CMS Selection Comparison Guide

WordPress vs Shopify vs custom-built vs headless CMS. Choose the right content management system for your business with this structured comparison framework.

5	TCO	Fit	Free
CMS OPTIONS COMPARED	TOTAL COST CONSIDERED	MATCH CMS TO YOUR NEEDS	COMPARISON GUIDE

Why CMS Choice Matters

The CMS you choose affects your website cost, performance, security, flexibility, and ongoing maintenance burden. Choosing the wrong CMS creates technical debt and limits your ability to grow. Consider your current and future needs before deciding.

1 CMS Options Overview

CMS	TYPE	BEST FOR	TYPICAL COST (YEAR 1)	
WordPress	Open-source CMS	Blogs, brochure sites, content-heavy sites	£2,000–15,000 build	£500–2,000/yr hosting + maintenance
Shopify	Hosted e-commerce	Online retail, product-based businesses	£3,000–20,000 setup	£2,000–10,000/yr (plans + apps)
Custom (React/Next.js)	Bespoke build	Complex web apps, unique requirements	£15,000–100,000+ build	£3,000–10,000/yr hosting + support
Headless CMS (Contentful/Strapi)	API-first CMS	Multi-channel, high-performance sites	£10,000–50,000 build	£2,000–8,000/yr platform + hosting
Webflow	Visual builder	Design-led sites, marketing teams	£3,000–15,000 build	£500–3,000/yr hosting

2 Detailed Feature Comparison

FEATURE	WORDPRESS	SHOPIFY	CUSTOM BUILD	
Ease of content editing	Good (Gutenberg)	Excellent	Depends on build	Good (visual editors)
Design flexibility	High (themes + custom)	Medium (theme-limited)	Unlimited	Unlimited
E-commerce	Via WooCommerce	Native (excellent)	Custom integration	Custom integration
Performance potential	Medium (plugin-heavy)	Good (hosted)	Excellent	Excellent
SEO capabilities	Excellent (Yoast/RankMath)	Good (built-in)	Full control	Full control
Security	Moderate (needs hardening)	Good (managed by Shopify)	Full control	Depends on architecture
Scalability	Moderate	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent
Plugin / App ecosystem	Massive (60,000+)	Large (8,000+ apps)	None (custom only)	Growing ecosystem
Developer availability	Very high	High	Moderate–high	Moderate
Hosting flexibility	Any host	Shopify only	Any host	Any host

WordPress Security Warning

WordPress powers 40%+ of the web, making it the number one target for attackers. WordPress sites require ongoing security maintenance: plugin updates, security plugins, WAF, regular backups, and monitoring. Unmaintained WordPress sites are routinely compromised.

3 Decision Framework

Match your requirements to the right CMS using this decision guide.

- **Choose WordPress if:** You need a content-rich website with a blog, you want lots of plugin options, you have a moderate budget, and you will maintain it ongoing.
- **Choose Shopify if:** You are primarily selling products online, you want a managed platform, you do not want to worry about hosting or security, and you need built-in payment processing.
- **Choose Custom if:** You have complex, unique requirements that no CMS can handle, you need maximum performance and flexibility, and you have the budget for bespoke development and ongoing support.
- **Choose Headless if:** You need to deliver content across multiple channels (web, app, kiosk), you want decoupled front-end and back-end, and your team is comfortable with modern web development.
- **Choose Webflow if:** Your marketing team wants to make design changes without developers, you want a visually designed site with good performance, and e-commerce is secondary or absent.

4 Scoring Matrix

CRITERIA	WEIGHT	CMS A	CMS B	
Content editing ease		/ 10	/ 10	/ 10
Design flexibility		/ 10	/ 10	/ 10
Performance		/ 10	/ 10	/ 10
Security		/ 10	/ 10	/ 10
Total cost (3 years)		/ 10	/ 10	/ 10
Developer availability		/ 10	/ 10	/ 10
Scalability		/ 10	/ 10	/ 10
WEIGHTED TOTAL		**/ 70**	**/ 70**	**/ 70**

Notes

Need Help Choosing a CMS?

We advise on CMS selection and build websites on the platform that best fits your business needs and budget.

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