



Need QuickBooks on your network? Multi-user instructions for the non-IT pro



Several users can work in the same QuickBooks company file at once, but which company file is the user actually updating? If users are modifying a company file they store on their personal hard drive, the next user to access the file won't see any changes. Use a server as the central hub where you can store and share all of your QuickBooks company files so users make changes in the same company file through the network (instead of changing their own computer's copy of the file).

To set up a multi-user environment on a network, we'll:

- Prepare a folder to store shared company files on the server and designate who can access the folder.
- Install QuickBooks on the server and ensure that it's hosting multi-user access.
- Use the QuickBooks Database Server Manager to direct QuickBooks to our company files.
- Access a company file that's stored on the server from a client computer.

Most QuickBooks users aren't necessarily IT professionals. Setting up the office so that several users can work in the same company file(s) — and do it correctly — is a daunting task. Between networks and servers and clients, the terminology alone is enough to make most users throw up their hands in frustration. We'll cut to the chase and explain how to set up QuickBooks multi-user access on your company's network in simple language that you can understand.

Servers, networks and clients, oh my!

Let's start by demystifying some of the terms that most QuickBooks manuals assume you already know. First,

what is multi-user access really trying to accomplish? Here is the goal: for several users to work in the same company file simultaneously, ensure that their work is stored on only *one* company file, and reflect every user's changes in the file to keep everyone on the same page.

Learn the lingo you need

Here are a few of the terms we'll use throughout this article in simplified language:

- **Server.** A *server* is a computer that stores vital software, documents and other files that users on the same network want to share. Think of it as a central meeting place, like the main lobby of a hotel. We

recommend you use Windows Server 2003 for the best results.

- **Network.** A *network* connects several workstations so that they can pass information, such as documents and files. Your network may cover a small area (called a *Local Area Network* or LAN) or it may cover a larger area (called a *Wide Area Network* or WAN). In this article, we're assuming you already have a network in place.
- **Client.** A client simply refers to the personal computers that connect to the server. The computer you work on every day in your office is most likely a client, which means it connects to a server.



I have expertise and experience with small business owners and non-profit organizations, setting up and maintaining their books, assessing problems and implementing appropriate solutions. Since obtaining my CPA license in 1989, I have had opportunities to work with many different segments and industries. My specialty is helping small and start-up companies as they begin and grow their operations.



Licenses: To set up multiple users, you should have several licenses. You can get five licenses with the Pro or Premier editions. However, you can install QuickBooks on your server *in addition to* five clients. This is because the QuickBooks you install on the server isn't meant for use, but merely as a facilitator to help increase your multi-user efficiency.

Prepare your server

QuickBooks makes most of the installation on your server user-friendly. It's the preparation that can sometimes trip you up. You need to designate a folder on the server to store your QuickBooks company files. Then, you need to give anyone who will be accessing QuickBooks from a client permission to work in that folder. Let's step through the process.

To set up a folder on the server:

1. Choose Programs | My Computer from the Windows Start menu.
2. Navigate to the location on your server's hard drive where you want to add the folder. We'll keep things

simple by adding a folder on the C:\ drive.

3. Right-click in the window and choose New | Folder from the resulting shortcut menu.
4. Enter a name for the folder and press [Enter]. We'll name our folder *QuickBooks Data*.

Now the folder exists on the server's hard drives, but you need users to access the folder's contents from their client computers. This means you need to share the folder and designate who can access the folder.

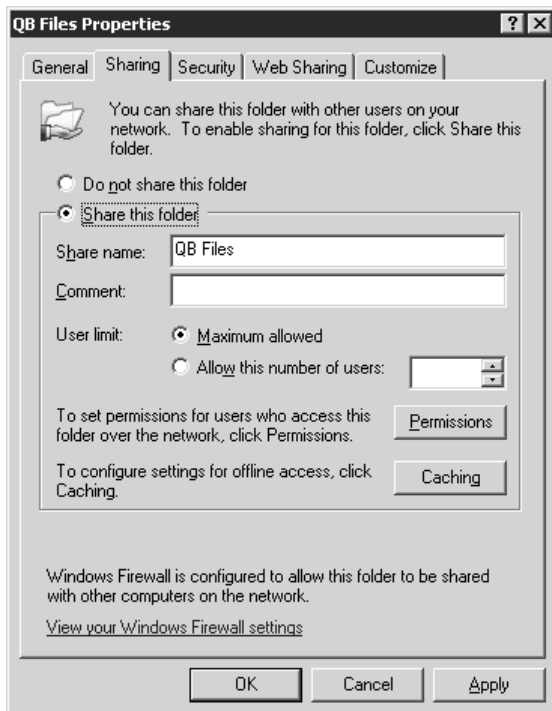
Warning: In order to set up user permissions and share folders, you must use a Windows account with administrative privileges. Most operating systems have an Administrator account with full access to these rights.

To set permissions for the new folder:

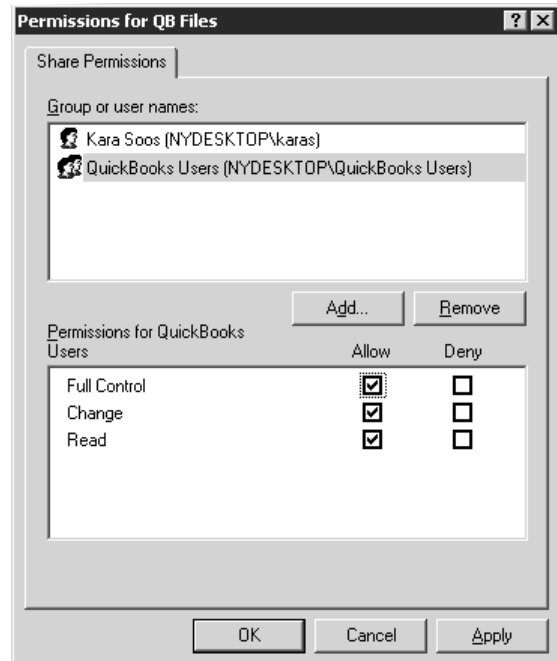
1. Right-click on the folder and choose Sharing And Security from the shortcut menu.

2. Select the Share This Folder option button, as shown in **Figure 1**.
3. Click the Permissions button and then add users or groups by clicking the Add button and finding the correct user or group.
4. Select the Allow check box for the Full Control option for each group or user you add, as shown in **Figure 2**. This gives them full access to the files in the QB Files folder.
5. Click OK to dismiss the open windows and apply the permissions to your folder.

Figure 2 demonstrates both an individual user and a user group that's comprised of more than one user. If you plan to give several users access to your QuickBooks company files, you may find it more efficient to create a user group than to add each user individually.



1: You must manually share a folder on the server before you can access it through a client computer.



2: If you want to give many users access to the same folder, it may be faster to create a user group.

Install QuickBooks on the server

Now you're ready to install the application and the QuickBooks Database Server Manager on your server.

To install QuickBooks on the server:

1. Insert your installation disc in the server's disc drive.
2. Click the Guided Install button.
3. Select the More Than One Computer option button, as shown in **Figure 3**, and click Next.
4. Choose the Install QuickBooks With Company File Server option button and click Install Now. This installs both the QuickBooks application and the QuickBooks Database Server Manager. In our testing, we found it best to have both of these components.

5. Choose the Yes option button if you want to check for updates (requires Internet connection). Otherwise, choose the No option button and click Next.
6. Accept the terms of the license agreement and click Next.
7. Enter your license number and product number, which you'll find on your installation disc's sleeve.
8. Click Install to install both QuickBooks and its Database Server Manager.

You can make sure that your QuickBooks application is now hosting multi-user access by opening QuickBooks on the server and choosing File | Utilities from the menu bar. There should be a Stop Hosting Multi-User

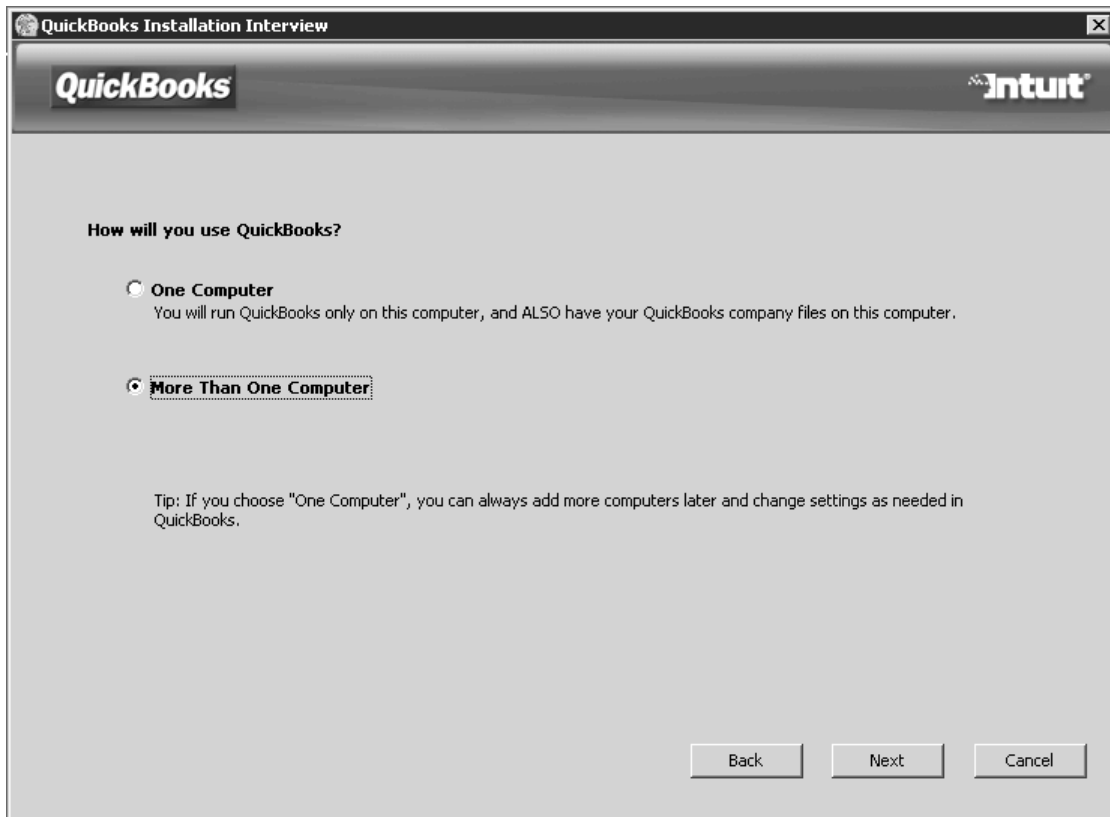
Access menu item, which means it's currently running. If it isn't running, there will be a Host Multi-User Access menu item. Choose it to enable the server as the host.

Manage your database server

You can use the QuickBooks Database Server Manager to scan the server for existing and new company files. You should find a shortcut to the QuickBooks Database Server Manager on your Windows Start menu. Once you open it, you need to make sure it's scanning the folder where you store company files.

To direct QuickBooks to your company files:

1. Open the QuickBooks Database Server Manager and select the Scan Folders tab.



3: You want to install the application so that multiple users can access it instead of just one user.

2. Click the Add Folder button and navigate to the folder you created to store company files.
3. Click the Scan button. QuickBooks adds any company files it finds in the folder to the lower list box, as shown in **Figure 4**.
4. Click Close when you're ready.

When you want to scan the server for additional company files, you'll need to return to the Scan Folders tab and click the Scan button.

Access a file from the client computer

You have your server set up with QuickBooks, but now you need to access your company files from your client computer. Remember that you must be logged in as one of the users with full permissions to the folder you created to store company files on the server (in our example, the QB Files folder).

To work in a company file stored on the server from a client:

1. Launch QuickBooks and choose File | Open Or Restore Company from the menu bar.

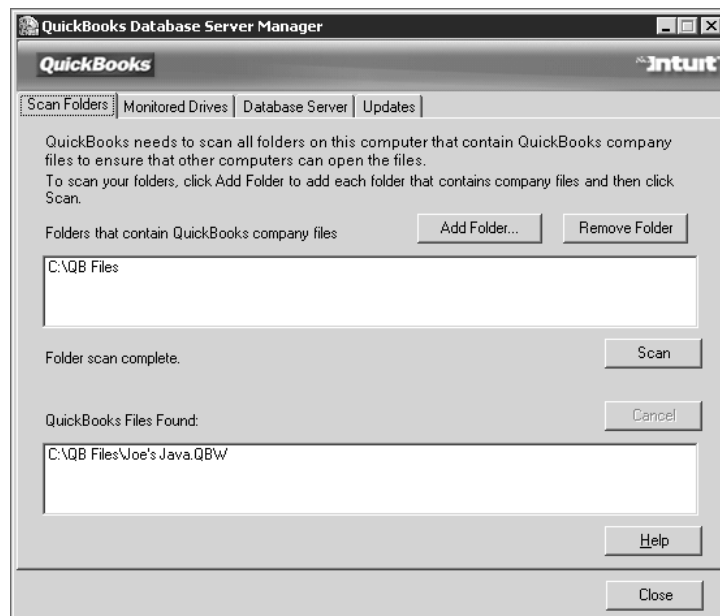
2. Select the Open A Company File option button in the Open Company: Type window and click Next. The Open A Company dialog box displays.
3. Navigate to the folder that stores company files *on the server* by clicking My Network Places.
4. Select the company file you want to open and click Open.

If you can't find the folder you created on the server through My Network Places,

you didn't properly share it or you aren't logged in as a user with permissions to access the files in the folder.

Changes display for every user

Once you work in the company file, close it and then have another user with permissions to work in QuickBooks' multi-user environment open the file. Any changes you made during your work are reflected in the second user's company file because you're all accessing the same file on a central computer — the server.



4: Add any folder in which you store (or may eventually store) company files.

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