



E-commerce Starting Blocks

There are many things you can have on an e-commerce website, but I'm going to outline just some of the key basic components you need to start thinking about.

First off, you need some products to sell! The best thing is have your products held in a database, this way you can update your product details easily and whenever you need to. This is very important, as you need to ensure you can delete products you don't sell anymore and that prices are kept up to date.

You then need a shopping cart. This will allow users to select items from your site and put them into a temporary list. The ability to remove items or change quantities is useful.

You then have to take customers details. Many E-commerce sites offer a different delivery address than that of the invoice. This does however increase the risk of fraudulent orders as the goods would go to a different address than that of the card holder.

There are many different postage options that you can choose from, so it's worth thinking about how you expect to deliver your items. You could have a total delivery cost per order, individual costs per each item, separate UK and world wide delivery cost or delivery costs based on weight. It all depends on what products you are selling.

Accepting credit cards is vital for online ordering; for this you require an SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) certificate to allow users to enter their credit card details securely. This encrypts the communication between your web browser and the web server. You should never enter your credit card details into a website that doesn't have a SSL padlock on your browser. You then either need to have the page integrated with a payment gateway such as World Pay, Epdq or Sec-pay to actually take the money from the credit card, or you need your own PDQ machine which you manually enter the credit card information which would be emailed to you using encryption to stop other people reading the credit card details.

If you are going to trade online, you do need some key pages that people expect to see on an e-commerce site; I get a lot of questions regarding this and many people don't really know where to start. Privacy Policy, Delivery, Terms & Conditions (Returns & Cancellation) and Terms of use are key areas to look at. Taking a look at other established e-commerce companies online will help give you some ideas.