



It seems like everyone has a website with a shopping cart, you'd like to have one as well. Where do you begin? It can be a daunting task to set up a shopping cart. This article presents the five steps you need to go through to have the smooth installation.

Step 1 – Choosing the Shopping Cart

Begin by researching which shopping cart is provided by your hosting company. While using the shopping cart provided by the hosting company is the easiest route, keep in mind that this product serves a wide audience and may not do exactly what you would like it to do. For example, most canned shopping cart applications allow you to customize your storefront using templates; however, you may be limited to the photos or color choices defined within a particular template. Some shopping carts allow you to write custom *cascading style sheets* (CSS) code, but, CSS is limited to color and font choices only. On the plus side, the shopping cart provided by the hosting company will get you going much faster.

Going the custom route can be beneficial if you have particular needs that cannot be met with a canned application. Several options are available: open source, shareware and fully licensed products. To establish a custom shopping cart, you have to understand the scripting language to be used and have the ability to set up the shopping cart on the platform where your site is hosted.

When making a decision regarding which custom option to use, keep in mind the tech support available to you. With open source and shareware tools, you may have to wait for a while to get an answer to your question.

Step 2 – Set up your Merchant Account

This portion of the process takes the longest time – sometimes up to two or three weeks. Make sure that the merchant account that you set up works with the shopping cart you are selecting and can be hosted on the same platform as your website. The three major categories of merchant accounts that can be created are:

1. **Standard Merchant Account** – Using this account, you will be able to sell regular products, such as books, shoes or electronics.
2. **Specialty Merchant Account** – This account is created for merchants that sell computer software, flowers or training materials.
3. **International Merchant** – If you intend to sell your products internationally, then you will need this merchant account.

Your banker can arrange a meeting with a representative who will explain the fee structure and terms and conditions for setting up a merchant account.

Step 3 – Payment Gateway

Usually, when you set up a merchant account, your payment gateway will be set up automatically as well. In the case where the merchant account is not compatible with the shopping cart, you might have to set up the payment gateway manually. This process often involves a conference call between the payment gateway representative, the merchant account representative, and the technical person who is helping you program the shopping cart.

Step 4 – Set-up SSL

Once you set up your shopping cart, you need to add a secured socket layer (SSL) certificate to the portion of the site that houses the shopping cart. For example, you may place your shopping cart under the sub-domain as follows

shop.domainname.com

Most people won't buy from your site unless you have the SSL installed. SSL prevents hackers from stealing your customers' personal information, including credit card numbers. Typically, a SSL certificate

is issued for a year and is location-specific, meaning you can't move the certificate from one domain to another. Therefore, you should not to change the location of the shopping cart once you have applied the SSL certificate because you will have to purchase a new certificate for the new location.

Step 5 – Refund Policy, Privacy Policy, Terms and Conditions

Before bank representatives approve merchant accounts they often request that the site states your refund policy, privacy policy and terms and conditions. If you don't offer a refund, this policy should be clearly stated on your site.

This article described the steps necessary for setting up a successful shopping cart installation. In Part II of this article, we'll delve into the details of setting up the shopping cart to attract buyers and entice them to buy from you.

Resources

Visit www.cxtgroup.com/shopping-cart.html to see a graphical view of the steps involved and learn to learn about the shopping carts. If you would like to discuss your particular needs in setting up a shopping cart, call us today toll-free at 877-439-2539 for a FREE 1-hour consultation.