E EMPIRE BUILDER ACADEMY

MODULE 01

# THE ENTREPRENEUR MINDSET

6 lessons with step-by-step instructions, copy-and-paste AI prompts, exercises, a worksheet, an action checklist, and a knowledge check.

**THE ONLINE ENTREPRENEUR BLUEPRINT**

From Zero to Your First Online Business

01

BUILD SMART. LAUNCH FAST. SCALE WITH AI.

© 2026 Empire Builder Academy. Educational content only. Not legal, tax, or financial advice. No income or results are promised.

# MODULE 1: THE ENTREPRENEUR MINDSET

**MODULE OVERVIEW:** Before you pick a name, build a website, or touch an AI tool, you need a direction. This module helps you understand the main ways people make money online, choose a business direction that fits your life, find real problems people will pay to solve, check whether demand exists, narrow down a niche, and avoid the mistakes that stall most beginners. By the end, you will have one clearly written business direction you can test in the real world.

**In this module:**

- Lesson 1.1: Understanding Online Business Models
- Lesson 1.2: Choosing a Business Direction
- Lesson 1.3: Identifying Customer Problems
- Lesson 1.4: Researching Market Demand
- Lesson 1.5: Finding a Profitable Niche
- Lesson 1.6: Avoiding Common Beginner Mistakes

> **NOTE:** Nothing in this course guarantees income or results. Every business involves risk, effort, and time. What this course gives you is a structured plan, practical tools, and a way to make better decisions. The outcome depends on your market, your execution, and many factors outside anyone's control.

LESSON 1.1

# Understanding Online Business Models

## The Big Idea

A **business model** is simply the answer to one question: *How does this business deliver value to customers and get paid for it?* Many beginners start with "I want to make money online," which is too vague to act on. When you understand the common models, you can pick one that matches your skills, budget, and available time.

Online businesses generally fall into a handful of models. Most real businesses combine two or three of them over time, but you should **start with one.**

## The Seven Core Online Business Models

**1. Services (freelancing or done-for-you work).** You sell your time and skill: writing, design, bookkeeping, social media management, video editing, virtual assistance, consulting, tutoring, web design. Services are usually the fastest model to start because you need no inventory and very little upfront money. The trade-off: your income is tied to your hours until you build systems or hire help.

**2. Local service businesses marketed online.** A physical service (cleaning, lawn care, pet sitting, mobile car detailing, handyman work) that gets customers through a website, Google Business Profile, and social media. The work is offline; the marketing is online. These often have strong local demand and less global competition.

**3. Digital products.** Templates, e-books, printables, spreadsheets, presets, guides, stock assets, mini-courses. You create once and can sell many times. Low cost to deliver, but you must build an audience or traffic source, and many digital product categories are crowded.

**4. Physical products (e-commerce).** Selling tangible goods through your own store or a marketplace. Options include buying wholesale inventory, making products by hand, or using print-on-demand (covered in Module 7). Higher complexity: inventory, shipping, returns, and thinner margins.

**5. Content and audience businesses.** Blogs, YouTube channels, newsletters, podcasts. Revenue usually comes from advertising, sponsorships, affiliate commissions, or selling your own products to the audience. This model typically takes the longest to produce revenue because you need to build an audience first.

**6. Affiliate marketing.** You recommend other companies' products and earn a commission when someone buys through your link. You don't handle products or customer service, but you also don't control pricing, and you must disclose affiliate relationships clearly (the Federal Trade Commission requires clear disclosure of material connections; see FTC.gov's endorsement guidance).

**7. Coaching, courses, and education.** You teach a skill or guide people through a transformation, one-on-one, in groups, or with recorded courses. Works best when you have real, demonstrable skill or experience in the topic.

## Comparing the Models

| Model | Startup cost | Speed to first sale | Scalability | Skills needed |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Services / freelancing | Very low | Fast | Low–medium | A sellable skill |
| Local service, online marketing | Low–medium | Fast–medium | Medium | Service skill + local marketing |
| Digital products | Low | Medium | High | Creation + marketing |
| Physical products | Medium–high | Medium | Medium–high | Operations, sourcing |
| Content / audience | Low | Slow | High | Consistency, content creation |
| Affiliate marketing | Low | Slow–medium | Medium–high | Content, SEO, trust |
| Coaching / education | Low | Medium | Medium | Expertise, communication |

These ratings are general tendencies, not rules. A particular business can break any of them.

> **EXAMPLE (HYPOTHETICAL):** Imagine "Maya," a fictional office administrator who is very good with spreadsheets. She could (a) offer spreadsheet setup as a freelance service, (b) sell budget templates as digital products, (c) teach a small online workshop on spreadsheet basics, or (d) write a blog reviewing spreadsheet tools with affiliate links. Same skill, four models. A sensible start for her would be the service model, because it gets her in front of real customers fastest, and what she learns from those customers can later become templates or a course.

## Step-by-Step: Map Your Options

1. Write down three skills, interests, or experiences you have (work skills count; so do hobbies).
2. For each one, write how it could fit at least three of the seven models.
3. Mark which options you could start within 14 days with less than $200.
4. Circle the one option that feels most realistic for your current schedule.

## AI Prompt: Map Your Skills to Business Models

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

Act as a practical small-business advisor for complete beginners.
Here are my skills, interests, and experience:
[LIST 3-5 SKILLS, JOBS, HOBBIES]

My constraints:
- Weekly hours available: [NUMBER]
- Startup budget: [AMOUNT]
- Location: [CITY/STATE or "online only"]

For each skill, suggest how it could work under these models:
services, local service, digital products, physical products,
content, affiliate, and coaching/education.
Then rank the 5 most realistic options for my constraints, explaining
startup cost, time to first customer, and main risk for each.
Do not promise income. Be honest about difficulty.

**EXERCISE 1.1:** Complete the "Business Model Map" in your Module 1 Worksheet. List at least three skills and connect each to at least three models. Highlight your top two options.

LESSON 1.2

# Choosing a Business Direction

## The Big Idea

You don't need the perfect idea. You need a **good-enough direction you can test quickly.** Beginners lose months searching for a perfect idea. In reality, most businesses evolve after contact with real customers. Your goal in this lesson is to choose one direction for the next 90 days.

## The Four-Circle Filter

A strong starting direction usually sits where four things overlap:

1. **Skill:** something you can do now, or learn quickly to a professional standard.
2. **Interest:** something you can tolerate working on for many months, ideally enjoy.
3. **Demand:** people already spend money on solutions in this area.
4. **Fit:** it fits your time, budget, health, family situation, and risk tolerance.

If an idea misses "Demand," it's a hobby. If it misses "Fit," you'll likely burn out. If it misses "Skill," you'll need time to learn first, which is fine, just plan for it.

## The Idea Scoring Method

Score each idea from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong) on these criteria:

| Criterion | Question to ask |
|---|---|
| Skill | Can I deliver this well today? |
| Interest | Will I still care about this in 6 months? |
| Demand | Can I find people already paying for this? |
| Reachability | Do I know where these customers spend time? |
| Startup cost | Can I start with what I have? (5 = very cheap) |
| Speed | Could I get a first paying customer within 30–60 days? |

Add the scores. The highest total isn't automatically the winner, but it's a strong signal. Any idea that scores 1 on Demand should be paused until you find evidence of demand.

> **EXAMPLE (HYPOTHETICAL):** A fictional retail worker named "Devon" has three ideas: a sneaker-cleaning service, a fantasy football newsletter, and resume-writing services. He scores them: sneaker cleaning 22/30, newsletter 17/30, resume writing 25/30. Resume writing wins because he has done hiring at his store (skill), can find people paying for it on freelance marketplaces (demand), and can start with a laptop (low cost). He decides to test resume writing for 90 days and keep the sneaker idea in a "later" list.

### Step-by-Step: Choose Your 90-Day Direction

1. Brainstorm 5–10 ideas without judging them.
2. Cross out any idea that is illegal, requires licenses you can't get soon, or needs money you don't have.
3. Score the remaining ideas with the table above.
4. Pick the top one. Write it as a one-sentence direction: *"I help [who] with [what] through [model]."*
5. Set a review date 90 days from today. You will not switch directions before then unless you find strong evidence there's no demand.

### AI Prompt: Score My Ideas Honestly

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
I'm choosing a business direction. Score each idea below from 1-5 on:
skill fit, interest, market demand, ability to reach customers,
low startup cost, and speed to a first paying customer.

About me: [SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, HOURS PER WEEK, BUDGET]
My ideas:
1. [IDEA]
2. [IDEA]
3. [IDEA]

Present results in a table with totals. Then give me the strongest
argument AGAINST my top-scoring idea, so I can see its risks clearly.
Finish with one sentence describing the idea in the format:
"I help [who] with [what] through [business model]."
```

### AI Prompt: Find Ideas I'm Overlooking

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
Ask me 10 questions, one at a time, about my work history, hobbies,
problems I've solved for friends, and things people ask me for help with.
After my answers, suggest 10 business ideas that use what I already know.
For each, name the business model and the first small test I could run
in under 7 days for under $50.
```

**EXERCISE 1.2:** Score at least three ideas in the "Idea Scoring Table" on your worksheet and write your one-sentence 90-day direction.

LESSON 1.3

# Identifying Customer Problems

## The Big Idea

People don't buy products. They buy **solutions to problems** and **progress toward goals.** Someone doesn't want a logo; they want their business to look trustworthy. Someone doesn't want a meal plan; they want to feel healthier without spending hours planning. When you understand the problem deeply, your marketing, offer, and pricing become much easier.

## Three Types of Problems Worth Solving

- **Painful problems:** something is costing people money, time, stress, or embarrassment right now ("My website looks outdated and I'm losing clients").
- **Urgent problems:** there's a deadline ("I need a resume by Friday").
- **Aspirational goals:** people want to reach a desired state ("I want to start running and finish a 5K").

The strongest opportunities are **painful + urgent**, among people who **already spend money** trying to solve them.

## Where to Find Real Problems

You are looking for the words customers actually use. Good places to listen:

- **Online communities:** Reddit, Facebook Groups, niche forums, Discord servers. Search for phrases like "how do I," "struggling with," "frustrated," "recommend," "is it worth."
- **Product reviews:** Read 3-star and 2-star reviews on Amazon, app stores, Etsy, or Google reviews of competitors. Middle reviews often explain exactly what's missing.
- **Q&A sites and search suggestions:** Type the start of a question into Google or YouTube and look at autocomplete suggestions and the "People also ask" box.
- **Your own network:** Ask people directly. Conversations are the most valuable research you can do.
- **Your own experience:** Problems you've personally had and solved are a strong starting point.

## How to Run a Problem Interview

A problem interview is a 15–20 minute conversation with someone in your target audience. You are **not selling.** You're learning.

1. Find 5–10 people who match your target customer (friends of friends, community members, local business owners).
2. Ask permission: "I'm researching a business idea about [topic]. Could I ask you a few questions for 15 minutes? I'm not selling anything."
3. Ask about past behavior, not hypothetical future behavior. People are poor predictors of what they'll buy, but good reporters of what they've done.

4. Take notes using their exact words.
5. Thank them and ask: "Who else should I talk to?"

**Good interview questions:**

- "Tell me about the last time you dealt with [problem]."
- "What did you try to fix it? What happened?"
- "What did you spend money on to solve it, if anything?"
- "What's the most frustrating part?"
- "If you could wave a magic wand, what would be different?"

**Questions to avoid:** "Would you buy this?" and "Do you like my idea?" Most people say yes to be polite.

> **EXAMPLE (HYPOTHETICAL):** A fictional aspiring business owner named "Priya" wants to offer social media help for local bakeries. In interviews with three bakery owners, she learns that none of them want "social media strategy." What they actually describe is: "I never have time to take decent photos" and "I post randomly and then feel guilty when I stop." That changes her offer from "social media management" to "a monthly photo session plus a month of ready-to-post content." The words came straight from the customers.

## Step-by-Step: Build Your Problem List

1. Choose one target customer group from your direction sentence.
2. Spend 60 minutes reading communities and reviews. Copy at least 15 exact phrases describing frustrations.
3. Group similar phrases into 3–5 problem themes.
4. For each theme, rate pain (1–5), urgency (1–5), and evidence of spending (yes/no).
5. Schedule at least three problem interviews this week.

## AI Prompt: Organize Customer Language

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
Below are real quotes I collected from online communities and reviews
written by [TARGET CUSTOMER]. Group them into 3-5 problem themes.
For each theme:
- Give it a short name
- Summarize the underlying problem in plain language
- Rate how painful and urgent it appears (1-5) based ONLY on the quotes
- List the exact phrases I could reuse in my marketing
Do not invent quotes or add statistics.

Quotes:
[PASTE YOUR COLLECTED QUOTES]
```

## AI Prompt: Prepare a Problem Interview

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
I'm interviewing [TARGET CUSTOMER] about [PROBLEM AREA].
Write a 15-minute interview script with:
- A friendly opening that makes clear I'm not selling anything
- 8 open-ended questions focused on past behavior and real experiences
- 3 follow-up probes for digging deeper
- A polite closing that asks for referrals to others I could talk to
Avoid leading questions and avoid "would you buy" questions.
```

**EXERCISE 1.3:** Fill in the "Customer Problem Log" on your worksheet with at least 10 real quotes and 3 problem themes. Book at least three interviews.

LESSON 1.4

# Researching Market Demand

## The Big Idea

Demand means **people are already spending money** to solve the problem you've identified. Contrary to common belief, competition is often a *good* sign: it shows a market exists. A total absence of competitors can mean you've found a gap, but more often it means there's no paying market.

## Five Free Ways to Check Demand

**1. Search engine signals.** Search for your service or product. Are there ads at the top of the results? Advertisers usually pay for clicks only when searches lead to sales. Look at autocomplete suggestions and "People also ask" questions.

**2. Keyword tools.** Free or freemium tools (for example, Google Trends, Google Keyword Planner inside a Google Ads account, and the free tiers of various SEO tools) show relative search interest. Google Trends shows whether interest is rising, falling, or seasonal. Treat all keyword volume numbers as rough estimates.

**3. Marketplaces.** Check Etsy, Amazon, Fiverr, Upwork, and similar platforms. Look at how many sellers exist, how many reviews top listings have, and what price ranges are common. Review counts suggest (but don't prove) sales activity.

**4. Competitor presence.** Find 5–10 businesses offering something similar. Do they have active websites, recent social posts, reviews, and published pricing? Active, established competitors suggest a functioning market.

**5. Direct evidence.** The strongest demand signal is someone giving you money or a firm commitment. A pre-sale, a paid pilot, or a deposit beats any amount of keyword research.

## The Demand Evidence Ladder

From weakest to strongest evidence:

1. You think it's a good idea.
2. Friends say it's a good idea.
3. People online discuss the problem.
4. Competitors exist and appear active.
5. People search for solutions (keyword and trend data).
6. Strangers join a waitlist or give you their email.
7. Strangers book a call or request a quote.
8. Strangers pay you.

Aim to reach at least rung 6 or 7 before investing significant money or months of building.

**EXAMPLE (HYPOTHETICAL):** Imagine a hypothetical dog-walking business in a mid-sized suburb. The founder searches "dog walker near me" and sees three local competitors with Google reviews and published prices, plus a pet-care marketplace listing several walkers. Google Trends shows steady interest year-round. She posts a simple flyer in two neighborhood groups offering a discounted trial walk and gets several inquiries. That's rung 7: real people requesting the service. Enough evidence to keep going.

## Step-by-Step: Run a One-Week Demand Check

1. **Day 1:** Search 10 phrases your customers would type. Record ads, autocomplete, and "People also ask."
2. **Day 2:** Check Google Trends for 3–5 key phrases over 5 years. Note direction and seasonality.
3. **Day 3:** Find 5–10 competitors. Record their offer, price, reviews, and what customers complain about.
4. **Day 4:** Check 2–3 marketplaces for listings, price ranges, and review counts.
5. **Day 5–7:** Run one direct test: a simple post, flyer, or landing page with a clear call to action (join a waitlist, book a free consultation, or pre-order).

## AI Prompt: Build a Demand Research Plan

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
I want to validate demand for: [YOUR BUSINESS DIRECTION]
Target customer: [WHO]
Location (if local): [CITY/REGION or "online"]

Create a 7-day demand research plan for a beginner with no budget.
Include:
- 15 search phrases a real customer might type
- Which free tools and marketplaces to check and what to record
- How to identify and analyze 5 competitors
- One low-cost direct test I can run by day 7
Remind me to verify any numbers myself instead of trusting estimates.
```

## AI Prompt: Analyze Competitor Reviews

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
Here are customer reviews of competitors in my market.
Summarize:
1. What customers consistently praise
2. What customers consistently complain about
3. Unmet needs or gaps I could address
4. Language patterns I could reflect in my marketing
Only use what appears in the reviews. Do not invent details.

Reviews:
[PASTE REVIEWS]
```

**IMPORTANT:** AI tools can produce plausible-sounding but incorrect market numbers. Never rely on an AI-generated statistic (market size, search volume, growth rate) without checking an original source.

**EXERCISE 1.4:** Complete the "Demand Evidence Tracker" on your worksheet. Record evidence for at least five rungs of the ladder you can currently reach.

LESSON 1.5

# Finding a Profitable Niche

## The Big Idea

A **niche** is a specific group of people with a specific problem. "Fitness coaching" is a market. "Strength training for busy nurses who work night shifts" is a niche. Niching down feels scary because it seems to shrink your market, but it usually makes marketing *easier*: your message is clearer, you know where to find customers, and you face fewer direct competitors.

"Profitable" here doesn't mean guaranteed profit. It means the niche has the *characteristics* that make profit possible: people with a real problem, the ability to pay, and a way for you to reach them.

## The Niche Formula

**[Specific audience] + [Specific problem or goal] + [Specific outcome or method]**

- Bookkeeping → Bookkeeping cleanup for independent hair salon owners.
- Web design → One-page websites for new home-cleaning businesses.
- Meal planning → Budget meal plans for families with picky eaters.
- Social media → Short-form video editing for real estate agents.

## Five Signs of a Promising Niche

1. **Identifiable:** you can describe who they are and where they gather.
2. **Reachable:** there are groups, hashtags, directories, associations, or events where they spend time.
3. **Able to pay:** they already spend money in this area, or the problem costs them money.
4. **Motivated:** the problem is painful or urgent enough to act on.
5. **Sustainable for you:** you're willing to serve these people for years.

## How Narrow Is Too Narrow?

If you can't find at least a few hundred potential customers you could realistically reach (or a few dozen for high-priced services), the niche may be too narrow. If your message could apply to "anyone," it's too broad. You can always widen later; it's much harder to stand out when you start broad.

> **EXAMPLE (HYPOTHETICAL):** A fictional graphic designer starts as "graphic design for small businesses" and struggles to stand out among thousands of similar designers. She narrows to "menu and signage design for food trucks." Now she knows where to find customers (food truck events, local food truck associations, social media hashtags), what they need (menus readable from a distance, brand consistency), and what to show in her portfolio. Her marketing message becomes specific and memorable.

## Step-by-Step: Narrow Your Niche

1. Write your broad market (e.g., "photography").
2. List 5 specific audiences within it (e.g., realtors, Etsy sellers, restaurants, dentists, newborn families).
3. For each audience, write the #1 problem they have related to your skill.
4. Score each audience 1–5 on the five signs above.
5. Choose the highest scorer and write your niche statement using the formula.
6. Find three places where that audience gathers online or locally. If you can't, reconsider.

## AI Prompt: Generate Niche Options

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
My broad skill/market is: [e.g., photography, bookkeeping, fitness]
My background and interests: [DETAILS]

Generate 10 specific niche options using the formula:
[specific audience] + [specific problem] + [specific outcome].
For each niche, list:
- Where this audience gathers (online and offline)
- Evidence they already spend money on this type of solution
- One risk or downside
Then recommend the 3 best niches for a beginner and explain why.
```

## AI Prompt: Stress-Test My Niche

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
My niche: [YOUR NICHE STATEMENT]
Play the role of a skeptical investor. Ask me the 10 toughest
questions about this niche: size, ability to pay, reachability,
competition, and my ability to deliver. After I answer, summarize
the biggest weaknesses and suggest how to reduce each risk.
```

**EXERCISE 1.5:** Use the "Niche Narrowing Table" on your worksheet to evaluate five audiences and write your final niche statement.

LESSON 1.6

# Avoiding Common Beginner Mistakes

## The Big Idea

Most early-stage businesses don't stall because the founder lacks talent. They stall because of predictable, avoidable mistakes. Knowing them in advance won't make you immune, but it helps you catch yourself early.

## The 10 Most Common Beginner Mistakes

**1. Building before validating.** Spending months on a logo, website, or product before confirming anyone wants it. *Fix:* Get evidence of demand (Lesson 1.4) before investing heavily.

**2. Trying to serve everyone.** A message for everyone resonates with no one. *Fix:* Choose a niche (Lesson 1.5).

**3. Perfectionism.** Waiting until everything is "ready." *Fix:* Launch a simple version, then improve based on feedback. "Done and improving" beats "perfect and invisible."

**4. Tool and course hopping.** Buying tool after tool or course after course without taking action. *Fix:* Implement one lesson before moving to the next. This course is built around action checklists for that reason.

**5. Ignoring the money basics.** Mixing personal and business money, not tracking expenses, forgetting taxes. *Fix:* Module 2 covers the foundation.

**6. Underpricing.** Charging too little to sustain the business, often out of fear. *Fix:* Module 6 covers pricing based on value and costs.

**7. No marketing plan.** Assuming customers will find you once your site is live. *Fix:* Plan marketing from day one (Module 5).

**8. Quitting too early or too late.** Abandoning an idea after two weeks, or continuing for years with no evidence of traction. *Fix:* Set clear test periods (like your 90-day direction) and decision criteria in advance.

**9. Believing hype.** Trusting "get rich quick" claims, income screenshots, or "passive income" promises. *Fix:* Treat any guaranteed-income claim as a red flag. Real businesses take work.

**10. Going it alone.** Never asking for feedback or help. *Fix:* Talk to customers, join communities, and find a peer or mentor. Free mentoring resources exist, such as SCORE (score.org) and Small Business Development Centers (find one through SBA.gov).

## Your Personal Risk Rules

Write down personal rules before you start, while you're calm and clear-headed. Examples:

- "I won't quit my job until my business has covered [X] months of my expenses consistently." (Decide your own number.)
- "I won't spend more than $[X] before getting my first paying customer."
- "I won't take on debt to fund this test."
- "I'll review progress every Sunday and make decisions based on data, not mood."

> **EXAMPLE (HYPOTHETICAL):** A fictional new founder, "Sam," spent four months building an elaborate app for gym owners before speaking to a single gym owner. When he finally did, he learned they already used software they liked. Contrast that with an equally hypothetical founder who spent two weeks interviewing gym owners first, discovered their real frustration was writing class descriptions and promotional emails, and offered a simple monthly copywriting service instead. The second approach risked far less time and money.

## Step-by-Step: Create Your Guardrails

1. Read the 10 mistakes and circle the 3 you're most likely to make.
2. For each, write one specific rule to prevent it.
3. Set your maximum test budget and test period.
4. Schedule a weekly 30-minute review on your calendar.
5. Tell one person your plan and ask them to check in with you.

## AI Prompt: Find My Blind Spots

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
Here is my business plan in its current form:
[DIRECTION, NICHE, MODEL, BUDGET, TIMELINE]

Act as an experienced, honest mentor. Identify the 5 most likely
mistakes I'm about to make, based on common beginner pitfalls.
For each, explain why it's a risk for my specific plan and suggest
one concrete guardrail. Be direct but constructive.
```

## AI Prompt: Weekly Review Coach

**COPY-AND-PASTE AI PROMPT**

```
Act as my weekly business review coach. Ask me these questions one
at a time and wait for my answer before asking the next:
1. What did I plan to do this week?
2. What did I actually do?
3. What evidence did I gather from real customers?
4. What's blocking me?
5. What are my 3 most important tasks next week?
At the end, summarize my week in 5 bullet points and point out
any pattern of avoidance or distraction you notice.
```

**EXERCISE 1.6:** Complete the "Personal Guardrails" section of your worksheet, including your test budget, test period, and three personal rules.

MODULE 1

# Module 1 Worksheet

*Fill in each section. Print it, type into the DOCX version, or copy the tables into your own notes.*

## Part A: Business Model Map

| My skill / interest / experience | Model option 1 | Model option 2 | Model option 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

My top two options: _____

## Part B: Idea Scoring Table (score 1–5)

| Idea | Skill | Interest | Demand | Reachability | Low cost | Speed | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

My 90-day direction: *"I help _____ with _____ through _____."*

Review date (90 days from today): _____

## Part C: Customer Problem Log

| Exact quote | Source (site/person) | Problem theme |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

| Exact quote | Source (site/person) | Problem theme |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

| Problem theme | Pain (1–5) | Urgency (1–5) | Evidence of spending? |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

## Part D: Demand Evidence Tracker

| Evidence rung | What I found | Date |
|---|---|---|
| People discuss the problem online | | |
| Active competitors exist | | |
| Search / trend data | | |
| Waitlist or email sign-ups | | |
| Calls or quote requests | | |
| Paying customers | | |

## Part E: Niche Narrowing Table (score 1–5)

| Audience | #1 problem | Identifiable | Reachable | Able to pay | Motivated | Sustainable | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | |

My niche statement: _____

Three places my niche gathers: 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

## Part F: Personal Guardrails

Maximum test budget: $_____ Test period: _____

The three mistakes I'm most likely to make, and my rule for each:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Weekly review day and time: _____ Accountability person: _____

MODULE 1

# Action Checklist

- [ ] Map at least three skills to the seven business models
- [ ] Score at least three business ideas
- [ ] Write a one-sentence 90-day business direction
- [ ] Collect at least 10 real customer quotes
- [ ] Identify 3 problem themes
- [ ] Book (or complete) at least three problem interviews
- [ ] Complete a one-week demand check
- [ ] Analyze at least five competitors
- [ ] Write a niche statement and identify where that niche gathers
- [ ] Set your test budget, test period, and personal rules
- [ ] Schedule a weekly 30-minute business review

MODULE 1

# Knowledge Check

**1.** Which business model is usually fastest to start with the least money?
A) Physical products with inventory
B) Services/freelancing
C) A content-based YouTube channel
D) A mobile app

**2.** In a problem interview, which question is most useful?
A) "Would you buy this?"
B) "Do you like my idea?"
C) "Tell me about the last time you dealt with this problem."
D) "How much would you pay in the future?"

**3.** What does the presence of active competitors usually indicate?
A) The market is impossible to enter
B) A market with paying customers likely exists
C) You should immediately choose a different idea
D) Prices will be very low

**4.** Which is the strongest form of demand evidence?
A) Friends saying it's a great idea
B) High search volume estimates
C) Strangers paying you
D) Many social media likes

**5.** Which is the best example of a niche?
A) Fitness
B) Online marketing
C) Bookkeeping cleanup for independent hair salon owners
D) Helping people

**6.** True or false: An AI-generated market-size statistic can be used in your business plan without checking a source.

**7.** What is the main purpose of setting a 90-day test period?
A) To guarantee results
B) To avoid quitting too early or continuing too long without evidence
C) To delay launching
D) To satisfy a legal requirement

**8.** Which combination makes a problem most attractive to solve?

A) Mild and rare

B) Painful, urgent, and people already spend money on it

C) Interesting to you but not to others

D) Free to solve with a quick search

MODULE 1

# Answer Key

1. **B.** Services require little upfront investment and can reach customers quickly.
2. **C.** Asking about real past behavior gives more reliable information than hypothetical questions.
3. **B.** Competition generally signals that a market exists. You then look for ways to differentiate.
4. **C.** Payment from strangers is the strongest evidence on the demand ladder.
5. **C.** It names a specific audience and a specific problem.
6. **False.** AI tools can produce incorrect numbers. Always verify with an original source.
7. **B.** A defined test period gives you a clear decision point based on evidence.
8. **B.** Painful, urgent problems where people already spend money are the strongest opportunities.