Practical Shopify Theme Selection Checklist

Choose Based on Store Needs, Not Only the Demo

Section 5: Themes and Store Design

Video: Choose a Practical Shopify Theme

Use this checklist before changing or purchasing a Shopify theme.

The goal is not to find the most impressive demo. The goal is to choose a theme that fits the store structure you actually need and lets you continue building without unnecessary complexity.

You do not need to find the perfect theme before starting.

For this course, we will use Horizon so everyone follows the same practical workflow.

1 What a Theme Controls

THEME CONTROLS

- Storefront layout
- Sections
- Templates
- Header
- Footer
- Fonts
- Spacing
- Buttons
- Product-page presentation
- Overall visual design

STORE DATA IS SEPARATE

- Products
- Collections
- Pages
- Menus
- Orders
- Customers
- Store settings

Theme = presentation. Store data = business/store information managed separately inside Shopify.

2 Free vs Paid Themes

FREE THEMES

Good for:

- beginners
- learning
- simple stores
- many real business stores
- keeping the starting cost low

Advantages:

- no extra theme cost
- enough to learn Shopify properly
- suitable for the course workflow

PAID THEMES

May provide:

- additional layouts
- more sections
- niche design styles
- additional product-page options
- more built-in features

Paid does not automatically mean better for your business.

A paid theme may include more layouts, sections, presets or built-in features, but buying the theme does not generally mean the complete demo store, demo products, images and store content automatically become your store.

Some third-party themes may provide presets, starter layouts or their own setup/import tools. This varies by theme and should be verified with the theme developer.

3 Theme Demo vs Your Store

A demo shows what the theme can look like.

- [ ] I understand that demo products are not automatically my products
- [ ] I understand that demo images are not automatically my images
- [ ] I understand that my own content still needs to be added
- [ ] I understand that my store may look different from the demo
- [ ] I am not choosing the theme only because the demo looks attractive

WARNING

Do not assume the complete demo store will automatically import just because a theme is paid.

4 What Happens If I Switch Themes?

USUALLY REMAINS:

- Products
- Collections
- Pages
- Menus
- Store data

MAY CHANGE OR NEED REBUILDING:

- Header design
- Footer design
- Homepage sections
- Product-page layout
- Fonts
- Spacing
- Buttons
- Theme-editor customizations

Switching themes later is possible, but some design work may need to be rebuilt.

5 Practical Theme Selection Check

- ☐ The theme supports the type of store I am building
- ☐ The layout suits my catalogue structure
- ☐ I am choosing it for a practical reason
- ☐ I am not choosing it only because the demo looks beautiful
- ☐ I understand what features I actually need
- ☐ I have checked whether the free theme already covers my needs
- ☐ I understand that a paid theme may still require setup and content work
- ☐ I am comfortable with possible rebuild work if I switch themes later

6 Course Decision

Which Theme Should I Use for This Course?

OPTION A · FOLLOW THE COURSE

Use Horizon.

Best if:

- I am a beginner
- I want to follow the exact course workflow
- I do not want unnecessary differences while learning
- I want to focus on Shopify design fundamentals first

OPTION B · USE ANOTHER THEME

Only if:

- I understand Shopify themes already
- I have a specific business requirement
- I understand that some steps in the course may look different
- I am comfortable adapting the practical steps myself

BEGINNER RECOMMENDATION

Use Horizon and follow the course workflow first.

If you already understand Shopify themes and have a clear reason to choose another theme, you may do so. If you are a beginner, follow the Horizon setup used in the course first.

7 Do Not Overthink This

YOU DO NOT NEED THE PERFECT THEME NOW

Focus first on:

- ◇ understanding sections
- ◇ templates
- ◇ content setup
- ◇ layout basics
- ◇ how the Shopify theme editor works

You can make more advanced design decisions later.

8 Final Theme Check

- ☐ I understand what a Shopify theme controls
- ☐ I understand what store data remains separate
- ☐ I understand free vs paid themes
- ☐ I understand that a demo is not my finished store
- ☐ I understand what may change when switching themes
- ☐ I have a practical reason for the theme I selected
- ☐ I am ready to continue using Horizon for the course

☐ **THEME DIRECTION READY**

Continue to the next lesson: **Install, Preview, Duplicate and Publish Themes.**

If you are unsure whether a particular theme is suitable for your store, use the Shopify Course Help & Direction Form from the resource hub before buying or switching unnecessarily.