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WooCommerce order statuses explained: pending, on hold, processing and completed

Online Stores

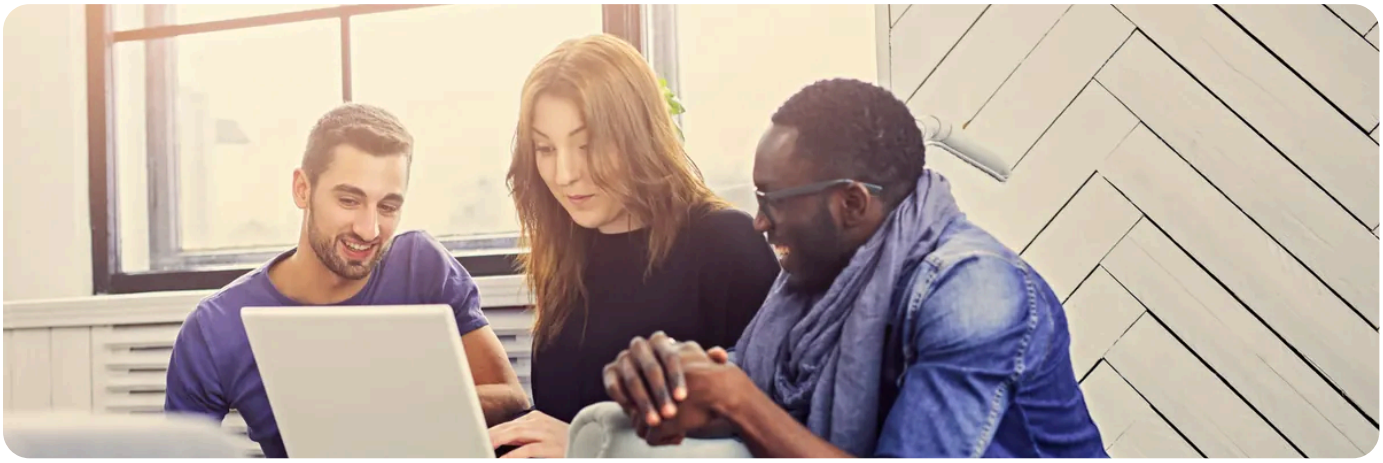
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WooCommerce order statuses explained: pending, on hold, processing and completed

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Every WooCommerce order has a **status**, and it decides whether the customer gets an e-mail, whether stock goes down and whether the money counts. Some people change them by hand “to tidy up” and then wonder about messages going to customers. Here is what each status means, what it triggers and when to change it.

The statuses and what they do

Status	It means	What happens
Pending payment	The order exists but has not been paid yet.	Stock is held for a while. If payment does not arrive, the order can cancel itself.
On hold	Waiting for an action from you, usually confirming payment (a bank transfer, for example).	Stock has already gone down. The customer gets the on-hold notice.
Processing	Paid, to be fulfilled.	Stock goes down, the customer gets the confirmation and you get the new-order e-mail.
Completed	Fulfilled and shipped.	The customer gets the completed e-mail. It is the final status of a normal sale.
Cancelled	Cancelled by you, by the customer or by time.	Stock goes back. By default the cancellation notice goes to you, not to the customer.
Refunded	The money was returned in full.	The customer gets an e-mail. See **refunds**.
Failed	Payment was tried and refused, or failed.	This is the status to look at in **checkout errors**.

Rules that save you surprises

1. **Downloadable digital products** move to completed by themselves once paid. Physical products stay in processing until you mark them completed.

2. **Changing the status sends that status's e-mail.** Marking a pile of old orders “completed” to tidy up sends an e-mail to every customer. Change them one by one, and only when the thing has happened.

3. **Bank transfer:** the order stays “on hold” until you confirm the money; then it moves to “processing”. In your shop, the person who runs it is the one who confirms the money arrived.

4. **Old pending orders:** in WooCommerce, Settings, Products, Inventory, the stock-holding time cancels unpaid orders once it runs out. It is not a fault, it is that setting.

5. **Reports count by status.** See **where to see your sales** to know which statuses go into the sums.

6. **Want more statuses** (say “preparing”, “shipped”)? Plugins add them; they come with a cost in e-mails and upkeep.

An order “on hold” for days is money standing still or a lost customer.
Set one day a week to go through pending and on-hold orders: either it is paid, or you cancel it, or you write to the customer.

Make a test payment
with every method you offer and see which status the order lands in. If a payment method leaves everything “pending” forever, its plugin is not telling the shop: see **connecting a payment method**.

NEED A HAND?

Orders get stuck in a status and you cannot see why? Tell us the number of one (no card details) and the payment method, and we will look at the logs.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

Checkout errors in WooCommerce →

Refunds and the returns policy →

Stock and low-stock alerts →

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