How To Build
Your Own Template

Beginner's Guide

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Introduction

This document is a short tutorial on how to build a Vendio Stores 100% custom template from scratch. It assumes that you already signed up for a [Vendio](#) account and obtained a free Vendio Stores plan. It also assumes that you have access to the [Stores Info](#) page (see below). And finally, it assumes that you have a basic understanding of HTML and XML. Well, even if you don't, you should still be able to create a template for your store by the end of this tutorial, so keep reading.

The Store Info page

The Store Info page can be accessed at the following URL:
http://stores.beta.vendio.com/

This is the control panel of your store. From this page, you can set up the way people access your store, the look and content of your store, and many more. One unique feature of the Vendio Stores is that you have *full control* of your store template. There are many way to achieve the exact look that you're looking for your store: you can choose from dozens of pre-made templates that are available to you and customize them using our state of the art [Stores Editor](#). You can *download any of the pre-made templates*, edit them offline in your favorite editor and re-upload them for your own use. You can *download our sample template* that we built especially for extremely easy customization, apply your own CSS and upload it as your own template. Or, *you can build your template from scratch* and upload it for use with your store. Whatever you want your store to be, it will be. This document will assist you in getting this done within minutes.

The Vendio Stores Templates

A *template* is a collection of files that compose your online store. With Vendio Stores, a template can be as simple as pure HTML pages. Any static HTML will work for your store, as long as you have a file called *home.html*, you pack your files in a zip file and you upload the zip file to the Store Template page.

Why don't you give it a try now:

- create a file called *home.html*
- add any HTML code inside. Example:
  ```
  <html>
   <body>
    <h1>Welcome to my store</h1>
   </body>
  </html>
  ```
- add it to an archive (any name will do, as long as it ends in .zip)

- go to the Store Template page
- open the "Your Store's Template" panel
- click the "Upload your own template" button
- upload the zip file
- click the preview icon next to your template

You can experiment with HTML templates as long as you want: add more pages to your template (any file name ending in .html will become a page in your site). Add subdirectories to organize your files. Add images, CSS files or flash animations. *Any* content is allowed, and as long as your HTML template works on your local computer, it will work when you upload it to the Store Template page.

However, Vendio Stores is much more than just HTML templates: it provides an extremely easy way to *embed data* in your HTML pages. The data comes from your online inventory, which you also got for free along with your Vendio account. The way the inventory data gets embedded in your HTML files is called the *Really Simple Templates* language, or *RST* on short. With RST, your store gets alive. Your store categories, your inventory items, your shopping cart become available in what will ultimately consist your own branded online store.

RST: add data to your HTML

If you're eager to design your own, full template, or if you don't care much about the inners of the Vendio Stores templates, you can skip directly to the next chapter, **The Sample Template**.

Otherwise, we'll make one more experiment that will introduce you to the powerful language that drives the Vendio Stores templates, RST. Let's say you wrote a HTML code that displays an item page. At this point, you're not using real data, but rather sample data that you hard coded yourself in your template. You have what designers call *a mockup*. Suppose your HTML looks like the one below (oversimplified for the context of this document):

```
<div>
  <b>Cool Item 123</b><br>
  <img src="thumb.jpg"><br>
  <span>
    Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit,
    sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.
  </span>
</div>
```

In the code above, replace thumb.jpg with the name of an actual image that you have on your local hard drive. Then save the code in a file called *home.html*, place the file in the same directory with the image and open it in your browser to see how it looks like. Undoubtedly, you've seen item detail sections more beautiful than this, but for the sake of our demonstration observe the formatting of the item's title, image and description.

Now modify the code to obtain the following version:

```
<div rst:xml="http://sell.vendio.com/GetHostedStoresInfoServlet?
verb=GII&GII.store=mystorename&GII.lid=123">
  <b rst:content="/Storefront/ItemsInfo/Items/Item/Title">Cool Item 123</b><br>
  <img src="thumb.jpg"
    rst:attr:src="iteminfo:/Storefront/ItemsInfo/Items/Item/ImageUrl"><br>
  <span rst:content="/Storefront/ItemsInfo/Items/Item/Description">
    Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit,
    sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua.
  </span>
</div>
```

Replace thumb.jpg with the name of an actual image that you have on your local hard drive, replace **mystorename** with your actual store URL (available in the Store Info page) and the 123 in **lid**=**123** with an actual inventory item ID (this might take some time to obtain, but you'll figure it out). Then save the code in a file called *home.html*, place the file in the same directory with your image and *open again it in your* browser.

You'll discover that, as far as the browser is concerned, *the page looks the same*. That is, for those that are more familiar with HTML, because all we did was adding a few special HTML *attributes*, starting with **rst:** which are simply ignored by the browser because they are not recognized as standard HTML attributes.

Now pack the *home.html* file *and your image* in a .zip archive and upload it to the Store Template page. Click the template preview button and check out what happens. If you used a valid item ID, the sample data that you had initially written will get "magically" replaced with the actual data of your inventory item!

This is the beauty of the RST language: it adds, in a non-intrusive way, information from an external source (such as your inventory), to a HTML template, *without affecting the way it looks when previewed locally in a browser*.

You don't have to worry at this point about what's *inside* the RST attributes. Unless you're planning to build your template from scratch, you won't need to write any RST attribute yourself. And if you do plan to write your own template from scratch, we have another document waiting for you after you finish this one.

The Sample Template

The fastest way to obtain a fully functional, fully customized template is to download our sample template, add your own CSS and re-upload it in the Store Template page.

What is the Sample Template?

Vendio Stores templates can get extremely complex. However, they can be extremely simple, while still conferring the basic functionality of an online store. We wanted to offer you the most basic, yet complete, version of a Vendio Stores template, which we called the *Sample Template*. The sample template contains only basic HTML, enriched with the minimal RST attributes that provide its data integration. Its purpose is to allow you to add your own CSS, or even perform minimal changes to the HTML code and obtain your own, fully customized, fully functional template, without getting into the details of the RST language (which, although designed with extreme simplicity and ease of use in mind, will take some time for anybody to master).

How do I get the Sample Template?

The Sample template can be downloaded from the following link:
http://stores.beta.vendio.com/documentation/sample_template.zip

How do I use the Sample Template?

Use the Sample Template as a guide to writing your own template:
- Download it and unpack the archive in a directory on your hard drive
- Open the various .html files and change the texts inside
- Open the *css/style.css* file and add your own CSS
- Open the img directory and change the images to the ones matching your brand
- Freely add content to your template (images, Flash, Javascript etc.)

Then repack all the files in a .zip archive, upload the archive to the Store Template page and click the template preview icon. Repeat these steps until you're satisfied with the look of your store.

Further Reading

At the end of this tutorial, you should be able to write and set up a HTML template for your store. You should also be able to download our Sample Template and customize it according to your needs. We would love to get the feedback of your experience, and therefore please write us using our contact page.

We recommend as further reading our documentation on the Stores API and the full RST language reference, available here:

- Vendio Stores API Reference
- Template Language Reference

Also, check out frequently our online documentation center, available in the Designer's Corner.

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The Vendio Stores Team