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How to start an

# Online Business

by James Bruce

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by James Bruce  
<http://duinobits.com>

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# Introduction

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With shoppers increasingly deserting brick-and-mortar stores all over the world, online business is booming. It's no wonder why - prices are cheaper thanks to virtually no overheads, no parking hassles, and no sales staff to deal with. The time has therefore never been better to open up your own online store - and it's a lot easier than you might think. Whether you want to sell your own handmade goods, drop-ship products from China or generate more in-store traffic from an online presence, this guide will walk you through the entire process, from setting up hosting to successfully launching your very own virtual shop.

To ensure this guide is comprehensive, it's been written alongside the creation of my own online shop, hosted with (mt) Media Temple and using all the techniques outlined. Although I've worked with a number of eCommerce sites in the past, this time I've started from scratch, so that I'll understand any trouble and issues you might face along the way. You can view the shop I created at [DuinoBits.com](http://DuinoBits.com). I'm selling affordable microcontroller starter kits, something I'm passionate about. I hope this guide lets you pursue your passion as well.

# 1. The Shop System

I've chosen to use WordPress as the core system here as the sheer level of support from developers, theme designers, plugins and tutorials is unmatched. It's estimated WordPress powers around 20% of the entire internet, so you won't be alone. Don't worry if you've never used WordPress before - we'll be walking you through the basics - but you'd also be well advised to download my previous free guide, [Getting Started with WordPress](#). WordPress will provide the core framework of the site and will power any blog elements we choose to include, as well as static pages (like an "about us", "contact page", etc).

On top of this, we'll be using the most popular open source eCommerce plugin for WordPress, [WooCommerce](#), because it has the widest choice when it comes to additional feature plugins and shop templates to choose from. Jigo-Shop is the biggest alternative, and, in truth, there is very little to distinguish the two - if you have a chance, download both and play with them for a few days before making your final choice.

There are also dedicated eCommerce systems out there - Magento, ZenCart and OpenCart are perhaps among the most popular of those - but working with WordPress means we're guaranteed a solid system that isn't going to be abandoned anytime soon. It also opens up a wealth of features not typically found on eCommerce sites, which is exactly what you need if you're going to stand out from the crowd.

## 1.1 Set Up Domain and Hosting

We'll be using the Grid hosting service from Media Temple as it's a great balance between cost, performance and scalability. At \$20/month, it's an affordable starting point for your business with 1TB of bandwidth and 100GB of disk space - most small stores will never need to upgrade.

Unlike other "shared hosting" plans, Media Temple's Grid will keep the site online even under heavy load from traffic spikes (how they achieve this is explained in the later chapter on performance). You can host more than one domain if you'd like too, so there's potential for experimenting.

If you think you're going to want more low-level access to the server because you're the kind of person who loves tinkering with Linux, consider Media Temple's "DV Managed" virtual private server solution. At \$50/mo, this gives you a complete virtual machine that you can tweak to your heart's content, although optimization tasks will be entirely up to you.

### Web Hosting for All of Your Ideas

<h4>Managed VPS Hosting</h4>  <p>Powerful and reliable Managed VPS hosting for small businesses, resellers and designers.</p> <p><b>\$50/MO</b> <a href="#">LEARN MORE ►</a></p>	<h4>Shared Hosting</h4>  <p>The best website hosting service for your blog, portfolio, or small business. Host 100 sites for one low price.</p> <p><b>\$20/MO</b> <a href="#">LEARN MORE ►</a></p>	<h4>Developer VPS Hosting</h4>  <p>Linux VPS web hosting gives you total control of your server environment - built for web developers.</p> <p><b>\$30/MO</b> <a href="#">LEARN MORE ►</a></p>
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Head over to [MediaTemple.net/webhosting/shared](http://MediaTemple.net/webhosting/shared) to get started:

Take a brief look at the features, then click **sign up**.

You'll need to choose a domain name immediately to set up your account - you can always add more later and change this primary domain if you want. If you don't have one yet, go ahead and type one in to see if it's available. New domain name registration through Media Temple starts at \$12/year. You can also configure it with a domain purchased elsewhere, but it's up to you to adjust the name servers for that domain to **ns1.mediatemple.net** and **ns2.mediatemple.net** from the control panel of wherever you purchased the domain.

## Activate

A better experience. A few steps away.

1. Domain Configuration   2. Contact & Payment Info   3. Done

**I want to register this domain**

Domain registration services renew automatically each year and can be modified at any time via the AccountCenter. [Click here](#) to see what types of domains you can register with (mt) Media Temple.

---

**I already own this domain – any domain type**

Choose this option if you currently own a domain name, or have recently purchased a domain with another company. Any domain with a valid TLD, including international domains, can be used. Domain handling instructions will be sent to you at the end of the order.

### Order Summary

**Hosting Plan** [edit](#)

(gs) Grid-Service   \$20.00/mo

**Domain name selection**

In Progress...

Total: **\$20.00**

Anytime Money Back Guarantee

« Go Back
CONTINUE ORDER ▶

With any luck, your domain will be available! “Domain Privacy” is not essential but, without it, your name and address will be easily accessible to anyone who knows where to look. If you're purchasing under a business address anyway, this obviously isn't an issue - but you may wish to enable this service if it's your home address.

duinobits.com is Available!

- Register duinobits.com**   → \$12.00/yr
  - Enable domain privacy (Normally \$8 - FREE for a limited time) ?

On the next screen, fill out your address and payment details. You should then shortly receive a welcome email - before you can get started, you'll need to set a password. Follow the link in the email to do this, and be sure to use something actually secure (I use [StrongPasswordGenerator.com](http://StrongPasswordGenerator.com) to generate a 15 character secure password - keep the tab open, you'll need another one in a minute). Once you've set that, you can log into your [Account Center](#).

**HTTP://MAKEUSEOF.COM**  
**JAMES BRUCE, HTTP://DUINOBITS.COM**

share:

7

**Welcome, James!**  
ACCOUNT: 260234

**The new, improved, and FASTER Grid.**  
Tell your friends and get it FREE!  
[LEARN MORE](#)

**CloudTech**  
Extended care and premium technical support from the (mt) team you trust.

**Affiliate Program**  
NOW WITH HIGHER PAYOUTS!

**SSL Certificate**  
Website security made simple.  
[Get yours now >](#)

**Your Domains** Smart Grouping  On  Off

Domain Name	Hosting Service	Renewal Date	
duinobits.com	(gs) Grid-Service	Sep 27, 2014	<a href="#">Admin</a>

[Manage All Domains](#) [Add New Domain](#)

**Recent Support Requests**

Request #	Subject	Domain	Updated	Status
No Recent Support Requests				

[New Support Request](#) [View All Requests](#) [View Chat History](#)

**Search the KnowledgeBase**

Enter Keywords  [Search](#)

**Quick Links**

- [Add new Domain or Service](#)
- [Make a Payment](#)
- [Help Center](#)
- [\(mt\) KnowledgeBase](#)
- [Try out our new Email Config!](#)

The most important buttons you'll want to know on this screen are:

- **Admin** - which takes you to the control panel for the site and from which you can create email addresses, databases, or use the one-click application install features.
- **Add New Domain** - there are no additional hosting costs for the domain, though the domain itself will need to be purchased.
- **New Support Request** - where you can get help on anything to do with your account. There's also a 24/7/365 chat accessible from the bottom right toolbar.
- **KnowledgeBase** - a wiki full of information about every aspect of managing your server. Always search this first when you have questions.

## 1.2 Make An Email Address

Let's set up your first email address - though you can have up to 1000 if you want. Click on the **Admin** button, then **Email Users**. Note that this is slightly different from **Email Aliases**. An alias is basically a forwarding address - it can receive email, but will go to another specified email account rather than having its own separate inbox. Click **Add New User**. You only really need to worry about the name, description and password bits - the rest can be adjusted later if needed, such as if you hire an assistant and need to give them FTP access without compromising the main admin account. Fill out the auto-reply settings if you'd like a default acknowledgement sent to anyone who emails you, such as "Thanks for getting in touch, we'll try to reply within a day".

**Add User** : duinobits.com

duinobits.com &gt; email users &gt; add/edit user

You are able to create a new email user or edit the properties of existing email user accounts. You can specify the domain to create the address for, or you can set the user to exist on all domains. You are able to manage per-user MailProtect settings, Sub-FTP and SSH access, and configure the Auto-Reply. Once a user is created, they may manage most of these properties from the **uControl**.

**Email user settings**

Configuration options for the email user.

**Email address/Username:** \*

Specify the name to use for this email address. You may set this email user to exist on all domains, or for a specific domain on your hosting service.

james @ all domains on this site

**Description:** \*

A way for you to identify this account.

**Set Password**

Set the login password for this user.

**Password requirements:**

- » At least one lower case letter [a-z]
- » At least one upper case letter [A-Z]
- » At least one numeral [0-9]
- » At least one symbol [!@#^&\*()+\_.,{}?~]
- » Minimum 8 characters
- » Maximum 20 characters

Password: \*

Re-enter Password: \*

Once set up, go to **Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.** to use the amazing automagical Media Temple email setup tool - just type in your email address, tell it which client (email application) you're trying to set up, and it'll send you a file you can run to set everything up automatically.

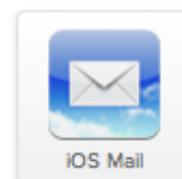
## Hi, let's set up your email client.

Enter the email address you'd like to set up.

james@duinobits.com



Tell us which email client you are using.



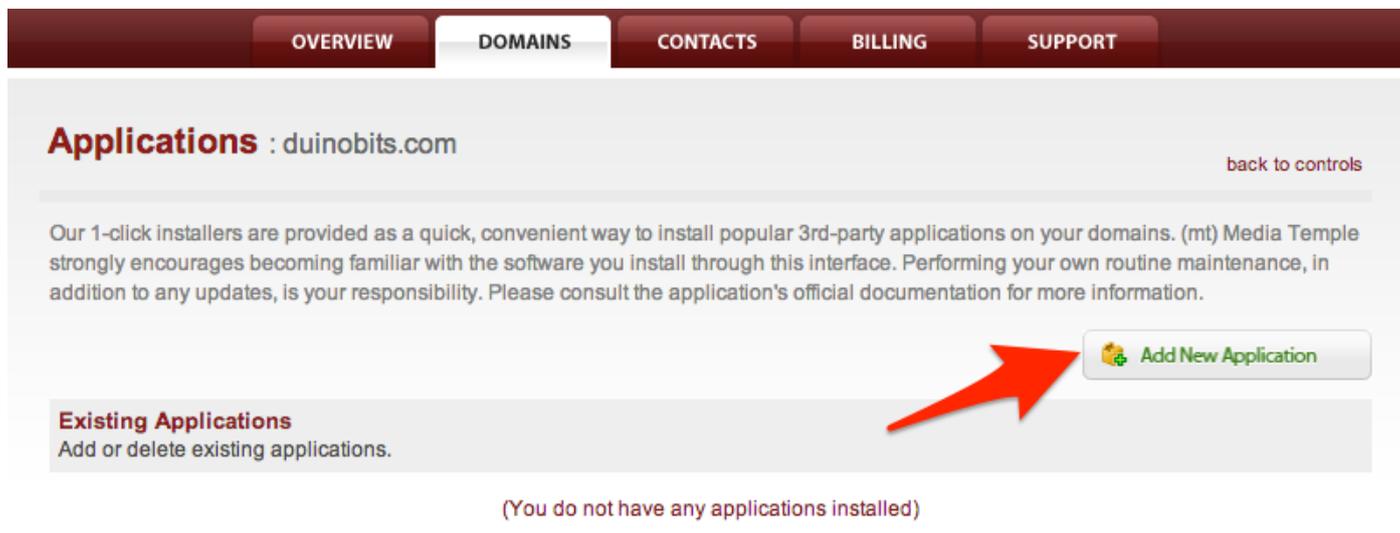
Don't see your email client listed?

## 1.3 Choose Database Password

Before we can use the one-click setup, you'll need to set up a database password - again, use the strong password generator to make a new one. On the next screen, it'll ask you to create a new database - don't worry about this, just go back to main Admin screen. We'll be using the one-click install from this point on.

## 1.4 Installing WordPress With One Click

Select **One-click Install** from the admin screen -> **Add New Application** -> **WordPress** -> and select **Start**. For other hosts equipped with CPanel, refer to the [WordPress.org Installation guide](#).



**Applications** : duinobits.com back to controls

Our 1-click installers are provided as a quick, convenient way to install popular 3rd-party applications on your domains. (mt) Media Temple strongly encourages becoming familiar with the software you install through this interface. Performing your own routine maintenance, in addition to any updates, is your responsibility. Please consult the application's official documentation for more information.

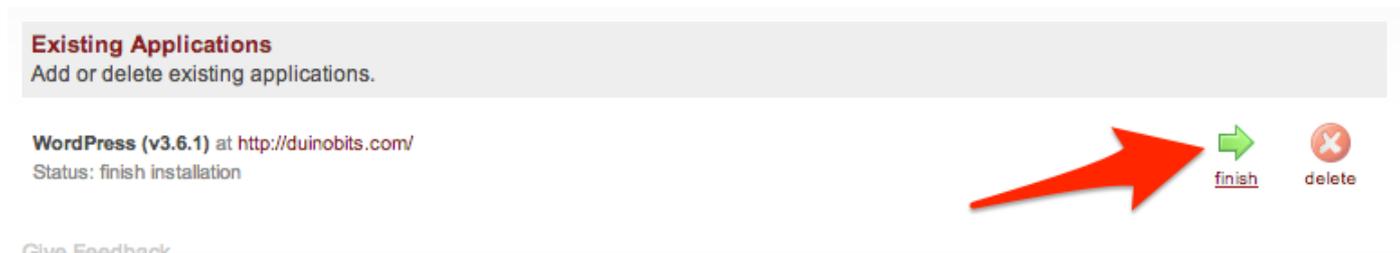
[Add New Application](#)

**Existing Applications**  
Add or delete existing applications.

(You do not have any applications installed)

By default, the installer will try to set up WordPress on blog.yourdomain.com (known as a subdomain). This isn't what we want, since WordPress will be hosting the main shop as well - not just a blog - so be sure to delete that bit. Don't include WWW in the domain either! You can leave the other fields for database on default if you wish, but, for security reasons, I suggest at least changing the database prefix away from the **wp\_** - that way, if someone does manage to hack into your site or inject malicious database commands, they won't know the name of the tables to target.

You'll get a message about an existing HTML folder - this the default page of the server. Feel free to discard this and overwrite. Once the install is ready for you, a green button will appear with the label **Finish**.



**Existing Applications**  
Add or delete existing applications.

**WordPress (v3.6.1)** at <http://duinobits.com/>  
Status: finish installation

[finish](#) [delete](#)

[Give Feedback](#)

Click that to complete the final steps of the installation within WordPress itself - that is, choosing the site title and administrator username, etc. Disable the option to **let search engines index the site** for now - you can re-enable this later, once you're actually ready to launch.

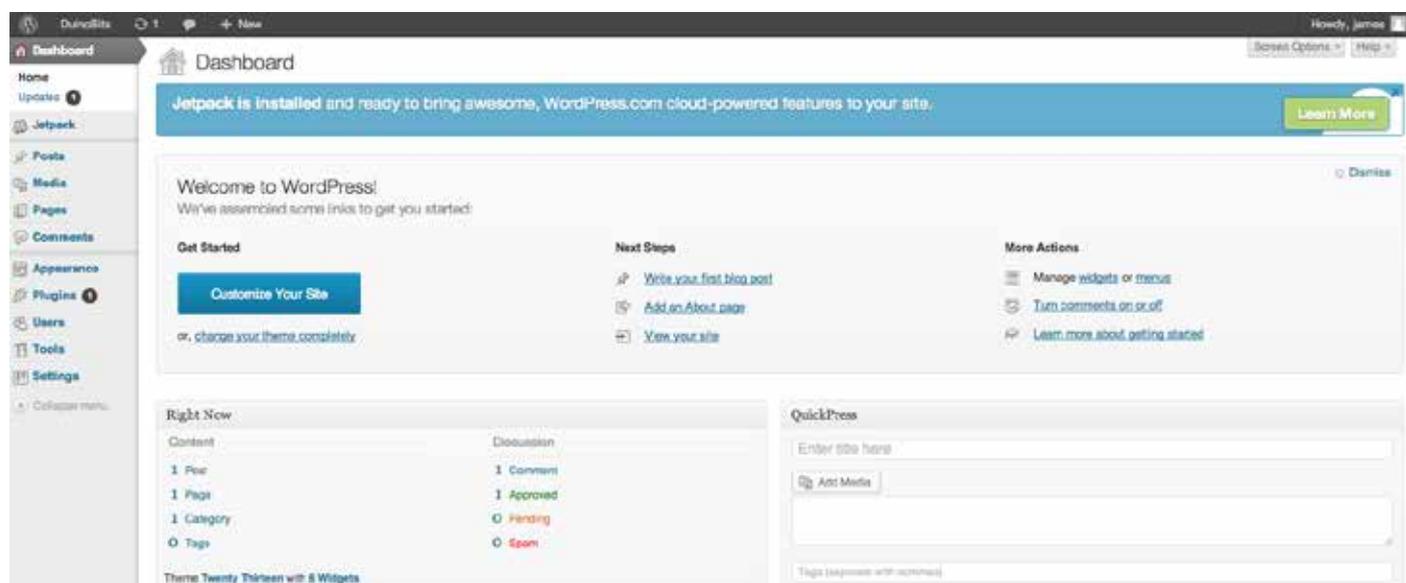
## 2. WordPress 101

WordPress began life as a simple blogging platform, but its popularity and open source code led to the system being adapted to power many kinds of websites. As a *Content Management System*, WordPress makes it easy for you to create posts in a chronological order - like a blog - and static pages, used for things like “About Us,” “FAQ” or “Contact.” WordPress handles your file uploads (media) and comments made on articles. All of this information is stored in a database, then, when a page is loaded, the relevant theme template is populated with the correct information. Posts can be categorised and tagged, helping the user navigate through items of interest. WordPress also has an extensive plugin system, which adds features or adjusts functionality of your site.

Here’s a quick look at the interface - you can always get to this by adding /wp-admin to the end of your domain, like:

<http://yourdomain.com/wp-admin/>

The first screen you see when you log in is the Dashboard, which gives an overview of pertinent information like total posts and comments, recent comments or who is linking to you.



Along the left side of the screen is the main navigation bar. Hover over an item, and a submenu may appear. From the posts item, you can view all existing posts, add a new post or adjust categories and tags.

**Media** lets you view all the files that have been uploaded, but generally you don’t need to do this as you’ll be uploading them directly to product pages or blog posts. You might use the Media screen to upload a logo.

**Pages** is where you view or create static pages, while **Posts** is where the action happens. Posts are chronological blog entries, the main focus of most WordPress installs. On the Posts submenu are also management screens for Categories and Tags. Since we’re using WordPress for eCommerce, we won’t be using these screens as much.

**Comments** brings you to the moderation queue where you mark comments as spam or approve them.

**Appearance** is where you’ll be choosing which theme to run - and if your theme supports it, there may be some more options for theme-specific settings. You’ll also adjust widget settings - these are special blocks of functionality on your website, like a calendar or list of most popular products on the sidebar. You may also be able to customise menu items here, but again this depends upon your theme. Basically, if you want to change something about how your site looks, it’s probably changed in here somewhere.

**Plugins** is for managing, adding or disabling plugins; some plugins may add their own settings under this menu too (though some will place it under tools instead). You can either install plugins by searching from the WordPress directory, or upload a zip file (if you purchased a premium plugin). Note: It’s common to find the actual plugin zip file inside of another container zip file, in addition to things like a readme for instructions. If you get errors when uploading, try expanding the original file on your local hard drive first, then upload the zip found within that.

**Users** is for editing who can log in to the site. There are five classes of “user”, from admin (that’s you - admins can adjust anything about the site, and very easily break it) to “subscriber” - which is how customers will be registered so that their details can be remembered.

**Tools** can be safely ignored, though some plugins will place their menu items in here.

Finally, **Settings**. For now, it will suffice to check the **General**, and **Permalink** sub menu items. From the **General** settings page, be sure to set a tagline for your site - a one-line description that may be shown on the homepage for some themes, as well as the local timezone. **Permalinks** refers to the URLs that will be used to access content - by default, they will look something like:

`http://yoursite.com/?p=12345`

.. which is not only ugly, but horrible for search engines (there’s a whole chapter on that later, don’t worry). Choose one that includes the post name, but I recommend not including the date unless you plan on posting a lot of time sensitive blog posts. I’ll be suggesting later that you do write blog posts, though, in order to attract the search engines to your site, so, this way, the URL for them will appear like:

`http://yoursite.com/why-my-products-are-awesome/`



## Permalink Settings

By default WordPress uses web URLs which have question marks and lots of numbers in them, however WordPress offers you the ability links. A [number of tags are available](#), and here are some examples to get you started.

### Common Settings

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Default                     | <code>http://www.duinobits.com/?p=123</code>   |
| <input type="radio"/> Day and name                | <code>http://www.duinobits.com/2013/09/28/sample-post/</code>                          |
| <input type="radio"/> Month and name              | <code>http://www.duinobits.com/2013/09/sample-post/</code>                             |
| <input type="radio"/> Numeric                     | <code>http://www.duinobits.com/archives/123</code>                                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Post name                   | <code>http://www.duinobits.com/sample-post/</code>                                     |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Custom Structure | <code>http://www.duinobits.com</code> <input type="text" value="/%year%/%postname%/"/> |

### Optional

If you like, you may enter custom structures **Choose one of these for how**  as your category base wo

Category base

Tag base

[Save Changes](#)

Take a moment to look around all the options, add some test posts perhaps - try to upload and insert a picture in them, then view your site and comment on those posts, and see how they appear in the admin area. You should find everything is fairly self-explanatory.

Performance tip: By default, a plugin package called JetPack is installed. Contrary to what the name might suggest, it actually slows your site down considerably. Deactivate this from the Plugins screen for an instant performance boost - the features of this plugin can be found individually elsewhere.



Plugins

[Add New](#)**Jetpack is installed** and ready to bring awesome, WordPress.com cloud-powered features to your sAll (3) | [Active \(1\)](#) | [Inactive \(2\)](#) | [Update Available \(1\)](#) | [Drop-ins \(1\)](#)Bulk Actions ▾ [Apply](#)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Plugin	Description
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Akismet</b> <a href="#">Activate</a>   <a href="#">Edit</a>   <a href="#">Delete</a>	Used by millions, Akismet is quite possibly the best way in the world to <b>protect your blog from comment and track</b> the "Activate" link to the left of this description, 2) Sign up for an Akismet API key, and 3) Go to your Akismet configu Version 2.5.9   By Automattic   <a href="#">Visit plugin site</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Hello Dolly</b> <a href="#">Activate</a>   <a href="#">Edit</a>   <a href="#">Delete</a>	This is not just a plugin, it symbolizes the hope and enthusiasm of an entire generation summed up in two words su from Hello, Dolly in the upper right of your admin screen on every page. Version 1.6   By Matt Mullenweg   <a href="#">Visit plugin site</a>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Jetpack by WordPress.com</b> <a href="#">Settings</a>   <a href="#">Deactivate</a>   <a href="#">Edit</a>	Bring the power of the WordPress.com cloud to your self-hosted WordPress. Jetpack enables you to connect your b WordPress.com users. Version 2.4.2   By Automattic   <a href="#">Visit plugin site</a>

There is a new versi **Jetpack by WordPress.com** available. [View version 2.5 details](#) or [update now](#).Bulk Actions ▾ [Apply](#)**Deactivate Jetpack, you don't need it.**

## 2.1 Setting Up Shop

To add the WooCommerce shop components to WordPress, select Add New from the Plugins sidebar option. Search for "woocommerce" and installing the top option, which at the time of writing is

**WooCommerce - excelling eCommerce 2.0.14**. There may be a more recent version by the time you're reading this, though, so don't worry if the version number isn't exactly the same.

- [Dashboard](#)
- [Jetpack](#)
- [Posts](#)
- [Media](#)
- [Pages](#)
- [Comments](#)
- [Appearance](#)
- [Plugins](#) 1**
- [Installed Plugins](#)
- [Add New](#)
- [Editor](#)

**Installing Plugin: WooCommerce - excelling eCommerce 2.0.14**  
 Downloading install package from <http://downloads.wordpress.org/plugin/woocommerce.2.0.14.zip...>  
 Unpacking the package...  
 Installing the plugin...  
 Successfully installed the plugin **WooCommerce - excelling eCommerce 2.0.14**.  
[Activate Plugin](#) | [Return to Plugin Installer](#)

**Don't forget to activate WooCommerce after installing**

Once installed, click the **Activate Plugin** link. Once this banner appears, click the **Install WooCommerce Pages** link - this will add the required static pages like Checkout and My Account.

The screenshot shows the WordPress Plugins interface. At the top, there's a 'Welcome to WooCommerce' banner with two buttons: 'Install WooCommerce Pages' (highlighted with a red arrow) and 'Skip setup'. Below the banner, a yellow notification bar says 'Plugin activated.'. The main area shows a list of installed plugins, with 'Akismet' visible. The interface includes navigation links like 'Screen Options' and 'Help', and a search bar for installed plugins.

Finally, you'll need to set the permalink preferences again, adjusting the product pages to use either a base URL of **/product**, **/shop**, or **custom**. Remember to **Save Changes** when done, and the new permalink structure will be written to the server.

## 2.2 Adjusting Settings

Assuming the installation went successfully, you should now have two new sections on your sidebar. The first, WooCommerce, is where you'll be managing the shop, dealing with orders, and doing all the setup. Click the Settings sub-menu item and have a read through all the general settings first - these are usually fine by default, but I would suggest the following changes:

Enable registration on the My Account page - otherwise customers will be forced to use the standard WordPress registration.

Prevent customers logging in to WordPress Admin - there's no reason for them to be there, after all, and it seems more professional to keep the WordPress side hidden from them.

Enable sitewide store notice text - just in case someone does stumble upon your shop and tries to make an order.

The screenshot shows the WooCommerce Settings page in the WordPress admin. The 'General' tab is selected. A yellow notification bar at the top says 'Your settings have been saved.'. The 'General Options' section includes:
 

- Base Location: United Kingdom
- Currency: Pounds Sterling (£)
- Allowed Countries: All Countries
- Store Notice:  Enable site-wide store notice text
- Store Notice Text: This is a demo store for testing purposes — no orders

 The 'Cart, Checkout and Accounts' section includes:
 

- Coupons:  Enable the use of coupons

 The left sidebar shows the WordPress navigation menu with 'WooCommerce' expanded to show 'Settings'.

On the **Catalog** tab, you can adjust units and some of the finer details of product display - by default, dimensions and weight will be shown in the “additional product information” section of product pages. Unless you have a good reason to disable them, I suggest keeping them on for SEO reasons (“search engine optimisation”, one of the later chapters in this guide).

Ignore the **Pages** tab for now - it allows you to create specific custom pages for store functions, but WooCommerce will have already created all the necessary pages for you when it was installed, so you should have no reason to change them.

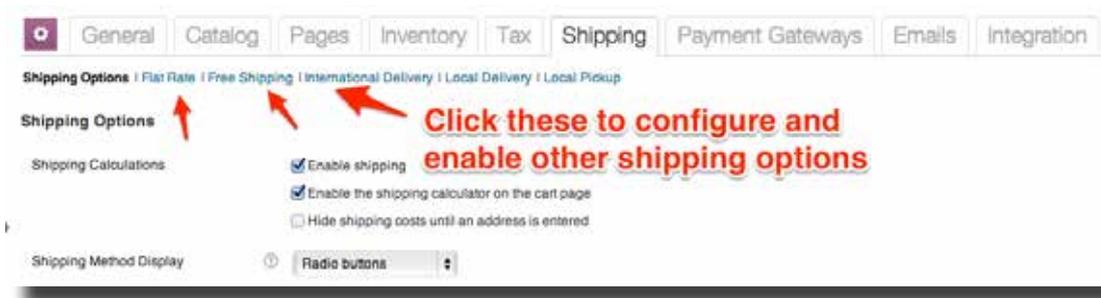
The **Inventory** tab is for stock management settings. Disable the stock management if you want to handle this side of things yourself, making items to order, or drop-shipping. If you are planning on keeping track of stock levels, the automated low stock warning can be quite helpful.

**Tax.** This is a broad topic, and it’s assumed you’ll understand the tax system in your local area. In the UK, you must pay 20% VAT if your total turnover is greater than £79,000/year - however, once registered, you can also claim VAT back on business purchases, so it isn’t quite as bad as a 20% loss of profit for you. Read this for [more details on VAT](#).

The situation is far more complex in the U.S., where rates vary by state as do the products that are exempt - though you’re generally exempt from sales tax if you don’t have a physical presence, like an office or retail store (technically, your online customers should be paying the tax themselves). There is, however, legislation under way that would remove this exemption and put the onus on the online store, so do check first.

All tax calculations are disabled by default in WooCommerce.

**Shipping:** There are basic shipping options - like flat rate, or free shipping - built into WooCommerce. You can purchase additional shipping options, such as USPS or Royal Mail from the official WooCommerce extensions store. By default, only free shipping is enabled in your store - but you can change this by clicking the blue links at the top of the Shipping tab. Don’t forget to also disable free shipping if you choose one of the others, or customers will probably choose the free option!



**Payment Gateways** are various methods that you can accept payment from customers. Again, you can purchase or download additional payment gateways from WooCommerce or other developers, but do bear in mind that accepting credit card payments directly on your site introduces a whole new set of challenges for dealing with SSL. Read the separate chapter on SSL to learn about these. No worries, though: you can still accept credit card payments through PayPal. On the final page of the checkout, the customer will be redirected to a secure PayPal page, before being automatically redirected back to your site for the usual “thanks for your order message”. The fee is just \$0.10 per transaction.

## 2.2.1 SSL Considerations

**SSL - Secure Sockets Layer** - secures your checkout by creating an encrypted connection for your customers. You must verify your site in order to obtain an SSL certificate that confirms you really are who you say you are, and this will enable various browser security markers to appear on your checkout page. Obtaining the SSL certificate costs money - \$75/year if you purchase one through Media Temple - and does introduce some other complications, mentioned later in this guide.



## 3. Choosing a Theme

Theming is an important part of WordPress and WooCommerce. Whilst the admin side remains familiar, the theme you choose will determine *everything* that your customers see, so choosing a good theme is critical. As someone with quite a few WordPress sites, I must admit I spend an abnormal amount of seeking out the next best theme!

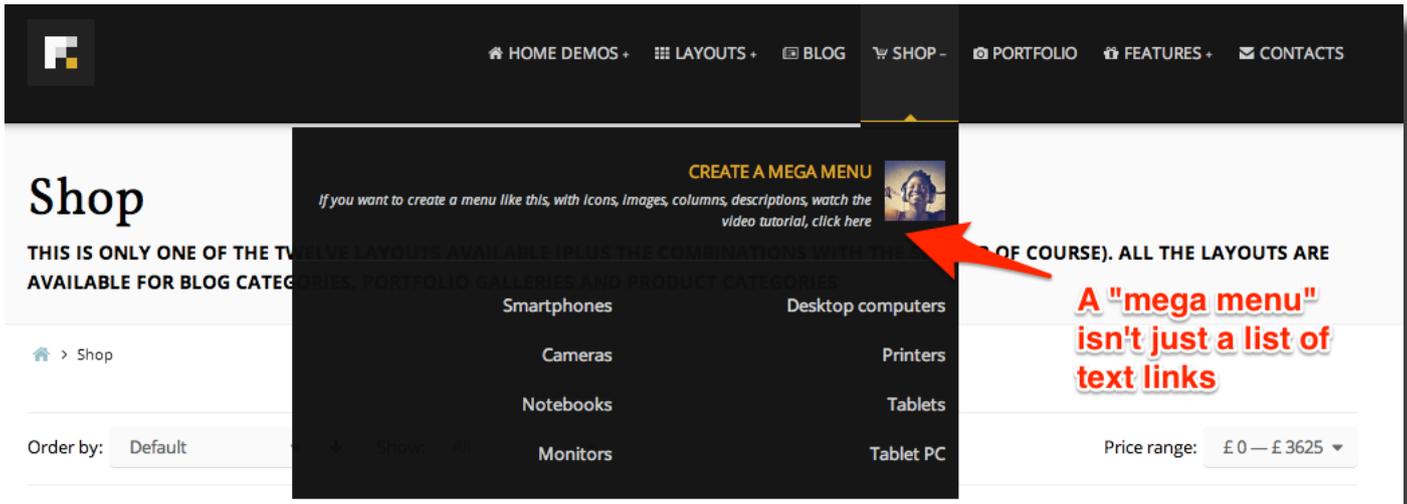
That said, it's also very easy to change the theme - you won't need to rewrite HTML or CSS, though you may need to reconfigure some menus.

If you've taken a moment to look at your site already, you'll have noticed that WooCommerce works out of the box with the default WordPress theme, but the styles are mismatched because it wasn't specifically designed to work with WooCommerce components. If you do have an existing theme that you'd like to integrate WooCommerce with, it should be possible - but adding custom styles is outside the scope of this guide. I'm going to assume you'll be purchasing a new theme that has been specifically designed to work with WooCommerce, so the product display style should match the surround template parts perfectly.

I recommend [ThemeForest WooCommerce](#) theme marketplace, though it's not the only place to find a premium theme. Expect to pay anywhere from \$50 to \$100 for a non-exclusive single site licence (which means other people can use the theme too). Here are some keywords to look out for:

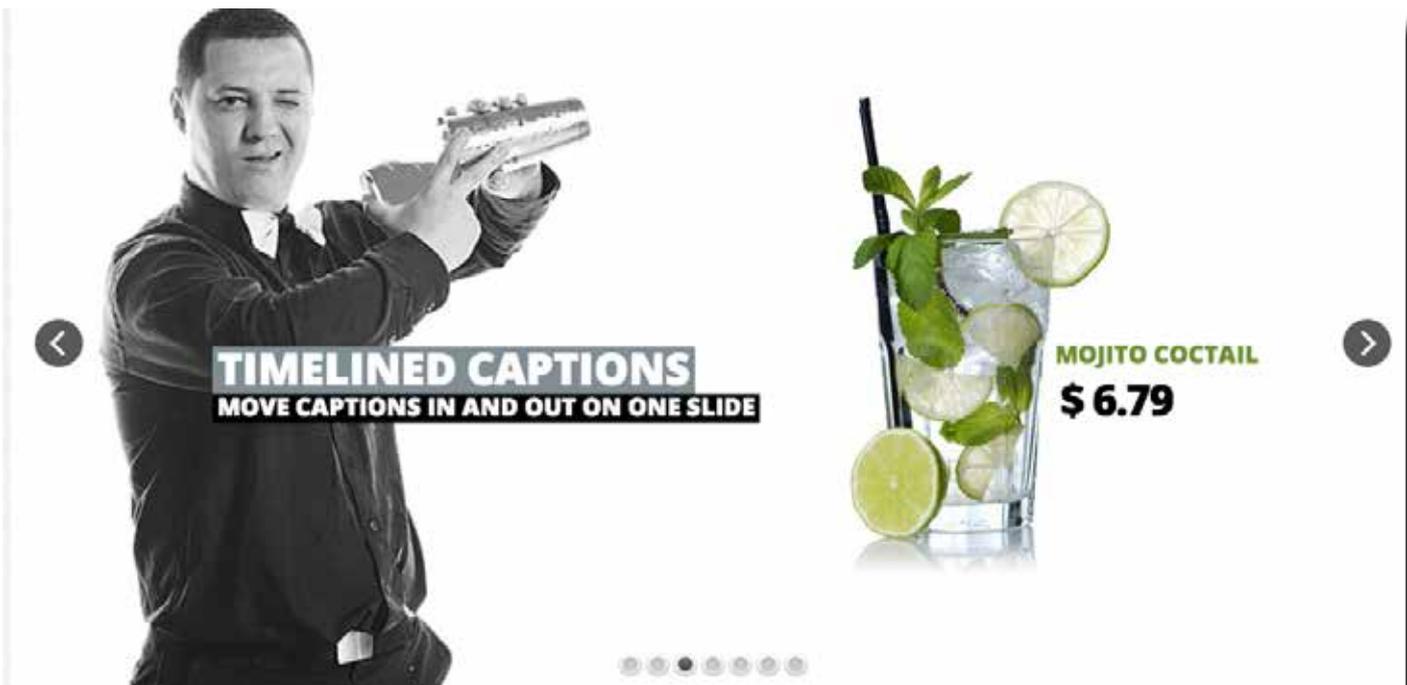
- **Responsive.** *The theme will resize photos and adjust layout depending on screen size - so it should work with mobiles and tablets. You can resize your browser window to test - it will adjust dynamically. Given that a good number of customers now shop from their sofa, catering at least for tablets is essential at this point.*
- **WordPress Customizer Compatible.** *A recent addition to WordPress is the ability to adjust elements of the theme design - such as header background and colours - without editing any code. This isn't essential - most themes will come with their own custom options panel anyway, but this is WordPress' attempt to standardize the process.*
- **Mega Menu.** *Menus are usually a single column of text links; a Mega Menu can be multiple col-*

umns, and can include a short graphic at the top, or descriptions for links - basically, a lot more than a standard menu.

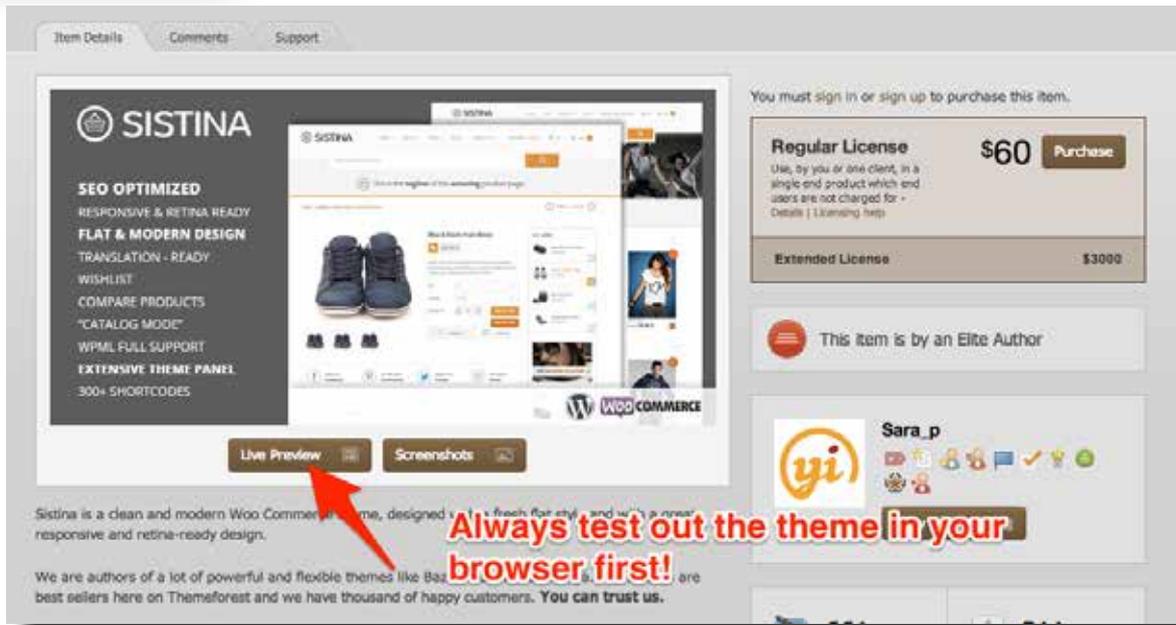


[Aqua Page Builder](#). A drag-and-drop template layout tool.

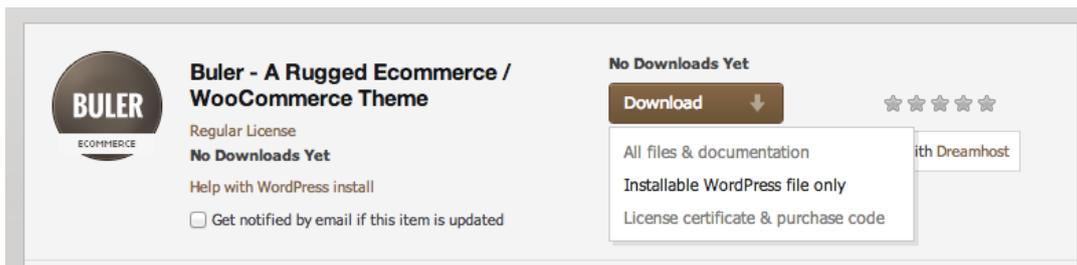
[Slider Revolution](#). Lets you add eye catching slideshows, with image and text effects. A great way to grab the customers' focus and introduce a specific product.



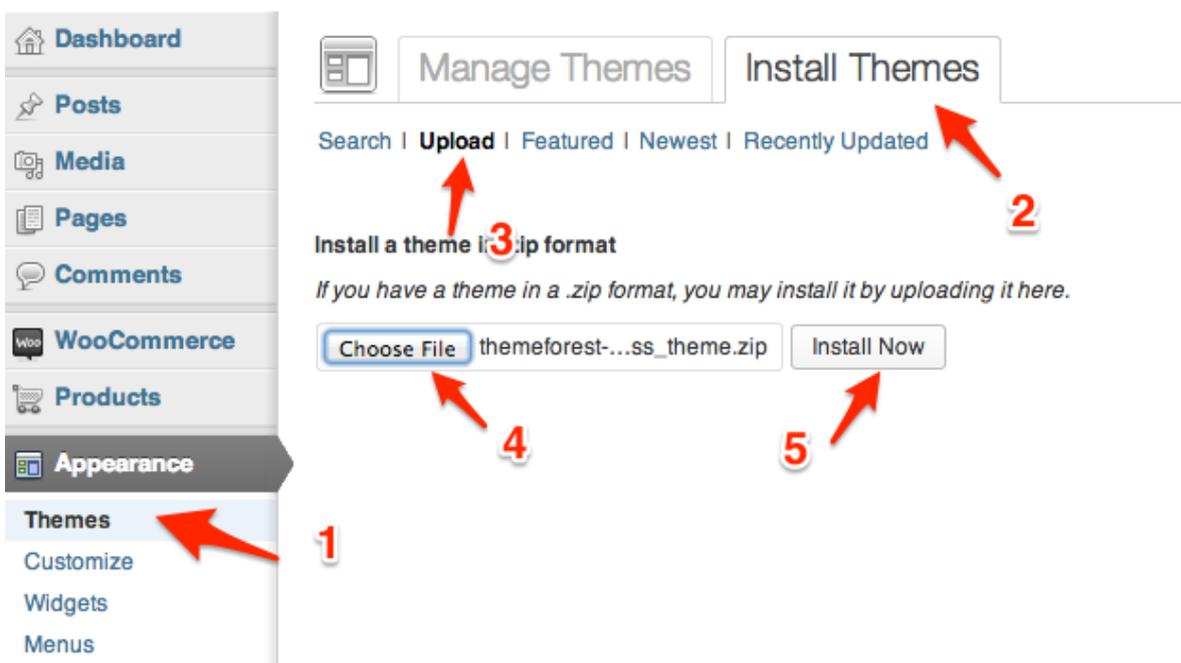
Each theme should have a live preview button where you can test it out. Look at all of the menu items to see the features offered by the theme - most will include different layouts.



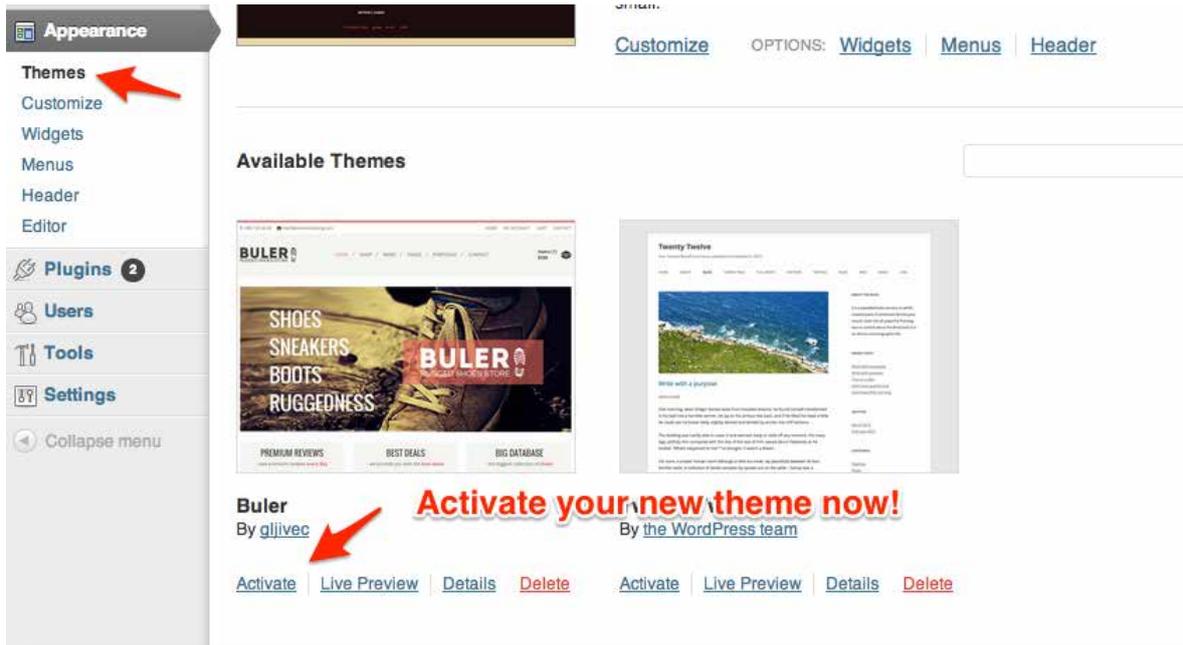
When it comes to downloading your new theme, you may be presented with the option of “WordPress theme files only” and “All files and documentation”. You’ll want to download both, but grab the WordPress theme file first as we can use that to upload to WordPress.



From the **Appearance** -> **Themes** submenu, click on the Install tab, then on the **Upload** link. Locate your theme file and click **Install Now**.

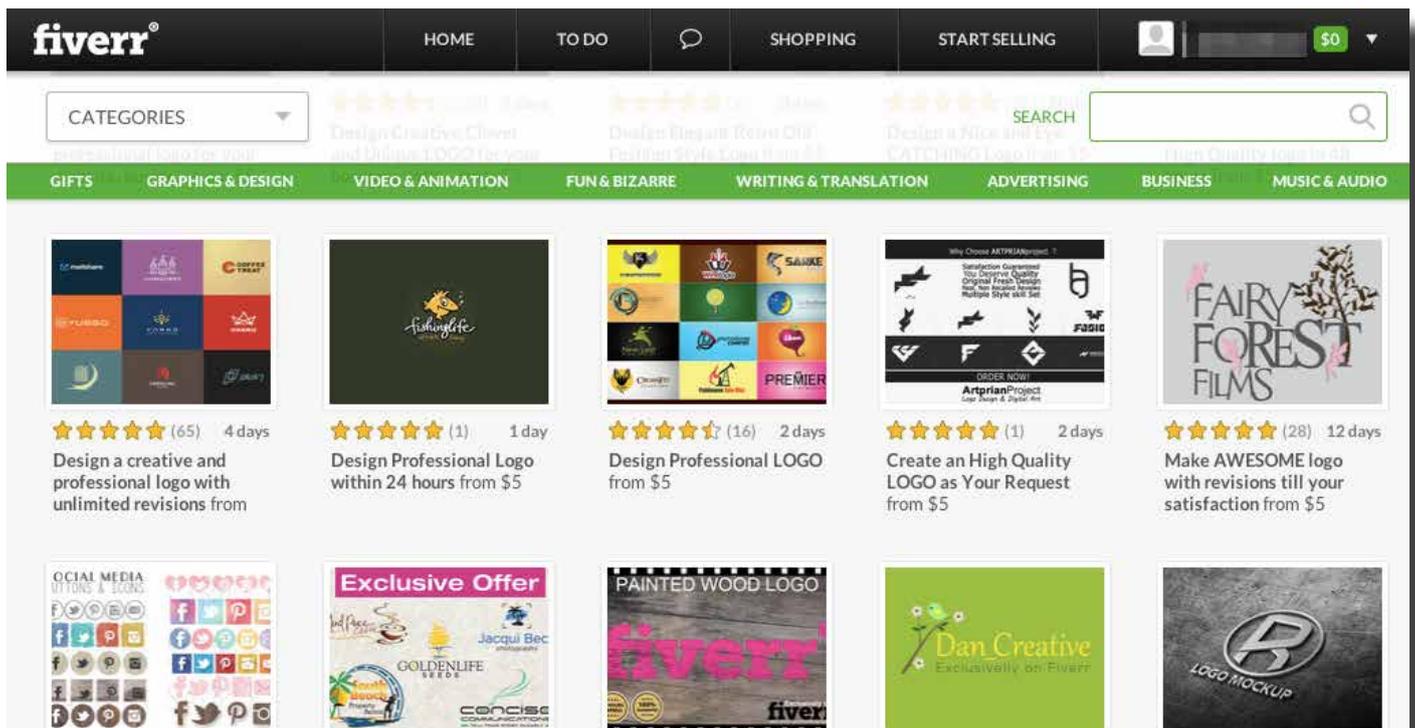


After completion, it should be listed on your **Available Themes** and ready to activate.



Since each theme is different, the options to configure and the methods of setting up various features will vary greatly. Some theme authors will provide demo content that you use to help set up features, which can be added using the **Tools -> Import** utility. Some will have additional plugins included in the full download package that will need to be installed separately (the process is the same as for a theme - just go to **Plugins -> Add New -> Upload**, and select the zip file). All themes will have some kind of documentation and an online support forum. Even seasoned pros need to refer to that documentation, but it can be overwhelming for the beginner with the sheer number of options available and different page designs. Take things one small step at a time, and don't get frustrated just because your site looks nothing like the preview yet.

**Money-Saving Tip:** If you want a semi-professional logo done without paying \$500+, check out [Fiverr.com](http://Fiverr.com), a marketplace for creative types to get experience and create a portfolio. You can get a basic logo concept done for \$5, but expect to pay \$50 for a complete set of PSD and vector files.

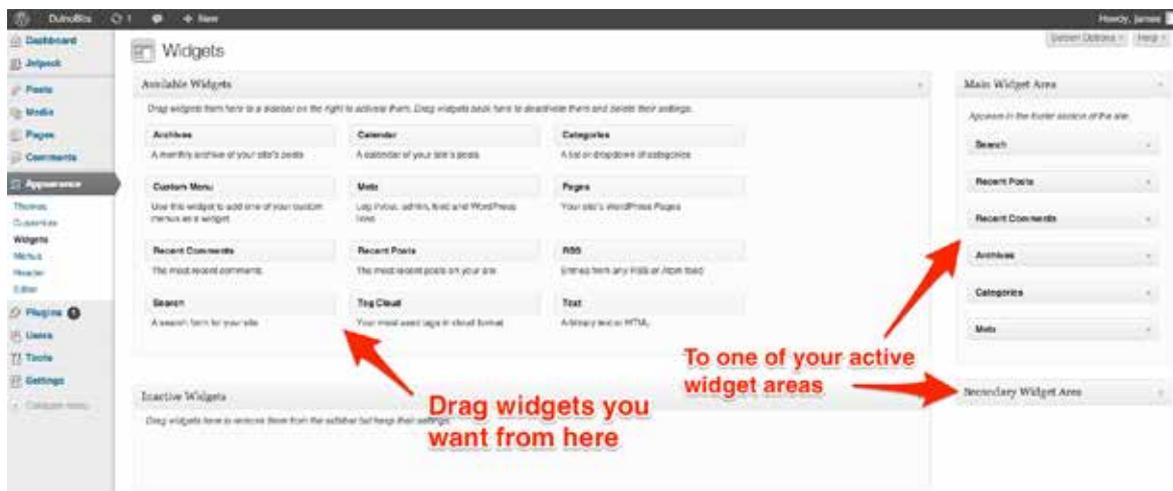


There are a few menu items under **Appearance** that are standard to every theme, so let's go over those briefly.

### 3.1 Widgets

Widgets are small bits of functionality that can be added to any sidebars / widget areas in your theme. Somewhat confusingly, a *sidebar* might also be found in the *header or footer* - it depends on the theme, but they usually include more than one. It's not always obvious where these widget areas are, so again refer to the documentation for details. Here are some examples of available widgets you can add that are included with WooCommerce:

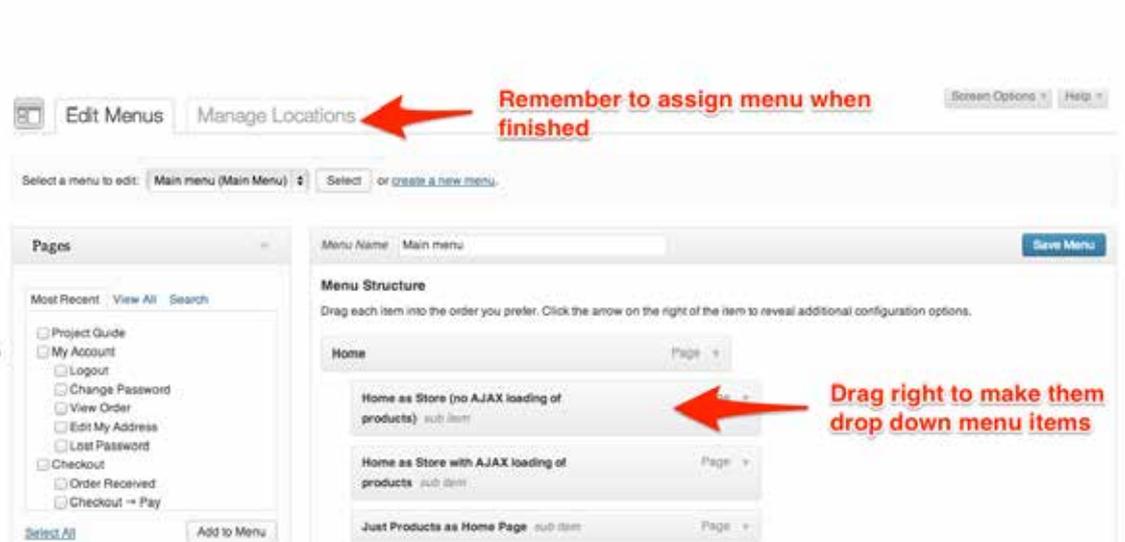
- *Product search*
- *Price filter*
- *Random products*
- *Cart (can be set to hidden if empty)*
- *Recently viewed products*



### 3.2 Menus

Most themes will also provide one or more menu locations. Menus must first be created, then assigned to a particular location.

If you'd like a menu item to expand when a user hovers over it, drag items in the menu editor to the left or right to make them a parent (top level) or child item.



## 4. Adding Products and Variations

If you've never managed an online shop before, the concept of product variations might be new to you. Your shop can handle these fundamental product types:

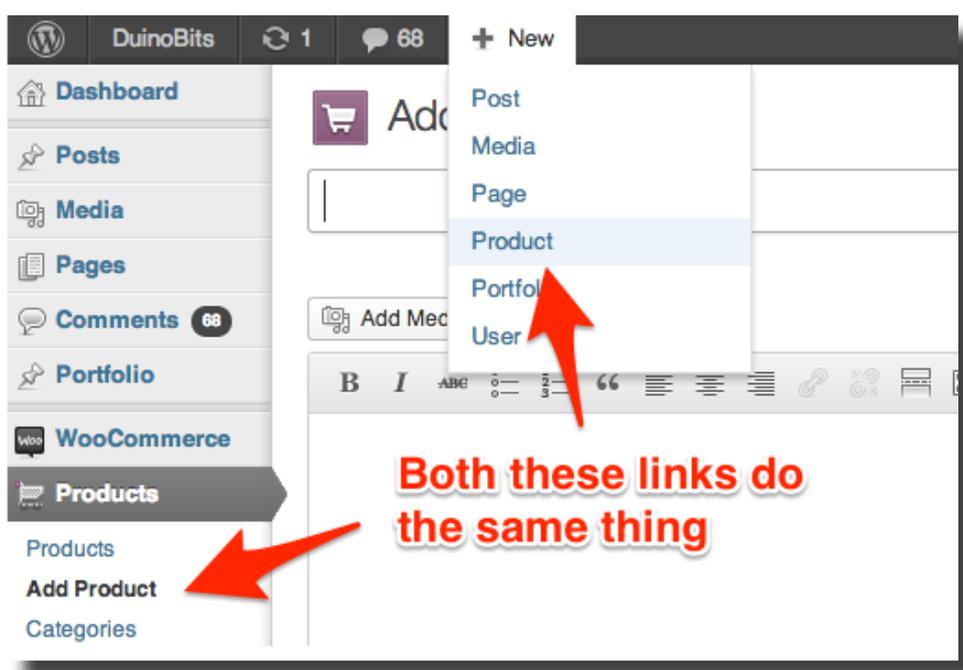
- **Simple product:** *A single item with no options. The easiest of all to manage.*
- **Variable:** *A core product with different attributes the customer can choose from - this could be size or color. If you're letting the system manage stock levels for you, each combination of variations is unique and, therefore, has its own stock level.*
- **Grouped:** *A collection of related simple products that can be purchased individually. A grouped product consists of many child products, but doesn't itself have a price or stock level; it's simply a way of visually grouping products on a single page, so that customers can add the individual products to their cart more easily.*
- **External / affiliate:** *Instead of an "add to cart" button, a "read more" button will be shown that sends the user to a different website.*
- **Downloadable:** *A file that can be delivered to the customer upon successful payment. This is usually protected in some way, and can be limited to a certain number of downloads, or with an expiry date.*
- **Virtual:** *These products don't require shipping and, therefore, won't contribute to a shipping cost - used mainly to sell services.*

Additional product types can be purchased as plugins - such as [product bundles or forced upsells](#). Most of the time, you'll be working with simple and variable products only.

All products can have attributes describing those products, such as color. A simple product might be a sweater available only in red (i.e. no variations), but the customer would still want it to be included if they were filtering for red products.

### 4.1 Adding a Simple Product

To add a simple product, go to **Products -> Add New** or use the quick admin bar at the top of the screen (**+ New -> Product**). The editing screen should be easy to grasp.



In addition to the product name and description, you'll find a **Short Description** box. On most themes this appears directly next to the product image with the full description further down the page; on some themes, it may not be used at all.

Scroll down the page a little to find the **Product Details** box. Here's where the important data about price and package dimensions are added.

Product Data — Simple product Virtual:  Downloadable:

General

SKU STARTER

Regular Price (£) 80

Sale Price (£)

Sale Price Dates From... YYYY To... YYYY-I

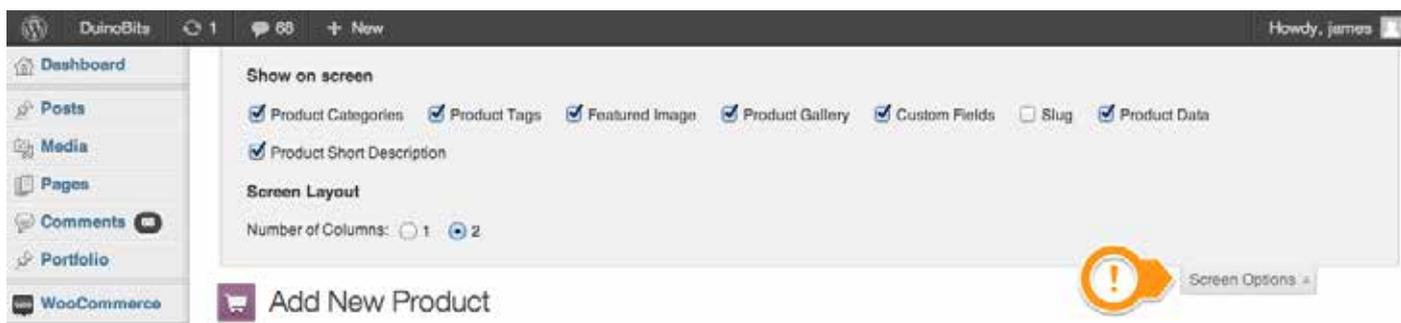
Shipping

Weight and dimensions are on the shipping tab

You must fill out SKU and price

Read on to find out how to add images.

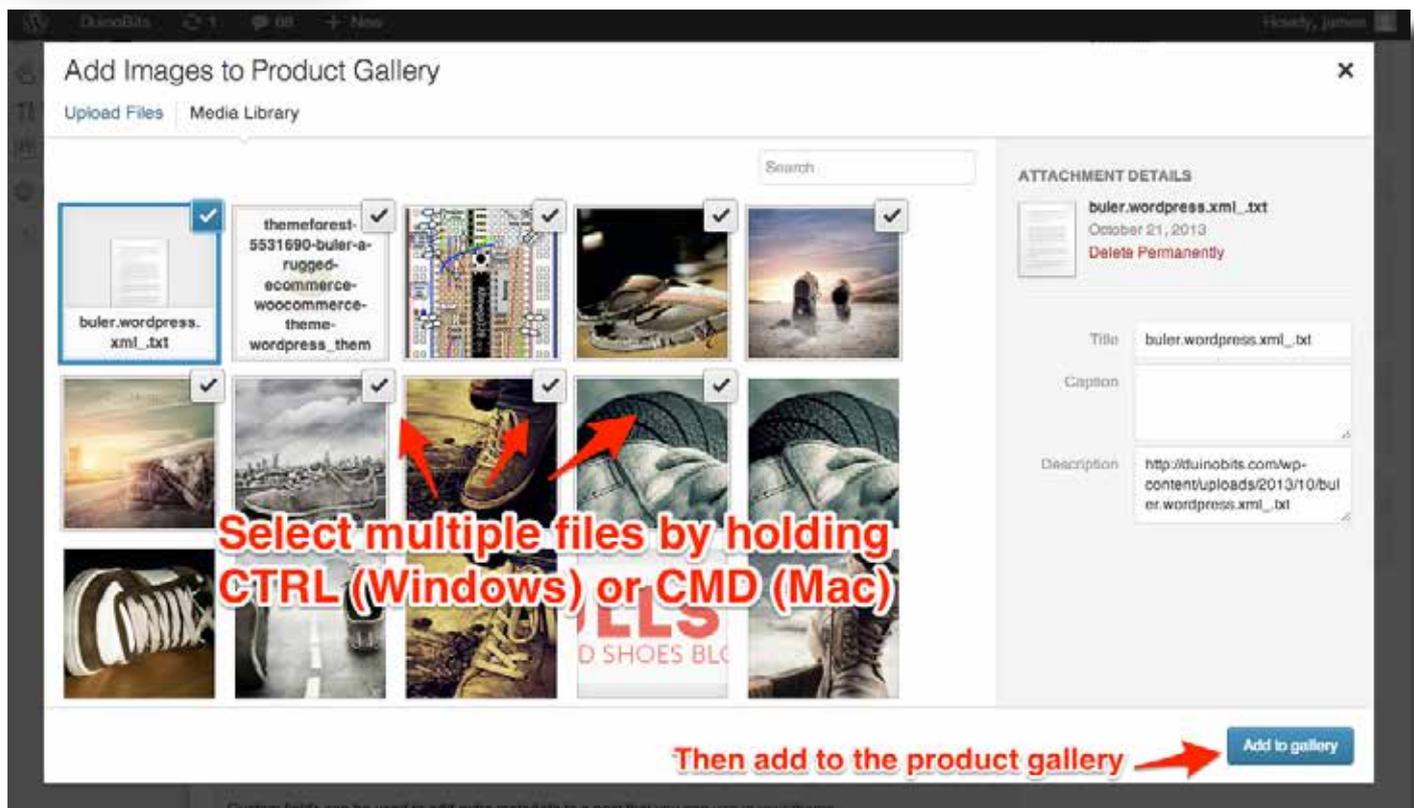
Quick tip: If you're looking for something on the edit screen and can't find it, the box may be hidden. Click **Screen Options** in the top right and ensure all boxes are enabled (or disable those you don't need to create a less cluttered edit screen).



## 4.2 Featured Images vs Product Gallery

On the bottom left side of the Edit or Add New Product screen, you'll find both a featured image and product gallery section. The featured image is the main product image shown immediately to the user and placed throughout the site. Only a single image can be used for the featured image, and each theme will have an ideal image size to be used. Upload everything at a reasonably high quality (but keep it under 2mb per image), and WordPress will automatically downsize as needed for thumbnail sizes.

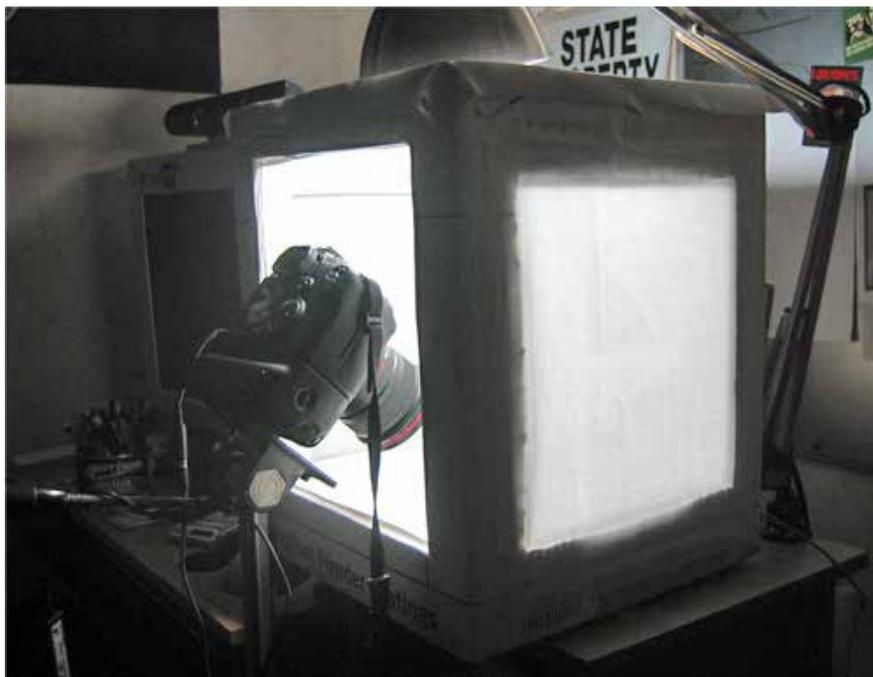
The Product Gallery section can be used to add multiple, additional images to a product. These are shown on the product detail page underneath the main image. In the case of variable products, each variation can also have its own image that will be shown when the user changes their selection.



The process of actually uploading images is self-explanatory - after you've clicked "Set featured image" or "Add product gallery", you can either choose from existing images or click the upload tab. Drag and drop into that window to upload. For product galleries, hold down the CMD/CTRL key to select multiple images at once from the media browser.

### 4.3 Product Photo Tips

Basic "seamless backgrounds" can be achieved with a white piece of card resting against a wall and a flat surface. For a really professional look, consider building a [DIY product photo box](#) (pictured below - image credit [Digital Photography School](#)). At the very least, use a flash diffuser for even lighting.



If your products could benefit from being seen at all angles, consider purchasing [Magic360 plugin](#) (£99), which creates a rotatable 360-degree object widget from 18 or 36 product photos. You can make a low-cost photography platform with a [Lazy Susan party plate](#) spray painted white.

## 4.4 Global Attributes

Accessible from the sidebar **Product** -> **Attributes** menu, global attributes can be applied to a range of products.

Let's go ahead and create a global **color** attribute as an example. From the **Products** -> **Attributes** screen, go ahead and name your new attribute. Make sure the attribute type is set to "select".

**Add New Attribute**

Attributes let you define extra product data, such as size or colour. You can use these attributes in the shop sidebar using the "layered nav" widgets. Please note: you cannot rename an attribute later on.

Name  
Colour

Name for the attribute (shown on the front-end).

Slug  
colour

Unique slug/reference for the attribute; must be shorter than 28 characters.

Type  
Select

Determines how you select attributes for products. Text allows manual entry via the product page, whereas select attribute terms can be defined from this section. If you plan on using an attribute for variations use select.

Default sort order  
Custom ordering

Determines the sort order on the frontend for this attribute. If using custom ordering, you can drag and drop the terms in this attribute

Add Attribute

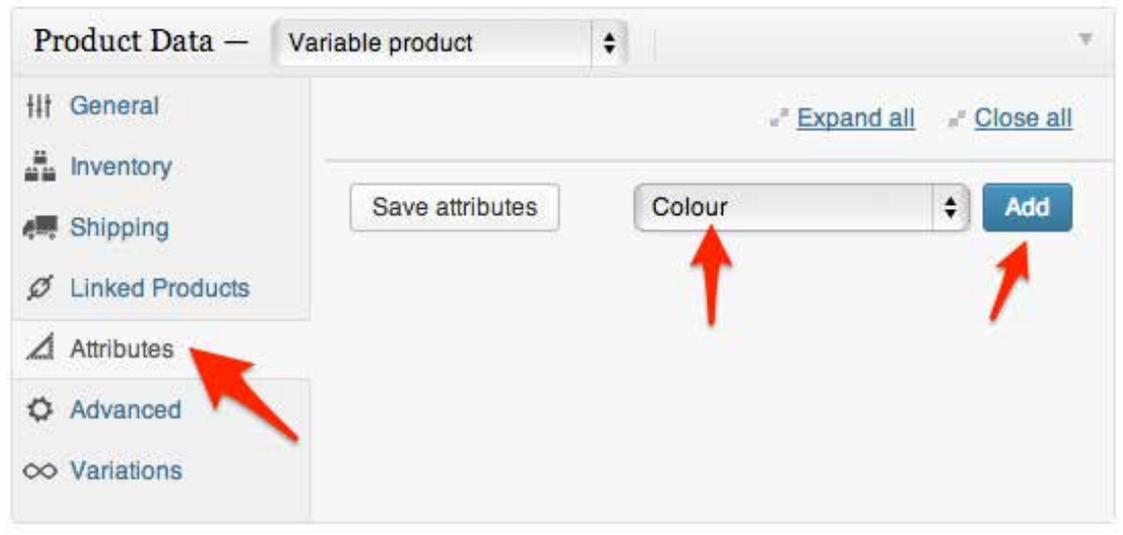
Name	Slug	Type	Order by	Terms
No attributes currently exist.				

Add the attribute and it'll appear on the list - click the configure terms button to add separate colors. *Note: If you want to use actual color "swatches" on the product options, you'll need to purchase the additional [Color and Image Swatches extension for \\$99](#). By default, you can only use text.*

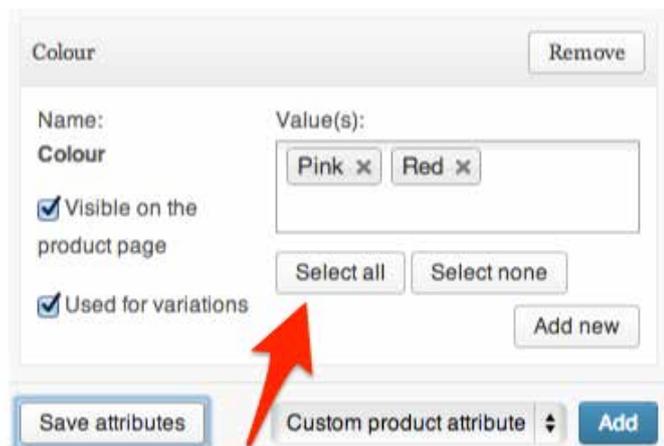
Size	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> L	<input type="checkbox"/> M	<input type="checkbox"/> S
Color	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Size and colour swatches come at a premium**

On the **Product** screen, scroll down to the **Product Details** box and you should now be able to add the new attribute color.



Once added, you'll need to select which color terms apply to this particular product - use Select All to quickly add all possible colors. Assuming you want these to create product variations and be selectable by the customer, ensure both checkboxes are selected as shown, then Save attributes.



**Add all of the defined colors as attributes on this product**

Now onto the **Variations** tab. If the product details don't change - price, height etc - and the variations are simply for user preference, you only need to add a single variation here and leave any attributes as the **Any Color, Any Size** (for example). That means that, regardless of the colour and size the user picks, it will display the same price and shipping calculations.

If the price or weight do change according to what the user selects, you'll need to add variations and update the information separately. **Link all attributes** will automatically generate a new variation for each attribute combination you have - useful if you're only using one attribute, but not recommended if you have multiple attributes as the number of variations created would be huge. If the price and shipping cost changes according to size selected, but not by color, you would create a new variation for each size, but leave the color attribute as "any color".

#18 — Red
Remove

SKU: [?]

Enabled

Downloadable [?]

Virtual [?]

Stock Qty: [?]

Regular Price: (£)      Sale Price: (£)      [Schedule](#)

Variation price (required)     

Weight [?]      Dimensions (LxWxH)

0.00      0      0      0

Shipping class:

Same as parent

File paths: [?]

File paths/URLs, one per line

[Choose a file](#)

Download Limit: [?]

Unlimited

Download Expiry: [?]

Unlimited

Editing the "Red" product variation - need a unique SKU, price and dimensions

Default selections: No default Colour...
Link all variations
Add Variation

## 4.5 Attributes, Categories and Tags Confusion

There is a degree of functional overlap when it comes to describing products with **attributes**, **tags** or **categories**. If your shop consisted only of simple products, you could for instance create a category for "red clothing," or define a "red" tag - both would be functionally similar for grouping "red products."

Here's how I try to remember the differences:

**Categories** should be used for navigational purposes. They are likely the first way your customer will pick to get around the store, so they should be focused on user intention - how does the user expect the store to be divided up? Think about logical sections of a department store - you wouldn't find a red section, but you would find "evening wear" or "summer dresses". Remember that you can also define sub-categories - best practices state that you should limit the number of top level categories to 10 or less. Unlike a real department store, you can assign a product to multiple categories.

**Attributes** can be thought of as a filter: price, size or color help to narrow down your choices, but they certainly aren't the primary way in which users would search for items in your store. You don't walk into a department store and say "show me everything you have in XL". Attributes can also be selected concurrently - so the customer may be searching for something red, in size M and for less than £30. If you had categories for each of these, they would only be able to search through one at a time.

**Tags** are optional — a phenomenon of the digital age. They can also be used to cross-reference products. If you have a keyword or label to describe a set of products that don't make logical sense in their own category or as an attribute, a tag may be appropriate. Don't worry if you can't think of why you would use tagging - most online stores don't either, but it's there if you want it.

## 5. SEO for eCommerce

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) - that is, the process of ensuring your site will appear high enough in the results presented to user search queries - is particularly difficult when it comes to eCommerce. Not because the rules are different for online shops compared to blogs or other sites, but precisely because they are exactly the same. The last few years worth of Google updates have been particularly harsh on eCommerce sites. Google decided that long form content is a strong indicator of a website's quality - which is fine for blogs, consisting of text and images, but far more difficult for online shops, which are essentially just catalogues with a paragraph of descriptive text if you're lucky.

The problem is that for most eCommerce sites, very little actually differs between product pages (the images, title and price), whilst the predominant content of a page (the template around it, the menu, etc.) - stays the same. From Google's perspective, you have a large number of low quality, similar content pages - which means they just won't be considered authoritative for any keywords.

This, of course, is a huge problem for online shops - and these stringent "quality check" algorithms that Google has strengthened in recent years are single handedly responsible for a huge down swing in sales for many online shopping sites. Luckily, we can understand the solution by looking toward the big players.

### 5.1 Technical SEO

In this section, I'll be looking at specifically at SEO tactics for eCommerce, but there are certain technical aspects of SEO that apply to any site which we simply don't have room to cover - doing so would probably double the size of this guide. When you have time, look over these [5 sites to learn basic SEO](#). Once you understand the basics, I suggest using [WordPress SEO](#) (free) with [Yoast SEO for WooCommerce](#) (\$29) plugins to implement them. Don't overlook this step though - SEO is an incredibly important aspect of doing business on the internet today - "if you build it, they will come" just doesn't apply if your SEO isn't done right.

### 5.2 How Does Amazon Manage to Buck the Trend?

The top area of an Amazon product page looks like any other eCommerce site around - a product photo or two, some basic information, and the price / add to cart buttons. The similarities end there, though. Scroll down, and we find a wealth of additional information and widgets.

#### 5.2.1 Extensive Descriptions

Forget simple, one-paragraph, superficial descriptions - put down as much as you possibly can. Product dimensions, weight, country of manufacture, materials - all of these add valuable extra content to your page.

**Product Description**  
Amazon.com

With the Airport Time Capsule, backing up your Mac couldn't be simpler. It works with Time Machine in OS X to automatically and wirelessly back up your data to its 3 TB hard drive, so you never have to worry about losing anything important. And the Airport Time Capsule doubles as a Wi-Fi base station with next-generation 802.11ac technology, for speeds up to 3x faster than the previous 802.11n standard. It's easy to set up and highly secure, letting you share your broadband Internet connection, a USB printer, or a hard drive. And the new vertical design has a smaller footprint, so it saves desk space, as well as your files.

The Airport Time Capsule is also available in a 2 TB model.

**Automatic Wireless Backup**  
With Airport Time Capsule, you get a superfast, all-in-one base station and an easy-to-use backup device all in one. Backing up your data couldn't be simpler -- just set it up once and Airport Time Capsule does the rest. Every photo, file, song, app, and OS X setting is saved, so you never have to worry about losing anything important again.

Airport Time Capsule is designed to partner seamlessly with Time Machine in OS X Leopard or later to protect your data. They work together smartly so that after the initial backup, only the files you've changed are backed up -- automatically, wirelessly, and in the background. If you have multiple Mac computers in your home or office, you can back up and store files for each Mac -- no more need to attach an external drive to each Mac every time you want to back up.

**802.11ac: The New Definition of Fast**  
With three-stream 802.11ac technology, the Airport Extreme Base Station can reach data rates of up to 1.3 Gbps (based on theoretical peak speed) -- up to three times faster than 802.11n Wi-Fi. You also get double the channel bandwidth, with 80 MHz-wide channels providing more room for more data to flow faster than ever. And if you have 802.11a/n devices, Airport Extreme guarantees that connection as well.

It features simultaneous dual band 802.11ac Wi-Fi, which transmits at both the 2.4GHz and 5GHz frequencies at the same time. That means your devices automatically connect to the best available band for the fastest possible performance.

**Beamforming: Put the Focus on Your Device**  
The new Airport Extreme Base Station features the intelligent, powerful beamforming antenna array. Most base station antennas emit an equal and constant all-in signal in all directions. But the beamforming antenna array is smarter -- it knows where an 802.11ac device is on the network. Then Airport Extreme targets its signal to that device, so your Wi-Fi signal is stronger, clearer, and faster.

**Connect to Wi-Fi from Any Device**  
Mac, PC, iPhone, iPad, Apple TV. Really, any Wi-Fi enabled device you have will work with Airport Extreme. That's because it's compatible with devices using the 802.11a, 802.11b, 802.11g, 802.11n, and 802.11ac specifications.

**Gigabit Ethernet**  
In addition to Wi-Fi networking, the Airport Extreme Base Station includes three Gigabit Ethernet ports for fast wired connectivity with desktop computers, network drives, and more.

**See larger image**

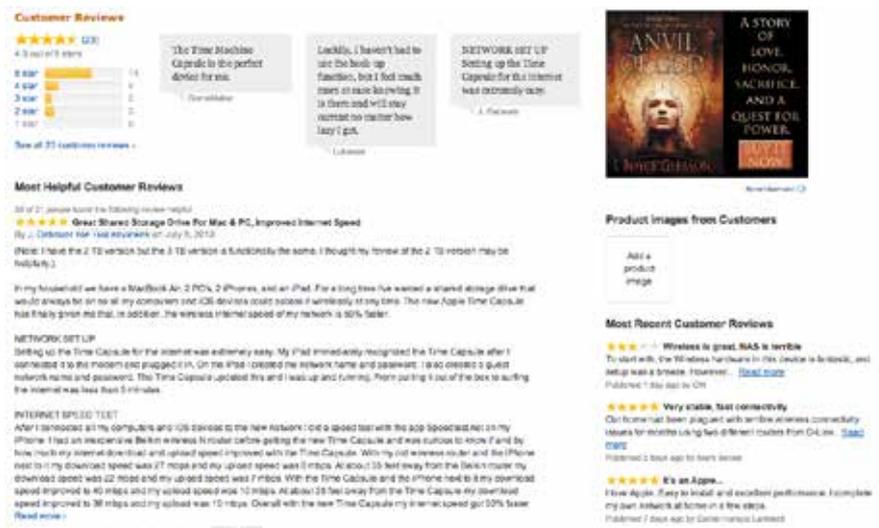
**See larger image**

If you're selling from a wholesaler database where product titles and descriptions are provided to you, rewriting unique descriptions is particularly important. Those supplied descriptions are likely being used verbatim on hundreds of other stores, so Google will consider many of them duplicate content. It's critical that you differentiate yourself from those sites.

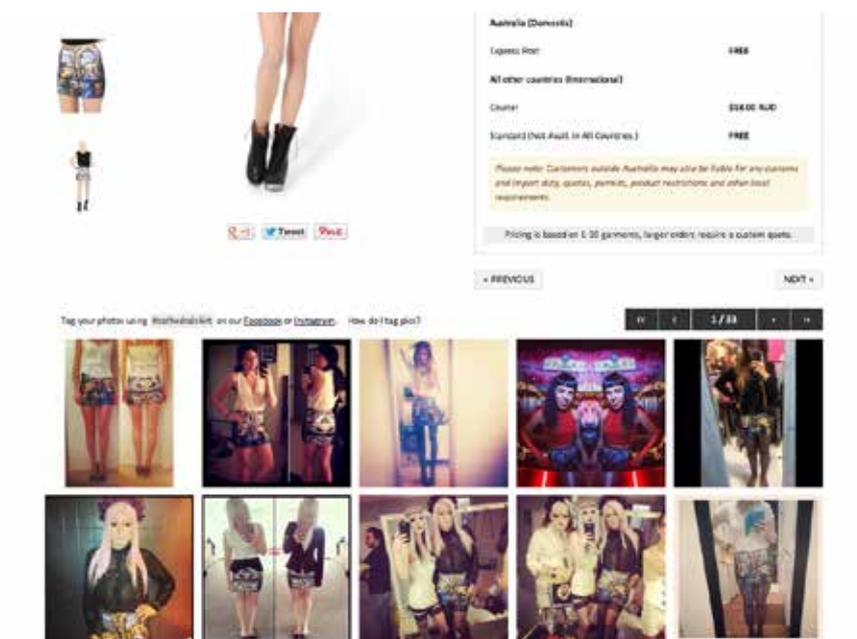
Obviously, if the products you're selling are one of a kind, you don't need to worry so much about this point, but it's still a good idea to provide as much information as possible. Remember that when Google "reads" your page, it doesn't really take into account the pictures - so relevant textual content (without appearing to be spamming) is essential.

### 5.2.2 User Reviews

One of the easiest ways to add value to a page is to publish user reviews of the product. It's going to take a while to gather them from customers, though, so consider offering a "5% off your next order if you leave a review" type of incentive. Set up a timed email to remind customers to leave a review a week after their purchase. The [Automated Follow Up Emails plugin](#) (\$129) can help you achieve that, but you could also send out emails manually.



Some sites will go the extra step and accept customer "action shots." While these can be great for the user experience, they don't add an awful lot in terms of SEO value. One unique approach that [Black Milk Clothing](#) took was to interface with the Instagram API and fetch photos tagged with the product name - it works because the product themselves are particularly viral, the kind of dress you really want to show off to your friends.



Product FAQs - where users can submit a question and await a response from you, can also add quick value and relevant content to a page. This [Product FAQs for WooCommerce plugin](#) is free.

### 5.2.3 Widgets

Take a moment to examine some of your favourite shopping sites and identify key elements on the page that you find useful from a shopper's perspective - chances are there's a plugin for WooCommerce that can help you add that too. Don't overload the page though - every additional "widget" will slow down the site, and [good UI practice](#) states that the more focused a page is, the more likely a user is to convert to a paying customer.

**Compare to Similar Hard Drives**

	This Item: Apple Time Capsule 3TB ME182LL/A [NEWEST VERSION]	Apple Time Capsule 2TB ME177LL/A [NEWEST VERSION]	Apple Time Capsule 2TB MD032LL/A	U32 Shadow™ 1TB External USB 3.0 Portable Hard Drive (Silver, Mac Version)
Customer Rating	★★★★☆ (23)	★★★★☆ (52)	★★★★☆ (194)	★★★★☆ (26)
Price	\$393.58	\$292.71	\$249.00	\$94.95
Shipping	FREE Shipping	FREE Shipping	Free Shipping	FREE Shipping
Sold By	Amazon.com	Amazon.com	DataVision Computer Video	Oyen Digital LLC
Hard Drive Size	3072 GB	2048 GB	2048 GB	1000 GB
File System	HFS+	HFS+	HFS+	hfs+
Hard Drive Type	Desktop	Desktop	Desktop	portable
	<a href="#">Add to Cart</a>	<a href="#">Add to Cart</a>	<a href="#">Add to Cart</a>	<a href="#">Add to Cart</a>

### 5.3 Expert Knowledge and Blogging

If you're selling products you're passionate about, you probably have a good amount of expert knowledge on the topic. Write about the latest fashion trends if you sell clothes; write about how to create a colorful summer border if you sell seeds. "How to" and list-based articles, such as "10 great ways to..." tend to do really well. Not only will you be writing content that demonstrates to Google that you know your stuff, but you'll also be creating content that users love to share on Facebook or Twitter. To get started simply begin creating new **Posts**, and they will automatically appear chronologically on the blog area of your site.

Even if you choose not to include a blog on your own online store, guest blogging can be a great promotional tool - this is where other sites will publish the article with a link back to your shop. Just be sure your content is actually valuable for the reader and not simply being used to drive traffic. For a systematic approach to guest blogging, you could try [MyBlogGuest](#), but, in my experience, directly contacting sites and offering your services can be more effective.

In short, it is not enough to simply offer a product for sale any more. Your site will need to differentiate itself with both innovative features and quality content. Establish yourself as an industry expert if you can - give credibility to the articles you post and show that you're knowledgeable about the product. Make sure your product listing is more attractive, more useful and with more information than any other competitors.

## 6. Speeding Up the Site: Performance Considerations

Speed matters. Put simply, a slow site will frustrate potential customers, making them leave before a sale is achieved - so it's important you do everything you can to optimise your site. The following advice applies specifically to Media Temple's Grid Service control panel, but some or all of these techniques will be available in some form on other hosts.

### 6.1 Enable FastCGI

From the [PHP Settings area of your account control panel](#), activate FastCGI. Without getting too technical, this speeds up PHP code, which is the language that creates dynamic web pages in WordPress. It's essential for running the next enhancement - mod\_pagespeed.

The screenshot shows the 'PHP Settings' page for 'duinobits.com'. At the top, there are navigation tabs: OVERVIEW, DOMAINS, CONTACTS, BILLING, and SUPPORT. The main heading is 'PHP Settings : duinobits.com'. Below this, there's a section for 'Safe Mode' and a section for 'Primary PHP Version'. Under 'Primary PHP Version', there's a dropdown menu labeled 'Select PHP version for all domains:' with '5.3.27 FastCGI' selected. A red arrow points to this dropdown. Below that, there's a 'PHP Info' section with a 'save' button. Another red arrow points to the 'save' button. A red text overlay says 'Make sure this says FastCGI, then save'.

### 6.2 Enable mod\_pagespeed

mod\_pagespeed is a web server plugin written by Google, designed to automate some of the optimisation tasks like minifying CSS and Javascript (this means removing whitespace and compressing multiple files into a single file). If you're really curious about the mechanics and details of it, watch [this hour-long video explanation](#).

To set this up, you'll find PageSpeed Settings on the last row of your control panel.

The screenshot shows a row of service tiles in the control panel. The tiles are: GPU Usage Reports (Displays current and projected GPU usage/overages), Redirect Domains (Quickly create redirects for your (gs) domains), Emergency Restore Request (Request an emergency restoration of files or databases), CloudTech (Extended care and premium support for your Grid service), and Pagespeed Settings (Manage mod\_pagespeed settings for your domains). The Pagespeed Settings tile is highlighted in grey.

From the next screen, enable it for all your domains and save. Done!

## 6.3 Enable Free CloudFlare Account

From the **Account Center** -> **Domains** drop-down menu, select **Add New Domain or Service**. Scroll down until you find CloudFlare, and click the **activate** button. Assuming you don't already have a CloudFlare account, walk through the simple signup form.

You'll then be taken to an activation page listing individual domains. Go ahead and activate now, or you can get back to this screen at any time from the new "Add-On Services" section that will have been created on your **Account Center** -> **Overview** tab.

The screenshot shows the 'Your Domains' and 'Add-On Services' sections of the Account Center. In the 'Add-On Services' section, the 'CloudFlare' service is listed with a plan of 'Free' and a renewal date of 'N/A'. A red arrow points to the 'Admin' button next to the CloudFlare entry, with the text 'Enable CloudFlare from here' overlaid in red.

Domain Name	Hosting Service	Renewal Date	
duinobits.com	(gs) Grid-Service	Sep 27, 2014	

Service Name	Hosting Service	Plan	Renewal Date	
CloudFlare	All	Free	N/A	

Note that the free CloudFlare account [does not support SSL connections](#) - this is a problem if your site is directly accepting credit card payments with your own payment gateway. If your shop is relying solely on external payment gateways like PayPal, this is not an issue and you don't need SSL. A premium CloudFlare account starts at \$20/month.

## 6.4 Use a CDN to Serve Static Resources

Web servers are great at generating dynamic pages from a database - but not so great at sustained transfer of files, like images or Javascript. A CDN, or Content Delivery Network, consists of special kind of web server that doesn't do any of the typical web server things - it's highly optimized to deliver files, and that's it. CDNs also maintain servers all over the world - so whilst the initial page might be generated in America, the additional resource files are loaded from somewhere more local.

Bandwidth on a CDN is cheaper than bandwidth provided by your host so if you're hitting the monthly bandwidth quota, you should definitely consider installing a CDN.

However, a CDN is a premium service that is available as an add-on at Media Temple. Starting at \$20/mo (monthly contract), Media Temple's ProCDN provides 200GB of bandwidth and over 10 content caching points of presence (POPs) in top tier data centers.

Do you really need a CDN? It isn't essential if you have the other optimizations working, so wait until you find you're going over the monthly bandwidth, or if your pages are particularly heavy in graphics. If you do decide to use a CDN, you'll also need a plugin in WordPress that rewrite URLs so they point to your CDN instead of your local site. For that, you'll need....

## 6.5 W3 Total Cache

Total Cache from w3 Edge is a complete caching solution for advanced users. When set up correctly, it can create minified files in much the same way as mod\_pagespeed, but this process really isn't for beginners. Total Cache consists of various modules that can each be activated, so configuring this plugin is very much out of the scope of this guide. You can read my brief introduction to [setting up w3 Total Cache here](#). Media Temple also has a [comprehensive guide to setting up the CDN feature](#), if you decide to use their ProCDN solution.

## 6.6 About "GPU Usage"

GPU - or Grid Performance Unit - is Media Temple's way of defining how much share of the servers your site is currently using, ensuring fair performance for everyone. It's mainly concerned with CPU cycles, but also takes into consideration things like disk read and write operations. At any point, you can check your current GPU usage per hour and predicted overage from the relevant section in your account control panel.

If your site experiences a sudden burst of traffic - for example if a link is posted to the front page of Reddit - the Grid Service will intelligently assign more resources in order to cope with that spike. Unlike most shared hosts, this means the site will stay online. Your GPU usage may increase during this time, but so as long as the traffic spike isn't sustained for an entire month your total monthly GPU usage probably won't exceed the quota.

Generally speaking, you won't need to worry about this - the monthly quota of 2000 GPUs (equivalent to 2.78 GPUs per day) was calculated such that 98% of Grid hosted sites will never exceed it.

## 7. Launch and Promotions

Don't be too hasty to tell the world about your site - my experience has told me that there will always be little bugs waiting for customers, so a low key launch is best. To test your site, try from different browsers and ensure you're not logged into WordPress - the pages you view as an admin user are sometimes different to those a regular visitor would see.

When you're confident the site is ready for everyone, try the following tactics to get as much footfall as possible.

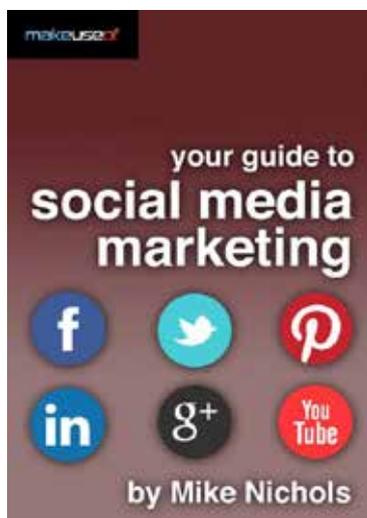
### 7.1 Competitions

Use a free giveaway widget from [PunchTab.com](http://PunchTab.com) to encourage various actions. Customers will be able to get competition entries for submitting their email address, tweeting or liking the page, introducing friends, becoming a Facebook fan or answering a question.



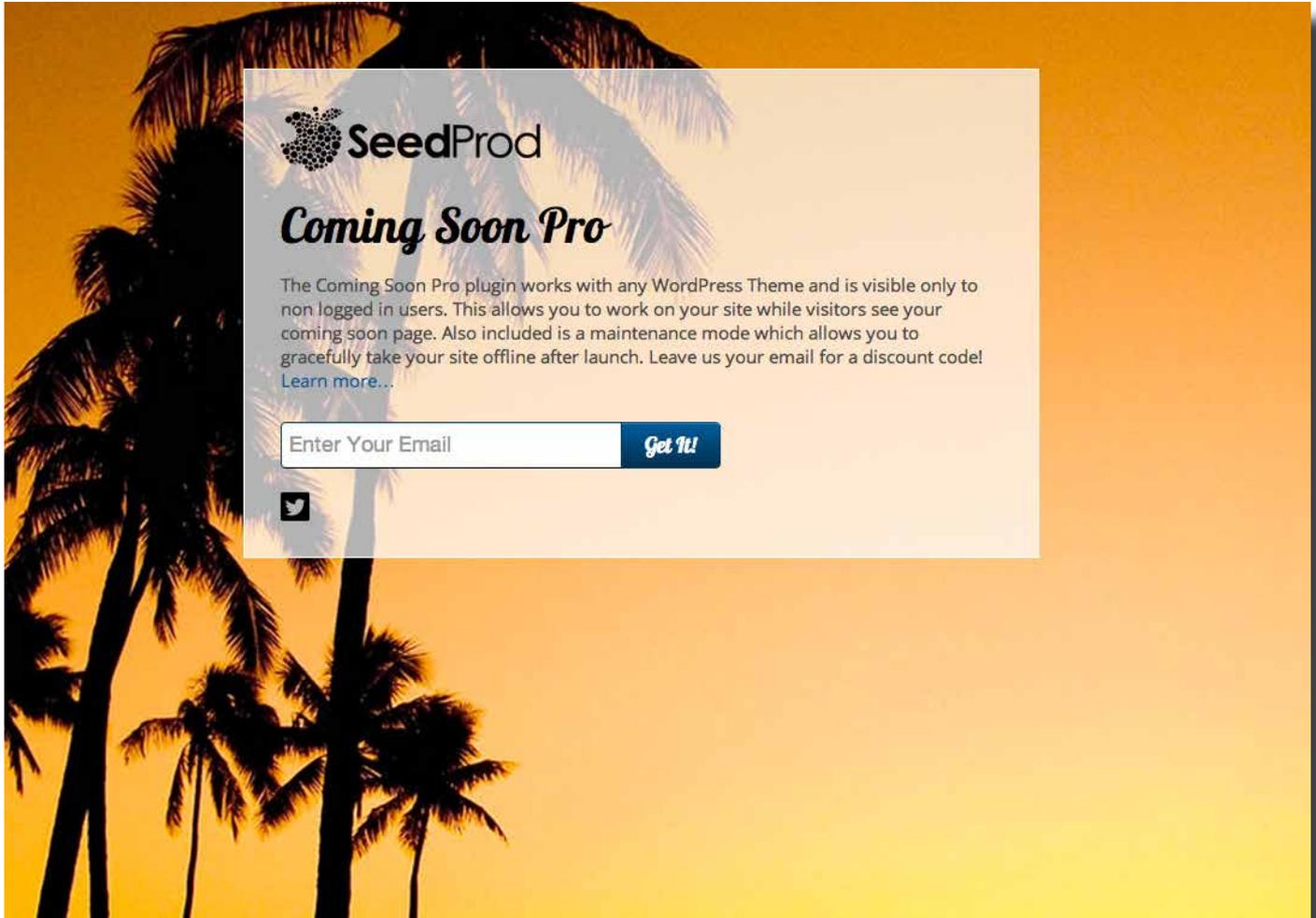
### 7.2 Social Networks

Whatever your moral stance on Facebook or personal opinion of Twitter, the truth is that social networks do play a large part in today's online marketing. We have a separate full guide you can download or read online now - [Your Guide to Social Media Marketing](#). Use the PunchTab competition widget mentioned above to gather new Twitter followers and Facebook fans.



## 7.3 Mailing List

Leverage your existing customer list to invite people to the site, and use the months leading up to launch to gather addresses. Use the [Ultimate Coming Soon Pro plugin](#) (\$29) and a [MailChimp](#) list management account (various plans, starts at free) to present a newsletter sign up page to visitors, whilst still being able to preview and work on the site when logged in as the admin user. If you're feeling generous, offer a coupon to subscribers for a discount off their first order (and another one after their first order to encourage them to come back).



## 7.4 Google Adwords

Google Adwords is a huge topic and very much outside the scope of this book, but Google makes it easy to “bid” on specific keyword searches to attract potential customers. Although not essential when you start, you’ll probably want to try an [Adwords advertising campaign](#) at some point.

# Good Luck!

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You should now be all set to start your own online business - from buying the domain to launching the site, and everything in between. The bits that come after is what will really test you - stock management, dealing with difficult suppliers and even more difficult customers, payment fraud, lost deliveries, etc. I'm afraid there are no plugins to help you with those!

The truth is, you'll have a lot of competition, so I really can't emphasise enough how important it is to differentiate yourself in some way: with your expert knowledge, your amazingly beautiful site packed with useful information and great customer service. There's no need to spend your life savings on expensive design agencies and scam SEO services, though - a few hundred dollars is all you need to test the waters for your product, and potentially become your own boss. By choosing WooCommerce and WordPress, you've ensured that if you do run into a problem or have a question, the answer is always just a quick Google search away. Now really, what are you waiting for?

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