

Printly and Print-on-Demand: Design Process, Alternatives, and Business Tips

Printly's Design Process and Nano-Banana Design Compatibility

What is Printly? Printly is a print-on-demand (POD) fulfillment service (similar to Printful or Printify) that integrates with e-commerce platforms like Shopify ¹. Users can create custom products (apparel, accessories, etc.) without holding inventory – when a customer orders, Printly prints and ships the item on demand. In community discussions, sellers note that Printly provides **good print quality** but at a somewhat higher base cost per item ². This means your products should be priced with enough markup to cover Printly's costs and still yield profit.

How the design process works: Using Printly is very much like other POD apps. You will typically follow steps such as: **(1)** choosing a product from Printly's catalog (e.g. a t-shirt, hoodie, bikini, etc.), **(2)** uploading your artwork or design and positioning it on the product mockup, and **(3)** publishing the product to your online store with your chosen price ³. Printly's app will then handle printing and fulfillment when orders come in ¹. Printly likely has an online design interface where you can upload image files (PNG/JPEG) or possibly add text elements. It may also offer some sample graphics or templates, but most sellers create their designs using external tools (e.g. Photoshop, Canva, or AI image generators) and then import them into Printly for printing.

Will your “Nano-Banana” designs work? In principle, yes – if you have created custom images (perhaps using Google's **Nano Banana Pro** AI tool), you can absolutely use them in Printly as long as the image files meet the quality requirements. Printly (like other POD services) will require high-resolution image files for good print results. A common recommendation is to use images around **300 DPI** at the physical print size, which ensures the print won't look blurry or pixelated. The good news is Google's Nano Banana Pro can generate images up to **4K resolution** ⁴ (roughly 3840×2160 pixels), which is typically sufficient for printing on apparel or accessories. For example, a 3840px design can cover a standard T-shirt print area (~12 inches) at ~300 DPI.

When preparing your **Nano-Banana artwork** for Printly, make sure to export the highest resolution version. If the aspect ratio or dimensions need adjusting (say, for an all-over print or a specific product template), you might need to upscale or add background as needed. Also, ensure there are no watermarks or unwanted artifacts. (Nano Banana Pro adds a hidden *SynthID* watermark for AI transparency ⁵, but that doesn't visually affect the image.) In short, as long as your designs are high-res and you have the rights to use them, you can upload them to Printly's design interface and have them printed on products. Printly does **support full-color printing** (DTG or sublimation depending on product), so your vibrant “nano-banana” graphics should print fine.

Design tips: If your design has a transparent background (for printing on colored garments) or needs specific placement, Printly's mockup generator will let you preview how it looks on the product. Take advantage of that to make sure your artwork is positioned correctly. It's wise to order a sample product for

yourself first to verify the print quality and color, especially if you used AI-generated art (colors can sometimes print differently than they appear on screen). Overall, Printly's process is user-friendly: you don't need technical print knowledge – just good design files. One Reddit user mentioned using Printly's built-in *mockups* for their store visuals, which implies Printly can auto-generate product images with your design to use in your shop listing. This helps your site look professional without needing to do your own photo shoots.

Alternatives to Printly for Print-on-Demand

Printly is one option in a **crowded POD market**. It's worth comparing it with some popular alternatives, as each has pros and cons:

- **Printful:** One of the largest POD companies. Printful has a **huge product catalog** (hundreds of products from clothing to home decor), in-house print facilities worldwide, and very robust integrations. It's known for high product quality and branding options (custom labels, pack-ins) but its base prices are on the higher side ⁶. If Printly's product selection feels limited (for example, sellers noted Printful offers more all-over-print shirts than Printly) or if you need advanced features, Printful is a top choice. Printful has no monthly fee; you pay per item fulfilled. Do note that higher base cost means slimmer margins unless you price premium.
- **Printify:** Another major platform, Printify acts as an aggregator connecting you to dozens of print providers. Its strength is **lower base costs and a very wide product range** – Printify often has *more options at lower prices* than Printful ⁷. For instance, Printify might offer 300+ product variants (multiple suppliers for the same t-shirt, etc.) so you can choose the best price or location. This can maximize your profits. However, quality control can vary by provider, and shipping times may differ. In summary, *"Printify wins on price and product range; Printful wins on quality and branding customization"* ⁸. Many sellers actually use Printify for most products and Printful for select items where quality/branding is crucial.
- **Podbase:** A newer POD service that specializes in certain niches (tech accessories like phone cases). Podbase markets itself as a **"Printly alternative"** with lower product base prices, but a smaller product catalog focusing on its niche ⁹. If your store was primarily about phone cases, etc., Podbase could be a cost-saving alternative. However, for apparel like shirts or bikinis, Podbase might not have offerings (or at least not as many).
- **Other POD providers:** *Gelato* is another rising platform – it has a network of printers globally (good for international orders) and competitive prices. *CustomCat* and *Teelaunch* are POD fulfillment companies known for fast U.S. shipping and specialty items (CustomCat, for example, has some all-over print apparel and a decent base cost). There are also marketplace-based POD options like *Redbubble* or *TeeSpring*, but those are more standalone marketplaces (where you upload designs and they handle the storefront too) – since you're considering Shopify/your own site, those may not apply directly.

When evaluating alternatives, consider what's most important for you: **cost vs. quality vs. selection**. For example, if your "nano-banana" brand requires a specific product (say, all-over-print leggings with banana pattern), ensure the POD service offers it. If you plan to scale a brand, branding options (packaging, inner labels) might matter – Printful excels there. If you need the absolute lowest costs to maximize profit, Printify

or others might edge out. You can even use **multiple POD providers** in one store (many entrepreneurs do this via multiple app integrations) – just keep track of each one's products and ensure orders route correctly.

Lastly, be mindful of Printly's noted **high base cost** ². If you find it hard to price your items competitively because Printly charges too much per unit, you may want to switch to a cheaper provider for those items. High base cost was a common complaint about Printly, so alternatives like Printify could improve your profit margins. On the other hand, if Printly is meeting your needs in quality and you're comfortable with their pricing, it could be fine to stick with it. It's all about balancing margin and customer satisfaction.

Shopify vs. Building Your Own Website

You asked about using **Shopify** versus creating a website yourself. This is a crucial decision for your online store. Both approaches can work, but they differ in ease, cost, and flexibility:

Shopify (Hosted E-Commerce Platform): Shopify is often praised for its **speed and simplicity** – it's a fully hosted solution, meaning all the technical heavy-lifting (server hosting, security, software updates) is handled for you. You can literally *"sign up, pick a theme, add products, and go live"* within a weekend ¹⁰. No coding is required; you don't need to worry about things like setting up web servers or patching security issues – Shopify takes care of that out of the box ¹⁰. This makes it ideal for someone who wants to focus on designing and selling products rather than on web development. Shopify also has an enormous ecosystem of apps (for marketing, POD integration like Printly, analytics, etc.) which you can plug into your store with a few clicks. In short, if you want **speed and convenience**, Shopify is an excellent choice ¹¹.

- **Cost:** Shopify is a subscription service. The **Basic Shopify plan is about \$25 per month** (if paid monthly) ¹², which gives you a fully functioning store and includes hosting, SSL security, etc. There are higher tiers (\$65/month and up) with more features for scaling businesses ¹². In addition, Shopify takes a small transaction fee if you use external payment gateways (this can be avoided by using Shopify Payments). You might also spend on premium themes or apps as your needs grow (some are free, some may charge monthly). Overall, many small businesses find the monthly fee worth it for the convenience and support Shopify offers. As one experienced founder summarized: *Shopify "works out of the box" to get you selling fast, but you pay for that simplicity through monthly fees and some limitations* ¹³.

Building Your Own Website (Custom or Open-Source solution): This route usually means using a content management system (CMS) like WordPress (with WooCommerce) or coding a site from scratch, and hosting it on a web server you manage. The upside here is **maximum control**. You can design the site exactly as you envision, add any custom features, and you aren't tied to Shopify's fee structure or rules. In the long run, a well-optimized independent site could save on platform fees – for example, WordPress itself is free, and you'd just pay for web hosting (which might be as low as ~\$10/month for a small site) and domain name. Over time, this can be cheaper than Shopify's subscription, especially if your store grows (Shopify fees scale up for bigger plans). Moreover, some people prefer owning their platform outright for flexibility (no worry about Shopify policy changes, etc.).

However, the **trade-offs** are significant: building and maintaining your own site is *far more technical and time-consuming*. You (or a developer you hire) would need to handle tasks like setting up hosting, installing e-commerce software, configuring security (SSL, anti-hacking measures), and ensuring everything is updated. If something breaks (say a plugin conflict or a server issue), you're the one who has to fix it. In

terms of difficulty, unless you have web development experience, this can be daunting. One comparison noted that *most store owners find Shopify “much less exhausting” to set up than doing everything yourself* ¹⁴ . With a custom site, **coding knowledge is often a must** (or at least comfort with tech setups) ¹⁵ . Even using a user-friendly option like WooCommerce, you will spend more time tweaking and troubleshooting than on Shopify.

In summary: *“If you want speed and convenience, go Shopify. If you want full control and can handle the technical work, a custom site can work.”* ¹¹ Many entrepreneurs start on Shopify to validate their business (since it’s quick to launch and manage), and perhaps later, if they outgrow it, consider a custom build. Shopify also offers great support and a community, which is valuable when you’re new. On the other hand, if you already have web development skills or very specific website needs, building your own site could pay off in the long term. Just keep in mind the **opportunity cost**: time spent building website features is time not spent designing products or marketing. For most cases, I’d recommend starting with Shopify for your print-on-demand store – it will seamlessly integrate with Printly or other POD apps, and you can be confident the checkout, payment security, and uptime are handled from day one ¹⁰ .

(One more middle-ground option: some people start with Shopify and later “graduate” to a custom site once revenue is high enough to justify hiring developers. But until then, Shopify provides an all-in-one reliable storefront.)

Licensing Concerns with College Trademarks (Ole Miss, LSU, Georgia, Alabama)

You specifically mentioned University of Mississippi (Ole Miss), LSU, Georgia, and Alabama – all of which are big universities with famous athletic programs. **It’s critical to understand that these institutions’ names, logos, and even certain phrases/colors are trademarked property.** In plain terms, you **cannot legally sell merchandise that features their names, logos, mascots, or other trademarked elements without proper licensing.** Each of those universities has a trademark licensing office (often managed in partnership with a company like CLC or Fanatics) that oversees who is allowed to produce items with the school’s branding.

For example, Ole Miss explicitly states that *any use of University of Mississippi trademarks (logos, symbols, nicknames like “Ole Miss”, slogans like “Hotty Toddy”, etc.) on products requires obtaining a license through Collegiate Licensing Company (CLC)* ¹⁶ ¹⁷ . If someone ignores this and produces unlicensed merch, the university *warns that such products can be seized and legal action can be taken* ¹⁸ . Likewise, LSU’s policy says that the university *“owns and protects”* its name, logos, colors, and slogans, and **unauthorized use may violate trademark laws and lead to civil or even criminal penalties** ¹⁹ . The University of Georgia and University of Alabama have similar protections – Georgia’s trademarks include not just the name but phrases like “Bulldogs”, “Dawgs”, and the “G” logo, and they license these through an agent (UGA uses a division of Fanatics for licensing) ²⁰ ²¹ . Alabama (UA) uses CLC for licensing and has a program (including a special *crafters license* for small artisans) to allow limited use, but still, you must apply and be approved before using any of their trademarks ²² ²³ .

What does this mean for you? If your business idea was to create, say, bikinis or shirts with the logos or names of Ole Miss, LSU, Georgia, or Alabama (like printing the school name, mascot, or official logos), you would be entering trademarked territory. To do that legally, you’d need to become a **licensed vendor** for

each university's trademarks, which typically involves a formal application, approval process, and royalty fees on each item sold. For big universities, the bar for licensing can be quite high – they often require proof of business capability, insurance, and a minimum royalty guarantee. This process might not be feasible for a small startup just testing products, as it can be costly and time-consuming.

Selling without a license is risky: The universities (often through CLC or their own enforcement) do monitor the market. Unlicensed sellers on Etsy, Shopify, etc. might receive **cease-and-desist letters** or DMCA takedowns if they use trademarks. In worst cases, inventory can be seized or lawsuits filed ¹⁸ . For instance, if you printed “LSU Tigers” with their logo on a shirt without permission, LSU could take action to stop sales and seek damages.

Workarounds? If you still want to tap into the college-fan market without infringing, you have to be very careful. Some sellers create designs *inspired* by a school – for example, using the school colors and a generic football graphic, or a phrase that hints at the school without using protected names. But even here, many phrases associated with the team or campus are trademarked (as seen in Ole Miss's list of protected words like “Rebels”, “The Grove”, etc. ²⁴). Simply using the school's official colors can potentially raise issues if combined with other identifiers (color schemes themselves aren't usually trademarked, but marketing a product as, say, “Georgia Bulldogs Red and Black Bikini” would definitely infringe because of the name). If you go this route, avoid any direct use of names or logos. You might do something like a shirt with a cute banana mascot in a generic football uniform of red and blue – *without* saying Ole Miss – and market it as “Oxford football fan banana tee” (relying on local fans to get the reference). This is a grey area and still somewhat risky if the design is too close to the real mascot or implies affiliation. So, tread carefully.

Best practice: before selling anything related to these universities, consult their trademark licensing offices. Ole Miss, LSU, UGA, and Alabama all have information pages. Ole Miss, for instance, says if you want to become official, **you must apply through CLC and get approval from the university before selling** ¹⁶ . They also provide lists of current licensed vendors ²⁵ – often only established companies make that list. If you plan to make college-themed gear a core part of your business, you might consider pursuing a **“local crafter” license** if available. Some universities (like Alabama and others through CLC) offer a cheaper, lower-tier license for small businesses that want to produce limited quantities (often for things like craft fairs or Etsy). These usually cap the number of items you can sell per year and still require royalties, but are less intensive than full licensing. Check each school: for example, Alabama's site mentions a *Crafters License* for people making handmade products with the marks on a small scale ²⁶ .

In summary, **to avoid legal trouble, do NOT use the names, logos, or obvious trademarks of Ole Miss, LSU, UGA, or Bama on your products without permission.** It's not a trivial matter – colleges actively protect their brand. Your safest bet if you want to cater to that crowd is to create *original designs* that college fans might like (inside jokes, generic football themes, etc.) without actually saying “Ole Miss” or using the mascot/logo. Otherwise, focus on your own branding (like your nano-banana theme) and save the college licensing for later when you have resources to obtain rights.

Expanding Beyond Bikinis: Product Options and Profitability

It's smart to think about diversifying your product line beyond just bikinis. You mentioned **hats, t-shirts, sweaters, hoodies**, etc. Each product type has its own market demand, startup cost, and profit potential.

Below, I'll discuss these items and give an idea of their relative profitability and ease of starting (essentially a ranking):

- 1. Hoodies (Sweatshirts with hoods):** Hoodies are hugely popular, especially in fall and winter, and they tend to have **high profit margins**. The base cost for a quality hoodie on POD (e.g. Gildan or similar) might be around \$20-\$25 ²⁷. Shoppers are accustomed to paying \$45 or more for a cool hoodie, so you can often mark them up significantly. In fact, data shows average profit margins ~30–60% on custom hoodies ²⁷ – higher than most other apparel. Hoodies have a perceived high value (they're thick, cozy, and considered premium casual wear). *"Thanks to their thicker material and higher perceived value, hoodies easily justify higher price points than t-shirts or sweatshirts."* ²⁸ For your business, this means a well-designed hoodie (say, a banana logo on a fleece hoodie) could net maybe \$15-\$25 profit each. The downside is the upfront price for your customer is higher than a tee, so it's a slightly bigger ask for them to purchase. But fans often love hoodies, and they can be year-round sellers (cool summer nights, air-conditioned classrooms, etc.). From a startup standpoint, adding hoodies via POD is as easy as adding any product – no extra cost to you except ordering a sample to check quality. Just ensure your designs work on a larger print area and possibly different color hoodies.
- 2. Sweatshirts (Crewneck sweaters):** By sweatshirts, I assume you mean the jumper without a hood (sometimes called crewneck sweatshirts). These are similar to hoodies in material and use, but a bit less expensive and perceived as slightly less premium than hoodies. Base POD cost for a sweatshirt might be in the \$15-\$20 range ²⁹. They can sell for maybe \$30-\$45 depending on design and brand. Profit margins are reported around 25–55% ²⁹ – not quite as high as hoodies but still solid. Sweaters are popular for collegiate style apparel and winter wear. If your brand designs resonate (e.g. a sweater with a fun banana pun or graphic), you could do well. From a cost perspective, they're a **medium-cost item to produce**, but since you're using POD, you're not paying upfront per item, just the sample and design time. I'd rank sweatshirts just slightly behind hoodies in profitability, but they are a great product to have, especially if you anticipate customers like college students who often love crewneck sweatshirts with cool designs.
- 3. T-Shirts:** The bread-and-butter of merch. **T-shirts have the lowest base cost and the widest market.** A typical POD t-shirt (e.g. a cotton tee) might cost you \$7-\$12 base (depending on brand and print method) ³⁰. This low cost means it's easy to get started – you can price tees at \$20-\$25 and still make a decent margin. The profit margin on custom t-shirts is around 20–50% on average ³⁰. In absolute terms, you might make \$5-\$10 profit per shirt sold, which isn't huge, but because *everyone* wears T-shirts, you can potentially sell higher volume. T-shirts are the easiest product to design for (just a front graphic or slogan) and are not seasonal (year-round demand). For a new brand like yours, tees are often the first product to launch to test which designs customers like. The competition is highest in t-shirts (everyone sells them), so unique designs matter. But since the **startup cost is essentially zero** (POD handles it), there's no harm in listing many t-shirt designs and seeing what sticks. It's a good low-risk item. Just remember that because base cost is low, sometimes quality can vary – choose a decent shirt (many use Bella+Canvas or Gildan Softstyle for a balance of quality and cost).
- 4. Hats (Caps and Beanies):** Hats are a bit different in POD. Most custom hats, like baseball caps or dad hats, are done with **embroidery** rather than direct printing (for quality and durability). POD services like Printful do offer embroidered hats. The base cost for a hat might be around \$12-\$18

depending on style (snapback, twill cap, etc.) with embroidery of a small logo. Customers might pay \$25-\$30 for a nicely embroidered cap of an independent brand. So you're looking at roughly \$10-\$15 profit per hat in a good scenario. That's actually a strong margin percentage-wise, and hats can be great brand builders (people love wearing a cool logo cap). The **design process** for hats is a bit more involved: you need a design that can be embroidered (simpler shapes, solid colors – no gradients or tiny details, usually). Often you provide a vector graphic, and the POD service will charge a one-time **digitization fee** (for example, \$3-\$6) to convert your design for embroidery stitching ³¹. Once that's done, you can embroider on demand. Hats are relatively low-risk to add; just make sure your design (perhaps a "Nano-Banana" icon or initials of your brand) looks good in a small format. Hats don't sell in as high volume as t-shirts generally, but they do complement an apparel line nicely and can yield a solid per-item profit. From a startup cost view: aside from a small digitization fee and ordering a sample hat to check the stitch quality, you're not facing big expenses. So hats rank well in profitability, though the audience might be niche (not everyone wears caps).

5. **Bikinis (Swimwear):** Custom swimwear is a niche product. You mentioned bikinis specifically, so likely you have designs in mind (maybe a banana pattern bikini?). **Pros:** Bikinis can set your brand apart, as not many newcomers start with swimwear. If you hit a trendy design, you could go viral especially in summer season. **Cons:** They are seasonal (mostly sell in spring/summer), and sizing/fit is a bigger concern (people are picky about swim fit). The base cost of print-on-demand bikinis is relatively high. For example, Printful lists all-over-print bikini sets around **\$27-\$35 base cost** ³². That's one of the higher base costs among apparel. If you price a bikini set at, say, \$50, your margin might be only \$15 or so, which is about a 30% margin. That's okay, but not as high as hoodies or even tees in percentage. Some providers might have cheaper options (the search result snippet hinted some POD bikinis could have base ~\$10, perhaps from overseas suppliers ³³), but quality might vary. Additionally, because a bikini is a more specialized item, the market is a bit smaller – you'd likely target a specific demographic (e.g. college-aged women into quirky swimwear). If your nano-banana design is very compelling (imagine a bikini with tiny banana graphics all over – it could be very fun!), it could sell, but probably not in huge volume compared to T-shirts. **Startup considerations:** Just like other POD items, you don't pay upfront per item, but you will want to order a sample bikini. Pay attention to the print coverage (all-over designs might have white streaks at seams if not designed carefully) and the fabric quality. Also, offer clear sizing info on your store to reduce returns (people can be unsure with swim sizes). I would rank bikinis lowest in this list in terms of broad profitability *for a new seller* – not because you can't profit (you can if you price well and they sell), but because the audience and seasonality make them a bit harder to succeed with initially. The **low-cost to start** is still true (no inventory), but the *base cost is high* which means you must charge a premium. You might consider introducing bikinis as a special product drop or if you see demand from your audience, rather than as the very first product to rely on.

Summary of profitability: High-ticket items like hoodies can yield more profit per sale than low-ticket items like tees, but the latter might sell more easily. A Printify study of 2025 trends noted that staple apparel (tees, hoodies) make up nearly 40% of the POD market and remain top sellers ³⁴. Hoodies and sweatshirts give you a higher dollar margin (and % margin) than t-shirts ³⁵ ³⁶, so they rank at the top for profit potential. T-shirts and hats are lower priced but have broad appeal – they're great for volume and low barrier to purchase. Bikinis are a more niche item – you might keep them as a fun option but probably not your primary money-maker unless you discover a strong demand.

Low cost to get started: In terms of what's easiest and cheapest to begin with, T-shirts win because of their low base cost and universal demand. You can start designing tees with essentially \$0 upfront (POD will only charge you when an order comes in, though you might invest a few dollars in samples or design software). Hats have a small setup fee for the embroidery file ³¹, but are otherwise low upfront cost too. Hoodies/sweatshirts have higher base prices, but again you don't pay that until a customer orders, so the "startup cost" is mainly the cost of ordering one sample to ensure quality (which is maybe \$20-\$30). So all of these via POD are low financial risk. The key "cost" is your time designing and marketing them.

Final Advice and Strategy

Given everything above, here are some strategic recommendations:

- **Start with a core product or two** that have wide appeal (like T-shirts, and perhaps hoodies or sweatshirts for a higher-end offering). These will likely carry your brand initially. Use them to test which of your designs or themes resonate with your audience. For example, list a few T-shirt designs featuring your nano-banana concept or related jokes and see what gets traction.
- **Use Printly or an alternative POD to fulfill those products**, but keep an eye on your margins. If you find Printly's costs eating too much profit, don't hesitate to try Printify or others. It's relatively simple to add a new POD app to Shopify and recreate a product in it. Some sellers list the same product via two providers (one as backup) in case one has issues. Since Printly quality is good by accounts ², you might stick with it for now and see. But always do the math: Product base cost + shipping + Shopify fees = your cost. Price your items with a healthy margin above that. Typically, a 30-50% margin is desirable in POD to account for marketing costs, etc. (E.g., if a shirt costs you \$10 to fulfill, you'd price it around \$20-\$25).
- **Address the college market carefully.** If your vision was to create Ole Miss or LSU themed apparel (maybe because you're in Orlando and SEC sports are big), decide if you want to pursue licensing *down the road*. Early on, it might be better to establish your brand with original content (like your banana designs) that don't infringe. Once you have more experience and capital, you could approach the universities for licensing, or collaborate with local campus organizations (some schools allow use of marks for officially recognized student groups, etc., under certain conditions). Always follow the rules on this; it's not worth a legal battle when starting out.
- **Expand product range based on demand.** After launching shirts and hoodies, pay attention to what your customers ask for. If you get comments like "I'd love this design on a cap" or "Do you have tank tops or stickers?", use that as a guide. It's easy to add new products via POD, but each new product means additional effort in creating mockups, product descriptions, and potentially customer service for that item. So choose the expansions that make sense. Hats could be a great add-on if your logo is strong. Stickers or mugs could also be low-cost items that complement your apparel (they weren't explicitly in your list, but often fans who won't buy a \$40 hoodie might buy a \$5 sticker or \$15 mug with the design). These have high margins too (stickers, mugs often 50%+ margin) ³⁷.
- **Ranking recap (profit vs. effort):** To put it succinctly, **Hoodies** likely yield the most profit per unit ³⁹, **t-shirts** are the easiest volume seller ³⁰, **hats** can solidify your brand image with moderate profit, **sweatshirts** are close to hoodies in profit and great for a classic merch vibe ²⁹, and **bikinis**

are a nice niche item but probably a lower priority initially due to seasonality and licensing considerations (if you intended them to be collegiate color bikinis, that's tricky legally). Focus on building a product mix that has both some high-margin items and some popular entry-level items.

- **Marketing and branding:** No matter which products you choose, success will depend on marketing. Leverage social media (TikTok, Instagram) to show off your unique designs (maybe a funny video of a "nano-banana" character, or people modeling your gear). If you're near those universities, perhaps local events or student reps could promote if you eventually go that route (just avoid trademark usage as discussed).
- **Shopify advantages:** Use Shopify's features to your advantage – set up a clean storefront, use a decent theme (there are free ones that are quite good for apparel). Install the POD app of choice (Printly or others) and maybe an app for reviews or social proof once you have customers. Shopify will let you track inventory (though POD apps handle stock automatically as noted ¹), and manage orders easily. They also provide SSL and a secure checkout out of the box ⁴⁰, so customers will trust your site.
- **Test and iterate:** Because everything is print-on-demand, you have flexibility. You can experiment with designs and even product types without big cost sinks. If bikinis don't sell, you can remove them. If a hoodie design is a hit, you can add more variations or colors of it. Keep an eye on your analytics to see what sells and adjust your offerings accordingly.

In conclusion, take it step by step: **great designs + the right product mix + a compliant business setup (licensing aware)** are the recipe. Printly (or any reliable POD) will handle the heavy lifting of production, especially if you integrate it with Shopify for a smooth workflow. This lets you focus on creative and marketing aspects. As you grow, you can always refine your approach – whether that's switching POD suppliers for better margins or officially licensing that killer college-themed design once you're able. Good luck, and have fun with it – the print-on-demand space is a fantastic low-risk way to bring creative ideas (like nano-bananas on merch!) to life ⁴¹.

Sources:

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- Podbase on Printly alternative positioning ⁹
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