EIN: Free-or-Pay Evaluation Checklist

Action Checklist — ClearLegalTips.com (2026)

Verify the source before you pay a cent

[ ] Confirmed the site is irs.gov — the IRS's actual EIN application lives only there.

[ ] Confirmed the IRS never charges a fee for an EIN (any charge is a third party's service fee).

[ ] Checked whether the fee is just reselling the free IRS form (standalone 'EIN filing' sites = the same free application, resold).

[ ] Checked whether the fee bundles real LLC formation, not just form entry.

[ ] Watched for lookalike pages dressed to look official. Decide if paying is justified (the three honest cases)

[ ] Case A — the EIN comes bundled with LLC formation I'm already paying for.

[ ] Case B — I have no SSN or ITIN (international founder) and need SS-4 fax handling.

[ ] Case C — genuine entity confusion: the fee is really buying guidance I need.

[ ] Ran the math check: fee ÷ ten minutes — is it worth my real hourly rate?

[ ] If none apply: decided to GO FREE and apply at irs.gov myself. Prepare (so you finish in one sitting)

[ ] Formed the entity first — have the exact legal name as the state approved it.

[ ] Confirmed the responsible party (a controlling human) and their SSN or ITIN.

[ ] Gathered address, state of formation, start date, fiscal year-end, employee count, reason for applying.

[ ] Noted the bottleneck: one EIN per responsible party per day; session can't be saved. Apply (IRS.gov — free)

[ ] Opened the IRS EIN Assistant (weekdays, Eastern business hours, one session).

[ ] Completed the application in one sitting.

[ ] Received the EIN immediately on-screen.

[ ] Saved and printed the CP 575 confirmation letter before closing the tab. After

[ ] Stored the EIN letter safely (PDF + paper).

[ ] Used the EIN to open the business bank account.

[ ] Started putting the EIN — never the SSN — on W-9s, invoices, and vendor forms.

[ ] Registered the state tax accounts that apply (sales tax, employer withholding).

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Use this checklist before, during, and after applying. The core lesson: an EIN is free, fast, and permanent, issued only by the IRS at irs.gov — pay only when Case A, B, or C genuinely applies. This resource is informational only, not legal advice.