, and level of detail you want to include.

## Tailoring sales forms

QuickBooks gives you multiple ways to preview these forms depending on your needs:

- » **Edit:** The form you use to enter or update the transaction.
- » **Email View:** A preview of what your customer will see in their email.
- » **PDF View:** A downloadable, printable version of the form.
- » **Payor View:** What the customer sees after clicking View Details from the email. It's a more interactive summary that they can review online.

To personalize a sales form, follow these steps:



**1. Choose Create ⇄ Invoice, Estimate, or Sales Receipt.**

The corresponding form opens onscreen.

**2. Click Manage to display a design task pane that contains four sections:**

- **Customization:** Use this section to turn fields and columns on or off, as well as modify column headings in the body of the transaction form.
- **Payment Options:** Manage your subscription to the QuickBooks Payment service, and configure fields to handle deposits, discounts, and shipping fees.
- **Design:** Choose from existing templates, including the default Modern format, or click Add/Edit to display the Custom Forms Style screen, which enables you to add or edit sales form templates.
- **Scheduling:** Activate the Recurring Invoice setting to schedule an invoice to generate automatically, mark an invoice as Print Later or Send Later, and manage invoice reminders.

## Simplifying your invoicing process

QuickBooks offers a limited ability to add subtotals to invoices for time activities only.

To add a subtotal, follow these steps:



**1. Choose Settings ⇄ Custom Form Styles.** The Custom Form Styles screen displays any form styles you've set up.

**2. Select a form to customize, and then click Edit in the Action column.**

The Customize Form Style screen contains three buttons in the top-left corner: Design, Content, and Emails.

**3. Click Content.**

The Content screen opens, with all sections disabled.

**4. Click Edit within the Table section.**



The Table section is where you see column titles such as Date, Product/Service, and Description.

**5. Scroll down the screen and click Show More Activity Options in the bottom-left corner.**

Additional options for the Table section are displayed.

**6. Click the Group Activity By checkbox and make a choice from the dropdown menu.**

You can group items by day, week, month, or type. For this example, choose Type.

**7. Click Subtotal Groups.**

**8. Click Done in the bottom-right corner of the window to save the settings.**

Although you can click Preview PDF, there's not much point in this context because QuickBooks doesn't show you the subtotals in use until you actually create an invoice.



REMEMBER

You must repeat the preceding steps to include subtotals for estimates and sales receipts if you want to have a consistent look and feel across all the forms you use.

## Customizing list columns

You can tailor the appearance of QuickBooks lists — including customers, vendors, products and services, accounts, and more — to show just the information you need:



**1. Click List Settings above the Action column.**

**2. Use the checkboxes to show or hide columns, include inactive records, or adjust how many rows display per page.**



**3. Click List Settings again to close the menu.**

Your choices remain in place the next time you open the list, so you can focus on the details that matter most.

## Speeding things up with keyboard shortcuts

One of the fastest ways to make QuickBooks feel like your own is to cultivate a go-to set of keyboard shortcuts. I hear you grumbling — you can't even remember to pick up milk from the grocery store, so how are you supposed to remember a bunch of keyboard combos?

Easy: by using a cheatsheet. Press **Ctrl+Alt+/'** (Windows) or **Cmd+Options+/'** (macOS) to summon the Additional Options dialog box, which is rife with shortcuts tailored specifically to QuickBooks.



TIP

Chapter 23 takes your keyboard shortcut game even further with ten cool Chrome shortcuts.

## Exploring Your Chart of Accounts

When you create a new company, QuickBooks automatically builds a chart of accounts tailored to the industry you selected. Think of this as your business's financial filing cabinet — it helps you track everything from income and expenses to assets and liabilities. You have a few options from here:



REMEMBER

- » Keep QuickBooks's default setup.
- » Tweak it manually (I'll walk you through how).  
You're limited to 250 active accounts unless you're using an Advanced subscription.
- » Swap it out entirely by importing from your own list from Excel, CSV, or Google Sheets, or, if you're using QuickBooks Online Accountant, by applying a standardized chart. Both approaches are covered in Chapter 18.

# Reviewing and customizing the chart of accounts



It's a good idea to review the chart of accounts that QuickBooks created for you. To do so, choose Settings ⇨ Chart of Accounts. You'll land on the screen shown in Figure 1-3, where you can do all sorts of things:



TIP



TECHNICAL  
STUFF



REMEMBER



WARNING

- » Click Run Report to generate a clean, printable list of your accounts.  
Chapter 6 walks you through several ways to customize your QuickBooks reports so they show exactly what you need.
- » Click New to add an account manually.
- » Click Batch Edit to rename multiple accounts at once.
- » Click Print to generate a clunky printout of the Chart of Accounts screen.
- » Click Settings (adjacent to Print) to choose which columns you want to see, manage account type badges (BAL for balance sheet accounts and P&L for profit and loss accounts), and determine whether inactive accounts are visible.

Accountants often use the terms *profit and loss* (P&L) and *income and expense* interchangeably. They both refer to the same thing: accounts that flow into the Profit and Loss report, as opposed to balance sheet accounts.

Account type badges only appear on the Chart of Accounts screen. They don't show up on any reports.

- » Select one or more accounts using the checkboxes, and then choose Batch Actions dropdown ⇨ Make Inactive to hide accounts you don't need anymore.
- » Click View Register for balance sheet accounts or Run Report for profit and loss accounts to see their transaction history.
- » Click the View Register or Run Report dropdown to reveal additional options, such as these:
  - **Connect Bank:** Sync the account with your bank or credit card.
  - **Edit:** Update the account's name, type, or other details.
  - **Make Inactive:** Hide the account from use in future transactions.  
Making an account inactive zeroes out its balance. Before you do this, move any balances using a journal entry (see Chapter 22) or another type of transaction.
  - **Run Report:** View a report showing all activity for a balance sheet account.

**FIGURE 1-3:**  
The Chart of  
Accounts screen.

	NUMBER	NAME	ACCOUNT TYPE	DETAIL TYPE	QUICKBOOKS BALANCE	BANK BALANCE	ACTION
<input type="checkbox"/>		Accounts Receivable (A/R)	Accounts receivable (A/R)	Accounts Receivable (A/R)	\$76,136.08		View register
<input type="checkbox"/>		Accounts Payable (A/P)	Accounts payable (A/P)	Accounts Payable (A/P)	\$2,702.07		View register
<input type="checkbox"/>		Eig Cde Bank	Bank	Checking	\$1,000.00		View register
<input type="checkbox"/>		Retained Earnings	Equity	Retained Earnings			Run report
<input type="checkbox"/>		Services	Income	Services/Free Income			Run report
<input type="checkbox"/>		Relative Expense Income	Income	Services/Free Income			Run report
<input type="checkbox"/>		Cash	Bank	Cash on hand	00.00		View register
<input type="checkbox"/>		Buildings	Fixed Assets	Buildings	00.00		View register
<input type="checkbox"/>		Land	Fixed Assets	Land	00.00		View register
<input type="checkbox"/>		Tools, machinery, and equipment	Fixed Assets	Machinery & Equipment	00.00		View register

## Adding new accounts

Need to create an account that isn't already in your chart of accounts? Here's how to add one:



**1. Choose Settings** ⇨ **Chart of Accounts** ⇨ **New**.

The New Account task pane shown in Figure 1-4 appears.

**2. Fill in the Account Name field.**

Stick to words here — no numbers yet. (You'll learn how to turn on account numbers later in the chapter.)

**3. Choose an option from the Account Type field.**

This list includes the major categories found on balance sheet and profit-and-loss reports.

**4. Select a Detail Type.**

Depending upon the account type you chose, you may see just one Detail Type to choose from — or several.

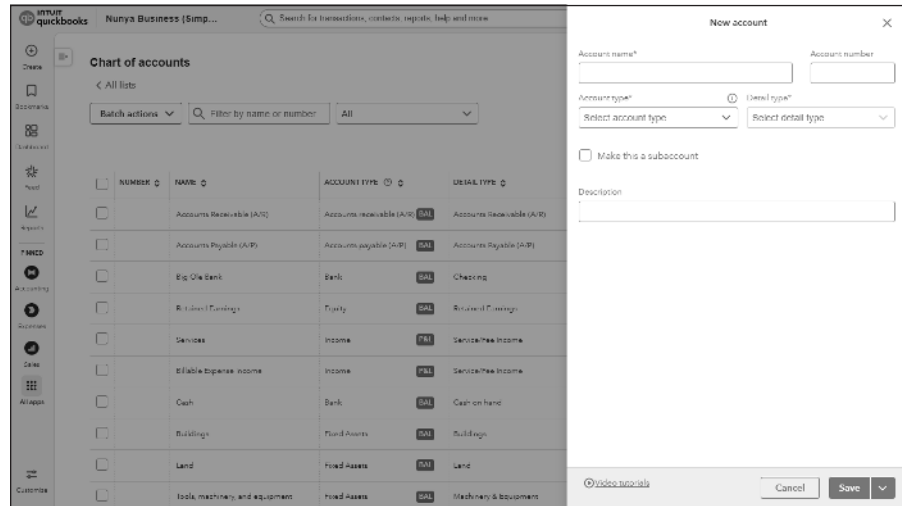
**5. Optional: Check the Make This a Subaccount box to roll the account up into a parent account on your reports.**

If you do check this, make sure to select the parent account as well.

**6. Optional: Specify an opening balance and an as-of date if you're creating a balance account (like an asset, liability, or equity account).**

If you're unsure about this, check with your accountant or bookkeeper.

7. **Optional: Enter a description for the account.**
8. **Click Save to add the new addition to your chart of accounts.**



**FIGURE 1-4:** The task pane you use to create an account.

## Implementing account numbers

Using account numbers can help keep your chart of accounts organized — especially as your list gets longer. They make it easier to group similar accounts and can be helpful when working with an accountant or importing data from another system.

By default, QuickBooks doesn't use or display account numbers, but you can turn the feature on with just a few clicks:

1. **Choose Settings ⇨ Account & Settings ⇨ Advanced.**
2. **In the Chart of Accounts section, click Edit.**
3. **Turn on the Enable Account Numbers toggle.**
4. **Check the Show Account Numbers box so they appear in your Chart of Accounts and on forms.**
5. **Choose Save ⇨ Done.**
6. **To assign numbers to your accounts, choose Settings ⇨ Chart of Accounts ⇨ Batch Edit.**



REMEMBER

Click Save periodically as you enter account numbers — just in case you get pulled away. This prevents QuickBooks from signing you out and losing your progress.

7. **Once you've added numbers, click the Number heading in the Chart of Accounts to sort your list in account-number order.**

## Removing accounts

With apologies to the Eagles, adding new accounts to QuickBooks is like checking in to the Hotel California: You can add them any time you like, but they can never leave. In most cases, QuickBooks doesn't let you delete accounts (or other list items) outright. Instead, you must mark them as inactive. Here are more things to keep in mind when deactivating accounts:

- » The only way to permanently delete an account is to merge it into another account.
- » You can't mark a parent account inactive if it still has subaccounts — reassign or remove the subaccounts first.
- » Transactions remain in inactive accounts. That means they'll still show up on your reports. If you need to edit any of these transactions, you'll have to reactivate the account first.
- » Before deactivating a balance sheet account, make sure its balance is zero; otherwise, QuickBooks creates an offsetting entry in Opening Balance Equity, which might affect your tax return. If you're unsure how to handle the adjustment, check with your accountant.



WARNING

Here's how to mark an account as inactive:



1. **Choose Settings ⇄ Chart of Accounts.**

The Chart of Accounts screen opens.

2. **Click the Run Register or View Report dropdown ⇄ Mark Inactive (Reduces Usage).**

In companies with an Advanced subscription, the option is simply labeled Mark Inactive since there's no account limit.

3. **Choose Yes, Make Inactive.**

The account remains in your chart of accounts but only appears when the Include Inactive setting is turned on.

If you prefer to burn any evidence that an account ever existed, you can merge it into another account:



**1. Choose Settings ⇨ Chart of Accounts.**

The Chart of Accounts screen opens.

**2. Click the Run Register or View Report dropdown ⇨ Edit for the account you want to merge into.**

**3. Make note of the account name and detail type, and then click Cancel.**

**4. Click the Run Register or View Report dropdown ⇨ Edit for the account you want to make vanish.**

**5. Edit the Account Name and Detail Type accounts to exactly match the account you want to keep.**



REMEMBER

You can't merge parent accounts that have subaccounts. And if you're merging subaccounts, make sure they share the same parent account.

**6. Click So It Is Written, So It Shall Be Done, er, I mean Save ⇨ Yes, Merge Accounts.**

All transactions from the account you're retiring are automatically moved into the account you kept.

## Enabling Custom Fields

Custom fields in QuickBooks Online let you capture information beyond the standard fields found on forms like invoices, sales receipts, estimates, and purchase orders. Whether you're tracking project IDs, salesperson names, delivery instructions, or internal notes, custom fields help tailor QuickBooks to your business.

However, Simple Start has a couple of caveats:

- » You can add up to 30 custom fields to your customer profile screen.
- » You can add one additional custom field, which can appear on up to ten transaction forms.

All custom fields you create can also appear on reports — Chapter 6 shows you how.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF

As you'll see in Chapter 8, Essentials and Plus users gain some expanded custom field capabilities. Then in Chapter 15, you'll see the capabilities for Advanced users.

With those limits in mind, here's how to create custom field:



**1. Choose Settings ⇄ Custom Fields.**

The Custom Fields screen opens.

**2. Click Add Field.**

The Add Custom Field task pane opens.

**3. Fill in the Name field.**

**4. Select either Text and Number or Dropdown from the Data Type field.**

Dropdown lists can contain up to 100 options.

**5. Select the form(s) where the custom field should appear onscreen.**

**6. Click Save to close the Add Custom Field task pane.**

Your new field appears on the Custom Fields list.



REMEMBER

Like most list records in QuickBooks, custom fields cannot be deleted, only made inactive. You can still edit a custom field to change its name and adjust what appears in its dropdown list.

## Starting Your Attachment Journey

If the word *attachment* has you thinking about emotional bonds and relationship patterns, you're in the wrong book again. For that, see *Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy For Dummies* — and if that topic hits close to home, here's to finding the clarity and support you deserve.

In QuickBooks, attachments are supporting documents, like receipts, invoices, contracts, and photos. You can upload as many as you like as long as each one is 20MB or smaller and in an accepted format.

### Recognizing acceptable file types

QuickBooks plays nicely with common file types — as long as your filenames stick to valid characters: letters (A–Z, a–z), numbers (0–9), and these symbols: , . ? @ & ! # ' ~ \* (space) \_ - ; +. Using anything outside that list may trigger server errors.

And this list of valid characters isn't just for attachment names — it applies across the entire QuickBooks platform.

You can attach the following document types:



REMEMBER

» **PDF:** Great for sharing formatted documents like scanned bills or signed agreements.

QuickBooks doesn't currently allow PDFs to be included with customer statements you email.

» **JPG, JPEG, GIF, and TIFF:** Common image formats, perfect for snapshots, scans, or even simple graphics.

» **DOC and DOCX:** Microsoft Word documents.

» **XLS and XLSX:** Microsoft Excel spreadsheets.

» **CSV:** Not to be confused with CVS (the drugstore chain), CSV is a plain-text format used for data, like transaction lists exported from banks or other programs.

Each line represents a row, and commas separate the values — hence, *Comma-Separated Values (CSV)*.

» **XML:** Used by some systems to share structured data. I could explain more, but I feel like I'd bore you to sleep — and neither of us needs that.

If you try to upload an unsupported file type — like a ZIP file or an Excel binary workbook (XLSB) — QuickBooks responds with a polite but firm: "We were unable to upload this type of file." Or, to put it another way: "I'm afraid I can't upload that, Dave."



TECHNICAL STUFF



REMEMBER

## Adding attachments

You can link attachments in QuickBooks Online to customer profiles, vendor profiles, and certain individual transactions:

### 1. Navigate to the screen you want to link the attachment to:



- **Customer Profile:** Choose All Apps ⇄ Customer Hub ⇄ Customers, or Customers & Leads ⇄ Customers. Select a customer, and then click the Customer Details tab.



- **Vendor Profile:** Choose All Apps ⇄ Expenses ⇄ Vendors, or Expenses ⇄ Vendors. Select a vendor, and then click the Vendor Details tab.

- **Transaction:** Open the transaction, such as an invoice, bill, or expense. If you don't see an Attachments section, that transaction type doesn't support attachments.

## 2. Choose an option:

- **Add Attachment:** The Open dialog box, where you can select a file, then click Open.
- **Show Existing:** The Add To task pane appears, where you can toggle between All Attachments and Unlinked Attachments. Click Add to link the file to the record.

In the classic interface you'll see a Show Existing link, but it's gone walk-about in the modern one. So, your only option may be to re-attach the file, which can create duplicates in your Attachment list. Let's hope Intuit restores that wayward button.

Chapter 7 shows how to create invoices or bills by emailing documents to your QuickBooks company.



TECHNICAL  
STUFF



TIP

## Managing attachments



The Attachments list, which appears when you choose **Settings** ⇄ **Attachments**, has the following columns:

- » **Thumbnail:** A small preview image for GIF, JPG, JPEG, and TIFF files.
- » **Type:** A one-word description, such as Document, Image, PDF, Spreadsheet, and so on.
- » **Name:** The uploaded file's name. You can change it by selecting Edit from the Action column dropdown menu.
- » **Size:** The file size.
- » **Note:** Describes the chord — oops, wrong kind of note. Choose Edit from the Download dropdown to enter or update this file's *raison d'être* — that's a fancy way of saying "reason for being." Would you like a croissant with that?
- » **Uploaded:** The date and time the file was uploaded.
- » **Links:** Shows which list items or transactions the file is attached to. It's blank if the file isn't linked to anything (or if it's having a moment of social anxiety).
- » **Download:** Enables you to save a copy of the attachment to your computer.

The Attachment Settings button lets you hide the Size, Note, and Uploaded columns and adjust how many attachments appear per page.



TIP

The Download dropdown menu offers these additional choices:



REMEMBER

» **Edit:** As noted previously, displays a dialog box from which you can rename a file or add a descriptive note.

» **Delete:** A prompt asks to confirm that you want to delete the upload, which removes the attachment from your QuickBooks company. The link to the upload is also removed from any corresponding list or record pages.

You can only delete attachments one at a time; batch deletion isn't an option. Think of this as QuickBooks's version of the La Brea tar pits.

» **Create Invoice:** Opens a new invoice with the file already attached.

» **Create Expense:** Opens a new expense with the file already attached.

If you select one or more attachments, the following options become available on the Batch Actions dropdown:

» **Export:** Creates a compressed file named Archive.ZIP that contains a copy of the selected file(s)

» **Create Invoice:** Opens a new invoice with the file(s) already attached

» **Create Expense:** Opens a new expense with the file(s) already attached

## Changing or Ending Your Subscription

With your subscription set, your settings dialed in, and a few shortcuts at your fingertips, QuickBooks is now dressed to perform — no breaking in required. But if your needs shift down the road, you can upgrade, downgrade, or cancel your subscription at any time. Here's how:



### 1. Choose Settings ⇄ Subscriptions & Billing.

If you don't see this option, your accountant may be managing your subscription, or your user role may not include billing access.

### 2. From here, you have a few directions you can go:

- Click Upgrade Plan to move up to a higher-tier subscription. You're greeted with a triumphant "Let's find the best fit for your business" screen.
- Click Switch to Annual Billing to swap monthly charges for a once-a-year payment — usually with a 10% discount.

- Click Cancel Subscription to start the downgrade or cancellation process. The screen shifts its tone — channeling KC and the Sunshine Band with a desperate plea: “Please don’t go, don’t go away . . . I need your love, I need your fees.” Not quite, but you get the idea.

**3. On the Cancel screen is the option Downgrade Plan instead. Click it to drop to a lower-tier subscription. QuickBooks lets you know the features to go dark; otherwise, click Cancel Plan and power through the remaining prompts.**



REMEMBER

Cancelled subscriptions stay active until the end of the current billing period. No partial refunds for you! After that, you have read-only access to your data for one year. Then, unless you restart your subscription, *poof*, it’s gone. Print or download anything important before that curtain drops.