MIDNIGHT WEBS

FREE RESOURCE · OPTIMIZATION GUIDE

E-commerce Conversion Optimization Guide

Roughly 7 in 10 online shopping carts are abandoned before purchase (Baymard Institute's average across 50 studies is 70.22%). This guide shows how to find where your own store loses them, fix the biggest leak first and prove the change worked.

Updated November 2026 | 14 min read | 51 checks

WHO SHOULD USE IT	WHAT IT COVERS	GOOD TO KNOW
Owners of online stores with some existing traffic	8 areas from measurement to testing	Checks marked with "!" usually pay back fastest

START HERE

Fix checkout before the homepage. Baymard Institute's average of 50 studies puts cart abandonment at about 70%, and the main fixable causes (extra costs, slow delivery, forced accounts, a long checkout) all sit in the cart and checkout.

TICK THE BOX WHEN DONE · MUST DO = HIGHEST IMPACT

01 Measure the funnel before changing it

Redesigning without data is guessing with a bigger budget. Measure first so you know which step to improve, and so you can tell afterwards whether it worked.

- [ ] MUST DO **Track the full funnel as separate events**
  In GA4 these are `view_item`, `add_to_cart`, `begin_checkout`, `add_payment_info` and purchase. The drop between two neighbouring steps shows where the problem is.

- [ ] MUST DO **Make sure "purchase" fires exactly once per order**
  Include a unique `transaction_id` so a page refresh or the thank-you page revisit does not create duplicate orders in reports.

- [ ] **Split results by device and traffic source**
  Mobile usually converts at a fraction of desktop; a single overall rate hides that. Compare new and returning visitors too.

- [ ] **Know your baseline conversion rate**
  Typical stores sit somewhere between 1% and 4% depending on category and price. Compare yourself with last quarter, not with a stranger's benchmark.

- [ ] **Watch real sessions**
  Ten recordings of mobile checkout (Microsoft Clarity is free) show rage-clicks and confusing fields faster than a month of dashboards.

- [ ] **Ask customers directly**
  A one-question exit or post-purchase survey ("What nearly stopped you from buying today?") often names the barrier outright.

HOW TO CHECK

Place a test order and confirm one purchase event appears in GA4 DebugView with the correct value, currency and `transaction_id`.

02 Product pages that answer buying questions

Shoppers cannot touch the product, so the page has to replace the questions they would ask in a shop.

- [ ] MUST DO **Show the real total cost early**
  Price, VAT/tax and delivery cost. Baymard's latest survey ranks extra costs (shipping, tax, fees) as the top fixable reason for abandoning a cart, at 40%.

- [ ] MUST DO **Use photography that answers doubts**
  Several angles, a scale reference, a close-up of material and the product in use. Add video if it shows how the product behaves.

- [ ] **Put the decisive information above the fold on mobile**
  Name, price, availability, the buy button and delivery estimate without scrolling.

- [ ] **Describe the product with specifics**
  Dimensions, materials, compatibility, what is in the box and who it is for. Replace "high quality" with the measurable detail.

- [ ] **Show stock and delivery honestly**
  "Ships in 2 working days" beats a vague "fast delivery". If an item is out of stock, say when it returns and offer to notify.

- [ ] **Place reviews near the buy button**
  Even a handful of genuine reviews with photos helps. Include critical ones; a page with only perfect scores looks edited.

- [ ] **State returns and warranty in one plain sentence**
  In the EU, consumers have at least 14 days to withdraw from a distance purchase, so link to your return process.

HOW TO CHECK

Hand the page to someone unfamiliar with the product and ask them to tell you the price, delivery time and return policy. Whatever they cannot find fast needs moving.

03 Cart and checkout

Checkout is where intent meets effort. Every field and surprise costs you orders.

- [ ] MUST DO **Offer guest checkout**
  In Baymard's survey, 18% of shoppers abandoned a cart because the site wanted them to create an account. Offer account creation after the purchase instead.

- [ ] MUST DO **Show shipping and taxes before the last step**
  Add a delivery estimator in the cart. Surprise costs at the final page are the single largest cause of abandonment.

- [ ] **Cut fields to what you truly need**
  Many checkouts ask for more than they need, and Baymard's research finds most fields can be removed or combined. Use one name field, make company optional and drop the "confirm email" box.

- [ ] **Support the payment methods your customers use**
  Cards, Apple Pay or Google Pay, and local favourites. In Romania and Moldova, cash on delivery and bank transfer still matter in many categories.

- [ ] **Make mobile forms easy to complete**
  Use the right keyboard (`inputmode` and type attributes), autocomplete attributes for address and card, and address lookup where available.

- [ ] **Write helpful inline errors**
  Next to the field, in plain words ("Postal code should have 6 digits"), and keep what the customer already typed.

- [ ] **Label the final button correctly**
  EU rules require the button to clearly state that clicking creates an obligation to pay, for example "Order and pay" rather than just "Submit".

HOW TO CHECK

Complete checkout on your own phone using a real mobile connection. Count the taps and the screens; if you ran out of patience, so did customers.

04 Trust and reassurance

People buy when the risk feels manageable. Show proof exactly where the doubt appears.

- [ ] MUST DO **Make support easy to reach**
  A phone number or chat with opening hours and an actual response-time promise, visible on product and checkout pages.
- [ ] **Publish real company details**
  Legal name, address, registration or VAT number. They are legally required in most EU countries and they reassure first-time buyers.
- [ ] **Link shipping, return and privacy policies where doubts arise**
  Beside the delivery estimate, near the buy button and at payment.
- [ ] **Use only trust signals you can prove**
  Payment-provider logos you actually use, verified reviews, real guarantees. Fake badges damage trust once noticed.
- [ ] **Avoid fake urgency and invented scarcity**
  Countdown timers that reset, "only 2 left" when untrue and made-up reviews are unfair commercial practices under EU consumer law, and customers recognise them.
- [ ] **Respond to criticism in public**
  Short, factual answers to negative reviews show how you treat customers when something goes wrong.

HOW TO CHECK

Read your own policies as a sceptical customer. Are the return window, who pays shipping and how long refunds take stated in numbers?

05 Speed and mobile

Most store traffic is on phones, often on average connections. Slow, shifting pages lose buyers before they see the product.

- [ ] MUST DO **Keep Core Web Vitals in the "good" range**
  Largest Contentful Paint under 2.5 s, Interaction to Next Paint under 200 ms and Cumulative Layout Shift under 0.1, measured on mobile. See our speed checklist for the fixes.
- [ ] MUST DO **Optimise product images**
  Modern formats (AVIF/WebP), correct dimensions per screen and no lazy-loading on the main product photo, which is usually the LCP element.
- [ ] **Audit third-party scripts**
  Chat, reviews, pixels and A/B tools each add weight. Remove any that nobody reviews monthly.

- [ ] **Reserve space to prevent layout shifts**
  Set image dimensions and keep banners and cookie notices from pushing the buy button down as it loads.

- [ ] **Check tap targets and zoom**
  Buttons at least 44 px tall with space between them; text readable without pinch-zooming.

- [ ] **Test on a mid-range Android phone**
  Your fast laptop hides problems most customers have.

HOW TO CHECK

Run PageSpeed Insights on your best-selling product page and read the field-data section first. It shows what real visitors experienced over the last 28 days.

06 Offers that help instead of pressure

A good offer removes a real barrier. A bad one trains customers to wait for a sale or doubt your prices.

- [ ] MUST DO **Choose offers that fit your margins**
  Free-shipping thresholds just above your average order value, bundles and quantity discounts raise order value without a permanent price cut.

- [ ] **Explain the offer in one sentence**
  "Free delivery over 400 lei" is clear. Complicated conditions generate support questions.

- [ ] **Show real reference prices**
  Under the EU Omnibus rules, when you announce a price reduction you must show the lowest price of the previous 30 days.

- [ ] **Use urgency only when it is true**
  A sale that really ends on Sunday is fine. A timer that restarts is not.

- [ ] **Test one offer at a time**
  Otherwise you will not know which one worked.

- [ ] **Protect margins on discount-driven customers**
  Check whether customers acquired with a discount buy again at full price. If not, the discount was a cost, not an investment.

HOW TO CHECK

Compare average order value and gross margin per order for two weeks before and after the offer, not just revenue.

07 Recovery and retention

The first sale is the most expensive one. What happens next decides whether there is a second.

- [ ] MUST DO **Send an abandoned-cart email sequence**
  A common pattern is one message after about one hour, another at 24 hours and a last one at three days, each showing the product, price and a direct link back to the cart. Only email people who have consented or who are existing customers.
- [ ] **Include a reason to return, not only a reminder**
  Answer the likely doubt (delivery time, returns), or offer help, instead of a discount every time.
- [ ] **Send clear order and delivery updates**
  Confirmation, dispatch with tracking link and expected delivery date. This is the email people open most.
- [ ] **Ask for a review after delivery**
  Wait until the customer has had time to use the product, usually 7 to 14 days after arrival.
- [ ] **Use post-purchase content**
  Care instructions, setup help and accessories matched to what they bought.
- [ ] **Make it easy to opt out**
  A visible unsubscribe link is legally required and protects your sender reputation.

HOW TO CHECK

Add something to your cart, leave, and check that the email arrives on time, renders on a phone and links back to a working cart.

08 Test one change at a time

Testing separates a good idea from a good-looking idea. Keep it simple and honest.

- [ ] MUST DO **Write a hypothesis before you start**
  "Because customers abandon at shipping costs, showing the delivery estimate in the cart will raise completed checkouts." If you cannot finish that sentence, you are not ready to test.
- [ ] **Change one meaningful element per test**
  If you change the headline, image and button together you will not learn why it worked.
- [ ] MUST DO **Run the test long enough**
  At least two full weekly cycles, and until each version has a few hundred conversions. Stopping on the first good day is how false winners happen.
- [ ] **Look at mobile and desktop separately**
  A change can help one and hurt the other.

- [ ] **Judge by revenue per visitor, not click rate**
  More clicks on "Add to cart" mean nothing if fewer people finish the order.

- [ ] **Keep a test log**
  Date, hypothesis, result and what you learned. Without it teams repeat old failures.

- [ ] **If traffic is too low for A/B testing**
  Make the change, compare before and after across comparable weeks, and back it up with customer feedback.

HOW TO CHECK

Before declaring a winner, check that the result held in both segments and that no tracking or site problem affected one version.

Sources and further reading

Baymard Institute: Cart abandonment rate statistics
https://baymard.com/lists/cart-abandonment-rate

Google Analytics 4: Measure ecommerce
https://developers.google.com/analytics/devguides/collection/ga4/ecommerce

web.dev: Web Vitals
https://web.dev/articles/vitals

European Commission: Consumer contract law
https://commission.europa.eu/law/law-topic/consumer-protection-law/consumer-contract-law_en

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