Shopify Theme Backup & Safe Publish Checklist

Preview First. Publish Only When Ready.

Section 5: Themes and Store Design

Video: Install, Preview, Duplicate and Publish Themes

Use this checklist whenever you are testing or changing a Shopify theme.

The goal is to protect the current working storefront while giving yourself a safe copy to experiment with.

Preview first. Publish only when ready.

1 Understand the Theme Status

PUBLISHED / ACTIVE THEME

- Currently visible to customers
- Changes may affect the live storefront
- Treat carefully when making major edits

DRAFT / UNPUBLISHED THEME

- Not currently live
- Can be previewed
- Useful for testing or preparing changes
- Can be published later when ready

Always confirm which theme is currently live before making major changes.

2 Before Making Major Changes

- [ ] I identified the current published theme
- [ ] I checked whether I am editing the live theme or a draft
- [ ] I duplicated the current working theme before major edits
- [ ] I gave the duplicate a clear name
- [ ] I know which version I will work on

Suggested naming examples:

- Before Homepage Update
- Before Header Changes
- Working Copy – October
- Backup Before Redesign

A clear name makes it easier to understand which copy is safe to return to.

3 Duplicate as a Simple Backup

Duplicating a theme creates another copy of that theme inside Shopify. For a beginner, this is a simple way to keep a previous working version before major design changes.

- [ ] Duplicate created
- [ ] Duplicate renamed clearly
- [ ] Original working version kept
- [ ] I know which copy I am editing

A duplicate theme is helpful, but it is not a complete backup of your entire Shopify business or store data.

4 Optional Theme Download

Shopify may also provide an option to download the theme files.

- [ ] I understand this downloads theme files
- [ ] I understand it does not replace a full backup of products, orders, customers or other store data
- [ ] I will store the downloaded file safely if I choose to use this option

5 Preview Before Publishing

- [ ] Previewed the correct theme
- [ ] Checked the homepage
- [ ] Checked key pages/templates where relevant
- [ ] Checked basic navigation
- [ ] Checked desktop view
- [ ] Checked mobile view
- [ ] Confirmed there are no obvious unfinished sections
- [ ] Confirmed I am previewing the theme I intend to publish

Preview first. Publish only when ready.

6 Before Clicking Publish

- [ ] I know which theme is currently live
- [ ] I know which theme I am about to publish
- [ ] I previewed the new theme
- [ ] Important areas look correct
- [ ] No unfinished test content is visible
- [ ] I kept the previous working theme
- [ ] I am ready for customers to see this version

Publishing changes which theme customers see on the storefront.

7 After Publishing

- [ ] Opened the storefront after publishing
- [ ] Checked the homepage
- [ ] Checked navigation
- [ ] Checked desktop view
- [ ] Checked mobile view
- [ ] Confirmed the intended theme is live
- [ ] Kept the previous theme until the new version was verified

Do not immediately delete your previous working version. Keep it until you are confident the newly published theme is working correctly.

8 Safe Beginner Workflow

LIVE THEME
↓
DUPLICATE
↓
RENAME WORKING COPY
↓
MAKE / TEST CHANGES
↓
PREVIEW
↓
VERIFY
↓
PUBLISH
↓
CHECK LIVE STOREFRONT
↓
KEEP PREVIOUS VERSION TEMPORARILY

9 Common Beginner Mistakes

- Editing the wrong theme
- Making large changes directly on the live theme
- Forgetting to duplicate before major edits
- Leaving duplicates with confusing names
- Publishing without previewing
- Publishing unfinished sections
- Deleting the old working theme too quickly
- Assuming a theme backup contains all Shopify store data

10 Rollout Awareness

Shopify may provide additional theme rollout/deployment functionality depending on the current platform features and account setup.

This lesson does not cover advanced Rollout configuration.

11 Final Safe Theme Check

- [ ] I know the difference between published and draft themes
- [ ] I know how to duplicate a theme
- [ ] I know why clear duplicate names are useful
- [ ] I know how to preview a theme
- [ ] I understand what publishing does
- [ ] I know to check the live storefront after publishing
- [ ] I will keep a previous working version until changes are verified

- [ ] **SAFE THEME WORKFLOW READY**

Next step
Continue to the next practical theme-design lesson.

If you are unsure whether you should duplicate, publish or change a particular theme, use the Shopify Course Help & Direction Form from the resource hub before making the live change.