START A BEAUTY BLOG

HOW TO GET FREE COSMETICS, MAKE MONEY, AND BECOME FAMOUS

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Start A Beauty Blog
How to get free cosmetics, make money, and become famous

by

Perry Romanowski & Randy Schueller

Brains Publishing, Inc. - New York, Chicago

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Introduction: Why should I read this book?

How can this book help me?
If you’re thinking about starting your own beauty blog or if you already have a blog and you need help to make it more successful, then you should read this book. It provides you with information on how to run a successful beauty blog that you can't find anywhere else.

Why should I start my own beauty blog?
Here are four important ways you’ll benefit from beauty blogging:

Express yourself
Blogging is a lot of fun. We all have a passion for beauty products and most of us spend a lot of time commenting on other peoples' blogs. With your own blog you not only get to share your passion with others, but you get to write about WHATEVER you want.

Learn the latest beauty news
As a blogger you'll have access to press releases from the beauty companies with information on all the latest and greatest new products. Learn what's hot before everyone else! Plus: the readers of your blog will also share their tips and tricks in your comments section, so you get to learn from others.

Get free beauty products
In addition to blogging for the fun of it, you can actually profit from running your own blog. You can get tons of free products to try from all the beauty companies. Almost everyday beauty companies ask us to try samples of their latest and greatest new products.

Make money
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And perhaps best of all, you can use your blog to make real money through advertisers, affiliate programs, and even selling your own products. Is this really true? Can someone who's never blogged before actually turn it into a money-making business? Yes, we know it's possible because that's exactly what we did!

**Why should I trust the advice in this book?**
We can help you be a successful blogger because THESE TIPS WORKED FOR US. In a few short years The Beauty Brains has become one of the top overall beauty blogs and the number one blog in our niche: beauty science. We have hundreds of thousands of readers each month, we've self-published one book and now have a second book deal with a major publisher, and we've been featured on such TV shows as Dr. Oz and Rachel Ray. We're living proof that you CAN be successful at beauty blogging. Now we'd like to share of our tips and tricks to help you with your blog. this is to continue stuff about the bb and our accomplishments and everything we’ve achieved and who we are and our resumes.

**Who are the authors of this book?**
The authors are the founders of The Beauty Brains, the #1 beauty science blog, and have been blogging for over 7 years. In addition, they've written dozens of science articles for Cosmetics & Toiletries, Gale Publishing, and the Marcel Dekker company. Their book, Beginning Cosmetic Chemistry is used in several college programs.

Perry Romanowski is a writer, cosmetic chemist, Inventor, scientist, instructor, futurologist, and thought leader. Founder of Chemists Corner blog and training program.
Randy Schueller is a former Sr. Director of Hair and Skin Care R&D for Alberto Culver and Unilever and a member of the National Association of Science Writers.

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Part 1: What do I need to know about setting up a blog?

Chapter 1 - How do I set up a professional class blog?

What is the fastest way to get started blogging?
There are a number of ways to get started blogging, but the first thing you have to do is to pick your platform. Then, sign up for one of the blogging services and create your blog. Each of the following options has an easy, step-by-step procedure to help you get started.

While we recommend that ultimately you get your own self-hosted website, it is a good idea to try out one of the free blogging websites to see if beauty blogging is for you.

The best websites for starting a free beauty blog include...

Wordpress.com: This is a great community and uses the same software that we use on The Beauty Brains and all of our other websites. Starting up a blog is easy. Just go to wordpress.com and click on the button to "Get Started Here".

Blogger.com: This service is run by Google and it integrates nicely with all your other Google products like Gmail, Picasa, and YouTube. Blogger.com was actually the first platform that we used when we created the Beauty Brains. In fact, http://thebeautybrains.blogspot.com/ is still around, even though we don't update it. Blogger is a great platform to learn the basics of blogging. When you become a serious blogger, however, it is better to go with Wordpress.

Tumblr.com: Tumblr is a microblogging platform and is not as versatile as the first two options. However, Tumblr is a great option if you want to start
a beauty blog but are uncertain about the direction or product types that you want to write about. It also has the benefit of easily integrating with Facebook and Twitter accounts.

There are a number of other options, but these three will get you started. Ultimately, you will want to switch to your own user hosted website because this gives you the maximum amount of control. You'll never have to worry about someone else removing your content because it is hosted on their website.

Why can't I use blogger.com or one of the other free blogging services?

While the free blogging services are excellent for getting you started and allowing you to practice how to set up and write a blog, they suffer from some significant drawbacks for anyone serious about creating a beauty blog that makes money.

**Your options are limited:** When you host your blog on one of the free sites, your blog design and layout is limited to the options that the blogging company lets you have. These are enough for some bloggers, but if you want to really stand out in the blogging world, you'll need a custom design (or at least a logo). Having your own paid, hosted site gives you complete flexibility and unlimited options. And some of these hosting services cost less than $100 a year, so they are incredibly affordable.

**Harder to add advertising:** In addition to limited options, the free blogging sites also limit the number and types of advertisers you can add to your blog. You never know which advertisements will work on your blog, and you could be limiting the amount of money you make by continuing to use a free hosted blog. Also, most serious advertising networks do not like to work with free hosted blogs because it is much more difficult to track your stats like traffic and audience.

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Someone else has control: One of the biggest drawbacks of using a free service is that your blog is ultimately controlled by someone else. If Google or Wordpress have objections to what you have written, they can take your content down at any time. In fact, they don't even have to have objections, they can take down your content for any reason. You have almost no recourse. You may not even be able to recover your content. This is a scary situation. If you are serious about your beauty blog, you will want to have complete control over the content.

Search engine penalty: While blogs on blogger.com don't have a problem with a search engine penalty (since Google owns them) other sites like Wordpress and Tumblr may not be as lucky. Google controls the bulk of the search engine traffic and they can manipulate the search engine results to favor one of their blogs or webpages over the free sites.

Reduces your credibility: Finally, having your blog on one of the free sites automatically reduces your credibility. Reporters, the media, and consumers will see that you are on a free site and immediately question your qualifications. When you have your own site, it removes the association with the free services and communicates that you are your own independent, serious website. This is one of the most important aspects of building your online reputation as a beauty expert.

The bottom line is that while the free services are nice to begin with, when you get serious about blogging, you need to go with one of the paid hosted services like Dreamhost.com. Then you install the self-hosted version of Wordpress and get started with your brand new, independent beauty blog.

What is a hosting service and why do I need to know?
Everyone who is serious about creating a great beauty blog that gets lots of traffic and makes money will want to eventually employ the services of a hosting company. A hosting company is one that has computers that are
connected directly to the Internet and work as a location through which Internet traffic is funneled.

The way it works is that you pay a hosting company some amount of money each month (the least expensive start at around $8 per month). Then you upload your blogging software and all of your posts to their computers. Whenever you post a new blog, it is stored on their computers. Whenever you put up a new picture, it goes on their computers. Your entire website resides on their computers (called servers).

These servers are accessible to anyone around the world as long as they know the website address. When someone types your address in their web browser, the Internet gatekeepers direct the traffic to your host's computers and ultimately to your blog / web page. Having a hosting service allows everyone in the world to access your content.

Another nice thing about the hosting service is that they provide services such as IT support, automatic backups, and technical troubleshooting. Websites go down all the time and your hosting service can help keep your beauty blog online even when there is a problem.

Hosting services are one of the best investments you can make in your beauty blogging business and we encourage everyone to get started with one today.

**What is a domain name and why does my blog need one?**

A domain name is the web address of your blog. For our blog, our domain name is thebeautybrains.com.

All domain names have a similar form in which the left side of the domain is a series of characters (typically a phrase or brand name) followed by a specific code like .com, .org, or .net. There are more specific codes being added each year, but the most highly valued domain names are the “.com”
domain names. When you are registering your domain, you should strive to get a “.com” domain name.

The domain name can be the same as the name of your blog but it doesn't have to be. For example, the domain name for the Cosmetic Launch Coach website is startacosmeticline.com. This is done because the domain name you want may not be available or because there are some particularly useful keywords that you want to use. In general, you should strive to get a domain name that matches your beauty blog name.

You can get a domain name from a variety of sources. Often your web host will register a domain name for you for free. However, there are other companies that are strictly dedicated to registering domain names, such as Register.com or DomainsinSeconds.com. Both of these are excellent choices.

For maximum flexibility, it is recommended that you have your domain registered with a different company than your hosting service. This makes it a little more complicated; however, it makes it much easier for you to move to another hosting service if you want.

**How do I pick a domain name?**

Picking a domain name is easy. Just go to one of the domain registration services like Register.com or DomainsinSeconds.com and type in the domain name to see if it is available. If it is, register it and you are done. If it is not available, try another version of your domain and see if that works.

For example, when we started the Beauty Brains we wanted to get the domain beautybrains.com. Unfortunately, this was not available at the time. We added the word “the” as in “thebeautybrains.com” and this one was available. Eventually, we did get beautybrains.com but our main blog has been thebeautybrains.com since we started. This is not as preferred, since
people have to type in more letters to find us, but it hasn't hurt us too much. If your domain name is not available, try adding a short word like “the” to it.

Now, this advice explains how you get your domain name but it doesn't tell you what domain name you should pick. This depends on the type of beauty blog that you are creating. Ideally, you should come up with a number of beauty blog titles, then figure out which one you like best. Register that one. There are a number of directions that people go when coming up with a domain name. For instance...

**Your name:** You can make your beauty blog your own name or nick name. This is great for establishing you as an expert but it may be harder to remember and doesn't help let people know what the blog is about.

**Some beauty term:** This is a great option as it will help your search engine results and it communicates to your reader exactly what your blog is about. We used The Beauty Brains because we wanted people to know it was a “smart” beauty blog. We could've gone with something like The Beauty Scientists or The Beauty Experts but these weren't as catchy as the alliterative Beauty Brains.

**Something clever:** There are a number of beauty blogs with clever titles. “A Girl's Gotta Spa” or “Hair on the Brain” all help to communicate what the blog is about in an interesting or amusing way. While this is a great way to go, it also makes it harder to figure out what your website is all about. It also may make it harder to remember.

A good way to figure out what you should name your beauty blog and the domain to pick is to go through a list of beauty blog names and see which ones you like. Then use their names as inspiration for your own name. See [http://www.invesp.com/blog-rank/Beauty](http://www.invesp.com/blog-rank/Beauty) for a list of the top beauty blogs.

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How do I pick a web host?

One of the key things you'll need when setting up your own beauty blog is a web hosting service. These companies maintain your website information and provide a gateway for people to find you on the Internet from anywhere in the world. But as with any service company, there are a number of factors to consider when choosing a web host provider. Here are the five most important things to consider.

Reliability: If your website is offline for any amount of time, that means people will not be able to find it, read your content, or click on your ads. And if this happens frequently, it will be impossible to build a significantly popular beauty blog. For this reason you need to find a web host service that will reliably keep your websites working. Most good web hosts will guarantee no more than 24 hours of down time per year. When searching for a web host, be sure find one that guarantees minimal downtime.

Pricing: While going with your cheapest option isn't always the best idea (mostly because these companies are less reliable), you also don't want to spend a lot of money on hosting when there are so many low cost options. As of this writing, you can find excellent web hosting for less than $10 a month. If you are being charged more than that, you can do better. When running a beauty blog, minimizing costs will help make your website more profitable, and you should strive to do this whenever possible.

Customer service: The one problem with less expensive web hosting services is that they typically have reduced customer service. So when your website does go down, they might not have a person you can contact right away. Look for a web host who has 24 hour customer service. You never know when your website might experience problems, and having someone on call who can help you fix it is crucial.

Space & bandwidth: When you first start your blog you will not require a large amount of web space or bandwidth. But as your traffic and web con-
tent grows you will need more and more. Therefore you should make sure
that your web hosting company offers you adequate space and bandwidth.
For a beauty blog, you will not need much computer space, but most host-
ing companies offer unlimited storage and unlimited bandwidth. These
amounts are not required for running a beauty blog, though it makes things
easier. Get them if you can.

**Company stability:** There are a number of inexpensive web hosts who offer
great deals, lots of storage space, and great customer service. However,
web host companies notoriously fail, and if the company disappears, your
websites may disappear too. Be wary of any web host company that hasn't
been in existence for very long. They may take your money, set up your
blog and then disappear overnight. This can make it difficult or even im-
possible to get your website information back. This is also why you should
frequently make backups of your website database and store it on your
own computer.

Companies which we have had success with include Dreamhost.com and
Bluehost.com.
Chapter 2 - What’s the best blogging software and how do I install it?

**What is WordPress and why do I need it?**

WordPress (WP) is an amazingly complex piece of blog authoring software: It’s part word processor, part desktop publishing software, part data base, and part HTML code compiler. But don’t let it overwhelm you. You can be an effective blogger without being a WP power user. You can create blog posts without having to know anything about HTML code (although it’s helpful if you know a little). Just think of WP as the word processor and your blog as the finished document that you create.

**Do I have to learn everything about WordPress to use it?**

No. WordPress handles all the work “behind the scenes” including duties like formatting text and images, associating data about your content (aka meta-data) like tags and categories to posts, and controlling who sees your posts and when. All you really need to know is how to enter text and pictures, and you can start using WP on your blog right away.

**What does WordPress do that Blogger or Tumblr can't?**

WordPress supports hundreds of plug-ins and widgets that give you added functionality. For example, you can automatically tweet or publish posts to Facebook. You can easily blog from your smartphone using the WP mobile app. And, most importantly if you’re interested in earning money from your blog, WP allows you to insert customized ads that you can’t do with Blogger or Tumblr.

**What's the difference between posts and pages?**

Posts are entries listed in reverse chronological order on the blog home page or on the posts page if you have set one in Settings > Reading. If you
have created any sticky posts, those will appear before the other posts. Posts can be found in the Archives, Categories, Recent Posts, and other widgets. Posts are also displayed in the RSS feed of the blog. You can control how many posts are displayed at a time in the Reading Settings. The URL for a post includes the date the post was published like this: http://blogname.wordpress.com/2008/11/30/post-title/

Pages are static and are not listed by date. Pages do not use tags or categories. An “About” page is the classic example. Pages can be displayed in the sidebar using the Pages widget, and some themes display pages in tabs at the top of the blog. If you have 50 pages and you use the Pages widget, then all pages will be listed all the time. The URL for a page looks like this: http://blogname.wordpress.com/page-title/

How do I get WordPress software?
That’s easy: just go to Wordpress.org. It’s free and easy to install. There are plenty of online tutorials that can walk you through the process.

How do I navigate to the WordPress interface?
The first thing you need to know is how to get to the “admin” mode of Wordpress: all you have to do is enter the URL of your blog followed by “/wp-admin/”.

You’ll also find a link in the bottom right corner of your blog that looks like this: "WordPress Admin" They both take you to the same place, which is the dashboard. Either way, once you click through that link you’ll find yourself at the sign on screen. Once you’re there simply log in with user name and password.

The first thing you’ll see is the Dashboard. You’ll notice you have access to blog stats at a glance like number of posts, pages, comments, etc. This is also a quick way to check your most recent comments. You’ll also see a bunch of Word-Presssy information that you can chose to ignore. We usually do.

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Chapter 3 - How do I chose the right design for my blog?

What makes a good blog design?
While content is the most important aspect of your beauty blog, picking the right design will help build a loyal readership, attract more advertisers, improve your brand image and get your visitors to take action. To maximize the effectiveness of your blog design, here are four things it must do.

Tell people what the blog is about: If you want to build a loyal readership then you'll want to ensure that the people who visit your blog know what it is all about. Your design should make it clear exactly what your beauty blog is and why they will benefit from reading it. Much of this can be accomplished by including a logo and tag line at the top of your blog (in the header). For the Beauty Brains we use the tag line “Real scientists answer your beauty product questions.” This isn't the most catchy phrase, but it effectively lets people know immediately what the beauty blog is all about.

Inspire visitors to take action: To create a successful blog you are going to want to inspire your readers to take some kind of action, such as clicking on an ad, purchasing a product, commenting on a blog post, joining your email list or other things. Your design should prompt visitors to do something. While it is great to have them read your content, you will have a more successful blog if you can get them to do more than that. Everything from your blog font, colors, and layout should prompt a visitor to do something.

Build your credibility as an expert: Your blog design should be a reflection of you, so you'll want to create something that you like. But you also want to make sure that the design looks professional, as this will help build your reputation as an expert. Dermatologists who want to be seen as beauty experts should go for a simple, clean look to help readers understand the

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Beauticians, on the other hand, can go for a more fun, sassy look as it will help establish their style expertise. Your design, including colors, name and logo, all help to build (or reduce) your credibility.

Be fun and easy to read and navigate: Finally, if you want people to come back to your website on a frequent basis, you'll need to create something that is fun. This is why the addition of quizzes and games is great for blogs. The colors you use should be pleasing to look at and your content should be easy to read. Stay away from fancy script fonts and stick with easy-to-read Times New Roman or Veranda.

Although your blog content will always be the most important factor in helping you build an audience, the design is crucial to keep people coming back and the get them to take action. And when you can get them to do that, you'll have a successful beauty blog.

What must I include in good blog design? What is "above the fold?"
There are a number of elements that make for a good blog design. But before you go about creating your design, you should answer this one question: What do I want my visitors to do?

You might think that the answer to this is to “read my content,” but this is only one small action. It is equally important for you to have visitors that will “subscribe to my website or email newsletter,” “click on an ad,” or “buy a product.” There is no point in getting millions of people to visit your website, read your content, and have you not get paid for your work. Advertising and products are the way that bloggers can get paid.
Once you've answered this question, there are a number of elements that are helpful in getting your visitors to take action.

**Header:** The header is the top of your blog. Here is where you should put your blog name and logo. This helps let the reader know what the blog is, what it is about, and why the blog will be useful to them. This is also an excellent place to put an ad because it frequently gets clicked on.

**Navigation bar:** Just below your header should be a strip of boxes that help the visitor navigate to different sections of your blog. This could include an “About” page, “Advertisers” page, a forum, archives, and a “contact us” button. This makes it easy for your visitors to access all of your great content.

**Content box:** Just below the navigation is the content area. This is where your blog post goes. It's important to have a catchy headline to get people to read what you've written.

**Sidebar:** This is a section on either the right or left side of your blog which includes unchanging elements. Here is where you will put things like advertisements, links to your social networking sites, pictures, videos, free newsletter downloads and other fun things to keep your readers engaged.

**Search box:** You should include a search box to help your visitors find older but useful blog posts.

**Above the fold:** You will hear this term from advertisers, so it's important to know what it means. This just refers to everything that the visitor will see when they land on your webpage. It is anything that does not require them to scroll down to see. Your header, navigation bar, and the top of your content and sidebar make up the area “above the fold.”

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**What is a blog theme?**
A blog theme is the standard layout and design for your blog. Both Wordpress and Blogger come with a number of themes that you can choose, and many excellent ones are free. The theme will include everything about your blog including the layout, the size of the different elements, the color scheme, the font, and the size of your text. Themes make it easy for anyone to set up a professional-looking blog. Simply go through the theme choices in your blog software and install them. Most themes allow you to add widgets in your sidebar and to customize the image in your header.

**How to I pick/install a theme?**
Picking a theme is simple. From the Wordpress dashboard click on the “Appearance” button on the left side, then choose “Theme”. On the top tab click on “Install Themes.”

Choose the features that you want such as color, number of columns, and features then click the 'Find Themes” button.

You will be presented with a list of themes complete with thumbnail pictures. Go through a number of themes and choose the one that you want for your blog. Don't worry about picking the wrong one; you can always switch to a new theme later. If you do not get enough choices, just reduce the number of features that you are searching through. Wordpress comes with thousands of free themes, so you should be able to find something acceptable to start.
Chapter 4 - What are plug-ins and widgets?

What is a plug-in?
On its own, Wordpress is an extremely powerful piece of software. It organizes your blog posts, allows you to edit and even helps control your design. But pieces of software called plug-ins make it even more powerful.

There are a wide range of plug-ins that can control all aspects of your blog, making it easier to control design, search engine optimization, memory allocation, picture manipulation, blog security and more. Plug-ins just make a beauty blogger's life easier. They are easy to add, and most of the best ones are free to install.

Where can I get plug-ins and how do I install them?
Useful plug-ins are easy to find and install. From the dashboard of your Wordpress site, click on the “plug-ins” link on the left side column. Then click on “add new.” You can search the plug-in database, choose a popular new plug-in, or install a popular one. To install, simply click on the “Install Now” link.

Be careful not to add too many plug-ins. You could slow your website down or worse, cause a memory problem that crashes your website. In general, you should run no more than 10 plug-ins at any time.

What are a few essential plug-ins that I should try?
While there are literally thousands of plug-ins for your Wordpress blog, you only want to run a few at a time so you don't unnecessarily slow down your website. Here is a list of the most useful plug-ins for a beauty blogger.

Akismet: Having an active comment section on your blog is important for building a beauty blogging community. However, spammers can overrun
your comments and make your blog look bad and scare away readers. This plug-in is one of the best to keep spam comments off your blog.

**WP Supercache:** You may not need this plug-in at the start of your beauty blogging career, but when you start to gain significant traffic, this plug-in can help ensure that your website doesn't slow down or crash.

**Google analytics:** Tracking your traffic with Google analytics is one of the most useful ways to figure out how many people are visiting your blog and where they are coming from. This plug-in makes installing Google analytics on your blog easy as cutting and pasting.

**WP database backup:** Frequent backups of your blog will help protect you in case of an unexpected computer crash. This plug-in makes backing up your system automatic and easy.

**Video plug-in:** Adding videos to your blog can make your posts more interesting, and attract more readers. Using this plug-in makes it simple to add your own videos or ones that you find on YouTube.

**Subscribe to comments:** When someone leaves a comment on your blog, it can be difficult for them to see responses. However, if you install this plug-in you give the reader the option to be alerted via email whenever someone posts a new comment on the blog post.

**What are widgets?**
One aspect of Wordpress that makes customizing your design easy is the widgets feature. Widgets are small pieces of computer code that are programmed to do almost anything that you like. There are widgets for showing pictures, videos, and archives. There are other widgets for linking to your social networking accounts, showing a calendar, creating a search function, or listing recent comments. You can easily install widgets by adding them to your sidebar.

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Where can I get widgets and how do I install them?
Widgets are free pieces of software (although you can buy them too). To find them you need to start at the dashboard of your Wordpress website. Click on the “Appearance” tab on the left side then choose “widgets.” You'll see a number of different types of widgets listed on the webpage. Simply drag the widget you want to install over to the right and drop it onto the Sidebar button. This will add the widget to your sidebar. Once installed go to your webpage and see how your design has changed. Widgets are great for customizing your theme and especially for adding advertisements.

What are tips for using blog add-ons (plug-ins and widgets)?
Plug-ins can be a great addition to your blog, but they can also cause problems. Sometimes two plug-ins might conflict with each other, or they might slow down your website. Here are some useful tips to consider when installing plug-ins and widgets.

Test lots of add-ons: There are so many plug-ins that it is difficult to decide which ones you should use. The only way to find the best ones for your website is to install and test lots of them. Some will work great and others will be terrible. Simply install a new plug-in and test it. If it doesn't work the way you want it, just uninstall it.

Don't run too many on your website: While plug-ins add new functionality to your website, they can also slow it down or cause other conflicts. To be safe, you should not run more than a dozen plug-ins at any one time.

Use trusted sources: Since plug-ins and widgets take over certain aspects of your blog's software, make sure you only use trustworthy sources. To do this, stick with plug-ins that you find in the Wordpress library of plug-ins.

Keep plug-ins updated: Software is continually updated as bugs are found or new versions of Wordpress are released. You need to keep your plug-
ins updated to the latest version. This will ensure that your website is not vulnerable to being attacked by hackers.

**Website problems:** Inevitably, you will have a problem with your website. Often these problems are caused by some software conflict between your blog, the plug-in, or between two plug-ins. If you ever have a problem with your blog, the first thing you should do is to turn off all the installed plug-ins. Then add them back one by one to see what is causing the problem. If you find a plug-in that crashes your website, be sure to uninstall that plug-in and find an alternative.
Chapter 5 - Why should I optimize my blog theme?

Why do I need to worry about messing with my blog theme?
Writing blog posts and generating content is the most important thing you can do to create a successful blog. It has been demonstrated that the more content (blog posts) you have, the more traffic you are likely to get. However, writing is not the only important part of blogging. If you want to make beauty blogging your career, you need to create a website that attracts visitors, keeps them on your site, inspires them to come back, and gets them to take some action beneficial to you.

**Design gets visitors:** When you are creating your blog design you have to first consider the search engines. You must make it easy for the search engines to analyze your blog and figure out what it is all about. Therefore, you need relevant keywords in your titles and in the URL of the blog page.

**Creating loyal fans:** If people like your design, they will be more likely to come back to your website. They will also be more likely to sign up for your RSS feed or your monthly newsletter. This allows you to keep in constant contact which can eventually lead to a profitable relationship.

**Create a community:** One of the best ways to establish yourself as an expert in the beauty blogging community is to create an active community. This means you need a website design that encourages people to leave comments and interact with other fans of your blog. You should never close posts off to comments and should also respond whenever someone leaves a comment. This could get impossible if you get hundreds of comments, but in the beginning you should respond to everything.

**Making money:** To get compensated for the time you put into beauty blogging, you'll eventually need to have some form of advertising on your web-
site. If you create a proper design, you can better motivate your readers to read and click on ads, and this can lead to money for you.

Your content will always remain the most important part of your blog, but proper design can mean the difference between a successful beauty blog and one that is not.

**How can improving my theme help inspire my readers to take action?**

Although you want to have a lot of readers come to your beauty blog, it's more important to get your readers to take some action beyond simply reading what you wrote. Your writing can inspire action, but so can your blog design. You need to include in your design subtle clues that encourage visitors to click on ads, leave comments, purchase products, or contact you. This means fixing your design so it is easy to leave comments. Also, put ads above the fold so readers are more likely to read and click on them. Additionally, you should include in your design a method for readers to contact you. You never know what opportunities will come your way as long as you make it easy for someone to get in touch with you.

**How can I make my blog load faster?**

Think about when you visit a website. Isn't it annoying when it takes a long time to load? If you don't find it annoying, you are in the minority. One of the most common website complaints is a slow loading website. If you want to have a beauty blog that encourages people to come back, you want to make sure that the website loads fast. There are two key things to do to accomplish this.

First, compress the pictures that you use on your website. Pictures are notoriously slow in loading if they are large files. It's easy to shrink the image files; simply resize them in the Wordpress media library. A good rule of thumb is to use pictures that are no more than 200K in file size.
Second, install a caching plug-in. If your website happens to get a high level of traffic one day due to a link from another popular website, your system could crash. Installing a cache plug-in creates a low memory version of your webpage that is served up to users whenever the traffic load gets too high. This is a must-have for any serious beauty blogger.

**How can I make my blog more useful to my readers?**

There are a number of things you can do to make your beauty blog more useful to your readers other than having excellent content. Think about what your readers want and deliver that to them. Here are some possibilities.

**Beauty product links:** As a beauty blog, much of what you write about will be beauty products. When you find a product that you like, it's likely that your audience will want to try the product too. Whenever you write about a product, be sure to include a link to Amazon or other website where they can buy the product. And it is also helpful to have a link on your blog where people can easily search through all of your product reviews.

**Useful links:** The beauty blogging world is a community, and there are lots of great blogs out there. Include a list of beauty blog links that you like. This has the added benefit of letting other beauty blogs know that you are out there. Ideally, they'll link back to you. In addition to beauty blogs, include links to other websites that you think your readers will find interesting. Since we write a science based beauty blog, we include links to science websites that we think our readers will like.

**Social networking links:** There is no getting away from the fact that social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter are where many people on the Internet spend their time. You should have links to your social networking sites on your blog so you can become incorporated into this aspect of your reader's Internet lives.

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Contact button: Since your readers will look at you as an expert, they will frequently have questions for you. By adding an obvious contact button you can allow your readers to ask questions, which will make your blog into a valuable resource for them. And whenever someone sees your website as valuable, they will return.

These are just some ways you can make your website more useful. Think of the problems that your readers might have and then consider different ways that you can help solve them.
Chapter 6 - How can I protect my blog and keep it up to date?

**Why do I have to worry about updating my blog?**
If you've been blogging for this long you probably already realize the Internet is changing around you every day in ways that you can't even see. If your blog files are not kept updated to deal with those changes, you are screwed. You're screwed because you won't have the latest security patches in place, which means your blog will be vulnerable to hackers. You're screwed because some of the plug-ins that you use won't work anymore. And lastly, you're screwed because you'll be missing the latest functionality that your software can offer.

WordPress software, plug-ins, and themes form the Golden Triangle of updating. Your WordPress theme gives your blog its unique appearance; plug-ins let you do all kinds of neat stuff; and the WordPress installation itself is what runs your blog. You have to keep all three points of the triangle in perfect harmony or else your blog will be a mess.

**How do I make a back up copy of my blog in case it crashes?**
Before you start messing with updates, you need to know how protect your blog by backing up your blog's database file. Think of it like this: Your database file is like an Excel file with columns of info corresponding to each post & page. Wordpress uses that data to construct your blog. So backing up that file backs up your entire blog. There are 4 steps involved in backing up this file, but don't worry, they're easy steps.

They're easy because you can use a plug-in that does all the work for you. It's called WordPress Database Manager. Go to the plug-in download page, search for that name and download the plug in. Once it’s installed and activated, go back to the side bar and under Tools, you will now see “back up”
as an option. So click that and you’re taken to the control panel. First is an options panel. We just use the default settings so we don’t change anything here. So just scroll down....and you’ll see another options panel that asks you what you want to do with the backup file. We recommend either downloading it or having it emailed to yourself.

Once you’ve made that selection you can click “backup up now.” OR....you can scroll down again and schedule the backup to occur automatically. Either way the process is relatively painless. If you have any problems, consult the WP support page.

Once all your data is safe and secure, you’re ready to check to see which points of that Golden Triangle need updating.

**How often do I have to update my blog software?**

There is no “one size fits all” answer to this question. You’ll need to update as often as new versions are released. First you’ll need to check for available updates from your WordPress Dashboard. If you have any updates, you’ll see a badge appear here. You can also click updates to check the complete status of your WP install and all your plug-ins and your themes.

Lets look at plug-ins first. If you have any plug-ins that require updating, you’ll see a badge that tells you there’s a new version. You can just click through to update automatically, or you can check the details of the new version before you update by clicking here. After you click update, you’ll be asked for your FTP password, and then installation will begin. Then you see a message telling you the installation was completed correctly.

Follow that same process to update all your plug-ins. Okay, what about themes? It’s the same basic process: from the WordPress Updates page first select which themes you want to update, then click update and enter password info again. You’ll also see a message pop up if you did everything correctly.

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How do I update the current version of my WordPress installation?

The last point of the Golden Triangle is the most difficult. You'll see new versions of WordPress appear on the Updates page. You'll also see it at the top of the dashboard in what is called the “Nag Bar.” You can't miss it. Once you get “nagged” there are 3 or 4 steps you’ll have to take to install a new version of WP. Sometimes WordPress updates can be problematic because your server may not be running the latest software. So the first step in a new WP install is to check the requirements.

Now this isn't an issue very often, so if you want to skip this step and move right to the update process you can, but to be thorough, you should check with your hosting service to make sure they support the latest version before you proceed.

Fortunately, WP makes this easy by giving you a standard template you can just email to your hosting service. You can get the latest version of this from the WordPress support page.

http://wordpress.org/about/requirements/

Once you've confirmed the requirements are met, you can go to step 2, which is disabling plug-ins. WordPress recommends disabling all your plug-ins before upgrading to avoid any incompatibility issues.

Fortunately, that's not hard to do. If you only have a few plug-ins, you can simply go to your plug-in page, scroll through your active plug-ins, and click them one by one to deactivate them.

If you have a lot of plug-ins, you can use one of our favorite nifty little WordPress shortcuts. Scroll down to the bottom of the dashboard and you'll see a drop-down box that says “Bulk Actions.” Open that up and you'll see various commands that you can apply to more than one item at a time. If
you select all your plug-ins and click Deactivate, boom, you can do them all at once.

Okay, now that all the preparatory steps are out of the way you're ready to begin the actual upgrade. From the "Update WordPress" page, just click the button "Update Automatically" to begin. That's all you should have to do. If the automatic upgrade doesn't work for you, don't panic! Just go to step #4....which is manually updating WP. Okay, maybe you can panic a little bit, because this is rather complicated. You have to download and replace the WP files through an FTP program like Filezilla. You can search the web for tutorials to help you with this process. Again, we hope you don’t have to mess with this. Just be thankful you backed everything up!
Part 2: What do I need to know about creating content and running a blog?

Chapter 1 - How do I use WordPress to create posts?

How do I enter text/write posts in WP?

When you’re on the WP dashboard, look at the left sidebar. By clicking on “Post” you add a new post. This is where you enter the title, enter and format text, and so on. Although the text entry area isn’t labeled as such, you’ll see two modes to choose from in the upper right corner of the box: Visual and HTML. Visual is the one you’ll use most of the time for basic posting. It has the “Kitchen Sink”, which consists of two rows of formatting icons. (This is also not labeled unless you roll over the button.)

The HTML tab opens a more limited formatting bar but it allows you to insert code directly into your post. This is helpful if you’re manually adding hyperlinks for video or audio, or links to Amazon.com. Most of the time you can write posts just using the Visual mode.

You can type directly into the text entry area or you can cut and paste from other applications. (Tip: make sure you click on either the “paste as plain text” or “paste from Word” icon BEFORE you paste text from another program. If you don’t, you may accidentally paste in some snippets of code that can mess up your blog post.

Is it okay to use any image I find on the Internet?

We’ve just seen how to handle text in WP, but a blog post is pretty boring without graphics to catch your reader’s eye. So how do we handle images in WordPress? There are legal as well as a technical issues to consider.

First, the legal side: Is it okay to use any picture you want?
The quick answer is “no.” If an image is copyright protected you can’t use it without the permission of the owner, and that permission may involve paying a fee. Will you really get in trouble if you use copyright protected images? It’s kind of like driving over the speed limit. The odds are you probably won’t get caught, but if you do, you’re in trouble. If you’re caught speeding you have to pay a ticket and you could lose your license. If you’re caught using copyright protected images then you may have to pay legal fees (you could be sued) and you might lose your blog’s “license” to advertise with Google because they could prohibit you from using Adsense. Plus, as of the time of this writing Google is even considering lowering your search rank if you’re improperly using copyright protected material.

Note: this information is for direction only - you should consult legal counsel if you have real concerns about the impact of using copyrighted material on your blog.

**How do I know if it’s okay to use someone else's image in a blog post? What kinds of images can I use?**

First, you could only use photographs or drawings that you create yourself. This approach works well if you’re doing makeup tutorials where you just post photos of how a certain nail polish or eye shadow looks on you. The problem is that it narrows your choices. By the way, if you are posting your own images you might want to consider “water marking” them with your blog URL. That just means you use some photoshop type program to put transparent text with your URL. That way, if your image is shared by anyone, it will help drive traffic back to your blog.

Second, you could purchase all the pictures you use. This gives you a wide selection of images but it can get very expensive. Individual images can cost anywhere from 50 cents to tens of dollars apiece.

Third, you could use images under the “fair use” law. Some owners have tagged their images with licenses that allow anyone to use them. One
popular type of licensing that you might have heard of is “Creative Commons”. If you choose this approach, we recommend you use Google’s special search function Creative Commons images. You can read more about that here:


**What kinds of images does WP support?**
The good news is that WordPress supports a wide variety of image types. All common formats are supported, like jpeg, tiffs, gif, and portable network graphics files. There are probably others as well, but these are the ones we’ve used. If in doubt, just try it. In some cases you might be able to convert the image to a different format using third party software.

**How do I make images the right size for my blog page?**
Once you’ve found an image and you know it’s the right format for WordPress, you have to size it properly. So let’s talk a little bit about image size and file size. It’s easy to confuse the two! Image size is measured by the physical dimensions of the pictures - either in inches or millimeters. File size is a combination of the image size and resolution - how many “mega pixels” in the image. For example, if you have a very large image at a low resolution, the file size will be small, but the picture may look fuzzy on your blog.

On the other hand, if you have a small image at a very high resolution, the picture will look great, even when you zoom in, but the file size may be so big that it causes your blog to load slower. You’ll have to play around with it to get the right file size, but a good rule of thumb to follow is that for a blog picture the file size should be between 25,000 bytes and 200,000 bytes (25K to 200K.)
Okay, so now you know that a blog image should have a certain file size. But you’re probably wondering what the dimensions of the image should be. The answer lies in how your blog is displayed. In the standard two column format of WordPress, the width of the main column is about 500 pixels. So, if you want an image to fill a column, make it about 500px wide. Half a column, size it to 250px and so on. We typically use images which are about 300px wide. (We use the Preview on our Macs to check image size, but you can look at the image specifications in whatever graphics editing program you use.)

**How do I add images to WordPress posts?**

Now we’re ready to upload the image to WordPress. The first thing to do is put your cursor where you want the picture to appear in the blog post. When WordPress uploads an image for you, it automatically inserts it exactly where the cursor appears.

Next, just click on the Upload/Insert icon. There are two ways that WordPress allows you to upload images from your computer. The first one is the browser uploader, which prompts you to use a standard file selection technique to get to the picture that you want to upload.

The second is using the drag and drop uploader. All you have to do is select the image you want and drag into the box within the dotted line, and then release. You’ll see that the file is uploaded.

Regardless of which method you used to upload, your image is now stored in WP’s Media Library. Over time, as you upload pictures for all the posts that you write, all those pictures (and any other media files you choose to upload) will be located in this media library.

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When you access images files through the media library, you can find a variety of information, like the file name, the type of image, the date you uploaded it, its dimensions and so forth. You don’t have to do anything with this information, but as you optimize your blog you’ll learn that search engines look at the file names for images in your posts. So, if you’re trying to rank for certain key words you may want to change the name of the pictures to reflect those keywords. You can also add alternate text to an image, which will show up when your readers hover their cursor over the picture.

You’ll want to take note of the link URL. If you’re using a more advanced WordPress theme than just the standard, they may use the image URL to allow you to place pictures in different places on your blog template. Nothing to worry about today, but just realize that the location of link URL could be important in the future.

You can also use the Media Library view to fine-tune the size of the image and how it’s aligned in your blog post. You can choose to have the picture have no alignment whatsoever, or you can have it left aligned, centered, or right aligned.

When you’re all done making your changes you’ll have to “Save” then “Preview” to see what the picture really looks like in the post. If it doesn’t look right, you can go back into the Media Library to edit it some more.

**What's the difference between writing, drafting and publishing a post?**

There are actually three different states that a post can exist in:

**Draft:** This can only be seen by you and other authorized authors of the blog. (Did you know that you can collaborate on your blog and have more than one person write a post?)
Published: This means it’s already visible to the public (or that it’s been scheduled for publication).

Pending Review: This means it’s still in draft mode and is waiting for review by an editor before it is published.

To change from one state to the other you just select the state and click “Update.” When you update the status to "published", you can publish immediately, or you can schedule a specific time and date for publication. Be careful! If you publish a post before you’re really ready it will be visible on your blog even if you’re not done with it.

Tip: You can also use the publish setting to change the author of the post.

What's the best time of day to publish a post?

It’s a little known secret: you should schedule your posts to “go live” one or two minutes after midnight on the day that you want them published. That maximizes your chances of being found quickly by search engines.
Chapter 2 - How can I make my posts look better?

Is there anything WordPress CAN'T do that a word processor can?

While WordPress is extremely powerful, you may have already noticed that it won’t do certain things for you that you can do in basic word processors. For example, you can’t change the typeface of fonts. You can't really do much to change the size of the font. And we dare you to try and change line spacing or kerning (which is space between characters.) You just can’t do it.

The reason WordPress can’t do all this is essentially because browsers control how fonts are rendered. And your blog contains code called a Cascading Style Sheet (CSS) that controls the fonts on your blog and tells the browsers what to render. Changing fonts requires rewriting the CSS code which beyond the scope of class.

How do I change the fonts/text color in blog posts?

Even though WordPress doesn’t allow total control over fonts, there are a couple of tricks you can use to control text, which will make your posts more readable. There are really three approaches to adjusting text within WordPress. The first you already know - it's using the toolbar. This is the easiest thing you can do, but it's also the most limited. All that WordPress allows you to change are the color of the font and a few preset sizes known as headings.

If you’re a little more adventurous, you can adjust the way your text looks using HTML box. Here’s what the code looks like. WordPress has a neat little tutorial that shows how to change the size and color of fonts, and in some cases even the typeface, using this approach.

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Finally, and we stress that this is not for the faint hearted, you can install a plug-in to help you change the fonts on your blog. This gives you the ability to change anything you want in terms of how your text looks. However it's really really difficult to do and we don’t recommend it. If you're up for the challenge, try this installing the Webfonts plug-in through the WordPress dashboard.

**Which are the best fonts to use on my blog?**

Now you may be thinking, “Okay, I've got the ability to change text, but what should I make it look like?” Here are a couple of tips you might find helpful: Firstly, if you want to find out what font your blog is currently displaying you can do that by using the “View Page Source” command in your Browser. In FireFox that’s under the “View” pulldown menu on the toolbar.

Secondly, if you'd like to experiment with a new typeface, but you're not familiar with how it looks, you can go to [www.typetester.org](http://www.typetester.org), choose a typeface and the font size, and it will show you exactly how it will display.

Thirdly, the WP tutorial we showed you explains how to change the color of fonts just by placing a different number in the HTML code. Well, here's a website that lets you preview a whole rainbow of colors. Once you find one you like, it gives you the number to paste into your blog.

And finally if you’re working with fonts, you might find it's a little confusing understanding sizing. There are a couple of different ways the font sizes are measured. Here’s a website [http://pxtoem.com](http://pxtoem.com) that converts fonts between different measurement units.

**How can I make my posts easier to read?**

One of the easiest and most impactful ways to make posts easier to read is to add headers. Headers are titles that break up blocks of text and give your post a better flow. These titles are typically in a larger font or have bold emphasis added to make them stand out. Headers are important be-
cause online readers are not very patient. A long block of text is hard to read and will bore them, and they’ll be gone in seconds. Headers help you break up text to make posts more readable.

There are two approaches you can use when crafting your headers. The first is just to use them as simple outline-like titles. These break up the text but don't really add much information. The second approach is to use headers with little snippets of your content to help your reader quickly understand what you're writing about.

For example, we recently wrote a post on using human shampoos on dogs. Using the first approach of simple outline headers, we might add headers like “Question,” “Answer” and “The Bottom Line.” But we could also use the second approach with headers that provide more information, like these: “Is human shampoo safe for pets?”, “Baby shampoo is mild enough for dogs,” and “Don’t leave too many chemicals on your pets.”

When we use the latter approach our readers can understand the general content of the entire post just by skimming the headers. And if they like the content they’ll stick around and read more.

**What's the best writing tip to capture my readers attention fast?**

In addition to using headers, you should also understand how to lay out your posts to improve readability. Studies have shown that people read online content differently. They've actually tracked how people’s eyes move across a webpage as they read and they’ve found that they follow a rough “F” shape as they scan a page.

These eye scans use red to show hot spots where readers eyes spend the most time, yellow to show warm spots that get less attention, and a white background to show what is barely read at all. These studies show that you should place your most important content within the F stem on the left side.
of the page to increase the chances that your audience will actually read what you want them to.

Let's look an example of how you can use the understanding of this F pattern to improve your writing. In our example post we wrote a heading that said “Don't leave too many chemicals on your pet”.

If it's true that readers may only look at the first two or three words in a sentence, then in this case they'll read something like “don't leave” and maybe a little bit of chemicals. That’s not very enticing and they may stop reading further - they would miss the most important information. But what if we re-wrote that header using our understanding the F pattern? It could something like “Pet danger: chemicals”, which will hopefully get them to read the rest of the line.

See the difference in how these two headers could quickly catch readers’ attention? So understanding the F pattern and formatting your content to fit it can improve readability.

**How can adding pictures improve readability?**

Another way to break up blocks of text and improve the readability of a post is to include graphics. An eye catching picture can certainly attract readers. But what kind of graphics are appropriate to use? Here are a couple of tips:

You can use a picture that's illustrative of your content. For example, If the point of your post is a product review, you certainly could feature a picture of that product. Or if you're doing a tutorial how to paint your nails to look like cupcakes, you can include pictures showing the process.

Or, since we're talking about beauty, you can use some kind of “glamour” shots. These are perhaps the most common of all beauty blog images. And of course you can always just choose a picture purely for its entertainment value. The point is that pictures are another way to break up text.

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What is the inverted pyramid style of writing? What's the best writing style to use?
Another way to improve readability is put the most important information in your post first. This is called the “front loading” or inverted pyramid style of writing. For example, look at our dog shampoo post.

Our normal style of writing is to introduce the question, give a little background information and then conclude with the answer. But if someone stops reading before they get to the end they miss the most important information.

If you took this same post and diagrammed the information using this inverted pyramid framework, putting the information from most important to least important, it looks something like this:

You can save time/money by buying baby shampoo for your dog.
Baby shampoos are not the same as adults’.
Here’s some more details on how they work.

If we rewrote the post in this form and someone stopped reading after the first paragraph, that’s okay. They already have the most important info that we want them to have.

How do I write better headlines?
When it comes to writing better posts, one of the most important parts to get right is the headline: great headlines will get more people to read your posts.

Why is that? Well, the headline can attract your audience’s attention to get them to read the post in the first place. In fact, a really good headline makes your post more sharable on social media. (We’ll let you in on a se-

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cret: we’ve actually retweeted or reposted articles just based on the headline, without even reading your text. That's the power of a good headline.)


They have 22 different templates you can use to write really catchy headlines. Here are a few examples:

What everyone ought to know about...
The secret of ....
If you don’t... now, you’ll hate yourself later.
Who else wants....
Little known ways to...

Now let’s apply some of these templates to the dog shampoo post that we’ve been using as an example in previous questions. Instead of “Can I Use Human Shampoo on My Dog” the headline could look like this:

“How to clean your dog without expensive pet shampoo”

“Do you make this mistake when you wash your dog?”

“A little-known secret about dog grooming”

“Warning: you may be wasting money on pet shampoo” and

“Get rid of expensive pet shampoos once and for all”
As you can see, the Copyblogger templates are great ways to jump-start your creativity and craft powerful headlines.
Chapter 3 - How can I communicate what my blog is all about?

What is a tagline and why do I need one for my blog?
A tagline is simply a short, memorable description of what your blog is about. It’s typically found in the header of a blog. For example, the tagline for the Beauty Brains blog is “real scientists answer your beauty questions.” Here are a few more examples from other beauty blogs:

Afro Bella: All shades of beauty

My Woman Stuff: There are no ugly women, only lazy ones.

Gala Darling: The radical self love project

We have 3 rules for creating a great tagline:

First, keep it short. You should be able to convey your blog’s essence in 5 to 10 words so it’s easy for others to share. Second, make it catchy so it’s easy to remember. Third, it should be descriptive of what your blog is about. You should focus on being informative, not overly cute and clever.

The key is to distill down the essence of why your blog is different. Remember there are over 7000 beauty blogs in the world, and you want to make sure yours stands out from the others.

What is a logo and why do I need one?
What is a logo? It’s a picture that identifies a brand - think of the famous Nike “Swoosh.” In the case of a blog it’s typically used as the header on your landing page. A logo is primarily a graphic (which can be some kind of stock image or something you’ve custom designed) and typically includes some text. At the very least the name of your blog. Perhaps most impor-
tantly, your logo is the first impression that your readers will have of your blog. It’s the first thing they see when they visit you. A strong logo can not only communicate what your blog is about but can establish a “brand identity” that you can use should you ever decide to create products of your own, like an e-book for your readers to download.

A strong logo should have two basic characteristics. It should be eye-catching. The header is likely to be the first thing they see when they land on your page, so it really needs to catch their attention. And it also needs to be “relevant.” In other words, the logo should convey what your blog is about. A good logo teases readers with a taste of your content, and the visual and the tagline should compliment each other to give your reader a good idea what the blog is about almost instantly.

**How can an avatar can help communicate what my blog is about?**

Avatar is a thumbnail image that represents you and your blog. It’s usually a small graphic usually set to a specific small number of pixels. You can think of an avatar as your blog’s “business card.”

Avatars can be set to be globally recognizable so anytime you leave a comment on another blog your avatar is visible. Your avatar is there to indicate who wrote the comment.

Depending on how you designed your logo, your avatar may just be a subsection of your header. For example, the Beauty Brains avatar is the “brainy lady” caricature that is part of our header.

You can use whatever image you choose, but it should represent what your blog is about. Some bloggers use their own personal picture, some use a cartoon representation of themselves, and others use symbols. We recommend using some portion of your blog header as the avatar. This provides a consistency in your brand imaging. But there's no single right way
to do this; if you prefer to use your own picture, as many bloggers do, that's perfectly fine as well. This question gets a little trickier if you have multiple authors on your blog. Having a single image represent your blog gives you consistent branding no matter who is doing the writing. On the other hand, if you have a different picture for whoever is doing the writing it may be a little confusing to readers who stumble across you on other blogs.

**How do I create an avatar for my blog?**

Firstly, prepare your image, making sure it’s sized appropriately (avatars typically are displayed as 80px by 80px.) You can use part of your logo, download an online image that you like, or use a picture of yourself. You can use whatever graphics editing software you want.

Then, all you have to do is sign up for a Gravatar account ([https://en.gravatar.com](https://en.gravatar.com)) to create your own globally recognized avatar.

Once you’re done, on any blog that recognizes gravatars (which is quite a few!), readers will automatically be able to see that you’ve left a comment. And, if they click on your gravatar it automatically takes them to your website. It’s like leaving a mini calling card where ever you go.

**Why do I need an "About" page?**

Every blog should have an About page, because that’s where many new readers go when they discover you. A well crafted About page should contain the four following elements:

An *introduction* that tells your readers who you are.

An *explanation* of why you’re here and the purpose of your blog.

An *invitation*, or call to action. For example, you could invite readers to subscribe to your RSS feed or follow you on social media.
Information like FAQs, additional contact information, or even your Disclaimer Policy.

Read this link: http://bit.ly/dl76Ht to learn more, especially to learn about the 3 kinds of people who read your about page. It also teaches you to anticipate the questions that each of these groups of people will want to have answered.
Chapter 4 - Should I use audio posts (aka podcasts)?

**Why should I do a podcast/audio post for my blog?**
There are a number of reasons that a podcast can be beneficial to your blog. These include growing your current audience, making a strong bond with your fans, getting media attention, and helping to establish yourself as an expert.

Recording a podcast will connect you with a new audience that your blog may not necessarily reach. There are people on the Internet who do not read blogs but listen to weekly podcasts. It should be your goal to talk to that audience.

The other nice part about podcasts is that there is less competition than there is for blogs. There are literally hundreds of thousands of beauty blogs out there. There are less than a thousand beauty podcasts. If you keep at it, you could easily become a top beauty podcast.

Podcasting allows your readers to hear your voice, and this can create a more powerful connection to you than your writing alone. In this way, it can make for much more loyal fans.

A podcast is also a way for the media to find you. When reporters are looking for experts in a field, they will often look to iTunes or podcasts to find those experts. It doesn't even matter about your actual qualifications. If you have a podcast that is popular, you are automatically seen as an expert on a topic.
Finally, podcasts can give you a new source of revenue. You can get a sponsor for the podcast and get paid to do it. You can also package up your podcast and sell episodes through iTunes, or even sell the complete set on a CD or DVD.

**What equipment do I need to podcast?**
The main equipment you need for podcasting is a good microphone / headset and a computer. The software that is best to use is something like Garageband if you use a Mac. If you use a PC, the free software called Audacity is a great option. Also, to do interviews on your podcast, Skype is a great way to connect. If you already have a computer, you can get started with a podcast for less than $30.

**What preparation/script do I need?**
When creating your podcast, it helps to have a written script. You do not have to read from it word for word, but having a script will make your show sound more professional. Even if you don't have a script, at the very least write an outline for the topics you are going to cover. When writing a script remember that you are writing for audio. This is different than writing for a reader. Here are some basic tips to keep in mind.

Choose simple words that are easily understood. Long words are more difficult to understand and will turn off some of your listeners. Shorter, mono-syllabic words are better because they are quicker for the ear to recognize. For example, use the word “use” rather than “utilize.”

Your sentences should be shorter and uncomplicated too. Long, complex sentences make it harder for your audience to understand. Generally, you should not use the words “but” and “and” to connect your compound sentences. Make them two sentences instead.

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Always type out your script so it is easy to read and practice reading through it a couple times before you record. But don't worry too much about mistakes. Remember you can always re-record sections of your podcast and splice them together later.

**How do I record a podcast?**

Recording a podcast is easy once you get everything set up. Plug in your microphone, start up your recording software (Garageband, Audacity, or whatever else you want to use), then push record. If you have written a script, start reading it in as natural a tone as you can. Try to minimize the 'uhs' and 'ums' and remember to breathe.

You should be sure your surroundings are quiet and that there is a minimal amount of external noise. Having a good headset microphone will help reduce noise picked up from your surroundings, but nothing is better than being in a room with minimal external noise.

It is up to you how long you want your podcast to last. Most shows range anywhere from 10 minutes to 30 minutes. At the start, we suggest that you go with a shorter show. It will be easier to keep creating content if you save some for future shows. Plus, most listeners drop off after listening for 10 to 15 minutes, especially if the topic is not interesting to them.

You should follow a format for your show, which includes an introduction, the main topic, and an ending. Remember to give your name and the name of the show in the beginning. It is also nice to say which show number it is and give the date. During the main topics, try to talk about one thing at a time. Jumping all over to different topics is jarring for some listeners. However, some podcasts can work like that. In the ending, be sure to announce any upcoming news, give a good-bye and remember to repeat.

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the name of the show. You want your listeners to remember and come back.

**How do I edit after recording?**

After you are done recording using Audacity, save your raw recording. Typically, this is saved as a .wav file. Listen to the show and remove any mistakes that you made. It is useful to clap your hands in front of the microphone when you've made a mistake. This will create a large spike on the wave file and you will be able to visually see exactly where you need to cut out a mistake.

You may want to remove the 'uhhs' and 'ums' and other long pauses, but don't remove too many. Having a few natural speech breaks will keep the recording sounding natural. Just don't leave so many in that the show is difficult to listen to.

Adding theme music at the start and ending of the show will also make it sound more professional. Music also gives cues to the audience about what is coming up. It makes the whole thing more enjoyable for the listener.

When you are finished editing, save the file as a .mp3 file. This is the best compression format and will make uploading it more efficient. Remember to give each show its own unique number code. Nearly everyone picks a sequential number system. This lets your audience know how many previous shows you have and will encourage fans to go back and listen to whatever they've missed.

**How to I upload audio files to my blog?**

Uploading your file is easy. Open up your FTP software (the easiest choice is Filezilla which you can download for free.) Then drag and drop your fin-
ished .mp3 podcast file to a podcast folder that you've made on your server. Get the url of the file, then open up your Wordpress blog and go to the dashboard.

You should install a podcasting plug-in called Podpress. Then start a new blog post. Near the bottom of the post menu you will find the Podpress menu. Enter the url of your podcast file and your podcast will now show up in your blog post. Write a blog post introducing the show and give any show notes such as links, product mentions, or contact information for the interviewee if you have one. Once you hit 'publish', the podcast will be live.

**How do I get listed on iTunes?**
If you use the Podpress plug-in, it automatically sends information about your podcast to iTunes. However, iTunes will not list your podcast until you have at least 6 shows, so it may take some time to show up.
Chapter 5 - How can I spice up my blog with video posts?

Why are video posts good for my blog?
You may not realize it, but video posts should be an important part of your blogging strategy. Why? First, because they can drive traffic. If you don’t believe us, just pay attention to how many YouTube videos show up in your search results the next time you Google something. Clearly Google weights these search results differently. Having a video presence can help your blog rank higher in search engines and that's better for your traffic and for monetizing your blog.

Also, video posts can give your blog visibility in other channels. Someone might share your video on YouTube, on Twitter or on Facebook, where they may not share a traditional text post.

And lastly, videos are a way of providing better service to your readers. Some people have different learning styles. Some prefer to learn through text; others, through audio or video. You're serving your audience better by offering your content to fit their different learning styles.

What kind of videos can I do?
Most beauty blog videos are typical “turn on the webcam and talk about your favorite product” type of videos. These mini “live action” videos are great because you can make them elaborate by splicing multiple scenes together and adding transitions, special effects, and even background music. This type of video is a lot of fun to do, but it's also a lot of work.

If that’s too much work for you (or if you prefer not to be “on camera”), then here’s another approach you might find helpful: make a basic and easy to do PowerPoint style video. You don't need to worry about many of the mechanics of creating a video if you're just doing a screen capture of a Pow-
erPoint slideshow. You don't even need a camera! Yet they're still informative and entertaining.

By the way, pay attention to the length of these videos. We’ve found that shorter videos work better. No longer than 2 or 3 minutes. Keep it short!

**What kind of camera do I need to do a video post?**

Not so many years ago it was really a luxury to be able to take video from your computer. Today, you have a number of options.

WebCams are now dirt cheap. You can get an inexpensive one for around $20 or so. And many newer computers and lap tops have a built-in camera. You don't even need any special software and they’re really easy to use. However, most webcams produce only average quality images and, importantly, they don't let you move around while you’re filming. You’re pretty much stuck at your desk.

A handheld video recorder is another option. These record higher quality, even High Def, video and they can easily be carried around, so you can film in front of your bathroom mirror or even outside. Either of these options will make a fine camera for you.

(One more note about equipment: depending on your camera choice, you may need an external microphone. There are a number of great models on the market which aren’t that expensive.)

We recommend starting with the cheapest and easiest option you can get your hands on, so you can get started as soon as possible. You can always upgrade your equipment later if video posts work well for you.

**How do I create a script and prepare to make a video?**

To make a video, you’ll need a “script.” Now don't freak out, we’re not talking about a 25 page single-spaced manuscript. When we say a script, we
just mean you need to have a clear idea of what your video will include. Here are 3 suggested scripting approaches:

You can make it as simple as just talking off the top of your head. If you have a good sense of what you want to say, there’s no need to have any prepared material before you begin shooting. This approach probably works best for product reviews, because you’re just sharing your experience of the product with your viewers.

If you’re doing something a little more complicated, like a tutorial or an educational video, you may want to outline exactly what you’re going to say before you begin filming. Having a rough outline for a script is very helpful for this type of video. You can just scratch something out on a piece of paper or type it up in a word processor. If you’re using PowerPoint, the presenter’s notes function is extremely helpful. If you want something that gives you a little more outlining flexibility, there are a number of outlining software packages that you can use. Our favorites are Omni outliner and carbon fin outliner.

If you’re planning a very elaborate video, in addition to outlining the script, you may even want to plan out your video shots. If that’s the case, you might benefit from a technique known as storyboarding. This is how film directors layout the shots for a movie. Again, there are a number of software options that can help you if you choose to go this more advanced route.

**How do I "set the stage" to shoot a video?**

Once you have your equipment and you know what your video’s about, you’re ready to set the stage and begin filming.

We use the term “stage” very loosely. You just need a place where the camera can be set up to capture everything you want to film. If you’re doing it at your desk, it’s pretty easy, but if you’re planning on filming in your bathroom or in another location, you may have to be a little creative in terms of
camera placement. A tripod may even be in order if you're using a hand-held camera.

Likewise, you'll need to be careful with lighting. While you don't need any kind of professional set-up, if your lighting is too bright, you'll wash out a lot of detail in the video. Conversely, if there's not enough light in the room, you'll have dark patches which will make it hard for your viewer to see you and the important parts of your story. It's always prudent to do a short test shoot to check lighting conditions before you spend a lot of time filming the video.

Similarly, you'll want to do a sound check to make sure that the volume level for recording sounds good. You may have to play around with microphone placement as well.

Even if the lighting and sound conditions are perfect, it's still a good idea to do a test shoot - a few seconds of video just to troubleshoot any other problems. It will save you a lot of time redoing snippets of video, and in the end, you'll have a higher quality product.

Lastly, once the footage is complete, make a back-up copy. This protective step will save you a lot of headaches. Trust us, whatever can go wrong will go wrong. If you're making changes to the file to add special effects, you may corrupt the data in the file. Even if you're not touching the file at all, you still might accidentally delete. Make a back-up!

**How can I add special effects to my video posts?**

Even if you're a novice moviemaker, you can use a few relatively simple special effects to make your videos look more professional.

If your video is short and simple, you may be able to film in a single take. But if video is longer or you're doing a multi step process, like a tutorial, it's likely that you'll have to film multiple segments and cut and paste them together.

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If you are cutting and pasting segments, it’s likely that you want to add some transitional effects in between. You may want one image to wipe the other off the screen, or you may want one image to fade into another.

Even in a video medium it’s still helpful to have some textual cues to help the viewer follow along. So adding titles and captions to videos is also important.

Once you’ve got all the visual elements in place, adding background music is a nice touch that really gives your video a professional feel. Of course, be careful not to choose music that will be too polarizing for your audience. Also, make sure you're following respective copyright laws.

Of course, the exact details of how you do all this video editing depends on the software package you’re using, but you don’t need to spend a lot of money on fancy video editing software. Both the Apple and Windows platforms offer a couple of pretty solid, free, entry-level programs. However, if you are the creative type you might be able to plus up your videos using a more powerful program like Screenium which sells for about $40. And our personal favorite is Camtasia which costs about $100.

**How do I upload videos to my blog?**

Once you've finished your video masterpiece, the final step is sharing it with your audience. There are two basic approaches you can use to post videos to your blog. You can self-host the video, which means you upload the file to your server and embed it in your blog post yourself. The advantage of this approach is that you control the video files at all times, and you don't have to rely a third-party like YouTube or Vimeo. The downside is that this self hosting is rather complex and requires at least a basic understanding of FTP uploading programs. It also requires the use of WordPress plugins.
The other option is to rely on one of the third-party video hosting services, with YouTube being by far the most popular. The advantage to these programs is they're much easier use - you can quickly get a video up and running on your blog. In addition, as we discussed the beginning of the lesson, you get some benefit from search engine results with a YouTube video.

There is a disadvantage, but not a big one. You do lose some control over your video files, although it's not likely that YouTube is going to crash tomorrow. You also get stuck with the third-party logo on your website, which some people may be concerned is distracting to viewers and makes the site look a little less professional. Personally, we wouldn't worry too much about that. We would recommend the YouTube approach wherever possible.

If you are the adventurous type, there are two plug-ins you might want to look into: PodPress and Video Embed plug-ins.

If you go with the YouTube approach, it's this simple: First, of course, you'll need a YouTube account and you'll have to upload your video. There are plenty of online tutorials on how to use YouTube. Once the video is up and running on YouTube, you simply go to that page and click the SHARE button. Then click on Embed. This will reveal a snippet of code that you need to copy. Now all you have to do is go to your WordPress dashboard, open up a new blog post, select the HTML view and paste your code in. Just be careful - don't do this in the view mode, because it won't work. Then you click save and publish just as you would with any text-based post. And, voilà, there's your video, ready for the world to see.

Where can I get music to use in my videos?

Here are two sources of royalty-free music you can use to score your mini movies:

http://www.seabreezecomputers.com/tips/freemusic.htm

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Chapter 6 - Why should I use guest posts?

When is it a good idea to use guest bloggers to generate content for me?
The main benefit of using guest bloggers is to help you generate content. Remember, your blog is a content monster that you have to feed constantly. Guest bloggers can help you prepare a couple of meals.

As they say, "content is king", but there's a lot of other work involved in running a blog besides writing posts. So every time you can give yourself a little break from writing, it lets you focus on monetization, design, and building traffic.

Hosting posts by other bloggers is also a great way to build relationships that have additional benefits:

You should see increased traffic because the regular readers of your guest blogger will be likely to check out their post.

If someone guest posts for you, they'll be more likely to reciprocate and host your post on their blog, which helps you drive even more traffic.

You may find increased comments and discussions on your posts from the faithful followers of the guest bloggers.

And you'll find that the bloggers you connect with are excellent subject matter experts. Now, if you're writing a post about beauty product that you're not familiar with, you can reach out to your guest blogging buddies for some help.
How do I find people to write guest posts for me?

Recruiting guest bloggers is all about relationship building. It's always good to begin by reaching out to potential guest bloggers by leaving comments on their blog or striking up a conversation through Twitter, Facebook, or email.

Once you've identified other bloggers that you think are good enough to write for your blog, you may have a little difficulty in convincing them to actually do it. If they're a good blogger they're probably facing the same “feed the monster” problems that you have. So, you need to focus on what's in it for them.

Most likely, you have two things to offer them:

- Increased traffic by exposure to your readers.
- And a little bit of Google juice.

Having your Google analytics reports handy to impress them with your traffic may be helpful. You may also be able to entice them just by offering them a little extra editorial free speech.

Let us explain that. There are some blogs that are exclusively focused on fragrance, for example. The writer of one of those blogs may jump at the opportunity to write an article on her favorite lipstick for you. That's not something that would fit with her blog niche, but may be something she's passionate about.

So, the most straightforward approach is simply to ask them to write about something they choose and see how they respond. Some people will find this approach too open-ended. For those individuals, you want to have a list of proposed topics prepared. It's usually better just to list one or two suggestions, because too many choices can be paralyzing.
What kinds of guests posts can I use?

We like to use three different kinds of guest posts on our blogs.

First, the interview approach: If you find that other bloggers are too busy to write fresh content for you, then you could interview them. Just ask them if they would have time to answer a few short questions about themselves and their blog. This interview approach makes it very easy for them and you. Just email them with a list of questions based on the 5W's:

Who are they?

When did they start their blog?

What is their blog about?

Why do they like blogging?

Where did they get their ideas?

If you're really ambitious, you could interview them on Skype, record the call, and create an audio post for a podcast.

Second is the rewrite approach. If your desired guest blogger doesn’t have time to even answer questions, then you could just paraphrase something they've already done. Just contact them and tell them you really enjoyed a specific post and ask them if it's okay if you re-write it and share it on your blog. Of course you’ll include a link back to their original post.

Third, and quickest and easiest, is the feature approach. Simply write up a feature on their blog. Just script a few words about why you like them and add links to some of your favorite posts. You don't even have to ask their permission because all you're doing is highlighting their website. You get a quick post and they may even be flattered enough to write something for you in the future.
How do I set up editorial guidelines for my blog posts?
With any guest post request it's also helpful to provide editorial guidelines. For example you should tell the guest writer...

How many words the post should be.
What your link back policy is.
Whether or not you’re expecting them to provide graphics for the post or if you'll take care of that.

By providing these editorial guidelines you can answer their questions before they even have to ask them.

How are guest posts bad for my blog?
However, there is a downside to guest blogging. If you over do it and rely on guest posts too frequently, you can dilute the unique voice of your blog. This can confuse readers about who you are and what you're about. Believe it or not, we actually got complaints from our readers when we used guest bloggers who weren't right for our audience. So don’t over do it!

Another potential issue is that you can get bogged down in spending too much time soliciting guest posters. Remember the objective here is to give you MORE free time. We recommend systematizing the process as much as possible. Email templates are very helpful in reaching out to potential guest bloggers.

And lastly, be on the alert for offers from unsolicited guest bloggers. We get a few emails each week from freelance writers who want to have us publish their guest posts. We caution you against embracing this approach for two reasons:

First, these freelancers typically want a link back to a commercial site. That may dilute some of your "Google juice." Second, while these freelancers
may be talented writers, they're usually not subject matter experts in the area of your blog. This means you may end up with some off-topic posts that won't add any value for your readers. We believe in the long run these kind of posts that do more harm than good to your blog.
Chapter 7 - How can I get help with technical stuff for my blog?

How can I get someone to do the technical work for my website?

We refer to the process of getting someone else to do work for you as outsourcing. As a beauty blogger, there is so much work that needs to be done that you literally need other people to help you if you want to be as successful as possible. Bloggers have a variety of tasks to accomplish including writing, designing the website, getting advertisers, responding to comments, setting up their software, updating software, and more. You can't possibly get it all done yourself in an efficient and profitable manner and maintain any semblance of a normal life. Therefore, we recommend that you outsource as many activities as you profitably can.

The Internet makes finding good freelancers and outsourced workers easy. You can go to websites like Freelance.com or Elance.com. Both of these websites allow for you to post your job offer for free, and then freelancers will bid on how much money they would be willing to take to do the work you require. For website design jobs, 99designs.com is a great option.

The key to successfully working with freelancers is to have a specific idea of what you want them to do. If you want someone to set up your forum software or to design your website, you will have to tell them exactly what you want. Have an idea of what you want the end product to be and speak with them about getting it done.

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When is it worth it to outsource some of my work?
While you theoretically could outsource everything, there are some things that make more sense than others. Some things are so simple to do that it makes no sense to pay money to have them done. Other things are so personal to the tone of your blog that it doesn't make sense to have someone else do it. Here are some of the things that make the most sense to outsource.

**Technical challenges:** Most bloggers are writers, and that is what they enjoy doing. They are not necessarily technically inclined. Therefore, it makes sense to hire someone to do whatever computer coding or software installation you need done. Also, your website will no doubt experience some technical difficulties, and a good computer person can get things figured out and fixed much more quickly than you.

**Website design:** If you are graphically talented, then you might want to design your own website. However, most writers are not also good artists, so it makes sense to hire someone to design your website theme. Even if you have some skills in the area of graphic design, website design still requires some specialized computer know-how, so if you don't have that, you should work with someone who does.

**Logo design:** A good logo for your blog will make branding much easier and can lead to a more profitable website. You can design your own logo if you want, but having a professional do it is relatively inexpensive and faster.

**Blog post writing:** While it doesn't make sense to have someone else write all your blog posts, it does make sense to have some of the writing done by a freelancer paid for hire. Make sure that you retain the copyright on any content you hire someone to write for you. This is an excellent way to build your website page count and improve your search engine rankings.

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What non-blogging tasks are good candidates for outsourcing?
In addition to the blogging tasks like post writing, website design, and technical challenges, there are a wide variety of other tasks that you can outsource. These include marketing efforts, business operations, and project management.

Marketing efforts: To create a high-traffic, profitable beauty blog, you will need to devote a significant amount of marketing effort to making that happen. This means you'll need to go out and post comments on other blogs, advertise, create and manage social media channels, write guest posts and even speak at conferences. It can be helpful to hire someone to handle many of these activities. Social networking is a great thing to outsource, as is research into where to advertise.

Business operations: When you run your blog as a business, you will run into a number of things that require a professional. This may require a lawyer or an accountant. While you can do your own books, it makes a lot of sense to hire a professional accountant to ensure that you are following all the laws related to your blog income.

Project management: There are a number of things that go on with your blog that are beyond writing posts. Of particular importance are your affiliate programs. You may be involved in dozens of affiliate programs, and it is helpful to have someone to manage all of those to ensure that you are getting links put into your posts and getting paid. Additionally, if you wish to turn your blog into a book or start publishing and selling ebooks based on your blog, having someone to help is tremendously helpful.
What should I NOT outsource?
While you can outsource everything, there are a number of things that do not make sense to outsource. For example, anything that you can do quickly (less than an hour of your time), you should not outsource. It just makes more financial sense to do it yourself. Outsourcing does require your time to explain what you want done, so you should take that into account when deciding on whether you should do it yourself or hire someone else.

Another thing that doesn't make sense to outsource is relationship building. When you send emails out to other bloggers to connect with them, you should write them yourself. You should be the one writing comments on blogs if you are trying to build relationships. You can't outsource this, even though it can take a good deal of effort.

Finally, you should no outsource anything that is going to cost you more money than it hopes to generate. We had considered creating a smartphone app based on The Beauty Brains website. We still may do it, but we need to ensure that the amount of money it costs to have created is less than the amount of money that the product will generate. Right now, we haven't found the magic formula.

Where do I go to outsource work?
There are a wide range of websites that allow you to easily find freelancers who will help you get things accomplished. Here are some of the sites we've found the most useful.

**Elance.com:** This website has a community of programmers, marketers, writers, graphic designers and more who will bid on your job based on what they think it is worth. It is free to post your job description, and you accept
whoever you want to work with based on their price and reputation. Be careful; the lowest cost option is not always the best option.

**Freelance.com:** This is much like Elance, but it has a different community and is better for tasks like writing and content generation.

**99designs.com:** This website is an excellent site if you are looking to get a new website design or a logo created. You post a description of what you want and their group of artists will submit designs based on what you've written. You only pay for the option that you like best. In this case, you have to pay to submit a job but you are guaranteed a specific price and a number of options.

**Social networking sites:** One of the benefits of building a strong social network presence is that you can connect with a large number of people. When you need a specific job done, you can send word out to your social network and see if they can put you in touch with anyone. Linkedin.com is especially helpful for finding people to do jobs.

**Other blogs:** Contacting other bloggers and finding out who they used is a great way to find outsourcing help. You can also participate in online forums and make requests there. For blogging work, Pro-blogger.net has some excellent outsourcing resources.

**What is the process of outsourcing?**

To ensure that you are getting the most out of your outsourced worker, you'll have to do some homework upfront.

First, you need to know exactly what you want done. Think about how you want things to be after the person has done the work for you. What new functionality do you want added to your website? How many new blog
posts do you want written? How long should they be? What do you want your new design to accomplish? Think through exactly what you want done before posting your job.

After you've done that, post your job to the appropriate website. If you are using Elance.com, they walk you right through the entire process. It's easy. Realize that you will be paying a minimum of $50 to have any job done, so make sure you have enough work to do to make it worthwhile. For a design job, provide examples of websites that you like and even ones that you don't like.

When the responses to your request come in, be sure to look at the past history of the person bidding and decide based on their proposal and reputation whether you want to work with them. Just going for the lowest price could lead to disaster. This is not to say that the lowest bid is not a good one; price should just be one factor in your decision.

After you've chosen a worker, be sure to agree on timing and follow-up on all deadlines. It should be simple for you to get in contact with the person you are working for. If there is any breakdown in communication, you should worry. Also, do not make full payments for any job up front unless you have worked with the individual in the past. Holding back some of the payment ensures that you can maintain control over the quality of the finished job.

Finally, provide feedback for people who have done work for you. Whether it is good or bad, you should always leave at least some feedback. It is this information that you use in the future to decide who to work with. It only makes sense to let other people know what you think.
Chapter 8 - Should I start a Forum for my blog?

**What is a blog forum and do I need one?**

A forum is a place on your website where people can start discussions, post questions, and engage with other fans of your blog. While they can add some complication to your website setup, they are an excellent way to develop a community, increase website traffic, get automatically generated content, and create loyal fans. We recommend using free software to run your forum. Specifically, you can download a free forum from Vanillaforums.org.

**What are the advantages of adding a Forum to my blog?**

Although a forum is not critical to creating a successful blog, there are a number of advantages if you have one. Here are some of the key benefits.

**Build your community:** While you can develop your community through your blog comments, the commenting system makes it difficult for users to interact with each other. On a forum, users can create their own profiles, upload pictures, start their own discussions, connect with other people on the forum, and generally participate more in your website. And when readers interact with each other, they become more loyal to your website.

**Increase content:** One of the nice things about a forum is that every time someone creates a new discussion, it adds to the number of pages on your website. And the way that search engines work, the more content you have (pages) the higher your website will rank. It's difficult to create lots of pages by yourself, so it is a great benefit when you have a community that does it for you.

**Increase page views:** In addition to creating content, a forum will help increase the number of page views that your website gets. You can virtually...
double or triple your website traffic just by creating an active forum. Many advertisers set their rates by the number of page views that you get, so the more page views, the better.

Create ideas for blog posts: A great benefit of your own forum is that it lets you know exactly what your community is interested in talking about. And if you can write about what your audience is interested in, you can make your blog a much more useful website. We get a number of blog post ideas from discussions that are started on The Beauty Brains forum.

Get reader feedback: Forums are great places for your community to vent or provide useful feedback for your website. When we were developing our first book, we posted options for the cover art to find out exactly what our readers thought was better. We received some excellent feedback that we incorporated into the project. This had the added benefit of making our community feel like they had a hand in the development of the book and ultimately, that made many of them purchase it.

Where can I check out some examples of successful forums?
There are a number of beauty forum examples that you can explore. You should study these sites, and we encourage you to join them and start posting. See what you like about them and the things you do not like. It will help you in creating your own forum.

The Beauty Brains forum: This is our own forum, and we have thousands of members. There are more active forums, but we generate a couple dozen comments and discussions each day. We are constantly adding new features, so it is worth checking back often.

Makeup Alley: This is one of the largest beauty forums on the Internet. They have a large, active community and they do a great job of inspiring discussion. If you ever have questions about products, this is a great place
to see what users think. Of course, many of the users can be employed by beauty product companies, so you can't always rely on the information you read to be unbiased.

Make-up-forum: Here is an active beauty forum which is worth looking at. They've done a good job with the types of categories that they've used.

**How do I set up my own Forum?**

Setting up your own forum is not difficult, but it does take a few steps. We suggest that you install Vanilla-Forum, as it is the most versatile and flexible software. Many hosting companies have PHP Forum software, and this is also a great choice. If your host has the PHP Forum option, you could use it instead.

If you are going to go with a Vanilla forum, then you'll have to go to the website and choose the Vanilla hosting options. You can choose to have the Vanilla forum people run your blog, and if you can afford it, this is the best choice. But if you want to install it yourself, download the latest stable version, and follow the steps to install it on your blog.

After you have the software installed, pick the various categories for your blog. These will depend on the primary topic of your blog. For our forum we chose categories like Hair Products, Skin Products, Makeup, etc. You may or may not want to do the same.

Finally, start a few posts in each of the topics. Many people are afraid to start the first discussion, so if there are some discussions already on your forum, you will be more likely to get some action from your readers.

**What software do I need and how much does it cost?**

The software for creating your own forum that we suggest is Vanilla-Forums. You can get it at [Vanillaforums.org](http://Vanillaforums.org). The pricing ranges anywhere from FREE to $549 per month. We would suggest starting with the free op-

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tion, but they also have a $49 per month option. This is a good choice once your forum gets large enough to generate income.

**What do I need to know about running my own Forum?**

Running a forum is easy, but it will take some setting up to get your readers to participate. Here are some tips for creating a forum which is useful to your readers and beneficial to your beauty blog.

**Create a “how to use the forum” post:** Using a forum is not obvious to readers, so it helps to have a “how to” post right at the top of the forum. Every new visitor should easily be able to read and understand this post. The post should also include rules of conduct for your forum.

**Set up rules:** Speaking of rules, it is a good idea to set ground rules for what you do and do not allow on the forum. Most forums will ban swearing and online harassment. It is up to you, but personal insults should also be discouraged, as you do not want to set up an environment that people view as hostile. Also, warn people about spamming the forum. You don't want the forum to turn into a place where advertisers overrun your discussions.

**Filter the spammers:** Since forums attract spammers, be sure to filter and delete spam comments from your blog. You can minimize spam by filtering out spammers and bots during the forum application procedure. Then encourage forum users to report spam and take action whenever some message is reported as spam.

**Edit messages:** If a forum post violates one of your rules, feel free to edit or delete the message. While this is a form of censorship, remember, the forum belongs to you and your community. You are the final arbiter on what kind of behavior you want to allow on your forum. Your forum (and blog) is like your house. You expect a level of civility in your house and you should do the same with your online properties.

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User profiles: One way to make the forum feel more personal is to allow users to set up profiles. This will get them more engaged in the website and encourage participation.

Participate: Finally, a secret to creating a great forum is to participate yourself. People will like interacting with you, and your posts will spur other discussions. In the beginning, you will have to participate more. Respond to every discussion. When the forum starts working on its own, however, you can cut back on your participation. You should never completely leave the forum, though.

How do I get people to use the Forum?
Now that you've set up the forum, it will take some work to get people to use it. The key is to participate yourself and talk about your forum whenever you get a chance.

Respond to all comments: At the start of your forum, you'll want to respond to every comment or discussion that your readers post. Don't worry, it will not be a lot in the beginning. This will encourage participation and prompt more readers to join in on the discussion.

Start new discussions: Begin the forum discussions yourself. Ideally, they will be on topics that your reader will find interesting and have opinions about. Starting question discussions like “What's your favorite brand and why?” is a good way to encourage participation. Also, writing controversial opinions can get people talking too.

Mention forum in blog posts: To get people to go to your forum, mention its existence frequently on your blog. Be sure to include a button link that takes people directly to the forum. Talk about the forum in your blog posts and provide links throughout. The more traffic you can generate to your forum, the more people will use it.
Encourage people to use it: You need to encourage people to use the forum. Specifically write in blog posts “go use the forum” or “go leave a comment in our forums.” Some people have even gotten rid of their comment sections on their blog and instruct people to talk about the blog posts in the forum.

Publicize on social networking: Since you have Facebook and Twitter accounts set up for your blog, be sure to publicize your forum on those social networking sites. Mention the forum a few times a week.

Have special giveaways for forum users: Treating forum members in a special way will encourage others to join. Create giveaways or contests specifically for forum members and then publicize these on your blog and your social media sites. This will prompt people to join.

How do I monetize my Forum?
You can monetize your forum in the same way that you monetize your blog. Add advertising banners, affiliate links and product links. Whenever you discuss a product, be sure to include a link to it. Also, tell advertisers that you are accepting ads for your forum. Your forum may actually generate more traffic than your blog, so it is helpful to let potential advertisers know.
Part 3: How can I drive more traffic to my blog?

Chapter 1 - How do I measure my blog traffic?

Why do I need to measure traffic?

Traffic measurement is important because it can help you reach your beauty blogging goals. Whether or not you’ve explicitly stated them, if you’re like most beauty bloggers you have goals for your blog. The most popular goals are what we call the 3F’s: Fame, Fortune and Freebies.

Fame is about being an influential voice in the beauty world (or at least your little corner of it.) By measuring traffic you can get a good sense of the scope of your influence.

Fortune is, of course, about making money by blogging. Understanding how much traffic you have will allow you to charge more for the ads on your blog.

Freebies is about getting free products to try and about getting invited to beauty events and blogger conferences. The public relations firms that you work with to get freebies may ask you to provide them with a traffic report.

Why should I use Google Analytics?

You can measure blog traffic a number of different ways. We use Google Analytics for two reasons:

First, it’s free. There’s no charge for any of the services unless you’re getting over 5 million hits per day. (And if you’re getting over 5 million hits a day, you don’t need this book!)
Second, it’s a very powerful tool. It can track the amount of traffic, source of traffic, geographic location, and much much more, and present that to you in very easily understandable graph form.

How do I set up Google Analytics?
There are three basic steps to setting up Google Analytics on your blog.

Signing up

Navigate your way to the Analytics sign up page (http://bit.ly/XyXE91) and log in with your Google account information. Then click on “Products” and then “Analytics”, then “Sign up.”

After entering your account name and profile name and confirming you’ve read the terms of service, you’ll be able to click to create your account.

Get Tracking Code

This step takes you to a page that shows you tracking code that you need to install on your blog. If you were installing this code manually, you’d need to cut and paste this into the Editor on your blog. Luckily there’s a plug-in you can use: Google Analytics for WordPress.

Once installed, the plug-in will authenticate your account with Google. This is the step that retrieves that code we created in Analytics. When you click it, you’ll see a yellow highlight asking to grant permission. Click again to grant permission and you’re all set.

Next you're asked to enter analytics settings. First you select the account, and then you select the profile from the pulldown menu.

Once you've done that, you click on “update Google analytics settings” and you should see at the top “Google settings updated.” This means that the plug-in has put the code on your site and registered with Google, so you're now ready to check the analytics.

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Check installation

Navigate your way back to Analytics. Assuming you're in the same place you left off, you're still looking at the tracking code. Now that we've installed that code, there's a bit more to see. Actually, there's a LOT to see, too much in fact. Analytics can be paralyzingly complex. For now, here are the basics:

Click on “Home.” This shows you a dashboard view of your stats. The account navigation is in the upper left, the sign-out stuff is in the upper right, and the date selection field is right below that. The Standard Reporting tab is where you'll probably spend most of your time when you do have data to review.

How do I find out how many visitors my blog has?
Google Analytics allows you to measure traffic for different time periods. Navigate to the Standard Reports tab. Go to the Left Sidebar and select “Overview”. Now select whatever date range you desire. For example, you can select today, yesterday, previous week, previous month, year to date, and so on. You'll also notice that in addition to just "visits", you get more information: unique visitors, page views, pages per visit, etc.

How is my traffic changing over time?

You can also assess how your traffic changes over time. For example, just click on the date range and under “Custom”, select yesterday, and then check the “Compare to Past” box. You'll be able to read the traffic for both days on the graph. To compare previous weeks, just select last week and check Compare to Past.

You can even compare any two time periods you want, even if they aren't the same length of time. To do that you select custom, and select the exact dates you want to view. As before, you'll see the orange line graphs. Using
this technique, you can measure traffic for any period of days, weeks, or years.

**How many people are on my blog RIGHT NOW?**

One of our favorite features of Google Analytics is the “Real Time” function, which allows you to see how many people are on your blog right NOW.

Click on the “Home” tab, and there you'll see the sidebar options change. Select the Real Time beta, then overview. You'll see a display of how many people are clicking on your blog, right before your very eyes! This one's kind of addicting!

**Where does my traffic come from?**

While it’s important to know WHO is visiting your blog, it’s also essential to know WHERE they come from. Understanding how people reach your blog helps you determine how successful your traffic building efforts are. Here are a couple of exercises to show you what we mean.

If you’re like most bloggers, the majority of your traffic comes from Google searches. It’s great to be popular with Google, but it's also important to recognize who else sends people to your blog, because you might be able to increase traffic by developing a relationship with that source.

To see where your visitors come from, simply pick your date range, then go to the sidebar and select “Traffic Sources.” This will give you three drop-down options. Select “Sources,” and then “All Traffic.”

Now you’ll see a list of the top 10 sources of traffic to your blog, for the selected time period. As predicted, Google is right at the top. But you can find some very pleasant surprises here. For example, we found that we receive a lot of traffic from Signature 9, a site that rates blogs. We weren't even aware of this rating service before we read this traffic report!
What is “Organic” versus “Referral” traffic?

You'll notice that Analytics categorizes traffic sources as "organic" or "Referral." Direct is the easiest to understand, and direct means visits from people who typed your URL directly into their browser. Organic essentially means it's an unpaid search result - you didn't have to advertise to get this traffic. Referral means another site has a link to one of your pages.

So, a hit from Google/organic means someone typed a keyword search and one of your pages ranked high in that search (without you paying to advertise!) A hit from Google.com/referral comes from a link on a Google-related site like Google Groups.

We recommend you spend some time on the Analytics Help page for a deeper understanding of their traffic terms.

How can I tell if I have traffic coming from a specific source?

Once again you’ll use the “Traffic Sources” tab. Under “Sources”, select “All Traffic.” Scroll down until you see the search box and then type in the address of the website you’re interested in. When you click “search”, the results will show how much traffic is coming to your blog from the site in question.

Why should you care about this? Here’s a real life example we experienced with a blog ranking service on Invesp.com. We've always been ranked highly on their site, usually in the top 8 or 10 of all beauty blogs. But one day, we noticed our ranking was dropping to 12 or 13. Looking at their metrics, we realized they were missing our RSS subscribers. For some reason their bot wasn't picking up the 2000+ people who subscribe to our feed. We sent them an email, went back and forth a few times, and got the issue resolved. Almost instantly, we jumped to the number 4 spot! But was this time well spent? Using the technique described above, here’s what we did: Since they fixed the problem on January 12 of this year, we set a date...
range for the week starting the 12th and compared that to the previous week. The results showed that visits from this site went from 230 per week when we were ranked 11th to 581 per week when we were ranked 4th. That's an increase of 152%! It also tells us that this is an important site for us to monitor in the future.

**Which of my posts get the most traffic?**

Information about traffic to specific pages on your blog can be found under Content and then under Site Content, All Pages. This will display a list of your top visited pages for the time period selected. This is a very simple list to generate, but you'll want to spend a lot of time going through it to understand which posts are your top content!
Chapter 2 - How can I connect with other blogs to grow my traffic?

How do I find other bloggers to connect to?
Connecting to other bloggers is one of the quickest ways to build your blog and establish yourself as an expert. Blogging is a community effort, and if you are not part of the community, you can become isolated and irrelevant. Connecting with other websites is also important for getting you to rank high on search engines. Therefore, you need to be linked up or connected with other blogs and beauty blogs in particular.

There are a number of ways to find beauty blogs to connect with. The first thing you can do is to conduct a search on Google for “Beauty Blogs” or “list of beauty blogs.” This will give you a list of possible blogs to connect to. A website that is particularly useful for finding beauty blogs is this one that lists the top 50 beauty blogs: [http://www.invesp.com/blog-rank/Beauty](http://www.invesp.com/blog-rank/Beauty). Other useful search terms include...

Makeup blog
Cosmetic blog
Hair care blog
Skin care blog

Take a look through the list of beauty blogs that you find and visit the blogs. See what they are doing in terms of content, advertising, topic, and design. This will help give you ideas for your blog. Also, leave comments that are relevant to the blog. Then link to the blog if you like them. After a while, contact the blog and see if you can write a guest post, do an interview, or trade links.

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How do I connect to other beauty blogs once I find them?
Connecting with beauty blogs and other types of blogs is an important part of building your online presence and ranking in search engines. To connect with other bloggers, there are a variety of things you can do. Put together your list of blogs that you want to link to and try some of the following tactics.

Comment frequently: If you want to get the attention of another blogger, you should become a frequent commenter on their blog posts. Make sure that you post comments that are relevant and help advance the discussion. Simply putting a link to your own blog in someone else's blog comments is spam and will likely annoy the blogger rather than build a relationship with them.

Link to their blog posts: Another way to get the attention of a blogger you want to connect with is to do a blog post responding to something that they wrote. Be sure to include a link and talk directly about what they've written. Follow a number of blogs you'd like to connect with using your RSS feed and write blog posts whenever they have published something that interests you.

Ask to do an interview: One of the best ways to connect with a blogger is to write a blog post that interviews them. Bloggers are typically flattered when you offer to write about them, so this is a great way to get started. It also helps you write content for your blog and have a post that the blogger you are interviewing will link to.

Offer to do a guest post: You'll find that coming up with content every day is a challenge. Other bloggers have this same challenge, and it is for this reason that offering to do a guest post is an excellent way to make a con-
nection. If you do a good job, you may get asked to regularly contribute. This is a great way to build links and build your own audience.

**How do I leverage my relationship with other bloggers?**

Once you have established a relationship with another blogger, there are a number of things you can do to leverage that relationship into building your audience, improving your search engine ranking, and making money.

The number one thing that you want to do is to get another blogger to link to you. This will help improve your search engine rankings and will also alert their audience to your existence. Many of their visitors will check out your blog just because you are linked on another blogger’s website.

In addition to getting the link, you can work with the other blogger to come up with information products, publicize your own posts, and even help you sell products. You just have to remember, whenever pitching an idea to another blogger, to make sure there is some significant benefit to them. People are much more interested in helping themselves than they are in helping other bloggers.

**Where else can I connect with new readers besides other blogs?**

While other blogs are an excellent way to connect with new readers, there are a number of other places you can find potential new readers for your blog.

**Forums:** Participate in online forums where you can connect with a like-minded community. Make sure that you put your website’s link in your profile signature. This will help people find you. Also, when participating in forums, be sure to have something valuable to add.
Social networking: Another place you can find potential readers is through online sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. Be sure to have profiles on all of these sites, and always include a link to your blog. The more links you have to your blog on the Internet, the more likely someone will click on it and find you.

Newsletter: Creating a newsletter from material on your blog is a great way to generate new content and get your blog known in other places. You can distribute the newsletter via email and encourage readers to pass it along to friends.

Offline: One overlooked area for finding new readers is offline sources. If you have the opportunity to speak to a group be sure to mention your website. Create business cards with your website url on it and hand them out to everyone you meet. This offline traffic building is one of the most overlooked, but useful, sources of new visitors to your website.

Media: If your blog attracts enough attention, you may be contacted by reporters. Be sure to answer all reporter questions and get back to them right away. If you can get linked to a national news outlet, or even better, put on television or radio, you can get a tsunami of website traffic.

How can I connect better with my readers?
Getting people to visit your blog is one thing, but what you really want to do is to build a community. The way to build a community is to connect better with your readers. There are a number of things you can do to make connecting with readers easier.

First, make sure it is easy for people to leave comments and contact you. We’ve seen blogs that require you to sign in to leave a comment. Do not do this! You have to make commenting on your blog as easy as possible.

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If it gets even a little complicated, readers will just skip it and move on to another website. Getting comments is the key to building a blogging community of loyal fans.

Next, respond to comments. Whenever someone leaves a comment on your blog, respond to them. It can be as simple as “thanks for your comments”, though you should do more. In the beginning, it will not be hard to keep up with comments, but over time it can be much more challenging. However, if you get to the point that responding to all your blog comments is too difficult, you know that you've done a great job of building a community.

To keep people interested in your blog, be sure to remove spam comments. Nothing is more irritating to your blogging community than comments that do not add to the conversation. Leaving spam on your blog is bad for community building. It is also bad for search engine ranking, as it can lead to penalties which will keep your website obscure.

You can also build your community by writing more controversial opinions. Do not write things that you will regret. However, if you have an opinion that is different from the majority of people on the web, writing this will help boost dialogue on your post and could even attract the attention of blogs outside of your own.

One other thing that can help build your community is to use blog comments as the basis for future blog posts. We've done this a number of times on the Beauty Brains and the truth is, these posts have led to even more comments than the original.
Chapter 3 - How do I get my blog to rank with search engines?

Why do I need to understand Search Engine Optimization?
Search engine optimization is a process by which you write your blogs, craft your headlines, and design your website to ensure that search engines can find it and rank you higher in the search results. The basic idea is that the higher you rank in search results, the more likely someone will find your website and click on the link. You will find that search engines represent anywhere from 75 to 90% of your website traffic. Optimizing your website for search engines is a key move to build a successful website and beauty blog.

What is SERP?
SERP stands for search engine results page. When you go to Google and type in a search, the resulting page that is displayed is the SERP. Your goal is to get your website listed near the top of the SERP. In general, the higher you are on the SERP, the more traffic it will attract to your blog.

How do I get my blog to rank higher with search engines?
There are a number of ways to get your blog ranked highly on search engines. Some of them you will have direct control over, while others you will not. We will focus on things in which you have direct control.

While the exact criteria that search engines use to rank websites is a secret, there are some things that are obvious and well known. A number of these things you can have direct control over, and you should optimize your website so you maximize the chances that it will rank near the top.
Include important keywords: Search engines figure out what your website is about by looking at a webpage and figuring out the frequency of the words used. If you write the word “cosmetic” a number of times, then the website will rank you among all the other websites that use “cosmetic”. One strategy that used to work was to just repeat a word over and over in your blog posts. This may have been good for search engine ranking, but it was awful for your user's experience. Search engines have grown wise to this tactic and no longer rely much on word density to determine where your webpage should rank. It is best to write naturally but include keywords that you want to rank for. So, sometimes when you could use a pronoun, repeat the word.

Use good headlines: The web url of your blog page is typically the same as the headline so you want to be sure to use keywords in your headline. Also, your headline is what will be posted in the search engine results page, so it should encourage people to click on your website. Remember, you should write for people, but keep search engines in mind too.

Get links from other blogs: The other critical factor that influences your rank on search engines is whether you have links from other websites. This is why it is important to get people on other websites to link to your blog. In general, the more links you have to your website, the greater your chances of ranking high for a search engine term.

Write a lot: Finally, the more blog posts you have, the greater the chance that one of them will rank high for a certain keyword phrase. If you want to improve your rankings on search engines, write a lot more posts.

What's the difference between internal and external SEO?
Setting up things on your blog to maximize your search engine results is an example of internal SEO. You can (and should) optimize things like the
linking url, the headlines, and the content of all of your blog posts. The better you optimize, the more likely you are to rank higher. But search engine results are only partly based on the design of your website. They also depend on the links that you get from people who are not on your site.

External SEO are activities designed to get other websites to link to your website. This can be done by building a relationship with other bloggers, leaving comments on forums, getting mentioned in media reports, or even buying advertising links. Since you are attempting to get someone to do something for you, these are much harder than Internal SEO activities.

**How do I optimize my internal SEO?**

While there isn't a lot you can do to control how other websites link to you on the Internet, there are a number of things that you can do to the structure of your own website to ensure that search engines rank you higher.

The most important feature of your web page is the page title. This is the line of text that is displayed when your web page comes up in a search. It is often the same as your blog post headline, but it does not have to be. The key to this title is to include important keywords and to make it a title that someone would be interested in reading.

The next feature of a web page is the description. This is the 150+ character summary that is shown under the headline when your website shows up in search engine results. The summary should provide enough information that it encourages people to click through. It does not have a huge impact on page rank, however.

The content of your blog post is important for determining where you rank on any given search. Many search engines look at the density of keywords

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used as part of their ranking system. So if you are writing about nail polish, be sure to include the words “nail” and “polish” in a number of places.

Tags are single words or phrases that describe what your web page is all about. These help search engines place your web page, but they only have a limited impact on your page rank. Still, it is worth adding tags to all your blog posts.

A good internal SEO strategy is to pick some web pages that you want to rank high and add keywords throughout your website, linking to that specific page. The more incoming links to your page, the higher it will rank for any given search term. Also, be sure to include a link back to your home page using your blog title. At the very least, you should be the number one ranking website for your blog's title.

**What can I do for external SEO?**

Unlike internal SEO, you have limited control over what happens to your external SEO links. Remember, the more external links you have coming into your website, the better you search engine ranking.

Your primary goal is to get other websites to link to you using your preferred keywords. So, when a website links to our website, The Beauty Brains, we want them to include our link [http://thebeautybrains.com](http://thebeautybrains.com) and the keyword The Beauty Brains. Although we also like it when they use other words, we want to rank high for such keywords as “beauty scientists,” “cosmetic chemists,” and “beauty answers.”

There are a number of things you can do to get good external mentions that will help your search engine ranking. First, develop relationships with other bloggers and offer a link swap. Don't be surprised if they don't take you up on the offer immediately. Just link to them and eventually they may
return the favor. Second, you can comment on other people's websites. If you leave enough good comments, the blogger will often write about you. Third, write interesting things. If you write something that helps another blogger, you'll often get mentioned by them.

Remember the key goals with external SEO. Get lots of links from lots of websites using your most important keywords.

**What does “Page rank” mean?**
Page rank is a term you will frequently hear. It is related to Google, and represents a rating for how valuable and reliable the content of your website is. It is also used as a way for Google to score the value of any link coming from your web page to another. When you link out to another website, you essentially give them page rank “points” that will help improve their search engine rankings. The more points, the higher the web page will show up in the results page. There are a number of factors that go into your page rank, including the amount of content on your website, the age of the website, the number of incoming links, and more. The exact formula is a secret that only Google knows.

**What is a keyword?**
A keyword is any word or phrase that is used to find websites on search engines. When a person on the Internet goes to the Google search engine, the words that they type into the search box are called keywords.

Keywords are important to your beauty blog because they are what is used to rank your website and how people to find it. It is a good idea to sit down and figure out what keyword or keyword phrase that you want to rank high for. Then write a number of blog posts using that keyword. For example, if you are doing a neon nail polish beauty blog, you will want to include the
phrase “neon nail polish” in a number of places throughout your blog. Ideally, they will all link back to a single page and it will be this page that ranks high in Google.

**How does Google know my keywords?**
Google is constantly sending out “spiders” the crawl the entire Internet and find new websites. Most blogging software will send an alert to Google whenever you have new content, which then prompts them to search through your website. Google determines the keywords on every web page by sorting the words and phrases into frequency tables. For example, if you mention the word “cosmetics” a dozen times in your post, your web page would get a 12 score for that word. The more times a word is mentioned, the higher the frequency score. Google (and other search engines) then use this information to figure out what your web page is all about.

**How do I get other blogs to link to me?**
There are a hundreds of ways to get other blogs to link to you. Here are some of the most effective.

*Write link-worthy posts:* If a blogger is interested in the post that you have written, they will be much more likely to link to your post and ultimately your website. As they say in the blogging world, content is king. Great content attracts more links.

*Trade links with other bloggers:* When you are first starting out, find other bloggers who have websites that are similar to yours. Offer to trade links with them. Most will be happy to trade if they see a benefit for themselves.

*Comment on other blogs and establish yourself as an expert:* Bloggers like to link to people they think are experts and have something useful to con-
tribute. Contribute great stuff to their blog and they will link back. Guest posts are another excellent way to get bloggers to link to you.

Use your social networking connections to get other bloggers to link to you: If you've established a good relationship through one social networking arena, it will be much more likely that the blogger will link to you if you ask.

**What are other link getting tips?**
Getting people to link to your content is not an exact science. Sometimes things work, and sometimes they don't. The key is to be creative about contacting other website owners and make it easy for them to connect to you. Remember, always consider what is in it for them. Here are some more creative methods for getting people to link to your blog.

**Write a 101 list post:** This can be 101 best cosmetics or 101 different hair styles. Really, anything can be made into a 101 list post. People love to link to these.

**Write a problem solving post:** List out a problem that you had (and your audience likely has) and tell how you solved it.

**Create a resource post:** This is similar to the 101 list post. Create a resource for the top 50 beauty brands, or top 100 beauty blogs. Something that your audience and other bloggers would find interesting.

**Do an interview of a fellow beauty blogger:** People love to link to stories about themselves.

**Learn everything you can about SEO:** Follow SEO blogs.

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Perform surveys and post the results: Bloggers love to write about surveys.

Post your blog on Stumbleupon: This is an excellent search resource that is under-utilized.

Submit your story to aggregator websites like Reddit.

Link to other blogs.

Get mentioned in a newspaper or a spot on TV.

Ultimately, there is no exact method of getting external links that works for everyone. Brainstorm some of your own ideas and try them out. The more links you get, the better.
Chapter 4 - Can I use social networks to get more readers?

What is social networking and why use it?
Social networking is the phrase used to describe all the various online communities that allow you to connect with other people around the world. You can share messages, photos, videos, and links to things that you find interesting. The most popular social networking sites include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, and LinkedIn. Most social networks have common features that bloggers can take advantage of to build the audience of their blog.

You should create a profile on a number of social networks, including the ones already mentioned, and others like StumbleUpon, MySpace, and Google+. The idea is to have your profile on as many of these as you can. This will help to attract people who share common interests and will provide more links to your website. Additionally, it will protect you from other people who may try to register your website name with social network sites that you have not used.

There are a number of benefits of using social media sites in relation to your blog. They can help you build a bigger audience by making people you have never met aware of your website. They can become a source for new blogging ideas. This will be particularly helpful when your blog gets older and you start to lose ideas. They are also a great source of research for topics. Social media sites can help you establish yourself as an expert, and they can even lead to appearances in the media.
What are the benefits of using Facebook?
Of all the social networking sites, Facebook is by far the largest. For this reason, you need to have a presence there. Facebook generates more Internet traffic than any other site besides Google. If you ignore Facebook, you ignore a potentially huge audience. But beyond the traffic you can get from Facebook, there are other benefits.

Facebook can give you exposure that you can't get elsewhere. You can create a Facebook page for your blog, which will alert people from around the world who use Facebook that you exist. You can even develop a Facebook community for your blog which could even get more interaction than your own blog. This will also help improve your blog ranking in Google. A Facebook page can also help you get more signups to your email newsletter, which will ultimately lead to new fans and a potential new money source.

If you haven't created a Facebook page for your blog yet, you should do that today.

What are some tips for using Facebook?
The key to using Facebook to help build traffic to your blog is to make a page that is similar to your blog and encourages people to either sign up for a newsletter (to get their email address) or click through to your website.

The way to do this is to first make a Facebook page. Find the 'create a page' button and follow the steps to make your own page. For a beauty blog, you would choose the 'brand or product' options and choose 'website' as the type. Upload a picture, give a description, include website address and create the page. Then, on a regular basis, add links and status updates to the page wall.
Making the page is just the first step, however. Next, you need to get people to 'like' the page. When someone 'likes' a page they will get an update every time you add something new to your page wall. So, whenever you write a new blog post, also put the link on your Facebook page. Encourage comments. And if you have affiliate programs, add links to the product on your Facebook page. Don't do this too often, but occasionally it is a great way to generate sales and some money for your beauty blog.

**What are the benefits of using Twitter?**
Twitter is a microblogging social networking site, and it can be of great use to a beauty blogger. There are a number of reasons you should sign up for an account and actively use it. First, it is a great source of research. There are already a number of beauty bloggers and beauty brands on Twitter. You can get early alerts of new products, plus ideas for new posts. You can keep up with industry news, which will make you a better informed beauty insider and help boost your credibility as an expert in your chosen topic. Of course, you can use Twitter to drive traffic to your blog, but you can also use it to build relationships with other beauty bloggers, conduct online polls, and even find potential guest bloggers. While Twitter can be a complete waste of time, it can also be a useful business tool which can help you create a lucrative and highly visited beauty blog.

**What are some Twitter tips?**
To get the most out of Twitter you need to develop a significant following. You should spend some time cultivating followers and focus on building your audience until you have at least 500 followers. The more followers, the more influence you will have and the more useful Twitter will be.

There are a few tricks to getting more followers on Twitter, but there is no magic bullet. To get more followers you have to post interesting things. You can't simply post links to all your blog posts. This will make your Twit-
ter channel nothing more than a commercial for your blog. You need to post things that your audience will find useful. For example, links to other blogs, links to interesting stories, and questions that make your audience think. Be sure to follow interesting people and re-tweet some of their messages if you think your audience would like it. Begin conversations with other people on Twitter. This will help build your audience quickly.

In general, you should be posting about 1 of your own links for every 10 Twitter messages you post. Try also to post something every day, but don't post more than a dozen times a day. You don't want to become annoying and get unfollowed. The key is to be interesting and useful to your audience. This will lead to more traffic to your website and help build your beauty blog.

**What about YouTube?**
If you have the time to create videos, YouTube is an excellent source of traffic that can help build your blog traffic, better connect you with your audience, and build your reputation as an expert in your area of beauty blogging.

To best use YouTube, you need to create a channel and set up a profile. Include a picture and a link back to your beauty blog. Create a number of videos about topics that you write about on your beauty blog. These can be simple video versions of your blog. However, the more useful videos and the ones that will get picked up and shared are the ones that review products or teach people how to do things. Suppose you have a beauty blog about nail polish. Then you can create videos teaching people the best way to apply polish, remove polish, pick a color, etc. Solving problems for your audience is always the best way to use these social networking sites, especially YouTube.
Are there any other social networks worth using?
It's always a good idea to at least create profiles on the various social networking sites. You have to be careful because you can spend too much time on the sites doing things that are not beneficial to your own website. Remember, the point of using social networking sites is to improve your blog in terms of traffic, content, and audience. Do not waste your efforts building a social network site if it is not helping with those goals.

With that in mind, there are some other social networking sites that make sense to use. Here are some of the more useful ones for beauty bloggers.

Google+: This social network has not taken off as widely as Google had hoped, but it is important for you to have a presence there, because Google takes into account content there when ranking your website in its search engine.

Flickr: If you need photos for your beauty blog, this is an excellent place to find them.

Pinterest: This website is the fastest growing social networking site at the moment, and it is of most interest to the audience that reads beauty blogs. Set up a channel now.

StumbleUpon: This website is a search engine alternative and can be a great resource for building traffic and finding ideas for blog posts.

Cafemom: Here’s a social networking site that caters to the same people who most frequently read beauty blogs. If you can get a significant presence here, you can multiply the traffic to your own beauty blog.
There are always new social networking sites that are coming up, so it is a good idea to stay informed about them. You never know which ones will be with sticking with (Facebook) and which ones are worth abandoning (Friendster). You just have to use them and decide whether they help your beauty blog or not.

**Should I use my personal profile or create one for my blog?**
Ideally, you will have profiles for both your personal information and your blog information. In all of the social networking sites, you should get a profile for your blog's name. It's also a good idea to get your own name, but for helping your beauty blog work, it is not as crucial.

Always put a link to your beauty blog and fill out the profile. It is helpful to create a standard profile that you use on all of the social networking sites. That way it saves time and it creates a consistent personality for you across the Internet.

**Okay, now I have too many social networks. How do I manage them all?**
While it is great to have profiles on as many social networking sites as you can find, it is also difficult to keep up with them all. To help, you should use a social networking aggregator service like Tweetdeck or Ping.fm. These services are free and they allow you to post the same thing to multiple social networking sites. We do not recommend that you always put the same stuff on all the social networking sites; there should be some differentiation. However, it is okay to post a link on both Twitter and Facebook. Just remember, you will have a lot of overlap in your audience and you don't want to annoy them too much.
Chapter 5 - How can I build traffic with content sharing?

Why is guest posting good for my traffic?
Let's be perfectly honest here - guest posting is about pushing your content out to others in the hopes that it will bring more traffic back to you. If you can have your content published by a few reasonably successful blogs, you're almost guaranteed to see an increase of traffic back to your site.

But if you approach guest posting from a purely selfish perspective, you won't succeed. You have to develop relationships with other bloggers for guest posting to work. Remember that it takes two to create a successful guest post: you, to write the guest post, and another blogger to host what you write.

As you approach other bloggers with your guest post proposal, you may find they have two concerns about publishing your material. First, they may be worried your content isn't good enough for their readers - that you don't add any value. Second, they may be worried your content is too good and that their readers may desert them and choose to follow your blog instead. By building relationships you can overcome both these concerns.

How do I convince someone to publish my guest post?
The first step in establishing a content sharing relationship is showing that you know what their audience wants. In other words, honor their content and audience. You can do that by leading with something that shows you really understand this blogger. You can leave comments on one of their posts, or you can reach out directly in emails or on their Facebook page. It's helpful to reference some of their posts in a tweet, or just by answering a question you find in their comments section.
The key is to focus on their needs instead of yours, and the best way to accomplish that is to explain What’s In It For Them (WIIFT). Spell out for them how publishing your guest post will benefit their blog. For example, when we approach other bloggers, we offer to analyze the ingredients in a product they blog about. By leveraging our expertise, they can share additional information with their readers.

Be direct and specific about your request. Let them know upfront what it is you're expecting in return for this guest post. It could be as simple as one link back to your site. Or perhaps you'd like them to write a brief introduction to your blog. Either way, make this very clear to your host from the very beginning so there are no surprises later.

**How do I know if guest posting is helping my blog?**

Even though you’ve established relationships with other bloggers who are willing to publish you guest posts, the work doesn't stop there. Don’t overlook the important step of measuring results!

Remember, having guest posts published is about driving more traffic to your blog. If you’re going to put all this effort into building relationships and sharing your content, then you need to know which partners are helping you reach that goal. As the old adage says, “You can’t manage what you don’t measure.” So be sure you're measuring the traffic that comes from each of your guest posts.

An easy way to do this is to create a spreadsheet list of all the blogs that have published your guest posts, and then record your traffic from each of those sites before and after the guest post is published. If you see a reasonable traffic increase, then you know that the guest posts are helping your blog.

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I'm already swamped writing for my blog. How do I create guest posts too?

Your blog is a “content monster” that has to be fed on a very regular basis. And therein lies the downside of guest blogging: Not only do you have to create daily content for your blog, but you also have to write stuff for someone else’s blog. To avoid getting bogged down by feeding the monster, you need to be smart about how you create content for guest posts. Here are a couple of tips that we use:

First, there’s nothing wrong with recycling your own previously published material, as long as it’s not it's a complete rehash of what you've already done. The key is to make the information valuable to the audience of the blog that will publish the post. That doesn’t mean it always has to be completely brand new.

Second, the more you can systematize the process the less time you’ll waste. For example, create an email template to use when soliciting new partners. You’ll have to customize it for each new blog you reach out to, but it will be lot faster than writing each email from scratch.

How can I get my blog mentioned by newspapers/magazines/TV?

It’s always nice to have your blog mentioned in other media. They may simply quote you, contact you for an interview, or plug your blog by doing a product or book review. Either way, it’s a special thrill when it happens.

Unfortunately, the relationship building approach we talked in the previous question for guest blogging simply does not work for media mentions. You just can't write to the New York Times and say, “Hey, can you publish something I wrote for you?”

Of course it doesn't hurt to have a presence in their online channels, but it's not the same kind of approach. Instead, it’s more about crossing your fin-
gers and hoping they'll notice you. This is not as far-fetched as it might seem. It happened to us after only a few months of blogging. Let's look at another case study.

In 2007, when our blog was less than a year old, we were getting a few hundred or 1000 hits per day. Then a New York Times reporter stumbled across one of our articles, and after an email exchange, we were included in an article on entitled “Blogging for Truth and Beauty”. On that day, our traffic jumped by over 29,000 hits!

While that was really exciting, this approach is very challenging. So, is there anything you can do to drive media mentions? Yeah, you can create epic content that people will want to share and make sure your blog design is optimized to make it easy for for search engines to find you. If you rank highly for certain keywords, it's likely that magazine editors or reporters will find you when they are researching the subject. Then just cross your fingers...

But you should be prepared for a tsunami of traffic if you’re ever fortunate enough to experience one.

Make sure you’re ready to capture email addresses of a tidal wave of visitors so you can properly monetize your blog. Also, you should make sure your blog is appropriately set up with whatever advertising you choose.
Chapter 6 - Are contests a good way to grow traffic?

Why are contests a good idea for my blog?
Why should you run contests on your blog? Any good beauty blog will run a contest from time to time. But a great beauty blog knows why to run a contest and does so strategically. Here are five reasons why it might make sense for your blog to run a contest.

1: To feed the monster:

We've talked about how demanding it can be to have to create fresh content for your blog on a daily basis. Provided that you have something to give away as a prize, blogging about the contest is an easy way to create content. You can create one post announcing the contest, another where you go into detail about the prize, and yet another announcing the winner. That's three posts that you can create with very little effort. Unfortunately, this is probably the weakest reason to run a contest, because there is no lasting benefit for your blog.

2. To increase your traffic:

If you do a good job spreading the word about your contest, it can be a valuable traffic building tool. You'll be surprised how many people will be attracted by the opportunity to win free stuff. However, the downside is that all those new readers may not stick around for very long. It's likely they're just visiting your blog to sign up for the contest, and they may never show up again.

3. To get rid of extra product samples:

You may find this hard to believe if you're just getting started with your blog, but as you get more successful, you'll get so many samples from compa-
nies that you can't possibly use them all. So sharing these extra samples is a perfectly legitimate reason to run a contest. Plus, it helps establish a bond with your public relations partners because you essentially get to blog about their new products twice: the first time when you review it and the second time when you run a contest.

4. To build more social media fans:

Using a contest to increase your Twitter followers or your Facebook fans can be very effective. But you have the same problem as in the previous example: those new fans may not be engaged with your content, so they may not stick around very long. And that brings us to our fifth reason to run a contest, which is by far the best reason...

5. To increase engagement with your readers:

If you're like most bloggers, one of the reasons you started to blog is to build an online community that is interested in a particular topic. To succeed, you have to get people to engage with you. Otherwise, it's a one-way flow of information. Blogging should be a discussion, not a monologue. We can't overstress the importance of this: It's better to have 10 people who are highly engaged with your blog -- leaving comments, asking you questions, telling their friends about you, etc., than it is to have 100 or even 1000 people who just sign up to win your contest and never read your blog again.

**What kind of contests can I use to build traffic?**

There are three basic types of contests:

The first is a sweepstakes, where your readers can have a chance to win simply by entering their name or "liking" you on Facebook.
The second type of contest requires your readers to write something as a submission. For example, they have to leave a comment on a blog post for a chance to win.

The third type of contest is the most challenging and the most engaging, because it's a skills competition. In this type of contest, you ask your readers to create something to be eligible to win. They could submit a picture they've taken or a video that they have created. You then select the winner from their submissions.

You can also categorize contests by how they are sponsored. In-self sponsored contests, you run the show. You set the contest rules, you decide how the winner is chosen, and you provide the prize.

In contests sponsored by a third party, you’re not always in charge; you have to “piggyback” on what someone else is doing. The sponsoring company picks the prize, and they may even set the rules of entry.

**How do I use contests to build a stronger following for my blog?**

The best kinds of contests are the ones that engage your readers. Try to uncover your readers’ hidden passions. If you can figure out where your readers’ passions fit into your blog’s niche, you'll have an opportunity for a great contest that will involve them. Let me illustrate with three examples.

For our first example, we’ll look at the Lab Muffin, a blog about science, nails, and beauty. So Lab Muffin could appeal to her readers, who are passionate about science, by running a contest where she asks them to write a short essay about why they like her science-based approach to beauty. Do you see how much more engaging that is than just asking for someone's email address?

Example number two is the blog Nouveau Cheap, which is devoted to teaching you about beauty on a budget. If this blogger is doing a good job,
her readers have probably taken her tips to heart and have saved money on beauty products. So, a great contest idea would be to ask her readers to send in a picture of something they bought with the money they have saved. Think how much fun you could have entering the contest.

Third, let's take a look at the blog Product Girl, which is all about sharing beauty product favorites. Every week she runs a feature called her "beauty VIP of the week." A good contest idea for her would be to ask readers to submit their own Beauty VIP ideas and then have a vote to determine the beauty VIP of the month.

In each of these examples, you'll notice that we looked for where the readers could be passionate about what the blog stands for. That unique intersection point is where you'll find engaging contest ideas.

**How often should I run contests?**

Once you figure out the type of contests that work for your blog, you want to repeat them regularly. This will build anticipation. You want your readers to expect that contests are coming and look forward to them so they can prepare to engage. Running contests should not be a “one and done” event if you want to use them for sustained growth.

**What kind of prizes should I give away in contests? How do I get prizes to give away?**

At some point, you'll have to think of a good prize to give away. There are two approaches here. You may consider running a sponsor contest so you don’t have to worry about the prize. Or you can give away some of the extra free beauty samples that you've received.

But it's also perfectly acceptable to give away something of your own. Perhaps you're an avid reader and you collect more books than you care to keep. Giving a beauty book away as a prize is perfectly fine.
You might want to also consider “extra” prizes that your winners will consider personally meaningful. For example, you may post the names of the winners in a special place on your blog so they can be displayed long after the contest ends. Similarly, you could create a special blog page where you showcase all the submissions you've received. We've seen one blogger who actually creates an ebook off all the contest submissions and sends them out to the winners. You'll be surprised at how much engagement this extra recognition can drive.

**How do I generate interest in my contests?**

Even if the contest goal isn’t to increase your Twitter followers or your Facebook fans, you should still be using these and other social media tools to spread the word about your contest.

**How can I tell if my contests are successful?**

The first step is to establish a goal for your contest before you begin. You should set a baseline so you know how well you’re doing against that goal BEFORE running the contest.

For example, if your goal is to increase traffic, then you want to make sure you're measuring people who visit your blog. If you're trying to increase your social media presence, then you want to know how many likes or fans you start off with. And if you're trying to increase engagement, you want to look at how much sharing and discussion your blog has.

When the contest is all said and done, measure your success against these goals. Analyze the results to determine if you met your goal or not. If you didn't meet your goal, do something different next time. If the contest was a success, then repeat, repeat, repeat.
Part 4: How can I make money and get free stuff?

Chapter 1 - How do blogs make money?

**How do blogs make money?**

Bloggers can make money from their blogs from a wide variety of sources. The key to being successful is employing as many of these money-making strategies as possible. Some blogs do excellently with pay-per-click advertising while others will do better with direct ad sales. It is just a matter of experimenting to see which works best for your audience. Here are the key money-making activities to try on your blog.

**Direct Advertising:** There are a number of different kinds of ads you can run on your blog, but direct advertising is the one in which you have the most control. Direct ads are text links or banner ads that you sell directly to advertisers. They directly pay you a monthly fee, and you manage the posting of the ads on your website. This advertising could be the most profitable for you, but it is also the most complicated, since you have to go out and find advertisers, put up the code, collect money, and troubleshoot any technical problems. It can be a lot of work.

**Advertising Networks:** An easier option than direct advertising is joining an advertising network. This simply requires you to put some code on your website and an outside agency will be responsible for what ads show up on your website. Some ad networks pay you based on the number of impressions that you generate. Others pay based on how many people you can get to click on the ads. This is known as Pay-Per-Click and the most common of these is the Google Adsense program. Advertising networks are great because they handle all the technical details, they get the advertisers,
and they collect all the money. However, they also take about half the revenue, so it will be less profitable for you.

**Affiliate Programs:** Another type of advertising is an affiliate program. Rather than getting paid for displaying the ad or when someone clicks on an ad, affiliate programs pay you a percentage of the sale when someone buys a product after having clicked on your ad. The most common of these types of programs is run by Amazon. You simply put up an Amazon link to a product you are writing about and if someone clicks on the link and then buys the product, Amazon pays you a small percentage (3-5%) of the sale. This isn't too much money if the product is inexpensive, but if you write about a $500 hair dryer and someone buys through your link, that can be up to $25. If you pick the right affiliate program, you can generate a significant amount of money through your blog.

**Selling Products:** If you can sell products using an affiliate program, you can probably sell your own products and make even more money. This can be a much more complicated endeavor, because you've got to actually find products to sell or make your own product. It also requires filling orders, dealing with customer complaints, and keeping track of inventory. However, if you can create your own product, it can be one of the most profitable options for your blog.

**Email Marketing:** One of the most important ways to make money through your blog is to develop an email list to which you can send special offers. These can be affiliate programs or direct ads. Your email audience will generally be more responsive than your blog audience, so it makes a lot of sense to start building your list now.

**Consulting:** By becoming an expert in a certain aspect of the beauty world, you may get the opportunity to get hired as a consultant. This really de-
pends on the type of company that is looking and the specific project, but we have made some money each year we've done the Beauty Brains through consulting jobs. In addition to consulting, you could also become a paid speaker. If a conference organizer asks you to speak at a conference, it is a great opportunity to get your name and your blog's name out there. Sometimes, they'll even pay to fly you to the conference and put you up in a hotel room.

Landing a job: Finally, beauty blogging can lead to a new job if that is what you want. One of the Beauty Brains recently left to take on a full-time market research job. The job offer was a result of someone contacting us through our beauty blog to see if we knew anyone who might be qualified. After a few interviews she landed the job.

There are other creative ways to use your blog to generate money, but those are the main ones. You should try each of them, because you never know what is going to work for your particular audience.

What is pay-per-click?
Pay-per-click is a type of advertising in which you get paid money every time someone visits your blog and then clicks on an advertisement. The advertiser does not pay you any money to put the ad up. The most common of these pay-per-click programs is the Google Adsense program. Nearly anyone with a website can sign up, and it is a great program to get started with. To generate a significant amount of money, you will have to have at least 500 people a day come to your blog (and click on the ads). But Adsense is the primary way that most bloggers get their start making advertising money. There are more profitable options, so eventually you will want to switch to those ad networks.
What's the best place to put ads on my blog?
The best place to put ads on your blog will really depend on your audience and what they find compelling. Take a look at other websites and see where they place their ads to get an idea of what works. In general, the most profitable ad placing includes just above or below the header, on the right sidebar, and within the blog post. You will also find that putting an ad at the end of a blog post can generate some revenue too. Remember, with many ad networks you are limited to the number of ads that you can place on your website. Google Adsense only allows 3 ad placements of Adsense ads. (You can still put other people's ads on your website.)
How does Google Adsense work?
Google Adsense is one of the best ad networks to begin with on your blog. It is a pay-per-click (PPC) system in which you make money every time someone goes to your website and then clicks on an ad. The revenue can be as small as 2 cents or as much as a few dollars per click. It just depends on the topic and ad. The way it works is that you first sign up into the Google Adsense network. Then you create an ad using their simple ad creation wizard. After creating the ad, you will be given some html code that you cut and paste onto your blog in the section you want the ad displayed. You can put it into a widget or paste it directly into your blog's theme template. Once the ad code has been placed, advertisements will start showing up based on the words that are on your web page. So, if you write about a specific product, you will see ads relevant to that product. The Google Adsense algorithm controls which ads are shown.

How do I make/customize an Adsense ad?
Google Adsense makes it easy to customize your ads. From the Google Adsense dashboard, you click on the 'My Ads' tab. Then click on the tab that says 'create new ad'. You can then click on options for the ad size (there are standard ad sizes) and type. You can use text-only ads or have graphic and text ads. We've found the graphic and text ads is the most profitable option. After picking the ad type, you can then pick the ad colors and fonts. You can also label your ad to make tracking easier. Once you've chosen all the options, you will get your new ad code, which you simply place on your blog where you want the ad to show up. You can change the look of your ads whenever you like, so it is worthwhile to experiment with different options.

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How do I track how well the ad does?
Adsense makes it easy to track ads, because you can label them directly. When you create your ad, label it based on where you are going to place the ad and when. For example, you can name your top ad the HeaderAd and add to it the date. So, the full name would be HeaderAd040412 if you made it on April 4, 2012. By labeling the ad as such, you can track how well it does. After you get a month or two of data, you can switch it up in an attempt to improve your ad performance. This is one of the key activities to ensure that you are maximizing the revenue you can get from ad networks. You can use the Adsense performance tools to get the data on how well your ad is doing over a specific time frame.

How do I install an Adsense ad?
Installing Adsense is just a simple matter of creating an ad, getting the code, and placing the code on your website. The code can be placed on your side bar using a text widget. From your Wordpress dashboard, click on the 'Appearance' tab then choose 'Widgets'. Next, drag a 'text widget' over to one of your sidebars. Double click on the widget and paste the Adsense code into the widget text box. Click save and close. That's it. You've added the Adsense code, which will now show up in your sidebar. To place the Adsense ads in other places throughout your blog, look for a plug-in that can help.

What are more tips for using Adsense properly?
While Adsense is easy to use and install, Google does have some strict rules about using it and they will kick you out of the program if you violate their rules. The most important rule that you need to know about is that you cannot click your own ads! If you click on your own ads, Google has ways of tracking and will kick you out of the program. They will also keep all of the revenue that you generated, so don't do this. Now, an occasional
click on an ad that you are interested in is not going to get you banned, but regular clicks on your own ads will.

Similarly, do not tell your readers to click on your Google Adsense ads. This constitutes as ad fraud and will get you booted from the Adsense program.

Another thing that can get you kicked out of Google Adsense is putting up too many ads. There is a maximum of 3 Google Adsense ads that you can place on your website. If you do more, Google will deem you a spam site and will kick you out. Don't put more than 3 ads.

Don't share your performance numbers either. When you sign the agreement to sign up with Google Adsense, you also agree not to share your Adsense performance, such as amount of money generated, click through rate, and impressions. If you share that information, Google will kick you out of the program.

Finally, experiment with your ad design and placement on your website. To maximize your ad revenue, you have to experiment to find out what works with your particular audience. No one can tell you exactly what will work for you.

What other advertisers could I use besides Adsense?
If you do get kicked out of Google Adsense, or you just want to experiment with someone else, there are a number of other pay-per-click ad networks that can be just as profitable. Here are some that you can experiment with.

AdBrite
Bidvertiser
Chitika
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Infolinks
Kontera
Clicksor
Exitjunction
Adbull

Each of these has their pluses and minuses, but you'll have to experiment with them to see if they are right for your blog. We have tried each of these, and they have worked to some extent on the Beauty Brains. The best options we have found from that list include Kontera and Chitika.

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Chapter 3 - How do I make money with affiliate programs?

What is affiliate marketing?
Affiliate marketing is a system by which you can generate money for your blog. In this system, you add a link to your blog to a product page and get paid money when someone clicks that link and makes a purchase. The most common affiliate marketing program is run through Amazon.com.

Affiliate marketing is an excellent way for beauty blogs to make money. It is particularly good for when you do a product review. Essentially, you write your review of a product you have tried, include an affiliate link to that product, then make money when someone purchases the product.

What affiliate programs should I join?
Amazon.com is a good affiliate program to begin with, because they have a wide range of products and they make it easy for you to set it up. However, they do not have the best affiliate commissions, so you have to generate a lot of sales to make a significant amount of money. Some other excellent options include the following.

Commission Junction (cj.com)
Shareasale.com
Clickbank.com
Linkshare.com – This is the one that Drugstore.com uses.
Affiliate.com

Sign up for each of these programs and look to see if they have products that would be worthwhile for you to write about. The strategy of being successful at affiliate marketing is to write a popular post, provide a link and

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encourage people to click on it and make a purchase. Unlike pay-per-click, it is okay for you to tell people to click on your affiliate links.

How do I sign up and start making money?
It's simple to sign up for affiliate programs. The Amazon affiliate program just requires you to have an Amazon account. Unfortunately, Amazon does not take everyone into their program. It depends on where you are located in the world. Just sign up to see if you qualify. Other affiliate programs also have limited acceptance, so the strategy is to sign up for as many as you can get accepted into. Typically, if you have a website that generates some amount of traffic, you will be accepted into an affiliate program.

How do I decide which products to promote?
This is the trickiest part of affiliate marketing, and getting it right will be the difference between making money and wasting time. The way to decide what to promote depends on your audience and what you think they would buy.

An excellent strategy is to write about products that you have tried and like. Start with specific beauty products that are your favorites. Write about all the benefits and reasons that you like the product. Be sure to focus on the problems that the product solves for you and also why it is fun. Then encourage your readers to click on the link and try the product themselves. Write about the product a number of times and always include a link to your post and the affiliate link. This will provide you with high Google ranking in addition to potential sales.

Other products you can choose include things that you want to try. Writing a post about a product and what you imagine it can do can be just as convincing as a product that you actually use.
When you are picking products, it is better to pick products that cost more money. Typically, the more expensive a product is, the more money you can make from an affiliate sale. Since it is the same amount of work to write about an expensive product versus an inexpensive one, you should write about the more expensive product. This may or may not work with the theme of your blog, but it is something you should consider.

**Do I have to write a special post for affiliate marketing?**

You don't have to write special posts for affiliate marketing, you just have to include a link so people can click on it to see the product sales page. However, when you do a special post about an affiliate product, it will typically be much more successful and lead to more sales. There are a number of types of posts you can write as affiliate posts.

**Review post:** The easiest and most effective affiliate post is a review post. In these posts you get the product, try it out, then write about your overall experience. If you loved the product, a positive review is always great, but it is not required. People will still buy products even if the review is a little negative. In fact, a review seems more believable if you include both the positive and negative aspects of a product. However, if you get too negative, people will be much less likely to make a purchase.

**Wish post:** In this post you write about a product that you want to get and list all of the things that you believe the product will do for you. Keep the post focused on why you want the product and the benefits that you think having the product will bring to your life.

**How-to post:** Some products have complicated directions or are a little bit challenging to use. If you can write a how-to post which describes how to use a product or how to do some cool thing with a product, this can be an
effective affiliate post. It can also generate significant traffic to your website, so there is a double benefit there.

What different ways can I add affiliate links to my blog?
The most common way to add an affiliate link to your blog is to create a text link. This is a simple matter of writing a keyword and linking to the affiliate program. Be sure to use the linking code that is generated from the affiliate program, or else you may not get credit for the sale. Another option is to include graphics and banners. These are typically provided by the affiliate program and are easy to install. If you include both the keyword link and an affiliate banner, you can generate even more potential sales.
Chapter 4 - What are direct ads?

What are direct ads and how are they different?
Direct ads are advertisements that you place on your website after having worked out a deal directly with advertisers. They are different from pay-per-click in that they do not require your audience to click on them for you to generate money. Typically, you are paid up-front for the ad and you agree to placement for a specific amount of time. These ads can generate significantly more money than other ad networks. However, they do require more work to get and maintain, and to collect money. This is why many bloggers start with an ad network rather than selling direct ads.

Are there different kinds of direct ads?
The most common types of direct ads include text links, sponsored blog posts, and banner ads. If you are going to provide a direct ad option for advertisers, be sure to offer each of these types of ads. Text links are simply a keyword phrase linked to a specific website. These are often the least expensive options. A sponsored blog post is essentially an advertisement talking about your advertiser’s product, which also contains a relevant link. And a banner ad is just a graphic ad that gets placed on your website in a specific space. For banner ads, you should have a size and placement already specified for potential advertisers. Other ad options include direct email ads and forum ads.

Where should I put my direct ads?
You can offer ads to be placed anywhere you like on your blog, but the most effective (and therefore expensive) should be above the fold, such as under the header. Also, the right sidebar above the fold is another effective placement. For ads placed below the fold, you can offer a slight discount, because these will not be as effective for your advertisers. Ads can be
placed in the sidebar, the footer and even within a blog post. To maintain the value of your ad space, you should limit the number of ads that you will put on your blog. More ads reduces the value of all the ads. Every blog has some maximum number of ads that they can run effectively, but it requires experimentation to figure out what that number is for your blog.

**How do I install an ad on my blog?**
Putting ads on your own blog is not difficult. Text links and banner ads can be added using widgets and the appropriate linking code. For the text links, you can create a 'text widget' entitled 'featured links' or some similar title. Then list the keyword links below.

For banner ads, you should set requirements for advertisers on what size image they can post. You have to upload the image to your own servers, then link to it on the widget or in the header of your blog, depending on where the advertiser has made a purchase.

**How do I attract advertisers?**
One of the best ways to get advertisers on your blog is to create an advertisers page, which tells them exactly what kind of advertising you accept and how much it will cost. Many websites like to keep this information secret, so rather than putting the price up, you can provide your own contact information for them to get pricing from you.

On your advertisers page, you should have a number of options including text links, banner ads (with size), email marketing, and forum ads if you have them. To increase the chances that someone purchases an ad, you should include a PayPal 'buy now' button so the advertiser can purchase right away. We like to set up the advertisement options as subscriptions that are automatically renewed. This way, you don't have to chase down your advertisers each month to see if they want to renew.

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While an ad page will attract advertisers, you can also find advertisers yourself. Go to other beauty websites and see what brands are advertising on them. Then contact them directly and offer your website as an advertising option. The advertiser will likely want to know your website traffic and page views, so be sure to have this information available.

**How do I decide how much to charge for ads?**
In general, the more traffic you get to your website, the more you can charge for ads. An effective estimate is that you should be able to charge 10% of your daily traffic for a monthly ad. So, if you are getting 2000 unique visits to your website, you should be able to charge $200 a month for a banner ad. You might charge half that amount for a text ad. There is not a specific formula, but this is a good guide. Also, do not be afraid to give discounts for advertisers who will guarantee you a certain amount of months and will also pay upfront.

**What blog stats will I need to know to convince people to advertise with me?**
The key stats you need to know about your website include unique visits and page views. Advertisers typically like page views, so the more you can get the better. This information can be found by installing Google Analytics on your website.

**How do I manage/keep track of the ads I get?**
This is the trickiest part of selling direct ads. When we did not have a system, we frequently forgot to remove ads that didn’t renew, and we lost out on a lot of money. To manage your ads we suggest you create an email list of your advertisers. This way you can always contact them if there is a problem, if you want to raise prices, or if you want them to renew. Next, schedule your ads on a calendar such as Google calendar. Set reminders

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to tell you to contact an advertiser to renew an ad or to remove the ad. Always give advertisers a chance to renew. Just send them an email. If they do not renew, remove the ad at the agreed upon time. Be sure to tell them that you would be happy to repost their ads in the future. Finally, making ad buys automatic is an excellent strategy because neither you nor your advertiser have to think about the next purchase. This can be done easily with the PayPal subscription button.
What are ad networks?
Ad networks are companies who go out and find advertisers who will pay to be listed on your website. It is typically free to join an ad network, although you have to have certain minimum traffic levels to qualify. You get paid based on the ads that purchase space on your website.

Ad network companies make money by sharing the revenue of the ad buy with you. There are a number of benefits to working with an ad network. For example, they are responsible for finding advertisers. Since they have relationships with a number of advertisers, it is frequently easier for them to get advertisers for your space than for you. Additionally, ad networks take care of renewal, ad displays, and money collection. These benefits often outweigh the negatives of giving up more than half of the revenue generated from the ads.

How are ad networks different from other kinds of advertising?
Ad networks can be an effective way for you to generate money from your blog. They have a number of benefits over other monetization strategies like pay-per-click and affiliate links, but there are also some downsides. Here are some of the benefits and drawbacks.

Amount of money: When it comes to making money, ad networks have both benefits and drawbacks. The most obvious benefits is that you have potential to make money from advertisers that you would never have the chance to make money from on your own. Many of the biggest companies work strictly with ad networks for their media buys. This is much easier for them, and they get more guarantees on getting ads placed on appropriate
websites. The big money in online advertising is spent through advertising networks. The drawback, of course, is that when you work through a middleman you are going to lose money that you could have otherwise gotten. When you sell an adspace on your website for $200, the ad network will typically take $100 (or more) leaving you with significantly less revenue.

**Qualifying:** If you have a lot of traffic coming to your website (>100,000 visits a month) then you may qualify for an ad network. However, if you are just starting out on your website, it is unlikely that you will qualify. Ad networks only want to work with websites that can generate enough page views that would be of interest to advertisers. For almost any ad network, you will need to have a significant amount of traffic before you will be considered.

**Running ads:** The huge benefit to working with an ad network is that they manage the ads and collect the money. This means all you have to do is place some code on your website in an appropriate space and then sit back and collect the money. The great thing about this is that you can focus on writing great blog posts and driving traffic to your website. Having to spend time chasing down advertisers can be a drain on your resources and motivation. The downside to giving up control of your ad space is that you are not as free to determine what ads get displayed. It's possible that you would be advertising a product which you do not want to advertise.

Overall, ad networks are a great thing for beauty bloggers to experiment with. The big corporations who spend the most money on ads only work through ad networks, so if you want to tap into that revenue stream, you'll have to work with an ad network.
How do I find ad networks?
Each blog will have a different level of success with different ad networks. To find out which one will work best for you, you need to experiment. Sign up for as many of these as you can and see which ones accept you into their network. Then test one or two of them at a time. Get rid of the ones that are not generating significant revenue after a month or two.

Blogads – This was the first one that we joined. It works well, but they don't seem to get a lot of ads.
Blogherads – Specially focused on women's blogs.
Adpepper
Adtegrity
Bardzomedia
Burstmedia
CasaleMedia
Crankyads – This is a new ad network, but they make it extremely easy to add customized ads anywhere on your website.
GorillaNation
ValueClick
VibrantMedia – We have had success with this ad network on the Beauty Brains, as well as other websites we've developed.

Of course, Google Adsense is another ad network worth considering, but they are a pay-per-click model, so they have different advertising dynamics and rules.

What are some concerns I might have about ad networks?
When working with an ad network, there are things to consider, which could affect the control you have over your blog and the amount of money you can earn.

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Exclusive contracts: first, make sure you do not sign any exclusive contracts, or if you do, make sure that there is a guaranteed way that you can cancel. Legitimate ad networks do not typically require you to be exclusive, so you should be able to work with multiple ad networks. This is important because it allows you to maximize the amount of money you can make. You should, of course, limit the number of ad spaces that you have, since having too many will reduce the overall worth of any single ad space.

Types of ads: Some ad networks specialize in specific categories of ads. It does not make much sense if you work with an ad network that only places automobile ads or computer gaming ads on your website. Remember that the ads on your website will also have an effect on the way people value your website.

Amount of revenue: Another thing to consider when working with an ad network is the amount of revenue sharing that is required. Most ad networks have a 50/50 revenue sharing agreement. This means that when an advertiser spends $400 for an ad, you get $200 and the ad network gets $200. This is how they make their money. There are some ad networks (like Blogads) who charge an additional placement fee, which reduces your ad sharing revenue to something like 60/40, with them taking the bigger share. This is unfortunate, and something you should try to avoid.

Ease of installation: This is another thing to consider when working with an ad network. One of the best ad networks in this regard is Kontera. They have a simple plug-in that works seamlessly with Wordpress. It allows you to make changes on your ads, control where and when they are placed, and see up to the minute performance of specific ads. Most ad networks are not this advanced.

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Payment schedule: This is another thing you should consider when signing on with an ad network. Some ad networks will pay monthly, but others will pay quarterly. If you are counting on money to get to you by a certain date, the monthly options are preferred.

What is an ad inventory?
Ad inventory is a term that ad networks throw around, and when we first heard it, we did not know what it meant. Simply, ad inventory is that amount of ad space that you have available on your website. This includes the size of the ad space and the number of ad units. Typically, you will have 4-6 ad units available on your website. Having more than 6 can start to make your website look cluttered and can be a turn-off to your readers.

How does the process work?/How do I sign up?
It is simple to sign up for most ad networks. Go through the list of ad networks that we posted in an earlier question. Submit your application and wait for an email to tell you whether you have been accepted into the program or not. Once accepted, you will be sent directions on how to install the web code. Typically, it is a simple line of html script that you can cut and paste right into a widget on your beauty blog. During sign-up, you are going to need your name, address, website address, approximate traffic numbers, and tax ID number.

After you have installed the advertising code, ads will start to show up as soon as the ad network sells some of your space. They may place ads advertising the ad network when there are no ads to show. Better, however, is when they show your Google Adsense ads. This way you can still generate money from the space while waiting for them to place an ad.

If an ad network is not generating enough money for you, feel free to remove the code and try something else. We always like to use Google Ad-
sense as the minimum amount of money that an ad network should be generating for us.

**Any other tips for working with ad networks?**
Working with ad networks can be a great benefit to beauty bloggers, but to be successful you have to continually experiment. There will be some ad networks that work great with your audience, and others that don't make the cut. This leads to a key action when working with ad networks. Always track how they are doing. If your revenue goes up over time (as it should), then the ad network is worth sticking with. If, however, you are not making enough money or revenue is decreasing, switch the ad code out to test another ad network. It could just be a result of the time of year or the amount of money that advertisers are spending, or it could be that the people working at the ad network are just not as good as some other ad networks.

The other thing you can do is to experiment with ad placement. Where you place an ad can have a significant effect on how well it does. This isn't as important for non-pay-per-click ads, as the money for the ad is paid up front, so the performance of the ad doesn't matter as much.

Give an ad network some time to see if it works for your website. The minimum amount of time you should test an ad network is 2 months. If after 2 months you are not getting a significant enough return, switch it out for another ad network.

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Chapter 6 - What are email lists and how can I use them to make money?

What is an email list?
When we talk about an email list, we’re NOT talking about a list of email addresses of friends, family and people who have visited your blog. An email list is different from a list of emails in three important ways:

First, and most importantly, the list has commercial value because it can be used to turn people into customers. A true email list consists of people who have signed up to receive emails from you because they’re interested in something that you have to offer.

Second, a professional list is generated and managed by a third-party provider. (More on those in a minute.)

Third, people must have a way to unsubscribe from your list, and they should approve being added to the list in the first place. This is called the double opt-in process.

(Points two and three are important, because they will keep you from getting into trouble with anti-spam laws.)

What do I need to know about anti-spam laws?
Anti-spam laws came into effect about 10 years ago, and now most countries have their own version. Essentially, these laws provide penalties for sending spam emails.

Here in the US we have the CAN SPAM act of 2003 which stands for Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography And Marketing. In Canada they have CAS L-1, and in the EU there are a variety of privacy directives.

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The US law has a reputation of being on the weak side, but it does establish three key areas of compliance:

**Sending compliance:** A message cannot contain false information about who it is from. And a message must include a legitimate physical address of the publisher.

**Content compliance:** The law stipulates that the subject lines must be relevant to the offer in the body content and not deceptive. We’ve seen a few thousand Viagra emails that violate that part of law!

**Unsubscribe compliance:** In addition, each email must include a visible and operable unsubscribe mechanism (with a 10 day limit).

In addition, the laws in Europe require that you have to get a subscriber’s approval BEFORE adding them to any email list. This is called the “double opt-in” process. Basically, it means you signed up to be on the email list, they sent you an email saying, “Are you sure you want to be on this list?”, and you opted in again.

Our understanding is that this is not part of the current US law. However, since most beauty bloggers are really doing a global business, you should just comply with the EU law to be safe.

**What is an email list manager?**
Managing an email list is complicated, because it not only involves doing the due diligence to stay in compliance with anti-spam laws, but also requires the ability to automatically schedule thousands of emails and to track statistics related to those emails. Fortunately, you don't have to worry about all the intricacies of how to handle an email list, because there are third-party providers that will manage email lists for you.

AWeber is one such email list manager, and it happens to be the one we prefer, because it’s more powerful. You do have to pay for it (approximately...
$20 per month). If you want to get started for free, try MailChimp, which is another great provider. It just doesn't give you the ability to track as much data as AWeber does.

**How do I create an email list?**

For the sake of this example, we’ll show you how AWeber works, since that's the system that we use.

First, navigate to AWeber.com and sign up for an account.

Second, use AWeber’s tools to create an email list sign-up form, like the one you see on the home page of our blog, [www.thebeautybrains.com](http://www.thebeautybrains.com). These are the kind of forms that your readers will use to sign up for your email list. These forms can be placed on your blog, in e-books or emails, or even on your Facebook page. AWeber provides a number of different templates you can use, and you can customize the web form to make it look just right for your site. Then you cut and paste the code wherever you want the form to appear.

Third, once your list is set up, AWeber lets you manage it in multiple ways:

- **Track subscribers to your list:** The service keeps a running count of how many people sign up AND allows you to track people who unsubscribe from your list. You can even collect data on why they unsubscribe so you might be able to change your approach if you’re losing too many people from your list.

- **Send messages:** AWeber allows you to send two kinds of messages. Broadcast messages (these are "blast" emails that go to everyone on your list at the same time) and followup messages (these can be sent to sections of your list in a predetermined order that is activated by a triggering event.)
Track message stats: These email list managers have some powerful software tricks up their sleeve. They can tell you how many people on your list open each email. They can also tell you how many people clicked on a given link within that email. This is critical information if you’re trying to track how effective an email is at getting your subscribers to take action.

Now that you’ve got a general sense of how AWeber works, we suggest you check out the video tutorials on their website.

How do I use an email list to make money?
If you’re serious about making money with your blog, it’s essential to understand how email lists work. That's the only way you can decide if you want to use them to help drive your income streams. The simple explanation of how to use email lists to make money looks something like this:

You find a topic that people are interested in and you create helpful content related to that topic that you give away for free. In exchange for your information, people permit you to send them emails on the subject. The collection of electronic addresses of the people who “follow” you is known as an email list.

Then you send out MORE free, helpful information to everyone on your list. Over time you gain their trust and respect, because you’re providing stuff that they like. After you’ve established relationship with these people, it’s okay to send out emails asking if they’re interested in buying products that you think would be helpful to them. This process is called a “sales funnel.”

What is a sales funnel?
The whole point of creating an email list is so you can use it to convince your subscribers to buy a product or service. You convert subscribers into customers using a process called a sales funnel.
Think of a sales funnel like this:

The top is a big opening where you collect people’s email addresses.

The middle is where you email them helpful information and build a relationship.

The bottom is where you pitch products for them to buy.

Your beauty blog is one important way to get people into your sales funnel. But you should collect subscribers from everywhere you have an online presence. That means your accounts for YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and any other places that you have a presence online are all potential entry points into your email list and therefore into your sales funnel.

**How does a sales funnel work?**

At the top of the funnel, you're getting people’s permission to write to them. This is how email marketing is different than old school, advertising-driven marketing. You are not going to interrupt people with a commercial while they’re watching TV in the hopes that they MIGHT be interested in what you’re selling. Instead, you’re going to attract people who you KNOW are interested and then ask them if it’s okay to send them helpful information.

To accomplish that, you need to give them free content that they will find useful. This could be an e-book, or a newsletter, or even a product giveaway. In exchange for some “freebie,” they’ll give you their email address.

Once people are “in the funnel” you need to give away even MORE valuable information to continue to gain their trust and respect. The middle of the funnel is all about establishing a relationship. The only way to do this is to be helpful. You shouldn't start out trying to sell something; the opportunity for sales will come later. Instead, focus on providing them content that
they will find valuable. The series of emails that take them through this process is called an email sequence.

You send out this content using an email sequence (follow-up messages). Each email should include a tip, or a lesson, or a video or even a link to a blog post that helps solve a problem for your readers.

Remember that this process is automated. That means that as you learn how to use AWeber (or whatever service you choose), you’ll be able to set up an email sequence that is automatically sent to everyone who subscribes to your list. You don’t have to manually send out each message.

How many emails should the sales funnel consist of? We use about a dozen, but that really depends on your individual program.

Over time, as you’re providing helpful content, you can also begin to build in soft references to the product you want to sell. By the time you reach the bottom of the funnel, your subscribers should be ready for a true sales pitch.

**How do I find products to sell on my blog?**

Of course it’s up to you to determine what products you’re going to sell. Some people start their own cosmetic lines, others write an e-book or a paperback. But the easiest thing to do is to sell other people’s products through affiliate programs. Refer to the questions in Chapter 2 of this section for details on how to work with affiliate programs. No matter what product you choose, a well-managed email list can turn your readers into subscribers and turn subscribers into customers. And THAT’s the power of email marketing.
Chapter 7 - How do I get free beauty products to blog about?

What kind of free beauty products can I get for my blog?
Popular beauty bloggers receive tons of free “swag.” The best known kinds of swag are free products from trial-sized samples, to full-sized bottles of products, to beauty gadgets worth hundreds of dollars. You can even save quite a bit of money because you don’t have to buy as many products as you might have otherwise. (As you well know, some of these beauty products are quite expensive.) Swag is also fun because it lets you experiment with new products that you might not buy for yourself otherwise.

In addition to products, you can also receive new beauty books to review as well as invitations to beauty events and blogger conferences. You’ll also have access to the latest beauty and fashion information. This kind of swag makes you a beauty business insider, because you have early exclusive information on new product releases and other beauty-related events. For example, every year we’re pelted with invitations to Fashion Week events in New York City.

How do I get these products?
To understand how this whole swag deal works, you need to understand a little bit about how the beauty industry spreads new news. There are two basic ways that beauty companies convey news to you.

The first path is through advertising agencies, companies that create commercials and other ads. The beauty companies must then pay to place these ads on TV, radio, magazines, websites, and so on. The second path is through public relations agencies or PR agencies for short. These are companies that spread “word of mouth” information about new products.

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So, the key to getting swag is to make sure your blog is on the “swag list” of some of these agencies.

**What are "PR" agencies and how do they work?**

Most beauty companies use public relations (PR) agencies to spread the word about their products. These PR firms are “behind the scenes” in the beauty industry, so you’re probably not familiar with their names. Here are a few examples of some of the agencies we work with:

Big Mouth PR

Blue Sky Communications

Creative Media Marketing

Janice McAfferty Communications

Kaplow

LaForce & Stevens

Tractenberg & Co.

Generally, these firms are assigned to a specific beauty company or even a specific brand. There are account managers for each agency who are responsible for sharing information.

Here’s how it works: PR firms create information campaigns involving free product samples, press releases and informational events for their clients. The PR firms then use their mailing lists (or what we call the “swag list”) to reach out to editors at beauty magazines and beauty bloggers. If the PR firms have done their job well, the magazines and blogs will spread the word about their client’s new products to a curious public.
How do I get on mailing lists for free products?

Unfortunately, this isn’t easy. These PR agencies are not well known to the general public, so they’re invisible to most beginning bloggers. Plus, it can take a while for your blog to attract their attention. But we can help you at least a little bit: In our “Start A Beauty Blog” newsletter, we provide you with a list of PR agencies that you can reach out to. If you haven’t done so already, click here to sign up for our “Start A Beauty Blog” email newsletter: http://thebeautybrains.com/beauty-blogging/

How do I convince PR agencies that my blog should get samples?

When contacting PR agencies, you should focus on demonstrating your credibility as a beauty blogger. You should research the agency to understand which brands/products they represent. After picking a product that you are passionate/knowledgeable about, send an email to the account manager asking for a sample. You should explain how your review will be beneficial and ask to be included on future mailings. Do focus on what’s in it for them; don’t be greedy about asking for too many samples.

For example, we found this press release from a PR agency promoting a dog shampoo:

“Introducing Fresh Dog - 100% natural and pH balanced. If you are familiar with hair and beauty experts, Lock & Mane, you will know that we have cornered the market in dry shampoo. Now we’ve gone one step further - Introducing Fresh Dog - 100% natural and pH balanced. We would love for you to try out our new product for review...dog dry shampoo and foam...”

In our response we explained our expertise and our ability to share their product message:

“We’d be thrilled to try your product. We’re preparing a series of blog posts on how dog’s skin is different from humans. We know that dogs don’t have
the kind of oil glands humans do, so they can’t shampoo as frequently as we do. Your dry shampoo is the PERFECT solution and we’d love to tell to our readers all about it in our upcoming 4 post series. We’ll also cross promote it with our sister blog, the Beauty Brains, which is ranked highly on Google for the keyword phrase “dry shampoo”.

**Should I share my traffic numbers with PR firms?**

Regardless of your expertise, some public relations companies require that you share your traffic numbers before they’ll include you on their mailing list. If that’s the case, you can use the techniques we talked about in Part 3, Chapter 1.

Obviously, they want to reach as many people as possible. But the quality of the audience is also important. That’s why you should also inform them about your audience on Twitter and Facebook to give them a total picture of how many people you’ll reach when spreading new product news. Remember to stress what’s in it for them. They want to spread the word about their client’s new product, so you should illustrate how you can help them reach that goal.

**What are my obligations when blogging about free product samples?**

If you intend to run your beauty blog as a business, then you have certain professional obligations. In the case of swag there are three things you need to be concerned about:

1. Give honest feedback.
2. Respond in a timely manner.
3. Disclose any conflicts of interest.
What if I don't like a product that I’m reviewing?
This may sound obvious, but you need to make sure you're giving honest feedback about the swag you receive. Giving false endorsements about products you receive for free is not only misleading, but it's illegal. Always base your reviews on your knowledge and experience. First and foremost, don’t lie about it just because you’re getting a free sample. If you have serious negative concerns and you feel bad about bashing the product publicly, that’s fine, but you should send and email with more detailed feedback to the PR Agency so they can try to have them addressed by the manufacturer. Don’t pretend to love it! If there’s something you don’t like about a product, then say it. You’ll be doing them a favor by providing constructive feedback.

Of course being honest doesn’t mean you have to be totally negative. If you have nothing good to say about how a product looks or feels, you can focus your blog post on other aspects, like reviewing a new ad for the product or discussing its Facebook page. What you can’t do is say that you like it when you really don’t. For example, the Beauty Brains frequently writes about the science of how a product works and not necessarily the experience of how the product feels when using it.

What do you do if you need to write about the experience of using a product when it’s not a product that you would normally use? (For example, if you’re blogging about a hair dye but you have natural hair.) You can ask a guest evaluator to use the product for you and you can report on their experience.

How long do I have to write a post after I get a product?
The timing really depends on the nature of the new product news. Some companies may have an entire launch campaign prepared. If that’s the case, they may want the timing of your blog post to be coordinated with TV,
print, or other advertising. If you don’t follow their prescribed dates closely, it’s unlikely that they’ll want to work with you again.

If no specific dates are provided, try to publish your blog post within a week or so of receiving the product. Of course, there are always exceptions. If you’re testing a product that takes several weeks to evaluate (like a new shampoo that is supposed to stop your hair color from fading), your evaluation will take much longer.

**What are conflicts of interest?**

Another area of ethical and, just as importantly, legal concern, is disclaiming conflict of interest. A conflict of interest can occur if you don’t advise your readers that you’ve received free samples of the product that you’re writing about, that you’ve been paid to write a specific post, or that you have some other relationship that could bias what you say about a company or a product. Understanding a blogger’s relationship to the company providing the product is important context for your audience. It’s so important, in fact, that there are now laws that bloggers must follow regarding disclosure.

**What kind of information do I have to include in a disclaimer?**

By law, bloggers must make it very clear to their audience when they are paid in exchange for blogging about a certain product, company, or service. This is a fairly recent development which dates back to 2006, when the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) issued a letter recommending that bloggers be clear about when they receive compensation for their endorsements and reviews. Fortunately, it’s pretty easy to comply with the FTC’s recommendation.

**Clarify when content is advertising versus editorial:** Make sure you clearly state when a post contains content that is sponsored or for which you have received some kind of compensation (including free samples).

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Identify affiliate relationships: For example, if you make money when a reader clicks on one of your links, that should be disclosed in the post.

Explain relationships you have with companies: Don’t pretend to be an independent third-party if you have a relationship with a company that you are writing about.

For more information, read Copyblogger’s excellent article entitled “6 Laws Every Blogger Needs To Obey So They Don’t Get Sued.”


Is there special language I have to use to make the disclosure?
No. The point is to give readers the information. Your disclosure could be as simple as “Company X gave me this product to try . . .”

Where should I put the disclaimer on my blog?
There is not a single “correct” place to put your disclosure information, but here are some tips on how NOT to handle disclosures.

Don’t rely on a single disclosure page: A dedicated disclosure page is a great way to communicate with your audience, but you shouldn’t rely on it exclusively, because readers may miss it. Even placing a single disclosure on your home page doesn’t really do it because people visiting your site might read individual reviews or watch individual videos without seeing the disclosure on your home page.

Don’t rely on a big “Click Here for Disclosure Information” button: A button isn’t likely to be sufficient. How often do you click on those buttons when you visit someone else’s site? If you provide the information as part of your message, your audience is less likely to miss it.
Wherever possible, include the disclosure within the post to make sure it is seen.

**Do I need a lawyer to write a disclaimer?**

In most cases, no. Effective communication is more important than legal gobbledygook.

**Do I have to let a company screen/review what I write before I post about their product?**

Not usually. However, if you’re writing a paid post, then check the agreement you’ve signed. It may stipulate that you have to provide a draft for review.