

Dropshipper

You run an online store and a supplier ships each order. Most stores lose money on ads before they find a product.

TYPICAL INCOME

\$0

a year, varies widely

INCOME RANGE

\$0 to \$60k

most to the successful few

TIME TO QUALIFY

1 to 3 years

after high school

DEMAND

Limited

job outlook

LICENCE NEEDED

No

anyone can do it

WHERE YOU WORK

From home on a laptop, with suppliers in China or the US and ads on Meta and TikTok

How you get there

- 1 Learn the basics for free** 1 to 2 months
 Shopify's own guides and free videos cover store setup, suppliers and ads. You do not need a course to start.
- 2 Pick a narrow niche and vet suppliers** 1 month
 Order samples yourself. Time how long they take to arrive and check what turns up.
- 3 Build the store** 1 to 2 weeks
 AI tools can write product pages and build a store in an afternoon. So can everyone else, which is why the store is not the hard part.
- 4 Test products with small ad budgets** 3 to 12 months
 Most tests fail. You are looking for one product where the ads pay for themselves with something left.
- 5 Grow or stop** 1 to 3 years
 The ones who last usually move to faster US warehouses, their own brand and stock they hold. Others stop and keep the skills.

Pros and cons

- + Cheap to start compared with holding stock
- + You learn ads, copywriting and video, which employers pay for
- + Work from anywhere with a laptop
- Most stores lose money and close within a year
- Thin margins that one ad price rise can wipe out
- You answer for a supplier you do not control

Good to know

A \$21.8 million lesson in AI stores

Automators AI promised passive income from online stores run with AI. The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) said most buyers lost money, got a judgment of about \$21.8 million and banned two owners for life...

The shipping rule is from 1975

The FTC (Federal Trade Commission) rule that makes online stores ship on time or offer a refund was written for mail-order catalogs in 1975. It now covers every internet order, including dropshipped ones.

Optional boosts

Paid ads. Short video. Unit economics. Supplier management.

Where these numbers come from

Federal Trade Commission: Business guide to the Mail, Internet, or Telephone Order Merchandise Rule

Shopify Help Center: Shopify Payments reserves

Shopify: plans and pricing

Federal Trade Commission: owners of Automators AI e-commerce scheme banned (2024)

Numbers checked October 2026. Pay figures are typical full-time annual amounts in United States dollars, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics wage data and published pay scales. They vary by state, employer and experience. Tuition is for in-state students at public schools unless the card says otherwise.

Sources, links and the click-through version: <https://career.help/us/careers/dropshipper>



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