

How-To Guide: How to Add Ecommerce to Your Website

If you're currently using your website as a marketing tool and/or to give customers valuable information, the next obvious step is to add ecommerce capabilities. Selling products or services isn't as hard as you might think and creates a new source of cash flow for your business. This tactic can allow even non-retail businesses to create new income streams. Here are some ideas for what to sell:

- Products you carry in your retail store
- Products related to your service business (for example, if you're a residential cleaning business, you could sell some of your cleaning products)
- Products that aren't in your retail store and are only available online (making them more desirable)
- Information, such as ebooks, CDs or workbooks related to your business (for example, a personal trainer could sell an exercise DVD)
- Services that can be delivered online, such as consulting, coaching or therapy sessions via chat, email or VOiP

Think of some products or services related to your business you could sell online:

Once you decide to add ecommerce to your site, here are the steps to make that happen:

Choose payment solutions. Customers expect to be able to use their credit cards when purchasing online. To accept payment by card, you can apply for an online merchant account through your business bank or a third party. The application and approval process won't be immediate. Expect to have your business credit report run and your site checked to see it's up and running properly. Each company also charges its own transaction fees.

You can also use a credit card processing service that offers merchant accounts. Here are a few to consider:

- [Flagship Merchant Services](#)
- [goMerchant Merchant Accounts](#)
- [Intuit QuickBooks Merchant Service](#)
- [Merchant Accounts Express](#)
- [Merchant One](#)
- [Merchant Warehouse](#)



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[PayPal](#) is another payment option. Signing up for PayPal allows you to bypass getting a merchant account. PayPal allows customers to pay directly through their bank accounts or by credit card. Expect to pay a flat rate monthly fee.

Choose a shopping cart solution. If you decide to go with one of the many shopping cart packages, you'll get a readymade shopping system complete with the ability to accept credit cards and, in most cases, PayPal. For a monthly fee, companies like eJunkie provide everything you need to get started selling and accepting payments. Once traffic and sales pick up, you may need to go with a more sophisticated system. If you are selling more than 10 products, look for shopping software that includes cross-sell and upsell techniques.

Investigate ecommerce software. Purchasing overall ecommerce solution software will walk you through the steps of setting up to sell online. Always check reviews to find the top rated systems. ProStores, Shopify, Volusion and Yahoo! Merchant are popular programs to try.

Consider [eBay](#). If you're not ready to set up ecommerce on your own site yet, think about setting up an [eBay store](#) to test the waters.

Make your site shopper-friendly. Remember the following rules when trying to attract customers to buy on your site:

- **De-clutter.** Make sure your site is clean, organized and easy to navigate. There should be a clear call to action to take on each page, such as "Buy Now" or "Add to Cart."
- **Add attractive product photos and enticing descriptions.** If you're not capable of writing good marketing copy, hire someone who can.
- **Put some items on sale.** Even online, shoppers are looking for bargains.
- **Install a chat system** so you can proactively pursue indecisive customers.
- **Include a toll-free number at the top of each page.** Don't make customers work to figure out how to contact you with questions on a product.
- **Follow up after the sale.** You'll capture customer emails and mailing addresses during the sale. Market to customers who have already purchased from you with special offers or suggestions of other items they might be interested in. Include discount coupons or sale flyers when you ship the product.

