

Importing Customers, Suppliers and Opening Balances into QuickBooks Online from Excel

Step by Step Guide — Prepare, Import and Tie Out

Clean Lists First — Import in the Right Order — Prove the Numbers

QuickBooks Authorised Dealer and Pro Advisor · For UAE businesses

IMPORTANT — CHECK YOUR EDITION FIRST

The Intuit help pages used for this guide cover QuickBooks Online editions such as US, UK, Canada, Australia and South Africa. Screens, field names and limits can differ in your UAE set-up, so confirm what your company file shows before you import. This guide is general information, not accounting or tax advice. Your accountant should approve the opening balance method.

Before You Start — What You Need in Place

Gather these items before you open the Import screen. Perfonec can review them with you before any data is loaded.

Item	Required?	Notes
QuickBooks Online company set up	Required	Company country, currency and tax settings finished before any import
A user who can import data	Required	Import is under Settings, then Import data, as Intuit's help describes
One clear start date	Required	Start of a financial year or a VAT period works best
Old-system reports at that date	Required	Trial balance, customer ageing, supplier ageing and bank balances
Customer and supplier lists in Excel	Required	One header row, full name in one column, unique names
Chart of accounts agreed	Required	Set up or import accounts before contacts
Accountant sign-off on the method	Recommended	Opening balance approach and clearing Opening Balance Equity
A test file of about 5 rows	Recommended	Re-importing to correct values has limits

The Complete Import — Step by Step

Follow the seven steps below in order. Intuit's own help recommends importing lists first (chart of accounts, then customers, vendors and products and services) and transactions after that.

Step 1 — Choose the Start Date and Collect Reports

Pick one cut-off date for the whole move. Every opening balance must be as of that date, so it should match a clean period end in your old system.

- Choose the date, such as the first day of the financial year or a VAT period
- Print or export the trial balance as of the day before the start date
- Export customer and supplier ageing reports for the same date
- Note every bank and credit card balance on that date

Step 2 — Clean the Customer and Supplier Lists

Prepare one Excel file for customers and one for suppliers. Intuit's help sets strict rules, and fixing mistakes after an import is slow.

- Add one header row, because QuickBooks uses it for mapping and does not import it
- Put the full name in one column, with no colon, quotation mark, tab or new line
- Make every name unique across customers, vendors and employees
- Keep one email address per contact, and check phone and company lengths
- Keep each file within 1,000 rows and 2 MB, and split larger lists
- Save as Excel, CSV or use Google Sheets, with the data on the first sheet

Name	Email	Phone	Country	Opening balance	As of date
Al Noor Trading LLC	accounts@alnoor.example	04 000 0001	UAE	12,500.00	31 Dec 2026
Gulf Fresh Foods	finance@gulffresh.example	04 000 0002	UAE	0.00	31 Dec 2026
Harbour Marine Services	ap@harbour.example	04 000 0003	UAE	30,200.00	31 Dec 2026

A made-up sample sheet. Names, emails and amounts are invented. Use one date format throughout.

Step 3 — Set Up the Chart of Accounts

Accounts come before contacts in Intuit's recommended import order. Decide which accounts you need, then create or import them.

- Compare your old chart of accounts with the QuickBooks Online default list
- Create missing accounts and merge duplicates before importing anything else
- Agree with your accountant which accounts will hold receivables, payables and VAT

Step 4 — Import Customers, Then Suppliers

Run the customer import first, then the supplier import. Start with a small test file so any mapping error shows up on five rows, not five hundred.

- Select Settings, then Import data, then Customers or Vendors (wording varies by edition)
- Upload the file and map each column to the matching QuickBooks field
- Review the preview, fix any rows flagged as errors, then import
- Repeat for suppliers, then open a few records to check names, addresses and tax numbers

Step 5 — Enter the Opening Balances

Opening balances set the starting point of your books. Choose one method for each type of balance, and never load the same balance twice.

- Bank and credit card accounts: enter the real-life balance and the as-of date when you create the account
- Customers and suppliers: use the optional opening balance fields in the import, or enter each unpaid invoice and bill with its original date
- Everything else: usually a journal entry from the closing trial balance as of the start date
- Intuit says QuickBooks tracks opening balances in an Opening Balance Equity account, so plan to clear it with your accountant

Step 6 — Tie Out to the Old System

Prove that the numbers match before posting a single new transaction. Any difference should be traced and explained.

- Compare total receivables and total payables with the old ageing reports
- Compare each bank balance with the bank statement on the start date
- Run the trial balance as of the start date and compare every account
- Review the Opening Balance Equity account and agree how it will be cleared

Check (made-up figures)	Old system (AED)	QuickBooks Online (AED)	Result
Total receivables	85,000.00	85,000.00	Match
Total payables	42,000.00	42,000.00	Match
Main bank account	120,350.00	120,350.00	Match
Trial balance debits and credits	Equal	Equal	Match

Step 7 — Review, Correct and Start Posting

Once the tie-out is signed off, lock in the start and begin entering new transactions. Keep the original Excel files and reports as your audit trail.

- Spot-check five customers and five suppliers against the source files
- Correct any contact errors one at a time, or follow Intuit's guidance on re-importing
- Save the old-system reports and Excel files together as the opening record
- Confirm sign-off from your accountant before the first live transaction

Import Rules at a Glance

These are the rules Intuit's help pages list. Limits can change, so check the help for your edition before you import.

Item	What Intuit's help says	Check for your UAE set-up
File type	Excel (XLS or XLSX), CSV or Google Sheets	Confirm the formats offered on your screen
Size	Up to 1,000 rows or 2 MB per file	Split larger lists into several files
Header row	Used for mapping, not imported	Always include one
Names	Unique across customers, vendors and employees, up to 100 characters	Rename duplicates before import
Existing contacts	A contact that already exists cannot be imported again	Search the current list first
Email	One email address only	Add extra emails in QuickBooks later
Other limits	Company 50 characters, phone 21 characters, country blank defaults to home country	Set country for every row
Opening balance fields	Optional, with an as-of date, in the account's currency	Check how the balance posts, and your plan's currency options

After the Import — Day One Checks

What Your Team Checks	What It Proves
Row counts for customers and suppliers	Every row in the file arrived
Five customers and five suppliers opened one by one	Names, addresses and tax numbers mapped correctly
Receivables and payables ageing against the old system	Opening balances are complete and correctly dated
Trial balance as of the start date	Every account matches the old closing trial balance
Opening Balance Equity account	The balance is understood and has a plan to clear it

3 Most Common Import Mistakes

Duplicate or clashing names

Names must be unique across customers, vendors and employees. A contact that already exists in QuickBooks cannot be imported again, so search the list and rename duplicates first.

Importing contacts before the chart of accounts

Intuit's recommended order starts with accounts, then customers, vendors and products. Loading contacts first can leave balances with nowhere correct to land.

Loading a balance twice

If a customer balance goes in through the contact import and again as an open invoice, receivables are overstated. Choose one method per balance and tie out afterwards.

RELY ON THIS CAREFULLY

How a contact opening balance posts, how to correct imported values and which fields your UAE edition shows can differ from the Intuit pages used here. Ask your accountant or a QuickBooks Pro Advisor to confirm the method before you load balances. Intuit's open-invoice guidance referenced here comes from its Desktop help page, so confirm the equivalent steps in QuickBooks Online.

QuickBooks Data Import Support by Perfonec Computers

Perfonec Computers Trading LLC is a QuickBooks Authorised Dealer and Pro Advisor in Dubai. We also sell and support TallyPrime, Odoo, Zoho and Sage 50. We can review your Excel lists, run a test import, load opening balances with your accountant and help you tie out before you go live. CEO: Akanksha Surana.

Free import readiness check — no cost, no commitment.

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