

Set Up Your First Online Store with WooCommerce

Facilitator Guide

Overview

Topic	Set Up Your First Online Store with WooCommerce
Duration	60 minutes
Audience	Progressive beginner to intermediate — everyone can start in Part 1
Prerequisite	None — no prior WordPress or WooCommerce experience required
Environment	WordPress Playground with WooCommerce pre-loaded: no account or install needed
Materials	Device with a modern browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari) and internet access

⚠ **Version note:** Written for WordPress 7.0 and WooCommerce 10.x. Verified against Playground (playground.wordpress.net/?plugin=woocommerce) in May 2026. WooCommerce wizard screens, UI paths, and plugin prompts change between versions — always run through the activity yourself before facilitating. Release notes: developer.woocommerce.com/changelog | WordPress core releases: wordpress.org/news. WordPress 7.0 changes relevant to this activity: the default admin color scheme is now 'Modern' — a lighter, higher-contrast palette. WooCommerce setup and product workflows are unaffected by 7.0 core changes.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- * **Identify the core components of a WooCommerce store: products, cart, checkout, and orders.**
- * **Configure WooCommerce using the setup wizard to establish store settings including location, currency, and product type.**
- * **Create a published product with a title, description, price, and image.**
- * Evaluate what WooCommerce provides out of the box versus what requires additional extensions for a live store.
- * Compare WooCommerce against alternative eCommerce approaches based on what they are actually trying to sell.

Green / bold = beginner entry point. All participants can achieve the first three objectives. Parts 3 and 4 build toward the intermediate objectives.

What Participants Need

- * A device with a modern web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari)
- * An internet connection
- * The Playground environment with WooCommerce pre-loaded:
playground.wordpress.net/?plugin=woocommerce — Playground loads on the front-end of a WordPress blog. The WooCommerce setup wizard does not auto-launch. Participants click 'My WordPress Website' in the dark admin bar at the top of the screen to reach the wizard.
- * A product image to upload. Free sources for activity use: openverse.org (WordPress.org project), unsplash.com, or pexels.com. Ask participants to download one image before the session starts.

⚠ **Image licensing note:** The image sources above are fine for this activity. However, licensing varies: Openverse includes images under a range of Creative Commons licenses, some of which restrict commercial use (look for the NC — non-commercial — badge). Unsplash and Pexels images are generally free for commercial website use, but not for resale as standalone images. For a real product store, participants should use their own product photography or purchase rights from a stock library. Remind the group: "These images are fine for today. When you launch your real store, use photos you own or have commercial rights to."

- * Optional: access to a real WordPress site to review settings after the session.

Note: Playground uses WebAssembly to run PHP in the browser. First load with WooCommerce may take 20 to 30 seconds on slower connections. Load the URL before the session starts to confirm it works in your venue.

A Note on the Strategic Question

This activity installs WooCommerce first and asks the strategic question later (in Part 4). That is intentional: participants learn more from evaluating a tool they have already used than from evaluating one in the abstract.

□ **Optional opening prompt:** If your group includes participants who are unsure whether they need a full store at all, consider opening with this question before loading Playground: "What are you actually trying to sell, and does that need a full store to do it? Someone selling one PDF might be better served by a payment link than a WooCommerce install. Today we're going to build a full store together, and by the end you'll have the experience to answer that question for yourself."

Facilitator Setup Notes

- * Test the Playground URL before your session: playground.wordpress.net/?plugin=woocommerce. Playground loads on the front-end blog — you reach the wizard by clicking 'My WordPress Website' in the admin bar. Confirm WooCommerce loads and the 'Welcome to Woo!' screen appears.
- * Run through the wizard yourself before the session so you can narrate each screen. The wizard has three screens after the Welcome screen: (1) 'Which one of these best describes you?' — three radio options, first option pre-selected; (2) 'Tell us a bit about your store' — store name, industry dropdown, location, email; (3) 'Get a boost with our free features' — eight plugins, all pre-checked. Participants should uncheck all or click 'Skip this step' in the top right.
- * Prepare a sample product image from openverse.org to use in your demo. Ask participants to do the same before they arrive.
- * Enable Cash on delivery before the activity: WooCommerce → Settings → Payments → 'Take offline payments' (click the row to expand) → Enable next to 'Cash on delivery.' Cash on delivery is not active by default in WooCommerce 10.x — it must be manually enabled, or participants will hit a 'no payment methods available' error when they reach the checkout in Part 3.
- * Have the WooCommerce shop page URL ready to share: after setup, the shop is at /shop on the Playground site.
- * Playground runs entirely in the browser. No downloads, no admin passwords, no real payment details are needed at any point.
- * The active theme in Playground is Twenty Twenty-Five — WordPress's default block theme. If participants want to customize the storefront appearance, they use Appearance → Editor

(the Site Editor), not the classic Customizer. The classic Customizer does not apply to block themes.

Activity Steps

Total time: 60 minutes | Parts 1 to 4 + 5 min debrief

Part 1: Open Playground and Run the Setup Wizard (15 minutes)

The WooCommerce setup wizard is the activity's opening experience. It is scaffolded — each screen introduces a concept participants will need later. Run through it as a group, projecting your screen, and narrate each choice as you go.

1. Open playground.wordpress.net/?plugin=woocommerce in a new browser tab. Playground loads on the front-end of a WordPress blog — you will see a page titled 'Blog' with a 'Hello world!' post, not the WooCommerce wizard. Allow 20 to 30 seconds for WooCommerce to finish installing.
2. To open the WooCommerce setup wizard, click **My WordPress Website** in the dark admin bar at the top of the screen. This takes you directly to the 'Welcome to Woo!' screen.

 **Data sharing checkbox:** The 'Welcome to Woo!' screen has a pre-checked checkbox at the bottom: 'I agree to share my data to tailor my store setup experience...' Mention this to participants before they click — they can uncheck it if they prefer. It does not affect the activity either way.

3. On the **Welcome to Woo!** screen, click **Set up my store**.
4. **Wizard screen 1 — Which one of these best describes you?** Three radio options appear. 'I'm just starting my business' is pre-selected. Leave it selected and click **Continue**.
5. **Wizard screen 2 — Tell us a bit about your store.** Fill in the four fields: **Store name** (pre-filled as 'My WordPress Website' — leave it or change it), **What type of products or services do you plan to sell?** (select any industry from the dropdown), **Where is your store located?** (auto-detected from your IP address — leave it), and **Your email address** (pre-filled as admin@localhost.com — leave it). The opt-in email newsletter checkbox is unchecked by default — leave it unchecked. Click **Continue**.

 **Facilitator tip:** The industry dropdown is for WooCommerce's internal personalization — it does not restrict what participants can sell. Any selection works for this activity. If the group wants a quick discussion, ask: 'What category best describes what you would sell?' Keep it to 30 seconds.

6. **Wizard screen 3 — Get a boost with our free features.** This screen shows eight plugins, all pre-checked: WooPayments, PayPal Wallet, Jetpack, Pinterest, Klaviyo, Google for WooCommerce, Snapchat Ads, and Reddit Ads. For this activity, **uncheck all of them**, or

click **Skip this step** in the top right corner. Installing these plugins is not needed for the activity and will slow down Playground.

⚠ **Free features screen:** Warn participants about this screen BEFORE they reach it. Suggested language: 'You are about to see a screen offering eight free plugins — all pre-checked. For today, uncheck everything or click Skip this step in the top right. None of these are needed for what we are building.' The screen also includes a note about agreeing to Terms of Service for WooPayments and Jetpack if participants click Continue with boxes checked — another reason to skip.

7. After skipping the free features screen, you land on the **WooCommerce Home** dashboard. You will see a five-step task checklist: Add your products, Set up payments, Customize your store, Collect sales tax, and Launch your store. This is your store's control center. We will start on task 1 in Part 2.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Run the wizard as a group, projecting your screen, and narrate each choice as you go. The goal is that participants understand why each screen exists — not just that they clicked through. On screen 2 (Tell us about your store), note that the location field auto-detects from the participant's IP address, so everyone may see a different country. That is expected and fine for this activity.

Part 2: Add Your First Product (15 minutes)

Participants now have a configured WooCommerce store. In Part 2 they add a real product. This is the hands-on core of the activity and should feel creative and low-stakes: they are building something imaginary, not a live store.

1. From the WooCommerce Home dashboard, click **Add products** under the 'Add your products' task. On the next screen — 'What product do you want to add?' — click **Physical product**. The product editor opens. Alternatively, you can reach the product editor directly via **Products > Add New** in the left sidebar — either path leads to the same editor.

□ **Facilitator tip:** When participants reach the product editor through the task checklist, a guided tooltip overlay may appear — 'Step 1 of 8: Product name.' Participants can close it by clicking the X in the top right of the tooltip. The overlay is optional and can be ignored; all the same fields are accessible without it.

2. Give the product a **title**. This is the product name customers will see. Make it specific: "Handmade Ceramic Mug" not just "Mug".
3. In the main content area below the title, write a short **product description** (two to three sentences). Describe what the product is, who it is for, and why someone would want it.
4. Scroll down to the **Product data** panel. Confirm the product type is set to **Simple product**. In the **General** tab, enter a **Regular price** in your local currency (the currency symbol is set by the location you chose in the wizard).

5. Still in the **Product data** panel, click the **Inventory** tab. Check **Track stock quantity for this product** and set a **Quantity** (for example, 10). This enables the cart to track available units. Additional fields appear once stock tracking is on: Allow backorders? (leave 'Do not allow'), Low stock threshold (leave the store-wide default), and Sold individually (leave unchecked).
6. In the **Short description** panel (below Product data), write one sentence that appears next to the product image on the product page. Think of this as your headline pitch.
7. In the **Product image** panel on the right, click **Set product image**. Upload the image you downloaded from openverse.org (or unsplash.com / pexels.com). Add alt text describing the image before clicking **Set product image**.
8. Click **Publish** in the top right. Your product is now live on the Playground store.

☐ **Facilitator tip:** The product editor has a lot of panels. For this activity, participants only need Product data (General + Inventory), Short description, and Product image. Tell the group explicitly: "We are only filling in four areas today. Ignore everything else for now." Participants may also see a 'Brands' panel in the right sidebar — this is a built-in WooCommerce feature. They can ignore it for this activity.

☐ **Facilitator tip:** Alt text for product images is both an accessibility requirement and an SEO signal. A brief pause here reinforces what participants may have learned in the SEO Foundations activity: "Descriptive alt text helps screen readers and helps search engines understand what the image shows."

☐ **Stretch goal:** Faster participants can add a second product and set a text bold alongside the regular price. WooCommerce will display a strikethrough on the storefront automatically.

Part 3: Preview Your Storefront and Checkout (10 minutes)

Participants switch perspective from store owner to customer. This is often the moment the activity clicks: seeing what they just built from the buyer side.

1. In the Playground address bar, navigate to your site's **/shop** page (add /shop after the base Playground URL). You will see your product listed on the shop page.
2. Click the product to open the product detail page. Review what the customer sees: product image, title, price, short description, and the **Add to cart** button.
3. Click **Add to cart**, then navigate to **/cart**. Review the cart block: product, quantity, subtotal, and the **Proceed to checkout** button.
4. Click **Proceed to checkout**. The checkout block shows: Contact information (email, pre-filled for logged-in users), Shipping address (name, country, postal code, city, street address), Shipping options (Free shipping is auto-enabled), Payment options, and an Order summary sidebar with a **Place Order** button. The payment section should show

Cash on delivery if you enabled it in Facilitator Setup (step 4 above). Note: shipping address field labels adapt to the store's country — for example, a Japan-based store shows 'Last name / First name' and 'Prefecture' instead of 'First name / Last name' and 'State.'

5. Fill in the shipping address fields with any test details and click **Place order**. You will see the **Order received** confirmation screen showing the order number, date, total, and payment method. Go to **WooCommerce > Orders** in the dashboard to see the order listed with status 'Processing.'

□ **Facilitator tip:** When participants reach the checkout, ask: "What information is this form asking for, and is any of it surprising? What would make you trust this checkout enough to enter your card details?" This plants the seed for Part 4's discussion about what a real store needs beyond the default WooCommerce setup.

□ **Facilitator tip:** The block-based cart and checkout in WooCommerce 8.x+ look different from older shortcode-based versions participants may have seen in tutorials. If someone says "this looks different from what I remember," that is correct: the block checkout has been the default since WooCommerce 8.3 (released late 2023). The older shortcode checkout still works on existing sites but new installs use blocks.

⚠ **Stock error at checkout:** If participants see 'Not enough units of [product] are available in stock to fulfil this order,' this can occur in the Playground environment when stock tracking is enabled. Quick fix: go to Products → edit the product → Inventory tab → uncheck 'Track stock quantity for this product' → Update. The product will then show as 'In stock' without quantity limits, and the checkout will go through. Note: this is a Playground environment quirk, not typical of a live WordPress site.

Part 4: What You Have — and What a Real Store Needs (10 minutes)

Participants have a working store. Now they evaluate it honestly. This is the strategic discussion the activity has been building toward: what WooCommerce gives you free, what gaps remain for a real launch, and whether WooCommerce is even the right tool for what they are trying to sell.

What WooCommerce gives you out of the box (free)

- * Product management: unlimited products, categories, tags, images, inventory tracking
- * Shopping cart and block-based checkout
- * Order management dashboard
- * Basic sales reports
- * Cash on delivery and bank transfer payment methods (no transaction fees)
- * Email notifications to customers (order confirmation, processing, completed)
- * Tax settings and shipping zones (basic)

What requires extensions or additional setup for a real store

- * **Payment gateways** — Cash on delivery works in Playground but a live store needs Stripe, PayPal, or a local gateway. WooCommerce Payments (Automattic), Stripe for WooCommerce, and PayPal Payments are all free plugins in the WordPress.org directory.
- * **SSL certificate** — Required for any real checkout. Most managed WordPress hosts include this. Without HTTPS, browsers will warn customers that the connection is not secure.
- * **Transactional email delivery** — WooCommerce sends emails but WordPress's default mail function is unreliable on shared hosting. A transactional email plugin (Postmark, SendGrid, or WP Mail SMTP) is strongly recommended.
- * **Shipping integrations** — Basic flat-rate and free shipping are built in. For live carrier rates (UPS, FedEx, USPS, Canada Post), an extension is required.
- * **Subscriptions and recurring payments** — WooCommerce Subscriptions is a paid extension. If subscriptions are a primary use case, evaluate whether WooCommerce is the right base.

When WooCommerce might not be the right choice

WooCommerce is the right choice for most stores — it is the most widely used eCommerce platform in the world. But there are cases where a simpler tool fits better:

- * [Easy Digital Downloads](#) is built specifically for selling digital products: ebooks, software, audio, video, and files. Lighter than WooCommerce for digital-only stores. No physical product overhead.
- * [WP Simple Pay](#) is a Stripe-powered payment form plugin. If you are selling one or two products and do not need a product catalog, cart, or inventory, a payment form may be all you need.
- * [SureCart](#) is a modern alternative that handles physical products, digital downloads, subscriptions, and donations in a single plugin with a fresh setup experience.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Close Part 4 with the strategic question: "Now that you have built and walked through a WooCommerce store, is it the right tool for what you are trying to sell? What would need to be true for you to launch a version of this store? What is the first gap you would need to close?" Give participants 60 seconds to think, then take a few answers.

Debrief and Discussion (5 minutes)

Discussion questions:

1. You just built a store in 45 minutes. What would it actually take to make it live — and what is the first thing you would need to set up?
2. Looking at the checkout your customers would see: what would make you trust it enough to buy from it? What is missing?
3. After today: is WooCommerce the right tool for what you are trying to sell, or would a simpler option serve you better?

The win: Today you built a complete WooCommerce store from scratch: configured it with the setup wizard, created a real product with a price and image, and walked through your own checkout as a customer. You also know what a real store would need beyond the defaults, and how to decide whether WooCommerce is the right tool for what you are selling. That is more eCommerce knowledge than most people who just install the plugin and wonder why things feel complicated.

Next steps for participants:

- * [WooCommerce: Start with WooCommerce in 5 Steps](#)
- * [WooCommerce Getting Started documentation](#)
- * [WooCommerce Payments — free payment gateway by Automattic](#)
- * [Easy Digital Downloads — alternative for digital-only stores](#)
- * [WP Simple Pay — Stripe payment forms without a full store](#)
- * [SureCart — modern eCommerce alternative](#)
- * [eCommerce Best Practices — WordPress.tv \(WordCamp Jinja 2022\)](#)
- * [Creating an Intuitive WooCommerce Checkout Experience — WordPress.tv \(2023\)](#)
- * [Getting Started in eCommerce: From Idea to First Customer — Learn WordPress](#)
- * [Openverse — free, copyright-respecting image search](#)

Sources

All URLs verified as of May 2026. Check before running the activity.

1. [WooCommerce: Start with WooCommerce in 5 Steps](#): Official WooCommerce documentation. Overview of the install and setup flow. Primary reference for Part 1.
2. [WooCommerce Setup Wizard documentation](#): Official guide to the onboarding wizard screens. Reference for Part 1 step-by-step instructions.

3. [WooCommerce Getting Started documentation hub](#): Official hub linking to all getting-started guides. Reference for Parts 2 and 3.
4. [WooCommerce plugin — WordPress.org](#): Plugin directory listing. Confirms active maintenance, install count, and compatibility.
5. [Demo your Woo extension with WordPress Playground — WooCommerce Developer Blog](#): Official January 2025 post confirming WooCommerce Playground compatibility and wizard behavior.
6. [Getting Started in eCommerce: From Idea to First Customer — Learn WordPress](#): Official Learn WordPress tutorial, Dec 2020. Conceptual framing only — UI steps are outdated.
7. [eCommerce Best Practices — WordPress.tv](#): WordCamp Jinja 2022 talk. Beginner-focused eCommerce tips for WooCommerce store owners.
8. [Creating an Intuitive WooCommerce Checkout Experience — WordPress.tv](#): WordCamp Masaka 2023 talk. Checkout UX principles and what makes a checkout trustworthy.
9. [Easy Digital Downloads — WordPress.org](#): Alternative plugin for digital-only stores. Referenced in Part 4 alternatives.
10. [WP Simple Pay — WordPress.org](#): Stripe payment form plugin. Referenced in Part 4 as a lightweight alternative for simple selling needs.
11. [SureCart — WordPress.org](#): Modern eCommerce alternative. Referenced in Part 4 alternatives.
12. [Openverse](#): WordPress.org image search for copyright-respecting photos. Recommended for product image sourcing.