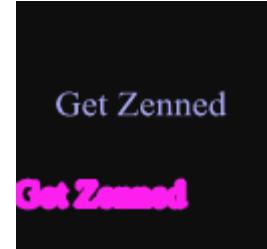


## Zen Cart - Add a Robust Shopping Cart and Commerce Center to Your Web Site

by June Kaminski, RN MSN PhD(c) © 2007

Zen Cart is a robust open source shopping cart that you can easily add to your web site that provides a free complete commerce center to your commercial web site. It has everything you could possibly want in a shopping cart, and doesn't require a technician certificate to install. If your web interface has Fantastico programs available, check to see if Zen Cart is one of them - you may already have the program available through your web hosting company. If not, you can easily download the program from the main site at <http://zencart.com/>.



### IINTRODUCTION TO ZEN CART

This open source program is really quite beautiful, the best I've seen - it's hard to believe that it is free to use, made possible by the wonderful programmers who created this delightful program, dubbed "the art of e-commerce". It comes with a number of very useful features including multiple category potential with subcategory options; XHTML template system, unlimited "extra" pages for customized additions, multiple payment options including PayPal, all major credit cards, money order, check, gift certificates, discount coupons, featured products and so on. It really is a gem of a program!

### TAKING A LOOK FIRST & INSTALLATION

To view the program in action, the main Zen Cart site features a number of [working examples](#). You can also look at how I applied the program on one of my design site, [Hygeia Designs](#). A number of templates are available to give your site shop a customized look that matches your web site. The look is so versatile - I highly recommend that you take the time to browse through their Showcase to get a feel for what is possible before you choose a final template. Or, if you are very creative, you can play with the 'classic' default template and make it your own. If you do come up with an inventive look, consider offering it back to the Zen Cart community as a potential template that others can use.

### MEET THE CREATORS

The Zen Cart team is led by Ian Wilson, Kim Elliott, Linda McGrath and Chris Brown. Together with other support team members, Frank Koehl and Quentin Dixon, these inventive people have mastered an incredibly flexible and jam-packed software that will make your online selling go much more smoothly without having to shell out hundreds of dollars for purchase and set up. The current version of Zen Cart is v1.3.7 which has been continuously improved by the authors. A [Documentation Wiki](#) and incredible [Support Forum](#) to help you to configure and implement your shopping cart is available as well.

## THE ADMINISTRATION AREA

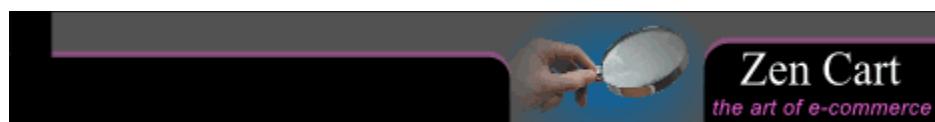
Once you have installed the program files successfully onto your web server, it is quite easy to set up your categories and products. Each product has its own page for setting the price, shipping, taxes, quantity, virtual or material products, images, shipping weight, attributes and options, model number, manufacturer, metatags, and a detailed html or text based description.

Each category of product can have unlimited product listings, with further unlimited subcategories for intricately linked products. There are also special set up capabilities to suit selling music by record artist, genre or companies, as well as media managers and types. There are also areas for reviews, newsletter subscriptions, product notifications, specials and features, a salemaker module, banner circulation, and other areas for selected advertising.

The administration is truly a dream come true - wonderful robust work area with printable sales reports, invoices, and shipping labels that can be used to mail out products. Reports are also available related to products viewed, products purchased, customer orders, low stock, gift certificates sent, and customer referrals. The image below gives you a bird's eye view of the administrative area, looking at the category screen. Click on the image below to see an example of the administration panel.

The screenshot shows the Zen Cart Admin Home interface. At the top, there is a header with the Zen Cart logo, the date and time (Sun, 04 Mar 2007 07:06:55 -0500 GMT [24.06.19.50]), and links for Admin Home, Online Catalog, Support Site, Version, and Logout. Below the header is a navigation menu with links for Configuration, Catalog, Modules, Customers, Locations / Taxes, Localization, Reports, Tools, Gift Certificates / Coupons, and Extras. A status bar at the top indicates several system status items: LESENDR: Status OFF (red), Status OFF (green), Status OFF (yellow), Linked Product (yellow), and Meta Tags Defined: Yes No (orange). On the right side of the interface, there is a sidebar with sections for Text Editor (HTML Area checked), Category/Product Display Order (Categories Set Order, Categories Name checked), and search functions (Search, Go To, Top). The main content area is titled "CATEGORIES / PRODUCTS - TOP". It displays a table with columns: ID, Categories / Products, Model, Price/Special/Sale, Quantity, Status, Sort, and Action. The table lists 12 categories, each with a thumbnail icon and a brief description. The "Action" column contains icons for edit, delete, and other management tasks. The table shows various quantities (e.g., 36 of 36 active, 0 of 0 active) and sort values (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14).

This program really is a great application that will please many web site owners looking for a reliable and professional looking shopping cart for their site . I highly recommend it, and encourage everyone to check it out, and make a [donation](#) if possible, if they choose to use the software. The author deserves both kudos and a reward for such an awesome program..especially since they are offering it free, as open source software.



Zen Cart :: the art of enlightened e-commerce