Business is the practice of making one's living or making money by producing or buying and selling products (such as goods and services). It is also "any activity or enterprise entered into for profit."  
A business entity is not necessarily separate from the owner and the creditors can hold the owner liable for debts the business has acquired. The taxation system for businesses is different from that of the corporates. A business structure does not allow for corporate tax rates. The proprietor is personally taxed on all income from the business.  
A distinction is made in law and public offices between the term business and a company such as a corporation or cooperative. Colloquially, the terms are used interchangeably.  
Corporations are distinct from with sole proprietors and partnerships. They are separate legal entities and provide limited liability for their owners and members. They are subject to corporate tax rates. They are also more complicated and expensive to set up, but offer more protection and benefits for the owners and members.  
Forms  
Forms of business ownership vary by jurisdiction, but several common entities exist:  
A sole proprietorship, also known as a sole trader, is owned by one person and operates for their benefit. The owner operates the business alone and may hire employees. A sole proprietor has unlimited liability for all obligations incurred by the business, whether from operating costs or judgments against the business. All assets of the business belong to a sole proprietor, including, for example, a computer infrastructure, any inventory, manufacturing equipment, or retail fixtures, as well as any real property owned by the sole proprietor.  
A partnership is a business owned by two or more people. In most forms of partnerships, each partner has unlimited liability for the debts incurred by the business. The three most prevalent types of for-profit partnerships are general partnerships, limited partnerships, and limited liability partnerships.  
Corporations' owners have limited liability, and the business has a legal personality separate from its owners. Corporations can be either government-owned or privately owned, and they can organize either for profit or as nonprofit organizations. A privately owned, for-profit corporation is owned by its shareholders, who elect a board of directors to direct the corporation and hire its managerial staff. A privately owned, for-profit corporation can be either privately held by a small group of individuals, or publicly held, with publicly traded shares listed on a stock exchange.  
A cooperative or co-op is a limited-liability business that can organize as for-profit or not-for-profit. A cooperative differs from a corporation in that it has members, not shareholders, and they share decision-making authority. Cooperatives are typically classified as either consumer cooperatives or worker cooperatives. Cooperatives are fundamental to the ideology of economic democracy.  
Limited liability companies (LLC) and other specific types of business organization protect their owners or shareholders from business failure by doing business under a separate legal entity with certain legal protections. In contrast, a general partnership or persons working on their own are usually not as protected.

A franchise is a system in which entrepreneurs purchase the rights to open and run a business from a larger corporation. Franchising in the United States is widespread and is a major economic powerhouse. One out of twelve retail businesses in the United States are franchised and 8 million people are employed in a franchised business.  
Company limited by guarantee is commonly used where companies are formed for non-commercial purposes, such as clubs or charities. The members guarantee the payment of certain (usually nominal) amounts if the company goes into insolvent liquidation, but otherwise, they have no economic rights in relation to the company. This type of company is common in England. A company limited by guarantee may be with or without having share capital.  
A company limited by shares is the most common form of the company used for business ventures. Specifically, a limited company is a "company in which the liability of each shareholder is limited to the amount individually invested" with corporations being "the most common example of a limited company." This type of company is common in England and many English-speaking countries. A company limited by shares may be a  
publicly traded company or a  
privately held company.  
A company limited by guarantee with a share capital is a hybrid entity, usually used where the company is formed for non-commercial purposes, but the activities of the company are partly funded by investors who expect a return. This type of company may no longer be formed in the UK, although provisions still exist in law for them to exist.  
An unlimited company with or without a share capital is a hybrid entity, a company where the liability of members or shareholders for the debts (if any) of the company are not limited. In this case, the doctrine of a veil of incorporation does not apply.  
Less common types of companies are:  
Most corporations by letters patent are corporations sole and not companies as the term is commonly understood today.  
Charter corporations were the only types of companies before the passing of modern companies legislation. Now they are relatively rare, except for very old companies that still survive (of which there are still many, particularly many British banks), or modern societies that fulfill a quasi-regulatory function (for example, the Bank of England is a corporation formed by a modern charter).  
Statutory companies are certain companies that have been formed by a private statute passed in the relevant jurisdiction, and are relatively rare today.  
"Ltd after the company's name signifies limited company, and PLC (public limited company) indicates that its shares are widely held."  
In legal parlance, the owners of a company are normally referred to as the "members". In a company limited or unlimited by shares (formed or incorporated with a share capital), this will be the shareholders. In a company limited by guarantee, this will be the guarantors. Some offshore jurisdictions have created special forms of offshore company in a bid to attract business for their jurisdictions. Examples include "segregated portfolio companies" and restricted purpose companies.