

Choosing a U.S. Selling Platform

A one-page summary of the master comparison and pros & cons, for Japanese stationery makers selling to the United States.

Master comparison

Platform	Typical cost	Setup effort	Built-in traffic	Best for
Etsy	\$0.20 per listing + ~6.5% transaction + ~3% payment	Low — open a shop in an afternoon	High built-in traffic	First-time sellers testing the U.S. market
Shopify	From ~\$29-39/month + ~2.9% + 30¢ per sale	Medium — a weekend to launch well	Zero built-in traffic — you bring it	Brands with an audience ready to grow wholesale + retail
Squarespace	~\$23-36/month incl. commerce + ~2.9% payment	Low-medium — templates do the design work	None built in	Story-led brands, studios and artists selling a small range
Wix	~\$17-36/month for commerce plans + payment fees	Low — visual editor, no code	None built in	Sellers who want to design freely on a small budget
Big Cartel	Free up to 5 products, then ~\$15-30/month	Very low — live in an hour	None built in	Artists doing small drops and limited runs
WooCommerce (WordPress)	~\$10-30/month hosting + plugins; software is free	High — you are the site admin	None built in, but strongest SEO ceiling	Content-heavy brands with a technical friend
Payhip	Free with 5% fee, or ~\$29/month for 0%	Very low	None built in	Printables, PDFs, digital planner and font sellers

Pros & cons at a glance

Platform	Pros	Cons
Etsy	- Millions of U.S. shoppers already searching for washi tape, notebooks and paper goods - Etsy handles checkout, currency conversion and most tax collection for you - English listing templates and translation tools are built in	- Fees stack up — budget 12-15% of each order once ads are included - You do not own the customer email list - Search rankings and policy changes are outside your control
Shopify	- Full control of branding, email capture and customer data - Best-in-class apps for shipping labels, duties (DDP) and subscriptions - Multi-currency and multi-language storefronts in one shop	- You pay monthly even in a slow month - No customers arrive on their own — SEO, email and social are required work - Apps add up quickly (\$10-30 each, monthly)
Squarespace	- Genuinely elegant templates — good for a Japanese aesthetic without a designer - Site, blog, shop and email marketing live in one subscription - Simple, calm admin with far fewer settings to learn than Shopify	- Weaker shipping, duty and inventory tooling than Shopify - Small app ecosystem — you live with what is included - Not ideal for large catalogs or complex variants
Wix	- Cheapest of the hosted site builders with real commerce features - Fully visual editing — move any element anywhere - Solid Japanese-language interface and support	- Design freedom makes it easy to build a slow, cluttered site - SEO is workable but less clean than Shopify or Squarespace - Harder to migrate away from later
Big Cartel	- A genuinely free tier for your first five products - Made for artists — drops, limited editions, one-of-a-kind pieces - Almost nothing to configure or maintain	- Very limited features — no serious SEO, apps or automation - Weak reporting and no real customer database - You will outgrow it if orders become steady
WooCommerce (WordPress)	- No monthly platform fee — you only pay hosting and plugins - Best long-form blog and SEO ceiling of any option here - Total control of data, design and checkout flow	- You handle updates, backups, security and breakage - Plugin conflicts can take a shop offline at the worst moment - Slow sites are common without careful setup
Payhip	- Handles digital delivery, licences and EU/UK VAT automatically - Free to start — you only pay when you sell - Coupons, bundles and affiliate programs are built in	- Not suitable for physical stationery - Very limited storefront design - No marketplace discovery — you must drive every visitor

Fees change — treat these as planning figures and confirm current rates. Full guide, mini quiz and Japan-specific notes: stationerystrategy.com/guides/best-selling-platform-japanese-stationery