

*how to*  
**MAKE MONEY**  
*blogging*



by Crystal Paine

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# 5 Necessary Traits of Successful Bloggers

One of the questions most often emailed to me is, “*How do you make money blogging?*”

The short answer is—it’s *easier* and *harder* than you may think.

It’s easy because it requires very little cash outlay up-front, you don’t need a degree or certification, the field is wide open, and the profit margins are high.

On the other hand, setting up a successful blog that makes a part-time or full-time income will only be the result of massive amounts of effort, determination, consistency, and perseverance.

If you want to be a successful blogger, here are five qualities you must possess.

## 1. Successful Bloggers Are *Marathoners, Not Sprinters.*

Anyone can be a successful blogger, but unless you're already a celebrity, there's no such thing as overnight blogging success. It takes hard work, sweat, and more hard work. It may be a few months before you ever see a penny from your hours of labor invested into your blog.

## 2. Successful Bloggers Have *Incredible Passion.*

If you don't think you could write three posts per week for the next two years on your chosen blog topic, you need to choose either a different topic or a different work-at-home idea.

## 3. Successful Bloggers Are *Self-Starters.*

It's great to learn from others, but if you want to be spoon-fed, you won't succeed. Roll up your sleeves, start digging and researching. Read books on blogging, read articles on blogging, read blogs on blogging, watch bloggers who are successfully blogging, and do your own experimentation.

## 4. Successful Bloggers Are *Creative.*

In a market that is already saturated, fresh and unique voices and approaches are those that will stand head and shoulders above the rest. How are you going to be different from all the other bloggers in your niche?

## 5. Successful Bloggers Are *Consistent.*

Readers come back when they can count on you having regularly-updated content. It's much better to post three times per week every week, than to post thirty times one week every few months.

# 5 Ways to Set Your Blog Up for Success

## 1. Pick a Great Name for Your Blog.

Your blog name should encompass your blog's mission and should clearly articulate your blog's purpose. Don't hurry through the process of picking a name; it's your brand and you want to make sure you love it and it's something you're going to love for years to come.

**Take a week or two to consider potential names.** Ask a few trusted friends to give their input. Toss around ideas, and when you land upon ones you like, check to see if the domain name (the *www* website address) is available on [GoDaddy.com](https://www.godaddy.com) before jumping ahead and settling on any one name.

**Important note: Blog names can be federally trademarked.** This means that an individual or company owns the federal rights to a particular name or phrase. It cannot be used by others or you will be subject to fines and required to discontinue using the name. To be safe, search thoroughly online to make sure no one is using the name you come up with or a very similar variation of it.

## 2. Purchase the Domain Name and All Variations.

As soon as you land on the blog name you love and have double-checked that no one is using it, buy the domain name immediately. It usually costs around \$10 to \$20 per year for this and it's worth every penny to have your own domain name for your blog.

I always purchase domain names from GoDaddy.com just because that's what I've always done. However, if you are planning to set up your blog through Blogger (see point 3 below), it's much, much easier if you purchase the domain name directly through Blogger rather than through a separate domain name service because the domain will be automatically set to point to your Blogger blog. You won't have to go through the process to manually input the code yourself to point the domain to your blog.

I also suggest, if you want to think long-term and hope to turn your blog into a successful business, that you purchase all variations of your domain name. That way, you don't have to worry about someone else setting up a site with a domain name very similar to yours.

## 3. Choose the Right Blog Platform from the Get-Go.

Not too long ago I was asked "What is the one thing you wish you had done differently when setting up your blog."

I immediately replied, "I wish I had started with [WordPress\\*](#)."

I started with [Blogger](#) because that was pretty much the only blogging platform in existence at the time. I moved to [TypePad](#) when the Blogger SPAM bots marked my blog as SPAM in 2008 and I was locked out of my Blogger blog for 10 days.

Near the end of 2009, my blog outgrew TypePad and I was forced to switch to WordPress. Making the leap from TypePad to WordPress was daunting and tedious. We had to move thousands of posts and hundreds

*\*Referring to self-hosted Wordpress that can be downloaded at Wordpress.org, not the free, hosted version of Wordpress at Wordpress.com*

of thousands of comments. There were all sorts of glitches and it was a big learning curve.

Truth be told, though it was a major headache, it was one of the best blogging moves I've ever made. WordPress has allowed me to have a much more organized blog and offer many features I couldn't with TypePad and Blogger.

So if I were to suggest a blog platform, I'd highly recommend WordPress. It's more expensive, but it gives you many more options than other platforms offer. Plus, you don't have to worry about your blog getting locked or outgrowing TypePad.

Another big perk of WordPress is that it has much more sophisticated SEO capabilities (i.e. SEO stands for Search Engine Optimization and basically refers to optimizing your site so it comes up high in search engines. People will find you a lot more easily if you come up on the first page or two of Google rather than page 133!). I don't do a lot for SEO at this point, but I'm all about doing small things to help improve where MoneySavingMom.com shows up when you search for "money-saving blogs" or "grocery budget." WordPress makes it extremely simple to accomplish this.

#### **4. Hire a Designer.**

Back in the "olden" days when there weren't many blogs, if you had great content and updated regularly, you'd have a good number of readers—even if you had a basic, free Blogger blog design. Today, because there are so many more blogs, great content is paramount, but a nice design and ease-of-use is also very important. If people find your blog design dull or your layout disorganized, they are much more apt just to go find another blog.

Now please don't let this discourage you. You don't need a fancy-schmancy blog with lots of bells and whistles. A simple, clean design that is easy to



navigate can make a world of difference. And paying someone to set this up for you may be worth the money.

If you can't afford a designer, at least consider paying to have someone design your header, and then take the time to learn some basic HTML so you can tweak your sidebar.

## 5. Plan Your Posts Ahead of Time.

I can't tell you how many times I've seen a new blog advertised and been all excited to check it out, only to find there were a whopping three posts on it! If you want people to stick around, you need to have depth and series and a variety of posts.

Before you open your doors to the public, go ahead and post 10 to 15 posts, plus plan out and write another 15 to have in queue to post after you start advertising your blog. Not only will this allow you to get your feet wet and get accustomed to blogging before you have a real live audience, it also provides some great content for people to check out when they visit your blog.

I love Google calendar for planning out post series long-term. I also have recently begun printing out a monthly calendar to pencil in specific posts for each day. This gives me accountability, inspiration, and organization—well, at least it's better than my former blog-by-the-seat-of-my-pants routine!

# 5 Tips for Writing Top-Notch Content

## 1. Be You.

One of the greatest hindrances to successful blogging is trying to be someone else. You are not someone else. You will never be someone else. You are you!

You are unique and one-of-a-kind. You have amazing gifts and talents that many people don't. You have a perspective on life that no one else in the whole wide world does because no one else is you.

Learn from other bloggers, but figure out who you are, and be you.

## 2. Be Confident.

It's easy to become discouraged and to feel completely inadequate when you see other bloggers who seem to have more creativity, a cuter blog, a more-frequently-updated blog, more traffic, more comments, more Facebook followers, and on and on it goes. You can spend so much time wor-

rying about not measuring up that you completely lose sight of what you have to offer as a blogger.

As I used to tell a dear friend of mine who often felt incompetent as a blogger (and who has now gone on to create a wildly successful blog), “Don’t be mouse-y!” Any time spent sitting and sulking about your lack of ability, or worrying about what people will think of you, is time that is wasted.

### **3. Be Engaging.**

Interact with your readers and respond to their comments and emails as much as you can. Ask your readers for their advice and input and listen to what they have to say. Your readers want to know that you value them. And you should, because without them, you’d have no audience to write for!

Don’t be afraid to try new things—even if they fail. Don’t always post the same things in the same way. Throw in some off-topic posts, photos or videos every now and then. Occasional surprises and unexpected posts will help keep things exciting.

### **4. Be Real.**

Readers aren’t looking for perfectionism; they are looking for realness. We all make mistakes and we all have our areas we struggle with. Don’t try to pretend that you have all your ducks in an alphabetized row.

Be honest, be open, and be vulnerable (when appropriate). People will connect with authenticity, but they will run from hypocrisy.

### **5. Be a Perfectionist.**

This might seem to fly in the face of being real, but I’m not talking about being perfect as a person, but about being thorough and detailed as a blogger. Frequent typos and blatant grammar errors are irritating.

Sloppiness will never get you far. **Always proofread your posts at least twice before publishing them.** Constantly seek to improve as a writer. Read books and blogs written by good writers. Critique your writing and ask others to do the same.

Please, please, please **do not use massive paragraphs without paragraph breaks.** This is one of the easiest ways to turn people off from reading your blog. Blog paragraphs should be no more than a few lines long so that people can read them easily on a computer screen.

Three more don'ts: **Don't center the text. Don't use exclamation points, all caps or ellipses excessively. Don't use multiple fonts.**

**Use subheadings in articles that are longer than a few paragraphs. Include graphics and/or photos on most posts.** And did I mention how important it is to proofread your posts before hitting publish?

### ***Bonus Point: Be Careful!***

If you share something in a public forum like your blog, **you can never completely take it back.** Always assume everyone in the whole world may read what you write.

**Don't use names, photos, or other identifying information without thinking carefully about the potential ramifications.** It's better to be safe than sorry.

# 10 Ways to Build & Increase Your Readership

## 1. Produce Consistent, Quality Content.

People visit a blog more often if they know they can count on it being updated regularly. Consistently commit to post at least three times each week and you'll be well on your way to building your readership.

## 2. Make It Very Simple for People to Subscribe.

If someone subscribes to your blog's feed or email newsletter, they are much more likely to remember your blog on a regular basis.

Make it very obvious on your blog's sidebar how to subscribe, and occasionally remind your readers of the ease and benefits of subscribing (**giving a little something away as a reward for subscribing** doesn't hurt either!)

### 3. Comment on Other Blogs.

A great way to encourage people to check out your own blog is to leave interesting comments on other blogs. If people like your comment, they are very likely to click on your name and wander over to your blog.

Please do make sure your comment adds value to the discussion though. Don't just say "great post!" and then leave your link. Comments that sound like an infomercial for your blog or that serve no purpose other than to try and get people to click over to your blog are not something bloggers or blog readers appreciate.

Amy has some great tips on [how to effectively make use of your time when commenting on other blogs](#).

### 4. Write Guest Posts.

Many, many blogs ([including this one!](#)) readily accept well-written, relevant guest posts, and it's one of the most effective ways to introduce your blog and your writing style to a new audience. As an added benefit, if the blog you guest post for has a lot of traffic and ranks high in search engines, having a link or two to your blog on that blog will increase your search engine rankings too.

When submitting a guest post, make sure that it follows that blog's [guest post guidelines](#), and carefully proofread it before you send it (you wouldn't believe how many guest posts submissions we receive that are riddled with glaring typos!). If it gets rejected, don't take it personally. I've rejected many fabulous guest posts over the years, usually because I felt they were better suited for a different audience than mine. Submit it to another blog for consideration instead.

### 5. Participate in Weekly Memes.

Blog memes are the weekly link-up opportunities many blogs host, such as [Works-For-Me Wednesday](#). There are [thousands of different memes](#)

[out there](#), and this provides a great opportunity to get new visitors to your blog.

I recommend that you try participating in one to two different memes each week when you're first starting out. Track your traffic after you participate to see which ones are most successful and bring the most visitors.

And just my personal opinion here: don't link up to 25 different memes in one post. It looks tacky and I believe it waters down your post's effectiveness.

## 6. Host Giveaways.

Readers love giveaways. It's a way to generate buzz for your site, give something back to your readers, and get additional traffic by linking up to [give-away link-ups](#) (ours goes up every Monday afternoon).

If there's one thing I want to encourage with giveaways, it's this: **don't overdo it and don't make people jump through a bunch of hoops to enter.** Okay, that was two things, but I think they are both vital for giveaway success.

Giveaways are great—in moderation. Unless your blog is primarily a product review blog, any more than 10–20% of a ratio of giveaways to regular posts is probably too much. And make it simple for people to enter. I promise your readers will appreciate it.

As a side note: **be honest in your reviews if you're including them with a product.** If you didn't love something, there's no need to gush up and down about it.

Your readers appreciate honesty and forthrightness. Show pros and cons. But, as I've learned the hard way, if you only have critical things to say about a product, it's probably better to skip the giveaway altogether since most companies aren't really excited about sponsoring a giveaway where

the blogger just posts a very negative review of the product.

Many new bloggers think you must have a big blog or super secret sources in order to host giveaways on your blog. But guess what! There is no super secret society one must be admitted to in order to run giveaways. Nor do you need to have substantial traffic.

No matter the size of your blog, there are thousands of companies who would love to offer a giveaway to your readers. Seriously. And once you get started with giveaways, you'll likely quickly find that there are many more opportunities than you have time and space for!

## *How Do You Start Offering Giveaways?*

### **(1) Give Something of Your Own Away.**

When I was very new to blogging and didn't know any better, I often paid for my own giveaways. In fact, I often gave away products that I personally owned and no longer needed.

While this is not the ideal, it is an excellent way to "get your feet wet" when it comes to giveaways. When you approach a company regarding running a giveaway (see next point), you'll likely have better success in procuring a giveaway if you can show them that you've successfully run giveaways in the past.

If you use [Swagbucks](#) (and if you don't, what are you waiting for?!), you might consider giving away a gift card you've earned through them. That way, it doesn't cost you actual money out of pocket. And readers love gift card giveaways.

### **(2) Approach Companies and Ask If They'll Run a Giveaway.**

If you don't have companies beating your door down to request that you do a giveaway with them, start getting proactive! Have a product or website that you love, write and ask them if they'd consider running a giveaway on your blog. It's that easy!



Be professional, be concise, and make sure to clearly explain how running a giveaway on your blog would be a win for their company. I'd recommend that you share your blog stats with them, link to a recent giveaway you've run, and share why you feel their product or website is well-suited to your blog's audience. In addition, I'd state upfront two ideas you have for a giveaway but also convey that you're open to other ideas they might have.

### **(3) Ask for a Contact From Another Blogger Who Has Run a Giveaway.**

Has one of your blogging friends run a giveaway with a company that you think would also be a great fit for your blog? Ask them if they'd be willing to pass along their contact at that company to you.

Now, please don't abuse this idea! Most bloggers are happy to share their contacts with you, but don't expect or demand that they must share all their contacts with you as most bloggers work hard to establish relationships with PR and Advertising companies. But if they are willing to share, this can be a great way to get a direct contact for a person at a company or PR Agency which is likely interested in running giveaways on blogs.

### **(4) Respond to a Press Release With a Giveaway Pitch.**

Once you've been blogging for a little while, you'll often begin to receive press releases about new products from companies and PR Agencies. If you're interested in the product and think it would be a great fit for your blog's audience, consider writing back and pitching a giveaway. Companies are sending out a press release to garner buzz for their product, so they'll often bite on a giveaway pitch.

## **7. Interact on Facebook and Twitter.**

A year and a half ago, my husband suggested I set up a [Facebook Page](#). I wasn't too sure if it was worth it, but I went ahead and did it. I was shocked at how much traffic it generated from the start and how many people signed up as fans!

The beautiful thing about a Facebook Page is that when someone interacts on your page, it shows up on their personal page. Many people have told me they originally found my blog through a friend on Facebook.

In addition, my Facebook Page is one of the highest generators of traffic to my blog each month. Needless to say, I'm listening more carefully when my husband suggests I add something to my blog.

**A successful Facebook page doesn't sit dormant.** It should be updated at least once a day, preferably a few times per day. Post links to all your blog posts, share posts from the archives and throw in the occasional picture or real-time funny story, quote or question. The more you interact with your fans, the better.

By the way, I recommend posting your links manually on Facebook, instead of using an auto-post set up. Not only does this cause you to see if people are commenting or leaving questions, but this also shows up more readily in people's feeds (auto-post tends to bury posts so people never see them).

## 8. Link Liberally to Other Bloggers.

Want to know one way to have people find your blog? Link to their blog!

Most bloggers track their stats and incoming links and will click over to see if someone has linked to them. They might just end up linking back to you if they like what they see.

Now I'm not advocating a "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" sort of mentality here, but I know that some bloggers are so scared they might lose traffic if they link to another blog. I've found the exact opposite to be true.

If you find a great blog or blog post that you think your readers would love, share it on your blog or Facebook Page! Don't keep a good thing to yourself.

## 9. Network with Other Bloggers.

Back when I first started blogging, if you blogged semi-consistently and were even remotely interesting, you had no problem getting readers. Nowadays, there are so many more blogs and it's a lot harder to build your readership. One of the key components—aside from so many of the other things we've discussed in this series—is to network with other bloggers.

**I've learned everything I know about blogging from more experienced and wiser people.** They've given me counsel, they've taught me things I would have never figured out on my own, they've encouraged me when I was feeling burnt out or discouraged, and they've challenged me to better myself as a blogger and writer.

Find bloggers you can connect with (either online or in your local area) to bounce ideas off of, to keep each other accountable and to share new things you're learning or experimenting. These friendships can be invaluable—and it's also nice to spend time with people who “get” what this whole blogging thing is about!

Partner with other bloggers to create series (see [Honoring the Man They Call Daddy](#) for an example), team up with other bloggers to raise awareness about issues you care about and guest post on each other's blogs. Always be looking for ways to join forces with other bloggers in a way that will benefit your readers—and theirs as well.

## 10. Create a Community.

Finally, if you want to build your readership, **you need to be there for them.** Don't just write a post and then disappear and let readers talk amongst themselves in the comments. Respond to questions asked and interact with your readers on a regular basis. In fact, when you are first starting out, you might try to respond to all comments left. It encourages people to stick around and it makes them feel a part of a community.

Even if you can't respond to every comment, whatever you do, don't just show up to respond to commenters. As Jon Acuff says, "If you only respond to jerks on your blog, eventually you'll create a blog that only jerks read." It's totally okay to explain yourself to those who misunderstood your post or are offended, but it's much more important to respond to the faithful, encouraging commenters. They care much more deeply about you than a fly-by-night nasty anonymous commenter ever does.

In addition, listen to your readers: ask for their advice, welcome their input, and let them know how much you appreciate them.

## *A Word of Caution*

People always ask me, “How do you do it all?” I think the important thing to remember is that I’ve slowly added new things—Facebook, Twitter, email newsletter, etc. If I had tried to set it all up all at once, I would have been completely overwhelmed.

**Pace yourself when setting up a blog.** Challenge yourself to try new things little by little, don’t go and implement everything all at once. Pick one or two things to focus on for the next few months. Set goals for each month, break these goals down into weekly goals, and then work on them for 10–15 minutes each day. Over time, it will likely start to become old hat and you can add new goals and experiment with new ideas.

However, **remember to compare yourself with yourself only.** There will always be another blogger doing a better job of this or that or the other. Don’t let it discourage you. Look at the progress you are making towards your goals—even if it seems very slow and miniscule—and be encouraged by that.

# 5 Tips for Maximizing Your Earnings with Affiliate Advertising

Now that we've laid a good foundation for successful blogging, we're ready to dive into those income-earning streams. The first—and easiest—is **affiliate marketing**.

For those who may have never heard the term of affiliate marketing before, it's basically when you are paid to promote another person's product, coupon, deal, or website. It's typically CPA advertising—which means that **you only get paid per action**. In other words, a reader must take some form of action (purchase something, click through your link and sign up for something, download a coupon or ebook, etc.)

You sign up for an affiliate program (I'll share some of my favorites in a little bit), you promote your unique affiliate link that the company gives you, and then you are paid if your readers buy the item or sign up for the item.

For instance, I promoted Amy's [Tell Your Time ebook](#) recently. She has an affiliate program that offers 50% of the sales to the affiliate. Since the ebook is on sale for \$2, I earn \$1 for every person who clicks through my affiliate link and makes a purchase. So, if 100 people buy the ebook, I'll make \$100 in affiliate earnings.

In many cases, people have to make a purchase in order for you to earn money as an affiliate. However, there are also hundreds of other options that require no purchase. To give you an example, I'm an affiliate for [Coupons.com](#), [RedPlum](#), and [SmartSource](#). If I post a great coupon that is on any of these sites, I earn anywhere from \$0.02 to \$0.80 per coupon printed (I have different agreements with each network and some pay per coupon printed, others pay a flat fee per print session per user per day).

As you can imagine, since one of the key focuses of MoneySavingMom.com happens to be using coupons, the affiliate money earned from coupons printed is one of the highest revenue earners. However, it is a win-win situation, because I'm sharing a great deal with you, it's hopefully helping you save money and get a great deal, and then we both benefit from it.

With that background in place, here are my top five tips for maximizing affiliate advertising.

## 1. Don't Compromise Your Values for a Quick Buck.

Affiliate marketing can be an incredible income stream for bloggers, but there are some definite pitfalls to be wary of. You want to be very careful that you don't just give something a great review or post about something because you're earning something for promoting it.

I always stop and ask myself before posting something that includes an affiliate link, "Would I post about this if I were not earning a referral fee from it?"

## **2. Promote Affiliate Links in Your Posts Instead of Your Sidebar.**

I've found that it's much more effective to weave affiliate links into your posts, rather than to just put affiliate links on the sidebar. If you're already going to be writing about a site or product, check to see if they have an affiliate program so you can use your referral link.

## **3. Experiment, Experiment, Experiment.**

It takes awhile to learn what works when it comes to affiliate links. Don't give up if you try it a few times and it doesn't work or result in any sales or click-thrus. Keep testing things out, tweaking your approaches, and learning what works for your audience.

## **4. Be Up-front and Honest.**

In the last few months, I started denoting all posts that contain an affiliate link with a simple note at the bottom letting you know that the post contains an affiliate link. This way, you know exactly what you're getting here and when I'm getting something in return. Not only have I received a lot of positive feedback from you all about this change, it also helps to keep me accountable in what I post to make sure I truly am following my policy to have your best interests in mind.

## **5. Remember That Less Is More.**

A few strategically placed affiliate links are almost always going to be more effective than hundreds of affiliate links all over the place. It's better to wait and only promote affiliate links that really fit within your blog's mission and purpose than to post every other affiliate deal and opportunity that arises.

Your readers trust your endorsement more if it's not something you give as often. If you don't feel comfortable with something, don't promote it.



## *My Current Top-Earning Affiliates*

*(listed in order of their average earnings from the past few months):*

[Logical Media](#)

[Living Social](#)

[MySavings](#)

[Commission Junction](#)

[ShareASale](#)

[Panthera Network](#)

**Coupon-printing**

[Coupons.com](#)

[RedPlum](#)

[SmartSource](#)

[Coupon Network](#)

[Amazon](#)

Amazon.com would be higher up on the list, but Amazon recently bumped my affiliate earnings to a flat-rate of 0.8% on all sales, no matter how many items affiliate sales I have in a month. Their reasoning was that I am sending too many low-profit sales to them so they had to change the terms of my affiliate agreement.

There are also many other miscellaneous programs I am an affiliate for that occasionally will have a really great deal or offer bumping them up to higher on the list.

If you're interested in joining any affiliate programs, Amy has a [great list of many different affiliates](#).

# 5 Tips for Selling More Sidebar Ads

Last week, we talked about how to maximize your affiliate earnings. Today, we're delving into another way to make money blogging—by selling sidebar ads.

While selling sidebar ads yourself does require more work and effort, it can really pay off in the long run. Plus, it's a great option for blogs in every genre. And if you don't want to use an advertising network because you don't have as much control over the ads they run (we'll talk more about advertising networks soon), selling sidebar ads yourself allows you to have complete control over what is running on your blog at all times.

Here are five tips to help you sell more sidebar ads:

## 1. Make It Obvious.

You know the number one reason most people don't sell as many sidebar ads as they'd like to sell? Because they aren't making it very obvious and conspicuous that they even offer advertising in the first place!

Most people aren't going to take the time to dig through your site and try to figure out how to advertise on it. In fact, some people will never even realize there's an option to advertise unless you clearly let them know you have advertising spots for sale.

Put an advertise tab in your header that links to your advertising page. This page should include details on your traffic (advertisers typically want to know pageviews and unique visitors), your demographics, a few details on your site, advertising options, advertising prices, and testimonials from former (or current) advertisers. You could do [an elaborate downloadable media kit like](#) Michael Hyatt has, or just stick with [a simple page](#) like Life as MOM has.

Whatever you do, make a compelling case for why someone should advertise on your site. Don't be bashful; a potential advertiser needs to know clearly why advertising on your site is going to be a great thing for their business.

## 2. Run a Half-Priced Special.

If you're just getting started offering sidebar ads, get things off with a bang by offering a half-priced special on your sidebar advertising. Write up a post highlighting this special pricing and approach companies you've worked with to run giveaways in the past letting them know you are offering a limited-time advertising special.

With some effort and enthusiasm, you should be able to get at least a few advertisers to bite. And once you have a few signed up to advertise, you'll find it's usually easier to find more advertisers—especially if you make it obvious that you offer advertising (see point 1).

## 3. Offer Discount Packages.

It's great to start out with selling simple sidebar ads, but people will be much more interested in all-inclusive discounted advertising packages.

For instance, instead of just selling a sidebar ad for \$25 per month, offer a three-month package that includes a sidebar ad, a post write-up about the company, a giveaway from the company, and a text link in your email feed—all for the discounted price of \$150 total.

If you want to take this idea a step further, put together three different package levels at three different pricing points. A potential advertiser might not want to pay for your top-tier advertising package that's \$500, but they will be more apt to go for the \$150 package versus just paying \$25 for a simple sidebar ad.

You can also offer discounts for advertisers who purchase three months' or six months' of advertising at a time. Not only will the discount appeal to them, it will save you time and effort in having to go out and secure another advertiser for that slot every month!

#### **4. Throw in Some Extras.**

You know how fast food restaurants always try to upsell you? Well, you can do the same thing with your sidebar advertising—only you can do it for free! Think of other options you could throw in to seal the deal such as: a free mention of the company on Facebook, a free mention on Twitter, and/or a free mention in a blog post when they purchase a sidebar ad.

#### **5. Keep Your Advertising Spots Filled—Even If They Aren't Sold.**

Want to know one of my biggest sidebar advertising pet peeves? When people have a big blank box on the sidebar that, instead of being an ad, says "Advertise Here".

This screams, "My advertising space isn't valuable enough for people to want to buy so I instead have this big blank box!" That's not the message you probably want to convey to potential advertisers.

Put the advertise tab in your header that links to your advertising information page and link to this in a small text link underneath your advertising spots, but don't have a big blank box. If you don't fill all your advertising spots every month, either replace the empty spots with an affiliate ad or give a free ad to a friend.

## *How Much Should You Charge?*

How you price your advertising will depend upon many factors—your blog's traffic, your blogging niche, where the ad will be placed, how many ad spots you are selling, and the demand. I always encourage people to start out with lowball prices and gradually move up from there.

**Advertising is usually priced per thousand pageviews (CPM)**, so I suggest starting with \$0.50 – \$1 per thousand pageviews and working up from there. This means that if your blog currently gets 10,000 pageviews per month, you could start out charging something like \$10 per month for a small 250×250 sidebar ad that is located near the middle of your sidebar or higher. As your traffic increases and the demand for sidebar advertising increases, you can slowly raise this price.

**I'd suggest selling no more than six to eight sidebar ads maximum.** If you have too many ads running, their value decreases. It's easier for you and better for the advertiser if you have a few higher-paying, larger ads on the sidebar than a bunch of small ads all over the place.

# The Pros and Cons of Joining an Ad Network

We've talked about affiliate marketing and private advertising as ways to make money blogging. Another income stream to add to your blog is to join an ad network.

Ad networks are basically advertising brokers. You offer the advertising space on your blog and they try to sell the space for you. If they sell the space, they take a cut of the sale (usually 40-50%).

Some people love using an ad network. Others haven't had such great experiences. Here are a few of my thoughts on the pros and cons of joining an ad network.

## *The Pros*

### **1. Ad Networks Require Little Effort**

Instead of private advertising where you have to do all the legwork of selling the ad and setting up the ad, when you join an ad network, you do nothing but sign a contract, put some HTML code on your sidebar, and then get checks.

### **2. Ad Networks Usually Earn You More Than Private Advertising or Affiliate Ads Do**

How much you make with an advertising network will vary widely. I've heard of people making as low as \$1-\$2 CPM (per thousand pageviews) or as much as \$15 to \$20 per CPM.

However, remember how I said last week that you could charge \$0.50 to \$1 per CPM for selling private advertising? Well, that's very much on the low end for ad networks. From what I've researched, most people make \$2-\$4 CPM on average with most ad networks. If you're just starting out selling private advertising and haven't had enough demand to warrant raising the price, you will very likely make more with an ad network than you will with private ads.

### **3. Ad Networks Often Sell More Than Just Ads**

While the revenue from sidebar advertising can be good, the revenue from other advertising opportunities is usually much better. I don't accept sponsored posts, but I have done a few underwritten post series (such as my [Christmas Gift Guide & Giveaways](#) series).

My Christmas series paid very well and I never would have gotten that opportunity had my ad network not made the phone calls and coordinated the details to close that deal. Since they are working with multiple bloggers, they are able to attract advertisers with big advertising budgets—something I'm not usually able to do on my own.

## *The Cons*

### 1. Ad Networks Give You Less Control

I shied away from joining an ad network for a number of years because I wanted to have control over what ads showed on my sidebar. Every single ad network I talked to was unwilling to let me have control over what ads showed on my sidebar.

I finally discovered that [Federated Media](#) would give me a say and joined their ad network early last year. While some unapproved ads have slipped through the cracks on occasion (due to hiccups with their ad placement system), they have been exceptional about removing any campaigns immediately if I request it. From what I've heard, most ad networks are not always so compliant.

### 2. Ad Networks Can Be Difficult to Get In With

It took me a number of months and persistence, plus [a kind friend](#) giving me a shoe-in, before I was able to get in with [Federated Media](#). The best ad networks often have a long waiting list and few openings.



## *Things to Consider Before Joining An Ad Network*

- Will they offer you a guaranteed CPM rate?** Most ad networks that are actively “courting” bloggers are new or struggling. They’ll make you all sorts of great-sounding promises, but very few are willing to back those up with a guarantee in writing. If an ad network will only guarantee you pay of around \$2 or less per CPM on average, you will probably do better to just stick with using Google AdSense on your sidebar.
- What are the terms of the contract?** Is it an exclusive agreement that would bar you from being able to run private ads or affiliate ads? If so, don’t agree to it. How do you get out of the contract? Have these details in writing ahead of time so you don’t get stuck in some bad situation.
- Will you have control over the ads they run?** If you run a blog on healthful eating, you probably don’t want McDonald’s Big Mac ads running on your sidebar. Sending mixed messages to your readership is a quick way to lose your integrity. Make sure that the ad network promises in writing to remove ads you deem to be inappropriate for your blog.
- What do other bloggers in the network think of it?** One of the best ways to determine whether or not a network is right for you is to go find other bloggers who are a part of the network and ask them how it is working out for them. You might find that what the ad network reps promised you on the phone is entirely the opposite of what bloggers in their network are actually experiencing. Firsthand knowledge is priceless and could save you a huge headache.

# 5 Ways to Use Your Blog as a Springboard to Earn Additional Income

Not only are there many ways to earn income directly from blogging, but blogging also opens up a host of other ways to earn money indirectly. Here are five ways I've used my blog as a springboard to earn additional income.

## 1. Teach an Online Class.

I taught my first online course back in 2006—way back when I was just learning about online marketing and blogging and really didn't have much of a clue what I was doing. That first class was successful, so I taught another and another and another. Not only did I learn so much through teaching (and hopefully imparted some helpful information to my students!), but it was a great source of side income to supplement our family during a lean season.

With just a few simple tools, you can teach video or audio courses online. Or, you can put together a package with video and/or audio plus a course handbook like Carrie's [Grocery University](#).

Consider what are your areas of expertise and what questions you are asked most as a blogger and then see if there's a way you can turn these ideas into a marketable online class. Offer the class very inexpensively the first time around as you learn the ropes, ask other bloggers to promote the class for you (you could write a guest post for a few blogs on a relevant topic and then link to your class in your bio), and make sure to [include testimonials from those who have gone through the class on your sales page](#).

## 2. Write an Ebook.

Writing and selling ebooks is one market that is untapped by many, many bloggers—and there's tremendous potential to earn a few hundred (or even a few thousand dollars!) each year by selling ebooks.

In the early days of blogging, selling ebooks was the bread and butter of our business. As our business has grown and our income has increased, I've moved away from selling ebooks, but I'd still highly recommend this to other bloggers—especially if you don't mind dealing with the occasional difficult customer service issue.

There are a few things you must know about successfully selling ebooks, though:

**You need to write on a relevant, practical topic.** The best-selling ebooks are those that tell you how to make money, save money, lose weight, cook better, get organized, or somehow practically improve your life. Unfortunately, an ebook comprised of poems is probably not going to sell well.

**Your cover and sales page are everything.** You can write a killer ebook, but if your cover is cheesy and your sales page is pathetic, it probably won't sell. Hire a designer to do your cover (it's worth the expense, I promise!), and make sure that your sales page has a clear-cut call to action, includes

specific details on why someone should buy your book, and has testimonies to back up your claims.

**You must exhaust every marketing possibility.** People need to see things again and again and again in order to consider buying. Write guest posts, get every blogger possible to review your ebook, run ebook giveaways on dozens of blogs, and find every other creative free way to get your ebook out there.

If you are planning to write an ebook, I heartily recommend Sarah Mae's ebook, [\*How to Market and Sell Your Ebook\*](#). It's packed with helpful information and advice and is worth every penny. Also, be sure to read her article on [how to sell \\$20,000 worth of your next ebook](#).

Two weeks ago, we talked about teaching an online class and writing an ebook as two ways to earn money indirectly through blogging. Here are three additional ideas:

### 3. Accept Speaking Engagements.

If you love public speaking (or want to grow to love it!), you can make a fairly good side income through accepting public speaking engagements. If you don't have people beating a path to your door offering to fly you to their event and pay you to speak, never fear, you just need to work on getting your name out there and building up a reputation as a highly sought-after speaker.

Depending upon your blog's topic, you could offer to speak at local events for free in order to build your portfolio. Or, you could offer a class through your local community center for a small fee per sign-up. If the class is well received, you could offer it on a regular basis or teach the same class in nearby towns, as well.

If you hope to be asked to do more speaking opportunities, you could set up a page on your blog that outlines details on what speaking engage-

ments you accept, past speaking experience, testimonials, future speaking engagements, and how people can contact you about possibly speaking at their event.

As an added bonus, speaking engagements can put your name and blog name in front of dozens or even hundreds of people who haven't heard of you or your blog before, helping to grow your blog and widen your audience.

#### **4. Become a Freelance Writer.**

Blogging has opened up a few doors of opportunity for me to have extra paid writing gigs on occasion. It's been a great experience, as well as extra cash flow. While it's been a long time since I've sought out such opportunities, I know that there are many available—especially if you are a gifted writer.

If you want to do more freelance writing and are having trouble finding opportunities, contact small local parenting magazines across the nation. Many of these accept articles and pay up to \$25 per article. Best of all, since these are local and state publications, they don't ask for exclusive rights. So, hypothetically, you could spend a few hours on one article and pitch it to 100 different small publications. If even 10 of them run it, you could make \$250 off it. That's certainly nothing to sneeze at!

Again, in most publications that you write for, you can include a bio with a link to your site. You might not get a lot of traffic from it, but it will more than likely send at least a few new visitors to your blog.

#### **5. Offer Consulting Services.**

Many companies are taking notice of bloggers and realizing that we are much more adept at online marketing and social media than they. They want to know how they, too, can grow their business through blogging and social media. As a result, there are numerous companies who are more

than willing to pay bloggers to give them tips and pointers—or even to take over their social media presence for them.

Consulting jobs pay well—often upwards of \$50 or more per hour—but they are more difficult to get. Usually they are the result of networking and pre-established relationships.

My biggest tip is that you don't sell yourself short or work for free. Sometimes companies expect bloggers to offer consulting services for free, just because, well, you're a blogger. If a company comes to you and asks for advice on something that's going to require more than 15 minutes of your time to help with, write back and let them know you are more than glad to consider helping them and your fees are \$XX per hour (charge at least \$20 to \$25 per hour, if not more, to make it worth your time).

Your time is valuable and, unless it's a ministry or nonprofit or some other company that you have strong ties to, don't give them free handouts. This only hurts all bloggers when companies have the idea that they can get hours of consulting services from bloggers without paying. They wouldn't expect to hire a consulting firm without paying them, so they also shouldn't expect the same or similar services from bloggers without paying.

## *Bonus Point: Write a Book.*

As I've [dipped my toe into the world of book publishing](#) this year, I've learned many lessons. One of which is that getting your book published is not as hard as many may think. If you've built up a strong blog audience, have a social media presence, are passionate about your subject, and are a decent writer, you can likely get a book deal.

However, don't do what I did and just accept whatever book deal a publisher offers you. I learned that the hard way. While my publisher has been excellent to work with, I wish I would have gotten my agent first before signing the book deal. There were a lot of little things I knew nothing about and having an agent to help me chart these never-before-navigated waters would have been invaluable, as well as saving me some headaches and hassles later. But oh well, live and learn right?

My advice? **Come up with some winning book ideas and then get a great agent.** You'll not only have an advocate and a go-between for pitching your book idea to publishers, but you'll have someone to hold your hand and cheer you on through the process.

# About the Author



Crystal Paine is a child of God, wife, homeschooling mom of three, and speaker. She founded [MoneySavingMom.com](http://MoneySavingMom.com), a site that has since grown to become one of the most popular blogs on the web, currently averaging 1.5 million readers per month.

Her new book, [\*Say Goodbye to Survival Mode\*](#), was written to challenge women in any season of life to wisely manage their time and resources and live life on purpose.

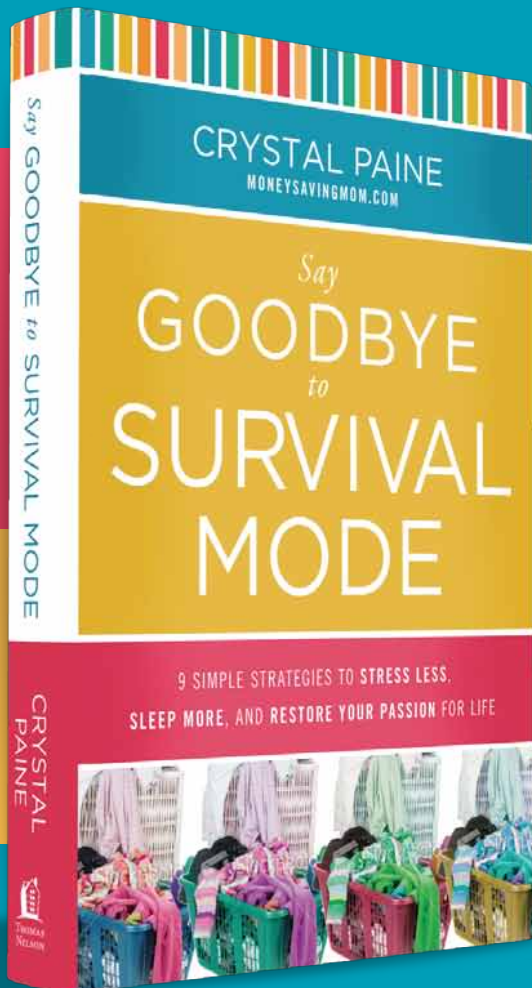
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