



## Ten things to consider with shopping carts.

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Being able to add your own shopping cart to a website is fantastic and technology has made the process extremely simple. But beyond the technology, how you configure and administer that shopping cart can make all the difference. Consider the following tips!

## 1. Don't overcomplicate the process

Too many clicks or pages give the customer too many chances to reconsider and back out of the sale. For example, customers want to be able to click a button, see their item has been added to the cart, and move swiftly on to more shopping. And, to be honest, that's what you want too.

Don't complicate the sale by forcing further items at them before confirming their choice. Taking the customer to a page that has the sole purpose of showcasing products they may want to add before confirming the item they have already decided upon is the online equivalent of "Do you want fries with that" and can be very irritating for the online shopper. Plus, this gives the customer a chance to reconsider before confirming their original purchase.

A simple purchase is enhanced by as few clicks as possible. There should be one click to select the item and a simple process to finalise the purchase once the customer has added all their desired items to the cart.

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## 2. Use an “Add to Cart ” button instead of “Buy Now”

A good shopping cart should encourage multiple sales within the one transaction. By using a shopping cart button that prompts the customer to ‘Buy’ rather than simply ‘Add to Cart’ puts the sales pressure at the wrong ends of the transaction.

You want the customer to freely add items to their cart – playing with the idea of having as many of your items as possible. Online window shopping is a powerful sales tool that can be encouraged by the right button. When they check their cart, you change your language to close the sale on the combined total of these items as the desire has now been established.

A ‘Buy’ button implies an instant purchasing commitment that can backfire in two ways. Firstly, a customer may be hesitant to immediately commit to buy, preferring to set items aside in a shopping cart to consider. Secondly, by encouraging the customer to buy straight away, you are pushing for a single transaction rather than encouraging multiple purchases at the one time – and this leads onto the next point.

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## 3. Keep the customer in the store

When a customer adds an item to their cart, some systems take them automatically to the shopping cart page to view the final transaction. This encourages the customer to finalise their transaction immediately, reducing multiple purchases, whilst irritating a customer who has to navigate back to search for further items.

By adding a simple shopping cart widget to your store, you can confirm the item has been selected correctly – even display a running tally – whilst the customer stays in the products area, happily clicking on further items.

## 4. Have the shipping costs up front

Shopping cart abandonment is a major issue in online commerce, with many customers deciding against the purchase at the last possible stage. The most common reason for this is that many online stores only display the shipping costs on the selected items at this last stage, dramatically adjusting the customer's idea of the bargains they were about to purchase by inflating the final cost.

If it isn't possible to have detailed shipping information on each product page (as there are so many possible international permutations) at least allow the customer to see an estimate of their shipping in their shopping cart at the earliest stage possible.

Showing the postage costs up front can have a further advantage as well.

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## 5. Allow for discount postage on multiple purchases

Ensure a discount is offered on multiple purchases and that this is automatically calculated by your shopping cart software, as this can definitely fuel further sales. If a customer can see that adding a further book to their order only adds a dollar to their postage bill, they will see the advantage in buying now rather than returning later to buy it in a separate transaction. They may even go searching for another book in your store just to maximise the convenience of the transaction. Remember, it costs you less to send more in one package at the post office, so you are only passing this saving onto your customer.

## 6. Avoid requiring registration before accessing the cart

Don't restrict your customers from creating the desire to purchase your products. If you force a customer to register before being able to place an item into a shopping cart, you run the risk of driving them away. Allow them to see the savings, play with the combinations, experience your combined shipping discounts and fantasise about buying your wonderful things. Only require registration when they are finalising their transaction. At that point, they are interested enough to want to complete the information. Before this point, you haven't created the motivation for them to spend the time completing boring forms.

Oh, and always remember to keep registration forms as simple as possible whilst only asking for information that is necessary to complete the transaction. Do not use the opportunity to ask survey questions, seek demographic information or otherwise add additional text boxes and pages of clicking if it can be avoided. The more work you ask of your customers, the less likely they are to complete it.

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## 7. Don't forget GST

GST can be complicated for businesses at the best of times, but when an online store can potentially attract customers from around the world, you need to ensure your shopping cart can offer both full and GST free prices for your different customers. Also, it is a legal requirement to enable the printout of a complete GST invoice (also known as a Tax Invoice), so your shopping cart software needs to support this feature.

## 8. Ensure flexibility

A good business future-proofs itself, meaning the technology decisions they make today take into account their future needs as well. You may want to migrate your online store from one hosting provider to another in the future. Therefore, it is important to choose a shopping cart technology that is compliant with all hosting systems. By selecting open source software, you are more likely to avoid software compliance issues that can severely handicap your website during hosting changes.

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## 9. Avoid the need for written instructions to use the checkout process

If the functionality of your shopping cart requires explanatory text to explain how items are added or deleted, your cart is too complicated. A shopping cart should be instinctive in its layout and behaviour. If you need to explain what the icons mean, your customers will not appreciate having to learn your own unique setup when other online stores are simple to use.

## 10. Inform customers if an item is out of stock

You've finally found the product you've been searching the net for. Happily, you put it into your shopping cart and fill out the information to buy the item. Suddenly, on the last page of the payment process, you are notified that the item is out of stock.

Shopping carts that process information on the back-end like this have very little understanding of the customer. Make sure your own shopping cart doesn't promote disappointment and instead provide stock information either on the product page or immediately on adding to the cart.

A good shopping cart will transform the 'Add to cart' button to an 'Out of stock' button when the item is unavailable, so as not to mislead a customer. It may be a good idea to allow for pre orders so a customer can indicate their interest once new stock has been received.