

*Creating Your Own
Online Jewelry Business*

By the designers of Peluche Designs

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Introduction

Starting your own jewelry business online involves a lot more work than just fabulous jewelry. Since I was a recent graduate from school and my husband was applying to medical schools, I did not have a lot of money to start off with for my business. Due to the lack of resources I became very creative with my approach and did a lot of research on creating a good jewelry website (Peluchedesigns.com). The most important thing I have learned while starting this website is appearance is everything.

Everyone has gone to a website that may have wonderful products, but if the pictures are not high in quality or if there are advertisements flashing everywhere we tend to leave. Selling your jewelry online is just like selling it in a retail setting. The feeling within the store can either help or hinder your sales. I have been in numerous jewelry stores in my lifetime, and my two favorite stores have very different feels, but are both simple and great at catching attention. The first store is inviting because it is very bright with simple white walls and blonde-stained wood floors. The displays are simple and placed in rows around the room. The moment you walk into the store your eyes will widen because of the brilliance of the lighting and reflections off of the metals and stones. The second store has a very different feel, but it is also based on the same simplistic ideas. The second store is based in black and reds with indirect lighting. You are intrigued to enter the store because it is intimate and elegant. All of the jewelry is displayed with black velvet, and the indirect lighting makes every stone seem absolutely flawless.

What I had learned from these two stores is that feeling is everything. Almost every time I walk past them I have to look in to see if anything is new, and most of that is



probably because of the atmosphere.

This was my goal with my own jewelry website. I new I wanted an elegant and classy appearance with a shock-and-awe factor. When the site was completed I wanted people to really question if I had actually done it on my own or if I had actually paid someone to do it for me. I succeeded

with my goal, and I found there were only two things that made the “wow” effect happen. One is having a fantastic template, and the other is having beautiful photography for great displays of my jewelry.

Choosing Your Template

When choosing a template for your website, do not be afraid to be very picky. You must realize that before anyone even looks at your jewelry your product is already being judged. The template is what gives your whole line of jewelry designs its theme and appeal. If the site is too “cutsie” buyers may see your jewelry as cheap or meant for the younger generation. You are also looking for something unique that will set you apart from all the other thousands of jewelry sites out there. Find something that is bold and catches your eye.

Consider what you go through when designing a room. Everything must coordinate, there needs to be a flow, and having a theme is a necessity. If there is anything that is out of place the eye will go straight to that object and the rest of the

room, no matter how beautiful, will be considered “thrown together.” Your template is the layout for your store. You want there to be a theme, and the theme can be very simple: elegant, whimsical, fun, sophisticated, etc. Just remember, the theme you choose should represent the jewelry that you have created. It will not be any good to have a whimsical website when you are trying to sell sophisticated jewelry – your buyers will “walk” right out.

You also want to consider the logistics of the template. Is it easy to move around it? Are people able to get to the most important aspects quickly without searching through a huge list or menu? Do you feel crowded with looking at it? All of these issues can be enough to turn someone away before he or she has even started shopping.

So, even though these ideas are simple and almost common sense, they are crucial to your business. Make it simple, but make a statement at the same time.

Selecting Your Template

Before you select your template, you should ask yourself how you want to set it up. Do you want to add a Paypal button for each individual item (which can be time consuming) and delete it off your website, or do you want to have your website be a little more sophisticated and have a shopping cart? Either way works, but you need to decide this before you start. I decided on Peluche Designs to use a shopping cart and a system which automatically keeps track of your inventory and your orders. It is simple to use and was relatively easy to setup. However, be cautious that the more complicated you make your website, the more headaches that are going to occur. Peluche Designs uses a shopping cart and then is connected to Paypal to pay for the jewelry. I did not write all

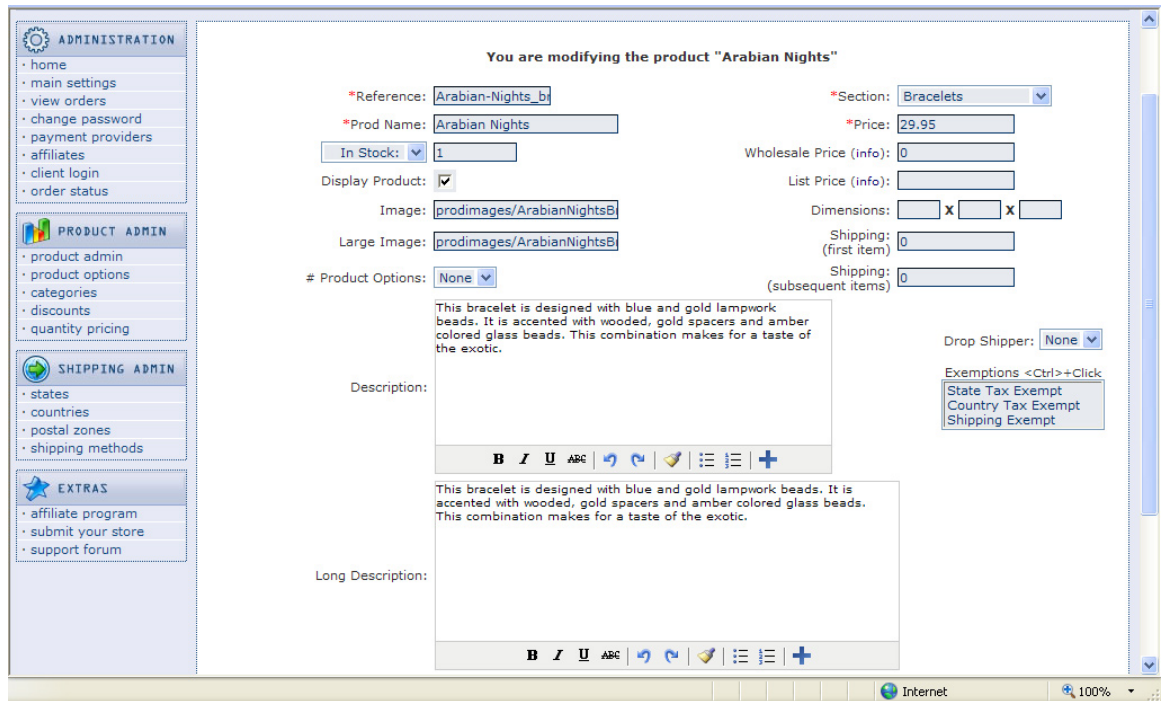
the complicated code to do this – I bought a template for about \$115 which has this all built into their template. I uploaded my template to my server and then integrated the template with my designs (from another template) and viola! I use Frontpage to edit my website because I think it is easy to use and understand. However, with the template that I purchased, I can edit my inventory and the prices from anywhere without using FrontPage. I just login using my login and password and I have access to the entire inventory. It looks something like this:

The screenshot shows a web-based control panel for an e-commerce site. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'help', 'support forum', 'search forum', 'updaters', and 'log-out'. Below this is a 'control panel' header with a shopping cart icon. On the left, there are four main menu sections: 'ADMINISTRATION', 'PRODUCT ADMIN', 'SHIPPING ADMIN', and 'EXTRAS'. The main content area features a search bar with 'Search For:' and 'Search Type:' (set to 'All words'), a 'Price:' field, and an 'In Category:' dropdown (set to 'All Categories'). Below the search bar are buttons for 'List Products', 'Out of Stock', 'New Product', and 'Stock Inventory' (with a dropdown arrow) and a 'Go' button. The central part of the page is a table listing products with columns for 'Product ID', 'Product Name', 'Discounts', 'Modify', 'Related', and 'Delete'. Each row contains a product name and its quantity in parentheses, followed by 'Assign', 'Modify', 'Related', and 'Delete' buttons. Some product names are highlighted in red, such as 'Black Ice (0)', 'Caribbean Waters (0)', and 'Chic (0)'. The 'Modify' button for 'Arabian Nights (1)' is highlighted with a red border.

Product ID	Product Name	Discounts	Modify	Related	Delete
Arabian-Nights_bracelet	Arabian Nights (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Aztec-Amber_bracelet	Aztec Amber (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Baby-Love_charm	Baby Love (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Bali_bracelet	Bali (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Basic-Black_charm	Basic Black (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Be-Mine_charm	Be Mine (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Beach_charm	Beach (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Belize_charm	Belize (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Black-Ice_bracelet	Black Ice (0)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
81_blue/green/pearls_AT	Blue and Green Pearls - 81 (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Blue-Ice_charm	Blue Ice (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
87_blue/iced/glass_AT	Blue Iced Glass - 87 (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Bronco-Blue_charm	Bronco Blue (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Candy-Cane_bracelet	Candy Cane (2)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Caribbean-Waters_bracelet	Caribbean Waters (0)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Caribbean-Waters_earrings	Caribbean Waters (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Caspian_bracelet	Caspian_bracelet (2)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Chic_bracelet	Chic (0)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete
Chic_earrings	Chic Earrings (1)	Assign	Modify	Related	Delete

Here is a list of my inventory. If I wanted to modify something, I just would click modify.

I could also add a new product by clicking on “New Product” I would get a page that looks like this:



Once I finish, it appears automatically on my webpage. This technology makes shipping and editing large amounts of inventory very easy. Here is what I did to make this happen.

I purchased the [Frontpage Generic Ecommerce Plus for \\$115 from e-commerce templates](#). However, there are different versions depending on the type of webpage editor you are using:

[Frontpage E-commerce templates](#)

[Dream weaver E-Commerce Templates](#)

[GoLive E-Commerce Templates](#)

You can buy the more expensive E-commerce template that has a design already laid out for you. I wanted to use the template for the shopping cart and inventory management

You might be thinking to yourself, “What is she talking about?” This sounds way too complicated. Okay, if you would like to ignore everything that I said above, that’s OK. You can just get a neat design from a template and use Paypal “Buy Now” buttons. I used [Template Monster](#). You can select what type of template you are looking for and go that way. Either way – you can customize your own webpage and make it look great. The best thing about using templates is that you do not need to pay a monthly fee. The only fee you have to pay is to host your webpage.

Photography



Okay, so now that you have the customer “in the door,” you need to really sell your product. The photography of your jewelry is going to really make an impact on how buyers view the jewelry’s quality. If the images are fuzzy, boring, or do not represent the true colors you will not be making many sales. I have read suggestions for cheap and easy ways to take pictures of jewelry that do not do the design justice, and I have also read about people paying a fortune for a professional photographer. I am going to tell you

not take short-cuts, but also, do not bother with the expense of a professional. I am not a photographer by any means. I have never even taken a photography class in my life, but I still taught myself tabletop photography. The amazing thing is that I am always asked, “Who took you jewelry pictures for your website?” I am going to give you the basics to learn the skills you need to at home without spending a fortune.

Supplies

Camera

The first place to start is your camera. The camera is the most important and,



unfortunately, the most expensive part of the table-top photography set-up. I would highly recommend purchasing a digital camera that is at least 5.0 megapixels. You need your images to be easily cropped, touched up, and

uploaded onto your website. The ease of this is all solved with a good digital camera.

Also having at least a 5.0 mega-pixel camera will make your images more clear and you

will spend less time touching up each

photo. The camera that I have used with

all of my website images is a Canon

Powershot A95 (can be purchased [here](#)

[at Amazon.com](#)). I have loved this

camera, but most any quality name

brand should suffice. There is a new



model that is very similar and even is a little bit less expensive called the Canon Powershot A540 that can be found [here at Amazon](#). Be sure to purchase an extra memory card when you purchase your camera. Most cameras come with only a 32 MB memory card, which can only hold about 40 pictures. You will find this is not nearly enough memory for you business, so I would highly recommend purchasing a second memory card for more storage. The amount of memory you wish to have is up to you, but you need to consider the mega-pixels on your camera because that significantly affects how many pictures can be stored on the memory card. The more mega-



pixels on your camera, the more storage is used, and the fewer pictures you can save on the card. I would recommend finding a memory card with at least 256 MB worth of memory (that equals out to about 72 images that can be stored on a 5.0 mega-pixel



camera.). I have a 512 MB CompactFlash card that can hold up to 144 images on my Canon, but there are memory cards that can store up to 1GB now (288 pictures). Any of these memory cards can be easily found [here at Ebay.com](#) or [here at Amazon.com](#). As

you are searching for memory, you need to know that there are different types of memory cards on the market today. You will come across both CompactFlash and Secure Digital.

The CompactFlash cards are for older model cameras, and the newer cameras use the smaller Secure Digital cards. Simply look at your owner's manual to see what type of card your camera requires.

Tripod

Next to purchasing your sacred camera, you need to find a tripod. I thought I could get by without a tripod when I first started practicing, but I learned quickly every breath or muscle movement was picked up. I do not think any particular name brand is necessary for a tripod as long as it is stable and easy to maneuver, however, if you want to know, I purchased a Digital Concepts tripod off of either [here at Amazon.com](#). I believe it was close to \$30, and I purchased my tripod through one of these websites and it has been wonderful. It moves in any direction I could ask for, and it is very secure.



Light Tent

Many people think that with the camera and the tripod they are ready to go, but not quite. You now need to make a homemade studio. Getting the right effect for lighting is crucial for making your jewelry look its best. This requires a filter to soften and universally disperse the light across the entire product, and this is best done with a light tent (also known as a light box). There are websites that show you how to create your own light tent out of PVC pipes and cloth, but I do not think they are very stable. Also, finding the right fabric to act as the perfect filter would be difficult. I chose



to spend the extra \$10-\$20 and purchased my own 40X40X40” light tent (once again off of here at Ebay.com) for under \$35. The tent came with three different colored, removable backgrounds, but none of them were black. So, I headed to my local fabric store, and I found some crushed, black velvet material on clearance for \$0.85 a yard. I simply pinned the fabric up in the back of the light tent for and I had the perfect backing material for my jewelry photos.

Lamps and Bulbs

So, now that you have your light tent, you probably want some light. There are rather expensive photography lamps that you can purchase, but if you are living on a budget like me that was not an option. I new that I was only going to be dealing with



photography on a table, so I found some table lamps at Wal-mart for \$6.99 a piece. Make sure when you are looking for lamps that they can fit any sized bulb. I had a lamp that I thought I could use, but the casing only allowed for a standard size light bulb and you will be buying light bulbs that require a lamp that will fit any shape or size. So, once you found your rather

cheap lamp, head to the light bulb section for the perfect light bulbs. You need to purchase bulbs that are daylight, fluorescent bulbs. Daylight, fluorescent bulbs have a much whiter light than the typical, household incandescent lights we



are used to. These light bulbs will prevent unwanted shadows, show true colors, and make everything sparkle or shine the way that you want. The higher the Watts the better and these light bulbs can be purchased at any local hardware store a department store.

Acrylic Platform

Okay, your final touch. This last item is the real key to your professional looking images. This item is a black or white, reflective, acrylic platform to place your jewelry on. The platform creates a beautiful reflection that helps your jewelry to be seen from



more angles as well catches the lighting perfectly. I was amazed at how much better my pictures looked with this simple piece added to the whole studio.

The black platform I purchased was too small, and I probably should have purchased the 9x9x3” platform. I have often had to reposition my smaller platform before taking each picture of my jewelry to avoid edges of the light tent getting in the way. With the 9x9x3” platform almost the entire floor of the light tent is covered so you do not have to always be resituating it. (These acrylic platforms [can be purchased here](#)).

Accessories

There are jewelry stands and displays that are available to help you arrange your jewelry in an even more professional manner. I will use earring stands on dangling earrings that lose their shape



when they are lying down. I will also use a necklace stand for a more majestic effect without taking away from the jewelry design. Jewelry stands can help the buyer see your product in the shape that will take form when she is wearing the piece, which can make your design more personal and more desirable. (Once again, these stands can be purchased on [here at Ebay.com](#) (search for Jewelry displays) or [here at Amazon.com.](#))

Set-up

Once you have all of your supplies for your studio, you now have the chance to set

everything up. You will need a simple table for everything, and I chose a table in my basement where I could leave it up all the time without having everything in the way. I started with putting the light tent on the table, and I made sure the table I used was wide enough to support anything that I would put in the tent. If the tent is wider than the table it will be unstable, and your whole studio could fall over at any



time. With the light tent set up, choose the background you are wanting. Since I had the



black platform I chose to use crushed, black velvet to prevent the white sides of the tent showing up in the picture. There were Velcro tabs on the back of the tent in the top seam. I simply safety pinned the fabric to those tabs to create a flowing background.

If you prefer your jewelry against the white platform, than you do not have to worry

about any added background for the tent. The sides of the tent will be enough. Once the background is set the way you like it, simply place the acrylic background in the base of the tent light. Be sure to have a simple artists' fan brush near by to sweep off any accumulating dust. You will be surprised how every speck will appear on your images, even if you are unable to see them with the naked eye. So, always have that fan brush around and sweep the platform off before every picture taken.

After the tent is set up, add in your lamps. Once again, make sure the table will have enough room for the lamps on either side. I place my lamps with their necks pointed towards the center of each side of the light tent. I liked having the option of the bendable necks on the lamps, because



with some jewelry items I need more direct lighting where I could simple point the lamp in the direction I need it. With starting off, though, I will point the lamps at the center of each side of the tent for a diffuse dispersion of the light. (Note: The lamps do produce quite a bit of heat, and you may need a fan or some form of circulating air if you will be working in your studio for a long period of time.)

You are now able to set up your brand new camera and tripod. Every tripod has a different way to attach to the camera as well as to set up for the picture. Most are so easy to figure out all you will need is intuition. The keys to the tripod are to make sure it is on a stable surface, it is level, and that everything is locked when you begin. My tripod has a base for the camera. The base will have a metal screw coming up a little off center that can screw into most any camera. Simply place the screw in the tripod socket of your

camera (see your owner's manual) and gently twist the base of the tripod around the camera until the camera cannot fall off. You will find it will continue twist without feeling secure, but this is a safety measure to make sure you do not screw the camera on the base too tight. Once the camera is on the base of the tripod, secure the base back on the tripod and make sure it is locked into position.

With the camera on the tripod, set the neck of the tripod to a level that will place the camera a little above the acrylic platform so you will be looking down on your jewelry. This set-up will allow for the camera to capture both your masterpiece and the reflection in the platform below it. You will find the lighting will be reflected back into the camera better as well.

The last item for your studio is a secure chair that sets you at the perfect angle to the viewing window on your camera. You want to be careful with your neck and back because you will have to put some time into your photography. It is not worth the risk of holding your neck in an awkward position or holding your torso at an angle and putting stress on your lower back. Perhaps the one thing to watch most closely while you are taking your pictures is your shoulder. You may find yourself holding your arm at an unusual position for holding the shutter button down, and over a long period of time this can wear on your rotator cuff. If you find your arm hurting, be sure to take breaks and stretch your arm out often. If the pain continues, there is another option. Some cameras offer a remote control to take the pictures. This can actually be a great accessory because you will be surprised how much you move the camera while taking the picture even while on the tripod. The remote completely removes any chance for motion that you cause while the shutter is open. So, you will not only be preventing damage to your

shoulder, but you will also be taking better and more accurate pictures. (For the Canon Powershot A95 the remote is the Canon WL-DC100 wireless remote controller. You can find this remote on [here at Amazon.com.](#))

Camera Techniques



Now that your studio is finally set up, you get to learn how to use your camera. To be honest, I had used my camera for a couple of years before the jewelry business, and I had only used it to point and shoot. When I started learning about table top photography I

realized there were so many features on my camera that could have used long before. The great thing with a digital camera is anyone can learn basic techniques that make them a better photographer, and a lot of these techniques can be learned with just reading the user's manual. I focused on the still photography sections as well as proper lighting in my instructions manual, and within a few hours my pictures were significantly better.

In order to go into the detail of the camera techniques I used, I needed to focus on the modes and setting of my Canon Powershot A95. A lot of this information is specific to Canon digital cameras, however, there is a lot of material that is applicable to other



brand names as well. Hopefully everyone is able to still get a technique or strategy out of this section that is able to help them.

Modes



Every digital camera comes with its own modes that give you the option of changing the shutter speed and aperture automatically or manually. On the Canon Powershot A95, there are four modes that allow you to have more control of your camera. These modes are represented on a wheel at the top of the camera and are labeled by letters (P, M, Av, and Tv).

P Mode: P mode puts the camera in charge of choosing both the aperture value and the shutter speed. So, normally you will not have to worry about changing these options, but if the picture will be under or overexposed (too little or too much light), the camera will list the aperture value and the shutter speed in red. You will have to “play” with a couple of options to help get the correct exposure. One way to alter the exposure is by turning the flash on or off. (See page 77 of the owner’s manual for other options to adjust the exposure in the P mode).

The P mode may seem a lot like the Automatic setting, and they are similar, but the P mode does give the photographer a little more freedom in choosing some custom settings. For example, the photographer (you) is still able to manually focus as well as

change the white balance. This could be an advantage to your photography depending on your experience.

M Mode: The M mode is the overall manual option for the camera. If the dial is set to this mode, you now are able to change both the shutter speed and the aperture by hand. If you are a more advanced photographer you can use this mode for customizing for longer exposure times with your jewelry in the exact focus that you are wanting. This can prove to be an excellent mode for ideal photos. However, if you are like me and have not had much experience with photography, you will probably have to spend more time practicing with this mode to get the correct settings for your studio.

Av Mode: The Av mode automatically sets a shutter speed for you so that you are able to focus on setting the aperture value. This is a great tool to help you focus on only what you want in the picture. The smaller the aperture value, the smaller the view of focus. So you are able to leave everything in the background out of focus, and pick up more details of the foreground (perfect for portraits.) The larger the aperture value, the larger the range of view is in focus for the picture. Make sure the shutter speed value is not appearing in red on the screen because this symbolizes that the picture will be over or underexposed (too much light and too little light respectively). If the red font does appear, you can get rid of it by changing the aperture value until the shutter speed is shown in white numbers again. Also, if you are in this mode, be careful to watch for the “camera shake warning” symbol. If the aperture value is large this slows the shutter speed down a lot, and the

picture will turn out fuzzy with even the slightest motion. If this symbol appears on the screen be sure you place the camera on your tripod.

Tv Mode: The Tv mode is my favorite mode to use in my jewelry photography. It allows for you to choose the shutter speed that is the best for your image and the camera will automatically set the best aperture value for you. The combination of these settings allows for you to take photos in dark areas without the flash turned on (the flash is automatically turned off in this setting). I learned that the flash on a camera will wash out your jewelry and you will lose a lot of the true colors that should be represented in your art work. Having true colors in your images on your webpage is essential to your business, and this mode on the Canon Powershot A95 allows for that to be accomplished.

At the bottom of the screen, the camera will tell you the shutter speed in seconds. The greater the denominator in the fraction the faster the shutter speed. A fast shutter speed indicates less time the shutter is open, therefore, less light is let in and the image will not be as bright. Fast shutter speeds are usually used for quick moving objects, like an athlete or an animal running, and a slower shutter speed is used in darker settings. Since you will be in a darker setting, use a much slower shutter speed, and this is the main reason for the tripod. Since the shutter will be open for a longer period of time to let more light in, the camera will pick up even the slightest movement, so make sure the camera is completely still. (This is also why it is a good idea to have the remote control so that you are not even in contact with the camera to cause any “jiggling” when you are pressing down on the shutter button.)

Each item of jewelry requires its own lighting, so I usually will take about 10 pictures of each product before I move on. I will start at the bottom of the shutter spectrum and work my way up (or vice versa). I will start with a 0"3 setting. (The quotation marks indicate a decimal point, so it is actually stating that the shutter will be open for 0.3 seconds.) After that, I will move up by increments of 2 until I reach the fraction 1/13 or 1/15 (1/13 of a second) for the final shutter speed. I have found that my darker jewelry items usually require more lighting for an emphasis on detail, and my lighter colored pieces require less lighting. I had a bracelet that was a soft, pink, quartz, and the slightest amount of light shining on it would completely wash out the color so it appeared completely white on my website. I had to spend a lot of time with the lower end shutter speeds before I was actually able to catch the actual color on a digital format.

Macro Mode: The Macro Mode setting is a final finishing touch with taking your table-top jewelry photography. This setting is designed for situations when the camera is about 2.0" to 1.5 ft. within range of the object being documented. This is ideal for still photography since you are very close to your subject. I always make sure this function is on before I take any picture, and I have found it really picks up on finer details and makes each picture look crisp.

Conclusion

I hope that this information was useful to helping you start your own online jewelry business. Remember that it takes a while for real traffic to start coming to your website, so do not get frustrated. Also, be sure to remember you are developing a skill with

the photography, so be patient with learning it. The beautiful thing is you will always be able to use those photography skills in the future, and you will hopefully have fun with it along the way. Enjoy selling your beautiful products and good luck in your business ventures!