

Ecommerce Options for Small Business: Reference Guide

3 WAYS TO SELL ONLINE

1. Existing site, add-on store
2. External marketplaces
3. Your store is your website

EXISTING SITE, ADD-ON STORE

- Add a lightweight, add-on ecommerce solution to an existing information-based website
- For selling simple items with few options
- For a WordPress website, use a plug-in for ecommerce, such as WooCommerce, Easy Digital Downloads, Ecwid
- For a Squarespace website, add Squarespace Commerce
- Add a “Buy Now” button to any website, using PayPal or Stripe
- Pros for this option: great way to try selling online, keeps people on your site
- Cons for this option: hard to scale, might need professional help to set up

EXTERNAL MARKETPLACES

- Online marketplaces, such as Etsy (for handmade goods) and Amazon, allow you to sell products without needing to set up your own online store
- Great for testing the market and product discovery (they market to potential customers on your behalf)
- Pros for this option: easy to set up, people can discover you through the marketplace
- Cons for this option: you pay a cut of sales (or a fee) to the marketplace, you don't control the marketplace and their strategy, could disappear or change in the future

YOUR STORE IS YOUR WEBSITE

- Website is a store first and foremost, with the addition of information pages
- Best option for selling multiple products or products with variants (for example, T-shirts in different styles, colours, and sizes)
- Can be custom coded for you, or use an ecommerce website builder such as: BigCommerce, Magento or Shopify
- Pros for this option: features and functionality - you can add many products and product variants, scalability - it can grow with your business
- Cons for this option: takes time and effort, lots of sections to customize (from the product pages all the way to the shipping confirmation messages)

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PAYMENT GATEWAYS AND FEES

- A payment gateway is the financial link between you and your customer (digitally connects their form of payment to your bank account)
- Authorizes the financial transaction for you, acting as a gateway
- For add-on ecommerce: you pick a payment gateway from the options presented (such as Stripe)
- For online marketplaces, such as Amazon or Etsy: you don't have a choice, they process financial transactions and send you money
- For ecommerce websites: you pick a payment gateway, some offer their own (such as Shopify's Shop Pay)
- Every payment gateway will have fees (on top of the credit card transaction fee)
- Some are a per-transaction cost, some are monthly costs, some are a combo
- Be realistic about the volume of sales you anticipate - you can change your plan later
- Customer service is part of what you're paying for - if you think you're going to need help, pick a payment gateway that has a lot of support
- Ask for a discount

INTEGRATIONS FOR ONLINE STORES

- Integration is the term for getting two (or more) different digital systems to talk to each other and share information
- Integrations are more likely to exist between "big name" digital solutions, such as WordPress, Shopify, Quickbooks, Xero, Mailchimp, Canada Post, FedEx, UPS
- If you know you need an integration (such as connecting your online store to your accounting software), check to see if one exists before building your store
- If you need to integrate online sales with offline sales, make sure your POS (point of sale system) can talk with your online store

SECURITY

- Your site must be secure with HTTPS (the S stands for "secure")
- Website needs a security certificate (SSL or other)
- Choose a good website host who prioritizes security
- WordPress websites must be kept up to date (core WordPress software, theme and plugins)
- Stay PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) compliant
- Do not store customer data
- Have a Terms & Conditions and Privacy Policy page
- Consider DoS (denial of service) protection by using a tool such as Cloudflare
- Make regular backups