SAMPLE

Making Money with Redbubble

How Independent Artists Turn Print-on-Demand into Income — the Margins, the Tiers, the Fees, and the Shop That Gets Found

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Free sample: Introduction & Chapter 1

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This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction

In 2006, three founders in Melbourne had an idea that sounds almost too simple now: let artists upload artwork, and when somebody buys it printed on a shirt, a sticker, or a print, produce exactly that one item and split the money. No inventory. No upfront cost. No store to build. Twenty years later, Redbubble is one of the most recognized names in print-on-demand, its catalog spans more than seventy products, and hundreds of thousands of sellers have opened shops there — including, this month, a small shop called Whimkin that this book follows from empty profile to first uploaded design.

This book is about the money side of that machine. Not the hype version —

"passive income while you sleep" — and not the doom version — "the fees killed it, don't bother." The version that can be stated as arithmetic: what Redbubble actually pays per sale, what the account tiers actually take, which fees arrived in 2025 and what they change, what a new shop must finish before it can sell anything at all, and what a person starting today should do first, second, and third.

The economics here are unusually transparent for a marketplace, because the whole model collapses into one sentence: retail price equals the base price of making the product plus the artist's chosen margin. Everything else — the default 20% margin, the Standard-tier account fee, the excess- markup fee, the $20 payment threshold, the monthly payout cycle — is a modification of that sentence, and each is examined in its own chapter.

But transparency in the formula does not mean transparency in the outcome. The same formula produces sellers earning five figures a month and sellers earning nothing in the same year, and the difference is not talent alone. It is what gets uploaded, how it is tagged, how many designs exist, and how much of the work the seller treats as a portfolio and how much as a product line. Those levers — the ones you actually control — take up the middle of this book, and the closing chapters treat Redbubble honestly as what it is: one channel in a wider print-on-demand plan, not the plan itself.

A note on method. The platform facts in this book were verified against Redbubble's own published information and seller-facing documentation in October 2026, with third-party reporting used where Redbubble's pages are gated; the onboarding walkthrough in Chapter 5 and the case study in Chapter 8 were captured live from a real account during setup, screen by screen, in the same month. Where a number is reported by sellers or outside analysts rather than published cleanly by the platform, the text says so. Redbubble changes fees and thresholds periodically — it has done so twice in the two years before

this book was written — so treat every figure here as the shape of the machine rather than its permanent calibration, and confirm current numbers inside your own account before making decisions with them.

Chapter 1: The Marketplace That Prints Nothing

Every traditional retail business starts the same way: buy inventory, hope it sells, eat the cost if it does not. Redbubble's founders — Martin Hosking, Peter Styles, and Paul Vanzella, who started the company in Melbourne in 2006 — inverted that sequence. On Redbubble, nothing exists until a customer pays for it. An artist uploads a design once, toggles it onto the products they want, and walks away. When an order arrives, Redbubble's production network prints that single item, ships it, handles the customer, remits the artist's share. The artist never touches a blank shirt, a roll of packing tape, or a refund request.

That single inversion — production on demand, never in advance — is the whole platform thesis, and everything that is good and everything that is frustrating about earning money on Redbubble follows from it. The good: the cost of trying is zero, the cost of listing a hundred designs is the same as listing one, and a design uploaded in an afternoon can keep selling for a decade. The frustrating: because the cost of trying is zero, hundreds of thousands of other sellers have tried too, and the marketplace's attention — its search rankings, its front-page placement, its buyer traffic — is the scarce resource, not the products.

The scale is worth pausing on. The company reported more than 250,000 artists signed up in its first years of operation, and the platform has grown continuously since; by the time this book was written, Redbubble's own marketplace pages advertised art from independent creators printed across more than seventy product types — clothing, stickers, phone cases, wall art, home goods, stationery, accessories. A live count of the product menu inside a seller's portfolio manager in October 2026 listed roughly eighty-five distinct product types, from A-line dresses to tough phone cases to shower curtains. Redbubble the group also owns TeePublic (acquired via its TP Apparel subsidiary in 2014), a sister marketplace with a different pricing model that Chapter 10 compares directly, and its parent company — long listed on the Australian Securities Exchange as Redbubble Limited — was renamed Articore Group in 2024, a fact that matters to sellers mostly because annual-report watchers found the group's profitability in the small print of its fee changes, as Chapter 3 explains.

Stripped to its parts, selling on Redbubble is four activities, and each has a chapter in this book:

Design. You upload original artwork — illustration, typography, photography, patterns — as a large, high-resolution image. You own the work; you grant

Redbubble the right to produce and sell it on the products you enable, and you keep the copyright. Redbubble embeds your declared copyright name and URL in the metadata of large downloaded images, a setting sellers configure once and rarely think about again.

Product selection and formatting. Each design can be toggled onto any of the catalog's product types. Nothing is printed on all of them by default, and nothing should be: a design that works as a die-cut sticker needs different framing than the same art on a duvet cover. Sellers who earn consistently adjust placement, background color, and available sizes per product rather than trusting defaults.

Discovery setup. Title, tags, and description — the metadata that Redbubble's internal search reads and that Google indexes. Redbubble allows up to fifty tags per design. On a marketplace with hundreds of thousands of shops, this is the difference between a design that exists and a design that gets found, and Chapter 7 treats it as the single highest- leverage lever a new seller controls.

Pricing. One number — the artist margin, set per product per design — that Chapter 2 turns into arithmetic.

Everything else — production, fulfillment, returns, payment processing, marketplaces in multiple currencies and countries — is Redbubble's side of the table. That division of labor is why the platform is the default first stop for new print-on-demand sellers: the setup that takes weeks on a self- hosted store takes an afternoon here.

The price of that convenience is the central trade-off every seller must understand before uploading anything: on Redbubble, the customer is Redbubble's, not yours. Sales happen inside Redbubble's storefront. You cannot collect the buyer's email, cannot run your own checkout, cannot change the store's design beyond a cover photo and a bio, and — critically — you do not set the rules. When Redbubble introduced account fees for new sellers in 2025, effective earnings for a large class of artists changed overnight, without negotiation and without opt-out. A marketplace gives you traffic, production, and trust on day one, and in exchange it holds the levers: the fee schedule, the search algorithm, the category rules, the takedown process.

This book's argument is not that the trade is bad. It is that the trade should be priced in. The seller who treats Redbubble as a distribution channel — one shelf in a larger shop that includes, eventually, a store they control — is structurally safer than the seller whose entire business lives inside someone else's marketplace. The final chapters build that wider plan.

Print-on-demand as a category has grown steadily for a decade for reasons that are durable rather than fashionable. Production technology got good enough that a one-off shirt or mug is economically viable at retail price. E-commerce normalized buying customized goods sight unseen. And the supply side — the artists — grew faster than traditional licensing could absorb: the number of people who can produce a sellable design in an afternoon is orders of magnitude larger than the number who can get a licensing deal. Redbubble sits exactly on that seam, and its persistence — twenty years, through fee changes, tier systems, and at least one corporate renaming — is itself evidence that both sides of the marketplace keep finding it worth their while.

The next chapter starts where the money starts: the moment a buyer clicks purchase, and the exact arithmetic of what happens to that payment before any of it reaches the artist.

End of free sample. The full book is available at putrabooks.github.io