

Digital Products From Zero

Create, price and sell your first downloadable product in 21 days

Introduction

You do not need a following, a studio, or a stock of inventory to sell something today. You need one useful file and a way to hand it to a stranger in exchange for money. That is the entire mechanics of a digital product business, and everything else in this book is detail on top of that simple exchange.

This is a practical, step-by-step guide for people who have never sold anything online before. It assumes you have no list, no audience, and no product yet. By the end of it you will have a finished digital product, a working sales page, a delivery system, and a plan for getting your first ten paying customers without spending a penny on advertising.

Digital products are attractive precisely because the economics are unusual. You build a thing once and sell it many times. There is no packaging, no postage, no stock room, and no reordering from a supplier. Your only real costs are your time to make it and a small amount to host and sell it. That means the maths work in your favour from the very first sale, provided the product actually solves a problem someone is willing to pay to have solved.

The mistake almost everyone makes is starting with the product. They decide they want to make a planner, or a course, or a set of templates, because it feels achievable, and only afterwards do they wonder whether anybody wants it. This book reverses that order. You will validate demand before you build anything substantial, so that by the time you sit down to create the product, you already know it will sell.

Twenty-one days is enough time to go from a blank page to a live product with real customers. It is not a guarantee of riches; it is a realistic timeline for a focused beginner working evenings and weekends, or a few hours a day. Some of you will move faster. Some will take longer because life gets in the way. The point of the timeline is not to pressure you but to stop the project drifting forever, which is what kills most first attempts.

Work through the chapters in order. Each one ends with a short list of actions titled "Do this now" — do them before moving to the next chapter. The book is designed to be used, not just read.

Chapter 1: Choosing a Product Idea Using a Demand Test

The single biggest reason first products fail is that nobody actually wanted them. Not because the product was badly made, but because it answered a question nobody was asking. You are going to avoid this by testing demand before you build.

Start from problems, not products

Do not start by asking "what could I make?" Start by asking "what do people already struggle with, complain about, or pay to solve badly?" A product idea that starts from a genuine, specific problem will always outsell an idea that starts from a format you fancy making.

Good sources of problems:

- Your own recent frustrations. What did you Google, ask a friend about, or wish existed in the last month?
- Questions repeated in online communities, forums and comment sections related to a hobby, job or life stage.
- Tasks people currently do badly with a spreadsheet, a notebook, or a messy folder of files.
- Processes that professionals charge for, which a template or guide could partly replace for beginners.
- Transitions: starting a new job, moving house, having a baby, retiring, starting a business. People spend money during transitions because they are short on time and confidence.

Narrow the audience on purpose

"People who want to get organised" is not an audience. "New freelance graphic designers who need to send their first client invoice" is an audience. The narrower your audience, the easier every later step becomes: your product, your pricing, your sales page copy and your marketing message all get sharper when you know exactly who you are speaking to.

Write one sentence in this shape: "This is for [specific person] who wants [specific outcome] but struggles with [specific obstacle]." If you cannot fill in all three blanks with something concrete, your idea is not ready yet.

The demand test

Before you spend a single hour building, run a cheap test to see whether anyone actually wants this. You are looking for evidence, not opinions from friends who will say something nice regardless.

1. Write a one-paragraph description of the product as if it already existed, including the outcome it delivers and who it is for.
2. Post that description in two or three places your target audience actually spends time: relevant online communities, forums, social groups or comment threads. Ask directly whether people would find it useful and what they would want included.

3. Create a very simple one-page description with a single button that says "Notify me when this is ready" or "Join the waiting list," and share the link in the same places. You do not need a finished shop for this; a single page and an email collection form is enough.
4. Set a target: if fewer than five people take a genuine interest (a real question, a saved link, a waiting-list signup, or a "yes please") within a week, treat that as a signal to adjust the idea rather than push forward blindly.
5. Ask the people who did respond one follow-up question: "What would stop you buying this?" Their answers become your product brief.

A demand test does not need to be scientific. It needs to replace guessing with evidence. If nobody responds, that is useful information — it is far cheaper to learn this in a week than after three weeks of building.

Signs an idea is worth pursuing

- People ask when it will be available without being prompted.
- People offer to pay before you have asked for money.
- You find existing products solving a similar problem that have reviews and repeat sales — competition is proof of a market, not a reason to avoid it.
- The problem is recurring, not a one-off. Recurring problems support a product line later, not just one item.

Signs to drop an idea and pick another

- The response is polite interest with no urgency ("that's a nice idea") and no follow-up questions.
- You cannot describe who it is for in one sentence.
- The problem is something people solve for free easily elsewhere.
- Nobody in your test group has ever paid for anything similar.

Do this now

- Write down three problems you have personally faced, argued with, or watched someone else struggle with in the last month.
- Turn your favourite one into the one-sentence audience statement: person, outcome, obstacle.
- Post your one-paragraph pitch in two places your audience gathers and ask for honest reactions.
- Set a simple waiting-list page and share it alongside the pitch.
- Give the test seven days before deciding whether to proceed.

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