

IT Setup for Startups

Why good IT setup matters for startups

- When starting a new business, start-ups need to use their time and resources wisely.
- Normally, founders will focus on product development, customers, and cash flow than on the information technology (IT) aspect of their business.
- If a start-up has a bad IT setup from the get-go, it will likely have data loss, wasted time, and frustrated team members as a result.
- Poor technology setup at the beginning of your business can also lead to security and compliance problems down the road.
- An effective IT setup will allow your start-up to be simple, secure, and flexible enough to grow with your business.
- Start-ups need to have an email system, a file sharing system, and a secure way to log in and access their systems.
- Having access to tools such as Microsoft® 365 make it easier for your company to enable your team members to work from anywhere in the world.
- When you choose the right technology now, you will save money and/or reduce your future risk.
- With a solid IT setup, your team will be able to dedicate more resources toward growing your business.
- This guide provides information on the most important IT tools and common pitfalls to avoid in 2026 when starting a new company.

Common technology challenges for startups

IT concerns faced by Startups include:

- **Using personal email and files for business:** difficult to manage, scattered files increase risk of a security breach, difficult to transition when employees leave.
- **Central file storage:** causes confusion about which version of a document is up to date, lost documents and slow collaborative efforts.
- **Weak security:** allows for easy takeover of an employee's account.
- **No backup or any type of test plan for recovery:** if a disaster strikes, so does loss of data.
- **Rapid growth of teams without an adequate onboarding plan:** creates chaos in providing access to data and opens up gaps in security.
- **Choosing low-cost tools that will not grow with your business:** ultimately results in costly, time consuming migrations when you outgrow a tool.

These issues are frequent among companies because the priority of the founders is to develop the company's product or service and sell it. If planning is done before launching the business, then most of these issues would be resolved before they exist.

Recommended IT setup for small teams

A UK startup with a staff of 5-15 people will benefit from:

- **Email & Productivity:** Microsoft 365 Business Basic or Standard, either £5 or £12 per user per month; email, Teams, OneDrive, and basic security.
- **File Storage:** OneDrive/SharePoint or Google Drive; contains all files in a central location, searchable, and supports versioning of files.
- **Communication:** Microsoft Teams, Slack; chat, video conferencing, file sharing.
- **Password Manager:** Bitwarden Teams (free for up to 5 users or a low-cost subscription for larger teams).
- **Hardware:** Business laptops such as Dell Latitude, HP EliteBook, and Lenovo ThinkPad with Windows 11 Pro Operating System.
- **Security:** MFA enabled on all devices and network; automatic updates; Microsoft Defender anti-virus.
- **Backup:** Backup OneDrive folders, plus additional weekly backups to either an external hard drive or a Third-Party Cloud backup.

With this configuration, the startup has a secure, scalable, and remote/hybrid work environment for its employees.

Security essentials from day one

Security shouldn't just be added later on though.

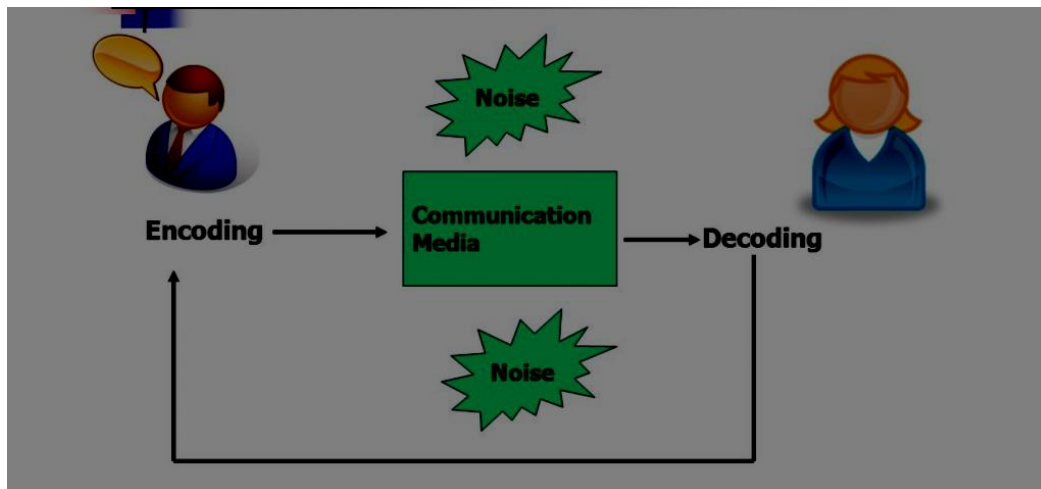
- Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) should be enabled on all accounts as this stops most account takeovers
- Using strong passwords: Passphrases of 14 or more characters combined with a password manager
- Encrypting your devices: You should be using Bitlocker (Windows) or Filevault (Mac) on all laptops
- Endpoint Protection is offered by Microsoft Defender for most startups
- You should be using internal links to share files, that's set to expire instead of sharing them with "anyone with the link" publicly
- Backup strategy: Daily cloud backup plus weekly offline backup (3-2-1 rule).

Quick win: Enable MFA for your entire Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace in 15-30 minutes today.

Communication and collaboration tools

- **Email:** Business domain (preferred), Do not use Gmail (personal) for business.
- **Chat/Meeting:** Use either MS Teams or Slack, choose ONE as your primary and stick with it.

- **Collaboration:** Work together on document collaboration using either OneDrive or Google Docs, working together in real-time.
- **Project Management:** Keep Project Management simple.

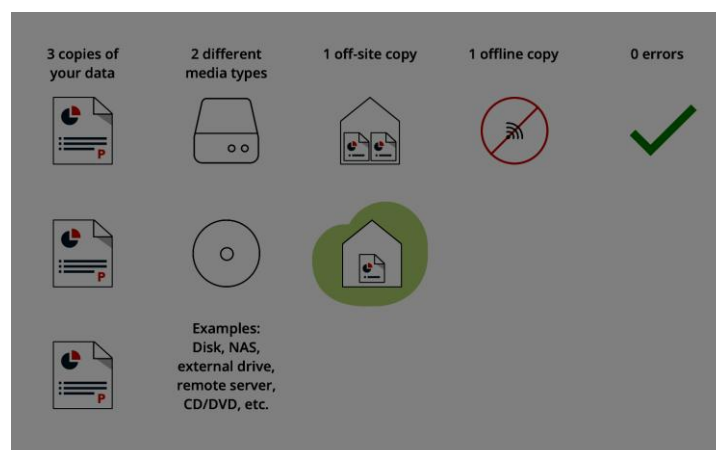


File storage and document management

- Use OneDrive, SharePoint or Google Drive as the sole source of truth.
- Ensure you have a strong, clear file structure in place (Example: Clients, Finance, HR, Marketing).
- Use version history when necessary to prevent unnecessary confusion (Example: “FINAL-FINAL V2”).
- Use Internal Only as your sharing default.

Backup and data protection

- Use the 3-2-1 rule for back-ups, 3 copies, 2 different mediums, 1 copy off-site.
- Make sure to enable OneDrive’s “Known Folder Move” to automatically back-up Desktop & Documents.
- Test the restore process on a quarterly basis.
- Make sure you have a documented process of what data you are backing up and how long you are keeping them to be compliant with GDPR.



Access control and user management

- Only create accounts when needed
- Remove access as soon as someone leaves the organisation
- Use groups when giving permissions (for example, the "Marketing Team" group)
- Review access every 3 months

IT support considerations

- Attempt to use self-service (for example Microsoft 365 help) plus 1 trusted provider for difficult issues
- Once the business has over 10 employees, consider a managed support solution (£30-60/user per month)
- Keep a secure password manager with the credentials and process for key logins

Startup IT setup checklist

Core Management

- Email Setup (Gmail or Microsoft 365)
- Cloud-Based Storage Manage Your Files (SharePoint/OneDrive or Google Drive)
- Collaboration Tool (Microsoft Teams or Slack)
- Password Manager for the Team
- Enable Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for all accounts

Security

- Encrypt Devices
- Enable Automatic Updates
- Enable Antivirus/Endpoint Protection
- Backup Data Using the 3-2-1 Backup Strategy
- Implement Basic Access Control Measures (No Shared Admin Accounts)

Onboarding

- Create New User Accounts
- Send Welcome Email (Include Login Information and Getting Started Resources)
- Provide Training for Tools & Security

FAQs

1. What IT systems does a startup need?

Startups require basic levels of Email, Cloud Storage, Collaboration Software, Password Manager and Security Systems; as they grow add either CRM or Accounting Software to that list.

2. Do Starters use Cloud Software?

Definitely! It has Scalability & Accessibility from Anywhere, plus, it is generally considered to be more secure than on-Premise for Smaller Teams.

3. How can Startups keep their Data center Costs down?

The easiest way is to start off using Microsoft's 365 Business Basic (\$5-\$10 user per month) or Google's Workspace Starter (\$5-\$10 per month). Add tools only when you actually require them.

4. When should Startups hire outside IT support?

Reach out for help at 8-10 employees or when you are spending more than a few hours per week on an IT issue. Managed IT Services (\$30-\$60 user per month), are less costly than resolving issues one by one.

5. How can Startups protect their Data?

Use MFA at all times. Have your devices encrypted, and use Centralised Cloud Storage with correct permissions for Sharing, as well as Regularly Scheduled Backups of your Data.

6. Do you need a Server?

Not generally speaking, because cloud service provides Businesses with a solution for using an on-premise server.

7. Do you purchase the absolute cheapest laptops?

No, purchase a Business Model manufactured by either Dell, HP or Lenovo because they will outlive other Brands and provide a higher absolute degree of support.

8. How does my organisation Onboard new employees?

Create a list of items to complete with New Hires i.e. Create an account, set up e-mail, create the right Level of Access, provide Password Manager, and Give an Overview of Security.

About This Guide

This Guide has been put together by **Computer Support Centre** to assist Start-Up Businesses in understanding how to build a reliable and secure IT environment from day one of their business journey as well as to show Start-Up companies that while product development and getting to know customers are generally the first priorities for Start-Up businesses, what often gets overlooked is the planning of technology.

This Guide will outline the essential IT systems that Start-Ups will require in 2026 in order to be successful email platforms, file storage, communication tools, security controls and backup plans. This Guide will provide practical tips for Small Teams in creating a simple, scalable, and secure Technology Environment which supports remote working and facilitates Future Growth.

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Conclusion

A successful IT Environment is a key foundation to a successful Start-Up Business. If your Technology Systems are well organised, secure and managed easily, your Team will have more opportunity to grow your Business versus constantly trying to figure out how to fix Technical Issues.

Start-Ups should have a reliable Tool Set and implement Security Measures such as Multi-factor Authentication, ensure that they have Backed-Up Data at regular intervals, and have strict Procedures to manage User Access so they can mitigate the risks of Loss of Data, Data Breaches, and Disruption to their Operations.

Making the right Technology Decisions early will save Time, reduce Cost, and create a Technology Environment which will grow with your Business.