How to Start a Blog

The Beginner's Guide to Successful Blogging

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About This Guide

This guide is an introduction to mastering the art of blogging. It provides easy to follow steps to start, maintain, and grow your blog.

Ever wonder how the top bloggers do it? The techniques that make them successful, wishing it could be you? Much like you, they all started with a desire to learn. They wanted to find the right learning tools to help them grow with understanding, practice, and experience.

What you will find in our Beginner's Guide is a blueprint that takes you from learning the basics of blogging to becoming a knowledgeable and talented blogger. This guide has been designed to help you achieve those goals in an easy to read, step by step way.

Chapters

Once you have mastered each chapter in our "Guide to Successful Blogging", you will be well on your way to running your very own blog. Should you need any help in setting up your blog, we will be happy to assist you for free. Just contact us.
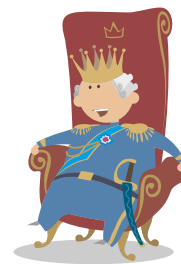
Welcome to The Blogger World

Summary: This section provides background information to help you understand blogging basics, the how to's, and where to find sources of valuable reference material. We also describe a number of different blog types, how to choose your niche, and list some of the many reasons people like to blog.

What is a "blog" and "blogging"?

A blog (shortened from the phrase "weblog") is known as many things - a digital magazine, diary, newscast, collector's meeting place, place to show your art, information sharing, teaching hub, learn spot, and... well, almost anything else. A typical blog combines text, images, videos, and links to relevant pages and media on the web. Blog readers can leave comments and communicate with the author. Dialogue and interaction are a popular part of blog's success.

In the blogging world, you have the word "blog" (an online journal), "blogger" (the person who owns and contributes to a blog), and "blogging" (the action of creating for the blog). You can be a "blogger blogging on a blog," a "blog about a blogger blogging" or a "blogging blog about a blogger."

Darren Rowse, one of the earliest and well-known bloggers, defines a blog like this:

"A blog is a type of website that is usually arranged in chronological order from the most recent 'post' (or entry) at the top of the main page to the older entries towards the bottom."

One of the great things about blogging is the impact it has made on communication throughout the world. Blogs can report news as it happens, hold mainstream media up to higher standards, and provide specific news and information to meet niche interests.

With over **160 million blogs** on the Internet - a number that is growing each and every day - it's easy to see how popular this communication tool has become.

Most popular blog styles and types

Personal blogs share thoughts, original art, poems, writing, photography, and even sell custom crafts, art, or products. If you just want to make a statement, have fun, or blog for therapy, a personal blog is perfect for your needs. Examples of good personal blogs include Kathryn Cramer, Sideshow, and Paperback Writer

Business blogs are created with the voice of the company for marketing outreach, and are used as the public relations of a company. This type of blog is ideal for small organizations that need to publish information for their customers or members. Examples of effective business blogs include Brazen Careerist, Cerasis Blog, and HootSuite Blog
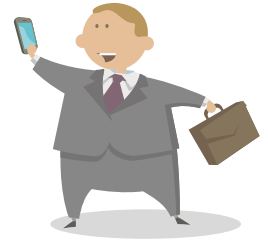
Niche/topical blogs focus on a particular interest. They could be about health, gardening, education, sport, fashion, pets, or almost any other special interest. If you are a collector of antiques, a travel addict, or just love cooking, there is a blog waiting for you. These blogs easily attract loyal followers, which contribute to the fun of blogging. Examples of niche blogs include Gracefull Plate, Fresh Home, and Nerd Fitness

Media-type blogs depend on the content used. If you enjoy video blogging, then you're a vlogger. If you curate content from other websites, then you have a linklog. If you post photos or art sketches on your blog, then it's a photoblog or artblog. Examples of media-type blogs include College Humor, Pointless Blog, and John Martz
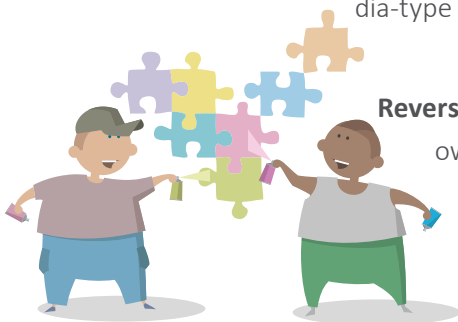
Reverse blogs are unique but popular type of blog. Instead of the owner creating content, the content is supplied by the public. A reverse blog has a team who moderate posts, prevent unpleasant interactions, and promote slow topics for greater interactivity. Examples of reverse blogs include Medium, List25 , and Post Secret

While these are the most popular types of blogs, there are a lot more to discover. Some examples include 25 Basic Styles of Blogs by Rohit Bhargava and 5 Types of Business Blogs by John Saddington. There are also community blogs, nonprofit blogs, live webcam blogs, live gaming screencast blogs, device type blogs, podcast blogs, various video blogs, and many, many others.

Why people blog?

Think about why are you starting a blog and why people should listen to you. Jeff Bullas created a poll and asked people "Why do you blog?" The answers vary, but top answers were "Writing about the passion" and "To share with others". If you want to learn more about phenomenon of blogging, read Psychology of Blogs by John Grohol

The biggest benefits of blogging

Become a better writer and thinker

Once you start blogging, you'll find yourself becoming a better writer and thinker. Mastering content takes creative thought. When your mind starts to push you to create great pieces of content for your blog, your writing, thinking, and research skills improve along the way.

Establish yourself as an expert

Blogs are wonderful tools to help people establish themselves as experts in a field or niche. We all have some kind of interest and expertise to share with others. If you are able to produce great content on your blog and/or have unique point of view on the topic, then be assured that your future audience will recognize it and reward you for it. Today, the web has different experts and different opinions for almost every topic out there. With a bit of effort, you too can become an authority in the area of your interest.

Increase your self-confidence

All of this creation will get your juices going. That's why blogging is so popular. The more you write, the more details you provide, the more confidence you will create in your followers and most importantly, in yourself. All of this leads to increased creativity. According to the New Your Times, 81% of Americans believe they have a book inside of them to share with the world. In essence, you will be writing a book, piece by piece, on your blog. Keep an open mind and enjoy your newfound confidence in your own abilities!

Make friends and have fun

With practice, you will find you can easily build your base of blog fans and followers. As you become an expert in your niche, you can inspire, encourage, and help your followers make a difference in their own lives. Along your blogging journey, you will also make new friends and connections throughout the world. If you like to travel, that means a lot of couches available for you to stay on while winging your way around the globe!

Make money from your blog

Blogging can also have financial benefits. You can place ads, receive affiliate commissions by promoting products of established online retailers, and you can sell your own digital products and merchandise. We'll talk more about monetization in Chapter 6.

Here are some great articles that cover additional personal and business benefits of blogging Number of articles by Linda Dessau and Benefits and Tips of Blogging by Barry Feldman

How to choose a perfect niche

Before you start your own blog and aim to become a successful blogger, consider the following:

The same applies to blogging. You want to attain the highest form of knowledge in the niche/topic of your choice. So pick the one that appeals to you - the one you are passionate about and most interested in - aim to reach success, happiness, comfort, security, and recognition. By picking your niche of interest and having your own point of view you will be able to position and differentiate your blog from the competition.

> *"The meaning of life is in attaining the highest form of knowledge, which is the idea of the good."*
>
> *Ancient Greek philosophers*

Here are <u>tips</u> from <u>Pat Flynn</u> about niche selection. If you still cannot pick one, here is an <u>interesting approach</u> from <u>Nathalie Lussier</u>. Choosing the niche that best fits you is the first step to becoming a successful top blogger.

Brainstorm your idea

This is one process that can help you determine which niche is best for you:

- Make a list of your interests or hobbies. Which topics fascinate you? List them all, for instance: golf, fishing, yoga, playing games, cooking, etc.

- Make a list of the accomplishments you are proud of, for instance: musical talent, artistic talent, sports achievements, etc.

- Make a list of difficulties you have overcome or defeated, for instance: lost a significant amount of weight, recovered from a financial setback, etc.
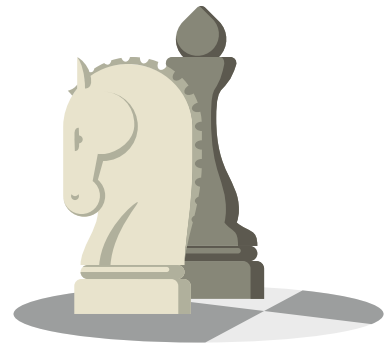
During the course of this exercise, you will get a better feeling for the topics that resonate with you. The ones that you are most passionate about are the best candidates for your niche.

Blog success validation

Whether you want to blog for prestige, fortune, fun, or connections, you need to research the niche you choose and make sure the topic is viable. The following "Blog success validation" exercise will help you determine whether your blog has real potential. It will also help you understand why most blogs fail.
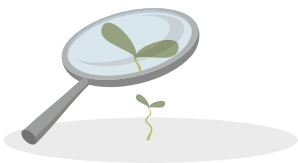
Potential niche size

Even if you believe you have a brilliant blog idea, you will likely struggle to succeed unless you find a niche market with enough people or one with little competition. You don't want your niche to be too small or too big.

Example: The size of "golf" niche is on average 2.8+ millions monthly searches. This niche might be too big and broad. However if you go after niche that is narrow, such as "plane golf swing drills" (average 4k searches monthly), the volume

of searches would be too small. One way to drill down from "golf" would be "golf tips" (average 350k total monthly searches) or even deeper down "golf tips for beginners" (average 250k total monthly searches).

Need more info? Read a real world example by Brian Clark on how to check the niche size. To master the keywords selection, try the ultimate keyword research guide by Brian Dean.

Here is how you can easily check the size of your niche:

Check the top 5 keywords for your niche market. Look for at least 10k monthly searches combined for the 5 key-words. You can use Google Keyword Planner (free), Market Samurai (paid) or WordTracker (partially free) to check for the volume of searches and get keywords ideas. You want to ensure there is a large enough audience looking for the kind of information you will provide, but not so large that you will get lost in the crowd. Here is how to use the Google Keyword Planner tool to get top keyword ideas and search volume:

- You will have to select the "Search for new keyword and group ideas" tab, enter your main keyword (in our ex-ample "golf tips") and get ideas by looking at the list of suggested keywords. Pick the top 5 keywords that fit the niche market you are going after.

- Once you pick the 5 keywords, you will have to check the search volume and add it together. By using the same tool for our example we found the following search results: "golf tips" - 9.9k, "golf swing tips" - 8.1k, "golf putting tips" - 1.0k, "golf tips for beginners" - 880, "golf tips driving" - 480.

With these 5 keywords, we have a little over 20k average monthly searches. This niche market ("golf tips") has enough volume and would be a good choice.

Potential competition

It's a good sign if you have competition. That means others are talking about your niche and are actively involved in pursuing it. It's also important to note that bloggers in your niche are not always your competition, as Julie Deneen wrote. And Stan Smith shares his 7 strategies of how to build a popular blog in crowded niches.
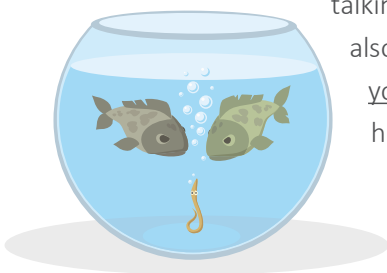
Here's a competition check process you can follow:

- Can you find blogs currently targeting your niche?

- Are there at least 5 popular blogs focused on your topic?

- Do a Google search for "[niche] blog" or "best [niche] blogs".

- Don't lose interest if you see large number of blogs in your niche. If they can do it, so can you!

- Go to Facebook and do a search for your niche. Are there active Facebook pages? Not all topics lend themselves to Facebook, but most do.

- Look for Facebook pages and how many followers they have. Great niches will exhibit at least 1k fans.

- Are there active Twitter accounts? You should find many references to your niche on Twitter.

- Check Twitter accounts of people involved within your niche and see how many followers they have (should be at least 1k).

- Go to Twitter and do a search for [niche].

- Are there offline magazines? This is the gold standard for a niche. If someone is going to the trouble and expense of creating a hard copy magazine centered on your niche, you can be sure there are online fans looking for information about the topic. You can check Amazon Magazines or just do google search for "[niche] magazine or journal". This one is no-brainer, we see all the golf related magazines at the local grocery stores.

If just one or two of these points are positive, it's a good sign your niche has a potential.

Potential monetization

Do you want to earn money with your blog? There are many people who will start blogging as a hobby without necessarily looking at monetizing their blog. However, others want to make extra cash or even dream of make a living by blogging. It doesn't matter which category you are in, it wouldn't hurt to know if your blog can bring you the income you desire. If you found other blogs, active social profiles, and offline magazines or journals in the previous sections, this means the niche is active and possibly monetizable. More about monetization techniques in Chapter 6.

To make sure your niche is monetizable research the following:

- Is anyone selling information products related to your niche? The easiest way is to check what your competitors are promoting.

- Are there well-known advertisers in your niche? These could be the big brands or e-commerce sites.

- Are there affiliate offers in your niche? Here's how to find affiliate offers:

→ Check affiliate networks (Clickbank.com, CJ.com and ShareSale.com and Amazon Affiliate)

← Do a Google search "[your keyword] affiliate" or "[your keyword] affiliate program".

These points can help you determine whether you can build a successful blog in the niche of your choice that helps you generate income.

What readers want from the blog

What content should you start creating? You can write about anything and everything, but you have to really understand what your readers want to see or read. While there may be other existing blogs dedicated to your area of expertise, they are not YOURS! If you have a unique perspective, people will want to read about it. There is never enough information for the voracious appetites of collectors and enthusiasts. They desire more and with practice, you can give them that.

Readers are looking for information

People who visit your blog want to be informed. They want to learn more or stay up to date on specific topics. You would be surprised what people are searching for online. Perhaps someone wants news that doesn't appear in mainstream media. You could be the one to give it to them.

Readers are looking for solutions

Blogs solve a lot of problems in the world. Those problems might include dieting and health advice, or how to replace the bumper on a 1957 Chevy. The internet has become the world's largest library. What can you add to the internet? What you know could help others.

Readers are looking to be entertained

The internet is not all work! People want to connect, laugh, and share with others. Your blog can quickly become popular for your brand of humor combined with the subject you choose. There's always fun information you can share with others that will help attract visitors to your blog.

Important things to understand about blogging

As you continue to put time and energy into your blog, you will begin to see bigger returns on investment. Depending on how you are planning to manage your blog, you will need to consider the amount of time the work will require. Perhaps your blog is your online journal, and you'll write a few paragraphs or articles a week. Or you might want to take it serious and update your content on a daily bases. It will take time to establish your web presence. Be prepared to wait, make the effort and be consistent.
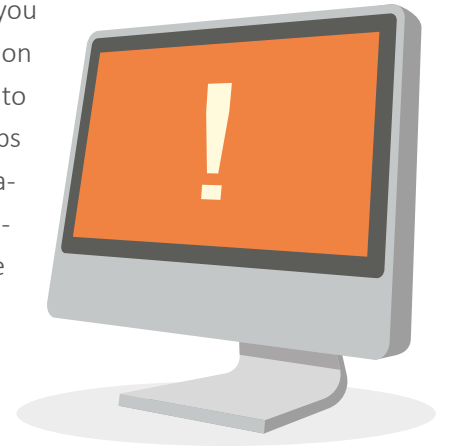
Choosing a blogging platform

At this stage, you will want to determine the blog management platform/tool you want to use. We recommend to setup your blog on one of the self-hosted platforms. But before you make the decision, let us describe each option below in more details, and talk about the pros and cons.

When it comes to starting your blog you have the following options: free, freemium, and self-hosted platforms (recommended).

Free bloggging platforms

For many new bloggers, the availability of free blogging platforms is tempting. The benefits include being free and quick to start. But having a blog name in this form - yourname.tumblr.com, yourname.blogspot.com, etc. - is the sign of an inexperienced beginner who won't be taken seriously.

By keeping your blog on free platform, you let somebody else own your name. With their rules and restrictions, they may limit or prohibit ads on your blog, or even place their own ads in your blog. As soon as you realize you're serious about blogging, you will want to move away from it.

Freemium blogging platforms

Freemium means you will have a trial period before you have to start paying (the cost vary from $5 to $30 per month). There are few platforms available but one of the most popular is TypePad. It focuses on ease of use for writing, but customization options are limited and it lacks features that bloggers could use.

By default TypePad blog name will look like this - yourname.typepad.com. t's not always the best option if you are trying to build the name and brand for your blog. However you could point your own domain (purchased through any domain registrar) to TypePad blog by applying domain mapping process.

Self-hosted blogs

Think ahead
and own your blog!

Your strongest choice would be self-hosted platform, recommended by FirstSiteGuide and most blogging experts.

Self-hosted platforms allow you to run a blog on your own domain. Aside from following your domain registrar and web hosting company's rules, you are fully in charge of your blog and the contents thereof.

You have number of choices when it comes to self-hosted blog systems (also called Content Management System or CMS). Here are few names you might recognize: WordPress.org, MovableType, Drupal, Concrete5, and Ghost. The blog setup is called self-hosted because

you will use your own web space (we like WebHostingHub) and name for your blog. This will cost you $4 to $8 per month for the web space (hosting account), depending on the company you choose, and $12 to $15 per year for the name (domain). The actual CMS is usually open-sourced and free.

One of the most recommended and well-known content management systems (CMS) is WordPress.org

This is the <u>same system used by</u> the New York Times, BBC America, author Tim Ferriss, and many other popular sites on the web. WordPress was launched in 2003. Since then, it has grown to be the largest self-hosted blogging tool in the world. It is used on millions of sites. WordPress blogs are visited by tens of millions of people every day. It is the most recommended CMS by expert bloggers - including FirstSiteGuide.

Throughout this guide, we'll be showing you how to start, manage, customize, and work with the WordPress CMS. By using our guide, you will be able to create your blog quickly and learn how to manage it in short order. We'll show you how to start and set up your Word-Press blog in Chapter 2.

Conclusion
Whatever your involvement, you should follow a few simple rules for success:

1

Choose your niche wisely and validate it before you start doing anything.

2

Think what content can you create to differentiate your blog from others.

3

Pick your blogging platform and get ready to launch your blog.

How to Create a Self–Hosted Wordpress Blog

Summary: In this chapter, you will learn the nuts and bolts that go into putting your blog together, definition of terms, choosing a domain name, web hosting and more.

In Chapter 1, you learned that a self-hosted WordPress blog is the best choice for most bloggers. To get your new self-hosted blog started, you need to decide on two important things: a domain name and a web hosting provider.

Domain name. Your domain name is you, your blog, your business and your very on line identity. That's why your domain name must be you. As you, it represents your brand. Make it recognizable, easy to remember, and a proud representation of you and your blog. Examples of domain names are amazon.com, apple.com and change.org.

Web hosting. After choosing a domain name, finding reliable hosting services will be one of the most important decisions you make. It's what will keep your blog live, and the performance of your blog will partially depend on your hosting provider. The host makes sure your blog is available 24/7 to potential readers; it is where your files are stored online.

Most hosting companies also offer domain registration services. Some people keep their domain name with the registrar company, separate from the hosting account. We recommend keeping it all under your hosting account for the trouble-free management and maintenance.

What is a domain name?

Your domain name will be the name by which you will be known online, no matter what niche you choose. It is the unique address of your blog on the internet. Your domain will be yours as long as you continue paying the annual fee ($10 - $15 for .com domain). Users who know your domain / URL (uniform resource locator) can simply type it in their browser's address bar. Others will be able to discover your blog through search engines such as Google and Bing, so you definitely need to find a unique moniker. Make sure you love your original domain name -- you will face a hurdle of challenges if you decide to change it down the road.

Types of domain names

Just like you and your business have a physical address, your domain name needs one too. It may be the highly popular "dot com" or it may be country or niche specific. From .us (United Sates) to .co.uk (United Kingdom), and from .guru (yes, for life coaches) to .sport (for sports related), these TLD's (top level domains) are added to any domain name in order to point to their location. The general rule is to always go for a "dot com" domain, but some of the other extensions can work. For example "dot net" or "dot me".

In the end, it's about being memorable, so if a different extension or country code helps you be memorable, then break the rules!

How to decide on a blog name

Remember the anxiety of naming your first pet? It's the same with naming your blog. It's a name tied to you. You'll be admired, teased, or forgotten because of it, so you must choose wisely. The tips we've mentioned previously, as well as those listed below, will give you some great ideas on how to formulate the perfect domain name.

11 tips for choosing the right domain name

Brainstorm first - Pick at least 5 main words or phrases that describe your blog topic. Write them down, then mix and match these words to invent your domain name. Choose the one that sounds good and will be memorable. There's a rule in advertising that says when launching a new product, you need to start by making a list of 10

names. The first three are easy. Maybe you can do five or six without breaking a sweat, but by the time you get to last one, you'll be stuck for more ideas. Using the outline described above, pick the best one from your list and you are on your way. That is the best way to help choose your domain name!

Choose a unique name - Using a search engine, like Google, search out your proposed blog name. Does your search show any sites with similar names? If it does, then make sure you try a different name. Naming your blog closely to other existing sites is the first step to failure. Also, don't choose names that are plural or misspelled versions of existing sites.

Make it easy to type - If you have to spell it out, at least more than once, then it won't work. Keep the name as easy to remember and type in as possible. You don't want your future visitors to incorrectly type in your name and be directed to a totally different site. For example: Flickr.com one of the popular social sites, which started in 2005, had to acquire Flicker.com 4 years later for a large amount of money in order to redirect visitors who misspelled their name. If you're determined to have that oddly-spelled name, then make sure common misspellings are available as well so you can register them and redirect visitors to the main domain.

Choose "dot com" first - 52% of all websites are "dot.com" domains. It is still the preferred extension and the easiest to remember. If your number one name choice isn't available, then try your second choice before accepting other TLD. Remember that some browsers accept address-only entries in their address bar. If you type just the domain name (and who knows how many of your users will just do that?) they will return, by default, to the .com site

Try to make it brandable - Your domain name will be your brand. Some names speak for themselves. When you hear the name, you know what the blog is about. Take a look at Top 100 blogs by DailyTekk, and you'll see that most blogs have brandable names.

Shorter is always better - As we've been saying, shorter is better. If you can't get your domain name down to one memorable word (almost impossible to come by these days), then consider adding one or maximum two more words. Combinations of two words works great for the memorable names like LifeHacker.com or GeekSquad.com. Also, don't use an acronym. People will never remember the letters unless it's a highly catchy name.

Avoid trademark problems - Once you've decided on your top choices for your blog name you have to make sure you are not violating anyone's trademarks. To check within US, visit uspto.gov/trademarks and do the search before you register the name. This problem is not that common for the bloggers, but it is always good to check now, because this could kill a great blog and business down the road. Also, if you are going to create a blog about a big name product, such as WordPress or Facebook, review their terms and conditions - most will not allow you to use their name in any part of your domain (sorry - no wordpresshacker.com site allowed).

No numbers and hyphens - Numbers and hyphens (especially hyphens) cause confusion. Stay away from them at all costs. Even something as clever as the number1blogger.com will cause confusion. Make the name speak for itself.

It's not always good to follow new trends - Anything that deals with something trendy will, like the trend, fade away. Stick with a classic name that will span the generations and not be tied down to a trend or fad.

Marry your domain name - It sounds odd but you have to make 100% sure that you love your domain name. Once it's set, you have it for years to come. If you decide later to rename it, then you will lose time, money, branding, and rankings. We do not recommend changing your domain once your blog has been live for a considerable amount of time.

Check social networks - Before you register your desired domain name, it's always a good idea to check social networks for the same name. To keep your blog name constant and to build your brand, you want a name that is readily available. For example: check facebook.com/yourdomain, twitter.com/yourdomain - and secure them as well. KnowEm is a great tool to use to see if certain names are already branded on social platforms.

Premium domain names

You might find a domain name that is already taken, but not necessarily in use. These are usually referred to as premium domain names. They are domains registered by someone else and offered for sale. There's no way of telling how much a domain is worth on the market, especially if you're after a niche domain. To buy a registered domain you could check one of the auction sites: Godaddy Auction, Sedo, NameJet, SnapNames. Or if it's not for sale through auctions, you might want to contact the domain owner to see if you can make an

offer to buy it. You can use Whois Tool to find the domain owner's contact information. Even if it is protected or private, you can send an email to the provided email address and ultimately reach the domain owner.

What is web hosting?
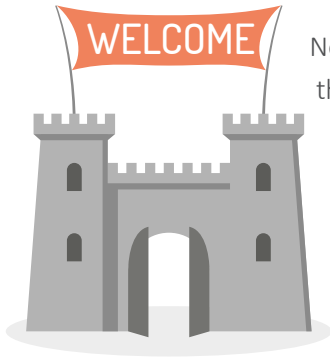
Next, you will need to choose a web hosting company to register the domain name with, and then sign up for the hosting account to host your new blog online.

A web hosting company provides you with the space on a server to store your blog files. It is similar to your personal computer files at home, except your blog files are available online where visitors can access them at all times by entering your domain name or discovering your blog in a search engines. You can use free blogging platforms (as described in Chapter 1) and live with the restrictions, or take the leap and launch your own self-hosted blog which 90% of the top bloggers recommend doing.

How to choose a web hosting provider

The wrong web host can really cause your blog many problems. Just imagine choosing a mobile company that has no reception. It is a major piece of the puzzle to maintaining a successful blog, therefore you must choose a reliable provider.

Often, when people asked for the most important thing about a great host, they cite things like 24/7 phone and chat support, reliability, and reputation. Naturally, there are additional features that good hosting providers offer, such as database support, back ups, free email, and so forth. Most hosting companies offer similar options and features, and as a beginning blogger, you won't have to go deeply into technical details.

A 10-point checklist for better web host selection

A good reputation - goes without saying. The rule of thumb is to check the website of the service provider for trustworthy signs such as physical address, phone number, general company information, and testimonials. Ask yourself the question "Would you trust and give this company your personal information?" Also check if the company is listed with Better Business Bureau (for North America) and check their rating.

Support - if you are new to the web, you might need additional help with the blog. Make sure the company offers 24/7 support. If you have a problem with your blog at 2 a.m., do you really want to wait for help? Some companies offer phone and chat support, others don't. You might also see companies offering online tickets support only. Many people are specifically looking for the U.S. based support, since some providers use outsourced support. Your best bet is to find a hosting company that offers 24/7 phone support in addition to on-line chats and support tickets

Uptime - as mentioned previously, this is very important for your blog to be available online. You have to understand that you are dealing with hardware and people, meaning things can still go wrong. Most reliable companies have technology in place to make sure your site is up and running all the time. The industry standard for the good companies is 99% network uptime. You can do your own online search "[company name] uptime" and check for a providers uptime listing.

Money back guarantee - most companies offer certain full money back periods (30, 45, 90 days) and in that period you will get a full refund. You might see "Anytime money back guarantee" claims from some companies, that usually means that you will get the prorated amount back after the suggested period passes. Make sure you read their "Terms of Services".

Features list - Are you thinking of a specific CMS (content management system), such as our much championed Wordpress? Does your prospective provider offer it? The list of features could be long, but more options the better. You might not need some of the listed features now, but once your blog grows there could be a need for additional items.

Email accounts - most providers will give you an unlimited emails option, but just in case they don't, make sure at least one email account is available for your domain. Having a few can help sort out messes. These can include personal addresses (john@yourdomain.com), sales addresses (sales@yourdomain.com), webmaster addresses (webmaster@yourdomain.com or admin@yourdomain.com), and similar.

Price - first time customer fees for the hosting services are very reasonable and could be as low as few dollars per month for the first year of services, but you need to understand that next year's renewal price will be different. Make sure to double check the renewal price information on the hosting provider's website.

Site Backup* - web host servers are not bulletproof. Data loss is possible just like on your own computer; servers are big computers that everyone can read files from. You'll want to backup both your site files and databases. If they don't offer backup, you will be left with the choice of figuring out how to do it manually. So make sure your host provider features an automated backup option (small monthly fee might be applied).

Scalability/Room to grow - So what happens if your blog becomes bigger? It's good to know your host can provide you with different hosting plan options. When your blog starts to grow and gets a lot more visitors you might need more power and speed. Plan on a bright future for your blog and think ahead!

Security* - your blog can hold a lot of information. The threat of site hackers reminds us of the need for top security. Most of the time it will be your responsibility to ensure you have secure passwords set up, but even then, malware and hackers can still strike, which can lead to downtime for your blog. Some hosting providers offer security monitoring services for an extra charge.

* When it comes to backups and security, there are third party providers that can provide these services for you, such as VaultPress and Sucuri. You'll need to factor in these costs along with your hosting company's monthly fee to see if it makes sense to go with a cheaper hosting solution that needs third party solutions, or if it makes sense to go with a more expensive hosting solution that has these services already provided.

Tested web hosting companies

Preferred choice

Visit WebHostingHub   Visit BlueHost   Visit InMotion   Visit HostGator

Complete instructions
for setting up a blog

Next you're going to get your domain name, web hosting account, and setup your own new blog. We use WebHostingHub as our hosting provider for our own blogs and use them for reference in this guide. If you choose to go with the different hosting company the setup process might be slightly different but the action steps would be the same and you can follow them down below. If you would rather watch the setup process video click here.

Action steps

1. Get a domain & hosting

Sign up for a reliable hosting account to get started. This is a straight forward process and before you move on to the next step and install your own blog, you will need an access to your hosting account. In our example once you purchase the hosting plan from WebHostingHub you will get an email from them with the login details to your AMP (account management panel).

2. Install Wordpress CMS

Follow an easy 1-click install process. Login to your AMP account and find "Install Popular Software", click on it and find the "Install WordPress" section and click on that link. Fill out the "Software Setup" fields with your own info (keep In Directory, Database Name, and Table Prefix fields untouched). And click the Install button.

3. Your own blog is live

You can start blogging instantly. Congratulations, your new blog is installed and you should see the default theme preinstalled for you when you open your blog. WordPress is easily customizable from the dashboard and we will cover that in the next chapter. To login to the dashboard of your blog use the following URL: yourblogname.com/wp-admin, enter the username and password that you've used to set it up.

Having trouble setting up your blog, watch this step-by-step video to get you started.

Last words of wisdom before you start your blogging journey
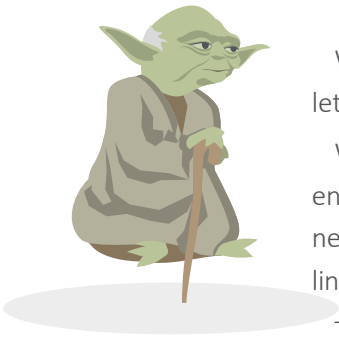
We've talked about some of these points already in Chapter 1, but let's recap since they're worth repeating.

When you create a blog, you need to future-proof it in order to ensure there will not be any big roadblocks in your way. Your vision needs to be long term. Whatever you do today will impact your online presence in the future.

The following information will help you avoid these mistakes, saving you time and money.

Make sure your blog topic is viable

While there is an audience for every niche, there may be less than 20 people looking for the specific topic you want to cover within your niche. Check the existing competition, and if you see other blogs covering that topic it means there is a demand for that specific info. There are great ideas that were ahead of their time and one's that lay hidden. Make sure you differentiate your idea and make it appealing to others.

Don't be afraid of technology
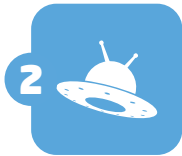
We understand some of this technical talk is a bit daunting. You may be nervous and think you'll never get it, but you're wrong. We had a 73 year-old customer, who didn't know anything about blogs, starting one in no time. She went from not being able to program a VCR to a blogging expert in her field. If you follow the steps we spell out for you, you'll see it's as easy as clicking a button or two... because that's all it really is.

You don't have to be a coder or designer

In this guide we will show you how to setup your blog without any knowledge of coding and how you can make it a nice looking blog without web design skills.

Be patient and give it time

It will take time to establish your web presence. Be prepared to wait and be consistent. Set a few pieces of content on a scheduled publishing date so you can step away for a long weekend without blogging, but get back to it when you can. You will get to the top gradually so be patient and don't quit without even starting.

Owning your blog

Although we mentioned some free blog hosting options, the best idea is to own your blog, especially if you will be using your own copyrighted material (articles, drawings, photos, etc.) Paying a small amount of money about the same as a Starbucks coffee, every month will get you your own equity. Dealing with a host provider is a professional move. If you are planning on selling your items, services, music or anything else via your blog, then paid hosting is the best way to go. Many hosting providers can help you maintain an ecommerce blog.

Conclusion

Congratulations! Now you have your own domain name, hosting space and your blog is setup. It's time to get familiar with the Wordpress dashboard and learn how to make desired changes to your blog.

Chapter 3

The Basics of Managing a Wordpress Blog

Summary: In this section, we will take a closer look at managing your WordPress blog. You will learn how to customize your blog, make design and layout changes, create your first post or page, and much more.

The Wordpress front and back ends

The WordPress platform consists of two areas: your blog's front end and back end.

The front end is what your visitors will see when they come to your blog. Many of the tasks performed in the back end will be visible on the front end as theme customizations, plugin functionality enhancements, and content publication. There are also actions that can be performed by you and your visitors directly from the front-end of the blog, including commenting and social sharing.

The back end, also known as the WordPress dashboard, allows you to fully manage your blog's content, community, functionality, and design. It is accessible only by users who have an account on your blog. In order to access your WordPress dashboard, you need to type example.com/wp-admin in the address bar of your browser and log in using your WordPress username and password.
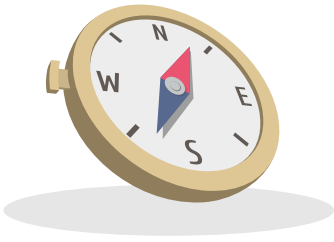
Navigating the dashboard

The Dashboard is the center of blog administration. It consists of three main parts left side menu, top toolbar, and middle section. In the setup process video in Chapter 2, we have already visited the Dashboard, but there is a lot more to it! The left hand column of your WordPress dashboard is where you will find all of your admin options, and where most of your creative effort will be focused.

They include the following:

Updates - Menu option to find updates to the WordPress platform along with plugins, and themes you have installed.

Posts - Menu options to view all posts (blog content), add a new post, view and create categories, view and create tags.

Media - Menu options to view your media library (images, documents, and other file uploads) and upload new files.

Pages - Menu options to view and add new static pages to your blog.

Comments - Menu option to comment manager where you will approve or delete new comments on blog posts and pages.

Appearance - Menu options to manage themes, customize your blog design (dependent upon theme), manage widgets, manage menu items, and edit your blog's header (dependent upon theme).

Plugins - Menu options to manage and add new plugins to enhance WordPress functionality.

Users - Menu options to manage users, add new users, and update your WordPress profile (name, password, and details).

Tools - Menu options to see available tools to import and export content to and from your WordPress blog.

Settings - Menu options to edit general blog settings, writing settings, reading settings, discussion (comment) settings, media settings, and permalinks (URL formatting for your blog).

In addition to the above mentioned general menu items in the left hand column, you will also find menu options for plugins you have installed. Depending on the plugin's purpose and coding, its settings can be added to any standard menu (posts, pages, comments, appearance, plugins, users, tools, or settings) or as a new menu item anywhere in the left hand column.

A closer look at each area of a dashboard

Updates
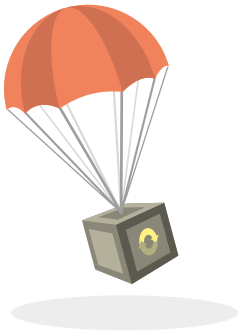
WordPress, like any popular CMS, releases both minor and major updates to their platform to introduce new features, fix bugs, and increase security. In the past, you would be given the choice to update to the latest version of WordPress through your Dashboard using a one-click install process or by downloading the latest version and installing it yourself. For anyone who has WordPress 3.7 or above, updates to the core WordPress platform are automatically installed on your website. You are still responsible for updating your plugins and themes when updates become available. If you do not want WordPress to automatically update the core of their platform, you can find directions on how to configure automatic updates in the WordPress Codex.

▶ Watch a quick demo (1:06)

Posts

The Posts menu allows you to control the new content you add to your blog. Blog posts are published on your blog in descending order (newest first). In the Posts menu, you will find the following options.

▶ Watch a quick demo (5:15)

All Posts - This will list all of your posts in the dashboard. You can use the listing to quickly edit single or multiple post's categories, tags, status, author, and ability to comment.

Add New - This will allow you to add a new post to your blog.

Categories - This will allow you to view all of the categories your posts are listed under, edit them, and add new categories.

Tags - This will allow you to view all of the keywords your posts are tagged with, edit them, and add new tags.

Media

Your WordPress installation comes with a unique media manager. With it you can upload rich media content and assign it to posts, pages, sidebars, headers, and so forth. It could be anything from photos to video and audio files, whatever serves the purpose. Media can be previewed, added, edited, or deleted. In the Media menu, you will find the following options.

▶ Watch a quick demo (1:42)

Library - This will allow you to view all of the media uploaded to your WordPress blog.

Add New - This will allow you to add new media to your WordPress blog.

26

Pages

Pages provide static content or information to the readers. Standard pages that WordPress bloggers use include About, Contact, Advertise, Products, Services, Resources, and so forth. In the Pages menu, you will find the following options.

All Pages - This will list all of your pages in the dashboard. You can use the listing to quickly edit single or multiple page's status, author, parent, template, and ability to comment.

Add New - This will allow you to add a new page to your blog.

Posts vs. pages

Your blog content will be displayed in pages and posts. While they have similarities, they serve different purposes and have different behaviors.

- As mentioned both have the following in common:
- A title / headline and specific content.
- Meta information (author, date of publishing, etc.)
- Can be added, deleted, updated, or edited.
- Will available for everyone or only a limited number of users based on your chose settings.
- Can be anything from plain text to media-rich content (video, audio, photo, links, etc.).
- Can be altered or extended via plugins.

What sets posts and pages apart are the following:

- Pages are generally not a part of your main blog's content. For example, if you have a travel blog, you would write posts about your latest travels. You would reserve pages for things that relate to you and the blog, such as a page about you, a page with a contact form to contact you, and so on.
- Posts are a part of your main blog's content. They will show up as new entries within your blog and your RSS feed. Pages will only be displayed when you link to them directly, and never within your RSS feed.

Comments

Comments are the best way to manage reader interaction. It allows readers to add comments on the topic, ask questions, and provide feedback. It allows one to stay engaged with the community and interact around specific niche market. Both blog posts and pages can accept comments. Most WordPress themes come equipped with comment layout functionality. However, it is up to you to engage with your readers and encourage them to leave comments on your blog. Make sure you always check new comments, approve them and reply to them when necessary.

In the Comments section, you will have the ability to moderate comments, including approve them, mark them as spam, or delete them entirely.

Appearance

This menu speaks for itself and it's where most of the activity of changing the design and layout of your blog will take place. Here you can search and install new theme and make some additional customizations to your blog's header image, colors, and background.

▶ Watch a quick demo (2:20)

In the Appearance menu, you will find the following options:

Themes - This is where you can search for themes on the WordPress network or install themes you have downloaded from elsewhere. We will talk about theme selection momentarily.

▶ Watch a quick demo (2:05)

Customize - Depending on the theme you have chosen, you will be able to use the Customize section to make changes to the theme's design in a visual editor. Things that can be customized include: Title and Tagline, Color, Background Image, Static Front Page, and Featured Content.

▶ Watch a quick demo (1:51)

Widgets - Widgets are boxes you can add to various areas of your WordPress blog. Depending on the theme you have chosen, this can include the homepage, header, sidebar and footer. Adding widgets is a simple task, and it works using a drag & drop building experience. Widgets can showcase a social media links, a search bar, subscription links, about text for the blog, most recent posts, most recent comments, links to other blogs you like, and more.

▶ Watch a quick demo (2:09)

Menus - Depending on the theme you have chosen, you can create one or more menus that will appear horizontally in your header.

▶ Watch a quick demo (2:40)
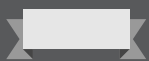
Header - Depending on the theme you have chosen, you can upload a graphic at a specific size (determined by your theme) which will be displayed at the top of your blog.

▶ Watch a quick demo (1:18)

Background - Depending on the theme you have chosen, you can change background colors or upload your own background image.

▶ Watch a quick demo (1:12)

Editor - The editor is for advanced users and involves code knowledge. It gives you the option of editing theme code for specific functionality and design changes. Because visitors will be able to immediately see any changes that you save in your theme's code, it's usually safer to edit copies of your files offline, test, and upload your changes when they are verified. If you are going to use editor, always make sure you backup current version of your blog before editing your files. If there is a problem, you can always upload a previous version of the code to fix it.

▶ Watch a quick demo (1:16)

More on themes
(blog's design and layout)

The first thing your blog's front end needs is a face (design and layout). You need to create an environment that is both eye-catching, and practical. In the long run, you want your visitors to easily find information on your blog. You don't want visitors to be discouraged by the colors you choose or the non-intuitive and unpractical way in which information is displayed. Your design can cause instant distrust of your blog or instant acceptance.

You should start your theme hunt as soon as your WordPress platform is installed. The look and feel of your blog relies on the theme you choose. Your readers will first notice the overall appearance of the blog, before even taking a look at the content. You should choose a theme that looks great, but also works for your unique content needs. The default theme that comes with your WordPress blog installed is Twenty Fourteen - while it's a good starter theme, you will want to choose something to make it more unique.

Here's a quick checklist for choosing your theme by searching within blog dashboard:

Read the description - Each theme usually comes with the short description of the features and functionalities. By reading it
you should have a rough idea if it matches your needs and how customizable it is.

Check the ratings - Popular themes will have star ratings that are visible in the preview and under theme details. They should give you a clear idea how good the theme is.

Preview the theme - preview the theme to get an idea of the overall look and layout.

Check for responsiveness - Aim for a responsive design that will work on desktop browsers and mobile devices. This is recommended by Google.

If you find a theme that takes your breath away, cool down. Once you install the theme you like, don't be surprised if it doesn't look quite right. Your theme is just a skeleton of your blog - to make it appealing you will have to fill in content (text, photos, videos, etc.). Earlier, we showed you how to add content to your blog.

Free, premium, and custom themes

For many visionary novice bloggers, the world is not enough. The stash of **free themes** (there are almost 2.3k themes available on wordpress.org) does not satisfy their particular desire for look and feel. There are two other options you can take a look at, premium and custom themes. But they incur a cost, sometimes a tiny one, at other times a huge amount.

And for the most part it's hard to choose the right theme from such a variety. At FirstSiteGuide we are doing our best to make that process easier for you.

Premium themes are created by, both single developer's and dedicated showcase websites. Top sources for the premium themes that are worth checking include StudioPress, Elegant Themes, Themefuse, Thesis, WooThemes and ThemeForest. The price range for a single-use licenses ranges from $30 to $500, depending on which premium theme you choose.

Custom themes are the ones where you hire an individual developer (coder and designer, or agency) to customize an existing theme or create a brand new theme for you. While coming with clear cut advantages, they are not ideal choices for beginner bloggers due to their high costs. Prices to customize the theme are ranging from $500 to $2,000, depending on the features you want.

Examples of good themes

Based on our experience, we recommend the following free and premium themes for new bloggers.

Free themes

Decode is a top choice for bloggers who are after a minimal look. Customizations include different colors and sidebar items accessible from the menu.

Supernova, despite its classical blog look and feel, is a true gem. With color palettes, full-width sliders and custom headers, it has been designed to meet the needs of bloggers.

Clean Retina is a simple, clean, and responsive theme that adapts automatically to any browser size. Along with the elegant design, the theme is easily customizable.

Premium themes

You can find different premium themes online from the resources mentioned earlier. We recommend you to check the themes series from StudioPress. Their services and support are top notch and all of their themes are highly customizable. Here are three themes that are suited for the blog.

Wintersong is a theme that carries an air of the bare essentials. Calm, minimal, and outstanding, it really caters to all types of sites

Beautiful is a theme that shows a lot of attention to details - and the details are actually the ones you can customize in order to give your website a unique look

Modern Blogger theme is bold, sleek, and colorful. With a well-sought, contemporary look, it meets the needs of the passionate blogger in more than one way.

## Advanced customizations

Now, let's look at the areas in your WordPress dashboard where you can do most of your customizations.

Plugins

Plugins are bundled pieces of code which affect the way your blog looks or feels. They can add new functionality to your blog, extend your theme's capabilities, and customize your blog as a whole or in part.

While a majority of plugins are free, there are plenty that are offered for a fee based on their unique functionality.
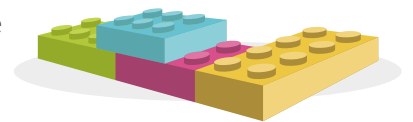
List of recommended plugins for new bloggers

In order to save you time, we have selected some important plugins for your immediate blogging needs. They cover many aspects of your blogging experience, enhance the functionality of your blog and make it a more professional and attractive to your readers.

Google Analytics - The top choice when it comes to monitoring and analyzing your website traffic.

Contact Form 7 - A contact form with flexible email options.

Digg Digg - A floating or static palette of social media and sharing options.

Disqus Commenting System - An alternative to the basic WordPress comment system with advanced administrative and comment capabilities.

Yoast SEO - A comprehensive SEO plugin for your blog. The best out there for free.

WP Super Cache - Helps with the load time of your WordPress blog.

Akismet - Protection from comment spam (you won't need this if you go with Disqus for comments).

YARPP - Creates a related posts list at the end of each of your posts automatically to encourage people to continue browsing your site.

Authors Widget - A great way to display multiple authors and their activity on-site.

Additional menu options

Users

This section allows you to add new users to your WordPress blog, customize your own user profile, and edit users you have added to your WordPress blog. You can assign each user the following roles.

Administrator - Able to perform all actions on the blog. This should be reserved for you as the site owner and only those you trust highly with your blog as they have the power to do anything, including lock you out of your own site.

Editor - Can access and edit all posts, pages, comments, categories, tags, and links.

Author - Can publish and edit articles, posts, and upload media.

Contributor - Can write and edit own posts, but is not able to publish without consent.

Subscriber - Can only read and comment on posts or pages

Tools

With tools you are able to execute some extended tasks on your WordPress blog.

Available tools - This section comes with pre installed option called "Press This" that provides a quick and easy way to clip text, images and videos from any site and share it on your blog. Under "Press This" there is also categories to tags converter.

Import tool - Enables to import data from other blogging platforms into WordPress.

Export tool - Enables to export blog content which can later be imported into new WordPress installation. It is a very useful way to back up your blog content.

Settings
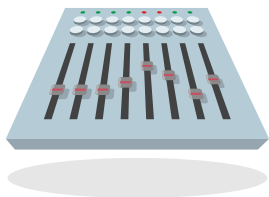
This menu contains all of the settings options for your WordPress site. They are as follows.

General - Allows you to configure basic options for your WordPress site, including the site name, description, URL, time zone, date format, and main administrator email.

Writing - Allows you to set defaults for your content, such as the category posts will automatically be added if you don't choose a

specific category.

Reading - Allows you to set the home page for your site (either a static page or the latest blog posts), the number of blog posts on your home page and archives, the number of items in your RSS feed, and whether you want to show your full post content or a summary in your RSS feed.

Discussion - Allows you to control how comments are received on your blog. The optimum setting is to moderate all new comment authors, and automatically approve comments by previously approved comment authors. Also hold in moderation comments with multiple links as this is a sign of a spammer.

Media - Allows you to customize the default sizes for images uploaded to your blog.

Permalinks - This allows you to customize the URL structure for your blog. The best option is to have a structure that allows keywords from your post / page titles to be implemented into your URL, also known as the post name structure.

Conclusion

Remember you will need to visit and learn about each section of your Dashboard and get comfortable with the management options. Doing so will allow you to improve your blog's design, functionality, and personality. Once you know what it takes to customize your blog, make the necessary tweaks to make it stand out and please your readers.

Chapter 4

How to Write and Create Great Blog Content

Summary: The content of your blog will be the bait that draws your readers. In this chapter we will cover what content your blog consist of, types of content you can be creating, and blogging practices you should follow.

Now that you have your blog set up, your next goal is to create content. Without great content, even the most well-designed, tightly-structured blogs will ultimately fail. There are three types of content you need to create for your blog.

Pages content - Static page content for your blog.

Sidebar content - Static content that appears alongside your blog.

Blog posts content - Regular post content about your niche.

Before you start writing your day-to-day "Blog posts" you will have to make sure the main content - "Pages" and "Sidebar" of your blog is created and uploaded to your blog.

We will explore each of these areas of content in-depth down below.

Pages content

First, you will need to create your page content. As you are starting out, you will want to have static content pages for the following.

About page - The most traditional page on any blog is the about page. This page simply tells new visitors to your blog what it is about, who you are, and why you have a blog about your specific topic.

Contact page - This page allows visitors to your blog to contact you at anytime. It can be a simple page with your email address plus social network links, or you can use plugins like Contact Form 7 to have a simple contact form visitors can use to contact you without leaving your website.

Products/services page - If you created your blog to promote your business, you will want to make sure that there is a page that details the products or services you sell. Alternatively, if you already have a website for your business, you can link to it in your menu.

Disclaimer/policy page - To give yourself a little liability protection, you might want to consider a disclaimers or policy page. For example, if you are writing a health blog, but you're not a medical professional, you may want to create a disclaimer to say that while you offer the best advice possible, you are not responsible for any outcomes that those who follow it experience. You may also want to inform visitors to your website that you use analytics tracking, Google AdSense, affiliate marketing links, and other types of content. A great example of a disclaimer page can be found here.

As you continue to grow your blog, you will also want to consider adding the following pages.

Pillar pages - As you add new content to your blog, you will want to consider creating pillar pages. These are pages that direct visitors to your blog to specific posts on specific topics. Derek Halpern's List Building 101 page is a great example of a pillar page.

Archive page - This page simply guides people to your most recent posts, your top categories, your top tags, and content you have created off of your site, such as guest posts, interviews, podcasts, videos, and similar.

Advertising page - If you want to sell advertising on your blog and you have enough traffic to make it worthwhile for advertisers, create an advertising page that shows off your latest stats (number of website visitors, pageviews, email subscribers, RSS subscribers, etc.).

Be sure to visit other blogs in your niche - preferably larger ones - to see what other pages they have linked in their main navigation bar, their sidebar, and their footer. Chances are, your visitors will be looking for the same types of pages on your blog as well.

Sidebar content

Your sidebar is the smaller column to the left or right of your blog's main content. You will want to add the following content in sidebar widgets for your visitors.

Subscribe widget - Encourage visitors to your blog to subscribe via email or RSS. Email of course is best, especially if you would like to monetize your blog in the future. MailChimp is a great service to use as it is free for the first 2,000 subscribers.

About widget - This is a simple sentence or two about you and your blog for new visitors who may not take the time to read your about page. Having your photo in this blurb of text helps visitors to put a face to the blog, whether you are just the owner and editor managing other writers or the main content author.

Follow widget - Beneath your about widget, you will want to display links to your social profiles so people can follow you. Generally, this will be your Facebook page, Twitter profile, and Google+ profile / page. You can use icons to represent each network, or use official boxes, buttons, and badges from these networks. The latter help you build your social media audience by allowing people to connect with you without leaving your website.

Popular posts widget - A popular posts widget will help direct visitors to your top pieces of content. WordPress Popular Posts plugin will help you create this easily, displaying posts based on comments and view count.

Advertisers widget - If you plan to add advertising banners to your blog, then add them from the start so regular visitors will not be surprised when you do start gaining advertisers. The banners you can use until then could link to products you are an affiliate marketer for, or to products you simply like.

Blog posts content

Before we get into the technical elements of blog posts, there is one fundamental that every blogger in every niche needs to adhere to.

Create content with readers in mind.

You'll read a lot about optimizing your content for search, and while that it is important, if you don't optimize your content for humans, then you'll never gain the exposure that it takes to ultimately get links and rank well in search. If you write content that people love to read, then you will get traffic, social shares, and links as your readership grows.

Basic components of a blog post

The following are the basic elements of a great blog post. We'll talk about how to optimize each for both readers and search engines.

Headline

The headline, or title of your blog post, must be crafted to get the attention of potential readers who may see it in their social media newsfeeds or in search results. Make sure that you've found a great keyword phrase that people in search would use to find blog posts on your topic and include it in your headline.

Introduction

The first paragraph of your blog post will either keep people reading or make people leave. Make sure that it compels people to need to read the rest of your content. You should use your targeted keyword phrase for search at least once in this paragraph.

Main content

This is the main portion of your blog post content. Think of the headline as the promise, and the main content as the fulfillment of that promise - your main content should fully satisfy anyone who visits your post based on the headline. If you create content that does not fully satisfy the promises of your headline, people will start to identify your blog as unfulfilling and thus, stop visiting. The length of your blog posts can range from 300 - 3,000+ words. It's best to alternate while you find the perfect length for your audience.

Sub-headlines

Lots of people will scan your blog content as opposed to reading it word for word. Write sub-headlines that break your content into digestible sections, and make sure those sub-headlines represent the content within them.

Bolded text - Use bolded text in a few areas of your main content to help highlight important points. Use it selectively, otherwise your entire article will seem bolded, thus taking away the ability for bolded portions to stand out as they should.

Bulleted/numbered lists - While you do not want your entire post to be a bulleted or numbered list, bulleted or numbered lists do help separate out steps and lists with useful content.

Media - Supplement the text portion of your content with media, such as relevant images and video. This will help break up your content and help illustrate your points better. Images can also be used as part of the search optimization of your post - include your post's main keyword phrase in the filename of the image as well as the ALT tag.

Conclusion

The conclusion should be a paragraph or two at the end of your post to summarize what the reader should have gotten out of it. If they didn't, chances are, they will go back to see what they might have missed.

The last line of your blog post should be some form of call to action. It can be as simple as asking readers to share their thoughts in the comments or to share the post on social media if they enjoyed it. If your post was written to promote a particular product or service, the call to action should encourage the reader to learn more about it.

You don't have to include all of the elements from this list in every post, but make sure you always have engaging introduction, quality content, and a solid conclusion.

Types of content

As a blogger, you don't have to be limited to standard blog posts to share your expertise. Here are various content types you can use to supplement your blog content.

Podcasts

If you like to speak or interview others, then podcast content should be on your list. It can allow you to gain new readers from those who love podcasts, and you can transcribe or summarize your podcasts in blog posts.

Infographics

For those with designing talent, infographics can be a great way to get more exposure for your ideas. With precision design and backed-up facts, you can get your content featured on sites like Mashable and others that regularly post infographics.

Ebooks

Ebooks are also great freebies for building your email list or, alternatively, something you can sell on your website and Amazon Kindle. You can create them from scratch, or repackage several blog posts that cover a specific theme.

Videos

If you want to gain new visitors from YouTube, or simply feel that it's easier to record a video than write a blog post, then video content should be on your list. All you need is an HD camera (if you want to be on video), a microphone, and/or a good screen capture program like Screenflow if you want to record tutorials from your computer. You can also create videos from webinars, Google+ hangouts, and other platforms.

Presentations

Enjoy creating PowerPoint presentations or Prezis? Then create slideshow content that you can use on sites like Slideshare or to supplement your blog content.

Whitepapers & Case Studies

If you prefer to write in-depth, researched content, then consider whitepapers and case studies. These can be summarized on a blog post and then offered as a free download to build your email list or in exchange for social shares.

The best part about these types of content is that you don't have to create unique content if you want to explore different formats. For example, you can take a blog post tutorial and record it as a video. You can take a podcast transcription and turn it into a blog post. You can take several blog posts and combine them into an ebook. The possibilities are endless.

Best blogging practices

To become a successful blogger in any niche, you will want to follow these best practices.

Set your blogging goals

You'll never know if you are getting the most out of blogging if you haven't set goals for your blogging. Is your goal to make money? Is it to get a new job? Is it to simply find people to connect with about a specific topic? Define your blogging goals, and periodically ask yourself if your blog is helping you meet these goals. If not, ask yourself how you can improve your blog in order to meet those goals.

Aim to become an expert

No matter what your blogging goals are, if you aim to be an expert in your niche, the fulfillment of your goals is sure to follow. People who are known as experts in their niche tend to receive more recognition and income for their content. They also tend to have larger audiences and the option to turn their readers into customers by offering related products and services.

Engage with your audience

The best way to stay in tune with your readers it to engage with them. Some ways to do this include replying to comments, responding to queries from your contact form, joining in conversations with readers on social networks, and visiting your readers' blogs to see what they are interested in and join discussions. As you do this, you will build stronger relationships with your readers and learn more about what they want, something that can help inspire your future content.

Be consistent and realistic

Creating a consistent schedule of posting on your blog helps your readers know when they can expect to hear from you again, whether it's daily, weekly, monthly, or even quarterly. The key to maintaining your consistency is to be realistic. Individual bloggers will find it difficult to create high quality content on a daily basis. Start with weekly, or bi-weekly, and work your way up to daily if that is your ultimate goal. Just don't sacrifice quantity for quality.

Aim to become an expert

No matter what your blogging goals are, if you aim to be an expert in your niche, the fulfillment of your goals is sure to follow. People who are known as experts in their niche tend to receive more rec-

ognition and income for their content. They also tend to have larger audiences and the option to turn their readers into customers by offering related products and services.

Edit your work, or hire an editor

For many people, it's hard to both create content and edit it. As a matter of fact, editing while you write can hinder your creative flow. If you're not able to edit your own, consider hiring a virtual assistant to do it for you. This is especially important if you are not writing in your own native language. Having a native speaker of that language edit your work can boost your credibility - while blog content does not need to be perfect, it does need to be easy to read and consume.

Analyze the data

Be sure to install Google Analytics when you begin blogging and regularly check your data. In particular, you want to make sure that your traffic is growing and see what websites, social networks, and other types of sources drive the most visitors to your blog. You will also want to watch for significant drops in traffic, as these drops may indicate a bigger problem, such as downtime for your website or loss of traffic due to Google algorithm changes.

Conclusion

If you want your blog to thrive and grow, then creating quality content is the answer. Focus on quality over quantity, even if you have to sacrifice frequency and consistency. Your readers will appreciate you for it.

Chapter 5

How to Promote Your Blog and Its Content

Summary: In the previous chapter, you learned how your blog content is the defining factor that will make or break your blog. You learned what it takes to create amazing content, as well as the types of content you can create for your audience. But your content will never help you succeed in blogging if no one ever sees it.
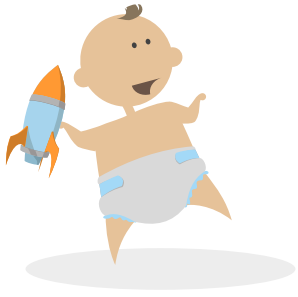
This is why you need to learn some online marketing strategies to help you market your blog as a whole as well as each piece of content you create. This is called content marketing. Your content marketing skills will determine how much traffic comes to your website, how many social shares you receive, how many comments are made on your posts, and how many subscribers you gain.

Ultimately, the goal is to have as many visitors as possible when you start to monetize your blog. Visitors who you can convert into advertising clicks, affiliate referrals, and product / service buyers, depending on your monetization strategy which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Until then, let's look at the many ways you can promote your blog and your content.

Preparing for promotion

Before you start promoting your blog, you will want to make sure it's ready.

This step is checking everything you have done from previous chapters, from setting up your blog to creating your pages and posts.
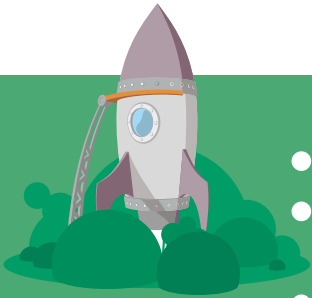
- Check if your core content is live and ready for promotion.
- Test your menu bar and sidebar links to make sure your pages, posts, and archives are opening properly.
- Test your blog on the top browsers (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and Internet Explorer) to ensure that everything looks right.
- Check your contact info and test your contact form to make sure anyone who wants to contact you can.
- Test your blog comment form to make sure people can easily leave comments.
- Test your social sharing buttons to make sure people can share your posts on the top social networks.
- Give your visitors one or more ways to connect with you and subscribe to your blog including an option to subscribe by email.
- Setup Google Analytics to track your visitors, where they come from, and top content pages on your website.
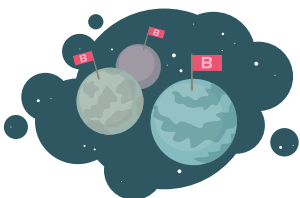
Promotion goals

At the start, you will have three main goals for promoting your blog.

You need to get the word out about your new blog so that those interested in your niche can find your blog, consume your content, and spread the word.

Focus on becoming an authority and gaining trust from your readers and also from other influencers within your niche. Build relationships with top bloggers in your space and strive on improving your name and credibility.

Engagement with your niche market happens every time anyone mentions your blog. When people start discussing your content, be sure to join into the discussion wherever it may be, including on your blog, social networks, forums, etc.

Think of these goals in everything you do when it comes to promoting your blog. Your goals are to get exposure for your blog, build yourself up as an authority, and engage with your niche audience.

Ways to promote your blog

Now, let's look at the ways you can promote your blog as a whole. These are especially important steps when you are just starting out.

Let your connections know about your new blog
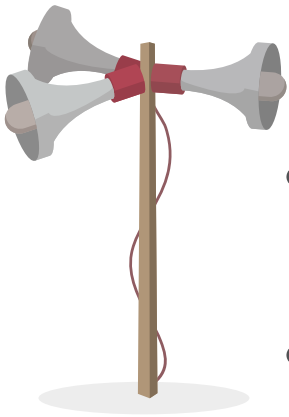
Everyone who comes in contact with you should know that you have a blog. Some good ways to ensure this include the following.

● Add your blog URL to your email signature so your email contacts can check it out. WiseStamp is a great app to try for anyone using Gmail or other browser-based email systems. It will even pull in your latest blog post into your signature.

● Add your blog URL to the social profiles you use the most including Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, and so on. This way, whenever people find you on social media, they can discover your blog as well.

● Add your blog URL to forum profiles and signatures where you participate in discussions, preferably related to your new blog's niche.

● Add your blog URL to author bios of any sites you are already contributing to, including other blogs that you own. Maybe you already have a blog about photography and you are starting a blog about marketing. Your author bio and about page should link up to your new marketing blog.

Network with others at every opportunity

Attend networking events? Be sure to have a quick elevator pitch about your blog when they ask you what you do. If you're at a blogging conference in particular, it's highly acceptable to let people know that you founded yourdomain.com, a blog that helps people learn more about your subject matter. Even if you have a day job that you need to promote, your elevator pitch would be that you are a [your job title], and you also run yourdomain.com, a blog that helps people learn more about your subject matter.

Submit your blog to search engines

In Chapter 3, we suggested a plugin called Yoast SEO. One of the features of this plugin allows you to create a custom sitemap for your blog. You can use this sitemap to submit your blog to search engines through Google Webmaster Tools (for Google) and Bing Webmaster Tools (for Bing and Yahoo).

Submit your blog to directories

While there are hundreds of directories that will list your blog for a specific yearly or permanent fee listing, only a handful should be considered in terms of quality. These include DMOZ (free, but hard to get into), Best of the Web Blogs ($150 for submission), EatonWeb Blog Directory ($35 for submission), and Yahoo Directory ($299 for 7-day listing guarantee). Some of these directories offer free listings as well, but you will be waiting a very, very long time to see yours get added, assuming they add it at all.

Comment on other blogs

Commenting on other relevant blogs is a great way to build relationships with top bloggers within your niche. Research the web to find top blogs in your niche and start commenting on their newest posts. This will help you make them and their readers aware of your existence as well as developing your own authority within the niche.

Contribute to other blogs in your niche

Matt Cutts, Google's head of webspam, has denounced guest blogging as a tactic for SEO. With that said, it's still a great way to get exposure within your niche so long as you are submitting quality content to quality blogs. Find blogs that have lots of social shares and community engagement as judged by the number of comments per post and social followers. Get to know the blog owners and/or editors, establish a relationship with them, and then approach them to see if they are accepting new contributors on their website.

The key is to say new contributors as opposed to guest bloggers - "contributors" tells the blog owner/editor that you are committed to creating high quality content for them as opposed to just slapping something together to promote yourself.

Create a Feedburner account

Feedburner is a service owned by Google that allows you to track the number of subscribers to your RSS feed. Use it to offer your blog visitors a way to subscribe to your blog in their favorite RSS reader such as Feedly.

Optimize your blog for search

Regularly creating valuable content on your blog is one way to get search engines to index your content. If you want blog and your posts to rank for particular keywords, you will want to always strive to optimize both for search. This can be as simple as using the fields provided by Yoast SEO to add a keyword optimized SEO title and meta description to your blog's homepage, main static pages, and each one of your posts.

To stay on Google's good side, avoid overstuffing your blog with keywords. Choose one keyword phrase to optimize for on each page and post. Include it in your SEO title, meta description, and one image on the page.

Start building your mailing list

Don't wait until you start getting a substantial amount of traffic to build a mailing list - start from the very beginning. If on your first day of launching your blog you get two people who love it, you want those two people to be able to give you their email address so you can keep them up to date with what is happening on your blog. Later, this list will be what you use to promote your monetization strategy.

Operating a mailing list is generally not expensive in the beginning. Services like MailChimp allow you to have up to 2,000 subscribers with up to 12,000 emails for free, while services like Aweber allow you to have up to 500 subscribers with unlimited emails for $19 per month.

Look at what your competitors are doing

You don't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to promoting your blog. Just look at what your competitors are doing in terms of marketing strategy. You can use SEO backlink tools to show you the links your competitors are getting which will shed light into their strategies in regards to social networks, directories, guest posting opportunities, and other online marketing tactics. CognitiveSEO has a free Backlink Explorer you can use for this purpose.

Look at paid advertising options

If you have a budget, you can boost your initial traffic through paid advertising. Google AdWords allows you to pay to promote your blog on Google Search and their display networks. Social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and StumbleUpon have their own advertising platforms to help you drive traffic to your blog and blog posts. You can also look at advertising options on other blogs in your niche that receive a lot of traffic. This will generally be in the form of banner advertisements or sponsored reviews.

Ways to promote your blog content

In addition to promoting your blog as a whole, you will also want to promote your blog content, i.e., each, individual blog post. As you promote your content, your blog as a whole will gain more traffic, social shares, and engagement. Here are some ways to promote your content.

Submit your blog posts to bookmarking and voting sites

Similar to directories, there are hundreds of social bookmarking and voting sites. And similar to directories, not all of them are worthwhile. Your goal is to look for social bookmarking and voting sites that have engaged users. These include Delicious, StumbleUpon, Reddit, BizSugar, Inbound, and similar. Note that many of these sites are not fond of people promoting their own content all of the time, so you may want to consider making a friend on those networks and occasionally sharing content with them in hopes that they will submit it to these networks.

Try blog promotion networks

Several networks exist solely for the purpose of gathering people who love to help each other promote their blog posts. These networks include Triberr, Social Buzz Club, Viral Content Buzz, and similar. You can also build your own blog post promotional network as you network with others in your niche. Just have everyone connect in a Facebook group or in an email list where they can share their latest posts.

Establish Yourself on Social Media

By this point, you should have already claimed your preferred name on each social channel. Depending on your niche, certain social media channels can be invaluable. Never forget, though, that social media (aside from paid advertising) is a place to connect with others, be helpful to them, and display your expertise. Don't hop in with a megaphone and act like a barker at a circus. Rather, treat social media like a huge cocktail party -- a place where you can meet others, trade ideas, and network to form alliances. Treat everyone you meet with respect. Your aim is to be of value and engage with your current or future blog readers.

The main social networks you should work towards building connections upon are as follows. Each social media platform should be utilized and approached differently. Chose the one (or ones) that best fit your needs and become an expert at leveraging them to help reach your goals.

Facebook

With over a billion active monthly users, Facebook is the number one social media network. Chances are, many of your potential readers and future customers already have an account there.

One thing to remember is that Facebook tends to be reserved for true "social" interaction. You can launch your blog's Facebook page and start interacting with the community that is already established, but be careful about mixing business with pleasure on this platform. Facebook rewards the engagement with your followers, thus the goal is not the quantity but quality of relevant posts and updates that engage your fans, which can be measured by the number of likes, comments, and shares you receive.

For an overview of how to use Facebook for business, check out the Facebook for Business guide. Social Media Examiner also excellent advice on social media. Find out how to use your personal Facebook page for business by reading this article.

Also remember that Facebook is a great place to promote your posts. You can start by doing so using their paid advertising platform as you grow your own organic audience and reach.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn is the leading social network for professionals. With more than 100 million users, it's a great place to connect with other bloggers and business owners in your niche. The network has a lot to offer when it comes to business-related information for. The down side to this network is that unlike Twitter, you have to know a person
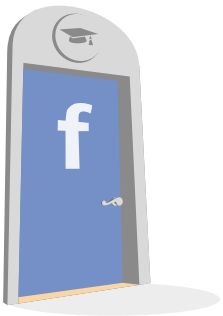
already (or know their email address) to connect with them. Social Media Examiner's excellent 10 tips series can help get you going with this platform. Read their post on 10 LinkedIn Tiips for Buidling Your Business for more.

Pinterest
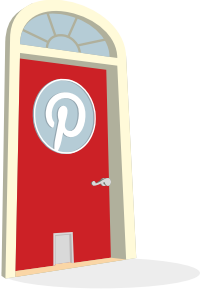
While it is still predominantly used by women, the number of men on Pinterest is increasing. With more than two million active users daily, the statistics on Pinterest are impressive. Melanie Duncan is a Pinterest expert, and her blog can help you get going there. See the Pinterest Tips for Business page for additional information.

Instagram

This site allows you to share photographs via your mobile device. It is similar to Pinterest, in that you can create boards that focus on specific topics.

Here again, remember how important it is to stay centered. Make sure your photographs are what your audience wants to see. This is not to say you shouldn't post items of general interest, but your profile as a whole should draw your desired audience and provide value to them.

Instagram's Getting Started page is an excellent place to learn about the platform. The Social Media Examiner's article on using Instagram for business is an excellent primer for finding out more about this very visual social media channel.
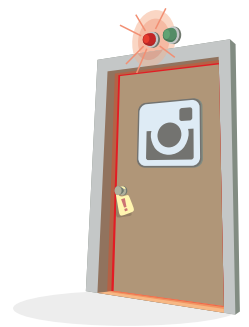
Twitter

There are more than 200 million users on Twitter. Some say it is a one-way conversation, with 140-character (maximum) messages getting fired out constantly with a lot of people talking, but not a lot of people listening. Others have managed to build a strong, engaged following to promote their content towards.

To learn more about Twitter, start with the Twitter 101 guide to Business as a quick-start resource. Also check out this article by Social Media Examiner about Twitter to help you get the foundations in place. There are also plenty of Twitter experts, such as Deborah Anderson. Her Social Web Cafe website has helped many bloggers learn to use Twitter chats to expand their reach.
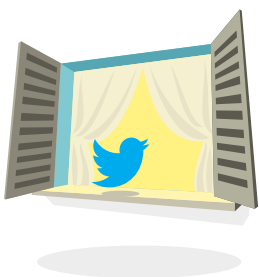
Google+

More than a social media platform, Google is using Google+ as a hubspot for identifying online movers and shakers. The internet giant has moved business listings from Google Places to Google+ and is rewarding those who tie their personal Google+ profile to their other online activities (via author attribution and publisher markup) with special recognition in search results. This may be the one social media platform you should definitely not ignore. Mark Traphagen stays tuned in to all things concerning Google+, so be sure to Follow Mark to stay updated.

YouTube

Now owned by Google, the videos you launch on YouTube can get indexed on the world's largest search engine quickly. Don't forget to apply search engine optimization (SEO) strategies on your YouTube channel and launches - most especially by optimizing your titles and video descriptions with a target keyword phrase. ProBlogger nails the basics in this excellent article.
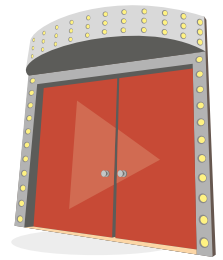
It is not wise to host your videos on your own blog due to the size of video files will lag you down way too much. YouTube is an excellent help in this regard. You can host videos there for free, gain the SEO advantage, and then embed them on your own blog. Check out this Udemy Blog article about using YouTube for business for more information.

Other Social Networkst
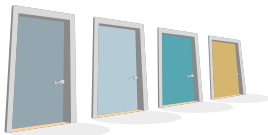
There are other social media possibilities, and new ones appear regularly. For most of us, though, one of the already-popular channels will serve our needs well and deliver maximum promotional benefit. Of course, your business is unique, and you should make use of the social media avenues that best fit your own niche and style. If there is a lesser-known channel where your audience tends to gather, you should be there with them. Whatever you do, don't overextend yourself. Everything you do online is a reflection of your capabilities.

Context is Important

"Content is the king but context is the god"* - *Gary Vaynerchuck*

The context is the circumstances that form and surround an event or idea so it can be fully understood. When it comes to blog content, context is the way you're publishing, distributing, and promoting your content. If you're trying to connect with your audience in the wrong context, it doesn't matter how good your content is. Your content will not be read, shared, or discussed.

Conclusion

Beyond the tips listed, you can come up with other creative ways to promote your blog. Your best bet is to start small and make adjustments to your promotion strategies along the way. Always remember to focus on key fundamentals:

1 Maintaining a clean and properly functioning blog.

2 Creating focused and helpful content.

3 Engaging in conversation and build your authority.

## Chapter 6

How to Make Money from Your Blog

Summary: In this chapter you will learn how to prepare your blog for monetization and monetization strategies for blogs with small (new blogs), medium, and large audiences.
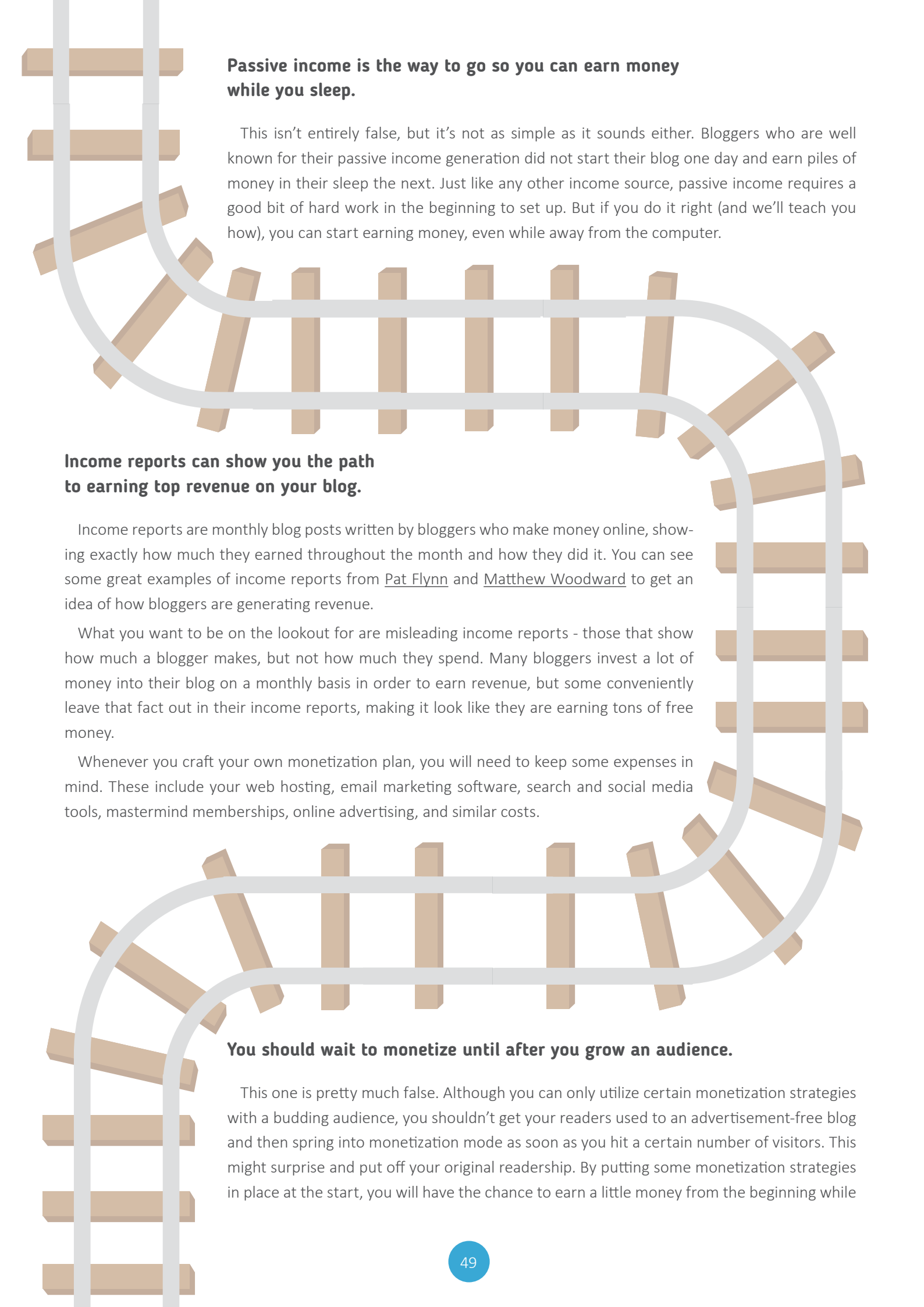
If one of the driving factors for starting a blog was to make money online, then this is the chapter you have been waiting for. Now that you've learned how to setup your blog, create great content, and promote your blog, you are ready to start with monetization.

For those who work regular full-time jobs, it is a great way to generate a side income. For those who plan to dedicate themselves to the monetization strategies, it is possible to use it as regular income.

Monetization misconceptions

First, let's clear up a few misconceptions about blog monetization that you may have heard.
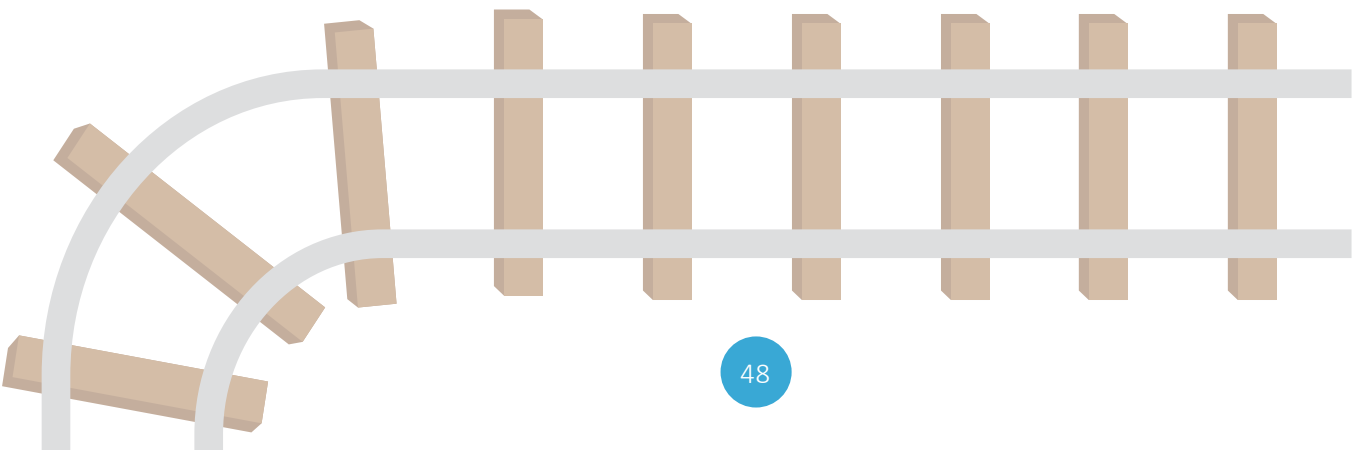
Passive income is the way to go so you can earn money while you sleep.

This isn't entirely false, but it's not as simple as it sounds either. Bloggers who are well known for their passive income generation did not start their blog one day and earn piles of money in their sleep the next. Just like any other income source, passive income requires a good bit of hard work in the beginning to set up. But if you do it right (and we'll teach you how), you can start earning money, even while away from the computer.

Income reports can show you the path to earning top revenue on your blog.
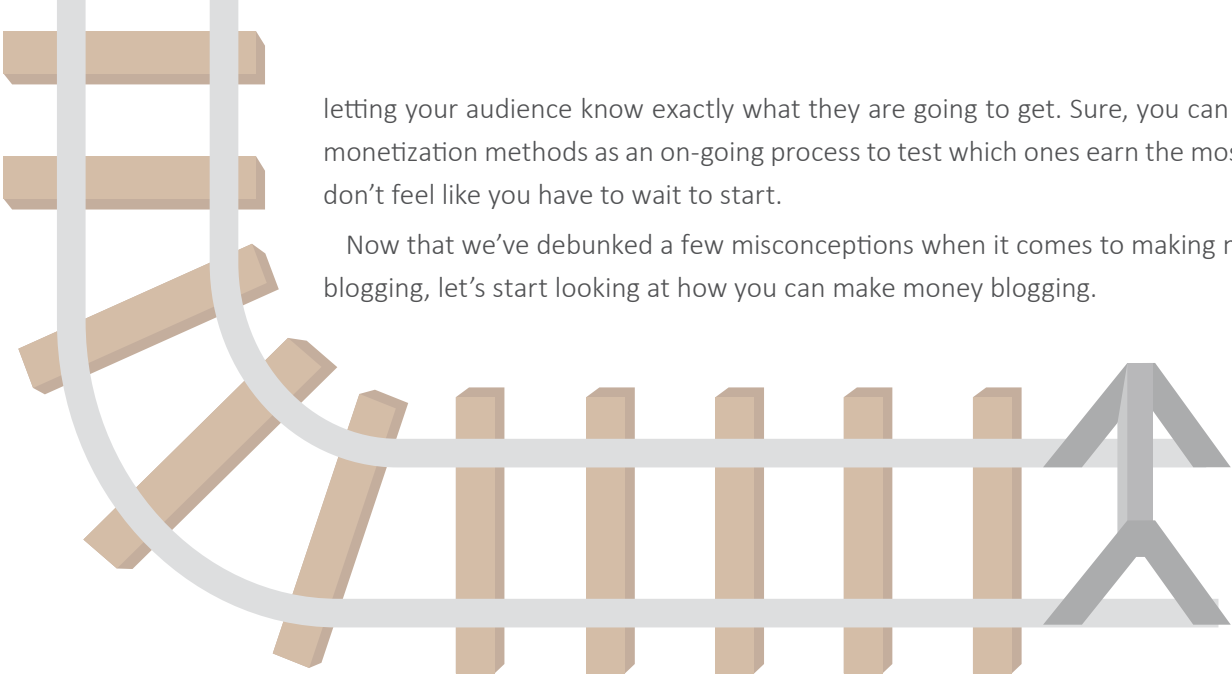
Income reports are monthly blog posts written by bloggers who make money online, showing exactly how much they earned throughout the month and how they did it. You can see some great examples of income reports from Pat Flynn and Matthew Woodward to get an idea of how bloggers are generating revenue.

What you want to be on the lookout for are misleading income reports - those that show how much a blogger makes, but not how much they spend. Many bloggers invest a lot of money into their blog on a monthly basis in order to earn revenue, but some conveniently leave that fact out in their income reports, making it look like they are earning tons of free money.

Whenever you craft your own monetization plan, you will need to keep some expenses in mind. These include your web hosting, email marketing software, search and social media tools, mastermind memberships, online advertising, and similar costs.

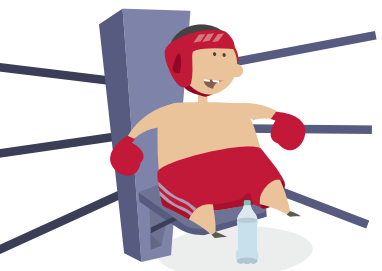**You should wait to monetize until after you grow an audience.**

This one is pretty much false. Although you can only utilize certain monetization strategies with a budding audience, you shouldn't get your readers used to an advertisement-free blog and then spring into monetization mode as soon as you hit a certain number of visitors. This might surprise and put off your original readership. By putting some monetization strategies in place at the start, you will have the chance to earn a little money from the beginning while

letting your audience know exactly what they are going to get. Sure, you can add / subtract monetization methods as an on-going process to test which ones earn the most revenue, but don't feel like you have to wait to start.

Now that we've debunked a few misconceptions when it comes to making money through blogging, let's start looking at how you can make money blogging.

Preparing to monetize

Before you start monetizing, there's one basic thing you need to do to ensure your current and future monetization success: start building an email list.

We've mentioned this before, but it is absolutely essential if you want to earn money in the blogging world. Here's why it is so essential.

- If you start to capture email addresses at the start of your blog, you will have the chance to retain your first visitors as lifelong readers. No one has to know there's only one subscriber on your mailing list so far if you don't tell them.

- Before you have monetization strategies that need email promotion, you can use your email list to drive traffic to your blog by promoting your content.

- Your email list subscribers are yours. You can't save contact information about fans of your page or followers on your Twitter account. Your email list, on the other hand, is exportable. So if your email marketing provider decides to shut down, you take your list and move it elsewhere as opposed to lose it completely.

- Your email list subscribers have more of a chance to see your email messages than social media updates. Facebook reach is slim, as is other networks, since most people are following hundreds of other people and businesses. Getting in someone's inbox means that they will at least see your name on a regular basis, regardless of whether they open that email. And when they do open that email, you have their undivided attention.

- When you start utilizing monetization methods such as email list sponsorship, affiliate marketing, or selling your own products, you will have grown a loyal audience that is used to receiving and consuming your emails. When you start utilizing monetization methods such as email list sponsorship, affiliate marketing, or selling your own products, you will have grown a loyal audience that is used to receiving and consuming your emails. This is much better than starting a list and selling to your subscribers right away.

Fortunately, email marketing does not have to cost and arm and a leg before you start generating revenue. MailChimp allows you to have 2,000 subscribers and send 6 emails per month to them (a total of 12,000 emails) for free. It's a great option for those who need to start a list, but don't have the budget until they start earning revenue.

Now that that's out of the way, let's start with some specific monetization strategies

Monetizations strategies for new blogs
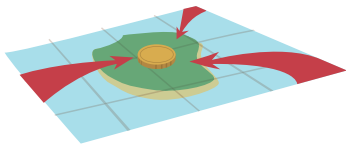
If you have a relatively new blog, or one that doesn't receive a lot of traffic, then the following are monetization strategies you can put into place to start the revenue generation process.

Affiliate marketing

Affiliate marketing allows you to generate income by promoting other people's products for a small commission. This is probably the easiest monetization method to get into at the start because you can apply to most programs with little to no audience. All you need is your blog.

Here are a two examples:

●   If you have a blog all about reviewing WordPress themes, then you should apply to affiliate programs for any WordPress theme that you wanted to write about and promote. Visitors to your blog would likely be interested in WordPress themes, and therefore would be likely to buy a WordPress theme after clicking on a link to it from your site. Popular affiliate programs for WordPress themes include StudioPress, DIYthemes, and ElegantThemes.

●   If you have a blog about gardening, then you should apply to affiliate programs for gardening books and products. Amazon Associates is a great affiliate program to join for any niche as they sell books and products related to just about everything.

Another way to approach it is to be an affiliate for anything you have paid for and use on your blog. So if you use a StudioPress WordPress theme, MailChimp email marketing software, Hostgator hosting, and any other product with an affiliate program, be sure to create a page on your blog with resources aimed at other bloggers in the niche. As your blog grows in popularity, other bloggers will want to follow in your footsteps and might sign up for the same services you use for their own blog, thus generating some revenue for you. Find other affiliate programs by doing a search for paid products and services you use + affiliate program.

You can also go to affiliate networks (sites that connect publishers like you and merchants who want publishers to promote their products) and look at the products they have available to promote. Networks like Shareasale, Ejunkie,

and Clickbank allow you to preview programs before you join, whereas networks like CJ require you to sign up before you see the programs they are in charge of.

To promote affiliate products, you will want to do some of the following:

● Write reviews about the product or service and include an affiliate link within your review post. Don't just regurgitate the information found on the product or service sales page, but write your experience with it inside and out. People can recognize a thorough, honest review from one that is done purely to generate revenue.

● Create a resource page on your blog of the top products and services you recommend, including an affiliate link for each, plus a link to your in-depth review if applicable.

● Get banners for the top products and services you know your audience will love and put them in your blog's header, sidebar, and at the end of posts. Affiliate product banners are also great placeholders for future advertising spots you may want to sell when you start getting a substantial amount of traffic.

● Email your list whenever you write a great review or a particular affiliate program has a great special going on that your subscribers would be interested in.

● Be prepared to do special promotions on your blog and email list around Black Friday and Cyber Monday - it's the hottest time to share affiliate product sales and earn some great income.

Whenever you do promote an affiliate product, be sure to include a disclaimer in your review, at the top of your resource page, or in your emails that you are an affiliate of the product. It's a good way to build trust with your audience, and it's also required in certain countries like the United States.

Google AdSense

Once you have created some content for your blog, let's say 10 - 15 blog posts, you can apply for Google AdSense. Google AdSense allows publishers to generate income from advertisers who want to place ads no the Google Network. Once you sign up and get approved, you will be able to customize ad slots for links, banners, images, and video and place the Google AdSense code for each of these ad slots onto your website. After an hour or two, Google will begin to match the best ads to your website.

The key to Google AdSense is to follow the guidelines and know where to place your ads for the best results. You can experiment with ad placement in your blog's sidebar, below the title of individual blog posts, in your blog's header, and other areas. Google even offers some example site layouts that will help you get the most clicks for your ads.

One thing to keep in mind about Google AdSense - if you are making good money through affiliate marketing or selling your own products and services, the last thing you will want is to encourage someone to leave your website by clicking on an ad. Once you begin making good money through other monetization strategies, you may want to consider removing Google AdSense. It's better to get a $20 sale than a $0.05 click.

Monetization strategies for blogs with small size audiences
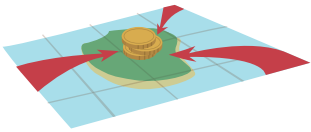
Once you start building up a loyal readership and a good flow of traffic, you can start looking into additional monetization strategies such as the following.
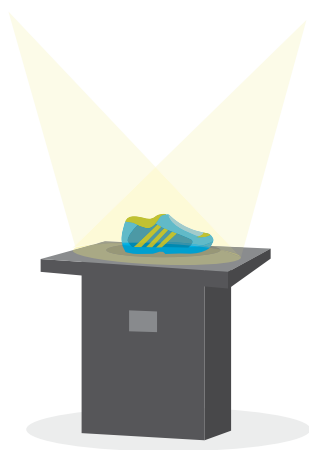
Selling ads

Depending on your niche, you can generally start selling ad space directly to advertisers once you get a certain traffic volume. You can manually manage ads on your blog, or use platforms like BuySellAds that can help you sell and manage ads quickly through their platform with a snippet of code that goes on your website where you want particular ad sizes and types to be displayed. It's also a great platform to use in researching your traffic volume versus how much you can charge for ads.

For example:
- An automotive site with 20k monthly impressions charges $50 per month for their 728x90 leaderboard ad space.
- A site about mythology with 35k monthly impressions charged $3 per 1k impressions per month for their 300x250 top sidebar ad space.
- A site on investing with 50k monthly impressions charged $8.75 per 1k impressions per month for their 728x90 leaderboard ad space.

This is a monetization strategy that has the potential to generate continually increasing amounts of revenue based on your ability to drive more traffic to your blog. Be sure to create an advertising page on your blog and update your metrics (traffic, social audience, email list subscribers, etc.) regularly so you can continue to increase your ad pricing monthly.

Sponsored reviews

In addition to selling ad space, you can also offer sponsored reviews. This is where someone pays you to write about their product or service on your blog. If you choose only the products your audience will most likely be interested in, you can earn money while creating great content - a win win situation. If you choose any product just because someone is paying you however, you could lose your hard-earned audience as they will not be interested in the content.

When you do sponsored reviews, you should always remember Google guidelines about using the rel=nofollow attribute for paid links, or links within a paid review. People will likely offer you more to have a dofollow link - you'll need to use your own discretion on whether the price advertisers offer for a sponsored review is worth risking the wrath of Google.

In order to write a great sponsored review, insist that you want to use the product or service for a trial period to really get some insight into it. That way, you can write a very compelling review.

Selling your own products or services

If you have a loyal following, then you don't need a large audience to start selling products or services. All you need is to be able to answer the following questions.

The first question will help you determine if there is a paying mar-
- Do people ask me for advice or help?
- What do people ask me for advice or help for?

ket for something you can provide for people as a salable product or service, and the second question will help you determine what that product or service is.

Here are a few quick examples:

- People are regularly asking you how you customized your WordPress theme's functionality or design, and they are asking if you can help them do the same for their blog. You can take this as a sign that you need to create an information product (such as a video tutorial series) on ways to customize WordPress themes or offer a service where you will customize WordPress themes.
- People are regularly asking you if you sell prints of your photography. You can take this as a sign that you need to open an online store to sell your photography.
- People are regularly asking you to write content for their business. You can take this as a sign that you need to offer freelance writing / copywriting services.
- People are regularly asking you how you market your blog and if they can "pick your brain" about it on a quick phone call. You can take this as a sign that you need to offer consulting.

If you pay attention to what people are asking you for most often, you'll likely discover a great product or service you can offer. Because for every person that asks you about something, there are probably a dozen others who would also ask the same thing.

Monetization strategies for blogs with large audiences

This is a monetization strategy that has the potential to generate continually increasing amounts of revenue based on your ability to drive more traffic to your blog. Be sure to create an advertising page on your blog and update your metrics (traffic, social audience, email list subscribers, etc.) regularly so you can continue to increase your ad pricing monthly.

Syndicating content

You've likely seen those blocks of links on sites like CNN, Time, and other media outlets that say "Around the Web" or "You Might Also Enjoy". These are generally created by code from content syndication networks (Outbrain, Taboola, etc.), many of which want you to have a large base of traffic before you are considered to apply as a publisher to their networks.
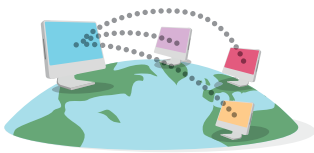
By including blocks of related content like this to your blog, you'll be earning revenue each time someone clicks on an article that looks interesting to them. It's a good situation for both the publisher and the reader - the publisher (you the blogger) gets money for sharing related, valuable links. The reader gets the opportunity to explore new content, and will likely think of your blog as a great source of content to check out.

Selling your blog

It might sound a bit crazy, but if you have a blog that isn't directly tied in to your own name, products, or services, and mostly depends on ad revenue, you may want to consider selling your blog later down the road. Some blogs - like the 20 listed in this article - have earned over $1 million dollars in a sale thanks to how much traffic received, the quality of content they house, and the advertising dollars they rake in on a monthly basis. The more traffic, quality content, and advertising dollars you earn with your blog, the more you can sell it for later down the road if you so choose.
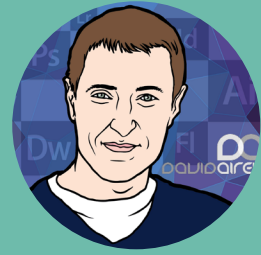
Dave Taylor

GoFatherhood.com

Dave Delaney
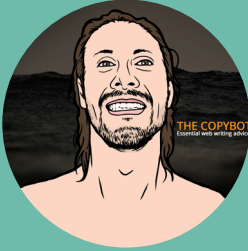
Davedelaney.com

David Jackson

Davidjackson.org

David Airey

Davidairey.com

Demian Farnworth

Thecopybot.com

Derek Sivers

Sivers.org

Dino Dogan

www.dinodogan.com

Greg Hickman

Mobilemixed.com

Henneke Duistermaat

Enchantingmarketing.com

Ian Cleary

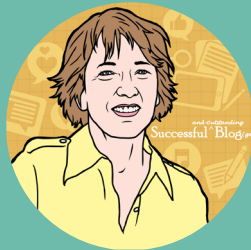Razorsocial.com

Jeff Bullas

www.jeffbullas.com

Karen Lee

Drkarenslee.com

Laura Simms

Createasfolk.com

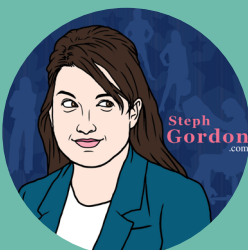**Liz Strauss**

Successful-blog.com

Manda Aufochs Gillespie

Thegreenmama.com

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