

ChatGPT ads for Shopify stores: *what it costs, who it fits, how to start*

A short guide for US store owners. Every OpenAI rule here links to OpenAI's own help center (numbered sources on the last page, checked October 19, 2026). Where OpenAI hasn't published something, we say so.

The short version

- Ads show below ChatGPT's answers, not inside them.¹
- You pay per click or per 1,000 impressions. Never per sale, even on conversion-optimized campaigns.²
- The US minimum is \$25 a day.^{2,3} Thirty days at the minimum is about \$750 in ad spend. That's our arithmetic, not an OpenAI quote.
- A daily budget is not a hard cap. It's an average over seven days, so one day can spend up to twice it.³
- There are no performance benchmarks yet. OpenAI says so itself.⁵ You only find out for your store by testing.

1. How the ads work

Where they show. Below a ChatGPT response. Each ad has your advertiser name, favicon, a headline, short copy, an image and a landing page.¹

Who sees them. Not everyone. OpenAI doesn't show ads to users on Plus, Pro or any Business plan, or to accounts identified as under 18.¹

How an ad gets picked. There's no keyword list to buy. The system looks at the current conversation, your landing page, headline and copy, and the "context hints" you write for each ad group: topics or conversations where your products fit. Hints guide matching but aren't exact-match keywords and don't guarantee placement.¹ A relevance-weighted, second-price auction then chooses among eligible ads,¹ so a more relevant ad doesn't always need the highest bid.

How it's measured. Ads Manager reports impressions, clicks, spend, click-through rate, average CPC, average CPM and conversions.¹ Purchases come in through the OpenAI Pixel, the Conversions API, or both.⁹ On Shopify, OpenAI's ChatGPT Ads app installs the Pixel for you.⁴

2. What it costs

There are two costs: the ad spend you pay OpenAI, and the time (yours or someone's) to run it. This section is about the ad spend.

How you're billed

Objective	You pay
Views	Per 1,000 impressions served (CPM) ²
Clicks	Per valid click (CPC) ²
Conversions	Optimized toward an event like a purchase, but billed per valid click (oCPC) or per 1,000 impressions (oCPM). You don't pay per conversion. ²

You can't switch a campaign's objective later. To change it, you build a new campaign.²

Price per click

OpenAI recommends starting click campaigns with a maximum bid of \$3–\$5 per click.¹ That's a starting bid, not an average price. OpenAI doesn't publish average CPCs or CPMs, so treat any "average cost" you hear as unconfirmed.

Minimum budget

\$25 a day for an account billed in US dollars.^{2,3} In the Shopify app, budgets move in \$25 steps. Ads Manager allows amounts in between, such as \$28.⁴ We couldn't find a published minimum for campaign-total budgets.

A daily budget is not a hard cap

- A daily budget is the average you want to spend per day over a seven-day period. On a single day, OpenAI can bill up to **twice** the daily budget. Over the seven days, spend won't go past seven times it.³
- The budget week runs Sunday to Saturday in your ad account's time zone.²
- So a \$25 daily budget can mean a \$50 day and up to \$175 in a week.
- When you pause a campaign, ads can keep showing for up to 24 hours, and that spend is billable.⁸
- Spend in Ads Manager can lag 7–8 hours. A zero doesn't mean nothing has been spent.¹
- Self-serve, card-billed accounts can't set an account-wide daily spending limit. That option is for accounts on invoice terms.⁸
- If you want a firm ceiling for the whole test, use a campaign-total budget. OpenAI calls it "the stricter control for total spend."² You can change a total budget to a daily one, but not back.⁸

When your card is charged

Billing is postpay. Spend builds up as ads run, and your card is charged each time the account reaches its payment threshold, plus any balance at month end. OpenAI's own example uses a \$25 threshold, and the threshold can rise over time. It decides when you're charged, not how much you can spend. When you add a card, your bank may show an authorization hold for 8 days or longer.⁸

Delivered spend is generally not refundable, and fewer sales than expected doesn't change that on its own.⁸

Do the math before you start

The useful number is your **break-even conversion rate**: the share of clicks that have to buy for the ads to pay for themselves on gross profit.

$$\text{break-even conversion rate} = \text{cost per click} \div (\text{average order value} \times \text{gross margin})$$

Example at a \$4 click (the middle of OpenAI's suggested starting bid, not a real price) and a 50% gross margin:

Average order value	Gross profit per order	Clicks that must buy to break even	Orders needed from \$750
\$40	\$20	20%, 1 in 5	38
\$80	\$40	10%, 1 in 10	19
\$150	\$75	5.3%, 1 in 19	10
\$250	\$125	3.2%, 1 in 31	6

Our arithmetic with assumed inputs. Not a benchmark or a forecast. \$750 at \$4 buys about 187 clicks. Put in your own margin and order value.

3. Who it fits

The hard requirements (OpenAI's rules)

- To use self-serve Ads Manager, the business that advertises and gets billed must be based in an available country. The US is on the list.⁶
- The ChatGPT Ads app for Shopify is available to all Shopify customers in the US.⁴
- Billing has to be set up in Ads Manager before any ad can run.^{7,8}
- Every ad is reviewed before it serves.⁵

Our view of who should test it

This part is our judgment, not OpenAI's.

BETTER FIT

- Products people research or compare before buying: gifts, gear, skincare, home, pet.
- An order value high enough that the break-even rate above looks reachable. Under about \$50, the math gets hard.
- Purchases you can track: Pixel connected, and links that keep their tracking through to checkout.
- You can spend about \$750 to learn, and still be fine if the answer is no.

WORSE FIT

- Low-price impulse buys.
- Catalogs that only ship to some states. Campaigns built from a product feed can only target whole countries.² You'd need non-feed campaigns, which can target states, cities and postal codes where available.²
- Needing a guaranteed result in month one. Nobody can promise one on a platform without benchmarks.⁵
- No time to check the account weekly.

4. How to start

1. **Write down your stop number first.** The cost per order where the test stops making sense, from the math above.

2. **Create the ad account at ads.openai.com.** Get the country, currency and time zone right. They can't be changed after the account is created.⁷ If others will help, one person creates the account and invites them under Settings → Users as Admin, Member or Viewer.⁷
3. **Be careful in signup.** If you build an ad during signup, OpenAI's notice says "Your ads will go live once they pass review." Once approved, with billing set up, they can start spending.⁷ If you're not ready, pause the campaign. On your first campaign you may not see start and end dates until after you publish, so don't publish early just to reach them.²
4. **Set up billing.** Business name, address, invoice email and a card.⁸
5. **Install the ChatGPT Ads app in Shopify.** It syncs your catalog into a product feed and connects the OpenAI Pixel for Shopify, so purchases flow back to Ads Manager.⁴
6. **Check tracking before you spend.** OpenAI adds a click reference called *oppref* to your landing URL. Make sure redirects and apps don't strip it.⁹ UTM tags on your links carry through on ad clicks.¹ Ads Manager and Shopify will often report different totals, and OpenAI says a difference doesn't necessarily mean an error.⁹
7. **Build the campaign.** Pick the objective you'll keep.² To run only in the US, include the United States explicitly. Excluding other countries isn't enough.² OpenAI suggests new advertisers start with a daily budget, and several ad groups to test different angles.²
8. **Run it long enough, then decide.** OpenAI doesn't set a test length. It says to give campaigns enough time to gather meaningful data.² We use 30 days from when ads go live. Check weekly, turn off what clearly loses, and at the end make one call: scale it, tweak it and retest, or walk away.

What OpenAI hasn't published (treat as unconfirmed)

- Average cost per click or per 1,000 impressions.
- Conversion rates or any benchmark for stores. OpenAI says there are none yet.⁵
- How long account verification takes. We plan for several business days, but OpenAI gives no number.
- A minimum for campaign-total budgets.

If you'd rather not run the first test alone: we're picking 2 US Shopify stores for a free 30-day pilot. There's no Nibble Ads fee. You pay only your own ad spend (about \$750 at the minimum) directly to OpenAI, on a daily budget you set. On day 30 you get our call: scale it, tweak it, or walk away. Apply for the free pilot at nibbleads.com/pilot. Applications close Friday, Oct 30, 2026.

Sources

OpenAI Help Center pages, checked October 19, 2026. OpenAI updates these often. If anything here conflicts with them, they win.

1. Ads in ChatGPT: The Basics. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001207-ads-in-chatgpt-the-basics
2. Create Campaigns for ChatGPT Ads. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001210-create-campaigns-for-chatgpt-ads
3. Daily Budgets. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001413-daily-budgets
4. Set up ChatGPT Ads for Shopify. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001523-set-up-chatgpt-ads-for-shopify
5. Frequently asked questions. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001220-frequently-asked-questions
6. Ads Manager Availability. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001245-ads-manager-availability
7. Ads Manager Account Setup. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001213-ads-manager-account-setup
8. Billing & Payment. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001216-billing-payment
9. Conversion Measurement. help.openai.com/en/articles/20001409-conversion-measurement

Nibble Ads is independent and not affiliated with OpenAI. ChatGPT and OpenAI are trademarks of OpenAI. Shopify is a trademark of Shopify Inc. This guide is general information, not a promise of results.