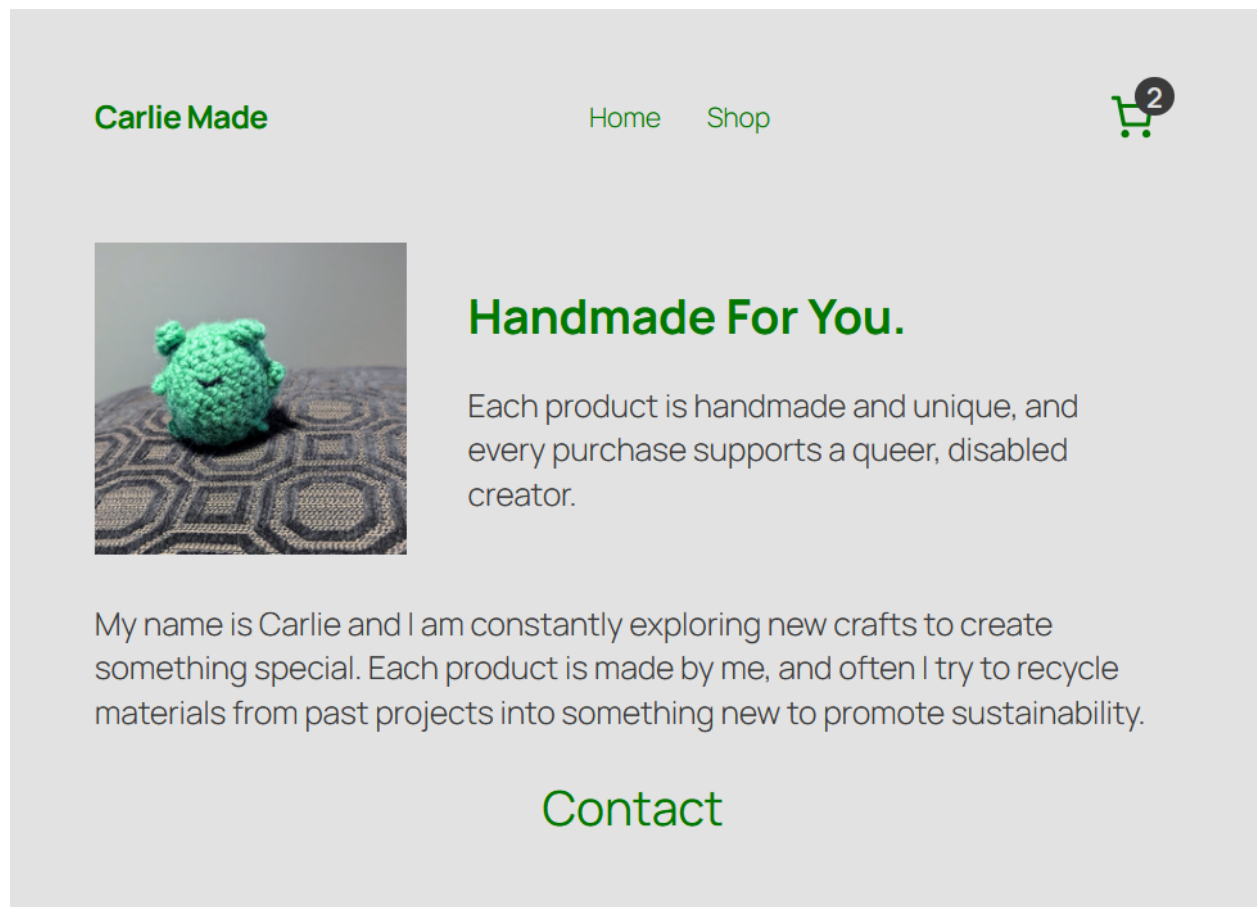


CREATE AN E-COMMERCE WEBSITE

A web development guide for small businesses



Carlie Zeisler

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INTRODUCTION

The benefits of e-commerce platforms are undeniable, providing small businesses with the opportunity to reach more customers by overcoming location and time constraints. Although the idea of getting into e-commerce can seem intimidating, there are a number of resources available to make the process relatively painless. Ultimately, it boils down to six steps: planning, product photography, creating the shop, filling orders, promoting your business, and maintaining your shop.

This guide will walk you through the steps needed to establish e-commerce, from hosting to design to product photos and descriptions. Additionally, an example website will be shown to illustrate a possible approach to an e-commerce website. [That can be found here.](#)

It is recommended that you review the guide before starting.

DEFINITIONS

There are some words to keep in mind in the creation of an online store.

- **E-commerce:** sales that take place over the internet
- **Content management service:** A tool to create a website or product listing without coding knowledge.
- **Domain:** The name used to find your business online. This will likely be your business' name.
- **Web hosting:** A service that allows your platform to be on the internet.
- **Scalability:** The ability to grow the size of your business, either from a marketing standpoint or a technical standpoint.
- **Listing:** The place where customers can view your product and details on said product
- **Theme:** The general placement of elements on a website.
- **Plugin:** an add-on to a service.
- **Dashboard:** a main page with different options and notifications.

STEP ONE: CREATE A CONTENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

Before taking further steps, you should first decide what platform will be best for displaying your products.

There are three broad categories for creating an online storefront:

- Multi seller platforms such as Etsy, Amazon, Redbubble, or eBay. For the purposes of this guide, the main example used will be Etsy.
- An all-in-one service that provides web hosting, e-commerce options, and content management all in one platform. For this, the main example used will be Shopify.
- Using separate services for web hosting, content management, and e-commerce. This will be what the example website uses due to it being a more involved process. For this, [ICDSOft](#) will be used for web hosting, [WordPress.org](#) will be used for content management, and the [WooCommerce WordPress plugin](#) will be used for e-commerce features.

There are benefits and drawbacks to each service, and it is important to use these to determine what will be the best option for your business.

	Etsy	Shopify	ICDSOft, WordPress, WooCommerce
Cost/Fees*	\$29 setup fee, \$0.20 listing fee per item, sale fee of 6.5% price of item To learn more about Etsy's fees, click here.	\$39-399 monthly, depending on plan selection To learn more about plans, click here	ICDSOft: \$10 dollars monthly for web hosting, ~\$11 for domain registration billed annually. To learn about ICDSOft pricing, click here. WooCommerce: \$0.30 per transaction and 2.9% of transaction total To learn about WooCommerce pricing, click here.
Support Service	The Etsy Help page (link) contains an FAQ and means to contact support staff, including a live chat feature.	The Shopify Help Center (link) has an FAQ and a virtual assistant that will connect you to support staff if needed.	Support Forums For WordPress (link) have an FAQ section but no live chat feature. WooCommerce has an FAQ and contact feature (link), but no live chat. ICDSOft has 24 hour live support.
Scalability	Etsy's costs and services stay consistent regardless of business size. It's more of a "one size	Plans can be increased for additional costs to obtain more resources and	WooCommerce can handle large amounts of traffic without additional costs, however they

	fits all” approach. There are options to advertise your store. On-site advertising uses a cost per click (CPC) system, where the shop owner can set a daily budget for how many clicks they will pay for. Off-site advertising varies on business income. To learn more about Etsy advertising, click here.	services for the business. There are a number of advertising methods, although they are unclear on pricing. To read more about these methods, click here. User testimony on third party platforms feel this is the easiest platform to scale.	recommend paying for additional maintenance and support, ranging from \$299-1899 monthly, billed annually. To read more about these plans, click here. WooCommerce has a variety of marketing strategies for varying prices. To learn more, click here. To read about general scalability, click here.
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*With these being simply example sites to demonstrate the different options, there are other options that might vary in price. These are just more popular options.

With multi seller platforms, there is a potential drawback worth noting. As it is one large platform with a lot of sellers, there is a chance of a sudden shuttering of your storefront. A common example of this is when an outside company claims copyright infringement on a large number of sellers, there is a chance the platform will just close the shop without investigating the claim. This can result in the income that was currently tied up in the platform being lost and losing access to the store. To hear more about this, check out the video [The Company that Sued 700 Small Businesses at Once || Understanding the SAD Scheme](#) from emma in the moment.

STEP TWO: GET PRODUCT PICTURES

Before you go any further, you might want to get your product pictures now so you don’t have to stop and get them later when setting up your website.

- **Get Your Supplies.** You don’t need to have an expensive camera or elaborate photography setup, but there are some things you need or might want:
 - **A Camera or a phone with a camera:** In this example, it is a Google Pixel 7 Pro phone, but most phones can take a quality product photo.
 - **Backdrop:** If you want, you can hang a backdrop. Just make sure it is clean and your product is still easy to see.
 - **Anything you want to set your product on to display it:** For this guide, I used a couch pillow, but it could also be things like a tablecloth or a jewelry stand. Again, just ensure the product is easy to see.

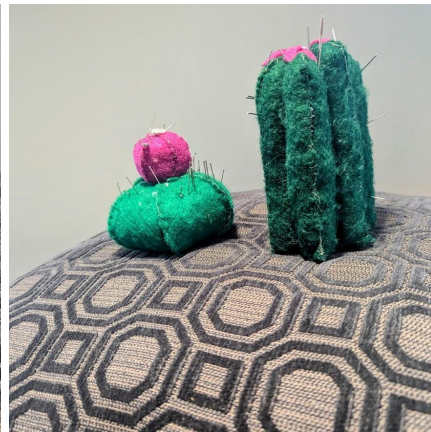
- **Lighting.** Many people purchase a diffuser screen with natural lighting from a window. This guide uses a mix of natural lighting (without a diffuser screen) and a [Kikkerland Selfie Ring Light](#) that I bought for cheap (although any ring light will do)
- **Create Your Setup.** Hang any backdrop you are using and gather any other props, lighting or display pieces you need. Here is my setup:



- **Take Your Pictures.** Leave some room to crop the pictures later. Make sure you get a few angles of your product to highlight any features of it.



- **Edit Your Photos.** Many types of product listings will use square images, so it is recommended that you crop your pictures into squares. Additionally, you might want to make minor adjustments to a picture's brightness or saturation. Just make sure it is still accurate to your product.



STEP THREE: OPEN YOUR SHOP

Based on what option you choose, move on to the following pages:

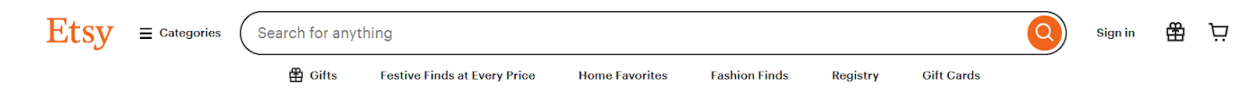
- **Etsy:** Page 7
- **Shopify:** Page 10
- **WordPress/ICDSoft:** Page 13

STARTING AN ETSY SHOP

- **Decide on branding.** If you already have an established business, you already have a name and product, and you might have some graphic designs, ideas on demographics, and social media accounts. If not, there might be more work to be done before you start the store. Here are some things to consider:
 - What is your product? Who are the intended customers?
 - What imagery and colors will best attract your intended customers?
 - What name will catch the attention of your potential customers?
 - Many people recommend claiming any usernames and the domain name at this point, even if you do not intend on using it. This allows for maintaining a consistent brand across the internet, and if you decide you do want to use those platforms, you do not have to worry about them having already been taken by someone else.

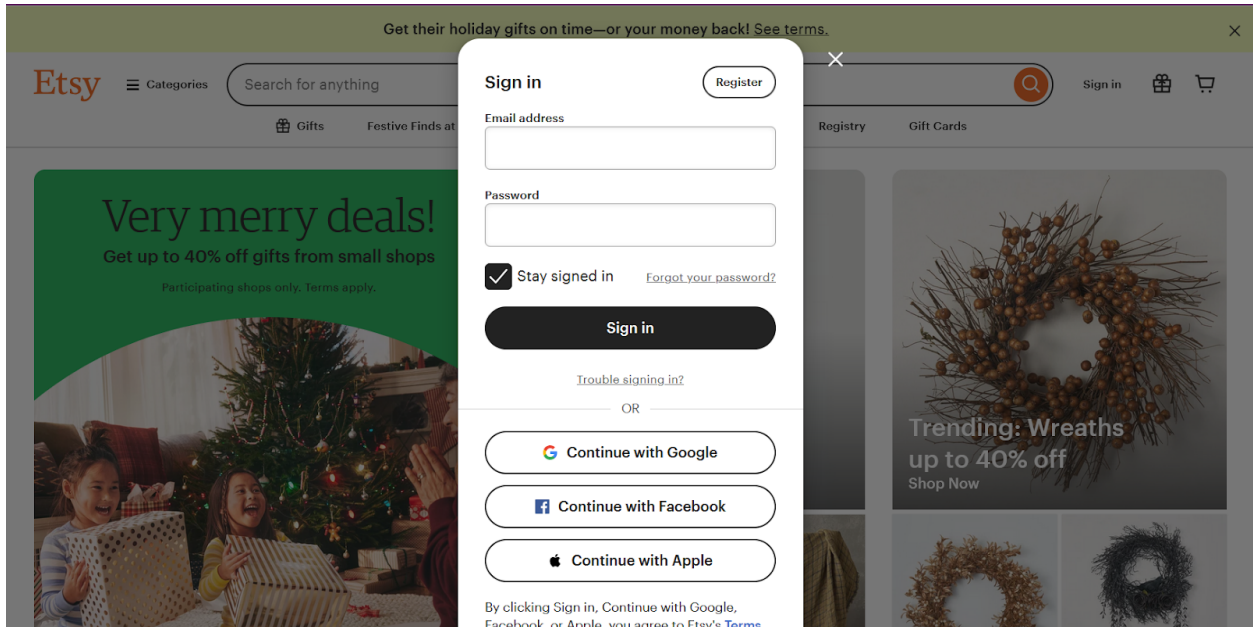
Regardless of if you already have a business or if you are just starting out, it is a good idea to look at your branding. The video [Watch This BEFORE Starting an Etsy Shop](#) from Starla Moore explains this with her own examples.

- **Sign into Etsy or create an Etsy account.** If you've shopped on Etsy before, you already have one, but if not, you will need to make one. Find the "Sign In" button in the upper right of the screen.



If you already have an account, enter your information here. If not, hit the

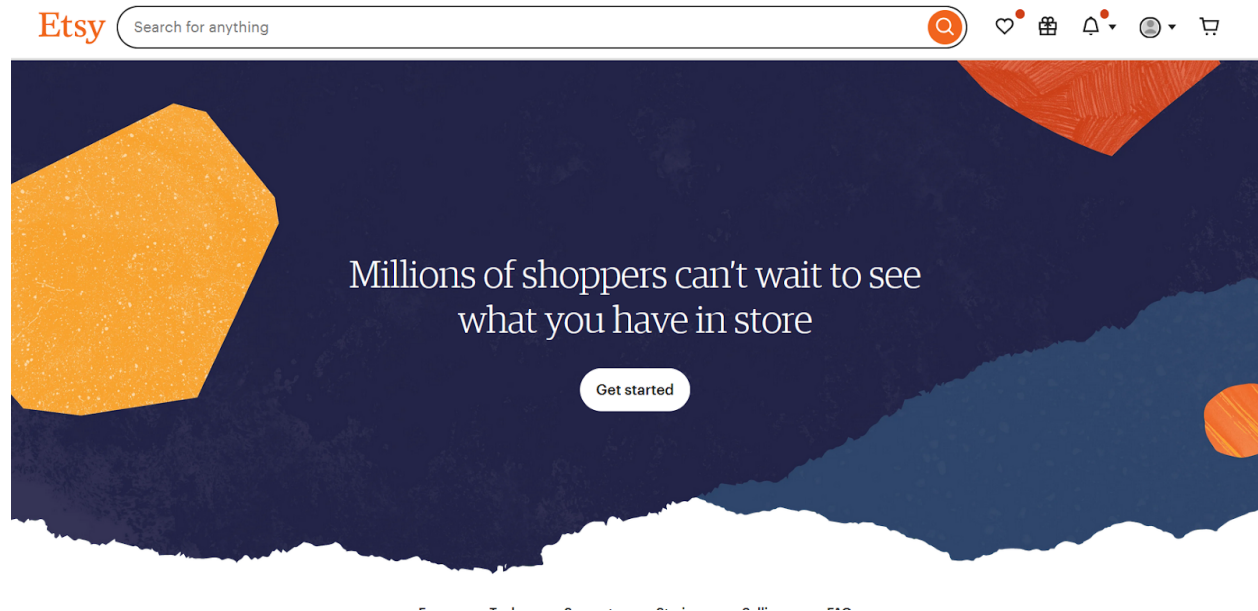
register button on the upper right of the pop up.



If you are registering, enter your username (not your shop name, pick something else for your username, possibly your name), first name, and password as prompted.

Whether you already have an account or are creating one, add a profile picture and biography. This builds more trust if a potential customer looks at your profile.

- **Create your store.** Go to <https://www.etsy.com/sell> and hit “Get Started”.



Answer the prompts that follow.

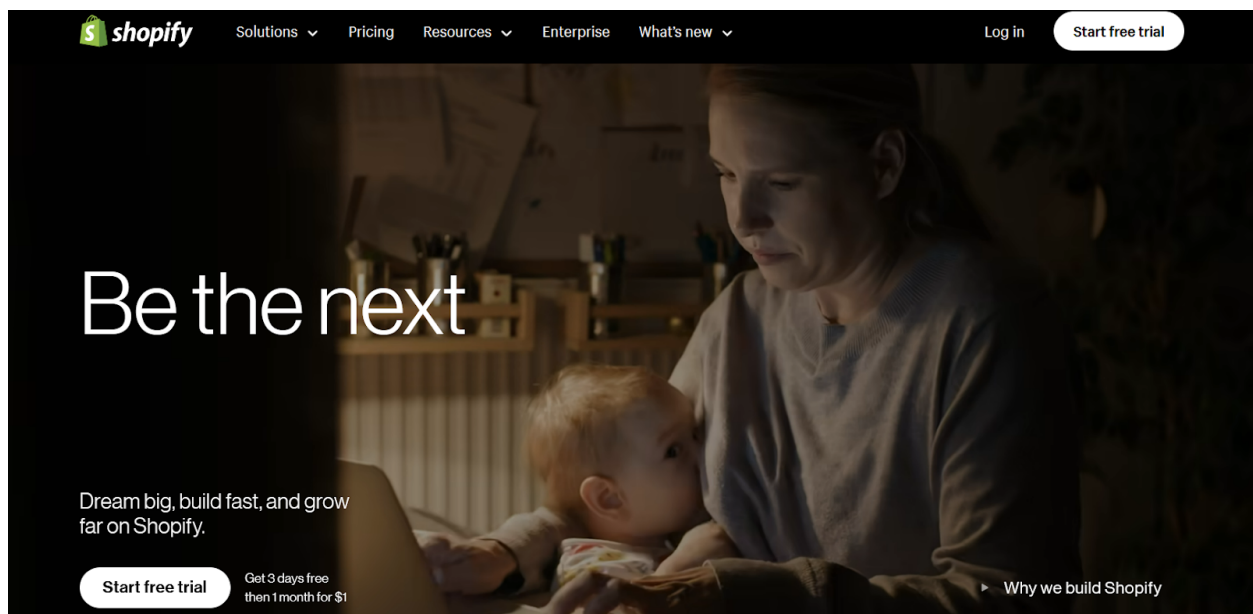
- **Create Listings.** You do not need to make them all at once. Use your product photos and make your titles and descriptions. Descriptions should be eye-catching but still detailed.
- **Follow the prompts to verify your identity.** It should ask you for a photo of a government ID and a picture of yourself.
- **Continue to Follow prompts for payment and billing information.** It will have you set up the way you will get paid (i.e., PayPal or bank account information) and require your credit card information to pay for Etsy's fees.
- **Add a profile picture, banner image, and biography.** Again, think about branding. What do you want your customers to know about your business?
- **Set shop policies.** This includes order processing time, returns, customs and taxes, and accepted payment methods.

To learn more about setting up your shop, check out Etsy's [How To Open An Etsy Shop](#).

Additionally, Katherine Haan and Lauren Holznienkemper made a guide with Forbes, [How To Start An Etsy Shop: Ready To Sell In 9 Easy Steps](#). It is missing some steps but provides a number of images highlighting the process.

STARTING A SHOPIFY STORE

- **Decide on branding.** If you already have an established business, you already have a name and product, and you might have some graphic designs, ideas on demographics, and social media accounts. If not, there might be more work to be done before you start the store. Here are some things to consider:
 - What is your product? Who are the intended customers?
 - What imagery and colors will best attract your intended customers?
 - What name will catch the attention of your potential customers?
 - Many people recommend claiming any username at this point, even if you do not intend to use it. This allows for maintaining a consistent brand across the internet, and if you decide you do want to use those platforms, you do not have to worry about them having already been taken by someone else.
 - Shopify has a [free logo maker](#) that you can use to create your store's logo if you do not have one already.
- **Create An Account.** Go to Shopify's website and hit "Start Free Trial".



- **Answer The Question Prompts.** This will help guide you through what the best options for a Shopify Plan might be. However, you also can skip the questions.
- **Create A Shopify ID.** This can be through email, Google, Facebook, or Apple.
- **Get A Domain.** On your account dashboard, select Add Domain. You do have the option to keep a default domain that adds ".myshopify" into the URL, however it is

generally considered to look better if you create a custom domain.

- Select “Buy A New Domain”.
 - Enter your domain name into the search bar. If your domain name is unavailable, select one of the recommended names, or enter other names into the search bar until you find something you like.
 - After you select the domain name, enter your payment information and hit “Buy Domain”.
- **Set Up Your Payment Methods.** Select the payment methods you will allow customers to use and hit “Activate Shopify Payments”.
 - Enter your business’ details as prompted
- **If You Are In The United States, Register For Sales Tax Collection.** If you have not registered your business in your state, do that first. Check with a professional to see if you need to collect sales tax. If so, turn on Tax Collection.
- **Set Up Shipping.** Go to settings and select “Shipping and Delivery”.
 - Enter the address of where you are shipping from.
 - Select your shipping speeds and carriers.
- **Add Any Additional Pages You Want.** This could be an About Page or a Contact Form or anything else you feel is important.
 - From your admin dashboard, select “Online Store” and then select “Pages”.
 - Hit “Add Page”.
 - Enter the page title and content.
 - Find the Visibility Section, select where the page will be displayed.
 - Hit “Save”.
 - Return to the admin dashboard, and select “Online Store” and then “Navigation”
 - Click the menu you want to add the page to and select “Add Menu Item”
 - Enter the name of the page.
 - Enter the link to your page.
 - Click “Add” and then click “Save”.
- **Design Your Store.** On your dashboard, hit “Customize Theme”. You can either use the default theme, or select a new one. There are a number of free and paid options.
 - When you’ve found something, hit “Customize”.
 - Upload any images for your store’s website. This can be a physical storefront, a product image, or something else that might appeal to potential customers. If using an image you did not take, make sure you are allowed to use the image and that customers will not mistake the image as being one of your products.

- Change colors of the theme to colors associated with your brand.
- **Add Products.** On the dashboard, find “Products” in the menu on the left. Click “Add Product”.
 - Enter name, pictures, description, and pricing. Use your product photos and make your titles and descriptions. Descriptions should be eye-catching but still detailed.
 - You also enter item quantity, color options, and size options here.
 - Click Save.
- **Set Up Order Fulfillment.** Click on “Settings”, then click “General”
 - Click “Order Processing”
 - Shopify lists some of the considerations and steps in [Setting Up Order Fulfillment](#).

Be sure to look at [Shopify’s resources](#) and Brian Connolly’s JungleScout article [How to Sell on Shopify: 11-Step Guide for 2024](#) for more details, resources, and pictures.

CREATING A WEBSITE

This option involves creating a separate website and using WordPress with WooCommerce plugins.

- **Decide on branding.** If you already have an established business, you already have a name and product, and you might have some graphic designs, ideas on demographics, and social media accounts. If not, there might be more work to be done before you start the store. Here are some things to consider:
 - What is your product? Who are the intended customers?
 - What imagery and colors will best attract your intended customers?
 - What name will catch the attention of your potential customers?
- Many people recommend claiming any username at this point, even if you do not intend on using it. This allows for maintaining a consistent brand across the internet, and if you decide you do want to use those platforms, you do not have to worry about them having already been taken by someone else.
- **Buy a domain name and web hosting services.** Go to [ICDSOft](#) or the site of another web hosting service.
 - Scroll down slightly and click on “Get Started” under “WordPress Hosting”
 - Hit “Order” on the middle “Business” plan option.

The screenshot displays the ICDSOFT website's service offerings. The navigation bar includes links for Hosting, Website Builder, Domains, Partners, Company, Support, Order, Login, and a search icon. Below the navigation bar, there are two trust indicators: 'TrustScore 5.0 | 556 reviews' and 'Verified by Review Signal'. The main content area features four service cards, each with an icon, a title, a description, a starting price, a renewal price, and a 'Get Started' button.

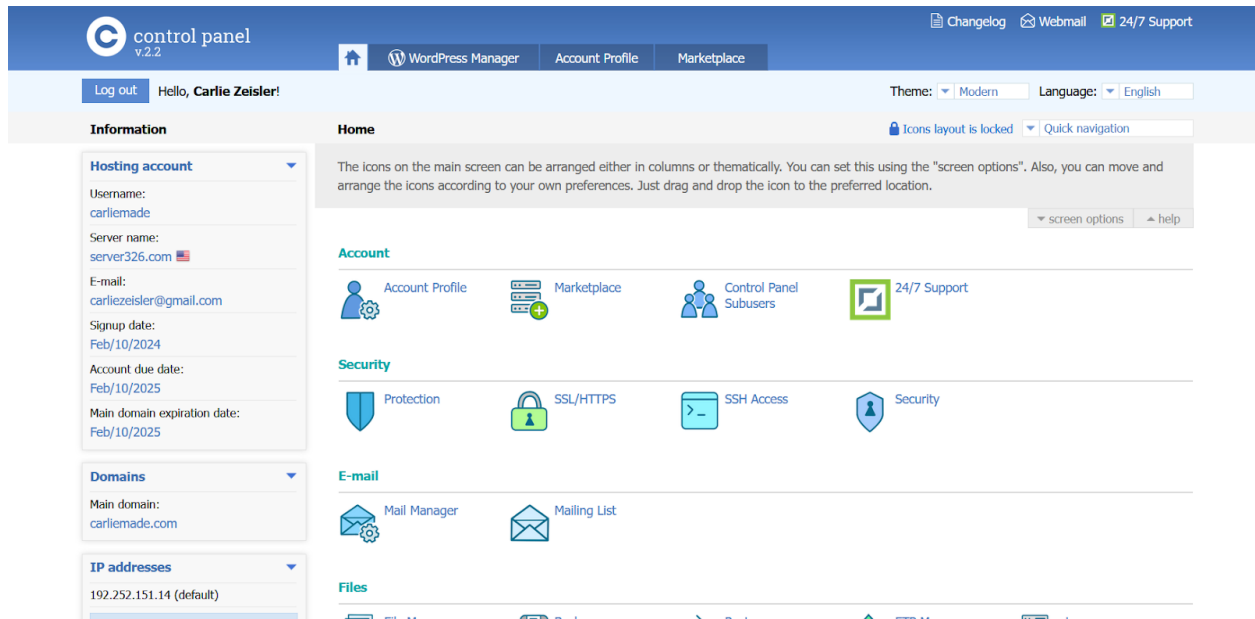
Service	Icon	Description	Starting Price	Renewal Price	Get Started Button
Web Hosting	Server icon	The best value for anyone looking for fast and reliable hosting and email.	\$10.00 /mo	Renew at \$8.00/mo or less	Blue
WordPress Hosting	WordPress logo	Meets all your WordPress hosting needs and more, at an affordable price.	\$10.00 /mo	Renew at \$8.00/mo or less	Blue
Managed VPS	VPS icon	Let us manage your server so you can focus on your business goals.	\$19.00 /mo	Renew at \$19.00/mo	Blue
Web Agencies and Resellers	Network icon	Optimize and grow your business with a partner you can trust.	-	-	Green

Below the service cards, there is a 'Live Chat' button and a footer notice: 'By visiting this website you accept its use of cookies. [Manage your cookie preferences.](#)'

USA	Europe		Hong Kong
	ECONOMY	BUSINESS Top Seller	BUSINESS PLUS
First-year Price	\$10 ^{.00} /mo	\$12 ^{.50} /mo	\$50 ^{.00} /mo
Renewal Price	\$8.00/mo or less	\$10.00/mo or less	\$40.00/mo or less
SSD Storage	10 GB	100 GB	150 GB
Free Daily Backups	7 days	7 days	7 days
Free SSL Certificate	Let's Encrypt	Let's Encrypt	Geotrust RapidSSL®
Email Accounts	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited
24/7 Support	✓	✓	✓
Money-back Guarantee	100 days	100 days	100 days
Websites	1	1	5
Free Site Migration	1	1	5
Renewal Discount	20% or more	20% or more	20% or more
Control Panel	✓	✓	✓
WordPress Toolkit	✓	✓	✓
Performance Optimization	✓	✓	✓
Social Media Backup	✓	✓	✓
Website Builder	✓	✓	✓
	Compare Plans	Compare Plans	Compare Plans
	ORDER	ORDER	ORDER

- Fill in prompts, including a domain name
 - This will most likely be the name of your business. You might have to try a few names or variations of the name in order to find something that is available. WordPress should be downloaded.
- **Get an SSL Certificate.** This allows for transactions on the website to be secure and helps users trust your site.

- On your ICDSoft's Control Panel, hit "SSL/HTTPS".



- Hit “Continue” under “Let’s Encrypt certificates”.

Let’s Encrypt certificates

Let’s Encrypt is a certificate authority that provides free SSL certificates, accepted by most browsers. While they provide security and authenticity when accessing your site over SSL, they do not provide end-user warranties or the additional features of commercial certificates. This section allows you to easily enable/disable Let’s Encrypt certificates for your domains/subdomains.

Continue

- This will give you a free certificate, however it might be good to pay for a certificate. Domain.com is often recommended for purchasing

an SSL certificate, and you will instead hit “Continue” under “SSL Certificates. From there, upload your files as prompted and hit “Submit”

Import SSL certificate

Private key:	PEM private key	Upload
Certificate:	PEM certificate	Upload
Intermediate certificates:	PEM intermediate certificates	Upload

Show additional options

Submit

- Continuing with Let’s Encrypt, select the first option under “Domain/subdomain FQDN” and hit “Enable”

Let's Encrypt certificates

Show hostnames of:

[all subdomains]

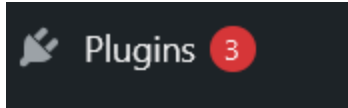
carliemade.com

☐ Domain/subdomain (FQDN)	Status
☒ *.carliemade.com	Enabled
☐ cp.carliemade.com	Enabled ?
☐ mbox.carliemade.com	Enabled ?
☐ www.carliemade.com / carliemade.com	Enabled ?

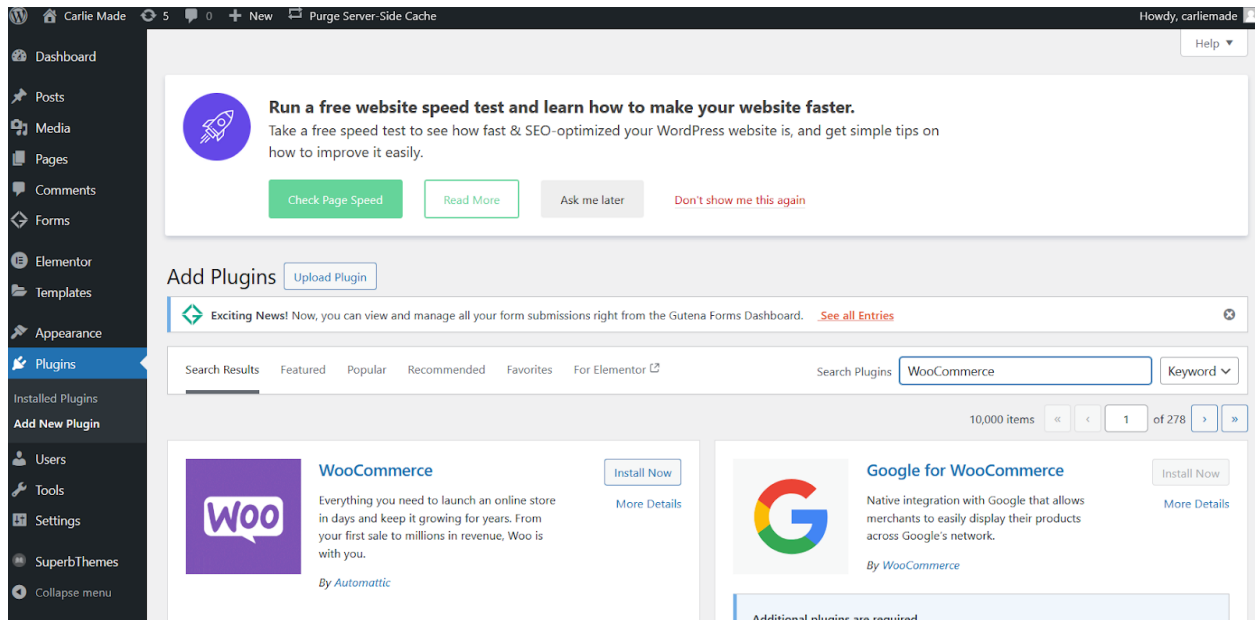
Disable

Enable

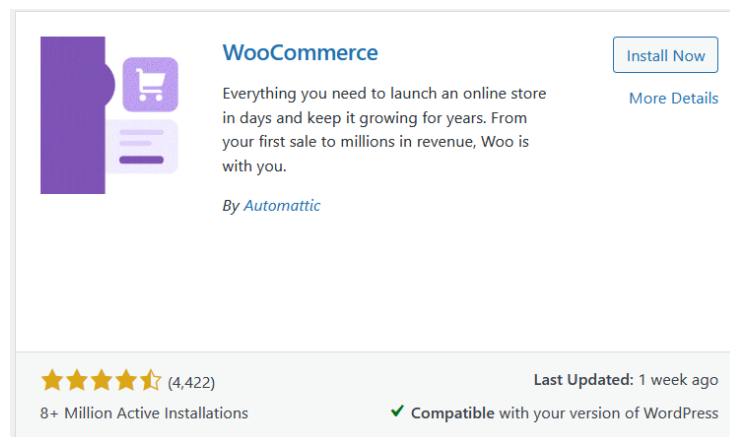
- Go to your domain with “/wp-admin/” added.** For example, the demonstration’s domain is “carliemade.com”, therefore for that site it is “carliemade.com/wp-admin/”. This will be where you build your website from.
- Add Plugins.** These will allow you to easily facilitate e-commerce on your website.
 - On the black menu towards the left of the screen, find the “Plugins” section. It should be near the bottom.



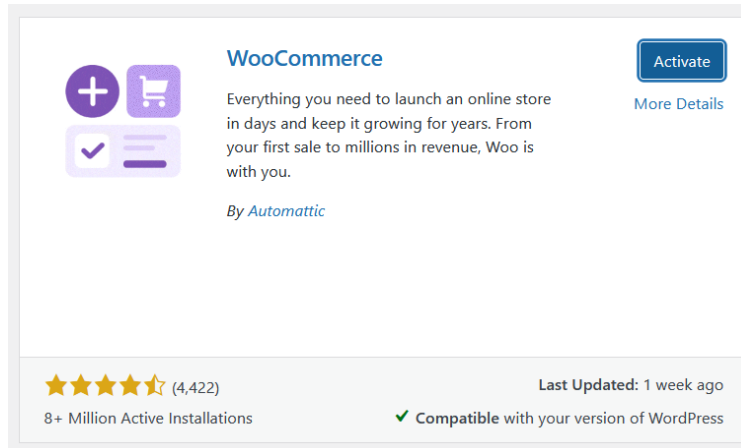
- Hit “Add New Plugin”



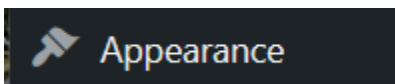
- Use the “Search Plugins” Feature to find a plugin. Hit “Install Now”



- Hit “Activate”

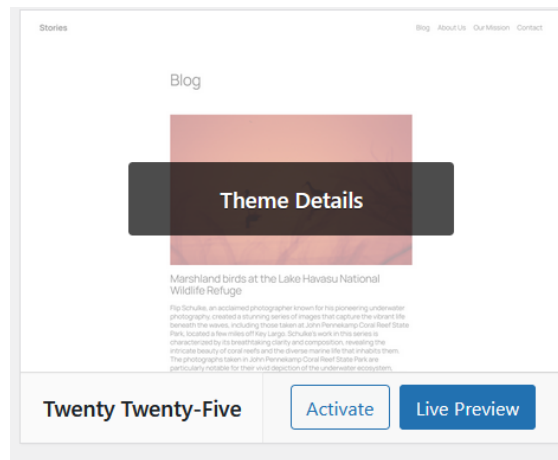
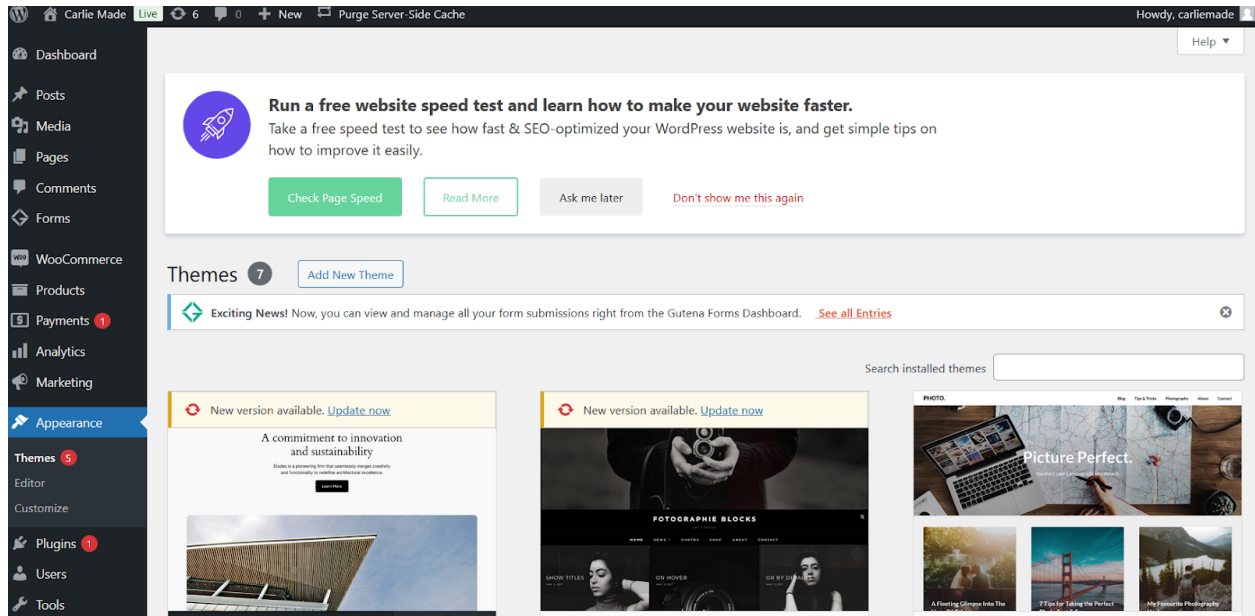


- It is recommended to get the following Plugins:
 - **WooCommerce:** Will provide tools to create products and facilitate e-commerce
 - **WooCommerce Shipping:** Will allow you to buy shipping labels
 - **Gutena Forms - Contact Forms Block:** Will allow customers to input information to contact you.
 - You may want the [Jetpack – WP Security, Backup, Speed, & Growth](#) plugin for additional security and features.
- **Select A Theme.** WordPress has a variety of themes to choose from. You are able to move different features from a theme, so it does not have to be perfect.
 - Click on “Appearance” on the menu to the left.



- If you don't see one you like here, hit "Add New Theme" and browse there (hit "Install" when you find one you want". When you find your theme, hit "Activate".

- This website is using the theme "Twenty Twenty-Five".



- **Create Product Listings.** Click on "Products" in the black menu on the left.

- Hit "Add New Product"

Products

[Add new product](#)[Import](#)[Export](#)

- Provide the Following Information As Prompted:

- **Product Name:** Make sure it clearly reflects what your product is.

Crochet Froggy in a Basket

- **Product Description:** The description should give users a clear idea of what the product is.

Product description

[Add Media](#)

VisualText

ParagraphBBIListListQuoteListListListLinkTable

Product Specifications

Materials: Acrylic yarn, cotton yarn plastic beads, polyester stuffing.

Basket size: 3in x 3in x 1.5in

Frog size: 2in x 2in x 2in

Word count: 25

Draft saved at 5:57:32 pm.

- **Product Data:** This is price and shipping specifications. Additionally, if you want to have a sale price or any stock

specifications, that is here as well.

Product data — Simple product

Virtual Downloadable

General

Regular price (\$) 12

Sale price (\$)

[Schedule](#)

Inventory

Shipping

Linked Products

Attributes

Advanced

Get more options

- **Product Short Description:** A brief summary of the product. Make sure it is eye catching and informative.

Product short description

Add Media

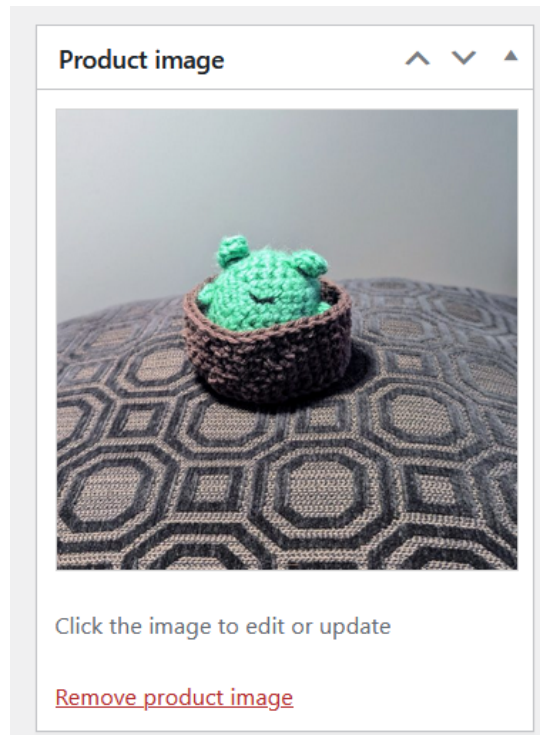
Visual Text

Paragraph B I [List Icons] [Quote Icon] [Link Icon] [Table Icon]

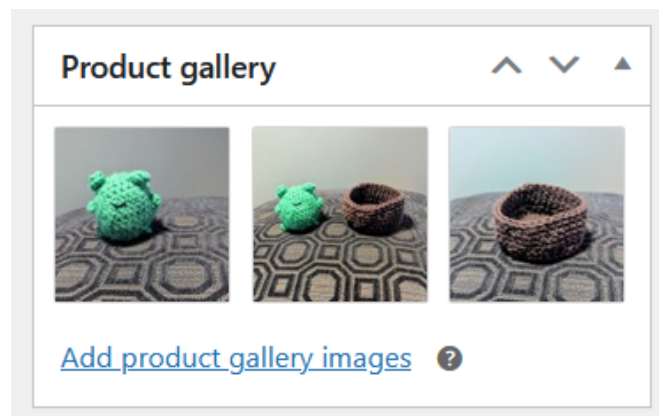
This crochet frog comes with it's own basket home and is perfect for those who enjoy cottagecore or amphibians.

P

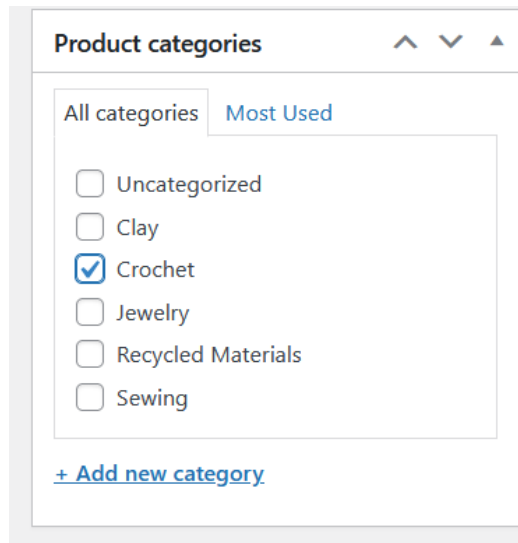
- **Product Image:** This is your main product image that will show up when all your products are displayed.



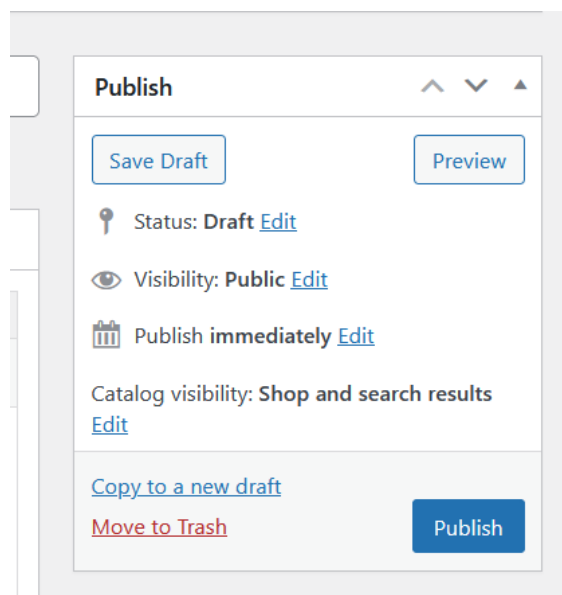
- **Product Gallery:** Any additional product images.



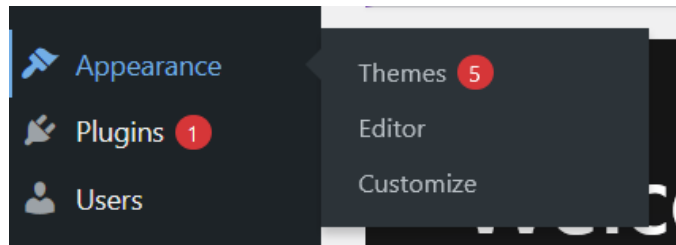
- **Product Categories:** If you plan on using and sorting or filtering options, input values you would use for that here.



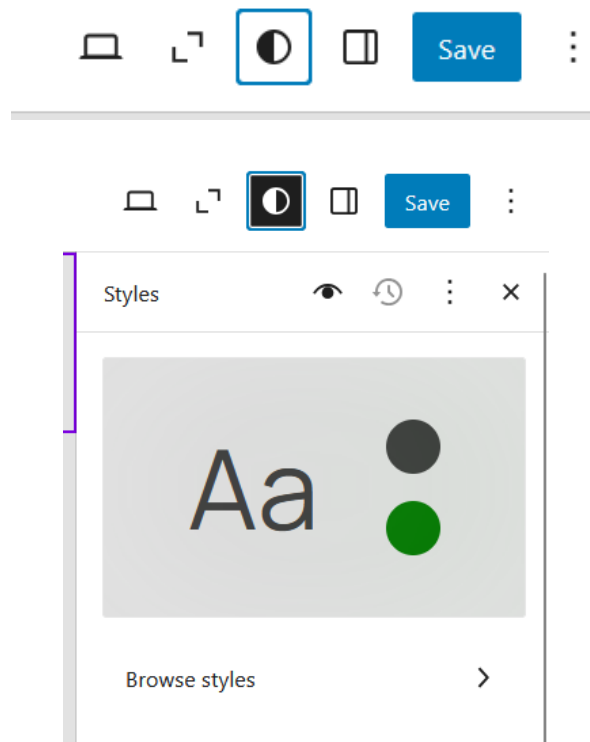
- When you're done, hit "Publish".



- **Create a Homepage.** This will be where you add business information, display your products, and add or remove theme features.
 - If you do not want a homepage but instead just want it to display your products, once you get to the site editor and choose colors and fonts, move on to the "Create Your Shop Page" step/
 - Hover your mouse over the "Appearance" section of the left menu (where you went to select your theme). Click on "Editor".

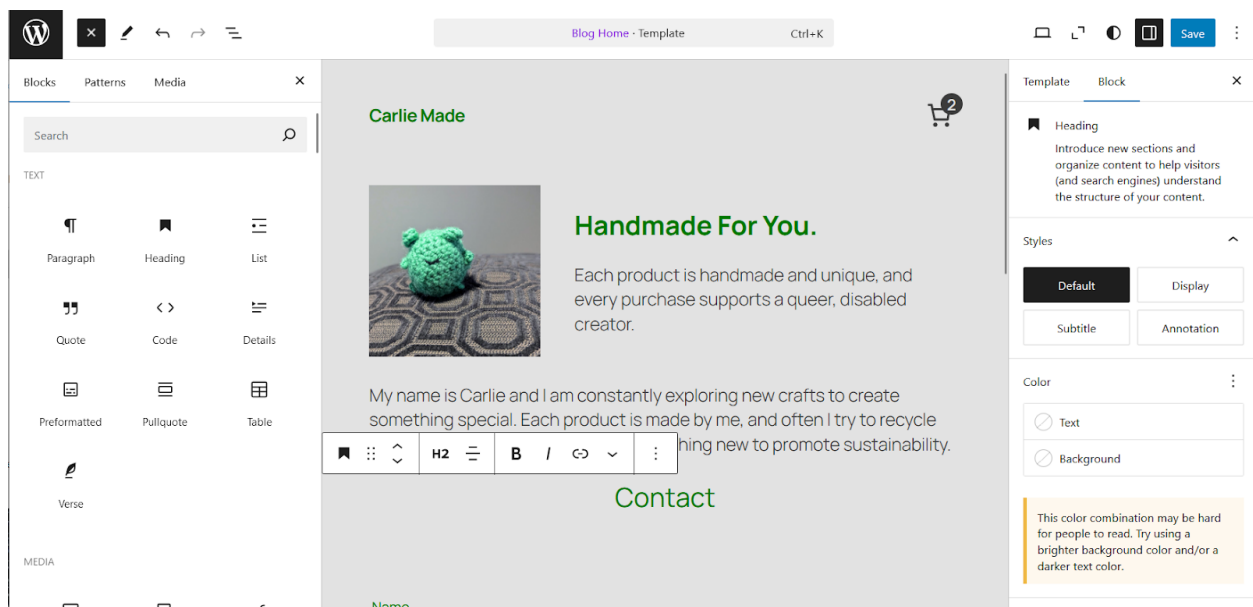


- If you want to change any colors or fonts, find the circle that is half shaded in. This will open up a menu where you can change these things.

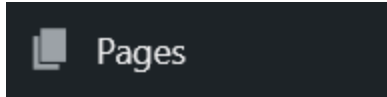


- Move, delete, or add content blocks. Each block allows you to input information to change the website's appearance. This website deleted all the default blocks except the top header and added the following blocks:

- Media & Text
 - Quote
 - Header
 - Form (One Column Basic)
 - Footer With Site and Credit Line
- If you want to add additional space on the sides of the website, go to the icon to the right of the style button, select an element of the site, and scroll to “Dimensions”. Use the sliders to get what spacing you want. You will have to do this for each content block.

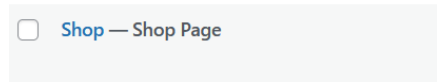


- When you're done, hit "Save".
 - **Create Your Shop Page.** With WooCommerce, there will be a default shop page that has been created. Find that and edit it as needed.
- Return to your WordPress dashboard. Click on the “Pages” button on the left menu.



- *Note: you can also change how your checkout and cart page looks here as well using similar methods.*

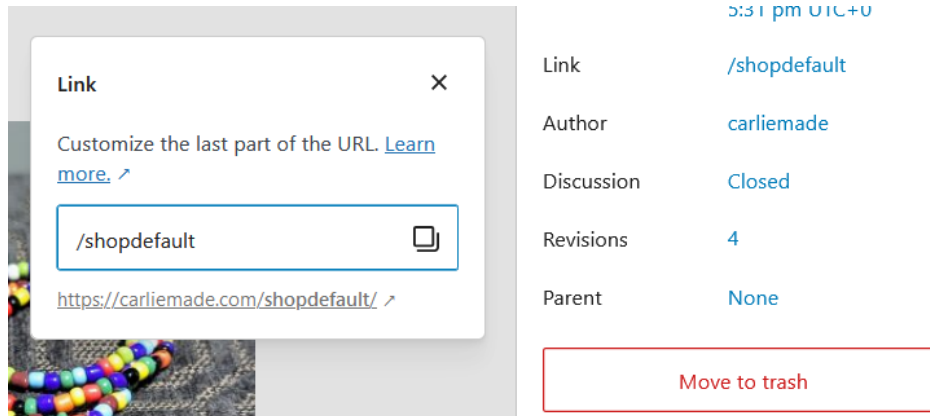
- Click on “Shop - Shop Page”



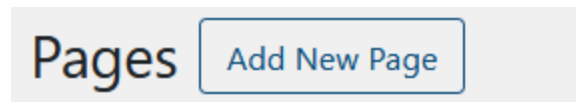
- If you are satisfied with how the shop page looks in the editor, feel free to leave it as is, of course.
- If you want to change the shop page, you will have to create a new page to replace it with. Before we do that, though, we need to make sure that is what appears on our website. You can delete this page, or if you want to keep it as a backup, we can change the link of the default shop page.
 - On the default page, hit the settings icon.



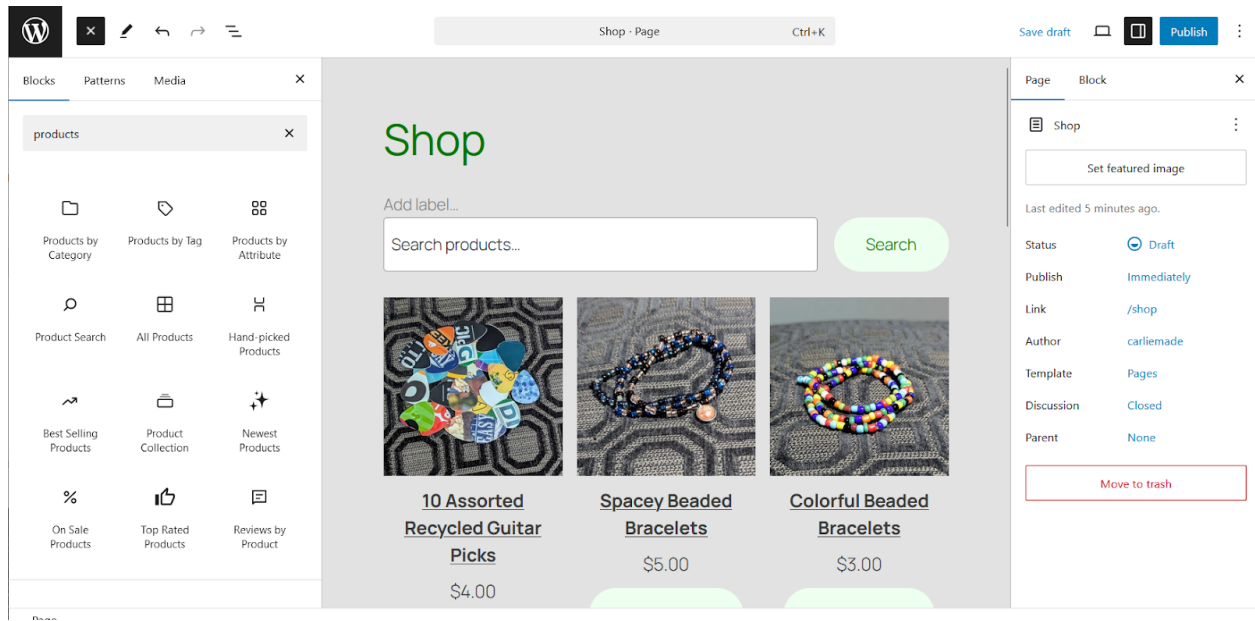
- Click on the blue text next to “Link” (it will likely be “/shop”) and type in something different. Click “Save”.



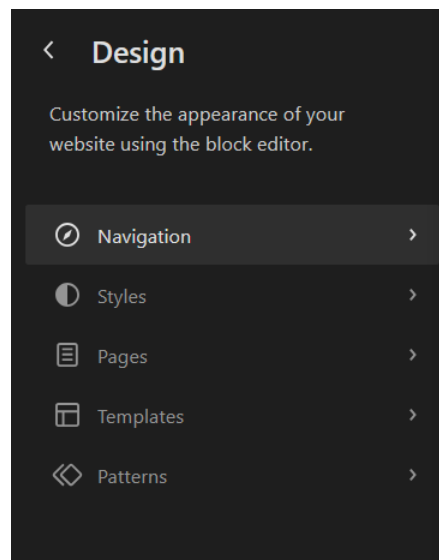
- Go back to the list of pages and click on “Add New Page”.



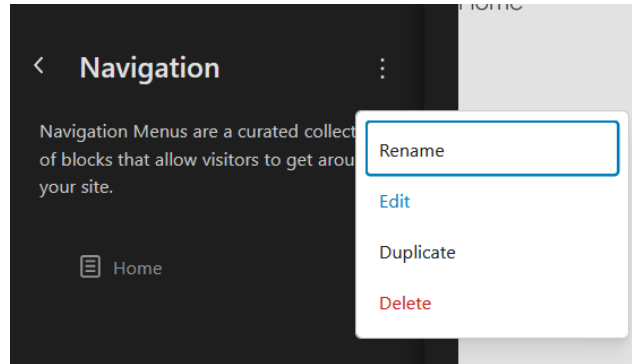
- *If you want to add any other pages such as an About Page, this is where you add that as well.*
- Input A Page Title. Most likely, it will be called “Shop”.
- Add in Blocks. This is similar to how you built the homepage—drag and drop what you want in, and use the style and setting to change how they look. This website uses the following blocks:
 - Product Search
 - All Products (you will likely have to press a “Attempt Recovery” button.
 - This shows the sorting dropdown being turned off.



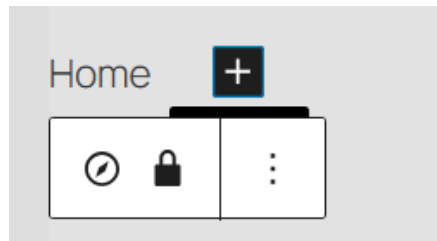
- Add your shop link onto your homepage. Go back to the list of pages and hover over “Appearance” to click on Editor (the same way you went to set up your homepage).
- Click “Navigation”.



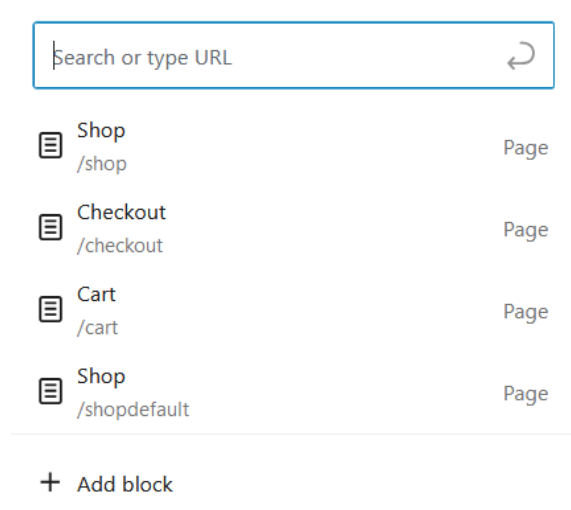
- Click the three dots next to “Navigation” and click “Edit”



- Hit the plus sign.



- Click Shop.
 - If you kept the default shop page as a backup, make sure you are choosing your new shop page. In this case, it’s “/shop” rather than “/shopdefault”



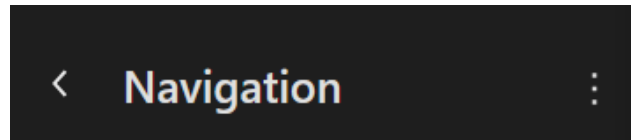
- Click the blue “Save” button in the upper right corner of the page.



- Click the black WordPress logo in the upper left corner of the screen.



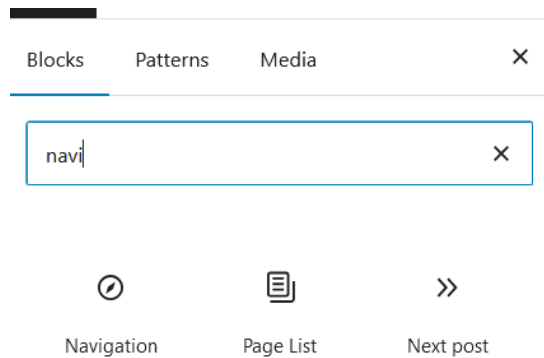
- Click the arrow next to Navigation.



- Click the on your website in the Editor
- Click on the blue plus sign.

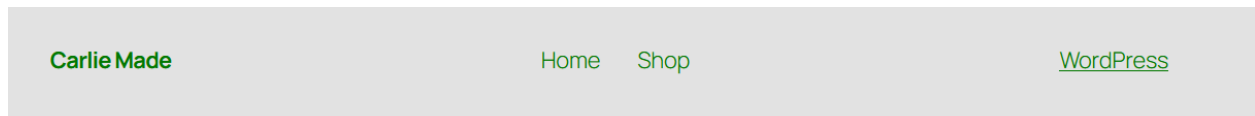
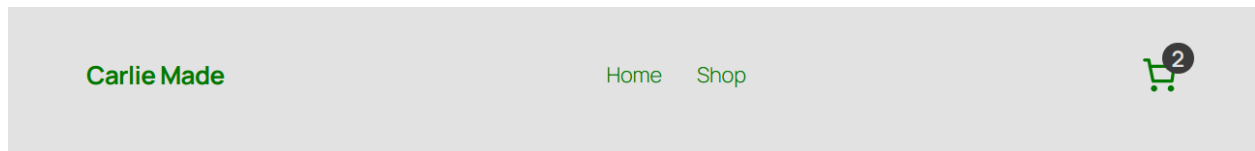


- Search for “Navigation”

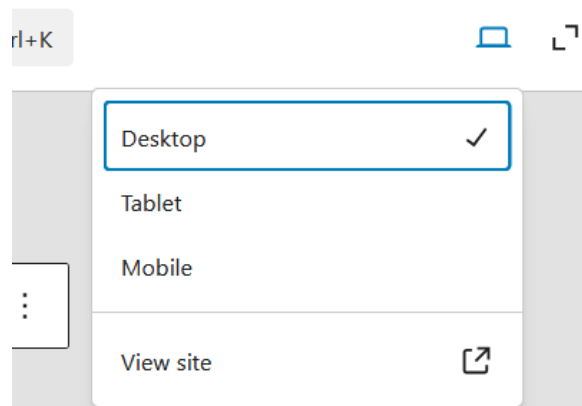


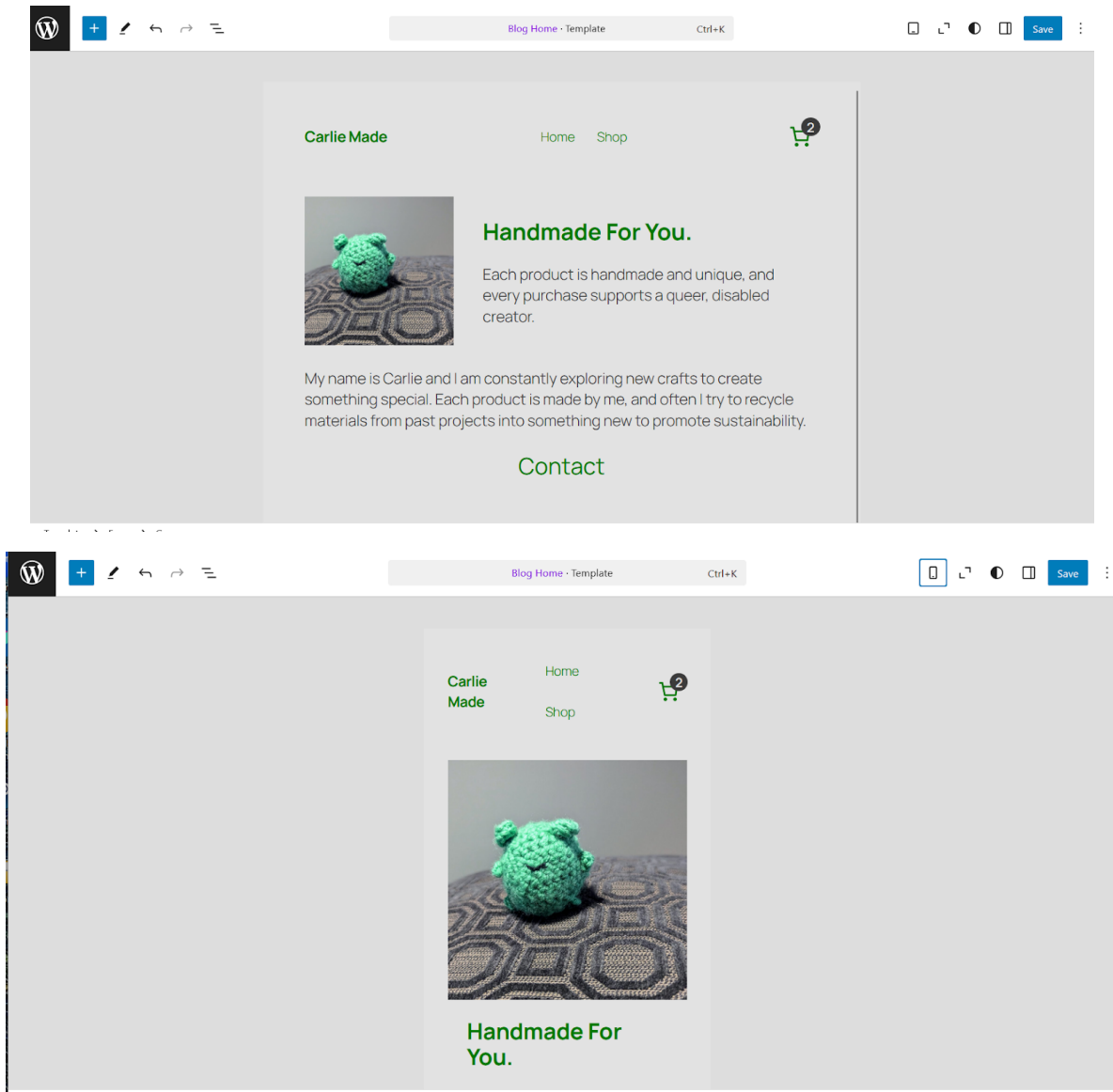
- Drag and drop the Navigation where you want it on your website. This will

most likely be at the top, although the example website has an additional navigation section at the bottom of the page.

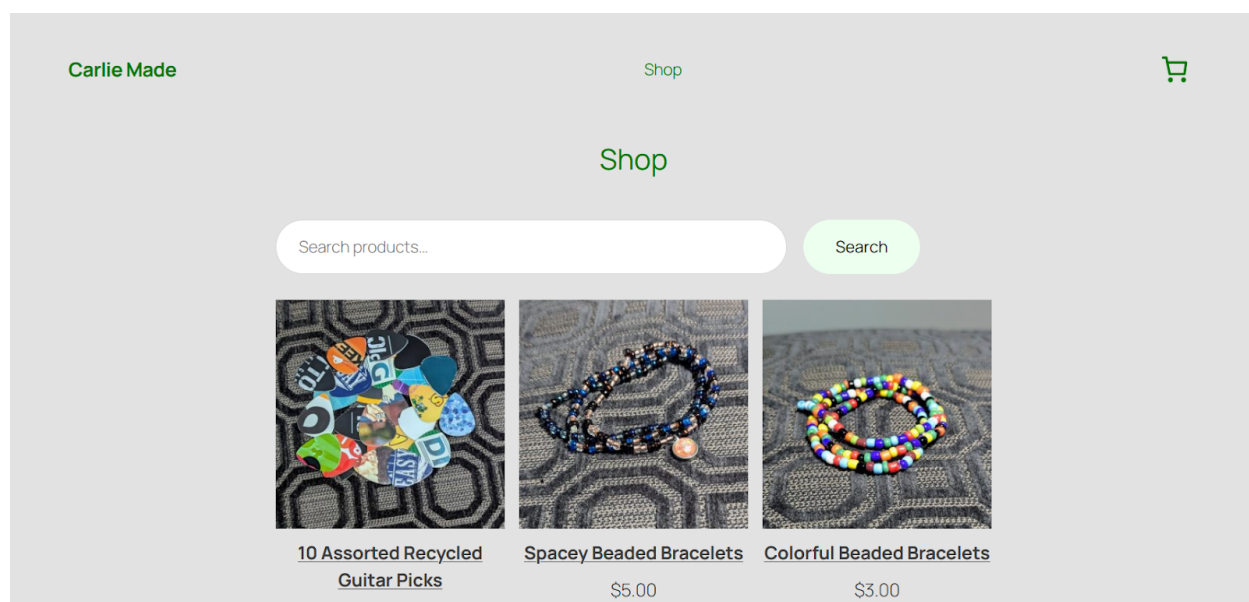
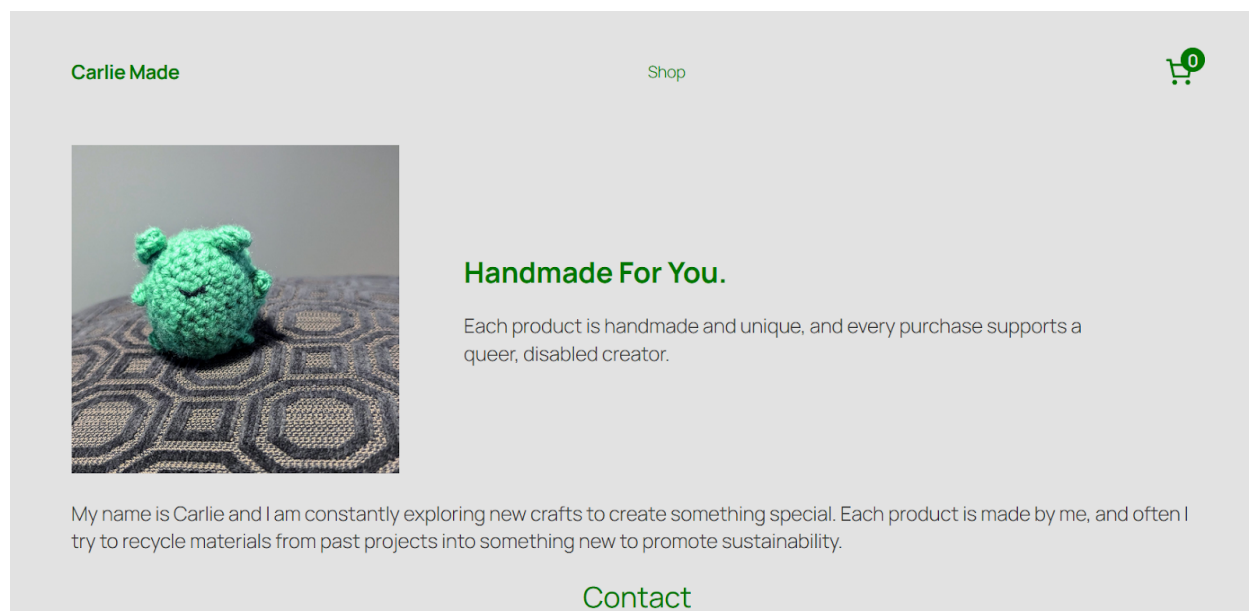


- Click save.
- **Confirm You're Happy With The Site.** WordPress lets you see how your website looks when on different devices such as a laptop, tablet, or computer. However, the website can also still be different in the Editor compared to viewing the website on its own.
 - View on different devices. Click on the icon that looks like a laptop and choose what device you want to simulate.



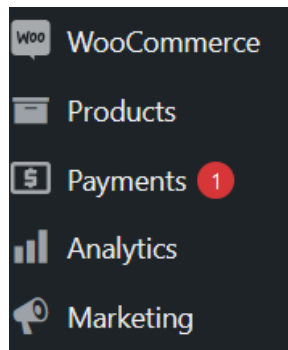


- See how it looks outside of WordPress. Enter your domain name into your browser. In this case, it is “carliemade.com”.
 - It is recommended that you do this in an incognito or private tab to get a full idea of how it looks, although it is not necessary.



- **Set Up WooCommerce.** To get your store running, you will need to get started with WooCommerce.

- On your WordPress dashboard, Click “WooCommerce” on the black menu to the left.



- Hit “Set Up My Store” and provide information as prompted.
- **Set Up WooCommerce Shipping.** Go to “WooCommerce” in the left menu of your WordPress dashboard and click on “Settings”
 - Click on “Shipping” and then “WooCommerce Shipping”.
 - Enter information as prompted. This will be how you will be printing shipping labels, a shipping address, payment information,



Welcome to Woo!

It's great to have you here with us! We'll be guiding you through the setup process – first, answer a few questions to tailor your experience.

Set up my store



I agree to share my data to tailor my store setup experience, get more relevant content, and help make WooCommerce better for everyone. You can opt out at any time in [WooCommerce settings](#). [Learn more about usage tracking.](#)

WEBSITE ACCESSIBILITY

There are some things that you might want to consider when designing your

website and listing products. Accessibility is the features put into making sure people with disabilities can use the website.

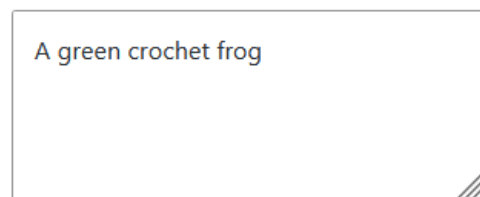
With the context of this website, the main concern is accommodating visual impairments, although if you are using any material with sound, make sure to include subtitles or describe the audio for those with hearing impairments.

There are three main concerns with visual accessibility: font size, color contrast, and pictures.

- **Font size needs to be easy to read.** Luckily, WordPress works well with modern web browsers' ability to enlarge text, however, it is still worth keeping in mind. You should try to keep the font size no smaller than "Medium".
- **Colors must make it easy to see in relation to each other.** This is particularly true for text. WordPress will offer a warning if it feels the color combination might be hard to read, but it is something to keep in mind even if it does not display this. There are a number of tools you can use to check color contrast:
 - [Coolors Contrast Checker](#) lets you input colors and evaluates the contrast. It also shows you what the colors would look like as text and background.
 - Browser Extensions: There are a number of extensions for web browsers that can be used to check a number of potential accessibility problems
 - [Siteimprove for Firefox](#)
 - [Lighthouse](#)
- **Pictures Must Have A Text Description.** This is so screen reading programs can inform visually impaired users of what they are looking at.
 - For product images, a detailed description can work to provide this. Including things like materials, colors, and size are beneficial to all customers, but it is essential for customers with visual impairments.
 - For decorative images, you will want to add in "Alt Text". This is text that only shows up if an image is not visible, and is what is read out by a screen reader when it gets to the image. Keep the description concise.

- In WordPress, you can do this by going to the site editor and clicking on the decorative image. On the right side of the screen, the options menu will open. Enter the description under “Alternative Text”.

ALTERNATIVE TEXT



A green crochet frog

- If you have the time, you might want to use a screen reader to confirm your site could be navigated by someone who is relying on a device like that.
 - [NVDA is a screen reader you can download for Windows for free here.](#)
 - Apple VoiceOver is a tool that is built into Apple’s computers. [Here is a guide on how to use it.](#)

Although this is the key part of website accessibility, there are more specific guidelines. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, version 2 (WCAG 2) by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3V) describes how websites can be accessible for all. [“WCAG 2 at a Glance” is a good starting point, but they have other, more specific pieces of information.](#)

STEP FOUR: FILLING ORDERS

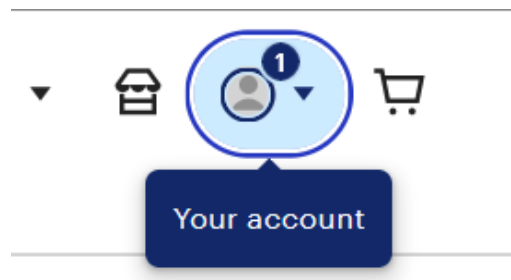
After your website has been set up, you will need to fill any orders that come in.

What You Need To Fill Orders:

- **Something to ship your product in.** It could be a box, envelope, or bubble mailer. Make sure it is big enough to fit your item, but not too big that it will move a lot in transit.
- **Something to secure your product in place.** If it is a box, this is likely to be bubble wrap, paper, or foam. If it is an envelope or mailer, you might want to add a piece of cardboard to prevent bending of your product.
- **Some packing tape.** This is particularly true if you are using boxes or mailers. It needs to be durable enough to keep the packages closed during shipping.
- **A postal scale.** This is to weigh your package and determine shipping costs. These can cost anywhere from \$20 to \$40.
- **A printer.** This can be a normal printer or a printer specifically designed for printing shipping labels.

Filling Orders With Etsy:

- When you make a sale, a notification will show up both on your account and in your email.
- On the Etsy website, click on the “Your Account” icon in the top right.



- Click on “Shop Manager” and then choose “Orders & Shipping”.
- The order should be under the “Open” tab.
- Buy and print a shipping label:
 - Click on the van icon.
 - View your address information under “Get shipping labels for” and confirm it is right. If it’s not, click “Edit” to change the information.
 - Fill out the shipping information. This is the weight, package type, delivery service (i.e., USPS), and package dimensions.
 - If the product is shipping internationally, fill out the customs form.
 - Click “Review Your Purchase” to confirm the information is correct, and confirm what you want to have printed.
 - Hit “Customize options” to set how you want your shipping label to be downloaded.

- Click “Purchase”.
- Print your label.
- Pack your order and drop it off at the post office or other designated location.

To read more, Etsy has the articles [What to Do After You Sell an Item](#) and [How to Purchase Shipping Labels On Etsy](#). Additionally, [How To Ship Your First Etsy Order | Etsy Shipping Tips](#) by the YouTube channel Our Sweet Sunny Days provides many examples and tools.

Filling Orders With Shopify:

- From Shopify’s administration page, click on “Orders”.
- Find the unfulfilled order in the “Unfulfilled” section.
- Click “Create shipping label”
- Click “Items” to confirm the amount of items being shipped.
- Click “Edit weight” to adjust the product and package weight as needed. Click “Done”.
- If you are shipping a product internationally, you will need to fill out a customs form.
 - Under “Items” click “Edit customs information” and fill out the section as prompted.
- In the “Package” section, click “Add package”. Enter information as prompted.
- In “Total weight (with package)” enter the final weight of all products and packaging.
- In the “Shipping Service” section, select a shipping service such as USPS or FedEx
- Enter a shipping date in the “Shipping date” section.
- Click “Buy Shipping Label.”
- Print out the label, attach it to the package, and drop it off at the post office or other designated location.

To read more, check out Shopify’s [Buying shipping labels individually using Shopify Shipping](#) and Casual Ecommerce’s [How To Fulfill Orders On Shopify - Step By Step Tutorial](#).

Filling Orders With WooCommerce:

- When an order is placed, you will receive an email notification.
- Go to your WordPress Dashboard, go to the WooCommerce link in the menu on the left of the screen, and click on “Orders”.
- Find the orders with a status marked as “Processing”. Click on the order to see the information on it.

- Click “Create shipping labels”
- Answer “Are you shipping dangerous goods or hazardous materials?” appropriately.
- If the product is being shipped outside the country, fill out a customs form.
 - In the Customs section, enter information as prompted.
- In the Packaging section, select a default package type or click on “Custom package”
 - If you are creating a custom package, select package type (box or envelope) and package dimensions.
- Enter total package weight.
- Click “Get shipping rates”.
- Continuing on, use the order shipping to verify your address as well as the customer’s.
- In “Shipping costs”, confirm your shipping details and click “Purchase label”.
- Print your label, attach it to the package, and drop it off at a designated location such as the post office.
- Mark the order as complete in your WordPress dashboard.

To read more, WooCommerce has [WooCommerce Shipping Documentation](#) that provides a step-by-step guide on how to use it. Additionally, [Managing and Processing Orders for your WooCommerce Online Store](#) by the YouTube Channel Nicole Sauk - Website Help for Business Owners provides many good visuals on how to navigate this.

STEP FIVE: PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS

As you start to get going with e-commerce, you will want to get your name out there, regardless of if you already have an established business. There are a few ways you can go about this, the main ones being social media and advertising.

Promoting Through Social Media

Social media is a powerful tool that businesses should embrace to grow a customer base. Two of the most popular sites businesses use are TikTok and Instagram, due to their popularity and the fact that TikTok videos can be used as Instagram Reels, which makes it easy to promote your business on both social media platforms. Of course here are other platforms you might want to look into such as Facebook, Bluesky, or Tumblr, but what platforms you choose depends on your target demographic.

Promote Your Business With TikTok:

- **Create A Business Account.** This will allow you to see more details on how your audience is engaging with your content.
 - Create your account and go to the “Me” page.
 - Click on the icon at the top with three dots and click “Manage Account”.
 - Click “Switch to Business Account” and select a category that best represents your business.
- **Customize Your Account.** Put a link for your website on the profile, add a profile picture to represent your business, and put a short description of your business in the biography.
- **Create Your Posts.** Use popular sounds or trends to get users interested in your business. It doesn’t hurt to look at how other businesses post, as long as you add your personal touch on your posts.
- **Post Consistently.** Accounts that post regularly tend to be favored by social media algorithms, and for TikTok, consistent posting also makes it more likely that you will receive verification by TikTok.
 - Verification is a mark provided by TikTok that confirms an account is authentic and follows TikTok’s Terms Of Service. This can help users trust your business more.

Influencer Marketing Hub’s article [How to Use TikTok for Business in 2024 – The Ultimate Guide](#) offers many visuals and information on TikTok that could provide valuable context.

Promote Your Business With Instagram:

- **Create A Business Account.** This will allow you to see more details on how your audience is engaging with your content.
 - Create your account and go to your profile. Click the line icon to the right.
 - Click on “Settings and privacy” and then “Account types and tools”
 - Click “Switch to professional account”. Choose a category that represents your business, and then click “Business”.
- **Customize Your Account.** Add a profile image that represents your business. Add a short description of your business to the biography section and add a link to your website.
- **Create Your Posts.** Make sure the posts are high quality and appeal to your target demographic. If you need inspiration, look at some other business

accounts with similar niches and put a personal spin on what you see there. Instagram has a few different post types.

- Posts: These are mainly photos with an occasional video, paired with a description. Many businesses will use this to show off products.
- Stories: These are temporary posts that will disappear after a day. Stories are often used to share time-sensitive announcements (i.e., a sale), promote customers who share their experience with your business, or give customers a sneak peek into what you are currently working on.
- Reels: These are primarily to draw new customers in. Use current trends or humor to get users to share the post and make customers curious about your business. If you are also promoting your business on TikTok, you can upload those videos as Reels.
- **Post Consistently.** Accounts that post regularly tend to be favored by social media algorithms.
- As your following grows, you may want to consider applying for verification by Instagram. This will make users trust your brand more. [Instagram has a page detailing this process and the criteria that you can find here.](#)

Instagram has a [Getting Started](#) page for businesses with several helpful resources. Additionally, Ignite Visibility has the article [How to Advertise Your Company on Instagram: 13 Proven Strategies for Success](#) with a variety of tips for running an Instagram account for your business.

Promoting Through Advertising

Advertising is the method of paying for services to promote your business. Etsy, Shopify, and WooCommerce all have advertising options available.

Advertising With Etsy

Etsy utilizes a “cost per click” advertising service, where you are only charged based on the amount of people who click on your advertisement. These ads can be placing your product listings at the top of relevant search results or your product being included on featured pages. The price per click depends on where the advertisement is placed. [Etsy provides a guide on how this advertising works.](#)

- On Etsy, click “Shop Manager” and then “Marketing”.

- Choose “Etsy Ads”.
- Set a daily budget. With the cost per click system, each day Etsy will start promoting your advertisements, and when people click on it, you get charged. Once your daily budget has been reached, Etsy will stop running your advertisements for the day.
- Click “Start Advertising”.

Advertising With Shopify

Shopify has a few options for promoting your business, with tools to sell directly on social media or to sell on sites like Amazon or Walmart. [All of their advertising and marketing options are listed on their website](#). They offer advertising campaigns by entering in data regarding your advertising goals. [That can be done here](#).

Advertising With WordPress And WooCommerce

WooCommerce does not have specific advertising options, but they do allow for you to sell on sites like Amazon, Walmart, or TikTok Shop. [You can sync your shop with these platforms here](#). Additionally, WordPress itself has a plugin called Blaze, which will allow you to pay for your website or product to be advertised on other WordPress sites or Tumblr. In this case, you pay a set amount for a number of ad placements—also known as impressions. [To learn more about Blaze, you can look at the documentation here](#). If you decide to use Blaze, search for Jetpack – WP Security, Backup, Speed, & Growth to add the plugin that features Blaze.

STEP SIX: MAINTAIN YOUR STORE

Even after your shop is set up, you will need to continue to monitor and maintain your store alongside filling orders. This is important both to ensure customers are having a good experience while shopping and to maintain security. There are two main ways to monitor your store:

- **Stay Informed.** Learn about any updates on your content management platform has and make sure you are getting those updates—they can be incredibly important for security purposes. Additionally, stay informed on the news surrounding your tools for potential security incidents. If you spot something, make a plan on how you will address it on your site, whether it’s informing customers or taking actions to remove the issue on your store. Finally, you want to

watch the trends in your business niche—while you should maintain your individuality, if you see a marketing technique or shop format becoming popular, you might want to consider embracing it.

- **Check Your Website Regularly.** On occasion, technology updates will cause new issues in your store, and it's important to catch these issues as quickly as possible. As such, you should routinely look at your website or shop. Check and make sure all the features still work correctly and display how you want them to. If you find an issue you can fix, if it involves product listings or it is a website you made, then you can tend to it yourself. If it is an issue with your content management platform, make sure you notify the support team so they can have it fixed.
 - If you do find an issue, searching for the issue online, especially using online forums such as Reddit, as it will let you see if anyone else is experiencing similar issues, help you identify the issue, and give you ideas on how to fix it.

CONCLUSION

Although the process of creating a website might seem daunting, there are so many tools out there that can get you started. Hopefully, this assemblage of resources, written tutorials, and personal experience have shed some light. If nothing else, I hope it gives you a starting point for the process of starting your e-commerce platform.