

Title:

How To Check If Your Home Business Is Legal?

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Summary:

If you're going to start running a business from your home, there are various laws you need to know about. If you don't check things out before you start, then you risk having your business shut down by the authorities.

Zoning Laws.

The chances are that the different parts of your town or city have been split into different 'zones'. Each one of these zones has a purpose: business or residential. Since you almost certainly live in a residential area, zoning laws restrict...

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Zoning Laws.

The chances are that the different parts of your town or city have been split into different 'zones'. Each one of these zones has a purpose: business or residential. Since you almost certainly live in a residential area, zoning laws restrict what you can do there in terms of business.

If you think about it, there are good reasons for this. What would it be like if someone could just decide to buy up a whole load of houses and turn the area into a shopping mall, without getting anyone's permission? What if your neighbours could just turn around one day and start using their house as a shop? I doubt that you'd like that. The laws are there to protect your neighbourhood, and to stop business from interfering with people's home lives.

You need to phone whatever local governmental body there is in your area, and

ask them about the zoning laws in your area. If they're not helpful, it could be worth a visit to a lawyer. You'll find that laws vary massively - here are some of the things you might come across.

The Strict Zoning Policy.

Many areas still operate a strict 'no-business' policy in residential areas, and will come after you if you start a business without their permission. You'll need to put in a formal application, and there could be a public hearing, giving other residents the chance to object. Time to start being nicer to your neighbours!

You should note that just because there are other home businesses in your area, it doesn't mean that you'll find it any easier to get permission. The rules may have been tightened up since those businesses were started. Still, it's worth talking to other home businesses in the area, if you can, to see if you can get any advice.

Percentage Policies.

Another common way of handling things is to allow you to use only a percentage of your house for business, to avoid residential properties becoming wholly commercial. You might be told, for example, that only 20% of the house can be used for business purposes. This can be restrictive if you have a small house, or if you need to store things. Worse, areas with a policy like this are usually completely unwilling to vary it for you.

Restrictions by Industry.

It's worth checking if there's a special exception in the zoning laws for what you plan to do. Artists, for example, are often excluded from the laws (where are they supposed to work - the art office?), as well as people who give home tuition, like music teachers. Doctors and dentists are another common exception.

Signs and Traffic Rules.

You might find that the laws have special restrictions on signs and traffic. You could be restricted from putting anything on the front of your house that could be considered 'advertising', meaning that you can't even have a sign with the name of your business. If you plan to have lorries or trucks bringing deliveries to your house, then that can pose a big problem, especially if someone complains about them, or there are lots of children in the area.

Visitor Rules.

Another contentious issue is visitors. For some reason, people get upset if lots of visitors keep coming to your house - they like their street to be quiet, not constantly busy. Some laws allow only a set number of visitors to your home business per day, or restrict the number of visitors that you can have at one time.

Breaking the Law.

A footnote to all this is that millions of businesses are operated illegally out of people's homes, in violation of the relevant laws. They keep their business secret, because they know that admitting what they're doing would probably get it closed down. This approach obviously isn't recommended, though - you should always try your best to do things legally, and consider moving house if no-one seems to want your business in the area.