Notova Getting Started

Red7en LLC

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Your first half hour with Notova — install it, create your books, and record your first entries

Notova is local, self-hosted, encrypted double-entry accounting. Your books stay on your computer.

Quick Start

Your first half hour with Notova: install it, create your books, and record your first entries.

This is the short guide. For anything not covered here — invoicing, vendor bills, reconciliation, budgets, 1099, and the rest — the rest of this help covers it in full.

What Notova is

Notova is double-entry accounting software that runs on your own computer. There is no cloud account and no subscription: you buy it once, and your books stay on your machine. Each set of books is a single encrypted file that only opens with its password.

Three things are worth knowing before you start.

- **It is real double-entry.** Every transaction has at least two sides, and they must balance to the penny. If you have worked with an accountant this will feel familiar; if you have not, the chart of accounts section below walks you through it.
- **Your password is the key.** It is not stored anywhere, and there is no reset link and no recovery. Write it down somewhere safe before you go any further.
- **You have 30 days free.** Every feature is available during the trial. After that Notova keeps working in read-only mode — you can still open your books, run reports, export, and back up — until you enter a license key.

> **A word of advice.** For the first few months, keep your existing bookkeeping running alongside Notova and compare the two. It is the cheapest way to find out whether Notova fits how your business actually works, and it costs you nothing but a little double entry.

Install and start

Notova is one self-contained download per platform. There is nothing to install alongside it — no runtime, no database engine, no setup wizard.

On Windows:

1. Download `Notova.zip`. Right-click it, choose **Properties**, tick **Unblock** near the bottom, and click **OK** — this saves you a security prompt later.
2. Right-click the file again and choose **Extract All**.
3. Open the extracted folder and double-click `Notova.exe`. A small console window opens and your browser opens to `http://localhost:5001`.

`Notova.exe` is digitally signed by Red7en LLC. If a blue "Windows protected your PC" notice appears the first time, check that it names Red7en LLC as the publisher, then click **More info** and **Run anyway**. It should not appear again.

On a Mac:

1. Download `Notova.dmg`, double-click it, and drag Notova into Applications.
2. Open Applications and double-click Notova. Your browser opens to `http://localhost:5001`.

This build is not yet notarized, so macOS may block the first launch. On macOS 15 and later: click **Done**, then open **System Settings ▸ Privacy & Security**, scroll to Security, and click **Open Anyway**. On macOS 13 and earlier: Control-click the app and choose **Open**, then **Open** again.

Full details, including how to change the port, are in Installing Notova.

> **To stop Notova.** Click **Quit Notova** in the sidebar, or just close your browser — Notova notices the window is gone and shuts down a few seconds later. Either way your books are locked and saved first.

Create your books

The first screen you see is a list of databases. A database is one complete set of books — one company. You can keep as many as you like, each with its own password, and opening one has no effect on the others.

1. Click **Create New Database**.
2. Give it a name, such as your company name.
3. Choose a password and type it again. Eight characters minimum; the strength meter will tell you how you are doing.
4. Click **Create & Open**. Notova builds a fresh set of books, already stocked with a standard chart of accounts, and opens them.

> **There is no password recovery.** Your password is the encryption key for that database. Nobody — not Red7en, not a support line — can open your books without it. If you lose it, the data is gone. Record it somewhere safe now, before you have anything in there worth losing.

Find your way around

You land on the Dashboard: income, expenses, and net income for the year, with a chart of monthly activity.

Everything else is reached from the sidebar, grouped into three pillars — **General Ledger** for everyday bookkeeping, **Accounts Receivable** for customers and invoices, **Accounts Payable** for vendors and bills — with Overview, Data, Settings, and Administration below them.

> **One number to understand.** The **Bank Balance** card is your register balance. It includes every transaction you have entered, including any dated in the future, so it matches your check register. Reports such as the Balance Sheet are dated "as of" a day and leave out anything later, so the two can differ — deliberately.

The chart of accounts

The chart of accounts is the master list of the categories your money moves through, grouped into Assets, Liabilities, Equity, Income, and Expenses.

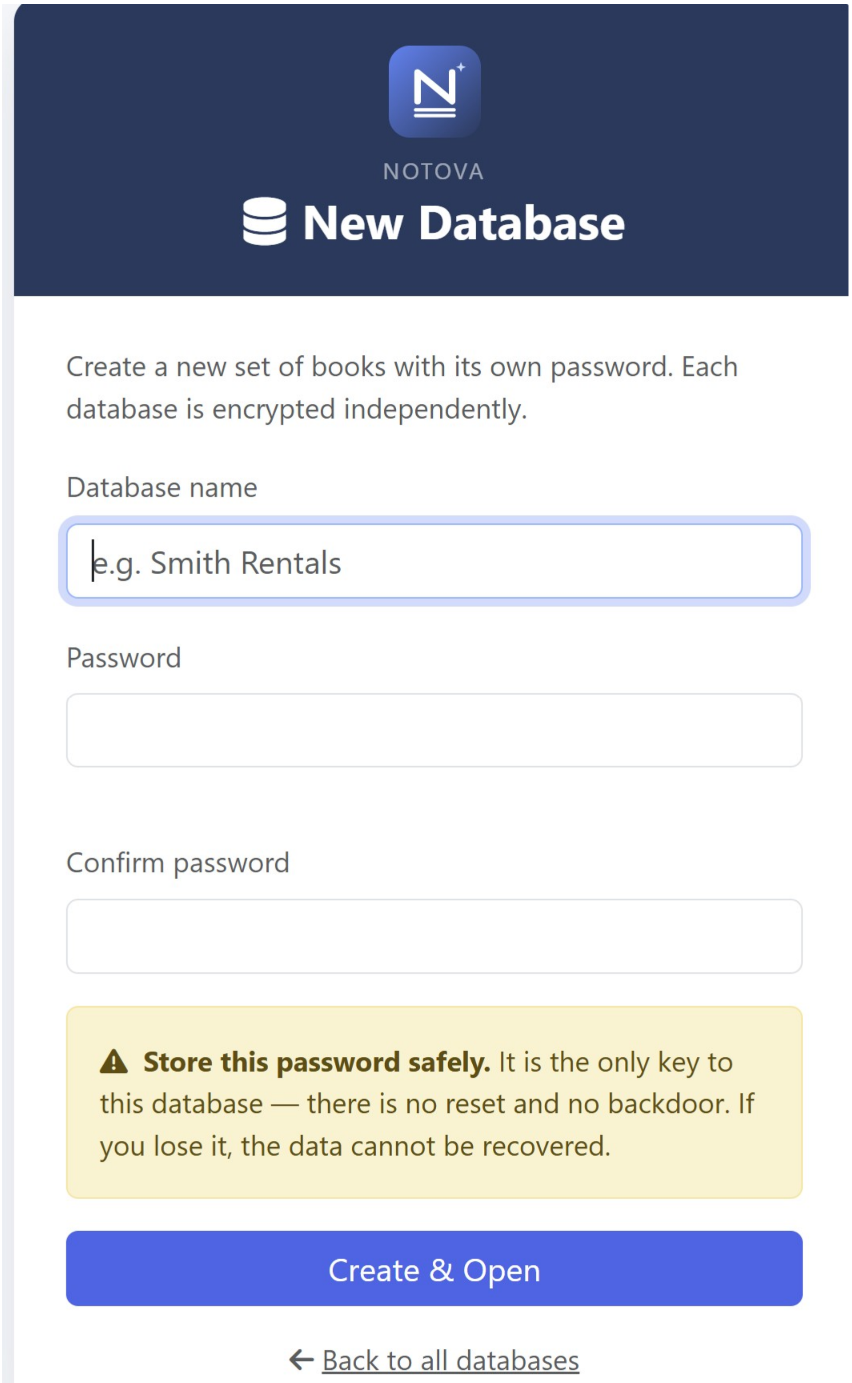

Figure 1: Figure 1. Creating your first set of books

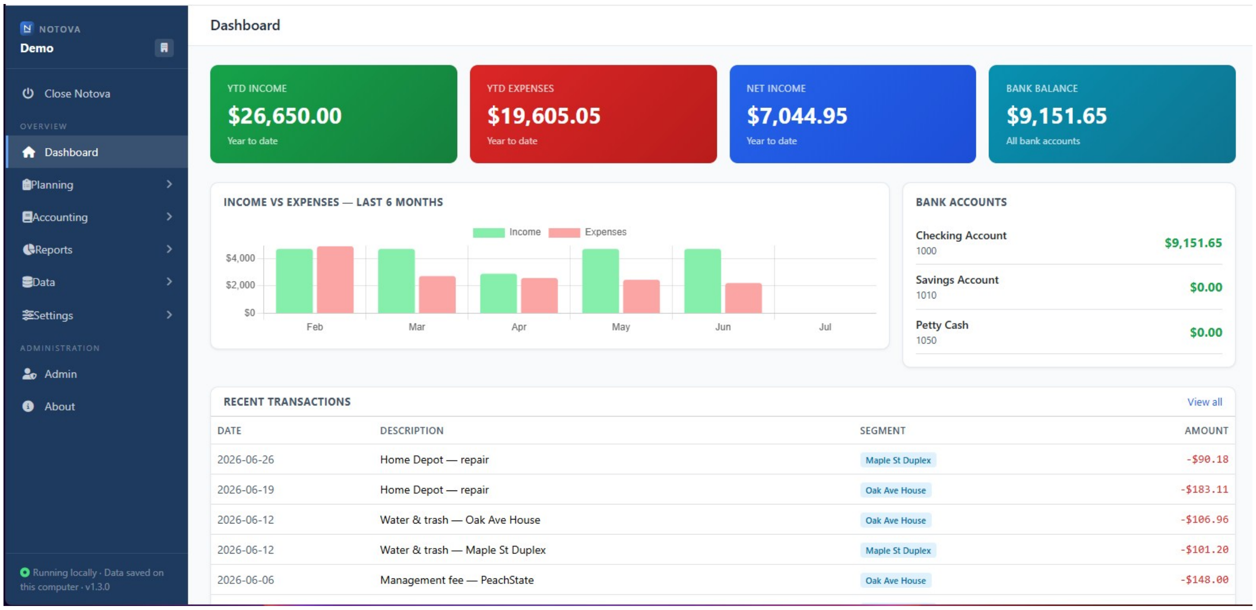

Figure 2: Figure 2. The Dashboard and the sidebar

Your new database already has a sensible starter set. Look through it, rename anything that does not match your business, and add what is missing. This is the one piece of setup worth doing carefully before you start entering data.

> **Setting opening balances.** To give a bank account its starting balance, record a journal entry dated your start date that debits the account and credits an equity account such as *Owner's Equity*. Do not use Quick Entry or a deposit for this — those post to income and expense, which would overstate your first period's results.

Record your first transactions

There are two ways in, and you will use both.

Quick Entry — the everyday way

For an ordinary cost, Quick Entry is the fastest route. Pick the date, the expense account, the account you paid from, and the amount. Notova writes the balanced double-entry behind the scenes.

A full journal entry — when you need control

For anything with more than two sides — a paycheck split across several accounts, an opening balance, a correction — use the Transactions screen. Enter the date and a description, then add a line per account with an amount in either the Debit or the Credit column. Save becomes available once debits equal credits.

> **If an entry seems to vanish.** The Transactions list shows the current year by default. Widen the **Start date** and click **Search** — imported history dated in an earlier year is simply hidden, not lost.

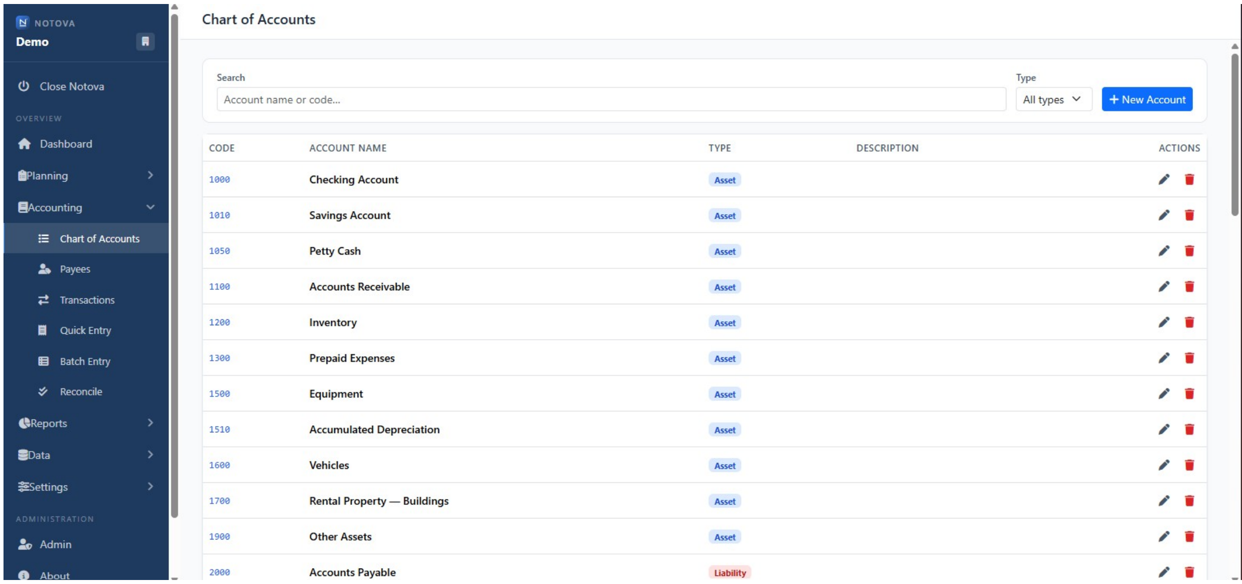

Figure 3: Figure 3. The Chart of Accounts

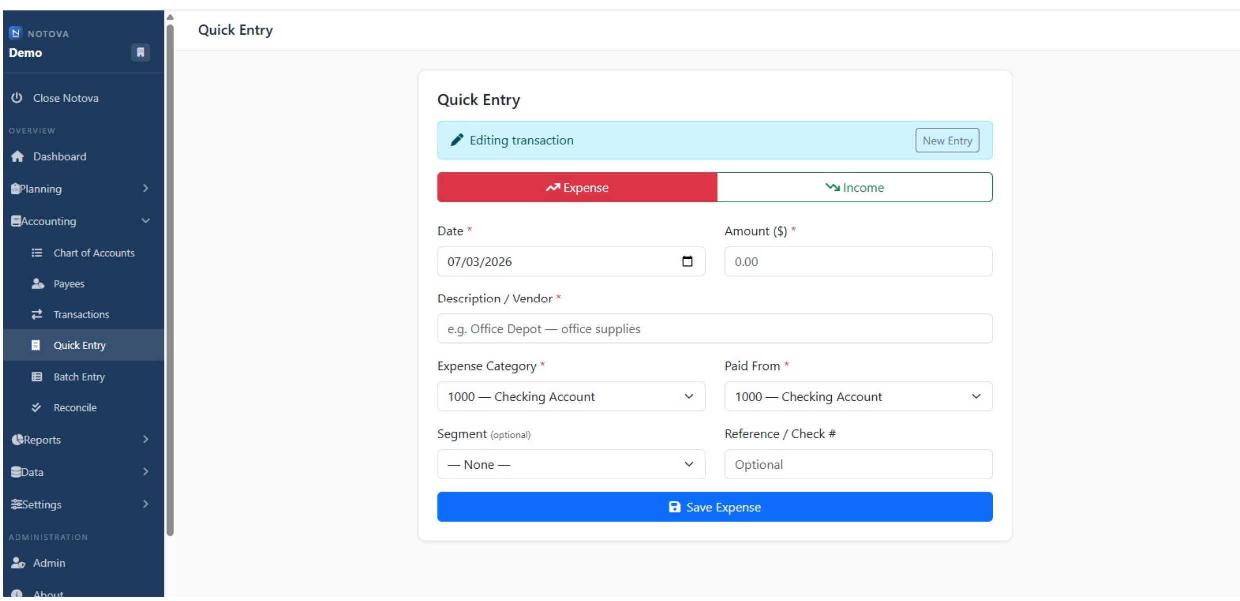

Figure 4: Figure 4. The Quick Entry form

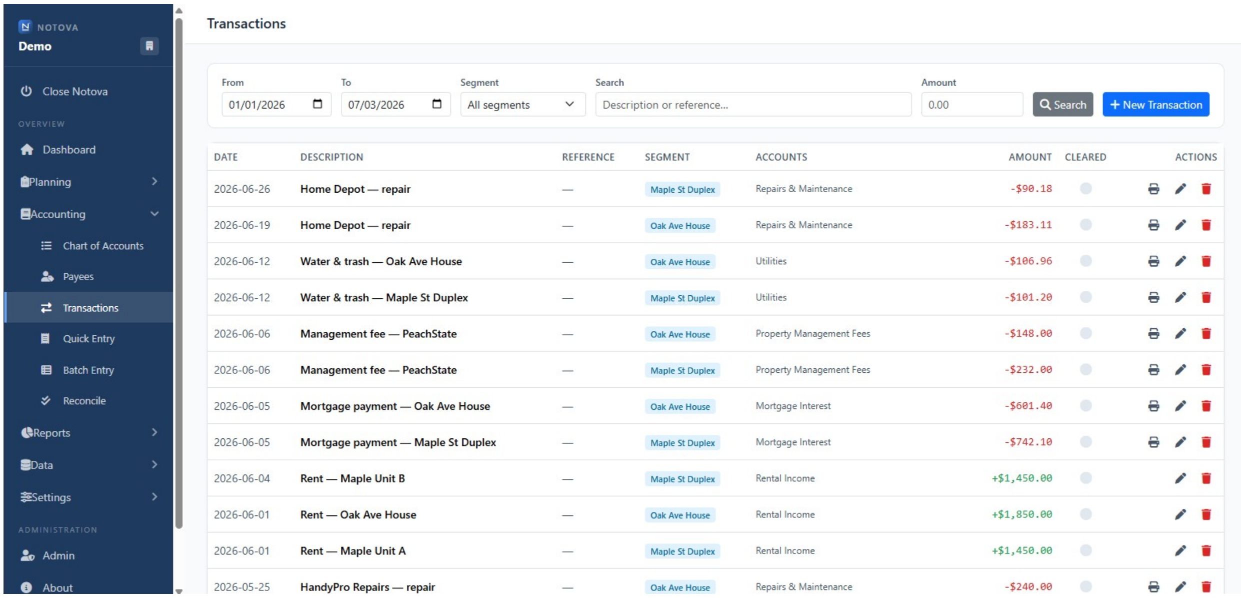

Figure 5: Figure 5. Recording a journal entry

Run a report

Once a few entries are in, open **Reports** under General Ledger. Start with the Profit & Loss for the current year, then look at the Balance Sheet.

Because Notova stores every amount as exact whole cents rather than as decimals, the Trial Balance and Balance Sheet always tie out precisely — if something looks wrong, it is the data, never the arithmetic.

Every report takes a date range, and most can be exported to CSV for a spreadsheet or your accountant.

Back up

Notova backs itself up without being asked: a timestamped encrypted snapshot every time you open a database, and again before anything risky such as an import or an upgrade. The most recent fifteen are kept beside the database, and every save is re-read and decrypted immediately afterwards to prove it is intact.

That protects you from mistakes. It does not protect you from losing the computer, so make your own copy too: choose **Backup**, pick a folder, and Notova writes a `.zip` containing your encrypted database, two recovery helpers, and a manifest. Put it on a USB stick or in cloud storage — the contents are encrypted, so it is safe anywhere, and it still needs your password to open.

> **Restoring. Admin ▸ Restore from Automatic Backup** lists the snapshots by what triggered them — "When you opened it", "Before an import", and so on. Notova saves a safety copy of the current state first, so a restore can itself be undone.

Where to go next

That is enough to keep books in Notova. When you are ready for more:

- **Invoicing and customers** — raise invoices, take part payments, print or email them on your own letterhead, and see who owes you on A/R Aging and statements.
- **Vendor bills** — enter, approve and pay them, plus purchase orders, recurring bills, vendor credits, and Cash Requirements.
- **1099 contractors** — flag vendors, track what you paid them, and print a substitute 1099-NEC.
- **Bank reconciliation** — tick off what cleared and prove your books against the statement.
- **Importing** — bring in history from CSV, Excel, or QIF, with duplicates caught for you.
- **Budgets**, segments, and check printing — plan the year, tag transactions by department or project, and print onto check stock.
- **Your letterhead** — add your address and logo in Company & Segments before you send anyone an invoice.

A first-week checklist

- Password recorded somewhere safe, outside Notova.
- Chart of accounts reviewed and adjusted to your business.
- Opening balances entered as journal entries against equity.
- A handful of real transactions entered, and a Profit & Loss run.
- One on-demand backup written to a drive that is not this computer.
- Company profile filled in, if you plan to send invoices.

If something goes wrong, the file `notova.log` beside your data is the first place to look, and Troubleshooting covers the common cases.