

Affiliate Marketing Basics for Beginners

by Tess Tackett

Why am I writing this special report? Because I've "been there and done that". When you're new to affiliate marketing, all of the information online can overwhelm you. After a few weeks of searching forums, reading blogs and soaking up all of the information you can, you might find yourself suffering from information overload. I know I did!

In this report, I'm going to delve in to the topics of choosing the right niche, doing thorough keyword research and laying out a plan. You *need* a blueprint for your business, otherwise you will find yourself wasting time that could have been spent in a productive way!

Whether you've been researching or not, this report will help you get off to a strong start with affiliate marketing. Enjoy the report, and most of all put what you learn in action.

[The truth about affiliate marketing](#)

If you're interested in learning affiliate marketing, you're making a wise decision. For those who are motivated and willing to work at it, affiliate marketing can make you more money than you ever dreamed possible.

Be warned that it is not a "get rich quick" scheme, and it does involve work. That being said, you can build and run a profitable business in just 2 or 3 hours a day. That means that affiliate marketing is something you can work on in the evenings or during your free hours if your work full time!

Honestly, there is no possible way to "get rich" overnight on the internet. Anything you choose to do is going to require time and dedication. With that being said . . .

Why do so many people choose affiliate marketing as a way to earn money online?

Good question - and a legitimate one. Affiliate marketing is something that anyone can do, whether you have absolutely NO budget or can afford to spend some money.

As an affiliate, you are simply the "go-between", connecting the customer with the merchant. Most affiliate networks allow you to sign up as an affiliate at no cost. Once you choose the products/services you want to promote, you are provided with a special link that includes your unique affiliate I.D. Some merchants also offer banner ads and other materials for you to use to sell the product, most at no cost.

With affiliate marketing, you have no responsibilities like storing inventory, shipping, authorizing returns or talking to customers. The vendor takes care of all of that - all you do is sell! That's the beauty of affiliate marketing.

Now, let's get on with what you're REALLY interested in - how to get started!

Choosing a Niche - and Why It is Essential to Your Success as an Affiliate

Choosing a niche is where many new affiliates go wrong. If you've read many forums or advice from others, it's nearly guaranteed that you've read "follow your passions" or "do what you love, the money will come". While this is true with many passions, it's not necessarily the case with all hobbies or passions.

There are basically three ways you can go about it; following your passion if you find that your niche is profitable, going where the money is, or with a topic you've always had an interest in and want to learn more about. If you choose a niche where it has already been proven that there is money to be made (such as weight loss, credit repair, make money online) you will have stiff competition - but I personally wouldn't let that deter me if I were you.

Take some time and write down all of your interests and hobbies

Sit down when you have an hour or so to really think things through. Take out a piece of paper and start writing down everything you have an interest in. Hobbies, your passions, those things you know a little about but want to know more about. If it comes to mind, write it down immediately. Don't try to weed out anything at this point. These topics could be anything from cooking, decorating, or travel to electronics, fishing, sports or "how-to" topics such as how to train your dog. For nearly any topic, there is a way to make money. People are always looking for "how to" do something. Do you know how to make jewelry, or how to build a carport? Great niches.

Once you have completed your list, go over it slowly and think about each one carefully. Is this a topic that would motivate you to write and promote each day, one that will hold your interest for the long term? Do you think there is a way to make money with it? Give each interest careful consideration, then mark through those that are your least favorite.

Now, once you have your list narrowed down a bit you can begin to research in order to learn how competitive it will be. Generally, the less competitive the easier it is for you to make money, but if there aren't many searchers looking for what you are wanting to sell, it won't be a profitable niche.

[How to research your possible niches and keywords](#)

Now, how do you go about finding out if your niche is a good one, or if you need to switch to something else?

First of all, see if any of the topics you have written down are general. For example, if you have written down cooking, break things down a bit further, such as cooking casseroles with beef. The farther you can narrow your niche down, the likelier you will be able to make money sooner as you probably won't face as much competition. Another example is weight loss, which is general and encompasses all kinds of people. In this example, target smaller groups such as diets for women over 40, weight loss for teenagers, getting rid of belly fat for men - you get the picture.

Once you have determined a few niches, it's time to find out how much "demand and supply" you are facing. In other words, you want to find out how many people are searching in your niche and how many other marketers are supplying this need (the competition).

There is a great free tool that will help you do this. Go to:

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

Fill in box that says "word or phrase". In this example, I am using "weight loss for teenagers". Enter the code required, then go down on the left hand side of the page to where it says "match types" and check the "phrases" box. Uncheck the "broad" box. Hit the search button toward the top, and the results will appear shortly.

This tool will give you all kinds of related search terms that people are searching for online, showing both global (worldwide) searches and local. The level of competition displays in a bar just to the right of the search terms. When the box is green all the way across, competition is probably heavy. If the box is only colored in half-way or less, competition isn't so stiff and it may be easier for you to make money using those terms.

"Weight loss for teenagers" gets 720 global searches per month according to the tool, which means you could make some money but probably not a substantial amount. However, "weight loss for teens" gets about 1900 global searches. You can see how this is a great tool to let you know how many searches certain keywords get, and how much competition there is.

You can also learn a lot about a particular niche by searching on Google. For example, when you key in "weight loss for teens" in the Google search bar, there are a couple of ads on the right hand side. These are Google ads, and people pay for them. When you research a topic and there are no ads paid ads at all, 99% of the time it is not a profitable niche. If it were, people would be paying to put their ads where people can see them.

When you see a good number of ads in the right-hand column (5, 6 or more), it's probably a really profitable niche. This is why so many people are paying to advertise on these pages.

Additionally, look at some of the websites listed on the page in the natural results (down the center of the page). If there are quite a few large, authority sites that are selling a product/service in your niche, it's likely that the niche is a profitable one. If most of what you come across are article sites like Ezine Articles, e-How, HubPages and other such sites, it may not be as profitable.

Searching for Profitable Keywords

Now that we've discussed choosing a profitable niche that will hold your interest and motivate you to do the work, it's time to find keywords that will attract the most traffic so that you can make a substantial amount of money. Keywords are simply the words and phrases that people key in every day when searching for products or information online. For example, if you are wanting to learn how to play the guitar, you might key in "learn how to play guitar" or "guide to learn how to play guitar". These are keyword phrases.

As with choosing a niche, you can use the same tool in choosing profitable keywords. The Google tool that we linked to above will help you in your keyword research when you are ready to start drilling down on the keywords you will use in your marketing.

What I want to talk about in this section is "long-tail" keywords, which are simply 3, 4 or more words used together to further target a specific niche. Like we talked about above, keywords like "weight loss" or "dog training" are far too general and competitive when you're first starting out in affiliate marketing. What you want to do is find keywords that get many searches every month, but that do not have such high competition.

Now, when I go to the Google Adwords keyword tool and key in "dog training", there are many keyword phrases that will be better to target such as "dog training books", "dog training guide", "hunting dog training", "dog training techniques", "aggressive dog training" and others that aren't quite as competitive. Again, you will look at the bar next to the keyword to see if the competition appears to be low, high or somewhere in between.

Go back to the Google search bar, key in some of these key phrases and check the competition. Are there many paid ads on the right hand side of the page. Are there many authority sites selling products? If there are, it's probably a profitable keyword. In order to make more money, try to find at least 8 or 10 keyword phrases to use in your marketing. This way, you can build a blog or website and target several search terms that people key in looking for what you are going to offer.

Now, write down all of the keywords you find that you are going to consider using in your affiliate marketing efforts. You want to keep this handy so that when you begin marketing, you won't have to try to remember what your keyword phrases are.

Once you have decided on your niche and chosen your keywords and keyword phrases, you can begin to check out all of the affiliate offers that are related to your niche. If you want to sell information guides, a great place to sign up is Clickbank. For health products, Market Health is a good one. You can find nearly anything you like to promote at Amazon.com. If physical products are what you want to promote such as "shabby chic style love seats" or "cushions for outdoor patio furniture" (keywords here), you can find merchants who offer affiliate programs by keying in on Google:

product you want to promote+affiliate program, so if you were wanting to promote "cushions for outdoor patio furniture, you would key in "cushions for outdoor patio furniture+affiliate program" and hit enter. This will bring up many merchants that offer an affiliate program so that you can promote their products.

Signing up for an affiliate account is usually free. Just search the sites you find for a link or tab that says "affiliate program" or "partner with us". If you don't see anything like that, contact the company and ask about an affiliate program.

Once signed up, you will be provided with your own special affiliate link and possibly banners, e-mail messages, classified ads or other tools to use in your marketing.

[Now It's Time to Start Selling!](#)

Now, it's time to start marketing! Your next step will be to set up a website or blog, which is easy today with all of the templates available. Most of these website builders and blog platforms are set up similar to a Word document, so that all you have to do is type out the content! Icons allow you to add pictures, banners, create links and more. I suggest Wordpress.org if you plan to build a blog.

On your website or blog, you will want to use the keyword phrases that you chose earlier in your keyword research. I suggest that on a regular website, you stick to about 2 keywords per page. On a blog, you simply write your posts around a keyword phrase, using it in your title and throughout your post. Don't overdo it; a good way to use keywords is to stick to a 1 to 2% keyword density. So, if your post is 300 words long, use your keywords and phrases about 3 to 6 times throughout. This is how search engines find your website or blog when people are searching for what you have to offer. The same with a website page; if you are using two keyword phrases, use each one about 4 to 6 times on a 400 to 500 word page.

I recommend [Wordpress.org](#) to build a blog using [Hostgator](#) as the host for your blog. If you decide to build a website, Hostgator is still a great host, and when you buy a domain name for your site you can use the website builders that Hostgator offers. They have a couple of them for you to choose from.

Once you have your website or blog set up and have some great content on it about your niche, you will start driving traffic to your website. The average person knows nothing about how this works; unfortunately, some people believe if you build a website or blog people will just show up. This is not true! With all of the competition, you have to make a way for people to find you. This can be done in a number of ways, both free and paid.

A word about content here: *What you put on your website or blog determines whether your visitors will leave immediately or stick around because they like what they see. Don't copy off of other websites in your niche! Write informative, valuable content that is geared toward what your visitor wants. Also, don't talk about yourself too much. As terrible as it sounds, visitors don't want to know about you - they want to know what you can do for them.*

A few of the most effective ways to send traffic to your website or blog is to write articles and link to your website. You can also comment on blogs related to your niche; just find a post you enjoyed reading, then comment on it leaving a link to your site. Do this on a regular basis for the most traffic! Writing articles is free, as is blog commenting. Do both as often as possible.

If you have a Facebook account, spread the word about your business - the same goes for Twitter. No matter how you promote, you don't want to come across as a pushy sales person. It's also a good idea to join online forums that are relevant to your niche, as you can place a link in your signature that leads back to your site. The more you get involved in the forum conversations, the more your link will be exposed.

When linking to your site from articles, forum signatures, blog commenting and other places, use keyword rich text. Here is how you make a link that will display as your keywords:

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<a href="http://www.your-domain-name-goes-here">keywords go here</a>
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Using this HTML code, your link will show up as the keywords only, such as "aggressive dog training". Using your keywords in links helps the search engines understand what your site is about, which helps over the long term with increasing traffic.

Pay-per-click ads are another way to drive traffic, but you will spend money. These are the ads you see on the right-hand side of the page when you do a search on a topic, like we were talking about earlier in this report. These ads are extremely effective if well-written, but you will really need to learn about it before you spend your money. You can search for "how to use pay-per-click ads" or "how to use Google Adwords" and find lots of information on how to use these ads so that they will make you money instead of costing you.

These are just a few methods you can use to drive traffic to your website so that you can sell your affiliate marketing products. You can learn many other methods by searching for the information online, or by reading forums and blogs related to affiliate or internet marketing.

Developing a Plan is Essential to Your Success

If you were to start a business offline, you would devise a plan, wouldn't you? No one starts off a business without a plan. It's no different with an online business. If you're going to succeed, you need a good plan. Without one, you will get up every morning not knowing what you are going to do that day - which could end up with very little accomplished.

Most beginners start out writing articles to promote their business, but if you have the money consider paid ads as well. Write down your goals for your business, and be realistic. You will be severely disappointed if you write down a goal to make \$500 your first week, then make only \$20. By setting small goals and reaching them, you will stay motivated to keep working hard on your business. You may want to set your goals by the week, bi-weekly or even monthly, whatever works best for you.

Every evening, write down what you intend to do the next day for your business. This may be to write 2 articles and distribute to article directories, to put a new post on your blog, to comment on 3 other blogs or to keep working on your website. There are literally dozens of things you can do that will lead to your success, but the most important thing is to take action on every new thing you learn.

Commit to work on your business for whatever time you have available each day. If you work full time and have small children, it may be that you can only work an hour each day. If you can work 4 hours, even better. No matter how much time you have to work on your business, make the most of it. Don't be tempted to go check your e-mail or visit on Facebook for a few minutes. This will eat up your productive time that should be spent on developing and marketing your business!

It's also a good idea to find a quiet place in your home to work, so that you aren't distracted by the telephone or television.

The point is, lay out a plan and stick with it. Don't expect results the very day you put your blog or website up, and don't even expect to see great results in a week. Building a successful business takes time, so try not to get discouraged. The "gurus" as they're called online who make tens of thousands of dollars a month with affiliate marketing are those who stayed motivated and focused, who worked on their businesses every day.

I hope this report has helped you understand the basics of getting started with affiliate marketing. Of course, this is the "bare bones" of getting started! There is plenty more to learn, you will find that you learn something new every day - especially if you research the topic and read blogs or visit forums related to affiliate marketing.

The best of luck to you and remember - hang in there! Keep this saying in mind "when you fail to plan, you plan to fail". This is why you have to take action, make a plan and stick with it.

Best Regards,

Tess Tackett

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P.S. If you want to learn EVERYTHING about affiliate marketing in a 31-day step-by-step plan that takes you from day one all the way through day 31, I highly recommend a guide by one of the most trusted sources online today. Jimmy D. Brown (a fellow Arkansan) offers a killer affiliate marketing guide called " [The 31-Day Guide to Profiting as an Affiliate](#) " - GREAT STUFF!

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