

# Introducing Online Shop Pages

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If you run a retail business—whether it's B2B or B2C—the benefits of including an online store in your business model are indisputable. So indisputable, in fact, that it doesn't make sense *not* to have an online shop in today's market.

Online stores are [relatively easy to set up](#). Startup costs and operational costs are minimal compared to those of a brick-and-mortar shop. You have the capacity to sell your products 24/7, without any geographical barriers between yourself and your store visitors. It's nearly effortless for visitors to locate your products online, and the transaction process is just as straightforward.

E-commerce has transformed the way the world shops. [96% of Americans now shop online](#), and in 2016 alone, [1.61 billion people worldwide](#) purchased products online, spending the equivalent of 1.9 trillion U.S. dollars. The market research company [eMarketer predicts](#) that number will reach \$4 trillion by 2020.

Given the near-term growth forecast for eCommerce and the many day-to-day benefits of online sales, setting up and properly maintaining an online shop will be a crucial step for any business moving forward. In the following sections, we offer best practices for the four most important components of your online shop: your store's homepage, your individual product pages (sometimes called "product detail pages"), your cart, and your checkout pages.

## The online shop homepage

Keep in mind that, while many of our recommendations for the online shop homepage are applicable to your individual product pages, these pages are different genres with different functions, as they meet the prospect at different stages in the sales funnel. It's important to respect those differences as you approach each page type.

Your online shop [homepage](#) has a broad swath of responsibilities to fulfill:

- It has to create an exceptional first impression of a few choice products (and, by extension, of your product line as a whole) through strong and well-placed imagery
- It has to create an exceptional first impression of your *business* through your value proposition and other promises your homepage communicates

- It has to create an exceptional *invitation* to click into your category and product pages in order to funnel visitors toward that checkout page
- It has to offer exceptional UX, so visitors to your virtual storefront can navigate to precisely the product they're looking for with ease

## Product pages

Your homepage is your virtual storefront, and thus will be chiefly visual. Your *product* pages, on the other hand, should be as focused on copy as they are on imagery.

It's on these pages that prospects on the threshold of making a purchase will find your most comprehensive product descriptions. They'll also find extensive product details (dimensions, colors, care instructions, warranties, and so on) and have the ability to compare specs and read in-depth about your products' features and benefits.

It helps to think of the product page as a virtual substitute for a store associate. The page needs to perform the same tasks a live salesperson would when discussing that product with a customer:

- It has to keep the prospect's attention focused on the product (by reducing friction points and distractions)
- It has to appeal to a variety of buying stages and purchasing motivations
- It has to [offer information about the product](#) that is not only detailed, but also *benefit-focused*. (How does it add value to the prospect's life? Does it make them look better? Feel better? Worry less? Does it save them time? Does it make their life easier in some way?)
- It has to answer questions that reduce doubt and help build the prospect's confidence
- It has to provide the prospect with alternate suggestions, in case they determine this particular product isn't for them
- It has to offer an unmistakable next step for the prospect to convert to a customer

Striking a fine balance between imagery and copy on your product pages will be essential. But your product page copy is about much more than detailing the product in question. It also needs to be clear about details such as shipping options and delivery dates, returns and exchange policies, and accepted payments.

## Shopping carts

Here's a number worth considering: Once they've clicked on that "Add to Cart" button, [nearly 75% of prospects worldwide](#) abandon their shopping carts.

That's some dismal data—data that could unquestionably be improved by employing best practices in both your [shopping cart](#) and your [checkout pages](#). After all, if these pages don't entirely alleviate lingering doubts—or don't display product images to keep your mouth watering, or aren't clear about pricing—they probably won't fully close the deal.

In one sense, it's perhaps pretty clear what your shopping cart's responsibilities are. Like those carts you regularly push around your local grocery store, it's there to give your prospects a persistent visual summary of the products they're considering purchasing. (This includes both images and important product details.)

And yet, online shoppers demand much more than this summary before they'll say they've had an excellent shopping experience with your business. Free shipping, perpetually updated total costs, easy cart edits, a wishlist option, cart memory, and clear CTAs are all must-haves at this point in the eCommerce game; and we'll cover these elements—and more—in that section.

## Checkout pages

Your checkout page is your prospects' last chance to bounce—and *your* chance to send them smoothly through the purchasing funnel with the momentum you've created on your product pages and cart summary. We examine three primary topics in our section on [checkout pages](#):

- Where in *your* checkout process your business should offer account creation (This will depend upon your company's priorities... though we have our own suggestions for where to begin)
- Strategies to keep your checkout enclosed
- Strategies to make your checkout forms as intuitive—and as fast—for your users as possible

The elements you use, or need, on your online shop will vary according to the type of products you sell, your sector, and your target market. Take these best practices with a grain of salt—and [consistently test](#) the ones you choose to use.

In other words, collect data on what visitors are doing on your shop pages as you test out these practices. Where are they clicking most (and least) often? Where have they come from? Where do they go next when they leave your homepage? What products are they most often searching for?

With tools like [Zoho SalesIQ](#), [Google Analytics](#), or [Crazy Egg's heatmaps](#), you can identify your visitors' key behaviors. Once you understand what those behaviors are, you can build a strategy that combines *our* best practices with *your* visitors' particular needs.

*Of course, if you run an online shop, stellar product images will be the most imperative feature of your business website. But there are quite a few other crucial elements your eCommerce homepage needs if your goal is to score conversions. In the next section, we focus on these decisive [homepage elements for online shops](#).*