

# Clothing Business Startup Checklist (South Africa)

*A practical, step-by-step guide for starting and running a clothing business using FREE tools and smart systems.*

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## Phase 1: Idea, Identity & Direction

### ✓ Define Your Clothing Concept

- Decide what you are selling: casual wear, modest fashion, streetwear, kidswear, formal wear, accessories, or custom pieces
- Identify your target customer (age, gender, lifestyle, budget)
- Clarify what makes your brand different (price, quality, cultural influence, sustainability, fit, storytelling)

### ✓ Choose a Business Name

- Brainstorm 3–5 name options
  - Check availability on:
    - Google
    - Instagram & Facebook
    - CIPC name search
  - Secure matching social media handles (even if unused initially)
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## Phase 2: Research & Planning

### ✓ Market Research (FREE)

- Study competitors on Instagram, Facebook Marketplace, Takealot, Shein, local boutiques
- Note pricing, fabric quality, sizing, customer feedback
- Use AI tools to summarise trends and seasonal demand in South Africa

### ✓ Basic Business Plan (Simple)

- What are you selling?
- Who are you selling to?
- How will you make money?
- What are your startup costs?
- Where will you sell (online, markets, pop-ups, home-based)?

*(Tip: Keep this to 2–3 pages. It's a living document.)*

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## Phase 3: Products & Sourcing

### ✓ Clothing Production or Sourcing

- Decide:
- Buy wholesale
- Manufacture locally
- Custom-make items
- Print-on-demand
- Source suppliers and compare prices
- Order samples before bulk buying

### ✓ Costing & Pricing

- Calculate:
  - Cost per item
  - Packaging
  - Delivery
  - Platform fees
  - Set prices with profit margins included
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## Phase 4: Legal & Formal Setup (When Ready)

### ✓ Decide Business Structure

- Sole Proprietor (start here)
- Private Company (Pty) Ltd (growth stage)

### ✓ Register with CIPC (Optional in Year 1)

- Register your business name online
- Open a business bank account
- Register for tax when income grows

*(Many clothing SMMEs start informally and formalise once revenue stabilises.)*

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## Phase 5: Branding & Visual Identity

### ✓ Brand Essentials (FREE Tools)

- Logo
- Colour palette
- Font style
- Brand voice (luxury, casual, youthful, modest, bold)

### ✓ Create Visual Assets

- Product mockups
- Instagram posts

- Story highlights
  - Simple lookbook
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## Phase 6: Online Presence

### ✓ Build a FREE Website

- Use Google Sites or similar
- Pages to include:
  - Home
  - About
  - Shop / Catalogue
  - Contact / WhatsApp link

### ✓ Product Photography

- Use natural light
  - Clean background
  - Show front, back, and detail shots
  - Lifestyle images sell better than flat lays
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## Phase 7: Social Media Marketing (Core Growth Tool)

### ✓ Platform Setup

- Instagram (main focus for fashion)
- Facebook Page
- Pinterest (long-term visibility)

### ✓ Content Strategy

- Product drops
- Styling ideas
- Behind-the-scenes
- Customer reviews
- Educational fashion tips

### ✓ Posting Routine

- 3–4 posts per week
  - Stories daily (even simple updates)
  - Use local hashtags (South Africa, city-based tags)
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## Phase 8: Sales & Customer Experience

### ✓ Sales Channels

- Instagram DMs
- WhatsApp Business
- Online forms
- Pop-up markets

### ✓ Customer Care

- Fast replies
- Clear sizing info
- Honest delivery timelines
- Polite, professional communication

*(Customer trust is everything in clothing businesses.)*

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## Phase 9: Payments, Packaging & Delivery

### ✓ Payment Options

- EFT
- Mobile payments
- Cash (for markets)

### ✓ Packaging

- Branded bags or boxes
- Tissue paper
- Thank-you cards

### ✓ Delivery

- Courier services
  - Local meet-ups (if safe)
  - Clear delivery policy
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## Phase 10: Growth, Skills & Funding

### ✓ Skills Development

- Digital marketing
- Fashion merchandising
- Customer service

### ✓ Explore SETA Support

- MICT SETA (digital & media skills)

- Services SETA (retail & business)
- Clothing & Textile related training

### ✓ **Prepare for Growth**

- Track sales monthly
  - Improve best-selling items
  - Consider formal registration
  - Plan seasonal collections
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## **Final Reminder**

You do not need perfection to begin. You need consistency, clarity, and courage.

This checklist is designed to carry you through your **first year** of running a clothing business in South Africa — sustainably, affordably, and confidently.

*Start small. Build smart. Grow intentionally.*

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