

# Online Shopping Carts

There are many details that need to be addressed when selling items through your web site. First you will need to decide on a Shopping Cart software. There are many shopping carts, all with varying specifications. The amounts of decisions that need to be made are daunting. You will also need to decide if the shopping cart system **IS** your web site or **PART** of your web site.

Many cart systems assume the role of “being” your web site. They may include other main pages like “contact us” and “about us” but, the look of the site will be that of the cart system you choose. You might be able to modify font colors, border colors and place your logo at the top but that may be all that you can do.

If you have a specific look that has been designed for your site that you want to keep consistent, you may need to look at cart systems that integrate with your already existing web site. These are the “Add to Cart” solutions where all you need to do is add the cart buttons to your product pages. The cart system may reside on a completely different server but the “Cart” can be modified to look like it is part of your site. There are some great many advantages to using 3rd party cart systems. You won't have to purchase a secure certificate for online transactions. System upgrades are part of the service and you have a 3rd party which is dedicated to just the cart system. I've seen many web owners get stranded when their installed cart system breaks because of hosting environment changes.

Shopping cart systems are so complicated that you may find after a lot of time and money has been spent that there was one little feature you wish the system had but it doesn't. There are so many aspects to the online transaction process that to integrate it with your business model perfectly is almost impossible. Some concessions may need to be made. Or, you could have a custom shopping cart system developed to suit your needs exactly. If you have the budget for custom programming that would be ideal.

Many web owners want to start selling online right away and get frustrated with all the details. There is so much to figure out like product names, quantities, weights, descriptions, photos, skew numbers, shipping carriers, taxes, handling fees, the list goes on and on. On top of that your Shopping Cart not only has to integrate with your web site but it must also interface with your merchant account and online gateway.

The bottom line is that online commerce is not easy and it is not for the faint of heart. The details are consuming. However, if you only want to sell a few different items and are flexible to wade through the information there are a lot of inexpensive options available to you. Ask a professional web developer to help you decide.

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