



**AN ABSOLUTE BEGINNER'S  
GUIDE TO SETTING UP YOUR**

# **Online Craft Biz**

**BY MOTH AND RUST DIY**



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# CRAFTING A BUSINESS:

## ***Setting Up Your Online Shop and Presence***

Selling your handmade creations online is a fantastic way to make extra cash to support your hobby or potentially make a full-time living.

I've written this small primer as a starting point for anyone who's thought about selling online but has no idea where to begin. This is meant as a jumping point and *gentle guide*, not a strict set of rules. You do not have to adhere to all the guidelines discussed in this book, and you may find different methods work better for you. These are simply some of the things I've found to work for me personally.

Also, while it is *possible* to create an online business that generates a larger income, it doesn't always happen—at least, not immediately. This is something that requires a lot of patience! In fact, patience is one of the most crucial elements of a successful journey.

This is by no means a comprehensive guide, but I have tried to touch on all major points of interest. Do a quick search online for any of the following topics, and you will find a plethora of free information and insights on each one. (Also, be sure to see the last section in this booklet for more on this.)

If you need clarification on any of these points, or have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to me. You can find all my contact info on my website at [mothandrustdiy.com](http://mothandrustdiy.com).

I hope your online craft journey is a fruitful one—not just monetarily, but emotionally, mentally, and creatively!



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## **Branding**

Before you open up your (virtual) shop doors, you might first give some thought to your *branding*.

Branding is the way you present your business and shows up in everything from the name you choose, the colors and images used in social media banners or pictures, packaging, advertising, and so on.

Consistent branding will help your business be recognized more readily, which will ideally help contribute to the overall success of your business.

However, when you're just beginning, don't stress too much about branding; it's natural to develop this as you go. It may be a while before you figure out exactly how you want to present yourself. One thing I do strongly suggest you are careful about is choosing your name—you can always experiment with things like profile pictures or page banners, but once you've picked a name, it can be difficult to change because you'll be using it for your shop URL and social media username. (It isn't impossible to change, though, so please also don't let this one decision keep you from proceeding to open up your shop!)

### **Choosing a Name**

Before settling on a name for your business, ask yourself:

- is this particular name already being used by someone else?
- is it reasonably easy to spell or pronounce? if not, will it be a problem?
- is your desired username or handle available across all the social media platforms you might use?
- does the name accurately reflect your business?

Of course, there are other factors that can come into play when choosing a name, but the aforementioned are some of the most practical considerations.

### ***Banners, Profile Pictures, and Other Imagery***

Over the years, I have changed things up quite a bit, as far as my shop banner, social media pages, etc, and this is still something I'm working to improve, so I wouldn't call myself a master of brand imagery.

But even when you switch things up, people should be able to recognize your style. So are you casual, whimsical, modern, farmhouse chic, or something else?

When you have a handmade business, it's very personal, so naturally, your branding will often reflect your own personality.

When creating banners and other brand images to use online, use good photos and keep it simple.

Even if you don't have graphic design skills, you can use a simple photo that reflects your brand. Websites like [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) have tons of free templates you can use and customize to create banners, posts, logos, fliers, and more.



## **Choosing a Platform**

There are a number of e-commerce platforms where you can sell your handmade goods for a very low cost. You can also purchase your own website with a shopping cart feature, but I would almost never recommend this for someone just starting out. Even sellers who've gained a lot of traction and sales can continue to do well on low-cost marketplace sites.

Some websites allow you to list items for free, then once your item sells, they will take a percentage of that sale. This is how sites like Poshmark and Depop work. Most listings on eBay are also free, taking only a fee after your item sells.

Etsy charges a fee of \$0.20 per four month listing, then an additional percentage after your item sells, but I still personally prefer [etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com) as a selling platform, especially for someone starting out.

Though Etsy has come under some scrutiny in recent years for a number of reasons—including the fact that they now allow certain items that are not quite handmade nor vintage—I still feel Etsy has maintained the overall feel of a handmade marketplace. When you open your shop on Etsy, you can customize your storefront with your banner, profile picture, an “about” section, and more. Also, despite being open to items that aren't exactly “handmade,” the majority of items on Etsy still are handcrafted, and I think shoppers still come to Etsy when they're seeking out handmade goods.

Whatever platform you choose, I definitely recommend starting out with one that's inexpensive. You can always switch later, or even sell on multiple platforms. But as long as you keep your investment to a minimum, you'll feel more comfortable experimenting.

## **Setting Up Shop**

Once you've chosen a platform, be sure to set up your profile before adding any listings. This will help potential customers get an even better feel for your products and what they can expect from you.

### **Profile and Basic Information**

If your profile information or bio is limited to 150 characters (like on Instagram), you'll need to stick to the basics, but if you have a lot of room for writing, take advantage of it!

Be sure you're very clear about shipping times and costs, return policies, and anything else that might be important. Also, don't be afraid to add some personality to your profile! Tell *your* creative story: talk about why making is important to you, how you learned your craft, share your inspirations, etc. Don't be afraid to own this space. Sometimes, I think because we are so familiar with our own personal story, it's easy to (falsely) believe that our story isn't interesting to anyone else, but this simply isn't the case. Share what makes you and your product unique!

Some platforms will also allow you to include links in your profile, so take advantage of this as well, and link to any social media pages or relevant site.

### **Banners & Profile Photos**

Again, if there's a place for a profile picture or banner, use it! Check the site's upload specifications to find the best size and file format. Use images that reflect your brand, product, or process.

## **Your Listings**

There are two things you absolutely must have when it comes to listings: **good photos** and a **clear description**.

### **Photography**

Of the two things I just mentioned, it could be argued that good photos are the most crucial thing; no one will bother reading your description if there isn't an eye-catching photo!

While your photos should be of excellent quality, that doesn't mean you have to invest a lot of time or money in taking them.

You don't need fancy equipment or a photography background to get the best photos. Most smartphone cameras are better than the camera I was using 10 years ago! All you really need are the following:

- natural, indirect lighting
- a clean, clutter-free background
- a steady hand (or inexpensive tripod)
- your smartphone or a basic, inexpensive point-and-shoot camera

...that's it!





If you're in need of a background, something as simple as a poster board works well for small items. If you have larger items, use a plain wall as a backdrop, and that should work just fine.

Rather than using direct sunlight that can create harsh shadows and overexposure, try the strong-yet-indirect light near a window, or if you're outside, try photographing in a shaded area where the light is more diffused.

Just be sure to avoid using the camera's flash, taking a blurry photo, or having a lot of stuff in the background of your photo, which can create a cluttered feel.

You can style photos to create a certain feel, or use other objects for size reference, but when you're staring out, try to keep them simple and let your item be the main focal point.

## ***Descriptions and Tags***

So often, I come across items with incomplete descriptions or tags that aren't fully utilized. While you don't need to overwhelm your potential customer with a novel of flowery description, it is important to include a few basic things.

Some things you should always include are:

- size/dimensions of your product
- the materials your product is made of
- any policies on returns, shipping, etc. (especially if not already included elsewhere in your profile.)

your items.

**Section** Optional

**Tags** Optional  
What words might someone use to search for your listings? Use all 13 tags to get found. [Get ideas for tags.](#)

Shape, color, style, function, etc.

little zipper pouch  purse organizer

white polka dots  cotton pouch

ruffles and bow  salmon color

**Materials** Optional

Ingredients, components, etc.

cloth  fabric  zipper

Other things to consider including are:

- how your item was constructed
- potential uses for your item
- your inspiration in creating the item
- why customers should buy the item from you specifically

I would probably err on the side of having “too much” in the description rather than not enough.

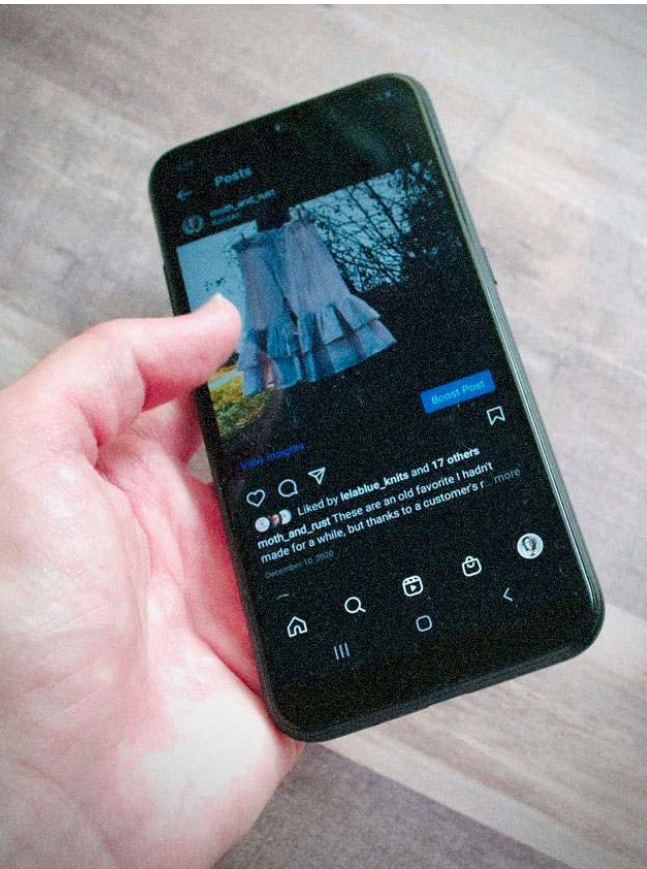
Depending on your selling platform, in addition to the description, there is usually a place where you can include tags or key phrases. These can help categorize your item and can improve your item’s chances of being found in searches. Use all the tags you are allowed, even if you end up repeating some phrases from your title and description.

The more data within your listing, the better, as this will help your item get seen by the person who’s looking for it!

## ***Social media***

You don’t have to grow a huge social media following in order to have a successful handmade business online, but it is nice to have a home base where you can post not only new products, but share shop updates, behind-the-scenes looks, and other relevant, interesting bits of information with your fans and customers.

I’ve heard some makers say that they don’t like posting to their social media pages because they don’t want to look like they’re “bragging”...if this is you, please understand this: ***it isn’t bragging—your followers want to see your posts!*** They’re following you for a reason, and that reason is because they’re interested in you and your work. Sharing your creations,



process, thoughts, etc. isn't bragging—it's connecting.

If you still feel too much like a "salesperson," remember: there's no need to keep your posts limited to what you're selling. Think about what you, as a follower or consumer, like to see on your social media feeds. Ideas for engaging posts can include behind-the-scenes glimpses into your creative process, relevant memes or funny stories, care tips for your products, interesting facts about your craft, customer reviews, or just your musings for the day.

The more interaction you can get on a post, the more likely it is to show up in people's feeds.

Obviously, there are reasons for not posting certain things, whether it's for personal safety or just because you don't want to share everything with the whole world. This is not only totally acceptable, but strongly recommended. Before you start posting, you might want to outline what aspects of your life, creative or otherwise, you are and are not willing to share with your fans.

Whether you're on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, or all of the above, it's a good idea to follow the same basic principles used for your shop profile: make good use of your "about" or "bio" sections, and make it *yours*! Fill out all the relevant information about you, your craft, and why you do it. Include links to other social pages and most importantly, **include the link to your shop**! Most people aren't going to take the time to search for your shop site, so if it's not accessible through a simple click, they likely won't visit.

## **Money Matters**

A lot of people are intimidated by the financial aspect, but starting small online isn't nearly as scary as setting up a storefront or selling lots of goods wholesale. It's relatively easy to learn and get a feel for these things as you go.

### **Pricing Your Items**

Make sure your items are priced appropriately. You can search for formulas online to use as a guideline for pricing items; some are very reasonable, I've come across some that seem a bit lofty as well.

For most crafters, the simplest way to figure price could look something like this:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{cost of materials} \\ + \\ \$12 \times \text{ \_\_\_ hours worked*} \\ = \\ \text{price} \end{array}$$

*\*Of course, you can set your own hourly wage; it can be \$10, \$15, \$20...whatever you feel comfortable with.*

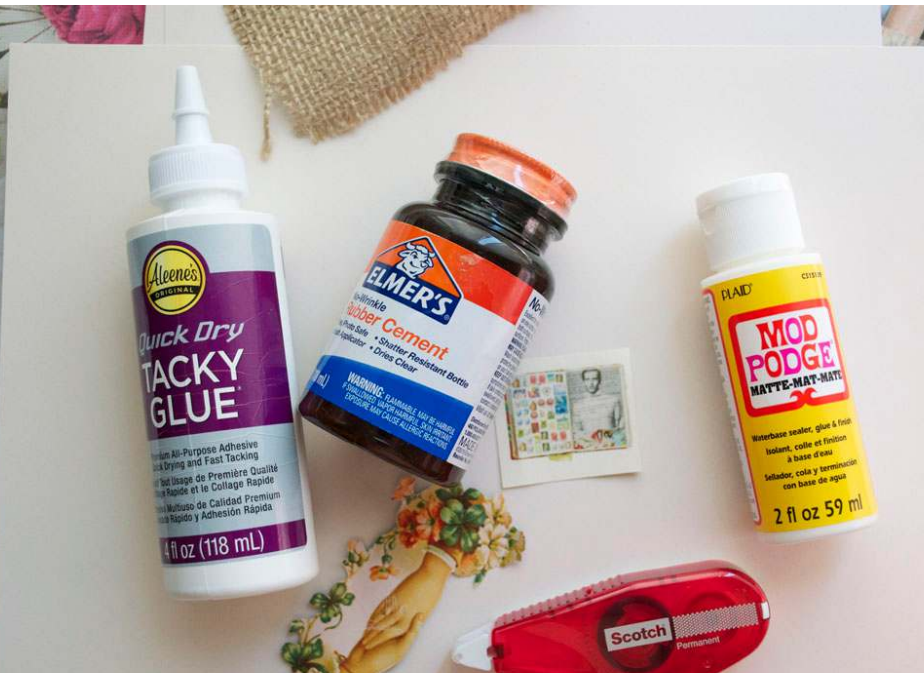
So, if your materials cost \$9 and you work on your item for two hours, the final cost would be \$33.

If you are shipping your items (and you probably are if you're selling online), you'll need to add that cost on as well.

In the past, I've heard artists and makers discuss the topic of pricing in a way that advocated for prices which most of us would consider pretty high. It's understandable that they'd want to discourage the general public from

undervaluing handmade goods, but ultimately, it's your right as the creator to determine the cost of your creation.

Many times, craft entrepreneurs who are just starting out tend to set their prices on the low side. While I understand the desire to keep your items as accessible as possible, it's important that you are paid not only for your materials, but also for your time, expertise, and skill that goes into each piece.



I feel my personal pricing philosophy is pretty moderate; it allows me to be paid, but also keeps my products within many people's budgets. Setting your own prices is another aspect that will likely take some time to perfect; just

keep records of your costs, your time, and pay attention to what's working and what isn't.

### ***Finances, Taxes, Etc.***

When it comes to most financial or legal advice, I do recommend seeking professional guidance. Do a search online for your state's department of revenue, and you should find resources and information there for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Also, it's often a good idea to set up a separate bank account for your business; if you shop around, you can usually find free or very low-cost checking accounts for small businesses.

## **Other Considerations**

### **Websites**

Do you need your own website? Probably not at first, and maybe not ever. Early on, I actually did purchase a website and made quite a few (expensive!) mistakes, mostly because I didn't know what I was doing and didn't have a real plan for it. Learning from this experience, I realized that you really don't need one if you're already selling through another online platform. I kept my site, though, because I eventually realized I wanted to start sharing more of my DIY tutorials and patterns.

Also, if you really want your own site but don't want to invest, you can create your own free blog. However, I think the biggest disadvantage to free blogs is all the advertisements that the host company will place on your site...it may not sound like a big deal, but I've found they can become pretty distracting, and you don't even have any control on what is being advertised. If you want to share blog type posts, you can consider "micro blogging" through your posts on Instagram or Facebook.

If you just want a landing page that has all the links to your social media sites, shop, etc., you can sign up for a free one from sites like [linktree.com](http://linktree.com)

### **PO Box**

If you are working from your home, you might consider renting a PO Box if you prefer to keep your home address private. I would especially recommend a PO Box if you plan on sending out email newsletters, because when you send newsletters, you are required to provide a mailing address.



## **Customer Service & Interaction**

Though this may go without saying, providing good customer service is crucial. Like just about everything else, you'll get better at this with practice. Once you've made a sale, ship your product promptly and include a small thank you note. Be sure to answer all the questions you receive. And if someone writes a comment on your social media posts, for goodness sakes, reply!! Not only is it just the courteous thing to do, but it will help form connections. (I even reply to spambots on Instagram, because the more interaction and engagement a post gets, the more it will be pushed out to more people's feeds.)

## **Business Classes & Workshops**

I mentioned earlier that you can search online for more in-depth information on any particular topic; nearly all the information you could want or need is out there, for *free*. But there are also a lot of people selling online workshops containing the very same information you can find, again, for free, if you take the time to look.

While I am all for supporting people who teach, and while I believe in paying them fairly for the information and insight they provide, there are some people out there charging exorbitant prices for very rudimentary information.

While some paid classes can be helpful, and you can pay for legitimate services, I truly believe the best thing a beginning craft entrepreneur can do is *just start*. Learn what you can from free resources, then dive in and don't be afraid to learn from your own experience and even mistakes. I would only recommend seeking out paid services or classes once you have had at least some experience selling online, know exactly what it is that you need help with.

## ***A Few Last Thoughts...***

Most good things, including your crafty business, will take a long time to build. Don't be discouraged if you don't take off right away. (And if your business *does* take off right away, don't be afraid to say "no" to customers in order to allow yourself to catch up!) It's important to not let yourself get burnt out.

Stay consistent, don't get discouraged, and you'll eventually build momentum, gain customers, and cultivate a following of people who really, really enjoy *your* creations!

I also believe it is so important to be ready to lift up and encourage other artists. **There is always enough to go around.** And when others are thriving, that will only help you to thrive. If you have any questions about anything I mentioned here, or question about things I *didn't* mention, or just need someone to bounce your ideas off of, please don't hesitate to reach out to me! I will try to help in any way I can.

xo,

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