

# CUSTOMIZING THE GRAPHICAL INTERFACE OF YOUR PRODUCTCART STORE



## Overview

Many e-commerce applications limit your ability to customize the look & feel of your online store, therefore preventing you from blending store pages with the rest of your Web site. ProductCart doesn't.

ProductCart allows you to build an online store that will merge seamlessly with your Web site. In other words, you can use any graphical interface that you would like. If you already have a Web site, it will be a snap for you to make all shopping cart pages blend with the rest of the site. If you don't have a Web site yet, you can be as creative as you'd like. ProductCart does not limit you in any way.

For real examples of how seamlessly ProductCart integrates with any graphical interface, take a look at some of the stores powered by ProductCart. You can find a partial list at the following URL:

<http://www.earlyimpact.com/productcart/stores.asp>

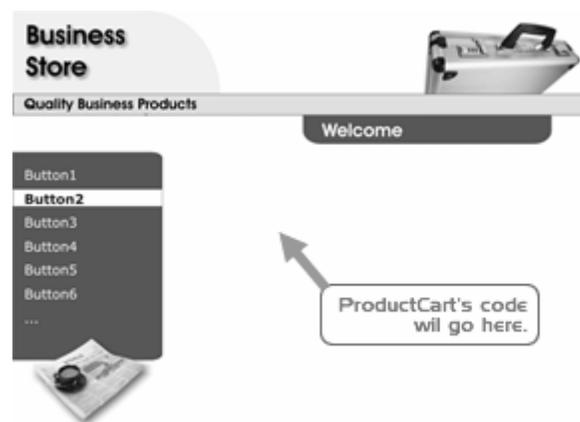
The following paragraphs explain how to integrate your Web site's design with the pages generated dynamically by ProductCart. A basic understanding of HTML is recommended.

## First Step: create a template.

A template is typically a Web page that contains the main graphic and navigation elements that make up a Web site's interface. Creating a template is a very simple thing to do.

- First, launch your favorite HTML editor (e.g. Microsoft® FrontPage, Macromedia® DreamWeaver, Adobe® GoLive, etc.) and open any page that is part of your current Web site (or create a new page).
- Next, remove all the content that is specific to that page only. For example, your "about.html" page will likely contain some text that describes your business. Remove that text, but keep navigation and other graphic elements that are repeated on other pages.
- Save the file with a different name (e.g. template.html) and you've gotten yourself a template.

For example, the blank Web page shown below features a few graphic elements at the top, and a navigation menu on the left side. The page content would typically go in the white area in the center of the window, where we placed the "ProductCart's code will go here" message.



When you create a template, it is a good idea to change all the links and image locations from relative (e.g. images/myimage.gif) to absolute (<http://www.mysite.com/images/myimage.gif>). This ensures that none of the links will be broken, regardless of the directory or subdirectory where the page may be located.

Alternatively, setup the links and image locations considering that this page will ultimately be located in the *pc* subfolder of the *productcart* folder. Therefore, if your template's images are in the *images* subfolder located in the root directory of your Web site, and if the *productcart* folder is also located in the root, the path to those images should be `"../..../images/myimage.gif"`.

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**Note to Macromedia Dreamweaver® Users:** When we say 'template' in this document, we are not referring to a Dreamweaver template (\*.dwt files). However, if you created a Dreamweaver template for your Web site, you can use it here too. Just follow these simple steps:

- (1) Create a new page based on the Dreamweaver template that you created.
- (2) Save the page to the *productcart/pc* folder in your Web site. This way Dreamweaver will automatically recalculate all the links for you.
- (3) Detach the page from the template by selecting "Modify/Templates/Detach from Template". This page will no longer be controlled by your Dreamweaver template. However this is a necessary step to remove the extra code that Dreamweaver adds to the file's source code.
- (4) Save the file and continue with the steps outlined below.

### Second Step: add the ASP code.

Next, add the following code to your template.

Place the following code right after the <html><head> tags at the very top of the page code.

```
<%Response.Buffer=True%>
<%
Set conlayout=Server.CreateObject("ADODB.Connection")
conlayout.Open scDSN
Set RSlayout = conlayout.Execute("Select * From layout Where layout.ID=2")
Set rsIconObj = conlayout.Execute("Select * From icons WHERE id=1")
%>
```

Place the following code right after the </html> tag at the very bottom of the page code.

```
<%
conlayout.Close
Set conlayout=nothing
Set RSlayout = nothing
Set rsIconObj = nothing
%>
```

**Note:** If there are extra lines or other characters, the code may not work. Sometimes pasting from Word directly into your HTML editor can create problems due to unwanted code being added to the original text. To avoid this scenario, a solution is to first paste the code into an empty Notepad file, proof it by comparing it to the above, then copy and paste it into the HTML document.

### Third Step: create "header.asp" and "footer.asp".

Place your mouse cursor at the beginning of the section where the page content should appear. If you are using an HTML editor such as Macromedia® Dreamweaver or Microsoft® FrontPage, you can do this in the design view by positioning the cursor at the center of the table cell that is going to contain the page content.

Now switch to the HTML view to display the code. Copy all the code from that point to the beginning of the page, paste it into a new Notepad file, and save it as "**header.asp**". Go back to the template file and now copy all the code from that point to the end of the document, paste it into a new Notepad file, and save it as "**footer.asp**".

Your copy of ProductCart ships with default *header.asp* and *footer.asp* files. Use these files as a point of reference if the paragraphs above were not clear to you.

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### An Example

Let's look at a basic example of how this process works. The sample page that we are using for this example is an extremely simple HTML page that organizes its content in a table cell. The code for page, our "template page", would look like this:

```
<html>
<head>
  <title>My Template</title>
</head>
<body>
  <table>
    <tr>
      <td>
        This is my template
      </td>
    </tr>
  </table>
</body>
</html>
```

In this basic example, the code for *header.asp* would look like this:

```
<html>
<head>
  <%Response.Buffer=True%>
  <%
    Set conlayout=Server.CreateObject("ADODB.Connection")
    conlayout.Open scDSN
    Set RSlayout = conlayout.Execute("Select * From layout Where layout.ID=2")
    Set rsIconObj = conlayout.Execute("Select * From icons WHERE id=1")
  %>
  <title>My store's graphical interface</title>
</head>
<body>
  <table>
    <tr>
      <td>
```

Note how the code in *header.asp* stops with the opening tag for the table cell that in our template page contained the copy "This is my template". We removed that text because we don't want it to show on the store. The code for *footer.asp* starts with the closing tag for the same table cell:

```
    </td>
  </tr>
</table>
</body>
</html>
<%
conlayout.Close
Set conlayout=nothing
Set RSlayout = nothing
Set rsIconObj = nothing
%>
```

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### **Fourth Step: upload the files.**

Upload both files to the *productcart/pc/* folder on your Web server. You will see that sample files are already located in that folder. Rename the sample files before you upload your files to the server if you would like to keep them as a backup.

**Note:** Do NOT use *header.asp* and *footer.asp* for other ASP pages. They will only work with shopping cart pages. If used with other content, they will generate errors. If you want to use the same files for other purposes (e.g. as the interface for another ASP application or other sections of your Web site), make sure you remove the ASP code added in *Step 3* above.