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This eBook contains affiliate links throughout.

Welcome! A Little About Me...



Hello! My name is Amber and I am the blogger behind Crazy Little Projects.

I am first and foremost a wife and a mother. I've got 4 fun little boys (yes, my house is wild and chaotic) and I love it more than anything. I stay at home full time with them and in my spare time, I blog.

I began Crazy Little Projects in March 2012 and have loved blogging ever since.

I love to celebrate life in all the small moments. I love to bake, sew, craft, make cute gifts, do fun things with my kids, and just enjoy living.

CRAZY little PROJECTS

See more about Crazy Little Projects at my blog: www.CrazyLittleProjects.com

Also, find me on social media:

Pinterest: www.pinterest.com/crazylittleproj

Facebook: www.facebook.com/crazylittleprojects

Instagram: www.instagram.com/crazylittleprojects

Google Plus: www.plus.google.com/+AmberPrice



Getting Started Blogging

I started blogging in March of 2012 and I admit, when I started I had one major goal in mind-to make money blogging. That certainly wasn't the only reason I started a blog (or surely I would have failed), but it was a big motivation. I wanted a creative outlet and a reason to spend time on my hobbies like sewing and crafting and baking, but I also suspected that good money could be made blogging and I wanted to give it a test run to find out.

At the time I owned a home based business and I was majorly burned out and wanted to be done! The business had served me very well for 9 years. I felt like it was time to move on but I knew that I needed to replace the business income in order to continue living comfortably. Giving blogging an attempt was a low risk endeavor-it doesn't cost much to start a blog and it if fails? It fails and you move on. No big loss. But I also knew that some of my favorite bloggers appeared to be making a worthwhile income blogging, so I decided to give it a go.

And it worked. Like a charm. Within a year I was comfortable enough with my blog income to list my business for sale. It sold a month later, in April 2013, and now I dedicate all of my business time to blogging and I love it. Financially it has been very successful, but it is also very emotionally fulfilling for me.

When you run a blog, YOU are in charge. There are no customers to worry about, only readers who (hopefully) love and appreciate you. There are no deadlines except those you make for yourself. There are opportunities to work with companies that you love. There are friends to be made in the blogging world and there is the great feeling of seeing your blog succeed. You are the boss, you give it as much or as little as you would like.

For me blogging has been one of the best things I have ever done. I genuinely love running a blog. It is a ton of work (don't want you to start out thinking it will be easy), and there are highs and lows, but for me, it's been very fulfilling. It's my number one hobby and it encompasses everything else I love too (the sewing, baking, crafting, parties, etc.). Over the almost three years since I have been blogging I have gained a bunch of knowledge about how to do it, what works and what doesn't and most importantly, how to make money doing it.

This ebook is for anyone interested in making a serious effort at putting together a blog. I will give you an overview of all the important aspects of blogging, from setting up your site to writing a post, from promoting to making money and much more. Blogging is quite a ride but it's a great one! Are you ready? Let's go!

The Basics of Getting Started: Brainstorming

Before you can start a blog, you probably better have an idea of what it is going to be all about. Sure, blogs can encompass a number of things, but you will need a general idea of what your blog will cover and what your posts will be about. You will refine this as time passes, but start out with an idea. I started out just knowing I wanted to blog about crafting. As time passes I narrow in on what I like to post about, what my readers like and have gained a better focus for my blog.

When I started I wrote out a long list of possible posts that I could do to get started. I had about 25 things on the list and I just dove in. I knew that 25 posts wouldn't last me too long-maybe a couple of months at best if I posted a few times each week, so I crossed my fingers and hoped that more ideas would flow in as I went. And they did. I haven't ever run completely dry on ideas, but I think it was important to have a basic starting place before I got going.

So, spend some time brainstorming what you are interested in, thinking about what this will look like in blog form, who your readers will be, how they will find you and why they will be interested in what you post about. Get a general idea of what you are going to do before you take the next step.

Tips for Brainstorming:

Search around the internet to get an idea of what other bloggers are doing that works, but never directly copy what other bloggers are doing. Come up with your own, new, fresh ideas that are exciting. This sets you apart from the crowd and makes your blog something new and fun to read.

Write down all of your ideas! If you don't write them down you may forget them. Also, writing them down may snowball into new ideas that are triggered by old ideas.

Think about holidays, seasons and trends as you plan posts. Post when things are popular and think ahead a little, knowing that it takes a while for a post to gain traction. Don't wait till the week of Valentine's day to start posting Valentine's posts.

The Basics of Getting Started: Set Up

Set Up To Do List:

- Come up with an Idea
- Figure out a Name
- Get Your Domain Name Registered
- Find Web Hosting
- Install WordPress
- Create a Blog Design
- Get Legal

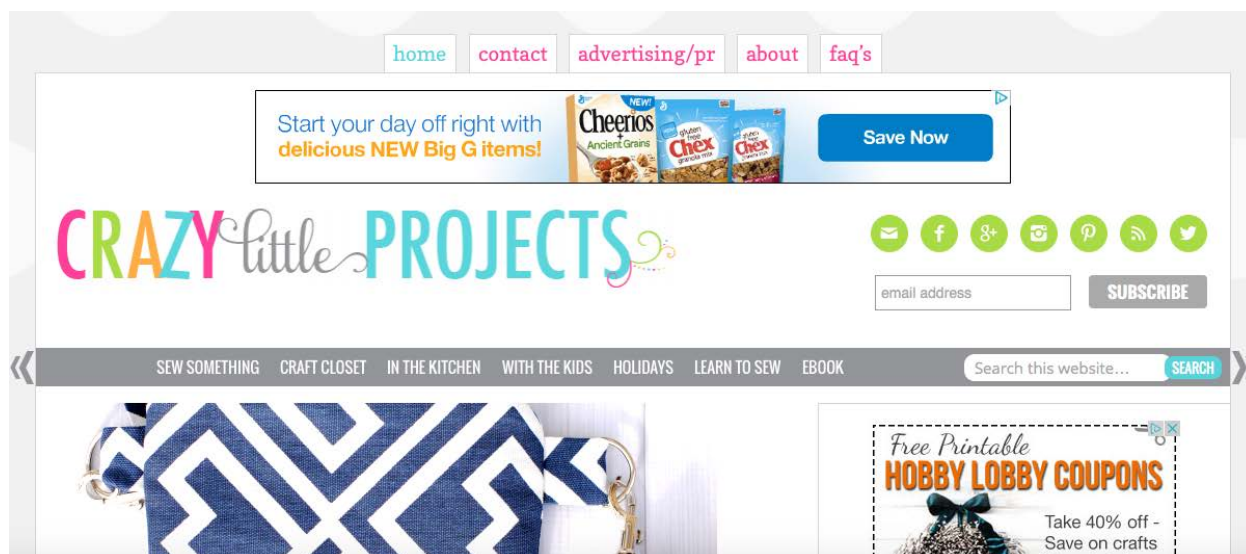
Setting up your blog is going to get just a little technical. If you have a tech friend or family member who can help you on this part pull them in to help for sure! If not, you can do a lot of it yourself (I managed to do most of mine by myself-it was tricky though!) or you can also hire people to do it for you.

The very first thing you will need is a blog name. Do a little creative thinking here, because whatever you pick you probably are going to need to stick with. Find a name that YOU love and that your readers will be able to recognize and remember easily. When I started my home based business years ago I picked a name that even my own mom couldn't always remember. That's not a great idea. You want to pick something that others will be able to remember when they sit down at their computer.

You will also need a domain name. Your domain name is the website address of your blog-such as www.CrazyLittleProjects.com. (Also called the URL.)

You will need to register a domain name using your blog name in it somehow. Be aware that many, many domain names are already taken, so you may have to get creative.

Here's just a peek at my current blog design and set up:



When you have an idea of what you think you want to call your blog, begin to search for a domain name. DO NOT do this until you are ready to actually register it. As soon as you start searching there are bad people out there who will buy up the names you searched for for really cheap and then try to sell them to you for a lot. So the day you start searching should also be the day that you purchase the domain name.

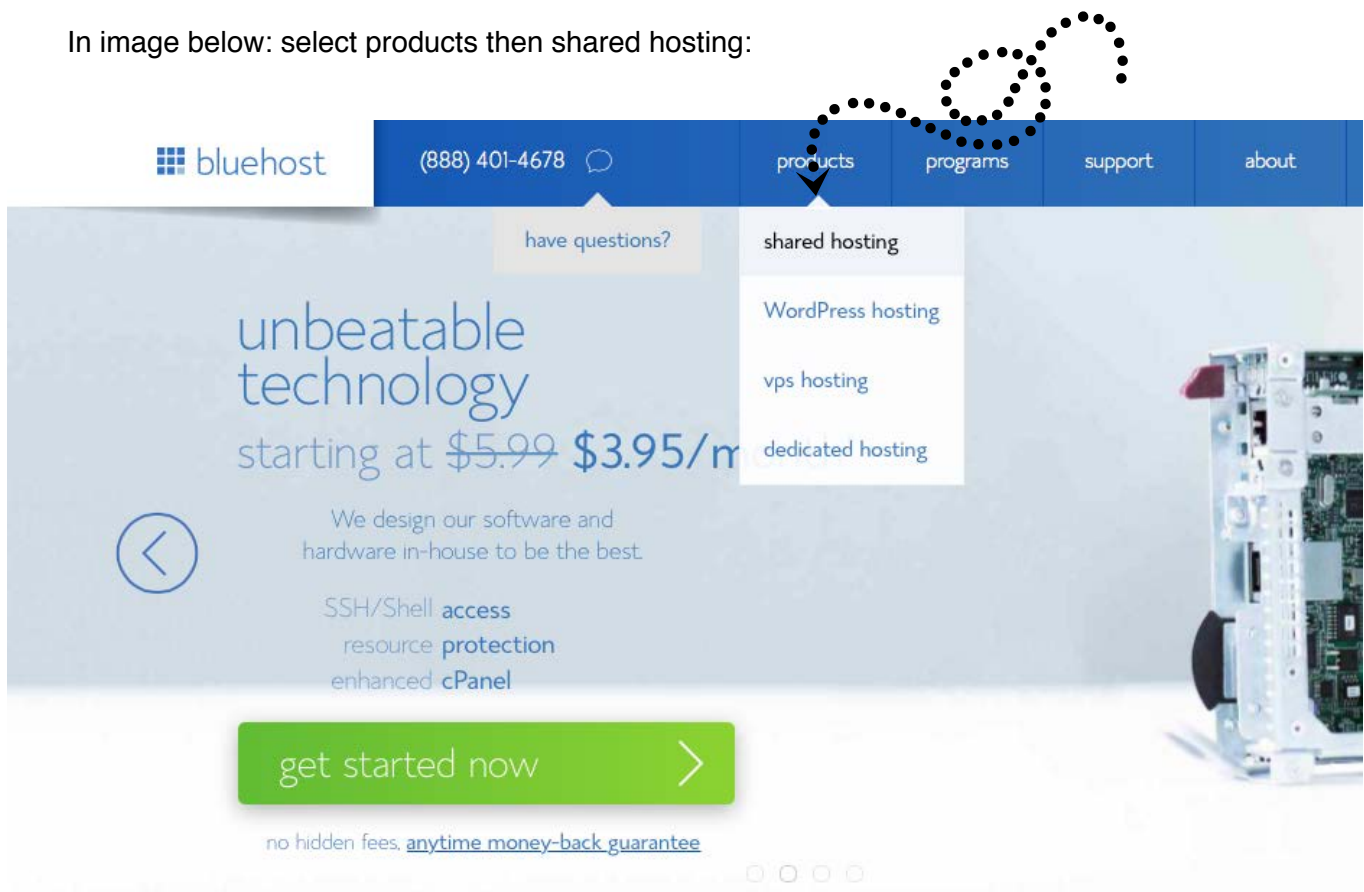
Before you sit down to search for your domain name have a list of possibilities so that if your top choice isn't available you can choose something else. Remember, you can use variations of your name including using hyphens

or .net options and things like that, but also remember that you want this to be as easy to remember as possible.

When you are ready to search for and purchase your domain name, you need to find a domain name registrar online. I recommend using the same one that you are going to purchase your web hosting from. (More on hosting below.)

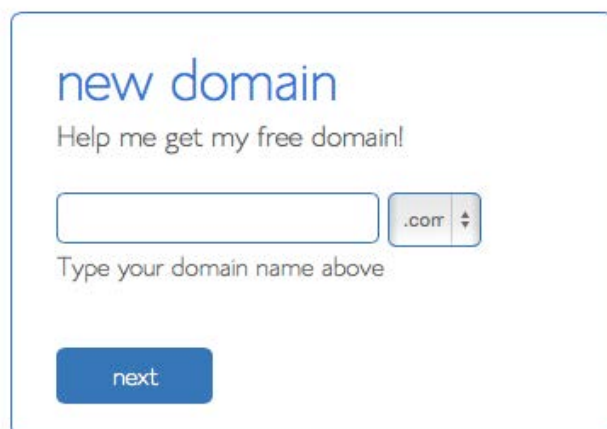
Let's use Blue Host as an example. You will go to their website and search under Products. Choose the option from the dropdown menu that says Shared Hosting.

In image below: select products then shared hosting:



Registering a Domain Name:

When you click on that option you will then be taken to a screen that allows you to purchase a new domain name. Plug in your idea there and see if it is available. If not, do some tweaking or try some other ideas to find something that will work. Purchase your domain name and then proceed to purchase your hosting as well. If you purchase your domain name and hosting together you will minimize a lot of the work for yourself (and if you are going through [Blue Host](#), your domain name will be free!)



Blog Platform and Web Hosting:

You are going to need a platform for your blog and a web host to house your blog. Your platform is the system that you will use to create your blog. Your web host is the company that provides space for you to put your site on the internet. Think of it like they are the landlords and you are renting an apartment from them. You cannot build a website without having a way to host it.

There are several platform options for bloggers, but the two main options are Wordpress and Blogger. Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com>) is a free option and many bloggers use it. Blogger blogs often have [.blogspot.com](#) in the URL (although you can purchase your domain name and remove the [.blogspot](#) from it.) Blogger is

run by google. If you select blogger they host your site for you so that you do not need to purchase separate web hosting.

Blogger is not a bad option, but I believe that Wordpress is a BETTER option for bloggers. If you are looking to make this a professional blog you do not want the [.blogspot](#) in your URL. Also, Wordpress is much easier to work with for things like optimizing your site for search engines (more on that later) and making it look and work how you want it to.

Please note that I am talking strictly of [wordpress.org](#) here. [Wordpress.com](#) is a completely different thing. For the purposes of this ebook, I will be explaining how to set up a blog assuming you are using [wordpress.org](#).



To use WordPress you will need a web host. There are tons of web hosts to choose from. The beauty of starting a blog is that when you are small (new), you can get web hosting for very cheap, so it is a low risk investment to set this blog up.

There are MANY hosting options. I am going to use BlueHost as an example because they offer hosting at a great price!

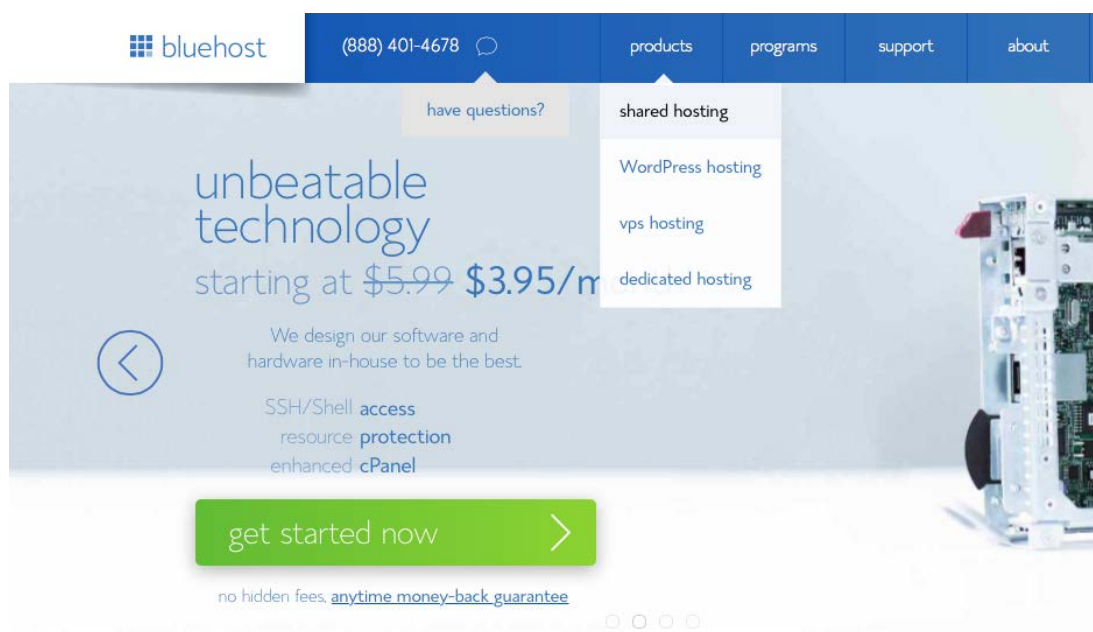
Blue Host offers hosting options beginning at \$3.49 a month. (See I told you starting a blog was low risk!) This will give you plenty

of space, storage and page views as you get started. Purchasing your hosting with Blue Host is easy. Let me walk you through it.

[Click here to go to BlueHost.](#)

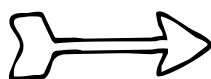
Then, select Products from the top drop down menu, then Shared Hosting. Select Get Started Now.

(This is the same that I showed you before for when you register a domain name. You can do it all in one, which I recommend.)



You will then be prompted to either register your domain if you are getting a new one, or enter your domain name if you already have one.

Once you have added your domain information you will be taken to a simple screen to enter your basic account information. Get this information filled out:



sign up - congratulations!

The domain you have requested, crazylittleprojectskids.com, is available.

account information

All fields are required unless otherwise noted.

First Name	<input type="text"/>
Last Name	<input type="text"/>
(optional) Business Name	<input type="text"/>
Country	<input type="text" value="United States"/>
Street Address	<input type="text"/>
City	<input type="text"/>
State	<input type="text" value="Please select a state"/>
ZIP Code	<input type="text"/>
Phone Number	<input type="text" value="(123) 456-7890"/> Ext. <input type="text"/>
Use an international number	
*E-mail Address	<input type="text"/>

Now, select any add ons that you want along with the length you want to prepay for. You shouldn't need most of the add ons-just maybe the site backup. I would skip the others.

package information


Account Plan	<div>Starter 36 Month Price - \$3.95/mo.</div>
Setup Fee	Free
Primary Domain Registration	Free
Domain Privacy Protection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - \$0.83 per month (Billed annually at \$9.99/yr. crazylittleprojectskids.com) More information
Site Backup Pro	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> - \$1.67 per month (Billed to end of hosting term) More information
SiteLock Domain Security	<input type="checkbox"/> - \$1.67 per month (Billed annually at \$19.99/yr) More information
Search Engine Jumpstart	<input type="checkbox"/> - \$1.25 per month (Billed annually at \$14.99/yr) More information
Google Apps for Work	<input type="checkbox"/> - \$5 per month (Billed annually at \$60/yr) More information


And finish the ordering process. Once you receive your confirmation email. It should look something like this. It has all kinds of vital information in it including links to your control panel, email server information, your username and more. Be sure to file this away somewhere safe that you can access it any time you need it:


Save this Email!

It contains crucial information, so file it away somewhere that you can find it any time!

Get Started:

**Domains**
[Transfer](#) | [Point to Bluehost](#) | [Buy](#) | [Privacy](#)

**Websites**
[Build](#) | [Upload](#) | [Transfer](#) | [Stats](#)

**E-mails**
[Create](#) | [Read](#) | [Configure](#) | [Block Spam](#)

Your Resources:

[FREE Webinars](#) | [1-Click Installs](#) | [Helpdesk Articles](#) | [Subscribe to Our Blog](#) | [\\$100 Google Advertising Offer](#)

Your Account Information:

Domain: **crazylittleprojectskids.com**
Username: **crazyli2**
Password: [Update Your Password](#)
Temporary URL: <http://50.87.248.106/~crazyli2/>
Email Server: **mail.crazylittleprojectskids.com**
Name Server 1: **ns1.bluehost.com**
Name Server 2: **ns2.bluehost.com**

Your FTP Information:

Host: **ftp.crazylittleprojectskids.com**
FTP Username: **crazyli2**
Password: [Update Your Password](#)

10

Now, from that email, go to your control panel by selecting the link that says update password. Go ahead and change your password if you would like.

Now you will want to go to your main control panel. From that email select the link to Build under the websites spot.

This will take you to a main login page.

Once you are logged in Click on the link that says set up Wordpress. This will automatically install Wordpress for you! (So handy!)

The screenshot shows a web hosting control panel with a dark blue header containing icons and labels for cPanel, Server, Email, Website (highlighted in green), FTP, Databases, and Manage IPs. Below the header, there are three main sections for website builders:

- WordPress:** Features the WordPress logo and text: "WordPress is an industry leading website and blog building tool. Over 60 million websites are powered by WordPress." Below this is a list of features: "Free to Use", "One-click Install", "Professionally-designed Templates", and "Plugins and Widgets". At the bottom is a green button labeled "Use WordPress".
- Mojo Marketplace:** Features a green cartoon character logo and text: "Mojo Marketplace provides easy, one-click installations and upgrades for over 70 of the Web's top applications." Below this is a list of applications: "concrete5 - Free CMS", "liveSite - Professional Site Builder", "Joomla! - Free CMS", and "Drupal - Free CMS". At the bottom is a green button labeled "Use Mojo Marketplace".
- Weebly:** Features the Weebly logo and text: "The Weebly drag & drop website builder makes it simple to create a powerful, professional website without any technical skills required." Below this is a list of features: "No HTML or CSS Knowledge is Needed!", "Professionally-designed Templates", "Blogs, Photo Galleries, Audio & Video-capable", and "Free for Up to 6 Pages". At the bottom is a green button labeled "Use Weebly".




This will then install WordPress for you! Seriously! This is so handy! I didn't have this option when I set up my blog and this will make it much easier for you!

The next page is a series of images of the process as you get WordPress all set up.

Make sure you take a few minutes to set up your email account as well. The link to do this is in your confirmation email from your web host. It should be -----@yourdomain.com so pick a good one and get it going!

Enter Your Domain:



WordPress
Version 4.1


Enjoy your FREE Install from
MOJO!

Select which domain you would like to install to:

/


Check Domain

It will then begin to install. All you have to do is sit back and wait for the confirmation email telling you that it has finished installing.



Hi there, crazyli2
[Edit Profile](#) [View Profile](#)

Welcome to the new MOJO Marketplace.
We're still getting setup but please don't
hesitate to [contact us](#) for anything!



My Account >

My Installs >

My Purchases >

Settings >

Support >

Messages >

Notification Center

Here are your recent notifications for the MOJO Marketplace.

PLEASE NOTE: Installation information is only available for 12 Hours and will be automatically removed from your notifications.

Alert	Action
Your WordPress install is finished! CREDENTIALS	View

INTERESTED in Selling?

Now I can click on that red button there that says Credentials to get all my information for my Wordpress access.

Here is my information:

The screenshot shows a user interface for a WordPress installation. On the left is a sidebar with a menu: 'My Account', 'My Installs', 'My Purchases', 'Settings', 'Support', and 'Messages'. Below the menu is a section titled 'INTERESTED in Selling?' with text about opening a StoreFront on MOJO. The main content area is titled 'Notification Center > INSTALLATION CREDENTIALS'. It contains a green box with the message: 'Congratulations on the installation of your new WordPress site! **Your login information is below.**'. Below this, 'Step 1. Access your New WordPress site' lists the following information: 'URL: http://www.crazylittleprojectskids.com/', 'Admin URL: http://www.crazylittleprojectskids.com/wp-admin', 'Username: amber@crazylittleprojects.com', and 'Password: Tt6ZrP8bg17AU'. 'Step 2. Browse Premium Themes and Plugins' is also listed. To the right of Step 2 is a green button that says 'Browse WordPress Themes' with a 'Browse All' link below it.

Notice that it shows me a username and password (which I can change) along with my URL and then the Admin URL. The Admin URL is important. This is where you will login to your WordPress Dashboard and begin blogging.

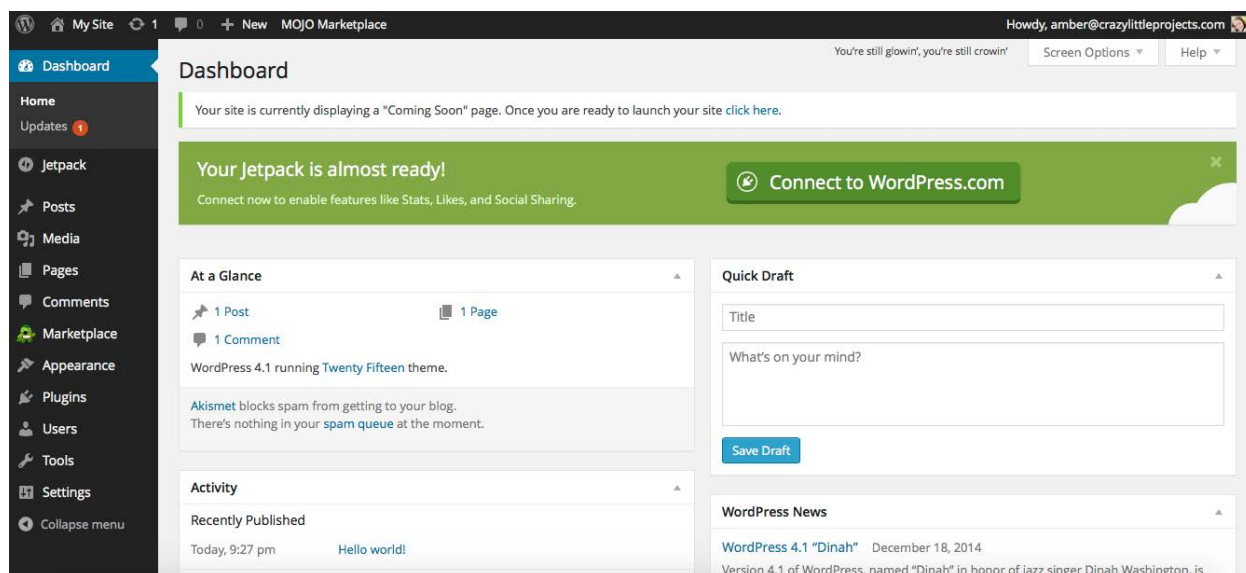
So, let's go ahead and do it! Click on that link to go to your WP Dashboard. It should take you to a screen that looks like this. (See image to right.)

Enter your username and password and you are in! You are officially logged in to your WordPress Dashboard and this is where all of the actual blogging will begin.

Take some time to surf through your dashboard and get a feel for it. This is where most of what you do will have happen from now on. This is where you write blog posts, upload all of your images, design your blog, and do everything else you are going to do to make this blog super successful! So it's worth taking some time to get to know this dashboard well.

The screenshot shows the WordPress login screen. At the top is the WordPress logo. Below it is a white box containing the login form. The form has two input fields: 'Username' and 'Password'. Below the 'Password' field is a checkbox labeled 'Remember Me'. To the right of the checkbox is a blue 'Log In' button. Below the login form, there is a link that says 'Lost your password?' and a link that says '← Back to My Site'.

Here's a look at what your WordPress Dashboard will look like:



On the left you see your main menu bar with things like Posts, Media, Comments, and Appearance. Under each of those tabs you will be able to do work on each of those areas. We will talk more about using some of these areas as we get going on the design part of the blog set up.

Designing Your Blog:

You are just one step away from being ready to blog. This is a step that will take a little time and work though, so be patient. You now need a basic blog design and layout-also called a Theme.

Wordpress offers many, many theme options. You can browse through them [here](#).

When I starting blogging I was told that the best option for me to use was the Genesis Framework. Within the [Genesis Framework](#) you then choose a Theme. The Genesis framework and StudioPress themes go hand in hand and you can purchase them together.

They become the skeleton and skin of your blog and once you have them installed and tweaked how you like, you don't have to worry much, you just get to blog!

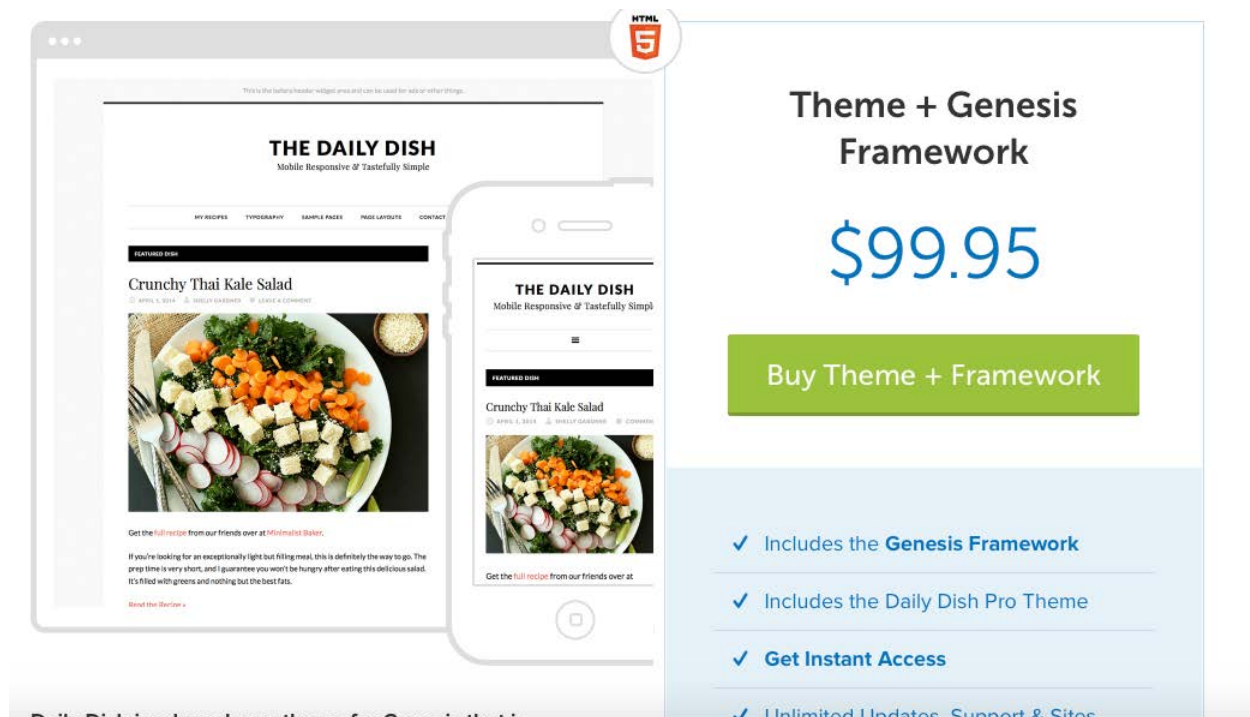
Here are a few of the most popular [StudioPress themes](#):

[Foodie Pro Theme](#)

[Modern Blogger Theme](#)

[Daily Dish Pro Theme](#)

(Click on those links to purchase Genesis and Theme)



Theme + Genesis Framework

\$99.95

Buy Theme + Framework

- ✓ Includes the **Genesis Framework**
- ✓ Includes the **Daily Dish Pro Theme**
- ✓ **Get Instant Access**
- ✓ **Unlimited Updates, Support & Sites**

But there are tons to choose from! Search through all of them and pick what you like [here](#).

One thing to consider as you select your theme is that you are going to want it to be mobile responsive. Probably at least half of your readers are going to be on phones or tablets when they view your site and if you aren't set up for mobile devices you will lose readers and money. Many themes already come mobile ready. Pay attention to this while shopping. There are some plugins (see more about plugins below) that can also help make a blog mobile responsive or you can hire someone techy to do it for you, just know that this is going to be an important part of your blog.

Go ahead and install your theme once you have selected one and you are ready to really get your blog going!

When you install your theme, your blog will look just like the theme you chose. You should have access in your control panel to change out some parts of your theme.

When logged in to your WordPress Dashboard look on the left menu bar and go under Appearance/Themes to see your theme and do any customization that you would like to. Every theme is different, so I can't walk you through this part.

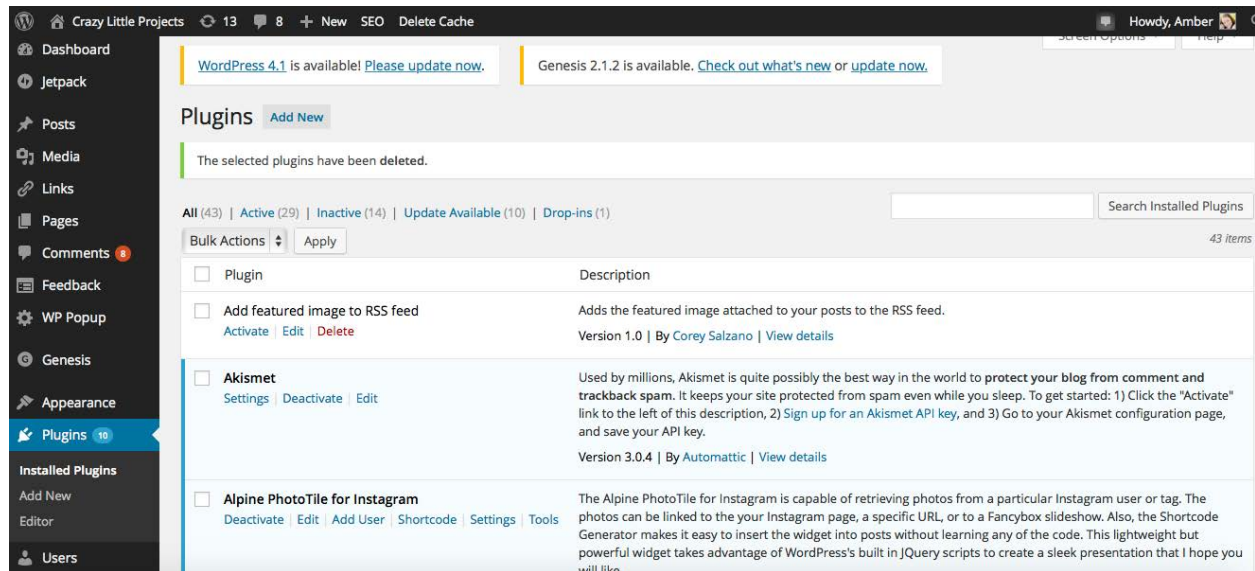
You will want a logo for your blog. You can design this yourself or hire someone to do it for you. Think about what colors you want to have on your blog, what you want the style to be and then go for it! It's then easy to upload your logo into your blog and all of a sudden you've got a blog that looks different from everyone else's!

On a side note, if you are not comfortable doing the design and theme installation, you can hire someone to do this for you. (I did.) Blog design options run from about \$200-1,000 and beyond. For the most part you will get what you pay for, so decide how much you want to invest and do some research online on WordPress designers. Look at their portfolios, ask questions and make sure you are happy with your choice before you commit.

After you have your basics of your blog up and running, you will want to install a few things called Plugins. Wordpress makes it very easy to add extras to your blog simply by uploading plugins to do things that you need done.

To add a plugin, look again at your left menu bar and select Plugins/Add New:

It's easy then to search through available plugins by typing in what you are looking for into the search box. When you find the one you want simply click Install Now. Then on your plugins page you will need to Activate it. Some plugins will have settings you will need to tweak, others will be ready to go as soon as you activate them.



Popular Plugins to Use:

- **Akismet** (Helps prevent Spam comments)
- **BlogVault** (Backs up your blog)
- **Comment Reply Notification** (Lets readers know if you or others reply to their comment)
- **Facebook Like Box** (Encourages readers to like you on Facebook)
- **Fanciest Author Box** (Gives a little blurb about you at the end of all posts)
- **Jamie Social Icons** (Adds social media buttons above your post-pin it, like it, etc.)
- **JetPack by Wordpress** (Does a number of things-my favorite are the site stats)
- **Simple Google Analytics** (You will need this to install google analytics on your blog. More on that later.)
- **W3 Total Cache** (Makes your blog load faster for readers)
- **WP Minify** (Another one to help your blog load faster)
- **WordPress SEO** (Makes SEO a breeze. More on SEO later.)

Get Legal:

One last thing to think about as you are setting up your blog is making yourself legal. A blog, if you are making money, is a business, so there are certain requirements you will need to fulfill in order to function legally. These requirements vary by state (and outside the US I have no idea about) so you will need to do a little research on your own.

In general you will probably need to file some forms that will qualify you as a doing business under another name. You can choose to work as a sole proprietor (or partners if you are not doing your blog alone) or file as an LLC (Limited Liability Corporation).

As an example, in the state of Utah I needed to file a Business Tax Registration and I also filed to become an LLC. Once a year I receive tax forms to fill out for State Sales and Use tax payment. (If you are not actually selling anything you probably will not be collecting or paying any sales tax, but you still have to file.) I also became an LLC which was relatively inexpensive in the state of Utah (under \$100) but was significantly more when I lived in California.

To figure out what you need to do to get legal simply run a google search for “starting a business in...” and fill in the name of your state or country. Many states have very simple websites to walk you through the process and it is surprisingly easy and inexpensive.

Chapter I To Do List:

- ☐ Brainstorm a Blog Idea
- ☐ Come Up with a Name and Register Domain
- ☐ Purchase Web Hosting
- ☐ Install WordPress to Web Host
- ☐ Create Logo for your Blog
- ☐ Design Your Blog
- ☐ Find Out Legal Requirements in your Area and Get Registered as a Business



If any of this legal stuff feels overwhelming, I recommend using [Legal Zoom](#). It's an online, affordable way to file for all various business licenses and statuses. I used this when I filed to become an LLC.

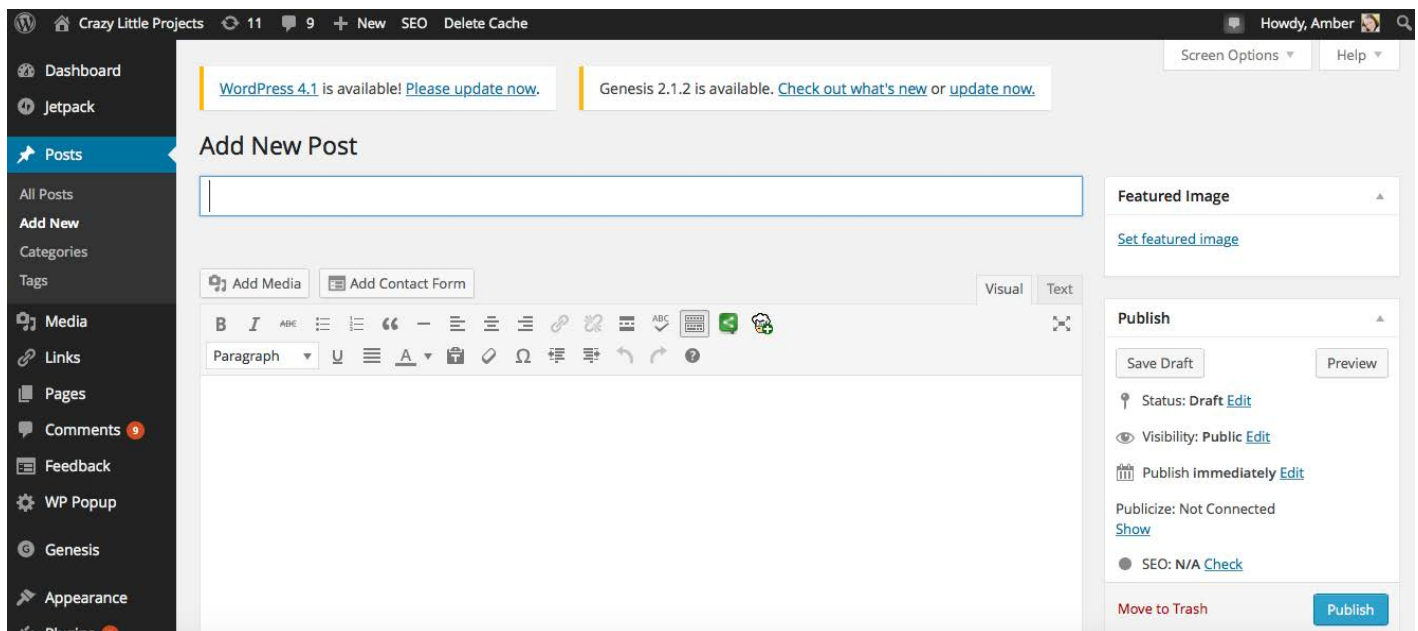
Chapter 2: Posting on Your Blog

Writing a Blog Post:

So the blog is set up, now it's time to start posting! I hope you've got some ideas and you're ready to write! Let's have a quick walk through how to compose a post in Wordpress. Don't worry! This part is really easy.

I'll keep this part short and sweet because I think it is fairly straightforward.

In your control panel you will see Posts in the left sidebar menu. Click Add New and you will see a window like this:

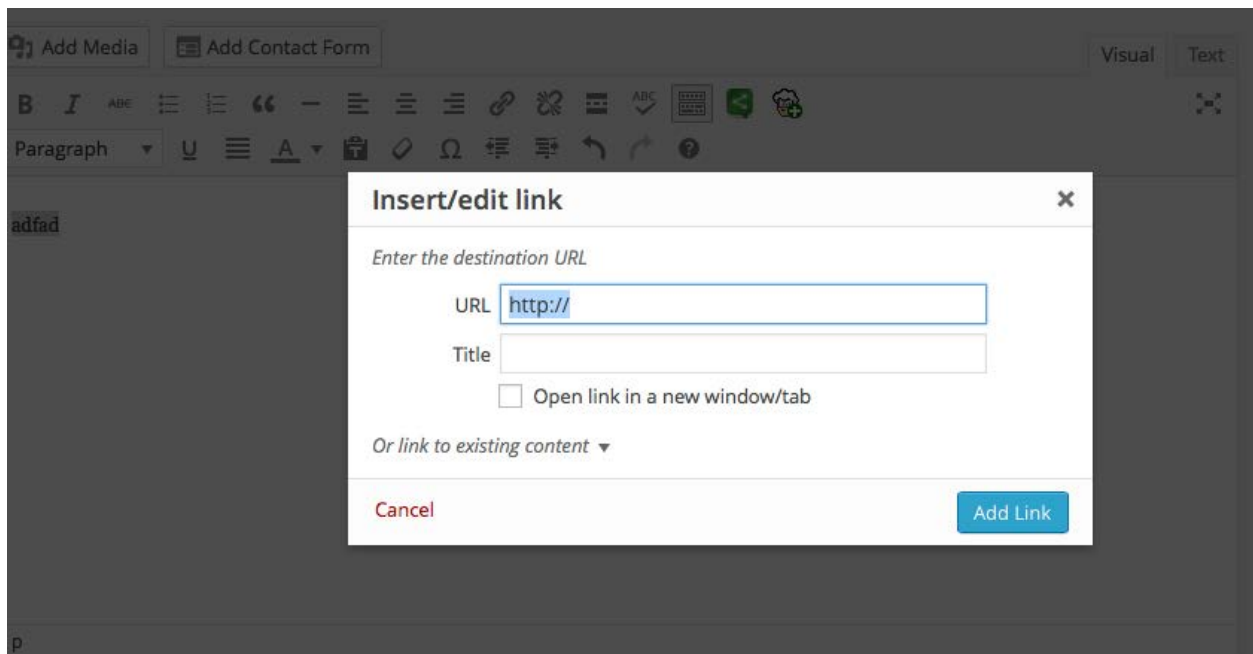


Now it's as simple as starting to write. You see a space there for your title. As you write that title a URL for the blog post will formulate itself right below it. You can change that URL to anything you want or leave it as is. (I will go into what you want there in the SEO section.)

Then there is a large body of space for your text. You can begin to write there. You will see that above that box is space to format your text with things like bold, italics, centering, adding links, etc.

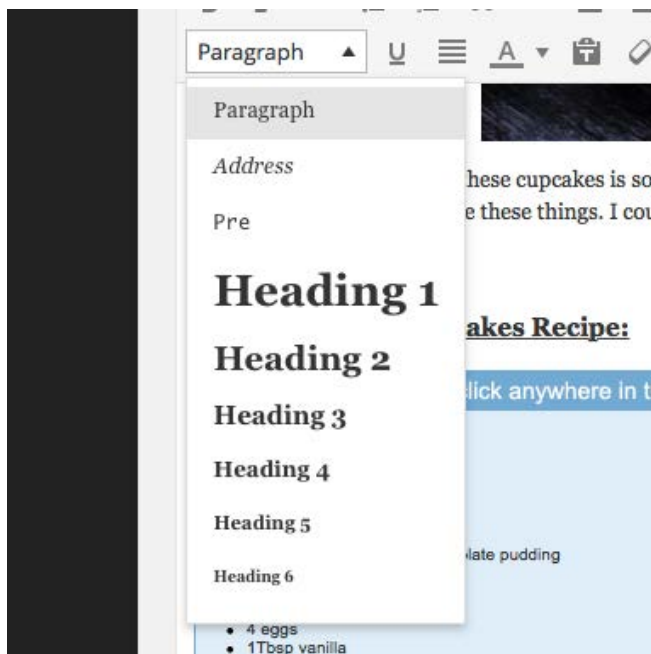
Most of this is probably fairly self explanatory, but let me break down just a few things.

Adding a link: If you want to add a link, you will highlight the text that you want to have be hyperlinked and then select the link icon (the one that looks like a paper clip) up on the little tool bar above where you are putting your text. (See image on next page.)



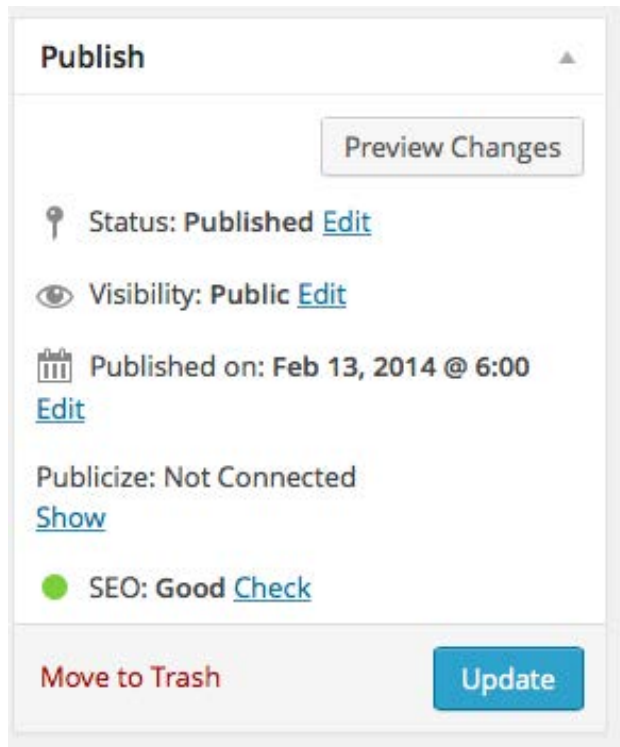
If you are linking within your own blog, do not check the box that says open link in new window/tab. In every other case DO check that box. This will pop open a new window for your readers to take them to

the site that you are linking to rather than taking your readers away from your site. You don't want to drive them away from your site-you want to keep them there, so this is an important step to remember.



Headings: In the drop down list that says Paragraph you will see a list of possibilities including Heading 1, Heading 2, and so on. This will change the size and heaviness of your text. Paragraph would be the type of text you want for your normal writing, but if you want to bold things and give them headers (which you do for SEO which we will address later), you will want to use these headers.

Text/HTML: Take note of the little tab that lets you switch between the text view and the html. The html is the code that make the post a post on the internet. If you know anything about html and want to edit within the html, you simply need to click the html tab. Even if you don't know html, there are likely to be times when you use this such as copying and pasting code for a giveaway.



On the right sidebar you will see options to finish up things on your post. You can choose a featured image (this is the image that your blog will display as the main image for the post, you can decide when to publish the post and schedule posts ahead of time. You can select categories for your blog (that can be linked to from menus on your main page), and you can add tags to your post to classify them.

Step by Step Post Checklist:

Just to give you an idea of what most posts will involve, here is a checklist. This list refers to a blog where you are creating something where it is a craft or food, printable, etc. If you are doing a lifestyle or fashion or parenting or other type of blog this may vary a little:

Come Up with Post Idea
 Create Project/Recipe/Project
 Photograph Project
 Edit Photographs
 Write Post
 Proofread and SEO Post
 Schedule Post to Go Live
 Post Goes Live
 Promote Post on Social Media
 Pin Post
 Submit Post/Link Parties

Of course there is some variation there, but that's just a general idea of what is involved in just one post. Each post can take quite a bit of work.

Posting To Do List:

- Come Up with Post Idea
- Create Project/Recipe/Project
- Photograph Project
- Edit Photographs
- Write Post
- Proofread and SEO Post
- Schedule Post to Go Live
- Post Goes Live
- Promote Post on Social Media
- Pin Post
- Submit Post/Link Parties

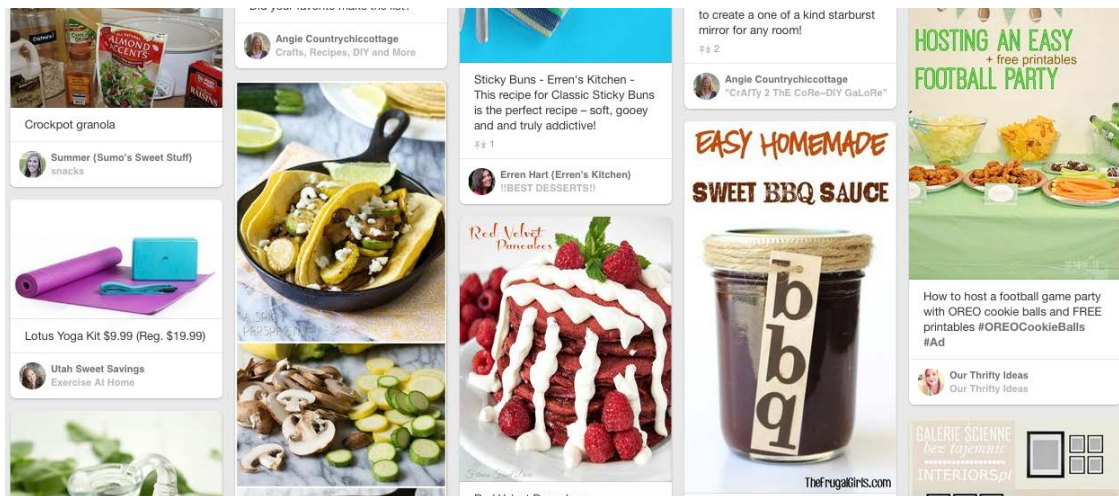
Photography:

I don't feel like we can talk about writing blog posts without talking about photography. Photography is essential for any type of blog because humans are visual and like to see pretty pictures. Even if you are writing a blog that is about lifestyle, travel or parenting, pictures are going to draw readers in, make your post pinnable and make your blog memorable. I don't think I can emphasize enough how crucial the photography part of blogging is to your success.

My blog, Crazy Little Projects, features posts on sewing, crafting, parties, printables, baking, that sort of thing. For me photography is a key aspect of every single post.

There are step by step photos for the tutorials (especially on a sewing tutorial) and there are the "money shots" or the main photo that I want my readers to see. The pictures for the step by step tutorial part are important but not crucial. The money shots are what will get people to my site. They matter a lot.

Take a minute to look through Pinterest and pay attention to the photography. You'll notice a wide variety of photos. Some are dark and don't attract attention, some are bold and bright. Some are small and far away while others are large and close up. Which ones are you drawn to? Which capture your attention?



Can you guess which ones are likely to have more success on Pinterest? It's always going to be the pretty picture that wins out on Pinterest. I have even seen projects or recipes that are off the wall or unusual that pin well on Pinterest simply because they are a pretty picture.

Photography is the very hardest part of blogging for me. It's not a natural skill for me and it's something that I really have to work at.

But in the years that I have been blogging I have improved a lot and will continue to work at it and improve.

Let's look back at some of my early pictures from my blog for an example of how NOT to do it. These photos make me cringe now, but that's ok, because it's all a learning process (and I can always go back and reshoot these images and update them right?).

Here is one of my very first projects from my blog-a mini reversible messenger bag.



This image isn't awful but it could be improved on a lot. First, I took it indoors in a spot that was only semi lit with natural lighting.

****Always, always, always take you blog images in natural (daylight) lighting. That doesn't mean directly in the sun, but in a location that is lit by natural light.**

The photo is also boring. I didn't take any time to style the image or have fun with it.

Compare that image with a recent post for the On the Go Organizer:

This image is bright and catches my readers' attention. It's styled in a fun way and has bright colors. It's eye catching and fun.

As a result, this image has been pinned more than twice as many times as the messenger bag while this project has only been on my blog for four months and the messenger bag has been up for almost 3 years.

The On the Go Organizer is also one of my most popular sewing posts and gets good traffic daily. This is why a good picture is crucial.

The smart thing for me to do at this point would be to remake and retake the images of the reversible messenger bag and pay more attention to lighting and detail at this point. This can make a big difference in a post, even an old post that has been around a while.



Let's look at another example.

These scotcheroos are something I posted on my blog several years ago. Here is the original image for this recipe. (See image on right.)

This recipe flopped pretty good when I put it up. The image is dark and not flattering. Later I decided to update the image and changed it to this image below.



This new image is still not perfect, but it is brighter, gets closer to the actual food and I added words to make it more clear what you are looking at. When I updated this image this post took off and immediately became one of my most popular recipe posts. Changing the image made a *huge* difference!

You'll also notice that in my more recent images I have started shooting vertically rather than horizontally. We will talk more about this in the section on Pinterest. It's a trick that can make a big difference as well.

Also, it's important to know that a lot of good photography is in the editing. You can lighten an image, bring out certain colors, enhance the contrast, edit out spots, crop in closer and just overall get a better picture in your editing. This is also something that takes time to learn, but is an important part of blogging.

Also-post LARGE pictures on your blog. Pictures grab attention. So grab it! Around 600 pixels wide is probably standard.

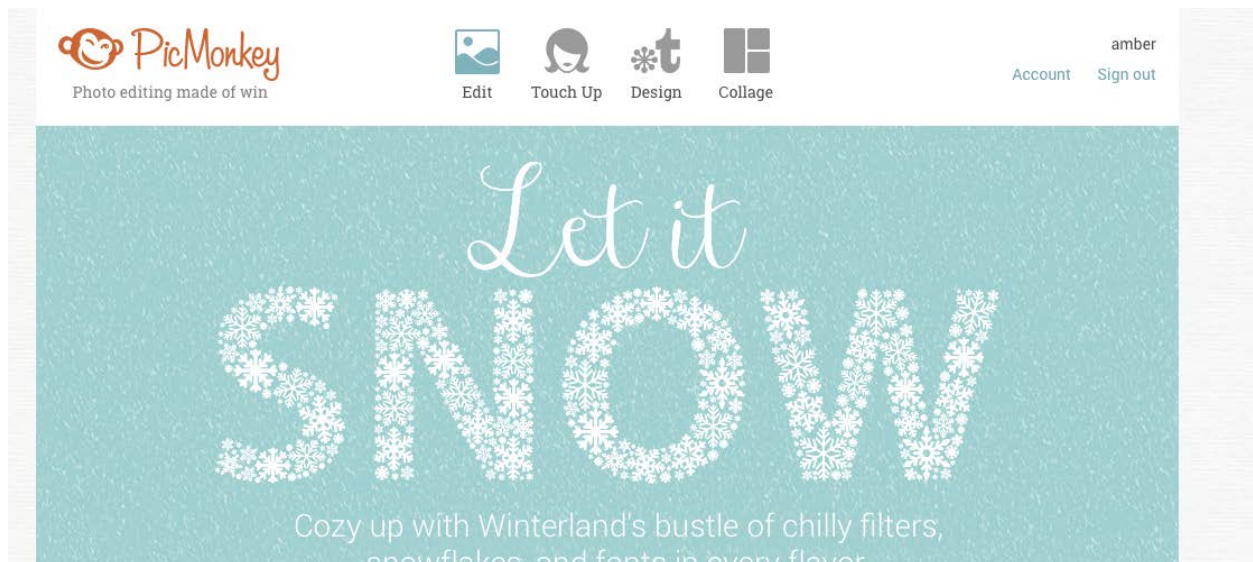
There are a few good resources for photo editing. Adobe offers several programs that are great for editing. My favorite is Lightroom. It allows you to do a lot of great editing on your photos in a quick and easy way. You can even bulk edit a group of photos all at once.

Another option is Adobe PhotoShop or PhotoShop Elements. These are wonderful, powerful programs that can do amazing things. I will tell you though that they are difficult to learn. Worth it in the end, but they take some time.

If you want to go the cheapest, easiest route to start out, PicMonkey is an online photo program that is amazing! I use it almost daily (along with Lightroom) to edit images and create graphics.

They have a free version or you can pay to upgrade for \$5 a month. I use the upgraded version and love it. I highly recommend getting PicMonkey, even if you are using some of the others too. You can create collages and fancy graphics in PicMonkey as well as the photo editing.

Get it here. (Seriously-get it! You will thank me.)



Tips to remember when photographing for your blog:

- ALWAYS use natural light
- Make it look pretty-think about how to style the image to appeal to readers
- Take vertical shots (we will talk more about this in the Pinterest section)
- Try many angles-you will eventually find the magic one that looks great
- Practice, practice, practice-you will improve little by little
- Use big, bold pictures to grab attention. They should span most of the width of your blogging section and be the focal part of your post no matter what your blog is about! Too much text and not enough pictures will turn people away.

Here are a few resources that could help with your photography:

Tasty Food Photography-This ebook will walk you through how to take great pictures of food. Honestly though, I think it could apply to any sort of object photography. Even if you aren't a food blogger, I feel like this book will help you out with how to photograph your projects.

[Get it here.](#)

Shoot Fly Shoot Classes-These online classes can walk you through basic photography as well as photo editing and you can do it all while at home and refer back to them as needed. There are a bunch of classes to choose from and they are very reasonably priced!

[Get them here.](#)



Say No to Auto-This ebook helped me out a lot when I first started blogging. I had a DSLR camera but I didn't really know how to use it, so I was shooting in Auto (which really isn't a very great way to do it). I bought this book and read through it and seriously, in 20 minutes I was taking better pictures!

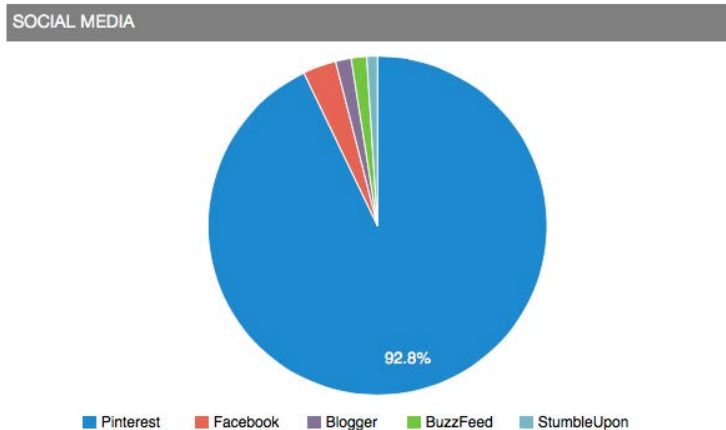
[Get it Here](#)

Whatever you decide to do, just realize that your photography matters a lot when you blog so please, take the time to make it good! It's a skill that can make or break your blog! You don't have to be a professional, but taking the time to learn a little can really help.

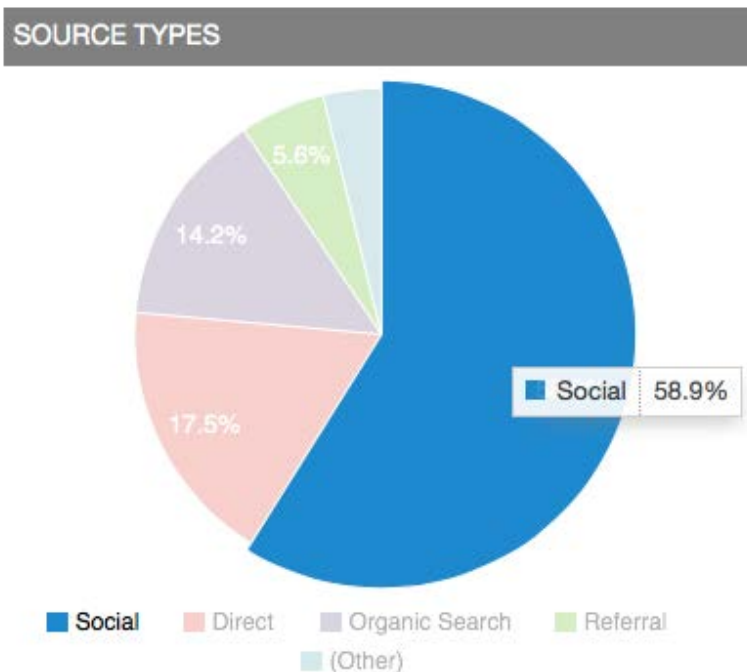
Pinterest:

This is where it gets good! You've got a blog, you've got posts, but how are you going to get anyone to read it? This is probably one area that most bloggers are very concerned about, especially in the beginning. You put together great content and sometimes it can feel frustrating if not a lot of people are seeing it. Luckily there are a lot of ways to put your blog out there. It takes time and work in the beginning, but the more you do it, the more return on your effort you will see.

Pinterest needs to be the first way of promoting that we address, because it is for most bloggers by far the biggest source of incoming traffic. Have a look at my own personal pie chart of incoming traffic. (See image on right.)



The blue represents the amount of my social traffic that comes from Pinterest. On this particular month it was 93% of my social media traffic.



You see from the image on the left that the bulk of my traffic comes from social media sources. Now, knowing that 59% percent of my traffic was from social media sites and that Pinterest was 93% of that traffic, you can see why it can be important to focus on Pinterest as a top source of blog promotion. This is true regardless of your blog type.

So let's talk about how to make the most of using Pinterest for your blog and driving more and more traffic from Pinterest. There are some great tips that I have picked up that I want to share with you that WILL make a difference in your engagement on Pinterest and how many followers you have on Pinterest.

First of all, set up a Pinterest account. Already have one for yourself? You can use that account if you would like, but you will need to do some tweaking.

Your Pinterest username should have your blog name in it somewhere. Take a look at my Pinterest board profile.



Amber Price: Crazy Little Proj...

✓ www.crazylittleprojects.com · f

Hi! I'm Amber. Blogger at <http://www.crazylittleprojects.com>. I love celebrating all the little things in life. Sewing, Baking, Crafting, Parties, & Printables.

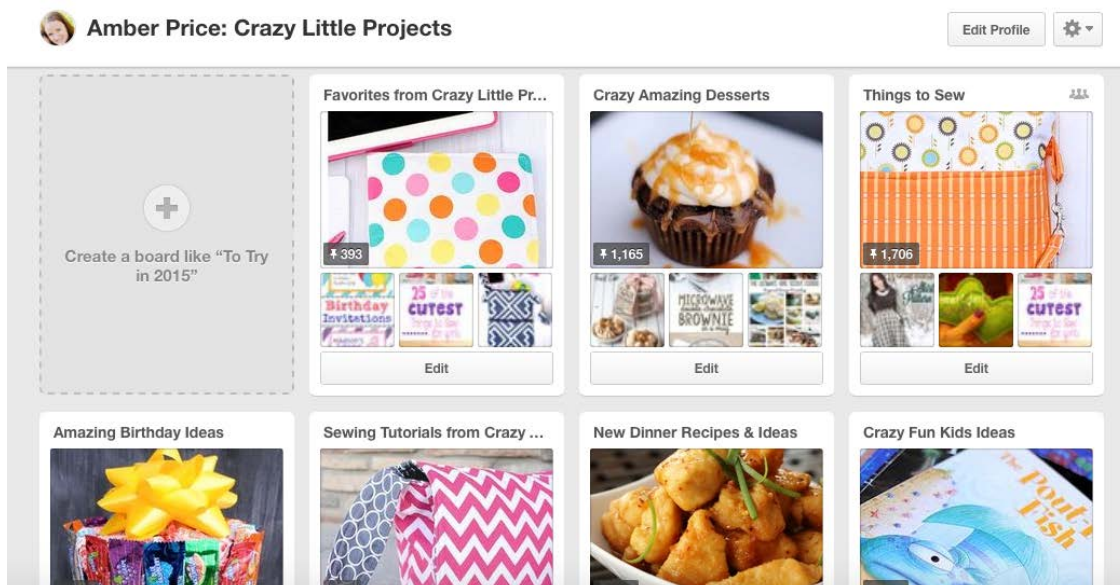
I have my pictures and name WITH my blog name as part of it as well. You can put your own name or not, either way, just be sure that your blog name is in there somewhere.

Then write a little blurb about what you are all about. It is good to throw some searchable keywords in your profile-words that relate to what you are all about, what your blog has on it and what you are pinning. There isn't much space there though (160 characters), so just do your best.

You will also want to verify your Pinterest account and associate it with your blog. I recommend making it a *business account* so that you can link it up to your URL and make it a clickable link to your blog.

Now, set up some boards. It is a good idea to make at least the first board on your Pinterest account just pins from your blog. You can divide this up into several boards if you have a variety of things that you blog about-for example Crazy Little Projects: Recipes, Crazy Little Projects: Parties, etc. Or make it all one board like Favorites from Crazy Little Projects.

Then add a bunch of boards about things that related to your blog or are things that your readers would like. For each board take the time to write a description that has some good searchable keywords in it (simply explaining what the board is about will usually do that). Also, select an image for the board cover that is pretty and will draw people in. Here is a view of my boards. I try to do bright, colorful, pretty pictures as my main image:



Also, keep your boards organized with current holidays at the top and your most popular boards at the top where possible. The idea here is that you want to draw people in to follow you and they are more likely to do that if things are pretty and organized.

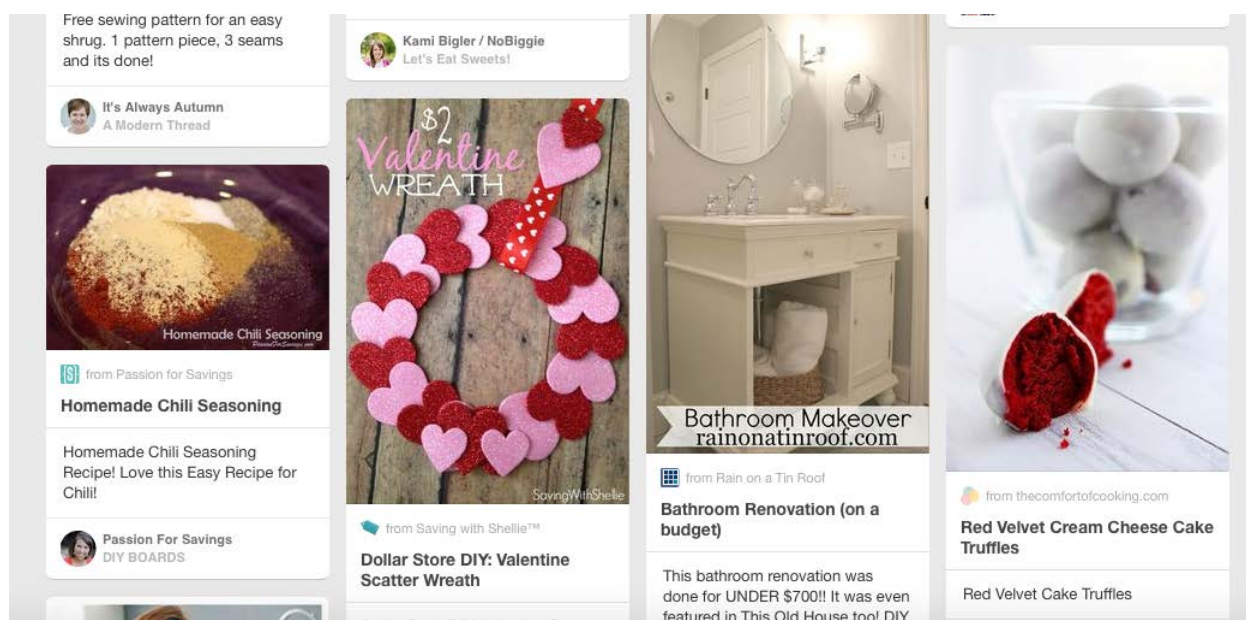
Then, start pinning. In general, the more you pin (within reason-you don't need to be crazy) and the better quality of pins that you pin, the more followers you will gain. Pin things that you think your readers will appreciate and that you think will be popular. This will ultimately give you more power on Pinterest which will trickle down into your own pins to your blog.

Now, what about your own pins? There is a lot to know about pinning that will help you be more successful at having your pins seen, repinned and clicked on.

First of all, take pretty pictures. We talked about this before, but I just can't emphasize enough how crucial this is! Pretty pictures pin better and that matters. Make sure that you are taking your pictures in natural lighting, get close (especially with food) so Pinners can see detail and know what it is that you are pinning.

Second, make your photos *vertical*, not horizontal. This is a small thing that makes a big difference. Vertical images take up a lot more space on Pinterest than horizontal ones, meaning that more people see it that way. Again, that matters a lot.

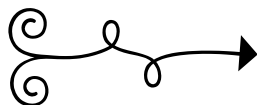
Compare the images in this picture. The horizontal one can easily get buried in the larger, vertical images because they draw your eyes more easily.



Which of these images is your attention drawn to? My eyes go first to the Valentine's wreath because it is bright and also takes up a good percentage of my screen. I also look at the bathroom makeover and cake truffles my screen.

but I don't notice the one on the left-the homemade chili seasoning-nearly as much because it takes up such a small amount of space on my screen. Pinterest users scroll through fast! You want to grab their attention.

Along those lines, it can be really good to put together a few images to create a long, collage like pin. There are a few ways to do this. When I put together a post that is a roundup of ideas I create a long pin with some of the images in it like this:



I try to make these clear and descriptive of what I am pinning and featuring. I try to use bright, pictures.

Another idea that many bloggers use is to do a step by step images for their pin like this:



Photo by Melissa Mondragon
of [No 2 Pencil Blog](#)



That is a couple of horizontal images on top of a vertical image with some text in the middle.

Be careful not to make them too huge or spammy for Pinterest. Some pins will work well as long pins and others should just be a regular vertical image.

I create my long pins in [PicMonkey](#). You can easily create collage pins there. A good rule of thumb is to make them a 1:3 ratio in sizing. So I size mine to 600 pixels wide by 1800 long.

Other Tips for Pinterest:

There are prime times to pin for maximum exposure. Evenings between about 8-12 Eastern Time are ideal, as well as weekends with Sunday afternoon and evening typically being peak pinning time. If you pin during that time you are more likely to get repins.

Another thing to do to increase your exposure is to join some group boards that allow you to pin to them. These will often have more followers than your own board which can maximize your exposure. Here are a couple of examples of group boards you can ask to join:

[Your Best DIY Projects](#)
[DIY Boards](#)
[Share Your Craft](#)
[Crafty 2 the Core](#)
[DIY and Crafts](#)

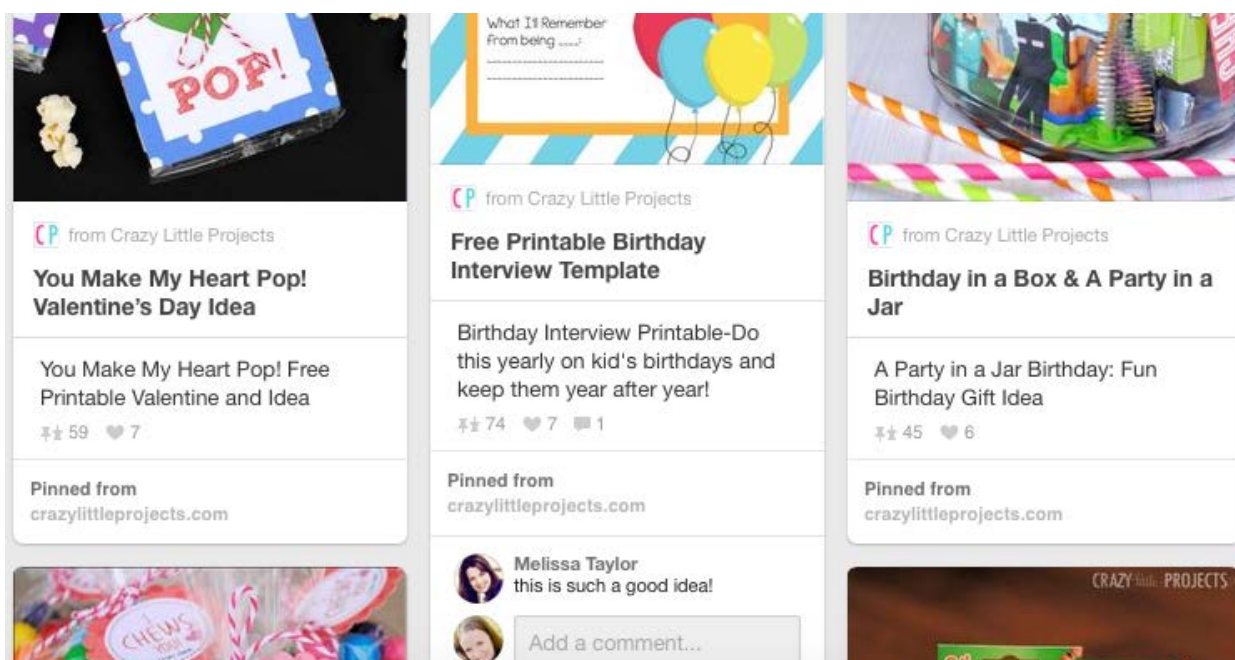
There are plenty more, but those are a few to get you started if they fall in your niche.

Rich Pins: One last thing to do for Pinterest is to set yourself up for Rich Pins. When you are set up for rich pins several things happen. First, when someone pins my pin it will show a little icon showing what site this pin comes from. See the little CLP icon on the pins at the bottom of this page? The text next to it tells all pinners that this pin comes from Crazy Little Projects and will show that no matter who pins this image.

It will also pull recipe information if I am set up for recipe rich pins or travel information if that is applicable to my blog.

Take the time to set these up-they will make a little bit of difference in the experience people have in relation to your pins.

To see more and learn how to do it go [here](#).



Social Media:

While Pinterest is the main source of social media traffic for most bloggers, many other forms of social media can also be beneficial for your blog. They will, of course, drive traffic, which is always a top goal when blogging. But they can also help you create a name for yourself and a brand that people will remember and recognize. Let's explore some of the other

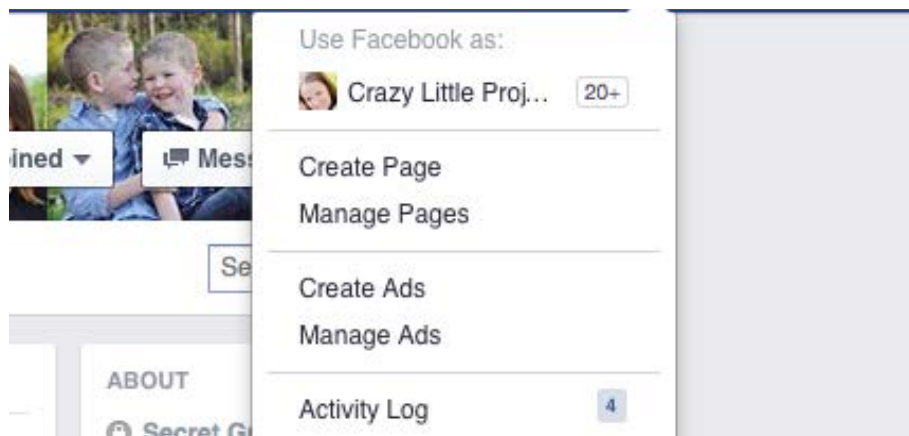


Facebook: Facebook is probably the most used form of social media, meaning it can be a great place to gain followers for your blog.



To get setup on Facebook you will want to create a page. You do this in the top right corner under the drop down menu where it says Create Page.

Select that option and enter your information. You will have the opportunity to add a profile picture, a cover image, put text about your blog and add other details to explain who you are and what your page is for.



Tips for Facebook:

Once you have your Facebook page set up, start posting! But be aware that Facebook is a little tricky these days. You might have 10,000 followers and only have 500 people see your posts. Facebook is trying to show what they feel is the most relevant of posts in users' feeds, so this means that your posts may not be shown to all of your fans.

How do you overcome this? In truth, you can't entirely. But there are some things that you can do that will help.

First, get your fans to engage with you. If you ask a question and they respond, they are more likely to see your next posts AND more of your fans are likely to see that particular post because it is getting engagement. So if you have a post that 100 people respond to, more and more of your fans are going to see that particular post because Facebook recognizes it as a popular post.

The same goes for clicks. If you post something that many of your fans click on, again Facebook will recognize it as an important post and will show it to more of your readers.

And most powerful of all is shares. If your fans share a post that you put on Facebook your reach will increase significantly. And in that case, not only your fans will see it, but your fans friends as well because they shared it on their own wall.

So, how to get these things to happen?

Best practice on Facebook says that you post fairly frequently and you post things that are of great interest to your fans. This is not necessarily all things from your own blog. In fact, the most successful Facebook users share all kinds of internet treasures that they know their readers will love and will share. When they do this they get great reach on their posts and they gain new followers.

This can be a very time consuming effort though. Some bloggers hire someone to do their social media work for them and some schedule out posts in advance. You will have to find what works for you and what you are comfortable with.

Experiment with what posts get the best response and reach on your own Facebook page. Often images will not get as much reach as a post that is just text. You also have the option usually, when you are posting a link, to leave the little thumbnail preview there so that your fans see it, or not. Play around with this and see what works. I find that when I leave the thumbnail there my reach is less UNLESS it is a post that my readers love and decide to share a lot. And they are a lot more likely to share if the link is in place. So in reality, you will probably do a variety of types of posts. Some with links and thumbnails, some just text, some images, and some just conversational to get your fans talking.

On each post Facebook will show you how many fans have seen your post.

Crazy Little Projects
January 7

Anyone else have birthdays this month? My little guy turns 7 next week. I made a cute birthday invitation for him and I am giving you the template to use along with a few other fun ones: <http://wp.me/p2HBpR-2ni>

2,657 people reached **Boost Post**

Like · Comment · Share

Linjen Neogi, Lesley Fordyce, Vanessa Gomez and 7 others like this. **Top Comments**

Write a comment...

Nicole Kester My birthday is jan 15. I'll be 29 - again 😊
Like · Reply · 1 · January 7 at 9:16pm

Crazy Little Projects Nice! 😊
Like · Yesterday at 9:49am · Edited

Write a reply...

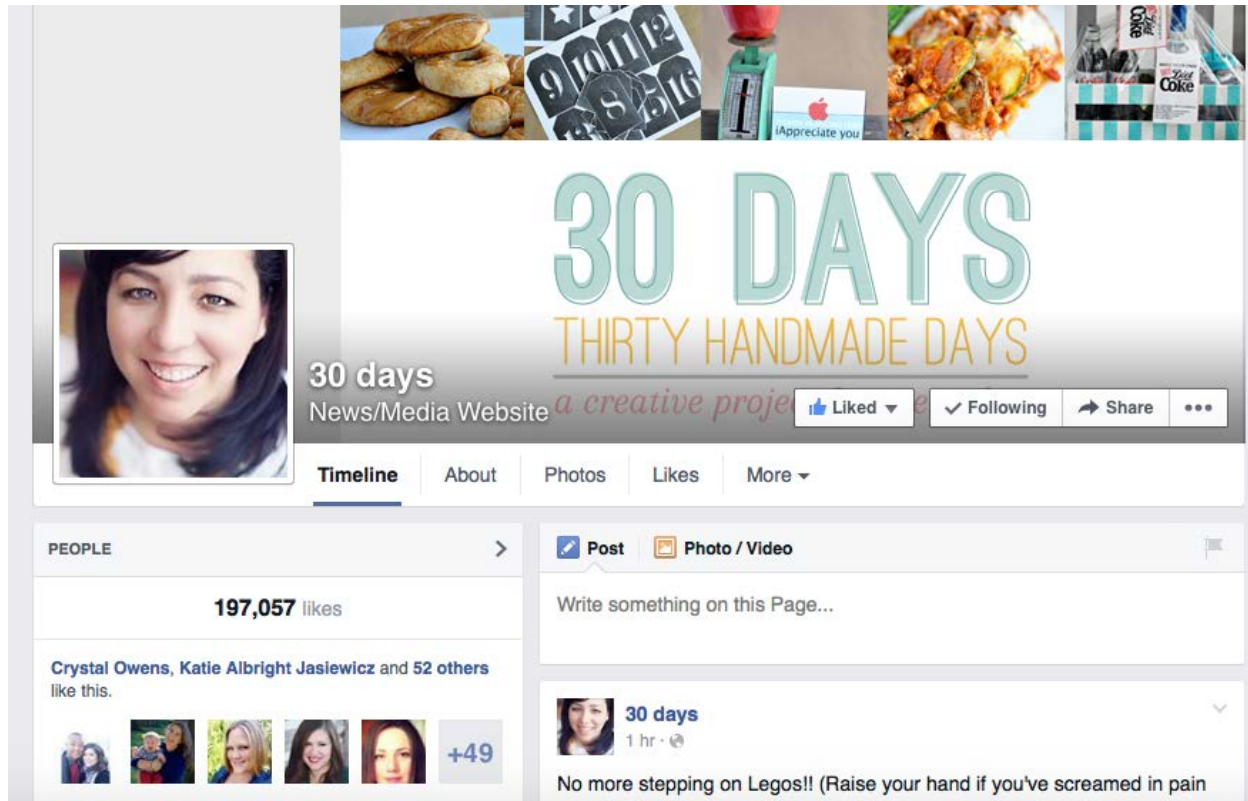
Rachel Marquardt very cute. turning 3 on sat (jan 10). (& the other one will be 9 months on the 12th). where has the time gone?
Like · Reply · January 7 at 8:44pm

You can see that in this post I asked a question to try to get fans talking. Then I tried to respond to many of their comments to keep the conversation going. The reach is still low (only about 10% of my readers saw this post), but that is fairly normal for me and probably for most Facebook users. To truly get a good reach, a lot of work is involved in maintaining your Facebook page and posts.

I should also mention that little blue box up top that says Boost Post. With a click on that box you can pay to boost your post-like advertising it.

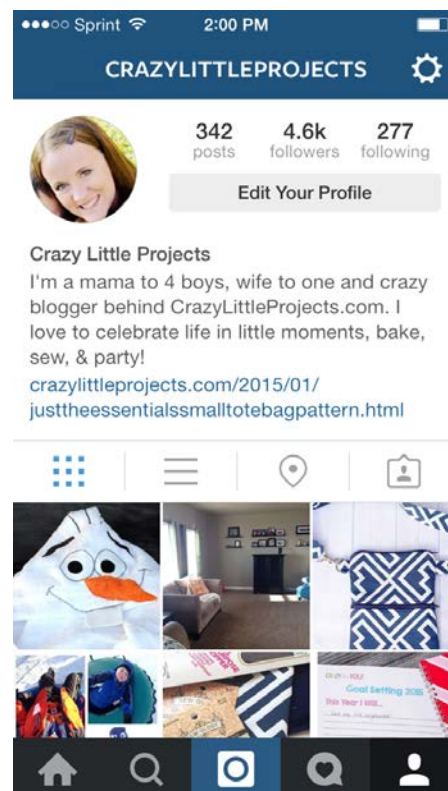
I have done this once or twice without great results, but don't have much experience to give you there. I can tell you that you set your own budget and parameters about who the post will be promoted to.

If you would like to take a look at a great page that has a huge amount of followers and great reach, have a look at [30 Days](#) and see what she is doing. You can see that she is actively posting and engaging readers all the time and this is paying off tremendously in her Facebook numbers.



Instagram: Instagram is more of a new, up and coming form of social media. It's a favorite for me because it is so quick and easy to use and I love to scroll through it because it is quick and easy as a reader too.

To work with Instagram as a blogger I suggest setting up an account that is unique to your blog-using your blog name or a variation of it that your readers can easily remember. Then add some info about your blog in the profile section and a direct link to your blog there as well.



Tips for Instagram:

Once you are all set up, start posting! I am relatively new to the Instagram world (I am also relatively new to the smart phone world-about time huh?), so I have paid attention to what some of the most successful Instagramers are doing that works. Here are a few tips:

- Post pretty pictures. Users on Instagram are there for the pictures, so keep them pretty.
- Post regularly, but don't get spammy and don't post TOO often. A few times a day at the most.
- Give a glimpse into your life/day. Some users do this a lot, showing lots of personal images, others keep it strictly blog related. Find what works for you.
- Keep most of your posts within your niche. The people who are following you are following you because they like to see pictures of things that you do and things that others like you do, so keep it mostly to that.
- Use hashtags that are searchable. For example, if you are posting a recipe you might use hashtags relating to it like #food, #yum, #whatsfordinner, etc. because other users who are searching through Instagram will find you and follow you if they like what they see.

Because you can't post a direct, clickable link in your Instagram postings, Instagram may be a social media source that drives less traffic than others. That's ok. Instagram can be an amazing way to build up your brand, have readers recognize you and your work and remember you.

It can be something that sets you apart to potential sponsors (more on sponsors later) and can be a powerful tool for making your mark in the blogging world. I know of many bloggers who have a smaller number of page views than they might like but huge, loyal Instagram followers and a strong brand recognition for their blog through Instagram.

One thing you CAN do to overcome the non clickable link problem is to post a link in your profile that goes directly to the post that you are referring to that day. So if I post a picture of my Olaf Hooded Towel on Instagram:



I can easily go into my profile and edit the link in there to go directly to that post. Most users on Instagram are going to either see your post that day or not see it at all, so changing out the link frequently works out just fine.



Twitter: Twitter is a form of social media that can be a little bit forgotten, but can still be powerful for blogs. Many large companies are active on Twitter, so it can be a good way to connect with brands and initiate relationships with them and also to be recognized. It's quick and easy.

You can't post more than 140 characters, so keep it short and sweet! If you are posting a link to your blog, shorten the URL either using <https://bitly.com> or in your Wordpress dashboard, where you write your post, select Get Short Link and grab that one.

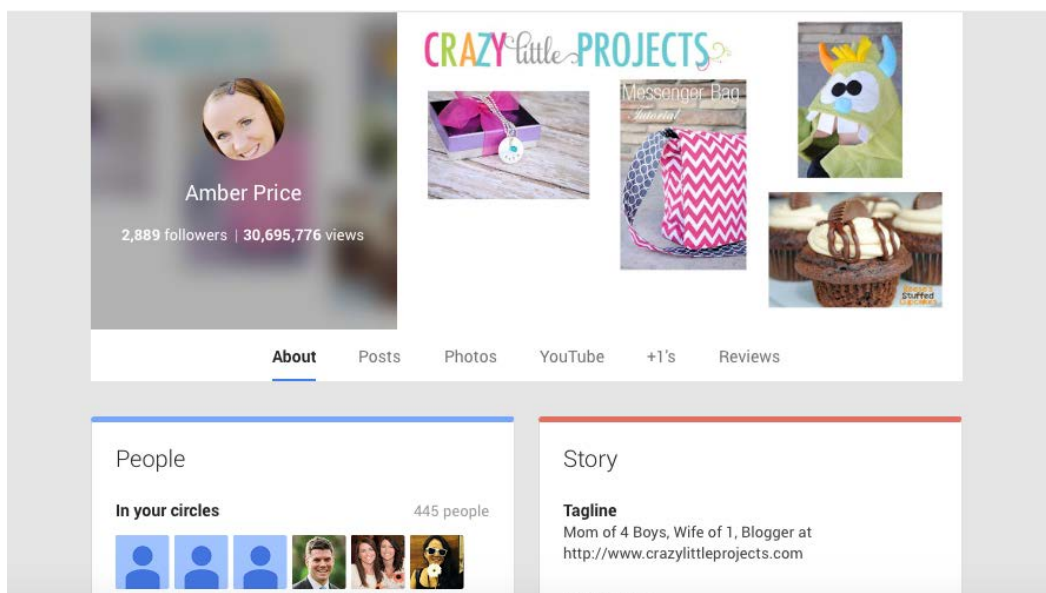
On Twitter, like Instagram, using relevant hashtags can be great for people searching. Also, tag companies that are related to your post. For example, if I do a post using my Cricut machine, when I post on Twitter I can tag them using the @ sign and their username. Sometimes companies will then retweet your tweet, and typically they are going to have a larger following than you, so this can be nice.



Google Plus: Have you ever used google plus? It's really a pretty handy social media tool and I love it for blogging. Google Plus is another social media tool that I don't use primarily to get traffic, but I still use all the time. For me, posting to Google Plus is more about getting my post out there and impacting its SEO for the better. (SEO chapter is coming next!)

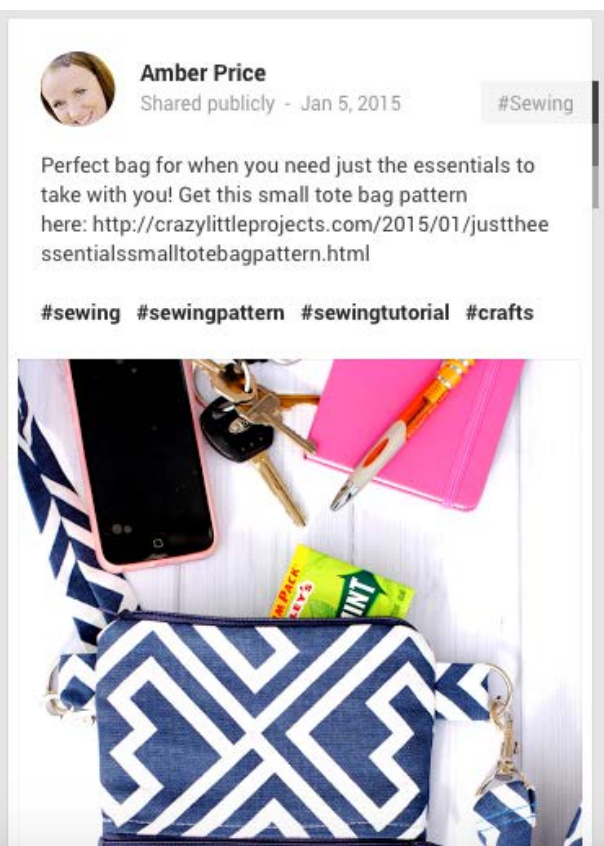
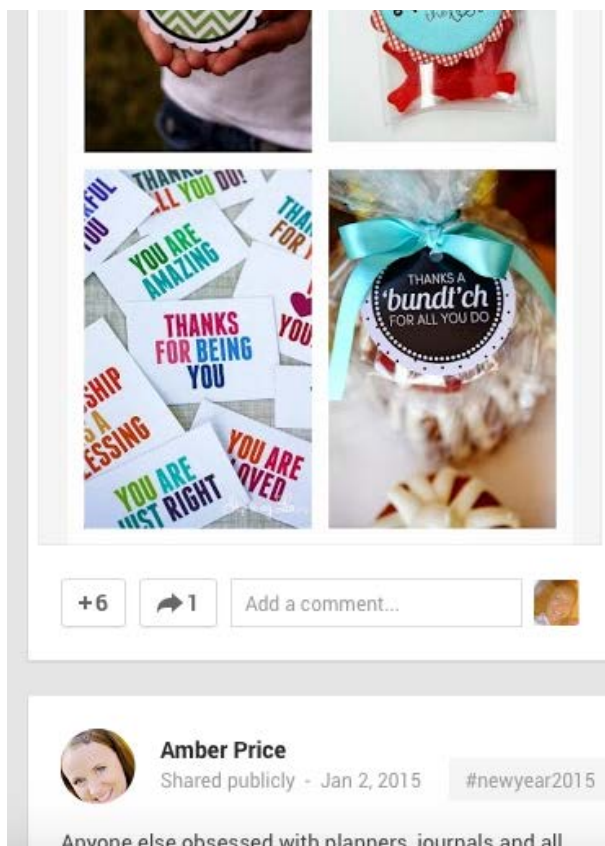
First, set up your Google Plus profile. If you already have a google account for gmail or anything else, then you are probably already linked up with Google Plus. Figure out for sure what account you want to use for your blog account and then set up your profile.

The thing about Google Plus is that your profile can be set up just as your name (or you can use your blog name). If you had multiple blogs or websites they could all be grouped in one under your profile.



I do a google plus post for every single post on my blog. When I post something to Google Plus, I am careful to use keywords that somebody might actually search the internet for that relate to my project. For example, look at this post for my Just the Essentials bag. (On right.)

No one is going to search the internet for “just the essentials bag” but they might search for “small tote bag pattern,” so I have used that phrase in my post:



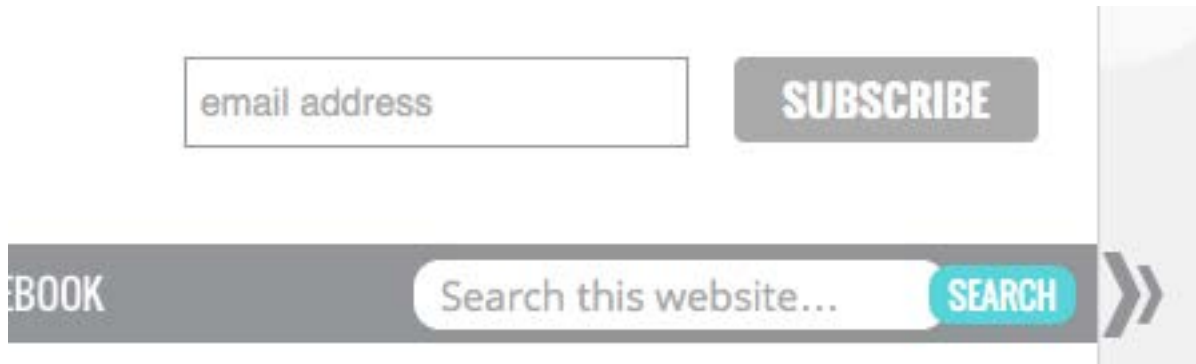
Also, using hashtags on google plus is important as well. As you start to type a hashtag it will automatically pull up hashtags that are related to what you are typing. Choose any that are relevant. This will make your post searchable and gain you more followers.

Posting your blog posts to Google Plus gives you a boost in the Google search engine. To increase your strength on Google plus, take the time to go through and +1 other people’s posts, comment and share other’s posts. I try to do this at the same time that I post my own post.

Email List: An email list is a list of subscribers who will receive emails every time you post and newsletters when you send them as well. You have to power to run sort of your own social media through an email subscriber list.

This list belongs to you and is not governed by any one else's rules.

Collect subscribers with a button on your blog like this one:



You can use a plugin to do this or have someone who knows coding do it for you. There are several possible email list sources for you to use.

A free option is Feedburner. This is run through Google and is entirely free. You can also let readers subscribe to your RSS feed. With this option they don't receive an email but when they look at their RSS reader will see updates whenever you post something new. This is a good option, especially when you are just starting out. The only downfall is that because this list is free to use you don't have a lot of control of your subscriber list and if Google decides to get rid of Feedburner (there were rumors a few years ago that they were), you could lose your list.

There are a few paid options for email lists as well. Mail Chimp is a common email list program that many bloggers use.

Mad Mimi is another email list possibility. Both systems give you a lot more power over how your emails look, when they go out and how often you send them. You can also send newsletters. Mail Chimp is free up to 2,000 subscribers and is reasonable up to about 10,000 subscribers but can get quite pricey beyond that. Mad Mimi will cost you a little bit from the get go but is about half the price that Mail Chimp is as you get bigger.

Having an email list is a powerful tool. This is the only form of social media that you govern entirely on your own. It's not like Facebook that dictates who sees your posts or Instagram that doesn't let you put direct links. With email you can do what you want and your email subscribers are likely to be some of your most loyal followers because they see those emails so frequently and remember who you are.

Bonus Tip: If you are using Mad Mimi or Mail Chimp you can also send out periodic newsletters. Holiday coming up? Put together a newsletter with little teasers about posts relating to that holiday and links to those posts on your blog. This can be a great way to boost traffic.

Once last thing about social media-make sure that you make it easy for people to find you and subscribe on social media! Don't hide it! Put social media icons in at least one spot on your blog and make them clickable links to your social media sites.

Put a pin it button EASILY accessible (and by that I mean at the TOP of your post-easy to find) on every single post along with any other social media promoting that you would like. You WANT people to like you and share you, so make it easy!

Also, you can try popups to gain subscribers. I use the WP Popup Plugin to get email subscribers. It pops up as often as I set it to (I do every 14 days) when readers come to my blog. In 2014 my email list increased 10 times from what it was at the beginning of the year simply by using this. (I added it in May.)

Also, try [Hello Bar](#). I use this at the top of my blog to gain Pinterest subscribers and double my numbers in 4 months with this. It simply says Follow Me on Pinterest with a link. Make it easy and they will come!



Other Ways to Promote:

Link Parties:

One way to get some exposure when you are new to blogging is something called Link Parties. Some bloggers will host a weekly link party on their blog. Then you go to their site, enter a link to a project (or several) that you have worked on during that week or previously and posted on your blog and add a picture. It then gets submitted into a little form that shows thumbnails and links to all of the bloggers' projects that have been linked up.

You will possibly gain some traffic from your small thumbnail link, but more importantly, most bloggers who do link parties will choose some of their favorite projects to feature the next week and THIS will gain you new traffic and new followers.

As a new blogger this can be a very powerful way to grow your blog. In my first weeks of blogging I was thrilled to find myself featured on many sites after link parties and it helped me gain steam on my blog fairly quickly.

A few link parties that I recommend are:

[Link Party Palooza](#)
[The Party Bunch](#)
[The Creative Collection](#)

I believe that each of these go live on Fridays (though at different times). They are each hosted by a group of bloggers, so you can link up at any of their sites. I recommend trying to get in early in the linking up if possible.

Submissions:

Another technique that I used a lot early in my blogging was submitting to various sites that will feature your work. For example, you can submit a post to a site like Craft Gawker. If they accept your post it will be featured on their page and link to your site.

This was a huge source of my traffic early on. It can be time consuming to spend time submitting, but when you are new to blogging and looking for exposure it can prove very worthwhile.

To find places to submit, run a search on the internet, but here are a few I suggest: (These are mostly in my niche because those are the ones I know, but if you are in a different niche just do some searching for some that work for you)

[Craft Gawker](#), [Food Gawker](#), [Dwelling Gawker](#), [Wedding Gawker](#), [Style Gawker](#)

[Craft Gossip](#)

[FaveCrafts](#) (and they have a whole series of affiliated sites)

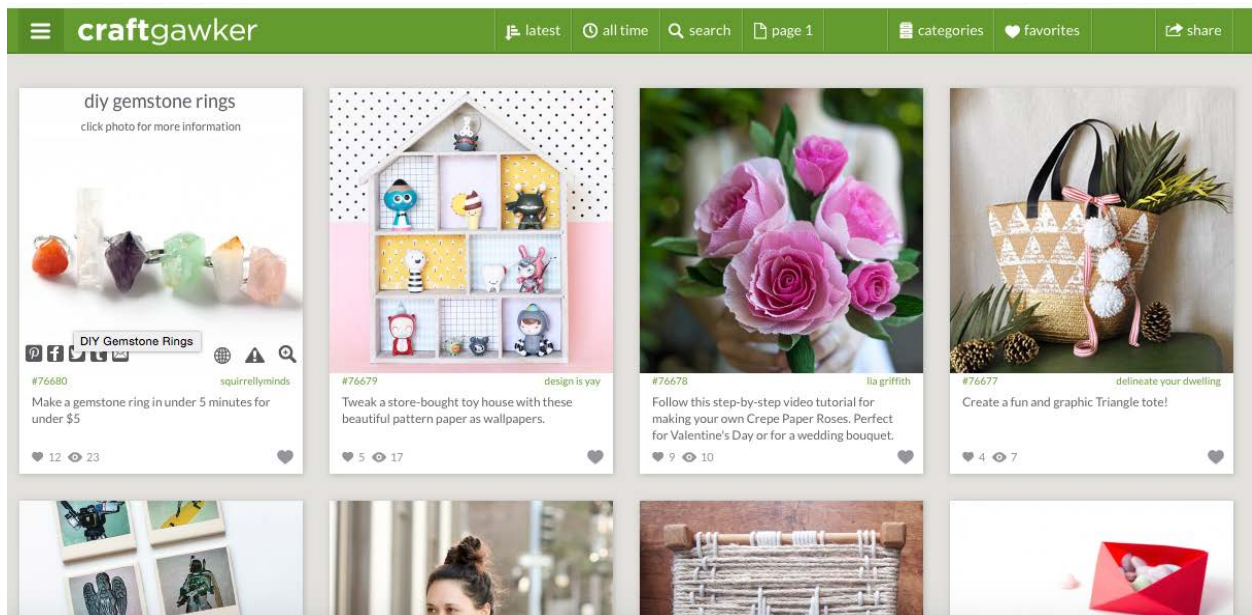
[Fun Family Crafts](#)

[Make and Takes Spotlight](#)

[IShareCrafts](#)

[LooksiSquare](#) and [LooksiBite](#)

There are tons more! Just play around with it and find out which ones work well for you and drive you traffic and new followers.



Conferences & Networking:

When I got started blogging I decided to look at some of my favorite blogs to see what they seemed to be doing right and then I emailed some of my favorites and asked them what their #1 tip to growing your blog would be.

Nine out of 10 of the bloggers I asked all said the same thing! Networking, working with other bloggers, getting to know people in your niche! I was surprised that this would be the top tip of so many bloggers.

Now that I have been blogging for several years I can definitely say that my relationship with other bloggers has helped my blog grow...a lot!

There are several ways to network in the blogging world (and it's not only helpful but fun!) and I recommend jumping in with two feet and doing it! Get to know others, promote others and build yourself a community of support and strength.



Conferences:

The first, and probably best, way to network is to attend blog conferences. There are many, many blog conference that go on all over. You can find large ones or small ones and, at least in America (not sure outside the US) you can find them from coast to coast in many locations. You can find blog conferences in any niche, price range, length of time, etc.

Blog conferences are invaluable to your blogging success. At a blog conference you will typically spend a lot of the day attending classes and workshops that will grow your blogging knowledge immensely. Then you will spend evenings and mealtimes meeting other bloggers, chatting, getting advice and forming relationships.

I recommend this very highly for networking and meeting other bloggers, but also for the learning.

You attend classes and learn a TON that you really won't learn in any other way.

But you are also with other bloggers the whole time. When you meet someone face to face you remember them, you form relationships, you find who works well with you and it helps you grow your blog!

Find a conference you can attend and do it! (Just for fun I included the logos of two of the conferences that I have attended- but there are so many to choose from in so many different niches.)

Here's a list of blog conferences that can get you started in your search for the right one for you.

[The Ultimate List of Blogging Conferences](#)

Blog Groups:

One other great way to networks is to get together with other bloggers to form blogging groups that support each other, promote each other and help each other along. Facebook is full of these sorts of groups. You can find some that are already formed that you can join and you can form your own.

Do a Facebook search for bloggers in your area that are part of a group. I believe most US states have groups called something like Utah Bloggers or Creative Utah Bloggers. These groups will often post about local blogging events that you can attend and meet others. There are also large, niche focused groups like Crafty Support which is a large group of Crafty bloggers or Blogtalk which is a large group of Home/DIY/Creative bloggers.

I also strongly recommend finding a smaller group of bloggers that you can form your own group with. This can be anywhere from a handful of bloggers to a bunch. I belong to a very active group of 25 bloggers. We have been working together for several years, so we know each other well. We come from several different niches-DIY, Home Decor, Food, Crafts, Photography, Sewing and more, but we all promote each other.

Each week we do a pinning thread where we each pin each other's projects. We also sometimes ask for help promoting a specific post or giveaway. And we share knowledge with each other and bounce ideas off each other. It works so well to have a group of bloggers that you can turn to when you need advice and help. Reach out to other bloggers who are a similar size to you and form a group and work together to promote each other. You will find that you grow much faster this way.

Giveaways:

One more way to help you grow is to offer giveaways. You have probably seen this a lot on blogs because it is a fairly common way of growing. You can purchase an item to give away or have someone sponsor the giveaway and provide the prize. You can then post the giveaway on your blog and have it run for about a week. Readers can enter in any way you want like following you on various social media channels, leaving blog comments, answering questions, etc. This can be a good way to grow your social media following.

I typically use a system like Rafflecopter to run my giveaways. You can use it free or purchase a subscription. Either way works well to run a giveaway. It will walk you through the the process, create the entries for you, and even select your winner at the end. All you have to do is copy and paste the code into your blog.

A couple things to note-you need to be careful and make sure you are following all guidelines when running giveaways. For example, Facebook will no longer allow you to use liking a page as an entry. This is also a no no on Google Plus. Asking readers to pin an image is against Pinterest's policy. Those are the major ones to watch out for. Just be careful as you are setting up your giveaway so that you don't break rules and get dinged.

Guest Posts:

One last thing you can do to help get exposure is try to guest post for larger blog that is in your similar niche. Some bloggers will let you do this-you post a post on their blog and then link back to your own blog so that their readers are introduced to you. Not all bloggers have guest posting on their blog, but if you find someone who does, this can be great!

How to Optimize Your Site for Search Engines:

Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is a fairly vital piece of running any website. You know when you run a Google search for something and then a bunch of sites come up with whatever you were searching for? Our goal with SEO is for your blog to be listed in those first few sites that Google pulls up so that new readers will find you (and hopefully love you and stick around).

Search engine optimization can get fairly tricky-if you let it.



But I don't believe it needs to be tricky at all. Follow the few tips I will give you in this chapter and you should be great.

The first thing you need to think about with each post is what your main key words are. So if I am doing a post that is a recipe for chocolate cupcakes that are topped with caramel buttercream and then drizzled in caramel sauce and sprinkled with salt I need to put some thought into what I am going to call this and make it searchable.

I could call them Amazingly Yummy Mind Blowing Cupcakes and that would be true and maybe kind of fun, but it's not going to be search engine friendly at all, because it's not likely that most internet users will be searching for "amazingly yummy mind blowing cupcakes."

Instead, I want to figure out what I can call them that people might search for. There are a couple of ways to do this. I can use my own brain to figure out what I think is most likely to be searched for or what I would search for if I was looking for a recipe like that. This is probably reasonably effective.

Better though, I can use a tool to search for what the most popular search terms for something like this are. The search tool that I typically use is a plugin that I have installed on my blog-WordPress SEO by Yoast.

To use this, I think of what is likely to be a good search term, or I start with a few keywords and start to type it into the Focus Keywords box at the bottom of the post I am writing.

Snippet Preview ? **Salted Caramel Cupcakes Recipe**
 crazylittleprojects.com/2014/02/salted-caramel-cupcakes.html
 Try this easy salted caramel cupcakes recipe. It's the best!

Focus Keyword: ?
 salted caramel cupcakes
 salted caramel cupcake filling
 salted caramel cupcake scentsy
 salted caramel cupcake scentsy review
 salted caramel cupcakes easy
 salted caramel cupcake calories
 salted caramel cupcakes sprinkles
 salted caramel cupcakes betty crocker
 salted caramel cupcakes chocolate
 salted caramel cupcakes starbucks

SEO Title: ?

Meta description: ?

The meta description will be limited to 156 chars, 96 chars left.

As I start to type something that I am thinking might be good, it will pull up a list of possible phrases or keywords that fit what I am searching for. I will then pick whichever term fits the best and is the closest to the top of that list, so in this case, Salted Caramel Cupcakes.

I put that in there as my keywords for this post and that plugin will then help me track how well I am doing at SEOing this post.

You can see here that it gives me an idea of where it is important to put those keywords:

Focus Keyword: ?

Focus keyword usage
 Your focus keyword was found in:

- Article Heading: **Yes (1)**
- Page title: **Yes (1)**
- Page URL: **Yes (1)**
- Content: **Yes (2)**
- Meta description: **Yes (1)**

As I write the post I will make sure to get that keyword phrase in there in the key places.

Let's run through those key places.

First-the title of my post:

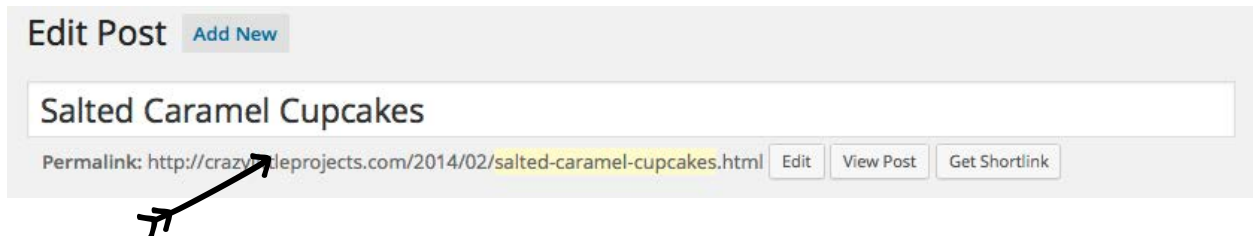
Edit Post [Add New](#)

Permalink: <http://crazylittleprojects.com/2014/02/salted-caramel-cupcakes.html> [Edit](#) [View Post](#) [Get Shortlink](#)

I name it the phrase that I came up with as my main keywords. Keep in mind that as long as you are using those main keywords it can be good to throw some other potential search terms in there too. For example I might call it Salted Caramel Cupcakes Recipe knowing that some people might search using the word “recipe.”

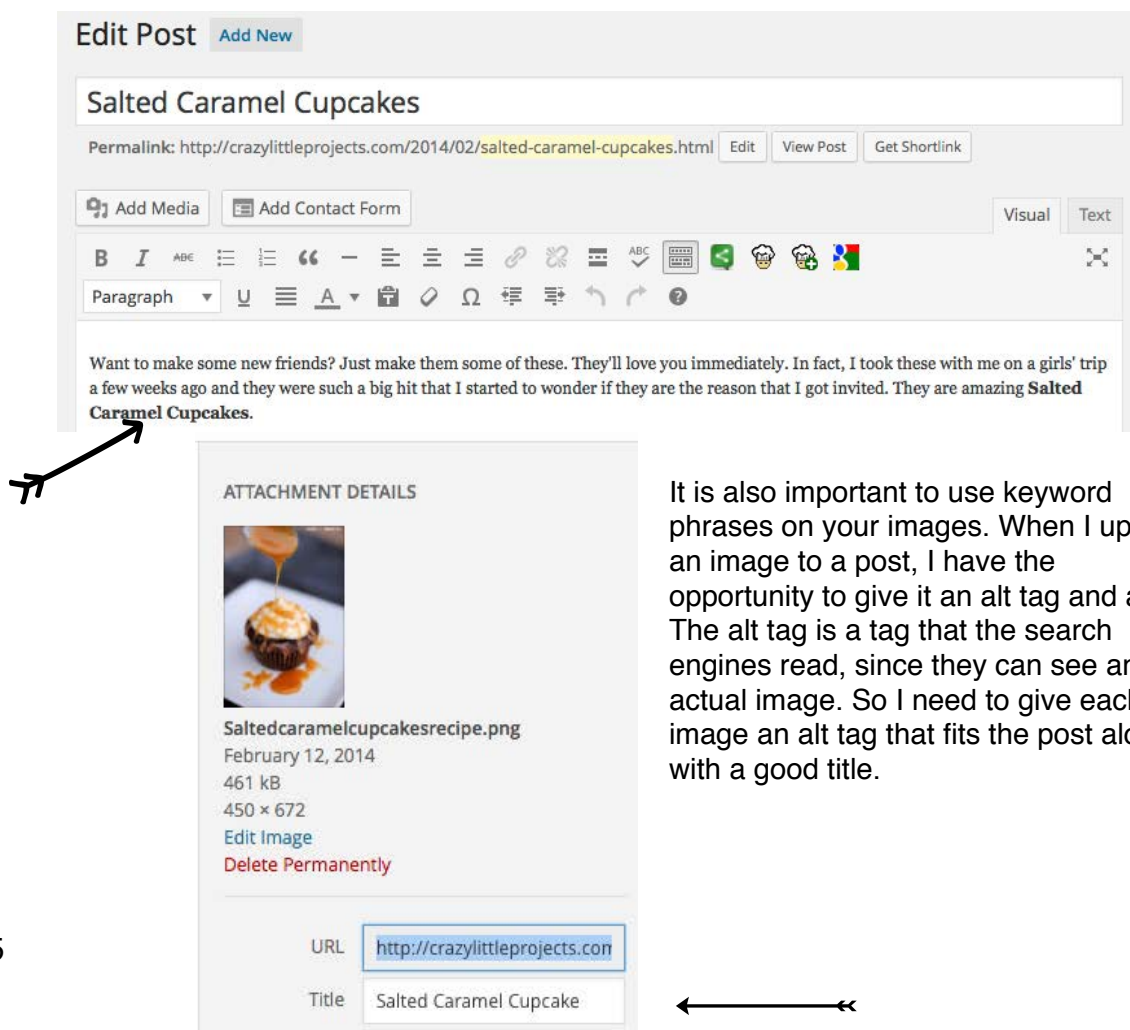
This way I have covered my bases for searches for either Salted Caramel Cupcakes or Salted Caramel Cupcakes recipe or even caramel cupcakes recipe and other variations.

Next, I will put it in my URL for that post:



You can smoosh all of the words together in one or you can put hyphens in between, either way works, just get it in there on your URL.

Next, I try to put that phrase or some variation of it in my first paragraph:



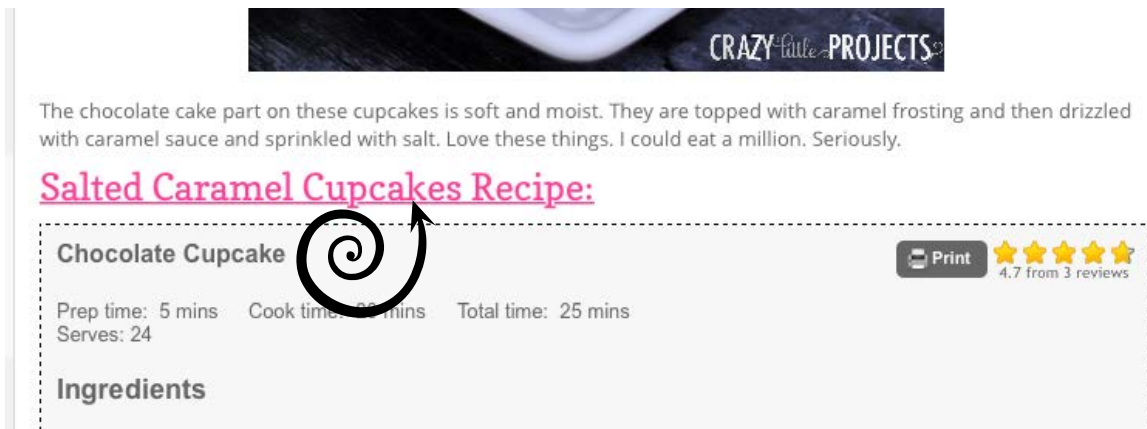
It is also important to use keyword phrases on your images. When I upload an image to a post, I have the opportunity to give it an alt tag and a title. The alt tag is a tag that the search engines read, since they can see an actual image. So I need to give each image an alt tag that fits the post along with a good title.

Because most posts are going to have multiple images, I try to shake things up here. I am not going to use that same phrase on every single image. You DON'T want to use the keywords excessively in a post. Search engines don't like that. So this is your chance to throw in some other stuff. So I might name on images Salted Caramel Cupcakes, the next one Chocolate and Caramel Cupcake Recipe (there is a difference between cupcakes and cupcake as far as search engines are concerned) and maybe another one Caramel Cupcakes with Caramel Sauce or something. Just shake things up, use a variety of applicable keywords.

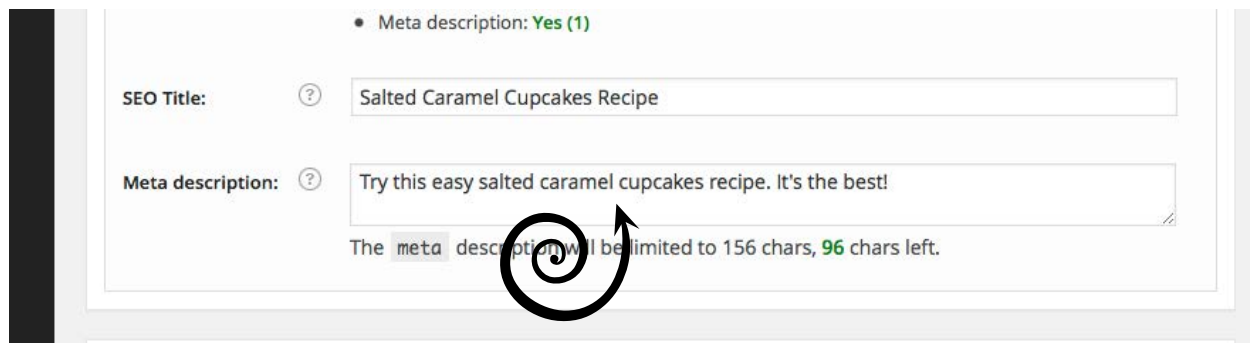
It's also important to note that when you are editing images on your computer and saving them, you should be naming them with your keywords as well, and again, this is a good place to shake it up and use variety. So I won't name my picture 234.jpg but saltedcaramelcupcakes.jpg instead.

Now, in the body of my post I have already used my keyword phrase once, so I really only throw it in here as needed in my writing to make my post make sense. I don't spend a ton of time trying to pop it in there too much at this point. You don't want to be spammy with your keywords.

But, in the body of my post I will use one article heading with my keyword phrase:



Last, use your keyword phrase in your meta description:



This meta description will be the little paragraph that the search engine pulls to use on the search page description:

Salted Caramel Cupcakes Recipe - Crazy Little Projects



crazylittleprojects.com/2014/.../salted-caramel-cupcakes.htm...

★★★★★ Rating: 4.7 - 3 votes - 25 mins

Feb 13, 2014 - Try this easy salted caramel cupcakes recipe. It's the best!

The truth is that I don't worry a ton about what I say here because I don't think most people read these, I just make sure that I get those keywords thrown in there again.

Now, this Yoast SEO plugin will give me a grade for how well I have done in getting my post search engine ready with a red, green, orange or yellow light right in the box where you publish. You want a green light. (See image to left.)

Publicize: Not Connected

[Show](#)



SEO: Good [Check](#)

Move to Trash

Update

It will also give you some tips to do better if you need it. (See image below.) A very handy tool! Follow these basic SEO tips and you should rank fairly well in the search engines.

WordPress SEO by Yoast

General Page Analysis Advanced Social

To update this page analysis, save as draft or update and check this tab again.

- No outbound links appear in this page, consider adding some as appropriate.
- The meta description is under 120 characters, however up to 156 characters are available. The available space is shorter than the usual 155 characters because Google will also include the publication date in the snippet.
- The page title contains 30 characters, which is less than the recommended minimum of 40 characters. Use the space to add keyword variations or create compelling call-to-action copy.
- The copy scores 78.1 in the [Flesch Reading Ease](#) test, which is considered fairly easy to read.
- The keyword / phrase appears in the URL for this page.
- The images on this page contain alt tags with the target keyword / phrase.
- Keyword / keyphrase appears in 1 (out of 4) subheadings in the copy. While not a major ranking factor, this is beneficial.
- The keyword density is 1.04%, which is great, the keyword was found 5 times.
- The page title contains keyword / phrase, at the beginning which is considered to improve rankings.
- The meta description contains the primary keyword / phrase.
- There are 492 words contained in the body copy, this is more than the 300 word recommended minimum.
- You've never used this focus keyword before, very good.
- The keyword appears in the first paragraph of the copy.

Understanding Your Blog Statistics:

Let's take a quick look at page views and statistics-because after all, that's a big part of what we want when we are blogging. If I am getting paid for every 1,000 page views (which I am and we will talk about that next), then understanding my statistics is pretty important.

There are a couple of ways to view your statistics. The industry standard for statistics reporting is Google Analytics. This is the official way to view and report your statistics so you will need to make sure that you have it installed and working on your blog. There are plugins that will help you do this (search for Google Analytics in plugins) or you can do it by adding code to your blog. (The google analytics help page will show you how to do this.)

When a company wants to work with you and asks for your statistics, you can then go into your Google Analytics account and find out what you need to know.

Here is a peek at my statistics report for one day.

It shows a number of different things.

Sessions means the number of people who came to my site in the last 30 days. If they were inactive for a period of time and then come back and start up again it starts as a new session.

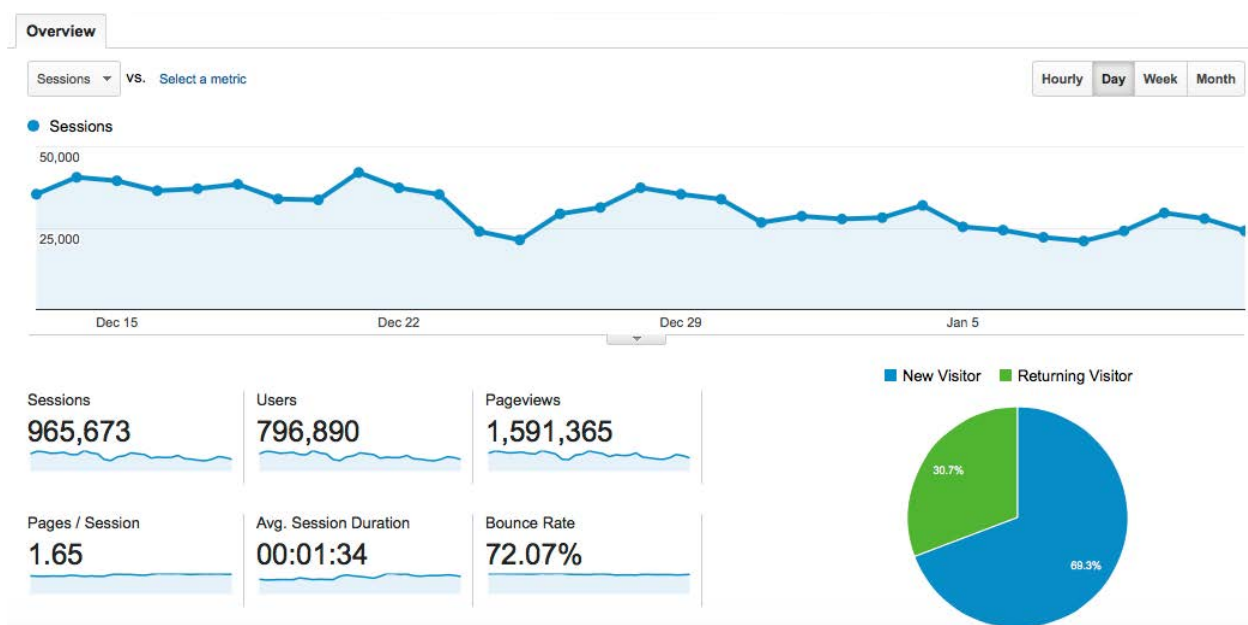
The users on the other hand is just the number of people who have been to my blog in the last 30 days.

Then there are the page views. This is the number of pages loaded on my blog in the last 30 days.

You can also see how many pages on average readers viewed while on the site.

The bounce rate is how many people come and then leave fairly quickly without surfing around and then the average duration is of course how long they stayed on the site.

This can be useful information to pay attention to.



Now, you can also find out all kinds of information about what is going on when you start to surf around on the side bar. (See image to right.)

For example, if I look at the Real Time stats it will show me how many people are on my site and what pages they are viewing. It can also tell you where they are coming from, where in the world they are, and what they are doing on your site.

You can run searches to find out more popular posts over a certain length of time as well. Google Analytics is very powerful. It can also be overwhelming because there is SO much information there.

Dig around in this side bar and you will find a wealth of information about your site and traffic and who your readers are, what they like and where they are going on your site.

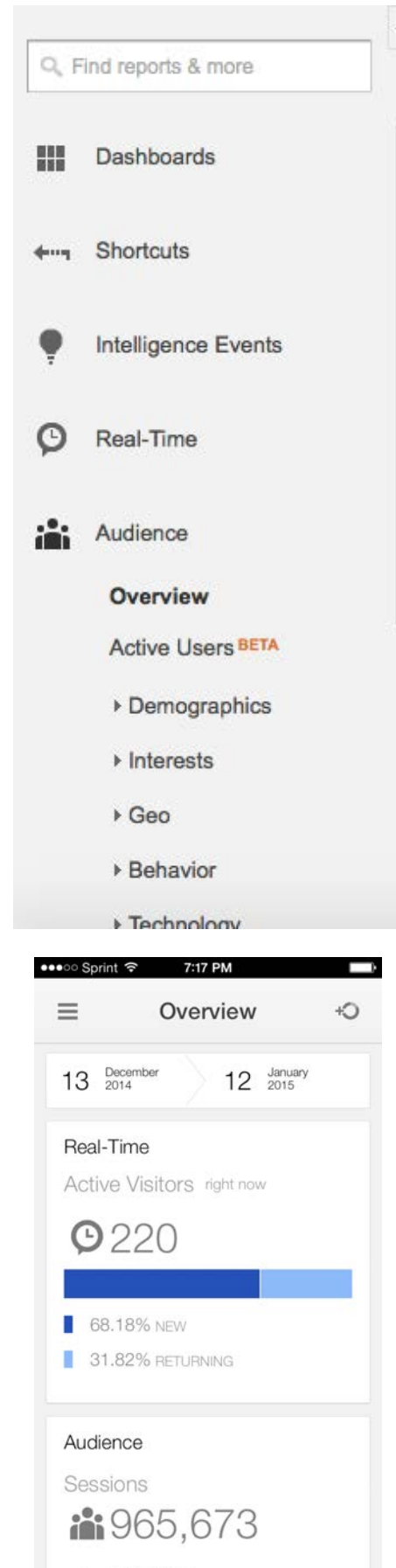
A few more simple statistics programs are available as well. I use two apps to track statistics: Google Analytics app and Quicklytics app.

Here's a peek at what the Google Analytics app does. It's basically the same thing as the Google analytics site but in a smaller, more condensed version.

I can see at any given moment how many people are on my site. (See image on right.)

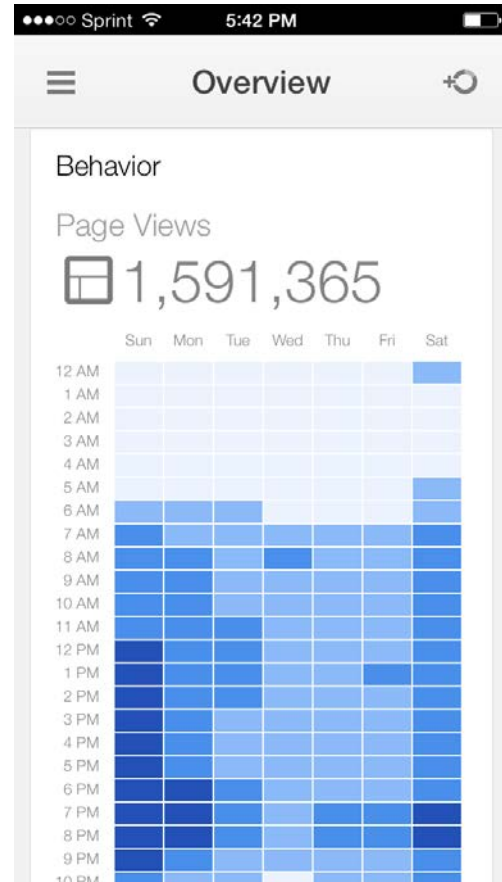
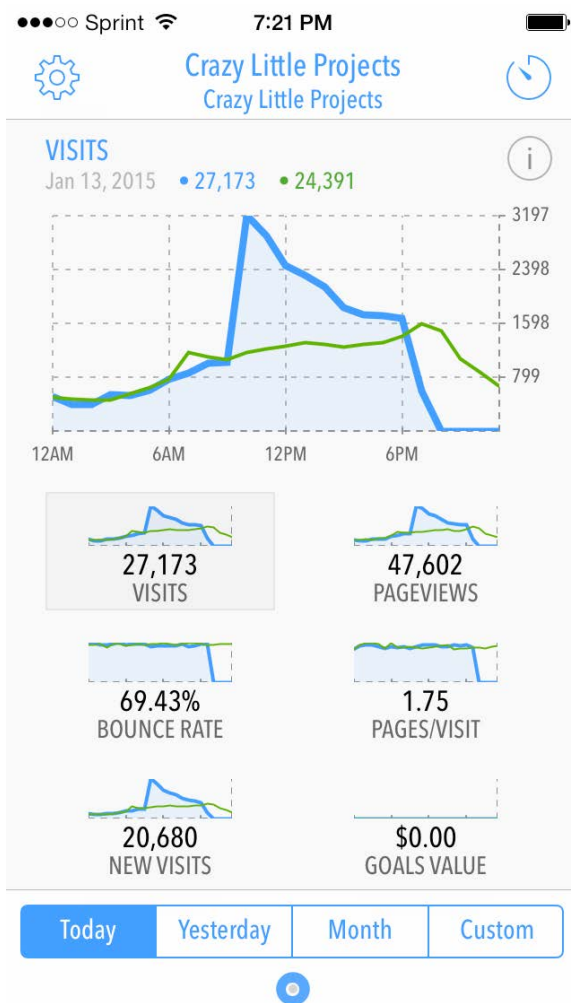
This also shows me how many are brand new visitors and how many are returning. Also, at the bottom of this image you see sessions. That's how many unique visitors I had in the last 30 days.

Basically it's the same information that I can get in google analytics, but here I can access it on my phone at any time-quick and easy. It won't give me all the information of google analytics, but it gives me the basics.



It also tells me times that I have the most traffic on my blog. You can dig a little deeper to find things like where in the world people are coming from and you can set goals and it will track it for you. I mostly use this app just to monitor how many people are on my site at any given time. (See right.)

Quicklytics is fairly similar but gives you a graph that compares the current day with the same day the previous week:



Typically I see similar trends from one week to the next. You can see that on this day I had quite a traffic surge in the morning that tapered off to regular levels by the end of the day. It also tells me how many page views I have had so far today, how many visits, bounce rate, etc.

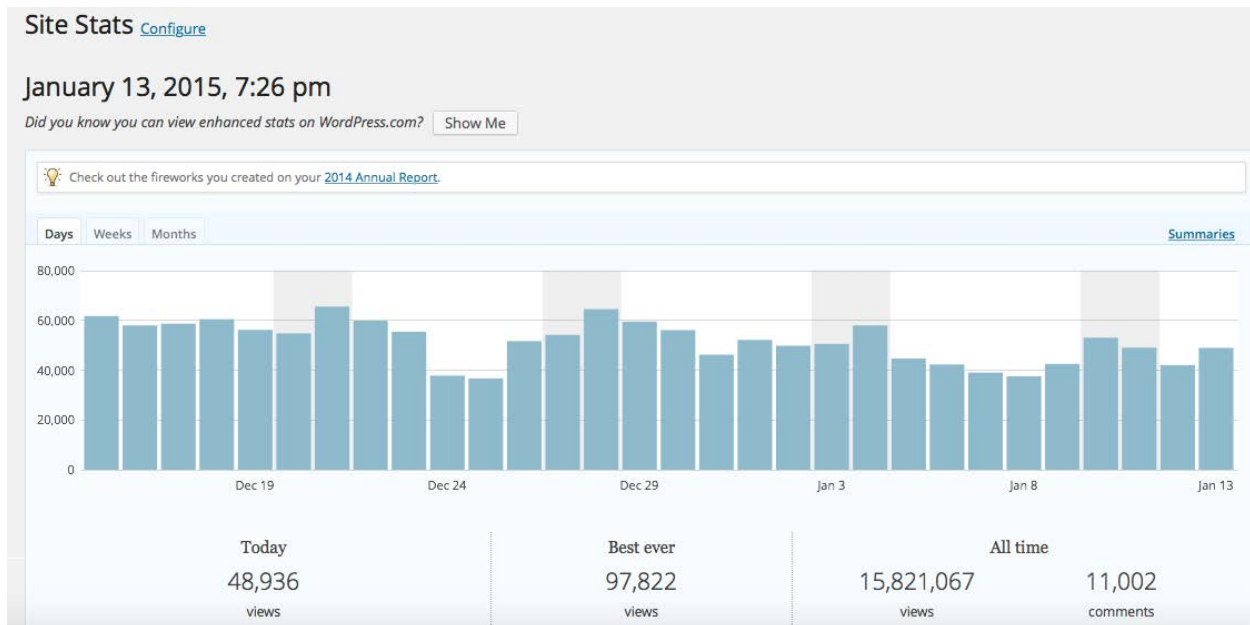
I can also click to see yesterday, the past month and I can set up custom settings. This app will also show me current active visitors, what pages they are visiting, etc.

So both of these apps are fairly handy to have.

One last statistics program that I like to use is the Jetpack plugin on WordPress. When you install this on your site you can view helpful information any time you login. This is a less accurate reporting tool (the numbers will be slightly off compared to Google Analytics), but it is easy to use and is what I look at most often.

To access this you simply click on Jetpack/Site Stats on your sidebar in WordPress once you have this Plugin installed. (To install go to Plugins, Add New.)

Then, this is what you will see:



At any given time I can see how many page views I have had so far that day, have a quick graph look at how that compares to the past month, see all time highs and totals (at least since I installed these statistics), and I can click on the tabs at the top to compare weeks and months. Again, remember that these statistics aren't completely accurate, but they give me a ball park look at how things are going.

Below this I see some very helpful breakdowns. I can see the top 10 traffic sources for that day and exactly where that traffic is coming from. I can also see what posts are performing the best and where my outgoing traffic is going. Paying attention to this can be VERY helpful. You can get an idea of what your readers like, what traffic sources are working and are worth investing time in and just a general idea of how things are going on your blog.

Referrers		Top Posts & Pages	
Today	Yesterday	Today	Yesterday
Summaries		Summaries	
Referrer	Views	Title	Views
diycozyhome.com	11,833	50 Sewing Tips for Beginners & Pros	13,500
pinterest.com	8,541	Home page / Archives	4,188
Search Engines	3,159	25 Things to Sew in Under 10 Minutes	3,722
Facebook	1,062	25 Things to Sew in Under 30 Minutes	1,646
u-createcrafts.com	171	How to Make Piping	1,061
sewing.craftgossip.com	170	25 things to do with Fat Quarters	955
diycraftsmom.com/25-diy-gadget-sewing-projects/	76	35 Valentine Party Ideas	786
crhideas.com	55	Learn to Sew Series Lesson #1: How to Sew a Straight Line	761
sewingsupport.com	52	Meet Your Sewing Machine	667
thesewingloftblog.com	43	Ipad Sleeve Case Tutorial & 25 Things to Sew for your Gadgets	601
Other sources	4,490	Other posts	21,073
Total views referred by links to your blog	29,652	Total views of posts on your blog	48,960

Search Engine Terms		
Today	Yesterday	Summaries
Search	Views	
easy sewing projects	9	
crazy little projects	8	
bookmarks	6	
crazylittleprojects	5	
beginning projects using fat quarters	5	
25 10 minute sewing projectd	5	
sewing projects for beginners	5	
sewing activities+middle school	5	
learn to sew with crazy little projects	4	
Other search terms	482	
Unknown search terms	1,619	
Total search terms	2,153	

Clicks		
Today	Yesterday	Summaries
URL	Clicks	
cf.crazylittleprojects.com	2,039	
thesewingloftblog.com	435	
makeit-loveit.com	286	
sewmamasew.com	222	
simplesimonandco.com	187	
running-w-scissors.com	149	
cheapbutchicblog.com/2014/01/07/serge-wout-a-serger/	148	
mellysews.com	140	
polkadotchair.com	110	
marthastewart.com	107	
Other links	3,812	
Total clicks on links on your blog	7,635	

I can also click to expand those 4 areas so that they show not just the top 10 for the day, but all information on that subject. So I can see how many views ALL of my posts got that day or I can see ALL of the incoming traffic sources to my blog. This can be fun to pay attention to. I am often surprised at the traffic that some posts are getting that I didn't realize was coming in.

One more small thing that Jetpack does-I have little icon at the top of my site that only I can see and only when I am logged in, but it gives me a small glimpse of my stats for the past 48 hours. This is mostly helpful if I see a sharp jump in page views-then I can go to my statistics page and dig a little deeper to find out where that traffic is coming from.



You can see here that I had a huge jump in page views on the morning of this day. When I saw that I was able to go into my statistics and see that a large site had featured one of my posts and was driving a ton of traffic to my site. It's handy to be able to figure out where traffic is coming from.

So following your statistics closely can matter because it will show you how things are happening on your blog, what is working and what is not.

Also, as you watch your statistics, think about using the popular pages to link to other pages as well.

You can add something like "You Might Also Like: below your posts and link to other posts or you can add links in your sidebar to your most popular post to get people clicking around through your site. This can increase your pageviews significantly.

Sidebar Advertising:

We have finally come to the part you have probably been waiting for...how to make money blogging. I saved it for last because all of the other parts are crucial to have in place if you want to succeed on the money making end of things.

The most common question that I get asked by friends and family about my blog is how I make any money. "I just don't understand how you make money with you blog." Or they are surprised that I make money at all-they thought it was just a hobby. But it's not. I am making a full time income on my blog and to me, that's pretty neat! I love that I can stay at home with my kids, blog in my spare time, and still contribute to my family's income.



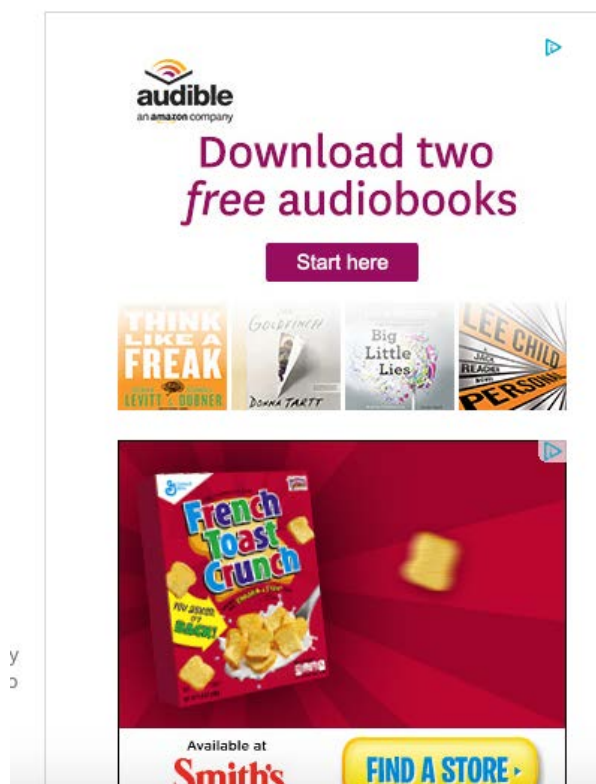
And I know you want to know how to do this too, so let's explore this area.

There are a number of ways to make money blogging. And each blogger probably relies more heavily on some areas than others and it's different from one blogger to another. We will talk about all of these areas so you can do what feels right and works best for you. For me, by far the biggest source of my income comes from ads that run on my sidebar and across the top and bottom of my pages.

These ads are run through Ad Networks. When I sign up with an Ad Network they then send me code to put in those places on my website and that code automatically loads the ads every time a page is loaded. I have about 6-7 ads on my page at a time.

Once the code is in place, I don't really have to worry at all about the ads. They just load and do their thing and then I make money. I don't even know which ads will be appearing, although I do have some control over ads that I DON'T want to have appear on my blog if I feel they are inappropriate or not something I want to advertise. Otherwise the ads just load and make money with no effort directed towards them from me.

Here is a sample of a couple of my side bar ads here:



There are two types of ads on my blog- pay per click and pay per impression.

Most of my ads are pay per impression. This means that I am paid a certain amount of money for every 1,000 times an ad appears on my site. That amount is called my CPM. Let's say my CPM is \$5 for any given ad. When that ad spot has loaded 1,000 times, I will make \$5.

That might not sound like a lot at first, but remember that I have about 6-7 ads loading at a time (though all with different CPMs) times tens of thousands of page views a day and it begins to add up nicely.

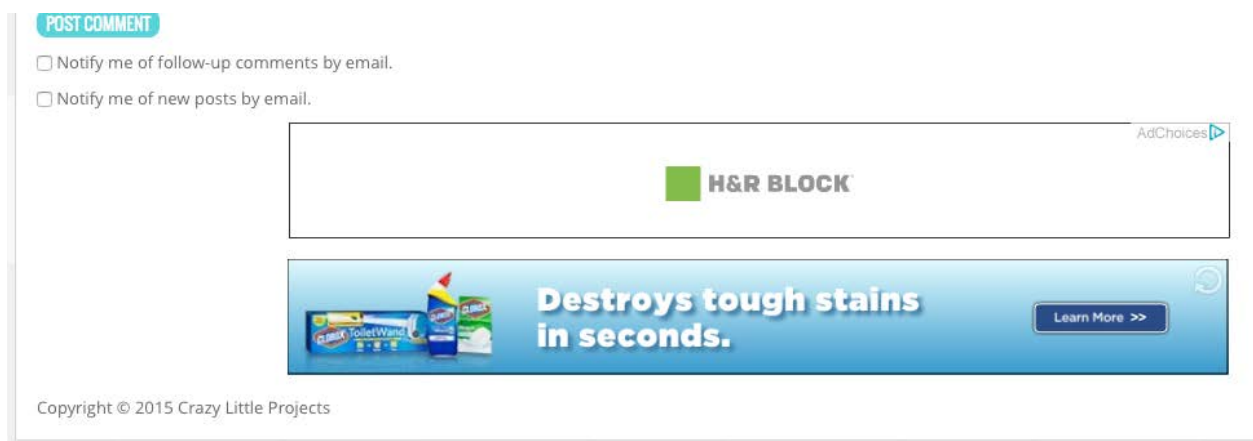
The other type of ad- pay per click- is less common, but also used. For these ads I get paid only when a reader clicks on it and is taken to the site that it is advertising.

On my blog I work with about 8 different ad networks and only one is pay per click. (Google AdSense) However, all of the ads look the same and when I look at my blog I can't tell which ads are running from which network. They all appear the same.

Here's a peek at what the banner ads look like on my page as well:



One up at the top and two down at the very bottom:



So the next question then, is how do you sign up for these Ad Networks?

There are a lot of Ad Networks out there. Typically you will run ads from one Premium Ad company and then fill the rest of your spots with smaller ad companies.

Here is a list of some Ad Networks to get you started.

Google Adsense
BlogHer
Martha's Circle
Pulse Point
Sovrn
Advertising.com
Rivit
Federated Media
Glam
Price Grabber
Burst Media

and I am sure that there are tons more.

Many of those companies are going to make you apply to be in their network and may have some minimum page view requirements before they will accept you. This is why we spent the first part of this eBook getting all the basics in place. You will want to make sure your blog is up and functioning well and looks nice before you begin applying to ad networks.

I will tell you that I started off with Google Adsense early on and then applied for BlogHer after I had been blogging for 3 months (which was their requirement) and then added others in later. Be a little patient. You will make money, but you need to spend some time getting there.

Now, one more important piece of information. My ads are running on something called Google DFP or double click for publishers. This means that with all of my ad networks set up, they are each ready to load ads at any given time, but the highest paying ad takes precedence and are the ones that actually run, meaning I make more money.

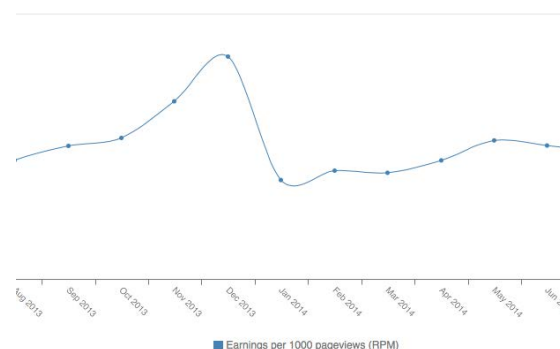
Let me tell you up front that I actually don't take care of my own ads. I have a company that does it for me and I love working with them. The company is called AdThrive and they manage and maintain all of my ads on my site. They pay attention to what is performing well, what needs tweaking and what needs to be changed out.

They have a minimum page view requirement before you can beginning working with them-100,000 per month for their basic service or 750,000 for premium. Until you reach a place where you can have someone maintain your ads for you (which I really recommend), you will need to do it yourself.

DFP is way over my head and is why I have an ad company running it for me. I am telling you about it so that when you get to that point-where you are ready to work with an ad company-you will understand why it is beneficial. Start thinking about implementing DFP when you get to about 100,000 page views per month.

With all of these ads running and paying you, what you make on average each month will be your RPM. So my total I made for the month per 1,000 page views is my RPM.

Note that this will fluctuate throughout the course of the year. In November and December this rate will be MUCH higher than in January for example. Here is a small graph to show you the change that can occur in this rate:



Affiliate Marketing:

Affiliate marketing can be another great way to make money on a blog. If I am signed up as an affiliate with a company, what this means is that if I promote a product and my readers then go to their site and buy it (using a special link that I generate), I make a percentage of the sale.

So it can be a fairly passive, easy way to make money. I can write a tutorial for how to use heat transfer vinyl and in my supply list include an affiliate link to a heat transfer vinyl source and then if my readers purchase that vinyl, I will make money.

For my blog this is a minor source of income but you can see that for some types of blogs this could be huge!

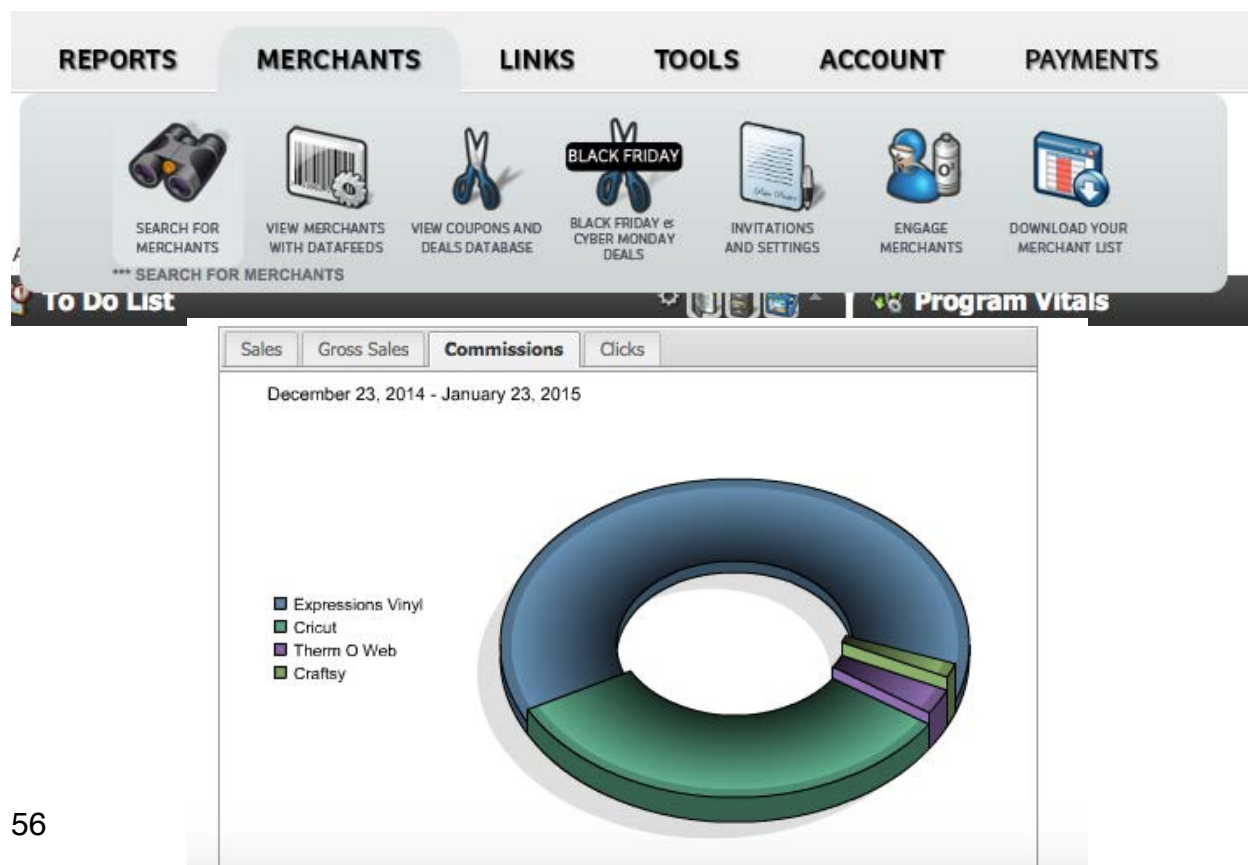
For example, if I am a deals and bargains kind of site and I post the latest and

greatest deals that I find and use affiliate links, I stand to make quite a bit of money on it.

So how do you get started with affiliate marketing?

First of all, there are a couple of major sites that are there just for connecting you with affiliates and will help you get started. shareasale.com and cj.com are each sites that you can sign up for and then apply for affiliate programs within them.

Take a look at my ShareASale dashboard. In it I can search for new merchants that I would like to apply to work with. I can also create my affiliate links to the sites that I already work with and I can track my affiliate sales with those sites.



You can see some of the companies that I work with in the graph above. There are tons of companies that run their programs through either ShareASale or Commission Junction (cj.com).

There are also many privately run affiliate programs.

Amazon has an affiliate program that can be very successful, especially at the holidays when many people are shopping on Amazon.

As with any affiliate program, there is a window of time that my readers can purchase after clicking on my link in order for me to receive the commission. For Amazon it is 24 hours. Some companies will have it as long as 30 days.

Also note that I may recommend something on Amazon and my readers are taken to that page but in the end decide to purchase something else, I still get my commission if they bought in the timeframe that Amazon pays even if they didn't buy what I was recommending.



It's also worth noting that there are some rules and restrictions that prevent residents in some states from participating in the Amazon affiliate program, so make sure your state qualifies before you sign up.



Now for companies that are not affiliated with the websites mentioned above, you can often find affiliate programs that are run independently.

Typically if I am trying to find out if a company offers an affiliate program I scroll to the bottom of their site and look for something like this. (See image above.)

Click on that link and you will be given information about their affiliate program and how to sign up.

It is important also to note that when using affiliate links you can embed them right into your text so that readers really won't even know that you are giving them an affiliate link. It is required, however, to disclose where affiliate links are being used. I have a number of affiliate links being used throughout this eBook, so on my title page I disclosed that to make sure that I am being clear and upfront with my readers. You will need to find a way to do this when using affiliates.

Sponsored Posts:

A third way that many bloggers make money is through sponsors or sponsored posts.

This is when a company approaches you to work with them to promote a product of theirs and you are paid in return for your work.

Sometimes bloggers are paid only in product, but generally they are paid in money as well.

Creating relationships with brands and working together on posts can be a very fulfilling part of blogging for many bloggers, particularly when it is a company that you genuinely love.

Let me give you an example of a sponsored post on my blog and talk about some of the steps involved in completing a sponsored post.

This post about throwing a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Party is a post that was sponsored by Target (in this case through a third party agency-we will talk more about those in a minute).

I was approached about doing this post with a pitch about what they were looking for, what requirements they had for the post and what the payment would be. I agreed to it, signed a contract and then had a certain time frame to complete the post.

For this particular post they were asking me to throw a TMNT party and use products from Target as well as incorporating some of my own creative ideas to make it a fun party that my readers would love.

They gave me a stipend to buy products from Target in addition to a payment after completing the post.

If there is one thing I love to do, it's pull together something fun for the kids. And bonus points if it's something that involves me getting to be crafty and creative AND have friends over to enjoy it with us, so this Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Party was a perfect celebration for us. I loved it, they loved it, our friends loved it.

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Party Ideas:



You can see my use of Target TMNT products in the post:



Along with creative ideas of my own that did not involve any Target products:



By doing this it makes it real to my readers. I am saying here are some great, fun party ideas to through a TMNT party to my readers, and for Target it works great because I am then throwing in some ideas that link to them and use their products so that people using my ideas may be inclined to purchase these products as well.

In my text when I talk about the products I used special links to the Target website that were generated specifically for this post by Target. You can also see that I disclosed at the beginning of the post that this is sponsored. (See below.) This is required on sponsored posts. In this case the required text was given to me along with a tracking link that is embedded so that they can track the page views on this post. Other times you will just create your own disclosure statement.



This post is sponsored by **Target**. More Turtles, More Bold and Daring Fun: Blur the lines of fantasy and reality with your favorite Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles at Target.

Often you will also be required to promote your sponsored posts on your social media channels as well, sometimes including a certain hashtag or link.

Now, I mentioned that this particular post was through a third party company. There are a number of companies who do the work of connecting with brands and creating campaigns that they then send out to bloggers and the bloggers can apply. These companies typically take about 50% of the profit, but this can still be a good way to connect with sponsored posts if you are interested.

Just a few companies to check out if you want to start doing sponsored posts:

Pollinate Media
Find Your Influence
Clever Girls Collective
SITS Girls
IZEA
The Blue Print Social
PopSugar
Federated Media
Collective Bias

Or, you can work with companies independently. Sometimes companies will approach you and sometimes you will approach them.

It will likely be similar to what I just described even when you are working directly with the company, you just don't have a third party doing the negotiations about payment and requirements for the post, so you will need to be prepared and know what you are willing to do, what kind of payment you require, etc.

Like I said earlier, this can be a very fulfilling relationship for both parties if you can build a good working system with a brand that you genuinely love.

Here's another peek at a sponsored post that I did with Craftsy-a website that offers online classes in sewing, baking, and all things crafty. This was a situation where I worked directly with the company-not through a third party-and did a series of posts with them over the course of 4 months.

I made this cake over the weekend and the leftovers are downstairs calling my name right now! Must be strong, must be strong. It's just so good! It's a Chocolate Caramel Cake with 4 layers of goodness-each frosted with a caramel buttercream frosting.

[Pin it](#)



I was [Pinned](#) this [Free Class on Craftsy-Modern Buttercream](#):



I will tell you now that in the 30 minutes I have spent so far watching the lessons in this class, my mind is blown! I learned so many cool tips and tricks to make great buttercream and to frost a cake.

I am showing you pieces of this post because I want to make one point. When working on a sponsored, make sure it is a good fit with your blog. Be careful about taking too many sponsored posts and be careful about how your sponsored posts come across to your readers.

I am very careful about the sponsored posts that I take on. I try to make sure that they are a good fit with my readers and my blog and that they are something that I can make feel not just like an advertisement but something I am interested in and my readers will be too.

So you can see in the images of the post above that I was advertising a Craftsy class about Modern Buttercream. But I didn't want the whole post to be just "hey take this great class." I wanted it to have some application to my readers, so I included a recipe in the post and talked about my own experience learning to frost the cake.

I feel like this way my readers really get something out of the post beyond just a sales pitch. It is also easier to drive traffic to a post this way.

As far as payment goes on sponsored posts, this varies a lot and can be tricky to figure out.

There is no simple formula for how much you should be getting paid for your work. So this means that you've got to figure out what you are willing to work for and then stick to that.

Remember that sponsored posts often take a lot of work and may turn readers off a little bit, so be sure that you aren't working for less than it is worth. Many of the companies listed previously pay between \$100-200 for a post. That may seem like a good amount of money as you are getting started, and it is, but as you grow you may find that you need to charge much more for the work you are doing.

When working with a company directly you are probably going to have more say in what you make. Be prepared to talk about payment as well as requirements you would like back from them. For example, if a large company is willing to share my post on their social media channels, that is worth a lot to me and I might be willing to take smaller payment, but you need to be up front about this kind of thing.

Media Kit:

One thing you can have prepared for when companies approach you to work on a sponsored post is a media kit. This is just something simple that highlights your work, social media following, page views and the strength of your blog and why they would want to work with you. This is something that you probably won't use a ton, but can be handy to have if anyone asks for one.

You can have a look at mine [here](#) if you would like an idea of what to include. Or run a search for media kits to see a variety.



I have covered the main ways to make money blogging already, but there are of course a million small ways to make money. I want to take just a minute to mention a few other options.

Selling Something:

Some bloggers sell products on their site. This may be physical products but more often they are digital.

For example, many sewing bloggers sell patterns on their blog. Typically they have it uploaded as a PDF file and it is emailed or given to the reader to download when they purchase.

Other bloggers create printables that readers can pay to download and print.

Another option is writing an eBook on something that you know a lot about. I put together an eBook with a few learn to sew lessons about a year and a half ago and have a small but steady stream of income that comes in from the sales of that book. (See image on right.)

Ad Space:

I talked about ads run by Ad Networks but you can also choose to sell sidebar space to companies who contact you directly. You can then display their ads (in whatever size you agree on) on your sidebar for a set amount of time.



Putting It All Together:

If you have made it this far, your mind is probably pretty packed full of information. I hope it hasn't overwhelmed you. Just take it one step at a time at whatever rate works for you. This is the beauty of blogging and what I want to talk about for these last few pages.

Blogging is a fun, great, amazing way to make money and open doors for yourself that you may have never dreamed of (or have always dreamed of and the blog makes the dreams come true). And you can blog about ANYTHING. Whatever you love-you can blog it! And take it where you want.

I know bloggers who have their own line of products, bloggers who have written books, bloggers who have speaking engagements all over the world, bloggers who have quit their jobs and blog full time now.

I also know bloggers who post when they get the inclination, not more. Who do it as a hobby and have fun doing it.

Your blog is your blog. Do what works for you. If you have dreams that you want to work towards-go for it! Because they can come true. If you want to just dabble in blogging and have fun doing it, that works too. My goals when I started blogging, as I said earlier, mostly involved making enough money to replace my business income.

As you get going your blog dreams will change and grow. That's fine.

Just remember that this blog is yours and you can do with it what you want. Nobody dictates what happens with it but you. You won't find a better job than that!

Tips for Blogging Sanity:

Just a few final tips to help you stay on top of your blogging adventure! These are things that help me save my own sanity:

- Plan ahead! This one is HUGE for me. I have a monthly calendar that I plan out my posts on. I try to plan my posts out at least 2-3 weeks in advance, ideally a full month ahead. I put them on my Google

Calendar where I can then make changes and adjust things if needed, but at least I have a plan. And that helps my sanity so much because I am not scrambling at the last minute to come up with ideas or running to the store last minute to get supplies. This way I can do one shopping trip and get all the supplies I need for a few weeks.

Here's a peek at my Google Calendar:

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
28	29 Crazy New YOU! Kickoff	30	31 Goal Setting Ideas & Goal S	Jan 1	2 Planner Roundup	3
4	5 Bag Tutorial	6	7 Free Printable Birthday Invit	8	9 25 Ways to Say Thank You!	10
11	12 Almond Joy Cupcakes	13	14 Birthday in a Box	15	16 Birthday Interview	17
18	19 You Make My Heart Pop	20	21 Chocolate Dipped Chocolatr	22	23 25 Valentine Ideas for Kids	24
25	26 You Make My Heart Glow	27	28 Valentine's Gift Tags	29	30 eBook Release	31

- Along those same lines, I like to keep it very consistent by having certain days that I ALWAYS post on. People recommended this to me early on but I didn't start buying into it until recently but it makes a HUGE difference for me. It makes it easy to plan because I know exactly what I am doing and on which days.
- Don't write your posts the night before. I try to have my blog posts done at least a week ahead if possible. This doesn't always happen, but when it does it feels so great. My worst days are the days when I have post I want up the next day and I am racing the sun (because I need natural light) to get pictures and then my kids need me or the pictures don't go well and I get stressed. I hate that and I don't want to hate blogging. No need to let blogging stress me out.
- Work in batches. If you can-do things in groups. I will sometimes get a bunch of projects ready and stash them in my closet. Then, when I have a bunch ready I do a photo shoot with all of them at once. This way I can get all my photo stuff set up only once and not keep having to do it all week. I shoot my pictures, then edit all at once, then write posts.
- Use schedulers. I don't do this one, but maybe I should. There are social media scheduling tools that you can use to plan ahead as well. On Facebook you can schedule in advance. On Pinterest you can schedule pins in advance using third party schedulers like Viral Woot or Ahalogy.
- Keep it fun! If blogging is getting stressful, take a step back and find a way to make it work! It's your blog, it works for you, so make it work for you!

Good luck in your blogging adventures! I hope you have success and fun along your way and I hope this eBook gets you started well. Best of luck!