



# Messy Books Recovery Kit



Your first step from chaos to calm

## Where Are You Starting?

Take a deep breath. Messy books are normal and you're taking exactly the right step by being here.

Before diving in, let's figure out where you are so you can start with the approach that actually fits your situation.

### Level 1: Slightly Behind

- You're 1-3 months behind on entering things.
- You have most receipts somewhere and know where your bank statements live.
- You use some kind of system, even if it's not perfect.

Your Starting Point:  
You're closer than you think. Skip to Step 2 and work through catching up methodically.

### Level 2: Several Months Behind

- You're 3-6 months behind on everything.
- Receipts are scattered but mostly findable when you really look.
- You've been avoiding your accounting software (no judgement here).

Your Starting Point:  
Begin with Step 1 to stop things from getting worse, then move to Step 2. You've got this.

### Level 3: Complete Chaos

- You haven't touched your books in 6+ months (or maybe ever).
- Receipts are everywhere, nowhere or lost in the coffee-stained shuffle.
- You're not even sure what system you're supposed to be using.

Your Starting Point:  
Start with Step 1 and be patient with yourself. This didn't happen overnight and it won't get fixed overnight either. That's completely okay.

# The 5-Step Recovery Path

## Step 1:

### Hit Pause on the Chaos

The Goal:

Stop your mess from growing while you clean up the past.

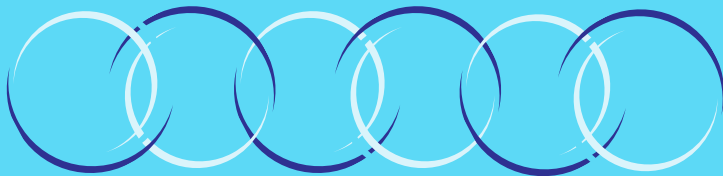
#### What to do this week:

- Set up a simple "New Stuff" folder or box for all new receipts.
- Peek at your business bank account daily (just look, no analyzing required).
- Jot down any cash expenses immediately on your phone.
- If you use QuickBooks Online, turn on bank feeds so new transactions download automatically.

#### Time Investment:

5 minutes daily

*(If this feels overwhelming, just do the receipt folder this week and call it a win.)*



## Step 2:

### Gather the Puzzle Pieces

The Goal:

Collect the most important documents without getting lost in perfection.

#### What you need to hunt down:

- Bank statements for the past 6-12 months.
- Credit card statements.
- All the receipts you can find (seriously, don't stress about the missing ones).
- Invoices you've sent to customers.
- Bills you've paid.

#### Simple Organization:

- Make folders by month: "January 2025", "February 2025", etc.
- Don't worry about perfect sorting yet - just get them in the right general area.
- Missing something? Make a note and move on.

#### Time Investment:

A few hours over a week

*(Remember. Progress, not perfection.)*

## Step 3: Choose What Matters Most

The Goal: Focus on the tasks that bring the biggest relief first.

#### Must do first:

*The stuff that affects your taxes and sleep*

- Enter all income and deposits.
- Enter expenses over \$100.
- Get your most recent month's bank account balanced.

#### Do when you can:

*Important but won't cause immediate problems*

- Categorize expenses properly.
- Enter smaller receipts.
- Organize your chart of accounts.

#### Nice to Have :

*Can wait until everything else is caught up*

- Perfect categorization of every transaction.
- Historical analysis beyond the current tax year.

**Time Investment:** Start with 30 minutes, 3 times per week  
*(Just pick one thing from the "must do" list each session)*

## Step 4: Build Easy Habits

The Goal:  
Prevent future mess with simple routines you can actually keep.

### Your New 5-minute Daily Routine

- Snap a photo of any receipt right when you get it.
- Quick check of your bank account.
- Add any cash expenses to your phone.

### Weekly 30-minute Session:

- Enter the week's receipts into your system.
- Review and categorize recent bank transactions.
- File documents in the right monthly folder.

### Monthly 1-Hour Reset

- Reconcile your bank and credit card accounts.
- Look at your profit & loss statement (even if it's messy).
- Note any big bills coming up.

*These habits prevent future chaos. Start with just the daily routine if that's all you can manage.*

## Step 5: Know When to Call a Friend

The Goal:  
Give yourself permission to get help when it saves time, stress, and money.

### Consider getting professional help if:

- You're more than 6 months behind and tax season is approaching.
- You're spending 5+ hours per week just trying to catch up.
- The stress is keeping you up at night or affecting your business.
- You need clean financial reports for a loan or investor.

### You can probably handle this yourself if:

- You're less than 3 months behind.
- You have most of your documents somewhere.
- You can commit to consistent weekly time.
- You're comfortable with basic technology.

*There's no shame in getting help. Many successful business owners choose to focus on what they do best.*

# Quick-Use Tools

## Daily Expense Tracker

*(fill out digitally, by hand or copy the layout and use your phone's notes app)*

Date:

Place:

Amount: \$

What for:

Cash or Card:

### Weekly Receipt Check-In

- ☐ Empty wallet/folder of receipts
- ☐ Sort by date (roughly)
- ☐ Enter into your system
- ☐ File in monthly folder
- ☐ Take photos as backup

### Monthly Financial Pulse Check

- ☐ Bank account makes sense
- ☐ Credit cards reconciled
- ☐ Major income recorded
- ☐ Big expenses captured
- ☐ Next month's bills noted
- ☐ You can sleep peacefully

These are guides, not rules. Use what helps, skip what doesn't.

# Your Next Steps

## Progress, Not Perfection

Remember: The goal isn't to become a perfect bookkeeper overnight. It's to bring enough clarity to your numbers that you can run your business with confidence and peace of mind.

### If you're feeling overwhelmed:

Just tackle Step 1 this week. Getting your "pause button" set up is a genuine win that will make everything else easier.

### If you're ready to dive in:

Work through the 5-step process at your own pace. Set a weekly appointment with yourself for "book time" and honor it like you would a client meeting.

### If you'd rather hand it off:

That's completely normal and often the smartest business decision. Your time might be better spent on what you do best.

## Ready for a Guide Beside You?

If you'd like to talk through your specific situation and get a clear plan tailored to your business, I offer free 15-minute consultations for Granbury and DFW area business owners.

We can look at where you are now, map out the quickest path forward, and help you decide whether to tackle this yourself or bring in professional support.

No pressure, no sales pitch – just practical next steps that make sense for your situation.

**Schedule Your Free 15-Minute Consultation**

*River helps small business owners in Granbury, Weatherford, and the DFW area bring serenity to their books through QuickBooks Online bookkeeping services. Because when your books are clear, your mind is free to focus on growing the business you love.*