How to Export a Journal Report from QuickBooks Desktop

Purpose: This guide walks you through exporting the Journal report from QuickBooks Desktop as an Excel file, and selecting the fields required for journal entry testing.

Required Fields Checklist

#	Required Field	Available in Standard Report?	QuickBooks Field/Column Name
1	**Amount**	Yes	Debit / Credit columns
2	**Time**	Not on Journal report	See “Getting Time & User” section below
3	**Posting Date**	Yes (see note below)	Date
4	**Transaction Date**	Yes (see note below)	Date (same field as Posting Date)
5	**Description**	Yes	Memo
6	**Account Number**	Yes, if enabled	Account (requires “Use account numbers” preference — see Common Issues)
7	**User (Posted By)**	Not on Journal report	See “Getting Time & User” section below
8	**Journal Reference**	Yes	Num

⚠ Important — Two Things to Know Before You Export

1. Posting Date and Transaction Date will always be identical. QuickBooks Desktop journal entries carry only one Date field — there is no separate concept of a posting-period date versus an original transaction date, the way Xero and SAP track them. Both required fields will be populated from the same value.

2. Time and User (Posted By) are not on the standard Journal report at all. This data exists in QuickBooks, but only on a separate report, the Audit Trail. See the “Getting Time and User via the Audit Trail Report” section below.

Step-by-Step Export Instructions (Journal Report)

1. Navigate to the Journal Report

- Log in to QuickBooks Desktop
- Go to Reports → Accountant & Taxes → Journal
- The report opens showing the current date by default

2. Set the Date Range

- At the top of the report, set the Dates field to the period you need to export (or enter a custom From/To range)
- Press Tab or Enter to refresh the report

3. Add the Required Columns

- Click Customize Report in the top-left of the report window
- **On the Display tab, ensure the following are checked:**
    1. Trans #
    2. Date
    3. Num
    4. Name
    5. Memo
    6. Account
    7. Debit
    8. Credit
- Uncheck any columns not required, to keep the export clean
- Click OK to apply

4. Export to Excel

- Click the Excel ▾ dropdown near the top of the report
- Select Create New Worksheet
- In the dialog, choose “Create new worksheet” and confirm the file will open in Excel
- If prompted about too many columns, see Common Issues below
- Click Export, then use File → Save As in Excel to save the file to your desired location

5. Confirm Before Sending

Before sending the file, check that:

☐ The date range matches the requested period

☐ Account column shows account numbers, not just names (see Common Issues if not)

☐ No filters are hiding transactions (check the Filters tab in Customize Report)

☐ The file is saved as .xlsx (not .csv, unless otherwise agreed)

Getting Time and User via the Audit Trail Report

QuickBooks Desktop tracks the timestamp and user for every transaction, but only exposes this on the Audit Trail report — a separate report from the standard Journal report used above.

1. Navigate to the Audit Trail Report

- Go to Reports → Accountant & Taxes → Audit Trail
- This report defaults to today's date only — you will need to widen the date range

2. Set the Date Range and Filter to Journal Entries

- Set the Dates field to match the period of your main Journal report export
- Click Customize Report → Filters tab
- Set Transaction Type to Journal to limit results to journal entries only
- Click OK

3. Add the Time and User Columns

- Click Customize Report → Display tab
- **Ensure the following are checked:**
    1. Num
    2. Entered/Last Modified
    3. Last Modified By
    4. Date
    5. Name
    6. Account
- Click OK to apply

4. Export and Combine

- Export this report to Excel the same way as the Journal report (Excel ▾ → Create New Worksheet)
- Match rows between the two exports using the Num field, which appears in both reports
- Merge Entered/Last Modified (Time) and Last Modified By (User) alongside the other required fields in one final spreadsheet

Note on Multiple Rows Per Entry

The Audit Trail report adds a new row every time a journal entry is created or edited, it does not overwrite history. If a journal entry was edited after creation, you'll see more than one row for the same Num. Use the row with the most recent Entered/Last Modified timestamp as the current version, unless the client specifically wants the full edit history.

Common Issues

Issue	Likely Cause	Fix
Account column shows no numbers, only names	The “Use account numbers” preference is turned off for this company file	Go to Edit → Preferences → Accounting → Company Preferences and check “Use account numbers,” then re-run the report
Posting Date and Transaction Date columns are identical	This is expected. QuickBooks Desktop journal entries have only one Date field; there is no separate posting-period date	No fix needed. Let the client know both fields will always match in QuickBooks exports
Audit Trail report shows several rows for the same Num	Each time a journal entry is created or edited, QuickBooks adds a new row/version to the Audit Trail rather than overwriting the old one	Use the row with the most recent Entered/Last Modified timestamp for each Num as the current version
Excel export fails with “too many columns” message	QuickBooks adds spacing columns between each data column by default	In the Excel export dialog, select Advanced, then uncheck “Space between columns,” and try again
Audit Trail data is missing for older entries	Some QuickBooks configurations periodically condense or clean up audit trail history	Check with the client whether audit trail data is retained long-term, or whether older Time/User data may not exist

This guide covers QuickBooks Desktop’s standard Journal and Audit Trail reports as of August 2026. Menu paths may vary slightly between QuickBooks Desktop editions (Pro, Premier, Enterprise) and versions.