ORIGINCERT FOR ETSY SELLERS

The OriginCert Listing Kit, v1

A plug-and-play workflow for Etsy sellers under the October 22, 2026 photo rule. Capture the unedited photo Etsy now requires, build the rest of the gallery, write every listing field inside Etsy's limits, and keep a signed, dated record of your real photo you can share if a listing is ever questioned.

Updated October 31, 2026. OriginCert by Wild Thistle Moon LLC. Not affiliated with or endorsed by Etsy, Inc. General guidance, not legal advice.

Contents

1. What this is, and what it isn't
2. Set your shop up right (if you haven't yet)
3. Slot 1: the unedited photo
4. Slots 2 to 10: the rest of the gallery
5. Video, if you use it
6. Pre-publish checklist (works for every listing)
7. Listing copy templates: title, tags, description, alt text
8. The category pack: Handmade, Vintage, Digital, Print-on-Demand, Craft Supplies, Made-to-Order
9. Getting found: SEO, AEO, GEO and AIO for Etsy listings
10. Pricing and the fees you'll actually pay
11. Reviews: how to earn them, how to answer them
12. Taxes and the 1099-K
13. Register the Slot 1 photo on OriginCert
14. If a listing is questioned
15. Policy references and FAQ
16. About OriginCert
17. Appendix A: Results disclaimer
18. Appendix B: Your license and refund policy

1. What this is, and what it isn't

What this is. A step-by-step kit for getting every Etsy listing ready under the October 22, 2026 photo rule. Sixteen sections plus two appendices of what to shoot, what to edit, what to write, what to fill in and what to keep. Works for handmade, vintage, digital, print-on-demand, craft supply and made-to-order shops; the category pack in Section 8 shows what's different.

What it isn't. Not a tool, not a plugin, not an Etsy product. Not legal advice and not a dispute service. OriginCert registers the real photo so you have a record to share; Etsy decides Etsy cases.

How to use it. Work through Sections 1 to 7 once. Then open Section 8 for your shop type. Section 9 is the universal getting-found checklist to run on every new listing. Section 13 is where OriginCert comes in.

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2. Set your shop up right (if you haven't yet)

If your shop is already live and selling, skim this section and skip to Section 3. If you're setting up now (or your shop has been dormant for a year), these are the fields that matter before you list a single item.

2.1 Shop name

- **8 to 20 characters, letters and numbers only, no spaces.**
- Change it once with no questions asked; change it again and Etsy support has to approve.
- Match it to your domain if you have one. If `yourshop.com` is taken, rework the name. A splintered brand hurts GEO (generative AI engines pick products by consistent brand entity).

2.2 Shop banner, logo and icon

- **Banner:** 1200 × 300 px minimum. Mobile crops to the middle third; put the important content there.
- **Logo (shop icon):** 500 × 500 px, square. This is the thumbnail everywhere: profile avatar, reviews, messages, order confirmations.
- Keep both calm. Loud shop banners read as spam on mobile.

2.3 Shop announcement bar

The one-liner shoppers see at the top of your shop. Use it for one of these, not a mix:

- A seasonal promotion ("Free US shipping on orders over $35 through November 30")
- A processing-time heads-up ("Orders placed after Dec 10 ship in January")

- A shop story one-liner ("Hand-poured candles made in Kountze, Texas")

Update it monthly or you'll forget it says "Mother's Day sale!" in August.

2.4 About section

The About section ranks for your shop in Google and feeds AI engines when a shopper asks "who makes handmade walnut phone stands." Three parts:

- **Shop story**: one short paragraph on who you are and what you make. Name the materials and the city or region.
- **Shop members**: if someone else helps, list them with their role.
- **Production partners**: if you work with any (laser cutter, print partner, dye house), list them. This is where Etsy wants the disclosure.

Keep it in your voice; a stock "I love crafting" paragraph lowers trust and feeds nothing to AI search.

2.5 Shop policies

Required. Set them in Shop Manager → Settings → Policy settings.

- **Processing time**: the date range from order to ship.
- **Shipping**: carriers, origin, international yes/no.
- **Returns, exchanges, cancellations**: clear yes/no on each. "No returns" is a valid choice; "returns at buyer's discretion within 14 days" is another. The buyer sees what you set.
- **Custom orders**: if you take them, say so. If you don't, say that too.
- **Payments**: Etsy Payments handles this; the policy page is informational.

Vague or missing policies are a Purchase Protection liability. If a buyer opens a case and your policy doesn't cover it, Etsy defaults to the buyer's position.

2.6 Shop sections

Shop sections are the categories on the left of your shop page (and the top on mobile). They matter for navigation and for Etsy's internal "related items" surfacing.

- Aim for **5 to 10 shop sections.** Fewer feels empty; more fragments your inventory.
- Name sections for how buyers search, not how you organize ("Phone stands" beats "Walnut collection").
- Put your bestsellers in the first section: it's the one shoppers land on.

2.7 Featured listings

Shop Manager → Listings → Featured. Pick 4 to 8 listings to feature at the top of your shop. Rotate them when:

- A season starts (October: holiday gifts; January: Valentine's; March: Mother's Day; August: back to school)
- A new listing hits its first few sales (feature it to compound momentum)
- A top listing starts to decline (replace with a fresher one)

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3. Slot 1: the unedited photo

Since October 22, 2026, most physical-item listings on Etsy need at least one unedited photo of the actual item against a real background. Etsy says that photo should be first, though it doesn't strictly require the unedited photo to be Slot 1, only that one unedited photo is in the gallery. For every reason that matters (buyer trust, search preview, case handling) make it Slot 1 anyway. The kit calls it **Slot 1** throughout.

Why Slot 1 matters

Slot 1 is the proof that the item you're selling exists and looks the way you say. Buyers see it first. Etsy support, if a listing is flagged, looks at it first. A buyer who opens a "not as described" case points at it first. If Slot 1 isn't a real, unedited photo of the actual item, the listing breaks the rule, even if everything else in the gallery is perfect.

Etsy's definition of "unedited"

This is the point that catches most sellers out. "Unedited" means **untouched**. Etsy's policy prohibits all of the following on the required photo:

- Cropping (even a small trim)
- Straightening (even by one degree)
- Brightness, contrast or exposure adjustments
- Color correction or white balance tweaks
- Background removal, background swap, or "clean background" filters
- Any AI-assisted edit: object removal, generative fill, enhancement
- Stacking, blending or compositing two photos together

Save all of those for Slots 2 through 10 instead.

How to shoot it

Lighting. Window light is enough. Shoot in the brightest part of the day, with the item perpendicular to the window, not directly under it. Avoid harsh overhead ceiling lights; they flatten color and crush shadows. If shadows look muddy, open a white sheet or piece of card opposite the window to bounce light back in.

Background. A real surface the item would sit on in life: a wood table, a shelf, a counter, a wall, a plain floor. No draped fabric backdrops. No AI-generated backdrops. No styled flat lay on a backdrop that doesn't exist in your home. The point of the rule is to show the item in a real place; if the item would never sit on a marble slab in your actual life, don't put it on one for Slot 1.

Clutter you don't want in the shot. Many sellers panic when they realize an untouched photo includes pets, feet, laundry, mail or whatever else is on the counter. The fix is physical, not editorial: clear the surface before you shoot, or move the item to a different real surface. Moving the item to a cleaner corner is allowed; cloning out the clutter afterwards is not.

Device. A phone camera is fine. Modern phones out-shoot most point- and-shoots. Turn **HDR off** so the photo isn't a composite. If your phone has a RAW or ProRAW mode, use it; otherwise shoot the highest- quality JPG your phone offers.

Distance and angle. Fill the frame with the item, with a small margin of background on every side. Shoot straight on or at a natural eye-level angle; avoid extreme top-down or bottom-up shots for Slot 1. If the item is three-dimensional, pick the angle a buyer would naturally hold or see it from.

Focus. Tap the item on the phone screen before you shoot. Check the photo at full size before you save it; a Slot 1 photo that's slightly out of focus still breaks the rule when a buyer complains.

Resolution and file size

Etsy's current guidance (seller handbook, help center):

- At least **2000 pixels on each side**, shortest-side first, so the square shop grid can crop without cutting your product.
- Keep the file under **1 MB** for reliable upload.
- Formats accepted: **JPG, GIF, PNG**.

Save the untouched original

Before you touch the photo in any editor, save the original file somewhere safe:

- A dedicated phone album, or
- A folder on your computer with the listing's SKU in the folder name, or
- A cloud folder (Drive, Dropbox, iCloud) if you want it backed up.

The original is your evidence if the listing is ever questioned. It's also what you register with OriginCert in Section 13.

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4. Slots 2 to 10: the rest of the gallery

Etsy allows up to 10 photos per listing. Slot 1 is the unedited real photo. Slots 2 through 10 are yours to style, edit and arrange, as long as every image still shows the item's true color, condition, scale and material.

A 9-slot plan that works for most physical items

Slot	Shot
2	Detail: close-up of the item's best feature
3	Scale: item next to a hand, a ruler, or a familiar object
4	In use or in context: on a shelf, worn, held, in a room
5	Alternate angle: side, back or three-quarter view
6	Packaging: how the item arrives
7	Variations: colors, sizes, options
8	Styled: a shot that shows the item's "vibe"
9	Lifestyle: the kind of scene a buyer imagines
10	Spare: a second detail, a stronger scale shot, size chart

Not every listing needs all 10. Three strong styled shots beat eight weak ones.

What edits are allowed on Slots 2 to 10

- Lighting, exposure, highlights and shadows
- Color and white balance correction to match the real item
- Crop, straighten and resize
- Clean up dust, lint, backdrop seams and small distractions
- Change or remove the background

- Add text, arrows, size overlays and watermarks (watermarks on Slots 2 to 10 only, never on Slot 1)

What is never allowed, in any slot

- **Misleading color**: a photo that makes the item look a shade it isn't
- **Misleading scale**: a photo that makes the item look much bigger or smaller than it is
- **Misleading condition**: a photo that hides damage, flaws or wear
- **Misleading material**: a photo that reads as wood when the item is resin, or as linen when the item is polyester

If one of these shows up on any slot, the listing breaks the rule, even if Slot 1 is clean.

AI-assisted images on Slots 2 to 10

Etsy allows AI-assisted images as **extra images only**. That means:

- Slot 1 is never an AI image.
- At least one slot is a real photo of the actual item against a real background.
- Any AI image on Slots 2 to 10 must show the item accurately: true color, scale, condition, material.
- Noting AI-assisted edits in the description is good practice. Etsy recommends it; the kit's description template in Section 7 includes a one-line disclosure.

Patterns, recipes and instructions

Etsy no longer allows AI-generated patterns, recipes or instructions listed as the item itself. If you sell a pattern, a recipe or an instruction set:

- Include a real photo of a finished result made from it.
- The finished-result photo counts as Slot 1 if it meets the Slot 1 rules.
- The pattern, recipe or instruction pages themselves can be illustrated, screenshotted or scanned.

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5. Video, if you use it

Etsy allows up to **2 videos** per listing. They're useful; they don't replace Slot 1.

- **Length:** 3 to 15 seconds (Etsy's current help page).
- **Max file size:** 100 MB.
- **Formats:** MP4, MOV, AVI and others listed on the Etsy video help page.
- **Resolution:** minimum 500 px; 1080 px or higher is ideal.

- **Audio:** videos autoplay silently in the listing preview; treat them as silent and don't rely on sound.
- Same editing rules as photos: color, scale, condition and material must be accurate.
- If the video is AI-generated or heavily AI-assisted, note it in the description.
- A video does **not** replace the unedited still. Keep a real, unedited Slot 1 even if you also upload videos.

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6. Pre-publish checklist

Run every new listing through these eight checks before you hit publish. Most shops only need to add or move one photo per listing to pass.

- [ ] **Add one unedited photo of the actual item.** For most physical items, at least one photo must show the real item against a real background. Make your clearest, most realistic photo the first one.
- [ ] **Leave that photo completely alone.** No cropping, straightening, brightness fixes or background swaps on the required photo. Edit your other photos instead.
- [ ] **Make every image accurate.** All images must show the item's true color, condition, scale and material. A styled photo that misleads on any of these breaks the rule.
- [ ] **Edit the other photos within limits.** Lighting, exposure, color balance, cropping and background cleanup are allowed on your other photos, as long as the item stays accurately shown.
- [ ] **Use AI images only as extras.** AI-assisted images may supplement your real photo if they match the item. They can never be the only images of a physical product.
- [ ] **Show a real result for patterns and recipes.** AI-generated patterns, recipes and instructions are no longer allowed. Listings for them must include a real photo of a finished result.
- [ ] **Check your category's exceptions.** Some print-on-demand, digital, customized and made-to-order items follow different photo rules. See Section 8 for the exemption each category gets.
- [ ] **Keep your original files.** Save the untouched originals of your required photos. If a listing is questioned or a buyer opens a case, the original is your best record.

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7. Listing copy templates

Etsy's limits are tight; the templates below fit inside them. Every figure comes from Etsy's own help center (sources in Section 11).

7.1 Title: 140 characters

Etsy's cap: 140 characters, including spaces.

What Etsy's SEO page recommends:

- Keep titles to 15 words or fewer.
- Front-load unique attributes (the specific thing, not your brand).
- Don't repeat the same keyword.

What the search algorithm actually weighs (consensus across credible 2026 analyses):

- The first **~40 characters** carry the most weight for Etsy internal search AND are what shoppers see on mobile and in Google search thumbnails. Treat those 40 characters as the most expensive real estate on your listing.
- Multi-word phrases that mirror the way shoppers type beat single-word keyword repetition.
- Exact-phrase match still beats partial match, but semantic matching has improved since 2023, so synonyms help.

Template

```
[Specific item] [key feature] [material] [size or color] [occasion or context]
```

Three worked examples (first 40 chars shown in bold):

- **Walnut phone stand minimalist desk**, solid wood 6 inch home office gift (72 chars)
- **Watercolor pumpkin patch print 8x10**, autumn farmhouse wall art nursery kids fall decor (85 chars)
- **Lavender beeswax candle hand-poured**, 4oz amber jar natural soy-free gift for her coworker (89 chars)

What to avoid

- ALL CAPS
- Strings of symbols: `!!!` , `★★★` , `✨` , `~~~`
- Trademarked terms you don't own
- Keyword stuffing ("gift gift gift for mom")
- Stylized Etsy-isms that make a title read as spam to Google and AI Overviews

7.2 Tags: 13 tags, 20 characters each

Etsy's caps:

- Up to **13 tags** per listing.
- Up to **20 characters** per tag, including spaces.
- Letters, numbers, spaces. Apostrophes (') and hyphens (-) within words only, not at the start.

Prohibited:

- Keyword stuffing or repeated tags
- Trademarked terms you don't own

A keyword mix that beats 13 synonyms (roughly a third each):

- **Literal**: what the thing is: `walnut phone stand`, `watercolor print`, `beeswax candle`
- **Descriptive**: what it looks or feels like: `minimalist decor`, `autumn farmhouse`, `small amber jar`
- **Context**: where, when or why someone would buy it: `desk gift idea`, `nursery wall art`, `hostess gift`

Use every tag. Don't repeat your title back word for word. Lowercase. No commas inside a tag.

7.3 Description

Etsy's cap: no published character limit. The field is effectively unlimited for the sellers using it; keep it scannable, not comprehensive.

Formatting rules:

- Plain text only. No markdown, no HTML, no tables.
- No clickable external links; Etsy's seller policy restricts linking to external sales channels.
- First line matters most. Many buyers only read it before deciding to scroll.

The 6-part structure that wins on all four discovery surfaces (Etsy internal, Google, AI Overviews, generative engines):

```
Line 1: The specific thing + measurements as plain numbers.
Example: Solid walnut phone stand, 6 inches tall by 3 inches wide,
4 oz. Fits phones up to 7 inches with a case.

Paragraph 2: Materials, how it's made, where it's made.
Example: Hand-cut from a single piece of American walnut, sanded to
1500 grit, finished with food-safe mineral oil. Made in Kountze, Texas.

Paragraph 3: Variations, if any.
Example: Available in walnut (shown) and white oak. Message me for
custom engraving.

Paragraph 4: Shipping and processing.
Example: Ships in 1 to 3 business days from Texas. US orders arrive in
3 to 5 days with USPS Priority. International shipping available at
checkout.

Paragraph 5: Care and honest disclosure.
Example: Wipe clean with a dry cloth. Apply mineral oil every few
months to maintain the finish. Some extra photos in this listing use
AI-assisted editing to show styling and context. The first photo is an
unedited real photo of the item; the item itself is handmade by me.

Paragraph 6: Common questions (3 to 5 Q&A pairs).
Q: How big is this?
A: 6 inches tall by 3 inches wide. Fits most phones with cases.

Q: What is it made of?
A: Solid American walnut, finished with food-safe mineral oil.

Q: How do I clean it?
A: Wipe with a dry cloth. Reapply mineral oil every few months.
```

The Q&A block at the bottom does three things at once: it answers the most common buyer DMs (saving you time), it feeds Google featured snippets, and it gives generative AI engines (ChatGPT, Gemini) clean Q&A pairs to extract when a shopper asks "find me a walnut phone stand that fits a case."

7.4 Alt text: one per image slot

Alt text is for screen readers and search. Describe the image literally. No marketing copy.

Template

```
[Item type] [key material or color] [angle or context], [any other
visible element], [plain background or room if visible].
```

Worked examples

- Slot 1: *Walnut wood phone stand, front view, holding a black smartphone upright, on a white marble kitchen counter beside a small green plant.*
- Slot 4 (in use): *Walnut wood phone stand on a wood desk, holding a smartphone that shows a calendar, next to a notebook and a cup of coffee.*

7.5 Materials, attributes and variations

Materials. List the real materials one by one. Etsy caps the materials field in the editor; follow what the live form allows and don't try to stuff keywords.

Attributes. This is where most sellers lose free ranking. Etsy's attribute fields (primary color, holiday, occasion, size, dimensions, room, recipient) feed Etsy search filters that tags do not. Fill every applicable one. Required attributes vary by category; the editor marks them with an asterisk.

Variations. Etsy allows two built-in variations (size, color, etc.) plus one custom variation. Combination limits:

- 1 variation: up to 70 products
- 2 variations: up to 4,900 products
- 3 variations: up to 2,500 products (with a 400-cap sub-rule when every property field is populated across all three)

You can attach a photo to each variation value. Do this; variation photos lift conversion.

7.6 SKU

Required: no.

Length cap: no hard cap. Short SKUs (4 to 8 characters) are common.

Format: letters, numbers and dashes. Avoid commas, slashes and special symbols. Each SKU should be unique per variation combination.

Suggested SKU pattern (so your records read cleanly):

```
[Category code]-[Item code]-[Variation]
Example: PHONE-WAL6-OAK  (phone stand, walnut, 6 inch, oak variation)
```

The SKU is for your own records. Etsy's own search doesn't rank by SKU. OriginCert records can be organized by SKU so each listing's record is easy to find later.

7.7 Processing time and shipping

- **Processing time** is a date range (for example 1 to 3 business days). Required on every listing. Set it realistically; late orders tank your shop's review average, which is a direct Etsy ranking factor.
- **Processing profiles** are separate from shipping profiles (Etsy split them in 2026). Reuse one processing profile across similar listings and update it in one place when your lead time changes.
- **Free shipping guarantee**: US sellers who offer free shipping on orders $35 and up to US buyers get search preference in Etsy's internal results.
- **International shipping** is optional. If you ship internationally, set accurate rates per country or region. Etsy's Purchase Protection program depends on shipping details being correct.

7.8 Who made / What is it / When was it made

Three required dropdowns on every listing. Fill them honestly; mistakes here are the most common reason listings get pulled.

- **Who made it:**
- *I did*: you handmade it yourself.
- *A member of my shop*: handmade by a shop member listed in the About section.
- *Another company or person*: must disclose a production partner in each applicable listing.
- **What is it:**
- *A finished product*
- *A supply or tool to make things*
- **When was it made:**
- *Made to order*
- A year or year range. **Vintage must be 20+ years old.**

AI disclosure. If AI contributed to the item itself (not just the extra photos), that must be disclosed in the listing description.

Fee details (listing fee, auto-renew, transaction fees, Offsite Ads) live in Section 10, where it's all in one place.

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8. The category pack

Everything above is universal. This section is what's different per shop type.

8.1 Handmade physical items

- **The Oct 22 rule applies in full.** Slot 1 must be an unedited real photo of the actual item.
- **Who made it:** *I did* or *A member of my shop*. Both require you (or your named shop member) to physically make the item.
- **Production partners.** If any part of the item is made by someone outside your shop (a laser-cutting service, a dye house, a seamstress you contract), disclose them as a production partner in every applicable listing.
- **AI photo edits** on Slots 2 to 10 are allowed if accurate.
- **AI item creation** (generative AI contributing to the physical item's design) must be disclosed in the description.

8.2 Vintage

- **"Vintage" means 20 or more years old** by Etsy's Creativity Standards. Younger items are not vintage, no matter the style.
- **Slot 1 unedited rule applies.** A vintage item is still a physical product; the real photo requirement is the same.
- **When was it made:** choose a year or year range. Be honest; "1970s" for an item that's actually 2010s is a case waiting to happen.
- **Materials and condition** matter more than for new goods. Describe wear, patina, repairs. A buyer who sees damage disclosed up front rarely opens a case; a buyer who finds it on arrival often does.

8.3 Digital goods and printables

- **The Oct 22 unedited photo rule does not apply the same way.** Digital products are a listed exemption. You still need listing photos (mockups, previews) and they still must represent the file accurately.
- **No shipping settings** on a pure digital listing.
- **Delivery is automatic** after purchase; the file lives in Etsy's download area.
- **Pattern, recipe and instruction rule:** AI-generated patterns, recipes and instructions are prohibited. If your digital product is a pattern or recipe, you must include a photo of a finished result made from it. The finished-result photo plays the Slot 1 role in search and in a case.
- **Attributes to fill:** file format (PDF, PNG, SVG, EPS), print size, intended use, included files.
- **Pinterest is the dominant traffic channel** for printables. Make 3 to 5 fresh pins per listing with different mockup images and keyword- rich pin titles.

8.4 Print-on-demand (POD)

- **The Oct 22 rule applies with nuance.** POD is on Etsy's exemption list, but Etsy expects accurate representation. If you're drop-shipping a product from a POD partner (Printify, Printful, Prodigi, Gelato, etc.), the "unedited real photo" rule is interpreted by Etsy as: a mockup from your POD partner is allowed as long as it shows the actual product your buyer will receive, in the actual color, size and placement.
- **Partner-provided mockups** are generally acceptable as the primary image when they're the actual production mockup, not an AI render dressed up as a product photo.
- **Avoid stock lifestyle mockups** that place your design on a model or scene you've never seen in production. Etsy's enforcement team flags these on review.
- **Disclosure of production partner.** Every POD listing must disclose the production partner. Use *Another company or person* for Who Made It.
- **AI designs:** allowed if the seller contributes clear creative direction (not pure prompt output). AI-generated designs sold as "my original art" without seller input are a Creativity Standards violation.

8.5 Craft supplies

- **The Oct 22 rule applies.** A supply is still a physical product; show the real supply against a real background.
- **What is it:** *A supply or tool to make things*.
- **Bulk and variants** are the hard part. If you sell beads in packs of 10, 50 and 100, use variations with per-combination inventory. Put measurements (bead size, package weight, unit count) in the first sentence of the description so AI search engines can extract them.
- **Materials** matter more than for finished goods. List every material; buyers filter by material.
- **Who made it:** *I did* if you cut, dye, assemble or finish the supply. *Another company or person* if you resell a supply made elsewhere.

8.6 Made-to-order and customized

- **The Oct 22 rule applies with an exemption option.** Made-to-order and customized items are listed exemptions when the item doesn't exist until the buyer orders it. For these, Etsy allows Slot 1 to be a representative photo of a previously-completed example.
- **When was it made:** *Made to order*.
- **Processing time** must reflect your real build time, not a marketing promise. Late made-to-order items are the single biggest case driver in this category.
- **Variations:** customization options (name, color, size, personalization text) go in variations when possible; use the "Personalization" field for free-text buyer input.

- **Slot 1 photo** should be a real example of the item you'll actually make, not an AI render, not a mockup. If you've made ten of these and have unedited photos of five of them, pick the clearest one.

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9. Getting found: SEO, AEO, GEO and AIO

Four discovery surfaces matter for an Etsy listing in 2026:

- **SEO**: Etsy's own search, Google Search, Pinterest.
- **AEO**: Answer engines: Google featured snippets, "People also ask" boxes.
- **GEO**: Generative AI engines: ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude.
- **AIO**: Google's AI Overviews (the AI summary above organic results).

9.1 How each surface picks a listing

Etsy internal search. Two phases: query matching (tags, title, description, categories, attributes) and ranking (relevance, listing engagement, customer experience). Field weight runs **title > tags > attributes > description.** First ~40 chars of the title are the most expensive real estate. Shop-wide signals (3-month review average, case rate, message response rate) are a direct ranking factor; one bad reviews streak hurts every listing in the shop.

Google Search and Google Shopping. Etsy syndicates listings automatically. Google ranks on title clarity, product schema (which Etsy auto-generates), and page quality. Etsy-isms (ALL CAPS, emoji walls, strings of exclamation marks) tank the external rank even when Etsy internal search tolerates them.

Pinterest. Still a top-of-funnel traffic driver, especially for home, wedding, baby, gift and seasonal categories. Pinterest's search is its own; use Pinterest's own search bar for keyword research, not external tools. Make 3-5 fresh pins per listing (not repins) with different images and keyword-rich pin titles.

Google featured snippets and "People also ask" (AEO). Google promotes existing page-one rankers into snippets when the page has a clean question → short-answer structure. Google removed the expandable FAQ dropdown display in May 2026, but FAQ structure still feeds the system; it just doesn't render as a dropdown anymore. The place this matters inside an Etsy listing is the **Q&A block at the bottom of the description** (Section 7.3, Paragraph 6).

ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude (GEO). These engines surface products differently:

Engine	Shows product cards	Notes
ChatGPT	~87% of shopping prompts	Instant Checkout launched Oct 2025
Google AI Mode	~91%	Universal Commerce Protocol
Perplexity	~1%	Prose answers with citations
Claude	0%	No shopping integration yet

ChatGPT and Gemini are where the bulk of generative-search traffic will come from in 2026. They pick products on noun phrases, measurable specs, and corroborating signals from outside the retailer's page.

Google AI Overviews (AIO). Appear on roughly 14% of shopping queries as of March 2026, up from 2% four months earlier, fast growth. Trigger on comparative queries ("best X under $Y"), attribute queries ("X that holds Y"), and use-case queries. Rarely trigger on pure transactional queries ("buy X"), which still default to shopping ads and organic. Cite products with complete schema, reviews, ratings, and multiple corroborating sources.

9.2 The 7 tactics that win on all four surfaces

Run every new listing through these. Each helps on Etsy, Google, AI Overviews, generative engines, and Pinterest at once.

1. **Front-load the title with the specific noun phrase.** First 40 characters = "Walnut phone stand" or "Watercolor pumpkin print 8x10". Not your brand name. Not styling adjectives. The thing.
2. **Measurements as plain numbers in the description's first sentence.** "6 inches tall by 3 inches wide, 4 oz." Readable by shoppers, extractable by LLMs, parseable by Google.
3. **Material + provenance as its own line.** "Solid walnut, handmade in Texas, finished with food-safe mineral oil." Three facts, each an entity.
4. **One use-case sentence.** "Fits most phones with cases, used at a desk, nightstand or kitchen counter." Matches use-case queries across every surface.
5. **A short Q&A block (3-5 questions) at the end of the description.** Direct answer in 2-4 sentences each. Wins Google snippets, feeds AI Overviews, saves you buyer DMs.
6. **Fill every applicable attribute.** Hidden Etsy ranking layer most sellers ignore. Feeds Google Merchant data. Feeds Gemini's shopping index. Takes 30 seconds per listing.
7. **Build at least one external corroborating signal.** A Pinterest pin, a shop blog post, a Reddit mention, an Instagram carousel. One per listing. Lifts GEO and AIO ranking more than any on-

page change you can make.

9.3 Varies by category

- **Digital / printables:** Pinterest (tactic 7) is dominant. Make pins before tags.
- **Vintage:** Replace "material + provenance" (tactic 3) with "era + decade + condition" ("1970s amber glass, excellent, no chips").
- **Craft supplies:** Measurements and unit count (tactic 2) are the main lever. Use-case (tactic 4) matters less.
- **Print-on-demand:** External corroboration (tactic 7) is the main lever because internal competition is highest.
- **Made-to-order:** Processing time clarity (Section 7.7) acts as a trust signal that lifts conversion more than any ranking tactic.

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10. Pricing and the fees you'll actually pay

Most sellers underprice because they only count the $0.20 listing fee. A sale on Etsy has four or five fees stacked on it. This section is the real math.

10.1 Every fee Etsy charges

Fee	Rate	When it hits
Listing fee	**$0.20 USD** per listing	On creation and every 4-month auto-renewal
Multi-quantity fee	**$0.20 USD** per additional unit sold	At renewal or on sale, per unit sold beyond the first
Transaction fee	**6.5%** of the total order (item + shipping + gift wrap)	On every sale
Payment processing	**3% + $0.25** USD (US sellers; varies by country)	On every sale through Etsy Payments
Offsite Ads fee	**12% or 15%** of the sale	When a sale comes from an Etsy-paid off-platform ad
Regulatory operating fee	**0.25% to 1.1%** (country-dependent)	On every sale in some countries (UK, FR, DE, IT, ES, TR, IN); zero in US

Offsite Ads opt-out: Etsy enrolls shops in Offsite Ads automatically. If your shop made **less than $10,000 in the last 365 days**, you can opt out in Shop Manager → Marketing → Offsite Ads. At or over $10k, you cannot opt out; the 12% fee applies.

10.2 What a $25 sale actually nets you (US seller)

Line	Amount
Sale price	$25.00
Transaction fee (6.5%)	-$1.63
Payment processing (3% + $0.25)	-$1.00
Listing fee (allocated per sale)	-$0.20
Net before Offsite Ads	**$22.17**
Offsite Ads fee if applicable (12%)	-$3.00
Net if the sale came through Offsite Ads	**$19.17**

That's **77% to 89% of the sale price** after Etsy's cut, before you've subtracted materials, packaging, labor, or shipping if the item isn't shipped at the buyer's cost.

10.3 Pricing so you don't lose money

The formula most profitable Etsy sellers use:

```
Materials + Packaging + Labor + Shipping cost (if free shipping)
= Base cost

Base cost × 2 to 2.5 = Wholesale
Wholesale × 2 = Retail
```

The 2× multiplier is what covers Etsy fees, returns, time spent on listings and marketing, and leaves a profit margin. If you skip it, you're working for Etsy, not for yourself.

Free shipping or paid shipping?

- **Free shipping on orders $35+** gets Etsy search preference for US buyers. If your average order is already near $35, bake the shipping into the price and offer "free" shipping. The ranking boost usually outweighs the small conversion loss from higher sticker prices.

- **Paid shipping** is honest for low-ticket items (under $15) where burying $7 shipping in the price inflates the item cost unreasonably.

10.4 Price laddering across a shop

- **Entry item ($10 to $20):** low-friction. Gets first-time buyers in the door. Low margin by percentage, but every buyer becomes a repeat prospect.
- **Core item ($25 to $75):** your bestseller tier. This is where most of your revenue should come from. Highest margin by dollar.
- **Signature item ($100+):** anchors the brand. Even if few sell, the shop reads as premium when there's a $150 item on the first page.

Price every category so there's at least one option at each tier.

10.5 Sales and coupons

- Shop Manager → Marketing → Sales & Coupons.
- Sale price must be **lower than the regular listing price.**
- Avoid running "20% off everything, forever"; Etsy's internal ranking deprioritises listings that are perpetually on sale (they read as low-quality discount inventory).
- A 2-week flash sale timed to a season (Mother's Day, Black Friday, back to school) outperforms a chronic 20% off.

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11. Reviews: how to earn them, how to answer them

Reviews are a direct Etsy ranking factor. The 3-month review average and the case rate (not individual review stars) feed shop-level ranking. One streak of 1-star reviews can drag every listing in the shop out of the first page of search.

11.1 How to earn reviews

Etsy sends an automatic review request a few days after estimated delivery. You don't need to ask again, and over-asking looks desperate. What moves review rate up:

- **Ship on time, every time.** Late shipments are the single biggest negative-review driver.
- **Pack neatly.** The unboxing moment is a direct review signal.
- **Follow up with one short message after delivery** (not a review request, just a note).

One short follow-up message template

```
Hi [first name],

Just a quick note to say your [item] shipped with [carrier] and should
arrive by [date]. If anything's off when it lands, message me first.
I'd rather fix it than have you live with a problem.

Thanks for picking my shop,
[Your name]
```

Note the "message me first" line. This reduces cases by giving buyers a direct path to you before they open a dispute or leave a bad review.

11.2 How to respond to reviews

5-star reviews: reply with a short thank-you. Not every one, maybe one in three, so it reads as human.

4-star reviews: reply with a thank-you and a specific question ("I'd love to make the next one even better. Was there something that would have made this a 5?"). You're not fishing for a star bump; you're mining for a product improvement.

3-star and below: reply once, professionally, with a resolution offer:

```
Hi [first name], thank you for the feedback. I'm sorry [specific
issue]. I'd like to make this right. I'll [specific action: refund
partial, send replacement, cover return]. If you'd like me to update
the listing to be clearer about [the issue], let me know. [Your name]
```

Then stop. Do not go back and forth in public review responses. Everything else happens in a private message.

11.3 When to request a revision

Etsy allows review revisions for 100 days after the review is posted, through the buyer. You can **ask** once; you can't force. Only ask when you've resolved the issue the review was about. Script:

```
Hi [first name], I'm glad we got [the issue] sorted. If you felt the
updated situation was fair, Etsy allows reviews to be revised through
the "Help with Order" page on your original order for up to 100 days.
No pressure either way, and I'm grateful you gave me a chance to fix it.
```

Never offer anything in exchange for a revised review. That's an Etsy policy violation and gets shops suspended.

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12. Taxes and the 1099-K

Short section, with a loud **not legal or tax advice** disclaimer. For anything that affects your actual return, use an accountant.

12.1 1099-K thresholds (US sellers)

Etsy issues a 1099-K for sellers who cross the IRS threshold in a calendar year.

- The 2026 threshold is **$2,500** in gross sales from Etsy Payments.
- The threshold is scheduled to drop further in 2027 (currently **$600**, under current law).
- **State thresholds vary.** Some states (MA, VT, VA, IL, NJ, MD, DC, AR) have had lower thresholds for years; sellers in those states may get a 1099-K for sales well below the federal number.

A 1099-K is an informational form. The IRS gets a copy. Any income Etsy sent you must be reported, with or without a 1099-K.

12.2 What's deductible for an Etsy seller

Common deductions (US; general categories, confirm with your accountant):

- **Etsy fees**: all of them. Listing, transaction, payment processing, Offsite Ads, pattern, shipping label fees.
- **Materials and supplies**: anything consumed to make the items you sold.
- **Packaging**: boxes, mailers, tape, labels, filler, thank-you cards.
- **Shipping costs**: postage, carrier fees, insurance.
- **Home office**: a dedicated portion of your home used regularly and exclusively for the business, by square footage.
- **Equipment**: camera, phone, laptop, workbench, tools, with depreciation rules on items over a threshold.
- **Software**: subscriptions used for the business (design tools, SEO tools, accounting).
- **Mileage**: trips to the post office, trade shows, supply runs.

12.3 Sales tax

Etsy collects and remits sales tax on your behalf in US states where Etsy is a marketplace facilitator (which is now effectively all states with a sales tax). You don't need to collect state sales tax yourself on Etsy sales. Off-Etsy sales (your own website, in-person) are your responsibility.

12.4 Bookkeeping that saves you at tax time

- Download your Etsy CSV monthly, not once a year. Shop Manager → Settings → Options → Download Data.
- Separate business bank account or credit card for every purchase that's a business expense. One account means one import file.
- Keep original receipts for anything over $75 (IRS requires it for deductions above that threshold).

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13. Register the Slot 1 photo on OriginCert

OriginCert is the record step. It registers your Slot 1 original with the date, so a copy found later can be matched back to it. Registration is on the Creator plan ($12/month). The free plan adds a visible mark only and does not register the photo.

Keep two files apart

Stamping makes a new, signed copy of your photo. That copy is not the original, so under Etsy's rule it counts as edited. Slot 1 always gets the untouched original. Never upload the stamped copy to Slot 1.

Three steps

1. **Stamp the Slot 1 original.** Sign in on the Creator plan and upload the original file from Section 3 (not a crop, not an edited version, not a screenshot). OriginCert registers it and returns a stamped copy.
2. **Put the original in Slot 1.** Upload the untouched original to Etsy, not the stamped copy.
3. **Save the record link.** Each registration has a verifier link and a signed certificate you can download. Save the link somewhere searchable with your SKU: a note, a spreadsheet, a shop management tool.

What the record shows

- The date the photo was registered.
- That a copy found later matches your registered original, even after resizing or recompression.

What the record does not show

- Who took the photo (OriginCert records the file, not the camera).
- That the item is handmade, authentic or new (that's your listing description).
- Who wins an Etsy dispute (that's Etsy).

The record is evidence, not a verdict. Etsy still decides Etsy cases.

---

14. If a listing is questioned

Two situations where the record matters: Etsy support flags a listing, or a buyer opens a case.

14.1 If Etsy flags the listing

Etsy's photo-rule enforcement usually asks you to update the listing. Reply to the notice with:

- A short note that the first photo is an unedited real photo of the item.
- The OriginCert record link for that photo.
- If relevant, the registration date (from the record) and a line about where it was taken.

Then update anything they specifically asked for. The record doesn't override Etsy's decision; it gives Etsy a reason to decide in your favor.

14.2 If a buyer opens a case

Etsy's case flow in 2026:

1. The buyer contacts you first through "Help with Order."
2. You have **48 hours** to respond and resolve.
3. If unresolved, the buyer can ask Etsy to step in.
4. Etsy can refund within **180 days** of the transaction.

If the case is about the photo:

- Reply to the buyer first, with the record link and a plain explanation of what the photo shows.
- Offer the usual resolution (replacement, partial refund, return) per your shop policy.
- If the case goes to Etsy, add the record link to the case notes.

Most cases settle at the first reply. The record is often enough to turn an uncertain buyer back into a happy one.

14.3 Purchase Protection

Etsy's Purchase Protection Program covers "not as described" for eligible orders. When Etsy decides against the seller, Etsy pays the buyer and charges the seller item cost + original shipping + return shipping. A clean Slot 1 photo and an OriginCert record don't guarantee Etsy will side with you, but they give you something to point to.

14.4 What the record does not do

- It does not refund the buyer for you.
- It does not stop Etsy from siding with the buyer, if Etsy decides the listing didn't meet the image requirements.
- It is not a certificate of authenticity for the item itself; it's a record of the photo.

Keep your shop policies clear and your descriptions honest. The record is the floor, not the ceiling.

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15. Policy references and FAQ

15.1 Etsy policy pages (current as of October 29, 2026)

- **Listing Image Requirements**: the Oct 22, 2026 photo rule itself, including what counts as unedited, what counts as AI-assisted, and category exceptions. https://www.etsy.com/legal/policy/listing-image-requirements/253962679005
- **Creativity Standards**: covers AI-generated patterns, recipes and instructions, and the shop-wide standards for honest listings. https://www.etsy.com/legal/creativity/
- **Seller Policy**: the master seller policy. https://www.etsy.com/legal/sellers/
- **Prohibited Items Policy.** https://www.etsy.com/legal/prohibited/
- **Cases Policy.** https://www.etsy.com/legal/policy/cases-policy/243306189901
- **Fees & Payments Policy.** https://www.etsy.com/legal/fees/
- **How Etsy Search Works**: Etsy's own explanation of the search algorithm. https://www.etsy.com/seller-handbook/article/how-etsy-search-works/375461474487
- **How to Create a Listing.** https://help.etsy.com/hc/en-us/articles/115015628707
- **SEO for Shop and Listing Pages.** https://help.etsy.com/hc/en-us/articles/115015663987
- **How to Add Listing Videos.** https://help.etsy.com/hc/en-us/articles/360053206073
- **Purchase Protection Program.** https://help.etsy.com/hc/en-us/articles/7471925990807

Check Etsy's policy pages before relying on any detail; Etsy may update their policy between the date in this kit's header and when you read it.

15.2 FAQ

Did Etsy ban AI images?

No. Etsy requires one unedited photo of the actual item and accurate images throughout. AI-assisted images are still allowed as extra images if they represent the item truthfully.

What exactly counts as "unedited"?

A photo of the actual item against a real background that has not been altered with editing software or AI tools: no cropping, no straightening, no brightness changes, no color correction, no background swaps, no AI edits. "Unedited" means "untouched"; if you opened it in any editor and saved it back out, it's not unedited.

Does the unedited photo have to be Slot 1?

Etsy recommends it be the first photo (so buyers see the real item first) but the policy requires that one unedited photo be in the gallery, not strictly that it be Slot 1. For every practical reason (search preview, buyer trust, case handling), make it Slot 1 anyway.

My Slot 1 has clutter in the background. Can I crop it out?

No. Cropping is an edit. The fix is physical: clear the surface, move the item to a different real surface, or reshoot in a cleaner spot. Then save the untouched file as Slot 1.

Do I have to disclose AI photo editing on Etsy?

Etsy recommends noting AI-assisted edits in your listing description as good practice. Disclosure is **required** when AI was used to create the item itself.

My listing is print-on-demand. Does the rule apply to me?

Yes, with nuance. POD is on Etsy's exemption list. Etsy expects accurate representation rather than strict unedited photos. A production mockup from your POD partner that shows the actual product in the actual color is generally acceptable. A stylized AI render posed as a product photo is not. Disclose your production partner on every listing.

I sell AI art. Am I going to be flagged?

Not if the AI content is permitted and disclosed. Etsy allows seller- prompted AI art when the seller plays a clear creative role (not pure one-shot prompt output) and discloses it in the description. AI-generated patterns, recipes and instructions are banned regardless.

What happens if a listing misses the new photo rule?

Etsy says those listings need updating. If a buyer opens a case because an item differs from its listing, the seller may have to refund when the listing did not meet the image requirements.

Does a listing video replace the unedited photo?

Etsy's rule names a photo. Keep a real, unedited still in every listing even if you also add videos.

How often does Etsy update this policy?

Etsy updated the Creativity Standards and image requirements on October 22, 2026. Policy pages change without notice. Check the live Etsy policy pages before relying on any detail in this kit.

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16. About OriginCert

OriginCert by Wild Thistle Moon LLC. The record behind this kit: a signed, dated registration of your real photo, built for Etsy sellers. The untouched original goes in Slot 1; the stamped copy stays off it.

Not affiliated with or endorsed by Etsy, Inc. General guidance, not legal advice. For questions, email contact@wildthistlemoon.com.

Appendix A: Results disclaimer

This kit is general guidance based on Etsy's publicly available policies and seller handbook as of October 29, 2026. It is not a guarantee of any outcome.

Following every tactic in this kit does not guarantee any of the following:

- That your listings will rank in Etsy's search results.
- That your listings will appear in Google, Pinterest, Google AI Overviews, ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, Claude, or any other search or discovery surface.
- That you will make sales, or that your shop will earn any specific level of revenue.
- That any listing, post, pin, video or piece of content will go viral or reach any specific audience.
- That Etsy will not flag, remove, suspend or deactivate a listing or a shop.
- That a buyer will not open a case, request a refund, or leave a negative review.
- That any specific photo, product, or shop meets the Oct 22, 2026 rule, Etsy's Creativity Standards, or any other Etsy policy. Etsy decides what meets its rules.
- That Etsy, Google, Pinterest, ChatGPT, Gemini, Perplexity, or any platform will not change its policies, algorithms, interfaces or features at any time.

Results depend on your products, your market, your pricing, your execution, timing, external platform changes, and factors outside your control or OriginCert's control.

OriginCert, Wild Thistle Moon LLC, and the authors of this kit make no representations or warranties, express or implied, about any outcome, financial or otherwise, from using the kit. You use this kit at your own risk and your own judgment. Nothing in this kit is legal, tax, financial,

accounting, or professional advice. For anything that affects your tax return, legal position, or business structure, consult a qualified professional.

Appendix B: Your license and refund policy

B.1 What you may do with this kit

Permitted:

- Use the kit for your own Etsy shop or shops, including shops you manage for clients as a VA, consultant, or employee.
- Share the download file with a business partner, employee, VA, or team member who works on the same shop.
- Use the templates (titles, tags, descriptions, alt text, Q&A blocks) as a starting point for your own listings. The listings you write from them are yours.
- Reference specific tactics from the kit in your own blog posts, videos, or social content, with attribution to OriginCert and a link to the source page.

Not permitted:

- Redistribute, resell, repackage, or publish the kit, or any substantial portion of it, in any format (PDF, website, course, Notion template, Google Doc, printed book).
- Translate the kit and republish the translation.
- Train an AI model on the kit or its content.
- Resell the templates or workflows as your own product.
- Remove or alter the OriginCert branding, the credit line, or this license section before sharing with your own team.

Rights not expressly granted here are reserved. Wild Thistle Moon LLC retains the copyright to the kit text, structure, and design.

B.2 Refund policy

If the kit is distributed free (via waitlist signup or download link): no payment, no refund.

If the kit is sold through origincert.wildthistlemoon.com or a licensed distributor:

- **14-day refund window.** If the kit doesn't fit your use within 14 days of purchase, email contact@wildthistlemoon.com with your order number and we'll issue a full refund. No questions asked.

- **After 14 days,** no refund by default. Exceptions by email on a case-by-case basis.
- **Digital goods** are not refundable where local law treats them as final-sale on download; the 14-day window applies where it is compatible with your jurisdiction's consumer protection rules.

B.3 Updates

OriginCert may release updated versions of the kit (v1.1, v1.2, v2, etc.) as Etsy's policies change. If you received v1 through the waitlist or purchased it, you receive subsequent minor updates (v1.x) at no cost through 2027-07-31. Major new editions (v2+) may be a separate purchase.

B.4 Privacy

Email addresses collected through the waitlist or the purchase flow are handled per OriginCert's privacy policy at https://origincert.wildthistlemoon.com/privacy. In short:

- Used to send you the kit and major update emails only.
- Not sold, rented, or shared with third parties for marketing.
- Removable at any time by replying "remove" to any OriginCert email.

B.5 Governing law

Any dispute arising from the kit or its use is governed by the laws of the State of Texas, United States of America, without regard to conflict-of-law principles.

Updated October 31, 2026.

OriginCert by Wild Thistle Moon LLC, PO Box 53, Kountze, TX 77625. Not affiliated with or endorsed by Etsy, Inc. General guidance, not legal advice. Updated October 31, 2026.