MerchPilotIQ
INSIGHT STRATEGY RESULTS

FOUNDER GUIDE · BUILDING YOUR FIRST SHOPIFY SITE

The Shopify *Starter Stack*

The 12 apps every new fashion brand needs to launch well, and nothing you don't. Most are free. Together they help shoppers buy, save you hours of admin, keep you legal and bring in new customers.

12 apps
all you need to launch

11 of 12
can start on a free plan

~$25–50
a month in total to start

Three rules before you install anything

Fewer is faster

Every app adds code that can slow your site, and slow pages lose sales. Install only what you'll use this month.

Start free

Begin on free plans. Upgrade only when an app is clearly earning more than it costs.

Uninstall properly

Deleting an app can leave code behind in your theme. Check its help page for removal steps.

Your starter stack at a glance

	App	What it does	Cost to start (USD)
1	**Klaviyo**	Email and SMS marketing	Free up to 250 contacts; paid from $20/mo
2	**Judge.me**	Product reviews	Free; $15/mo to remove branding
3	**Shopify Search & Discovery**	Search and filters	Free (built by Shopify)
4	**Kiwi Sizing**	Size charts and fit finder	Low monthly fee
5	**Shopify Flow**	Store automation	Free (built by Shopify)
6	**Shopify Inbox**	Live chat	Free (built by Shopify)
7	**Shopify self-serve returns**	Returns portal	Free (built into Shopify)
8	**Parcel Panel or AfterShip**	Order tracking	Free tier; low paid plans
9	**Consentmo or Pandectes**	Cookie consent	Free tier; Shopify's own banner covers the basics
10	**TinyIMG**	Image speed and SEO	Free tier; low paid plans
11	**Shopify Markets + Translate & Adapt**	Selling abroad	Free (built by Shopify)
12	**Shopify Collabs**	Influencers and affiliates	Free (built by Shopify)

Help shoppers buy

1 Klaviyo
EMAIL AND SMS MARKETING

Automatic emails that win back abandoned carts and bring customers back to buy again. For most brands, email becomes the biggest source of repeat sales.

SET-UP TIP
Switch on two flows before launch: a welcome series for new subscribers and an abandoned-cart email. Add a sign-up pop-up with a small first-order offer.

Free up to 250 contacts; paid from $20/mo

2 Judge.me
PRODUCT REVIEWS

Shoppers don't know a new brand yet. Reviews and customer photos give them the confidence to buy.

SET-UP TIP
Send review requests about 7–14 days after delivery, so customers have worn the piece. Ask for a photo.

Free; $15/mo to remove branding

3 Shopify Search & Discovery
SEARCH AND FILTERS

Lets shoppers filter by size, colour and price, and find what they typed even if they used a different word.

SET-UP TIP
Add size, colour and price filters to every collection. Add synonyms such as trousers / pants and jumper / sweater.

Free (built by Shopify)

4 Kiwi Sizing
SIZE CHARTS AND FIT FINDER

Wrong fit is one of the biggest causes of fashion returns. A clear size guide protects your margin.

SET-UP TIP
Make one size chart per product type (tops, trousers, dresses) with real garment measurements, not a generic chart.

Low monthly fee

Save yourself time

5 Shopify Flow
STORE AUTOMATION

Takes over small daily jobs you'd otherwise do by hand.

SET-UP TIP
Start with one rule: email yourself when any size drops below 3 units, so you can reorder bestsellers in time.

Free (built by Shopify)

6 Shopify Inbox
LIVE CHAT

Answers fit and delivery questions while the shopper is still on the site, before they leave.

SET-UP TIP
Set up quick replies for your top five questions: sizing, delivery times, returns, care and stock.

Free (built by Shopify)

7 Shopify self-serve returns
RETURNS PORTAL

Customers start returns themselves instead of emailing you, and you set the rules once.

SET-UP TIP
Write your returns policy first (time limit, condition, who pays postage), then turn on self-serve returns to match it.

Free (built into Shopify)

8 Parcel Panel or AfterShip
ORDER TRACKING

Answers “where is my order?”, usually the most common customer email, before anyone asks.

SET-UP TIP
Brand the tracking page with your logo and add a “you may also like” row, so it sells as well as informs.

Free tier; low paid plans

Stay legal and fast

9 Consentmo or Pandectes

COOKIE CONSENT

Keeps you legal on cookies and tracking for UK and EU visitors, and keeps ad tracking within the rules.

SET-UP TIP

Set the banner to show for UK and EU visitors and block marketing cookies until the shopper accepts.

Free tier; Shopify's own banner covers the basics

10 TinyIMG

IMAGE SPEED AND SEO

Fashion sites are image-heavy. Faster pages sell more and rank higher on Google.

SET-UP TIP

Compress all product images and add alt text describing each product (colour, fabric, item).

Free tier; low paid plans

Reach new customers

11 Shopify Markets + Translate & Adapt

SELLING ABROAD

Local currency and prices, with duties shown at checkout. Since Brexit this avoids surprise fees and refused parcels for EU customers.

SET-UP TIP

Only switch on the countries you can ship to well. Ireland and the EU are a natural first step for UK brands.

Free (built by Shopify)

12 Shopify Collabs

INFLUENCERS AND AFFILIATES

Work with creators who are paid commission only when their followers buy.

SET-UP TIP

Start with 5–10 small creators whose followers match your customer, rather than one big name.

Free (built by Shopify)

Your pre-launch checklist

- [ ] Klaviyo welcome and abandoned-cart emails switched on and tested.
- [ ] Size, colour and price filters on every collection.
- [ ] A size chart on every product, with real measurements.
- [ ] Returns policy written, and self-serve returns set to match.
- [ ] Cookie banner live for UK and EU visitors.
- [ ] Product images compressed, with alt text.
- [ ] Branded tracking page and quick chat replies set up.
- [ ] A test order placed, returned and refunded, start to finish.

Apps you don't need yet

These are good apps, but they cost more and work best once you have sales coming in. Add each one when you reach its trigger.

Type of app	Examples	Add it…
Loyalty and referrals	e.g. Smile.io	once you have regular repeat customers, roughly 200+ orders a month
Upsell apps	e.g. UpCart, ReConvert, Rebuy	once most orders are single items and you want a bigger basket
A helpdesk	e.g. Gorgias	once customer messages take more than an hour a day
Profit analytics	e.g. Polar Analytics, Triple Whale	once you spend on ads across several channels
Stock planning	e.g. Prediko	once you have 50+ SKUs or keep selling out of bestsellers
Page builders	e.g. PageFly, Shogun	only if your theme genuinely can't build the page you need

Want a second pair of eyes before you launch?

MerchPilotIQ offers a free mini website check for founders: a buyer's-eye review of what helps or stops your site selling, from product pages to pricing and sizing.

ian@merchpilotiq.com · merchpilotiq.com

Prices are in US dollars, as Shopify bills apps in dollars, and were checked in October 2026. App prices and plans change often, so confirm on each app's Shopify App Store listing before installing.