



## Online Shopping Cart Best Practices – 23 Ways to Decrease Cart Abandonment

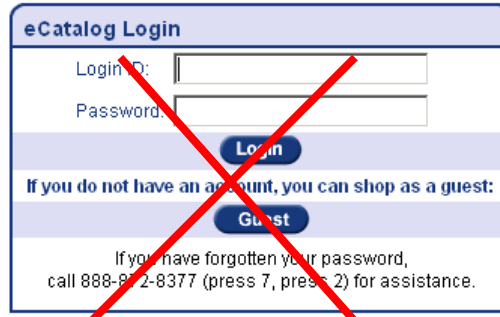
By Anna Slyter, Marketing Project Manager

It's frustrating for ecommerce website owners to see the number of shoppers who add items to their carts, only to leave the site before purchasing. Many factors contribute to shopping cart abandonment: high shipping costs, shoppers changing their minds, unexpected costs, lack of trust, and complicated checkout processes all play a part.

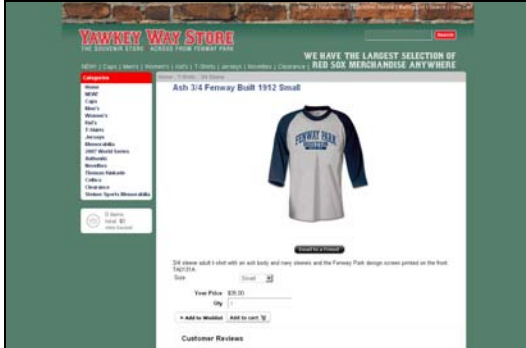
Some factors you have no control over, like when shoppers simply change their minds. Luckily, there are other factors that you CAN do something about, like making sure your website is easy to use and follows best practices. Simple tweaks to your shopping cart can produce significant increases to conversion rates.

Do you know if your ecommerce site follows best practices or if you are alienating users with confusing cart and checkout processes? If you answered "no," it's time to take a look at your site from your shoppers' perspective. The following 23 tips will help to guide you to a smooth checkout process that decreases shopping cart abandonment and increases your bottom line.

1. Don't require shoppers to register BEFORE adding items to their cart or viewing products. If shoppers have to give you information too soon, you risk their trust.



2. Make sure your "Add to Cart" button is prominent and above the fold on your site. It's much more difficult to check out if you can't find the "Add To Cart" button. According to w3shools.com – up to 48% of users (in January 2008) used a 1024 x 768 screen resolution. Test different browsers and screen resolutions to make sure your "Add To Cart" button won't disappear below the fold for visitors with smaller screen resolutions.



1280 x 1024

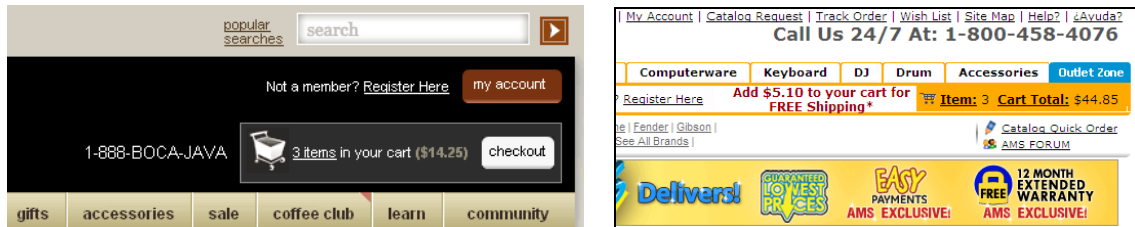


1024x768

3. Label your cart button, "Add To Cart." Using terms like "Buy Now" can reduce conversion rates, whereas using standard terminology makes users more comfortable during the checkout process. Also, test different colors and sizes for your "Add To Cart" button to see which is most effective at converting.



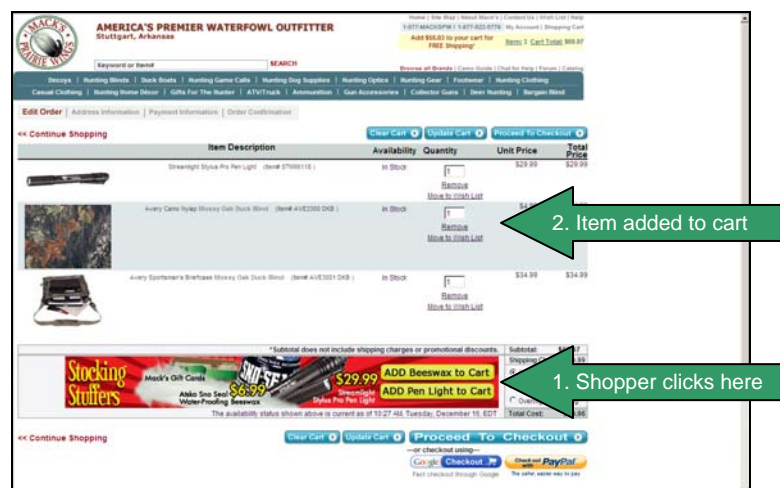
4. Make sure shoppers can not only access, but also see the number of items and the cart total from every page. Your visitors will have an easy way to see what is in their cart without having to click. Going a step further, show them the amount they still need to purchase to qualify for free shipping and increase up-sells.



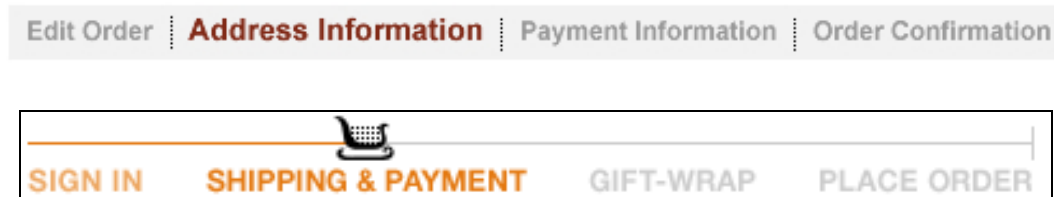
5. Make sure your "Checkout" button is clear and prominent. It should be a different color and even size than "Update," "Clear Cart," etc. Clearly label it as "proceed to checkout." This will make it easy for shoppers to know what to do to order.



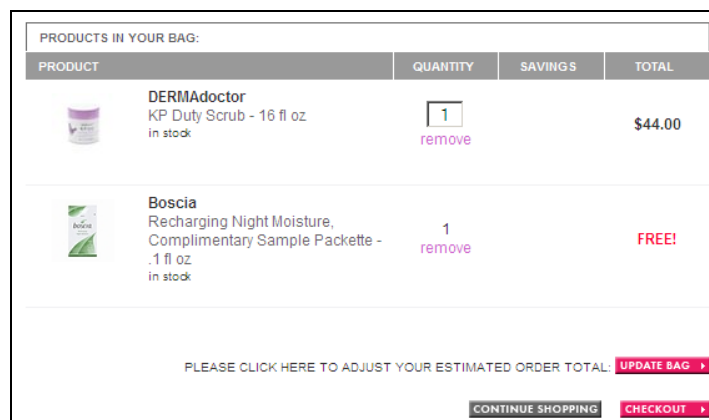
6. Checkout up-selling can be effective, but only if properly done. If visitors have to leave the checkout process to put items in their cart, abandonment rates increase. Make sure to bring shoppers immediately back to the checkout page if they add an item to their cart.



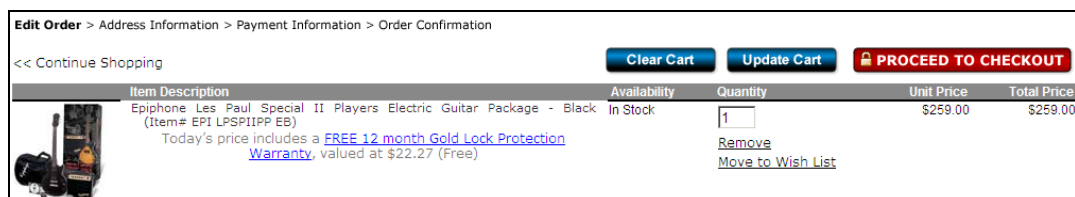
- Clearly label each step of the checkout process and show shoppers what step they are currently on and how many steps are left to complete the process. Don't make them guess how many more forms they have to fill out or they may abandon their carts.



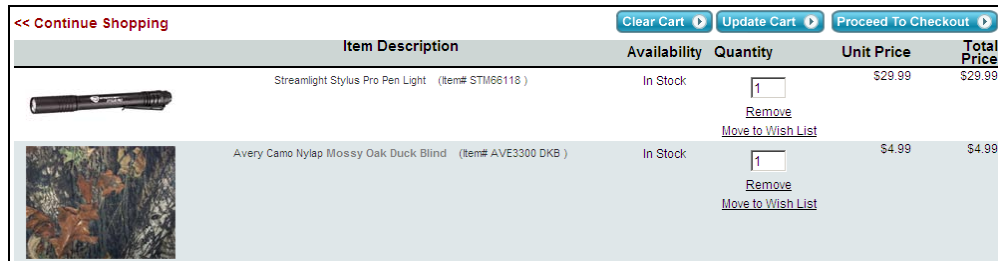
- Show any discounts, warranties or free items clearly on the checkout page. Don't make shoppers wonder if they are going to get charged or if the item wasn't added to their purchase.



- Show the item descriptions AND an image of the item on the cart page. Make certain both image-focused and text-focused shoppers are clear about everything they are purchasing.



10. Allow users to change the quantities in their carts, delete items from carts and clear carts easily. Don't make users abandon their cart because they can't get rid of an item they decided they don't want. Users expect to be able to easily change the contents of their carts.



11. Make sure you tell customers as soon as possible if a product is out of stock. At the very least, show stock item availability on the cart page, preferably on the item page before they even add it to their cart. Never let your customers order only to be surprised by a backorder notice AFTER checkout. It's possible they may go elsewhere to buy this item if they can't wait, but at least they won't leave with a bad taste in their mouth and may shop with you again.



12. Make sure your customer service number and/or live help information is prominent and easy to find, in case shoppers have questions during checkout. If they get confused, they may call and you could still get the sale. Odds of them calling drop significantly if they have to hunt for your phone number.



13. Keep your checkout pages uncluttered and as simple as possible. Avoid requiring information that is not required to process a sale. The more a customer has to fill out, the greater the chance they will abandon the process all together. Shoppers are especially reluctant to give birthdates or other information that could lead to identity theft. Use your web statistics to find referral sources; don't require visitors to give you this information during checkout.

**Your Personal Details**

Gender:  Male  Female \*

First Name:  \*

Last Name:  \*

**Referral Source**

Please let us know:  \*

Please specify

*If magazine, please let us know which one.*

14. Give clear messages for any required fields shoppers forgot to fill in – don't make them guess at what they did wrong. The easier it is to check out, the more likely shoppers will finish the process.

**Address Line 1:**

**\* Address is required.**

15. Give the shipping calculation and costs prior to asking for credit card information. Most shoppers are reluctant to give you credit card numbers without knowing the exact total they will be charged.

Item Total:	\$39.90
Total (1 Day Air):	\$14.95
Order Total:	\$54.85

The availability status shown above is current as of 11:45 AM, Tuesday, December 16, 2007

**Billing Address**  
Anna Sifer  
130 Lake  
Spicer, Minnesota - 55289 USA  
320-786-6245  
anna@sifer@gmail.com

**Shipping Address**  
Anna Sifer  
130 Lake  
Spicer, Minnesota - 55289 USA  
320-786-6245  
anna@sifer@gmail.com

**Credit Card Information**  
Select a previously used credit card-OR-Add a New Credit Card  
Add New Credit Card Type:   
Add New Card Number:

Shipping costs visible

16. Give shoppers payment options beyond just credit card. Google Checkout and PayPal are popular alternative to credit cards. Some shoppers, especially if they have not done business with you, may need the security they feel when using a trusted name to complete the checkout process. You can also offer installment plans or “on account” orders for those who have established accounts. Shoppers like having control over their payment options.



17. Give users the option to checkout as a guest or create an account and clearly label this feature. Not every shopper is comfortable with creating yet another account or with you saving their credit card information. Be hospitable and let them checkout as a guest – you just might see them again. This can also be used if a returning customer forgot his password and for some reason can't access it through the “forgot password” feature.

<p><b>Returning Customers</b> If you have an existing account please sign in.</p> <p><b>Email address:</b> <input type="text"/></p> <p><b>Password:</b> (password is case sensitive) <input type="password"/></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Remember me next time. <a href="#">Forgot your Password?</a></p> <p><input type="button" value="Sign In"/></p>	<p><b>New Customers</b> Sign In, Save Time and Get Benefits! <b>Benefits Include:</b> Email Order Confirmations, Email Ship Confirmations, Email Price Matches, Access to Your Wish List, Online Order Status, Private Sales and more!</p> <p><b>Email address:</b> <input type="text"/></p> <p><b>Password:</b> (password is case sensitive) <input type="password"/></p> <p><b>Confirm Password:</b> <input type="password"/></p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Remember me next time. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Send me special offers via email</p> <p><input type="button" value="Submit"/></p>	<p><b>Guest Checkout</b> No registration required.</p> <p><input type="button" value="Checkout Without Registering"/></p>
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18. For returning customers, have a prominent link with a “forgot password” feature. Make certain the password retrieval process easy and fast so they don't get delayed from finishing their purchase.

**Returning Customer with Password:**

**Email address:**

**Password:**  
(password is case sensitive)

Remember me next time.  
[Forgot your Password?](#)

19. Allow users to store multiple credit card numbers and use them to place future orders. If you have users who want accounts because they shop at your site often, you can make it even easier for them to check out. You can store their credit card information and allow them to choose which of their saved cards to use on each purchase.

20. Allow users to store multiple ship-to addresses so they don't have to retype every time. Again, it makes things easier for the shopper and increases conversions.

21. Make sure you have a persistent cart feature so your shoppers' carts are not emptied if they close their browser window and come back later. Many shoppers use their cart as a "shopping list." If you empty their cart, it's just that much harder for them to complete a purchase.



22. Make sure your security certificate works on both the www. and non-www. versions of your URL. You do not want visitors who skip typing the "www." on a

URL to see a security area like the one below. They may just lose trust and completely abandon your site for a competitor's.



**23. Test, test, test.** Any time you change things on your site, be sure to test the impact on conversions and sales. What works on one site may be different than what works on another. Watch your cart abandonment rates for any problems and consider conducting user testing sessions to see how real people navigate through your website. It can be eye-opening!

By following the preceding best practices, you can expect to decrease shopping cart abandonment rates and increase online sales. Remember, your shoppers have a multitude of online options when making purchases. Don't unknowingly chase them away from your website because checking out is too difficult or confusing.