EXCEL TOOL + GUIDE · 2026

Stale Check & Uncleared Item Cleanup Kit

Clear old outstanding checks and phantom deposits out of your bank reconciliation, the right way, before year-end.

1
List
Export uncleared items from your reconciliation report and paste them in.

2
Decide
The workbook ages each item and gives a next step: wait, contact, void, move or report.

3
Contact
Print a fill-in letter for payees with stale checks and track the reply date.

4
Book
Copy the ready journal entries, then clear old items and entries together.

What's inside

File / tab	What it does
Cleanup Tool	Up to 200 items · age, stale and dormant flags · 16 next-step rules
Entry Builder	JE-1 move to liability · JE-2 old checks not owed · JE-3 duplicate deposits
Payee Letter	Type an item # and the letter fills itself in
My State Rules	Worksheet for your state's dormancy periods and report date
Year-End Checklist	12 close-out steps with Done boxes
This PDF guide	Desktop and Online steps, worked examples, edge cases

Who this is for: small businesses and bookkeepers whose reconciliation still shows checks from last year (or older) and deposits that never reached the bank. Works with QuickBooks Desktop and QuickBooks Online exports, or any ledger that can export a list.

Before you start: do not delete old checks, and do not void checks dated in a year whose tax return is already filed. That changes old reports. This kit shows the current-period method instead.

Built by a US tax and bookkeeping practice with 20+ years of bookkeeping experience. Privacy: the workbook never asks for bank account numbers, SSNs or passwords.

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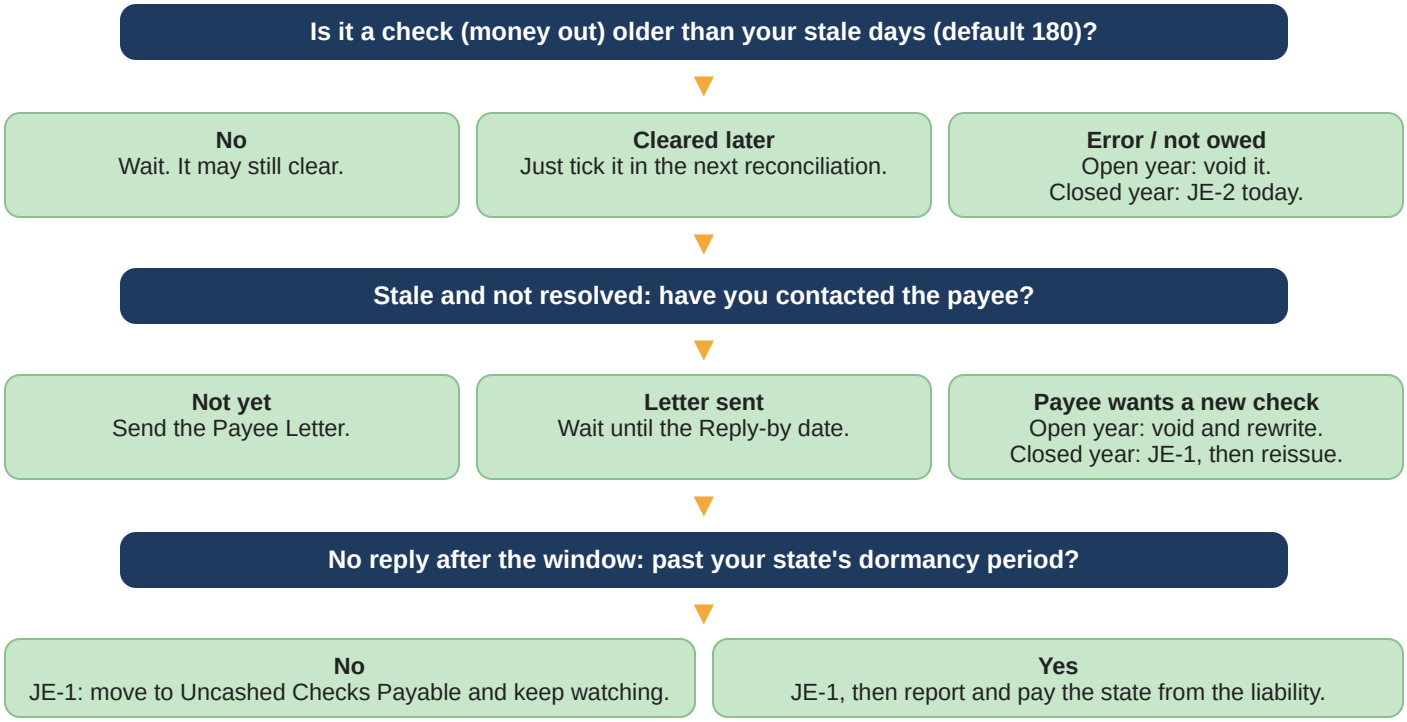
Why old checks and deposits matter

Stale check. Under the Uniform Commercial Code (section 4-404, adopted by the states), a bank is not obliged to pay an uncertified check presented more than six months after its date. So a check older than about 180 days may never clear, but the money is still owed to someone.

Unclaimed property. Every state has an unclaimed property law. After a "dormancy period" with no contact, an uncashed check can become property you must report and send to the state. Periods differ by state and by type (payroll is often shorter than vendor checks). Many states also expect a due diligence letter to the payee before you report.

Phantom deposits. A deposit in your books that never hit the bank is usually a duplicate, a bank-feed match error, or a payment that bounced. It overstates cash and income.

The decision tree used by the workbook



Deposits follow a shorter path: older than your "clear within" days (default 10) means investigate; a duplicate in an open year is deleted or voided; a duplicate in a closed year gets JE-3 today.

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QuickBooks Desktop: step by step

1. Get the uncleared list

1. `Reports > Banking > Previous Reconciliation`, pick the bank account and the latest statement date, choose **Detail**. The report ends with the uncleared transactions.
2. Or build a custom report: `Reports > Custom Reports > Transaction Detail`, Dates = All (or through your cleanup date). On **Filters**: Account = your bank account, **Cleared = No**.
3. Click **Excel > Create New Worksheet**. Copy Date, Type, Num, Name and Amount into the Cleanup Tool. Checks show as negative amounts; type them as positive numbers (in Excel: `=ABS(cell)`).

2. Create the liability account (once)

`Lists > Chart of Accounts > Account > New > Other Account Types > Other Current Liability`, name it **Uncashed Checks Payable**.

3. Void open-year mistakes

Open the check (double-click it in the register or report), then `Edit > Void Check`, and Save & Close. A voided check keeps its number with a zero amount. Only do this when the check's date is in a year you have not closed or filed.

4. Enter the journal entries

`Company > Make General Journal Entries`. Date = your cleanup date. Copy JE-1, JE-2 and JE-3 lines from the Entry Builder tab. Put the payee in the Name column on detail lines if you want per-payee history (one line per payee).

5. Reconcile

`Banking > Reconcile`. Tick each old check **and** the matching JE line. They offset to $0, so your cleared balance still equals the bank statement.

6. Reissue or pay the state

Use `Banking > Write Checks` with the account **Uncashed Checks Payable** (not the original expense) so the expense is not counted twice.

> **Closing date:** if you use `Edit > Preferences > Accounting > Company Preferences > Set Date/Password`, keep it. The JEs are dated in the open period, so you never need to unlock a filed year.

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QuickBooks Online: step by step

> QuickBooks Online menus change often and differ a little by plan. If a name below does not match your screen, search Intuit's help for "reconciliation report", "void a check" or "journal entry" and follow the current article.

1. Get the uncleared list

1. Select **Settings** ⚙, then **Reconcile**. Choose **History by account**, pick the bank account and open the most recent report. It lists the **uncleared transactions** as of the statement date.
2. Or open the bank account register from the **Chart of accounts** (**View register**), use the filter and set the reconcile status option to the items that are not cleared or reconciled.
3. Export the report to Excel with the export icon, then copy Date, Type, Num, Name and Amount (as positive numbers) into the Cleanup Tool.

2. Create the liability account (once)

In the **Chart of accounts**, select **New**. Account type: **Other Current Liabilities**. Name: **Uncashed Checks Payable**.

3. Void open-year mistakes

Open the check, select **More** at the bottom of the form, then **Void** and confirm. The check stays in the register with a $0 amount.

4. Enter the journal entries

Select **+ New**, then **Journal entry**. Date = cleanup date. Copy the lines from Entry Builder. Bank-feed tip: these entries never appear in the bank feed, so do not "match" them there; you clear them in the reconciliation.

5. Reconcile

Settings ⚙ > Reconcile, choose the account, start reconciling, then tick each old check and the matching JE line together.

6. Reissue or pay the state

Create the new check (**+ New > Check**) and use the category **Uncashed Checks Payable**.

Closing the books: if you closed prior years (**Settings ⚙ > Account and settings > Advanced > Accounting > Close the books**), leave that date alone. All new entries are dated in the open period.

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Worked examples (from the sample data)

EXAMPLE values only. Cleanup date 12/31/2026 · last closed year 2025 · vendor dormancy 3 years (example) · payroll 1 year (example).

Example 1: 2025 vendor check, letter sent, no reply

Check #1987, $640.00, dated 08/15/2025. Letter mailed 11/01/2026; the 30-day window ended 12/01/2026. The check is in a closed year and not yet dormant (dormant on 08/15/2028), so the tool says **Move to Uncashed Checks Payable**.

JE-1 line	Debit	Credit
Checking	640.00	
Uncashed Checks Payable		640.00

Example 2: 2023 check, past dormancy

Check #1650, $1,200.00, dated 06/30/2023, no response. Three years passed on 06/30/2026, so the tool says **Move to liability; report to state**. It goes into JE-1 too, and is later paid to the state from the liability.

Example 3: 2025 deposit recorded twice

$420.00 sales deposit on 03/03/2025 was entered twice. Closed year, so no deleting: **JE-3** today debits the original income account and credits Checking for $420.00.

Example 4: 2026 duplicate check (open year)

Check #2150, $330.00, 07/07/2026, entered twice. Year 2026 is still open, so simply **void it on its own date**. No journal entry needed.

Totals from the sample

Answer cell	Amount	How to check by hand
Move to Uncashed Checks Payable	$1,998.90	640.00 + 1,200.00 + 158.90 (reissue, closed year)
May be reportable to state	$1,200.00	Only the 2023 check is past dormancy with no reply
Stale uncleared checks	$3,836.48	All money-out items over 180 days, except one that cleared
Old deposits to investigate	$1,500.00	10/30/2026 deposit, 62 days and still not in the bank

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Unclaimed property basics and the payee letter

Each state runs its own unclaimed property program for "holders" (businesses that owe money to someone they cannot reach). The rules that matter for old checks:

- **Which state:** generally the state of the payee's last known address; if unknown, often the state where your business is incorporated.
- **Dormancy period:** the time with no owner contact before the item is reportable. It differs by property type. Payroll checks are often shorter than vendor checks.
- **Due diligence:** many states require a written notice to the owner before you report, sent within a set window and above a minimum amount.
- **Annual report:** each state has its own report date and format (often an online portal).

Start at **unclaimed.org** (National Association of Unclaimed Property Administrators), pick your state, open its holder reporting pages, and fill in the **My State Rules** tab. Then copy the years into the Cleanup Tool settings.

The Payee Letter tab

Type the item # from the Cleanup Tool and the letter fills in the payee, check number, date, amount and a reply-by date (cleanup date + your reply window). Print it on your letterhead, sign, mail, and type the mailing date in the **Letter sent** column. Keep a copy.

> Sample wording used: "Our records show check #___ dated ___ for $___ has not been cashed... If we do not hear from you, we may be required by law to report this amount to the state as unclaimed property."

> State rules change and vary. Use this as a worksheet, check your state's current holder guide, and ask a professional if you hold larger amounts or many years of items.

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Edge cases and year-end checklist

Situation	What to do
Old **payroll** check	Do not void it in a filed quarter. Voiding can change payroll reports and W-2s. Move it to the liability and ask your payroll provider.
Check already on a 1099-NEC	Voiding in the original year would change the 1099 total. Use the current-period JE instead.
Bank cleared a different amount	Not stale. Fix the amount (encoding error or typo) and contact the bank if needed.
Stop payment already placed	Void (open year) or JE-1 (closed year), reissue if still owed, and record the stop-payment fee as bank charges.
Check to the owner	Not unclaimed property. Reverse it against the owner's draw or equity account (ask your CPA).
Deposit is in Undeposited Funds	That is a different problem: payments never grouped into a deposit. Clear those first.
Same item in bank feed and manual entry	Usually a duplicate. Keep the one that matches the bank and treat the other as Error / duplicate.
Bounced customer check	Not a phantom deposit: record the return and re-open the invoice.

Year-end checklist

- ☐ Reconcile every bank account through the cleanup date
- ☐ Export uncleared items and paste them into the Cleanup Tool
- ☐ Fill in My State Rules and the dormancy settings
- ☐ Send letters for items marked Contact; record the mailing date
- ☐ Void open-year errors on their own dates
- ☐ Enter JE-1 to JE-3 dated in the open period
- ☐ Clear old items and JE lines together in the next reconciliation
- ☐ Calendar your state's report date; pay from Uncashed Checks Payable
- ☐ Save the workbook, letters and proof of mailing with year-end records

> **Disclaimer.** This kit is general educational information, not tax, legal or accounting advice, and no result is guaranteed. Unclaimed property and tax rules depend on your state and facts; confirm with your CPA or attorney before you file or remit.

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