



Why Your Payout Does Not Match Your Sales

A simple guide to sales, fees, refunds, taxes, timing differences, and deposits for e-commerce sellers.

Clarity, confidence, and beautifully balanced books.

A free Clear Ledger Studio guide for e-commerce sellers who want to start with a clearer system before buying tools or hiring help.

Why payouts and sales rarely match perfectly

A payout is the amount that reaches your bank. Sales are the activity that happened before the platform, payment processor, refunds, taxes, and timing differences affected the final deposit.

In plain English

Your payout is not your sales number. The deposit is the end result after other things have happened. A cleaner bookkeeping process separates the story into sales, discounts, refunds, taxes collected, fees, adjustments, and the final payout.

Common reasons your payout does not match your sales

Reason	What may be happening	What to do
Platform or payment fees	Shopify, PayPal, Amazon, Etsy, eBay, TikTok Shop, and other platforms may deduct fees before money reaches your bank.	Record fees separately so profit is not overstated.
Refunds and returns	Refunds can reduce the cash paid out or appear in reports at a different time than the original sale.	Review refunds every month, not only total sales.
Discounts	Customer discounts lower the amount your business actually earns from a sale.	Track discounts separately so gross sales and net sales stay clear.
Sales tax, GST, or VAT	Tax collected from customers is usually not business income. It may be owed to a tax authority depending on your registration and location.	Separate tax collected from sales income and ask a tax professional how it applies to you.
Payout timing	Orders, refunds, fees, and deposits may not land in the same month or on the same day.	Match the payout report to the bank deposit and keep notes for timing gaps.
Adjustments, chargebacks, or reserves	Disputes, chargebacks, shipping adjustments, holds, and reserves can change the final payout.	Investigate unusual differences before forcing the numbers to match.
Separate payment processors	If customers pay through PayPal or another processor, some money may deposit outside your main platform payout.	Do not double-count sales, but do track separate processor fees and deposits.

A simple payout example

This example is simplified, but it shows why one bank deposit is not the full sales story.

Line	Amount	Plain-English note
Product sale	\$100.00	Income from the item sold
Shipping charged to customer	\$10.00	Often tracked separately from product sales
Sales tax collected	\$8.00	Usually a liability, not income
Total customer payment	\$118.00	What the customer paid
Less processing/platform fee	(\$4.00)	Fee deducted before deposit
Net payout to bank	\$114.00	What reached the bank

Key takeaway

If you record only the \$114.00 bank deposit as sales, the sales, tax, shipping, and fee story becomes blurred. The goal is to record the activity clearly, then match the payout to the bank.

What to check before assuming something is wrong

<input type="checkbox"/> The date range on the sales report matches the month you are reviewing	<input type="checkbox"/> The payout report covers the same payout period you are comparing
<input type="checkbox"/> Refunds and chargebacks have been reviewed	<input type="checkbox"/> Platform and payment processing fees have been captured
<input type="checkbox"/> Sales tax, GST, or VAT collected has not been treated as ordinary sales income	<input type="checkbox"/> The bank deposit date is not being confused with the order date
<input type="checkbox"/> Pending payouts, reserves, or holds have been checked	<input type="checkbox"/> PayPal or other third-party deposits have not been double-counted
<input type="checkbox"/> Manual adjustments have been noted	<input type="checkbox"/> A short explanation has been saved if the timing difference is normal

Beginner-friendly cleanup process

- 1 Start with the platform sales or finance report for the month.
- 2 Pull the payout or settlement report that shows what was paid to your bank.
- 3 Write down the fees, refunds, tax collected, and adjustments that affected the payout.
- 4 Compare the payout report to the bank deposit, allowing for normal timing delays.
- 5 Save a short month-end note for anything unusual, such as refunds, chargebacks, or pending payouts.

Common mistakes to avoid

Mistake	Why it matters	Cleaner approach
Recording the bank deposit as total sales	It hides fees, refunds, tax collected, and timing differences.	Record the sales activity and the payout separately.
Ignoring fees	Profit may look higher than it really is.	Enter platform and payment fees monthly.
Treating sales tax as income	Revenue can be overstated and tax balances can become messy.	Track tax collected separately and ask a tax professional how to handle it.
Double-counting PayPal or other sales	Sales may be overstated.	Only add sales from another source if they are not already in the main platform report.

When to ask for help

- You have large unresolved payout differences that keep repeating.
- You collect sales tax, GST, or VAT and are unsure how to report it.
- You sell on multiple platforms and cannot tell which deposit belongs to which source.
- Your inventory, COGS, returns, or chargebacks are becoming complex.
- You need financial reports for taxes, loans, investors, or legal purposes.

Next step

Ready for a clearer Shopify system? The Clear Ledger Studio Shopify Bookkeeping Kit 2026 is designed to help you organise sales, fees, expenses, payouts, profit, and monthly checks with a workbook and spreadsheet system.

Source notes

Source notes: This free resource was prepared using Clear Ledger Studio's internal product positioning and publicly available platform documentation from Shopify Help Center finance, sales discrepancy, tax report, and export report guidance; Clear Ledger Studio CPA-informed product notes. Platform menus and report names can change, so always confirm inside your own seller account.

