

Introduction

This user guide is intended to provide a comprehensive set of instructions and information about how to install, customize, configure, and use the Magento open source e-Commerce software package. This guide is written based on my own practical experience with Magento in both live and test environments.

Most of the image/illustrations included in this document are captured from an installation on a local test server using the XAMPP package. You can see how I installed this package at <http://ipicdg.com/EC/>. Based on my own evaluation, the XAMPP package is the best local server test package available for the Windows operating system.

Intended Audience

This guide is written from the viewpoint of a web developer with intermediate programming skills and is intended for anyone who wants to use the Magento software package to setup an e-Commerce web site (or sites).

It is designed with the intention of putting the chapters and information in the order in which a web consultant/designer would use it. In other words, when I created this guide I wanted to ensure that it followed the logical flow of creating a Magento web site.

What This Book Is and Is Not

This book was created with the goal of shortening the learning curve involved in bringing a new Magento store from installation to operation. It is meant to provide basic yet complete information about all of the features Magento includes in the default current release package, how to configure those features, and how to use the features once configured.

This book is NOT meant to be an in-depth discussion of the program's architecture, structure, or how to hack the original code to make it do things not originally designed into the program. While some basic knowledge in this area is included in the book, an in-depth discussion of these subjects requires an entirely separate book.

Prerequisite Knowledge

It is assumed that anyone reading this guide has some basic knowledge of web technologies. The following table summarizes the technologies and programming languages used by the Magento software, along with my estimation of the required level of understanding needed by the user.

Table 1: Prerequisite Knowledge

Technology	Knowledge Level
XHTML	Intermediate – Users should have a working knowledge of the XHTML programming language concepts and syntax. The Magento software produces output for the browser that conforms to the XHTML 1.0 Strict W3C recommendations. Users can find detailed information about this language here: http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/
Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)	Intermediate – Users should should have a working knowledge of CSS. Magento uses CSS to skin the web pages it produces. Knowing how to edit CSS files is necessary for successfully changing the look and feel of the user's site. Users can find detailed information about CSS here: http://www.w3.org/Style/CSS/
eXtensible Markup Language (XML)	Basic – Users should have a fundamental knowledge of XML. Magento uses XML files to define the layout of the pages they produce. Users can find a basic introduction to XML here: http://www.xml.com/pub/a/98/10/guide0.html
JavaScript	Basic – Users need only know what JavaScript is. While Magento uses JS extensively, only the most advanced users may have a requirement to change the included JavaScript files. More information about JavaScript can be found here: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ECMAScript
MySQL (Database)	Basic – Users should have a basic knowledge of database concepts and a basic knowledge of the MySQL database application. Like all e-Commerce software, Magento uses the database for the storage of data related to the user's store configuration and products. More information about MySQL can be found here: http://www.mysql.com/
PHP	Basic – Users should have a fundamental knowledge of the PHP scripting language. PHP is the server side scripting language used by Magento to control all aspects of the e-Commerce site. Only advanced users may need to change the default PHP files included with the software. More information about PHP can be found here: http://www.php.net/
AJAX	Basic – Users should be aware of what AJAX is and how it is applied to web pages.

In addition to the technologies mentioned in the preceding table, it is expected that anyone installing and configuring Magento will be familiar and comfortable with using their own computer and software tools like text editors, Internet browsers, FTP clients, and others necessary for completing the tasks of getting a web site working.

If you don't have the prerequisite knowledge and/or don't want to invest the time necessary

to learn what you need to know to install and configure Magento yourself, then I recommend seeking the services of an experienced Magento consultant.

Methodology

Prior to beginning the writing of this manual I had installed version 1.0 of the Magento software on my local machine using the XAMPP test server package. I then upgraded that to version 1.1.6 and have used this test installation for most of the screen captures and testing all of the installation, design, configuration, and store management information this manual contains. Additionally, I have, in some instances, referenced live installations I have done for some of my clients. As new upgrades to the Magento software has been made available I have upgraded my test installation and updated this manual for new features and changes to features already described.

Version Information

This guide is initially started using Magento version 1.1.6. During the creation of this document I upgraded to version 1.1.7, then to version 1.1.8, and currently at 1.2.0.3.

Most of the screen captures included in this document were taken from a version of Magento installed on my local system on an XAMPP test server, which has been continuously updated as new versions of Magento are released.

The following information will be updated automatically as I continue to edit this manual so that the readers of this manual will know what version they are looking at:

- ◆ Version is an arbitrary number assigned to the document by me reflecting my estimation of the current document level. For example, if the version were 0.5.0 that would indicate that I am about 50% complete toward my goal of the first release covering all the major features included in the current Magento version. In other words, the first zero (0) indicates that the document is a pre-release version. The second number (5) indicates my estimation of how close I am to the next version. The third number indicates where I'm at in the editing process for the level indicated by the second number.
- ◆ Revision is a number reflecting the total number of times the document has been opened for editing and the changes saved.
- ◆ Magento Version reflects the version of Magento used for the most recent changes.
- ◆ Pages/Words/Graphics displays the number of pages, words, and graphics in this revision.

Version	Revision	Magento Version	Pages/Words/Graphics
0.6.6	1	1.2.1.1	4 / 1428 /0

About the Author

James D Ballotti is an experienced technical writer, instructional designer, and trainer with extensive training and experience in adult learning. In addition, James has been building web sites as a hobby since 1996. You can learn more about James at <http://jballotti.ipicdg.com/>.

Disclaimer

This guide is a work of my own invention. While I will often reference resources on the Magento web site, no one from the Magento development team has participated in the creation of this work. Nor is this guide approved or recommended by them.

The Magento team have provided their own user guide, which is available at: http://www.magentocommerce.com/wiki/welcome_to_the_magento_user_s_guide. In addition to the Magento User Guide, Magento also has a design guide available at: http://www.magentocommerce.com/design_guide. Both of these are excellent resources and I recommend everyone become familiar with the information they contain. I further recommend users register with Magento and take advantage of the information contained in the Wiki and the forums.

This guide was created as a guide written from the view point of an actual user as opposed to that of the developers of the program. This version of the guide has been created by me with information gained from the experience of having installed my own test version and also installing two live Magento websites. I have incorporated installation, design, configuration, and site administration information into this one manual, organized in a logical work flow as might be followed by a web designer.

I can not, and will not claim that this manual is better in any way than the online users guide provided on the Magento web site. I've simply taken a different approach to presenting the information users need. The approach I've taken is based on principals of adult learning and information mapping learned over more than a decade's experience as an instructional designer and trainer. My goal was to create a guide that helps users learn the material as quickly as possible while, at the same time, creating a valuable reference manual. Since I am solely dedicated to creating and maintaining this manual, it is my further goal to ensure that the guide is and remains up to date with the latest Magento version.

Every effort has been made to make this book as complete and as accurate as possible, but no warranty or fitness is implied. The information provided is on an “as is” basis. The author and the publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage arising directly or indirectly from the information contained in this book.