

THE AMERICAN DREAM PROJECT

Field Guides

Start your own business — six practical playbooks

Start a Lawn Care Business

Low startup, steady demand, repeat customers.

What you need

A reliable mower, a trimmer, gas, and a way to haul them. Begin with a few yards close to home to keep travel low and margins high. Your real edge isn't equipment — it's showing up exactly when you said you would.

First customers & price

Knock on neighbors' doors, post in local groups, and leave simple flyers. Price per visit by yard size, and offer weekly or biweekly plans that build steady income. Five regular yards is already a real business.

Recurring revenue: Income that repeats, like weekly service.

YOUR NOTES & NEXT STEP

Start a Cleaning Business

Almost no startup cost, always in demand.

What you need

Basic supplies, dependable habits, and trustworthiness — people are letting you into their homes and offices. Decide whether you'll focus on homes or offices; offices often pay on a steadier schedule.

First customers & price

Ask people you already know first — referrals are everything in cleaning. Quote after seeing the space, and price per job or per hour. Consistency and care turn one client into a standing weekly route.

Trust: The whole foundation of in-home work.

YOUR NOTES & NEXT STEP

Start a Baking Business

Turn a kitchen skill into first dollars.

What you need

Your recipes, ingredients, and simple packaging. Check your state's cottage-food rules — many let you legally sell certain home-baked goods within limits. Start with one signature item done perfectly, not a giant menu.

First customers & price

Sell to friends, at local markets, and by order for birthdays and events. Price to cover ingredients, your time, and a margin — resist the urge to undercharge. Good photos and word of mouth do the rest.

Cottage food laws: State rules for selling home-baked goods.

YOUR NOTES & NEXT STEP

Start a Tutoring Business

Teach what you know; help someone grow.

What you need

A subject you know well, real patience, and a quiet space (in person or by video). Decide your subjects and the ages you serve. Parents and adult learners pay for results and for someone reliable.

First customers & price

Tell teachers, parents, and local groups you're available. Price per hour by subject and level, and offer a discount for a package of sessions. Visible progress is what earns you referrals.

Package: Selling several sessions together.

YOUR NOTES & NEXT STEP

Start a Handyman Business

Fix-it skills are always needed.

What you need

Core tools, a vehicle, and honest competence. Know your limits — some electrical, plumbing, or structural work requires a licensed trade, so check what your area allows before you take it on.

First customers & price

Neighbors, local groups, and repeat callers build this business. Charge by the job or the hour, and always quote before you start. Clean work, fair quotes, and showing up bring the callbacks that sustain you.

Scope: Exactly what a job includes and excludes.

YOUR NOTES & NEXT STEP

Start a Reselling Business

Buy smart, sell for more, learn fast.

What you need

An eye for value and a phone with a camera. Source from clearances, thrift stores, and yard sales; sell on local and online marketplaces. Start in one category you genuinely understand so you can spot a deal.

First customers & price

Clear photos and honest descriptions do most of the selling. Price for a margin after fees and shipping, not just above what you paid. Reinvest your early profits to grow inventory steadily.

Margin: Sale price minus what you paid and the fees.

YOUR NOTES & NEXT STEP
