

CHAPTER 3

Building your ecommerce store



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Introduction

The PayFast Guide to Going Online is a comprehensive ebook to help aspiring entrepreneurs such as yourself turn your hobby into a successful online business.

In this third chapter of the guide, we outline the main points you need to consider when building your ecommerce store, including registering your web domain, choosing a shopping cart platform, adding your products and making sure your website is secure. Throughout this chapter you'll also find useful tooltips for creating your ecommerce website and advice from some businesses who are using PayFast to accept payments.

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BUILDING YOUR ECOMMERCE STORE

For many online business owners, this is the most fun and exciting part - customising your online store and seeing it come to life. The main points you need to consider are outlined below.

Register your domain

As part of the research phase, you should have chosen the name of your online store and made sure that it's domain name is still available.

Tooltip: Business registration and web hosting

- Open an account with a hosting company such as [1-grid](#) or [Xneelo](#) that provides affordable yearly rates. An added bonus would be to choose a web hosting company that has servers in different regions as this will enable faster loading times.
- If your business is local, choose a custom domain ideally ending in co.za to show buyers that they are buying local.
- Keep your URL as short and as easy to spell as possible to avoid confusion and misspelling.
- Buy misspelt domains and other keyword rich domain names you can think of to prevent competition or even brand hijacking.

1-grid is a great service that you can use to register your company in under 30 minutes. You can also use 1-grid to create your website as well as for web and email hosting. For more information about 1-grid, read their [case study](#) and [visit 1-grid.com](https://www.1-grid.com)

Choose your shopping cart platform

There are a wide variety of online shopping cart platforms to choose from that offer different tools and functionalities depending on your business needs.

Each of the platforms offer different packages, ranging from monthly to yearly subscriptions, some also offer freemium plans or at least free trials. What's important is to find the platform that works best for you.

💡 **Tooltip: Shopping cart platforms**

Some of the most popular shopping cart platforms you could look into for your online store are:

- [Shopify](#) - one of the easiest to use ecommerce solutions
- [WooCommerce](#) - a popular free ecommerce plugin for WordPress websites
- [Prestashop](#) - a ready-made open source ecommerce solution
- [Magento](#) - a feature-rich ecommerce platform built on open-source technology
- [Ecwid](#) - a solution that can turn your existing website into an online store

It's worth taking a look at the 80+ shopping carts list on [PayFast's website](#) for more ideas, as well as the following PayFast blog posts where we compare different functionalities and features:

[Shopify or WooCommerce, which platform is right for you?](#)

[Sell almost anywhere online with Ecwid and PayFast](#)

While platforms like Shopify offer an all-in-one ecommerce solution, other platforms offer the ability to add ecommerce functionality, like WooCommerce or Ecwid, to an existing website. You can even forgo pre-built carts and build a custom ecommerce website that's integrated with the PayFast API. You'll need to have the right development skills for this route.

Tooltip: Choosing your ecommerce platform

"It's very important to choose a very reliable platform that will make it easy for your customers to successfully purchase products from your ecommerce store, as online shopping already comes with its own uncertainties for shoppers. It's best to make the process as uncomplicated and effective as possible."

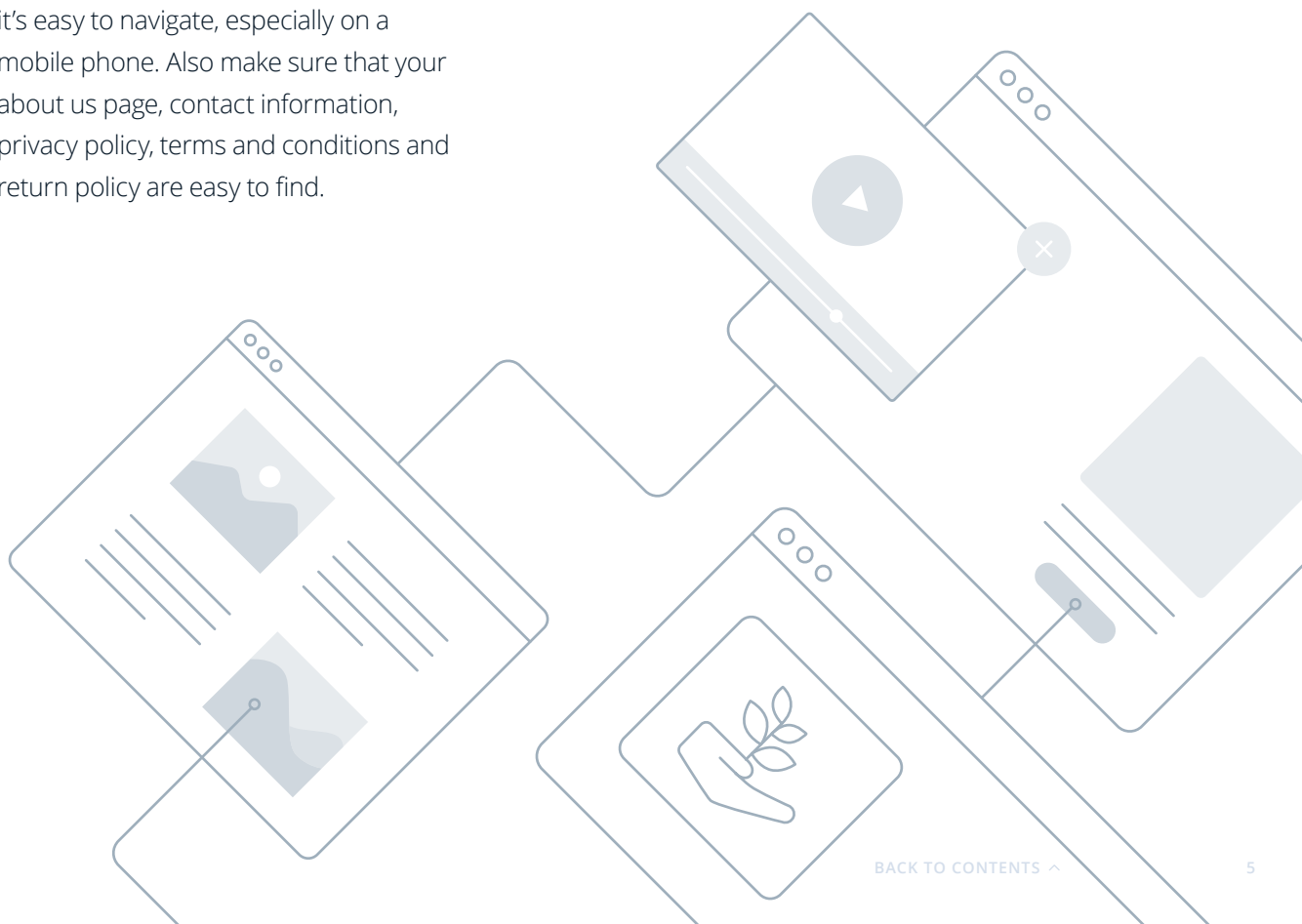
- Andile Dlamini, Founder of BROKE

To find out more about BROKE, read their [case study](#) and visit [sobroke.online](#)

Set up your website

Whichever ecommerce platform you choose, they should have [easy to follow guidelines](#) on how to effectively set up your online store. This involves choosing a template and colour schemes, creating and uploading your logo and creating different webpages.

Remember to design your online store with your customers in mind to ensure it's easy to navigate, especially on a mobile phone. Also make sure that your about us page, contact information, privacy policy, terms and conditions and return policy are easy to find.



Add products

Once you've chosen your platform and designed it to represent your brand, then it's time to add your products. We can't stress the importance of **having high quality, professional photos of your products** that are consistent in style and size to give shoppers a realistic idea of what they are buying.

Add a detailed, unique description of what each product is, colour and size options (if applicable) and how it can benefit the shopper. The more information you provide will help with your search engine optimisation (SEO) ranking and also encourage shoppers to buy the product. You can find out more about how to add good SEO content to your website in **Chapter 5: Marketing your store online**.

Tooltip: Setting up your online store

"Brace yourself – it's not as easy as it looks. Place high value on the customer experience on your online store. i.e. make it easy for your customers to pay you, make it easy for customers to add items to the shopping cart, make it easy for customers to navigate your store, just make it easy. The world is filled with noise, therefore you don't want to complicate your store, otherwise your customer is going to get lost in the noise. Just make it easy for your customer."

- Lethu Tshabangu, Co-founder of Ukhamba Beerworx

To find out more about Ukhamba Beerworx, read their **case study** and visit **ukhamba.africa**



Secure your website

It's vital to have a secure website to ensure the safety of your details and those of your customers. Shoppers won't convert to buyers unless they trust that their personal details are secure when they check out on your online store.

Google will also penalise your website if it doesn't have SSL certificates installed. If you don't, then your website will display a 'Not Secure' notice informing shoppers not to enter sensitive information as it could be intercepted. Make sure to talk to your web designer or hosting company to check that you have an SSL certificate installed.

Security audit checklist

Conduct regular security audits by going through the following checklist:

- Are your plugins and shopping cart software up-to-date?
- Is your SSL certificate current and working?
- Is your online store PCI-DSS compliant?
- Are you backing up your online store often enough, i.e. at least once a week?
- Are you using strong passwords (Passphrase) for admin accounts, hosting dashboards, content management system (CMS), database and File Transfer Protocol (FTP) access?
- Are you scanning your website regularly for malware?
- Are you encrypting communication between your store and your customers and suppliers?
- Have you removed inactive plugins?

If you aren't tech savvy or don't have the time or resources to monitor your website's security, it's recommended that you hire an online security specialist to assist you.





PayFast's Head of Security and Infrastructure's top 3 website security tips



1. Update your shopping cart software

We can't stress this one enough. 60% of all data breaches in 2019 were a direct result of unpatched software and could easily have been avoided. If you run a blog or a shopping cart, subscribe to the vendors newsfeeds and update the core engine and all plugins at least once per month.



2. Enable multi-factor authentication for passwords

68% of black hat hackers say multi-factor authentication (MFA) and encryption are their biggest obstacles. Let's face it, passwords are insecure and often leaked. Those that are complex and unique enough are too difficult, or forgotten. Find a good MFA plugin, most of these are free. Ensure all your Admin accounts have MFA enabled, this will ensure that each admin has their own user account, and that it is adequately secured from human error and weak passwords.



3. Install a Web Application Firewall

No matter how stable or how much you paid for your shopping cart, vulnerabilities are prevalent. 84% of applications tested by Trustwave had one or more vulnerabilities, which is why it's critical to keep them patched and well updated. For a further security boost, install a Web Application Firewall (WAF) such as **WordFence** if running WordPress/WooCommerce. Ask your hosting provider if they have any WAF facilities, if they don't, then use one of the cloud WAF's such as Cloudflare's Pro package.



Find out more about going online

To find out more about getting your business online, download the entire PayFast Guide to Going Online or any of the individual chapters that may be relevant to your online business.

[Download the entire PayFast Guide to Going Online](#)

Download the individual chapters:

[Chapter 1: Developing your business plan](#)

[Chapter 2: Managing logistics](#)

[Chapter 4: Setting up a payment gateway](#)

[Chapter 5: Marketing your online store](#)

[Chapter 6: Converting visitors into customers](#)

[Chapter 7: Capitalising on shopper trends like Black Friday](#)



About PayFast

PayFast is a leading online payment processing solution for individuals, non-profit organisations (NPOs) and businesses of all sizes in South Africa. Over 80,000 merchants from a variety of South African businesses, big and small, have registered with PayFast to process and manage online payments made by their customers.

Visit payfast.co.za and follow us on:

