

Getting Started with Blogging and Google AdSense

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INTRODUCTION — WHAT IS BLOGGING AND WHY IS IT A GREAT ADSENSE EARNER?

There's a lot to be said for Google's AdSense advertising program. There's the way they match the ads to the content of your website. That gives you maximum clicks without annoying your users. There's the flexibility of changing the way the ads look. That makes your ads attract attention without turning your site into a billboard.

And then there's the fat checks, of course, delivered month after month. That gives you almost anything you want.

But probably the best thing about the ability to earn good revenue with AdSense is that anyone can do it. You don't need any specialized knowledge. You don't need to invest huge sums of money in expensive hardware. You don't need anything... except a website.

Now, it's very easy to put up a website these days. You can buy a domain, choose a template and put it on a hosting company's server in a very short space of time. All you have to do next is fill the pages with good quality content and bring in traffic.

Easy, right?

Sure it's easy, but it does require a little bit of work and for those who have never built a site before, that process can look like a bit of an obstacle.

The solution is blogging. Putting up a blog and using it for AdSense advertising is simple, fast, and can give you at least as much revenue as building a conventional website.

Blogs originally started as online diaries but they quickly developed into so much more. There are no frills, bells or whistles. You just get page after page — usually on someone else's server — to put all the text and pictures you want.

You can write about anything you like from your family life to what's happening in your workplace to what you think about politics, sport, religion or anything else that takes your fancy.

You'll be amazed at what people want to read.

If a topic interests you, you can be certain it's going to interest someone else. Those people will come to your blog, read your comments and views, and click on your ads.

You'll be getting paid by Google to talk about your favorite subject.

Making money doesn't get any better than that.

But what makes blogging such an attractive option for people who want to make money with AdSense is that you can be up and running in minutes. Because blogs themselves are so simple — you can think of them as online notebooks that anyone can read — you don't have to worry about layout or which pages you need to build or even what your site should be about.

All you have to do is select the blogging service you want to use, pick one of the professional-looking templates they have available and write the first thing that comes into your head.

You can update your blog with a new entry as often as you wish, join blogging circles to bring plenty of interested visitors in quickly and of course, optimize your AdSense ads to blend them into the site.

And Google loves blogs. The company loves the fact that the pages change frequently. They love the fact that a good blog builds a loyal fan base. And they love the fact that most blogs focus on one particular topic.

All of that means good search engine rankings, well contextualized ads and plenty of good revenue that can start flowing in within just days of launch.

Oh... and did I mention that many blogging services are free?

In this guide, I'm going to introduce you to three main blogging platforms: Blogger, Wordpress and Movable Type. For each, I'll explain how to sign up, add AdSense and optimize your ads to maximize your Click Through Rate (CTR).

Follow the instructions for one or all of those chapters and you should find yourself earning money.

I'll then provide some tips about the best ways to arrange your ads and choose your content, and offer some advice about bringing people to read your blog and click your ads.

By the time you've finished reading this guide, you'll have all the knowledge you need to launch your blog and start earning from it.

You'll also be able to do that in less time than it took you to read this guide.

Let's start with Blogger...

1. BLOGGER – FROM USER TO PUBLISHER IN 5 MINUTES OR LESS



Fig. 1.1. Create a Blogger blog in 3 easy steps.

When you're just starting out in blogging, your first stop should probably be Blogger (www.blogger.com). Blogger has two main strengths:

1. **Set-up is fast.** You can be up and running with your own blog in five minutes. Really!
2. **It's owned by Google.** That means your AdSense implementation is going to be smoother than a greasy ice rink.

1.1 Creating A Blogger Account

There are a few things easier than creating a blog at Blogger: falling out of bed is easier; finding nothing to watch on TV is easier; and spending money is easier... and that's about it.

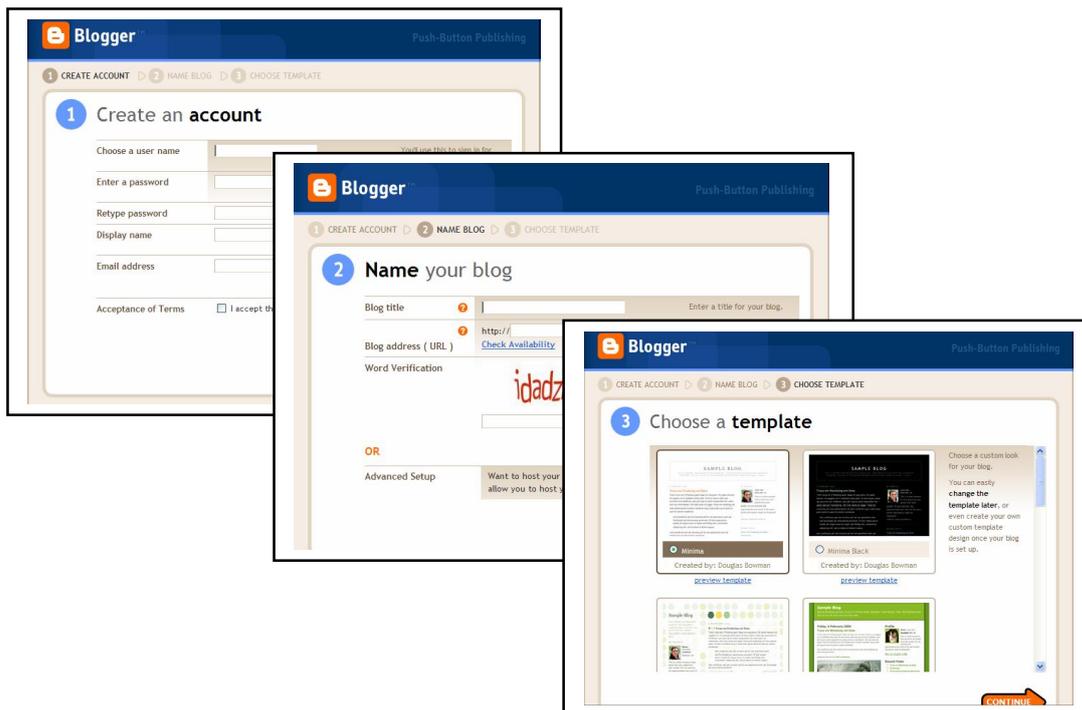


Fig. 1.2 Creating a blog is as easy as 1-2-3.

The **first stage** is to create your account by choosing a username, a password and a display name — the name that will appear on your blog. Most people don't want to put their real names on their blog but there's no reason why you can't do that if you want to.

The **second stage** is to name your blog. Again, you don't have to wrack your brain trying to come up with some fancy title. "John's Blog" or "Jane's Place" is good enough. At the same time, you'll be asked to create your own URL. This will be `http://[your_choice].blogspot.com`. You might have to enter a few possibilities before you come up with an address that hasn't been taken. You're not the first person to discover blogging!

You can also host your blog somewhere else if you want to, which is nice if you have a domain name of your own that you'd like to use. But if you want to save time, just use Blogger's own server.

And finally, the **third stage** is to choose a template. Blogger offers twelve templates to start with and once you've made your choice you can tweak it to make it suit your taste. They're all good, professional designs though, so even if you leave your template unchanged, you'll still have a good looking site. And if none of those twelve take your fancy you can change it for a different template later. There's a good selection at <http://blogger-templates.blogspot.com>.

And that's it! You've got a blog.

You'll then be taken to a page where you can start writing and posting. You'll also be able to change the settings and formats of your blog, control the comments and play with the template if you want.

The most important points on the blog though are what you put in the writing space — and you can start doing that right away — and your AdSense ads. You can start putting those in right away too.

1.2 Adding AdSense To Blogger

Your blog is managed from a "dashboard," which lets you add new posts and change your blog's settings. Directly beneath the options to do those tasks though is a link to sign up to AdSense. You can also find the AdSense page at:

Settings > Template > AdSense

To create your AdSense account all you have to is tick the check box that says that you agree to the terms and conditions and click the button at the bottom of the page. Blogger has even completed the rest of the form for you.

I do recommend that you read the AdSense terms and conditions though. I know most people take one look at these contracts, assume that everything is okay and tick the box. But with AdSense, they're important. You want to understand what you can and cannot do to get users to click. Get it wrong and you could find your earnings cut off. You'll get a summary of the highlights when you complete AdSense's own form, but it's worth being familiar with the entire thing.

Once you've applied for AdSense, you'll be sent your confirmation email and asked to choose the format of your first AdSense ad.

1.3 Optimizing AdSense on Blogger

The principle behind all success with AdSense is to make your ads look like part of your content, not like ads. Blogger assumes that's how you want your ads to look and it's a wise assumption. It's why the default color scheme when you're first asked to choose your ads is the "Blend Template."

This removes the borders from the ads, makes the background color the same as the background color of your blog's template and

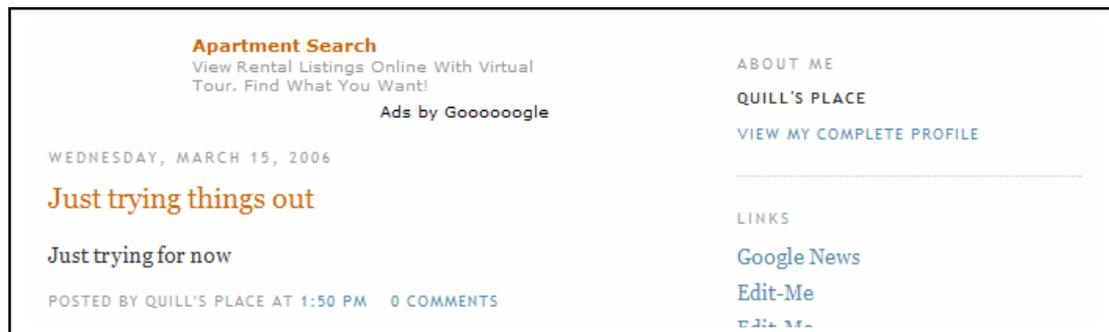


Fig. 1.3 The Blend Template makes your ads match your blog.

matches the font colors of the content and title of the ad to the content and title of your blog.

Don't choose any other color scheme. The Match Template is ugly and while choosing other schemes will make your blog look pretty, they won't do much for your revenues.

But Blend Template isn't perfect. It doesn't match the font color of the ad with the font color of your blog. The easiest solution is to first choose Blend Template, then Custom. All you'll have to do next is change the color of the font. Very easy.



Fig. 1.4 Customizing the Blend Template. Just change the text.

A much tougher choice is the format of the ad.

When you're optimizing your AdSense ads, it's important to put the right ad format in the right place. You start by placing one ad at the top of the page and you're likely to get the best results there with one of the following: a **234 x 60 half banner**, a **180 x 150 small rectangle** or a **468 x 15 horizontal row text link**.

Why are these formats the best choices for the top of the page?

The half banner fills the space very neatly above the first blog entry; the small rectangle leaves plenty of space around the ad, helping it to stand out even though it looks like content; and when the ads

are optimized, the horizontal text link will look like a menu bar of a conventional website.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't use the other formats. You should. But you should use them in different places on the page. Once you've added some content to your blog, clicked the link in the confirmation email and filled in the AdSense application form, your next job will be to put more ad units on your page.

1.4 Adding Ad Units To Blogger

So you start your blog with one AdSense unit at the top of the page. Google though lets you place up to three ad units on a page, one text link unit and a search box. Each ad unit will display unique ads so you won't be spamming your users with the same ads over and over again.

Stick to just the one ad Blogger gives you and you're wasting some valuable opportunities.

The people at Blogger know this of course and that's why they explain how to put another ad unit in the sidebar. You can find that guide at <http://help.blogger.com/bin/answer.py?answer=974>

What Blogger tells you is that you'll need to log in to your AdSense account and click the tab marked **Ad Settings**. You'll then have to choose your ad format and select your colors.

Blogger recommends that for the sidebar, you choose between a **125 x 125 button**, a **120 x 600 skyscraper**, a **160 x 600 wide skyscraper**, a **120 x 240 vertical banner** and a **180 x 150 small rectangle**. Those are all good choices and you'll have to test them to see which one works best for you. Start with the button, follow your stats for a week, then replace it with a skyscraper and compare the results. You should soon discover which delivers the best CTR on your site.

I'd probably skip the narrow skyscraper and the small rectangle but I do recommend that you put in a vertical text link. These are perfect for sidebars and slip in so smoothly under the links that you'll believe they were made to go there.

The colors, of course, should match the colors of your blog.

You'll then need to copy the AdSense code and — here's where it gets interesting for people who don't know their HTML from their elbow — you'll need to paste it into your blog template.

Log back into your Blogger account and paste that AdSense code immediately after the lines that say:

```
<!-- Begin #sidebar -->  
<div id="sidebar"><div id="sidebar2">
```

Save and republish and you'll have doubled the chances that you'll get a click.

Now, if you're thinking "If I can put AdSense code there, then maybe I can put another unit somewhere else too..." then you're thinking like a soon-to-be-rich AdSense publisher.

If you've got the default ad at the top of the page, a second ad in the sidebar, then I recommend you put another ad in the body of your blog.

Oddly though, the people at Blogger aren't thinking like soon-to-be-rich AdSense publishers and they don't make it easy for you. Here's what you have to do...

Log into your AdSense account and choose an ad format and color. If you're placing an ad at the bottom of a blog entry, I'd recommend either a **banner** or a **half-banner**. If you want to put an ad at the start of an entry then a **square** or **rectangular** ad unit will work very well.

Both those options work very well.

The colors, of course, should still match your blog.

Copy the code, open your Blogger page and click:

Template > Edit Current

About a third of the way down the page, you'll see a line beginning `/* Posts`". Pasting your AdSense code after one of the sections in this unit will place an ad unit in the body of your blog.

Be sure to check the preview before you save and republish to make sure the ad is appearing where you want, and feel free to experiment with different placements if you find your CTR is lower than you expect.

Setting up an AdSense-earning blog is very easy on Blogger. It will take you minutes to get your blog up and running and your first ad showing at the top of your page. It might take you a few more minutes to put a second ad in the sidebar and a little longer to find a good position for your third ad unit.

But even all those minutes together is really no time at all, and you're ready to earn!

2. WORDPRESS — EASY TRACKABLE ADS



Fig. 2.1 Wordpress — Why not indeed?

Blogger is a great place to start if you want to zip right in to blogging and AdSense earning. But there are other options too. Wordpress is another popular blog site that can get you up and running in no time at all.

In fact, if anything, starting even easier. The sign-up is just one page instead of three, and even includes search engine submissions. All you have to do is choose your username, which will also be your URL, pick a name and wait for your activation email and password. You'll have a blog in about fifteen seconds.

Once you're up and running, you'll be able to change your template (there are about thirty available on the site and more available all over the Web; there are some nice ones here:

http://chris.lineages.co.uk/Wordpress_template_index.php), and get writing.

2.1 Adding Ad Units To Your Wordpress Blog

So getting up and running with Wordpress is a breeze. Where things get a little tricky is adding AdSense to your blog. At the moment, Wordpress take a bit of a snotty attitude to ads and are suspicious of blogs created just to score high on search engines and turn a buck for the owner. That's fair enough, but there's no reason why a good blog shouldn't also generate a good income. Wordpress are coming round and do seem to have plans to allow AdSense, Chitika and YPN ads in the future, but in the meantime you have to be a little clever.

Or rather, you have to rely on the cleverness of other people who wanted to put ads on their Wordpress blogs and figured out how to do it.

There are a couple of options out there.

2.2 Phil Hord's AdSense Inline

The first is to use [Phil Hord's](#) plugin, **AdSense Inline**. You can download it for free from <http://philhord.com/wp-hacks/adsense.zip>. Phil did a great job with this (and he's one of my AdSense Secrets readers, so I don't have a bad word to say about him).

There were a few problems with some early installations, but users, and in particular, the people at Aoteatech (<http://blog.aoteatech.com/>) have since worked out how to fix those pesky little bugs. Here's what you have to do...

First, you'll need to open an AdSense account of course, pick the format you want for your first ad unit and download the plugin. Once you've expanded the plugin, you'll need to add a few lines to the code.

Don't worry, that's not as hard as it sounds.

Scroll down the page of code until you reach this section:

```

/*****
**
** Replace this HTML code with your own customized Google AdSense
code. **
*****/

$adsense_code = '
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-6439393840838593";
google_ad_width = 468;
google_ad_height = 60;
google_ad_format = "468x60_as";
google_ad_type = "text_image";
google_ad_channel = "";
//--></script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js">
</script>';

```

Copy your AdSense code, paste it here in your inline code, then add the following lines immediately afterwards:

```

if( is_single() )
{
return str_replace( $tag, $adsense_code, $data );
}
elseif ( is_home() )
{
if ( get_option("firstPost") )
{
update_option("firstPost", FALSE);
return str_replace( $tag, $adsense_code, $data );
}
else
{
return str_replace( $tag, "", $data );
}
}
else
{
return str_replace( $tag, $adsense_code, $data );
}

```

and delete this line:

```

return str_replace( $tag, $adsense_code, $data );
}

```

Next, open the file marked index.php, scroll down to the first div and add the following line:

```

<?php update_option("firstPost", TRUE); ?>

```

That's most of the hard work done. All that's left is to open your Wordpress dashboard and run your plugin. You should find an AdSense button on your writing dashboard that automatically adds your AdSense ad units to your posts.

Don't forget to optimize your ads by making sure that they match your site before you add them though. If you've done all this to put ads on your Wordpress blog, you should be making the largest amount of money possible from them!



Fig. 2.2 AdSense ads in Aoteatech's Wordpress blog.

2.2 The AdSense-Deluxe Wordpress Plugin

A good alternative to Phil Hord's plugin is **AdSense-Deluxe**. This is an excellent program which has the advantage of letting you track the results of the ads you post.

That's very important. I've already said that blending your ads into the page will define your success as an AdSense publisher. But that's only half the story. The other half is keeping track of what your ads are doing so that you can always be sure that you've got the best ads in the best places.

With Wordpress-Deluxe, you can create a number of different ad units with different names and put each one in an appropriate place

in your blog. You can also use AdSense's custom channels to follow how many clicks each type of ad is receiving.

So if you had a blog which talked about your love of origami, your digital photography and your family, you could create different ad units for each subject and follow which was making you the most money.

You could then focus your attention on those areas to maximize your income.



Fig. 2.3 Choosing trackable ads to insert with Wordpress-Deluxe.

You can download Wordpress-Deluxe at www.acmetech.com/blog/adsense-deluxe/ and follow the instructions in the readme to install it. You'll then need to open your AdSense account and choose an ad format to generate a piece of code. So if you wanted to place an ad at the end of a post, you might choose a banner or half-banner with colors that blend in.

Copy the code and open your Wordpress account. On the admin page, click

Options > AdSense

paste the code into the form and name it.

And here's where it gets really good. You can then go back to AdSense, create another type of ad in a different format, build a custom channel to track it, and copy that code into Wordpress with a different name. You can repeat this process as many times as you wish to give yourself a complete toolkit of different types of ads to play with.

To bring up a particular type of ad in a post simply insert the line

```
<!--adsense#name-- >
```

into the text. Very easy.

You can refine the way your ads appear on the page by wrapping HTML or CSS styles around the HTML code and, most importantly, AdSense-Deluxe also comes with an AdSense Sandbox that lets you see right away which types of ads you'll be served.

Why is that important? Because sometimes Google's contextualizing software misses the mark and instead of serving up ads about the topic in your blog, it serves ads about blogs in general. Those aren't likely to get you many clicks and you don't want to wait until it happens before you start making changes.

The Sandbox will show you right away which ads you're going to get so that you can tweak your post until you get some good ones. To use it, you'll first need to publish your post without any ads before you test it.

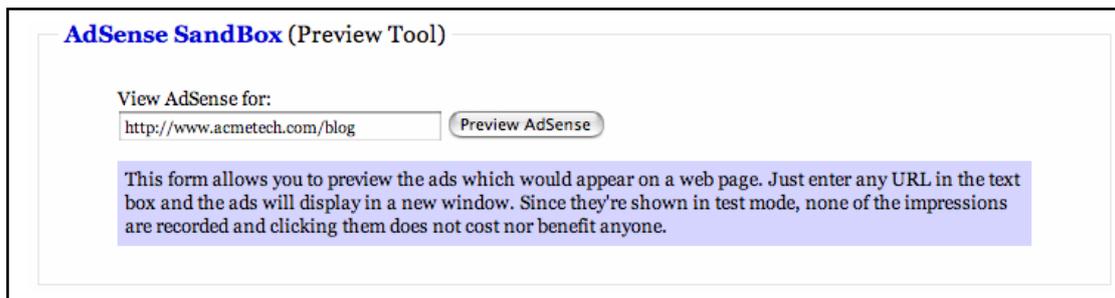


Fig. 2.4 Checking with the AdSense Sandbox.

So that's Wordpress. You can be up and running very fast and with the help of these little tools, be experimenting with your ads in no time at all!

3. MOVABLE TYPE — BLOGGING FOR PROS

Both Blogger and Wordpress are great for beginners. For people with a little more experience though, Movable Type is a great choice. It's a bit more complicated than either of the other two options and it will take you a bit longer to get started. You'll also need your own hosting service.

What you get in return though is much greater customization that lets you produce a blog like no other. If you were worried that your Blogger blog might look like the thousands of other blogs on the

Web — and you're at least a little computer-savvy (or know someone who is) — then Movable Type will give you the flexibility to stand out from the crowd.

The screenshot shows the Movable Type 3.2 website homepage. At the top left is the Six Apart logo. Navigation links include TYPEPAD, MOVABLE TYPE, LIVEJOURNAL, ABOUT US, and SUPPORT. The main banner features the Movable Type 3.2 Publishing Platform logo and a list of features: Simple, Powerful Interface; Flexible Static and Dynamic Publishing; Extensible Plug-in Architecture; and Friendly, Responsive Technical Support. A 'Get It Now' button is located at the bottom right of the banner. Below the banner, a text block states: 'Movable Type 3.2 is the premier weblog publishing platform for businesses, organizations, developers, and web designers. Powerful customization gives you control over everything you publish and the elegant interface keeps things simple and clear.' To the right of this text is a 'YAHOO! SMALL BUSINESS Web Hosting' advertisement. Below the advertisement is a 'PROFESSIONALS' section with the text 'LEARN. CONNECT. NETWORK.' and a target icon. Further down is a 'YOUR (COM)MISSION' section with the text 'Help us spread the word' and a 'Join our affiliate program' link. On the left side, there is a 'Movable Type News' section with a date '03.17.2006' and a headline 'New plugins for Movable Type!'. Below the headline is a short paragraph of text.

Fig. 3.1 Movable Type — where professionals play with blogs

3.1 Creating A Movable Type Account

SixApart, the people behind Movable Type, offer all kinds of packages for bloggers, most of which cost money. In fact, commercial users who want to make their blogs available for up to 25 people to contribute to are expected to pay \$599 for a license.

Fortunately, for personal users, who “just” want to make money with AdSense, there’s also a free version, and you can download it here: www.sixapart.com. Click on the tab marked “Personal” and the button marked it “Get it now”.

Note that I said you have to download it. You will have to complete a quick form but unlike Blogger and Wordpress, that won’t be enough to give you blog pages. You’ll first need to download the program and unzip it. And you’ll then need to upload it to your server.

Installing your Movable Type blog program onto your server is the tricky bit. There’s a manual available at www.sixapart.com/movabletype/docs/3.2/ and that should explain

exactly how to do it depending on whether you want to use ftp or your command line.

You'll then have to go through the process of signing in and choosing a password before you come to select and edit your template. This is really where Movable Type is at it's strongest and I'm not going to tell you what your blog should look like. If you're using Movable Type, it's probably because you have a good idea of how your blog should look.

When you're creating a blog for AdSense though, I do recommend that you include at least one sidebar. While you can create a blog that fills the middle of the page, that would be waste of an opportunity. Sidebars are great places to put text links and skyscrapers.

There is also some evidence to suggest that if you're going to have just one sidebar, the left side delivers the best results.

3.2 Putting An Ad After Your First Post

In the next chapter, I talk in general about ad placement in blogs. One place that I recommend is between the first post and the second post. That gives the reader enough time to be drawn into the site while keeping the ad above the fold and giving it enough surroundings to blend smoothly into the page.

Doing that on a Movable Type blog is not however, as easy as just pasting your AdSense code in the appropriate place on the page.

Here's how you do it...

Once you've joined AdSense and generated your code, you'll need to turn to your Movable Type main index template. The code which contains your blog entries should look like this:

```
<MTEntries>
<$MTEnterTrackbackData$>

<MTDateHeader><h2 class="date-header"><$MTEnterDate
format="%x"$></h2></MTDateHeader>
<a id="a<$MTEnterID pad="1"$>"></a>
<div class="entry" id="entry-<$MTEnterID$>">
<h3 class="entry-header"><$MTEnterTitle$></h3>
<div class="entry-content">
<div class="entry-body">
<$MTEnterBody$>

</MTEntries>
```

Copy this block of code and paste it immediately beneath the `</MTEntries>` tag, changing the `<MTEntries>` tag in the copied block of code to `<MTEntries lastn="1">`.

If you want to place more than two posts on the page, repeat the process but change the `MTEntries` tag to `<MTEntries lasn="[#posts-1]" offset =1">`.

But don't do this too much unless you're going to use "more" tags on the home page to send readers to the rest of the post. You want to generate plenty of pages so that you'll have lots of opportunities to serve ads. That means you really want to keep each page down to just one post.

Check that you haven't made any mistakes, and that your blog is still working, then paste your AdSense code between the `MTEntries` code. That should give you a template that looks like this:

```
</MTEntries>

<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client
[Your Google Adsense code]
</script

<MTEntries lastn="1">
```

Finally, save and rebuild your template and you should find your ad nicely embedded between your first and second post

3.3 Optimizing Channels With Movable Type

One of the advantages of using Movable Type is that you can refine the information you receive through AdSense channels. The people at www.eatdrinksleepmovabletype.com have come up with a neat little hack that keeps a close eye on your ads. Exactly the sort of thing I love to see.

What they recommend is that once you've created your channels and added your AdSense code to your Individual Entry Archive, you should replace the line:

```
google_ad_channel = "";
```

with the following chunk of php:

```
<?php
```

```

$channel_generic = '*generic channel #*';
$channel_list = array(
  '*category 1 #' => '*category 1 name*',
  '*category 2 #' => '*category 2 name*',);

if ($current_channel = array_search('>MTEntryCategory<', $channel_list)) {
  echo 'google_ad_channel = "' . $current_channel . "'";
} else {
  /* Generic channel for undefined categories. */
  echo 'google_ad_channel = "' . $channel_generic . "'";
} ?>

```

You'll want to replace "category 1 #" with your category 1 channel number and "category 1 name" with your blog's category name. The same, of course, is true of the next line and you can keep adding similar lines for each of your chosen channels. The generic channels refer to a channel that contains the ads that you haven't specifically tracked.

Movable Type is pretty complex stuff. If you're new to blogging and want to get started right away, you'll be better off with Blogger or Wordpress. Once you've got those moving and you can see how much fun — and how profitable — blogging can be, you can take your time, set up a Movable Type blog and create a site that will impress other pros.

4. BLOG LAYOUTS THAT BRING BIG BUCKS

One area where blogs really make life easy is in optimizing your AdSense ads. On a conventional website, the choices that you can make about which ad units to place in which locations are almost endless.

That means it's very easy to make a mistake and find yourself earning much less than the maximum amount you should be generating.

On a blog, the choices are much easier.

You can really break a blog into three sections: the area at the top of the page above the first post; the main section where the posts are placed; and the sidebar. Only a few formats fit into each section making it very easy to maximize your earnings.

4.1 The Top Of The Page

Most of the templates you'll find on the blogging services have a large header that fills up much of the page. It's where the name of the blog goes and it's the first thing the user sees.

That makes it a prime piece of real estate for advertising purposes. You either want to make sure that your ads are where people are going to be looking or that people are looking where your ads are going to be located.



Fig. 4.1 Got an eye-catching top of the page like this one at WorldVillage.com? You've got an ad hotspot right beneath it.

And the best thing about putting your ads beneath this header is that you can be sure they'll be **above the fold**. That's a basic rule of AdSense earning. Ads that are located in the first screen before the user starts to scroll down generally do better than ads lower on the page.

When you sign up with Blogger, this is where your first ads will appear and I've already mentioned which formats I recommend you use here. I'd probably start with a horizontal text link, track the results and see what sort of earnings it brings me.

What I like about this sort of ad is that it looks like a menu bar on a conventional website. That makes it appear less like an ad and more appealing to users.

4.2 The Sidebar

The sidebar also gives you some pretty simple options when it comes to choosing ad formats. Again, I've already pointed out that the best options are skyscrapers, buttons and vertical link units.

They all work very well and you'll have to test to see which would do best on your site. Once you've narrowed the choice down to about four formats like this, you should be able to do that very quickly.

But here's a tip:

Most blogging services allow you to add all sorts of things to the sidebar. You can sometimes add a calendar and usually a photo. **Place a photo or some other graphic on your sidebar and put your ad unit directly beneath it.**

Eyes are drawn to pictures much faster than they're drawn to text. Your users will look at your blog, glance at the picture and then look at the ad unit directly underneath.

With AdSense, you're not allowed tell people to click on your ads, but putting a picture right next to your ad units is the next best thing.

An alternative strategy is to embed a vertical text unit among all the links in the sidebar.



Fig. 4.2 Ads embedded in a Movable Type sidebar at TravelsWithSheila.com

You're going to have a number of different links in that sidebar. You're going to have links to archives, links to recent entries and maybe links to other blogs too.

Put your text link unit in between two of those modules, optimize it so that the text links look like the other links on the page, make sure that it's showing relevant ads and you're going to have ads that are not just perfectly camouflaged but ads that are highly inviting too.

And finally, another great strategy is to put two side bars on your blog, place a

vertical ad unit in one and **a list of links to other blogs formatted in the same way as Google ads** in the other. Your ads will then look like they're an integral part of the blog and that their links have been as carefully selected as your blog recommendations.

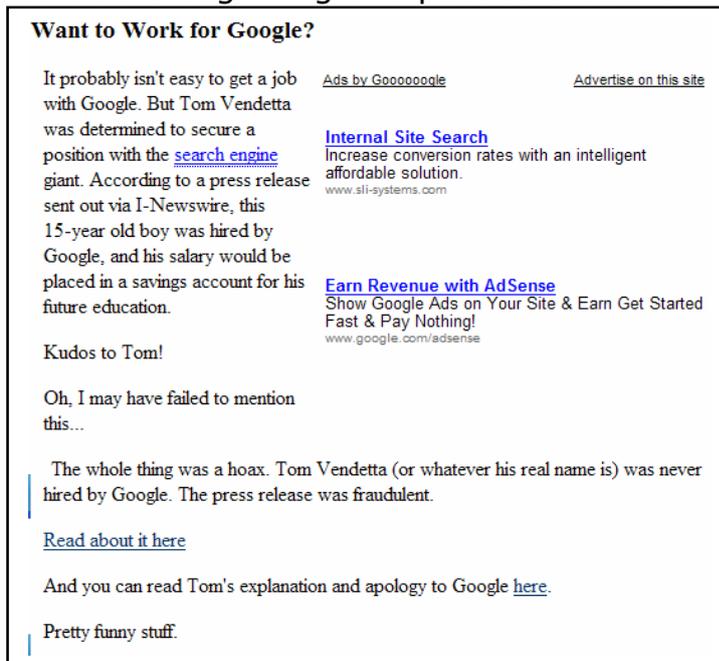
4.3 The Main Area

While users will look at the top of the page and glance at the sidebar, they'll be spending most of their time in the middle of the page, reading your posts. At least, you hope that's where they'll be spending most of their time!

That gives you three options.

The first is to place an ad at the beginning of a post so that the text wraps around it.

That's pretty unmissable. Any square or rectangular ad unit will do the trick and even though it doesn't do much for your site's looks, this strategy works wonders for your earnings. I use it on my blog, JoelComm.com, and I've been very impressed with the results.



The screenshot shows a text-based advertisement at the start of a blog post. The ad is titled "Want to Work for Google?" and contains several links and promotional text. The main text of the post is partially visible, discussing Tom Vendetta's alleged job at Google. The ad includes links for "Internal Site Search" and "Earn Revenue with AdSense".

Want to Work for Google?

It probably isn't easy to get a job with Google. But Tom Vendetta was determined to secure a position with the [search engine giant](#). According to a press release sent out via I-Newswire, this 15-year old boy was hired by Google, and his salary would be placed in a savings account for his future education.

[Internal Site Search](#)
Increase conversion rates with an intelligent affordable solution.
[www.sli-systems.com](#)

[Earn Revenue with AdSense](#)
Show Google Ads on Your Site & Earn Get Started Fast & Pay Nothing!
[www.google.com/adsense](#)

Kudos to Tom!

Oh, I may have failed to mention this...

The whole thing was a hoax. Tom Vendetta (or whatever his real name is) was never hired by Google. The press release was fraudulent.

[Read about it here](#)

And you can read Tom's explanation and apology to Google [here](#).

Pretty funny stuff.

Fig. 4.3 An ad unit at the beginning of a post at [JoelComm.com](#).

An alternative is to put a horizontal ad unit between posts. This is also a good strategy that has been known to work very well. It doesn't interrupt the reader's flow, it gives the user somewhere to go once he's finished reading, and best of all, you can have a lot of fun blending it into the page.



The screenshot shows a horizontal ad unit between two blog posts. The ad is titled "Sweaters at JCPenney™" and includes a link to "Crochet Patterns". The main text of the posts is partially visible, discussing baby shoes and siblings.

[Baby Needs A New Pair Of Shoes](#)
Baby's first Nike's may be absolutely adorable, but are they necessary? According to most experts - and not just modern ones but for at least the last thirty years - babies...

[Preparing a Sibling For Baby](#)
You may be excited about the thought of having another baby to complete your family, but your little darling first born may not quite feel comfortable with the idea of...

[Crochet Patterns](#)
Find different styles, brands & more for Crochet Patterns online.

[Sweaters at JCPenney™](#)
Shop the Latest Collection at JCPenney. Order Now & Save!

[Ads by Google](#) [Advertise on this site](#)

Fig. 4.4 Links and ads at [Babies-Worldwide.com](#)

For example, one great technique is to end a blog entry with a list of recommended links for further reading and place a well-blended ad unit directly beneath it. Your ads will look both recommended and relevant. Perfect!

Finally, you can plant your ads bang in the middle of a post. I've seen a few sites do this and frankly, I'm not crazy about it. Ads don't work when they're intrusive — they work when they're attractive. Put an ad in the middle of a block of text and your users will read right around it.

So you can put your ads in all sorts of places and in all sorts of ways, using all sorts of little tricks to make your ads look inviting. Remember, the more you can make your ads look like part of your blog, the more recommended they will look to your users. And that's what gets you the clicks and the money your blogging deserves!

5. CREATING CONTENT — WHAT TO WRITE, HOW MUCH AND HOW OFTEN

One of the first things that people say when I recommend that they write a blog is "What would I write about?"

That question always floors me.

Everyone has dozens of interests, ideas and stories that could easily fill page after page of a blog. And if you think that no one would want to read it, think again. Even if you were to write a blog about your favorite TV show, you can be sure that other people would be interested in that show and they'd be interested in reading your blog. Make what you write fun to read, and you can be sure that they'll be back time after time to read each of your entries. They'll also tell their friends and mention you in their own blogs.

There's no end to what you can put in your blog but in this chapter, I'm going to focus on three of the most common topics that people like to discuss — and I'll give you tips on how to make money out of each of them.

5.1 Keeping It In The Family

Many of the blogs on the Web have been set up specifically to keep families in touch. There's nothing wrong with that. If you use a blog to put up pictures of your kids or show your aunts and uncles what happened on your last vacation, you'll have a great family relationship.

But you won't have much money from AdSense.

Writing solely about your family might be very easy and a lot of fun but few people make much money out of it.

After all, other people's family's are only interesting for a short space of time.

Unless you turn a blog about a family into a blog about a family issue.

So if you had a child who had a stammer for example, in addition to writing about what she had for dinner last night or the trip to the amusement park last weekend, you could make sure you included plenty of regular posts about her speech therapy and the latest advances in treatment for stammerers.

You'd get plenty of ads for speech therapists, get talked about by other people interested in stammering and pick up plenty of free traffic.

Or if your son was keen on soccer, you could make sure you talk about youth soccer leagues, give the latest news on the tournaments and describe what happens behind the scenes as kids dream about becoming professional soccer players.

The idea is always to expand the interest in your family blog beyond your immediate family. You do that by giving it a theme that will appear to more people than your favorite aunt and uncle.

If all the people who would want to read your blog can fit around your dinner table at Thanksgiving, you can forget about making any money from AdSense. You've got to find some aspect of your family to expand the circle.

5.2 Making Your Interests Interesting — And Profitable

Your family is an obvious and easy topic to write about. It's just not a very easy topic to make money out of. Your interests are much easier.

Everyone has something that interests them, an activity that they do when they're not sitting in the office or slaving over a hot keyboard. If you're not sure what your favorite topic might be, just think about what you did last weekend.

If you spent Saturday afternoon surfing, that could be a topic for your blog.

If you spent Sunday morning reading the *New York Times*, what you read in the newspapers could be a topic for your blog.

If you redecorated your living room, interior design could be a topic for your blog.

Anything that you do for no other reason than that you enjoy it can make a great topic for your blog. If you enjoyed doing it, you'll enjoy writing about it and other people will enjoy reading about it.

But here's the thing... **if you want to make money out of it, you need to mention products.** Most of the ads you get will be for specific products. Talk about those products in your posts and there's a good chance that those are the ads you'll receive.

And because you'll already have spoken about them, those ads will look much more interesting to your users. In fact, if you blend them into your page properly, and they should look like links to further information about the content of your blog entry.

So if you were writing a blog about your love of surfing, for example, you could mention the type of surfboard you use or talk about the various types of wetsuits or even the best cars for carrying surfboards.

If you were writing a blog about the current affairs you read about during your Sunday brunch, you could discuss books that explore a particular issue or mention groups that support your point of view. Test your blog in the AdSense Sandbox to make sure you're going to get good ads and you should get plenty of clicks.

5.3 Getting The Most Out Of Your Work

You're going to spend most of your time at work so one of two things is going to happen. Either you're going to love it... or you're going to hate it.

If you hate your job, it's probably not a good idea to write about your work in your blog. The last thing you'll want to do when you've finished your workday is think and write about it some more. You'll have much more fun writing about an activity that you enjoy.

But if you like your job — and you're good at it — then you've got a mind full of useful information that other people will want to know.

So if you're a professional web designer for example, you could put up a blog that discussed the latest design programs, the newest fashions in Web designs and offer tips to get the most out of Photoshop or some other piece of software. Again, you could fill the blog with mentions of products and bring up some high-paying ads.

If you're a mortgage broker, you could explain what the latest interest rate change means or review the various home finance products that the banks are wheeling out.

Whatever you do for a living, you've got knowledge that others need and want. They'll be happy to check out your blog regularly to pick up the latest tips.

5.4 How Often And How Much?

How often you write is entirely up to you. Many people like to update their blogs every day; others prefer to write once a week.

Either of those two is fine. Once a month though is too seldom. If you only update your blog once a month, you won't be able to hold onto your users and turn them into regular readers. And that's your goal: to create the sort of fan base that stops by consistently and sends you users from their own sites.

The good news though is that you don't have to write much. In fact, it's better to write just 200 words once a week than 1,000 words once a month.

But here's the important thing: don't put your entire post on your home page. **Each entry should have its own page.**

The home page of your blog should be a list of teasers — half-posts linked to the rest of each post by the phrase “Read more...”

Putting all your posts on one long page is a big mistake.

First, it limits the number of ads you can receive. When all your posts are on separate pages, you can receive ads on each of these pages.

And second, when each page focuses on just one topic, you’ll get ads that with much better targeting.

That’s also why you have to be careful with the comments you receive. Posting comments on your blog is a great idea. It gives you extra, valuable content to offer your readers and it shows that you’re talking about issues that people like to discuss. But you have little control over the comments that people post. Sure, on most blogging platforms, you can choose whether or not to post a comment but usually you’ll want to post all of them — and that could affect the targeting of your ads too.

If you find that your readers’ comments are changing the ads you receive, you can use Section Targeting to tell Google’s robots to ignore them.

Just put the line:

```
<!-- google_ad_section_start(weight=ignore) -->
```

before the comments, and the line:

```
<!-- google_ad_section_end -->
```

after them. That will keep the AdSense robot’s eyes where they belong: on your post.

6. BRINGING TRAFFIC TO YOUR BLOG

Even the best blog in the world with the most optimized ads on the Web won’t make a dime if people don’t know it’s there. Once your blog is up and running, you have to do a bit of traffic acquisition.

There are all sorts of ways to promote your blog — as there are to promote any website — and I don't intend to go into all of them here. That's a whole other book.

What I will provide though is a few tips that apply specifically to blogs.

Naturally, you want to make sure that your site is linked to from many other sites. That's going to require you to do two things: link to other sites in return; and spread your own links as far as possible.

You'll need a space on your sidebar for links. (And remember what I said about matching this section to the formatting of an ad unit?) You can link to any site and let them know so that they'll link back to you, but you'll probably get the best results by linking to small sites in the same field. They'll bring you fewer users but you'll be more likely to get a link in return and the users you get will be more inclined to click on your ads.

You should also post comments on other blogs in your field. Those comments should be real. Spamming blogs with your URL is just going to get you a bad name and tossed off those sites. But you should make a point of knowing what other blogs on your topic are discussing and throwing in your own two cents. It will help build your name in your community.

In addition to exchanging links and spreading your links as widely as possible, you should, of course, submit your blog to all of the search engines. Yes, that can take time but it pays and it's worth it.

And finally, make sure that you keep posting.

When Google notices that you're posting all the time, it will send its robot to index your entire blog more often. That will push you up the search engine rankings and bring you streams of free traffic. Exactly the sort you need.

Ultimately though, the best way to keep good traffic flowing to your blog and on to your advertisers is to produce good quality content and talk to the community who would be interested in it.

If you build a good blog, they will come.



7. CONCLUSION

In this book, I've shown you how easy it is to get your blog up and running.

I've talked you through creating a blog with Blogger and taking your first simple steps with AdSense.

I've discussed Wordpress and what you need to do get your ads on their blogs and I've talked briefly about Movable Type, a more advanced sort of blog that will require you to know something about coding.

I've also explained how to lay out your ads and which sort of content you might write about. More importantly, I've discussed how you can turn that content into cash. You can do that whether you're talking about your family, your hobbies or your work. As long as you're producing interesting posts which bring up good ads, you can be confident of generating a steady stream of clicks.

What I can't tell you in this book though, is how much fun blogging can be.

Sure, blogging is easy and when you know what you're doing, it can be very profitable too.

But it's also a hugely enjoyable — and that's just something you're going to have to discover for yourself when you launch your first blog.

Enjoy it!

About the Author

Joel Comm is an Internet entrepreneur who has been building successful web sites since 1995. Dedicated to providing a family-friendly Internet experience, Joel's flagship site, WorldVillage.com, continues to be a popular family-safe portal. Joel is the co-creator of Yahoo! Games and co-author of Internet Family Fun: The Parent's Guide to Safe Surfing (1997, No Starch Press). He is the self-appointed Mayor of WorldVillage.com and author of the best-selling ebook, "What Google Never Told You About Making Money with AdSense"

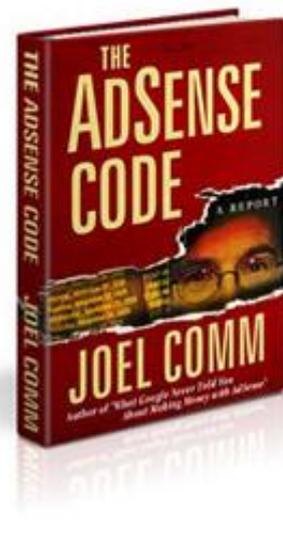
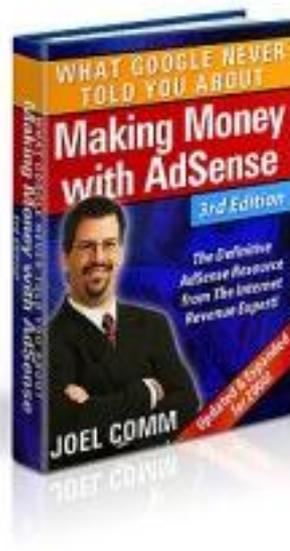
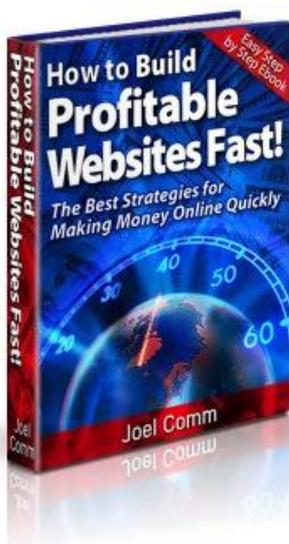


Joel's sites include:

DealofDay.com - a popular bargain-hunting community
FamilyFirst.com - Family-friendly sites reviews
SafetySurf.com - Parental control products and services
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