Startup Checklist

A founder's checklist to launch a scalable, venture-style startup.

Validate the problem

- ○ Define the specific problem and who suffers from it most.
- ○ Interview target users about how they solve it today.
- ○ Identify your riskiest assumption and a cheap way to test it.
- ○ Estimate the size of the market you can realistically reach.
- ○ Map existing alternatives and where they fall short.
- ○ Test willingness to pay before building anything.
- ○ Decide go or no-go based on the evidence you gathered.

Build and ship an MVP

- ○ Define the single core value your MVP must deliver.
- ○ Cut every feature that isn't essential to that value.
- ○ Choose a tech stack or no-code tools you can move fast with.
- ○ Set a realistic timeline to a usable first version.
- ○ Recruit a small group of early users to test it.
- ○ Instrument analytics to measure activation and retention.
- ○ Ship, gather feedback, and iterate in short cycles.

Incorporate and protect IP

- ○ Choose a legal structure suited to growth and investment.
  Structures and tax treatment vary by country and state — confirm with your official authority or a startup lawyer.
- ○ Register the company and obtain a tax identification number.
  Registration steps differ by jurisdiction — check locally.
- ○ Put a founders' agreement in writing covering equity and roles.
- ○ Set up a vesting schedule for founder shares.
- ○ Assign intellectual property to the company in writing.
- ○ Protect key trademarks or domains where appropriate.

Set up finances and metrics

- ○ Open a business bank account separate from personal funds.
- ○ Set up bookkeeping and a simple financial model.
- ○ Track runway and your monthly cash burn.
- ○ Define the key metrics that prove your business works.
- ○ Set up billing and a way to collect payments.
- ○ Establish a basic budget and spending controls.

Build the early team

- ○ Identify the first one or two critical roles to fill.
- ○ Decide what to hire for versus do yourself or outsource.
- ○ Define a simple equity and compensation framework.
- ○ Write clear role descriptions and expectations.

- [ ] Use written offers and contracts for everyone you bring on.
  Employment rules vary by jurisdiction — verify locally.
- [ ] Document your mission and values to guide hiring.

Prepare to fundraise

- [ ] Clarify how much you need and what milestones it buys.
- [ ] Learn the basics of equity, valuation and dilution.
- [ ] Build a concise pitch deck and a simple financial model.
- [ ] Assemble traction evidence such as users, revenue or growth.
- [ ] Research and shortlist investors that fit your stage.
- [ ] Prepare a data room with key documents organized.
- [ ] Understand basic term sheet concepts before negotiating.
  Investment terms carry legal and tax consequences — seek qualified advice.