

A PROFIT PROTECTION WORKBOOK

PRINT-ON-DEMAND PROFIT CHECKLIST

Avoid low-profit products. Build listings that actually pay you.

Created by SimpleLifeCalc.com

Made for sellers using:

Printify • Printful • Etsy POD • Shopify POD

Practical, beginner-friendly, and built to keep your profit safe.

Costs and fees vary by provider and change over time — always confirm current numbers in your POD and selling accounts.

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HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

This is a working document, not just a guide. Print it (or fill it in digitally) and actually complete the worksheets and checklists for each product you sell.

Every dollar figure inside is an illustrative example to show how the math works — your real numbers come from your POD provider (Printify, Printful, etc.) and your selling platform. Plug in your own.

1. Understanding POD Profit

Print-on-demand (POD) means you design a product, and a provider like Printify or Printful only prints and ships it after a customer buys. You hold no inventory and pay nothing up front — which is wonderful, but it also means your profit margin per item is usually thin. Protecting that margin is the whole game.

The simple profit equation

THE ONE FORMULA THIS WHOLE WORKBOOK PROTECTS

Profit = Selling Price – Base Cost – Shipping – Platform Fees – Ads

Let's define each piece in plain English:

- **Selling price** — what the customer pays you for the product.
- **Base cost** — what your POD provider charges you to make the item. This is your biggest cost.
- **Shipping** — what the provider charges to deliver it (you either pay this or pass it to the buyer).
- **Platform fees** — what Etsy, Shopify, or another marketplace takes (listing, transaction, payment processing).
- **Ads** — money spent on advertising to get the sale, if any.

Why POD profit needs protecting

Because so many small costs stack up, it's easy to sell a \$25 shirt and keep only a dollar — or even lose money — without realizing it. A product can look successful ("I got a sale!") while quietly earning almost nothing. This workbook helps you catch that *before* you launch, not after.



BEGINNER TIP

Aim to know your profit per item **BEFORE** you publish a listing. The worksheets on pages 5–7 walk you through every number so there are no surprises after the first sale.



KEEP IT CURRENT

Base costs, shipping prices, and platform fees all change over time and differ between providers. Always pull your real, current numbers from your POD and selling accounts — never assume last year's figures still apply.

2. Product Selection Checklist

Profit starts before you design anything — with choosing the right product and provider. Work through this list for any product you're considering.

The product itself

- ☐ The base cost leaves room for a healthy margin at a price buyers will accept.
- ☐ The product has strong, clear print areas for my design style.
- ☐ Reviews of this provider's product (print quality, sizing) are solid.
- ☐ It's a product people reorder or buy as gifts, not a one-time novelty.
- ☐ Shipping cost for this item is reasonable for my target customer's location.

The provider & fulfillment

- ☐ I compared the same product across providers (e.g., Printify vs Printful).
- ☐ I checked production time so my delivery promises are realistic.
- ☐ The provider ships to the countries I want to sell to.
- ☐ I understand whether I or the customer pays shipping.

The market

- ☐ There is real demand (people are searching for and buying this).
- ☐ I can stand out with design, niche, or branding — not just lowest price.
- ☐ Competing listings aren't all racing to the bottom on price.



BEGINNER TIP

The cheapest base cost isn't always the most profitable choice. A slightly pricier product with better quality often earns more through higher prices, better reviews, and fewer refunds.



WATCH OUT

Highly saturated products (basic white mugs, plain tees with common phrases) can be hard to sell at a profitable price. Differentiation protects your margin.

3. Cost Worksheet

Fill this in for one product. Pull the real numbers from your POD provider's pricing page. (The example column shows how it works — replace it with your own.)

Cost line	What it means	Example	Your number
Base cost	Provider's charge to make the item	\$12.00	\$ ____
Add-on / extra print areas	Second side, sleeve, etc.	\$2.50	\$ ____
Branding inserts (optional)	Custom labels, packaging	\$1.00	\$ ____
Subtotal product cost	Add the lines above	\$15.50	\$ ____

Don't forget these easy-to-miss costs

- **Design time or design purchase** — if you bought artwork or fonts, or value your hours, spread that cost across expected sales.
- **Sample orders** — ordering a test print is smart, but it's a real cost. Factor it into your first batch.
- **Color/size variants** — some colors or sizes cost more. Check the priciest variant, not just the cheapest.

My true product cost per item (worst-case variant): \$



BEGINNER TIP

Always base your pricing on your most expensive variant. If a 2XL shirt costs more than a Small, pricing off the Small means you lose money every time someone orders the larger size.



KEEP IT CURRENT

Providers adjust base costs periodically and run seasonal price changes. Re-check your costs before any big launch or promotion.

4. Shipping Worksheet

Shipping is the cost that quietly eats POD profit, because it's charged on **every single order** and often costs more than beginners expect. Map it out before you price.

Step 1: Find your real shipping cost

Shipping detail	Example	Your number
First-item shipping (domestic)	\$4.50	\$ ____
Each additional item	\$2.00	\$ ____
International shipping (if offered)	\$9.00	\$ ____

Step 2: Decide who pays

You generally have three options. Each affects your price and your profit differently:

1. **Charge shipping separately** — the buyer pays it on top of the item price. Simple, but a high shipping line can scare buyers away.
2. **Free shipping, cost baked into price** — you raise the item price to cover shipping. Popular on Etsy and often improves visibility.
3. **Partial — you absorb some** — a middle ground. Just make sure the part you absorb is in your profit math.

WATCH OUT: the “free shipping” trap

“Free shipping” is never free — you’re paying it, just hidden inside the price. If you offer free shipping, your selling price **MUST** include the full shipping cost, or you’re donating money on every order.

Shipping cost I will use in my profit math (per order): \$



BEGINNER TIP

On marketplaces that charge a transaction fee, remember the fee usually applies to the shipping you charge too. Build that into your number.

5. Profit Worksheet

This is where it all comes together. Bring forward your numbers from pages 5 and 6, then fill in the rest. The example shows a \$25 shirt; replace it with your product.

Line	Example	Your number
Selling price	\$25.00	\$ ____
– Product cost (from page 5)	\$15.50	\$ ____
– Shipping you absorb (from page 6)	\$0.00	\$ ____
– Platform fees (listing + transaction + payment)	\$3.00	\$ ____
– Ads / marketing per sale (estimate)	\$1.50	\$ ____
= Profit per item	\$5.00	\$ ____
Profit margin (profit ÷ price)	20%	____ %

In the example, a \$25 sale returns \$5.00 — a 20% margin. That's workable, but notice how little room there is: one fee increase or one ad click too many and it shrinks fast. That's exactly why you calculate this *before* you launch.



BEGINNER TIP

Example margin math: \$5 profit ÷ \$25 selling price = 20% profit margin. Many POD sellers aim for a margin cushion comfortable enough to survive fee changes, refunds, and a few slow weeks.



KEEP IT CURRENT

Platform fees and ad costs shift over time. Re-run this worksheet whenever your provider or selling platform announces a change — a price that worked last year may not work today.

6. Pricing Checklist

Use this before you set the final price on any listing. A good price covers every cost, pays you fairly, and still feels right to the buyer.

Before you set the price

- ☐ I priced from my most expensive variant, not the cheapest.
- ☐ My price covers product cost, shipping, platform fees, and ads — with profit left over.
- ☐ I checked profit with “free shipping” baked in, if I plan to offer it.
- ☐ My profit margin meets the minimum I set for myself.
- ☐ The price still makes sense if a marketplace fee rises slightly.

Market sense-check

- ☐ My price is competitive for the quality and niche — not a race to the bottom.
- ☐ I’m not underpricing just because I’m new (a common confidence trap).
- ☐ I left room for occasional sales/discounts without going below break-even.

Psychology & presentation

- ☐ I considered charm pricing (e.g., \$24.95 vs \$25) where it fits my brand.
- ☐ My photos and description justify the price I’m asking.



BEGINNER TIP

If the math says your price feels “too high,” resist simply lowering it. Instead lower a cost (cheaper variant, fewer print areas), or strengthen your photos and listing so the price feels worth it. Cutting price below profit is how POD shops quietly fail.

QUICK GUIDE: A FAIR PRICE

A fair price = (all your costs + the profit you want) priced so that, after the marketplace takes its cut, you still keep that profit. The Profit Worksheet on page 7 confirms it.

7. Product Launch Checklist

Everything to confirm before you hit “publish.” A clean launch protects both your profit and your reviews.

Profit & pricing

- ☐ Completed the Cost, Shipping, and Profit worksheets for this product.
- ☐ Confirmed profit per item is positive and meets my margin goal.
- ☐ Double-checked pricing on every variant, including the priciest.

Listing quality

- ☐ Ordered or reviewed a sample so I trust the print quality.
- ☐ Mockups look professional and show the design clearly.
- ☐ Title and description include the words buyers actually search for.
- ☐ Sizing chart and product details are accurate and complete.
- ☐ Shipping times reflect real production + delivery time.

Operations

- ☐ My POD account is connected correctly to my selling platform.
- ☐ Payment and payout settings are set up and verified.
- ☐ A test order (or sample) confirmed the whole flow works end to end.



BEGINNER TIP

Setting honest, slightly generous delivery estimates protects you. POD takes production time PLUS shipping time — under-promising and over-delivering earns better reviews than the reverse.



WATCH OUT

Never publish a product you haven't profit-checked. “I'll fix the price later” often turns into selling at a loss during your very first rush of sales.

8. Profit Mistakes Checklist

Tick any that sound like you — then fix them. Every one of these quietly drains POD profit.

- ☐ Pricing off the cheapest variant, then losing money on larger sizes.
- ☐ Forgetting shipping is charged on every order, not just the first.
- ☐ Treating “free shipping” as free instead of building it into the price.
- ☐ Ignoring platform fees on the shipping portion of a sale.
- ☐ Not counting ad spend as a cost per sale.
- ☐ Confusing revenue with profit (“I made \$500!” — minus what?).
- ☐ Underpricing out of fear, especially as a new seller.
- ☐ Skipping a sample order and getting hit with refunds for quality issues.
- ☐ Choosing a provider on base cost alone, ignoring shipping and quality.
- ☐ Never re-checking prices after a provider or platform raises fees.
- ☐ Running discounts that dip below break-even.
- ☐ Letting low-margin products stay live instead of fixing or retiring them.

THE BIGGEST MISTAKE

Assuming a sale equals profit. In POD, plenty of sales earn almost nothing once every cost is counted. The seller who knows their profit per item — and protects it — is the one who lasts.

BEGINNER TIP

Pick your top three mistakes from this list and fix them this week. Small corrections on every order add up to real money over a year.

9. Monthly POD Review

Once a month, spend 15 minutes here. This habit catches profit leaks early and tells you what to do more of.

Numbers to pull

Total sales (revenue) this month: \$ _____

Total product + shipping costs paid to provider: \$ _____

Total platform fees: \$ _____

Total ad spend: \$ _____

Actual profit (revenue – all the above): \$ _____

Average profit margin this month: _____ %

Monthly review checklist

- ☐ Compared this month's profit margin to last month's.
- ☐ Identified my top 3 products by PROFIT (not just by sales).
- ☐ Identified any product earning below my minimum margin.
- ☐ Checked whether any provider or platform fees changed.
- ☐ Reviewed refunds/returns and what caused them.
- ☐ Decided one thing to improve next month.



BEGINNER TIP

Rank products by profit, not by number of sales. A product with 5 high-margin sales can beat one with 20 near-break-even sales — and deserves more of your attention and ad budget.

MAKE IT A HABIT

Put a recurring 15-minute “POD Review” on your calendar for the first of each month. Consistency here is what separates a hobby from a profitable business.

10. Product Performance Tracker

Track each live product so you always know which ones earn their place. Fill a row per product; review monthly. (Photocopy or duplicate this page as your shop grows.)

Product	Price	Cost	Profit / item	Margin %	Sales	Keep / Fix / Cut

HOW TO READ YOUR TRACKER

Keep — healthy margin and steady sales. Consider promoting it more.

Fix — sells, but margin is thin. Adjust price, variant, or costs before spending on ads.

Cut — low margin AND low sales. Retire it so it stops cluttering your shop.

BEGINNER TIP

Update this tracker during your Monthly POD Review (page 9). The two pages work as a pair: review the numbers, then mark each product Keep, Fix, or Cut.

11. Quick Wins

Short on time? These are the fastest ways to lift POD profit — most take under an hour and pay off on every future sale.

1. **Raise prices slightly on your best sellers.** Even a small bump on popular items flows straight to profit, often with little drop in sales.
2. **Switch to a better-value provider or variant.** Re-compare Printify vs Printful (and product variants) for your top items — prices change.
3. **Bundle products.** Selling two items together raises the order value and spreads fixed costs across the sale.
4. **Add a second print area or upsell.** A small added cost can justify a larger price increase.
5. **Tighten your shipping setup.** Make sure the shipping you charge (or absorb) actually matches current provider rates.
6. **Retire your lowest-margin products.** Cutting dead weight focuses your energy on what pays.
7. **Improve photos on thin-margin items.** Better mockups let you raise prices without losing buyers.
8. **Reduce wasteful ad spend.** Pause ads on products that don't profit after the ad cost is counted.

FASTEST WIN OF ALL

Run your three best-selling products through the Profit Worksheet today. If any is underpriced, fix it now — that single change can lift profit on every sale from here forward.

BEGINNER TIP

Do one quick win per week rather than all at once. Steady, small improvements compound into a noticeably healthier business within a couple of months.

12. Profit Improvement Checklist

A deeper checklist for when you're ready to systematically raise your margins across the whole shop.

Costs

- ☐ Re-compared providers and variants for every active product this quarter.
- ☐ Removed unnecessary add-ons that don't increase sales.
- ☐ Negotiated or upgraded to any volume/membership discount I qualify for.

Pricing

- ☐ Every product meets or beats my minimum margin target.
- ☐ Best sellers are priced for profit, not just popularity.
- ☐ Discounts and sales are checked against break-even before launching.

Operations & fees

- ☐ Shipping charges match current provider rates.
- ☐ I'm aware of all platform fees and they're in my profit math.
- ☐ Refund/quality issues are tracked and trending down.

Marketing

- ☐ Ad spend is tracked per product and only runs on profitable items.
- ☐ Top-margin products get the most promotion.
- ☐ Listings (photos, titles, descriptions) support higher prices.



BEGINNER TIP

Work through one section per week. Trying to fix everything at once leads to burnout; steady progress through these four areas reliably raises your overall margin.

13. Action Plan

Turn everything in this workbook into action. Fill this in now, while it's fresh — then come back and check your progress.

This week

One product I will profit-check or re-price: _____

One mistake from page 10 I will fix: _____

One quick win from page 13 I will do: _____

This month

My minimum profit margin going forward: _____ %

Date I will do my first Monthly POD Review: _____

Products I plan to Keep / Fix / Cut: _____

Recommended Profit Calculators

Stop doing this math by hand. Bookmark and use these free calculators so every pricing decision takes seconds, not spreadsheets:

- **POD Profit Calculator** — the all-purpose tool: enter price, base cost, shipping, and fees to see your profit and margin for any print-on-demand product.
- **Printify Profit Calculator** — tailored for Printify sellers, so you can plug in Printify costs and see your numbers quickly.
- **Printful Profit Calculator** — tailored for Printful sellers, for the same fast, accurate profit check.



BEGINNER TIP

Free versions of the POD Profit Calculator, Printify Profit Calculator, and Printful Profit Calculator are available at SimpleLifeCalc.com — simple and beginner-friendly, just like this workbook.

You've got this. Protect your profit and keep creating! 🎨

Visit SimpleLifeCalc.com for free calculators, guides, worksheets, and seller resources.

Costs and fees change — always confirm current numbers in your POD and selling accounts.