

CHAPTER FIVE: E-COMMERCE

Tips for selling online.

While you may or may not be currently selling items on your site, if you do decide to sell online, make sure to do thorough testing.

I've created a basic checklist for what to consider when setting up e-commerce for your site (this lists uses the WooCommerce plugin as its guideline - but many of the same items will pertain to other services). If you're creating something like an online course, you will likely have more checkpoints (check out my other guide, the [*Minima Guide to Getting Paid Online*](#) for more info about selling your services online).

Minima Recommends

WOOCOMMERCE

This robust plugin for selling physical and digital goods is free - but note that you often need to add on paid extensions to do specialized tasks. These paid extensions (typically billed in yearly fees) can help you do everything from modifying products to offering alternate payment options and dynamic shipping rates.

THE SHOP

Time to setup your shop! Not sure if you need to charge taxes (and at what rates)? Check with your accountant to make sure you set yourself properly from the start - and find out what you need to report (and how you need to pay your local, state and federal taxes).

SHOP SETTINGS	
	Set your base selling and shipping location (state, country, etc.)
	Set your currency options and units of measurement.
	Determine your shop display page and what products / categories to show by default.
	Determine if you want to send the user immediately to the cart after adding a product.
TAXES	
	Find out if you need to charge taxes. Determine if you need to add tax to all of your products (certain items, like digital downloads, may be excluded from taxation - check with your accountant to verify).
	Find out if you need to calculate taxes based on customer shipping address or your address.
	Add any unique tax classes / rates as necessary.
SHIPPING	
	Determine where you will ship (certain countries, states, etc.). Create shipping zones.
	Determine what shipping services to use (USPS, UPS, FEDEX, etc.).
	Determine if you're charging flat rate or weighted rate shipping.
	Determine if you're charging shipping per-item or per order.
	Decide if you want to show shipping calculator on the checkout page and if you want to hide shipping costs until address is entered.

GETTING PAID

On to the fun part. What service do you want to use to take payments and how do you want to get paid? Many people start out with PayPal - but there are a ton of options to take payment on your site. I personally love [Stripe.com](https://stripe.com) - a great, affordable option with simple pricing and quick payouts.

PAYMENT	
	Choose a payment processor (PayPal, Stripe, Authorize.net, etc.) and connect to site.
	Find out how you will get paid. (Direct deposit, wire transfer, etc.) and how often (weekly, monthly, at a certain payment threshold.)
	Determine how will you process refunds.
	<p>Determine if you need an SSL certificate for the site (some services like Stripe require this).</p> <p><i>(Not sure what this is? Ever seen the little padlock in the URL bar when you're shopping? This is a digital certificate that is installed on a web server - it serves to authenticate the identity of the website and encrypts the data that's being transmitted. Typically the certificate is a yearly fee of \$30-\$100+. You can usually get this from your web host (some like SiteGround even offer it for free for the first year).</i></p> <p>NOTE: If you're using SSL, your site URL prefix will need to be https:// instead of http://. You'll ideally want to set this up BEFORE you launch your site as it can be a bit tricky to migrate after your site is setup. Contact your webhost or designer for more details.</p>

PRODUCTS & THE PURCHASE PROCESS

Create and place your products on your site. Next, test all parts of the purchase process to insure that your customers have a smooth buying experience.

THE PRODUCTS	
	Create product categories.
	Create new product, add description, images, set product price and product category.
	Proofread product images and copy.
	Add height and weight dimensions to physical products.
	Add quantity available (inventory).
	<i>(Affiliate products only)</i> Set affiliate referral rate.
	Determine if you want to allow product reviews.
PURCHASE PROCESS	
	Test purchasing each product.
	Make certain that all “buy now” buttons work.
	Verify that payments are received.
	Verify that each transaction completes and you received a record of the transaction.
	Verify that buyers can access their account/purchase info (you may want to setup account registration on the settings page so buyers can login to access their records).
COUPONS / DISCOUNTS	
	Test coupons.
	Set expiration date for coupons.
	Set number of times coupon can be used.

DIGITAL VS. PHYSICAL PRODUCTS

Digital products are “virtual” - these are typically things like online courses, e-books and downloadable goods like mp3s. Physical products are tangible and need to be shipped or picked up.

Typically digital products are immediately accessible (either through an email link to download or through a membership site). Make sure to thoroughly test that your users can access their products. You’ll also want to clearly outline how long users will have access to download their materials.

DIGITAL PRODUCTS	
	Test that the buyer can access product upon receipt of payment.
	Determine if buyer will be able to download product multiple times.
	Determine how long will buyer have access to the product.
	Create FAQ on how to use/install digital products.
	Write instructions on how buyers will download products.
	Test downloads (.mp3s and videos play, .pdfs open)
	Test that product links are protected - (users aren’t able to share download link with others or download item when not logged in).

SUPPORT + COMMUNICATIONS

Doing a little bit of testing before you launch your product can save you tons of time (and headache) in the future. Make sure your customers get the correct receipt and are able to contact you for any support issues! Got affiliates promoting your site? Make sure they have all the info they need - from swipe copy and graphic banners to regular reports and payout info.

EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS	
	Make certain that buyer gets emailed receipt.
	Customize and brand email receipts.
	Determine if you want buyer to be able to opt-in to your newsletter at checkout.
	Set-up any follow-up email(s) asking about experience/purchase.
	Verify shop communications (receipts, shipping info, transactional info) are coming from an address associated with the domain (such as shop@yourdomain.com).
CUSTOMER SUPPORT	
	Set-up support / faq pages for products.
	Create return / refund policy.
	Set-up support email address.
	Set-up support contact form.
AFFILIATES	
	Set-up affiliate member area / login info.
	Create affiliate links.
	Create affiliate sales materials (banners/graphics).
	Add affiliate login link to site.
	Create affiliate policies (how often you'll pay out, how they can reference your materials/image, etc.)

WANT MORE?

[The Minima Guide to Launching Your Website](#) provides you with the insights, tools and checklists developed and refined over the last 10 years of launching and managing hundreds of websites.

This 81 page digital guidebook features 11 distinct chapters with content specific checklists to cover every feature of your site.

Whether you're working on a brand new site or renovating an old one, this guide is perfect for site owners, designers, developers, virtual assistants and anyone involved in running a website.

Want some fresh eyes on your site?

Want to talk to someone one-on-one about your site and what you want to achieve with your online business? Minima Designs offers website consultations complete with video site reviews and suggestions to improve your site.

YOUR NOTES



Acknowledgements

I am so grateful for everyone who helped me create, edit and review this guidebook.

Thank you to my husband Zane, for patient late nights, ongoing strategy development and being a constant source of encouragement. Thank you to my parents for connecting me with technology early in life and fixing my grammatical errors.

And thank you for taking the time to make your site better!