

QuickBooks 2014 Guide for Upgraders

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by Bonnie Biafore

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QuickBooks 2014 Guide for Upgraders

There you are in QuickBooks, happily keeping track of your financial books. Before you know it, a year or two or three has gone by and it's time to upgrade your copy of the program. With each edition of QuickBooks come new features.

This upgrade guide tells you what QuickBooks 2014 has in store for you, whether you're upgrading from QuickBooks 2011, 2012, or 2013. First, the guide whisks you through what's new in QuickBooks' user interface. Then, it provides an overview of the major new features introduced over the past three years.

What's New in the User Interface

When you first launch QuickBooks, you'll notice big changes in how the program looks. This section gives you the lowdown on these new features.

What's New Tags

Eager to get started? The What's New feature helps you learn about new attributes while you work. Go ahead and use the parts of QuickBooks you need, and the What's New feature points out what has changed since the previous version. When there's something new and noteworthy, you'll see a yellow tag with the label "What's New." To satisfy your curiosity, simply click this tag, and yellow boxes point to the new features, as shown in Figure 1. The What's New tag shows up throughout the program. For example, if you open the Create Invoices window (on the Home page, click Create Invoices), you'll see the What's New tag on the window's right. Click this tag to see callouts for new features in that window. To dismiss the callouts, click anywhere within the current window.

Once you're up to speed with the new version, you might want to hide the What's New tags. All you have to do is click the X in any What's New tag, and they all disappear. If you realize you dismissed them too soon, you can bring them back by clicking Help in the main QuickBooks' menu bar, and then choosing What's New on the drop-down menu.

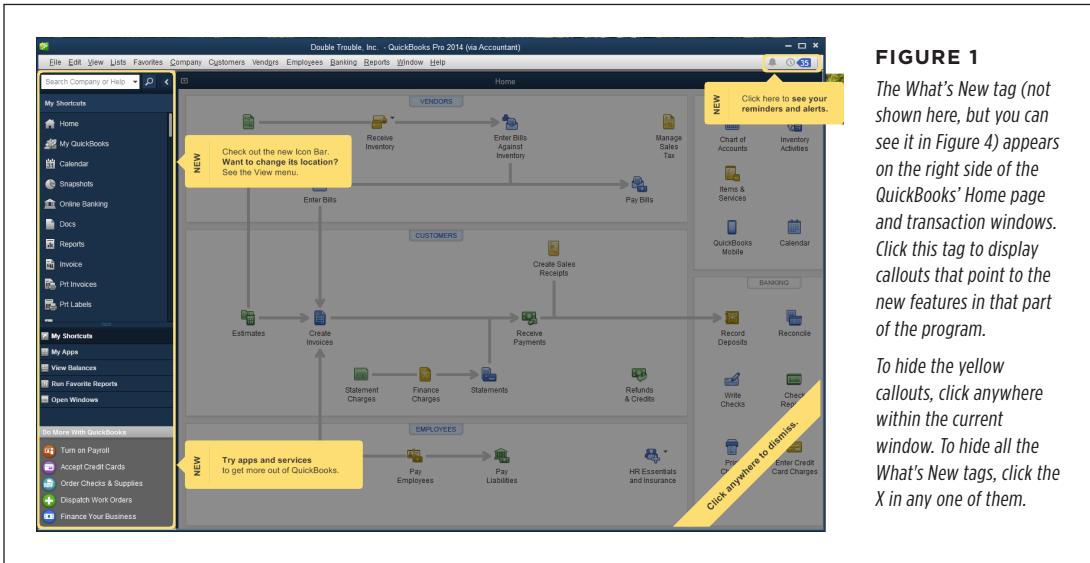


FIGURE 1
The What's New tag (not shown here, but you can see it in Figure 4) appears on the right side of the QuickBooks' Home page and transaction windows. Click this tag to display callouts that point to the new features in that part of the program.
To hide the yellow callouts, click anywhere within the current window. To hide all the What's New tags, click the X in any one of them.

New Look

The user interface's appearance is simpler and less cluttered than in earlier QuickBooks versions. It presents features and options in a more organized and consistent way. The new color scheme makes it easy to focus on the task at hand: Navigation features like the menu bar and the top and left icon bars are darker and monochromatic. That way, the areas where you do your work—like the Home page and transactions windows—stand out, as shown in Figure 2. Blue, green, and yellow icons (like the ones in transaction window ribbons) represent other features that relate to the work you do. When you place your cursor over an entry in the menu bar or a drop-down menu, the entry's background turns green so you can tell what you've selected. In addition, the button that will be activated when you press Enter is blue, so it's easy to identify.

Onscreen font sizes and colors vary to indicate how significant various bits of information are. For example, labels on the program's fields use small, gray text, while the values you enter appear in taller, black text so they stand out more. In addition, the rows in transaction window's tables are taller and overall spacing is greater than in older versions of QuickBooks to make data easier to read.

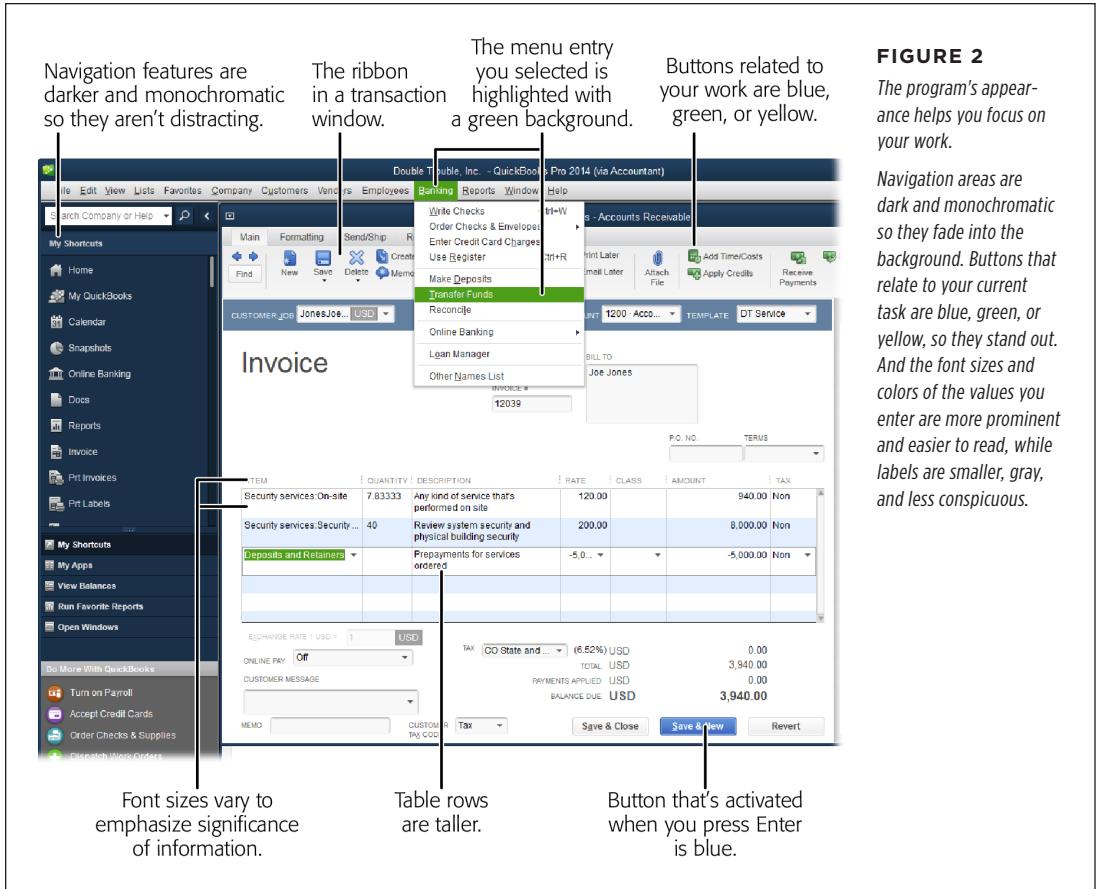


FIGURE 2

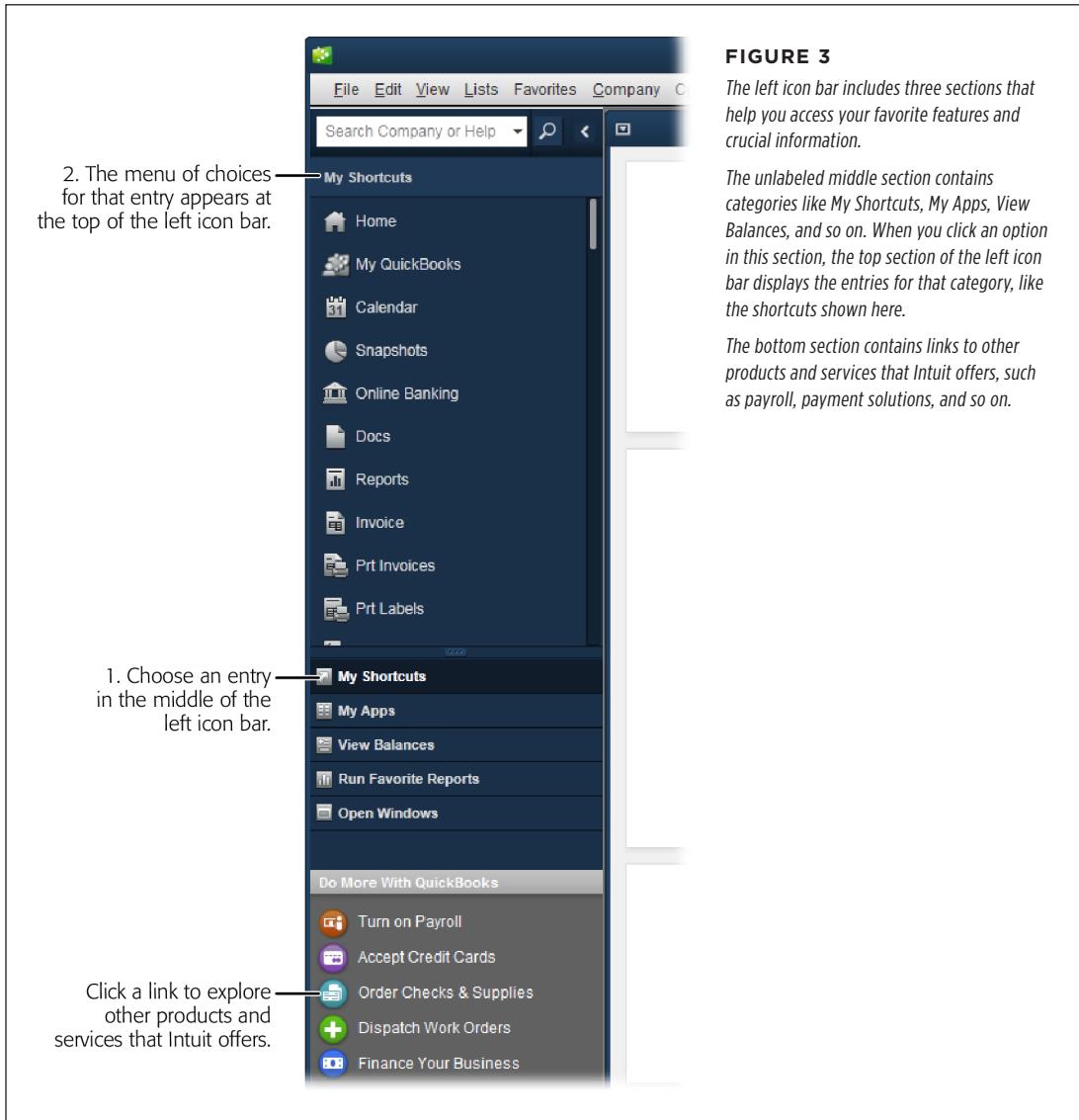
The program's appearance helps you focus on your work.

Navigation areas are dark and monochromatic so they fade into the background. Buttons that relate to your current task are blue, green, or yellow, so they stand out. And the font sizes and colors of the values you enter are more prominent and easier to read, while labels are smaller, gray, and less conspicuous.

Left Icon Bar

You can now use the program's View menu to choose between the left icon bar and the top icon bar. The left icon bar, shown in Figure 3, appears automatically the first time you launch QuickBooks 2014 and gives you access to everything the program has to offer. It can take you to your favorite QuickBooks windows and reports, and show your account balances. To unlock the potential of the left icon bar, take a minute to customize your shortcuts. The My Shortcuts entry (which appears at the top of the left icon bar whenever you launch QuickBooks) displays shortcuts to the program's features. (These are the same shortcuts you see as icons if you display the top icon bar.) Although these shortcuts initially include features that most people find useful, you can get rid of shortcuts you don't use or add links to features you use all the time by right-clicking anywhere within the My Shortcuts section (except on the My Shortcuts heading) and then clicking Customize Shortcuts.

The middle section of the left icon bar contains several categories, including My Shortcuts. (What you choose here determines what's displayed in the top section of the left icon bar.) For instance, if you use add-on programs, click My Apps to see links that let you access those programs or find new ones. Click View Balances or Run Favorite Reports to see account balances or favorite reports, respectively, in the top section of the left icon bar. Click Open Windows to see a list of all your open windows; simply click a window's name to make it active. (This option displays the same windows you see if you choose View→Open Window List when you use the top icon bar.)



TIP

You can use the View menu to switch between the top icon bar and the left icon bar. Simply choose View→Left Icon Bar or View→Top Icon Bar.

Ribbon

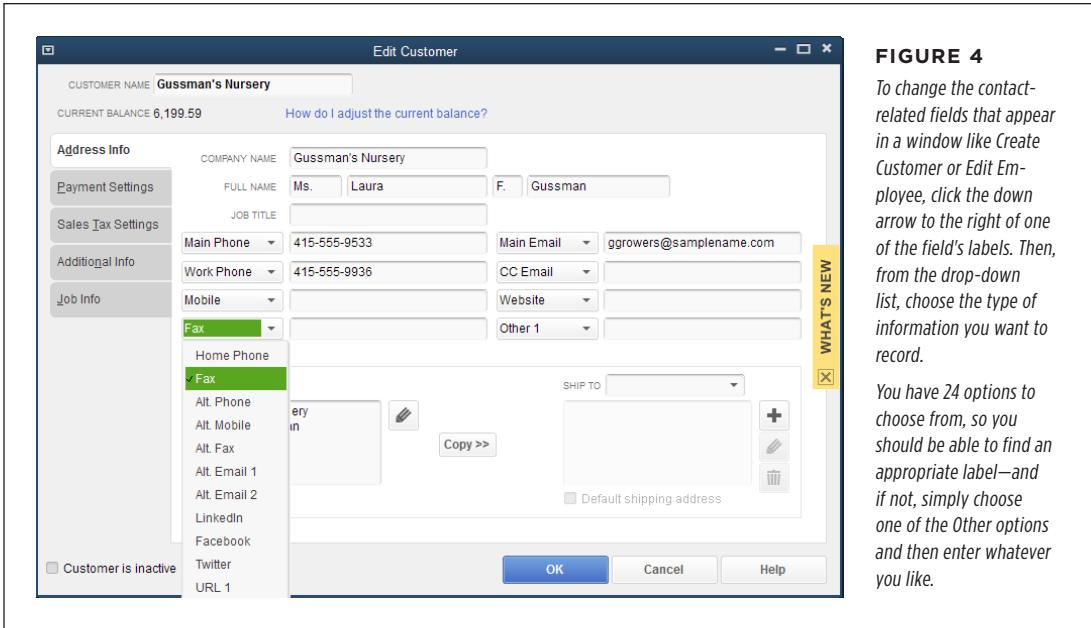
You'll see a ribbon (a panel that contains buttons and drop-down menus that let you access the program's features) across the top of most of QuickBooks' transaction windows, such as Create Invoices. Features that used to be scattered around the window's toolbar, the window's form, and shortcut menus are now consolidated in the ribbon, as shown in Figure 2. (If you're a fan of right-clicking to open shortcut menus, don't fret—you can still do that.) Similar to the ribbon in Microsoft programs, QuickBooks' ribbon contains several tabs that organize all the features at your disposal. For example, in the Create Invoices window, the Main tab provides access to the most frequently-used features for invoices, like Save, Memorize, Print, Add Time/Costs, and so on. The Formatting tab includes features like templates and spell-check.

■ New and Improved Features

With each new version of the program, QuickBooks offers new features and improved adaptations of existing ones. Here's a rundown of the new tricks up QuickBooks' sleeve.

More Contact Info Fields

QuickBooks now includes a lot more contact information fields for customers, vendors, and employees. If you open a window like Create Customer or Edit Vendor, you'll notice that the labels for the eight contact fields in the middle of the window have down arrows on them, as shown in Figure 4. Initially, these fields are set to include four phone numbers, two email addresses, the address of the company's website, and "Other 1" (meaning whatever other piece of info you want to record). However, you can set these fields to any of 24 contact-related options—such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Skype ID—by clicking the down arrow and then choosing a setting from the drop-down list.



To-dos

QuickBooks' to-dos are preferable to papering the edges of your computer monitor with sticky notes. You can create to-dos for customers, vendors, employees, and leads. To-dos can be calls, faxes, emails, meetings, appointments, or tasks—common activities you want to remember. You specify the to-do's priority, set a due date and time, and associate it with a customer, vendor, employee, or lead. The To Do List window (choose Company→To Do List) is command central for viewing and managing all your to-dos: it lets you filter your to-dos by type, status, date, customer, lead, or vendor. The various QuickBooks centers also let you look at to-dos. For example, in the Customer Center window, click a customer or job in the Customers & Jobs list, and then click the To Do's tab at the window's bottom right to see the to-dos for that customer or job. To-dos also appear in the program's Calendar, which you'll learn about in a sec.

Multiple Notes for Each Name

You can now create multiple notes for each name in QuickBooks. In previous versions, you could add as many notes as you wanted, but they all resided in one field in the Edit Note dialog box. Now, the Notes tab appears at the bottom right of each QuickBooks center (Customer, Vendor, Lead, and Employee.) You can scan the list of individual notes, create new ones, and edit or delete existing ones.

Color Schemes for Each Company File

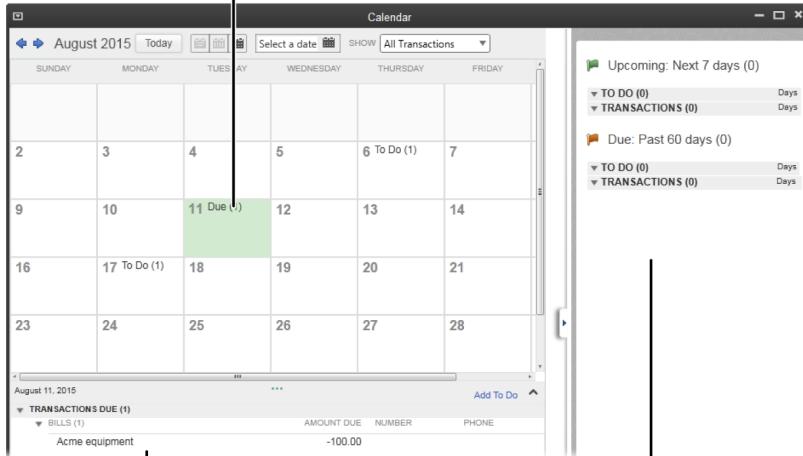
Each company file can have its own color scheme, so you can easily tell which company file you're working on by the color of the QuickBooks title bar and the borders of its windows. To set the color scheme for a company, click Edit→Preferences. On the left side of the Preferences dialog box, click Desktop View, and then, at the top middle of the dialog box, click the My Preferences tab (if it's not already active). In the Company File Color Scheme drop-down list, choose the color scheme you want to use for the current company file. (You can choose from 15 different options.) Because this setting is on the My Preferences tab, each person who uses this company file can choose their *own* color scheme; that means you can make this company file red and Steve in accounting can make it forest green to mimic the color of money.

Calendar Window

The Calendar window (choose Company→Calendar) shows you when transactions and to-dos are due, as shown in Figure 5. This window lets you see everything you've done or need to do (at least in QuickBooks) in one convenient spot. Each date square shows what's scheduled to occur on that day. To see the transactions and to-dos due on a specific day, click its date square, and those transactions and to-dos appear below the calendar grid. You can modify the calendar to show one month, one week, or one day at a time.

The Upcoming and Due pane on the right side of the Calendar window lists the to-dos and transactions that are on deck or past due as of today, which is incredibly handy for staying on top of your bookkeeping and business activities. Double-click a to-do in this pane to open the Edit To Do dialog box, which displays the details of what you're supposed to do and when. Double-click a transaction in this pane to open it in its corresponding window (such as Create Invoices for an invoice).

Click a date square
to see what's happening
on that day.



This list shows the transactions
and to-dos for the date
selected in the calendar.

This pane shows what's
on deck and what's overdue.

FIGURE 5

The Calendar window shows when transactions and to-dos are due or were completed.

If you want to see what's supposed to happen on a particular date, simply click its date square in the calendar grid, and its transactions and to-dos appear at the bottom of the window.

The Upcoming and Due pane on the right is great for seeing what's scheduled in the near future and what's overdue.

Simplified Bank Feed Setup

Setting up bank feeds (the connections between your real-world bank accounts and the accounts in QuickBooks) is a sleeker process these days. All you have to do is head to the Bank Feed Setup window (Banking→Online Banking→“Set Up Account for Online Services”) fill in your bank's name, your user ID, and your password. When the Bank Feed Setup window displays the accounts you have at that bank, you match them up with the corresponding accounts in your QuickBooks company file. Click Connect and your QuickBooks accounts are ready to talk to the ones at your financial institution.

Bank Feeds Center Window

The Bank Feeds Center window (Banking→Bank Feeds→Bank Feeds Center) has a new, easy-to-use layout. This window lets you quickly compare your online bank account balances to the ones in your company file's accounts. When you're ready to start working on transactions, the bank feeds you set up (see above) make it easy to process your banking transactions. After you download transactions, a status area in the middle of the Bank Feeds Center window shows how many transactions QuickBooks was able to match automatically and how many you have to match

manually. Then, when you click the Transaction List button to open the Transactions List window, you see that same info at the top of the window, as shown in Figure 6. You can click the bars in the Transactions List window's status area to choose the transactions you want to work on. For example, click the orange "Need Your Review" bar to view the transactions that QuickBooks couldn't match up. You can fill in the payee name, account, or class right in the transaction table. In addition, you can tell QuickBooks what you want to do with each transaction by choosing an option from the Action cell's drop-down menu: add the transaction to your account register, add more details to it, match it to an existing transaction, or ignore it. In addition, you can add, approve, or delete multiple transactions at once. As you process the downloaded transactions, QuickBooks updates the status area to reflect your progress.

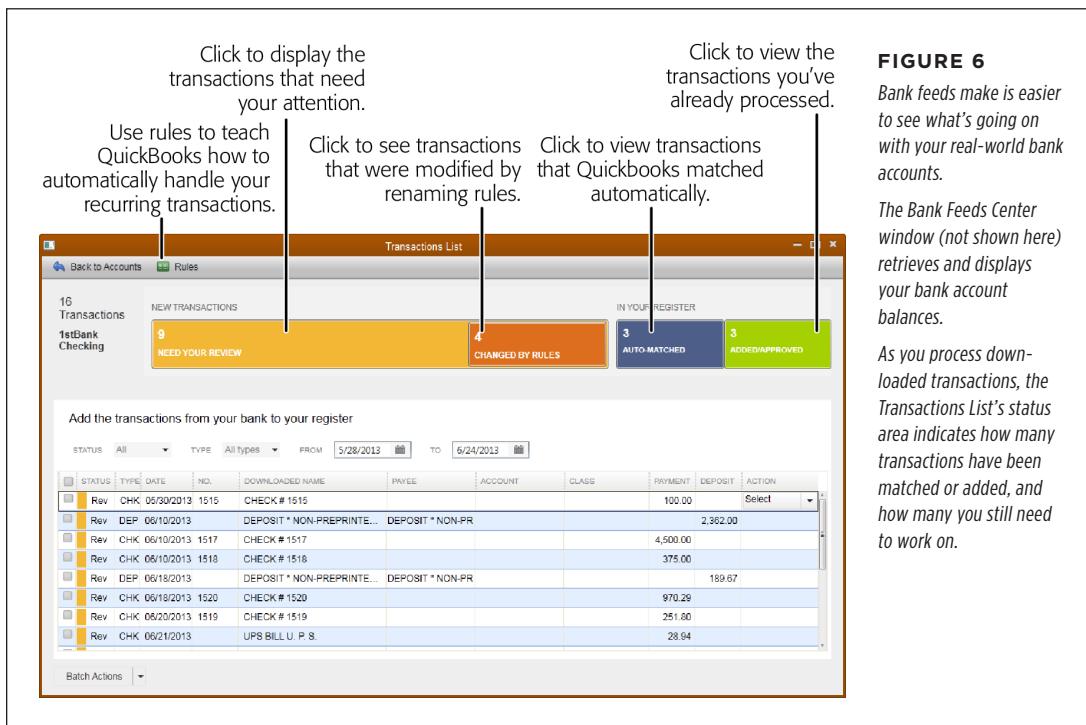


FIGURE 6

Bank feeds make it easier to see what's going on with your real-world bank accounts.

The Bank Feeds Center window (not shown here) retrieves and displays your bank account balances.

As you process downloaded transactions, the Transactions List's status area indicates how many transactions have been matched or added, and how many you still need to work on.

Improved Bounced Check Handling

Handling bounced checks in QuickBooks is a lot easier than it used to be (although a bounced check is never fun to deal with.) When a customer's check bounces, several things have to happen to recover from that financial gaffe, and QuickBooks can take care of them all. To handle a bounced check, head to the Receive Payments window (choose Customers→Receive Payments) and find the payment that bounced by clicking the left-pointing Previous arrow in the window's ribbon or by searching for the payment. Then, in the window's ribbon, click Record Bounced Check to open the Manage Bounced Check dialog box. There, fill in the bounced-check fee that your

bank charged you so QuickBooks can deduct that fee from your bank account. In the “Fee to Charge Your Customer” field, enter the amount you want to charge your customer. For example, if your bank charged you \$25 for your customer’s bad check and you want to tack on *another* \$25 for your inconvenience, enter \$50. Then, when you click Next, the Bounced Check Summary dialog box tells you what QuickBooks will do: mark the invoice corresponding to the bounced check as unpaid, deduct the amount of the bad check and fees from your bank account, and create a new invoice for the fee you’re charging the customer. To set all these actions in motion, click Finish. After that, all you have to do is send the new invoice to your customer and hope the *next* check you get from them is good.

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