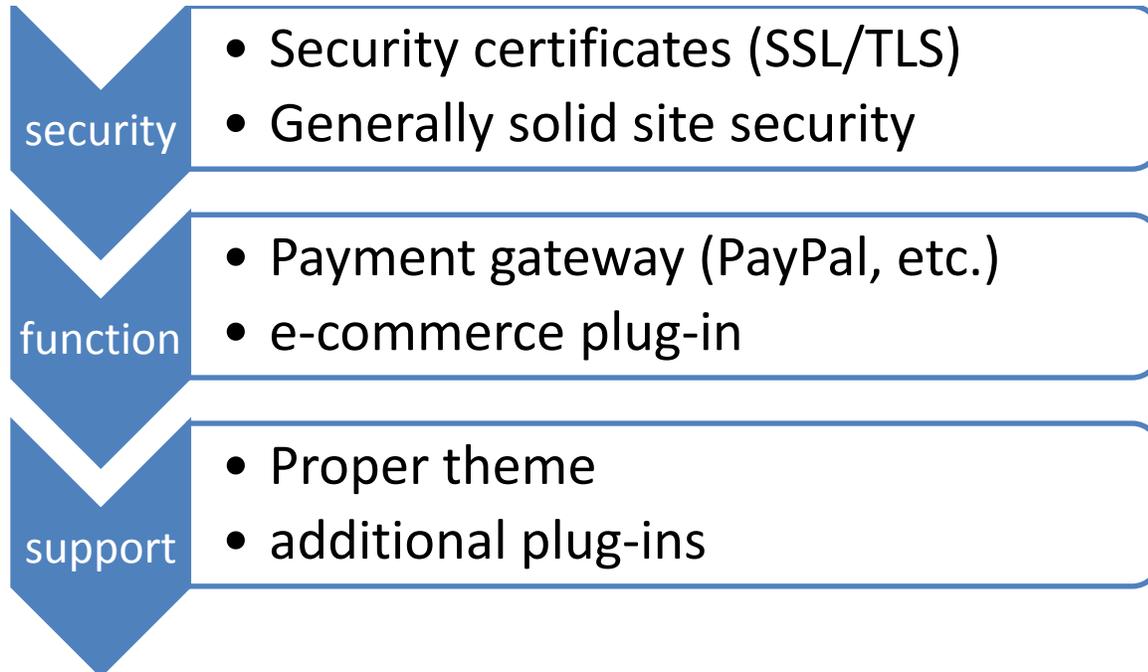


WordPress Class 5

Beginning e-Commerce with WordPress



There are many pathways to an e-commerce website but this is probably the easiest and fastest. There are several issues to consider on your way in: (these for using WordPress specifically)

Harden your site:

Purchase of encryption certificates is crucial if accepting payment directly and a good idea anyway. This must be done before you install WordPress. Also get good security plugins to take common sense security measures.

Internal function

What e-commerce plug-in will you use? What Payment gateway? A couple of pay choices are "Shopp", "WP-e-commerce" and "Cart66". There are frequently free versions and more robustly featured pay versions. We will use a free plug-in today because I'm obviously not buying multiple site licenses to try out. But to continue the idea, if you picked one of these plug-ins, how would you receive the money from the customer? You have to have what's called a "payment gateway" to flow the payment from the website into your bank account. The best known of these is PayPal but there are many, many others. Google checkout is another but it requires users to have a Google account. Many WordPress plug-ins are designed to work with PayPal so let's use that example. You have to have a PayPal account (monthly charge and percentage clip) to receive payment this way. A less expensive PayPal account forces you to include PayPal branding at the point of purchase, a professional account gives you the option to hide PayPal and receive payment transparently. In this business there is also no free lunch, but it is pretty modest price to pay for running a business without bricks and mortar.

Supporting issues

Not every theme works with every store plug-in. Find out which ones are supported by your plug-in. Also plan the functionality of things ahead of time and install any necessary supporting plug-ins.

If your products are digital, customers will expect to be emailed their files or else shown to a download area. If your products are physical, what sort of shipping will you arrange? How will it affect the price? How will taxes be configured?

Practical exercise

Using our free plug in for today, (WP e-commerce: more specifically, the FREE version with fewer features...) we will we will set up some basic stuff and make some products but of course we have no payment back end so it's a bit of an academic dry run.

Having done some research we know that a theme that works with our plug in is one called "Glossy blue" so we'll start by installing that, before we add the plug in. Go to themes and upload/install "glossy blue" then go to plugins and upload/install "WP e-Commerce".

Once you've activated the plug-in look to the left on the dashboard and there will be a new item: "Products" . We aren't quite ready for this yet though. Look to the bottom left under "settings" for the word "Store".

In this section we have a lot of choices to make, from really important to fairly trivial.

The critical things to set up are things like:

- What currency
- What taxes
- What payment gateway
- What shipping costs and arrangements

Creating the Product Database

When the configuration is set up the way you want it's time to make some products. Click in the "Products and categories" area.

First create some categories. It's important to start with this because you need to have things well organized before the products start appearing on line. The better organized you are the happier your customers will be. Only when the correct categories exist should you start making products to add to them.

When you go to edit your products you will find various information fields to be filled in. Title of course is the name of the product, then paste your blurb into the using blogging or page text area. Off to the right there are categories for SKU number and price. Fill in these essential categories and save.

Now, on a new page in your "kitchen sink" area there is a new button, "add product" and you can choose either a single product or a category of products or even ALL your categories.

These are just some of the major issues but it shows how you need to do a lot of thoughtful research to plan your strategy before simply diving in.

You will also need to account for your products. What exactly am I selling and where will descriptions, pictures, etc. be coming from?

The following table (next page) shows an example of the kinds of things you may need to know and use to organize your products.

Overview of data you can specify (as columns) in your spreadsheet:

| Option name | Option definition | Examples |
|------------------|--|---|
| sku (required) | Any unique identifier (stock-keeping unit) | 12345 |
| title (required) | The title of the product you want to sell (supports HTML) | Flashing Yo-Yo |
| price (required) | The price of the item for sale | \$10.00 |
| description | Description of the product (supports HTML) | A Yo-Yo with LEDs inside |
| quantity | The number of products you have in stock | 5 |
| image_link | URL to a picture of the product. When 100px thumbnails are clicked, 500px versions are displayed. | http://www.google.com/intl/en_ALL/images/logo.gif |
| option_name | Title for optional product categories | Color: ...or... Size: |
| option | Product options separated by commas | red,blue,green, ...or... small,medium,large |
| digital | Indicate if the product is digital. Buyers will expect you to email their purchased digital content. Leave blank if false. | true ...or... blank |
| weight | Specify item's shipping weight in pounds, used with carrier-calculated shipping. Do not specify units. | Example value for 8 lbs: 8 Example value for 2 oz: 0.125 |
| shipping | Shipping rate per-item. Leave blank to default to shipping options in your Checkout account. | \$5.00 |