🔐 Sign-In & Account Guide

Everything you need to know about signing in, creating an account, managing roles, and keeping your account secure on the Multi-Directory Platform.

⚡ Walkthrough — do this, in this order

Which login to use, where you land, and how to fix the usual problems — in order.

1. **Click Sign In.** The **Sign In** button is top-right on any page of the site.
2. **Pick your method. Continue with Google** is fastest. Or use the **Login** tab with your email and password. Or choose **Magic Link** to have a one-time sign-in link emailed to you. New here? Use the **Register** tab and click **Create Account**.
3. **Verify your email if asked.** Check your inbox — and the spam folder before concluding it never arrived. Verification is what lets you claim a business later.
4. **Land where you meant to.** Customers land in the visitor portal (`/visitor`), businesses in the business portal (`/portal`), suppliers in `/distributor`.
5. **Switch roles if you hold more than one.** The **Role Switcher** moves you between the roles you already have — no second account, no second password.
6. **Claim a business.** Click **Claim This Business** on the listing (or open `/claim`), enter your details, and submit. Three steps: submit → verify → approved by an admin.
7. **Reset a forgotten password. Forgot password** on the Login tab emails you a reset link. The link is one-use and time-limited.
8. **See the result.** You are signed in, in the right workspace, with every role you hold listed in the switcher.

✅ **You're done when:** you can sign in with your chosen method, land in the correct portal, and see your roles in the Role Switcher.

1. Introduction

The Multi-Directory Platform supports multiple sign-in methods so you can choose what works best for you. One account can have multiple **roles** (Visitor, Business Owner, Supplier), and you can switch between them without logging out.

🔑 Google OAuth

One-click sign-in with your Google account. No separate password to remember.

📧 Email & Password

Traditional email/password sign-in with magic link option for password-free access.

🔄 Role Switcher

Toggle between Visitor, Business Owner, and Supplier views from the header dropdown.

🛡️ Security

Session management, sign-out-all-devices, and OAuth token protection.

2. How to Sign In

The platform offers three sign-in methods. All are available from the sign-in page accessible at `/auth/login` or by clicking **Sign In** in the top navigation bar.

🔑 Sign In with Google (Recommended)

Google OAuth is the fastest way to sign in — no separate password to create or remember.

1. Click the **"Continue with Google"** button on the sign-in page.
2. Select your Google account in the pop-up window. If you're already signed into Google in your browser, this happens automatically.
3. On first sign-in, you'll be prompted to complete your profile (display name, preferred role).
4. You're signed in. Your Google profile photo and email are linked to your platform account.

> 💡 **Tip:** If you signed up with Google, you don't need a separate password. Use the "Continue with Google" button each time you sign in.

📧 Sign In with Email & Password

Traditional email and password authentication for users who prefer not to use Google OAuth.

1. Enter your **email address** and **password** in the sign-in form.
2. Click **"Sign In"**. If the credentials are correct, you'll be redirected to your dashboard.
3. If you've forgotten your password, click the **"Forgot Password?"** link to reset it (see Section 6: Password Reset).

✨ Magic Link Sign-In

Password-free sign-in via a one-time link sent to your email. Available as an alternative on the sign-in page.

1. Enter your email address and click **"Send Magic Link"**.
2. Check your inbox for an email with the subject "Your Sign-In Link."
3. Click the link in the email. You'll be signed in automatically — no password needed.

> 💡 **Tip:** Magic links expire after **15 minutes**. If your link expires, request a new one from the sign-in page. Each new request invalidates previous links for security.

3. Account Creation

Creating an account takes less than a minute. You can create an account with Google or with an email/password combination.

📝 Creating an Account

1. Go to the sign-in page and click **"Create Account"** or use the **Google OAuth** button if you're a new user.
2. Choose your **display name** — this is how other users will see you on the platform.
3. Select your **primary role**:

👤 **Visitor**	Browse directories, search for businesses, save favorites. The default role for most new users.
🏪 **Business Owner**	Claim and manage a business listing, post deals, respond to reviews. You'll need to claim a business after account creation.
🚚 **Supplier**	Access the B2B marketplace, respond to RFQs, browse lead exchanges. Designed for wholesalers, distributors, and service providers.

4. If you used email/password sign-up, check your inbox for a **verification email**. Click the link to verify your email address. Google OAuth accounts are automatically verified.

💡 **Tip:** You can add additional roles later — you're not locked into your initial choice. See Section 4: Role Switcher for details.

📬 Email Verification

For email/password accounts, you must verify your email before accessing certain features (claiming businesses, posting deals, etc.).

- **Verification email** — Sent immediately after account creation. Subject: "Verify Your Email Address."
- **Link expiry** — Verification links expire after **24 hours**. You can request a new verification email from your Account Settings.
- **Resend** — If you don't receive the email within 5 minutes, check your spam folder, then use the "Resend Verification" button on the sign-in page.

4. Role Switcher

The **Role Switcher** is a dropdown in the header navigation that lets you toggle between different platform views without signing out and back in. A single account can have multiple roles.

🔄 How the Role Switcher Works

1. Look for the **Role Switcher** dropdown in the top-right of the header navigation. It shows your current active role.
2. Click the dropdown to see all roles available to your account. Active roles are shown with a checkmark.
3. Select a different role. The page refreshes with the navigation, dashboard, and features for that role.

Example Role Combinations

Visitor + Business Owner	Browse directories normally, then switch to manage your claimed business.
Business Owner + Supplier	Manage your business listing, then switch to browse the B2B marketplace and respond to RFQs.
All three roles	Full access: browse as a visitor, manage your business, and participate in B2B trading.

💡 **Tip:** Each role has its own bookmarks, notification preferences, and dashboard layout. Switching roles doesn't affect your data in other roles.

Adding a New Role

To add a role you don't currently have:

1. Go to **Account Settings** from the user menu (click your avatar in the top-right).
2. Select the **Roles** tab.
3. Click **"Add Role"** next to the role you want to add (Business Owner or Supplier).
4. For Business Owner role: you'll be prompted to **claim a business** (see Section 5).
5. For Supplier role: you'll complete a brief supplier profile with your business category and service area.

5. Claiming a Business

To manage a business listing, you must **claim** it. This verifies that you're the legitimate owner or authorized representative. The claim process is available at `/claim` and takes a few minutes.

📋 The 3-Step Claim Process

Step 1: Find Your Business

1. Go to `/claim` and search for your business by name or address. If your business is already listed in the directory, it will appear in the search results. If not, you can **add it as a new listing** first.

Step 2: Verify Ownership

2. Select a verification method to prove you own or represent the business:
   - **Email verification** — A code is sent to the business's listed email or a domain-matching email address.
   - **Phone verification** — An automated call or SMS to the business phone number with a verification code.
   - **Document upload** — Upload a business license, utility bill, or tax certificate showing the business name and address.

Step 3: Admin Approval

3. After verification, the claim is sent to the **directory admin** for final review. The admin checks that the submitted information matches the business listing. Approval typically takes **1–2 business days**. Once approved:
   - You gain full access to the **Business Portal** at `/portal`.
   - A **Verified Owner** badge appears on your listing.
   - You can edit your business profile, post deals, and respond to reviews.

⚠️ **Important:** If your claim is rejected, you'll receive an email with the reason. Common reasons include mismatched ownership details, incomplete documentation, or the business already being claimed by another user. You can re-submit with corrected information.

6. Password Reset

If you signed up with email/password and forgot your password, you can reset it through the forgot-password flow.

🔄 Resetting Your Password

1. On the sign-in page, click the **"Forgot Password?"** link below the password field.
2. Enter the email address associated with your account and click **"Send Reset Link"**.
3. Check your inbox for an email with the subject "Reset Your Password." Click the link in the email.
4. On the reset page, enter your **new password** (minimum 8 characters, at least one letter and one number) and confirm it. Click **"Reset Password"**.
5. You'll be redirected to the sign-in page. Sign in with your email and new password.

⏱️ Reset Link Details

Expiry	Reset links expire after **1 hour**.
One-time use	Each link can only be used once. Request a new link if needed.
Invalidation	Requesting a new reset link invalidates any previous links.
Google OAuth users	If you signed up with Google, use the "Continue with Google" button — no password needed. You can set a password later in Account Settings if desired.

7. Account Settings

Access your account settings by clicking your **avatar** in the top-right corner and selecting **"Account Settings"** from the dropdown menu.

👤 Profile Management

- **Display name** — Change how your name appears to other users (reviews, comments, etc.).
- **Profile photo** — Upload a profile picture or use your Google account photo. Supported formats: JPG, PNG. Max size: 5 MB.

- **Bio** — Optional short bio visible on your public profile.
- **Time zone** — Set your time zone for accurate deal and event timestamps.

🔗 Connected Accounts

- **Google** — Link or unlink your Google account. If Google is your only sign-in method, you'll need to set a password before unlinking.
- **Email** — Update your email address. A verification is sent to the new address before the change takes effect.
- **Add password** — Google-only users can set a password here to enable email/password sign-in as a backup.

🔔 Notification Preferences

- **Email notifications** — Toggle on/off for: claim status updates, review replies, deal expirations, new messages.
- **In-app notifications** — Control which events trigger the bell icon badge in the header.
- **Marketing emails** — Opt in or out of promotional emails and platform announcements.

💎 Your ZaarCash Balance

- **One account, one network-wide wallet** — once you're signed in and enrolled, your ZaarCash balance follows your account across every participating ZaarHub business and city.
- **Earning:** 1 ZaarCash per $1.00 of earnable spend at any participating business (only businesses that sign up to the loyalty programme participate and show the ZaarCash 💎 badge).
- **Value:** 100 ZaarCash = $1.00 (1 ZaarCash = 1¢).
- **Redemption:** you can pay at most 10% of a bill with ZaarCash, and only once you've banked at least 100 ZaarCash. Free or fully discounted items earn nothing.
- **Why you must sign in:** your QR code, balance and transaction history are tied to your account — sign in to see them and to let a business scan you at checkout.

8. Security

🖥️ Session Management

You can view and manage all active sessions from the **Security** tab in Account Settings.

- **Active sessions** — See every device and browser currently signed into your account, including location (city/country), browser, and last active time.
- **Sign out individual session** — Click "Sign Out" next to any session to remotely end it.

- **Sign out all devices** — Use the "Sign Out Everywhere" button to end all sessions except your current one. Useful if you suspect unauthorized access.

> ⚠️ **Important:** If you see a session you don't recognize, sign it out immediately and change your password. Contact the directory admin if you suspect your account has been compromised.

🔐 OAuth Token Handling

- **Google OAuth tokens** are stored securely and never exposed to client-side JavaScript.
- **Token refresh** — Access tokens are refreshed automatically. You don't need to re-authenticate with Google unless you explicitly sign out.
- **Scope** — The platform only requests basic profile information (name, email, profile photo) from Google. No access to your Google Drive, Contacts, or other data.

🛡️ Account Protection Best Practices

- Use a **strong, unique password** — at least 12 characters with a mix of letters, numbers, and symbols.
- **Don't share** your account credentials with anyone. Each team member should have their own account.
- **Sign out** from shared or public computers when you're done.
- **Review sessions** periodically — check the Security tab for any unrecognized activity.

9. Troubleshooting

📧 "I Didn't Receive the Verification Email"

- Check your **spam/junk folder** — verification emails sometimes get filtered.
- Wait **5 minutes** — some email providers delay delivery.
- Verify you entered the **correct email address** during sign-up.
- Use the **"Resend Verification"** button on the sign-in page.
- If you still don't receive it, try signing up with a **different email provider** (Gmail is recommended).

🔑 "Google Sign-In Is Blocked"

- Ensure **third-party cookies** are enabled in your browser — Google OAuth requires them for the pop-up window.
- Try in a **private/incognito window** — this rules out conflicting browser extensions.
- Disable **ad blockers or privacy extensions** temporarily — some aggressively block OAuth pop-ups.

- If using a **work or school device**, your organization may block Google OAuth on external sites. Try from a personal device.

🏪 "My Claim Was Rejected"

- Read the **rejection email** carefully — it includes the specific reason.
- **Common reasons:**
  - Name on documentation doesn't match the business listing name.
  - Submitted document is expired or illegible.
  - Business is already claimed by another verified user.
  - Address on documentation doesn't match the listing address.
- Re-submit with **corrected documentation**. You can upload a different verification document if needed.
- If you believe the rejection was in error, contact the **directory admin** for a manual review.

🔒 "I Can't Sign In"

- **Wrong password:** Use the "Forgot Password?" link. If you don't receive the reset email, check spam.
- **Google account changed:** If you changed your Google email, sign in with your original Google account and link the new one in Account Settings.
- **Account locked:** After **5 failed sign-in attempts**, the account is temporarily locked for 15 minutes. Wait and try again.
- **Browser issue:** Clear your browser cache and cookies, or try a different browser.

🔄 "The Role Switcher Doesn't Show My Role"

- Ensure you've **added the role** in Account Settings → Roles. Having a claimed business is separate from having the Business Owner role active.
- If your claim is still **pending approval**, the Business Owner role may not be fully active until approval is granted.
- **Refresh the page** — role changes may take a moment to propagate.
- Try **signing out and back in** to force a role refresh.

> 💡 **Still stuck?** Contact the directory admin through the support link in the footer, or email the platform team. Include your account email and a description of the issue for faster resolution.