



HOW-TO GUIDE, UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2026

Getting started with Coinbase

How to open a Coinbase account, set up Coinbase Wallet, and move crypto between the two.

Part 1: Exchange account

Part 2: Self-custody wallet

Part 3: Linking and compliance

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BEFORE YOU START

How the two products differ

CUSTODIAL



Coinbase exchange

- Coinbase holds your private keys
- Identity verification (KYC) required
- Support can help recover a lost login
- Buy and sell with a bank account or card

SELF-CUSTODY

Coinbase Wallet

- You hold the keys; nobody can reset them
- No Coinbase account needed to create one
- A lost backup cannot be recovered
- Connects to DeFi, NFT and other crypto apps

The two balances stay separate. Moving crypto between them is a blockchain transfer, even after you link the accounts.

GET THE APPS

Scan or tap to download



Coinbase

Custodial exchange (Part 1)



[iPhone: App Store](#)



[Android: Google Play](#)

Coinbase Wallet

Self-custody wallet (Part 2)



[iPhone: App Store](#)



[Android: Google Play](#)

For the browser extension or web version, go to coinbase.com/wallet/downloads. Before installing, check that the store lists Coinbase as the publisher.

01



Open your Coinbase exchange account

You will need a government-issued photo ID, your phone, and a bank account or debit card in your own name.

Create and secure the account

1

Get the app

Install from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#), or type [coinbase.com](#) into your browser. Do not sign up through an ad or a link someone sent you.

2

Create account

Tap Get started. Enter your legal name exactly as it appears on your ID, and choose a password you do not use anywhere else.

3

Verify email

Open the confirmation email and click the link. First check that it came from a [coinbase.com](#) address.

4

Turn on 2-step

Set up 2-step verification before you add any money. The next slide ranks the options.

Use something stronger than SMS

Method	Protection	When to use it
Security key	Phishing-resistant hardware	Larger balances
Passkey	Phishing-resistant, on your device	Good default for most people
Authenticator app	Not tied to your phone number	A solid alternative
SMS text code	Exposed to SIM-swap attacks	As a backup only

SMS codes work, but in a SIM swap an attacker receives them on their own phone. You can change your method in Settings > Security.

Verify your identity (KYC)

Why it's required

Coinbase is a registered money services business. Under the Bank Secrecy Act it must confirm who you are before you can trade, and check customers against sanctions lists.

You cannot skip this step, and false information can get the account closed.

What you'll be asked for

- Legal name, date of birth, home address
- Social Security number (U.S. users)
- Photo of a government-issued ID
- A selfie or liveness check, if prompted
- Occupation and how you'll use the account

For the ID photo, use good light, keep all four corners in frame, and avoid glare.

Link a payment method

Method	Speed	Cost	Best for
Debit card	Instant	Highest fees	A small first purchase
Bank (ACH)	Buy now; withdrawal hold may apply	Lowest	Regular deposits
Wire	Same or next business day	Bank wire fee	Larger amounts

Debit is the quickest way to buy but usually costs the most. For regular deposits, a linked bank account is cheaper. Any account you link must be in your own name.

Make your first purchase

1. Tap **Buy**
2. Select **Ethereum (ETH)**
3. Enter the amount
4. Read the fee and total on the preview
5. Confirm

Before you confirm

- Start small while you learn the steps
- The price includes a spread plus a fee
- Crypto prices can drop sharply
- Crypto holdings are not FDIC- or SIPC-insured

02

Set up Coinbase Wallet (self-custody)

The app was called Base App from July 2025 until September 10, 2026, when Coinbase changed the name back. It is the same app with the same addresses, and some help pages still use the old name.

Download, then pick an account type

Install Coinbase Wallet from the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#) and check that the publisher is Coinbase. Tap Create, pick an optional username (other people can see it), and accept the terms.

Recovery-phrase wallet

- 12-word phrase you write down
- Holds Bitcoin, Solana and EVM tokens
- Can be restored in other wallet apps

Passkey smart wallet

- Sign in with your device passkey
- No phrase to write down
- **Cannot hold Bitcoin or Solana**

PART 2, STEP 3

Back up your recovery phrase

Anyone who has these 12 words can take everything in the wallet, and Coinbase cannot restore it for you.

Write it down offline

On paper or a steel plate. Not in a screenshot, photo, cloud note or email.

Keep two copies

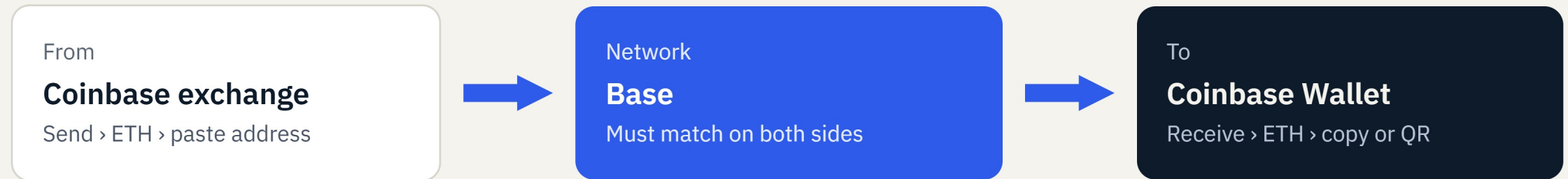
Store them in two separate places. Confirm the words in the app, then turn on a PIN or biometrics.

Never share it

Coinbase support will never ask for your phrase. Anyone who asks is running a scam.

PART 2, STEP 4

Fund the wallet on the right network



- ✓ Send a small test amount first and wait for it to arrive before sending the rest.
- 🔍 Copy the address from the Receive screen and compare every character, not only the start and end.
- ⚠️ If the networks don't match, stop. Crypto sent on the wrong network may be lost for good.

Connecting to Web3 apps

Use the in-app browser or scan a WalletConnect QR code to open DeFi platforms, NFT marketplaces and other dApps.



Before connecting

Open apps from a saved bookmark, not a search ad or a direct message. Check the web address letter by letter.



When signing

Read each request. A token approval can let a contract spend your tokens with no limit.



Afterwards

Revoke approvals you no longer use. Keep only what you need in a wallet you connect to apps often.

03

Link exchange and wallet

1. In Coinbase Wallet, open **Settings**
2. Choose the option to connect your Coinbase account
3. Sign in to Coinbase and authorize the link
4. Move funds between the two from either app

Linking does not hand your wallet keys to Coinbase. The wallet stays self-custodial and its balance stays separate. Menu names changed with the September 2026 rename, so look under Settings if a label is different.

Tax, sanctions and terms

Form 1099-DA

Coinbase reports your exchange sales to the IRS. Gross proceeds are reported from 2025, and cost basis for crypto bought from 2026 on.

Track wallet activity yourself

Swaps in a self-custody wallet generally won't appear on that form, but they can still be taxable. Keep a record of every transfer.

Sanctions screening

Deposits are screened. Funds that passed through sanctioned addresses or mixing services can be frozen and reported.

Different terms

The wallet is provided by Coinbase Bermuda Technologies Ltd. Its perpetual futures and tokenized stocks are limited by region and carry high risk.

RECAP

Quick-start checklist

- ✓ Signed up through the official app or site
- ✓ Passkey or security key turned on
- ✓ Identity verified
- ✓ Payment method in your own name
- ✓ Wallet account type chosen
- ✓ Recovery phrase written down twice, offline
- ✓ Test transfer sent on Base first
- ✓ Records kept for tax time