Before you open the app

Fourteen questions, and the answers, written down before you start. Fill this in at the table.
Then opening the account is typing, not deciding.

Have with you: a photo ID, your Social Security number, a recent pay stub if you are employed, and your bank login.

First, the only real decision: which account

○ **Regular brokerage account**
Money you might want back in the next couple of years. Take it out whenever you like.

○ **Roth IRA**
Money you are not planning to touch. Needs money you earned this year.

Who you are

Required of every broker by the Customer Identification Program.

1. **Your legal name**
Exactly as it appears on your ID.

2. **Date of birth**
18, or the age of majority where you live.

3. **Home address**
A street address where you live. Not a PO box.

4. **Social Security number**
Have your card or number with you. Do not write it on this sheet.
not written down

5. **Citizenship and country of residence**
And an ID document ready to photograph.

What you do

Required by FINRA Rule 4512.

6. **Employment status**
Employed, self employed, student and not employed are all normal answers.

7. **Employer name and address**
Skip this one if you are not employed.

What you have, and what you want

Required by Regulation Best Interest. These are about the broker's duty to you, not a test of you.

8. **Annual income**
They ask for a band, not a figure. Pick your honest one.

9. **Net worth, or liquid net worth**
The lowest band is a normal answer.

10. **Investment experience**
None is a real answer. Do not answer up to look experienced, it can unlock things you do not want.

11. **Investment objective**
Growth, if you are buying a broad index fund and leaving it alone.

The two that sound like a trap

One is FINRA Rule 4512, the other is control person status under SEC Rule 144.

12. Are you, or is anyone in your household, employed by a broker, a stock exchange or FINRA?
☐ No ☐ Yes

13. Are you, or is anyone in your household, a director, policy making officer or 10% shareholder of a public company?
☐ No ☐ Yes

The tax box

14. **The W-9 certification**
You are confirming your Social Security number is correct and that you are a US person. Nothing to write. Read it and tick it.
☐ Read it

When you are done, look back.

Count how many of these fourteen you had to go and find out, and how many were already yours.
That number is the real size of the thing that has been stopping you.

The eighteen words

What the app is going to say to you in the first hour, in plain English, and whether it is for you.

YOURS you will use this on day one | **LATER** real, but not now | **NOT FOR YOU** can lose you more than you put in

#	Word	What it means (in plain English)	For you?
1	Ticker	The short nickname a fund goes by, like a license plate. You type VOO into the search box, not "Vanguard S&P 500 ETF".	YOURS
2	Share	One slice of one company's pizza. Buy a share in a coffee chain and you own a real piece of it, every store included, however small your piece is.	YOURS
3	Fractional share	Half a slice, or a tenth of one. If a share costs $500 and you have $100, you get a fifth of it and it grows exactly the same way.	YOURS
4	Stock, or equity	Your whole $100 in one pizza. If that one company has a terrible year, so do you, with nothing else in the box to soften it.	LATER
5	ETF	One thin slice taken from each of hundreds of different pizzas. If one of them turns out burnt, you barely taste it. That is the entire point of it.	YOURS
6	Mutual fund	The same box of many slices, except the price only updates once, after the market closes for the day. You say how many dollars you want, not how many shares.	YOURS
7	Index fund	A fund that copies a whole market instead of paying someone to pick winners. It quietly buys a bit of everything and stops trying to be clever.	YOURS
8	Expense ratio	The fee the fund takes each year, quietly, off the top. At 0.03% you pay three cents a year on $100. At 0.60% you pay sixty, for exactly the same thing.	YOURS
9	Market order	Buy it now at whatever the price is this second, like paying the sticker price at the register. Fine when you are buying one big steady fund.	YOURS
10	Limit order	Buy only if it comes down to a price you name. Like leaving a bid and walking away. You might get it. You might not get it at all.	LATER
11	Buying power	What you can spend this minute. Your balance can say $100 while your buying power says nothing, because the transfer has not finished landing.	YOURS
12	Settlement	The gap between selling something and the cash properly being yours. Sell on Friday, it is there Monday. One business day, every time.	YOURS
13	ACH transfer	The ordinary bank transfer that moves your money in. It is mail, not a text message. Days, not seconds. Send it before the day you want to buy.	YOURS
14	Dividend	Some companies hand out a slice of their profits a few times a year. It turns up in your account as cash, usually a few cents at first.	YOURS
15	Spot	Buying the real thing with money you already have. Like paying cash in a store and walking out holding the item. This is what you are doing.	YOURS
16	Futures	A bet on what a price will be later, usually placed with borrowed money. If it goes the wrong way you can owe more than you ever put in.	NOT FOR YOU
17	Options	A bet on a price with a deadline attached. If the date passes and you were wrong, the whole thing is worth nothing. Not a slow mistake, a sudden one.	NOT FOR YOU
18	Margin	The app lends you money to invest with, then wants it back whether or not you made any. This is how beginners end up owing instead of owning.	NOT FOR YOU

Three of these eighteen can take more than you gave them.

They are the three marked NOT FOR YOU. Everything you need for a first $100 is marked YOURS.