The IIF import format is very unforgiving with regard to formatting, spelling, syntax errors, and various circumstances. Before working with IIF files, please familiarize yourself with this entire document. Import IIF files have a unique set of attributes when compared to other import methods.

This document and its associated files are provided as-is.

INTUIT INTERCHANGE FORMAT (IIF)
Updated 9/30/2008

This IIF Import Kit is composed of the following three components:

- **IIF Import Manual (The document you are reading now)**
  This IIF Import Manual is a primer on the IIF format that outlines IIF syntax and formatting requirements

- **IIF Header Help**
  The IIF Header Definitions [Folder] contains specific help with IIF Reserved Words and Headers

- **IIF Example Files**
  The IIF Example Files [Folder] contains version specific examples of a IIF transactions as well as a complete version specific IIF file containing several lists and transactions

QuickBooks & Importing
- **For import file assistance**, you can read discussions and post messages relating to IIF file on the Intuit QuickBooks Community site in the Importing and Exporting Data forum.
- **If you want to create a blank data file with lists but no balances**, importing IIF files may not be the most efficient method. Refer to Create a new company file for a new business year for an alternate method.

There are three import methods for use with QuickBooks. (**This document ONLY COVERS IIF** transaction importing):

1. Intuit Interchange Format (IIF) **imports transactions and lists. IIF does NOT import list balances, only list data.** IIF is a tab delimited import file, often created or edited in a spreadsheet application (such as Microsoft Excel).

2. The Software Developer's Kit (SDK) imports transactions and lists and dynamically interacts with the data file. This method is best for programmers, developers, and those familiar with XML. Best for large volume importing, such as applications being authored, the SDK has greater capability and flexibility. Refer to http://developer.intuit.com for more information about the SDK. ONLY QuickBooks 2002 and later support this import method.

3. Microsoft Excel and Comma Separated values (CSV) files. Excel/CSV import lists only, not transactions. Importing from Excel/CSV offers mapping of fields between QuickBooks and the import file For more information refer to [About importing an Excel or .csv file into QuickBooks](). QuickBooks 2003 and later support the .CSV import method. *Do not confuse "Import from Excel" (CSV file import) with IIF import.* Although IIF import files are often created using a spreadsheet application like Excel, *Import from IIF* and *Import from Excel* are distinctly different utilities.

About the sample files in the IIF Import Kit:

- There are separate subfolders of sample files for each year version of QuickBooks. The product year is of importance to the IIF formatting; QuickBooks Enterprise and Pro/Premier for a given year all use the same IIF file format.
- Each version subfolder contains a complete set of transactions in Excel (.XLS) format. This complete import IIF file contains one of each type of IIF transaction. The example .XLS file will be useful in viewing the context of a complete, appropriately formatted IIF file that contains multiple types of data.
- Each subfolder also contains an IIF file containing lists and account names that are used by the transactions in the examples. Import the list definition file FIRST before importing any specific IIF examples.
- **Do NOT import the examples into your actual company file.** Create a new, empty company file with which to practice and test importing the sample files.

Tips, Best Practices, and Notes

Please familiarize yourself with this entire list because many of these concepts are relevant to importing all types of IIF files.

- There is **no preventative mechanism** to stop the same IIF from being imported multiple times. It is possible to repeatedly import the *same* IIF file, resulting in multiple entries of the same transactions.

- Create a backup of your data file BEFORE importing. There is no Undo on the import function.

- Be sure that all the list elements pertaining to your transactions (accounts, customers, vendors, etc.) are already entered in your company file OR are being imported at the TOP of your IIF transaction import file BEFORE you attempt to import the transactions. If you do not do so, default list element types will be taken based on the transaction they were imported with.

- When importing list items using IIF, it may be helpful to enter a complete list item in QuickBooks with ALL the fields you intend to use. Then you can export that list (**File > Utilities > Export > Lists to IIF**) to use as a template for entering the remaining list data you want to import.

- Enter at least one of every transaction type manually that you intend to import before attempting to import the rest of your transactions. While tedious, doing this will ensure that ALL required preferences are enabled and all schema customization specific to your data file is established BEFORE importing by IIF. **The IIF format is not forgiving with syntax errors.** Not ALL fields appearing in the example IIF are necessarily required. The IIF Header Help files tell you which fields are required, among other things. Trial and error experimentation may be needed to determine exactly what you need to enter to import a particular transaction type successfully.

- Support for use IIF files created by third party programs is provided by the author of the third party software.

- The following transaction types CANNOT be imported using IIF files:
    - Inventory Adjustment
    - Pay Check
    - Payroll Liability Payment
    - Year-To-Date Adjustment
    - Payroll Liability Adjustment
    - Sales Order
    - Assembly Item Builds
    - Sales Tax Liability Payment

    These transaction types must be entered from the regular QuickBooks user interface. This stems from lack of ability to establish links between transactions as they import by way of IIF.

- The most common cause of Online Banking IIF import failure is use of the transaction type "BILLPMT". Bill payments are not an importable transaction type. CHECK must be used instead. View the Bill Payment sample IIF file for clarification.

- If an IIF transaction import appears to have been successful but the information does not appear in the QuickBooks data file, use the **Find** feature of QuickBooks (**Edit > Find**, click the **Advanced** tab). Run a find for the Entered/Modified filter, from TODAY to TODAY (using dates). This *find* will show if a transaction was committed today (regardless of transaction date). Double-click to zoom in and examine the transaction.

- When errors occur while importing (line XYZ) the *line* number corresponds to *row* number if the IIF is viewed in a spreadsheet program. The error line cited in the error will most likely be the last line where an "ENDTRANS" is trying to commit a transaction that is specified on the preceding lines.

- Sales Tax transactions must make use of "VTYPE" (Vendor Type) references in their import file. *See an import example IIF file*. The "VTYPE" line is used to notify QuickBooks that a vendor is a "Sales Tax Vendor." Failure to do so on a [taxed] (Cash Sale, Sales Receipt, or Credit Memo) will cause errors when importing.

- For transactions, IIF essentially imports only debits or credits. Some item functionality does not import the item-usage driven side. This causes Sales Tax liability from import invoices to appear ONLY on the balance sheet. Since the PAY SALES TAX LIABILITY function is driven by sales item use on sales forms AND Sales Tax Liability Payments (not merely Debits and Credits only). Due to this import limitation, it is best to enter transactions affecting sales tax through the user interface.

- When the Sales Tax Preference=ON, importing Invoices, Sales Receipt, and Credit Memos must include a sales tax code (e.g., NON) **even on non-taxable sales forms**.

- If a certain transaction will not import without errors, it is often helpful to enter at least one of a same-kind transaction MANUALLY through the QuickBooks user interface. This often results in a more user-friendly and explanatory error that can point to what is missing from your import file. This is particularly true if a QuickBooks preference or account/name type is at fault.

- If a specific item, transaction, or field cannot be entered through the user interface, then it can not be imported by IIF.

- It is not possible to establish a history (link) between Invoice & Invoice Payment, Bill & Bill Payment, or Estimate & Invoice when using the IIF format to import the data.

- Bill Payment checks are imported as a regular check (write check) offset against Account's Payable. Because there is no ability to dynamically link Bills & Bill Payments, there is no net loss of functionality.

- Import your IIF file into a test QuickBooks company file to ensure that your import is producing the desired result BEFORE you import into an actual, live company data file.

- Checks imported by IIF will be assigned the NEXT check number, **regardless of check number** specified in the import IIF file.

- Some transaction types (Transfer, Deposit) do not hold a "from" name (vendor, customer) on each line.

- Some accounts are created automatically by QuickBooks at the time of creating a blank company file or when certain preferences are enabled. These mandatory accounts (Sales Tax Payable, for example) cannot be deleted. Another example: enabling Estimates will cause a non-posting account "Estimates" to appear at the bottom of the Chart of Accounts.

- QuickBooks cannot import IIF files just by double-clicking the IIF icon or using a Windows context menu. IIF file import can only be initiated through the QuickBooks user interface (**File > Utilities > Import**). Some system administrators have found it convenient to associate the IIF extension with their IIF editor (usually a spreadsheet program). This way, double clicking the file quickly opens it in the editor of your choice.

- **Specific to Customer: Job References when importing:**

  Take Away Summary: Be consistent in spelling names as FIRST LAST or LAST, FIRST. You can only use one format per customer.

  When reading this, please be aware that the QuickBooks **preference** for how to represent first, last names applies to the **employee list** only.

  This functionality occurs as far back ask version 2000. Earlier products were not tested. In the Customer:Job list, QuickBooks recognizes that a customer name spelled "FIRST LAST" and "LAST, FIRST" are the same however you use that customer with imported transactions UNLESS you spell the name EXACTLY as it is already represented in the Customer: Job list. For example there is **already a customer named** "LAST, FIRST" and a customer named "FIRST LAST" is being imported. If you try to add this new customer, a familiar message appears "Name is already in use on the Customer: Job list. Append a letter or number to this name to differentiate it from the existing name". You may notice the *exact name* isn't in the list as shown in the IIF file, however, QuickBooks sees the two spellings as the same.

  Implications are twofold:
  - You cannot represent the same name as two separate formats. Some people may want to use "LAST, FIRST" for business transactions and "FIRST LAST" for personal transactions. This is not possible, because QuickBooks recognizes the names as being the same and prompts for merge. This is confusing to some users because the *exact* name isn't in the list when viewed. It shows as "LAST, FIRST," which they take to be a different name.

- Importing transactions is not possible unless customer name in the import transaction is the **exact** FIRST LAST or LAST, FIRST spelling already defined in the Customer:Job list. Otherwise, import fails with "Can't change the type of a name or add a duplicate name". At best, ***this sends you down a path of looking at the vendor, employee, and other*** *names lists for an existing name spelled identical, which will never be found;* ***the issue is in the customer: job list itself.***

Sample screen shot:
- The cause of the error is the same (customer name already exists), but the text of the error is different when importing an IIF file vs. when entering through the user interface. Refer to the Error Screenshot in this Import Kit to see an example of how the same error appears with a different message in both situations