wiredsmarter

Your First Digital Product, Honestly

Build and sell a small PDF with AI.
Real costs, real timelines, no hype.

FREE SAMPLE: CHAPTER 1

Edition 1.3 · October 2026

Before you start

What this guide is

A step-by-step way to make and sell one small digital product, such as a PDF guide, with AI doing much of the drafting. You make the decisions and check the facts, and AI does most of the typing.

What it does not promise

Any income. Many new products sell little or nothing at first, and Chapter 1 shows what the numbers say. If a guide promises you a figure, ask whose figure it is and how typical it is.

Affiliate links

Some links in this guide are affiliate links. If you sign up through one, we may earn a commission at no extra cost to you. We only list tools we would recommend without it. The links go through our tools page (see the appendix), so we can fix them in one place when a tool changes its prices or terms.

Refunds

This is a downloadable file. At checkout you agree that refunds are not available once you have downloaded it, and you can read Chapter 1 free before you decide. If the file is broken or you were charged twice, write to us at the address on the page where you bought it and we will fix it or refund you.

Sources and updates

Every number in this guide has a source, listed at the end of its chapter. When a figure is self-reported or comes from a third party, we say so next to it. This is Edition 1.3, October 2026. We update the guide when prices or platform rules change.

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1. The real numbers

Most guides about making money online open with a screenshot of someone's best month. This one opens with the numbers for everyone else, because that is the group you are most likely to be in when you start.

How many people are trying

In a June 2025 survey of 2,616 US adults, Bankrate found that 27% had a side hustle, down from 36% a year earlier. Younger adults do it more: 34% of Gen Z and 31% of millennials. For 35% of side hustlers, at least some of the extra money goes to regular living expenses.[1]

Many readers of a guide like this one already have a job and need the extra money to count. Spend your first dollars on it carefully.

You will also see "$885 a month" quoted as the average side-hustle income. We traced it to a calculator site that cites Bankrate, but we could not find the figure in Bankrate's own release, so we leave it out.[2]

What the best sellers sold

Gumroad shows a running sales count on some product pages. These are among the largest in this category:

Product on Gumroad	Price	Sales shown
YT Automation Blueprint	$19.99	30,067
Wifi Money System	$6.97	26,018
ChatGPT prompt PDF, 16 pages	$10	7,542
AI money guide (12 chapters)	$29.99	1,253

Read these with three things in mind. The count covers the product's whole life and shows no dates. It can include free downloads when the price is "pay what you want". And many of these titles still mention GPT-4, so a large share of the sales probably came during the ChatGPT rush of 2023.[3]

What a new product usually sees

New products are the better comparison for you. In the categories this guide covers, new Gumroad products had between 0 and 8 ratings when we looked. One called "100+ Businesses You Can Start With Claude AI", priced at $14.99, had none. A search for "ai guide" on Gumroad returned 9,891 products, and "make money online" returned 3,809.[4]

Other marketplaces look the same. On Etsy, the best sellers in these categories are resell-rights ebooks at €1 to €3, and one "AI Side Hustle" guide at €15 was running ads from a shop with five

sales in total.[5] For Whop, a third-party tracker estimates that the AI category earned about $102 per product on average in 2025.[6]

You cannot count on any of these platforms to bring buyers to a new product. The sellers with the big numbers above brought their own, mostly from their social media accounts.

How long the first sale takes

Nobody publishes good data on this. What exists is self-reported, usually by people who sell a course about it. One faceless seller wrote that they posted every day for three weeks with no views and no sales, and made a first $27 sale in week four.[7] They sell a $37 guide, so treat the story as marketing. It is still more realistic than most.

What one sale is worth

This guide costs $17. If you sell yours on Gumroad at the same price, Gumroad keeps 10% plus $0.50 and you keep about $14.80. If the buyer finds you through Gumroad's own marketplace (Discover), its cut rises to 30%.[8]

At $14.80 a sale, $100 takes 7 sales and $1,000 takes 68. Seven is a reasonable first target.

Why the honest version is also the safe one

Regulators now act against money-making products that promise too much. In 2024 the US Federal Trade Commission went after "AI-powered" income schemes; in one case it alleged that customers lost at least $25 million.[9] In the UK, the Advertising Standards Authority ruled against money-making course ads in December 2025 and told sellers to show what most customers achieve.[10] Gumroad's own rules ban "get rich quick" schemes and any product that guarantees an outcome.[11]

This guide has no income promise for the same reason. Chapter 2 starts the work: picking a small problem and checking, for free, whether anyone will pay to have it solved.

Sources

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10. ASA/CAP, "Money making courses: stick to the facts", 9 Apr 2026. asa.org.uk/news/money-making-courses-stick-to-the-facts.html
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That was Chapter 1

The full guide has nine more chapters, from picking a small problem and checking demand for free, to making the product with AI, pricing it, writing an honest sales page and finding your first buyers. It also has a checklist, a sales page template and the prompts we used.

It costs $17, on the same page where you got this sample.