Small Business Digital Marketing Guide

HOW TO GET YOUR STORE ONLINE IN 9 STEPS.

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a publication of

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If you're a small-business owner, being forced to close your brick-and-mortar store during the COVID-19 pandemic might have felt like the end of your livelihood. But while it's easy to mourn the loss of cash generated by walk-in sales, these challenging times are the perfect opportunity to upgrade your business plan by adding to or enhancing its e-commerce capabilities.

There are numerous benefits to setting up your retail business to accommodate customers who are doing the majority of their shopping online during the quarantine economy. **Online sales have increased 49%** since the start of the pandemic, and it looks like this trend will continue.

With many non-essential US retail stores closed or operating at a limited capacity, businesses with the greatest chance of survival will likely be the ones that capitalize on their ability to capture virtual orders.

This guide covers how to update your operations, digital strategy, and communication so you can keep doing business and thrive in 2021 and beyond.

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Why E-Commerce? Why Now?

Why E-Commerce? Why Now?

E-commerce will be the largest retail channel in the world in just two years, according to projections.

People aren't just shopping online. E-commerce statistics show that consumers are spending more money in online stores than physical stores for the first time in history. It's forecasted that consumers worldwide will spend up to $4.8 trillion online in 2023.

5 STATISTICS YOU NEED TO KNOW

1. Over 204 million people ages 14 and older made an online purchase in 2020, with more than 5 million users buying online for the first time this year.

2. Estimates say that consumers will make 95% of purchases online by 2040.

3. 72% of e-commerce will take place on a mobile device by 2021.

4. 87% of shoppers today use e-commerce reviews to decide whether to buy, and 77% of those shoppers buy online.

5. 31% of US internet users ages 16 to 64 say they will shop online more after the pandemic ends, and 30% expect to visit brick-and-mortar stores less.
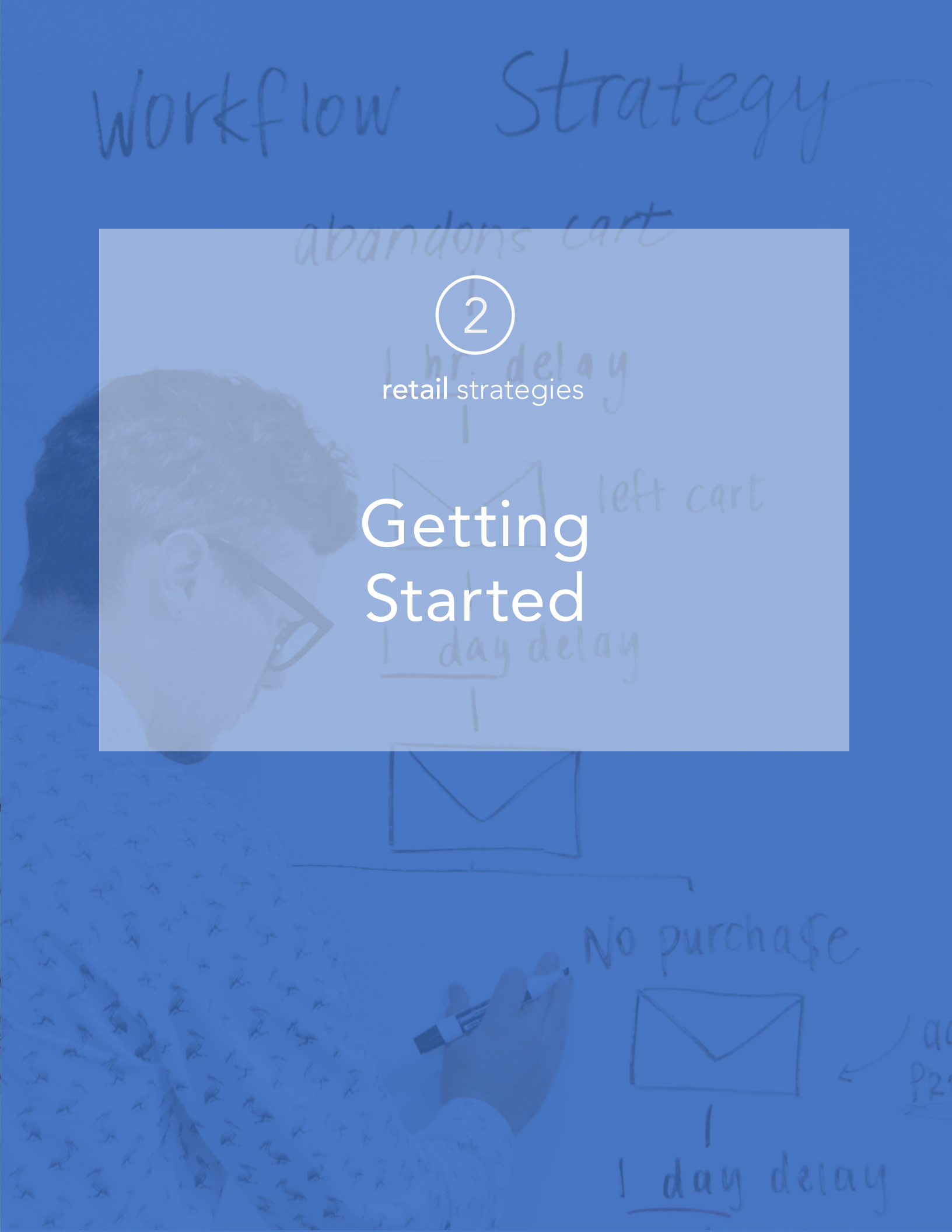
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Getting Started

Domain Name Tools

The first step for most online stores is finding the right domain name. A good domain name should support your brand, be as short as possible, and be easy to remember. You have lots of options when it comes to picking a domain name — you can use your existing business website domain, a variation of that domain, or start with something completely new.

www.yourdomain.com

TIP:
Domainr is a tool that helps you find the perfect domain name by exploring the entire domain name space, including domains beyond .com, .net, and .org.

E-commerce Platforms

When e-commerce was in its infancy, online retailers had to use many different services to piece together their digital shopping experience, including product gallery tools, shopping carts, payment processors, and more. Today, there are many platforms that provide all of the elements that are important to have in your online store.

WOO COMMERCE

SQUARESPAC

Magento

Bigcommerc

shopify

TIP:
Shopify, one of the most popular and turnkey e-commerce platforms, has everything you need to sell online, on social media, or in person, providing a platform for online stores as well as retail point-of-sale systems. We'll detail how to set up your online presence in Shopify later in this guide.
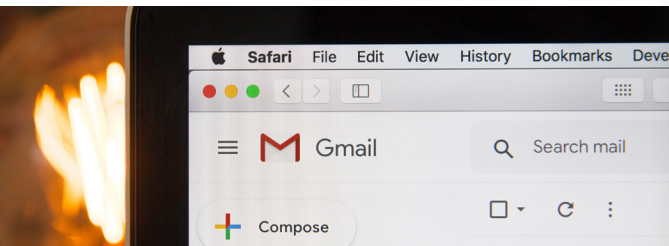
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Email Marketing

An important part of growing your business through e-commerce is having a way to communicate with your customers. This is where email marketing comes in. You need a platform that helps you build a database and send transactional email messages, customer service follow-ups, and special marketing promotions and notifications.

TIP:
MailChimp is a versatile tool for marketing automation for product follow-ups and other types of messaging that targets customers based on behavior, preferences, and previous sales.

Social Media Marketing

Social media is essential for all business, but particularly those that focus on selling online. You can certainly manually manage your social accounts through each separate platform, but it is much more efficient to use a social media marketing platform that allows you to view multiple channels and plan out posts and campaigns.

TIP:
Hootsuite, a social media management tool that helps you quickly find and schedule social content, then measure its impact, maximizes your time and allows you to adjust your efforts based on consumer feedback.

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Metrics and Analytics

All online businesses should be monitoring their metrics and analytics in order to improve their products and online stores, give their customers more of what they want, and gain an understanding of how customers are finding and navigating through their site.

TIP:
Google Analytics is one of the most reliable and user friendly digital analytics tool that measure your advertising ROI and performance of your web properties, as well as tracks your videos and social networking sites.

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How to Set-up Your Business on Shopify

How to Set-up Your Business on Shopify

The following steps will help you simplify setting up your business on popular e-commerce site Shopify.

STEP 1

1. Start a free trial of Shopify

If you haven't already, you'll need to start a free trial of Shopify. The 14-day trial should give you more than enough time to build an online store that's ready to launch if you follow this guide and keep in mind that you can continue to add products and improve your store after it goes live.

When you start your trial, you'll be prompted to enter a store name, which will become your default URL (e.g., storename.myshopify.com). You won't be able to change this, but you will be able to buy a custom domain (e.g., yourstore.com) later on, so don't worry about picking the perfect name right now.

STEP 2

2. Add your products

Adding products should be one of the first things you do, because your products are what you'll design the look and feel of your website around.
In your new Shopify store, go to **Products > Add** product to create your first product listing.

WRITE YOUR PRODUCT TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

Product pages are where customers go to learn about a product and decide whether or not to buy it. Details matter, and sharing the right information in the right way, from pricing to sizing, through text or visuals, can make all the difference. If you're not sure what to include, you can look at other online stores in your market for inspiration.

Your product title should make it clear what the product is. This is what customers will see as they browse your store and what will help them find what they're looking for in your catalog. Try to keep it short and use your product description or variants (more on those later) to surface other specific information or product options, such as colors or sizes.

Product descriptions describe and sell your product. They're also a common source of writer's block. The good news is you don't need to be a professional copywriter to write a compelling product description. You just need to:

- *Know who you're speaking to. Think about what your customer needs to know to feel confident buying your product and try to communicate it in your description.*

- *Highlight incentives. Do you offer a generous return policy or free shipping? Are your products eco-friendly? Consider what features, benefits, and offers really matter— and cut the fluff. Many stores mix text and icons to quickly communicate these selling points on their product pages.*

- *Anticipate common questions or objections. What might make a customer hesitate to buy? Are they afraid of buying the wrong size? Do they need to know what your products are made of in case they have allergies? Do they need to know that your products are ethically made?*

- *Make your text easy to scan. Make your descriptions easier to read with short paragraphs, bullet points, subheadings, bolded text, etc. Then ask yourself how quickly a visitor can pull out the information they need.*

- *Help customers see themselves using your product. Customers can't taste, feel, touch, or try on your products. Outside of product photos, you can bring your products to life by listing the materials you use, including a sizing chart, or sharing the story about how they're made—it all depends on your product.*

UPLOAD PRODUCT PHOTOS or other media

In the Media section of your product page, you can upload any visual media that helps you share richer details about your products: photos, GIFs, videos, or even 3D models.

Presentation makes all the difference. Help customers imagine owning your product. Help them see it in action or proudly displayed in their space. Here are a few points to remember:

- *Use high-quality photos that put your products in the best light. Avoid blurry or low-resolution images.*

- *Try to maintain the same aspect ratio (i.e. the ratio between the width and height) across your product photos so that all your photos appear the same size. This consistency creates a cleaner, more professional appearance for your store.*

- *If you're on a budget, most modern smartphones are capable of shooting high-quality product photos and you can use free photo editing tools to touch them up (like remove.bg, which lets you remove the background for free).*

- *After uploading an image, you can click on it to perform basic edits, such as cropping and resizing. You can also edit the Alt Text for accessibility to describe your photos to people who cannot see them.*

SET YOUR PRICE

Now it's time to set the listing price for your product. This is what customers will pay to buy your product.
Optionally, you can use the Compare at price field to communicate what the product would typically cost, especially in the case of a sale.

The Cost per item field is also optional. If you like, you can use it to track your profit margin for an individual product. On the Shopify plan or higher, this lets you track profit in your profit report.

While there are some exceptions, businesses that sell goods and services have to collect taxes each time someone orders from them, so we recommend checking the "charge tax on this product" box and configuring your tax settings later.

You can always revisit and adjust your prices based on what you learn after you start marketing. You may discover that customers are actually willing to pay more for your products or you may find creative ways to cut costs and increase the average value of every order you get.

ROUND-NECK T-SHIRT
$19 $10
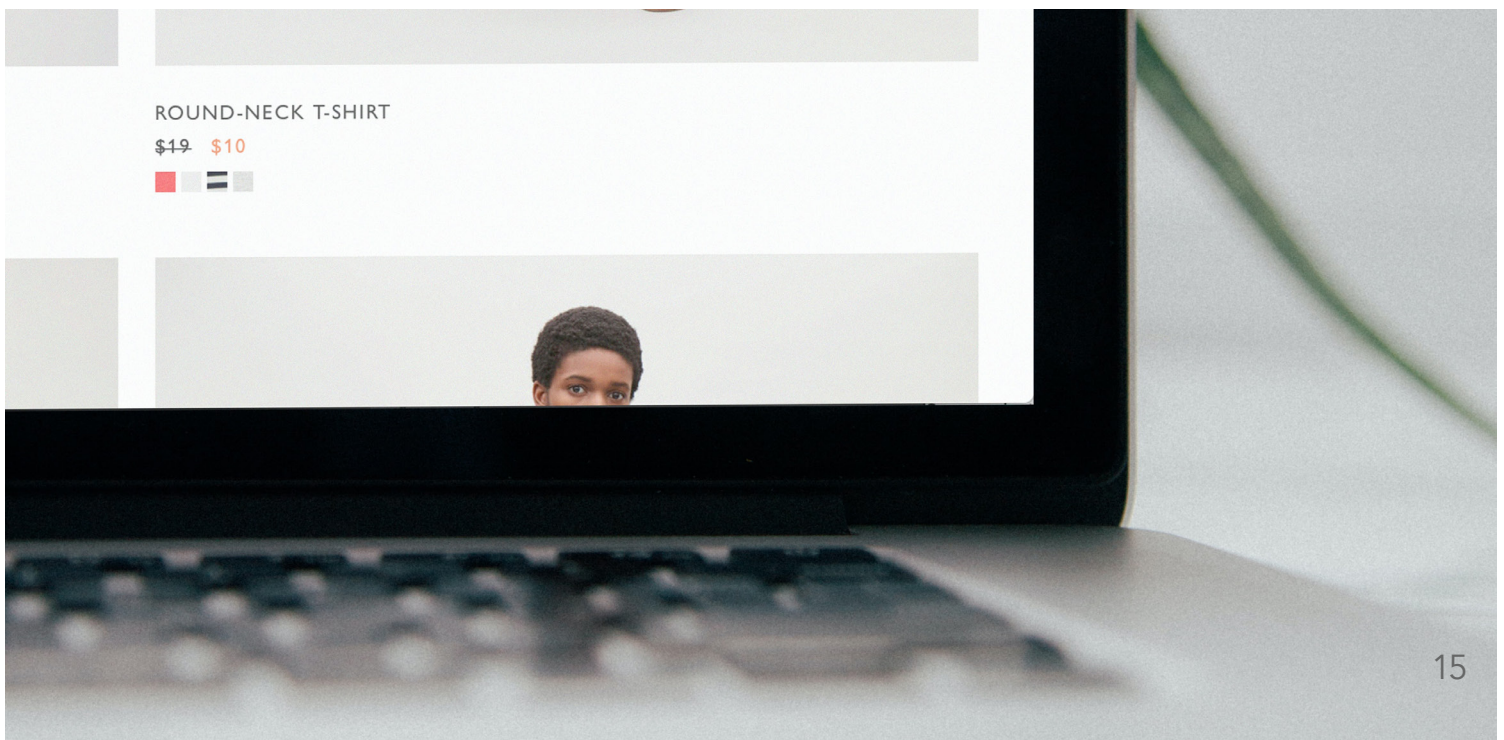
INVENTORY

If it's your first time selling online, you might see a few unfamiliar terms here, so we'll quickly run through them.

•   *SKU. A stock keeping unit is used to track and manage your inventory for specific products and variants. Create a consistent system using numbers or letters that makes it easy for you to identify what the exact item is at-a-glance.*

•   *Bar code. Bar codes (ISBN, UPC, GTIN, etc.) are typically used if you're reselling products or eventually want to add scannable bar codes to your items for easier inventory management. You can leave that blank if necessary.*

•   *Quantity. This is how much of a specific product you have on hand. If you have multiple locations holding inventory and have them set up in Shopify, they'll display here*

SHIPPING

In the shipping section, you'll enter details that will automatically calculate shipping rates and print the appropriate shipping labels for each order.
For most, you'll want to check the "This a physical product" box and enter the following information:

•   *Weight.*

•   *Customs information. This is important if you plan to sell internationally.*

Setting the actual shipping costs and options that you'll offer to your customers will come later on in this guide.

VARIANTS

If your product comes with different options, like sizes or colors, instead of adding each one as its own product, you can simply add them as variants of the same product. Each variant can have its own image, price, tracked inventory, and individual settings associated with it.

With variants, you can even add additional product options, for example, offering multiple colors that come in different sizes.

When you add variants to your product and hit save to refresh the page, the Media, Pricing, Inventory, and Shipping sections we covered above will need to be set for each specific variant.

If you're selling distinct variants of the same product, be sure to edit each variant with the appropriate product page information, (e.g. color, etc.)
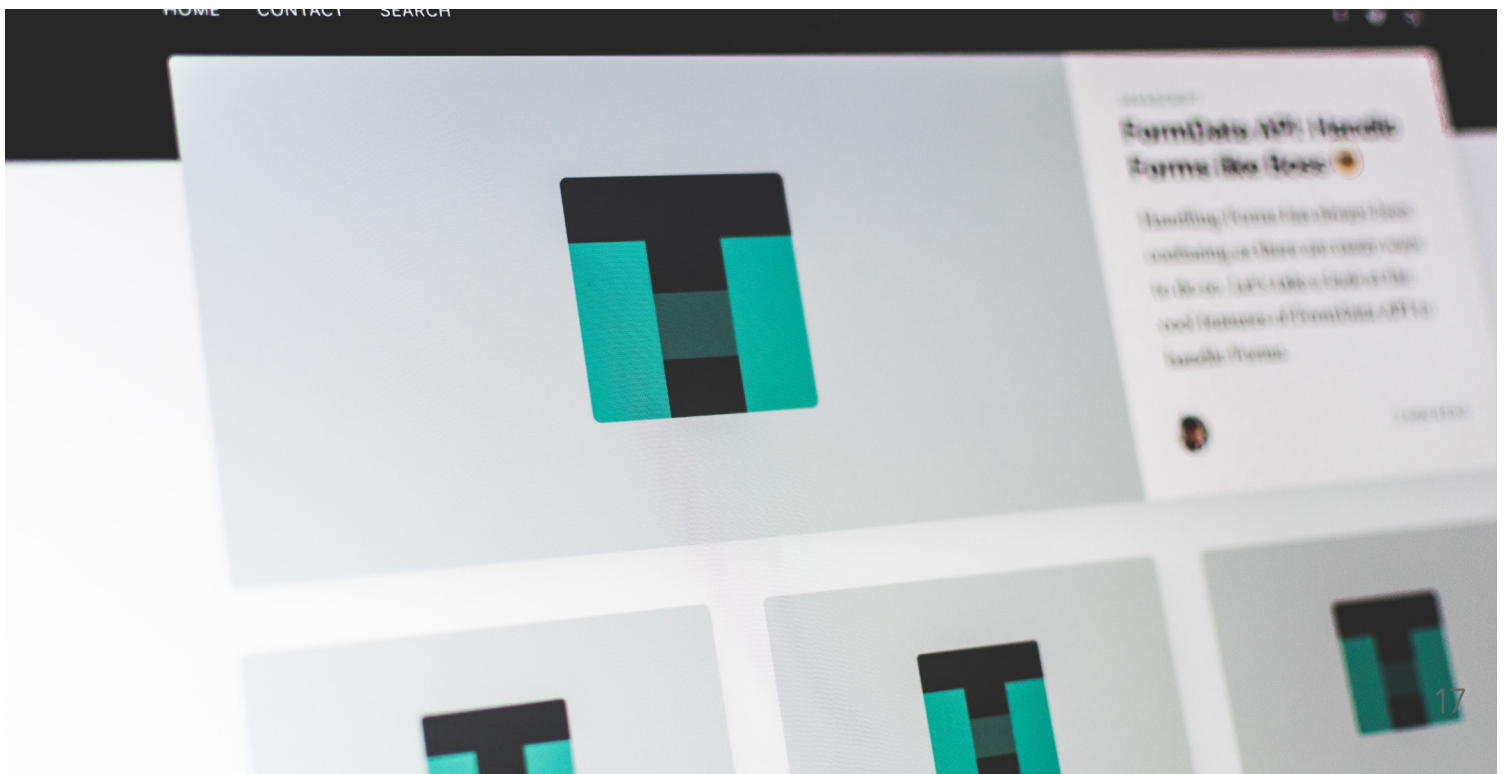
ORGANIZATION AND PRODUCT AVAILABILITY

In the Organization section, you can label your products to help group them together and make it easier to manage your store's product catalog, curate products for customers to shop, and apply rules or discounts to specific products. Here's what each label means:

- **Product availability:** *You can choose from a multitude of sales channels, like Facebook Shops or Amazon, to list your products on, which we'll go into later. For now, just make sure your product is available in the "Online store" or it will be hidden.*

- **Product type.** *A product category that you can use to identify certain products (e.g., t-shirt). Each product can have only one product type.*

- **Vendor.** *This is the manufacturer, wholesaler, or third-party vendor for the product. You can filter your product list by vendor, which can speed up ordering inventory.*

- **Tags.** *Tags are keywords that you can associate with your product. You can add multiple tags to a product to help customers find it through your online store's search bar. You can also use tags to automate actions in your store, like adding a product with a specific tag to a specific collection.*

- **Collections**. *Collections are important. They let you organize and curate your products for specific purposes and audiences. For example, an apparel brand could create a collection based on products for women, products for men, a summer sale, or new arrivals. The same product can be included in multiple collections.*

SEARCH ENGINE LISTING PREVIEW

The search engine listing preview is where you can customize how a page appears in search engine results. It's also where you can improve the discoverability of your products through search engines like Google.
If you know what keywords your target customer is using to search for products like yours, you can work them into this section to increase your odds of showing up in search engine results over time.

We recommend Uersuggest, a free keyword research tool, to gauge how often people search for keywords related to your products.

We'll go into more depth about SEO later, but here are some quick tips for optimizing this section in the meantime:

Page title. Write your page title so that it includes your target keywords while still being short and descriptive enough to click on. Aim for under 60 characters if you can so it doesn't get cut off in search results.

Description. Use this space to surface any compelling information that might persuade searchers to click through when they see a link to your product in search results or on social media. Try to keep it short and sweet while expanding on the information presented in your page title.

URL and handle. Keep this simple, unique, and meaningful for people who are using search engines to find your product.

Once you're done, you can hit Save and preview your product page to see what it looks like. You can change the little details, like colors and fonts, later on when you start customizing your store.

You can repeat this for each product you want to add to your store, while keeping in mind that you don't need to add all your products in order to launch.

ORGANIZING YOUR PRODUCTS INTO COLLECTIONS

Now that you have at least a few individual products listed, you can start organizing them into collections under **Product > Collections** in Shopify.

Collections can be created to curate products to target a specific audience (e.g., products for children), a theme (e.g., bestsellers), or product category (e.g., accessories). You can decide if you want to manually add products to certain collections or automate what gets included/excluded based on price, Tags, or other conditions.

Collections serve a variety of purposes, such as:

• *Pulling certain products that you want to display in a section on your homepage*

• *Linking to Collections of products in your navigation or on your homepage to help different audiences quickly navigate your catalog*

• *Curating items you want to put on sale (you can apply discounts to specific Collection of products)*

You should fill out the Collection title and description based on how you want to greet visitors when they land on this Collection page. The Search Engine Preview can be filled out using the same best practices you followed for the product pages. You can also set a Collection image, which will be pulled to represent your Collection when we get into customizing the look and feel of your online store.

STEP 3

3. Create key pages for your online store

So far, we've focused on products. But your online store needs to do more than just have products to purchase. It needs to help shoppers understand your business, give them reasons to trust you, and make other essential details available to customers who are looking for them.

You can create most of these pages under **Online Store > Pages**.
You don't need to have all your pages ready for launch, but some of the most helpful ones to create include:

1.   **Contact page.** This page gives customers clear ways to reach you if they have questions or points them to a place to find answers, such as an FAQ page.

2.   **About page.** An About page connects personally with customers, explains your business model, and/or shares the reason you started your business. A persuasive About page can go a long way in earning trust for new online stores.

3.   **FAQ page.** A frequently asked questions page helps alleviate some of the more common customer support inquiries.

4.   **Policy pages.** There are certain legal pages customers expect and that can help protect you in case of disputes, such as your return policy and privacy policy, that you can set up under **Settings > Legal**.

ABOUT PAGE

About pages are a great way to embrace the "small" in small business and earn trust as a new store.

You can have a video introducing yourself as a founder, links to awards and press mentions, images that explain your supply chain, or include anything that helps this page tell your customers who you are and what you're about.

Just like you did for your products, you should also customize the Search engine listing preview section of your pages based on what you want the URL to be and how you want the page to appear in search engine results.

CONTACT PAGE

Your Contact page is what customers will look for to ask a question or get support.

Most Shopify themes let you create one easily. Simply create a new page, go to the Template section on the right side, and choose the Contact template. This should add a form to your page. You can then write some instructions to help customers get in touch or even link out to other pages, like an FAQ, to help shoppers troubleshoot their own problems first.

POLICY PAGES

Policy pages are standard practice for online businesses. They give your customers a place to understand how you conduct your business and what to expect from you. They also help protect you in case of a customer dispute. Under **Settings > Legal** in Shopify, you'll be able to generate templates that you can customize according to your business and local laws:

- **Return policy.** What's your policy regarding returns and exchanges? How long do customers have to initiate a return? What condition does the product need to be in? A generous return policy can help customers buy from you with confidence.

- **Privacy policy.** A privacy policy describes how you collect information about your customers.

- **Terms of service.** Your terms of service policy is an agreement between you and your customers outlining how you will operate and what rights you reserve.

- **Shipping policy**. A shipping policy helps you set customer expectations around shipping costs, manufacturing times, and delivery speeds for the regions you ship to.
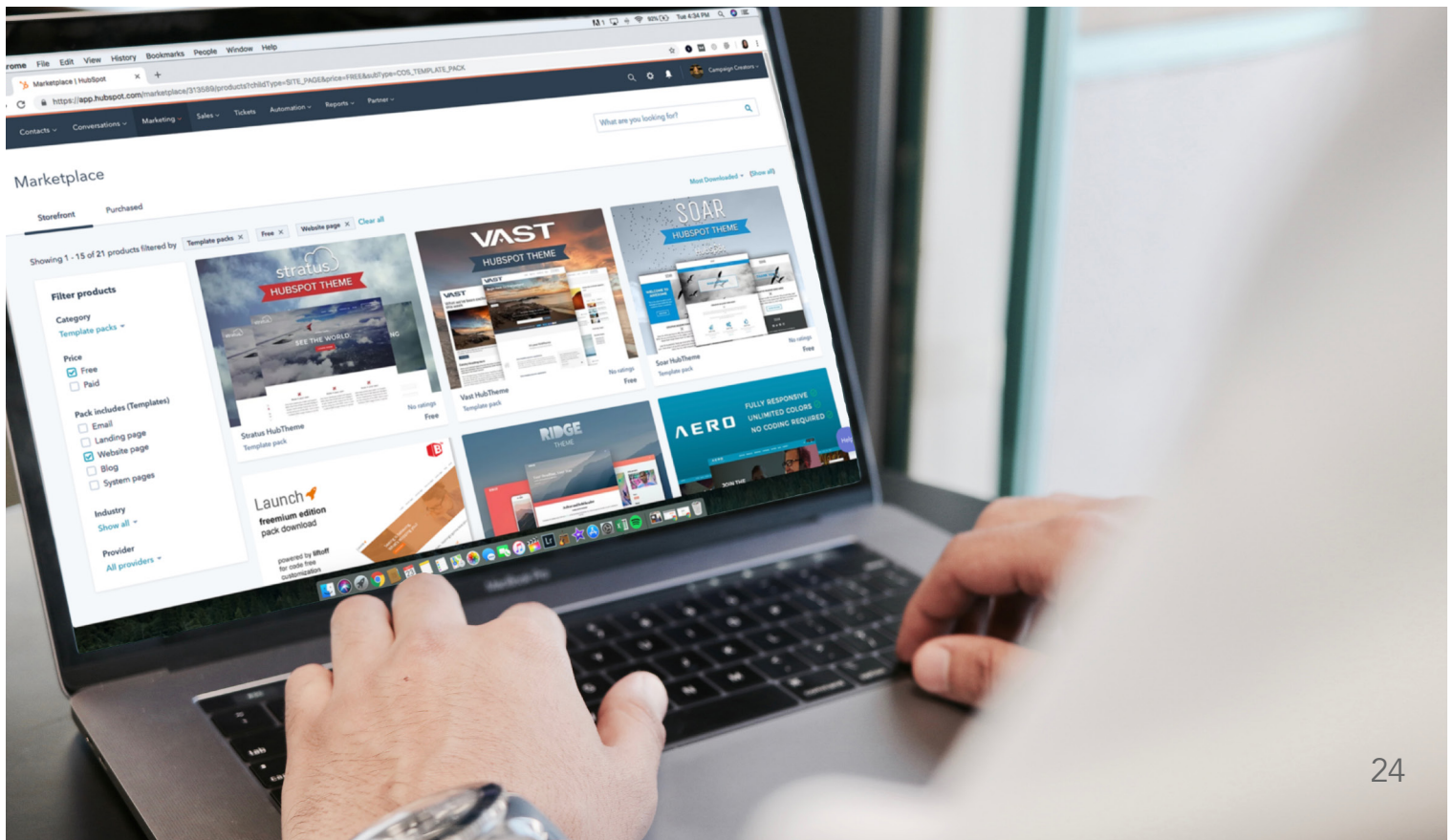
STEP 4

4. Customize your online store

Now that we've got some products in our store and some pages ready to go, it's time to head over to **Online Store > Themes** in Shopify and start thinking about what we want our website to look like.

CHOOSE A THEME

The first step is to choose a theme: a template you install in your store that you can use as a starting point to design your website. The Shopify Theme Store is home to both free and paid themes, each with its own set of styles and features.

Some themes were made for larger product catalogs, while others are for single-product businesses. Others are made for certain industries or types of businesses, such as the Express theme for restaurants.

Here are some key points to consider when choosing the perfect theme:

• Each theme comes with multiple styles, so be sure to shop around for a theme and style based on how large your product catalog will be and the kind of aesthetic you want for your store.

• Consider whether the theme you're looking at has any built-in features you need, like a search bar that auto-completes queries or a section that displays press mentions. Keep in mind that you can also find free and paid Shopify apps that add additional functionality to your store.

• Don't pick a theme based on colors or fonts. These are all things you can customize later. You can even make your theme truly unique by hiring a Shopify Expert to customize it for you.

• You can try out a paid theme before you purchase it for a one-time fee.
Above all, keep in mind that you are not stuck with the theme you pick. If you change your mind later, you can preview other themes, install them in your current store, and customize them without having to recreate your products or pages.
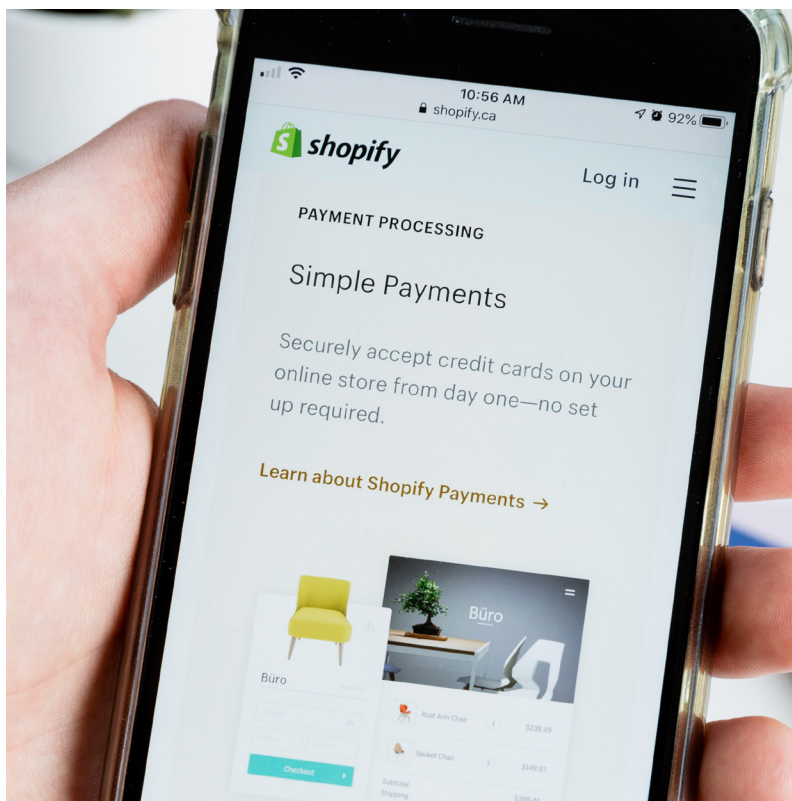
DESIGN YOUR HOMEPAGE

Each theme is made up of sections that you can rearrange, add, remove, or temporarily hide. Sections can help you decide on the presentation of your store's homepage and try out different layouts.

When determining your homepage design, think about the goals a homepage needs to accomplish and determine how they apply to your specific business:

- *Prioritize first-time visitors and help them quickly understand what your business is and what you sell.*

- *Accommodate returning visitors and make it easy for them to navigate to the products and pages they're looking for.*

- *Try to build interest in your products and trust in your business with every scroll.*

- *Create clear paths for your visitors to take based on their intent to purchase. You might highlight an About Us page for people who want to learn more about your business, or your various Collections to let visitors self-select the products they're interested in.*

Design your homepage with the assumption that many of your visitors will be browsing it on their mobile devices.

You will revisit and rework your homepage over time. Don't let the pursuit of perfection keep you from moving forward with your launch.

CUSTOMIZE YOUR NAVIGATION MENUS

The Header section is where you'll make changes to the topmost area of your online store, which includes your navigation menu, cart, and logo.

We'll focus mostly on creating a clear navigation menu, as this is how people will find their way around your website.

There are three main forms of navigation you can set up in the header section:

- *Main navigation. This is the top menu where you can prioritize the main navigation paths you want to offer customers. You can create submenus (i.e., dropdown menus) under each item to avoid cluttering it.*

- *Footer navigation. This is where you keep links to non-essential pages that might distract new visitors but still need to be available for those who need to find them. Most online shoppers will know to look here for information like your return policy or contact page.*

- *Search. You can enable the search bar in the header to help visitors directly navigate to what they're looking for. This is especially useful if you have a large catalog of products and many pages on your website.*

You don't want to overwhelm people with too many options from the get-go. Instead, you can organize your navigation to prioritize the actions you want visitors to take—with a focus on shopping, of course.

One menu item can have multiple dropdown levels to gradually feed visitors more options based on what they're looking for. For example, you can group multiple Collections under one menu item focused on products for women—that way you don't immediately overwhelm men who shop with you with options that aren't for them.

SET YOUR COLORS, TYPOGRAPHY, AND OTHER THEME SETTINGS

Colors and typography play a big role in your online store's visual identity. Under the Theme Settings tab in the online store editor, you'll be able to customize the look and feel of your overall online store, including colors and typography.

Even if you're not a designer, you can still pick font and color pairings you feel good about using the following tips

For colors

- Consider the psychology of color and how different colors make people feel (e.g., red makes people feel hungry, yellow suggests safety, and purple can have a royal quality to it).
- Use contrast to highlight important features of your homepage, such as buttons.
- Use a tool like Coolors to cycle through different color palettes to find colors you like and their associated hex code.
- Don't be afraid to go with your gut or just keep it simple if you're in doubt (even if it's just a simple black and white color scheme).

Typography

- Try to pick two fonts (a maximum of three) to use across your store.
- Use a tool like FontJoy to experiment with different font pairings.
- Choose a body font that is easy to read (sans serif fonts like Helvetica are generally easier to scan on a screen).

CUSTOMIZE YOUR CHECKOUT

Under Theme Settings, you can also customize the look of your checkout. At the very least, it's a good idea to add your logo to your checkout to give it a branded feel.

If you need to, you can also customize how your checkout works by clicking through to your checkout settings (or going to **Settings > Checkout**).

Here's a quick rundown of the choices you can make regarding your checkout:

▶ • **Customer accounts.** You can choose whether you want customers to create an account at checkout. This can be useful if you're running a wholesale or members-only store. We'll be disabling it for our store since we don't want to introduce unnecessary friction to our checkout experience.

▶ • **Customer contact.** You can let customers choose how they want to be contacted by you after placing an order (email or SMS text messages). I'll select "Customers can only check out with email" for now to keep it simple and focus on building an email list I can market to.

▶ • **Form options.** Here you can decide whether extra information like a first name or company name is hidden, optional, or required at checkout. Since we don't need all this information to fulfill every order for Kinda Hot Sauce, I'm going to make most of them optional.

▶ • **Order processing.** You can find options to streamline the ordering process or add an additional confirmation step. To save customers some time, we'll use the customer's shipping address as the billing address by default and enable autocomplete for addresses.

▶ • **Email marketing.** You can build your email list as you build your customer list by letting customers sign up during checkout. Since email is a key pillar in many online marketing strategies, we'll make sure this is turned on so we can sell our hot sauce to potential and existing customers on our email list.

▶ • **Abandoned checkouts.** When a customer reaches your checkout and decides not to complete their purchase (it can happen for any number of reasons), you can set up an automated reminder email for these shoppers. We'll set up our automated email to go out 10 hours after someone abandons their checkout, while our store is still fresh in their minds and they may have more time to reconsider their purchase.

When in doubt, prioritize choices that reduce the friction of checking out for the majority of your customers.

STEP 5

5. Set up shipping

Shipping can be one of the most complex considerations involved in running an ecommerce business. Between product weights, packaging costs, shipping destinations, carrier rates, and your potential profit per order, there are a lot of variables to juggle.

Luckily, we can boil it down to a few main approaches, which you can even blend together depending on the unique needs of your business, to find a shipping strategy that works for you:

- **Offer free shipping.** Free shipping can be an effective incentive for customers to shop with you, whether it's applied to certain products, order amounts (e.g., if they spend over $50), or regions of the world. Keep in mind that you will need to factor this into the retail price of your products if you plan on absorbing the cost of shipping on behalf of your customers.

- **Charge real-time carrier rates.** Shopify integrates in real-time with various carriers like USPS and Canada Post to generate shipping options and live pricing. This allows your customers to choose the exact service and price they want. You can take advantage of discounted rates through Shopify Shipping.

- **Charge a flat rate**. Flat rate shipping works best when your products have similar sizes and weights, making actual shipping expenses easier to predict.

- **Offer local pickup/delivery.** You can also give local customers the option to pick up their online order at one of your locations, setting specific notification settings, pickup instructions, and other details for each location.

SETTING UP SHIPPING ZONES

You can implement your shipping strategy under **Settings > Shipping** in Shopify. Here, you'll be able to create shipping zones where you can set your rates for shipping to customers in certain countries.

SETTING CONDITIONAL SHIPPING RATES

Within the shipping zone we just created, we can use the Add rate button to create specific rates based on certain conditions. For example, we can offer free shipping based on the condition that an order reaches a certain value threshold. Or we can increase the shipping rate if the order exceeds a certain weight.

Generally, you can save time and money on shipping while making more per sale by encouraging customers to add more items to their order. So we'll use free shipping on orders over $30 (two bottles of hot sauce or the three-pack bundle) as an incentive for customers to spend more.

SETTING UP REAL-TIME CALCULATED SHIPPING RATES

Real-time shipping rates are based on the shipping details you entered when adding your products and package dimensions on the **Settings > Shipping** page. Customers can then choose their preferred service and rate at checkout.

You can also adjust these rates to include a handling fee to account for extra costs, like packaging or your time, on top of the courier service's rates.

STEP 6

6. Set up taxes

As a business that sells goods or services, you have to collect taxes to send to the government each time someone orders from your store (some exceptions apply, such as for digital goods in many jurisdictions).

Shopify will help you automatically handle most tax calculations using default sales tax rates around the world. Even so, it's a good idea to conduct some research or ask a tax professional to ensure you're charging the correct amount of sales tax.

You can override the default tax settings if there are specific requirements for your region, such as taxes for specific products or for shipping.

Go to **Settings > Taxes** in Shopify to set up your tax regions. Here you can edit the default rates if you like, or apply overrides if specific conditions apply in your region or to your products.

You'll be able to see how much tax you've collected under **Analytics > Reports.**
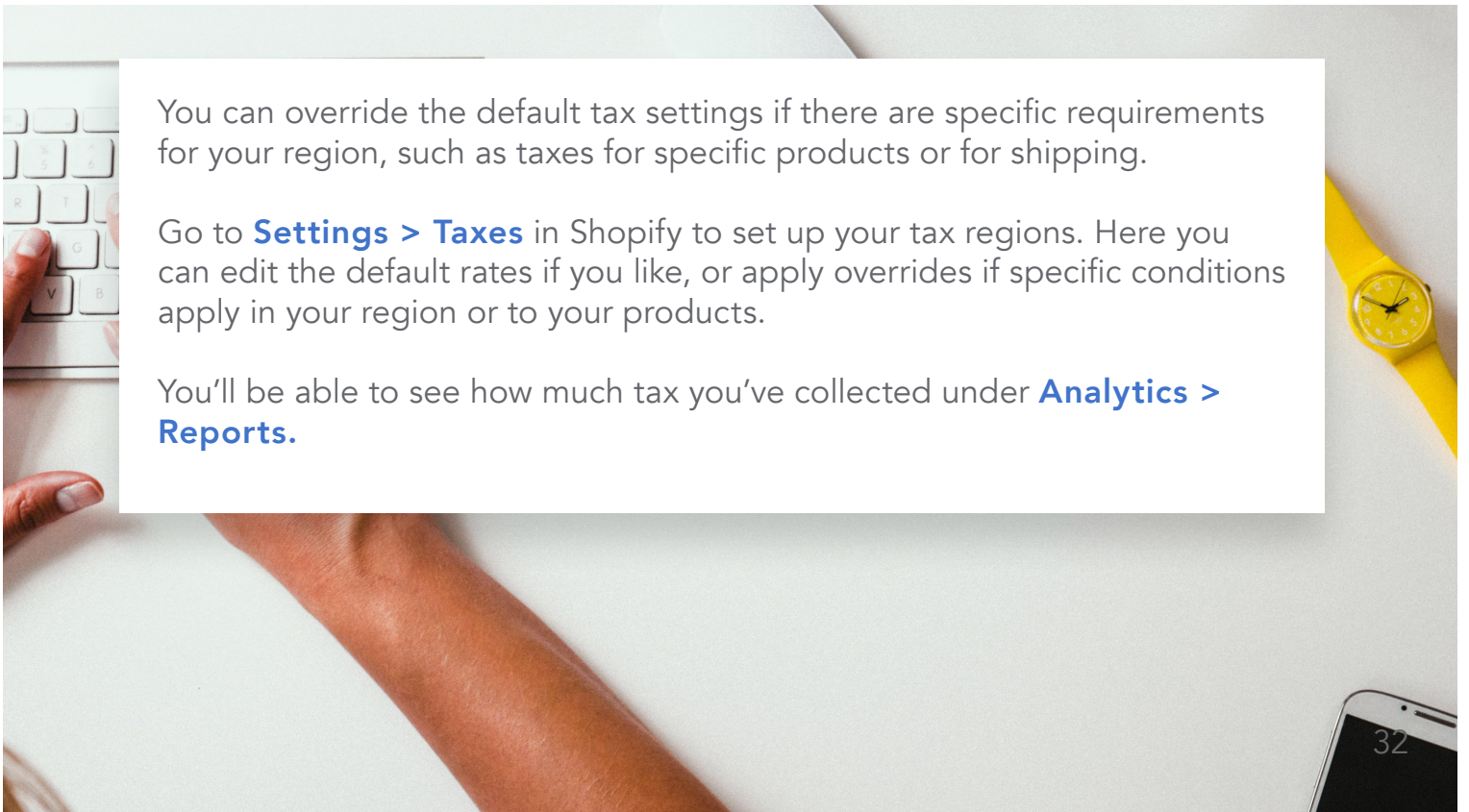
STEP 7

7. Setting up payment gateways and payouts

We're in the final stretch! Next up is deciding how your store will accept payments and how you as a store owner will get paid.

Go to **Settings > Payment**s to set up your payment provider. Shopify has made it easy to start accepting all major forms of payment with Shopify Payments. As long as you operate your business in one of the supported countries and aren't considered a prohibited business, you can activate Shopify Payments in just one click and pay 0% in extra transaction fees. You can also choose from over 100 third-party payment providers here or offer your customers additional payment options, such as PayPal.

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Shopify
STEP 7: Payment Gateways

In my case, I'll Complete Account Setup for Shopify Payments by entering my business and banking information. I can also Manage my settings for Shopify Payments and do things like:

▶ • Choose the payment options I want to offer, like different credit cards (e.g., Visa), and accelerated one-click payment options like Apple Pay and Shop Pay. Shop Pay is Shopify's one-click payment option that lets any customer of any store with Shop Pay enabled save their payment information for future purchases.

▶ • Sell in multiple currencies, which will automatically convert your prices into the customer's currency if you enable it.

▶ • Set your payout schedule. You can receive your payout daily, weekly, or monthly— it all depends on your preferences when it comes to your cash flow.

▶ • Toggle extra fraud prevention measures such as CVV and postal code verification to add an extra layer of security.

▶ • Customize how you appear on your customer's bank statements.

The currency you sell your products in can be set under **Settings > General**. I'm going to be selling in US dollars since it will be familiar for both US and Canadian customers.
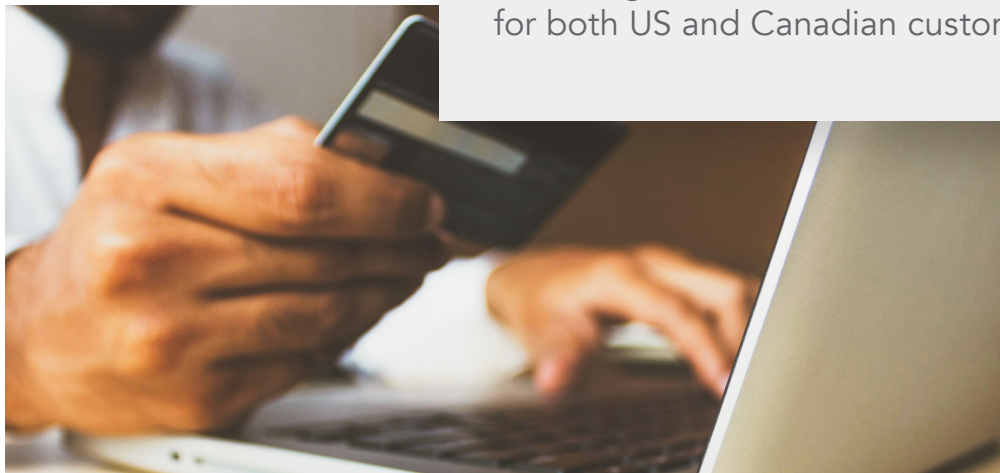
STEP 8

8. Prepare your store for launch

With all the work you've done so far, you could actually launch your store now if you wanted to. You would just disable the password protection under **Online Store > Preferences**, which is the final step to flip the open sign and let people in to start buying our products.

In fact, if you're in a rush to go live, you could skip some or all the following steps and revisit them later when you have time.

You should ensure that your store not only makes a strong first impression and offers a smooth customer experience at launch, but is also in a good place to start marketing.

That said, here are the final steps we'll be going over:

- *Adding a custom domain*

- *Installing relevant sales channels*

- *(Optional) Customizing your email/SMS notifications*

- *Setting up your store for marketing (tracking and analytics*

ADDING A CUSTOM DOMAIN

Buying a domain is like claiming land on the internet. That's why it's called a "web address."

A custom domain is a fully branded URL that replaces the default URL that was created based on the store name you chose at setup (e.g., you could buy yourstore.com to replace yourstore.myshopify.com as your public URL).

Under **Online Store > Domains**, you can buy your domain directly through Shopify in a matter of seconds, or you can transfer your domain from another registrar and connect it to your store.

EXAMPLE:

www.yourstore123.myshopify.com
can be become
www.yourstore.com
for a customized, branded experience.

INSTALLING RELEVANT SALES CHANNELS

One of the advantages of using Shopify to power your business is that your online store is just one of many sales channels you can use to sell your products. You can connect your products to additional sales channels to meet your customers where they are, while keeping track of your products, inventory, and reporting in the same Shopify account so you always know what's going on in your business.

While you don't need to connect all of them right away, it's good to have them in mind when you're ready to explore new ways to get your products in front of the right shoppers.

Not every sales channel will be relevant for your unique business, but here are some that are worth highlighting:

▶ • *Shopify POS.* Shopify's point-of-sale solution for accepting in-person payments and easily syncing physical retail sales with your online Shopify store and inventory.

▶ • **Social networks.** You can sell your products through a Facebook Shop on your Facebook page, product tags in your Instagram posts, Pinterest, and more.

▶ • **Marketplaces.** Many shoppers start their purchasing journey on marketplaces like Amazon or eBay.

▶ • **Google channel.** Google is the most popular search engine in the world. With the Google channel, you can run Google Shopping campaigns and list your products for free in the Shopping tab in Google search results.

▶ • **Buy button.** If you have an existing website or blog where you want to sell your products, you can install the Buy button sales channel to embed your products onto another webpage, allowing customers to purchase them and check out there. You can even create checkout links to send directly to a customer and have them jump straight to checkout.

You can quickly add sales channels by clicking the + button next to Sales channels or view our full list of sales channels in the Shopify App Store. Then, on your Product pages under Product Availability, you can choose which products are available on which sales channels.

CUSTOMIZING YOUR EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS
(optional)

Shopify comes with a series of ready-to-use automated email and SMS notifications to let customers know about order confirmations, status updates, and more.

You can edit these notifications under **Settings > Notifications.**

SETTING UP YOUR STORE FOR MARKETING

Marketing is different for every business, but regardless of your strategy, it's important to set up the right foundation as soon as you can so you can get the most out of your efforts as you drive traffic to your store.

In particular, I want to cover the fundamentals of nearly every e-commerce marketing strategy that are important to know for new store owners.

ANALYTICS

Shopify Reports (under **Analytics > Reports**) not only helps you monitor traffic and sales generated by your store across all your sales channels but also serves as a treasure trove of great insight for improving your business over time.

You can learn where your traffic and sales are coming from, your overall online store conversion rate, traffic and sales over time, and more.

FACEBOOK PIXEL

Have you ever visited an online store, considered a product, but left without buying it, only to see an ad for it a few days later? Or have you ever seen an ad for a product from a business you'd never heard of that seemed like it was made for you?

That's made possible through something called the Facebook pixel, an intelligent code that learns from how people interact with your brand and your website—from liking your social media posts to making a purchase—and makes it possible to personalize how you advertise to them over time.

The Facebook pixel learns from all the traffic you send to your online store, so if you plan on advertising on Facebook or Instagram at any point in the future, it's important to have your Facebook pixel set up. You can get clear instructions on how to set it up for your Shopify store by using the free Facebook Marketing app (note that this process will require you to also set up a Facebook page and ad account for your business).

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION (SEO)

Many shoppers turn to Google and other search engines as part of their purchasing journey, whether it's to find a product they saw or heard about through a friend or they're conducting some comparison shopping for a purchase.

Helping your online store's pages and your products appear in these search results can create passive streams of relevant traffic for free. However, it takes time to grow this source of traffic.

You can lay the right foundation through a practice called search engine optimization (SEO), which we were first introduced to when we set up our Products and Pages in our store.

Another area of your store where you'll want to keep SEO in mind is the Title and meta description fields, which can be found under **Settings > Preferences.**

Always remember that the job of a search engine is to show the most relevant results to the user, so you should try to prioritize keywords that are directly relevant to your business.
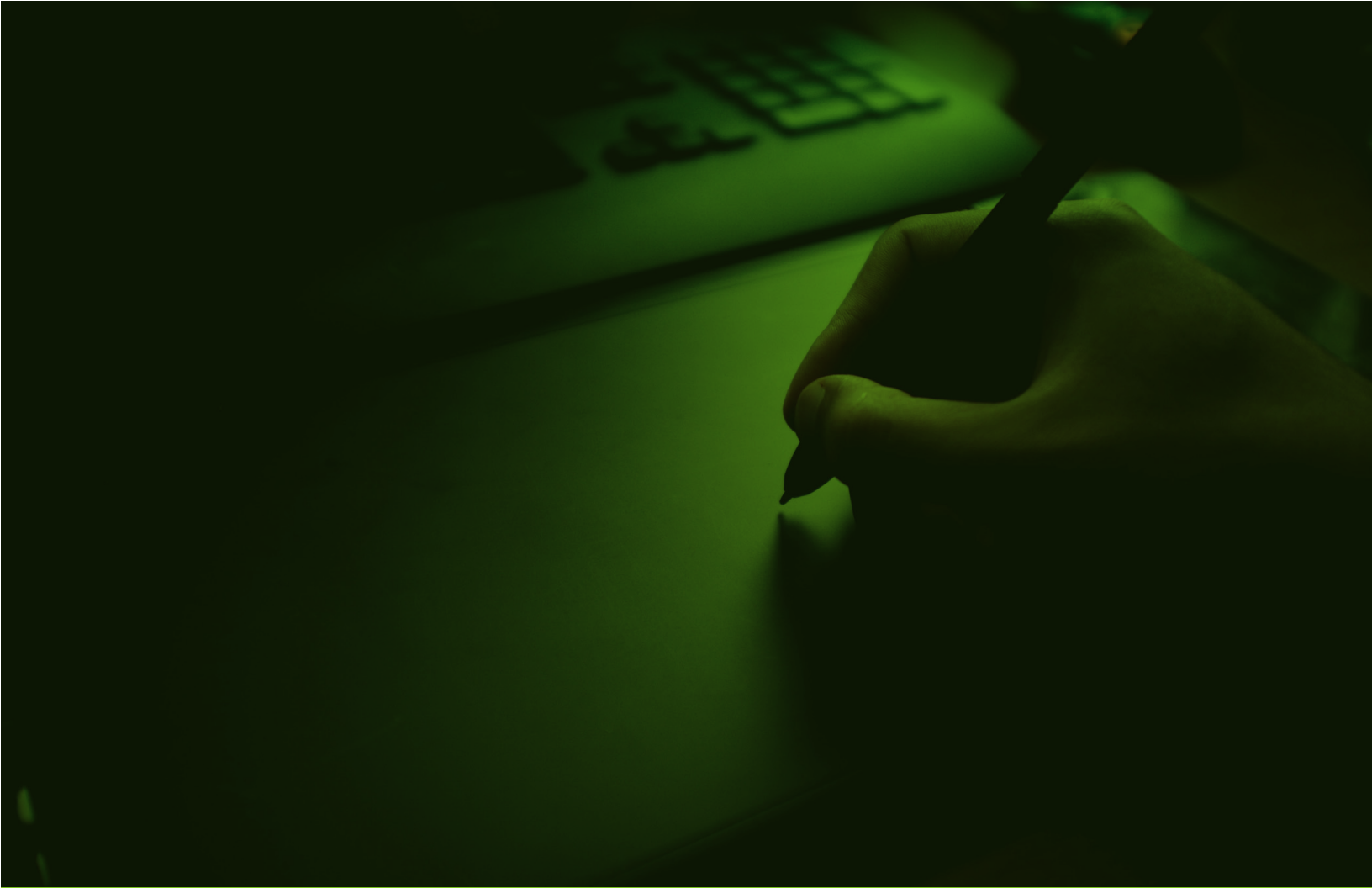
STEP 9

9. Launch your store

You're finally ready to launch! Is your store perfect? No. But you should feel good enough about it to bet time and money marketing in it and learning from the feedback you get to make it even better over time.

ou can remove your password page (under **Settings > Preferences**) and start telling the world you're open for business!

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