5 Month-End Close Mistakes

(and the fix for each)

The five errors that quietly wreck a small business's month-end numbers — drawn from the 18-step close checklist inside the Vickery Finance Month-End Close Template — and the exact fix for each one.

A month-end close is just a routine: reconcile, record, review, lock. Most bad months don't come from complicated accounting — they come from one of five simple steps being skipped, rushed, or done out of order. Here they are, in the order they usually bite.

Mistake 1 — Closing before the bank reconciliation balances

It's tempting to start reviewing the month while the bank rec is "close enough." It never is. An unreconciled account means some transactions are missing, duplicated, or recorded in the wrong month — and every report built on top of it inherits the error. In the Vickery Finance checklist, reconciliation is step 2 of 18 for a reason: nothing else starts until it ties out.

The fix: Download the bank and credit-card statements first, then reconcile every account to its statement. The difference must be $0.00 — not approximately, exactly — before you record or review anything else.

Mistake 2 — Leaving bank fees, interest, and NSF items unrecorded

The bank charges and credits that appear only on the statement — monthly fees, interest, returned-check (NSF) items — are the easiest entries in the whole close to forget, because nothing in your inbox reminds you. Skip them and your cash balance and expenses are both wrong by exactly the amounts you most needed to notice.

The fix: Right after reconciling, post every bank fee, interest item, and NSF charge through your journal entries (checklist step 3). Do it in the same sitting as the reconciliation, while the statement is open.

The five mistakes, continued

Mistake 3 — Revenue that never gets tied back to deposits

Sales recorded in your invoicing tool are not the same as money that arrived. Unbilled work, a processor payout that netted out fees, or a deposit recorded twice will all hide inside a revenue number nobody compared to the bank. The month looks fine — until the quarter, or the tax return, proves otherwise.

The fix: Record all sales and invoices for the month and check for unbilled work (step 5). Then reconcile revenue to bank deposits and to Stripe / Square payouts (step 6), and investigate any variance before moving on. If you deferred or unearned revenue exists, record it too (step 7).

Mistake 4 — Skipping accruals for bills that haven't arrived yet

Rent is due, the utilities ran all month, the subscriptions renewed — but the bills land next month, so the expenses get booked next month too. That flatters this month's profit and ambushes the next one, and it makes month-to-month comparisons meaningless.

The fix: Accrue unpaid expenses — rent, utilities, subscriptions — in the month they belong to (step 10), and record payroll, taxes, and contractor payments (step 9) and depreciation (step 11) in the same pass.

Mistake 5 — Never locking the month

If last month stays editable forever, it will get edited — a backdated receipt here, a "quick fix" there — and the reports you sent your accountant no longer match your books. An unlocked month is a month that is never actually closed.

The fix: When the review is done, lock the month: no more backdated entries (step 15). Save a dated copy of the workbook, file the statements, invoices, and workbook together (step 16), and note anything to fix next month (step 18) instead of reaching back into this one.

The 18-step close, at a glance

The full routine these fixes come from, in the template's own order:

Cash & Bank (steps 1–4): Save statements · reconcile to $0.00 · record fees, interest & NSF items · review outstanding checks over 90 days

Revenue (steps 5–7): Record all sales & invoices · reconcile revenue to deposits and Stripe / Square · record deferred / unearned revenue

Expenses & Payroll (steps 8–11): Enter all bills & receipts · record payroll, taxes & contractor payments · accrue unpaid expenses · record depreciation

Review & Close (steps 12–18): Review the P&L for unusual variances · review balance-sheet accounts · confirm journal entries balance (debits = credits) · lock the month · file everything · send the P&L · note fixes for next month

Do the close in a workbook built for it

Reading the fixes is step one. Running them every month, in the same order, without forgetting step 3 or step 10 — that's a systems problem, and it's exactly what the Month-End Close Duo is built to solve.

Month-End Close Duo

$39

The full **Month-End Close Template** (Excel + Google Sheets) — six sheets: Start Here, Cover & How to Use, the 18-step Close Checklist with owners, due dates, and a live % complete, Bank Reconciliation, Journal Entries, and a P&L Dashboard — **plus** the **Month-End Close Checklist — Accessible Edition**, the large-print step-by-step edition. Bought separately the pair is $53; the Duo is $39.

Get it in the shop: **vickeryfinance.gumroad.com**

Prefer to start smaller? The Month-End Close Template on its own is $29 and the Accessible Checklist edition is $24 — both in the same shop, both instant downloads for Excel and Google Sheets.

And if debt is the bigger fire, start free: the **Debt Payoff Starter Sheet** is a free download at vickeryfinance.com/free-debt-payoff-starter — no cost, no card, no email required.

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