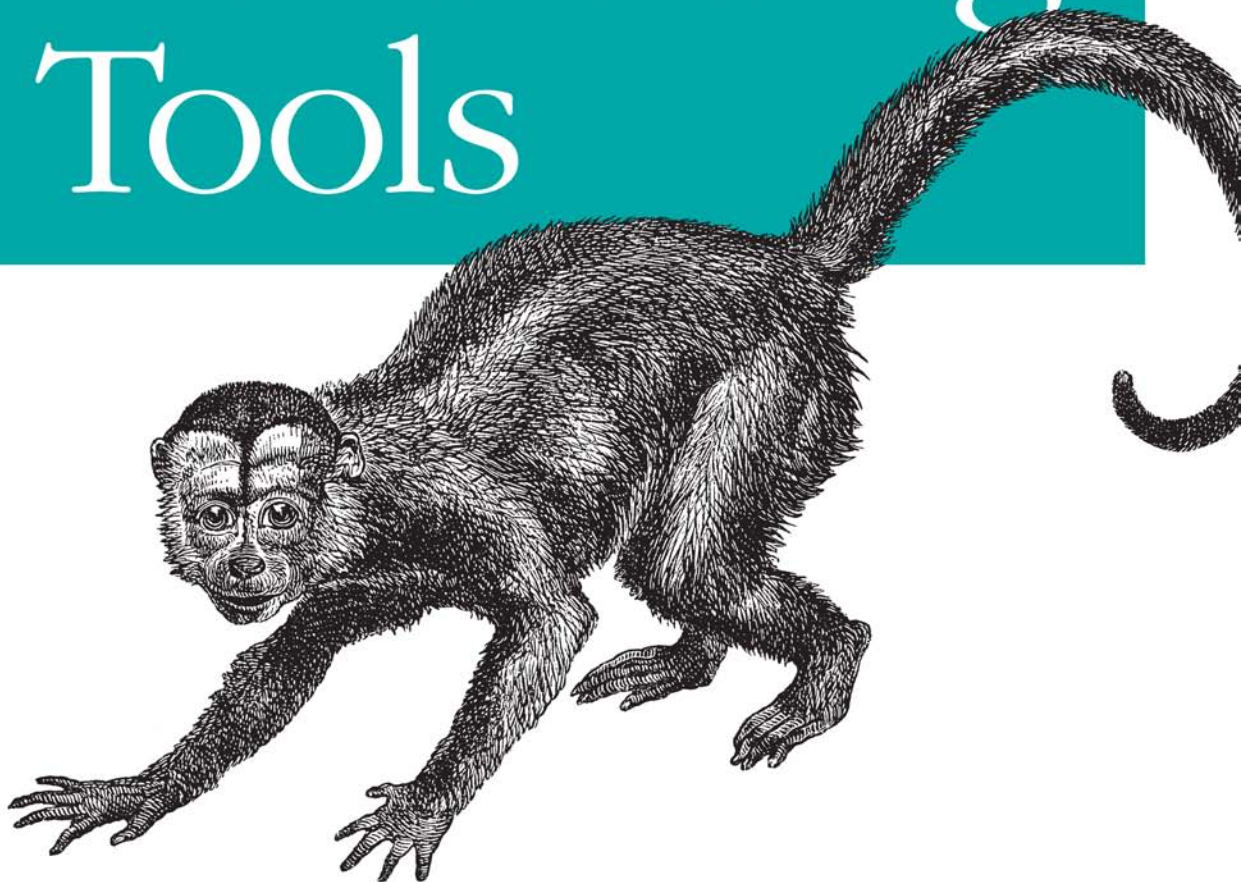


*Cashing in with AdSense,
AdWords, and the Google APIs*

2nd Edition

Google Advertising Tools



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*Harold Davis
with David Iwanow*

Google Advertising Tools

SECOND EDITION

Google Advertising Tools

Harold Davis with David Iwanow

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Google Advertising Tools, Second Edition

by Harold Davis with David Iwanow

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Table of Contents

Preface	xiii
---------------	------

Part I. Making Money with a Website

1. Creating Successful Websites	3
The Taxonomy of Success	4
Entertainment	5
Useful Free Services and Software	6
Magazines and Newspapers	8
The Blogosphere	9
Practical Information: Content Sites and Niches	10
E-Commerce Sites	11
Tools for Measuring Popularity	12
Using the Google Toolbar	12
Let the Google Search Engine Be Your Guide	13
Finding Popularity with Alexa	15
How Much Content Is Enough?	17
Presenting Content	18
Page and Site Design	18
Page Size	19
Images, Video, and Podcasting	20
Keeping Content Fresh	20
Positioning Ads	21
Content Architecture	23
Separating Content from Design	23
Server-Side Includes	25
PHP Includes	27
Optimal Include Layout	28
Where Does Content Come From?	29
The Power of Community	29
Action Items	31

2. Creating Effective Marketing Plans	33
Telling a Story	33
The Elevator Pitch	36
Basics of Marketing	36
Creating a Plan	38
Creating a Checklist	40
Naming Your Site	40
Introducing SEM	41
Comparing SEO with SEM	42
Crafting the Blended Campaign	43
Action Items	43
3. Driving Traffic to a Website	45
Submitting Your Sites to Search Engines	46
Important Search Engines for Submission	47
Submission Tools	47
Working with Google	49
Taking Advantage of Site Mapping	54
Working with Directories	57
Understanding Taxonomies	58
Getting Open Directory Project Listings	58
Getting Yahoo! Directory Listings	62
Becoming Popular by Generating Inbound Links	63
The Best Inbound Links	65
Finding Sites to Make a Link Request	65
Making the Link Request	66
The Power of the Press Release	68
Unleashing Your Inner Blogger	71
Using Syndication Feeds to Your Benefit	73
Creating Feeds	74
Telling the World About Your Feed	75
Submitting Feeds	76
Creating Email Lists and Surmounting the Spam Problem	77
Action Items	78
4. Nuts and Bolts of SEO	81
SEO's Evolution	82
The SEO Advantage	83
What SEO Can (and Cannot) Do	83
Free Tools	85
Google Webmaster Tools	86
Commercial SEO Analysis Software	88
More About How Your Site Appears to a Bot	89

Images	89
Links	90
File Formats	90
Viewing Your Site with an All-Text Browser	91
Excluding the Bot	92
The robots.txt File	94
Meta Robot Tags	95
Meta Information	96
Design for SEO	99
Site Design Principles	100
Words and Keyword Density	100
Site Design Principles	105
Using PageRank	105
Linking	109
Inbound links	110
Outbound Links	111
Cross Links	111
Avoiding Overly Aggressive SEO	112
Google's Prohibitions	112
Why Not to Be Overly Aggressive	115
Action Items	115
5. Making Money with Affiliate Programs	117
Kinds of Ad Programs	118
Understanding Affiliate Programs	119
Mechanics of the Process	120
Creatives	123
Areas of Concern	126
Working with an Affiliate Program	130
Benefits of Affiliate Aggregators	130
Finding an Affiliate Aggregator	131
Ad Hoc Affiliation	145
The Amazon.com Associate Program	148
Action Items	153
6. Making Money by Hosting Advertising	155
Understanding Cost Per Click (CPC)	156
Contextual Relevance	158
How Good Is the Context?	160
Serving Ads	161
Dollars and Cents	163
CPC Vendors Compared	165
Placing Ad Units on Your Site	166

Signing Up	166
Choosing the Kinds of Ads	167
Selecting Ad Formats	168
Adding Code to Your Pages	173
Display and Banner Ads	176
Action Items	177
7. Understanding the Google Behemoth	179
The Parts of Google	180
Blogger	183
Book Search	183
Directory	183
Gmail	183
GOOG-411	184
Google Health	184
Maps	184
Product Search	185
Scholar	185
YouTube	185
Content Versus Search	186
Anatomy of a Search Query	187
Google Syntax and Operators	189
The Rules of Simple Search	189
Effective Searching	190
Advanced Search	191
The Search Results Page	191
The Automated Ad Broker: AdWords	193
Action Items	195

Part II. Cashing in with AdSense

8. Working with AdSense	199
Applying for an AdSense Account	199
Setting Account Options	203
Payment Preferences	203
Ad Display Preference	205
Account Access	205
Reviewing Payment History	206
Filing Tax Information	206
AdSense Programs	207
AdSense for Content Ad Settings	211
Ad Type	212

Ad Format and Colors	213
Ad Channels	218
Getting the Code	218
Managing Ads	224
Custom Ad Colors	225
Using Channels	227
Applying Competitive Filters	229
Site Authentication, Ad Review, and Allowed Sites	230
AdSense for Search Settings	230
AdSense for Feeds	235
AdSense for Domains	239
Video Units	243
Linking Google AdSense to Google Analytics	246
Action Items	247
9. Making Sense of AdSense	249
Fundamentals of Navigation	249
Understanding the Metrics	253
Running Reports	254
Saving a Report as a Template	255
Choosing a Date Range	256
Page, Unit, or Ad Impressions	257
Aggregate Versus Channel Data	257
Statistics	259
Downloading a CSV File	260
Other Program Performance	261
Search Performance	261
How Are Your Parked Domains Doing?	262
Optimization Tips	263
Site Diagnostics	264
Your Earnings	265
Tools Beyond AdSense for Tracking	266
Listening to Web Logs	267
Web Analytic Software	273
Action Items	274

Part III. Working with AdWords

10. Using AdWords	277
Signing Up for an Account	277
Creating Your Account	277
Creating Your First Campaign	280

Bidding and Budget	282
Advanced Settings	283
Creating an Ad	284
Crafting an Ad	286
Choosing Keywords	288
Providing Payment Information and Activating Your Account	289
Graduating	290
Ad Campaigns and Ad Groups	291
Creating and Editing Ad Campaigns	292
Creating a New Campaign	293
Editing Campaign Settings	299
Ad Groups	308
Getting a My Client Center Account	312
Action Items	314
11. Improving Performance	315
Monitoring Your AdWords Activity	315
Understanding Your Campaign Summary	317
Drilling Down into a Campaign	320
Understanding Ad Group Performance	321
Campaign Management Tools	325
Using the Ads Diagnostic Tool	326
Optimizing Your Ads	330
Action Items	339
12. The Zen of AdWords	341
The Customer Life Cycle	341
Keywords	342
Getting Seen	343
Test Your Ads	344
Landing Pages That Work	344
Tracking	345
Balance	345
The Path of Indirection	345
Success via Iteration	345
Targeting the Competition	347
Estimating Traffic	347
Exclusion	350
Excluding Sites and Categories	350
IP Exclusion	352
Action Items	353

13. Advanced Performance Monitoring	355
Using AdWords Reports	355
Kinds of Reports	356
Creating a Placement/Keyword Report	357
Conversion Tracking	362
Understanding Conversion Tracking	363
Tracking PayPal Purchases	367
Tracking Visitors to a Crucial Page	373
Google Analytics	374
Getting Started with Google Analytics	376
Using Google Analytics	379
Website Optimizer	383
Action Items	383
14. AdWords beyond CPC	385
Display Ad Builder	385
Mobile Ads	392
Video Ads	395
Advertising on TV	396
Action Items	399
Index	401

Preface

In the five years since the first edition of *Google Advertising Tools* was published, Google tools for making money from content with advertising (Google AdSense) and for creating contextual advertisements (Google AdWords) have become even more important to every business with a web presence. This software is now ubiquitous in the life of anyone doing business on the Web. In addition, these programs and the related Google offerings have greatly expanded in functionality and complexity.

In the first edition of *Google Advertising Tools*, I noted that “advertising on the Web is a \$7 billion market...with a 40 percent estimated annual growth rate.” Give or take a few percentage points, this growth prediction has proven accurate, and the lion’s share of it belongs to Google. But no one could have known the extent to which Google has expanded into other areas of our lives, from video to office applications to mobile telephony and beyond.

Five years is forever in Internet time, and in those intervening years the Google AdSense and Google AdWords tools have grown even more useful and powerful—and more complex. The need to understand Google’s advertising tools has also become more universal.

Every business and businessperson needs to know how to position advertising with AdWords, and should consider how to capitalize on the moneymaking potential of AdSense. Effective use of both programs requires a practical mastery of a number of related issues, including how to create an effective Internet marketing plan, implement Search Engine Optimization (SEO), understand the structure of search, and track results using programs such as Google Analytics. Besides covering AdSense and AdWords, this revision of *Google Advertising Tools* explains these topics.

Google Advertising Tools has been rewritten to take into account changes and advances in the software, as well as the different needs of our times.

The first edition of *Google Advertising Tools* explained how to write code that takes advantage of the Google APIs. However, this kind of programming has become a specialized arena that no longer belongs in a book aimed at the general business public. Therefore, this material has been omitted from the revised edition.

At the same time, the AdSense and AdWords programs have grown to include so many features that they can seem downright intimidating to someone coming to the programs for the first time. Don't worry: I'll help you host your first AdSense ads and launch your first AdWords campaigns easily and without fuss. More advanced users will find the explanations of many potentially confusing bells and whistles helpful.

By the way, Google is constantly improving the features and user interfaces of its advertising tools (as is true of many web-based applications). So, by the time you read this book, the way these applications look may be a little different than they do here. But don't worry: the core functionality will not have changed, and you should be able to use the directions in this book without any significant problems.

My focus in *Google Advertising Tools* is to help you run your business—whether it is large or small—in a more profitable way through effective use of Google's advertising software.

Organization

This book is organized into three parts, with each part containing a number of chapters. Taken as a whole, these parts cover the gamut of the Google advertising tools. However, each part can be read as a self-contained unit, and each part is aimed at readers with different needs.

- **Part I, *Making Money with a Website***, Chapters 1 through 7, explains how to create a successful website, how to create a marketing plan, how to drive traffic to a website, the nuts and bolts of SEO, how to make money from a content-based website, how to build a site that will get traffic, how to get your site noticed, and the many ways to make money with advertising on your site.
- **Part II, *Cashing in with AdSense***, Chapters 8 and 9, explains how to work with Google's AdSense, the premier contextual advertising program for content sites. Participating in the AdSense program is probably one of the best ways to monetize your site.
- **Part III, *Working with AdWords***, Chapters 10 through 14, explains the nuts and bolts, and metrics, of the Google AdWords program, a highly successful mechanism that anybody with a valid credit card can use to place advertisements that reach over 80 percent of users of the Internet. I've added chapters that cover how to improve AdWords performance, AdWords tactics and strategies, and how to monitor performance. A final chapter explains AdWords programs that go far beyond contextual text ads.

If you read all three parts, you will get a comprehensive picture of how advertising works on the Web and how you can use the Google advertising programs to your advantage.

Assumptions

This book does not explain HTML and will not tell you how to create or modify websites. To put the concepts and software explained into practice, you need to have basic knowledge of web fundamentals and skills, or you need to work with a webmaster who does.

[Part I, *Making Money with a Website*](#), and [Part II, *Cashing in with AdSense*](#), are intended for readers who have, or are interested in building, websites that can be used to make money with advertising. To take advantage of this material, you will need to be able to publish web pages and modify the HTML code of these pages; for example, to add affiliate links and the code needed to display Google AdSense ad units on your pages.

You don't need any technical skills to become an effective advertiser on the Web using Google's AdWords program, although great analytic business skills are a plus. So in a sense, [Part III, *Working with AdWords*](#), is the least geeky part of this book, although as you'll learn when you read [Part III](#), advertising on the Web does have its own complex discipline and metrics. If you want to take advantage of AdWords and Google Analytics tracking features, you'll need to be able to add JavaScript code to your HTML pages.

To profit from [Part III](#), you need, of course, a service or product to advertise that makes you money, but webmasters who are simply interested in monetizing the content of their own sites, and not in advertising per se, will gain from an understanding of "how the other half lives." An interesting idea to explore is whether you can profitably drive traffic to your site using AdWords and make more revenue from AdSense and other programs than it costs you to get the traffic.

Many people who are interested in business and the Internet should regard the parts of this book holistically: no matter what part of Internet advertising is most crucial to you, your understanding will be improved with knowledge of the full life cycle of planning, driving traffic, implementing SEO, and hosting and creating ads.

About the Examples

Various fragments of HTML and code are presented in this book, such as the short JavaScript code snippets used to display Google AdSense ad units on your web pages. Except for the material in [Chapter 4, *Nuts and Bolts of SEO*](#), you won't need to work with this code beyond copying and pasting the snippet that Google provides for you.

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The following typographical conventions are used in this book:

Plain text

Indicates menu titles, menu options, menu buttons, and keyboard accelerators (such as Alt and Ctrl).

Italic

Indicates new terms, URLs, email addresses, filenames, file extensions, pathnames, directories, and Unix utilities.

Constant width

Indicates commands, options, switches, variables, attributes, keys, functions, types, classes, namespaces, methods, modules, properties, parameters, values, objects, events, event handlers, XML tags, HTML tags, macros, the contents of files, and the output from commands.

Constant width bold

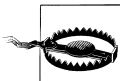
Shows commands or other text that should be typed literally by the user.

Constant width *italic*

Shows text that should be replaced with user-supplied values.



This icon signifies a tip, suggestion, or general note.



This icon indicates a warning or caution.

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With three little boys and a baby girl in the house, music and a good headset are obligatory. Artists I listened to during the revision of this book include Greg Graffin, Alison Krauss, Robert Plant, Bruce Springsteen, and Sara Watkins. These musicians are, of course, responsible for all errors and omissions in the text, while I alone deserve credit for everything I happened to get right!

Thanks to David Iwanow, who revised several of the later chapters after Google updated its AdWords interface. David would like to thank Adam Briggs, his account manager at Hot Goanna, for his assistance in ensuring that the updated information and images would be as current as possible.

PART I

Making Money with a Website

Creating Successful Websites

“Build it and they will come” is a wonderful line in the movies. Too bad it’s usually not quite so easy in real life! True, good web content is occasionally—not always—discovered surprisingly quickly. More often, it requires a great deal of disciplined work to draw traffic to a website, no matter how good the content of the site is.

And what is a good site and good web content, anyhow? “Good” does not mean a site with a halo! The way I use the word *good* in this chapter is perhaps self-referential: a site, and its content, are good if the site and its content draws traffic (or can draw traffic when suitably promoted).

The topic is important because having good content is the single most important determinant in where a site stands in search rankings and whether the site draws traffic. A site that draws traffic is a potential money maker, or can help you fulfill your business goals even if these don’t include direct revenue creation. Obviously, other factors besides content do come into play in determining search rankings, but there is no substitute for quality content.

Having well-formed and properly tagged content on a site is nice, but it’s not nearly as important as the site content itself. Keeping content fresh and making sure there are good links into your site help—but nothing beats good content.



Inbound links, explained in [Chapter 4](#), are at the heart of Google’s PageRank system. But the rationale for making these links important is that they are an “objective” way of discovering, and ranking, good content.

So let’s take a closer look at how web content can be categorized.

If your site has a great deal of traffic, then the site’s traffic is *broad*. Google itself is a prime example of a broad-traffic site; people use Google to search for a myriad of different things. But narrow, or *focused*, traffic can be more useful to advertisers than broad, unfocused traffic. For example, a site discussing complex ophthalmological

conditions might be very successful with targeted advertising even if it only draws a few hundred users a day. Google’s traffic becomes more focused, and less broad, when a keyword search is initiated. All the targeting in the world won’t help unless you get some eyeballs.

As I’ve suggested, to make money with your website content, it’s a necessary (but not sufficient) condition that you have good content—either broad or targeted at a specific niche. *Content* can mean information, but it also can mean other things—for example, software applications or jokes.

From a technical viewpoint, there are some issues with setting up a content website so that you can be flexible as you go along. Flexibility is good—to make money with advertising, you need to do a great deal of tweaking. I’ll explain how to set up sites so that you can easily modify advertising as you go along without having to rewrite your entire site.

The Taxonomy of Success

There’s a great deal of variation in good—successful—content websites. The gist of these sites varies from humor to practical to editorial opinions and beyond. It’s hard to generalize. But successful content sites typically do tend to fall into at least one (maybe more than one) of the following categories:

- The site is humorous and makes visitors laugh.
- The site provides a useful free service.
- The site is an online magazine or newspaper.
- The site provides opinions in the form of a blog or blogs.
- The site provides practical information.
- The site sells a popular product or service.
- The site services a community and provides communication tools for that community.

The only thing these kinds of sites have in common—and there are undoubtedly other ways successful sites can be categorized—is that they draw traffic (either focused or broad). Therefore, they are “good” sites, using my self-referential definition, and are excellent venues for web advertising. In short, they use web content to make money—and making money with your website content is the topic of the first part of this book. Even if you don’t care about making money from content on your website—perhaps because you are an online retailer with the primary goal of increasing prospects rather than selling ad space—the issues are the same: you need good content to attract the search rankings (and therefore the traffic) that you desire.

In this section, I'll drill down further on the categorization, or *taxonomy*, of successful sites without spending too much time on the issue. As U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harlan Stewart once commented about obscenity, it's hard to define good content, but you know it when you see it.



The section “[How Much Content Is Enough?](#)” on page 17 provides information about the mechanics of content creation—in other words, how many pages of content do you need, how frequently should it be updated, and so on.

Entertainment

Obviously, entertainment is huge on the Web. Many of us spend too much time surfing, and sites primarily aimed at entertainment can be great traffic draws. The best entertainment destinations typically involve community participation (see “[The Power of Community](#)” on page 29). Other common properties of good entertainment sites is that they involve humor, and even though entertainment is the primary thrust of the site, often there is an important educational or communicative component as well.

YouTube, owned by Google and shown in [Figure 1-1](#), is a good example of a broad site that combines entertainment with other forms of communication. Many people visit YouTube simply for its entertainment value. In addition, it's not uncommon to find software training material posted as YouTube videos and other kinds of material that are not necessarily entertaining (although they may be edifying).

Some successful entertainment web content sites fill relatively smaller niches. For example, CollegeHumor, shown in [Figure 1-2](#), is at the time of this writing the top search result in Google for the term “humor.” CollegeHumor hosts content of a type and tone that you'd expect considering its target demographic, and it's very successful in its role as a niche entertainment site.

There's a final category of entertainment site that tends to show specific content based on a current trend or news item. I hesitate to give specific examples in this category because these sites, which are mostly parodies or humorous in some other way, tend to have short half-lives. Like stars going nova, they can draw tons of traffic for a short while and then fade from view.

Today everyone is bombarded with content in a variety of mediums. Things come and go quickly. For the most part, topical humor sites that are *static*, meaning that the content doesn't change, publish content that can be expected to fade from public interest—which means that to make money from this content, you must be prepared to strike while the iron is hot because it will only be popular for a short while.

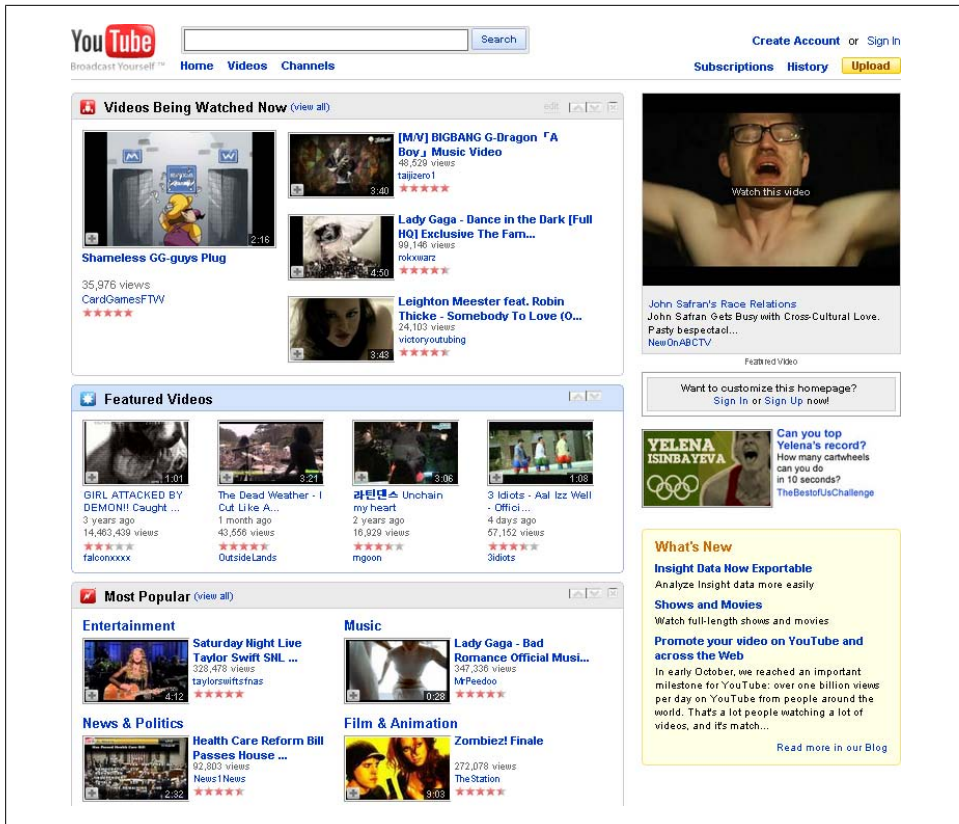


Figure 1-1. YouTube lets users share videos and has become an immensely popular destination site

Useful Free Services and Software

TinyURL provides a practical and very useful (but simple) service: it allows you to convert long, unwieldy URLs—for example, like those you often see on Amazon.com when you select an inventory item—into short, convenient URLs that are easy to use in HTML code (and easy to enter in a browser). Astoundingly, this service is free. Last time I looked, TinyURL had more than 185 million hits a month. Talk about traffic!

In part, a service like TinyURL works to generate ad revenue because it is so targeted. If you go to the site, you'll find Google AdSense content ads for things like DNS (Domain Name Server) services and software that fixes technology problems with browsers. In other words, technology that addresses the problems of reasonably savvy web users is likely to be contextually relevant to the concerns of visitors to TinyURL. Enough users click these ads to more than justify the startup cost and ongoing costs of maintaining the URL conversion service.



Figure 1-2. CollegeHumor features content that interests its target audience, which is, well, college kids, mostly male

It's splitting hairs to try to decide whether sites that provide access to free downloadable software are providing a service or information. Whatever the case, a site that provides information, links, resources, and downloadable software covering a particular technology can draw a great deal of traffic.

For example, if you want to learn about RSS and Atom syndication software—tools for reading and writing feeds—and to download this software (and find easy one-stop links

for the location of the download sites), a good site to visit is the [RSS Compendium](#). Because of their usefulness, one-stop technology sites such as the RSS Compendium (whether or not they provide access to downloads) can draw considerable traffic—and content-based ad revenue.

If you are going to publish a site whose main draw is access to software, and then make money off the site with content advertising, bear in mind that software that runs on the Web typically generates multiple page views for a single user running the software. (In other words, the user spends time on the website.) This makes it better for the purpose of generating content revenue than a site that merely publishes information about software with download links.



The difference I've described is between software that runs on the Web and software that you download from the Web in order to run locally.

With a download link, once the user downloads the software, there is probably going to be no more interest in the web content.

Magazines and Newspapers

The business of Salon.com, shown in [Figure 1-3](#), is to provide informed editorial content. This business is profitable because of the advertising that appears on the Salon site. The business model of Salon, and other online magazines such as Slate, is pretty much like that of a brick-and-mortar newspaper or magazine: subsidize the distribution of articles and editorials, and make revenue with sponsored ads. This works fairly well on the Web, even though it is essentially old fashioned.

While it is harder to get subscription revenue on the Web than off-web for content, profit margins for online advertising are higher, and ads can be more reliably targeted to the context of the content. This last point is important, because it is the unique selling proposition for web advertising as opposed to advertising in other mediums.

Opinions about whether charging a subscription fee for access to content makes sense differ at even the most successful online venues. This is a debate that is almost as old as the Web, and yet to be fully resolved.

For example, as of this writing, the *Wall Street Journal* does but the *New York Times* does not charge for most access. The *New York Times* online site has a far greater revenue base from online advertising and certain pay-for-access premium services than the *Wall Street Journal* with its entirely subscription-based model. If you include the *New York Times*-owned About.com in the comparison, the *New York Times* is probably making more money than the *Journal*.

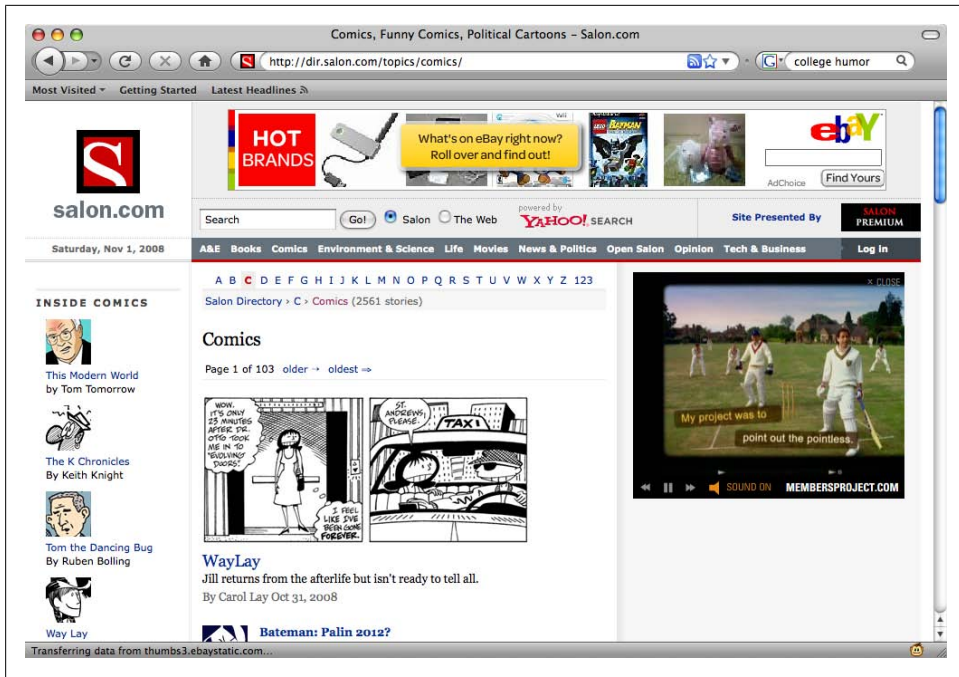


Figure 1-3. Salon presents topical and interesting articles in the same general fashion as a hardcopy magazine

There's evidence that both subscription and advertising newspaper and magazine models can work on the Web. But at this point, the advertising model seems to be winning the race.

The Blogosphere

You probably read one or more blogs, at least from time to time. A blog, also called a weblog or web log, is a diary of entries, usually presented on the Web in reverse chronological order. You may even write your own blog. The subject matter of blogs varies wildly, from general rants and raves, to blogs about relationships, to blogs more or less devoted to specific subjects, such as my [photography blog](#).

If you think that a blog about a specific subject is an ideal (although narrow) venue for targeted advertising content, you are quite right. Unlike opinion sites that are basically online magazines, blogs are a specifically web phenomenon (sometimes collectively referred to as the *blogosphere*). A variety of software mechanisms—such as the ability to automatically collect trackback links in a blog entry, meaning links to sites or blogs that discuss the original entry—make blogging an extremely effective and versatile mechanism for publishing content on the Web. Syndication built into most blog

content management software—such as Movable Type or WordPress—allows easy distribution of the content.

All is not perfect in paradise, though, and there are some problems with blogging as a vehicle for making money from your content. First, there are so many blogs. It's easy to create a blog using hosted services such as Google's Blogger or Six Apart Software's community sites TypePad and LiveJournal. (Six Apart is the publisher of Movable Type blogging software.) But it's hard to stand out from the mass of blogs and generate notice and traffic. See [Chapter 2](#) for some ideas about how to drive traffic to a blog, and [Chapter 10](#) for information about how to purchase traffic for a blog using Google's AdWords contextual advertising program.

Next, the fact that blogs are essentially unvetted and unedited makes some advertisers leery of placing ads on these sites. If you do expect to make money from advertising on your blog, it's a good idea to be careful with spelling, punctuation, and the overall presentation issues involved with writing.

Finally, most bloggers use hosted blogging services such as Blogger, so they don't have to worry about configuring or maintaining their own blogging software. Installing software like Movable Type is tricky enough that Six Apart, the company that wrote the software, will get it going for you on your own web server—for a fee.

But a problem with having a hosted blog may be that it's not up to you to place advertising on it—if there is contextual advertising, the revenue may go to the blog host. You should check with specific blog hosts and blog hosting software to determine the rules. So, if you plan to make money from blogging content, you need to either set up your own blogging server software, or work with a specialized web hosting organization that handles the technical end of things but still lets you profit from advertising.



The problem of losing control of the revenue potential of hosted sites can be present in contexts other than blogging. For example, many smaller e-commerce websites outsource order processing and shopping cart functionality. This often makes practical sense, but it may mean that these pages are no longer available for advertising—or that the advertising and profits are controlled by the host rather than the site creator.

Practical Information: Content Sites and Niches

The [O'Reilly site](#) provides a great deal of practical information, such as code from the O'Reilly books. O'Reilly is also a source of (usually) well-informed opinions, mostly about topics related to technology—for example, the O'Reilly author blogs, articles, and other quality content.

Many people turn to the Web as their first line of approach for finding information: about technology, relationships, travel destinations, and much more. These content niches are probably the most dependable road to advertising riches on the Web.

Niches don't necessarily have to be big niches. The smaller the niche, the more targeted you can be. For example, quality content aimed at answering questions about specific medical conditions is likely to be in high demand, even if the population with the condition in question isn't huge.

Good content positioned in a very narrow niche can be very profitable indeed—but you need to make sure that there are advertisers willing to pay for target words related to the niche. A good technique for quickly assessing what advertisers are willing to pay for specific keywords is to use the Google AdWords Keyword Tool, explained in [Chapter 10](#). (You don't need to actually place an ad to use this tool for research purposes.)

Don't forget the old saw that it's better to be a big fish in a small pond than a small fish in a big pond. Sites that feature a niche that is only of interest to a small group of people (but very interesting to those people) are likely to achieve high search engine rankings for the relevant terms, draw traffic through the search engines, and become well known among aficionados of the niche.

See [Chapters 2 and 3](#) for more information about drawing traffic and search engine rankings.

If you are the publisher of this kind of niche site, you are likely to make a nice revenue return in relation to the effort involved.

E-Commerce Sites

Many of the most successful web businesses make their money as e-commerce sites by selling goods or services. Advertising on these sites is a by-product (you might say, a product by-product). To name just a few examples:

- Amazon.com is the department store of the Web, selling either on its own account or for affiliates everything you can imagine.
- eBay is the world's greatest flea market and auction community, with a great business model because it doesn't need to take an inventory position in the items sold on its site.
- ETrade, Schwab, and other online trading and investing sites are among the greatest revenue generators on the Web.
- Gambling sites successfully part players from their funds.

The only things these sites really have in common are they make money by selling something that people want and they draw traffic (in some cases, such as eBay and Amazon, lots and lots of traffic).

Making money from advertising is not the primary business of this kind of site. Still, it's natural to look for additional revenue sources, and many e-commerce sites do sell advertising, although they all try (or should try) not to let the advertising interfere with their primary goal—selling products or services online—or with their brand. For example, you can buy ad placement for a book or other product on Amazon. These ads show up as similar items when you are checking out (or considering a purchase). This works pretty similarly on eBay. You can purchase contextual advertising on eBay—but only for your products or store on eBay itself.

E-commerce sites besides Amazon and eBay may sell ads based on impressions (also called CPM, or cost per thousand, advertising), such as banners used for branding purposes. These sites are very unlikely to sell ads on a pay-per-click basis (also called CPC, which stands for cost per click) because they want to keep traffic on their sites. Even CPM ads intended for branding purposes will be scrutinized carefully to ensure that the branding message is in line with the goal of the e-commerce site.

Tools for Measuring Popularity

The metrics of website traffic is a huge topic by itself, with a number of books just about web metrics, and quite a bit of software designed simply to help webmasters gather and understand the metrics of their sites. You'll find more information about this subject in [Chapter 13](#), but for now, to get started, it's important to learn how to quickly get a feel for a site's popularity.



Website metrics is a very important topic because to optimize your site you need to have baseline information as well as feedback so that you can understand whether changes improve site traffic or not—and also which elements in your site draw traffic.

This topic is also important because the fees you can expect to get from advertisers largely depend on the metrics of your site.

Of course, your web server's logs contain a great deal of traffic information that can provide you with useful metrics.

But, no doubt, the best metric of all is money in your pocket from goods and services sold on your site and from fees paid by advertisers—through the AdSense program or some other mechanism—for publication on your site.

Using the Google Toolbar

The Google Toolbar can be installed in the Internet Explorer web browser. Go to <http://toolbar.google.com/> to download the toolbar.

With the Google Toolbar in place, a button (shown at the very top in [Figure 1-4](#)) that can optionally be added to the Toolbar will give an indication of the PageRank, on a 0 to 10 scale, of a web page that is open in your browser. PageRank is a pretty good proxy for popularity, and as you might expect of an indicator created by Google, the Google home page is a perfect 10.

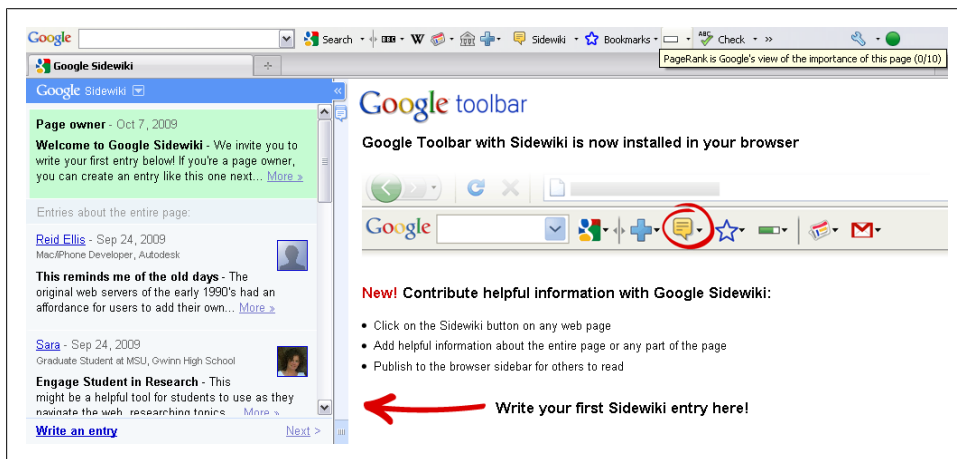


Figure 1-4. When you move your mouse over the PageRank button in the Google Toolbar, the relative popularity of the open web page is indicated on a scale from 0 to 10

The PageRank indication given by the Google Toolbar is not a precise tool. For one thing, the 0 to 10 scale is a different metric from the PageRank used in Google's internal calculations. But as a quick and easy way to gauge PageRank, and therefore popularity, it is hard to beat this widget.

Let the Google Search Engine Be Your Guide

Since Google is the most popular of all search engines, why not use the search tools provided by Google itself to get a relative feel for the popularity of websites? I'd suggest a couple of ways to go about this. The point here is to regularly use the Google search engine on a variety of sites to get a feeling for how search rankings correspond to traffic.

The `link:` operator, when used in a Google search query, returns the pages that link to the specified URL (website address). For example, `link:www.wikipedia.org` returns all the pages that link to Wikipedia.org, as you can see in [Figure 1-5](#).

While it should be noted that many inbound links will in fact be internal site links—also called *cross links*—quantifying the pages that link to a given site is an easy way to get a sense of Google's assessment of a site's popularity and, therefore, its traffic. (For more about the various kinds of linking, see [Chapter 4](#).)

An alternative approach involves a bit of keyword analysis. You'll need to understand what the most common keywords used to search for the site you are interested in are.

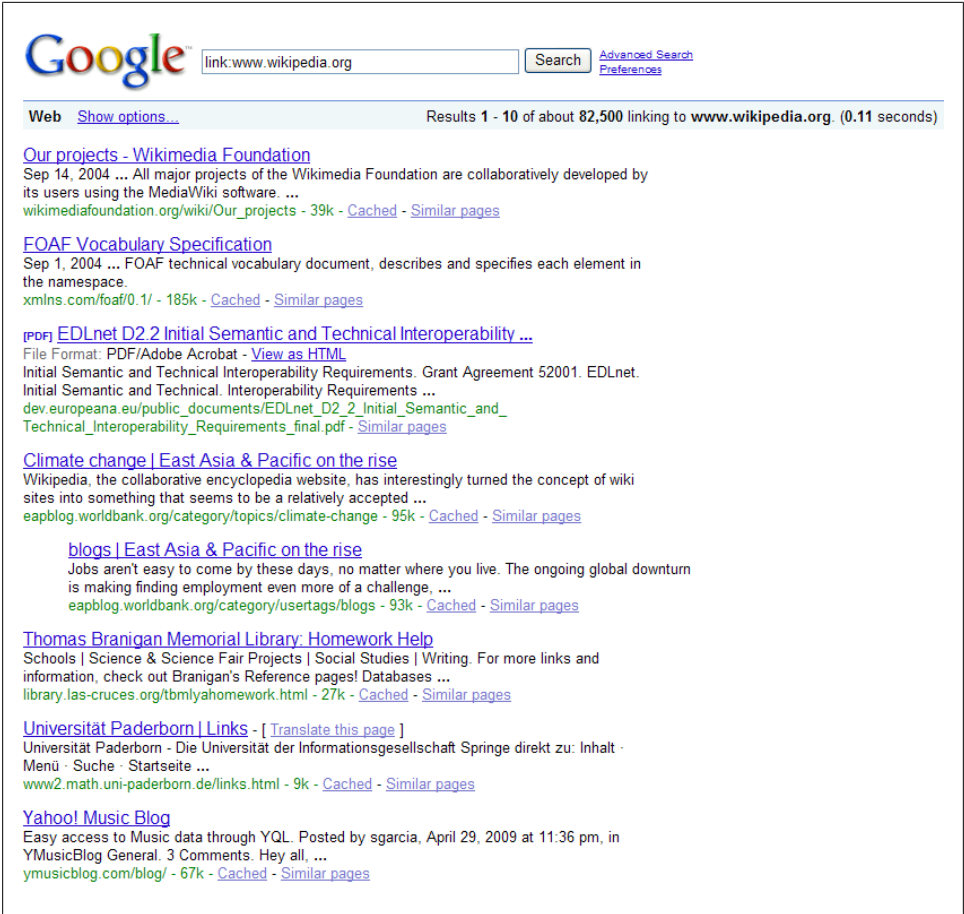


Figure 1-5. Checking inbound links, like those shown here to Wikipedia, helps show the popularity of a site

This kind of keyword analysis, of course, is something you should do in any case if you are interested in promoting a site. As a simple example, if you were trying to find out how a site with a directory of dentists fared in search rankings, you could enter the word *dentist* in Google search and see where the site is returned in the results.

Armed with the search terms, you can run searches yourself. Over time, this will disclose whether a given site is moving up or down in the search rankings, and, as a snapshot, should give you an idea of whether a site is popular at all. A site should be in the top 30 search return results (the first three pages) to be considered a successful search result for a given term. In other words, you need to be on the first three pages to have a shot at getting decent traffic from a search engine.

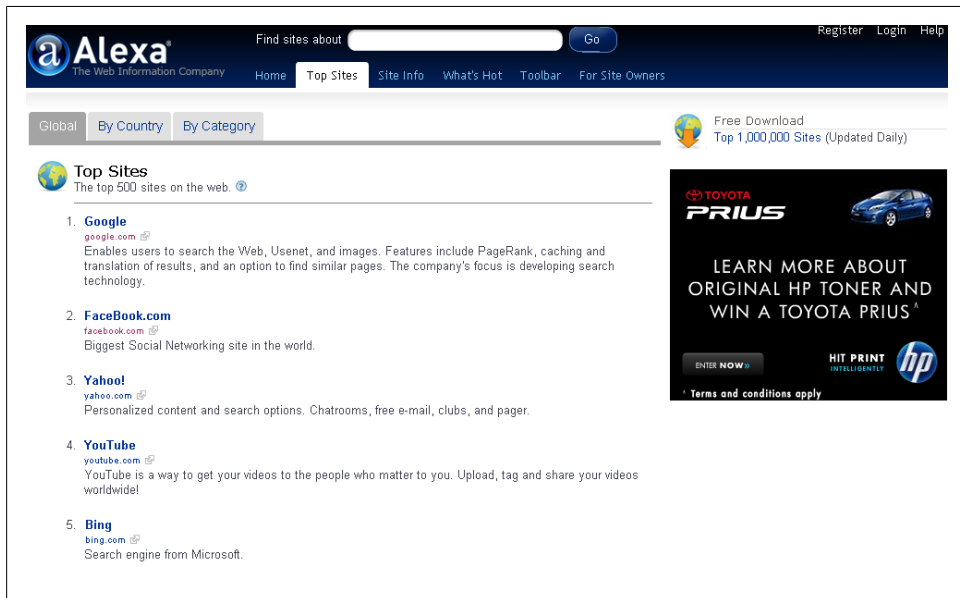
Finding Popularity with Alexa

I've already mentioned Google as an example of a site with broad traffic. There are, of course, many others. If you are curious, you can go to [Alexa](#), which monitors how much traffic a site gets and the relative increase (or decrease) in site popularity.



Alexa is owned by [Amazon.com](#).

On the Alexa site, click on the Top Sites tab to see an ordered list of the most highly trafficked sites, updated daily. The most trafficked sites (at the time of this writing) according to Alexa are shown in [Figure 1-6](#).



The screenshot shows the Alexa website interface. At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Find sites about" and a "Go" button. To the right of the search bar are links for "Register", "Login", and "Help". Below the search bar is a navigation menu with "Home", "Top Sites", "Site Info", "What's Hot", "Toolbar", and "For Site Owners". The "Top Sites" tab is selected. Below the navigation menu, there are tabs for "Global", "By Country", and "By Category". To the right of these tabs is a "Free Download" button and a link to "Top 1,000,000 Sites (Updated Daily)". The main content area is titled "Top Sites" and "The top 500 sites on the web." Below this title is a list of the top 5 sites:

- 1. Google**
google.com
Enables users to search the Web, Usenet, and images. Features include PageRank, caching and translation of results, and an option to find similar pages. The company's focus is developing search technology.
- 2. Facebook.com**
facebook.com
Biggest Social Networking site in the world.
- 3. Yahoo!**
yahoo.com
Personalized content and search options. Chatrooms, free e-mail, clubs, and pager.
- 4. YouTube**
youtube.com
YouTube is a way to get your videos to the people who matter to you. Upload, tag and share your videos worldwide!
- 5. Bing**
bing.com
Search engine from Microsoft.

On the right side of the page, there is a promotional banner for Toyota Prius and HP Print. The banner includes the text "LEARN MORE ABOUT ORIGINAL HP TONER AND WIN A TOYOTA PRIUS" and "ENTER NOW".

Figure 1-6. You can find the current most popular websites using Alexa

Alexa's Movers and Shakers, shown in [Figure 1-7](#), is also interesting. This snapshot of the "right here and now" Web is useful for seeing if there are any web-wide trends in action—and also for learning about the kinds of exogenous events that move large-scale websites up and down the chutes and ladders of popularity.



Figure 1-7. Alexa’s Movers and Shakers can help with your education about what moves sites up and down the popularity ladder

While it is probably unrealistic to expect that you or I will be piloting sites that are at the top of Alexa’s list, it is worth spending time learning about popularity on the Web if you want to build successful sites. Alexa provides the tools you can use to see for yourself what is trafficked and what is gaining or losing among top-ranked sites.

You can also use Alexa to see traffic statistics for sites that are not in the top 500. For almost any site that has been around a while, Alexa will give you an idea of traffic statistics and whether it is gaining or losing traffic.



Alexa lets you enter descriptive information about your website, which others can see if they check your site traffic using Alexa. You can also make sure that Alexa provides a snapshot of your home page along with its statistics. Since this service is free, it is certainly worth entering a site description.

Alexa works by collating results from users throughout the Web who have installed the special Alexa Toolbar. (If you’d like, you too can install the Alexa Toolbar and help with popularity statistics.) There’s some question about the statistical validity of Alexa for less trafficked sites because of this method of gathering data—that is, Alexa’s results are probably skewed toward users who are already web savvy and heavy users.



Just as the Google Toolbar can provide you with information about the popularity of sites as you surf the Web, the Alexa Toolbar can give you helpful data about the relative popularity of sites. The Alexa Toolbar is particularly helpful in finding and comparing similar sites.

Most likely, Alexa's results are not very meaningful for sites that are ranked below 100,000 in popularity (very roughly, with fewer than 10,000 visitors per week).

The Alexa ranking of 100,000 or lower is also a great divide: if your site is in the top 100,000, you have content that many advertisers will consider worthwhile. Being in the top Alexa results is a pretty good goal for your website or sites. You can make real money from a top 100,000 site; it is an ambitious goal, but attainable.



[Ranking.com](#) provides a popularity ranking service comparable to Alexa's.

How Much Content Is Enough?

Suppose you create 1 web page every 100 days that generates \$100 in ad revenue. Alternatively, you create 1 page per day for 100 days. Each page generates \$1 in ad revenue. Either way, you end up with \$100 at the end of 100 days.

The point is that there are different ways to go about deciding how much content to create—it significantly depends on the quality of the content. A single content page might make sense if it contained a valuable application like TinyURL (see “[Useful Free Services and Software](#)” on page 6). If your pages are low-value content, you will need a great many of them to make significant revenue from advertising.

Between the two extremes—a single page of valuable content and many pages of low-value content—lies a happy medium that will work for most content-based sites by creating enough critical mass to draw both traffic and advertisers. If you are just starting out, this happy medium is a goal to which you can reasonably aspire.

Here's what you need, at a minimum, to have a site drawing respectable numbers at the end of one year:

- 100 pages of quality content “in the can” to start with
- On average, one new page of quality content every day for a year (each page containing about 300 words)

Presenting Content

Content is king. Content is certainly king if your business model is to publish content on the Web and make money from advertising with traffic drawn by the content. Your first rule should be: don't "dis" the king. In other words, don't do anything to distract from the content, make it harder for surfers to find content they need, or make the graphics that frame the content too jazzy. In particular, if the graphics seem too important, they will distract from the content.



A particularly annoying sin on content-based websites is the use of an animated splash page (such as Flash) to open the site. If you do use an animation to open your site, users should easily be able to bypass it if they desire. At the same time, you should work to keep unnecessary navigation down. In other words, don't make people click an extra link to get to a destination (unless the extra click is a well-thought-out part of the user experience).

Page and Site Design

These rules of content presentation can be positive (rather than negative):

It should be obvious that the purpose of the site is to clearly present content

Choose a name for the site, and titles and headers for the pages, that make it abundantly clear that the purpose of the site is to present content, and (as a general matter) what that content is.

The design of the site should serve the purpose of presenting content

Site design should be intended to facilitate navigation and frame the content—nothing more and nothing less.

Specific content items and subject areas should be easy to find

Provide multiple mechanisms for finding things: index pages, search boxes, site maps, subject areas, and so on.

Type should be legible

Be careful to choose a readable font, in a large enough size, and background and foreground color combinations that are easy on the eyes. It's hard to go wrong with black type on a white background. The reverse—white on black—is hard on the eyes, and some combinations (for example, dark blue on lighter blue) are essentially unreadable.

Keep graphics simple

For example, avoid animations and other splashy images.

As it happens, following the rules of content presentation I've outlined will serve you well with search engine placement (see [Chapter 4](#)). But that's not the point of these suggestions here. The point is usefulness and transparency to site users. If viable content is presented in an accessible fashion, then indeed "they will come."

If you are targeting your content specifically for Google’s AdSense program (or a competitive contextual engine), you should also bear in mind the following:

- AdSense can’t interpret images (except using captions, the value of `alt` attributed in the `` tag, the name of the image file, and surrounding text), so keep images to a minimum.
- You are likely to get more relevant ads if you keep each page to a single subject (and move tangential subject matters to different pages).
- Key concepts, words, and phrases should be clear by glancing at a page. (See [Chapter 3](#) for information about how to use these keywords and phrases to optimize your pages for AdSense, Google, and other search engines.)

Page Size

How much content should go on each site page? Like Goldilocks and the three bears, the answer is not too much and not too little—just the right amount of content.

It’s in the interest of the site publisher to keep pages short, because the same amount of content spread over shorter pages makes for more pages. And more pages on a site means more places for advertising, which in theory might mean more revenue.

In addition, more pages may mean more page views, implying better metrics to advertisers who don’t look too carefully.

However, if you break an article up into many short pages that a user has to click through, users will find it irritating—and vote with their time by frequenting the site less often.



For an example of a site that has chosen to maximize pages it can place ads on at the cost of potentially alienating readers by dividing articles up into many small pages that must be clicked through, see [The Street.com](#).

The happy medium is to be natural about page length. The natural length for a content page is the content that will reasonably fit into a maximized browser window without having to scroll.

Obviously this is a rough, rather than a precise, guideline, as different browsers on different systems will show different size pages.

Don’t gratuitously break an article into multiple pages unless the article really is longer than a few browser-sized pages. Also, don’t break an article (even if it is long) unless there are natural breaks in the content. Anytime there is a new Level 1 header in an article, it’s a good sign that you could break to a new content page without the break feeling forced.

A related issue is to be careful about the width of your content pages. People will be looking at your web pages using a variety of hardware, operating systems, and browsers—the most important variable being the monitor size. You don't want your readers to have to scroll to the right because part of a content web page is off the screen. This is very bad form and may also obscure content advertising if it is positioned along the right border of the page.

The answer is to design pages for lowest common denominator displays. In practice, content pages should be no wider than 800 pixels. Pages 800 pixels wide (or less) should display without scrolling on most (although not all) computers—some displays are still only 640 pixels wide. (For more on this, see [“Positioning Ads” on page 21.](#)) In other parts of the world, and depending on the display devices used by your target audience, you may want to consider going even smaller than these sizes.

Images, Video, and Podcasting

As previously noted, visual (and audio) content cannot be as readily indexed by search engines as straight text. That said, a picture is worth a thousand words, and there's no arguing with the popularity of podcasts and video sites like YouTube. So, it's a trade-off. Content-based websites need some content in media that is splashier than plain text, like the aforementioned images, video, and podcasting. On the other hand, this kind of content doesn't necessarily help search rankings, and may not provide a hosting environment for advertisement within the media that is available to any but the largest content providers.

Keeping Content Fresh

Have you ever tried to keep fresh-caught fish fresh? It isn't easy. Neither is keeping site content fresh. But sites, and their content, need to stay fresh. It's not a big deal to change the overall look of a site by changing the graphic used as a navigation bar every month or so—that is, if you've set the site up with server-side includes, so that editing one file changes the site globally. But keeping content fresh is a trickier issue.

Since search engines appreciate new content, some sites go to great lengths to provide content that *appears* new—for example, by displaying syndication feeds on the site's home page. This may help with search engines (I have more to say on this point in [Chapter 3](#)), but it doesn't do much at all for your primary audience—real people.

Quality content sites need to strike a balance. You need to have a core of worthwhile reference material that doesn't change much. You also need to keep content sites fresh. As you plan your successful site, you should consider what strategy you will use to keep people coming back for the latest and greatest. For example, do you plan to keep up with the latest events in a technology niche, such as a programming language? Will you feature articles about current cultural events (which are constantly changing by definition)? Or will your site present interesting blogs with frequently added entries?

Positioning Ads

Studies have shown that ad *positioning* is crucial to content revenue generation. Positioning means the physical position of an ad on a web page, the size of the ad, and also *which* page(s) on a site carry an ad.

As I explain in [Chapter 8](#), when using a program like Google’s AdSense, you’ll want to use AdSense to generate code that displays ads sized to your site, and also in colors that work with your site.

Although there are some general guidelines for what works best with advertising positioning, it is far more art than science. You should expect to spend a fair amount of time tweaking ad position to see what works best—another good reason for having a site mechanism in place that allows you to change ad settings globally by editing one include file.

Tweaking ads is good for another reason: you don’t want *ad fatigue* to set in. Ad fatigue is a term used by webmasters to describe the phenomenon in which visitors to your site are so used to the ad display on your site that they ignore it. Experimenting with new ad positioning (and colors) is a good way to combat that “same old, same old” feeling—and avoid ad fatigue.

Most studies show that ads positioned above the fold do better than ads lower on a page. *Above the fold* means visible without scrolling. The smaller the monitor, and the lower its resolution, the less screen real estate there is above the fold. In other words, a monitor running at 640 × 480 pixels screen resolution has a lot less available real estate above the fold than a monitor running at 800 × 600, which in turn has much less area above the fold than a monitor running at higher resolution.

If you want the maximum eyeballs—and you should, because more eyeballs means more advertising revenue—you should try to place ads so that they will be above the fold on lower resolution monitors. It certainly makes sense to target 800 × 600 monitor resolution, because this is widely in use. Don’t finalize your ad positioning (and website and page design) without checking it out on an 800 × 600 monitor.

Some research has shown that vertical ad blocks—the kind Google calls *skyscrapers*—work better than horizontal ads. However, from the viewpoint of basic geometry, it is easier to fit a horizontal ad block above the fold than a vertical skyscraper—the lower part of the skyscraper is likely to be below the fold. If you decide to go with vertical ad blocks, make sure they are positioned as high as possible, and that at least one ad (assuming the skyscraper contains multiple contextual ads) is positioned above the fold.

One other major positioning issue is *context*. From the viewpoint of a content publisher, you’d like to position ads so that they are not only contextually relevant, but also so that they lead to a high click-through rate.



With programs like Google's AdSense, context is important because you want a high click-through rate. With affiliate advertising, context is even more important because you don't make any money without a *conversion*, which means turning someone into a customer. You may, perhaps, care less about context when you are paid by the impression—in that case, all you really care about is that the ad gets seen on your site.

Google's AdSense attempts to place only contextually relevant ads. With some notable lapses, AdSense is pretty successful at this. In any case, you can't exercise a great deal of control over the ads that AdSense displays on your site—you have to trust that Google gets this right.



You can forbid your competitor's ads from appearing on your site by using the AdSense option that allows you to ban specific IP addresses. The ability to ban IP addresses can be used to a limited degree to also keep out advertisers you find offensive. For example, an animal rights information site might want to ban ads from prominent furriers.

There are some important aspects of context that you *can* control, although there is no reliable analytic research about what works best. Some sites use graphics and positioning to make contextual ads blend in with the site and appear almost part of the editorial content. Other sites feel that keeping the appearance of editorial integrity is vitally important, and use color and position to instantly indicate that the ads are separate from the body of the content.

Overloading pages with ads generally does not work because viewers tend to ignore pages that have too many ads. If you're working with multiple ad programs and kinds of ads to generate a revenue stream, you can make an important contribution to ad context by deciding what kinds of ads should go with what content. For example, it might make sense to advertise books on Amazon on a page of book reviews.

There's also a school of thought that believes ads should only be placed on boring pages—for example, registration pages, login pages, resource pages, and exit pages. (An exit page is a page designed to launch a visitor onward following a visit—for example, an order confirmation.) One reason for placing click-through ads on resource and exit pages is that visitors will be leaving your site from these pages anyhow. You won't be losing traffic by providing click-through opportunities.

The more general logic for placing ads only on boring pages is that it gives the rest of your site a clean, inviting, ad-free look—and that visitors are more likely to click on ads in the context of boredom than in the context of exciting content.

Whatever strategy you decide to try, if you will be varying ad programs depending on context, you should attempt to implement this programmatically rather than by manually adding and deleting advertising code from individual HTML pages.

Content Architecture

You should think about site architecture before you create your first content page. Site architecture should be arranged so that you can make global changes to the look and feel of a site with no impact on the content. You also want to be able to change the code for an ad program, or even swap one ad program for another, once and have the changes take effect across your site in all the content pages.

Separating Content from Design

When you create content websites, it's imperative to use mechanisms that separate web page content from design. The purpose of separating content from design is to let you:

- Easily change the look and feel of a site without the change in overall site design having any impact on the content
- Tweak positioning and other ad-related variables to maximize revenue without having any effect on site content

The simplest way to achieve these goals is to use *includes*—server-side includes—to position site graphics such as navigation bars. A server-side include is a file that the server includes within another file (the inclusion is specified by a special directive). When you view the HTML source code in a browser, you have no way of telling whether the main file was generated using includes or not.

Includes can also be used for advertisement code, such as that provided by Google's AdSense. By changing the code in a single include, you can change the navigation bar or advertising parameters across all the content pages on an entire site.

The most important thing, as a content web publisher, is to be on board with the concept of separating design from content, and advertising content from normal page content. The overriding reason for doing this is so you can tweak both the site design and the advertising content.

The mechanics for separating advertising content, published content, and design aspects of a site are fairly simple.

Site-Wide Changes to Styles

Although it's somewhat less important than the ability to easily do site-wide changes of advertisements and site graphics such as navigation bars, it's still nice to be able to perform site-wide changes of text styles. It is less important because leaving everything as reasonably sized black text on a white background is usually just fine.

Style attributes can be set using a server-side include. Each content page then includes the include file, which contains the styles for the content. Text styles can be changed on a global basis simply by changing the definitions of the styles within the include file.

Another simple mechanism for doing site-wide font and font-size changes is to use an external style sheet to define the fonts and sizes to use with various types of text (each content page references the style sheet). To effect a global change, simply change the style definitions in the external style sheet.

Server-side includes work well to separate key design elements (and advertisements) from content, provided your content site doesn't have too many pages, and assuming that each page doesn't have a great many repetitive elements.

If many of your content pages are essentially the same—meaning they have the same elements but the value of the elements differs from page to page—you should probably be using a templating system. Templates use special tags for the common elements, with the actual content for each page that replaces the special tag specified, often using content stored in a database table. This means that an appropriately written template file and one or more database tables can populate and create a whole raft of web pages—one for each row in the table.

PHP is one of the most popular server-side programming languages available on the Web (most inexpensive Linux/Apache web host services let you program in PHP without any additional configuration effort).

If you are a programmer, or have access to programming talent, you can create your own templating system using PHP or some other language. But why reinvent the wheel? A popular PHP templating system, available for free download, is [Smarty](#). One of the great features of Smarty is that it caches a web page the first time it is generated from a template. Subsequent calls to the page, unless the template or data have changed, open the cached page—meaning the website isn't slowed down by page generation each time the templated page is opened.

A server-side include mechanism is a great start for creating a manageable content site and—from a technology standpoint—within the grasp of almost anyone. (I explained the server-side include mechanism and how to use it to lay out a content site to receive advertising in [“Content Architecture” on page 23.](#))

Templating is a good next step if you (or an associate) have the technological sophistication and expect to be managing content sites with thousands of pages. It's particularly important to use a system of templates if you expect to generate pages using data from a database.

Suppose you are managing a site with not thousands, but hundreds of thousands of pages. You have multiple authors, a team of editors, and a workflow process to make sure that work is fact-checked, copyedited, and approved before it is published. In this case, you'll want to use Web Content Management (WCM) software to provide content and design separation, template features, workflow management, and more. Commercial WCM packages are available from vendors including IBM, FileNet, Interwoven, Microsoft, Stellent, Vignette, and others.



Not everyone recognizes that, in fact, blogging software such as Movable Type and WordPress in effect manages web content using special tags and a template system. You can use WordPress in particular to manage pages that are not part of a blog. So if it's appropriate for your particular project, consider creating a “blogosite”—a content website managed by blogging software such as WordPress.

No matter what mechanism you use, it is vitally important to separate form from content so that you can easily keep your site design fresh and tweak advertising positions.

Server-Side Includes

The simplest mechanism for implementing a “change code in one place, change the whole site” architecture is to use server-side includes (see [“Separating Content from Design” on page 23](#)).

Most web hosting accounts provide a server-side include mechanism. You tell the web server which file extensions mean that a file can have includes. When the web server processes the file to send back to a browser for display, it looks for the special syntax that means there is an include. When it sees this syntax, it expands the page it is serving to the browser by expanding it with the file indicated by the include's syntax.

The default file extension for a web page is usually *.html*, although you can add other file extensions so that your web server will look through them for includes (there is, of course, a slight performance hit for this).

[Figure 1-8](#) shows a typical Linux and Apache web host administrative utility with the mouse cursor pointing at the button that lets you add file extensions to be parsed for includes.

For example, suppose you have a simple *.html* home page like this:

```
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" lang="en" xml:lang="en">
  <head>
    <title>A simple little home page</title>
  </head>
  <body>
    <h1>Hello!</h1>
    ...
  </body>
</html>
```

You could create two include files:

- *styles.html*, which contains CSS (Cascading Style Sheet) styles for the elements used on the site such as font size and color
- *top-bar.html*, which contains the site navigation bar

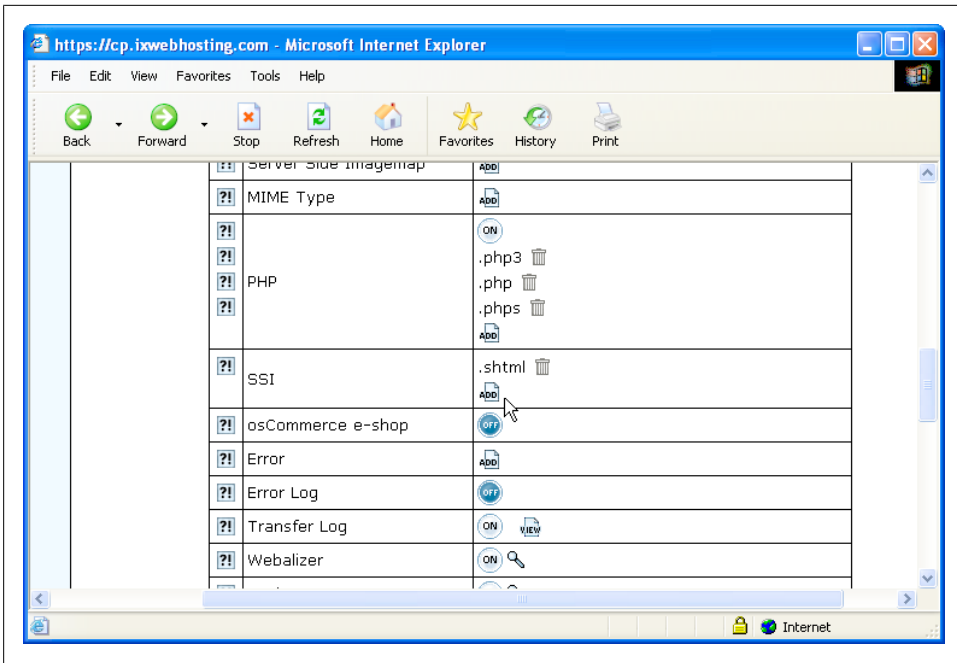


Figure 1-8. You can add file extensions to be parsed for includes by the web server



You can link to an external CSS style sheet or define your CSS styles in an include file. Either way, to change styles site-wide, you just have to change the style definitions in one file.

The site home page, and every other content page on the site, includes these two files as follows:

```
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" lang="en" xml:lang="en">
  <head>
    <title>A simple little home page</title>
    <!--#include virtual="includes/styles.html" -->
  </head>
  <body>
    <!--#include virtual="includes/top-bar.html" -->
    <h1>Hello!</h1>
    ...
  </body>
</html>
```

Now it's easy to change the appearance of the text on each page of the site by just making one change to *styles.html*. And, if you need to change the appearance of the navigation bar, you can simply make the changes to *top-bar.html*, and it will be replicated across the site.



There's generally no requirement that included files be named with any particular file extension—instead of *.html* you can perfectly well use *.foo*, or anything else you'd like. One tip is to avoid a file extension that begins with “z”—some search engines will assume it's a type of *.zip* file and they won't index it!

PHP Includes

If you are constructing a dynamic site using PHP (see [“Separating Content from Design” on page 23](#)) or using PHP for other programmatic purposes on your site, it makes sense to use the PHP include mechanism.



Whatever technology you use to serve your site, it undoubtedly has an include mechanism that works pretty much like server-side includes and PHP includes.

Most Linux- and Apache-based web hosts provide PHP scripting automatically for files named with a *.php* file extension. Within these files, PHP includes work almost exactly like server-side includes.

For example, suppose you have a simple little web home page in a file named *index.php*:

```
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
  <head>
    <title>Simple Little Web Home Page </title>
  </head>
  <body>
    ...
  </body>
</html>
```

If you put the CSS styles for the elements of the website, such as the appearance of website text, in a file named *style.inc*, it can be included in PHP code like this:

```
<? include 'style.inc'; ?>
```

The code for the top portion of a page, to be shared in common across the site, might be put in a file named *top.inc*. It could now be inserted at the top of the body of a content page using the PHP include directive:

```
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml">
  <head>
    <title> Simple Little Web Home Page </title>
    <? include 'style.inc'; ?>
  </head>
  <body>
    <? include 'top.inc'; ?>
    ...
  </body>
</html>
```

As with the server-side include example, if all the pages in a site use the PHP directives to include *style.inc* and *top.inc*, then site styles and the top element can be changed globally just by changing the contents of these include files.

Note that you can include PHP code—including other PHP include directives—within PHP includes, and that there is no requirement that includes be named with any particular file suffix.

Optimal Include Layout

The optimal include layout is to provide includes for both geographic areas of your web page and for specific ad programs. The two should not be the same, although one can go inside the other, and (at least initially) consume all its area. If you don't follow this organizing principle, down the road—to take one example—you'll find that you named the include for the entire right side of your content pages *Google_ad_right*, even though by now it contains a variety of graphic elements, but no Google skyscraper.

The composition of PHP includes used on a site with optimum flexibility is shown in diagram form in [Figure 1-9](#).

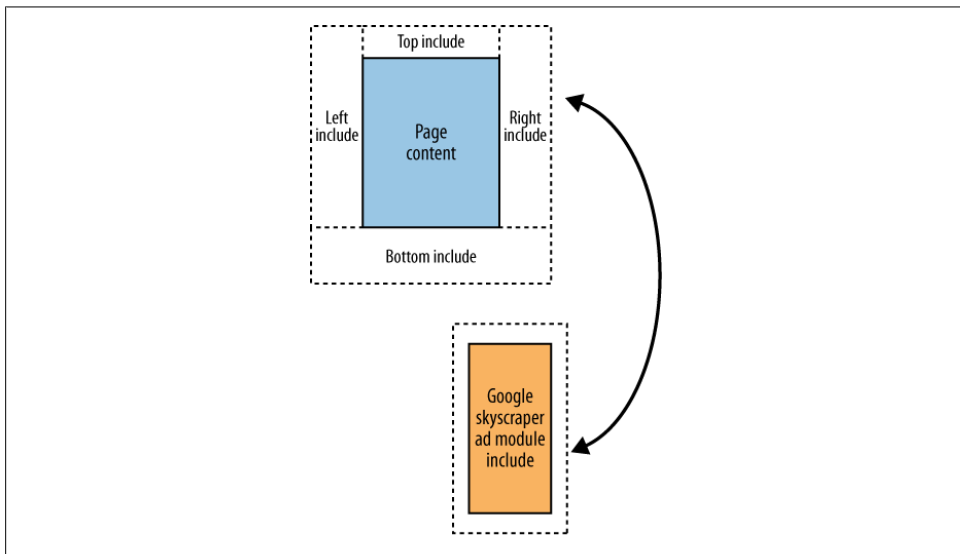


Figure 1-9. Using includes for both geographic areas of site pages and specific ad content creates flexibility that allows for easily implementing future changes

Figure 1-9 shows that there is an include for each geographic area of a page that will carry graphics or ads: *top include*, *left include*, *bottom include*, and *right include*. Within the geographic includes are ad-program-specific includes for each ad program or type of ad, such as a Google ad module. A final include holds a navigation panel at the top of the site above the page individual content. The point here is to allow for flexibility

both in terms of page geography and in the ads or ad modules that will appear on specific pages.

This arrangement gives the maximum flexibility and won't have you contorted like a pretzel in the future. You can change any of the graphics in a geographic include. Alternatively, you can change ad code, swap, add, and delete ad programs in a very granular fashion. Changes take place globally across a site, but they have very little impact on the rest of a page.

Where Does Content Come From?

No, content doesn't grow on trees. Content is a valuable commodity—and perhaps more than a commodity. Great content is wonderful and unique, and not fungible.

Communities can supply a great deal of content if you have an idea for a good framework that will entice contributions about specific subjects.

If you are a writer, you can create content yourself. (Maybe this is the time for your inner writer to finally come out!)

Site owners can hire writers, either as employees or freelancers, or with a profit-sharing arrangement.

You can often pick up the rights to publish material on the Web that was originally created for a book, magazine, or newspaper very inexpensively. Content creators may be placed to let you use their content simply in exchange for publicity—in the form of an author credit as an expert and/or a link.

You also might check out book and literary agencies—some of them run a sideline business supplying aggregated recycled content, and represent whole groups of writers.

So even if you aren't confident that you can personally create valuable content, don't despair; there are many inexpensive ways to publish valuable content without writing it yourself.

Don't underestimate the value of resource pages as content. A simple page of links to sites related to a specific subject (for example, sites of interest to collectors of antique typewriters and calculators) may draw traffic if the links are accurately described, kept up to date, and expanded when new relevant sites are opened.

The Power of Community

From its very earliest beginnings, the Web has largely been about community. From a practical standpoint, involving a worthwhile community is a great way to create content. You don't need to create the content yourself; your users do—for example, by contributing to discussion threads or by making syndication feeds available.

Site owners can use community to leverage their content and to create sites that are valuable to users because of the involvement of the community.

If your site is extended by community members (for example, through a discussion thread), you may have little control over the quality of the content. As an advertising venue, this content may not be worth that much. But even if it is only worth pennies a day in advertising revenue, the content generation is on autopilot—it is expanding, changing, and staying relevant on its own. So you may still be making a good return on your effort.

Community has made eBay great—essentially all the content comes from users of the eBay auction system. Amazon makes extensive use of community to fill out its content with reviews of books and other products.

Even if your site is essentially not a community site, you can use contributions from visitors to extend and round-out your own content. Successful examples include comments on blogs and reader reviews on a site. Another idea for obtaining content that some webmasters have used successfully is to run contests (“Best story in pictures and words about a diving trip” for a scuba diving site is one example).

Mechanisms you can use to build community on a site include:

- Message boards
- Chat rooms
- Calendars with information about events in a specific field
- Instant messaging applications
- Reader reviews
- Blog comments and trackbacks



You probably wouldn't want to program an application that enabled much of this community functionality from the ground up, but the fact is that your web host may provide this software for free, versions may be available from the open source community that are also free, or you may be able to inexpensively outsource the application.

If you are hosting your own blog with standard software like Movable Type or WordPress, the software will give you the ability to enable comments and trackbacks out of the box.

Action Items

Here are some action items for you to get started on the road to creating content sites to make money with advertising:

- Understand content categories, types of content, and why people visit content sites
- Find a quality content source
- Design a simple site that highlights content
- Separate content from design
- Keep your content fresh
- Experiment with ad positioning
- Create a site architecture that uses includes, templates, or content management software to facilitate flexibility
- Create a plan to build community on your site

Creating Effective Marketing Plans

“No man is an island,” wrote the poet John Donne in 1624. Donne’s famous meditation suggests that all of humanity is connected, and that individuals do not thrive if they regard themselves as entirely separate from one another. It works the same way with websites.

To build a successful website (with success defined in [Chapter 1](#) simply as a site that draws either broad or specific targeted traffic), you need to get other sites to link to your site. [Chapter 3](#) discusses many of the tactics needed to generate these in-bound links. In addition, you need an overall strategy for increasing the visibility of your site.

This strategy likely involves optimization of your content for search engine ranking and tactical advertising, as I explain later in this chapter (the nuts of bolts of optimization are explained in [Chapter 4](#), and advertising with AdWords is the subject of [Part III](#)). But these techniques should not be regarded as “islands.” They are necessary, but not sufficient in and of themselves.

Creating a successful website requires an effective campaign plan that blends the tactical techniques at your disposal. To some degree, this is Marketing 101.

Any good campaign plan must communicate a compelling story about your site and brand. The plan should also provide a roadmap, so that you know the steps you need to take, and provide a framework with which to benchmark your efforts. Finally, the plan should consider which marketing tools and techniques are most likely to help you achieve your campaign goals.

Telling a Story

At its simplest, marketing means telling a story. This story should be reducible to the well-known elevator pitch: a story that is succinct enough to be told, usually in a single sentence, between the stops of an elevator ride.

Why is it smart to be able to convey your marketing idea as a (very) short story? As far as the issue of brevity goes, nobody has much time these days, particularly on the Web. Therefore, you only have a brief moment to get the attention of your target audience.

Narrative, another word for a story, is simply more compelling to most people than “just plain facts.” Think about it. On your time off, which are you more likely to read: an exciting story or a technical brief? Assume that both are about a small company creating an innovative product and beating the gigantic competition. Most people, hardcore propeller heads aside, will pick the story every time.

Almost without exception, any business story that works contains one or more of the following narrative elements. These elements are identified and described by Guy Kawasaki in his blog story “The Nine Best Story Lines for Marketing” and Lois Kelly in her book *Beyond Buzz: The Next Generation of Word-of-Mouth Marketing* (Amacom):

The Enterprise in danger

One of the prime directives of the scripts of the original Star Trek series was that the Starship Enterprise needed to be in danger in each episode. Even viewers who found the show kitschy (or maybe especially viewers who found the show kitschy) were hooked by the narrative tension of wondering if (or, more accurately, how) the Starship Enterprise would survive.

The “Enterprise in danger” narrative works best as a business-to-business story. Here’s how it goes: your business is in danger and will be shot out of the sky by space aliens unless you buy our tools, which will (a) stop the aliens in their tracks, or (b) rescue you from prison on the alien planet if all else fails.

A great example of a successful (and perfectly legitimate) “Enterprise in danger” pitch is the anti-computer virus story told by McAfee, Norton, and others.

Heroic

We all like to hear heroic marketing stories. Since biblical times, it has thrilled us to learn how David beat Goliath. One reason for this fascination with the little guy prevailing against all odds is we identify with small players. If this “David” could do it, then so could we.

A classic example of a heroic marketing campaign is that waged for years by ice cream vendor Ben & Jerry’s against corporate behemoths like Pillsbury and General Foods. Note that this story still plays through Ben & Jerry’s packaging and marketing collateral even though Ben & Jerry’s has been swallowed by one of their former large competitors.

Against the grain

A marketing story that goes against common assumptions and prejudices gets attention. It makes us say “Huh!?!” and pay attention to the remainder of the pitch. But be warned: this approach is potentially dangerous and can backfire. You need to be very sure that your full story counteracts the counterintuitive aspects of the “against the grain” pitch. If it doesn’t, you risk losing your audience.

Anxiety

Closely related to the “Enterprise in danger” narrative, anxiety tends to play best with social embarrassment issues. For example, many (if not most) deodorant ads are intended to evoke, and then allay, these kinds of personal concerns. In other words, the Enterprise may not be in danger, but there’s an unpleasant condition making it not quite ship-shape, and you wouldn’t want another Star Captain seeing the vessel right now. In the business-to-business context, anxiety story lines tend to play to business rivalries that are not life-and-death issues. But not all anxiety pitches are as trivial as underarm wetness. You’ll recognize many anxiety stories in the advertising of financial services and insurance companies. For example, “Will you have enough money to retire?”

Seasonal or event tie-in

Obviously, Christmas or other gift-giving holidays make a good marketing story, as do other seasonal or event tie-ins such as trade shows, business mergers, and movie openings. The right kind of event can be an opportunity to add glamour to a marketing story, as well as provide a practical motivation and call to action.

Glamour

Everyone wants to be associated with glamour, which is why there is widespread interest in movie stars. Marketing stories that manage to associate a product or service with glamour tend to get attention. Obviously, our society’s fascination with glamour explains the ubiquity of celebrity endorsements as part of marketing stories.

Aspirational

Aspirational stories appeal to the desire most people have for a strong emotional and intellectual connection with community and the businesses they care about. A story that pitches the convergence of a variety of emerging digital media is aspirational, as is one that involves helping to alleviate global warming or pollution. Hope is aspirational.

How-to

How-to stories are one of the most basic, straightforward, and ubiquitous story lines. What can the product or service do for me? Some how-to pitches are closely related to the “Enterprise in danger” story, while others help people achieve aspirational or personal goals. For example, social networking sites on the Web help consumers achieve their personal goals of meeting like-minded souls (for example, Facebook) or business contacts (for example, LinkedIn). The marketing story for these services largely focuses on the practical aspects of how they help people achieve their goals, although the marketing story will also include aspirational aspects of helping to build community.

Personal stories

There’s no better way to illustrate a point than to tell a personal story. This accounts for the raft of personal testimonial advertising, as well as the propensity for inspirational speakers at sales events to charge up the audiences with anecdotes from

their careers or youth. When the personal combines with the aspirational, the result is often a compelling marketing story.

The Elevator Pitch

You should be able to summarize your story in a sentence or two (this is sometimes called an *elevator pitch*). For example:

Digital photography resources, techniques, software, equipment reviews, and photo galleries.

is a story that will probably attract people interested in digital photography. On the other hand:

Ramblings of a grouchy, cranky person who, well, rambles about everything.

is not a targeted story likely to interest anyone for long.

Once you've come up with the gist of your story, you can combine the narrative elements in the story with the fundamental concepts of marketing to create your marketing plan.

While you are thinking about the essentials of your story to create your elevator pitch, you should also come up with a list of the words that are most relevant. These important words are referred to as *keywords*. A good set of keywords is very valuable. They can be used and reused in marketing (for example, in press releases), in website construction (for example, as meta tags), and as targets to acquire for online advertising programs such as Google AdWords.



Use your plan and story to create a summary of your site, a list of keywords related to your site content, and one or more press releases (as I explain in [Chapter 3](#), in “[The Power of the Press Release](#)” on page 68). The site summary and keyword list also can be used to create meta information for your site, as I explain in [Chapter 4](#).

Basics of Marketing

It's likely that you think of marketing as selling and promoting. In fact, these activities are part of marketing. But the real goal of marketing is to have a product or service that sells itself. For example, no one really needs to sell YouTube; users just flock to the site for the service it offers. At its highest level, a good marketing campaign understands the markets and the potential buyers so well that the offering can be positioned in such a way that it sells itself.



You may be saying to yourself, “Why should I care about this stuff? I’m just trying to draw traffic to a website.”

While classic marketing theory predates the Web, and much of it is, in any case, common sense, the more marketing principles you understand and use, the more likely you are to succeed in marketing your website.

The essential concepts in the theory of marketing are often remembered using the mnemonic “5Ps”:

Product

The product, or offering, is the thing or service that is being marketed. The product is not always what meets the eye. For example, a popular music group that sells CDs may actually be using the recordings as a promotional tool for live concerts, which is where the group really makes money. In a similar fashion, there are many websites where the real money-making offering is cloaked in content intended to draw traffic.

Price

The price is the amount that is charged for the product or service. Price bears an intriguing relationship to positioning because a high price often denotes value. You’ve surely heard the phrase, “You get what you pay for.” It’s often (although not always) true—and leads purchasers to assume that low-priced goods or services are inferior (as well as the converse).

On the Web, a pricing problem for content owners is the ideological position (and belief of many consumers) that “content wants to be free.” The usual end-run around this entrenched position is to take advantage of the belief of many that there is no cost to viewing advertisements. Affiliate programs ([Chapter 5](#)), hosted advertising ([Chapter 6](#)), and the Google AdSense program ([Part II](#)) are the primary mechanism for monetizing web traffic with advertising.

Place

The place refers to the distribution channels that the product will go through to reach the consumer. In the physical world, placing and distributing products can involve complex issues of warehousing, financing, and negotiating price. From the viewpoint of a web content provider, issues of place fundamentally come down to the strategies employed to draw traffic. The two leading strategies are Search Engine Marketing (SEM) and Search Engine Optimization (SEO), explained later in this chapter.

Promotion

Promotion means the methods used to raise awareness about the product with the target market.

Positioning

Positioning is understanding how to place the product in the mind of the purchaser, and how that placement relates to the structure of the marketplace.

Creating a Plan

The process of telling a marketing story and integrating the story into the 5P fundamentals is shown in diagram form in [Figure 2-1](#).

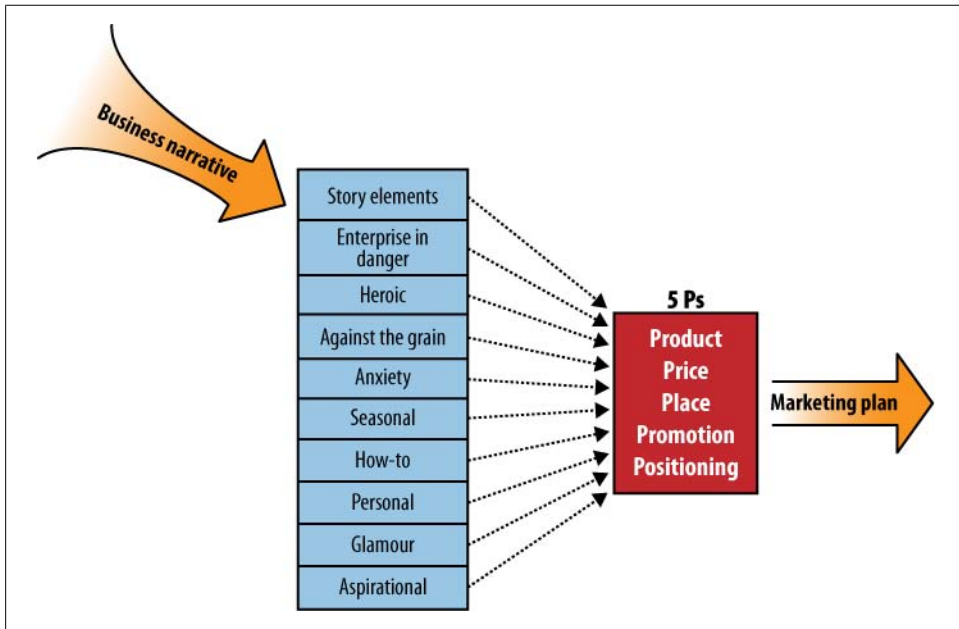


Figure 2-1. By combining business narrative with marketing fundamentals, you can create a marketing plan

Taking the 5Ps of marketing in the context of a web content site, Place and Price are somewhat irrelevant. Place, the distribution channel, is simply the Web, and Price means ad revenue (see [Chapter 5](#), [Chapter 6](#), and [Part II](#) for information about cashing in with web content). The key issues a marketing plan should resolve are Product, Promotion, and Positioning.

Promotion and Positioning of web content is primarily accomplished by advertising, by optimizing your site for search engines, and by generating buzz (the online equivalent of word of mouth).

So the five marketing Ps in the web content context boil down to only 3Ps. This simplification of the process of creating a marketing plan is shown in [Figure 2-2](#).

A marketing plan is created by placing your (hopefully compelling) business narrative in the context of the basic elements of marketing. As opposed to an overall business plan, a marketing plan doesn't have to be an extensive or formal document. In particular, it shouldn't include financial projections or spreadsheets (which are an important element of a general business plan).

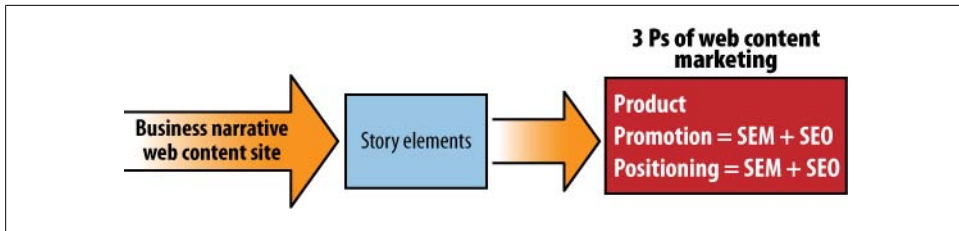


Figure 2-2. When you are creating your marketing plan for web content, you usually don't have to be concerned with pricing or distribution channels

The two most important aspects of a good marketing plan are to present a clear understanding of exactly who your customers are, and why they would, should, or could be interested in your product. If you know the customer, and the reason for the customer's interest, you can usually figure out how to “connect the dots”—and get your offering in front of your potential buyers.

How can you discover your target customer? There's no exact science to it. Large businesses often employ focus groups for this purpose. But not only are focus groups expensive, they often yield results that are neither generally applicable nor useful. For smaller enterprises that want some kind of analytical basis for making marketing decisions, the survey is probably a more useful tool. Surveys can be used with existing customers or potential customers. If properly designed, surveys can yield good data for analysis and can help drive marketing decisions.



Services such as [iContact](#) and [Constant Contact](#) provide tools that can help you design effective email surveys. In addition, by using one of these services your surveys won't get labeled as spam, and your survey targets can use the opt-in and opt-out tools provided. This will keep you in compliance with applicable laws and make your surveys feel more user-friendly and professional to those who are interested in completing them.

Whether or not you use tools like focus groups and surveys, the key issue is to understand your customers and potential customers. If you can, talk to them and get to know them. Think about them. Research competitive businesses and see how they position themselves.

The two most important aspects of a plan for online marketing and publicity are:

- Understanding your target audience (or audiences)
- Creating a story (or stories) that will meet the needs of and intrigue your target audience

Creating a Checklist

Your plan should provide a checklist with specific “to do” items—essentially, all of the techniques used to create online publicity described in this chapter. The list should also include offline marketing and publicity placements appropriate to your target audience and your story.

Successfully getting online publicity and generating traffic is largely a matter of focus and keeping track of the details. Creating a checklist as part of your plan will help you make sure that none of these details fall through the cracks.

When you get to the steps I suggest in Chapters 3 and 4 for publicizing your site and improving its construction, you’ll see that many of these steps are essentially mechanical. For example, once you have submitted a site to a variety of search engines, there is no great difficulty in repeating the process.

Even so, you should have a plan for marketing your content sites. No brick-and-mortar business in its right mind would attempt a marketing or publicity campaign without a plan, and you shouldn’t proceed online without one either.

Having a plan will help you accomplish even the mechanical steps more effectively. When you submit your site to a search engine or a directory, you will often be asked for a description of your offering. Understanding your site in the context of a marketing plan will help you hone a site description. If you already have your elevator pitch and keyword list, you can use and reuse them—in site submissions, in meta code, in press releases, and more. As minimum steps, you should:

- Understand who the ideal visitor to your site is
- Discover some interesting stories to tell about your website
- Make a checklist and plan for publicizing your site

Naming Your Site

An important part of marketing a web content site is naming the site. As one can learn from ancient mythologies in almost any culture, there can be a great deal of power in the selection of a name.

If you haven’t already picked a name for your website, try to select a name that helps to tell your story. Good names, at least with a *.com* suffix, are hard to find these days. It’s worth working hard to find the right name.



Since more and more site traffic is derived from search engine queries (or search page advertising), arguably the domain name for a site is less important than it used to be. It’s still a great plus to come up with a memorable and relevant site name.

The Cult of Personality

Life written large with the cult of personality might well describe the times we live in. At the time of this writing, Paris Hilton, an heiress with an apparently vacuous personality, has a television show and is famous because (and not despite) of that vacuous personality. I think the reality is that Paris is a great deal smarter than she seems—although another moral you can certainly draw from the Paris Hilton success story is that sex sells.

My point is that people, particularly celebrities, get attention these days. If you have celebrity, have access to celebrities, or have ideas about how to create celebrity, I say: “Go for it! Milk it!” And don’t forget to mention your website.

It’s reasonable that people should be interested in people. People are interesting. As the poet Alexander Pope said a long time ago, “The proper study of mankind is man.” (If Pope had included both genders, we moderns could surely go along with this.)

It’s really very simple. Getting website traffic requires publicity. Publicity is best generated using stories about people—particularly interesting or notorious people. If your website has an interesting story about people, let others know about it (perhaps using a press release). Your people story will draw traffic.

Ideally, a site name, as I mentioned, should tell or evoke the story of your site and be memorable. Consider these classics:

Amazon

The world’s greatest river meets the world’s largest inventory

eBay

Evokes an Internet port of trade, and perhaps even a new age of discovery

Google

A very big number fits with the very large quantity of information Google indexes

Introducing SEM

Search Engine Marketing, often referred to by the acronym SEM, means paying for ads displayed by a search engine on a page of search query results. Google is essentially the inventor of this kind of advertising on a wide scale (although not the first to deploy it) and by far the largest player in the field.

In the Internet era, SEM is the key mechanism for driving marketing. Many SEM campaigns are primarily designed to drive traffic to take a specific action (such as purchasing a product). This means that these SEM campaigns are primarily related to the “Place” component of the 5Ps of marketing. However, as SEM has matured, many businesses are also realizing that SEM can be used in a broader fashion to drive perception and, as such, fall under the “Position” component of marketing.

Obviously, there are many kinds of paid advertising that go beyond getting your ads to appear in response to a user entering specific search terms (see [Chapter 14](#) for some examples of advertising that don't depend on search). However, by far the easiest and most productive advertising on the Web is accomplished using SEM.

The predominant type of SEM ads is text only. The short block of text includes one or more hyperlinks. The ads are paid for using a scheme called CPC, or cost per click. With CPC, the advertiser agrees to pay for the ad only when the hyperlinks it contains are actually clicked.

Getting the most from your marketing and advertising budget with SEM and CPC ads is a complex and important topic. It is the primary subject of [Part III](#) of this book.

The most important SEM ads appear on search results pages, either on the top or the right of the page. They are clearly denoted as advertisements. However, they are often extremely well targeted. After all, they appear in response to a search query. The extent of this targeting makes these ads very effective.

As you'll see in [Parts II and III](#) of this book, if you use the Google AdWords program to place SEM ads, you can also place ads on web content. Website owners have signed up to host this advertising content and are paid a portion of the revenues. While this kind of content ad is targeted, it's not as effective as ads on search engine results pages themselves (and therefore is not worth paying as much for).

Comparing SEO with SEM

The idea behind SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is that it makes sense to bypass the whole idea of advertising. As I've noted, the most effective and targeted ads are themselves on search results pages. So, why not simply arrange for them to be in search results—and specifically somewhere at the top of the search results—returned for a given query? Surely there's more credibility in being within the top so-called *natural* search results rather than paying for placement. After all, anyone can buy an ad. In addition, more users tend to click on natural search listings than on ads. Taking these factors into consideration, the goal of SEO is to appear high in natural search listings.

Studies have shown that most people go no further than the first three pages of search results. Since Google defaults to 10 results per page, your goal should be to be within the top 30 results for the search terms you target.

Of course, the first few search results get far and away the most clicks, so ideally you'd want to be number five or above. However, this may not be realistic, depending upon many factors—and a successful SEO campaign targets many different keywords and phrases, with logical but differing expectations.

You should bear in mind that the traffic fall-off is steep. There's a world of difference from an SEO viewpoint of being in the top three as opposed to on the second page of results.

Crafting the Blended Campaign

The goal of core SEO is to obtain high natural listings. As the world of search has grown, however, the SEO discipline has also expanded. There used to be considerable stigma associated with obviously paying for listings. Since Google has taken the high road and labeled all paid content as advertising, there's absolutely no stigma associated with paid listings, particularly when using a program like AdWords that appropriately labels content.

If paid listings help drive the traffic that you need in a cost-effective fashion, they should be considered a valuable part of your extended SEO campaign management. In fact, to generalize, SEM advertisements reinforce SEO natural listing placement. If a prospect sees both an advertisement and a listing high in the search results for the same product or company, that person is more than twice as likely to click one or the other. Perhaps this is because the natural listing implies that the site being promoted has genuinely relevant content, and the advertising link implies that a solid company (or at least one with an advertising budget) is behind the site.

The ideal of the blended campaign should be to expose prospects to both advertisements and natural search results. Paid advertising can reinforce search listings as I've just explained. It can also extend the reach of a natural search engine ranking campaign by using ad placement for terms or phrases that do not correspond to a high natural result.

Action Items

- Understand your story, and tie it in to one or more narrative elements
- Reduce your story to an elevator pitch
- List significant keywords and phrases related to your site, story, and pitch
- Create a marketing plan
- Create a marketing checklist
- Understand the distinction between SEO and SEM, and consider crafting a marketing strategy that uses elements of each

Driving Traffic to a Website

The best way to get traffic to a website is to publish great content, sit back, and let word of mouth spread the news. However, life is not always quite so simple. For one thing, generating great content is not necessarily easy. And even great content can sometimes use a head start so that it can really catch on.

Effective online strategies for driving traffic to a site fall into three general categories:

Promotional

Intended to build buzz and word of mouth

Technical

SEO activities intended to increase search engine visibility and rankings and drive traffic via inbound links

Advertising

Such as the Google AdWords program explained in [Part III](#) of this book

The first two of these strategies fall under the general rubric of SEO (Search Engine Optimization), whereas advertising with AdWords (explained in detail in [Part III](#)) is, of course, SEM (Search Engine Marketing). I discussed crafting a campaign balance between SEO and SEM in [Chapter 2](#).

This chapter explains how to publicize your site and increase traffic using techniques that do not cost money and do not involve tinkering with the HTML code or content of your pages themselves.

What Price Popularity?

The three kinds of activities that drive traffic to a website have very different apparent cost metrics:

- Promotional activities, discussed in this chapter, are largely free, although they do take time and energy.
- Technical SEO activities, explained in [Chapter 4](#), are also largely free of out-of-pocket costs, although they do require technical expertise with websites.

- Advertising, covered in [Part III](#), explicitly costs money; however, it is possible to tie cost to performance.

The best advice is to use elements of all three approaches, if possible, in any effort to drive traffic.

Submitting Your Sites to Search Engines

Google and most other search engines use several separate mechanisms:

- A program that crawls the Web to find sites, also called a *crawler* or a *spider*. Once found (crawled), sites are placed in the search engine's index.
- Software that ranks sites in the search engine's index to determine their order of delivery when someone uses Google to search for a particular keyword or phrase.

To start with, if your site hasn't been found by a search engine, you won't be ranked at all. So the first task is getting your site into the systems of Google and other search engines.



I do not recommend participating in any programs that ask you to pay for search engine listings, regardless of whether these programs are run by search engines themselves or by third parties. At best, these programs do nothing you cannot do yourself, and at worst they are scams.

If you have *inbound links*—links to your site—from other sites in a search engine's index, then the search engine's spider will find your site...eventually. But why not see if you can speed up the process?



It's peculiar but true: different search engines index different portions of the Web. Also, at any given time, it is impossible for any search engine index to include the entire Web because the Web is changing too fast!

The rub is that even by submitting a form to a search engine, there is no guarantee if, or when, your site will be included by a given search engine. An easy approach is to list your site using the search engine's procedures, and check back in six months to see if you are included in the search engine's index. If not, submit again. In other words, this is a process that requires patience and may produce limited results—but at least the price is right!

Google re-indexes frequently, so a better way to get listed in Google is to find a page that is already listed and get a link from it to your site.

Google is, of course, the single most important index. The good news about Google is that the Googlebots (its crawlers) are hyperactive. If you put up a new site that has a

few inbound links from sites that are themselves at least somewhat linked-to, it is very unlikely that you will have to wait long to be indexed. Note, however, that this presents a cogent argument for arranging at least one or two inbound links before your site is ready to go live.



Getting a site listed in an online categorized directory—particularly the Open Directory Project (ODP) or Yahoo!’s directory, as I explain in “Working with Directories” on page 57—is one of the most effective ways to get included in the search engine indexes themselves.

To summarize, search engines find the web pages they index by using software to follow links on the Web. Since the Web is huge, and always expanding and changing, it can be a while before this software finds your particular site. Therefore, it’s smart to speed up this process by manually submitting your site to search engines.

Important Search Engines for Submission

Table 3-1 shows some of the most important search engines to which you should submit your site, along with the URL for each site’s submission page. Some search engines, such as [Ask.com](#), don’t have a submission page. Their attitude is that you should prepare a site map (see “Taking Advantage of Site Mapping” on page 54), and they’ll get to your site when they get there. But the big three—Google, Bing, and Yahoo!—each do have an explicit submission mechanism.

Table 3-1. Selected search engines and submission URLs

Search engine	Submission URL
Google	http://www.google.com/addurl/
Bing	http://www.bing.com/docs/submit.aspx
Yahoo!	http://search.yahoo.com/info/submit.html

Submission Tools

You may also want to use an automated site submission tool that submits your site to multiple search engines in one fell swoop. If you have inbound links, your site will get picked up automatically in any case, so site submission is not worth as much as it used to be. But the price is right, so what the heck?

If you are hosting your web content offsite, your web hosting company may well provide a utility with this functionality that you can use to submit the URLs for your hosted domains to a group of search engines. Figure 3-1 shows the results of a site submission using the tool provided by one web host (you’ll probably find that your web host provides something similar).



Before using a site submission tool, you should prepare a short list of keywords and a one- or two-sentence summary of your site as I mentioned in “Telling a Story” on page 33 and “Creating a Plan” on page 38 (you’ll be able to reuse the keywords and site summary as keywords and description data in your meta tags). Alternatively, if you have already created meta information for your site, as I explain in Chapter 4, you can use the keywords and description in your meta information for search engine submissions.

Submit your sites to search engines		
Domain to submit	digitalfieldguide.com ▾	
Contact e-mail	info@digitalfieldguide.c +	
Key Words (Keywords must be separated by spaces)	photography, digital, techniques, aperture, f-stop, exposure, lighting, ▾	
Description	Digital photogaphy and inspiration from Harold Davis ▾	
Timeout:	90 sec ▾	
Sites to Submit		
Site	Submit	Result
NetSearch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
TopSitesNet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
Google_	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
Infomak	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
Webwombat	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
hotbot	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
Walhello	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
MasterSite	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
lycos	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
Whatyouseek	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
AllTheWeb	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
Northernlight	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
Googley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Has not been submitted
<input type="button" value="Submit"/>		

Figure 3-1. This web host utility lets you automatically submit your site to a number of search engines at once



If the tool is provided by your web host, you will probably be able to submit only your domain, rather than directories within the domain—for example, <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com> but not <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/>.

If you search Google with a phrase like “search engine submit,” you’ll find a few free services that submit to a group of search sites for you. You’ll also find some search engine submission services that cost money.

Typically, the free submission sites try to up-sell or cross-sell you on a product or service, but since you don’t have to buy anything, why not take advantage of the free service? The best-known example of this kind of site is [Submit Express](#), which will submit your URL to 40 sites for free (you’ll likely want to pass on the various offers you’ll find on the site).

Working with Google

Google wants you to succeed. Successful content websites and pages represent advertising target destinations. Creating new places for Google’s ads is important to Google because it is a significant revenue source for Google. Unless you have millions of visitors to your website, you probably will not receive personal advice from someone who works for Google. But any site, no matter how big or small, can take advantage of Google’s tools for webmasters.

The tools that Google makes available fall into four categories (Google tends to describe “documentation” as a tool):

Automatic updating tools

Let you discover how Google sees your pages, and let you notify Google automatically when there are changes

Find out how users are reaching your site

Provides report information about your inbound links, and how people are reaching your site

Understand the query path

Provides information about exactly what queries drive users to your site, so you can tweak your pages to get more traffic

Documentation at Webmaster Central

A knowledge base that includes a blog, help section, and often-updated FAQs

The best way to start taking advantage of these Google Webmaster Tools is to open the Webmaster Central page, located at <http://www.google.com/webmasters/> and shown in [Figure 3-2](#).

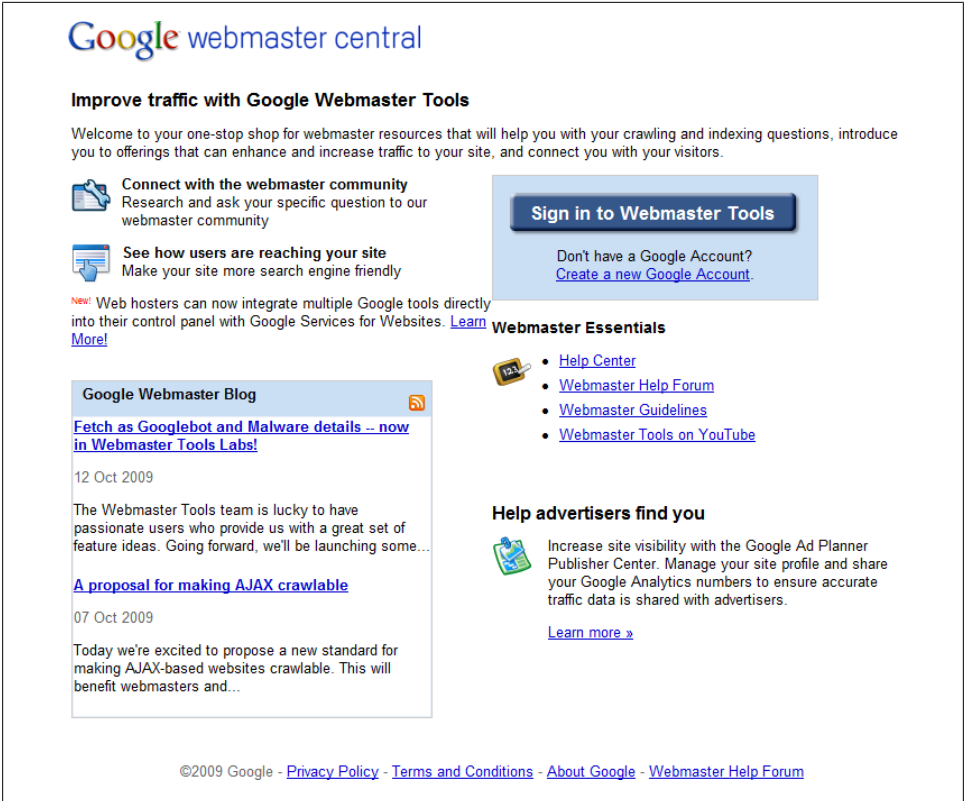


Figure 3-2. Google provides a Webmaster Central page to help you navigate the Webmaster Tools offerings

When you click the “Sign in to Webmaster Tools” button shown in Figure 3-2 and sign in, the Webmaster Dashboard shown in Figure 3-3 opens.

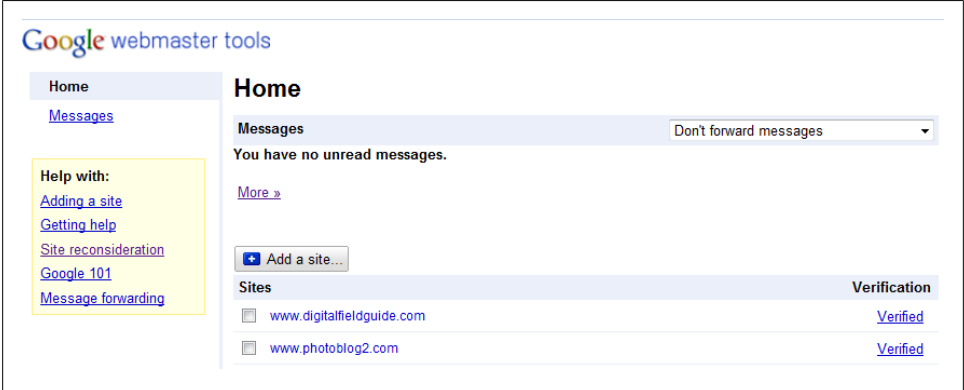


Figure 3-3. The Google Webmaster Dashboard is used to launch Webmaster Tools

The Dashboard lists the sites associated with your user ID.



You may notice that you can report spam and paid links using this interface. Google is essentially asking you to do its work for it, but a cleaner, less spammy Web benefits everyone.

On the topic of paid links, of course Google is in the business of providing paid links all the time. There's no reason you should not accept paid advertising from parties other than Google on your site. However, in the interest of both being fair with your site users and not angering the Google Gods, it is important to mark the advertisements as such, both visually (for humans) and in HTML code (for the Googlebots). You'll find more on this topic in [Chapter 4](#).

To get the most out of the Webmaster Tools, you'll need to verify your sites, which means proving they are yours (or, more technically, that you at least have permission from an owner or administrator with root level access). You verify a site in one of two ways:

- Add a file to the home directory of your site named as Google instructs. Google then scans for the file.
- Add a meta tag generated by Google to the header section of the index page of your site, and then Google scans for the custom tag. (See [Chapter 4](#) for more information about meta tags.)

A *site map* is an XML guide to the pages and links in a website presented in a normalized format. Although many of the Google Webmaster Tools are available without a site map, to get the most out of the tools (as well as to improve your visibility in Google) you'll want to upload a site map as I explain a little later in this chapter.

It's not particularly intuitive, but to get to the different sections of Webmaster Tools for a site, click the site URL in the Google Dashboard (as shown in [Figure 3-3](#)). For each URL, you'll see a menu like that shown in [Figure 3-4](#).

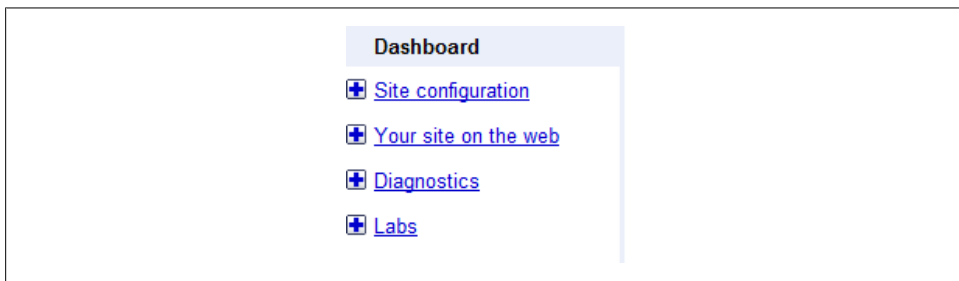


Figure 3-4. After clicking a link in the Dashboard, you get access to the Webmaster Tools on a per-domain basis

If you haven't yet verified your site, you won't see much in the Dashboard mode (Figure 3-5), although Google will tell you if it is able to communicate with your home page and if it's been indexed.

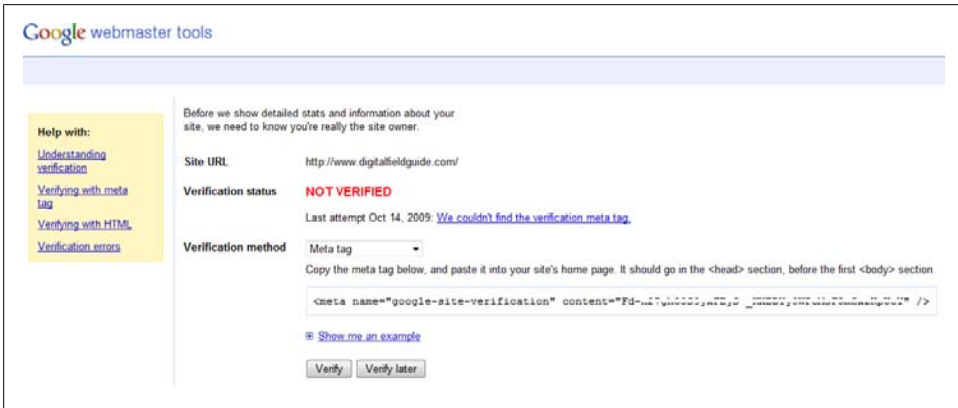


Figure 3-5. To get the most out of the Webmaster Tools, you need to verify your site

Once your site is verified, in Dashboard mode you'll be able to see web crawl errors, as shown in Figure 3-6.

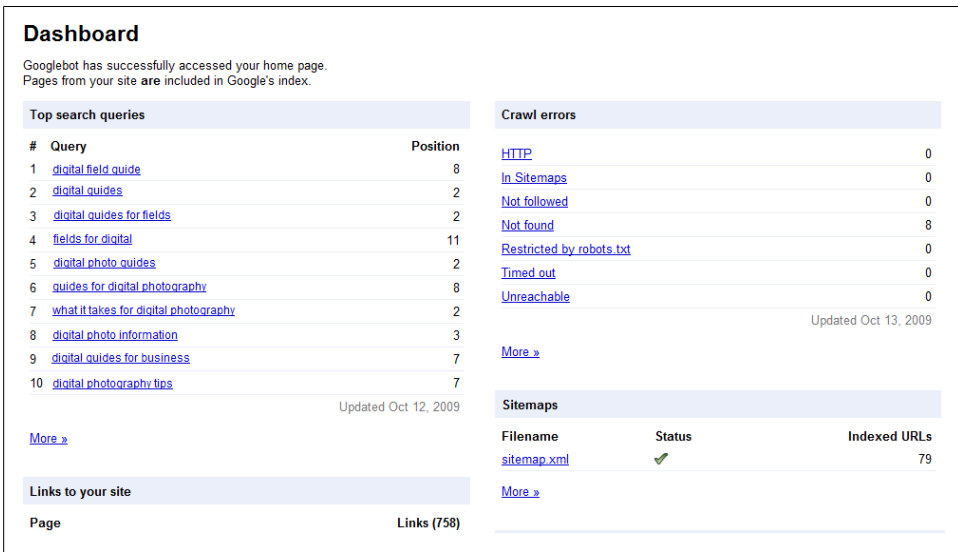


Figure 3-6. Dashboard mode lets you know if the Googlebot found any errors while it was crawling

Clicking on the link for any of the web crawl errors found gives you specific information about the location of the problem pages so that you can fix the error.

The tabs on the Dashboard control panel shown earlier in [Figure 3-4](#) let you access utilities and information as follows:

Site configuration

This tab lets you access web crawl information such as site maps, crawler access, and restrictions to your site’s content. You can also change your domain address, access general settings, and see any Google-generated sitelinks that will appear in search results.

Your site on the web

This tab provides information about the top search queries that people use to find your site, and shows you inbound links (Google calls these *external links*), cross links (Google calls these *internal links*), and the most common keywords the Googlebot sees when crawling your site. You can also get a detailed breakdown of subscriber statistics.

Diagnostics

Any issues Google encounters when crawling your site will be listed under “Crawl errors.” These stats show Googlebot activity during the last 90 days. In addition, a new feature called “HTML suggestions” will highlight issues that may affect user experience and performance, such as meta or title tags. A typical HTML suggestions report is shown in [Figure 3-7](#).

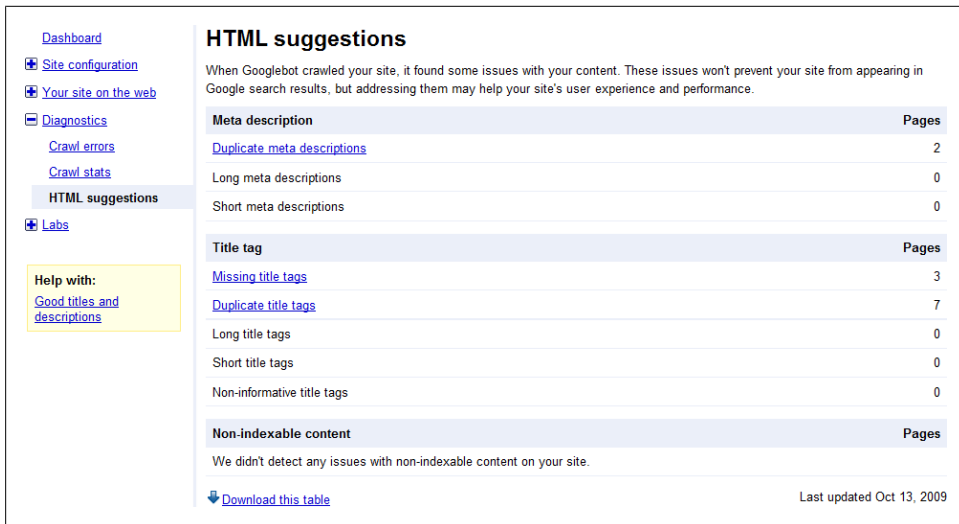


Figure 3-7. HTML suggestions tell you whether you need to work on your title and meta tags

Labs

As Google rolls out new beta features to assist webmasters, they will first appear here. For example, the “Fetch as Googlebot” and “Malware details” tools provide more information if any issues are detected on your site.



[Google Webmaster Central](#) provides an easy way to access the full suite of Google Webmaster Tools, as well as Google Webmaster documentation including the Google Webmaster Blog, Help Center, and Discussion Group.

Taking Advantage of Site Mapping

Simply put, site maps are a list of the pages on your site. There are two kinds of site maps: those that humans can use to navigate a site, and encoded site maps for the use of web bots and crawlers.

Google encourages webmasters to create the second kind of site map, which is written in XML. If you have this kind of site map registered with Google, your site will likely be more fully and quickly indexed, and changes to your site will be noticed more frequently.

Sites with certain characteristics will benefit from site mapping. Here are the kinds of sites that will benefit the most from mapping (although there is no downside, so site mapping is something all sites should do):

- Sites with dynamic content
- Sites that have pages that the Googlebot can't easily crawl and process—for example, pages featuring AJAX or Flash
- New sites with few inbound links (the Googlebot crawls the Web by following links from one page to another, so it may be hard for Google to discover your site if it isn't well linked)
- Sites with a large archive of content pages that are not well linked to each other or are not linked at all

To get mileage with Google, the site map should conform to the standards set by [Sitemaps.org](#). At the time of this writing, the current version of the standard is Sitemap Protocol version 0.9, with the specifications found at <http://www.sitemaps.org/protocol.php>.

For example, here's a sample site map containing one URL (and one page):

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8"?>
<urlset xmlns="http://www.sitemaps.org/schemas/sitemap/0.9">
  <url>
    <loc>http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/</loc>
    <lastmod>2009-01-01</lastmod>
    <changefreq>monthly</changefreq>
```

```
</url>  
</urlset>
```

If your eyes start to glaze over at the beginning of a discussion of XML schema and the fine points of a specific protocol, fear not. There are automated tools, many of them free, that can do it for you, and you don't really need to know much about how site maps work to take advantage of the concept.

To use site mapping while only maintaining a bare nod to the technical side of what is involved, pick one of the site mapping programs suggested by Google at <http://code.google.com/p/sitemap-generators/wiki/SitemapGenerators>. Many of these programs are free; if there is a fee, it is indicated on the page with a dollar sign (\$) next to the link for the software.

For example, GSiteCrawler is software on the Google-approved list that is currently available for free download on the Windows platform. You download it to your Windows desktop and start the New Site Wizard shown in [Figure 3-8](#).

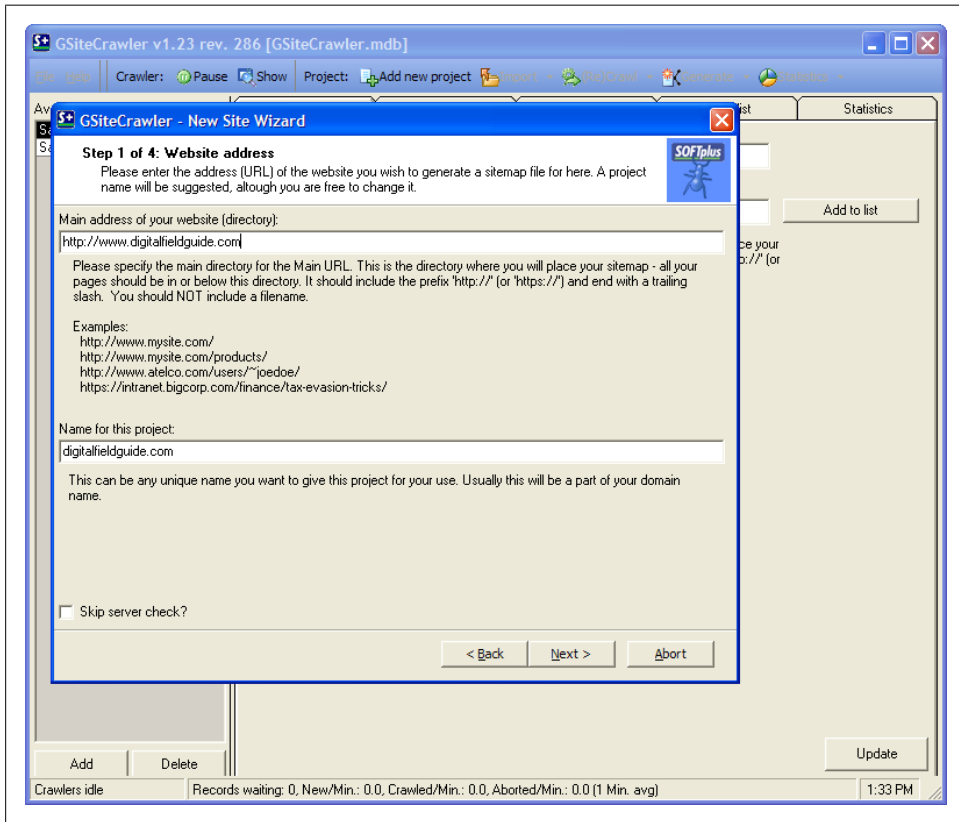


Figure 3-8. You'll need to enter some straightforward information before the software can begin crawling your site in order to generate a site map

Once you've entered basic information, the New Site Wizard crawls your site to generate the site map as shown in [Figure 3-9](#). This is a process that can take hours if your site is extensive.

Once your site has been completely crawled, you'll need to generate the site map file as shown in [Figure 3-10](#). Save the site map file to your local computer, and then transfer it to the root directory of your website. The FTP transfer is generally accomplished using FTP software, such as [Fetch](#) for the Mac or [WS_FTP](#) for Windows.



You can generate a site map for Yahoo! at the same time the Google site map is created.

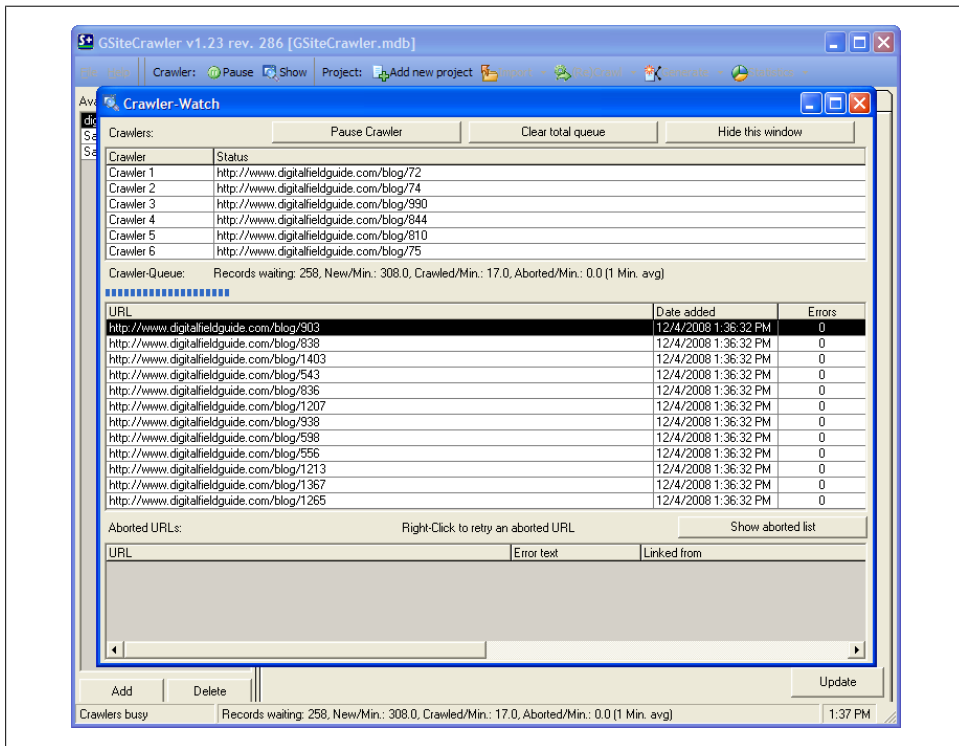


Figure 3-9. Each page is considered when the software crawls a site to create a site map

Once your site map has been uploaded to the root directory of your website, you can point Google to it using the Webmaster Dashboard (shown in [Figure 3-4](#)) and clicking on the “Site configuration” link and choosing the Sitemaps tab. You will need to be verified in relation to the website.

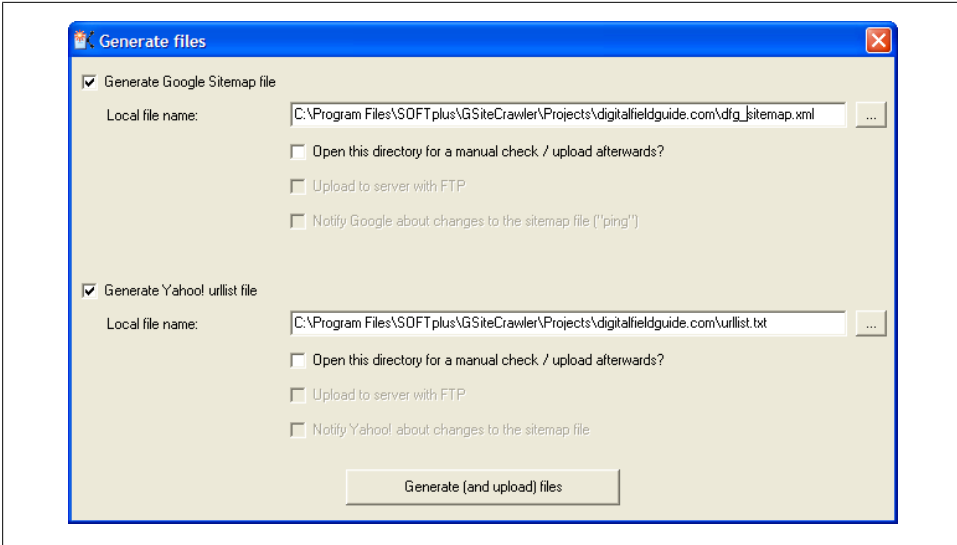


Figure 3-10. Once a site has been crawled, the site map file is generated

In the Sitemaps window, shown in Figure 3-11, enter the name of your site map and click Submit.

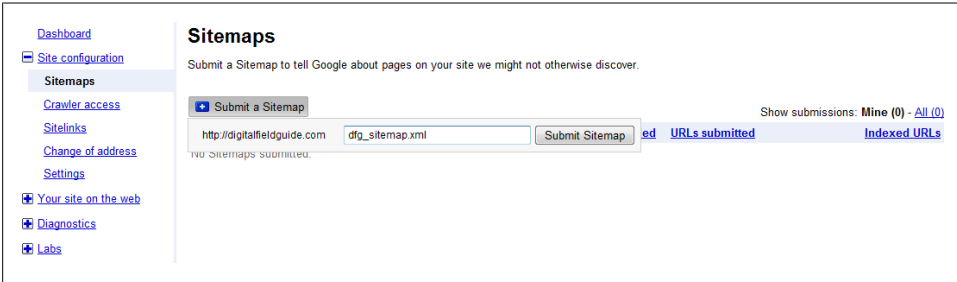


Figure 3-11. Once the site map file is in the root directory of your website, you can submit it to Google

Working with Directories

It's a not-so-well-kept secret that one of the best approaches for getting better rankings in the search engine listings is to enter through a back door by working with the two most important structured directories: the Open Directory Project (ODP) and the Yahoo! Directory.

Understanding Taxonomies

A directory differs from the index used by a search engine because a directory uses a structured way to categorize sites, sometimes called a *taxonomy*. In addition, sites are included in a particular category in the ODP and Yahoo! directories only after they have been reviewed by human editors. You can search within directories (just as you can search in a web index such as the one compiled by Google). But it's common to use a directory by following its taxonomy, drilling down through subjects to find what you want. For example, suppose you wanted to find resources related to alternative photo processes, such as creating daguerreotypes (a nineteenth-century print technology). Using the Open Directory taxonomy, shown in [Figure 3-12](#), you would drill down through the categories Arts→Photography→Techniques and Styles to find topics including Alternative Processes.



You can think of the index of the Web compiled by search engines such as Google as being like the index of a nonfiction book. In contrast, a taxonomic directory is much more like the table of contents for the book: it is organized according to the book's structure, and you can drill down by part, chapter (within the part), heading (within the chapter), and subtopic to find the information you need.

Getting Open Directory Project Listings

The [Open Directory Project \(ODP\)](#) is the most important taxonomic directory on the Web. Formally hosted and administered by the Netscape division of AOL, the ODP is run along the lines of an open source project and is inspired by the [Debian Social Contract](#).

The credo behind the ODP is that “humans do it better.” The ODP believes that web automated search is ineffective and getting worse, and that the small contingent of paid editors at commercial web search engine companies cannot keep up with the staggering rate of change on the Web—decaying, stagnant sites; link rot; new sites; sites intended as search spam; and so on.

The ODP is run and maintained by a vast army of volunteer editors. These editors follow internal checks and balances to preserve the integrity of the directory. See <http://dmoz.org/guidelines/> for more information about the ODP review process and guidelines for site inclusion.



You, too, can become an ODP editor in an area of your interest and expertise. See <http://dmoz.org/help/become.html> for more information about becoming an ODP editor.

The screenshot shows the DMOZ Open Directory Project interface. At the top, there is a green header with the 'dmoz' logo and the text 'open directory project'. Below this is a search bar with a 'Search' button. The main content area displays a hierarchical category structure. The current path is 'Top: Arts: Photography: Techniques and Styles' with a count of 1,061 items. Below this, there are three lists of sub-categories, each with a count in parentheses:

- [Darkroom](#) (41)
- [FAQs, Help, and Tutorials](#) (83)
- [Workshops and Courses@](#) (79)

- [Abstract and Experimental@](#) (139)
- [Astrophotography@](#) (247)
- [Aviation@](#) (75)
- [Black and White@](#) (169)
- [Cave@](#) (18)
- [Dance@](#) (38)
- [Documentary](#) (365)
- [Fine Art@](#) (342)
- [Forensic@](#) (18)
- [Kite Aerial@](#) (36)
- [Music Photography@](#) (125)
- [Nature and Wildlife Photography](#) (24)
- [Road Photography@](#) (149)
- [Underwater@](#) (154)

- [Alternative Processes](#) (95)
- [Collage and Montage@](#) (4)
- [3D](#) (55)
- [Digital](#) (87)
- [Infrared](#) (32)
- [Lomography](#) (22)
- [Night Photography](#) (28)
- [Panoramic and 360°](#) (72)
- [Pinhole](#) (95)
- [Polaroid Processes](#) (30)
- [Toy Camera](#) (17)

Figure 3-12. You can find “Alternative Processes” and related photographic topics by drilling down through Arts, Photography, and Techniques and Styles

The ODP taxonomy (categorization system) and the sites included in the categories are freely available as data for use by anyone who wants to run his own search engine, as long as the terms of the ODP’s free-use license are complied with. (For terms of the license, in case you want to use the ODP data in a search engine of your own, see <http://dmoz.org/license.html>.)

Google and most of the major search engines do use information derived from the ODP, but they use it in their own way. Google in particular uses information from the ODP to form one of the less well-known facets of Google, the [Google Directory](#).



Google uses its own search technology for searches within the Google Directory and, in this way, differs from the ODP.

Most significantly, inclusion within an ODP category means that your site will very likely be included within the Google web index (as well as the Google Directory and in other major web indexes).

So, it's worth submitting your site to the ODP if only because it's the best way to get indexed (and appropriately categorized) by Google. You'll find a FAQ about how to add your site at <http://www.dmoz.org/add.html> (this FAQ is also available via a link from the ODP home page).

The first step is to locate the best category for your site. For example, suppose you have a site like the Photogram area of <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com> (Figure 3-13), whose purpose is to display images created using an alternative photographic process.

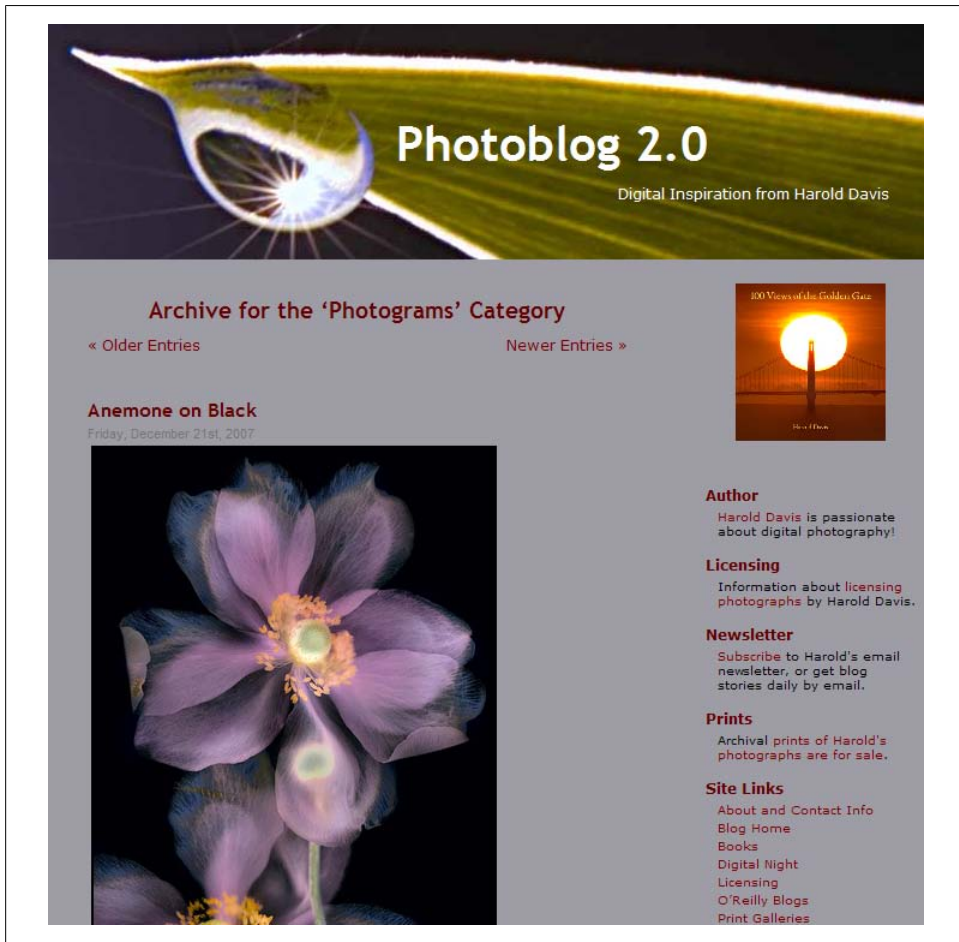
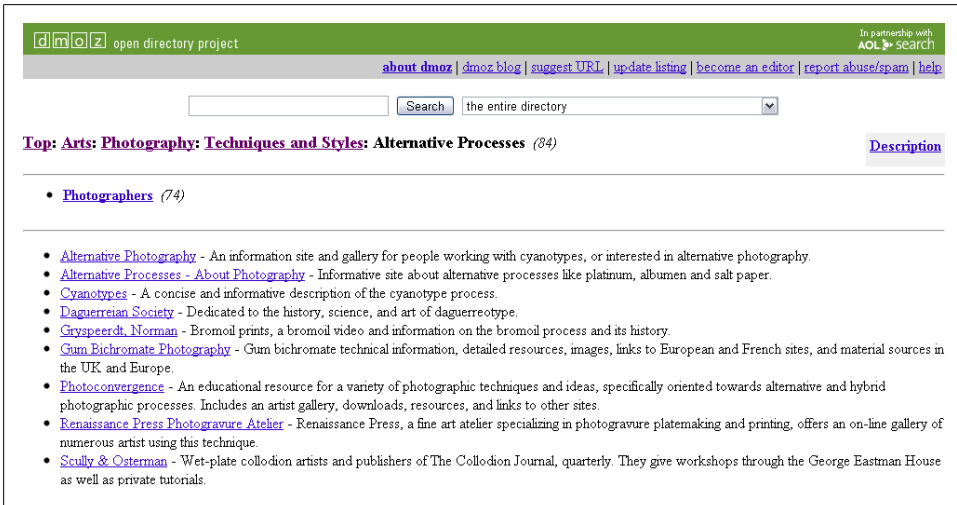


Figure 3-13. The Photoblog 2.0 Photogram archive might fit in the alternative processes category on the ODP

The best category on the ODP I can find for this site is the category I've already shown, Arts→Photography→Techniques and Styles→Alternative Processes. The category page is shown in [Figure 3-14](#).



The screenshot shows the Open Directory Project (ODP) website interface. At the top, there is a green header with the ODP logo and the text "open directory project". To the right, it says "In partnership with AOL SEARCH". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: "about dmoz", "dmoz blog", "suggest URL", "update listing", "become an editor", "report abuse/spam", and "help". A search bar is located below the navigation bar, with a "Search" button and a dropdown menu set to "the entire directory". The main content area displays the category path: "Top: Arts: Photography: Techniques and Styles: Alternative Processes (84)". A "Description" button is visible on the right. Below the category path, there is a list of sub-categories, with "Photographers (74)" being the first one. A list of links follows, each with a brief description of the site it points to, such as "Alternative Photography", "Alternative Processes - About Photography", "Cyanotypes", "Daguerreian Society", "Gryspeerd, Norman", "Gum Bichromate Photography", "Photoconvergence", "Renaissance Press Photogravure Atelier", and "Scully & Osterman".

Figure 3-14. Click “suggest URL” to start the process of requesting an addition to an ODP category



You can start looking for the right category (to get close to the best possible category) using a search term—for example, “photogram.”

On the category page that you think is best for your site, click the “suggest URL” link, shown at the top of [Figure 3-14](#).

This will open the “Submit a Site to the Open Directory” page, where you will be asked to verify the category you selected (as determined by the page from which you clicked “suggest URL”). You’ll need to enter your site’s URL, title, a brief site description, and your email address. As the editors note, “A well-written, objective description will make listing your site easier.”

When your listing page is complete, click Submit. The process is now complete, except for the waiting. You should check from time to time to see if you’ve been listed.

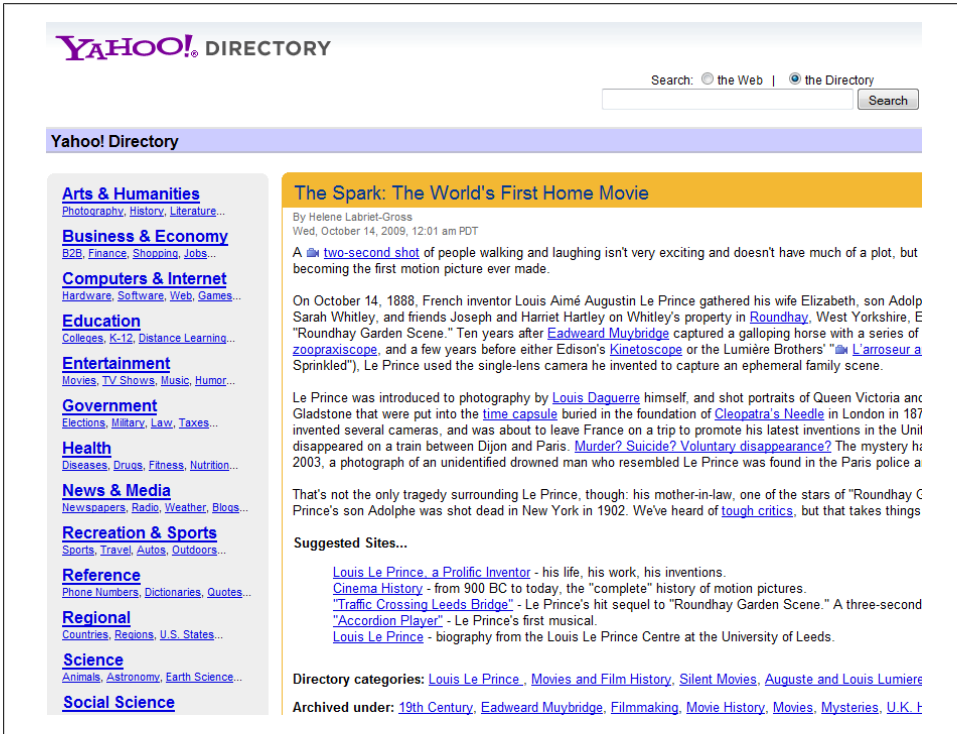


If I make it sound like you might have to wait a long time to get listed in the ODP, well, you might! The ODP depends on volunteer labor, and rumor is that it is getting slower and slower. However, inclusion in the ODP is a virtual guarantee of inclusion in many search engine indexes and other directories. So have patience! The ODP is worth it.

Getting Yahoo! Directory Listings

The Yahoo! Directory, a somewhat lesser-known part of Yahoo!, works in pretty much the same way as the ODP, except that it is privately maintained. Sites added to the Yahoo! Directory tend to end up in the Yahoo! index as well as other important search indexes.

To suggest your site for inclusion in the Yahoo! Directory, open the [Yahoo! Directory's home page](#), shown in [Figure 3-15](#).



The screenshot shows the Yahoo! Directory interface. At the top, the 'YAHOO! DIRECTORY' logo is on the left, and search options are on the right: 'Search: the Web | the Directory' with a search button. Below the logo is a navigation bar with 'Yahoo! Directory'. On the left is a vertical menu with categories: Arts & Humanities, Business & Economy, Computers & Internet, Education, Entertainment, Government, Health, News & Media, Recreation & Sports, Reference, Regional, Science, and Social Science. The main content area features a yellow header for 'The Spark: The World's First Home Movie' by Helene Labriet-Gross. The article text describes the invention of the first motion picture on October 14, 1888, by Louis Aimé Augustin Le Prince. It includes a 'Suggested Sites...' section with links to 'Louis Le Prince, a Prolific Inventor', 'Cinema History', 'Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge', 'Accordion Player', and 'Louis Le Prince' biography. At the bottom, it lists 'Directory categories' and 'Archived under' with various related terms.

Figure 3-15. Yahoo! Directory is not Yahoo!; here's the Yahoo! Directory home page



You can also find the Yahoo! Directory by opening the main Yahoo! home page, selecting Directory as your search category, and searching for a term. The search results you will be presented with are from the Yahoo! Directory (not the Yahoo! web index), and the display will show where you are in the taxonomy, so you can browse through related categories.

Next, find the best category for your site, either by drilling down through the Yahoo! Directory taxonomy, shown on the left of [Figure 3-15](#), or by searching within the Yahoo! Directory, using the search box shown at the top of [Figure 3-15](#).



You can use directory search results as the starting place for pinpointing the perfect category.

When you find the right category page (for example, for a digital photography site, the category page for Directory→Arts→Visual Arts→Photography Digital), click the Suggest a Site link shown on the bottom right in [Figure 3-16](#).

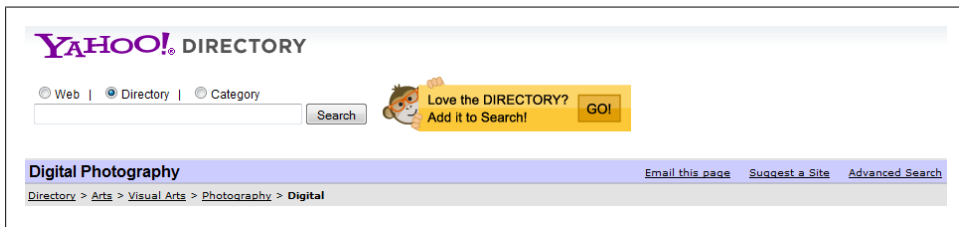


Figure 3-16. From the appropriate category page, click the Suggest a Site link to propose your site for inclusion in the Yahoo! Directory

Clicking the Suggest a Site link starts the site submission process. You'll first be asked if you want to pay for inclusion or continue for free (for noncommercial sites). You'll have to decide for yourself whether the fee is worth inclusion.

The next step is to verify that the site you want to suggest does not already appear in the Yahoo! Directory. This is verified using a Yahoo! Directory search. If your site cannot be found, you can continue.

You'll be asked to verify the listing category and to log in with your Yahoo! username. (If you don't have a Yahoo! account, you'll need to create one.) Finally, you can complete the form with information about your site, shown in [Figure 3-17](#), and submit.



Keep track of the email address you supply in the Yahoo! Directory Suggest a Site form. You'll need that address to change information about any of your sites listed in the directory.

Becoming Popular by Generating Inbound Links

Sometimes it seems like all of life has the same theme as high school: what's important is being popular. A significant measure of popularity on the Web is how many *inbound* links—links from other sites to your site—you have.

Yahoo! Directory Suggest a Site

Welcome, braintique [Change User](#)

Step 2

Your Site Information * Required Fields

Enter information about your site below to help us describe and categorize it. Please be brief and do not use all capital letters. Yahoo! reserves the right to edit all titles and descriptions.

* **Site Title**
 · The name of the site (e.g. Museum of Modern Art)

* **URL:**
 · The web address of the site that begins with "http://"

Geographic Location
 · The city/state and country, if relevant to placement of your site

Description:
 · A brief phrase or sentence describing the content of the site
 · Maximum 25 words
 · Please avoid repeating the site title or category name
 · Please do not capitalize the first letter of every word or use HTML tags

Figure 3-17. You should provide a brief description of your site, along the lines of the elevator pitch described in [Chapter 2](#)



Inbound links are an important component of Google's PageRank system, which is the way it orders the sites returned from a search. Google sometimes calls inbound links *external links*, although this is slightly confusing terminology. While it excludes cross links, called *internal links* in Google-speak, it fails to differentiate between inbound and outbound links.

Obtaining inbound links is not rocket science, but it is labor-intensive and does require some thought. An effective (but not always easy) way to get another site to link to your site is to ask for it, as obvious as that may seem.



Link farms—sites that exist for the sole purpose of providing inbound links to better a page's search ranking—will *not* help your site become more popular and may in fact damage your standing with Google and other search engines.

It makes sense for sites to link to your site when they have similar or related content—always assuming the webmaster in charge of the site linking to you likes your content. This is a reasonable thing for the webmaster in charge of the other site to do, because

it adds value for the other site’s visitors. (If your site is not adding value, you might want to rethink its premise.)

The Best Inbound Links

The best—meaning most likely to drive traffic—inbound links come from:

- Sites that publish content that is complementary and related to the content on your site.
- Hub sites that are a central repository, discussion area, or community site for a particular interest group. For example, a mention on [Slashdot](#) or [Digg](#) can drive huge amounts of traffic to sites.

Finding Sites to Make a Link Request

To find sites that are appropriate for an inbound link request, you should:

- Consider the sites you find useful, entertaining, and informative
- Use the web taxonomic directories to find sites in your category and in related categories (see “[Working with Directories](#)” on page 57)
- Use specialized searching syntax to find the universe of sites that search engines such as Google regard as “related” to yours

If you’ve looked carefully at Google search results, you may have noticed a Similar Pages link ([Figure 3-18](#)).

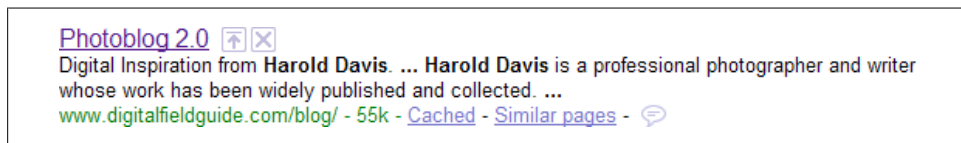


Figure 3-18. You can use the Google Similar Pages link to find sites that might be interested in linking to yours (because they are like yours)

The Similar Pages link is supposed to show you more pages like the one the link modifies. How well it works varies widely (it works better on popular, highly ranked pages and less well on obscure pages). But it can give you some leads.

You can bypass the process of clicking Similar Pages by using the Google `related:` operator followed by a URL directly in a Google search. For example, entering the following Google search:

```
related:www.digitalfieldguide.com
```

is comparable to clicking the Similar Pages link for <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com>, and shows exactly the same web pages as the search result.

Six Degrees of Separation

Sometimes you need to iterate the process of finding similar sites. If your first try at finding similar sites generates only a few leads, try expanding several of these initially similar sites to show sites similar to them to get a greater pool of similar sites. One wonders: if you keep on iterating ad infinitum, do you get all websites, or are there only six degrees of separation?

If you find it easier to analyze data presented visually, a demonstration tool called Google-enabled Visual Search, provided free by i2 Software, may be right for you. [Google-enabled Visual Search](#) uses the Google Web APIs to (among other things) present a visual representation of sites similar to yours. For example, [Figure 3-19](#) shows a visual representation of sites that are similar or linked to <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com>.



The Google-enabled Visual Search Tool will show similar sites, linked sites, or both. This is demonstration software produced by a company whose primary business is to provide data visualization tools for the military.

Making the Link Request

Email is the best way (and sometimes the only way) to request an inbound link to your site.

Finding email addresses

The first step in writing an email requesting an inbound link is to find the email address of the webmaster you want to contact. This can take quite a bit of poking around, but it is amazing how often you can uncover the right email address with a bit of persistence if you just look at all the pages on a website.



If a website has a contact form but no explicit email address, you can often find the email address the contact form is mailed to by viewing the HTML source code for the contact form's page. Another place to look for email addresses is within a syndication feed. If the site provides an RSS or Atom feed, the creator's email address is often included as part of the feed.

As you may know, you can use the Whois service of Internet domain registrars to find contact information for site owners, although with multiple domain registrars, this information is more fragmentary than it used to be. In addition, some sites intentionally

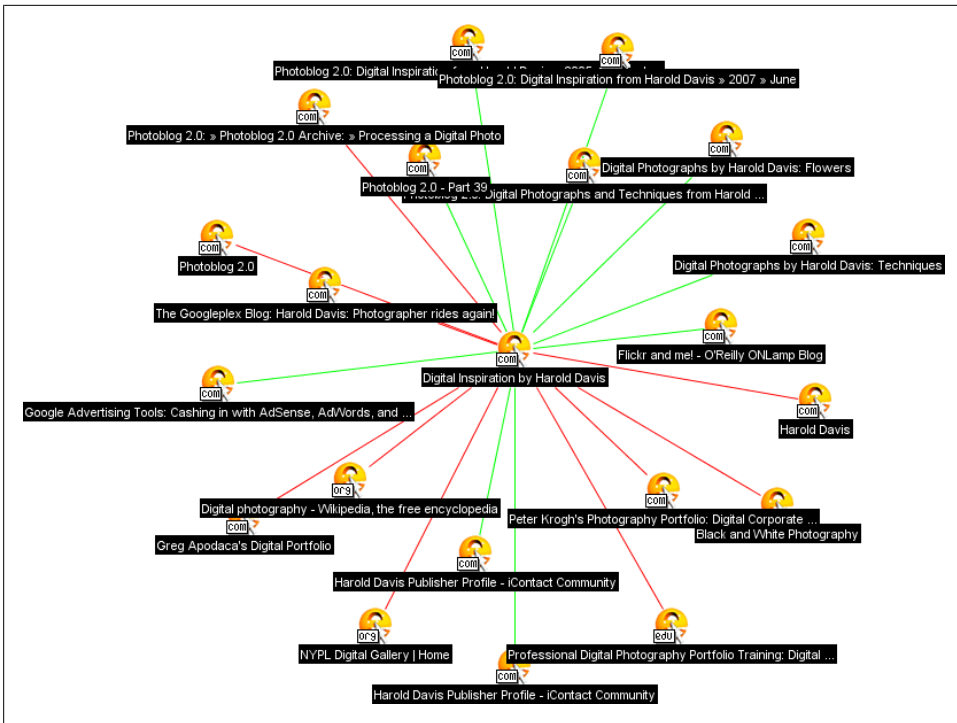


Figure 3-19. If you prefer to analyze data visually, the Google-enabled Visual Search Tool may be for you

do not publish information about the real domain owners when they register domains—for example, by entering the domain as the name of the web host.

A good first step if you want to try using a Whois service to get email contact information is [Network Solutions](#), the “classic” Internet domain name registrar. Next, try [Whois.net](#), which has one of the largest databases for Whois information.

If these two sources fail, do not give up! Go to [Internic](#). The Internic service will not give you contact information, but it probably will tell you the specific domain registrar who registered a given site and the address of the domain registrar’s Whois server. You can then go to the Whois server maintained by the appropriate registrar and usually find email contact information there.

If this sounds time-consuming, well, it is. To justify the time, make sure that any sites you contact are indeed related to your site.

Emails should not be spam

Generally, you should not send email that reads like spam. Don’t send mass emailings requesting links; such messages will probably get intercepted and marked for

deletion by anti-spam filters. Personalize each email with the recipient's name, something about her site, and information about why she should link with you.

It's OK to offer a reciprocal link in exchange for your inbound link. But I think the classier approach is to already have a link to any site you approach. You can set aside a resource page on your site for this purpose. Why bother trying to get an inbound link from a site that isn't worth linking to? If it is worth linking to, go ahead and do it on your own without requiring payback. You'll be surprised at how often the other webmaster decides to reciprocate.

Comments, Trackbacks, and Discussion Threads

The “cheap date” way to get inbound links is to post them yourself using a mechanism such as a blog comment, a blog trackback, or a discussion thread. These links do not have the permanence or credibility of a link from a stable site, but they can draw considerable short-term traffic if posted on a popular site.

There's nothing wrong with adding a link to a comment on a blog, in a discussion thread, or using a trackback mechanism, provided you have a valid hook for hanging your URL. In other words, it's OK to enter a discussion if you really have something to say, and it's also OK to link back to relevant material on your site, but don't come completely from left field. It will undermine the credibility that you are trying to build for your site.

The Power of the Press Release

It used to be that putting out a press release was a big deal. It required special accreditation and membership in a wire service and could generally only be accomplished by large companies or by using an accredited public relations or ad agency.

As with many other things, the Web has disintermediated and democratized the process of publishing a press release—so much so that some large organizations don't even bother with them anymore, figuring that their releases will be lost in the flood of information unleashed on the world by the “little guys.”

These days, publishing a press release that will be picked up by wire services is technically free. In reality, getting the distribution you want for the release will cost you about \$30 per release. Although my general stance is not to pay for listings, this is usually well worth doing, provided you have the skills to write a good press release and you have an interesting story to tell. Not only will it produce inbound links, but some traditional media may pick up on your site and story.

There are several online services that exist to distribute press releases, including 24-7PressRelease.com, FreePressRelease.com, and PRWeb. These sites all work in essentially the same way: an online form is provided for your press release submission, and the service submits your release to wire services, web search engines, and anyone

who subscribes to the service’s feeds. Free submission is available from all of the press release services, but to get the distribution your press release deserves, you need to buy premium membership in the service (or upgrades for specific press releases). In some cases, this is phrased as making a “contribution” or a “donation.”

PRWeb is probably the best known of these services. To get started with PRWeb, you need to create a free account. Once you’ve established an account, you have access to a management console, shown in [Figure 3-20](#), which lets you create, edit, and submit press releases and also check how many times each of your releases was viewed.

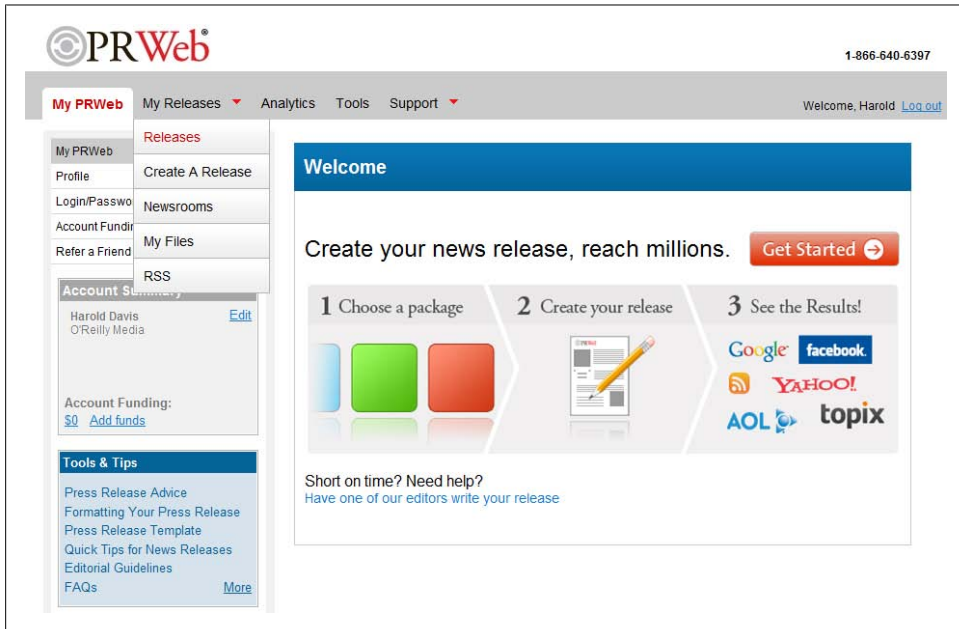


Figure 3-20. Drop-down menus in the PRWeb management console give you access to press release creation, editing, and submission and allow you to monitor release statistics



The viewing statistics for PRWeb are impressive, typically in the tens of thousands of views for most press releases. PRWeb also tells you how many times your release was picked up by a media outlet, how many times it was forwarded using PRWeb’s forwarding service, and how many times it was printed using the printer-friendly version of your release. However, it’s not entirely clear what these statistics actually mean, and you should not necessarily expect a corresponding increase in your volume of site traffic.

To create a new release for submission, click the Create Release button on the console. In the form that opens, you can copy and paste the elements of your press release if you created it as a word processing document (see the upcoming sidebar “[Preparing a Press Release](#)”).

You can edit the press release later, but you do need to supply the following elements initially:

- Headline (one sentence)
- Summary (two to four sentences)
- Body of the press release
- Keywords (it’s not a good idea to add a special keyword section in the body of the release; instead, make sure that all the keywords appear as part of the text of the release)
- Industry
- Site URL and contact information

Preparing a Press Release

Before you go online to submit a press release, you should prepare the press release using a word processing program such as Microsoft Word. It’s important that you get your release reviewed by several people, including (if possible) a professional writer or editor. Grammar, spelling, and punctuation do count; if your press release is deficient in these areas, it will look amateurish.

A good press release should be succinct. Keep it to one page if at all possible.

The press release should start with a summary of no more than two or three sentences. You should also prepare a single, short sentence to serve as the headline for the release.

Next, the press release should tell a story in several paragraphs (see “[Creating a Plan](#)” on page 38). If possible, you should include interesting quotations from one or two people related to the story. (If no one else comes to mind, how about quoting yourself?)

A final short paragraph should describe your website and include links to a FAQ page and related sites. This paragraph can be used as a *slug*, which means it can be copied and pasted for use in all your press releases related to your website.

The press release should provide email and phone contact information in case someone who reads the release wants further information. Don’t make it hard to find you!

A press release created in this way can easily be copied and pasted into online submission forms.



To some degree, your industry selection determines to whom your press release is distributed. You need to pick a primary industry when you create the release, but (depending on your contribution level) you can add industry groups after the release has been saved but before it is submitted. You should take advantage of this to get your release as widely distributed as possible.

When you've completed your press release and assigned a release date, click Save Press Release. You'll next be asked to pay for your submission (select a contribution level).

Press releases are subject to a vetting process conducted both by software and human editors. Some kinds of content are forbidden. For example, you cannot submit a press release having to do with adult content and related industries on PRWeb.

You can find out more about PRWeb's review policies using the knowledge base on the PRWeb site. Generally, besides adult content, PRWeb will reject any outright and apparent advertisements, so take care to word your press releases to avoid this stigmatization. If your press release is rejected, PRWeb will refund any contributions as a matter of course. Note that PRWeb does not vet spelling or grammar and does not check facts—it's up to you to get these things right.

Provided your press release has been accepted, you'll receive email confirmation and a link to your press release online on the wire service site.



For a fee, PRWeb and other comparable newswire services will write or edit your press release for you.

Unleashing Your Inner Blogger

Some people blog for fun, and some blog for profit. Whichever the case, blogging serves to drive traffic to your site, provided the content of the blog stories has some merit. People like to read blogs because they can provide opinionated and topical information. Blog content that is part of a home page, or prominently connected to the main parts of a site, helps propel ranking in a search engine because it adds new content and changes often.

Although blogs may seem simple, they are actually reasonably complex database-driven applications. The most commonly used blogging software on the Web are WordPress and Six Apart's Movable Type.

You can install blogging software on your own web server or you can contract for a hosted blog environment (discussed shortly). For those running their own server-side blogging installations, Movable Type, a commercial product, is most often used in

situations where there are multiple authors on a single blog—for example, the O’Reilly Digital Media site, shown in [Figure 3-21](#).

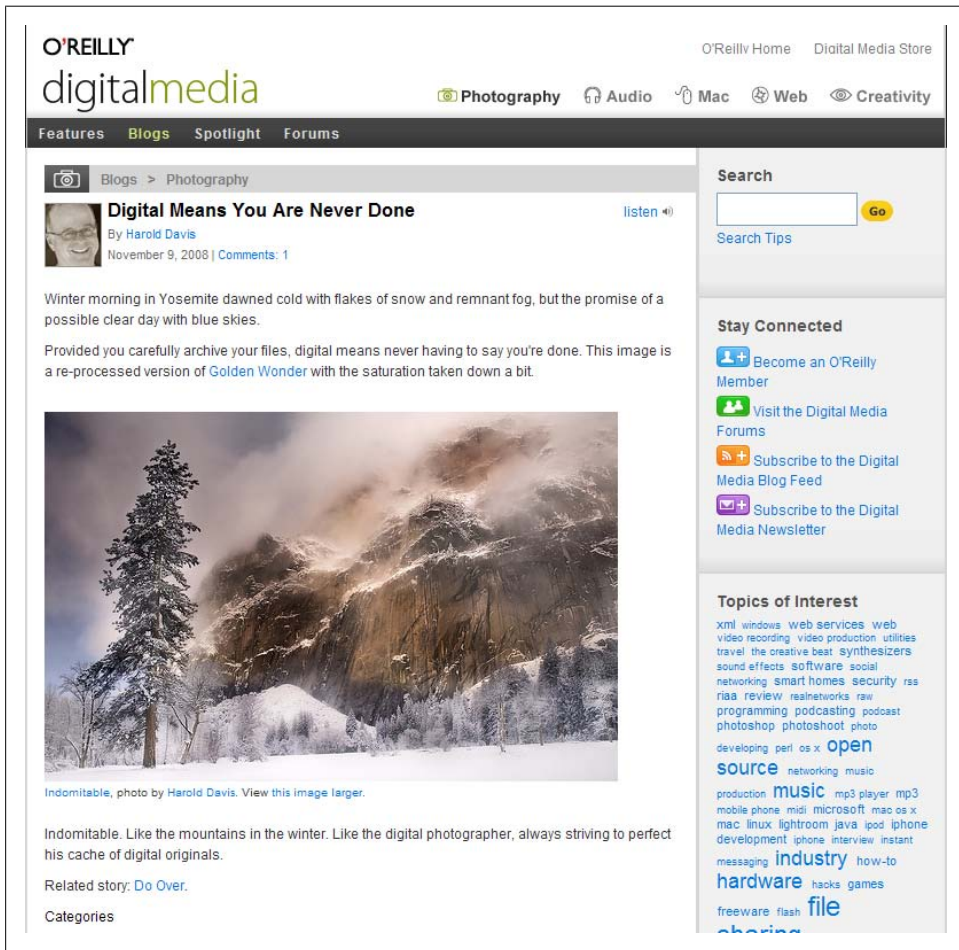


Figure 3-21. Blogs with multiple authors like the O’Reilly Digital Media site often run on Movable Type software from Six Apart

In contrast to Six Apart’s commercial software, a vibrant open source community has created WordPress using PHP, a web scripting language. The community nature of WordPress turns out to be both a strength and a weakness: it is elegant software that is full-featured and certainly priced right, but it’s also subject to a great deal of malicious software attacks. Currently, WordPress is the single biggest server-side target of malware. Safely administering a WordPress installation requires a fair amount of commitment and know-how.

If you don't want to get involved with the intricacies of hosting your own blogging software, there are many hosting services that will do this for you. Here are some options:

TypePad

[TypePad](#) is a service run by Six Apart that will host your Movable Type blog for a fee.

WordPress hosting

The WordPress organization will host a free blog at a domain like *yourblog.wordpress.org*. If you need more full hosting services, WordPress recommends commercial hosting providers at <http://wordpress.org/hosting/>.

Blogger

[Blogger](#), owned by Google, provides free blogs at domains like *yourblog.blogspot.com*.

The bottom line is that you can get a free, hosted blog, but it won't integrate with your site (and therefore won't be as effective in driving traffic to your site). The greater the complexity of your particular website, the more you'll need customized blogging software installations. Thus, those with appropriate knowledge or staffing will likely want to host their own.

However you manage the software side of things, run—don't walk—to integrate blogging as an effective way to draw traffic to your site.

Using Syndication Feeds to Your Benefit

As you may know, syndication is a simple XML-based mechanism for publishing content. Syndication feeds come in two predominant flavors: RSS and Atom. From the viewpoint of publicizing your website, you don't need to worry about the differences between them.

Content is syndicated by encoding it within an RSS or Atom feed. This feed can—and usually does—include links to the site originating the content.

Subscribers can view syndication feeds in all different kinds of software, including web browsers, email clients, standalone programs, and on HTML web pages. There's no mechanism built into syndication to pay for subscriptions, but once you are subscribed, your feed display is automatically updated when a new item is added to the feed. It's up to the syndication-viewing software to decide how to render feeds, but software that can display web pages often shows the underlying pages to which the feed links.

There's some controversy about how publishers can best use syndication feeds, since it's not obvious how to make money from them. (Google has introduced a program allowing publishers to insert contextual ads within syndication feeds, but this is a controversial step.)

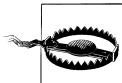
However, syndication feeds work well as a device for driving traffic to a site because:

- Feed content is under the control of the publisher.
- Most feeds contain items that are thematically linked (and can be related to a site).
- Feed items provide content along with links back to more content on a publisher's site.
- It's easy to distribute a syndication feed.

In other words, many savvy web publishers use syndication feeds as a kind of teaser for their real web content.

Creating Feeds

If you maintain a blog, it's likely that you are already publishing a syndication feed (whether or not you are aware of it). Check your blog templates to see if there is a template for an *index.xml*, *index.rdf*, or *atom.xml* file. If so, have a look at the root directory for your blog. Voila! You'll probably find a syndication feed. You may want to tweak the template tags to make sure that you are syndicating the content you want, and only the content you want.



Once you've syndicated content, anyone can use it and even build a website of their own around your content, and there's not much you can do about it.

If you don't have a blog feed, or want to publish content other than the entries of your blog, it's easy to construct an XML syndication feed by hand using a text editor. For example, here's a portion of an RSS syndication feed I created by hand:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="utf-8"?>
<rss version="2.0">
  <channel>
    <title>Featured Feed</title>
    <link>http://www.feedly.com</link>
    <description>Featured feeds - Editor choice best of the best
syndication feeds that are fun, interesting, and useful from
Syndication Viewer, www.googleplexblog.com/rss_view.php, rotated
regularly along with a Web viewer for HTML display.</description>
    <language>en-us</language>
    <copyright>Feedly.com. All rights reserved.</copyright>
    <managingEditor>harold@feedly.com</managingEditor>
    <generator>FeedEdit</generator>
    <ttl>60</ttl>
    <item>
      <title>Movers and Shakers</title>
      <link>http://www.feedly.com/index.php?feed=http://rss.alexa.com/
movers_shakers.xml</link>
      <description>Top sites moving radically up or down in
popularity from Alexa.</description>
      <pubDate>Sun, 07 Dec 2008 20:48:15 GMT</pubDate>
```

```

    </item>
  </item>

  ...

  <item>
    <title>I-am-bored</title>
    <link>http://www.feedly.com/index.php?feed=http://www.i-am-
bored.com/rss_latest.xml</link>
    <description>Fun and games from I-am-bored.com.
    </description>
    <pubDate>Sun, 07 Dec 2008 12:00:00 CST</pubDate>
  </item>
</channel>
</rss>

```

The key thing to notice about this feed is that it consists of items. You can tell because each one is wrapped in `<item></item>` tags. Within the item, you'll find some kind of description and/or content and a link to the full content provided by the item, as indicated by tags such as `<description>` and `<link>`.

You can see that it isn't very hard to create syndication feeds manually just by mimicking the form of the thing and adding your own data as items with links. But this will quickly get cumbersome if you are creating feeds that get updated frequently.

Fortunately, there are also a great many tools available to help you construct your own feeds. Some tools use a Wizard interface, so you don't need to know anything about coding in XML to create a syndication feed.

You'll find links to these tools and to syndication resources in general on the [RSS Compendium](#) and on [O'Reilly's Xml.com site](#).

Telling the World About Your Feed

Once you have your syndication feed, the key to getting some bang out of it is to get it distributed. As with a website, in the long run this requires constant addition of fresh content. You probably should not try to distribute a syndication feed until you have a minimum of a dozen entry items and can reasonably expect to add at least an item a week.

You can (and should) mark your website with a graphic that is linked to your syndication feed. To create the graphic, you can create a button using [FeedForAll's free RSS Graphics Tool](#), or you can grab a premade button from [RSS Specifications](#).

You also need to add code into the head section of your HTML pages to let syndication viewers and aggregators automatically know about your feed. For example, if you include this code in a page, when someone visits your site using a web browser that is capable of displaying syndication, such as Firefox, it will automatically offer to subscribe to the feed.

The general form of the code to be added is:

```
<link rel="alternate" type="application/rss+xml" title="RSS" href="http://  
www.yourdomain.com/rss.xml">
```

Obviously, you need to specify the actual location of your own feed when you add this code to the head section of your HTML page. For example, I maintain a syndication feed for Photoblog 2.0 at <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/feed/>. The link code added to my page looks like this:

```
<link rel="alternate" type="application/rss+xml" title="Photoblog 2.0 RSS Feed"  
href="http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/feed" />
```



Typically, your blogging software will take care of actually adding the feed link code for you.

Submitting Feeds

The next step is to submit your syndication feed to syndication aggregators and search engines. The RSS Compendium provides a great list of sites for submitting syndication feeds for inclusion at <http://allrss.com/rsssubmission.html>. The RSS Specifications site also has an extensive list of sites that maintain syndication feed databases at <http://www.rss-specifications.com/rss-submission.htm>. FeedBurner, owned by Google, has some great tools for distributing and submitting feeds.

It's a good idea to continue to submit your feeds as you add content items. Particularly if you are publishing multiple feeds, this can become an unpleasant chore. RSS Submit is a tool that automates this process. Shown in [Figure 3-22](#), RSS Submit is available for download at <http://www.dummysoftware.com/rsssubmit.html> in an evaluation version or (with free updates) for about \$35.



The updates to RSS Submit add new syndication indexes as they come online and make sure the submission pages for older feeds stay accurate.

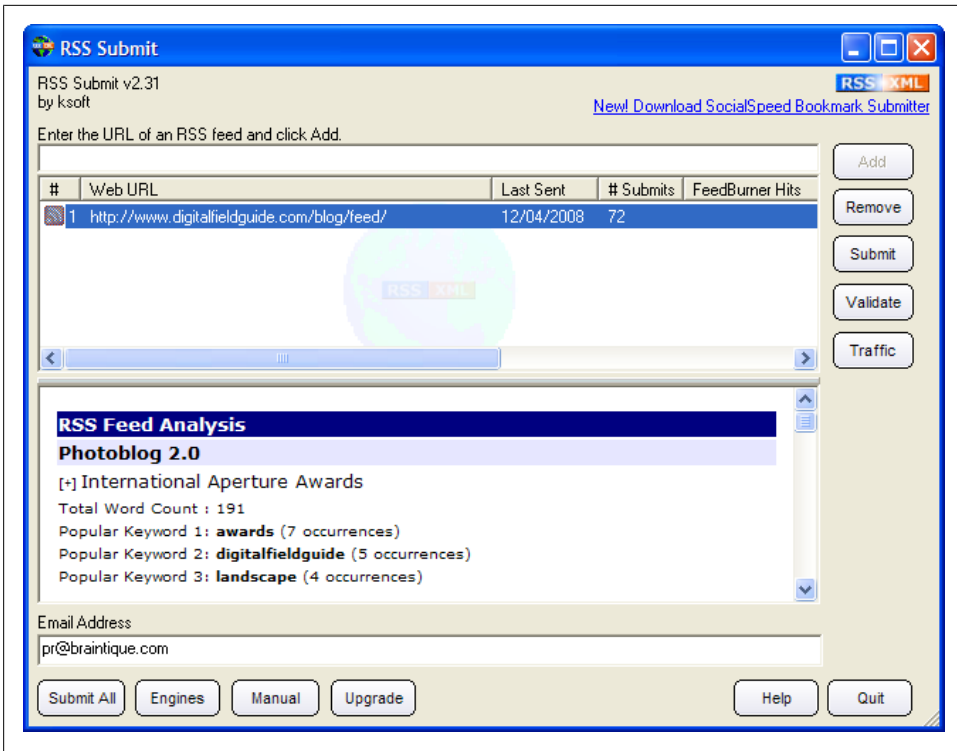


Figure 3-22. RSS Submit automates the process of syndication feed submission

Creating Email Lists and Surmounting the Spam Problem

Although they sometimes seem a little old fashioned, email lists can be a great mechanism for increasing interest in your websites over time. It's fair to say that in the long run, all successful websites include an email component in their marketing plans to drive traffic. These emails can be informal, but increasingly they take the form of email newsletters.

The rise of spam email, the creation of increasingly stringent spam filters, and certain legislation related to spam email means that marketing email can no longer be considered a do-it-yourself proposition. Apart from legal issues, if you start sending bulk emails from the mail server associated with your website, many will not go through, and you are likely to be blacklisted by major ISPs (Internet Service Providers).



Federal anti-spam legislation is complex, but the essential requirements are that recipients of commercial email must consent to be added to your list in the first place, that an easy opt-out provision must be provided, and that your emails must include your identification and physical address.

So, what's the solution? First and foremost, you should ensure that any email you send out doesn't walk like spam, look like spam, or quack like spam. If it has even a hint of spam about it, at least some recipients will regard it as such—and will be offended. Make sure everyone on your email list wants to be there and can easily unsubscribe. Keep your emails topical, interesting, and give value beyond the blatantly commercial.

The easiest way to implement email marketing is to use a service. The top email marketing providers to small and medium-sized enterprises are [Constant Contact](#) and [iContact](#), with minimum monthly charges of \$10 to \$15.

Besides basic email management, these services provide some important functionality, including:

- Tools for creating attractive HTML email newsletters
- Tracking, so you know which recipients click on which links in your email
- Targeting, so you can send different content to a variety of recipients with different interests
- User management, so users can modify their subscriptions without requiring your intervention
- Database tools, so you can better manage your subscribers and understand their behavior
- Compliance with anti-spam laws and relationships with ISPs to make sure your emails go through

These tools are powerful and you may have a bit of a learning curve, although the management consoles are reasonably intuitive. For example, [Figure 3-23](#) shows the upper-level options for tracking subscribers at iContact.

Action Items

Here are some action items for you to get started on the road to driving traffic to your website:

- Submit your site to search engines
- Resubmit your site to search engines as necessary over time
- Get a Google Webmaster Tools account
- Verify your site with Google Webmaster Tools
- Run Google Webmaster diagnostics on your site
- Generate a site map and register it with Google



Figure 3-23. Slicing and dicing your lists of email subscribers is easy with iContact

- Get your site listed in the ODP and Yahoo! taxonomic directories
- Work to encourage appropriate inbound linking to your site
- Create a topical blog and associate it with your website
- Publish a press release
- Continue to publish press releases as stories related to your site come up
- Create and distribute syndication feeds
- Create and maintain a subscription-based email newsletter

Nuts and Bolts of SEO

SEO—short for Search Engine Optimization—is the set of techniques used to drive web traffic to websites. These techniques include optimization of the code, content, and organization of a site. While some SEO strategies do involve paying for inbound links, generally SEO is considered to exclude advertising.



Advertising on search engines is thought of as Search Engine Marketing (SEM). SEO campaigns should often be used in tandem with SEM as I explain in [Chapter 2](#). Advertising programs, such as Google AdWords (see [Part III](#)), can very effectively generate traffic via ads placed on web pages as well as on search engine result pages.

Most web businesses need traffic to succeed. Some websites depend on broad, general traffic. These businesses need hundreds of thousands or millions of visitors per day to prosper and thrive.

Other web businesses are looking for high-quality, targeted traffic. This traffic is essentially like a prequalified sales prospect—they are already looking for and interested in your offering.

This chapter tells you what you need to know, and explains the tools you'll use, to draw more traffic to your site. Google is by far the most important search engine, so most SEO targets Google (but what works for Google also works for the other search engines). You'll learn how to effectively use PageRank and Google itself. Effective use of SEO means understanding how Google works, how to boost placement in Google search results, and how not to offend Google. You'll also learn how to best organize your web pages and websites, apply SEO analysis tools, establish effective SEO best practices, and more.

When you approach SEO, make sure you've worked through the analysis I suggested in [Chapter 2](#) to understand the characteristics of the traffic that you need. Then use the techniques explained in this chapter to boost your traffic—and your business.

SEO's Evolution

Originally fairly narrowly conceived as a set of techniques for rising to the top of search engine listings, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has conceptually expanded to include all possible ways of promoting web traffic.

Learning how to construct websites, web content, and pages to improve—and not harm—the search engine placement of those websites and web pages has become a key component in the evolution of SEO. This central goal of SEO is sometimes called *core* SEO, as opposed to broader, noncore, web traffic campaigns, which may include lobbying and paying for links.

Effective SEO requires understanding that there needs to be a balance between attracting search engines and interesting human visitors. One without the other does not succeed. There must be balance between the yin of the search bot and the yang of the real human site visitor.

The basics of SEO involve these steps:

- Understanding how your pages are viewed by search engine software
- Creating content that is attractive to the search engine indexing
- Taking common-sense steps to make sure that the way your pages are coded is optimized from the viewpoint of these search engines



Fortunately, this often means practicing good design, which makes your sites easy to use for human visitors as well. In addition, software is becoming available that automates the nuts and bolts of SEO page coding. For example, you can optimize the HTML tagging of a WordPress blog for SEO using the All-in-One SEO plug-in.

- Organizing your site in a way that makes sense to the search engine index
- Avoiding some overaggressive SEO practices that can get your site blacklisted by the search engines

Search engine placement means where a web page appears in an ordered list of search query results. It's obviously better for pages to appear higher up and toward the beginning of the list returned by the search engine in response to a user's query.

Not all queries are created equal, so part of effective SEO is to understand which queries matter to a specific website. It's relatively easy to be the first search result returned for a query that nobody else cares about. On the other hand, it's very tough to become a top-ranking response to a topical and popular search query that reflects the interest of millions of people (and has a corresponding number of search results all competing for visibility).

Clearly, driving traffic to a website can make the difference between commercial success and failure. SEO experts have come to look at search engine placement as only one of their tools—and to look at the broader context of web technologies and business mechanisms that help create and drive traffic.

SEO has become an advertising discipline that must be measured using the metrics of cost effectiveness that are applied to all advertising techniques.

The SEO Advantage

If you understand SEO, you have an edge. It pays to nurture this understanding—whether you are coding your web pages yourself, working with in-house developers, or outsourcing your web design and implementation.

There may be some sites that do just fine without consciously considering SEO. But by intentionally developing a plan that incorporates SEO into your websites and web pages, your web properties will outrank others that do not.

Just as success begets success in the brick-and-mortar world, online traffic begets traffic. What you plan to do with the traffic, and how you plan to monetize it, are other issues. Making money with web content is considered in Chapters 5 and 6.

One way to look at this is that sites that use core SEO have an incrementally higher ranking in search results. These sites don't make gauche mistakes that cost them points in search engine ranking. They use tried-and-true SEO techniques to gain points for each web page.

Page by page, these increments give you an edge.

This edge is your SEO advantage.

What SEO Can (and Cannot) Do

SEO can drive more traffic to your website. If you plan carefully, you can also affect the kind and quality of traffic driven to your site. This means that you need to consider SEO as part of your general market research and business plan, as explained in [Chapter 2](#). Sure, most businesses want traffic—but not just any traffic. Just as the goal of a brick-and-mortar business is to have qualified customers—ones with money in their pocket who are ready to buy when they walk in the door—an online business wants qualified traffic.

Qualified traffic is not just any traffic. It is made up of people who are genuinely interested in your offering, who are ready to buy it, and who have the means to buy it. This implies that to successfully create an SEO campaign, you need to *plan*. You need to understand your ideal prospect and know her habits, and create a step-by-step scheme to lure her to your site, where she can be converted to a customer. It should be natural and easy to perform this kind of planning if you've first followed the marketing plan suggestions in [Chapter 2](#).

SEO cannot spin gold from straw or make a purse out of a sow's ear. Garbage sites—those that have come to be known as *spam websites*—will not draw huge amounts of traffic. Or if they do, these sites won't draw traffic for long. Google and other search engines will pull the plug as soon as they detect what is going on.



There's a web content arms race going on, with spammers and malware creators on one side and Google and other content indexers and evaluators on the other. For Google and other search engines to stay in business, the results they deliver have to be meaningful to users. This means that there's only so much content garbage that Google will put up with.

Just as email spammers keep trying to outwit email filters, and filters keep getting better in response, content spammers and Google are involved in an arms race.

Your goal with SEO should not involve content spam, sometimes referred to as *black hat* SEO. Instead, be one of the good guys, a *white hat* SEO practitioner. SEO skills are SEO skills whether the hat is black or white. But use your white hat SEO skills to draw even more traffic to sites that are already good and useful. In other words, SEO should be used in an ethical and legitimate fashion to add genuinely interesting and valuable content—and not as part of a scam to rip people off!

SEO needs to be regarded as an adjunct to the first law of the web: good content draws traffic. There is no substitute for content that people really want to find.

While SEO best practices should always be observed, there needs to be a sense of proportion in how SEO is used. It may not make sense to create a “Potemkin village” using SEO to draw traffic to a site if the site itself doesn't yield high returns. In other words, SEO that is costly to implement is becoming regarded as one more aspect of advertising campaign management—and subject to the same discipline of cost-benefit analysis applied to all other well-managed advertising campaigns.

You'll find a wide range of SEO analysis tools available to help you optimize your web pages and sites:

Free tools

Free tools generally tackle a single piece of the SEO puzzle, such as generating good keywords, understanding how Google operates on specific sites and keywords, checking who links to your sites, and displaying rankings in multiple search engines at once.

Google Webmaster Tools

The Google Webmaster Tools, which are free and were partially explained in [Chapter 3](#), provide many of the analysis features of third-party, one-off free tools.

Commercial SEO analysis software

Commercial software costs money to license (obviously!) and is mainly intended for administration of multiple SEO-improved sites.

Free Tools

There are a myriad of free SEO tools available, and there are many sites that list these free tools. (The compendium sites are generally supported by advertising, and must therefore practice good SEO themselves to be successful!)

Some good sites that list (and provide links) to free SEO analysis tools are <http://www.trugroovez.com/free-seo-tools.htm>, <http://www.webuildpages.com/tools/>, and <http://www.seocompany.ca/tool/11-link-popularity-tools.html>.

Some of the most useful (and free!) single-purpose SEO tools are:

NicheBot

A keyword discovery tool that helps pinpoint the right keywords for optimization



As I mentioned in [Chapter 2](#), keyword lists such as those generated by NicheBot are useful for marketing purposes.

The SERPS Tool

The SERPS (or search engine positioning) tool helps you discover your ranking across Google and other major search engines in one fell swoop

Meta Tag Analyzer

Checks meta information for errors and relevance to page content

These tools can definitely be time-savers, particularly if you have a large amount of content you need to optimize. The price is certainly right!

Individual tools also can serve as a reality check—by running your pages through one of these tools, you can get a pretty good feeling for how well you have optimized a page. However, you should bear in mind that there is nothing that one of these tools can do for you that also cannot be done by hand given the knowledge you learn from this chapter.

Individually, SEO analysis tools available on the web can help you with your SEO tasks. However, to get the most from these tools, you need to understand underlying SEO concepts as explained in this chapter before you use these tools.

Over time, as you progress with SEO, you will probably accumulate your own favorite SEO analysis toolkit.

Google Webmaster Tools

The [Google Webmaster Tools](#) provide several features that help with your inspection and analysis of your websites and pages. For information about starting the tools and launching them in reference to a specific site, see [Chapter 3](#).

Formerly, many of the tools needed for effective SEO work had to be found piecemeal. While some SEO practitioners still prefer their own toolkits assembled from the web resources mentioned in [“Free Tools” on page 85](#), the truth is that most essential tasks can be performed using the Google Webmaster Tools.

The most important analysis tools are “Crawl errors” and “HTML suggestions” (both in the Diagnostics tab) and “Your site on the web.”

Crawl errors

As shown in [Figure 4-1](#), the crawl errors page shows you errors in your URLs as listed in your site map (see [“Taking Advantage of Site Mapping” on page 54](#)). In addition, the report will show you various other kinds of problems with the links (URLs) in your site—and most important, links that lead to HTTP 404 errors because the file can’t be found.

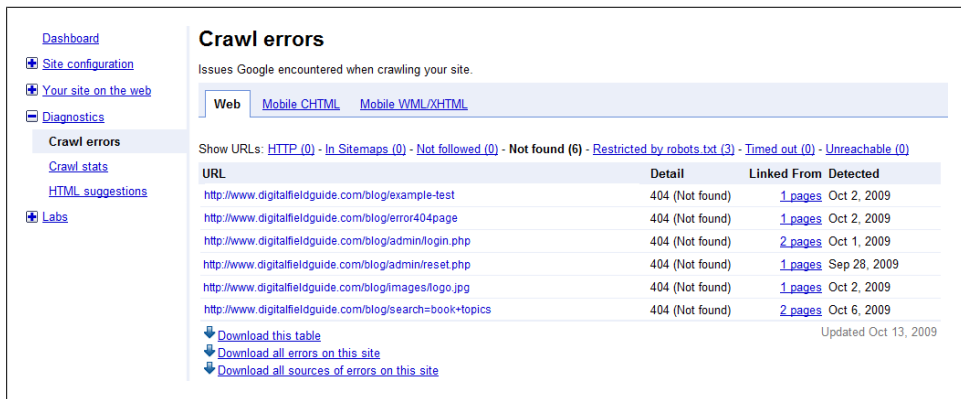


Figure 4-1. The crawl errors tool tells you about problems with the URLs on your site



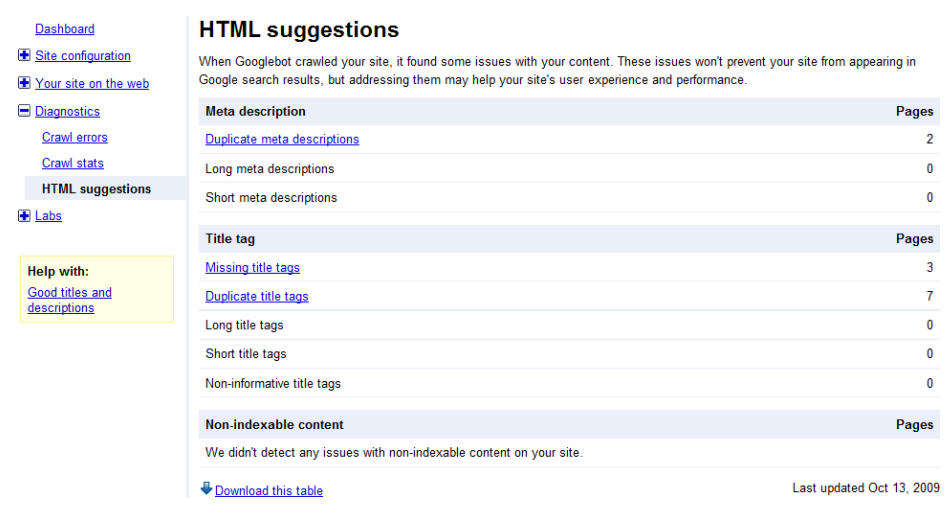
The errors listed in the crawl errors report should be used as the basis for further inquiry, but not necessarily considered definitive. URLs that are listed as errors may simply be links that the Googlebot cannot follow for a variety of reasons.

HTML suggestions

The HTML suggestions page shows you potential problems with meta descriptions, title tags, and whether there is any content that is not indexable. As with the crawl

errors page, any reported errors should be taken as the starting place for investigation rather than gospel.

Figure 4-2 shows an HTML suggestions report listing some meta description and title tag problems.



The screenshot shows the 'HTML suggestions' tool interface. It features a left-hand navigation menu with links to 'Dashboard', 'Site configuration', 'Your site on the web', 'Diagnostics', 'Crawl errors', 'Crawl stats', 'HTML suggestions', and 'Labs'. A 'Help with:' section is also present. The main content area is titled 'HTML suggestions' and includes an introductory paragraph. Below this, there are three tables of suggestions:

Meta description	Pages
Duplicate meta descriptions	2
Long meta descriptions	0
Short meta descriptions	0

Title tag	Pages
Missing title tags	3
Duplicate title tags	7
Long title tags	0
Short title tags	0
Non-informative title tags	0

Non-indexable content	Pages
We didn't detect any issues with non-indexable content on your site.	

At the bottom of the suggestions section, there is a 'Download this table' link and a timestamp 'Last updated Oct 13, 2009'.

Figure 4-2. The HTML suggestions tool helps you pinpoint problems you can fix with meta descriptions, title tags, and content that cannot be indexed

Your site on the web

The “Your site on the web” page (Figure 4-3) helps give webmasters a window into how their sites appear to the Googlebot. This page shows top search queries, inbound links to your site, the anchor text of those links (i.e., the text that is visible in the hyperlink as opposed to the destination URL), and the most common words found on your site.

It’s important to be clear that the link text appears on the sites that link to you. Inbound linking plays a very important role in Google’s evaluation of your site, and the anchor text that accompanies links is what the bot uses to understand other sites’ ideas about your site. Anchor text that is not descriptive, for example, “Click here,” doesn’t help the bot. If you find sites that are linking to you with un-descriptive anchor text, it’s good SEO practice to work with these sites to improve the quality of these links.

“Your site on the web” also provides information about important keywords found on your pages, as well as keywords used in external links to your site. This is a great place to see how well the content is optimized for your target keywords. If they’re not on the list, or not high on the list, it’s really easy to see where more work is needed.

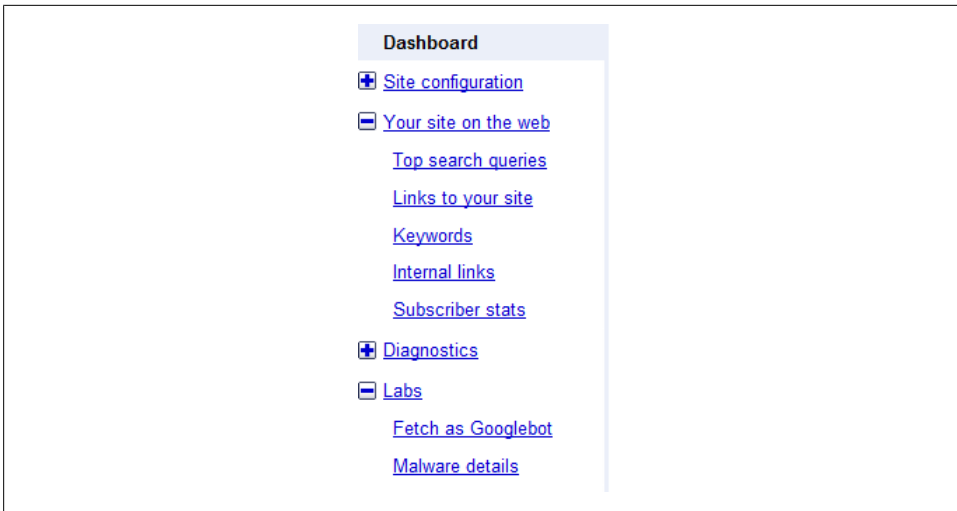


Figure 4-3. “Your site on the web” gives you the chance to view your site as Google sees it



Even if you’re not interested in SEO (but who isn’t?!), it’s worth running “Your site on the web” from time to time and glancing at the Keywords tab. If strange terms like *hydrocodone* and *prescription* have crept into the keyword table, it is likely that you’ve been hacked (assuming you don’t sell drugs on your site). Spam text of this sort may not be visible to human viewers of your site, so it is good to have a mechanism for making sure you haven’t been hacked.

Commercial SEO Analysis Software

Commercially licensed SEO analysis software is unlikely to prove worth its cost unless you are in the business of performing SEO for numerous websites and a great deal of content, or for a major enterprise.

If the advertising for this kind of software claims too much, beware!

If you do want to look into licensed SEO software, some of the better-known commercial SEO analysis products are:

[Keyword Elite](#)

Keyword analysis

[SEO Elite](#)

Automated SEO analysis

[Lyris HQ](#)

Provides a hosted suite of integrated web tools that includes marketing services, email, search marketing, web analytics, and web content management (CMS)

SEO Administrator

A suite of SEO analysis tools

Analysis tools are extremely important, not so much for the numbers they provide as for the insights that webmasters can get into improving the usability of their sites. You'll find material in [Chapter 13](#) about [Google Analytics](#).



If your need for analysis can be categorized as “heavy-duty enterprise,” you should look at software such as [Omniure](#) or [WebTrends](#) to see if your needs can be better served than by Google Analytics.

More About How Your Site Appears to a Bot

The Google Webmaster Tools, explained in the previous section, help give you some notion of Google's evaluation of your website. But let's step back for a second and look at some general issues:

- Why this evaluation is very important
- How you can get a better intuitive feeling for bot evaluation

To state the obvious, before your site can be indexed by a search engine, it has to be found by the search engine. Search engines find websites and web pages using software that follows links to crawl the Web. This kind of software is variously called a *crawler*, a *spider*, a *search bot*, or simply a *bot* (bot is a diminutive for “robot”).



You may be able to short circuit the process of waiting to be found by the search engine's bot by submitting your URL or site map directly to search engines, as explained in [Chapter 3](#).

To be found quickly by a search engine bot, it helps to have inbound links to your site. More important, the links *within* your site should work properly. If a bot encounters a broken link, it cannot reach, or index, the page pointed to by the broken link.

Images

Pictures don't mean anything to a search bot. The only information a bot can gather about pictures comes from the file name, from the `alt` attribute used within a picture's `` tag, from text surrounding the picture, and in some cases from the image meta data. Therefore, always take care to provide description information via `alt` along with your images and at least one link (outside of an image map) to all pages on your site.



While effective automated image analysis is still largely in the lab, or in use by the military, its day is coming to the Internet. It's likely that by the time this book goes into its next edition, Google and others will have added at least rudimentary image recognition features to their bots and crawlers.

Links

Some kinds of links to pages (and sites) simply cannot be traversed by a search engine bot. The most significant issue is that a bot cannot log in to your site. If a site or page requires a username and a password for access, then it probably will not be included in a search index.



Don't be fooled by seamless page navigation using such techniques as cookies or session identifiers. If an initial login is required, these pages probably cannot be accessed by a bot.

When I was writing the previous edition of this book, there were some issues with search engine navigation of dynamic URLs. Dynamic URLs are generated on the server side from a database, and can often be recognized by characters in the URL such as `?`, `&`, and `=`. The current word from Google is that there are no problems with dynamic URLs, and it may not be worth creating server-side rules to rewrite dynamic URLs to make them look more like static URLs.



Navigation accomplished using JavaScript code can also be a problem, and the best bet for implementing complex navigations is to use CSS menus.

File Formats

Most search engines and search engine bots are capable of parsing and indexing many different kinds of file formats. For example, Google states: "We are able to index most types of pages and files with very few exceptions. File types we are able to index include: pdf, asp, jsp, html, shtml, xml, cfm, doc, xls, ppt, rtf, wks, lwp, wri, swf."

However, simple is often better. To get the best search engine placement, you are well advised to keep your web pages, as they are actually opened in a browser, to straight HTML. Note a couple of related issues:

- A file with a suffix other than `.htm` or `.html` can contain straight HTML. For example, when they are opened in the browser, `.asp`, `.aspx`, `.cfm`, `.php`, and `.shtml` files often consist of straight HTML (it has, of course, been generated by server-side software).

- Scripts (such as a PHP program) or include files (such as an *.shhtml* page) running on your web server usually generate HTML pages that are returned to the browser. This architecture is shown in [Figure 4-4](#). An important implication: check the source file as shown in a browser rather than the script file used to generate a dynamic page to see what the search engine will index.

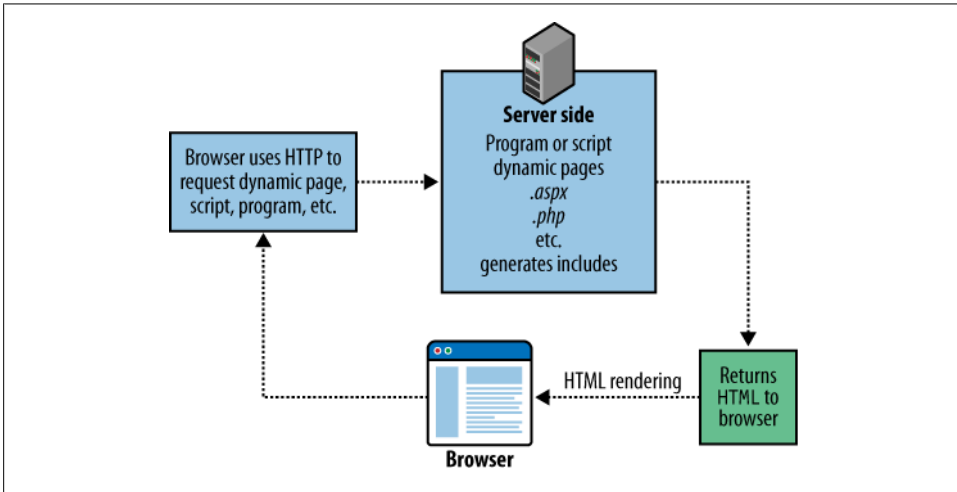


Figure 4-4. Server-side programs usually return “straight” HTML to the browser

Google puts the “simple is best” precept this way: “If fancy features such as JavaScript, cookies, session IDs, frames, DHTML, or Flash keep you from seeing all of your site in a text browser, then search engine spiders may have trouble crawling your site.” The only way to know for sure whether a bot will be unable to crawl your site is to check your site using an all-text browser.

So go ahead, find out for sure. View your site in an all-text browser. It’s easy. And fun.

Viewing Your Site with an All-Text Browser

Improvement implies a feedback loop: you can’t know how well you are doing without a mechanism for examining your current status. The feedback mechanism that helps you improve your site from an SEO perspective is to view it as the bot sees it. While information shown by the Google Webmaster Tools and other helpers is useful, nothing beats a text-only view of your site.

This means viewing the site using a text-only browser. A text-only browser, just like the search engine bot, will ignore images and graphics and only process the text on a page.

The best-known text-only web browser is Lynx. You can find more information about Lynx at <http://lynx.isc.org/>. Generally, the process of installing Lynx involves downloading source code and compiling it.



The Lynx site also provides links to a variety of precompiled Lynx builds you can download.

Don't want to get into compiled source code or figuring out which idiosyncratic Lynx build to download? There is a simple Lynx Viewer available on the Web at <http://www.delorie.com/web/lynxview.html>.

All you have to do is navigate to this page in your browser and submit the URL for your site. The text view of the page you'll see (Figure 4-5) is starkly simpler than the comparable fully rendered view with images and graphics (Figure 4-6). The contrast may be a real eye opener. You should take the time to “crawl” the text link in your site to understand site navigation as well as page appearance from the bot's viewpoint.

Excluding the Bot

There are a number of reasons you might want to block bots from all, or part, of your site. For example, if your site is not complete, if you have broken links, or if you haven't prepared your site for a search engine visit, you probably don't want to be indexed yet. You may also want to protect parts of your site from being indexed if those parts contain sensitive information or pages that you know cannot be accurately traversed or parsed.



Google requests that you block URLs that will give the bot hiccups—for example, dynamic URLs that include calendar information that have the potential for infinite expansion. You can block individual URLs using a `nofollow` attribute value in the anchor tag of the URL itself. For example:

```
<a rel="nofollow" href="botcantgohere" />No follow me</a>
```

Services provided by [Delorie Software](#) and its sponsors (the ad above)

Lynx Viewer:

This service is intended to be used only by content developers, on their own pages.

[#Photoblog 2.0 RSS Feed](#)

[Photoblog 2.0](#)

Digital Inspiration from Harold Davis

[Impossible Images](#)

December 10th, 2008

Variety is the spice of life, and it is certainly part of what I enjoy about photography. Having a camera is an excuse for being anywhere and examining anything. Those of you who follow [my blog](#) or my [photostream on Flickr](#) will know that my subjects range from [kids](#) and [flowers](#) through the [night landscape](#). I'm also intrigued with the idea of extending photography via software manipulation to create images of the impossible.

I'm pleased to announce that [Spirals](#), one of my images of the impossible, has won a place in the prestigious [MacWorld 2009 digital imaging exhibition](#).

[Spirals](#)

Figure 4-5. Lynx Viewer makes it easy to focus on text and links without the distraction of the image-rich version

If you need to, you can make sure that part of your site does not get indexed by any search engine.



Following the no-robots protocol is voluntary and based on the honor system. So all you can really be sure of is that a legitimate search engine that follows the protocol will not index the prohibited parts of your site from the root of your site (if there are external links to excluded pages, these may still be traversed regardless of your policy file). Don't rely on search engine exclusion for security. Information that needs to be protected should be in password-protected locations, and protected by software hardened for security purposes.

Impossible Images

December 10th, 2008

Variety is the spice of life, and it is certainly part of what I enjoy about photography. Having a camera is an excuse for being anywhere and examining anything. Those of you who follow [my blog](#) or my [photostream on Flickr](#) will know that my subjects range from [kids](#) and [flowers](#) through the [night landscape](#). I'm also intrigued with the idea of extending photography via software manipulation to create images of the impossible.

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Figure 4-6. Compared with the identical page in a text-only view (Figure 4-5), it's hard to focus on just the text and links

The robots.txt File

To block bots from traversing your site, place a text file named *robots.txt* in your site's web root directory (where the HTML files for your site are placed). The following syntax in the *robots.txt* file blocks all compliant bots from traversing your entire site:

```
User-agent: *  
Disallow: /
```

You can exercise more granular control over which bots you ban and which parts of your site are off-limits as follows:

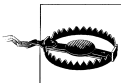
- The `User-agent` line specifies the bot that is to be banished.
- The `Disallow` line specifies a path relative to your root directory that is banned territory.



A single *robots.txt* file can include multiple `User-agent` bot bannings, each disallowing different paths.

For example, you would tell the Google search bot not to look in your *cgi-bin* directory (assuming the *cgi-bin* directory is right beneath your web root directory) by placing the following two lines in your *robots.txt* file:

```
User-agent: googlebot  
Disallow: /images
```



As I've mentioned, the *robots.txt* mechanism relies on the honor system. By definition, it is a text file that can be read by anyone with a browser. Don't rely on every bot honoring the request within a *robots.txt* file, and don't use *robots.txt* in an attempt to protect sensitive information from being uncovered on your site by humans (this is a different issue from using it to avoid publishing sensitive information in honest search engine indexes like Google). In fact, someone trying to hack your site might specifically read your *robots.txt* file in an attempt to uncover site areas that you deem sensitive.

For more information about working with the *robots.txt* file, see the [Web Robots FAQ](#). You can also find tools for managing and generating custom *robots.txt* files and robot meta tags (explained later) at <http://www.rietta.com/robogen/> (an evaluation version is available for free download).

Meta Robot Tags

The Googlebot and many other web robots can be instructed not to index specific pages (rather than entire directories), not to follow links on a specific page, and to index but not cache a specific page, all via the HTML meta tag placed inside of the `head` tag.



Google maintains a cache of documents it has indexed. The Google search results provide a link to the cached version in addition to the version on the Web. The cached version can be useful when the Web version has changed and also because the cached version highlights the search terms (so you can easily find them).

The `meta` tag used to block a robot has two attributes: `name` and `content`. The `name` attribute is the name of the bot you are excluding. To exclude all robots, you'd include the attribute `name="robots"` in the `meta` tag.

To exclude a specific robot, the robot's identifier is used. The Googlebot's identifier is `googlebot`, and it is excluded by using the attribute `name="googlebot"`. You can find the entire database of registered and excludable robots and their identifiers (currently about 300) at <http://www.robotstxt.org/db.html>.



The more than 300 robots in the official database are the tip of the iceberg. There are at least 200,000 robots and crawlers “in the wild.” Some of these software programs have malicious intent; all of them eat up valuable web bandwidth. For more information about wild (and rogue) robots, visit [Bots vs. Browsers](#).

The possible values of the `content` attribute are shown in [Table 4-1](#). You can use multiple attribute values, separated by commas, but you should not use contradictory attribute values together (such as `content="follow, nofollow"`).

Table 4-1. Content attribute values and their meanings

Attribute value	Meaning
<code>follow</code>	Bot can follow links on the page
<code>index</code>	Bot can index the page
<code>noarchive</code>	Only works with the Googlebot; tells the Googlebot not to cache the page
<code>nofollow</code>	Bot should not follow links on the page
<code>noindex</code>	Bot should not index the page

For example, you can block Google from indexing a page, following links on a page, and caching the page using this `meta` tag:

```
<meta name="googlebot" content="noindex, nofollow, noarchive">
```

More generally, the following tag tells legitimate bots (including the Googlebot) not to index a page or follow any of the links on the page:

```
<meta name="robots" content="noindex, nofollow">
```

For more information about Google's page-specific tags that exclude bots, and about the Googlebot in general, see <http://www.google.com/bot.html>.

Meta Information

Meta information, sometimes called *meta tags* for short, is a mechanism you can use to provide information about a web page.



The term derives from the Greek word *meta*, which means “behind” or “hidden.” *Meta* refers to the aspect of something that is not immediately visible, perhaps because it is in the background, but that is there nonetheless and has an impact.

The most common *meta* tags provide a description and keywords for telling a search engine what your website and pages are all about. Each *meta* tag begins with a *name* attribute that says what the *meta* tag represents. The *meta* tag:

```
<meta name="description" ...></meta>
```

means that this tag will provide descriptive information. The *meta* tag:

```
<meta name="keywords" ...></meta>
```

means that the tag will provide keywords.

The description and keywords go within a *content* attribute in the *meta* tag. For example, here’s a *meta* description tag (often simply called the *meta description*):

```
<meta name="description" content="Quality information, articles about  
a variety of topics ranging from Photoshop,  
programming to business, and investing."></meta>
```

Keywords are provided in a comma-delimited list. For example:

```
<meta name="keywords" content="Photoshop, Wi-Fi,  
wireless networking, programming, C#, business, investing, writing,  
digital photography, eBay, pregnancy, information"></meta>
```

More About Meta Tags

Meta tags can contain a lot more than just descriptions and keywords, including (but not limited to) a technical description of the kind of content on a page and even the character encoding used:

```
<meta http-equiv="Content-Type" content="text/html;  
charset=iso-8859-1" />
```

And you’ve already seen how *meta* tags can instruct search engine bots on what to index in [“Meta Robot Tags” on page 95](#).

It’s easy for anyone to put any *meta* tag keywords and description they’d like in a page’s HTML code. This has led to abuse when the *meta* tag information does not really reflect page content. Therefore, *meta* tag keyword and description information is deprecated by search engine indexing software and not as heavily relied on by search engines as it used to be. But it is still worth getting your *meta* tag keywords and descriptions right, as there is little or no cost to it.

In [Chapter 2](#), I explained how to create a short (one- or two-sentence) elevator pitch for your website. The *meta* description is a perfect use for this elevator pitch. Be aware

that your meta description may be what searchers see displayed for your site, particularly if your site doesn't have much text on the page.



Google will try to pick up page descriptions from text toward the beginning of a page, but if this is not available—for example, because the page consists of graphics only—it will look at the information in the content attribute of a meta description. Providing a good meta description from the viewpoint of human browsers is therefore important.

For example, the home page of Digital Photography: Digital Field Guide (shown in Figure 4-7) doesn't have much text, but it does have a lot of images.

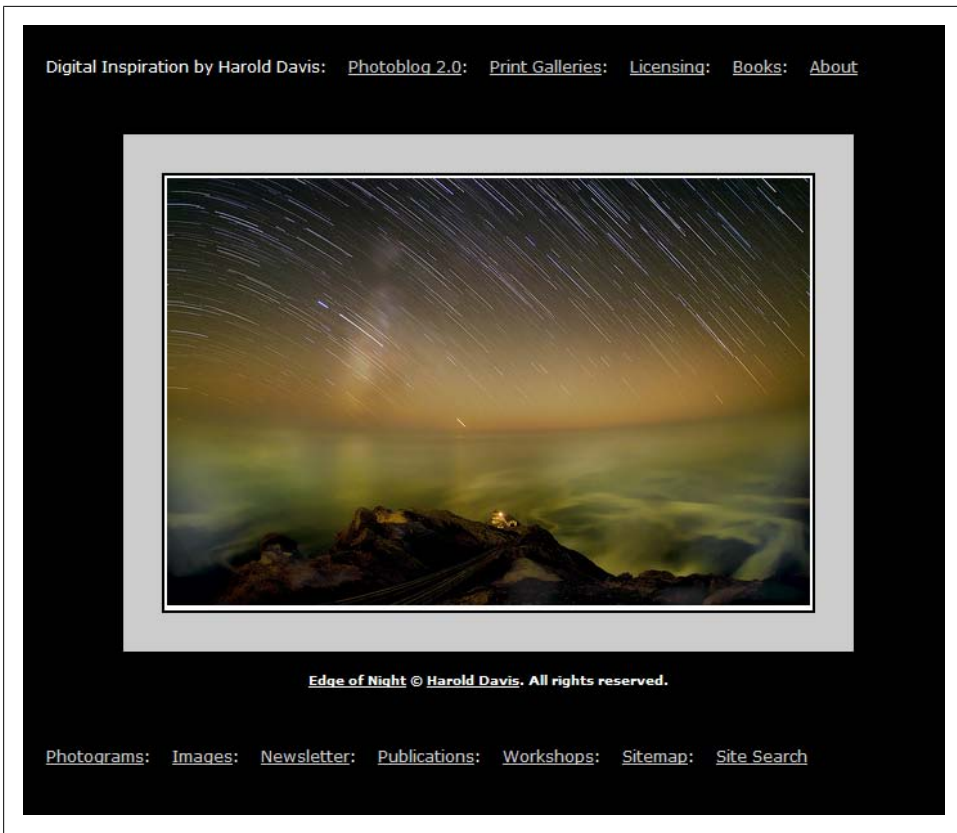


Figure 4-7. Meta description information is particularly important when your website or page doesn't have much text (like this home page)

Meta keywords should be limited to a dozen or so terms. Don't load up the proverbial kitchen sink. Think hard about the keywords that you'd like to lead to your site when visitors search (see “Words and Keyword Density” on page 100).

For the keywords that are really significant to your site, you should include both single and plural forms, as well as any variants. A site about photography might want to include both “photograph” and “photography” as meta tags.

Here’s the meta tag information included in the HTML source code for the home page of the Digital Photography: Digital Field Guide site:

```
<meta name="description" content="Showcasing digital photographs by Harold Davis: photomacrography, flowers, landscapes and relevant Photoshop techniques"/>

<meta name="keywords" content="Digital, photography, photographs, photograms, scans, night, field, guide, camera, tripod, filter, photo, processing, Harold Davis, photomacrography, macro, landscapes, roadtrip, adventure, San Francisco, Bayscapes, flowers, Yosemite, Wave, Photoshop"/>
```

Since Google’s software can’t find what this page is about *except* by reading the meta description, because the page is almost all images with no text, the meta description is what shows up when the site is part of Google’s search results (see [Figure 4-8](#)). The moral: if there aren’t very many words on your page, pick your meta description and keywords with special care.

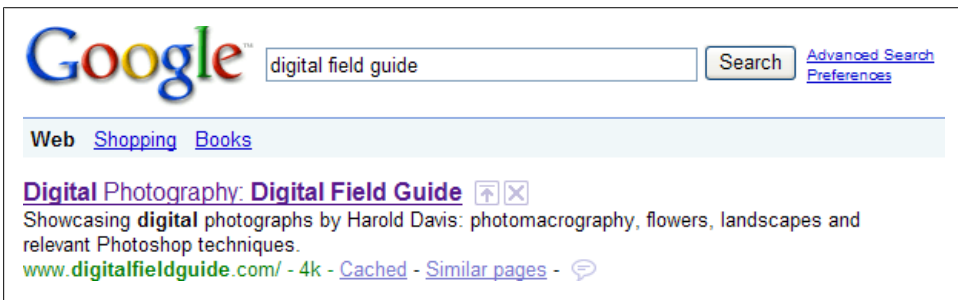


Figure 4-8. In this example, Google simply took the meta description verbatim since it couldn’t find a description on the page itself

Design for SEO

Designing a site to be SEO-friendly encompasses a wide range of topics that include the general structure of the site and its hierarchy, principles and content ratio of individual pages, and specifics of using HTML tags.

Keyword density means the ratio of keywords that you are trying to target for SEO purposes to the other text on your pages. Getting keyword density right—enough so that your SEO goals are achieved, not so much that the search engines are “offended”—is an important goal of core SEO practice. Search engines do look for keywords, but they take away points for excessive and inappropriate keyword “stuffing.”

Even from the point of view of your site visitors, you want a nice density of keywords in your pages—but you don't want so many keywords that the content of your pages is diminished from the viewpoint of visitors.

It is certainly true that *which* keywords you use is more important than how many of them there are. Your main focus should be on finding the right keywords, not counting them.

Site Design Principles

The following are some design and information architecture guidelines you should apply to your site to optimize it for search engines.

Text is best

For most sites, the fancy graphics do not matter. If you are looking for search engine placement, it is the words that count. Always use text instead of—or in addition to—images to display important names, content, and links. Where it's reasonable, add a `title` attribute to anchor tags to provide the bot with more information about the destination and purpose of hyperlinks.



Make sure you provide accurate `alt` attribute text for any content-related images that are on your pages (such as logo and photos, but not purely formatting graphics such as stripes, etc.).

Navigability

Pages within your site should be structured with a clear hierarchy. Several alternative site navigation mechanisms should be supplied, including at least one that is text-only. The major parts of your site should be easy to access using a site map. If your site map has more than 100 links, you should divide the site map into separate pages (as a matter of usability, not in relation to Google's analysis).

Words and Keyword Density

By now, you probably understand that the most important thing you can do on the SEO front involves the words on your pages.

There are three issues you need to consider when placing keywords on a page:

- How many words should be on a page?
- Which words belong on what page?
- Where should these be placed on the page?

Page size

Ideally, pages should be between 100 and 250 words. Shorter than 100 words, and Google and other search engines may tend to discount the page as unsubstantial. Personally, as a photographer I tend to resent this anti-image bias. But from an SEO standpoint, you should know the facts of life as they are. The Web started as a primarily text-based medium, and the underlying technology still tends to prefer words.

You do want to include as many keywords as you can without destroying the value and integrity of the site. Besides decreasing the value to humans, you don't want the bot to think you have created a spam site. There's a balance here. With fewer than 100 words, any significant inclusion of keywords is going to look like keyword stuffing—and get “points” taken off your pages.

Pages that are longer than 250 words are not terrible, but do tend to diminish traffic—both actual and measured as a per page statistic. From the viewpoint of advertising, lengthy pages waste content; 250 words is about as many as will fit on a single monitor screen, so your visitors will have to scroll down to finish reading the rest of the page if you publish longer pages. You might as well provide navigation to additional pages for the content beyond the 250 words—and gain the benefit of having extra pages to host advertising.



Some sites prefer to run longer pages and rotate ads with the page still loaded. This should be considered a good option for any page with an average page view of a minute or longer.

The bottom line is that it's best to create pages that have between 100 and 250 words. These words should include some keywords that are desirable, but don't overdo it. If the sentences on the page appear unnatural because they are full of keywords, they have probably been “keyword stuffed”—which is counterproductive.

Choosing keywords

Beyond the mechanics of crafting sites and pages that are search-engine friendly lies another issue: what search queries does your site answer? You need to understand this to find the keywords to emphasize in your site construction—a very important part of Search Engine Optimization.

Keywords used in the body of a page can duplicate the keywords used in meta tags. However, it's important to understand that the keywords within a page are far more important than the meta tag information.



Keywords are emphasized by their placement within a page. For example, important keywords should go in a page's HTML `<title>` and in `<h1>` headers. It's best to craft titles and tags that reasonable and logically use the target keywords, but this can't always be done, and you can always add a few keywords to the phrase used for the title attribute within tags such as the `<h1>` tag.

There's no magic bullet for coming up with the right keywords to place in a page. A good starting place is the elevator pitch and related keywords, as explained in [Chapter 2](#). You can also take a look at your competition to see if their optimization makes sense in terms of titles, keywords, and so on.

It's fundamental to your success to vary keywords used in a page depending on the page content, rather than trying to stuff a one-size-fits-all approach across all the pages on your site. In fact, Google will definitely take points off if it finds that all the pages on your site emphasize the same keywords.

If the answer is X, for example, what is the question? This is the right way to consider keyword choice. X is your website or web page. What did someone type into Google to get there?

The Top Search Queries page on the Statistics tab of Google Webmaster Tools will, to some extent, answer this question for you. This page will tell you the top 20 search queries that returned your site. Bear in mind that you may need to know about more than the top 20 searches (this is the province of web logs and web analytics programs, as explained in [Chapter 13](#)). In addition, the Google Webmasters information is at least a week old, which may not be fresh enough for quickly moving sites.

As you come up with keywords and phrases, try them out. Search Google based on the keywords and phrases. Ask yourself if the results returned by Google are where you would like to see your site. If not, tweak, modify, wait for Google to re-index your site (this won't take too long once you've been initially indexed), and try your search again.

Ultimately, the best way to measure success is relative. It's easy to see how changes impact your search results ranking—just keep searching (as often as once a day) for a standard set of half a dozen keywords or phrases that you've decided to target. If you are moving up in the search rankings, then you are doing the right thing. If your ranking doesn't improve, then reverse the changes. If you get search results to where you want them (usually within the top 30 or even top 10 results returned), then start using these results to optimize additional pages.

You should also realize that the success that is possible for a given keyword search depends upon the keyword. It's highly unlikely that you will be able to position a site into the top results for, say, "Google" or "Microsoft"—but trivial to get to the top for keywords phrases with no natural search results (such as "nigritude ultramarine" or "loquine glupe," two nonsense phrases that became the fodder for SEO contests).

The trade-off here is that it is a great deal harder to place at the top of natural search listings with keywords that are valuable—so you need to find a sweet spot: keywords where you stand a chance, but that also will drive significant site-related traffic.



Since feedback is ultimately determined by financial incentive, an interesting approach to keyword selection is to see what words cost the most to advertisers. If you are registered with Google AdWords, you can use the AdWords tools as explained in [Part III](#) to do just that—and get valid cost estimates for keywords and phrases.

Keyword placement

The text on your web page should include the most important keywords you have developed in as unforced a way as possible. Try to string keywords together to make coherent sentences.

Not all text on a page is equal in importance. First of all, order does count: keywords higher up in a given page get more recognition from search engines than the same keywords further down on a page.

Roughly speaking, besides the body of the page itself and in meta information, you should try to place your keywords in the following elements—presented roughly in order of descending importance:

Title

Putting relevant keywords in the HTML `<title>` tag for your page is probably the single most important thing you can do in terms of SEO.

Headers

Keyword placement within HTML header styles, particularly `<h1>` headers toward the top of a page, is extremely important.

Links

Use your keywords as much as possible in the text that is enclosed by `...` hyperlink tags on your site in outbound and cross-bound links. Ask webmasters who provide inbound linking to your site to use your keywords whenever possible.

Images

Include your keywords in the `alt` attribute of your HTML `` tags.

Text in bold

If there is any reasonable excuse for doing so, include your keywords within HTML bold (`...`) tags.

The saying, “Everything in moderation, even moderation” is a good principle to keep in mind when you tweak your website to achieve SEO. The moderation slogan has been aptly applied to many human activities, from the sexual to the gustatory and beyond. It fits very well with SEO.

For example, you want a nice density of keywords in your pages, but you don’t want so many keywords that the content of your pages is diminished from the viewpoint of visitors. Search engines look for keywords, but they take away points for excessive and inappropriate keyword “stuffing.”

Put Meta Tags in an Include

In [Chapter 1](#), I explained the importance of using includes to manage site content. In that same vein, the HTML used for meta tags and description information should be placed in a single include file, making it easy to change your meta information across an entire site or a series of related pages.

You do want to be careful to provide relevant meta information for different pages. If your site is large, with many pages, and has several distinct areas of content, you can create a separate file, each consisting only of meta description and tags, for each content area.

You can always customize the meta information for a specific page by discarding the reference to the meta include file and adding page-specific meta information. Alternatively, you can create a page-specific meta include, keeping track of your meta includes by placing them all in one directory and devising a sensible naming convention.

It’s a really good idea to have default meta information for a site that can easily be tweaked. However, default descriptions may not be competitive with individual hand-created descriptions. There have been a variety of creative approaches to deal with this conundrum; one that seems to work fairly well is to write good page content and then dynamically copy the first 150 characters as the meta description.

Try to see the world from a search engine bot’s viewpoint (that’s the point of using a text-only browser as I explained in [“More About How Your Site Appears to a Bot” on page 89](#)). Create sites that appeal when looked at this way, but go easy. Don’t overdo it!

Site Design Principles

The following are some design and information architecture guidelines you should apply to your site to optimize it for search engines.

Eschew fancy graphics

Fancy graphics do not matter for most sites. When it comes to search engine placement, it is the words that count.

Use text wherever possible

Use text rather than images to display important names, content, and links.

Always provide alt attributes for images

Make sure you provide accurate alt attribute text for any images that are on your pages.

Navigability

Pages within your site should be structured with a clear hierarchy. Several alternative site-navigation mechanisms should be supplied, including at least one that is text-only.

Provide text links

Every page in your site should be accessible using a static text link.

Make a site map available to your users

The major parts of your site should be easy to access using a site map ([Figure 4-9](#) shows an example of a useful site map). If your site map has more than 100 links, you should divide the site map into separate pages.



Your human site map should not be confused with a site map prepared for search engines, as explained in [Chapter 3](#).

Using PageRank

The PageRank algorithm is used in part by Google to order the results returned by specific search queries. As such, understanding PageRank is crucial to core SEO efforts to improve natural search results.

Depending on who you ask, PageRank is named after its inventor, Lawrence Page, Google's cofounder—or because it is a mechanism for ranking pages.

When a user enters a query, also called a search, into Google, the result order of the returns is partially determined by the relative PageRank of the results.

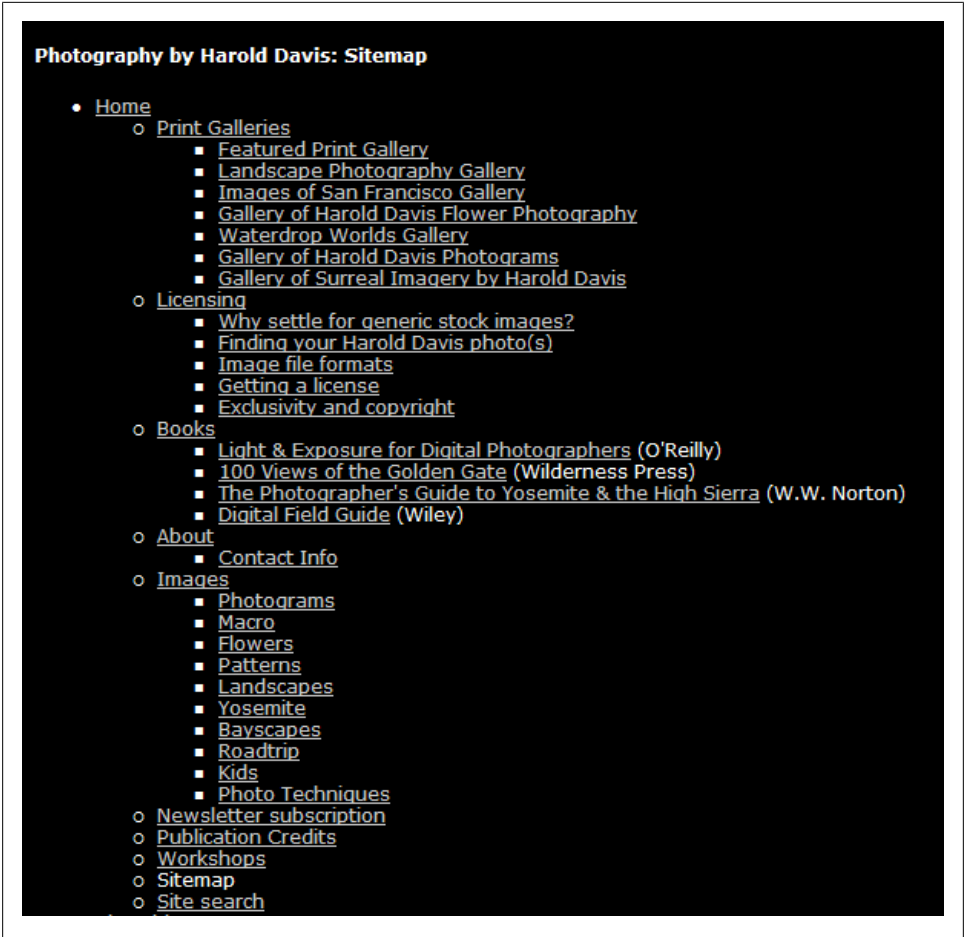


Figure 4-9. A site map makes it easy for visitors to find what they need on your site and also helps optimize your site for search engines

Originally fairly simple in concept, PageRank now reportedly processes more than 100 variables. Since the exact nature of this “secret sauce” is, well, secret, the best thing you can do from an SEO perspective is more or less stick to the original concept.

The underlying idea behind PageRank is an old one that has been used by librarians in the pre-Web past to provide an objective method of scoring the relative importance of scholarly documents. The more citations other documents make to a particular document, the more “important” the document is, the higher its rank in the system, and the more likely it is to be retrieved first.

Let me break it down for you.

Each web page is assigned a number depending upon the number of other pages that link to the page.

The crucial element that makes PageRank work is the nature of the Web itself, which depends almost solely on the use of hyperlinking between pages and sites. In the system that makes Google's PageRank algorithm work, links are a Web popularity contest: Webmaster A thinks Webmaster B's site has good information (or is cool, or looks good, or is funny), so Webmaster A may decide to add a link to Webmaster B's site. In turn, Webmaster B might return the favor.

Links from Website A to Website B are called outbound (from A) and inbound links (to B).

The more inbound links a page has (references from other sites), the more likely it is to have a higher PageRank. However, not all inbound links are of equal weight when it comes to how they contribute to PageRank—nor should they be. A web page gets a higher PageRank if another significant source (by “significant” I mean a source that also receives a lot of inbound links, and thus has a higher PageRank) links to it than if a trivial site without traffic provides the inbound link.



PageRank is essentially a recursive algorithm, meaning a process that invokes itself. A given page's PageRank is the sum of the PageRanks of the pages that link to it (weighted by the total number of links, of course). In this scheme, a link from a high PageRank page clearly counts for more than a link from a low-ranking page. See the sidebar “[Understanding PageRank](#)” on page 108.

The more sophisticated version of the PageRank algorithm currently used by Google involves more than simply crunching the number of links to a page and the PageRank of each page that provides an inbound link. While Google's exact method of calculating PageRank is shrouded in proprietary mystery, PageRank does try to exclude links from so-called link farms, pages that contain only links, and mutual linking (which are individual two-way links put up for the sole purpose of boosting PageRanks).



The easiest way to see the comparative PageRank for your web pages is to install the Google Toolbar. With a web page open, the PageRank is shown in the Toolbar on a scale of 0 to 10. These PageRanks are really between 0 and 1, so although the 0 to 10 scale is useful for comparison purposes, it does not represent an actual PageRank number.

Note that you may have to specifically turn on the feature that displays PageRank in the Google Toolbar; in some installations this feature is not enabled by default.

From the viewpoint of SEO, it's easy to understand some of the implications of PageRank. If you want your site to have a high PageRank, then you need to get as many high-ranked sites as possible to link to you.

However, useful outbound links draw traffic to the linking site and encourage other sites to return the favor because they respect the quality of the links the original site provides. So for SEO, there's a delicate balancing act with outbound linking—some quality outbound links add merit to a site, but too many outbound links decrease desirability. Trial and error is probably the only way to get this one right.

Understanding PageRank

The PageRank formula can be thought of as a model of user behavior of “random surfers.” Such a random surfer visits a random web page, keeps clicking links randomly, never clicking the back button, and eventually gets bored enough to visit a new random page by typing the web address into the browser. The probability that the random surfer visits a particular page is its PageRank. The probability at each page that the random surfer will get bored and request a new random page is called the damping factor, represented by “d” in the formula.

Put this way, the PageRank for a specific web page can clearly be calculated by going through all the inbound links to a page, calculating the PageRanks of all these pages, backing up to calculate the inbound links in turn to the new set of pages, and so on, all the way back until there are no more inbound links. A little more technically, a web page's PageRank can be calculated by iterating recursively through all of its inbound linked pages. This is the fundamental method behind Google's search engine, although in the real world (as you likely know if you've read this far in this sidebar) there are usually nonrecursive techniques that calculate results more quickly than the corresponding recursive algorithm.

The original formula for PageRank with further explanation is contained in the [Brin and Page page at Stanford University](#). Here it is—PR stands for PageRank; A stands for a random page, identified as Page A; $T_1 \dots T_n$ signifies all the pages that link to Page A; and $C(A)$ represents the number of Page A's outbound links:

$$PR(A) = (1-d) + d(PR(T_1)/C(T_1) + \dots + d(PR(T_n)/C(T_n))$$

PageRanks form a probability distribution over web pages, so the sum of all web pages' PageRanks is 1.

The formula for PageRank has, of course, evolved since this formulation—as I've mentioned, it now involves more than 100 variables—and its exact nature is part of Google's proprietary technology. It's still the case that some of the best insights into how Google works for SEO purposes come from this early academic formulation.

Linking

The links on your site constitute a very important part of how Google and other search engines will rank your pages.

Links can be categorized into inbound links, outbound links, and cross links (see [Figure 4-10](#)):

Inbound links

These links point to a page on your website from an external site somewhere else on the Web.

Outbound links

These links point from a page on your site to an external site somewhere else on the Web.

Cross links

These links point between the pages on your site.

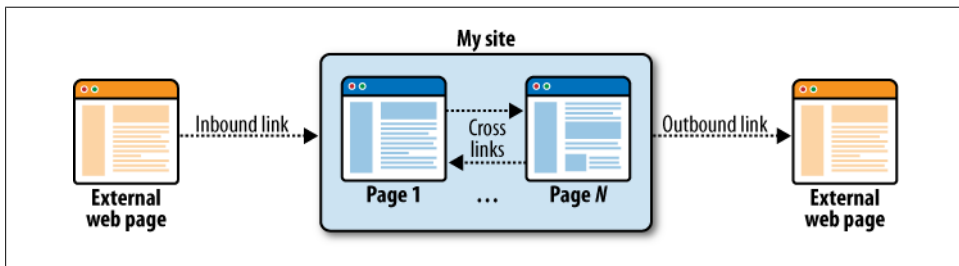


Figure 4-10. It's important to understand the distinctions among the three categories of links

Broken Links

It's important to search engines such as Google that the links on your site are not broken. It shouldn't be that big of a problem to go through your site and check to make sure each link works manually. Doing this will also give you a chance to review your site systematically and understand the navigation flow from the viewpoint of a bot.

Even though you've checked your links manually, you should also use an automated link checking tool. Quite a few are available. A good choice is the simple (and free) link checker provided by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) at <http://validator.w3.org/checklink>. As you can see in [Figure 4-11](#), all you need to do is enter the domain you want checked and watch the results as the links on your site are crawled.

Processing <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/>

Go to [the results](#).

For reliable link checking results, check [HTML validity](#) first. See also [CSS validity](#).

Back to the [link checker](#).

```
Parsing...
done (658 lines in 0.0s).
Checking anchors...
done.
Checking link http://www.flickr.com/photos/harold_davis/3087625688/
HEAD http://www.flickr.com/photos/harold_davis/3087625688/ fetched in 1.6s
Checking link http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3014/3086184200_c026c3d056.jpg
HEAD http://farm4.static.flickr.com/3014/3086184200_c026c3d056.jpg fetched in 1.5
Checking link http://www.youtube.com/v/gdn3gJxSzew&hl=en&fs=1
HEAD http://www.youtube.com/v/gdn3gJxSzew&hl=en&fs=1
HEAD http://www.youtube.com/swf/1.swf?swf=http%3A//s.ytimg.com/yt/swf/cps-vfl68942
Checking link http://www.google.com/logos/Logo_25wht.gif
HEAD http://www.google.com/logos/Logo_25wht.gif fetched in 1.3s
Checking link http://farm1.static.flickr.com/168/373007436_49b33b711e_b.jpg
HEAD http://farm1.static.flickr.com/168/373007436_49b33b711e_b.jpg
```

Figure 4-11. An automated link checker goes through the hyperlinks on a page (or site) one by one

Inbound links

You want as many inbound links as possible, provided these links are not from link farms or link exchanges. With this caveat about inbound linking from “naughty neighborhoods” understood, you cannot have too many inbound links. The more popular, and the higher the ranking of, the sites providing the inbound links to your site, the better.

PageRank and Inbound Links

Inbound links are considered a shorthand way of determining the value of your website, because other sites have decided your site has content worth linking to. An inbound link from a site that is itself highly valued is worth more than an inbound link from a low-value site, for obvious reasons.

This concept is at the core of Google’s famous PageRank algorithm (see the earlier section “Using PageRank” on page 105).



For information about the best approaches for generating inbound links, see [Chapter 3](#).

The best—meaning most likely to drive traffic—inbound links come from:

- Sites that publish content that is complementary and related to the content on your site
- Hub sites that are a central repository, discussion area, or community site for a particular interest group

Outbound Links

The “everything in moderation” slogan is really apt when it comes to outbound links. You could also say that the “outbound link giveth and the outbound link taketh.” Here’s why: you want some respectable outbound links to establish the credibility of your site and pages and to provide a useful service for visitors. After all, part of the point of the Web is that it is a mechanism for linking information, and it is truly useless to pretend that all good information is on your site. So on-topic outbound links are themselves valuable content.

However, every time your site provides an outbound link, there is a probability that visitors to your site will use it to surf off your site. As a matter of statistics, this probability diminishes the popularity of your site, and Google will subtract points from your ranking if you have too many outbound links. In particular, pages that are essentially lists of outbound links are penalized.

If you follow the words-per-page guideline I made in [“Words and Keyword Density” on page 100](#)—between 100 and 250 words per page—you’ll get the best results if you try to provide at least 2 or 3 outbound links on every page and, in any case, no more than 10 or 15 per page.

Cross Links

Cross links—links within your site—are important to visitors as a way to find useful, related content. For example, if you have a page explaining the concept of class inheritance in an object-oriented programming language, a cross link to an explanation of the related concept of the class interface might help some visitors. From a navigability viewpoint, the idea is that it should be easy to move through all information that is topically related.

From an SEO perspective, your site should provide as many cross links as possible (without stretching the relevance of the links to the breaking point). There’s no downside to providing reasonable cross links, and several reasons for providing them. For example, effective cross linking keeps visitors on your site longer (as opposed to heading offsite because they can’t find what they need on your site).

Avoiding Overly Aggressive SEO

Google, like other major search engines, urges you to avoid overly aggressive SEO practices when you build your site.

Here's why you should avoid being overly aggressive with SEO (besides wanting to avoid Google's disapproval): building sites that get highly ranked is simply a matter of common sense; just build a site that will be useful or interesting to people, and it will naturally get indexed correctly, although this may take some time.

With this viewpoint, you shouldn't concern yourself with search order ranking or SEO when you construct your site. Just create worthwhile content that is genuinely useful, interesting, or entertaining. However, at the same time you needn't be naïve. It makes sense to deploy sites and pages in the most SEO-compliant way possible that doesn't cross the line into deceptive behavior—or one of the constructions frowned upon by Google.



SEO experts tend to disagree with this “build it with quality and they will come” theory of site creation. They point to the incredible competition for premium SEO results, and the money that is at stake, and suggest planning in advance for effective SEO with a knowledgeable expert.

Google's Prohibitions

Following is a list of the techniques that Google considers bad behavior. Google prohibits these things because it considers them overaggressive and deceptive, but note that Google does not consider this list exhaustive and may penalize your site for anything new that you come up with if it is considered deceptive to either humans or the Googlebot, assuming it is discovered.

According to Google, good search engine citizen websites do not:

Employ hidden text or links

For example, users cannot read white text on a white background (and will never even know it is there), but this text will be parsed by the search engine. This rule comes down to making sure that the search engine sees the same thing that users view.

Cloak pages

Also called *stealth*, this is a technique that involves serving different pages to the search engine than to the user.

Use redirects in a deceptive way

It's easy to redirect the user's browser to another page. If this is done for deceptive purposes—for example, to make users think they are on a page associated with a

well-known brand when in fact they are on a web spammer’s page—it’s frowned upon.

Attempt to improve your PageRank with dubious schemes

Linking to web spammers or bad neighborhoods on the Web may actually hurt your own PageRank (or search ranking), even if doing so provides inbound links to your site. (For information about how to legitimately encourage inbound site linking, and therefore improve your PageRank, see [Chapter 3](#).)



Bad neighborhoods are primarily link farms or link exchanges—sites that exist solely for the purpose of boosting a site’s inbound links without other content. *Web spammers* are sites that disguise themselves with pseudo-descriptions and fake keywords—the descriptions and keywords do not truly represent what the site contains.

Bombard Google with automated queries

This wastes Google’s bandwidth, so it doesn’t like it.

Practice keyword loading

This is the practice, beloved by some purported SEO “experts,” of adding irrelevant words to pages. (The page can then be served as the search result based on a query for the irrelevant words that actually don’t have anything to do with the page content.)

Create multiple similar pages

Google frowns on the creation of pages, domains, and subdomains that duplicate content.

Use cloaking or redirection

These techniques send a user to a page that has nothing to do with the one in the search engine results. (A variety of techniques may be used to substitute one page for another—either by redirection or actual substitution of pages on the web server—when the first page is optimized for specific keyword searches and the page to which the user is actually sent has little or nothing to do with that search.)

Create pages that lack content

Google frowns on pages that lack original content, such as a page that exists simply to present affiliate links.

Create domains with the intention of confusing users

It’s likely you’ve landed on a site with a domain name that’s confusing because it shares a name with a different domain suffix (for example, <http://www.php.org>, which combines a redirection with the deception, rather than the legitimate PHP language site, <http://www.php.net>) or because of a slight spelling variation (<http://www.yahho.com> rather than <http://www.yahoo.com>).

Publish advertising that is not clearly denoted as such

Paid advertisements and links are not in and of themselves evil, but graphically it should be clear to viewers what they are looking at. In addition, the Googlebot should be warned that it is looking at paid advertising through the use of the `nofollow` attribute in links within the ad.



Paid advertising links should be marked with the `nofollow` attribute, but not all links marked in this way are advertisements.

The following code snippet contains a way to make the ad distinctive for humans (the `adalt` class formatting) and a `nofollow` attribute to make the paid nature of the link clear to bots as well:

```
<p class="ad adalt"><small>Please buy widgets from <a rel="nofollow" href="http://www.advertiser.com/">this advertiser</a>. Thanks!</small></p>
```

A Nefarious Domain Spamming Example

A really egregious example of the nefarious practice of *domain spamming* is [Org.com](#). [Org.com](#) is a link farm that takes advantage of the fact that if you enter the body of an address in the address bar of Internet Explorer and hit Ctrl + Enter, you are taken to the `.com` domain related to what you entered. For example, if you enter “google” in the IE address bar, and press Ctrl + Enter, <http://www.google.com> opens. So suppose, by mistake, you enter anything followed by `.org` in the address bar—for example, “www.w3.org”, expecting to open the World Wide Web Consortium’s (W3C) site—and press Ctrl + Enter. Instead of W3C, <http://www.w3c.org.com>—in other words, [Org.com](#) (and its link menu)—will open.

Google frowns on deceptive domain naming if the domain name was selected for the purpose of taking advantage of the confusion.

As Google puts it, spending your energy creating a good user experience will let you “enjoy better ranking than those who spend their time looking for loopholes they can exploit.”



If you are a webmaster, you’ve likely been approached to pay for SEO services. While there are many reputable and effective SEO consultants, there are also a fair number of scam artists. Remember: if something seems too good to be true, it likely is.

Why Not to Be Overly Aggressive

If you draw Google's attention for practicing dirty tricks, you can get expelled from Google's index altogether. Worse, there's effectively no way to appeal a Google decision to expel a site from its index. Nor is there a set of procedural safeguards for webmasters who feel they have been wrongfully accused of deceitful SEO practices. It's therefore safest to avoid the wrath of Google by avoiding anything that even smacks of deceit.



You can appeal for reconsideration from Google at the form found at <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/reconsideration>, but there's no guarantee that Google will respond to your request, or when it will do so.

Most dirty SEO tricks are also simply bad web design. If you put sites together using bad practices that are intended solely to optimize your sites, most often you'll just irritate visitors—and get less traffic.

Google and other major search engines urge you to avoid overly aggressive SEO practices when you build your site. Google has actually taken the trouble to spell out SEO practices it regards as naughty (the list can be found at <http://www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=35769>). You should pay attention to this list as if it speaks the mind of every major search engine, not just Google. Google's position that building sites that get highly ranked is simply a matter of providing useful content isn't totally off-the-wall, although it assumes a world where everything always works.

Action Items

Here are some action items for you to optimize your website and pages for SEO:

- Understand what SEO can (and can't) do
- Get to know the relevant Google Webmaster Tools
- Learn about available SEO tools
- View your site in text-only mode
- Determine if you need to exclude search engine bots from portions of your site (or, if you already do exclude bots partially or completely, review the exclusion and change it as needed so your site can be indexed)
- Tweak the meta information for the site's major content areas or for individual pages
- Create a text-heavy and easily navigable site
- Check for, and fix, any broken links

- Understand how PageRank works and the implications for your site
- Work to add appropriate inbound, outbound, and cross links
- Choose keywords that make sense for your content and the traffic you are seeking, and add them to the important elements of your page content
- Endeavor to reach a keyword density balance
- Make sure your site avoids overly aggressive SEO practices

Making Money with Affiliate Programs

You've got the content ([Chapter 1](#)). You've created a business plan for your site ([Chapter 2](#)). You've learned how to drive traffic to your site ([Chapter 3](#)). You've optimized your site for search engine placement ([Chapter 4](#)). Now, where's the money?

This chapter explains how to make money from your website by having your site work as a virtual “sales rep.” You become a sales rep for another site, often called a *merchant*, by becoming an *affiliate*, sometimes called an *associate*, of the merchant.

With affiliate programs, your site provides links to a merchant's site. You make money if—and only if—visitors you send to the merchant's site make purchases. If this sounds easy, it can be. You don't need to stock inventory or worry about fulfillment, shipping, and returns. And you still make money—sometimes very good money—when the product sells. Best of all, the visitor doesn't necessarily need to make a purchase right away.

However, selling on the Internet is very competitive; there are always multiple avenues for a consumer to buy anything. Furthermore, there's nothing to stop consumers from bypassing your site completely and going directly to the merchant. You'll only be successful with your affiliate links if the goods provided by the merchants you are associated with are relevant to the content of your site. Specificity also helps. There must be a good connection between your site content and specific offerings of the affiliated merchant.

This chapter explains the different kinds of ad programs, how affiliate advertising works, and how to work with affiliate aggregators—everything you need to know to make money with affiliate programs, provided your sites draw traffic that will click on links to your affiliated merchants and that this traffic converts into actual purchasers.

Kinds of Ad Programs

Affiliate programs differ from most other advertising approaches: to make money, your traffic has to generate actual sales. This important distinction has implications for your website content and design.

It's worth going over the three primary approaches to making money via advertising with your web content so that the underlying distinctiveness of the affiliate advertising approach is clear.

The three most common ways to use advertising to make money with content on the Web are:

Affiliate programs

Affiliate programs pay you a sales commission when someone who clicks through a link on your site to an advertiser's site actually buys something from that advertiser.

Sponsored advertising

You are paid a fee when a sponsored ad (either banner or text) is displayed on your site. Sponsored ads are often called CPM—short for *cost per thousand page impressions*—ads because they are paid for on a CPM basis.



For more information on CPM ads, see [Chapter 6](#).

Contextual advertising

Contextual advertising is primarily text-based advertising that appears on web pages where there is a contextual relevance as determined by automated software. Contextual ads are often called CPC—short for *cost per click*—ads, because that is the basis on which they are paid.



For more general information about contextual advertising, see [Chapter 6](#). Google's AdSense is the best-known CPC program. Working with AdSense is explained in [Part II](#).

From your viewpoint—that of the publisher of content on one or more websites—what you probably really care about is how much money you can make from each kind of approach to advertising. Of course, that depends on a great many variables, and there are ways to maximize the yield from each kind of advertising program. It's worth experimenting to find out which kind of advertising works best with the specific content on your site (and the kind of traffic your site draws). It's also the case that many content sites carry all three kinds of advertising.

The key conceptual difference between the three kinds of advertising is what a visitor to your site has to do to make you money. It's a spectrum.

One way to look at this is by the amount of action required on the part of your site visitor, from most to least:

Affiliate ad

The visitor has to actually get out a credit card and make an online purchase from the advertiser's site (if not right away, then within a designated amount of time).

Contextual ad

The visitor has to click the ad to surf to the advertiser's page (but does not have to actually buy anything).

Sponsored ad

All that has to happen is that the ad is displayed on your page.

Understanding Affiliate Programs

Affiliate programs go by many names, including affiliate marketing programs, virtual marketing, revenue sharing, associate programs, Internet affiliate marketing, direct marketing, performance marketing, partner marketing, pay-for-performance, and referral programs. The names themselves give you an idea of what is involved. But as Shakespeare put it in *Romeo and Juliet*: What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

By whatever name it's called, an affiliate earns a commission from a merchant for generating a desired result. The specific result that must occur for the affiliate to earn a commission is (or should be) spelled out, and specified contractually, when the affiliate signs up for the program.



Read the fine print carefully when you sign up for an affiliate program. These agreements can be complicated, and you should be completely clear about exactly what commission you are supposed to get under all the circumstances covered by the agreement.

Most often, the event that leads to a commission for the affiliate is (as I've already said) a merchant sale resulting from the affiliate's promotion. But this need not be the case. In some (less common) circumstances, providing a merchant with a qualified sales lead may be enough to generate a commission for the affiliate.

Joining an affiliate program is potentially lucrative, but requires real attention and care. If not done right, you may not make any money from the affiliate programs you have joined.

Unlike other forms of advertising on your site, you really should care about who your affiliate partners are. This is because you do not get paid unless the affiliate links on

your site lead fairly directly to a sale. With contextual or sponsored ads, your content is merely a host for advertising; with an affiliate ad, you are a kind of partner.

Understanding affiliate programs can be confusing—there’s not a great deal of objective information available about this kind of advertising, affiliate aggregation sites are complex, and affiliate agreements are often full of legalese and opaque. But fear not! After reading this chapter, you’ll have a pretty good idea of what affiliate programs are, how they work, and how you can craft an affiliate strategy that can help you make money from your web content.

Mechanics of the Process

There are a number of steps involved in the affiliate marketing process. Here’s an overview:

1. A publisher signs up for affiliation with a merchant.
2. The merchant approves the affiliation and welcomes the publisher into the program.
3. The publisher is provided with a tracking number for the program.
4. The merchant makes available to the publisher a variety of graphics and links for the program.
5. The publisher constructs links to the merchant that incorporate the tracking number and may use the other material supplied by the merchant.
6. Visitors to the publisher’s site click the links.
7. The merchant’s site tracks purchases made by visitors from the publisher.
8. The merchant puts a cookie on the visitor’s computer that tracks additional purchases during a designated period.
9. The merchant makes periodic reports to the publisher and pays a sales commission based on actual purchases.

These steps are shown in [Figure 5-1](#).

Here are the steps in the process explained in a little more detail:

1. Publisher signup

A publisher (an owner of a content-based website or sites) signs up as a web affiliate of a merchant, either using an affiliate aggregator—a company in the business of servicing affiliates for multiple merchants (see [“Benefits of Affiliate Aggregators” on page 130](#))—or directly with the merchant (for example, Amazon.com).

This signup is done using a web interface, although sometimes certain documents (such as a W9 tax form) may need to be filed with the merchant or affiliate aggregator by mail or fax.

You’ll need a Social Security number or an employee tax identification number (EIN) to sign up with most affiliate programs based in the United States.

Note that some solo merchants use affiliate aggregation software to power their programs. In this case, even though the merchant is using software supplied by an aggregator, it is a one-off—you are signing up with one, and only one, merchant.

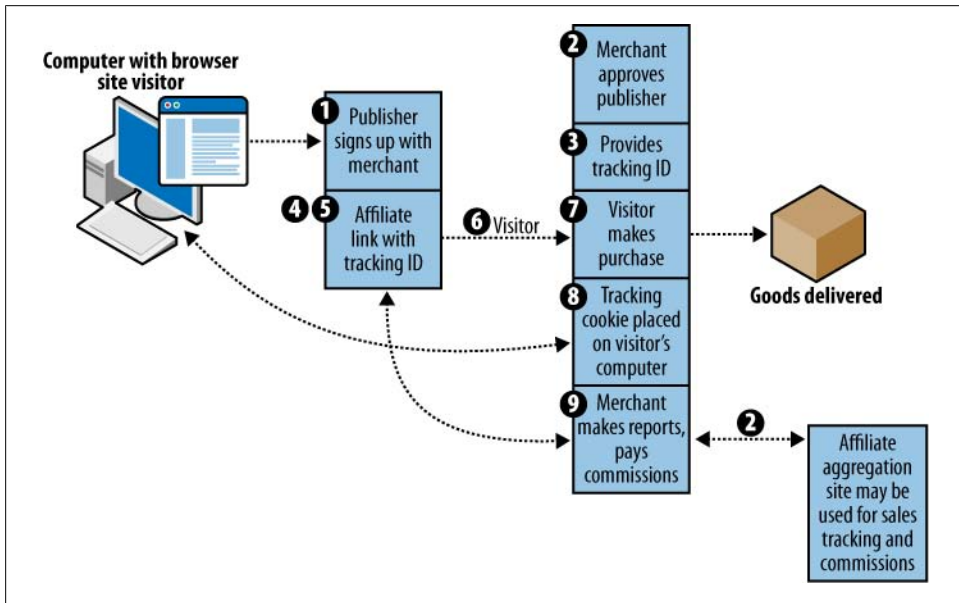


Figure 5-1. Visitors link through the publisher's site to purchase from the merchant; a third-party aggregator may track sales and commissions

2. Merchant approval

The merchant approves the publisher. Depending on the goals and methods of the merchant, this step may happen automatically or semiautomatically, or it may involve a manual determination of the suitability of the publisher by the merchant. Marketing goals and guidelines vary; a premium-brand merchant may want to take care that an affiliate is not perceived as *déclassé* and therefore manually approve all affiliates.

In some cases, merchants have outreach programs that contact sites they may feel are appropriate for affiliation. Other brands may feel that the more inbound links, the better, and let anyone sign up as an affiliate who wants to.

3. Tracking ID

Once the publisher has been approved, the publisher is provided with a tracking ID to use in affiliate ads.

Affiliate aggregators use one tracking ID per publisher, even when the publisher has signed up with multiple merchants. But if the merchants you work with don't affiliate through aggregation software, they will each provide you with a unique tracking ID for use in links.

Be sure to keep these tracking IDs so that you can retrieve them, along with logon information for each affiliate program.

4. *Creatives*

The merchant supplies banner and links—collectively called *creatives* (see “[Creatives](#)” on page 123)—that use the publisher’s tracking ID. The merchant also supplies information about how to create links with the proper tracking ID to the publisher. If the merchant-publisher connection is taking place with the facilitation of an affiliate aggregator, then the aggregator makes it easy for publishers to obtain links.

Banners and links are supplied as HTML code, usually complete with the publisher’s tracking ID embedded in the link, so you don’t need to know much HTML to join an affiliate program. If you are comfortable with HTML, you can, of course, construct your own custom links. Graphics, most often hosted on the merchant’s site, are supplied by the merchant or affiliate aggregator.

5. *Link construction*

The publisher incorporates the supplied HTML in web pages and/or constructs links based on the tracking ID that mesh well with the publisher’s content.

The plausibility of the links that the publisher constructs, their relevance to the publisher content, and their ability to provide added value to site visitors are the most important components in determining whether an affiliate arrangement will make money for the publisher.

6. *Clicking the affiliate links*

Visitors to the publisher’s site click the banners or links that open the merchant’s site; these links contain the tracking ID of the publisher.

7. *Tracking sales*

The merchant site tracks sales that are associated with users who have the publisher’s tracking ID. This mechanism is either home-brewed by the merchant site or uses software infrastructure provided by an affiliate aggregator.

8. *Placing the cookie*

Usually the merchant’s site places a cookie on the visitor’s computer so that the publisher is credited for actions that take place at a later point by the visitor. The amount of time depends on the affiliate program, so you should check individual affiliate program details before you sign up.

9. *Reports and sales commissions*

If the visitor takes a desired action—usually by buying something—the publisher is due a commission (often, as specified in the original agreement, there’s a time delay before any actual money is paid in order to handle issues like merchandise returns). Reputable affiliate programs provide an easy mechanism for publishers to keep track of page and click statistics and what they are owed. The tracking software is managed either by the merchant or by a third-party affiliate aggregator.

Creatives

Banners, buttons, and links provided by a merchant to an affiliate publisher are generally called *creatives*, a term deriving from the ad agency business. (Yes, I suppose it takes some creativity to make a good banner!) Creatives vary from fancy, splashy graphics in the GIF format (or even made using Flash) to simple text links pointing at a single product.

There's a great variety in the kinds and sizes of creatives made available by merchants. To generalize, the most common kinds of creatives are:

Text links

Simple hypertext links.

Banners

Graphic images, usually laid out horizontally. Sizes vary, but 480 × 90 pixels and 600 × 90 pixels are typical.

Skyscrapers

Graphic images intended for vertical deployment (hence the nickname skyscraper). Typical dimensions are 120 × 600 pixels.

Buttons

Small graphical images, typically 120 × 90 pixels.

Search boxes

Search boxes combine graphics, HTML, and text to allow your site visitors to search the merchant's site.

Custom designs and sizes

The best affiliate merchant programs provide “instant stores” in a format specific to the business of the merchant.

[Figure 5-2](#) shows one of the dynamic “poster store” creatives available to affiliates of [AllPosters.com](#).

The best creative to use depends upon context and individual taste and what you think will work with visitors to your site. It's worth spending some time experimenting with different creatives to see whether one performs better than another.



There's a tendency on the part of people running affiliate marketing campaigns to produce what are—in my opinion—garish creatives: banners and buttons full of movement and special effects. It's obvious why merchants do this—to get attention—and it is mostly no skin off their noses if an affiliate website looks a little tasteless. But as a content publisher, you should probably avoid these kinds of creatives. Banners that don't flash most likely work better and won't overwhelm your site content.

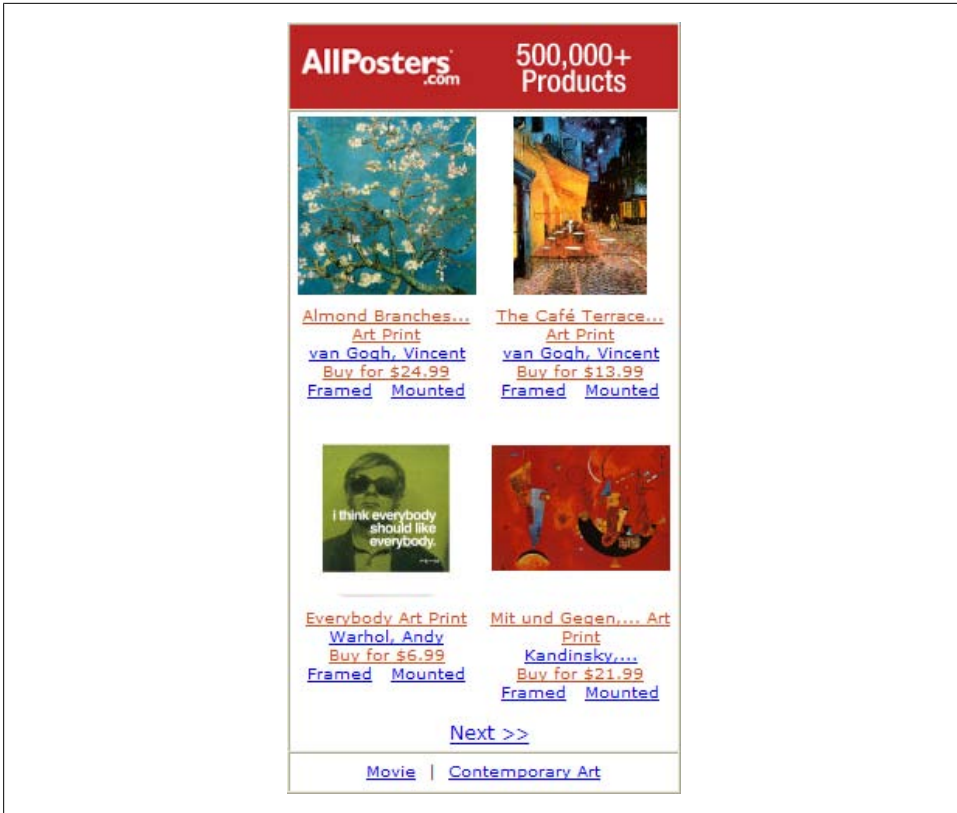
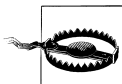


Figure 5-2. Merchants with good affiliate programs provide effective creatives, like this “poster store” display from AllPosters.com

All creatives used in affiliate marketing provide a mechanism for including the tracking ID of the publisher, so the publisher can be credited for sales or other action events.

Affiliate marketing works best when the merchant has high appeal to the demographics visiting a publisher’s site (see “[Matching affiliates with content](#)” on page 129). In fact, some of the most effective affiliate links are simple text links to products that your content discusses or recommends. For example, a digital photography website might want to provide a link to a merchant partner selling Canon or Nikon digital cameras.



Providing links to a specific product for sale by a merchant partner in the context of a website discussion of the product raises ethical concerns about the separation of editorial and advertising content. Most affiliates do it. You’ll have to resolve this for yourself, but I would suggest that you not include positive content about a product unless you believe in your content, and that you not direct your site vendors to a merchant unless you would buy that product from that merchant yourself.

If you decide to use text links to product items, such as a Nikon D300 dSLR camera, eventually you'll probably need to understand where the merchant's tracking ID goes in the HTML used for a specific product link, as well as how to link to a specific product within a merchant's catalog.

For example, here's the HTML code for an affiliate link to the B&H Photo site that sends the visitor right to the product page for the Nikon D300 on B&H's website:

```
<a href="http://www.bhphotovideo.com/c/product/518489-REG/Nikon_25432_D300_SLR_Digital_Camera.html/BI/XXXX/KBID/YYYY">
buy your Nikon D300 from B&H photo
</a>
```



The affiliate program at B&H adds the publisher tracking IDs to the URL for the link. In this example, an actual ID for B&H has been replaced with XXXX, and the ID for the affiliate aggregation software that B&H uses to power their system replaced with YYYY.

The actual link that the B&H code creates looks just like a normal text link, as you can see in [Figure 5-3](#).



Figure 5-3. This apparently normal hyperlink is actually a creative that embeds affiliate marketing tracking IDs and points to a specific product on the site of the merchant (B&H Photo in this case)

In the Nikon D300 example, the product is designated using its B&H product code. The process for creating one of these links is straightforward (although you do have to be careful to get the details right):

- Find the product code (in some cases this is made easier through the use of standardized product and SKU designations such as ISBNs and ASINs)
- Construct a hyperlink in the form the merchant requires, embedding both product code and your tracking information



It's perhaps surprising that text links, when correctly written, are probably the most successful form of affiliate marketing. One reason for this may be that the commercial intent of the hyperlink is not as obvious as when a gaudy banner is used.

An interesting point is that you should understand where the graphic (usually a JPEG or GIF file) used in banner and button creatives is located. For example, B&H, as well as most other major affiliate merchants, hosts these graphics itself. However, sometimes merchants do ask you to copy graphics to your own web server.

Usually, this distinction doesn't make much difference. It's less trouble when the graphic is on the merchant's site and it uses less of your own bandwidth. However, if the merchant's server goes down, then your site looks (and is) broken. This does happen more often than you might expect. True, if the merchant is not serving creatives, it is probably also not selling product, but if a graphic is missing from your site, it looks worse for you than if a link simply doesn't work.

Areas of Concern

The relationship between a content website and an affiliate advertiser is essentially like that of a commission-only sales rep to a manufacturer. You'll want to examine the same areas that a brick-and-mortar independent sales rep would look at before agreeing to carry a merchant's products. Start by asking these questions:

- Does the merchant have a good reputation?
- Will the merchant honor its commitments?
- Will the merchant stay in business?
- Is there a strong—or at least reasonable—connection between this merchant and your content?
- Will your customers want to buy the product?
- Will your customers feel that you are adding value—as opposed to trying to profiteer—by linking to the merchant?

More specific to the Web, as I've mentioned in the context of hosting creatives, if a merchant's site goes down, then your links will be broken and you won't be able to earn a commission. You should feel reasonably good about the website stability of a merchant whose affiliate program you join.

As a web “sales rep,” you should also be concerned with (and investigate as thoroughly as possible) these issues:

- The amount of commission you will earn per event
- The adequacy of the processes for tracking your sales, crediting you, and paying you

- The commitment of the affiliate advertiser to support its affiliate program
- The appeal of the offerings of the affiliate advertiser in relationship to the visitors to your site

These issues are worth more discussion.

Amount of the commission

You can (and should) find out the amount of the sales commission when you sign up for an affiliate program. There are a huge variety of commission structures, but you should probably expect a commission of between 3 percent and 10 percent of what the merchant receives, exclusive of shipping, handling, and sales tax.



As one of the biggest merchants on the Web, Amazon has one of the best and most extensive affiliate programs (see “[The Amazon.com Associate Program](#)” on page 148). The Amazon.com commission structure tends to be at the lower end of this range; however, note that on nonbook items, Amazon.com is often acting as a go-between, rather than directly selling actual merchandise.

You should take care to note precisely what action items trigger a sales commission. Most of the time, it is a sale. However, some significant sales may be excluded, and it is important to the health of your pocketbook to know this and not promote excluded items.

In addition, some sites may pay commissions for qualified leads—for example, someone signing up for insurance and completing the paperwork—whether or not the product actually sells (with the insurance example, underwriting wouldn’t have to take place for you to receive your commission).

Be on the lookout for commission structures that reward you for good performance. These kinds of programs can add bonus percentages to the commissions you make and can be quite rewarding if you deliver substantial traffic.

In addition, some affiliate programs simply offer flat fees as incentives. For example, a web hosting affiliate program might pay affiliates \$90 each time a visitor to the affiliate site signs up for a web hosting contract of a year or more.



\$90 is, in fact, roughly the current going sales commission for an affiliate who sends a site visitor who signs up for a web hosting contract. This may seem like a lot to you, but customers tend to feel fairly locked into the company that hosts their web businesses, even when they find the customer service or technical standards don’t live up to what was promised.

One other variation on the affiliate marketing commission sounds a great deal like a multilevel marketing scheme (and probably is one)—not only do you get a commission on sales generated by traffic from your site, you also get a small percentage of the sales of any affiliate you bring in, and maybe even a share of the sales of affiliates that your affiliates bring in.

Theoretically, these arrangements can go on ad infinitum, with potential for both accounting problems and commissions, provided you get in on a scheme like this early. However, remember the old adage that “if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” I’m not saying that all such schemes are bogus or that you can’t make money from them. However, this kind of arrangement does not denote the quality and long-term partner you should be looking for.

Also note that, depending upon the program, commission payout usually does not take place right away. Most affiliate programs build some time in for product returns (or buyer’s remorse). Once it is clear that there will not be any returns, it can still be 30 to 90 days before you are paid. The “float” on the money is simply part of the profit to the merchant and you have to build it into your expectations.

Sales and commission tracking

Sales and commission tracking is a serious issue. It’s very important to most affiliate site publishers. If you don’t know that transactions originating from your site are being consistently tracked, then you have no way to be assured that you will be paid the commissions you are owed.

This implies that you should be careful to work only with third-party affiliate aggregators (see [“Benefits of Affiliate Aggregators” on page 130](#)) or enroll in programs managed by an extremely reliable vendor, such as Amazon.com (see [“The Amazon.com Associate Program” on page 148](#)).

Testing Links by Buying

If possible, you should test that each affiliate link on your site works by buying something and making sure that your sales commission shows up when you check the tracking software. You’d be amazed at the number of times a problem with the linkage or the accounting is revealed by doing this!

In some cases, the Terms of Service (TOS) prohibit you from buying merchandise using your own affiliate links. Other merchants encourage you to buy with your affiliate links, so this just varies from merchant to merchant. You need to check the TOS carefully so you can be sure you are in compliance.

If the TOS of a merchant your site is affiliated with prohibits you from personally buying through your affiliate link, get a friend to buy something small. It’s worth checking that the link and reporting mechanism is working, and you can always think of this as something like your own “secret shopper” program.

Merchant support of affiliate programs

Will the merchant support your efforts with good promotions, incentives, and creatives? Ideally, an affiliate relationship is a long-term partnership. You'd like to know that the merchant supporting the affiliate program is in it for the long haul. Merchant support of affiliate programs makes a big difference in the following areas:

- To make an affiliate program work well, you'll want to be able to provide value to your site visitors in terms of special promotions. These promotions often work well if they are seasonal, but it's really helpful if you can also offer your site visitors a deal that they can't get anywhere else.
- If you put great effort into an affiliate program and perform well, you should be rewarded with incentives. These incentives typically take the form of a step-up in commission after reaching a volume of sale benchmarks.
- To keep your site visitors coming back to an affiliated merchant, you need a steady stream of quality, fresh creatives. The merchant should be willing to work with you if none of their existing creatives fit the look and feel of your site design. If the merchant has a large inventory, the creatives should deliver the ability to go straight to a particular item, as well as the possibility of implementing a search through the entire inventory.

Matching affiliates with content

Perhaps the single biggest factor in successful affiliate marketing is the alignment of the content of your site with the affiliate merchant's offerings. In other words, visitors to your site should be genuinely interested in the products the merchant has to sell.

You'll have a tough row to hoe if you try to sell cosmetics to visitors of a digital photography site, but you should find it easier to sell these visitors digital photo equipment and processing services. Visitors to a site that provides technical services of use to webmasters are likely candidates for web hosting affiliate programs, but unlikely to buy lingerie or refrigerators.

In the brick-and-mortar world, there used to be talk about a salesperson who could "sell ice to the Inuit." No website can sell as well as this proverbial salesperson, so you need to use common sense and devise an intelligent strategy to provide affiliate links to products and services that are relevant to your site visitors. Relevant links get clicked, goods get purchased, and publishers get their commissions. Relevance and referrals to quality merchant partners get you a long way toward providing added value when you publish links to an affiliate merchant.

More than any other form of website advertising monetization, affiliate marketing requires careful honing of site content with an intelligent choice of partners and creatives.

Working with an Affiliate Program

Generally, there are three affiliate marketing situations you may get involved with as a web content publisher:

- The affiliate program is managed by an affiliate aggregator (see [“Benefits of Affiliate Aggregators”](#) next).
- An extremely well-known entity offers a broad and well-thought-out affiliate program. The Amazon.com Associate Program is probably the best example, as explained in [“The Amazon.com Associate Program”](#) on page 148; both AllPosters.com and B&H Photo, mentioned earlier in this chapter, are very well-known and successful businesses with affiliate marketing programs.
- A vendor with a limited line of products or services starts its own affiliate marketing program (see [“Ad Hoc Affiliation”](#) on page 145).

Benefits of Affiliate Aggregators

Major affiliate aggregators provide the following benefits to web publishers:

- The publisher can use “one-stop shopping” to work with many different merchants.
- There’s only one software interface to learn.
- Reporting and commission payments are consolidated.
- A third party (the aggregator) provides consistent tracking software and provides some recourse in case of disputes over sales.

Of course, from the viewpoint of the merchant, there are some major benefits as well; primarily:

- Off-loading the complex business of tracking and reporting the numerous transactions to accurately pay sales commissions
- Being able to attract more affiliate sites through the site of the aggregator



Don’t forget: affiliate aggregators are paid by merchants, not publishers. They exist to provide a service to merchants who want to effectively manage affiliate programs without having to roll their own. They primarily represent the interests of the merchants who are their clients, not the interests of the affiliates.

You’ll need at least one content-based website to enroll with an affiliate aggregator. Once you’ve signed up with an affiliate aggregator, the aggregator will provide access to a single website that allows you to:

- Apply to individual merchant affiliate programs
- Get HTML for creatives
- Generate activity reports



It's pretty easy to add multiple websites to your account with an affiliate aggregator once you have obtained an initial account. This is such an important point that it is worth rephrasing and repeating: as a publisher, you can use a single account with an affiliate aggregator to manage your relationship with multiple merchants and multiple content websites. It's also, as I've noted, one of the primary benefits to merchants.

Nothing good, however, comes without some potential risks. In this case, there is the possibility that if you create very successful programs, and all of your efforts use the same ID, your competitors will find out. Like a good fishing hole, some good affiliate programs are easily spoiled once the word gets out.

Finding an Affiliate Aggregator

Probably the three most active and well-known affiliate aggregators at the time of publication are Commission Junction, Kolimbo, and LinkShare. Each of these is described in this section. In addition, you'll find more affiliate programs listed in the Open Directory Project in the Affiliate Networks category and in the Yahoo! Directory in the Web Site Affiliates category.



At the time of this writing, there are rumors that Microsoft will be introducing an affiliate network. If so, it would certainly introduce a bigger player and a new element to this space.

Commission Junction

[Commission Junction](#) represents more than 1,000 merchants, ranging from Buy.com and Discover Card to Half.com, dating sites, software publishers, and companies selling clothes—just about any kind of merchant you can imagine. Owned by NASDAQ-traded ValueClick, if any legitimate product or service can be bought over the Internet, you can probably figure out a way to make a sales commission from selling it via Commission Junction.

The signup procedure for Commission Junction is pretty simple. You give them a content website, description, and your personal contact info. Once you've agreed to the Terms of Service and verified your email address, you can logon to the site. Before you can add affiliate links to your site, you need to complete an electronic W-9 (for businesses in the United States) and provide a SSN or TIN.

The Commission Junction home page is shown in [Figure 5-4](#).

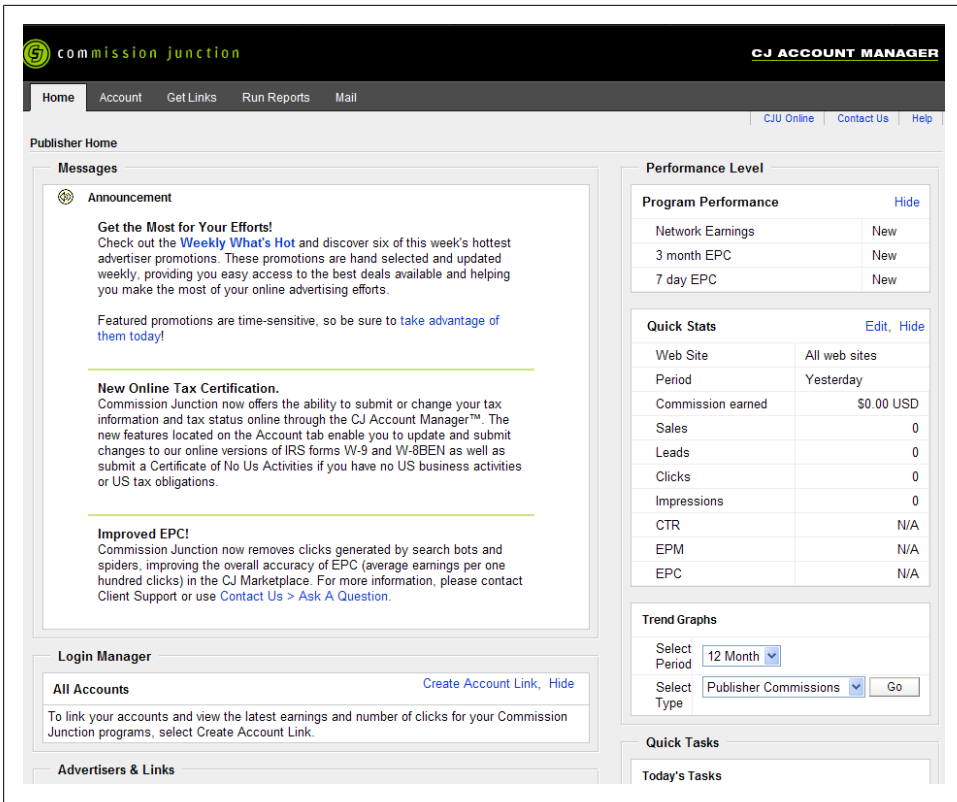


Figure 5-4. The Commission Junction home page lets you access much of the program's functionality from a single window

By choosing Account – Web Site Settings, you can add a new website for deployment with the Commission Junction affiliate programs or change the information about your current site (Figure 5-5).



If you look carefully at Figure 5-5, you'll notice that a PID has been assigned as a site setting. The PID is the number that Commission Junction uses as its tracking ID.

The Run Reports tab, shown in Figure 5-6, provides a very complete set of metrics covering how many times ads have been displayed on your pages (called *page impressions*), how many times your ads have been clicked (called *click throughs*), and the sales commissions you have earned.

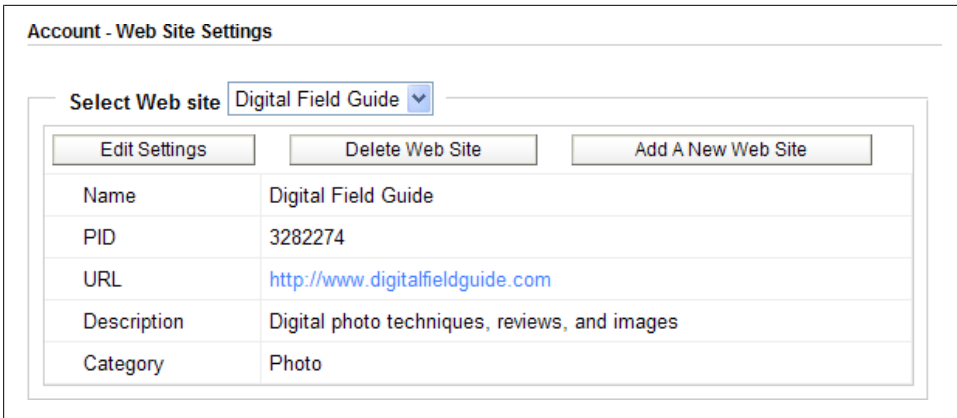


Figure 5-5. It's easy to add websites to your Commission Junction account or edit current site information

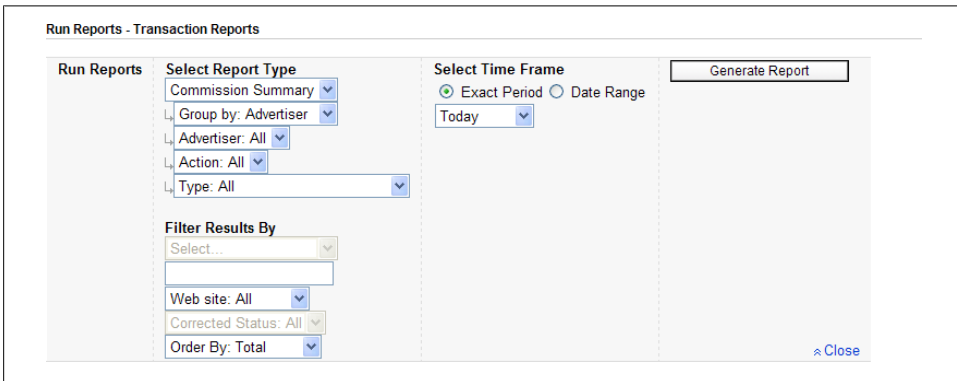


Figure 5-6. Commission Junction provides advanced reporting facilities you can use to learn about your page views, transactions, and sales

The heart of the Commission Junction interface is the Get Links tab, shown in [Figure 5-7](#).

Using the Get Links tab, you can find merchants—called *advertisers* by Commission Junction—by category, by searching using various filters, or by listing the merchants with whom you have an existing relationship. You can browse the entire list of Commission Junction merchants by clicking Advertiser List. You can also do a search based on the name of a specific advertiser.

Once you've found a merchant you are interested in, you can apply to join the merchant's affiliate program by checking the program application box and clicking Apply to Program, as shown in [Figure 5-8](#).

Get Links - Advertiser List

Search

Language and Targeted Area Filter ON / OFF
 Additional Search Options | Additional Filter Options

Display By

Advertiser Categories			New Advertisers
Accessories Handbags - Jewelry - Shoes Art/Photo/Music Art - Music - Photo Automotive Cars & Trucks - Motorcycles - Parts & Accessories - Rentals - Tools and Supplies Beauty Bath & Body - Cosmetics - Fragrance Books/Media Audio Books - Books - Magazines - News - Television - Videos/Movies Business Business-to-Business -	Department Stores/Malls Department Stores - Virtual Malls Education Children - College - Languages - Professional Entertainment Discounts - Events - Guides - Memorabilia - Mobile Entertainment - Party Goods Family Babies - Children - Entertainment - Teens - Weddings Financial Services Banking/Trading - Credit Cards - Credit Reporting and Repair - Investment - Mortgage Loans -	Insurance Commercial - Personal Insurance Legal Services Marketing Business-to-Business - Network Marketing Non-Profit Charitable Organizations - Fundraising Online Services Blogs - Broadband - Domain Registrations - Email Marketing - Internet Service Providers - Search Engine - Web Design - Web Hosting/Servers - Web Tools	TriSports.com The Flip HeavyDutyStore.com MoneyNowUSA.com Woodhouse Clothing InstantAmber Dermal Renu TicketFeeder Otel.com Moneyaisle CJM_Liebe.de CJM_Zyb IT CJM_Zyb DE CJM_Zyb ES CheapOair DermaVwand HerbalSuperStore.com BORRO1 CJM_Zyb FR eVoice Receptionist » View All

Figure 5-7. Using the Get Links tab, you can search for participating merchants by category

Advertiser Search Results

Results 1 - 1 of 1

Apply to Program

<input type="checkbox"/>	Advertiser	3 Month EPC (USD)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Henry & June Lingerie » View Links » View Products	\$3.05

Apply to Program

Results 1 - 1 of 1

Return results per page

Figure 5-8. Check the box and click Apply to Program to join a merchant's affiliate program



You can view the creatives a merchant provides, the merchant catalog of inventory items (if applicable), and statistics such as earnings per click (EPC) before you join a program.

Your application to join a merchant program will be approved either automatically (if the merchant has decided to approve all would-be affiliates) or manually. During the manual approval process, which may take up to several days, your status with the

merchant is set to “Pending Approval.” With manual approval, you will be notified by email whether you’ve been accepted or rejected.



These days, more and more applications to become affiliates are not automatically approved. This is a reaction to the huge increase in spam the Internet has seen, and you should not read anything personal into it. Businesses need to protect their image. The vast majority of appropriate websites are approved as affiliates, although the process takes a bit more time than it used to.

Once a merchant has approved your application to join its affiliate program, you can grab the HTML required to make links. To do this, use one of the mechanisms provided by the Get Links tab to find the merchant that you have the relationship with.

If you are responsible for web content across more than a couple of sites, you know it can be tough to keep track of content details. Merchant relationships are no exception. A good approach to finding the merchants who have approved your affiliate application is to open the Get Links – By Relationship page shown in [Figure 5-9](#).

Advertiser	3 Month EPC (USD)	7 Day EPC (USD)	Network Earnings	Sale	Lead	Click	Date Accepted	Category	Country
Date.com » View Links	\$5.70	\$6.07	██████	Sale: \$36.00 USD Performance Incentive			27-Apr-2005	Matchmaking	UNITED STATES
Macromedia » View Links	\$10.01	\$13.53	██████	Sale: 2.00% - 6.00% USD			19-Apr-2005	Computer SW	UNITED STATES
JewelsBasket.com » View Links » View Products	New	New	██████	Sale: 10.00% USD Performance Incentive			11-Mar-2005	Jewelry	UNITED STATES
Amquest Mortgage » View Links	\$236.90	\$218.65	██████	Lead: \$20.00 USD			9-Mar-2005	Loans	UNITED STATES
Discover Card » View Links	\$49.77	\$51.32	██████	Sale: \$20.00 - \$55.00 USD			9-Mar-2005	Credit Cards	UNITED STATES
Dan's Chocolates » View Links	\$2.31	\$5.25	██████	Sale: 12.00% USD Performance Incentive			9-Mar-2005	Gourmet	UNITED STATES
1-800-AUTO-YES » View Links	\$50.12	\$10.76	██████	Lead: \$6.00 USD			9-Mar-2005	Loans	UNITED STATES
Jewelry Television » View Links » View Products	\$40.36	\$51.53	██████	Sale: 8.00% USD			7-Mar-2005	Jewelry	UNITED STATES
Half.com » View Links	\$26.06	\$11.70	██████	Sale: \$5.00 USD Performance Incentive			7-Mar-2005	Books	UNITED STATES
LoweryMills.com » View Links	\$96.42	\$183.09	██████	Lead: \$8.00 - \$32.00 USD Performance Incentive			7-Mar-2005	Loans	UNITED STATES
Bath-and-Body.com » View Links » View Products	\$5.06	\$3.06	██████	Sale: 16.00% USD			7-Mar-2005	Bath & Body	UNITED STATES
Henry & June Lingerie » View Links » View Products	\$2.34	\$2.53	██████	Sale: 10.00% USD Performance Incentive			7-Mar-2005	Women's	UNITED STATES
Caniarex » View Links	\$8.13	\$0.00	██████	Sale: 10.00% USD Performance Incentive			7-Mar-2005	Gourmet	UNITED STATES
Flowerfarm.com » View Links	\$6.05	\$3.69	██████	Sale: 10.00% USD			7-Mar-2005	Flowers	UNITED STATES
Figwaves » View Links » View Products	\$3.07	\$1.31	██████	Sale: 8.00% USD			7-Mar-2005	Women's	UNITED STATES

Figure 5-9. You can use the Get Links – By Relationship page to display all the merchants who have approved your affiliate account

Locate the merchant you want to add to your site. Click View Links. You can now scan all the creatives offered by the merchant. For example, [Figure 5-10](#) shows some of the creatives offered to participating affiliates by Henry & June Lingerie.

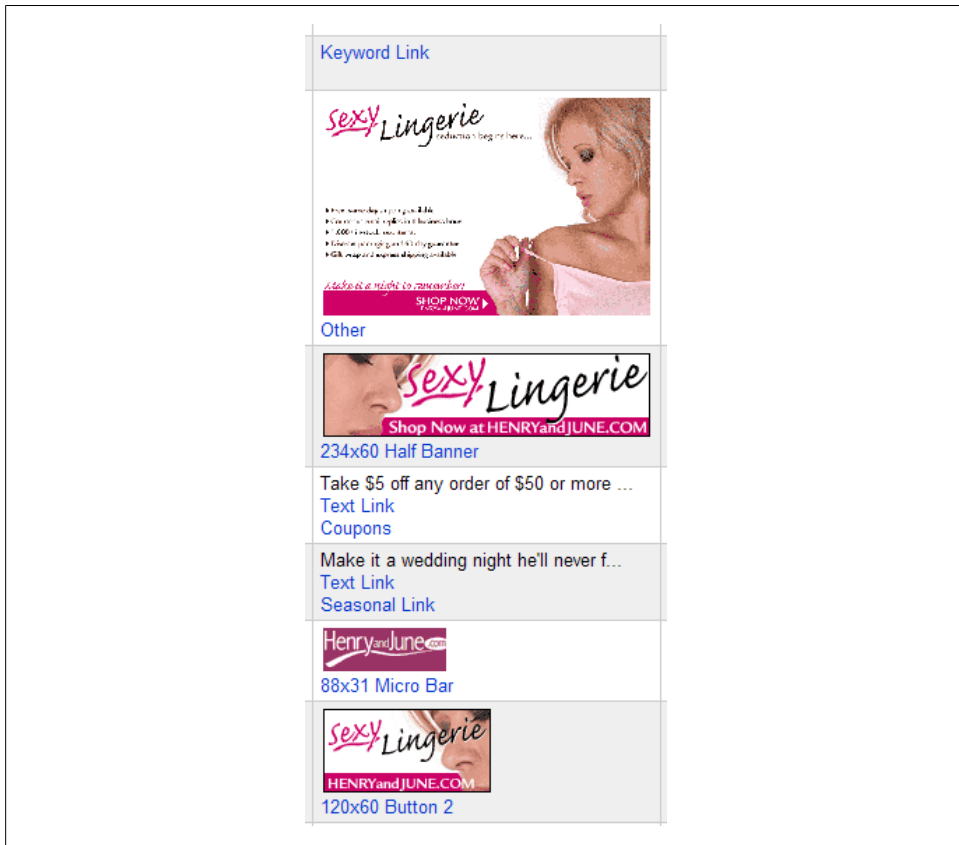


Figure 5-10. You can view all the creatives supplied by a merchant to decide which ones will work best for your site

To grab the HTML for a specific creative, either click the creative or check the box next to it and click the Get HTML link to the right of the page. In either case, a Get HTML window, like the one shown in [Figure 5-11](#), will open.



If you are managing multiple websites, make sure to select the right one on the website drop-down list before copying HTML. You can also use the Get HTML window to set a variety of options, notably setting the affiliate link to open a new browser window (an important choice because it helps to keep visitors on your site longer).

The HTML for the new affiliate link is pretty simple and includes the web publisher's PID (tracking identification) as part of the link:

```
<a href="http://www.dpbolvw.net/click-3282274-156060" target="_top"></a>
```

If you paste this HTML into the code for your web page, the new creative will now appear on your site.

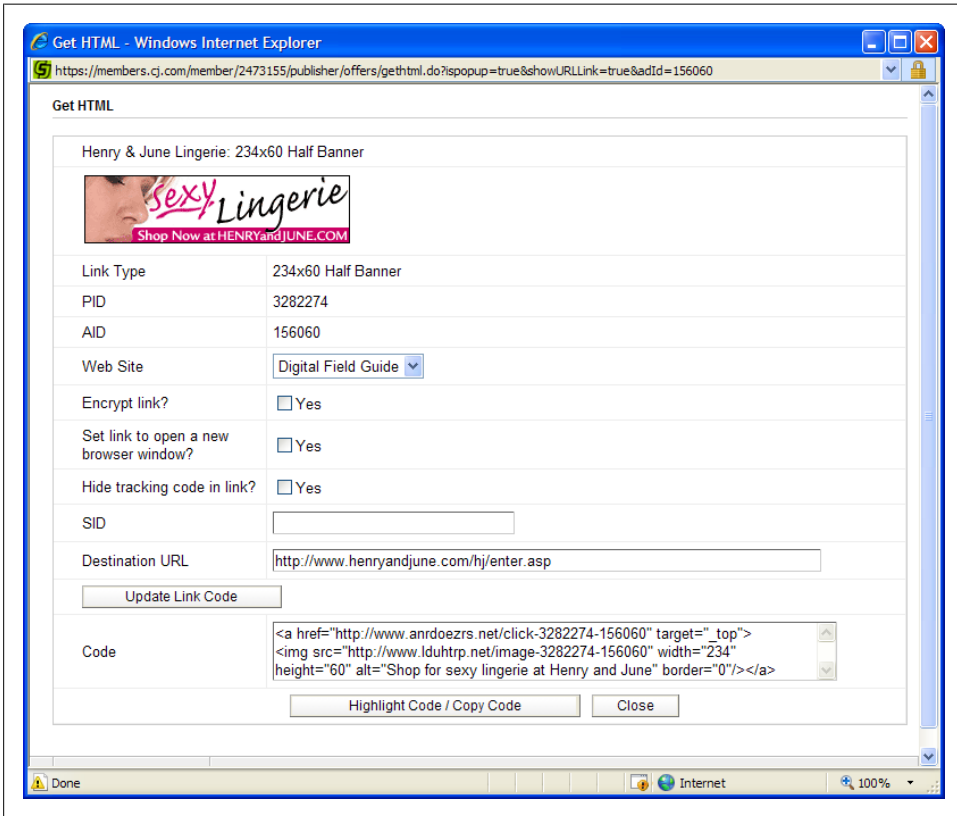


Figure 5-11. The Get HTML window lets you copy the HTML for a specific creative

Alternatively, you can display the affiliate link using JavaScript. To get the appropriate code, click Get JavaScript (instead of Get HTML). A new window will open as shown in Figure 5-12.



There's not much functional difference between the HTML and JavaScript approaches, so this is essentially an issue of your preference and style as a webmaster.

Here's the corresponding JavaScript code:

```
<script type="text/javascript" language="javascript"
src="http://www.tkqlhce.com/placeholder-3456743?target=_top&mouseover=N"></script>
```

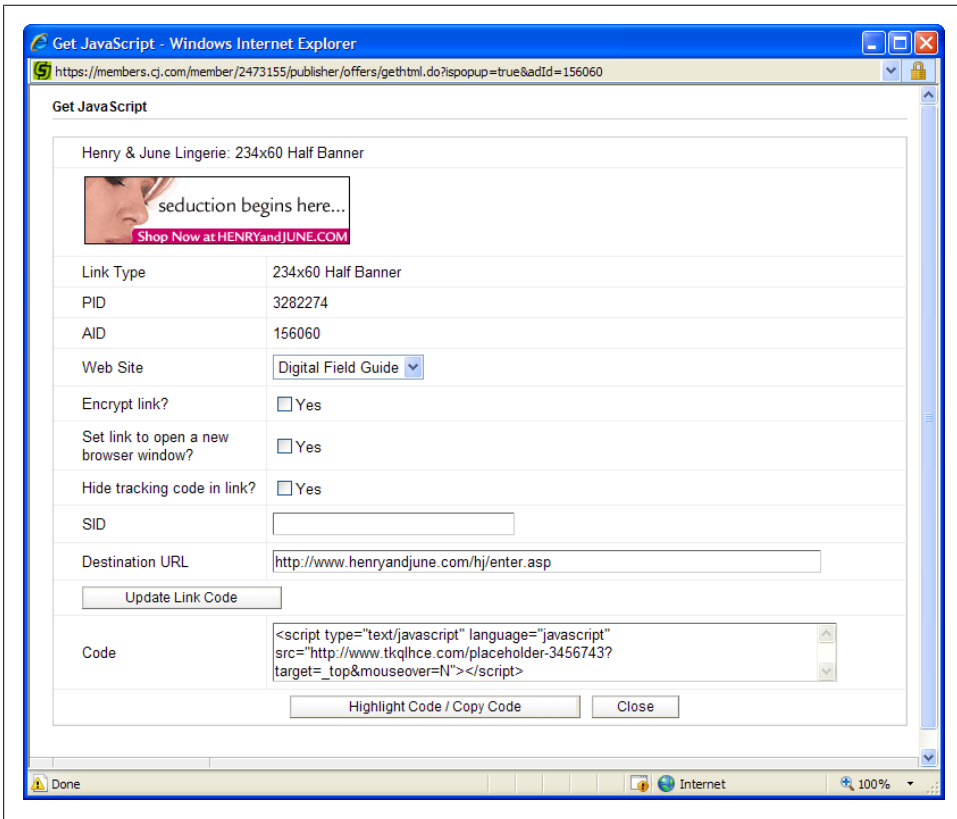


Figure 5-12. If you prefer, you can load the creative and affiliate link using remotely hosted JavaScript code



To maximize affiliate revenue, it's important to constantly tweak ads—for example, to respond to seasonal conditions such as holidays. To facilitate ad changes across a range of pages, it's important to use an architecture that facilitates flexibility of presentation, as explained in [Chapter 1](#).

Kolimbo

[Kolimbo](#) bills itself as the “open” alternative to closed affiliate network sites:

Both affiliates and merchants can work with whomever they choose, on their own terms.... Unlike traditional networks that tend to be more controlling over the affiliate–

merchant relationship, Kolimbo merchants have full access to all data about their affiliates. This allows merchants the opportunity to work closely with their affiliates to help build a profitable long-term relationship for both parties.

While Kolimbo is probably in more widespread use as infrastructure software for one-off merchants like B&H Photo than as an affiliate relationship marketplace, there are still plenty of merchants you can find, as you can see on the Find New Programs index page shown in [Figure 5-13](#).

Find New Programs

Quick Reports: Kolimbo Select | PPS | PPL | PPC | KBStore | Datafeeds | 2 Tiers
Anti-Spyware | Email | UK£ | ! | !! | !!! | All Approved

(Help)

- Advertising and Marketing**
AdNetworks - E-mail - Marketing - Services
- Books and Art**
ArtPhoto - Books - E-books - Posters
- Business and Finance**
Banking - Business Opportunities - Business to Business - Careers - Credit Cards - Finance - Insurance - Loans - Mortgages - Office - Printing - Stocks and Shares
- Computers and Internet**
E-Commerce - Hardware - Software - Solution Providers - Storefronts
- Education**
Education Funds/Funding - Education Training
- Entertainment**
DVD - General - Home Entertainment - MP3 - Music - Satellite Dish - Tickets - Videos/Games
- Family, Lifestyle, and Society**
Astrology - Community - Food and Wine - Gambling - Holidays - Kids and Babies - Matchmaking - Pets - Religion - Self-help - Women
- General**
Auction - Classifieds - Free Services
- Health and Beauty**
Beauty - Dental - Health and Fitness - Pharmacy - Vitamins
- Home and Garden**
Construction - Furniture - General - Real Estate - Utilities
- International**
Australia and NZ - Canada - Europe - Rest of the World - South Africa - UK and Ireland
- Legal**
Advice and Information - Law Offices
- News and Media**
Magazines - Newspapers - Online/Blogs - Radio - TV
- Shopping and Gifts**
Accessories - Apparel - Cards - Electronics - Flowers - Gifts - Jewelry - Shopping - Toys
- Sports and Recreation**
Automotive - Games - Outdoors - Sports - Tickets
- Telecommunications**
Telecommunication - Telephone

Figure 5-13. Many categories of merchant programs are represented in the Kolimbo “open” affiliate marketplace

The mechanics of working with Kolimbo as a publisher don’t differ that much from other affiliate aggregators like Commission Junction, except that reporting and com-

mission payments are between individual merchants and publishers. You sign up, providing a website, description, and taxpayer information. Next, you apply for merchant programs, some of which automatically approve anyone, while others require manual approval.

To integrate the merchant links with your site, you grab graphics and code containing your tracking ID, like the creatives for the March of Dimes shown in [Figure 5-14](#).



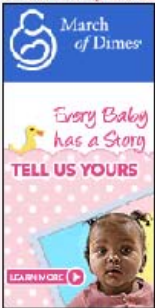
Text Link: Newborn Screening Article	March of Dimes	Add This Merchant
125x125 Banner (view full size) 	March of Dimes	Add This Merchant
Video Contest 234x60 Banner (view full size) 	March of Dimes	Add This Merchant
Video Contest 120x240 Banner (view full size) 	March of Dimes	Add This Merchant

Figure 5-14. Not all affiliate marketing is about money; if traffic you direct to the March of Dimes results in a donation, you will get an acknowledgment (and the good feeling that comes from having helped babies)

LinkShare

[LinkShare](#) is the oldest major affiliate aggregator, currently representing several hundred merchants ranging from American Express to iTunes to Macy's and beyond. Owned by Rakuten, a publicly traded Japanese company, LinkShare provides roughly the same functionality as Commission Junction.

The LinkShare home page is shown in [Figure 5-15](#).

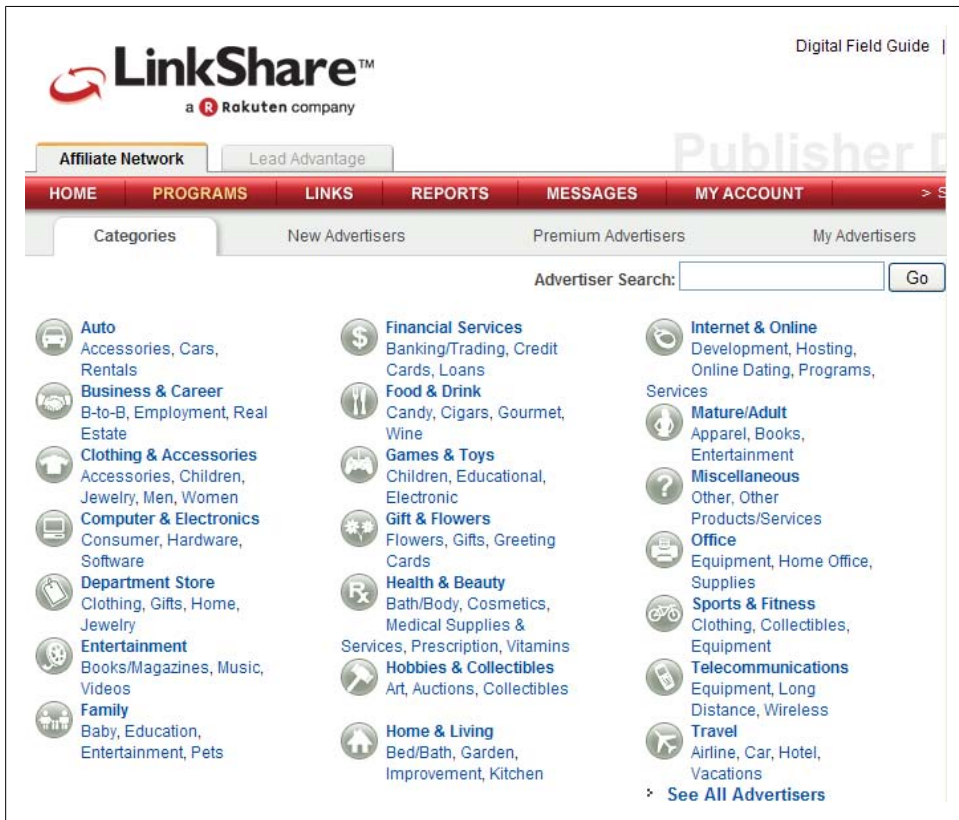


Figure 5-15. From the LinkShare home page you can browse merchants, join programs, generate links, and more

Within LinkShare, you'll find five tabbed windows in addition to the home page:

Programs

Used to apply for approval to merchant's affiliate program (as with the merchant members of Commission Junction, some approvals will be automatic and some will be manual)

Links

Used to build and select merchant creatives (requires prior acceptance in a merchant's affiliate program)

Reports

Used to generate detailed reports about site and program metrics

Messages

Provides an email system for communication between publishers, merchants, and LinkShare

My Account

Used to change account information (for example, add a domain)

To obtain a creative, click the Create Link tab (you can also navigate to this point by clicking the My Advertisers tab on the Programs page). A list of the affiliate programs for which you have been approved appears (Figure 5-16).

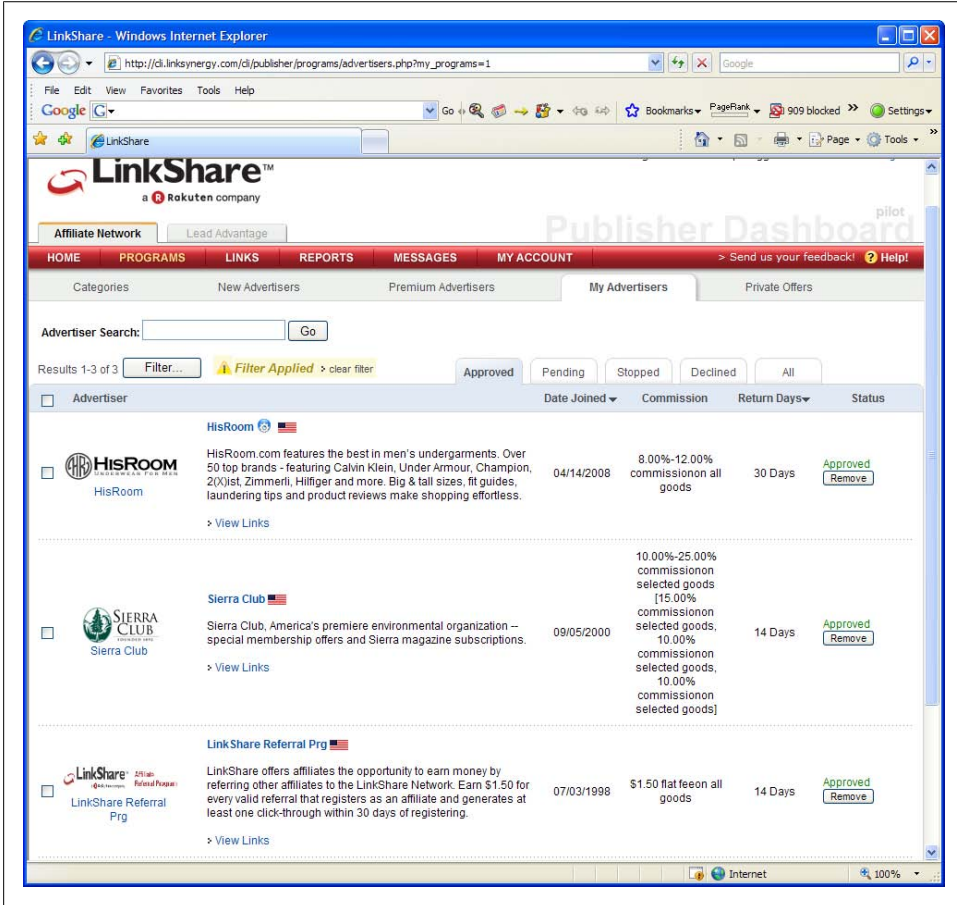


Figure 5-16. You can create links only if you have been approved for a merchant's affiliate program



If you have registered multiple websites with LinkShare, be sure the one you want to use the creative with is selected from the drop-down list that will appear at the top of the page.

Click the name of the merchant you'd like to link with—for example, Sierra Trading Post, a discount retailer of sporting goods and clothes. A page that will let you generate creatives specifically for Sierra Trading Post will open. Choose the kind of creative you'd like to create from the Available Link Types box, shown in [Figure 5-17](#).

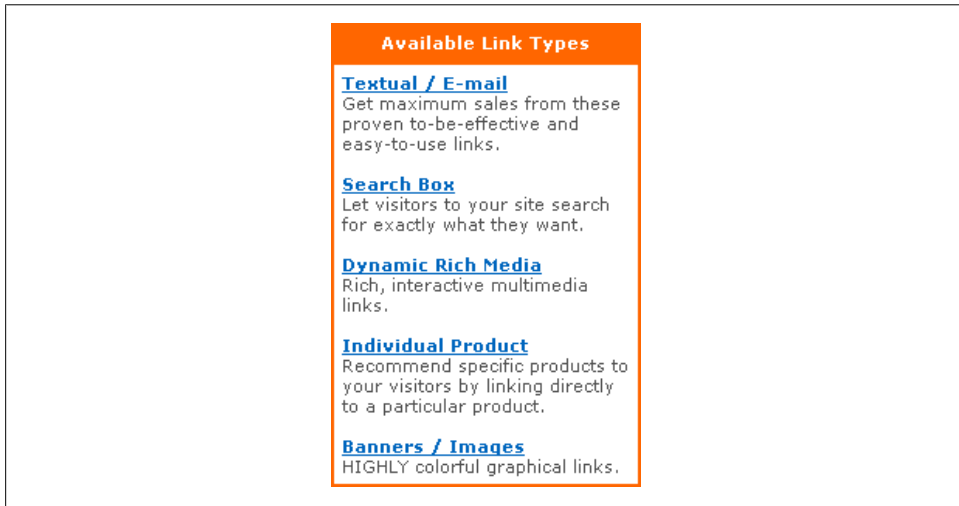


Figure 5-17. Link types range from straight text to search boxes, banners, and more



The Dynamic Rich Media category tends to produce creatives that are “blue plate specials,” such as rotating deals of the day.

For example, suppose you want to add a box to your website that searches the Sierra Trading Post product database. To do this, you'd click the Search Box link. A page showing a number of possible search boxes, such as the one shown in [Figure 5-18](#), will open.

To add the search box to your site, copy the code and paste it into your page. Here's the code that generates the Sierra Trading Post search box:

```
<table width="150" height="150" border="0" cellspacing="0"
cellpadding="0" style="padding: 0px; background-image:
url
(http://www.sierratradingpost.com/assets/images/ppam/ad_images/LSsearchbox.jpg);">
<form action="http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-bin/statform" name="form1" id="form1"
method="get"><input type="hidden" name=id value=RQuescWsfWI><input type="hidden
name=offerid value=42083><input type="hidden" name=bnid value=740><input type="hidden
name=subid" value="">
<input type="hidden" name="Ntk" value="All">
<input type="hidden" name="Nty" value="1">
<input type="hidden" name="Ntx" value="mode+matchallany">
```

Search Box 740

Example of Link



Code for Link This code must be placed on your site exactly as it appears.

```

<table width="150" height="150" border="0"
cellspacing="0" cellpadding="0" style="padding:
0px; background-image: url
(http://www.sierratradingpost.com/assets/images/p
pam/ad_images/LSsearchbox.jpg);">
<form action="http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-
bin/statform" name="form1" id="form1"
method="get"><input type=hidden name=id

```

[Copy Link](#)

Figure 5-18. If you add this search box to your site, visitors can search outdoor clothing discounter Sierra Trading Post's product database

```

<input type="hidden" name="track" value="true">
<input type="hidden" name="DCMP" value="LS05">

<input type="hidden" name="KC" value="LS05">
<tr>
  <td width="150" height="65"></td>
</tr>
<tr>
  <td width="150" align="center" height="25">
    <input type="text" name="Ntt"
value="enter keyword or item #" maxlength="50" style="font-family:
arial,helvetica,sans-serif; font-size: 11px; width: 140px; padding-left: 2px;">
  </td>
</tr>
<tr>
  <td width="150" align="center" height="25">
    <select name="N" style="font-family:
arial,helvetica,sans-serif; color: #000000; vertical-align:
top; font-size: 11px; width: 105px; height: 18px; width: 140px;">
      <option value="0">All Departments</option>
      <option value="9000310">Outdoor Gear</option>
      <option value="9000154">Men's Clothing</option>

```

```

        <option value="9000230">Women's Clothing</option>
        <option value="9000342">Shoes & Boots</option>
        <option value="9000335">Kids' Corner</option>
        <option value="9000331">Home Decor</option>
    </select>
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
    <td width="150" align="center" height="35">
        <input class="submit" type="submit"
value="Search Sierra Trading Post" style="font: 11px arial;
color: #ffffff; width: 140px; height: 30px; border:
outset 1px; background-color: #447744;">
    </td>
</tr>
</table><IMG width=1 height=1 border=0 src="http://ad.linksynergy.com/fs-
bin/show?id=RQuescWsfWI&bids=42083&type=5">

```



The Sierra Trading Post search box code consists of an HTML form formatted using table tags. The value of the affiliate tracking ID is passed using a hidden form variable named id.

With this code pasted into your web page, the Sierra Trading Post search box will appear on your site.

If a visitor to your site enters a specific item—for example, men’s socks—in the search box and clicks Search Sierra Trading Post, the results page for the item will open (Figure 5-19). This helps to increase the rate of conversion of clicks to sales because visitors are looking only at items they have some interest in, which therefore increases the likelihood that you will make a commission.

Ad Hoc Affiliation

From A to Z, with stops along the way for Viagra and web hosting, there are a great many merchants that offer their own affiliation programs. I started this chapter with an explanation of how affiliation works with examples from two of the bigger merchants on the Web: AllPosters.com and B&H Photo. But there are also many quirky, independent, and smaller merchants you can affiliate with that may actually be better commercial opportunities for your specific site.

You might want to affiliate with an individual merchant for one or more of these reasons:

- You know and appreciate the merchant and the merchant’s product or service.
- You believe your site visitors will buy from the merchant.
- You can’t find comparable offerings through an affiliate aggregator.



Figure 5-19. Providing a way to search a merchant's inventory increases sales because customers can find the items they are interested in

But bear in mind the good reasons for working through a single aggregator rather than multiple individual affiliates:

- Third-party oversight of sales tracking and commission payment
- Fewer administrative headaches with only one or two programs to work with
- Stability and reliability of merchants and program administration

A merchant that provides its own affiliation tracking (and related tools) generally provides the most important functionality, such as that you'll find at Amazon.com or one of the aggregators, but when you work one-on-one with a merchant, you may find that systems are not as smooth as when you work with an affiliate aggregator or an established "super-store" merchant like Amazon. Still, it's perfectly feasible to work with smaller merchants. If you choose your merchants wisely, monitor your sales commission accounts, and match your content to the merchants you choose, you should be able to do well. Here are two different examples of specialty merchants with whom it might make sense to work.



If you don't see your sales being recorded, find out why and get the merchant to fix the problem.

Fred Miranda Software

[Fred Miranda Software](#) makes inexpensive plug-ins for advanced users of Photoshop. This specialty product fits very well with a content site focusing on serious photography, particularly when the affiliate link to Fred Miranda can be put in the context of a specific problem and solution, as shown in [Figure 5-20](#).

If you are interested in using the SI Pro 2 plugin, it costs about \$25 to download from [Fred Miranda Software](#) (you'll find the link about half way down the page on the left). I've used it successfully to upsize images, and also to size images precisely for printing with margin areas on particular paper sizes.

Figure 5-20. Embedding a specialty affiliate link in the context of the solution to a task often works well

iContact

In [Chapter 3](#), I described the benefits of using a specialty service such as [iContact](#) to manage your email marketing. It probably will not surprise you to learn that iContact has its own affiliate marketing program. And what better place to embed affiliate links for an email marketing solution than in your own HTML marketing emails?

From a coding viewpoint, the mechanism for embedding an affiliate link in an HTML email is precisely the same as it is for placing the link in an HTML web page.

[Figure 5-21](#) shows iContact affiliate creative and text links in the footer of an HTML email newsletter.

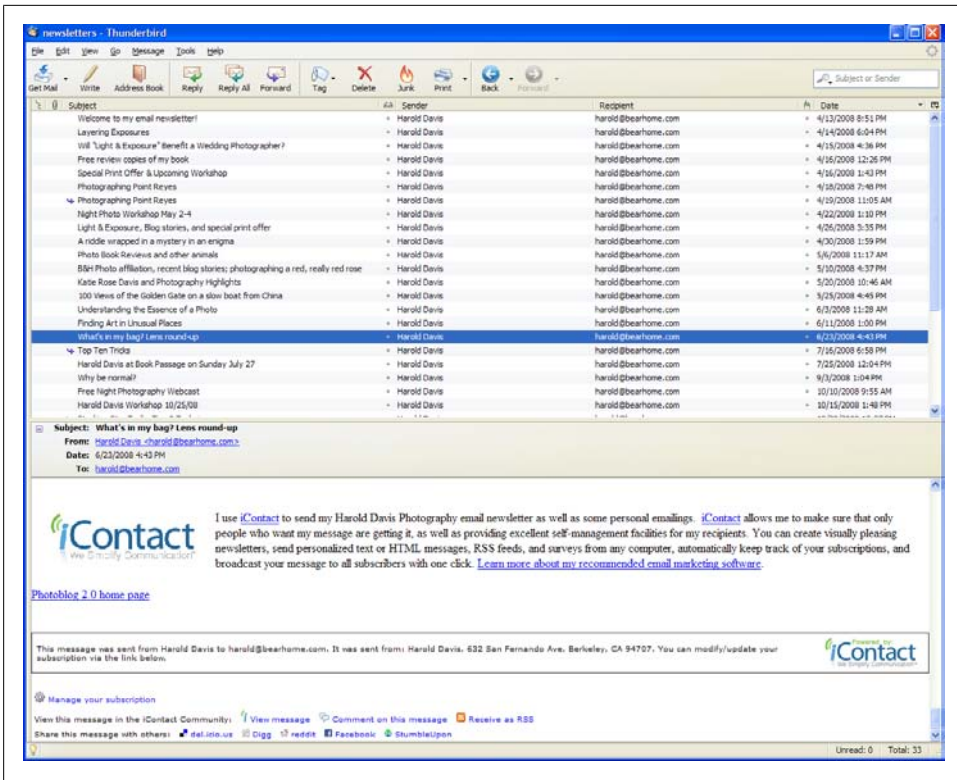


Figure 5-21. You can easily embed HTML affiliate links in HTML marketing emails

The Amazon.com Associate Program

If you belong to just one merchant's affiliate program, Amazon.com is probably the one to join.



In Amazon's terminology, affiliates are called *associates*, just as the sales help at a brick-and-mortar Wal-Mart (and other fine stores) are also associates. Becoming an Amazon associate sounds like the better of the two options to me, but then I am a virtual kind of guy!

Amazon makes a great partner for an affiliate (particularly if the affiliate is only going to be associated with one merchant program) for a number of reasons, including:

- Amazon is one of the oldest businesses on the Web.
- Amazon has a great reputation with customers for reliability and fair dealing.

- Amazon—at times in combination with partner merchants—can supply almost any conceivable product to your customers.
- Amazon.com provides creatives with great variety and flexibility; it's easy to use them to link to any product or Amazon.com search result, and the creatives fit well with most site designs.
- An Amazon-supplied widget allows your customers to search almost any part of the vast Amazon inventory.
- Amazon's "site stripe" allows you to easily link to any page on Amazon you happen to visit.
- Amazon's seasonal promotions—at Christmas, for example—are incredibly effective.

Quick-and-Dirty Amazon Text Links

As many webmasters know, it's perfectly possible to build your own Amazon text links without visiting the Amazon site simply by inserting your own Amazon identifier in the link example, along with the ISBN or ASIN of the book or product you want to link to.

It's quick and dirty, but the hyperlink <http://www.Amazon.com/exec/obidos/ISBN=0596529880/XXXXXXXXX/> points to one of my books by ISBN with an Amazon.com affiliate ID (represented in the link by XXXXXXXXXX.) If sales result from this link, Amazon will know to credit me.

If you create a link like this, you'll want to substitute your own account identification and change the ISBN to point to a book you are interested in. (Of course, I don't object if you just want to link to my book!)

To link to a product rather than a book, use the form ASIN=*asin number* in the URL.

The application process for becoming an Amazon associate can be accessed at <https://associates.Amazon.com/gp/flex/associates/apply-login.html>. Essentially, Amazon.com approves all applicants who provide a valid email address and the required Social Security number (or EIN).

Amazon pays between 4 percent and 10 percent sales commissions, with the bulk of the commissions in the 4 percent to 7 percent range. In some cases, performance bonuses are given to affiliates who are extraordinary producers.



As is the case with many lucrative programs on the Web, Amazon doesn't spell out the precise percentages that you get. (In this respect, Google AdSense operates in the same way.) You just have to trust in the fairness of Amazon (and Google), which, for the most part, works out.

The home page for the Amazon Associate program, called Amazon Associates Central, is located at <http://associates.Amazon.com>. Once you've joined the program, you can log in to update your account information, generate reports, and obtain creatives.

Click Build Links to specify creatives and obtain the corresponding code. There are five varieties of Amazon creatives:

Product links

Link to a specific product that you select and display a product image

Recommended links

Link to Amazon recommendations by product category or keywords

Banners

Wide variety of banners, both rotating special promotions and by shopping category

Text links

Text link to any Amazon page, such as a product page or a page that results from an Amazon search

Search boxes

You can put an Amazon search box on your site

Figure 5-22 shows the launch panel for building this wide selection of creatives at Amazon.

For example, suppose you want to add a box on your digital photography site that will display a digital camera that Amazon recommends (and let Amazon take care of the specifics of which camera is highlighted).

To start, click Build Links with Recommended Product Links selected. The Choose Content panel, shown in Figure 5-23, will open.

In the Choose Content panel, select a product line and enter keywords or choose a subcategory. For example: if “Camera & Photo” is the primary category, “Digital Cameras” might be a good subcategory (but you could also limit the recommendations to a specific brand by entering “Nikon,” “digital,” and “camera” as keywords rather than selecting a subcategory).

With a content type selected, click Continue. You'll next be asked to select a size for the creative. With a size selected, you can now move to final adjustments (for example, to the colors used in the text and background of the creative) and copy the HTML, using the window shown in Figure 5-24.

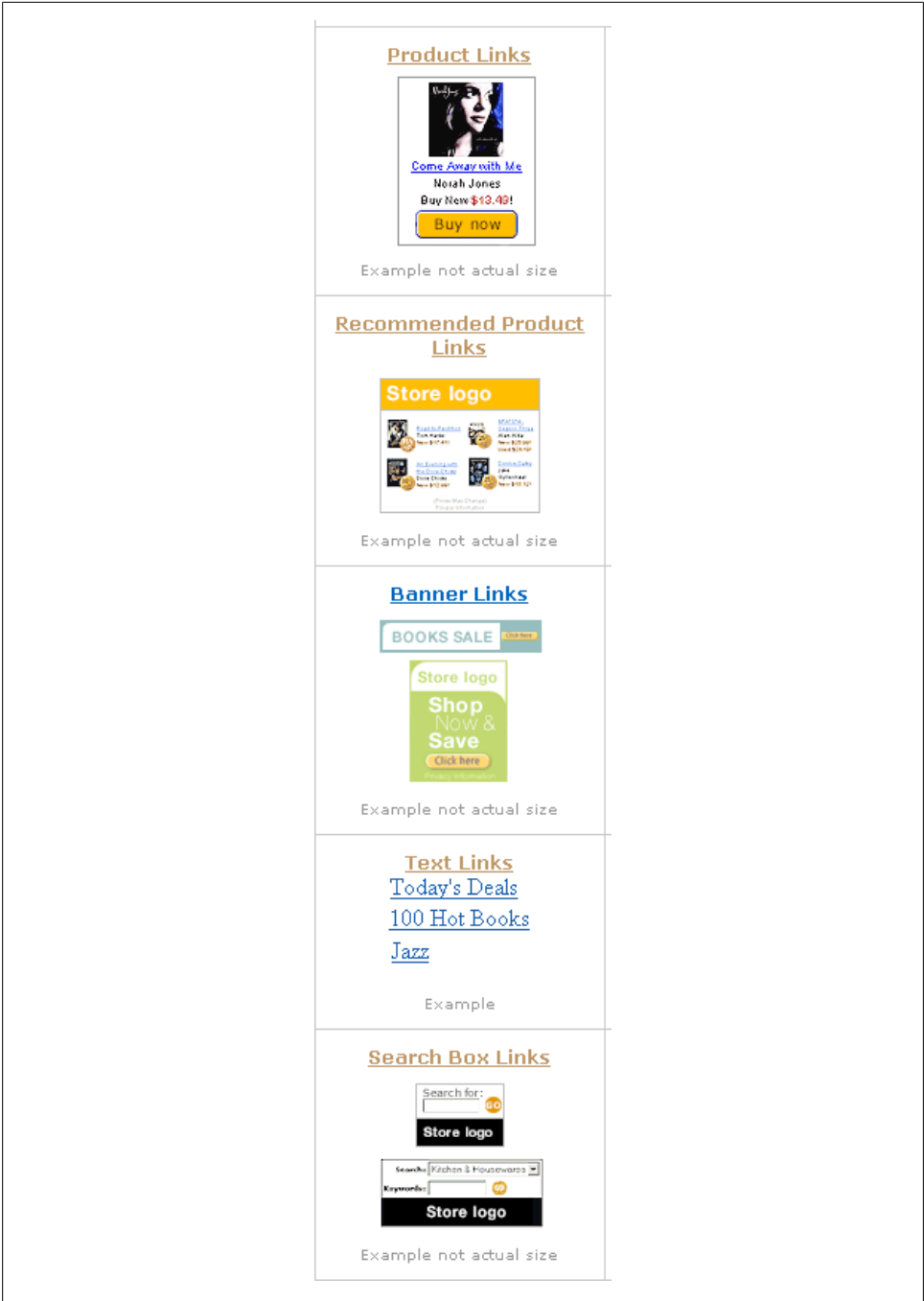


Figure 5-22. The launch panel for building creatives at Amazon shows examples of what the finished link will look like

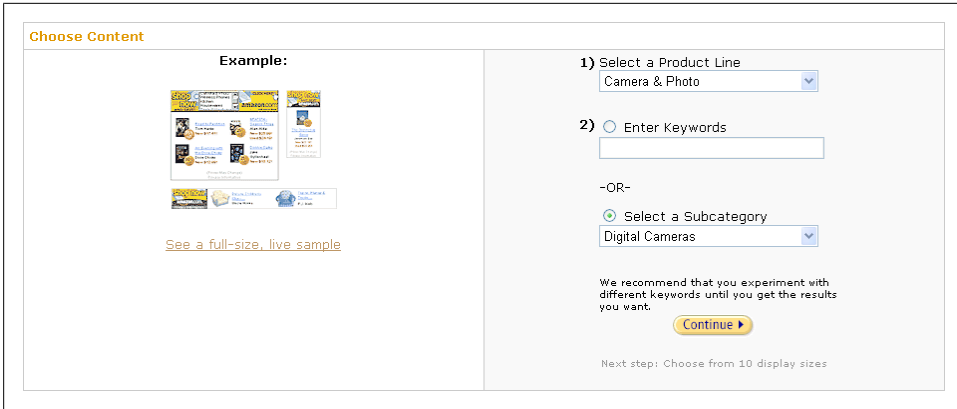


Figure 5-23. Use the Choose Content panel to specify what kinds of products Amazon will recommend

Here's the HTML produced for this creative:

```
<iframe src="http://rcmAmazon.com/e/cm?t=XXXXXXXXX&o=1&p=8&l=bn1&
mode=photo&browse=281052&fc1=&=1&lc1=&lt1=&f=ifr&bg1=&f=ifr"
marginwidth="0" marginheight="0" width="120" height="240"
border="0" frameborder="0" style="border:none;" scrolling="no">
</iframe>
```



In the example, the Amazon associate ID has been replaced with XXXXXXXXXX.

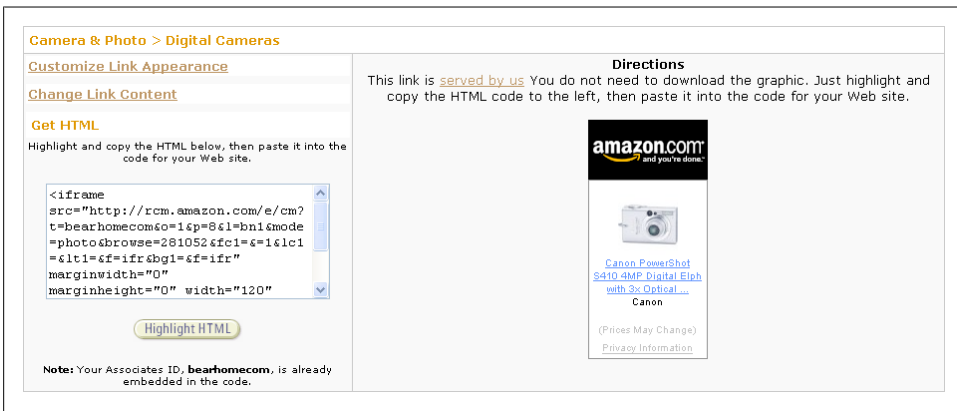


Figure 5-24. By clicking the links shown, you can customize the creative or just copy the HTML for use on your site

Once the HTML is copied to your site, the creative will appear to your site visitors.



With a Recommended Product creative that refers to a category of products, Amazon automatically rotates the actual products that are displayed in its creative.

Action Items

Here are some action items for you to consider in order to make money from your web content with affiliate programs:

- Understand the mechanics of affiliation
- Identify merchants with affiliate programs that mesh well with your content
- Evaluate affiliate programs
- Explore, and sign up with, affiliate aggregators
- Identify individual affiliate programs that may be small but targeted to your niche audience
- Become an Amazon associate
- Integrate creatives as HTML links, banners, and search boxes on your website
- Test your affiliate links, using a “secret shopper” if necessary
- Monitor affiliate statements for traffic, click, conversion, and sales commission statistics
- Experiment with your choice of merchants and their creatives to optimize your returns
- Add seasonal and sale creatives as appropriate
- Keep tweaking the use of creatives on your site to maximize return

Making Money by Hosting Advertising

If you think about how you live your life, there's a spectrum of activity levels from sleeping to moving briskly and perhaps even running. Advertising on the Web is structured with a similar activity-level spectrum, although the activities themselves may not be very aerobic.

At the briskest, a visitor to your site must click on a merchant's link. You only get paid when the visitor actually buys something from the merchant. This is affiliate advertising, explained in [Chapter 5](#).

CPC—cost per click—advertising is one of the most common ways to make money by accepting ads on your site. With CPC, an advertiser pays a fee when someone clicks its link on your site, and you get a portion of that fee. CPC ads are mostly (although they don't have to be) text-only. While CPC is most commonly associated with advertising using programs such as AdWords, the concept of CPC is fundamental to both search-based AdWords and content hosted via programs such as Google AdSense.

The idea of making ads *contextual*—that is, relevant to the content of the web page near the ad—is closely bound with CPC advertising. CPC ads that are contextual are much more effective, and generate more revenue for a site owner, than ads that are not contextual. But it is worth bearing in mind that you can have CPC ads that are not contextual, and conversely, contextual ads that pay on some other basis than CPC.

Like affiliate advertising, something has to happen with CPC, but not as much—the visitor doesn't need to actually consummate a purchase, just click on the advertiser's link.

Display ads—also called CPM, for reasons explained later in this chapter—are the passive, television-viewing form of web advertising activity. A visitor to your site doesn't have to do a thing (except possibly to surf past the display ad on your site with minor irritation). No activity on the part of your site visitor is required, and all you need to do is to serve the ads.

This chapter explains how you can profit from CPC and CPM ads, with the emphasis on CPC (as it is generally on the Web).

Understanding Cost Per Click (CPC)

When you first start working with a CPC program as a website publisher, you will encounter some terms that may not be familiar to you. These concepts are actually pretty straightforward, so it makes sense to start a discussion of CPC by looking at the definitions of the most important terms you may not know or may mean something that is slightly different than in normal usage.

The point here is to not get thrown by language and terminology. If you were about to begin working with a complicated technology, you would expect to have to learn unfamiliar concepts and words. Whether you are implementing a for-profit advertising system yourself, or are working with outside experts, knowing the language is a big step toward success.



Google is the 10,000-pound gorilla when it comes to CPC, both for advertising and hosting advertising. Since Google's CPC ad-hosting program, AdSense, is the primary subject of [Part II](#) of this book, in this chapter Google is just treated as "one of the gang," even though it is hard to avoid the long shadow Google casts. The idea is to show you the general concepts of CPC and give you a sense of the range of the industry.

Here are some of the most commonly used terms in the CPC industry:

Ad unit

A group of ads, often from one to six text-only contextual ads, but sometimes only presenting links to the actual ads. Typically, ad units are served off the site of the advertising agency (for example, Google). This is most often accomplished using a script. You get the code on the agency website, as shown in [Figure 6-1](#). While you can choose a variety of options related to the appearance of the ad unit, typically the choice of ads served is up to the agency.

Click

A click occurs when a site visitor to your web page clicks on a link in an ad that was served by an ad unit on your site. Not all clicks generate revenue (for example, most clicks on public service ads don't pay you anything).

The click is the basis for all CPC ad programs and an extremely important metric.

Click fraud

A click made without actual interest in the product or services offered. For example, clicks by a site publisher on the ads on a site or on the ads of a competitor (to jack up advertising costs for the competitor).

Click fraud, and click fraud detection, is extremely serious in CPC programs because money is at stake, and direct click fraud detection is virtually impossible. Click fraud detection programs employ primarily statistical methodology. This

implies that you need to monitor your clicks and click-through rates for aberrational rates and suspicious patterns.

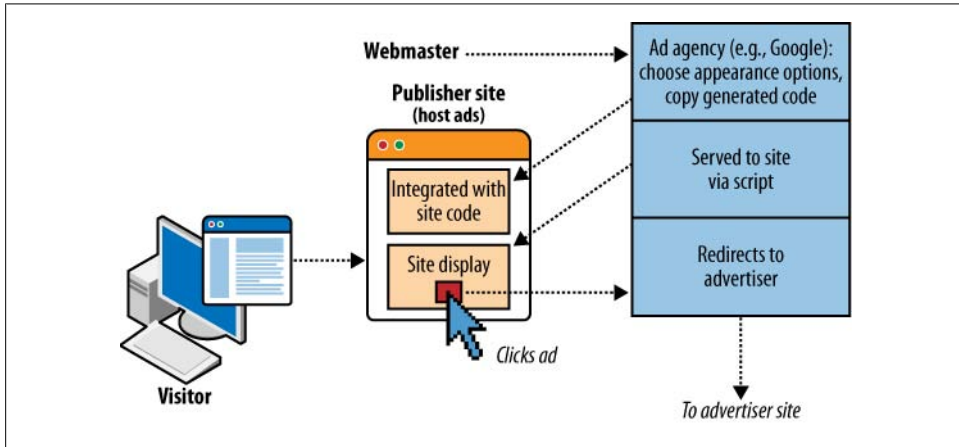


Figure 6-1. Once an ad unit is placed on your site, ads are chosen by the ad agency

Cost per click (CPC)

Online advertising where there's a cost only when a visitor clicks on the ad; synonym for pay per click (PPC).

Cost per mille (CPM)

Cost per mille (CPM), meaning cost per thousand impressions, is the industry metric used to contract and pay for display ads that are served to visitors. For more on CPM, see [“Display and Banner Ads” on page 176](#).

Click-through rate (CTR)

The number of clicks an ad unit receives divided by the number of times it is shown, expressed as a percentage.

Consider that a direct “snail mail” campaign is considered a huge success with a response rate of .01 percent or .02 percent. The CTR for properly crafted CPC ads should be considerably higher. If your CTR is less than 0.25 percent, you should see if you can troubleshoot the problem, which may have to do with ad placement on your pages, design of the ads and of your pages, your traffic (its interests and where it is coming from), keyword targeting for the ads on your page, and the content of the ads themselves.

Effective cost per thousand impressions (eCPM)

eCPM is a way to compare revenue from different kinds of advertising. eCPM is calculated by dividing the total earnings from an ad by its impressions in thousands. In other words, a nominal or theoretic cost is calculated on a CPC ad as if it were a CPM ad. You can use this calculation to compare CPC revenue with CPM revenue to see which is a better deal, given your site content and traffic.

Impression

Short for *ad impression*; the number of times an ad is displayed. This is advertising industry terminology left over from the days when magazines and newspapers were what advertising was all about, and an impression was a literal impression of ink on a page.

Page CTR

The click-through rate (CTR) averaged for all the ads served on an individual web page.

Page eCPM

The eCPM for an individual web page. In other words, take a page with a number of CPC ads, add them, divide by the number of ads, and calculate the nominal revenue if it has been expressed in CPM terms.

Page impressions

The number of times a single web page is displayed.

Pay per click (PPC)

Pay per click is another term for CPC.

Public service ad (PSA)

Public service ads are often served before relevant content has been specifically targeted on a site (the site owner can decide to show the PSA ads in their unit rather than have a blank area of their page or site).

Contextual Relevance

The holy grail of advertising is to have a prospect interested in your product, and have an ad targeted to that prospect just at the moment he is researching the product. Put another way, suppose you decide you need a new toothbrush. On the way to the drugstore, you hear a radio ad or see a billboard specifically extolling one brand of toothbrush. This is potentially powerful stuff, and something that the relevance engines behind CPC programs make easy. After all, when you hit a page of information about toothbrushes after searching for them online, Google knows you are interested in toothbrushes and can easily serve appropriate ads.

The basis of CPC advertising is having visitors to your website click the links presented to them by ads. People are likely to notice ads, and click on ad links, only if the content of the ad is relevant to their current interests. This leads to the notion of contextually relevant advertising (usually referred to simply as *contextual advertising*) often being confused with CPC advertising, even though the two are not the same.

Contextual advertising, which as I've noted need not be CPC, but often is, hopes to target a specific individual visiting a website (or page within a website). More accurately, it is the web page itself that is being targeted. A contextual advertising system scans the text of a website for keywords and returns advertisements to the web page based on the website (see [Figure 6-2](#)). To some degree, it is possible that the advertising

system knows something about this specific visitor, but most likely the analysis is simply based on a general evaluation of the page.

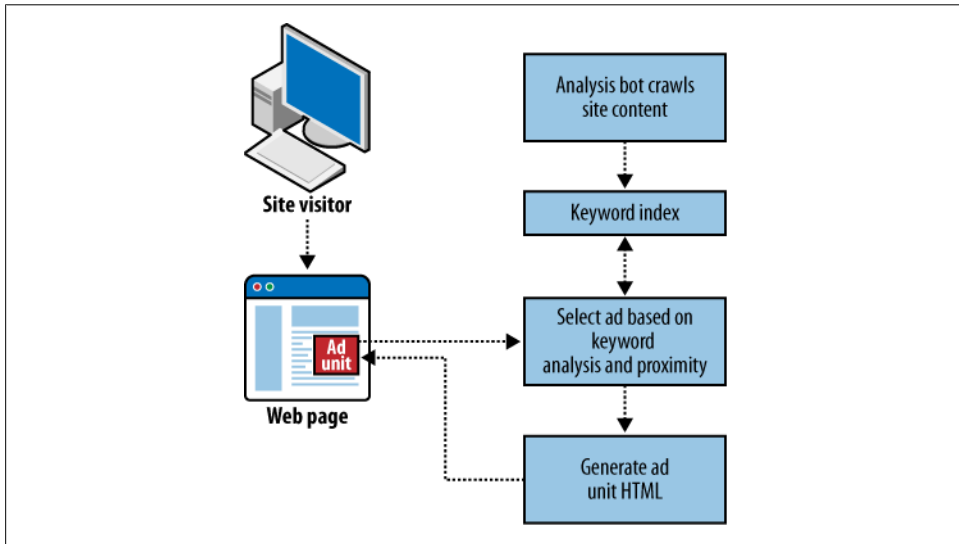


Figure 6-2. The program that generates the contextual ads tries to figure out which ads are relevant and then generates the HTML to display them on your web page

There are a number of forms that contextual ads can take. Besides text ads with links and banner displays, contextual advertisements may be displayed as pop ups, rollovers, and so on. Note, once again, that contextually relevant ads need not be paid for on a CPC basis, but usually are because of the encouraging CTR.



While CPC ads don't have to be contextually relevant, totally unrelated ads look odd on a web page and are unlikely to be clicked. How often would you interrupt your train of thought to click on an ad for "contact lens cleaner" when you are reading a site about C# programming? As a website publisher, you are better off sticking with CPC programs that do, in fact, provide reasonably good contextual placement.

For example, if someone is visiting a website that covers digital photography, they are likely to see contextually relevant ads for cameras, memory cards, processing services, and so on. More professional-oriented digital photography sites might have contextual relevance for portfolio reviews and other services aimed at advanced photographers.



Contextually relevant ads show up on search results pages, not just on web content pages. In fact, these ads have somewhat better CTR on search results pages than they do on content pages—because you know the viewer actively engaged in a search for the term that is used as the basis for contextual relevance.

How Good Is the Context?

How good is contextual analysis? The short answer is that most of the time it is pretty good, but when it goofs it can be a lulu.

It's completely appropriate to display an ad for a Microsoft developer's site on a web page devoted to C# programming (C# is one of Microsoft's languages for developers).

However, sometimes the engine that figures out contextual relevance is just way off base. Most often, the cause is reliance on a keyword that doesn't really represent the content of a page. Here's an actual example: in a web page about digital photography, one photograph (of many shown) was captioned to indicate that it showed a child in a bathtub. The Google AdSense contextual ads for the page were for plumbing supplies, claw-foot bathtubs, and so on—all utterly unrelated to the content of the page (and ignoring the real context of the mention of the word *bathtub*, which was about the photograph, not the tub).

Another—and somewhat notorious—example: consider the news media account of a gruesome crime spree along the Pacific Northwest coast that led to severed feet being washed up on beaches. Some news agencies that ran the story also carried contextual banner ads for a moving company, PutUpYourFeet.com. The only connection between the content and the ad were the keywords “foot” and “feet.”

From the viewpoint of cost, depending on whether the PutUpYourFeet.com ad was CPM or CPC, this ad placement didn't cost much (if it was CPC, it wouldn't have cost anything to the advertiser, or paid anything to the site, because one assumes no one genuine would click through). However, it's very damaging to the reputation of both the advertisers and the site to run such an inappropriate ad.

Technically, the PutUpYourFeet.com ad was an error because it was out of context. But what about an ad that is in context but tasteless—for example, a strident life insurance ad on a story about a prominent death? (This has actually happened.)

The contextual engines may have gotten the life insurance ad on the celebrity obituary technically right—the connection is the keyword “death” and related phrases. But, depending somewhat on the ad, the placement will strike most people as tasteless. Whether or not it leads to clicks through, it is a placement that damages the reputation of the website and the advertiser.

The mechanisms for intervention that might stop something like this from going to press in a newspaper are essentially not present when automated ads are served on the Web. Human beings don't monitor the ad placements and software analysis is not subtle enough to pick up on nuances that form the boundary between effective and offensive to human beings.

Premium Google AdSense accounts, meaning those with more than 5 million page views per month, have some mechanisms for controlling ad subject matter, but short of having this kind of clout, the best way to direct the content of ads on your page is to construct your web pages following the guidelines explained in [Chapter 4](#) and to provide a contextually accurate list of `alt` tags for images and `meta` tags for pages. In addition, most CPC programs (including AdSense) have a mechanism for filtering out competitive ads (see [Chapter 8](#)). You can use a competitive ad filter mechanism to help keep advertising appropriate. But the reality is that if you publish a lot of content, sometimes contextual analysis gets it wrong and there's not much you can do about it.

A related issue comes up when your web pages feature controversial material and ads are placed by opponents of your viewpoint. For example, I wrote a series of blog posts blasting the rhetoric around "intelligent design." These posts kept drawing ads from antievolutionists; in other words, people and organizations diametrically opposed to my viewpoint.

Although, as I mentioned, AdSense and other contextual programs do allow you to block specific web domains from advertising on your site (this is supposed to be used to keep competitors off your site), there's nothing much you can do about advertisers with ideology you don't like, except grin about the fact that if anyone clicks, the advertiser is paying for a context that will most likely be counterproductive for its ads. So maybe straying from contextual relevancy is its own best reward after all.

Serving Ads

How are ads placed on contextually relevant pages? As you can imagine, it isn't done by a roomful of gnomes scanning web pages and deciding what ads should go on them. There are simply too many websites and web pages, and their content changes too quickly, for this to work (even if you had plenty of gnomes).



Even with print media, such as newspapers and magazines, it makes sense to position advertising near contextually relevant editorial material (although it is not always possible). The manual mechanism that I mock (albeit using humans instead of gnomes) has always been used to try to come up with the best placement of ads, called *ad imposition*, in traditional print media.

Obviously, software, not gnomes, is used to automatically analyze the content of a web page to determine its content and which contextually relevant ads should be placed on it. This is fortunate for Google (and other search engine companies) because determining the content of a site for contextual ad relevancy is essentially the same task as determining the content of a site to match with the keywords used in a search.



To make it easier for Google's AdSense and other contextual ad programs to accurately determine the content of your web pages, it's important that you follow the guidelines for website and page optimization explained in [Chapter 4](#).

Here's how the process of placing a contextually relevant CPC ad on your site works in a little more detail than I previously provided:

- A block of code on your web page calls a script on the server provided by the contextual ad program. This code also contains your tracking ID (discussed in [Chapter 8](#)) so the ad program knows who to pay when the ads are clicked.
- This code is activated when users load your web page in their web browser.
- The activated code invokes the script on the server. The content of your page has been analyzed. This process usually involves some time delay the first time; generic ads may appear until the server has had time to look at your web page. Once your page has been analyzed, the server doesn't have to parse it again (unless the page content changes, in which case there may be a time lag before the contextual ads have caught up with the new content).
- The software decides which ads to serve based on its analysis of your web page content.
- The designated ads are generated as HTML and served on your page.

These logistics behind serving contextual ads were shown earlier in [Figure 6-2](#).

There's a separate piece of this system that these steps don't describe: how the system on the server determines which ads go with particular pages or sites.

Taking Google as an example, Google has a specific web crawler, the MediaBot, which downloads web pages. The job of the software behind the crawler is to analyze the pages and reduce them to prioritized keyword lists. When the ad unit code on a specific page is loaded, the software compares the keyword list associated with the page with a ranked list of ads to serve for those keywords. This scheme is shown in [Figure 6-3](#).

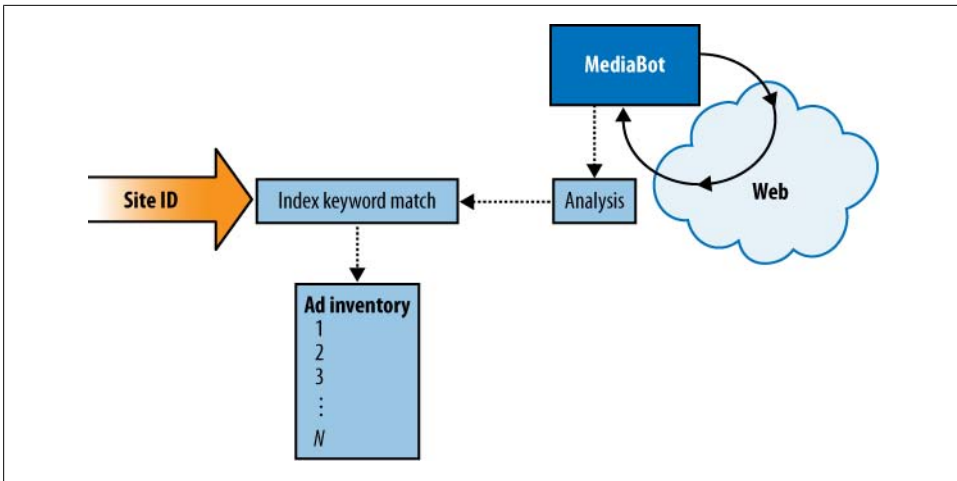


Figure 6-3. The MediaBot analyzes web content; a keyword match is used to determine which ad from the inventory is served

Dollars and Cents

The amount of money generated by an individual click on a contextual ad is a highly variable and murky business. In the case of Google and other contextual programs, the amount that is paid for an ad depends on an automated bidding process where advertisers bid for keywords. So the amount paid for a contextual ad varies day by day and even hour by hour.



Google's Terms of Service (TOS) forbids the disclosure of any financial information about how much is made off the AdSense contextual ad program except an accurate account of the total paid to a publisher.

Essentially, a contextual ad program such as Google is acting as an agent or a broker. In old-fashioned language, the role is an automated advertising agency.

Ads are sold by keyword to advertisers, and publishers are paid on the basis of click throughs (see [Chapter 7](#) for the details of Google's role as a broker). But Google doesn't say what percentage commission it takes, or what share of the pie it leaves for you, the web publisher. If you sign up for Google's AdSense, the leading contextual ad program, you just have to take what Google gives you, and trust Google.

Furthermore, the percentage of the fee paid by the advertisers isn't generally disclosed by most contextual ad agencies. It usually ranges between 30 percent and 70 percent. (I know; that's a pretty big range!)

An individual click on a contextual ad is not going to make you rich. The net value to a web publisher of a click ranges from one or two pennies to a few dollars at the very high end. The average click is probably worth about \$0.20. Combine this statistic with the fact that the CTR (the clicks an ad gets divided by the number of times it is served) are in the low single-digit percentages—2 percent is a quite respectable CTR—and you come up with the fact that to make good money from CPC, you need a lot of traffic. A six-figure income from CPC contextual advertising is not unheard of, but it takes monthly page views in the millions. Doing the math, this page-view volume implies either a broad site or some highly trafficked pages (or both).

Supposing you have a great deal of content—say 10,000 pages—it’s possible to reach the target volume of more than 100,000 page views per month with an average of 10 page views per page per month—ambitious, in terms of the amount of content, but not impossible, and quite modest in terms of the traffic per page.

These 100,000 page views per month might theoretically give you an income of around \$400 per month calculated by multiplying 100,000 times the 2 percent CTR, times the \$0.20 average fee per click.

Of course, most sites are created to fulfill multiple needs and use a variety of mechanisms to generate income. But if your only consideration is creating revenue using a contextual CPC model, you should consider whether it makes more sense to get to 100,000 page views and beyond by creating relatively fewer heavily visited pages—the *shallow-site approach*—or a great many less trafficked pages—the *broad-site approach*. Putting the same question in a slightly different way: is it better to draw niche traffic, which may be worth more because it is highly targeted, or general traffic, which is likely to be less categorizable and therefore less valuable. The answer may, of course, depend on the niche you target.

If you take the broad-site approach, then you’ll need to figure out a low-cost way to generate the content. The calculation that shows a \$400 monthly revenue for a 10,000-page site—a broad site that is not heavily trafficked—implies a revenue stream of about \$0.50 per page per year. For this to make sense as a business proposition, it can’t cost you very much to generate this content (perhaps because you create it yourself and even because—fates forbend!—some of the content generation is automated).

Business modeling is only as good as its assumptions. If the hypothetical 10,000-page site averages 100 views per page rather than 10 views per page—not at all unreasonable for a worthwhile site—then the economics shift radically in favor of the site publisher. The site is now probably generating \$50,000 or so annually in CPC contextual revenue (each page contributes an average of \$5).

The point here is to understand the implications of site and advertising metrics on the economics of your site so you can take the steps required to meet your financial goals.

Site metrics, CPC advertising, and profitability in the context of Google’s AdSense program are discussed further in [Chapter 9](#).

CPC Vendors Compared

Google's AdSense program is, of course, the largest of the contextual CPC ad programs, with features aimed at both large and small web publishers.



See [Part II](#) for a lot more information about AdSense. In this chapter, these programs are considered from the viewpoint of a web publisher wanting to host ads. They could, of course, also be considered from the opposite viewpoint: that is to say, an advertiser wishing to place an ad.

If you are a large web publisher, you may wish to investigate the major competitors to Google's AdSense: [DoubleClick](#) and [Yahoo! Publisher Network](#). At the time of this writing, DoubleClick is only open to publishers with hundreds of thousands of impressions per day, and the Yahoo! program is in invitational beta (and also for larger publishers).

While Google's AdSense program works astonishingly well for many smaller publishers, there are some reasons publishers might like to investigate working with one of AdSense's smaller competitors:

- You'd like more control over the ads that appear on your site, perhaps even to the extent of approving each ad before it can be served on your web pages.
- Your site features content that is not acceptable to Google, such as adult content.
- You'd like to understand exactly what advertisers are paying for the ads and exactly how much commission is being deducted; maybe you'd like to approve some ads only if the price is right.
- You want to make sure you have a viable alternative to Google in case something goes wrong with your Google account.

Some smaller CPC ad program vendors are shown in [Table 6-1](#).

Table 6-1. CPC ad programs other than Google and Yahoo!

Program	URL	Comments
AdBrite	http://www.adbrite.com	AdBrite is probably the leading alternative to AdSense for smaller sites; its innovative program allows website publishers a great deal of control over the specifics of advertising that will appear on their site.
AdToll	http://www.adtoll.com	Easy-to-manage interface; features innovative ad formats.
BidVertiser	http://www.bidvertiser.com	Provides design tools to allow publishers to customize their ad space; publishers can control approval at the individual ad level.
Clicksor	http://www.clicksor.com	Good contextual analysis technology; flexibility about ad approval for publishers; innovative creative styles, such as full-page ads that "fade" (a good or bad thing depending on your site and viewpoint).

Program	URL	Comments
Kanoodle	http://www.kanoodle.com	Founded by executives who used to run a contextual marketing concern that was bought by Google; prefers to work with somewhat larger and more technically sophisticated web publishers.
Kontera	http://www.kontera.com	Sophisticated program that requires a minimum of 150,000 page views per month for publisher participation.
LookSmart	http://www.looksmart.com	An effective and well-designed CPC network aimed at medium to large publishers; offers more flexibility and choices than AdSense; well worth investigating if your page views justify inclusion in the program.
Proximic	http://www.proximic.com	Offers publishers contextual relevance using a pattern matching technology that claims superiority over the standard keyword matching used by AdSense and others.
ValueClick	http://www.valueclick.com	ValueClick, the parent company of Commission Junction (see Chapter 5), offers effective contextual ad placement for larger publishers.

Placing Ad Units on Your Site

Publishers need to take the following fairly simple steps to place ad units on your site:

- Sign up with a program.
- Select the ad format that works best with your site.
- Add the code generated by the program to your pages.



Bear in mind the suggestion in [Chapter 1](#) that ad unit code be placed within an include architecture, allowing the flexibility to change ads across multiple pages, portions of sites, or entire sites. In addition, placing the ad code within an include means that you can easily switch who you work with.

Signing Up

[Figure 6-4](#) shows the AdBrite signup form, which is pretty typical of most programs.

You'll also need to provide who you want checks made out to and a tax identification number (either a Social Security number or an employer identification number).



Many programs also require that you complete and submit a W-9 tax form.

AdBrite THE INTERNET'S AD MARKETPLACE

For advertisers For publishers Site directory How AdBrite works

Already have an account? [Sign in](#)

WEBMASTERS | Sell ads on your site

Sign up now:

* = required field [Existing users click here](#)

Account info

Username*

Password*

Confirm password*

Where should we send your check?

First name*

Last name*

Email*

Phone*

Address*

City*

Country*

State/Province*

Zip/Postal Code*

Minimum Check Amount* \$ USD
What's the smallest amount you'd like to earn before we send you a check?

- ✔ Complete control of ads
- ✔ Sell ads directly to your users
- ✔ Customize your ads' look & feel

[LEARN MORE](#)

Romantic Bed & Breakfasts
 Escape the mundane at one of our uniquely romantic B&Bs!

Gourmet Food
 Gourmet Food - Free Shipping, Chef's Resource

Your Ad Here

Sell text ads on your site

AS FEATURED IN:

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
 Los Angeles Times
 RED HERRING

"For our market, AdBrite was by far and away the best solution," says Konstantin Guericke, LinkedIn's vice president of marketing in the Wall

Figure 6-4. Simple contact information plus a tax ID number is all you need to enroll in a CPC program

In addition, some of the programs (such as Google) will want at least one website URL. They will manually vet the site for compliance with program content policies before accepting you into the program.

Choosing the Kinds of Ads

Once you've been accepted, you can choose the kinds of ads you want to serve. On AdBrite, as shown in Figure 6-5, the choices are banner and text versus text only, full-page in-between ads, and inline ads.

What types of ads do you want to show?


Banner and/or text ads

Banner & text ads

- Higher payout
- Choose from 5 standard sizes
- Banners can pay on a CPM (cost per 1000 impressions) or CPC (cost per click) basis
- Text ads pay on a CPC basis (cost per click)

Text ads only


- Custom fit the size and design of the text ads to match your site
- Ability to sell flat-rate ads that run for a fixed time for a fixed price
- Display network CPC text ads
- Customize with our editor or your own CSS



Full page ads

- A full-page ad shown *in-between* the pages of your site
- Customize the header to match the look & feel of your site
- Choose to display after 1,2,3,4 or 5 pageviews

Customizable header



Advertisement is displayed here

Inline ads

- Up to 8 keywords are double-underlined on your site
- When users rollover highlighted words, a text ad shows
- Pays on a CPC (cost per click) basis


Try it out:
see how it works: [cars](#)
rollover 

Figure 6-5. In the AdBrite program, you choose the format of the ads you want to serve

Selecting Ad Formats

Once you've chosen the kinds of ads you want to serve, you can choose ad formats—meaning the size of the ad unit and number of ads—and colors for your site.



Some programs allow you to control adult content by specifying at the beginning whether it is unacceptable (and even what level of explicitness is permissible on your site). This is not an issue with Google's AdSense, since the AdSense program does not display adult ads at all or accept adult content sites into the program. In addition, some programs allow you to designate initial content areas, which are used until the contextual engine completes its job.

Most programs provide a number of ad unit sizes to choose from, and also some pre-selected color schemes. [Figure 6-6](#) shows the AdBrite program ad generator.

Ad specs

1. choose ad formats → 2. **ad specs** → 3. describe your site → 4. pricing options → 5. get code

Number of ads

Maximum number of text ads to allow at one time:

Text ad layout

Vertical layout Horizontal layout (ads per row)

Choose text colors

Title #

Text #

Fine Cheeses
Specialty cheese, low prices

Fine Cheeses
Specialty cheese, low prices

Fine Cheeses
Specialty cheese, low prices

Fine Cheeses
Specialty cheese, low prices

Fine Cheeses
Specialty cheese, low prices

Your Ad Here

Figure 6-6. Most ad generators, like the ones provided by AdBrite, allow you to select the number of ads in your unit and how they are formatted



The design choices you make in relationship to ad format and color are quite important. See [Chapter 1](#) for some discussion of ad placement. In addition, you should consider two possible, but incompatible, strategies: making ads seem like they are part of a site’s content and making ads different so they really stick out.

You’ll also need to set some ad content options, as well as to specify the default ad that appears when there are no paid ads to display (see [Figure 6-7](#)).

With the ad content set, you can refine the appearance of your ad unit ([Figure 6-8](#)).

Ad content

What kinds of ads are suitable for your site? Allowing all available ads to be shown will increase your revenue potential. You can change this setting at any time.

Include all available ads (but never adult ads)
 Limit to family-friendliest ads only

Auto-approve ads

Select this option if you want AdBrite to automatically display targeted ads. Otherwise, you'll have to approve each ad on an individual basis before it appears on your site. You can still reject any ad, no matter which option you pick. You can change this setting at any time.

Yes, auto-approve ads (recommended)

Flat-rate ads are excluded from auto-approval. We will always ask your permission to show a flat-rate ad.

Create your "house ad" that will appear in this zone if there are no paid ads to display.

Headline Max 25 characters

Text Max 70 characters

Figure 6-7. You can set the default text that appears when there are no ads to be served on your site



AdBrite is a real two-way marketplace in the sense that advertisers can decide to individually pick sites for placement, and publishers (if the auto-approve checkbox shown in Figure 6-7 is not selected) can decide whether they want to run individual ads on their site.

Pick a size

Choose text colors

Title # Background #

Text # Border #

URL #

Ads by AdBrite

Come Visit Our Website
 Funny stories, hilarious videos, even better comments. Submit yours.
[YouWontBelieve.com](#)

Discount Designer Widgets
 Browse our inventory of world class widgets. Find just the right one.
[www.Widgets-R-Us.com](#)

Find Local Restaurants
 Chinese, Italian, American, Mexican & Thai. For all tastes and budgets
[Restaurantz.net](#)

10 Ways to be Successful
 Learn the habits of the successful people from experienced experts.
[10SuccessfulMethods.com](#)

[Your Ad Here](#)

Figure 6-8. Once you pick your ad unit dimensions, you can refine its appearance to match your site

170 | Chapter 6: Making Money by Hosting Advertising



You should name your ad zone to describe the position of the ad unit to potential advertisers, assuming you are going to implement multiple ad units on your site.

The next step is to describe your site using a description and keywords (Figure 6-9). This is for two reasons: to help AdBrite make a better contextual match, and also to serve as an advertisement of your own to potential advertisers. The keywords and description you include do appear to any advertiser seeking a good host for their ads.

Describe your site

1. choose ad formats → 2. ad specs → 3. describe your site → 4. pricing options → 5. get code

Site Info:

Name of your site:

Site URL:

Description of site:

Simple HTML allowed, including , <i>, , <p> and
 but no images

Name of ad zone:

Tip: Describe where the ads will go on your site, or in what section they will appear. Ex: Top banner ad

Keywords:

Enter one keyword or phrase per line, 50 lines max. You have 49 lines left.

These keywords will help us match the right advertisers to your ad zone.

Figure 6-9. The description you add about your site is often used by advertisers to determine if there is a good fit



You can use the elevator pitch and keywords that you derived from the material explain in [Chapter 2](#) (and may have used as meta information as explained in [Chapter 3](#)) for this form.

Next, choose a category for your site from the list, shown in [Figure 6-10](#). Once again, this selection is multipurpose—you are helping AdBrite contextualize your site and also helping potential advertisers find you.

Choose a category :

This is where advertisers can find your site in the AdBrite directory. We also use this to help match advertisers to your site

Main category (pick one)

-
- Arts & Entertainment
- Automotive
- Business & Industrial
- Culture & Society
- Education
- Employment & Recruiting
- Finance
- Games
- Health

Secondary category (pick one)

- Dining & Nightlife
- General
- Humor
- Magazines & E-zines
- Museums
- Music
- Performing Arts
- Television & Radio
- Theatre & Film
- Visual Arts

Figure 6-10. It's important to correctly categorize your offering in AdBrite so that advertisers can easily find you

Optionally, AdBrite will integrate your existing ad code, such as that from AdSense, into their own unit, asserting that they will serve the highest paying ad from both networks.

To take advantage of this, choose Yes to Reserve Pricing in the pricing options interface shown in [Figure 6-11](#). You'll need to make sure the ad unit that you are integrating with AdBrite's has the same dimensions, and you'll have to paste the code from the other ad server into the HTML box shown in [Figure 6-11](#).

If you'd rather not integrate ad units, and want to place the AdBrite unit in addition to another unit, choose No to Reserve Pricing. In either case, you can proceed to pick up the code you'll need to add to your site.

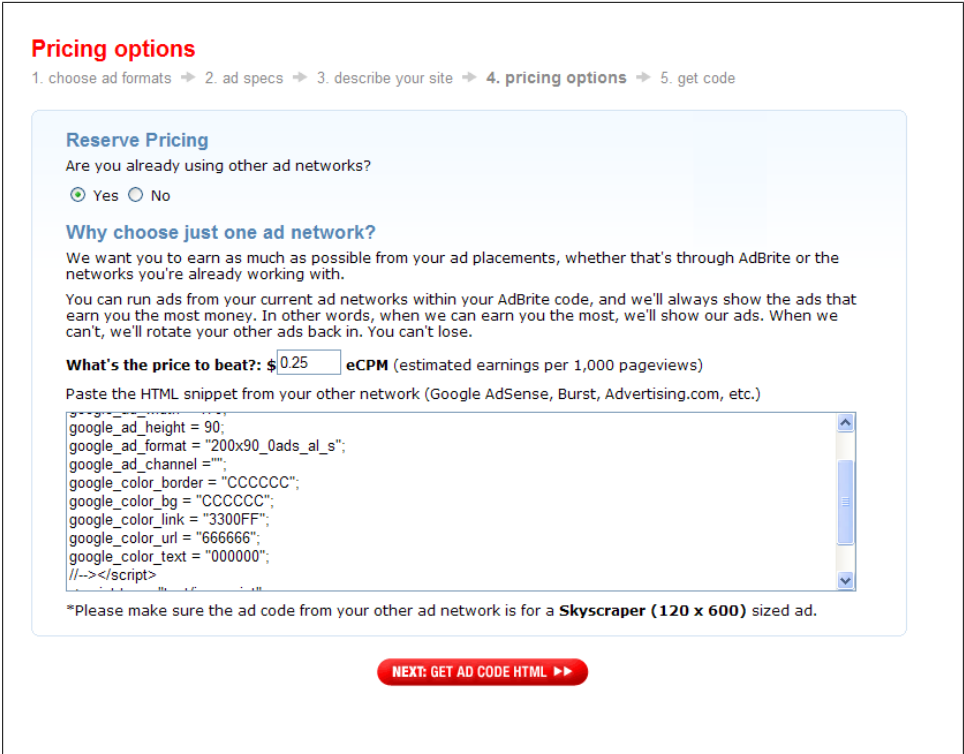


Figure 6-11. AdBrite allows you to use its interface to work with multiple advertising networks and to flexibly set pricing

Adding Code to Your Pages

Once you've selected your ad format, colors, and entered other options, AdBrite will generate the code for your unit, as you can see in [Figure 6-12](#).

Simply copy the code provided into your web pages where you'd like the ad units to appear.



It's important to place ad code in include files, as I explained in [Chapter 1](#), so that your ad settings can easily be modified site-wide.

Ad unit code consists of settings, which depend on your choice of format and color, and a JavaScript call to the program on the ad server that actually displays the ad on your site (see [“Serving Ads” on page 161](#) for an explanation of this mechanism).

Get code

1. choose ad formats → 2. ad specs → 3. describe your site → 4. pricing options → 5. get code

Please note that it may take up to 24 hours for you to see ads on your site.

Copy & Paste on Your Site

```
<!-- Begin: AdBrite, Generated: 2008-12-19 13:56:19 -->
<script type="text/javascript">
var AdBrite_Title_Color = 'CC0000';
var AdBrite_Text_Color = '000000';
var AdBrite_Background_Color = 'CCCCCC';
var AdBrite_Border_Color = 'CCCCCC';
var AdBrite_URL_Color = '0000FF';
try{var AdBrite_Iframe=window.top!=window.self?2:1;var
AdBrite_Referrer=document.referrer==''?
document.location:document.referrer;AdBrite_Referrer=encodeURIComponent
(AdBrite_Referrer);}catch(e){var AdBrite_Iframe='';var AdBrite_Referrer='';}
</script>
<script type="text/javascript">document.write(String.fromCharCode
(60,83,67,82,73,80,84));document.write('
```

Setup Complete!

You'll be notified when somebody wants to buy an ad from you with instructions to "approve" or "reject" the sale. If you chose to display network ads, **please allow up to 24 hours** for network ads to appear in your new zone.

What next? You can...

- [Visit your dashboard >](#)
- [Manage your ad zones >](#)
- [Check your earnings >](#)
- [Review your ads >](#)

Figure 6-12. AdBrite generates the code for its ad units that you use on your site

For example, an AdBrite ad unit might look like this in code:

```
<!-- Begin: AdBrite, Generated: 2008-12-19 13:56:19 -->
<script type="text/javascript">
var AdBrite_Title_Color = 'CC0000';
var AdBrite_Text_Color = '000000';
var AdBrite_Background_Color = 'CCCCCC';
var AdBrite_Border_Color = 'CCCCCC';
var AdBrite_URL_Color = '0000FF';
try{var AdBrite_Iframe=window.top!=window.self?2:1;var AdBrite_Referrer=document.
referrer==''?document.location:document.referrer;AdBrite_Referrer=
encodeURIComponent(AdBrite_Referrer);}catch(e){var AdBrite_Iframe='';var
AdBrite_Referrer='';}
</script>
<script type="text/javascript">document.write(String.fromCharCode(60,83,67,82,73,
80,84));document.write(' src="http://ads.adbrite.com/mb/text_group.php?sid=
967865&z=3132305f363030&ifr='+AdBrite_Iframe+'&ref='+AdBrite_Referrer+'
type="text/javascript">');document.write(String.fromCharCode(60,47,83,67,82,73,80,
84,62));</script>
<div><a target=" top" href="http://www.adbrite.com/mb/commerce/purchase_form.php?
opid=967865&afsid=1" style="font-weight:bold;font-family:Arial;font-size:13px;">
Your Ad Here</a></div>
<!-- End: AdBrite -->
```

You can tweak the settings in the ad code easily enough to change the format or the colors of the ads displayed. For example, in the code sample just shown, changing the value of the variable `AdBrite_Text_Color` will change the color of the text displayed in the AdBrite unit.

Technically, tweaking this code directly is prohibited by some TOS, although AdBrite doesn't seem to care as long as you don't break anything. The bottom line is that no one will mind if you are just adjusting things to fit in with your site's look and feel.

Once your ad code has been copied to your site, you'll get a temporary ad like the one shown in [Figure 6-13](#) until AdBrite has learned about your site.



Figure 6-13. Until AdBrite can gather information about your site, it displays this message

Once AdBrite has fully gathered data and has some contextual ads to serve, the ads will appear in your AdBrite unit on your site, depending on your choice of format, for example, as shown in [Figure 6-14](#).

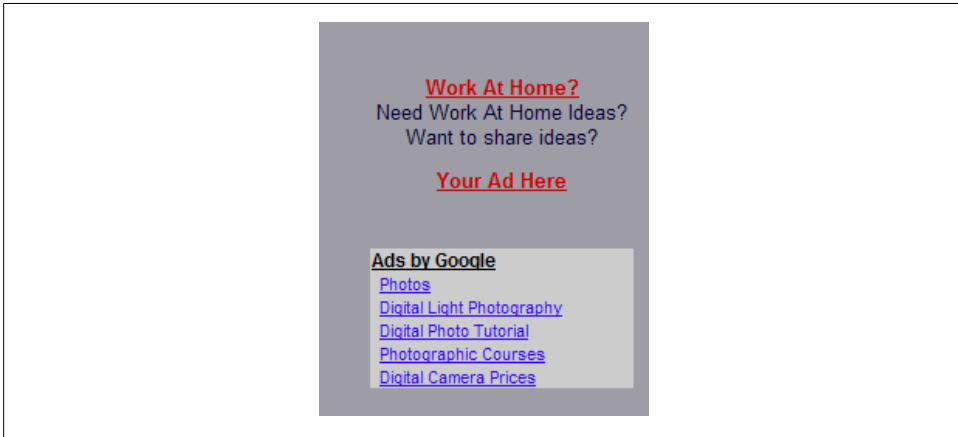


Figure 6-14. An ad in the AdBrite unit appears above the Google ad unit

Display and Banner Ads

There's nothing to stop display and banner ads from being contextually related to the text they accompany, and obviously it is often a good idea. However, text ads—which usually come in groups and have, by definition, text—present a greater opportunity for effective contextual relevance. That's why text ads are predominantly purchased and displayed on a CPC basis (although, of course, they could be CPM), and why many display and banner ads operate under CPM terms. The primary concern of CPM banner and display ads is that they be viewed; while a call to action may be involved, it's possible that they may not be concerned in the way most CPC ads are with immediate results (by clicking the text link provided).



With CPM (cost per thousand impressions) advertising, you get paid a fee, based on thousands of impressions, when an ad is displayed on your site. This is the kind of web advertising that is the most like traditional media advertising: an advertiser pays for displaying its ad in a magazine, on television, or on a website—end of story.

These considerations mean that the vast bulk of display and banner ads that you see on the Web have been placed on a CPM basis.



One of the pitfalls of accepting CPM advertising is getting stuck with garish imagery or Flash-based animations, as well as assorted pop ups and pop unders, which can irritate and distract visitors to your website. My own taste runs to less-is-more when it comes to advertising, but you'll need to experiment to see what works for your site.

CPM advertising cannot be expected to generate a very high CTR and does not pay very much per impression. Typical CPM ad rates are in the \$4 to \$6 range per thousand impressions, although significantly higher fees can be achieved in special situations (for example, when a CPM sponsor underwrites an entire site).

Obviously, with these economics, making money from CPM is a volume affair. For the most part, to even participate in CPM programs you need a minimum of 500,000 monthly page views. If you do have this kind of volume, you can find a great deal of information about CPM advertising from the trade association that works with the Internet CPM industry, the [Internet Advertising Bureau](#).

Many of the advertising vendors shown earlier in [Table 6-1](#) offer hosted display advertising. If you are interested in this option, and have a fairly high trafficked site, you should investigate ValueClick. Lower volume sites should check out AdBrite, which has no minimum volume requirements and lets you set your own pricing structure.

For information about hosting CPM ads targeted to your site using Google's AdSense program, see [Chapter 8](#).

Action Items

Here are some action items you may wish to consider to make (more) money from CPC ads:

- Understand the logic behind CPC and contextual ad programs
- Get to know the terminology of the web advertising business
- Create a realistic plan based on the revenue you can expect from CPC advertising
- Understand both the power and pitfalls of contextual relevance
- Consider the architecture of web serving of ad units
- Make a comparison of CPC ad unit vendors
- Enroll your site in a CPC ad program
- Grab the code to use for your ad units
- Use server-side includes so that the CPC ad code is replicated across your site
- Choose ad formats and colors to match or complement your site design
- If your site has enough volume to make it feasible, investigate CPM advertising programs

Understanding the Google Behemoth

Google is a colossus that sits astride access to information on the World Wide Web. Ubiquitous, useful, and often imitated—but seldom equaled—Google has lent its name to a verb: to *google* something (or someone) is to search for the thing or person on the Web. Google is also a forward-looking corporation filled with brilliant thinkers and one of the largest companies in the world in terms of market capitalization. From its roots as a search engine company, Google has emerged as a leader in many spheres, from applications that are used to watch videos on the Web to on-demand office productivity software.

The primary focus of this book is making money with the Google advertising applications: the AdSense and AdWords programs. These programs are closely related to Google's searching technology. An AdSense ad is placed on your website depending on the context of your site (in other words, Google's analysis of how your site is likely to be found in response to a variety of searches). And the very same AdWords ad is targeted using keywords and phrases—the same keywords and phrases used when searching for something with Google.

The close relationship between Google web searching technology and the advertising programs means that it is important to understand a little about the syntax of Google searches when working with the AdSense program or crafting AdWords campaigns. It's not that I propose to teach you how to use Google to search in this book. Rather, you need a sense of how *others* may be using Google to search when they come across your sites or ads.

To get the most out of working with Google, you also need to understand the parts of Google. It's not easy to get a grasp of what Google is and what Google does in addition to web search. For one thing, the parts of Google don't all work together seamlessly. This chapter starts with an overview explaining the parts of Google and what they do so that you'll get a sense of what Google resources may be available to you and how all these moving parts integrate (or, as the case may be, don't integrate).

After explaining Google’s search syntax and exploring what Google has to offer generally, this chapter drills down on Google’s role as an automated advertising broker with these programs and explains, in general terms, how these programs are related and how you work with them.

The Parts of Google

Google’s parts can, roughly speaking, be divided into the following categories:

Services

These let people do something (for example, search the Web or create a blog)

Tools

Software to make chores easier (for example, the Google Toolbar or the Picasa image manipulation software)

Developer tools

Programs aimed at software developers, such as the AdWords API

Advertising solutions

Programs such as AdSense and AdWords

Business solutions

Products intended to be used as part of an enterprise infrastructure, such as the Google Enterprise search appliance

Obviously, many of these aspects of Google are beyond the scope of this book, which focuses on making money with Google advertising and the AdSense and AdWords programs.

Google itself takes a more pragmatic tack in categorizing its applications that are available to consumers. On the More Google Products page, partly shown in [Figure 7-1](#), you’ll find the following categories:

- Search
- Explore and innovate
- Communicate, show & share
- Go mobile
- Make your computer work better

Some of the parts of Google can be opened directly from the [Google home page](#). If you don’t see the link you are interested in on the Google home page, open the More Google Products page by starting at Google’s home page. Click the More link found on the upper left of the page, then choose “even more” from the drop-down list.



You can reach the More Google Products page directly by opening <http://www.google.com/options/> in your browser.

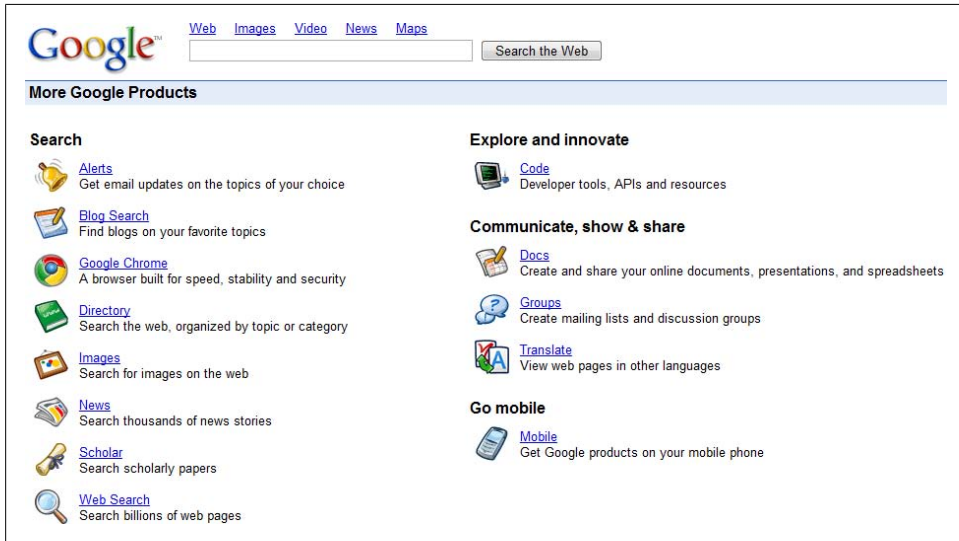


Figure 7-1. Google's consumer applications are categorized on the More Google Products page

However you categorize this vast collection of applications and tools, you should at least be aware of the scope of what is available. This section explains the parts of Google you should know about, with a focus on the parts that are relevant to advertising.



Don't be fazed because Google marks an application as still in *beta*. Google tends to call applications beta (supposedly meaning still in testing and not ready for release) long after most companies would declare the software complete.

In addition to the software shown on the More Google Products page, Google has numerous applications that have not yet made it to product status. You can test drive much of this software from the [Google Labs page](#), partially shown in [Figure 7-2](#).

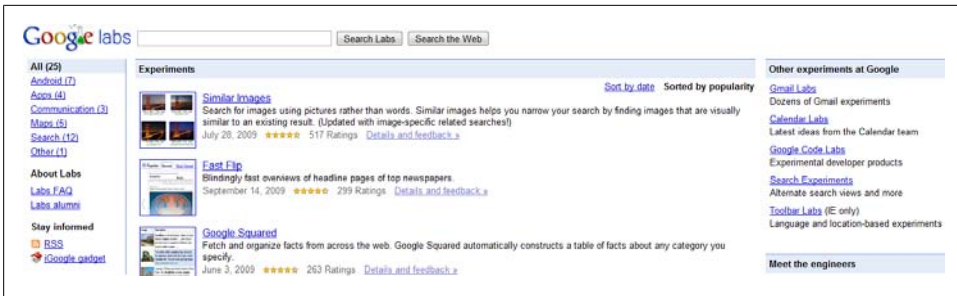


Figure 7-2. The Google Labs page allows you to try Google software that hasn't yet made it to product status

Even More Google Parts

Parts of Google not discussed in this section (because there's no clear and obvious connection to advertising at the present time) include:

- Alerts (automatic notifications of news and search results by email)
- Blog Search (searches through current blogs by topic)
- Calendar (organizes your schedule and shares events with others)
- Checkout (an online payment mechanism that competes with PayPal)
- Google Chrome (a streamlined web browser)
- Desktop (searches the files on your desktop computer using an interface that looks like Google's web search)
- Docs (online word processing, presentations, and spreadsheets)
- Earth (explore the earth and sky using maps, satellite photos, and more)
- Finance (customizable business news)
- Groups (bulletin board posts on every conceivable subject)
- Images (comprehensive image search on the Web)
- News (lets you search news items)
- Picasa (image management and lightweight image editing)
- Translate (automatic translation of text and web pages)

These Google parts may not be the primary focus of this book, but even a quick glance should give you respect for the breadth and depth of Google's offerings.

Also, Google has a near-miraculous ability to build genuinely useful applications and subsequently add advertising, in ways that actually add to the utility of the application. In the future, these applications may be used to host or locate advertising.

Google is a moving target; it's constantly innovating, releasing software, and acquiring software companies. No static list of Google parts is ever likely to be up-to-date or final.

You'll find links to almost all the parts of Google on the More Google Products page; I'll also provide a direct address to each Google part I discuss in the following sections.

Blogger

[Blogger](#) is one of the largest hosted blogging services on the Web. Blogger hosts hundreds of thousands of blogs, and it is free and easy to use. From an advertiser's viewpoint, Blogger and other hosted blogging services are interesting because they provide Google with a venue for AdWords contextual ads, categorized by the specific interest of the blog author. Some of the proceeds from these blogs go to the content creator, although you'll probably make more money by hosting your own content and displayed AdSense units.

Book Search

[Google Books](#) lets users search through books submitted to the program by publishers and other copyright holders. Google scans the books and hosts the resulting pages on Google servers. These pages are then used by Google to display contextual ads. Google pays a portion of the revenue from the ads to the owner of the materials. Google Book Search represents an interesting venue for advertisements, as well as a possible profit center for authors and publishers.

At the time of this writing, Google has reached an extensive and general licensing agreement with publishers and authors. Assuming this agreement becomes effective, the content available under this program (and potential sites to host advertising) will greatly expand.

Directory

[Google Directory](#) uses the categorization scheme and sites selected by the Open Directory Project (ODP) to find information that has been vetted by volunteer editors familiar with a particular subject. As I explained in [Chapter 2](#), the ODP is important to you if you want to drive traffic to your site. You can use Google Directory to explore Google's use of the ODP taxonomy.

Gmail

[Gmail](#) is one of the best free email services on the Web, with good anti-spam technology, plentiful storage, and excellent searching capabilities. Gmail is used to host text and link ads that are relevant to a recipient's email.

GOOG-411

GOOG-411, 1-800-GOOG-411, is a directory assistance program that will partially be supported by audio advertisements relevant to searches requested.

Google Health

Google Health is intended to help people organize their health records in one place online. This is an ambitious and laudable goal not intimately related to advertising, but note that the portions of the application that are used to search for health care providers do host contextual advertisements.

Maps

Google Maps is a service that provides maps and directions. When you search within Google Maps for an address, business, or landmark, the results page shows businesses that seem related to your search (for example, Japanese restaurants as in Figure 7-3), and also businesses located close to your search address.

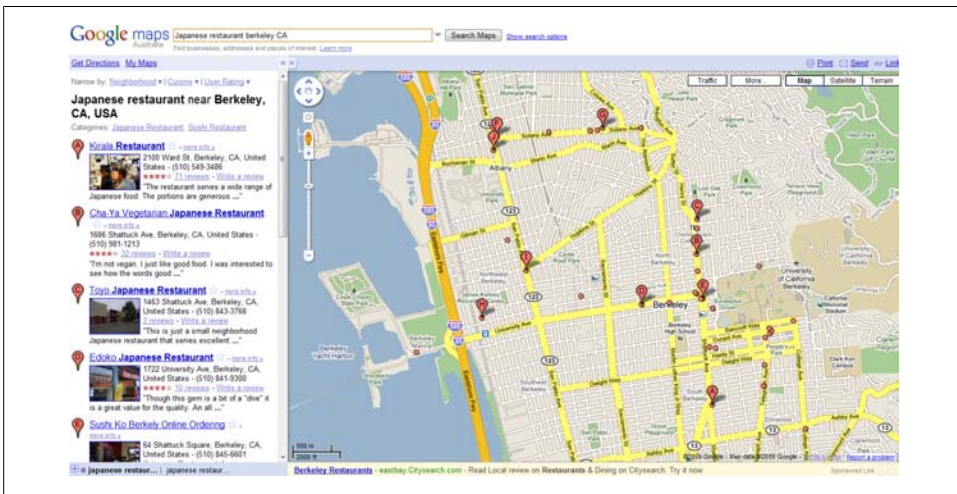


Figure 7-3. Google Maps results are used to host geographically relevant ads



In Figure 7-3, the top “sponsored” link is a paid AdWords placement while the other listings come from natural search results. See Chapter 2 for more about the distinction.

For advertisers who draw business based on location—such as restaurants—the ability to place proximity-based ads on Google Maps may prove to be extremely significant.

Product Search

[Google Product Search](#) lets you search through many of the products available on the Web. Sellers can add products to Product Search using a data feed; there's no cost for inclusion. Google does use search results pages to host advertisements.

Scholar

[Google Scholar](#) lets you search for academic, peer-reviewed articles and citations. Although Scholar has had some rather mixed reviews, it is certainly one of the largest free repositories online of scholarly material, and Google Scholar search results are another place Google displays contextual advertising.

YouTube

[YouTube](#), shown in [Figure 7-4](#), is the leading application for watching, uploading, and sharing videos.

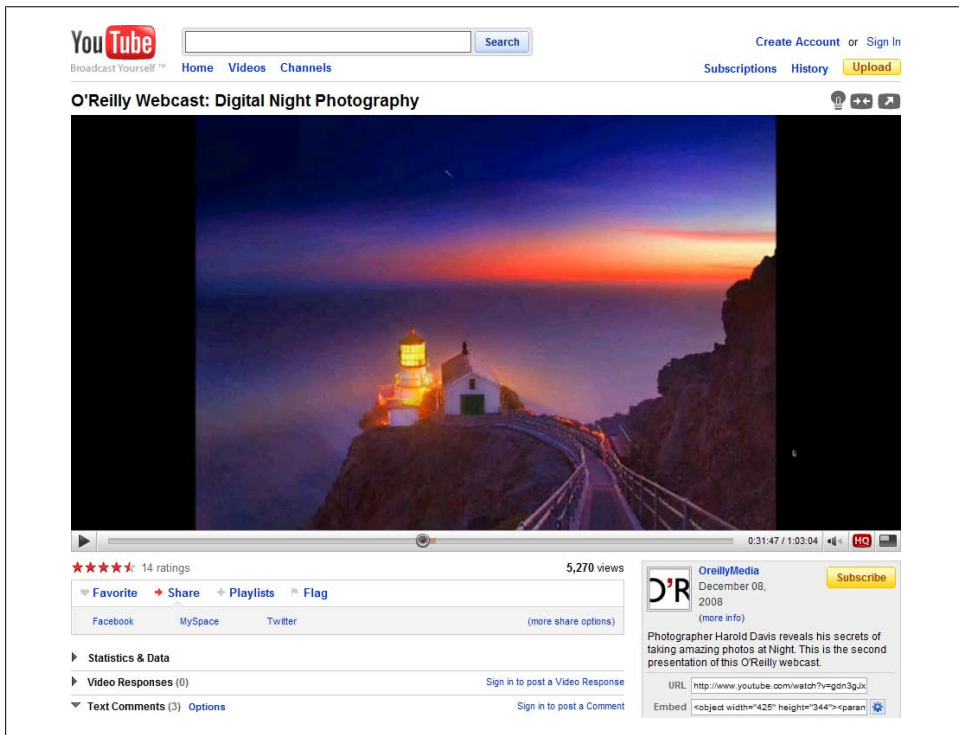


Figure 7-4. YouTube is probably the most popular site for watching videos on the Web

There are several advertising programs on YouTube that are either operational or in the works. Google enrolls partners that draw substantial traffic on YouTube in a pro-

gram that derives revenue from contextual ads. The ads display on the pages that host the content. Other ads display for certain content as video overlays.

These kinds of ad programs are interesting to content owners. For example, a website might promote videos on YouTube that generate revenue. For details, see [Chapter 8](#).

Obviously, YouTube is also interesting to advertisers. Check out <http://www.youtube.com/t/advertising> for more information.

Content Versus Search

Google contextual ads appear on web content as in [Figure 7-5](#) when the owner of the web content site signs up with the AdSense program.

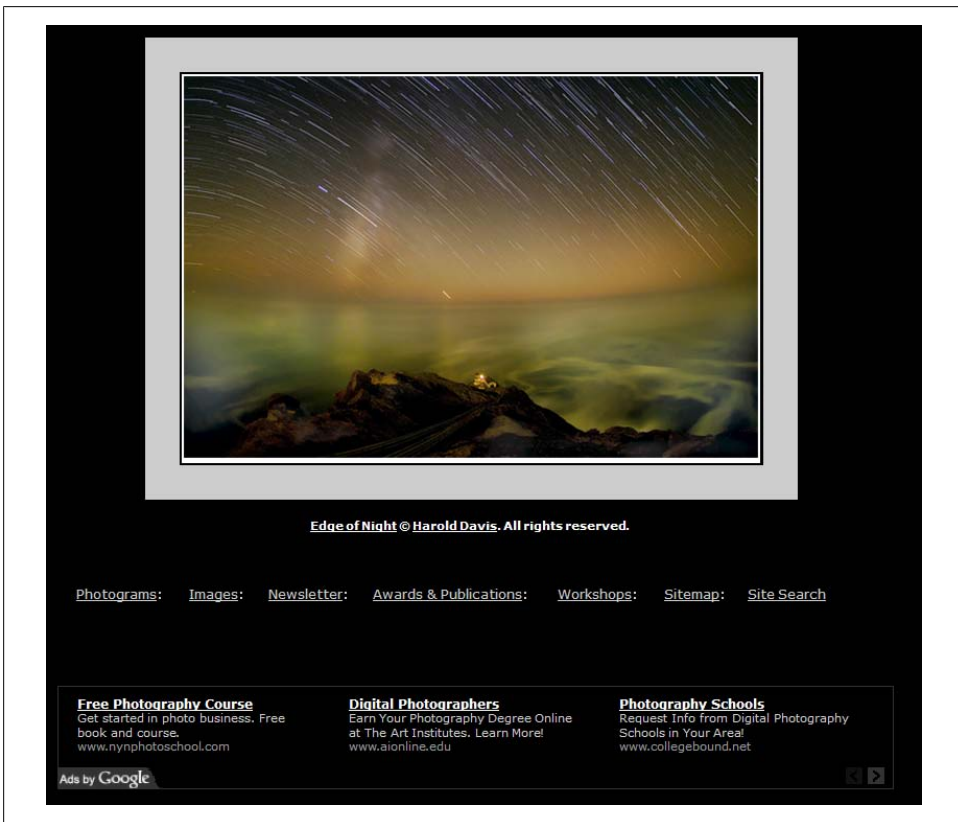


Figure 7-5. Content ads appear on websites that have enrolled in the AdSense program



See [Chapter 6](#) for a discussion of how well (or poorly) contextual relevance software actually works.

These ads also appear on search results pages, as shown in [Figure 7-6](#).

The screenshot shows a Google search results page for the query "dslr". At the top, the Google logo is visible, followed by a search bar containing "dslr" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, the page is divided into several sections. On the right side, there are "Sponsored Links" which include an advertisement for "Nikon D80 DSLR on Sale" from DidIPrice.com, a link to "Digital SLR Online School", and a "Dslr" bid on eBay.com. On the left side, there are "Shopping results for dslr" showing prices for various camera models, followed by a Wikipedia entry for "Digital single-lens reflex camera" and a blog post titled "Should you buy a DSLR or Point and Shoot Digital Camera?".

Figure 7-6. Entries marked as sponsored (right) are paid ads, while the longer entries on the left are natural search results

Within the Google AdSense program, ads of the first kind are called *content* ads, and those of the second kind are *search* ads.

If a user goes to the Google home page and searches, only Google profits from the ads placed on the search results page. If, however, the search originates from an AdSense search unit, like the one shown in [Figure 7-7](#), the owner of the site hosting the search box shares in any proceeds from the search.

See [Chapter 8](#) for information about adding a search box to your site, and [Chapter 10](#) for a comparison of content and search ads from the viewpoint of an advertiser.

Anatomy of a Search Query

The primary Google search interface, the Google home page, is famously simple and uncluttered (as shown in [Figure 7-8](#)).

You enter a word or words, also called *keywords*, *search terms*, or *queries*, in the Google search form.

As you probably know, when you click the I'm Feeling Lucky button, Google opens the page that is the top-ranked search result for your query.



Figure 7-7. When a search box is placed on a content site, ads on the search results page are profitable to the site owner

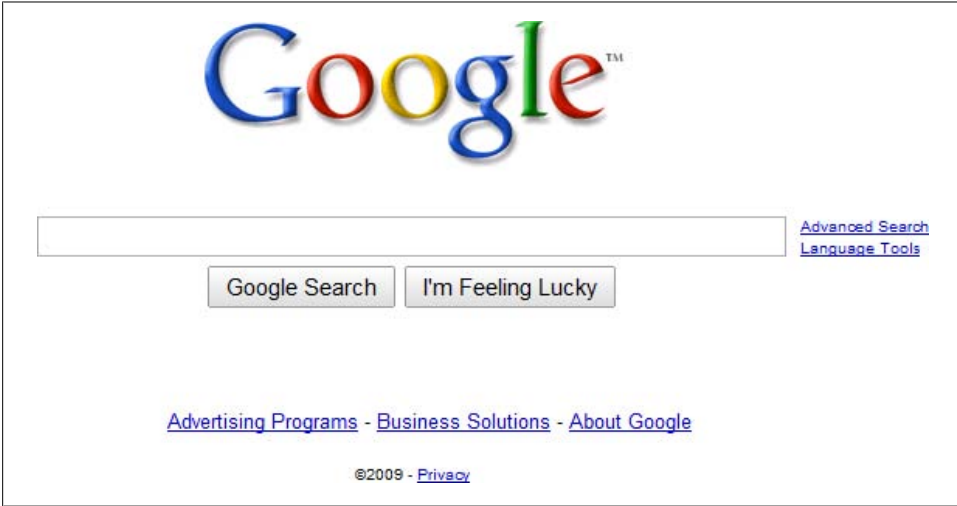


Figure 7-8. In its simplest form, Google search returns results for keywords entered in the search box



Experienced researchers don't usually bother with the I'm Feeling Lucky button because it is unlikely you will find what you need this way and it wastes time—even if it is fun!

Clicking the Google Search button opens the first page of Google's search results for your query. Google's search results pages also display AdWords ads that are contextually relevant to the query that generated the pages.

Google Syntax and Operators

Google searches support a number of operators, including:

AND

The **AND** operator tells Google to explicitly join two keywords in a query. It must be uppercase (cannot be written `and`).

OR

The **OR** operator, which can also be written using the pipe character (`|`), matches any of the terms joined with this operator in a query. It must be uppercase (cannot be written `or`).

+

The “plus” operator, called the *inclusion operator*, forces Google to include words, such as stop words (defined shortly), in a search.

-

The “minus” operator, called the *exclusion operator*, looks for results that do not have the specified keyword in them. For example, a search for `virus -computer` finds results that have to do with viruses, but not computers (particularly useful if you are looking for biologic viruses).



To avoid confusion, all search terms are printed in this book in literal font (as in `Google AdWords`). If quotes are shown in the search term—as in `"Computer Programming"`—then those quotes are part of the search term and would be typed in by the user.

You should also know that Google searches omit many common words, called *stop words*. Stop words that are omitted include “and,” “for,” “the,” and most punctuation. If you want to include a stop word in your search, you need to include it within double quotes.

Double quoting also serves the purpose of searching for an entire quoted string. For example, to search for the film *Star Wars: Episode III*, you could use the query `"Star Wars III"`. Without the quotes, the `III` would be omitted as a stop word.

The Rules of Simple Search

Searching with Google can be really simple, but it helps to keep some basic rules of Google search syntax in mind:

Implicit AND connection

Google assumes that two or more words in a query are connected by an **AND** operator, even when the **AND** is omitted. A search for `Landscape Photography` is the same as a search for `Landscape AND Photography`.

All-word search

Google searches for all words in a query, unless they are stop words.

Results can be anywhere

A successful search finds results anywhere in a document (such as in HTML and meta information), not just in its text.

Word order matters

The words in a search are ordered in terms of importance from left to right.

Proximity counts

Words in a query that are close together in a search result are returned ahead of results where the words are farther apart.

Google is not case-sensitive

Google does not care about capitalization. A search for **new york** returns results that include **New York**, and a search for **New York** returns **new york** with lowercase initial letters.

Effective Searching

Google searches tend to be more effective—producing better search results—if the following concepts are kept in mind:

Google looks for words, not meaning

Google’s algorithms look for the occurrences of words and phrases, not the meaning of words. So it helps to think about how words are likely to be used in context and in web pages when formulating a search.

Specificity and distinctiveness in keyword choice helps

If you search using generic words—words that are used in a great many documents on the Web—you won’t get as useful a result set as you would if you pinpointed more unusual words that are relevant to your search.

Use singular, plural, and alternate word forms

Since Google is looking for words, not meaning, you may need to use alternative forms of words in your searches to get the widest results. A search for **photograph**, **photographs**, and **photography** may each yield different results.



You can use the **OR** operator to search for several forms of the same word:
photograph | photographs | photography.

These concepts related to effective searching have big implications for participants in the AdWords program (see [Part III](#) for more about AdWords). An important part of AdWords is selecting the right keywords to target your ads against. It’s hard to

cost-effectively target generic words that generate massive search results; it makes much more sense to target narrow, quirky words (and phrases).

Advanced Search

Google Advanced Search, shown in [Figure 7-9](#), can be opened using the URL http://www.google.com/advanced_search. Google Advanced Search implements the operators explained earlier in “[Google Syntax and Operators](#)” on [page 189](#) (and a number of additional operators that space considerations precluded me from explaining) using a visual interface, so you don’t need to enter the operators as part of a search query.

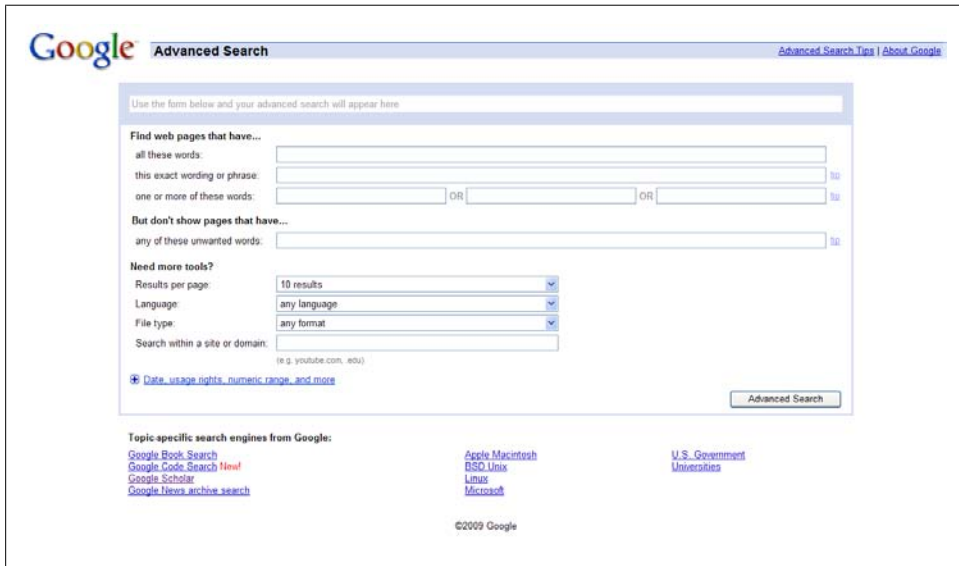


Figure 7-9. Google Advanced Search lets you implement sophisticated searching without understanding Google’s query language

The Search Results Page

A typical Google search results page is shown in [Figure 7-10](#). It’s a good idea to learn a little more about what to expect on a results page and what ads to expect, because Google search results pages are where more than half of all AdWords ads turn up.



Ads placed with the Google network using AdWords show up on web content (via AdSense), in third-party pages with whom Google has contracted, and on Google’s search results. The Google search results are the most important of these from a dollars-and-cents viewpoint and also have the best CTR.

For a given keyword, relevant results are returned in the order of their PageRank—the complex formula Google uses to determine the importance of a web page—in Google’s index. Each search results page provides statistics in the upper-right corner (above the actual search results) that show you an estimate of how many results were found and how long a search took.



Figure 7-10. A Google search results page provides a great deal of information in each result block as well as “sponsored links” (AdWords ads)

Each of the results on the page is represented by a snippet of text from the web page the result points to, called a *search results block*. A link to the web page is part of the search results block, with the title of the page as the text for the link if it is available (the page’s URL is used if the title isn’t available).

Each results block also provides a *Cached* link (if this is available) and a *Similar Pages* link. If you click the *Cached* link, a copy of the page saved by Google’s servers will open. This is useful in case the page has changed since it was indexed by Google. It’s also handy for finding where on a page the search terms are located: they are highlighted in the cached version. The cache will also tell you if the query appears only in links pointing to the page, and not on the page itself.

The *Similar Pages* link opens pages that Google determines bear a close relationship to the page found in the search results.



Using the Google `related` operator in a search is equivalent to clicking the Similar Pages link following a search result.

Following Similar Pages links for a search is a great technique for participants in AdWords to ferret out keyword alternatives. The sites that are in part of the similar results may be what the traffic you are interested in selling to is interested in visiting; you can get ideas from these sites about what keywords to bid on.

Learning More About Google Search

This section provides enough about the mechanics of working with Google search so that you can skillfully use the Google AdSense and AdWords programs. But, obviously, it is not a complete guide to becoming an experienced researcher with Google.

For more information about researching with Google, begin with the Google Help documentation. A good starting place on the Web is “[The Essentials of Google Search](#)”.

Google: The Missing Manual (O’Reilly) is a great introduction to Google search tools and techniques. *Google Hacks: Tips & Tools for Finding and Using the World’s Information*, Third Edition (O’Reilly) provides more in-depth technical information. My own *Building Research Tools with Google for Dummies* (Wiley) explains how to use Google as a professional research tool, what information you can expect to find in Google (and what isn’t there), and how to evaluate the credibility of information you do find on the Web.

The Automated Ad Broker: AdWords

Google places ads on its own properties—most significantly on search results pages—and on websites that have signed up for the AdSense program.



Google also places ads in third-party content networks to extend the range of its ads even further.

Advertisers—businesses and people with something to sell or promote—sign up with Google via the AdWords program. Working with AdWords, which involves bidding a maximum amount for particular keywords, is explained in detail in [Chapter 10](#).

Google’s software sits like an automated advertising broker between the two halves of this equation, as shown in [Figure 7-11](#). It’s a really important point. If a content ad is hosted by Google and appears on your site, the advertiser and the publisher could theoretically cut out the company in the middle (Google), if each knew who the other was and could negotiate a price both felt was fair. For example, if I publish a site with information about digital photography, and I notice that online camera stores often provide the Google AdSense ads that appear on my site, I could theoretically approach one of these camera stores and negotiate a deal to carry ads for the store on my site that did not pay Google a commission. However, that assumes that I know who to contact and want to take on the added responsibility of a direct interface with the stores. Since many people don’t want this extra responsibility, using Google as an intermediary turns out to be a good solution.

Like all successful intermediaries, Google’s job is introducing parties and establishing a market pricing mechanism that both sides feel is fair (or, at least, that they can live with). What’s unusual about Google is the success, scale, and automation with which it achieves this intermediation.

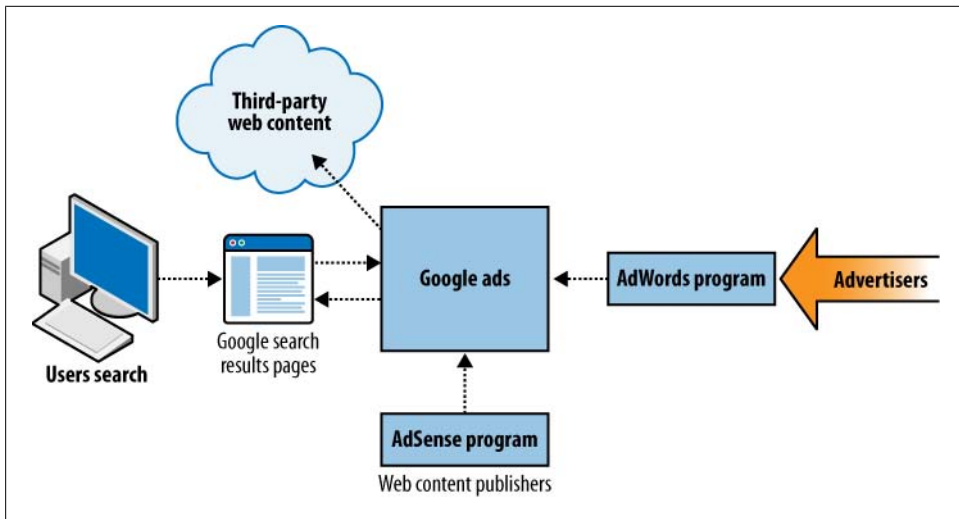


Figure 7-11. Google is the intermediary between AdSense accounts and AdWords advertisers

In the case of advertisements that are placed on websites participating in the AdSense content network, the business model is really simple. Google takes in money from the advertisers and pays out money to the owners of the web content. Your goal, if you are a website content owner, should be to maximize your share of this revenue stream, and Google’s game is to make the most of the difference between what it has to pay for ad space (AdSense) and what it can take in placing ad inventory (AdWords).

The Google inventory of pages that can host ads is bifurcated, however, and Google's model with its own search results pages is different and more complex. Google's search results pages make Google a content owner of an incredibly valuable web property—one that is, however, difficult and expensive to maintain. Google's profit in this portion of its business comes from taking in more ad revenue than it pays out to maintain and improve its search application (and, to some degree, the other parts of Google). The goal of a participant in the AdWords program who is looking to place ads on the Google search network is to maximize the effectiveness of its expenditures on the AdWords program.

What About Click Fraud?

Click fraud means clicking on contextual ads with no interest in purchasing the goods or services advertised, usually with the intention of defrauding the advertiser or enriching the contextual publisher. Most often, click fraud occurs as part of an effort to raise expenses for a competitor—by making them pay for the bogus clicks—or as an attempt at self-enrichment by a publisher (by clicking on ads on its own pages).

Click fraud is a serious problem, at least in terms of perceptions, on the Internet for contextual advertising vendors.

Google has major efforts underway to detect click fraud, which are in the aggregate fairly successful, but the details of these programs are (for obvious reasons) secret. The bottom line:

- On a very small scale, it is possible to commit click fraud and get away with it. However, as a publisher, you should take care to be totally aboveboard. If Google suspects you of click fraud, it will most likely close your account and possibly ban your sites from the Google search index.
- Detecting click fraud is a statistical matter. Once the fraud becomes statistically significant, it will probably be detected.

Contextual advertising does work and delivers targeted prospects much more effectively than any other method. A small amount of click fraud is a fact of life—most advertisers regard it as a cost of doing business that does not diminish the relative effectiveness of CPC advertising.

Action Items

To become an effective and productive user of the Google AdSense and AdWords programs, you should:

- Get a sense of Google's gigantic extent
- Spend some time getting a grasp on what the main parts of Google contain and how they relate to your advertising agenda

- Understand the difference between content and search advertising
- Learn the basics of Google's search syntax
- Think about the queries users are likely to use to find your products or services (or products and services similar to yours)
- Understand Google's brokering function between the AdSense and AdWords programs
- Try to see the world from both viewpoints: AdSense publishers will make more if they understand how AdWords works, and AdWords advertisers will be more effective if they consider the position of content owners who are signed up with AdSense

Cashing in with AdSense

Working with AdSense

Once you know how to work with AdSense, you can start making money from your websites by placing Google’s ad code in your web pages and displaying ads. This chapter explains the details of how to work with the Google AdSense program, from signup through obtaining your AdSense code and pasting it into your web pages. I’ll explain what the different options are and how you can tweak your AdSense settings to be most successful.

From Google’s viewpoint, the AdSense program represents a way to extend the pages that host its ads from its own search results pages across the entire Web. The result of this extension has been the creation of an excellent mechanism for monetizing content and traffic.

Google makes its living from advertising, and the Google AdSense program in particular earns its keep by placing ads in web content. It’s therefore not surprising to see AdSense promoting itself as the way to reap “the reward of great content.” However, reaping the reward requires not only content (as explained in [Chapter 1](#)) and traffic (as covered in [Chapter 3](#)) but also understanding how to adjust the “dials” on AdSense itself. The job of this chapter is to make sure you become an effective and efficient user of AdSense.



It’s worth having a quick look at the web content scenarios that Google presents as AdSense successes for both new and current AdSense publishers. You can view these case studies at <https://www.google.com/adsense/success>.

Applying for an AdSense Account

To apply for a Google AdSense account, visit the [Google AdSense home page](#), shown in [Figure 8-1](#).

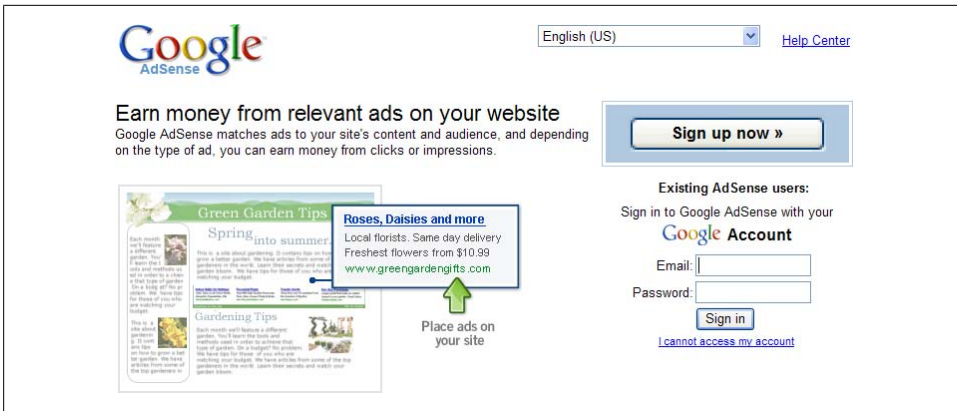


Figure 8-1. The Google AdSense home page is the starting placing for signing up for AdSense

Next, click the “Sign up now” button. The form partially shown in Figure 8-2 will open.

Figure 8-2. You apply to open an account with the Google AdSense program using this simple form

There are a few issues you'll need to bear in mind as you complete this form:

Website address

You need to provide Google with the URL for your primary website (see the upcoming sidebar “[Providing a Website Address](#)”).

Agreements

You need to agree not to place AdSense ads on sites that incentivize visitors to click on the ads or that include pornographic content.



Besides pornography, AdSense policies prohibit a fairly wide variety of content including content that is drug- or violence-related, content that explains hacking, and gambling sites. You can see the full list of prohibitions on the [AdSense Program Policies page](#).

If the content on your site is prohibited, you should avoid AdSense and consider the alternative CPC programs described in [Chapter 6](#).

Account type

You can have an individual or business account. For business accounts, you'll need to have a checking account in the business name.

Contact information

You need to tell Google what name to put on the checks and where to mail those checks, and provide phone and email contact information.

Policies

You need to agree not to click on the ads you are hosting and certify that you have read the AdSense policies (also referred to as the Terms of Service, or TOS). You can open the AdSense Program Policies page using a link on the signup page or at <https://www.google.com/adsense/policies>. You also need to check a box stating that you don't already have an AdSense account.

Providing a Website Address

Google will review the website address you provide for compliance with the content policies of the AdSense program. It is common for Google to reject websites for non-compliance with content provisions of the AdSense policies; as I've already noted, the prohibitions are fairly broad and exclude a variety of “sinful” content, ranging from excessive advertising content or adult content to content about hacking—and even prohibit content using excessive profanity. If you plan to host AdSense, your site had better not promote sin or even cuss words.

It is permissible (and often makes sense logistically) to use one Google AdSense account across multiple web addresses. If you are maintaining half a dozen sites, it is easier to work with a single AdSense account than to keep up with statistics on multiple accounts. If you are using one AdSense account across multiple sites, you'll probably want to take advantage of AdSense channels, explained later in this chapter. There's

also information in [Chapter 9](#) about what you need to do to monitor your AdSense performance.

If you are a devious thinker with some “sinful” content and other clean sites, you might consider the scenario of submitting one URL for acceptance into the program and eventually placing AdSense ads on noncompliant sites. You could probably get away with doing this for a while, but it is a bad idea. If you are caught, Google will most likely terminate your entire account.

The best approach is to apply for a separate account for any website with questionable content. That way, you are aboveboard. If Google accepts the account application, it can have no beef with you because of the content. If Google rejects the application, you’ll need to work with one of the less squeamish vendors mentioned in [Chapter 6](#).

It’s pretty simple, really, to fill out the AdSense form; as these things go, it is not a lot of red tape. Once you’ve entered the information required to sign up with AdSense, you must associate it with a Google account. There are two ways to do this:

- You can associate your AdSense application with an existing Google account, such as one you use with Gmail or AdWords.
- You can create a new Google account, as shown in [Figure 8-3](#), for use with the AdSense program.

Which best describes you?

I have an email address and password (Google Account) I already use with Google services like AdWords, Gmail, Orkut, or the personalized home page.

I do *not* use these other services. I would like to create a new Google Account.


Please provide a valid email address for your AdSense login

Email:
e.g. myname@example.com. This will be used to sign-in to your account.

Password:
Minimum of 8 characters in length. [?]

Re-enter password:

Word Verification: Type the characters you see in the picture below.



&

Letters are not case-sensitive

View the [Terms of Service](#) & [Privacy Policy](#).

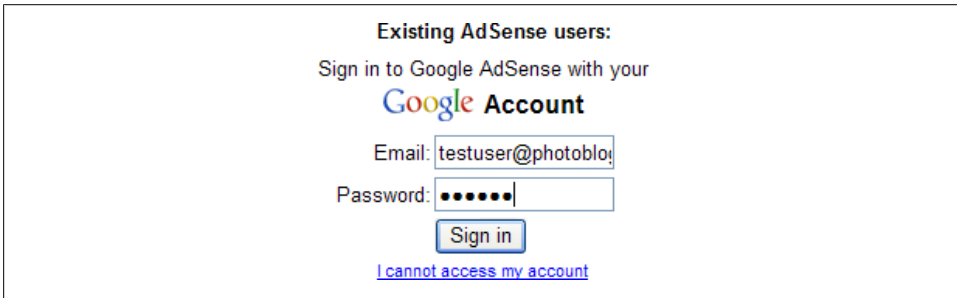
You must accept the Terms of Service to create a Google account.

Figure 8-3. If you don’t already have a Google account, you’ll need to create one

The next step is to wait for Google to review your application, which usually takes one or two days. You'll be notified of program acceptance in an email sent to the address you provided.

Setting Account Options

Once you've been accepted into the AdSense program, proceed to the Google AdSense home page shown earlier. Log in using your Google account information as shown in [Figure 8-4](#).



The screenshot shows the sign-in interface for existing AdSense users. At the top, it says "Existing AdSense users:" followed by "Sign in to Google AdSense with your Google Account". Below this, there are two input fields: "Email:" with the value "testuser@photoblo" and "Password:" with a masked password of seven dots. A "Sign in" button is positioned below the password field. At the bottom, there is a blue link that says "I cannot access my account".

Figure 8-4. Use your Google account information to sign into AdSense

Once you've logged in, your first step should be to verify your initial settings and enter some more information. Start by clicking the My Account tab. The My Account tab has four main pages:

- Account Settings
- Account Access
- Payment History
- Tax Information

You'll find that you can modify your initial account options using the Account Settings page, as well as set some significant options, namely your payment preferences (and what could be more important?) and your global ad display preferences.

Payment Preferences

To change your payment preferences, on the Account Settings page click the edit link that follows Payment Details, as shown in [Figure 8-5](#).

Payment Details [edit]	
Payment Type:	Check - Standard Delivery
Currency:	US Dollar

Figure 8-5. Click the edit link in the Payment Details section to change how you are paid

The Choose Form of Payment window, shown in [Figure 8-6](#), will open. The choices are:

- Electronic Funds Transfer to your bank account
- Check by regular mail (free but it takes longer)
- Express delivery of your check (there's a \$30.00 processing fee)

Choose Form of Payment

Please note that changes to your form of payment must be made by the 15th of the month to affect the current month's payment cycle.

Electronic Funds Transfer [learn more](#)

Wells F *****261 [edit name](#) VERIFIED

Add a new bank account

Check Options

Check - Standard Delivery *

Check - Secured Express Delivery (\$30.00 Processing Fee) [learn more](#) **

* Standard Delivery checks are sent by regular mail and should arrive within 2-3 weeks of the mailing date.
** Secured Express Delivery checks are sent via courier and should arrive within 1 week.

Figure 8-6. You can choose to have your payments transferred electronically or sent by check

Arranging to have your AdSense payments electronically transferred to your bank account is an attractive option because there are no delays and there is less chance of a paper check getting misplaced in the mail.

In order to have funds transferred by Google, you need a verified bank account. In the bank account verification process, first you enter your bank account number and bank routing number. Next, Google deposits small sums of money (less than a dollar) in your bank account. Once you see these deposits in your account, you must go online and enter the amounts. Once Google sees that you have access to your account records, your account is considered verified.



Not all payment options are available in all countries; the options available to you will depend upon the physical address associated with your account.

You can also elect to have your payments held (and accrued) indefinitely rather than paid monthly by clicking the edit link in the Payment Holding section on the Account Settings page, shown in [Figure 8-7](#).

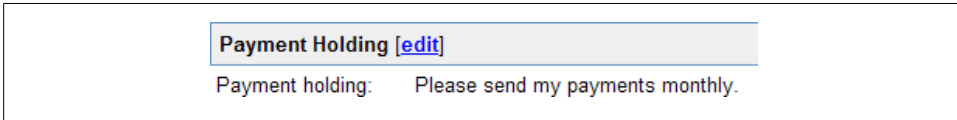


Figure 8-7. You can choose to let your earnings accrue rather than have them paid monthly

Ad Display Preference

Ad Display Preference, on the Account Settings page, sounds like a big deal, but it's really used to set the default for one thing.

This preference is used to set global preferences for whether you want to display text ads only or both text and images. This Ad Type Preference option sets your global default; you can override your default global choice on a page-by-page basis when you specify options for a block of Google ad code that will be placed on a particular page.



Text ads are the delivery format of most of Google's contextual advertising. Some content owners may want to avoid image ads because they can clutter sites and may work to the detriment of content.

Account Access

The Account Access page shows you the email address of users with access to your AdSense account. Generally, this will be the email address associated with the Google account that you used to open your AdSense account.



Multiple users can be associated with a single AdSense account if you use Google Ad Manager, explained later in this chapter, or Google Analytics, covered in [Chapter 13](#).

In addition, you may need to set software access to your AdSense account on the Account Access page. For example, Blogger, FeedBurner, and YouTube all need to be authorized for account access on this page so they can serve ads with your AdSense codes (assuming you are signed up with these other programs, and have integrated your content offerings on those sites with your AdSense account).

Reviewing Payment History

The Payment History link on the Account Settings page opens a display of your earnings and payment history as shown in [Figure 8-8](#). Using the Payment History window, you can determine the amount of recent payments and get a ballpark sense of when and how much your next payment is likely to be.

Although it's reasonable to want to know how much money one is owed, the information in this display is quite sketchy and not very useful for tracking your account activity. See [Chapter 9](#) for information about better ways to monitor the activity in your AdSense account.

Month	Date	Description	Earnings/credits	Payments/debits	Monthly balance
Earnings carried over from previous months			\$27.82		
October 2008	Oct 31	Earnings (Oct 1 - Oct 31) - details	\$43.94		
Balance at end of October					\$71.76
November 2008	Nov 30	Earnings (Nov 1 - Nov 30) - details	\$38.09		
Balance at end of November					\$109.85
December 2008	Dec 22	Payment issued - details		(\$109.85)	
December 2008	Dec 31	Earnings (Dec 1 - Dec 31) - details	\$21.57		
Balance at end of December					\$21.57

Figure 8-8. You can view your earnings and payment information on a per-month basis or download the data so it can be opened in a spreadsheet

Filing Tax Information

Filing appropriate tax information forms with Google is really part of the account application process, and your account won't be activated until you file these forms. If you are a United States resident, you will need to file an IRS form W-9 with Google; residents of other countries will need to comply with the legal requirements of the tax authority in their domicile.



If you are operating under your name—or, to put this formally, as a sole proprietorship using your own Social Security number (SSN)—you will need to file an IRS form W-9 with Google that lists your SSN. Depending on your situation, the income that Google reports to the IRS for your SSN will likely be reported on a Schedule C with your next income tax filing.

For instructions and forms, with the Account Settings page open, click the Tax Information link. Most likely, you will be able to file the appropriate forms online. Once your form has been filed with Google, when you click the Tax Information link you'll see a message stating, "Our records indicate that you have already submitted the appropriate information."



You can change your tax information as necessary—for example, because you now have a business tax ID—using the Filing Tax Information link.

AdSense Programs

Google AdSense provides a number of different programs for monetizing content, each of which works in a somewhat different way, as I'll discuss in detail later in this chapter. You can deploy each of these different programs by clicking the AdSense Setup tab, which opens the Get Ads page shown in [Figure 8-9](#).

The programs are:

- AdSense for Content
- AdSense for Search
- AdSense for Feeds
- AdSense for Domains
- Video units
- [“AdSense for Mobile Content” on page 217](#)

AdSense for Content is by far the most important program, with AdSense for Search a distant second. These two programs are similar in the sense that they are both utilized by website owners with content and traffic. In contrast, each of the other programs involves either specialized content (feeds, video, or mobile content) or a parked domain—so each of the other programs can be thought of as noncore, although they can present good opportunities for making money.

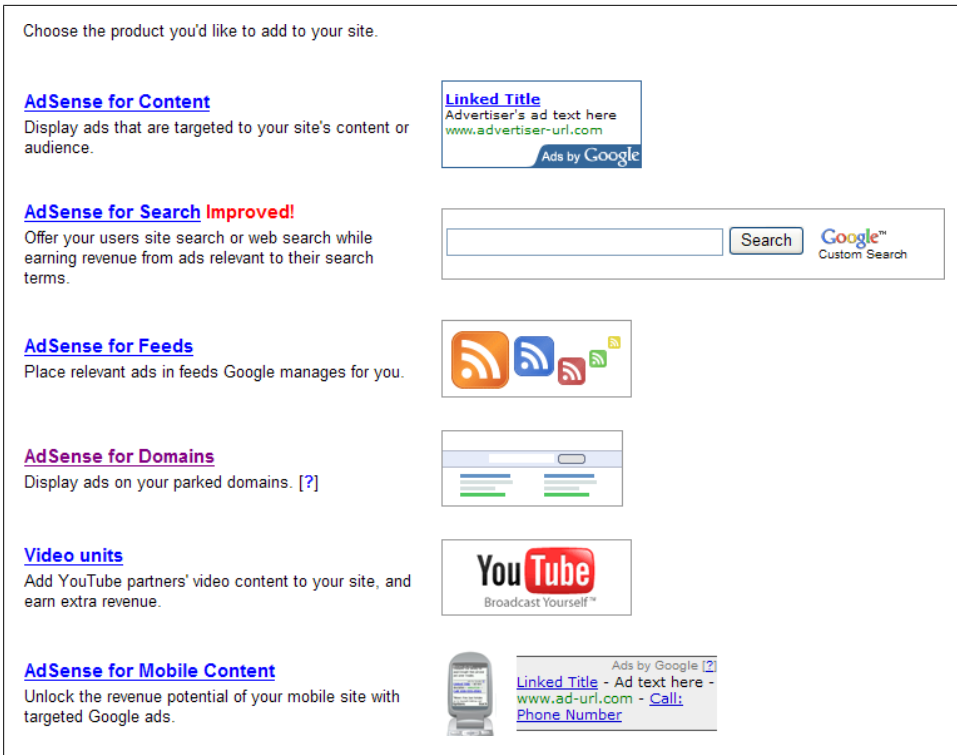


Figure 8-9. The Get Ads page is your gateway to deployment of the various AdSense programs

While the AdSense for Content and AdSense for Search are generally aimed at the same kind of web content, there are differences in the way the programs work. AdSense for Content places ads on your web pages, similar to the ad unit shown in Figure 8-10, and you make money when a site visitor clicks on the ad.

With AdSense for Search, you put a Google search box, like the one shown in Figure 8-11, on your site.

The AdSense search box displays Google search results when a user enters a query. These search results show relevant ads. You receive a portion of the revenue generated when a visitor uses your search box and then clicks on an ad from the search results page, such as that shown in Figure 8-12, returned by Google.

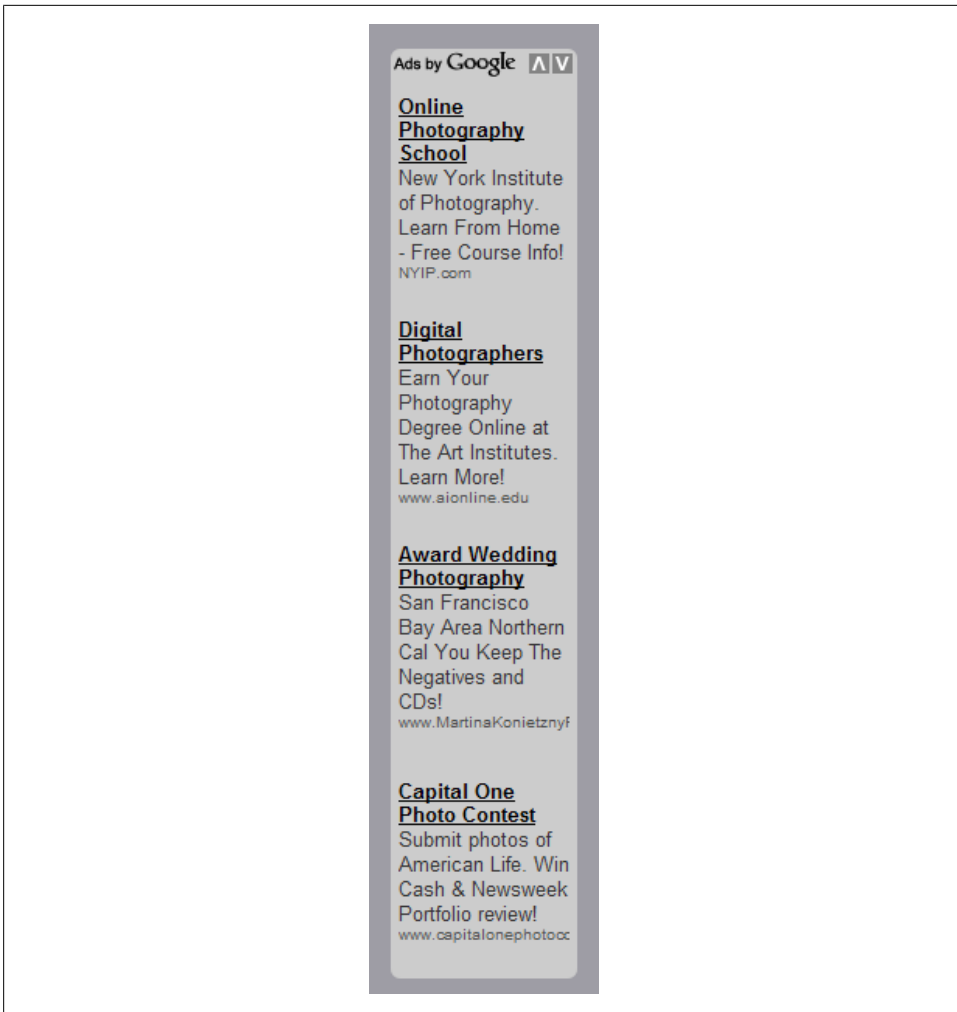


Figure 8-10. A typical AdSense for Content unit provides text ads with links; you get paid when someone clicks one of the links



Adding to the power of the AdSense search program, you can use the SiteSearch option to search your site rather than the Web (see “[AdSense for Search Settings](#)” on page 230 for details). You can also configure the AdSense search results page (whether searching your site or the Web) to match the look of your website.

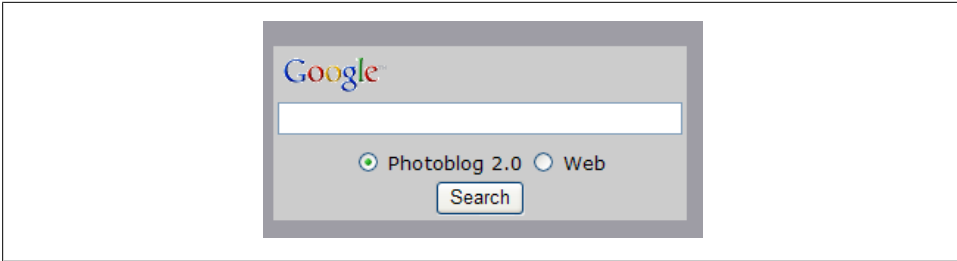


Figure 8-11. In the AdSense for Search program, a search box goes on your site

Ads by Google


Rose Bushes
www.JacksonandPerkins.com Huge Variety of Award-Winning **Roses** Trusted Source for Over 135 Years.

Free Delivery FTD Flowers
FTDfloristsOnline.com/flowers Free delivery for online orders FTD Florist satisfaction guaranteed

Rose Flower
shopping.msn.com Flowers at MSN Shopping - Save Big! Compare Products & Prices Online.

Rose California
1800flowers.com 100% Satisfaction Guaranteed! Same Day Delivery at 1-800-FLOWERS.

Web Results 1 - 10 of about 365 from www.digitalfieldguide.com for **rose. (0.10 second**

powered by


[The Birth of Katie Rose Davis | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 May 31, 2008 ... This story is a recapitulation. If you've been following Katie's story, you may not find anything new here (although I don't think I've ...
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1265 - [Similar pages](#)

[Hands | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 Sep 5, 2008 ... Dr. Michael Katz, who delivered Katie **Rose**, suggests that the whole story is in the size of Phyllis's hands. If you.
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1371 - [Similar pages](#)

[Catching Up with Katie Rose | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 Arrgh!, photo by Harold Davis. It's been fun having Katie **Rose** over the holidays . Each of the boys thinks she's his personal play thing, kind of like a.
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1892 - [Similar pages](#)

[Rose Moon Rising | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 The fog coming and going was beautiful, and the **rose** moon rising was icing on the cake (to badly mix my metaphors). For me, this was a bus person's holiday, ...
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/910 - [Similar pages](#)

Figure 8-12. When a site visitor clicks on one of the advertising links on a search page (at the top of the page shown), you earn revenue with AdSense for Search

AdSense for Content or AdSense for Search?

Is AdSense for Content or AdSense for Search right for your site? It's hard to say, and of course you can have both on your site.

From a general viewpoint, AdSense for Content works best on *destination sites*. If visitors to your site tend to linger a while and regard your site as conferring some authority on the ads you present, then AdSense for Content will probably work well.

On the other hand, if your site is a way station leading toward further information (usually on other sites), then it is probable that visitors will frequently use AdSense for Search, if it is available on your site, and this program may make you quite a bit of money.

AdSense for Content Ad Settings

Once your AdSense account has been approved, you'll likely want to get started by adding the code that will place Google's ads on your site. To get started with AdSense for Content, log in to Google AdSense and click the Ad Settings tab. The AdSense for Content Wizard, shown in [Figure 8-13](#), will open.

AdSense for Content

[Choose Ad Type](#) > [Choose Ad Format and Colors](#) > [Choose Ad Channels](#) > [Save and Get Ad Code](#)

Wizard | [Single page](#)

Google AdSense [program policies](#) allow you to place up to three ad units and three link units on any page.

Ad unit ▼

Ad units contain either text ads, image ads, or both. The ads are targeted to the content of your page using contextual and placement targeting.

Link unit

Each link unit displays a list of topics that are relevant to your page. When users click a topic, they're brought to a page of related ads. [?](#)

Figure 8-13. The AdSense for Content Wizard walks you through the process of getting ad code



You can choose to enter all your settings at once by selecting the single page option; it's equivalent to the Wizard and may be quicker to use once you are familiar with AdSense.

Ad Type

Ads are supplied by Google in *units*. An *ad unit* contains from one to six ads. For example, an ad unit was shown earlier in [Figure 8-10](#).

A *link unit*, shown in [Figure 8-14](#), contains four or five links to pages listing ads.



Figure 8-14. A link unit displays links to Google pages that display ads

Your first choice is to decide which kind of unit—ad or link—you want to display.



Web pages can contain both kinds of AdSense ad units on the same page. According to the Google TOS, you can have up to three ad units on a single page, and you can mix and match ad and link units.

If you select an ad unit, the drop-down list to the right of the ad unit radio button (shown earlier in [Figure 8-13](#)) is used to determine whether only text ads will be displayed in the unit, only image ads will be displayed in the unit, or both.



You can also just leave the text ad/image ad setting for the unit at the default you selected when you signed up for the AdSense program or that you chose in your account options.

Ad units display ads directly on your pages, where they are probably more likely to be clicked than link units. Link units are, in some ways, one step removed; a link unit presents links to ads rather than the ads themselves. But the advantage of the link unit is that it takes up almost no space and the ad pages can contain many ads.

This effective use of real estate makes sense if your site visitors are affirmatively looking for additional resources related to a topic rather than “impulse clicking.” Once again, experimentation and trial and error are the best ways to find what works on your site.

After you've chosen the type of ad unit you are configuring, click Continue to open the Ad Format and Colors panel of the Wizard.

Ad Format and Colors

If you are configuring an ad unit (as opposed to a link unit), you will see a page like that shown in [Figure 8-15](#).

Choose Ad Type > **Choose Ad Format and Colors** > Choose Ad Channels > Save and Get Ad Code

Wizard | [Single page](#)

You can customize your ads to fit in with your pages. Use the options below to specify ad size, style, and more.

Format
Ad units come in a variety of sizes - view all the options on our [Ad Formats](#) page. 728 x 90 Leaderboard

Colors
Choose from one of our pre-designed color palettes, or create your own palette. [Tips](#)

* Some options apply to text ads only.

Palettes: Harold's Choice [Save as new palette](#) | [Edit palettes](#)

Border # CCCCCC
Title # 000000
Background # CCCCCC
Text # 333333
URL # FFFFFF

Sample
Linked Title
Advertiser's ad text here
www.advertiser-url.com
Ads by Google

[Preview this AdSense unit](#)

Corner Styles
Optionally, choose from one of our pre-designed corner styles. Select corner style

More options

Alternate ads or colors
Choose what to display if no relevant ads are available. [Learn more...](#)

Show public service ads
 Show non-Google ads from another URL
 Fill space with a solid color

<< Back Continue >>

Figure 8-15. You can use the Ad Format and Colors panel of the Wizard to configure what your ad unit will look like

If you are configuring a link unit, this panel will look slightly different, as you can see in [Figure 8-16](#).

AdSense for Content

Choose Ad Type > **Choose Ad Format and Colors** > Choose Ad Channels > Save and Get Ad Code

Wizard | [Single page](#)

You can customize your ads to fit in with your pages. Use the options below to specify ad size, style, and more.

Format 728 x 15 ▾

Link units come in a variety of sizes - view all the options on our [Ad Formats](#) page.

4 links per unit
 5 links per unit

Colors

Choose from one of our pre-designed color palettes, or create your own palette. [Tips](#)

* Some options apply to text ads only.

Palettes: Harold's Choice ▾
[Edit palettes](#)

Border # CCCCCC
 Links # 000000
 Background # CCCCCC

Sample

Ads by Google

[Bicycle parts](#)
[Bicycle training](#)
[Bicycle shops](#)
[Cycling news](#)

[Preview this AdSense unit](#)

More options

Alternate ads or colors
 Choose what to display if no relevant link units are available. [Learn more...](#)

Show public service ads
 Show non-Google ads from another URL
 Fill space with a solid color

Reuse colors
 Use the same colors on your ad pages.

Figure 8-16. Link units differ from ad units in terms of formatting

Format

The Format section of the ad layout code page is used to specify a size for your ad or link unit. Table 8-1 shows the drop-down list of choices for ad units, which are also shown in Figure 8-17.

Table 8-1. Ad unit names and sizes

Unit name	Size (in pixels; width first)
Leaderboard	728 × 90
Banner	468 × 60
Large Rectangle	336 × 280
Medium Rectangle	300 × 250
Square	250 × 250
Half Banner	234 × 60

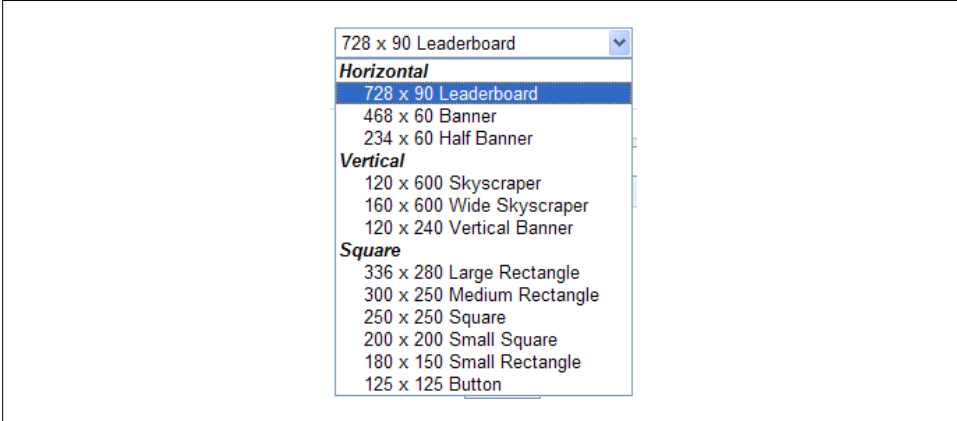


Figure 8-17. You choose the size for your ad unit from a drop-down list

Unit name	Size (in pixels; width first)
Small Rectangle	180 × 150
Wide Skyscraper	160 × 600
Button	125 × 125
Skyscraper	120 × 600
Vertical Banner	120 × 240

If you are specifying a link unit, you can choose to have four or five links in the unit. Your size choices for the link unit (in pixels, width first) are shown in [Table 8-2](#).

Table 8-2. Link sizes and number of links

Size (in pixels; width first)	Number of links
120 × 90	Up to five links
160 × 90	Up to five links
120 × 90_4	Up to four links
160 × 90_4	Up to four links
180 × 90	Up to five links
180 × 90_4	Up to four links
200 × 90	Up to five links
200 × 90_4	Up to four links
468 × 15	Up to five links
468 × 15_4	Up to four links
728 × 15	Up to five links
728 × 15_4	Up to four links

Colors

The Colors section, shown in [Figure 8-18](#), lets you choose the colors for text and other elements of your AdSense ad units so that your ad units work well with your site.

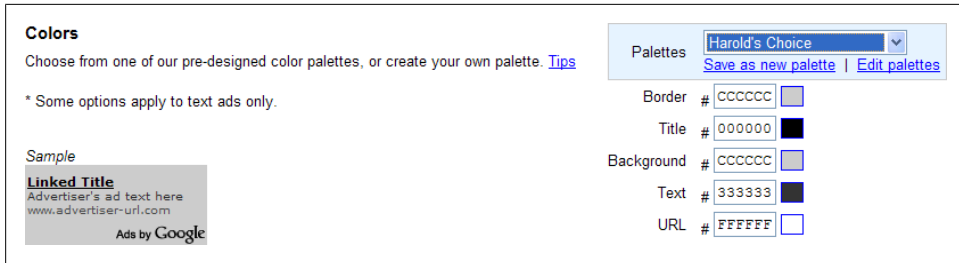


Figure 8-18. You can choose colors for your AdSense ad units that work well with your site

You can choose from a number of existing color schemes, called color palettes, for your ad unit, or design your own color scheme. It's likely that you will want to pick your own colors, either to match your pages or to stand out from your pages. In that case, you should save your scheme as a custom palette by clicking the “Save as new palette” link shown in [Figure 8-18](#).

The best way to see which (if any) of the existing color palettes is right for a given web page or site, and to see the impact of your custom color choices, is to run through the list of possibilities in the Palettes drop-down list. When you select a color palette, an example showing the appearance of the ad elements using that scheme will display to the left under the word “Sample.”

Which Color Choice Works Best?

There's a lot of discussion in webmaster circles about which AdSense colors work best. Ultimately, nobody really knows; it is different for different sites, and experimenting and watching the results make sense. It's now even easier to do this if you link your Google AdSense account to your Google Analytics account.

That said, there are two circulating theories that have strong advocates (but happen to be contradictory):

- Use the color palette to match your site. If you do this, it is speculated, some users may click on the ads because they think they are part of your site, not ads.
- Make a color choice that starkly contrasts with your site. By doing this, the ads are made more noticeable, and thus it is more likely that they may be clicked.



You can also get a sense of the visual impact of your color choices by clicking “Preview this AdSense unit.”

More options

If you are configuring an ad unit, you can choose a corner type for the unit. The choices are square corners, slightly rounded corners, or very rounded corners. If you don’t make a choice, you will get square corners.

If Google doesn’t have an ad to display on your web page—because it hasn’t figured out what would be contextually relevant or because there’s nothing in the Google ad inventory that matches your content—Google will display a public service ad of its choice. There’s nothing wrong, in my opinion, with public service ads, and personally I always elect to display them. However, some webmasters do not like to give away their “real estate” without getting something in return.

You can change the behavior of a Google ad unit when it doesn’t have an ad to serve by choosing either an alternate URL or a color code (Figure 8-19). The obvious use for an alternate URL is to use it to link to a standby ad of your own, so that the real estate occupied on your site by the Google ad unit can be productive even when Google doesn’t have any ads to serve.

The color code box is used to enter a color specification in hexadecimal RGB notation. To get the hexadecimal for a color, you can click the “Choose a color” link. Select the color you’d like from a palette and Google will supply the hexadecimal code. This color will be displayed in the Google unit when there is no ad to serve.

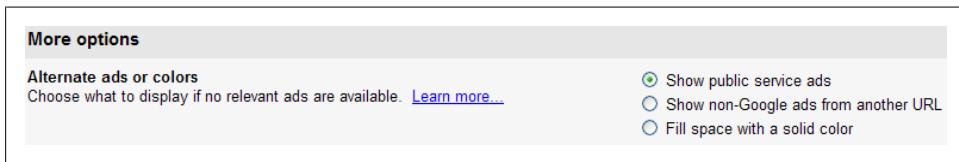


Figure 8-19. If you choose an alternate URL or a color code, Google will not display public service ads



The best use for the color alternative is to specify the background color of your site. That way, if Google doesn’t have an ad to serve, the Google ad unit will not be visible—it will just look like part of your site background.

AdSense for Mobile Content

AdSense for Mobile Content works pretty much like a regular AdSense unit—except that you have to have a mobile website written using mobile markup tags. Mobile sites

need to be constructed using server-side scripting languages. Google only supports ASP.NET, JSP, Perl, and PHP.

Google won't help you build this kind of site; as the supporting documentation notes, if you don't know whether you have one, you probably don't. A suggestion is to search the web for terms like “create mobile website” or “make mobile web page.”

Actually, it is not difficult to convert many websites so that they are mobile (although some kinds of content, such as large graphic files, are inherently resistant to mobile display).

To get started once you have a mobile website, from the AdSense Setup page, click AdSense for Mobile Content. Configuring a mobile content unit is essentially the same as configuring a normal ad unit except there is less real estate (so you can only display single or double ads), and you need to specify the mobile markup language used on your site. The choices are XHTML (WAP 2.0, the default), WML (WAP 1.x), and CHTML.

In certain circumstances, mobile advertising is very effective and useful. For example, if I am looking for a Chinese restaurant in a specific area with my mobile device, then I'll be glad to see relevant ads. However, when planning mobile advertising you should bear in mind the limited nature of display space, and try to ensure customer relevancy—there's nothing more annoying than an irrelevant ad when you just need to use your phone.

Ad Channels

Channels are a mechanism for keeping track of which part of a site—or which site, if you are managing multiple sites in one AdSense account—is generating clicks. *Custom channels* are channels that you define in advance of ad deployment. A Google unit can be assigned to a custom channel you've created, as shown in [Figure 8-20](#).

In addition to custom channels, *URL channels*, which track ad unit clicks by URL, can help you keep track of how your Google ad and link units are doing. See “[Using Channels](#)” on [page 227](#) for more information about channels.

Getting the Code

With your Google unit selections made, it's time to grab the code for your unit and place it in your web page.

Ad unit example

Suppose you decided to create a Skyscraper (120 × 600) ad unit using a custom color palette and very rounded corners (and otherwise accept the default options from Google). The next step is to give the ad unit a name, as shown in [Figure 8-21](#).

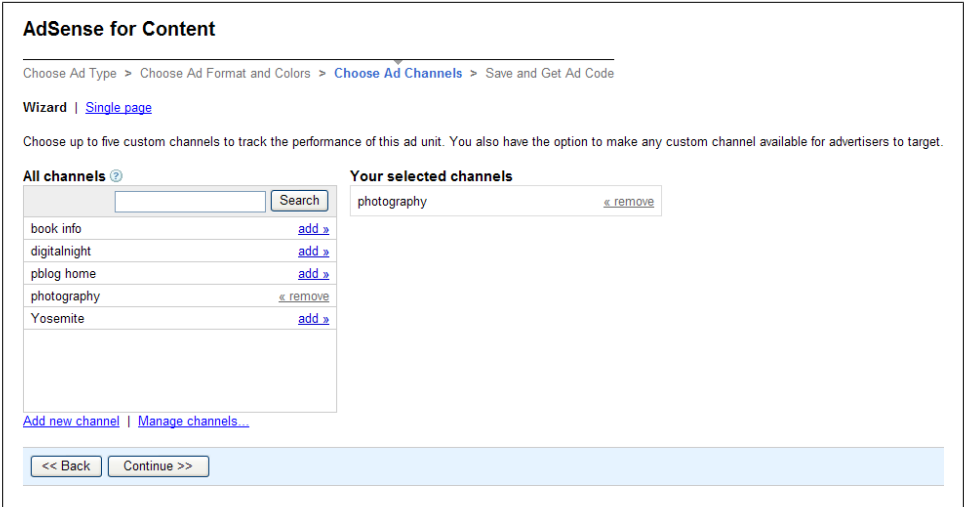


Figure 8-20. Custom channels are user-defined and can help you keep track of pages and groups of pages and their click-through rates

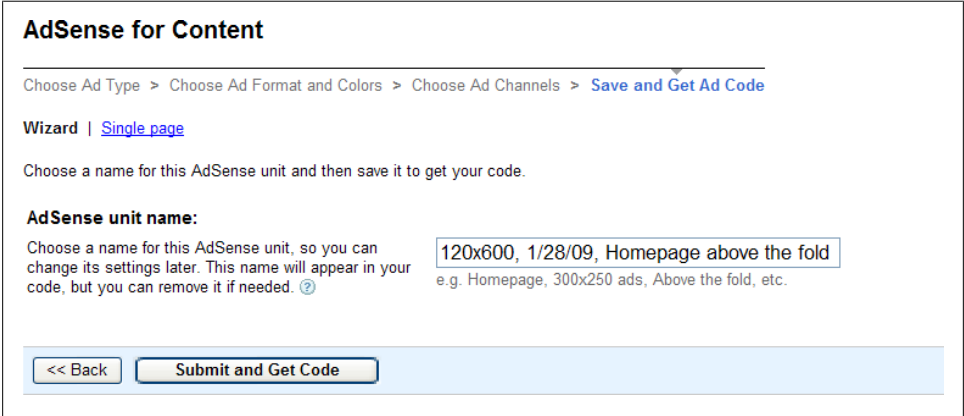


Figure 8-21. By giving your AdSense unit a name, you'll be able to find it to change its settings when you need to



Be sure to pick a descriptive name. Assuming you have a number of web pages, and a corresponding number of AdSense ad units, it can be difficult to know which one is which unless you provide plenty of information in the unit name.


Once you've named your ad unit, click "Submit and Get Code." Next, click the code box shown in [Figure 8-22](#) to select and then copy the code for the unit you have specified.

[Get Ads](#) > AdSense for Content

AdSense unit: 120x600,1/28/09, Homepage above the fold

Your AdSense unit has been saved. Changes may not appear for up to 10 minutes. ?

You may paste this code into [any web page or website](#) that complies with our [program policies](#).

 **Tip:** Did you know that you can make changes to your ads without replacing the ad code on

Your AdSense unit code:

```
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-5493015234961725";
/* 120x600,1/28/09, Homepage above the fold */
google_ad_slot = "1963938419";
google_ad_width = 120;
google_ad_height = 600;
//-->
</script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js">
```

[Preview this AdSense unit](#) | [Edit this AdSense unit](#) | [Create a new AdSense unit](#)

Figure 8-22. The next step is to copy and paste the code from the box into your web page

Here's the complete code for the ad unit:

```
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-5493015234961725";
/* 120x600,1/28/09, Homepage above the fold */
google_ad_slot = "1963938419";
google_ad_width = 120;
google_ad_height = 600;
//-->
</script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js">
</script>
```

If you look at the code that makes up this Google ad unit, it is really a very simple affair, built using JavaScript. First, a couple of variables are set, including your publisher ID and an ID for the ad (the `google_ad_slot` value). Next, a remote script on Google's server, `show_ads.js`, is called. This script generates the HTML for the ad unit that displays on your page.

It's your job to paste the code that Google has generated into position in the pages served by your web server. The specifics of the tools you need to use to do this depend upon many variables, but it's no different than making any other changes to your web pages.

Figure 8-23 shows adding the Google code to a PHP web page using a PHP code editor.

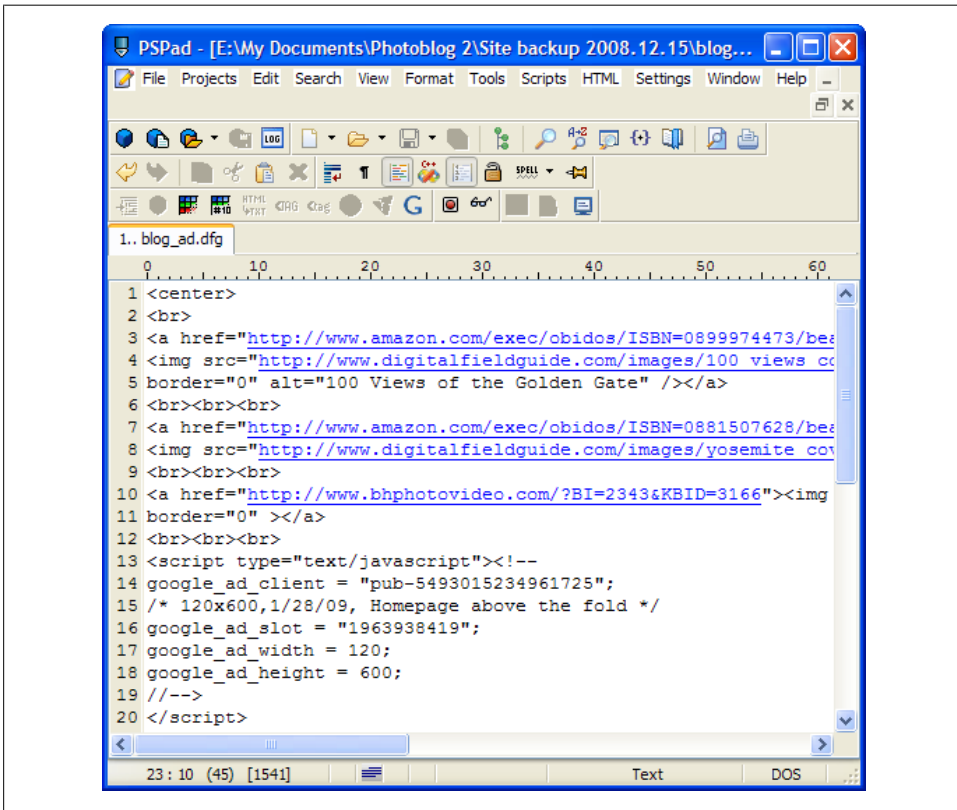


Figure 8-23. You'll need to add the Google code to your pages on your web server



You can check out the way this ad unit looks in Figures 8-10 and 8-24.

Once you've created it, you can change the configuration of an existing ad unit without modifying the code using the Manage Ads page (see [“Managing Ads” on page 224](#)).



Earlier versions of AdSense ads set configuration options using variables within the code. This meant that you had to change your pages to change the appearance of the ads. These older ads are no longer generated by Google, but they will still work if you choose not to upgrade.

Link unit example

Suppose you decided to display a link unit with five links and a dimension of 120 × 90 pixels. Here's the code AdSense would generate for you to copy and paste:

```
<script type="text/javascript"><!--  
google_ad_client = "pub-5493015234961725";  
/* 120x90, created 1/28/09 */  
google_ad_slot = "4665943536";  
google_ad_width = 120;  
google_ad_height = 90;  
//-->  
</script>  
<script type="text/javascript"  
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js">  
</script>
```

Paste the link unit code into one of your web pages (or an include file), and copy the pages or include file to your server. The link unit will then appear on your site, hardly taking up any space at all, and look just like more links, as shown in Figures 8-14 and 8-24 beneath the ad unit. If you click on one of the links in the link unit, a Google page consisting of contextual ads will open (Figure 8-25).

Where to Place AdSense Ads on Your Pages

Publishers may well wonder where they should place AdSense ads on their pages for the best results. There's a great deal of speculation about AdSense ad placement in webmaster circles, but not much hard data.

It is clear that ads placed above the fold—meaning in the top third of the page where they will be seen on any computer monitor without scrolling down—do better than ads placed lower on a page.

The best performing AdSense ad format and position is Leaderboard (also called a horizontal skyscraper) close to the top of a page. The second-best format is one of the several vertical skyscraper formats (Skyscraper and Wide Skyscraper), with the top ad very close to the top of the page, either along the left or right side. If a vertical skyscraper is positioned along the right side of a page, then you need to take care to use a page design with a total width of less than 800 pixels so the skyscraper along the righthand side will display without horizontal scrolling on all monitors.

Beyond this basic placement information, you might want to consider whether it makes sense to put many ads on a single page (the Google limit is three ad units). There's something to be said for placing many ads on a page—the variety might produce good choices for more visitors. However, the “noise” of displaying many ads can detract from your site and some publishers get better results with fewer ads.

The bottom line is that you should experiment with ad placement and the number of ads on your site. What works well for your site is not necessarily what works well for another site, so there is no substitute for trial and error. To assist publishers, if you have

linked your Google AdSense and Google Analytics accounts, you can begin to test and measure performance, as shown in [Figure 8-57](#) later in this chapter.

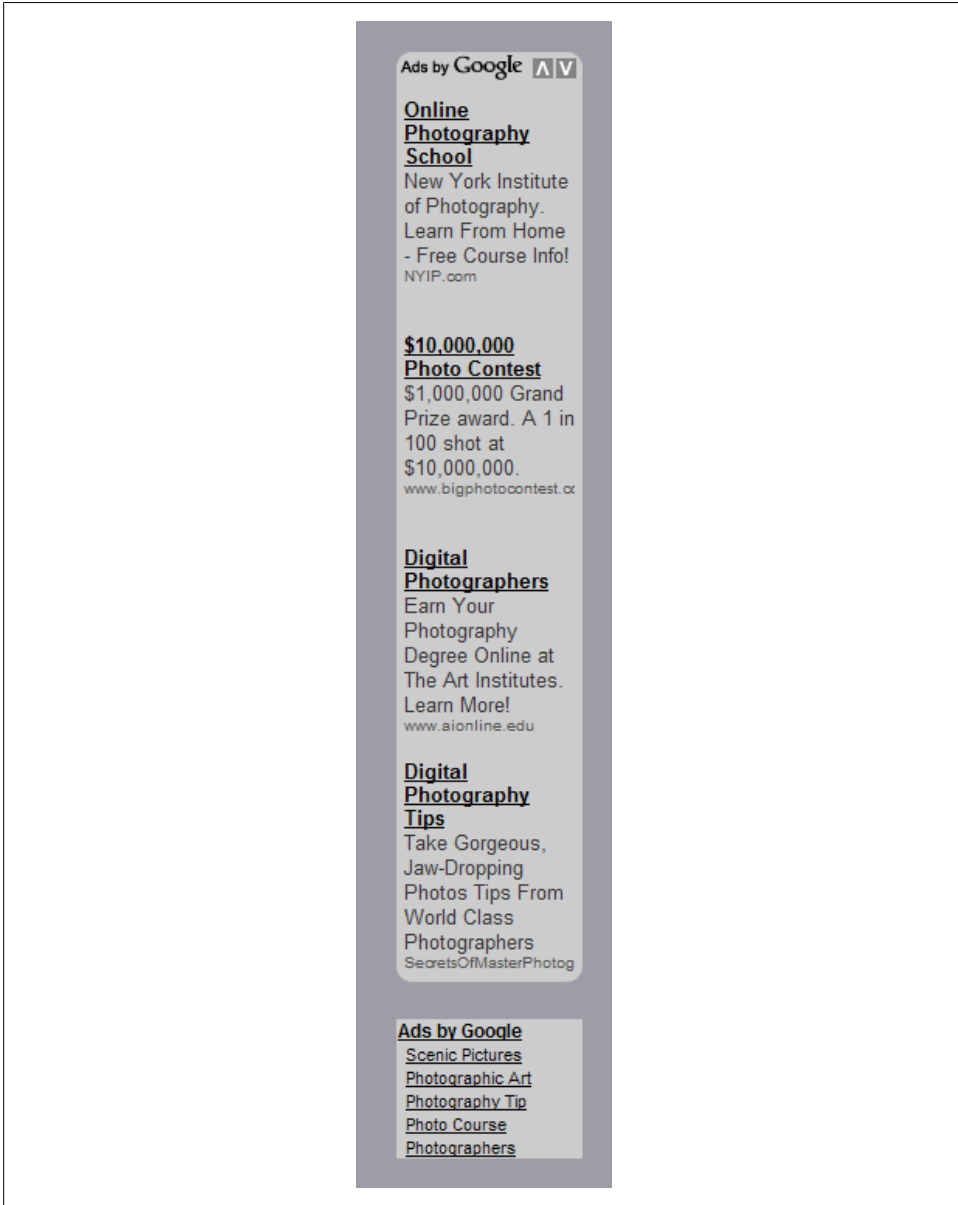


Figure 8-24. An ad unit is shown above a link unit



The screenshot shows a Google Ads interface. At the top left is the Google logo. Below it, the heading "Ads by Google" is displayed. The main content area contains several advertisement units, each with a title, a brief description, and a website URL. On the right side, there is a vertical list of links under the heading "View ads about:", including "Scenic Pictures", "Photographic Art", "Photography Tip", "Photo Course", and "Photographers".

Google

Ads by Google

[Children's Photography](#)
Maternity Newborn Babies Kids and Family Photography
www.wassenberghphotography.com

[Fine Art Photography](#)
Handsigned Prints on Canvas or Traditional Paper, Gallery Quality.
www.proshotimages.com

[Nature Photographers](#)
Earn Your Photography Degree Online at The Art Institutes. Learn More!
www.aionline.edu

[Baby Photography](#)
Color or B&W, shot in natural light Sessions are relaxed and fun
www.heatherforbes.com

[Digital Photography Class](#)
Learn From Home at Your Own Pace - Request a Free Course Catalog!
NYIP.com

[Ann's Photography](#)
Landscapes & Wildlife & Skys 8X10 Original Photographs by Ann
annmcgregorphoto.ifp3.com/

[Photographic Art](#)
Should Imitate The Conventions Of Academic Painting, Have Your Say
forandagainst.com

[Free Stock Photos](#)
Create a Free Account and Download High Resolution Images for Free.
Dreamstime.com

[Hislop Photography](#)
Commercial Photography Aerial Photography
www.hislopphoto.com

[Buy Original Photo Art](#)
Landscapes, Nature. Pugs, Paintings Prints, Frames, T-shirts, plus more
jdweissPhotoArt.com

View ads about:

- [Scenic Pictures](#)
- [Photographic Art](#)
- [Photography Tip](#)
- [Photo Course](#)
- [Photographers](#)

Figure 8-25. Clicking the link unit opens a page of related ads hosted by Google

Managing Ads

Click the Manage Ads link on the AdSense Setup tab to open the Manage Ads page, shown in [Figure 8-26](#). The Manage Ads page lets you modify ads you've already created. It's a very nice feature that lets you change ads on the fly without having to change the code in your web pages.

To change the settings for a specific ad, click the Edit Ad Settings link.



Ads cannot be deleted (so that you don't make a mistake and delete an ad that is in use). However, if you are no longer using an ad, you can click the Hide link and it will not be displayed.

Manage Ads

View your active AdSense units below. You can also [import your old AdSense code](#) to create saved AdSense units. [?](#)

Show: Inactive units [?](#) Hidden units [?](#)

View: [Create a new AdSense unit](#)

Name (Info)	Last edited	Content	Size	Status	Channels	Actions
120x600, created 1/28/09, Homepage above the fold <small>(#1903030419)</small>	Jan 28, 2009	Text ads	120x600	Active	photography	Edit Ad Settings Code Preview Hide
120x90, created 1/28/09 <small>(#4869543536)</small>	Jan 28, 2009	Ad links	120x90	Active	link unit	Edit Ad Settings Code Preview Hide
200x90, created 1/28/09 <small>(#7637089290)</small>	Jan 28, 2009	Ad links	200x90	New	link unit	Edit Ad Settings Code Preview Hide
468x60, created 12/21/09 <small>(#5920615172)</small>	Dec 21, 2009	Text ads	468x60	Active		Edit Ad Settings Code Preview Hide

[Why can't I delete my ad units?](#)

Figure 8-26. You can change the settings for a specific ad on the fly without having to change the code in your web pages

Custom Ad Colors

Suppose you don't like the default color schemes for ads that Google offers. You can create new color schemes or modify an existing scheme by clicking the Color Palettes link on the AdSense Setup tab.



You can also open the Color Palettes page by clicking the "Manage color palettes" link from Choose Ad Color and Formats page.

Using the Color Palettes page, you start with one of the built-in Google palettes. Next, you can modify each of the colored elements of the palette, either by specifying an RGB hexadecimal color value or by choosing colors from a color picker (see [Figure 8-27](#)).

Once you have the color scheme you want, you can save your custom palette (using any name you'd like). Your custom palette will be added to the list on the Choose Ad Color and Formats page ([Figure 8-28](#)).



I'm explaining using custom color palettes in the context of AdSense ads. You should know that much of AdSense's customization features, such as channels and colors, work for AdSense for Search and AdSense for Domains as well as straight ad units, even though I haven't specifically noted it.

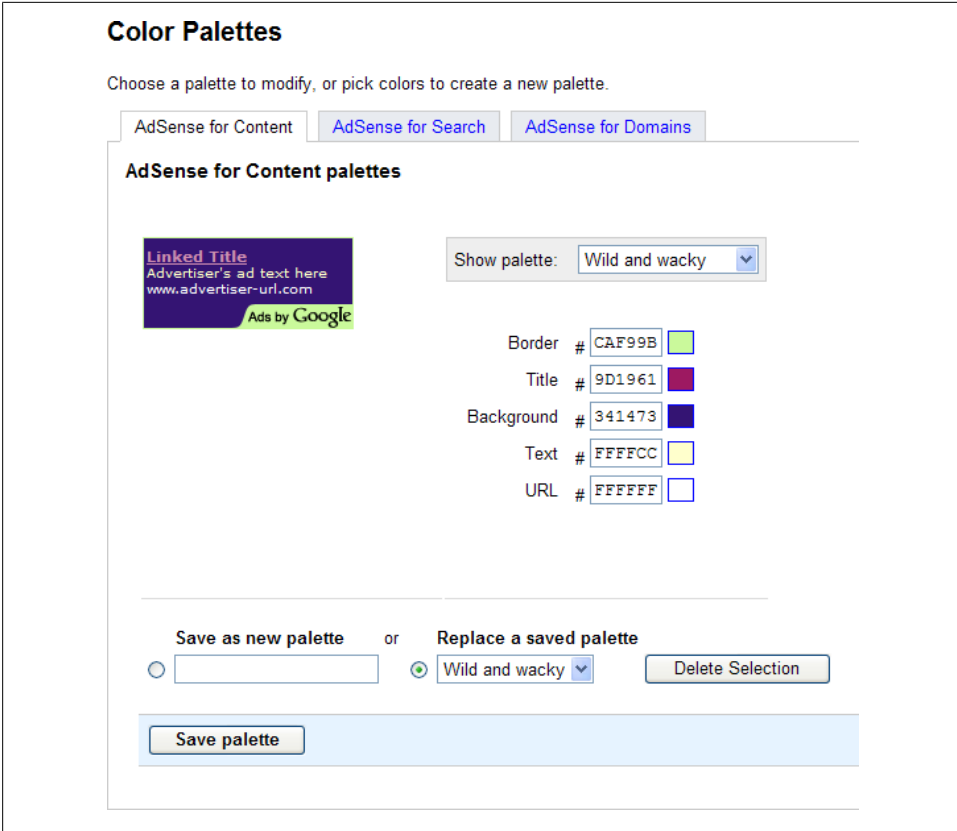


Figure 8-27. Creating your own custom palettes makes it easy to match the design of your site

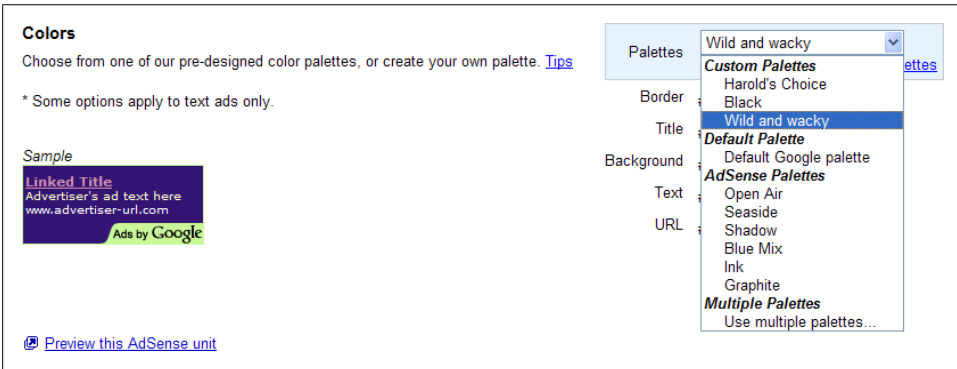


Figure 8-28. Custom palettes are available on the Choose Ad Color and Formats page

Using Channels

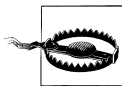
The Channels page, opened by clicking the Channels link on the AdSense Setup tab, lets you define URL and custom channels.

URL channels are tracked by web address, and you can add these at any point. You can use URL channels to track a single page, a directory in a domain, or an entire domain. For example, the URL channel www.digitalfieldguide.com will track ads served and clicked on this URL and ads on any page below that address (for example, ads on pages in www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/). In contrast, the URL channel www.digitalfieldguide.com/index.php tracks activity only on the page *index.php*. Figure 8-29 shows the interface for creating and managing URL channels.



For information about using URL channel information to understand your Google AdSense activity, see [Chapter 9](#).

Custom channels are not limited by the domain and directory structure of your web server, and track activity from an ad unit—wherever it is located—that is linked to the custom channel. The catch is that for this to work, you need to have created the custom channel and associated the ad unit with that channel *before* deploying the ad unit. In contrast, you can always add a URL channel (but URL channels are not flexible in terms of the information they report).



The need to specify a custom URL channel before you deploy your ad code is a serious drawback. Things do change often and quickly on the Web. Adding or changing custom channels means changing the actual ad unit code in your pages.

Custom channels allow you to track AdSense information as you'd like to see it, perhaps divided by subject matter rather than web addresses. In addition, one important use of custom channels is to allow advertisers to use a channel as an ad target, meaning to place ads only on the pages referenced by your channel. This allows you to carve out web “real estate” aimed at specific kinds of advertisers—for example, only pages that relate to digital cameras. To implement a custom channel as an advertisement target, click the edit settings link for the custom channel in the page used to create and manage custom channels shown in [Figure 8-30](#).

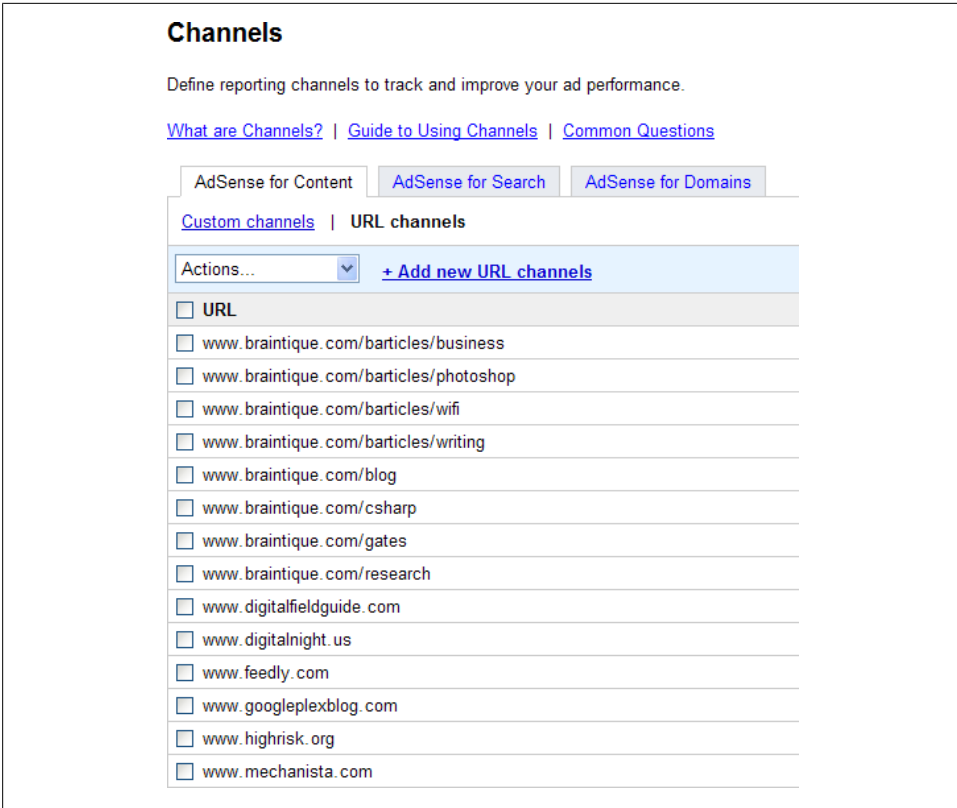


Figure 8-29. URL channels track activity by web address, so you can use them to monitor impressions and clicks on specific pages, directories, and domains

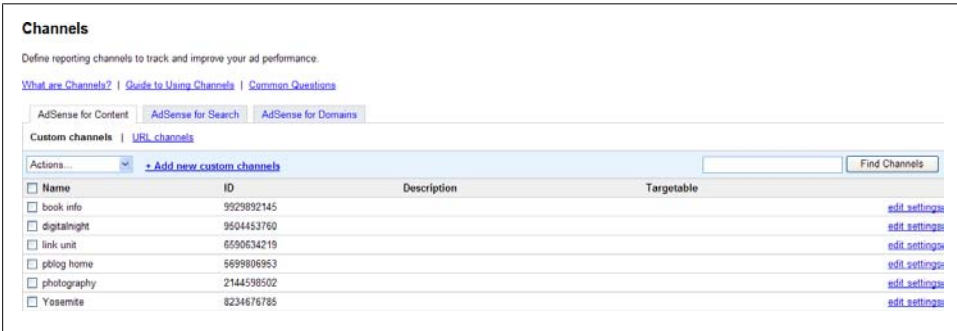
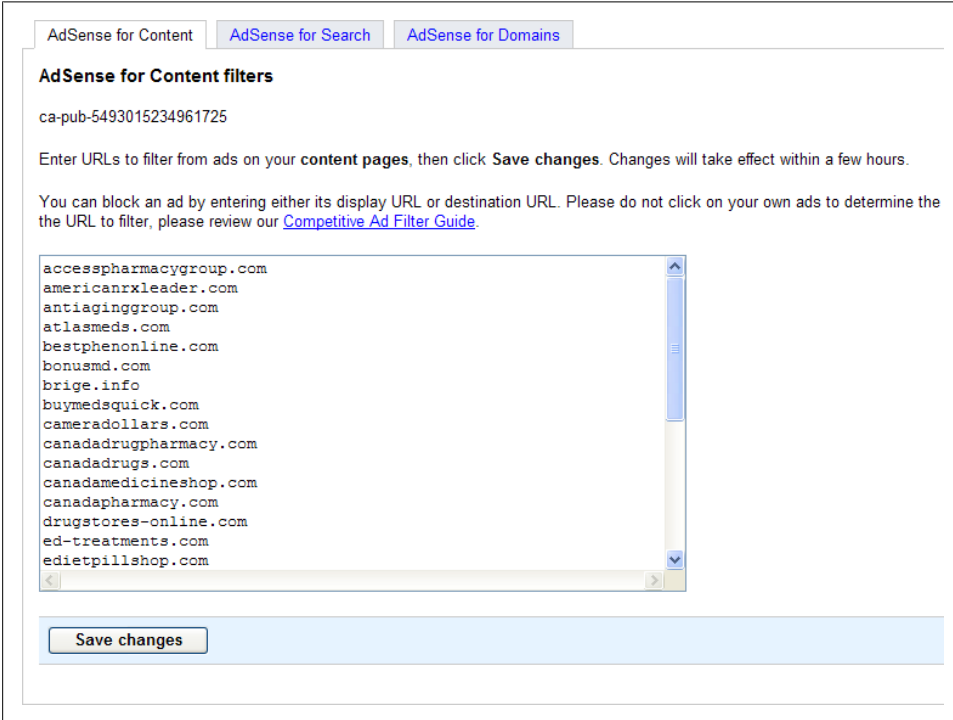


Figure 8-30. Custom channels must be defined before they can be deployed but can be used for granular ad unit tracking

Applying Competitive Filters

Sometimes it's a good idea to filter ads so that they *don't* appear on your site. The most common reason for doing this is to make sure that competitors' ads don't appear on your site, but you might also simply want to make sure that ads from organizations you find offensive don't appear beside your web content.

To block ads, based on their display URL or destination URL, from appearing on your site, click the Competitive Ad Filter link found on the AdSense for Content tab. Enter the addresses you want to ban in the box shown in [Figure 8-31](#).



AdSense for Content | AdSense for Search | AdSense for Domains

AdSense for Content filters

ca-pub-5493015234961725

Enter URLs to filter from ads on your **content pages**, then click **Save changes**. Changes will take effect within a few hours.

You can block an ad by entering either its display URL or destination URL. Please do not click on your own ads to determine the URL to filter, please review our [Competitive Ad Filter Guide](#).

accesspharmacygroup.com
americanrxleader.com
antiaginggroup.com
atlasmeds.com
bestphenonline.com
bonusmd.com
brige.info
buymedsquick.com
cameradollars.com
canadadrugpharmacy.com
canadadrugs.com
canadamedicineshop.com
canadapharmacy.com
drugstores-online.com
ed-treatments.com
edietpillshop.com

Save changes

Figure 8-31. You can easily filter out ads from your competitors or ads that you find offensive

Finding that Offensive URL

Suppose an AdSense ad that you really don't like and want to ban appears on your site. Bearing in mind that you are not supposed to click on ads on your own site, how do you determine what URL to use in the Competitive Ad Filters dialog to exclude the ad?

Following these steps will let you find the URL you need to ban:

1. Right-click the ad title (the portion of the ad that is a hyperlink).

2. If you are using Internet Explorer, select Copy Shortcut. On Firefox or Safari, the command will be something like Copy Link Location.
3. Paste the selection into a text editor like Notepad or TextEdit.
4. The destination URL for the ad will appear following the `adurl=` portion of the URL, and continue up to the ampersand (&).

For example, if the pasted selection is something like this (portions of the ad string have been omitted):

```
http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/adclick?sa=l&...  
&adurl=http://www.  
competitiontermite.com&client=...
```

then the destination URL is <http://www.competitiontermite.com>.

Site Authentication, Ad Review, and Allowed Sites

There are some other settings you should know about, accessed as links on the AdSense Setup tab. Depending on your situation, you may never want to use these settings. On the other hand, for some sites they are quite important:

Site Authentication

Site Authentication allows the Googlebot to get behind a login on a password protected site using the identification you provide. The point here is to allow AdSense to target ads to the content on pages that it wouldn't otherwise be able to access for contextual analysis purposes.

Ad Review

The Ad Review Center is used to allow or block ads that have been specifically targeted to your site.

Allow Sites

The Allow Sites page is the logical converse of the Competitive Filter page. If you choose, using this page you can block all advertisers except those you specifically allow. Note, however, that this will likely not be in the interest of any content owner except one with a very specific and targeted advertising base.

AdSense for Search Settings

As I've noted, AdSense for Search allows you to add a customized search box to your site, and to make money from the ads on the search results page.

To get the code for placing a search box on your web pages, open the AdSense Setup page and click AdSense for Search. You can then choose from various options, including whether you want to have the box search specified domains or the entire Web, and what language should be used.

The site search box is a nifty alternative to Google’s web search box. You set this box up by choosing your domain as the site to search (rather than the entire Web) as shown in [Figure 8-32](#).

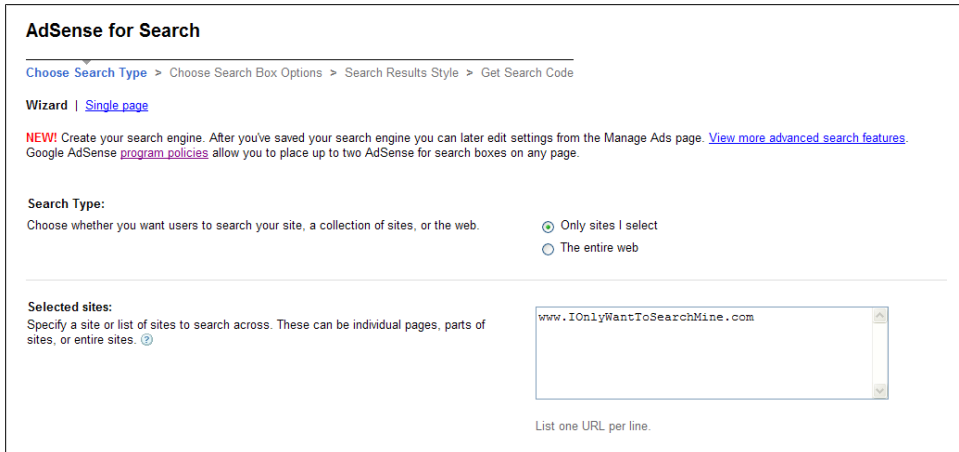


Figure 8-32. AdSense for Search lets you implement a site search box that is useful to your site visitors—and can make you money

Google can only return results from pages it has indexed, so the site search box results of your domains will only be as good as Google’s job of indexing your site. Usually, this is pretty good indeed—so you have a double whammy advantage: users can search your site with a state-of-the-art tool and you potentially increase your revenue.

You can also make some simple layout selections, as shown in [Figure 8-33](#), and decide to exclude adult content from searches by enabling SafeSearch (this option is further down the dialog).

With search box units, as with ad units, you use channels to track the performance of your search boxes. You can also apply competitive search filters to block ads from specific URLs from appearing on the pages generated by your search results. You can change the configuration of a search box you’ve saved using Manage Ads, explained earlier in this chapter.

Once you’ve configured the appearance of the search box, you also need to set the appearance of the search results page as shown in [Figure 8-34](#). Besides using a palette to set the color of text and page elements, you can upload a logo for the page and set the destination that opens when someone clicks on the logo. More important, you can choose to have Google serve the search results page in the open browser window, have Google serve the search results page in a new window, or have the search results appear on one of your own pages.

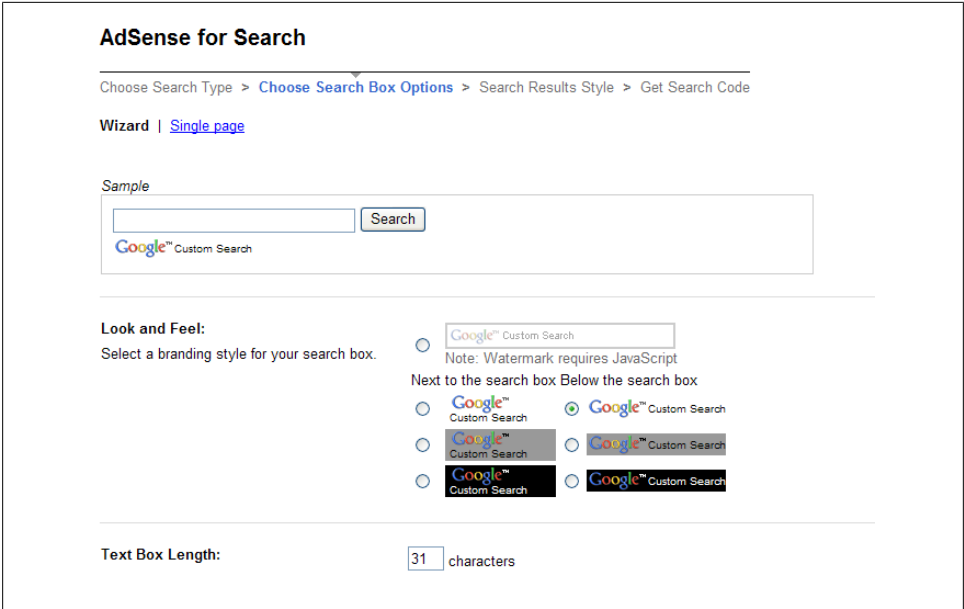


Figure 8-33. Google web search boxes give you some layout choices

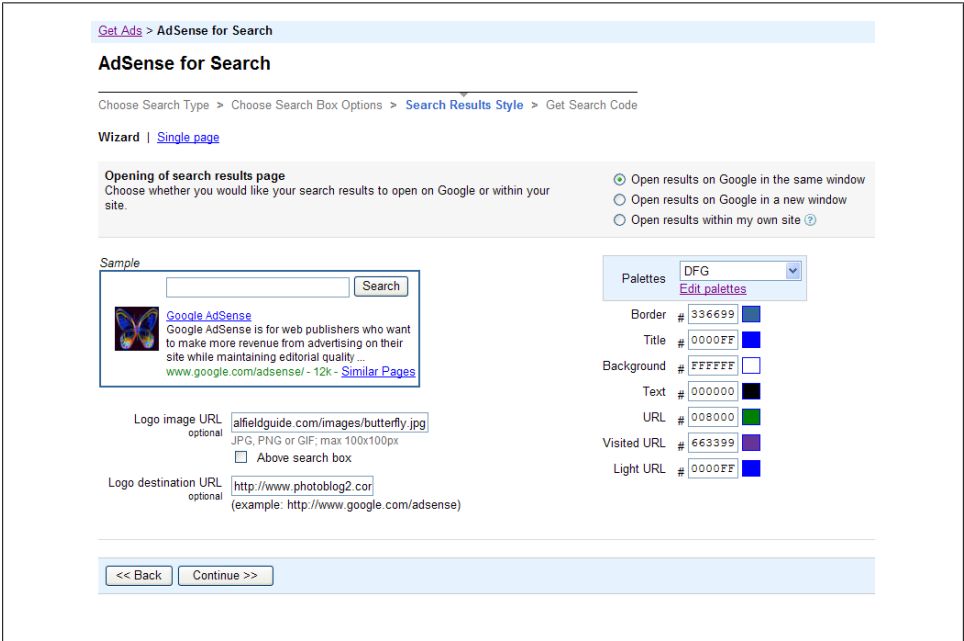


Figure 8-34. You can determine many aspects of the way the search results page looks

With your search box and results page options set, next you'll save the unit settings so you can tweak them as needed. Finally, AdSense generates code for you to use as shown in [Figure 8-35](#).

Search unit: Photblog 2.0

For more help with implementing the AdSense code, please see our [Code Implementation Guide](#).

Search Box Code

Paste this code in the page where you'd like your search box to appear.

```
<form action="http://www.google.com/cse" id="cse-search-box">
  <div>
    <input type="hidden" name="cx" value="partner-pub-
5493015234961725:gbahz1fbr6o" />
    <input type="hidden" name="ie" value="ISO-8859-1" />
    <input type="text" name="q" size="31" />
    <input type="submit" name="sa" value="Search" />
  </div>
</form>
```

[Edit this AdSense unit](#) | [Create a new AdSense unit](#)

Figure 8-35. Click within the code box to select the search box code for copying

Copy and paste the code into your web pages. The search box will appear with the options you selected ([Figure 8-36](#)); when someone searches your site, the results page will show relevant advertisements ([Figure 8-37](#)).

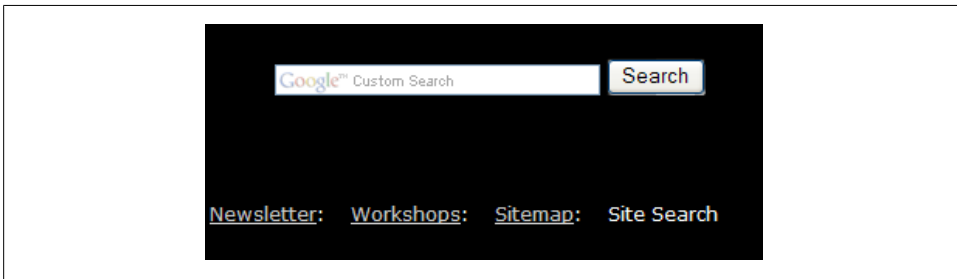



Figure 8-36. In this example, AdSense for Search integrates nicely with a Site Search feature



[Google SafeSearch is ON](#)
 Photoblog 2.0
 Web Search

Ads by Google

[Free 2008 Specials](#)
www.berkshirebutterflies.com Free dozen with wedding packages when ordered by 8/31/2008

[Butterfly Release](#)
www.kirkwoodbutterfly.com See Our Wedding Package Specials We have **butterflies** year round.

[Save Date Wedding Magnets](#)
www.SaveTheDateMagnetsUsa.com 50-59.95 100-\$89.95 Why Pay More? We Can Ship The Next

[Butterfly Alphabet](#)
www.ButterflyAlphabet.com Inspiring posters, books & gifts. Fun and educational for kids!

[Is It Photography? | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 Oct 16, 2006 ... Iter play, like this stylized version of a photo of a marble, with stops along the way for Warhol-like renditions of a **butterfly**, ...
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/647

[My Brilliant Butterfly | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 Jul 17, 2008 ... My Brilliant **Butterfly**, photo by Harold Davis. View this image larger. Briefly noted: this Photoshop composite combines a flatbed scan with ...
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1323

[Julian and Mammoth | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 To me, this **butterfly** proves there is beauty in devastation. The Mammoth Ski Resort is part of Inyo National Forest. I respect everyone's right to ski and ...
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/112

[Coleoptera | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 I post-processed it in somewhat the same style as my **Butterfly 2**. ... Related images: **Butterfly 2**, Stained Glass Bug, Coleoptera. This entry was posted ...
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1072

[Ringing Cedars Covers | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 Jun 22, 2008 ... For example, the sunflower used for the cover of the first volume ("Anastasia") is pretty much a digital photo, whereas the **butterfly** used ...
www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1299

[Anemone Japonica | Photoblog 2.0](#)
 Sep 24, 2006 ... ui **butterfly** from the Central African Republic. I captured it for reflectivity rather than transparency, and then cross-processed the ...

Figure 8-37. Search results shown are on the site specified and the ads are contextually keyed to the search term and results

AdSense for Feeds

As I explained in [Chapter 3](#), a syndication feed is a mechanism for widely distributing your content in a standardized XML format. If you create an AdSense for Feeds ad unit, and associate one or more syndication feeds with it, then contextual AdSense ads will appear in your feeds. The object, of course, is for you to make money from these ads.

To start, on the AdSense Setup page, click the AdSense for Feeds link. Create a unit as shown in [Figure 8-38](#), specifying whether it should display text ads only or text and image ads, how often the ads should appear, and where the ads should be positioned.

The screenshot shows the 'AdSense for Feeds' 'Create ad unit' form. It includes fields for Name, Size, Ad type (set to 'Text ads only'), Frequency (set to 'each feed item'), Post length (set to 'posts of any length'), and Position (set to 'At the bottom of the feed item'). There are radio buttons for 'Colors' (selected: 'Allow AdSense to optimize feed ad color choices automatically'). Below are two empty 'Channels' lists. At the bottom, there is a 'Feeds' section with a 'Save' button.

Figure 8-38. To start placing ads in your feeds, you need to add an AdSense for Feeds unit

An AdSense for Feeds unit without an associated feed doesn't do anything; the next step is to associate a feed with the ad unit.

FeedBurner, part of Google as I mentioned in [Chapter 7](#), provides a service where any valid syndication feed is “burnt”—meaning hosted and made available for redistribution. If you already have a feed burnt in FeedBurner, clicking the Move FeedBurner feeds to your Google account link makes it easy to move the feed as shown in [Figure 8-39](#) to add it to your AdSense unit.

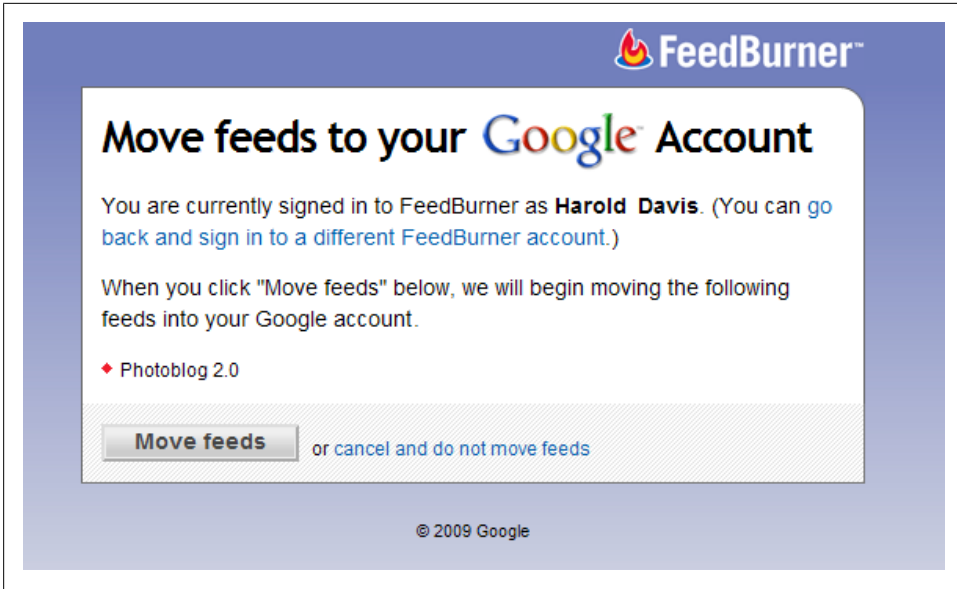


Figure 8-39. The easiest way to move a feed is to use one already registered at FeedBurner

If you don't have any FeedBurner feeds yet, the other approach is to create one. Start by clicking the "Burn new feed" link shown in Figure 8-38. You'll be prompted to enter the address for the feed, as shown in Figure 8-40.

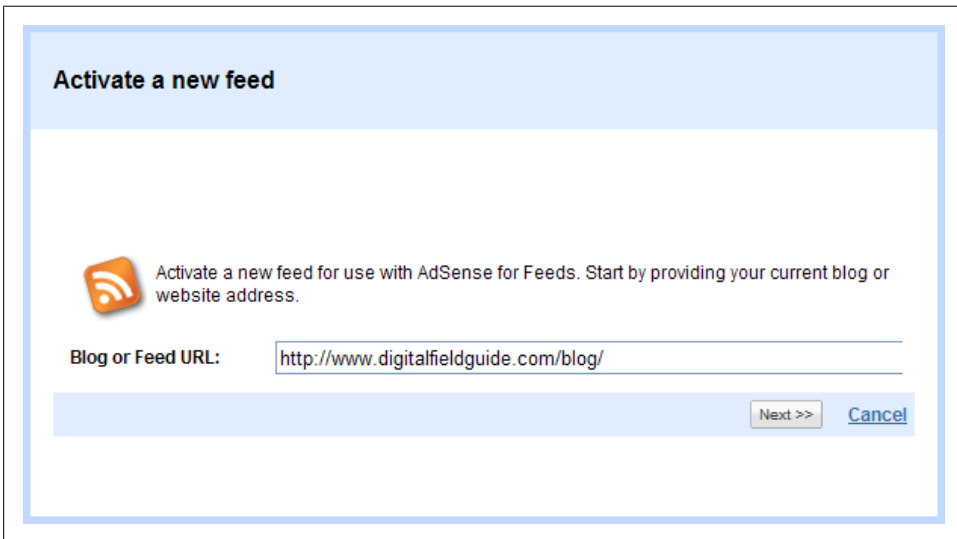


Figure 8-40. The first step in activating a new feed is to verify its address

If the feed is verified at the address you supplied, you will be prompted to add a title for the feed as shown in [Figure 8-41](#).

Activate a new feed

Sweet! Your feed's content source has been verified.

Confirm the following key feed identification settings.

Feed Address: This is the address where subscribers can find your new feed.

Feed Title: Enter a title to help identify your new feed in your account.

Feed Language: English

Feed Statistics

- Publisher Tools tracks feed subscribers and readership automatically
- Track feed content item views and reach ?
- Track feed content item clicks ?

Figure 8-41. Once you've verified a new feed, Publisher Tools can be used to track the feed

Click Next and your new feed is burnt in FeedBurner. Whether you moved or created a feed, in the AdSense feed ad unit setup you need to add the feed to your Google account as shown in [Figure 8-42](#).

Feeds ?

Add feeds to your account:

- Burn new feed
- Move FeedBurner feeds to your Google Account

Feed	Subscribers	Item Views	
Photoblog 2.0	2142	69112	<input type="button" value="add"/>

Figure 8-42. Click add to add a feed to the AdSense unit

By the way, once you have a FeedBurner feed, there are many ways to make use of it with the tools you'll find at <http://feedburner.google.com/>. For example, you can easily setup a subscription to an email version of your feed as shown in [Figure 8-43](#) by clicking on your feed, choosing the Publicize tab, selecting Email Subscriptions, and adding the code provided to your web page.



Figure 8-43. You can let users subscribe to an email delivery of your feed

[Figure 8-44](#) shows a portion of an actual syndication feed with an AdSense ad below the text of the feed item.

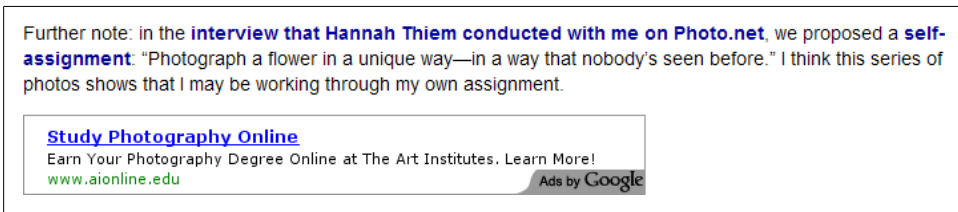


Figure 8-44. An AdSense ad is shown in this syndication feed

Generally, once you've set up a FeedBurner feed and registered it with an AdSense for Feed ad unit, it makes sense to aggregate all related feeds so that they redirect to the version with ads. Doing this depends on the software you are using to generate the feed. You'll find instructions for most common blogging software at <http://www.google.com/support/feedburner/bin/topic.py?topic=13055>.

If you are using WordPress, the easiest way to aggregate your feeds so that all relevant feed addresses display the FeedBurner content with the Google ads is to install the FeedSmith plug-in. Once the FeedSmith plug-in has been installed, you configure it by entering the FeedBurner address as shown in [Figure 8-45](#) and the plug-in takes care of the rest.

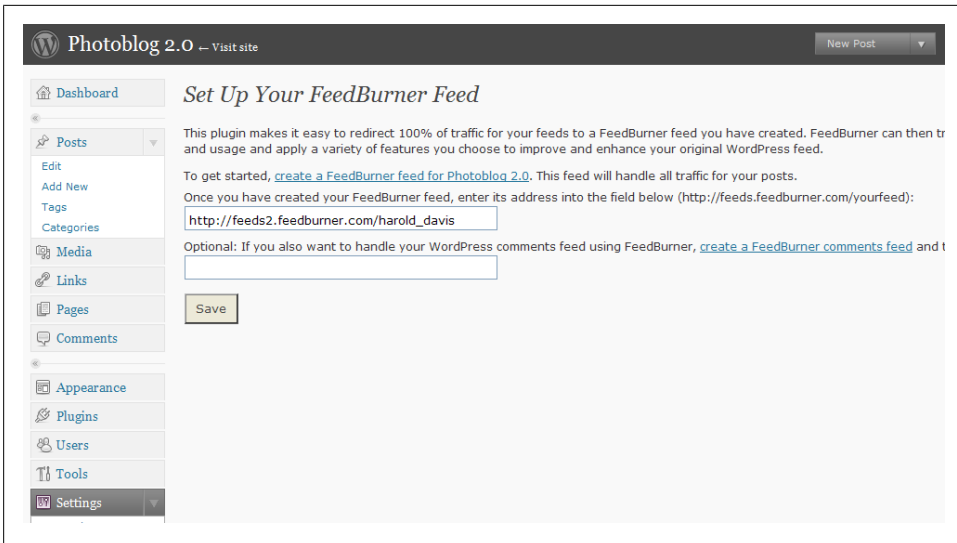


Figure 8-45. The syndication feeds generated by WordPress have been redirected to the FeedBurner version of the feed

AdSense for Domains

AdSense for Domains is a program for parked domains, meaning domains that are not in active use. There are many reasons someone might want to park a domain, including the intention of speculating in domain names and protecting existing related domain names from falling into the hands of competitors.

In the AdSense for Domains program, you redirect the site to Google's servers and Google supplies content and advertising based on the domain name, the keywords you supply, and the visual scheme you choose.



AdSense for Domains seems like an “if you can't beat 'em, join 'em” strategy: recognizing that parked domains are a magnet for spam websites, Google is offering a way to present quality spam that is under their control.

To get started with AdSense for Domains, from the AdSense Setup page, click AdSense for Domains. Next, add your parked domains as shown in [Figure 8-46](#).

The next step is to follow Google's directions to modify the DNS (Domain Name Server) records at your domain registrar. This allows Google access to your parked site to add the content.

[Get Ads](#) > [AdSense for Domains](#) > [Add Domains](#)

Add Parked Domains

Domains are subject to Google approval.

Add Individual Domains

Enter your domain name(s), separated by commas, or each domain on a new line (max 100 domains allowed here):

Language for your domain(s): [?](#) English — English

Upload a CSV

Or upload a CSV file:

CSV file containing domain - language [?](#) pairs. [Learn more...](#)

Figure 8-46. Add the domains you want to include in the program

If you've registered your domain with one of the more popular domain registrars, Google provides detailed step-by-step instructions for how to make these changes. When you add a domain, you'll see a link to these instructions as shown in [Figure 8-47](#).

If your domain registrar is not on this list, you'll have to figure out how to make these changes on your own. It's not as daunting as it may sound, but it's not possible at all domain registrars—in which case your best option is to transfer the domain to a registrar that allows you to modify the records and is on Google's list with detailed instructions.



Transferring domains is reasonably routine, but the kind of bureaucratic process between automated entities that can make adults quake. Generally, the new registrar issues a transfer instruction. At the old registrar, you unlock the domain (if it is locked) and get a transfer authorization code, which you supply to the new registrar. The new registrar then accepts the domain and the old registrar releases it (which may take human intervention).

What's the next step? [hide instructions](#)
 In order to allow Google to display ads on your domains, you'll need to modify some settings at your domain registrar. This is necessary to ensure ads show up correctly on your domain.

Create the following A records for your domains at your domain registrar:

Host name / Alias	Record Type	Value / Destination
@	A (address)	216.239.32.21
@	A (address)	216.239.34.21
@	A (address)	216.239.36.21
@	A (address)	216.239.38.21

Next, create the following CNAME (alias) records for your www host using your domain registrar:

Host name / Alias	Record Type	Value / Destination
www	CNAME (alias)	pub-5493015234961725.afd.ghs.google.com.

If you've registered your domain with a common domain registrar like GoDaddy, Enom, Moniker, or others, customized [step-by-step instructions](#) are available.

Figure 8-47. Google provides instructions for modifying the settings at your domain registrar

Next, enter the A record and CNAME record settings that Google provides at your domain registrar as shown in [Figure 8-48](#).

The screenshot shows the 'googleadtools.com' control panel. At the top, there are buttons for 'Copy', 'Delete', 'Import/Export', 'Check Zone Records', 'Advanced Mode', and 'Return to List'. Below these are two main sections for DNS records:

A (Host) section with an 'Add New A Record' button. It contains a table with the following data:

Host	Points To	TTL	Actions
@	216.239.32.21	1 Hour	[Edit] [Delete]
@	216.239.34.21	1 Hour	[Edit] [Delete]
@	216.239.36.21	1 Hour	[Edit] [Delete]
@	216.239.38.21	1 Hour	[Edit] [Delete]

CNAMEs (Aliases) section with 'Reset to Default Settings' and 'Add New CNAME Record' buttons. It contains a table with the following data:

Host	Points To	TTL	Actions
www	pub-5493015234961725.afd.ghs.google.com	1 Hour	[Edit] [Delete]

Figure 8-48. Modified DNS records are shown in this ISP's control panel

Once you've modified the records, and Google has verified and approved your parked domains included in the program, you can customize each domain.

To change the settings for a parked domain, select the domain in the AdSense for Domains window. Then choose Edit from the Actions drop-down menu.

First, set the color scheme for the site as shown in [Figure 8-49](#).

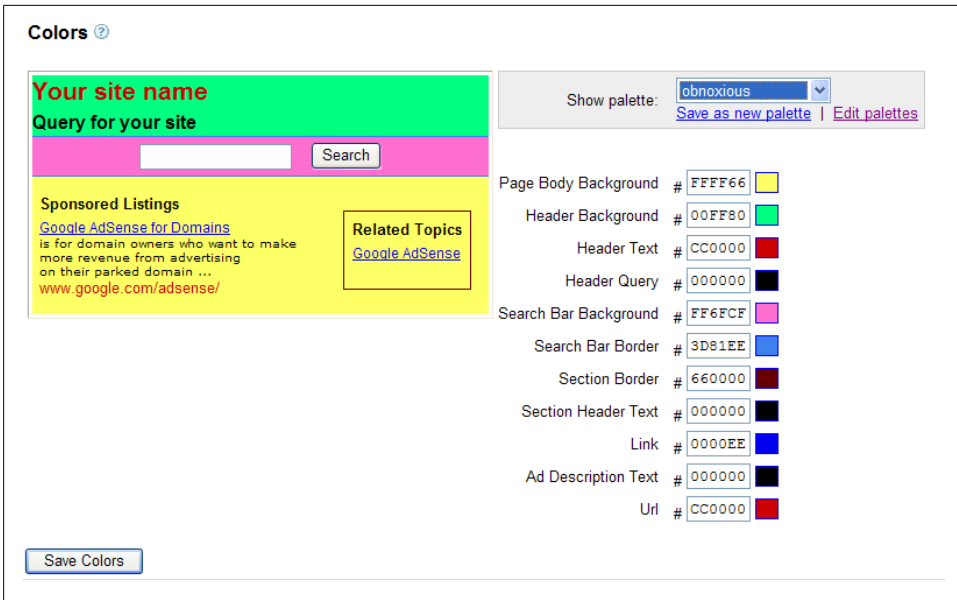


Figure 8-49. You can specify the color scheme for your parked domain

The most important customization is to add some keywords to help Google understand the primary thrust of the domain name. You add optional keyword hints as shown in Figure 8-50.

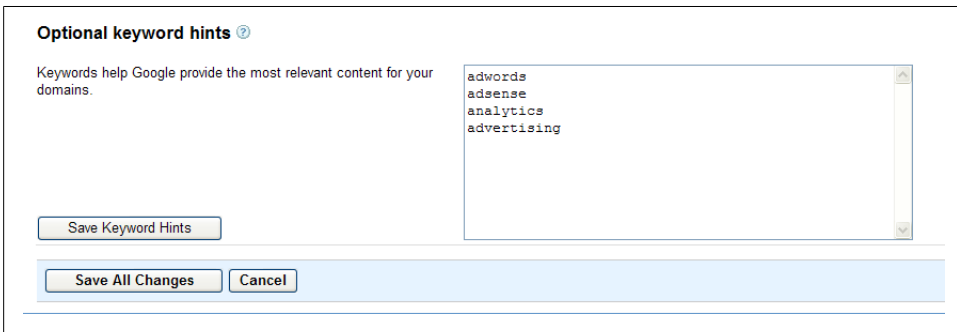


Figure 8-50. Adding keywords helps Google figure out what the domain is about



You are limited to a maximum of four keywords per parked domain.

With your settings in place, you can open the parked site as shown in Figure 8-51 to review the appearance of your new parked domain.



Changes made in the Google AdSense Setup to parked domains may take a while to actually propagate to the domain.



Figure 8-51. The parked domain now features advertising content provided by Google

It's clear that Google doesn't pay much attention to the keywords you select when preparing site content; as you can see in [Figure 8-51](#), there's not much connection to either the name of the domain or the keywords specified in [Figure 8-50](#).

Video Units

What content is more compelling than video? And how better to monetize this compelling content on your site than by adding video units from Google's YouTube, a leader in online video?

To get started, from the AdSense Setup page, click Video unit. You will need to login to your YouTube account (or create an account if you don't have one already). Next, you'll be prompted to name and design a video player as shown in [Figure 8-52](#).

Google analyzes the site on which you put a video unit to help determine the content of the unit, but you can give this decision a nudge by adding content keywords, categories, and channels as shown in [Figure 8-53](#).

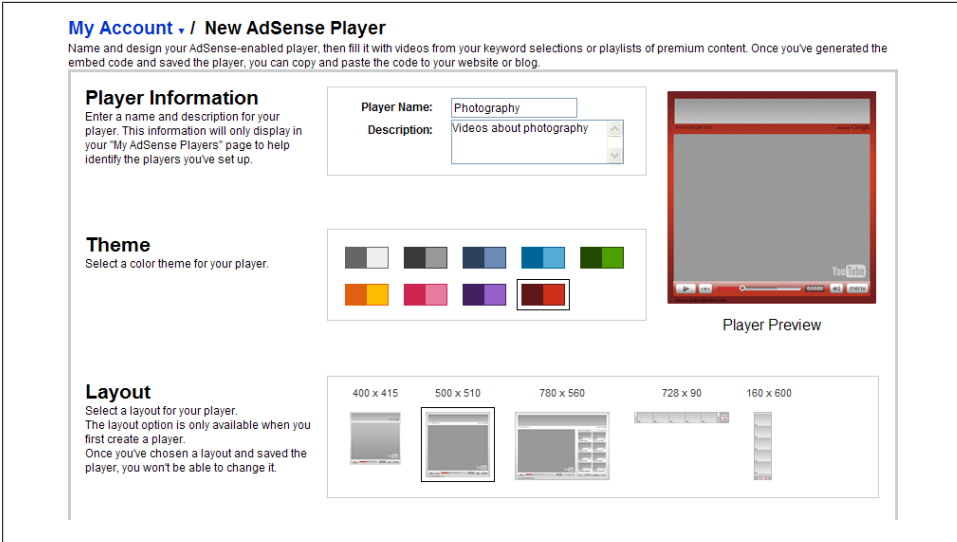


Figure 8-52. The first step is to configure the appearance of your player

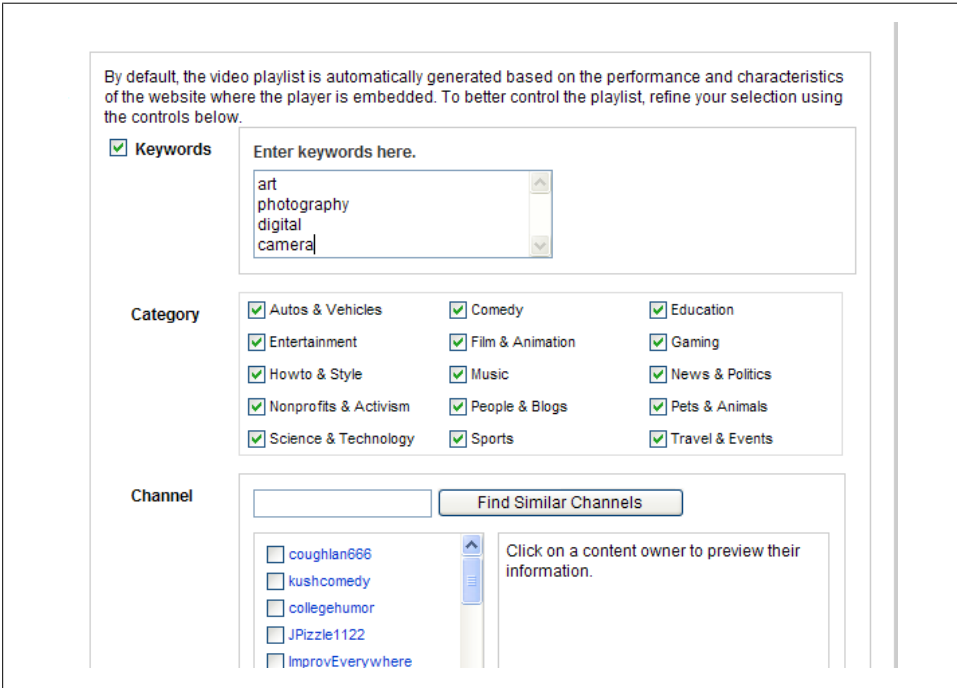


Figure 8-53. You help Google determine the videos that will play by selecting content-related keywords, categories, and channels

After you've made your selection, Google generates code for you as shown in [Figure 8-54](#). As with other Google AdSense products, it is your job to copy and paste the code into position on your web pages.

Embed Code
Copy and paste the code at right into your website to embed this player.

```
<div id=yu_ytplayer_vjVQa1PpcFO-IQf8yJ1pzmFa7CSMz5MXN9Y1D8Wdg=><a href=http://www.youtube.com/browse>Watch the latest videos on YouTube.com</a></div><script type=text/javascript src=http://www.youtube.com/watch_custom_player?id=vjVQa1PpcFO-IQf8yJ1pzmFa7CSMz5MXN9Y1D8Wdg=></script>
```

Finish

Figure 8-54. Copy and paste the video unit code into your web pages

Once the code has been copied and pasted into your web page, the video unit displays along with some Google ads as shown in [Figure 8-55](#).



The screenshot shows a video player interface. At the top, there are two text advertisements. The first is titled "Premature Babies" with the text "How To Care For Your Premature Baby & Special Skills You Need To Have". The second is titled "Preemies & Brain Injury" with the text "An infants brain is ready to learn. Now is the time to act, don't wait!". Both ads are attributed to "Ads by Google". Below the ads is a video player showing two characters in futuristic armor (one blue, one green) in a desert-like environment. The video player has a play button in the center, navigation arrows on the sides, and a progress bar at the bottom showing "0:00 / 7:12". The URL "http://www.youtube.com/user/roosterteeth" is visible at the bottom of the player.

Figure 8-55. Text ads incorporated in a video unit are likely to relate to the site hosting the unit rather than the video content



For demonstration purposes, I pasted the video unit into a site related to pregnancy issues. As you can see in [Figure 8-55](#), Google is a lot better at finding text ads that relate to this topic than YouTube video content. The moral: be careful where you paste these video units, as their content may not be appropriate for every site.

Linking Google AdSense to Google Analytics

Google AdSense now allows you to integrate your Google Analytics accounts to provide you with more detailed information about traffic and how users interact with your website. When you link your accounts, you will find a new AdSense menu under the Content section of the lefthand navigation in your Google Analytics, as shown in [Figure 8-56](#).

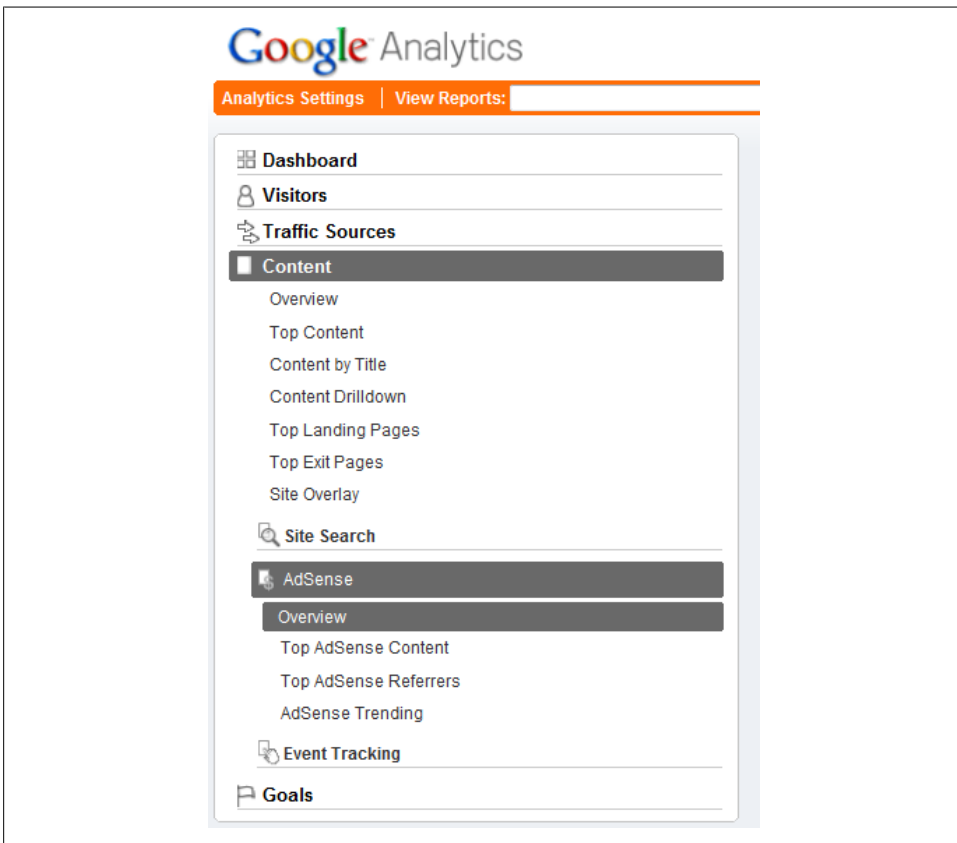


Figure 8-56. New Google AdSense Content tab is available after linking accounts

You will notice some differences between the reporting within Google AdSense and Google Analytics due to a number of factors, so it is possible to view a AdSense Metrics Differences report to show the actual difference between the two accounts. You can see in [Figure 8-57](#) you can get a very detailed overview of how your AdSense is performing, which Content or Referrers are producing the most revenue.

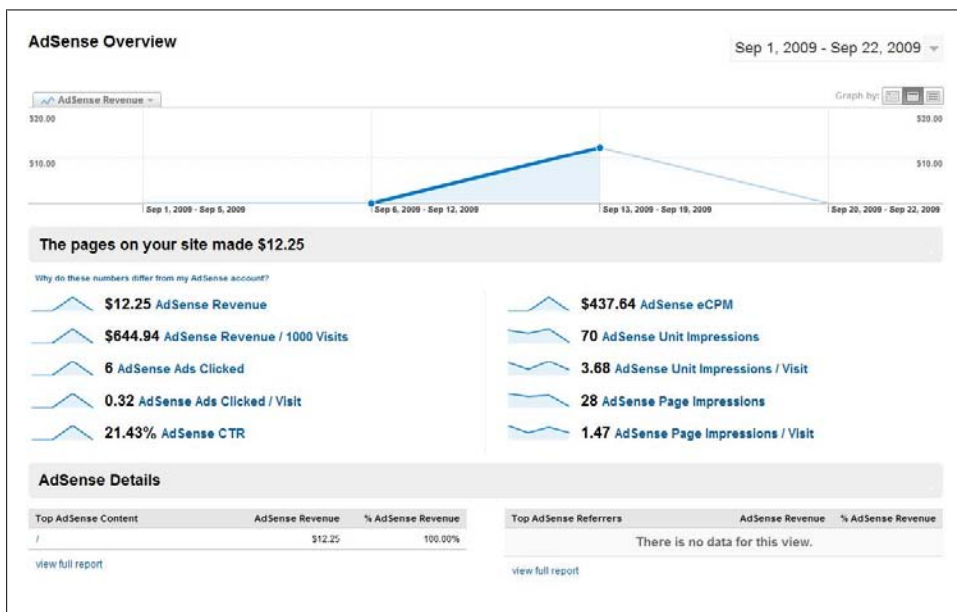


Figure 8-57. Google Analytics AdSense overview report

Action Items

To start making money with AdSense:

- Apply and get accepted by Google's AdSense program
- File an IRS form W-9 (or other appropriate tax form) with Google
- Generate AdSense for Content ad and link unit code for your site
- Place the code in your pages
- If you have a mobile site, add AdSense for Mobile units to the mobile site
- Add AdSense search boxes to your site
- Create a custom search results page that echoes the look and feel of your site
- Create custom channels to track your ads and to offer targeted ad placements
- Create custom palettes to complement your web designs
- Add AdSense for Feeds to your syndication feeds

- Aggregate your feeds from a single source such as a WordPress blog using FeedBurner
- Add any parked domains you have to the AdSense for Domains program
- Add video units to sites with appropriate content

Making Sense of AdSense

Putting AdSense code on your web pages is only the beginning of making money with Google AdSense advertising. Once you've added AdSense for Content and the other AdSense products explained in [Chapter 8](#) to your pages, you need to know how well your AdSense revenue is doing in relationship to how well it could be doing. Monitoring your performance so you can make changes to make more money is a very important part of successfully working with AdSense.

This chapter explains the reporting and performance tracking tools available in the AdSense program and what you should be looking for in terms of performance.

Fundamentals of Navigation

When you log into AdSense from the AdSense home page at <https://www.google.com/adsense/> (after your account is up and running and you have ads on your site), the first thing you'll see is the Reports Overview window, with the current day's earnings displayed, as shown in [Figure 9-1](#).

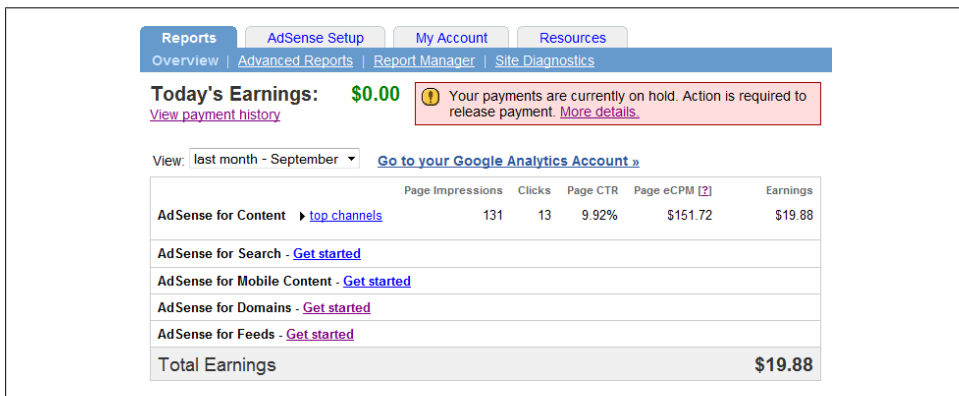


Figure 9-1. You'll see your page impressions, clicks, and other data related to today's earnings

Scrolling down the page shown in [Figure 9-1](#), you'll see links to optimization tips ([Figure 9-2](#)) and links to premade custom reports ([Figure 9-3](#)). Note that these custom reports open in the Advanced Report window preloaded with the specified content.

Recent messages View all messages »		
Sender	Subject	Date
Optimization Team	January 2009 Optimization Report	Jan 1
Optimization Team	December 2008 Optimization Report	Dec 1
Optimization Team	November 2008 Optimization Report	Nov 7
Optimization Team	October 2008 Optimization Report	Oct 1
Optimization Team	July 2008 Optimization Report	Jul 1

Figure 9-2. AdSense automatically provides optimization tips

Quick Reports

Advanced Report Templates

[Learn more about Report Templates](#)

AdSense for Content

- [This month, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [This month, by channel & day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Last month, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Last month, by channel & day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Since last payment, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Since last payment, by channel & day](#) [CSV](#)

AdSense for Search

- [This month, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [This month, by channel & day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Last month, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Last month, by channel & day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Since last payment, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Since last payment, by channel & day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Top Queries](#) [CSV](#)

AdSense for Mobile Content

- [This month, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Last month, by day](#) [CSV](#)
- [Since last payment, by day](#) [CSV](#)

Figure 9-3. Quick report links open premade reports in the Advanced Report window

Returning to the initial daily earnings screen (shown in [Figure 9-1](#)), click the top channels links shown to see the statistics for your top-performing channels ([Figure 9-4](#)).

View: ▼

	Page impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM [?]	Earnings
AdSense for Content ▼ top channels	43,717	73	0.17%	\$0.59	\$25.81
www.digitalfieldguide.com	40,194	49	0.12%	\$0.47	\$19.07
www.highrisk.org	455	5	1.10%	\$4.11	\$1.87
digitalnight	878	6	0.68%	\$1.95	\$1.71
pblog_home	4,657	3	0.06%	\$0.34	\$1.59
www.googleplexblog.com	412	1	0.24%	\$3.20	\$1.32
www.braintique.com/barticles/writing	519	3	0.58%	\$1.32	\$0.68
www.digitalnight.us	69	1	1.45%	\$2.66	\$0.18
www.braintique.com/research	88	1	1.14%	\$0.85	\$0.07
photography	486	0	0.00%	\$0.01	\$0.01
www.braintique.com/csharp	416	0	0.00%	\$0.01	\$0.00
www.braintique.com/barticles/photoshop	149	0	0.00%	\$0.01	\$0.00
Video Units	1	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
link unit	474	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
www.braintique.com/gates	1	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
www.braintique.com/barticles/business	41	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
www.braintique.com/barticles/wifi	6	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
www.braintique.com/blog	3	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
view all AdSense for Content channels »					
	Total page impressions [?]	Landing page impressions [?]	Results page impressions [?]	Page eCPM [?]	Earnings
AdSense for Domains ▶ top channels	108	80	28	\$45.29	\$4.89

Figure 9-4. The top channels display lets you see at a glance which of your channels are performing (products for channels besides AdSense for Content not shown)

When you click the Advanced Reports tab (or view AdSense channels links), the Advanced Reports window opens, as shown in [Figure 9-5](#). This is used as an extensive and complete way to monitor your performance in the AdSense for Content program.

Advanced Reports

Report Templates: Weekly domains [View Report](#) [Delete](#)

Choose product
 AdSense for Content

Choose date range
 Today
 Feb 2, 2009 - Feb 2, 2009
* Date ranges are based on Pacific Time

Show data by
 Page

Show
 Aggregate data
 Channel data [manage channels >](#)

Choose Units
 Ad Units
 Link Units
 Combined

[Display Report](#)

February 2, 2009 [CSV](#)

Date	Page impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM [?]	Earnings
Monday, February 2, 2009	784	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
Totals	784	0			\$0.00
Averages	784	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00

Figure 9-5. You can customize reports on the Advanced Reports tab

Once you really get going with AdSense, you are quite likely to have a number of custom reports you'll need to organize and keep track of (see “Running Reports” on page 254). That’s where the Report Manager, shown in Figure 9-6, comes in.

Report Manager

On this page, you can edit your saved reports and set up schedules to have reports emailed to the address of your choice. Please note that monthly reports are sent on the first day of the month, while weekly reports are sent every Monday.

Recently Generated Reports

Report name	Created	Type	Status	Get report
one-time report	Feb 2, 2009 10:14 AM	One-time	Ready	View CSV
one-time report	Jan 26, 2009 2:33 PM	One-time	Ready	View CSV

Saved Report Templates

Report name	Frequency	Email Addresses	Format
<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly domains	Weekly	Separate by comma info@photoblog2.com	CSV

[Save changes](#) [Delete checked reports](#)

Figure 9-6. Report Manager lets you organize reports

Understanding the Metrics

Now that you understand the basics of navigating the AdSense revenue reporting mechanism, it's time to consider what the numbers reported mean and how you can get increased value out of the reporting.

It's quite appropriate that the Ad Performance statistics should be the first thing you see in the AdSense application, because as an AdSense publisher, you need to keep a close watch on these statistics. This chapter goes into the details of slicing and dicing the information you can get from the Report screen, but let's start with the mile-high view first.

The most important statistic for you to pay attention to is the CTR, or click-through rate. CTR measures the percentage of times visitors click, and can be broken down on the basis of what is being clicked into Page CTR (page percentage click-through rate), Ad Unit CTR (ad unit percentage click-through rate), and Ad CTR (the percentage of times an individual ad is clicked). Page CTR tells you how effective your pages are as hosts for advertising, and Ad and Ad Unit CTR tell you how well specific ads and ad configurations work.

Page CTR should be in the 0.5 percent to 2 percent range (meaning that an ad is clicked from 1 to 4 out of every 200 times a page is displayed). As you'll see when you learn about the AdWords program in [Chapter 10](#), a 2 percent Ad CTR is a home run; it's more normal to expect something slightly below 1 percent.



Click-through rates are higher for ads displayed on Google search results pages than they are on web content pages, perhaps because it is easier to serve really relevant ads when people are searching for something specific rather than simply surfing web pages.

If your Ad CTR is consistently below 0.5 percent for more than a day or two—as those shown in [Figure 9-7](#) are—meaning fewer than 1 in 200 ads are clicked, then you need to take remedial action because your traffic is going to waste.

Most likely, the problem is that Google is not able to accurately serve relevant ads on your pages because you haven't written the pages to clearly present the most important content they contain (see [Chapter 4](#) for information about how to fix this). Try tweaking your pages to emphasize their significant content areas. In addition, try changing the position of the AdSense ad units on your page, the kind of ad units, and the graphic schemes used in these ad units (see [Chapter 8](#) for information about changing ad units and their palettes). It's also worth seeing what happens when you change the number of ads and ad units per page. Carefully monitor the Reports tab to see which of these measures improves your CTR.

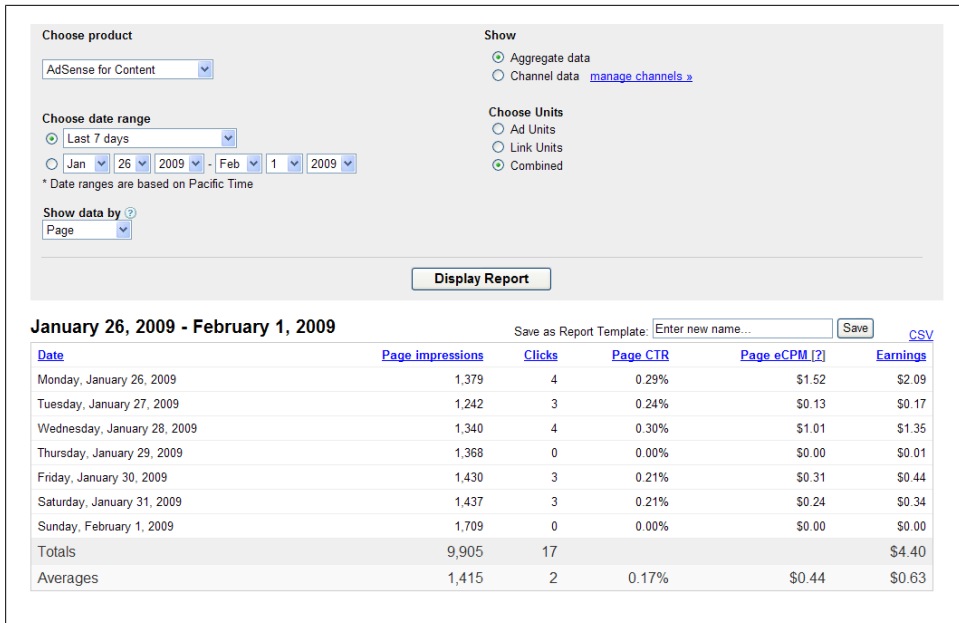


Figure 9-7. You can see at a glance how many times your pages have been displayed (page impressions) and how many people have clicked on the Google ads on your pages



You should also be monitoring your comparative performance. Over time—using fairly broad time slices such as weeks or months—is the absolute number of impressions going up (or down)? And what about CTR? If either the number of impressions or your CTR is declining, you should be concerned and consider revisiting your ad layouts and site content and positioning.

Running Reports

The Advanced Reports interface is designed to generate reports. To generate a report, pick your date range, select page or unit impressions, choose aggregate versus channel data (and select your channels), and click Display Report.

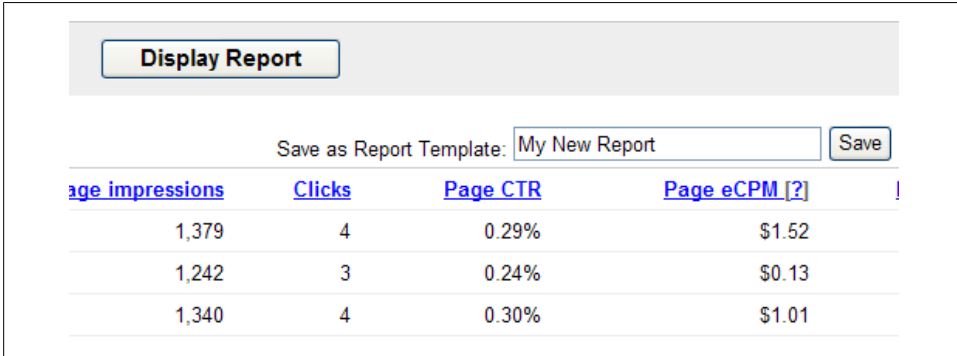


The initial AdSense settings are to display an aggregate page unit report for the current day. When you log into AdSense subsequently, it displays the settings for the most recent report you ran. The best idea probably is to generate daily reports to get a sense of how your AdSense account is doing in real time. You may also want to generate weekly and monthly reports to get a more long-term perspective.

Saving a Report as a Template

It's useful to be able to save a report you've generated as a template. That way, you don't have to figure out all over again how to generate the report. You can also arrange to have a report that's been saved as a template sent to you by email on a regular basis.

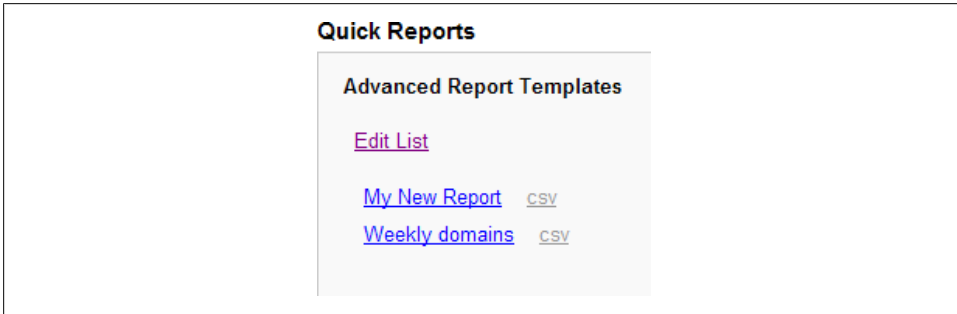
To save a report as a template, once you've generated a report, give it a name in the Save as Report Template box as shown in [Figure 9-8](#) and click Save.



Page impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM [?]
1,379	4	0.29%	\$1.52
1,242	3	0.24%	\$0.13
1,340	4	0.30%	\$1.01

Figure 9-8. Saving a report as a template makes it easy to get the same data over time

Once you've saved a report as a template, you can open an updated version of the report whenever you like on the Reports Overview page under Quick Reports as shown in [Figure 9-9](#).



Quick Reports

Advanced Report Templates

- [Edit List](#)
- [My New Report](#) [CSV](#)
- [Weekly domains](#) [CSV](#)

Figure 9-9. The new report is shown on the Quick Reports list of report templates

You can also arrange to have the data in the report emailed to you at selected periods of time. To do this, open the Report Manager window, check the report, and enter an email address as shown in [Figure 9-10](#).

Saved Report Templates			
Report name	Frequency	Email Addresses	Format
Separate by comma			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> My New Report	Weekly	info@photoblog2.com	CSV
<input type="checkbox"/> Weekly domains	Never		
<input type="button" value="Save changes"/>		<input type="button" value="Delete checked reports"/>	

Figure 9-10. You can have the updated data in a report template emailed to you

Choosing a Date Range

When you build a report, you can choose any data range you'd like, by date, from the inception of your AdSense account to the current point in time, all using the interface shown in [Figure 9-11](#); or you can choose one of the preset time spans that Google always has available.

Choose date range

Today

Feb 2 2008 - Feb 2 2010

* Date ranges are based on Pacific Time

Figure 9-11. You can choose a preset time span or a date range

The preset time spans are:

- Today
- Yesterday
- 2 days ago
- Last 7 days
- This month
- Last month
- This week (Monday–Sunday)
- Last week (Monday–Sunday)
- Last business week (Monday–Friday)
- All time



The “all time” preset time period means from the beginning of your AdSense account through the current day; it does not include the age of the dinosaurs or the birth of the Roman Empire.

Page, Unit, or Ad Impressions

Google lets you put more than one ad unit on a single page, and each ad unit has multiple ads. Therefore, it makes sense to be able to display impressions (the number of times something is displayed) by page, unit, or ad using the drop-down list shown in [Figure 9-12](#).

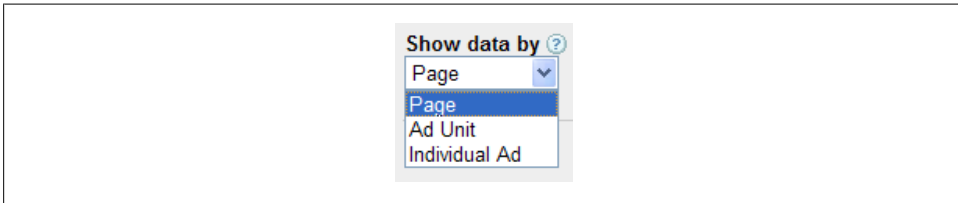


Figure 9-12. Individual ad unit impressions are likely to have a higher number than page impressions in the aggregate because you can have more than one ad unit per page



If you put a single ad unit on each of your pages, then displaying data by page or unit will show the same thing.

It’s easy to be tempted to throw four AdSense units (three ad units and one link unit) up on each of your pages, but try to resist this temptation. Experienced webmasters generally find that CTR goes down as pages become too loaded with ads—even AdSense ads.

Aggregate Versus Channel Data

You can choose to display AdSense data for your entire account by selecting the Aggregate data radio button shown in [Figure 9-13](#).

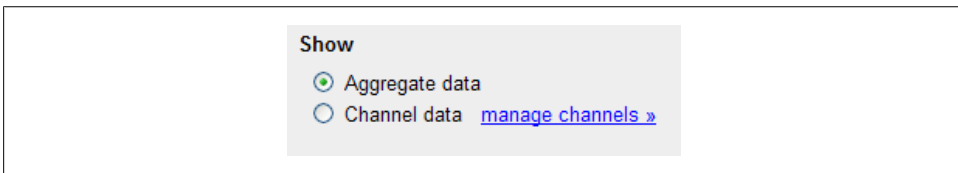


Figure 9-13. You can view your data as a whole or separated by channels

Alternatively, you can select Channel data to show as many or as few channels as you'd like. If you choose Channel data, the drop-down box shown in [Figure 9-14](#) will appear, and you can select the channels you'd like by checking the box next to the name of the channel. The drop-down list displays both custom and URL channels.

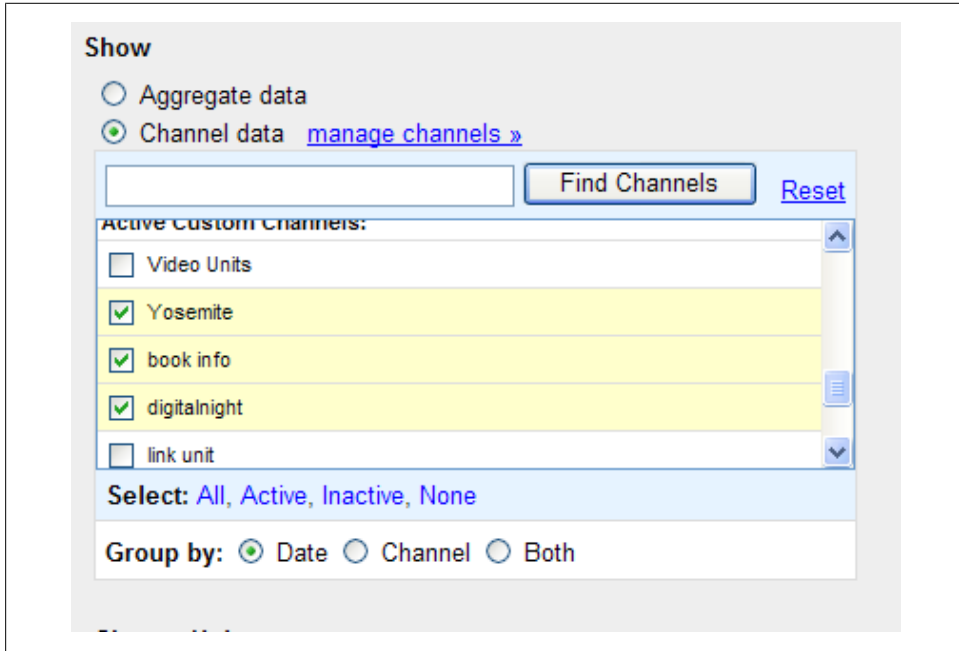


Figure 9-14. If you display data by channel, you can choose from URL channels or from custom channels



As explained in [Chapter 8](#), URL channels display information from the specified web address. In contrast, custom channels can be applied to whichever ad units you'd like to group together—for example, they can span multiple domains and not include all units in those domains—but must be specified before the ad units are created and included in the ad unit code.

When you are showing data by Channel, you can use the Group data by radio buttons to display statistics organized by date, channel, or grouped using both.



Clicking the manage channels link opens the Channels page on the AdSense Setup tab, explained in [Chapter 8](#).

Statistics

A famous aphorism says, “There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics,” meaning you can support any statement and sound authoritative, so long as you quote statistics. Fortunately, the statistics shown in an AdSense Ad Performance report are simple enough that they are hard to misinterpret, but you should be clear about the terminology used.

Each report will show you daily statistics (each of these is a column in the AdSense report, as shown in [Figure 9-15](#)):

Impressions

An *ad impression* is recorded each time an AdSense ad unit is displayed. A *page impression* is recorded each time a web page containing an AdSense ad unit is displayed. A single display of a web page containing three ad units would produce one page impression and three ad impressions.

Clicks

A visitor’s click on an ad on a publisher’s page. Public service ad clicks are not included in this statistic.



Google reserves the right to audit clicks and retroactively remove clicks that it deems invalid—for example, if Google finds you have been clicking ads on your own pages. These clicks will show up in the report that is displayed, even though you won’t make any money from them.

CTR

CTR (click-through rate) is the number of clicks an ad unit receives divided by the number of times the ad unit is displayed (ad unit impressions).

eCPM

Effective CPM (eCPM; cost per thousand impressions) is calculated by dividing the total earnings by the number of impressions in thousands. For example, if a publisher earned \$100 from 20,000 impressions, the eCPM would equal $\$100/20$, or \$5. The point of this metric is to provide a way to compare AdSense’s CPC revenue with the money you might make from other forms of advertising, such as affiliate advertising (see [Chapter 5](#)) or CPM (see [Chapter 6](#)).

Your earnings

This column shows your earnings, either in aggregate or for selected channels. These are not final numbers and may be subject to adjustments. (See “[Your Earnings](#)” on page 265 for information about final earnings numbers.)

January 1, 2009 - January 9, 2009					
Date	Page impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM [?]	Earnings
Thursday, January 1, 2009	1,018	3	0.29%	\$1.70	\$1.73
Friday, January 2, 2009	1,094	2	0.18%	\$1.22	\$1.33
Saturday, January 3, 2009	1,100	1	0.09%	\$0.96	\$1.05
Sunday, January 4, 2009	1,138	2	0.18%	\$1.06	\$1.20
Monday, January 5, 2009	1,264	5	0.40%	\$0.89	\$1.12
Tuesday, January 6, 2009	1,652	1	0.06%	\$0.79	\$1.31
Wednesday, January 7, 2009	1,593	3	0.19%	\$0.46	\$0.74
Thursday, January 8, 2009	1,566	2	0.13%	\$0.07	\$0.12
Friday, January 9, 2009	1,352	1	0.07%	\$0.65	\$0.88
Totals	11,777	20			\$9.49
Averages	1,308	2	0.17%	\$0.81	\$1.05

Figure 9-15. You should monitor your earnings for trends and inconsistencies (such as the relatively poor result shown on Thursday in this figure)

The Point of eCPM

eCPM is related to CTR—the higher the CTR, the better the eCPM comparison. Google includes this metric as a way to compare apples to apples—AdSense CPC with conventional CPM advertising—and stacks the deck slightly in its own favor while doing so. (I would, too, if I had a program that delivers as well as AdSense.)

The normal cost of CPM advertising is in the \$3 to \$4 ballpark. If you have a reasonable CTR (anything better than about 1.5 percent), your eCPM will demonstrate that you are doing significantly better than you would have with conventional CPM advertising.



You can sort the report by one of these columns by clicking the column headers. For example, if you have a month's worth of data displayed and want to see it with the day with most clicks displayed first, clicking on Clicks will accomplish this sort.

Downloading a CSV File

You can download the data in your AdSense report by clicking the CSV file link (shown in the upper right of Figure 9-15). The file is a plain text file formatted with comma-separated values, and it can be opened in a spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel (shown in Figure 9-16) for further analysis.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Date	Page impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM	Earnings
2	1/1/2009	1,018	3	0.29%	1.7	1.73
3	1/2/2009	1,094	2	0.18%	1.22	1.33
4	1/3/2009	1,100	1	0.09%	0.96	1.05
5	1/4/2009	1,138	2	0.18%	1.06	1.2
6	1/5/2009	1,264	5	0.40%	0.89	1.12
7	1/6/2009	1,652	1	0.06%	0.79	1.31
8	1/7/2009	1,593	3	0.19%	0.46	0.74
9	1/8/2009	1,566	2	0.13%	0.07	0.12
10	1/9/2009	1,352	1	0.07%	0.65	0.88
11	Totals	11,777	20			9.49
12	Averages	1,308	2	0.17%	0.81	1.05
13						
14						

Figure 9-16. Downloading AdSense report data into Excel allows you to use the full power of Excel to manipulate and display the information

Other Program Performance

Of course, AdSense for Content ad units are not the only components of AdSense. The other AdSense programs—Search, Content, Domains, and Feeds—are reported in pretty much the same way as AdSense for Content units. However, AdSense for Search and AdSense for Domains do report some additional metrics that are worth noting.

Search Performance

You can display an AdSense for Search report in almost exactly the same way as an AdSense for Content report. To generate a Search report, on the Reports tab, click the Search Performance link. You can then display a report, as shown in [Figure 9-17](#).

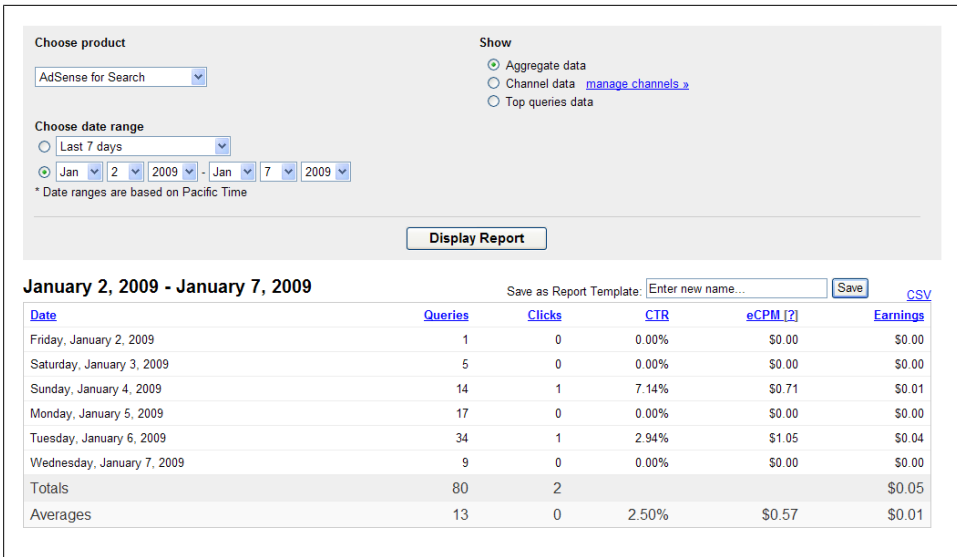


Figure 9-17. You can display reports for AdSense for Search pretty much in the same way as for AdSense for Content

One difference between an AdSense for Search report and an AdSense for Content report is that AdSense for Search can't display information by unit impressions, only by page impressions because ads are displayed on Google's search results pages, not your pages (unless you've elected to open search results on your own site).

You'll also notice that the AdSense for Search report lists Queries. These are the times someone used the search box to make a search.

A click is counted when someone searches using your search box, and then clicks on one of the sponsored links on the results page.

How Are Your Parked Domains Doing?

You may be surprised by how much your parked domains can make. But, who knows? Why not find out for sure?

Reporting for AdSense for Domains, shown in Figure 9-18, is primarily formulated in page impressions. Landing page impressions are generated when a user visits the domain. Results page impressions are generated when a user submits a query into the search box or clicks on a Related Search link on the site. Total page impressions is simply the aggregate of your landing page impressions and results page impressions.

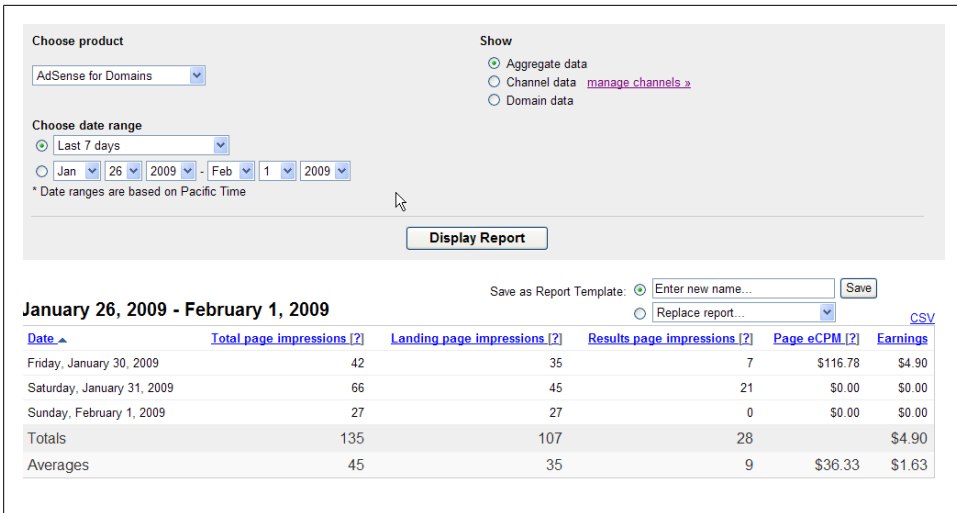


Figure 9-18. Total page impressions is landing page impressions plus results page impressions

Optimization Tips

On the Overview tab of AdSense Setup, you'll find links to both general optimization tips and optimization tips reports that have been created specifically for your account. The optimization tip links look like those shown in Figure 9-19.

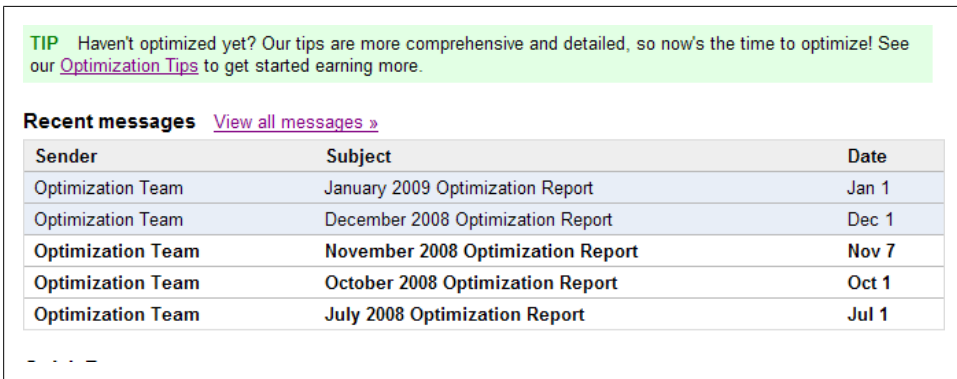


Figure 9-19. An optimization report is prepared monthly for each AdSense account

Figure 9-20 shows an example of a monthly optimization report. Of course, these reports are generated automatically, but you still should take a look at them from time to time.

Reports
AdSense Setup
My Account
Resources

Overview
Advanced Reports
Report Manager
Site Diagnostics

Overview
> Your messages
> January 2009 Optimization Report

January 2009 Optimization Report

Dear Publisher,

Here is your optimization report for the month of January. After an automatic review of your sites, we think you might be able to improve your monetization using the following tips:

Placing more than one ad unit on a page often generates more revenue.
 Many of your sites only contain one ad unit.
[How can I fix this?](#) [Dismiss this tip.](#)

You may be filtering ads that monetize well on your site.
[How can I fix this?](#) [Dismiss this tip.](#)

We hope these tips are helpful, and encourage you to experiment using different layouts and formats--no two sites monetize the same way!

Sincerely,
 Google AdSense

Figure 9-20. Optimization reports provide tips about how to improve your results

Site Diagnostics

The Site Diagnostics tab of AdSense Setup lists a number of possible problems detected in your pages when they were crawled. Typically, these are broken URLs or pages blocked by a *robots.txt* file.

If your web pages show these problems, the page will provide a link to documentation about how to fix the issue.

Most often, you'll need to unblock URLs by adding the following text to the top of your *robots.txt* files.

```
User-agent: Mediapartners-Google
Disallow:
```



See [Chapter 4](#) for more information about working with your *robots.txt* file to exclude (and not exclude) crawling of your pages.

Your Earnings

Strictly speaking, your earnings and payment history are not advertising performance. But, of course, to you they may be the most important metric of all.

To monitor your actual earnings (as opposed to your ad performance), choose the My Account tab and click the Payment History link. As you can see in [Figure 9-21](#), you will be shown your month-by-month earnings for any time period you select.

Earnings and Payments Summary					
View: Last 12 months - CSV		Payment sch demo (Flash)			
Month	Date	Description	Earnings/credits	Payments/debits	Monthly ba
<i>Earnings carried over from previous months</i>			\$137.03		
February 2008	Feb 26	Payment issued - details		(\$137.03)	
	Feb 29	Earnings (Feb 1 - Feb 29) - details	\$47.34		
	Balance at end of February				\$47.34
March 2008	Mar 31	Earnings (Mar 1 - Mar 31) - details	\$65.99		
	Balance at end of March				\$113.33
April 2008	Apr 24	Payment issued - details		(\$113.33)	
	Apr 30	Earnings (Apr 1 - Apr 30) - details	\$52.87		
	Balance at end of April				\$52.87
May 2008	May 31	Earnings (May 1 - May 31) - details	\$49.86		
Balance at end of May					\$102.73

Figure 9-21. Your actual earnings are displayed on the My Account tab

Your earnings can be downloaded as a comma-separated value file (by clicking the CSV link shown in the upper left of [Figure 9-21](#)). This file can be imported into Excel for further analysis.

If you click an Earnings link in the Description column for a particular month, a detail report (an example is shown in [Figure 9-22](#)) will break out the revenue source between AdSense for Content and AdSense for Search.



Detailed monthly information can also be downloaded as a CSV file.

Download CSV file	
Description	Amount
AdSense for Content	\$35.92
AdSense for Search	\$2.17
Subtotal	\$38.09
Total Monthly Earnings	\$38.09

Figure 9-22. The detailed monthly earnings screen shows you how much revenue came from AdSense for Content and how much came from AdSense for Search, as well as income from other programs such as AdSense for Domains

Tools Beyond AdSense for Tracking

“Trust, but verify” is an excellent motto in life. It’s nice to have independent verification of Google’s numbers and also better analysis tools of visitor behavior than the AdSense reports provide. You now have the option of linking your account to Google Analytics.

To get third-party information about your traffic, a good starting place is to visit [Alexa](#). On Alexa, click the Traffic Rankings tab. Enter your site domain in the box and click Get Traffic Details. The Related Info page for your site will open. Next, in the Explore this Site box, click the Traffic Details link.

A number of different measures of your site traffic, including the daily page views graph shown in [Figure 9-23](#), will be displayed.

You can use the Alexa metrics as a reality check in terms of whether it agrees with Google that your page views are going up (or down) over time, but you cannot use Alexa as an absolute measure of anything because of how the Alexa statistics are compiled. Alexa’s page-view metrics are based on information uploaded from a small toolbar, mostly installed by business users. This information is notoriously flawed for consumer sites, particularly ones without high traffic.

The next place to turn is your web server’s logs.

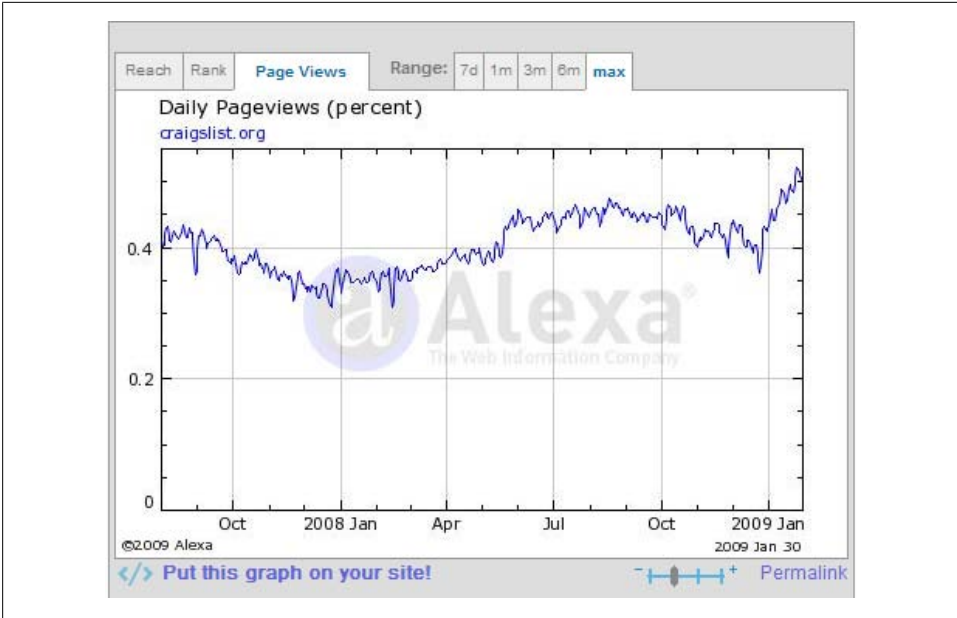


Figure 9-23. Alexa can give you an idea of how many daily page views your site receives

Listening to Web Logs

Depending on your web host, you should have access to a number of tools used to generate usable information from your web logs files. Web log analysis is the first and best place to look for data in addition to that supplied by Google.



Raw web log files provide copious and dense information, but it is hard to extract anything usable from them.

Webalizer, shown providing monthly statistics in [Figure 9-24](#), is available for almost all sites that are hosted on a Linux-based web server. If your web host doesn't make Webalizer available to you, it almost surely will provide comparable software.

Web Log Analysis Programs

There are many good web log analysis programs available with much the same functionality as Webalizer, the one shown in this section. Popular offerings include Access Watch, Piwik, ModLogAn, NetTracker, and WebTrends.

Many of these programs are free; others, such as WebTrends—which offers additional facilities for tracking visitors through your site as explained in “[Web Analytic Software](#)” on page 273—are fee-based.

Which web log analysis program you have access to depends upon the operating system of your web server and (assuming you are working with a web hosting company to serve your web pages) the software made available by your web host.

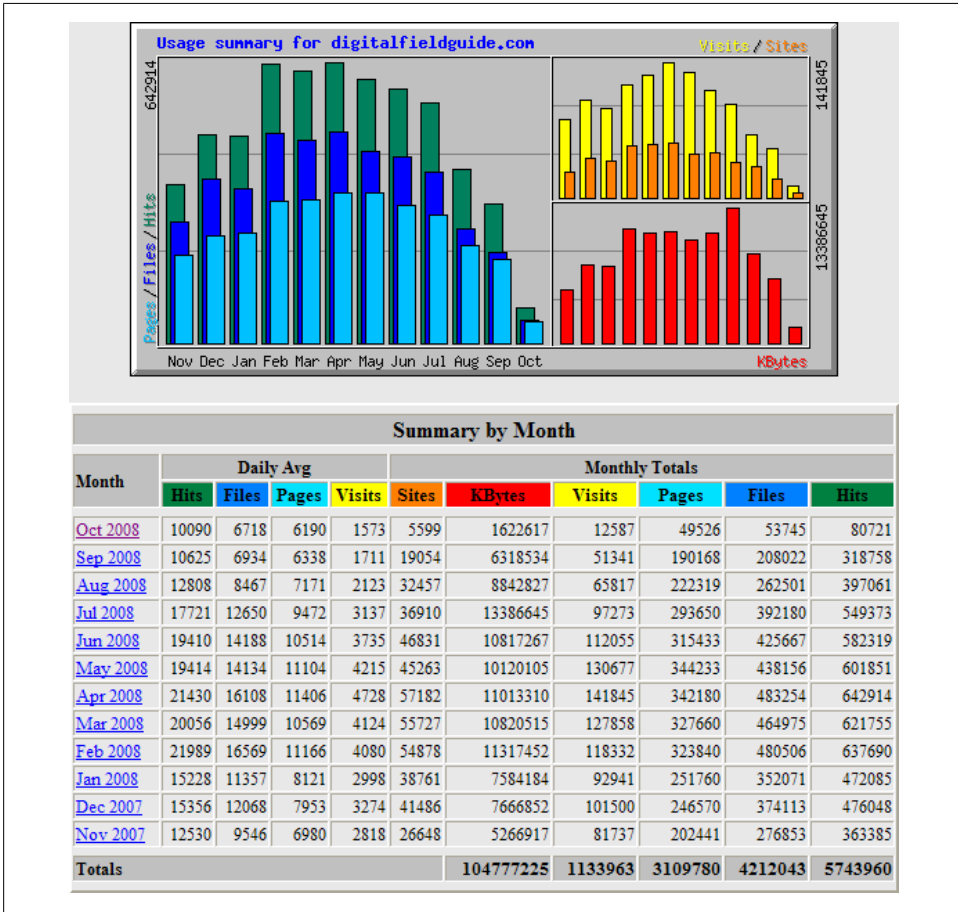


Figure 9-24. Webalizer uses your web logs to display statistics about your site

You can use the Webalizer monthly summary shown in [Figure 9-24](#) to see if it confirms the trends shown in Google’s accounting of your page views. Next, click a specific month to get more detailed information about a whole range of topics, including:

- Daily usage ([Figure 9-25](#))

- Hourly usage
- Top URLs on your site (your pages that have the most visitors)
- Top entry pages on your site (the pages most often used as the entry point to your domain)
- Top exit pages on your site (the pages most often used as the exit point for leaving your domain, [Figure 9-26](#))
- Top referrer pages (the pages, by address, that have referred the most traffic to your site, [Figure 9-27](#))
- Top search strings used (in search engines) to find your site ([Figure 9-28](#))

A great deal of the information provided is quite valuable. You should certainly keep an eye on daily usage statistics ([Figure 9-25](#)).

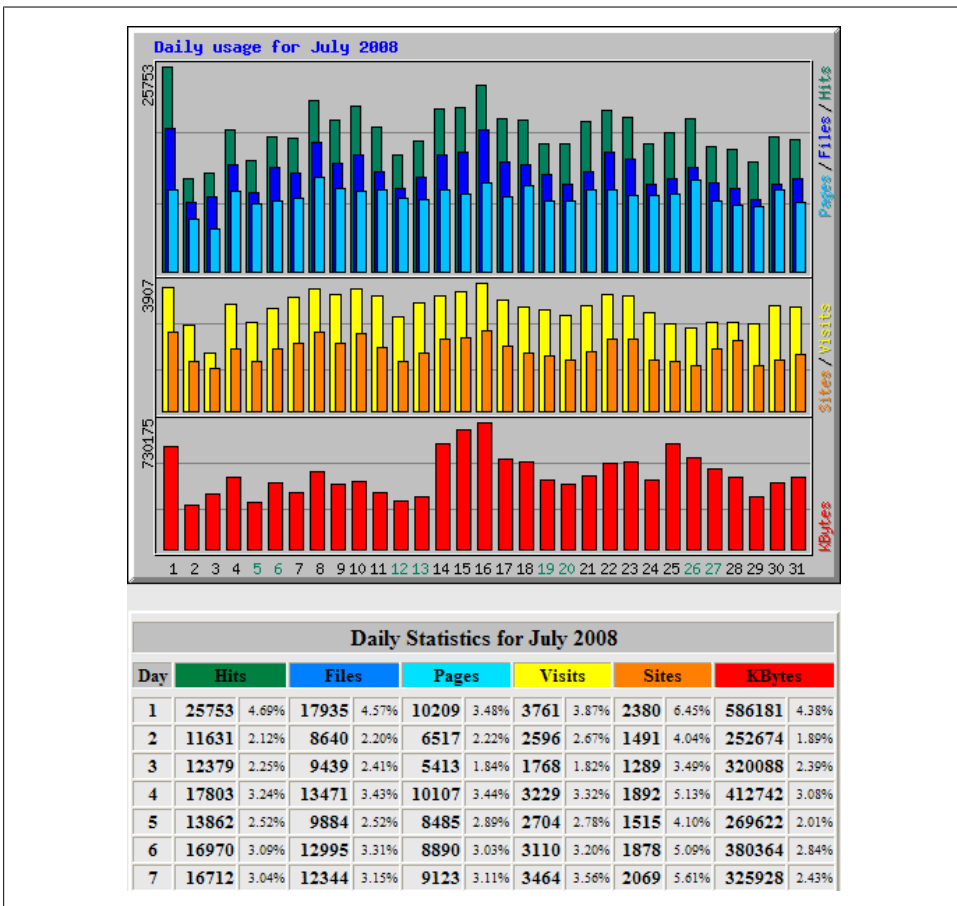


Figure 9-25. Monitoring daily usage statistics helps you make sure that your site traffic is staying steady or gaining

You probably already have a good idea of your entry pages, the pages that visitors first open when they access your site (but it's still a good idea to verify this information with your web log analysis tool). These pages are also often called *landing* pages. But you may not know about your top exit pages—the last page a visitor opens in your site—shown in Webalizer in [Figure 9-26](#).

Top 10 of 1610 Total Exit Pages					
#	Hits		Visits		URL
1	4221	5.23%	2377	19.29%	/blog/feed/
2	3577	4.43%	1957	15.88%	/blog/feed/atom/
3	3385	4.19%	1661	13.48%	/blog/feed
4	2071	2.57%	1437	11.66%	/blog/feed/atom
5	1236	1.53%	610	4.95%	/blog/
6	716	0.89%	539	4.37%	/
7	186	0.23%	165	1.34%	/blog/479/feed/
8	151	0.19%	68	0.55%	/blog/1320/feed
9	106	0.13%	63	0.51%	/blog/entries/hiking
10	72	0.09%	45	0.37%	/blog/69

Figure 9-26. Exit pages are the final page viewed in your domain before leaving your site

Exit pages are significant because you may wish to make an attempt to keep traffic on your site on the top exit pages. You might want to try tinkering with the imagery or adding stronger or more subtle calls to action.

More important, studies have shown that exit pages are a particularly good place to put AdSense ads. The logic is your visitors are ready to leave your site anyhow, so they are likely to be more willing to click on a link in an ad. Therefore, it makes sense to pay special attention to your top exit pages when you tweak your AdSense content ads.



This tip is worth highlighting: consider AdSense placements on exit pages a top priority.

Referrers are sites that refer traffic to you. It's good to know where your traffic is coming from. [Figure 9-27](#) shows some top referrers for the site <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com>.



The first entry shown in Figure 9-27, Direct Request, represents visitors who simply entered the URL for the site in their browser and didn't come via a link from another site. If a visitor has set your site as their home page in their browser, it will also show up here.

Top 30 of 1333 Total Referrers		
#	Hits	Referrer
1	60336 74.75%	-(Direct Request)
2	3393 4.20%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/
3	1391 1.72%	http://www.google.com/imgres
4	747 0.93%	http://www.weblo.com/domain/available/coinmapusa.com/
5	595 0.74%	http://www.google.com/reader/view/
6	583 0.72%	http://images.google.com/imgres
7	520 0.64%	http://search.live.com/results.aspx
8	502 0.62%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/images/map-usa.jpg
9	427 0.53%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/wp-admin/post.php
10	399 0.49%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/books.php
11	371 0.46%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/entries/hiking
12	293 0.36%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com
13	230 0.28%	http://kookkaburra.blogspot.com/
14	206 0.26%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/69
15	189 0.23%	http://blogs.oreilly.com/digitalmedia/2008/07/software-review-fluid-mask-3.html
16	183 0.23%	http://www.google.com/search
17	152 0.19%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1265
18	149 0.18%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1396
19	140 0.17%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/
20	138 0.17%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/86
21	132 0.16%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1367
22	120 0.15%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/wp-admin/wp-admin.css
23	120 0.15%	http://www.oreillynet.com/digitalmedia/blog/2007/06/
24	119 0.15%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1393
25	114 0.14%	http://www.digitalnight.us/
26	113 0.14%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/prints.php
27	109 0.14%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1140
28	103 0.13%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1395
29	101 0.13%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1340
30	100 0.12%	http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/1078

Figure 9-27. The top referrer table helps you to know where your traffic is coming from

Using information about your top referrers, you can work to strengthen your relationship with these referrers and also consider if there are other sites like a particular referrer

that you might be able to approach for traffic (see [Chapter 3](#) for advice about how to approach a site).

You can also use the top referrer list to understand the “stickiness” of your site. In other words, which pages most often refer users to other pages within your site? These referring pages that cross links represent valuable real estate that should be monetized via AdSense as extensively as possible, because they are a clue to the core interests of your user base.

[Figure 9-28](#) shows a table of the top search strings used in search engines to find your site.

Top 20 of 97 Total Search Strings			
#	Hits		Search String
1	51	24.06%	map usa
2	9	4.25%	photoblog 2.0
3	8	3.77%	digital field guide
4	7	3.30%	cherry blossoms
5	5	2.36%	harold davis photography
6	5	2.36%	map us a
7	4	1.89%	s-
8	3	1.42%	ansel adams-
9	3	1.42%	red rose
10	3	1.42%	rose bud
11	3	1.42%	si-
12	3	1.42%	the minarets -
13	2	0.94%	ansel -
14	2	0.94%	autumn pictures in bridgeport
15	2	0.94%	blind bo-
16	2	0.94%	digital photographs
17	2	0.94%	golden -
18	2	0.94%	great-
19	2	0.94%	http://www.digital field guide
20	2	0.94%	import photoshop raw

Figure 9-28. Top search string information is extremely valuable because it allows you to hone your site content

Knowing the top search strings used to find your site is extraordinarily valuable to an AdSense publisher. Honing your site to provide information relevant to these searches sets you up to benefit from a virtuous circle: more targeted information draws better search engine rankings for these queries, which in turn draw more traffic and at the same time generates better CTR because it’s easier for Google’s contextual engine to figure out what your site is about.

You should also analyze a more extensive keyword list, perhaps the top 1,000 keywords, to look for themes, meaning two and three word queries that have a recurring common word or topic. In other words, you may not get much traffic from “butterfly” but you may get a lot of traffic from many keywords containing “butterfly” or “butterflies” that only refer two or three visitors each.

As you can see, there’s a great deal of information to be had from your web log data, and it is important to keep on top of it to get the most revenue out of the AdSense program. Pay particular attention to the overall direction of traffic volume, the flow of traffic through your site via entrance and exit pages, and top referrers and search strings.

Web Analytic Software

When your web log software is not enough, because you really need to understand visitor behavior in detail through your site, it’s time to turn to web analytic software such as [Google Analytics](#) and [WebTrends](#) (which also does web log analysis). These are complex software packages that may require professional assistance to implement fully. Google Analytics is free, while WebTrends requires a licensing fee.

WebTrends is available as a standalone product (you install it on your web server) or as a hosted solution. Google Analytics is only available as a hosted solution. In some cases—when your content is behind a firewall—you may need to deploy [Google Urchin](#) in addition to Google Analytics.



In a hosted solution, you add a small bit of code to your pages—much in the way Google AdSense works—and the software company takes care of the rest.

This sophisticated category of software can be used to track almost everything about every visitor to your site. For example, Google Analytics will also tell you how many people bounced off your landing page, meaning they didn’t go beyond the first page of your site. If you have a high bounce-off rate, you need to know it so you can redesign your site to pull visitors in. If you link your Google Analytics and AdSense accounts, you can link this behavior back to AdSense revenue.



If you are using AdWords to advertise and are selling a product, as I explain in [Part III](#), a key feature in Google Analytics allows you to track how many visitors are converted into customers, what they buy, and even which link they clicked to make the purchase.

You’ll find more information about Google Analytics in [Chapter 13](#).

Action Items

If you are enrolled in the AdSense program, you should:

- Track progress by regularly displaying reports—perhaps as often as daily—to monitor your AdSense for Content and Search performance as well as AdSense for Domains
- Use custom reports or URL channels to display results to get a better handle on performance on different parts of your site or site(s)
- Download CSV files to crunch your own data
- Use the optimization tips provided to increase your AdSense revenue
- Check the Site Diagnostics page and fix any problems indicated
- Learn to use the web traffic analysis programs available to you to get a better understanding of how your site is performing in relation to the AdSense program
- If your business justifies the trouble (and expense), consider more robust web analytic software
- Make sure you link your Google Analytics and Google AdSense accounts

Working with AdWords

Using AdWords

Google's AdWords program is a marvelous way for big and small advertisers to reach precisely the people they would like to reach. Ads placed via AdWords are almost always relevant to people viewing the ads; they are targeted using keywords selected by the advertiser and placed either on Google search results pages where users have searched for these keywords (AdWords *search network*) or on web pages that publish content including the targeted keywords (AdWords *content network*). In addition, it's estimated that ads placed using AdWords reach more than 80 percent of all Internet users.

Unlike old-fashioned advertising, the AdWords delivery mechanism is managed completely via the Web and can be used by anyone who has a credit card. There's not even a minimum budget. You can design effective AdWords campaigns that drive traffic to your site for just pennies a day; of course, it always helps to have a bigger budget!

This chapter explains how to open an AdWords account and how to create ad campaigns, ad groups, and text or display keyword-targeted ads. Although the mechanics of the AdWords program can appear a little daunting at first, after reading this chapter you'll be armed with the information you need to create sophisticated and cost-effective targeted web ads.

Signing Up for an Account

To create an AdWords account, start by opening the Google AdWords home page at <http://adwords.google.com>. Open an account using the Click to Begin button under the Sign Up Now headline (Figure 10-1).

Creating Your Account

The new interface starts with you selecting the username and password that you would like to use with AdWords. If you already have a Google account (for example, with

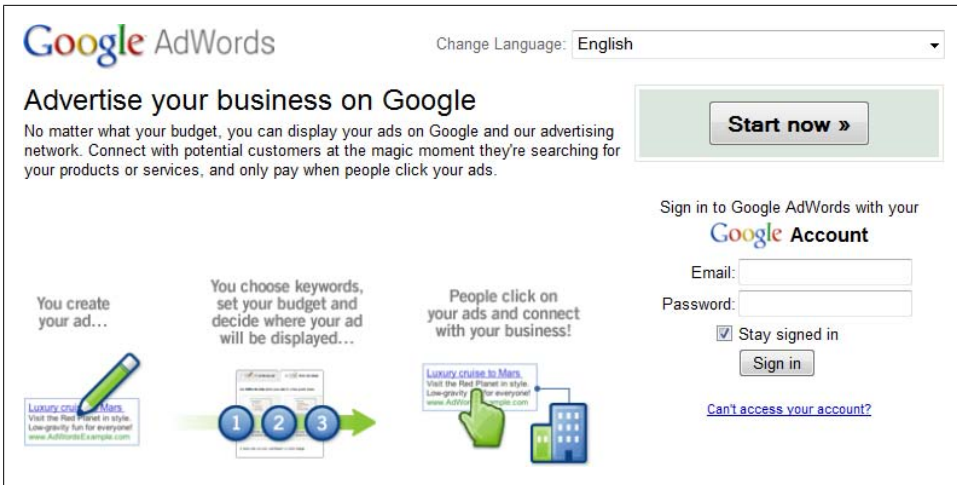


Figure 10-1. Google makes it very easy to sign up for AdWords

AdSense or Gmail), you can use that account to create your AdWords account and log in to AdWords.

Some people prefer to use a new login and password just for AdWords and Google (Figure 10-2).

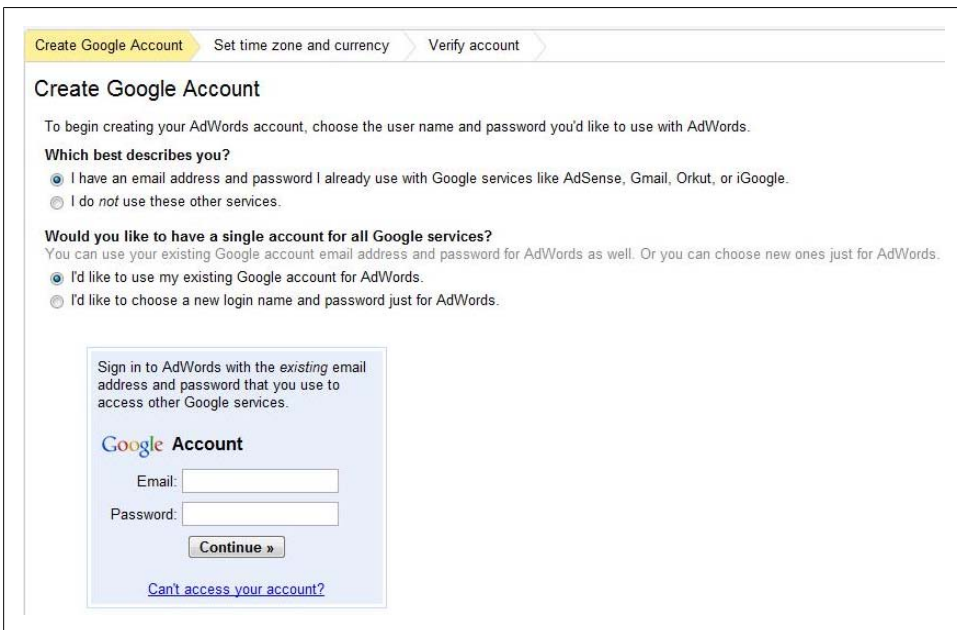


Figure 10-2. To begin creating your AdWords account, choose a username and password

The next step is to set up the economics of your new ad. As shown in [Figure 10-3](#), you'll need to:

- Select time zone country or territory
- Select time zone
- Choose a currency to pay for your new account



You need to ensure the time zone is relevant for your reporting in AdWords, as this time zone data is also imported into the Google Analytics reports. The currency or time zone settings cannot be changed after you set up your account.

The screenshot shows a multi-step process for creating a Google Account. The current step is 'Set time zone and currency', which is highlighted in yellow. The page title is 'Set time zone and currency preferences'. Below the title, there is a paragraph explaining that the time zone and currency are for reporting and billing. There are three main sections: 1. 'Select a permanent time zone for your account.' with a dropdown menu for 'Time zone country or territory' set to 'United States' and another dropdown for 'Time zone' set to '(GMT-08:00) Pacific Time'. 2. 'Select a permanent currency for your account.' with a dropdown menu for 'US Dollar (USD \$)'. 3. A yellow warning box stating 'Your time zone and currency settings can't be changed after you setup your account. Please review your choices carefully and then click 'Continue.''. At the bottom, there are 'Back' and 'Continue' buttons.

Figure 10-3. Set time zone and currency preferences

Working Backward

As you'll see, although Google makes it pretty easy to sign up for an AdWords account, the whole process can seem a little backward: you go through the steps to select your budget, create an initial ad, select keywords to match your ads to potential customers, and finally—at the end of the process—before your ad is run, you provide your credit card information.

If you are like me, it would probably feel more natural to do this in reverse order: first establish an account with your credit card so you are able to understand the various account options, and then set up your first ad. Alas, that's not an option, so to open an AdWords account you must work backward.

The final step in the signup process is verifying your account via an activation email. After that, you will be able to sign in to your AdWords account using the email address and password you specified. When you sign in, you will be asked to create your first campaign (Figure 10-4) and enter your billing information to start running your ads.

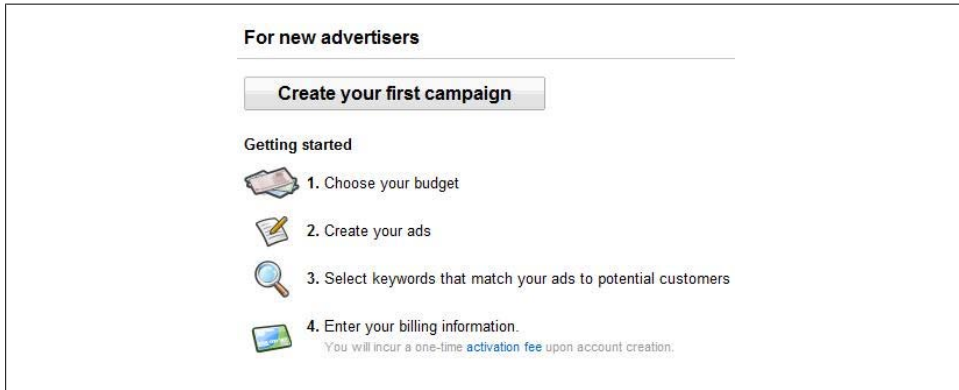


Figure 10-4. First steps in creating your first campaign

Creating Your First Campaign

First, in the “Locations, languages, and demographics” window (Figure 10-5), choose where you want your ads shown. Google tries to present you with good choices based on what it knows about where you are located (e.g., where the computer you are working on is located). You can always override Google’s suggestions, but it does make sense to carefully select only the area your business serves.

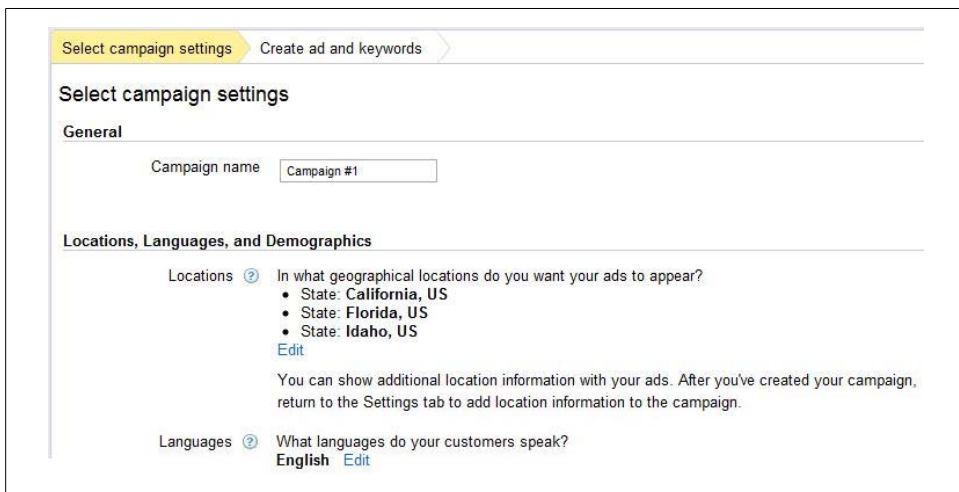


Figure 10-5. You can target customers in areas that Google hasn’t preselected



For quite a few businesses, there are no geographic borders—in which case it makes sense to pick a wide geographic swath.

The initial choices Google offers include:

- Country
- Specific region, such as a state
- Localities, such as a city

You can change the country Google has preselected for you using the “Select a different country or territory” link. You can also choose different areas within a country by clicking the appropriate link and entering a city, region, or postal code, as shown in [Figure 10-6](#).

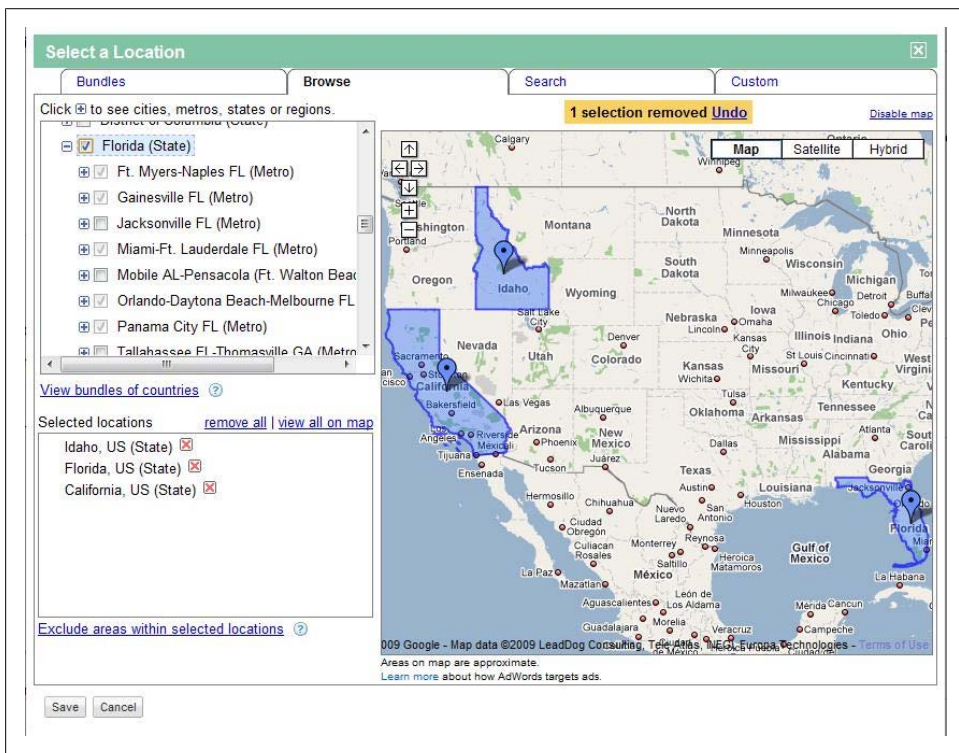


Figure 10-6. Select a location or multiple locations for targeting



You can choose a language for your ad from the long list of available languages that opens when you select Another Language in the “Locations, languages, and demographics” window. You target multiple languages by selecting the relevant boxes from the list, but AdWords does not translate your ads to these languages.

The new interface allows some advanced settings as part of the standard campaign setup, which includes demographic bidding preferences on eligible content network sites. The next setting requires you to decide whether you want your ads for the initial campaign to show up on both the search and content network (Figure 10-7). AdWords recommends new advertisers select all available sites and devices, including iPhones and mobile devices, to reach the greatest potential audience.

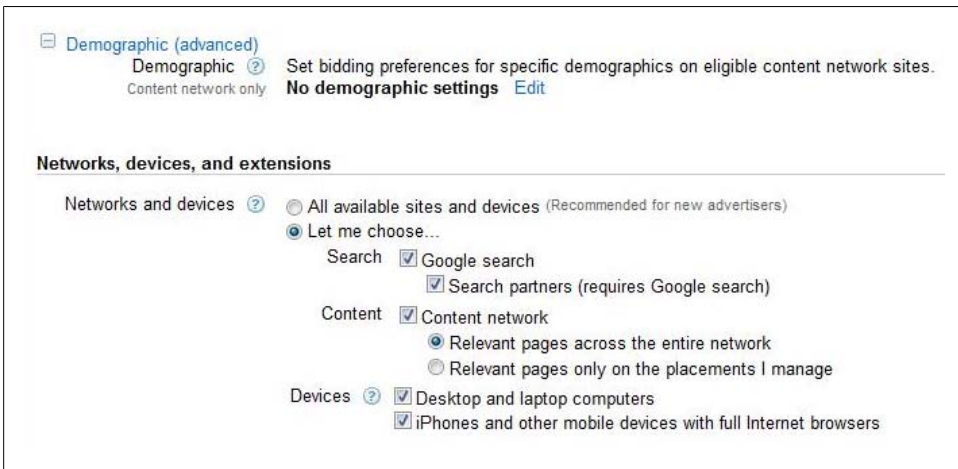


Figure 10-7. Select what networks and devices to target

Bidding and Budget

The new interface requires initial bidding and budget decisions to be made before the selection of keywords or creation of the ads. There are two options for bidding: basic and advanced. Most users will find that the basic option with both optional automatic bidding and a focus on clicks will be suitable for their campaigns (see Figure 10-8).



If you select the automatic bidding option, you are unable to use position preference or accelerated delivery of ads.

The Advanced option is more suitable once the campaign has been set up, because you need to set up conversion tracking before you can use the Conversion Optimizer to

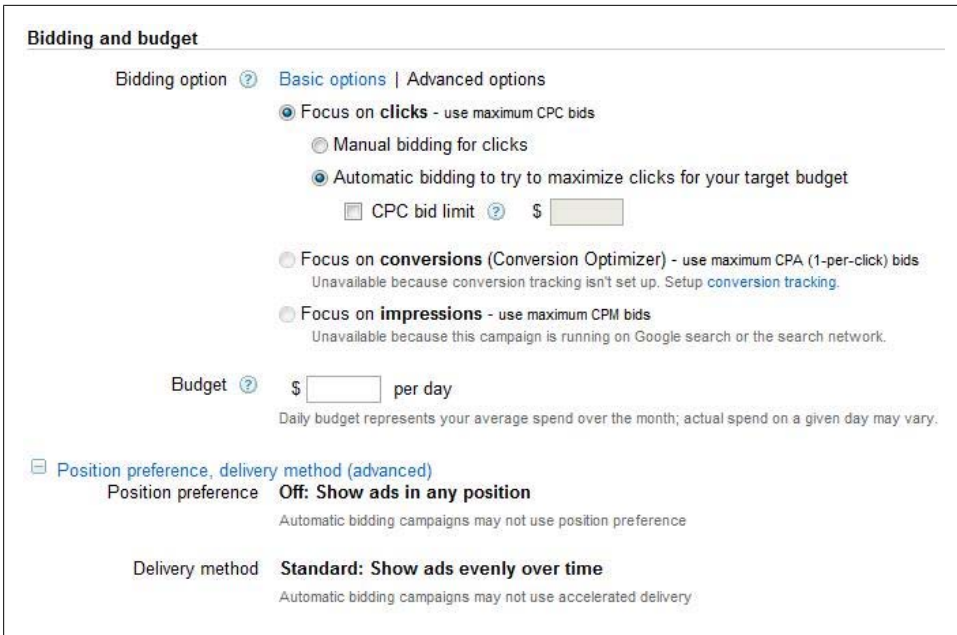


Figure 10-8. The new interface allows for basic or advanced options

focus on conversions. If you want to focus on impressions, conversion optimization is available only for content placement campaigns, not for those that are also running on the search network.

The most important step in the setup of your campaign is setting your daily budget. You can increase or decrease this budget at any time by editing campaign settings. AdWords does not give any guidance at this stage as to a suitable budget based on the keywords targeted in your campaign, but it does offer some help in the next step.



The campaign daily budget is averaged over the month, so actual daily spending may vary.

Advanced Settings

One AdWords feature that most people should consider is Schedule, as it allows you to set up multiple campaigns.



If you select to use the automatic bidding option, you cannot use said scheduling.

Frequency capping is useful for controlling budgets for CPM campaigns, so it is available only for campaigns running on the content placement network. This option allows for basic “per day” or “per ad group” settings. See [Figure 10-9](#).

Advanced settings

Schedule: Start date, end date, ad scheduling

Start date

End date None

Ad scheduling **Show ads all days and hours**
Automatic bidding campaigns may not use ad scheduling

Ad delivery: Ad rotation, frequency capping

Ad rotation **Not available**
Unavailable because there is no ad in the campaign

Frequency capping No cap on impressions
Content network only impressions

Figure 10-9. Ad scheduling allows for more flexibility when targeting specific customer markets

Creating an Ad

The next step is to create an actual ad using the window shown in [Figure 10-10](#). First, specify the ad that will direct traffic to the website; you can create more ads later.

As you can see in [Figure 10-10](#), an ad consists of the following elements:

The Headline

A Headline appears at the top of your ad and is a hyperlink. When the user clicks the link, she is redirected to the address you specify in the destination URL (specified in “What site will your ad link to?”). With the Headline, you have 25 characters to capture the eye of a prospect.

Two Description lines

Each Description line is limited to 35 characters. The Descriptions are the heart of your ad. Once an ad’s Headline has captured the attention of a prospect, it is up to the Description to provide enough specific information to motivate the prospect to click the hyperlink provided by the ad. It’s therefore important to think through how best to achieve this goal using the 70 characters available (which is not much) in the two Description lines.

The Display URL

The Display URL is the address that shows in the displayed ad, not necessarily the one the ad links to.

The Destination URL

This is the actual address that the hyperlink associated with the Headline element of the ad sends traffic to.

✓ Select campaign settings Create ad and keywords

Create ad and keywords

Create an ad

Enter your first ad here. You can create more ads later. [Help me write an effective text ad.](#)

To create another ad type save your incomplete campaign, then go to the "Ads" tab to create your ad.

Headline	<input type="text" value="Google Advertising Tools"/>	Ad preview Google Advertising Tools Making Money with a Website and working with AdWords www.oreilly.com
Description line 1	<input type="text" value="Making Money with a Website"/>	
Description line 2	<input type="text" value="and working with AdWords"/>	
Display URL	<input type="text" value="www.oreilly.com"/>	
Destination URL ?	<input type="text" value="http:// www.oreilly.com"/>	

Figure 10-10. Google AdWords are terse, so make sure that every word counts

When a user clicks the hyperlinked Headline on your ad, an address on one of the Google ad servers is opened. The Google ad server then automatically redirects the user to the address you specified in the Destination URL field when you created the ad. This allows Google to meter the click throughs on your ad, so Google can assign you, the advertiser, a CPC-based charge and pay an AdSense CPC-based fee to the website on which your clicked ad appeared, as applicable.

Providing the ability for you to use distinct display and actual (destination) URLs also gives you some flexibility when you create your ads, particularly when you graduate to the Standard Edition and can run multiple ads. For example, you can use this capability to display a single, simple URL for your site while directing click throughs on different versions of your ad to different internal portions of your site.



Bear in mind that as soon as you enter your billing information, your account is activated, your ad will start running, and you will be charged for it.

Of course, the mechanics of creating an ad are not nearly as important as understanding how to craft an ad that will get people's attention and make them want to click your link and buy your goods or services, and, at the same time, not violate Google's editorial policies. (For more on Google's policies, see the sidebar "[Google's Editorial and Content Guidelines](#)" on page 287.)

Generally, you should realize that AdWords ads are very short. As noted, when you create an AdWords ad, you have 130 characters, including spaces and the display URL. These characters are divided as shown in [Table 10-1](#). This terseness leads to a style that is possibly unique to AdWords CPC advertising, and may account for some of the success of the medium: there's little room for hype, and you must get to the point.

Table 10-1. Keep the character limitations in mind when you create your ads

Line	Purpose	Maximum characters
1	Headline	25
2	Text of ad	35
3	Text of ad	35
4	Display URL	35

Crafting an Ad

If you stop to think about it, these four lines, with their rigid maximum number of characters, present a writing challenge a bit like that involved in writing a formal haiku (a Japanese poetic form with three lines and a specific, limited syllable count for each line). For example:

Fancy headline leads
Describe, interest, compel
My hyperlink: yes!



Since the fourth line is used for the display URL, your ad really has only the 25-character headline and the 70 characters of text. This compares with the Japanese haiku convention of 5-7-5 syllables in three lines!

You'll want to abbreviate and be as succinct as possible, while still being intelligible and inviting. The best AdWords ads don't bang surfers on the head; rather, they appear to provide a solid and calm way to get information or services needed by the reader of the ad (who, after all, has already been prequalified by ad targeting). Good AdWords ads are pared down to the essentials.

The following guidelines are also basic to crafting good AdWords copy:

- Try to include the keywords you targeted with the text of the ad.
- Short, clear, nonrepetitive phrases work best.
- Make sure the words in your ad are all spelled correctly.
- Identify your unique selling proposition (what makes your site special?). Refer to [Chapter 2](#) for ideas about creating short pitches that identify your value proposition.

- Provide a call to action using words such as “Buy,” “Shop,” or “Join” (e.g., “Join our photo club!”).

For example, the ad:

Shop Wi-Fi Antennas
Large selection, good prices
Immediate shipping

will probably generate a respectable CTR if properly targeted. The ad is clear, simple, and informative and contains a call to action.

In contrast, the following ad for the same merchandise is poorly written and contains too much jargon (although perfectly acceptable under Google’s editorial guidelines). Most prospects will probably be unclear about what the ad is selling and what benefits clicking the link will provide:

Wireless Boosters Blog
IEEE 802 standard devices
Rectify and amplify

Google’s Editorial and Content Guidelines

AdWords Editorial Guidelines are essentially in your interest as an advertiser. For the most part, these rules make sense. But working with Google’s Editorial Guidelines can sometimes feel like working with a particularly rigid and unimaginative high school English teacher—yes, spelling and punctuation do count. You’ll find the complete editorial, content, and linking guidelines at <https://adwords.google.com/select/guidelines.html>.

Google enforces its rules with an automated check of your ad before it is accepted. In fairness, Google’s rules are generally intended to make everybody’s web experience better on the (probably true) premise that respect for web visitors on the part of advertisers yields better ad results.

The good news is that in some cases—for example, if Google believes you have misspelled a word when in fact you are spelling the word differently as part of your branding—you can request a waiver as part of the approval process. This waiver is automatically granted pending Google’s manual review of the matter.

Here are some of the highlights of Google’s editorial strictures:

- Use proper spelling and grammar.
- Ad content and keywords must directly relate to the destination web page.
- Local services must indicate their location in their ads.
- No exclamation points in the ad headline and only one in the ad text.
- No unnecessary capitalization or repetition.
- No use of superlatives such as “best price” without third-party verification on your site. This means real verification, and customer testimonials do not count.

Google's example: "If an ad claims to be the 'Best of the Web,' the site must display third-party verification of the claim. A *Forbes* magazine seal indicating a site received a 'best of the web' award would be acceptable, and the ad would then comply with this policy."

- No universal call-to-action phrases (such as "click here") that could apply to any site (but site-specific calls to action are generally encouraged).
- The third line of text cannot reference the display URL immediately below it.

Google also enforces an extensive list of content prohibitions, such as no ads promoting prostitution. Note that some of these "sin" prohibitions depend on where your ad will run; Google makes every effort to comply with applicable laws, and the legality of ads for products such as alcohol do vary depending upon jurisdiction.

Choosing Keywords

The next step is to choose an initial 10 to 20 keywords or phrases that you will be running your ad against, using the window shown in [Figure 10-11](#). The keywords or phrases you select will determine which search results pages your ad appears on. Users will see the ad when they search for the keyword or phrase in Google. If you've elected to display your ad on the Google AdSense network as well, your keywords are used by Google to determine relevancy for placement purposes. (See "[Ad Groups](#)" on [page 308](#) for information about targeting Google search, content, or both with an ad.)

The easiest way to add keywords is to expand one of the categories that Google suggests based on a scan of your site (as shown in [Figure 10-11](#)), and add some of the specific keywords suggested. The keywords or phrases you choose will also partially determine the cost of your ad (if the keywords cost more than your budget, then your ad won't run), as well as its quality score. To make the process easier, the new interface offers a simplified estimated traffic summary to help you understand more about approximate campaign costs.

If you already have a list of specific websites on which you wish to place your ads, the new interface saves you time by allowing you to add managed placements through a simple text box. Later in this chapter we examine in more detail the new layout for managed placements, which are now supported by an enhanced placement tool.



Generally, the best advice about keywords is to be targeted and specific (don't go after the kitchen sink), don't use too many keywords (Google suggests no more than 20, but less than 6 would probably be a good starting place), and experiment. See "[Keyword Tool](#)" on [page 331](#) for some nifty assistance with keyword selection.

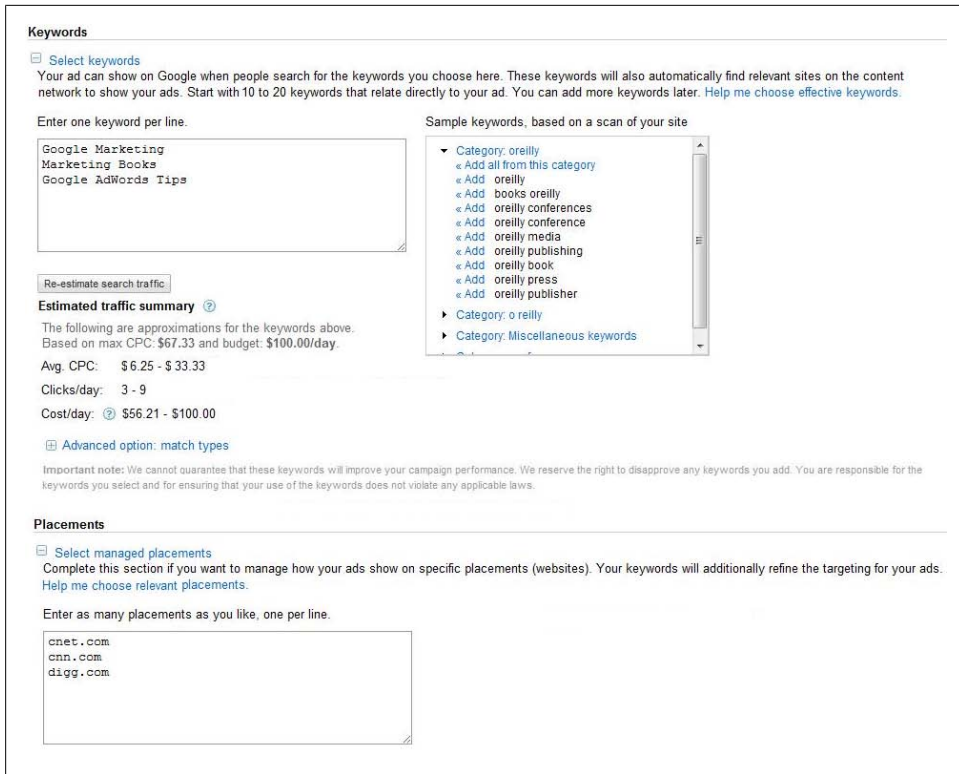


Figure 10-11. Google suggests categories of keywords to make your selection easier

Providing Payment Information and Activating Your Account

Your ad isn't served until you provide payment information to activate your account. To activate your account, open the My Account tab and click the Billing Preferences link.

In the Account Setup window, select the country in which your business is located, set your local time zone, and click Continue. The choice in country or territory will affect the payment options available, and might include region-specific options such as Bank Transfer or BPAY. The "Choose form of payment" window, shown in Figure 10-12, will open. You can choose to directly debit from a bank account or use a credit or debit card. With credit card or debit card payments, you can choose to establish a prepaid balance (as a way to control potential costs), or you can "postpay" as you go—meaning as you receive clicks, your card is automatically charged.

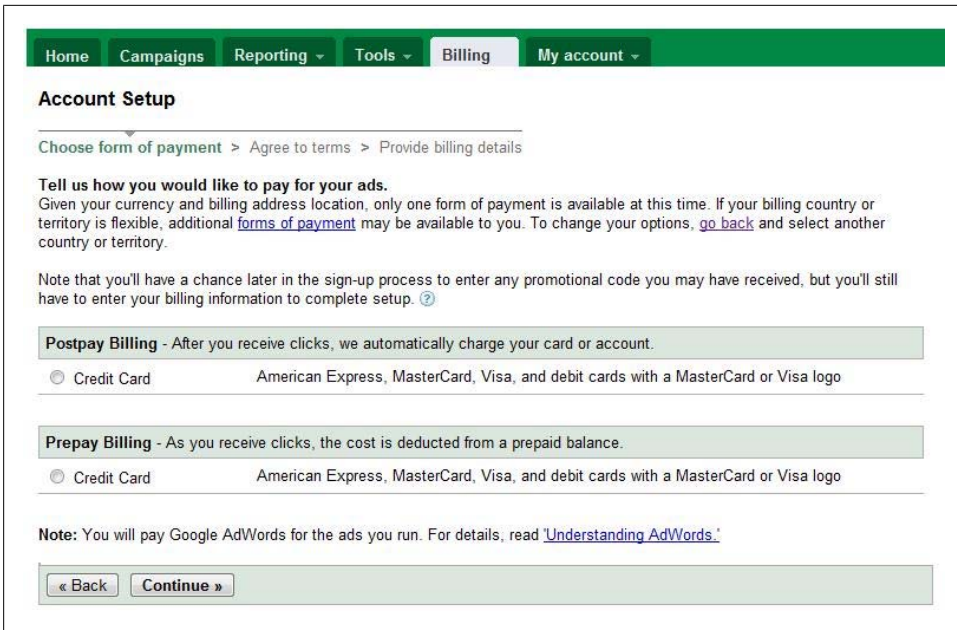
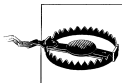


Figure 10-12. You can choose from a number of campaign options



Once you select postpay or prepaid, you cannot change this. If you change your mind, you will have to close down the account and open a completely new account. Be careful and think about how you will be managing your campaign over time, not just today, before you make this choice.

Next, the Terms window will open. Review the AdWords terms and conditions, agree to them, and click Continue. Finally, enter your billing and credit card (or bank) information to complete the process.

Graduating

Previously, AdWords offered a separate Standard and Starter Edition for advertisers, but with the development of the new interface, Google is updating all AdWords Starter Edition accounts to the new interface. This means one interface can be used by all advertisers. You no longer need to graduate to Standard Edition to expand your account, and you now have access to all the advanced AdWords features available if you want to use them.

The following are some of the key differences Starter Edition users will notice after the update:

- Just one edition for everyone
- Able to advertise many more products (the old Starter Edition limited the account size)
- Multiple ad formats
- Multiple geographic targeting
- Daily, not monthly, budget
- Advanced cost control with “automatic bidding”
- New settings tab
- New content networks tab
- Single Health Meter for your entire account
- Ability to create advanced reports
- Advanced campaign planning tools

Ad Campaigns and Ad Groups

Ads are grouped within ad groups, and ad groups are contained within ad campaigns. Each AdWords account can have many campaigns, and each campaign can contain multiple ads. Google AdWords allows up to 25 campaigns in each AdWords account, with up to 2,000 ad groups in each campaign, but many accounts are set up with a single campaign and several ad groups. The relationship of an AdWords account to campaigns and groups is shown in [Figure 10-13](#).

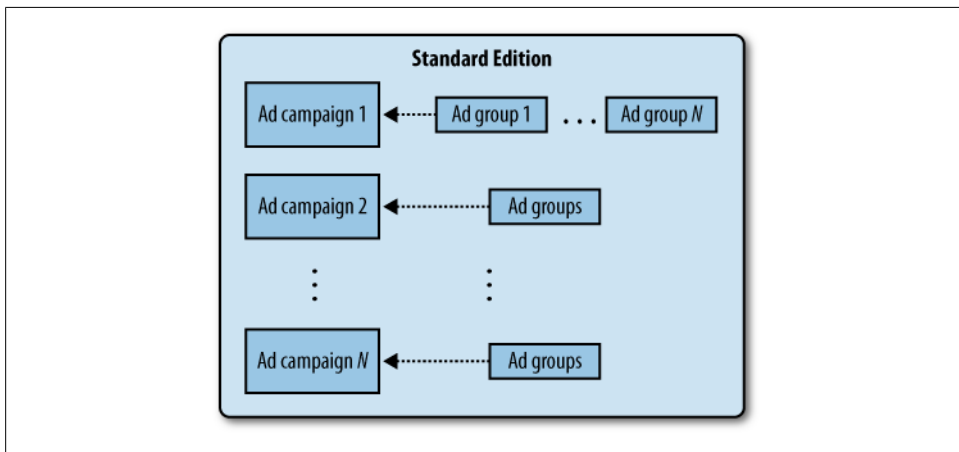


Figure 10-13. An AdWords account can contain multiple campaigns, each of which can hold more than one ad group



An ad group can have the same name as the ad campaign that contains it.

You can use ad campaigns to contain the AdWords activity of a business unit or location, or you can establish separate ad campaigns for projects with individual budgets or unique settings.

Creating and Editing Ad Campaigns

When you create and activate an AdWords account, you must create an ad campaign and an ad group as part of the account creation process.

However you get there, you will have at least one ad group within one ad campaign as you get started with AdWords. Once your account is in use, it is likely that it will contain multiple ad campaigns. Many of these ad campaigns will contain multiple ad groups.

For example, if you are a webmaster attempting to generate traffic to multiple sites, it makes sense to create an ad campaign for each of your sites. Within each ad campaign for one of your particular web properties, create an ad group containing a specific ad, along with the keywords it targets.

Ad campaigns allow you to organize your AdWords account along functional lines, by creating a separate ad campaign for each website, for instance. Within each ad campaign, multiple ad groups—one per ad—allow you to experiment with how ads are written and which keywords they target.

For example, a webmaster might have campaigns defined for a photography site and a wireless networking site. Each campaign would probably contain several different ad groups, with each ad group containing a different ad and targeted at somewhat different keywords.

When you log on to AdWords, the first thing you will see is either the Account Snapshot, which provides an account overview, or the Campaign Summary window, which will probably have multiple ad campaigns defined in the interface, as shown in [Figure 10-14](#). The new interface uses a feature called “account tree” located on the left side at all times. This feature makes it easier to navigate between your campaigns and ad groups.



Some AdWords users prefer to set the Campaign Summary page as the first page that opens, rather than the Account Snapshot page. You can make this change by clicking the link on the bottom of either the Campaign Summary or Account Snapshot pages.

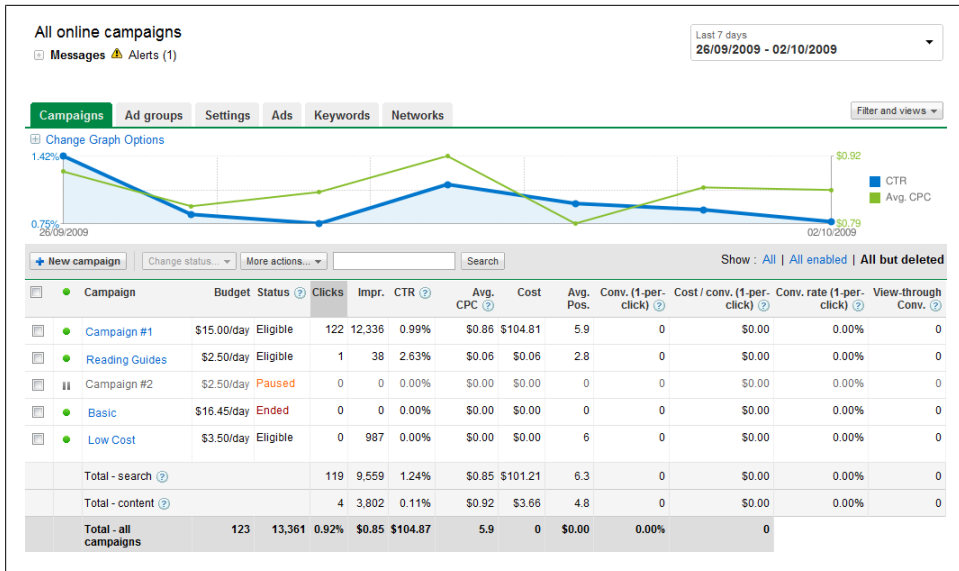


Figure 10-14. It's common to define multiple ad campaigns within your AdWords account

If you created a new AdWords account, the campaign you created as part of the account creation process was named *Campaign #1*. If you “graduated” from a Starter Edition account, your campaign was named *Starter* by default.

Once your AdWords account is activated, you’ll want to change this name to something recognizable by checking the box next to the campaign name and clicking Edit Settings. Ad campaign names should let you know at a glance what the campaign is about.

Creating a New Campaign

To create a new AdWords campaign, from the Campaign Summary window, click “+ New campaign” (shown in the left of [Figure 10-14](#) below the graph box).



You shouldn’t have any trouble locating the Campaign Summary window; if it is not set to open first in your AdWords account, simply click the Campaign Summary link from the Campaign Management tab.

Campaigns can be targeted either to specific ad placements on sites you designate or to keywords. If you choose to create a keyword-targeted site, you’ll find that things work almost identically to the campaign creation process you followed when you created your first account, except that you can name your new ad campaign (and the initial group within it) anything you like, as shown in [Figure 10-15](#).

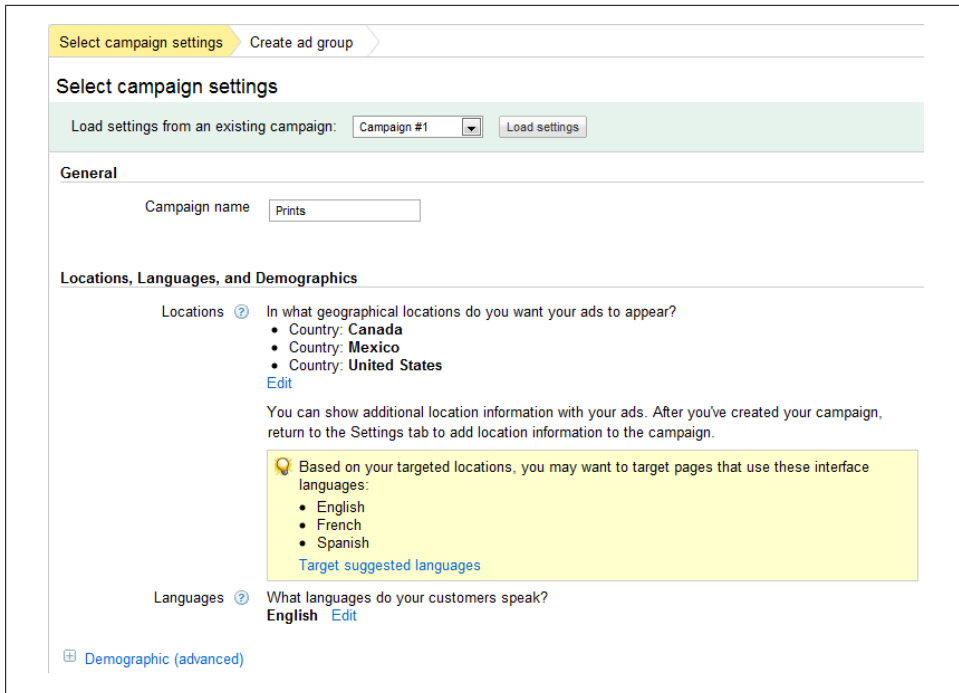


Figure 10-15. It's good to name new campaigns so that you can identify the purpose of the campaign at a glance



Since I've already shown you how to create a keyword-targeted campaign, this walk-through will feature a placement campaign. Keyword targeting works as explained earlier in [“Crafting an Ad” on page 286](#).

What Does Placement Targeting Mean?

Placement targeting, or site targeting, means specifying sites by domain for your ads, rather than using keyword targeting. Each ad campaign can implement either keyword targeting or site targeting.

In other words, once you've turned on site targeting globally, you can then elect to use site targeting in a specific campaign (but not keyword targeting for the same campaign).

Site targeting often means using Google as an agent for CPM, rather than CPC, advertising. As explained in [Chapter 6](#), with CPM you pay for impressions, not for click throughs.

Note that site-targeted ads appear only on Google's content network and not on Google search results pages.

By site targeting your ads, typically you are saying that you don't really care about click throughs and the primary purpose of your ad is to promote brand awareness rather than a specific action on the part of those seeing your ads.

The new interface allows you to load campaign settings from an existing campaign, which can speed up the process of creating similar campaigns by importing all previous selections.



Just as when you signed up for an account, you must create an ad group as part of the process of creating an ad campaign.

Whether you are placement targeting or keyword targeting, the next step is to write your ad, as shown in [Figure 10-16](#). (See “[Crafting an Ad](#)” on page 286 for tips about how to write great AdWords ads.)

✓ Select campaign settings Create ad group

Create ad group

Name this ad group

An ad group should focus on one product or service. Each ad group can contain one or more ads and a set of related keywords, placements, or both.

Ad group name:

Create an ad

Enter your first ad here. You can create more ads later. [Help me write an effective text ad.](#)

To create another ad type save your incomplete ad group, then go to the "Ads" tab to create your ad.

Headline	<input type="text" value="Buy Fine Art Prints"/>	Ad preview Buy Fine Art Prints B&W, florals, landscapes Artist Harold Davis www.DigitalFieldGuide.com
Description line 1	<input type="text" value="B&W, florals, landscapes"/>	
Description line 2	<input type="text" value="Artist Harold Davis"/>	
Display URL	<input type="text" value="www.DigitalFieldGuide.com"/>	
Destination URL	<input type="text" value="http:// www.DigitalFieldGuide.com"/>	

Figure 10-16. Before you target an ad, you need to write the ad copy

Review your ad, and add other ads to this ad group if you'd like. When you are satisfied with your ad, click Continue to save. See [Figure 10-17](#).

The new interface offers only limited support for content placement when creating a new ad group because the settings for content placement have moved to the Networks tab, where you can find the Placement Tool. (More detailed settings are available after you've created the campaign.) As you can see in [Figure 10-18](#), Google provides a number of ways you can find sites you want to target for placement. These methods include:

- A taxonomy of categories through which you can drill down

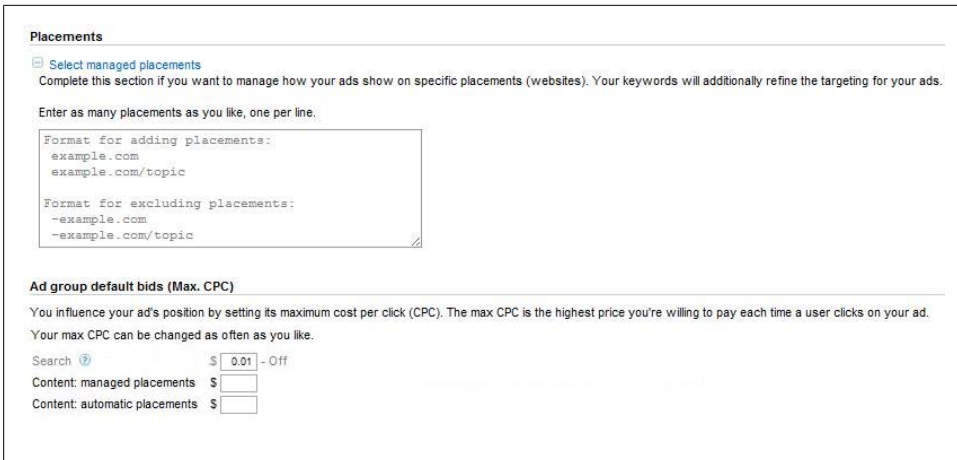


Figure 10-17. You can quickly enter placements and set default ad group bids

- A keyword search through site topics
- A straight list of available URLs
- A demographic search using the characteristics of the audience you are attempting to target

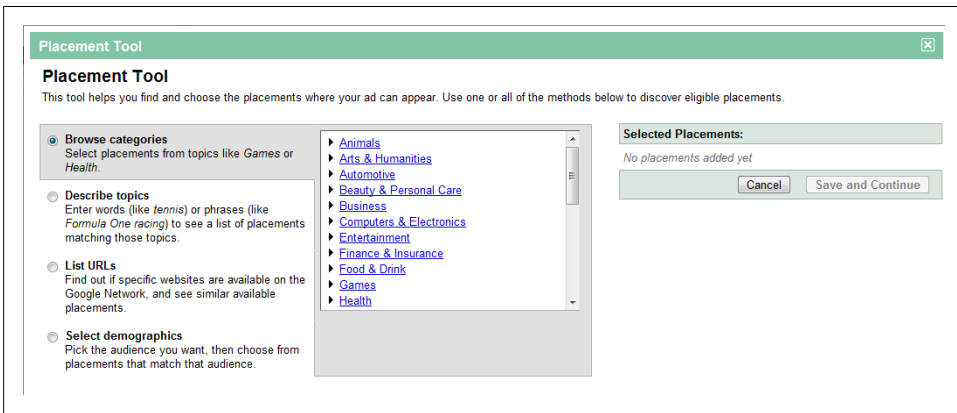


Figure 10-18. The current Placement Tool offers a number of ways to identify the sites you want to target for placement

The new beta “Find placements” tool (Figure 10-19) allows you to search based on keywords or by website, with further refinements available, such as locations and languages. These refinements offer far more specific placement than the current Placement Tool does. The “Filter placements” function offers some very specific refinements, similar to Google Ad Planner, that try to ensure you reach the best possible audience for your ads. The “Sorted by” options for the placement ideas, while advanced, still

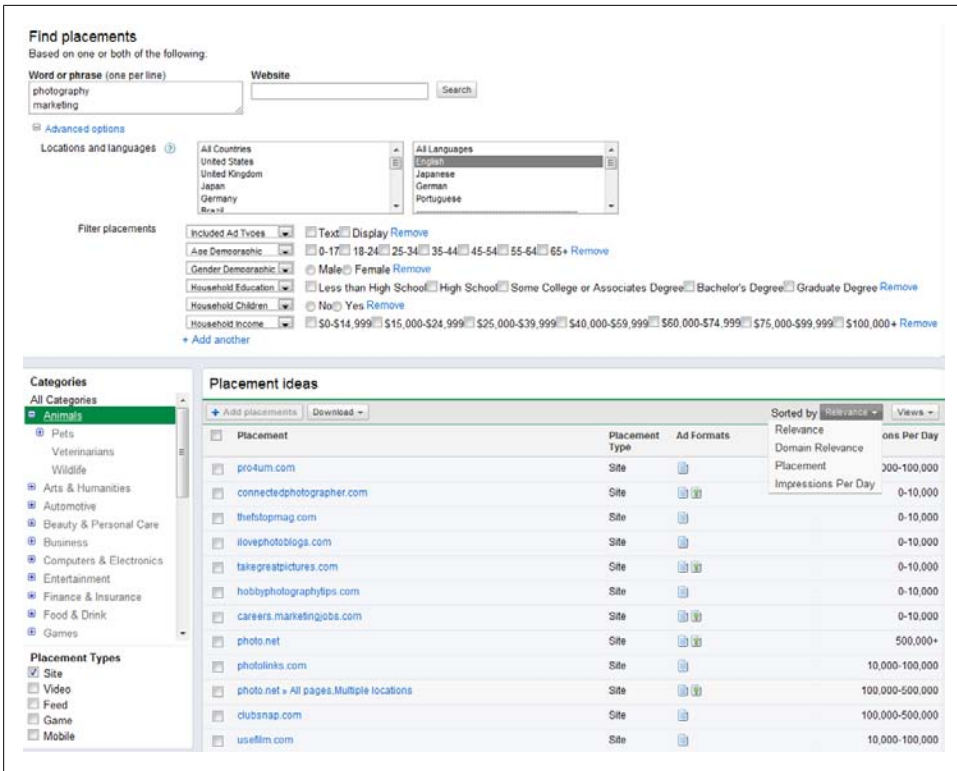


Figure 10-19. The new beta “Find placements” tool offers some vast improvements

seem to require more explanation, and the daily impression figures have varied ranges and do not appear to be accurate enough for any use beyond general guidance.

Site Placement Considerations

The easiest approach (although not always the most effective way to go about site targeting) is to pick an upper-level category from the site taxonomy and let Google suggest specific placements. However, it’s work taking the time to review any sites you don’t know well to make sure they’re really appropriate for your site targeting. Since the primary purpose of CPM advertising—and site targeting is a form of CPM advertising—is promoting brand awareness, you should be careful about the context surrounding your ad (meaning the pages on which the ads appear). For example, it wouldn’t do at all to have an ad for a prestigious car appear on a sleazy site.

Once you’ve identified your placements, you can refine the bid rates that you set when creating the ad group. When you set up the campaign, you selected whether to pay for the ads with CPC or CPM, and bid rates defaulted to the initial selection.



CPC is best if you care most about driving traffic to your site; CPM is best if you care more about getting users to view your ad and logo than getting them to take a specific action. Video and image ads should almost always be placed on a CPM basis. Note that CPM ads appear only on the Google content network, and not on Google search results pages. It's often best to choose CPC for the Google content network because you can get a very high number of impressions with a very low CTR. Depending on your campaign goals, this can result in an extremely low-cost ad campaign.

Next, set a budget for the placement. As you can see in [Figure 10-20](#), Google gives you an estimate of the total number of daily impressions available for the sites in the placement tool. These are the total number of impressions available to all advertisers, not just to you.



You should usually choose at least five sites for placements.

Ad groups Settings Ads Keywords Networks Filter and views						
	Clicks	Impr.	CTR [?]	Avg. CPC [?]	Cost	Avg. Pos.
Search - off	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Google search - off	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Search partners - off [?]	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Content	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Managed placements [?] hide details	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Automatic placements [?] show details	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Total - All networks	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0

Content: managed placements Hide details									
+ Add placements Edit Change status... See URL list... More actions... <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Search"/>									
<input type="checkbox"/>	Placement	Ad group	Status	Max. CPM	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost
<input type="checkbox"/>	cnn.com	Ad Group #1	Eligible	\$1.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	digg.com	Ad Group #1	Eligible	\$1.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/>	cnet.com	Ad Group #1	Eligible	\$1.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
Total - all managed placements					0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00

Show rows: 1 - 3 of 3

Figure 10-20. The maximum CPM you enter amounts to a bid for placement on a site; your ad will appear if this bid makes it worthwhile for the site operator compared to CPC ads and other CPM bids

Once you've reviewed the number of impressions available for your placement choices, for CPM advertising you set an average daily budget and a maximum you are willing to pay per a thousand impressions for each managed placement.



Keep in mind you are making a bid. It is not a guarantee that your ad will appear on the placement-targeted site. The average-position column will help you understand whether your ads have a high enough placement and whether you are bidding enough for your ad to run.

At this point, you can create another ad group for this site-targeted ad campaign, or if you don't want to make another ad group, your campaign is now ready and it will appear in your account summary of all online campaigns and under the Networks tab (for example, the bottom campaign shown in [Figure 10-20](#)). If you have set the bids to CPC, you can see both content and search ad groups together ([Figure 10-21](#)), but if you select CPM, you will have to set up a different CPC campaign for search.

Ad group	Status	Search Max. CPC	Content Managed Max. CPC	Content Auto Max. CPC	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. Pos.
Content	Eligible	\$1.00	\$1.00	auto	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Search	Eligible	\$1.00	\$1.00	auto	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Total - search					0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Total - content					0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Total - all ad groups					0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0

Figure 10-21. The new site-targeted campaign appears in your account summary right along with more traditional Google CPC campaigns

Editing Campaign Settings

You'll often want to change the settings for one of your existing ad campaigns for a whole host of reasons, including:

- You want to temporarily pause, resume, or permanently delete an ad campaign.
- You'd like to change the budget for a campaign.
- You'd like to access certain settings that cannot be changed from the default when the ad campaign is created.

Pausing, resuming, and deleting an ad campaign

Proactive advertising managers often find themselves temporarily stopping (pausing) an ad campaign. Pausing each of several campaigns in turn is a good way to see which of them works best. After your comparison is complete, you can resume the most effective ad campaign. You may also want to delete an ad campaign if you no longer have any interest in it.



Another reason for pausing an ad campaign is that your budget may have temporarily run dry.

To pause, enable, or delete an ad campaign, check the box in the Campaign Summary window next to the campaign to select it (the campaign *Digital Era* is shown selected in Figure 10-22). Next, click Pause, Enable, or Delete as desired.

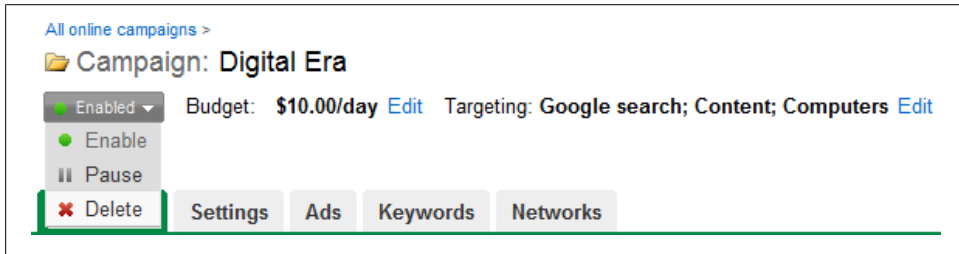


Figure 10-22. Webmasters often find they are pausing and resuming campaigns to meet the needs of their budget, and this window makes it easy to perform the operation on multiple campaigns at once

You can select more than one campaign and perform an operation on all of the selected campaigns at once using the checkboxes as shown in Figure 10-23.

	Budget	Status	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. Pos.
<input type="checkbox"/> Camp	\$10.00/day	Eligible	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Retail	\$25.00/day	Eligible	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Corporate	\$25.00/day	Eligible	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Total - search			0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Total - content			0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0
Total - all campaigns	\$4.90/day		0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0

Figure 10-23. Clicking “Change status” with one or more campaigns selected lets you change settings for all selected campaigns

The Campaign Summary

There’s more to ad campaigns than whether they are running—in fact, much more! To start editing campaign settings, click the Ad Campaign link in the Campaign Summary window. A window like the one shown in Figure 10-24 will open, providing access to a campaign’s ad groups.

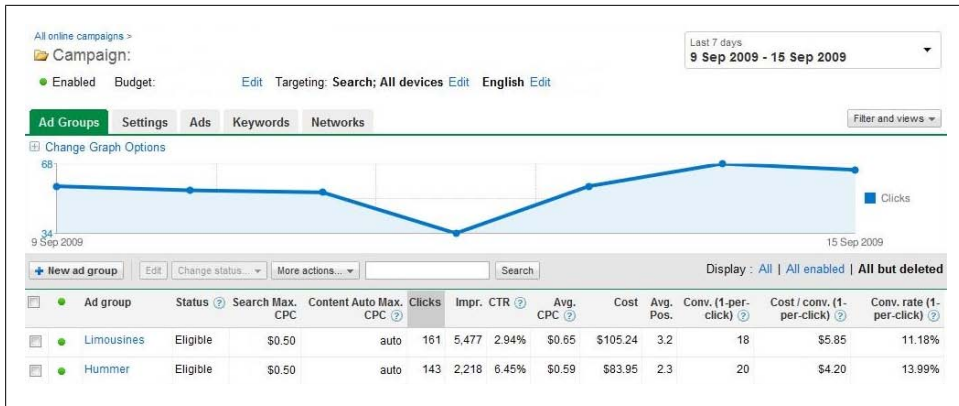


Figure 10-24. The Campaign Summary window lets you review information about all the campaigns

The new interface summary window shows the campaign information in accessible tabs, displaying Ad Groups (see “Ad Groups” on page 308), Ads, and Keywords. You can also use this summary window to change settings for the entire ad campaign.

Excluding sites or categories

Excluding a website means making sure that your ads do not appear on that site. For example, you might wish to exclude specific websites for an entire campaign because you don’t want your ads to appear on a competitor’s site. Or you may have seen a site that is contextually relevant but doesn’t provide a good environment for your ads.

Painting with a broader brush, you also can elect to exclude entire categories of sites. Whatever your reasoning, it’s easy to exclude specific domains or site categories. You can open the Site and Category Exclusion window, shown in Figure 10-25, by clicking the “More tools...” link under the Opportunities tab (shown later in Figure 10-41).



If you have already excluded sites, instead of the Add link shown in Figure 10-24, the link for excluding sites will say Edit.

To exclude a domain, subdomain, or directory within a domain, add it to the text box shown in Figure 10-25, and then click “Save all changes.”

You can exclude what Google calls *topics* by going to the Topics tab, shown in Figure 10-26. Check the items you want to exclude and save your changes.

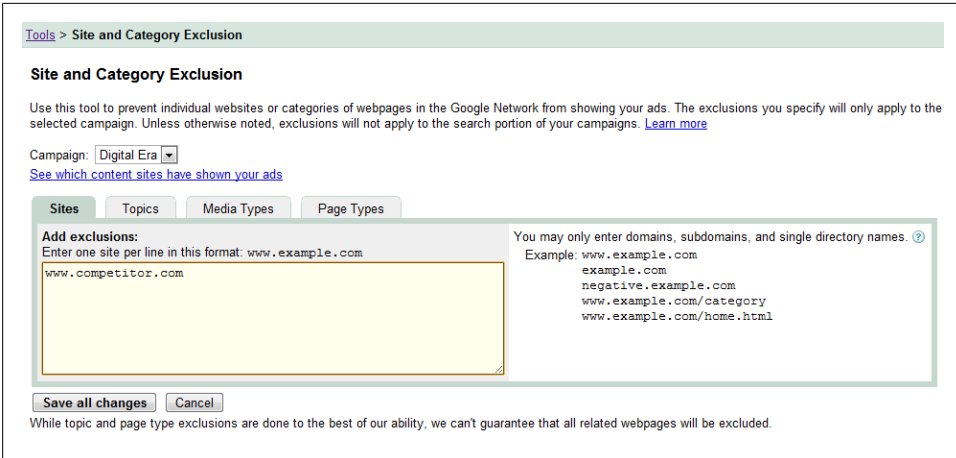


Figure 10-25. You can make sure your ads do not appear on specific domains using the Site and Category Exclusion window

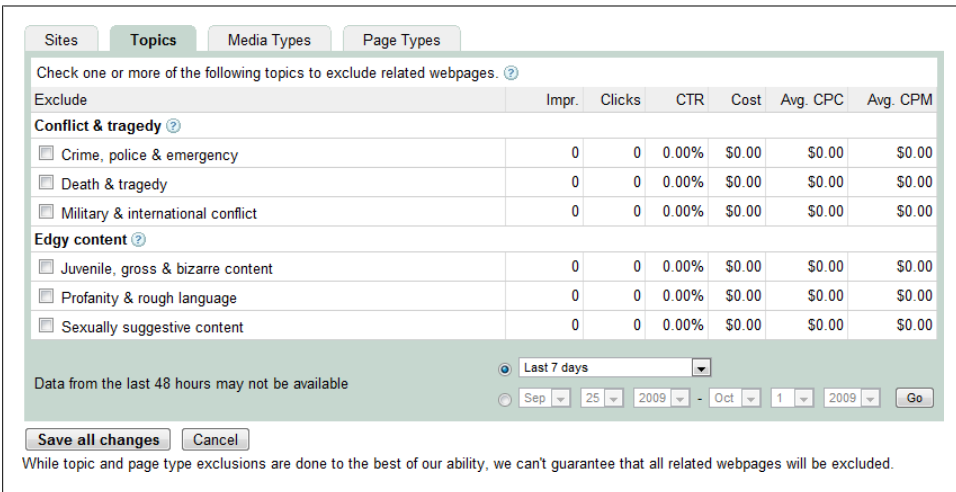


Figure 10-26. Many advertisers prefer not to have their ads run on web pages featuring the kind of content that you can exclude on the Topics tab



It's usually best to exclude violent and edgy content so that your ads won't be shown on such pages.

You may be interested to know that you can exclude many types of user-generated content, such as the content often found on social networking sites and photo sharing

sites, on the Page Types tab, shown in [Figure 10-27](#). You can also keep your ads out of online video content, and the units used to display video, on the Media Types tab.



You might be surprised to learn that CTR can be quite good for error pages and parked domains because such content is often very suitable for your ad or business—for example, when a domain has been mistyped but is similar to a very relevant and popular domain.

Exclude	Impr.	Clicks	CTR	Cost	Avg. CPC	Avg. CPM
<input type="checkbox"/> Error pages ?	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Parked domains ?	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Exclude	Impr.	Clicks	CTR	Cost	Avg. CPC	Avg. CPM
<input type="checkbox"/> Forums ?	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Image-sharing pages	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Social networks	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Video-sharing pages	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

Data from the last 48 hours may not be available

Last 7 days

Sep 25 2009 - Oct 1 2009 Go

While topic and page type exclusions are done to the best of our ability, we can't guarantee that all related webpages will be excluded.

Figure 10-27. It's easy to exclude specific kinds of pages

Adding negative keywords

Negative keywords are used to make sure your ad *doesn't* run on a content site with the specified keyword. For example, if you are trying to drive traffic to a digital photography site by targeting keywords such as “photo,” you might want to add “film” as a negative keyword to make sure your ads don't run on sites that primarily cover older, film-based photography. Negative keywords can be added at the ad group or ad campaign level.



Negative keywords can offer a great deal of control over your ad placements. For example, if you are running a linen cleaning service just for Brooklyn, you might add other locations in the New York area as negative keywords.

To add a negative keyword to an ad campaign in the new interface, go to the summary screen for the campaign, scroll down the page, and expand the “+ Negative Keywords”

option. Click the Add button, enter your negative keywords, and then click Save. If you've already added negative keywords to the campaign, you can edit their match type, as shown in [Figure 10-28](#).

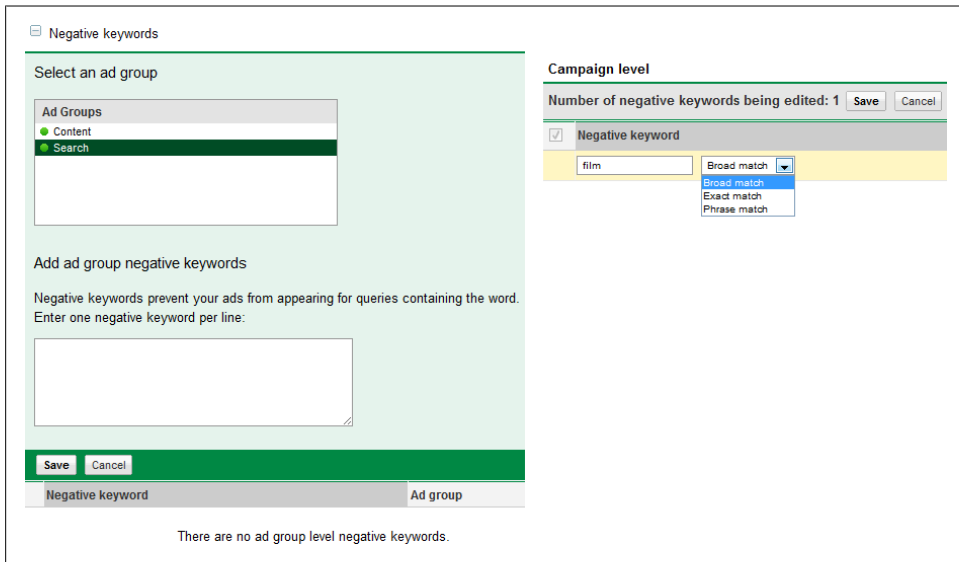


Figure 10-28. Using negative keywords is a good way to make sure that ads don't end up targeted to inappropriate content

You can access the old Edit Campaign Negative Keywords tool in the new interface via the “More tools...” link under the Opportunities tab. In the Edit Campaign Negative Keywords window ([Figure 10-29](#)), add words you want to negatively target in the “Enter words manually...” text box and click Add Keywords.



The Run Clean Sweep option, shown on the lower right of [Figure 10-29](#), is a mechanism that lets you aggregate negative keywords applied to individual ad groups within an ad campaign, up to the ad campaign level.


Changing campaign settings

To edit ad campaign settings themselves, click the Edit Campaign Settings link in the Campaign Summary window. The Edit Campaign Settings window is partially shown in [Figure 10-30](#). You can also open the Edit Campaign Settings window directly from the Campaign Summary window by selecting the Settings tab.

Most of the settings you can edit with the Edit Campaign Settings window are exactly the same as the settings offered when creating a new ad campaign. However, there are

Edit Campaign Negative Keywords

Campaign:

Negative keywords prevent your ads from appearing for queries containing the word . The negative keywords you select here will apply to all ad groups within this campaign.

Add new campaign negative keywords

Enter words manually...

... or use Clean Sweep.

Do your negative keywords appear in more than one ad group? Remove them from the ad group level, and add them at the campaign level.

1. Find negative keywords occurring in
2. Delete from ad groups and add as campaign negative keywords.
You'll have the chance to confirm each change.

Manage existing campaign negative keywords in Digital Era

select all Showing 1-1 of 1 keywords.

<input type="checkbox"/>	film		
--------------------------	------	--	--

Figure 10-29. Campaign Negative Keywords tool

some important settings that you can access from the Edit Campaign Settings window that you cannot configure when setting up a new campaign, such as “Ad rotation.”

Optimizing ad service

By default, the “Optimize: Show better performing ads more often” button shown under “Ad rotation” in [Figure 10-31](#) is turned on. This means that AdWords will give priority in ad placement to your keywords that are performing well (meaning a better CTR). The logic here is that since these keywords are performing better than your other keywords, they will probably continue to do so.

However, there are a couple of reasons you might want to experiment with turning this option off. You might want to give your underperforming keywords a chance by serving ads against them in equal proportion with the better-performing keywords (after all, if the underperforming keywords never get to serve ads, they have no way to better their performance).



You might also intentionally choose to target ads to keywords that don’t perform so well if you are primarily interested in getting your ad text noticed and less concerned about actual click throughs.

By unchecking this option, all your keywords will be served equally, not just your high-performing keywords. Note that this might lower your average position and result in fewer clicks.

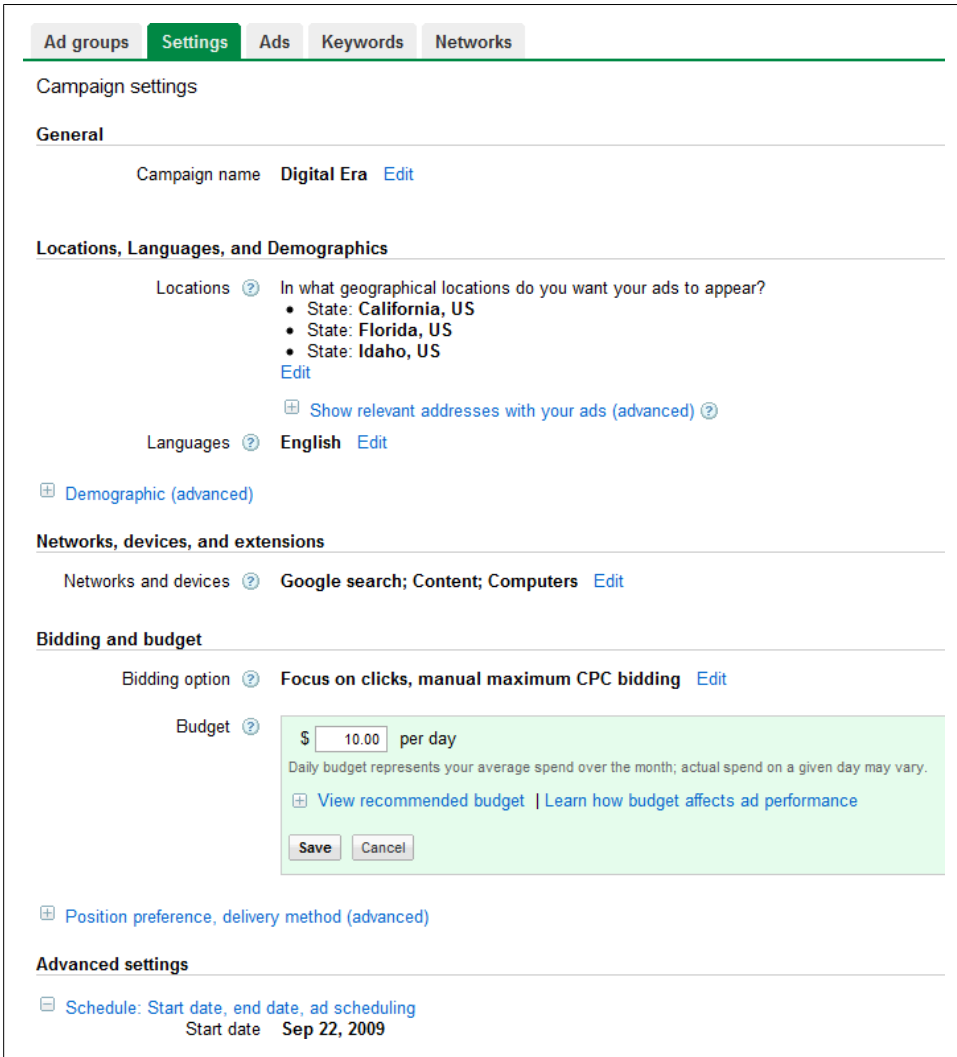


Figure 10-30. The Edit Campaign Settings window is used to change many campaign settings, including whether ads appear on search results, on content, or both

Ad scheduling

For certain advertisers, it might make sense to turn on ad scheduling rather than run ads all the time (Figure 10-32). For example, a service aimed at night owls that delivers calming tea probably should not run during the day. Or you might want to run your ads only during office hours, when there is someone available to answer the phone.

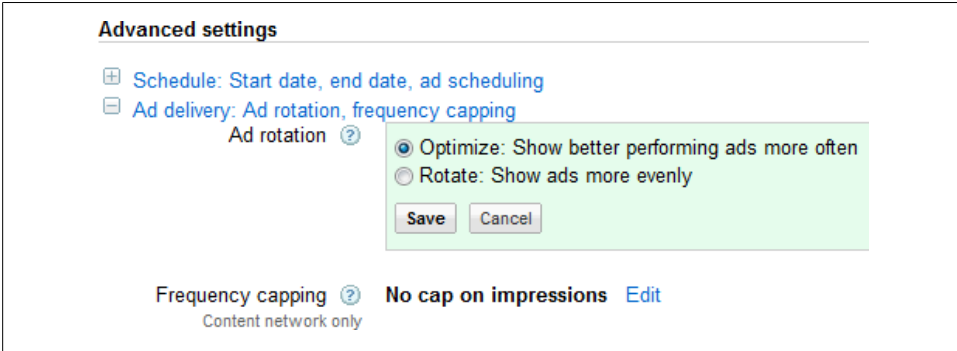


Figure 10-31. By default, better-performing ads are shown more times than average ads; however, some advertisers prefer to rotate ads evenly

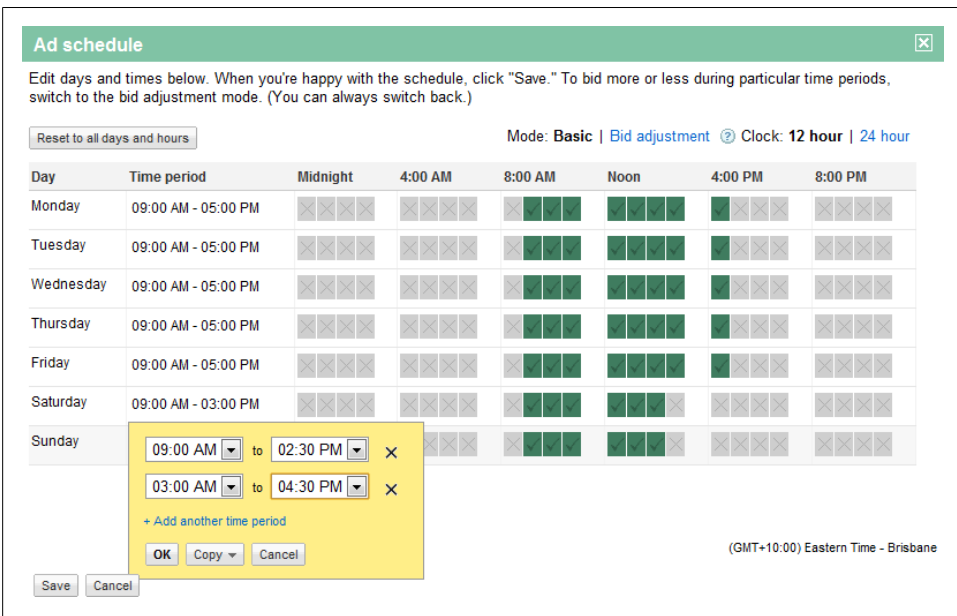


Figure 10-32. Ad optimization by time scheduling

Where ads display

All AdWords ads are displayed on Google search results pages. By default, your ads will also be displayed on the AdSense search and content networks (see [Chapter 8](#) for information about these programs).

In the “Networks, devices, and extensions” section shown in [Figure 10-30](#), under “Let me choose...”, uncheck the Search network if you don’t want your ads to appear on AdSense search results pages, and uncheck the Content network if you don’t want your

ads to appear in AdSense web content. You can also choose whether you want ads appearing on AdSense for Search pages (as opposed to regular Google search pages), and whether you want your ads to appear on mobile devices such as iPhones.



Ads that appear in search results have a much higher CTR than ads appearing in web content, so much so that Google itself doesn't count ads placed in content toward official CTR (although, of course, clicks on these ads do cost you money).

Position preference and delivery method

These two advanced features are not used by most AdWords advertisers but can be useful as extra ad optimization features for your campaigns. Position preference allows AdWords to automatically manage maximum CPC bids to maintain a preferred position range. The standard option for ad delivery is suitable for most accounts because it ensures your budget stretches further, as the accelerated delivery may mean your campaign will miss traffic later in the day. See [Figure 10-33](#).

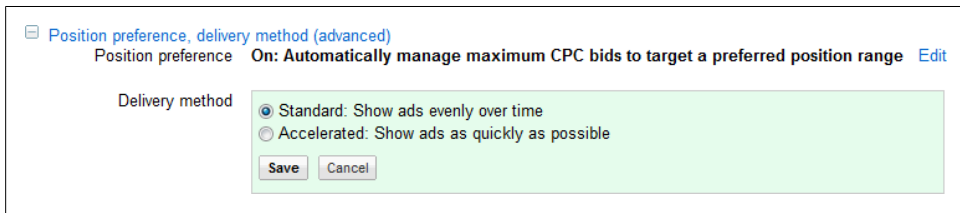


Figure 10-33. Advanced bidding and budget optimization

Ad Groups

The most granular level within the AdWords program is the ad group, which lets you create individual ads and target the ads against keywords. You can easily add new ad groups to existing campaigns.

Creating a new ad group

Each ad group must be created from within an ad campaign. To create an ad group, start from the Campaign Summary window that will contain it (such as the Campaign Summary window shown earlier in [Figure 10-24](#)).

Next, click the “+New ad group” link, and the “Create ad group” screen will display ([Figure 10-34](#)). This process works the same way as entering your initial ad when you first created your AdWords account (see “[Creating an Ad](#)” on page 284).

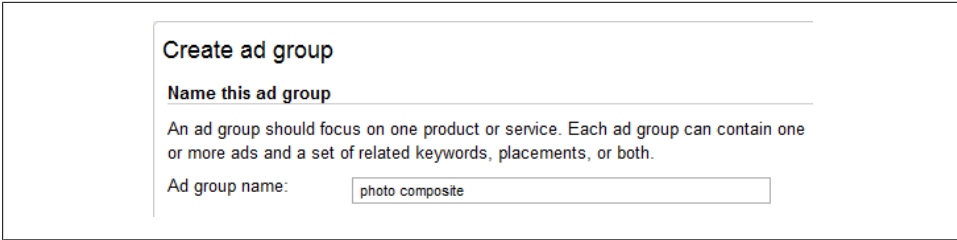


Figure 10-34. The “Create ad group” screen lets you write a new ad, provide keywords for targeting (if it is a keyword-targeted ad), and set the maximum CPC for your ad

Editing an ad group

The new interface allows you to quickly edit an existing ad group by selecting the checkbox and clicking Edit (Figure 10-35). If you require more options from the Campaign Summary, click on the Ad Group link, and a screen like the one shown in Figure 10-36 will open.

Ad group	Campaign	Search Max. CPC	Content Managed Max. CPC	Content Auto Max. CPC	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Avg. CPC	Cost	Avg. Pos.	Conv. (1-per-click)	Cost / conv. (1-per-click)	Conv. rate (1-per-click)	View-through Conv.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Contract	Basic	\$1.50	\$0.50	\$1.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0	\$0.00	0.00%	0
<input type="checkbox"/> Medical	Basic	\$1.50	\$0.50	\$1.00	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0	\$0.00	0.00%	0
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional	Basic	\$1.50	\$0.50	\$1.00	0	2	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	3	0	\$0.00	0.00%	0

Figure 10-35. Quickly edit within the new interface

Ad group: Content

Settings | **Ads** | Keywords | Networks

Change Graph Options | View Change History

Ad	Status	% Served	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Cost
Digital Era Photography Tips, Techniques, Stories Classic photos by Harold Davis www.photoblog2.com	Pending review	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00
Total - search		0.00%	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00
Total - content		0.00%	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00

Figure 10-36. An opportunity to review and edit many aspects of a specific ad

The new interface allows you to modify the text of an existing ad, as well as delete, edit, add keywords, and adjust placements. To modify the text of the ad, open the Ads tab shown in [Figure 10-36](#).

Move your mouse over the ad you want to edit, and click on either the highlighted ad or the pencil icon in the top-right corner. You can now change text and links, as shown in [Figure 10-37](#).

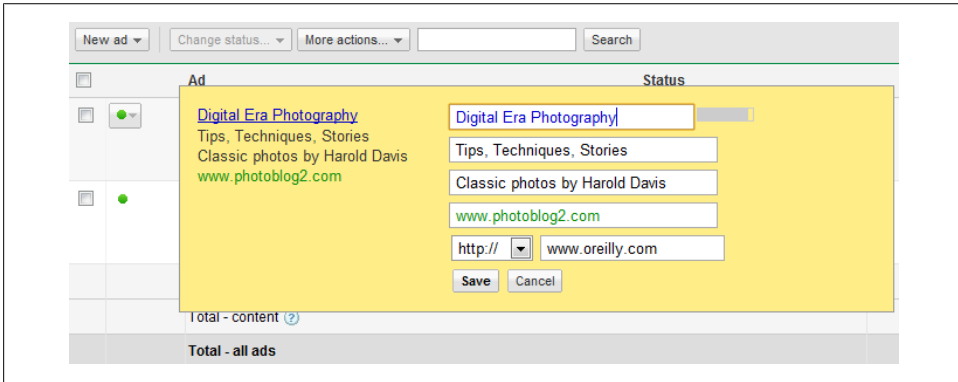


Figure 10-37. The new interface allows quick editing of both text and links in your ad

See [Chapter 11](#) for information about how to make effective use of the keyword and CPC metrics shown in the detailed Ad Group window and how to use the excellent Keyword Tool. In addition to keyword, click-through, and CPC metric data, the detailed Ad Group window gives you access to some functionality not available when you first create an ad group; most important, you can create an ad with graphics, called an *image ad*.

Creating an image ad

To create an image ad, go to the detailed Ad Group window and click the “New ad” link (shown in [Figure 10-38](#)). The Image Ad creation window, shown in [Figure 10-39](#), will open.

To create an image ad, click the Choose File button to upload a *.gif*, *.jpg*, or *.png* graphics file from your computer that is sized appropriately (see [Table 10-2](#)) and has a file size that is less than 50k.

Table 10-2. Sizes for image ads

Size (in pixels)	Adjusted size (in pixels)	Size type
468 × 60	468 × 49	Banner
728 × 90	728 × 79	Leaderboard
300 × 250	300 × 239	Inline

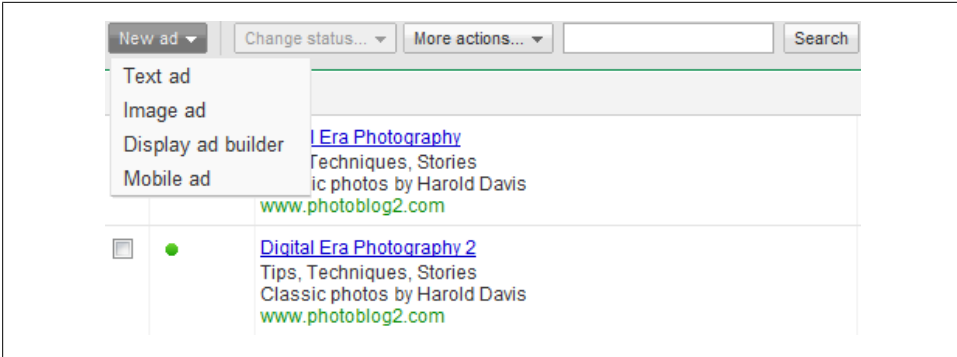


Figure 10-38. Click the “Image ad” option to create an image ad

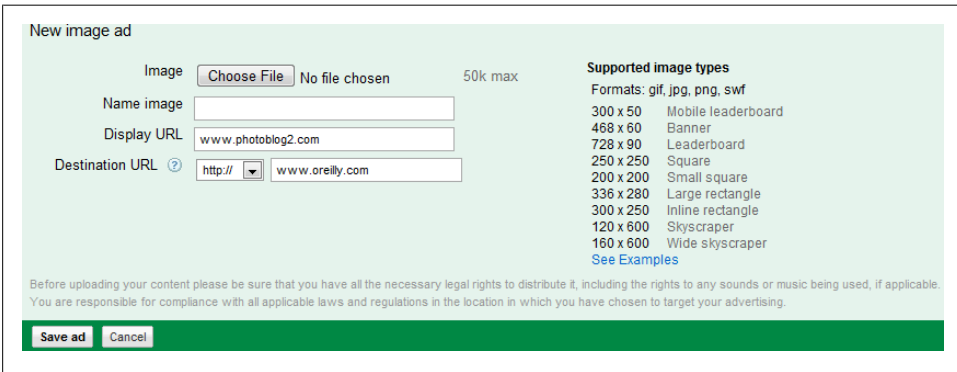


Figure 10-39. It’s easy to create image ads in a handful of acceptable sizes that will run with AdWords

Size (in pixels)	Adjusted size (in pixels)	Size type
250 × 250	239 × 239	Square
200 × 200	189 × 189	Small Square
120 × 600	120 × 578	Skyscraper
160 × 600	160 × 578	Wide Skyscraper

Next, give the image a name, and verify the display and destination URLs. Click “Save ad” to create the image ad.

The adjusted size column shown in Table 10-2 represents the actual size of the graphics that Google will run in ads it serves. The “missing” 11 or 22 horizontal pixels are taken up by your display URL and a Google feedback link.

It is best practice to resize your graphics yourself to the adjusted size. However, you can alternatively check the box that authorizes Google to adjust your graphics from the nominal size to the adjusted size.



If you authorize Google to make this adjustment, be aware that the resizing probably will not be proportional; watch the results carefully.

The Google AdWords editorial guidelines for image ads are nothing extraordinary, and are about what you'd expect. Google takes its role in preventing users from being bombarded with offensive content—or ads that blink and gyrate—quite seriously. You can see the full text of Google's image ad policies at <https://adwords.google.com/select/imagedguidelines.html>.

Google AdWords is not known primarily for serving image ads, and the majority of AdWords ads are text ads. For one thing, image ads do not appear on Google search results, and they appear in only some of the formats chosen by AdSense content participants. Still, it's an important facility to be able to serve targeted image ads via AdWords, and you should know about it for those advertising situations in which you feel a picture is worth many—specifically, 105—words.

Getting a My Client Center Account

A My Client Center (MCC) AdWords account is an umbrella account that allows you to access as many as 1,000 different AdWords accounts using a single window (Figure 10-40).

The screenshot shows the Google AdWords My Client Center interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'My Client Centre', 'Alerts', 'Client Reporting', 'Billing', and 'My Account'. Below this, there's a 'Performance' tab selected, with a date dropdown set to 'Today 02/11/2009'. A table displays performance metrics for various clients. The table has columns for Client Name, Clicks, Impr., Search CTR, Content CTR, Conversions, Conv. Rate, and Amount Spent. The 'Totals - all 7 clients' row shows 5,353 clicks, 53,530 impressions, 7.00% search CTR, 3.00% content CTR, 1,017 conversions, 19.00% conversion rate, and \$13,382.50 spent. Two individual client rows are visible below, both showing 0 clicks, 0 impressions, 0.00% CTR, 0 conversions, 0.00% conversion rate, and \$0.00 spent.

Client Name	Clicks	Impr.	Search CTR	Content CTR	Conversions	Conv. Rate	Amount Spent
Totals - all 7 clients	5,353	53,530	7.00%	3.00%	1,017	19.00%	\$13,382.50
sales@seoprojects.org 555-123-4567	0	0	0.00%	0.00%	0	0.00%	\$0.00
store@seoprojects.org	0	0	0.00%	0.00%	0	0.00%	\$0.00

Figure 10-40. If you are responsible for managing multiple AdWords accounts, it's a great convenience to be able to link all the AdWords accounts in a single client manager account

MCC accounts are primarily intended for advertising professionals who manage multiple AdWords accounts on behalf of clients. To sign up for a client manager account, open the URL <https://adwords.google.com/select/ProfessionalWelcome> in your browser. Next, click the “Join the Google Advertising Professionals program” link. The Enrollment page will open.

In the Enrollment page, enter your existing Google account that you use for AdWords logon information.

Click Continue Enrollment. In the next window you provide a different (or new) Google account for managing access to your My Client Center. The email address cannot be the same as the one for your existing AdWords account.

An MCC account acts as a container for multiple AdWords accounts (just as each AdWords client account is a container for ad campaigns, which in turn are containers for ad groups). Besides making it easier to manage multiple AdWords accounts, client manager accounts provide a number of other benefits, including the ability to enroll in the Google Advertising Professional program (see the sidebar “[Becoming a Google Advertising Professional](#)” on page 313).

Note that if your AdWords account is managed as part of an MCC account, a client manager will be listed on the Access page of the My Account tab (see [Figure 10-41](#)).

Home Campaigns Opportunities Reporting Billing My Account

Access to this AdWords Account

If you manage this AdWords account with other users, see who has access to sign in. Invite others to create their own login email and password to access this account by clicking 'Invite other users.' [Learn more](#)

+ [Invite other users](#)

	AdWords User	Access Code:	
Users With Account Access	sales@seoprojects.org Last logged in 13/05/2009 ?	Administrative Access ?	Change access level
Client Managers	The Lost Agency adwords@thelostagency.com Linked on 16/01/2009	User Interface and API	Terminate access

Figure 10-41. A Client Manager has an MCC account and access to this AdWords account

Becoming a Google Advertising Professional

Google Advertising Professionals is a program offering certifications, tools, training, and incentives for those who manage multiple AdWords accounts (and numerous AdWords campaigns) on behalf of multiple clients. It is intended for professional advertising managers.

You can learn more about the program at the [Google Advertising Professional's welcome page](#). In order to enroll in the program, you'll need to first get a client manager account.

The benefits to advertising professionals include:

- A professional certification program for members who pass an exam and are actively placing AdWords ads
- Professional visibility for members who are certified via a referral program

- Promotional goodies—including advertising credits—to give away to advertising clients
- Promotional materials that members can use to help sell potential clients on the benefits of the AdWords program

Action Items

To start driving traffic to your web properties with AdWords, you should:

- Sign up for an AdWords account
- Choose your daily budget
- Create an initial ad group and ad campaign
- Select keywords that match your ads
- Create multiple campaigns for multiple web properties
- Add variant text and image ads to your ad campaigns
- Understand how to implement site placement as opposed to keyword targeting and the implications of CPM advertising
- Enter your billing information
- Examine setting up conversion tracking
- If you manage multiple AdWords accounts, get a client manager account

Improving Performance

There's a great deal of information contained in the average AdWords account. This information—ads and keywords and the related performance data—is stashed away in ad groups. These ad groups are themselves contained in AdWords campaigns.

To make effective use of AdWords, you need to be able to get to this information. In other words, drilling down into one ad group after another will only provide piecemeal data and usually won't give you the kind of picture you need to improve performance.

For CPC ads, an ad group consists of the text of an ad and its targeted keywords, along with budget choices. For CPM ads, an ad group consists of the creative for the ad or its text, the targeted domains, and budget choices.

It's pretty unlikely for an ad, or an ad campaign, to be perfect the first time round. A great part of the craft of creating effective campaigns is to see how your ads and campaigns are doing, tweak them, see how the improved ads and campaigns are doing, tweak again, and iterate the process. In other words, if at first you don't succeed, try and try again.

This chapter explains how to monitor your AdWords campaigns and AdWords ad groups performance, and how to use the tools that AdWords provides to improve ad and campaign performance.

Monitoring Your AdWords Activity

When you open AdWords, the initial screen you'll see is the Account Snapshot, partially shown in [Figure 11-1](#). By glancing at the Account Snapshots window, you can see whether there are any alerts or status messages that you need to pay attention to. You can also set up a watch list for specific campaigns.

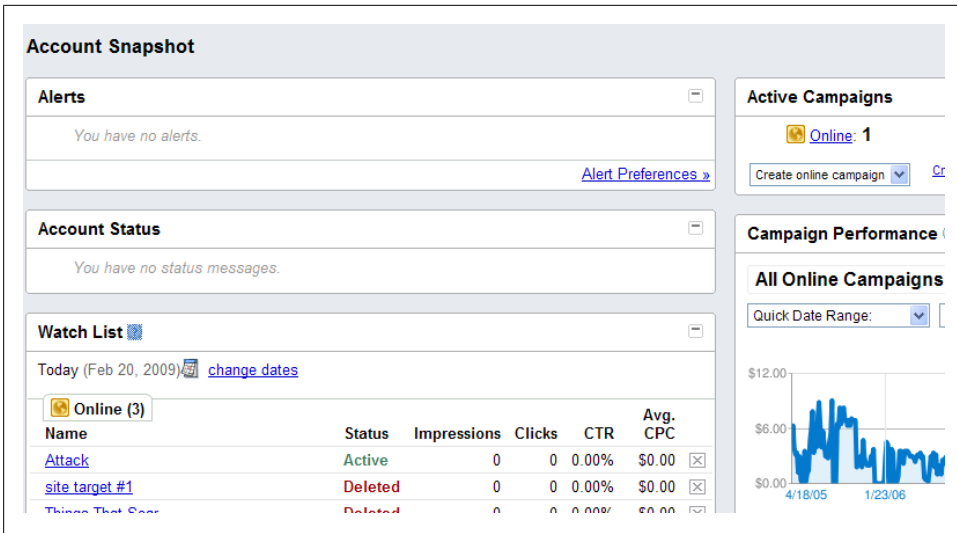


Figure 11-1. The Account Snapshot screen is a centralized place for you to see messages from the system and watch specific campaigns

Of course, the most important thing is to keep frequent track of the progress of your ads. The key high-level questions are:

- How much are you spending?
- How effective are your ads?
- How well are your keywords performing?

Two of the Account Status windows help you track your spending and ad effectiveness. Keyword Performance shows you how well your best performing keywords are doing at a glance (Figure 11-2).



You can change the time frame of reference in the Keyword Performance applet, as is true of most of the AdWords performance review tools.

The Campaign Performance window, shown in Figure 11-3, provides both a visual and metric overview of how all your campaigns are doing. You can set the graphics to display a variety of different statistics, including cost, clicks, and impressions. You can elect to display information for all your online campaigns or for a specific campaign (by clicking the downward arrow shown in Figure 11-3 next to All Online Campaigns).

To really start to get to the underlying campaign and ad performance, you need to open the AdWords Campaign Summary window (shown in Figure 11-4).

Keyword Performance			
Best Performing Keywords ▾ ?			
Jan 1, 2008 – Dec 31, 2008 change dates		Export to .csv	
Keyword	Clicks	Impressions	CTR ▾
The Moment It Clicks	2	44	4.55%
how to make photograms	3	92	3.26%
digital exposure	4	140	2.86%
digital photograms	1	44	2.27%
photography patterns	8	474	1.69%
flower prints	35	2,171	1.61%
floral art	11	690	1.59%
patterns in photography	7	506	1.38%
learn digital photography	13	983	1.32%
art prints	25	2,220	1.13%
Showing keywords 1 – 10 of 26			1 2 3 Next »
Need help finding new keywords? Try the Search-based Keyword Tool .			

Figure 11-2. The Keyword Performance window will show you clicks, impressions, and CTR for your best performing keywords



Some AdWords users prefer to set the Campaign Summary page as the first page that opens, rather than the Account Snapshot page. You can make this change by clicking the link on the bottom of either the Campaign Summary or Account Snapshot pages.

Understanding Your Campaign Summary

You can set the Campaign Summary window to display information for the current day or for almost any date range after the beginning of your AdWords account. Preset time periods besides the current day include the current week, the current month, and all time (i.e., since you opened your AdWords account).



For the purpose of monitoring your AdWords performance, you should check the current day's activity at least once a day before reviewing other time periods.

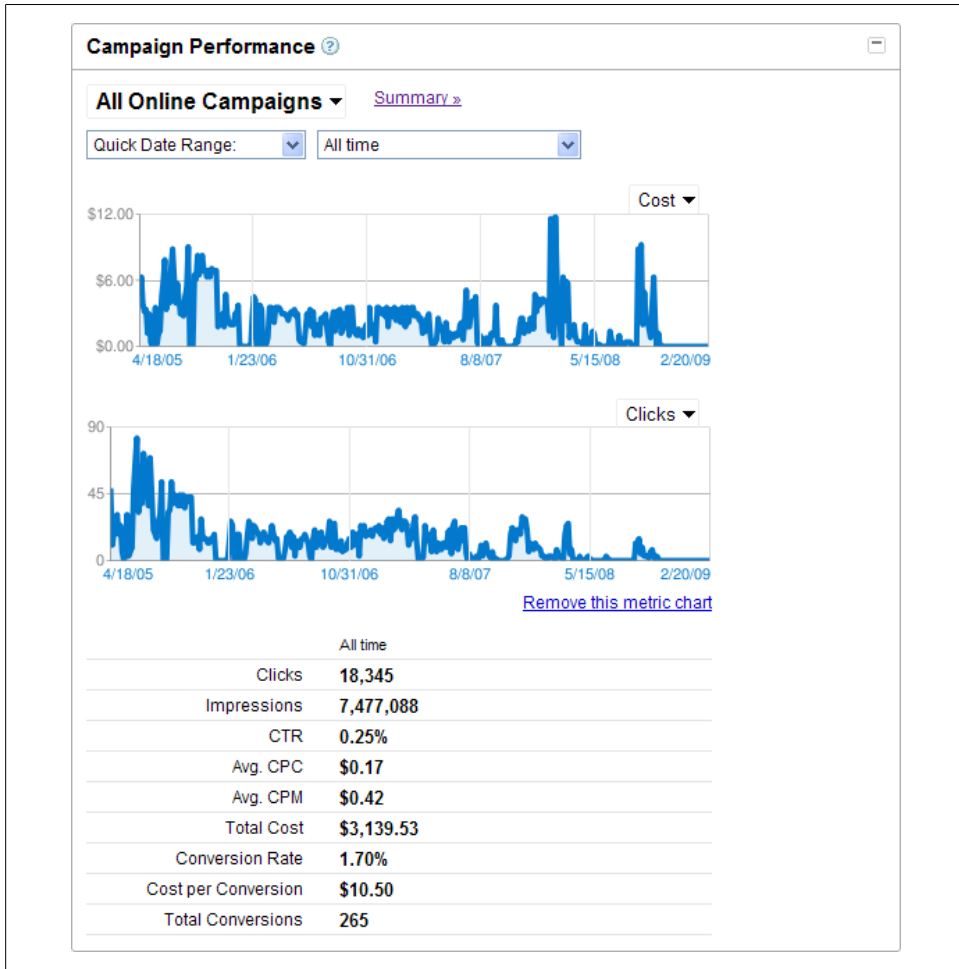


Figure 11-3. The Campaign Performance window provides an at-a-glance summary of how your campaigns are doing

Here's what the columns in the Campaign Summary window tell you about each of your campaigns:

Current Status

Campaign status can be Active, Paused, or Deleted. If a campaign is Active, ad groups within the campaign can be Paused. Paused campaigns are campaigns that are not running, but can be reactivated and set to Active. The number of Paused ad groups within a campaign will be displayed below the campaign's status. Deleted campaigns cannot be reactivated. The historical data about Deleted campaigns is still present, so you can use this information for the purposes of analysis.

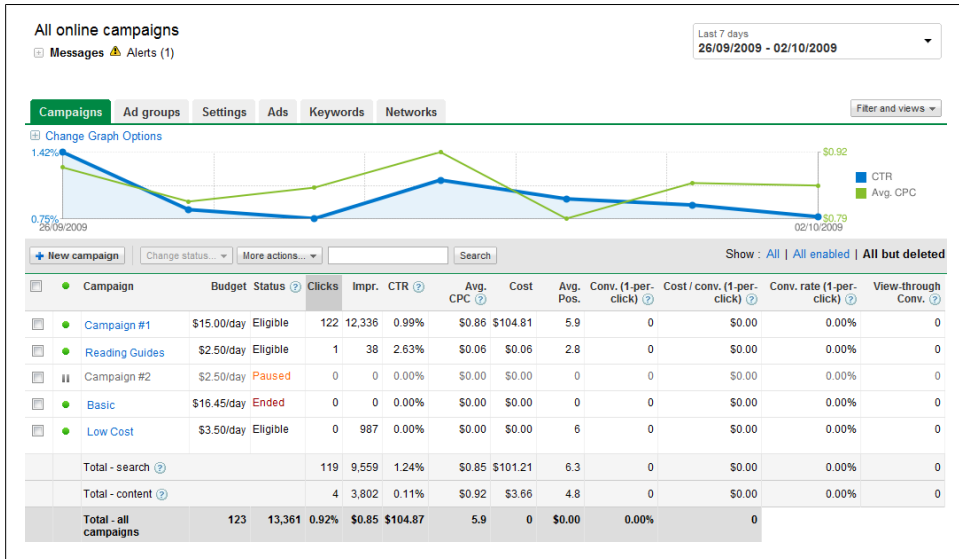


Figure 11-4. The Campaign Summary window provides a great way to get a snapshot of your activity for any time period

Current Budget

This is the daily amount you've budgeted for each campaign.

Clicks

The aggregate number of times ads within a campaign have been clicked.

Impr.

The aggregate number of impressions, or times the ads within a campaign have been displayed.

CTR

The click-through rate, or ratio of clicks to impressions, for a campaign.

Avg. CPC

The average cost per click for the ads in a campaign (for CPC-based ads).

Avg. CPM

The average cost per thousand impressions for CPM-based ads.

Cost

The total cost for all the ads in a campaign.

Conversion

Occurs when a click on your ad leads to an action, such as a purchase, signup, or lead.

View-through Conversion

Occurs when no content ad is clicked, but a conversion occurs within 30 days.

Drilling Down into a Campaign

To get more detailed information about a specific campaign, click the campaign in the Campaign Summary window. A summary window opens, as in [Figure 11-5](#), showing each ad group within the campaign.



Figure 11-5. A summary of each ad group within the campaign is shown

Here's the information shown for each ad group within a campaign (in each case for the time period selected):

Status

Ad group status can be Active, Paused, or Deleted.

Max CPC

The maximum amount you are willing to pay for content ads and specific targeted placements. (For CPM ads, this column is maximum CPM rather than CPC.) By default, Max CPC is broken down into the amount you are willing to pay for content ads (as opposed to search ads, which would be priced at the default) and specific, targeted placements.

Clicks

The aggregate number of times an ad has been clicked.

Impr.

The aggregate number of impressions, or times an ad has been displayed.

CTR

The click-through rate, or ratio of clicks to impressions, for a campaign.

Avg. CPC

The average cost per click for an ad (for CPC-based ads).

Avg. CPM

The average cost per thousand impressions for CPM-based ads.

Cost

The cost of the ad.

Avg. Pos.

The average position at which your ad is likely to be displayed when there is a keyword search match (see the sidebar “[Understanding Average Position](#)”).



For CPM ads, the Avg. Pos. column does not appear.

Understanding Average Position

Average position is an integer that is 1 or greater, usually followed by a decimal point and a single integer after the decimal point (for example, 1.7).

Simply put, the closer your ad’s average position to 1.0, the more likely it is to appear in search results. Ads with an average position between 1 and 8 will appear on the first page of search results; those with an average position between 9 and 16 will appear on the second page of search results; and so on.

The reason for the decimal number is that it is the calculation of an average estimate; actual placement is not guaranteed and depends on many factors.

A conversion takes place when a sales prospect performs a specific action, such as making a purchase.

Conversions—represented by the Conversion Rate, Cost per Conversions, and Number of Conversions columns in the Campaign Summary page—depend on how you define a conversion. Conversion tracking is explained in [Chapter 13](#).

Understanding Ad Group Performance

The real information about ad performance comes at the granular level of the ad group. To see performance of an individual ad group, click on the ad group in the summary for a particular campaign. A window will open displaying the ad contained by the ad group and showing keyword statistics for the ad, like the one shown in [Figure 11-6](#).

The statistics for an ad group are roughly similar to those presented for individual campaigns and for the ad campaign summary, although the information is more granular (it applies to a specific group and not the entire campaign) and the relevant ad is also displayed.

Another important difference between the Ad Group Performance window and the less granular Campaign Summary performance window is that aggregate results are broken out by search versus content network.

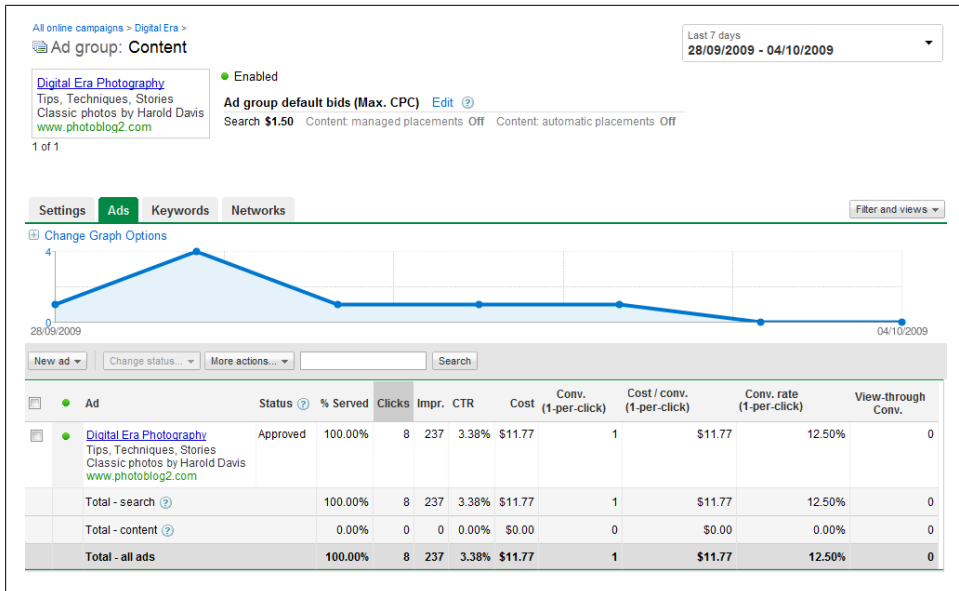


Figure 11-6. The summary window for each ad group provides a detailed account of individual ad performance

Search and content results

Statistics for a given ad are divided between search (ads appearing on Google search results pages) and content (ads appearing on Google's network of websites affiliated via AdSense).



Google also contracts out its AdWords ads to appear on a number of networks besides AdSense, including those provided by America Online, Amazon, Ask.com, and EarthLink, so there's no telling exactly where your ads may appear!

Search versus content statistics are significant because your ad may do better in one context than the other. If you learn that this is happening, you may decide to run your ad only in search or only in content.



It's normal to expect much lower CTR on content ads than on Google search results ads. This is so much the case that Google does not include content results when calculating keyword status.

Individual keyword results

To really see what's going on with your ad, you need to click the Keywords tab for a view like the one shown in [Figure 11-7](#).

The Keywords display breaks out results by individual keyword, and shows the status of each keyword.

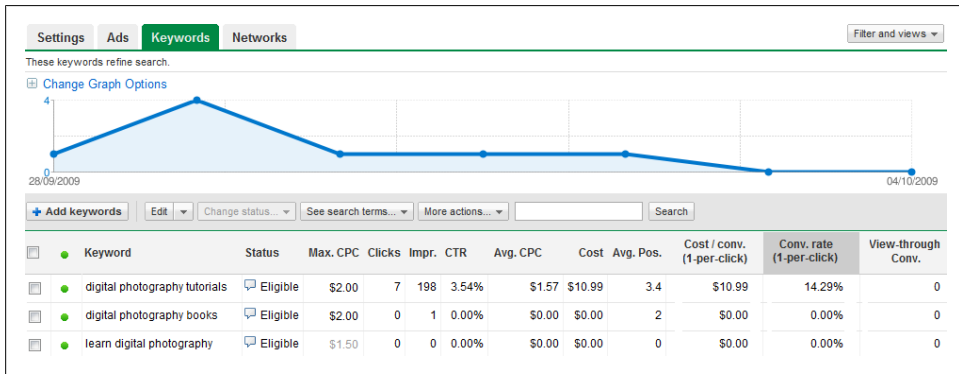


Figure 11-7. Understanding how individual keywords are performing is crucial to tweaking an AdWords account

Properly understanding the statistics relating to the individual keywords associated with your ads can help you target ads better and improve your ad performance.

Individual keyword results are important because they allow you to determine how well your ads are being targeted. For most CPC advertisers, the ultimate goal of an advertising campaign is customer conversion—that is, getting a site visitor to take an affirmative step, such as joining a service or buying something. Clicking through is the single most significant thing someone on the Web can do on the journey toward customer conversion. If you don't get click throughs, your ad campaign is not working, at least if customer conversion is the goal. Conversions as a metric are discussed further in [Chapter 13](#).



Some ad campaigns don't have customer conversion as their primary goal. For these campaigns, creating brand awareness might be the main purpose of an ad. Managers of these campaigns might be well advised to choose CMP rather than CPC advertising. In any event, they will pay less attention to CTR rates. They may also figure that CPC advertising with no click throughs is a good deal, because there are no costs associated with the advertising.

Assuming that your goals are like those of most advertisers on the Web—to drive traffic to your site with the hope of converting traffic into paying customers—you should monitor both absolute CTR and how your CTR are changing.

A CTR of 2 percent or better is good, although you should aim for a CTR of more than 5 percent.



By comparison, a direct mail campaign with a response rate of just 0.2 percent—an order of magnitude less than 2 percent—is considered successful.

On the other hand, if your absolute CTR for an ad is less than 0.4 percent, you should think about how to bring that rate up by using one or more of these strategies:

- Improving your ad so that it is more compelling
- Improving your keywords so they are more relevant to your ad and/or more targeted
- Using negative keywords
- Testing multiple ads
- Increasing your bid amount so that you are shown higher in the results
- Reducing the number of ads you are targeting so that you can be more focused

In a similar spirit, an increasing CTR for a keyword is a good thing, but a decreasing CTR is not, and the latter might mean that your ad has reached a saturation point for a specific keyword. If this is happening, you should think about alternative keyword targeting, starting with synonyms.

Quality Score

You should know that the AdWords system calculates a Quality Score for each of your keywords. It looks at a variety of factors to measure how relevant your keyword is to your ad text and to a user's search query. Essentially, instead of maximizing its profits in the short term by selling premium ad space to the highest bidder, Google regards those who use the Google search engine as customers. In the long run, use of the Quality Score is intended to improve the experience of these search customers so they keep coming back.

A keyword's Quality Score updates frequently and is closely related to its performance. In general, a high Quality Score means that your keyword will trigger ads in a higher position and at a lower cost per click. You can really save money and optimize your ad placements at the same time by working to improve your Quality Score.

The Quality Score calculation is a somewhat complex business. A good place to learn how to improve your Quality Score can be found on the bg Theory blog at <http://www.bgtheory.com/blog/google-adwords-quality-score-factors-demystified/>.

Keyword status

Google does not want ads to appear on its network that are targeted against keywords that it expects to have a CTR of less than 0.5 percent. For this reason, Google evaluates the keywords you've chosen for targeting based on their CTR with AdWords ads in general and on the CTR of similar keywords.



Keyword status is based on ads appearing on Google search results pages, not on ads appearing on content pages.

If one of your keywords falls below the minimum threshold in Google's estimating process, the keyword will be disabled, meaning your ad won't be targeted to that keyword. Glancing at the keyword status column in the statistics display for an ad is a good way to quickly ensure that your keywords are performing acceptably.

The possible keyword status labels and their meanings are shown in [Table 11-1](#).

Table 11-1. Keyword status labels and meanings

Keyword status label	Meaning
Normal	Targeted keywords are above Google's minimum 0.5 percent CTR threshold; ads targeted to these keywords should display normally.
In trial	Keywords are below the minimum CTR threshold and under evaluation. Ads targeted to these keywords will continue to be served until Google is statistically confident that the keywords will deliver a CTR above or below the minimum—when the keyword will be moved to Normal or Disabled status, respectively. Each account has a limited (but unspecified) number of keywords that can be in trial at any one time.
On hold	An account's In trial limit has been exceeded and a keyword is slightly below the minimum threshold. When In trial space becomes available, On hold keywords are automatically moved up to In trial status.
Disabled	Keywords don't meet the minimum quality threshold (the 0.5 percent CTR) or haven't triggered a click through in 90 days. If you really think a Disabled keyword is relevant to your ad, you can try turning the keyword into a descriptive phrase—for example, "yacht buying service" rather than "yacht."

Campaign Management Tools

Google provides many tools to help you improve your campaigns and ads, and to answer questions about performance. Although there are multiple routes to access many of these tools, all of them can be opened from the Opportunities tab in the new interface (shown in [Figure 11-8](#)) and via the Campaign Management Tools tab in older accounts.

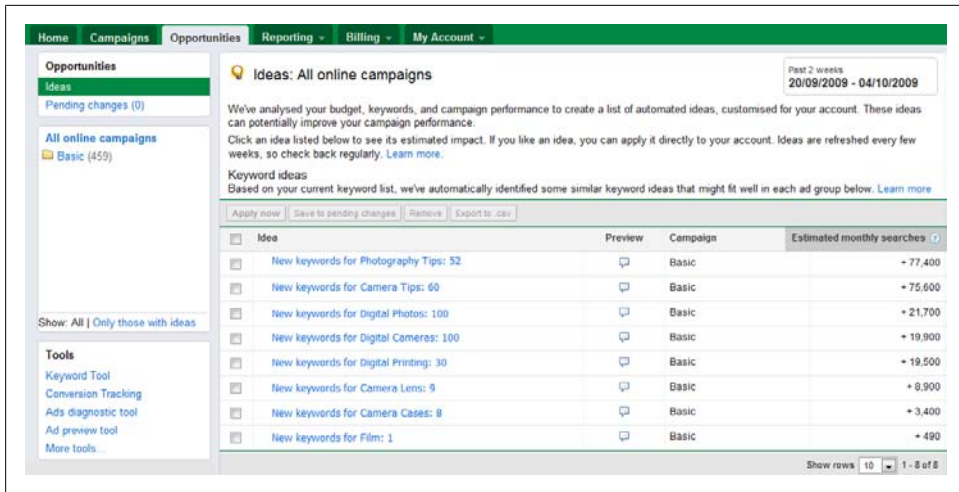


Figure 11-8. Discovery and enhancement of your ads is made easier using the tools Google provides

Using the Ads Diagnostic Tool

Will my ad appear on a Google page that answers a specific search query? This is a question of vital importance to an ad campaign manager who may care more about the answer to this practical issue than about the theoretical improvement of keywords.

The Ads Diagnostic Tool is intended to answer this question by telling you which of your ads are likely to appear on Google search results pages.

To open the Ads Diagnostic Tool, open the Opportunities tab, click the Tools link, and then click “Ads diagnostic tool” (the link is shown on the lower left of [Figure 11-8](#)). The Ads Diagnostic Tool, shown in [Figure 11-9](#), will open.

The Ads Diagnostic Tool provides two different mechanisms: Option 1 and Option 2. However, each one comes up with the same result, provided you use the same search query with each option. (See “[Entering Search Queries or Search Results Page URLs](#)” on page 328.)

What Decides Whether Your Ad Will Appear?

Keyword selection—and performance—plays a crucial role in determining whether your ad will appear in response to a specific query, but so do other factors. For example, if you’ve used up your budget for the day for an ad group, your ad will probably not appear. (Note that this is not an absolute, because budgets are expressed as rolling 30-day averages; Google can overbudget on your behalf one day and make up for it on another day.)

Additionally, if the maximum CPC you are willing to pay for a given ad is less than other advertisers are willing to pay for ads targeted to the same keyword, it becomes less likely that your ad will appear in response to a query for that keyword.

Ads Diagnostic Tool
Enter details below to diagnose your ad's behaviour.

Search
 Mobile search

Option 1: Search Terms and Parameters
"Use this option if you're concerned about all ads within your account that should be appearing for a specific search term, or if you'd like to diagnose all keywords in an ad group or campaign."

Keyword selection: Single keyword:
 All keywords in
Campaign:

Google domain: << ex: froogle.google.com, www.google.co.uk

Display language:

User location: Geographic:

 IP address: Format: xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx

or

Option 2: Search Results Page URL
Use this option if you are concerned about a particular search results page that you believe should be showing one of your ads. Copy and paste the URL from the address bar on the search results page where your ad should be showing.

Search results page URL:

Figure 11-9. You can use the Ads Diagnostic Tool to see whether your ad is targeted to a keyword on Google search results pages

To use Option 1, enter a keyword or keyword phrase in the “Keyword selection” text box, as shown in [Figure 11-10](#).

Ads Diagnostic Tool
Enter details below to diagnose your ad's behaviour.

Search
 Mobile search

Option 1: Search Terms and Parameters
"Use this option if you're concerned about all ads within your account that should be appearing for a specific search term, or if you'd like to diagnose all keywords in an ad group or campaign."

Keyword selection: Single keyword:
 All keywords in
Campaign:

Google domain: << ex: froogle.google.com, www.google.co.uk

Display language:

User location: Geographic:

 IP address: Format: xxx.xxx.xxx.xxx

Figure 11-10. Enter a keyword or use the plus (+) operator or quotes (as in the figure) to enter a literal multiword term

Entering Search Queries or Search Results Page URLs

Option 1 and Option 2, as shown in [Figure 11-9](#), provide two different mechanisms that use essentially the same inputs and show the same results. If the keyword phrase you enter in the Option 1 box is the same as the search you used in Google prior to copying and pasting it into the Option 2 box, then the results will be the same.

However, if the keyword phrase you enter in the Option 1 box contains multiple terms, you must remember either to put plus symbols between the keywords or quote the phrase. In contrast, Google search will take care of this for you automatically with Option 2.

Next, click Continue. The Keyword Diagnosis results window will tell you whether the ads in your account that are targeted to the keyword or keyword phrase you entered are likely to run on Google search pages ([Figure 11-11](#)).

Keyword Diagnosis for Campaign: Campaign #1 Diagnosed 172 of 172 keywords.

[Export results](#) [Export results for Excel](#)

✓ **These keywords are currently showing your ads:**
Keywords (3): [digital camera blog](#) [digital photo blog](#) [digital camera articles](#)

⚠ **These keywords are currently not showing ads due to the following reasons:**

Reason: ▶ [The amount remaining in your campaign's budget is too low to allow a competitive bid. This means your ad is not showing.](#)
Keywords (62): [digital camera](#) [camera](#) [photo blog](#) [photo blogging](#) ...
[Show All](#)

Reason: ▶ [Keyword paused](#)
Keywords (5): [buy a digital camera](#) ...

Reason: ▶ [Unknown](#)
Keywords (99): [digitally camera blog](#) ...
[Show All](#)

Reason: ▶ [We're showing your ad only occasionally based on your budget.](#)
Keywords (70): [digital & camera blogs](#) [digital photography](#) ...
[Show All](#)

Reason: ▶ [One of your other ads is showing for this keyword.](#)
Keywords (9): [digital cameras blog](#) ...
[Show All](#)

Reason: ▶ [Your ad isn't being shown for this keyword because there may be other ads that are ranked higher and have similar keywords.](#)
Keywords (10): [digital blog](#) ...
[Show All](#)

Reason: ▶ [A negative keyword is preventing your ad from showing.](#)
Keywords (2): [free digital camera tips](#) ...

Reason: ▶ [The keyword phrase you've entered has a low search volume and isn't showing any of your ads.](#)
Keywords (1): [f-stop](#)

Reason: ▶ [Although your ad is showing, its rank is not high enough to place it on the first page of search results.](#)
Keywords (9): [digital camera tips](#) ...
[Show All](#)


Reason: ▶ [This keyword is not triggering ads to appear on Google or the search network.](#)
Keywords (1): [digital camera](#)


Figure 11-11. This new interface provides much more detailed explanations around why particular keywords are not showing ads

The ads shown in [Figure 11-11](#) fail to meet minimum CTR requirements for the keywords under investigation. This means that they would be good candidates for keyword improvement, using the tools explained in “[Optimizing Your Ads](#)” on page 330.

In addition, you can see whether a keyword is likely to be showing ads. If the ad will be shown, results like those shown in [Figure 11-12](#) will be displayed.

Ads Diagnostic Results: digital photos*

[« Try another keyword](#) | [Preview search results for digital photos](#) 

 **No ad is being shown for the keyword 'digital photos'**

This test is based on the criteria listed to the side.
Review the details below to learn more about why an ad isn't showing.


Test criteria
Search domain: [www.google.com](#)
Display language: [English \(US\)](#)

*This tool calculates results based on a variety of dynamic search factors. These results may change at any time.

Ad groups where the keyword 'digital photos' is used:

Campaign: [Basic](#) [View](#)

[Digital Era Photography](#)
Tips, Techniques, Stories
Classic photos by Harold Davis
[www.photoblog2.com](#)
Sample ad

 **Ad Group: [photo blog](#)** No ads are showing for this keyword.

► [Your ads are set to only show to users in the geo-targeted areas you've chosen.](#)

Figure 11-12. If you try a keyword that does meet threshold requirements, the ad targeted to the keyword is displayed



The difference between the keywords targeted (and results shown) in [Figure 11-11](#) lies in the broadness and lack of specificity of the terms: “digital photo blog” in [Figure 11-11](#) versus the very precise and narrow term “f-stop” (which refers to a photographic lens aperture). Narrow, precise, and technical terms will almost always have higher CTR (although these searches will not come up as often as searches for broader terms). This is an important general trade-off to highlight: the more narrow and specific the keywords, the better the targeting ability; however, there will be less overall traffic.

In some ways, the Ads Diagnostic Tool Option 2 may be more convenient and intuitive than Option 1. You can search Google until your heart’s content (you may even see your own ads as you search!).

When you locate a specific query that you want to find out about (or you want to verify your empirical findings that your ad does or does not appear on search results pages), copy the address for the Google search query from your browser’s address bar. Paste the URL into the Search Results Page URL text box, shown in [Figure 11-13](#).



The results from this procedure are exactly the same as if you used the query part of the Google search URL (the part in [Figure 11-13](#) after the `q=night+photography`) in Option 1.

Option 2: Search Results Page URL
Use this option if you're concerned about a particular search results page that you believe should be showing one of your ads. Copy and paste the URL from the address bar on the search results page where your ad should be showing.

Search results page URL:

[Continue »](#)


Figure 11-13. You can alternatively search using a Google URL if you want to verify whether a particular search page will (or will not) display your ad

The Ads Diagnostic Results will either tell you that your ad should display ([Figure 11-14](#)) or—if it won't display—provide diagnostic messages like the one shown in [Figure 11-11](#).

Ad groups where the keyword 'digital photos' is used:

Campaign: Basic [View](#)

[Digital Era Photography](#)
Tips, Techniques, Stories
Classic photos by Harold Davis
www.photoblog2.com
Sample ad

 **Ad Group: photo blog** No ads are showing for this keyword.

▶ [Your ads are set to only show to users in the geo-targeted areas you've chosen.](#)

Figure 11-14. Google shows you when your keyword and related ad shows because of geo-targeting (as in this case) and also when your ad and keyword do not

Optimizing Your Ads

Once you've determined that there are specific ad groups that need improvement, either by monitoring CTR statistics (because you are not getting a high enough CTR) or by using the Ads Diagnostic Tool (because your ads are not showing against the search terms you'd like), Google provides a number of tools you can use. It's in your best interest to try to improve your targeting because more focused matching means that the most appropriate prospects see your ads, and consequently your cost, expressed as CPC goes down.

Google provides a great many tools for optimizing yours ads. The most important are the Keyword Tool, the Traffic Estimator, and the Campaign Optimizer, which—like the Ads Diagnostic Tool—can be accessed via the Campaign Management Tools page.

Keyword Tool

You can open the Keyword Tool in either of two ways:

- In the Tools panel under the Opportunities tab, click the Keyword Tool link (shown on the left in [Figure 11-8](#)). When the Keyword Tool is opened this way, it won't have any keywords loaded, as shown in [Figure 11-15](#), making this the best option for figuring out the keywords for a new ad group rather than clarifying an existing group.
- With the summary window for an ad group open, click the Keyword Tool link. The Keyword Tool then opens in a new window, fully preloaded with the existing keywords for the ad group, as shown in [Figure 11-16](#).

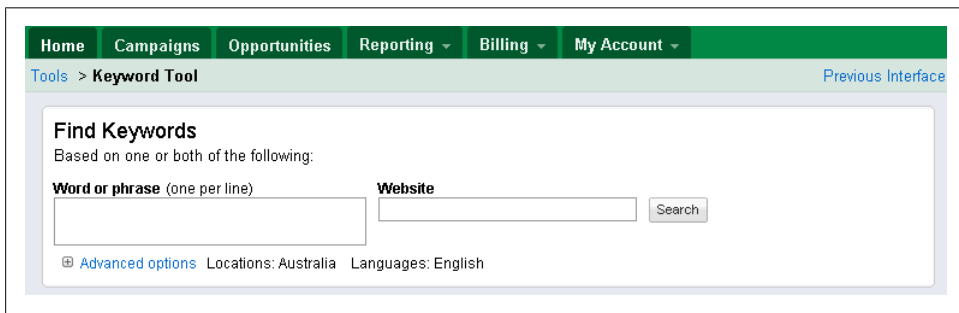


Figure 11-15. You can open the Keyword Tool from the Tools panel to experiment with keywords before you have specific keywords running against ad groups

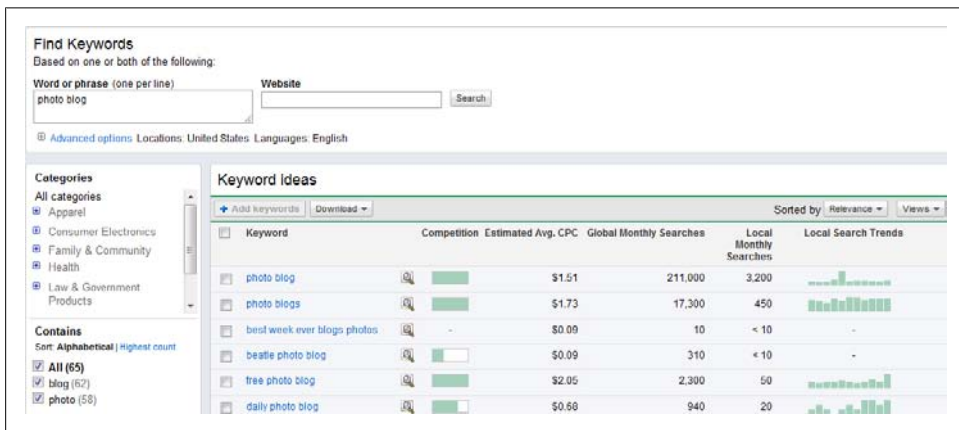


Figure 11-16. When you open the Keyword Tool from an existing ad group, more specific, similar, and additional keywords to the ones already targeted by the ad group are suggested

A goal of keyword optimization is to make sure that your ads will run according to the Ads Diagnostic Tool. For example, consider the ads shown in [Figure 11-11](#) that were

not displayed in response to the search query “digital photo blog.” It makes sense to use the Keyword Tool to get these ads performing better.

You can run the poorly performing keywords for the ads that failed the Ads Diagnostic Tool through the Keyword Tool, as shown in [Figure 11-17](#), to generate a long list of alternative suggestions. The new and improved tool also offers some more advanced options, which provide you with more accurate estimates and some useful filters for more refined suggested results ([Figure 11-18](#)).



Although the Keyword Tool comes up with a very extensive list of possibilities, ultimately it is up to the human being who is managing the AdWords campaign—possibly by dint of trial and error—to come up with high-performing keywords.

Find Keywords
Based on one or both of the following:

Word or phrase (one per line)
digital photography
photo blog
photo blogging

Website

Search

Advanced options Locations: United States Languages: English

Figure 11-17. Running failing keywords through the Keyword Tool is the best way to start coming up with better alternatives

Find Keywords
Based on one or both of the following:

Word or phrase (one per line)
photo blog

Website

Search

Advanced options

Locations and languages ?

All Countries
United States
United Kingdom
Japan
Germany
Brazil

All Languages
English
Japanese
German
Portuguese

Show stats for ? Mobile search

Traffic estimation ? Max CPC \$ 1.65 Daily Budget \$ 50.00

Filter keywords

Estimated Impressions >= [] Remove

Estimated Impressions
Local Monthly Searches
Global Monthly Searches
Competition
Estimated Avg. CPC
Estimated CTR
Estimated Cost

Categories
All categories
Apparel

+ Add keywords Download

Figure 11-18. Keyword Tool advanced options

Keyword Matching Options

AdWords offers a number of keyword matching options. Understanding these options can help to improve the relevancy of your ad placement, leading to fewer ad impressions but a higher CPC.

The keyword matching options are:

Broad match

This is the default option. When you enter a phrase such as *sail boat*, ads will appear when a user's query contains *sail* and *boat* in any order in any part of a query, possibly along with other terms. In addition, broad-matched ads will also show for *expanded matches*, which are matches with plural (or singular) and other variant forms of the words in a phrase.

Phrase match

When you enter your keywords in quotes—for example, “*sail boat*”—your ad will appear when a user enters the search phrase in the order it appears within the quotes, but possibly with other words as well—for example, *big sail boat*.

Exact match

Exact matches are the least flexible kind of keyword matching. The term that users search for must exactly match the phrase you enter in brackets—for example, [*sail boat*]
—in order, without any additional terms. Exact matching is the most targeted option among experienced AdWords managers because users searching for terms that make this kind of narrow match are more likely to be interested in exactly your business's offerings.

Negative keyword match

Negative keywords are added to a search phrase by placing a minus sign in front of the negative keyword, to make a search more precisely targeted. For example, if you target *sail boat -blue*, your ad will appear when a user searches for *sail boat*, but not *blue sail boat*. Negative keywords are an important mechanism for making targeting more precise.

The problem with the first ad shown as failing the Ads Diagnostic Tool in [Figure 11-11](#) is a broad match with the phrase **digital photography**. Deleting “digital photography” and replacing it with exact matches—[**digital photography tips**] and [**digital photography techniques**]
—improves the CTR for this ad.

The problem with the second ad shown in [Figure 11-11](#) is the broad match targeting with **photo blog** and **photo blogging**. The Keyword Tool makes lots of suggestions, but most of them are not appropriate (for example, **erotic photo blog** or **blogspot**). Dropping the keywords related to “blog” and focusing on keywords related to digital photography might improve CPC for this ad. However, that would actually diminish the relevancy of the advertisement, which is attempting to drive traffic to a photo blog. The recommendation here is to live with a low CTR and increase the likelihood of ad placement on search results pages by increasing the maximum CPC you are willing to pay.

Estimating traffic

The Traffic Estimator is best used to get a quick idea of how keywords will perform and how that performance will affect the cost of running an ad group, without actually adding the new keyword(s).

To open the Traffic Estimator, go to the Opportunities tab, click “More tools...”, and click the Traffic Estimator link in the lefthand column.

In the Traffic Estimator window, shown in [Figure 11-19](#), enter the keywords you want to investigate, as well as a maximum CPC, language, location targeting method, and countries to target.

The screenshot shows the 'Traffic Estimator' tool interface. At the top, it says 'Traffic Estimator' and 'Get quick traffic estimates for new keywords without adding them to an account or using the AdWords sign-up wizard.' The interface is divided into four main sections:

- 1. Enter keywords, one per line:** A text area contains 'digital photography techniques', 'digital photography tips', and 'photoblog'. To the right, a legend defines match types: 'keyword = broad match', '"keyword" = match exact phrase', '[keyword] = match exact term only', and '-keyword = don't match this term'. Below the text area, it says 'Set optional individual CPCs using this format: keyword ** 0.25'.
- 2. Choose a currency.** A dropdown menu is set to 'US Dollars (USD US\$)' and a text box contains '0.25'. A note below states: '*Suggested value should deliver ads in the top position 85% of the time.'
- 3. Choose daily budget (optional).** A text box contains the value '3'.
- 4. Select targeting.**
 - a. Language:** A dropdown menu is open, showing options: English, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), Danish, Dutch, Finnish, and French. 'English' is selected.
 - b. Location Targeting:** Three radio button options are present: 'Countries and territories - choose countries' (selected), 'Regions and cities - choose states and regions and/or enter cities', and 'Customised - enter a radius and address or coordinates'.
 - c. Countries:** Two list boxes are shown. The left one, 'Available Countries and Territories', lists 'All Countries and Territories', '-----', 'Australia', 'Austria', 'Belgium', 'Brazil', and 'Canada'. The right one, 'Selected Countries and/or Territories', contains 'United States'. Between the lists are 'Add »' and « Remove' buttons.

At the bottom left of the form is a 'Continue »' button.

Figure 11-19. You can enter the amount you are willing to pay for a click through or let Google suggest a value, and Google will give you a traffic estimate for the keyword



If you don't estimate a maximum CPC in the Traffic Estimator, Google will suggest one for you that will deliver ads in the top (1.0) position 85 percent of the time. As you can imagine, this is an expensive CPC choice, so to make the best use of the Traffic Estimator, you should always enter your own, more realistic, maximum CPC.

Click Continue. The Traffic Estimator results screen, shown in [Figure 11-20](#), gives you an idea of the average position, clicks per day, and cost per day you can expect, given the keywords you entered and the maximum CPC you specified.

Traffic Estimator
[« Revise settings](#) | [Download as .csv](#)
All estimates are provided as a guideline, and are based on system-wide averages; your actual costs and ad positions may vary. To view estimates based on your keywords' performance history, use the Traffic Estimator within the appropriate ad group. [Learn more](#)

Average CPC: 0.54 (at a maximum CPC of 0.25)
Estimated clicks per day: 2 - 3 (at a daily budget of 3.00)

Maximum CPC: Daily budget:

Keywords ▾	Search Volume	Estimated Avg. CPC	Estimated Ad Positions	Estimated Clicks/Day	Estimated Cost/Day
digital photography techniques	<input type="text" value=""/>	0.41 - 0.80	4 - 6	0	10
digital photography tips	<input type="text" value=""/>	0.38 - 0.80	1 - 3	0 - 1	10
photoblog	<input type="text" value=""/>	0.31 - 0.71	1 - 3	1 - 2	10
Search Network Total		0.33 - 0.73	1 - 3	2 - 3	10

[« Revise settings](#)

Figure 11-20. You can use the estimates provided by the Traffic Estimator to decide whether you want to add keywords to an ad group

Campaign Optimizer

The Campaign Optimizer takes an automated look at your campaign, ad, and keyword settings and makes suggestions.



It bears repeating that you should use your judgment and discretion in deciding whether to confirm the changes that the Campaign Optimizer suggests. The Campaign Optimizer is not privy to many aspects of the decision-making process in your specific situation. As the fine print in the Campaign Optimizer itself notes, you alone are responsible for the content of your ads.

To start the Campaign Optimizer, click the Campaign Optimizer link on the Tools page (hidden within the Opportunities tab shown in [Figure 11-8](#)). Next, select a campaign to optimize and click Go ([Figure 11-21](#)), and then click Get Started ([Figure 11-22](#)). The Campaign Optimizer will come up with a list of location targeting options, as shown in [Figure 11-23](#).

Campaign Optimiser

Choose a campaign to optimise.
Click 'Go' next to one of the campaigns below to see a customized proposal for your campaign, including changes to keywords, ads, and certain campaign settings. You'll have the opportunity to review the changes before accepting or dismissing them.

Campaign	Status	Last Optimised ?	
Basic	Active	Never optimised	Go »

Figure 11-21. The Campaign Optimizer provides a list of keywords to add or change

Campaign Optimizer: Getting Started

When you run the Campaign Optimizer for a campaign, we analyze your budget, keywords, and ads. If appropriate, we automatically create a customized proposal for your campaign. [Learn more](#)

Note: Depending on the size of your campaign (number of keywords, ad groups, and other factors) it can take you 5 to 20 minutes to review your proposal.

We analyse your campaign and propose changes



We automatically analyse your budget and keywords and create a customised proposal for your campaign. [Learn more](#)

You review our proposal



You look at all the changes and choose the ones that you would like to apply. [Learn more](#)

Ready to optimize this campaign?

[Get started »](#)

Figure 11-22. Campaign Optimizer: Getting Started

Campaign Optimiser: Location Targeting Options

Based on your recent performance, we believe you might get better results by reducing the total area targeted by this campaign. Improved location targeting can help you reach the right audience at more cost-effective prices. [Learn more](#)

Refined targeting can lead to higher clickthrough rates (CTR) and lower costs.

While targeting a smaller area can result in fewer clicks and impressions, it can also improve your Quality Score, reduce your costs, and reach the specific audience with the most potential to perform well for you.

Show my current locations on the map

▼ Current Locations	Clicks	Impr.	CTR ?
Customised	13	537	2.42%
Combined Total	13	537	2.42%

* Data based on this campaign's performance over the last 15 days

Show proposed locations on the map [Why these locations? ?](#)

Approve	Proposed Locations	Clicks	Impr.	CTR ?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Proposed Locations			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brisbane, California	13	216	6.02%
	Locations (1)	13	216	6.02%

Potential results: ?	Clicks	Impressions	CTR
	+0	-321	+3.60%

* Data based on this campaign's performance over the last 15 days

Cancel
Make changes to my targeting now;

Figure 11-23. Campaign Optimizer: Location Targeting Options

Campaign Optimizer and Suggested Changes

The Campaign Optimizer suggests keywords to add when the system concludes that you are underutilizing relevant keywords. Adding relevant keywords means bringing more targeted traffic through your ads, but exercise some caution—this tool may not always be so effective at determining relevance to your site and concerns.

The suggestion will be to delete keywords if the Optimizer finds they are performing poorly, or if the analysis concludes they aren't directly relevant to your ad.

Keyword matching options (see the earlier sidebar “[Keyword Matching Options](#)” on page 333) are important, because if the matches are too narrow you might get too little traffic, and if they are too broad you might get too much general traffic. The Optimizer will make suggestions to improve the efficiency of your matches.

In addition, the Optimizer will likely suggest making changes in your keyword bids to improve your ad position by bidding higher, or (less likely) suggest you lower your bids to free up ad budgets.

In the new interface ([Figure 11-24](#)), you begin by reviewing each ad group keyword suggestion individually. Click review, and then check the Approve box beside the changes you'd like to implement ([Figure 11-25](#)). You can also globally approve all suggestions, but this is not advisable, unless you have reviewed each one carefully.

Campaign Optimizer: Ad Groups
Click 'Review' to see proposed changes for each ad group. Changes may include:

- New and deleted keywords
- Adjusted keyword CPCs and matching options

▼ **Campaign Settings** ✔ Completed
Changes applied
Daily budget: No change
Location targeting changed: Cities: 1

Review Changes Within Each Ad Group
Once you review each ad group, your approved changes will be applied to your campaign. Reviewed: 0 of 9

Digital Cameras	Review »
Photography Tips	Review »

Figure 11-24. Campaign Optimizer: Ad Groups

Next, click the “Confirm changes” button, shown in [Figure 11-26](#). Depending on the analysis of the software, you may be asked to approve suggestions for changing the text of the ads themselves.

Digital Era - Step 1 of 3: Keywords

Keywords (34) > Ad variations (1) > Confirm and apply changes

The Campaign Optimiser may propose various changes, including keyword, ad text, and bidding changes. The types of changes you'll see depend on the needs of this specific campaign and its potential for growth. [Learn more](#)

Cancel Next: Ad Variations »

Current default max. CPC: \$1.50

+ Add the following new keywords:
Choose relevant, specific keywords to expand your keyword list and increase the visibility of your ads. [Learn more](#)

[Digital Era Photography](#)
Tips, Techniques, Stories
Classic photos by Harold Davis
www.photoblog2.com

Approve	Change Description	Keyword	Match Type	Status	Current bid Max CPC	Show Settings
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add this keyword	Digital Cameras	Broad	Active	\$1.71	Settings Why change #? ?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add this keyword	Digital Photography	Phrase	Active	\$1.71	Settings Why change #? ?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Add this keyword	Digital Camera Tips	Broad	Active	\$1.71	Settings Why change #? ?

Figure 11-25. The Campaign Optimizer's Step 1 of 3: Keywords

Digital Era - Step 2 of 3: Ad Variations

Keywords (34) > Ad variations (1) > Confirm and apply changes

The Campaign Optimiser may propose various changes, including keyword, ad text, and bidding changes. The types of changes you'll see depend on the needs of this specific campaign and its potential for growth. [Learn more](#)

Cancel « Back: Keywords Confirm changes »

△ Edit the following ads:
Simple changes to your ads could make them more successful. If you like any of the changes, make sure they comply with [AdWords policies](#) before you continue. [Learn more](#)

Approve	Current	Proposed	Status	Changes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Digital Era Photography Tips, Techniques, Stories Classic photos by Harold Davis www.photoblog2.com	Digital Era Photography Tips, Techniques, Stories Classic photos by Harold Davis www.PhotoBlog2.com	Active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replaced "www.photoblog2.com" with "www.PhotoBlog2.com" in the visible URL

Cancel « Back: Keywords Confirm changes »

Figure 11-26. The Campaign Optimizer's Step 2 of 3: Ad Variations



Suggested changes to the text of an ad are usually pretty straightforward, along the lines of capitalizing the first letter of each word in a display URL, and they work as described when you first create an ad (see [Chapter 10](#)). Don't expect human subtlety from these suggestions; rather, they are useful as a checklist to make sure you haven't overlooked something basic.

When you are satisfied with your keyword changes (and ad text changes, if any), click “Apply and continue” as shown in [Figure 11-27](#).

Digital Era - Step 3 of 3: Confirm and Apply Changes

[Keywords \(34\)](#) > [Ad variations \(1\)](#) > **Confirm and apply changes**

The Campaign Optimiser may propose various changes, including keyword, ad text, and bidding changes. The types of changes you'll see depend on the needs of this specific campaign and its potential for growth. [Learn more](#)

Summary of ad group changes

To apply the following changes to this ad group, click 'Apply and continue' below.

Keyword changes (14) - review/edit	
+ Added keywords	14

Ad variation changes (1) - review/edit	
△ Edited ads	1

Figure 11-27. Click *Apply and continue* to save the changes made to your keywords



Google recommends that you run the Optimizer no more than once every two weeks for a given campaign. Otherwise, the software won't be able to gather enough meaningful data to present good suggestions.

Action Items

To improve the performance of your AdWords campaigns and groups, and more easily manage your AdWords account, you should:

- Use the Account Snapshot window to quickly get the gist of your performance
- Monitor the overall Campaign Summary window for performance daily
- Drill down to monitor the summary window for each active campaign daily
- Monitor the summary window for each active ad group daily
- Understand the meaning and implications of ad group performance
- Learn to use the Ads Diagnostic Tool to see whether your ads will run against specific search queries

- Optimize ads using the Keyword Tool
- Understand the implications of broad and narrow keyword matching
- Use the Traffic Estimator to get a handle on how much traffic to expect
- Run the Campaign Optimizer at intervals longer than two weeks to get data-backed suggestions on how to improve your campaigns

The Zen of AdWords

Zen is about balance. A successful AdWords campaign is complex and involves a number of potentially competing considerations. Understanding the Zen of AdWords means learning to balance these considerations.

Before you can begin to refine an AdWords campaign, you must understand the goal of the campaign. Since AdWords is more compatible with formal ways to define success and failure than conventional (pre-CPC) advertising, it is desirable to reduce the criteria for a successful campaign to a standard metric. For example, the campaign is successful on an individual basis if a visitor clicks on my site landing page. But it's better to work for conversions, which are really the point of most CPC ads.

Therefore, a campaign is successful if a visitor buys my product online (or by picking up the phone to place an order after visiting my site).

In addition, you will need to determine the range of aggregate actions that constitute success. If 100,000 people buy my book, it is a success. But if only 10 people buy the same book, it is a failure. With your success metric in hand, it's time to consider the steps to AdWords success that need to be balanced.

The Customer Life Cycle

A good way to look at things is to remember the five-step process you want your potential customers to take:

1. Your potential customer searches for something—for example, “digital photography”
2. Your ad appears above or to the right of the search results (a slight variation is that your ad might also appear next to content on a website as a result of the AdSense program)
3. The customer reads your ad and clicks on it
4. The customer visits your site

5. The customer buys something, preferably online, but a purchase by phone isn't bad either

The desired end result of this process is the conversion.

Once you've dissected the process into those five steps, you need to consider the five actions you should take to encourage the desired result. Balancing these five steps constitutes the Zen of AdWords.

Keywords

The basis for your ad that the potential customer will see step 1 is the keywords you choose. This means that picking the right keywords is critical to a successful AdWords campaign. You need to pick the words that people who are receptive to buying your product will be searching for. How can you find these words? The AdWords Keyword Tool, explained in [Chapter 11](#), gives you good ideas of popular words and phrases you can consider.

More generally, you should consider the question, "What are people searching for on the Web?"



In addition to the Keyword Tool, there are many sites on the Web (both free and paid) that can help you generate keywords. While I'm not endorsing any specific resource in this arena, some of these sites are undoubtedly helpful. However, you should also strongly rely on your own expertise regarding trade practices and keywords in the specific market niches of the product area you are working with.

One simple thing to think about regarding keywords is that you should try different modifiers and stems, e.g., "photo accessories" as well as "photo supplies." If you are promoting a local business, you should definitely include that in your keyword phrases—for example, "Berkeley, California, chiropractor."

Remember that you are trying to reach customers who are on their way to making a purchasing decision. From this viewpoint, you want people interested in specific items rather than those playing the field with research-oriented terms. As an example, "camera review" indicates someone who is in the early stages of thinking about a purchase, whereas a specific product search ("Nikon D300") may indicate someone who is ready to buy.

Another example: a search for "sports cars" probably indicates someone who is doing research, while a search for a specific car model may come from someone who is closer to actually buying.

There's a reason that terms that indicate research are cheaper to bid for on AdWords than specific product terms. That said, some businesses want to purchase both the less expensive research terms and the more specific (and closer-to-buying) product terms.

In the car example, buying a car can involve a long and drawn-out period of research (after all, it is a major purchase). So it may make sense to advertise at a variety of points along the timeline involved, although the specifics of this depend upon your campaign goals, marketing budgets, and so on.



As a matter of budget, it also may make sense to target the #2 or #3 advertising spot rather than the top spot in search results ads. Your ad will get seen just as often, and the approach will possibly save you quite a bit of money.

You should also be careful to use keyword terms that will limit clicks to people who are actually appropriate for your business. If you sell wholesale supplies, make sure to include modifiers like “bulk”—you don’t want to pay for clicks by people who search for (and want to buy) single items, and will likely go elsewhere once they see you are a wholesaler.

Getting Seen

After you’ve determined your keywords, the next step is getting the ads that correspond to those keywords seen, and figuring out if your ads work.

You won’t be able to know if your ads work until they are seen. You need data to work from. So start out by bidding high enough that your ads will show up first or second. You can lower your bids to more comfortable levels after a few days, but in the beginning you need plenty of impressions.

If you are running massive AdWords campaigns that involve many keywords, there are third-party automated tools that can help with the management chores that this involves. (Once again, I am not endorsing any specific commercial solution.)

Consider that search patterns are different at different times of day, and this may have a major impact on your AdWords campaign, depending on the product you are selling. For example, people search for different things when they are at the office and when they are at home. Depending on your product, you may want to factor this in and pay more for keywords when your target audience is active.

A similar concept is to vary your ads seasonally. Some ads are more appropriate for winter than summer (or vice versa), and some ads are essentially intended for a specific holiday season. [Google Insights for Search](#) can help you understand seasonality and how it relates to your business.

In addition, ads related to a product launch should be timed to intensify around the launch itself. They might start a few weeks before the ad, with visitors asked to add their names to an email list. Then, plan to campaign extremely heavily just as the product is launched.

Test Your Ads

With some good keywords in place, and high enough bidding so that your ads are being shown, the next trick is to make sure that your ad copy is working—and getting qualified visitors to click through your ad. (See [Chapter 2](#) for some ideas about what works in advertising campaigns, and [Chapter 10](#) for suggestions for crafting ad copy for AdWords.)

Make sure to include your keywords in the ad—this works to increase conversions, since Google bolds the keyword text in the ad copy, which helps make your ad stand out.

Your best bet is to have at least three or four ad variations running. Each of these variations should have a different title. Google will rotate your ads to show the best performer.

Ad copy is a great place for differentiation. Use your ad to show why and how you are a little bit different from your competition.

Just as you should use your keyword selection to prequalify visitors, your ad copy should prequalify them as well. You really don't want to pay for clicks for anyone who isn't really interested. If you are giving away a free whitepaper but you require registration, indicate that fact (“Register for free whitepaper”) so that no one who is going to balk at the registration requirement clicks.

Landing Pages That Work

Make sure the landing page that the visitor clicks through is effective. This isn't a matter of fancy graphics. Rather, it is an issue of form-follows-function design. You want it to be easy for the visitors that you have worked so hard to land to find what they came for. Be sure to provide About and Contact pages that are easy to find.



It's a good idea to have a separate landing page for each major group of AdWords ads. Specific landing pages designed for conversion tend to work better than a more generic website home page.

If your landing page looks bad, or is hard to navigate, your entire expensive and elaborate AdWords campaign is for nothing. In this day and age of information glut, you don't have long to keep someone's attention—a couple of seconds at most. So don't blow the opportunity.

More generally, your entire site should be designed to help enable the results you want. It should be easy to find products on your site, the purchasing experience should be smooth, and you are better off not trying to offer your visitors fishy add-ons in addition to the product they came to find.

Tracking

The overall conversion rate across AdWords and the Web, depending on a number of issues and definitions, is roughly between 1 and 2 percent. Are your numbers in line with this statistic? You won't know until you track conversions (see [Chapter 13](#) for information about the conversion tracking tools that Google AdWords provides and to learn more about Google Analytics).

Balance

Successful AdWords campaigns have a kind of balance that you recognize when you see. Each of the five aspects of an AdWords campaign affects the other aspects.

The right keywords won't work if the price is wrong, or if the ad copy isn't any good, or if your web presence doesn't convert. Great ad copy won't do a thing if you've picked the wrong keywords. All five aspects of your Zen AdWords campaign must be in place, working harmoniously, and contained within a feedback loop. To stay in balance, you need to know what work—and what doesn't.

The Path of Indirection

In [“The Customer Life Cycle” on page 341](#), I suggested a pretty straightforward approach to getting and converting customers. But sometimes, if you look in your heart, the best—and most cost-effective—path is one of indirection. This is most often the case when the customer is unable, or unwilling, to directly enter search terms that describe their desired goal.

An example I like to use concerns someone who is a likely prospect for a dating site. But this person doesn't search for matchmaking sites. Rather, she might search for old Meg Ryan movies such as *Sleepless in Seattle*. So a path-of-indirection AdWords campaign for a matchmaking site might target searches for these romantic movies.

The trick here is that you have to essentially read the customer's mind, and know what they want better than they know themselves. It is easy to get this wrong.

AdWords campaigns that use indirection often don't work. In fact, they should only be used in very specific situations, and monitored carefully for effectiveness. But when they do work, they can lead to surprisingly high conversion rates and be extremely cost-effective.

Success via Iteration

With no exceptions that I am aware of, Google AdWords campaigns are not as successful at the beginning as they can be. This implies that success comes via iteration. With your feedback mechanism in place as I've suggested earlier in this chapter, you

can take even a relatively poorly performing AdWords campaign and tweak it to make it much better. To use successful iteration, you need to be tracking your AdWords campaigns, and you need multiple ad variations. It's amazing how much impact even a small change in wording in an ad can have!

Basically, for each ad variation you should be tracking impressions, clicks, CTR, and conversions.

As shown in [Figure 12-1](#), iteration is basically a simple process. You start with two related ads, run them a lot of times, and compare the results. Drop the poorer performing of the two ads and create another variation. Repeat the performance.

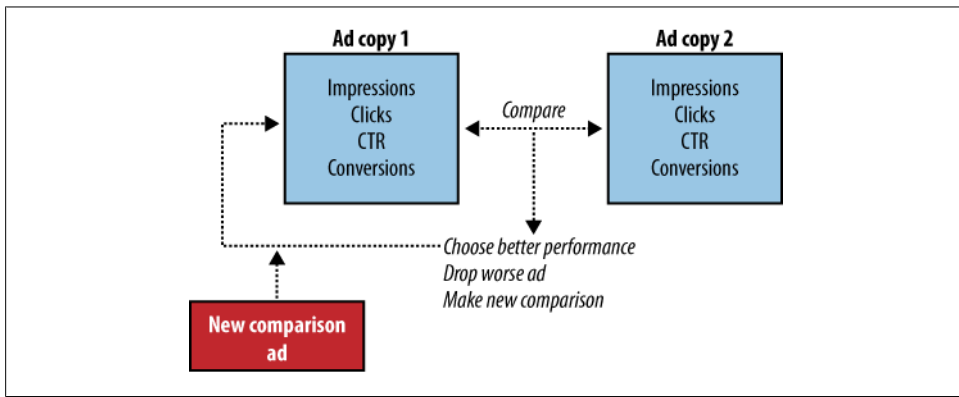


Figure 12-1. Iteration means replacing each ad that performs poorly with another ad, and then repeating the comparison



Before doing your comparisons, make sure you have enough ad impressions so that the results are statistically significant.

There's also an issue if all your metrics don't agree. Suppose Ad A gets you a higher CTR than Ad B, but Ad B does better in terms of conversions (always assuming you have enough data on which to base conclusions). In this situation—which does come up in the real world—it can be tricky to know which ad you should choose.

To make this determination, you'll need to know more about the metrics of the business that is being advertised. Generally, businesses that have a high profit margin per unit sold should go for the higher CTR because they can afford to absorb the cost of the excess clicks. Lower-profit-margin businesses should most likely select conversions as the key metric because they need to make sure not to waste any CPC funds.

Although the specifics of metric comparison will vary depending on the business and campaign, the idea of iteration, and of succeeding by applying metrics to iteration, will not change.

Targeting the Competition

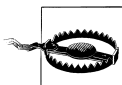
Businesses don't operate in a vacuum, and we all have competition. In many ways, this is a good thing because it forces us to be our best. Competition also means that we can analyze the advertising campaigns of others in our business niche and follow their example when that seems to make sense.

If you are new to a business niche, and there are established players who have been in the business for years, you might take a look at the keywords these competitors have targeted. To do this, type common industry terms into the Google search box and see whose ads come up on the search results page.

As an initial place for your AdWords iterations, these keywords might be helpful. Do take care in your ads to differentiate yourself from the competition by price, product, or attitude: "We try harder!", "The low-cost provider", and "Truly effective widget" are all examples of this kind of differentiation.

At the fairly extreme end of targeting the competition, you could actually bid on the competition as keywords. If you figure that there are players so dominant in your industry that some buyers search for them by name, then it might make sense to advertise on these search results. For example, a small photo stock provider might bid on the names of the large stock photography aggregators Corbis and Getty.

If you are the dominant force in your industry, you might want to target your competition to make sure anyone who searches for them knows that you exist (and are an appealing alternative). Of course, as the dominant force in an industry, you don't want to risk drawing attention to any other companies or making them seem more important than they are.



Google may not allow you to bid on trademarked terms, and there may also be issues of legality with this. Think carefully before starting an AdWords "arms race" with a competitor, as this may simply raise the cost of advertising for both of you.

Estimating Traffic

In the real world, the cost of running a campaign is an important part of the Zen of deciding to run the campaign and which keywords to target.

The Traffic Estimator is best used to get a quick idea of how keywords will perform and how that performance will affect the cost of running an ad group, without actually adding the new keyword.

To open the Traffic Estimator, go to the Opportunities tab and click the “More tools...” link to find the complete list of tools, as shown in [Figure 12-2](#). The Traffic Estimator is found at the bottom of the Optimize Your Ads column.

Tools

Optimise Your Ads

- [Campaign Optimiser](#)
Looking for ways to boost the performance of your ads? The Campaign Optimiser automatically creates a customised proposal for your campaign.
- [Keyword Tool](#)
Build a master list of new keywords for your ad groups and review detailed keyword performance statistics like advertiser competition and search volume.
- [Search-based Keyword Tool](#)
Get new keyword ideas based on actual Google search queries and matched to specific pages of your website.
- [New Placement Tool \(beta\) New!](#)
Try the new Placement Tool to find new placements.
- [Edit Campaign Negative Keywords](#)
Now you can manage your negative keywords—which help you reduce wasted clicks—at the campaign level.
- [Site and Category Exclusion](#)
Refine your Google Network targeting by preventing individual websites or categories of webpages from showing your ads.
- [IP Exclusion](#)
Refine your targeting by preventing specific Internet Protocol (IP) addresses from seeing your ads.
- [Traffic Estimator](#)
Thinking about trying a new keyword? Enter it here and see an estimate of how well it might perform.
- [Insights for Search New!](#)
Compare search volume patterns across specific regions, categories, and timeframes by entering keywords into this tool.

Analyse Your Ad Performance

- [Ads Diagnostic Tool](#)
Are your ads showing for a particular search? Find out here.
- [Ads Preview Tool](#)
See your ad on Google without accruing extra impressions, and preview your ad as it appears to users in other geographic locations.
- [Disapproved Ads](#)
Find out which ads have been disapproved and why.
- [Conversion Tracking](#)
It's time to make your campaign more efficient and improve your ROI. Learn which ads are the best at helping you reach your goals.
- [My Change History](#)
Browse changes you've made to your account since January 1, 2006.

Optimise Your Website

- [Website Optimiser](#)
Experiment with different versions of a page on your website to discover the best content for boosting your business.

Manage Your Account Offline

- [Download AdWords Editor](#)
Our campaign management application enables you to make changes offline, then upload your revised campaigns. (Available in [certain languages](#).)

Figure 12-2. The Traffic Estimator can be found toward the bottom of the list of ad optimization tools

In the Traffic Estimator window, shown in [Figure 12-3](#), enter the keywords you want to investigate, a maximum CPC, language, location targeting method, and the countries you want to target.

Traffic Estimator

Get quick traffic estimates for new keywords without adding them to an account or using the AdWords sign-up wizard.

- Enter keywords, one per line:**

digital photography tips
 digital photography techniques

keyword = broad match
 "keyword" = match exact phrase
 [keyword] = match exact term only
 -keyword = don't match this term

Set optional individual CPCs using this format:
 keyword ** 0.25
- Choose a currency.** Enter a specific Max CPC for your estimates, or leave the field blank and we'll provide estimates based on our suggested Max CPC.*

US Dollars (USD \$)

*Suggested value should deliver ads in the top position 85% of the time.
- Choose daily budget (optional).** See estimates for the amount you want to spend each day, or leave field blank to see all available clicks.
- Select targeting.**
 - Language**
 - English
 - Chinese (simplified)
 - Chinese (traditional)
 - Danish
 - Dutch
 - Finnish
 - French
 - Location Targeting**
 - Countries and territories** - choose countries
 - Regions and cities** - choose states and regions and/or enter cities
 - Customized** - enter a radius and address or coordinates
 - C. Countries**

Available Countries and Territories	Selected Countries and/or Territories
All Countries and Territories ----- Australia Austria Belgium Brazil Canada	All Countries and Territories
<input type="button" value="Add »"/>	
<input type="button" value="« Remove"/>	

Figure 12-3. Enter keywords and a maximum CPC to get an idea of how well keywords will perform without having to add them to an “actual” campaign



If you don't estimate a maximum CPC in the Traffic Estimator, Google will suggest one for you that will deliver ads in the top (1.0) position 85 percent of the time. As you can appreciate, this is an expensive CPC choice, so to make the best use of the Traffic Estimator, you might want to enter your own, more realistic, maximum CPC, depending upon your budget.

Click Continue. The Traffic Estimator results screen, shown in [Figure 12-4](#), gives you an idea of the average position, clicks per day, and cost per day you can expect, given the keywords you entered and the maximum CPC you specified.

Traffic Estimator
[← Revise settings](#) | [Download as .csv](#)
 All estimates are provided as a guideline, and are based on system-wide averages; your actual costs and ad positions may vary. To view estimates based on your keywords' performance history, use the Traffic Estimator within the appropriate ad group. [Learn more](#)

Average CPC: 0.54 (at a maximum CPC of 0.25)
 Estimated clicks per day: 2 - 3 (at a daily budget of 3.00)

Keywords ▼	Search Volume	Estimated Avg. CPC	Estimated Ad Positions	Estimated Clicks/Day	Estimated Cost/Day
digital photography techniques	<input type="text"/>	0.41 - 0.80	4 - 6	0	10
digital photography tips	<input type="text"/>	0.38 - 0.80	1 - 3	0 - 1	10
photoblog	<input type="text"/>	0.31 - 0.71	1 - 3	1 - 2	10
Search Network Total		0.33 - 0.73	1 - 3	2 - 3	10

[← Revise settings](#) | [Download as .csv](#)

Figure 12-4. You can use the estimates provided by the Traffic Estimator to see whether you want to add keywords to an ad

Exclusion

Sometimes what we don't say is more important than what we do say. In that spirit, AdWords provides a number of tools for excluding sites, topics, categories, and even specific viewers from seeing your ads.

Excluding Sites and Categories

The Site and Category Exclusion Tool works only with Google content network sites (e.g., not on search results pages). This tool lets you control the context of your advertising by excluding:

- Domains
- Subject matter (topics)
- Video (media types)
- Page categories

To start the Exclusion Tool, click the "More tools..." link under the Opportunities tab, and then click the Site and Category Exclusion link.

To exclude a domain, subdomain, or directory within a domain, enter the URL(s) you want to exclude in the Sites box, as shown in [Figure 12-5](#).

Google's TOS (Terms of Service) exclude many kinds of overtly objectionable content from the Google content network. Think of these exclusions as a way to keep out X-rated content, such as pornography.

At your discretion as an advertiser, you can ratchet the content your ads display against down a notch further, well into R-rated territory, by selecting the kind of content you want to exclude, as shown in [Figure 12-6](#).

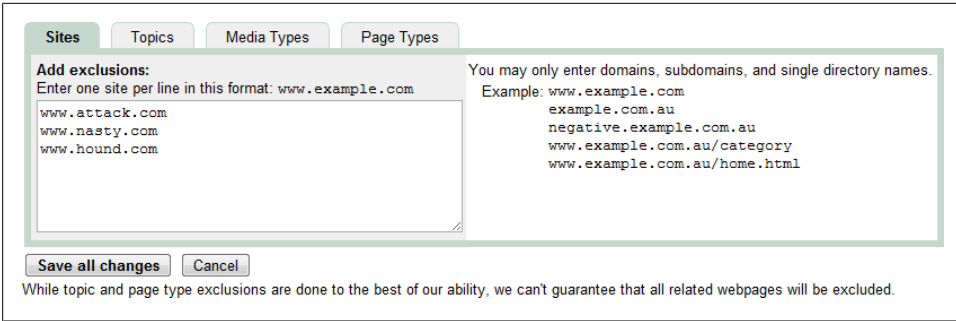


Figure 12-5. You can exclude individual sites on the Google content network

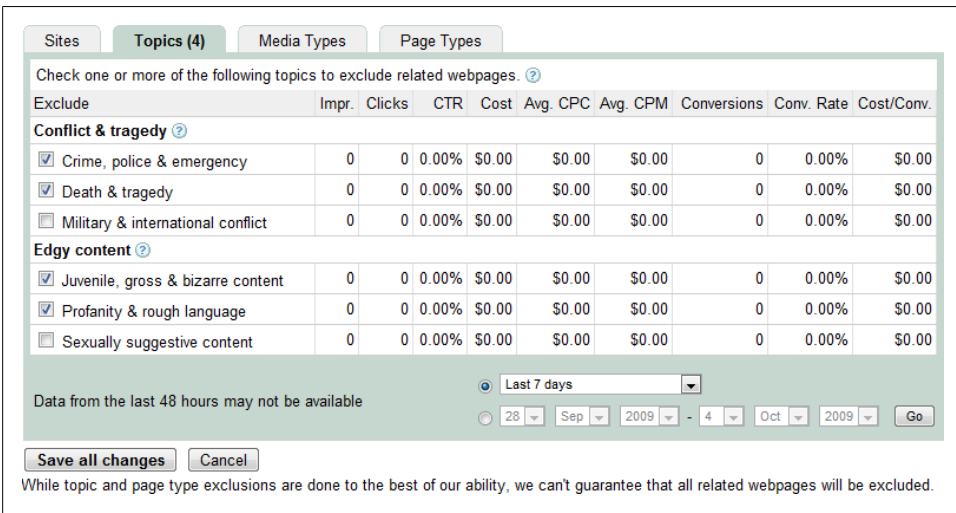


Figure 12-6. Excluding by topic is a way to help ensure that your ads appear in appropriate settings



Since topic exclusion is achieved via automated analysis of page and site content, while most pages with objectionable content are excluded, there's no guarantee that something won't slip past the software gatekeepers. The same caveat applies to the exclusion of page types.

You can also decide to keep your ads out of video content, using the Media Types tab shown in [Figure 12-7](#).

Suppose you don't want your ads to appear on MySpace pages. Checking Social Networks on the Page Types tab shown in [Figure 12-8](#) will prevent this from happening.

Besides social networking sites, there are a number of categories of page types you can choose to exclude, including parked domains, forums, image-sharing pages, and so on.

Sites Topics (4) **Media Types (2)** Page Types

Your ads can also appear with online video content to help you reach a vast audience of video viewers. You have the option of excluding this media type by checking one or both boxes below.

Video content types ?

Exclude	Impr.	Clicks	CTR	Cost	Avg. CPC	Avg. CPM	Conversions	Conv. Rate	Cost/Conv.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In-stream video	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Embedded video	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00

Data from the last 48 hours may not be available Last 7 days

28 2009 - 4 2009

While topic and page type exclusions are done to the best of our ability, we can't guarantee that all related webpages will be excluded.

Figure 12-7. Use the Media Types tab to keep your ads out of video content

Sites Topics (4) Media Types (2) **Page Types (2)**

There are several page types that can show your ads. You can choose to opt out by checking one or more of the following options.

Network types

Exclude	Impr.	Clicks	CTR	Cost	Avg. CPC	Avg. CPM	Conversions	Conv. Rate	Cost/Conv.
<input type="checkbox"/> Error pages ?	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parked domains ?	1	1	100.00%	\$1.72	\$1.72	\$1,720.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00

User-generated content ?

Exclude	Impr.	Clicks	CTR	Cost	Avg. CPC	Avg. CPM	Conversions	Conv. Rate	Cost/Conv.
<input type="checkbox"/> Forums	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Image-sharing pages	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social networks	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Video-sharing pages	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0	0.00%	\$0.00

Data from the last 48 hours may not be available Last 7 days

28 2009 - 4 2009

While topic and page type exclusions are done to the best of our ability, we can't guarantee that all related webpages will be excluded.

Figure 12-8. You can use the Page Types tab to keep your ads off certain kinds of pages

Reviewing domains, topics, and page types for exclusion helps you ensure that your ads are viewed in an appropriate context.

IP Exclusion

IP exclusion works in the opposite way as site and content exclusion. In site and content exclusion, your ads cannot appear on certain kinds of sites. In IP exclusion, certain people (based on their IP, or Internet Protocol, address) cannot be served your ads.

The IP Exclusion Tool opens from a link on the Tools page. You select one of your campaigns from the drop-down “Select campaign” listbox, click Go, and then enter one or more IP addresses in the box shown in [Figure 12-9](#).



You can exclude an entire block of IP addresses using the asterisk wildcard specifier, e.g., 123.4.5.*.

IP Address Exclusion

On this page, you can specify Internet Protocol (IP) addresses that you would like to exclude from seeing your ads. This list will apply only to ads in this campaign. ?

Note: You may still receive some impressions and clicks from excluded IP addresses if a Google Network site doesn't provide users' IP information.

Add IP addresses to be excluded ?

Enter one IP address per line in this format:
123.145.167.89

123.4.5.*

You may enter up to 20 IP addresses or blocks of addresses using the wildcard as the last 3 digits. ?

Example: 123.4.5.67
123.4.5.*
123.45.167.1

Figure 12-9. The IP addresses you list will be excluded from ad service



IP exclusion makes sense only if you know in advance the IPs of the users you want to exclude—for example, all users from a certain domain. But users can always change the location they browse from. So if you are trying to limit your ads to a geographic area, you are better off doing this positively, using geographic keywords or with the AdWords geo-targeting tools.

Probably the main use of IP exclusion is to stop your competitors from clicking on your ads (and spuriously raising your CPC costs). The possible downside to IP exclusion is that if you block a large ISP, you may lose a great deal of potentially profitable traffic.

Action Items

To master the Zen of AdWords and get the most out of your AdWords account (and advertising budget), you should:

- Understand the five steps to AdWords conversion, considered from the viewpoint of your prospective customers
- Make sure you have an appropriate offering at each step of the AdWords process that corresponds to the steps taken by visitors
- Use the Keyword Tool to find new keyword possibilities
- Start with high initial bids so that you get a lot of impressions and have enough data to see what works
- Create variations for each of your ads
- Create simple, but effective, landing pages
- Track which ads and keywords work, and which don't
- Iterate, repeat, and keep testing and changing
- Consider indirection as a campaign strategy
- Consider targeting the competition as a campaign strategy
- Exclude sites, topics, and pages that are inappropriate for your message
- Use IP exclusion to keep your competitors from clicking your ads

Advanced Performance Monitoring

If you have only a handful of campaigns and ad groups to keep track of, the Campaign Summary window (shown in [Chapter 10](#)) should work fine. But once you are tracking a dozen or more campaigns, each containing multiple ads and many keywords, in order to retain your sanity—and do a good job of tracking your spending and performance with the multiple campaigns and ads—you’ll need to take advantage of the excellent AdWords reporting facility.

Conversion tracking means implementing a mechanism that tells you when visitors to your site perform a specified action. More specifically, if you are paying for advertising on a CPC basis, unless you are just interested in drawing eyeballs to your site, you’d probably like to know whether this traffic brings you revenue.

Using AdWords conversion tracking, you can add code to your web pages that lets you determine whether traffic generated by AdWords *converts*, that is, performs an action you want to have happen, such as making a purchase, leaving contact information, signing up for a subscription, or visiting a particular page.

This chapter explains how to use AdWords reports, and how to work with AdWords conversion tracking. I’ll also introduce Google Analytics and explain some of the sophisticated monitoring options available.

Using AdWords Reports

To create a report, click the Reports tab of the AdWords application. Click the Create Report link just under the tab to open the Create Report window, shown in [Figure 13-1](#).

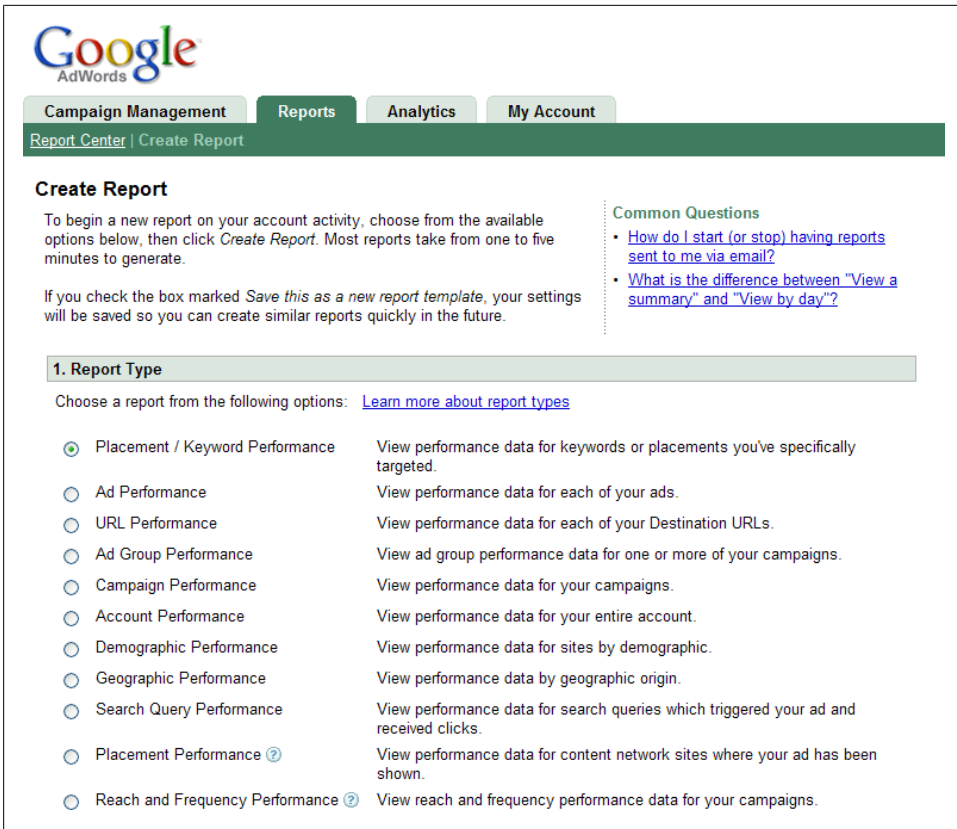


Figure 13-1. To create a report, select the button next to the kind of report you want to generate

Kinds of Reports

The first step in the Create Report window is to specify the kind of report you'd like to create. The available report types are:

Placement/Keyword

Provides performance information for all sites targeted and/or keywords across an entire account or in selected campaigns in an account.

Ad

Provides performance information for each of the ads in an account or in selected campaigns in an account.

URL

Provides performance information by destination URL for the ads in an account or in selected campaigns in an account.

Ad Group

Provides aggregate performance information for the Ad Groups in one or more campaigns in your account.

Campaign

Provides aggregate performance information for one or more campaigns in your account.

Account

Provides aggregate performance information for your account.

Demographic

Provides the demographic information that is available for an account.

Geographic

Sorts account information by geographic origin of users who received or clicked on your ads.

Search Query

Shows the search queries that triggered the display of your ad *and* led to clicks.

Placement

Shows performance data for Google content network (e.g., AdSense) sites where your ad has been shown.

Reach and Frequency

Reports on performance using reach (the number of people who have seen your ads) versus frequency (the number of times each viewer saw your ad).



Creating all these reports works in more or less the same way, with minor differences in your ability to include specific kinds of data (or not). I'll only show you the details of creating one kind of report, the Placement/Keyword report. But don't worry—once you know how to create one of these reports, with minor variations in the information you choose to display, you really do know how to create all of them!

As an example, here's how to create the first kind of report on the list, a Placement/Keyword report.

Creating a Placement/Keyword Report

To create a Placement/Keyword report, in the Create Report window choose the Placement/Keyword Report type. Next, in the Settings area, shown in [Figure 13-2](#), choose a date range and which campaigns and groups you want to include in the report.

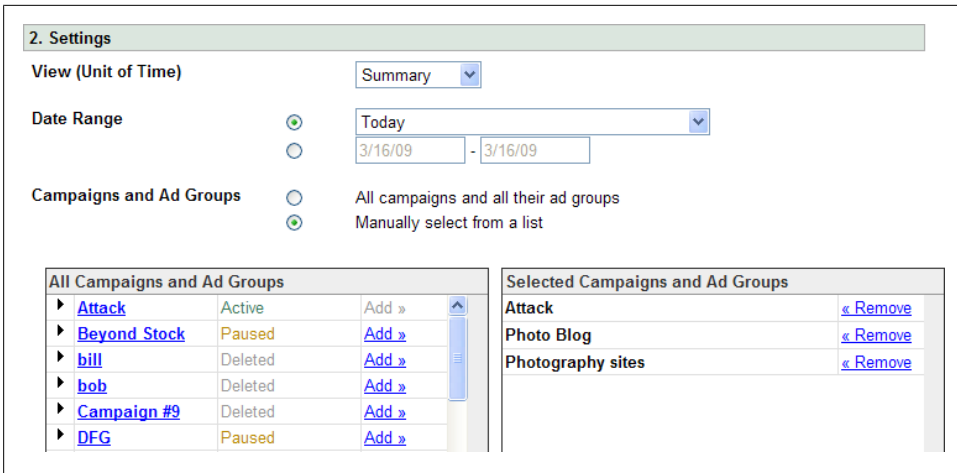


Figure 13-2. You can choose to display all campaigns and groups in the report or you can be more selective

Here’s a little more detail about the choices shown in [Figure 13-2](#):

View (Unit of Time)

You can choose to display data as an aggregated line of summarized information or as daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly data.

Date Range

You can choose a preset period to be covered by the report or select your own date range.

Campaigns and Ad Group

You can choose to display information for all campaigns in your account or for one or more campaigns.

The Advanced Settings window is not shown by default. To open this window, which allows you to customize your report with columns as shown in [Figure 13-3](#), click the triangle to the left of Add or Remove Columns.

Using the Advanced Settings window, you can drill down to almost any level of detail. A good use for adding specific placements and keywords to the Level of Detail of an advanced report is to drill down into ads and keywords that you are specifically scrutinizing—because performance may be borderline acceptable, not terrible and not great.

Clicking the triangle to the left of Filter Your Results opens another window of advanced options, shown in [Figure 13-4](#). The drop-down lists in the Filter Your Results window are useful if you are primarily interested in a single thing—for example, keywords that have high CTR.

▼ [Filter Your Results](#)

Show only keywords that match all of the following criteria:

Placement / Keyword is one of [Remove](#)

Match Type

Keyword Status

Ad Distribution

Ad Group Status

Campaign Status

Impressions

4. Templates, Scheduling, and Email

Keywords with zero impressions

Placement / Keyword Report

Template Save this as a new report template

Scheduling Schedule this report to run automatically: every day

Figure 13-4. You can filter your results—for example, you might want to show only keywords with a good CTR

4. Templates, Scheduling, and Email

Name Your Report

Template Save this as a new report template

Scheduling Schedule this report to run automatically: every day

Email Whenever the report runs, send email to:

For multiple recipients, separate email addresses with commas.

with report attached as: .xml

[Create Report](#)

Figure 13-5. It's easy to save a report as a template, schedule the report, or have the report emailed to you

When you are satisfied with your choices, click **Create Report**.

To view your report, in the Report Center window click on the report name once it has been generated (Figure 13-6).



Report generation will generally take a few minutes, during which time a message will be displayed saying that the report is in progress.

Home Campaigns Opportunities Reporting Billing My Account

Report Centre

The AdWords Report Centre allows you to easily create customised performance reports to help you track and manage multiple facets of your AdWords campaigns. [Learn more](#) [Create a New Report »](#)

Last 15 Reports

View your recently created reports here. Your account will save a maximum of 15 reports at any one time.

Report Name	Date Range	Requested	Status	Create Similar	Delete
Search Query Report	04/08/2009 - 10/08/2009	11/08/2009 2:02:36 AM	Completed	Create Similar	Delete

Show rows: 10 1 - 1 of 1

My Report Templates

Once your saved templates are created through the Create New Report process, you can access, edit, and run new reports here. [Learn more](#)

You have no saved templates.

Figure 13-6. Click on the report name to view the report you created

A report like the one shown in Figure 13-7 will be displayed on screen.



There's no way to edit a report once you've created it. If you want to change something about a report, you'll need to create an entirely new report using the Create Similar link in the Report Center window. You can then delete the first report from the Report Center if you want.

Google AdWords

My Placement / Keyword Report

Report Generated: Mar 16, 2009 10:24:36 AM [Show Report Detail](#)

Export Report | Create Another Report Like This

Mar 2, 2009 - Mar 16, 2009

View: Summary

Impressions		Clicks		CTR		Avg CPC		Avg CPM		Cost		Avg Position			
6,494,272		15,790		0.24%		\$0.17		\$0.40		\$2,621.14		4.25			
Campaign	Ad Group	Placement / Keyword	Match Type	Keyword Status	Est. First Page Bid	Quality Score	Current Maximum CPC	Current Maximum CPM	Keyword Destination URL	Impressions	Clicks	CTR	Avg CPC	Avg CPM	Cost
DFG	Great Photos	Total - content targeting	Content							3,938,520	8,265	0.21%	\$0.12	\$0.26	\$1,018.65
DFG	Great Photos	aperture	Broad	Deleted						181	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
DFG	Great Photos	depth of field	Broad	Deleted						63,441	664	1.06%	\$0.14	\$1.46	\$92.56
DFG	Great Photos	digital photography	Broad	Deleted						35,666	349	0.98%	\$0.12	\$1.13	\$40.47
DFG	Great Photos	digital photography book	Broad	Deleted						181	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
DFG	Great Photos	digital photography resources	Broad	Active	\$0.15	7	\$0.30	\$0.00	default URL	10,058	22	0.22%	\$0.19	\$0.42	\$4.22

Figure 13-7. You can view your reports on screen

Report Download Formats

AdWords offers you five different formats for reports that you want to download:

.csv (for Excel)

This format uses comma-separated values encoded using the UTF-16LE character set and is a native Excel format.

.csv

This format is plain-text (using the UTF-8 character set) comma-separated values, and is good choice if you will be loading the report into a database program. In addition, reports created in *.csv* are likely to produce smaller files than reports created in *.csv (for Excel)*, and can probably be read by Excel. So if your reports are large, you should experiment with using *.csv* rather than *.csv (for Excel)*.

.html

The report is generated as a standard HTML file.

.tsv

This is a tab-separated-value format using the UTF-8 character set.

.xml

Reports are presented in XML (eXtensible Markup Language), a good choice for publishing data to multiple formats. It's worth noting that reports downloaded in the *.xml* format feature more precision than the other formats—currency values are reported to one millionth of a unit!

Reports that are over 100 megabytes in size can only be downloaded in *.xml* format. Google suggests splitting up reports that are this big into a number of smaller reports—for example, by covering fewer keywords or shorter date ranges—to view these reports in other formats.

Conversion Tracking

Conversion tracking is used to see whether the traffic that you've paid to drive to your site with AdWords actually does what you want it to do. If your site is in the business of selling widgets, then all the click throughs in the world don't do you any good unless your site visitors buy your widgets. Conversion tracking is a mechanism that helps you understand empirically whether site visitors coming via AdWords are converting (i.e., performing the action you desire), and what percentage of the visitors sent to your site by AdWords do, in fact, convert.

ROI and Conversion Tracking

If you understand what a conversion is worth to you, and know the percentage of CPC AdWords visitors who do convert (the *conversion ratio*), then it is easy to calculate your *return on investment* (ROI) for an AdWords campaign. If the amount each conversion is worth multiplied by the conversion ratio is greater than your average CPC, then your AdWords campaign is producing a positive ROI—and probably makes sense.

You could write this as an equation. For an AdWords campaign to make sense in the long run, the following should be true:

$$\text{Conversion amount} \times \text{Conversion ratio} > \text{Average CPC}$$

Understanding Conversion Tracking

Google's underlying conversion-tracking mechanism is fairly simple and works as follows:

- You add some special Google conversion tracking code to a results page on your site.
- You make sure that the results page will open when a visitor is converted, for example, by buying something (in the case of a purchase, the results page usually doubles as an order confirmation).
- When a user clicks your AdWords ad, Google adds a cookie to the user's computer to track the user.
- When a user with the Google AdWords cookie on his computer opens the results page, a conversion is logged, and a special tracking message is displayed to the user.

This process is shown in [Figure 13-8](#).

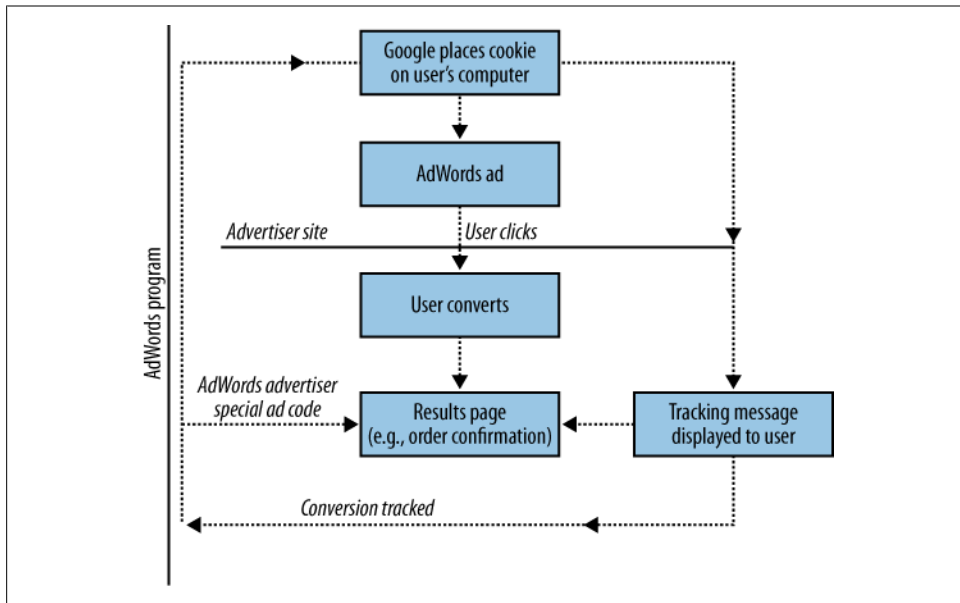


Figure 13-8. Conversion tracking is triggered when a user with an AdWords click-through cookie opens your results page

An interesting, and somewhat controversial, feature of Google AdWords conversion tracking is that as part of the tracking, Google notifies users that they are being tracked. This notification is produced by the Google-supplied code you add to the results page. A tracked user sees a message with the title *Google Site Stats*, and the message includes a “learn more” link back to Google.

Google explains that it prefers to be aboveboard about its actions, and that the “learn more” link is a chance for users to understand Google’s privacy policies and to reject the Google tracking cookie if they wish.



You can choose to omit the message about tracking if you desire; however, Google’s TOS requires that you include information in your site’s privacy statement if this is omitted.

Most major advertising programs do provide conversion tracking options, and not all programs that track users and conversions “brand” the process. Users who click through ads in these other programs never know they are being tracked.

The tracking message Google displays may make some users uneasy, and a few advertisers have decided not to track AdWords conversions. That said, you have to admire the aboveboard aspect of Google’s notification to users that they are, in fact, being tracked.



If you see the “Google Site Stats – learn more” message in the course of your web surfing, it means that a Google AdWords cookie on your computer has tracked a successful conversion.

You can define a conversion in any way you’d like, as long as you can put up a web page that the user opens when the conversion event takes place. The most common conversions are:

Purchases

The conversion occurs when the user makes the purchase, and the order confirmation page doubles as the results page.

Lead generation

The conversion takes place when the user provides contact information, and the “A sales representative will be in touch with you shortly” page is also the results page.

Subscription signup

The conversion takes place when the user signs up to join a community or subscribe to a newsletter; the membership or subscription confirmation page is also the tracking results page.

Viewing a key page

If the point of your AdWords campaign is to subtly direct users to a specific, crucial page, then that important page can double as a tracking results page.



AdWords conversion tracking uses the same programmatic model as the Google AdSense program (and other contextual content ad programs). The code you embed in your results pages uses JavaScript to set some variables, and then call a script on Google's servers.

By the very nature of conversion tracking, and the “mash-up” nature of development on the Web, conversion tracking has to coexist with a variety of technologies used for e-commerce and web deployment. The bottom line is that you can use Google's conversion tracking in any web page that can work with JavaScript—which is almost any web page. Essentially, the way it works is more or less the same regardless of the technology that serves or generates the pages: you use Google AdWords to generate the conversion tracking JavaScript code, which you embed in a results page on your site.

Google specifically expects conversion tracking to be used with sites that use the following technologies:

- Yahoo! Stores
- Sites that enable users to purchase goods or services with PayPal
- .NET web pages (ASPX)
- JavaServer Pages (JSP)
- Sites written in PHP
- Sites prepared using Macromedia Dreamweaver



As an example, I will show how to add conversion tracking to a PayPal Buy Now button for purchases, and to a PHP page for users who open this key page. Implementing conversion tracking works comparably for these other technologies—just add the Google-generated JavaScript code to your results page.

It's up to you to create a results page and have it up on your site. Google will not do this for you. (Of course, if you are selling goods or services, you probably already have an order confirmation page!)

Conversion tracking reports

Under the Reporting tab, you can view all the conversion tracking reporting, edit existing actions, or create new actions ([Figure 13-9](#)).

Home Campaigns Opportunities Reporting ▾ Billing ▾ My Account ▾					
Conversion Tracking					
Use conversion tracking with your online campaigns to measure how many conversions your ads are producing, based on specific actions you define.					
Last month (01/09/2009 to 30/09/2009) change dates					
Conversion Tracking ▾ + Create a new action show: all all but deleted					
<input type="button" value="Delete"/> <input type="button" value="Edit Settings"/>					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Action Name	Status	Tracking Purpose	Conversions (1-per-click) ▾	Conversions (many-per-click)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contacted Office Google Analytics	Active	Signup	5	5
<input type="checkbox"/>	Quote Request	Active	Lead	0	0
Total		-	-	5	5

Figure 13-9. View your campaign conversions by action and filter by date

Tracking Google Analytics goals as conversions

There are a number of reasons why you may not be able to install the AdWords conversion code or you require more advanced tracking such as Event Tracking events. Google AdWords now allows you to link your Google Analytics goals to your AdWords conversions to allow more effective campaign management and better ROI from your campaign. This will not import historical data from your account, but it will start importing from the day that you link the accounts, and based on existing campaigns the Goals data will begin appearing after approximately one to two weeks.



You need to make sure that once the accounts are linked you have opted into Data Sharing from your Analytics account.

Tracking views of content network ads as conversions

Google AdWords has recently released a new feature to improve measurement of conversions for display advertising running on the Google content network. The *view-through conversions* report can assist with brand awareness campaigns where the ad is seen but not immediately clicked on. The conversion can occur within 30 days of the display ad appearing—but no click generated—and can attribute a single impression to multiple view-through conversion events.



The view-through reporting follows the industry standard of last click, last impression.

Tracking PayPal Purchases

You can easily track conversions defined as the user making a purchase by clicking a PayPal Buy Now button. The possibilities are to add a new Buy Now button to your page and use it to track conversions, or add a conversion tracking mechanism to an existing Buy Now button.



You can track conversions made by purchases in a PayPal shopping cart in much the same fashion as with the PayPal Buy Now button.

Setting up a new PayPal button

The first part of the process of adding conversion tracking code is to use AdWords to generate the AdWords JavaScript code you'll need.

To get this code, select Conversions from the Reporting tab drop-down list. Click "New conversion," and give the conversion action a name so that you'll be able to find it later. Next, select the type of the action from the Tracking Purpose drop-down box. The choices are:

- Other
- Purchase/Sale
- Signup
- Lead
- View of a key page

Click "Save and continue." The Code Settings window, shown in [Figure 13-10](#), will open.

You can state the value of each conversion to you. It's helpful to do this, although variable values can also be used in code.

Indicate the security level of the results page, the language, and the formatting of the tracking message. You can also choose to omit the tracking message by selecting the None radio button.



For a PayPal button, you should check Purchase/Sale and enter a nominal amount.

Click "Save and get code." The Code page, shown in [Figure 13-11](#), will open.

Figure 13-10. Provide details about the page where the conversion will be tracked

Grab the JavaScript code shown and paste it into the body of your “action” page (the page the users reach when they have converted, for example, by buying something). For this example, I named the page *confirmation.html*.



If you don’t maintain your own website, and someone else is updating your website code, you can send this code snippet to them by clicking “Send conversion tracking code to somebody else.”

Here’s a sample of what this code looks like (of course, the conversion ID and label will be different for your own pages):

```

<!-- Google Code for Buying Conversion Page -->
<script language="JavaScript" type="text/javascript">
<!--
var google_conversion_id = 1070313714;
var google_conversion_language = "en_US";
var google_conversion_format = "1";
var google_conversion_color = "ffffff";
var google_conversion_label = "oeR6COTFnAEQ8uGu_gM";
//-->
</script>
<script language="JavaScript"

```

Code

💡 For your changes to take effect, you must add or replace the tracking code on the page this conversion is tracked.

Step 1 Copy the whole code.

```
<!-- Google Code for Buy Conversion Page -->
<script type="text/javascript">
<!--
var google_conversion_id = 1031504377;
var google_conversion_language = "en";
var google_conversion_format = "2";
var google_conversion_color = "ffffff";
var google_conversion_label = "c6NBCLGtoQEQ-YPu6wM";
var google_conversion_value = 0;
if (5) {
  google_conversion_value = 5;
}
//-->
</script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/conversion.js">
</script>
<noscript>
<div style="display:inline;">

</div>
</noscript>
```

Step 2 Paste the conversion tracking code into the source of your action page.

```
<body>

  Paste the code between the body tags of your conversion pages.

</body>
```

[Send conversion tracking code to somebody else](#)

Figure 13-11. It's easy to copy and paste the code that Google provides

```
src="http://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/conversion.js">
</script>
<noscript>
<img height="1" width="1" border="0"
src=
"http://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/conversion/1070313714/?label=oeR6COTFnA
EQ8uGu_gM&guid=ON&script=0"/>
</noscript>
```

Make sure the page has been loaded on your web server.

Next, log in to your PayPal account. Click the Merchant Services tab. Expand the Website Payments Standard link shown in the Business Solutions area (on the left of Figure 13-12).

Click the Buy Now Button link, and configure your button as you'd like—for example, by setting a price and choosing from the button graphics that PayPal makes available.



You can add AdWords conversion tracking features to any kind of PayPal button or cart; this example shows a single Buy Now button to keep things simple.

The screenshot shows the PayPal merchant account dashboard. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for 'Log Out', 'Help', and 'Security Center', along with a search bar. Below this is a main navigation menu with tabs for 'My Account', 'Send Money', 'Request Money', 'Merchant Services', 'Auction Tools', and 'Products & Services'. The 'Merchant Services' tab is selected, and a sidebar on the left lists various services, including 'Website Payments Standard'. The main content area is titled 'Website Payments Standard: Overview' and contains a sub-header 'Turn your website into an online store today'. Below this, there is a list of bullet points describing the benefits of Website Payments Standard, such as low transaction fees and no monthly fees. There are also logos for VISA, MasterCard, BANK, and PayPal. A section titled '3 ways to get started' is visible, with 'Option 1. Payment Buttons' highlighted. This section shows three buttons: 'Buy Now', 'Add to Cart', and 'Subscribe', each with a corresponding link to create the button.

Figure 13-12. PayPal merchant account holders can use the payment resources their account provides to add Buy Now buttons to their websites

Next, expand Customize Advanced features. In the Customize Buyer's Experience area, locate "Take customer to a specific page (URL) after successful checkout," shown in Figure 13-13. Make sure the box is checked and enter the address of your conversion page.

Click Create Button, and the HTML form code for your PayPal button (including the reference to the tracking results page) will be generated for you, as shown in Figure 13-14.

Copy and paste the PayPal code into your web page used to make purchases and upload the page to your web server.

No

Take customer to a specific page (URL) after checkout cancellation:

 Ex: <https://www.mystore.com/cancel>

Take customer to a specific page (URL) after successful checkout:

 Ex: <https://www.mystore.com/success>

Advanced variables

Use a line break between the variables you enter below. These variables will be included in your button HTML code.

Add advanced variables

Example
 address_override=1
 notify_url=https://www.mywebsite.com/PayPal_IPN
 business_cs_email=frank.zweitek@elomenopee.com

[Create Button](#)

Figure 13-13. PayPal lets you specify a page that is opened immediately after the buyer successfully completes a purchase

[Log Out](#) | [Help](#) | [Security Center](#)

PayPal

[My Account](#) | [Send Money](#) | [Request Money](#) | [Merchant Services](#) | [Auction Tools](#) | [Products & Services](#)

You are viewing your button code


1. Click **Select Code** to select all the button code.
2. Copy the code (CTRL+C for Windows, CMD+C for Mac – or right-click and choose Copy).
3. Paste the code into your own code (CTRL+V for Windows, CMD+V for Mac – or right-click and choose Paste).

[Tutorial](#)

Website Email

```
<form action="https://www.paypal.com/cgi-bin/webscr" method="post">
<input type="hidden" name="cmd" value="_s-xclick">
<input type="hidden" name="hosted_button_id" value="4016266">
<input type="image"
src="https://www.paypal.com/en_US/i/btn/btn_buynowCC_LG.gif"
border="0" name="submit" alt="PayPal - The safer, easier way to pay
online!">
```

Buyer's View



[Select Code](#) [Go back to edit this button](#)

Figure 13-14. The HTML code generated by PayPal includes the page to be opened when the transaction is successfully completed

Depending on the graphics you chose for your Buy Now button and the layout for your page, your site visitors will see a page that looks something like [Figure 13-15](#).

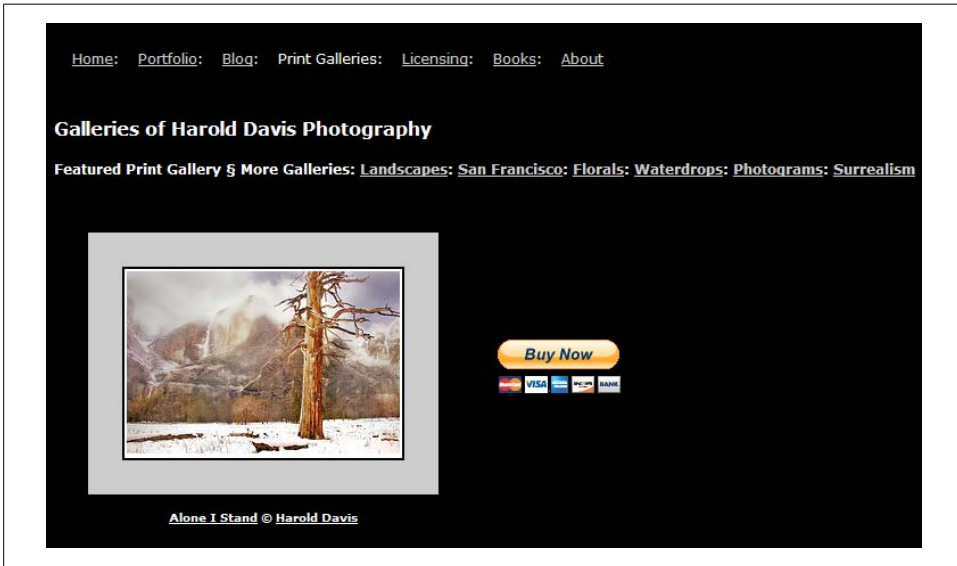


Figure 13-15. The PayPal Buy Now button—which will propel a user who makes a successful transaction to the results tracking page—looks just like any other PayPal Buy Now button

When the user successfully completes a purchase using the PayPal Buy Now button, the results tracking page (*confirmation.html*) shown in [Figure 13-16](#) opens.

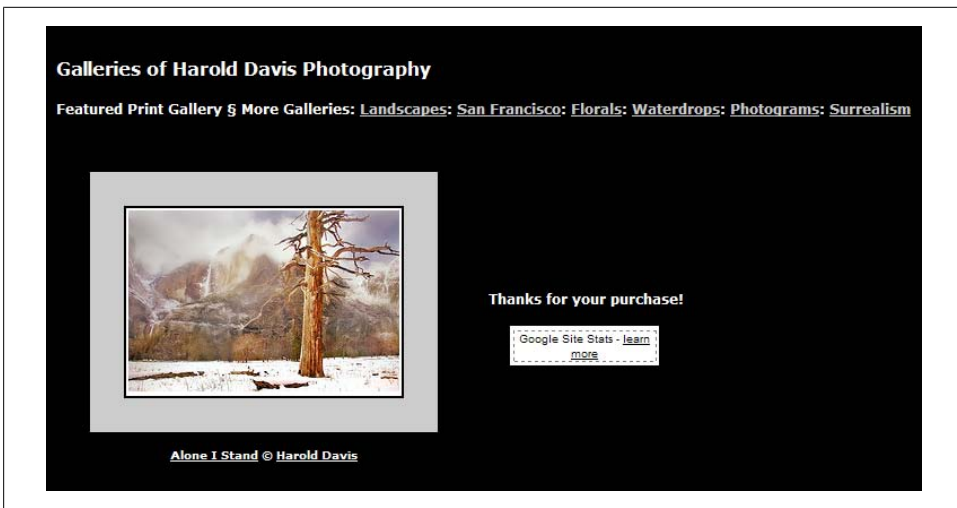


Figure 13-16. The Google Site Stats text and link tells a savvy user that Google AdWords tracking is in use

The final step, of course, is to test that conversion tracking is actually working. You can wait for a user to click through from an AdWords ad and complete a transaction. You'll then see the conversion in your Campaign Summary (and your reports) with a time delay (of up to about 24 hours).

You can also initiate a conversion tracking test yourself, but it will cost you for the clicks you make.

First, search Google for one of your ads. Click through your own ad (this is not illegal, but it will cost you for the click!).

Next, open the results page. Note that since you know the address for the results page, such as <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/confirmation.html>, you don't have to actually use the Buy Now PayPal button—just open the results page.

Your actions will record a conversion, which will show up in the AdWords Campaign Summary and AdWords reports after the time delay.

Tracking Visitors to a Crucial Page

Suppose you are not quite so concerned with whether visitors actually make a purchase; you just want to determine whether site visitors are visiting a key page.

For example, part of the strategy of the AdWords campaign that sends traffic to the Photoblog 2.0 at <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/blog/> is that some of this traffic will migrate along internal site links to the page that provides information about image licensing, <http://www.digitalfieldguide.com/licensing.php>. It would be nice to know how many of the AdWords-driven visitors to the photo blog are actually interested in paying for an image license. Using AdWords conversion tracking, it's easy to find this out.

The first step is to generate new conversion tracking code, by choosing “View of a key page” as the conversion tracking type in the definition of the conversion action (Figure 13-17).



It probably doesn't make much sense to assign a value to this kind of “conversion.” As opposed to a purchase, there is no clear value to a site view, even if it is something useful to track.

Click “Save action and get code,” and copy and paste the conversion tracking code into the key results page. Here's the code:

```
<!-- Google Code for licensing Conversion Page -->
<script language="JavaScript" type="text/javascript">
<!--
var google_conversion_id = 1070313714;
var google_conversion_language = "en_US";
var google_conversion_format = "1";
var google_conversion_color = "ffffff";
```

Create an Action
Define Action & Conversion Page > Insert Code

Define action

Name your action: This name will help you easily identify your action later.
Buy

For example, required info: widget sale confirmation
This action is used for tracking: [?](#)

Revenue for your action: [?](#) (optional)
Google AdWords partner Purchase/Sale
Signup
Lead
View of a key page

action's value to you. This value is only for your reporting purposes and will not affect your campaigns in any way.

Describe page where action is completed

Provide details about the page where you will insert the action code, so we can format the code properly.

Conversion page language: [?](#) English (US) – English (US)

Conversion page security level: [?](#) http://

Customise tracking indicator

To maintain user trust and protect their privacy, you may want to consider telling users about your tracking methods through the 'Google Site Stats' text below and/or your privacy policy. [?](#)

Choose text format: Google Site Stats - [?](#) Google Site Stats [?](#) None

Customise background color: # Choose colour

[← Back](#) [Save Action & Get Code](#)

Figure 13-17. Choose “View of a key page” if you want to track how many users migrate from an AdWords click through to a specific page on your site

```
var google_conversion_label = "eeuJCL7GnAEQ8uGu_gM";
//-->
</script>
<script language="JavaScript"
src="http://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/conversion.js">
</script>
<noscript>

</noscript>
```



A new Google conversion tracking feature allows you to track many conversions per click—for example, if someone clicks through to your site, registers for an email newsletter, and also buys something.

Google Analytics

The idea behind Google Analytics is similar to AdWords conversion tracking: add a code snippet to your web pages so that you can understand what works and what doesn't. However, comparing Google Analytics to AdWords conversion tracking is a bit like comparing a fully loaded Ferrari to a Ford Model T. Both programs are intended

to help website owners understand website dynamics so that they can make better business decisions and enhance performance. But beyond shared goals, there really is no comparison.



Google Analytics and AdWords conversion tracking do not interfere with each other. In other words, there's no reason you can't have both running at the same time.

Google Analytics offers a wide breadth of functionality. To start with, the program shows you where your visitors come from and how they interact with your site. Ultimately, you can use this feature to calculate your rate of return for each AdWords keyword.

In addition to basic conversion tracking, Google Analytics offers:

- Visitor flow tracking through your site
- Understanding the sources of referrals to your site
- Page view information across your entire site
- Advanced conversion reporting
- Funnel analysis

Funnel Analysis

Funnel analysis takes a defined multipage process, such as checking out with a credit card. Generally, it takes more than one page to actually enter all one's information and complete a purchase using a credit card. For you, the goal of the funnel is to have the site visitor complete the transaction.

It's a fact that at each step of a funnel process, some visitors will leave your site. Obviously, you want to keep these departures to a minimum.

Good funnel analysis will provide a breakdown of which pages in the funnel cause problems and where visitors go when they leave the funnel. Armed with this information, you can begin to attack the problems in the funnel.

For example, perhaps visitors don't complete a purchase three pages into the process when they see the shipping charges. The solution might be to lower shipping charges or put an indication of the amount of the charges at the beginning of the funnel.

Funnel visualization helps you find out which pages result in lost conversions and where your would-be customers go. If you try a change, you can use further analysis of the funnel to see how well the change is working.

Google Analytics can't solve website performance issues for you. However, it very likely can help you pinpoint problem areas—so you can solve the problems yourself. In addition, the price is right (Google Analytics is free). It's worth noting that this is enterprise-caliber software that can be used by everyone from mom-and-pop shops to large organizations. Furthermore, Google Analytics will help you monitor your site performance even if you are not using other Google products. There's no requirement that either AdSense or AdWords must be implemented on your site for you to use Google Analytics.

Getting Started with Google Analytics

To get started with Google Analytics, click on the Reporting tab of the Google AdWords page and select Google Analytics. The window shown in [Figure 13-18](#) will load.

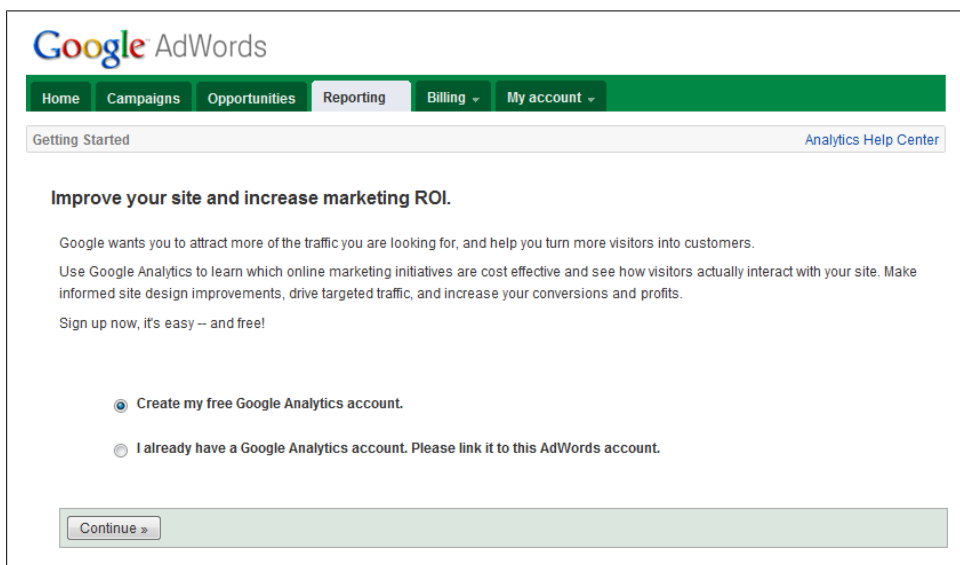


Figure 13-18. It's easy to create a Google Analytics account from within AdWords

There are two options available. I will show the option for linking to an existing Google Analytics account in [Figure 13-19](#), but will take you through the steps of creating a new account as shown in [Figure 13-20](#).

Assuming you don't already have an Analytics account, choose the "Create my free Google Analytics account" option and click Continue. The New Account Signup window, shown in [Figure 13-20](#), will open. Enter the domain you want to track.

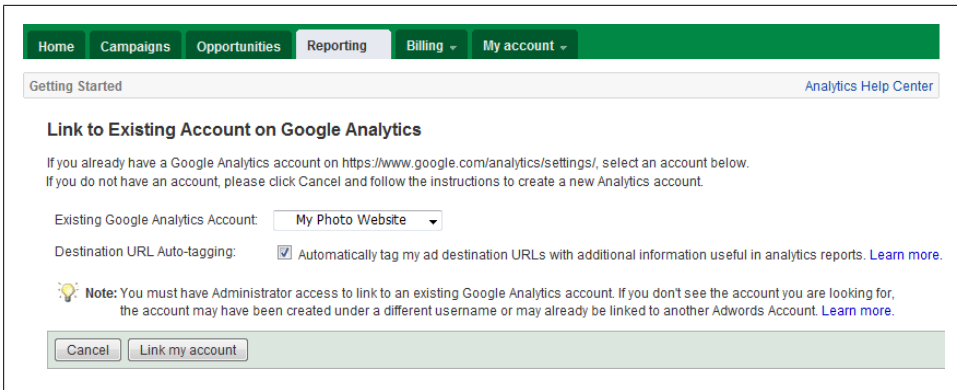


Figure 13-19. Link AdWords to an existing Google Analytics account

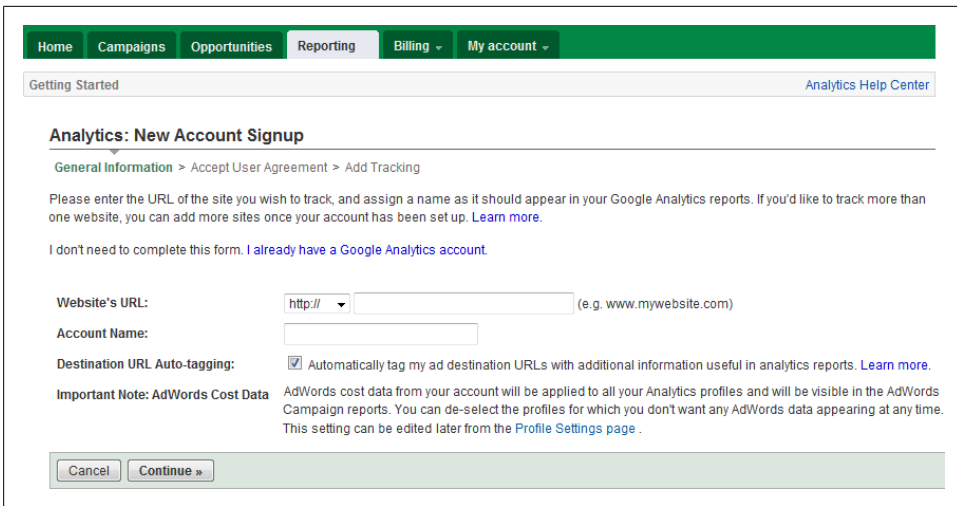


Figure 13-20. Although you can further differentiate, aggregate websites are the fundamental unit for tracking



Once you've created an Analytics account, you can add additional domains to be tracked from the Analytics Overview page by clicking Add New Profile. Note, however, that each domain requires its own unique tracking ID and JavaScript code snippet.

Click Continue. The Tracking Code page, shown in Figure 13-21, will open.

On the code page, you'll see your ID as well as some tracking code. This tracking code needs to be included in every page on your site, usually just above the `</body>` tag.

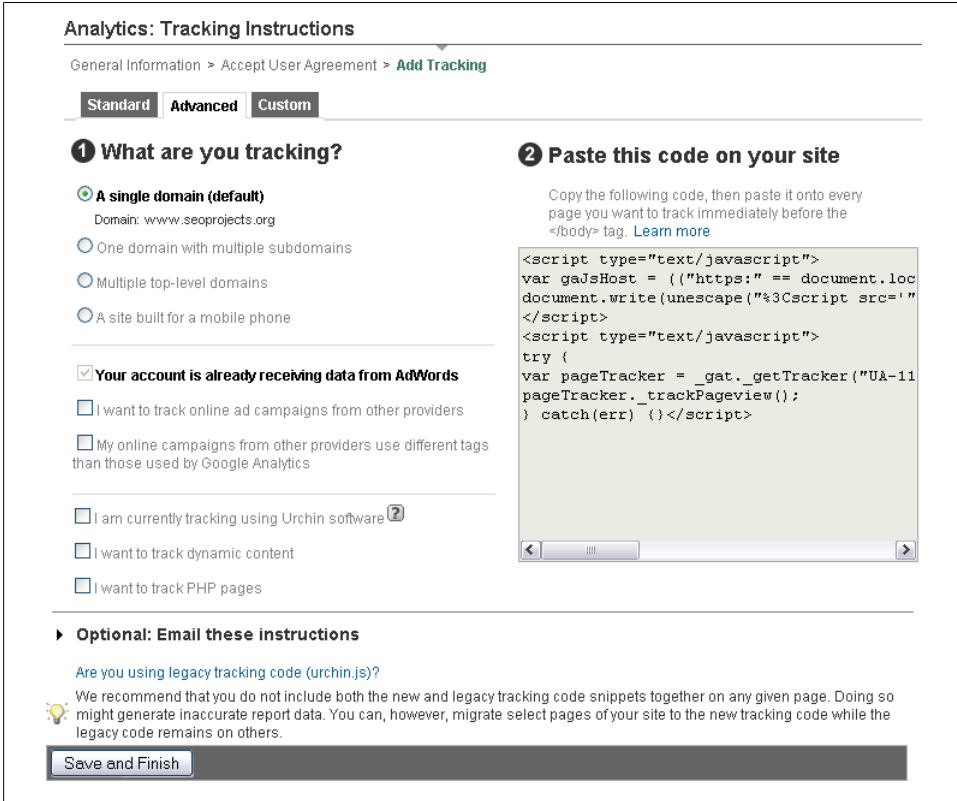


Figure 13-21. Google Analytics generates the JavaScript code you'll need to add to your pages

For example:

```
<html>
<head>
...
</head>
<body>
...
  <script type="text/javascript">
var gaJsHost = (("https:" == document.location.protocol) ? "https://ssl." :
"http://www.");
document.write(unescape("%3Cscript src='" + gaJsHost + "google-analytics.com/ga.js'
type='text/javascript'%3E%3C/script%3E"));
</script>
<script type="text/javascript">
try {
var pageTracker = _gat._getTracker("UA-7959080-2");
pageTracker._trackPageview();
} catch(err) {}</script>
</body>
</html>
```

If you don't personally maintain your website, that's fine: just pass the code snippet along to your tech person.



Actually, all you may need to pass along to the techie is the ID; the rest of the code is the same across the board.

You should try to paste the Google Analytics code as it was written without changing line breaks. You can check to make sure the code has been correctly added by opening your web pages and viewing the source code.

If your website is generated from a database using a content management system, there is likely an easier way to add the Google Analytics code to each page than doing it by hand.

For example, there are a number of plug-ins, like the one shown in [Figure 13-22](#), that add the Google Analytics code to all the pages in a WordPress blog. All you have to do is enter the ID number in the Plugins settings page.

Once the tracking code has been added to your pages, you'll start to see data in the Google Analytics Dashboard, shown in [Figure 13-23](#).



To open the Analytics Dashboard from within Google AdWords, go to the Analytics tab and choose the website you are interested in from the View Reports drop-down list.

Using Google Analytics

The JavaScript code that Google Analytics asks you to add to your web pages passes information back to a Google Analytics server about your site visitors, your pages, and the actions of the visitors on the page (for example, what links were clicked). The real value of Google Analytics is in the processing and presentation of this data.

The Dashboard

When you've chosen which URL you'd like to view the reports for, the Dashboard opens ([Figure 13-23](#)). By default, the date range at the top is the past 30 days.

A line graph beneath the date shows you the number of visits for each day. There is a summary of the vital statistics for the 30 days below that include pages per visit, average time on the site, and percent of new visits.

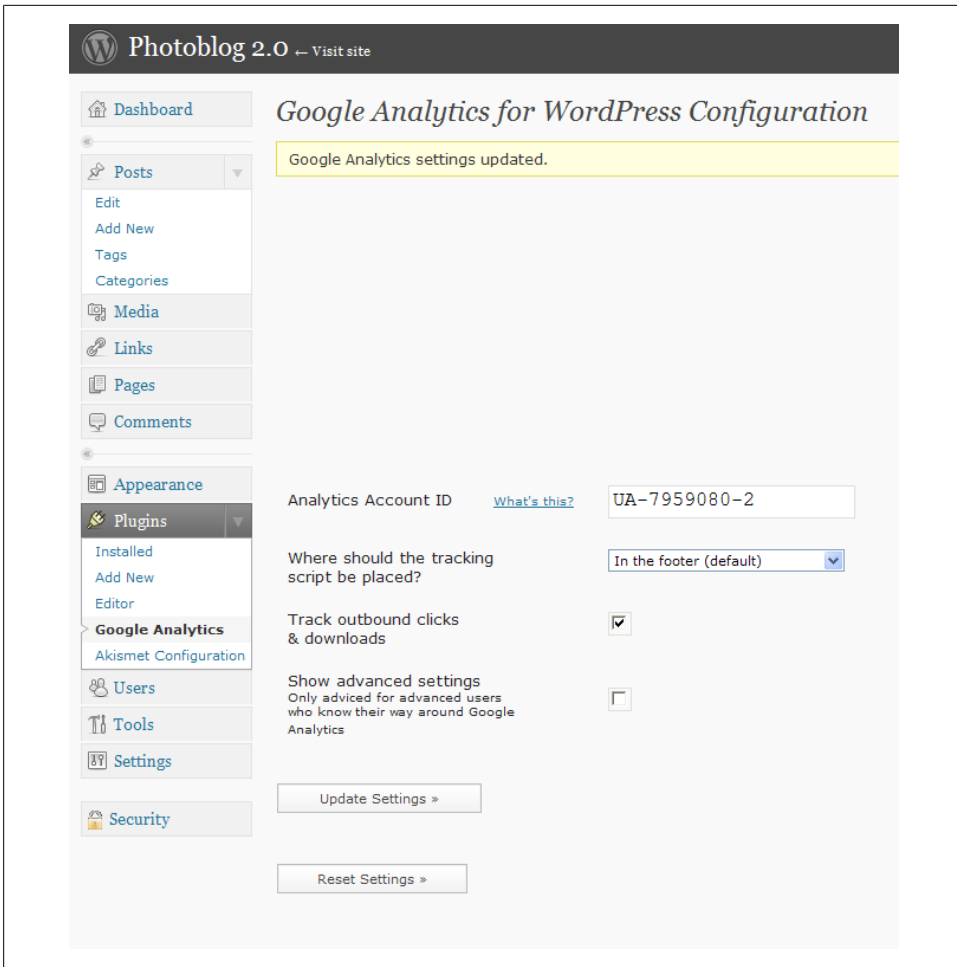


Figure 13-22. You can use a plug-in to add Google Analytics capabilities across an entire WordPress blog

When you change the date range, the Dashboard refreshes, making it easy to notice trends. You can also compare data from two different time frames. The differences between the two sets of data are displayed in green (for a positive change) or red (when the change is negative).

Map Overlay

The Map Overlay, shown on the lower right of Figure 13-23, is an important tool for websites targeting visitors from more than one location. You can use the Map Overlay to drill down and quickly (and visually) find out the countries and cities that your site visitors come from.

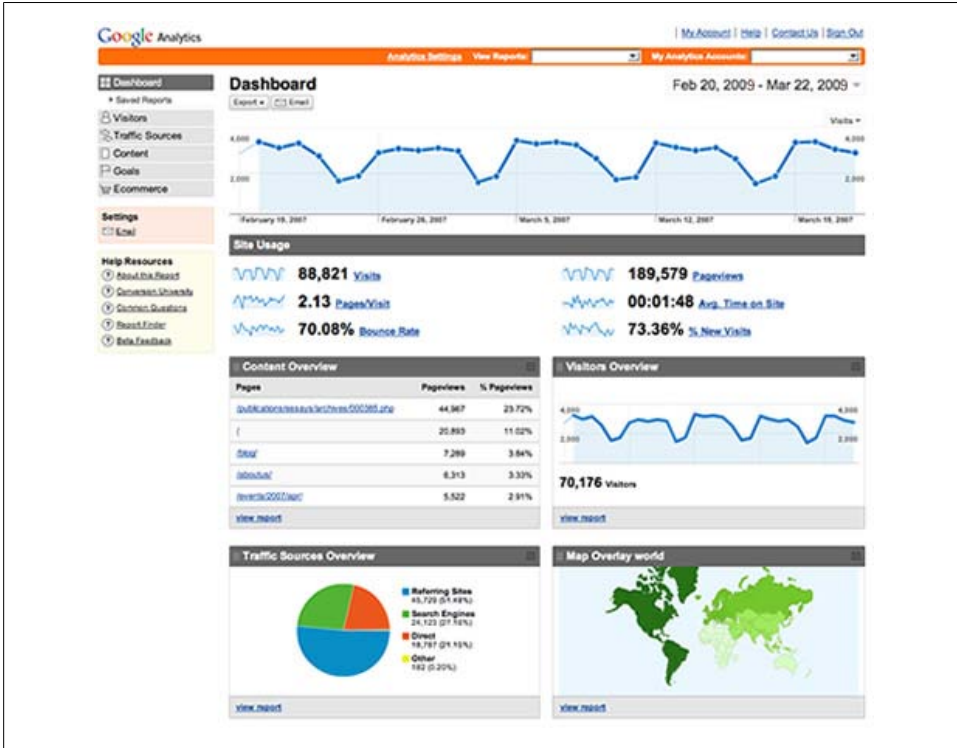


Figure 13-23. The Google Analytics Dashboard helps you understand your site performance dynamics at a glance

When you pass the mouse over a city on the Map Overlay, you can find out the number of visits from the city for a given date range, as well as the number of visits from a specific IP.

The Map Overlay feature is best used to track promotional efforts aimed at specific geographic regions. For example, using the overlay of the United States and drilling down to the state level, you can view visitors by state, county, or city.

Content Overview

The Content Overview pane puts page views and paths on your site in context. When you click on a link in the Content Overview, such as the site home page, the home page is loaded in the browser with visuals next to each link that show the number of visitors that clicked on the link. When the visitor clicked on a link from this home page, you can follow the link. The subsequent page loads with the site overlay, allowing you to follow frequent visitor paths.

If you are trying to improve the performance of a website, it's key to put yourself in the position of a visitor to your site. The point of the Content Overview is to follow the

actual behavior of users, rather than your subjective impressions of the user experience, so that you can make adjustments as necessary.

Information in the Content Overview, each with a statistical overlay, includes:

Navigation summary

How visitors found your content

Entrance paths

Paths visitors used to get to your content

Landing page optimization

Top entrance sources and top entrance keywords per page

Click patterns

Site overlay of visitor click behavior through your site

Advanced Segments

Advanced Segments, currently in beta, found on the Settings panel, allows you to filter your visitor data in a variety of preset ways, including:

- All Visitors (default)
- New Visitors
- Returning Visitors
- Paid Traffic (AdWords)
- Nonpaid Traffic
- Search Traffic (Google, Yahoo!, MSN, Ask)
- Direct (bookmarks)
- Referral (links from other sites, articles, blogs)
- Visits with Conversions (AdWords conversions)
- Visits with Transactions (e-commerce turned on)
- Visits from iPhones
- Nonbounce Visits (those who don't exit immediately)

You can also create a custom segment.

Goals

Goals allow you set up specific conversion goals similar to AdWords conversions. The funnel visualization tools in this section are a great way to spot possible problems with the way visitors are supposed to “funnel” through your site.

Custom Reports

If you find that you don't use a particular Google Analytics metric, but you really want more information about another, you can build your own Custom Reports.

Custom Reports allow you to present data in different ways to help with your reporting and analysis. It's easy to design one-off reports for your needs. Breaking down data by metrics (such as "content, goals, e-commerce") or by dimensions (such as "visitors, traffic sources, systems") can provide valuable insight. You can set up multiple tabs, each displaying custom sets of data, that might relate to your goals.

You have a lot more control over how data is presented than with premade reports, and you can set up multiple reports, such as a weekly visitor or a monthly sales report.

Website Optimizer

Part of the idea of Google Analytics is to take the guesswork and hunches out of website traffic analysis. Instead of your feeling about what visitors will do, you have the actual paths and click numbers. But data in a vacuum isn't particularly helpful. If your response to all this information is to build new site pages and features based on hunches, then the analysis isn't as useful as it might be.

The point of the Website Optimizer is to try to determine the benefit of one set of pages as opposed to another objectively rather than by hunch, thus better matching the intelligence provided by Google Analytics.

To run Website Optimizer, you need to be prepared to sort through the data provided by multiple A-B tests of specific pages with specific features to see which performs best. In other words, Website Optimizer provides a testbed for comparing sequences of pairs of pages. In a well-designed test, each pair deviates from one another in only one way. Once you've determined the best choice, then you can move on to the next deviation. Obviously, it takes plenty of visitor data to make Website Optimizer statistically significant. Google Website Optimizer advises that for pages that receive less than 1,000 page views, A/B tests will be the most effective for testing variations.

Website Optimizer can be started from a number of places within Google Analytics: from the Reporting tab, from the Opportunities tab within AdWords, or by direct navigation. See Figures [13-24](#) and [13-25](#).

Action Items

To monitor the performance of your ads and campaigns, you should:

- Customize, generate, and save report templates that cover your key business metrics
- Schedule reports to be regularly emailed

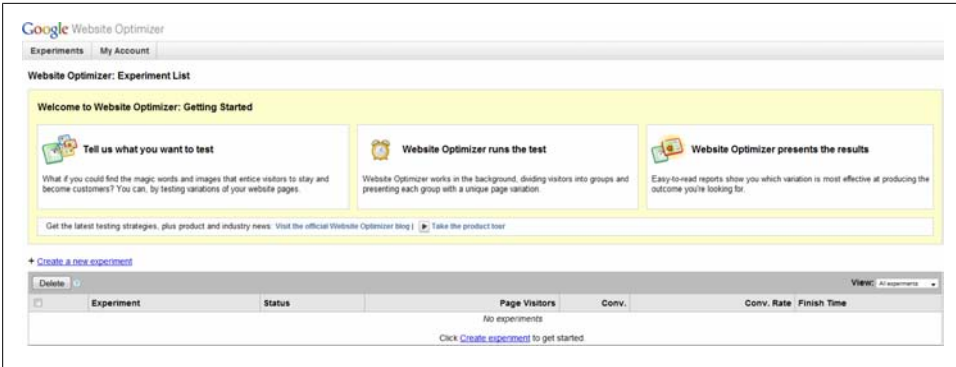


Figure 13-24. Getting started with Website Optimizer

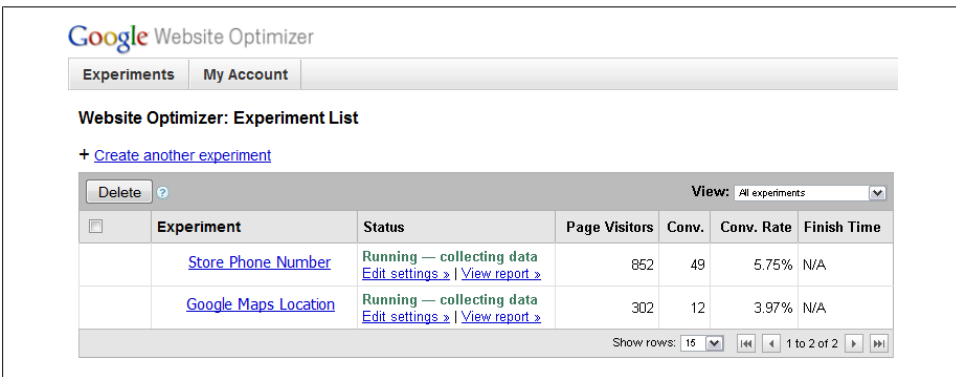


Figure 13-25. View your Website Optimizer experiments

- Implement conversion tracking for purchases, key page views, and other events that are significant to your business model
- Start a Google Analytics account that is connected to your AdWords account and add the Google Analytics JavaScript code to each of your pages
- If you maintain a WordPress blog, add an Analytics plug-in
- Create funnel analysis reports for each of your key conversion areas
- Use Google Analytics overlays to understand the behavior of visitors as they pass through your site
- Consider implementing page comparison tests to see which pages work better using Website Optimizer

AdWords beyond CPC

When Google started out, the commercial focus of the company was CPC advertising—text ads that cost money to advertisers when they were clicked. (Of course, before that Google was a search company!) As time has gone by, Google’s commercial offerings have expanded way beyond CPC and out of the virtual world into the real world. For the most part, these advertising options are available from your AdWords account. Even after recent contractions, these offerings are substantial and should command your attention.

This chapter explains how to use Google’s tools to create display ads, which are site placement ads on the Google content network. (Uploading your premade display ads was covered in [Chapter 10](#).) Site placement ads are themselves an expansion of Google’s original advertising model and were explained in [Chapter 10](#).

Moving outward from the virtual world, this chapter explains how you can use AdWords to create and place interactive visual, mobile, and video ads.

Display Ad Builder

In [Chapter 10](#), I explained how you can upload a graphic to create an image ad that can be served on the Google content network. Uploaded graphics can be in *.gif*, *.jpg*, or *.png* file formats. The graphic for this kind of ad needs to fit into a predetermined format; the nomenclature and sizes for these formats are reviewed in [Table 14-1](#).



You’ll find these sizes referred to in Google’s documentation about image ads as “IAB-approved” sizes, where IAB is the Interactive Advertising Bureau. You can find more information at <http://www.iab.net>.

Table 14-1. Sizes for image ads

Size (in pixels)	Adjusted size (in pixels)	Size type
468 × 60	468 × 49	Banner
728 × 90	728 × 79	Leaderboard
300 × 250	300 × 239	Inline
250 × 250	239 × 239	Square
200 × 200	189 × 189	Small Square
120 × 600	120 × 578	Skyscraper
160 × 600	160 × 578	Wide Skyscraper



The adjusted-size column in [Table 14-1](#) represents the actual size of the graphics that Google will run in ads it serves. The “missing” 11 or 22 horizontal pixels are used by your display URL and the Google “feedback” link. When you upload graphics, you can have Google adjust the size for you, but it’s a better idea to upload graphics already in the adjusted size.

Since Google provides tools for accomplishing a great many tasks, it probably will not surprise you to learn that there’s a Google tool—the Display Ad Builder—for creating site and banner ad graphics if you don’t already have what you need. The extensive interactivity of what you can build with Display Ad Builder goes way beyond what you can do with a single uploaded file, so you should consider taking advantage of these capabilities even if you are experienced with graphics and have premade imagery.

To begin the Display Ad Builder, start a new campaign with placements as explained in [Chapter 10](#). When the ad creation menu opens, instead of creating a text ad, click “Display ad builder” (shown in [Figure 14-1](#)).

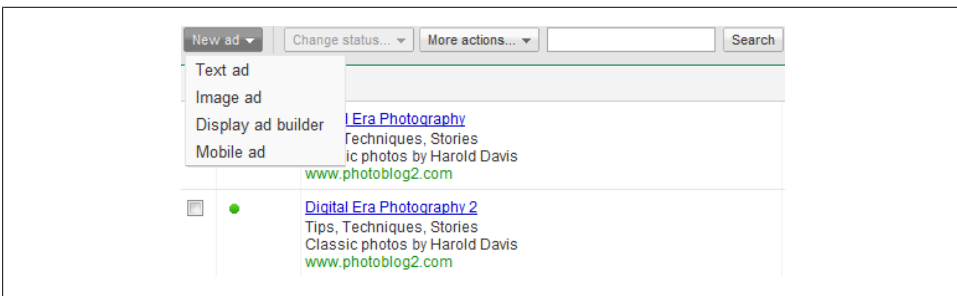


Figure 14-1. Choose “Display ad builder” to create a visual ad using Google’s templates

The Display Ad Builder, shown in [Figure 14-2](#), will open.

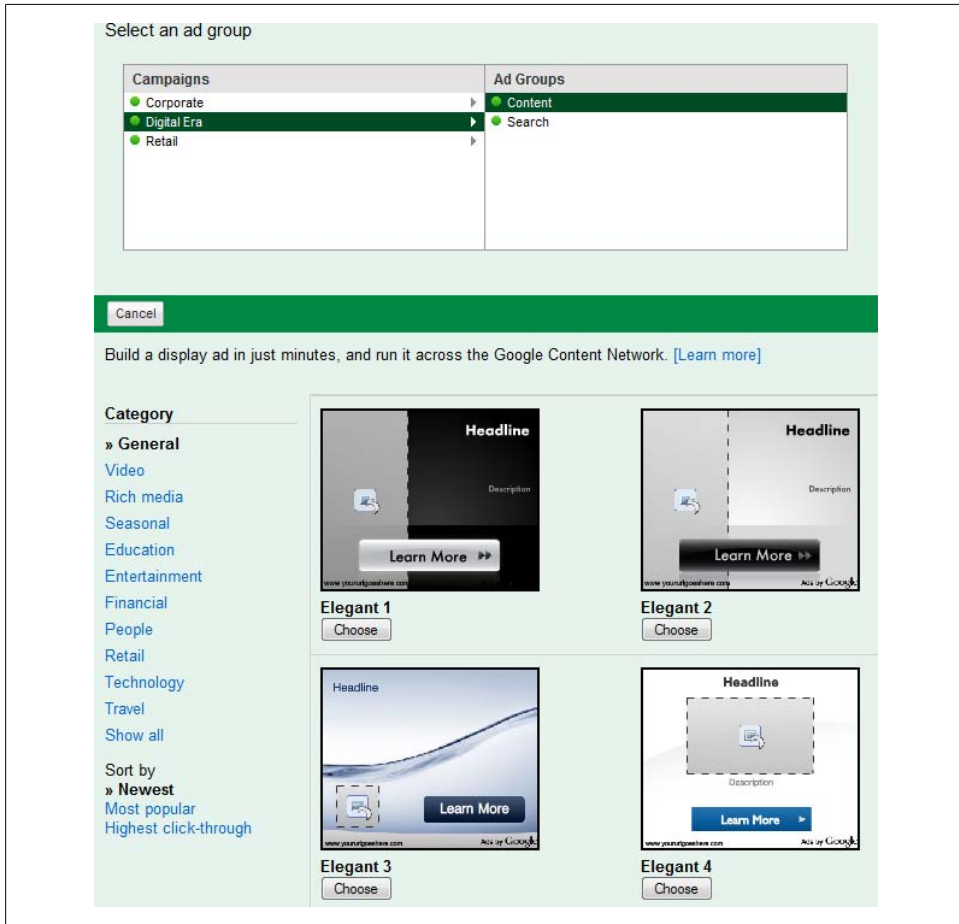


Figure 14-2. The categories let you choose from a variety of interesting formats

Essentially, the Display Ad Builder provides templates in a number of categories that you use as the basis for your own ads. There are two major types of ads: fully customizable and predesigned by industry. Fully customizable ads assume that you'll be uploading the graphics to make the ad work; predesigned ads provide existing graphics that will work for many business niches. These types of ads and their categories are shown in [Table 14-2](#). You can sort the ad templates within each category by highest click-through rate, most popular (meaning most AdWords users have selected the template), and newest.

Table 14-2. Ad template categories and types

Category	Type	Description
Fully customizable	General	These ads encourage the viewer to respond immediately, using direct mail advertising for inspiration, with buttons such as “Learn More”, “Buy Now!”, or “Enter Site”
	Video	These ads include in-stream video, click-to-play video, and YouTube-promoted videos
	Rich media	Multimedia ads including in-stream video, photo galleries, and so on
	Seasonal	Seasonal- and holiday-appropriate customizable templates
Predesigned by industry	Education	Most graphics are already provided for these industry-specific ads covering many of the most popular niches
	Entertainment	
	Financial	
	People	
	Retail	
	Technology	
	Travel	

Choose the category of template you’d like to use to create your image (the General category is shown in [Figure 14-2](#) and the Seasonal category is shown in [Figure 14-3](#)). Depending on the category you’ve chosen, you’ll have less or more graphical and text elements to supply to complete the ad.

For example, in the “Rich media” category, the Photo Gallery template, shown in [Figure 14-4](#), lets you upload up to six different photos, with accompanying text for each element.

The Halloween template from the Seasonal category, shown in [Figure 14-5](#), is pretty straightforward—all you need to enter is your URL, logo, and three lines of text.

Predesigned industry ads are the simplest of all; after all, “predesigned” means that the graphics are already in place. For the most part, all you’ll need to supply if these ads work for you is a logo and URL. [Figure 14-6](#) shows some of the premade ads available for Entertainment businesses.

Image Ad Guidelines

Image ads must comply with normal Google editorial policies regarding such things as acceptable content, competitive claims, and so on (see [Chapter 10](#) for details). In addition, there are some specific guidelines for visual ads.

The most important of these requirements is that visual ads should avoid unconventional ad layouts. Specifically, visual ads should occupy the entire form factor selected, they cannot appear sideways or upside down, and they cannot be segmented or contain multiple copies of themselves within the ad or appear to be more than one ad.

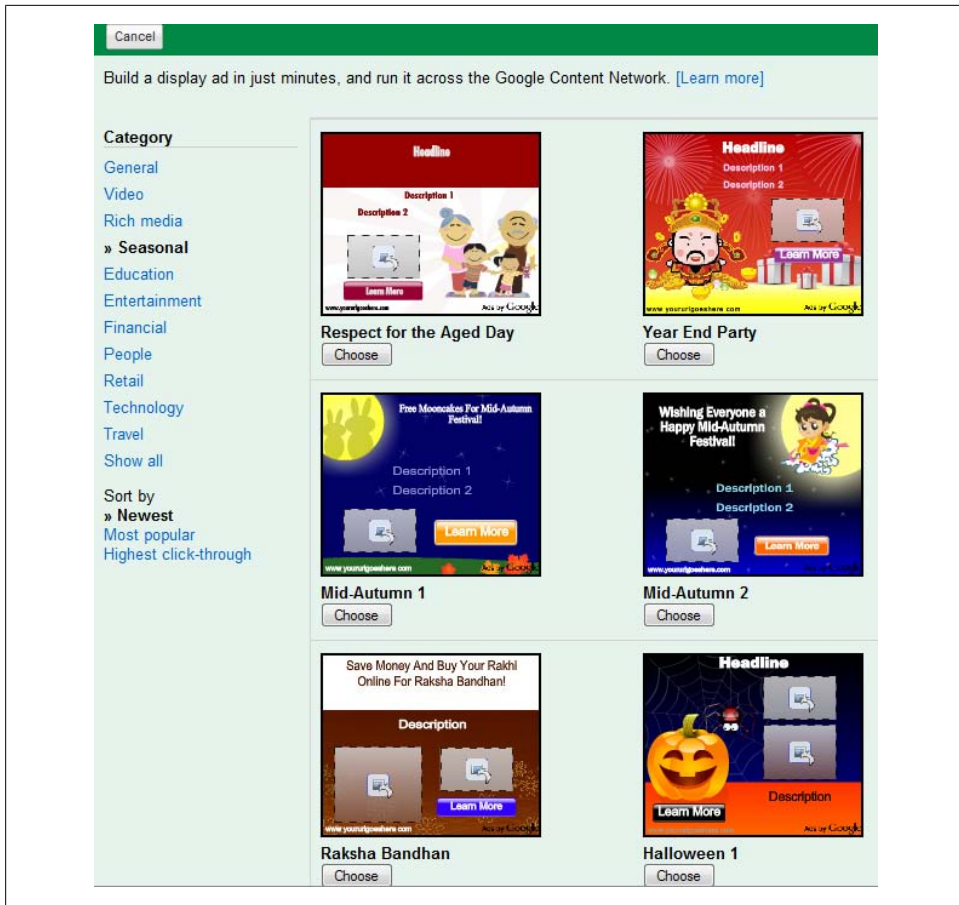


Figure 14-3. The Seasonal category shows you different templates depending on the time of year

In addition, you cannot add your own user bar or image footer to an image ad. This is because Google automatically appends your image with a user bar that contains links to your URL and to the “Ads By Google” feedback page.

It should go without saying that you need to either own the copyright or be licensed to use any image you upload to Google.

Also needless to say, Google reserves the right to review image ads and to disapprove them if they fail to comply with normal editorial or image-specific guidelines.

You may recall from [Chapter 10](#) that unsubstantiated competitive claims are forbidden. It’s hard to substantiate a competitive claim in a 105-word text ad, but it’s worth noting that you may have more of a chance of doing so with charts and graphs in a visual ad—particularly if the image ad links to a landing page that helps substantiate the competitive claims.

Save ad
Cancel
Preview all ad sizes
Choose a different template

New display ad

Ad Name

Name Max 35

This name won't appear in your ad and is only used for identification purposes.

Headline

Headline

Headline font

Headline text colour

Product 1

Product 1

File size 50K max. Format jpg, png, gif (336x145)

[Select an already uploaded image](#)

This image will be used as a product image in the ad

Product 1 description

(optional)

Product 1 description font

Product 1 description colour

Product 1 click URL Max 1024

(optional)

Select ad variations

The content of this ad will be used for all ad variations. Remember, there's no extra cost for selecting multiple ad sizes.

468 x 60 120 x 60
 300 x 250 336 x 280
 728 x 90 160 x 600

Preview ad

[See interactive preview for all sizes](#)

Great Eastern Location

www.photoblog2.com Ads by Google

Figure 14-4. This rich media Photo Gallery ad lets you upload a series of photos

Display ads appear on content sites (and, in some cases, within products) in the Google network. Remember that they do not appear in Google search results. This means that for any of your display ads to appear on a content publisher's site, your campaign must have enabled the content network. In addition, website owners must have approved image and display ads before they will appear on a specific site.

Affiliate Advertising with Google

Affiliate marketing, explained in [Chapter 5](#), works so that you (the advertiser) pay the publisher (website owner) only when a specific action takes place—usually a purchase. Website owners who participate in affiliate marketing schemes essentially become your partner and are paid only when you actually sell something.

New display ad

Ad Name

Name Max 35

This name won't appear in your ad and is only used for identification purposes.

Headline

Headline (optional)

Headline text font (optional)

Headline text colour (optional)

Description

Description (optional)

Description text font (optional)

Description text colour (optional)

Logo

Logo image book-cover.jpg (optional)

File size 50K max. Format jpg, .png, .gif. (100x60)

[Select an already uploaded image](#)

This image will be used as a product image in the ad

Select ad variations

The content of this ad will be used for all ad variations. Remember, there's no extra cost for selecting multiple ad sizes.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 336 x 280	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 300 x 250
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 120 x 600	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 468 x 60
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 728 x 90	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 160 x 600

Preview ad

[See interactive preview for all sizes](#)




Figure 14-5. Each visual template allows you to customize elements of your ad

When Google bought DoubleClick in 2008, Google acquired the DoubleClick Performics Affiliate network, now renamed the [Google Affiliate Network](#).

The Google Affiliate Network is a top-quality affiliate network, with advertisers such as Barnes & Noble and Verizon, and should be considered more than competitive with the two largest affiliate networks outside of Amazon, Commission Junction and Link-Share (described in [Chapter 5](#)). Advertisers and publishers are considered on an individual basis for inclusion in the program, and the Google Affiliate Network is noted for the amount of individual attention given to the unique goals of affiliate advertisers.

At this point in time, the Google Affiliate Network is not integrated with AdWords or other tools available to Google advertisers, except for AdSense, which is used to distribute earnings.


Build a display ad in just minutes, and run it across the Google Content Network. [\[Learn more\]](#)

Category


- General
- Video
- Rich media
- Seasonal
- Education
- » **Entertainment**
- Financial
- People
- Retail
- Technology
- Travel
- Show all

Sort by


- » **Newest**
- Most popular
- Highest click-through




Nighttime




New Media




Off to the movies 2



Take me out with the crowds



Rock to the music



Get in the game

Figure 14-6. Predesigned industry ads are templates for specific niches (Entertainment shown)

Mobile Ads

Mobile ads are ads that appear on wireless devices such as the Apple iPhone or Google's G1. Many sites target these appliances using some variant of wireless markup language. If you advertise a local product or service, particularly one whose customers are most likely to find you on a mobile device, it makes a great deal of sense to place targeted mobile ads.

To create a mobile ad, in AdWords start a new campaign with placements. In the "Create an ad" window, select "Mobile ad," shown in [Figure 14-7](#).

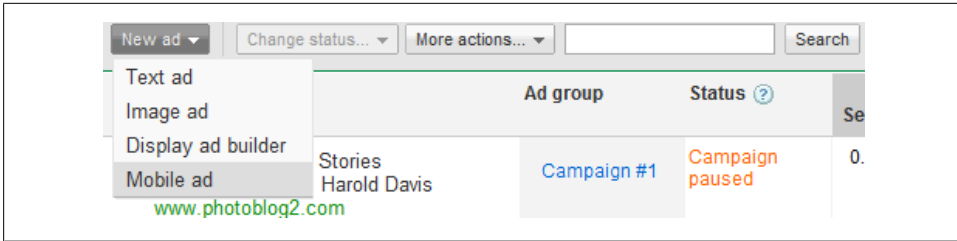


Figure 14-7. Select “Mobile ad” to create an ad targeted at mobile devices

The “Design your mobile ad window,” shown in Figure 14-8, will open. For a text ad, enter the headline, description, and URL. Note that the headline and description are each limited to 18 characters, and the display URL can be no more than 20 characters (if Google CPC text ads are terse, mobile ads are *very* succinct).

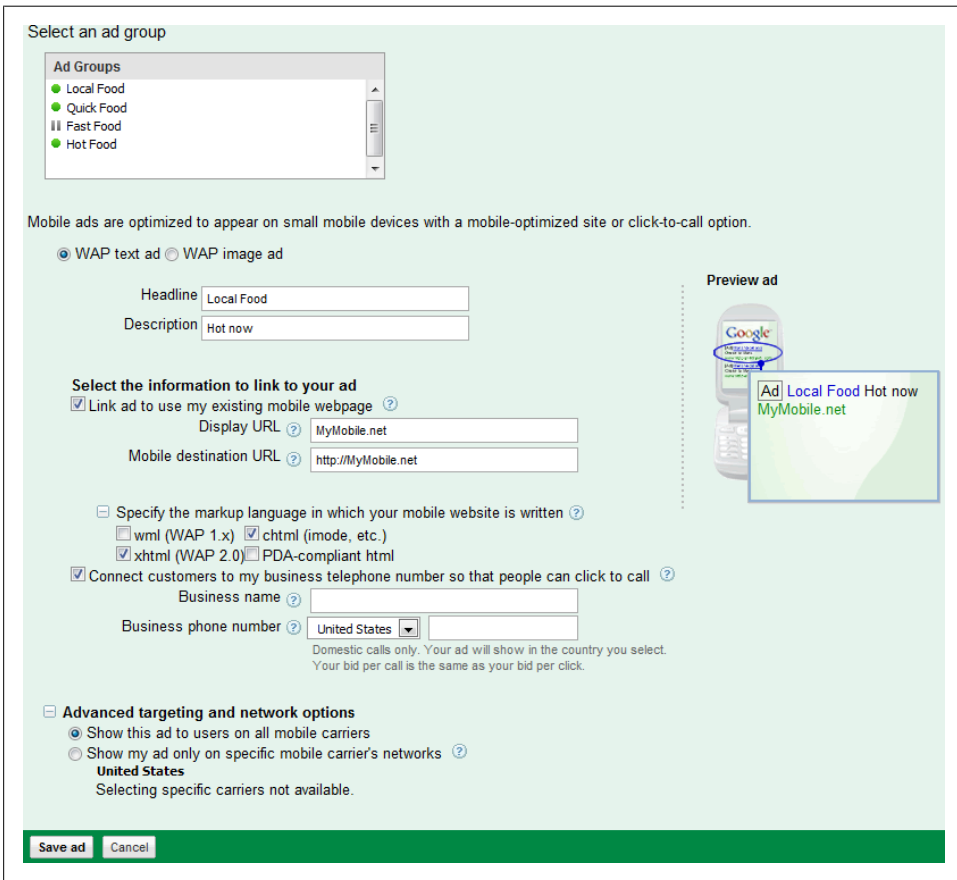


Figure 14-8. Mobile text ads are pretty much like regular CPC ads—but shorter



If you link your business’s phone number to the ad, customers can call you by clicking rather than having to open your mobile web page.

To create a mobile image ad rather than a text ad, choose the Image radio button and upload your ad in one of the specified file sizes, file formats, and aspect ratios, as shown in Figure 14-9.

Figure 14-9. You can upload a graphic for mobile image ads



The mobile file specifications that Google allows conform to the standards set up by the [Mobile Marketing Association](#).

Once you’ve created your image or text mobile ad, click “Save ad.” A mockup of your ad will be displayed (Figure 14-10). Ensure that you set the targeting and network options.

New ad ▾		Change status... ▾		More actions... ▾		Search						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ad	Ad group	Status ?	% Served	Clicks	Impr.	CTR ?	Cost	Conv. (1-per-click) ?	Cost / conv. (1-per-click) ?	Conv. rate (1-per-click) ?	View-through Conv. ?
Total - all ads				0.00%	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0.00%	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ad Local Food Hot now MyMobile.net	Campaign #1	Campaign paused	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0.00%	0
<input type="checkbox"/>	Ad Local Food Now Hotter MyMobile.net	Campaign #1	Campaign paused	0.00%	0	0	0.00%	\$0.00	0	\$0.00	0.00%	0

Figure 14-10. As your mobile ads show up with your other ads, it is advised to create separate campaigns for them

Video Ads

Video ads appear in placements on the Google content network and can now be created using the Display Ad Builder, which builds the whole ad in one step. Your video ad will appear as a static image until a user clicks on it and your video is played.

If the user clicks the display URL at the bottom of the ad, or clicks the ad while it plays, the user will be taken to the advertiser’s website.



You can pay for click-to-play video ads on either a CPC (keyword) or CPM (placement) basis.

To create a video ad, in the Display Ad Builder choose the “In-Stream video ad” link shown in [Figure 14-11](#).

The first step in creating your video ad is to name your ad and then upload the video, as shown in [Figure 14-12](#). Once you have selected your file, click the Upload button for Google to start processing your video. You can also select an already uploaded video or check on the progress of a conversion, as shown in [Figure 14-13](#).

After you click the Choose File button shown in [Figure 14-12](#), you’ll be prompted to upload your video. You can upload videos in a variety of formats, including AVI, QuickTime, and MPEG. Google will transcode these videos into the Flash format.

Once your video has been uploaded and processed, select it, add the companion banner image, and enter the display and destination URLs, as shown in [Figure 14-12](#). Click the “Preview ad” box at the top right to preview your ad, then click “Save ad” at the top.

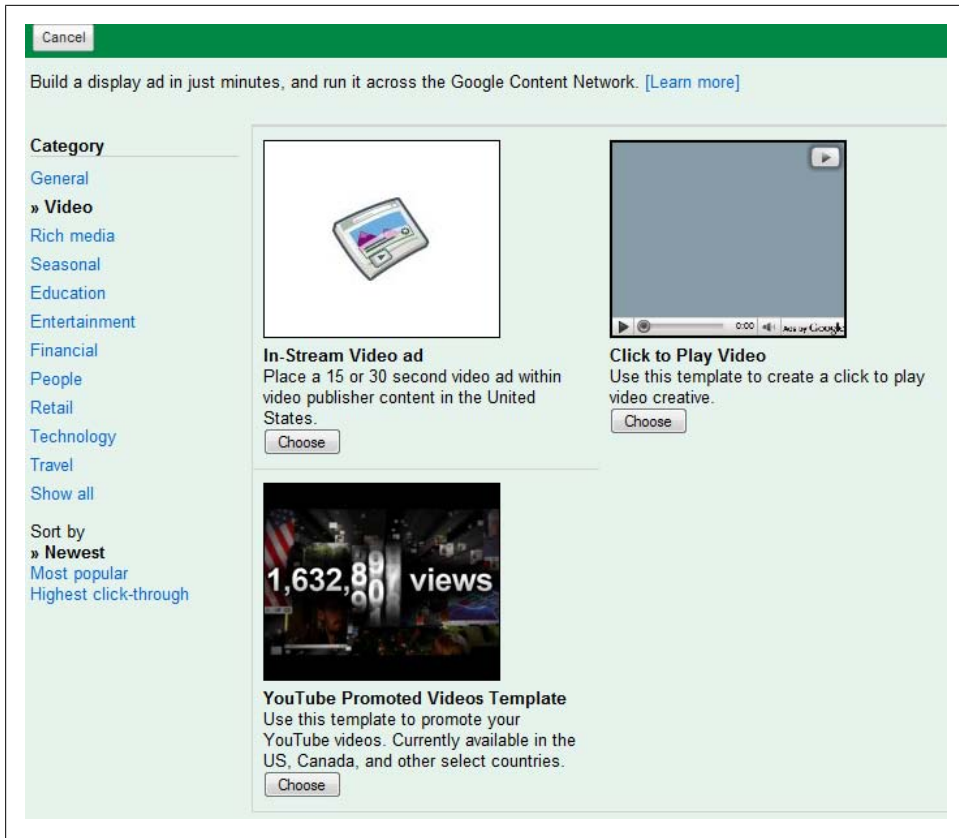


Figure 14-11. Choose “Click-to-play video” to create a video ad

Advertising on TV

Creating a professional quality video ad is not at all the same thing as creating a video ad for display on YouTube (although many online video ads do have high production values).

That said, if you have experience creating television ads or want to get started with the help of advertising professionals, Google has created a marketplace to help you optimize your placements of television ads. The Google TV Ads website is located at <http://www.google.com/adwords/tvads/>.

Benefits of TV ads include flexibility, economy, and reliable metrics. You may not know that Google collects near real-time data from millions of anonymous set-top boxes, helping you know what is working and not working. Google TV Ads’ online auction model allows you to set your own maximum prices, with your actual price paid for a winning bid that of the next highest bidder. You can use the TV Ads interface to buy

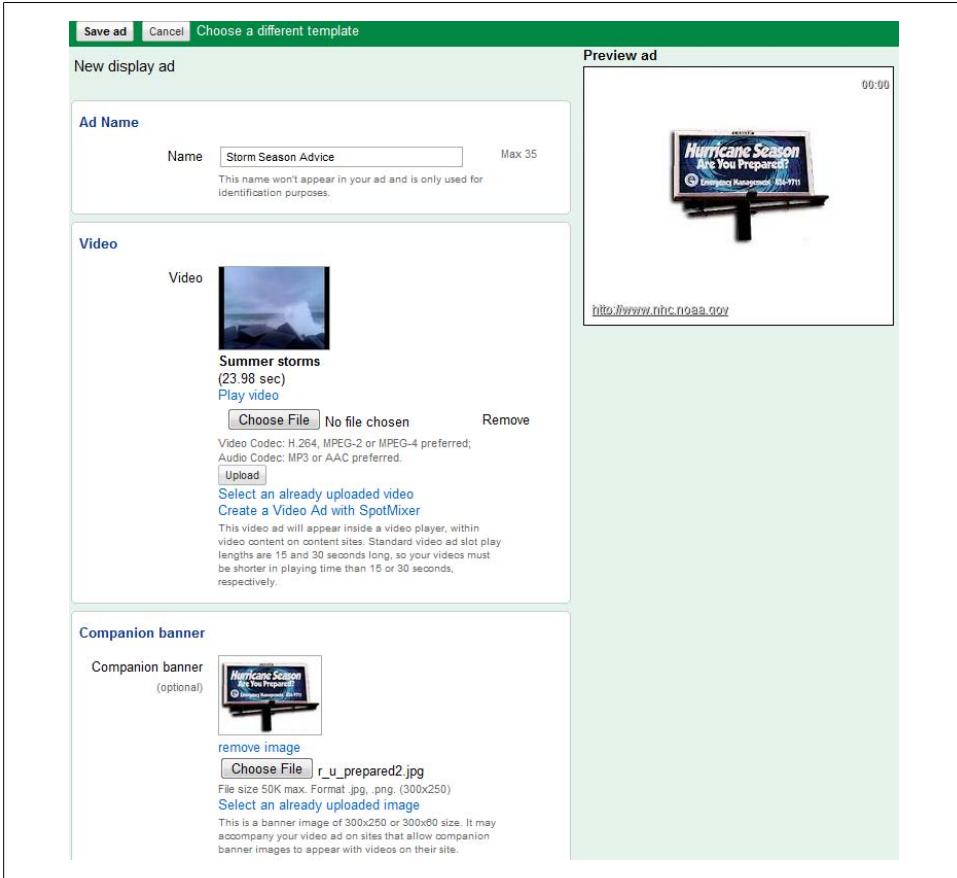


Figure 14-12. The opening image of the video you upload is shown until you play the video

just the placements you want, without bundling, and to adjust your placements on the fly when you determine what works and what doesn't.

As you can see in Figure 14-14, Google is able to place your ads on many television content providers with tremendous granular flexibility regarding when the ad runs.



If you look on the Campaign Management tab (shown in Figure 14-15), you may see a link for Audio Ad Library. The audio ad library functions in much the same way as the market for TV ads, except that it is a radio advertising platform. However, as of mid-2009, Google is discontinuing the placement of radio ads.

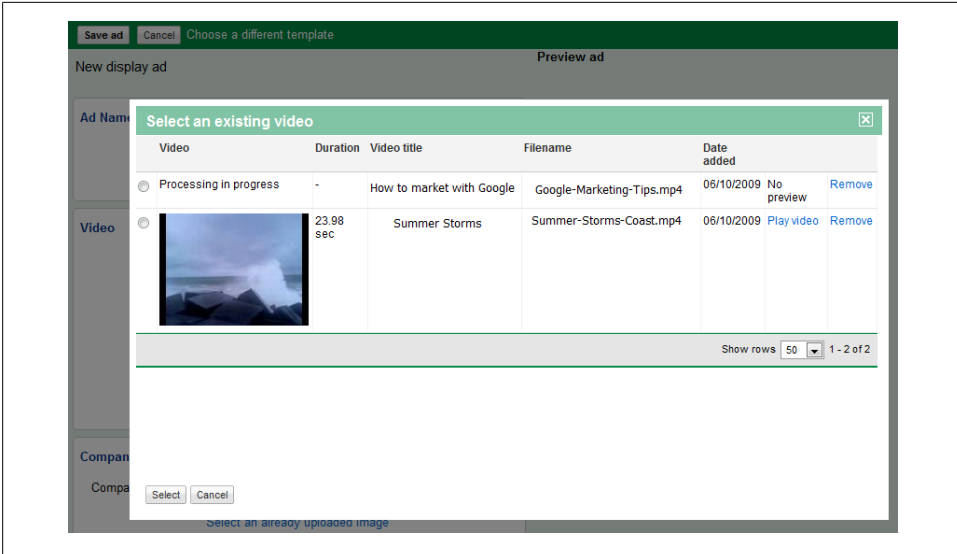


Figure 14-13. You can select an existing video or check any processing in progress

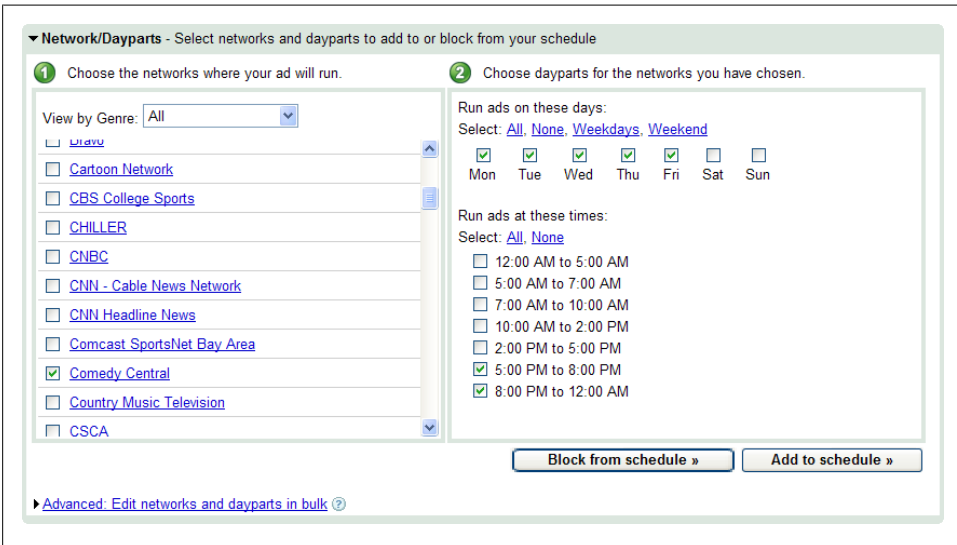


Figure 14-14. You can control exactly where and when your TV ad runs

The screenshot shows the Google AdWords interface. At the top left is the Google AdWords logo. Below it are four tabs: Campaign Management, Reports, Analytics, and My Account. Underneath these tabs is a navigation bar with links: Account Snapshot, Campaign Summary, Tools, Conversion tracking, Website Optimizer, Ad Creation Marketplace, and Audio Ad Library. The main content area is titled "Audio ad summary" and contains the text: "You have no audio ads in your Audio Ad Library." Below this text are two links: "Upload an ad" and "Don't have an ad? Find a specialist in the Ad Creation Marketplace". At the bottom of the main content area is a table with three columns: "Ad name", "Listen", and "Duration". The footer of the page contains the copyright notice "© 2009 Google" and links to "AdWords Home", "Editorial Guidelines", and "Privacy Policy".

Figure 14-15. Although audio ads appear on the Campaign Management tab, they are scheduled to be phased out

Action Items

For almost any kind of ad you need to place, Google provides essentially self-service mechanisms that help you assemble, target, and analyze the results. This represents a radical restructuring of advertising as we know it, and the philosophy behind Google's core web businesses have been applied to more traditional advertising as well.

To take advantage of Google's offerings:

- Create and target interactive image-based advertising
- Take advantage of Google's extensive gallery of direct mail, interactive, seasonal, and industry-specific visual ad templates
- If appropriate to your business, create and target a mobile advertising campaign
- Create and target click-to-play video advertisements

Symbols and Numbers

- " " (quotation marks, double), using in search strings, 189
- + (plus sign), inclusion operator, 189
- (minus sign), exclusion operator, 189
- 5Ps of marketing, 37

A

- account access for AdSense account, 205
- ad fatigue, 21
- ad impressions (see impressions)
- ad positioning, 21
- Ad Review Center, 230
- ad units, 156
 - AdSense code for, placing on your website, 218
 - AdSense for Feeds unit, 235
 - colors, choosing, 216
 - names and sizes, 214
 - refining appearance to match your site, 169
 - selecting formats, 168
 - supplied by Google for AdSense, 212
- AdBrite program
 - adding code to your pages, 173
 - choosing kinds of ads to serve, 167
 - comparison to other CPC vendors, 165
 - selecting ad formats, 168
 - signing up with, 166
- AdSense, 156
 - account options, 203
 - access to account, 205
 - ad display preference, 205
 - payment history, 206
 - payment preferences, 203
 - tax information forms, 206
 - applying for an account, 199
 - content ad settings, 211
 - ad channels, 218
 - ad type, 212
 - custom ad colors, 225
 - filtering ads, 229
 - format and colors, 213–217
 - managing ads, 224
 - placing code on your website, 218–224
 - site authentication, ad review, allowed sites, 230
 - using channels, 227
 - content and search ads, 186
 - content presentation and, 19
 - control of ad subject matter by affiliates, 161
 - for domains, 239
 - downloading ad performance data in CSV file, 260
 - earnings reports for your account, 265
 - financial remuneration from, 163
 - for feeds, 235
 - for mobile content, 218
 - navigating revenue reporting mechanism, 249
 - optimization tips, 263
 - performance of other programs, 261
 - domains performance, 262
 - search performance, 261
 - placement of ads on your exit pages, 270
 - programs, 207
 - deciding between AdSense for Content and AdSense for Search, 211

- reasons for working with smaller competitors, 165
- running reports on, 254–258
- search settings, 230
- site diagnostics for your website, 264
- statistics in ad performance report, 259
- understanding ad performance statistics, 253
- web analytic software, using with, 273
- web traffic analysis tools, using with, 266
- adult content ads, 168
- advertisements
 - ad template categories and types in Display Ad Builder, 387
 - blocking ads from your site, 229
 - display preferences for AdSense ads, 205
 - getting ads seen in AdWords campaign, 343
 - testing AdWords ads, 344
- advertising
 - cost of keywords, 103
 - hosting, 155–177
 - adding code to your pages, 173–176
 - choosing kinds of ads, 167
 - comparison of CPC vendors, 165
 - contextual advertising, 158–164
 - CPC (cost per click), 156
 - display and banner ads, 176
 - placing ad units on your site, steps in process, 166
 - selecting ad formats, 168–172
 - signing up with publishers, 166
 - kinds of programs on the Web, 118
 - paid, not designated as such, 114
 - SEM (Search Engine Marketing), 41
 - SEO (Search Engine Optimization), 84
 - SEO and SEM campaigns, 43
- Advertising Professionals program, 313
- AdWords
 - ad campaigns and ad groups, 291–312
 - creating image ad, 310
 - creating new ad group, 308
 - creating new campaign, 293
 - editing ad group, 309
 - editing campaign settings, 299–308
 - advanced performance monitoring, 355–384
 - conversion tracking, 362–374
 - Google Analytics, 375
 - using reports, 355–362
 - advertisements on Google search results page, 191
 - campaign management tools, 325–339
 - Ads Diagnostic Tool, 326–330
 - optimizing your ads, 330
 - creating display ads, 385–399
 - Display Ad Builder, 385–392
 - mobile ads, 392
 - television ads, 396
 - video ads, 395
 - editorial guidelines from Google, 287
 - effective searching techniques and, 191
 - getting My Client Center account, 312
 - Keyword Tool, 331
 - monitoring account activity, 315–325
 - ad group performance, 321
 - campaign summary, 317
 - drilling down into a campaign, 320
 - overview of program, 193
 - signing up for an account, 277
 - choosing keywords, 288
 - creating an ad, 284
 - creating your account, 278
 - payment information and account activation, 289
 - setting pricing, 279
 - targeting customers, 280
 - writing an ad, 286
 - successful campaigns, 341–354
 - conversions process, 341–345
 - estimating traffic, 347
 - excluding sites, topics, categories, and viewers, 350
 - indirect path for search terms, 345
 - success via iteration, 346
 - targeting competition, 347
- affiliate programs, 117–153, 390
 - ad hoc affiliation, 145
 - Amazon.com, 148
 - areas of concern in the relationship, 126
 - benefits of affiliate aggregators, 130
 - creatives, 123
 - finding an affiliate aggregator, 131–145
 - kinds of ad programs, 118
 - many names of, 119
 - steps in process, 120
- aggregators (affiliate), 130–145
 - benefits of, 130

- Commission Junction, 131–138
 - Kolimbo, 138
 - LinkShare, 140
- Alexa
 - finding current most-popular websites with, 15
 - information about your site traffic, 266
- Alexa Toolbar, 16
- all-text browsers, 91
- Allowed Sites page, 230
- AllPosters.com, 123
- alt attribute in image tags, 89, 103
- Amazon, 11
 - associate program, 148
- AND operator, 189
 - implicit use in simple search, 189
- Atom feeds, 73
- authentication, site, 230
- average position, 321

B

- B&H Photo, 125
- balance in successful AdWords campaigns, 345
- banner ads, 167
 - hosting, 176
- Bing, 47
- Blogger, 183
- blogging, 71
 - comments, trackbacks, and discussion threads as inbound links, 68
 - creating syndication feed for blogs, 74
 - hosted sites, 10
- blogging software, 71
 - hosting services for, 73
- blogosphere, 10
- bold text, keywords in HTML tags, 104
- Book Search (Google), 183
- bots, 86
 - (see also Googlebot)
 - excluding from your site, 92–96
 - how your site appears to, 89–92
- Bots vs. Browsers, 96
- broad traffic, 4
- broken links, checking and fixing, 109
- browsers
 - installing Google Toolbar in Internet Explorer, 12
 - page size and, 19

- viewing your site with all-text browser, 91

C

- Campaign Optimizer tool, 335
- case-insensitivity of Google searches, 190
- categories of websites, excluding from AdWords campaign, 301
- celebrity, appeal of, 41
- channels (ad), 218
 - monitoring performance on AdSense, 251
 - reporting data by channel on AdSense, 258
 - using in AdSense, 227
- click fraud, 156, 195
- click-through rate (see CTR)
- clicks, 156
 - ad performance report statistics on, 259
- client manager account (AdWords), 313
- cloaking or redirection, bad SEO practices, 113
- code
 - adding to your pages, 173–176
 - Google Analytics tracking code, 377
 - Google code for buying conversion page, 367
 - Google code for licensing conversion page, 373
- colors
 - choosing for AdSense content ads, 216
 - custom colors for AdSense content ads, 225
- Commission Junction affiliate aggregator, 131–138
- commissions in affiliate programs, 127
 - tracking, 128
- community, 4
 - power of, 29
- competition, targeting in AdWords campaign, 347
- Competitive Ad Filter (AdSense), 229
- Constant Contact, email marketing service, 78
- content
 - Content Overview in Google Analytics, 381
 - definition of good content, 3
 - exclusion from AdWords campaign, 350
 - how much is enough, 17
 - matching affiliates with, 129
 - prohibited from Google ads, 288

- questionable content and AdSense
 - accounts, 202
 - separating advertising from normal page content, 23
 - separating from design, 23
 - sources of, 29
 - content ads, 187
 - AdSense for Content, 207
 - AdSense for Content settings, 211–230
 - ad channels, 218
 - ad type, 212
 - custom ad colors, 225
 - filtering ads, 229
 - format and colors, 213–217
 - managing ads, 224
 - placing code on your website, 218–224
 - site authentication, ad review, allowed sites, 230
 - using channels, 227
 - choosing for AdWords campaign, 307
 - display ads on content sites, 390
 - monitoring performance on AdSense, 251
 - performance statistics in AdWords, 322
 - content architecture, 23–29
 - include layout, 28
 - PHP includes, 27
 - server-side includes, 25
 - content attribute values (meta tag), 96
 - content presentation, 18–22
 - images, video, and podcasting, 20
 - keeping content fresh, 20
 - page size, 19
 - positioning ads, 21
 - rules for page and site design, 18
 - content sites, 10
 - action items for getting started, 31
 - content spam, bad SEO practices, 84
 - context, ad positioning and, 21
 - contextual advertising, 118, 158–164
 - click fraud, 195
 - money generated by, 163
 - quality of contextual analysis, 160
 - serving ads, 161
 - text versus banner and display ads, 176
 - conversion ratio, 362
 - conversion tracking, 355, 362–374
 - common conversion events, 364
 - notification of users being tracked, 364
 - PayPal purchases, 367
 - setting up new PayPal button, 367–373
 - technologies supported by tracked sites, 365
 - understanding Google’s mechanism for, 363
 - visitors to crucial page, 373
 - conversions, 321
 - conversion goals in Google Analytics, 382
 - steps in AdWords conversions, 341–345
 - tracking for comparison with overall rate, 345
 - cost per click (see CPC advertising)
 - cost per thousand impressions (see CPM advertising)
 - country, specifying for AdWords ads, 281
 - CPC (cost per click) advertising, 42, 155
 - choosing for AdWords campaign, 297
 - comparison of vendors, 165
 - contextual relevance and, 159
 - Google offerings beyond CPC, 385
 - CPM (cost per thousand impressions) advertising, 12, 157
 - choosing for AdWords campaign, 297
 - economics of, 176
 - eCPM (effective CPM), 259
 - crawl errors (Google Webmaster Tools), 86
 - creatives, 122
 - Amazon.com, 150
 - definition and description of, 123
 - cross links, 13, 109
 - importance of, SEO and, 111
 - CSS (Cascading Style Sheets)
 - including in PHP code file, 27
 - server-side include files, 25
 - CSV (comma-separated values) file, ad
 - performance report, 260
 - CTR (click-through rate), 157
 - AdSense performance statistics on, 253, 259
 - examining for AdWords campaign, 323
 - cult of personality, 41
 - customer life cycle, 341–345
- ## D
- Debian Social Contract, 58
 - deleting ad campaigns, 299
 - descriptions
 - describing your site, 171
 - description lines for AdWords ads, 284

- in meta tags, 97
 - getting them right, 97
- design
 - principles for websites and SEO, 105
 - separating content from, 23
- Digg, hub site that drives traffic, 65
- directories, working with, 57
 - getting Open Directory Project (ODP) listings, 58
 - getting Yahoo! Directory listings, 62
 - Google Directory, 183
- directory assistance program (GOOG-411), 184
- display ads, 155
 - (see also CPM advertising)
 - hosting, 176
- display ads, creating, 385–399
 - Display Ad Builder, 385–392
 - creating visual ads using Google templates, 387
 - mobile ads, 392
 - television ads, 396
 - video ads, 395
- domain spamming, 114
- domains
 - AdSense for Domains, 239
 - performance of, 262
 - excluding from AdWords campaign, 301, 352

E

- e-commerce sites, 11
- earnings, AdSense reporting on, 259, 265
- eBay, 12
 - community, 30
- eCPM (effective cost per thousand impressions), 157
 - statistics on AdSense ad performance report, 259
- elevator pitch, 36
- email addresses, finding for webmasters, 66
- email marketing
 - overcoming spam problem, 77
 - using a service, 78
- email surveys, 39
- entertainment, 5
- entry pages, 270
 - (see also landing pages)
- excluding from AdWords campaign, 350–353

- exclusion operator (-), 189
- exit pages, 270

F

- FeedBurner, 76, 235
- FeedForAll RSS Graphics Tool, 75
- feeds
 - AdSense for Feeds, 235
 - creating, 74
 - distributing, 75
 - syndication feed submission, 76
 - using to your benefit, 73
- file extensions for includes, 25
- file formats
 - images, 385
 - search engine placement and, 90
 - video, 395
- filtering ads, 229
- 5Ps of marketing, 37
- focused traffic, 4
- fonts, site-wide changes to, 24
- format for AdSense content ads, 213
- Fred Miranda Software, 147
- free services and software, 6

G

- geographic area and language for AdWords ads, 280
- Gmail, 183
- GOOG-411 directory assistance program, 184
- Google, 47
 - advertising applications, AdSense and AdWords, 179
 - Analytics software, 273
 - Blogger, 73, 183
 - Book Search, 183
 - categories of products offered by, 180
 - CPC advertising, position in, 156
 - Directory, 183
 - editorial and content guidelines for AdWords ads, 287
 - evolution of, 179
 - FeedBurner, 76, 235
 - Gmail, 183
 - Health, 184
 - Insights for Search, 343
 - intermediary between AdSense accounts and AdWords advertisers, 194

- Maps, 184
- MediaBot, analyzing web content, 162
- More Google Products page, 180, 182
- PageRank, 63
- Product Search, 185
- prohibitions on SEO behavior, 112
- Scholar, 185
- search engine, 13
- search query, anatomy of, 187–193
- Similar Pages link, 65
- tools for webmasters, 49
- TV Ads website, 396
- Visual Search Tool, 66
- YouTube, 185
- Google Advertising Professionals program, 313
- Google Affiliate Network, 391
- Google Analytics, 273, 375
 - Advanced Segments, 382
 - Content Overview, 381
 - Custom Reports, 383
 - Dashboard, 379
 - getting started with, 376
 - Goals, 382
 - Map Overlay, 380
 - plug-ins, 379
 - tracking code, 377
 - Website Optimizer, 383
- Google Site Stats message, 364
- Google Toolbar, 12
- Google Web APIs, 66
- Google Webmaster Tools, 84, 86–88
 - Googlebot, 87
 - HTML suggestions, 87
- Googlebot, 86
 - excluding, using its identifier, 96
 - further information on, 96
 - your site on the web, 87
- GSiteCrawler, 55

H

- haikus, similarity to ad writing, 286
- headers (HTML), keywords in, 103
- headline for AdWords ads, 284
- Health (Google), 184
- hexadecimal RGB notation, 217
- hosted sites, 10
- HTML suggestions (Google Webmaster Tools), 87

- hub sites, inbound links, 65

I

- iContact
 - affiliate marketing program, 147
 - email marketing service, 78
- image ads
 - creating on AdWords, 310
 - Google guidelines for, 388
 - mobile, 394
 - sizes for, 310, 385
- images, 20
 - contextual engines and, 19
 - file formats, 385
 - how they appear to search engine bot, 89
 - keywords in alt attribute of HTML tags, 103
- impressions, 12, 158
 - (see also CPM advertising)
 - ad performance report statistics on, 259
 - monitoring page impressions on AdSense, 253
 - page, unit, or ad impressions, 257
 - total page impressions on AdSense for Domains, 262
- inbound links, 3, 110
 - best, or most likely to drive traffic, 65, 111
 - finding sites to make link request, 65
 - generating to increase popularity, 63
 - making the link request, 66
 - PageRank and, 107, 110
 - using blog comments, trackbacks, and discussion threads, 68
 - viewing with Googlebot, 87
- includes
 - defined, 23
 - meta tags in, 104
 - optimal layout, 28
 - PHP mechanism for, 27
 - server-side includes, 25–27
- inclusion operator (+), 189
- indirection in AdWords campaigns, 345
- inline ads, 167
- Internet Explorer, downloading and installing
 - Google Toolbar, 12
- InterNIC
 - domain registrar lookup, 67
- IP exclusion, 352

K

- keyword analysis, 14
- keyword density, 99
 - appropriate and inappropriate, 104
- Keyword Elite, SEO software, 88
- keyword loading, 113
- Keyword Tool (AdWords), 331
- keywords
 - analysis and suggested changes by
 - Campaign Optimizer, 335
 - choosing for AdWords ads, 288, 342
 - choosing for effective searches, 190
 - choosing for SEO, 101
 - domain hints, 242
 - examining competitors' keywords, 347
 - individual keyword results in AdWords, 323
 - matching options offered by AdWords, 333
 - in meta tags, 97
 - getting them right, 98
 - negative keywords, adding to campaign, 303
 - optimization of, using Keyword Tool, 331
 - performance, monitoring in AdWords campaign, 316
 - pinpointing for SEO, 85
 - placement on page, 100, 103
 - quality score for, calculation by AdWords, 324
 - role in determining whether your ad will appear on search results, 326
 - status labels and their meanings, 325
 - targeting in SEO campaign, 42
 - targeting, using Traffic Estimator tool, 347
- Kolimbo affiliate aggregator, 138

L

- landing page impressions, 262
- landing pages, effective, 344
- language, specifying for AdWords ads, 280
- link farms, 64, 107
- link units, 213
 - AdSense code for, placing on website, 222
- linking, 109
 - broken links, 109
 - categories of links, 109
 - inbound links, 110

- as measure of site popularity, 13
 - outbound links, 108
- links
 - how they appear to search engine bot, 90
 - hyperlinking between sites, PageRank and, 107
 - keywords in, 103
- LinkShare affiliate aggregator, 140
- logfile information from your web server, 267
- Lynx Viewer, 92
- Lyris HQ, SEO software, 88

M

- magazines, online business model, 8
- malware, WordPress as target of, 72
- Maps (Google), 184
- marketing
 - basics of (5Ps), 36
 - telling a story, 33–36
- marketing plan
 - checklist for, 40
 - creating, 38
- MCC (My Client Center) AdWords account, 312
- merchant approval of publisher (affiliate programs), 121
- meta information, 96
- Meta Tag Analyzer tool, 85
- meta tags, 96–99
 - descriptions, keywords, and content attribute, 97
 - other information in, 97
 - putting in includes, 104
 - using to block web robots, 95
- mobile ads, 392
 - AdSense, 218
- Mobile Marketing Association, 394
- Movable Type blogging software, 10, 71
- My Client Center (MCC) AdWords account, 312

N

- naming your site, 40
- narrow traffic, 4
- navigation, website, 100
- negative keywords, 303
- Network Solutions
 - domain name registrar, 67

newspapers, online business model, 8
niche sites, 11
NicheBot keyword discovery tool, 85

O

Open Directory Project (ODP), 57
 getting listings, 58
operators supported by Google search, 189
optimizing ad service (AdWords), 305
OR operator, 189
outbound links, 108, 109
 considerations in, 111

P

page impressions, 158
 monitoring on AdSense, 253
 total page impressions on AdSense for
 Domains, 262
page size, 19
 SEO design and, 101
page view metrics from Alexa, 266
PageRank, 63, 105
 algorithm for, 107
 calculating, formula for, 108
 inbound links and, 110
 viewing for a web page, 107
PageRank button on Google Toolbar, 13
pages, tracking visitors to crucial page, 373
pausing ad campaigns, 299
payment history for AdSense account, 206
payment information for AdWords account,
 289
payment preferences for AdSense account,
 203
PayPal, 365
 tracking PayPal purchases, 367–373
Photo Gallery template for display ads, 388
PHP, 24
 includes, 27
 templating systems, 24
place, 5Ps of marketing, 37
placement targeting, 294
Placement/Keyword report, creating, 357
podcasting, 20
popularity, measuring for websites, 12
 search engine rankings, 13
 using Alexa, 15
positioning ads, 21

 placement of AdSense ads on your pages,
 222
positioning, 5Ps of marketing, 37
practical information sites, 10
press releases, 68
 online distribution services for, 69
 writing, 70
price, 5Ps of marketing, 37
Product Search (Google), 185
product, 5Ps of marketing, 37
promotion, 5Ps of marketing, 37
PRWeb, 69
public service ads (PSA), 158
publisher sign up (affiliate programs), 120

Q

quality score for keywords, 324

R

Ranking.com, 17
recursive algorithms, 107
redirection, bad SEO practices, 113
referrers, information about your top referrers,
 270
reports
 AdWords report download formats, 362
 Google Analytics, Custom Reports, 383
 optimization tips for AdSense, 263
 running on AdSense, 252, 254–258
 aggregate versus channel data, 257
 choosing data range, 256
 page, unit, or ad impressions, 257
 saving report as template, 255
 using AdWords reports, 355–362
 creating Placement/Keyword report,
 357
 types of reports, 356
results page impressions, 262
resuming ad campaigns, 299
RGB color specification, 217
robots.txt file, 94
ROI (return on investment), conversion
 tracking and, 362
RSS Compendium, 76
RSS feeds, 73
 FeedForAll's free RSS Graphics Tool, 75
RSS Specifications website, 75

S

- sales and commission tracking in affiliate relationships, 128
- Salon.com, business model, 8
- Scholar (Google), 185
- search ads, 187
 - AdSense for Search, 207
 - AdSense search settings, 230
 - choosing for AdWords campaign, 307
 - indirection in AdWords campaigns, 345
 - statistics on, in AdWords, 322
- search box placed on websites, 187, 208
 - AdSense for Search, 230
- search engine bots, excluding from your site, 92–96
 - meta robot tags, 95
 - rotots.txt file, 94
- Search Engine Marketing (see SEM)
- Search Engine Optimization (see SEO)
- search engine placement, 82
- search engines
 - Google, 13
 - important, 47
 - submission tools for, 47
 - submitting your sites to, 46
- search performance (AdSense), 261
- search queries on Google, 187–193
 - advanced search, 191
 - effective searching, 190
 - learning more about Google search, 193
 - rules of simple search, 189
 - search results page, 191
 - syntax and supported operators, 189
- search rankings, 13
- search results block, 192
- seasonality, relation to your business, 343
- SEM (Search Engine Marketing), 37, 41
 - advertising (see AdWords)
 - comparison to SEO, 42
- SEO (Search Engine Optimization), 37, 81–116
 - advantages of, 83
 - analysis tools, 84
 - commercial analysis software, 88
 - free tools, 85
 - Google Webmaster Tools, 86
 - capabilities and limitations of, 83
 - comparison to SEM, 42
 - design for, 99–105
 - navigability, 100
 - text is best, 100
 - words and keyword density, 100
 - evolution of, 82
 - how your site appears to a bot, 89
 - linking, 109
 - meta information, 96
 - overly aggressive, avoiding, 112
 - Google prohibitions on bad SEO, 112
 - reasons for avoiding, 115
 - site design principles, listed, 105
 - using PageRank, 105
- SEO Administrator, analysis software, 89
- SEO Elite, analysis software, 88
- SERPS (search engine positioning) tool, 85
- server-side includes, 25–27
 - defined, 23
 - PHP includes, 27
- services, free, 6
- .shtml web page files, 25
- sin prohibitions in ad content, 288
- Site Authentication setting (AdSense), 230
- site diagnostics (AdSense), 264
- site mapping, 54
- site maps, importance of, 105
- site targeting, 294
 - considerations in site placement, 297
- Sitemaps.org, 54
- Six Apart Software, 10
- skyscrapers (vertical ad blocks), 21
- Slashdot, hub site that drives traffic, 65
- Smarty templating system, 24
- social networks, excluding AdWords ads from, 351
- software, free, 6
- spam
 - content, 84
 - domain spamming, 114
 - email lists, 77
 - websites, 84
- sponsored advertising, 118
- statistics in AdSense ad performance report, 259
- stop words, 189
- story, telling, 33–36
 - elevator pitch, 36
- styles, site-wide changes to, 23
- submission tools for search engines, 47
- successful content websites, taxonomy of, 4

- summary, ad campaign, 300
- surveys as marketing tool, 39
- syndication feeds, 73
 - creating, 74
 - distributing, 75
 - submitting to syndication aggregators, 76

T

- tax information forms, filing with Google, 206
- taxonomies, 58
 - of successful sites, 4
- television ads, 396
- templates, 24
- templating systems, 24
- text
 - bold, keywords in HTML tags, 104
 - words and keyword density for SEO, 100
- text ads, 167
 - display and banner ads versus, 176
 - mobile, 393
- text-only browsers, 91
- TheStreet.com, 19
- TinyURL, 6
- title tags (HTML)
 - HTML suggestions, 87
 - keywords in, 103
- topics, excluding content by, 350
- tracking ID in affiliate ads, 121
- Traffic Estimator tool, 334, 347
- traffic on websites, broad versus narrow, 4

U

- URL channels, 227
- URLs
 - blocking for search engine bots, 92
 - finding for offensive ads on your site, 229
 - problems with, analyzing with crawl errors tool, 86
 - specifying for AdWords ads, 285
- TinyURL, 6

V

- ValueClick, 177
- video, 20
 - file formats, 395
 - keeping AdWords ads out of, 351
- video ads, 395
- video units, adding from YouTube, 243

- viewers, excluding using IP exclusion, 352

W

- web analytic software, 273
- web log analysis programs, 267
- web logs, information from, 267
- Web Robots FAQ, 95
- Webalizer, web log analysis, 267
- website address, providing for AdSense, 201
- website architecture, 23
- website metrics, 12
- Website Optimizer, 383
- websites
 - design principles for SEO, 105
 - excluding from AdWords campaign, 301, 350
 - mobile content, 218
 - naming, 40
- WebTrends, 273
- Whois.net, 67
- Wikipedia, inbound links to site, 13
- wireless devices, ads on, 392
- word order in search, 190
- WordPress blogging software, 10, 72

X

- XML syndication feed, creating, 74

Y

- Yahoo!, 47
- Yahoo! Directory, 58
 - getting listings, 62
- YouTube, 185
 - video units from, adding to your site, 243

About the Authors

Harold Davis is the author of more than 30 books on a wide range of topics from art and photography to computer programming and the Internet. He has been a professional photographer, lawyer, software developer, enterprise consultant, and the chief technology officer of an Internet startup.

Colophon

The animal on the cover of *Google Advertising Tools*, Second Edition, is a white-headed capuchin monkey (*Cebus capucinus*). The capuchin monkey is named after the Capuchin order of monks because the color of its head is said to resemble the monk's cowl. Native to parts of Central and South America, capuchin monkeys can be found in a range of habitats, including rain forests, mangrove forests, and wooded areas.

Traveling in groups of 6 to 20 monkeys, capuchins spend much of their day foraging for food. While they prefer fruit, capuchins will also eat leaves, nuts, flowers, insects, spiders, and sometimes small birds and lizards. Because food can be scarce, capuchins have to come up with creative ways to feed themselves. For example, they have been observed using tools to crack open the tough nuts of shells and teaching their offspring how to use these tools.

Scientists postulate that the challenges these monkeys face in procuring food has helped develop their brains. Capuchins' high intelligence and small size make them good pets, and they are sometimes trained to act as assistants to paraplegic people. Most famously, perhaps, the capuchin monkey is the traditional companion of the organ grinder.

The cover image is from *Wood's Illustrated Natural History*. The cover font is Adobe ITC Garamond. The text font is Linotype Birka; the heading font is Adobe Myriad Condensed; and the code font is LucasFont's TheSansMonoCondensed.

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With this book, you'll learn how to take full advantage of Google AdWords and AdSense, the sophisticated online advertising tools used by thousands of large and small businesses. This new edition provides a substantially updated guide to advertising on the Web, including how it works in general, and how Google's advertising programs in particular help you make money.

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"This second edition helps businesses better understand how they can continue to use Google Advertising Tools to make informed and profitable decisions."

—David Iwanow
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- Learn how to create effective campaign plans for your website
- Understand the PageRank algorithm, Search Engine Optimization (SEO), and Search Engine Marketing (SEM)
- Drive traffic to your website and make money as an advertising host
- Add AdSense code and Google search to your site
- Learn how content, search, and referral ads perform
- Create and edit AdWord campaigns
- Monitor AdWords activity and improve your campaign's performance

Harold Davis is the author of more than 30 books on a wide range of topics, from art and photography to computer programming and the Internet. He has been a professional photographer, lawyer, software developer, enterprise consultant, and the chief technology officer of an Internet startup.



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