

How to Start an Ecommerce Store: A Guide to Success

Want to learn how to start an ecommerce store? By 2026, ecommerce is forecasted to make up nearly 25% of [all retail sales worldwide](#). Get in on the action by starting your very own online store today!

Although setting up a new business may seem overwhelming, fear not. With a well-thought-out strategy and the right tools, you can create a successful online store and make your entrepreneurial dreams a reality.

We'll walk you through the basics of ecommerce, the different kinds of online stores, and the steps you'll need to start selling online – *pronto!*

Read on to learn all about how to set up an online store.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[What Exactly Is an Ecommerce Store?](#)

[How Does E-commerce Work?](#)

[How Much Does It Cost to Start an Online Store?](#)

[Most Popular Ecommerce Business Models](#)

[Business To Business \(B2B\)](#)

[Business To Customer \(B2C\)](#)

[Customer To Customer \(C2C\)](#)

[What Is an Ecommerce Platform?](#)

[Ecommerce Plugins for WordPress](#)

[Standalone Ecommerce Platforms](#)

[Types of Ecommerce Websites](#)

[Dropshipping](#)

[Service-Based Ecommerce](#)

[Physical Product-Based Ecommerce](#)

[Digital Product-Based Ecommerce](#)

[How to Start an Ecommerce Business from Scratch](#)

[1. Find Your Niche and Research Successful Businesses](#)

[2. Get Clear on the Type of Business You Want](#)

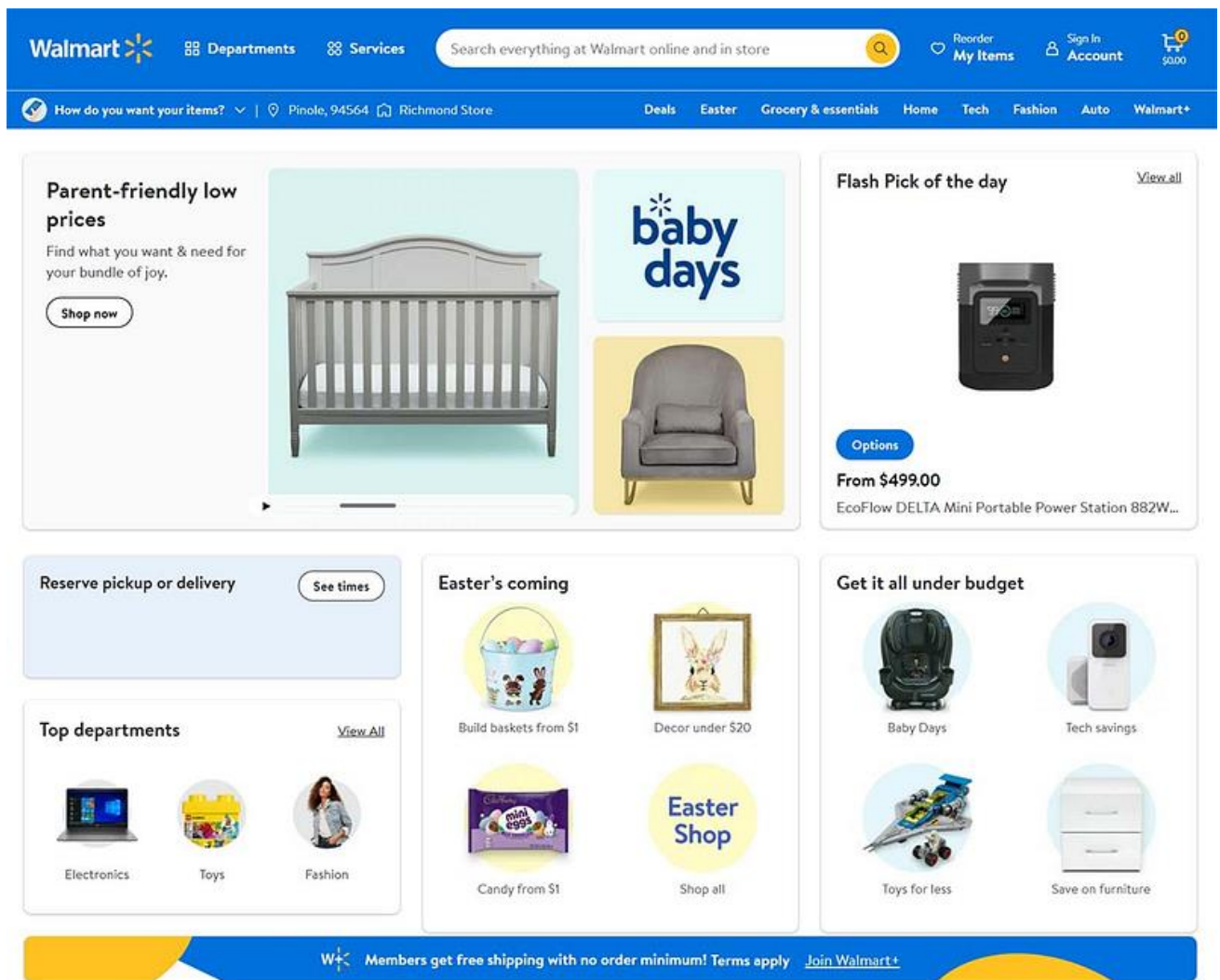
[3. Inform Yourself About Legal Requirements and Permits You Might Need](#)

[Take note!](#)

- [4. Get Clear With Your Business Plan](#)
 - [5. Pick an Ecommerce Platform](#)
 - [6. Build Your Online Storefront](#)
 - [7. Showcase Your Products](#)
 - [8. Learn Ecommerce Marketing](#)
 - [9. Measure Business Performance](#)
- [What Makes an Ecommerce Business Successful?](#)
- [1. A User-Friendly Website](#)
 - [2. Great Products](#)
 - [3. Competitive Pricing](#)
 - [4. Stellar Customer Service](#)
 - [5. Solid Marketing](#)
- [Now It's Your Turn!](#)

What Exactly Is an Ecommerce Store?

An ecommerce store is a website where you can sell products or services online. Visitors from anywhere in the world can visit your website and purchase your products. These types of stores can be small businesses that sell niche products such as pet supplies; or large multinational corporations such as Walmart that sell a wide range of goods and services.



At Walmart.com, you can purchase a large variety of goods, from baby products to electronics.

When you start your own online store, expect to start small and in a [specific niche](#). You can expand your business year by year, as you achieve new milestones.

How Does E-commerce Work?

On the most basic level, ecommerce works by allowing customers to browse products on your website, add items to their cart, and pay for their purchases. Then, the business fulfils the order by shipping the product to the customer.

Of course, there are several details to iron out when creating your store, including [how to set up an e-commerce website](#), as well as [how to get leads for your ecommerce website](#), but the general idea is very similar to purchasing items at a brick-and-mortar store, except customers must wait a few days for your product(s) to arrive.

How Much Does It Cost to Start an Online Store?

Starting a business specifically for ecommerce can cost anywhere from a few hundred dollars to several thousand dollars, depending on the size of your business, the type of business and products you're selling, and the ecommerce platform you choose to facilitate purchases.

For example, if you're on a budget, your startup expenses might look something like this:

- Domain name ([Google Domains](#) - \$12/yr)
- Web host ([WPX](#) - \$250/yr) WordPress theme and marketing tools ([Thrive Suite](#) - \$299/first yr)
- Ecommerce plugin ([WooCommerce](#) - free for basic features)
- Payment gateway ([Wise](#) - free for basic setup, fees are paid per transaction)
- Email marketing service ([Mailchimp](#) - free for basic features)
- Accounting software ([Quickbooks](#) - \$15/mo)
- Supplies (boxes, shipping labels, packing materials, postage)
- Business permit (varies)

So is it possible to start an ecommerce business for under \$1000? *Absolutely.* However, if you already have an established brick-and-mortar business, then bringing your business online may be more involved.

You may require extra features such as additional staff accounts, or additional online storefronts. Larger businesses may seek more advanced features such as the ones offered by [Shopify's](#) Advanced tier service (\$299/mo), or [BigCommerce's](#) Pro tier service (\$299/mo).

You don't need to have a massive budget to grow your business, but you do need to invest in the right tools and resources, and it's wise to develop a step-by-step plan for starting your business.

Most Popular Ecommerce Business Models

Before you start an e-commerce business, it's important to understand the different business models available so that you can choose the best one for your specific online business. The most common ecommerce models are business to business (B2B), business to customer (B2C), and customer to customer (C2C).

Business To Business (B2B)

B2B refers to the buying and selling of goods and services between businesses. Some examples of B2B are:

- Manufacturing car parts and selling them to car manufacturers, such as [Lear](#)
- Providing a service that businesses use, such as [Coschedule](#)

- Selling products to distributors and wholesalers
-

The benefits of a B2B model include:


- Dependable repeat business since businesses will have recurring demand for your product(s)
- Lower marketing costs as your niche industry business customers can be targeted with surgical precision, and
- Higher order values, as B2B sales are typically made in larger quantities and values compared to B2C and C2C sales.

Business To Customer (B2C)

B2C refers to the buying and selling of goods and services between businesses and customers – customers meaning individuals or end users. In ecommerce, B2C refers to businesses that sell to individuals via their online stores.

Some examples of B2C are:

- [Zappos.com](https://www.zappos.com) selling shoes to the general public
- [Yoga-urt](https://www.yoga-urt.com) selling vegan frozen desserts to general public
- [The Yoga Shala](https://www.theyogashala.com) selling online yoga classes and courses to the general public



The Yoga Shala Windhoek

Now Offering Online Yoga Classes!
— Yoga Anywhere, Anytime —

[Click Here for Online Class Info](#) [Click Here for In-Studio Class Info](#)

Many of Windhoek's yoga teachers have come together to provide a home for anyone seeking to begin, continue or deepen their yoga practice. We have created a healing space that focuses on physical, mental & emotional health and wellbeing. We invite you to join our yoga family.

Businesses such as the The Yoga Shala that sell online classes to the general public are considered B2C businesses.

The benefits to choosing a B2C model include:

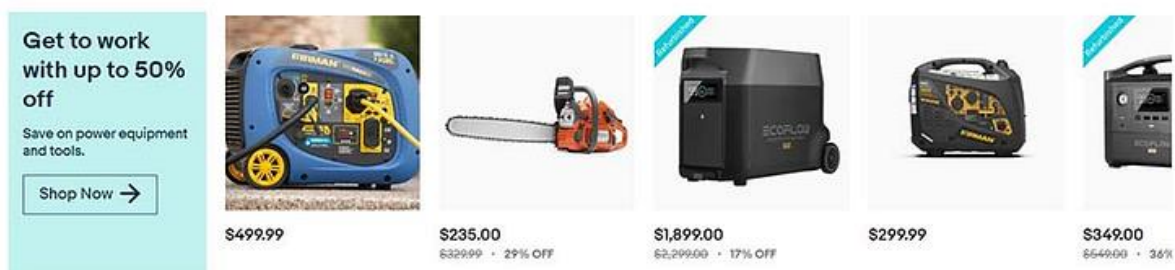
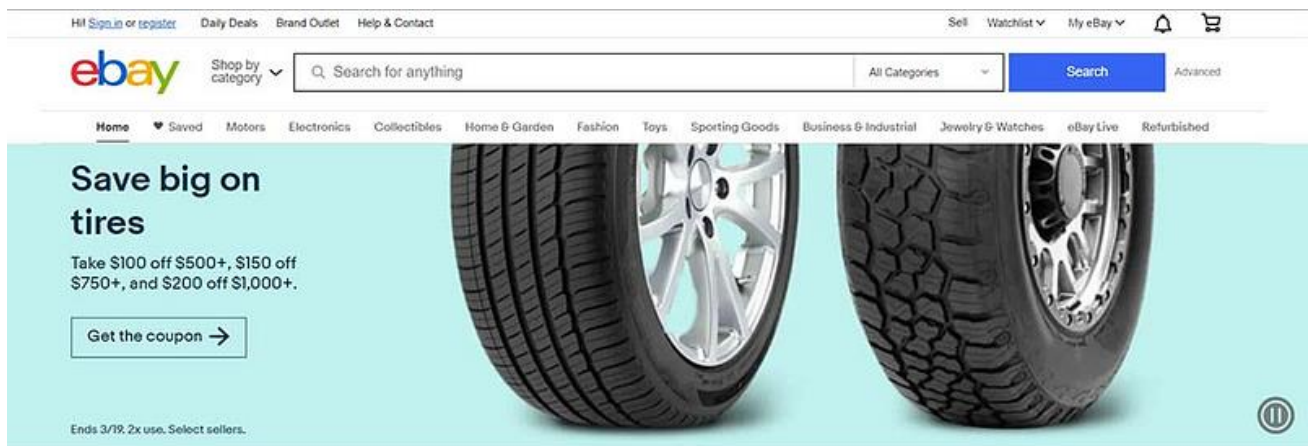
- Access to a larger number of customers (potentially leading to more sales)
- The ability to have your brand recognized more widely, develop deeper brand loyalty, and
- Higher profits than selling to wholesalers because you aren't splitting the earnings with the wholesaler

Customer To Customer (C2C)

C2C refers to the buying and selling of goods and services from one customer to another customer. This model facilitates commerce between individuals.

Some examples are:

- Marketplace websites such as [eBay](#)
- Fashion and beauty websites such as [Poshmark](#)
- Selling personal possessions on [Offerup](#)



Ebay is one of the most popular C2C websites worldwide.

The benefits of a C2C model include:

- A large selection of goods, many of which may no longer be available through traditional retailers.
- The ability to earn revenue without having to purchase or store physical products.
- The ability to reach a wide audience through products being suggested in Google search results.

If you would like to start a business focusing on peer-to-peer transactions, then the C2C model is for you.

What Is an Ecommerce Platform?

An ecommerce platform is a software application that allows business owners to display their goods for sale, take payments, and keep track of orders. It also allows store owners to manage inventory, shipping, taxes, and more.

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of e-commerce platforms to consider: **ecommerce plugins for WordPress**, and **standalone ecommerce platforms**.

Ecommerce Plugins for WordPress

Ecommerce plugins for WordPress let you build your storefront and sell products from a WordPress website.

This makes it super handy to set up an online store on the same domain as your main website, as well as market your products alongside blog posts, set up scarcity marketing campaigns for your entire website, and use an

automation plugin like [Thrive Automator](#) to create time-saving and business boosting automations.

One of the most cost effective ecommerce platforms for online business owners is **WooCommerce**, an ecommerce plugin built specifically for WordPress websites. And one of the big benefits to using WooCommerce is that it is natively integrated with [Thrive Suite](#).

Standalone Ecommerce Platforms

Standalone ecommerce platforms are paid services made exclusively for building ecommerce websites, such as **Shopify** and **BigCommerce**. These services offer everything you need to start your ecommerce store, and do not require another platform such as WordPress to set up.

If you have a large, established business with thousands of SKUs and require advanced ecommerce features, then you may want to look into using a standalone ecommerce platform to run your online store.

In addition, standalone ecommerce platforms typically have built-in payment gateways, which means you'll spend less time figuring out how to set up and integrate your website tools on the back end.

Types of Ecommerce Websites

Ecommerce websites come in several different forms including dropshipping, service-based, physical product-based, and digital product-based ecommerce. Let's go over each of these in turn.

Dropshipping

Dropshipping is a business model where the business owner doesn't hold any inventory. Instead, the business owner takes orders, then forwards them to a supplier who fulfills the orders.

One of the biggest advantages of dropshipping is the low startup costs. Since you don't have to invest in inventory, you can launch your business with minimal financial investment.

Additionally, you can operate your business from anywhere in the world, as long as you have access to the internet – a *significant* advantage for digital nomads and entrepreneurs who want to start a location-independent business on a budget.

However, dropshipping also has some drawbacks. The first disadvantage is that you have little control over the quality of the products you are selling since you rely on third-party suppliers to manufacture and fulfill orders.

If the supplier provides low-quality products, your customers will be dissatisfied, which can damage your reputation.

Another major drawback to dropshipping is the low profit margins. Since you are not buying in bulk, you will pay a higher price for the products you sell, reducing your profit potential. Additionally, high shipping costs can further reduce your profit margin.

For business owners who are interested in starting an ecommerce store, but who do not wish to invest time and resources into holding onto inventory or shipping it out, dropshipping is a fantastic ecommerce store option.

However, the lack of control over product quality and low profit margins are significant disadvantages that one would be wise to consider before launching a dropshipping business.

Service-Based Ecommerce

A service-based ecommerce website sells services online. For example, if you're a freelance writer, photographer, or transcriber, you can sell your services online.

These types of businesses have several advantages. One of the biggest advantages is the high profit margins. Since there is no physical product involved, the cost of providing your service is minimal.

Additionally, service-based ecommerce offers recurring revenue potential. If you provide a valuable service, your clients are likely to return to you repeatedly, creating a steady stream of income.

Another advantage of service-based ecommerce is the flexibility it provides. You can work from anywhere in the world, as long as you have access to the internet.

This allows you to choose your own working hours as well as work around other commitments. Additionally, you have the freedom to choose the types of projects you work on, allowing you to develop your skills in areas that interest you.

On the other hand, service-based ecommerce also has some disadvantages. One of the main drawbacks is the potential for competition. Depending on your niche, there may be a lot of competition in the market, making it challenging to attract clients.

Another significant disadvantage is the potential for a lack of stability. Service-based ecommerce is reliant on a steady stream of clients, and if you are unable to attract new clients, your income can quickly dry up.

If you're able to put a system in place for regularly attracting new clients, and retaining old ones, then a service-based ecommerce business may be perfect for you.

Physical Product-Based Ecommerce

Physical product-based ecommerce websites sell tangible items that are either shipped to customers, or held for pickup. For example, [Warby Parker](#) sells eyeglasses. After placing your order online, your eyeglasses are shipped to your home.

Like the other types of ecommerce websites, physical product-based ecommerce has its pros and cons. One of the biggest advantages is its potential for high sales volume.

Physical products often have a broad customer base, and if you can identify products with high demand, you can generate *significant* sales revenue.

Additionally, physical products offer the potential for recurring sales, as customers often need to replace or replenish their products.

What's more, a physical product-based ecommerce business offers high profit margin potential. If you can source products at a low cost and sell them at a higher price, you can generate substantial profits.

One of the biggest drawbacks, however, is the need for inventory management. You will need to invest in inventory and manage it carefully to ensure that you have enough stock to meet demand, but never so much stock that you tie up your capital in managing excess inventory.

Another significant disadvantage is the need for shipping and fulfillment. You will need to establish relationships with shipping providers and manage the fulfillment process carefully to ensure that your customers receive their products in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Shipping and fulfillment can also be expensive, which can cut into your profit margins.

A physical product-based ecommerce business can be a profitable and scalable business model, but inventory management, shipping, and fulfillment can be a challenge to manage.

Digital Product-Based Ecommerce

Digital products are an ecommerce *goldmine* and can include:

- Ebooks
- Online courses
- Memberships
- Software
- Music

Digital products have several highly-desired advantages. One of the biggest advantages is scalability. Once you have created a digital product, such as an online course or ebook, it can be sold repeatedly without the need for additional production costs.

This makes digital product-based ecommerce an excellent business model for generating passive income.

Another advantage of digital product ecommerce is its low overhead costs. Since there is no physical product involved, the cost of production is minimal, and there are no shipping or inventory costs.

But of course, everything has drawbacks. One of the main drawbacks is the potential for piracy. Because digital products can be easily shared and distributed online, this can lead to lost revenue if your products are copied and shared without permission.

Another significant disadvantage is the need for effective marketing. Since digital products are intangible, it can be challenging to communicate their value to potential customers.

You will need to invest time and effort into developing effective marketing funnels to sell your digital products.

So take a few minutes to think about which of the above ecommerce business models is right for you, then it's time to get started building it!

How to Start an Ecommerce Business from Scratch

Now that you know the basics of ecommerce, are you ready to start building? Let's go over the steps you need to take to get started.

1. Find Your Niche and Research Successful Businesses

The first step is to [decide on a niche](#) and research more about the type of business you want to run. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Are there other successful businesses in your niche?
- What factors have contributed to their success?
- How will your business stand out from the competition?
- Is there demand for the product you want to sell?
- How will you attract customers?

Once you have solid answers for the above questions, then you can start an online store with confidence.

2. Get Clear on the Type of Business You Want

Before you go all-out setting up your online store, consider the many different types of businesses you can start and narrow your ideas down to one or two areas of focus. Will you be selling:

- Physical products?

- Digital products? Like:
 - Courses
 - Memberships
 - Ebooks
 - Services?
 - Bundles containing multiple items?

Also think about your short term and long-term goals. For example, perhaps in the short term, it'll be easiest to begin selling services, and within a year or two you could take what you've learned and start scaling your business by selling digital product courses instead.

3. Inform Yourself About Legal Requirements and Permits You Might Need

While the internet at one time may have been like the wild west, these days online businesses are held to certain standards.

When setting up an online store, it's essential to inform yourself about the legal requirements and permits you may need to operate your business legally.

The laws and regulations surrounding ecommerce can be complex and vary by jurisdiction, so it's crucial to do thorough research and ensure compliance with all relevant regulations.

One of the first things you'll need to consider is whether you need to register your business. This will depend on your location and the type of business you're running. In most cases, you'll need to obtain a business license, which

may be issued by your local government. You may also need to register your business with your state or national government.

Another important legal requirement to consider is taxation. In most countries, ecommerce businesses are subject to the same tax laws as brick-and-mortar businesses. You may need to obtain a tax identification number, collect and remit sales tax, and file regular tax returns.

Additionally, you'll need to ensure that your online store is compliant with data protection and privacy regulations. This may include complying with GDPR in the European Union, CCPA in California, or other regional privacy laws.

You'll need to inform your customers about the data you collect, how it's used, and give them the option to opt-out or request that their data be deleted.

Take note!

Also be aware that most customers generally expect to see a Privacy Policy page and a Terms and Conditions page on your website. Consult with a business advisor in your area, and do not simply copy and paste these pages from another website, as that is plagiarism.

4. Get Clear With Your Business Plan

You know the old adage, “Failing to plan is planning to fail”? As trite as it sounds, when it comes to selling online, it’s actually true.

To start your business plan, it's important to define your business's mission and goals. This should include a clear description of the products or services you'll offer, your target market, and the unique value proposition that sets your business apart from competitors. You'll also need to consider financial goals, such as revenue targets and expenses.

Next, you'll need to research your target market and competitors. This includes understanding customer needs, preferences, and buying behavior. It's important to identify your competitors and analyze their strengths, weaknesses, and market position.

This information will help you develop strategies to differentiate your business and capture market share.

Your business plan should also outline your marketing and sales strategy. This includes how you'll promote your products or services, the channels you'll use to reach customers, and how you'll measure success. You'll also need to consider logistics, such as shipping and handling, inventory management, and fulfillment.

Finally, your business plan should include financial projections and a budget. This should cover startup costs, ongoing expenses, revenue projections, and profitability analysis. It's important to have a realistic understanding of your financial needs and to plan accordingly.

If you create a holistic business plan that is reasonable and doable with your budget and timeline, your new business venture is sure to be a success!

5. Pick an Ecommerce Platform

Next, you'll need to choose an ecommerce platform that suits your needs. Choosing a platform can be a daunting task, as there are so many options available in the market. Among the popular ecommerce platforms available today, [WordPress](#) is a great choice for those looking for flexibility, scalability, and ease of use.

When it comes to WordPress, one of the most popular ecommerce plugins available is [WooCommerce](#). This plugin is free to use and has a vast number of extensions that can be used to customize your online store. It's easy to install and use, making it an ideal choice for small business owners who don't have extensive technical knowledge.

To make things even easier, we recommend using the [Thrive Theme Builder WordPress theme](#), which works hand-in-hand with both WordPress and WooCommerce.

This theme is designed to make building an online store easy and hassle-free, with a user-friendly interface that allows you to customize every aspect of your store.

It also has built-in conversion optimization features that can help increase your store's sales and revenue.

In fact, we have a detailed tutorial on how to set up this winning combination quickly. [Check it out here.](#)

6. Build Your Online Storefront

Your online storefront needs to be user-friendly, visually appealing, and easy to navigate. Thankfully, most ecommerce platforms come with easy-to-use templates to help you create a professional-looking storefront quickly and easily.

One reason why we recommend using [Thrive Theme Builder and WooCommerce](#) to build your ecommerce website is that you can easily customize professionally designed storefront templates using Thrive Themes Builder's no code visual editor.

7. Showcase Your Products

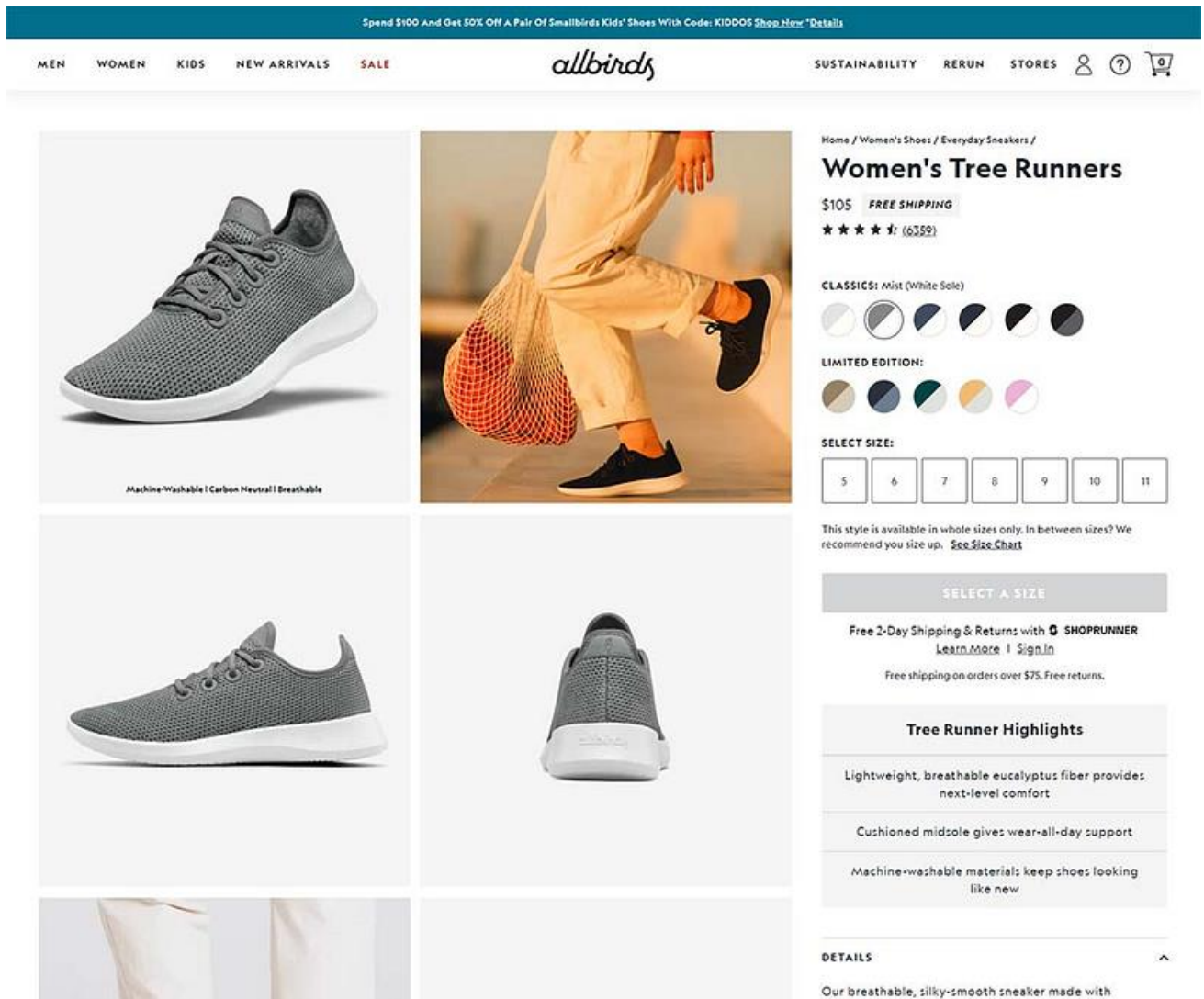
After designing your main storefront pages, you'll need to create listings for individual products.

Showcasing your products effectively is essential when creating an ecommerce store. Your products are the lifeblood of your business, and how you present them to potential customers can make all the difference in whether or not they decide to make a purchase. Here are a few strategies for showcasing your products effectively:

- **High-Quality Product Photography:** High-quality product photography is one of the most important aspects of showcasing your products online. Make sure your product photos are clear, well-lit, and show your products from multiple angles. If you can, include lifestyle photos that show your products in use.
- **Detailed Product Descriptions:** Along with great product photos, detailed product descriptions are essential. Make sure to include all relevant information about your products, including

materials, dimensions, features, and benefits. Use clear, concise language and highlight the key selling points of each product.

- **Video Demonstrations:** Video demonstrations are becoming increasingly popular as a way to showcase products online. Consider creating short videos that show your products in action, highlighting their features and benefits.



Allbirds is a great example of how to take high quality photos and provide clear, detailed product descriptions.

By using high-quality product photography, detailed descriptions, and videos, you can make it easier for customers to decide if a product suits their specific needs.

8. Learn Ecommerce Marketing

Now it's time to promote your products and get as many views on your product listing pages as possible.

Here are a few strategies for marketing ecommerce products effectively:

1. **Search Engine Optimization (SEO):** SEO is the practice of optimizing your website for search engines so that your products appear at or near the top of search engine results pages. This includes keyword research, on-page optimization, and building high-quality backlinks to your site.
2. **Social Media Marketing:** Social media marketing is a great way to reach new customers and build brand awareness. This includes creating engaging social media content, running paid social media ads, and partnering with influencers in your niche.
3. **Email Marketing:** Email marketing is an effective way to nurture leads and build relationships with your customers. This includes building an email list, segmenting your list based on customer behaviour and interests, and creating engaging email campaigns.
4. **Paid Advertising:** Paid advertising, such as Google Ads and Facebook Ads, can be a great way to drive targeted traffic to your website. This includes creating engaging ad copy, targeting the right audience, and tracking and optimizing your campaigns for maximum ROI.
5. **Content Marketing:** Content marketing is the practice of creating high-quality content that attracts and engages your target audience. This includes creating blog posts, videos, infographics, and other types of content that provide value to your audience and help establish your brand as an authority in your niche.

6. Marketing ecommerce products often involves a multi-channel approach that includes SEO, social media marketing, email marketing, paid advertising, and content marketing.

By developing a comprehensive marketing strategy that leverages these channels effectively, you can drive traffic to your website, increase sales, and start a successful business.

9. Measure Business Performance

Now that your business is running like clockwork, be sure to monitor your business and look for ways to improve. Build trackable metrics around answering the following questions:

- Where is the majority of your website traffic coming from?
- What are your conversion rates?
- What are your cart abandonment rates?
- What prevents people from buying?
- Is there anything you can do to decrease friction in the customer journey?

Remember to keep evaluating your business and improve your processes, products, and customer experience.

What Makes an Ecommerce Business Successful?

Now that you know the steps necessary to build your ecommerce store, what factors contribute to making a business successful?

1. A User-Friendly Website

First and foremost, a successful ecommerce business in 2023 needs a user-friendly website. Your website should be easy to navigate, with a clean design and clear calls-to-action. Be sure to optimize your website for mobile, as [over 40% of all ecommerce sales](#) are now done from mobile devices.

2. Great Products

Offering high-quality products is crucial to building your business. Aim to provide products that meet the needs of your target audience while also setting you apart from your competitors.

3. Competitive Pricing

Pricing is often a huge factor in whether or not people choose to buy. Check out some of your fellow competitors to ensure your prices are reasonable in comparison to what other competitors in your niche are offering.

4. Stellar Customer Service

Providing excellent customer service builds trust and repeat customers. So go the extra mile to make it easy for customers to contact you, and respond promptly to their inquiries.

5. Solid Marketing

Finally, in order for your venture to be successful, you'll need a solid marketing strategy. Use marketing channels such as [email marketing](#), social media marketing, and [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) to reach potential customers.

Then, be sure to have re-marketing campaigns in place, as well as [a system for gathering reviews and testimonials](#).

Now It's Your Turn!

Now that you know all the steps needed to start an online ecommerce business, it's time for you to apply what you've learned and get your business up and running.

We recommend using **Tourandtakein / Us** to build and launch your online business website using WordPress. Then, use an ecommerce plugin such as [WooCommerce](#) to add ecommerce functionality to your site.

So with this guide on how to start an ecommerce store in hand, go ahead and take the first step! And let us know how it goes down in the comments below!

Tip: Why not use a [Worldwide exchange](#)?

This helping you when buying, and helping your worldwide customer save on exchange rates, extortionate bank transactions.

We travel the world and constantly use [Wise](#) as our exchange card, Why?

- It's fast with all transactions, sometimes minutes.
- The exchange rate is always one of the best.
- Can be used portal and on your smartphone.
- You will also receive a card.
- You can send money to over 154 countries.
-
- **I also use this has my safety net just in case I lose my UK bank card!**

Our services we offer:

Building your website/blog.

Helping you to pick a memorable store or blog name.

SEO for Google indexing.

Online lessons on any of the above features and benefits.

Showing you how to affiliate your ecommerce site.

On-going business consultation.