#1 Check if You Need a Business License

To find out if you need one of DCA’s 55 licenses, visit nyc.gov and search “Business Toolbox” or contact 311. You can also visit nyc.gov/business to find out what you need to start and operate businesses in New York City. DCA encourages business owners to view the Business Owner’s Bill of Rights, available at nyc.gov/bizrights.

#2 Post Prices and Payment Methods

- If you sell goods, the price of each item must be either on a tag on the item or on a sign where the item is displayed.
- If you do more than $2 million worth of business in a year, you must put individual price tags on most items.
- If your business sells a service—for example, hair or nail salons, dry cleaners, laundries,tailors, repairers, locksmiths, tax preparers—you must post a price list near where orders are placed and at the register.
- It is illegal to post different prices for men and women for the same service.
- If you limit credit card use, you must clearly post the policy near the register and the entrance.

#3 Post Your Refund Policy

You can set your own refund policy, but the law requires that it be posted near the register where customers can easily read it. Your sign must explain all conditions or limitations on getting a refund or exchange, such as whether you charge restocking fees, require a receipt, have time limits on returns, or give refunds in cash, credit, or store credit only. If you fail to post a refund policy, customers can return any item for 30 days.

#4 Make Sure Receipts are Complete and Correct

If a customer requests a receipt for a purchase between $5 and $20, you must provide it, and if the purchase is $20 or more, you are required by law to provide a receipt.

By law, your receipts must show:
- Your business name and address and, if you are a licensee, you must add “Department of Consumer Affairs” followed by your DCA license number
- The amount of money paid for each item
- The total amount the customer paid, including a separate line for tax
- The date of the purchase
- The make and the model of any electronic purchase more than $100

Receipts cannot show a credit card’s expiration date or more than its last five digits.
#5 Make Sure Your Sales Ads Aren’t False or Misleading

• It is illegal to advertise low prices on items that you don’t actually have available for customers (“bait and switch”).
• Any item you list as “on sale” must also display the pre-sale price clearly, and you must have reasonable quantities available before advertising the sale. If you advertise that you are having a sale due to fire, smoke, or water damage or because you are going out of business, liquidating, lost your lease, or are renovating, you must have a DCA Special Sale license and conduct the sale at the location that is being closed.
• You must include your business name, address, and DCA license number (if applicable) on all newspaper ads, business cards, and business vehicles.

#6 Know the Items You Cannot Sell

• It is illegal to sell fake or imitation guns unless the entire exterior of the gun is white, bright red, bright orange, bright yellow, bright green, bright blue, bright pink, bright purple, or translucent or transparent (see-through). Any fake or toy gun that is not one of these colors (for example, black, green) is illegal even if it has an orange tip.
• You cannot sell laser pointers to anyone under 19. You cannot sell the following items to anyone under 21: box cutters, etching acid, spray paint.
• You cannot sell the following products to anyone: expired over-the-counter medication, motorized scooters, and products made of endangered or threatened species.

#7 Know the Rules for Tobacco Sales and Signage

• It is illegal to sell cigarettes to anyone under 21. You must request proper identification for anyone who appears to be under 30.
• You must have a DCA license to sell cigarettes in New York City and post required City and State warning signs, all of which are available in DCA’s Business Toolbox.
• It is illegal to sell “flavored” tobacco unless you operate a tobacco bar or if the tobacco has the taste or smell of menthol, mint, or wintergreen.
• You cannot sell individual cigarettes (“loosies”).

#8 Make Sure Scales are Accurate

DCA inspects all scales used by stores and airports for accuracy. Scales must be positioned so customers can view the weight and the price per pound. If you sell packaged items, you must subtract the weight of the packaging (“tare” weight) from the cost of the weighed item. Businesses can request a scale inspection online in DCA’s Business Toolbox or by contacting 311.

#9 Resolve Customer Complaints

If DCA receives a complaint, we will contact you by phone or mail to get your side of the story before we mediate. All licensees must respond within 20 days. A DCA mediator will work with you and the customer and if we cannot resolve the complaint, it may be heard by a judge at a hearing at a City Tribunal or State court. DCA maintains permanent public records of complaint histories and how they are resolved.

#10 Handle Violations and Pay Fines

If a DCA inspector issues a violation during an inspection, you will be given a Notice of Hearing with the date and time that you need to meet with a Settlement Officer or contest the violation with an Administrative Law Judge at a City Tribunal. You may bring an attorney with you, and free translation services are available. Those with disabilities can request special accommodations before their hearings. Depending upon the violation or your violation history, you may be able to settle the violation online or by mail. Not responding to a Notice of Hearing will result in additional violations and fines.