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IS STARTING A BUSINESS RIGHT FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

An honest look at the time, money, risk and support a new business takes, so you can start with your eyes open.

TYPE: GUIDE REVIEWED: NOVEMBER 2026 TIME: 8 MINUTES LEVEL: BEGINNER

AT A GLANCE

- Starting a business is less about being "born an entrepreneur" and more about having **time, a money cushion, a real problem to solve and people in your corner**.
- "Not yet" is a fine answer. You can start small, part-time or as a test while you build up what's missing.
- This guide gives you five questions to ask yourself and a simple readiness check.

Why it matters

Most businesses that close early don't fail because the idea was bad. They run out of money, time or energy before the business finds its footing. Thinking honestly about your situation now helps you plan around the hard parts instead of being surprised by them.

The five questions

1. Do you have the time?

A new business usually takes **10 to 20 hours a week** at the very start, often more. Look at your week as it is today, with work, school, family and rest. Where would those hours come from?

2. Can you cover your own bills for a while?

Most new businesses don't pay their owner much in the first year. Ask yourself: if the business made no money for 6 months, how would you pay rent and buy food? A savings cushion, a part-time job or a partner's income all count.

3. Are you solving a real problem for real people?

The strongest businesses start with a problem you understand well, often from your own life, job or community. If you can name the person who has the problem and what they do about it today, that's a good sign. See **I-02 Who Is Your Customer?**.

4. Who's in your corner?

Family support, a friend who'll test your product, a mentor who's done it before. You don't need a big network, but you do need a few people. See **S-08 Finding Mentors and Building a Network From Zero**.

5. How much risk can you take?

Think about what you'd put in, such as savings, time or a loan, and what happens if the business doesn't work. Never risk money you can't afford to lose, like rent money or an emergency fund.

A quick readiness check

Area	Not yet	Getting there	Ready
Time	Under 5 hours a week	5 to 15 hours a week	15 or more hours a week
Money cushion	No savings, bills are tight	1 to 3 months of bills saved, or another income	3 to 6 months saved, or steady other income
Problem and customer	A general idea	I can name who has the problem	People have told me they'd pay
Support	Doing this alone	One or two people helping	A mentor plus people who'll help
Risk	I'd have to risk money I need	Some risk, but I have a backup	I know my limit and can stay within it

> KEY POINT
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> Mostly "Not yet"? That doesn't mean "never." It means start smaller: test your idea on weekends, save a cushion, or keep your job while you build. See **S-07 Building a Business Around a Job or School**.

Example: Lina weighs her timing

> EXAMPLE
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> Lina, 26, wants to open a Lebanese bakery. She works full-time at a hotel and has one month of bills saved. Her check comes out mostly "Getting there." Instead of signing a lease, she spends six months selling at a weekend market and taking pre-orders for holidays. By then she has 4 months of savings, a list of 300 regular customers, and real numbers to show a landlord and a lender.

Signs it might be a good time

- People keep asking you for your product or service.
- You've made a few sales, even small ones, without much effort.
- You have a cushion or another income to lean on.
- You're excited about solving the problem, not just about being the boss.

Common mistakes

- **Quitting your job too early.** Many strong businesses start part-time. Leave when the business can support the jump.
- **Spending big before testing.** A lease, inventory or custom app before anyone has paid you is a big risk. See **I-06 Testing Your Idea Before Spending Big**.
- **Going it alone.** Asking for help early saves time and money.
- **Waiting for the "perfect" moment.** There isn't one. Start small and learn as you go.

Your checklist

- ☐ Fill in the readiness check honestly
- ☐ Write down how many hours a week you can really give
- ☐ Work out how many months of bills you have covered
- ☐ Name the customer and the problem in one sentence
- ☐ List three people who could support you
- ☐ Decide what you're willing to risk, and what you're not

Key words, explained

Word	What it means
Cushion	Savings or other income that covers your bills while the business grows.
Side business	A business you run part-time alongside a job or school.
Risk	What you could lose if things don't go as planned.

Where to go next

- **S-03 Tech Startup or Main-Street Business? Choosing Your Path**
- **I-06 Testing Your Idea Before Spending Big**
- **S-07 Building a Business Around a Job or School**

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