

# California LLC Formation Checklist

## Step 1: Name Your California LLC

The name of your California LLC should be distinguishable from other business names in your state and must meet the California naming guidelines.

How to Complete This Step:

Review California's naming guidelines

- Your name must include the phrase "limited liability company" or one of its abbreviations (LLC or L.L.C.).
- Your name cannot include words that could confuse your LLC with a government agency (FBI, Treasury, State Department, etc.).
- The name cannot include the following words: bank, trust, trustee, incorporated, inc., corporation, or corp.
- The name cannot include the words "insurer" or "insurance company" or any words suggesting that it is in the business of issuing policies of insurance and assuming insurance risks.
- The name must be distinguishable from any other LLC registered with the Secretary of State. You can read more about what makes a name distinguishable on the [California Secretary of State website](#).

[Brainstorm business names](#)

Check if the [web domain](#) is available

Make sure the name isn't already taken by doing a [business name search](#) on the California Secretary of State website.

Your Business Name:

Your Business URL:

## Step 2: Choose an Agent for Service of Process

An [agent for service of process](#) (known as a registered agent in most states) is the person or company you choose to accept official communication on behalf of your LLC.

Your registered agent must be:

- 18 years or older
- A resident of California
- Available at all times during normal business hours (i.e., 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Monday through Friday) at their listed physical address (no P.O. boxes)

Many businesses choose to use a [registered agent service](#) for convenience and privacy.

Registered Agent Name and Address:

### Step 3: File Your Articles of Organization

The Articles of Organization is the paperwork required to register your LLC. This document is filed with the Secretary of State either [online](#), by [mail](#), or in person.

You will need to provide the following information:

- Name of the LLC (Step 1)
- Business address
- Name and address of the agent for service of process (Step 2)
- Management structure ([member-managed or manager-managed](#))

A member-managed LLC structure is when the members of the LLC are involved with the management of the LLC. A manager-managed LLC is when a few assigned individuals are responsible for managing the LLC.

### Step 4: File the Initial Statement of Information

All California LLCs are required to file an Initial Statement of Information with the California Secretary of State within 90 days of formation. This can be done [online](#), by [mail](#), or in person.

### Step 5: Create an Operating Agreement

An [operating agreement](#) lays out the rules and management structure of your LLC.

While California legally requires LLCs to maintain an operating agreement, your operating agreement doesn't need to be filed with the state. You'll keep it in your LLC records file and return to it as needed to clarify rules and settle disputes.

### Step 6: Get an EIN

An Employer Identification Number ([EIN](#)) is like a Social Security number for your business. EINs are free and easy to get from the IRS using [Form SS-4](#) or by filling out the [online application](#).