

How to start a Shopify store
The essential guide

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Disclaimer

As you go through this guide, you will encounter a few links to some free trials of software applications. These are affiliate links, meaning that if you buy through them we may get a commission. This is at no extra cost to you however and helps fund our work.

Introduction

Ecommerce used to be expensive, complicated and something that only large corporations could do.

But thanks to the explosion in availability of easy-to-use ecommerce platforms, that's no longer the case — starting a life-changing online store is something that can technically be done by anyone.

At Style Factory, we've reviewed a really wide range of these platforms. Of these, we've found Shopify to be arguably the best option for most, because it combines ease-of-use with powerful, scalable features.

This makes it a great option if you're a new merchant – the platform lets you build a store easily, but remains a highly capable solution should your business experience rapid growth.

So, in this short book, I'm going to show you how to start your own online store with Shopify. I'm going to do this in a friendly, jargon-free way — and help you get an online store live quickly and easily.

Ready to build your store? Let's dive in.



Chris Singleton Founder, Style Factory



1 Picking a niche

Before you start building your online store, you need to make sure there's demand for what you're going to sell on it.

This means identifying a profitable niche — one where there's a lot of interest in the kind of things you're selling, but not so much competition from other sellers that your products won't get noticed.

For example, instead of selling 'sports equipment,' you might sell yoga mats made from recycled materials. Rather than becoming a 'home decor' merchant, you might zero in on Scandinavian-style lighting for small apartments.

Why narrow things down like this? Well, in most cases, doing so means that...

- you'll face less competition from other sellers than you would in a broader, more saturated market
- you can engage in **more targeted** marketing for your store (reducing ad spend in the process)
- you may find it easier to access or develop a loyal customer
 base people are more likely to buy from (and recommend)
 a store that clearly caters to their specific needs.

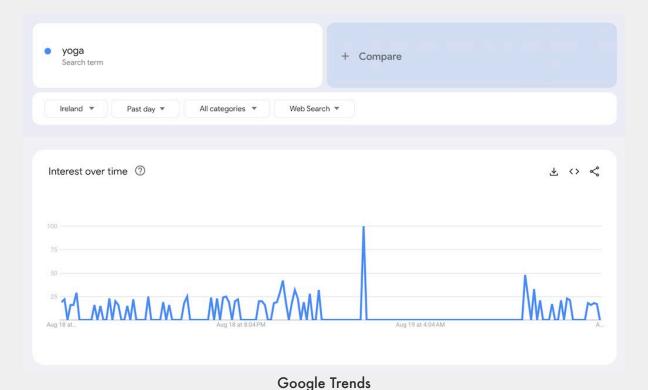
Ways to perform niche research

Here are some tools that can help you find a niche:

• Google Trends – this free service lets you see whether interest in a particular product type exists, and whether it is

stable, growing, or shrinking over time.

- SEO platforms tools like <u>Semrush</u> show you how many people search for specific product keywords each month.
- Online marketplaces you can browse Amazon, Etsy, or eBay to see what's selling well.
- Social media you can check Instagram hashtags, TikTok trends, or Pinterest boards to spot products people are excited about.
- Online communities you can explore forums or Reddit and Quora threads to see if there's demand for the kinds of things you'd like to sell.



▼ Tip: be careful about building a store around products
 with huge but short-lived spikes in interest — these can die off
 quickly (fidget spinners, anyone?)

Checking the numbers

All going well, the tools and approaches I've outlined above should help you find a product idea that might work for you. But once you've found one, it's important to be honest with yourself about how much it will cost to run a business in your chosen niche.

So, before settling 100% on what you're going to sell, consider:

- product cost what a supplier will charge you for your products
- **shipping and packaging** heavy, bulky, or fragile items that cost a fortune to ship can destroy the profitability of an ecommerce business
- marketing spend how much are advertising, influencer partnerships, and content creation for your product range going to set you back?

As a rough guide, aim for a gross profit margin of at least 25%. A bigger one is better of course, because it gives you room to cover overheads and still make money.

When you've found your niche, the next thing you need to do is to work out how you're going to source and fulfill your products.

Let's move onto doing that.



2 Selling and fulfillment methods

With Shopify, there are several ways to sell products and fulfill orders — and the right option for you will depend on the kind of items you'd like to sell.

Here are a few key selling / fulfillment methods to consider:

• Selling your own inventory

This is where you buy or make your own products, store them yourself and ship them out after purchases of them are made on your store.

Dropshipping

Dropshipping is a business model where you don't manufacture, purchase, store or deliver your products. Instead, you take orders for products via your online store and pass them onto a third-party supplier. The supplier then charges you and sends the goods to your customer.

• Print on demand (POD)

This is where you add your own designs to items like t-shirts, mugs or posters. A POD service prints and ships them for you — but only after your customers have placed orders for them.

Selling digital products

This is where you sell downloadable goods like ebooks, music, photos or software.

Now, in what follows I'm going to focus on how to sell your own inventory. If you'd like to learn more about Shopify dropshipping

and Shopify print on demand, there are two free Style Factory guides available that can really help you with this:

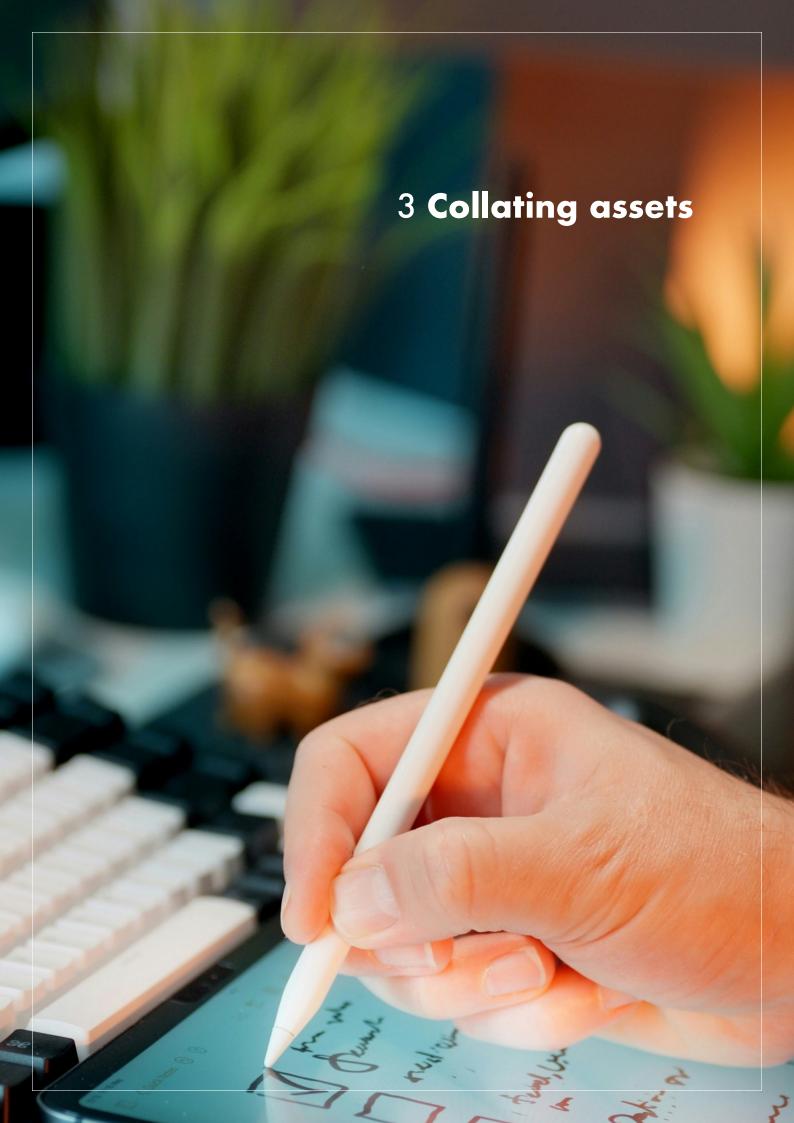
- Shopify dropshipping tutorial
- Shopify print on demand tutorial

And if you're interested in selling downloads, you'll find <u>our guide</u> to selling digital products on Shopify helpful.

(That said, many of the steps I'm going to outline in the rest of this book apply to any Shopify store build.)

Once you've worked out how you're going to source and fulfill your products, it's time to start getting things ready for the actual store building process.

This means collating assets.



3 Collating assets

Before creating your Shopify store, it's a good idea to have everything you need for it to hand.

The key things you'll usually need are:

- ✓ Some brand guidelines fonts, color scheme etc.
- ✓ A logo
- ✓ Products
- ✓ Photos of your products
- ✓ Product descriptions
- ✓ Product pricing
- ✓ Content for your store's pages

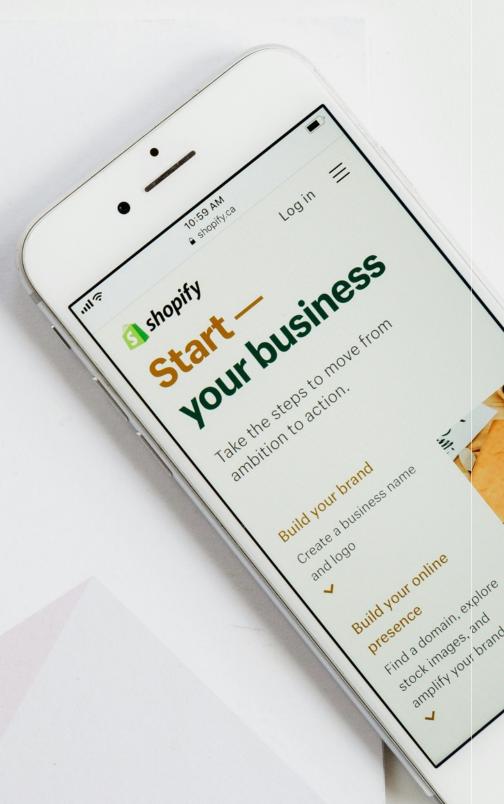
You might need some help collating some of these assets – for example, if branding is not your strong point, it's well worth consulting a graphic designer for some help with your logo.

Similarly, if you're not much good at copywriting, you might want to consider hiring a professional writer to help you create content for your store's pages and blog posts.

However you decide to go about collating the above assets, it's important that you try to get absolutely everything ready in advance of your store build — this will save you lots of time in the long run, and result in a much better-looking store.

Once you've got the above assets ready, it's time to <u>start a trial of</u> <u>the Shopify platform</u>.

4 Starting a Shopify trial (the right way!)



4 Starting a Shopify trial

With a decision made on fulfillment methods, and all your key store elements in one place, it's time to start a Shopify free trial.

Now by default, this trial is only three days in length — too short to get much done! To get enough time to build a fully-functional store, it's best to sign up to Shopify using its <u>extended '\$1 per month' trial option</u>.



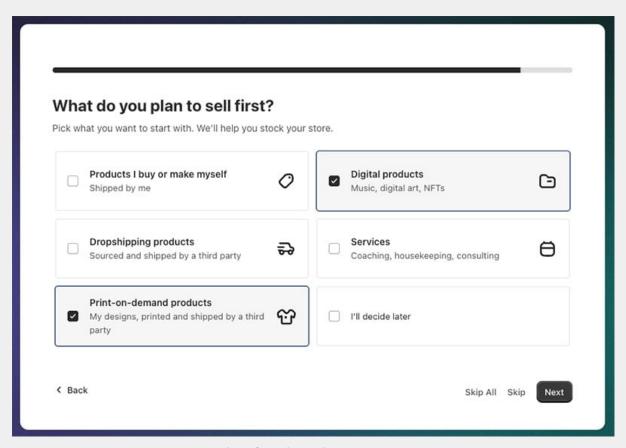
Shopify free trial

This gives you access to a 3-day free trial followed by the option to use the platform for \$1 per month for three months — more than enough time to get a Shopify store off the ground.

Just click the button below to access this extended trial.

Extended Shopify trial >

Now, you don't need to enter any credit card details to create your Shopify account and start your trial — however, you will be asked a few onboarding questions about the type of business you are creating on Shopify.



Shopify onboarding questions

Once you've answered these questions, you'll find yourself inside your brand-new Shopify account!

Now it's time to pick a theme, add products and configure your payment and shipping options.

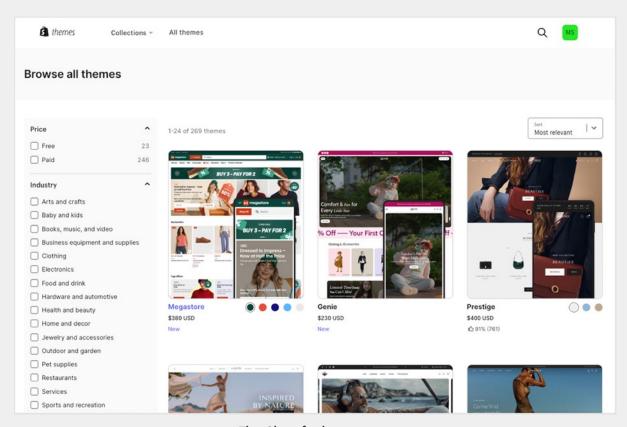
Let's go through all that now.



5 Choosing a theme

Shopify themes are web design templates that you use as the starting point for your store. Shopify provides a wide range of free and paid themes — you can access these in its <u>theme store</u>.

Browse Shopify themes ▶



The Shopify theme store

The Shopify theme store is set up in a way that makes it easy to find the right template for your online store: you can browse it using a wide range of filters, including price, industry, catalog size and features.

When choosing a theme, there are some key things to bear in mind:

- Don't let fonts and colors sway your theme selection too
 much these are easily editable once you've installed a
 theme (more on which in a moment!). Ensuring that a theme
 has the features you need for example particular layouts,
 search functionality etc. is usually more important.
- Most paid themes come in 2-3 variants check each version before settling on one.
- You can try paid themes out to see how they look before buying them. (It's also worth noting that the prices listed for the paid-themes are one-off fees, not monthly charges.)

You can browse the Shopify theme store here.

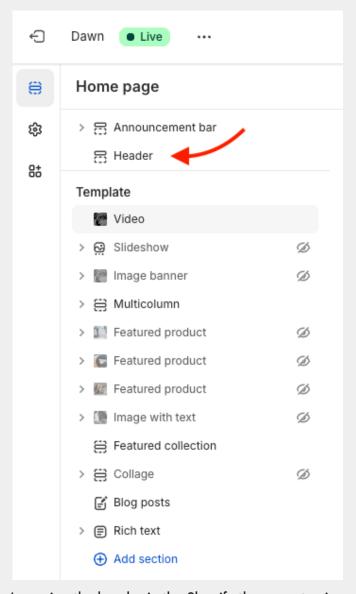


6 Applying your brand

Once you've picked a theme, it's time to customize your store so that it makes use of your own logo, typefaces and colors — the key elements of your business' brand.

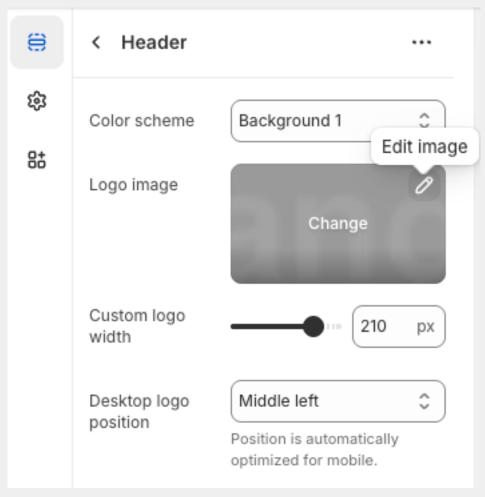
Adding a logo to your Shopify store

To add a logo to a Shopify store, just go to Online Store > Themes > Customize and click the 'Header' option.



Accessing the header in the Shopify theme customizer

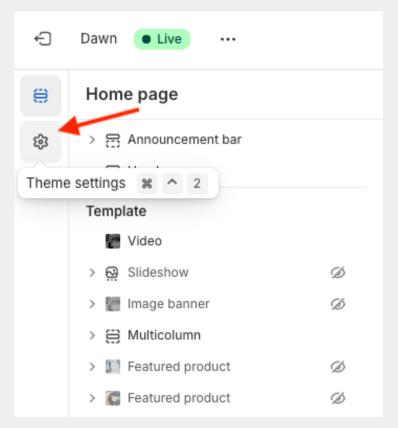
You can then use the 'logo image' option to add your Shopify logo to your store.



1Adding a logo in Shopify

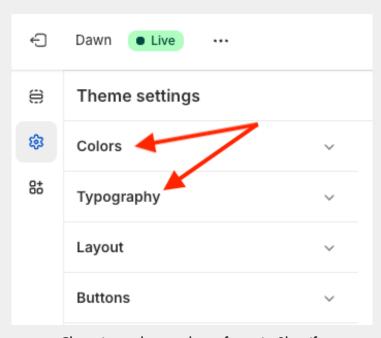
Customizing typefaces and colors

To customize typefaces and colors, go to Online Store > Themes > Customize and click the cog icon in the top left-hand corner of the screen.



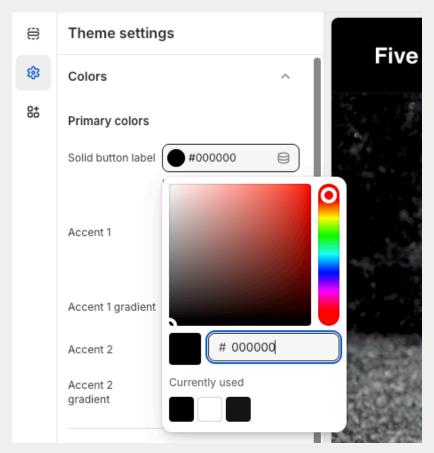
Accessing theme settings

Then, click on the 'colors' and 'typography' options to change colors and fonts respectively.



Changing colors and typefaces in Shopify

Editing these elements is very straightforward – you simply click on what you want to change and are given the controls to do so.



Changing text color in Shopify's theme settings

Here are a few things worth bearing in mind when deciding on colors and fonts:

- Do your research into how colors and typefaces work together — or better yet, involve a graphic designer in the process. A designer will be able to give you a clear steer on good font and color pairings, save you time and help you get a more professional result.
- When picking a color scheme, don't forget accessibility.
 For example, if you pick a light font color and use it for text
 on a light background, your content will be much harder for

your visitors to read (and especially so for those with a visual impairment).

- Keep things simple if you can if you're not confident about color and font selection, minimalism is probably your best bet. A monochrome scheme using sans serif fonts will in many cases look more professional than one involving a loud color scheme and lots of ornate typefaces.
- Consider using one font only. This will reduce the loading time of your Shopify store, which can improve user experience. Additionally, site speed can affect a site's performance in search results — so for SEO reasons it makes sense to make your design elements load as quickly as possible.

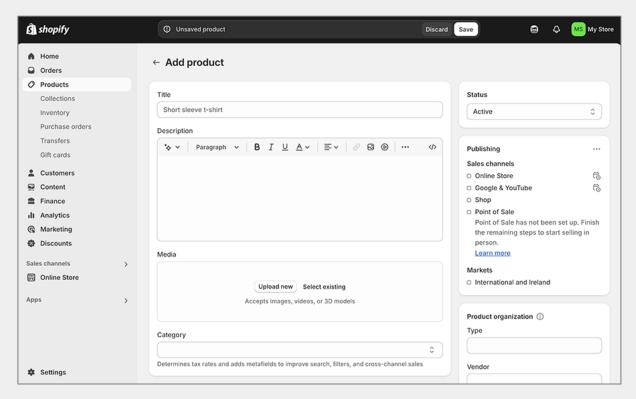


7 Adding products

7 Adding products

With your theme in place and your branding applied, it's time to add some products!

To add your first one, just go to **Products > Add Product** in your Shopify dashboard.



Adding products to your Shopify store

Then it's a case of adding in the key information about your product, namely:

- product title
- description
- media
- category
- pricing
- inventory
- shipping

- variants
- search engine listing preview

Let's go through these quickly.

Product title

This is what your customers will see when they come across your product either in your store or in Google search results. So, your title should be

- clear
- accurate
- engaging
- relatively short.

Product description

This field gives you the opportunity to really sell your product! However, it's important not to fill it with a long piece of blurb that goes on and on about how great your stuff is — you need to be strategic here.

So, when writing your product descriptions...

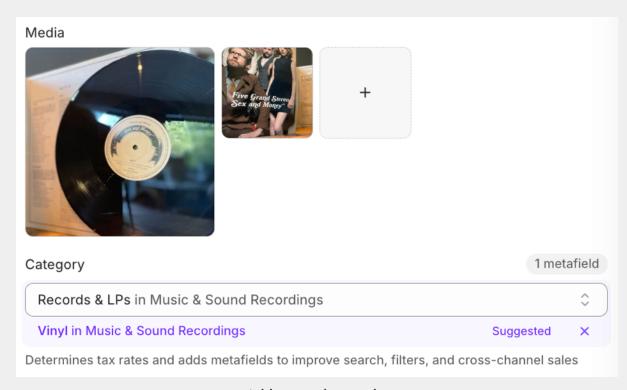
- Be very aware of your buyer persona the kind of person who's most likely to be browsing your store. Tailor your product descriptions so that they speak to your target audience clearly and in a relevant way.
- Make your descriptions extremely easy to read explain your products in simple terms and use headings, bullet points and short paragraphs to lay out your copy clearly (this will help visitors access key information about your products

quickly, and search engines like this approach to copywriting too).

- Highlight any unique selling points (USPs) associated with your products — features that elevate them above similar goods. Mention any incentives or special offers associated with them (discount codes, the fact that you offer free shipping etc.).
- Overcome objections try to work out why a potential customer would feel nervous about parting with cash for your products and provide reassurance that calms those nerves.

Product media

The 'media' section of your product page gives you the option to add **photos**, **videos** and **3D models** of your products.



Adding product media

There are a few key things to note when uploading media to Shopify.

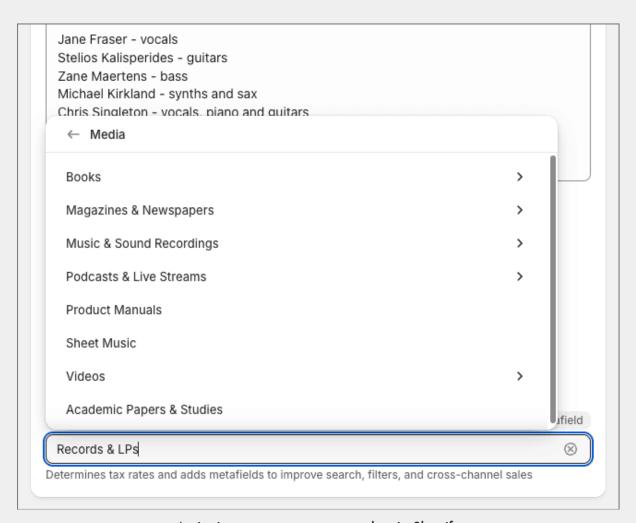
- Ensure that the quality of your product media is as high as possible if you can, work with a professional product photographer or videographer to create your media. If that's not possible, it's fine to take your own product photos or shoot your own videos just make sure to use a device with a high-quality camera when doing so.
- Ensure that you use the same aspect ratio when uploading product photos Shopify themes look *much* better when a consistent one is used.
- Be aware of image resolution requirements for Shopify's product zoom feature to work properly, images need to have a minimum resolution of 800 x 800 pixels; and if using Shopify to sell online via Amazon or Etsy, you'll need to ensure that they are at least 1000 x 1000 pixels in size. Shopify suggests using photos with a minimum width of 2048 pixels.
- After you've uploaded a product image, add alt text to it.
 Alt text lets visitors with visibility impairments understand your content better and helps search engines index it more accurately too.
- Watch out for video length and file sizes if you're uploading your own product videos to Shopify (i.e., rather than embedding YouTube and Vimeo ones), make sure that they don't exceed 10 minutes in length and 1GB in size.

Category

In Shopify, the category field is used to classify products based on 'taxonomies' used by Google Shopping, Facebook Shop, Tiktok and other platforms. There's a large list of categories to choose from, and it's important to pick the right one for your product — doing so can make it more visible on all these services.

Additionally, you can use categories to organize your collections in various ways throughout your store.

Simply review the list of options available and pick the right one for the product you're adding.



Assigning a category to a product in Shopify

Pricing

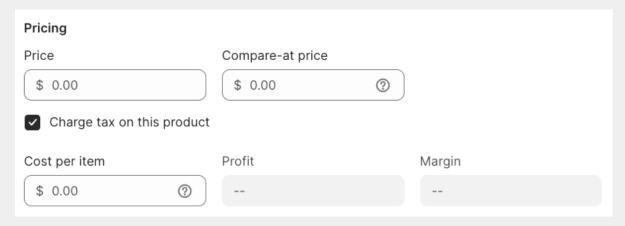
Now it's time to set your product price! When setting a price for an item, you need to aim to strike a balance between:

- your costs employee costs, raw materials, shipping, rent and so on
- the 'perceived value' of the product you're selling.

Price things too high, and you won't generate enough sales to turn a profit. But making things too cheap by comparison to similar goods may raise doubts in your customers' minds about the quality of what you're selling online (if something sounds too good to be true, it often is).

Pricing can be tricky – but the good news is there's *lots* of room for trial and error in ecommerce. You can always test the market with one price and change it later based on the results you're getting in your store.

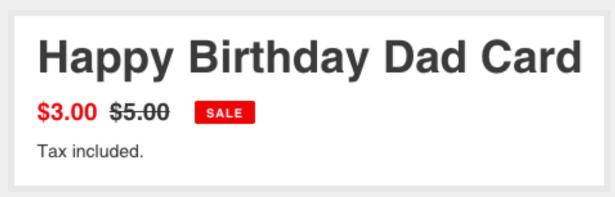
Once you've settled on your product price, it's easy to add it to Shopify — you just enter it into the 'price' field on your product page. If you like, you can also enter a value into the optional 'compare at price' field (pictured below).



Shopify's "Compare at Price" option

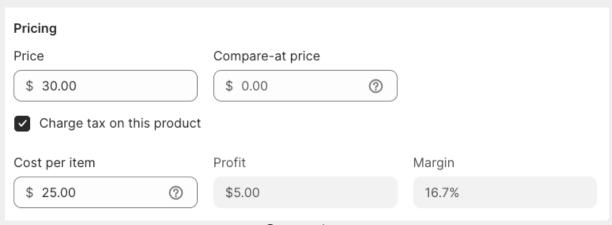
This lets your visitors know what the 'full' price of an item is, with the 'price' appearing as a discounted rate.

For example, entering \$3 into the 'price' field and \$5 into the 'compare at price' field will show your store visitors something like this:



Shopify's "Compare at Price" option in action

The 'cost per item' field (pictured below) is also optional — it simply lets you add the cost price of an item into Shopify, so that you can see what your actual profit per sale is.



Cost per item

As for the 'charge tax on this product' option, whether you need to tick this box will depend very much on your product type, location and tax status.

If you are planning to charge tax on your goods, just tick it for now – you can edit your tax settings later.

Inventory

As its name suggests, this section of the product page lets you keep tabs on your inventory – and lets Shopify know what to do if you run out of a particular product.

Inventory		
✓ Track quantity		
Quantity		
Shop location	1000	
Continue selling when out of stock This won't affect Shopify POS. Staff will see a warning, but can complete sales when available inventory reaches zero and below.		
✓ This product has a SKU or barcode		
SKU (Stock Keeping Unit) Barcode (ISBN, UPC, GTIN	N, etc.)	

here will depend on your product

What you need to enter here will depend on your product type (physical, digital etc.) and your own requirements, but you can use the fields provided to add:

Inventory settings

- stock keeping units (or SKUs a product code, basically)
- bar codes
- quantity information.
- location of your inventory.

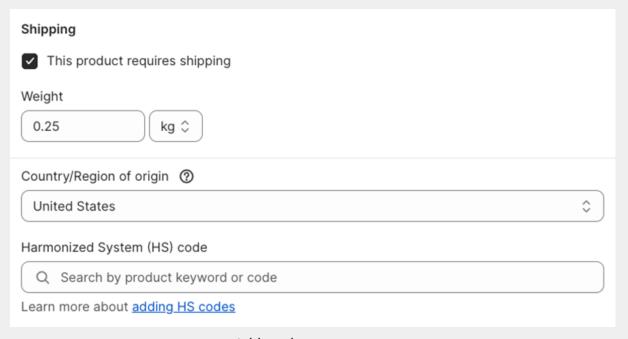
Of the above, the 'quantity' settings are probably the most important — if you sell physical products, enter how many are currently available and, using the 'continue selling when out of stock' box, instruct Shopify what to do when you run out of goods.

If it doesn't take you very long to make or source your products, it's usually best to tick the 'continue selling' option — but if it's going to take a while for you to get more stock, it's better to leave it unticked (doing so will display a 'sold out' notice beside your products until you restock).

If you're using multiple locations to store your products, you can use the location settings provided to let Shopify know how many products you are storing at each of them.

Product shipping

If you're selling physical products, you can use the shipping section to enter weight and customs information.

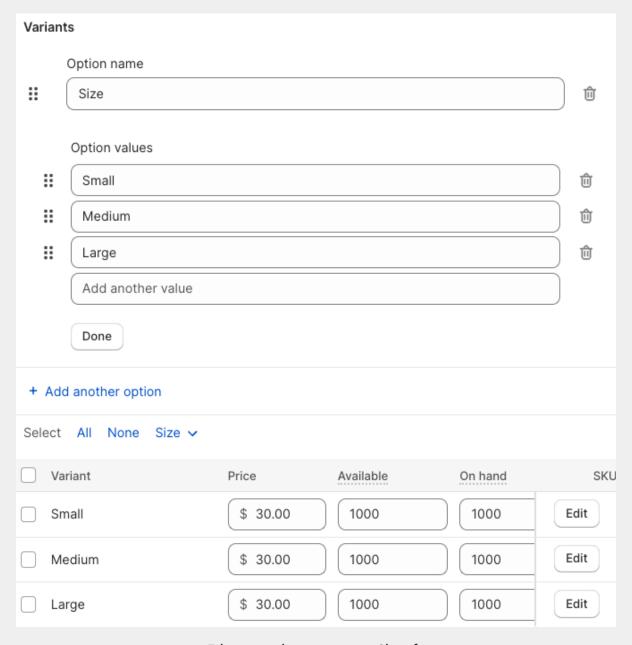


Adding shipping options

The weight data is particularly important for calculating shipping rates (more on these shortly).

Product variants

If your product comes in a variety of options — for example different sizes, colors or flavors — this is where you add them (along with relevant prices, quantities and SKUs).



Editing product variants in Shopify

You can create up to **three options** for each Shopify product (for example size, color, material); and up to **100 variants** of these. Variants are **combinations** of product options — i.e., a large, blue shoe would be one variant; a small, red one would be another and so on.

Tip: if these limits are too restrictive for your product range, you may need to buy a relevant app from Shopify's app store (Infinite Product Options is a popular choice).

Search engine listing

URL handle

products/five-grand-stereo-vinyl-sm

https://www.fivegrandstereo.com/products/five-grand-stereo-vinyl-sm

This section lets you tell search engines more about your products.

Five Grand Stereo https://www.fivegrandstereo.com > products > five-grand-stereo-vinyl-sm Five Grand Stereo — 'Sex and Money' Vinyl Edition We are delighted to announce the availability of a highly limited edition vinyl edition of our album 'Sex and Money.' The vinyl The vinyl comes as a gatefold, 1... £23.99 GBP Page title Five Grand Stereo — 'Sex and Money' Vinyl Edition 49 of 70 characters used Meta description We are delighted to announce the availability of a highly limited edition vinyl edition of our album 'Sex and Money.' The vinyl The vinyl comes as a gatefold, 1... 161 of 160 characters used

Search engine listings section

There are three fields to complete here:

- Page title this is the title that usually appears in search results (the large clickable heading).
- Meta description this is where you enter your 'meta description,' a piece of information that is displayed as the description in search results (though not always — Google often uses it as a guide rather than gospel).
- URL handle the web address for your product.

Here's how all this translates into a Google search result:



Search result components

For a detailed guide to how you should approach filling in these fields, you might like to <u>read our Shopify SEO guide</u>.

But for now, here are some key pointers:

• When naming your products, it's always best to carry out some keyword research first. Keyword research tools like Ahrefs and Semrush can tell you exactly what phrases people are using when searching for products like yours; how many searches there are per month for these phrases; and how difficult it will be to rank for them. For example, using a keyword research tool, you might discover that there are 64,000 searches for 'ketchup' every month and 5,000 for 'red sauce' — and that it will be easier to rank highly for

'red sauce.'

- Include your target keyword in your URL. This helps Google index your products more accurately.
- Keep your meta description around the 155-160 character mark. Longer meta descriptions are less likely to be used by Google, or may be truncated.

Product organization

On the right hand side of the product page you'll find a 'Product Organization' section. This lets you add information about your products that makes it easier to set up collections and discounts.

Product organization (i)	
Туре	
T-shirt	
Vendor	
Big T's Tees	
Collections	
Tags	

Product organization in Shopify

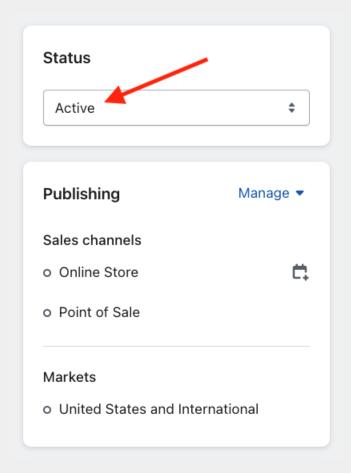
The fields you need to fill in are:

- **Product Type** the specific type of product for sale.
- **Vendor** the manufacturer or seller of the product (that can of course be you).
- Collections I'll come back to collections in more depth in a
 moment but basically, they are catalogs of products that you
 create either manually or using rules. Collections are
 important because you can display them in various useful
 ways on your store for example as a feature on your
 home page, or in your navigation.
- Tags these are keywords that you can associate with your products. They matter because you can use them to automatically create collections, and they help your customers locate products more easily when they search your Shopify store.

Product status

Once you're happy with all the information you've entered on your product page, you can activate your product.

This is done by setting the product status option box at the top right corner of the page to 'active' (as per screenshot overleaf).



As you can see, there's also an option in the 'Publishing' section to manage your product's availability on various 'sales channels'.

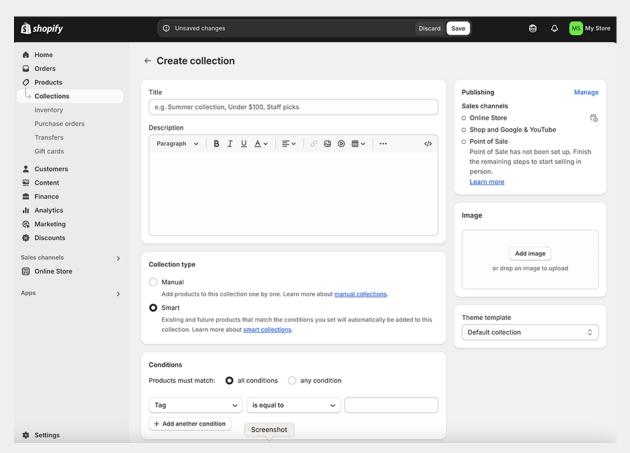
By default you will be activating the product on your standard Shopify online store sales channel, but if you are using Shopify to list your product on other platforms, you can click the 'manage' link to activate them on those channels too.



8 Creating product collections

Once you've added some products to your new Shopify store, you can organize them into 'collections.'

These are groups of similar types of products – for example, if you ran an online greetings card store, you might create a birthday card collection, a Christmas card collection and so on.



Creating a collection in Shopify

There are usually three main reasons why you might want to do this:

 to display a certain selection of products on your store's home page

- to create a link in your site navigation to a particular set of products
- to discount a specific selection of products.

To create a collection, just go to **Products > Collections** in your Shopify store and click 'Create collection.'

Once you've accessed the collection editor, you can enter a title, description, image, SEO information and so on — this involves a similar process to creating a product.

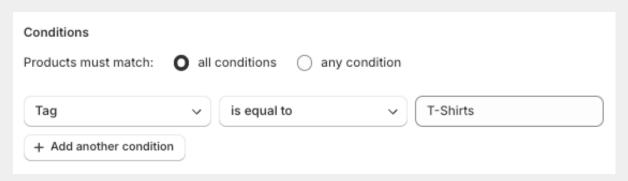
What you must pay particular attention to here is the 'Collection type' box. This gives you the option to either create a collection manually, or via automation (Shopify refers to automated collections as 'smart' collections).

Collection type Manual Add products to this collection one by one. Learn more about manual collections. Smart Existing and future products that match the conditions you set will automatically be added to this collection. Learn more about smart collections.

Selecting collection type

If you choose the 'manual' option, you'll then be given the opportunity to search for individual products and add them to the collection, one by one.

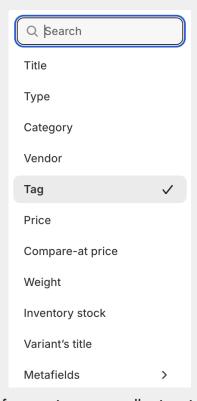
If you choose the 'smart' option, you'll be asked to set up some simple rules that populate your collection:



Creating a smart collection

In the above example, I'm creating a 't-shirts' collection based on a product tag. Every time a product is tagged with 't-shirts,' it will automatically be added to that collection.

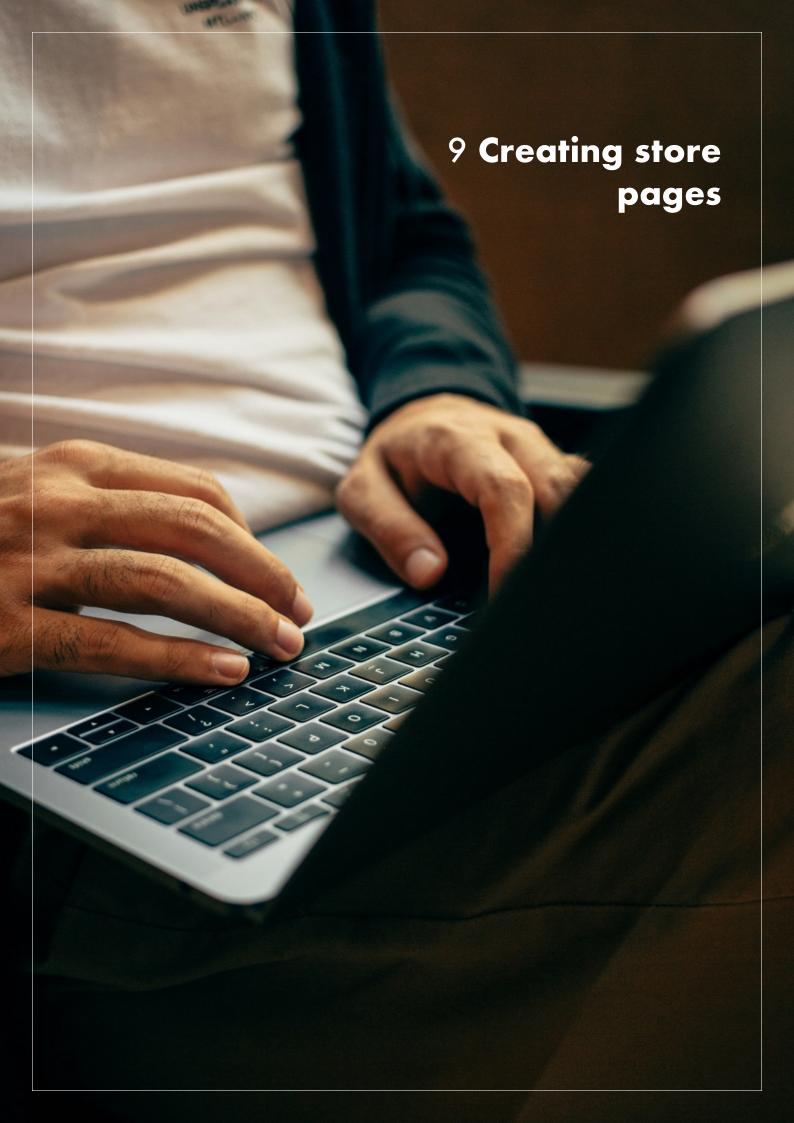
You aren't restricted to using product tags to create these collections, however — you can use several other product attributes including product title, type, vendor and price.



Options for creating smart collections in Shopify

In my view this 'smart collection' option is one of Shopify's best features — key competing platforms typically restrict you to creating manual collections.

Automated collections can save you hours of time, especially if you're dealing with a large product inventory – so make the most of them!



9 Creating store pages

Now it's time to create the web pages on your store.

The key pages you will usually need to add are:

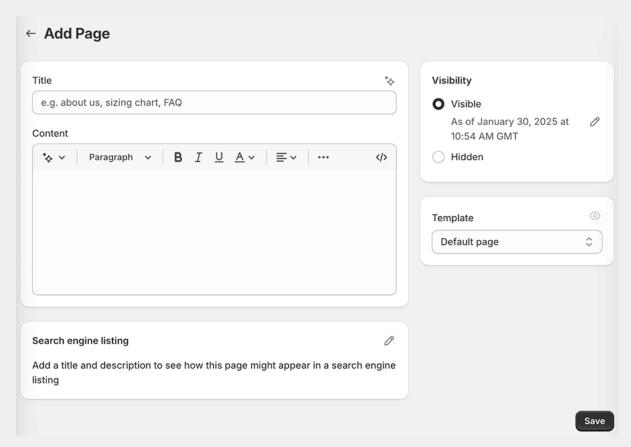
- A home page the front page of your store.
- About us an overview of your ecommerce business, your values and story.
- FAQs a page where you answer frequently asked questions about your products.
- **Policy pages** a website terms of use page, cookie notice, privacy notice, shipping policy, refund policy etc.
- Contact page a page containing your phone number, address and a contact form.
- A blog this lets you share news about your business or related content that your customers might be interested in.

Tip: creating policy pages containing privacy information, refund information etc. is actually very important. They establish trust in your store not just among potential customers, but Google too — the search engine's algorithm looks for 'trust' pages like these when ranking websites in search results.

Creating static pages

Regular 'static' pages like 'About Us', 'FAQs' etc. are all created in the same way. You simply go to **Online Store > Pages** and click 'Add page.'

Note however that the home page is not created like this (I'll come to that shortly).



Adding a static page to a Shopify store

It's then a case of filling in the blanks – your page title, content, SEO info etc.

√ Tip: when creating your contact pages you will need to set the 'template' option to 'contact' – doing so will display an online form that store visitors can use to get in touch.

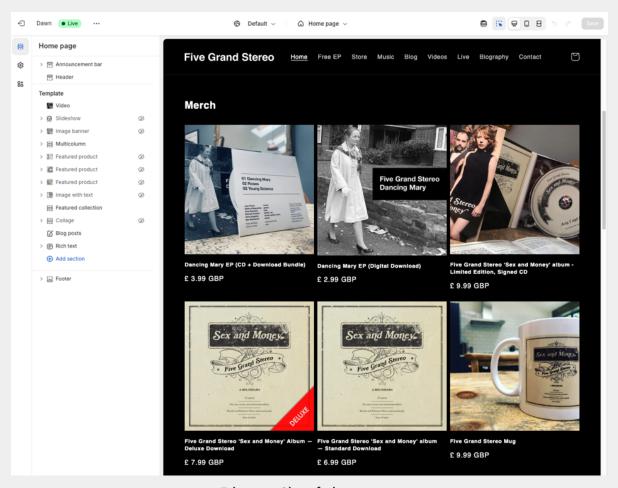
Creating blog posts

To create blog posts, you go to Content > Blog Posts and click 'Add blog post.'

For now, you only need to create **one** post — a 'welcome to our new store' article or similar. You can always add more content to your blog as your store develops.

Building your home page

Shopify lets you create a home page using a dedicated page builder. To access this, go to **Online Store > Themes** and click the 'Customize' button.



Editing a Shopify home page

This takes you to a drag and drop editor that you can use to adjust the layout of elements on your site's home page (pictured above). You can also use this editor to add or remove home page content.

The default layout and the options available to you here will vary a bit by theme, but all Shopify themes typically let you add sections like:

- hero images
- slideshows
- featured collections
- images
- text
- email sign-up forms
- featured products

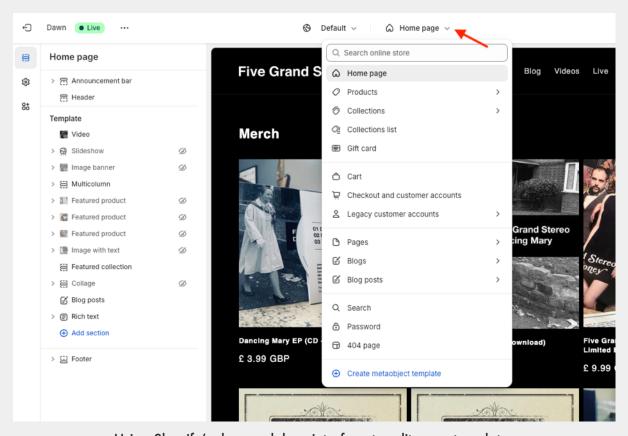
In terms of what you should add to this page, the key thing to remember is to **keep things simple** — don't overwhelm your visitors with information. Highlight your best products, avoid clutter and make it super easy for your potential customers to find what they're looking for.

√ Tip: why not try a bit of user testing?

When you've got a draft of your online store ready, it's a good idea to run it past a few people to get feedback on how attractive and user-friendly it is. These can be friends or colleagues — or you could solicit opinions from members of relevant Facebook or Reddit groups. If they consistently find issues with particular aspects of your site, fix them!

Editing the layouts of other Shopify pages and posts

It's worth noting that you can also use Shopify's drag and drop editor to adjust the layouts for other types of page templates — when editing your home page, if you click on the drop-down menu at the top of the screen, you'll see the option to edit templates for products, collections, blog posts and so on.



Using Shopify's drag-and-drop interface to edit page templates

However, where these other page types are concerned, the drag and drop interface can't be used for editing content — it's for adjusting the 'master' page layout only.

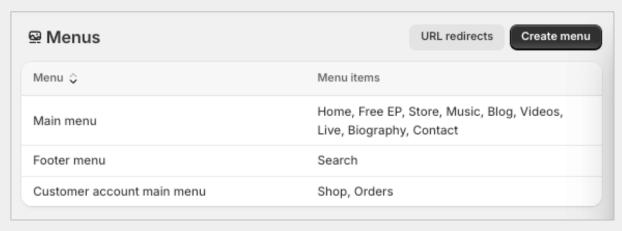
(If you want to change the text on individual pages or blog posts, you'll need to go to those specific pages in your dashboard to do so – as per my instructions earlier on in this section.)



10 Building navigation menus

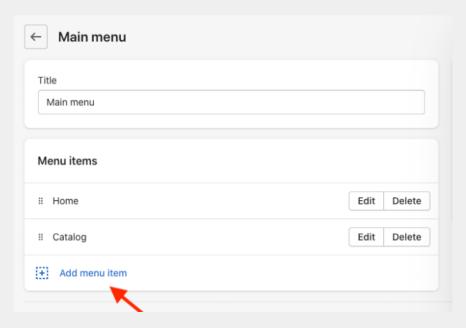
With your products and pages in place, it's time to create navigation menus. These let users find key content easily.

To add your navigation to a Shopify store, go to **Content > Menus**. This will typically display three menus: a main menu, a footer menu and a customer account menu.



Creating menus in Shopify

Of these, the 'main menu' is the most important for now. Click on it and you'll get the option to add pages to it.



Adding items to the main menu

When you're done, just click the 'Save menu' option.

(If you like, you can use this section to create other types of menus too – like footer or sidebar ones, or more complex 'nested' menus. For more detailed information about menu creation, see Shopify's help page about creating navigations).



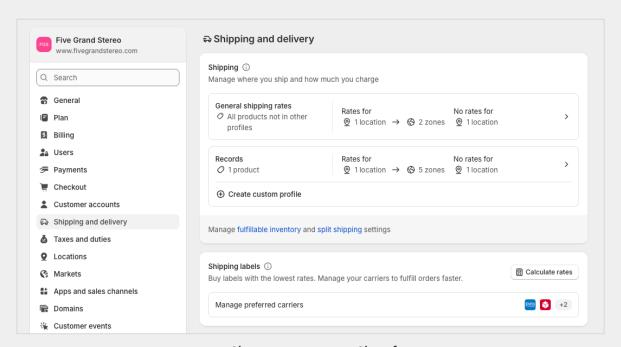
11 Setting shipping rates

With your products, content and design all in place, it's time now to turn to the operational side of things and think about:

- how you're going to get your products to your customers
- how much tax you'll need to charge on them
- how you're going to accept payments online.

In this section I'm going to show you how to start with the first of these, **shipping**.

To access your shipping settings, you need to go to **Settings** > **Shipping and Delivery** in your Shopify dashboard.



Shipping settings in Shopify

There, you'll be able to set up various types of shipping rates, including:

- flat shipping rates a rate per item that is not connected to product price or weight
- rates based on product price or weight
- calculated shipping rates rates that are determined at checkout (in 'real time') by a postal company based on the weight / size of the order
- **free shipping** where the customer doesn't pay any postage (i.e., it is absorbed into the cost of the item)
- local pickup or delivery.

Which option is for you will really depend on the type of products you're selling, packaging costs and your customers' typical shipping destinations.

But as with your pricing strategy, if you don't get shipping zones and rates right first time, there is always the option to revisit things, and refine your shipping rules at a later stage.

Tip: reduce shipping costs by using the 'Shopify Shipping' service

If you live in the US, UK, France, Canada, Italy, Spain or Australia, you can avail of discounted shipping rates by using 'Shopify Shipping' — a partnership between Shopify and various postal companies. Discounts can go as high as 88%, depending on plan.

12 Setting tax rules



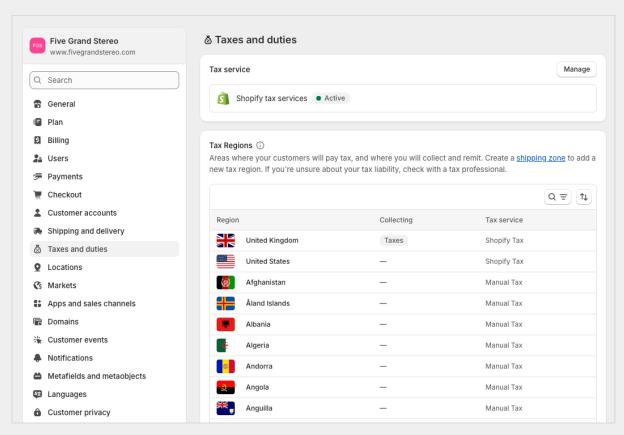
12 Setting tax rules

Many merchants will need to charge sales tax or VAT (value added tax) on purchases of their products. Rules vary considerably by country, so it's worth asking a tax professional how you should configure these for your store.

Shopify facilitates automatic tax calculation for certain jurisdictions (and can in fact even cater for the EU's rules on adding VAT to digital products), so using this feature will speed the tax setup process up for some merchants.

Others will have to set tax rates in a more manual way.

Either way, the tax settings in Shopify can be located in the Shopify dashboard by going to Settings > Taxes and Duties.



Taxes and duties settings in Shopify

Once you're in the tax settings section, you'll get the option to create tax regions (rules for individual countries or areas) and specify how you want to charge tax.

For example, you can specify that product prices should be inclusive or exclusive of tax; or whether tax should be applied to shipping rates.

As mentioned above, it's best to get advice from a tax professional or accountant when setting these rules up; it's also worth taking a good look at Shopify's official guide to managing tax rates.



13 Choosing a payment gateway

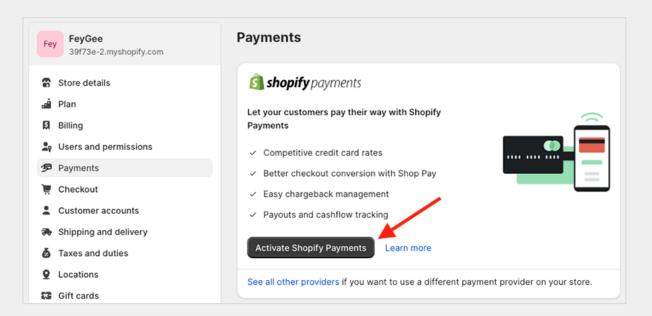
In order to accept payment for your products, you need to choose a **payment gateway**. This is the software that processes credit card transactions on your store.

Shopify works with a lot of payment gateways (over 100) and has its own one too: **Shopify Payments**.

For many merchants, Shopify Payments will be the quickest payment processor to get started with – and it's the only one you can use without incurring transaction fees.

Shopify Payments is only available in certain countries however — if you live in an unsupported location, you will need to use a third-party payment gateway.

To enable a payment gateway, just go to **Settings > Payments** in your Shopify dashboard, and follow the instructions provided.



When deciding on which payment gateway is right for you...

- Check customer needs choose a gateway that is popular in the region your store visitors are based in and supports the currencies and payment methods they use.
- Compare costs look closely at transaction fees and payout times.
- **Prioritize security** PCI compliance and fraud protection are a must.
- Plan for growth make sure the gateway supports international sales and recurring payments if you'll need them.

14 Connecting a domain



14 Connecting a domain

At this point, you've essentially completed all the key steps needed to get your Shopify store live — and in fact, if you wanted to, you could simply publish it immediately using the 'myshopify' URL that was created for you when starting your Shopify trial.

However, it's generally preferable to use a **custom domain** name for your store — i.e., yoursitename.com. This will work much better from a branding point of view and will help your site visitors trust your store more too.

You may already have registered a custom domain already – but if not, there are two ways to buy one:

- from a domain name registrar (such as Namecheap, Gandi, Network Solutions etc.).
- direct from Shopify.

Let's go through both options.

Getting a domain via a registrar

If you decide to buy a domain from a domain name provider, do so using a long-established, reputable registrar (one that provides phone support if possible).

It's worth choosing a registrar that facilitates two factor authentication, where you log into your domain name account not just with your email address, but using a code delivered by SMS / authenticator app too. This helps keep your domain name — one of the most important business assets you may ever have! — safe.

Buying a domain from Shopify

Using Shopify to buy a domain name will make the process of connecting it to your store much easier; doing so will be a simple case of clicking a button in your Shopify interface.

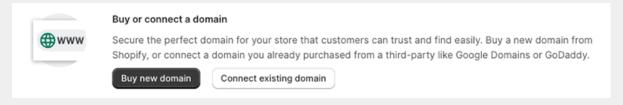
(And if you buy a domain from Shopify, you'll get customer support for it too.)

The drawback of this approach is that you will be putting all your eggs in one basket — i.e., your content management system, hosting AND your domain will all be associated with one Shopify account.

This could be a problem if you ever lost access to it, so for this reason, some users prefer to keep their domain name and Shopify accounts separate.

Connecting your domain name to your store

Whichever domain purchasing approach you decide on, you start the process of domain connection in the same place: under **Settings > Domains** in your Shopify dashboard.



Connecting a domain in Shopify

If you're buying a **new** domain via Shopify, simply click the 'buy new domain' button and follow the instructions provided.

If you're connecting an existing domain, you'll need to click the 'connect existing domain' option, let Shopify know what the domain name is and again, follow the instructions provided.

If you're connecting a third-party domain that you already own, you'll need to log into your registrar's dashboard and change some domain name settings (DNS) so that they point to your Shopify store.



15 Launching your store

Once your domain is connected, you could just unleash your store on the world right away!

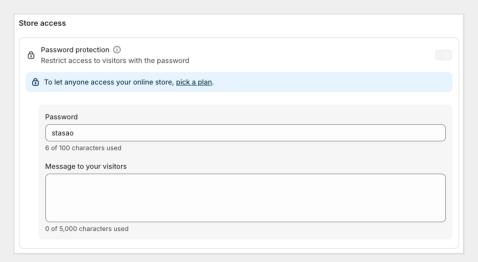
But it's much better to check that all aspects of your store are working as expected first — and that's where a **Shopify launch checklist** comes in.

Before letting people know about your store, you should check that:

- ✓ product data is accurate ensure descriptions, images, prices, tax and shipping information are correct
- ✓ copy and visuals are error-free proofread text and test
 your theme across multiple devices
- √ all internal links work
- ✓ payments are being accepted correctly place a test order to find out
- √ email notifications are being sent okay
- ✓ shipping rates are accurate test checkouts with different
 addresses to confirm rates are being properly applied
- √ tax rates are applied correctly
- √ contact and signup forms work properly

- ✓ legal notices and policies are in place website terms, privacy policy, refund policy, cookie banner etc.
- ✓ an analytics tool is installed and tracking visits correctly (Google Analytics, Fathom Analytics etc.)
- ✓ unnecessary Shopify apps are removed unused apps can slow down your store
- √ two-factor authentication is enabled
- √ a favicon has been added
- √ the store has been optimized for search engines
- ✓ a marketing plan is in place this should cover social media, content marketing, SEO, ads, etc.

When you're done with your pre-launch checks, you can publish your store by removing your password. Go to Online Store > Preferences and scroll down to the 'Store access' section to do this.



Removing password protection to launch your Shopify store

And that's it! Your new Shopify store is live and you're ready to start selling.

But how do you turn your lovely new store into a successful one? Let's look at a few ways that you can promote your store.



16 Promoting your new business

Once your Shopify store is live, it's tempting to think that your ecommerce journey is over. However, it's only just beginning!

There are a variety of things you can do to ensure that going forward, your Shopify store makes new customers and becomes a profitable business.

Here are a few key ways to promote your new store effectively:

- Add more sales channels. In this e-book I've walked you through setting up a standalone online store but Shopify lets you connect your site to many other platforms, including Amazon, Etsy, eBay and Facebook. By listing your products on these platforms all of which have big, existing userbases you can extend the reach of your store considerably.
- Focus on SEO. Good search results are vital to getting sales, so getting the search engine optimization aspect of your Shopify website right is crucial.
- Engage in content marketing. Shopify stores come with a built-in blogging feature use it to create fantastic content that attracts people to your store! Done well, blogging is a superb way to generate organic traffic.
- **Build a mailing list** email marketing is a great way to build awareness of your product range and create repeat business.
- Enhance your store using apps. The Shopify app store contains a huge number of apps and integrations that let you

add a wide range of features to your site. From marketing apps to dropshipping services to analytics tools, you'll find a lot of useful ways to add functionality to your Shopify site in there.

Use online advertising to drive sales. PPC services like
Google Ads and social networks like Facebook offer a
whole host of sophisticated ways to target and retarget the
niche audiences that will be most receptive to your products.

At Style Factory, we have some resources which can help you get the word out about your store. I'd encourage you to check out:

- Our comprehensive video guide to Shopify SEO
- Our guide to content marketing
- Our guide to driving traffic via a blog
- Our guide to creating newsletters and email marketing campaigns

And that's it! I hope you've found this e-book a helpful resource — do follow Style Factory on <u>YouTube</u> and <u>LinkedIn</u> for all our latest resources on ecommerce.

But above all, good luck with your new Shopify store!