GENERAL

how to find my abn number

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Introduction

When you start or run a business in Australia, one of the first things you'll need to secure is your Australian Business Number, commonly known as an ABN. This unique 11 digit identifier is essential for tax purposes, invoicing, and establishing your company's legal identity. Whether you're a sole trader, a partnership, a company, or a trust, knowing where to find your ABN—and how to verify it—can save you time and prevent costly mistakes.

In this guide, we'll walk you through every method you can use to locate your ABN. From the official Australian Business Register to invoices, bank statements, and even your company's website, you'll discover multiple reliable ways to retrieve this critical piece of information. We'll also cover what to do if you can't find your ABN, common pitfalls, and how to keep your ABN secure.

By the end of this article, you'll have a clear, step by step understanding of how to find your ABN, whether you're a new entrepreneur or an experienced business owner.

Why You Need an ABN

Before diving into the methods, it's helpful to understand why an ABN is so vital:

- Tax Compliance – The ABN is required for all dealings with the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), including lodging Business Activity Statements (BAS) and claiming GST credits.
- Legal Identity – It distinguishes your business from other entities and is mandatory for contracts, agreements, and licensing.
- Credibility – Displaying your ABN on invoices and marketing materials signals professionalism and legitimacy to clients, suppliers, and banks.
- Access to Government Services – Many government programs, grants, and subsidies require a valid ABN.

Where Your ABN Appears

Once you've registered your business, the ABN is automatically assigned and can be found in several places:

1. Official Registration Certificate – Sent by the ATO upon approval.
2. Business Activity Statement (BAS) Forms – Required for GST registered businesses.
3. Invoices and Receipts – Must include the ABN for tax purposes.
4. Bank Statements – Many banks display the ABN on the account summary.
5. Government Portals – The Australian Business Register (ABR) lists your ABN.
6. Tax Return Documents – Your ABN appears on the ATO tax return.

Method 1: Using the Australian Business Register (ABR) Online Lookup

The ABR is the most reliable and official source for locating your ABN. The ATO manages this database, which contains all registered Australian business entities.

Step by Step Instructions

1. Open Your Web Browser – Navigate to https://abr.gov.au.

2. Click “ABN Lookup” – You’ll find this link on the homepage.
3. Enter Your Business Name or ABN – If you already know your ABN, type it in; if not, enter the full business name.
4. Complete the CAPTCHA – This security measure ensures the request is from a human user.
5. Submit the Form – Click “Search.” The ABR will display your business details, including the ABN.
6. Verify the Details – Check that the business name, status, and address match your records.

Note: If your business is a partnership or trust, the ABR may display the ABN under the entity’s name rather than the individual owner’s name.

Tips for a Successful ABR Search

- Use the exact spelling of your business name; minor variations can yield no results.
- If you have multiple business names, try each one individually.
- Remember that the ABR shows the ABN for the primary business name only.

Method 2: Checking Your ATO Tax Return Documents

When you lodge your tax return, the ATO includes your ABN on the form. You can retrieve it from:

- Paper Tax Return – Look at the top of the form where your personal or business details are listed.
- Electronic Tax Return – Log in to my.ato.gov.au and view your lodged returns.

In both cases, the ABN will be listed next to your business name or individual name, depending on your registration type.

Method 3: Reviewing Your Business Activity Statement (BAS)

GST registered businesses submit a BAS regularly. The ABN is mandatory on each BAS. If you have a copy of your BAS—either printed or in electronic form—your ABN will be displayed prominently.

Where to Find It

- Electronic BAS – Log into the ATO portal and download the BAS file.
- Paper BAS – Check the header section of the form.

Method 4: Looking at Your Invoices and Receipts

Invoices issued to clients must include your ABN. If you keep a copy of any invoice you’ve issued, the ABN will be listed under your business details.

What to Look For

- Business Header – Usually at the top of the invoice, next to the business name and address.
- ABN Field – Often labeled as “ABN” or “Australian Business Number.”

Method 5: Inspecting Your Bank Statements

Many Australian banks automatically print the ABN on the account statement or the front page of the bank’s online portal.

Steps to Find It

1. Log Into Your Online Banking – Use your banking credentials.
2. Navigate to Account Summary – Look for a section titled “Business Details” or “Company Information.”

3. Check the Statement Header – The ABN should be displayed near the account name.

Method 6: Using Your Company's Website

Many businesses proudly display their ABN on their official website, often in the footer or on a dedicated "About" page.

How to Check

1. Visit the Website – Enter the URL in your browser.
2. Scroll to the Bottom – The footer often contains the ABN.
3. Search for "ABN" – Use the browser's search function (Ctrl+F or Cmd+F) to locate the term.

Method 7: Checking Your Business Registration Documents

If you registered your business through the Australian Securities & Investments Commission (ASIC) or a state government agency, you likely received a registration certificate or letter.

Key Documents

- Company Registration Certificate – Issued by ASIC for companies.
- Business Name Registration Confirmation – For sole traders and partnerships.
- Trust Registration Certificate – For trusts.

Open the certificate and look for the ABN field.

Method 8: Using Your Employer Reference Number (ERN) or PAYG Details

Employers are required to use their ABN in payroll and tax reporting. If you're an employer, you can find your ABN in:

- PAYG Withholding Statements – These documents include the ABN.
- Employer Group Tax File Number (TFN) Statement – Also lists the ABN.

Method 9: Asking a Professional Service Provider

If you've used an accountant, bookkeeper, or tax agent, they maintain your ABN in their records.

How to Request

1. Contact Your Professional – Email or call them.
2. Ask for Your ABN – Provide any identifying information, such as your business name or TFN.
3. Receive Confirmation – They'll send you the ABN in writing.

Method 10: Checking the Australian Business Register via Mobile Apps

Several mobile apps, such as the **ABR Mobile App**, allow you to search for your ABN on the go.

Using the ABR Mobile App

1. Download the App – Available on iOS and Android.
2. Open the App and Select "ABN Lookup" – Follow the prompts.
3. Enter Your Business Name or ABN – Complete the search.
4. View Your ABN – The app will display your details.

What to Do If You Still Can't Find Your ABN

If you've tried all the above methods and still cannot locate your ABN, consider the following steps:

1. Verify Your Registration Status – Confirm that your business is registered. If you're unsure, check the ABR for your business name.
2. Check Your Email Inbox – Search for "ABN" or "Australian Business Number" from the ATO.
3. Contact the ATO Directly – Call the Business Enquiries line at 13 28 66 or use the ATO's online chat.
4. Request an ABN Confirmation Letter – The ATO can send you a formal letter confirming your ABN.
5. Check Your Business Name Registration – If you registered a business name but not an ABN, you'll need to apply for one.

How to Apply for an ABN if You Don't Have One

While this guide focuses on finding an existing ABN, it's useful to know the application process in case you're starting a new business.

Online Application via the ATO

1. Go to the ATO Business Registration Page – https://www.ato.gov.au/business/starting-a-business/registering-for-an-abn/
2. Click "Register for an ABN" – You'll be guided through the application.
3. Enter Your Business Details – Provide the business name, structure, address, and contact information.
4. Submit the Application – The ATO will review and approve it within a few days.

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