THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

eCommerce Software

By The Zapier Team

zapier

The Ultimate Guide to eCommerce Software

Zapier

Contents

The *start your own business* bug can be incredibly easy to catch. One more needless traffic jam on your evening commute or another bad day at the office, and it's easy to wonder if you couldn't just build your own business instead.

Scratching that itch is easy if you start an online business. Unlike real-world stores, here's no storefront to rent and no sign to hangâ€"all you'll need is a free afternoon, something to sell, and perhaps $30 or less.

You could start without a dedicated online store of your own yet. Perhaps you'd like to sell your products on the internet's equivalent of a superstore or flea market, like Amazon or eBay. Maybe your product isn't done yet, and you need pre-orders from an app like Kickstarter. You might just want to sell one product, and only need a simple checkout experience for it, or you may want to build your own full-featured online store. It's not *that* hard.

Starting a full-fledged online *business* selling things, however, is a far more difficult thing. You'll need a name for your company, funds to get your business off the ground and running, and, perhaps, a business plan and formal legal structure.

Whether you want to sell a few things occasionally or a lot of things regularly, this is the book for you. It will walk you through the questions you need to answer and the boxes you need to check before starting a business. Then, it'll help you pick out eCommerce software, walk you through setting it up, and leave you with tips-and-tricks to make the most of your store.

It's the perfect guide to getting your own special corner of the internet to stake your claim with your own business. You're in for a fun ride.

What Others Say About Zapier's Books

- "Simple and Clear." ∼Sami Al-Maqtari on Zapier's *An Introduction to APIs*[1]
- "...a tremendous amount of quality information in this book" ∼Steve Pickering on Zapier's *Ultimate Guide to Email Marketing Apps*[2]
- "Fantastically written book." ∼Michael Wojcicki on Zapier's *Ultimate Guide to Google Sheets*[3]
- "This is an amazing little book... that keeps you from reinventing the wheel." ∼Tyler Forge on Zapier's *Ultimate Guide to Project Management*[4]
- "Definitely something for your team to read." ∼Christopher Brisson on Zapier's *Ultimate Guide to Customer Support*[5]
- "It was really helpful to inspire our company's processes." ∼Alejandro Rodriguez on Zapier's *Ultimate Guide to Remote Work*[6]

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[1] https://zapier.com/learn/apis/
[2] https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/
[3] https://zapier.com/learn/google-sheets/
[4] https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-project-management/
[5] https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-customer-support/
[6] https://zapier.com/learn/the-ultimate-guide-to-remote-working/

Image Credit: Stores sign photo by Jason Baker[7] via Flickr[8].

[7]https://www.flickr.com/photos/mezuni/
[8]https://www.flickr.com/photos/mezuni/475143348/

Chapter 1: 3 Things You Need to Know Before You Start Your Own Business

"Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do." - Steve Jobs

There's a deep desire to own your own destiny—and starting your own business is one of the most obvious ways to do that. Your business can be anything, do anything, make and break its own rules. It's your chance to make your mark on the world.

Starting a business might seem intimidating, though, especially if you're planning on ditching your day job to pursue your passion.

But every minute, at least one person starts a new business[9], joining 28 million current small business owners and sole proprietors—and that's only in the US. You can too, and it doesn't have to be that hard.

Thanks to a plethora of eCommerce apps[10] today (which we'll explore in-depth in Chapter 5[11]), it's easier than ever to start your own business right from home. We're not saying this is going to be a breeze, though. There are lots of things you'll need to decide before you launch, not the least of which is: How viable is your business idea? And, once you're set up, running your "shop" will definitely be more challenging than being an employee. For many people, however, the satisfaction of being your own boss and making your own opportunities are worth it.

Knowing how to start is perhaps the biggest hurdle. The questions below will help you make the necessary, big decisions about your business and prepare properly for its long-term success. Got your entrepreneurial hat on? Let's dive in.

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[9] http://www.business.com/entrepreneurship/the-state-of-small-businesses-in-2015/
[10] https://zapier.com/learn/ecommerce/how-to-start-online-store/
[11] https://zapier.com/learn/ecommerce/best-ecommerce-shopping-cart-software

1. Do You Really Want to Run Your Own Business?

Forging your own path and striking it rich with your business idea—it's part of the American Dream. When you're a freelancer or a small business owner, you get to decide your working hours and environment, avoid office politics, choose what to work on, and, hopefully, make more money and keep more of what you make. With all those benefits, however, come several challenges that you'll need to keep in mind before starting your business.

You'll Need to Be a Jack-of-All-Trades

Successful business require more than just great products. They also require people to fill a lot of roles, including:

- *Marketing:* Finding and getting in front of qualified prospects

- *Selling:* Interacting with those prospects to turn them into customers
- *Production:* Creating what you're selling
- *Support:* Maintaining your customer relationships and the things you're producing
- *Operations:* Administrative things such as billing and filing paperwork

When you're an employee, you are only focused on your role. Others take care of everything else. When you're running your own business, all of that is on you.

It's important to review your weaknesses in these areas before you start your business, and find ways to overcome them. You could have the best products or services in the world, but without marketing them to people who'd be interested in them, the business will flop. If you're not disciplined with invoicing and following up with customers, you won't get paid. And if you miss a tax filing deadline, you can count on being penalized for it.

You could outsource or hire people for any of these roles you aren't great at or interested in doing, but when you're just starting out, you might not have the funds to do that. So prepare to wear many hats, spending time doing things that might not be core to what you're producing but are still essential for your company. You'll have a better chance of success if you're comfortable doing everything your business requires–or trying to at least. And once you are able to hire or outsource for other roles, you'll need management skills to bring out the best in your team.

You'll Have to Be Your Own Boss

Working for yourself might seem like a benefit, but it's a double-edged sword. You could be your worst boss. Just as working

remotely for a company takes discipline[12], staying productive when you're the boss can be even more challenging. Watch out for the common problems of procrastination, not knowing where to start with a project, and lack of motivation[13].

Your Income Will Be Irregular

Running your own business might not be for you if you prefer a predictable income. Without a set paycheck every two weeks as an employee, your income will be dependent on not just your efforts but also, to a large degree, luck and circumstances beyond your control. Both freelancers and small business owners are familiar with the "feast or famine" cycle—at any point in time you might have either too many assignments and customers or too few of them.

This makes budgeting every month trickier than if you had a steady paycheck, and could be nerve-wracking if you're not prepared for it.

Still, even though self-employment might seem riskier than being an employee, you'll have more income potential and perhaps even more security (several clients instead of one client, your employer).

> **Tip:** Learn how to budget without regular income[14] over at LearnVest.

You'll Need More Support from Your Friends and Family

With so much uncertainty around starting your own business, you need a support group of family and friends who believe in your

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[12]https://zapier.com/learn/the-ultimate-guide-to-remote-working/avoid-work-burnout/

[13]https://zapier.com/blog/beat-procrastination/

[14]https://www.learnvest.com/2013/05/how-to-budget-without-regular-paychecks/

business idea—as much as you believe in it yourself. They'll help you survive the inevitable ups and downs and possibly be your first customers or employees. Keep in mind that your significant other and immediate family will be sharing any money issues or business problems that affect you, so they should be onboard every step of the way.

How to Find Out If Starting Your Own Business Is Right for You

The best way to make this decision is to take an honest look at your personality and goals. What do you want out of your work life? How important is creating and maintaining your own company to you? How comfortable will you be with the income fluctuation and additional tasks for running your own shop? Do you think of failures as part of the learning process, or will setbacks deflate you? How do you deal with rejection?

The wrong reasons to start your business include:

- Thinking you'll have more time with your family (you'll probably have less)
- You want to make a ton of money (you might not)
- You hate your company or boss and need to get away (you'll meet customers like them)
- You want freedom from having someone to always answer to (you'll have more bosses—your customers or clients)

The right reasons: You're passionate about what you want to create, believe it'll fill a real need in the world, and you thrive on independence.

The Wall Street Journal offers five additional questions you should ask to figure out if entrepreneurship is right for you[15], including "Am I passionate about my product or service?" and "Am I good at making decisions?" Forbes then offers 10 reality checks before starting your own business[16] that are also worth considering, including "Are there customers with real pain and money?" and "Does your solution have hidden costs?"

In the end, though, running your own business is a lot like marriage or parenting—there's no way to know what it's like until you're doing it. One way to get started is to set up a business on the side, keeping your day job but working nights or weekends on your business. Or you could dive right in with a full-commitment approach. Either way, the tips below will help you think through the other crucial aspects of your burgeoning business.

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[15]http://guides.wsj.com/small-business/starting-a-business/how-to-decide-if-entrepreneurship-is-right-for-you/

[16]http://www.forbes.com/sites/martinzwilling/2012/09/16/10-reality-checks-before-starting-your-own-business/#7d04e1b2759a

2. What Will You Sell and How Much Should You Charge?

You could start your own business doing the same thing as your current line of work. If you're a marketer, for example, you could form your own marketing agency or consultancy. If you're a graphic designer, you could start offering your design services as a freelancer. Or you could start a business doing something completely different—perhaps producing and selling products based on a hobby or skill you've previously picked up.

Find Your Product or Service Niche

The three most important things to consider when you make this decision: What is your area of expertise? Will you be driven enough to invest time and money doing it? Will people pay you for it?

What is your area of expertise? You might not consider yourself an "expert" at anything, but you don't need to be one; you just need products or services good enough that people will pay you for

it. Also keep in mind that Imposter Syndrome is terribly common and when you start your business, you need to get over it—as Carl Richards writes on the New York Times[17]:

> "Once we know what to call this fear [of being found out as a fraud], the second step that I've found really valuable is knowing we're not alone. Once I learned this thing had a name, I was curious to learn who else suffered from it. One of my favorite discoveries involved the amazing American author and poet Maya Angelou. She shared that, 'I have written 11 books, but each time I think, "Uh oh, they're going to find out now. I've run a game on everybody, and they're going to find me out."'
>
> Think about that for a minute. Despite winning three Grammys and being nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and a Tony Award, this huge talent still questioned her success."

Chances are, you're probably good at something that you can monetize.

If you're not sure what you're good at or what you want to make and sell, ask around. Your family, friends, and people in your network might know your strengths better than you do. When I started freelance writing, for example—after years of jumping down different career paths—my friends all said "Of course, that's what I always thought you'd do." (Too bad they didn't tell me that sooner.)

Another way to find your great business idea: What frustrates you, and can you come up with something to correct it? That's how payment processing service[18] Stripe was founded. John Collison,

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[17](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/26/your-money/learning-to-deal-with-the-impostor-syndrome.html?_r=0)

[18]https://zapier.com/blog/best-payment-gateways/

president and co-founder of Stripe, told CNBC that frustration is a source of inspiration for many entrepreneurs[19]:

> "I think an important force that drives entrepreneurship is a productive dissatisfaction with the way the world works. … There are so many places where clearly a better service or a better business [could exist], or there's some opportunity to fix an inefficiency in the world."

Also, as Zapier co-founder and CTO Bryan Helmig writes[20]: "If you're unsure about an idea to pitch—stop overthinking it and just do it. You'll thank yourself later."
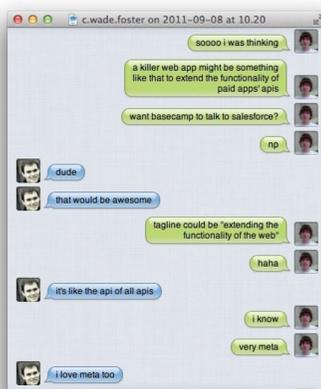
The idea for Zapier discussed over chat

Still need a business idea? Here are 101 businesses you can start part-time[21] and Entrepreneur's business idea center[22].

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[19]http://www.cnbc.com/2016/05/09/turn-your-daily-frustrations-into-a-billion-dollar-business.html

[20]https://zapier.com/blog/startup-weekend-part-i-idea/

[21]http://www.ryrob.com/best-businesses-start-while-working-full-time-job/

[22]https://www.entrepreneur.com/businessideas

Once you've got a business idea, you'll need to decide if it's something *you* actually want to do. (Hint: "When you find an idea that you just can't stop thinking about, that's probably a good one to pursue," Josh James, Omniture CEO and co-founder has said.) Here are a few questions to ask yourself first:

Will you be driven enough to invest time and money doing this? Few businesses are overnight successes. The truth is, it could take years before your business is profitable. The first few months and years are critical, since only about half of new businesses survive five years or more[23]. This means you'll need patience and determination, as well as a healthy cash cushion to keep your business running until you break even.

Will people pay you for it? That's the million-dollar question. When businesses fail[24], many times it's simply because there's isn't enough demand for the product or service at a price that would make the business profitable. Although all sorts of crazy business ideas[25] have gone on to be successful (including the Pet Rock and Twitter), try to gauge as best as possible if there's really a demand for what you'll be offering before you start your business.

In addition to surveying potential customers to test out your idea, you'll want to identify your competitors and get a good overview of your industry. The US Small Business Association (SBA) has a guide to doing this market analysis[26] to help you get started.

Determine How Much to Charge

Next: How much will you charge? Pricing your products or services might be one of your most difficult first tasks. Should you match or undercut what your competitors are charging? Position your brand

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[23]https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/FAQ_March_2014_0.pdf

[24]http://boss.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/05/top-10-reasons-small-businesses-fail/

[25]http://blog.marketwired.com/2013/08/22/10-crazy-business-ideas-that-actually-worked/

[26]https://www.sba.gov/starting-business/how-start-business/understand-your-market

as a "premium" one, with accordingly higher rates? Or just take whatever the client or customer will give you?

The wisest answer is probably *charge what the market will bear*, but that's hard to determine even after doing the market analysis recommended above. One quick calculation: Charge at least double your current salary to come up with a freelance rate[27] or to set a target income for your business sales.

A safer method, however, is to calculate how much it will cost you to run your business—monthly overhead for things like advertising and office supplies, estimated taxes, and income you want—and then add a profit margin between 10% and 30%. That's how much you should aim to bring in for your business or self-employment income. Here's a more in-depth guide to figuring out how to charge as a freelancer[28] and Shopify's recommended strategies for pricing retail products[29].

But don't sweat the pricing too much at first, especially if you're selling something that's in a market niche of its own.

When Zapier started in 2012, for example, there weren't any similar apps around for comparing pricing plans, so the three co-founders struggled to know what a good price for Zapier would be. Co-founder and CEO Wade Foster shares Zapier's initial, random pricing scheme:

> "Eventually we realized we were getting to hung up on the details and decided to launch with something fun even though we knew it wouldn't be perfect. Our first pricing followed the Fibonacci sequence[30] at \$11, \$23 and \$58 for the plans. [*Ed. note: In the Fibonacci*

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[27]http://sethgodin.typepad.com/seths_blog/2015/03/double-and-half-freelancer-math.html

[28]http://lifehacker.com/5831776/how-much-should-i-charge-for-my-freelance-services

[29]https://www.shopify.com/retail/120028547-9-strategies-for-profitably-pricing-your-retail-products

[30]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fibonacci_number

sequence, the first six digits in the series are 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, and 8.] The plan names where Amp, Ohm and Volt keeping with the electricity theme too. And we had people signing up for plans right away! It really did prove to us that in the beginning people spend too much time thinking about perfect pricing instead of good pricing. And, of course, over time we've learned a lot more about what people value and how pricing plans affect the growth of the business. So we've been able to iterate and improve."

Figure Out a Name for Your Company

You can start working on your own using just your full name as a consultant or freelancer. But if you're selling products or want to create more of an impression of size and stability, you'll want to come up with a company name and register it. "Melanie Pinola Writing Services" or "Pinola and Associates" has a better ring to it than "Melanie Pinola, Freelancer" if you're targeting big businesses or if you later decide to hire employees.

The best business name will be unique and catchy, easy to pronounce and relatively simple, and, most of all, available. You'll need to check your name choices with your local and national government entities to make sure they're not already taken—as well as domain registrars (such as Namecheap[31]) to make sure you can get a domain address for your company website (.com is preferable, although depending on your company name, .agency, .info, or other top level domain could work too).

Picking a name, however, isn't easy. There's a whole industry of companies that will help you research and come up with a company name. Shopify has a business name generator[32], while Inc. offers

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[31]https://www.namecheap.com/
[32]https://www.shopify.com/tools/business-name-generator

a guide to naming your business[33], which includes how to use linguistics to come up with a name and how to trademark it.

Don't get too hung up on this part, though. You could very well get stuck never launching your business because you're trying to come up with the perfect name. As with pricing, keep in mind you can always change your company's name.

Fun story: Zapier was initially called "Snapier" (see the "API" there?)—a name Wade came up with in about five minutes. Later, the founders discovered another company with that name in the same industry so they had to come up with a new name. As Mike Knoop, co-founder and COO, explains on TechCrunch[34]:

> "The hunt was on for a new name. Early in a startup's life, every decision seems monumental (especially a decision as public-facing as choosing a name). If you can survive the first few months of hard decisions, team unity tends to kick in and the dispute process gets easier. We were not at this point. We spent an entire evening brainstorming names. Bryan wrote a script to auto-generate names and look up .com availability. Somewhere in the brainstorming process Bryan or Wade suggested replacing the "Sn" with a "z". I hated it. I was never in love with the original name and a small spelling change was not improving much in my book. I made my position clear, but I also did not have a better suggestion. So a few days went by, then a few weeks. Two blurred months later and we had adopted the name "Zapier" by the most informal, non-committed decision ever. Fast-forward one year and I couldn't be more happy with that informal non-decision 12 months prior."

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[33]http://www.inc.com/guides/2010/06/choose-the-best-name-for-your-business.html
[34]https://techcrunch.com/2013/01/26/resolving-co-founder-disputes/

Sometimes a company name will jump out of you immediately. Sometimes you'll just need a working name—one that might grow on you.

3. Who Will Be Your Customers and How Will You Find Them?

Until you make your first sale, your business will be just an idea. You need customers to make your company a reality—and, just as important, a solid understanding of your customers to keep your business up and growing.

Marketing and sales aren't easy for everyone, though. They require pitching over email, making phone calls, dealing with difficult people, and, in general, putting yourself out there with the high chance of being disappointed. Still, regular sales efforts are critical for your business's success. And the good news is that if you're passionate about what you're doing or producing, self-promotion won't be as hard. Think of your customers and how your business will potentially be useful to them to stay motivated.

But first: Who are your customers? In some cases, this will be obvious. If your product is a new, clever cat toy, you'll target cat owners. If you're starting an SAT tutoring business, you'll want to look for parents whose children are getting ready for that college exam. In a nutshell, **your customers—your top focus—are the people using your product or service, the reason why your company exists**. That might not always be clear, so your best bet is to examine:

- What's the core product or service you're offering? And why would a customer want to buy it? Maybe you're developing a new fitness tracking app; a customer would buy it to keep tabs on their exercise and health.
- What extra benefits or services do you offer with the product? What are the customers' pain points? Perhaps your app is easier to use than other similar apps, has a better design, or is less expensive.

Also, after setting up your company website, you can use tools such as Google Analytics to find out who your first visitors—or early adopters—of your product are and how they discovered you.

With that knowledge, you can try to segment your customer market into smaller groups for targeted marketing. Perhaps your fitness app caters specifically to runners or to Apple Watch owners or senior citizens. Your messages to each of these groups should be different.

Your first customers might come from unusual places, too. Take stock of your current network and contacts. Even your employer might be willing to keep you on as a freelancer part-time or become your first customer. You might start a blog on your company website and attract new users that way. Or you could grow your customer base through a user referral program. For more ideas, Inc. offers 11 ways to get your first 1,000 customers[35].

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[35]http://www.inc.com/christina-desmarais/11-ways-to-get-your-first-1000-users-and-beyond.html

And then, once you've started establishing your customer base, keep in touch with them with tools such as email marketing and newsletter apps[36] and customer relationship management (CRM) apps[37].

> **Further Reading**: Get some more ideas on how to land your first customers with these Zapier guides: 7 Proven Product Marketing Tactics from an Early Salesforce and Dropbox VP[38] and How to Acquire Customers: 19 "Traction" Channels to Start Testing Today[39].

That is a lot to think about before you head off on this venture. But careful consideration of these questions should help you decide if starting your own business is right for you. As Dave Thomas, founder of Wendy's said, "What do you need to start a business? Three simple things: know your product better than anyone. Know your customer, and have a burning desire to succeed."

Millions of people are happily running their own businesses part- or full-time. With a vision and the will to act on it, you can join them.

Now that you've answered those questions, it's time to explore what it'll take to *actually* start your real business. In chapter 2, we'll look at the startup costs, legal requirements, and plans that you need to

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[36]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/best-email-newsletter-software/

[37]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-crm-apps/what-is-a-crm/

[38]https://zapier.com/blog/product-marketing-tactics-adam-gross/

[39]https://zapier.com/blog/acquire-customers/

actually start a company. And then in the next chapters, we'll dive into the tools you need to run your eCommerce store.

Your entrepreneurial journey is just about to begin.

Further Reading: Get inspired with some stories from the Zapier blog, on how to bootstrap your startup idea[40], and how companies have turned moonshot ideas into profitable businesses[41], along with 26 tips on management, marketing, hiring, and productivity gleaned from Reddit AMAs[42].

Written by Melanie Pinola[43].

Image Credits: Title photo by Álvaro Serrano[44] via Unsplash[45]. Working photo by iDriss Fettoul[46]. Piggy bank photo by Fabian Blank[47]. Customers photo by Roman Arkhipov[48].

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[40] https://zapier.com/blog/how-zapier-can-help-bootsrap-your-startup-weekend-idea/

[41] https://zapier.com/blog/company-side-projects/

[42] https://zapier.com/blog/reddit-ama-business-tips/

[43] http://twitter.com/melaniepinola

[44] https://unsplash.com/@alvaroserrano

[45] https://unsplash.com/search/business?photo=-kr8XPYuSI8

[46] https://unsplash.com/@maroquotidien

[47] https://unsplash.com/@blankerwahnsinn

[48] https://unsplash.com/search/customers?photo=4hxEOapTQGU

# Chapter 2: From Startup Costs to Business Plans—What You Need to Start Your Own Business

"I believe that this is the age of the entrepreneur, and as job security has increasingly become a thing of the past, we have no choice but to become self-reliant. Small business is the foundation of growth in America, and it starts with one person, with one vision." - Gary Bredow, host and creator of *The Start Up Show*.

If you've ever dreamt of being your own boss, there's never been a better time than now to start. The internet connects us to billions of potential customers, partners, and employees, not to mention hundreds of online tools that simplify running every aspect of a business.

Now that you've considered your business idea and products, figured out how much to should charge, and understand the downsides to entrepreneurship, it's time to actually start your business. To make that leap, though, you'll need to consider how much money

you'll should have to start, how to structure your company legally,
and, perhaps, create a business plan to keep you on course.

How to Determine Your Startup Costs

You can start your business without spending a single dime. After
work hours or on weekends, you could develop your app, write
freelance articles, hand-make products, or do any kind of side
business suited for working from home.

Odds are, though, you'll need to spend *something* at least–to pay for
supplies needed to create your product, web hosting and design fees,
and business cards, perhaps. If you're thinking about eventually
running a business full-time, especially, you'll need to consider
funding. How much will it cost you to start and maintain your
business until it becomes profitable?

The $100 Business

Many businesses were founded with less than a $100 investment, something Chris Guillibeau, author of *The $100 Startup*[49] researched. Guillibeau interviewed 1,500 micro businesses (small operations typically run by one person) that made over $50,000 per year but were started with little investment—the majority for less than $1,000 and nearly half for under $100. As Guillibeau shares on the Four Hour Workweek blog[50]:

> "In Vancouver, Canada, Nicolas Luff started with only $56.33, the cost of a business license. Others started only with a domain name and a free WordPress account. It wasn't just online businesses that started on the cheap. Michael Hanna started an unconventional mattress store after being laid off from his job in media sales. A friend of his who owned a furniture store offered him an unwanted truckload of mattresses, figuring that Michael could sell them one at a time on Craigslist. Instead of Craigslist, though, Michael found a car dealership that had recently gone out of business. He was able to rent the space at a huge discount, and he opened his first store while learning on the job. Even though Michael originally knew nothing about the mattress business, three years later Mattress Lot produces more than $1 million in revenue."

Here's a chart of the average startup costs from those covered in *The $100 Startup*:

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[49]http://100startup.com/

[50]http://fourhourworkweek.com/2012/05/24/six-figure-businesses-built-for-less-than-100-17-lessons-learned/

Range of Startup Costs
### (Among Survey Respondents)
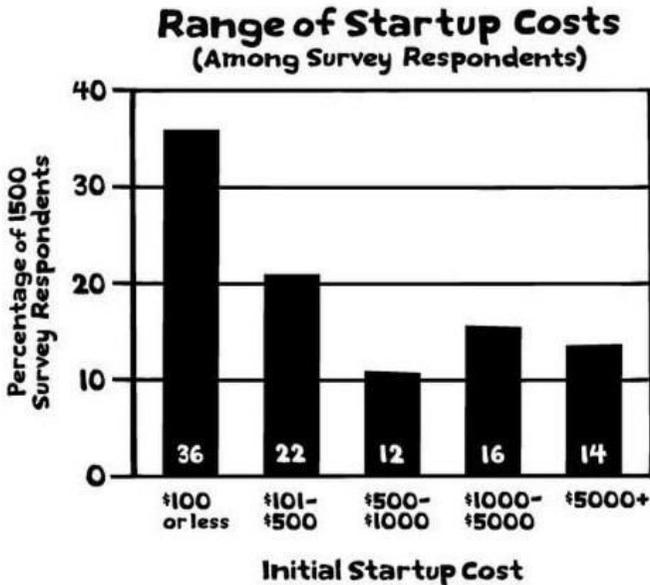
Image via The $100 Startup

So you *can* start quick and start cheap, depending on the type of
business you want to open.

Figure Out Your Startup and Ongoing Costs

To start your business, you'll need to take into consideration these
costs:

- One-time startup costs (state business registration fees, lease
  deposits, and more)
- Labor costs (your salary plus anyone else's salary you pay)
- Overhead costs (monthly office rent, utilities, taxes, amor-
  tized equipment such as computers, any costs associated with
  producing your product, and more)

Spreadsheets are your friend with planning business finances—and Quickbooks offers a startup expenses spreadsheet[51] to help you accurately budget monthly and one-time expenses for your business.

> **Tip:** Need help getting started with spreadsheets? Check out Zapier's free Ultimate Guide to Google Sheets[52] for a spreadsheets crash-course.

Create a Cash Cushion for Your Company

You know when your car gets a flat tire and you're thankful you have enough savings in the bank to cover the repairs or replace the tire? You also need an emergency fund for your new business. That is, a large emergency fund—enough to cover perhaps 50 tire replacements in a year.

The US Small Business Administration recommends[53] having at least 3-6 months of cash reserves to cover your slow months in business, for those unknown or variable expenses.

This will also depend on whether you're starting your business on the side or going full-in, quitting your job. If your business is a part-time endeavor and you're still earning a salary, the 3 months of emergency funds might give you peace of mind. If you're starting a new endeavor with no other income, you'll want more to get you through lean times.

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[51] http://quickbooks.intuit.com/r/budgeting/essential-small-business-financial-tools-free-startup-budget-template-and-guide/

[52] https://zapier.com/learn/google-sheets/

[53] https://www.sba.gov/blogs/managing-small-business-cash-flow-answers-10-commonly-asked-questions

Find Funding

Once you've determined how much your business will cost, there's one more financial question to answer: How will you pay for your great idea? If you have significant startup costs and want to cover both the cash cushion and the first few months or even year of operating expenses, you'll need money. Thankfully, there are a ton of options for raising it.

> *Remember, though, that your purpose isn't to raise money. Your purpose is to create a viable business, with products or services that make a difference in the world.*

You could get a loan from your family or friends, but if your business goes south, that might harm your relationship. You could tap your credit cards or take out a second mortgage, but interest rates could be prohibitive. Better loan options include the Small Business Association[54], your local bank, or new types of online lenders[55]. Also, Business USA offers a tool for finding government financing programs[56].

Perhaps you can start a campaign on a crowdfunding site[57] to generate the cash—which might also be a good way to test out your business idea's viability.

Remember, though, that your purpose isn't to raise money. Your purpose is to create a viable business, with products or services that make a difference in the world. As O'Reilly Media founder and CEO Tim O'Reilly said[58]: "Money is like gasoline during a road trip. You don't want to run out of gas on your trip, but you're not doing a tour of gas stations."

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[54]https://www.sba.gov/starting-business/finance-your-business/loans/sba-loans
[55]https://www.nerdwallet.com/small-business-loans
[56]https://business.usa.gov/access-financing
[57]https://zapier.com/blog/how-to-start-online-store/#crowd
[58]http://www.goodreads.com/quotes/255682-money-is-like-gasoline-during-a-road-trip-you-don-t

If you're able to, self-fund your business and focus on creating
a great product or service and finding your first customers. The
company can then hopefully soon be bootstrapped[59], funding itself
from its revenue.

> **Related**: Need help pricing your product and finding
> customers? Jump back to chapter 1 for a crash-course.

How to Find Legal and Financial Help

Even if you're starting a company of one, you're going to need help
getting your business launched. Besides the customers or clients
needed to turn your business into a reality, several people and
services will play key roles in creating a solid foundation for your
company.

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[59]http://www.investopedia.com/terms/b/bootstrap.asp

Services for Setting Up Your Type of Business

There are four main types of business structures: sole proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies, and corporations. For legal and tax purposes, you'll need to decide which type you'll operate under—though if you need to, you can always switch to a different business type later as your company grows.

Sole proprietorships: This is the simplest type of business to start and run. If you never organize your company formally, this is what your business will be considered. It basically means that you are the company—all assets and debts for the company are yours personally too. Bookkeeping is fairly simple: you record all income and deduct business-related expenses, and then pay taxes on the difference. The downside to a sole proprietorship is that you'll have to personally answer to any business obligations—such as a lawsuit from a customer or client or unpaid debts. That makes this business structure the riskiest, legally speaking.

> **Tip**: Freelancing and sole proprietorships might seem like they're the same thing, but there's a slight difference. If you're a freelancer, you don't usually have to register with your county or state to operate. If you want to be seen as a business, however, and form a sole proprietorship under a different name than your own, you likely will need to register with your county and/or state. If you get an an employee identification number (EIN) and hire employees, you'd have a sole proprietorship[60]. When it comes to running your business or paying income taxes, there's little difference between having a sole proprietorship or being a freelancer.

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[60]http://smallbusiness.chron.com/differences-between-sole-proprietorship-freelance-25278.html

Partnerships: are just like sole proprietorships, except—you guessed it—there's more than one owner. Co-owners typically structure their business relationship with partnership operating agreements. These spell out each person's responsibilities and rights, how much money each person invests in the company, and so on. As with sole proprietorships, all parties are liable for the company's legal and financial obligations—and also share in the profits. Forbes suggests[61] checking your local bar association website to see if they have ownership agreement samples to use as a starting point.

Limited Liability Companies and Partnerships (LLC and LLP): LLCs and LLPs offer the simplicity of bookkeeping that partnerships and sole proprietorships have but with added legal protection (hence the "limited liability" part of the name). When you form an LLC or LLP, you work as a "member" of the company, along with any partners you form the company with. If the company goes into debt or gets sued, your personal assets are protected. And compared to corporations, there's less paperwork and smaller startup costs.

But there's more paperwork and regular fees. Companies like Legal Zoom[62] can file the required documents for your state for about $200. Or you can check with your state for the requirements and do it yourself. The downside of LLCs and LLPs: potentially more taxes, depending on the state you file in. Also, these kinds of companies are US-only and not recognized outside of the US—though there may be a similar type of company in your region[63].

Corporations: When you incorporate, you create a separate legal entity that owns all of the assets and liabilities for the company. Corporations have to be structured and chartered according to the state's rules, and there are more complex tax and legal requirements (more paperwork, basically, as well as higher startup and operating

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[61]http://www.forbes.com/sites/amandaneville/2013/06/07/five-clauses-every-partnership-agreement-needs/#3e374cad102e

[62]http://www.legalzoom.com/limited-liability-company/limited-liability-company-3-step-process.html

[63]https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Limited_liability_company#International_equivalents

costs compared to other types of businesses). Why bother? Corporations are usually more attractive to outside investors—you can "go public" with an initial public offering (IPO) and raise money through selling stock in the company. This option might be best for well-established companies with employees.

Forming a corporation is complex, but one company is trying to change all that. Payment service Stripe recently introduced Atlas[64], a way for anyone to incorporate a US company, set up a US bank account, and start accepting payments through Stripe. This is huge for entrepreneurs around the world who want to start a global business. As Patrick McKenzie wrote on his blog Kalzumeus[65] after joining the Atlas team:

> "Our future colleagues are presently prevented from starting by a host of logistical difficulties and informational barriers. They don't have business bank accounts. They don't know what bookkeeping is. They've never negotiated a master services agreement. These are all things that can be learned, but the depth and breadth required from an aspiring entrepreneur feels forbidding. So I'm joining Atlas to work on community and communication, which means something like "scalably educate the world's Internet-enabled entrepreneurs, reduce any barrier to entry, and assist the global community of practice in growing to accommodate a lot more people."

It's a lofty goal—one that currently can help you open only a US-based company—but soon Atlas may be able to help you start a company in any country you'd like.

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[64]https://stripe.com/atlas
[65]http://www.kalzumeus.com/2016/09/09/im-joining-stripe-to-work-on-atlas/

Other Important Services for Your Business

State and local business authorities: Consult your local and state government before you start your business to find out what regulations, if any, you'll need to follow. For example, your town's regulations might restrict business use of your home to certain types of home-based businesses. If you plan on doing business under a name other than your own name—for example, "Christine Klein Accounting Services" instead of "Christine Klein"—you'll likely need to file paperwork with your local or state authorities to do business as that company name (often referred to as a "DBA" license). And if you sell physical products, you might have to register with an authority to collect sales tax. You can look for guidance on these regulations online; your best source of information will be the actual town, city, state, and country official websites.

An accountant: You haven't made any money yet, why do you need an accountant? Frankly, to keep more of your income and avoid steep tax penalties. The tax rules for small business owners and even freelancers are too complex and ever-changing to follow without professional help. You can wait to get a good accountant until you see a steady stream of income, but start looking before you make too much money and find yourself at tax time with a huge, unforeseen bill. (In the US, if you make more than $400 a year from self-employment or even have income from a hobby, you're required to report it).

Professional organizations and business support programs: Whether you're a solopreneur or want to form a startup with your friends, you'll find organizations that will help you with networking, funding, and overall guidance—from your local Small Business Administration[66] to startup incubators like Y Combinator[67]. You might find expert advice from a LinkedIn or other social media group, gain important connections from your alumni association, or discover new

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[66]https://www.sba.gov/content/find-local-sba-office
[67]http://www.ycombinator.com/

opportunities through membership in your industry's association.
Those are great connections to have—and maintain—as you form
your business.

A lawyer: You don't need a lawyer to start a company (even if
you're incorporating!). But one could be helpful particularly when
you're drafting up and evaluating contracts, such as partnership
agreements or independent contractor agreements. Many compa-
nies start up without having a lawyer help them out, though,
so consider your company's needs before looking for one. There
are several resources for business owners to get free legal help[68],
too, including trade associations and your local Small Business
Development Center (SBDC).

An independent insurance agent: When making the switch be-
tween full-time employee to full-time entrepreneur, you might
want to seek out the help of an insurance agent to get you covered
for benefits—such as health insurance—that you might be giving up
or would want to provide for any employees you hire.

A business bank account or merchant account: Finally, even if
you run a sole proprietorship and your business is basically you, life
will be easier if you have a separate bank account solely to manage
your business income and expenses. Most banks offer business
checking and savings accounts that you can open by verifying
your business with something like your DBA (Doing Business
As) certificate. And if you want to accept credit card payments
either online or in person, look into credit card payment processing
services[69].

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[68]http://blogs.findlaw.com/free_enterprise/2012/06/how-to-get-free-legal-help-for-your-business.html

[69]https://zapier.com/blog/best-payment-gateways/

How to Create a Business Plan

Once you've thought through the topics above, along with the three most important things to think about before starting your own company[70], you're ready for the next step to starting your own company: Writing a business plan. Although not necessary for starting a business, a plan will help you nail down your goals and expectations. It will be a living document that you can refer to every so often to make sure you're on track or update when your company changes (as it will). You could also use it to pitch investors or get a business loan from the bank.

A business plan can be as long or short as you like. In fact, you can use our free one-page business plan template[71] (PDF) to cover your bases. Questions include: What's the need or problem that your business idea will solve? Who will buy what you sell? And who will be important resources for your company's success?

LeanCanvas[72] is another option. Instead of creating a business plan, it's more of a one-page business model that you can create in about 20 minutes.

If you want to create a more in-depth business plan to secure a loan, for example, this article at Lifehacker gives an overview of the sections your business plan should have[73], as well as business planning software that can help.

Don't get too hung up on the business plan, though. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg's advice[74]: "If you just work on stuff that you like and you're passionate about, you don't have to have a master plan with how things will play out." The truth is, you can't be sure how it will play out, so creating a detailed business plan

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[70]https://zapier.com/blog/before-you-start-your-own-business/

[71]https://zapier.cachefly.net/storage/files/e68994a94155e77bfc53e8e29998d59a.pdf

[72]https://leanstack.com/lean-canvas/

[73]http://lifehacker.com/5833967/how-do-i-create-a-business-plan

[74]http://magazine.startus.cc/mark-zuckerberg-definition-perseverance/

with 5- and 10-year projections won't be the best use of your time–and will perhaps be an excuse for procrastinating and never getting your business off the ground.

The planning is more important than the plan itself.

Thousands of books are dedicated to this subject of starting your own company (over 49,000 listed on Amazon for "start business," in fact)–from how to come up with a business idea to how to market it online. While we can't cover every aspect of starting your own business, the main considerations above will hopefully help you set up shop as soon as possible—maybe even today.

In fact, let's get started on that. In chapter 3, we'll look at the advantages and disadvantages of the best tools for selling online, everything from Amazon and Kickstarter to building your own self-hosted store with WooCommerce. You'll now exactly where to turn when you're ready to turn your business idea into reality.

Written by Melanie Pinola[75].

Image Credits: Title photo by cogdog[76] via Flickr[77]. Old register photo by Andrew Branch[78]. Law photo by Helloquence[79].

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[75]http://twitter.com/melaniepinola
[76]https://www.flickr.com/photos/cogdog/
[77]https://www.flickr.com/photos/cogdog/6476689463/sizes/o/
[78]https://unsplash.com/search/register?photo=vZ8jUC14bgM
[79]https://unsplash.com/collections/277386/law?photo=5fNmWej4tAA

Chapter 3: How to Sell Stuff Online—The 7 Best Places to Start Your Online Store

The internet is the world's largest mall, where everyone can hawk their wares—and perhaps become the next Jeff Bezos.

Maybe you want to sell your handmade goods around the world, or test the market for your groundbreaking new product. Or maybe you have a real-world store that you want to expand to the digital realm.

No matter what you create, you'll need a place to sell it—and the internet is rich with real estate for your storefront.

Opening an online store is easy—you don't need to hand-code a dedicated digital shop to get your business off the ground. (You wouldn't shell out to put a flagship store on New York's 5th Avenue, right?)

The hard part is picking a platform, and deciding where to lay down your digital roots.

When The Entire Internet is a Store

The original Amazon.com homepage, already with over a million titles for sale

After the World Wide Web launched in 1991, only three years passed before people started selling stuff online. *The Internet Shopping Network*, an online computer equipment store, and *NetMarkets*, online marketplace both [launched in the summer of 1994](#)[80], with the latter believed to be the first to process secure online payments.

A year later, both eBay and Amazon were founded, the former as

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[80]http://www.cnet.com/news/e-commerce-turns-10/

an online auction site and the latter as the world's largest bookstore. Someone purchased a broken laser printer on eBay—much to founder Pierre Omidyar's surprise—and the world of eCommerce as we know it was born.

And yet, online shopping at that time was primitive. Amazon and eBay are online giants today, some of the most visited—and most valuable—properties online. When they launched, though, they looked more basic than your average post on Medium. What they lacked in looks they made up for in potential—the opportunity tap into a global economy from your living room.

Fast forward to today, and most of us shop online regularly. If anything, we have to find an excuse to go to a "real" store.

Starting an online store isn't nearly as big of a deal today, and the odds of your new online bookstore turning into the next Amazon are minuscule. And yet, the internet's still one of the best places to start a store, with a market of over $300 billion[81] in the US alone.

Amazon and eBay had to hand-code their first eCommerce sites, figure out how to accept payments securely online, and decide how an online checkout experience should work. Today, all you need to sell things online is an internet connection and a half hour or so to get your store started.

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[81]https://www.statista.com/outlook/243/109/e-commerce/united-states#market-revenue

The Ingredients for a Successful Store

Products. People. Payments.

It's really that simple: every store needs products to sell, people to buy them, and a way to get paid for those products. It doesn't require a fancy website or millions in funding. All you need is:

- A way to list products where people can see and learn more about them. Remember: people can't pick up your product boxes and read them in an online store, so the more detail you can provide for each item—such as multiple photos and product specs—the better.
- A way to gather information from and talk to customers. You'll obviously need to be able to process the customers' orders, know which product they want, along with their address so you can ship it to them. And you'll likely need to talk to them about your products and provide customer support, too.

- A payment system. Perhaps you'll use an online payment processor[82] (which we'll look at more in chapter 6) to accept credit cards. Or, you could use a lower-tech option: checks, payment-on-delivery, or even bank or mobile transfers depending on your local infrastructure.

None of that requires a dedicated eCommerce site. In fact, many of the tools and sites you already use each day include everything you need to start a store.

The Simplest Ways to Start an Online Store

With such basic requirements, almost any site could be a store. If you already have a following on Facebook, a popular YouTube channel, or a WordPress blog with thousands of visitors, you could start a store right from that community.

You'll still need a tool to help you list your products for sale and process payments. Here are the best options, ranging from online marketplaces that handle the entire sales process to building your own store by hand right inside your Facebook page.

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[82]https://zapier.com/learn/ecommerce/best-payment-gateways/

Online Marketplaces
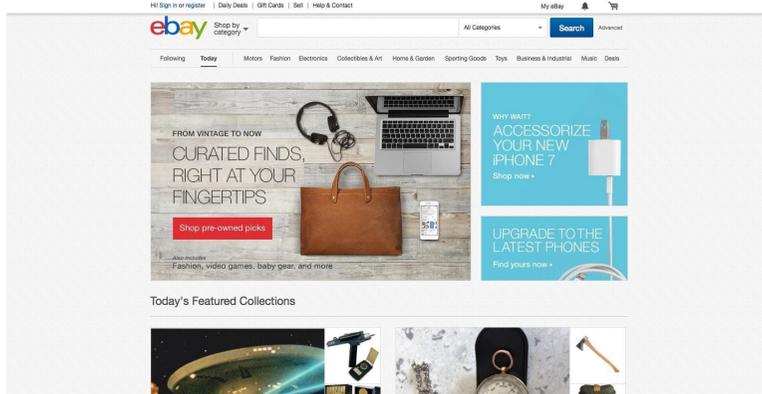
eBay is still one of the easiest ways to sell stuff online

Imagine getting guaranteed, primo shelf space for your product at a major retailer. They'd handle everything, and you'd just focus on the merchandise.

That's what online marketplaces offer. You create an account, and list your products in a store that already has millions of visitors. When those people search for "widget", they just might find—and buy—your widget.

That's what eBay, Etsy, AliExpress (a retail site from Alibaba—which is a wholesale site from China that lets factory directly sale their products in bulk), and other stores are designed around. They don't directly sell products on their own—instead, they maintain an online market where everyone can list their wares. Amazon does something similar: they sell their own products, but also let you list your own products for sale.

Here's how they work:

1. You create an account, and often also create a companion

payment account (typically PayPal[83]).

2. Then, fill out the site's forms to list your existing products for sale, following that marketplace's guidelines for adding your product description, images, price, and more.

3. If you want, you can market your products, telling friends and followers about your new store. Or you could just sit back and wait, and let people discover your items through the site's search.

4. Once someone buys something, you'll get a notification to package and ship your product to the customer.

That's all. You won't have that many options to make your store stand out, but hey: you've got a huge audience, and won't have to worry much about your store.

Where to Sell:

- **Amazon**[84] for listing name-brand products, books, and other items that have a bar code. It's a great place to sell used books, generic products you've imported, or perhaps a new product that fits a category people would search for. Amazon also offers fulfillment services, where they can ship your products and handle customer service as well.

- **Ebay**[85] for selling any random thing. You can auction your used iPhone or kid's outgrown clothes, or sell your new products with a fixed price. Unbranded items fit here a bit better than Amazon, and you can even find buyers for broken electronics (people are always seeking parts). Again, make sure it's something people are looking for.

- **Etsy**[86] for handcrafted products and art supplies. If you know how to make cute, eye-catching products—or want

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[83] https://zapier.com/zapbook/paypal/review
[84] https://services.amazon.com/content/sell-on-amazon-f.htm?pageIdent=soa&canonical=/services/soa.htm
[85] https://www.ebay.com
[86] https://etsy.com

to sell the products others need to make them—this is your marketplace. Even if your product is a brand new idea that no one would search for, it might get discovered by Etsy's engaged community.

- **Bonanza**[87] or **Storenvy**[88] for your own store inside a larger store. You'll have more flexibility in terms of branding, and people can still discover your shop from a site-wide search. Learn more in Zapier's Storenvy review[89].

- **Alibaba**[90] for selling wholesale products directly from a factory. If you make the best widgets in the world and want to directly sale them to stores, list them here and buyers just might discover them. Or, you can sell them directly on AliExpress[91] (if your business is in China) or on their recently acquired site Lazada[92].

- **App Stores** and **Specialized Markets** for selling digital products. Typically you'll find a market designed for the types of products you're selling—the Kindle store for eBooks, a WordPress market for website themes, Bandcamp for music, Steam for games—and list your products there.

What It'll Cost: Fees vary widely between marketplaces. For example:

- eBay lets you list 50 items for free per month, and then charges 10% of the total sale plus standard PayPal fees of 2.9% + 30¢ per transaction.

- Etsy charges 20¢ per listing, 3.5% per sale, along with PayPal fees for payments.

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[87]http://www.bonanza.com
[88]https://www.storenvy.com/
[89]https://zapier.com/zapbook/storenvy/review/
[90]http://alibaba.com
[91]http://www.aliexpress.com
[92]http://www.lazada.com

- Amazon charges a 8-25% referral fee, depending on the category, along with a $1.35/purchase closing fee.

  Tip: Want to sell your products elsewhere? Check your favorite eCommerce site to see if they let you list products for sale. Chances are, they do: For example, electronics store NewEgg and department store Sears both let you list your own products for sale.

Campaign Funding or Preorder Stores
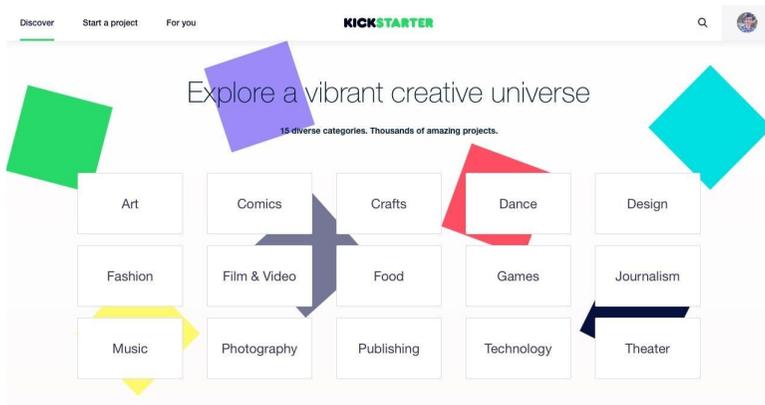
Kickstarter has built a brand around discovering new products

Perhaps you're making a brand new thing no one's ever heard of before. You need to both share the word about your product and raise funds to actually manufacture it in bulk.Traditional funding can be hard to acquire, and you likely don't want to take out a loan to build something you're not even certain there's a market for.

Crowdfunding is the next best option. It lets people pre-order your product so you get the initial revenue to start the manufacturing process.

The best part is that crowdfunding sites tend to have large audiences who are already looking for exciting new products that they can't find elsewhere. Once your product is added to a category, people who check that category regularly will pick up on it. With any luck, your listing will get featured on the crowdfunding site's landing page or or in their newsletter—something that's far less likely to happen on a traditional online marketplace.

Here's how crowdfunding works:

1. Start out with a product *idea*, not a finished product. Describe your idea, take photos of your prototypes or drafts, and make a video to sell viewers on the idea.
2. Figure out what to offer when people "back" your campaign—the term typically used for pre-ordering in a crowdfunded project. You might offer your widget at a discounted price for early backers, or a limited edition version if they pledge a certain amount.
3. Then, create a crowdfunding account and post your campaign, with a funding goal for how much you'll need to raise to actually produce your product. Make sure to include enough info to make the project viable so it'll be accepted.
4. Once the campaign is live, you typically have a month for people to back it. You'll need to promote it as much as possible during this time, and add "stretch goals"—extra features, colors, or other special things if you exceed your funding mark.
5. If you hit your funding goal, the campaign will end and your backers will be charged. You'll then have the money you need to make the product, and you can ship it to your customers as soon as you're finished. You'll update backers on your progress through the crowdfunding site in the meantime.

Crowdfunding is a bit more complicated than just listing your products on a site like eBay, and likely isn't the best way to sell items

you've already produced. But it can be a great way to jumpstart your ideas. It's how the Pebble[93], Oculus Rift[94], Glif[95], and more got started.

Where to Sell:

- **Kickstarter**[96] for an engaged audience looking for new products. Kickstarter has strict rules around getting your campaign launched, but its rabid community of early adopters might be what your product needs to succeed. If you don't hit your funding goals, though, you don't receive any funds from the campaign and have to start over from zero.
- **Indiegogo**[97] for more flexible crowdfunding goals. If you're not quite sure how much money your product needs to get off the ground, you can make a flexible campaign on Indiegogo that won't be killed if you don't meet your funding goal— instead, you'll get the funds that *were* raised and ship the product to those customers.

What It'll Cost: Both Kickstarter and Indiegogo charge 5% of your total funding amount, along with an additional payment processing[98] fee of around 3-5%.

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[93] https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/597507018/pebble-e-paper-watch-for-iphone-and-android

[94] https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1523379957/oculus-rift-step-into-the-game

[95] https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/danprovost/glif-iphone-4-tripod-mount-and-stand?ref=profile_created

[96] https://www.kickstarter.com

[97] https://indiegogo.com

[98] https://zapier.com/blog/best-payment-gateways/

Social Network Stores

One of the many stores on Facebook, with new product listings

If you're looking for a crowd, start your store on a social network. They may not be designed for selling stuff, but they provide a built-in audience, along with tools for sharing pictures and text.

In many places, especially South East Asia, a Facebook Page—or even an Instagram "store"[99] or chat app account—is the default way to start selling stuff online.

You might not even need a store. Instead, you need a Facebook Page or other social media account, with photos of your products along with the sizes, colors, price, and other info in each image's description. When people want to purchase products, they can contact you in Facebook Messenger, or send an email to the address on your profile.

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[99] http://qz.com/104499/a-rising-class-of-instagram-entrepreneurs-in-kuwait-is-selling-comics-make-up-and-sheep/
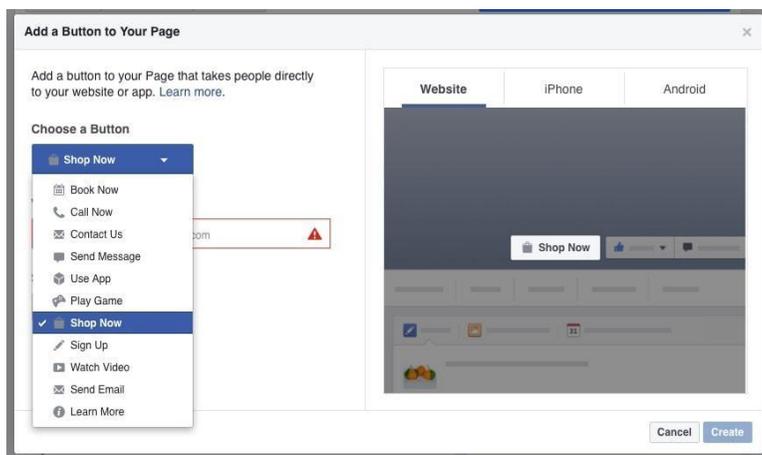
You can add a link to your store website in Facebook

All of that works in a normal social media profile, with no special tools needed. If you're selling locally, you could deliver your products and get paid in cash. Depending on your local banking options, you could have customers transfer money to your bank account to purchase products—a common option in Asia.

You could also share a PayPal[100] link with potential customers for them to send you money for the products. Or, you could just use Facebook for your marketing, and send potential customers to your *real* store website to make the purchase—just add the link to your store as the default button in the top-right of your page.

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[100]https://zapier.com/zapbook/paypal/review
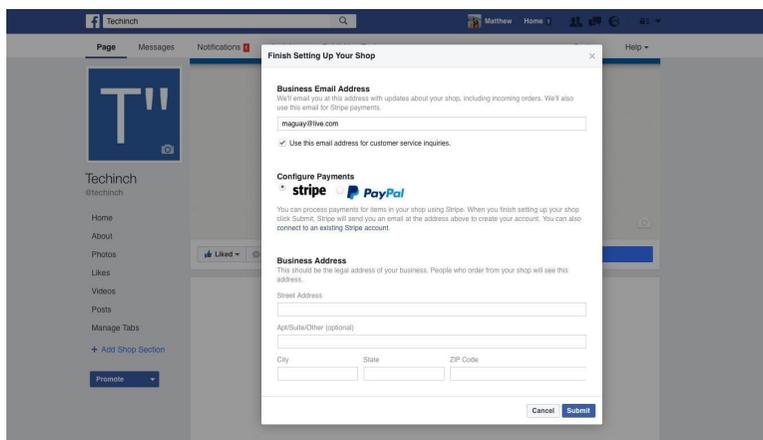
Facebook now includes a full store tool for Facebook Pages

If you want to get more advanced, both Facebook and Twitter now offer built-in store tools to list products. On Twitter, just share a link built with a compatible service like Gumroad[101] or Shopify[102], and your followers will see a preview of your product along with a *Buy Now* button. Facebook Pages now include a *Shop* section as well. Just click the *Add Shop Section* link on the left sidebar in your Page, then add your business address and email address, and optionally integrate with PayPal or Stripe. Then you can add products—which are basically fancy versions of pictures and descriptions, this time with a button to message you about the product. It's a slightly quicker way to close a sale from your page.

The hard work of selling products is still yours, though. Social networks give you a built-in marketing boost thanks to their existing audience, who might help you grow your business by sharing your product.

[101] https://zapier.com/zapbook/gumroad/review
[102] https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/review

But for the most part, you'll need to build your own audience to make social network sales work. If you already have a wide follower base, selling products to that *existing* audience might be easy. Or, you can start from scratch, building your audience one person at a time with beautiful photos, witty posts, or silly videos. Real-world events—like a table at a farmer's market—can help people notice your brand, follow you on social networks, and eventually make a purchase.

Ads are another great option—and they're more affordable for small businesses on social networks than anywhere else. You can set a small Facebook Ads budget, target people who are following related brands or interests, and hopefully get them to follow your page. Then, over time, you can try to keep their interest with new posts and eventually get them to make a purchase.

Ready to sell stuff on your favorite social network? Here are the basic steps:

1. Make a standard profile for your company, with your logo as the account icon and perhaps a preview of your products as the banner.
2. Start promoting your social media profile. The most important step to selling on social networks is getting a following. Share your store with your friends, post content others are likely to share, and perhaps get some ads to attract new followers.
3. Then, post your products over time. If you're just sharing them like anything else on a social network, the new products will show up alongside the rest of your posts.
4. Figure out how to accept payments, and be creative. There may be a better local alternative to PayPal in your area, so figure out what your customers prefer.
5. Check your private messages often—that's how potential customers will get in touch and buy your products.

The best part about selling on social networks is that it's cheap. You can make a Facebook Page or Twitter profile and list your products for free right from your phone. You don't need a separate website, and might not even need a payments tool or a full computer. You'll even keep your communications with customers right inside the chat apps you already use to talk with friends. The downside is, it's harder for customers to sort through all of your products, and can get overwhelming trying to manage all of your orders inside Messenger.

Where to Sell:

- **Facebook Pages** for a social network, site for your store, and private messaging all in one. With the new Facebook Shop[103] section on your Page, you can sell products and accept payments all inside Facebook. Learn more on Zapier's Facebook Pages review[104].
- **Twitter** makes it easy to get a wide reach with its open network, and its Buy Now buttons[105] can help you get quick sales.
- **Instamojo**[106] and **Meesho**[107] let you sell products directly inside chat app WhatsApp, something that can be an easy way sell additional products to customers who have already come to your store.
- **Shopify**[108] and **BigCommerce**[109]—along with many other online store builder apps—integrate with both Facebook and Twitter, adding a store section to your Facebook Page and turning your Shopify product listings into Twitter Buy Now buttons. You'll need to build a full store in their apps first,

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[103] https://www.facebook.com/business/help/846547442125798?helpref=faq_content
[104] https://zapier.com/zapbook/facebook-pages/review/
[105] https://business.twitter.com/en/advertising/commerce-on-twitter.html
[106] https://www.instamojo.com
[107] http://www.meesho.com
[108] https://www.shopify.com/facebook
[109] https://www.bigcommerce.com/features/sell-on-social/

though. Learn more on Zapier's Shopify[110] and BigCommerce[111] reviews.

What It'll Cost: Nothing—at least if you sell directly on a social network. You might need to pay for ads to get your products discovered, along with a 2.9% + $0.30 fee per sale if you charge through PayPal or Stripe. A Shopify store would start at $29/month as well.

Taking Your Store to The Next Level

If you like having the more integrated feel of a real Facebook Store, then you might be ready for a more advanced eCommerce platform. One that's designed *just* for selling stuff online, that includes exactly the features you want.

It'd take a bit more work to run that store—you'd have both the promotion tasks a social store brings and the more strict listing requirements a marketplace asks for—but you'd have more control over the sales process and how your products are displayed.

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[110]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/review/
[111]https://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcommerce/review/

Form-Based Stores
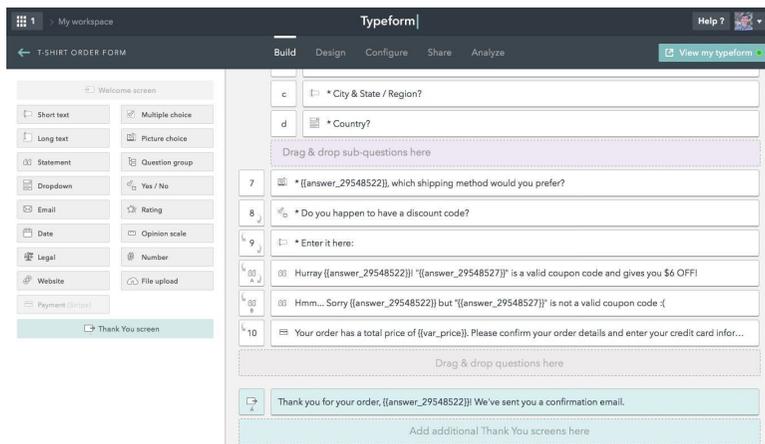
Orders need a form—so you could build your whole store in a form (Typeform pictured)

Form builder apps are some of the most flexible tools—they can power anything from your contact form to a prototype of your next app[112]. And, yes, they're a great way to start a simple store.

All you need to sell stuff is your customer's name, info about the product they want, and their payment and shipping info. A form's standard text fields are a simple way to gather most of that. Most form builders—such as Typeform and Wufoo—let you integrate with payment processors like Stripe and PayPal to accept payments inside your form.

> **Remember**: *Never* ask for payment information in a form without using the built-in payment tools, as you could easily be liable if credit card data were stolen or leaked from your form.

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[112]https://zapier.com/blog/prototype-app-zapier/

You'll have to do the hard work of sharing your product page and convincing people to pay via a form, but it's an incredibly simple way to sell your new shirt design or eBook. Here's what you'd need to do.

1. Open your favorite form builder, and connect it to a payment processor service such as PayPal or Stripe. *Note:* You might need a premium or paid account for the form builder to do this.
2. Make a new form, including text and image fields to describe your product, radio buttons to let people choose which item or color they want, and text input fields for their contact info. Many form builders, such as Typeform, offer templates for these kinds of forms.
3. If you want to sell multiple products or let people get more than one copy of your product—or want to charge variable shipping rates—add logic fields[113] or math fields to calculate the total.
4. Add a payment field to the end of your form, using your form app's built-in payment support.
5. Be sure to customize the default confirmation email on your form—or make one with form integrations[114]—to thank your customer for their order and assure them it'll be shipped soon. Or, to sell digital downloads, use integrations to email the file to them directly.

One of the best parts of using a form to sell products is that you can customize the checkout process far more than you could in any other standard eCommerce app. That can let you be creative—but be sure to include fields for all the data you need, and make sure your

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[113]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-forms-and-surveys/best-form-features/#logic

[114]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-forms-and-surveys/form-software-automation/

form feels trustworthy with clear pricing info and official payment fields so your customers won't leave the form before paying. Be sure to check some example payment forms (perhaps with these guides from Typeform[115] or Wufoo[116]).

Where to Sell:

- **Cognito Forms**[117] for payment forms without a monthly subscription—just pay 1% of your sales, along with your PayPal or Stripe payment processing fee. Learn more on Zapier's Cognito Forms review[118].
- **Typeform**[119] for flexible forms that feel more like apps, by only showing one question at a time and then completing the experience with Stripe payments. Learn more on Zapier's Typeform review[120].
- **Wufoo**[121], **Formstack**[122], or **123ContactForm**[123] for flexible, traditional forms that let you accept payments with a wide range of services, including PayPal, Stripe, Braintree, Authorize.net, Chargify, and Dwolla.
- *And more*: There are dozens of form apps, most of which offer payment processing with their paid plans. Here's a roundup of the best form apps with payment tools[124] for more options.

What It'll Cost: Most form apps only include payments on their higher priced plans; you'll need a $29.95/month Wufoo plan, $35/month

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[115] https://www.typeform.com/help/payment-field-stripe-integration/
[116] http://www.wufoo.com/guides/preview-prices-on-wufoo-payment-forms-with-running-total/
[117] https://www.cognitoforms.com/features/payment
[118] https://zapier.com/zapbook/cognito-forms/review/
[119] https://www.typeform.com/help/payment-field-stripe-integration/
[120] https://zapier.com/zapbook/typeform/review/
[121] http://www.wufoo.com/payments/
[122] https://www.formstack.com/integrations/payments
[123] http://www.123contactform.com/docs/payments/
[124] https://zapier.com/blog/best-form-apps-payments/

Typeform plan, or a $39/month plan on 123ContactForm or Form-stack to accept payments—along with the per-transaction payment processing fee from the payments service you choose.

Cognito Forms makes it cheaper to start out by only charging 1% of sales—but if you sell a lot, their $24/month plan with no per-sale fee might work out cheaper.

Single-Product Stores
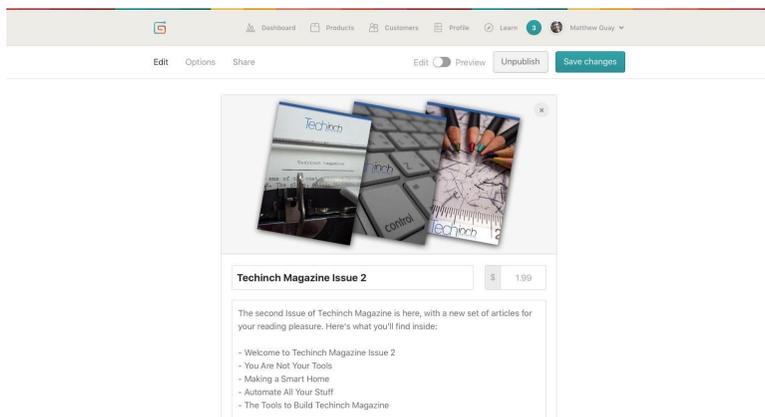
Single product stores are the quickest way to sell individual products (Gum-road pictured)

Want something even simpler than a form—perhaps the simplest way to sell stuff online? A single-product store builder is the app for you.

Tools like Gumroad and Plasso aren't *just* for selling single items—you could use them to sell as many products as you want. But they *are* focused on presenting only one item at a time. You'll make a listing page for each product, with its own pricing, description, and media. Then, share that page, and your customers can buy that one item in a few clicks.

In just about the time it'd take you to share a file on Dropbox, you could be *selling* that file. All you'd need to do is:

1. Make an account with the single-product tool you want to use—and connect it to a payment processor with some services. What's the simplest option? Go for something that manages payments itself.
2. Make your product listing, with a photo, price, and description of what you're selling.
3. Share your product page with your followers to start getting sales.

You can use payment pages like these for all types of purposes. They're especially great for selling digital products such as eBooks and website themes, but you can also use them to sell anything you'd list on Etsy or even to make your own pre-order system for upcoming products. They can even run your subscription service or give you a way to add a store to your existing website without much work.

They're not that flexible and you can't make them look like you want—but you'll be hard-pressed to find anything else that offers this kind of simplicity.

Where to Sell:

- **Gumroad**[125] to start selling products in seconds, and let customers re-download digital products from their dashboard anytime. Learn more on Zapier's **Gumroad review**[126].
- **Plasso**[127] for a simple, Stripe-powered online store that supports preorders, invoices, and USB card readers for in-person sales.
- **Chec**[128] to create individual product listings, share them

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[125] https://gumroad.com/
[126] https://zapier.com/zapbook/gumroad/review/
[127] https://plasso.co
[128] https://trychec.com

directly or embed them in your site, and then build a full custom checkout system later if you'd like.

- **Sellify**[129] to sell digital products and have them listed in Sellify's store for a cross between a single-product store and a marketplace.
- **SendOwl**[130] for product pages in your multiple languages, along with credit card, PayPal, and BitCoin payments.
- **E-junkie**[131] for one of the original tools to sell digital products online quickly, with integrated affiliate tools to get others to promote your products.

What It'll Cost: Most single-product stores are priced like payment services, as a percentage of your selling price.

- Chec comes in cheapest, at 2% per transaction plus payment processing fees.
- Gumroad's charges 5% per transaction plus 25¢ per sale.
- Plasso charges 4% per transaction plus Stripe's fees
- Sellify charges 5% plus PayPal fees.
- E-junkie and SendOwl use monthly plans, starting at $5 and $9/month, respectively.

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[129] https://sellfy.com
[130] https://www.sendowl.com
[131] http://www.e-junkie.com

Hosted Online Stores
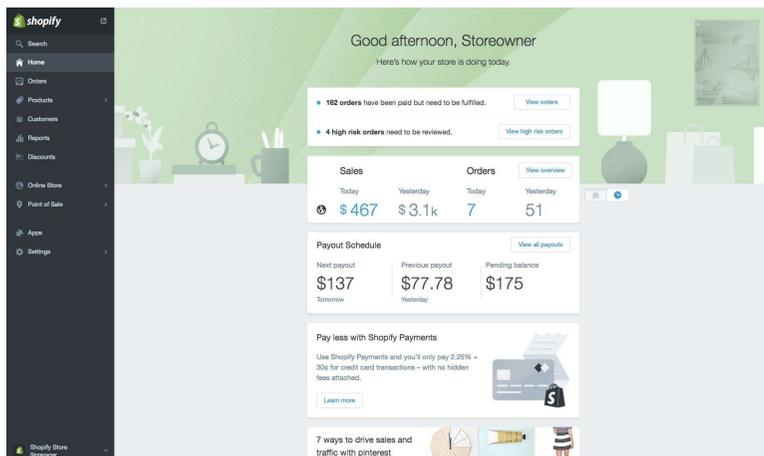
Hosted stores tend to be focused on tools to help you manage orders (Shopify pictured)

If you need more customization for your online store than eBay and Etsy offer, odds are you'll end up with a hosted eCommerce app like Shopify or Big Cartel. They're the *real deal*—a full custom online store for your business.

Tools like these are designed to handle every detail about your own store, one that looks exactly the way you want. Your store will have its own site, complete with product listings and a shopping cart for customers to buy multiple products. When you login to your store's account, you'll see a list of orders you need to ship, and can dig into stats to see how many people visited your store and how much money you've made this month.

And, since they're *hosted*, you won't have to do any work to maintain the site, install updates, or keep customer data secure. The team behind your eCommerce store will manage all that for you. You'll have all the advantages of having your own site, without most of the hassle you'd have in running a site on your own server—

though you won't be able to change as much in your site as you could with a self-hosted eCommerce app (which we'll look at next).

Want to market your store with blog posts, email newsletters, and social media? Wondering how you'll keep track of accounting data and manage returns? Hosted eCommerce apps will take care of all that and more.

They'll take longer to set up than any of the other options so far—and cost more, at least up front—but you'll get a customized site for your efforts. Here are the basic things you'll do:

1. Create an account with a hosted eCommerce app, and pick your store's name and domain.
2. Choose and customize a theme for your site, along with a logo and other branding aspects.
3. Add your products to your store.
4. Add any other details your store will need—typically a payment processing account, shipping info, and a contact form where customers can get in touch if needed.
5. Open your store to the public and start promoting it online.

The important thing with hosted eCommerce apps is how much their interface fits your workflow and needs. Instead of directly opening an account and committing to one app right from the start, you might want to try a trial account on several apps and see which one you like best before building your full store.

Where to Sell:

- Shopify[132] to quickly build a store that looks and works like you want with themes, add-ons, and mobile apps. Learn more on Zapier's Shopify review[133].

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[132]https://www.shopify.com/
[133]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/review/

- **BigCommerce**[134] to build a store that's integrated with your favorite accounting, mailing, and other apps—and to cross-list your products on eBay, Etsy, and Facebook Pages. Learn more on Zapier's BigCommerce review[135].
- **Big Cartel**[136] for simple tools to start a smaller store. You can start out with listing 5 products for free, then grow your store as your business grows. Learn more on Zapier's Big Cartel review[137].
- **Volusion**[138] to drive sales with daily deals, color swatch tools on product listings to preview designs, and dozens of themes—along with a custom theme design service.
- **LemonStand**[139] for a developer-friendly hosted store that lets you use Bootstrap, React, Angular, or other front-end frameworks to design your store.
- A site builder like **Squarespace**[140], **Weebly**[141], **Wix**[142], or **Jimdo**[143] that also supports stores to add a small shop on the side of your existing blog or website. They're best for selling merchandise along with your site that's primarily focused on your brand.

What It'll Cost: Pricing for hosted stores varies based on your needs. Big Cartel is free for tiny stores, Shopify lets you get started with a $9/month lite plan, and Volusion starts at $15/month.

For a full suite of features, most stores cost around $30/month, plus payment processing fees and additional charges for customizations like themes and your own domain.

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[134]https://www.bigcommerce.com
[135]https://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcommerce/review/
[136]https://www.bigcartel.com
[137]https://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcartel/review/
[138]https://www.volusion.com
[139]https://lemonstand.com
[140]https://www.squarespace.com/commerce/
[141]https://www.weebly.com/features/ecommerce-website?lang=en
[142]http://www.wix.com/html5ecom
[143]http://www.jimdo.com/make-an-online-store/

> **Tip:** Want more details on each eCommerce platform—
> and other alternate apps? Skip ahead to chapter 5 for a
> deep-dive into each of the best eCommerce apps.

Self-Hosted Online Stores
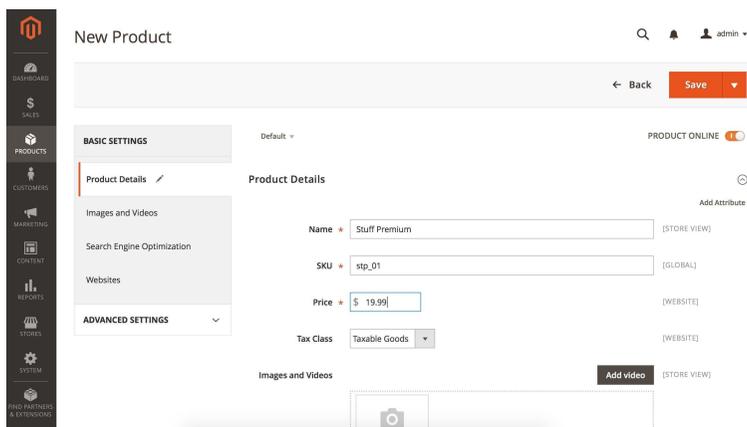
Self-hosted stores let you tweak everything about your site (Magento pictured)

If you're already running your own website or want to customize *everything* about your site, self-hosted eCommerce tools are the next best option. They offer many of the same features you'd find in hosted eCommerce apps, and the core versions are free—though you'll need to pay for things like hosting, though..

Self-hosted eCommerce apps such as WooCommerce and Magento are some of the most popular ways to build a store since they let you customize everything. You'll find a wide range of themes and plugins for each to make it simple to build the site you want. And because they're running on your own server, you can dig in and customize their code and database however you want.

That same flexibility makes them more difficult to start using and maintain, though. You'll need to set up your own server or hosting,

and the onus is on you to keep your customer data safe. And you'll often need to look further for add-ons with the exact features you want since the core apps themselves are a bit more streamlined.

Here's the minimum you'd need to do to run a self-hosted online store:

1. Get a hosting account or run your own server, complete with your own domain and SSL certificate to keep customer data secure.
2. Install your eCommerce app, along with any dependencies it needs to run and any add-ons you need for your store.
3. Add a theme to your site and customize it to fit your branding.
4. Add your store's info and connect it to a payment processor service.
5. Add your product listings and any other pages you want to include in your site.
6. Share your site and perhaps set up integrations to help manage your orders.

Want to try out a self-hosted eCommerce app before committing to it? You could run them locally on your computer using a local server tool like MAMP[144], or could try a pre-installed version in a hosting tool like Digital Ocean[145]. That'll help you figure out if you like the tool enough to set it up entirely on your server.

Where to Sell:

- **Magento**[146] for one of the most powerful eCommerce platforms with a wide range of paid extensions—and an Enterprise edition if you need more features as your store grows. Learn more on Zapier's Magento review[147].

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[144]https://www.mamp.info
[145]https://zapier.com/zapbook/digital-ocean/review/
[146]https://magento.com
[147]https://zapier.com/zapbook/magento/review/

- **WooCommerce**[148] to run a store right inside your Word-Press[149] site. It's simple to use, takes minutes to set up, and includes a wide range of themes to customize your store. Learn more on Zapier's WooCommerce review[150].
- For a simpler WordPress store, Go Pricing[151] and Simple Pay[152] give you an easy way to just add payments to your store.
- **X-Cart**[153] for a store that integrates with eBay, includes a point-of-sale view, and lets you create your own marketplace—along with a Mac and Windows app to test-drive your store on your computer.
- **FastSpring**[154] or **Ecwid**[155] for adding a hosted checkout to your own website. It's a handy split between hosted and self-hosted stores—you run your own site, and then let Fast-Spring handle the secure parts of your transactions. And, as mentioned above, a payment form could work perfectly for payments on your existing self-hosted site.

What It'll Cost: The core versions of most self-hosted eCommerce stores—including Magento, WooCommerce, and X-Cart—are free.

You'll need to pay for your own hosting (starting at $5/month on a service like Digital Ocean[156]), a SSL certificate to encrypt your site (from around $9/year), and will likely need to purchase themes, plugins, and paid upgrades to get the features you need—along with payment processing fees and your domain name. You'll also need to count for the time it takes to set up and maintain your site.

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[148]https://woocommerce.com

[149]https://zapier.com/zapbook/wordpress/review/

[150]https://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/review/

[151]http://www.go-pricing.com

[152]https://wpsimplepay.com

[153]http://www.x-cart.com

[154]https://fastspring.com

[155]https://www.ecwid.com

[156]https://zapier.com/zapbook/digital-ocean/review/

> **Tip**: To help make your self-hosted eCommerce store easier to manage, here are 10 tips from the WooCommerce team on how to automate your store[157]—tips that could also work with Magento and other tools.

Which Should You Choose?

There's no perfect place to start your store. Everything comes with tradeoffs. Marketplaces give you a built-in audience in exchange for higher fees and less control. Hosted eCommerce apps cost more per month, but are packed with features. Self-hosted eCommerce apps are free as long as you have hosting and time to manage them.

One might work better when you're starting out, and as your business grows you can switch to another eCommerce app. That's what the Moment Lens[158] team found. "Kickstarter was an early fundraising platform that played a key role in getting off the ground, gauging customer demand, and funding early production," says founder Marc Barros. They then built their own store in WooCommerce to drive sales after the crowdfunding campaign. And they still needed social media, like Instagram, to drive sales at their site.

Others start out on a marketplace, and build their own store later. Tasha Burton did that with her Belle Butters[159] store. "Etsy is where I began," Burton says. It became crowded with similar stores over time, and the fees added up, so she moved her store to Big Cartel.

Or you could use multiple eCommerce platforms at once, as Urban Baby Bonnets[160] does. "The branding strength of my own site is

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[157] https://woocommerce.com/2016/02/ecommerce-automation-ideas/
[158] https://momentlens.co
[159] http://www.bellebutters.com
[160] http://urbanbabybonnets.com

more powerful than the sub-branding of other platforms," says founder Colette Palamar. So, for the best of both worlds, she sells her products on her own site *and* on Etsy and Amazon at the same time to grab customers from their vast customer base.

Self-hosted eCommerce tools are popular for their flexibility, but they can also be too much to manage. As BottleKeeper[161] founder Adam Callinan said, "WordPress and WooCommerce worked well for the first year and a half. Then, we outgrew the system and had 29 plugins operating simultaneously, tremendously slowing performance." Shopify fit their needs better, and their team didn't need to spend time optimizing the site.

Start with the tool that seems to fit best now, and when you outgrow it, make the switch. You could even sell in more than one place at once—just like you could have a real-world bakery and sell your baked goods at festivals on the weekend, too.

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[161]https://www.bottlekeeper.com

It Takes More Than Just a Store

How are you going to replicate that in your online store?

No one's going to walk past your online store. They won't follow your Facebook Page by accident, and aren't likely to randomly choose your product on eBay a second time if you don't try hard.

As BzaBiz[162] founder David Bizer said, "Starting an eCommerce business is super easy and can be done in one day. Getting sales is hard, though."

A store on its own isn't enough. You need to get people to notice your store, take interest in your products, buy them, *and* share them with their friends. And you'll need to support your customers when things go wrong.

The tough part is that you need to do a great at all of it. As Tasha Burton said, "If the product is excellent, the customer service is great, you'll have instant customer loyalty. Don't take your

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[162]https://bza.biz

customers for granted!"

It's the same things you'd need in a real-world store, only this time, your best tricks are with apps, not signs and fresh-baked samples. Here are some great resources to help you get started:

- You need to get people's attention with your new store. Here's a look at 19 great customer acquisition channels[163], from affiliates to viral videos, and what you can expect from each.
- Social media is one of the best ways to promote your products, whether you're selling directly with a Facebook Store or not. Here are 101 ways to smartly automate your social media[164] so you don't have to have Facebook open on your phone at all hours.
- One of the best ways to keep people coming back—or to get them to buy a product they've already looked at—is with email marketing. Zapier's free *Ultimate Guide to Email Marketing*[165] gives you the tips and tools to send great emails to your customers and keep them engaged.
- You'll also need to support your customers. Zapier's *Ultimate Guide to Customer Support*[166] is another free book you should add to your collection. With tips from a number of companies on how to offer great customer support—and guides to the best apps for customer support—you'll hit the ground running with your first support emails.
- Once you've sold some products, want to know what people think about them? Here's how to monitor your brand online[167] to see what's said about your store and products.

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[163]https://zapier.com/blog/acquire-customers/

[164]https://zapier.com/blog/social-media-automation/

[165]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/

[166]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-customer-support/

[167]https://zapier.com/blog/monitor-brand-mentions/

Building the next name-brand giant takes great products, along with a location where you can show them off.

Your online store is no different. The internet is really just the world's cheapest real estate, with online marketplaces, social networks, and hosted stores acting as shopping malls, market stands, and kiosks. What matters most is a combination of a good location, great products, and marketing that attracts people to your store.

There's no one perfect place to sell your products. Your best bet might be a combination of all the above—maybe you should try a Kickstarter to develop your product, then promote it on Facebook and make some extra sales, and eventually build a full-featured WooCommerce site on your own once you're ready. Maybe you'll end up starting a real-world store, too.

So go give it a try—in chapter 4, we'll show you step-by-step how to open, stock, and run your online store. There are so many ways to sell stuff online, it'd be a shame to want to start a store and never do it.

Written by Matthew Guay[168].

Image Credits: Shopping cart photo by Caden Crawford[169] via Flickr[170]; market photo by Erik Scheel[171] via Pexels[172]; specials sign photo by Ed Gregory via Stockpic[173].

[168]http://twitter.com/maguay
[169]https://www.flickr.com/photos/cadencrawford/
[170]https://www.flickr.com/photos/cadencrawford/8344048410/
[171]https://www.pexels.com/u/erikscheel/
[172]https://www.pexels.com/photo/apple-business-fruit-local-95425/
[173]http://stokpic.com/project/cafe-chalkboard-with-todays-specials/

Chapter 4: How to Start a Store—A Step-by-Step Guide to eCommerce with Shopify and WooCommerce

You've wanted to start an online store for forever—perhaps as a new venture or as a way to expand your existing physical business to the web. You've done your due diligence: you've picked out a name, developed your products and inventory, started your real business, and even decided where you want to sell your products online.

But you're still not sure where to go from here. Online sales are intimidating, and there are so many new things that you've never had to worry about before: Product listings, SKUs, payment gateways, website themes, SEO, analytics, and more. It seems easier

to just stick with selling products in your hometown or listing them
on a marketplace site[174] like eBay or Etsy.

That would work—but your own customizable online store gives
you the greatest opportunity to brand your products, create a
relationship with more customers, and put your best face forward
from the first time people interact with your company. And it
doesn't have to be that hard.

Let's go through it, step-by-step.

What You Need to Set Up an Online Store

At the core of any store are products, people, and payments. You
list products for sale, attract people's attention, and then get them
to pay you money and purchase the products.

In the real world, you could do that with a stand at a market,
by getting your products carried by a major retailer or even by
selling products door-to-door. Online, you have similar options,
with online marketplaces, social media stores, and more that we've
explored in the last chapter.

But the best option—the way you can feature products the way you
want, get to know customers, and attract repeat business with your
hands-on support—is by starting your own store. There are dozens
of great tools for that, but we've picked two to feature in this tutorial
that cover most use cases: Shopify and WooCommerce.

Shopify[175] includes everything you need to start an online store,
starting at $29 per month. In addition to managing your site theme
and product listings, it also includes a payment processing service
and can help you register your own domain name. You can even

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[174]https://zapier.com/blog/how-to-start-online-store/#marketplace
[175]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/review/

use its Point of Sales app to bring a digital face to your existing real-world store's checkout experience or manage your store on the go from Shopify's mobile apps.

WooCommerce[176], on the other hand, gives you even more flexibility for free—but with the additional complexity of running a self-hosted store. You'll be able to tweak and customize everything, but will also have to manage your own website and handle things like payments and domains on your own.

We'll start out with Shopify—it's the best option if you're still unsure which store to use for your tool—and then will look at what else you'd need to run the same store with WooCommerce.

> **Tip**: Want to use a different eCommerce platform for your store—perhaps one of the others listed in chapter 5? You'll likely find tips in the Shopify section that apply to most hosted eCommerce stores, and WooCommerce tips that apply to many other self-hosted eCommerce stores.

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[176]https://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/review/

How to Set Up a Shopify Store
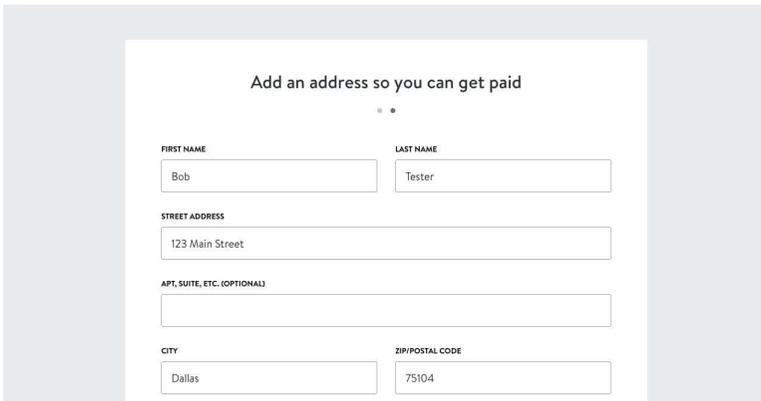
**Have your business name and address ready—that's all you'll need to start
your store**

Got a business name and some products to list in your store? That's
all you'll need.

Just go to shopify.com[177], and enter your email address to make an
account. Shopify will ask you a few survey questions about whether
you have an existing store and then have you enter your name and
address—where you should enter your business address, if you have
one.

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[177]https://shopify.com/
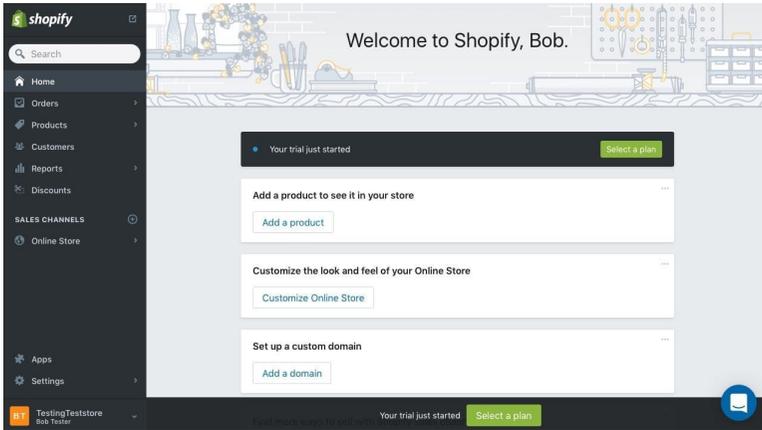
It's time to start your store by listing products

Shopify will automatically make a new site for your store at
yourname.myshopify.com—in fact, you can open it right now. But
first let's dive right in and start adding your product listings.

1. Create Product Listings in Shopify
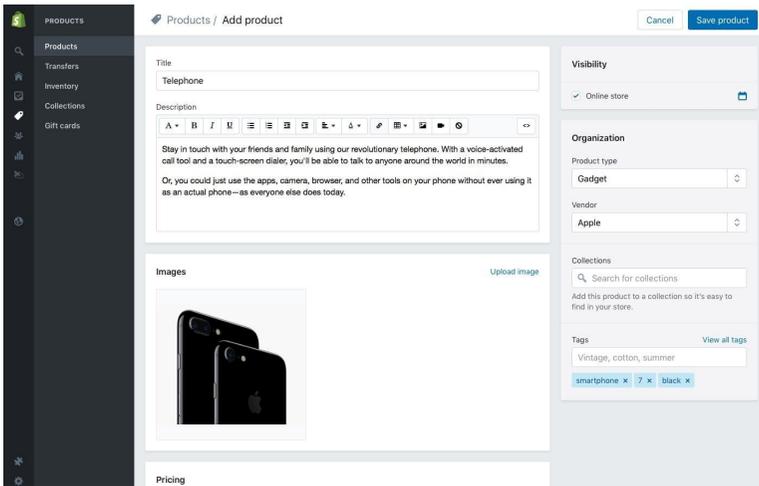
Add as many or few details as you want to your products

From the dashboard in the Products section, just click the *Add a
product* button to start adding the stuff you want to sell. For each
product listing, you can add:

- **Title**: a name for your product.
- **Description**: formatted text that describes your product.
- **Images**: photos of your product; include at least one.
- **Date**: an option to set a date when the product will be
  available. It's a bit hidden, but click the calendar icon beside
  Visibility to set a date for the product to launch (or, option-
  ally, uncheck *Online Store* under Visibility to
- **Product Type**: the category of your product, perhaps `shirts`
  or `gadgets`. Each product gets one product type, and you can
  choose from any product type or add a new one.
- **Vendor**: selling branded goods? This is where you'll list the
  brand name like `Nike` or `Tide`, and each product can again
  only have one.

- **Tags**: keywords to identify your products in a less formal way, as an easy way to add terms like `retro` or `winter` to your products.

- **Price**: your product's price, typically not including sales tax for US-based stores. Check the *Charge taxes on this product* to have Shopify calculate sales tax automatically based on your business location.

- **Compare at Price**: want to list a suggested retail price or a price from another major vendor that's more expensive than your listing? Add that price here, and Shopify will show customers how much they're saving.

- **SKU (stock keeping unit)**: a code to keep track of your internal stock of the product. You can add your own code if you have one, or make a new code for your products—it's just for your own internal management.

- **Barcode**: if you're selling branded goods, or already have your products in a store, they'll likely have a UPC code. Or, if you're selling books, they'll have an ISBN code. Add that there to keep your stock organized and help customers search for products in your store.

- **Weight**: your product's shipping weight, to calculate shipping prices.

- **Harmonized system code**: a code published by the US International Trade Commission[178] to identify your products for international customs. Could be helpful to add for each product if you plan to sell internationally.

- **Variants**: options for your product, including size and color, which you can add to your listing. Be sure to include info about each variant in your product description and images.

You could list everything—or you could make things simple and just list the core items: Title, Description, Photo, and Price. Everything

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[178]https://hts.usitc.gov

else is extra, but they can keep your store organized and help
customers find what they're looking for.
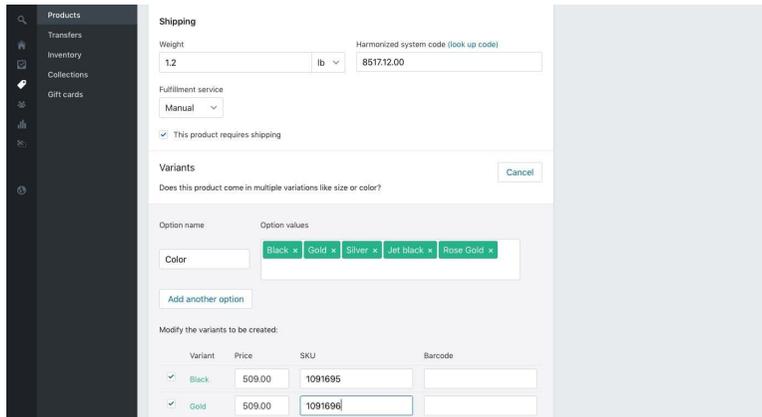
Shopify shows only the tools you need

Some options will show up as you're working. Say you add variants
to your product. Shopify will add sub-listings for each one, where
you can customize each variant's price, SKU, and barcode numbers.

When you're done, save your product. You can now add more
products or jump to the next step and continue setting up your store.

> **Tip:** Want to add custom fields to your Shopify product
> listings to include data not covered by these product
> fields? Shopify supports line item fields in custom
> themes[179]—it's an advanced feature that requires cod-
> ing, though, so not something you'd likely want to try
> out when you're just getting started.

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[179]https://help.shopify.com/themes/customization/products/get-customization-
information-for-products#add-customization-form-fields
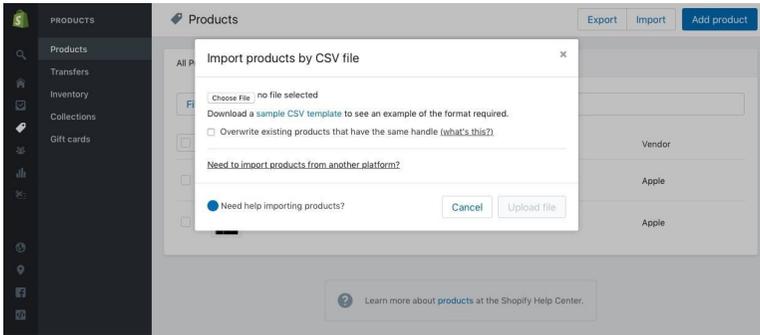
You can bulk import products from eBay, Magento, or a spreadsheet

Adding each product by hand can be time consuming, so Shopify
offers a simpler option: Import. Back on your main Product page,
click the *Import* button in the top right corner to bulk import
product listings. If you already had a store on eBay or Magento,
click the *Import products from another platform* link and follow the
steps to bring those products in.

Otherwise, you can import products from a .CSV spreadsheet file.
Check Shopify's import guide[180] for tips on setting up your spread-
sheet, as you'll need columns for your product name, price, de-
scription, vendor, and more. Also, make sure each product has a
unique name, or **Handle** as Shopify refers to the product name with
imports.

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[180]https://help.shopify.com/manual/products/import-export#product-csv-file-format

2. Organize Products Into Collections
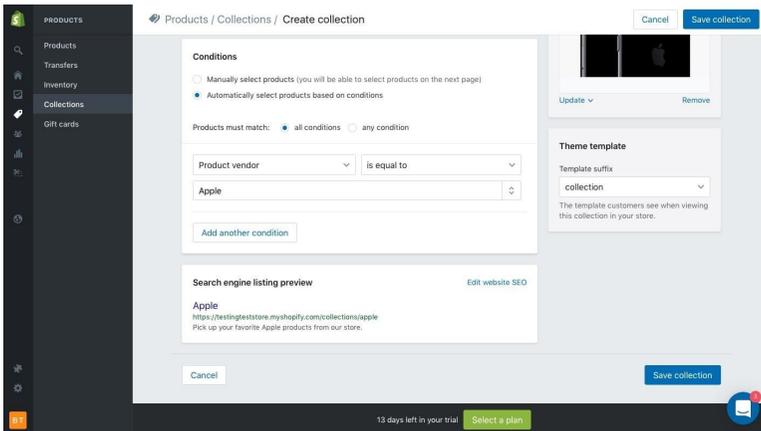
**Choose products for collections, or let Shopify do the work based on your
product info**

Adding all that info to each product is time consuming. It pays off,
though, because it gives you a simple way to create **Collections** or
sets of products in your store.

Shopify uses Collections to let you group your products, feature
them on your homepage, and make it easier for customers to find
items that go together. You could make a collection of all your blue
products, say, or group a gadget and the accessories that go with it.
You could make a random collection of your favorite products or
the newest things in your store—it's your choice.

To add one, click *Products* in the side menu and select *Collections.*
Add a name, description, and image as with a product. Then, you
can choose to manually select items for the collection, or you can
add conditions—the best way to make categories that you don't
have to manage. Just choose the product variables to watch—the
product tag, vendor, or weight, a word in the name or description,
or whether it's in stock. Then enter the words or values to filter for,
and add any other conditions you want.

Say you want only blue products that are in stock from Vendor X.
You'd add a condition for `Product vendor is equal to Vendor X`, a condition for `Product tag is equal to blue`, and a final
condition for `Inventory stock is greater than 0`. Then you can
choose to display the products alphabetically, in price or date order,
or however you'd like.

3. Add a Domain Name

The best part about having your own store site is customizing it to
showcase your branding. There are two ways to do that: with your
own domain name and with a custom theme.

Your site's **Domain Name**—or the address customers will type in
their browsers to visit your store—is perhaps the most important.
You need something unique, ideally a name that's still available
with a `.com` extension, as that's what most people will expect when
they type your site's name in.

Shopify includes an *Add a Domain* button in your dashboard, where
you can either add an existing domain name or buy a new one. If
you already own a domain name, just click the *Add* button and
enter your domain name. Then in your domain registrar's settings,
you'll need to set Shopify's IP address as your A record—follow
Shopify's steps to setting up your domain[181] to get it right.

Or, to make things easier, you can buy a domain from Shopify for
around $13/year. Enter a name you'd like to use for your site, and
Shopify will register it or suggest alternate domain names if that
one's not available.

Your store also needs an **SSL certificate** along with your domain to
enable secure transactions, so your customers can safely enter credit
card numbers and other private info even over open WiFi networks.
As a nice bonus, Shopify will obtain one for your domain, so you
don't have to worry about that.

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[181]https://help.shopify.com/manual/domains/third-party-domains/common-providers

> **Tip**: Having trouble finding a great domain name?
> LeanDomainSearch[182] and iWantMyName[183] are great
> tools to help you find something close to what you
> want.

4. Customize Your Store Theme
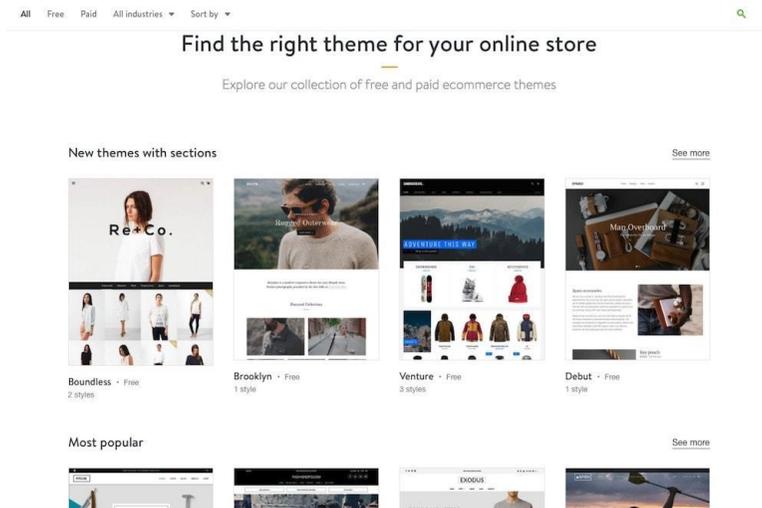
Choose a theme that works the way you want—then customize it with your style

Now that you have a domain name and product listings, it's time
to make your store look great with a **Theme**, a customized design
that changes your site's entire design and layout.

Back on the dashboard, select the *Themes* button to customize your
existing theme (the default white *Debut* theme) or select a new
theme. Shopify includes 6 default free themes, along with a Theme
Store[184] where you can choose from dozens of free or paid themes

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[182]http://www.leandomainsearch.com
[183]https://iwantmyname.com
[184]https://themes.shopify.com/

from designers around the world.

Select the themes you like to preview their details and variants, as some themes include multiple color or typography options. All themes on the store are guaranteed to work with Shopify's core store features, and some also include extra features like a video slideshow, zooming photos, Instagram and other social media integrations, drop-down menus, and more.

You can view a demo of the theme to see if you like it—and with paid themes, click the *Preview* button to see what your store would look like with that theme. Then, purchase the theme and click *Install.* From the Theme Manager page, you can then customize the theme.
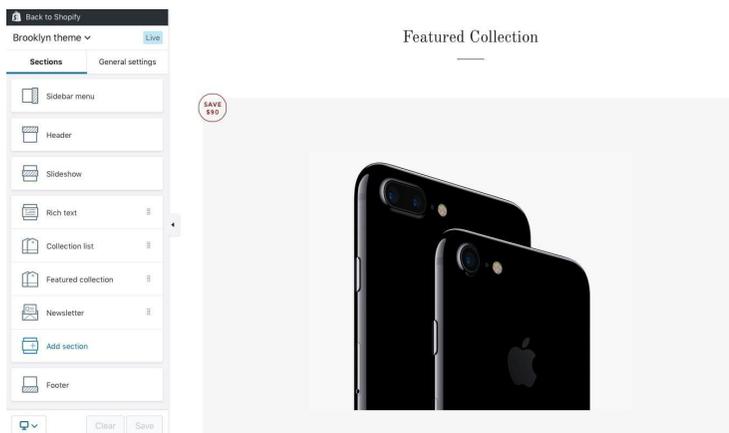
Edit the text and images in any section of your store site—and tweak fonts and colors from the General Settings

Shopify themes are designed to be simple to edit with your own text, colors, images, and typography. They're built around Shopify's product listing tools, especially product collections. That's where the collections you made before come in handy; most themes let you choose a featured category to list on your store's front page and promote to your customers.

Rich text

CONTENT

▼ 🗒️ Rich text

Text

B	*I*

Thank you for checking out our store!

🗑️ Delete

➕ Add content
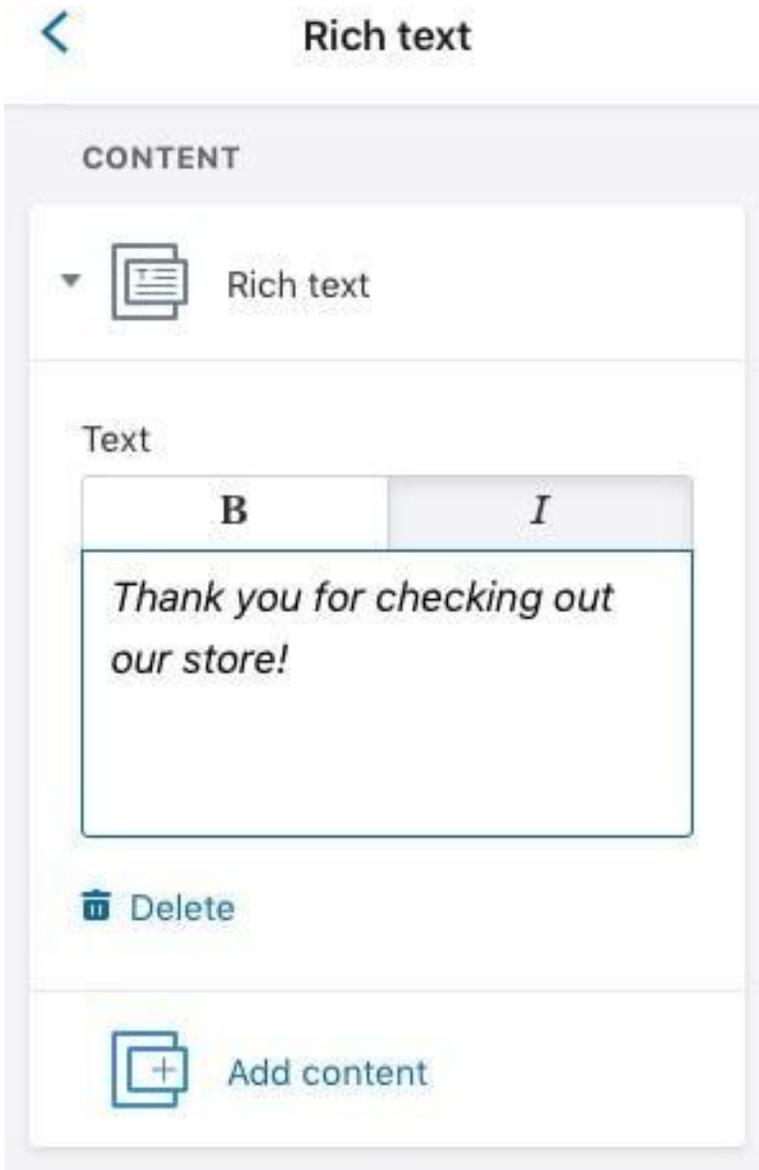
While you can't move, say, an image to any spot on the page you
want, you *can* rearrange, add, or remove sections to customize the
front page. Say you want to customize the description of your store,
and add a video under that.

You'd click the *Rich text* box in the left sidebar, and add the text you
want with basic formatting. Then, go back to the main menu and
click the *Add Section* link near the bottom. Select *Featured Video*,
click *Add*, then enter a link to your video on YouTube or Vimeo. Go
back again to the first tab, and you can drag that new video section
to right underneath your store's description.

Most Shopify themes make the most of your images, using an image
for your store's name or logo, as the main banner on the front
page, and to showcase your products and collections. For some extra
branding, you can also tweak your store's colors and fonts, choose
if your shopping cart shows up in a separate page or as a popover
tab, as well as include links to your social media accounts from the
General Settings tab.
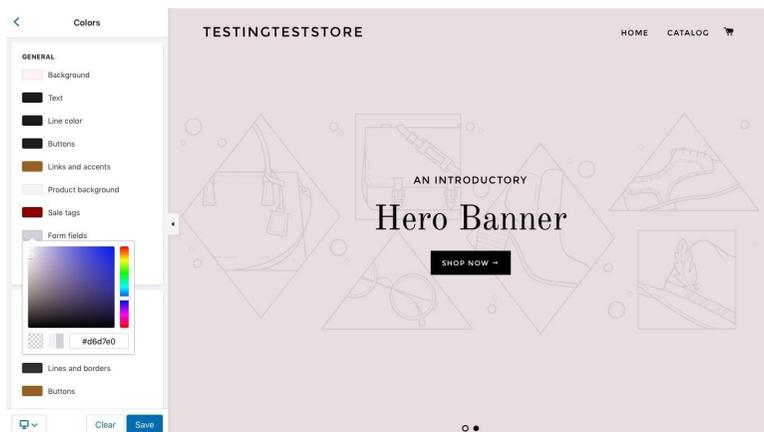
Just select the item you want to change, and tweak each setting
with a live preview on the right. You can change colors for most
parts of your site, choose from a select of Google Fonts typefaces,

pick between a drawer or full page for your shopping cart, and add banners to your checkout experience.

One thing you should add: a **Favicon**. That's the small icon that'll show in the top of the browser when people visit your site, or in the bookmarks list when they save it to visit later. It's a tiny way to make sure people know they're on your site. Just grab your logo image, then use a site like Faviconer[185] or Favicomatic[186] to convert it into a favicon. Download that image, then add it to your Shopify store design here.

> **Tip**: Want to build your own theme from scratch? Check out the Shopify Theme Documentation[187] to learn how to build your own theme using the Liquid[188] template language and Shopify's AJAX API[189].

5. Add Store Info
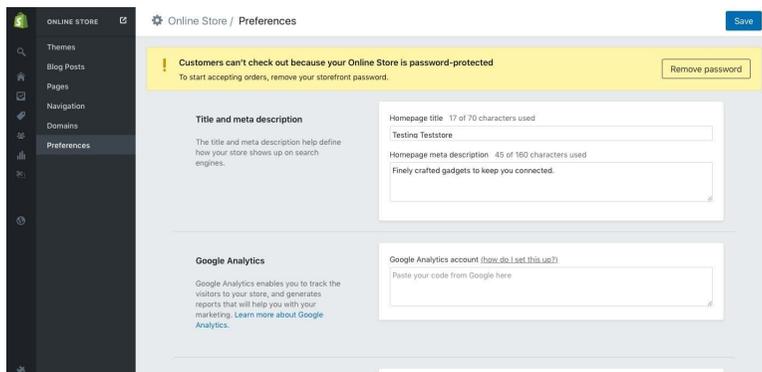
Your new Shopify store only needs a bit more info to get launched

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[185]http://www.faviconer.com

[186]http://www.favicomatic.com

[187]https://help.shopify.com/themes/development/getting-started

[188]https://help.shopify.com/themes/liquid

[189]https://help.shopify.com/themes/development/getting-started/using-ajax-api/

When editing your theme, you may have noticed a message about
needing to remove your site's password to start accepting orders.
That's nearly your last step to get your store launched.

Just click the password link—or select *Online Store* and then *Prefer-
ences* in the menu, and you can remove the default password that
keeps your store under wraps while you're setting it up. On the top
of that page, you'll also want to add a name and description for your
store.

You can also add a Google Analytics code to track your store's
traffic, although Shopify will keep tabs on your site traffic for you
with its own *Reports* if you want to keep things simple. And if you
plan on using Facebook Ads[190], you can add a tracking pixel to see
if your ads are bring in real customers.

You'll be asked to select a paid plan to remove the password, and
once you've done that, your store will be ready for customers.
There's only one more thing: payments.

The simplest way to get paid in Shopify is with the built-in Shopify
Payments gateway. Your store will use it by default, though you'll

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[190]https://zapier.com/zapbook/facebook-lead-ads/review/

need to add your bank info to get paid. Just click *Settings -> Payments*, select *Complete Account Setup* under the Shopify Payments box, and enter the rest of your personal info along with your bank account info.

And that's it. Your store is now open, and customers can buy your products and pay you directly. It was simpler than you thought, wasn't it?

> **Tip**: Shopify also works with PayPal, Amazon Payments, Dwolla, Alipay, and more. Compare the payment processing services in chapter 6 to help you choose the best one for your store.

How to Manage Your Shopify Store

Your basic store is plenty to get started, with product listings, a customized theme, featured collections of products, and your own domain name. Shopify will email you whenever you get a new order, and you could ship the orders to the address in that email.

To run an efficient, well-maintained store, though, you'll want to put a bit more work into Shopify. Here are the tools you need to keep track of your sales, add more info and features to your store, and let your store take care of itself with automations.

Manage Your Orders
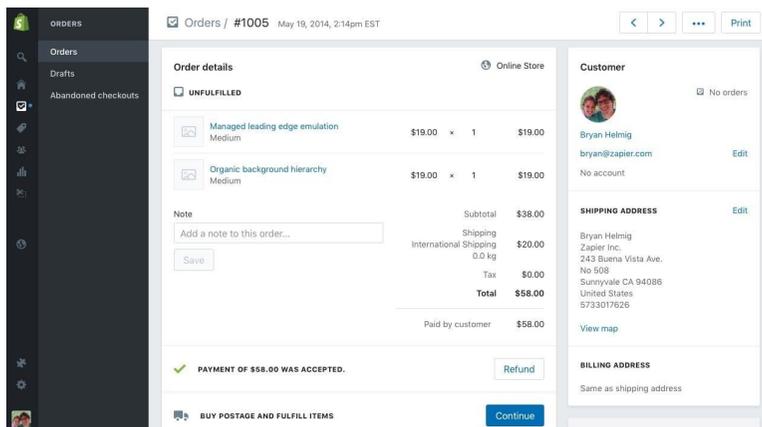
Shopify makes it easy to see what you need to ship—and to add notes to remind you about this order

By now you should have the Shopify menu down pat: you'll hover over the left side of the screen, select the item, and then click the sub-item you want. To see your orders, just select *Order*, and you'll jump right to the *Orders* sub-page. You can open any order, see which ones are paid and which still need shipped.

Just open your first order that needs to be shipped, and look through the page. You'll see the products ordered, the total paid, the customer's shipping address, and even a risk analysis where Shopify tries to detect if an order is fraudulent. You can add a comment or note on the order—perhaps to list something the customer said or to note which specific product you sent them—and can add tags to categorize that order. Then, click *Continue* to print a shipping label with pre-paid shipping from your postal service, or you can make your own label and just mark the order as shipped.

> **Tip**: Want to ship with another carrier? Shopify can show live shipping rates from FedEx, UPS, and your

local post office—just open your Shipping settings and activate them. You can also add other carriers—and label printing options—from the Shopify App Store.

Now, some orders won't follow through—you'll have customers get started checking out and quit halfway through, or others who want to give you a direct order instead of ordering through your website. For the former, check the *Abandoned orders* page where you can see what those people ordered and can email them to encourage them to come back. Then, in the *Drafts* page, you can add orders over the phone or send an invoice to a customer for a custom product.

Add Extra Pages
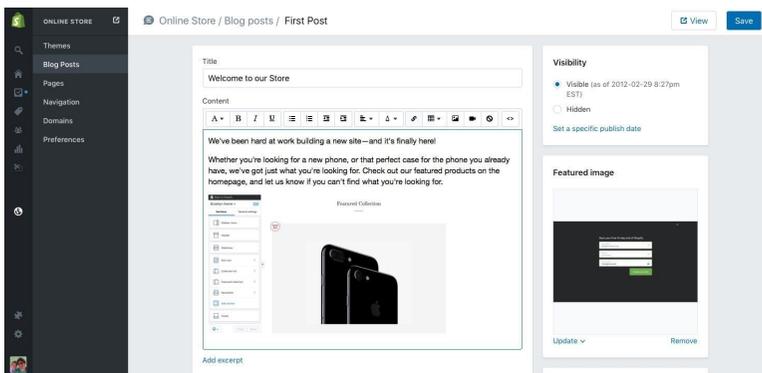
You can add custom pages and blog posts to your Shopify store

Your store will include a few pages by default: your store's front page, a catalog of your products along with a page for each product, and perhaps an *About* page with details about your store. It'll also have a checkout page, which customers will see when they're ready to pay.

Want more—perhaps a way to share news with customers or a page to outline your company's history? Just open your *Online Store* page, and select either *Blog Posts* or *Pages* to add to your site.

Blog posts work just like blog posts in a WordPress, Medium, or Tumblr blog, and are perfect for sharing news or updates. You'll write a post, with a title, featured image, and tags for organization, and can include tables, images, text, and more in your post itself. Blog posts will then be shown in reverse chronological order with the newest post on top.

Pages, on the other hand, stick around. They're the pages in your store's top menu, and where you'll put things like contact forms, store info, directions, history, and anything else you *know* won't change often. The page editor works much the same as the blog post editor, with one addition: a Template selector. Your theme can include custom templates for different pages, and you can pick from those styles here.

Want to include a Contact form in your store? Most themes include a Contact template—just make a page to gather contact info, and select the *Contact* theme. If your theme doesn't include a Contact page, you can add one with Shopify's theme code editor[191]—or, you could just use any online form builder app[192] to build a contact form, and then add its embed code to your Shopify page. That's a great way to add a customized form to your store, too, if you want to survey your customers or gather other data.

> **Tip**: Wonder how your pages and product listings will appear on Google? Just scroll to the bottom of the Shopify editor, and you'll find a **Search engine listing preview** that shows how the page would look in a Google search result. Tap its *Edit* link to customize the title and description just for search.

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[191]https://help.shopify.com/themes/customization/communication/add-contact-form#create-a-contact-form-template

[192]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-forms-and-surveys/best-online-form-builder-software/

Sell in More Places
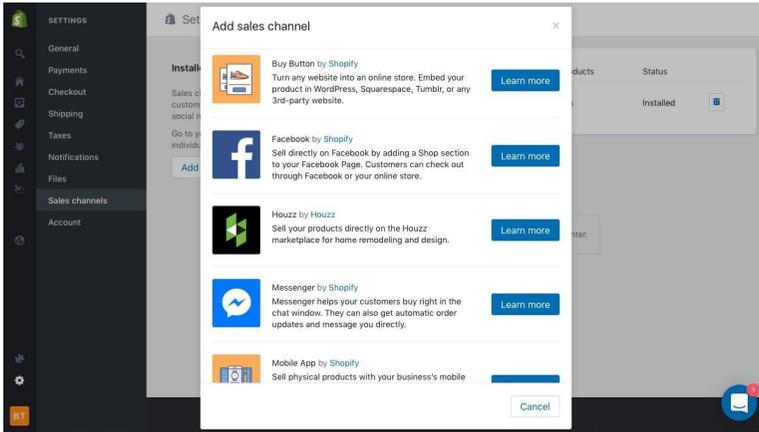
Shopify lets you sell directly on any site—including your Facebook page

Your online store is a great place to sell products and put all your marketing efforts into one place. The only problem is, you'll have to attract customers to your store. That's tough—and sometimes it's easier to just put your products where customers already are.

That's what makes selling products on marketplaces so appealing—and Shopify can help you do that while still managing everything through your main store site. Just click the + icon beside *Sales Channels* in the Shopify menu, and you can add integrations for marketplaces including Broochy, Houzz, and Wanelo, along with social networks like Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest. You can even add Shopify to Messenger to chat with customers and close sales right inside of Facebook's Messenger chat.
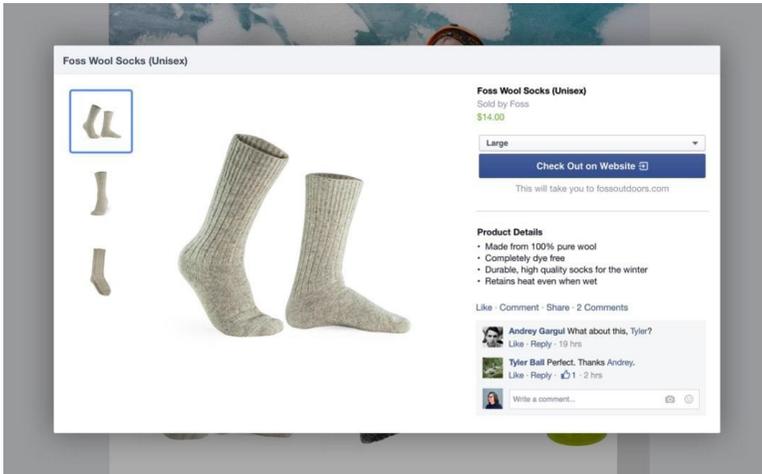
A dedicated store on Facebook makes it easy for people to find your products

You could also simply share links to your blog posts and product listings on social networks. Shopify's integrations, though, let you do more. Its Facebook integration, for instance, automatically lists each of your products in a new Shop tab on your Facebook Page—and can even let customers purchase a product directly from Facebook while adding the order to Shopify along with your other orders.
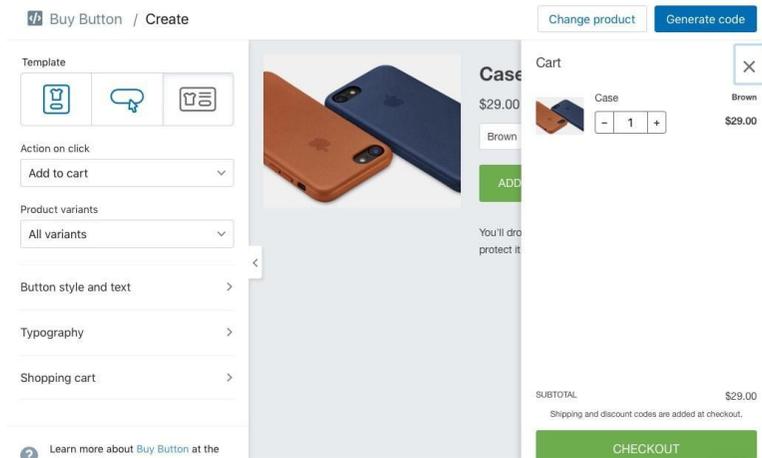
Buy Buttons let you turn any site into a store

Already have another website, perhaps a blog that has a large
following? Shopify provides *Buy Buttons* that give you an embed
code for any product on your site. You'll select a product or
collection, choose how you want the product listing to appear, and
then copy the HTML embed code to paste into your site. Shopify
even includes a popover shopping cart, so customers can make their
full purchase without knowing your existing blog or site isn't a real
store.

Speaking of real stores: if you have a local business, you can use
Shopify's *Point of Sale* channel to manage that, too. It gives you
mobile apps that you can use to ring up purchases and process credit
cards in person. You can then track your inventory for online and
local sales together to make it easier to run your store.

Add Features with Apps and Integrations
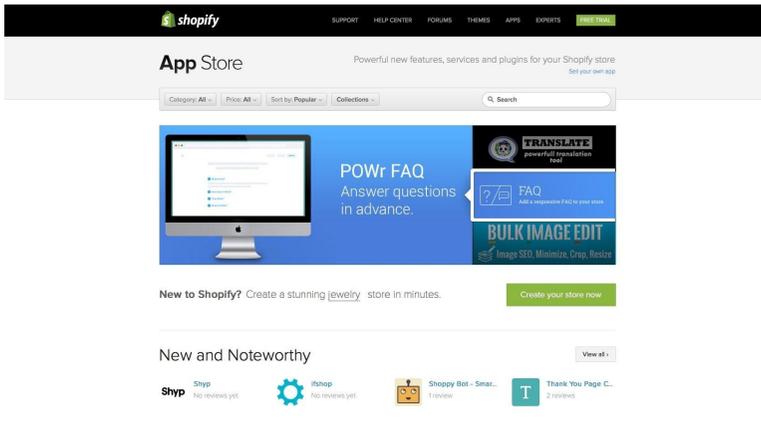
**From tools to list your products more places to add-ons that give Shopify
more features, there's everything in the App Store**

Need more features? The Shopify App Store[193] is filled with tools
that help you do almost anything you want with your Shopify store.

Say you want to sell your products on Amazon and eBay too. There
are apps for that, both to import your old listings and to cross-post
your new products from Shopify to the other marketplaces.

The core extra tools come from Shopify itself. Check the Shopify
profile on the App Store[194] to find Shopify's social integrations, tools
to add reviews or downloads to your products, a barcode builder
and script editor, and more. Shopify keeps their core app focused
on helping you quickly build a great store—and keeps the extras
here as add-on apps. And for anything else you might need, there
are 3rd party apps for free or paid that you can add to your store,
or you could build your own with the Shopify API[195].

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[193]https://apps.shopify.com
[194]https://apps.shopify.com/partners/shopify
[195]https://help.shopify.com/api
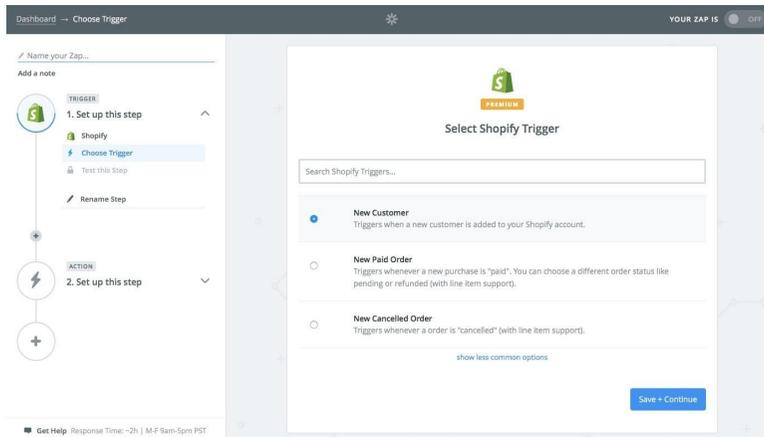
Zapier's automated workflows to keep your Shopify store running for you

Another great option is using Shopify integrations[196] from Zapier, an app integration tool that works with 750+ apps. You can use it to connect Google Sheets, QuickBooks, MailChimp, Slack, and hundreds of other apps to your Shopify store. That way, you can use your favorite tools to manage accounting, print labels, email customers, and more without having to copy and paste anything from your Shopify store.

Say you want to get an SMS notification whenever you get a new customer—and you want to add your new customers to your MailChimp email list. With a Zapier account, just make a new Zap (what we call worfklows between apps on Zapier), and select Shopify's *New Customer* option as the trigger.

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[196]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/
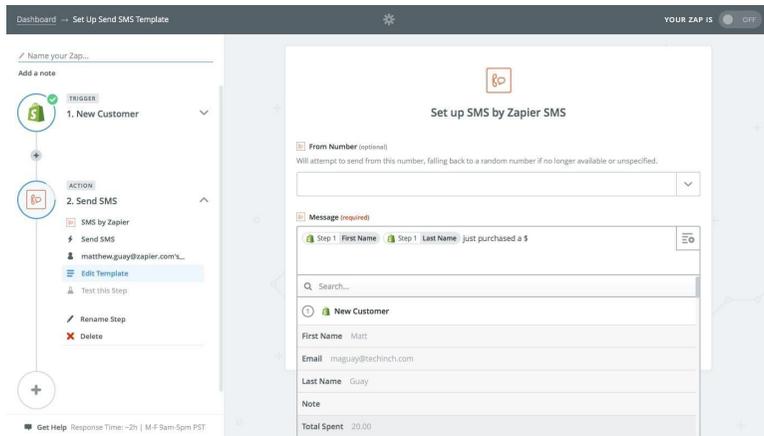
Get an SMS whenever you get a new Shopify customer

Then, in the next step, select *SMS* as the app, and fill in the template
to have Zapier send you an SMS message with info about your new
customer. Click the + icon beside the *Message* field to add info from
Shopify—perhaps the customer's name, order amount, and more.
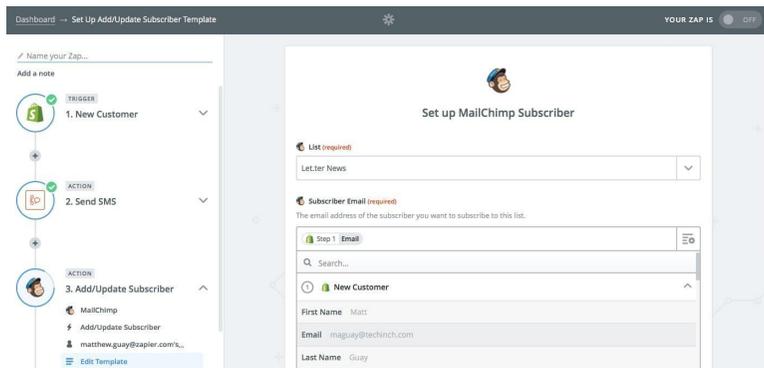
Add your new Shopify customers to your MailChimp list automatically

Now, add one more step, this time choosing MailChimp (or another
email newsletter app[197]) to send your customers your newsletter.

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[197]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/best-email-newsletter-software/

Select *Add/Update Subscriber*, then select the customer email address field to the *Subscriber Email* field along with any other data you want to add.

Turn on the Zap, and now whenever someone new buys something at your store, you'll get an SMS notification and they'll get added to your email newsletter list automatically. It's a simple way to make your store work for you in the background.

> **Tip**: Make your own Shopify integrations[198] with Zapier to automate anything you want in your store.

What's Different with a WooCommerce Store

When you want to run your own store, there are two main ways to run your site: with a hosted service or a self-hosted service. A hosted eCommerce service[199] like Shopify makes running a store site much like using any other app. You'll pay a bit more, perhaps, but will have little to manage besides product listings, order fulfillment, and customer support. Starting a site and getting your first sale only takes 5 steps, and there's little you have to worry about getting right with security.

Self-hosted eCommerce apps like WooCommerce are cheaper—WooCommerce[200] itself comes for the low price of free. But it's traditional software you have to install and run on your own website's server. You'll need a bit more technical skills and will have to manage your site and keep it secure on your own. In exchange, you get more flexibility. You can tweak *everything* on your site, changing your checkout experience and catalog layout any way you want.

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[198]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/
[199]https://zapier.com/blog/best-ecommerce-shopping-cart-software/#store
[200]https://woocommerce.com/

It's a tradeoff that many find worthwhile—and if so, WooCommerce is the simplest way to get started with the self-hosted eCommerce adventure. It's a free WordPress plugin that you can install onto an existing WordPress site, and only takes a few more steps than Shopify to start selling products.

Install WooCommerce

To use WooCommerce, you'll need:

- A server or hosting account
- A domain name and SSL certificate
- WordPress
- WooCommerce
- Extensions for your payment gateway[201] and an account with the payment service

If you already have a WordPress blog, you could just install the WooCommerce plugin[202]. First, though, *make sure* your site has an SSL certificate which you can get for free from Let's Encrypt[203] (and that your site shows https:// in your browser address bar), as that's a requirement for selling products from your site.

> **Tip**: Have a blog on WordPress.com[204]? You can't install extensions there, so you'll need to get your own server and install WordPress[205] first.

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[201]https://zapier.com/blog/best-payment-gateways/
[202]https://wordpress.org/plugins/woocommerce/
[203]https://letsencrypt.org
[204]https://wordpress.com/
[205]https://wordpress.org/download/
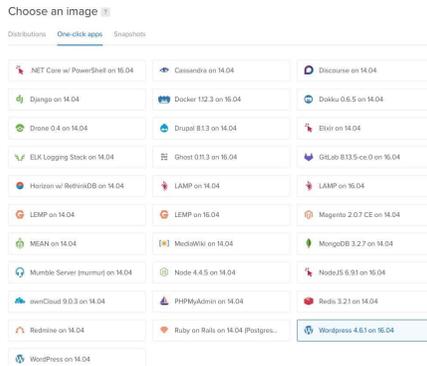
You can start with a pre-installed copy of WordPress in Digital Ocean

If you don't have a WordPress site yet, you'll need to get that set
up first. Sign up for a hosting account—Digital Ocean[206] is a great
option that we'll use for this tutorial. They offer **VPS** (virtual private
servers) with WordPress pre-installed starting at $5/month, which
makes it easy to get started.

Create a new *Droplet* (Digital Ocean's name for VPS servers), select
the *One-click apps* tab, then select WordPress. Select the location
and server size you want (the defaults are fine unless you have
a preference), then create the Droplet. You can add your SSH key
(or an encrypted way to identify yourself without a password—see
GitHub's SSH documentation[207] for more details) to login directly—
or Digital Ocean will email you a password for your site and you'll
need to login via SSH and change that first.

> **Tip**: Your server needs to be secure for your store,
> so be sure to go through these tutorials from Digital
> Ocean before opening your store: How to Secure your
> Server[208] and How to add an SSL certificate from Let's

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[206]https://zapier.com/zapbook/digital-ocean/review/
[207]https://help.github.com/articles/generating-an-ssh-key/
[208]https://www.digitalocean.com/community/tutorials/initial-server-setup-with-ubuntu-16-04

Encrypt[209]. You'll also need to manually add your domain name from the *Networking* tab in Digital Ocean.
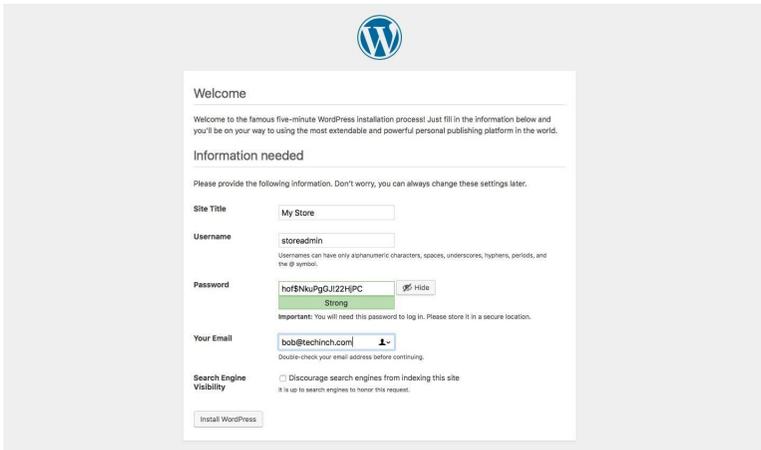
Now it's time to setup WordPress. Visit your site, select your language, then add your store's name, and create an account in your WordPress site. You can then log in and add pages and blog posts to your WordPress site—that's all you'd need to do if you just want a basic site.

> **Tip**: WordPress is a powerful tool on its own, so check out our WordPress tools and resources[210] post to help you get the most out of the blog part of your site.

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[209]https://www.digitalocean.com/community/tutorials/how-to-secure-apache-with-let-s-encrypt-on-ubuntu-16-04

[210]https://zapier.com/blog/wordpress-blog-tips-tools-resources/
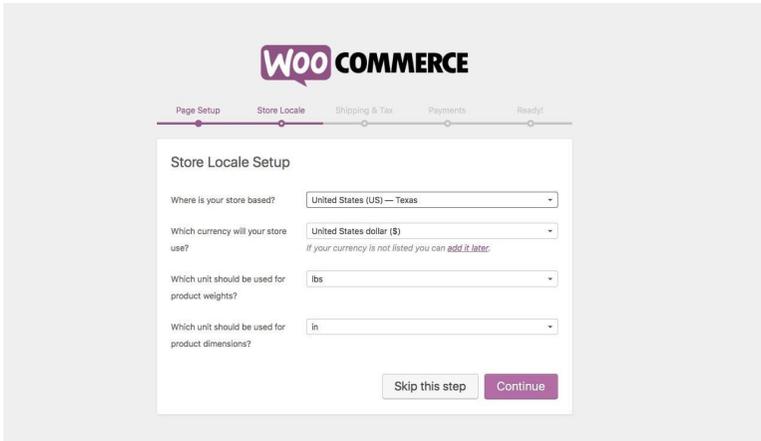
For a store, though, you need to also install WooCommerce. Select
Plugins -> Add New in the left menu, search for woocommerce,
then click its *Install* button. Click *Activate* once it's installed, and
WooCommerce will open its setup screen.

Here, click through the options to set your store's location, currency,
units, and payment services. You can pick from PayPal, Stripe, Bank
Transfer, and Check payments by default—and if you use PayPal,
just enter your PayPal email account and it'll be automatically
added to your store. For Stripe payments, you'll need to add your
Stripe account key to the WooCommerce settings; for any other
payment gateways[211], you'll need to install their extensions and set
them up later.

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[211]https://zapier.com/blog/best-payment-gateways/

Manage Products and Orders
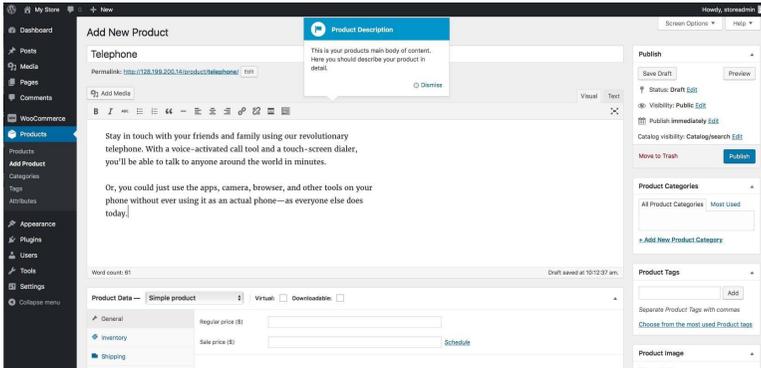
**WooCommerce product listings include all of the standard WordPress page
features**...

WooCommerce includes all the tools you need to list your products,
organize them with categories and tags, and manage your orders
and customers. But remember: your site is a WordPress blog first,
with WooCommerce added on.

As such, the top *Posts* and *Pages* sections are where you'll add your
About and Contact pages, and publish blog posts with news about
your store. Then, further down you'll see a *Products* menu entry,
where you can add and manage product listings. Each product
includes a normal WordPress style page, with as much text and info
as you want.
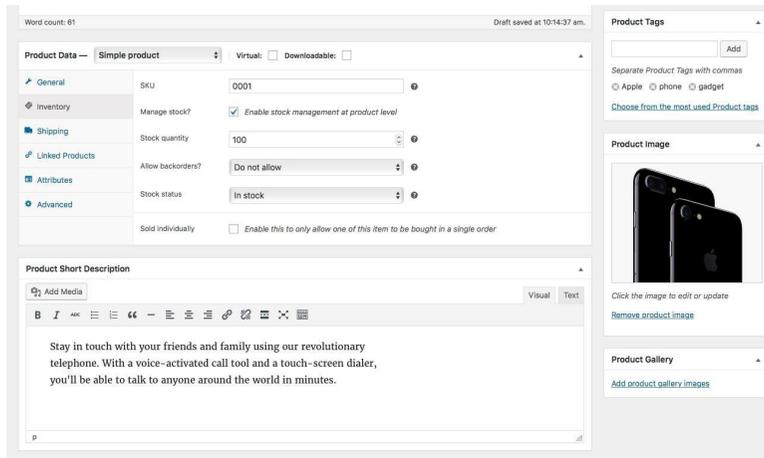
...**along with a ton of other fields to manage inventory, shipping, related
products, and more**.

The most important part of the Product listing, though, are the fields
further down. There, you can add a *Short Description*, which is what
customers will see first when they visit your product page. You'll
want to add the most important info and sales copy for your item
here—then, in the top post box, you can add further details about
the product. In the same way, the *Featured Image* will show up first
on your page and in your catalog, while the *Product Gallery* images
will show up inside your listing as extra images of the product.

> **Tip:** Don't want to add each product directly? WooCom-
> merce offers a Product CSV Import Suite[212] to import
> product listings from a CSV file—for $199.

WooCommerce includes a number of other fields to help you
manage your products. There are the standard price fields, along
with inventory, shipping weight and size, and custom attributes.
You can link products, for a simple way to build Shopify-style

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[212]https://woocommerce.com/products/product-csv-import-suite/

product collections of items people might purchase together. Or, add tags to group your products by manufacturer, color, and more.

Orders work much the same way: you can see orders by going to *WooCommerce -> Orders*, and can view each one on its own Word-Press-style page. And, being WordPress, you can add comments and extra info to the orders to track anything you want.

Customize Your Store
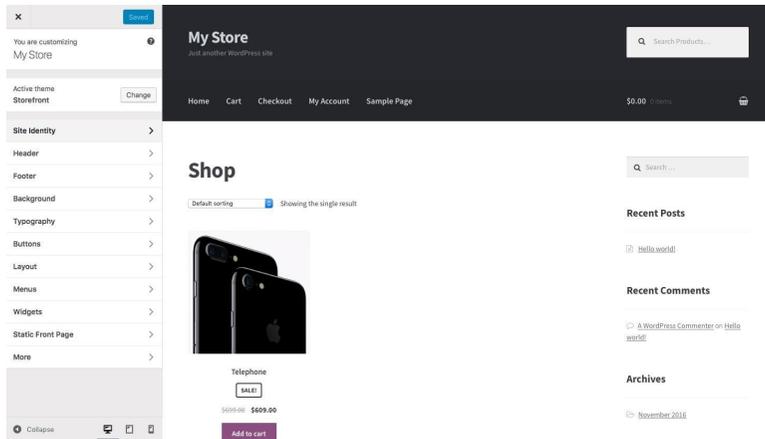
WooCommerce's Storefront theme is a great base theme for your store

Your store still looks like a blog—so you'll need to install a WooCommerce theme to make it look and work more like a store. And the best one to start with is free: Storefront[213]. It's a base theme from WooCommerce that includes all the core store features and lets you customize it to fit your style.

Just select *Appearance -> Themes* to open WordPress' theme selector, then click *Add New* and search for `storefront` to find the theme. Install and activate it, then click `Appearance -> Customize` to open the theme editor. There, you can tweak colors and fonts,

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[213]https://woocommerce.com/storefront/

change your store's title and copyright, and add widgets to show-case your new products, blog posts, and more.
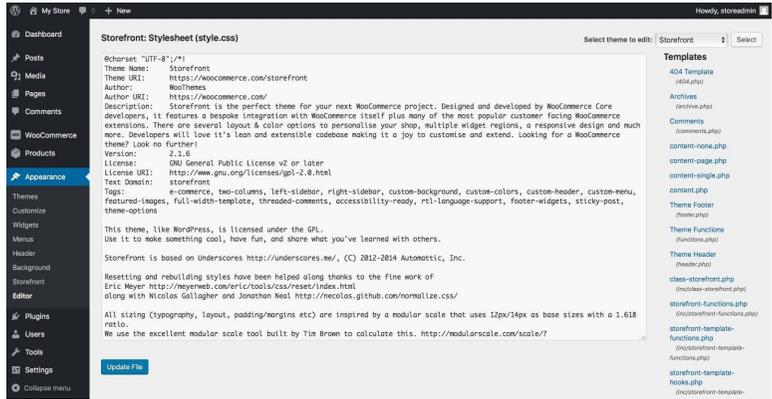
WordPress lets you quickly tweak the code in your site's theme

For a fancier theme, you can purchase Storefront *Child Themes*[214], which use Storefront's core features with their own custom designs. You can also download and purchase other WooCommerce themes. Or, you can edit your store's code by hand to design your own store.

Just click *Appearance -> Editor*, and you can directly edit your site's CSS in seconds. Or, select any other file from the theme to tweak its layout and design in code. It's a more advanced way to build your site—but you'll get exactly the design you want.

> **Tip**: Want to try out tweaking a few things on your site? Check out our quick guide to HTML & CSS[215] to get started. Or, to build your own WooCommerce theme from scratch, check out the WooCommerce theme documentation[216].

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[214]https://woocommerce.com/product-category/themes/storefront-child-theme-themes/
[215]https://zapier.com/blog/learn-html-css/
[216]https://docs.woocommerce.com/document/template-structure/
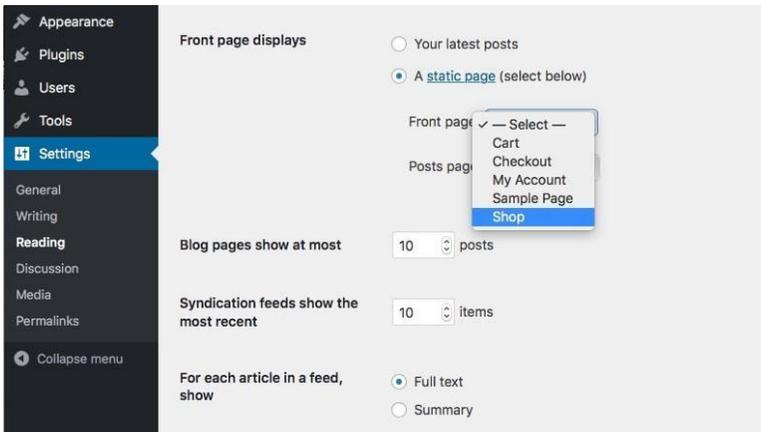
Then, there's one more thing you'll want to configure before
launching your store: your front page. By default, WordPress puts
your blog on the front page, but you'll likely want your store front-
and-center. To do that, open the *General -> Reading* settings, select
the option to have your front page be a static page, then select your
Shop page.

With that done, your store is ready for business. You can add extra
product listings, accept payments via PayPal, and manage your
orders right inside of WordPress—all on your own server. And, if
you want to blog, your store is running on top of one of the most
powerful blogging tools.

Add Extra Features and Integrations
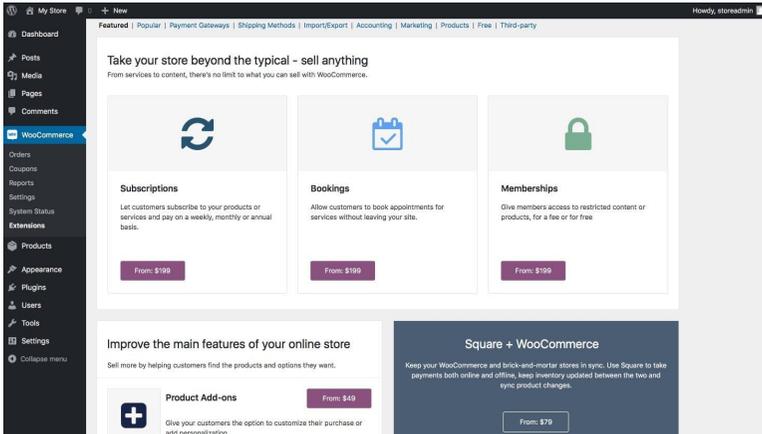
ou can add dozens of plugins to WooCommerce for the features you want in a store

Need more features in your store? Just like Shopify, WooCommerce also includes extra tools, this time called Plugins[217]. You'll purchase each plugin for a one-time fee, install it into your store, and then set it up to work the way you want.

You can get started right from your store. Just select *WooCommerce* in the menu and choose *Extensions*, then browse through the plugins available or click the price button to jump to its page on the WooCommerce site. There, you can buy the plugin and download it. Back on your own store site, you'll go to *Plugins -> Add New*, and upload the plugin manually.

Each plugin comes with its own documentation[218], so be sure to check that to make sure you install and set up each plugin correctly. It's a bit more work than adding a Shopify App, *but* with WooCommerce you can customize the plugins if you want with the

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[217] https://woocommerce.com/plugins/

[218] https://docs.woocommerce.com/documentation/plugins/

same tools you'd use to customize the themes. It's a powerful way
to build the store you want.
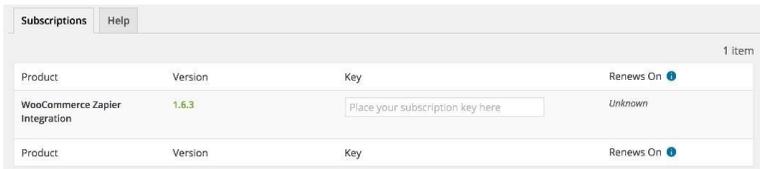
Add the Zapier extension to WooCommerce for integrations

Or, just like with Shopify, you can use Zapier's WooCommerce integrations[219] to build your own powerful automated workflows for your WooCommerce store. You'll first need to install the WooCommerce Zapier plugin[220] into your store.

Then, you can connect your store to any of your favorite apps. Zapier could add your new orders to your accounting app, send out emails to customers and staff, and much more.

> **Tip:** Build your own WooCommerce integrations[221] to automate your store.

Go Build Your Store

Starting an online store *actually* isn't that difficult—with Shopify, it just takes 5 steps, along with time to list each of your products. WooCommerce only takes a couple of extra steps, which shouldn't be too difficult if you're accustomed to managing your own website.

The hardest work is in running your actual business—as it should be. That's where your store add-ons and integrations come in

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[219]https://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/
[220]https://zapier.com/help/woocommerce/#setting-up-the-woocommerce-plugin
[221]https://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/

handy. They take care of the most tedious work, letting you list your products in more places, and print labels or send emails without ever copying and pasting text. It's more than worth it to take the time to go through the best integrations for your eCommerce site and figure out where you can save time going forward.

After all, it may only take 5 steps to start your store, but you don't want it to take that many steps each time you get an order. Make your store work for you, and you'll get to focus on your products and customers. That's what you started a store for, after all.

Now, perhaps you'd like a different option than Shopify and WooCommerce. Maybe you want a simpler store with less options—or perhaps you want something more powerful and customizable that will fit into your existing website. You might want a store that comes with a marketplace, or one that handles orders without a full storefront.

Either way, there are a lot of options. In the next chapter, we'll look at the best features of 20 popular eCommerce platforms to help you choose. Or, if you're sure Shopify or WooCommerce are the store builders for you, you can jump ahead to chapter 6 to help you decide which payment processing tool is best for your store. And then, we'll come back to your store in chapter 7, with tips and tricks to help you get the most out of your online store.

Written by Matthew Guay[222].

Image Credits: Shop photo from Alicia Zinn[223] via Pexels[224].

[222]http://twitter.com/maguay
[223]https://www.pexels.com/u/aliciazinn/
[224]https://www.pexels.com/photo/assorted-business-desserts-display-159991/

Chapter 5: The 20 Best eCommerce Platforms to Start an Online Store

If you want to start selling things, it's hard to beat selling them online. With over two billion global internet users, your online store can reach vastly more people than a local storefront could. You can run that store from the comforts of your home or office, without a lease or license in sight.

All you'll need is a tool to list your products, manage shopping carts, process orders, and customize everything with your branding. But which tool should you use?

There's a wide market for eCommerce apps, just as there are for almost any other popular software category. Some are simple tools for selling individual products; others are focused on enterprises with large sales volumes and warehouses of inventory.

Chances are, if you're starting a new online store, you're right in the middle. You want a tool that'll help you list all of your products and manage your sales, without being too difficult to set up or requiring an excessive upfront investment. And you'll want a tool that's widely supported, with themes, add-ons, and integrations to make your store look and work the way you want.

That's what these apps do. We've gone through over 50 eCommerce apps, looked for those that work well and are used by a wide range of stores, and made sure they each let you:

- List products on your own store site, and let customers add them to a shopping cart and place orders online
- Sell physical and digital goods
- Include a shopping cart so customers can purchase more than one product at once
- Use your own store branding and domain name
- Manage orders and easily see what needs shipped
- Run a store for $30 or less per month
- And, for most of the tools, get extra themes, tools, and support from an online community

Here they are, starting with the simplest options for the smallest stores to the most customizable options you can run on your own server. We've listed their core features, pricing, and if they have a mobile app to manage orders and products on the go.

Start a Simple, Hosted Online Store

The simplest online store tools let you create product listings and turn them into a basic store in minutes. You can still customize your store's branding, sell multiple items in one checkout, and either use your own domain name or a custom URL from the site—but they're far easier to manage than more full-featured store tools with their more complicated configuration options and bells and whistles.

Gumroad

Best for starting a simple small store, especially for selling digital goods
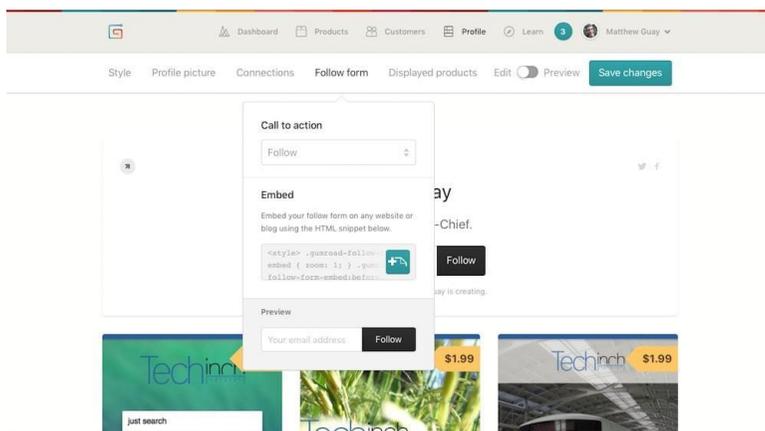
[Gumroad](225) is best known as a way to sell individual products. List more than one product on Gumroad, though, and it automatically turns into a simple store for your goods.

Just drag-and-drop a photo of your item into Gumroad's product editor, then add a quick description and price, along with a file for

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[225]https://gumroad.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

digital products or extra shipping fields for physical goods. When selling digital products, Gumroad can add your customer's name to PDF files, or automatically generate license keys for software which you can then verify from your app with a bit of code. To sell just that one thing, you could just share the Gumroad link on your website, social media, or elsewhere, and customers can buy it in seconds.

Add multiple products, and Gumroad turns into a store, one that's accessible at `gumroad.com/your_name` or your own domain name. Customers will see each product you've launched, and can tap on each item to view more details or add it to their cart. You can then stay in touch with customers using Gumroad's emails, or customize your site's theme colors with a paid plan for a bit of your own branding.

Gumroad Pricing: 8.5% + 30¢ per sale (including payment processing) Free account with basic features; $10/month plus 3.5% + 30¢ per sale with Premium[226] account.

Learn more in Zapier's Gumroad review[227]

See Gumroad integrations[228] *on Zapier*

Selz

Best for a simple store with customizable themes and a built-in blog

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[226]https://gumroad.com/features/pricing
[227]https://zapier.com/zapbook/gumroad/review/
[228]http://zapier.com/zapbook/gumroad/
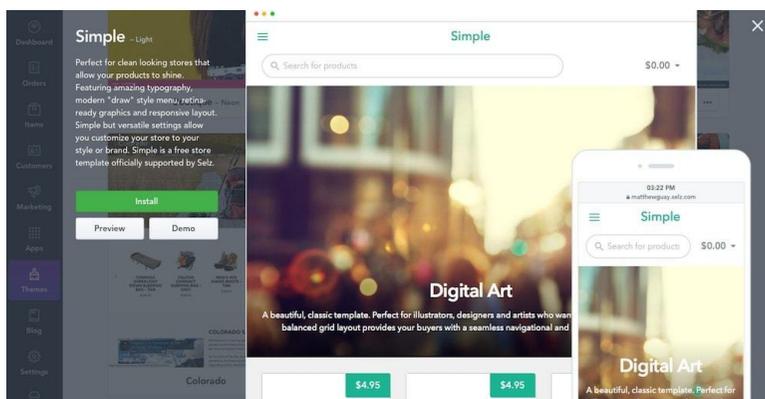
For a store that's a bit more customizable but still a breeze to use, Selz[229] offers a wide range of site themes and optional apps for your store. You can customize its themes to fit your branding, and add physical or digital products in a couple of clicks.

On the free plan, you can only sell one product at a time—but with a paid plan or the $4.99/month shopping cart add-on, your customers can choose as many items as they want to buy. There are also more advanced add-ons to remind customers about abandoned carts, customize your receipts, add custom order fields, and more. Or you can stay with the core features for a streamlined way to sell products.

Selz also lets you add a basic blog and extra pages, such as About and Contact pages—but its focus is on helping you start a store in just a few minutes.

Selz Pricing: Free for 5 products; from $19.99/month plus 1% transaction fee Plus[230] plan for unlimited products and main features including a shopping cart

Learn more in Zapier's Selz review[231]

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[229]https://selz.com/
[230]https://selz.com/pricing
[231]https://zapier.com/zapbook/selz/review/

See Selz integrations[232] on Zapier

Storenvy

Best for building your own customized store inside an existing marketplace
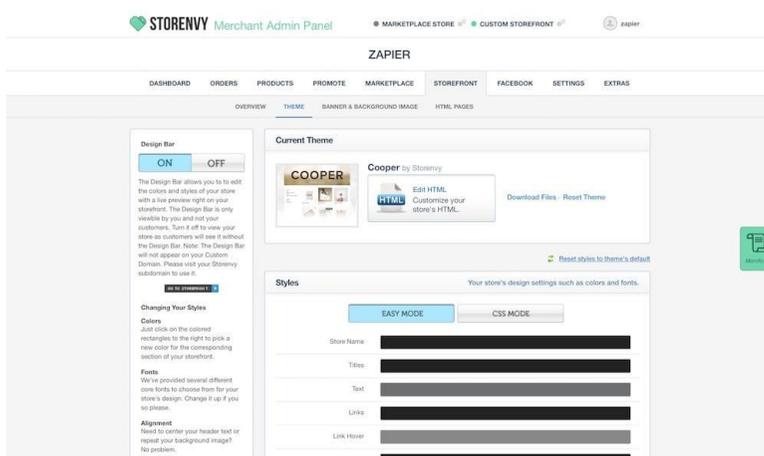
The hardest part of running your own store is getting customers to discover it. Marketplaces such as Amazon and eBay help with discovery, since so many people search for products on their sites already, but they don't give you much space to make your *own* personalized store.

Storenvy[233] offers the best of both worlds, with a personalized store right inside the Storenvy marketplace. With a customized theme and domain—along with Facebook Store integration—Storenvy has the core tools you'd look for in an eCommerce app. It even comes with social-style *watch* and *envy* buttons to let people follow your products and make a wish list.

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[232]http://zapier.com/zapbook/selz/
[233]http://www.storenvy.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

All of those features are, amazingly, free. Then, for a 10% fee on each sale, you can cross-list your products on the Storenvy marketplace to get them in front of more eyes.

Storenvy Pricing: Free for sales on your own store with up to 500 product listings; 10% transaction fee[234] for sales on the Storenvy Marketplace

Learn more in Zapier's Storenvy review[235]

See Storenvy integrations[236] on Zapier

Build a Site With a Store

Perhaps you don't want a tool that's *only* designed for building a store and you want a bit more space to describe your brand and market your products. You also want a blog to share ideas, extra pages to showcase your design process, and tools that make it easy to customize your site.

These site builder tools are the best option. They let you create websites with a simple editor, so you can tweak everything on your site without any code. And they happen to be great at eCommerce, too.

Jimdo

Best for editing product listings directly on the page and adding details with a click

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[234]https://support.storenvy.com/customer/en/portal/articles/1090639-is-storenvy-free-
[235]https://zapier.com/zapbook/storenvy/review/
[236]http://zapier.com/zapbook/storenvy
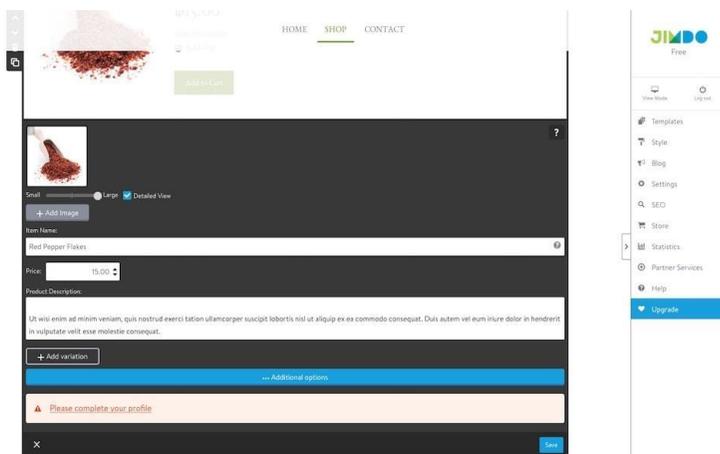
Instead of dragging-and-dropping elements from a toolbar into your site design, Jimdo[237] lets you click to add something and select the element you want. With a simple, one-column design by default, it's easy to get customized header, description, and other sections quickly added to your site. And you can change the entire design with a new theme in a click, keeping your custom sections while changing up the color and design.

Adding products to your store is just as easy. Just scroll down to the store section, click in between an existing product, and select *Store Item*. You can then add the product listing—including images, descriptions, pricing, and more—right there inside the page editor. And, you can select any other product and edit it on the page as well.

To manage orders, see site stats, and more, you'll use the sidebar on the right. You'll find everything you need to turn your product listings and pages into a real store there, complete with shipping and payment options. You can even manage inventory right from inside your website builder.

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[237]http://www.jimdo.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

Jimdo Pricing: Free for a branded store with core features; from $7.50/month JimdoPro[238] plan for custom branding and no ads with annual billing

<h1 style="text-align:center">Wix</h1>

Best for adding apps to your site for the features you want
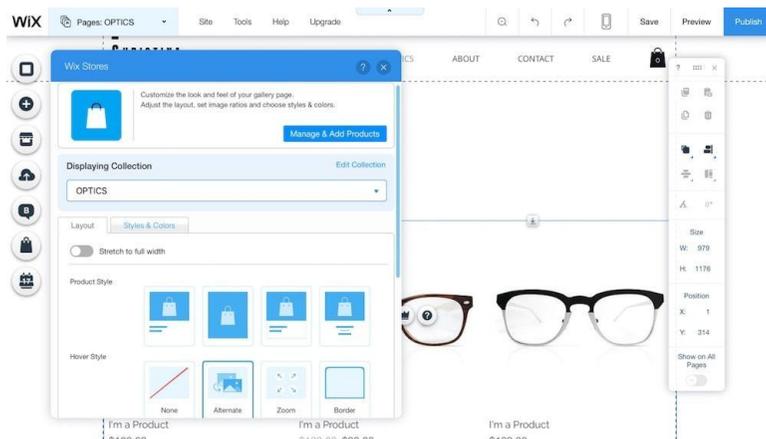
Drag-and-drop site editors typically come packed with features, but what if you want something extra? Wix[239] solves that with its own App Market.

You'll first design your site using its Photoshop-style editor that lets you align website elements on a grid, format text with Word-style font and style settings, and even add PowerPoint-style animations to any element. Then you can add products within the *Store* tab that shows your products, orders, and more in a popover right inside your site editor.

Need any more tools? Just click the *App Market*[240] button to open

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[238]http://www.jimdo.com/pricing/feature-overview
[239]http://www.wix.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership
[240]http://www.wix.com/app-market/main

an add-ons store in another popover. Find the feature you need—say, a form builder, live chat, or events booking tool—click *+ Add to Site*, and that item will be added to your page immediately. It's a simple way to add everything you need to your website and online store.

Wix Pricing: From $17/month eCommerce[241] plan for a store, domain name, and form builder

Squarespace

Best for flexible product arrangement with beautiful themes
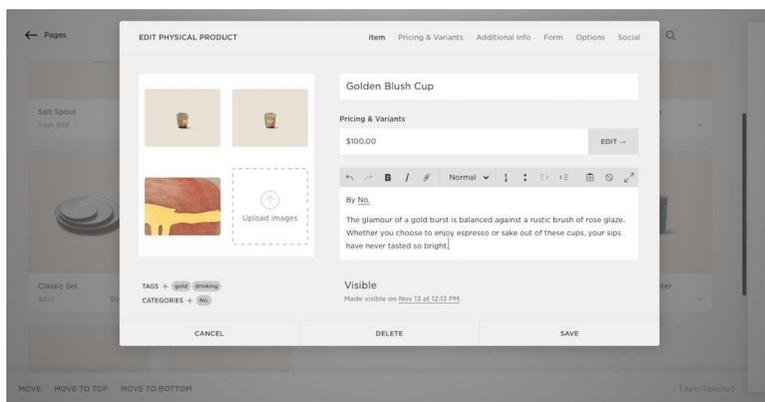
Squarespace[242] is known for its artsy site themes and tools that help you build a landing page or blog for your brand. With its new Online Stores tools, you can also use its themes and design tools to sell your products online.

Editing your site is especially easy with Squarespace. Just open your site, and click the arrow button in the top left corner to unveil an editor for that page. You can drag-and-drop products into the order

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[241] http://www.wix.com/upgrade/premium-plans
[242] https://squarespace.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

you want instead of having to rely on categories to sort products automatically, and can tap a product to edit its listing right there. Pages work the same: Just select the page you want to edit and start typing, or drag-and-drop your pages in the editor sidebar to arrange them in the order you want.

Want to write in Markdown on your site or add a customized form to your Contact page? Need charts and graphs in your companion blog or a menu to build a restaurant site that also sells products online? Squarespace includes widgets for that and more to build a customized site to fit even the most unique stores.

Squarespace Pricing: From $30/month Basic Online Stores[243] plan for core store features

Squarespace Zapier integration[244] *coming soon*

Weebly

Best for building a customized site and store with drag-and-drop

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[243]https://www.squarespace.com/pricing#commerce
[244]https://zapier.com/zapbook/squarespace/

Building an online form that works the way you want is simple—with apps such as Typeform, for example, you just drag-and-drop the fields you want, and the form editor makes sure they look and work correctly. Weebly[245] does the same thing for your website.

You can build a standalone website, add a blog, and include a store section all by dragging-and-dropping website elements onto a page. Once you add items to the Store section of Weebly, it'll automatically add a corresponding *Store* page to your site that shows each of your products. Then, drag in the extra elements you want on each page—buttons, image slideshows or galleries, maps to your store location, surveys, and more—to make the site your own.

With Weebly's newly redesigned eCommerce tools[246], you can now automatically calculate tax and shipping rates for orders, send branded store emails, and organize your products into categories in your Weebly site pages. It's everything your store needs–in a flexible website builder.

Weebly Pricing: From $8/month plus 3% transaction fee per sale Starter[247] plan for core website and eCommerce features with up to 10 products

Weebly Zapier integration[248] coming soon

Create a Full-Featured eCommerce Store

When you think of an eCommerce store, these apps are the ones that likely come to mind. They're tools designed specifically for

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[245]https://www.weebly.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[246]https://www.weebly.com/blog/introducing-weebly-4

[247]https://www.weebly.com/pricing

[248]https://zapier.com/zapbook/weebly/

building robust online stores with dozens or hundreds of products, and power many of the stores you've likely already shopped from.

You won't need to manage a server or worry about security—but you can usually add extra features with custom themes and plugins if you'd like. All these tools require is some time to set them up.

Big Cartel

Best for a full-featured small store
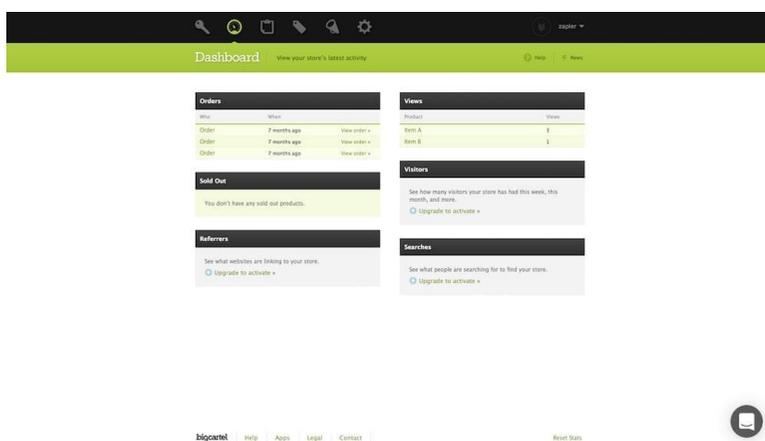
Big Cartel[249] is one of the cheapest ways to start your own online store. If you're only listing up to 5 products, it's free—with reasonably priced plans for managing more products. You'll find most of the features of full-featured store builders, with a focus on making smaller online stores successful.

A checklist will help you start your store, making sure you've added a logo, chosen a theme, and created your products. To make things quicker, you can set default price, shipping, and other settings. Then, add a new product, and Big Cartel will fill in those extra details for

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[249]https://www.bigcartel.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

you automatically. To get your store looking the way you want, you can choose from free, built-in themes, or customize your own with code.

Big Cartel is designed for smaller stores—and only lets you list up to 300 items, max—but gives you the same core selling features as other platforms in a simpler interface.

Big Cartel Pricing: Free Gold plan for stores with up to 5 products with core features; from $9.99/month Platinum plan[250] for 25 products and full features.

Learn more in Zapier's Big Cartel review[251]

See Big Cartel integrations[252] *on Zapier*

Shopify

Best for quickly building a full-featured, hosted online store with built-in payment processing

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[250]https://www.bigcartel.com/signup/

[251]https://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcartel/review/

[252]http://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcartel/
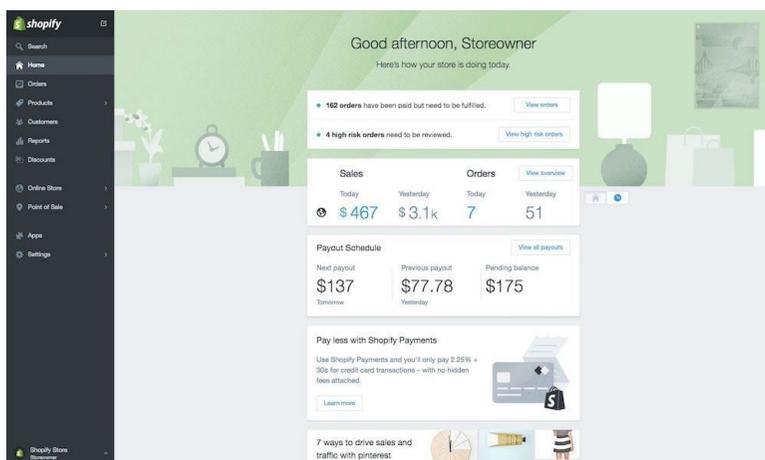
What WordPress is to blogs, Shopify[253] is to online stores for small businesses. It's a full-featured hosted eCommerce tool that powers a wide range of small brands' sites, with its own theme and app store to make your shop your own. And it integrates with Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest so you can sell products directly from those networks—and even let customers get order updates right inside Facebook Messenger.

Just like other eCommerce apps, you'll list products and manage orders in its app. You could sell solely on social networks with a cheap $9/month light plan, or go with a full plan for a complete store on your own Shopify site. Then, for extra features, the Shopify App Store[254] includes tools to create loyalty programs, print nicely designed labels, and more. Shopify even includes a point-of-sale (POS) system to process sales at your real-world store, along with its own payment processing service that offers lower transaction fees as you upgrade to Shopify's more expensive plans.

And if you're struggling to come up with a great name for your brand, need a logo, want to see what your designs would look like on a shirt, or wonder how much your business could borrow, Shopify includes free tools to help you start or run your business[255], too.

Shopify Pricing: $29/month Basic plan[256] for an online store with core features

Learn more in Zapier's Shopify review[257]

See Shopify integrations[258] on Zapier

> **Tip:** Want to just sell a few individual products? **Spaces**[259]

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[253]https://www.shopify.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[254]https://apps.shopify.com/

[255]https://www.shopify.com/tools

[256]https://www.shopify.com/pricing

[257]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/review/

[258]http://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/

[259]https://gospaces.com/

is a new simple eCommerce app from the Shopify team that helps you build a quick landing page and sell products one at a time.

Volusion

Best for getting your products noticed with promotions and search integration
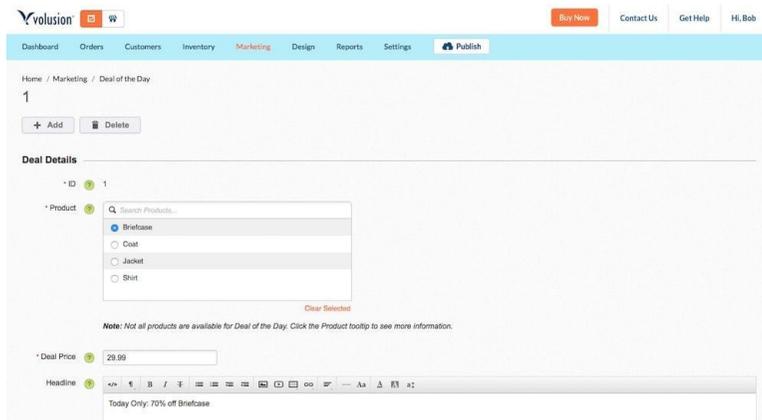
One visit isn't enough. Ideally, customers would visit your store regularly to see your latest products and promotions. Volusion[260]'s built-in flash sale tool is a great way to keep people coming back.

Once you've added products to your store, jump over to the *Marketing* tab and select *Deal of the Day*. There, you can queue up deals for any days you want, add marketing copy, and set the sale price. Volusion will then promote that item on your store automatically. You can queue up email newsletters the same way, and offer a *MyRewards* program to customers to give points based on purchases.

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[260]https://www.volusion.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

You'll still need to get your store in front of new customers, and Volusion includes tools to help there, too. It can cross-list your products on eBay, Amazon, and a Facebook Store, and includes SEO tools to let your products show up as detailed product listings in Google search results complete with customer ratings and price info. And once that new customer visits your site, you can keep them coming back with rewards and promotions.

Volusion Pricing: From $15/month Mini[261] plan for 100 products

Connect your Volusion store with hundreds of apps using Zapier's Vextras integration[262]

> **Tip**: Need more features? Volusion's enterprise store platform, **Mozu**[263], lets you segment customers, run flash sales, add personalization and loyalty discounts for return customers, and save versions of your store to launch later.

Bigcommerce

Best for selling products in multiple stores at once

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[261]https://www.volusion.com/hosting-plans-pricing

[262]http://zapier.com/zapbook/vextras/

[263]https://www.mozu.com/
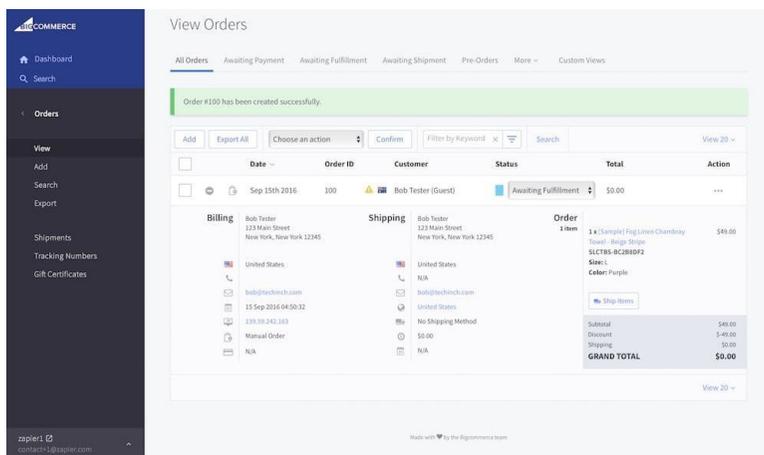
Already selling stuff in an online marketplace, and want to also have your own eCommerce site? Bigcommerce[264] can add your existing product listings to your new site in minutes. Just set up your Bigcommerce store, then you can import your product listings from eBay, Shopify, Volusion, Amazon, and other eCommerce platforms.

Bigcommerce includes everything you need to run a successful store: over a hundred themes, live shipping price quotes, a point-of-sales interface to run a real-world store, and more. It then integrates with everything else you might use, connecting to popular accounting and support tools to manage your finances and customers.

Want to still sell stuff on Amazon, eBay, and other marketplaces? Bigcommerce can cross-list your products, maintaining your inventory and listings between all the places you're selling. You can add products to Bigcommerce once, and they'll be listed everywhere you want to sell automatically. Run as many stores as you want, from one app.

Bigcommerce Pricing: From $29.95/month Standard plan for up to $50k/year in sales

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[264]https://bigcommerce.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

Learn more in Zapier's Bigcommerce review[265]

See Bigcommerce integrations[266] *on Zapier*

> **Tip:** Running a business in Australia and want a simple way to sell in your own store and on eBay? **Neto**[267] is another great option, complete with integrations with a wide range of Australian payment services and custom theme design.

3dcart

Best for following up with potential customers via email
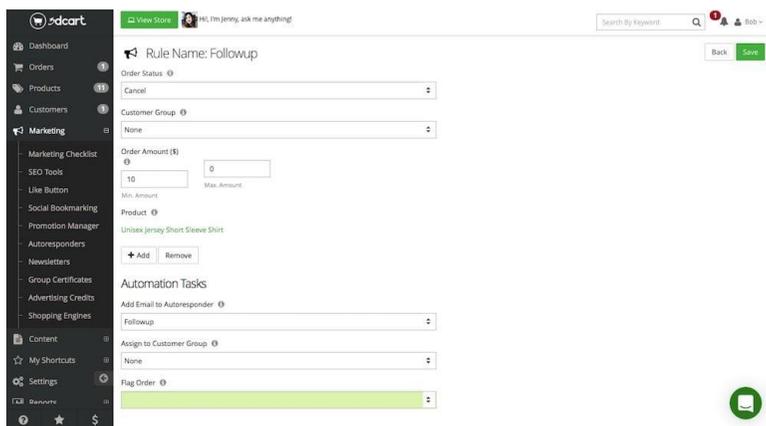
Most online store tools pull your product listings, orders, and landing pages together in one app, but 3dcart[268] does even more. It also includes a detailed CRM[269] that lists your customers' contact

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[265]https://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcommerce/review/

[266]http://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcommerce/

[267]https://www.neto.com.au/

[268]http://www.3dcart.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[269]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-crm-apps/what-is-a-crm/

info, orders, product reviews, and even their ranking among your customer base.

You can organize your customers into lists, then send targeted email newsletters based on their preferences. Perhaps you could send one email to everyone who purchases one category of products and another to all customers who haven't bought anything in awhile. You can also build drip emails[270] to follow up with customers who added items to their cart but didn't purchase, remind people when products are back in stock, or upsell related products to customers who did make a purchase. And you can reward purchases with points to build a loyal customer base.

Then, to manage orders, 3dcart can print shipping labels, process returns, and even integrate with shipping services to ship your products via Amazon or other services. Need help setting up your store? 3dcart also includes 24/7 phone and chat support.

3dcart Pricing: From $9.99/month Nano[271] plan for 10 products

Connect your 3dcart store with hundreds of apps using Zapier's Vextras integration[272]

Add a Store to an Existing Site

Already have your own site and just want to add a store to it? Some of the self-hosted store apps let you add a store with an extension or plugin, but let's start with tools that are even simpler and will easily blend in with your site's brand and design.

These tools are similar to the simple store tools we looked at before. The difference is, they don't create a store page separate from your current web pages. Instead, you'll embed their buttons and widgets

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[270]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/drip-marketing-campaign/

[271]http://www.3dcart.com/pricing.htm

[272]http://zapier.com/zapbook/vextras/

into your existing pages to turn any blog or website into a store. They're the simplest way to build a store that looks *exactly* the way you want.

SendOwl

Best for adding simple checkout tools to any web page
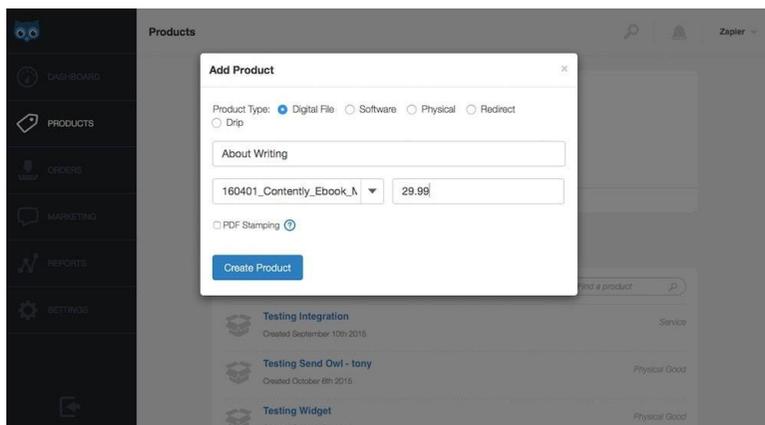
Instead of building a full store in its SendOwl[273], you'll only add product pages on for each thing you want to sell, along with settings for shipping rates and business info.

You'll then get embed codes for *Buy Now*, *Add to Cart*, and *View Cart* buttons that you can add to any page on your existing blog or website. Just make pages on your blog or website for each thing you want to sell, then add the *Buy Now* or *Add to Cart* button code from SendOwl for the correct item to each page. Put the *View Cart* button code somewhere prominent on your site—perhaps in your site header or sidebar—and the shopping cart and payments screen will show up in a popover on your site whenever it's clicked.

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[273]https://www.sendowl.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

Customers will never know that your site isn't a "real" eCommerce site.

It's a surprisingly simple way to turn any website into a store, without switching to a new content management system. A full-featured eCommerce site could be worth the extra time and trouble for a larger store, but for smaller stores, SendOwl's buttons could be all you need.

SendOwl Pricing: From \$9/month Basic[274] plan for 10 products

Learn more in Zapier's SendOwl review[275]

See SendOwl integrations[276] on Zapier

> **Tip**: Want a mix of Gumroad and SendOwl's features? **Plasso**[277] and **Chec**[278] are new Stripe-powered options for selling individual items with a link or an embed in your site. They only let customers purchase one item at a time, though.

Ecwid

Best for embedding a full store into your existing site

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[274]https://www.sendowl.com/pricing
[275]https://zapier.com/zapbook/sendowl/review/
[276]http://zapier.com/zapbook/sendowl/
[277]https://plasso.co
[278]https://trychec.com
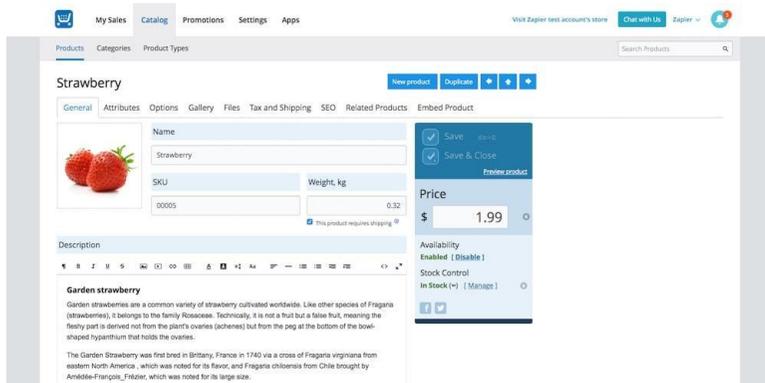
Want to embed a full store into your site, instead of just adding product buttons? Ecwid[279] is the tool for you.

You'll add product listings as on the other tools, and manage everything inside Ecwid—it's a full web store. The only thing you won't have to worry about is your site's theme, as Ecwid just blends into your existing site. You can publish your store directly to your Facebook page, or copy the embed code to add the store to your website or blog. The embedded store will include your products organized into categories, a search tool to look through products, and more—everything you'd expect in a full eCommerce site.

Want to sell products on the go? Ecwid's $99/month Unlimited plan also lets you use their white-label mobile app to turn your store into its own store app. That lets customers buy your products without visiting your website—and lets you use Ecwid as a point-of-sales system, too.

Ecwid Pricing: Free for up to 10 products; from $15/month Venture plan for 100 products and extra features

Learn more in Zapier's Ecwid review[280]

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[279]https://www.ecwid.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[280]https://zapier.com/zapbook/ecwid/review/

See Ecwid integrations[281] on Zapier

E-junkie

Best for adding a shopping cart to any website or blog

With an interface reminiscent of the '90's, E-junkie[282] isn't quite as modern as the other eCommerce apps. But if you want to build a store on *any* site—including a Medium blog or other site that won't let you add standard embed codes—it's the store builder for you.

You'll add your digital or physical product listings inside E-junkie, with options for item variations, thank-you emails, and inventory management. Then, you can copy embed codes for *Add to Cart* buttons, which will open a simple shopping cart popover on your site. For sites that don't let you use JavaScript code, you can copy button images and links to add to your page. When customers click those buttons, their E-junkie checkout cart will open in a separate window. It's a full shopping cart that works anywhere.

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[281]http://zapier.com/zapbook/ecwid/
[282]http://www.e-junkie.com/

Then, to drive more visits to your store, E-junkie includes affiliate codes that your best customers can share on their own site. It also can add watermarks to PDF files, create software license keys, and manage subscriptions for a convenient way to sell anything you want on any site.

E-junkie Pricing: From $5/month for 10 products[283] with core features

E-junkie Zapier integration[284] *coming soon; use Zapier's Webhooks integration*[285] *to integrate with other apps for now*

> **Tip**: Only selling digital products on your site? **Fast-Spring**[286] is a great option designed for selling software on your site, with tools to generate license codes and validate purchases.

Run a Self-Hosted Store

Want the most powerful, full-featured eCommerce store you can have? A self-hosted store is the way to go. They're similar to the hosted store apps like Shopify, but let you run your store on your own server. You can design your own theme, tweak the store with plugins and extension, and even even dig into the store software's code and database if you want.

These tools are often free, though you'll need your own server and the skills to set up the software and keep it secure. For that extra investment, you'll get a fully customized store without any monthly service fees.

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[283]http://www.e-junkie.com/ej/pricing.htm
[284]https://zapier.com/zapbook/e-junkie/
[285]https://zapier.com/zapbook/webhook/
[286]https://fastspring.com

WooCommerce

Best for building a detailed store inside WordPress
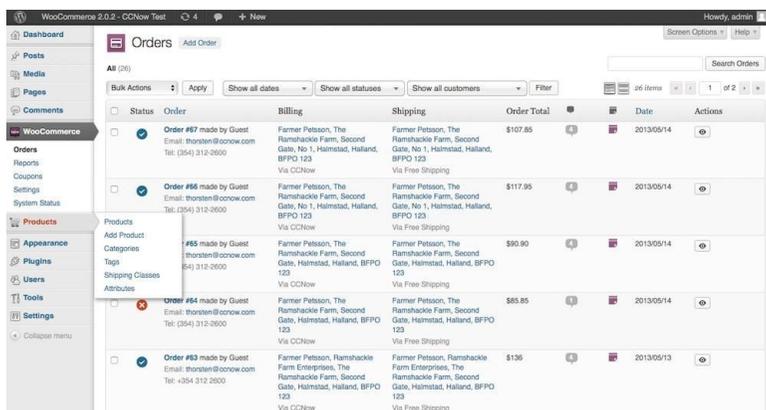
If you already have a WordPress blog or site—or have used Word-Press in the past and know your way around it—WooCommerce[287] is the best way to add a fully customizable store to your site. Just install the WooCommerce plugin as you would any other WordPress plugin, and you'll get a new section on your site for products and orders.

The Products listings in WooCommerce work much like any other post on your WordPress blog—only with extra fields for product description, pricing, sizes, and more. They'll show up on your site's new store page, where visitors can search through products, sort them by categories and tags, and add them to their shopping cart. You'll then manage their orders inside WordPress, with a similar page that this time shows private info about their purchases.

Need more features on your store? WooCommerce has its own extensions[288], which let you add your favorite payment services,

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[287]https://woocommerce.com/woocommerce/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium= profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[288]https://woocommerce.com/product-category/woocommerce-extensions/

integrations, and other features to your store. Or, check the standard WordPress plugins page—chances are you'll find a tool that fits your needs, even if it isn't specifically designed for stores.

WooCommerce Pricing: Free for core features with on a self-hosted WordPress site; extensions from $49 each purchased separately

Learn more in Zapier's WooCommerce review[289]

See WooCommerce integrations[290] on Zapier

> **Tip**: Want to sell just one product or service on your WordPress site? **WP Simple Pay Pro**[291] lets you add a simple Stripe-powered checkout form to your site, and **Go Pricing**[292] can help you showcase multiple product options.

Magento

Best for building a self-hosted store on your own

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[289]https://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/review/

[290]http://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/

[291]https://wpsimplepay.com

[292]http://www.go-pricing.com
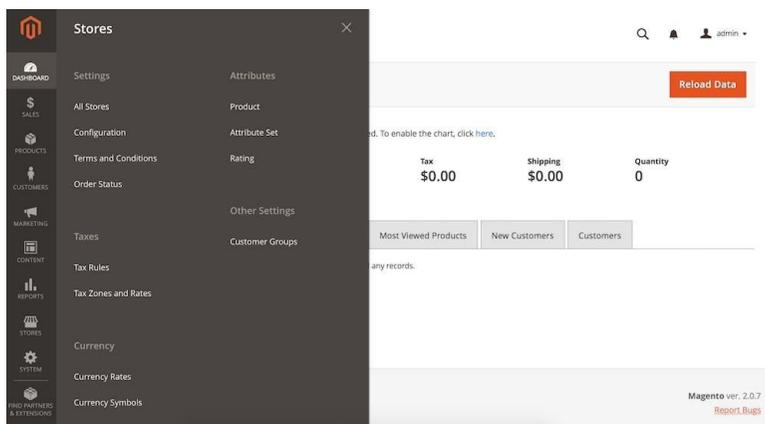
When you want to run a store on your own server, without having to manage blog-focused features, Magento²⁹³ is the app to use. It's an eCommerce tool that includes the main features you need to run a store and control everything about it.

You'll start out with core product pages and order management tools that show reports on your sales volumes. Then, Magento's scheduling tools let you automate tasks so your store isn't so hard to run. For example, you can schedule promotions, change your site's theme on specific dates, and send email newsletters right from your site. Its marketing tools are also handy, with SEO options to redirect old product links to new pages and show promotions to customers based on what they've ordered.

Magento itself is focused on the core tools you need to sell stuff. For more, the Magento Marketplace²⁹⁴ likely has what you're looking for, with extensions to add a blog to your store, create barcodes, let customers comparison price, and more. It's a great way to build a store with exactly the features you need.

Magento Pricing: Free community edition; paid Enterprise edi-

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²⁹³https://magento.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

²⁹⁴https://marketplace.magento.com

tion[295] with dedicated support available

Learn more in Zapier's Magento review[296]

See Magento integrations[297] on Zapier

> **Tip**: One of the big advantages of a self-hosted eCommerce app is being able to customize *everything* down to the code that runs your store. If you'd like that same ability without having to host your own store, **LemonStand**[298] is a hosted eCommerce platform that lets you even edit the code of your checkout process; plans start at $99/month.

X-Cart

Best for building a self-hosted store for selling in-person or on eBay

Want a self-hosted eCommerce site that can also help you sell stuff in-person or cross-list your products on eBay? X-Cart[299] has that

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[295]https://magento.com/products/enterprise-edition
[296]https://zapier.com/zapbook/magento/review/
[297]http://zapier.com/zapbook/magento/
[298]https://zapier.com/zapbook/lemonstand/review/
[299]https://www.x-cart.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

and more, with its advanced eCommerce tools.

Ideally, you'll sell products to the same customer more than once. X-Cart lets your customers create accounts when they first order a product and then login with a click using their social network account (available on X-Cart paid editions). You can offer promotions based on how many items customers have ordered, or include wholesale pricing for store members who purchase over a set number of that item. X-Cart integrates with a wide range of payment and shipping services to calculate total cost and route customers to the best payment service for their location.

If you want to sell products in a real-world store too, X-Cart's mobile interface works with PayPal Here, so you can process in-person orders and swipe credit cards on your phone. It can also import and sync product listings with eBay, all while managing your listings and inventory right from your own X-Cart install.

X-Cart Pricing: Free to build a self-hosted store with core features; from $495 one-time purchase Business[300] edition for product variants, social media sign-in, and more.

PrestaShop

Best for starting a free hosted or self-hosted store with the same software

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[300]https://www.x-cart.com/software_pricing.html
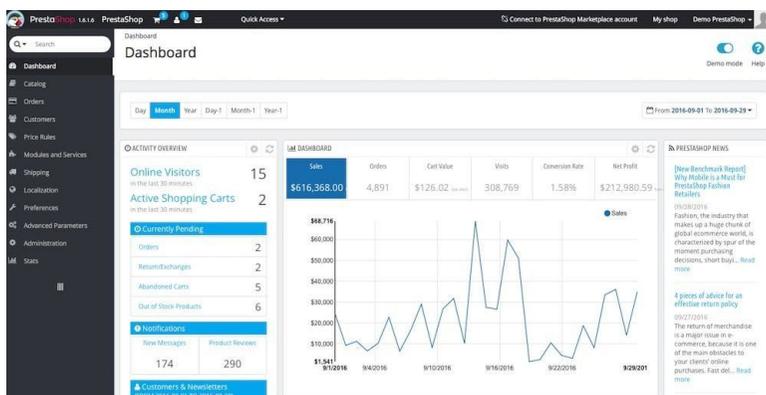
Perhaps you want to host your own store someday, but for now would rather start without needing a server. PrestaShop[301] is the eCommerce tool for you. Similar to WordPress, where you can start a free blog on WordPress.com or install WordPress software on your own server, PrestaShop lets you use the same tools in their cloud or on your own. Either way, it's still free.

You can start your store with all of PrestaShop's core features, listing products with popovers so customers can quickly browse through everything you're selling without having to visit multiple product pages. Other features include filtered search and custom pages, email marketing to keep customers coming back, and detailed analytics about how each part of your store is performing. PrestaShop even lets you run multiple stores from the same admin account.

For everything else, you can buy dozens of modules and hundreds of themes to customize your store or buy training and support services to help you get the most out of your store. And if you want to move to a self-hosted PrestaShop store, you can install PrestaShop on your server, export your products and order info, and import them into the new site. It'll be easier than starting over from scratch.

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[301]https://www.prestashop.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

PrestaShop Pricing: Free Cloud or self-hosted store; paid Addons[302] from $20+ each.

Foxycart

Best for coding your own product listings

Still haven't found the eCommerce app that has everything you need for your store? Perhaps you want something that will let you design and code all of your store's site, using simple code snippets to add products to your cart. Foxycart[303] is the tool for that.

Instead of managing product listings inside Foxycart, you'll just list your store's default settings for tax, shipping, language, and more inside the app. Add categories for your product types along with their default weight, and set up confirmation email settings for each category. Then, on your site, you can code your product listing pages as normal, and add a Foxycart button including the product name, price, variation and more encoded in a link like

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[302] http://addons.prestashop.com/

[303] http://www.foxycart.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

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https://yoursite.com/cart?name=Cool%20Example&price=10&color=red&image=
URL.
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Add the cart and checkout snippets to your site, and Foxycart will handle all of the transaction details, automatically calculating shipping and tax, as well as sending out confirmation emails. It handles the hard part of building and running a store while giving you the tools to code your online shop the same way you built the rest of your site. It's an advanced app—and Foxycart's own onboarding suggests using another tool if you're not a developer—but with a bit of coding, you'll be able to build the most customized store possible.

Foxycart Pricing: From $20/month plus 15¢ per sale Standard[304] plan for full features, with first 100 sales per month included

Use Foxycart's data feeds and API[305] with Zapier's Webhooks integration[306] or Developer Platform[307] to connect your sales to hundreds of apps

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[304]http://www.foxycart.com/pricing-signup
[305]http://www.foxycart.com/features/feature/integration/datafeeds
[306]https://zapier.com/zapbook/webhooks/
[307]https://zapier.com/developer/

The Other Tools You'll Need for a Store
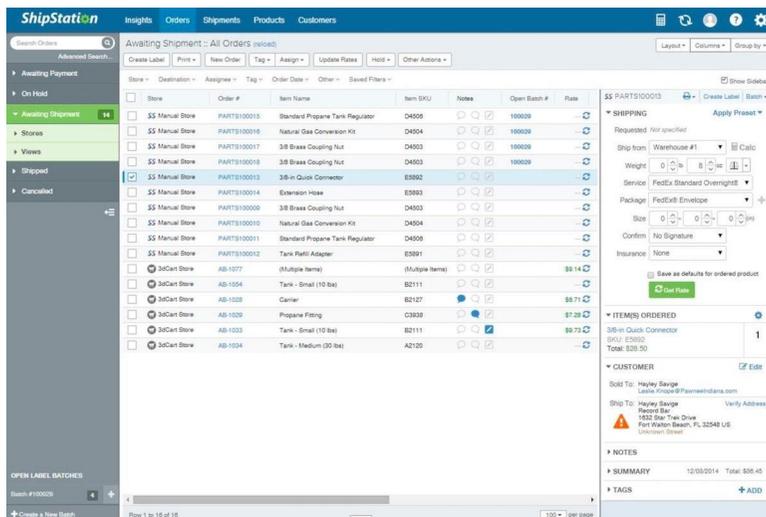
Tools to print labels, manage finances, and more will help you run your store more efficiently

An eCommerce app gets you a website for your store, along with tools to list your products, log inventory, and manage orders. That alone isn't all you'll need for a store.

Most importantly, you'll also need a payment processing service[308] to accept credit card and other payments through your store. Some of the apps in this chapter include their own payment services; with the rest, you'll need to choose between PayPal[309], Stripe[310], Braintree[311], and other services. We'll look at those in the next chapter to help you decide.

Then, you may want a tool to help you ship products and find

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[308]https://zapier.com/blog/best-payment-gateways/

[309]https://zapier.com/zapbook/paypal/review/

[310]https://zapier.com/zapbook/stripe/review/

[311]https://zapier.com/zapbook/braintree/review/

the best rates on postage. Logistics tools like ShipStation[312] or Shipwire[313] can help, letting you print shipping labels in bulk or use logistics services and Amazon to store and ship products automatically. Or you could use Zapier integrations with your eCommerce app[314] to print invoices automatically with Google Cloud Print[315]. We'll then explore those services in-depth in chapter 7.

You'll also need to market and support your products. Zapier's free eBooks can help there, with guides to email marketing[316] and customer support[317] with the tools and tricks you need. And if you need to brush up on your spreadsheet skills to manage inventory and accounting, Zapier's Ultimate Guide to Google Sheets[318] is the crash course for you.

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Starting an online store doesn't have to be that hard. With most of these tools, you can get the first version of your store online in an afternoon at most—and perhaps in just a half hour if you're only listing a few products.

Then comes the hard work of promoting your products, supporting your customers, and running the store. That's where your main focus should be—and each of these apps let you worry more about your products and your customers than the store software you're selling them with.

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[312]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shipstation/review/

[313]http://www.shipwire.com

[314]https://zapier.com/zapbook/#sort=popular&filter=ecommerce

[315]https://zapier.com/zapbook/google-cloud-print/review/

[316]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/

[317]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-customer-support/

[318]https://zapier.com/learn/google-sheets/

But first, you need to decide how you'd like to get paid. PayPal's an easy and obvious choice, but they're far from the only one. So, in the next chapter, we'll look at the best credit card processing services, and see what each one offers for your business.

And then, in chapter 7, we'll come back to your store and see how to successfully juggle your orders, keep your site up-to-date, and build automated workflows to help you do more in less time.

Written by Matthew Guay[319].

Image Credits: Online Store photo by Negative Space[320].

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[319]http://twitter.com/maguay
[320]http://negativespace.co/photos/credit-card-payment/

Chapter 6: The Best Online Credit Card Payment Processing Services for Your Business

Money is tough. Not olden-days tough, where I'd trade my cow for your lumber, or a merchant would need somewhere to hide a sack of gold coins. Compared to that, modern banking is incredibly simple to navigate.

Yet accepting payments online is still far more difficult than accepting cash payments at a weekend market. You can't just send your customers' credit card numbers to your bank and go back to running your business—you need a service that can process payments, keep track of who paid what when, and let you settle the issues and

disagreements that are bound to occur with something as sensitive as financial transactions.

Accepting payments don't have to be as tough as that sounds. Today, there are a wide range of services that can manage payments, charge subscriptions, and let you focus on making the best products possible while still getting paid for them. All you need is to figure out which one fits your business the best.

What is Payment Processing?

Currency changed the world. With the bartering system, you never knew exactly what value you were getting for your products—and besides, hauling a cow or stack of lumber around isn't exactly practical. Coins and paper currency simplified transactions. My cow and your lumber now are worth a certain number, and we can use that to buy anything—not just to trade with each other. You just hand me money, and the transaction is finished.

Credit cards and now mobile payments made it even simpler: You
can carry *all* of your money without even a wallet. Only, this time,
it's more difficult for the merchant. Instead of a nice stack of coins
or bills, all they get is a code that they have to convince your bank
to turn into money.

That's a lot of work, something banks won't just let any random
person do. You're best to leave that to payment processors. They're
companies that handle the transactions, making sure your cus-
tomers' credit card info is valid, processing the payment between
their credit card provider and your bank, and giving you a way to
issue refunds—or your customer a way to get their money back if
you happen to be an unscrupulous seller.

Those are front-end payment processors, the services you'll need
to use if you want to accept payments on your site or in your
app. There's also another type of payment processors—back-end
payment processors—who handle the transactions between your
customers' and your banks themselves, and move the actual money
around. You can let your front-end payment processor worry about
them.

Or, there is one more option: a merchant account with your bank.
If you're handling high volume sales, your bank just *might* want
to process those credit card payments directly. In that case, you'll
manage your own payment processing, and let the bank itself
handle the back-end payment processing.

The Most Common Types of Online
Payment Processing Services

There are two main ways of paying for products with a credit or
debit card: You swipe (or, more recently, tap or insert) your card
into a card reader at a retailer, or enter your credit card info in an
online payment form.

If you're starting an eCommerce store, the latter option is what you
need. Even then, there are a variety of payment systems you could
choose to use:

- **Account-based Payments**: Ever been asked to sign into your
  PayPal or Amazon account to pay for a product? That's
  account-based payments, one of the simpler ways to start
  accepting payments on your site. You don't have to worry
  as much about security, since customers enter their payment
  info on a 3rd party site—and you might even have less aban-
  doned shopping carts since customers can use an existing
  account to pay. They do tend to have higher fees, though,
  part of the cost of using a simpler tool.
- **Direct Payment Services**: Want to build a custom eCom-
  merce site and accept payments directly? You'll still need a
  tool to process credit card payments, but these services make
  it simple to do inside your own app. With an API, you'll
  be able to build credit card payment support—along with
  options to pay via newer mobile or digital payment systems—
  right into your own tools. They tend to hit a nice middle
  between the lower price of managing your own payment tech
  and the convenience of using an account-based service.
- **App-centric Payment Services**: As a retailer, you may not
  want to manage your raw payment data in one app, your
  subscription and receipt records in another app, and your
  accounting info somewhere else. If that's the case, a wide
  variety of apps can help you sell products or subscriptions,
  with everything under one roof. These apps may use a direct
  payment service of your own choice, though they'll pull in
  all the data to make things more hassle-free, as way to use
  those services without as much work. As such, they're also a
  bit pricier than directly using a payment service.
- **Merchant Accounts**: If your site is a high-volume retailer,
  and you have the tech resources to handle your own pay-
  ments and security, then you could open a merchant account

with your bank to directly process payments. You'll likely get a better payment processing rate, though will spend more on your own infrastructure.

Odds are, you'll want one of the first 3 options for your store, so let's look at the best tools in each category.

The Best Online Payment Processing Systems

There are three main things to look for in a payment processing system:

- Does it support the payment methods you need?
- How much will you pay per month and per transaction?
- Are there any extra features you need in a payments tool, such as recurring billing or mobile payments?

Fees are perhaps the trickiest to figure out. Most payment systems charge a percentage (say 3%) plus a fixed fee (perhaps 50¢) per transaction. That means if you sell a $10 item, you'll pay 30¢ for the percentage fee, along with the 50¢ fixed fee, for a total of 80¢.

Some services don't include the fixed fee; others charge a monthly fee (say $50) for using the app instead of the fixed fee. Others—and most merchant accounts—will charge a much smaller fee, along with the *interchange fee*, or the direct fee that the credit card company charges, which means your fees will vary per transaction. And almost all include extra fees for chargebacks, disputes, and other payment services, along with an extra percentage fee for international payments.

It's something you should be sure to check, especially if you're processing a high volume of payments. When you're just starting

out, features that make payments simpler are likely more important than an extra 0.2% fee.

With that in mind, here's a look at each of the most popular payment processing systems, with their US domestic and international fees.

The Best Account-Based Payment Systems

Ever visited a site, considered purchasing an item, then wondered if it'd be safe to give your credit card info to a business you'd only just heard of? That dilemma is one of the things that make account-

based payment systems so useful.

Instead of including a credit card form on your site, with an
account-based payment system you'll just send the customer to the
3rd party site where they likely already have an account or are at
least familiar with. They can then pay using a card that's already on
file, and you'll get the sale that otherwise might have been discarded
at checkout.

PayPal

for simple online payments
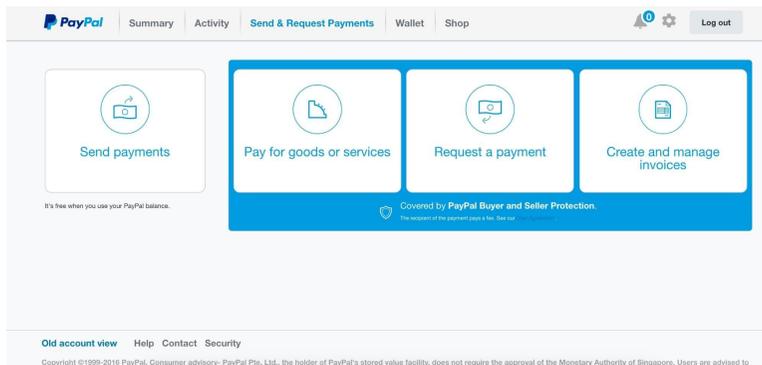
One of the most well-known payment apps, PayPal[321] has been pro-
cessing payments online since 1999—and was built by such notable
figures as Tesla co-founder Elon Musk and venture capitalist Peter
Thiel. Even today, it's one of the easiest ways to accept payments.

Customers can connect their bank accounts or credit cards to PayPal
to pay for products, or can store money in PayPal to use directly
with PayPal acting as an online bank of sorts. It's the only way to
accept payments inside eBay, and its payment button is one your
customers will recognize at first glance.

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[321]https://paypal.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=
partnership

As an account-based tool, though, all money you receive will be stored in your PayPal account. You can then use it to buy products from other PayPal vendors, use a PayPal debit card to access the funds, or can transfer the funds to a bank account. It's an extra step that makes PayPal feel a bit more like having an extra bank account.

PayPal Pricing: 2.9% + 30¢ per transaction for sales inside the US; 3.9% plus fixed fee[322] for each currency for international transactions. Transfers to non-US bank accounts may incur transfer and exchange fees as well.

Learn more in Zapier's PayPal review[323]

See PayPal integrations[324] on Zapier

Amazon Payments

for accepting payments from Amazon accounts
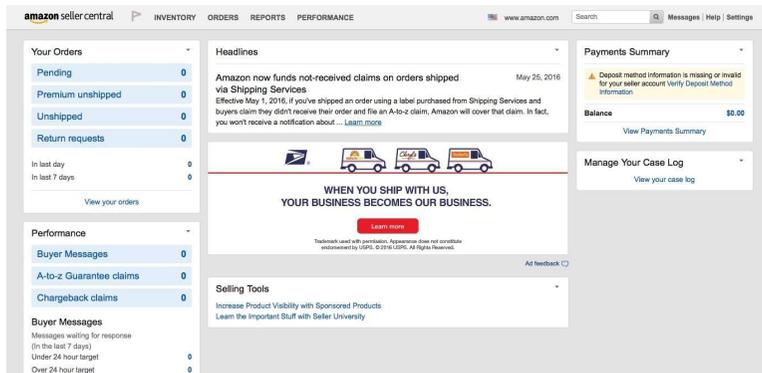
You've likely already added your payment and address info to Amazon, along with over 300 million other people around the globe.

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[322]https://www.paypal.com/webapps/mpp/ua/useragreement-full#8
[323]https://zapier.com/zapbook/paypal/review/
[324]http://zapier.com/zapbook/paypal/

That's what makes Amazon Payments[325] an interesting option. You can add a *Pay with Amazon* button to your checkout form, and let your customers purchase items from your site while using the same payment and address info they've already added to Amazon.

It offers more than just payments, too. You can let your customers log in to your site using Amazon, or start subscription services that bill customers monthly through their Amazon account. You'll even cut down on fraud, since your payments are done through accounts already setup in Amazon.

Amazon Payments Pricing: 2.9% plus 30¢ per transaction for payments within the US; 3.9% plus 30¢ for international transactions

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There are a few other popular account-based payment systems worth mentioning:

- Alipay[326]: a mobile payment system popular in China, Alipay is growing in popularity especially across Asia. It's account based, but the simplest way to accept payments with it is using Stripe which we'll look at below.
- **Google Wallet**[327]: a personal payment system tied to your Google account—you can use it for personal sales[328], but it wouldn't work well to run a full business.
- **Apple Pay and the App Store**[329]: an account-based payment that's built into every iPhone and iPad, the App Store lets you accept payments for apps and subscriptions inside apps for a 30% cut, though it requires the coding skills to build an iOS

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[325]https://payments.amazon.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[326]https://intl.alipay.com

[327]https://wallet.google.com

[328]https://support.google.com/wallet/answer/6285485?hl=en

[329]http://www.apple.com/apple-pay/

app. On websites, you can now use the credit card-powered
Apple Pay to accept payments without an app, but you'll still
need a payment provider, somewhere Stripe comes in handy
again.

The Best Direct Payments Services
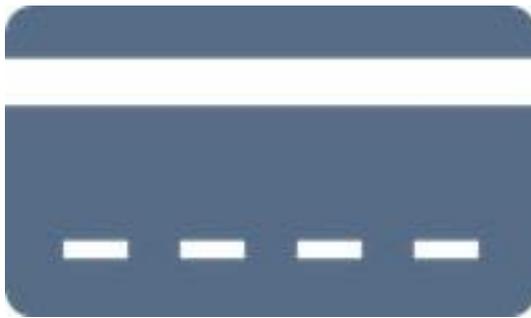
Perhaps you have an eCommerce site already, and the only missing
piece is your payment service. Or maybe you're building an app
or site from scratch, and want something more customizable than
PayPal.

These services are some of the best payment processing tools you
could use—and they let you accept payments from more than just
credit cards, too.

Square

for accepting credit card payments in person
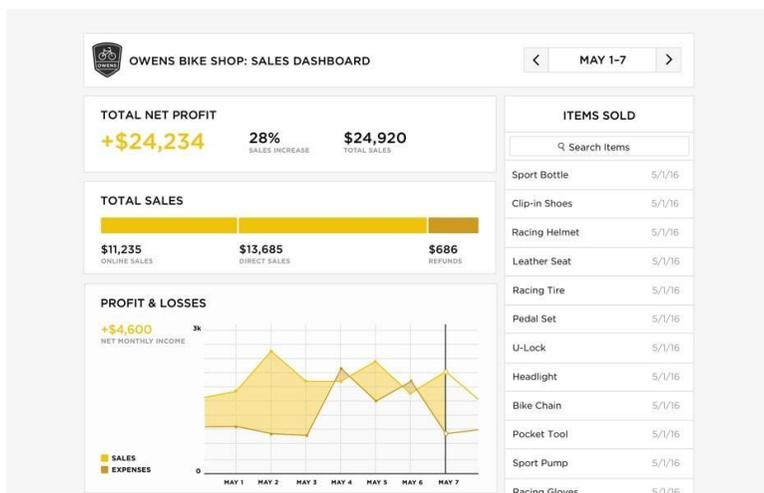
If you've ever looked into accepting payments right on your phone, you've likely seen Square[330]—the tiny white credit card reader that connects to your phone's headphone jack. An ingenious little device, Square made it simple for anyone to accept credit card payments, anywhere: at a market, yard sale, or even to split bills with your friends if you really wanted.

Along with that, Square's apps let you run a point-of-sales system to process sales at your brick-and-mortar store or restaurant. And with the Square eCommerce API[331], you can build its payments into your site to use the same service process all of your sales. It can even manage inventory and employees, so you can tie your site into Square's mobile apps.

Square Pricing: 2.75% per swiped transaction; 3.5% + 15¢ per keyed-in transaction; 2.9% + 30¢ per API transaction; international transactions not supported via API

   Tip: PayPal also offers a mobile card reader, PayPal

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[330]https://squareup.com/
[331]https://squareup.com/developers

Here[332], as does QuickBooks with its Intuit GoPayments[333] device.

Stripe

for accepting payments of any type in your app
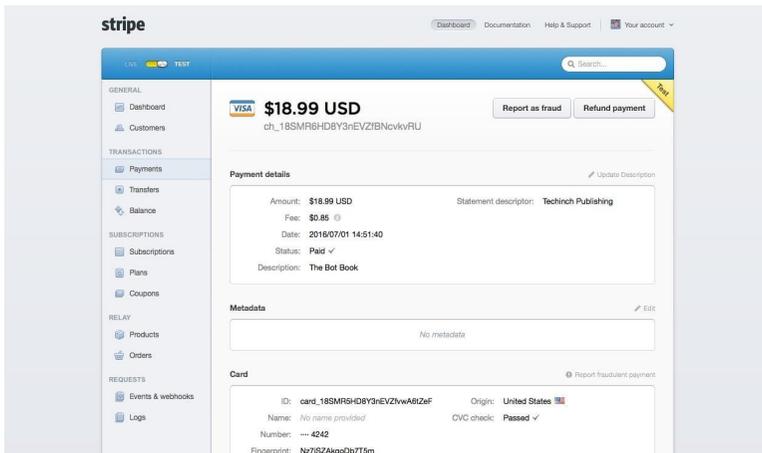
One of the more popular payment processing services, Stripe[334] prides itself on a simple, beautiful payment experience. With only a bit of JavaScript, you can add a simple secure checkout form to your site. Or, you customize the full experience, using Stripe's APIs to power your payments deep inside your app.

Stripe works everywhere. You can create accounts from 10 countries with 15 more in beta[335] and counting, and accept credit card payments from nearly any country. It even lets you accept payments via Bitcoin, Alipay, Apple Pay, Android Pay, and ACH bank transfers,

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[332]https://www.paypal.com/webapps/mpp/credit-card-reader

[333]http://quickbooks.intuit.com/payments/mobile-credit-card-processing/

[334]https://stripe.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign= partnership

[335]https://stripe.com/global

so customers can pay the way they want. And if you're building
a subscription service, or want to add coupon codes and special
discounts, Stripe lets you manage them right inside your payment
management.

Stripe Pricing: 2.9% + 30¢ per card or mobile payment transaction;
0.8% per ACH or Bitcoin transaction, with a $5 cap; no additional
international fee

Learn more in Zapier's *Stripe review*[336]

See *Stripe integrations*[337] *on Zapier*

Dwolla

for bank transfer payments in your app

Want to avoid credit card fees? Dwolla[338] lets you accept payments
directly from your users' bank accounts, for free or very cheap
payments with Dwolla's paid plans. Instead of a per-transaction
fee, you'll pay a monthly fee for Dwolla's features while funds
are transferred directly between you and your customers' bank
accounts. Or, if you don't need many features and can handle a
4-6 day delay for each transfer, you can use it for free.

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[336]https://zapier.com/zapbook/stripe/review/

[337]http://zapier.com/zapbook/stripe/

[338]https://www.dwolla.com/

Using Dwolla's API, you can build payments into your site, either
having customers add their bank info through Dwolla's UI or
your own white-labeled install. It even includes tools to move
payments around, making it a great payments tool if you're building
a marketplace that needs to process customer payments and send
out payments to sellers.

Dwolla Pricing: Free for basic transfers; from $25/month Plus
plan[339] for next-day transfers; international transfers not supported

> **Tip**: If you want to build a marketplace powered by
> credit card payments, WePay[340] is another great pay-
> ment processor to consider. It's the payment service
> behind Zoho Subscriptions, Freshbooks' payments, and
> more, and can integrate directly with your full plat-
> form.

Braintree

for accepting payments directly in international currencies

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[339]https://www.dwolla.com/pricing
[340]https://wepay.com

Want to accept PayPal payments, but still build your own payment forms and accept credit cards directly? Braintree[341] is a tool to make that possible. It lets you build your own checkout process with its API, or you can use its hosted fields[342] to securely accept payment info right inside your own forms.

Then, with that one payment form, you can accept credit card and mobile payment options like Apple Pay and Google Pay, along with account-based payments from PayPal and personal payments app Venmo. And if you want, you can receive international payments directly in their local currency, to get your own bank's exchange rate or perhaps store payments in multiple currencies if your bank allows.

Braintree Pricing: Free for first $50k of credit card and $1m of Bitcoin transactions; 2.9% + 30¢ per credit card transaction, plus additional 1% fee for international transactions; 1% per Bitcoin transaction

Learn more in Zapier's Braintree review[343]

See Braintree integrations[344] *on Zapier*

Authorize.net

for processing batch transactions

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[341]https://www.braintreepayments.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[342]https://www.braintreepayments.com/products-and-features/custom-ui/hosted-fields

[343]https://zapier.com/zapbook/braintree/review/

[344]http://zapier.com/zapbook/braintree/
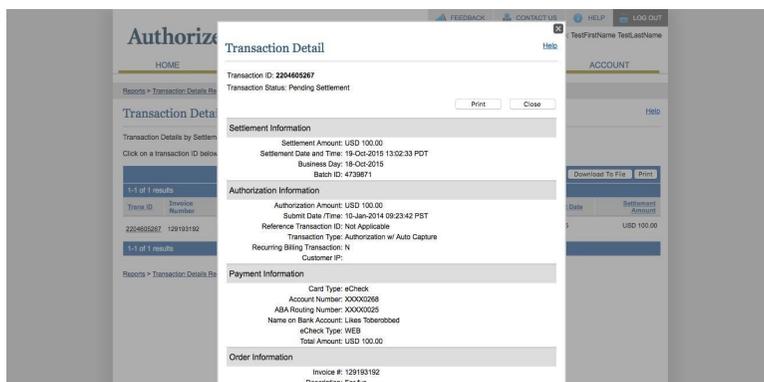
Want one payment processor that can handle your online and in-store payments? Authorize.net[345] is one that can handle everything from checks to credit card transactions. Your customers can enter their bank account info in Authorize.net's eCheck payments, or you can input payment info directly from paper checks to process payments. In fact, you can bulk-add payments anytime, to accept offline credit card and bank payments and submit them to Authorize.net for processing later.

On your website, Authorize.net's API lets you build its payment service into your app, and then sync details back to QuickBooks to analyze your accounting data easily. And if you need to send bills for metered service usage or subscriptions, it's flexible enough to handle those, too.

Authorize.net Pricing: 2.9% + 30¢ per transaction, plus 1.5% fee for international transactions; 0.75% per eCheck payment; $25/month gateway fee; $49 setup fee

Payline

for payments based on interchange fees

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[345]http://www.authorize.net/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership
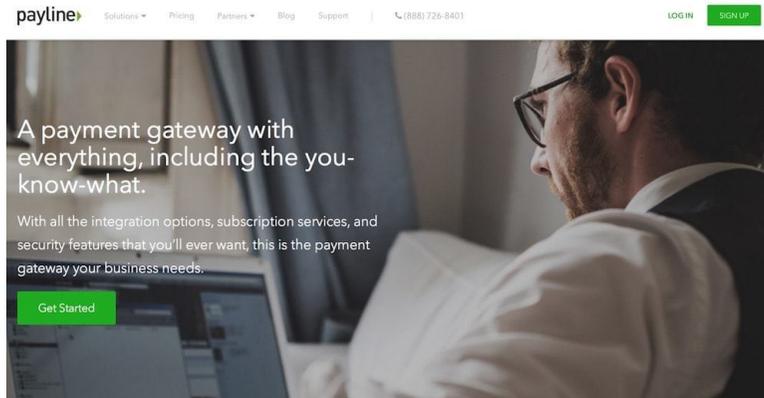
The main cost in processing payments is the *interchange fee*, which credit card companies charge to process the payment—and sometimes give back to their users with rewards and miles. Those fees vary between credit card companies, and Payline[346] lets you pay less when your interchange fees are lower.

Interchange fees average out to 1.7%—sometimes lower, sometimes as high as 3.5%—so depending on the cards your customers use, you'll likely save money over standard credit card processing services. And you'll still be able to accept payments, either in-person at your store or on your website through Payline's API or simple checkout buttons that let you accept payments without writing much code.

Payline Pricing: 0.2% + interchange fee + 10¢ per swipe transaction; 0.35% + interchange fee + 10¢ per online transaction; $15/month account fee

Adyen

for accepting payments in the most popular ways for an area

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[346]https://paylinedata.com/
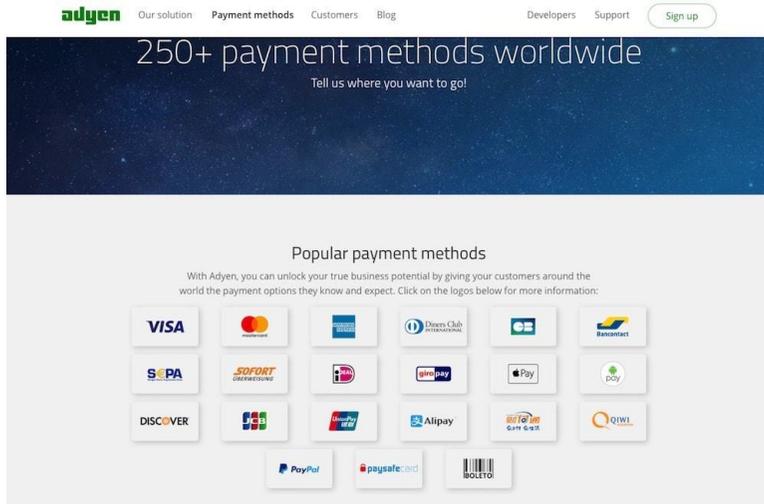
Visa and Mastercard payments work great for the US, but they're not the only credit cards on the market. There's also JCB cards in Japan and UnionPay in China, SEPA bank transfers in the EU, Boleto payment tokens in Brazil, over-the-counter payments at 7-11 in Thailand, online bank payments in Malaysia, and much more. Adyen[347] lets you accept them all, with over 250 supported payment methods.

Just add Adyen payments to your app or site, or use integrations to accept payments inside eCommerce apps. Then, whenever anyone buys your products, Ayden will prompt them to pay with the payment methods most popular in their region. You'll then be able to sell products globally and make your customers feel like your site is personalized for their area without any extra work.

Adyen Pricing: Interchange fees + .6% + €0.10 for most credit card payments; payment fees vary[348] for all other payment methods.

   Tip: If you're focused on sales in just one region,

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[347] https://www.adyen.com/
[348] https://docs.adyen.com/legal/adyen-pricing

be sure to check out PayMill[349] for EU transactions,
Omise[350] for South East Asia, Flutterwave[351] for Africa,
and Boleta Simples[352] for Brazil.

Apps With Built-in Payment Services

Payment processor services can take a lot of work to get setup, and
you'll *still* need a tool to run your store or will need to code your
own.

These tools give you an all-in-one experience for a simple way to
sell products and accept payments with only one account.

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[349]https://www.paymill.com

[350]https://www.omise.co

[351]https://flutterwave.com

[352]http://boletosimples.com.br

Shopify

for running a full store
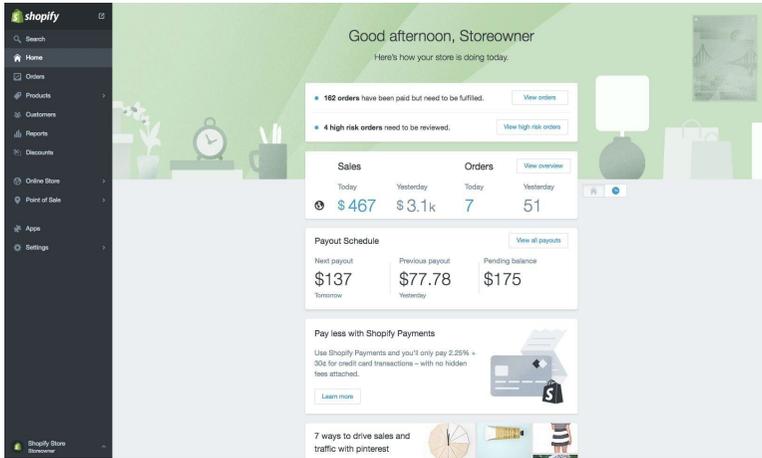
Shopify[353] is best known as a simple tool for building an eCommerce site—and it can process your store's payments, too. You can quickly build an online store with Shopify's templates, list each of your products, and use its built-in Twitter *Buy Now* buttons and dedicated Facebook store page tools to sell your products on social media.

Accepting payments won't take any extra work. Just opt to use Shopify Payments[354], and you'll be able to process credit card payments for similar rates as other payment services. That way you'll only have to worry about your store itself—everything else is taken care of automatically.

Shopify Pricing: $29/month for Shopify Basic account, plus 2.9% + 30¢ per payment

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[353]https://www.shopify.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

[354]https://www.shopify.com/payments

Learn more in Zapier's Shopify review[355]

See Shopify integrations[356] *on Zapier*

Gumroad

for directly selling individual items
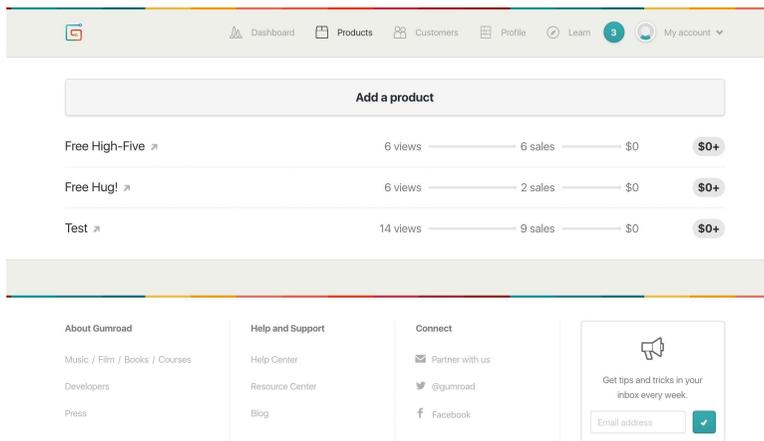
Want an even simpler way to sell products? Gumroad[357] helps you create one-page product listings for digital products, subscriptions, or physical goods, and processes the payments, too. You can even make a pre-order page for upcoming items to start making sales before your item is ready to launch.

All you'll need is an image and description of your product, and Gumroad does the rest. If your customers already have a Gumroad account, they can pay in a click—otherwise, they'll just have to enter their payment info, and you'll be notified that it's time to ship your product.

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[355]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/review/

[356]http://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/

[357]https://www.gumroad.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=partnership

Gumroad Pricing: 5% + 25¢ per transaction

Learn more in Zapier's Gumroad review[358]

See Gumroad integrations[359] *on Zapier*

Recurly

for building detailed subscription plans

Building a subscription service? Recurly[360] includes the tools you
need to manage your plans and customer info. You can add detailed
subscription plan variants, even with a fixed number of billing
cycles for courses and other time-limited subscriptions. Or, you
can include optional add-ons, and make coupon codes for new
customers.

Then, you can process payments using Recurly's built-in payment
gateway as a cost-efficient payment system. Or you can accept
PayPal and Amazon payments–or connect with alternative pay-
ment services–and let Recurly automatically route international

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[358]https://zapier.com/zapbook/gumroad/review/
[359]http://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/
[360]https://recurly.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_campaign=
partnership

customers through the cheapest payment system for that transac-
tion. It's a great way to use multiple payment systems together
to save money—or to simplify things with your subscriptions and
payments in one place.

Recurly Pricing: 1.25% + interchange/merchant account[361] fee + 10¢
per transaction, along with $99/month Core plan

Learn more in Zapier's Recurly review[362]

See Recurly integrations[363] *on Zapier*

CheddarGetter

for bundling smaller charges into one bill
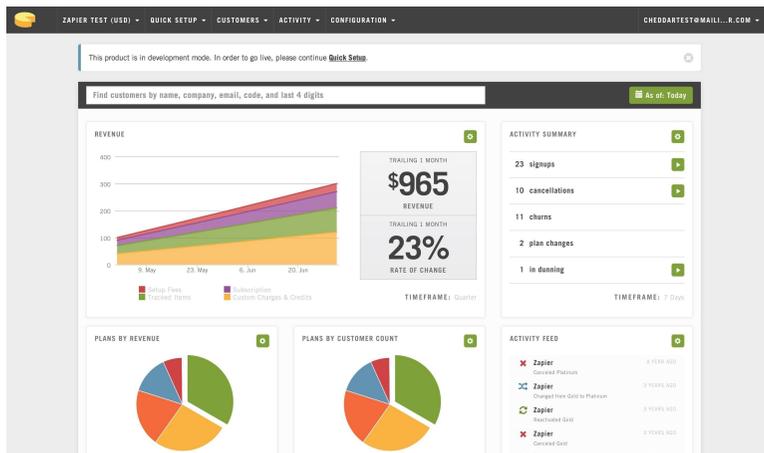
Billing for tiny purchases doesn't make sense when credit card fees
could easily eat half of a $1 transaction. CheddarGetter[364] lets you
instead offer metered billing, and roll transactions into monthly

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[361]https://docs.recurly.com/docs/gateway-merchant-account-overview

[362]https://zapier.com/zapbook/recurly/review/

[363]http://zapier.com/zapbook/recurly

[364]https://cheddargetter.com/?utm_source=zapier&utm_medium=profile&utm_
campaign=partnership

subscription-like payments. You could charge per article read or
song downloaded with micro-transactions, and experiment with
unique business models for your products.

Adding CheddarGetter payments to your site is easy, with hosted
forms that can accept credit card info without extra work on your
site. You can offer standard subscriptions and individual products,
too, along with coupon codes, add-ons, and more.

CheddarGetter Pricing: 25¢ per transaction plus $9/month for Pay-
Pal payments; 20¢ + interchange fees per transaction plus $79/month
for credit card payments

Learn more in Zapier's CheddarGetter review[365]

See CheddarGetter integrations[366] *on Zapier*

QuickBooks Payments

for payments integrated with your accounting

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[365]https://zapier.com/zapbook/cheddargetter/review/
[366]http://zapier.com/zapbook/cheddargetter
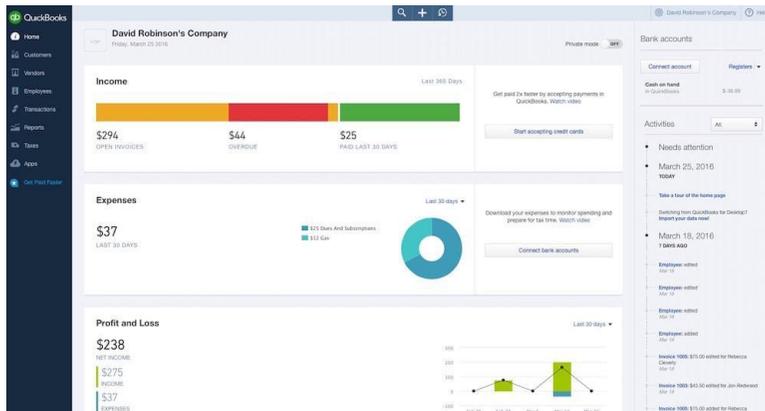
Need to get paid for invoices, and also want to sell products online? QuickBooks has what you need with QuickBooks Payments[367]. It's a payment processing tool built into your QuickBooks Online account, where you can accept credit card payments right inside your invoices. Or, with the QuickBooks API, you can process payments right from your website.

As a part of QuickBooks, your transaction info will automatically be logged alongside the rest of your accounting data. You can log work, send an invoice, get paid, and have your financial records automatically updated right inside QuickBooks.

QuickBooks Payments Pricing: 2.4% + 25¢ per credit card transaction, plus interchange fee for international payments; 50¢ per ACH bank transfer; 1.6% + 25¢ per transaction with a $19.95/month plan; QuickBooks accounts from $9.95/month

Learn more in Zapier's QuickBooks Online review[368]

See QuickBooks Online integrations[369] *on Zapier*

Still haven't found the app you want? Then perhaps you should use an eCommerce app alongside a payment processing service. You'll need two apps but will get the features you want.

Here are some of the best options, most of which integrate with many of the payment processing services above:

- **MoonClerk**[370] lets you accept payments via Stripe using a simple form. It's nearly as simple to use as Gumroad, with more options to customize your product pages.

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[367]https://quickbooks.intuit.com/payments/
[368]https://zapier.com/zapbook/quickbooks/review/
[369]http://zapier.com/zapbook/quickbooks/
[370]https://zapier.com/zapbook/moonclerk/review/

- **Chargify**[371] makes it easy to manage all of your products and optional components for one-off orders, subscriptions, or metered billing.
- **Chargebee**[372] helps you manage complex subscription prices, including EU VAT charges, and lets you accept payments from PayPal, Amazon Payments, and other payment processing services.
- **eCommerce apps** like WooCommerce[373], Magento[374], and Bigcommerce[375] help you make an online store, and then integrate with account or direct payment services to process payments.
- **Zoho Subscriptions**[376] manages your subscriptions, sends emails to customers, and saves payment info directly to Zoho Books for easy accounting.
- **Form apps**[377] like Wufoo[378], Typeform[379], and Jotform[380] let you accept payments in forms—typically via PayPal or Stripe—for a simple way to start selling stuff online.

Accepting payments shouldn't be the hardest part of starting your business—and with these tools, it won't be. Just choose how much of the process you want to manage, pick a payment processing service that fits your needs, and then turn your focus to building the next great online store.

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[371] https://zapier.com/zapbook/chargify/review/
[372] https://zapier.com/zapbook/chargebee/review/
[373] https://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/review
[374] https://zapier.com/zapbook/magento/review/
[375] https://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcommerce/
[376] https://zapier.com/zapbook/zoho-subscriptions/review/
[377] https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-forms-and-surveys/best-online-form-builder-software/
[378] https://zapier.com/zapbook/wufoo/review/
[379] https://zapier.com/zapbook/typeform/review/
[380] https://zapier.com/zapbook/jotform/review/

For that, you'll need some extra tools and integrations to make sure
your store runs smoothly. That's what we'll explore in this book's
final chapter.

_Written by Matthew Guay[381].

Image Credits: Credit card photo by Michal Jarmoluk[382] via Pixabay[383]; Payment photo by Renate Meijer[384] via Flickr[385].

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[381]http://twitter.com/maguay

[382]https://pixabay.com/en/users/jarmoluk-143740/

[383]https://pixabay.com/en/money-card-business-credit-card-256319/

[384]https://www.flickr.com/photos/kleuske/

[385]https://www.flickr.com/photos/kleuske/8411140007/

Chapter 7: How to Run a Successful Online Store
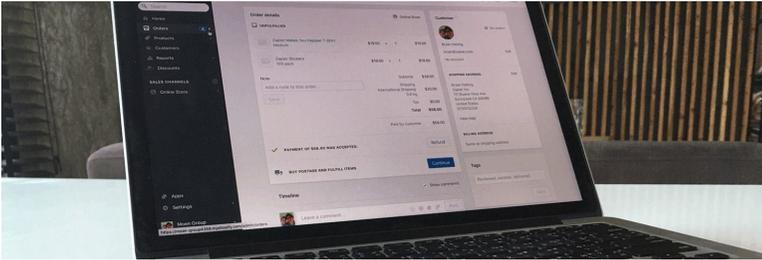
You've decided what you want to sell, found the best eCommerce platform to run your store, designed the perfect logo, and held a *Grand Opening* event. Perhaps you've already made a few sales and have shipped them out to customers.

You're well on your way to being an eCommerce success story. As long as you can manage everything, that is.

Running a store can be hard, tiring work that requires you to wear many hats. Between shipping out orders, managing inventory, keeping track of accounting data, and answering yet another customer's email, it's easy to get overwhelmed. But it doesn't have to be that hard. Your eCommerce platform and other companion apps can keep your store running smoothly, managing the busywork so you can focus on your products and customers.

Your store will need the best-in-class tools—and the essentials are right here. From the best places to find themes and add-ons to your store, to the best tools and automations to run your store, here are the resources you need to keep your store running and growing. Consider it your extended cheat sheet for managing a successful store.

Starting an Online Store

Before cutting the ribbon and turning on your virtual *Open* sign, you'll have to start your own business and build a store.

First, you'll need to think through your business idea, plan how much to charge for your products, and make sure you're up to the task of actually running a business. Then, you'll need to actually start a business: you'll need startup plans, paperwork, and capital.

With that done, you'll be ready to start your own store. You could sell your products in a number of places online, from online marketplaces to social networks. Or, you could start your own store website with one of the many eCommerce platforms.

You've done all that, and now you're ready to turn on that *Open* sign.

And that's where the real work starts.

> **Note**: This guide includes resources for the 20 eCommerce platforms—including Gumroad, Shopify, WooCommerce, Big Cartel, Volusion, and more—the tools we featured in chapter 5. The tips apply to most eCommerce stores—you just may need to search your eCom-

merce platform's documentation for relevant tools if
you use a different app. And if your platform is listed in
chapter 5 but not under a specific tip, it didn't include
that feature at the time of publication.

Import and Export Products
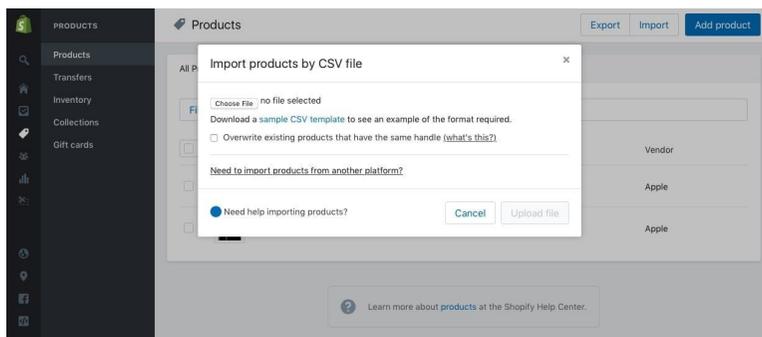
If you've had another store before, **you can get started faster with a quick
import as in Shopify, pictured**

One of the first pain points you'll hit with your new store is adding
products. If you want to sell a wide variety of products, you'll need
to create a listing in your store for each one. And that can be tedious.

Most stores let you import a `.CSV` spreadsheet file with each of your
product names, descriptions, pricing, and more for a quick way to
fill up your store. And while starting your store, you can use that as
a quick way to make all of your product listings. Typically, you'll
download a sample spreadsheet from your eCommerce platform,
open it your favorite spreadsheet app[386], and add your product
listing info in that style.

Already have an older store? Some eCommerce platforms, includ-
ing Shopify and WooCommerce, offer add-ons to import product

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[386]https://zapier.com/blog/best-spreadsheet-excel-alternative/

listings from your older Ebay or another online store, while others like Squarespace include native tools to import product listings.

Or, you can often *export* your product listings from an older store in a `.CSV` file, clean it up to fit your new eCommerce platform's import style, and import those listings.

Here are the guidelines for importing products from popular eCommerce tools:

→ *Import your product listings with a spreadsheet (unless otherwise noted) into Selz[387], Storenvy[388], Squarespace[389] (from Big Cartel, Etsy, and Shopify), Weebly[390], Shopify[391], Volusion[392], BigCommerce[393], 3dcart[394], Ecwid[395], WooCommerce[396] (via plugin), Magento[397], X-Cart[398], or Prestashop[399].*

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[387]https://selz.com/support/importing-exporting-items/

[388]https://support.storenvy.com/customer/portal/articles/1151196-can-i-import-products-from-csv-etsy-or-other-sites-

[389]https://support.squarespace.com/hc/en-us/articles/205814028-Importing-and-exporting-content

[390]https://hc.weebly.com/hc/en-us/articles/227130587

[391]https://help.shopify.com/manual/products/import-export/import-products

[392]https://www.volusion.com/ecommerce-blog/articles/getting-started-with-volusion-importing-products/

[393]https://support.bigcommerce.com/articles/Public/Importing-Products

[394]https://support.3dcart.com/Knowledgebase/Article/View/348/9/how-do-i-import-products-via-csv

[395]https://support.ecwid.com/hc/en-us/articles/208079105-Importing-products

[396]https://woocommerce.com/products/product-csv-import-suite/

[397]http://docs.magento.com/m1/ce/user_guide/store-operations/data-import.html

[398]http://kb.x-cart.com/en/import-export/how_to_import_data.html

[399]http://doc.prestashop.com/display/PS16/CSV+Import+Parameters

List Products Elsewhere
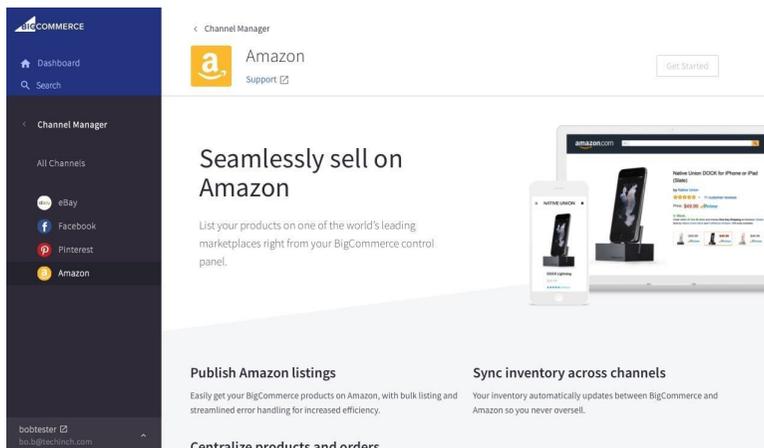
Manage your products from your store, and list them in marketplaces at the same time (BigCommerce pictured)

With your own domain name and custom branding, your own store might be the most fun place to sell your products. And it could be the best place to land new customers.

But—especially when you're first starting out—you'll likely want to get your products in front of other people. That's where online marketplaces like Amazon and eBay shine. They come with a wide audience of customers who *already* are searching for products like your own every day. List your products there and you lose the customization and branding from your own site—and likely will spend more in fees—but the additional customers might be worth it.

Good news: it's not either/or. BigCommerce and Volusion can cross-list your products on Amazon, X-Cart syncs product listings with eBay, and many other eCommerce platforms include add-ons or integrations to let you list your products on any marketplace you want. Storenvy even includes its *own* marketplace, letting you run a

customized store right inside of a marketplace filled with potential buyers.

You could also manually list your products on marketplaces and your store, but that's risky and time consuming. Each time you add a new product, you have to post that listing to your site *and* marketplaces. And, if you're not careful, you could end up selling more inventory than you have, with customers buying your product from both stores at the same time.

If you want to list your products on multiple stores at once, it's worth picking an eCommerce platform that's designed for it. Here are the platforms with built-in eCommerce integrations or plugins and add-ons that do the same thing for you:

→ *List your products on a marketplace and your own store with* *Storenvy*[400] *(own marketplace),* *Shopify*[401] *(Amazon/eBay via 3rd party;* *built-in Amazon support*[402] *coming soon),* *Volusion*[403] *(Amazon/eBay),* *BigCommerce*[404] *(Amazon/eBay),* *3dcart*[405] *(Amazon),* *Ecwid*[406] *(eBay),* *WooCommerce*[407] *(Amazon/eBay via 3rd party),* *Magento*[408] *(Amazon/eBay via 3rd party),* *X-Cart*[409] *(eBay), and* *PrestaShop*[410] *(Amazon/eBay via 3rd party).*

> **Tip**: There's one other trick: if you want a customized store but want to process your sales through eBay and Amazon, you could create a website, and embed

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[400]https://support.storenvy.com/customer/en/portal/articles/1090639-is-storenvy-free-
[401]https://apps.shopify.com/shopping-feed
[402]https://www.shopify.com/amazon
[403]https://www.volusion.com/how-to-sell-on-amazon
[404]https://www.bigcommerce.com/features/sell-on-ebay-amazon/
[405]https://support.3dcart.com/knowledgebase/article/View/636/46/what-is-3dcarts-ebay-integration
[406]https://www.ecwid.com/blog/sell-on-ebay.html
[407]https://www.wplab.com/plugins/wp-lister/
[408]https://www.m2epro.com
[409]https://market.x-cart.com/addons/ebay-integration.html
[410]http://addons.prestashop.com/en/2742-ebay-marketplace-official.html

your marketplace-powered store on your web pages—something that Wix[411] and Squarespace[412] offer—and you could do the same thing on most other standalone sites and blogs[413].
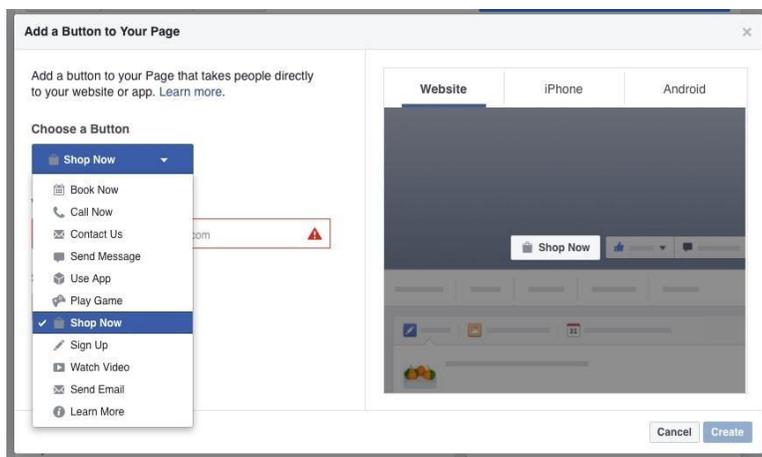
Another great option: list your products on Facebook

Another similar idea is to list your products on Facebook. While not a marketplace, Facebook does give you an easier way to get your products in front of potential customers. And with a Facebook Store, customers can complete the entire purchase right from Facebook.

You could again list your products manually, but that makes managing orders difficult. Or, you could just share each product listing to your Facebook Page—it'd get the products in front of potential customers, but would make it more difficult for them to purchase items. That's why a full Facebook Store integration for your platform is the best option. They list your products in a Facebook store and most let customers make purchases right from your Facebook

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[411]https://www.wix.com/support/html5/article/third-party-app-ebay-ecommerce
[412]https://support.squarespace.com/hc/en-us/articles/205814038-Using-the-Amazon-Block
[413]https://zapier.com/blog/how-to-start-online-store/#form

Page while keeping the order and inventory info organized back in your normal store app.

→ *Add a store to your Facebook Page with Selz[414], Storenvy[415], Weebly[416] (3rd party), Big Cartel[417], Shopify[418], Volusion[419], Big-Commerce[420], 3dcart[421], Ecwid[422], WooCommerce[423] (or 3rd party[424]), Magento[425] (3rd party), X-Cart[426] (3rd party), and PrestaShop[427] (3rd party).*

You might need to do a few more tasks to get your store working the way you want—we'll look at those in the annual store tasks section. But for now, let's look at how to improve your day-to-day work with tools to manage your orders, support customers, and build marketing campaigns.

The Daily Tasks in Running an eCommerce Store

Now that your store is open for business, it's time to sell stuff. That's your new day job, the thing you'll do every day when you start

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[414]https://selz.com/support/selling-facebook/
[415]https://support.storenvy.com/customer/portal/articles/1090677-how-do-i-setup-my-facebook-store-
[416]https://www.weebly.com/app-center/facebook-shop
[417]https://help.bigcartel.com/apps/facebook-store/
[418]https://www.shopify.com/facebook
[419]https://www.volusion.com/facebook-social-store
[420]https://www.bigcommerce.com/features/sell-on-social/
[421]http://www.3dcart.com/facebook-store.html
[422]https://www.ecwid.com/facebook-commerce
[423]https://woocommerce.com/products/facebook-tab/
[424]https://woocommerce.com/products/storeya/
[425]https://www.magentocommerce.com/magento-connect/beetailer-social-commerce-platform.html
[426]https://market.x-cart.com/addons/fcommerce-go.html
[427]http://addons.prestashop.com/en/1048-facebook-shop-pro.html

work.

Here are the tasks you'll be doing most often, along with tips and automations to help you do them in less time.

Manage Your Orders
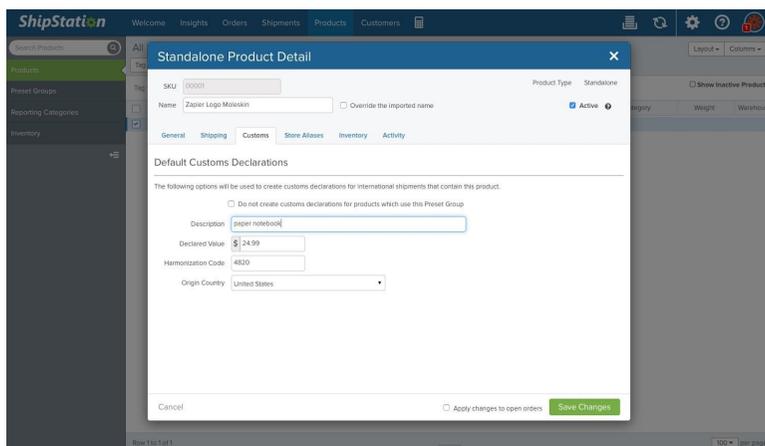
Print shipping labels automatically with tools like ShipStation

Your store is designed to handle orders—and it's likely great at that. From your *Orders* or *Customers* tab, you'll find details about each order from your site, and can then ship out products and let customers know their order is on the way.

Packaging and shipping orders will likely end up being the most time-consuming part of your store. You'll need to copy each customer's order info, print out a label, pack the items they ordered, and mail them out.

Most eCommerce platforms include tools to speed things up—or offer add-ons that can help. You can often integrate your store with your default shipping service, to calculate shipping prices and purchase postage right from your store. You could even use

Amazon Order Fulfillment[428] to store your products in Amazon's warehouses and ship them to customers automatically—even if you're not selling your products on Amazon.

Or, you could handle everything yourself, printing shipping labels and getting orders out the door. For that, a fulfillment tool like ShipStation[429] can come in handy. It finds the cheapest shipping service for each order and automatically prints out shipping labels and postage, so all you have to do is stick the label on the box. And, it comes with built-in integrations on many eCommerce platforms—or you can build your own with app automation tool Zapier[430].

Another option is printing shipping labels yourself. There are a few ways you could do that—all of which can be automated. You could have Zapier add order info to a plain text file, then print all of your labels manually at once. Or, with a Wi-Fi connected printer, you could print labels automatically with Google Cloud Print[431]. Need a fully formatted invoice as well? Just send your order details to a WebMerge[432] document template, then perhaps add another Zap to print that automatically, too.

You'll also want to keep track of your order data, for your own records and for accounting purposes. Perhaps you'll need to add new orders to your accounting app like QuickBooks or Xero, and you'd also like to have a spreadsheet of every order. Just make an integration to your sales data in the way you need.

Your entire order processing workflow is full of tiny steps like that, ones that are unique to your business. That's what makes it worthwhile to look through your store, find things in your workflow that take the most time, and see if there's a way to automate them. Chances are, there is.

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[428]https://services.amazon.com/fulfillment-by-amazon/benefits.htm

[429]https://zapier.com/zapbook/shipstation/review/

[430]https://zapier.com/

[431]https://zapier.com/zapbook/google-cloud-print/review/

[432]https://zapier.com/zapbook/webmerge/review/

Support Your Customers
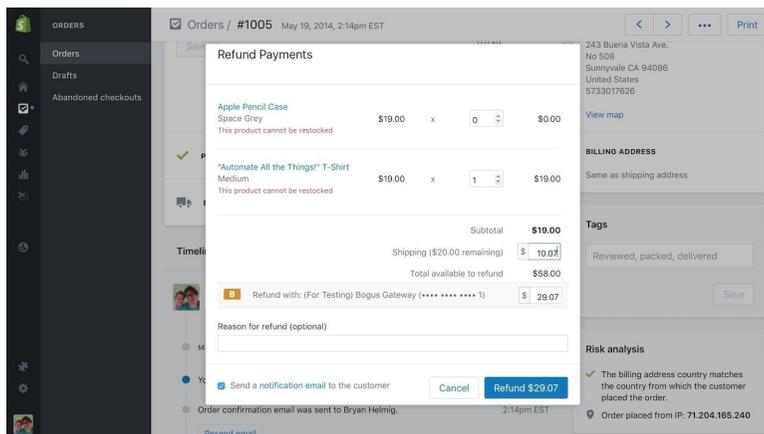
You'll try your best to make everyone happy, but odds are, someone will eventually have problems. Perhaps they'll buy the wrong size shirt or will decide they *didn't* want that product after all—some of the many reasons why Americans returned over $260 *billion*[433] worth of goods in 2015.

Or maybe your customers will just want to say hi, ask you for tips about using your product or want to see if you would offer discounted pricing in bulk. Either way, you'll need a way to let people get in touch with you or your team.

The best way to do that is via email. You could start out small, just by including your email address in an *About* or *Contact* page on your site, or you could add a contact form. Your store will email customers when they've purchased a product—and if they reply, most eCommerce platforms will forward that to you.

> **Tip:** If your store doesn't come with a contact form,

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[433]http://www.economist.com/news/business/21710855-what-happens-all-goods-shoppers-dont-want-business-reselling-returned-shop-items

you can add your own with one of these online form builders[434].

As your store grows—and especially if you have a team working together to run your store—you'll want to upgrade to a customer support app. A customer support app[435] like Help Scout[436] or Zendesk[437] gives you a shared email account, where all emails from customers can come in together. You could even forward any emails your store receives to the app, and have it watch social networks for mentions of your store's name.

Then, set aside time each day to check your support queue. You can organize emails by their requests, to handle all of your discount, refund, and support questions in a batch. And if you're not available, anyone else on your team can pick right up where you left off in the support queue. A customer support app is the perfect tool to help you help everyone—no matter how many customers you have.

Want to go even further? Depending on your store, you could add a live chat support app[438] like Intercom[439] or Olark[440] to talk with customers in real-time. It'll take more work, but might help you solve problems before they turn into larger issues.

> **Tip**: Get a head-start on customer support by reading Zapier's free *Ultimate Guide to Customer Support*[441].

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[434]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-forms-and-surveys/best-online-form-builder-software/

[435]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-customer-support/best-customer-support-apps/

[436]https://zapier.com/zapbook/help-scout/review/

[437]http://zapier.com/zapbook/Zendesk/

[438]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-customer-support/best-customer-support-chat-apps/

[439]https://zapier.com/zapbook/intercom/review/

[440]https://zapier.com/zapbook/olark/review/

[441]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-customer-support/

For that most common request about refunds and returns, the tools you need will be tucked away in your store's *Orders* pages. Just find the correct order—searching for the customer's email or name should help—and walk through the refund options there. Typically, you'll be able to offer a partial refund, if you'd like—perfect for those times when someone needs to be refunded for one item, or when you don't want to refund the shipping price, too.

Market Your Products
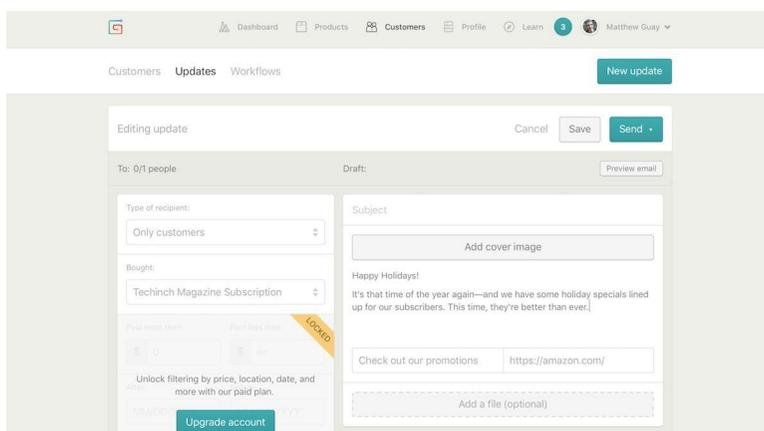
Some store builders, including Gumroad, let you email all your customers at once

Your existing customers are not just people who paid you once. They're also your target to grow your store with repeat business. Maybe they'll buy something else you sell or purchase another copy of the item they already bought for a gift. Perhaps if you taught them how to use your product, they'd buy add-ons to get even more out of it.

Each of those are perfect reasons to use email marketing. There are two main types: Email newsletters let you send messages to everyone on your list, while drip emails let you send customized

emails based on activities a contact has done. Say you want to send lessons on how to use your product to new customers. Drip emails would be perfect: they would be sent on a schedule to someone as soon as they make a purchase. But if you want to share your holiday specials, an email newsletter that goes out to everyone is the better tool.

Either way, sending the emails is easy. Some eCommerce platforms—including Gumroad—include a built-in newsletter tool, while others like 3dcart come with a full drip email system. Or, you can use your own favorite email newsletter app[442] or drip email tool[443] (like MailChimp[444] or Campaign Monitor[445]—both of which support newsletters and drip emails) to send the messages.

Just set up a Zap that watches your store for new customers or orders, and have Zapier send the customer's email address to your email app. The next time you want to send out an email to your customers, you'll have all of them in one list so you can email them in a click.

> **Tip:** Learn more about email marketing from Zapier's free eBook, The Ultimate Guide to Email Marketing[446].

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[442]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/best-email-newsletter-software/

[443]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/best-drip-email-marketing-apps/

[444]https://zapier.com/zapbook/mailchimp/review

[445]https://zapier.com/zapbook/campaign-monitor/review

[446]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/

Many stores include a blog too—and some, like WooCommerce, are literally built into a blog

It's not just existing customers you should worry about. You'll also want to bring in *new* customers—that's where most of your marketing efforts will likely be focused. And your store along with some integrations can be perfect there, too.

The front page of your store *is* marketing. It's literally the first thing most people see when they stumble upon your products. That's why your store theme and branding matter. Your store's design can showcase your best products, describe them in a way everyone will understand, and feature deals and coupon codes that will convince people to stick around. It could even include another form like your contact form—this one to capture emails of people who *aren't* yet customers and add them to your email list.

Then, there's content and social media marketing. Many store builders like Shopify and Magento include a built-in blog; others like WooCommerce and Squarespace are built around a blog. Or, you could build a blog on Medium, Tumblr, or WordPress.com, and link to it on your store's front page. Either way, your posts there can help position your products and keep people coming back to learn from your team. They might not buy something this time— but hopefully they will eventually.

Social media works the same. You might have your products listed on a Facebook Store, but you'll *also* want to consistently share new things—perhaps your new product listings, blog posts, and sales. Zapier integrations like these can do the busywork for you, posting your product listings and blog posts automatically.

And remember: customer support is part of marketing, too. Each time you talk with a customer is a chance to make them remember how nice your store is—and they just might remember that when they go to buy something again. You could even take that the extra mile, and send your customers a thank you card—another thing that you could automate with a Zap.

The Occasional Tasks to Get The Most From Your Store

You'll have a nice little business going if you can effectively market your products and take care of every customer. But you could do even better with a few extra tweaks.

You won't need to do these tasks every day—or even every month— but it's worth sitting down every so often to find ways to optimize your store and workflows so you and your store are as effective as possible.

Optimize Your Store

Have 2 versions of a similar product? Upsell your customers and convince them to buy the better one (Magento pictured)

Another form of marketing is to make sure your site is designed to land as many purchases as possible. Anything from your product names to the color of your *Buy* button can affect sales—sometimes significantly.

There are three main ways you can make your store perform better, in minutes.

Up-Sell or Cross-Sell

Say you have a basic widget for $10, and a premium version of the same widget for $20. Whenever anyone goes to buy the basic widget, you could remind them of the premium widget, and perhaps convince them to buy it instead. That's an upsell. Even if it works part of the time, you'll gain a bit of extra revenue.

Or, say you sell phones, and also sell phone cases. Whenever anyone buys a new phone, they'll likely also need a case—so you could show your most popular cases and perhaps offer a small discount if they're purchased together. That's a cross-sell, something you'll

see on Amazon with it's "people who bought this also bought" recommendations.

Both options can be a great way to improve your revenue from customers who are already buying something from your store. Just use them carefully—people who are buying a phone case *likely* don't need a new phone and might be annoyed if you show that as a suggested product.

Look around in your eCommerce platform for both of these tools. Shopify, for example, includes a *Collections* tool to group related products, for a simple way to cross-sell. Magento, on the other hand, lets you pick up and cross-sell products for each of your product listings.

SEO

Some eCommerce platforms like Shopify let you tweak the search engine description of each product

SEO, or *search engine optimization*, is the sometimes dark art of getting your site and product listings to show up on the first page

of Google's search results. In general, Google will show the most relevant link for a search query, so if your store is the only one selling `Amazing Widget` and someone searches for it, your `Amazing Widget Store` will show up first.

The real world is a bit more tricky, and often your products will be similar to those sold by others—and thus you'll compete with them for the top spot on Google's results. And so, you'll wonder if there's a way to make your site rank better, automatically.

There is, to a degree. In general, the best way to have your content rank well is to:

- Write well. Write clear, descriptive product titles and descriptions, and back them up with equally clear tutorials and blog posts.
- Know your audience. Most people don't search for `widget`, they search for the entire product or solution they need. So write the way they'd search, and directly answer their questions. You can use tools like Google Trends[447] to find which terms are most popular for your product, and use them to hone the way you describe them.
- Check analytics. Your store will likely include built-in trends about your products, and may show which search keywords bought in visitors. Or, add Google Analytics[448] to your store to learn even more about which pages and keywords are most popular. Then double-down on what works.

There's one more thing you can try: your store's SEO tools. Shopify and others include an SEO tool at the bottom of your product listings. You can preview how your products will look on Google, and customize the text if you'd like.

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[447]https://www.google.com/trends/
[448]https://analytics.google.com

Each of those tips will help your search engine rankings—without any black magic. Don't try anything shady, like leaving links to your site in comments or asking other sites to link to your store. Odds are, they won't work—and they might actually *hurt* your store's ranking.

> **Tip**: Here are some SEO tools[449] to help you find the best keywords for your store and product descriptions.

A/B Testing

Then, there's A/B testing, the tool you can use to find out if a different product name would sell better or if a blue *Buy* button would perform better than a green one.

The basic idea of A/B testing is that you'll change *one* thing on your site, and show the new version of the site to half of your audience and the old version to the other half. You can then see which version performed better—did the blue or green button get more clicks?—and keep the best version as the default.

Once you've answered that question, you could test something else the next time. You could A/B test anything: your product names, button colors, even whether or not showing up-sells really work. Only test one thing each time, to make sure the results are correct—if you change pricing *and* the button color at once, it'd be impossible to say which one impacted sales the most.

A/B testing is perhaps the most complicated way to optimize your store, but it can have some of the best results. Check your store's add-ons for an A/B testing tool for your store—or look around the documentation for a hidden one like Magento[450] includes. Or, you could use a tool like Optimizely[451] or Visual Web Optimizer[452] to

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[449]https://zapier.com/blog/blog-seo-tools/
[450]https://inviqa.com/blog/how-use-magento-2s-new-built-ab-testing-tool
[451]https://www.optimizely.com/
[452]http://visualwebsiteoptimizer.com/

test your store—for the most part, if you can edit your site's code, you can add those tools or any others to your store.

> **Tip**: Learn more about A/B Testing with our guide to A/B testing email marketing[453]—many of the tips apply to testing your store pages, too.

Build Advanced Workflows for Your Store with Zapier

A Zapier workflow can tell you about daily sales—and more

Your store is pretty great, by now, and you've got a full workflow of tools to help you manage orders, customer complaints, and more. But to do even more, in less time, customized automated workflows are what will help you make your store be more than you could ever do on your own. We've already looked at Zapier workflows that can add customers to mailing lists, print labels automatically, and more.

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[453]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/ab-testing-email-marketing/

But building detailed, customized workflows will let you automate the tasks that take *you* the most time.

Say you want a quick way to see how much your store sold that day every evening—as one of our customers did. Our platform support engineer Tony Rule helped them build a Zapier workflow that would watch their Shopify store for sales, calculate the total, then post it in a message every evening in Slack.

Here's how it works. You'll start out by adding your store to Zapier, and have Zapier watch it for new orders or sales. Then, you'll have Zapier add the orders to Storage[454], a simple database built into Zapier. Add a name for your database in the *Key* field, then select your total order price for the *Increment Amount* value.

> **Tip**: Want Zapier to keep track of your total *number* of orders instead of the total value sold? Just have Zapier add 1 to your Storage *Increment Amount*.
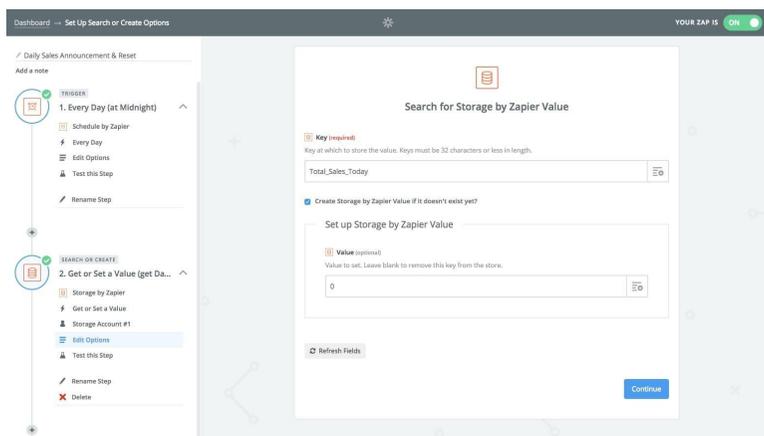
Get the sales report sent to you anywhere you want

That first Zap will keep a running total of how much you've sold. Now you'll build a second Zap, one that will run once every day—or week, or month; whenever you want the report. Use Zapier's *Schedule* app to trigger the Zap on the schedule you want, then add a Storage *Get or Set a Value* to find the Storage Key you added in the previous step.

Then add one more step, this time to send you the total number of sales. Tony Rule's Zap sent the total in a Slack message; you could have Zapier send it to you in an SMS, email, or a message in your favorite chat app. Include any text you want in the message, perhaps `Today's total sales: $`, and then click the + icon on the right of the message field to select your total sales from *Storage.* All that's left is to add one final Storage step to reset the storage back to `0`, so you're ready for a new day of sales tomorrow.

> **Tip:** Want an even more advanced report? Use Zapier's Digest tool[455] to pull together a list of today's customers and orders for a quick way to see what you need to ship tomorrow.

That's a simple way to get an automated report about sales every day from your store. Zapier can do that for anything else you want. Need to look up product info from Slack? A Slack bot could find that for you from your Shopify store—something you can build with our chat bot tutorial[456]. Or want to ask customers to review your products a week after they received them? A *Schedule* or *Delay* Zap could run every time you get a new order, queueing up those review request emails automatically.

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[455]https://zapier.com/blog/custom-digest-app/
[456]https://zapier.com/blog/how-to-build-chat-bot/

It's all about doing jobs that you wouldn't have time to do oth-erwise, so you can focus on your products and customers while getting more done.

The Yearly Tasks to Keep Your Store Running Smoothly

You'll likely spend 99% of your time using the *Orders* and *Products* sections of your store—as you should. That's where you'll take care of customers, add new products, and keep your business running. But sometimes you'll need to venture into other parts of your store, sections that you might forget about since you use them so rarely.

Perhaps you want to tweak your site's theme for the holidays, or need to add an extra feature to display variants of your newest products. Maybe you want to change your receipt emails and can't remember where that setting is.

These are the tools you'll need when first starting your store—and the tools you'll want to revisit every so often to revamp and upgrade your store to make sure it offers the best possible experience to your customers.

Add Extra Features with Add-ons and Integrations
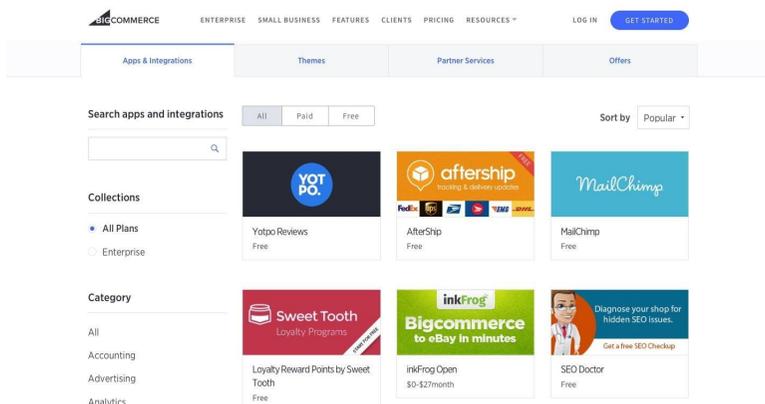
Add-ons, Apps, Extensions, Integrations: they all let your store do more (BigCommerce pictured)

Can't find the feature you want in your eCommerce platform, perhaps a way to calculate shipping costs or show extra images? Your store just might not come with that feature—and in that case, you'll need to add it with an add-on or integration.

Add-ons—sometimes called *apps* or *extensions*—are extra tools you can add to your store. They're a bit more like browser add-ons than the apps you install on your phone. Instead of running on their own (as a phone app does), eCommerce add-ons add extra features to your store—and often change parts of your product listing pages, checkout workflow, or site layout. Many eCommerce platforms include a wide range of such tools from their own team or 3rd party developers.

In most hosted eCommerce platforms—including Shopify and BigCommerce—you'll search through a built-in add-ons gallery and install the ones you want in a tap. With most hosted eCommerce platforms—including WooCommerce and Magento—you'll purchase and down-

load add-ons, then install them manually into your site.

Either way, add-ons are the easiest way to add the features you want to your store.

→ *Find add-ons, apps, and extensions for Wix[457], Weebly[458], Big Cartel[459], Shopify[460], Volusion[461], BigCommerce[462], 3dcart[463], Ecwid[464], WooCommerce[465], Magento[466], X-Cart[467], and PrestaShop[468].*

> **Tip**: If your store platform doesn't include add-ons, you can possibly add small extras—like embedded videos or maps—with a widget or a page on your site that accepts custom code.

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[457]http://www.wix.com/app-market/main

[458]https://www.weebly.com/app-center

[459]https://help.bigcartel.com/apps/

[460]https://apps.shopify.com

[461]https://www.volusion.com/marketplace

[462]https://www.bigcommerce.com/apps/

[463]http://apps.3dcart.com

[464]https://www.ecwid.com/apps

[465]https://woocommerce.com/product-category/woocommerce-extensions/

[466]https://marketplace.magento.com

[467]https://market.x-cart.com

[468]http://addons.prestashop.com
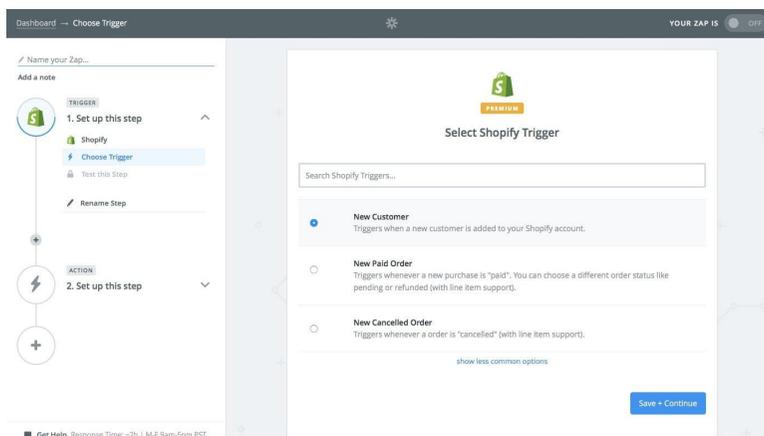
Zapier integrations let you connect your store to the other apps you rely on

Or, you could turn to eCommerce integrations from Zapier[469] to build the tool you want. Zapier connects many popular eCommerce apps to over 700 other software tools—including Excel, Slack, QuickBooks, Dropbox, and much more. Just pick your favorite apps, and connect them to your store with customizable workflows that let you add new customers to your email list, log sales in a spreadsheet, print shipping labels automatically, and more.

We've already looked at many of the ways you can use automations to get more done, so be sure to explore all of the Zapier integrations for your eCommerce platform:

→ *Find Zapier integrations for Gumroad[470], Selz[471], Storenvy[472], Big Cartel[473], Shopify[474], Volusion[475], BigCommerce[476], 3dcart[477], SendOwl[478],*

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[469]https://zapier.com/zapbook/#sort=popular&filter=ecommerce
[470]http://zapier.com/zapbook/gumroad/
[471]http://zapier.com/zapbook/selz/
[472]http://zapier.com/zapbook/storenvy
[473]http://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcartel/
[474]http://zapier.com/zapbook/shopify/
[475]http://zapier.com/zapbook/vextras/
[476]http://zapier.com/zapbook/bigcommerce/
[477]http://zapier.com/zapbook/vextras/
[478]http://zapier.com/zapbook/sendowl/

Ecwid[479], *WooCommerce*[480], *and Magento*[481].

> **Tip**: Using a different eCommerce app—or a market-place like eBay or Etsy—to sell your products? Connect your payment processing service[482] to Zapier to copy order info, send emails to customers, and more. Check out our PayPal[483] integrations to connect eBay or Etsy, or our Stripe[484], Braintree[485], Recurly[486], or Cheddar-Getter[487] integrations for other payment sources.

Customize Your Store with Themes

Most eCommerce platforms—including Selz, pictured—let you customize your store with a theme

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[479]http://zapier.com/zapbook/ecwid/

[480]http://zapier.com/zapbook/woocommerce/

[481]http://zapier.com/zapbook/magento/

[482]https://zapier.com/blog/best-payment-gateways/

[483]http://zapier.com/zapbook/paypal/

[484]http://zapier.com/zapbook/stripe/

[485]http://zapier.com/zapbook/braintree/

[486]http://zapier.com/zapbook/recurly

[487]http://zapier.com/zapbook/cheddargetter

Your store doesn't *have* to look great. Amazon and Alibaba's websites compete for sparseness, focusing instead on their overwhelming quantity of products. But that doesn't mean a beautiful design for your store is pointless.

A well-designed store can reflect your brand, something that's especially important if you've designed your own products and are hoping to sell them for a premium. You don't want to go too far—a flashy site filled with blinking GIFs and auto-playing audio might turn away potential customers—but a bit of style can help position your products and set you apart from the competition.
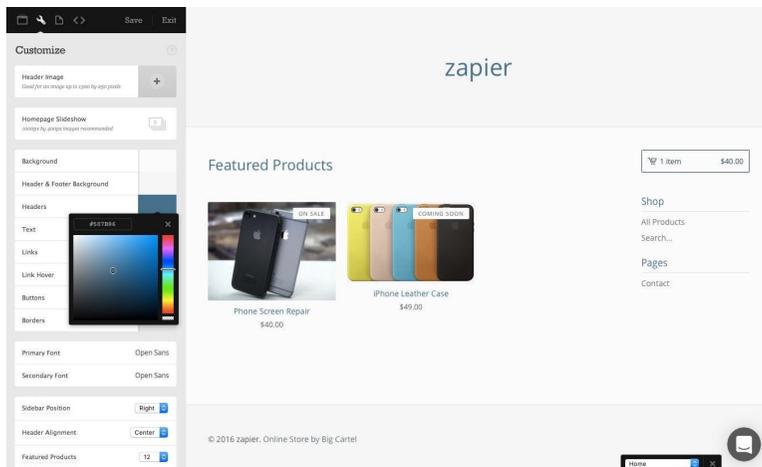
Big Cartel lets you customized colors, fonts, and more in its Design settings

Most eCommerce tools let you customize your store's design—including each standalone app in our roundup of the best eCommerce platforms[488] (tools like SendOwl, E-junkie, and Foxycart don't let you choose a theme—instead, you embed their buttons in your site which use any theme you want). Typically, you'll choose a theme from a built-in theme gallery or *Design* page, and then customize its fonts, colors, and more in the editor. In most store

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[488]https://zapier.com/blog/best-ecommerce-shopping-cart-software/

builders, this is where you'll choose which products to showcase on your homepage, which social profiles to show on your site's footer, and where your shopping cart shows up. And, you can often add additional pages or blog posts to your site from the theme editor or an accompanying *Blog* editor.

Here's where you can find the default free and paid themes for your store's eCommerce platform:

→ *Find the perfect theme for Gumroad[489], Selz[490], Storenvy[491], Jimdo[492], Wix[493], Squarespace[494], Weebly[495], Big Cartel[496], Shopify[497], Volusion[498], BigCommerce[499], 3dcart[500], Ecwid[501], WooCommerce[502], Magento[503], X-Cart[504], and PrestaShop[505].*

> **Tip**: Don't like the default themes? Google's your friend—just search for themes for your eCommerce platform, and you'll likely find hundreds of popular options. Or, check theme marketplaces like Themeforest[506], Creative Market[507], and Template Mon-

[489] http://blog.gumroad.com/post/136335649618/introducing-themes

[490] https://selz.com/support/use-themes-selz/

[491] https://support.storenvy.com/customer/en/portal/articles/1090694-how-do-i-customize-my-storefront-

[492] http://www.jimdo.com/templates/#/category/store

[493] http://www.wix.com/website/templates/html/online-store/1

[494] https://www.squarespace.com/commerce/?category=stores

[495] https://www.weebly.com/themes#vertical/onlinestore

[496] https://help.bigcartel.com/themes/

[497] https://themes.shopify.com

[498] https://www.volusion.com/themes

[499] https://www.bigcommerce.com/theme-store/

[500] http://themes.3dcart.com

[501] https://support.ecwid.com/hc/en-us/articles/207807915-How-to-change-Ecwid-design#readytheme

[502] https://woocommerce.com/product-category/themes/storefront-child-theme-themes/

[503] https://marketplace.magento.com/themes.html

[504] https://market.x-cart.com/xcart-templates

[505] http://addons.prestashop.com/en/3-templates-prestashop

[506] https://themeforest.net/category/ecommerce

[507] https://creativemarket.com/search?q=ecommerce

ster[508], or popular independent designers including Pixel Union[509], Theme Fiend[510], and more.
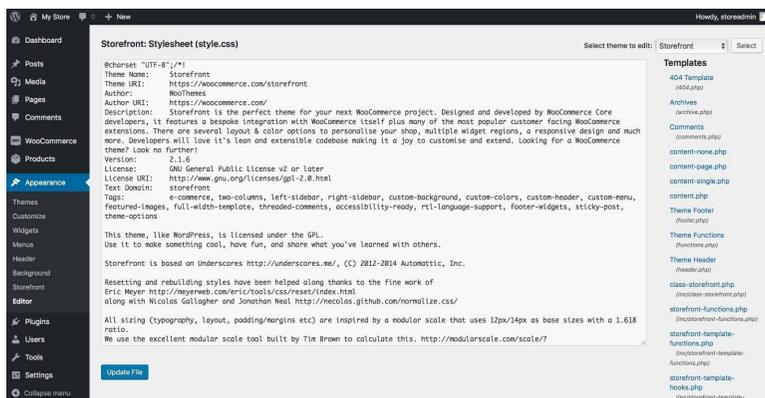
With a WordPress-powered WooCommerce store, you can easily edit the code of any part of your store

Or, with many eCommerce platforms, you can edit your store theme's actual code to make it work *just* like you want—either with a hand-crafted theme or by changing the layout or design of an existing theme. Here's documentation on how to do that in many of these platforms:

→ *Learn how to code and customize a theme in Selz[511], Storenvy[512], Jimdo[513], Wix[514], Squarespace[515], Weebly[516], Big Cartel[517], Shopify[518],*

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[508]http://www.templatemonster.com/ecommerce-templates.php

[509]https://www.pixelunion.net/pixel-union-themes/

[510]https://themefiend.com

[511]https://selz.com/support/developer/themes/

[512]https://support.storenvy.com/customer/portal/articles/1090698-how-do-i-edit-the-html-and-css-for-my-store-

[513]http://support.jimdo.com/design/custom-template/

[514]https://www.wix.com/support/html5/article/creating-a-wix-site-from-a-blank-template

[515]http://developers.squarespace.com

[516]http://customthemes.weebly.com

[517]https://help.bigcartel.com/developers/themes/

[518]https://help.shopify.com/themes

Volusion[519], *BigCommerce*[520], *3dcart*[521], *Ecwid*[522], *WooCommerce*[523], *Magento*[524], *X-Cart*[525], *and PrestaShop*[526].

> **Tip**: Need a coding crash-course? Here are the basics of HTML and CSS coding[527]—enough to help you tweak an existing site theme, at least.

Get Help with Your eCommerce Platform
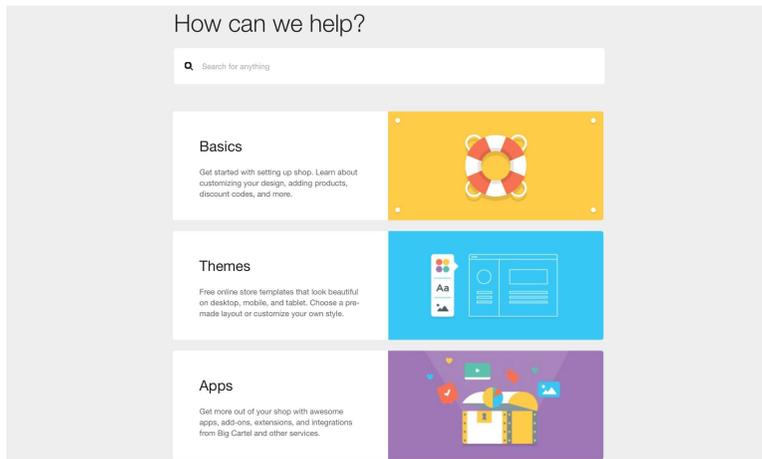
Have a problem? That's what your eCommerce platform's documentation is for (Big Cartel's documentation pictured).

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[519]https://support.volusion.com/hc/en-us/articles/208233818-Basic-Template-Customization

[520]https://developer.bigcommerce.com/themes/

[521]http://www.3dcart.com/Guide/dev_docs.html

[522]https://support.ecwid.com/hc/en-us/articles/207807915-How-to-change-Ecwid-design#owntheme

[523]https://docs.woocommerce.com/document/template-structure/

[524]http://devdocs.magento.com/guides/v2.1/frontend-dev-guide/bk-frontend-dev-guide.html

[525]http://devs.x-cart.com/en/design_changes/basic_guide_to_theme_creation.html

[526]http://doc.prestashop.com/display/PS16/Designer+Guide

[527]https://zapier.com/blog/learn-html-css/

You're going to get stuck. It happens to the best of us. One of these days, you'll need to add custom fields to your product listings or offer a discount on one product variant or add an extra shipping option, and you'll need help.

That's what your eCommerce platform's documentation is for. It lists the ins-and-outs of your store, with hidden tips for everything you want to do. And if you need more help, that's typically where you can reach out to the platform's support team and get hands-on guidance.

For your reference when you need it, here's the documentation for your platform:

→ *Get help and support with documentation and knowledge bases for Gumroad[528], Selz[529], Storenvy[530], Jimdo[531], Wix[532], Squarespace[533], Weebly[534], Big Cartel[535], Shopify[536], Volusion[537], BigCommerce[538], 3dcart[539], SendOwl[540], Ecwid[541], E-junkie[542], WooCommerce[543], Magento[544], X-Cart[545], PrestaShop[546], and FoxyCart[547].*

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[528] http://help.gumroad.com

[529] https://selz.com/support/

[530] https://support.storenvy.com

[531] http://support.jimdo.com/store/

[532] https://www.wix.com/support/html5/wix-stores/setting-up-your-store

[533] https://support.squarespace.com/hc/en-us

[534] https://hc.weebly.com/hc/en-us/categories/203663687-eCommerce

[535] https://help.bigcartel.com

[536] https://help.shopify.com

[537] https://support.volusion.com/hc/en-us

[538] https://support.bigcommerce.com

[539] https://support.3dcart.com/Knowledgebase/List

[540] https://help.sendowl.com/help

[541] https://support.ecwid.com/hc/en-us

[542] http://www.e-junkie.com/ej/help.htm

[543] https://docs.woocommerce.com

[544] http://docs.magento.com/m2/ee/user_guide/getting-started.html?_ga=1.55301355.1191484653.1469590873

[545] http://kb.x-cart.com/en/index.html

[546] https://www.prestashop.com/en/documentation

[547] https://wiki.foxycart.com

> **Tip**: Need more help? Google is your friend—often someone else has had the same problem, and already listed the answer online. You also might find help with more technical problems with a community like StackOverflow[548] or Reddit's eCommerce[549] subreddit.

Keep the Focus on Your Customers

You didn't start a store just so you could use an eCommerce platform every day. You started it, perhaps, for a shot at running your own business, a way to turn your dreams into reality, and an opportunity to gain your own customers. That's where the focus should stay.

It's easy to get wrapped up in the software, trying to optimize everything and add the latest bells-and-whistles. That can be good to a point—but not if it's taking you away from actually running your business.

So keep the focus on the daily tasks of managing orders, supporting customers, and marketing your products. Every so often, check the more advanced features and integrations to see how they can help—and feel free to update your store's design when you have time. But only so often. It's your customers and products that matter most.

Never forget that. It's what makes your store more than just a set of products.

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[548]http://stackoverflow.com/questions/tagged/e-commerce
[549]https://www.reddit.com/r/ecommerce/

Written by Matthew Guay[550].

Image Credits: Food box photo by U.S. Department of Agriculture[551] via Flickr[552]. Open sign from MIKI Yoshihito[553] via Flickr[554].

More Zapier Resources

Now that you've got an online store and have the tools and workflows you need to keep things going, what's next?

You'll likely want a bit of a break for software. Understandable. With everything running smoothly, it's worth taking a step back and focusing on your business.

When you've got a second wind and want to dive back in, here are some extra eBooks from Zapier to help you take your business to the next level:

- **The Ultimate Guide to Project Management**[555] can help you plan your work and launch your next big thing. Perhaps you want to open *another* store, or are designing a new product. The tips in this book will help you take that moonshot from idea to finished product while making sure nothing gets left to chance.
- **The Ultimate Guide to Customer Support**[556] will help you solve your customers' problemsâ€"sometimes before they even have them. With advice from a wide range of startups and support teams, you'll learn how to write documentation, handle common problems, and find the tools to lighten your support workload.

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[550]http://twitter.com/maguay
[551]https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/
[552]https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/7754786720/
[553]https://www.flickr.com/photos/mujitra/
[554]https://www.flickr.com/photos/mujitra/15185987370/
[555]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-project-management/
[556]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-customer-support/

- **The Ultimate Guide to Email Marketing Apps**[557] gives you the tools to market your products more efficiently. One of the best markets for you new products is your existing customersâ€"and email is the best way to reach them. You'll learn the best ways to do that in this book.

Have any questions about eCommerce apps and Zapier, or just want to chat? We'd love to help. Send us a message on Twitter @zapier[558], mention the book, and let us know what you need.

And hey: thanks for reading!

∼ The Zapier Team

If you enjoyed this book, we'd appreciate it if you'd take a moment to leave a review[559]. Thanks!

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[557]https://zapier.com/learn/ultimate-guide-to-email-marketing-apps/
[558]https://twitter.com/zapier
[559]https://zapier.com/blog/ecommerce-book-kindle/