



Minimum Viable Startup Pack

(aka how to start small, without looking like a cheapskate)

Welcome!

This toolkit is created especially for people who are put off by the technicalities of starting a free range business. I strip back the layers and show you exactly what you need (and what you don't) to get going for under \$100 (or £100) minus the faff.

This isn't really about the money: it's about the *headspace* that you can save by focusing on what you need here and now.... And so that the admin parts don't stop you from starting in the first place (because the reality is they don't have to!).

The Free Range Humans approach used in this guide is: only get what you need when you need it. **If you try to learn everything about each of the below at the same time it will take away from the far more important task of actually getting started.** So think of what you need before taking the next step, get those elements place and then take that next step.

As always, your own *learning* and *action* are more important than any tool (but the tools below should make things that much easier for you and help you on your journey).

Finally, while these suggestions can be great ways to get started that doesn't mean they are the only way.

As always please think like a Free Range Human and check things out / make the best decision for **your** situation.

Enjoy!

Marianne x

Author: "Be A Free Range Human"

IMPORTANT: this guide was created in 2019.

Please do your own research to be sure it's up to date for your needs!

Disclaimer

This guide contains general opinions on systems and approaches that work well, but this is not to say these will be appropriate for you. Each individual and business is unique so please check that your choices are right for you.

In particular, the business registration, tax and insurance sections are NOT intended to be taken as a recommendation - you should seek professional advice. Any decisions or purchases taken are your responsibility.

Some of the links in this guide are affiliate links which means I may get a small kickback for recommendations. This does not impact the price and does not impact which services I recommend (if you've read the book you might have picked up that my reputation is more important than a few dollars here and there. But as one of my early clients pointed out, if you're pointing out all this fab stuff you really should get shoe-money for it ;).

As always, the way I work is: I choose my recommendations first, and only then search for any affiliate programs for these existing choices. As you'll see I only recommend those tools I choose to pay for myself (wherever possible); I also give free alternatives when I am aware of a quality option. Of course you are also free to Google the options listed here and go to them directly – though personally I prefer to keep things in the free range family.

TL;DR: this guide is not a definitive tome, so please use it at your discretion. Think for yourself and all that jazz :)

Now let's dive into this guide, shall we?



I built all my first websites without advanced technical knowledge. You can do this with the right platform such as the ones below:

BLOGS

Want to start a blog on a free platform? Here are the top options right now:

Option 1: Medium.

If you are starting you're a play project blog that focuses on writing (as opposed to photos etc) then a great free platform is Medium.com.

Simple to set up and already designed to optimize the reading experience, this is a decent spot to play out your ideas and get started without faffing with technology! In fact: you *can't* faff with technology on Medium. There are no bells and whistles on this platform, it's black text on white background and they keep things simple *but super effective for readers*.

With great typography (and a reader base of 60 million) your blog will look professional).

While Medium is a good place to start and play things out before you commit to a self-hosted blog, but it isn't just a starting point: it also is a spot that plenty of established entrepreneurs and thinkers keep their blog on the side of their main site these days – it is a regular place for content that is 'thought leadership' related.

If I were starting today, Medium is where I would be testing out my ideas and honing my writing.

Look up www.medium.com

Option 2: Linked In.

If you're writing for a professional audience you might want to consider Linked In's blogging platform. This is easy to use, gets exposed to Linked In's users, and is linked to your professional profile (so only use this if that is appropriate!).

When you publish your existing connections will get notified and the better you get at this the more Linked In is likely to notice and promote you to other users (Linked In has editors that can choose posts to be featured on their channels).

However, this platform is quite niche, and there are no customization options. But it will look Linked In friendly which may be enough if your audience is on there!

Option 3:

Microblogging on a platform like Instagram.

Wait up, what is microblogging? Basically exactly what it sounds like: shorter posts! If you aren't writing hugely long posts, then putting them up on a platform like Instagram is smart as you grow a following as well as make it more likely people will share your words!

Having said that, you won't get the benefit of showing up on Google for what you write, and it is just on that platform so could get overlooked.

But you could easily overcome that with posting your best content on another blogging platform at the same time to get two points for the price of one piece of content (that's free range thinking in action!),

WEBSITE AND BLOG

To take things a step up use 'self hosted' site for both blog and website.

Self hosted means that you have control over everything on a proper website, with your own www. website domain name and everything ready to go!

How does this work and what should you use?

For which web hosts and design themes I recommend and how it works (and what this all means), check out the related points on my Resources page here:

<https://free-range-humans.com/resources>

However this takes a *bit* more technical learning to get started (see link above for how to do it without a ton of technical knowledge!).

You also have to pay for your own website hosting (but to many people's surprise this is actually pretty accessible compared to what you might imagine!)

Big benefit of a self-hosted site is that you can create it yourself, do your own edits, and if you use the resources I suggest in the link above, plenty of good web designers will happily work with it in the future when you decide to upgrade.

Top Tip: getting a self hosted website and your own domain name also means you can have a professional email address! That means you can avoid free email accounts like yourbusiness@gmail.com - that smacks of 'fly-by-night' providers and doesn't inspire trust.

When you get a domain with a good provider (see link above), you can also use it for your email address eg: yourname@yoursite.com so it is well worth the \$10 or so to buy that domain.

COST

Medium or Linked In = free.

Website with own hosting = around \$10 per month (including a free domain name). Your first year is usually discounted so it can be more like \$5 a month.

WEBSITE AND LOGO DESIGN

You do not *need* to spend loads on design for your first website or logo.

As we discuss in the Branding chapter of the book, your brand ideas will probably change as you discover what things are like on the ground so a rule of thumb is: would I will be unwilling to ditch this logo/website header in month if I change my mind? If your answer is 'no' then you are spending too much time or money on your first attempt so find another way of getting it out faster for your first period until you see how it works for you (eg: *you can easily write out your brand name in regular font on your site, and use that as your website header.*).

If you know you need something more, then here are my two favourite suggestions that give you quality on a budget:

Several designers offer premade logos on Etsy.com: just go to <http://www.etsy.com> run a search for *premade logos* and you'll have plenty of options of beautiful premade logos. Then pick a design 'off the shelf' and they customize it with your words! Great results from quality designers, for the fraction of the price of a fully custom design.

www.99designs.com is where dozens of designers compete to create the best design for you: you state what you want, how much you want to pay and freelancers start creating. If you like one, you choose it, nice and simple!

WEBSITE TECHNICAL HELP

If you need help on installations hop on www.fiverr.com and hire someone for \$5 for a small job or go to www.peopleperhour.com or www.upwork.com and find a freelancer for a bigger job. In short, there are plenty of people there waiting to help you out for a wide range of budgets!



This is so helpful to have on your side. A good email list provider lets you quickly and easily collect email addresses and names so that you can follow up with those people however you choose.

How can you gather names? Either with prior consent in person (eg: people fill in their names on a piece of paper at an event specifically asking to be on your email list) or with a signup box for your website so people can choose to join and get an automatic welcome email.

Not only can you regularly remind people of your presence and build a relationship but you can also build relationships and make sales without having to there in that moment.

There are a lot of options out there and while you could spend days researching this I'll save you time. Not all providers are equal, so to make your life easier, here are my top insider recommendations

CONVERT KIT is my top choice and what I currently use.

A lot of people who use email lists professionally have moved to Convert Kit over the last few years (me included!) and there's good reason for this.

Without getting too geeky about this, CK really does everything you'll need, plus things you didn't know you needed but will love (eg: sending people who have shown interest in different things slightly different messages – extra personal touch and so easy here!). Great support team too.

They also have best in class education around this topic.

Get a free trial at https://frh.me/convert_kit

MAILCHIMP is an email list service which has a good reputation, it is user friendly (people particularly like the visuals) and while I don't use it I do know a good number of happy users! www.mailchimp.com

What are the pros and cons?

The big draw about Mailchimp is that it is free and easy to set it up if you have a small list (however it starts to charge if you want their templates and to use your own custom branding etc - which you soon will).

Downside is that Mailchimp isn't as powerful a platform at that end (and it's smart to start your list on the platform you want to grow on).

Also, if you want to learn as well as do, then Convert Kit has hands down the best email marketing education bundled with their starter offering to get things going (see above).

This one is a personal choice with a few variables, so I'll leave it with you!

COST

Starter options range from *free* to \$29 a month.



1. A SIMPLE BANK TRANSFER (UK) OR VENMO (USA)

This is a basic option that only works if you are selling a service where people have to get in touch with you before signing up.

I'm including this here as so often we forget about the simple options when starting out because we think it all has to be complicated – so a reminder that you are *more* than allowed to take your first purchases in a simple way!

COST: free

Obviously this is more a starter option for your first sales and it isn't appropriate when you are selling something that you'd like people to buy at the touch of a button. For that, you need a payment system. Luckily you can get one easily and at almost no cost using a service like PayPal.

2. PAYPAL

www.paypal.com is the simplest way to take payments online. Nothing difficult, go to their Paypal Business section and it's all there, with no upfront costs to pay. Create buttons, change currency, or create subscription payments over weeks or months. You can even create invoices to send by email if you prefer!

TOP TIP: Did you know PayPal processes credit cards too? You'll see the option at checkout. This means your customers do not necessarily need their own PayPal account to buy from you.

COST: no upfront fee. Just a small % of each payment from PayPal. This holds up well when compared to credit card processing costs.

3. ONLINE SHOPS

You can sell anything online using only the resources above. However if you are selling physical products – or smaller design-based virtual ones – you may prefer one of these options:

www.shopify.com a great service that gives you your own shop builder and shopping cart for a monthly fee. You get your own 'site' up and running, nice and simple!

www.etsy.com for handmade, vintage or craft supplies. Quick to set up, easy to use, you get an instant shop.



NOTE: This section applies to UK and USA people. If you are based elsewhere please consult a local startup guide for this part.

Welcome to the simplest business reg/insurance/tax guide out there.

The aim of this guide is simple: to break things down to the minimum viable things you need to do to get going, without getting bogged in red tape.

For example the aim the tax setup section is not to set you up to pay the least tax, but to show you what you may need to do to get going in the first 3 months.

This might seem odd. Why write a tax section that doesn't aim to save you tax?

Well, think about it: when wading through a book on optimum tax setups what do most people do? Answer: NOTHING. They avoid the setup process because it is too complicated and there is too much to get your head around. End result: lost income from putting things off, and not starting up! From a bottom line perspective this doesn't make sense (you don't save money if you don't make money).

Yet that is what most guides focus on: the things you would *ideally* do... but that actually put off the bulk of potential free rangers. I much prefer to work with the reality of how people really think and act.

Reality: most people just want to get something going and make it work without the fuss. Most people are put off by what is perceived by a complicated set up process. Most people don't realize that things are actually much simpler than that.

Problem: most startup guides are written by people who enjoy the startup details (and indeed that is what makes them valuable experts in general). Yet a large chunk of their readers are people who are actively put off by those details.

Solution: a guide for the rest of us. Let's start thinking about what you really need, and cut out the things that are not essential right away.

In this guide, the focus is on three things: *time, costs and headspace*. My aim is to get you looking at the minimum you 'really' need to get in place before launching (and within your first few months) in order to maximize your time and headspace on building up the best free range business you can without getting bogged down by red tape.

Sound good? Let's get to it!

But first a word about **what this is not**: in case it wasn't clear, this is not a startup guide that covers every eventuality and every circumstance. My aim is not to show you what to do after your first 3 months, or to show what you would 'ideally' do given infinite time and capacity for wading through red tape.

If you enjoy the details of this process then this guide may not be for you (a book like the comprehensive *Financial Times Guide To Business Startup* (UK) <https://amzn.to/2SHzGf5> or *The Small Business Start-Up Kit: A Step By Step Legal Guide* (US) <https://amzn.to/312UNLC> may be more appropriate).

However if you like to scrutinize every detail for a long time before doing anything, I would also ask you to consider: is the (probably small) amount of tax you might save by taking another 2 months to get everything perfect worth 2 months of lost income? In most cases, for someone starting out for the first time, the answer is a resounding no.

So do consider: what would happen if you got things out fast and well-enough, with the aim of coming back after say 6 months once you DO know what your business really looks like and tightening things up then? Counterintuitive, but also possibly the very thing to get you unstuck.

I am also not an accountant, legal or insurance expert (what? Was that in some way surprising? :). While this guide had some input from such experts, **this guide is in no way definitive and is not intended as official advice. This was also created in 2019 and things change fast.** As always, you should consult the appropriate expert for your individual circumstance.

Finally, free range humans think for themselves. I'm giving you a 'what can work to make this simple + get going without the faff' perspective, but I'm going to trust you to take responsibility for your decisions, ok? In other words, use your brain when applying this and rainbows and happy bunnies shall abound*

Marianne x

*rainbows and happy bunnies not guaranteed.

BUSINESS REGISTRATION

This one depends entirely on where you and your business are based!

In the UK here's the deal:

This is almost always easier than most people assume.

You have a few options – most commonly 'register as a sole trader' or 'register as a limited company'. There are a lot of resources out there on registering as a limited company or similar (and if you hire an accountant they will usually do it for you).

However, did you know that in the UK you do NOT have to register as a limited company in order to start getting paid as your own boss?

A 'sole trader' is a legal status that you can set up easily and it allows you to earn money without registering as a company or having an official business name!

In the UK you can register as a sole trader with HMRC (tax office). Click here and register online (or if you've sent a return online before then fill in the form CWF1 there): <http://frh.me/VUeUCi>. Follow the steps and voila you're done! Look at you up and registered ;).

If the link above doesn't work please contact HMRC or get googling, they do change things around and we can't provide individual technical help on their forms or systems – but they have staff of thousands so you imagine they can ☺).

Upside: becoming a sole trader is simple with very little paper work, and it's free to register. There are no company accounts to file either which means it is simpler and will save you time and valuable headspace in your first year.

It is also very flexible. As a sole trader you are registered under your own name, not a business name. On your website or materials you simply state you are Jane Bloggs *trading as* Awesome Cupcakes... and the next day you could start a side project and be Jane Bloggs *trading as* Brighton Beekeepers. Bottom line is: you don't need to notify anyone before starting a second or third idea once you are registered as a sole trader, just keep separate records for each and pop these details into two separate sets of pages in your tax return, one for each activity.

Downside: because you are not a limited company you don't have the same legal protection. Also the tax rate is higher (which won't be an issue if your profits are under £25,000 or so).

Despite this, the simplicity of set up and lower admin means that sole trader is the way many free rangers choose to start out for their first year, before switching things up down the line.

In the US here's where to turn:

I've brought in leading small business attorney Elizabeth Potts Weinstein to share her knowledge on this.

As she explains:

"In the United States, businesses are regulated by the federal government, by the state governments, by county governments, and by city or town governments. So what you need to do depends upon where you are located, how many business owners you have, the type of services or products you sell, and whether you want to form a limited liability entity or not."

Here's a straightforward way to look at the options:

"If you are a single-owner business, you automatically exist as a sole proprietorship as soon as you start operating. This type of entity does not offer you any liability protection (it does not shield your personal assets from the business' liabilities).

However, a sole proprietorship is relatively simple and low-cost to start" which is why a lot of people choose this!

"If you are going into business with another person or persons, your business is automatically a general partnership. While you are not legally required to have a written partnership agreement, it is highly recommended. You are also liable for the actions of your partner(s), even if you don't know about their actions ahead of time. Since this is such a risk, many multi-owner businesses form an LLC or Corporation.

Another option in the USA is to form a Limited Liability Company (LLC) or Corporation (S-Corp or C-Corp), to limit your liability and sometimes to save on taxes. These are formed at the state level, so you would need to decide both the type of entity to form and you would need to choose a state. Usually it is best to pick the same state as where you are located for simplicity, but you can form your business entity in a different state than where you are located.

You don't always need to form an LLC or Corporation. It depends upon how many owners, the type of services or products you sell, how much income you're making, and your tolerance for risk. If you're not sure, best option is to speak to an attorney."

Elizabeth also explains that because rules change around the country, then whichever form you choose, "you also need to check if you must do certain business filings in your area. If your trade name is different than your legal name, you may need a trade name or doing-business-as (DBA) registration. You may

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also need a business license and a sales tax license. If you work from home, you may need a "home occupation" permit; home occupation permits are from your town or county.

To find out what you need to do, check the websites of your state, county, and city or town and look for their "business" section. Some places have an online "wizard" that will tell you what you need to do. If you live in a smaller town, the best way to get an answer is to call them or go down to your city hall in person.

Business licenses may be done at the state, county, or city/town level. In some places, you only need a business license for certain types of businesses, like if you sell alcohol. In other locations, every business needs a license and it is more like an annual tax. In some areas, you need to have obtained your business license before your first sale."

So in short, this will vary by region so it's a good idea to look up what is the *minimum* you need to be legally operating in your area – but don't let this feel overwhelming, most places are business friendly and official state and area websites should tell you if there is anything you 100% need right now – and if they don't then pick up the phone, explain exactly what you are doing, and ask!

When it comes to taxes, Elizabeth explains: "If you are selling physical products, you need to collect sales taxes and file regular sales tax returns. In a few states, you also need to collect sales taxes on digital products and even some types of services. Because the law on the collection of sales taxes has been changing in the USA, please research the latest rules to determine if sales taxes applies to your business."

www.elizabethpottsw Weinstein.com

BUSINESS INSURANCE

There are two main types of insurance to consider:

1. Public liability insurance (known as “general liability” insurance in the USA) which I call Tripping Over Insurance. This protects you financially if you're found liable for negligence that results in death, injury, loss or damage.

Usually this relates to physical products, physical injury or property (which means it does not apply to *all* free range businesses; I have not required this insurance to date). If you host events on other people's property you might be covered by their insurance (but it's worth checking on a case by case basis).

Get advice as to whether this is appropriate for you. (Note: when people talk about insurance being expensive they are usually referring to public liability insurance so if you don't need it then your insurance costs drop automatically).

2. Professional indemnity insurance is the one you will probably need if offering any sort of service, support or advice. Professional indemnity insurance protects you in case of legal action due to financial, material or physical losses a client experiences as a result of your advice or work. Or: if someone takes your advice, something goes wrong, and they sue, you're going to want your professional indemnity insurance at the ready! This insurance is used by everyone from coaches to consultants to therapists.

This is an affordable insurance, and you can get it in place in about 15 minutes online.

COST

In the UK, you can get this for as little as £20 a month (varies depending on your business and assuming you need professional indemnity only).

In the USA professional indemnity (also known as Errors and Omissions insurance) is more like \$50 a month.

The cost of yours will vary as it depends where you trade, who your clients are, your type of business and other factors.

TOP TIP

While you can look this up online advice changes a lot. Shop around and ask for advice from people in your industry and make the best decision for yourself.

For example asking around got me recommendations for my first professional indemnity insurer in the UK, www.westminster-indemnity.co.uk (note this is provided as an example rather than advice. Choose the insurer that is best for you).

MEDICAL INSURANCE (FOR USA BASED READERS)

A common barrier to going free range in the USA is concern over medical insurance. However, you can buy your own insurance, just like you would home or car insurance.

If you're currently employed often you can use COBRA* insurance as an interim plan while you investigate other options. This Act allows employees of companies with 20 or more staff the option to self-pay on their previous employer's plan for 18 months when they leave their job.

After that? A healthy, younger person can get catastrophic coverage for about \$300 per month. Check out options on a comparison website such as:

<https://www.getinsured.com>

When I moved to the US I got medical insurance with the company "Oscar" and loved them (note this isn't a recommendation – it's my personal experience!).

Another option that has been talked about more and more among US based free rangers is a 'health-share' scheme, such as "Liberty Health Share".

In this particular 'health share' example (Liberty) you can sign up any time: at time of writing it's around \$200 per month for a single person and \$500 for a family (and there are no co-pays). The yearly deductible varies between \$1500-2000 but after that you are covered 100%.

NOTE: I am not recommending this Healthshare provider for you and have not used them. I have no idea if they're a good fit for you, as with everything there are so many variables. I am placing it here *purely* as an example to make you aware of options available outside of employer-sponsored insurance. Everything has its pros and cons - please do your own research for your own needs.

TOP TIP: No matter what you go for, the advice repeated when looking into medical insurance was to not let your current coverage lapse until you get the new one. If there is even one day lapse, they are permitted to turn you down.

* Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), employers with 20 or more employees that have a group health plan are required to offer their employees and dependents the option of continuing their membership in the group plan at their own expense after they leave their job. See more here: <https://frh.me/2Kfp2tJ>

Note: This should not be taken as advice or recommendations (and is subject to change). Mentioning a website or product here does not imply an endorsement. Get professional advice before making a decision on your medical insurance.

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ACCOUNTANT

There's a bit of a myth that if you're in business you are always worrying about taxes and it's all dreadfully taxing (ha!), but that simply isn't true when you have a decent accountant.

TOP TIP: Most accountants have a free session on the phone or even face to face. Use this to decide who you want to work with - and don't feel obliged to go with someone you are not comfortable with.

Speaking of which, what does it mean to have a decent accountant? There is no such thing as a generic 'good accountant', only a good accountant for you. At least one of my free range friends values an accountant that minimises tax radically, whereas another values someone who makes things simple so they have almost nothing to do and never has to worry about it (they know everything will all be done accurately and they will have no hassles), and another likes their accountant mostly because they get on well.

Each of them has a 'good accountant' by their standards but I doubt they would like each other's! Get clear on your priority and look for that.

COST

As a sole trader in the UK, you can generally get an accountant for around £40-£100 per month. Costs will vary substantially depending on service levels etc. For limited companies it is more like £100-£200+ a month at least (everything is simpler as a sole trader as you have seen above!).

In the USA the cost of accountants for small businesses vary a lot, but can be around \$100 a month.

However, the rule of thumb is that your accountant should save you more than you pay them so the real cost is 'free'!

POPULAR ALTERNATIVE: Instead of hiring an individual accountant or trying to figure it out yourself, you can find a middle ground with an affordable online tool like www.turbotax.com in the US or an online service like www.crunch.co.uk in the UK.

**Wait what about VAT and other scary sounding things?
(A note for UK based readers).**

This is relevant to UK based readers only: do you need to register for VAT before you take on your first client or customer? It depends on a lot of things but *often* the answer is 'no' (phew!)

For example did you know that with most business types, you don't actually need to register or pay VAT until you reach the VAT threshold of £85,000? (This goes up annually so google for what it currently is).

While that's when you *have* to register, people who sell B2B (ie: business to business) and whose clients are mostly VAT registered may find there is value in voluntarily registering earlier on (mostly as it doesn't put off their clients, who can just claim that part back in their next tax return. In contrast, those whose clients tend to be individuals often find it isn't worth registering until they hit the threshold).

Having said that, when it comes to VAT, there can be other factors at play regarding what sort of products you're selling, so the best advice is 'talk to an accountant'.

Google results and anecdotal advice in groups or forums can all too easily send you down the wrong track, so I highly encourage you to do this.

(Tip: you don't need to hire someone before you have this conversation. If you are shopping around for an accountant this is a key part of the 'intro' conversation to see how well they can communicate with you - and way smarter than endless googling on the topic!)



The piece you don't 'need' but that you might like. Don't let the absence of anything in this section hold you back from starting! But feel free to add them in if you can and want to.

BUSINESS CARDS

This one's easy: Moo cards. My favourite business cards, Moo lets you easily create stand-out, fun cards made exactly how you want them, and delivered to your door. Easy, fun and brilliant value.

Avoid: free, low quality business cards with the manufacturer's name printed on the back. That says "I don't care enough about you to get a real card".

Top tip: Start with a small number, like 50, for \$19.99 (or £10.99). That's more than enough to get started and odds are you'll change your details or design second time around!

Get 25% off Moo Cards using this link: <https://frh.me/moocards>

Note: you do not need business cards to start. In fact for the past few years I have experimented with not carrying any business cards! The worked out well as I made meaningful connections with people I really wanted to stay in touch with.

Think about it: If you met someone in a social setting and really wanted to stay in touch how would you do it? Probably whip out your phone and add their details. That's exactly what I do too. Not having cards makes for more real human interactions, where you stay in touch with the people you want to... rather than handing out cards and wondering what happened.

I am sharing this story to show that you don't 'need' cards before you start, so don't stress about them. But they are nice to have and helpful in some settings (in fact I'm creating my first batch in a while this week – using Moo cards!) so use the above to go for yours when you like!

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WORK SPACE

There are plenty of free range work spaces available for free: home, cafes (most of which have free internet) and other places depending on your location.

There's nothing quite like sitting in a café with your laptop doing 'work' in a beautiful setting.

Having said that over the last few years people on laptops in cafes has exploded, so smart free rangers are thoughtful about where they base and for how long. Not only are there other customers to think of - but often the cafes are small businesses too, run by real people, so let's look out for them!

So how do you do laptop-in-café-working without becoming one of 'those people' with laptops? Well, consider that some places embrace and even rely on the custom of laptop-nearing humans (especially if you're showing up most days!). And some are perfectly ok with it at quiet times but would really prefer if you moved when they got busy.

Often places have signs up indicating this, but if ever in doubt, especially if you're going to show up somewhere more than once, ask the staff if they are ok with laptops – it's worth a bit of checking-things-out time at first to find your cosy and welcoming out of home spot!

COST: free (or for cafes: a few cups of coffee and being nice to the baristas).

Co-working spaces (and members clubs). This is where you pay a monthly fee to become a member of a place that includes a shared workspaces. These are available in most cities and towns, and in more and more smaller places too!

There are loads of local options (google yours!) and some bigger ones eg: The Impact Hub has over 100 locations around the world (including London, Amsterdam, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Dubai among many more), and there are many other independent spots around the world.

These have taken off so much that a little one-road beach town in Costa Rica that I stopped by years ago now has a co-working space!). Google 'co-working space' in your area for a start. And look around for one that fits the vibe you like!

COST: varies by location.

Whatever your preference as a free ranger you can find a place that fits be it at home, 'on the road if travel is part of your vision - or out of the house.

For inspiration, here is a small selection of my favourites over the years!



(From left to right, from an Airbnb on a quiet street in **Rome**, poolside in **Bali** (top tip, don't sit so close to the edge, no one wants to drop their laptop in the pool!), to a favourite **local café**, meeting a friendly dog while at a cafe-with-laptop in Tulum, **Mexico**... and a fave laptop friendly spot with a glimpse of the beach while visiting my Dad back on the east coast of **Australia**).

VIRTUAL WORKSHOPS / CLASSES OR WEBINARS (HOW TO DO IT)

Virtual workshops / webinars growing faster than ever! With obvious benefits for location (you can get clients from all over the world, and be anywhere yourself), costs (no room hire) and time (no travel time for you or your clients):

Zoom is what I use to run online group classes (with anything from 2 to over 200 people) with people dialling in from around the world. It's easy to use and reliable video conferencing (yes, you can turn video off and use it as audio only! And yes, you can record if you want to)

Plus the screen-share tool is really handy.

Start for free with the basic version (where you can have up to 100 participants and meeting of up to 40 mins). Then you can upgrade to the Pro (that's what I use!) should you ever need to.

Check out Zoom here: <https://frh.me/zoomwebsite>

COST

Free to start, Pro version (for meetings of unlimited length and more) is \$14.99 a month.

Websites, and other (optional) tech:

Want more? Check out my personal resource list of what I use to run things online at: www.free-range-humans.com/resources

Remember you don't need all of the things on that page, but if you're curious what you can use as you get going, here it is!

FINDING A 'VIRTUAL ASSISTANT' (TO DO THE PARTS YOU DON'T NEED TO BE DOING)

Now this is not something *need* to get started!

However, I'm adding this in as an option for down the line, as it is nice to know that as you go you can hire in 'freelance help' in the form of what we call a VA, or Virtual Assistant.

A VA is someone who does tasks for you, taking things out of your headspace and off your plate so you can focus on where you are adding the most value (aka where you are most in flow!).

How I hired my first VA

I hired my first VA a year or so after I started - and I would have been better off doing it a bit earlier.

Like most people I was nervous about hiring someone on retainer longer term so I originally hired her for just a week, when taking my first fully offline week for a while (I do this more regularly now, mostly because I have a good VA!).

Here's how we started: her first task was managing client emails and enquiries while I was away. And it went so well that far from it ending after that week, I kept her on for several years!

The reason was simple: headspace. I *could* do all of that, and had been, but it was something that was on my mind far more than was warranted. I was stressing about never being late with a reply or missing something, even the days back then when I'd only get one email, I'd still refresh far too much!

Having someone in a few hours a week (she dipped in less than 30 mins a day on weekdays!) was a game changer.

To make sure this was done right, before we started I spent a good chunk of time compiling the usual questions we got, and my replies. For each, I explained *why* I replied in that way (this part is important!). This simple guide gave her the starting point for helping out on emails. We started with a few practice sample emails and then were good to go.

At first, she ccd me on replies and passed 'unsure' ones by me before replying. Then, I was dropped off the loop and only got forwarded responses that were not 'standard' and needed me to reply.

A while later she kicked me out of the admin inbox (with my permission!) and ran the show for real; today I only get forwarded things when needed.

That was my 'big thing' at first – emails. Clearing up that from my headspace meant that I could develop more ideas and products and also market with more confidence as I knew we had the capacity to take care of people properly.

I share this example as I used to think you hired a VA when you had no more time. That is not always the case, a great time to hire is when something (especially something that isn't in line with the biggest value you provide) is taking up your headspace and stopping you being as effective as you can be. That's when a VA will more than pay for themselves.

On the side, my VAs over the years have done detail tracking (spreadsheets and other process-y things we know I'll drop the ball on!), personal projects and even project management.

Where to get a good VA

- 1. Ask around.** Go into a good Facebook group for entrepreneurs in your area (or entrepreneurs of your type). Ask for VA recommendations. (Of course if you already know people doing their own thing who might know VAs, ask. They might not hire anyone right now but they may well know someone). That is one of the simplest ways to find someone with firsthand recommendations.
- 2. Look on freelancer sites.** Like peopleperhour.com and many others. If you haven't hired before, then is something I'd do only after the first point (or if you can't pull off the first point). You'll find people there for sure but there will be more of a screening process to ensure they fit the bill.
- 3. Want a one off job or to practice with a VA?** Head to fiverr.com and pick up a temporary VA there! From web edits, to spreadsheets, to, well whatever you think of. There are plenty of people from all round the world. You can get a feel from their description or reviews and get a lower priced practice experience.

Keep in mind, this won't be the same as one you talk to and develop a longer relationship with, and will involve more management on your end, but it is a good way to start (I practiced in this way before hiring a longer term VA).

How do you screen VAs to get the right one for you?

Personally, I am interested in a personality fit, so I both get aware of personality profile so that I don't accidentally hire someone who is doing something that is the opposite of their natural flow (mistakes will 100% be made if that is the case! Plus, they won't be happy for long).

I have a list that is personal to me about what traits do and do not work for anyone who I'm considering joining my team. From communication, to being self driven, to high personal standards and more. Work out what yours are and watch for them. More importantly, I make sure we click from the start. I'm also open about my weaknesses and see how they respond to knowing those.

So, what do you do specifically to get yourself the right person?

Here is advice from free range human Jo Munro, creator of the VA Handbook:

"I always recommend clients post a thorough brief and then give shortlisted VAs a paid one-hour task (ideally a task they know how to do!) and see how they manage it. It's important to find a good fit for your business and this way you can see how they communicate and whether they clarify the task etc.

Finding a good administrator is actually very easy, but finding someone who can solve problems and help you identify and reach your objectives is not.

I know someone who, when giving test tasks to potential VAs, won't give them all the information they need to complete it because she wants to see what they do. She's looking for a VA who can solve problems. She wants to see if they will find out the missing piece of the puzzle, admit they don't know how to continue or/and come back to her for clarification. Clients need more than just someone to do their tasks.

There are two types of VAs: ones who are very invested/involved in their client's businesses (they may check emails, manage calendars and ensure their client is on top of their tasks) and the other simply completes tasks they are given by a specific date. So it's important to know which you need.

Sometimes a client should hire one or more VAs. I was the second type of VA back when I did this work. I liked to be given techie tasks such as setting up automated email sequences and LeadPages so I was routinely hired by clients who had an ongoing "regular" VA (the first type) but who didn't know how to do these techie tasks. I charged a higher rate for these skills and was bought in as and when needed - like when a client needs a graphic designer etc. I like to travel and only took on tasks that I could complete anywhere. I didn't like the personal involvement in my client's business; I preferred the work and not the relationship aspect myself!

It's unrealistic for a client to assume their VA can do everything. VAs should be thought of as facilitators - if you need something doing then they can make it happen. They may not have the skill set to do the task themselves but they can find and manage someone who does.

When writing a brief, I suggest the client considers and outlines:

- What type of work they need doing
- What skills they need the VA to have (and which ones are must-have or would-like-to-have)
- Whether the VA needs to have experience of specific platforms, systems or industries etc (essential, preferable or irrelevant)
- Whether the VA needs to be local or if the work can be done remotely
- If they have a budget or a certain amount of hours in mind (the industry average in the UK is £25 an hour but a good VA can get a lot done in an hour!)

Once you have your VA, remember it's also very easy to show your VA how to do something. Simply record your screen using the free Chrome extension Loom, the next time you do the task, then upload it to Drive. This is also recommended so you don't have to do it again to train another VA if you part ways later. The video is always there."

Jo Munro, www.thevahandbook.com

Hey congrats! That's all the basics you probably need for most free range businesses.

Some specialized businesses may need more and if that's you make like the free range humans in the book and have confidence you can find this out (you can, you know).

More to the point, you don't even need *everything* in this pack to get going to the first stage. You can get yourself set up with all the basics in an afternoon and from there focus on *actually making this work*.

Personally I find it exciting that we are in a place and time that makes it so easy to start out and play with our ideas in the real world (much faster and easier than a decade or two ago) and earn money from them (without getting caught up in red tape: not everyone around the world has this advantage so make the most of it).

I hope you will get your free range idea out there and start experimenting in the real world very soon. Let's do this!

Marianne x

Things change fast online! Get up to date details on what I use and recommend (and more ideas) at www.free-range-humans.com/resources

FREE RANGE humans.

Your next steps: starting out isn't just about what you use it's about how you do it!

Plenty of folks have all these tools... but no real freedom or business.

For more on doing it right (from figuring out your right thing to doing it!) and to get my help head below to see what's happening. Tip: be sure to get your name on my email list as that's where anything new is announced!

www.free-range-humans.com