

# Introduction

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## How to use this guide

Choose the sections you need, or read the whole thing from beginning to end. Print out pdfs of the files you want for reference. We've designed this guide to meet your needs, and made it as usable as possible. [Let us know](#) if there's information you need and can't find here, and we'll do our best to add it to the guide, or direct you to other quality resources.

## What this is (and what it isn't)

As the title suggests, this guide should help you "get started" as an entrepreneur. We've collected ideas from staff of the [National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance \(NCIIA\)](#) and the [UMass Five Colleges Entreclub](#), as well as students and professional in the fields of innovation and entrepreneurship. We've enriched the text with links from important online entrepreneurial resources, such as links to [Entreworld.org](#) (the web resource of the [Ewing Marion Kauffmann Foundation's Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership](#)) and articles from [Fast Company](#), [Entrepreneur](#), [Inc. Magazine](#), and others. Each chapter touches on an important theme of entrepreneurship. You can read the guide straight through, or pull out individual sections for reference.

This resource is targeted to beginning student entrepreneurs. If you're an entrepreneur with some or a lot of experience, you may find parts of it helpful, but your experience may already put you ahead of the material in this guide. We intend for this resource to serve as a jumping-off point that can lead you to other resources, including your own inner resources, and send you on your way.

We've written this manual to help you as a student entrepreneur, or a student with entrepreneurial dreams, get your business off the ground. Although the content is aimed mainly toward high-growth or technology entrepreneurship, we do use a few examples from lifestyle-type businesses, and believe that they share some common traits with technology businesses.

## There's more than one way

Even within our own ranks we don't always agree about exactly what it takes to be a successful entrepreneur. One of the thrills of entrepreneurship is that you'll develop your business in the way that best suits you and your customers, and you'll think of ways to tailor your products or services that no one has thought of before.

## The story of your business

While it sounds handy to have a step-by-step description of how to build a business at your fingertips, it doesn't work that way. Entrepreneurship is not a linear process that starts at point A and ends at point Z. Think of your business as a story with a plot and characters that evolve as you go. You'll encounter lots of surprises along the way. It's the mystery unfolding that holds fascination for many entrepreneurs. You can't count on any one road to success. Your successes and failures will build into the big story of your enterprise.

## Are you an inventor or an entrepreneur?

Maybe you already know the answer to this question. Or maybe it's something you're still learning about yourself. To rephrase, what kind of an opportunity are you looking for? Is it your invention or idea itself that excites you? Or is it the notion of turning an idea into a business and taking it to commercial success? Your dreams might fall somewhere between these two extremes. Take a little time to assess where your ambitions lie--focusing your thoughts will help you get more out of this guide and start your enterprise right. Knowing your own desires and limitations will also help you hook up with suitable business partners.

**Do you have an entrepreneurial spirit?**

People toss around the phrase "entrepreneurial spirit" like it's something in the water. Those who have struggled and made it as entrepreneurs understand the level of sacrifice required, and acknowledge the intense energy they've found within themselves to make those sacrifices. Entrepreneurs describe themselves as hard-nosed and aggressive. They accept no obstacles to their success, but get up after each fall and carry on. They are consummate optimists and problem-solvers, who temper their enthusiasm with bucketsful of common sense.

The entrepreneurial mindset ([audio file](#))

Effective entrepreneurs don't use their energy and ambition exclusively for making money and killing the competition. Many use entrepreneurship as an outlet for creativity, and a means of challenging themselves and developing specialized skills. And if your entrepreneurial activities lead you to new ventures that meet essential needs of other people in the world, your efforts will be worthwhile not only to you, but to society as a whole.

Key motives for self-employment ([audio version](#)) ([pdf transcript](#))

Why be an entrepreneur? ([audio version](#)) ([pdf transcript](#))

Guiding principles for entrepreneurship ([audio version](#)) ([pdf transcript](#))

Taking control of the situation ([audio version](#)) ([pdf transcript](#))

The coming entrepreneurial century ([audio version](#)) ([pdf transcript](#))