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Google AdSense™

FOR DUMMIES®

Learn to:

- Earn ad revenue using your Web site
- Register and set up an AdSense program
- Track results with server logs and other tools
- Improve site earnings with AdSense for Search

Jerri Ledford



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FOR
DUMMIES[®]

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Dedication

For James because you always believed in me, and for Sean, Jennifer, Kyle, and Brandi because a Mom couldn't ask for better kids. I love you all ceaselessly.

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My biggest thanks go out to you, the reader. Thanks for reading this book. I hope it helps you realize all the potential of AdSense.

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Introduction

The Web is big business, and you probably picked up *Google AdSense For Dummies* hoping to tap into some of the money that's available online. Good choice. I wrote this book to help you to make more money online.

I'm not talking the *get rich scheme* of the decade, though. AdSense is serious business and requires serious effort. This book is designed to give you an understanding of AdSense and how to make the most money possible using it with your particular Web site. Not everyone is destined to be an AdSense millionaire, but using the principles I lay out in the pages that follow should help you at least add enough money to your budget to enjoy a nice dinner out now and again.

About This Book

Google AdSense For Dummies is an introduction to Google AdSense and how to use it to add a revenue stream to your Web site or blog. I explain everything you need to know in order to get started with AdSense, from signing up for the program to creating various types of ads, including ads for content, mobile Web sites, and video ads. The book includes dozens of tips to help you get up to speed with AdSense faster than you can down your allotment of caffeine.

If you know nothing at all about AdSense, this book is the user's guide that you won't find in the online AdSense Help pages. If you're already somewhat familiar with AdSense, you can depend on this book to show you how to optimize your AdSense efforts and start making money with your ads.

Conventions Used in This Book

The alphabet soup that accompanies anything technology is enough to make you gouge out your eyeballs in an attempt to massage your aching brain. I avoid as many of those acronyms as possible. I even try to keep the jargon that's always associated with technology to a minimum.

As with all specific technologies, however, some level of geek-speak is involved. If I absolutely have to use techno-mumbo-jumbo to make a point, I add a clear explanation along with the offensive words, just so you're clear on what you're reading.

Also, I'm a geek, and I have a geek's sense of humor. Still, I lighten up the seriousness of the topics covered where I can. Keep in mind though, it's still technology, and you'll still find that some parts are as exciting as sorting paperclips. Like I said, I'm a geek.

Foolish Assumptions

My dad used to remind me often that the results of making assumptions were often not pretty. Still, I had to make some assumptions about you, the reader, and your understanding of technology. Those assumptions are

- ✓ You have a Web site or blog that you want to earn money from.
- ✓ You're familiar with how that Web site or blog works.
- ✓ You have a basic understanding of technologies associated with making your Web site or blog work.
- ✓ You have a desire to make more money with your Web site.
- ✓ You want to make more money with AdSense.

How This Book Is Organized

Every software program has a structure and a progression. AdSense is one of those programs, and I designed this book to follow that natural structure as closely as possible. The book is broken into parts, and each one covers a different aspect of AdSense. The chapters within each part cover different details of each aspect.

Chapters are designed to stand on their own, so you have two options: You can read the book straight through, or thumb through and read the chapters that are most appealing to you. Here's more information on what you'll find in the sections of the book.

Part I: AdSense Basics

This first part gets you up to speed with all the information that you need to know, even before you begin using AdSense. If you're going to use an advertising program, you need to have something to use it on, so most of the chapters in this section cover creating and preparing your Web site for AdSense. Of course, I provide a detailed explanation of what AdSense is, too.

Part II: The Major Players: AdSense for Content, AdSense for Search

The way the AdSense program is broken down, you have separate mini-applications within the main application. In this part of the book, I cover two of those mini-applications: AdSense for Content and AdSense for Search.

The first chapters here have everything you need to know when it comes to building ads for your content. (Just to be on the safe side, I also fill you in on how to get great content on your Web site in the first place!) I then go on to tell you how you can use AdSense for Search to make money. (Here's the shorthand version — you place access to search engines on your Web site and get paid when users search and then click the ads that are displayed in search results.)

Part III: Other Types of AdSense

AdSense isn't just about placing ads in your text content. You can monetize your Web site in many other ways, and this section details the different capabilities that AdSense gives you. From placing video ads, to placing ads in your video (they really are two different things), to placing ads on mobile Web sites, you find the information you need in this part.

Part IV: AdSense Administration

No software program or application works without some tweaking from you. If you want to know how to tweak AdSense to get the best performance possible or where to find information on how well your ads are performing and how much money you're making, you can do so in the Administration section of the application. In this part, I show you how to tweak AdSense and how to make the most out of the administrative tools that are available to you.

Part V: The Part of Tens

In this section of the book, you find quick lists to help you use AdSense better. Check out ten (plus two) tools that you have to have if you want to take full advantage of AdSense, ten things you should never ever ever do with AdSense, and ten ways to improve your Web site traffic (because it's all about exposing your ads to more people, right?).

Icons Used in This Book

This *For Dummies* book is formatted just like the other ten gazillion out there, so you'll find icons in the margins to help you identify information you should pay special attention to. The icons used throughout this book are:



I use the Tip icon to alert you to shortcuts and other tidbits of information that you might find useful when you're using AdSense and the other programs that I discuss.



The Warning icon alerts you to use caution when performing tasks or following a set of instructions. The icon indicates information that can cause problems with software or hardware if you're not careful about how you proceed.



Okay, this is the really geeky stuff. Read on if you want to get under the hood a little or just skip ahead if you're not interested in all the gory details.



This icon highlights an important point that you don't want to forget because it just might come up again.

Where to Go from Here

Google AdSense is a great program to help you start monetizing your Web site. In this book, you can find all the information you need to get started using it and using it well. All programs change over time though, and new information becomes available for AdSense almost every week. Keep up with the changes at the Google AdSense blog (<http://adsense.blogspot.com/>) and keep this book handy as a reference for the basics of using the program.

Part I

AdSense Basics

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



“Tell David to come in from the hall.
We can make up the shortfall using
AdSense.”

In this part . . .

Every book starts somewhere, and this one starts with the basics. Here you'll get the information you need to know before you even begin using Google AdSense, as well as tips on how to better use AdSense after you *do* get started.

This part introduces you to Google AdSense and then gets you ready to use AdSense. Not only that, but you also find out how to create a Web site that's designed well for showcasing your AdSense ads. Along the way, I discuss Search Engine Optimization as a way to increase traffic to your Web site — optimizing your AdSense earnings in the process, by the way — and I close by discussing how to install that pesky AdSense code.

Chapter 1

Understanding Google AdSense

In This Chapter

- ▶ Finding out what AdSense is
 - ▶ Exploring why you should use AdSense
 - ▶ Mastering the basics of AdSense
 - ▶ Understanding the potential of AdSense
-

Since the Internet first began in the early '80s, it's grown like kudzu in southern Alabama — faster than anyone can keep up with. The adoption of the Internet has been so rapid, in fact, that some companies are spending millions of dollars trying to find ways for third-world countries to have Internet availability.

Closer to home, however, it's probably safe to say that the majority of people already have Internet access. It's probably even safe to take that one step further and say the majority of Internet users also have a Web site, a blog, both, or multiples of both. The Internet Economy has taken over.

Many of the people who use the Internet see it as a path to the business they always wanted to own but couldn't because of the business ownership costs. Setting up a Web site is relatively inexpensive — add some e-commerce capabilities and then connect a blog to it to advertise the existence of the site and the products or services offered on the site.

Even people who aren't necessarily looking to start their own businesses are looking for a way to make money online. And that's where Google AdSense comes into play.

Introduced in June 2003, AdSense offers anyone with any type of Internet real estate the ability to generate at least a small income from their efforts.

This chapter is for *publishers* — those who are interested in using AdSense to advertise on their Web sites. I cover the basics of what AdSense is and how to use it to generate income from your Web site.

Understanding AdSense

AdSense is an advertising program that anyone who publishes a Web site can use to generate income for their Web site. But there's one small condition — Google must approve your site before ads are shown on your site.

A longer explanation is that *AdSense* is an ad-placement program that utilizes Google's proprietary search capabilities to determine the best placement for ads that are purchased through the Google AdWords program.



AdSense is *contextual advertising*, or ads that appear in the context of surrounding content. What this means for you is that AdSense ads are related to the content of the pages on which those ads appear.

It sounds complicated, I know. And really it can be very complicated, but the bottom line is that with AdSense, you can place ads on your Web site that are targeted to the content of your site. So, if your site is about Chinese Crested dogs, ads for Web-based human resources applications don't show on your site.



AdWords: The flip side of AdSense

AdSense is one-half of an advertising duo that Google has cooked up. The other half is Google *AdWords*, a pay-per-click keyword advertising program. (How smart is that? Having both advertisers and publishers as your customers!) In a pay-per-click advertising program, advertisers place ads based on keywords that are related to their content. (*Keywords*, in this context, means key terms or words that are commonly associated with a given subject, topic, service, or product.)

In pay-per-click advertising, advertisers create short, text-based ads that are very closely related to chosen keywords, and then allow those ads to be shown on other people's Web sites that feature (in some way or another) the chosen keyword. The advertiser agrees to pay *up to* a certain dollar amount — called a *bid* — each time a Web site visitor clicks on the ad. Thus, the term *pay-per-click*.

The bid amount an advertiser placed on a keyword is usually determined by two factors:

the budget and the popularity of the keyword. The advertisers themselves set the daily budget for each advertisement — one built around how much they are willing to pay if someone clicks the ad. The bidding process itself sets how much a keyword is worth — clearly, more popular keywords are going to cost advertisers more.

The bidding process works much like any other auction process, with one minor change. Advertisers bid for placement of their ads by keyword, but more than one advertiser can win. The way it works is that the advertiser that has the highest bid has their ads shown in the most desirable places (both on Google and other Web sites). Bidders with lower bids will still have their ads shown, but in somewhat less desirable places. The "less desirable" places can still perform very well, and in fact are sometimes more coveted because they cost less, which means advertisers can afford to have their ads shown more often.

In return for placing those ads on your site, you're paid a small amount each time one of your site visitors clicks an ad, and in some cases, even when site visitors just see the ads.

Money Makes AdSense Go 'Round

Okay, so AdSense is (in essence) an advertising program. But why would you want to use it? Well, for the money, of course. AdSense is an easy way to generate income from your Web site, even if you're not selling anything on the site.

And while creating income is the most likely reason that publishers use AdSense, it's not the only one. Some publishers use AdSense as a means of making their Web site more valuable to site visitors.



Anyone who displays an AdSense ad is considered a *publisher*, whereas anyone who purchases the ads that are displayed through AdSense is an *advertiser*.

Now, this is where a lot of debate usually begins. *Experts* (who are usually people who know a lot just about a given subject) tend to disagree about the value of any type of advertising on your Web site. Some experts say that any advertisement that takes people away from your Web site is a bad thing. Others say that ads are okay, in the right places. You can read more about ad placement in Chapter 3.

When placed properly, AdSense ads can add value to your Web site by pointing users to other resources related to the topic of your site. This means they'll probably surf away from your site at some point. But if your site is well built (which is essential if you intend to grow traffic over time), it's likely that users will come back to your site again in the future.

The value here is that users not only get what they're looking for, but you get return traffic; and because you're using AdSense to help those users find the information they need, you're also making a little extra money in the process.

Deciding Whether AdSense Is Right for You

Even though there are a lot of benefits to using AdSense, it's not for everyone. Just like not everyone likes the idea of eating chocolate, there will be

some who aren't willing to risk that AdSense ads push (or draw) traffic away from their Web sites.

One good example of this is if you have an e-commerce Web site that features products on every page. Many e-commerce site owners aren't willing to include advertisements on their pages because the ads can cause site visitors to surf away before they complete a purchase.

What it all really comes down to is to know how badly you would be hurt if a site visitor surfed away from your site. If the damage would be like cutting off your left hand, you probably don't want to include AdSense on your site.

If, on the other hand (the right hand because it's not been cut off yet), the possibility of a site visitor surfing away wouldn't cost you any money, AdSense is probably worth considering. To be clear, a certain percentage of site visitors click an ad on a site and then don't come back, either that day or at all. But that percentage is likely to be very small. If you won't lose money if they don't come back, why not try to make a little money?

Jenn Savedge, the owner of the blog *The Green Parent* (www.thegreenparent.com), doesn't use AdSense. She says, "I want to have complete control over the products that are advertised on my site. I don't want it to appear as though I am endorsing products when I am not." And that's a valid reason to decide against using AdSense.

A good rule of thumb is generally that all content-only sites can afford to have AdSense ads displayed on some, if not all, pages on the site. Sites that sell stuff? Well, that's a little trickier, but if you have pages that don't contain links to purchase products (like product review pages, or articles that extol the value of a particular product or group of products), you can probably feel pretty secure about including AdSense ads on those pages.

Common AdSense Questions

If you've read to this point, you know just enough to be dangerous, which means you probably have a ton of questions about AdSense. Other chapters answer most of those questions for you, but to keep you focused, I answer a few of the more pressing questions now.

What follows are answers to a few of the more common questions that are usually asked about AdSense (which incidentally are probably the ones that you want the answers to the most).

How much money can I make with AdSense?

There's just no easy answer to this question. Well, okay, there's an easy answer — it depends. But that easy answer isn't really useful. The problem is that several measurements impact your daily revenue from AdSense ads, such as



- ✓ **Unique visits:** A visitor is considered *unique* when she visits your Web site the first time during a given period of time. Depending on the *metric* — the measurement used to track visitors on your Web site — that's used, a visitor might be considered unique the first time he visits your site in a 24-hour period, the first time in a week, or the first time in an hour. For AdSense, the unique visits measurement is used to help determine the click-thru rate for ads.

Click-thru rate (CTR) is the number of people who click an ad and are taken to the Web page designated for the advertisement. This page is usually a larger, more colorful ad, the opening page of a Web site, or a page that displays more information about the product or service featured in the ad.

- ✓ **Average click-through-rate (CTR):** The *CTR* is the actual number of visitors who click through an ad on your Web site. This is important because you're paid when users click your AdSense ads.
- ✓ **Average cost-per-click (CPC):** The *CPC* is the amount that advertisers pay each time someone clicks one of their ads. This number varies widely and is dependent upon the cost of the keyword to which an ad is related. For you, as an AdSense publisher, the *CPC* is the basis for how much you're paid.

Using these three measurements — measurements which are highly variable — you can estimate how much you *could* make based on some hypothetical numbers. For example, assume that your Web site gets 1,000 unique visits per day and that the average value of the ads that are displayed on your site each day is \$.25 per click (that's the *CPC*). Finally, assume that about 2 percent of your 1,000 visitors click through the ads on your site each day. Now, you have numbers that you can work with.

With those hypothetical numbers in place, you can use this equation to estimate how much you might make from your AdSense ads on a given day:

$$(\text{unique visits} \times \text{average CTR}) \text{average CPC} = \text{potential revenue}$$

so

$$(1,000 \times .02) \$.25 = \$5.00$$

Using that equation and the hypothetical numbers I've defined, you could estimate that you'd make \$5.00 per day, or \$150.00 per month. Again, however, that's assuming your numbers are exactly what I've defined here, and they probably won't be — these are completely fictional numbers used solely for the purpose of example.

Any change in those numbers — more or less visitors, higher or lower CTR, or more or less average CPC — results in different numbers.

I can hear you wailing in frustration — “So what can I realistically expect to earn with AdSense?” I understand your desire for solid numbers, but the truth is, I can't give you an exact figure. More accurately, I can tell you that if your site is well-targeted and has high traffic levels, you can expect to make pretty good money (at least enough to get a check every month). And if your site traffic is slower or your site isn't as highly targeted, you might be lucky to make enough to pay for your Web site hosting each month.



In an effort to keep costs down, Google doesn't release payments until you've earned \$100 or more in ad revenues. If you make less than \$100 in a given month, your earnings will be held until you reach the \$100 minimum. So, if you're not making enough money, you'll get your payment eventually, just not right away.

Fortunately, there are ways to optimize your Web pages so that you get the most possible return on your AdSense ads. I cover those strategies throughout the rest of this book.

How much does AdSense cost?

Easy question, easier answer. AdSense doesn't cost you a thing. Well, it doesn't cost you a thing unless you consider the time that it takes to implement the ads on your Web site. But even this step isn't overly time-consuming, so even labor costs should be minimal.

What kind of ads will show on my Web site?

The advertising kind.

Okay. All jokes aside, the ads that show on your site are determined by the content of your site. Google uses a search algorithm to determine what ads are best suited for your site — an algorithm that's quite similar to the one Google uses when you run a search query from the Google search pages or through a Web site-based search box.

That said, it's possible that the ads that show on your site might have nothing at all to do with the content of the site. Here's why: If your site content isn't very focused, the algorithm gets confused and isn't sure which ads are appropriate. So, it makes its best guess, which may or may not be correct.

The best way to ensure that the ads are highly relevant to your content is to have well-focused, keyword-rich content. You can find guidelines for putting together the best content for your site in Chapter 3.

Can I control ad content?

No one wants ads from their competitors on their Web site. Even if you're not selling anything from your site, it's likely that some ads you just don't want shown on your site.

Fortunately, Google's made it possible to exclude some companies from showing their ads on your site. It's not too difficult to do; simply add your competitors' URLs (*Uniform Resource Locator*, the Web address) to your ad filters, and the competition is then blocked from advertising on your site.

You can find more information on filtering the ads that are shown on your site in Chapter 5.

Can I use AdSense on more than one Web site?

Sure you can, and here are a couple ways to do it. First, you can use the same AdSense code on all your sites, and the *metrics* — the tracking measurements, like number of clicks and payment for clicks — are all collected in the same report with no way to differentiate the Web site.

The other way you can track multiple sites (or even different pages within the same site) is to use Google channels. *Channels* simply allow you to track different sites or pages on a site by using code that's written to indicate each separate channel you set up.

You can set up channels by URL or by custom-defined differentiators. You can find out about the fine art of using channels effectively in Chapter 14.

Can I have more than one AdSense account?

Having more than one account might seem like a good idea in certain situations. For example, if you run multiple Web sites, you might want to have a different AdSense account for each of those sites.

Google doesn't think that's such a great idea.

You're limited to a single AdSense account per payee. You can differentiate between ads on your various Web sites with the channels that I mention earlier in the preceding section, but having two accounts is a no-no.



Google's very sensitive about the ways in which publishers use AdSense capabilities. Reading through the AdSense program policies before you even begin to set AdSense up for your Web site is a very good idea. Google won't think twice about banning policy violators from using AdSense.

The Potential of AdSense

Okay, AdSense seems relatively simple, so what's all the fuss about? Well, the easy answer to that is *money*. Publishers use AdSense because it's a potential revenue stream that might not otherwise be available to them.

In some rare cases, you may have heard of AdSense publishers making \$20,000 or more each month. Those are rare cases, but it's possible to build a decent revenue stream with AdSense if you manage the use of the ads carefully on sites that are very well designed. Is it likely that you'll get rich? No.

What is likely is that you might be able to make enough to cover your Web site hosting or even enough to cover your mortgage. AdSense definitely has the potential. How you manage the program combined with how well your site is designed and the amount of traffic that your site receives determine how much you make.

In the coming pages, you can find out about all the tips and secrets that will help you maximize the potential of AdSense for your Web site. It all starts in Chapter 2, where I walk you through how to sign up for an AdSense account and get it set up on your site, so keep reading. Plenty more information is to come.

Chapter 2

Getting Started with AdSense

In This Chapter

- ▶ Signing up with AdSense
 - ▶ Understanding Google's policies
 - ▶ Creating your first ad block
 - ▶ Using public service ads
-

If you want to find out what AdSense is, check out Chapter 1. (Too busy to read Chapter 1? Here's the barebones definition — *AdSense* is ad space on your Web page or blog that you lease to advertisers.) Now, I think definitions are all well and good, but it's time to get started using AdSense to generate a little income from your Web site, don't you know? Before I get too deep into the hows, though, I need to address a few whys.

Probably one of the greatest reasons to use AdSense is to tap into the growing Web advertising market, a market expected to reach about \$18.9 billion dollars by 2010 if you can believe the folks at Jupiter Research. (You can read all about it at www.jupitermedia.com/corporate/releases/05.08.15-newjupresearch2.html.) And if you could have a fraction of a percent of that market, wouldn't it be worth a few minutes of your time to set up an AdSense account?

Of course, you're probably thinking to yourself, "Self, if that much advertising revenue is available on the Web, why don't I just go straight to the source and cut out the middle man?"

You could. After all, why in the world would you want to give Google a portion of the income that you can generate selling advertising space on your Web site?

Okay, okay, I give. The question was a setup. The truth is I can think of a few (very good) reasons that it might be worth losing a small portion of your advertising revenue to allow Google to handle the logistics:

- ✓ **Ease of advertising sales:** You could find out which advertisers are putting their ads on your site and go straight to them to cut a deal for advertising that would cut Google right out of the picture. But would you know who to contact? And would you know how to go about convincing the advertiser to put his ads on your site? Probably not. Instead, Google handles those sales issues for you, and that alone justifies the premium that Google gets from connecting advertisers with ad publishers.
- ✓ **Availability of time:** Think of it like this: You can make and bake homemade bread to go along with your dinner every single night, but it's time-consuming and bread's available on the grocery store shelves that you don't have to knead, let rise, or bake. And that bread is just as good as anything most people could make at home (and in a lot of cases, much better!). AdSense is the same. You could track down the sales, negotiate the deals, design the ads, and then connect your site to the advertiser's site. But why would you spend time on that when you could let Google do it, place a couple lines of code in the design of your Web site, and then sit back and wait for the clicks to happen? Time is at a premium, and you have better ways to spend that premium than on the time-consuming activities that go along with selling, designing, and implementing advertising on your Web site.
- ✓ **Avoidance of technological frustrations:** Those ads that are placed on your Web site when you sign up for AdSense are created by someone. Usually that someone is a tech geek of some kind who not only knows what works in online advertising but also knows how to program pages or sections of pages to see, display, and update advertisements regularly. Are you that someone? Most of the time, the answer to that question is no, you're not the tech guru. If you were, you'd be in advertising and wouldn't need this book. It just makes more sense to allow someone who knows how to handle the situation to handle it. That frees you up to do tasks that are more essential to making money.

Setting Up for AdSense

One misconception that I had when I wanted to start using AdSense was that it would be difficult and time-consuming to set up. Boy, was I wrong! Setting up the account doesn't require your first born child or your signature in blood. Setting up the account takes only a few minutes and a minimum of information. But how you set up the account is determined by whether you already have a Google account.

Having a Google account isn't a requirement, but it can be useful. If you don't have a Google account, you're missing out on other Google applications, like *Gmail* (Google's Web mail program), possibly *AdWords* (the other side of AdSense; it's a pay-per-click advertising program in which you only pay for

ads that users click), and *Google Analytics* (a Web site traffic measurement program that tells you all kinds of cool information about who visits your site and what they do while they're there). A Google account makes connecting all these applications considerably easier, too.



If you're going to use AdSense, you most definitely want to have some kind of Web site analytics program. A *Web site analytics program* tracks the number of visitors to your site and some of their behaviors while they're on your site. You can use a program like AWStats or ClickTracks, but those programs are nowhere near as easy to use as Google Analytics.

Google Analytics is free, and it integrates with AdWords and AdSense, so it makes it easy to track your efforts in those programs. You may also want a program that's easy to understand and use. Google Analytics fits that bill, too. And did I mention the program is free?

But I digress.

One reason that many people choose not to have a Google account is because they don't like the way that Google collects personal information. People fear that because Google's claim to fame is its ability to analyze the heck out of online information, it'll use its expertise to dredge up all the personal information that it can about them. To some people it just feels far too much like Big Brother is watching.

AdSense only Web sites

You need to know one more detail before you even start to set up your AdSense account. Many people set up AdSense strictly to build Web pages with the singular purpose of enticing users to click the ads. You've seen these pages on the Web; they're all similar to the one shown below. The pages contain a small amount of text and lots of links, ads, and search boxes — all of which are usually linked to AdSense or a service like it.

If this is the type of page that you're planning to construct and connect to your AdSense account,

don't bother. The page may stay up for a few weeks or even a couple of months, but Google will find it, and when they do, that's it. Google will ban you from the AdSense program.

If you're truly interested in making a little money with AdSense, don't try to cheat the system. Working within Google's guidelines is a perfectly profitable way to make some extra cash that you can depend on for a long time to come. It's also not as difficult as it might seem when you first read through the guidelines and program policies.

(continued)

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Onlien Wedding Rings Guide

EVERYTHING ABOUT WEDDING RINGS



Wedding Rings Mens Band

This [wedding rings mens band page](#) will cover the major changes and choices available to men today. Not long ago, the choice of wedding rings was limited to gold and platinum wedding bands.

Finding anything like three tone rose gold wedding rings or a [Scandinavian wedding rings](#) was just not possible. Now, however, the selection of men's wedding rings or bands is actually just as varied as those for the [softer sex](#).



Wedding Rings for Men
Platinum, Titanium, Gold & Diamond Find the Perfect Wedding Band Today
[www.DesignBands.com](#)

Blue Hill Wedding Band 
Forbes Favorite Online Jeweler. Free FedEx Overnight on all orders.
[www.bluehill.com](#)

Save on Wedding Rings
Recognized Leader - Real Quality. 30 Day Guarantee. Free Shipping.
[JewelryMetal.com/WeddingRings](#)

Wedding Bands & Rings 
Buy Quality for the One You Love & Save Up to 75%. No Tax, Free Ship.
[www.WorldJewels.com](#)

Ads by Google

The reason is demand. These days, more men are looking for something different or unique. If you'd like more than the usual plain wedding band, then take a look through this information about what is now available for men.

One of the major changes is in the type of metal you can choose for your male wedding ring.

Gold and platinum are nice, but there are other choices now too including two-toned gold, tungsten, titanium stainless, steel, and other wedding band metals.

A tungsten wedding band is a unique choice for a wedding ring because of its durability and inherent quality. Tungsten, which is an unalloyed metal, is very unlikely to cause some kind of allergic reaction.

Ads by Google [Wedding DJ](#) [Wedding Gifts](#) [Titanium](#) [Wedding Bridal](#)
[Snippet of text](#) [Read more here](#)

Wedding Bands Express
Gold, Platinum & Diamond Bands Free Shipping, 30 Days Money Back
[www.weddingbandsexpress.com](#)

U.S. based Online Jewelry
Wedding Bands, Rings, Pendant & More At Your Jewelry Needs Here!
[CraftYouJewelry.com](#)

Fine Diamond Jewelry
We Guarantee To Beat Any Price Free Exp. Shipping & 15 Day Returns
[www.AmericanStarDiamond.com](#)

Tungsten Carbide Rings
Timeless rings at great prices. Free UPS, Ring Box, 30 Day Returns.
[www.EternatTungsten.com](#)

Ads by Google

One Of A Kind Celtic Wedding Rings
Celtic settlements stretched from Turkey into the Balkans and ...
[one-of-a-kind-celtic-wedding-rings.html](#)

History Of Wedding Rings
Typically, they are usually just gold bands and it is the engagement rings t...
[history-of-wedding-rings.html](#)

How To Choose A Wedding Ring
Brides and grooms often choose matching wed...
[how-to-choose-a-wedding-ring.html](#)

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In my experience, however, Google hasn't used my personal information for anything more than what I want it used for. I have a Google account, multiple Gmail accounts, a Google Analytics account, and accounts with Google AdWords and AdSense (and a couple dozen other Google applications and accounts that I won't list here). Not once in the past decade has Google used my information inappropriately. And I'm pretty careful about who I give my information out to. If you're still not convinced, Google has a pretty rigorous Privacy policy in place to protect you. You can find that policy at www.google.com/privacy.html.

If, after reading that document, you still don't want to register with Google, you can jump to the instructions for opening an AdSense account if you don't have a Google account. Otherwise, you can set up a Google account while you're setting up your AdSense account. And if you already have a Google account, you're one step ahead of everyone else.

One more note about setting up a Google AdSense account: Some experts suggest that you should have an AdSense account that's separate from your other Google accounts. The purpose behind having them separate is so that there are no repercussions should you accidentally end up in Google's bad graces with your AdSense efforts. I think that caution is unfounded.

Unless you plan to use your AdSense account in a manner that's prohibited by Google, you should run into no problems at all. And I find that it's much easier to have an AdSense account that's as easy to access as all the other Google applications that you use. One difficulty that I've discovered is the frustration of not having your AdSense account connected to other accounts, especially Google Analytics and AdWords.

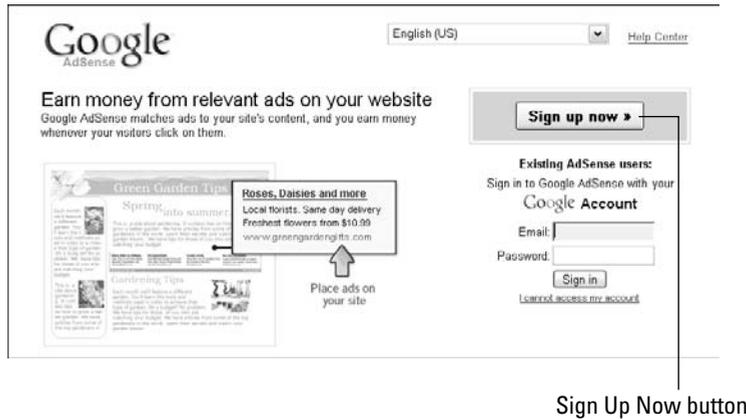
You have to decide what you're most comfortable doing: using your existing Google account, creating a new Google account, or not using one at all. But no matter what your preferences are, you can still get started with AdSense (even if not effectively) as soon as you get the approval from Google.

Taking the Plunge

If you have a Google account that you want to use when you set up your AdSense account, here are the steps for setting up the account:

1. **Point your browser to the AdSense Web site at www.adsense.com.**
2. **Click the Sign Up Now button, as shown in Figure 2-1.**

Figure 2-1:
Use the Sign Up Now button on the AdSense front page to create an account.



3. Fill in the requested information on the form that appears (shown in Figure 2-2) and then click the Submit Information button.

The information you'll be requested to enter includes

- *Your Web site URL:* Google will check the site to ensure it's appropriate for ads to be displayed.
- *Your Web site language:* To ensure that AdSense is available to your site visitors and that any ads placed are properly targeted to the main language of your site.
- *Type of account:* Use this drop-down menu to select whether you're creating a personal account or a business account. (If the account is for you, it's personal, and if you plan to use it as part of a business that you own, it's a business account.)
- *Country or territory:* You do know where you live, don't you?
- *The payee name:* This is the name under which you want your payments issued. If you're creating a personal account, it should be your personal name. If you're creating a business account, it's best to use the business name, but you can also use your personal name if you prefer.

Payments are made electronically or by check, but you set that information up after you've created your AdSense account, so for now all you need to know is to whom and where payments should be sent.

- *Address and telephone number:* Use the address where you would like to have your payments sent, and be sure to include a working telephone number in case the good people at AdSense need to contact you concerning payments. You also need to select the I Agree



that I Can Receive Checks Made Out to the Payee Name I Have Listed Above check box. This just ensures that you're aware that the name you have selected in the Payee Name portion of the form is the name your checks will be made out to.

- *Email preferences:* If you want to receive the AdSense newsletter and surveys about AdSense, place a check mark in the In Addition, Send Me Periodic Newsletters with Tips and Best Practices and Occasional Surveys To Help Google Improve AdSense check box.
- *Who referred you:* Use the drop-down menu provided to tell Google how you heard about AdSense. This information is likely used to help them effectively market the AdSense service.
- *Agree to AdSense program policies:* The last part of the form is where you register your agreement or disagreement with the AdSense program policies. Be sure to read these policies completely (a link to them is provided on the form). If you don't agree to the program's policies, you will not be approved for an AdSense account. Two of the four check boxes on this list are the most important points in the program policies. The third check box is your agreement (if you agree) and the fourth check box is just confirmation that you don't already have an AdSense account. (You're only allowed to have one, so don't try registering another because it will be refused.) All four of these check boxes must be selected.



Don't blow off the Policies section. You need to read the policies and make sure you understand them because Google strictly requires that *publishers* (AdSense users) adhere to these policies. Slip up, and Google will strip your AdSense capabilities so fast you'll wonder if there's some capability-stripping super power out there that you've never heard of.

- 4. In the new page that appears, confirm your payment information, and then choose either the I Have an Email Address and Password (Google Account) option or the I Do *Not* Use These Other Services option.**

If you select the first option, you can jump right to the next section.

If you select the second option, a new form appears, as shown in Figure 2-3.

- 5a. If you select the second option, choose a new e-mail address for the account, designate and confirm a password for the account, and then enter the verification word. When you're finished, click Continue.**

A Gmail account will be created for you, using the e-mail address you select.

Google AdSense

Welcome to AdSense [What is AdSense?](#) | [Already have an account?](#)
Please complete the application form below.

Website Information

Website URL [?]: [?]

- Please list your primary URL only.
- Example: [www.example.com](#)

Website language:

- Tell us your website's primary language to help our review process.
- I will not place ads on sites that include incentives to click on ads.
- I will not place ads on sites that include pornographic content.

Contact Information

Account type [?]:

Country or territory:

Important - Your payment will be sent to the address below. Please complete all fields that apply to your address, such as a full name, full street name and house or apartment number, and accurate country, ZIP code, and city. [Example](#).

Payee name (full name):

- Your Payee name needs to match the name on your bank account.
- Payee must be at least 18 years of age to participate in AdSense.

Street Address:

City/Town:

State:

ZIP: [?]:

- To change your country or territory, please change your selection at the top of this form.
- I agree that I can receive checks made out to the payee name I have listed above.

Telephone Numbers

Phone:

Email preference: We'll send you service announcements that relate to your agreement with Google.
 In addition, send me periodic newsletters with tips and best practices and occasional surveys to help Google improve AdSense.

How did you find out about Google AdSense?

Policies

AdSense applicants must agree to adhere to AdSense program policies ([details](#))

- I agree that I will not click on the Google ads I'm serving through AdSense.
- I will not place ads on sites involved in the distribution of copyrighted materials.
- I certify that I have read the [AdSense Program Policies](#).
- I do not already have an approved AdSense account. (Click [here](#) if you do.)

[AdSense Blog](#) [AdSense Forum](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Terms & Conditions](#) [Program Policies](#)

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Figure 2-2: Provide the requested information to register for an AdSense account.

5b. If you choose the I Have an Email Address and Password (Google Account) option, then you have to choose one of the other two options on the page: I'd Like to Use My Existing Google Account for AdSense or I'd Like to Choose a New Login Name and Password Just for AdSense.

If you choose to use your existing Google account for AdSense, a form like the one shown in Figure 2-4 appears. Enter your active e-mail address and password and click Continue.

Google AdSense Help

This is the account information you entered:

Website Information
 Website URL: www.jerriedford.com
 Website language: English

Account Type
 Account type: Individual
 Country or territory: United States

Contact Information
 Payee name: Jerri L Ledford
 Address line 1: 1801 Knollwood Dr. Apt. 92
 City: Mobile
 State, province or region: AL
 Zip or postal code: 36609
 Country or territory: United States
 Phone: 251 454-0992
 Email preference: Send me important service announcements.

How did you find about Google AdSense: Friend/colleague
 Be sure all of this information is correct before you continue.
 You cannot change your payee name or country/territory after this point.

Which best describes you?

I have an email address and password (Google Account) I already use with Google services like AdWords, Gmail, Orkut, or the personalized home page.

I do not use these other services. I would like to create a new Google Account.

Please provide a valid email address for your AdSense login

Email:
 e.g. myname@example.com. This will be used to sign-in to your account.

Password:
 Minimum of 8 characters in length. [?]

Re-enter password:

Word Verification: Type the characters you see in the picture below.



&

Letters are not case-sensitive

View the [Terms of Service](#) & [Privacy Policy](#).
 You must accept the Terms of Service to create a Google account.

Figure 2-3:

If you don't have a Google account, you need to create one to access AdSense.

The other option you have is to set up a new login name and password just for AdSense. If you select that option, a form like the one shown in Figure 2-5 appears. Create a new e-mail address for your username, add a password (and confirm it), and then enter the verification word and click Continue.

6. Wait.

First you have to wait for an e-mail confirmation from AdSense. That should arrive in your e-mail Inbox within a matter of minutes.

After you've confirmed your e-mail address, you have to wait a little longer for approval of your account. But don't wait too long. Google should only take a few days to approve or deny your application for an AdSense account.

Google AdSense

Help
Search AdSense Help

This is the account information you entered:

Website Information
 Website URL: www.jamiedford.com
 Website language: English

Account Type
 Account type: Individual
 Country or territory: United States

Contact Information
 Payee name: Jerri L Ledford
 Address line 1: 1801 Knollwood Dr. Apt. 92
 City: Mobile
 State, province or region: AL
 Zip or postal code: 36609
 Country or territory: United States
 Phone: 251 454-0992
 Email preference: Send me important service announcements.

How did you find about Google AdSense: Friend/colleague
 Be sure all of this information is correct before you continue.
 You cannot change your payee name or country/territory after this point.

Which best describes you?

I have an email address and password (Google Account) I already use with Google services like AdWords, Gmail, Orkut, or the personalized home page.

I do not use these other services. I would like to create a new Google Account.

Would you like to use your existing Google Account for AdSense?
 You can use your existing Google account email address and password for AdSense as well. Or you can choose new ones just for AdSense.

I'd like to use my existing Google account for AdSense.

I'd like to choose a new login name and password just for AdSense.

Use an existing Google Account
 What does this mean?
 Use my existing Google Account as my AdSense login

Google Account

Email:

Password:

[I cannot access my account](#)

[AdSense Blog](#) - [AdSense Forum](#) - [Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms & Conditions](#) - [Program Policies](#)

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Figure 2-4:
You can use an existing Google account to create an AdSense account.



One question you may have is whether you really need a *Gmail* address to complete the AdSense application. The answer is no. I can sing the praises of Gmail — Google's Web mail program. I've had an account since the program was in beta testing, and it's the best Web-based e-mail program you'll find. But it's not necessary to have one. Any e-mail address will suffice. Just be sure it's an e-mail address that you have access to because that's where Google sends your communications from AdSense, and you must be able to access those communications to verify your account.

Google AdSense

Help
Search AdSense Help

This is the account information you entered:

Website Information
 Website URL: www.jamiedford.com
 Website language: English

Account Type
 Account type: Individual
 Country or territory: United States

Contact Information
 Payee name: Jerri L Ledford
 Address line 1: 1801 Knollwood Dr. Apt. 92
 City: Mobile
 State, province or region: AL
 Zip or postal code: 36609
 Country or territory: United States
 Phone: 251 454-0992
 Email preference: Send me important service announcements

How did you find about Google AdSense: Friend/colleague
 Be sure all of this information is correct before you continue.
 You cannot change your payee name or country/territory after this point.

Which best describes you?

I have an email address and password (Google Account) I already use with Google services like AdWords, Gmail, Orkut, or the personalized home page.
 I do not use these other services. I would like to create a new Google Account.

Would you like to use your existing Google Account for AdSense?
 You can use your existing Google account email address and password for AdSense as well. Or you can choose new ones just for AdSense.

I'd like to use my existing Google account for AdSense.
 I'd like to choose a new login name and password just for AdSense.

Please provide a valid email address for your AdSense login

Email:
 e.g. myname@example.com. This will be used to sign-in to your account.

Password:
 Minimum of 8 characters in length. [?]

Re-enter password:

Word Verification: Type the characters you see in the picture below.



&

Letters are not case-sensitive

View the [Terms of Service](#) & [Privacy Policy](#).
 You must accept the Terms of Service to create a Google account.

[AdSense Blog](#) - [AdSense Forum](#) - [Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms & Conditions](#) - [Program Policies](#)

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Figure 2-5:
 Creating an account just for AdSense is an option if you don't want AdSense connected to other Google accounts.

Understanding Google's Policies

If you've read anything at all online about AdSense, you've probably seen the phrase "familiarize yourself with the AdSense Program Policies" at least as many times as you've seen the moon. There's good reason for that.

Google is very strict about AdSense users (*publishers*, in their jargon) following the guidelines set forth in the AdSense Program Policies document. If you don't adhere to the program policies, Google reserves the right to disable your AdSense account. And Google will — faster than you can say “What did I do wrong?” They're that serious about the guidelines because the appearance of your site and your adherence to their guidelines determine how people view the advertisements. Google wants to be in users' good graces, and your cooperation helps to accomplish that.

The program policies aren't filled with quite as much legalese as you might find in other policy documents, but you'll encounter ten-dollar words like *pursuant*. Here's a quick list of what you'll encounter in the policy document:

- ✓ Legalese
- ✓ Invalid clicks and impressions
- ✓ Encouraging clicks
- ✓ Site content
- ✓ Copyrighted materials
- ✓ Webmaster Guidelines
- ✓ Site and ad behavior
- ✓ Ad placement
- ✓ Competitive ads and services
- ✓ Product-specific policies

In the next few sections, I deal with each of these points in greater detail. (**Remember:** This is just an overview. Read the document completely before you agree to the policy requirements of the program.)

Legalese

The document starts with an explanation of Google's legal rights. Basically, the Google lawyers are telling you that you need to be nicer and follow the guidelines Google sets forth or Google can — and will, if it becomes necessary — disable your AdSense account. The rub here is that after your account is disabled, you're just finished. You can't use AdSense anymore. (Yes, you could try to cheat fate by creating a new account, but if Google finds out it's you, they'll just shut you down all over again.)

Invalid clicks and impressions

“Clicks on Google ads must result from genuine user interest.”

That’s the first line of the most highly debated section of the program policies. This section of the policy lays out the guidelines for what constitutes a valid click. If you click your own ads, those clicks are invalid. If you program (or purchase) some piece of software to click your ads, those clicks are invalid. And these types of invalid clicks are click fraud. *Click fraud* is fraudulently clicking your own or someone else’s ads with the intent of affecting AdSense revenues or AdWords costs and is enough to get you banned from AdSense completely, no questions asked — and please don’t re-apply.

A valid click or impression has these qualities:

- ✓ It’s initiated by a real user to your Web site.
- ✓ The actual click is performed by a real, live person.
- ✓ The click is the result of genuine interest in the content of the advertisement by the real, live person.

Any clicks that don’t meet these requirements can be (and usually are) considered invalid clicks. Clicking your own ad even *one* time could get you banned from AdSense. It’s not worth it.

You don’t have to say it. I hear your objection: How are you supposed to know how the ads apply to your site if you can’t follow them? Or how will you know how the ads will look or how they will integrate into your Web site?

Well . . . it’s half about trust and half about testing. Trying to view every single ad that’s shown on your Web site probably isn’t prudent. Because ads rotate constantly and each site visitor might see a different ad set — also called an ad *group* or an ad *block* — you probably couldn’t view all the ads, even if you wanted to.

Instead, AdSense has a testing capability — the *AdSense preview tool*. It’s a small application you have to download and add to your computer’s registry, which allows you to see what the ads look like and how they behave without having to click your own ads.

Download the preview tool from the AdSense Help Center at <https://www.google.com/adsense/support/>. In the Help Center, search for *preview tool*. You should be taken to a search results page where the top result is a link to the page from which you can download the preview tool. The directions on the page walk you through downloading and installing the preview tool.

Here’s one catch: If you’re a Firefox user, the preview tool won’t be much help. It only works with Internet Explorer. For the purposes of previewing your AdSense ad blocks, it might be wise to keep Internet Explorer as a

backup browser. You don't have to use it all the time — just when you want to preview your AdSense ad blocks.

Encouraging clicks

The next section of the AdSense Program Policy document addresses the kinds of things you shouldn't pull in an attempt to encourage people to click on your ads. I know this is a little negative, but it's important that you pay attention to these no-nos because ignoring them could have dire consequences.

You can't point out ads. You can't pay people to click your ads. You also can't use any kind of misleading titling around the ads (for example, using a Favorite Sites title when the ads really are just advertisements), and you must be cautious about the graphics you include around ad blocks. If they're at all misleading and appear to be associated with the ads, that's more fodder for the banning machine.

In short, all you can really do to encourage ad unit clicks is to place the ads in the best possible locations. Make them appealing with the design tools that Google provides and then leave them alone. Much more than that and you run the risk of landing on Google's black list.

Site content

Here's where the program policies begin to get interesting. Okay, not really. There is rarely anything interesting about program policies. But a lot of meat is in this section of the program policies, and you should pay close attention to what's here.

Google's requirements for site content are basic: no violent content, no adult content, nothing related to gambling, and nothing associated with any type of illegal activities. But that's not all. Google also frowns on Web sites that are related to anything that could be construed as controversial — tobacco, alcohol, prescription drugs, and weaponry of any kind. Google stops just short of disallowing ads on political pages, though that might not be a bad idea.

Think of it this way: If you were Google, what would you *not* want your name associated with? Just about anything you come up with will probably be on the restricted list that Google's created. Read the list closely. Google doesn't accept *I didn't know* as a good excuse for violating the policies.

Copyrighted materials

This should really go without saying, but plagiarized content will ensure that Google pulls your AdSense access. Copyright infringement is a serious crime; one that's more prevalent on the Internet than grains of sand on a beach. Many people mistakenly believe that because articles and other content on the Web are on the Web, they're free for anyone to use. That's not the case, and Google is a bulldog in the copyright protection arena. The *Google crawler*, which is the program that looks at your Web site to determine the main topics, or keywords, that are relevant to the site, can determine if the content on your page is original or if it appears in another place on the Web. If it's not original and you can't prove you have permission to use it, you'll pay the price. So, be kind; use original content.

Take the time to read about the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and Google's stance on that piece of legislation. The details are on the Web at www.google.com/adsense_dmca.html. Not only will copyright infringement and plagiarism get you banned from AdSense, but they can also get you thrown in jail, so use original content. You not only protect your investment in AdSense, but your Web site will probably rank better in search results, too, because search engines — and site visitors — love fresh, original content. Having fresh, original content would naturally make your site more popular.

Webmaster Guidelines

Google's Webmaster Guidelines tell you everything you need to know about what the company expects from the design of a Web site. The document is pretty complicated, but it can be summed up in one word: simplicity.

Keep your Web site simple, easy to use, and relevant to your site visitors, and you shouldn't run into any problems with Google where site design is concerned. Of course, it still doesn't hurt to familiarize yourself with and follow the Webmaster Guidelines. Read them here:

www.google.com/support/webmasters/bin/answer.py?answer=35769#quality



A more in-depth discussion of Google's Webmaster Guidelines can be found in Chapter 3. There's even a bonus to using this set of guidelines — Google is *the* search engine to rank in. Following these guidelines helps ensure that you rank well in its search results.

Site and ad behavior

Need a few more guidelines for how your site should be designed? Not necessarily? Well, tough because Google's giving a few more anyway. In this section of the program policies, Google outlines yet more no-nos. You can't use pop-ups or pop-unders in your site design. (*Pop-ups* are those annoying little windows that pop up out of nowhere when you click a link leading to a Web site or when you click away from the site. *Pop-unders* are the same except the window appears under your Web browser so you don't see them until you close the browser window.)

You also can't try to deceive your visitors into clicking through ads by disguising the ads or hiding them within text, behind graphics, or in the background of the Web page. The ads must appear as ads and not as sponsored links of any kind.

And to take it all one step further, Google also has Landing Page Quality Guidelines to help ensure that your *landing page* — the first page that site visitors land on when they click into your Web site — is designed well and adheres to the AdSense Program Policy requirements. These guidelines ask the following of you and your site:

- ✓ That you have relevant and original content on your site
- ✓ That your site is clear in your intent and the nature of your business (if that's relevant)
- ✓ That it's clear how your visitors' information will be used
- ✓ That users can find their way around your site, or navigate the site, easily



I recommend checking out the full set of Landing Page Quality Guidelines at <https://adwords.google.com/support/bin/answer.py?answer=46675&hl=en>.

The real key to staying in Google's good graces (for both search engine ranking and the AdSense program) is to design your Web site with the end user in mind. If you're designing a site strictly to collect ad clicks, you might get a high number of visitors for a short time, but that number will fall like a penny dropped from the Empire State building as soon as users figure out what you're up to. Or worse, Google will figure it out first and ban you from AdSense and probably from search engine rankings, too.

A much better idea is to design your site for site visitors. Provide the information that visitors are looking for. They'll spend more time on your site, which means more exposure to AdSense ads, which means ultimately more clicks. And Google will leave you alone to make your money. Not a bad trade for doing things the right way instead of trying to deceive site visitors.

Ad placement

In case there was any doubt, Google set up guidelines for how and where ad units can be placed on your site. The policy document lists the particulars, but it's safe to say that Google wants ads tastefully displayed and in context.

Google also doesn't want visitors overwhelmed by the number of ads on a page, so, you'll also find guidelines for how many ad blocks of each type you can have on any given Web page.

More information about how to actually place ads on your Web site — as well as information about creating appealing ads — can be found in Chapter 5.

Competitive ads and services

This isn't about your competition; it's about Google's competition. Like any good contender, Google doesn't want competitors competing for its share of the prize money. So, you can't display ads from any competing services that could be confused with AdSense ads.

For example, it's okay to include ads on your site from Amazon or other retail services. And you can even include other pay-per-click ads, as long as they don't mimic AdSense ads. Ads that look like they belong to AdSense but do not are a real no-no — that could really stir Google's pot!

Google stops just this side of saying you can't use other advertising services, but only because denying your freedom to use any program without thought of how it could be misconstrued as a Google capability is creating a monopoly. And monopolies draw the attention of Big Brother. He's a sibling no one wants to spend time with.

Product-specific policies

AdSense has a few different divisions, such as Internet ads, video ads, radio ads, and a massive variety of content ads. Google is slowly working into many other types of advertising as well. Because there are so many different types of media in which you can use AdSense, and all those media differ in some way, there have to be policies that directly address some of the differences for each medium. You can find those guidelines at www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/answer.py?answer=71600.

The AdSense Program Policy document seems pretty tame on first glance. But as you look closer at the contents of the policy, you can quickly see that there are additional bits and pieces about those program policies scattered behind several different Web links. And after you start getting into those links, you can truly see how complicated Google's policies get.

Don't skip anything, though. Read through all the policy documentation and then read it all again. And read it again as you need to, to stay on the right side of Google's good graces, because if you get booted, it's hard to reestablish your presence on the Web.

Creating Your First Set of Ads

You created your account, waited, and were approved. Now AdSense is active. Now you can fill that blank space on your Web site with money-generating ads. But first you have to set up your ads.

Log in to your new AdSense account by using the username and password that you set up during the registration process. The page that appears at login is the Reports tab (AdSense always opens to this), which features a quick overview of your earnings and the reports that are available for AdSense. Because you don't have any data to be reported yet, you'll have a big, fat zero on that page, much like the one shown in Figure 2-6.

If you want to change that big fat zero into something a bit more lucrative, you need to set up a few ad blocks. Here's how:

1. If you haven't already done so, log in to your AdSense account.
2. Click the AdSense Setup tab, immediately to the right of the Reports tab.

A page like the one in Figure 2-7 appears.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense Reports interface. At the top, it displays the user's email (G.Gee107@gmail.com) and login status (Last login: 1 hours ago). The main navigation includes 'Reports', 'AdSense Setup', 'My Account', and 'Resources'. Under 'Reports', there are sub-tabs for 'Overview', 'Advanced Reports', 'Report Manager', and 'Site Diagnostics'. The primary content area shows 'Today's Earnings: \$0.00' with a link to 'View payment history'. A tip asks if the user wants to hold their payment. Below this, a 'View' dropdown is set to 'Today'. A table lists reports for 'AdSense for Content', 'AdSense for Search', 'Referrals', and 'AdSense for Mobile Content', all showing '- No data available -'. A second tip provides payment support information. At the bottom, a 'Recent messages' section shows a table of optimization reports.

Sender	Subject	Date
Optimization Team	January 2008 Optimization Report	Jan 1
Optimization Team	December 2007 Optimization Report	Dec 11
Optimization Team	November 2007 Optimization Report	Nov 1

Figure 2-6:
This will always be your starting point when you log in to AdSense.

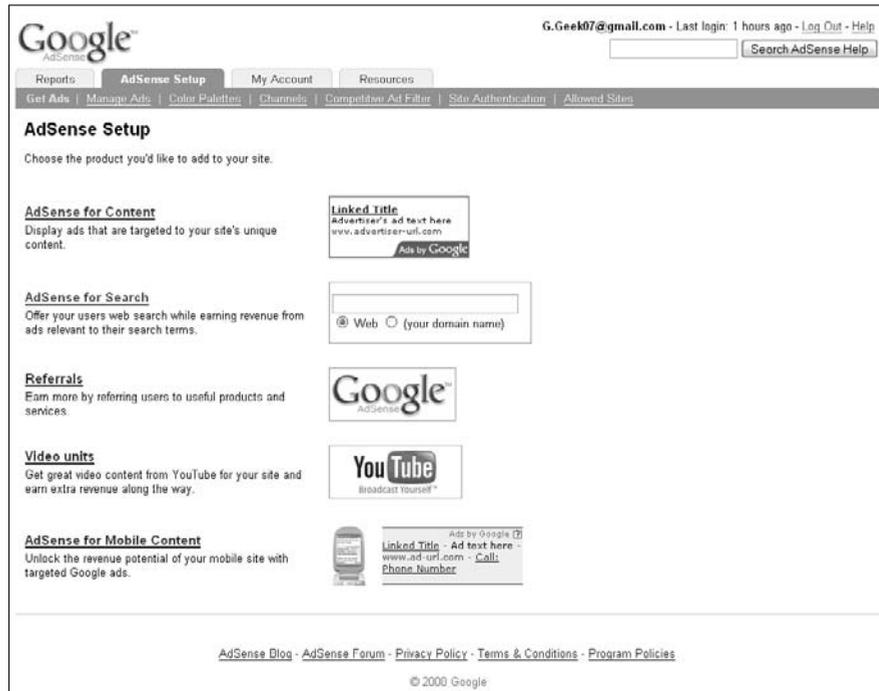


Figure 2-7:
The AdSense Setup page is where you choose which type of ad you want to create.

3. On this page, select the type of ad block you want to set up.

For this example, go ahead and select AdSense for Content. The other options are covered in later chapters.

The page that appears is the first step in the Ad Wizard, which walks you through setting up your ad.

If you prefer a single-page form instead of using the wizard, click the wizard's Single Page link. The information you're asked to enter is the same, but on the single-page form, you just scroll down the page instead of clicking a Continue button.

4. Choose your ad type and click Continue.

Your choices here are

- *Ad Units:* A graphical text box (as shown in Figure 2-8) inside of which linked ads are displayed.
- *Link Units:* A set of linked keywords (as shown in Figure 2-9) that lead to advertisers' pages.

Just to keep it simple for now, select Ad Unit.



Figure 2-8:
A graphical
ad unit.



Figure 2-9:
A link ad unit.



5. In the new page that appears, choose the size of ad you want to have appear on your Web site.

Google offers a variety of different shapes, sizes, and types of ad formats. The format that works best for you depends on the space you have available, the content of your Web site, and the design of the page on which the ad appears. For now, select 234 x 60 Half Banner from the Format drop-down menu. (I give you all the details about ad styles and formats in Chapter 7, when I cover designing the perfect content ad.)

6. On the same page, choose a color scheme for your ad.

Google has several pre-made color schemes available in the drop-down list to the right, or you have the option to specify border, title, background, text, and URL colors by hexadecimal number. This is useful if you know the exact hexadecimal numbers of your Web page design and want to match them.

For your purposes, select Seaside from the drop-down list.

7. Still on the same page, choose Slightly Rounded Corners from the Corner Styles drop-down list.

The other options available here are Squared Corners or Very Rounded Corners. Visually, each has a different appeal to people in different situations and on different Web sites.

8. For the last option on the page, choose Show Public Service Ads from the drop-down list and click Continue.

What's this about public service ads? Well, Google shows public service ads when your site is so new that it can't be properly populated with paid ads and when your site content doesn't match ad content. You can choose to have these ads displayed, to have ads from another service displayed, or to have a solid color displayed as a placeholder if either of these situations applies.

9. In the new page that appears, click Continue.

This page of the wizard gives you the option to assign the ad to a channel, but you have not yet set up channels. I show you how to set up

channels in Chapter 14. For now, channels aren't an aspect of AdSense that you need to worry about. They're for tracking your ads, but before you can track them you need to know how to create them and get the highest percentage of clicks possible. After all, tracking nothing — which is exactly how many clicks you'll have if you do your ads wrong — still leaves you with nothing to track.

10. In the new (and final) page that appears, enter a name for your ad unit in the appropriate field and then click the Save and Get Code button.

When the page appears, a default name is already filled into the Name text box. I recommend renaming the ad unit something useful, but if you want to leave the default name, that's fine.

The page shown in Figure 2-10 appears with the code for your ad unit.

11. Copy the code provided by AdSense and paste it into the HTML code of your Web site.

How you access your HTML code depends on how you got your code in the first place. If you're using an HTML Editor/Web Page Creation program to design your Web site, you may need to dig around the menus to find out how to get the raw HTML code on-screen. If you're writing your code from scratch, though, all you need to do is pull up the Web site code and paste the ad code into the spot on which you want AdSense ads to appear.



Creating the ad for your Web site is an easy process. Getting it to appear on the right spot on your Web site might be a little bit like landing a jumbo jet in the median of the New Jersey Turnpike. It'll take a little practice, and in the beginning, it could get a little hairy.

Figure 2-10:
The code
for your first
AdSense
ad.

G.Geek07@gmail.com - Last login: 47 minutes ago - [Log Out](#) - [Help](#)

Search AdSense Help

Reports | **AdSense Setup** | My Account | Resources

[Get Ads](#) | [Manage Ads](#) | [Color Palettes](#) | [Channels](#) | [Competitive Ad Filter](#) | [Site Authentication](#) | [Allowed Sites](#)

[Get Ads](#) > **AdSense for Content**

AdSense unit: 234x60, created 1/9/08

Your AdSense unit has been saved. Changes may not appear for up to 10 minutes. [?]

You may paste this code into [any web page or website](#) that complies with our [program policies](#). For more help with implementing the AdSense code, please see our [Code Implementation Guide](#).

Tip: Did you know that you can make changes to your ads without replacing the ad code on your site? Try [Manage Ads](#).

Your AdSense unit code:

```
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-6630304584312230";
//234x60, created 1/9/08
google_ad_slot = "4043896504";
google_ad_width = 234;
google_ad_height = 60;
//--></script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_ads.js">
</script>
```

[Preview this AdSense unit](#) | [Edit this AdSense unit](#) | [Create a new AdSense unit](#)

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A note about public service ads

The subject of public service ads has come up once in this chapter already. Here's the scoop on public service ads.

Basically, a *public service ad* is an ad that Google places in an AdSense ad block when there are no appropriate ads to be displayed in that space at that time. One time when you're likely to see public service ads is when you've first added the AdSense code to your Web site.

In order to serve ads to your Web page that match the content of the page, Google periodically examines — or *crawls* — the site to determine the content of the site. Then ads are pushed out to your Web site based on that content. When you've first put the AdSense code on your site, it takes a few hours (and sometimes even a couple of days) for Google to crawl the site to examine the content. Until that happens, the company wants *something* displayed in the space that you've made available, so public service ads are the filler.

The problem with public service ads is just that — they're part of a public service, which means you don't get paid when they're viewed or clicked. So you don't want to have those ads hanging around any longer than necessary —

you do want to start making money as soon as possible, right?

If public service ads display for more than a few days, contact Google to make sure that your site is being crawled regularly. You can't ask the company to specifically crawl your Web site (well, you can ask them, but they won't do it), but you can find out if there's something that you can do to speed up the process.

It's possible that your site design is causing the public service ads to be displayed, too. If Google's Web crawler can't determine the topic of your Web page, the public service ads remain in place. This happens when pages are largely graphical in nature or when the content on a page isn't coherent enough for the crawler to determine the overall theme of the page. If the crawler can't understand your site design, it can't target the right ads to your site. And that's all the more reason to familiarize yourself with Google's policies and guidelines and apply them to your site design.

If everything is in order, after a few hours or maybe even a couple of days (or whenever Google crawls your site), the ads are replaced with actual paid ads and you can begin making money.

One resource you may find helpful during the implementation process is the AdSense help page for code implementation:

```
www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/answer.py?answer=44511&sourceid=aso&subidww-ww-et-asui&medium=link#3
```

The one thing you need to remember is that this is just an exercise in creating your first ad block. There are more details to implementing ads that work than there are quills on a porcupine. So maybe you do have an ad that you think is ready to go online, but it might not be. You can put it online now, and tweak it as you have time. Or, flip through some of the more detailed chapters about creating specific types of ads. Putting a basic ad on your Web site probably won't hurt you, but your time might be better spent figuring out how to make that ad really sing to your site visitors.

Creating ads seems easy enough. Even getting the ads to display isn't all that difficult. However, getting site visitors to take note of those ads is a completely different tale. One way that you can get users to click your ads is to ensure they appear in the right context on your Web site. In Chapter 3, you find out about building content-rich Web sites and how you can optimize your Web site content for AdSense. Use those tips to help create pages that are complemented by the ads Google dishes out to your site.

Chapter 3

Building a Content-Rich Web Site

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the value of content
 - ▶ Understanding the content-rich Web site building basics
 - ▶ Getting cozy with Google's Webmaster guidelines
-

Content is the main draw to your Web site. I say this even though I'm the first to admit that pictures can be very cool and that you can do some pretty amazing (and some not-so-amazing) stuff with your pages using Flash animation. When I'm being charitable, I can even see the rationale for all kinds of other electronic bling some folks insist on adding to their pages. All that's beside the point, though; what brings users to your site and draws them deeper and deeper into your pages is content.

Admittedly, one could argue that *content* is more than merely words — it's all the elements that make up your Web site, even the bling. But it's the *words* that help visitors find your site because words can be strung together to form information — and finding the right information is the goal of nearly every person who surfs the Web.

So having the right kind of content is one key to AdSense success. There's such a thing as having the wrong kind of content or even having too much content. Having the right amount and the right kind of content is a balancing act. With careful attention to detail, you can keep all your plates dancing on their assigned poles.

The Big Deal about Content

Content is king! Bet you've heard that a few times before, right? It's an over-used phrase that's lost some of its impact. It's still true though — content *is* king. And without enough content (and enough of the right kind of content) on your Web site, you might as well toss the keys to your Web domain down the nearest sewer drain because the domain will be worthless.

Think about what's really motivating you when you surf the Internet. Go ahead — pay close attention to what you do the next few times you go online. To help you remember, keep a list of the Web sites you visit and what you do while you're there. I bet the search for information is the unifying theme to all your Internet sessions. Information is *content* — words, pictures, audio, and video — that relay the information you need when you're online. That's one of the reasons why search engines like Google have grown exponentially in size and popularity. People want information, and they want the best possible way to get to exactly what they need in the least amount of time.



You can tap into that desire for information and use AdSense to generate a decent income, but only if you have the content that draws visitors to your site in the first place. Your site visitors care about content (or information), and you should, too.

Content draws visitors to your site, and keeps them on your site or causes them to return. Content equals traffic — but here's the catch. Content only translates to traffic if the content is relevant and fresh. Old content or completely unrelated content doesn't do you any more good than old fish — it stinks up the place and makes people want to be somewhere else.

Good content is a good thing — I think we can all agree on that. You may ask how good content ties in with AdSense and your desire to turn your Web site into a handy little income stream. It turns out that content is also what Google uses to target ads on your Web site. In fact, Google uses the same technology to target AdSense ads that it uses to create search results. A software program — called a Web *crawler*, a *spyder*, or a *bot* — literally counts the number of times different words are used on your site and examines the words surrounding them (the so-called *context*). Then, using a mathematical equation that would probably take an entire ream of paper to write, the program determines the probability that the site is related to the words used most frequently on the site — the site's *keywords*. (Smaller, common words, such as a, an, the, and, nor, or, but, and etc., are completely ignored by the crawler.)

Then the content on your site — broken down to the keyword level — is used to determine which ads are appropriate for your site. The keyword *value* — how much someone is willing to pay to have their related ad shown in your ad space — determines how valuable the ads for your site are to you, how appropriate they are, and how valuable they can be to your site visitors. Run a site that's largely graphical in nature — lots of images, in other words — and Google has a hard time placing the right ads on the site. What you end up with instead are public service announcements, which are nice enough, I suppose — if you're not interested in making money, because they take up space but generate no income.

My sense is that your interest in AdSense might be tied up with making a bit of green on the side. If that's so, keep the following mantra in mind: "Content is a big deal. Content is king. Content is site traffic. Content is money in your pocket if it's done right." Content done right starts with building the right type of Web site.

If You Build a Content-Rich Web Site . . .

You probably already have a Web site to which you want to add AdSense — and that's a good move. Honestly, any site that's well designed can probably benefit from AdSense. If you're just building your site for the first time, you can do a number of things to optimize your site so that you get the most from your AdSense investment.

The next few sections walk you through some optimization strategies designed to get your Web site working harder for you. I start out with some site-building basics and then move pretty quickly into some AdSense-specific recommendations.



Don't think that all is lost just because your site exists already. Some of the optimization strategies I cover can be tweaked in ways that let you transform an already existing Web site into a site that gets more mileage from your AdSense efforts. A great idea, I'd say.

Site-building basics

Site design is critical to increasing your AdSense revenue. Both Google (the Brains Behind It All) and AdSense users (Average Janes and Joes working in the Web trenches) have tested different combinations of content, ad placement, and ad design to see what works best. There are some clear leaders — site design is important, and it all starts with the site name.

Name and address, please

Okay, it's time for the Obvious Tip of the Week: The name of your site should be closely related to the topic of your site. There's also more to your name than just a name; a well-designed site has a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) — fancy talk for a Web site address — that reflects the site name.

The *URL* is the address that you see in the address bar of a Web site. For example, you don't want a Web site named TheKittenPalace.com if your target topic is dogs or tropical fish. If you look at Web sites, you'll find that the content on the site is usually closely related to the site name.

Domain names come in two flavors: free and premium (or not free). A free domain name is usually used with Web pages that are hosted in a Web site community, whereas a premium domain name is usually hosted all by itself. Think of domain names like a neighborhood. An apartment in a complex at the end of the street usually has to share the same address as several other apartments (those in the same building), the only difference being the apartment number. Houses, on the other hand, have the luxury of their own address.

Free domains are available from a number of sources, including

- ✓ **Google Pages:** (www.pages.google.com): A free service you can use when you create your Web pages with Google Page Creator.
- ✓ **Geocities:** (<http://geocities.yahoo.com>): This free Web hosting provider has been around for a while. If you don't mind someone else controlling the ads on your site, it's a good option.
- ✓ **Homestead:** (www.homestead.com): Another free hosting provider, Homestead offers templates that make creating your Web site fast and easy.
- ✓ **Free WebSites:** (www.freewebsites.com): This service hosts your site for free, but requires that you allow them to advertise on your site. The ads are small, but you don't control them.

Most of these services provide a Web page creator tool that lets you design your pages in minutes. You can literally sign up for an account and have a Web site online in less than an hour, and that's if you're being very creative about putting your site together.

The problem with pages like these — pages that are part of a community — is that you don't have a direct URL. The URL for the site — which, if you remember my advice, should reflect the actual topic of your site — is usually something quite generic, like www.yoursite.community.com.

Nothing's wrong with being generic — if you don't mind ending up buried in search results — and nothing's wrong with being buried in the search results if you don't want to generate income with AdSense.

Oh, and one more thing. These pages are usually free because they're pre-loaded with advertisements from which you make no money. However, that would make it even harder for you to generate an AdSense income with these pages.

If you *do* want to generate income with AdSense, your Web site address should reflect your site name and it should be a direct address. A *direct address* states [www.yoursite.com](http://www.example1.com) loud and clear and nothing else. I don't know about you, but I'm much more likely to type that than to type http://www.example1.com/Search-Engine-Optimization/dp/0470175001/ref=sr_1_10?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1208363273&sr=8-10 if I'm looking for a particular type of Web site.

What's in a name?

The exception that proves the Name a Site in Accordance with the Site's Content rule is when a personal name is also the name of the domain. For example, my personal Web site, Jerriledford.com, has a variety of information on it, all different types of articles and personal interests that I have. Over the past decade or so, the site has changed dramatically in design, but the variety of the content remains largely the same. This is because that's the site I use to showcase (to editors) what type of work I can do. The goal of that site isn't to sell a product but rather to sell a package — me.

Jerriledford.com does its job well, but it's not the only dog I have in the World Wide

Web race. Another site that I have is GoogleGeek.com, which I built for a very different purpose — to help people understand the different products and services that Google makes available. The site's focal point is the Google Geek blog, but the site also has other pages that showcase different Google-related topics. Some are more in-depth articles about Google products and services, and a few are tutorials that guide users through using those products and services. The content of the entire site is focused on helping users use Google better. As you might expect, GoogleGeek.com consistently lands much better targeted AdSense ads than the content on the Jerriledford.com site.

Getting set up with a premium Web site that provides you with a direct address is a little more involved. You first have to purchase a domain name, which you can do from the following companies:

- ✓ **GoDaddy** (www.godaddy.com): Offers regular sales on domain names. You can also purchase your domain name, hosting, and other Web site services through GoDaddy.
- ✓ **Register.com** (www.register.com): Also offers domain names as well as hosting packages and other services. You can order domain names online through Register.com or by phone.
- ✓ **NameSeek** (www.namesseek.com): This company strictly sells domain names. It might even be more accurate to say this company negotiates the sale of domain names between current owner and purchaser.

After you have a domain name in hand, build the site and upload it to the Web. Many of the companies that sell you a domain name (or URL) will also offer to host your Web site for a monthly or yearly fee. (*Hosting* is like having land on which to put a house. You host your Web site on a server somewhere or on your own server.) You don't have to host with the company you purchased the domain name from, however. Any hosting company that you're comfortable with will do.

I use GoDaddy.com because their pricing for domain names is good and they offer the convenience of Web site hosting as well. However, you have plenty of options out there. Prices vary from one company to another, and what's included with the domain name also varies. With some companies, you're purchasing the name only. With others, you might be purchasing the name and security, the hosting, or any of a hundred or so other services.

Review each company to find the one that suits you and ask others what company they use. Find one that you like and then stay with it. That way, if you purchase multiple domain names, you can manage them all from one location. (For more on Web site hosting, check out the "Selecting the right Web host" section, later in this chapter.)

Getting with the plan

Before you register your site, put some thought into what you want the content of the site to be. In fact, it doesn't hurt to write a short plan for the site. It doesn't have to be a formal document, but getting your ideas on paper will help flesh them out and will also help you stay on track while you're working through the site design and implementation. Some of the details to include in your plan are

- ✓ **Site name:** Remember, don't get too cute, here. Make the name fit the site.
- ✓ **Topic:** You do know what your site will be about, right?
- ✓ **Subtopics:** Each of these will be a separate page or section of your site.
- ✓ **Hosting:** On what real estate will your site sit? You can use your own server or pay someone to host the site for you.
- ✓ **Design:** This includes the look of the site, the navigational structure, and even the kinds of images you want to include.
- ✓ **Types of content:** Will your site have only text, or will you also have video, audio, or downloads on the site?
- ✓ **Special considerations:** Do you plan to offer products for purchase? If so, include e-commerce capabilities.

You may think of other aspects of your site that you want to address in your site plan. If so, by all means, add them. Write it all down in as cohesive a format as you can and then put it away for a day or two. Come back to it after it's had time to season a little and re-read your plan to see if it's still as good an idea as you thought to start with.

Selecting the right Web host

Web sites need a place to park. Like the land your house or apartment sits on, a Web host is the physical place on a network where the files that make up your Web site are stored. This physical place has an address (the URL) that makes it possible for people to find the Web site, like a street address.

When you're looking at Web hosting, the whole idea of parking your Web site somewhere can get a little complicated. How much space and bandwidth do you need? What about things like managing the domain, security, and having an e-mail address to go along with the domain? These are all aspects you should consider when examining your Web site hosting options.

In most cases, a domain hosting company has several tiers of hosting packages. The basic package usually gets you enough space on the server to house a few dozen pages of text and light graphics. You may even be able to slide a video or two into the mix.

From there, packages get progressively more involved until you have every service imaginable for your Web site, from e-commerce and content management to download capabilities and streaming audio and video. What's right for you is determined by your needs, and you can always start with a smaller package and increase hosting capabilities if you find you need them at some later date.



One thing to keep in mind when you're selecting your Web host is the way in which your Web site will be designed, technically speaking. If you're writing your site from scratch with HyperText Markup Language (HTML) or some other programming language, you have less to worry about. But if you're using an HTML editing program (like FrontPage or DreamWeaver) to design your Web site, you may need to have special extensions installed on your site to allow file transfers from your computer to the server. These additional extensions usually add a few dollars extra to the cost of the hosting package. Knowing what you need before you get started could save you a few headaches and maybe even a little money.

Smart site design

After you come up with a name for your site and figure out where it'll be hosted, it's time to begin actually designing your Web site. You can deploy a few strategies that will make it easier to optimize your Web site for AdSense purposes.

First and foremost, keep in mind that the layout of your site will dramatically affect how your AdSense ads perform. This ain't rocket science, by the way. All you really have to do is picture what most people do when they surf the Web. In general, a user nearly always uses a Web site in the same fashion. When a user clicks into your site, his eyes first take in the heading of the page, travel down the right side of the page, and finally move to the middle. The exception to the normal state of affairs is when there's something flashy in the middle of the page that catches the visitor's eye first. The left side of the page is where most Web sites include the navigational structure, so users are less inclined to look there until they're ready to move on to another page on the site.



In Web site design, flashy isn't usually a good thing. Neither is Flash-y. *Flash* is a Web design protocol that animates objects and allows designers to embed video into a Web page. The problem with Flash is that it tends to hog a lot of resources, so it slows users' computer performance down, which users hate. The fastest way to lose visitors is to bog their systems down with your Flash (or flash). Make your pages attractive, but also make it possible for those pages to load quickly even with (gasp) dialup service.

Because visitors nearly always approach a Web site in the same way, many designers have discovered that the most important information on a Web site should go in certain places. That's why you often see that Web sites have a navigation bar on the left side of the page. Some sites include text links at the top of the page, and the most important content on the page is nearly always above the fold.



Above the fold is a newspaper term used to designate the placement of the most important story in the day's news. Newspapers are folded about halfway down the page. When a reader picks up the paper, she always turns it so the title of the paper is on top. (This is human nature; we don't like things displayed upside down.) So, the most important story of the day gets in the top half of the page, above the fold.

The same term can be used to relate to Web sites as well, though the orientation is a bit different. Because no fold is on a Web page, you have to think in terms of a browser window. Essentially, the *fold* on a Web page lines up with the bottom edge of your browser before the page has been scrolled. (*Scrolling* a page involves using the page's scroll bars to move the page up and down so you can view content that's not visible when the page appears in your browser window.)

Figure 3-1 illustrates where the fold is on the page. The figure also includes labeling for other important elements of the page.

A site visitor clicks your page and, in many cases, makes a determination about the value of the page before he ever scrolls down or moves the page in any way. Essentially, you have only one shot to make a good first impression: Whatever a visitor sees when that browser window loads is, for all intents and purposes, what he gets. So, the most important elements of your site should be loaded into that area above the fold. Information that's not quite as important should be placed below the fold.

For your AdSense strategy, this means placing ads smack dab in those sections of your site where a visitor's eye is most likely to land, which are

- ✓ **At or near the top of the page** (either immediately above or immediately below the title of the site, depending on how well the ads integrate in that spot)

- ✓ **Above the content**, or at the least, imbedded in the content above the fold
- ✓ **On the right side of the page**, blended with the other content that usually appears in the sidebar
- ✓ **On the left side and the bottom of a page** (only effective when the ads blend well with the other elements of those sections)

Figure 3-2 shows one of the most popular (and most effective) ad layouts.

While you're designing your pages, keep in mind that the areas shown in Figure 3-2 are most desirable for ad placement. That doesn't mean that ads should dominate those sections or that ads can't be effective anywhere else. It only means those sections are optimal for ads. Also, ads should be integrated into the content in those sections without being overpowering, and they should logically fit with your Web site design.

The click-friendly top spot.

Figure 3-1:
The fold of a Web site might not even be halfway down a page; it technically falls where the browser window ends.

The screenshot shows the ComputerWorld website layout. At the top is a Dell advertisement for PowerVault HD3000 storage, claiming 40% less cost and simpler management. Below this is a navigation bar with '100 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN IT 2007' and 'VIEW NOW' buttons, the 'COMPUTERWORLD' logo, and the IDG logo. A search bar is on the right. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'HOME' with a sidebar menu, 'TODAY'S TOP STORY' featuring an article about Firefox, 'MORE TOP STORIES' with several headlines, a 'Register Today!' banner for the 'FAST forward 08' conference, 'EDITORS' CHOICE' featuring CES 2008, 'YOUR PICKS', 'TOP-RATED STORIES', and 'TOP-RATED SHARK BAITS'.

Readers look left for navigation.

Keep important info above the fold.

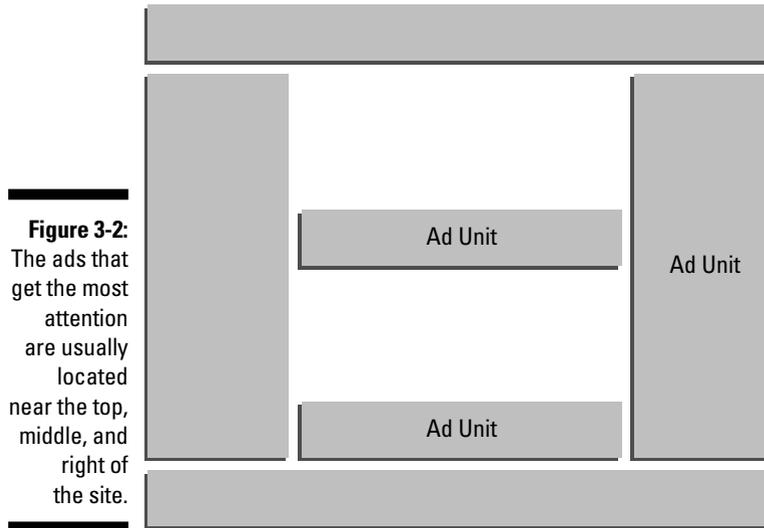


Figure 3-2: The ads that get the most attention are usually located near the top, middle, and right of the site.

AdSense optimized content

I spend a lot of time in this chapter talking about ad placement for a simple reason — it’s important. If nobody sees your AdSense ad, it’d be like the proverbial tree falling in the middle of the forest — no moneymaking proposition, in other words.

With the ad placement basics out of the way, it’s time to figure out how to convince the good folks at Google AdSense to place ads on your Web site that have meaning to your site visitors. Your ultimate goal by implementing AdSense is to entice visitors to click or view the ads that appear on your page. That only happens, though, if the ads are appealing to visitors. Having the right content is the key to having the right ads.

The technology behind Google AdSense — Web crawlers, spyzers, and bots diligently scouring the World Wide Web for info — tries its best to determine the content of your site, but it ain’t perfect. If all the articles on one page refer to grading diamonds and other gemstones, the ads that are pushed to your page for display will (more likely than not) feature loose diamonds and gemstones or diamond and gemstone jewelry. (Duh!) If you have a thing for free association so that articles on any given page jump from one topic to another with no cohesion, AdSense will have a much harder time placing relevant ads on your page. You could end up with ads for frog food when your site is related to planning a wedding at the lake. Try to keep your page as cohesive as possible and don’t combine topics on a page if you can help it.

Wanted: Good writers for Web site startup

You don't need a degree or any other fancy identifier to ensure that you have good content. You don't even have to be a writer, although it helps. There are all kinds of ways to find the right content for your Web site. If you don't want to write the content, try using a content provider, such as EzineArticles.com, FreeSticky.com, or ArticleGeek.com. Dozens of other services are also available. A quick Web search will turn up more places that offer free articles than there are cars in Detroit. One problem with these sites though is that the content is often over-used and stale. Remember that original content means better ads.

Another great option for having the right content on your site is to hire a writer. Online services, such as Elance.com, allow you to create a project listing that available writers bid on. You then determine the winning bid. It doesn't have to be the lowest bid, either. You determine what looks like the best bid with your own factors.

With a service like Elance.com, you or the writer pays a fee for the ability to list a project that is then bid on. Someone has to pay Elance's bills. The fee isn't unreasonable, and in fact, it's more than worth it to many Web site owners that need original content.

If the whole bidding scene doesn't paint your wagon red, you can also place advertisements for writers on Web sites, such as WritersWeekly.com, Craigslist.com, or JournalismJobs.com. Some of these Web sites charge a fee for listing your call for writers.

One thing to remember when you're looking for a writer is that you often get exactly what you pay for. A writer willing to work for pennies is probably new and untested, which isn't to say he's not a great writer, just that you're taking a gamble. Be willing to pay a little more to get a professional to write your articles, and always check references and provide a written contract before you enter into any business relationship with writers or any other vendors.



Google uses the same technology to index your pages for search results that it uses to examine your pages to determine the most relevant ads. To improve ad targeting for your site, you can do some things that are designed to pique the interest of the Google indexers, like using keywords in your content and in the design of your site.

Piquing the interest of Google indexers has become a science in its own right — the science of search engine optimization. *SEO*, as it is referred to by those in the know, has tried to come up with a set of Web design principles that deal with everything from choosing content to actual structure to help search engines more easily analyze your site to determine where in the search results it fits best.

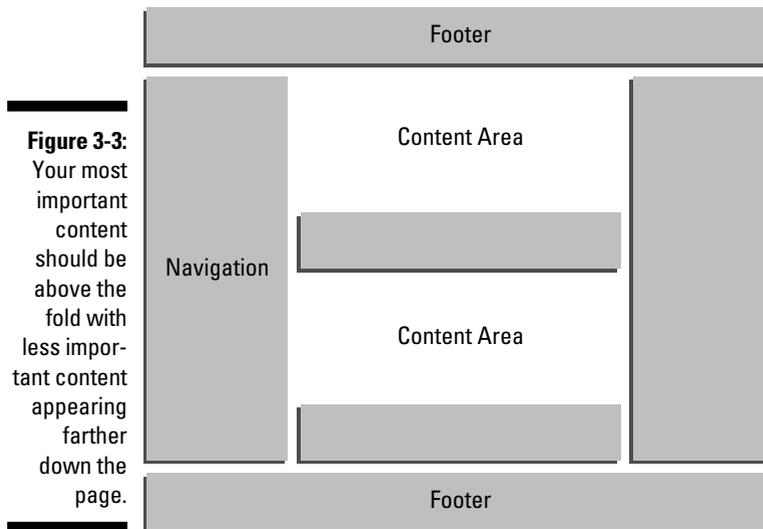
One of the most basic elements of SEO is how the content on your site is formatted. Assuming your content is mostly text, the titles and headings of your text are important. Including *keywords* — words that indicate the topic of your site — in titles and headings as well as a few times in the text of the articles you're using, is one way to ensure that a search engine crawler will properly classify your site.



The most important principle behind SEO involves making sure that you design your Web site so that it's both useful and relevant to visitors. Site visitors will come to your site either by conducting a search for a specific topic or by directly typing your Web address into the address bar of their browser. If you design your Web site with the intent of providing something the visitor needs, search crawlers are more likely to classify your site properly. As an added bonus, you'll probably also end up ranking higher in the search results.

I have lots more on SEO in Chapter 4, but for now, the most you need to know is that if you apply the same techniques that you would to optimizing your Web site for search engines, your AdSense ads will be spot on.

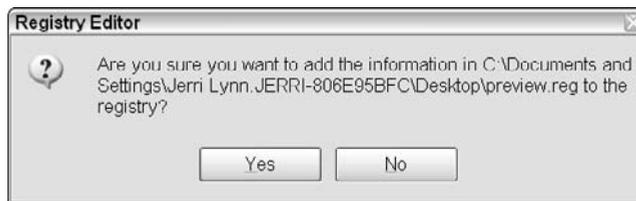
In Figure 3-3, you can see how content can be placed around AdSense ad units to provide users with what they need and to feed the Google crawler so that ads are properly targeted.



You may say it's just not enough to be told that the Google crawler knows its stuff when it comes to pushing content-specific ads to your site. It may not even be the content that you're worried about. The big questions for you might be "Where will the ad lead?" or "How will it look after you put it on your site?" Sometimes you just want to see for yourself, and that's fine. Just don't make the mistake of clicking your own ads. Instead, use the AdSense preview tool to see what kind of ads will be returned for your site. (You can download the preview tool at <https://www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/answer.py?answer=10005&topic=160>.) When you find the file, follow these steps to download and install it:

1. **Right-click the AdSense preview tool filename.**
2. **In the menu that appears, select Save and then save the file to your desktop.**
3. **When the download is complete, double-click the file to open it.**
4. **In the confirmation dialog box that appears (see Figure 3-4), click Yes.**
The program does its installation thing, usually quite quickly.

Figure 3-4: Confirm that you want to install the AdSense preview tool.



5. **When the Successful Install confirmation message appears, click OK.**
6. **Open Internet Explorer and navigate to the site whose ads you want to preview.**
Sorry, this doesn't work with Firefox or other browsers.
7. **Right-click inside the page but not inside the ad unit.**
8. **In the menu that appears, select Google AdSense Preview Tool, as shown in Figure 3-5.**
A list of the ads showing on your site appears.
9. **Click the link for each ad to be taken to the advertisers' Web sites, or place a check mark in the check box beside each ad and click Show Selected URLs to see the Web addresses the ads lead to.**

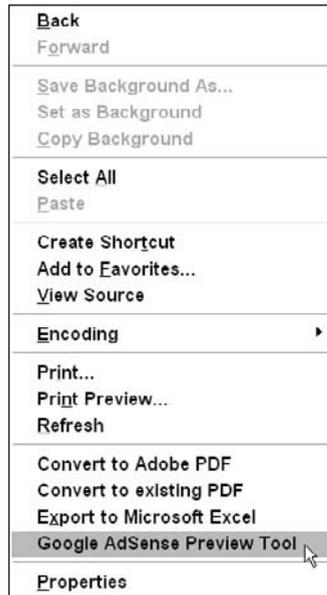
Section targeting

In AdSense terminology, *section targeting* is a method of ad placement that allows advertisers to decide where on a page they want their ads displayed. If it turns out that you have ad space available in that place on the page, and if your page is related to the topic of the ad, the ad can be placed on your site. (I use *can be* because you probably won't be the only publisher that meets the requirements the advertiser sets forth, and the ad can be placed on any site that meets said requirements.)



Ads rotate, so an ad may appear on your site one day and not the next. Advertisers' budgets also vary, and that's another determining factor on where and how often you may see the ad.

Figure 3-5:
Select
Google
AdSense
Preview
Tool
from the
menu that
appears.



You'll encounter two types of section targeting:

- ✓ **Contextual:** Uses such factors as keyword analysis, word frequency, font size, and the overall link structure of the Web site to determine what a Web page is about and to precisely match ads to each page.
- ✓ **Placement:** Advertisers choose specific ad *placements* — sections of specific Web sites they've taken a shine to — on which to run their ads. Ads that are placement-targeted may not exactly jive with the content of your page, but they're hand-picked by advertisers who believe there's a match between what your users are interested in and what the advertiser is advertising. For the privilege of making these specific choices, the advertiser pays a slightly higher fee. As a publisher, you benefit because you'll be paid every time someone comes to your site and sees the ad rather than by the number of times the ad is clicked.

Using RSS feeds for content

Really Simple Syndication (RSS) is a way of delivering news stories, articles, blog entries, and other types of content to subscribers by way of an e-mail or a *content aggregator* — a program that collects RSS feeds and delivers them all to a single location.

Think of RSS like a newspaper delivered to your home. You don't have to go out to get every single story in a newspaper. You subscribe to the paper, the reporters do all the legwork, the publisher puts all their stories together

in one package, and a delivery guy brings it right to your front door. An RSS feed is an electronic version of a newspaper.

The most important aspect of RSS feeds is that they deliver fresh content as often as it's available. If you're trying to put fresh content on your Web site to improve your AdSense revenues, that's huge. It's more content, less work, and Google loves it.



Wait. I can hear your objection. It's *not* plagiarism or copyright infringement. Content owners who put their content out via RSS feeds want that content to be distributed to as many readers as possible. You still need to ensure that the content is attributed properly, but as long as you do, you should have no problem using RSS feeds to add content to your Web site.

You do have to consider a couple logistical problems when using RSS, though. One problem is that RSS feeds don't always deliver full articles. The *content owner* — the person or company that publishes the article, news story, blog, or other type of content — can set how much of his content he wants delivered through the RSS feed. That means you may only get about 250 characters delivered (which is usually about a paragraph). Some RSS feeds (the Google Reader, for example) link the titles of feeds to a pop-up window. When you click the title, the window pops up for you to read the feed. Because the bots and spyzers Google uses won't be doing that clicking, they probably can't associate the RSS content with your Web site.



The way feeds are displayed varies from reader to reader. What's more, the feed display (or a feed reader) isn't likely to be customizable, adding yet another wrinkle to your plan to let someone else do all the hard work.

If you've embedded an RSS feed on your Web site to help generate fresh, new content, having only 250 words of an article can be a real problem because it's hard to place relevant AdSense ads around that content. Even when the full article is available, feed readers often interfere with AdSense displays, making it difficult, if not impossible, to use RSS for content for your Web site. Back to the drawing board, right? Nope, not yet.

One way to get around those display issues is to use an RSS script that allows you to add the feed to your site and to change the way it's displayed. RSS scripts, such as the RSS Equalizer (<http://milleniumb.rssalizer.hop.clickbank.net>), CaRP (www.geckotribe.com/rss/carp), and FeedForAll.com's PHP script (www.feedforall.com/free-php-script.htm), make it possible for you to grab RSS content and display it more effectively on your Web site. For example, if the script converts your RSS feeds to HTML, you can add articles to your site without ever even logging on. And best of all, you can also place AdSense ads around and within those articles. So now you not only have automatically updated content, but you also have content with AdSense ads. Life's good!

A word about “baiting”

If you’ve read a bit about Web marketing here and there, you may have come across link baiting. *Link baiting* is the creation of an article that’s so unique or interesting that people, because of its content, want to link to it. Link baiting can be a good tactic for driving content to your site, which of course, will drive up your AdSense revenues. But to be successful, you have to make your link bait fun, informative, or creative — and it still has to be quality content.

The link bait has a dark side, too. When content is gimmicky, misleading, and unrelated to the content of your Web site, it can get you into trouble with Google. For example, if you place a gadget on a page of your site with the specific intent of drawing users to your site, and that gadget isn’t directly related to the site’s content, you’re skirting on the dark side of link baiting. Users may come to download that gadget, but they’ll be disgusted that your site isn’t relevant to their real interests, so they’ll go somewhere else.

After a while, even Google’s crawlers will realize that the increase in traffic to your site is only superficial. After they do, your ranking in search results will be penalized and your site traffic will drop dramatically. Misleading link baiting is expressly forbidden by Google, and because it’s become such a popular way to drive Web site traffic, Google has developed some new ways to judge whether you’re using link baiting tactics.

Nothing’s wrong with adding a bit of fun or creative content to your site, just make sure you create it within the guidelines that Google has established. (Need a refresher on Google’s guidelines? You’re in luck. That section is coming up right . . . now!)

Understanding Google’s Webmaster Guidelines

Google seems to have guidelines for everything, and Web site design is no exception. Google’s Webmaster Guidelines (which I cover in some detail in Chapter 2) are the de facto guidelines for how any Web site associated with Google should be designed.

Google is certainly one of the most visible companies in the world. The number of people who watch Google in hopes that it will one day screw up is shadowed only by the number of people who are watching Microsoft hoping for the same. And because Google is such a target, the company needs to ensure that anyone who’s even very remotely associated with it meets certain guidelines to help avoid the ire of an offended public.

The Google Webmaster Guidelines are only one step in the requirements that Google has for people, but the guidelines are an important step — and it'll benefit you to understand them completely. Here's a quick overview, but take the time to read the complete guidelines at www.google.com/webmasters as the ideas underpinning them are valuable for Web design even if you're not planning to use AdSense or any of Google's other applications:

- ✓ **Make your site easy to navigate by creating a consistent navigational structure across your site and by making that navigational structure obvious to visitors.** Nothing's worse than getting stuck on a Web page without a link to the home page or another way off the page without using your back button or closing your browser completely.
- ✓ **Include relevant links to other Web sites.**
- ✓ **Use a *site map* (a text document that links to every page on the site) and submit it to Google.** To submit your site map, you have to be a member of Google's Webmaster Central, but signing up for that is as easy as signing up for any other Google account. After you sign up, submit your site map by using the form. (You can find links to the forms as well as other pertinent info at www.google.com/webmasters/start.)
- ✓ **Include clear, relevant content.**
- ✓ **Make sure the HTML that makes up your site is written correctly.**
- ✓ **Repair broken links as soon as they're noticed.**
- ✓ **Allow crawlers access to your Web site by including a `robots.txt` file in the design of your site.** The `robots.txt` file has two lines:

```
User agent: *  
Disallow: /
```
- ✓ **Create the file with a text editor, such as Notepad, save it using `robots.txt`, and then when you upload your Web site to a server, be sure to also upload this file.** The file tells Web site crawlers that they're welcome to look at all the pages on your Web site.
- ✓ **Design your pages for users, not for search engines.** Users come to your site because they need something. Design your site so that the visitors you're targeting get exactly what they need — information and products that they're searching for. By designing your site with your visitors in mind, you'll automatically hit most of the requirements that search engines have for ranking you in search results. A good rule of thumb is the more useful your site is to real people, the better crawlers will rank the site.
- ✓ **Avoid any kind of underhanded Web site design, such as using hidden pages or hidden text that's only meant to be seen by Web crawlers.** Believe it or not, crawlers recognize this kind of sneaky design, and you'll be penalized in search rankings for it.

- ✔ **Use only relevant keywords in the titles, headings, and text of your Web site.** (You'll also be using them in your HTML code, but more about that is in Chapter 4.)

Many more guidelines are in the document, but these basics are a good place to start. And one in particular really sums up the whole concept of Google's Webmaster Guidelines: Build your site for people, not for search engines. If you do that, the chances that you'll end up in trouble with Google (or AdSense) are very slim.

A word (or two) about extreme content Web sites

When you hear *extreme content*, visions of something less than moral — or worse, less than legal — may come into your head. I understand the associations such a term may call up, but in the AdSense context, extreme content isn't adult content, graphic violence, or even anything terribly controversial. Extreme content refers to large Web sites with thousands of pages of content — as many as 300,000 pages!

Web site owners build extreme content sites specifically to increase the real estate on which they can place AdSense ads. The content is gathered from all over the Web; wherever the owner can find free content, she'll grab it and sometimes she'll even grab content that's not free and, by extension, not for use by whomever wants it.

The problem with extreme content sites is that they're built only for the ads, not for the users. And that makes it taboo if you're really looking to create a decent recurring income with AdSense.

AdSense doesn't look kindly on Web sites that are built specifically to maximize AdSense

income without any thought of the user in mind — and that's exactly what extreme content sites are. Still, if you spend any time at all building your AdSense business, you'll find someone online that tells you extreme content Web sites are the golden ticket. Don't believe them.

Navigating through such a large site is nearly impossible, and the organization for and management of such a site is a nightmare. It's time-consuming and costly to create and maintain such a site, and when the Google crawler realizes what you're up to, your site will be penalized. You can even be banned from the AdSense program for using this kind of scheme to generate income.

Ultimately, it's much better to design a Web site that users will want to use. Include the information that visitors are looking for, and not only will your Web site rank better in search results but your AdSense income will be higher because your ads will be much more relevant to the people who are visiting your site. You also won't run the risk of being banned from AdSense, which would mean no income at all. It's really not worth the risk for the short term jump in revenues, so don't bother.

Chapter 4

AdSense and Search Engine Optimization

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding search engine optimization
 - ▶ Conquering keyword marketing
 - ▶ Creating valuable link structures
 - ▶ Improving click-through-rates
 - ▶ Using metatags to improve search engine rankings
-

Your AdSense income is affected by many different factors, including how much advertisers are willing to pay for ads and how much Google decides to take for its trouble. As for factors that you, as an AdSense user, can actually affect, site design, of all things, is probably the most important because the design of your site affects the way that search engines rank the site in search results. The higher your site ranks, the more traffic that hits your Web site, which means (potentially) more AdSense income.

Traffic translates into page views, and page views translate into clicks of your AdSense ads. The more clicks you get, the better your income. Naturally, you want to do everything you can to increase traffic to your site. Search engine optimization is your first step. Ensure that your site is optimized for search engines, and the traffic on your Web site will increase dramatically as your search engine rankings rise.

People search for stuff all the time — that's just what people do. We want information, and in the 21st century, the fastest way to find information is to go to a search engine. Now, if you have a Web site, you want those folks looking for pertinent info to be directed straight to *your* Web site rather than that other guy's Web site one domain block over. You want your site to *rank* well in search engines — in other words, search engines like Google. In fact, ranking well in search engines is so important that Web site owners are willing to pay thousands of dollars each year to ensure their sites rank as high as possible. *Search marketing* — the practice of creating marketing targeted at getting your Web site listed high enough in search engine rankings that it's noticed by people — is a \$12 billion a year industry and is one of the fastest growing marketing segments out there.

The way you optimize your Web site so that it's easier to find online is *search engine optimization (SEO)*. Go figure. It's kinda obvious, isn't it? Where it begins to look a little muddy is in defining what, exactly, is the best strategy to adopt when optimizing a Web site. I'm here to tell you, though, that even if the topic is a bit muddy, you can still follow a few guidelines — guidelines that make a big difference in where your site ranks in search results. The rest of this chapter lays out a few of these SEO truths in all their glory.

Optimizing Your Site for Search Engines

Search engine optimization is a lot like trying to catch the steam that you breathe on a cold winter day. You can see it. You know it exists, but there's no way to actually contain and quantify the steam. You can see the results of SEO and you can figure out how best to achieve it, but it's still possible to do everything right and not achieve the ultimate goal — landing the very first listing on a *search engine results page, or SERP*.

Good news though, you don't necessarily want to be the very top listing on a SERP. Think about this — how often do you click the first search result and not go any farther? Even if you find exactly what you're looking for on the first page you jump to, you still click through some of the other results just to make sure the first page isn't lying to you.

As a general rule, I go through the listings of about ten results pages, just to make sure I'm getting the best info. Admittedly, I may be a little more patient than your average searcher. Most people don't go much deeper than the second page of results. Because you should probably be targeting your Web site to normal folks rather than obsessive-compulsive types like me, you want your Web site to fall somewhere on the first or second page of results. If it does, you're fine — you can count your search marketing efforts a success, even if your site isn't at the very tippy-top of the first SERP.

Achieving that first- or second-page placement isn't a sure thing — it requires a little effort on your part. You can take a number of steps to ensure a better search engine ranking — steps I get to in a bit — but the most important piece in your SEO puzzle involves the keywords on which your Web site is based. You do have keywords, right? If not, you need them. However, not just any keyword will do, which the next section makes clear.

A Keyword By Any Other Name

It doesn't matter what you call it, a keyword will always be . . . well, a keyword or phrase around which your Web site content is centralized. A single word is sometimes not enough to narrow the possibilities for a Web site,

which is why some keywords are actually *keyword phrases* or *keyphrases*. It's the same concept — a centralized theme — just using more than one word. I use the term keyword generically to mean both keywords and keyphrases.

Web crawlers are programs that travel around the Internet examining and categorizing Web pages by keyword. That's how search engines, like Google, know to return your Web site when someone searches for a specific keyword or phrase. The crawler has already had a look-see and has placed your Web page into a category along with all the other sites on the Web that fit into that category.

Keyword marketing, then, is using that keyword or phrase to market your Web site. Advertisements for a Web site, product, or service are designed using the keyword or keyphrase as the “foundation” for the ads. Then, when Internet users search for that keyword, the ads are displayed in the search results. Google then takes this process one step further by placing ads on Web pages that are built around — or optimized for — that keyword. So, whoever said a picture is worth a thousand words didn't realize the Internet would come along and reduce that value to just one or two — three at the most.

Understanding Keyword Marketing

Before finding out how keywords work, you first need a quick overview of how Web sites are cataloged and then returned as search results. The way things go, you first put up a Web site. It doesn't have to be anything fancy — maybe it's your personal blog about your busybody Aunt Louise and how crazy she makes you, or it could be a serious site about how frogs hibernate in the muck at the bottom of ponds during winter. The topic of your Web site doesn't matter, but you have to get it on the Internet.

After you put up a Web site, a *search crawler* — a specialized software program that examines Web sites and categorizes them by keyword — finds your Web site. Search crawlers are designed to crawl every Web site within parameters that are outlined by the search crawler's designer. A designer could order a search crawler to, say, examine Web sites contained on a list drawn by the designer.

The crawler's first stop is the first Web page of the first Web site on the designer's list. The crawler *reads* through the pages of the Web site, looking at each word on the site.



Crawlers also look at what words are used together. For example, *cosmetic makeup* is different from *exam makeup*, but the crawler knows that makeup is used in two completely different ways because it looks at the words surrounding it.

While the crawler makes its way through a site, it records the number of times a keyword, a keyphrase, or a set of keywords is used on the site. If *exam makeup* is

used in the title and then three times in a 300-word section of text, it's probably a good bet that the Web site being crawled is about makeup exams. Of course, the search engine crawler isn't betting on anything. The crawler's like the skeptic who doesn't count on anything that's not immediately visible and physically touchable. *Exam makeup* may be there, but it needs proof!

The crawler uses a very lengthy and complicated algorithm as its search formula. The algorithm compares the number of times a keyword is used to indicators that tell it if that keyword is important on the Web site. Like color coding, that algorithm makes it possible to define a Web site in terms of how it relates to a specific topic.



Algorithms in general are computer programs that systematically solve problems such as determining how many times a keyword is used on a Web site. They're complicated creatures, highly technical in nature, and they are a search engine's lifeblood — which is why they're so jealously guarded. Just try to pry Google's secret algorithm from their tightly clenched fist and see where that gets you.

The crawler takes a stab at what your Web site's all about by registering the site's keywords. The crawler then takes another look at the site, this time considering those keywords in the context of the Web site — not just the keywords but also things like *keyword placement* (where on the site the words appear), the *alternative text* you put in for graphics (the stuff that shows up if the graphic won't load), and the links into and out of the Web site.

After looking at all these elements and many others (some search engines use over 100 different considerations), the crawler makes a determination about where in the great scheme of things a particular Web site belongs. That information is then stored in a database the size of Manhattan.

Okay, it's not really the size of Manhattan, but it's huge. Way larger than any database you've ever encountered before.

After the Web site's cataloged, it can be pushed to visitors that do a search based on keywords related to the main keyword of the Web page. That's another algorithm altogether. That algorithm cross-references the search that a user makes with the data stored in the database to determine which sites — of the billions of cataloged sites — are the best fit for the keyword or phrase that the searcher used.

In other words, your Web site basically boils down to the keywords on which it's built. To rank successfully in any search engine, you not only need the right keywords but you also need keywords that are closely associated with the topic of your Web site. Those keywords also need to be at the right places on your Web site. If they're not, the search crawler won't feel completely confident about which particular section of the database is the proper home for your site — so the site might be put lower in the rankings behind many other (perhaps far less relevant) sites.

Choosing the right keywords

Choosing the right keywords is a bit of a science — but it's also a bit of old-fashioned luck. No keyword guide is out there for the perplexed that can tell you whether the keyword is perfect for this or that subject. Instead, the words that apply to your subject are what they are. So, the best place to start looking for the right keywords for your topic is to brainstorm all the words that are most prevalent when the topic is in discussion.

Use search engine optimization (SEO) as an example. In any conversation you ever have about SEO, you'll hear the term *keyword* come up time and again. *Keyword* is clearly one of the top keywords for SEO — come on, SEO is built around keyword marketing!

Okay, that was the easy part. Getting the number-one keyword down is like shooting fish in a barrel, but you can't stop there. You need a larger pool of keywords to get you started. If you keep brainstorming additional words, you'll probably come up with the following keywords:

Search engine

Search

Marketing

List

Link

Linking strategy

Alt tags

Metatags

Metadata

Media

Content

Social media

That's just the short list. If you really put some time into brainstorming the SEO topic, you could come up with a couple hundred words. And don't forget phrases, too — up to three words. They're more useful and help you target better than just single words.

You'll find hundreds of words for your own Web site topic, too. Sit down with a pen and a piece of paper and think through your topic. Write down all the words that come to mind as you consider each aspect of your business. Don't worry about compartmentalizing the words, just get them on paper. When you're done, cover up the page and walk away for half a day or so.



Walking away gives the list time to rest. Take the time away from the list to do something completely unassociated with determining keywords. During that time, try to keep your mind off the list so that when you come back to it, you can look at it with fresh eyes.

When you do return to the list, read through it slowly and take the time to consider each word while you read it. Ask if a particular word is really a term that a searcher would use to find your Web site or a page on your site. If the answer is a resounding “No,” cross the word off the list. When you’re done, you should have a reasonably sized list from which to choose that magic number of words.

So, what’s the magic number? Who knows? Just use exactly the number of words you need (to market your site properly) and not one more. Here are some general rules you should follow:

- ✓ **Start with a list of 50–100 keywords.** You won’t use all the keywords, but the list gives you a good point from which to narrow the words that are most likely used to find your Web site.
- ✓ **Don’t use more than three words on a single page.** Also, only use three words if they’re all contained within a phrase. It’s better to use one word or phrase per page on your Web site, but each page can have a different word or phrase.
- ✓ **Avoid words that are overused.** Overused words are obvious search terms, but they’re also the most competitive terms and can cost a fortune if you’re targeting them for advertisements. No kidding. It’s not unheard of for some words to cost as much as \$50 per click to advertisers who want their ads prominently displayed if someone searches for that keyword. Advertisers would have to have an endless budget to market with these words. On the other side of that equation is AdSense — which arranges to display those superexpensive ads on Web sites like your own — and yes, those words pay really well, but the competition for sites to place those ads on is also very tough. Best to stick with something that will get you a regular listing of some great ads that will truly interest your visitors.
- ✓ **Try to think like site visitors think.** What keywords represent your visitors’ interests? One way to keep up with this information is to use a Web site analytics program, such as Google Analytics (www.google.com/analytics). An *analytics program* tracks visitors to your site, such as where they came to your site from and what keywords they used to find your site on search engines, along with many other statistics. If you don’t have a Web site analytics program, get one. Right now.

After you narrow down your keyword list, put in the hard work — research the words on the list. Researching keywords isn’t difficult, but it can be time-consuming. That’s one of the reasons you don’t want to start the process with a list of 500 potential keywords. You’d never have enough time to research them all. It’s also unwise to use too many keywords on your Web site because it makes it hard for crawlers to properly classify your site — a problem that could leave you without well-targeted AdSense ads.

The first step in researching keywords is to select the top 20 or so words or phrases that most accurately reflect your Web site. Then, with that list, start searching for each word or phrase on the list.

Look through the first couple results pages for matches to your site. Do the pages returned by your search engine reflect the content of your site in any way? If not, how do the sites that do get returned differ from yours? Are they structured differently, for example? If you examine your results critically, you can find clues that help you decide how well the word or phrase you selected will actually result in traffic to your site.

The next step is to look at statistics, such as the amount of competition and the cost of advertisements for the keyword or phrase. Keyword research tools like the Google AdWords Keyword Tool (<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>) and the Yahoo! Search Marketing Keyword Tool (<http://pixelfast.com/overture> can help here). You must have a Yahoo! Search Marketing account to use the Yahoo! tool, and while I write this, Yahoo! Search Marketing is still under construction, but should be up and running soon.

The Google AdWords Keyword Tool performs two functions: It allows you to see what other keywords you might be missing when putting together your keyword list and it also lets you see which of those keywords are most valuable to you as a publisher. The Keyword Tool is easy enough to get the hang of. At first glance, it may look like it's just a generator for keyword ideas, but as you dig deeper into using it, you can learn valuable facts about keywords, such as how much competition there is for a keyword, what kind of placement an advertiser can expect for ads targeting that keyword, and what the search volume is for the keyword. Here's how a typical keyword search using the Keyword Tool works:

- 1. Point your browser to** <https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>.
- 2. Under the How Would You Like to Generate Keyword Ideas? heading, select the Descriptive Words or Phrases radio button.**
- 3. Enter a few keywords from your list into the center text box, as shown in Figure 4-1, and then click Get Keyword Ideas.**

After a few seconds (the exact time depends on the number of words you enter), the suggested keywords appear beneath the search box, as shown in Figure 4-2.

The default information shown includes the Advertiser Competition (how many advertisers are bidding on that keyword), the previous month's Search Volume (how often that keyword was searched for in the past month), and the Avg Search Volume. (The average is figured monthly, based on the number of searches each month for the past year.) Each statistic is represented by a colored bar, representative of what you see in a bar graph. The more color in the bar, the greater the competition or volume.

Figure 4-1:
The Google
AdWords
Keyword
Tool
suggests
available
keywords
for a topic.

Enter keywords here.



The average cost of a keyword to the advertiser doesn't appear automatically, but you can change the way the keywords are filtered (see Figure 4-2) with the Filter drop-down menu.

4. To determine the average cost of a keyword, choose Show Estimated Avg. CPC from the Filter drop-down menu.

The *CPC*, or *cost-per-click*, is the amount that it costs an advertiser every time one of their ads based on that keyword is clicked. That amount is paid to Google, which then distributes portions of the money to AdSense publishers that allow those ads to be shown on their Web sites. Of course, Google keeps a fair chunk of it to line its own pockets, too.

After you make your selection from the Filter drop-down menu, another small section appears immediately below the Filter drop-down menu (as shown in Figure 4-3).

5. Choose your currency from the menu provided; and then in the text box beside it, enter the maximum CPC and click Recalculate.

The keyword list changes slightly, and a new column appears with the estimated average cost-per-click (CPC) for each keyword suggested, as shown in Figure 4-4. Now you not only see the competition for the keyword or phrase, but you also see what it costs advertisers who use those words. Only a percentage of that is paid to *publishers* (you) who show the ads, but this gives you an idea of how valuable your available ad space is, based on the keywords you use on your Web site.

Filter drop-down menu

The screenshot shows the Google AdWords Keyword Tool interface. At the top, it says "Google AdWords" and "It's All About Results™". There are links for "Help" and "Contact Us".

Keyword Tool
 Use the Keyword Tool to get new keyword ideas. Select an option below to enter a few descriptive words or phrases, or type in your website's URL. [Keyword Tool Tips](#)

Important note: We cannot guarantee that these keywords will improve your campaign performance. We reserve the right to disapprove any keywords you add. You are responsible for the keywords you select and for ensuring that your use of the keywords does not violate any applicable laws.

Results are tailored to **English, United States** [Edit](#)

How would you like to generate keyword ideas?

Descriptive words or phrases
 (e.g. green tea)

Website content
 (e.g. www.example.com/product?id=74893)

Enter one keyword or phrase per line:
 Learning
 Link Strategies
 Keyword Placement

Use synonyms

[Get Keyword Ideas](#)

Selected Keywords:
 Click 'Sign up with these keywords' when you are finished building your keyword list.
 No keywords added yet
[+ Add your own keywords](#)
[Sign up with these keywords](#)

Filter my results
 Choose columns to display: [Show/hide columns](#) (2)

Keywords related to term(s) entered - sorted by relevance

Keywords	Advertiser Competition	December Search Volume	Avg Search Volume	Match Type
seo	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Broad
search engine optimization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
link strategies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
linking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
seo elite	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
keyword placement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
tv links	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
search engine	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
d link	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
tv link	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
tv links co uk	<input type="checkbox"/>	No data	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add
seo software	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Add

Figure 4-2:
 A list of suggested keywords appears under the search box.

Figure 4-3:
 Use the Show Estimated Avg. CPC filter to find the approximate value of the suggested keywords.

Filter my results
 Choose columns to display: [Show/hide columns](#) (2)

Calculate Estimates using Max CPC:
 US Dollars (USD \$) [Recalculate](#)

Understanding and optimizing click-through-rates

The more traffic you have on your Web site, the higher your *click-through-rate (CTR)* will be. Click-through-rate is exactly what it sounds like — the rate at which your site visitors click through the ads that you display. This rate is based on the number of visitors to your site versus the number of visitors who click your AdSense ads.

What's considered a good CTR is a hard figure to nail down. It's against Google's policies for publishers to publicly discuss the results they have with the AdSense program. So, despite the fact that you may have seen discussions about it on the Internet, you should avoid following suit. Still, it helps to have a general idea of what you can expect.

The rates I've heard all hover around the 2–4 percent range. That's 2–4 percent of your total traffic who actually click through the ads on your Web site. If you get 100 visitors per day, with these percentages, two to four of those visitors will click through your AdSense ads, generating money for you.

The thing to remember is that those numbers are in no way official or accurate. They're whispers heard and accurate only to the specific cases (and circumstances) in which they actually happened. A wide variety of factors can affect your CTR, from placement of the ads and the amount of traffic on your Web site to the mood of site visitors in a given day and the colors of the ads themselves.

All these factors are variables that change often. To further cloud the picture, fluctuations in the popularity of certain keywords, changes in the budgets of advertisers, and the ways in which those advertisers choose to write their ads have to be considered.

To some extent, your click-through-rate is dependent upon the advertiser. If the advertiser isn't doing his homework and properly targeting his ads, your click-through-rates could be affected because the ads won't appeal to your site visitors.

Advertisers pay this amount per click on their advertisements.

Figure 4-4:
The
Estimated
Avg. CPC
column
provides
an idea of
the value of
suggested
keywords.

Keywords related to term(s) entered - sorted by relevance				
Keywords	Estimated Avg. CPC	Advertiser Competition	December Search Volume	Avg Search Volume
seo	\$4.18			
search engine optimization	\$8.84			
link strategies	\$1.79			
linking	\$0.99			
seo elite	\$3.46			
keyword placement	\$4.00			
tv links	\$0.43			
search engine	\$4.66			
d link	\$1.23			
tv link	\$1.58			
tv links co uk	\$0.05		No data	



Because you're researching keywords for your Web site with AdSense income in mind, use a high figure for your maximum CPC, like \$50 per click. This really doesn't determine how much you make per click on advertisements that appear on your site, but it gives you an idea of which keywords you'll be paid the most for. In keyword marketing, the advertiser pays a fee to display ads. How much they pay for that privilege directly affects how much you make. So, the more a keyword costs the advertiser, the more you'll make as a publisher of those ads.

Keep in mind that whatever keywords you choose should be used intelligently on your Web page. If you include the keywords but don't use them properly, you'll do yourself more harm than good by causing inappropriate ads to appear or by causing Google to disqualify your site from the AdSense program for not following proper Web design practices. More information about Web design practices can be found in Chapter 3, and I address how to properly use keywords on your Web pages in the next few sections, so keep reading.

The importance of keyword placement

After you finish researching your keywords and then selecting the most valuable — those worth most to your pocketbook — and the most appropriate words for your Web site, you have to actually integrate them into your Web site. Using those valuable and appropriate keywords in your site's content is good practice, and more information about how to use those words in your content is in the section "It's all about placement," later in this chapter, or you can flip back to Chapter 3 for even more Web design help. But there's more to keyword placement than just putting the words into the content on the page, as the next few sections make clear.

Placing keywords in site design

Face it: You don't need much of the old gray matter to place keywords in prominent places in the content of your Web site. Stick them in a title, a few headings, or the opening paragraph and *voilà* — you've placed your keywords. The thing is, if any idiot can do it, many will; which means that all those Web sites with keywords prominently placed in the text start looking alike — at least to Web crawlers sent out by search engines. To make your site stand out, feature your keywords in the less-obvious corners of your Web site, such as places that may never be seen by Web site visitors but *are* visited by Web crawlers. "Where are these dark corners?" you ask. Read on to discover the hidden mysteries of Web site design.

When you're designing your Web site, there are places under the *hood* — in the actual *HTML (HyperText Markup Language)* structure of the site, in other words — that you can use as hidden storage areas for placing informational tidbits about your site. Because all this stuff is information about your Web site content — information about your information, in other words — such tidbits are referred to as *metadata*, or data about your data. Metadata is

placed within special HTML tags (dubbed, curiously enough, *metatags*) within the code for a Web site that search engine crawlers then *read* when cataloging your site for inclusion in search results. As such, you'd be smart to stuff your metatags with as many keywords as your HTML structure will bear.

Metatags where keywords should appear include the following:

- ✓ Title metatags
- ✓ Description metatags
- ✓ Keyword metatags
- ✓ Heading metatags
- ✓ Alt text

Now, for those of you out there who are faint-of-heart when it comes to HTML coding, be aware that you need to physically place these metatags (with the exception of the alt text) in the top section of the HTML code of your Web page, between the tags that indicate the head of your page. Figure 4-5 shows part of the *raw* HTML code for the Google Geek Web site, including the head tag, metatags, and body tag.

As I mention earlier, metadata are usually indicated within the HTML of your Web site as metatags. The code here shows how the metadata might appear on your site:

```
<Head>
<Title>Your Web Site Title Goes Here</Title>
<Meta name="description" content="Include a quick keyword-
rich blurb about your site here.">
<Meta name="keywords" content="enter keywords here,
separated by commas">
</Head>
```

Metadata tags

Figure 4-5:
Metatags should be placed in the HTML header of a Web site.

```
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Strict//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-strict.dtd">
<html dir="ltr" xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" xmlns:b="http://www.google.com/2005/gml/b" xmlns:data="http://www.google.com/2005/gml/data" xml:lang="en">
<head>
<meta content="text/html; charset=UTF-8" http-equiv="Content-Type"/>
<meta content="true" name="MSSmartTagsPreventParsing"/>
<meta content="blogger" name="generator"/>
<link rel="alternate" type="application/atom+xml" title="Google-Geek - Atom" href="http://www.google-geek.com/feeds/posts/default?alt=rss">
<link rel="service" type="application/atom+xml" title="Google-Geek - Atom" href="http://www.blogger.com/feeds/7662296931/default.rss">
<link rel="editURI" type="application/rsd+xml" title="RSD" href="http://www.blogger.com/rsd.g?blogID=7662296931546595910"/>
<link rel="openid.server" href="http://draft.blogger.com/openid-server.g"/>
<title>Google-Geek</title>
<style id="page-skin-1" type="text/css"><!-- body {background:#FFFFFF;margin:0;color:#333333;font-size:small Georgia serif;font-family:serif;}
<!-- --><style type="text/css">@import url('http://www.blogger.com/css/blog_controls.css');
@import url('http://www.blogger.com/dyn-css/authorization.css?targetBlogID=7662296931546595910');
#navbar-iframe { display:block }
</style>
<link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="http://www.blogger.com/widget/3936352919-blog.css"/><link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css" href="http://www.blogger.com/widget/3936352919-blog.css"/></head>
```

The head tags usually have far more information between them because this is where the heading of your Web site is set up. Information about the colors, images, and styles of the page are also included here, but those don't really concern you when you're thinking about keywords. Those elements are all associated with site design, not keyword placement.

Working with alt text

Another area in which you can place your keywords is the alt text on your page. *Alt text* is the alternative text that's used to describe images on your page to search engines and to site visitors who can't view the images. This alt text is usually included in the image tag in your page's HTML and looks something like this:

```

```

Alt text should be limited to as few effective words as possible. So, if the image on your Web site is a magnifying glass, the alt text might simply be `search` if that's one of your keywords.

Adding keywords to the HTML descriptors on your Web site is far from a difficult task. When you know where to put the keywords, it takes little time to do it. If you're writing your Web site code from scratch, you can insert your keywords in the appropriate places while you write it. If you're using an HTML editor or a WYSIWYG — what you see is what you get — Web site design program, you can switch to the HTML view for the HTML editor and add the tags that way.

The extra effort improves the search engine rankings for your site and ultimately makes it easier for Google to find the right AdSense ads to appear on your site. The tags also help to ensure that ads appearing on your site are targeted to the correct audience — assuming that the keywords you're using are well targeted.

The secret of keyword density

If you've been following along in this chapter so far, you've already found out that your chosen keywords need to appear somewhere in your content. (*D'oh!*) Clearly, your Web site articles and other elements (stuff like video content) should be targeting the topics your potential visitors are searching for — which means your articles and other elements will have your keywords embedded in them somewhere.

That's pretty much a no-brainer. But if you take this a little bit further, it gets a bit more interesting. Some folks might be tempted to adopt what I call an *in for a penny, in for a pound* strategy — if a little bit of something is a good thing, a lot of something is a very good thing. Why settle for a sprinkling of keywords on your Web site when, with a little bit of effort, you can saturate your Web site with a veritable blizzard of keywords?

Why indeed? Because if you yield to temptation, you're guilty of committing *keyword spam*, the act of deploying your keywords merely to increase search engine results placement (bad!) rather than using them to provide site visitors with desired information (good!). No one likes spam. You don't like spam, your potential Web visitors don't like spam, and even spammers don't like spam. Keyword spam doesn't even help you increase your search engine results placement. In fact, Web crawlers that recognize keyword spam can get your number and list your site deeper in search results, or worse, completely de-list your site from those results.

The secret to having the right balance of keywords in your site content is *keyword density* — the ratio of keyword occurrences to the overall number of words used on your site. Search engines vary on what's acceptable for a keyword density. Google, for example, looks for a keyword density of around 2 percent, whereas Yahoo! and MSN look for a keyword density closer to 5 percent. Remember, these are guidelines. So, if your keyword density is less than 5 percent, your page will still appear in Yahoo! and MSN search results. But over 2 percent and you might be penalized by Google.



Most folks who do search engine optimization for a living tend to stay around the 2 percent keyword density mark to stay in Google's good graces.

Time to picture what a 2 percent keyword density might actually look like. Think of it this way: If the page contains an article that's 1,000 words in length, your selected keyword or phrase should appear no more than 20 times in the article. Twenty seems like a small number until you start adding keywords to articles and then you find that it takes some serious work to spin 1,000 words around one word or phrase and still have everything make sense and not sound repetitive.

The key here is to build an article around a specific topic, like "credit monitoring," but then not to go overboard using the keyword or term — which in this case is "credit monitoring." The article should be a coherent information piece, and the use of the keyword or phrase will automatically grow out of that. You just have to be careful not to stuff that keyword or phrase into the article out of context in a misguided attempt to use your selected keyword as often as possible.

One trick that might help, though, involves thinking outside your body text box. It turns out that putting keywords into the body text of your article is only half the work when you're dealing with keywords. Keywords should also appear in the title and the headings of articles you place on your Web site. Titles and headings are also given additional weight in search engine rankings because those are the elements on a page that catch a visitor's eye.

Think of it as being like reading a newspaper. Most people scan a page of the newspaper before committing to reading any of it. They look at headlines, paragraph headings, and bold or italicized text before they decide which

stories to read. Reading behavior is the same online — someone clicks onto your page, scans the titles, headings, and specially formatted sections of the articles there, and then decides to read deeper or click away.

Keywords in your titles and headings help pull readers into the content of the article and help search crawlers classify your site by those keywords. See, search crawlers are designed to weigh the appearance of keywords in certain places — like titles and headings — just like people do. It's written into their programming, so you might think of a search crawler as the ultimate reader.

The Magic of Linking Well

Search engine optimization plays a key role in generating AdSense income because how well your Web site places in search results determines how much traffic your site sees. If you plan to have AdSense ads on your site and you hope to generate a decent revenue stream with them, having a well-optimized site is essential. And part of site optimization is having a *linking structure* — the links that connect the pages of your site together as well as the links that connect your page to other pages on the Web — that leads to other, complementary sites as well as having other sites link to you. Like keyword placement, link management is almost as much of an art form as it is a strategy.

Linking schemes

Linking schemes are nothing more than the structure of how your Web site is linked to other sites, how other sites are linked to you, and where internal links lead. Good Web design principles include all three types of linking schemes, and all are important to search engines because what a search crawler is looking for is site usability first — how easy it is for visitors to go from one place to the next on your Web site — and then site relevancy, or how appropriate your site is to the topic for which a site visitor is searching. Crawlers literally follow all the links on a Web page to make sure that what's connected together makes sense and is useful in the context of where the links appear both in text and in navigational menus.



When you're creating your linking schemes, remember that the ultimate goal is to make your site as usable and as valuable as possible to your site visitors. Assume that your visitors have landed on your page because it contains information for which they're searching; the idea here is to make your site as valuable to those visitors as possible by providing your visitors with the info they're looking for and then some. (It's the *and then some* that keeps them coming back for more.)

Creating value for your user encompasses one concept — provide the user the information he seeks. It's that simple. That doesn't mean that you need to have every detail or product related to a specific topic on your site. But if you don't have it and you don't plan to put it there, at least be prepared to point visitors to another site that does have the information or products sought.

All of that is accomplished through linking. You're either linking to another page on your site where the information being sought is available or you're linking to another site entirely. In return, you should also have other sites linking to your own, for the same reasons. (I have some tips on how to get other sites to link back to you later in the chapter.)

Internal linking

Internal linking is the process by which the pages on your site are actually linked together. The type of links isn't nearly as important as the way in which the pages are linked, but even the structure can have some benefits. For example, text links — called *hotlinks* — *can* be more valuable than graphic links because they allow you to use your keywords within the link. But it's also important to have a consistent navigational structure — the links that usually grace the side or top of a page that lead to different sections of your Web site. Both hotlinks and navigational links can be used in your internal linking process.

Using keywords in your navigational structure gives you freebie opportunities to use them — the keywords within links don't count toward the keyword density of a page because the percentage of times a keyword is used is based solely on the content on the page. This means you can use your keywords more often. But using hotlinks does count toward keyword density, so be careful about how you place those links.

It's also important that no matter how your links are formatted, you always need to leave an escape hatch — every page on the site has to have a clearly defined navigation area with easily recognizable links that make it a snap to return to whatever page the visitor wants. Users who click from one page to another in your Web site may not appreciate having to click the Back button to get them back to the page they were previously on. Even more importantly, if there's no way for users to go back from whence they came, they'll leave. Typical surfer behavior when they can't escape a page is to close the window or browser that's pointing to the site on which you have them trapped. They may also just type a new address in the browser bar and navigate away from your page that way.



Internal links all qualify as navigational links, even when they include hotlinks. Use these links wisely, and always provide a way for users to navigate back the way they came. I don't care whose fault it is; if you lock a visitor in Web page hell, she'll leave and probably won't come back.

It's far better to have all your pages (even those that are unrelated) connected in a loose kind of way. Every page should have a way to go back to the main page as well as a way for visitors to get back at least to the previous page if not to the beginning of a section. It may be that your navigational structure expands to show previous pages or sections of your Web site, based on where the visitor is on the site at any given moment. Whatever you choose to do, make sure visitors have plenty of ways out.

When you're creating the way that your internal pages are linked, also remember to keep like pages grouped together. When you think of the structure of your Web site, think of it as a tree. The trunk of the tree is your main page, and each of the branches is a major topic. Subtopics are the smaller branches off the main branches, and the leaves are individual pages of information.

If you were to draw your Web site structure, it should resemble (in an abstract kind of way) a tree lying on its side, as shown in Figure 4-6.

Each different topic of content on your Web site should be related to the overall theme of the site — nobody would argue with that — but each topic should also be further broken down into smaller categories so that site visitors can quickly find what they're looking for. For example, if your site is about healthy cooking, every page on your site should be related to healthy cooking. However, individual sections of your site can be broken down into the different types of dishes that you cook or the techniques that you use to create healthy dishes. Keep like content together and keep it all related to the main theme of the Web site.

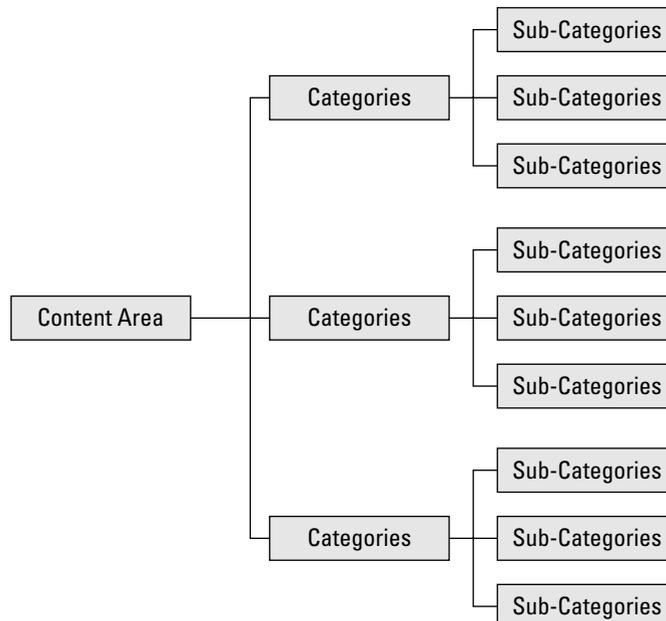


Figure 4-6:
A basic
Web site
structure
might
resemble a
tree, lying
on its side.

External linking

External linking — the links you use to connect your Web sites to other relevant sites on the Web — is also going to play a major role in the way that your Web site is categorized by search engine crawlers. *External links* lead away from your page, and for this reason, many Web site designers think it's best to avoid external links on a page. Not true. In fact, if you don't have some element of external linking on your page, it becomes an obstacle in both search rankings and in helping potential visitors find the information they're searching for.

Search crawlers look for external linking on a page as a sign of how well connected the page is to the industry or category that it's included in. For example, if your site is about mental health issues, users will expect to find links to other sites on the same topic. Crawlers will too. And if a crawler examines your site and finds you're not linked to other related sites, it devalues the site, assuming that the site will be less useful to site visitors (because no single site can have every piece of information about a topic or category).

What you don't want to do is create a Web page that's an *island* — surrounded by cyberspace, but cut off from everything. Even the most beautiful islands can become useless if nothing connects them to the rest of the world. And if your Web site isn't connected to other Web sites, (especially where search crawlers are concerned), the usability rating of the site falls considerably.

It's necessary to have outgoing and incoming external links to your site. But there's a catch (isn't there always?): The external links on your site should lead to or from other sites that are relevant to the content on your site. If you're linking to other sites in some disorderly, couldn't-figure-it-out-with-a-clear-explanation kind of way, you might as well not have any links at all. Search crawlers follow every link leading out from your site and will evaluate the content on the linked site for relevancy. If the content doesn't compute, your search rankings will plummet.



Having one or two links to unrelated sites isn't a big worry. It's not at all unusual for your best friend, who sells handmade soaps, to link to your Web site about money management. But if you want search engines to take notice of your Web site, I recommend that you have far more links to other sites related to money-management vehicles, tools, and information.

Reciprocal linking

One way to gather links to your site and to share your site with other relevant Web sites is to use *reciprocal linking*. Reciprocal linking is the new-age version of *you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours*. You find sites that would be of interest to your site visitors and then approach the Web site owner with the offer of putting a link to her site on your own if she'll do the same for you in exchange.

It's a good strategy to get some inbound links built into your site if it's a new site, but don't rely on this type of linking to gain you much favor with search crawlers. A limited amount of reciprocal linking is acceptable, but when a search engine is examining the links to your site, it ranks them by determining if the keywords used on your Web site are similar to the keywords on the sites that are linking to you. That's why links always need to be generated out of true interest in the content on your site. If your link to another page is matched by a link back to your own page on too many pages, the value of those links is lessened because the pattern of "I'll link to you if you link to me" becomes obvious.

Think about the wildly popular Web sites in your business (or personal) scope. Even better than just thinking about it, surf on over there and have a look. Click through a few of the external links on the page and look at where they lead. Are there links back to the page you just left? In most cases, the answer to that will likely be "No" because the most popular pages on the Web don't need reciprocal linking schemes. People link to them all the time because the site offers information that's of interest to everyone concerned with that topic.

It's all about placement

One last strategy to extend your linking mileage: Where you place your links matters. When a crawler is navigating through your site, it's looking at the usability of your site. So, if you're hiding links in places that users can't find them simply to improve your Web site ranking, you'll find your Web site in search results' nether regions. And yes, that's a trick some Web site designers really use. The idea behind hidden links is to have them there because you must have that linking structure, but to have the links hidden in places users don't think to click so they won't navigate away from your Web site. Wrong move. That kind of linking strategy will turn the curious search crawler into a snotty search crawler that doesn't score your Web site well for ranking purposes.



Keep in mind that hidden links are very different from strategies like using metadata keywords, as I talk about earlier in this chapter. Metadata keywords and tags are built into the structure of your site and are designed to provide additional information to crawlers. Hidden links and keywords are actually built into the visitor-facing structure or user interface. Hidden links and keywords, however, are intentionally blended into the site so that visitors can't see them. This is a deceptive way to include elements of Web design that crawlers look for but that a Web site owner might not want the site visitor to see.

Creating a well-designed site that uses a more traditional link placement structure is much better. Not only are Web surfers accustomed to seeing a navigation structure, or links, in a few places (the top of the page, the left side of the page, or within the text), but a well-designed site meets a need —

the visitor's need for information. By meeting that need, you give visitors a reason to return to your site again and again.

Most often on a well-designed site, some combination of those navigation structures is going on. Most Web sites have their main navigation bar on the left side of the page, and users know that that's where they can usually go to find the link to the next page within the site. Links to *other* sites can be included in the text or in combination with the navigational structure on the sides of the page.

Once in a while, a page will have the main navigational structure on the right. In fact, that's a common structure in blogs, and there's nothing wrong with setting up your page that way. Web crawlers don't give a hoot if your navigational structure and other links are located on one side of the page or the other. But it's important that however you decide to do it on the main page of your Web site, you maintain that structure across every other page on the site. Users get frustrated if the navigation scheme changes on every single page, and Web crawlers will notice the inconsistency and lower the usability ranking of your site.

Keyword marketing is like watching the news. A big story could hit today, and it might hang around for a few days until journalists have wrung all the interest out of the story. Then something else happens, and those same journalists toss that story aside in favor of the newer, more interesting piece of news.

With keyword marketing, marketers might be willing to fight hard to win the bids on one keyword today, only to find that another keyword is much more popular and worth more to them in advertisements tomorrow. These changes affect the income that you make from each click through, as well as affecting the click throughs themselves. When the higher-paying marketer moves on, it opens a keyword for lower-paying advertisers. Sometimes, though, those lower-paying advertisers aren't writing ads that are as appealing to your users.

Users' moods change, too. What they're interested in today will certainly not be the same tomorrow or next week. So, to keep your CTR optimized, you have to stay on top of your keywords. Watch the effectiveness of the keywords around which your Web site is built. And don't be afraid to test new and different keywords, especially if your traffic statistics begin to fall. Your AdSense income depends on you staying at the razor's edge of the marketing curve. And that requires attention from you.

Chapter 5

Installing the AdSense Code

In This Chapter

- ▶ Determining what AdSense capabilities to use
 - ▶ Conquering ad formats
 - ▶ Generating ad code
 - ▶ Optimizing code placement
 - ▶ Blocking ads from competitors
-

One reason many people shy away from using AdSense on their Web sites is because they think that the whole AdSense thing is just too hard to manage. Surely there has to be some trick to adding AdSense to your Web site — a trick that only some uber-geek could figure out.

Nope. If I can figure it out, just about anyone can. I'm a consumer technologist — I can tell you all about why you should use a program and how that program works. If you want me to program the program though, you're looking at the wrong gal. Programmer, I am not, and that includes HTML.

That didn't make a bit of difference when it came time to put the AdSense code on my site. I did it, and it wasn't that hard and didn't leave me wondering what in the world I was doing wrong. You won't have any problems either because it's a cut-and-paste job. The catch is that you have to know where to paste the code that Google provides for you.

Choosing AdSense for Content or AdSense for Search

I make putting the code on your Web site sound really easy because it is. Before you get to the whole cut-and-paste part, you'd best understand a few things about AdSense ads, and it's these facets of the ads that can be confusing.

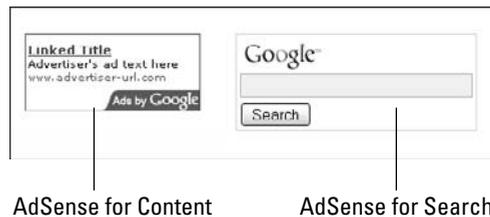
First of all, you have to decide whether you'll use AdSense for Content or AdSense for Search. (I don't talk too much about AdSense Referrals, Video Units, or AdSense for Mobile, just yet. Those capabilities are discussed in Part III.) To make the decision, you need to know how the two differ, so here goes: *The difference between AdSense for Content and AdSense for Search lies in how your ads are displayed.*

- ✓ **AdSense for Content** displays *linked* ads — ads that contain links that lead to the advertisers' Web sites — in text or graphical formats on your pages.
- ✓ **AdSense for Search** displays a search box on your Web site that site visitors can use to search for additional information if they don't find what they need on your pages.

Figure 5-1 shows an AdSense for Content ad and an AdSense for Search ad side by side.

AdSense for Search is a tough sell. Not because it's not useful. Many people like having the option of searching for what they need right from the page they're on. However, the fact that it takes two clicks before you get paid turns a lot of folks off.

Figure 5-1:
AdSense for Search is completely different from AdSense for Content.



Link Units: The Other AdSense for Content Ad

AdSense for Search ads are not the only AdSense ad type that requires two clicks. Link units, which are a subset of AdSense for Content, also require two clicks. Figure 5-2 shows you what I mean. Users click once on the link on your page, which takes them to a list of targeted advertisements that looks like a search results page (as shown in Figure 5-3). Users must then click one of those advertisements for you to get paid. The neat thing about this (when they're used properly and work for you) is that often you can get paid for multiple ad clicks from one display because users will follow the initial link and then check out several of the ads on the results page.

Figure 5-2:

A link unit displays links only, no advertisement text.



Horizontal link unit

 A vertical link unit advertisement. At the top is the "Google" logo. Below it is a section titled "Ads by Google". The advertisement consists of a list of search results, each with a bolded title, a short description, and a URL. The results include:

- Google Search Appliance**: Use the power of Google to search your intranet or public website. www.google.com/enterprise/mini
- Google Com**: Shopping Made Easy at Yahoo! Low Prices On Google Com. shopping.yahoo.com
- Meet Catholic Singles**: Matching you on what counts. Faith, beauty, values & more... www.CatholicMatch.com
- Googles.com**: Browse a huge selection now. Find exactly what you want today. www.eBay.com
- Shaved Ice Equipment**: Professional Shaved Ice Machines, Flavors & Supplies. Free Biz Manual www.1-800-Shaved-Ice.com
- Download Free Ringtones**: 10,000+ Ringtones! Get Free Ringtones With 9 99/m Subscription. Free.RingRingMobile.com
- Free Chat**: Browse photos of Millions of Users View profiles & meet new friends. trueexsingles.com
- SuccessRealities, LLC**: Strategic Planning For Individuals and Organizations www.successrealities.com
- Free Dating**: Browse photos of Millions of Users View profiles & meet new friends. true.com
- 2008 Home Business**: Start Earning \$7500+Every Month. 100% Free Information. Start Now! www.work-at-home-with-google.com

 At the bottom of the advertisement, there is a small copyright notice: "©2007 Google".
Figure 5-3:

The link unit leads to a page of ads that is formatted like a search results page.

Generating Search Box Code

Life doesn't always demand stark choices. It's not as if you can get only chocolate or vanilla ice cream. In fact, throw in strawberry, and you have Neapolitan, the ice cream for indecisive folks everywhere.

The same principle applies to AdSense for Search versus AdSense for Content on your site — there's no reason you can't have both. AdSense for Content works well in and around your articles and other printed content, and an AdSense for Search box at the beginning of the page (or end of the page or in a blank space on the page) works pretty well, too. The results from the search box can add to your AdSense income; although if I were you, I wouldn't rely on the search box alone to generate income for your site.



My advice to you: Go with a combination of both content ads and the search box.

With that out of the way, it's time to do some code slinging. I start out with the AdSense for Search code, just because today is Tuesday. (I cover the AdSense for Content code later in this chapter.) Keep in mind, though, that all the AdSense ad formats are created in about the same way. You work through the wizard, copy the text, and paste it into the HTML on your Web site. Pretty simple, in other words. You'll probably spend more time debating *where* to put your search box than you'll spend actually dealing with the code.



You can install the search box wherever you have some blank real estate that you don't plan to put higher paying ads or other content on. Some designers place their search box at the top of the page, others at the bottom. Very few actually use a search box in the center of the page or off to either the right or the left because the box looks awkward and out of place in those locations. Site visitors usually look to the top or bottom of the page if they want to search.

To create a search box for your Web site:

- 1. Point your browser to `www.adsense.com`, log on to your AdSense account, and click the AdSense Setup tab.**
- 2. In the Setup tab, select the AdSense for Search option.**
Doing so calls up the AdSense for Search Wizard.
- 3. On the top of the first wizard page, as shown in Figure 5-4, select either the Google WebSearch option or the Google WebSearch + SiteSearch option.**

Figure 5-4:
Choose the type of search box you want to create at the top of the wizard page.

AdSense for Search

Choose Search Box Options > Search Results Style > Get Search Code

Wizard | [Single page](#)

Choose your search type and customize your search box size and style to fit your site. Google AdSense [program policies](#) allow you to place up to two AdSense for search boxes on any page.

Search Type
Choose the type of search functionality you'd like to use on your website. [?]

Google WebSearch
Allows users to search the web directly from your site

Google WebSearch + SiteSearch
Allows users to search the web or the specific site(s) of your choice

WebSearch allows visitors to search the Web for additional information whereas WebSearch + SiteSearch allows users to search up to three Web sites that you specify in addition to the whole Web.

- 4. If you select WebSearch + SiteSearch, a new form appears in the wizard, as shown in Figure 5-5. Fill in the Web addresses of the sites you wish to allow visitors to search in the appropriate text boxes.**

If you select WebSearch, you can skip to Step 5.

In most cases, those sites will be your own sites, but you can select any sites you like. You also don't have to enter three sites — one or two are fine if that's your preference.

- 5. Scroll down to the middle of the page, as shown in Figure 5-6, and then choose your search box style.**

Each of the options has a preview that appears when you select that option. You can choose to move the Google logo above the search box, or to remove it completely and place it on the search button. Another available option is to move the search button down below the text field of the search box.

Figure 5-5:
If you choose the SiteSearch option, enter the Web sites to be searched.

Figure 5-6:
Choose the style you want to use for your search box.



Next to the search box style you'll find options to change the background color, text color, and allowable text length of the box. Feel free to select the options that work best with your Web site.

6. **From the drop-down menus at the bottom of the wizard page, select the default language for search results. (See Figure 5-7.)**

There are 30 — count 'em, 30 — options besides English.

7. **Choose the type of page encoding that your Web site uses from the options in the drop-down menu provided. (Refer to Figure 5-7.)**

The type of encoding that your site uses depends on how it's designed. If you don't know what type of encoding your site uses, check with your Web site designer. The most common encoding used for Web sites is UTF-8, but Western (Windows 1252) is another common encoding format.

8. **In the final drop-down menu on the wizard page, select the country you're in so Google knows which domain to search from. After you make your selection, click the Continue button.**

The second page of the wizard appears where you have a chance to customize your search results page.

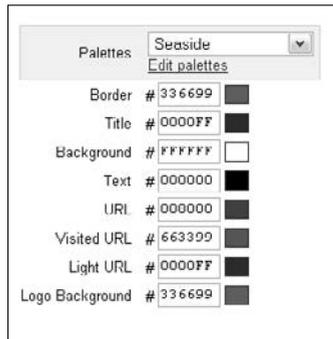
9. **Use the Palettes drop-down menu (see Figure 5-8) to select a different palette for your various color needs, or click the small, colored box next to each element of the search box — Text, Background, Border, and so on — to create a custom palette.**

If that's still not good enough for you, you can always enter the six-digit, hexadecimal number in the text box provided for each element. By the way, don't let the term *hexadecimal* scare you; it's just a number that represents the color you want to use. A nifty sidebar in Chapter 7 explains colors and hexadecimal numbers in more depth.

Figure 5-7:
Use the drop-down menus to choose the default language for search results.

More options	
Site language Select your website's primary language.	English
Your site encoding Select your page encoding. If you are unsure of your encoding, select West European Latin-1 (ISO-8859-1).	West European Latin-1 (ISO-8859-1)
Country or territory for Google domain Choose a country or territory to determine which Google domain will be used for search results.	United States
Continue >>	

Figure 5-8: Customizing the colors of your search results page using the palettes, Color Picker, or hexadecimal numbers.

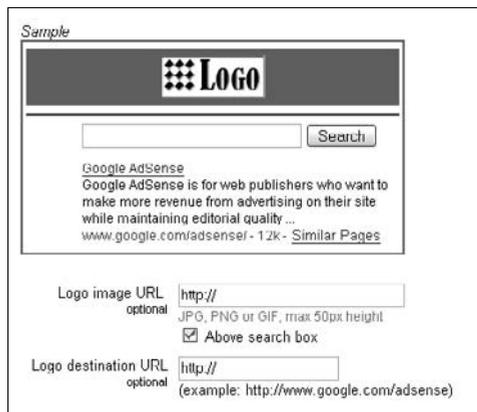


10. If desired, use the logo customization tools shown in Figure 5-9 to upload a personalized logo to your search results page.

It's easy to do, enter the URL showing where your logo is located on your Web site. If you're not certain of that URL, right-click the logo in your browser and select Copy Link Location. Then, paste that link location into the Logo Image URL box, and AdSense pulls your URL whenever a search results page is shown. After you enter the location of the logo, the preview display changes to reflect the logo you want to use.

The second text box, Logo Destination URL, is there so that you can make the logo on your search results page a link back to your Web site if you like. To do that, enter the URL of your Web site — or whatever page you would like to send visitors to — in the provided text box.

Figure 5-9: Add a custom logo to your search results page to make it blend better with your Web site.



- 11. In the More Options section, as shown in Figure 5-10, select whether you want the search results page to open in a different page or window, or to open in the same page by selecting the desired option.**



Opening the search results page in another window or page is best. That leaves your Web site open for visitors to return when they're finished looking through search results. After all, the idea here is to give them additional tools to help them make better decisions about using your site, not to direct them away from your site (potentially) for good.

- 12. Decide whether you want to customize the type of search results with the help of the Site-Flavored Search option.**

Site-flavored search customizes search results over time to your topic and to your Web site visitors. It takes some time for the search results to become highly targeted because Google tracks which results are most clicked by site visitors that use the search box. Site-flavored search can add an additional element of functionality to your search capabilities, however, because it discovers how to provide the best possible results to your visitors. If this is an option that you want to use, select the Customize the Type of Search Results I Get to My Site Content check box.

If you do choose this option, the site-flavored search options expand, as shown in Figure 5-11, so that you can select a profile to use to track the search results.

- 13. Use the drop-down menu provided to select the desired profile.**

There may be no profiles available to choose from if this is the first time you've selected this option. To create a profile, select the Add New Profile link. A text box appears where you can enter the name of the desired profile. When you're finished, click OK and the profile is created.

- 14. If you want to protect visitors from being exposed to adult-themed search results, select the Use SafeSearch check box. (See Figure 5-10.)**

The SafeSearch option blocks adult content.

Figure 5-10:
Additional customization options are near the bottom of the second wizard page.

More options	
Opening of search results page Choose whether you would like your search results to open on Google or within your site.	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Open results on Google in the same window <input type="radio"/> Open results on Google in a new window <input type="radio"/> Open results within my own site [?]
Site-flavored search Get search results that are tailored to your site's topics and visitors. [?]	<input type="checkbox"/> Customize the type of search results I get to my site content.
SafeSearch With SafeSearch, sites and web pages containing adult themed and explicit sexual content are excluded from web search results. [?]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Use SafeSearch
Custom channel You can specify a reporting channel for these ads to help track performance of this search box. [?]	No channel selected ▼ Add new channel Manage channels...
<< Back Continue >>	

Figure 5-11:
Selecting site-flavored search enables customization options for the specialized search.

15. For the last option on this page, decide whether you want to use a custom channel to track your results.

Custom channels are like Web counters. Each time a visitor uses a search box that you've assigned to a custom channel, the *count* for that visit is credited to that specific channel. Custom channels provide a way for you to keep track of which ads are successful and which ads get low amounts of traffic.

You can choose to add a custom channel that separates this traffic from other AdSense traffic. To create a custom channel, click the Add New Channel link. This opens a dialog box where you type the name of the channel you want to use and then click OK. The channel is then automatically set for you. If you already have an existing channel you want to add, select it from the drop-down menu.

16. When you finish customizing your search box and search attributes, click the Continue button.

The final page of the wizard appears, containing the code for your search box in all its glory.

17. Copy and paste this code into the HTML of your Web site and you're done.

If you're not sure where to paste it, keep reading. You can read more about code placement a little further along in this chapter in the section, "Code Placement for Optimum Traffic."

Now you have a search box for your Web site. Go ahead and try it, just to see if it works. Ain't technology grand?



If you're not generating any income from the search box, you can always remove the code after a few weeks of testing. With AdSense, testing is the key to finding what works for *your* Web site. Keep in mind that what works for you might not be the same thing that works for others. That doesn't mean you should ignore what others have figured out; only that you shouldn't be limited by others' experiences.

Understanding Ad Formats

If you're not using search boxes on your site, you're probably using AdSense for Content, and with content, creating the right ads gets a little trickier. Trickier, as in negotiating a strange house blindfolded — it's pretty certain you'll bump into things and your path won't always be the most direct to your destination, but you'll eventually end up in the right place through trial and error.

But that's the worst-case scenario. Why go through all that trouble when you have someone who can take the blindfold off, let you see exactly where you are, and show you the path to exactly where you want to go? (Me, in other words.) When I get you to understand the ad formats in AdSense and understand what works best where, it's like taking off that blindfold.

The infinite variety of AdSense ads

AdSense gives you dozens of different types of ads and ad formats to choose from. Options include

- ✓ Text ads
- ✓ Image ads
- ✓ Video ads
- ✓ Link units
- ✓ Referral buttons
- ✓ Themed ads

Each of these categories includes 8 to 12 different sizes of ads, and then you can further customize ads by choosing the *referral partners* — the folks whose products or services you want to recommend to your Web site visitors — or the colors of the ads. There are enough choices to keep you busy testing different types of ads for a couple years, at least!

Text ads

Text ads are the most popular type of AdSense ad. If you've seen a Web site using AdSense, you've seen text ads. It gets a little confusing, though, when you step back and try to determine exactly what kind of text ad would be best for what space on your Web site. Should you use a leaderboard ad or a medium rectangle? What's the best placement for a vertical banner? When considering options on your Web page, you could probably come up with dozens of potential places for placing ads, but really *knowing* what works best — rather than just guessing — can be a little tricky.

Here's where I come in. Table 5-1 shows you at a glance what types of text ads are available and what the best placements for those ads are. **Note:** The size of each ad format is noted in *pixels* (or the tiny little squares that make up online images). It's not essential to know this, but I thought I'd mention it in case you were curious.

Table 5-1		
Text Ad Formats		
Format	Size	Placement
Leaderboard	728x90	Top of the page or between blog entries
Banner	468x60	Not great anywhere but can be used at the top of the page
Half banner	234x60	Top of the page, end of articles, between blog entries
Button	125x125	Sidebars
Vertical banner	120x240	Either side of the page
Skyscraper	120x600	On either side of the page
Wide skyscraper	160x600	Right side of the page
Small rectangle	180x150	Beginning of an article
Small square	200x200	Beginning of an article
Square	250x250	Beginning of an article
Medium rectangle	300x250	Beginning of an article
Large rectangle	336x280	Beginning of an article

Obviously, you won't use every single one of those ad types on your page. Instead, you should select two or three of the ads that seem to work best in the natural flow of your pages. For example, if you have a Web site that regularly features articles about products or just provides information for site visitors, it might be best for you to consider using a *skyscraper ad* — an ad that's tall and narrow, just like a skyscraper — on the right side of the page and a rectangle ad — a shorter and wider fellow — at the beginning of an article.

The size of the ad and the size of the space that you have available for an ad determine which ones fit best where on your page. The first four ads in the table (leaderboard, banner, half banner, and button) are horizontally oriented, as shown in Figure 5-12. Okay, so the button ad is squarer, but it fits really well in the screen shot.

The best places to put horizontally oriented ads are at the top of a page, between articles or blog entries, and sometimes at the bottom of the page. Don't expect much by way of performance out of ads that you place on the bottom of the page. On rare occasions they do well, but for the most part, you want to remember the rule about keeping your ads above the fold of your page.

Figure 5-12:
The leader-
board, banner, half
banner, and
button ads
are more
horizontally
oriented.



Remember, the fold is considered the bottom of the Web browser window. The idea is that you don't want your visitors to have to scroll to see your ads because they'll often only look at the top of the page without scrolling further down. If you need a refresher about the importance and function of the fold of the page, flip to Chapter 3. The exception to that fold rule is with a blog, where you can (somewhat successfully) place ads between blog posts.

Here's my take on five of the most popular ad formats:

- ✓ **Leaderboard:** Probably the most successful format — so much so that you're sure to have seen them everywhere. *Publishers* — that means you or anyone who signs up with AdSense and publishes ads to a Web site — usually put leaderboard ads at the top of the page because they fit nicely there. They're designed to be about the same width as a Web page, and they can blend underneath the header of a page very well.
- ✓ **Banner:** I'd say banner ads are the least successful of the top five. That's not to say banner ads won't work at all. Your circumstances might make them work beautifully for you. However, site visitors tend to hate advertisements, and the banner ads of old are the reason. When Internet advertising first started to take off, banner ads were one of the first types of ads to appear — and they were a pain in the rear. Too often, early banner ads were graphically challenging to Web browsers, slowing users down when they went from one Web site to another. Back when dialup was the main way to access the internet, downloading anything with large graphics was a pain.

Most Internet users today use broadband (you know, cable and DSL), but the bad taste left by those early banner ads still remains. Users can spot a banner ad, and out of sheer habit will usually avoid them like that smelly compost heap in the back corner of the yard.

Another problem with banners is that they're not the full width of your Web site, which leaves lots of open space on one side or the other of those ads. That's another factor that makes them look like ads. People will click your ads, but only if they don't glaringly look like ads.

- ✔ **Half banners:** Half as bad as banners, but that still doesn't make them good — and they leave even more open space around them than banner ads.
- ✔ **Vertical banners:** Standing a banner upright doesn't make it any less banner-ish, it just changes the orientation, but vertical banners still work on some Web sites in the right column. They're more graphic than skyscraper ads, and are somewhat more acceptable than their horizontal counterparts.
- ✔ **Button:** Useful little buggers for any small space that you have available. Usually, that small space falls in the sidebars of your pages, on the left and right sides, which is the best placement for those ads. If you have a small spot on your sidebar where your links don't reach or there's open, empty space, a small button ad fills that space nicely without being overbearing.

Okay, so that's the top five. On to the next type of text ads from Table 5-1: the two vertical ads — the skyscraper and the wide skyscraper, as shown in Figure 5-13. (I treat them both at once.)

I think it's okay to place vertical ads on either side of your Web page, right there in the sidebar area; but in my opinion, the wide skyscraper seems to do best on the right side of the page. Some experts suggest that could be because most visitors tend to be right-handed, and the right side of the page is technically closer to their hand, making it easier to click the ad. I'm not sure I buy that line of reasoning.

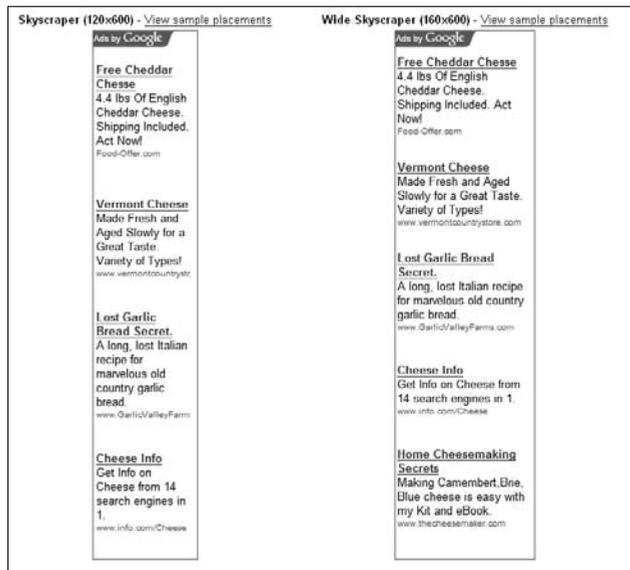


Figure 5-13: Skyscrapers and wide skyscrapers are vertical ads you should use on the sides of your pages.

I think it's more accurate to say that the wide skyscraper on the right side of the page *feels* right. Flip back to where I talk about the way that users tend to view a Web site (Chapter 3, I believe). Users look first at the top of the page, and then at the right, and finally at the left side of the page. Only after glancing at those three areas do they look to the content in the middle of the page.



On the right side, the wide skyscraper just *fits* well. It looks like it belongs there, and that's where users expect to see it. One key to success with any online endeavor, including with AdSense, is to meet the visitor in her comfort zone. It's one reason that so many business people in the real world no longer do business in the office — business types go where their clients are most comfortable: the beach, a restaurant, Starbucks, or into the client's home. Potential customers (which are what your Web site visitors are) are more likely to be agreeable to your terms or to purchase your product if they're comfortable, so make them comfortable. Put the skyscrapers on the outer edges of the pages and use the wide skyscraper on the right.

Going down the list in Table 5-1, you see a set of square and rectangular ads, represented in living black and white in Figure 5-14.

The square and rectangle ads are the most versatile of the AdSense offerings. These ads do well when placed in text, as long as the text is wrapped around the ad, making it look like part of the article or blog post. Of the six ads shown in Figure 5-14, the large rectangle is usually the most successful when placed in text, with the medium rectangle being the next most successful.

The thing to remember about these ads, though, is that just because others find that one type of ad performs better over another in their case, the same might not hold true for you. Testing is the key to determining what your best choices are. Look at the space in which you plan to use the ads and then, based on the space that you have available, try a few different configurations.

If the traffic flow to your site is already established, testing each ad will probably only take about a week. Put up an ad, watch the numbers for a week, and then try something different for another week. After you test several different configurations, you can tell what works well, what works great, and what doesn't work at all. Remember though, the effectiveness of your ads could change over time and with changes to your site, so testing will likely be a constant process.

To make it easier to keep up with your results over time, write down everything. Keep track of the dates, the ads and placements used, the format of the ads (colors and styles, in other words), and anything else that might be pertinent to the results that you see. After a while, you'll instinctively know what will work on your site and what won't. Until then, you have a written record to help you keep track.

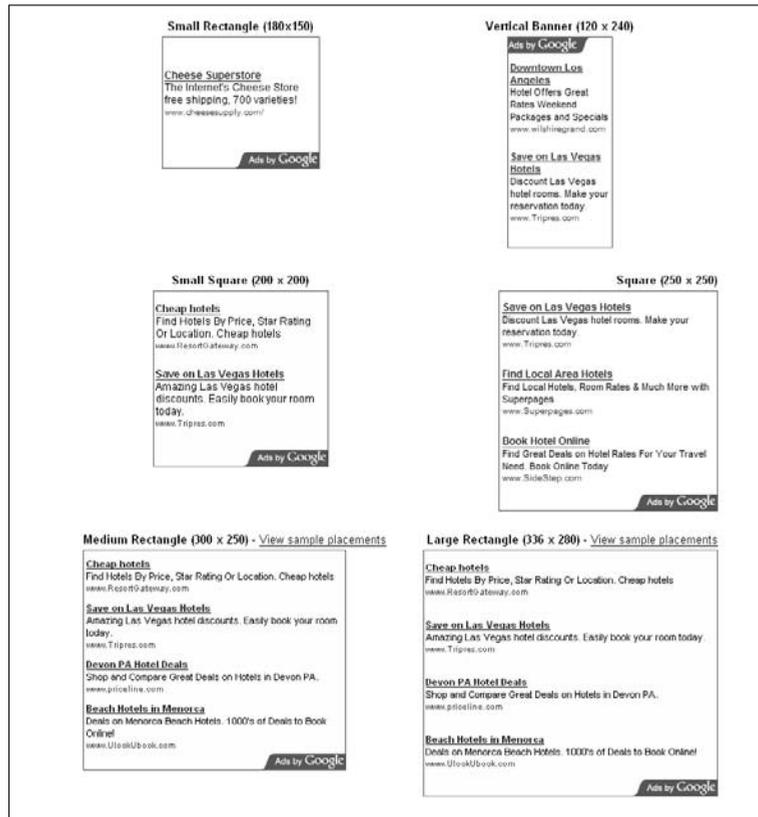


Figure 5-14: The square and rectangular ads are the most versatile text ads that AdSense provides.

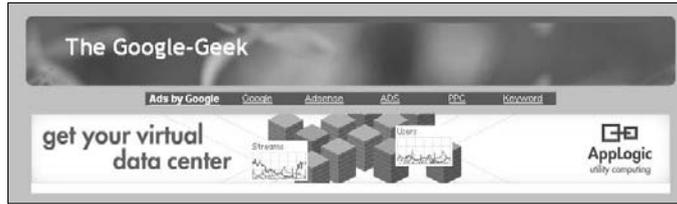
Image ads

I have this feeling that image ads are what you probably think of when you think “Ah, yes, Web advertisements!” You have your nice image and your pithy text, just like the banner ads I mention earlier in the chapter. And, as is the case with banner ads, everyone has them and everyone ignores them. Does that mean you shouldn’t use image ads? Not necessarily. Just don’t expect them to generate as much income as text ads do.

Image ads include pictures or other images that can be very eye-catching, like the ad shown in Figure 5-15. No mistaking it for anything else; you know at a glance that it’s an ad.

Now, there’s nothing inherently wrong with visitors knowing that your ads are in fact, ads. Most users will recognize all kinds of AdSense ads for what they are. However, visitors really do tend to hold a grudge against image ads of all kinds, so the better you can blend them into the content of your site, the less likely they’ll be ignored.

Figure 5-15:
Image ads
are unmis-
takably
advertise-
ments.



Fortunately, there are several different sizes of image ads that you can add to your page. Table 5-2 gives you a quick overview of those sizes and how they're best used. (If you notice some similarities with Table 5-1, your eyes aren't playing a trick with you. The formats are pretty much the same.)

Table 5-2 **AdSense Image Ad Formats**

<i>Format</i>	<i>Ad Size</i>	<i>Placement</i>
Leaderboard	728x90	Top of the page
Banner	468x60	Top or bottom of the page, in between articles or blog posts
Skyscraper	120x600	Right or left side of the page
Wide skyscraper	160x600	Right side of the page
Small square	200x200	In sidebars, on the right or left of the page
Square	250x250	In sidebars, on the right or left of the page
Medium rectangle	300x250	In the text of an article or a blog post
Large rectangle	336x280	In the text of an article or a blog post

Image ads, like text ads, need to blend into the surrounding elements of your page as much as possible. You don't want to make them invisible — if that's your goal, you might as well not put any ads on your site. If you can make them appear as if they belong on your page, your site visitors will be less likely to shun them completely.

For horizontal placement, the leaderboard and banner ads are your best options. These ads, as shown in Figure 5-16, work well at the top of pages, usually directly below your page header, or between articles or blog posts.

The thing to remember with these horizontally oriented ads is that they have to be really great ads that work really well on your pages, or users will ignore them for the most part. It might take some tweaking to get the ad just right for your page. If you have a choice, text ads are probably the better option. Save the image ads for other areas on your Web site.

Figure 5-16: Leaderboard and banner ads are the horizontal offerings for images.



The next set of image ads — the skyscrapers — are also likely to be ignored if not integrated well into your site. Such ads, as shown in Figure 5-17, are best suited to the edges (the right and left sidebars) of your pages. And much like the text ads, the wide skyscraper is always better suited to the right side of the page.

As for square and rectangular ads, they work best embedded in (or surrounded by) the text on your page. These ads, when placed in the text and matched to the color palette of your Web site, can actually look like they belong with the article or blog post. When they look like they belong, that's when visitors' old aversions to image ads are less likely to rear their ugly heads.



Figure 5-17: The image skyscraper ads are best placed just like text ads, on either side of the page.

The square and rectangle ads you see in Figure 5-18 are the least evil of the image ads. Test a few of them in your text and see how they work for you. If they don't do well, you can always switch back to text ads.

Video ads

Video ads are one of the newest additions to the AdSense family. Technically, though, the ad is *not* the video. Yes, videos are streamed for advertising partners that have YouTube accounts, but the actual ads are displayed in the video player that's embedded in your content, not in the video itself. To see what I mean, check out Figure 5-19.

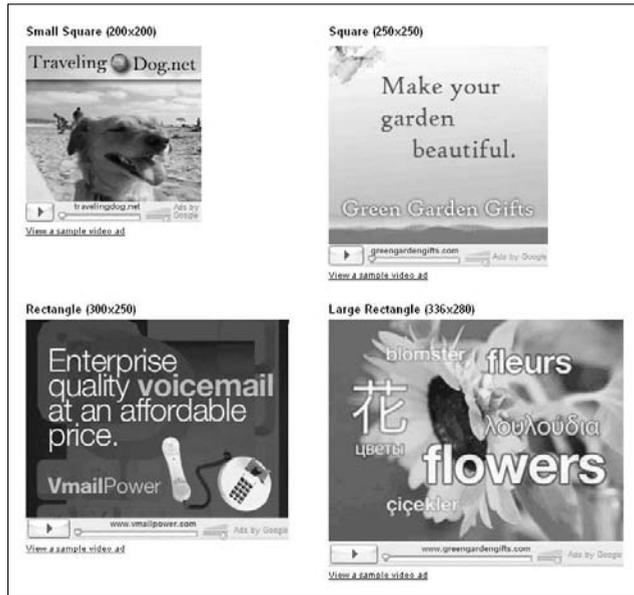
The formats available for video units include

- ✓ Leaderboard
- ✓ Skyscraper
- ✓ Wide skyscraper
- ✓ Small square
- ✓ Square
- ✓ Rectangle
- ✓ Large rectangle



Figure 5-18: The square and rectangle image ads are the most visitor-friendly of the image ad group.

Figure 5-19:
Video ads stream videos from sponsors' YouTube accounts and include links to the sponsor.



I won't subject you to another table because the size and placement of these ads are the same as the size and placement of the image and text ads shown in the earlier tables in this chapter.

When a site visitor clicks the video player, the content from the advertiser's YouTube account is shown, along with a link to his site. The video player also becomes a large graphical link when the video is finished playing.

For you to get paid, your site visitors must click through the video player to the advertiser's site. It'd be nice if these types of ads were shown on an *impression only basis* — you'd get paid each time someone viewed the video — but that's not the case. The click actually has to happen.

That doesn't mean video ads aren't good for your site. Today's Internet users love video content. If the content of the video units on your site isn't too *advertise-y*, you may find that these units are good for your AdSense income. Of course, that also depends on how well they work with your Web site content. Test them to see how they perform. If you don't like the results, you can always go back to image or text ads.

Link units

Probably the second most used ad type in the AdSense program (after text ads) is the link unit. Link units are very cool because — when used properly — you can make them look like they belong on your page, so users are more likely to click them.

Making a link unit look like it belongs on your page is pretty simple. You adjust the template colors of the ad to match the template colors of your page. Then, when the link units are displayed on your page, they look like links that are related to the content of the page.

Link units come in several sizes, as detailed in Table 5-3. (In the table, you see some ad sizes followed by the number 4. This indicates there are four links in that ad display. All others have five links displayed within the ad.)

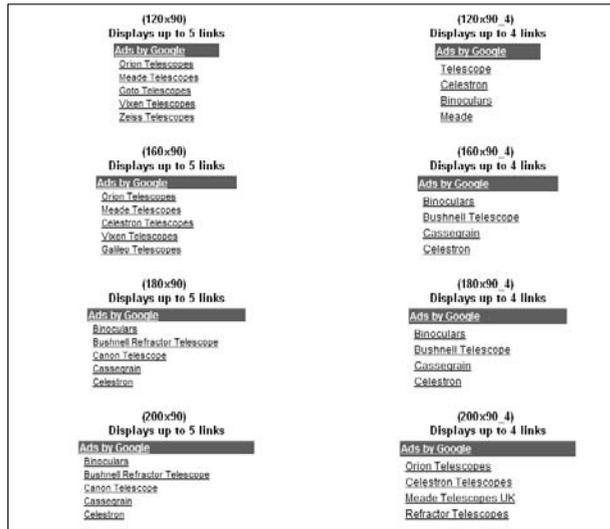
<i>Size</i>	<i>Number of Links</i>	<i>Best Placements</i>
120x90	Up to five links	Sidebars
120x90_4	Up to four links	Sidebars
160x90	Up to five links	Sidebars
160x90_4	Up to four links	Sidebars
180x90	Up to five links	Sidebars
180x90_4	Up to four links	Sidebars
200x90	Up to five links	Sidebars
200x90_4	Up to four links	Sidebars
468x15	Up to five links	Top and bottom of the page, between articles and blog posts
468x15_4	Up to four links	Top and bottom of the page, between articles and blog posts
728x15	Up to five links	Top and bottom of the page, between articles and blog posts
728x15_4	Up to four links	Top and bottom of the page, between articles and blog posts

Although there are several sizes of link units, there really are only two types — vertical and horizontal.

Vertical link units are best used in the sidebars of your page. Use them at the top or bottom, before or after any set of links that you might have in your sidebar. The ads, as shown in Figure 5-20, work well when matched or blended with your template colors. In essence, users think those links belong with the links surrounding them, and they're more likely to click those ads than most other ads.

Several different sizes of vertical link units make it easier to integrate them into the sidebars on your Web site. When you tweak colors with the color pallets provided by Google, you can make them appear as if they're an intentional part of your site design.

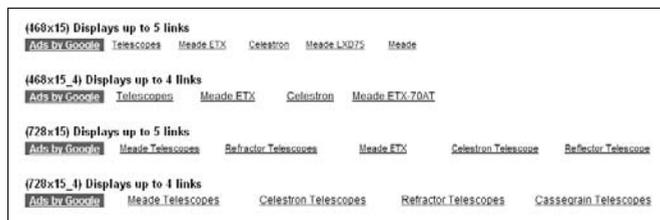
Figure 5-20: Vertical link units look like lists of links that can be integrated into existing link lists on your site.



The horizontally oriented link units, as shown in Figure 5-21, work essentially the same way — they just work better on the top and bottom of your pages, and between articles and blog posts. Like the vertically oriented link units, tweak the colors of these, and they'll blend well on your Web site. The key is to make them look like they belong.

As with everything good, there has to be a catch. Link units are great to blend in with your Web site, and they look less like advertisements than anything that's available in the AdSense program. But here's the rub — with link units, site visitors have to click *twice* before you get paid. They must first click a link within the link unit, which takes them to a page that looks very much like a search results page. The real difference is that the results shown on the page that the link unit leads to are all advertisements. For you to get paid, users must click through one of the links on the results page.

Figure 5-21: Horizontal link units work well on the top and bottom of pages, and between articles or blog posts.



Here's the trade-off, though. If users are inclined to click through the links on the results page, it's also likely that they'll click through more than one of those results, meaning you *could* get paid for more than one click.

With link units, they either work really well or they bomb completely. The only way to know is to test link units on your site and see how they perform for you. Try different configurations and locations. If they're going to work, you'll find your sweet spot. All you have to do is watch the change adding up.

Referral buttons

One last type of AdSense ad that you should consider is the referral button. These ads, shown in Figure 5-22, are small buttons that refer site visitors to a sponsored program.

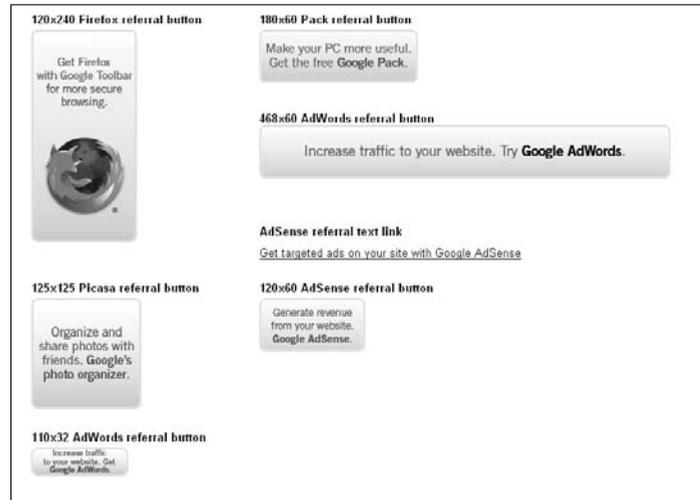


Figure 5-22: Referral ads allow you to choose up to 15 companies or products to endorse.

The ads shown in Figure 5-22 show specific types of programs, such as Google Pack, AdSense, and AdWords, but Google has referral buttons from hundreds of different advertisers that want you to endorse their products.

All the referral ads are basically the same, with the exception of the text link variety. The text link referral ad is literally a line of text that displays a referral. You can place this text link anywhere in your content. The remaining ads are all buttons of various sizes:

- ✓ 120x240
- ✓ 180x60
- ✓ 468x60
- ✓ 120x60
- ✓ 125x125
- ✓ 110x32

When you're setting up your referral button ads, you can select up to 15 different ads to rotate through the referral button. So, if you choose to use a 125x125 square referral button, you can have referrals from up to 15 different advertisers. That doesn't mean you have to choose 15 companies to refer visitors to. You can select just 1, 5, or 12 if you like — whatever works best for your site.



As an added bonus, with referral button ads, you get to choose exactly the companies that you want to show referrals for. You're not surprised by an ad from a competitor or a company you're not willing to endorse.

When you're making the selections for your referral ads, you can browse the different categories of vendors and even look at the products and URLs that you'll be supporting. Referral values are also listed next to each product, so you'll have a ballpark figure of how much you're paid for each referral.

Themed ads

Themed units are basically text ads that have a specific theme. Google offers these around holiday times, and they just appear in your ad structure. You don't have to do anything special to use themed units — they're automatically enabled in your ads when you set up your AdSense account.

You'll find themes that surround the various major holidays on your calendar. How themed ads work varies from the way that text ads work, however. The theme makes it obvious that an ad is an ad, unless you've changed your whole site to reflect the holiday theme.

If you're into decorating for the holidays, you might consider using themed ad units. If your site stays the same (appearance-wise) day in and day out, it's probably best if you just avoid the themed unit altogether.

If you decide you'd rather not have the themed advertisements showing on your Web site, you can disable themed ads (they're enabled by default) using these steps:

1. **Point your browser to `www.adsense.com` and log on to your AdSense account.**

2. **Click the My Account tab.**

You should be automatically taken to your Account Settings page. If not, click Account Settings in the link strip below the tabs.

3. **Scroll down the page to the Ad Type Preference section, as shown in Figure 5-23, and then click the Edit link, next to the Ad Type Preference heading.**

You're taken to the Ad Type Preference page.

4. **On the Ad Type Preference page, as shown in Figure 5-24, select the Display Text Ads Only in All Ad Units option.**

5. **Click the Save Changes button.**

That's it. Themed ad units are disabled and won't show during holiday periods. Of course, neither will any other kind of picture ad, so you have to decide whether you want text only or if you're okay with themed units on occasion.

Figure 5-23:
Click the Edit link next to the Ad Type Preference heading.

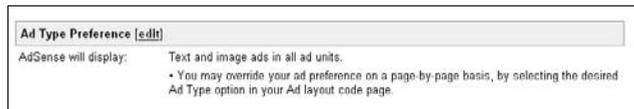
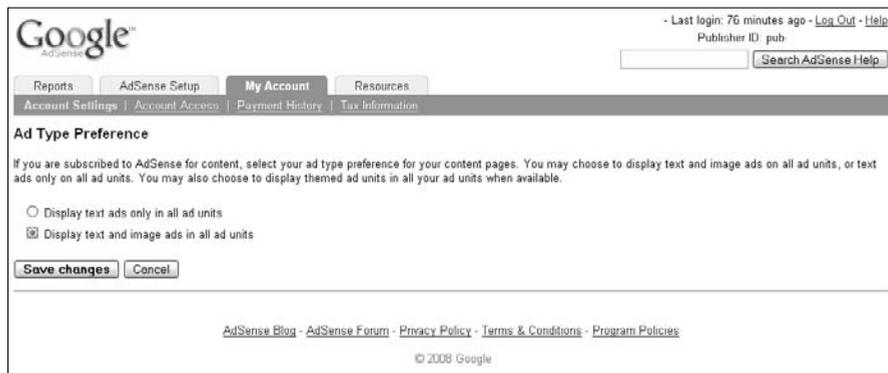


Figure 5-24:
To disable themed ads, change your Ad Type Preference to text only.





With any of the AdSense formats, only half the art is knowing what ad to place where. The other half is knowing how to format your ads to make them more appealing to site visitors. Because the name of the game is garnering clicks on your ads, you want them to appeal to site visitors — the color, style, *and* placement should all entice the visitor to click the ad. So, there's way more to it than just placement. The fine details make all the difference, and those details are covered in Chapter 7.

Generating Other Types of Ad Code

Okay, if you've followed along in this chapter, you now have a better grasp of the kinds of ad formats AdSense makes available to you. And, if you were really good and read the opening section in this chapter, you know all about generating the code for search boxes on your Web site. Generating the code for other types of AdSense ads works pretty much the same:

1. **Point your browser to `www.adsense.com` and log on to your AdSense account.**
2. **Select the AdSense Setup tab.**
3. **Choose the type of ad that you want to have on your site — content ads for text, search boxes to allow visitors to search, or video ads if you use video on your site.**
4. **Select the ad size you want to have displayed.**
5. **Customize the ad to work on your Web site, using the color and display customization options I show you in Chapters 3 and 4, as well as earlier in this chapter.**
6. **Select the *channel* — the tracking information — you want to use for the ad.**
7. **Click Submit and Get Code to generate the code for the ad.**
8. **After your code has been generated, copy and paste the ad code into the HTML on your Web site.**

Don't worry if you're not quite sure where to put the code. The next section, "Code Placement for Optimum Traffic," contains all the details you need.

That's it. The AdSense wizard walks you through making all the selections that you need to generate the code. Then all you have to do is copy and paste it into the HTML of your Web site. Of course, copying and pasting the code isn't as easy as it sounds. If it were, there wouldn't be a dozen or more books about improving your AdSense income.

Code Placement for Optimum Traffic

You're now in a position where you understand ad formats and you can generate the ad code. Does that mean you're all set? Far from it. You still need to figure out precisely where to put all that nice HTML code you've just generated on your page and watch the dollars add up.

In Chapter 2, I point you to the AdSense help pages for information on code placement. If you made your way through those pages, you may already know where to put your code, but if you're like me, you haven't made it over there yet, so you're still clueless. No worries. I help you get up to speed right now.

Getting code where you want it

How you place the AdSense code on your site depends on how you're accessing the HTML for your Web site. There are two basic ways to do it:

- ✓ **Using a WYSIWIG (what you see is what you get) HTML editor:** If that's your weapon of choice, be sure to switch from Design view to HTML view.
- ✓ **Using an HTML Insert capability:** If your Web site design software application offers an HTML Insert feature, all you have to do is paste the HTML into the window provided and click OK.

In both cases, when you view your Web site (or preview your Web site), the ad should appear. Of course, it's a little more complicated than that because you need to know exactly where to paste the code.

If you're using the HTML editor, you'll have to navigate your way through your HTML code. One major landmark to look for involves the `<body>` tags on your Web site. You may remember from Chapter 4 that a very scaled down version of your HTML might look something like this:

```
<Head>
<Title>Your Web Site Title Goes Here</Title>
<Meta name="description" content="Include a quick keyword-
rich blurb about your site here.">
<Meta name="keywords" content="enter keywords here,
separated by commas">
</Head>
```

After the heading of your Web site comes the body. That looks like this:

```
<HTML>
<Head>
<Title>Your Web Site Title Goes Here</Title>
</Head>
<Body>
The body of your Web site goes here.>
</Body>
```

It's between those body tags that the code for your AdSense ads should be placed. If the code doesn't appear between those body tags, the ads won't show up on your Web site.

Now, if you go back and look at the source code for any given Web site (remember, you do this by choosing View↔Source or View↔View Source Web from your browser's main menu), you see that there's a whole lot of gobble-dygoon between the body tags. Basically everything that you see on your site below the header and above the footer will appear in there somewhere.

Knowing where in that jumble of code to paste your AdSense code makes all the difference in the world. It takes a little bit of trial and error to get the code in the right place if you're not an HTML guru.

If you read through the HTML (don't panic, after you focus on it for a few minutes, you begin to see the patterns that translate into a Web site), you'll start to see common tags, like `<div>` (which means *division*) and `<table>` (which indicates the beginning of a table).

As you begin to see the patterns in your code, you also begin to recognize where you want to paste the code. For example, if you're pasting the code for a leaderboard-sized link unit into your page, you want to paste it immediately following the opening body tag (`<body>`). This ensures that the ad gets placed at the top of the page.

To paste a rectangle text ad into the beginning of an article, paste it immediately before the first word of the article. And if you want to place an ad in a sidebar, place it after the `division` tag for the sidebar.

It's only slightly different if you're using a Web design program that allows you to insert snippets of HTML into your site design. If that's the kind of program you're using, place your cursor or pointer at the place on the page where you want the HTML snippet to appear, and then select the HTML Insert command from the main menu. In the window that appears, paste in the code and then click OK. You can then drag or resize the section that contains the HTML code until it's in the exact location where you want it displayed.

When installing the HTML code onto your site, remember that location is everything. Review the placements that I share with you earlier in the chapter and try them to see how they work for you. Of course, don't let those guidelines become your prison, either. Test different sizes, colors, and locations until you find the combination that suits your site the best and draws the most clicks.

Resisting the urge to change the code

When you're installing your AdSense code, one of the most important things to remember is that you can't change the AdSense code in any way. You can't add to it, take away from it, or otherwise change it. Period. It's not only against the AdSense policies, but it could also render the code useless.

When Google generates code for you to use as a display on your site, there are some very important elements in that code. Among those elements is your user ID as well as information that tells Google what ads to display on your site.

If you start messing with the code, Google might not recognize it and ads won't be pushed out to it. Or worse, ads that are completely irrelevant to your site might be pushed out. At least until Google figures out you monkeyed with the code — and then you could be banned from the AdSense program altogether.

So don't *ever* mess with the AdSense code. Copy it; paste it; forget it.

Blocking Ads from Your Competitors

One last tidbit before I wash my hands of this chapter completely: competition. Everyone hates it, but it's what makes it possible for you to have that AdSense revenue stream. Still, you may decide that you don't like the idea of having your competitors' ads show up on your site. You can stop that, you know.

The Competitive Ad filter allows you to specify the URLs of sites for which you don't want ads shown. You have a couple options, too. You can filter broad URLs, like an entire site, or you can filter specific pages within a site.

To filter broad URLs, follow these steps:

- 1. Point your browser to `www.adsense.com` and log on to your AdSense account.**

2. Click the AdSense Setup tab and select Competitive Ad Filter from the row of links below the tab.

A new page loads (as shown in Figure 5-25) that contains a form you can use to block your competitors' ads.

3. In the space provided, enter the URL of the Web site that you want to block.

For example, you could use the broad URL `http://www.competitor.com`. Enter one URL per line.

4. When you finish listing the URLs of the competition you want blocked, click Save Changes.

You're done — although it could take up to a couple of hours for ads from the URLs you've blocked to stop showing on your site.

Figure 5-25:
Enter competitors' URLs into the form to block their ads from displaying on your Web site.

If you use a broad URL, like the one in the steps above, every page with that base URL will be blocked. If there are only certain pages that you want to have blocked, you can enter a more specific URL for that site. So, for example, if there's a single product page on your competitor's site that you want blocked, you could enter the URL for that product page only. It might look something like this: `http://www.competitor.com/product/product1.htm`.

The more specific the URL, the less you're blocking.



If you want to target a specific ad to be blocked from your site, wait until the ad shows up, right click it, and then select Copy Shortcut or Copy Link Location from the contextual menu that appears. Then paste that URL into a text editor and look for the link within the link.

Here's what I mean: When you right-click the ad and copy the link, you're copying both Google's location and the link that the ad leads to. It might look something like this when you paste it:

```
http://www.googleadservices.com/pagead/  
adclick?adurl=http://www.blogger.com/  
signup.g&sa=
```

If you look closely at that URL, you see that there are actually two sets of `http://`. The first, at the beginning of the URL, points to Google Ad Services. That's the URL that's serving up the ad. The second one (after the equal sign) points to `http://www.blogger.com/signup.g&sa`. *That* is the URL that you want to paste into your competitive filter because it's the actual URL for your competitor.

Many Web site owners who end up publishing AdSense ads use the Competitive Ad filter to ensure that their visitors aren't sent to their competitors' sites by mistake. It's easy to use, so if you have any doubts about losing your visitors to your competition, take advantage of it.

Part II

The Major Players: AdSense for Content, AdSense for Search

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



“Honey—remember that pool party last summer where you showed everyone how to do the limbo in just a sombrero and a dish towel? Well, look at what the MSN Daily Video Download is.”

In this part . . .

As you can tell from the title, this part of the book focuses on AdSense for Content and AdSense for Search. To help you take advantage of AdSense for Content, this part gives you all the details you need to create great content and design the perfect content ads, as well as help you build the perfect AdSense for Search box.

This part shares how to create content that visitors are looking for as well as how to design your ad to appeal to those visitors. After content is out of the way, I provide an overview of AdSense for Search and the differences between the two.

Chapter 6

Building the Right Content

In This Chapter

- ▶ Writing great content
 - ▶ Hiring content providers
 - ▶ Tapping into multimedia content
 - ▶ Making content management routine
 - ▶ Understanding copyright
-

I promise not to grind the content horse completely into ground meat, but content is important, so you have to put up with me as I dive into a few more content issues. I know you know that content is the cornerstone of your Web site — actually, it's great content but that's such an overused term — and you also know that there are quite a few different avenues for collecting the content that you can use to populate your site. (You know that because you're smart, and I know you're smart because you bought a *For Dummies* book.)

What I think still needs to be covered is the actual writing process, the option of hiring someone *else* to do it, and using content other than written articles and blog posts. Don't get me wrong. Written articles and blog posts are important, and you'll probably have far more written content on your site than anything else, but using video is a great option, too — especially because the occasional video helps acclimate your visitors to seeing video on your site. Then you can use AdSense video ads once in a while, too.

One more thing. What do you do with all that content after you find it, write it, or purchase it? Keeping content fresh can be a full-time job if you have a site that's more than a few dozen pages in size. Think of those sites that have hundreds or even thousands of pages. Keeping that content interesting and new is a nightmare endeavor!

Well, it is unless you have some method to tame that monster, and taming methods do exist. It's just a matter of finding the one that works best with the plans that you have in mind.

So, yeah, I've already talked about content, but there's still plenty to cover, so bear with me just a little longer, okay?

Foundations for Great Content

Great content — what a terrible, horrible phrase. What, exactly, constitutes great content? Isn't "great" content kind of like a college (or a high school) literature course? Remember those? You go to this class, and the instructor thrusts a book at you and says, "You must read this and tell me what it means."

Great. I would read those books, but the meaning I found was never the same as the meaning the instructor found in them. I always got so-so grades in literature because of it, and I still don't understand. Who is that instructor to tell me what that writer was thinking when he or she wrote that piece of literature? Was the instructor sitting on the writer's shoulder during the writing process? Or maybe the writer dialed up the future and asked the instructor for direction on what should be written? Not likely.

Literature is subjective — as is content. What I think is great content might absolutely drive the next visitor to your site completely insane. He could find the article boring or lively, instructing or condescending. Every person interprets what's put before them differently.

That doesn't mean that great content can't be achieved, though. It's more accurate to call it appealing content — your content should *appeal* to the majority of visitors that land on that page. The truth is you can't purchase, steal, borrow, or copy anything that will appeal to everyone. What you have to shoot for is content that appeals to the majority, and there are some guidelines for writing to the majority of people that will land on any one of your pages.

Knowing your audience

Before you can put anything on paper (or on-screen as is the case here), you have to know who you're addressing. If you've done any targeting research on your Web site, you already have some of this information. If you haven't, you'd better get to it. The only way you'll ever reach your audience in the first place is to have a Web site that's well targeted to them.

Here's an example: Say you own the Web site Greenparenting.com (in real life, the site actually forwards to GreenForGood.com, but we're talking hypothetical here). Just looking at the name for that site, you automatically know that the site should be targeted to parents who are environmentally responsible. Now, what you need to know is who those people are.

If you know your industry, you can do a little research and find out that the people who would be interested in green parenting are probably upper-middle class adults in their late 20s to early 50s. These are people who fall into the parenting age. Being environmentally friendly isn't cheap, so a decent income is required to be truly dedicated.

Now you have a profile. Your site visitors have these characteristics:

- ✓ They're parents.
- ✓ They're in their late 20s to early 50s.
- ✓ They have a household income of \$75,000 or more.
- ✓ They're concerned about the environment.

As you're reading through those few facts, you should already have a picture of these Web site visitors in your mind. If you haven't done the spadework necessary to come up with a picture of a typical visitor to your own Web site, do it now. You can't accurately target anything on your Web site until you know who you're serving. That includes creating content that your visitors are looking for and that they want to read.

Language considerations

The language that you use in your content can be addressed on a couple different levels. First, is the *what language do most of your readers speak* level. Obviously, this level is completely out of your control. It makes no sense at all to create content for your site in English if most of your visitors are Japanese.



If you have any doubts at all about the native language of your visitors, look at your analytics software. Most analytics packages have some element of tracking visitors based on their language. In Google Analytics (which I highly recommend because it's very user-friendly and FREE!), the actual report is in with a group of reports that segment users according to differing characteristics, such as language location.

A language report tells you the native language of each of your site visitors based on what's set as the default language in their Web browser.

A different aspect of language is the words that you actually use to communicate with your visitors. I can quote you all kinds of facts about how the average person reads at an 8th-grade level or how readers perceive words on a screen differently than how they perceive words on a page — all that is true. What's more important to understand about the language that you use to communicate with your visitors is that it should be *familiar* to them.

Jargon (those words that are inevitably coined for every topic on the planet; really, every topic can be explained with jargon) isn't familiar. For example, *analytics* is actually jargon. It's used to mean Web site traffic statistics. Analytics is actually a derivative of the word *analyze*, which means to examine critically. So, by definition then, analytics would be the science of analyzing. Yet, I use it most frequently when associated to Web site traffic statistics.

Understanding visitors with Google Analytics

Google Analytics is Google's free Web site traffic analytics program. It's easy to use and provides a wealth of information about the visitors to your site, so don't let its dry-as-dust name scare you away from using it. Detailed coverage of Google Analytics is in Chapter 14, including where to get the application and how to make it work with your Web site, but I thought you might like to know a little more about it right now.

Google Analytics, which started life as *Urchin Analytics* — a program that wasn't free — offers nearly 50 standardized analytics reports as well as reports that you can customize, all of which tell you about the visitors to your site. As a free program, it's one way for you to find out more about your site visitors without having to spend a tidy sum on the insight that an audience research firm will cost you.

Broadly speaking, Google Analytics offers you reports in four different areas: Visitors, Traffic Sources, Content, and Goals. The neat thing about Analytics from an AdSense perspective is

that it features reports that are AdWords-specific (very handy, that) and reports that apply very specifically to any SiteSearch capabilities enabled on your site (including those capabilities that you may have enabled through AdSense).

Installing and using Google Analytics is simple and doesn't require a technology degree. It takes about an hour to set up an account and paste the provided code into the HTML on your Web site. After you place the code on your site, it should take a couple days to start seeing statistics. And after you collect statistics for about a month, you can begin seeing patterns in how your site visitors use your site.

Google Analytics may well be the secret weapon that you never knew you needed. At worst, it tells you more about your site visitors than you could ever gather with your AdSense reports alone. At best, you'll find out enough about your users to begin understanding what they're looking for and how you can provide it for them.

The problem with jargon is that if you stay immersed in a subject long enough, it becomes part of your normal speech and thought patterns. Unfortunately, that might not be true for your Web site visitors.

If you place an article or blog post on your Web site that's full of jargon and your site visitors don't view that jargon from the same perspective as you, they'll get frustrated very quickly. Visitors don't want to struggle through articles and blog posts filled with terms that seem to be used as part of some coded language. (BBC World War II Upper Class Twit Announcer Voice: "The geese are carrying the potatoes over the vicar's pond. I repeat: The geese are carrying the potatoes over the vicar's pond.") They want to skim your stuff, pluck out the information they need like the ripest and sweetest grapes, and move on. Jargon slows them down, so don't use it.

If you do find that jargon is necessary in your content, be sure to explain what it means the first time it appears in any article or blog post. The idea is to make your content as easy to read as possible without being overly simplistic. This is where it gets a little tricky.



If you're too simplistic in the language that you use in your content, most readers are turned off. I find it's usually best to choose one person that represents your audience and write your content so that person can understand it. For me, it's my best friend, who happens to be a serious technophobe while at the same time being one of the most intelligent people I know. I write with her in mind, phrasing things in such a way that I don't insult her intelligence and yet get the fundamentals of (an at times rather complicated) technology across.

If I can write about technology at a level that she understands but that doesn't grate on her nerves, I count myself successful. Use the same trick with your site visitors. Think of someone you know who represents your readers, assume his or her knowledge of your topic isn't as deep as your own, and then write to that person. If necessary, you can even ask that person to read what you've written the first few times. If he has questions, he'll ask. If he understands it and the language doesn't annoy him, you know you're on the right track.

Getting Fresh with Content

Here's a simple exercise for you. Do a quick search on Google for whatever topic interests you. It doesn't matter what the topic is, just pick something. When the search results come in, click through 20 or so of the results and make note of what you see. How many times does the same article or group of articles appear in those search results?

I bet it's more than once. I research a lot of topics on the Web, and the one thing that I've noticed in nearly every topic is that the same articles appear over and over again. It's a phenomenon that happens both in print and on the Internet, but it's far more noticeable on the Internet because information is just a Web search away. In print, you actually have to collect the books and newspapers together in one place to notice the patterns.

Everyone uses the same articles. Well, okay. Maybe not everyone, but a lot of people do. It's *content syndication* (or *article syndication*), and sometimes it happens on purpose — writers work hard to get their articles and stories syndicated and books published because that's how they reach wider audiences. Sometimes it happens accidentally though — an article is placed online (it's less likely to happen accidentally in print), and other Web site owners find it, like it, and either with permission or without, copy it and use it on their own Web sites.

Another reason you see the same article everywhere is because companies exist that sell packages of pre-made Web pages or even just packages of articles that you can place on your Web site that are targeted around a specific keyword or topic. These packages are sold both on Web sites and on auction sites like eBay, and they're available to everyone — and I *do* mean everyone.

The problem with that kind of content is that although it's easy to find and for the most part inexpensive to purchase, it's old. It's so old it's bleu-cheese moldy — which is precisely why you find it everywhere. Nothing's more frustrating to someone than clicking through a bunch of links looking for information just to find that one-third of those links all lead to the same article on a different Web site.



If you truly want to generate traffic volume for your Web site (and you do, because the more traffic you have, the more AdSense revenue you generate), fresh content is what you need. Fresh content is new, different, and doesn't show up on 5,000 different Web sites. It's your own content that you've written or had written for your specific audience to meet their exact needs.

Your Web site visitors will love you for it. Potential Web site visitors are more likely to stay on your site, reading your articles, viewing your other types of content, and eventually clicking your AdSense ads if you're offering them content they can't find elsewhere. The only place to get that kind of content is to either write it yourself or hire someone to write it for you.

Article Wrangling

Folks who want to take the easy way out when populating their Web sites with content snatch up as many reprint articles as they can. (*Reprint articles* refer to that small pool of articles that gets replicated out onto a gazillion Web sites, kind of like that Agent Smith guy in *The Matrix*.) You can get reprint articles anywhere. A ton of content syndicates are online where you can purchase articles for a few dollars, but so can everyone else.

You can even use *public domain works* — those written articles and books for which copyright has expired and thus have slipped back into the public domain. You can publish them without the permission of the author, but again, so can everyone else.

If you want truly original content, you have to do it the hard way — you have to write it or hire someone else to write it.

Creating original content

Writing your own articles and blog posts isn't as hard as it sounds unless you have hundreds of Web pages to populate, which could become a very time-consuming effort. If that's the case, you'll have to use *some* reprints, but it's still best if you try to keep the most important pages on your site filled with original content.

Selecting the best fonts

The whole issue of fonts can be a little confusing, especially when you begin to listen to the *experts* on the topic. It seems that every expert has a different opinion on what's best to use on the Internet.

Fonts come in two flavors: serif fonts and sans serif fonts. *Serif fonts* have small strokes that lead into a letter; *sans serif fonts* don't. There's a lot of debate as to which is easier to read both online and in print. The fact is, though, that there's really no easy answer to that question because other factors — spacing, font size, and screen resolution — also make a difference in what works and what doesn't.

The most common serif fonts that you find online are Times New Roman and Georgia. The most common sans serif fonts online are Arial and Verdana. Which ones are best? Consensus is that Verdana is one of the best fonts to use for Web pages because of the spacing of the font and the design of the letters. However, you'll find that many Web sites also use Times New Roman and Arial.

Personally, I use Arial in a lot of the work I do online, simply because it's a more appealing font to me. Verdana is my second choice. When you get below a 10-point font (the size of the font), Arial becomes very difficult to read because the letters are so closely spaced.

Choose the font you use on your site based on the layout of the site and the needs of your visitors. Obviously, you want to appeal to the largest audience possible, so common wisdom is that you should use the font best suited to as many people as possible — Verdana.

One thing is certain, however. Whatever you do, don't use a crazy font like Vladimir Script or Curlz MT just because you think it looks neat. Those fonts are very difficult to read. Because reading on-screen is already harder on their eyes than reading from a printed page, you want to make it as easy as possible for your visitors to get through an entire article (or even several articles) on your Web site.

Coming up with ideas for your original content isn't too difficult. If you don't already have a list of ideas based on what you know your visitors are looking for, spend about an hour brainstorming some ideas. You won't use them all, and some of them will be just plain silly, but you'll come up with some good ideas. Here's a secret every writer knows: The more you write, the more ideas you have.

When it's time to actually write the articles for your Web site, a few basic principles should be applied. These principles help make it easy for your site visitors to read your articles. The short list looks like this:

- ✓ **Article layout:** The experience of reading on-screen is very different from reading on paper. On-screen, it's much easier to get lost. Eye strain is also much more common when you focus on a computer screen for too long. Computer screens have an invisible bar that scrolls across the screen refreshing the image constantly. If you've ever seen a computer

on TV that has a black line scrolling through it, that's what I'm talking about.

You don't *see* this line because of the rate that it rolls across your screen, but it causes slight vision anomalies that your eyes pick up on, even though it doesn't register in your brain. These anomalies are what cause eye strain.

One way to combat eye strain is to keep your articles as sparse as possible. That doesn't mean skimping on the content but does mean you need to use lots of *white space* — open space without words — and use a type font that's screen-reading friendly.

It works best when you're laying out your articles if you single space (or even use a space and a half) between each paragraph of type. Also try to keep your paragraphs short and resist the urge to pack everything, kitchen-sink style, into a single sentence. Long sentences are easy to get lost in.

Between paragraphs, use a double space. The extra white space between paragraphs gives the eyes a second to rest before moving into the new text.

- ✓ **Reading-friendly colors:** Color can be your best friend or your worst enemy online. The first thing to remember when dealing with Web site colors is that colors display differently on-screen than they do on paper — and colors display slightly differently on different screens. So test your colors in the *real world* — online rather than on paper. It wouldn't hurt to take a peek at your Web masterpiece from a few different computers.

The second thing to keep in mind when dealing with colors is that computers are already prone to causing eyestrain, so if you use wild colors on your Web site, that exacerbates the problem. Believe me: Nothing's worse than clicking through a link to find a Web site with a black or dark blue background and yellow type. It's hard to read and will send your readers clicking back to where they came from.

It's always better to stick with muted colors, and white or black text. Some of the most successful Web sites online have white backgrounds with black text. These combinations are not only natural, they're also eye friendly. Even a black background with white text can get tiring very quickly. So, if you absolutely insist that your Web site have broad swaths of color, try to make it something that you don't mind staring at for five to ten minutes. If you can't read a whole article in the color scheme that you choose for your site, find a different color scheme. If you don't, your visitors will go elsewhere.

- ✓ **Titles and headings:** Because reading is much more of a chore online, many people don't completely read everything. Those who do read everything skim a page first just to make sure it'll be worth their time to read through it. That means you need to catch your visitors' attention as quickly as possible.

The best way to do that is with your article or blog post titles and headers. Titles are the first impression you get to make with your article. They should be catchy and in a larger font than the rest of the article. It's also a good idea to make them bold to stand out.

Headings are the mini-titles that signal new sections of your article or blog post. Like titles, they should be larger than the text surrounding them (but not as large as the title size) and should be in bold type-face. This makes them both easy to skim and easier to read.

You want your headings to be catchy, but they need to be descriptive as well. It does no good at all to use a header like, "Lost in Space," when your article is about pruning your prize roses. Readers won't get it, so they won't connect the dots. A better heading might be something like "A Snip in Time."

There's an added bonus to using apt titles and headings in your articles — titles and headers are often closely examined by search engine crawlers in their ongoing attempts to correctly categorize your site. The crawler pounces on titles and headings to determine the content on your site, so be sure to fill such elements with appropriate keywords and phrases whenever possible.

- ✓ **Links within articles:** One last element that you should include in your articles and blog posts is links to other, related articles and blog posts, both on your Web site and on others' Web sites. Linking to other resources provides additional information for your site visitors. Usually, those visitors will click through those links and then click back to the page from which they came. If you worry about visitors clicking away from your site, never to return, set your links up so that they open in a new window. Opening links in a new window keeps your Web site open and in front of the visitors. When they're finished examining the site you've linked to, they can close the window and be right back on your Web site.

Another advantage to using links to other resources is that when you create links within your content, you're adding to your *link structure*, a facet of your Web site that search engine crawlers consider when ranking your Web site.



Think of a link structure as the framework of links that you create on your Web site. The framework includes *internal links* — those links that connect your pages within your site — and *external links*, which lead visitors away from your site. It also includes links that lead to your site from other pages. Although it's true that you have a little less control over how many other sites link to your site, don't underestimate the power of a little *you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours* negotiating. You can offer free articles to other Web sites that include a link back to your site, for example, or you can just exchange links with other Web sites.

The key is to keep a good balance of the links to other pages on your site and the links to other pages off your site, and work diligently to bring other links into your site from relevant sources. Links from Web pages that are unrelated are much less useful than links from relevant pages. Just remember that having too many internal links or too many external links could be more detrimental than helpful. Try to keep an even mix of internal and external links.

Creating your own content isn't difficult. It can take a little time, but when you get the hang of formatting your articles and blog posts for the Web, it goes faster, making it almost as easy as writing down your thoughts.

You'll be rewarded for putting out the effort to come up with original content. Web surfers are looking for new, original, and helpful information online. Surfers who log on to the Internet do so for many reasons, but the number-one reason stated by surfers is to find information. If the information you provide is fresh and new, you'll have more (and higher quality) visitors than would ever be possible if you were using recycled content.

Hiring someone

Some Web site owners just don't have the time to write their own content. If that's you, you don't have to lose out on the value of original content. Instead of doing it yourself, you can hire someone to do it for you.

Hiring someone, of course, means paying them. You *can* put ads on the Web for writers to produce content for your site for free, but you get what you pay for. In every case, the writer who's willing to work for free has no (or very little) experience, and many of them have no talent.

That said, exceptions to the rule do exist. Once in a while, you can find a great writer, with experience, who's willing to work for free because she loves to see her name in print. This might work out for you one-tenth of a percent of the time. The rest of the time, it's just more headache than it's worth.

You can, however, hire a writer without breaking the bank. Good writers are often willing to work for small amounts of money (say \$10 to \$50 per article) if the exposure is right, and if the person or company requesting the work pays quickly and consistently. It also helps when articles aren't too involved. If what you're looking for is a 1,000 word piece with three interviews, however, you're not likely to find a good writer to do it for \$50. However, if you're willing to pay \$200–\$400, you won't have a problem finding writers.



If you *do* decide that hiring a writer is the way to go, you need to get (and give) contractual specifications in writing. Even if it's nothing more than an e-mail that states the guidelines for the article, the size of the article, the due date, and the pay, you have to have something that both you and the writer agree on. Then stick to your side of the bargain.

You may encounter writers who say they'll provide what you're looking for, but then don't. It happens, and the only way to be sure you're getting someone who won't leave you high and dry is to check references. Treat writers just as you would employees. Make sure they are who they say they are. Then, be flexible about how the writer goes about writing the article you request. As long as the article is turned in on time and meets the specifications that you set forth in the beginning, don't bug them about how they get to that point. (Unless plagiarism's involved — then you must get involved, but there's more about that near the end of this chapter.)

One other option that you have — one which could potentially cost you a lot less than hiring a writer — involves inviting guest writers to put together articles for your site. You have to use caution with this method, too, though. Guest writers sometimes write a few articles that they pass around to everyone on the Internet, which makes their contribution to your site not nearly as valuable as if they wrote the article specifically for your site.

You can ask for that specificity, though. When you approach a guest writer, nothing's wrong with asking him to write an article specifically for your site. Make sure you lay out exactly what you're looking for, though. Usually it's okay to ask for the right to publish the article first for a specified amount of time (like six months) before the writer allows others to publish it. You also want to make sure you have the right to archive the article on your Web site so that it remains available to users even after that six-month period (or however long you choose) is over.

In exchange for writing for you, most guest writers want a small blurb or link pointing back to their products and services. It's usually worth it. In fact, it's so worth it that many companies have a stable of writers that write these types of articles for them all the time. They offer these articles to all publications that target their own audiences. It saves the company marketing dollars and provides great content for your site.



One caveat when it comes to guest writers: If you plan to use a guest writer, make sure the article that's provided isn't too *sales-y*. When someone comes to your site to read an article, he doesn't come because he wants to be sold to. He comes because he's looking for information. Nothing's wrong with making a recommendation for products or services, and nothing's wrong with allowing guest writers to include a small paragraph about themselves or their products and services at the end of the article, but it still needs to be as objective as possible.

A guest writer's purpose is always to sell something. Whether that something is a product or service, there's an ulterior motive. It's your job, as the site owner, to keep that motive in check so you're not running a big advertising service. Always remember to give your visitors the information that they're looking for first and foremost. If you do, everything else is gravy.

Tapping multimedia

Content can be so much more interesting these days than it was in the past. Back in the early days of the Internet, content was stuff you wrote down. Period. There were few pictures and almost no audio or video. The adoption of broadband Internet access has changed that.

Today, in addition to your written content, you can also feature audio and video content. *Podcasting* — recording spoken messages that your site visitors can download — and streaming videos are some of the hottest technologies on the Web right now.

You do have to have some specialized equipment to create podcasts and videos, though, and it's a little more involved when it comes to placing them on your Web site so that others can download them. I don't go into the details of how to do that here. If you want additional information about creating those kinds of con-

tent, there are dozens of really good books (including *For Dummies* books like *Podcasting For Dummies*, by Tee Morris and Evo Terra) on those topics.

You don't have to create videos to have them as content on your site, though. YouTube — Google's video service — is a great way to include video content on your site. All you have to do is find videos that relate to your Web site and then you can add them to the page or to your blog by copying and pasting a snippet of code into the HTML on your site.

Multimedia content offers a little variety for your Web site. Because multimedia is the Internet darling of the moment, there's no reason not to tap into this alternative to fill out your content offerings. Anything that draws visitors to your site is a useful tool for improving your AdSense revenues.

Automating Content Management

Hundreds of Web pages on your site mean hundreds of pages of content that you have to deal with. That's a massive undertaking for even the most industrious of Web site owners. Fortunately, tools are available — known as *content management systems* — to help you manage your content without driving yourself completely into a coma, and some of them won't even make you crazy.

A content management system is a piece of software that's used for organizing and facilitating what's referred to as *the collaborative creation of documents and other content*. In other words, content management systems help you to create and manage the content on your Web site. For example, if you have a set of articles that you want to first feature on your Web site and then have moved to an archival section when a new article is featured, a content management system helps you do that without having to build a new Web page every time you change the feature articles.

The problem with content management systems is that if you get a *proprietary* system — a system built specifically to meet your content management needs — you'll pay upward of \$100,000. If you fork over that amount of dough, you can rotate articles from features to archives to your heart's

content and even set it up so that several people can seamlessly contribute to blogs on your site. This might all sound dandy, but just keep in mind that if you're having the system designed specifically for you, you'll shell out some serious coin to have it done.



You don't have to use a proprietary system, though. Several open source software applications for content management exist.

Open source software is software that's created by an individual or company and then shared freely with others. Others can use the software and even change it to specifically meet their needs, without having any expenses to worry about.

The only real drawback to open source content management systems is that you either have to be very knowledgeable in certain types of programming or you have to hire someone who *is* knowledgeable to take care of it for you. True, you *could* pick up some good books on the topic, but if you're not a code jockey, you'll find that the books probably leave you a little lost.

Still, if you think you can handle the challenge, Drupal is a good open source content management system, and believe it or not, so is the blogger's friend, WordPress. Okay, I know WordPress is usually thought of as being a blogging system, but it can also be used as a content management system. If you're intrigued, check out the next sections.

WordPress as a content management system

Although WordPress is primarily known as a blogging tool, it really is much more. With a few modifications — a couple plugins and custom templates — it's possible to use WordPress as a content management system. In one sense, WordPress is already a content management system because it's a blog application. All blog applications are essentially content management systems because they allow you to create, share, and store content from a single location. By modifying WordPress just a little, you can also use it for other content management functions, such as managing

- ✓ Portfolio sites
- ✓ News and magazine sites
- ✓ Article libraries
- ✓ Gallery sites
- ✓ Photologs
- ✓ E-commerce sites

WordPress site designs are based on the idea of themes. *Themes* are basically design templates that can be uploaded to your server and then assigned from within the WordPress Control Panel. The beautiful thing about templates or themes is the ability to alter them. WordPress and other blog platforms tend to use a lot of proprietary code that can be difficult to get just right when you're putting together a design template. By relying on a pre-designed template, you can focus on editing the graphics and moving snippets of code around to get the design that you want.

WordPress also has a handy little feature — *Page Management* — that allows you to create static Web pages — pages that always remain the same. You can create top-level pages that show in the navigation bar of your Web site or you can create lower-level pages that live underneath your main navigation topics. These secondary pages appear as drop-down navigation under the main links in your navigation bar.

Other features of WordPress include a built-in blog roll, which makes creating a list of related links as simple as filling out a small form to add a new listing. The best part? No HTML is required to do this. The WordPress panel also allows site owners to quickly change the appearance of their sites by switching from one theme to another as simply as selecting a new theme. WordPress does the rest.

WordPress also has plugin capabilities, meaning you can 'plug in' small additional bits of code that someone else creates to add functionality to your WordPress site. Examples of plugins are the capability to use WordPress as a content management system, or even features you can add to your WordPress blog, like a picture viewer or video player.

Plugin management is mostly seamless in WordPress, and that's where you find the real benefit of using WordPress as a content management system. Plenty of plugins are available, and there are usually detailed instructions for installing and using those plugins.

Going forward with WordPress

You don't have to be a certified geek to use WordPress as a content management system, but there is a learning curve, and it can take a while to traverse. If you want to find out more about installing and customizing WordPress to be your content management system — no matter what type of Web site you've created — check out *WordPress For Dummies*, by Lisa Sabin-Wilson and Matt Mullenweg. If you prefer getting your info right from the source, grab the WordPress Codex at <http://codex.wordpress.org>. The *Codex* is nothing more than a fancy name for the user manual. (If you don't know where to find it, you could spend days searching for it.)

If you're trying to populate hundreds of pages and keep the content on those pages fresh, a content management system helps you automate the process. If you don't have such a system in place, you might as well go ahead and shine up your coffin now because you'll run yourself into the grave trying to keep up.

Understanding (And Respecting) Copyright

With all these content issues floating around, it's only right to address copyright. As I mention earlier in the chapter, one of the reasons you see so many articles on the Web in dozens of different places is because those articles are placed on Web sites without the owners' permissions.

This is the epitome of copyright infringement, and it's illegal. It's the same as using a program like Napster to download music that you don't want to pay for. It's out there, but it's not ethical to use it, and it's likely that you'll eventually wind up in some serious hot water if you don't go through the proper channels to get permission to use the article.

If you write articles for your own Web site and then find them on other people's sites without your permission, you'll understand completely why copyright is such a big deal. You worked hard to put that article together, and whenever someone else puts it on their site without your permission, that person is just being a lazy so-and-so. What's more, having your article pop up on every corner of the Internet devalues your content.

So, if you're thinking about snagging someone else's articles for your Web site without her permission, forget it. It may look appealing now, but when you get hit with a lawsuit for damages, it won't be such a small deal. Writers are usually fiercely protective of the articles and stories that they right. If you're stealing it, they'll find out.

Determining copyright

Copyright infringement is a big deal, but copyright can be one of those tricky determinations that leave you wondering whether you're okay to use an article or other piece of content. The following are basic guidelines for dealing with copyright issues:

- ✓ For any work published prior to 1978, and marked with the proper copyright (©) notice, copyright lasted for an initial term of 28 years, renewable in the 28th year for an additional 28 years.

- ✔ With the introduction of the 1976 Copyright Act, copyright could be renewed for an additional 47 years.
- ✔ The Sonny Bono Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998 added another 67 years to that renewal period.
- ✔ If a work published prior to 1964 wasn't formally renewed, it entered the public domain when the initial 28-year term expired.
- ✔ In 1992, copyright renewal became automatic for any works published after 1963. Copyright owners after that period no longer had to apply for copyright renewal.
- ✔ When all these considerations are taken into account, if the copyright was renewed, the term of renewal was actually 75 years from the year of publication — expiring on December 31 of the 75th year following the initial publication — until the Sonny Bono act extended this to 95 years. This all means that if a work was published in 1922 or earlier, it is probably now in the public domain.
- ✔ Works that were published between 1923 and 1963 have a 95-year term, provided the copyright was formally renewed in the 28th year.
- ✔ Works published between 1964 and 1977 have a flat 95-year term.
- ✔ Works by individual authors created (meaning they just had to be written, they don't have to actually be published) after 1977 have a term of the author's life + 70 years.
- ✔ Works by corporate authors, which are usually billed as *works made for hire*, that were created after 1977 have a term of 95 years.

Determining when a work was first published can be a little tricky. If a copy is available with a copyright notice, the notice should contain the year of first publication. New editions, which are sometimes called *derivative works*, meaning they have been derived from the original, often contain notices with the year of the publication of the derivative work and not the original year of publication; but if the date is prior to 1923, you can be confident that the work in question and all its predecessors are in the public domain. Anything published after 1923 is likely still under copyright protection, so you'll have to be granted permission before using that work or part of the work.

The guidelines I lay out earlier apply both to print and electronic works. If someone's created an original piece of work that appears on the Internet, he owns the copyright on it, whether it was *officially* registered with the copyright office or not. So, when you snag articles that are floating around the Internet, you're stealing copyrighted materials. Writers can be a fiercely protective bunch. If you're stealing their work and they find out about it, expect to have some legal issues to deal with.

If the work you want to use falls into that borderline territory (originally published before 1964), you may have to do a little more research. Every year, the Copyright Office publishes a *Catalog of Copyright Entries*. This is in hard copy form for the years up to 1982 and solely in electronic form since then. The *Catalog* is online for entries since 1978. Some collegiate libraries have a copy of the *Catalog*. If yours doesn't or you don't have access to a collegiate library, you can visit the nearest Copyright Office to find a copy that you can browse to find the work in which you're interested.

The thing to remember is that even if a work was first published between 1923 and 1963, it's in the public domain unless a timely renewal application was filed with the copyright office. However, works first published between 1964 and 1977 must be assumed to be under copyright for the full 95-year period.

Requesting usage permissions

Unless you're populating your Web site with material that's turn-of-the-century old, it's a pretty good bet that you need to request permission to use a piece that's been published elsewhere. To do that, you must first determine who holds the copyright.

Most materials contain the copyright symbol (©) and then a *by* line. It usually looks something like this: © *by The Author or Owner's name and a date*. The name that follows the copyright symbol is who you need to contact to ask permission to reuse the material or portions of the material. Under the Fair Use doctrine of U.S. copyright law (specifically the Copyright Act of 1976), you're permitted to use a small portion of a work, without having to request permission *under certain circumstances*. Those circumstances, however, aren't always clearly defined. In most cases, it's up to a judge to determine if the circumstances in which you use copyrighted material are permissible.

The size of a small portion is determined by the work that you're planning to use:

- ✓ **Motion media (such as movies):** You can use up to 3 minutes, or 10 percent of the original production, whichever is less.
- ✓ **Text:** With text you're allowed to use up to 10 percent, or 1,000 words without permission, whichever is less.
- ✓ **Poetry:** Poetry is a little different. You can use entire poems, up to 250 words, no more than three poems per poet, or no more than five poems from a single anthology. If a poem is longer than 250 words, use is limited to 250 words from the selection, no more than three excerpts by a poet, or no more than five excerpts by different poets.

- ✓ **Music, lyrics, and music videos:** Like other forms of content, with music, lyrics, and music videos, you can use up to 10 percent of the original work — not to exceed 30 seconds in the case of video. Also note that you may not alter a work to change the basic melody or character of the work.
- ✓ **Illustrations and photographs:** Usage for illustrations and photographs is limited to not more than 10 percent of the total number of images on your site, or 15 images, whichever is less. No more than five images may be used from a single artist or photographer.
- ✓ **Numerical data sets:** You can use up to 10 percent, or 2,500 field or cell entries, whichever is less, from a copyrighted database or data table.

Even though these guidelines are provided, it's still possible to use only a small amount of a copyrighted work and to be sued for *copyright infringement* (which is using copyrighted material without proper permissions). That's because there's also a spirit of intent taken into consideration. Any judge can rule that the intent of your use of a piece of copyrighted material is unlawful, meaning you can be liable for damages if this is the case.

For that reason, you should always seek to attain permission if you plan to use any materials on your Web site that are copyrighted by another person or entity. To obtain permission to use copyrighted materials, usually all you need to do is request that permission be granted in writing. A sample letter like the one below is usually enough to legally gain permission. When you send the letter, ask that the copyright holder sign and return the letter to you, and then keep it on file in the event that any question arises in the future about whether you were granted permission.

Here's the sample letter. Customize it to include your specific information:

Date

Material Permissions Department

Copyright Owner/Company Name

Street Address

City, State Zip Code

Dear Sir/Madam:

I would like permission to use the following for *<brief description of project>*.

Title: Enter the title of the book here.

Copyright: Copyright information, including copyright date, goes on this line.

Author: Enter the author's first and last names here.

Material to be duplicated: List the exact material to be used and enclose a photocopy of the selection.

Number of Copies: List the number of copies you expect to make. If this is for inclusion in a book, list that intent and include the title, publisher, and publishing date of the book on the next line.

Distribution: List the title of the work in which the copyrighted material will be included. If it will be included in a book, include the book title, publisher, and publishing date. If the material will appear in a periodical, include the periodical details and publishing date.

Type of Reprint: List the type of reprint. This can be a complete reprint or a quoted section of the original work.

Use: Finish up with a brief description of how you intend to use the requested materials.

Please select the correct option below and then sign and return this letter in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

You Name

You have permission to use the copyrighted material detailed above.

You **do not** have permission to use the copyrighted material detailed above.

Signed _____ Date _____

Chapter 7

Designing the Perfect Content Ad

In This Chapter

- ▶ Creating appealing ads
 - ▶ Choosing the best ad colors
 - ▶ Working with borders
 - ▶ Using multiple ads and varying ad types
-

Just in case you haven't gotten this by now — AdSense success is all about the ads. Ad design and ad placement are crucial when it comes to AdSense, but the most important thing is that your ads don't appear to be ads — as counterintuitive as that may sound.

I know; it's nearly impossible to completely remove the advertising element from AdSense ads. No matter how well you integrate the ads into your content, the Ads by Google label is still there. Even so, the more your ads look like ads, the less likely it is that site visitors will bother to click them.

That means you should integrate your ads into your site content as well as you possibly can. That's accomplished by changing the style of the ad — the text styles, colors, shapes, and borders — until the ads and your content flow together as one.

“Easier said than done,” you might say, but here's where this chapter comes into play. Success with AdSense is all about knowing what works and what doesn't. By the end of this chapter, you'll have a whole slew of tips and techniques under your belt that you can use to make your AdSense strategy work for you.

Ad Appeal

You're smart, you know the score: For site visitors to even consider clicking your ads, the ads have to be appealing. The way to make those ads appealing is to integrate them into the content that's situated around them. Fortunately,

AdSense gives you some good tools for matching your ads with the surrounding content. Remember, though, that what you're creating here is just the *container* for the ad — its outside appearance. The actual ad text — or if the ad includes pictures, the images — are designed by the advertiser.

Customizing ads to work on your Web site begins when you create your ads. To create a new ad, simply log in to your AdSense account and then click AdSense Setup. From that page, select the type of ad you want to create. (If you need a refresher, the process of creating ads is covered in greater detail in Chapter 5.) In this chapter, I walk you through setting up AdSense for Content (in other words, a content ad) because it's the type of ad that you'll use most often. The principles that follow, however, work when you're designing other types of ads, as well.

Text matching

Text ads need to be just as appealing as any other kind of ad. So, the natural inclination might be to *dress up* your text ad by making the text all kinds of pretty colors. Big mistake: Dressing up your text ads only makes them look more like ads.

One of the reasons that text ads are so appealing — and certainly the main reason they perform so well when compared to the other types of ads that AdSense makes available — is because text ads can be made to blend well into your Web page. Notice my use of *can be* here — they really only blend well if they look like their surroundings.



Keep in mind that you can't change the font styles for the ads that you build with AdSense. You can, however, change the fonts on your Web site to help blend your ads better. If there's a significant difference between the fonts of your ads and your Web site, that's just what you'll want to do.

Did I mention that making your ads appear to be part of your Web site is essential? Well, it bears repeating over and over again because this one little factor can completely change the success of your ads. Try to keep font styles similar between your ads and the text on your Web site. They don't have to be an exact match. As great as that would be, it's not always possible, especially because Google has decided not to make the font it uses in their ads available to normal mortals like us. (Okay, it kind of looks like several common fonts out there, but any *typographer* — someone who designs typefaces or fonts — will tell you that even subtle differences like spacing are very noticeable.)

Back to text design. What you *do* have control over with AdSense is the color of the text that you use for your ads. When you're creating an ad, you have several preset options for color designs as well as the ability to create your own palette of colors for your ads. The next section shows you how you can put these options to good use.

Color or camouflage?

Google provides its AdSense users with a set of preset palettes offering what Google considers your best design options for your ads. You call up these palettes using the drop-down menu in the Style area as you're creating your ads. Be aware though, that the preset palettes may or may not work on your pages — it really depends on the design of the page.

Here are the palettes that are available:

- ✓ **Default Google:** This palette includes a white background, white border, black text, blue title, and green URL.
- ✓ **Open Air:** This palette is exactly the same as the Google default. I'm not even sure why it's included in the list, but it is. It's a clone of the default — absolutely nothing's changed.
- ✓ **Seaside:** In the Seaside palette, the only change involves the border. Instead of having a white border, this palette includes a seafoam-colored (yes, seafoam is actually a color) border.
- ✓ **Shadow:** With this palette, the colors begin to get progressively more noticeable. The title (which, by the way is also a link) is still blue, the text of the ad is black, and the URL is green, but the border is black and the background is pale blue. Drop this ad onto a white background, and it screams *advertisement*.
- ✓ **Blue Mix:** This ad style is significantly different from all the other styles. A light blue border, white title, light blue text and URL, and dark blue background make this one stand out. The only page that might be able to pull this ad off is one that's designed in exactly the same colors. I recommend that you change your page if it's built like this, unless you have a very strong reason to leave it alone (like hundreds of thousands of visitors), because it's hard on the eyes.
- ✓ **Ink:** The Ink style comes with a black background and border, and a white title, text, and URL. In other words, it's similar to the Blue Mix style, but instead of being blue and white, this one is black and white. I admit it's a little easier on the eyes, but only for short periods of time.
- ✓ **Graphite:** In my opinion, this is a boring ad style because it's gray. Yuck. But on the right Web site, the black title, dark gray text, light gray URL, and pale gray background and border might work. I don't think I've ever encountered a Web site it would work on, but stranger things have happened.



These styles are the ones that Google's created. Although Google says they're the most effective ad styles, people who really are making great money with AdSense will tell you that the defaults aren't usually your best option. That's okay though because Google gives you decent customization features for designing ads that *are* good options.

Tweaking the wizard

I cover the AdSense wizard in some detail in Chapter 5, but there I'm more interested in showing you how to generate the HTML you need to insert a default AdSense ad in your Web site. Now I want to show you how you can stray a bit from the beaten path so that you can come up with stuff other than the default settings.

As you might expect, you start out with the very same wizard I show you in Chapter 5. Here's how you call it up:

1. **Point your browser to `www.adsense.com` and log on to your AdSense account.**
2. **Click the AdSense Setup tab.**
3. **Select AdSense for Content.**
4. **In the new screen that appears, choose the type of ad you want to create — Ad Unit, Text only, in this case — and then click the Continue button.**

The screen you see in Figure 7-1 appears.

Figure 7-1:
Use the color tools to customize the appearance of your ads.

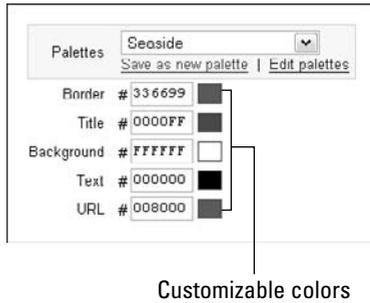
The Colors section.

5. **In the Colors section of the screen, choose one of the pre-designed color palettes from the drop-down menu on the right.**

The Default Google palette is just as easy to work with as any other, but if you prefer one of the others over the default, that's okay.

All the colors that you can alter in the palette are shown below the palette name, as shown in Figure 7-2. Note that each color has a number to the left of it. This is the hexadecimal number that represents the color to Web browsers. (See the sidebar, “Decoding hexadecimal numbers,” for more on hexadecimal numbers.)

Figure 7-2:
Google provides a limited number of colors you can use to customize your ads.

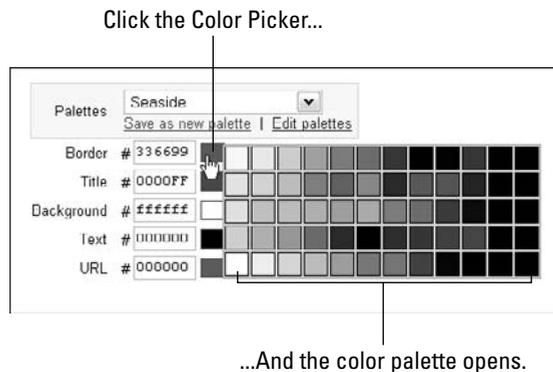


6. Use the Color Picker to the right of each ad element — Border, Title, Background, Text, and URL — to choose a new color for an element.

As shown in Figure 7-3, when you click the *Color Picker* the nice colored square — a color palette opens from which you can choose other colors. Note that after you make the change, the sample ad in the lower-left corner of the wizard screen changes to reflect the new color.

Play with your Color Picker just a little so you can get a feel for how wild you can make your ads. I don't recommend making them wild for actual use, though. My strong advice to you will always be *the simpler, the better*. It's still kind of neat though to see how you can change your ads just by changing the color of different elements of the ad.

Figure 7-3:
The colors for each palette are preset but can be customized.





Here's another neat hint. If you place your pointer over one of the colors, the sample ad in the lower-left side of the screen temporarily changes to that color. Move the pointer over a different color, and the color changes again. Take it away, and the color reverts back to the original.

- 7. Just below the Color Picker, use the Select Corner Style drop-down menu to specify how you want the corners of your ads to look: square, slightly rounded, or very rounded.**

These options only actually appear on your ad if you're using a contrasting border color. If you match your border to your background, you have this option, but the corners will blend into the background like the rest of the border.

- 8. Select the channel you want to use to track your ad and then click Continue.**

Remember that channels are categories that you create so you can keep up with how specific ads perform.

- 9. On the next page, enter a new name for your ad (if desired) and then click the Submit and Get Code button to generate the code for the ad.**

- 10. Copy and paste the ad code generated into the HTML on your Web site.**

These steps are okay for most situations, but I admit there's one little problem with using the Color Picker to determine colors for your ad elements: Your color choices are somewhat limited. The palette that Google makes available to you shows only about 60 colors out of the hundreds that a browser can display. You're not limited to those 60, though. You can further customize your colors by entering the hexadecimal number for the color you want displayed.

"What's a hexadecimal?" you ask. I point you to the handy "Decoding hexadecimal numbers" sidebar for the full scoop, but the short answer is that *hexadecimal* numbers — the number/letter combinations you see to the left of the Color Pickers in Figure 7-2 — are part of a system for telling computer monitors how to display certain colors. Every color has been assigned a hexadecimal number, and if you enter that number into the appropriate box in Figure 7-2, your ad element takes on that color.

You may be thinking to yourself that hexadecimals look like Greek to you and you could never figure out what numbers correspond to what colors. The thing is that you don't *have* to keep all those number/color correspondences in your head. The idea here is that you want the colors of your AdSense ads to blend in with colors already found on your Web site — meaning that if you can figure out the hexadecimal numbers of colors already on your Web site, you can then plug those numbers into your AdSense wizard (refer to Figure 7-2) and then have the wizard generate code for ads that match your Web site colors to a T.

Decoding hexadecimal numbers

Hexadecimal has its roots in both the Latin and Greek languages. *Hex* is a Greek term meaning *six* and *decimal* is a Latin term meaning *tenth*. Literally translated, *hexadecimal* could mean either *six to the tenth* or *six times ten*. Either translation is correct because hexadecimal is a computer term used to mean *grouped by 16* or *base 60*.

If all that math stuff really interests you, I invite you to google *hexadecimal* to your heart's content and read all the complicated theory behind hex and deci. I cut to the chase and let you know that hexadecimal numbers are used to specify the amount of red, green, and blue present in a color.

I'm sure your 2nd-grade art teacher told you that all colors could be broken down into the component parts of red, green, and blue. This insight is what drove computer-types into using the RGB/hexadecimal number model to represent colors using the following shortcut:

#RRGGBB

where RR tells your Web browser how much red to use, GG tells how much green to use, and BB tells how much blue.

So, to get that nice seafoam-colored border you see in Figure 7-2 (oops, I forgot — black-and-white illustrations don't show color . . . trust me, it's a nice, foamy shade of blue) you'd use the following hexadecimal number:

#336699

For a computer to read this hexadecimal number as a color, the number sign (#) must be displayed immediately before the color code. Without the number sign, the hexadecimal code looks just like any other number, and with other symbols in front of the six-digit number, the code is read as a different type of indicator because hexadecimal code is used extensively in programming.

None of that really concerns you, though. What you really need to understand here is that hexadecimal numbers can be used by AdSense to help build ads that match your Web site perfectly. You may have to do a little experimenting or investigating to find the exact hexadecimal numbers that you need, but after you do, the results are perfectly rendered ads that look as if they belong on your Web site.

How does one determine the hexadecimal numbers of colors already on your Web site? I'm glad you asked:

- 1. Point your Web browser to your very own Web page.**
- 2. After your page loads, choose View⇨Source from your browser's main menu.**

Note that you may have to choose View⇨Source Code or View⇨Page Source. Different Web browsers have different menus — the exact phrase is determined by the browser that you're using.

A new page appears, showing the source code for your Web site.

3. On this new page of source code, look for a line that starts something like this:

```
<style id='page-skin-1' type='text/css'><!-- body
{background:#ffffff;margin:0;color:#333333;
font:x-small Georgia Serif;font-size:small;
font-size: small;text-align:
```

This is just the beginning of this line. If you actually copy and paste the whole line into a blank document, you'll see that it's a large block of code. This code tells you the style of your Web site. Notice that throughout the code, there are different snippets that read

```
Color:#XXXXXX
```

Those numbers represent the hexadecimal numbers you're looking for.

If you look closely at your `style id` code, you'll find all kinds of tags for the colors that are used in the design of your site. For example, in the code snippet I highlight in the steps list before, the information

```
body {background:#ffffff;margin:0;color:#333333
```

tells you that in the body of the Web site, the background color is `#ffffff` (which in this case is white), the margin of the body is zero — which means there's no margin), and the color of text is `#333333` (which is a very dark gray).

If you look through the formatting for the body (that's the information you copied from that one line of source code in the steps above), you'll find the colors that you need. Aside from the background and text colors, you also need the color number for links (represented as `a:link #XXXXXX`). Simple enough to come by.

Notice that I didn't say you need the numbers for border colors and for URLs. There's a reason for that, which I expand on in the next couple sections. First, what do you do with the color numbers when you have them? You use them to help create ads that are a perfect match for your Web site.

Use the numbers you've collected to fill in the Title, Background, and Text fields of your AdSense ad design page of the AdSense wizard. All you have to do is delete the number that's there — refer to Figure 7-2 — and key in the numbers you've collected in the correct space. In the sample ad in the lower-left corner of the wizard screen, you should see the colors displayed after you click away from the color box you're editing.

What's in a color?

Surf the Internet for a while and you'll soon notice that nearly every Web page uses blue as the color for its hyperlinks. Why is that?

Answering that question requires a little background history. When the Internet first came into being, there was little you could do about page displays. The screens (or monitors) on which the pages were displayed were *monochrome* — basically black and green. Then color monitors came along, but the number of colors that could be displayed was limited.

If you wanted someone to know there was link on your Web site that led to another Web site, you had to do something that would alert the visitor to the link; thus the advent of blue links. Color limitation made it difficult to read text that wasn't black or blue, and because black was the color of most text, blue became the choice for links.

It didn't take technology long to mature to the point we're at now, with technological capabilities that allow us to generate thousands of amazing colors on a screen. There's one small glitch though — Internet users have become accustomed to seeing links in blue, so often, if a link is another color, they don't recognize it.

Fascinating, I know, but there's a point to all this. When you're designing your Web site, the most effective method of alerting users to links in your text is to make them blue. Now, your *navigational* links (on the left side or top of the page) don't necessarily have to be blue. They can blend with your page design, but *text* links should always be blue. That means that it's also a good idea to use blue for the links on AdSense ads that are integrated into your text. The color blue makes them more clickable and helps site visitors to see there's something interesting behind those words.

The borders are open . . .

Borders are made to keep people out or sometimes to keep them in. Either way, a border is like a fence. Even on paper, a border surrounds print and pictures to keep everything cohesive. So, why in the world would you want to (metaphorically, at least) fence in people by putting a border around your ads?

Borders scream, *Hey, I'm over here. I'm an advertisement. Run!* Really. I'm not even trying to be funny. Borders make ads even more ad-like than the Ad by Google logo that AdSense places on your ads — and you don't want ad-like, trust me.

The best option is to blend your ads into the background of your Web site. That means using no borders at all. There's one problem with that theory though — there isn't a No Borders option.

What you have to do instead is make the border color the same color as the ad background. Your ad background is the same color as your Web page background, right? If it's not, it should be.

Remember the Golden Rule: Blend your ads into your Web pages so they look like they belong there. That means blending the border and the background of the ad with the background color of your Web site. Use the techniques outlined in the previous section to determine the hexadecimal number of the background color of your Web site and then use the AdSense wizard to set your ad background and ad border to that color.



The easiest way to keep everything straight is to keep your Web site simple. You'll never go wrong with a white background and black text.

Camouflaging URLs

I want to move on to another topic as much as the next guy, but I need to cover one more thing about ad placement. AdSense ads consist of three zones: the title link, the text, and the URL. The *title link* is the title of the ad, and it's obvious that *the text* is the text of the ad. No rocket science here, so we can safely pass them by. The URL is what I'm concerned with here.

The URL of the Web site that the ad belongs to can be a real problem. The *URL* isn't *hyperlinked* — made into a link that leads to the Web address shown in the URL — because visitors are supposed to click the ad's (linked) title, not the ad's URL. The thing is that having a URL that doesn't transport you to a new place on the Web when clicked can confuse a visitor, especially if you've chosen not to make the (linked) title of the ad blue.

Visitors see the URL and may click it, expecting to actually go somewhere. When they *don't* go anywhere, that could alert them to the fact that they're about to click an ad. After visitors think about that fact, however briefly, they're less likely to mess with your ad at all by making those clicks.

For that reason, it's best if the URL doesn't in any way invite a site visitor to click it — and the best way to stifle that click impulse is to make the URL the same color as the text in the ad. It's usually best to have ad text black, or whatever color the surrounding text is.

My preference is to have the title linked and colored blue and have the URL black. Site visitors (at least to my site) seem to like that configuration better, and I have more success when I stylize my ads this way. Will that hold true for you? Probably, but you can always switch things around and see.

The cool thing about AdSense is that it's easy and costs nothing to tweak your ads until you find the style that works best for your visitors. So, give it a shot; change it up. Keep track of what you're doing though so that when you're done testing, there's no doubt what works best in each different area of your Web site.

Using Multiple Ads

More dessert is a good thing. More money is a good thing. Sometimes, even more people is a good thing. And guess what? More ads *can* be a good thing, too.

Wow. I'm channeling Martha Stewart. But unlike Ms. Stewart, I won't get all crafty on you, and I won't tell you that multiple ads *are* a good thing, when in fact, sometimes they're not. I just want to convey that adding multiple ad blocks to your Web pages can work well — if it's done properly.

The appeal of multiples

Having multiple ads means more chances for site visitors to click your ads. With that reasoning, many Web site owners who add AdSense to their pages automatically put as many ads as they can on their Web site. Sometimes that works for them; other times, it doesn't.

When it does work, multiple ads may improve your AdSense revenue significantly or maybe just a little. But what makes multiples work? In a word: audience.

There are no hard and fast guidelines for what works and what doesn't with multiples. In every instance, it comes down to how your audience uses your Web site and what kind of value they find in the ads that are displayed on your page.

For example, I've played with a lot of different settings for the ads on my blog in the process of putting this book together. One thing I did early on was to increase the number of ads that were shown on my blog by tweaking the blog template with code and by adding additional ad blocks using the widgets provided by my blogging application provider, Blogger. (*Widgets* are like mini-programs or additional capabilities within a program that you can add or remove at will.)

Before those changes, I was generating a few dollars each day with my AdSense ads. After the changes, the revenues dropped by a few cents each day, and I even had a few days where I generated no income at all.

In my case, it seemed that adding more ads made visitors less likely to click them. It may be the number of ads I chose to use, or it's possible that I just chose the wrong combination of ads. That's what makes testing different types, numbers, and configurations of ads so vitally important.

Using multiple ads — more than one ad unit per page — is usually a recommended practice. Having multiples gives you the opportunity to catch your site visitors in more than one location. It also allows you to include ads on your site that may appeal to different audiences. For example, the site visitors who are likely to click video ads may be a different set of visitors than those who'll click links or text ads. Figuring out the right configuration of these ads just requires testing to see how your audience responds to each type of ad.

Getting in the zone

In watching the revenue numbers for my site — in this case, the actual earnings — I could see the results of the changes I made. Those results reflected different zones that were successful for ads on my pages.

A *zone* is an area of your Web site that draws readers' eyes. Most Web sites have a header zone, a content zone, and a sidebar zone. Visitors focus on each of those areas for a different reason.

The *header zone* is where visitors look to confirm what site they're on. Later, a visitor might look to the header zone to see if there are interesting or useful links for them to follow.

The *content zone* is where visitors focus most of their attention. This is where the main content of your site is found, and that's what your visitors are looking for. Content is first, links are secondary. Don't get fooled, though. Links may be secondary, but they're still an important part of the site.

And that's exactly why there's also a sidebar zone. *Sidebar zones* are where the cool stuff is usually found. Sidebars usually feature additional information or links to other resources.

Multiple ads need to appear in one of these zones. Which zones, you ask? I can't tell you that. Try different configurations for all three zones to see what works. Test, test, test. You know your visitors, and you can deduce some facts about them and create theories for what will work. But until you actually try a specific configuration, you'll never know.

Avoiding overkill

One problem with using multiple ad blocks on your Web pages is that you can quickly overdo it. A few ads can enhance the content on your page. Too many make it look crowded and confusing. Visitors won't know what to look at first or which links to click.

If you have a blog service, you may be limited in the number of ads you can show on a page for this very reason. Blogger, for example, limits publishers to three instances of AdSense. You can place those three instances anywhere on the page, but if you place more than three ads, something won't show up.

So should you limit each of your pages to three or fewer ads? That depends on your page and how well the ads integrate into the content and surrounding elements of the page. Remember, the rule is still to make your ads as invisible as possible. By making them invisible as ads, you're making them visible as content, meaning they're more likely to attract the attention of visitors.



You don't literally want to make your ads invisible. You could, too. Changing the ads to make them blend completely into your background would certainly do the trick. But then, how would visitors click the ads? No, the invisibility superpower isn't a good one to use in this instance. Just make your ads less obviously ads.

Multiples don't have to be identical

I've already alluded to this fact, but let me come right out and say it: *Multiple ads do not have to be identical.* You can have one ad in your text and a different kind of ad at the top of your page and another kind of ad in a sidebar, if that's what works for your Web site.

In fact, that combination — one in each zone — is probably the most successful way to have multiple ad blocks on most pages. It won't work with every single Web site or even every single page on a Web site though.

When you're configuring the ads for your site or blog, you may find that ads work better on some pages and not others. That's okay. If you have a page where ads don't perform well (or even at all), remove the ads from that page and find a way to work in links to pages where ads do perform.

Play with the configuration of your ads. For my Google-Geek blog, what works best are ads between the posts. In fact, ads at the top of the page and in the sidebar don't work at all — I've never been able to generate income from them.

Ads inside the posts also didn't work for that blog, so I took them out. Ads between the posts do work, though — but not all ads. A banner doesn't perform as well as link units do. It took a lot of testing for me to figure out these facts about what ads work, where they work at, and how well they work.



When you're testing your ads, be sure to try different configurations, but keep in mind that you do have to keep track of what you're trying and how well it works. Keep a journal or a spreadsheet, or notes on a napkin if you have to. But keep track of what you're doing so that when it comes time, you can set up your ads in a way that works best for you.

Also remember that with any kind of testing, what works today may fail you tomorrow. Your site visitors may change, the topic of your site may expand or narrow over time to suit your site visitors, and designs may get boring, so you'll need to re-do them. All I mean is that your ads might work really well right now and not work at all two weeks from now or a year from now or whatever timeframe you choose. It's not that you're doing anything wrong. It's just that things change. (You know the saying — there's nothing constant in this world except constant change.)

Testing isn't a do-it-once-and-forget-it proposition. You do it again and again and again, if necessary. Just remember, content gets stale, but so do ads. AdSense helps with this because the ads that are shown on your page change often. As your site matures, you may have to make more changes, so always be watching your revenue levels to see when the tried-and-true ways start becoming less effective.

Chapter 8

Understanding AdSense for Search

In This Chapter

- ▶ Using AdSense for Search for revenues
 - ▶ Searching the Web and your site in style
 - ▶ Creating a custom search engine
 - ▶ Developing the right AdSense search box for your Web site
 - ▶ Making the color scheme simple
-

People find content on the Internet by searching for it. This is a simple fact of life. You know it, I know it, and the folks at AdSense know it. You can take advantage of this simple fact of life by installing AdSense search capabilities on your site, capabilities that allow site visitors to either search your site or search the whole Internet, all the while providing for a nice little revenue stream back to your pockets.

If yours is a site that's hundreds of pages deep, such a search capability for both the site and the Web is essential. Even if you have a smaller site though, search is an important element. Users may come to your site and find only part of what they're looking for. How will they find the rest of it? Whether it's on your site or not, you need to provide visitors with a way to find what they're looking for.

AdSense for Search gives you the search capabilities you need, but you have to use it well. You have to work through a few things, including figuring out how your revenues will be made and what kind of search options will be best for the visitors who come to your site. You also have to think about whether it's worth customizing your search box. (Hey, adding your own logo is a nice touch!) All these options make creating your search box a little more involved than creating ads for content — the stuff I cover in Chapter 7 — but I walk you through the rough parts.

Searching for Revenues

When it comes to searches that really turn up results, Google is the King of the Hill. A dozen or so other search engines are out there, and some of them even offer search capabilities for Web sites and enterprises; but none of them match the power of Google and none of them have gained the confidence of users like Google has. Google's known for results, and that's why using AdSense for Search makes so much sense.

If you've had a Web site for any amount of time, you've probably already discovered that you must have search capabilities on your site. Whether those search capabilities are only for your Web site or are for the entire Web is a decision that's best based on the amount of content you have on your site, but it's probably no secret to you that users want search capabilities. In fact, you may have already added Google Search to your Web site, using either Google's free search capabilities or the Google Custom Search Engine.



So, if you've already added Google Search to your site or you've strongly considered doing so, why not go the extra mile and add a search capability that makes you a little bit of money? Admittedly, AdSense for Search probably won't ever make you as much money as AdSense for Content, but that shouldn't stop you from trying. Why let even a little bit of potential coin surf away from your site untapped?

Here's how it works: A visitor to your site types a search query into your AdSense-enabled Google search box in hopes of finding something either on the Web as a whole or just on your Web site. You don't get paid just because the visitor used the search box on your Web site. Instead, you get paid if that visitor clicks one of the ads in the search results that are shown from the search box that you put on your page. It's a secondary-click revenue stream, which means that, with AdSense for Search, the revenues are admittedly a little harder to get to. Visitors must first use the search box and then click through an ad for you to get paid.

Just because it's not a direct click doesn't mean you should ignore the potential of this AdSense approach. The fact is that every site has visitors that won't find exactly what they're looking for. If they found your site with a search engine, they'll likely go back to that search engine and refine their search term. If they found your site directly and it doesn't contain what they want, they'll probably surf away to search for what they want.

Also, if you already have search capabilities on your site, visitors who use those capabilities are already seeing the ads that are shown in the search results. You're just not getting paid for them. If you have the capability anyway, you should at least be able to collect revenue from increasing Google's confidence level.

Besides, if the visitor will leave your site anyway to search for the information she's looking for, why not give her the option of searching from your site? The visitor benefits in time saved, and you benefit in the possible revenue stream.

Plenty of options for the types of search you can allow are available, too. Users can

- ✓ Conduct a site search
- ✓ Conduct a Web search
- ✓ Conduct a targeted search
- ✓ See results returned on your Web site
- ✓ See results returned on the Google site

It's not just plain vanilla search, in other words. You can really punch up your search capabilities so that your site visitors can search with style and find what they're looking for. You can even direct the search so that users aren't pulling information from your competition.

Search in Style

AdSense for Search is a capability that's automatically enabled if you're registered with AdSense at all. So, if you've created AdSense ads for your Web site content before now, you won't have any problems creating your first AdSense search box. (If you haven't created an AdSense ad or even created your AdSense account, flip to Chapter 2, where I cover all the details you need for getting your ads off the ground.)

It should only take a few minutes to create a search box for your Web site. I spell out the basics of setting up a search box in Chapter 5 — you know, logging on to your AdSense account, clicking the AdSense Setup tab, and then making your way through the AdSense for Search Wizard to generate the HTML code for your Web site — but I want to show you some of the tweaks available to you. For that, make your way to the AdSense Setup tab and click the AdSense for Search button. (If you need to refresh your memory on how to do that, check out Chapter 5.) Doing so calls up the first screen of a wizard (as shown in Figure 8-1) that walks you through customizing your search box. (Note that AdSense likes to keep things as simple as possible, so the customization page for search boxes is very similar to the content ad customization page.) With the first screen up and ready on your monitor, you're ready to tweak your search box however you want to. The next few sections show you how.

Reports | AdSense Setup | My Account | Resources

Get Ads | Manage Ads | Color Palettes | Channels | Competitive Ad Filter | Site Authentication | Allowed Sites

Get Ads > AdSense for Search

AdSense for Search

Choose Search Box Options > Search Results Style > Get Search Code

Wizard | [Single page](#)

Choose your search type and customize your search box size and style to fit your site. Google AdSense [program policies](#) allow you to place up to two AdSense for search boxes on any page.

Search Type
Choose the type of search functionality you'd like to use on your website. [?]

Google WebSearch
Allows users to search the web directly from your site

Google WebSearch + SiteSearch
Allows users to search the web or the specific site(s) of your choice

Enter up to three URLs for SiteSearch:

http://

http://

http://

Search box style

Sample

Google

Web YOUR DOMAIN NAME

Logo type

Google Logo

Logo above text box

"Google Search" on button

Search button

Search button below text box

Background color

White

Length of text box

21 characters

Text color:

Black

White

More options

Site language
Select your website's primary language. English

Your site encoding
Select your page encoding. If you are unsure of your encoding, select West European Latin-1 (ISO-8859-1). West European Latin-1 (ISO-8859-1)

Country or territory for Google domain
Choose a country or territory to determine which Google domain will be used for search results. United States

Figure 8-1:
The search box customization page is similar to the content ad customization page.

Web and site searches

The first decision you have to make when it comes to designing your search box is whether to allow your users to search only the Web as a whole or to allow them to search the Web as well as your site or other sites that you choose. If your site is relatively small (under a couple dozen pages), there's probably no sense in having a site search capability unless there are other, specific sites that you want search results drawn from. This is a function that works well if you have multiple Web sites and want to keep your sites in front of your site visitors as much as possible. If you have a single site, with just a few pages, it's not quite as useful.



The more pages you have, the more difficult it is for your site visitors to find what they're looking for, so you should definitely include site search capabilities in the mix. The search boxes look a little different, depending on the capabilities that you allow.

The top section of the first screen of the AdSense for Search Wizard (refer to Figure 8-1) is where you set up your Search Type options. Selecting the Google WebSearch radio button sets up the Web only search, whereas selecting the Google WebSearch + SiteSearch radio button lets you specify three specific sites to search. (You enter the URLs for your three sites in the text fields provided.)

Figure 8-2 shows the AdSense example for a search box that searches the Web as well as Web sites that you specify. You can enter URLs for up to three different Web sites that visitors can then search either individually or as part of a larger search.

Figure 8-2:

Allow users to search the Web and up to three sites you specify.

Google

Web www.google-gEEK.com
 www.JerriLedford.com www.SEOMoz.com

Figure 8-3 shows the AdSense example for a search box that allows visitors to search only the Web.

Figure 8-3:

Another option is to allow users to search only the Web from your Web page.

Google

Which type of search is more effective for your site is determined by the site content and by what you hope to accomplish with an AdSense search box. If you have multiple sites, you can keep them in front of your site visitors even

if your visitors don't find what they need on the current site. Use AdSense search to provide for as many of your site visitors' needs as possible even if your sites won't answer their questions.

The middle and bottom sections of the AdSense for Search Wizard's first screen (refer to Figure 8-1) let you customize the appearance of the search box itself as well as set a few other preferences. Neat stuff that I cover in sufficient detail — but not now. (I lead you back to the wizard in the “Creating an AdSense Search Box section,” later in this chapter.) Right now I want to introduce you to a more high-powered way to customize your search engine with the Google Custom Search Engine page.

Creating customized searches

One other option for creating a search box for your Web site is to create a customized search engine. This isn't exactly a feature of AdSense, but instead is a separate Google capability that works with AdSense so that you can monetize the search capabilities that you give to users while directing it much more specifically.

A custom search engine is a creator-defined search capability, so you can specify which Web sites (or even which pages) you want to allow your visitors to search. The really cool thing about a custom search engine is that you can have more than the three sites that AdSense makes available for searches with an AdSense-specific search box. So if you want to allow your visitors to search 7, 15, or even 50 specific sites, a custom search engine is the way to go.

Before you can connect custom search capabilities to your AdSense account, you must first create a custom search engine. Here's how:

1. **Point your browser to** www.google.com/coop/cse.

The Google Custom Search Engine page appears.

2. **Click the Create Custom Search Engine button.**
3. **In the new page that appears, enter your username and password in the space provided and then click Sign In.**

You can use the same username and password you use for your AdSense account.

4. **In the new page that appears, enter the setup information for your search engine, as shown in Figure 8-4.**

This information includes

- **A name and description for your search engine.**
- **Keywords that define the topic of your search engine.**
- **The main language for your search engine.**

- **Your choice on the scope of the search.** You can limit the search to specific sites or you can also set up your search so that it either searches the whole Web or the whole Web with emphasis on the sites that you specify.

If you've decided to specify certain sites to be included in your search parameters, you can list the specific URLs you want to allow in the text box provided. Go ahead and choose as many sites as you like. You're allowed up to 5,000 specific sites, which are also called *annotations*.

- **The specific edition of the customized search engine you want to use.** The standard edition is free but requires that you allow ads to be shown. The business edition allows you to create a customized search engine with no ads.

Google Custom Search **Create a Custom Search Engine** [My Account](#) | [Sign out](#)

1. Set up your search engine 2. Try it out

Basic information

Give your search engine a name and provide a brief description.

Search engine name:
for example, Real Climate Search Engine

Search engine description:
for example, Climate Science from Climate Scientists

Specify some keywords that describe the content or subject of your search engine. These keywords are used to tune your search engine results.
[Learn more](#)

Search engine keywords:
for example, climate "global warming" "greenhouse gases"

Search engine language:

What do you want to search?

Only sites I select.
 The entire web, but emphasize sites I select.
 The entire web.

Select some sites

Specify a list of web sites to search. You'll be able to edit this list and add more sites later. [Tips on formatting URLs](#).

Sites to search:

List one URL per line

Select an edition

Select the edition you'd like to create. [Learn more](#).

Editions:

Standard Edition - Free, ads are required on results pages.
 Do not show ads on results pages (for non-profits, universities, and government agencies only).

Business Edition - Starts at \$100 per year, no ads on results pages.

I have read and agree to the [Terms of Service](#).

©2007 Google - [Google Home](#) - [About Google](#) - [Privacy Policy](#)

Figure 8-4:
Creating
a custom
search
engine is a
simple
process.

- **An I Have Read and Agree to the Terms of Service check box.** (Okay, it doesn't sound much like setting anything up, but if you don't select this check box, you're stuck in an eternal loop you'll never break out of.)

5. **After you fill in all the requested information — and agree to the terms of service — click the Next button.**
6. **On the second page of the wizard, test your search engine by running a test query.**

The results from the test are shown on the page, as shown in Figure 8-5.

7. **After you test it, you can select the Send Confirmation Email To . . . check box near the bottom of the page to have a confirmation message sent to your Inbox.**

The confirmation message provides links to additional information and capabilities, such as managing your custom search engine. This isn't a required option, but I suggest that you select it for at least the first search engine that you create.

8. **Click Finish to be taken to your main Google Custom Search Engine page.**



Google Custom Search Engine is a *beta* program, which means it's still in the testing phases even though it's available to the general public. Beta programs sometimes have glitches or bugs and don't work exactly as they should, so keep your eyes open for anything out of the ordinary and expect changes in the future. After the program's been sufficiently tested and improved, it comes out of beta testing and becomes a *general release* program, which means that the glitches and bugs are less likely to occur and updates to the program happen less often and on more regular schedules.

Now you have a custom search engine. Just because you have it doesn't mean that you'll start earning money from it, though. You still need to connect your Custom Search Engine account to your AdSense account before you can get paid for the ads that appear on the search results page.

1. **Point your browser to** www.google.com/coop/cse.

The Google Custom Search Engine page appears.

2. **Click the Manage Your Existing Search Engines link.**

If you're not automatically logged in to your account, you may be prompted for your username and password. If needed, enter your e-mail address and password in the spaces provided and click Log In.

You'll be taken to the Manage Search Engines page, as shown in Figure 8-6.



Figure 8-5: Results from testing your search engine are shown on the wizard page.

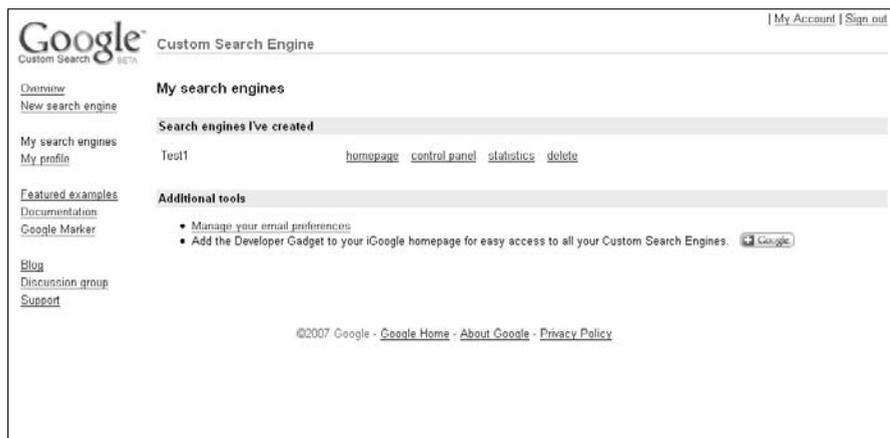


Figure 8-6: You can manage any search engines you've created from the Manage Search Engines page.

3. Click the Control Panel link.

The Control Panel page appears, as shown in Figure 8-7.

4. Click the Make Money link at the top of the Control Panel page (also shown in Figure 8-7).

5. In the new page that appears (as shown in Figure 8-8), select the I Already Have an AdSense Account radio button.

The Existing AdSense User form appears, as shown in Figure 8-9.

By the way, I'm assuming here that you *do* have an AdSense account. If you don't, choose the I am a New AdSense User option, which takes you to set up an AdSense account.

The Make Money link

Google Custom Search Engine | My Account | Sign out

Custom Search BETA

[Overview](#)
[New search engine](#)

[My search engines](#)
[Control panel](#)
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Control panel: Test
[Basics](#) | [Sites](#) | [Refinements](#) | [Look and feel](#) | [Code](#) | [Collaboration](#) | [Make money](#) | [Business Edition](#) | [Advanced](#) | [Preview](#)

Basic information

Your search engine's name and description will be shown on its Google [homepage](#).

Search engine name:

Search engine description:

Keywords describe the content or subject of your search engine. These keywords are used to tune your search engine results.
[Learn more.](#)

Search engine keywords:
 e.g. climate "global warming" "greenhouse gases"

Search engine language:

Search engine encoding:

Preferences

How to search included sites: Search only included sites.
 Search the entire web but emphasize included sites.

Who can collaborate: [Learn more.](#) Anyone may volunteer to contribute to this search engine.
 Only people I invite may contribute to this search engine.

Search engine visibility: Public - List my Custom Search Engine in the directory.
 Unlisted - Do not list my Custom Search Engine in the directory (but people who know the url of my search engine can still view it).

Specify whether your search engine is for a non-profit, university, or government website that should not have advertising on the results pages.

Advertising status: Show ads on results pages.
 Do not show ads on results pages (for registered non-profits, universities, and government agencies only).

New! Add my Subscribed Link to this Custom Search Engine. Create a [Google Subscribed Link](#).

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Figure 8-7:
Connect the search engine and AdSense accounts.

Figure 8-8:
Select the
option for
an existing
AdSense
account.

Figure 8-9:
When you
select the
option for
an existing
AdSense
account, a
new form
appears.

6. Fill in the information requested to link your AdSense account and then click the Submit button.

It's simple information: e-mail address, zip code, phone number, and a drop-down menu from which you can select your location.

If all the information matches, you receive a confirmation letting you know the two accounts are now connected. Being connected simply means that your search box not only appears on your page but also sends information about ads that appear in search results to your AdSense account. That means that when your visitors use your custom search box to search for something and then click an ad while they're viewing the search results, you get paid for it just as if you were using an AdSense for Search box.

Now, you may be wondering why in the world you'd go to all this trouble to add a customized search engine to your Web site when AdSense has similar controls built into the AdSense for Search capability. The answer is: It's all about control.

You *can* use the AdSense for Search Wizard to customize your search engine — specifying whether users can search the Web or other sites, for example, or customizing the appearance of the search engine that you make available from your site. Those capabilities are limited with AdSense though. (You can only specify up to three sites for customized searches, for example.)

If you really want to make an impact with your search engine capabilities, using a Google Custom Search Engine is the way to go. You can add more Web sites to the SiteSearch capabilities, and you can further customize the search engine to reflect your style and the design of your Web site.



Many companies or Web site owners that have a large number of pages or a complex forum system use the Google Custom Search Engine because it makes their site and their site capabilities more valuable to site users. It's really your call though. If there's no added value in creating a custom engine, don't put the time into it. I'm always an advocate for anything that adds value to site visitors because those visitors really do remember (and revisit) the sites that they find most useful.

So, that's it. Now you have a custom search engine connected to your AdSense account, providing an additional revenue stream — and you know what makes it valuable to you! You can also go back into your Custom Search Engine account at any time and tweak the search engine you created by changing the Web sites that it searches or even the look of the search engine.

To change the way your custom search engine looks, try this:

- 1. Log in to your custom search engine Control Panel, as outlined in the previous steps, and then click the Control Panel link for the search engine that you want to customize.**

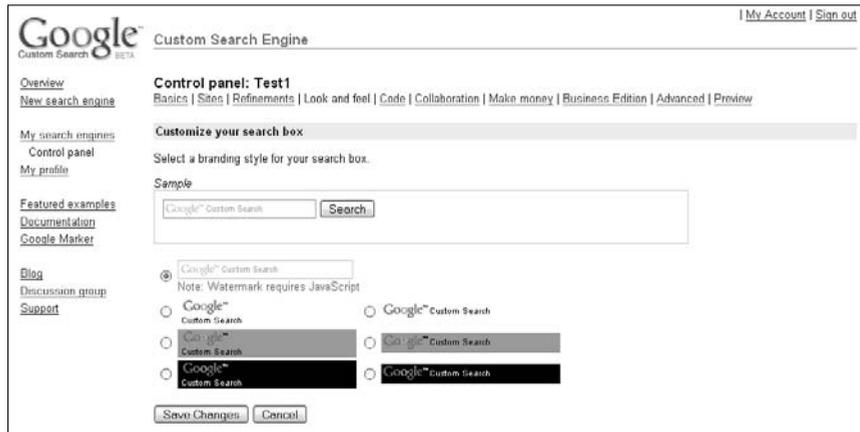
Doing so opens the Control Panel page for that search engine.

- 2. On the Control Panel page, select the Look and Feel link to be taken to the Customize Your Search Box page.**

On this page, you have several options for changing the appearance of your search box, including different logo configurations and color options.

- 3. In the first section of the page, as shown in Figure 8-10, select how you want the Google custom search box to appear on your page and then click the Save Changes button.**

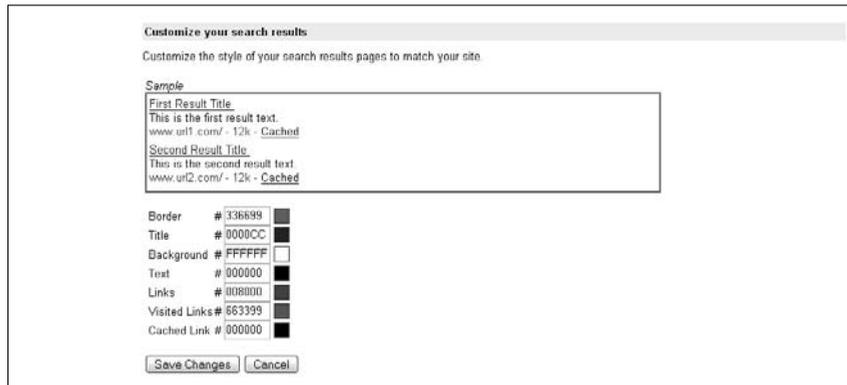
Figure 8-10:
You have several options for how you want the Google custom search box to appear on your page.



4. In the next section, as shown in Figure 8-11, customize the colors of the border, title, background, text, links, visited links, and cached links and then click the Save Changes button.

You can do this by choosing the desired colors from the *Color Picker* — the small colored boxes next to each option — or by entering the hexadecimal numbers that represent the colors.

Figure 8-11:
Customize the colors of your custom search engine results pages.



The results of the changes you make are displayed in the sample above the color options.

5. To add your personalized logo, enter the URL for the logo in the Image URL text box, as shown in Figure 8-12.

If you don't know what the URL is, you can open another browser window and go to your Web site. Then right-click the logo of your site and select Copy Image Location, flip back to the Google Custom Search Engine customization page, and paste the URL into the text box provided.

Figure 8-12:
Add your own logo to your custom search engine results pages using this form.

Customize your Google-hosted search results

Add a logo to your search engine's Google-hosted results page.

Sample

Test1

Test1 Web Search

Image URL: (optional) (JPG, PNG or GIF, max 100px height)

Link logo to URL: (optional) (e.g. http://www.google.com/coop)

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You also have the option to link your logo to a specific Web site. For example, if you want your logo to appear on the search results page and to link back to your main Web site, then enter the main URL for your Web site in the Link Logo to URL text box.

6. When you've entered the logo and link information, click the Save Changes button.

The small sample display above the logo and link text boxes displays your logo if you choose to use this option.



Although all three of these customization options are on one page, you don't have to change them all at the same time. You can change any single option on the page without affecting the other options. If you want to change the colors, but leave the logo you already have in place, or even leave it off completely, adjust your color settings and click the Save Changes button, and only the changes you actually want will take effect.

Creating an AdSense Search Box

I'm the first to say that custom search engines are pretty cool, but they're not necessary for every Web site. If you don't need a custom search engine, a regular AdSense search box works just fine.

I spend some time earlier in this chapter profiling the wizard that helps you create the search box, and filling you in on your options when it comes to specifying the types of searches the AdSense search box can perform. Now I want to show you how to create the search box from A to Z — all the way from specifying the kind of search box you want to generating the HTML code you need to place on your Web site so you can finally start earning some money from it. It's

not too tough — I'd say it's fifth-grade-science-project easy — and should take you less time than brewing your first cup of coffee in the morning (unless you have a Bunn Coffee Maker — those take like three minutes, so you'd have to hurry to beat one). Here's how it's done:

1. **Point your browser to `www.adsense.com`, log on to your AdSense account, and then click the AdSense Setup tab.**
2. **On the Setup tab, select the AdSense for Search option.**
Doing so calls up the AdSense for Search Wizard (refer to Figure 8-1).
3. **In the Search Type section of page, select the radio button corresponding to the type of search you want the search box to perform: Google WebSearch or Google WebSearch + SiteSearch.**
4. **In the Search Box Style section of the page, use the options to customize the look of your search box.**

As Figure 8-13 shows, you have two options for logo styles and several different combinations of styles that can change the look of your search box.

Your options include

- **Google Logo:** If you select the Logo Above Text Box check box, the Google logo appears above the search box. If you leave this box deselected, the Google logo appears to the left of the text box.
- **“Google Search” on Button:** Selecting this option ditches the Google logo and just puts the Google name on the search button.
- **Search Button Below Text Box:** If you select this check box, the Search button (the thing a user clicks to start a search) appears under the search box. Otherwise, the button appears to the right of the search box.

Figure 8-13: Select the logo style and combination of features that works for your site.

The screenshot shows the 'Search box style' configuration interface. At the top, there is a 'Sample' section displaying a search box with the Google logo to its left and a 'Search' button to its right. Below the sample, there are two radio buttons: 'Web' (selected) and 'YOUR DOMAIN NAME'. The main configuration area is divided into four sections: 'Logo type' with radio buttons for 'Google Logo' (selected), 'Logo above text box', and '"Google Search" on button'; 'Search button' with a checkbox for 'Search button below text box'; 'Background color' with a dropdown menu set to 'White'; and 'Length of text box' with a text input field set to '31 characters'. A 'Text color' section has radio buttons for 'Black' (selected) and 'White'.

- **Background color and text color:** Here you can use a drop-down menu to select the color that you want to use as your search box background — your choices here are white, black, or gray — as well as specify if you want the text to be black or white.
- **Text box length:** Here you can choose the number of characters that you want to allow in the search box. The default is 31 characters, but you can change that to whatever length suits you.

5. In the More Options section, select the main language for your search box from the drop-down menu.

This setting refers to the language of your Web site. Visitors can choose to search in their own native language if it's different than the one you select, but you still have to make a choice from more than 30 selections available in the drop-down menu.

6. Still in the More Options section of the page, choose the site encoding you'll use for your Web page from the Your Site Encoding drop-down menu.

Site encoding here refers to the computer language or code that your site is created in. (Even if you're using HTML, there are several versions of it.) The default is set to West European Latin-1 (ISO-8859-1). If you don't know what the encoding for your site is, leave the default in place.

7. Select the country your domain is registered in from the Country drop-down menu and then click Continue to go to the second page of the wizard.

The second page, as shown in Figure 8-14, is where you customize the look of your search results page.

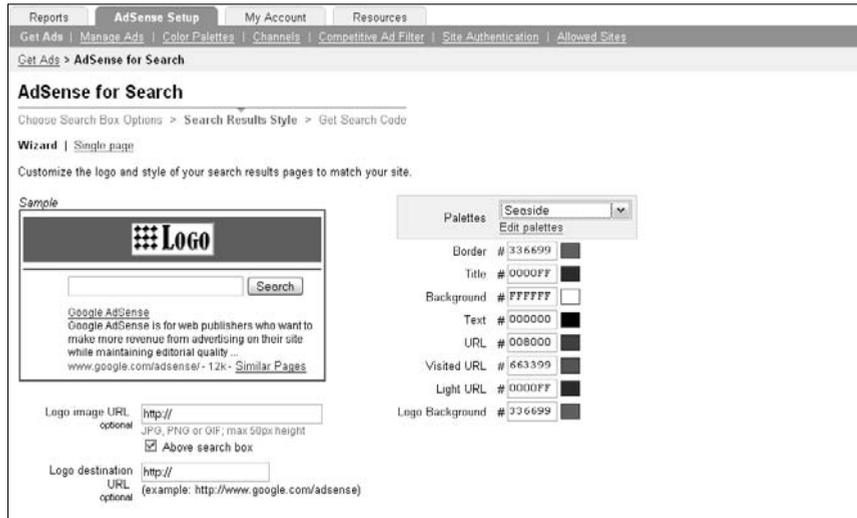
8. In the second page of the wizard, select the color template you want to use for the search results page from the drop-down menu at the center-right.

You have six palettes to choose from, but keep in mind that you can skip the palettes and just enter hexadecimal numbers for custom colors in the appropriate text boxes — Border, Title, Background, for example — to precisely match your Web site. (Chapter 7 has more on hexadecimal numbers and how you can use them to match the colors of your search box to the colors on your Web site.)

9. To add your own corporate logo to your search results page, enter the URL where the logo is located in the Logo Image URL text box.

Note: If you want your logo to appear above the search box, select the Above Search Box check box. Otherwise, the logo appears to the left of the box.

Figure 8-14:
Customize
the appear-
ance of
your search
results
page.



10. (Optional) Add a Logo Destination URL.

The Logo Destination URL is optional, but should you decide to use it, this will link your logo back to a Web page that you specify. That can be the main page of your Web site or any other page that you choose.

11. In the More Options section of the screen, as shown in Figure 8-15, select where you want the search results to appear.

Your choices here are

- **On Google, in the Same Window:** Opening search results on Google in the same window replaces your Web page with the Google page. It's streamlined — no additional windows are opened — but it also leads visitors away from your Web site. The concern with leading visitors away is that they won't click back and you'll lose them completely. The tradeoff is that opening the results on Google's pages gives your site visitors confidence that their search is being done by the best search engine on the Web.
- **On Google, in a New Window:** Opening search results in a new window is an excellent way to ensure that your site remains open for users and that the user also feels the confidence that comes with seeing Google-logoed pages. A second window (or tab, if you're using a Web browser that supports tabbed browsing) opens with the search results, but your Web site also remains open. When users finish browsing search results, they can close the window in which the search results are displayed, but your Web site will still be open. That's no guarantee that the visitor will continue surfing your site — he could close your site, too — but it does leave the possibility that he'll continue surfing through your pages.

- **On Your Own Web Site:** Opening search results on your Web site keeps the user on your site, but also strips away some of the confidence that comes with Google search results. The search results are stylized to match your site, but still contain the Google logo. They're just not actual Google pages, which could erode user confidence some.

Figure 8-15:

More options allow you to specify where search results should appear.

The screenshot shows the 'More options' section of the AdSense search box configuration. It contains four sections:

- Opening of search results page:** Choose whether you would like your search results to open on Google or within your site.
 - Open results on Google in the same window
 - Open results on Google in a new window
 - Open results within my own site [?]
- Site-flavored search:** Get search results that are tailored to your site's topics and visitors. [?]
 - Customize the type of search results I get to my site content.
- SafeSearch (English-only):** With SafeSearch, sites and web pages containing adult themed and explicit sexual content are excluded from web search results. [?]
 - Use SafeSearch
- Custom channel:** You can specify a reporting channel for these ads to help track performance of this search box. [?]
 - No channel selected
 - [Add new channel](#) | [Manage channels...](#)

12. If you want to enable site-flavored searches, select the Customize the Type of Search Results I Get to My Site Content check box.

Site-flavored search is a progressive technology — meaning that the results get more accurate over time — that pulls search results that are related to the content of your Web site. In the beginning, search results are more general, but over time the results become more refined and better related to your site content.

13. If you want to use the SafeSearch option, select the Use SafeSearch check box.

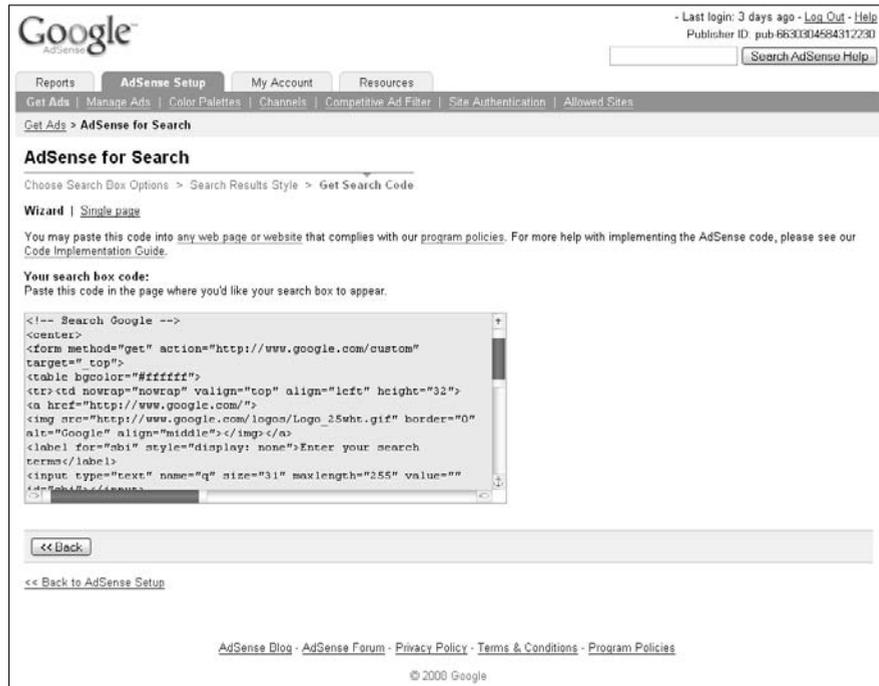
SafeSearch filters out nearly all the adult content (such as pornography) from search results.

14. Select a Custom Channel for tracking earning results from the drop-down menu of custom channels that you've created.

Remember, channels are basically a tagging method that allows you to track specific ads or groups of ads.

15. Select Continue to generate the search box code, as shown in Figure 8-16, for pasting into your Web site.

Figure 8-16:
After you complete the customization and click Continue, the code for your search box displays.



Keep in mind when you're customizing the search results page that you definitely don't want to go crazy with all the colors. The last thing you want to do is create a kaleidoscope that gives your site visitors headaches.

A better option is to stick to standard design principles and have a single color for the background — preferably one that matches the background of your Web site — and then use no more than three colors in the foreground. For example, if you have a basic white background for your Web site, that counts as one color.

Then, you can style your text in black, links that haven't been clicked as blue, and links that *have* been clicked as red. Including the white background, you have four total colors. Four colors won't jar the user, and your search results will still look very professional.

After you generate the code for your search box, copy and paste the code onto your Web page in the same way that you copy and paste AdSense for Content code. It may take a little tweaking to get the search box in exactly the spot you want it, but you can move it around with your HTML editor to ensure that it appears in the proper place.

AdSense for Search and WordPress

In many ways, WordPress is different from other kinds of blogging programs. At its core, WordPress is a good blogging program; but because it's so customizable at the code level, it has much more power than other blogging applications. That also happens to mean that some things just aren't as easy with WordPress.

Installing an AdSense search box in Blogger is pretty straightforward. You create the search box in AdSense, copy the code, and use an HTML widget to insert it in your blog. With WordPress, the process is much more difficult and requires that you edit the core code of the WordPress blog page where you want the search box to appear.

Here's an easier way — MightySearch is a WordPress plugin from MightyHitter (www.mightyhitter.com) that's designed to let you paste in your AdSense for Search code and it will make the code work properly on your WordPress blog. The plugin handles all the details that could take you forever to figure out if you're not a WordPress genius.

Adding search capabilities to your site just makes sense. Chances are that you won't have every detail that your site visitors are looking for on your Web site. Why not make it easy for them to find what you don't have? In the process, you can add to your AdSense revenue stream. Nothing wrong with making some money on the information you don't have on your site, too.

One thing you should know about designing your search box is that with the customization that's available, you can change the look of the search box completely. You should not, however, change the color of the search *button*. Because it's Google and people trust Google, they'll recognize the gray search button, and they're more likely to use it. If you change the search button, visitors could mistake your search box for something belonging to some other search company, and their confidence in finding what they're looking for might not be as high.

Adding search capabilities through AdSense makes sense whether you have a site of 5 pages or 500. Users may come to your site and find everything they need, but if they don't, they'll go somewhere to search out the answers they seek. Give them a search box linked directly from your site, and you'll not only help them out, but you might gain a little financial reward in the process.

Part III

Other Types of AdSense

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



“Is this really the best use of Flash animation on our e-commerce Web site? A bad wheel on the shopping cart icon that squeaks, wobbles, and pulls to the left?”

In this part . . .

AdSense is so much more than just content ads and search boxes, and this part helps you understand all the options that are available to you. From video ads to referral programs, I include all the remaining AdSense options in these chapters.

I show you what AdSense for Video is, how it works, and how to make video that catches a visitor's attention. I then show you how to tap into the AdSense for Mobile market by creating mobile ads and improving your AdSense revenues. I close things out with coverage of AdSense for RSS, AdSense referrals, and how to use AdSense with your blogs. There's more than one way to earn a pretty penny!

Chapter 9

Show Me Some Video (& Other Gadgets)

In This Chapter

- ▶ Choosing the right AdSense video product
 - ▶ Enabling click-to-play video
 - ▶ Installing video units
 - ▶ Exploring gadgets
-

Video is one of the top technologies online right now. Everyone's watching, downloading, streaming, or creating it. You find video on a majority of pages, and several services — including YouTube, GodTube, and Google Video — make it possible for people to create and upload videos of interest as well as find, watch, and/or download said videos.

No wonder AdSense is trying to tap into the video market. The popularity of online video is almost as mind-boggling as the popularity of blogs or podcasts or any other newer technology that no one expected to fly but is taking the Web by storm. The draw is entertainment. The content changes constantly and there are so many different types of video — from those created by amateurs to professional documentaries to full-length television shows and movies — that there's something to keep everyone busy.

Add to the availability of a wide variety of videos the fact that Internet users are logging on through broadband services more and more frequently, and you have a mix that just works for video. To take advantage of it, AdSense is monetizing videos in more ways than one, as this chapter makes clear.