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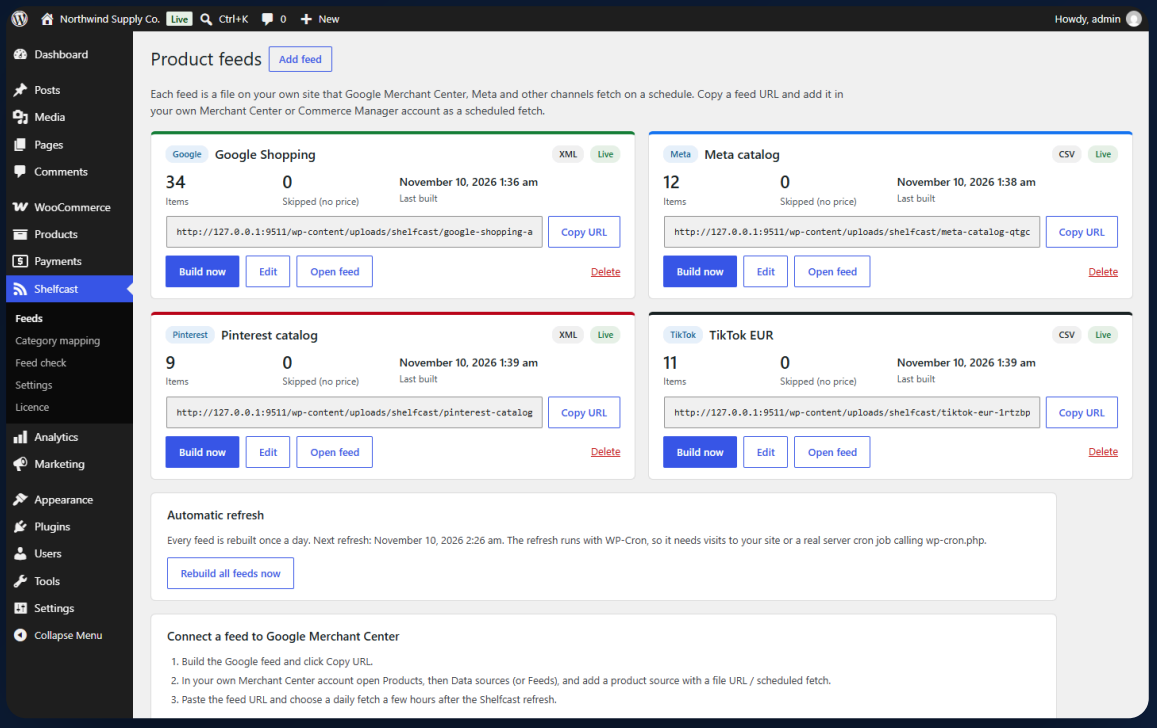
WOOCOMMERCE PLUGIN · USER GUIDE

Shelfcast — Product Feeds for Google Merchant Center & Meta

Version 1.0.0 · Installation, licence activation, every setting explained, FAQ and troubleshooting.



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Shelfcast — user guide

Shelfcast builds WooCommerce product feeds for Google Merchant Center (Shopping ads and free listings), Meta catalogs (Facebook and Instagram) and, in Pro, Pinterest, Microsoft Merchant Center (Bing) and TikTok. Each feed is a file on your own site; you add its URL in your own Merchant Center or Commerce Manager account, and those services fetch it on their schedule. Shelfcast never logs in to Google or Meta and never uploads anything to them.

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1. Installation

1. In WordPress go to **Plugins** → **Add New** → **Upload Plugin**, choose the Shelfcast .zip and click **Install Now**, then **Activate**. WooCommerce 8.0 or newer must be active.
2. Shelfcast adds a **Shelfcast** menu with **Feeds**, **Category mapping**, **Feed check**, **Settings** and **Licence** (Pro) or **Upgrade to Pro** (Free).
3. On activation two feeds are created: **Google Shopping** (XML) and **Meta catalog** (CSV). They are built for the first time by the daily refresh about a minute after activation, or straight away when you click **Build now**.

Activating Pro

1. Install the Pro .zip the same way. It replaces the free plugin and keeps your feeds, their URLs, the category mapping and settings (as long as "Delete all plugin data" is off).
2. Open **Shelfcast** → **Licence**, paste the key from your purchase email and click **Activate licence**.
3. Monthly and yearly keys switch Pro off when they end; renew, then click **I have paid — check again** on the Licence screen. Lifetime keys do not end.

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2. Feeds (Shelfcast → Feeds)

Screenshot: `pro-NN-feeds.png`

Each feed card shows the channel, the file format, whether it is **Live**, how many items it has, how many products were skipped because they have no price, and when it was last built.

- **Build now** rebuilds that feed immediately.
- **Copy URL** copies the feed's address (in `wp-content/uploads/shelfcast/`, with a random 10-character code in the file name so it cannot be guessed).
- **Edit** opens the feed editor; **Open feed** opens the file; **Delete** removes the feed and its file.
- **Rebuild all feeds now** rebuilds every feed.

Automatic refresh

Every feed is rebuilt once a day by WP-Cron, at the same URL. WP-Cron runs when your site gets visits; on a quiet site add a real server cron job that calls `wp-cron.php`. Set the scheduled fetch in Merchant Center a few hours after the Shelfcast refresh.

Connecting Google Merchant Center

1. Build the Google Shopping feed and click **Copy URL**.
2. In your own Merchant Center account open **Products** → **Data sources** (older accounts: **Feeds**) and add a product source with a file URL / scheduled fetch.
3. Paste the URL and pick a daily fetch time.

For Meta, add the Meta catalog feed URL as a **scheduled data feed** in your own Commerce Manager catalog.

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3. What goes into a feed

Field	Where it comes from
id	The product ID (the variation ID for variations in Pro)
title, description	Product name; description or short description (Settings), plain text, title cut to 150 characters
link, image_link, additional_image_link	Product page, main image (variations fall back to the parent image), up to 10 gallery images
price, sale_price, sale_price_effective_date	Regular price and running sale price as shown in your shop (your tax display setting is used), with the sale end date when one is set
availability	in_stock, out_of_stock or backorder (Meta and TikTok: "in stock", "out of stock", "available for order")
condition	Settings (Pro: per product)
brand	WooCommerce Brands term, a "Brand" attribute, or the default brand (Pro: per product)
gtin	WooCommerce's own "GTIN, UPC, EAN or ISBN" field (WooCommerce 9.2+); Pro: a GTIN field on each product and variation
mpn	The SKU when "Send the SKU as MPN" is on; Pro: an MPN field on each product and variation
identifier_exists	"no" when an item has no GTIN and not both brand and MPN (Google feeds only)
google_product_category	Category mapping (Pro: per product)

Field	Where it comes from
product_type	Your own category path, e.g. "Apparel > T-Shirts"
item_group_id, color, size	Pro, variations as separate items

Products that are drafts, private, password-protected or hidden from the catalogue are never listed. Grouped products are not listed (list their children instead). Out-of-stock products are included as out_of_stock unless you untick that in Settings.

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4. Category mapping (Shelfcast → Category mapping)

Screenshot: `pro-NN-category-mapping.png`

For each WooCommerce category type a Google product category ID (for example `166`) or the full path (for example `Apparel & Accessories > Shoes`). Suggestions appear as you type; choosing "166 - Apparel & Accessories" stores `166`. Sub-categories without their own mapping use their parent's. **Everything else** is used for products whose categories are not mapped. Google's full list is linked on the screen.

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5. Settings (Shelfcast → Settings)

Screenshot: `pro-NN-settings.png`

- **Default brand** — used when a product has no brand of its own.
- **Condition** — new, refurbished or used.
- **Send the SKU as MPN** — only if your SKUs really are manufacturer part numbers.
- **Description** — product description or short description (each falls back to the other, then to the title).
- **Include out-of-stock products** — on by default, as Google recommends.
- **Product type** — send your own category path as product_type.
- **Delete all plugin data when the plugin is deleted** — off by default.

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6. Pro: feed editor

Screenshot: `pro-NN-feed-editor-mapping.png`

- **Channel and file format** — Google, Meta, Pinterest and Microsoft feeds can be XML or CSV; TikTok is CSV with `sku_id` as the first column.
- **Variations** — list every variation as its own item with item_group_id (the parent ID), colour, size, its own price, stock, image and a link that preselects its options. Off: one item per variable product at its lowest price.

- **Products in this feed** — leave out out-of-stock products, only these categories, leave out these categories (sub-categories included), price range, and product IDs or SKUs to leave out. Each product also has an **Exclude from feeds** box in its Shelfcast feed tab.
- **Currency** — a three-letter currency code and an exchange rate (1 store currency = rate × feed currency). Your product pages must show that price to those shoppers, or Merchant Center flags a price mismatch.
- **Field mapping** — set a field for every item from text and placeholders: `{title}`, `{sku}`, `{brand}`, `{category}`, `{price}`, `{attr:pa_colour}` (any attribute), `{meta:_my_field}` (any custom field). An empty result keeps the value Shelfcast found.
- **Rules** — run after the mapping, top to bottom: when every item / category is / on sale / in stock / out of stock / price over / price under / title contains / SKU contains, then set a field or leave the item out.

Save and build feed saves and builds in one step.

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7. Pro: product fields

Screenshot: `pro-NN-product-fields.png`

The **Shelfcast feed** tab in the Product data box has Brand, GTIN, MPN, Condition, Google product category and Exclude from feeds. Each variation has Feed GTIN and Feed MPN fields. Empty fields keep the automatic value.

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8. Pro: feed check (Shelfcast → Feed check)

Screenshot: `pro-NN-feed-check.png`

Each build checks every item. **Errors** are what Merchant Center rejects: no title, no image, image URL not http(s), no price, a GTIN with a wrong length or check digit. **Warnings**: no brand, identifier_exists = no, no Google category (Google feeds), no real description, a title cut to 150 characters, backorder items (Google expects an availability_date). Each row links to the product. Up to 500 rows are kept per feed.

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9. When a Pro licence ends

Feeds beyond the free Google + Meta pair stop refreshing (their settings and last file are kept), the Google and Meta feeds go back to one item per product in the store currency, and mapping, rules, filters, product fields and the feed check stop applying. Nothing is deleted; renewing switches everything back on.

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10. Troubleshooting

- **"Build failed"** — the error message says why; usually wp-content/uploads is not writable.

- **The feed is not refreshed** — WP-Cron needs visits; add a server cron job for wp-cron.php or click Build now.
- **Price mismatch in Merchant Center** — check your tax display setting and, for currency feeds, the exchange rate.
- **Products missing** — check they are published, visible in the catalogue and have a price; in Pro check the feed's filters and rules and the product's Exclude box.

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11. FAQ

- **Does Shelfcast send data to Google or Meta?** No. They fetch the file you point them to.
- **Is there a product limit?** No limit is built in. The feed is built in one run in pages of 100 products; it was tested on a 12-product demo store, so very large catalogues on slow hosting should be tested with Build now first.
- **What is removed on uninstall?** Nothing unless "Delete all plugin data" is ticked; then feeds, feed files, mapping, settings and the Shelfcast product fields are removed.