

# THE BOOTSTRAPPER'S BIBLE

43 IDEAS FOR BUSINESSES  
YOU CAN START TODAY



# The Bootstrapper's Bible

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# The Bootstrapper's Bible

## Introduction

Congratulations! If you're reading *The Bootstrapper's Bible*, you're one of tens of thousands of entrepreneurs who are considering whether to start a business.

There is no shortage of reasons for it: Job security is at an all-time low in America – sometimes it feels like the only company you can trust is the one that you start yourself! Add that to the fact that the power of the Internet has not only greatly democratized the economy and lowered the barrier to entry for a lot of people, but has opened up whole new industries, and you've got a pretty compelling case to strike out on your own.

Whether you're transitioning from an old career into a new one, facing the all-too-familiar struggle to stay at home with the kids and remain productive, or retiring and looking for what's next, a business or home-based business is a great opportunity. Starting one is within reach for just about anybody who's willing to take on the risk and work hard.

If you're sure you want to get started, but don't know *how* to get started, you've got the right e-book. In these pages are 43 ideas for businesses that you can begin building today without a huge amount of capital. When you encounter one that resonates with you, you'll find some useful information on that particular business to help you decide whether or not it's the right one for you.

You're embarking on an exciting new chapter of your life, and you should be proud to be part of the few elite entrepreneurs in this country that decide to go into business for themselves. Best of luck!

## Accounting Services

Qualifications:	Pass the <a href="#">Uniform Certified Public Accountant Examination</a> , meet state-mandated education and experience requirements for certification as a CPA
Average Income:	\$50,000 - \$60,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

Most Certified Public Accountants (CPAs) have a college degree in accounting – it's difficult to pass the federal exam required to become a CPA without that base of knowledge. However, if you're already an accountant, or are willing to go back to school to learn how to do it, it makes a great home-based business.

First, determine the extent of the services you want to provide: Do you want to do simple bookkeeping for local businesses? Or actually work up income statements, balance sheets and financial reports? Once you've decided how involved of an accountant you want to be, the first step is to create a home office with all of the equipment you'll need (computer, accounting software, calculator, office supplies, etc.) Next, you need to advertise your service! Start with some simple fliers and get your name out there with local businesses!

As a CPA, you can specialize within the field. You'll still perform basic accounting tasks – preparing and verifying financial documents to provide necessary information to your clients. But you may find you're drawn to specific duties such as preparing taxes, consulting for companies in areas like compensation or health care benefits, forensic accounting (investigating bankruptcies and other complicated financial events) or public sector accounting, which analyzes and audits government records.

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## Bed & Breakfast

Qualifications:	Municipal and state regulations/licenses vary
Average Income:	No data available

If you already own a home with some extra space, you could incorporate a bed and breakfast as a home-based business with relatively little effort. With the unparalleled success of web sites like AirBnB.com and Craigslist.com, more people than ever are taking to the Internet to try and find untraditional lodging near their business and vacation destinations. You can be especially successful if you live somewhere near a large tourist area, a sports stadium or another big venue like a convention center.

You need an unused room with its own bathroom that's segregated from the rest of the house, and you will likely need to be certified as a Food Handler by your state, since you'll be providing breakfast to your guest every morning. You'll also need to provide hotel-like amenities like turn-down services, laundry and even concierge services, if you've got a businessperson in town.

The things to really focus on here are the bed and the breakfast – seems simple, right? But this is where costs can run a little higher for this business than other potential home-based ventures. You'll need to invest in a nice frame and top of the line mattress, and buy some swanky linens for the bed. Next, your breakfast should be out of this world – sumptuous, huge portions of every great breakfast food you can think of. The reviews your visitors leave for you online will be crucial to the continued success of your business, so be sure to pull out all the stops for each one.

## Bicycle Repair/Mechanic

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business; certifications available from the <a href="#">Park Tool School</a> and other organizations
Average Income:	\$25,000 - \$40,000 ( <a href="#">NY State DoL</a> )

Being a bicycle mechanic is a practical, hands-on profession that doesn't require too much paperwork and affords you a job that you can do without having to work too closely with coworkers.

There are no certifications necessary to go into business, but it's important to have a healthy amount of experience before opening up a bicycle repair shop. Bicyclists tend to be a committed, savvy crowd who know their stuff, and they'll expect a high level of knowledge and skill from you.

This business is often seasonal, because in many parts of the country, the weather isn't conducive to bike-riding during the winter. However, there are definitely hardcore cyclists and road race riders in nearly every town you can cater to who are positively postal in their commitment to cycling – neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays them.

If you don't have a large pool of winter cyclists where you live, you can rent a storage unit in the local area and charge customers a fee to store their bicycles over the winter and provide tune-ups and preventative maintenance on a regular schedule.

One last thing: Cycling is a leisure activity, so be prepared to work on weekends!

## Boat Cleaning Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business
Average Income:	\$30,000 - \$36,000 ( <a href="https://www.indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

There's an old saying: "The two best days of owning a boat are the day you buy it and the day you sell it."

Most boat owners don't know what they're getting into when they buy a boat – there's an extraordinary amount of work required to keep it maintained and cleaned, especially in the winter months, when the vessel spends the majority of its time either in the harbor or out of the water completely.

You should know that a boat cleaning service is largely a seasonal job over the winter. However, if you live near a body of water, there's a good chance you can get a healthy home-based business going by cleaning boats that have been pulled out of the water during chilly months, or are undergoing repairs mid-boating season. Depending on the type of the boat, winter is one of the best times to have the decks, the head, the holds, the hull and the sleeping quarters scrubbed down, because it's not in use.

To get started, it's a good idea to apprentice yourself to someone already in the business so you learn the ins and outs of boat cleaning, and some of the sticking points you'll run into with owners. When you're ready to strike out on your own, get your service started by finding houses with a boat sitting in their yard or driveway, or contract with the local marina to provide your services to their customers.

## Business Plan Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business, large amount of experience necessary
Average Income:	\$70,000 - \$76,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

This is one of the most instantly lucrative home-based businesses you can start, but it'll be difficult to market yourself without a track record of helping people launch successful businesses.

However, if you've got the chops and the golden history, you can offer people a start-to-finish business plan service for a tidy sum. You'll be in charge of helping them translate their idea into action – which means not only writing their business plan and business narrative, but performing market research and generating financial statements.

The best way to get going on this is to get involved in the entrepreneurial community online – find folks who are looking to start their own businesses but don't know where to start, and then offer them your services. You should offer a main service (writing the business plan) and offer all of the others as add-ons for additional fees.

Another business model you can use is generating an electronic document you keep on file, and offer the service of making little adjustments to it as their business grows and changes.

When selling your services, make sure you have plenty of sample business plans to look at, and always be ready to show a potential client your own!

## Chimney Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business. Certifications available from <a href="#">Chimney Safety Institute of America</a>
Average Income:	\$50,000 - \$55,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

Chimney sweeps – immortalized by Dick Van Dyke in the movie *Mary Poppins* – are not only still in high demand, they've become an important element in the cycle of home inspection and maintenance. A good chimney service is required to prevent fires and carbon monoxide poisoning, especially in older homes.

If you don't have any experience, it's probably best to sign up for a course from the CSIA (link above) or to get started as an apprentice to someone that knows the job well before striking out.

As a chimney sweep, you'll need to know how to inspect and service any chimney attached to a fuel burning appliance, have a broad base of knowledge about many different kinds of residential heating appliances, how to navigate residential codes, and how to operate equipment specialized to the industry.

Once you've become an expert at chimney sweeping, you can also earn additional licenses to become certified in chimney inspection, allows you to help customers determine not only if their chimney needs cleaning, but if it's in need of any maintenance or repair. Combining chimney sweeping with chimney inspection can increase the amount of business you can drum up and substantially raise your earning potential.

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## Cleaning Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business.
Average Income:	\$20,000 - \$23,000 ( <a href="https://www.indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

Professional house cleaning has come a long way from the days of maids who attended to daily household chores. Now, house cleaners travel to several locations a day, performing deep cleaning in commercial and residential settings for businesses, folks that are too busy to do it themselves or people who have become physically unable to keep their homes clean.

As a house cleaner, you have a lot of flexibility, especially with your work hours. If you want to work by yourself, you can work after hours at an office park or corporate building. If you do not like to travel, you can focus in on retail businesses in a particular neighborhood, which will help you cut down on gas bills. And don't forget to set up regular meetings with restaurant owners! They need to be constantly, thoroughly cleaned, and can be some of your best, most consistent clients.

The best part of house cleaning is that you don't have to set aside a large budget for marketing or advertising, because most of your customers will come to you through word of mouth and referral.

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## Computer Repair

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business.
Average Income:	\$40,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

This is a business that will never run short on demand – personal computers are ubiquitous and utterly necessary to modern life, but their maintenance and repair is just technical enough that folks aren't able to fix the lion's share of their own problems.

You'll need to learn about hardware and software, and you'll specifically need to know a lot about the main kinds of programs that people use on a regular basis. These include Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, e-mail programs, Photoshop, design programs and especially security programs like antivirus and antispysware software. You need to know how to service all the components of a computer, such as the motherboard and the monitor, and the peripherals as well, such as keyboards, scanners and printers.

If you can establish yourself as the go-to expert for folks who use personal computers, you can get a steady stream of work lined up all year round.

There are online courses you can take for computer repair, as well as A+ certification, which teaches you how to maintain and repair computer networks. If you're totally unfamiliar with computers but feel like this is the right business for you, consider taking a few basic-level courses at your local community college.

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## Consultant

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business.
Average Income:	\$60,000 - \$61,000+ ( <a href="https://www.indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

The term "consultant" is used as a catch-all for any expert who hires themselves out as a counselor or advice-giver to other businesses. In order to become a consultant, you need to have expertise in another field, so this is a good job for folks who were senior personnel with a long time in a particular industry.

It doesn't matter what your particular expertise is in – there are all kinds of consultants out there – information technology consultants, creative consultants, workplace morale consultants, diversity consultants...the list is endless. And your only job as a consultant is to consult a business – it's as simple as that.

Now, because there are so many consultants out there, there's a bit of market saturation, so it's important to differentiate yourself from the plethora of folks just claiming the title to make a quick buck. The first thing you need to ask yourself is whether you're qualified. Before you start selling your services, make sure you're up to date on all the latest developments in your field. You don't want to give people bad or outdated advice, and you don't want to look like you don't know what you're talking about, your you'll ruin your reputation quickly.

Your passion, knowledge and insistence on excellence needs to be apparent as you consult a company – be prepared to work long hours and show a lot of dedication in order to build a reputation early on.

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## Day Care

Qualifications:	Multiple city, state and legal licenses and certifications necessary
Average Income:	\$64,000 ( <a href="#">Salary.com</a> )

If you're great with kids and thrive in chaos, you might consider opening up a daycare. This is one of the harder businesses to get going, because it takes time to build up trust (and a fair amount of startup capital to launch off the ground) but it's incredibly rewarding work.

There's quite a bit of legwork you'll have to accomplish before you can launch: The first thing you need to do is check your rental agreement or lease (if you don't own your home) to see if opening a day care is even allowed. If you're in the clear, your next step is to attend a family childcare orientation with the licensing agency in your jurisdiction, which is where you'll learn how to start a home-based daycare that meets all of the local laws. You'll also need to be able to pass a background check. Next, you'll have to make sure all of your immunizations are current – don't want to get any kiddos sick – and then you'll need to thoroughly childproof your home, meaning locking cabinets, securing chemicals, covering sharp corners and covering your electrical outlets.

Because you're working with people's children, there is a legal and regulatory labyrinth you'll have to navigate in order to go into day care. Luckily, there's a very thorough how-to article from the Small Business Administration that will take you through the basics [here](#).

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## EBay Sales

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business.
Average Income:	\$24,000 ( <a href="http://indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

When the online auction web site eBay first launched, thousands of people became eBay sellers and made huge amounts of money.

However, this started looking like a "get rich quick" scheme after a while and the site was flooded with people trying to make their millions selling Beanie Babies and grilled cheese sandwiches with an image of the Virgin Mary.

The eBay craze has tapered off some, but it's still a viable home-based business option. Maybe you've got some things around your house that you want to sell, or maybe you're interested in purchasing items wholesale and making them available through the site. Regardless of your strategy, as long as you do your research and ensure that there's actually a market for what you're selling, you'll be able to earn money as an eBay seller.

As an eBay seller, remember that you're competing with a lot of other people for business from consumers with a large amount of bargaining power. You have to pick your products wisely, pinch pennies to minimize your costs, be able to write great listings that stand out, and provide outstanding customer service. It's a highly competitive marketplace, and if you're not on top of your game, buyers will find another eBay seller who is.

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## Editorial Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business.
Average Income:	\$55,000 ( <a href="#">Salary.com</a> )

If you're a good writer, or a savvy proofreader, you might consider starting an editorial service. Especially given the recent boom in what's known as "content marketing," there is a huge demand for writers and editors who can create compelling Web content.

You don't need any qualifications to start up an editorial service, but it doesn't hurt to have a degree in English. There's a lot more to editing and writing than first meets the eye, and having some certifications or credentials can help you differentiate yourself from your competition (which will be pretty stiff.)

Here is a list of some of the editorial services you could perform:

1. *Freelance writing.* If you can write blog posts, articles, and e-books, this might be a good gig for you. Use an online marketplace like [Elance](#).
2. *Book doctoring/ghostwriting.* You need to be a skilled creative writer in order to perform this service. As a book doctor, you'll take notes and manuscripts from other people and put them into a readable, organized book. As a ghostwriter, you'll actually perform the research and writing of a book, and someone will buy that from you and put their name on it.
3. *Copyediting/proofreading/developmental editing.* These are the process of taking a first draft and turning it into a finished draft. If you are a great speller and have good attention to detail, this service is always in demand.

## Electronics Repair

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business.
Average Income:	\$36,000 ( <a href="http://indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

The world has moved past the desktop and laptop computer; now, mp3 players, smartphones and tablets have come to dominate the average American's time spent using electronics. With all of these gadgets out there, someone has to know how to fix them!

Being in electronics repair is similar to computer repair, but you'll specialize in many different brands and formats of gizmos and devices people use on an everyday basis. Many computer repair businesses also branch out into electronics repair. One of the key differences between these businesses is that with computer repair, you'll often need to make house calls to fix people's computers in their offices or living rooms. With electronics repair, you'll most likely need to have people bring their devices to you, because there are slightly lower margins and it'll be more difficult to recoup travel costs if you're visiting someone's home just to fix their broken iPad.

Consumer electronics – especially those made by Apple – can be very difficult and expensive to work on, so it's a good idea to apprentice yourself to an electronics repair technician before striking out on your own.

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## Event Planning

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business; certificates available through many community colleges
Average Income:	\$55,000 ( <a href="#">Salary.com</a> )

Around the world, the event planning industry is worth almost half a trillion dollars, and it only grows more and more every year. It is a stressful, fast-paced job with a need for people with excellent managerial skills, but it makes for a great home-based business.

Event planners handle everything from celebrity parties to nonprofit galas to art house raves to corporate sponsorship events. The event planner does it all – administration, operations, supplies, logistics, finances; the mark of an excellent event planner is that no one who attends the gathering has any idea how much hard work went into it. You'll be responsible for locating event sites, handling caterers and bar staff, scheduling and managing entertainers and decorators, seating charts and more.

The first thing you need to figure out is what kind of event planner you want to be. Event planners usually specialize in certain kinds of events, like weddings, corporate events, sports events, etc. It's good to have an area that you really excel in, so that you become the "go-to" person whenever anyone is putting on an event.

This is a very specialized line of work – it's a lot more than just throwing a party – and people benefit greatly from education and training. Check with your local community college to see if they offer a Bachelor's Certificate in Event Planning.

## Expert Witness Services

Qualifications:	Must be a recognized expert in a field able to be recognized as such by a court of law
Average Income:	\$500/hour

Every year, there are millions of lawsuits filed, and in order for someone to receive damages for their claims, they have to prove that someone caused them harm.

Both sides in a lawsuit will often retain the services of an expert witness to testify on their behalves. For instance, in a malpractice suit, a plaintiff might bring in an expert witness who can explain why the doctor being sued might have been negligent or not providing a regular standard of care.

Expert witnesses sometimes mean the difference between someone winning or losing a case, so lawyers and their clients are willing to pay a tidy sum for their services. Being an expert witness can be very rewarding, both in terms of the paycheck, and intellectually.

In order to be an expert witness, you have to have an exhaustive knowledge of your field and be able to show documentation that proves it. You don't need a Ph.D. or decades of experience, but typically, folks with more education and experience are viewed as more credible by courts and juries alike.

You'll also need a working knowledge of law and the generalities of legal proceedings, so you'll have to spend some time researching that, as well.

## Fence Installation Service

Qualifications:	Licensing requirements vary from state to state; most states require that you pass a Business and Law examination. Certification and training available through the <a href="#">American Fence Association</a>
Average Income:	\$27,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

So long as people have neighbors, people will need fences. And since fences aren't as sturdy or well-founded as houses, they need to be repaired or replaced fairly often.

Most folks have wood or vinyl fences, but in urban areas – especially on the East Coast – chain link and wrought iron are also popular choices.

Becoming a fencing contractor is a great home-based business for someone with experience in the construction industry, but you don't need to have worked as a contractor previously to get started.

It's a good idea to either apprentice yourself to someone who installs fences or take a training course through the American Fence Association. Fencing looks like a simple thing, but there's a lot more to it than meets the eye! Customers don't mind paying for excellent work, but if you don't know what you're doing and can't provide a high-quality fence, you're going to have a hard time staying in business and building a reputation for yourself.

Many fence installers form professional relationships with area general contractors to provide fencing not only for job sites, but for finished homes and other buildings.

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## Financial Planning

Qualifications:	Bachelor's Degree, must be able to pass the <a href="#">Certified Financial Planner Examination</a>
Average Income:	\$70,000-\$79,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

The demand for qualified personal financial planners has been skyrocketing ever since the Great Recession of 2008. Unemployment is consistently higher than it ever has been in history, so the need is great for people with expert advice to help folks navigate the rocky economic landscape.

A financial planner is responsible for helping people pull all their finances together, solve problems and develop strategies to help them reach their financial goals. As a personal financial planner, you'll be in charge of helping people build their income potential and acting as a trusted coach, counselor and advisor.

The Certified Financial Planner Certification, which is an industry requirement for successful financial planners, is a tough gauntlet to run: Not only do you have to have a Bachelor's Degree (though it doesn't have to be in personal finance) but you have to have college coursework in the basics of financial planning. You also have to meet an experience requirement, so being a financial planner requires working for someone else (usually a bank or other financial institution) for a period of time until you satisfy the CFP's expectations.

## Flea Market Vending

Qualifications:	None required to go into business; usually requires special state or municipal permitting
Average Income:	No data available

This is sort of the offline equivalent to the eBay seller – you find things you'd like to sell, then take them to a marketplace and offload them there. People love to spend their weekends going to places like garage sales and flea markets, where they can get bargain prices on other people's discarded items. As the old saying goes: One man's trash is another man's treasure.

You'll need regular access to a repository of unwanted items that you can sell to others at a premium. One of the best places to find goods to sell at a flea market is a bulk thrift store processing center, such as regional hubs for Goodwill and The Salvation Army. These places are often referred to as "the bins" because they're just long tables with large bins atop them, and everything in the bins is sold by weight rather than by individual price. There are often incredible values to be found here – brand name electronics, designer clothes and the like; they just weren't able to sell at a regular outlet, so they get shipped off to the bins.

In order to organize this business, you'll need to live somewhere that's populous enough to support demand for a flea market, and then, of course, you'll need to find a local flea market that will let you rent a booth. If you live in an area with over 50,000 people but there is no current flea market, you might consider organizing your own – but be warned that the permitting, licensing and navigation of the bureaucratic labyrinth to make an event like that happen is not for the faint of heart.

## Gift Basket Service

Qualifications:	None required to go into business
Average Income:	No data available

Do you have a good aesthetic sense? Are you a thoughtful gift-giver? If so, you might have a future with a home-based business performing gift basket services.

Gift baskets are increasingly popular for weddings, birthdays and holidays, especially in niche markets, because they can be endlessly customized to suit the giver, receiver, the occasion and the price. If you can put together a basket stuffed with things that people with a particular interest (say, dog lovers, or book club fans) would like, you can sell it for a tidy sum and have fun doing it.

Starting a gift basket business doesn't require a lot of money – most are started with just a couple hundred dollars – but you do need to put in a lot of planning and preparation to ensure you'll be successful.

The first step in starting a business is to identify whether you'll sell to individual buyers or corporate buyers. Individual buyers tend to be women, and often want to buy smaller, highly customized baskets for specific occasions. These can be a lot of fun and give you a high potential for creativity, but the profit margin generally isn't very high. Corporate buyers can be excellent customers – they usually have long lists of people they want to give gifts to, and their demand isn't seasonal, because they often give gift baskets for employee anniversaries, promotions and retirements and the like.

## Golf Coaching

Qualifications:	None required to go into business; certifications available at local golf courses and through
Average Income:	\$47,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

If you love the game of golf, this might be a great home-based business for you to consider. A golf coach is a lot more than a teacher – and there is a big difference between a teaching professional and a coach. A coach is someone who understands the game inside and out, including the mechanics and the mental/psychological aspect, and can both play it well and teach others the skills they need to succeed.

You'll be working with people of all skill levels, so it's crucial that you understand every detail of the game as well being a master of the basics.

When getting started, it's important to let all of the local public courses know you've started a business, and to work on establishing and maintaining relationships with the staff there. You can also usually find plenty of clients in the corporate world, as many businesspeople use the game of golf for networking.

Eventually, you'll want to get some tournament experience; this may require that you have to travel to municipal areas near your own in order to maximize the amount of tournaments that you visit. The amount of tournaments that golfers win is how they measure their own success, so the amount of tournaments that your pupils win will determine your own reputation.

## Hair Styling

Qualifications:	Licensing varies from state to state; most customers expect stylists to have attended beauty school and have a professional certification
Average Income:	\$21,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

Hairstyling is a great home-based business for creative folks that love to work with their hands and with other people. Generally, if you're starting a home-based hairstyling business, you've already got a background in cosmetology. It is a trade that usually requires formal education in order to do well, and it's hard to get licensed by some states without being able to prove you've been to a school for cosmetologists or barbers.

It's also a trade that requires a lot of experience, so it's not well-suited for untrained folks looking to get something up and going quickly. However, if you've got a passion for making people look great, there are local beauty schools in nearly every city in America that aren't generally too expensive and have courses that don't last as long as typical college degree programs.

It is probably best to get a start in a salon before trying to start a home-based business, because you'll need to get experience (and you'll benefit from the wisdom of other stylists in the salon.) You also need to build up a following of customers who will be willing to leave a salon and start retaining your services instead.

## Home Energy Auditing

Qualifications:	State or municipal permitting may be required; certification and accreditation available through the <a href="#">Building Performance Institute</a>
Average Income:	\$63,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

A home energy auditor is a specialized inspector who measures the amount of energy a home uses and then makes recommendations on ways to cut down.

You can learn most of what you need to know about home energy auditing through a book at the library, making this one of the cheapest home businesses to start, but you will probably need to be certified at some point early in your career by BPI, the industry standard for home energy auditors. Because there is such a low barrier to entry for this business, there are a lot of people getting into the energy audit industry, so it's important to be able to prove that you're an expert – certification is often what will differentiate you from cheaper, less qualified auditors.

The first step to determining whether this home-based business is right for you is to do your research. Is there a regional Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program nearby that can promote your business? Does your state or city offer rebates or incentives to homeowners that retrofit their homes to cut down on energy use?

Eventually, once your business is making money, you may need to invest in some more expensive equipment, especially if you want to start auditing the energy output of commercial properties. But if you want to eventually expand into the retrofitting business, you could potentially do audits and the suggested changes yourself, making for a pretty lucrative business!

## Home Inspection

Qualifications:	Certification requirements vary from state to state; certification available through the <a href="#">American Society of Home Inspectors</a>
Average Income:	\$39,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

A home inspector is a kind of consultant who works within the real estate industry and advises homebuyers on a number of elements before they commit to a large purchase. Since the crash of 2008, the real estate market has taken a huge hit, but it has slowly limped back to positive growth in the last five years, and the demand for home inspectors has similarly recovered.

About 77% of homes sold in the United States and Canada are inspected before they're purchased, so it's become established that home inspection is a normal part of the home buying process. Also, the startup capital and overhead needed to get a home inspection business going are nice and low, so this is a great home-based business for folks looking to start something quickly and on the cheap.

To become successful, it will be important to establish contact with real estate agents who can recommend you to their clients. You'll also need to constantly update your knowledge of the field, as new products are regularly introduced to the market, and you need to be able to inspect new materials like composites. The regulations and safety information regarding chemicals in the home and carbon monoxide production are also in a regular state of flux, so you'll need to stay current on those, as well.

## Home Organization

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business, certifications available from many online schools, such as <a href="#">QC Design School</a>
Average Income:	\$28,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

If you're great at organization, a "people" person and you're looking for a good home-based business you can run without too much of a time commitment, home organization might be the job for you.

A home organizer engineers custom systems for people who don't have the time or energy to keep their homes well-organized. From paper to electronic files to helping someone manage their schedule, a home organizer takes a top to bottom to approach to helping busy people get a firm grasp on their lives and possessions.

Home organizers often specialize into one of three areas:

1. *Spatial organization.* This is all about making a home more livable. This requires some knowledge of interior design and some familiarity with important topics in that realm, such as *feng shui*.
2. *Systems organization.* This is a kind of organization that helps people get their finances and files into good working order. Your goal here is to help someone be less stressed and more productive by simplifying their everyday routines.
3. *Planning and goals organization.* To do this kind of organization, you'll need to be able to see the big picture when your clients can't. Planning and goals organization has some overlap with another home-based business: Life coaching.

## Import/Export Services

Qualifications:	Certification requirements vary; most clients prefer Bachelor's Degree in International Trade and Commerce
Average Income:	\$43,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

If you've never worked in import/export services, you might have a harder time breaking into this business than someone with experience. However, this is a challenging, fun way to build a successful business that doesn't require much financial investment and affords you the opportunity to begin working with people all over the world.

An importer/exporter manages international trade, either for designated sellers or corporations. The main service you'll provide will be contacting and negotiating with suppliers in other countries where goods are manufactured cheaply, like China and India, then establishing a chain to sellers in the United States.

You'll need a good head for organization and strong attention to detail. Since you'll be going it alone at first, you'll need to learn the basics of shipment handling, which in this business is referred to as "freight forwarding." Eventually, if you begin to handle a larger volume of business, it's a good idea to hire someone who does this on a regular basis.

This is a hard business to get into, but there are a lot of perks – as an international businessperson, you'll get to take tax deductible trips all over the world a few times a year. And once you've got a few exclusive accounts set up, you'll find that the time you spend maintaining those relationships is rewarded with a handsome financial return.

## Interior Decorating Services

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business, certifications available from organizations like <a href="#">Certified Interior Decorators International</a>
Average Income:	\$35,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

If your interior design is the talk of all your friends, or you're known for your good taste in decorations, interior decoration might be the right angle for you. It's not easy, but you don't need professional certifications to get started – all you need is a good aesthetic eye, an ability to stay current on fashions and an intuitive sense of style.

Interior decorating is all about attention to detail. Once you've started your business, you'll develop a sixth sense for what "belongs" in a room and what changes need to be made to improve its beauty. You can learn best practices, past designing trends and industry standards by getting a degree at a school like Devry, but this is only a requirement if you want to go to work at a design firm; many interior decorators are completely untrained.

Interior decorating requires almost no startup capital, other than basic organizational and office supplies (and some highly fashionable clothing – you've got to look the part!) However, it can be difficult to build up a portfolio without any experience, so you may need to offer your services at a highly discounted rate to friends and family before you attempt to build a relationship with building contractors.

## Jewelry Making

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business
Average Income:	No data available

There are as many ways to start a jewelry making business as there are different kinds of jewelry. Whether you make hand woven hemp and bead necklaces to sell at the local market, or open up a metal shop and start working with precious materials like gold and silver, your options are endless. Depending on your own passion and your level of skill, you can make jewelry from glass, plastic, beads, feathers, bone and wood, just to name a few.

There is usually stiff competition at local markets for jewelry sales, so you'll need to work hard to differentiate yourself. It's more than just making sketches of your ideas – you need an in depth knowledge of styles, trends and materials. Most of the really unique, high-value jewelry that comes out of home-based businesses tends to be hybrid jewelry, in which several different materials are combined into a simple, but elegant piece. In order to make designs that wow your customers, you'll need to understand how to solder, shape and cast metal, set gems and other decorative pieces, and how to create jewelry that works with different bodies and body types.

There are degrees and certificates available in jewelry design that will teach you historical methods, such as wax design and casting, and current methods, such as using software to design pieces. Most local community colleges offer entry-level courses that will teach you the basics. This is one of the more cost-intensive home-based businesses to start but as an artistic endeavor, it's also one of the most rewarding.

## Landscaping Services

Qualifications:	No educational requirements necessary; most states require professional licensing
Average Income:	\$35,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

If you were born with a "green thumb" and an overactive imagination, you don't need a college degree to get started with this job (although it certainly can't hurt you.) The bulk of landscaping services come from folks who are looking to have their yards fixed up, their lawns mowed, their leaves cleaned up and more. Many people with gardens also contract landscapers for debris removal and help with planting, cleanup and pest control, and there are business opportunities available in tree care, as well. Outside of plants, you might build retaining walls, irrigation, fencing and more. There is a lot to do in landscaping services!

Landscaping is hard, physical work, and it requires being outside in weather that's often terrible. But it's a rewarding business that can quickly grow once you've got regular customers that trust you and begin recommending you to their friends. To begin, get to know the horticulture of your local area – what kinds of different plants are trees are commonly planted? And remember that landscaping services will be very different depending on where you live. You're going to spend a lot more time maintaining small lawns in California, you'll be working with large trees in the South, and if you're in the Pacific Northwest, you'll be called on to help with gardening and urban farms.

If you want a professional degree, you can also consider becoming a landscape architect. These programs are available at most major four-year universities.

## Marketing Copy Services

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business, businesses usually prefer a Bachelor's degree in English or Marketing
Average Income:	\$57,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

Copywriting differs greatly from creative writing, in that there is much less *art* in it and much more *craft*. Rather than trying to write something beautiful or engaging, a marketing copywriter attempts to get people excited about purchasing a good or service that your client is trying to sell.

Copywriting is one of those elusive skillsets that is easy to be competent at but incredibly difficult to become great at. It takes a lot of experience and education to get going, but it's a rewarding, fun job once you've invested the necessary time in getting it up and going.

If you don't have a Bachelor's Degree in either English or Marketing (it's best to have a major in one and a minor in the other) you'll need to go to a local community college or an online university and take some classes there. Copywriting has very specific formats, and businesses have very specific expectations that you'll need to meet in order to be successful. However, once you know what you're doing, it's relatively easy to find clients who need advertising copy (the Internet has caused a boom in demand for marketing copy) for their web pages, brochures, catalogs, e-mail marketing campaigns, advertisements and more.

## Massage Services

Qualifications:	Formal education necessary for massage therapy, licensing requirements vary from state to state.
Average Income:	\$61,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

If you're only interested in basic massage or becoming a non-therapeutic masseuse, you can learn many of the fundamental tenets of massage through books at the library or online.

First, research your state and city's requirements for a massage business. Many jurisdictions regulate massage therapy, but not simple massage. Once you know you're in the clear legally, start practicing on friends! It's important to develop what's called a "bedside manner," which is your conduct as you perform the massage. Your friends will usually be quite willing to help you practice, as well – who doesn't love a free massage? Once you feel you've got it down, you can start offering massages as a service, as long as you're careful to let people know that you're a masseuse, not a massage therapist.

If you want to become a massage therapist, there are different requirements. Massage therapists help millions of people with pain management, recovery from injuries and more. It's a lucrative job for patient, empathetic people who thrive on healing others.

In order to become a qualified massage therapist, you'll need to attend a formal school and learn not only the art of massage, but human anatomy and medical training. Many massage therapists specialize in fields like sports massage, clinical massage, reflexology and Reiki.

# The Bootstrapper's Bible

## Moving Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business.
Average Income:	\$32,000 ( <a href="https://www.indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

There are a lot of things to be said about moving (most of them unrepeatable in polite company) but this at least is true: You really know who your friends are on moving day. You can be that friend to a lot of people!

If you have a strong back, great customer service and a desire to help people, consider opening a home-based business in professional moving. There is always demand for movers – people love to hire other folks to do their heavy lifting.

When you're first starting out, leave long-distance moving to big companies. You should focus on in-town moves, because many of those customers will start the job, thinking they can finish it themselves, then decide to hire a professional mover. Also, you can zero in on apartment moving or college students to keep it really small (and have some income) while you build up a reputation for yourself.

You may need to incorporate a moving service with someone else, as many large items can't be moved with just one person. You can start by contracting temporary labor if you want to run the moving service yourself, but long-term, you're going to encounter enough California King-size beds and pianos that you'll want someone full-time to give you a helping hand.

## Personal Concierge Services

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business; experience usually preferred
Average Income:	\$54,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

If you're a highly efficient, organized, Type-A kind of person, you might have great success with a home-based business in personal concierge services.

The concept of this business is simple: People want things done but don't have the time to do it themselves. A personal concierge is someone who makes things happen for extraordinarily busy people like executives of companies or celebrities. Your job is to make things happen when someone needs to them happen, to provide things when people want them, and accomplish your mission, no matter how customized or strange it may seem, with a personal touch and class, to boot. If that sounds difficult, it's because it is! But personal concierges are consistently facing new challenges with every day and feel very rewarded by being part of a team that's accomplishing big things.

There's no real way to prepare yourself to be a personal concierge except to get out and do it; for that reason, it may be difficult to establish yourself without offering your services at a discount to begin with. However, this is a world where networking is more valuable than anything else – once you've got a satisfied customer willing to give you a referral, it's much easier to find another executive or VIP to work for. You can also consider joining the [National Association of Professional Organizers](#) for networking, directory listings and continuing education as a professional concierge.

## Personal Training

Qualifications:	Certification requirements vary from state to state; most reputable fitness certification is offered through the <a href="#">Aerobics and Fitness Association of America</a>
Average Income:	\$26,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

Some folks need a little extra help learning to diet and exercise, and others are serious about a fitness lifestyle, but are looking for an expert's advice. In either case, they go to a personal trainer.

Are you passionate about fitness, and love to help people? If so, this might be the right business for you. It's a quickly growing profession in America because of its many perks – flexible hours, doing what you're passionate about, and inspiring people to be their best. There's a lot of satisfaction to be had from helping someone achieve their maximum potential.

As a personal trainer, you'll be responsible for educating people about fitness and motivation. Of course, you have to be proficient in this yourself, so it's important that you be in the best shape you can be. You'll also need to have a good understanding of human anatomy so that you don't injure your potential clients. Lastly, you need to have good leadership skills, because when you're training someone, you're essentially forming a team with them and leading them toward their goals. If you want a client to stick with you, you'll need to care for them, inspire them and gain their trust – after all, you'll be traveling through very painful, intense personal territory with them, and they need to know that you know the way, and have their best interests in mind.

## Pet Sitting Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business; experience usually preferred
Average Income:	\$57,000 ( <a href="https://www.indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

This is a business that requires almost no startup capital. The only thing you need are some basic credentials to get started – you should own a pet and it helps to have a little experience with pets (for instance, a background in a veterinary clinic.)

Pet sitting is a fairly simple proposition – you watch other folks' pets while they're not able to care for them. If you're watching dogs (the most common) you'll need to feed them, play with them and walk them on a regular basis.

This is a bit counterintuitive, but there's some paperwork involved: Be sure to protect yourself with signed contracts every time you agree to watch someone's pet. You'll want to give owners a "report card" when they come back as well, detailing the activities you performed with the animals. Also, if pets need any medications or other special care, you'll have to have a way to record when you administered that to them.

When deciding on what rates to charge people, consider the type of animal, the amount of time you'll be watching someone's pet and the number of animals you're currently taking care of.

Next, get yourself a web site! Even though it seems like pet sitting is a primarily offline business, these days, most folks go to Craigslist or other classified sites to try and find local pet sitters. You will undoubtedly increase your business with some savvy advertisements and other methods of making your business known online.

## Property Management

Qualifications:	Licensing requirements vary from state to state. The <a href="#">Institute of Real Estate Management</a> offers Certified Property Manager credentials that are recognized industry wide. Many clients prefer managers with post-secondary education in architecture, business or property management.
Average Income:	\$51,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

Property managers are responsible for maintaining and managing a building or property (such as an apartment complex.) If you're thinking of starting a property management company, you'll need to decide right away which field you want to get into – residential or commercial.

Residential property managers handle both business and property-related elements. Usually, a residential property manager handles things like tenant affairs, applications, rent collection and budget management. A residential property manager is always on-call for emergencies and maintenance!

Commercial property managers usually have a specific staff and budget for a property like an office tower. Managing a commercial property generally consists of scheduling preventive and property maintenance and coordinating renovations. Commercial property management tends to be a bit less complicated than residential, but the standard of service in the industry is higher.

It's tough to go into property management – especially on your own – without prior experience in the building trade. Without project management skills and the valuable experience of working with other trade professionals, you'll have a hard time getting a leg up on your competition.

## Small Engine Repair

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business; most customers prefer licensing and certification from well-known professional organizations
Average Income:	\$37,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

It doesn't take much to get started as a small engine repairman – most local community colleges offer courses in it, and small engines for machines like lawn mowers, generators, chain saws and snow blowers tend to be much less complicated to work on than larger, computer aided engines like those found in automobiles.

Small engine repair is another job that is an excellent candidate for apprenticeship before striking out on your own – the act of repairing an engine isn't usually terrible difficult, but it's hard to command the necessary knowledge of the vast array of parts, brands, models and processes by reading it in a book. You'll also need to become familiar with the best periodicals and catalogs in the industry in order to stay current on each new yearly model of small engine tool that companies produce.

Typically, small engine repair specialists work out of their own garage or rent space at a repair shop. Some folks take on business from owners of tractors, snowmobiles and ATVs if they have the space to house them while working, although the bulk of most small engine repair business comes from landscaping tools. As such, this is a business that's pretty dependent on the building construction season (April to October, depending on your geographic location.)

## Solar Energy Consulting

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for going into business; most customers require <a href="#">Certified Energy Manager</a> and <a href="#">Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design</a> certifications. Many expect you to have a Master's degree in Electrical Engineering or Mechanical Engineering.
Average Income:	\$96,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

For eco-conscious homeowners who live in sunny states, solar energy can make a big statement (and save a lot of cash on the utility bill.) As the technology gets more efficient and more widespread, the price continually drops, and in concert, demand for solar energy consulting has risen.

This is a great home-based business for folks that want a green career in the solar industry, but don't feel like installation work or solar panel manufacturing is right for them. It's a challenging job with duties that change from day to day – a solar energy consultant is responsible for knowing industry trends and emerging technologies, advising on the right kind of solar panels for certain projects, designing installations for clients and assisting with applications for government rebates, tax credits and incentives.

It's tough to get started in this industry without some previous experience, but it's possible. Start with CEM and LEED certifications (you can obtain both with books at your local library) and consider taking a couple of classes at a community college on solar engineering and topics related to the solar industry.

## Tax Preparation

Qualifications:	Must be able to pass the <a href="#">Registered Tax Return Preparer</a> test
Average Income:	\$34,000 ( <a href="#">Indeed.com</a> )

It's not too difficult to become a tax preparer anywhere in the country, but you should be sure it's right for you before opening a home-based business. You'll need an encyclopedic knowledge of federal and state tax laws, the ability to perform some math and calculations, good people skills and the ability to work with computers. You'll also need great attention to detail!

The Internal Revenue Service has fairly strict requirements for people that want to become Tax Preparers – you'll have to pass a test before you can register your business, so prepare yourself for a good deal of time studying and learning about the tax code.

One of the best ways to learn how to prepare taxes is to go to work for one of the large chains like H&R Block or Jackson Hewitt. These companies not only have entire schools set up for their employees, they provide continuing education so that you stay updated on tax laws. By working for a company for a couple of years, you can learn the framework and then re-use that in your own business.

## Taxidermy

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for starting a business; stuffing certain animals requires a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service permit and state-specific licenses
Average Income:	\$31,000 ( <a href="#">eHow</a> )

Taxidermists stuff, prepare and mount animal skins. Their business primarily comes from hunters who want a memento of their kill, but some folks also like to have their family pets stuffed after the animal has passed away.

Taxidermy is a very old practice, and it's not terribly difficult, but it does require someone with a steady hand and a strong stomach. It requires taking the carcass of a dead animal, cleaning it out, tanning the hide, using chemicals to preserve the skin and fur (if necessary), removing the creature's eyes and replacing them with glass, and other grisly tasks that not everyone is suited for.

Profit margins on taxidermy run from 50 to 75 percent, so it can be fairly lucrative, especially if you live somewhere near a large population of game that attracts hunters. Because of the nature of hunting season requirements, taxidermy is a seasonal business and best suited for part-time work, although some animals are able to be hunted year-round, which can provide a small, though steady, stream of customers.

## Upholstery Service

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for starting a business
Average Income:	\$32,000 ( <a href="https://www.indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

If you're a wizard with a needle and thread, consider starting a home-based business centered around upholstering services.

Especially since the Great Recession, a lot of families have decided to repair old furniture rather than throw it out and make new, large purchases. This often means replacing upholstery and stuffing on chairs, couches, loveseats and more. Often, upholsterers will also work in cars and other vehicles.

Learning how to upholster is easy – simply head down to the dump or a thrift shop, pick up some unwanted furniture and start ripping it up and seeing how it works. There are plenty of YouTube videos and online tutorials (not to mention books at the library) that can explain the theory to you as you practice. Once you feel confident in your abilities, you can start marketing yourself – and making partnerships with furniture repair shops.

Oftentimes, if furniture needs new upholstery, it's going to need some repairs to its structure, as well. If your customers need a full-on repair, be sure to have a list of furniture repair technicians on hand you can recommend to them – or better yet, learn how to do some minor furniture repairs and keep the business for yourself!

## Used Book Sales

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for starting a business
Average Income:	No data available

Back in 1994, a man named Jeff Bezos wanted to harness the power of the Internet for retail sales. He started by selling the books on his bookshelf, and built a little company you might have heard of – Amazon.com.

Now, he's got a pretty big share of the market these days, so you might have a hard time gunning for his position. But there is still plenty of money to be made as a used book dealer.

Big chain bookstores aren't doing so well – Borders is already out of business and Barnes and Noble keeps posting losses year after year. But used books are having something of a renaissance period right now.

A used book dealer usually starts with the books on her bookshelf and moves out to library sales, flea markets, by-bulk clearance events and picks up titles she thinks will be popular, then turns around and sells them at a small markup. The overhead costs for this business are quite low – all you have to have is plenty of bookshelf space, a good web page and some Google AdWords. But the earning potential as such probably means this is a home-based business that's best for someone with a part-time endeavor in mind.

# The Bootstrapper's Bible

## Web Development

Qualifications:	No education required if experienced
Average Income:	\$88,000 ( <a href="http://indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

As the Internet grows and grows at its current unprecedented rate, there is an ever-increasing demand for web developers. If you've got the chops for programming web sites (or are willing to learn) it can be a very lucrative home-based business.

You can get most of the training you need online, but you'll need to know how to build e-commerce sites, incorporate security into Web pages, some fundamentals of user experience design and a sprinkling of graphic design, too.

You can get your business started by downloading free trials of the most popular web development software like Dreamweaver, Espresso, Coda and Aptana – some folks hop from one free trial to another for months on end. And of course, once you've got the money, you know which one you like best.

Before anyone will hire you, they need to see some of your work. It's important to have a portfolio web site up and running that you can point your potential clients to. The web site should show off your best stuff, clearly state your services and give them a good way to contact you.

You might have to do some web site design for free to get started and fill up your portfolio. Get out there in your local community and find charities, social clubs and local schools who could benefit from a web developer, and start getting the experience you need while doing some good!

## Wedding Planning

Qualifications:	No legal requirements for starting a business
Average Income:	\$52,000 ( <a href="https://www.indeed.com">Indeed.com</a> )

Forget you ever saw the awful Jennifer Lopez movie. Wedding planning is a big business. As anyone who has ever gotten married can attest to, there are thousands of little details that assume massive importance, especially the closer a couple gets to the big day, and it can get overwhelming. This is where a wedding planner's expertise and experience pays off.

As a wedding planner, you'll need to get – and stay – familiar with an ever-changing patina of trends, fads, wedding dress styles, color palettes and more. If you offer an a la carte style array of services, from flower arrangement to venue selection to catering management, you can also pick up business from DIY brides and grooms who just need help with one aspect of their ceremony.

You might have to offer your services at a highly discounted rate (or even free) to get some business to begin with, as it can be hard to convince someone paying thousands of dollars for a wedding to entrust the most important day of their life to an amateur. However, once you've pulled off a couple of successful weddings and have a portfolio built up, you'll find it a lot easier to bring in potential clients.

To get started, make some rounds at the local wedding shops where you live. Figure out what services they're offering, which ones you can provide cheaper, and which services they're *not* offering that you think might be popular. Then, start advertising!