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BOOKKEEPING 2026

How long to keep *business records*

Keep anything behind a return until the window to question that return closes.

3 yrs
IRS default
From the date you file. Early returns count as filed on the due date.

4 yrs
Payroll records
After the tax is due or paid, whichever is later.

6 yrs
Income left off
If over 25% of the gross income shown on the return.

7 yrs
Bad debt
Or a worthless securities deduction.

IRS: WHAT TO KEEP	HOW LONG
Receipts, invoices, statements Anything behind income, deductions, credits	3 yrs
Equipment, vehicles, property Until the window ends for the year you sell	Longer
Refund claim after filing Or 2 years from paying, if later	3 yrs
No return filed, or fraud The window never starts	No limit
Copies of filed returns Our tip: keep them permanently	Keep

NEW JERSEY & NEW YORK	DIGITAL OK
NJ: time to assess more tax From the date you filed	4 yrs
NY: business records At least, after you file	3 yrs
NY sales tax vendors From due date or filing date, if later	3 yrs
Scanned receipts System must meet Rev. Proc. 97-22	Allowed
Lender or insurer rules Check before you shred	May be longer

Merchant
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General information, not tax advice. Facts checked Nov. 15, 2026.