

A Kid's Guide to Starting a Business



And Making a First Sale

A **14-mission** business book for kids:
spot a real problem, build a product,
and make your first real sale.

For kids
aged
10-15

100 Real Business
Ideas Included



**Kids
Business
School**

THANK YOU FOR
SUPPORTING YOUNG
FOUNDERS!

Based on true father-son story

A note before you start

This book has one rule: **nothing in it stays in the book**. Every chapter ends with a mission — a small, real thing you do in the real world. A walk. A question. A sale.

Reading about business is like reading about swimming. Useful — right up until the moment you have to get in the water. So we get in early. By the middle of this book you will have noticed real problems, talked to real humans, built a real thing, and made your first real sale. Not a pretend one. A real one, with real money, to a real person who smiled.

You don't need money to start. You don't need to be loud, or a genius, or a grown-up. You need a notebook, a pencil, and the patience to read about six pages at a time.

That's the whole deal. Ready?

A NOTE FOR PARENTS

Your job is smaller than you might think: say yes to the missions, be the first customer *only once*, and ask “what did you notice today?” at dinner. The missions are designed to be safe, local, and parent-visible — markets, neighbours, your own social circle. When your child is ready for more, the Kids Business School community at kibischool.com/join is where this book continues.

How this book works

Five things you'll meet on almost every page. Here's what they mean:

The **important sentences come pre-highlighted**, like this.

word to own

PROFIT

The money left after you pay back everything you spent.

Highlighter. If it's yellow, read it twice. There are only one or two per chapter — they earn it.

Words to own. Business has its own vocabulary. Each card gives you one word, in plain language, in the margin where you can find it again.

I forgot the box itself cost money. rookie move. — M.

Notes from Max. A young founder read this book before you and left his notes in the margins. Learn from his wins — and his rookie moves.

MISSION 00

The Warm-Up

- ☐ Find a notebook. Any notebook.
- ☐ Write your name on the first page.

⌚ 1 minute • that's it, really

Missions. Every chapter ends with one. They're small, real, and they're the actual point of the book. The reading prepares you; the mission changes you. (Yes, Mission 00 is real. Go on.)

Meet Max



Max, 13

The notes in the margins of this book — the wins, the rookie mistakes, the “learned that the expensive way” — all come from one real kid. Max didn’t read about business and then write a book. He *did* it: noticed a problem at home, talked to real people, built a scrappy first version, and made his first nervous, wonderful sale.

“If I can do this, you completely can. Start before you feel ready.” — M.

That’s why his notes show up on almost every page. He’s not a perfect expert looking down at you — he’s a step ahead, turning around to say “here’s the bit that tripped me up.” When you see — **M.** (that’s Max) in the margin, it’s a real founder, your age, who walked this exact path first.

FROM MAX’S DAD

This book grew out of watching Max learn that business isn’t something you wait until you’re grown up to do. Everything in here is what I wish someone had handed him on day one — the real loop, the real fears, the real first sale. I made it so your kid can start now, too.



Max & me — this whole book started as a conversation between us.

The journey

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your first sale happens around chapter 8. in the MIDDLE. founders don't wait for graduation. — M.

1

Open Your Eyes

Before you build anything, you learn to see what everyone else walks past. Three chapters, three habits: spotting your own founder moves, hunting problems, and talking to real humans.

CH 1 You're Already an Entrepreneur

CH 2 The Superpower of Noticing Problems

CH 3 Talk to Real Humans



*no suit
required.*

You're Already an Entrepreneur

Thirteen letters, French origins, sounds like you need a suit. You don't. You've been doing this for years — nobody told you what it was called.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Spot the founder moves you already make every week.
- ☐ Learn what an entrepreneur actually is — and is not.
- ☐ See the whole road ahead, so you always know where you are.

A big word for a simple thing

Entrepreneur. It sounds like something you need a briefcase and a tie for. Here's the entire definition: **an entrepreneur is a person who notices a problem and builds something people happily pay for.**

That's it. That's the briefcase.



FIG. 1.1 · The whole job, in three moves. Every chapter in this book feeds one of them.

Notice. Build. Get paid happily. Three moves you already know how to make — you've just never chained them together *on purpose*. The word "happily" is doing serious work in that sentence, by the way. Tricking someone into paying isn't business; it's a refund waiting to happen. When someone pays you *and smiles*, you've made their day slightly better. That smile is the whole game, and we'll come back to it about forty times.

word to own

ENTRE- PRENEUR

A person who notices a problem and builds something people happily pay for.

I couldn't even spell it when I started. — M.

Proof: you've already done this

Ever traded the good snack for two okay snacks? That's **negotiation**. Organised the game when nobody could agree what to play? **Leadership**. Fixed your grandmother's phone and got chocolate for it? Congratulations — that was a **service business** with one extremely loyal customer.

Sold old toys at a market? **Retail**. Convinced your parents that a later bedtime benefits everyone? **A pitch**. Noticed that everyone at school suddenly wanted the same kind of sticker and wished you had ten of them? That itch you felt — that was **opportunity**, tapping you on the shoulder.

You've been running tiny businesses your whole life. Nobody told you, because nobody called it that. School grades you on remembering; nobody grades you on noticing, trading, fixing, convincing. This book does.

So the question of this book isn't "can you become an entrepreneur?" You already are one — an accidental one. The question is what happens when you start doing it *on purpose*.

word to own

OPPORTUNITY

A problem or wish that enough people share — before anyone has fixed it for them.

grandma still
pays in
chocolate. — M.

Still sounds like a grown-up word?

Meet someone who would politely disagree.

she was FOUR.
you have a head
start. — M.



Mikaila, started at 4

Austin, USA

REAL STORY

Stung by two bees in one week, Mikaila got curious instead of just scared. She learned bees are in trouble — and that her great-granny's old lemonade recipe used honey. So she set up a lemonade stand that helps save the bees. At 9 she pitched her company on national TV and won an investor. A few years later, Me & the Bees Lemonade was on supermarket shelves across America.

her first headquarters: a folding table

Different country, different product, same three moves.

She **noticed** (bees matter; lemonade is loved). She **built** (granny's recipe, a stand, then a brand). People **paid happily** — a lot of people, as it turned out.

Nobody handed her a business. She started with a folding table and a question. You'll meet more founders like her through this book — and chapter 13 is entirely theirs.

What an entrepreneur is *not*

Before we go further, let's throw out the heavy luggage. Four myths most people carry around, and what's actually true:

I believed all four, especially the loud one. — M.

X MYTH You need money to start.	✓ TRUTH You need a problem and a pencil. Money comes from customers, not before them.
X MYTH You have to be loud and super-confident.	✓ TRUTH Quiet noticers often win. Listening is a founder skill; shouting isn't.
X MYTH It's all about getting rich.	✓ TRUTH It's about making things people want. Money follows usefulness, not the other way round.
X MYTH You have to be an adult first.	✓ TRUTH You have this book, a market on Saturday, and parents with a phone. That's enough.

Notice what survived: no money, no loudness, no age limit, no genius required. What's left is small and learnable — noticing well, building simply, and treating customers like humans. That's the whole skill list, and it fits in fourteen chapters.

The road from here

Here's the whole map, so you always know where you are:

chapter 8 = first money. circle it in the contents.
— M.

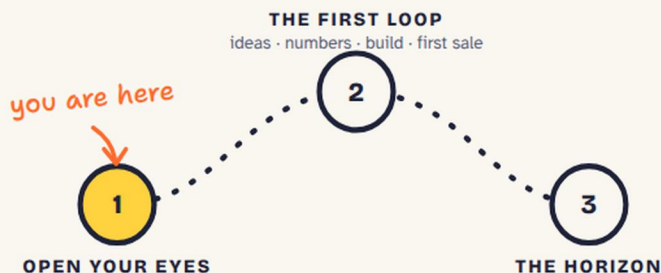


FIG. 1.2 · The whole journey. Three parts, fourteen chapters, one real business at the end.

Part One trains your eyes: spotting problems and talking to the humans who have them. **Part Two** is the loop every founder runs: ideas, the three money numbers, picking one, building the simplest version — and then your first sale, around chapter 8. In the middle of the book, not the end. Founders don't wait for graduation.

Part Three opens the horizon: where the money goes, your brand, your AI partner, surviving things going wrong — and what comes after the last page (spoiler: a community of founders your age).

Your first mission

Every chapter ends here, with something real to do. This one takes ten minutes, a pencil, and a small amount of courage. It matters more than it looks: founders keep records, and this is the first page of yours.

From now on, your notebook is your **Founder's Log**. Everything goes in it — ideas, numbers, things you noticed, things that flopped. Max filled three of them by chapter 14.

I told my dad.
he became
customer #1
three weeks
later. — M.

MISSION 01

The Founder Audit

- ☐ Write down **3 moments** you already acted like an entrepreneur — trades, fixes, sales, deals. Anything counts.
- ☐ Pick the one you're proudest of. Add one line: *what did you notice that others missed?*
- ☐ Tell one person: "I'm learning to build a business." Out loud. Saying it makes it real.

⌚ 10 minutes · needs: notebook + pencil + a little courage

NEXT *There's a superpower hiding in plain sight — and most people step right over it on the way to school. Chapter 2 teaches you to hunt it. →*



problems =
treasure. weird
but true.

The Superpower of Noticing Problems

Problems lie on the pavement like unclaimed treasure, and almost everybody steps over them on the way to school. Time to stop stepping.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Learn the four signals that give every problem away.
- ☐ Open the Problem Log — the first official section of your Founder's Log.
- ☐ Sort real problems from hobbies with three sharp questions.

Problems are seeds

Most people treat problems like bad weather — sigh, complain, wait for them to pass. Founders treat them like seeds. Every business you love started life as somebody's bad day.

Somebody stood in the rain and couldn't find a taxi — now there's an app for that. Somebody got tired of pizza arriving cold, of homework folders tearing, of plants dying while the family was on holiday, of phone cables tangling into angry spaghetti. Behind every useful thing on Earth stands a person who finally said: *enough*.

Which means problems aren't bad news. They're jobs that haven't been claimed yet. The founders who win aren't the ones with the fanciest ideas — they're the ones who **noticed first** and bothered to write it down.

This chapter hands you the noticing kit: four signals, one log, three questions. From here on, an annoying day is raw material.

word to own

PROBLEM

The gap between how things are and how somebody wants them to be. Where there's a gap, there's a job.

I used to apologise for complaining. now I take notes. — M.

The four signals

Problems hide in plain sight, but they leak signals.
Four of them, to be exact — learn these and you’ll start seeing problems everywhere: on your street, at school, in your own kitchen.

my mum says
“again?!” about
tangled cables
roughly weekly.
noted. — M.

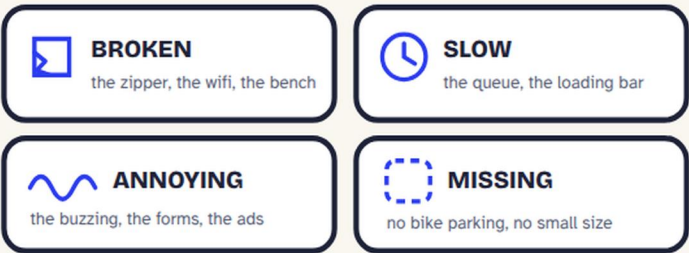


FIG. 2.1 · The four signals. Spot any one of them and a problem is hiding nearby.

And keep your ears on. People announce their problems out loud all day, in four magic phrases: “ugh”, “again?!”, “why is there no...”, and the purest of all — “I wish somebody would...” When you hear that one, a human is literally placing an order with the universe. Be the universe. Write it down.

Open the Problem Log

Time to give your Founder's Log its first official section. Every problem you catch gets one line: **what** it is, **who** has it, and an **ouch score** from 1 (mildly annoying) to 5 (people complain about it out loud). Here's a real week from Max's notebook:

MAX'S PROBLEM LOG

WEEK 1

tourists can't find the night market entrance — visitors	OUCH 4
school bags have no safe pocket for water bottles — kids	OUCH 3
plants die when families travel — neighbours	OUCH 4
phone cables tangle in every bag on earth — mum	OUCH 5

word to own

OUCH SCORE

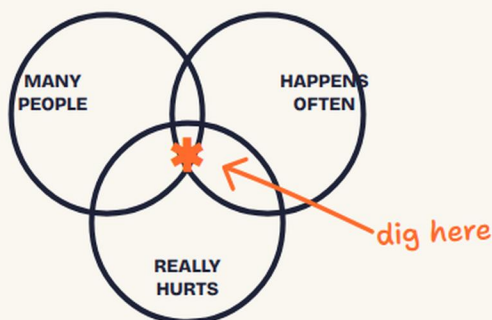
Your 1-5 rating of how much a problem hurts the person who has it. A 5 means they complain out loud.

the water-bottle
one took me 11
seconds to spot.
— M.

Three rules for the log. **No fixing yet** — this week you collect; solutions get their own chapter. **No judging** — silly-looking problems grow serious money, and the water-bottle line up there is sillier than most of what ends up in shops. **Date everything** — future-you, flipping back to find an idea, will be grateful.

Which problems are worth it?

Not every problem deserves your weekend. A problem three people barely notice is a hobby. **A problem many people feel every single week — that's a business waiting.** Run your starred problems through three questions:



word to own

DEMAND

How many people want something, how often, and how badly. Big demand is business fuel.

close to home
beats far away.
remember that
line. — M.

FIG. 2.2 · Three questions, one overlap. You don't need all three at maximum — but the closer to the middle, the better.

How many people have it? **How often** does it bite?

How much do they care? Your ouch scores already answer question three. Tangled cables: nearly everyone, daily, ouch 5 — see why Max starred it. The night market entrance: only tourists, but every single evening, and they're lost *right now*. Both are diggable. The water-bottle pocket? Fewer people, but Max could reach every one of them at school. Small overlaps close to home beat big overlaps far away.

Mission: the problem hunt

Noticing is a muscle. One walk builds it; one walk a week keeps it strong. Do this hunt today, then repeat it weekly — by chapter 4 your Problem Log becomes an idea vault, and every line in it is raw material.

One warning before you go: the first five minutes will feel like there are no problems anywhere. That's normal — your eyes are still booting up. Keep walking. Around minute six, the world quietly turns into a to-do list.

my #1 starred problem became my actual business. chapter 7 spoiler. — M.

MISSION 02

The Problem Hunt

- ☐ Take a **15-minute walk** — your street, a market, your school route.
- ☐ Write down **5 things** that are broken, slow, annoying, or missing.
- ☐ Give each an ouch score. **Star the highest** — that's buried treasure with your name on it.

🕒 one walk · needs: notebook + open eyes

NEXT *Your starred problem belongs to people. Chapter 3: how to talk to them about it — without it being weird.*

→



*scariest chapter.
best chapter.*

Talk to Real Humans

Your starred problem belongs to people. Guessing what they think is comfortable — and usually wrong. Asking takes ten minutes and changes everything.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Learn why guessing fails — and why nice people will lie to you.
- ☐ Master the five questions that get the truth every time.
- ☐ Run your first three real interviews. Yes, this week.

Guessing is comfortable. And wrong.

Here's the most expensive mistake in business, made by twelve-year-olds and twelve-billion-dollar companies alike: build something in secret, polish it for weeks, then unveil it to a world that politely shrugs. The fix is embarrassingly simple — **talk to people before you build, not after.**

But there's a trap inside the fix. Ask anyone “would you buy this?” and watch what happens: they smile and say yes. Your mum says yes. Your friends say yes. The neighbour says *definitely*. Are they lying? Sort of — they're being kind. A “yes” costs them nothing and makes you happy, so they hand it over for free.

People will lie to you to be kind. The past never lies.

What someone *actually did* last Tuesday — what annoyed them, what they tried, what they paid — is solid ground. What they *say they'll do* someday is weather.

So this chapter teaches you to ask about Tuesdays. It's a small twist with superpowers.

word to own

FEEDBACK

What people tell you about your idea. Kind feedback feels nice; honest feedback is worth money. You're hunting the second kind.

my first 9 yeses
bought exactly
zero cable
straps. — M.

Ask about the past, not the future

One rule turns a polite chat into a gold mine: every question points **backwards**. Not “would you...” but “when did you last...”. Not opinions about your idea — stories about their problem.

“what did you do about it?” is the best question ever invented. — M.

✗ DON'T ASK “Would you buy a cable organiser?”	✓ ASK INSTEAD “When did your cables last tangle? What did you do?”
✗ DON'T ASK “Do you like my idea?”	✓ ASK INSTEAD “What’s the most annoying part of this problem for you?”
✗ DON'T ASK “Would you pay five dollars for it?”	✓ ASK INSTEAD “Have you ever paid anything to fix it? What, and how much?”

See the pattern? The left column asks people to predict themselves — humans are terrible at it and kind about it. The right column asks for receipts. The past has receipts. The future is just politeness.

Bonus: backwards questions are easier to ask. You’re not pitching anything, so there’s nothing to be shy about. You’re just curious about their Tuesday.

The five questions

Here's your entire interview script. Copy it into your Founder's Log — it works on parents, neighbours, market sellers and, one day, investors:

FOUNDER INTERVIEW

5 QUESTIONS

- Q1 "Tell me about the last time [the problem] happened to you."
- Q2 "What was the most annoying part?"
- Q3 "What did you do about it?"
- Q4 "Did you ever pay anything to fix it? What, and how much?"
- Q5 "If a magic helper existed for this, what would it do?"

word to own

INTERVIEW

A conversation where you ask about someone's real past, listen 80% of the time, and write down their exact words.

Q5 answers sound crazy. write them down anyway. — M.

Two rules while you ask. **Rule one: they talk, you listen.** Aim for them doing 80% of the talking; every time you want to explain your idea, bite your tongue and write instead. **Rule two: write their exact words.** Not "she finds it annoying" but "*I've bought three of these and lost them all.*" Exact words contain prices, feelings and product names — the expensive stuff.

Q4 is the secret star. The moment someone admits they've already *paid* to fix the problem, you've found proof the treasure is real.

Who to talk to (and how to be brave safely)

Start close, then move outwards. Three rings:



sellers gave me
free samples
AND free
wisdom. ring 3
forever. — M.

FIG. 3.1 · Your three interview rings. Warm up in ring 1, get honest in ring 2, strike gold in ring 3.

Ring 1 is your warm-up — family lies kindly, but it’s safe practice for the script. **Ring 2** gets honest: classmates, teachers, neighbours. **Ring 3** is the gold mine: market sellers and shop owners hear customer complaints all day long and love being asked. The noodle-stall lady knows more about tourists than the internet does.

One founder rule that never bends: brave is not the same as careless. New people means a parent within waving distance. Besides — parents make excellent interview fixers. “My kid is writing a business notebook, can they ask you three questions?” opens almost every door in town.

Mission: three real humans

Time to spend the courage you've been saving. Take your starred problem from Mission 02 and interview three people about it — the five questions, exact words, 80% listening.

MISSION 03

Three Real Humans

- Interview **3 people** about your starred problem using the five questions. At least one from **ring 2 or 3**.
- Write their **exact words** in your log — especially complaints, amounts, and anything they've already paid.
- Afterwards, add one line: *what surprised me most was...*

⌚ 3 x 10 minutes · needs: the five questions + a parent for ring 3

the surprise line from interview #2 became my best product feature. — M.

Part One checkpoint. Look what's in your Founder's Log already: a week of spotted problems, ouch scores, and real quotes from real humans. You can now see what others step over and *hear* what others miss. That's the founder's eye and the founder's ear — and most adults never train either.

PART TWO *The collecting ends; the building begins. First stop: turning your log into twenty ideas in twenty minutes — including the terrible ones. Especially the terrible ones. →*

2

The First Loop

The collecting ends; the building begins. Five chapters, one loop every founder on Earth runs: ideas, numbers, the pick, the build — and your first real sale. Not at the end of the book. Right here in the middle.

-
- CH 4** No Bad Ideas: Brainstorm Like a Pro
 - CH 5** The Three Numbers Every Business Lives On
 - CH 6** Pick One Idea: The Reality Check
 - CH 7** Make the Simplest Version That Works
 - CH 8** Your First Sale (Yes, This Week)



*the terrible
ideas
matter most.
trust me.*

No Bad Ideas: Brainstorm Like a Pro

Your log is full of problems and real quotes. Time to turn one problem into twenty ideas in twenty minutes — terrible ones included. Especially the terrible ones.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Learn the one rule that separates pros from everyone else.
- ☐ Run the three idea machines: Flip, Combine, Borrow.
- ☐ Find the idea zone only you can reach — your unfair advantage.

Quantity first. Quality later.

Here's how most people brainstorm: think of an idea, immediately judge it ("nah, silly"), throw it away, repeat twice, conclude they're not creative. The problem isn't their imagination — it's the judging. **You can't dig for gold and polish it at the same time.**

Pros split the work into two separate sessions.

Session one: generate. Every idea gets written down, no exceptions, no faces made. A trained hamster that untangles cables? On the list. **Session two: judge.** Later. Different day, even. With the inner critic finally allowed back in the room.

Why does quantity matter so much? Because your first five ideas are everyone's first five ideas — they're what any person would say in the first minute. The weird, original, *only-yours* material starts showing up around idea fourteen, after the obvious stuff has been emptied out. You have to write down the boring ten to get to the brilliant fifteenth. That's the toll. Everyone pays it.

word to own

BRAINSTORM

A timed session where you generate as many ideas as possible and judge none of them. Judging comes later — always later.

my idea #2 was
"a longer cable."
my idea #14
paid for my bike.
— M.

The three idea machines

Around idea eight, every brain stalls. Pros don't wait for inspiration to come back — they crank a machine. Three of them, and your problem fits in all three:



stuck? pull a lever. any lever.

FIG. 4.1 · The three idea machines. When the flow stops, run your problem through one of them.

Flip it: reverse something about the problem and see what falls out. What if tangled cables were collectible? What if the queue was the entertainment? Flips sound absurd and lead somewhere real surprisingly often.

Combine: smash the problem into something you already love — drawing, football, baking, stickers. The collision is where original lives. **Borrow:** find someone who solved a *cousin* of your problem — climbers tame ropes, sailors tame ropes, electricians tame cables all day — steal the trick and shrink it to kid size.

borrow isn't cheating. every founder does it. it's called research. — M.

Twenty minutes inside Max's notebook

Here's what a real idea storm looks like — six lines from Max's twenty, garbage lovingly included:

MAX'S IDEA STORM

20 MIN

- #2 a longer cable (so it tangles... more?)
- #5 trained hamster, untangles while you sleep
- #9 glow-in-the-dark straps so cables are findable
- #11 cable "parking garage" box for the family drawer
- #14 ★ velcro straps with name charms — one per family member, no more "whose cable is this?!"
- #19 monthly "untangle service" for neighbours

interview quote that unlocked #14: "I've bought three and lost them all." chapter 3 pays off. — M.

Look at the journey. #2 is filler — everyone's first answer. #5 is glorious nonsense... but notice it smuggled in a real wish: *untangling that happens without me*. #9 and #11 are warm. And #14 — fourteenth! — combines the cable problem with something Max noticed in interviews: half the fights weren't about tangling at all, they were about *whose cable is whose*. The hamster walked so #14 could run.

That's why no idea gets deleted during the storm. **Bad ideas aren't failures — they're stepping stones with bad PR.**

The idea zone only you can reach

One more filter makes good ideas great. Anybody anywhere could sell cable straps. But who lives five minutes from a night market full of phone-charging tourists? Who has a class of twenty-five kids losing water bottles? Whose aunt runs a café, whose dad fixes bikes, who speaks two languages? **You** — and that changes which ideas are yours to win.



FIG. 4.2 · Where the problem meets your world, you stop competing with everyone and start being uncopiable.

Founders call this an **unfair advantage**, and kids are loaded with them: your street, your school, your hobbies, your family's shops and group chats. Don't hunt for the best idea in the world. Hunt for the best idea in your world. Go back over your twenty and mark which ones sit in the overlap — those just got a head start.

word to own

UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

Something you have that others can't easily copy: your location, skills, language, or people. It makes an idea yours.

I live 5 minutes from the night market. tourists charge phones. hmm. — M.

Mission: the idea storm

Everything is loaded: a starred problem, real quotes from real humans, three machines, and permission to write garbage. Set a timer and go.

MISSION 04

The Idea Storm

- ☐ Set a timer: **20 minutes**. Write your starred problem at the top of a fresh page.
- ☐ Write **20 ideas**. No judging, no crossing out. Stuck? Crank a machine: Flip, Combine, Borrow.
- ☐ Tomorrow (not today!), **circle 3 favourites** — and mark any that sit in your unfair-advantage overlap.

🕒 20 minutes today + 5 tomorrow ·
needs: timer + zero shame

I circled #9,
#14 and #19.
one of them
survives chapter
6. — M.

Notice the mission says circle favourites — not pick the winner. Choosing between ideas by gut feel is how good ideas lose to shiny ones. Before you pick, you need glasses that see what gut feel can't: what things cost, what people pay, and what's left over.

NEXT *The money glasses. Three numbers — cost, price, profit — and suddenly you can read any business on Earth in under a minute. →*



*this is the
maths that
actually matters.*

Cost, Price, Profit

Every business on Earth, from a lemonade stand to an airline, runs on the same three numbers. Learn them once and you can read any business in under a minute — including your own, before you build it.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Meet cost, price, and profit — and what each one actually means.
- ☐ Price your idea with a real method, not a guess.
- ☐ Run your three favourites through the numbers before picking one.

Cost. Price. Profit.

Three words, and once you own them you can read any business on the planet. **Cost** is everything it takes to make one unit of your thing — materials, packaging, the bus fare to buy supplies. **Price** is the number a customer hands over. **Profit** is what's left after cost is subtracted from price — and profit, not price, is the actual point of being in business.

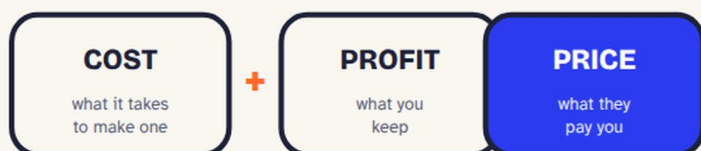


FIG. 5.1 · Cost plus profit equals price. Get any two, and the third is just subtraction.

Say a velcro cable tie costs 40¢ in materials (velcro, a metal charm, a scrap of ribbon). Sell it for \$3 and your profit is \$2.60 per tie. Sell it for \$1 and your profit is 60¢. Same product, wildly different business — and the only thing that changed is one number.

word to own

MARGIN

Your profit shown as a percentage of price. A \$2.60 profit on a \$3 tie is an 87% margin — healthy. A 60¢ profit on a \$1 tie is 60% — also fine, just smaller per sale.

forty cents felt tiny until I multiplied it by fifty ties. — M.

The cost trap (and how to dodge it)

Almost every new founder forgets to count something. Materials are obvious. What slips through: the ribbon, the little bag you sell it in, the bus fare to the craft shop, even the hour you spent making it (your time has a price too, even if nobody's paying it yet). **If you don't count it, you're not pricing your business — you're donating to it.**

Here's a pricing method that actually works, in three steps. **One:** add up every real cost per unit, no matter how small. **Two:** decide the profit you want to keep — pick a number, or a percentage of cost. **Three:** cost plus profit is your price. Then do one gut check: would you pay that, for that?

There's a second check worth running too — what does something similar already sell for? If finished cable organizers sell for \$8–12 online, a handmade one at \$3 isn't a bargain, it's a red flag that you've underpriced your own work.

word to own

BREAK-EVEN

The number of units you need to sell before your profit covers whatever you spent getting started — after that, every sale is pure profit.

the ribbon cost more than the velcro. nobody warns you about ribbon. — M.

Run your favourites through the numbers

Remember the three ideas you circled at the end of chapter 4? Time to put price tags on them. This is where a great-sounding idea sometimes quietly fails, and a plain-sounding one wins — because feelings don't show up in a spreadsheet, but math does.

#19 hurt my brain. #14 made sense in ten seconds. — M.

THREE IDEAS, PRICED

PER UNIT

#9 glow-in-the-dark cable straps — cost \$0.60, price \$3.50, **profit \$2.90**

#14 velcro name-charm ties — cost \$0.40, price \$3.00, **profit \$2.60**

#19 monthly untangle service — cost (your time) hard to count, price unclear

Notice #19 is the problem child: a service has almost no material cost, which sounds great, until you try to price *your own time* and realize you have no idea what an hour of you is worth yet. That's not a reason to drop it — just a sign it needs a different chapter (look for it again in chapter 9). For now, products with countable costs are easier to start with.

Give your business a number to hit

“I want to start a business” is a feeling. “Make and sell 10 cable ties in the next 3 weeks” is a plan — specific enough to know exactly when you’ve won. Before your first sale, write down three numbers: how many you’ll make, by when, and roughly how much it’ll cost you to find out.

That last number matters more than it sounds. Most kid businesses cost less to start than one trip to the cinema — but “less than” isn’t the same as “nothing,” and knowing your number up front means no surprises later. If the number feels too big, that’s useful information too: it might mean a smaller first batch, or a cheaper material, not a smaller dream.

word to own

BUDGET

The amount of money you plan to spend before you start. Founders who write it down beforehand spend less than founders who don’t — nobody knows exactly why, but it works.

my whole first batch cost less than two movie tickets. — M.

Mission: price your top three

You're about to do something most adults starting a business skip — actual math, before spending actual money. Five minutes now saves real disappointment later.

#14 won. cost 40¢, sold for \$3, kept \$2.60. easiest math of my life. — M.

MISSION 05

The Price Tag

- For each of your **3 circled ideas**, list every real cost — materials, packaging, transport. Add them up.
- Pick a profit per unit you'd be happy with. Cost + profit = your price.
- Gut check: would *you* pay that price? Would your starred problem-haver?

🕒 15 minutes · needs: Founder's Log + a calculator

One idea probably just pulled ahead — cheap to make, priced fairly, profit that feels real. That's not luck.

That's the numbers doing their job. Next chapter, you stress-test it one more way before committing any real time to it.

NEXT *Before you build anything, run your favourite idea through one brutal reality check. It takes ten minutes and might save you ten weeks. →*



*this is the
boring chapter
that saves you.*

Pick One Idea

You have a winner on paper. Paper is patient — it never asks you to actually find materials, or wonders whether your school allows this, or notices the deadline. Five honest questions, and paper becomes real.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Run your idea through five reality checks before committing.
- ☐ Spot the three ways good ideas quietly become bad weeks.
- ☐ Commit — on paper, with a date — to the one you're building.

Five questions, asked in order

An idea sounded great in a brainstorm and even better on a pricing sheet. Before you spend a single afternoon building it, run it through five questions — in this order, because the first three can end the conversation early and save you the other two.

- 1 Can I actually make this?
- 2 Will it cost less than it sells for?
- 3 Is it legal and safe for a kid to sell?
- 4 Do I have time before my deadline?
- 5 Would I be a little proud to sell this?

FIG. 6.1 · Five questions, asked in order. The first three can sink an idea outright; the last two just need a yes.

A “no” on questions one, two, or three means stop and pick a different favourite — that’s not failure, that’s the check working exactly as intended. Questions four and five are softer: a tight deadline might mean a smaller first batch rather than a different idea, and pride is the gut-check that keeps you motivated on day twelve when day one’s excitement has worn off.

word to own

FEASIBLE

Something you can actually build with the time, skills, and materials you have right now — not the version you could build in five years.

#9 failed
question 1.
nowhere near
me sells glow-in-
the-dark thread.
— M.

How good ideas quietly become bad weeks

Three patterns sink more kid businesses than bad ideas ever do. **Scope creep:** “cable ties” slowly grows into “cable ties, plus a matching pouch, plus a website, plus business cards” — and three weeks later nothing exists yet because the plan never stopped growing. **The someday material:** the idea depends on a part that needs ordering online, arrives in three weeks, and quietly kills the momentum you had today.

Borrowed confidence: a friend says it’s a great idea, so you skip questions one through three because the praise felt like proof. It wasn’t — compliments and feasibility are different things, and only one of them is checkable.

The fix for all three is the same: pick the smallest version of the idea that a real person could buy this week. You can always add the pouch later, once the ties themselves are real.

I almost added a “custom colour” option before selling a single tie. almost. — M.

Five yeses, one decision

Here's what it looks like when an idea actually clears all five — not because it was the flashiest idea on the list, but because it was the one with the fewest ways to go wrong.

MY REALITY CHECK

IDEA #14

Q1 Can I make it? — **yes, with craft-shop velcro + charms**

Q2 Profit? — **yes, \$2.60 per tie**

Q3 Legal & safe? — **yes, parent says fine for school + market**

Q4 Time before deadline? — **yes, 3 weeks is enough for 10**

Q5 Proud to sell it? — **yes, genuinely**

word to own

MVP

Minimum Viable Product — the smallest version of your idea that a real customer could actually buy. Everything extra comes after, never before.

MVP sounds fancy. it just meant: skip the pouch. — M.

Notice nothing here is exciting. No website, no custom packaging, no second product line. Boring and buildable beats exciting and stuck, every single time. Excitement is for later, once the first ten are sold and you actually know what works.

Make it real with a date

An idea without a deadline is a daydream with good intentions. The fix takes one sentence: write down what you're building, how many, and by when. A date turns "someday" into a real countdown you can actually fail or succeed at — and failing on a specific Tuesday is far more useful than drifting forever.

This sentence also becomes the thing you tell people, which matters more than it sounds: "I'm making and selling 10 velcro cable ties by the 30th" invites help, accountability, and your first customer, all from one sentence said out loud at dinner.

word to own

DEADLINE

A specific date attached to a specific number. Vague goals get postponed; dated ones get done.

saying it at dinner was scarier than making the ties.
— M.

Mission: the commitment

This is the shortest mission in the book and one of the most important. Five questions, one decision, one sentence said out loud.

MISSION 06

The Reality Check

- ☐ Run your top idea through **all 5 questions** on a fresh Founder's Log page. Write a real answer to each.
- ☐ If it fails Q1, Q2, or Q3, go back to your circled three and check the runner-up instead.
- ☐ Write your **commitment sentence**: what, how many, by when. Say it out loud to one person today.

🕒 15 minutes · needs: Founder's Log + one brave sentence

saying my commitment sentence out loud was scarier than the ties. — M.

You now have a real idea, a real price, and a real deadline. Everything from here is building — starting with the smallest possible version of the thing you're about to sell.

NEXT *Time to actually make one. The simplest version that works beats the perfect version that never ships. →*



*done and ugly
beats perfect
and imaginary.*

Build the First One

You don't need a workshop, a logo, or a website. You need one finished thing, made today, that a stranger could hold in their hands and understand without you explaining anything.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Build your MVP — the smallest real version of your idea.
- ☐ Learn the one-hour rule that keeps your first build honest.
- ☐ Test it on a real human before making nine more.

One tie, not ten

Here's the trap: you committed to 10 cable ties, so it feels logical to set up an assembly line and make all 10 at once. Don't. **Make exactly one. Test it. Then decide what the other nine should look like.**

The first one will teach you things no amount of planning could: the velcro is scratchier than expected, the charm needs a bigger hole, the whole thing takes four minutes instead of one. Find that out on tie number one, while changing course costs you nothing. Find it out on tie number eight, and you've wasted seven.

This is the same idea as the MVP from chapter 6, zoomed in to today: **build the smallest version of the smallest version.** One tie. Not the matching pouch. Not the gift box. One tie that works.

word to own

ITERATE

To make something, learn from it, then make a slightly better version. Founders don't get it right first — they get it less wrong, repeatedly, on purpose.

tie #1 took
eleven minutes.
tie #6 took
ninety seconds.
— M.

The one-hour rule

Give yourself exactly one hour from “I’m starting” to holding a finished, sellable first version. Not one hour of research. Not one hour of deciding on the perfect ribbon colour. One hour of actual making, with whatever materials are already in the house.

used scrap velcro from an old bag for tie #1. worked fine. — M.



one hour, then your hands have to be moving

FIG. 7.1 · Planning past one hour stops being useful and starts being a hiding place.

One hour feels impossibly short, and that’s the entire point: a tight deadline forces you to use what you have instead of waiting for what you imagine you need.

Founders with unlimited time make zero products.

Founders with one hour make one imperfect product — which is worth infinitely more.

Hand it to someone before you make nine more

Your first finished tie goes straight to a real person — ideally someone from your interview rings in chapter 3, not a parent who loves you unconditionally. Watch what they do, more than what they say. Do they actually use it, or just nod politely and set it down?

Ask one question: “What would make you actually want one of these?” Their answer is free, fast feedback that no amount of solo planning could have given you — and it might change tie #2 before you’ve spent another minute on tie #1’s flaws.

A flinch is data. A shrug is data. Silence while they fidget with it is the most useful data of all. You’re not looking for a compliment here — you already have those from chapter 3. You’re looking for the one true reaction a finished object gets that an idea on paper never could.

word to own

PROTOTYPE

An early, rough version of your product built to test and learn from — not to sell yet, and not expected to be perfect.

my sister
untangled her
own cables with
it before I even
asked. — M.

Fix it. Don't restart it.

Feedback on tie #1 will tempt you toward a familiar trap: scrapping everything and starting over with a “better plan.” Resist it. **Small fixes on a real thing beat a brand-new plan for an imaginary thing, every time.** If the charm hole is too small, make the next hole bigger. That's it. That's the whole fix.

This is also where the idea storm from chapter 4 quietly pays off again: most fixes turn out to be small, because you already thought through the wild versions back then and picked the sane one. You're not redesigning a business right now. You're tightening one bolt.

word to own

REVISION

A small, specific change made in response to real feedback — one bolt tightened, not a new machine built.

fix #1: bigger hole. fix #2: shorter velcro strip. that was it. — M.

Mission: build and test #1

One hour, one tie, one honest reaction from one real person. This is the mission the whole book has been pointing toward.

MISSION 07

The First Build

- ☐ Set a timer: **one hour**. Build one finished, sellable version of your idea with materials you already have.
- ☐ Hand it to **one real person** (not a parent). Ask: “What would make you actually want one of these?”
- ☐ Make **one small fix** based on their reaction. Don’t restart — tighten the one bolt that needs it.

⌚ 1 hour build + 10 minutes testing ·
needs: materials + one honest stranger

my sister's
reaction was
worth more than
a week of
planning. — M.

You now have a tested, working version of something a real person reacted to. That’s further than most businesses — kid or adult — ever get. Next: turning that one tie into your first real sale.

NEXT *Your first real sale, with real money, to a real person who didn’t have to say yes. It can happen this week. →*



Your First Sale

*the moment
every
chapter so far
has
been pointing at.*

Every chapter before this one was preparation. This one is the moment itself: a real stranger, choosing to hand over real money, for a real thing you made. Nothing in business feels like the first time that happens.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Find your first three real customers, on purpose.
- ☐ Make the ask without the awkward stumble.
- ☐ Actually sell something — this week, not someday.

Your first three customers

You don't need a crowd. You need three people, found on purpose, not by accident. **Start warm, but sell to someone who actually has the problem — a sale to family proves you're loved. A sale to a stranger proves you have a business.**



FIG. 8.1 · Warm contacts are easiest, but starred problem-havers are where the business actually proves itself.

Look back at your Founder's Log: the people in your problem log, your interviews, anyone who said "ugh, again?!" about tangled cables in chapter 2 — they're your customer list, already written down, just waiting for a knock on the door or a message.

word to own

CUSTOMER

A person who pays real money for what you made. Not someone who says they would — someone who actually does.

my list was already in chapter 2. I just hadn't noticed it was a list. — M.

The ask is shorter than you think

Most kids freeze before the ask, imagining a speech. You don't need one. A good ask names the problem, names the price, and asks one direct question — in under thirty seconds. Anything longer and you're talking yourself out of it.

I practiced the ask on my mirror four times. felt silly. helped a lot. — M.

THE ASK, WORD FOR WORD

30 SEC

"I made these velcro cable ties — they stop your charger cables from tangling. They're \$3 each. Want one?"

If they hesitate: "You can try mine for a week first, no charge, if that helps."

If they say no: "No worries! Do you know anyone who might want one?"

Notice the third line: a "no" isn't a dead end, it's a free referral request. Most people who say no to buying will happily point you toward someone who'll say yes — if you just ask.

Handling the actual money

The moment money changes hands is smaller and quicker than it feels in your head beforehand. Decide in advance how you'll take payment — cash in an envelope, or a parent-supervised payment app — so you're not figuring it out mid-sale.

Whatever you take, **write it down the second the sale happens**: what sold, for how much, to whom. Memory is unreliable and your Founder's Log isn't. This single habit, done from sale one, makes chapter 9's "where the money goes" almost effortless later.

One more thing worth saying out loud: thank them. Not as a script, genuinely — they didn't have to say yes, and they just funded the next chapter of your business with their own real money.

word to own

TRANSACTION

One complete exchange — money for product. Each one gets written down: what, how much, who, when.

sale #1: \$3, to the noodle-stall lady from chapter 3. wrote it down shaking. — M.

A “no” is not a verdict

You will hear no. Possibly more than once before the first yes. A no usually means “not this, not now, not from you yet” — it is almost never the verdict on your entire business that it feels like in the moment.

Ask, lightly, what would have made it a yes — a different colour, a lower price, better timing. Most people will actually tell you, for free, and you’ll walk away with better information than the sale itself would have given you.

The founders who get their first yes fastest aren’t the ones with the best product. They’re the ones who asked the most people, fastest, without letting one no slow down the next ask.

nos #1 through
#4 were
practice. #5 was
a yes. — M.

What the first yes actually feels like

Founders who've done this describe the same thing: it's smaller than they expected, and bigger than they expected, at the same time. Smaller, because the world doesn't stop — the person just says "sure" and hands over the money like it's nothing. Bigger, because something shifts in how you see yourself, permanently, the second it happens.

You are no longer someone with a business idea. You are someone who has run a business. That sentence doesn't need ten sales to be true — it only needed one, and you're about to make it true this week.

word to own

FOUNDER

Someone who built something and made a sale — past tense, already true, not a title you wait to deserve.

I texted dad
ONE WORD:
SOLD. he called
back in nine
seconds. — M.

Don't stop at one

The first sale proves the idea works. The next nine prove it wasn't luck. Go back to your customer list from earlier in this chapter and keep asking — same thirty-second ask, same envelope, same habit of writing it down.

Watch what changes between sale one and sale five: the ask gets smoother, the nos sting less, and you start noticing which version of your pitch actually works versus which one you just liked saying. That noticing is the real skill this chapter was teaching — the sale was just proof you'd learned it.

sale #1 took
four days. sale
#10 took four
hours. — M.

Mission: the first sale

This is the mission the whole book has been building toward. Everything before it was preparation; this is the real thing.

MISSION 08

The First Sale

- ☐ List **3 real people** from your Founder's Log who might want what you made. Start with the warmest.
- ☐ Use the 30-second ask. Out loud, in person if you can. **Make at least one real attempt today.**
- ☐ Whatever happens — sale or no — write it down: what was said, what they said back, what you'd change.

🕒 **this week · needs: your finished product + 3 names + real courage**

ten ties, ten weeks, one nervous text to dad that started all of it. — M.

You committed in chapter 6 to selling 10. You've just made the first one real. The rest is the same thirty-second ask, repeated — and every chapter that follows is about what to do with the money, the story, and the momentum you've just earned.

NEXT *You have real money now, even if it's just \$3. Chapter 9 is where you decide what a founder actually does with it. →*

3

The Horizon

You've sold something real. Now the questions get bigger: where the money goes, what your story is worth, how AI fits into all this, what happens when things go wrong — and what comes after the last page of this book.

-
- CH 9** Where the Money Goes
 - CH 10** Your Story Is Your Brand
 - CH 11** AI Is Your Business Partner
 - CH 12** When Things Go Wrong
 - CH 13** Kids Who Actually Did This
 - CH 14** This Book Was Day Zero



*this is the
chapter banks
don't teach.*

Where the Money Goes

You have real money now — maybe just \$3, maybe more by the time you read this. What you do with it next says more about you as a founder than the sale itself did.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Split your first earnings into three honest piles.
- ☐ Decide what “reinvest” actually means for a 10-tie business.
- ☐ Start a habit that outlasts this one product.

Three piles, decided in advance

Most people decide what to do with money only after it's already gone. Founders decide first. Split every sale into three piles the moment it lands: reinvest, save, spend — and decide the split before the cash is in your hand, not after.

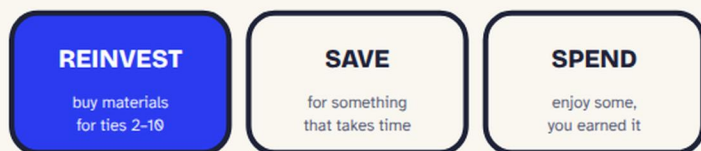


FIG. 9.1 · Three piles, decided before the money arrives, not after it's already spent.

For a 10-tie business, reinvest usually wins early: more velcro and charms means more ties means more sales. But even a small save and a small spend matter — spend keeps the work feeling worth it, and save builds the habit of not touching every dollar that arrives.

word to own

REINVEST

Putting profit back into the business instead of your pocket — more materials, better tools, the things that help you sell the next one.

first \$3: \$2 back into materials, \$1 into my pocket. felt fair.
— M.

A ledger is just a list that doesn't lie

You started writing down every sale back in chapter 8. Now it becomes something with a proper name: a **ledger** — every sale, every cost, in one place, in order. It's the least exciting page in this book and the most useful.

THE FOUNDER'S LEDGER

WEEK 1

Sale to noodle-stall lady — **+\$3.00**

Velcro + charms, 5 more ties — **-\$2.00**

Sale to classmate's mum — **+\$3.00**

Running profit so far — \$4.00

word to own

LEDGER

A running record of every sale and every cost, in order. The simplest, most boring, most essential tool any founder owns.

my ledger was a phone notes app. nothing fancy required. — M.

A ledger answers the only question that actually matters: are you making money, or just moving it around? Feelings about a business are unreliable. A running total never lies.

Did you actually pay yourself back?

Remember the budget from chapter 5 — the money you spent before selling anything? That comes out of your earnings *first*, before profit feels real. If you spent \$4 getting started and you've made \$9 in sales, you've broken even at \$4 and the next \$5 is genuine, new profit.

This moment — the one where you've earned back every cent you put in — has a name, and it's worth marking in your Founder's Log when it happens.

Everything after break-even is the business paying you, instead of the other way around.

broke even on tie #4. tie #5 was the first dollar that felt like mine. — M.

The habit matters more than the ties

Cable ties might not be your business in a year. The habit of splitting money into piles, writing every sale down, and knowing your break-even — that travels with you into whatever you build next. This chapter was never really about velcro.

Adults who manage money badly usually weren't taught these three habits as kids, not because the habits are hard — they take ten seconds per sale — but because nobody handed them real money early enough to practice on. You just did.

word to own

BREAK-EVEN

The point where total earnings finally equal what you spent getting started. Everything after this point is real profit.

I'll use this same notes app for whatever I build next. — M.

Mission: the three piles

Take whatever you've actually earned so far — even if it's just one sale — and give it a real plan.

MISSION 09

The Three Piles

- ☐ Open your Founder's Log and start a **ledger page**: every sale, every cost, running total.
- ☐ Decide your **split** — reinvest / save / spend — as percentages or real numbers.
- ☐ Calculate your **break-even**: how much you've spent total, and how close you are to earning it back.

🕒 15 minutes • needs: Founder's Log + your actual sales so far

dad asked to see my ledger. I was weirdly proud to show him. — M.

You now track money like a real founder, not just a kid with a jar of coins. Next: the story behind your business is worth more than you think — and it's about to become your best sales tool.

NEXT *Why people remember the story of your business long after they've forgotten the price. →*



people forget
prices. they
remember
stories.

Your Story Is Your Brand

Two cable ties can be identical in every way — same velcro, same charm, same price — and people will still pick the one with a story attached. That's not unfair. That's just how humans decide.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Find the true story your business is already sitting on.
- ☐ Tell it in one honest sentence, not a sales pitch.
- ☐ Make people glad they helped a real kid, not just bought a thing.

You already have a story

Founders sometimes think they need to invent a story — some dramatic origin, a clever brand name, a logo. You don't. The true, boring, real version of how your business started is already more interesting than anything invented.

“I noticed cables kept tangling, so I made ties to stop it” is a story. It has a problem, a person who noticed it, and an action. That's the entire shape every good story needs — nothing else has to be added, and nothing should be made up.

This matters more than it sounds: a customer who buys from a kid solving a real problem feels good about the purchase in a way that buying from an anonymous shop never quite matches.

word to own

BRAND

What people feel and remember about your business — built from your story and how you treat people, not from a logo.

my whole story
is one true
sentence. that's
the whole brand.
— M.

Say it like you're telling a friend

The fastest way to make a true story sound fake is to over-decorate it. Compare: “Introducing an innovative new tangle-prevention solution!” versus “My cables kept tangling so I made these. \$3.” The second one is better, every time — because it sounds like a real kid talking, not an advert pretending to be one.

Use the same plain words you'd use telling a friend at lunch. If a sentence makes you wince reading it back, that's usually the sign it stopped sounding like you and started sounding like a commercial.

I deleted
“revolutionary.”
nobody's cable
tie is
revolutionary. —
M.

Where the story actually goes

Your story doesn't need a website or a paragraph. It needs to fit in the moments people actually encounter your business: the spoken ask from chapter 8, and a small sign if you're selling somewhere in person.

THE STORY, OUT LOUD

20 SEC

"My cables kept tangling every single day, so I started making velcro ties to fix it. This one's \$3 — want one?"

On a market table sign: *"Made by a kid who got tired of tangled cables. \$3 each."*

word to own

PITCH

A short, honest description of what you make and why — said the same way you'd say it to a friend, not a stranger you're trying to impress.

the market sign
got more smiles
than the ties
did. — M.

Notice both versions are short, plain, and true. A story that takes longer to tell than the sale itself is too long.

Say it, sell it, thank them — the story's only job is to make the \$3 feel like more than just \$3.

Give a little more than expected

The easiest way to turn one sale into a story people repeat to their friends costs almost nothing: do a little more than they paid for. A genuine thank-you. A second tie if their first one came out crooked, no questions asked. Remembering their name next time.

People don't tell their friends about an average purchase. They tell their friends about being surprised.

A kid founder who under-promises and over-delivers gets remembered — and a customer who tells one friend is worth more than any sign.

word to own

WORD OF MOUTH

When a happy customer tells someone else about you, for free, because they actually mean it. The oldest and still the best advertising there is.

I gave the
noodle-stall lady
a spare charm.
she told three
other stalls. —
M.

Mission: tell your true story

You've been living this story since chapter 1. Time to actually say it out loud, on purpose, where customers can hear it.

MISSION 10

The True Story

- ☐ Write your story in **one honest sentence**: the problem you noticed, and what you made about it.
- ☐ Say it out loud during your next ask — no extra decoration, no “revolutionary.”
- ☐ Do **one small extra** for your next customer — and notice how they react to it.

🕒 10 minutes • needs: Founder's Log + your real story

dad still tells
people the cable-
tangle story
better than I do.
— M.

Your story is now doing real work for you — turning strangers into customers, and customers into people who talk about you. Next: a different kind of helper, one that doesn't buy anything but can genuinely speed up everything else you do.

NEXT *AI can't notice your problem or make your first sale — but used well, it can save you hours on everything in between. →*



*fast helper.
not the founder.
that's you.*

AI Is Your Business Partner

Not the boss. Not the founder. A very fast, very patient assistant who never gets tired of your questions — and who is genuinely useless at the two things that matter most: noticing your problem, and making your first sale.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ See exactly what AI is good at for a young founder — and what it isn't.
- ☐ Use it for naming, wording, and research without losing your own voice.
- ☐ Keep the parts of the business that only a real human can do.

What it actually helps with

AI tools — the kind that answer questions and write text back to you — are everywhere now, and a few minutes with one can save you real time. **They're excellent research assistants and terrible founders.** The difference matters more than it sounds.

GOOD AT

naming things
fixing your wording
quick research
doing the maths fast

BAD AT

noticing YOUR problem
talking to a real human
making your first sale
caring if you succeed

FIG. 11.1 · The split that matters: AI speeds up the thinking. You still have to do the founding.

Notice everything in the right-hand box is something only *you* can do, no matter how good the tool gets. That's not a limitation to work around — it's the actual job description of a founder. AI can carry the left-hand box so you have more time for the right-hand one.

word to own

AI

A computer tool that can answer questions, write text, and help you think faster. A fast assistant — never the founder.

I asked it to name my charm tags. it gave me twelve options in nine seconds. — M.

How to actually ask it something

The trick to getting something useful back isn't a secret password — it's being specific. "Help me with my business" gets you a vague essay nobody asked for. A small, exact question gets you a small, exact, useful answer. Give it the real numbers, the real words, the real problem.

it suggested "CharmTie." I still liked my own name better. kept mine. — M.

WHAT I ASKED

REAL PROMPTS

"Give me 10 short names for a velcro cable tie with a name charm."

"Make this sound like a kid talking, not an advert: *[my pitch]*."

"If a tie costs 40¢ and sells for \$3, what's my profit on 20 sold?"

Treat every answer as a first draft, not a final one. If a suggested name doesn't sound like you, change it. If the wording feels stiff, say so and ask again. *You* are still the editor — the tool just gives you something faster to edit than a blank page.

The parts it can never do for you

Here's the guardrail worth remembering every time you open one of these tools: it cannot notice that cables tangle in your bag because it has never owned a bag. It cannot feel nervous walking up to a noodle stall, and it cannot feel the win when someone says yes. Every chapter before this one happened to a real kid in the real world — that part was never going to be a shortcut.

There's a second guardrail too: never let it invent facts about your own business. If it guesses a cost, a customer quote, or a number you didn't give it, that guess is fiction wearing a confident voice. Your real numbers come from your real ledger — not from a tool filling in gaps for you.

word to own

FACT-CHECK

Checking a claim against something real before you trust it or repeat it — especially true for anything a tool tells you about your own business.

it once guessed my cost was \$1.20. it was 40¢. I checked. always check. — M.

Editing it back to sounding like you

Here's a real before-and-after from Max's own market sign — the kind of edit that turns a generic-sounding draft back into something a real customer believes.

BEFORE / AFTER

SAME BUSINESS

Before (AI's first draft): "Introducing premium tangle-prevention solutions for the modern cable user!"

After (edited back to me): "Made by a kid who got tired of tangled cables. \$3 each."

"solutions" was the word that gave it away. real kids don't say solutions. — M.

The job wasn't to accept the first draft. It was to notice it sounded like nobody in particular, and fix that. That instinct — does this still sound like me? — is the one skill no tool can do for you, and it's worth practicing on every draft you get back.

Mission: ask it, then edit it

Use an AI tool once, on purpose, for one real task — then prove to yourself you're still the one in charge of the result.

MISSION 11

Ask, Then Own It

- ☐ Ask an AI tool for **one small, specific thing** — names, a pitch rewrite, or quick maths.
- ☐ Read the answer back and ask: **does this still sound like me?** Edit anything that doesn't.
- ☐ Fact-check any number or claim it gave you against your real ledger before you trust it.

🕒 10 minutes · needs: Founder's Log + any AI tool you have access to

the maths question saved me ten minutes. the naming one saved me an hour. — M.

You just used a powerful tool the way founders should — for speed, not for substance. Next: the chapter nobody wants to need, for the day something genuinely doesn't go to plan. It happens to every founder, and it happened to Max too.

NEXT *A spilled box, a sale that fell through, a customer who wasn't happy — what to actually do, the day it happens to you. →*



*every founder
has a story
like this.*

When Things Go Wrong

A box gets crushed. A customer doesn't show up. Someone says your tie broke in two days. None of this means you failed — it means you started, and starting is the only way any of this ever happens to you.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ See why setbacks are normal, not a sign you picked wrong.
- ☐ Walk through three real situations and exactly what to do.
- ☐ Turn your worst moment so far into your best story later.

This chapter happens to every founder

Nobody put this chapter in the book to scare you. It's here because it's true: every founder, in every business, at every age, eventually has a bad day. A spilled batch. A customer who doesn't show. A sale that goes wrong somehow. This isn't a sign you picked the wrong idea — it's a sign you're actually doing it.

tie #7's charm
fell off two
hours after I
sold it. felt like
the end of the
world. it wasn't.
— M.

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE

"I ruined it. I'm done."
the whole business feels broken

WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS

one bad afternoon
in a business that keeps going

FIG. 12.1 · The feeling lies about the size of the problem. Almost every setback is smaller than it feels at 4pm on a bad day.

The adults running businesses you admire all have a chapter exactly like this one in their own story — they just don't lead with it when they tell you about their success. You're about to get the part they usually skip.

The three things that actually happen

Almost every setback a young founder hits sorts into one of three boxes. **Knowing the box you're in tells you exactly what to do next** — and that's the whole point of having a name for it instead of just feeling bad.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN

AND THE FIX

Batch ruined — velcro got wet in a bag. Lost \$2 in materials, made a new batch the next day.

Customer no-show — promised to meet at the market, never came. Texted once, moved on.

Unhappy customer — charm fell off after two days. Replaced it free, no argument.

word to own

SETBACK

A problem that costs you time, money, or a sale — but doesn't end the business unless you decide it does.

\$2 felt huge at the time. it was less than my allowance. — M.

Notice none of these stories end in giving up. They end in a number (what it cost), an action (what got fixed), and the business carrying on the next day. That's the actual shape of recovering from a setback — smaller and faster than it feels in the moment.

What to actually do, right then

When something goes wrong with a real customer, three steps cover almost every situation, in this order.

One: stay calm. Nobody trusts a founder who panics more than the problem deserves. **Two: say sorry like you mean it** — not “sorry, but...,” just sorry. **Three: fix it** — replace it, refund it, or make it right, fast and without a fight.

A customer who watches you handle a mistake well will often trust you more than if nothing had gone wrong at all. Anyone can be likeable when everything works. Handling the hard moment calmly is what actually earns trust.

word to own

MAKE IT RIGHT

Fixing a mistake for a customer without making them argue for it — a replacement, a refund, or an honest apology, offered before they have to ask.

I replaced the charm before she even finished the sentence. she told her sister about that, not the broken charm. — M.

Put your setback in the log too

Your Founder’s Log has been tracking ideas, sales, and money so far. **It should track this too — on purpose, not buried.** A setback you write down honestly becomes useful. One you just try to forget tends to repeat itself.

the sealed box cost \$1. cheapest lesson I ever bought. — M.

MY WORST DAY

FOUNDER’S LOG

What happened: left the velcro bag on a damp windowsill overnight. Whole batch unusable.

What it cost: **\$2.40** in materials, one missed market day.

What I did differently after: stored materials in a sealed box. Never happened again.

Notice the entry has three parts, not just “it was bad”: what happened, what it cost in real numbers, and what changed afterward. That third part is the only one that actually matters — it’s the difference between a setback and a lesson.

Mission: write down your worst moment so far

Every founder has at least one moment like this already, even a small one. Time to give it the same honest treatment as a sale.

MISSION 12

The Setback Log

- Write down **one real setback** so far — even a tiny one. What happened, exactly.
- Add the real cost in **numbers**: money, time, or a lost sale.
- Write **one thing you'll do differently** because of it.

⌚ 10 minutes • needs: Founder's Log + one honest memory

writing it down made it feel smaller. I don't know why that works, but it does. — M.

You've now handled the part of business most people never talk about — and you handled it on paper, calmly, like a founder rather than a kid hiding a mistake. Next: you're about to meet other kids who hit setbacks just like yours, and kept going anyway.

NEXT *Real kids, real businesses, real numbers — proof this whole book actually works outside of it. →*



*real names.
real businesses.
look them up.*

Kids Who Actually Did This

Three real kids, three real businesses, no made-up names and no exaggerated numbers. Each one started with something small and ordinary — exactly like the tie you're holding, or the idea sitting in your notebook right now.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Meet three real kid founders and the actual problem each one solved.
- ☐ See your own chapters — noticing, building, setbacks — in their real stories.
- ☐ Notice what all three have in common, on purpose, before the mission.

Mikaila Ulmer — Me & the Bees Lemonade

At four years old, Mikaila Ulmer was stung by a bee twice in one week. Most kids would just stay away from bees after that. Mikaila's parents told her to research them instead of fearing them — and she learned that bees are essential to almost everything we eat, and that they were dying off at an alarming rate.

That same year, a 1940s family cookbook turned up from her great-grandmother, with a flaxseed lemonade recipe inside. Mikaila combined it with local honey — both to make it taste better and to support the bees she'd just learned to care about — and started a front-yard lemonade stand in Austin, Texas, donating part of every sale to bee conservation.

A local pizza shop owner liked it enough to ask her to bottle it. That one ask turned a front-yard stand into Me & the Bees Lemonade — now sold in thousands of stores nationwide, after Mikaila pitched it on Shark Tank at age nine.

word to own

REAL PROBLEM

Mikaila didn't set out to start a company. She got curious about something scary, researched it, and built a tiny solution — same shape as your noodle-stall lady in chapter 3.

a bee sting led to a national lemonade brand. the problem found her first. — M.

Moziah Bridges — Mo's Bows

Moziah “Mo” Bridges liked dressing sharp from the time he was a little kid — suits, and always a bow tie. The problem: he could never find bow ties he actually liked. So at nine years old, in Memphis, Tennessee, he asked his grandmother — a retired seamstress — to teach him to make his own.

He started small: selling handmade bow ties to family, friends, and at local craft fairs. His mother handled the boring-but-essential parts — tracking money, shipping orders — while Mo focused on the designs and the talking-to-customers part. Sound familiar? It's the exact split this book has been teaching since chapter 5.

Mo pitched Mo's Bows on Shark Tank at eleven. He didn't get a deal that day — but investor Daymond John liked him enough to become his mentor anyway. By his late teens, Mo had sold over 200,000 bow ties and partnered with the NBA, Neiman Marcus, and Bloomingdale's.

word to own

NOT A STRAIGHT LINE

Mo didn't get a Shark Tank deal — and it didn't matter. The mentor relationship that came out of it mattered more than the deal he didn't get.

his grandma
taught him to
sew. my
grandma never
taught me
velcro, but the
idea's the same.
— M.

Isabelle May — Charming Wine Charms

Isabelle May's first business wasn't a hit. At seven, she and a friend started Funky Flip Flops — and it didn't take off. She didn't quit being a founder. She just noticed the skills from that first try were still hers to use on a better idea.

A few years later, at a party, Isabelle noticed a hostess using plain wine charms to tell glasses apart — and thought, *I could make these more interesting.* She started designing themed charm sets: beach charms, ballet charms, even saint-themed charms that became her bestseller, with one customer ordering twenty sets for a bridal shower.

By eleven, Isabelle was running her second real business — buying supplies as cheaply as possible to protect her margin (the exact lesson from chapter 5), and eventually paying three other young crafters to help her keep up with orders.

word to own

SECOND TRY

Isabelle's flip-flop business taught her how to run a business. Her wine-charm business is the one that actually worked. The first one wasn't wasted — it was practice.

Funky Flip Flops failed. she didn't mention that part to feel bad — she mentioned it because it's true. — M.

Spot the pattern — it's your pattern too

Read those three stories again and a shape repeats:
none of them started with a perfect plan. All three started with something small, real, and a little bit accidental. A bee sting. A bow tie nobody made right. A pair of flip-flops that flopped.

none of them sound like geniuses in these stories. they sound like kids who just kept going. — M.

WHAT THEY SHARE	THE PATTERN
Mikaila — noticed a problem (bees) she didn't go looking for.	
Mo — used a skill someone in his family already had.	
Isabelle — let a setback teach her, then tried again.	
You — noodle-stall lady, idea #14, tie #7's charm. Same shape.	

Every chapter heading in that table is a chapter you've already lived in this book. That's not a coincidence — it's the actual order things happen in, for an Austin four-year-old, a Memphis nine-year-old, and you.

Mission: find one more, yourself

Three real stories are proof. A fourth one you find on your own is proof you can spot this pattern without the book pointing it out for you.

Mikaila was 4. I was 11. it still counts either way. — M.

MISSION 13

Find Your Own

- ☐ Look up **one more real kid entrepreneur** — ask an adult to help you search safely.
- ☐ Find their **real starting problem** — what small, ordinary thing kicked it off.
- ☐ Write one sentence on how their story rhymes with **yours**.

🕒 15 minutes · needs: Founder's Log + an adult to search with you

You now have proof, in real names and real numbers, that every chapter in this book maps onto how actual businesses actually start. Next: the very last chapter — and the honest truth about what this book was always supposed to be the start of.

NEXT *This book ends. Your Founder's Log doesn't have to. →*



this isn't
the end.
it's day zero.

This Book Was Day Zero

Day Zero isn't the big launch, the perfect logo, or the moment everything feels ready. It's the ordinary day you started anyway. You already had yours — somewhere around chapter 1, probably without noticing.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL

- ☐ Look back at everything you actually did, not just read.
- ☐ Turn this book's habits into habits that outlast this book.
- ☐ Find out where a founder goes after the last page.

Look what you actually did

Flip back through your Founder's Log for a second, because it's easy to forget how much of this book happened *outside* the book. You didn't just read about noticing problems — you found one and wrote it down. You didn't just read about asking questions — you asked a real person, out loud, and listened to their answer.

You ran a real brainstorm. You priced a real idea with real maths. You built something with your own hands in under an hour. You said the actual words of an actual ask to an actual stranger, and at least one of them said yes. You split real money into real piles. You told your real story, out loud, on purpose. You asked a tool for help and edited it back to sounding like you. You had a setback and wrote it down honestly instead of hiding it.

That's not a list of things you read. That's a list of things you did — and nobody can take a single one of them back, no matter what happens to the cable ties.

reading this page back made me realize I did way more than I remembered doing. — M.

The book ends. The log doesn't have to.

This is the last numbered page with a lesson on it — but the Founder's Log you started back at Mission 00 was never really about this book. It was always about building the habit of paying attention, on paper, on purpose. That habit doesn't have a final chapter.

WHAT OUTLASTS IT

KEEP THESE

The **habit** of writing every sale down, even tiny ones.

The **question** — “what did you notice today?” — asked of yourself.

The **willingness** to say the ask out loud, even when it feels awkward.

word to own

FOUNDER'S LOG

Not a school notebook. The ongoing record of everything you notice, try, sell, and learn — useful long after any single business ends.

three notebooks full by the time I finished writing my own notes for this book. — M.

Whatever you build next — cable ties, something completely different, or nothing for a while — the three things in that card travel with you for free. They cost nothing to keep and they're the actual reason chapter 9's habit mattered more than chapter 9's ties.

Where founders go after the last page

A book has to end somewhere, but a founder doesn't. If cable ties were your version of chapter 1's "you're already an entrepreneur," the honest next question is: *what's your next idea #14?* It might already be sitting in your log, underlined, waiting.

If you want company for whatever comes next, that's exactly what the Kids Business School community at **kibischool.com/join** is for — other young founders, real missions, and grown-ups who've read this same book with their own kids. **You don't have to keep founding alone just because the book is finished.**

And if you want a re-read someday — not because you forgot it, but because chapter 5's maths means something different once you've actually sold ten things instead of one — that's allowed too. This book doesn't expire.

word to own

FOUNDER

Someone who notices, tries, sells, and keeps a record of all three — not a job title you earn once, but a habit you keep choosing.

see you at
kibischool.com/join.
bring your log.
— M.

My last entry, for now

Every chapter in this book had a note from me in the margin. Here’s the last one, written the same honest way as all the others.

LAST ENTRY

FOUNDER’S LOG

Ties made: **well over fifty**. Worst day: a soaked velcro bag. Best day: the noodle-stall lady.

What I’d tell page-1 me: the ask is shorter than you think, and the math is friendlier than it looks.

Next idea, already underlined: **#21**. You’ll have to ask me about it at kibischool.com/join.

This page was never the finish line — it’s just where my notes in your copy of the book happen to stop. My own log keeps going past it. So does yours, whenever you’re ready to write the next page yourself.

thanks for
reading my
margins this
whole way
through. now go
write your own.
— M.

Mission: write your own Day Zero

One last mission, and it's the only one in this book with no deadline and no chapter after it to lead into.

MISSION 14

Day Zero, Again

- ☐ Write today's date in your Founder's Log, and call it **Day Zero** for whatever comes next.
- ☐ Write one sentence about **what you noticed** today — the habit this whole book was built on.
- ☐ Leave the next page blank. You'll know what goes on it when you get there.

🕒 5 minutes · needs: Founder's Log + whatever you noticed today

see you on the next page. it's yours now, not mine. — M.

A NOTE FOR PARENTS

However far they got — one mission or all fourteen — something real happened in the meantime: a problem noticed, a question asked, maybe a sale made. That's the whole point, and it already worked. When they're ready for more missions, more founders, and more real money, the Kids Business School community at kibischool.com/join is where this continues.

Part 1 — Self-Employed

Before choosing an idea, ask: **who could this help, what problem does it solve, can I make a tiny first version this week, and can I sell it safely with a parent's support?**

Some ideas are **self-employed** — you do the work and get paid for your time. Others can grow into something **scalable** — a product or system that keeps selling even when you're not there.

- 1 Dog walking** — Walk dogs for neighbours or family friends on a regular schedule.
- 2 Pet sitting** — Feed, play with, or check on pets while owners are away.
- 3 Plant watering service** — Water plants for travelling neighbours, paid per visit.
- 4 Garden help** — Weed, rake leaves, sweep paths, or do light gardening.
- 5 Car washing** — Wash family or neighbour cars by appointment.
- 6 Bike cleaning and tyre pump-up** — Clean bikes and top up tyres, done at the owner's house.
- 7 Toy cleaning service** — Clean and organise toys for younger children.
- 8 Room organising help** — Help younger kids sort shelves, toys, or desks.
- 9 Bookshelf organising** — Sort books by topic, colour, size, or reading level.
- 10 Homework buddy for younger kids** — Help with reading, spelling, or basic maths practice.
- 11 Language practice buddy** — Practise a language you speak well with a younger kid learning it.
- 12 Reading aloud service** — Read stories to younger children for a set time.
- 13 Beginner music practice buddy** — Sit with a younger kid while they practise piano, guitar, or rhythm.
- 14 Art lesson for younger kids** — Teach drawing, colouring, or simple crafts.
- 15 Chess practice buddy** — Play chess with beginners and explain the moves as you go.
- 16 Board game host** — Organise and run board game afternoons for younger kids.
- 17 Tabletop adventure host** — Run a short, beginner-friendly story game for a small group.
- 18 Birthday party helper** — Help with games, decorations, or clean-up.
- 19 Face painting** — Offer simple designs at small parties.
- 20 Balloon animal beginner service** — Make simple balloon dogs, swords, or flowers.
- 21 Handmade card maker** — Make personalised birthday or thank-you cards to order.
- 22 Gift wrapping service** — Wrap gifts neatly for birthdays or holidays.
- 23 Custom drawing commissions** — Draw pets, characters, or family portraits for a fee.
- 24 Bookmark making** — Make personalised bookmarks for readers.
- 25 Friendship bracelet making** — Make bracelets to order with names or chosen colours.

CONTINUED

- 26 Keychain making** — Make simple bead, clay, or cord keychains.
- 27 Clay charm making** — Make small charms for bags, pencils, or necklaces.
- 28 Custom notebook decorating** — Decorate notebooks for school or journaling.
- 29 Poster making** — Create handmade signs or posters for rooms or events.
- 30 Photo sorting help** — Help families sort phone photos into albums.
- 31 Simple video editing** — Edit short family videos or birthday clips.
- 32 Basic design help (Canva or similar)** — Make simple posters, invitations, or social posts for a neighbor or small business.
- 33 Presentation design help** — Help younger students make clean, simple school slides.
- 34 Typing help** — Type handwritten notes or stories into a document.
- 35 Menu or sign design for small local shops** — Help a local café or stall make a simple printed menu.
- 36 Marketplace listing helper** — Help an adult photograph and list used items for sale online.
- 37 Family tech helper** — Help older relatives with phone settings, photos, or video calls.
- 38 Lemonade or drink stand** — Sell drinks at a safe, family-approved spot.
- 39 Bake sale helper** — Bake cookies or muffins to sell, with adult supervision in the kitchen.
- 40 Snack box service** — Prepare simple snack boxes for friends, family events, or sports days.
- 41 Smoothie helper** — Make and sell smoothies at family gatherings or small events.
- 42 Picnic helper** — Help prepare simple picnic packs for families heading to the park.
- 43 Mini photographer** — Take photos at small family events or kids' parties.
- 44 Sports practice buddy** — Help younger kids practise football, basketball, or basic skills.
- 45 Errand helper for neighbours** — Carry small items, deliver notes, or run simple tasks.
- 46 Local tour helper for visiting families** — Show a visiting family the kid-friendly spots nearby, with a parent along.
- 47 Pool skimming rounds** — Simple weekly upkeep for neighbours with a backyard pool.
- 48 Recycling bin rolling (out and back)** — A tiny weekly task that busy or older neighbours are glad to pay for.
- 49 Holiday decoration setup and takedown** — Many families would rather pay than climb the ladder twice a year.
- 50 Pet poop-scooping rounds** — Unglamorous, but reliably in demand and easy to start this week.

Part 2 — Scalable

These start small too, but are built differently: a product made once, sold many times. **Still simple enough to run at 10-15.**

- 1 **Custom sticker brand** — Start with hand-drawn designs, then sell themed packs again and again.
- 2 **Printable planner pages** — Design once — habit trackers, homework planners — and sell the same file to many families.
- 3 **Digital colouring pages** — Draw once, sell as a download an unlimited number of times.
- 4 **Kids' journal templates** — Create a printable gratitude or adventure journal once, sell it on repeat.
- 5 **Study flashcard packs** — Make a set for a subject once; every student who needs it can buy the same pack.
- 6 **Language practice cards** — Make a word-card set for a language you know well, sold to many learners.
- 7 **Maths practice mini-books** — A worksheet pack made once, used by many younger kids.
- 8 **Drawing tutorial sheets** — A step-by-step guide drawn once, sold to anyone who wants to learn that drawing.
- 9 **Printable board games** — Design the game once; print-and-play copies can sell indefinitely.
- 10 **Beginner adventure scripts** — Write a short, ready-to-run story game once; many groups can play it.
- 11 **Craft kit business** — Package the same bracelet, clay, or origami kit and sell it over and over.
- 12 **Science experiment kits** — A safe, parent-approved kit assembled once, sold many times.
- 13 **Gardening starter kits** — Seeds, labels, and instructions bundled once into a repeatable product.
- 14 **Mini terrarium kits** — A simple, repeatable kit sold at markets or online.
- 15 **Bird feeder kits** — A build-your-own pack you can assemble in batches.
- 16 **Pet toy kits** — Safe, simple DIY toy kits made and sold in batches.
- 17 **Birthday party activity kits** — A ready-to-use games-and-crafts pack, the same kit sold to many families.
- 18 **Family game night kits** — A themed box of games and challenges, repeatable as a product line.
- 19 **Travel activity packs** — A screen-free activity pack made once, sold to many travelling families.
- 20 **Rainy day activity boxes** — A boredom-buster box, assembled in batches and sold repeatedly.
- 21 **Upcycled notebook brand** — Turn scrap paper or packaging into a repeatable handmade product line.
- 22 **Second-hand toy rescue shop** — Clean and resell quality used toys — the same simple process scales with more toys.
- 23 **Book swap club** — Build a simple membership system where the same idea works for hundreds of books.
- 24 **Local kids' marketplace organiser** — Run an event once, then repeat it monthly, taking a small table fee from other young sellers.
- 25 **Children's art brand** — Turn your own drawings into cards, prints, or stickers sold again and again.
- 26 **Pet portrait brand** — Develop one repeatable style, then sell it to any pet owner who finds you.

CONTINUED

- 27 Personalised keychain brand** — One simple template, infinite name swaps, made in batches.
- 28 Handmade jewellery brand** — Make a batch once, sell many — the cable-tie business in this book is exactly this shape.
- 29 Room decor mini-brand** — Posters, door signs, or wall art made in a repeatable batch.
- 30 Mini candle or soap brand** — With adult supervision for the heating/mixing steps, a recipe made once becomes a repeatable batch product.
- 31 Healthy snack brand** — A packaged snack mix made once, sold many times to many customers.
- 32 Cookie mix jars** — Jars of dry ingredients and instructions, assembled in a batch and sold repeatedly.
- 33 Kids' interview podcast** — Record an episode once; it can be heard by far more people than you'll ever meet in person.
- 34 YouTube channel teaching one skill** — Teach drawing, chess, or study tips once on video; it keeps earning views long after you post it.
- 35 Newsletter for kids** — Write it once a week; the same issue reaches every subscriber.
- 36 Local family guide** — Research kid-friendly spots once, then sell or share the same guide with many families.
- 37 Kids' challenge club** — Run a themed monthly challenge — the format repeats, only the challenge changes.
- 38 Beginner coding templates** — Build one simple website or game template that other kids can customise and reuse.
- 39 Digital invitation shop** — Design a set of invitations once, sell the same files to many party-throwers.
- 40 Mini online course** — Teach one clear skill on video once — bracelet-making, drawing, or a starter guide — and sell access to many learners.
- 41 AI-assisted idea or prompt cards** — Create a set of safe, kid-friendly prompt cards for homework or creativity.
- 42 Young makers brand** — Build one shared shop where several kids sell their own products under shared rules and one quality standard — the most scalable idea on this list, because it scales people, not just products.
- 43 Reusable beeswax food wraps** — A simple batch process: more beeswax and fabric makes more product.
- 44 Pressed-flower bookmarks or art** — Collect and press in batches, then assemble and sell many at once.
- 45 Plant cuttings and propagation sales** — One healthy plant can become dozens of sellable cuttings over time.
- 46 Resin keychains or coasters** — A mould and recipe reused to produce many identical, sellable units.
- 47 Custom team or school-spirit merchandise** — Design once per season, sell to an entire school's worth of customers.
- 48 A simple online shop for any idea above** — The same product, sold beyond just your street, to anyone who finds it.
- 49 Local trading cards or stickers about your town** — Design once, print many, sell to a whole community.
- 50 A simple subscription lawn-care route with helpers** — Bring a friend as helper when demand outgrows you — the moment a service turns scalable.

Simple Rule for Choosing

Choose an idea that's small enough to start this week, useful enough that someone might actually pay, safe enough to do with a parent's support, and interesting enough that you want to keep going.

The best idea is not the most impressive one. The best idea is the one you can actually test on a real person — this week.

And once it works: Part 1 pays for the hours you put in. Part 2 can grow past just you. Most founders, including Max, start in Part 1 and grow toward Part 2 once the first idea proves itself.

Glossary

Every “word to own” card from this book, alphabetical — **for fast lookup.**

AI

A computer tool that can answer questions, write text, and help you think faster. A fast assistant — never the founder.

Brainstorm

A timed session where you generate as many ideas as possible and judge none of them. Judging comes later — always later.

Brand

What people feel and remember about your business — built from your story, not just your logo.

Break-even

The point where your total earnings finally equal everything you spent getting started. Sell past it once, and every sale after is pure profit.

Budget

The amount of money you plan to spend before you start. Founders who write it down spend less by accident.

Customer

A person who pays real money for what you made. Not someone who says they would — someone who actually does.

Deadline

A specific date attached to a specific number. Vague goals get postponed; dated ones get done.

Demand

How many people want something, how often, and how badly. Big demand is business; small demand is a hobby.

Entrepreneur

A person who notices a problem and builds something people happily pay for.

Fact-check

Checking a claim against something real before you trust it or repeat it — especially true for anything a tool tells you about your own business.

Feasible

Something you can actually build with the time, skills, and materials you have right now — not the version you'll be able to build someday.

Feedback

What people tell you about your idea. Kind feedback feels nice; honest feedback makes the product better.

Founder

Someone who notices a problem, tries something, makes a sale, and keeps a record of all three — past tense, already true the first time you do it, not a title you wait to deserve.

Founder's Log

Not a school notebook. The ongoing record of everything you notice, try, sell, and learn — useful long after any single business ends.

Interview

A conversation where you ask about someone's real past, listen 80% of the time, and write down their exact words.

Iterate

To make something, learn from it, then make a slightly better version. Founders do this on purpose, over and over.

Glossary (continued)

Ledger

A running record of every sale and every cost, in order. The simplest, most boring habit that actually runs a business.

Make it right

Fixing a mistake for a customer without making them argue for it — a replacement, a refund, or an honest apology, offered before they have to ask.

Margin

Your profit shown as a percentage of price. A \$2.60 profit on a \$3 tie is an 87% margin — healthy.

MVP

Minimum Viable Product — the smallest version of your idea that a real customer can actually use.

Opportunity

A problem or wish that enough people share — before anyone has fixed it for them.

Ouch score

Your 1–5 rating of how much a problem hurts the person who has it. A 5 means they complain out loud.

Pitch

A short, honest description of what you make and why — said the same way you'd say it to a friend.

Problem

The gap between how things are and how somebody wants them to be. Where there's a gap, there's a business.

Profit

The money left after you pay back everything you spent.

Prototype

An early, rough version of your product built to test and learn from — not to sell yet, and not expected to be perfect.

Reinvest

Putting profit back into the business instead of your pocket — more materials, better tools, the next batch.

Revision

A small, specific change made in response to real feedback — one bolt tightened, not a whole new machine.

Setback

A problem that costs you time, money, or a sale — but doesn't end the business unless you decide it does.

Transaction

One complete exchange — money for product. Each one gets written down: what, how much, who, when.

Unfair advantage

Something you have that others can't easily copy: your location, skills, language, or people. It makes an idea yours.

Word of mouth

When a happy customer tells someone else about you, for free, because they actually mean it. The oldest and still the best advertising there is.

Join Kids Business School

This book is only the beginning.

Inside Kids Business School, kids and families keep going together. Share your business idea, see what other young founders are building, ask questions when you get stuck, and join real challenges — not homework, actual missions like the ones in this book.

Inside the community, you'll find:

- Practical courses for kids and families
- Business challenges you can run at home
- Real examples from other kids, not made-up case studies
- Support from parents, mentors, and other young builders
- A place to celebrate your first idea, first product, and first sale
- An option to become a mentoring family — support other kids, and earn money doing it

Founding is easier — and a lot more fun — when you're not doing it alone.



For parents, and for schools

FOR PARENTS

Kids Business School is a practical learning community for families who want their kids to build confidence, understand money, think creatively, and learn real skills by actually doing something. The goal isn't to push kids to make money fast. It's to help them notice problems, create real value, communicate clearly, test ideas, learn from mistakes, and get a little more independent along the way.

FOR SCHOOLS

Kids Business School is also available as a program for schools. If you're a parent, teacher, school owner, or administrator who'd like to bring this entrepreneurship program to your school, get in touch — we can provide a structured program that teaches business, money, creativity, teamwork, communication, and problem-solving through real projects, not textbooks.

Scan the QR code on the previous page, or visit kibischool.com/join, to learn more.

Questions? Write to us at info@kibischool.com