

When it comes to AdSense, consider another technology along with video: AdSense for Google Gadgets. *Google Gadgets* are cool little programs and downloads folks come up with that you can add to your Web site, blog, or desktop that help you do stuff faster. For example, Google hosts a whole slew of gadgets created by third parties that you can add to your *iGoogle* page — your personalized Google page — that help you accomplish tasks faster. I have an iGoogle page that features things like dictionaries, calculators, and weather reports.

If you have some software-writing skills and can come up with your own gadgets, you should strongly consider embedding AdSense ads into your gadgets as one way to monetize the gadgets you create to share with others. If you have a popular gadget like Weather Forecast by LabPixies or MP3 Player by Mike Duffy, it could be a very lucrative way to create more AdSense revenue.

Video and AdSense: Choosing the Right Product

AdSense, in its ongoing drive to be as accommodating as possible, actually has three options available for video. Each of these options is targeted to a different aspect of video — aspects that reach both those who create videos and those who want to advertise on a text site with video. The three types of video are

- ✓ **Click-to-play video ads:** Video ads are a type of ad displayed on your Web site. You must opt into image ads when you create your first AdSense for Content ads and use one of the supported formats to add click-to-play video ads to your site. The supported formats are
 - 336x280 (Large rectangle)
 - 300x250 (Medium rectangle)
 - 250x250 (Square)
 - 200x200 (Small square)
 - 728x90 (Leaderboard)
 - 120x600 (Skyscraper)
 - 160x600 (Wide skyscraper)

- ✓ **Video units:** This feature allows you to add video content from YouTube partners to your Web site in a customizable player. The video comes to you packaged with text overlay ads and a companion banner above the video — that's the AdSense part. **Note:** You must have an English-language site to use AdSense video units.
- ✓ **AdSense for Video:** This product delivers text overlay and InVideo ads into your existing video streams. (InVideo ads are ads that actually play within videos that are embedded on your Web site.) If you have your own online video content, AdSense for Video can help you earn revenue from that content. The rub here is that AdSense for Video is in beta testing, so it's only available to a limited number of users at this time. It shouldn't be long (maybe even before you finish reading this chapter) before it's open to the general public, though.

All three of these options are viable for different types of AdSense users, and each has different uses and capabilities. How do you know which one to use for your site? That depends on how you want your site visitors to interact with the ads. (To some extent, it also depends on whether AdSense lets you use a certain type of video ad, but I get to that in a bit.)

Click-to-play

Click-to-play ads actually take the place of graphic ads on your site, but you can't control when that happens. You place a compatible graphic ad on your Web site, and when AdSense has a click-to-play video ad that fits your site, it's shown in place of the static ad. The videos don't show all the time, and there is currently no way to make videos replace static images all the time. See, it's based on the availability of videos that are appropriate to your site, but AdSense may not always have advertisers placing ads that match your site. It's only when there are matching video ads that your content ads will be replaced.

The ad formats that accommodate these click-to-play ads are

- ✓ 336x280 (Large rectangle)
- ✓ 300x250 (Medium rectangle)
- ✓ 250x250 (Square)
- ✓ 200x200 (Small square)
- ✓ 728x90 (Leaderboard)

- ✓ 120x600 (Skyscraper)
- ✓ 160x600 (Wide skyscraper)

If you already have one of these ads sizes on your Web site, but it's not image-enabled — meaning it's a text only ad — you can edit the settings under the Manage Ads option. To edit existing ads, follow these steps:

1. Log into your AdSense account and go to the AdSense Setup tab.
2. Click the Manage Ads link.

The Manage Ads screen displays a list of the ads you have available, as shown in Figure 9-1.

Figure 9-1:
Choose the ad you want to edit from the list of available ads.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense 'Manage Ads' interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Reports, AdSense Setup, My Account, and Resources. Below these are links for Get Ads, Manage Ads, Color Palettes, Channels, Competitive Ad Filter, Site Authentication, and Allowed Sites. The main heading is 'Manage Ads', followed by a sub-heading: 'View your active AdSense units below. You can also [import your old AdSense code](#) to create saved AdSense units. [?]'. There are checkboxes for 'Show Inactive units [?]' and 'Hidden units [?]'. A search bar is present with a 'Search AdSense Help' button. Below this is a table of active AdSense units:

Name (ID) ▲	Last edited	Content	Size	Status	Channels	Actions
160x600, created 4/25/08 (#8677434558)	Apr 25, 2008	Text and image ads	160x600	New	Christian	Edit Ad Settings > Code Preview Hide
300x250, created 4/25/08 (#9019303430)	Apr 25, 2008	Text ads	300x250	New	AFD_Test	Edit Ad Settings > Code Preview Hide

Below the table, there is a link: [Why can't I delete my ad units?](#) At the bottom of the page, there are links for AdSense Blog, AdSense Forum, Privacy Policy, Terms & Conditions, and Program Policies. The footer indicates '© 2008 Google'.

3. Click Edit Ad Settings for the ad that you want to change.
4. Use the Format drop-down menu (indicated in Figure 9-2) to select either Text and Image Ads or Image Ads Only.
5. Click the Save Settings button at the bottom of the page.

Within a couple of hours, your ads should be showing images, which can then be replaced by videos when they are available.

Enable image ads here.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense 'Edit AdSense unit' interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Reports', 'AdSense Setup', 'My Account', and 'Resources'. Below that, a breadcrumb trail reads 'Manage Ads > Edit AdSense unit'. The main content area is titled 'AdSense unit: 160x600, created 4/25/08'. It lists the unit's ID (9677434550) and size (160x600). The 'AdSense unit name' is set to '160x600, created 4/25/08'. The 'Format' is 'Text and image ads (default)'. Under 'Colors', the 'Default Google palette' is selected, with color codes for Border (#FFFFFF), Title (#0000FF), Background (#FFFFFF), Text (#000000), and URL (#008000). The 'Corner Styles' section has a 'Select corner style' dropdown. The 'More options' section includes 'Alternate ads or colors' with radio buttons for 'Show public service ads', 'Show non-Google ads from another URL', and 'Fill space with a solid color'. The 'Your selected channels' section shows 'Christian' with a 'remove' link. At the bottom, there's a 'Save settings' button and a 'Back to Manage Ads' link.

Figure 9-2:
Use the editing page to change the settings of your ad.

Video units

Video units are ads that are partnered with YouTube videos. Such ads are displayed within your YouTube videos — both videos that you’ve created and videos that others have created that you have embedded on your Web site — in a couple different ways within the video player. They appear both as a banner at the top of the video player and as a pop-up link within the video player, as shown in Figure 9-3.



Figure 9-3: Video units give viewers two places from which to click an ad.

If you don’t use videos on your site, this type of ad might be a little out of place in the beginning. If you’re using video on your site already, the integrations of video units are relatively smooth, and it’s a great way to monetize the video content that your visitors are accustomed to.



Keep in mind that you have to have an active YouTube account to use this type of video ad and you also have to link your YouTube account to your AdSense account.

It only takes a few steps to link the two accounts:

- 1. Open two browser windows and then log in to your YouTube account in one window and your AdSense account in the other.**
- 2. In the window in which you have your AdSense account open, go to the AdSense Setup tab and then choose Video Units as the product.**

Basically, act as if you’re setting up a video unit for your Web site.

3. When you get to the Video Setup page, click the Visit AdSense Video Units button.

Doing so takes you to the YouTube site, where you're prompted to connect your YouTube account and your AdSense account.

4. If you already have a YouTube account and are signed in, verify your linkage request by entering the e-mail address, phone number, and postal code associated with your account.

This is why you signed in to both your YouTube account and your AdSense account in the first step.

5. After you enter this information, click the Submit Confirmation button.

If you don't have a YouTube account, you're prompted to sign up for one. After you've created the account, the steps to connect the two accounts are the same as above.

After you click the Submit Confirmation button, your accounts will be connected. Then you can return to your AdSense account to begin setting up video units.

AdSense for Video

AdSense for Video is the newest addition to the video family for AdSense. So new, in fact, that it's still in beta testing, and is only available to a certain number of participants. To be selected, you also have to meet certain restrictions:

- ✓ You must have a Flash 7 player that you can control.
- ✓ You must have 1,000,000 or more monthly streams — that's a million times a month that your video is viewed by site visitors. Don't let the number scare you. It's not all that uncommon for a popular YouTube video to get a million or more views in a month's time.
- ✓ You must be a U.S.-based Web site owner who publishes AdSense ads on your site and you must have a (primarily) U.S. viewership.

If you meet these requirements and want to display AdSense for Video ads, you also need to fill out a sign-up form (as shown in Figure 9-4) and wait to be accepted into the program. You can find the form at this URL: www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/request.py?contact_type=video_joinbeta.

When you do get accepted into the program, AdSense for Video allows you to place ads in *your own streaming video*. This is especially useful if you create and share videos on your Web site and other sites.

Figure 9-4: AdSense for Video is in beta testing, so users must be approved before using.

Ads can appear in one of two places in your video. Ads can be displayed *InVideo*, as shown in Figure 9-5, which means that the ads actually appear within the window where the video displays.



Figure 9-5: InVideo ads are actually small video ads within your video.

The alternative is to display ads as text overlays, as shown in Figure 9-6.

The cool thing about InVideo ads is that they're essentially a video within a video. The ads play in the lower one-third of the video player you've embedded on your site, and they're short — usually not more than 60 seconds.

While the ad is showing, the video that should be playing in the player is paused. Then, when the ad is finished, the area in which it is displayed shrinks back but still displays a link to the advertiser. The video that you have set to play should then begin on its own.

Figure 9-6:
Text overlay
ads are the
alternative
in AdSense
for Video.



Text overlay ads don't contain any actual video. They are simple text ads that overlay the lower one-third of the player. Your video plays as usual but the link remains available throughout the whole video.

There is no inherent advantage to one type of ad over the other — InVideo or Text Overlay. It's mostly a personal choice that should be governed by what you and your visitors prefer. I strongly recommend that you try each configuration separately for the same amount of time and then compare results to see which option your Web site audience likes best.

Enabling Click-to-Play Capabilities

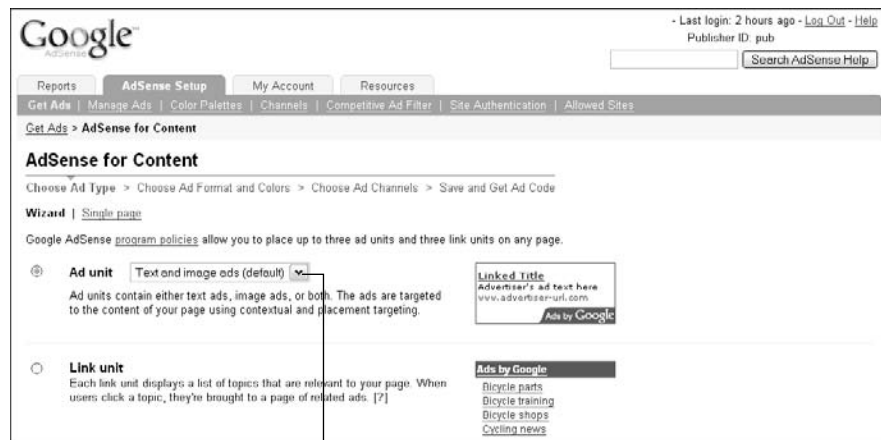
Putting AdSense video capabilities into place on your Web site differs a little with each different type of video capability AdSense offers. The simplest path to take involves using click-to-play video ads, whereas AdSense for Video is definitely a bit trickier.

Implementing click-to-play video ads is as simple as choosing the right format (large rectangle, square, wide skyscraper, and so on) and enabling graphic ad displays. Choosing the right format for video ads isn't actually part of the video setup that AdSense offers but is part of the AdSense for Content setup (see Chapter 5).

If you made your way through Chapter 5, this choosing-an-ad-format business sounds familiar. Here's the shorthand version:

1. **Point your browser to `www.adsense.com`, log on to your AdSense account, and then click the AdSense Setup tab.**
2. **On the AdSense Setup tab select AdSense for Content.**
The AdSense for Content Wizard appears.
3. **In the first section of the wizard, select the Ad Unit radio button and then select either Text and Image Ads or Image Ads Only from the drop-down menu to the right, as shown in Figure 9-7.**

Figure 9-7:
Select one of the options from the drop-down menu to show images in your ads.



Choose an image ad option here.

Continue to set up the ad as I show you in Chapter 5. When you're finished, copy and paste the code into your Web site, and you're all set. All that remains is to wait for AdSense to place a click-to-play ad on your site.

You have no control over what videos get placed beyond enabling the graphic format that click-to-play video ads require. Ads are placed when they're appropriate for your site.



Earning with click-to-play ads is the same as earning with other AdSense for Content ads. Site visitors must click the ad and be taken to the advertiser's Web site for you to earn your payment on the ad.

When you get right down to it, nothing much different is going on in click-to-play video ads. You create and add the code for your ads in the same way you do for AdSense for Content ads. The only real difference is in the way the ad displays. If you're looking to draw a little more attention to your ads, this video format might be a good way to go about it. You can't blend video ads as well into your Web site as you can text ads, however, so test any video ads before you commit to replacing text ads that have already proven how they perform.

Getting Started with Video Units

Video units are a little more complicated than click-to-play ads. *Video units* are actually ads shown along with YouTube videos that are displayed in a specialized player you've added to your Web site.

You do have some control over what videos you choose to show in your player. You can select the video content you want by picking content categories, by selecting individual content providers, or by having video automatically targeted to your site content.

Before you can do any of that, however, you have to have a YouTube account that's connected to your Web site.

Signing up with YouTube

YouTube is a video-sharing service that's owned by Google. With YouTube, anyone can upload and share videos with others. Or, if you're not the video-shooting-and-sharing kind of person, you can browse YouTube videos to find things that interest you. Since I've been using YouTube, I've watched movie spoofs, instructional videos, and even sermons from church services. What you watch is directed by your taste in videos.

You can also find videos and add them to your Web site or blog. You don't actually download the video and then store it on your Web server; instead, you paste the code for a special URL into the code of your blog or Web site, and the video is streamed from YouTube to your site whenever someone comes to your site and starts the video.

In order to take advantage of all the fun, you *do* need to sign up for a YouTube account, which is a simple process. Start by going to the YouTube Web site at www.youtube.com. After you're there, click the Sign Up link in the upper-right corner of the page. You see a simple form, like the one shown in Figure 9-8. Fill it out, click the Sign Up button, and then wait for YouTube to send you a confirmation e-mail. After you get your e-mail, respond to it to create a YouTube account that you can use with AdSense.

The screenshot shows the YouTube homepage with navigation tabs for Home, Videos, Channels, and Community. Below the navigation is a search bar and an Upload button. The main content area is split into two columns:

- Member Login:** Includes a prompt "Already have a YouTube account? Login here." with input fields for "YouTube Username:" and "YouTube Password:", a "Log In" button, and a link for "Forgot Username | Forgot Password". Below this is a "Login with your Google account" link.
- Create Your YouTube Account:** Includes a prompt "It's free and easy. Just fill out the account info below. (All fields required)". The form contains:
 - Account Type: Standard (dropdown)
 - Email Address: [input field]
 - YouTube Username: [input field] (with a "check" icon)
 - Help text: "Your username can only contain letters A-Z or numbers 0-9"
 - Password: [input field]
 - Confirm Password: [input field]
 - Password Strength: None
 - Country: United States (dropdown)
 - Postal Code: [input field] (with note: "Required for US, UK & Canada Only")
 - Gender: Male (radio), Female (radio)
 - Date of Birth: [dropdown] - [dropdown] - [dropdown]
 - Verification: [input field] (with note: "Enter the text in the image")
 - Image: A CAPTCHA image showing the word "handwest" written in a cursive font.
 - Link: "Can't read?"
 - Checkboxes:
 - Sign me up for the "Broadcast Yourself" email
 - I agree to the [terms of use](#) and [privacy policy](#).
 - Sign Up button

Below the login form is a section titled "What Is YouTube?" with the text "YouTube is the home for video online:" and a bulleted list of features:

- Watch millions of videos
- Share favorites with friends and family
- Connect with other users who share your interests
- Upload your videos to a worldwide audience

 At the bottom of this section is the text "Sign up now to join the YouTube community!"

Figure 9-8:
To sign up for YouTube, enter the requested information in the sign-up form.

A note about the YouTube Partner program

YouTube has a Partner program that you can also use to monetize your YouTube videos. With the YouTube partner program, you can allow ads that are controlled by YouTube. Keep in mind, though, that you don't have as much control over them as you would with a standard AdSense ad. The ads are chosen for you, based on the videos that you choose to place on YouTube. That means that you won't necessarily be displaying the ads — other people will, when they display videos that you have uploaded to the YouTube service. This program can be a little confusing, and although it's not required for you to use video units with AdSense — in fact, the YouTube Partner program is a completely different entity than AdSense for Video — I want to take a minute to discuss its quirkiest aspects.

To start with, signing up for the Partner program isn't difficult, *per se*. To sign up, fill out another form (see Figure 9-9) on the YouTube Web site (www.youtube.com/partners).

YouTube Partner Program: Application Form

Application Information
 YouTube Username: Jerrigen07
 YouTube Email: g.peek07@gmail.com

Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required.

Personal Information
 First Name: *
 Last Name: *
 Date of Birth (YYYY-MM-DD): * -- You must be 18 years of age or older to become a partner.

Business Information
 Company Name: (?)
 Company Web Site: (?)
 Country/Region: * United States We are currently only accepting applications from residents of the US, Canada, and the UK.

Additional YouTube User Accounts
 Linked YouTube user accounts: (?) I have additional YouTube user accounts I would like to include in this partnership application

Video Information
 How many videos have you created/produced?: *
 What is the average length of your videos?: *
 Category that best describes your content?: *
 How often do you create and upload new videos?:
 If your videos are NOT on YouTube, enter the URL where your videos are published online.: (?)

Tell us why you want to join the partner program:

Figure 9-9: Fill out and submit this form to be considered for the YouTube Partner program.

The problem with this process isn't in the Filling Out Yet Another Form part or the Time You Spend Waiting to Find Out If You've Been Accepted into the Program part. The problem lies in the requirements to be accepted. To be accepted into the YouTube Partner program, you must meet the following criteria:

- ✔ You must create and upload original videos suitable for online streaming.
- ✔ You must own (or have express permission to use and monetize) all audio and video content that you upload — no exceptions.
- ✔ You must regularly upload videos that are viewed by thousands of YouTube users.
- ✔ You must live in the United States, Canada, or the United Kingdom.

In all, the only real issue is with the third point: You must regularly upload videos that are viewed by thousands of YouTube users. If you're new to YouTube, you're not likely to meet this criterion, so you may not be approved for the YouTube Partner program, which is frustrating when you want to start using AdSense video units immediately.

If you do meet the criteria and you're accepted into the YouTube Partner program, you have yet another method for monetizing your YouTube videos — in addition to using AdSense for Video. There is one little confusing part, though.

If you have more than one YouTube account, you could find yourself in AdSense-connection hell! In an effort to get out of that fiery Neverland, you may find that you're clicking from your AdSense account into your YouTube account, only to be sent back to your AdSense account again as you try to connect the two.



Make very sure you're logged in to your AdSense account and your YouTube account with the exact same e-mail address before you begin the connection process. If you're not, you'll be running in circles for hours trying to figure out what you've done wrong. Take my advice on this, folks. I spent nearly a whole day trying to figure out what I was doing wrong!



Creating your first video player

If you've made it this far, you deserve a medal. I don't give you one, though; instead, I show you how to create your first video player.

I make the assumption here that you've already connected your YouTube account to your AdSense account, as I describe in the previous section. That means you've received a nice confirmation message praising you for your successful linking of your YouTube and AdSense accounts. If you scroll down a bit in that message, you also see a line informing you that You Have Not Created Any AdSense Players Yet. Next to that little bit of info you see a Create AdSense Player button. Guess what I ask you to do?

1. Click the Create AdSense Player button.

The New AdSense Player page appears, as shown in Figure 9-10. Use this page to build a customized AdSense player for your Web site.

2. In the New AdSense Player page, enter a name for your AdSense player and, if you like, a short description in the text boxes provided.

Although the name and description are shown only to you, still enter something that helps you remember the purpose of the player, rather than some smart-alecky name whose meaning you might forget in a month or two.

3. In the Theme section of the New AdSense Player page, select a color scheme for your player.

Make it something that matches well with your Web site.

Figure 9-10:
Give your
AdSense
player a
name and
description
to help you
recognize it.

4. In the Layout section of the page, choose a size that best suits your site.

Your choices here are Mini, Standard, and Full Size.

5. After you finish making your selections, scroll farther down the page to make selections for what content you want to display in your AdSense video player, as shown in Figure 9-11.

You can choose to either let YouTube automatically populate your player with content, which is done by keywords — you enter the most relevant keywords for your site — or if you're like me and want more control, you can choose from a list of categories or individual providers that will be used to populate the player.

6. After you make your selections, scroll to the bottom of the page and click the Generate Code button to get the code for your Web site.

When the page reloads, you'll have to scroll to the bottom of it to copy the code that's provided.

All that's left is to install the code on your Web site and then videos are fed directly into the AdSense player.



You're not limited to a single AdSense player on your Web site. You are, however, limited to one per page. If you want to create new players for other pages on your site, click the Create Player button on the left side of the screen when you log in to AdSense Video Units. Each player that you've created is then displayed on the Video Units page so that you can access it for deleting or editing at any time.

By default, the video playlist is automatically generated based on the performance and characteristics of the website where the player is embedded. To better control the playlist, refine your selection using the controls below.

Keywords

Enter keywords here.

Category

Autos & Vehicles Comedy Education
 Entertainment Film & Animation Howto & Style
 Music News & Politics Nonprofits & Activism
 People & Blogs Pets & Animals Science & Technology
 Sports Travel & Events

Channel

Click on a content owner to preview their information.

Figure 9-11:
You can choose the content that appears in your player or let YouTube choose for you.

Installing the code

Installing the code for the AdSense player is exactly like installing any other AdSense code on your Web site. First highlight and copy the code and then paste it into the HTML (HyperText Markup Language) for your Web site, between the `<body>` and `</body>` tags.



After you upload your Web site code to the server, your video units should begin showing immediately, although in some rare cases, you could experience a short delay. If your ads aren't showing within about an hour of having uploaded the new site with the AdSense code included, contact AdSense to see if you've done something wrong.

Earning with video units

Your earnings with video units aren't much different from the earnings that you generate with other types of AdSense ad units. The difference is all in the display.

With video units, you have two opportunities to earn from your placement. The first involves the banner-type ads that appear at the top of the video player, and the second comes from the text overlay ads that appear on the bottom 20 percent of the video player. When your site visitors click either of these ads, you get paid.

Some video units also have the *cost-per-impression model* — also called a cost-per-thousand-impression model because payment is based on the number of times an ad or video is viewed, divided by 1,000 — which means all that’s necessary for you to get some earnings out of this is for someone to view the video. Like all cost-per-impression ads, those are doled out by AdSense to sites that generate very high levels of traffic and stringently meet the requirements that advertisers have set forth.

You never know for sure when cost-per-impression ads are displayed, so all you can do is steadily build your Web site traffic and hope that they’re displayed when you’re having a nice spike in traffic. If you do happen to notice when a cost-per-impression ad is displayed, you can always try to drive traffic to your site. You never know how long the ad remains on your site though, so whatever efforts you take should be ones that have quick results.

Reports for video units

After you connect your AdSense and YouTube accounts, a new report appears on your Reports page. This report is for the video units, and it shows the same information for video units that you see for other types of AdSense ads:

- ✓ Page impressions
- ✓ Clicks
- ✓ Page click-through-rate (CTR)
- ✓ Page cost-per-thousand impressions
- ✓ Earnings

You have the same capabilities with this report that you have with any of the other earnings reports that AdSense makes available, including the ability to generate the report regularly and have it e-mailed to you. (For more on AdSense reports, see Chapter 15.)

If you’re already using video on your Web site or blog, AdSense video units are a good way to monetize on that video. After you work your way through the confusing parts, you can add video with the click of a few buttons. The earnings potential is there, so get started with it.

Go, Go Google Gadgets

If you've ever seen a personalized Google home page, you've seen Google Gadgets in action. *Google Gadgets* are basically little programs that you (or someone else) put together and upload to the Google Gadgets collection. Users can then download those gadgets and add them to their iGoogle home page or even to their Google desktop application.

Some serious confusion exists about how Google Gadgets works with AdSense, though, and I clear that up for you. First, a little more about Google Gadgets, what they do, and how they're created.

What's a gadget?

Google Gadgets are mini-applications that are created with XML, HTML, or JavaScript. When you create a Google Gadget, it can do anything from display the weather forecast to show you the Bible verse of the day or connect you to a useful service on a company's Web page. One example is the Wikipedia Gadget, which sits on your iGoogle page and shows a search box for Wikipedia. To perform a search, type your search string into the search box, click Search, and you're taken to the correct Wikipedia page. Cool, huh?

Gadgets are an excellent way to turn users onto your products and services by giving them a sneak peak at what you have to offer. Gadgets can be in the form of calculators, search boxes, useful tools, or whatever it is that you have to offer. The thing to remember as you plan to create a Google Gadget is that the more useful or entertaining it is, the more people will download and install the gadget, which is the key to monetizing your gadgets.

When you create gadgets, think creatively about the audience that you want to serve. What does that audience want that doesn't already exist? When you hit that sweet spot, you'll know you've come up with the right idea by the number of downloads of your gadgets.

Creating a gadget

If you have an idea for a gadget that you think will be wildly popular, create it. You can create gadgets in XML, HTML, or JavaScript. Creating gadgets is all about how you format the code that makes the gadget work.

Don't be discouraged if you don't know XML or JavaScript, though. If you know some basic HTML, Google provides all the additional information that you need to create a gadget with the Google Gadgets Editor (GGE). You use

this program to write the code for the gadget. Alternatively, you can use any text editor that you're comfortable with, but GGE is specifically designed for you to work with gadgets.

To access GGE, log in to <http://code.google.com/apis/gadgets/docs/gg.html#GGE> and scroll to the bottom of the page. That's where the editor, as shown in Figure 9-12, makes its home — until you offer it a new home on your computer.



Figure 9-12:
The Google Gadgets Editor is where you can create your first gadgets.

One of the most basic gadgets that you can create is the same program that everyone starts with when they're figuring out how to program an HTML site of any kind — Hello, world!

Hello, world! is a very simple program to write and requires only a few lines of code, such as:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>
<Module>
<ModulePrefs title="hello world example" />
<Content type="html">
<![CDATA[Hello, world!]]></Content>
</Module>
```

I explain this line by line as follows:

```
<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>
```

The first line is a standard opening line of code that tells any processor reading it that a program's coming, and it's written in *this* language with *that* protocol. In this case, the language is XML version 1.0, and the encoding protocol is UTF-8.

```
<Module>
```

The `<module>` tag indicates that a program — the gadget — is within the program.

```
<ModulePrefs title="hello world example" />
```

The third line is the module preferences tag, which indicates information about the module, such as the title, the author, and other optional features that might need to be taken into consideration.

```
<Content type="html">
```

Just as it reads, this line tells you what the type of content for the gadget is. In this case, the content type is HTML (which is why you can get away with not knowing XML or JavaScript). If you can use the tags here to get started and you know HTML, then you can use HTML as your content type and write your gadget using HTML code.

```
<![CDATA[Hello, world!]]></Content>
```

The `<![CDATA>` tag is used to enclose HTML when a gadget's content type is HTML. This tag tells the browser that reads the code that the text within the CDATA section shouldn't be treated as XML. The CDATA section typically contains HTML and JavaScript. `</Content>`, or the closing tag, is another part to this line. The *closing tag* — in this case, the `</Content>` closing tag — indicates where the content for the module ends and is a signal that the program information is complete.

```
</Module>
```

Here's another closing tag. This one indicates that the module is complete.

With that, you're finished. This is a very simple gadget, but when done properly, it appears like the one shown in Figure 9-13.

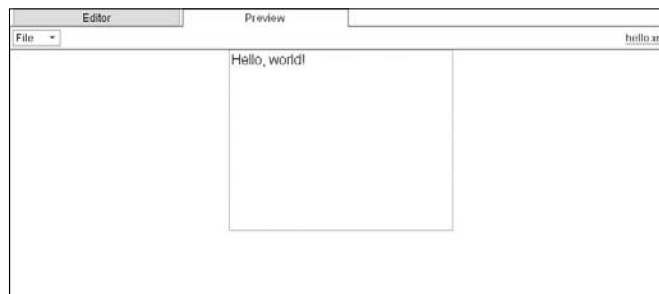


Figure 9-13:
The Hello, world! gadget is as simple as it gets.

If you play with it some more, you can tweak it considerably. For example, Figure 9-14 shows what I did with some very simple HTML tags.

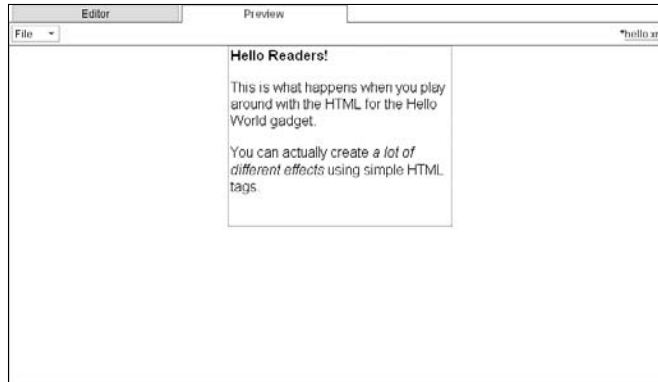


Figure 9-14:
Play with the HTML a little and you can change Hello, world! as desired.

Obviously, you'll want to do something a little more sophisticated than a simple Hello, world! message, but I want to give you a feel for how easy it is to work with Google Gadgets.

I'm sure you're wondering where AdSense comes into this mix, though, right? It's simple. AdSense doesn't have a module specifically for Google Gadgets. However, you can program your AdSense ads directly into Google Gadgets.

Programming your AdSense ads into Google Gadgets is just like creating a Google AdSense for Content ad. Generate the ad by using the same steps that you would if you were putting the ad directly into the content on your Web site, and then insert the AdSense code into your gadget code. (If you skipped straight to this chapter and you don't know how to create a content ad, you can jump to Chapter 5 where I address that.) You may have to play with it a little to get the styles and placement just right, but the end result is a gadget that includes an AdSense ad for everyone to see.

Except for one small problem . . .

Creating gadgets sounds simple enough, and if doing so with AdSense ads piques your interest, you'll probably want to do a little more studying on the topic because it's more involved than I make it sound here. You can read more about it by going to the Google Gadgets Web site at <http://code.google.com/apis/gadgets>.

There's one small issue of which you might want to be aware upfront. When you're creating a Google Gadget with the intent of embedding Google AdSense code into it, you first need permission from AdSense. AdSense doesn't usually have a problem with granting that permission, but without it, your ad probably won't show up properly in the gadget.

To get permission, you have to e-mail Google AdSense with their support form found at www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/request.py. Enter your contact information in the form, and then, in the text box provided for questions or statements, write a brief request to use AdSense in your gadget. If you already have an active gadget that is popular, be sure to include information about it. If you're creating a new gadget, include that information too. And don't forget a description of your gadget. Google will make the determination to allow you to use AdSense in your gadget on a case-by-case basis.

You may have to wait a few days to get a response from AdSense, so think a little ahead of the game if you're trying to meet a specific deadline.

Another issue to keep in mind when you're creating your gadgets with AdSense embedded in them is that the combination of the two isn't something that Google came up with, so there are times when gadgets and AdSense don't play well together.

This can result in either the gadget that you've created not being shown or the AdSense ad not being shown. There's no known fix for this issue right now. Google's working on it, so you'll see that your ads and gadgets display well for a time and then they'll crash. This is the nature of the beast, so be prepared with alternative plans (maybe for a gadget without ads) in the event that one program ticks off the other.

Ultimately, even without AdSense, Google Gadgets are a great investment of your time because they're a quick and easy way to draw a lot of users to your site — especially if you can nail down your audience and provide a truly useful gadget. If you can combine AdSense with your gadgets, you've really created a winning combination.

Chapter 10

AdSense for Mobile

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding the differences of mobility
 - ▶ Creating ads for mobile content and mobile requirements
 - ▶ Setting up and earning with AdSense for Mobile
-

Look around on any given day and you'll probably see a few dozen people using their cell phones. Most will be talking on them, but you'll also find plenty who are texting or even using the Internet.

Despite its smaller format and scaled-down capabilities, the mobile Internet is gaining a lot of traction, especially among younger — Generation X and Generation Y — users. These kids are always on the go, and they grab what they're looking for from the Internet while they're in mid-stride. (Unlike me — I'm a little more “mature” and find it difficult to read the screen on the phone, much less search the Web!)

This younger generation also has a larger disposable income than adults — folks who have mortgages, car payments, and credit card bills to think about, not to mention the cost of providing disposable income to the younger generation!

If that disposable income is available, why wouldn't you want to tap into it? Most Web site owners do feel that urge, so they've created mobile-friendly Web sites that allow cell phone-enabled Internet users to access their content whether those visitors are sitting on the bus or climbing the Rocky Mountains. Of course, with mobile Web sites, Google will find a way to monetize these mobile-friendly sites.

Enter Google *AdSense for Mobile*, which is a program that allows you to put ads on your Web site that can be displayed on mobile browsers. Visitors surfing your site with a mobile phone can see and click these ads, and you can earn some bucks even in this smaller format.

Trying to harvest a bit of cash from mobile users *does* require some changes to your Web site, though, and it also requires that you scale down some AdSense strategies. Think small, in other words, but don't freak. Thinking small doesn't require too much retooling. This chapter contains what you need to know to target those mobile surfers and add another stream to your AdSense revenues.

The Differences of Mobility

Nearly half of all mobile Internet users use mobile Web sites only to find tidbits of immediately useful information. Mobile surfers don't usually surf just for the fun of being on the Internet — they save major surfing for when they can sit at a computer and see pages displayed more than a few words at a time. In part, that's because mobile Web sites are usually pretty poorly designed still, despite the fact that the mobile Web has been around for awhile now.

It's hard to get the hang of how a Web site should appear on a cell phone screen. Many Web site owners make the mistake of designing their Web site for the computer screen and then enabling it for mobile phones without changing site design. You can do that, but the results won't be the most useful site a mobile surfer comes across.

Enabling your site for mobile users is easy — for the most part. In most cases, it requires a small switch in the encoding of your Web site from HTML (HyperText Markup Language) to XHTML (eXtensible HyperText Markup Language) or another mobile-enabled Web design language.

Some mobile applications, however, require *PHP* — *hypertext processor* (I have no clue how the popular acronym gained the first *P*). PHP is a server-side processing language because *scripts* (or *applications*) are run from the server rather than from the computer that the application appears on. This makes it much easier to have rich programming on Web sites, which doesn't depend on the computer a visitor may be using.

Because of the way it works, PHP makes creating rich, detailed mobile Web sites a much easier process. The cool part is that if you have a Web site written in HTML or XHTML, changing it to PHP is often as easy as changing the extension of the files that make up the site from `.htm` to `.php`. Really.

Well, okay, it sounds easy enough. Now for a reality check — I've seriously oversimplified the considerations that go into creating mobile Web sites. The fact remains that if your site is built for display on a computer screen, mobile users won't have the same experience. For example, Figure 10-1 shows how a list of links might look on a mobile Web page. Keep in mind that there's no mouse on a mobile phone, so users have to scroll through every link on the page until they get to the one they want to follow.



Figure 10-1: Links on a Web site may look something like this on a mobile browser.

Simply changing the extension on an existing site built for the Internet also doesn't do justice to the pages that display on mobile phones. Much of the graphics and functionality of the site is lost during the translation to a mobile format, so while the extension change allows you to quickly enable the text and links on your site for mobility, it doesn't make the site pretty or even completely useful.

The hardware restraints faced by most mobile users also create serious issues. You have to go into creating a Web site with the thought of making it available to the largest audience possible. That's just a fact of mobile life, and as more and more mobile adoptions take place, the mobile surfer is more of a consideration. That means making your site friendly for both mobile and non-mobile surfers.

Mobile content is different

When you're considering a mobile surfer as part of the audience for your site, keep in mind the different uses for the mobile Web. Google has done a lot of research in this area and has defined three types of mobile surfers:

- ✓ **Repetitive Now:** This is the group of mobile surfers who have a set of online activities that they conduct from their phones on a regular basis. Some of the repetitive tasks these surfers perform are checking the weather, reading news stories and blog posts, and checking stock quotes.

- ✓ **Bored Now:** The Bored Now group of Web surfers have a few minutes of downtime and don't know what else to do in such a short amount of time. Out comes the phone, and the Web browser is opened to occupy their minds for just a few minutes. This type of mobile surfer is probably the most targeted because this is the only area where true e-commerce dollars can be captured. Bored Now surfers are selecting ringtones, downloading videos, and adding themes to their phones.
- ✓ **Urgent Now:** "We need it right now" is the motto of this group of mobile surfers. These people are booking, changing, or checking airline flights, booking hotel rooms, finding directions, or locating restaurants. They need information now, so they pull out their phones to find it.

As you consider these three types of mobile surfers, think about which group you're targeting because the group determines whether AdSense ads will even be acknowledged by these users. The Repetitive Now group and the Bored Now group might click your ads. Unless there's something very compelling about them, the Urgent Now group is likely to pass right by an ad and go straight for the information they seek.

Mobile requirements

Mobile content is definitely different from the content that you find on other Web pages, and because it is, participation in AdSense for Mobile has some different requirements. Obviously, the Web site must be mobile-compliant, but it also must be developed with a server-side scripting language, such as PHP. If you're not sure what PHP is, check out "The Differences of Mobility" section earlier in this chapter to find out more about it.



If your mobile site isn't developed with a server-side scripting language, AdSense for Mobile ad code doesn't display properly on your pages. The code generated for AdSense for Mobile doesn't render properly on a normal Web site, either, so don't generate the code thinking that you can fool Google into believing that you're supporting mobile Web sites. All you'll wind up doing is generating an obvious error that your site visitors can see.

Here are some of the mobile Web page markup languages that can be used to program your Web site and still have mobile ads enabled:

- ✓ **WML (WAP 1.x):** WML, or *wireless markup language*, is a programming language that's based on XML (eXtensible Markup Language) and is designed specifically for creating Web sites and applications for mobile devices.
- ✓ **XHTML (WAP 2.0):** *eXtensible HyperText Markup Language* is an intersection of HTML and XML, meaning that it's useful for both normal Web sites and mobile Web sites.

- ✓ **CHTML (imode):** *Compact HTML* is an alternative to WML and XHTML, but it was designed specifically for Japanese cell phones and even more specifically for one manufacturer's products — the Japanese company DoCoMo — and the imode phone designation just indicates an Internet enabled device. So this isn't a markup language that has a wide usage outside Japan.

I know this is all pretty complicated, but it really is necessary to program your mobile Web site using a supported mobile scripting language if you want your site to be both functional and useful. Users aren't likely to return to a site that's nothing more than text and links. If you plan to have a mobile site, you should make it as functional and useful as possible. If you want to find out more about mobile scripting languages, check out *Next Generation Wireless Applications: Creating Mobile Applications in a Web 2.0 and Mobile 2.0 World*, by Paul Golding (Wiley Publishing), or *Wireless Markup Language (WML) Scripting and Programming Using WML, cHTML, and xHTML*, by William Rount (Althos Publishing).



In the preceding list, there's another abbreviation that I haven't explained yet — WAP. *Wireless application protocol* is a standard that's used to simplify how a browser sees a Web site so that mobile browsers can access the Internet. The protocol is automatically built into the programming language that you're using to create your mobile Web site. So WML sites automatically adhere to the protocol WAP 1.0 and higher. XHTML is designed to work with the protocol WAP 2.0 and higher.

In addition to the actual software language requirements that AdSense sets forth, ad placement, behavior, and accessibility guidelines are as follows:

- ✓ You can display only one ad unit per mobile Web page.
- ✓ A *double ad unit* — an ad unit that displays two different advertisers' links — can be placed only on the bottom of the page but can be located above the page's footer (including navigational links and copyright messages).
- ✓ Ads displayed on a mobile Web page may not be modified or obscured in any way.
- ✓ After an ad has been clicked, the landing page display may not be interrupted or prevented in any way. For instance, you can't display any other pages — including other advertisements — before taking users to the advertiser's Web site.
- ✓ The Google crawlers must be able to access your mobile Web sites for targeting purposes. If the crawler can't access your site, ads won't be displayed on your mobile pages.

If you're truly interested in creating a mobile Web site and you have content that will support mobile users, monetize the site as much as possible. These guidelines help you to do just that — put the right content in front of mobile surfers so you can take advantage of mobile ad revenues. That process is only slightly different than the one used for setting up AdSense for Content (see Chapter 5).

Setting Up AdSense for Mobile

Okay, the technical mumbo-jumbo is out of the way. I don't claim that what you've read so far in this chapter is everything there is to know about understanding mobile programming languages and protocols, and creating mobile Web sites. This is an AdSense book and it doesn't cover everything mobile. If you want to know more about creating mobile Web sites, check out *Mobile Internet For Dummies*, by John R. Levine, Michael J. O'Farrell, and Jostein Algroj (Wiley Publishing). If you really want the whole nine yards, go for Nirav Mehta's *Mobile Web Development*. It's technically dense, but you'll find everything you need to know in it.

Setting up AdSense for Mobile is a lot like setting up AdSense for Content. The differences are all related to the mobile platform and are easy enough to navigate. You have to tell the AdSense folks which programming language — or a markup language (or just markup for short) — you used for your site. You also have to tell AdSense which character encoding you used for the site.

Character encoding happens when you combine one set of characters with some other indicator, such as numbers or integers. Morse code is probably one of the best known sets of character encoding because it combines letters of the Latin alphabet with dots and dashes that are used in telegraphy. The result is that a set of dots and dashes (or *depressions*) can be sent with a telegraph machine and then decoded to represent the characters they represent. In other words, with a telegraph, you could send messages from one place to another.

Character encoding for Web sites works basically the same way. Characters are encoded with some numerical system. Then, the Web browser can decode those characters to ensure that they're displayed properly. In most cases, UTF-8 is the most commonly used character encoding for U.S. Web sites.

I'm jumping just a little ahead of the game here. To begin creating your mobile ads, first log in to your AdSense account. Then use these steps to create the ad:

- 1. Click the Get Ads link on the AdSense Setup tab.**

The Get Ads page appears.

2. On the Get Ads page, select the AdSense for Mobile Content link, as shown in Figure 10-2.

The AdSense for Mobile Content Wizard appears, ready to walk you through the process of setting up mobile ads (see Figure 10-3).

3. In the Format section of the wizard, use the drop-down menu to select the type of ad you want to display on your Web site.

You have two options: Single or Double. Single shows the link to one advertiser whereas Double shows the links to two, but the ads are stacked one on top of the other.

Mobile text ads contain 24–36 characters of text depending on the language in which the ad is written, followed by a destination URL if advertisers choose to enter one. Advertisers also have the option to allow customers to directly connect to their business phones by placing a Call link next to the destination URL. If the Call link appears, visitors can click the link to initiate a call to the advertiser.

Figure 10-2:
Select the AdSense for Mobile Content link to create mobile ads.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense Setup page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Reports', 'AdSense Setup', 'My Account', and 'Resources'. Below that, a secondary navigation bar includes 'Get Ads', 'Manage Ads', 'Color Palettes', 'Channels', 'Competitive Ad Filter', 'Site Authentication', and 'Allowed Sites'. The main heading is 'AdSense Setup' with the instruction 'Choose the product you'd like to add to your site.' There are four main options listed: 'AdSense for Content' (with a preview of a text ad), 'AdSense for Search' (with a search input field), 'Referrals' (with a note about selecting ads), and 'Video units' (with a YouTube logo). At the bottom, 'AdSense for Mobile Content' is highlighted with a red box, and its description reads: 'Unlock the revenue potential of your mobile site with targeted Google ads.' A preview of a mobile ad is shown next to it. The footer contains links to 'AdSense Blog', 'AdSense Forum', 'Privacy Policy', 'Terms & Conditions', and 'Program Policies', along with a copyright notice for 2008 Google.

The AdSense for Mobile Content link

Google AdSense

- Last login: 1 days ago - [Log Out](#) - [Help](#)
 Publisher ID: [Search AdSense Help](#)

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

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

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

AdSense for Mobile Content

Choose Ad Style > Choose Ad Channels > Get Ad Code

[Wizard](#) | [Single page](#)

Google AdSense [program policies](#) allow you to place only one ad unit on any mobile webpage. Ad units contain either one or two text ads. The ads are targeted to the content of your mobile webpage using contextual targeting

You can customize your mobile ads to fit your mobile webpages. Use the options below.

Format
 Ad units come in a variety of sizes - view all the options on our [Ad Formats](#) page.

Markup
 Specify the markup language in which your mobile website is written. [?]

Character Encoding
 Specify the character encoding you want the ads to be in. [?]

Colors
 Choose from one of our pre-designed color palettes, or create your own palette. [Save as new palette](#) | [Edit palettes](#)

* Note: wml and chtml webpages will not display certain color selections, including background or borders. [?]

Border # 555555

Hyperlink (Title/Phone Number) # 0000CC

Background # EEEEEE

Text # 000000

URL/Company Name # 008000

[Sample](#)

Ad by Google

Unlinked Title - Ad text here
 www.ad-url.com - Call
 Phone Number

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

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Figure 10-3:
 The AdSense
 for Mobile
 Content
 Wizard
 walks you
 through
 creating ads
 for mobile
 content.

4. In the Markup section of the wizard, use the drop-down menu to select the markup language used to create your mobile Web site.

Your choices are WML, XHTML, and CHTML. If you're not sure what these are, flip to the discussion about them earlier in this chapter in the "Mobile requirements" section.

5. In the Character Encoding section of the wizard, use the drop-down menu to select the character encoding for your Web site.

If you're not sure what character encoding is used on your site, AdSense gives you the option to Auto-Detect encoding. Make sure that option is selected.

6. In the Colors section of the wizard, use the color palettes to choose colors for the various elements of your ads.

As with AdSense for Content, you want your mobile ads to blend with the pages on which they appear. Use the Color Picker (that pretty colored box) next to each element to choose the color you want to use for that element. Alternatively, you can also enter the six-digit hexadecimal number in the text box provided to further customize colors if the one you want to use isn't available in the Color Picker. However, you should know there are some markup languages — like WML and CHTML — that don't allow color customization, so your ads are displayed in the default Google palette if you're using one of these languages.

7. Click Continue.

You're taken to the next page in the wizard, where you have the option of selecting or creating specific channels to track your mobile ads. Remember, channels are simply tracking tools that help you visualize how ads are performing. You can add a channel to your ad, and then when you look at your AdSense reports, you can immediately see how one channel of ads performs over another.

8. In the new wizard page, use the drop-down menu to select a channel — or click the Add New Channel link to add a new one — and then click Continue.

You're taken to the Get Code page of the wizard.

Placing mobile ads to increase earnings

Placement is one problem that you'll likely encounter with mobile ads. The format of a mobile Web site is already so small, so how do you place ads that catch the attention of mobile surfers?

My suggestion is to place them near the top of the page. For example, if you're setting up your mobile Web site so that a small logo appears and then content and links for your page immediately display, ads appear between the logo and the content.

This gets the ads right in front of the mobile Web site users as quickly as possible to ensure they don't navigate away from the page before your ads are seen.

Another alternative might be to put your ads at the top of a list of links that appear on your

mobile Web page. This integrates the ads into the links, making them feel a little more natural on the site. But again, they're still above the links so that users have the chance to actually see the ads before they navigate away from the page.

Ultimately, the perfect placement of your ads may take some trial-and-error. With any form of AdSense, don't take my word — or anyone else's for that matter — as gospel. Instead, begin with my suggestions and test your ads over a period of time to see where they earn the most click-throughs for your site. Only thorough testing can you really determine what works and what doesn't on your specific pages. Ultimately, what works for you is all that really matters, right?

In this last page of the wizard, you see one major difference from the AdSense for Content routine. Check out Figure 10-4, where you can see a Server-Side Scripting Language drop-down menu right above the box that contains the code for your ad.

9. In the Server-Side Scripting Language drop-down menu, choose the language that was used during the creation of your Web site.

The code changes to reflect the option that you select.

10. Copy and paste the code into your mobile Web site.

Paste the ad code into your mobile site in the same way you paste the code into a regular Web site. Find the location on the site where you want the ad to appear and paste the code there. Remember, however, that it can take up to 48 hours for ads to start appearing on your pages.

Select the appropriate scripting language.

The screenshot shows the AdSense for Mobile Content wizard. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Reports', 'AdSense Setup', 'My Account', and 'Resources'. Below that, there's a sub-navigation bar with 'Get Ads', 'Manage Ads', 'Color Palettes', 'Channels', 'Competitive Ad Filter', 'Site Authentication', and 'Allowed Sites'. The main heading is 'AdSense for Mobile Content'. Below the heading, there's a breadcrumb trail: 'Choose Ad Style > Choose Ad Channels > Get Ad Code'. The 'Wizard' section is active, and it says 'AdSense for Mobile Content requires server-side scripting, unlike the client-side scripting in JavaScript, which is not supported by most mobile browsers or webpages. You can paste the AdSense code in the server-side scripting language of your choice into [any mobile webpage](#) that complies with our [program policies](#).' Below this, it lists supported scripting languages: PHP v4.3.0 or greater, CGI/Perl v5.8 or greater, JSP v1.2 or greater, and ASP v3.0 or greater. A dropdown menu labeled 'Server-side scripting language' is set to 'PHP'. Below that, there's a section for 'Your AdSense code' with a text area containing the following code:

```
<?php
$GLOBALS['google']['ad_type']='text';
$GLOBALS['google']['channel']='';
$GLOBALS['google']['client']='pub-6630304504312230';
$GLOBALS['google']['format']='mobile_double';
$GLOBALS['google']['https']=$_SERVER['HTTPS'];
$GLOBALS['google']['host']=$_SERVER['HTTP_HOST'];
$GLOBALS['google']['ip']=$_SERVER['REMOTE_ADDR'];
$GLOBALS['google']['markup']='xhtml';
$GLOBALS['google']['oe']='utf8';
$GLOBALS['google']['output']='xhtml';
$GLOBALS['google']['ref']=$_SERVER['HTTP_REFERER'];
$GLOBALS['google']['url']=$_SERVER['HTTP_HOST'] . $_SERVER['REQUEST_URI'];
$GLOBALS['google']['useragent']=$_SERVER['HTTP_USER_AGENT'];
$google_dt = time();
google_set_screen_res();
```

At the bottom, there's a '<< Back' button and a link to '<< Back to AdSense Setup'. The footer contains 'AdSense Blog - AdSense Forum - Privacy Policy - Terms & Conditions - Program Policies' and '© 2008 Google'.

Figure 10-4:
Select the server-side scripting language used to create your Web site.



Just as you can with content ads, you can filter your mobile ads to prevent your competitors from advertising on your mobile site. To filter a site, go to the AdSense Setup tab and select the Competitive Ad Filter link. After the Competitive Ad Filter page loads, select the AdSense for Mobile Content tab and enter the URLs that you want filtered. Enter one URL per line. When you're finished, click the Save Changes button below the text box.

Earning with AdSense for Mobile

The AdSense way of doing things is pretty much the same across all ad formats — visitor clicks ad, you get money. Mobile ads do have *one* wrinkle that you haven't seen in other types of ads, though, and that's the Click to Call link. This link allows visitors to click the link and place a call to the advertiser. It's a cool feature, but one that might leave you wondering how you'll get paid for that.

Truth is that this link works just like any other link in an ad. You get paid for mobile ads whenever your site visitors click the ad links. That includes the Click to Call link. Like other types of AdSense ads, the amount of payment is determined by the payments that advertisers make when their ads are displayed. It's a formula that Google keeps closely guarded, but it works the same as AdSense for Content and other types of AdSense. Advertisers bid for the right to have their ads shown. Then, each time the ad is shown, Google gets paid whatever that winning bid amount is. In turn, Google then gives a percentage of what it is paid to you, the Web site owner who publishes the ad. But how much is the exact percentage? Google is pretty tight-lipped about it.

You can track your AdSense for Mobile earnings on the Reports page, which is the first page you encounter when you sign in to your AdSense account. Included here is a category for AdSense for Mobile Content that shows page impressions, clicks, click-through-rates, effective cost-per-thousand impressions, and earnings. Like other reports, you can show these numbers by day, week, month, or all the time. (For more on AdSense Reports, see Chapter 15.)

Mobile Web sites, and by extension mobile ads, aren't for everyone. You may not have a Web site that's appropriate for (or is even of interest to) mobile surfers. That's a call you have to make.

If your site does lend itself to the mobile lifestyle, however, consider AdSense for Mobile. It's one way to monetize your mobile efforts — and although the revenues that you generate for mobile ads might not be enough to pay the mortgage or the payment on that shiny new car you rushed out and bought when you were approved to display AdSense ads, it might add a little to the revenue streams that you're building. In my book, every little bit helps.

Chapter 11

AdSense for RSS

In This Chapter

- ▶ Familiarizing yourself with RSS and dynamic content feeds
 - ▶ Doing the beta thing
 - ▶ Signing up for AdSense for RSS updates
 - ▶ Earning by feeding
-

Every once in a while you stumble across a great idea that hasn't quite made it to fruition yet. That's what AdSense for Feeds is. It really is a great idea — who could hate the ability to place ads in dynamic content that's pushed out to readers? — but it's an idea that hasn't quite made its way off the production line yet.

Another way of putting this is to say that AdSense for Feeds is still just a concept. As I write this, it's in closed beta testing and there is no word from the company about when the beta testing will end and general public release will begin. (I've heard rumors that it will be open to the general public soon, but I really can't confirm any of those rumors.)

I still think covering the topic is a good idea. The program is sure to be available sooner, rather than later, and if you already know how to use it, you'll be ahead of the learning curve. Because you can sign up to be notified when AdSense releases the program for general use, you won't have to waste any time when it does become available.

Feed What? An RSS?

As the popularity of blogs grew, so did the popularity of another technology, called a *feed* or *RSS feed*. Both of these terms refer to the same thing. Feeds are content that is pushed out to registered users who have signed up to receive them. The content that's pushed out can be short teasers about blog posts, news, or podcasts or it can be a complete blog post, news item, or article.



Podcasts can't be pushed out through RSS, but you can send a teaser or blurb about the podcast. (And, if you think podcasts have something to do with the pod people from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, have I got news for you: A *podcast* is actually an audio recording that's available to listen to online. It's an audio version of an article, news story, or blog post.)

Pushing content

Think of feeds like the ticker tapes that were used to transmit breaking news into newsrooms around the world back in the 1940s and '50s. Only this ticker tape is faster, produces less waste, and is written in complete sentences.

The technology is different, but the result is the same — news is shared as soon as it's created. Now, I can hear you grumbling that blogs aren't news. Blog usually are news to *someone*. Does that mean that what you'll find in a blog is going to appear on the 6:00 news or as headlines in tomorrow's newspaper? Not usually. But for every blog out there, there is a host of people who read the blog and want to know when a new post goes up. To those people, those posts are news, and they wouldn't mind at all if news was updated in the timeliest fashion possible.

Because blogs have become so important in communicating in today's Internet-centric world, people often read multiple blogs every day. I know people who subscribe to feeds for a dozen or more blogs every day. The blogs vary — some like news, some like blogs in a particular niche area, and some just like the stories about other people's lives. Whatever draws a person, there is usually more than one blog for them to keep up with, and that's where feeds come in.



Despite what you may have heard, RSS doesn't stand for *Really Simple Stupid*. It actually stands for *Really Simple Syndication*, and it's a protocol by which content is delivered to a user who can read the content using an *RSS reader* or *feed reader* — programs that display the content pushed out in RSS or feeds. This content may be a small snippet — up to about 250 words — or it may be the whole article. The person who sets up the feed determines how much text is delivered to the reader.

Reading content

I've tied RSS feeds into the bloggy part of the Internet, but I have to be a bit careful here. Accessing blogs is a no-brainer — you fire up your browser, point it to the correct URL, and start reading away. RSS feeds are a bit different in that, as I mention earlier, you need a special software program — an *RSS reader* or *feed reader* — in order to access RSS feeds.

Not that it's at all hard to find a feed reader. Examples abound, including a Google variant (of course!) known as the Google Reader (www.google.com/reader) as well as Feedreader, a neat little product available at www.feedreader.com. I'm not talking rocket science here. All you need is a relatively simple software program that's been programmed to collect content from various feed-enabled sources.

Using programs like Google Reader or Feedreader is usually pretty simple. You begin with the application, which provides you with the “window” for reading the selected content. To add content to the program, you usually just have to enter a URL. The program then goes out and gets new content either on a schedule that you set or in real-time. For example, if you're using the feed reader that's built in to Outlook 2007, when you check your e-mail — or whenever Outlook is scheduled to download your mail — your feeds are also automatically updated. New feeds are updated in the Feed Display folder, just like new e-mails.

If you're using a program like Google Reader, the feeds are collected on a Web site. You log in to the site to see a listing of all the available posts — that listing is automatically updated each time someone posts a new item to the feed to which you're subscribed.

The AdSense connection

You might be saying to yourself “Self, this is truly fascinating stuff, but where does AdSense fit in to all this?” Wonder no longer. AdSense, in its infinite wisdom, is working on software that would place AdSense ads directly into the RSS feeds that are pushed out to subscribers. The idea here is that even though you have content that's pushed out to readers, you can still monetize that content with ads. This is an especially valuable concept for Web site owners out there who provide complete content in feeds.

Often, a Web site (or blog) owner will only syndicate a small portion of his content, specifically because doing so forces the readers to come to the Web site to finish reading the content, which increases the chances that those readers will click any ads that are shown on the site. Pushing your ads out with your content gives you one more opportunity to get ads in front of readers.

Beta Testing, Still

The idea behind AdSense for RSS is that you can

- ✓ Create *dynamic* content — content that changes frequently.
- ✓ Have that content pushed out to your readers.
- ✓ Place ads within the content that remain intact, *even if the reader doesn't visit your Web site.*

It's a grand idea, but the program is still in beta testing. And the beta testing is closed to new users — at least for a little while longer. So, even though the AdSense Web site advertises AdSense for RSS, you can't access it.

You can, however, sign up to be notified if and when the program moves forward. It's closed to beta testers as of the writing of this book, so signing up for updates is the only option available right now. If you'd like to receive notices about the general availability of AdSense for RSS, you can sign up at http://services.google.com/ads_inquiry/aff. Just enter the requested information. Then, as AdSense for RSS updates are released, you'll be notified.

Getting Started with AdSense for Feeds

In discussions with AdSense team members, I get the impression that AdSense for Feeds won't be in beta testing too much longer. If that's the case, you'll want to know how to use it once it becomes available to you. Not a problem. I have seen the future — beta tester that I am — and it is cool!

The first thing you need to know is that AdSense for Feeds needs two subscriptions. One is to AdSense (of course), and the other is to another Google program — FeedBurner. At the time of this writing, those two accounts are not the same. And unlike other Google programs, you can't sign in to your FeedBurner account using your Google Account information. You have to create a separate account. (Rumor has it that this will change in the near future, but no one can give me an exact date.)

FeedBurner is a program that lets you track how your feeds perform. With this program, you can analyze, optimize, monetize, and publicize your content feeds. FeedBurner also has an option for troubleshooting, called Troubleshootize — wouldn't want to break with the *-ize* theme.

Creating an account in FeedBurner is easy enough. All you have to do is

- 1. Point your Web browser to** www.feedburner.com.

Feedburner's home page loads on your computer screen.

- 2. Click the Register link in the upper-right corner of the page.**

The Create an Account page appears.

- 3. Enter the requested information in the Create an Account page and then click Sign In.**

You're automatically signed in to your new account where you'll see a bold, red message, like the one shown in Figure 11-1. This is your prompt to create — or *burn* — your first feed account.

4. Enter the URL of your blog, podcast, or news feed into the text field and then click Next.

A new page appears, giving you some information about your feed.

5. Read through the information, and then if you want, you can change the feed title or the feed address. When you're ready, click Activate Feed.

The information provided on the next page gives you details for the services that have been enabled. You'll see mention of *BrowserFriendly*, a service that approves the appearance of your feed in most browser windows and makes it easier to subscribe to, and *FeedBurner stats*, a service that tracks basic traffic statistics — like number of subscribers — for your feed. You also get the option to add other traffic statistics services.

6. If you want to add other services, click the Next button. If not, click the Skip Directly to Feed Management link.

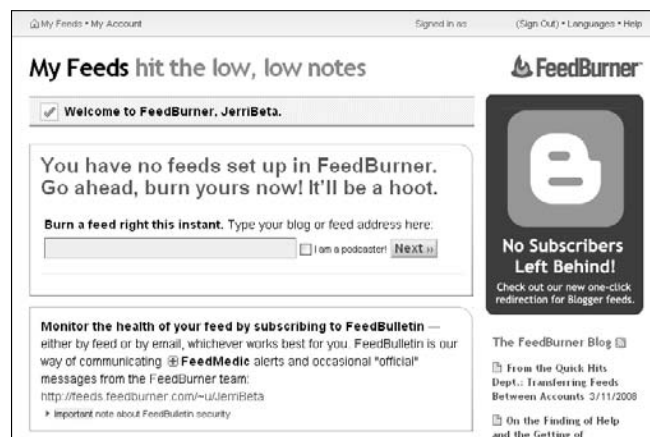
Assuming you click the Next button, you're taken to a page like the one shown in Figure 11-2.

7. Choose the additional tracking options that you want to include and then click Next.

Click-throughs and Item Enclosure Downloads — that's podcast downloads — are two of the tracking options included. You can also choose to use FeedBurner Stats Pro, which allows you to see the number of people who have viewed or clicked the content in your feed and shows the popularity of individual items.

That's it. You're done. Now you can begin using FeedBurner to manage your content feeds. And you can use it to include AdSense ads in your feeds.

Figure 11-1: FeedBurner prompts you to create your first account immediately on sign-in.



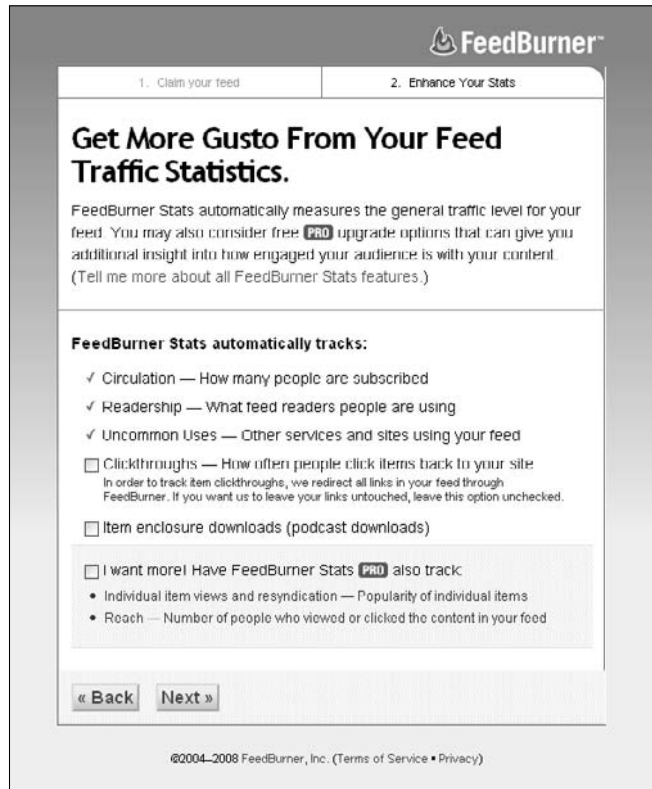


Figure 11-2: Select from additional services that are available on your FeedBurner account.

Enabling AdSense for Feeds

Just like AdSense ads that appear on other parts of your Web site, ads that appear in your feeds are unobtrusive. They usually appear at the bottom of the feed, as shown in Figure 11-3.

Your AdSense ad



Figure 11-3: Ads appear at the bottom of a feed.

Enabling your ads is easy enough, just follow these steps:

1. **Point your Web browser to `www.feedburner.com` and click the Sign In link.**
2. **In the new page that appears, enter your username and password and then click the Sign In link.**

Your feed dashboard appears.

3. **Click the title of the feed you want to manage and then select the Monetize tab on the page that appears.**

The screen shown in Figure 11-4 appears.

4. **In the In Your Feed section of the Monetize tab, use the drop-down menus to select how often you want ads to appear in feeds and what length of posts they should appear in.**

You can choose to have your ads appear after every post, or after every second, third, or fourth post. You can also limit the ads that are shown according to length. Your options are to show ads in posts of any length, or only in posts that are longer than 50, 100, or 150 words.

5. **In the On Your Web Site section of the Monetize tab, select the Display Ads from AdSense Content check box.**
6. **Use the customization options of the Monetize tab to configure your ads.**

The configuration portion of the screen, as shown in Figure 11-5, looks much like other AdSense configuration screens you've seen before now. Select the desired options for the ads that will display in your content.

Your available options include

Color: Select colors for the border, title, background, text, and URL, or you can use a pre-designed color template from the available drop-down menu.

Channel: Select the desired tracking channel for your ad.

Ad size: You have two options for size: 300 x 250 or 468 x 60.

Ad position: This option allows you to choose to place your ad on the left, in the center, or on the right. Keep in mind, though, that this is specific to the area of your feed where ads will appear — at the bottom.

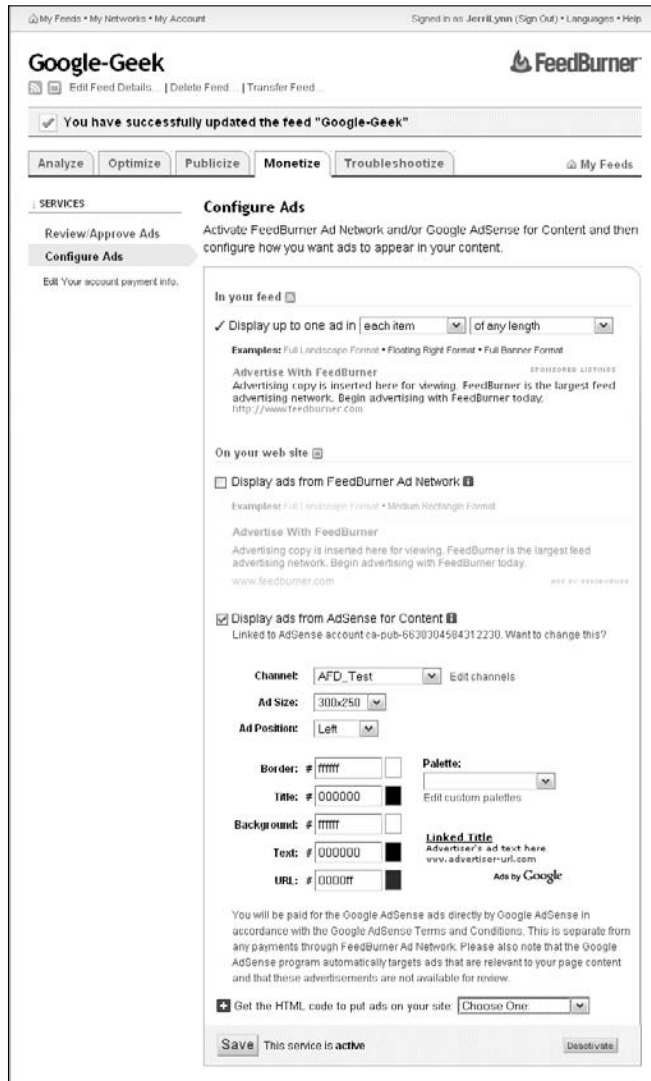


Figure 11-4:
Choose the
AdSense
option to
create
AdSense-
enabled
ads for your
feeds.

7. Choose your blog provider from the Get the HTML Code to Put Ads on Your Site drop-down menu.

A new window, like the one shown in Figure 11-6, appears on-screen. Leave this window open for just a bit. I show you how to paste the code into a Blogger blog on the next page.

8. After that window appears, be sure to switch back to the configuration window and click the Save button to save your ad configuration in case you need to access or edit it in the future.

After loading for a few seconds, the configuration screen appears again, but you'll notice there's a confirmation message near the top of the page. You've created your first ad for feeds.

Of course, if you could just create the ad and be done with it, wouldn't life be grand? I think it would, but you're not that lucky. After you've created the ad, you still need to copy and paste the code for the ad into your Web site or blog account. (Remember, the code is still available in another window. You didn't close that window, right?)

Different blogging programs do this differently. Here's how you do it for Blogger. (You need to have both your Blogger account and your FeedBurner account open.)



FeedBurner actually provides specific directions for several different blogs, including Moveable Type, WordPress, and even a generic blog — one you might have created on your personal Web site or through your Web site hosting company. When you use the Get the HTML Code to Put Ads on Your Site drop-down menu to generate the HTML code for you, you get some handy instructions on how to deal with the code after getting it.

1. Log in to your Blogger account and select the blog for which you want to include ads for feeds.

If you're not clear on the whole connection between AdSense and blogs, Chapter 13 should answer all your questions. Go ahead and flip over now. I'll wait . . . good, you're back.

Display ads from AdSense for Content ⓘ
 Linked to AdSense account ca-pub-6630304504312230. Want to change this?

Channel:

Ad Size:

Ad Position:

Border: #

Title: #

Background: #

Text: #

URL: #

Palette:

Linked Title
 Advertiser's ad text here
 www.advertiser-url.com
 Ads by Google

You will be paid for the Google AdSense ads directly by Google AdSense in accordance with the Google AdSense Terms and Conditions. This is separate from any payments through FeedBurner Ad Network. Please also note that the Google AdSense program automatically targets ads that are relevant to your page content and that these advertisements are not available for review.

Get the HTML code to put ads on your site:

This service is active

Figure 11-5:
Configure the ads that appear in your feeds using familiar tools.

Adding FeedFlare to your Blogger blog

This guide is for "New Blogger". Still using "Old Blogger"? Show me the Old Blogger steps.

In order to add FeedFlare to your blog, you'll need to insert a small piece of code near the post metadata (author, date, comments, etc) in your template. Fortunately, this is really easy (really!) — just follow these seven short steps.

1. Sign in to Blogger.
2. For the blog to which you're adding FeedFlare, click "Manage Template" or "Manage Layout" (you'll see one or the other).

Testor's [View Blog](#)
 11 Posts, last published on Sep 28, 2006

[New Post](#) Manage: [Posts](#), [Settings](#), [Template](#)

If you clicked "Layout," follow the instructions for editing Blogger Layouts. If you clicked "Template," follow the instructions for editing Blogger Templates. (Yes, we realize that's a little confusing!)

Editing Blogger "Layouts"

1. Copy this code:


```
<script expr:src='\"http://feeds.feedburner.com/~s/Google-geek?i=\" + data:post.url' type='text/javascript' charset='utf-8'></script>
```
2. In Blogger, click "Edit HTML". You should see the HTML for your blog template.

Posting **Settings** **Template** [View Blog](#)

[Page Elements](#) [Fonts and Colors](#) [Edit HTML](#) [Pick New Template](#)
3. Click the "Expand Widget Templates" box above and to the right of the template code.

[more...](#) Expand Widget Templates

```
ML 1.0 Strict//EN" "http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-strict.dtd">
mI xmlns:b='http://www.google.com/2005/gml/b' xmlns:data='http://
```
4. In your template code, scroll to `<div class='post-Footer'>`. (Don't see this code? You may be using a customized or non-standard Blogger template. Don't panic! Paste the code near the post metadata (author, date, comments, etc)
5. Paste the code from step 1 *just below* `<div class='post-Footer'>`.


```
<div style='clear: both; text-align: center;'></div>
</div>
<div class='post-Footer'>
<script expr:src='\"http://feeds.feedburner.com/~s/testors?i=\" + data:post.url' type='text/javascript'></script>
<p class='post-footer-line post-footer-line-1'>
<span class='post-author'>
```
6. Click [Save Template].

Click "View Blog" to see what you've done, and enjoy!

Figure 11-6:
When you select your blog provider, a new window appears with the appropriate code for ads.

2. Go to the Layout tab and select Edit HTML.
3. Remember that window from FeedBurner that you left open? The one with the code in it? Switch over to it now and copy the code provided by FeedBurner.

This code is provided when you select the blog that you're using from the bottom of the configuration page.

4. On the Edit HTML page of Blogger, place a check mark in the box next to Expand Widget Templates, see Figure 11-7.
5. Read through the HTML code displayed in the Edit Template box until you find the line that reads:

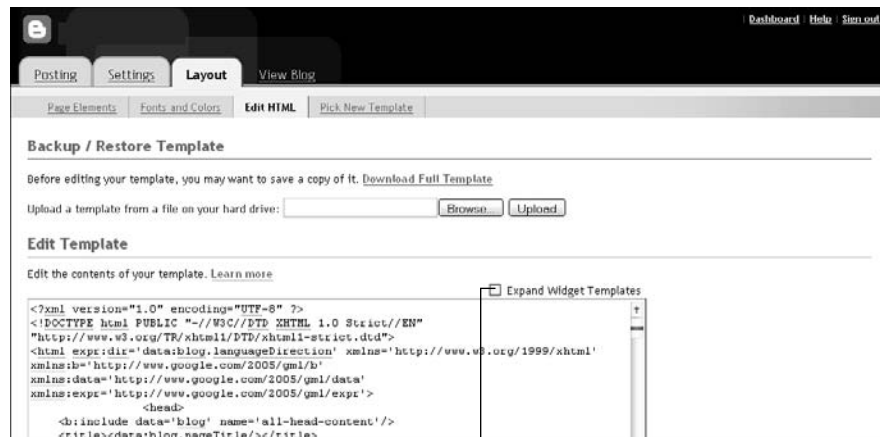
```
<div class='post-footer'>
```

6. Paste your AdSense code generated from FeedBurner (see the previous set of steps) immediately below this line.
7. Click Save Template.

Now you should have ads enabled in your feeds.

After you've created a feed, you can find it listed in the Review/Approve section of your My Account page at FeedBurner. At this time, there's no reference to it in AdSense, however. Even the ability to create ads for feeds is only available through the FeedBurner Web site.

Figure 11-7:
Select the Expand Widget Templates check box to see all the HTML for your blog.



Click here to see all the HTML for your site.



After the AdSense for Feeds program goes live, it's likely the way ads are tracked will change. Even the way ads are set up and installed is likely to change some. So, before you begin creating your AdSense ad, you should check out the help topics in FeedBurner's Help section to read about how the program is installed and how it works. FeedBurner's help is much like Google's, so you should be able to navigate it easily.

Style notes

One thing you'll notice as you're creating your feed ads is that the style options are very sparse. You're really limited in both the size and the display that are available for feed ads because of the nature of feeds. Most feeds are mostly black text on a white background. That limits what you can do stylistically.

The important thing to remember as you're creating your feed ads is that you want people to click through them. So, keep it simple. Black titles and text and blue links should do the job very well. Don't try to use funky colors or to make every colorized element of a feed ad a different color. Basic is better when it comes to these ads because of their location.

Ads that are displayed in feeds will very obviously be ads. Remember to eliminate the border around the ad, and blend the text of the ad with the surrounding text. It doesn't matter if your Web site has a black background with lime green lettering. Feeds will appear to readers as black text on a white background. Make your ads match so they blend in as well as possible.

Earning with Feed Ads

AdSense for Feeds doesn't currently have a designation on the AdSense Web site. In fact, if you're not specifically searching for the topic, you won't ever find it. And it's not just the information that's hard to locate. Anything related to your earnings or the performance of the ads is also non-existent.

At least for now, feed ads are tracked through AdSense for Content. I assume that will change when the program is finally released for general consumption. At that time, it's most likely that — like other AdSense programs — feed ads will have their own sections.

Until then, assigning a channel that's specific to your feed ads is the best way to track them. Since the numbers for your ads will be lumped in with AdSense for Content data, without a designated channel you'll never know what's coming from your Web site or blog and what's coming from your feed.

When it comes to actually generating revenue from feed ads, the process works just the same as with other ads — users must click through an ad for you to be paid for it.

At this time, there's no information available about whether feed ads will have the case-by-case instances of pay-per-thousand-impressions. That's something that surely will be made public when the program goes live. There's also no information about what the *revenue share* — how much you'll make when a reader clicks through your ads — will look like with feed ads. It's safe to assume, however, that it will take the same general (and vague) structure that content ads take.

AdSense for Feeds is such a great idea. There are so many instances of dynamic, feed-enabled content on the Web today that it only makes sense to monetize that content. How long it will take for the program to make the final cut and be released to the general public is anyone's guess, though. In the meantime, keep working with your other AdSense ads — and be sure to sign up to receive updates on AdSense for Feeds from the team at AdSense.

Chapter 12

The AdSense Referral Program

In This Chapter

- ▶ Differentiating among referrals and other types of AdSense ads
 - ▶ Choosing between Google and non-Google referrals
 - ▶ Creating referral ads that work with your Web site
 - ▶ Understanding how you actually get referral earnings
-

Google offers so many different ways for you to earn some money that it's often hard to choose what's best for your site. This chapter talks about yet another revenue method that you can add to your list of possibilities: referrals.

Referrals differ from other ads in that they allow you to recommend specific products or services that you've used and liked to your Web site visitors. You can choose from hundreds of different products and services, so you're not limited to just the obvious Google products (which tend to be the referrals that you see most often).

Although similar in some ways to other AdSense products, the AdSense referral program is also a little different in the way that you set up and choose the products that you want to recommend. Earnings and earnings potentials are also different from what you see with AdSense for Content.

This chapter outlines those differences and helps you get started with AdSense referrals to earn more from your Web site offerings.

Understanding Referral Units

Recommending products and services to others on the Web has been a concept for as long as the Web's been around. Probably one of the best known *referral* programs (okay, *referring* to something in this context is the same as recommending it) is the one that Amazon.com offers for the books and other products that are available to buyers around the world. Everyone has seen the little Amazon boxes on Web sites that allow you to click through to buy the featured product.

Google AdSense offers the same type of service. The difference is that AdSense offers the ability to refer other programs or Web sites, rather than just offer the products that you like. For example, I use the Firefox Web browser, which is a personal preference, but I love it and think everyone who tries it will love it too. I include an AdSense referral button for Firefox where space allows on my Web sites. Then, each time a user clicks through that referral button and downloads Firefox, I get a small payment added to my AdSense revenues.



Referrals are a neat feature that can seriously help to bump your AdSense earnings if the referral ads are targeted well to your Web site audience. The key is in the targeting though, as you see when you get a little deeper into this chapter. There are two kinds of referral products — Google products and non-Google products — so you're not as limited in what you can refer your users to as you might be with other referral programs.

But why referrals? (Did you know I can hear you asking these questions? Well, okay, not really. But I do imagine you asking them.) The answer is simple really. Some of the best advertising that any company can ever get is based on word-of-mouth referrals.

No advertising in the world sells a product better or faster than when someone loves the product and shares that fact with others who then share it with others. If you've seen the commercials on TV with the *domino effect* cell phones, that's a really good graphical representation of the concept of word-of-mouth advertising, which is also dubbed *buzz*.

One person tells two who then tell four who then tell eight. This buzz grows exponentially until it seems like everyone is talking about the product and even rushing out to buy it.

That's the same effect advertisers hope for when they place their products in the AdSense referral program. They hope to take advantage of the buzz that's created when one person loves a product and recommends it to others who also love it and recommend it to others. As the ad-placement person, that's good for you because advertisers are willing to pay to generate good buzz.

Google products

When you're considering adding AdSense referrals to your Web pages, you have the option to refer Google products or non-Google products. Or, you can refer both if you like — up to three referrals per page.



One thing to remember is that you're limited to three AdSense ads on your page. If you have three content units, a referral unit won't appear on your page, even if you add the code. When you're choosing your AdSense layout for your Web pages, be sure you carefully consider what types of ads work best for the visitors that will see them.

In Google referrals, you can choose from among the following six offerings:

- ✓ **AdSense:** You know what AdSense is. If you love it — and who doesn't — you can add a referral button so visitors to your site can use it and grow to love it, too.
- ✓ **Firefox plus Google Toolbar:** Firefox is a Web browser from Mozilla that (in my opinion) beats Internet Explorer hands down for usability. When you add the Google Toolbar — a tool that lets you quickly access some of the most useful applications and features from Google — you have a winning combination, so why not recommend it to your users? It's a pairing made for Internet power users.
- ✓ **AdWords:** If you're advertising anything on the Web, you're probably doing so with *AdWords*, Google's pay-per-click keyword marketing program. Recommending AdWords to others with something to advertise is a great way to boost your AdSense revenues.
- ✓ **Google Pack:** Google Pack is a collection of 13 useful Google products, all of which are free — not limited trials! Included in the Google Pack offerings are
 - *Google Earth:* Offers maps and satellite images for most locations around the globe.
 - *Norton Security Scan:* A program that scans your computer to determine if your computer is free of viruses, worms, and spyware.
 - *Google Desktop:* A desktop search application that allows you to search the files on your hard drive just as you would search the Web. The program also includes program plugins, called widgets, that let you access other Google applications from your desktop.
 - *Firefox with Google Toolbar:* Firefox is a great Web browser, but with the Google Toolbar added on you get Google search access built right into your toolbar, so you don't have to go to the Google Web site to search.
 - *Adobe Reader:* This program allows you to read Adobe PDF files.
 - *Skype:* An Internet telephone service that allows you to speak to other Skype users using a microphone and speakers or a microphone-enabled headset.
 - *Star Office (including Java):* This is a complete office software suite — a free alternative to Microsoft Office.
 - *Google Toolbar for Internet Explorer:* If you use the Internet Explorer browser, the Google Toolbar allows you to access Google Search from your toolbar without going to the Google Web site.
 - *Spyware Doctor:* This program helps you find and remove spyware that may have been planted on your hard drive.

- *Picasa*: If you have a lot of digital pictures, Picasa is your organizational answer. This program helps you organize and catalog your digital pictures and also provides tools to help you edit pictures or create slide shows.
- *Google Photos Screensaver*: Use this program to create a screen saver for your computer using the photos stored on your hard drive.
- *Google Talk*: Google Talk is both an instant messaging program and an Internet telephone service.
- *Real Player*: A digital media player you can use to play MP3s and videos and to view photographs.

Each of the programs offered in Google Pack are optional, so users can choose to download 1, 3, or all 13 software applications.

- ✓ **Google Checkout**: Google Checkout is an e-commerce application that has two facets. One facet is for buyers who are tired of entering their information time and again into online forms when they purchase products on the Internet. The other is for sellers who want to offer products or services from their Web site — Google Checkout acts as a site's shopping cart application.
- ✓ **Google Apps**: One of the newest offerings from Google, Google Apps is a collection of Web-based applications and services that businesses, schools, and organizations can use to improve productivity. Among the applications and services that are available through Google Apps are
 - *Gmail*: Google's Web-based e-mail application.
 - *Google Talk*: An instant messaging and Internet telephone application.
 - *Google Calendar*: Google's Web-based calendaring application.
 - *Google Docs*: Google's answer to Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, and Microsoft PowerPoint. Google Docs acts as an all-in-one office suite for all your word processing, spreadsheet, and presentation needs.
 - *Google Apps Security and Compliance Services*: Provides security and compliance for existing mail systems.

Did you even know that many Google products are available? Really, that's just the tip of the iceberg, but those are some of the most used Google applications and services that are available. Why not recommend them to your site visitors if you use them and find them worth the time it takes to download and configure them?



AdSense users can (potentially) see excellent earnings from some of the applications and services you can refer, something I detail in the “Earning with Referral Units” section a little later in this chapter. All I’ll say for now is that you’ll be pleasantly pleased with some of the referral fees that you can earn.

Non-Google products

On the flip side of the coin are the non-Google products that you can refer. Hundreds of them are spaced across 26 different categories. Browse through the Animals section or Travel section, but make sure you have a good chunk of free time available because some of those categories have more than 100 products available for referral.



Of course, when you’re talking about referring a product, how do you know which one you should refer, especially when you can choose from hundreds? The easy answer is to stick with the products that you know. If you don’t know any of the products that are listed (which is highly unlikely because you’ll find referrals for all kinds of programs, such as SmugMug photo hosting and Boca Java Gourmet Coffee), you can always try them before you add a referral to your site.

The important thing to remember is that you’re not limited to Google products. You can refer any of hundreds of different products and services, and you can tailor your choices to what is most interesting to your site visitors. Also, understand that the referral fees paid for non-Google products vary by product. You can catch a glimpse of the expected earnings range when you’re selecting the products and services that you want to refer. For more on that actual selection, check out the following section.

Adding Referrals to Your Web Pages

If you’ve already tried a few of the other AdSense ad formats, you’ll soon discover that creating referral ads is a little bit different. Succinctly put, you have lots of choices, but your choices are restricted. I know, that doesn’t make much sense on the face of it, so let me put it another way: You can only do so much stylistic customization with any individual AdSense referral, but you have plenty of referrals to choose from, giving you the power to customize which products you refer to your visitors.

Even the process of creating referral ads is a little different. You don’t immediately start with a stylistic choice for what kind of ad to create. Instead, you start with a location choice and then move into selecting what products you

want to refer. Only after you do all that can you begin to worry about stylistic concerns. Differences in creation aside, though, setting up a referral ad is just as easy to get through as all the other AdSense types, and maybe even a little easier than some.

Referring from . . .

Remember how you created a content ad? If not, here's a quick refresher:

1. **Log in to your AdSense account by going to `www.adsense.com`.**
2. **Click the AdSense Setup tab to be taken to the AdSense Setup page.**
3. **On that page, click AdSense for Content, which takes you to the page where you begin to create your AdSense for Content ad.**
4. **Begin creating the ad by selecting whether to create an Ad Unit or a Link Unit.**

Remember, the ad unit is either text and links or graphics and links, and the link unit is links only.

5. **After you make your selection, click the Continue button to move to the next page.**
6. **On the second page, choose the format for the ad that you're creating, select the colors for the ad, and decide whether to allow public service ads or other placeholders. After you make your selection, click the Continue button.**
7. **In the next page of the wizard, select a tracking channel for your ad and then click the Continue button to be taken to the final page of the wizard.**

Tracking channels allow you to view how individual ads or groups of ads perform.

8. **On the last page, enter a name for your ad that you'll recognize if you need to come back and edit it, and then click Save and Get Code.**

Now all you have to do is copy and paste the code into your Web site (and if you don't remember how to do that, flip to Chapter 5 for details).

The setup process for referrals is quite a bit different than the setup process for content ads, as the following steps make clear:

1. **Log on to your AdSense account and click the AdSense Setup tab to go to the AdSense Setup page.**
2. **From the list of available ad formats to create, choose Referrals.**

You'll be taken to the Referrals page, as shown in Figure 12-1.

Google AdSense

- Last login: 9 hours ago - [Log Out](#) - [Help](#)
 Publisher ID: pub-
 [Search AdSense Help](#)

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

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

[Get Ads](#) > **Referrals**

Referrals

Google Referrals allow you to choose specific products or groups of products to advertise on your site, allowing you to match ads to your content. Choose up to 15 products or specific ads to rotate in the referral unit. You can also choose categories and keywords to ensure you get newer ads as they become available.

To learn more about Referrals, please visit the [Referrals FAQs](#).

Ad format:

Targeted countries and languages
 United States, English — English [change](#)
[Add another country/language](#)

Search for a product name or keyword: [Search](#)

Show referrals with:

You can browse and refer the items in any category or choose an entire category to refer.

Category	Items	
All products		View products
Google Products		View products
Animals	36	View products Choose category >
Arts & Humanities	>100	View products Choose category >
Automotive	>100	View products Choose category >
Beauty & Personal Care	>100	View products Choose category >
Business	>100	View products Choose category >
Computers & Electronics	>100	View products Choose category >
Entertainment	>100	View products Choose category >
Finance & Insurance	>100	View products Choose category >
Food & Drink	70	View products Choose category >
Games	96	View products Choose category >
Health	>100	View products Choose category >
Home & Garden	>100	View products Choose category >
Industries	>100	View products Choose category >
Internet	>100	View products Choose category >
Lifestyles	>100	View products Choose category >
Photo & Video	53	View products Choose category >
Real Estate	>100	View products Choose category >
Recreation	64	View products Choose category >
Reference	>100	View products Choose category >
Science	39	View products Choose category >
Shopping	>100	View products Choose category >
Social Networks & Online Communities	72	View products Choose category >
Society	>100	View products Choose category >
Sports	70	View products Choose category >
Telecommunications	>100	View products Choose category >
Travel	>100	View products Choose category >

Referrals
 You may choose up to 15 ads in each AdSense unit.

Categories and Keywords
 You may choose up to 10 categories and up to 10 keywords.

[Advanced options](#)

[Submit and Get Code >>](#)

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

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Figure 12-1:
 Even the creation page for referral ads looks very different than the creation page for content ads.

3. Select the size of the ad you want from the Ad Format drop-down menu.
4. If this is the first time you've tried to create a Google referral ad, select your location (country) and language preferences.

These preferences should be based on the preferred country and language of your *site visitors*, not necessarily your own. (It's perfectly possible to have a site in one country that serves visitors from another country.) Setting country and language preferences make it possible for you to refer the most relevant products to your users.

There's a little more to it than that though: Not all referrals are available in all countries or languages. If a referral on your site targets someone in an ineligible country, you might not get credit even if that person does what he's supposed to do and takes advantage of the referral.



You can scoot right through this section of the setup process. If you do, your referrals default to the language settings you have on your account, but you can go back and change them at any time from the Creation Wizard. The language settings are on the right side of the page, near the top.

After you set the location and language for your referrals, you're all set for the next step — choosing what products to refer to your visitors. The next section turns the spotlight on that chore.

You don't HAVE to refer THAT

Write this down: You don't have to refer any product you're not comfortable with. Some people have the impression that if you set up AdSense referrals on your Web site, you're stuck with whatever AdSense puts up there. That is *not* the case. You can pick and choose which products you want to refer. (The whole idea with referrals is that you're supposed to be *recommending* something, and who recommends stuff they don't like?)

When you begin setting up your referral ads, you have to go through setting up the location, as I show you in the previous steps. After that's complete, you have two options for finding the products that you want to refer, as shown in Figure 12-2. You can either search for specific products to refer or you can browse all the available products.

Product search is available on a keyword basis. Enter the keyword that represents the products you think your visitors would be interested in and click the Search button. As shown in Figure 12-3, search results are shown in place of the categories that were listed on the page before the search.

If you don't find what you're looking for in the search results, click the Back to List of Categories link at the top-left corner of the page. This returns you to the category list so that you can search again or browse the categories.

Enter keywords to find products.

Search for a product name or keyword:

Show referrals with:

Browse items

You can browse and refer the items in any category or choose an entire category to refer.

Category	Items		
All products		View products	
Google Products		View products	
<input type="checkbox"/> Animals	37	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts & Humanities	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Automotive	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Beauty & Personal Care	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Business	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Computers & Electronics	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Finance & Insurance	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Food & Drink	77	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Games	85	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Home & Garden	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Industries	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyles	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Photo & Video	39	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Real Estate	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation	66	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Reference	94	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Science	44	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Shopping	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Social Networks & Online Communities	84	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Society	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Sports	62	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Telecommunications	>100	View products	Choose category >
<input type="checkbox"/> Travel	>100	View products	Choose category >

Figure 12-2:
To find products to refer, search or browse the referrals available.



One way to narrow your search results is to use the provided drop-down menu to select whether you want to search for image referrals, text referrals, or both. Image referrals result in referral buttons, which look a lot like search buttons, but text referrals are great for including in the text of a blog entry or other content on your Web site. (You can read more about the stylistic uses of these two types of referrals in the “Customizing referral ads” section, later in this chapter.) The other way to find the products you want to recommend is by browsing the available categories of products. To browse a category, click the small plus (+) sign next to the title of the category (refer to Figure 12-2). The category expands to show the available subcategories, as shown in Figure 12-4. When you find a subcategory that you want to explore further, click the View Products link to the right of the subcategory.

← [Back to list of categories](#)

Search for a product name or keyword:

"christian" Adding categories and/or keywords to the AdSense unit will ensure that an ad is shown in the ad slot even if chosen specific referrals become unavailable. [Add this keyword >](#)

Show referrals with: Sort by:

Need to select format to add a product to ad unit.

Product	Ad Formats	Performance on Network
<p>Free ebooks on sex, love, and marriage</p> <p>Plough Publishing Choose from a selection of thought-provoking ebooks on love, sex, dating, finding true love and marriage.</p> <p>Product site: www.ploughbooks.co.uk Landing page: www.ploughbooks.co.uk</p> <p>View all from advertiser View available ads</p>	Text links, Text ads, 200x200, 250x250, 300x250, 336x280	Conversions: \$0.02 Conversion Details Average conversion rate: ★★★★★
<p>Free Ebook of Early Christian Writings</p> <p>Plough Books Download a free ebook of early Christian writings.</p> <p>Product site: www.ploughbooks.co.uk Landing page: www.ploughbooks.co.uk</p> <p>View all from advertiser View available ads</p>	Text links, Text ads	Conversions: \$0.02 Conversion Details Average conversion rate: ★★★★★
<p>Free Christian Ebooks</p> <p>Plough Publishing Thought-provoking Christian books on love, sex, forgiveness, children and more.</p> <p>Product site: www.ploughbooks.co.uk Landing page: www.ploughbooks.co.uk</p> <p>View all from advertiser View available ads</p>	Text links, Text ads, 200x200, 250x250	Conversions: \$0.02 Conversion Details Average conversion rate: ★★★★★
<p>Christian Billboard Hot 100 Ringtones</p> <p>Offer your visitors complimentary Christian Billboard Hot 100 Ringtones. Blink is one of the top 3 largest ringtone companies in the world. Because of the Billboard relationship conversions are high.</p> <p>Landing page: www.celadoradio.com</p> <p>View all from advertiser View available ads</p>	Text ads	Conversions: \$3.00 - 7.50 Conversion Details
<p>Bible Study Library</p> <p>Bible Study Library - Logos Bible Software 3</p> <p>Product site: www.logos.com Landing page: www.logos.com/</p> <p>View all from advertiser View available ads</p>	Text links, Text ads	Conversions: \$0.38 Conversion Details

Figure 12-3:
Search results replace the categories that were listed.

Figure 12-4:
Click the plus button next to a category to view sub-categories.

Browse items			
You can browse and refer the items in any category or choose an entire category to refer.			
Category	Items		
All products		View products	
Google Products		View products	
[-] Animals	37	View products	Choose category >
Pets	35	View products	Choose category >
Veterinarians	8	View products	Choose category >
Wildlife	6	View products	Choose category >
[-] Arts & Humanities	>100	View products	Choose category >
Books & Literature	62	View products	Choose category >
Humanities	24	View products	Choose category >
Theater & Performing Arts	20	View products	Choose category >
Visual Arts	31	View products	Choose category >
[+] Automotive	>100	View products	Choose category >
[+] Beauty & Personal Care	>100	View products	Choose category >
[+] Business	>100	View products	Choose category >
[+] Computers & Electronics	>100	View products	Choose category >

Click to expand a category.

Click to view products in a category.

After you select a subcategory of ads to view, you see more information about the product, as well as the available ad sizes and the monetary performance of the ads, as shown in Figure 12-5. You can use this information to make informed decisions about the products that you want to refer.

Figure 12-5:
Clicking a subcategory reveals more information about the available ads.

Product	Ad Formats	Performance on Network
Sign Up With FanStory.com FanStory.com is a writing site with poetry and short story contests. Joining is free. The Landing page: www.fanstory.com <small>View all from advertiser</small>	Text links, Text ads, 120x600, 160x600, 200x200, 250x250, 300x250, 336x280, 468x60, 728x90	Conversions: \$0.77 <small>Conversion Details</small> Expected Revenue/Click: ★★★★★ Average conversion rate: ★★★★★
View available ads		
Free Terry Goodkind Book Alerts Fans get notified about new books and readings of bestselling author Terry Goodkind Product site: www.myhound.com Landing page: www.myhound.com/ <small>View all from advertiser</small>	Text ads	Conversions: \$0.14 <small>Conversion Details</small> Expected Revenue/Click: ★★★★★ Average conversion rate: ★★★★★
View available ads		

Selecting the right referrals

Let me take a step back for just a minute and tell you a little more about what kind of decision-making information is accessible when you look more closely at the available ads. If you take another look at Figure 12-5, you see a View Available Ads link with another small plus (+) sign to the left — the universal symbol for click-me-and-I-expand. Figure 12-6 shows what happens when you take the plunge and click that little plus (+) sign. The list here fills you in on what you see:

- ✓ **Top left:** This info mirrors what you'd see in the unexpanded version, in Figure 12-5. You get a short description of the product, a link to the product Web site, and a View All from Advertiser link. If you click this link, only the available referral ads from *that* advertiser are shown.
- ✓ **Top center:** This is a list of the available ad formats. You're not limited to a referral button with most of these products. (Again, you see this in Figure 12-5 as well.)
- ✓ **Top right:** This information indicates the average performance you can expect from this referral. The dollar amount shown is the maximum, meaning you can earn up to that amount, and there's a Conversion Details link that leads to more info on the conversion requirements. (*Conversion requirements* spell out what has to take place for you to actually get paid. I explain all about conversion requirements in more detail a little later in the "Understanding conversions" section of this chapter.)
- ✓ **Bottom left:** Here's where you see a graphical representation of the referral ad, as it will appear on your Web site. For some products, you get text links, text blocks, and graphical ads to choose from; for others, you may only have one choice. One thing you should know about what you see here is that, for the text links and graphical ads, this is exactly how your referral ads will look on your Web site — no ifs, ands, or buts. The text blocks are a bit more accommodating, in that you can customize the colors a tad. (I talk more about stylistic concerns in the "Choosing between button and text" sidebar and the "Customizing referral ads" section, later in this chapter.)
- ✓ **Bottom middle:** Here you find an explanation of the referral type: text links, text boxes, and graphical formats and sizes.
- ✓ **Right side:** The Choose Ad link appears in this section of the expanded block. This allows you to select single ads rather than selecting categories or even advertisers, both of which are possibilities.






Product	Ad Formats	Performance on Network
Sign Up With FanStory.com FanStory.com is a writing site with poetry and short story contests. Joining is free. The Landing page: www.fanstory.com View all from advertiser	Text links, Text ads, 120x600, 160x600, 200x200, 250x250, 300x250, 336x280, 468x60, 728x90	Conversions: \$0.77 Conversion Details Expected Revenue/Click: ★★★★★ Average conversion rate: ★★★★★
<input type="checkbox"/> Hide ads		
writing site		Text Link Choose ad >
poetry contests		Text Link Choose ad >
poetry feedback		Text Link Choose ad >
writing contests		Text Link Choose ad >
short story contests		Text Link Choose ad >
Feedback for your poetry		Text Link Choose ad >
contests with cash prizes		Text Link Choose ad >
feedback for your writing		Text Link Choose ad >
feedback for everything you write		Text Link Choose ad >
Over 30 writing contests are available on FanStory.com		Text Link Choose ad >
Writing Contests Free Writing Contests For Poets and Short Story Writers FanStory.com		Text Block Choose ad >
Writing Feedback Feedback For Your Poetry Feedback - Poetry Contests - Fun! FanStory.com		Text Block Choose ad >
Writing Contests Get feedback for your writing Feedback - Writing Contests - Fun! FanStory.com		Text Block Choose ad >
Writing Contests Join writing contests. Great Prizes! Get feedback for your writing too! FanStory.com		Text Block Choose ad >
Poetry Contests Join poetry contests. Great Prizes! Get feedback for every poem posted. FanStory.com		Text Block Choose ad >
	468x60 pixels	Choose ad >
	468x60 pixels	Choose ad >
	468x60 pixels	Choose ad >
	468x60 pixels	Choose ad >
	468x60 pixels	Choose ad >

Figure 12-6:

Click the plus sign next to the View Available Ads link to see additional information about the ads that are available.

When you're selecting your ads, notice some of the restrictions on the number of ads that you can select. Here's how the restrictions work: Referral ads can be static or dynamic on your site. *Static* referrals are those where — no matter whatever format you choose to display — you get a single referral ad and nothing more. You can accomplish static referrals in one of two ways: You can either select an ad that doesn't rotate — like a Google Ad — or you can choose a single ad from the list of other products that are available.

You can, however, go the dynamic route by rotating the referrals that you're offering, just to keep things from getting boring. If you decide that you want to jazz up your referrals, you can show up to 15 specific ads or you can select 10 keywords and 10 categories from which your ads are selected. The advantage of choosing the specific ads is that you have complete control over what's shown. If you select the Keywords and Categories options, the referrals that are shown rotate *any* of the ads that are available in those keywords and categories. Big difference.

After you decide on the ads and/or keywords and categories that you want for referral ads, you can move on to customizing your referral ads to work on your Web site. The following section shows you how.

Customizing referral ads

The odd thing about creating referral ads, to me at least, is that all the actions for creating the ads are on the same page. When you begin the customization process for referral ads, you have the ads that you're selecting from displayed on the left, but after you select an ad or category of ads, the customization abilities expand on the right.

When you first open the ad-creation pages, not much appears available for customization — you only see information boxes on the right side of the page for Referrals and Categories and Keywords. After you select the products, keywords, or categories that you want to refer, you begin to see customization capabilities on the right side of the page — Referrals, Categories and Keywords, as well as Alternate Ads or Colors. Additionally, a new section appears under the Advanced Options heading — AdSense Unit Name.

To see how this works, go ahead and select an ad — one of those ads you tracked down with the techniques spelled out in the previous section. Selecting an ad brings up the customization section of the AdSense Unit Wizard, as shown in Figure 12-7.

First things first, choose an ad format. (Ad format selection is the top option on the customization section of the page.) To view your options, click the Ad Format drop-down menu — formats listed in black are available, whereas formats listed in red are unavailable. Feel free to choose any of the available options you feel suit the space you have available on your Web site.

After you get formatting out of the way, the menu on the right expands with additional customization options. You see these sections: Referrals (which list the referral ads you've selected), Categories and Keywords (which list the categories and keywords you've selected), and Alternate Ads or Colors.

The screenshot displays the Google AdSense Referrals management interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Reports, AdSense Setup, My Account, and Resources. Below these are sub-tabs for Get Ads, Manage Ads, Color Palettes, Channels, Competitive Ad Filter, Site Authentication, and Allowed Sites. The main heading is 'Referrals', with a sub-heading 'Get Ads > Referrals'. The page explains that Google Referrals allow choosing specific products or groups of products to advertise on your site, allowing you to match ads to your content. It notes that you can choose up to 15 products or specific ads to rotate in the referral unit. A link to 'Referrals FAQs' is provided.

The interface includes several configuration sections:

- Ad format:** 234 x 60 Half Banner
- Targeted countries and languages:** United States, English — English (with a 'change' link and 'Add another country/language' link)
- Search for a product name or keyword:** Religion (with a 'Search' button)
- Product search results:** A table showing 'Religion' as a selected keyword. Below it, a table lists products:

Product	Ad Formats	Performance on Network
Free Ebook of Early Christian Writings Plough Books Download a free ebook of early Christian writings. Product site: www.ploughbooks.co Landing page: www.ploughbooks.co View all from advertiser View available ads	Text links, Text ads	Conversion values: \$0.02 Average conversion rate: *****
Free Christian Ebooks Plough Publishing Thought-provoking Christian books on love, sex, forgiveness, children and more. Product site: www.ploughbooks.co Landing page: www.ploughbooks.co View all from advertiser Hide ads	Text links, Text ads, 300x200, 250x250	Conversion values: \$0.02 Average conversion rate: *****
Download free ebooks from a wide range of thinkers and seekers.	Text Link	Unavailable for your chosen ad format.
Download free ebooks Challenging reading from unconventional thinkers. www.ploughbooks.co.uk	Text Block	Choose ad
Download free ebooks Challenging reading from a wide range of thinkers and seekers. www.ploughbooks.co.uk	Text Block	Remove ad
- Referrals:** You may choose up to 15 ads in each AdSense unit.
 - Individual ads:** Free Christian Ebooks (with a 'remove' link)
 - Categories and Keywords:** Add categories and/or keywords to be used if the above referrals become unavailable. You may choose up to 10 categories and up to 10 keywords. "Religion" (with a 'remove' link)
 - Alternate ads or colors:** Choose what to display if the selected ads are unavailable.
 - Automatically choose fallback referral ads
 - Show non Google ads from another URL
 - Fill space with a solid color
 - Advanced options:**
 - AdSense unit name:** Choose a name for this AdSense unit, so you can change its settings later. [?]
234x60, created 5/5/00
e.g. Homepage, 300x250 ads, Above the fold, etc.

At the bottom right, there are buttons for 'Submit and Get Code >>' and 'Preview AdSense Unit'.

Figure 12-7:
Use these options to customize your referral ads.

The Alternate Ads part of the Alternate Ads or Colors option is where you choose what should show on your site instead of the referral ad in the event that a particular advertiser reaches its budget limit and its ad can no longer be shown. You have three options here to select from:

- **Automatically Choose Fallback Referral Ads:** This option leaves any fallback ads up to AdSense. If your chosen advertiser hits its budget limit, AdSense substitutes another ad.

- ✓ **Show Non-Google Ads from Another URL:** If you're using more than one advertising program, you can have Google show ads from that other program if your chosen advertiser hits its budget limit. (How generous of Google!)
- ✓ **Fill Space with a Solid Color:** Rather than show any additional ads, AdSense blanks out the ad space you have set aside with a solid color. The only problem with this option is that as long as your ads are blocked (because advertisers' budgets are limited), you have no potential to make money from this spot that you've set aside.

I select the first option for each of my ads. I have yet to see a time when alternate ads needed to be shown, but I'm sure that it does happen. (I guess I'm just not picking the most popular ads in the referral program!) If you have another option or you don't trust that AdSense will show ads of which you approve, the other options are just as viable.

Choosing between button and text

You have to decide whether you want to use a text ad or a button ad, or whatever other format is available from the Ad Format dropdown menu. Typically, Google referral ads are available only as text and button ads, but other advertisers can offer their referrals in any ad format that's available for content ads.

When you have to choose between the text ad and the button (or graphical) ad, which one works best? Good question. In my humble opinion, text ads work best when they're surrounded by text. For example, if the referral ad that you plan to place in your text is for Google AdSense, one of the text options available to you is Sign Up for Google AdSense. Work that line into an article and then use the referral ad as the link.

One catch here, though — you can't change the text of the ad. No matter how you place that text within your text, the ad that's displayed in the preview is exactly what will appear on your Web site. If you're using the Google AdSense referral that reads `This site monetized by`

`Google AdSense`, you can't change that text. Working a sentence like that into an article is a little more difficult. In other words, if you choose to use text ads within text on your Web page, be sure to choose a text ad that blends well with the surrounding text.

Graphical ads, including button ads, are better suited for the outer edges of your pages, such as on the sides, top, or bottom of your site. Remember that ads on the top right, above the fold, tend to work best, but with referral ads, you can move them down the page and even to the bottom of the page. Referral ads appear more natural than other types of ads in those locations, so you don't lose as much performance as you might with a different type of ad.

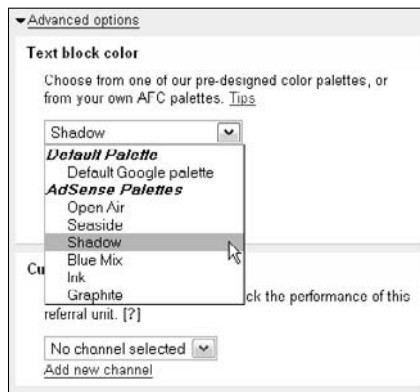
Your ads perform better if you place them correctly, so be sure to test different placements before deciding on a permanent home for your referral ads. (For my general thoughts on AdSense ad placement, check out Chapter 5.)



As for your coloring options, remember that these are only available for text block ads, not text links or graphical ads. To see your options, click the Advanced Options to expand the Customization menu so it includes a Text Block Color section and a Custom Channel section. The Text Block Color option is the very first option that appears under this link.

The options in the Text Block Color section are limited to those included in the drop-down menu in this block, as shown in Figure 12-8. Choose an option from the drop-down menu, and a preview of that option appears immediately below it.

Figure 12-8:
Select a color scheme for your ad alternative from the drop-down menu.



When choosing colors, try to get as close to the color scheme used on your Web site, but resign yourself to the fact that you just can't match it perfectly. Because you can't, stick with colors that are complementary to your site. Don't do something dramatic just to draw attention to the box. If you do, you end up with a referral box that looks completely out of place and isn't aesthetically pleasing, which (believe it or not) could cause your visitors to avoid clicking the box even if they're interested in the referral.



Aesthetics, or the appealing look of an ad, are important. If visitors see a small portion of your site that looks out of place, they're more likely to avoid it because humans, by their nature, need harmony. If your referral box is out of harmony with the rest of your site, it sends a subliminal message to visitors to avoid it. Don't let a referral stand out like a sore thumb. Instead, keep the colors of your referrals similar or complementary to the rest of your site.

One of the last options that you have in the Advanced Options section — and this has nothing to do with the appearance of the referral ad on your site — is what channel you want the ad to be tracked with. I talk a lot about using channels in Chapter 14, but for now, you need to know that channels help you track ad performance on your pages or even on whole Web sites so that you can keep track of which ads are generating the most revenue.

If you don't know how to create a channel yet, don't worry. You can always create an ad without one and add the channel later — maybe after reading Chapter 14. Or, you can click the Add a New Channel button, enter a name for this channel in the text box that appears, and click OK. Then you have a channel that you can use to track the referral ad.

The last option in the Advanced Options section allows you to give your ad a specific name. By default, ads are named according to their size and the date created, but if you have a bunch of different ads and referrals on your Web site, keeping track of what's what might be a little difficult if you leave the default name in place.

Consider creating a more descriptive name that helps you remember what the ad is and its purpose. When you see reports — once a week or once a month, depending on your preference — you can quickly decipher which of your ads is performing well and which should be removed or replaced. (Not sure what kind of reports I'm talking about? Check out Chapter 15. You'll be glad you did.)

All you have to do is highlight the default text and type the name you want to use. When the code for the site is generated, the indicator that tags that ad with the name you've created is added automatically to the code.

Adding the code to your Web site

After you select your ads and customize them to your tastes, all that's left is to generate the code and then paste that code onto your Web site. To do that, click the Submit and Get Code button at the bottom-right of the Referrals page.

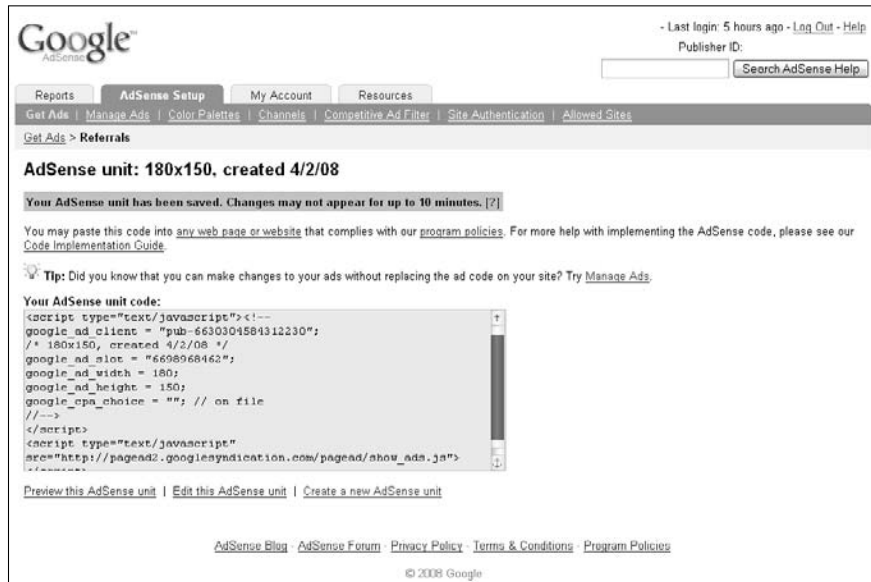
The site processes for a few moments and then you're taken to a page similar to the one shown in Figure 12-9.

Copy the code and paste it into the HTML of your Web site, making sure you place it between the `<body>` and `</body>` tags of the site. (Okay, I know there could be a lot of real estate between the `<body>` and `</body>` tags on a site. Exactly *where* between those tags you place your code is determined by your profound study of AdSense ad placement principles, as outlined by yours truly in Chapter 5.)



Every HTML editor is a little different, and the code for every Web site is different, so I can't tell you exactly where in the text between the `<body>` and `</body>` tags to put the code, but you can play with the placement until you get it just right.

Figure 12-9:
The code for referral ads looks very similar to the code for other types of AdSense ads.



When you're done, upload your Web site and you should immediately begin to see your referral ad. Well, okay, you might temporarily get public service announcements, but in most cases, the referral ad shows right away. However, if it doesn't appear on your site within 48 hours, you may have done something wrong in the process and you'll need to try again.

Promoting Referral Ads

Referral ads seem to be different than other AdSense ads in more ways than just how you create them. For example, it's perfectly okay to promote your referral ads — to a point. Although AdSense definitely doesn't want you to do anything to draw attention to your AdSense for Content ads, you have a bit more freedom when it comes to highlighting other AdSense products:

- ✓ **AdSense for Search:** Feel free to mention to your site visitors that you have a search box they can use to find whatever.
- ✓ **Referrals:** Refer away. It's always best if you've actually used the products you're referring so that what you tell your visitors is accurate. Tell them your thoughts about the products and share your stories of how the product has performed for you.

You're absolutely not allowed under any circumstances to draw attention to the referral by telling readers to click it. Click Here graphics pointing to the referral box and anything resembling a directive to click the button are not allowed. Oh, you also can't claim sponsorship — as in, *This Web site sponsored by that product*.

Go ahead and write an article about the product that you're sponsoring and leave the referral text within the article as well as a referral graphic on the right side of the page. You can even tell your visitors that you recommend the product that you're referring. Just don't tell them to click the link or the graphic, and don't try to force a visitor to pay attention to the referral ad. Let referrals naturally occur, based on your good experiences with the products that you're referring.

Earning with Referral Units

If you think things have been a little different with AdSense referrals up to this point, you'll really see the differences in the earnings department. Here's where everything that you've read about AdSense so far changes a little bit.

Earning with AdSense referral ads requires some action on the part of your Web site visitors. Earning with referrals isn't as simple as clicking through a link, or even searching and then clicking through search results. AdSense referrals have *conversions* — which are specific actions that must take place before you get paid for displaying the referral ad.

Even after a conversion takes place, the payments are a little different than what you see with other AdSense ads. All referral ads are paid on a flat fee. However, the fee that you're paid can be influenced by your location. Each advertiser sets country-specific goals, so you're paid *up to* the maximum amount shown for each of the referrals that you make from your AdSense referral ads.

To further complicate things, there's a validation period when you first add a referral to your Web site. This validation period is put in place to help AdSense validate that conversions that take place through your referral ads are genuine. During this period, you earn the minimum payment for conversions, with the amount increasing after the validation period is over.

Here's the frustrating part — the validation period has no time limit on how long it lasts. On the AdSense Web site, Google states:

“For most publishers, the validation period should end quickly, but it will vary by publisher due to differences in the time it takes to collect the necessary account data.”

In other words, how long you're paid the minimum instead of the maximum is determined by how much traffic your site generates and how often your site visitors take advantage of your referrals. That's not exactly something that you can change or influence in much of a big way.



When you're looking at the available referral ads, the amount shown in the upper-right corner of the referral information box may be a single dollar amount or a dollar range. When you see a dollar range, you notice this principle of minimum versus maximum the most.

For example, I looked at an ad that had an earning range of \$1.73–\$15.38. The lower figure is the minimum, which is what you can expect to earn during the validation period after you place the referral ad on your site. The higher figure is the maximum, which you work up to earning as the validation period continues (until it ends) for any future referrals made from the ad.

I find the whole process a little frustrating, but I do understand why AdSense has the validation period in place. Without it, publishers could add referrals to their sites, ask all their friends to click through, do whatever is necessary for conversion, and rake in the dough. For a few days, the referral numbers would be really nice for the advertiser and the publisher, but then referrals would drop dramatically.

The validation period dampens this type of activity, making the actual number of referrals more realistic — which isn't such a bad thing. With realistic numbers, you can know exactly what to expect from your referral earnings, and advertisers can know exactly what to expect from their referral spending.

Understanding conversions

Until now, I kept the whole concept of referral conversions a bit vague. Let me see if I can now give you a clearer picture. A *conversion* is an action or a set of actions that have to happen before you get paid for a referral ad. It's not enough for you to place the ad on your Web page and have your visitors click the ad. Something else — a download, a registration, or something similar — has to happen before you get paid.

Here's the part that might make you think twice before including referrals on your site — some of those conversions take time. A conversion requirement that visitors sign up for a membership on a Web site and remain a member for a certain amount of time — usually 30 to 60 days — isn't unheard of.

Some conversions are simple — sign up for a newsletter, request information, and become a forum member. Others require a monetary investment from the visitor who followed the referral link — buy a product, purchase a membership, and donate a sum of money. The conversion details vary by product.

For example, the conversion details for a referral ad to Google AdSense are these:

“When a publisher that signed up for Google AdSense through your referral earns their initial \$100.00 within 180 days of sign-up and is eligible for payout, we’ll credit your account with \$100.00.

A Google AdSense referral is counted only for publishers never previously enrolled in Google AdSense. Google AdSense referral payouts do not count towards \$100.00 threshold.”

Pretty complicated, huh? They’re not all that complicated, though. For example, here are the conversion requirements for the Ghirardelli referral ad:

Purchase/Sale — \$3.00–\$11.54

Purchase Online

Really. That’s all there is to it. A visitor clicks through your referral ad, makes a purchase from the Ghirardelli Web site (It’s chocolate, folks! Who doesn’t love chocolate?), and you’re paid the referral fees. Of course, exactly how much you’ll be paid is still a little murky because nothing explains exactly the percentage of sale that’s credited to the publisher, but it’s still simple enough to understand. Visitors buy chocolate, you get paid, everyone’s happy!

The only way to know for sure what the conversion requirements are for a referral ad you may have selected is to look. When you’re examining ads (remember, I talk about this earlier in the chapter), you see a blue Conversion Details link. Click this link, and a small box appears that details what the conversion requirements for that specific ad are, as shown in Figure 12-10.

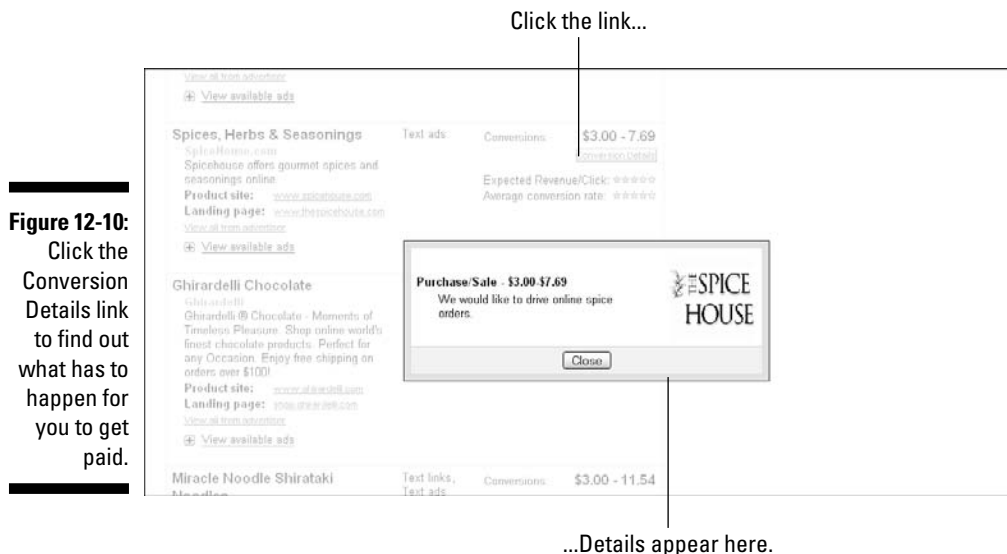


Figure 12-10: Click the Conversion Details link to find out what has to happen for you to get paid.

Invalid conversions

One more aspect of conversions that you should pay attention to is the possibility of conversions being considered invalid. An *invalid conversion* is any conversion that AdSense deems isn't the result of genuine interest on the part of the Web site visitor who clicked the referral ad. Most usually, invalid conversions are caused by Web site owners clicking their own ads, but they can also be the result of automated clickbots, clicking contests — where you offer a prize to the person who clicks an ad the most often or who clicks the most ads — or other forms of click fraud.

Because I already know that you're not using those methods to generate AdSense revenues, consider this a refresher. Don't participate in any such fraudulent activities. They're not good for the ad programs and can have nasty results for you. Place your ads on your pages and allow visitors to naturally click through them. Don't try to inflate your numbers by requesting clicks or convincing your friends to click through your ads.

Just let click-throughs happen. If you follow the principles I lay out in this book and work diligently to create a Web site that has true visitor value, earnings will happen. Then you can truly enjoy the revenue stream that you've generated without worrying about when AdSense will catch on to your less-than-honest methods.

Tracking conversions

If you place referral ads on your page, you'll want to also track how they're performing. AdSense gives you some tools to do that. After you set up your AdSense referrals, a new report becomes available in the Reports section of your AdSense account. Right there on the front page is the new Referrals report. If you click this report, you're shown some stats based on the performance of your referral ads.

For each referral ad you display, you see the following stats:

- ✓ **Clicks:** This number indicates every time that a site visitor has clicked your referral ad even when a conversion doesn't follow.
- ✓ **Sign-ups:** When a referral product — like AdSense — requires a sign-up, and your site visitors actually do sign up, that number is displayed in this column.
- ✓ **Conversions:** When your visitors click through your referral ads and complete the required conversion, this is where that fact gets recorded. Conversions are listed by product.
- ✓ **Earnings:** Here's the line that interests you the most, I'm sure. This line tells you exactly how much you've earned from your referral ads, by product.

Outside the reports offered by AdSense, you can't track the actual conversion of your AdSense referrals in any other way. This report is enough to help you see quickly which of your referral ads are working and which are not. The report also helps you understand what you're actually earning from those referrals that *are* performing.

The earnings breakdown

The earnings you can expect to make for referrals will vary depending on the product you're referring. They may also depend on the location of the user you've referred the product to. Some referrals pay more when users are U.S. residents, whereas others pay more when users are located in other countries. The difference is determined by where the company you're referring is located and the target market the company is trying to reach.

Earnings are determined by the product owner or company that offers its products for referral. For non-Google products, individual advertisers decide the actions they want visitors to complete and how much they're willing to pay for those actions as a result of clicking through the referral ad. You're credited for non-Google referrals if a user clicks through your referral ad and completes the advertiser's conversion criteria within 30 days of clicking.

For Google products, the earnings schedule is a little different. Well, okay, it's not really different, it's just lain right out there so you can see it without having to wonder or search for what earnings you can expect to make. Your earnings for Google referral products are defined as follows:

- ✓ **AdSense:** When a user who signed up for Google AdSense through your referral first earns \$100 within 180 days of sign-up and is eligible for payout, you're credited with \$100. Note that it's only when the user *first* signs up and earns \$100. If a visitor has been a member of AdSense in the past, you don't receive this payment. Also, this applies only to referrals located in North America, Latin America, or Japan. All others are counted as invalid referrals because AdSense doesn't support other countries at this time.
- ✓ **Firefox plus Google Toolbar:** When a visitor you've referred to Firefox with Google Toolbar runs Firefox for the first time, you'll receive up to \$1 in your account, depending on the visitor's location. Your referral must be a Windows user who hasn't previously installed Firefox in order for you to receive credit.
- ✓ **AdWords:** When an advertiser you refer first spends \$5 on AdWords ads within 90 days of sign-up, you earn \$5. This is in addition to the first \$5 that AdWords gives new users. So, technically speaking, users have to spend the \$5 that AdWords gives them and \$5 of their own money before you're paid. If that same advertiser spends \$100 within 90 days of sign-up, you're credited with an additional \$40.

If in any 180-day period you refer 20 advertisers who each spend more than \$100 within 90 days of their signing up, you're awarded a \$600 bonus. Note that bonus payments are limited to one payout per year.

- ✓ **Google Product Pack:** When you refer a Windows user to the Google Pack product and he downloads and installs it, you receive up to \$1 in referral fees.
- ✓ **Google Checkout:** When a user signs up as a buyer and completes a transaction through Google Checkout within 90 days of sign-up, you're paid \$1. Note, however, that the transaction *must* be at least \$10 for you to receive payment.
- ✓ **Google Apps:** When a visitor signs up for a new Google Apps account through your referral, you earn \$.05. However, if the visitor creates a Google Apps Standard account and opens one or more Google Apps e-mail accounts that remain in use for four consecutive weeks, you earn \$5. If the visitor signs up for a Google Apps Premier account, you earn \$10 for each user license purchased.

Your Payment History page is where you see the monthly totals for all the referral fees that you earn — from both Google and non-Google products. The payment schedule for referral fees is just as it is with other AdSense ads. You're paid once per month after your account reaches a \$100 balance. Note that the exception to this is the AdSense referral bonus. If you earn \$100 in AdSense referral fees, those fees don't count toward your account minimum for payment, so you have to earn an additional \$100 in AdSense revenues to receive that payment.

Also, the \$600 bonus that's paid when you reach the outlined requirements for AdWords is a once a year bonus. You can only receive it one time per year, so if you earn it more than one time in a given year and you've already received the bonus, you won't receive that payment.

In general, AdSense referral ads are a pretty smart addition to your Web site if you have room to add them. Referrals are a relatively easy way to boost your AdSense income, but keep in mind that you do have to meet the conversion requirements for each ad that you show, so choose your ads wisely. Also keep in mind that the better targeted your ads are, the better they'll perform.

Chapter 13

AdSense Your Blog

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding how AdSense works in blogs
 - ▶ Adding AdSense to your blog
 - ▶ Using the best techniques for blogs
-

Information is the purpose of the Internet. People use the Internet to share the information that they have and to find the information that they need. It doesn't matter whether you're an individual or whether you're part of a company with thousands of employees. If you or your company has a Web site, the sole purpose of that site should be to share information with site visitors.

Those site visitors might *just* be seeking information, or they might be seeking products or services. The products and services, however, are secondary to the information because before someone purchases your products or contracts your services, he wants to know that his money will be well-spent. He wants something and he wants to know he's getting the best deal possible.

Constantly updated information comes in handy here. *Content* — information — on your Web site needs to be regularly updated to get people's attention. Equally important for you as a site owner, regular updates are what it takes to keep a search engine interested — and rating your site highly.

The Blog Explosion

Even as little as five years ago, search engines were loaded with information that had been the same for years. Many people never bothered to update the material on their Web site because there was no penalty for not doing so. Today, however, search engines look at information freshness as part of the formula to determine where a Web site ranks in search results. Web sites with highly relevant and regularly updated information rank higher than those sites that have had the same content for 3 (or 2 or 15) years.

To increase their ratings, most companies as well as many individuals now employ blogs as a way to put the most current and most relevant informational tidbits in front of people as quickly as possible. Blogs, by their very nature, are publishing on demand. Writers no longer have to put together a piece just to wait three to six weeks, or even months, to have that information in front of people. Blogs allow writers — whether personally or corporately driven — to put their thoughts and collected facts in front of a reader in an instant.

For example, consider the Web site and blog Woot.com. Woot's concept is to provide potential customers with a single product of high value every day. The company doesn't keep a huge back stock of products stored in a warehouse somewhere. Woot gets a limited number of a single product every day. That product gets announced and placed on the Web site at a very special price, but when it's gone, it's gone. No more. You're out of luck.

The concept only works, however, because the company's established a system of constant contact with its customers by using blogs. Notice the plurality there — blogs. More than one blog and multiple blog posts per day.

The value in having multiple blogs — and having multiple blog posts each day — is that there's *more* information you can keep in front of your site visitors. The assumption is that it's *relevant* information. Now, add AdSense to that, and you can see that the potential for income is amazing. All you have to do is create a high-demand blog, populate it with relevant information, and add AdSense to the mix.

Creating Blog Buzz

Blogs are everywhere. I subscribe to more than 24 blogs and I skim the posts every single day. When I find useful information, I take the time to read the entire posts, to follow links in the posts, and in general to gather as much information as I can from the *snippets* of daily information I find in the blogosphere. Those snippets are the very information that makes blogs of all kinds useful to me and to a large percentage of the world's population.

Without useful information, blogs are worthless. Sure, you can blog about your daily antics with Aunt Betty and her hairless pugs, but what's useful about that? Not a darn thing. That translates to three whole subscribers — your mom, your Aunt Betty, and maybe your best friend. The chances of generating any kind of cash from those endeavors are exactly zero.

But, say you blog about how to use technology to generate big bucks in business. Now, that topic will garner you some traffic. If you don't believe me, check out all the blogs that come up in the results when you search for something like *making money in technology*. Astounding what's out there.

Hot topics work because they *mean* something to subscribers, they cover valuable information that people are looking for, and they create *buzz*. Think of buzz like the *conversations* that take place in a bee hive. One worker bee goes out to gather nectar. Along the way, he comes across a field of the most flavorful flowers of the season. Mr. Worker Bee gathers his share of the nectar and returns to the hive to share his good fortune.

Upon his return, Mr. Worker Bee tells everyone he comes in contact with what a great field he's found and provides directions to the other bees in the community. Within seconds, there's *buzz* of both sound and activity. Welcome to Internet buzz, which works exactly the same way.

You generate a post on the Web that contains secrets for how to make real, living, growing slugs in your bathtub, and then along comes a visitor who was searching for that very thing on the Internet. He reads your post, decides it's worthy, and immediately shoots off an e-mail to everyone he knows who has the same interests. Those people then visit your site, and they share the news with all their friends. Before you know it, *buzz* about your post is everywhere.

Buzz only works though if the information that you're sharing is valuable to more people than your immediate family. Your first step in creating blog buzz is to choose a topic that other people find useful — and there are thousands of such topics. You can write about nearly anything and find an audience for it, but the idea is to find a topic that interests a large number of people over a long period of time.

A good way to figure out a great topic is to pay attention to the media. Yes, you have to wade through all the blather about the latest hot celebrity, but the media doesn't spend *all* its time on the newest starlet's latest psychodrama. For example, you'll probably find a lot of economic issues and trends. When you break down economic topics, you come up with everything from making money to saving money and investing money.

Now, take that topic and divide it a little further. What do you do that helps you make money, save money, or invest money? For me, I could write a blog about making a very good living writing about technology. And I have, in fact, written such a blog in the past, which was quite successful, thank you very much. I don't write it anymore because of time constraints, but it was a topic that I know well and could help others with.



Choosing a topic that other people want to know about is relatively easy. (Hey, getting rich off the stock market sounds like it might be a popular topic!) The hard part comes when you have to figure out enough about that topic so that you're in a position to give useful advice to other people. That doesn't mean you have to be the best-known expert on the topic. You do have to know enough to share useful information and to figure out what you don't know though.

After you have a blog in mind, all you have to do is create it. Fortunately, creating a blog is easy. Dozens of services allow you to create a blog for free, and it takes just a few minutes to set up one. Look at several different services to find the one that's right for you. The top three are

- ✓ **Blogger:** Blogger is Google's answer to blogging. It also happens to be the easiest way to add AdSense to your blog. If you're going to start a blog, I suggest you start here.
- ✓ **WordPress:** WordPress is also a pretty powerful blogging tool with free accounts. Here's the rub though — if you want to have AdSense on your account, you have to pay for the premium account and even then it can be a difficult chore to put the code in the right place.
- ✓ **TypePad:** TypePad is a hugely popular blogging application that allows you to use AdSense ads in the footer of blog posts. It's also not difficult to use, which makes it another good option for a blog that includes AdSense ads.

As I mention earlier, dozens of other blogging services are out there that you can try. Some companies offer business-specific blogs, and others offer blogs as part of a larger community of users. But for your purpose, I look at blogs that you can use AdSense with, and the service that's most AdSense-friendly (of course) is Blogger. So, the remainder of this chapter focuses on how to put AdSense on your Blogger blog.

Adding AdSense to Your Blogger Blog

Okay, so you signed on to Blogger, set up your blog, and got the word out. You're getting some visitors, and the great response you're getting makes you think it might be time to put AdSense on that blog. Let the fun begin.



The one drawback with adding AdSense to your Blogger account is that you can show only three AdSense units on your blog at any given time. So, when you're placing ads on your blog, be very selective about where you place them. Now, if you paid attention in Chapter 3, you know that your most effective ad placement is above the fold, at the very top of the page, on the right-hand side (preferably in a sidebar), or within the text on the page. With these guidelines, you can place your ads for the most attention and the best results.

AdSense as a page element

You can place AdSense in your blog in one of two ways. The first (and probably easiest) way to add it is as a *page element*. Page elements are like the

building blocks of your Web site. You can choose which elements you want to appear in your blog template by pointing and clicking the desired element.

Here's how to add AdSense with this method:

1. **Point your browser to `www.blogger.com` and log on to your Blogger account with your username and password.**

You're automatically taken to the dashboard — essentially the Control Panel — for the blog.

2. **From the Dashboard, select the Layout tab for the blog that you want to add AdSense to.**

You can have more than one blog with Blogger.

3. **On the Page Elements page (see Figure 13-1), click the Add a Page Element link.**

The Choose a New Page Element dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 13-2.



Figure 13-1: Page elements are different capabilities you can add to your blog page.

Click here to add AdSense.

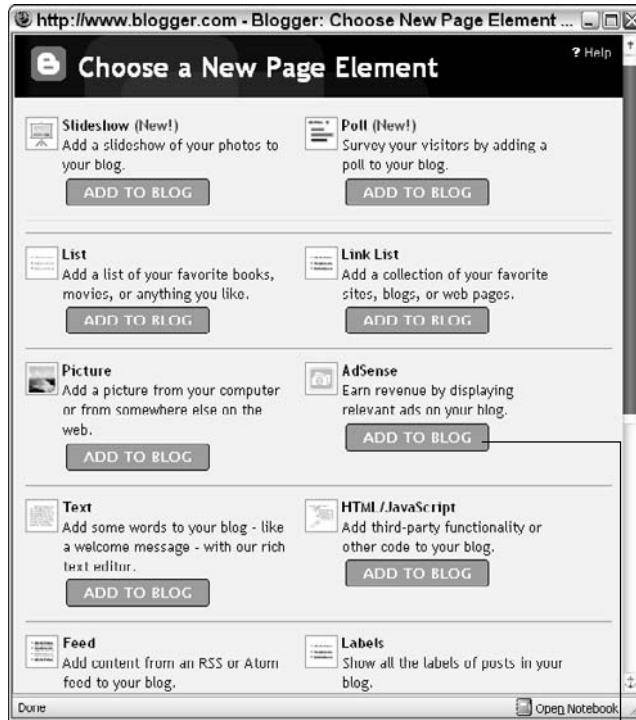


Figure 13-2:
Locate
AdSense in
the list of
available
widgets.

The AdSense widget

4. **Locate AdSense in the list of available elements — or *widgets* — and click the accompanying Add to Blog button.**

The Configure AdSense dialog box appears, as shown in Figure 13-3.

5. **Make your selections in the Configure AdSense dialog box and click Save Changes.**

Here's where you can tweak things like ad size or colors. You can even change your publisher ID, the number that identifies your AdSense account so that you're properly compensated when visitors click your ads.

Clicking Save Changes closes the Configure AdSense dialog box and you're returned to the Blogger layout page. You can see your new AdSense widget immediately below the Add a Page Element link.

After you create the widget, you can move it around by clicking and dragging it anywhere — anywhere on the sidebar, above the footer, or below the header, that is. You can't move the widget to the main post area of your blog.

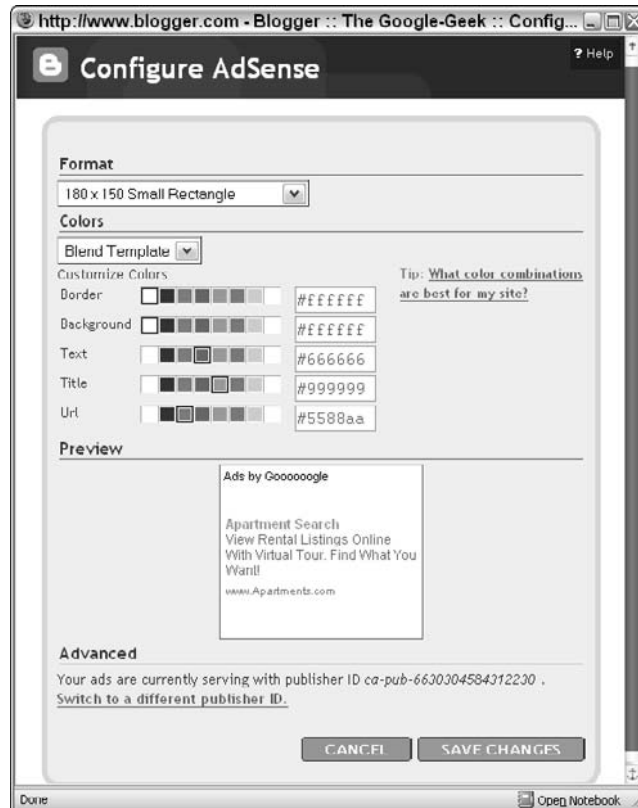


Figure 13-3:
Configure
AdSense
with the limited options
available.

If you want to place ads within the area that's reserved for your blog posts, you have to do it through the settings for the post page. Here's how:

- 1. Log in to your Blogger dashboard (see the previous steps) and select the Layout tab under the blog you want to change.**

You're taken to the Page Elements page of your blog layout.

- 2. Locate the Blog Posts section of the layout page and select the blue Edit link, as shown in Figure 13-4.**

The Configure Blog Posts dialog box appears.

- 3. Select the Show Ads between Posts check box, see Figure 13-5.**

Additional options for configuring inline ads become visible immediately below the check box, as shown in Figure 13-6.

- 4. Configure your ad preferences — size, color, and publisher ID — and then scroll to the bottom of the dialog box and click Save Changes.**

Ads now appear between your blog posts, according to the preferences that you selected.

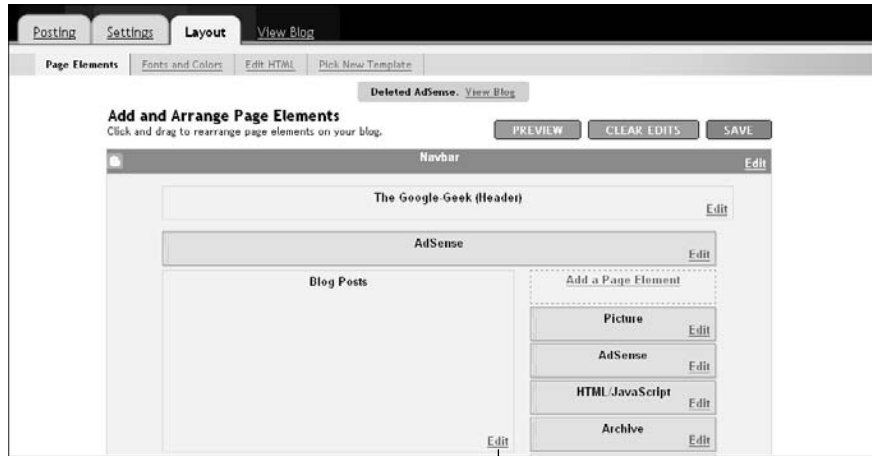


Figure 13-4: AdSense between blog posts requires adding from the posting configuration.

The Edit link

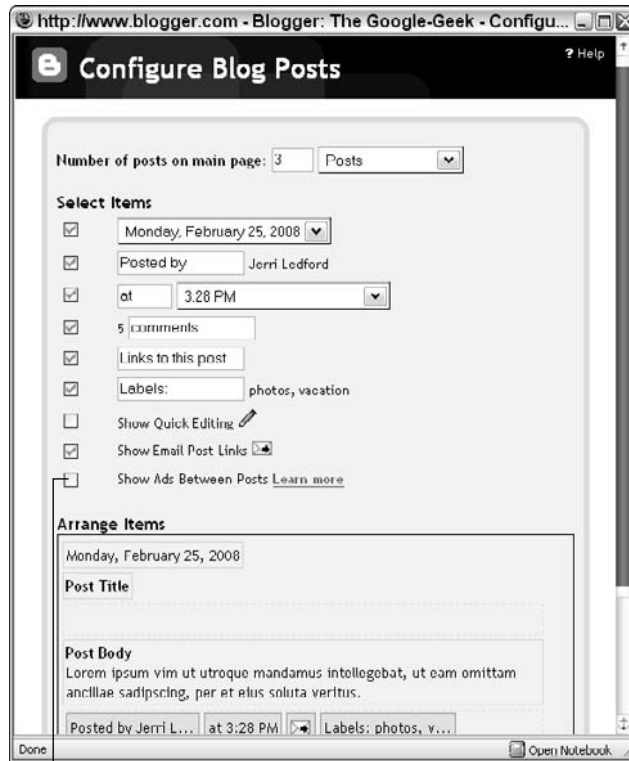


Figure 13-5: The Show Ads between Posts option.

Select this option to place ads between posts.

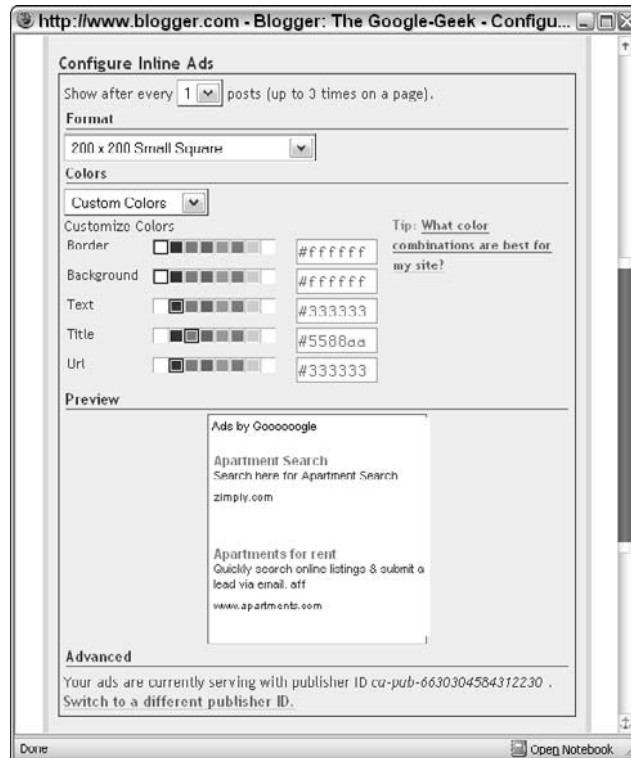


Figure 13-6:
Your
AdSense
configura-
tion options.



You can't use these gadgets to put ads directly in the text of your posts, but you can use them to put ads between your posts.

One other method for adding AdSense code using widgets that gives you a little more flexibility is to add the code using the HTML/JavaScript widget. The HTML/JavaScript widget works in much the same way as the AdSense-specific widget.

1. **On the Layout tab, make sure you're in the Page Elements view and then select Add a Page Element.**
2. **Select HTML/JavaScript from the list of available widgets.**

The dialog box changes to a text editor, as shown in Figure 13-7.

3. **Open AdSense and generate the code for a new ad.**

If you need a reminder on how to create ads, I covered that in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

4. **Copy the ad code.**

5. **Return to the Blogger HTML/JavaScript editor, enter a name for the ad — this can be whatever name makes sense to you — then paste the ad code from Step 4 into the Content text box.**
6. **Click the Save Changes button.**

The dialog box disappears and you're returned to the Page Elements view of your blog, except now you should see an element labeled HTML/JavaScript.

You can move this element around the header, footer, or sidebar of your blog, just as you would any other element, by clicking and dragging it to the desired location.

That's all there is to it. The big difference between using the HTML capabilities and Blogger's built-in AdSense capabilities is what you can do with the ads. Blogger's AdSense customization elements are pretty slim. By using Blogger's HTML capabilities, on the other hand, you can create more customized ads on the AdSense Web site and then paste them into your blog.

Monkeying with the code

Plopping down an AdSense ad right in the middle of a blog post — rather than *between* posts — is a little more involved than just adding it using the widget feature, but it can be done. The result is an ad that floats off the left side of the post, above the fold.

I may as well come right out and say it: Getting an ad to float off to the side of your blog post requires that you monkey-around with the HTML template of your blog. Sounds a bit dicey, I know, and if you're not careful, you could really mess up your blog, but I'm here to show you the way.



Before you make *any* changes at all to your blog, save a copy of the template to your hard drive, in case you mess up royally. I messed up the first time I tried to put the code into my blog. Fortunately, I had saved the template, so all I had to do was upload it and nothing was lost.

To save your template to your hard drive, follow these instructions:

1. **Log in to your Blogger account and go to the Layout tab.**
2. **Click the Edit HTML link below the tab, as shown in Figure 13-8.**
The Edit HTML screen appears.
3. **In the Edit HTML screen, click the Download Full Template link.**
A Save As dialog box appears.
4. **Using the Save As dialog box, save the template to a place on your hard drive where you can find it.**



Figure 13-7:
Blogger's
text editor.

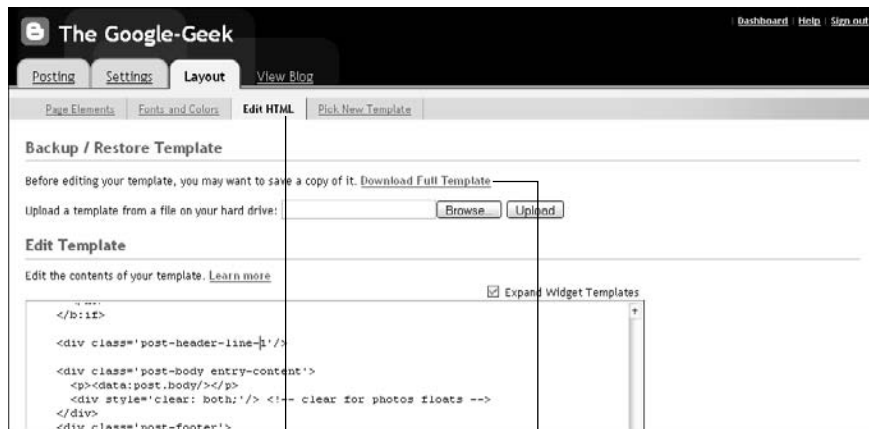


Figure 13-8:
Download
the full
Blogger
template
before
making any
changes.

Edit HTML link

Download Full Template link

After you've saved the file to your hard drive, you can play around with the template without fear of irreparably damaging your hard drive. Time to get elbow deep in HTML!

The HTML page that's displayed when you click the Edit HTML link is everything that makes up your blog. It's a monster document that could keep you busy for hours if you don't know what you're looking for. Don't worry though; I know what's what. Follow me and you won't lose your way.

1. Go to AdSense and generate the code for the ad unit you want to place in your posts.

For the purposes of this illustration, I use the 125x125 square format.

By the way, Chapter 5 gives you all the gory details on generating code.

2. Open NotePad (or any other text editor) and paste this code into a new document:

```
<div style='float:left;'>
AdSense Code
</div>
```

3. Copy the code generated by AdSense and paste it into the document in place of AdSense Code.

Replace those two words completely. When you're finished, the complete piece of code looks something like this:

```
<div style='float:left;'>
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-0000000000000000";
/* 125x125, created 2/25/08 */
google_ad_slot = "000095560";
google_ad_width = 125;
google_ad_height = 125;
//-->
</script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_
ads.js">
</script>
</div>
```

Your code won't look *exactly* like that, but it should be very similar. In particular, some of the numbers will be different, and the design of the ad may also be different.

4. Open a Web browser, surf over to your Blogger account, and log in.

This should be second nature by now.

5. Go to the Layout tab and then click the Edit HTML link below the tab.

The Edit HTML screen makes an appearance.

- 6. In the Edit HTML view of your blog, search for the following line of code with the search function on your browser:**

```
<div class='post-header-line-1' />
```

You could scroll through pages and pages of HTML code to find what you need, but here's an easier way. In Firefox and Internet Explorer browsers, press Ctrl+F to open a search box on your browser. When it appears, search for the line of code above.

- 7. When you find your little snippet of code, go back to your text editor, copy the code that you put together, and then paste that code immediately below the line you located.**

When you're finished, your code looks like this:

```
<div class='post-header-line-1' />
<div style='float:left;'>
<script type="text/javascript"><!--
google_ad_client = "pub-6630304584312230";
/* 125x125, created 2/25/08 */
google_ad_slot = "9092795560";
google_ad_width = 125;
google_ad_height = 125;
//-->
</script>
<script type="text/javascript"
src="http://pagead2.googlesyndication.com/pagead/show_
ads.js">
</script>
</div>
<div class='post-body entry-content'>
```

Notice in this code that the first and last lines are exactly what you see in your template. That's because those two lines were pre-existing. Everything in between is what you've pasted from your text editor.

- 8. Before you save the template, click the blue Preview button.**

This opens a new window that displays the results of the changes you made to the template.

- 9. After you preview the results of your cut-and-paste job and you're satisfied with the results, click the Save Template button to make the changes to your blog permanent.**

With the code in the previous steps list, you're adding AdSense to all the posts that are displayed on your main page. The only problems that you might encounter are if you have more than two or three posts displayed on the page, or if you have multiple ad units displayed in different places on your site. AdSense allows only three ad units to be displayed on any one

page, so if your configuration puts you over that golden number, some of the ads won't display properly.

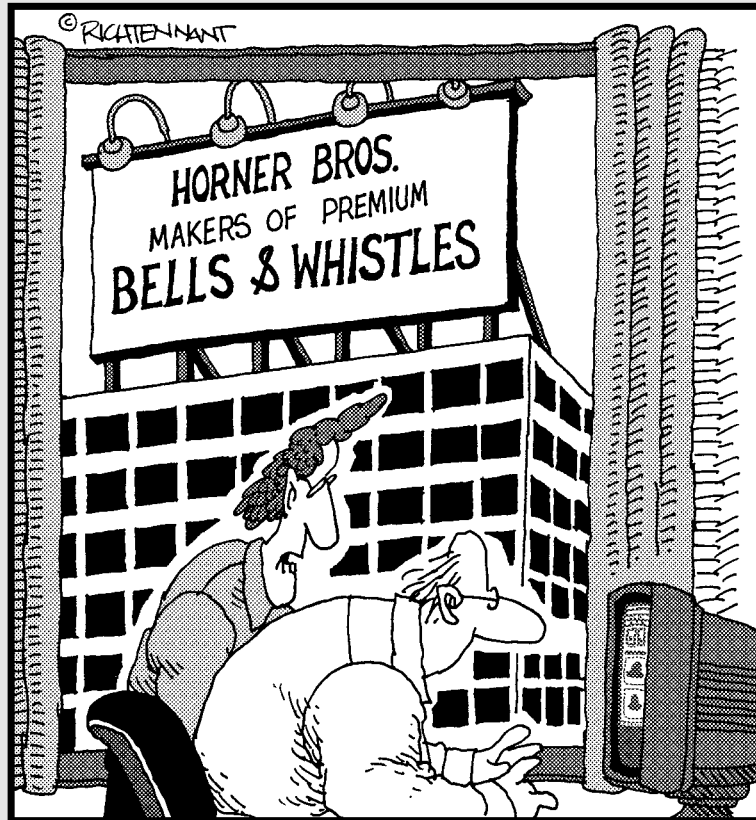
For example, if you have an AdSense widget in your sidebar and at the top of the page, when you use this method to add AdSense to your posts, some posts will have blank spaces where the ads should be. To combat this blank space, either remove AdSense widgets or reduce the number of posts that you show on the main page of your blog.

Part IV

AdSense Administration

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



“As a web site designer I never thought I’d say this, but I don’t think your site has enough bells and whistles.”

In this part . . .

This part of the book is dedicated to helping you understand the administrative functions of AdSense. These functions are essential to helping you visualize and increase your AdSense income.

Here you'll find out how to track AdSense responses with programs like AWStats or Google Analytics. I also cover setting up channels — a great way to figure out what's working with your AdSense ads. I then walk you through the reports that AdSense provides and how to better manage your account. I wind things up by detailing everything you need to know in order to get paid — how to set up your payment account, make changes to it, or put your payments on hold.

Chapter 14

Tracking AdSense Responses

In This Chapter

- ▶ Dealing with server logs
 - ▶ Analyzing site traffic with Google Analytics
 - ▶ Using AdSense channels effectively
-

Anytime you track how well your AdSense strategy is actually doing, you're relying a little bit on science and a little bit on magic. True, the only surefire way to determine what your AdSense revenues will be is to wait until they're processed and show up on the AdSense administration pages. But that doesn't tell you what works (and what doesn't work) with the way that you've set up your ads or the placement that you're using for the ads. If you want to know what trends seem to be influencing your revenue, here's another way to go about it. Tracking your Web site traffic — more specifically, tracking what brings people to your site, what takes them away, and what they do while they're on your site — is the best way to get a feel for the trends that affect your AdSense revenues. To track all that, you have to put in some work or find a really good program.

Which of those options you decide to use is determined by you. What are you more comfortable with? You can track everything and extract all that information from the logs that are available on your server, or you can let someone else do all the hard work for you so that all you have to do is take a look at the data that's been gathered.



Both ways have advantages and disadvantages. Ultimately what it comes down to is whether a service (like Google Analytics) can provide all the data that you need. Such a service might not, and if that's the case, you have only one option: Roll up your sleeves and do it on your lonesome.

Understanding Server Logs

Let me put it to you straight: The most difficult way to track traffic on your Web site is through your server logs. Server logs are also the only way to get

certain types of in-depth detail about your site. I guess you need to know what sever logs are though before I get too deep into what you can do with them.

A *server log* — more accurately a *Web server log* — is a group of files automatically generated by a server that tracks statistics about the traffic on your Web site. This group of files might contain information on where a user came to your site from, what pages on your site she visited, how long she spent on each site, and even more detailed information like what country she lives in (or the country her Internet access account is registered in) and some of the specifications about the browser she's using.

Server logs are a complicated mess of facts and information that most people just can't read. Seriously. You have to be one step above a NASA geek to understand all the gibberish contained in a server log.

Because most people won't ever reach that level of geekiness, some programs — *log analyzers* or *log parsers* — take all that data, analyze it, and then spit out more understandable statistics. Programs like AWStats (which is free, available at www.awstats.sourceforge.net) and Summary (which is free to try but can be costly to own, available at www.summary.net) can give you the information you seek from the raw data that the server collects.

Even though these programs are easier to use than trying to figure out server logs on your own, they're still not the easiest programs available. With AWStats, for example, you get to track your Web site statistics, but you have to have access to your Web server to use it. It's also requires a little more technical knowledge than some of the other Web site statistics programs that are available — like Google Analytics. Still, if you're ready to take on this program, it can potentially provide very in-depth analyses of the data that is collected in your server logs. I'm not ready to jump too deep into this pool right now, though. You'll find more information on AWStats in the “Installing AWStats” section, later in this chapter.

I'll be honest with you. Working with log analyzers can sometimes seem nearly as complicated as just trying to use the raw data coming from the server. Most log analyzers require that code be added to your Web site or Web server and then the reports have to be programmed before you can receive them.

On the flip side, server log analyzers can allow you to parse server data in ways that some other programs won't let you. With this technology, you can design reports that meet very specific needs (if you know how). For example, if you need a report that not only tells you what page of your Web site that visitors entered on but also what time of day they came to your site most often, you can program a report to divulge that kind of information.

If you're using a program like AWStats, the first thing to understand is that log analyzers count visitors differently than analytics programs do — one like Google Analytics, for example. AWStats looks at the *IP address* — the unique numerical address of a computer on the Internet, kind of like a street address for your house — of each site visitor. If one person visits your site a number of different times, AWStats counts that as only a single visitor. By comparison, a program like Google Analytics tracks computers by placing a cookie on the hard drive. That means that if a user clears out his browser *cache* — that's a record of the sites the user visited using that computer — or if the user logs in from another computer, Google Analytics counts him as more than one visitor. Looking at IP addresses is a little more accurate because even if a user clears his cache, the IP address for his computer remains the same. (Logging in from a different computer is still a problem, but as far as I know, there's no way around that kind of user being counted more than once with any stats program.)

Next, understand that programs like AWStats are more about the numbers than what can actually be extrapolated from those numbers. For example, with AWStats, Web crawlers are identified according to a list of crawlers defined by the log analyzer. Usually, a person creates the list, and the program then compares data against that list to determine which visits are from Web crawlers and which are from real people. The problem with this approach is that if the list of Web crawlers is not all-inclusive, a crawler could be counted as a visitor. The result, then, is that the number of visitors can be skewed. Because AWStats doesn't look at things like where a visitor comes from, it's hard to tell what's a crawler and what's a visitor if the crawler doesn't appear on the list of excluded IP addresses.

On the other hand, Google Analytics *does* look at where visitors come from. And Web crawlers have very specific origins, so it's usually pretty easy to tell which of your visitors are people and which are programs that are designed to crawl a Web site.

Installing AWStats

AWStats is a free program that's available from SourceForge. To download the program, go to <http://awstats.sourceforge.net>. After you download it, install it.



If you're planning to use AWStats to track your Web site traffic statistics, you must have access to your Web server. Unless you own that server (or your company owns the server), you probably don't have that access. If you're purchasing a hosting package from a Web site host, AWStats isn't the right program for you to track your statistics. If that's the case, you need to use a program, such as Google Analytics, that tracks your statistics without you having to get access to your Web server.

Assuming you do have access to your Web server, here's what you'd do to install AWStats:

1. **After you download AWStats (from `http://awstats.sourceforge.net`), find the file and extract the AWStats package.**

Whatever extraction program (for example, WinZip — available at `www.winzip.com`) you use will have different instructions for the extraction process, so refer to that program's documentation if you're not sure how to use it.

2. **If the installation process doesn't start automatically (it should with Windows Installer but it won't with any other operating system), locate the AWStats Tools Directory and double-click the `awstats_configure.pl` script to begin the installation process.**

`awstats_configure.pl` tries to determine your current log format from your Apache Web server configuration file, `httpd.conf`. (The script asks for the path if it can't find the file.)

3. **If you use a common log, `awstats_configure.pl` suggests changing that log to the NCSA combined/XLF/ELF format.**

You can use your own custom log format, but this pre-defined log format is often the best choice and makes setup easier.

If you answer yes, `awstats_configure.pl` modifies your `httpd.conf` file, restarts Apache to apply the changes, and then creates a new file called `awstats.mysite.conf` by copying the template file `awstats.model.conf`.

These actions should occur automatically (though they may require your confirmation in some areas).

4. **To verify that the main parameters of your new configuration file match your needs, open `awstats.mysite.conf` in your favorite text editor — the file should be located on your hard drive and you can use the search function of your computer to locate it — and make the following changes, as required:**

Verify the LogFile value. It should be the full path of your server log file.

Verify the LogType value. It should be `W` for analyzing Web log files.

Check the LogFormat. It should be set to `1`, although you can use a custom log format if you don't use the combined log format.

Set the SiteDomain parameter: It should be set to the main domain name or the intranet Web server name used to reach the Web site you want to analyze (for example: `www.mysite.com`). If you have several possible names for the same site, use the main domain name and add the others to the list in the `HostAlias` parameter.

5. When you've finished editing these elements, save the file to its original location.

Installation and configuration are now finished and the wizard should close automatically.

You may have to wait a couple days to see results from the log analyzer — and you still have to figure out how the program works if you want to get your results! After a couple days, however, you can begin creating stats reports by going to `www.myserver.mydomain/awstats/awstats.pl` — it's a Web-based program. Just remember to replace *myserver* and *mydomain* with your own server and domain information. It's a pretty complicated process, though, so I suggest that you read more about using the program by going to `http://awstats.sourceforge.net/docs/awstats_setup.html`.



Because Web crawlers change, a log analyzer can occasionally misinterpret a Web crawler as a real person. It's not a major mistake, but one of which you should be aware.

Tracking Stats with Google Analytics

If you're asking my opinion about the best programs to use for tracking Web site statistics — go ahead! Ask. — Google Analytics is definitely #1 on my list. It's easy to use, it's free, you don't need access to your Web server, and you don't have to be an ubergeek to use it. Google Analytics also provides all the statistics that I think you need. (I've been known to be wrong a time or two, but just keep that between you and me.)

Google Analytics started life as Urchin Analytics. Urchin was one of the premier Web site traffic statistics programs available on the Web — at an expensive price. Then Google bought Urchin and made the program available for free. The number of people who adopted it during the first few days of release was overwhelming. Google actually had to close the program to new users for a time to catch up with demand.

It's no surprise that demand for such a powerful stats program was very high, especially at a cost of exactly nothing. The statistics that are available through Google Analytics will satisfy almost everyone looking for Web site stats and are certainly enough to help you understand how your AdSense ads are performing.

Understanding Google Analytics quirks

The thing about Google Analytics that's different from a log analyzer like AWStats is the way that visitors on your site are tracked. Log analyzers tend to track visitors by IP address. Google Analytics actually tracks visitors by placing a *cookie* — a small snippet of code that acts as a kind of software ID collar — on the visitor's hard drive. Then, each time the visitor comes to your site, that cookie is recognized by Google Analytics.



The more Web-savvy among readers will immediately see the problem with relying on cookies to get the job done. A cookie is only trackable as long as it's on the visitor's hard drive. So, if a visitor comes to your site, clears out his Internet history, and then returns to the site in the same day, that user is tracked as two different users. Numbers can get a little screwy.

Most people don't clean out Internet histories on a daily basis — some never clean out them at all — but that's one of the issues you should be aware of.

Google Analytics also can be fooled by people who set their browsers to not accept cookies at all. It's a privacy issue. Some believe that when a company (any company) is tracking their movements on the Web, their privacy is invaded. On principle, they edit their browser preferences so that the browser won't accept any cookies. (Editing your preferences is a snap to do, in case you're wondering.) I don't necessarily buy into that school of thought, but I can understand why some people would feel that way.

Regardless of whether you understand the anti-cookie stand of some folks, the fact still remains that a percentage of your site visitors may have set up their browsers to reject cookies. If that's the case, Google Analytics can't track those people. It's a small percentage, but again, enough that you should be aware it's a possibility.

Even with these issues, Google Analytics remains my favorite Web site traffic statistics program. Because it's free and easy to install, I recommend that everyone at least try it for a month or two. If you don't like it, you can always move on to something else.

Intrinsically, the difference between log analyzers and programs like Google Analytics mostly involves methodology. Which program you use is determined by what you're looking for. I much prefer programs like Google Analytics over log analyzers because, as far as I'm concerned, the information that I need is covered by Google Analytics. You may not feel that way, and that's okay. Just choose the program that works best to meet your specific tracking needs.

Installing Google Analytics

Google Analytics, like all Google programs, is easy to install. It requires that you register for the program and then install the tracking code. Easy-peasy. Here are the basics for getting started with the program:

1. **Point your browser to `www.google.com/analytics`.**

The Google Analytics home page appears.

2. **Click the Sign Up Now link.**

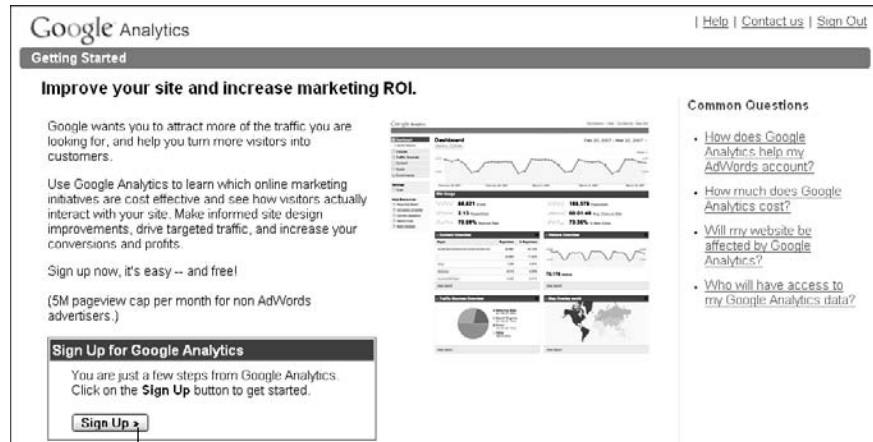
A sign-up page appears.

3. **If you already have a Google account, sign into Google Analytics with that account. If you don't have an account, register a new account with Google.**

4. **After you sign in, click the Sign Up button (as shown in Figure 14-1).**

You're taken to the New Account Signup page.

Figure 14-1:
Even after you sign in with a Google account, you need to set up an analytics account.



Click here to sign up.

5. **In the New Account Signup page, enter your Web site's URL, an account name (this can be any name you choose), your time zone location, and your actual time zone into the appropriate text fields and then click Continue.**

6. **In the new page that appears, enter your contact information (including name, telephone number, and country) and then click Continue.**

The User Agreement page appears.

7. Read through the user agreement, and if you agree with the terms of service, select the Yes, I Agree to the Above Terms and Conditions check box and then click Create New Account.

You now have an Analytics account, but you're still not quite done. A new page appears, displaying your tracking code, as shown in Figure 14-2. This snippet of code is how Google Analytics tracks the visitors to your Web pages.

8. Copy the code provided and paste it into the HTML of your Web site immediately before the `</body>` tag of the site.

Now, you're *really* finished.

After you place the tracking code on your Web site, it could take a couple days before you begin to see any statistics about the site on Google Analytics — stuff like number of visitors, where they came from, and how long they stayed on your site. Even then, the statistics aren't really valuable beyond telling you who's been to your site. There's nothing historical to compare the statistics against.

Getting the real value of Google Analytics takes at least 30 days — long enough to have enough information to compare timeframes and see what a normal baseline for your site is.

After you allow enough time to establish a baseline, you can really tell what tweaks are valuable in terms of bringing in more site traffic — and seeing what may be pushing traffic off your site. For example, if you have a high percentage of your visitors leaving your site on a specific page, you know that there's something about that page that could be turning your visitors off, so you can tweak the page to try to hold them on the site longer.

Figure 14-2:
Copy the provided code and paste into your Web site code to enable tracking.

The screenshot shows the Google Analytics 'Getting Started' page. At the top, it says 'Google Analytics' and 'JoeAndrews@gmail.com | Help | Contact us | Sign Out'. Below that is a 'Getting Started' header. The main content is 'Analytics: Tracking Instructions' with a breadcrumb trail: 'General Information > Contact Information > Accept User Agreement > Add Tracking'. There are two tabs: 'Legacy Tracking Code (urchin.js)' and 'New Tracking Code (ga.js)'. The 'New Tracking Code (ga.js)' tab is selected. The instructions say: 'Copy the following code block into every webpage you want to track. Click in the box below to select all code. Copy and paste the code segment into the bottom of your content, immediately before the `</body>` tag of each page you are planning to track. If you use a common include or template, you can enter it there.' Below this is a code block containing the following code:

```
Refer to this tracking code if your site already has urchin.js installed. Please note that urchin.js will not receive feature updates and is not compatible with new features.
<script src="http://www.google-analytics.com/urchin.js" type="text/javascript">
</script>
<script type="text/javascript">
_uacct = "UA-#####-1";
urchinTracker();
</script>
```

On the right side, there is a 'Common Questions' section with three links: 'How do I add tracking code to my website?', 'How can I confirm that I've entered the tracking code correctly on my pages?', and 'How long does it take to see report data after adding the tracking code?'.

Google Analytics with Google AdWords

One very cool feature of Google Analytics is that it has reports that are specifically created for people who use AdWords to advertise. If you use AdWords (and many people who publish AdSense ads do), you can take advantage of reports, such as AdWords Campaigns, Keyword Positions, and Audio Campaigns, which allow you to specifically track your AdWords results.

AdWords is all about drawing new traffic to your site, so there's no better way to track your success with AdWords than to use a Web site traffic statistics program. Google Analytics, being a Google program, is a natural choice. (If AdWords sounds intriguing, check out *AdWords For Dummies* by Howie Jacobson [Wiley Publishing].)

Analyzing Analytics

After you set up your Google Analytics account and have a few days to collect numbers, the true value of the program starts to shine through. This section shows you how to put that value to use.

When you log on to your account from the www.google.com/analytics/ page, the first screen that you see is a Dashboard overview of your available stats, as shown in Figure 14-3.

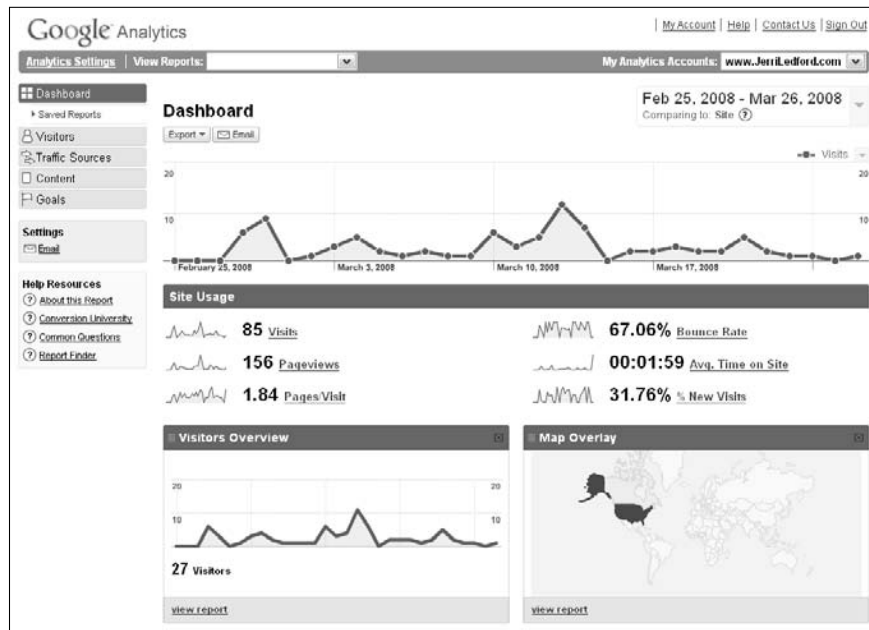


Figure 14-3:

The Dashboard is an overview of the most important stats on Google Analytics.

These stats are, by default, the stats most folks consider important when it comes to Web site traffic numbers. You may not be like most folks though, which is why you're free to add other snapshots to the Dashboard if you'd rather see something there. One thing you can't do, however, is remove or replace the Site Usage stats that you see at the top of the page. These are fixed permanently in place.



You *can* change the *dates* shown in the Site Usage section — the default dates always show the previous month.

You'll find a handy navigation menu on the left side of the page, right under the Dashboard heading. This menu collapses and expands, according to where you click it. As shown in Figure 14-4, clicking one of the headings in the menu expands the menu so you can see additional reports that are available under that heading.

Headings expand to show additional reports.



Figure 14-4:

Click a menu heading to expand the heading to see additional reports for that section.

Of all the reports that are available to you, the most useful ones in terms of tracking AdSense info are found under the Traffic Sources and Content headings. Under Traffic Sources, for example, you can access the following reports:

- ✓ **Referring Sites:** This report, as shown in Figure 14-5, shows which other Web sites referred visitors to your site. This is important to your AdSense earnings because in addition to placing the ads on your page, you should also be marketing your site. One way to market your site is through other Web sites. This report tells you how successful those marketing efforts have been.
- ✓ **Search Engines:** The Search Engines report shows you which search engines sent visitors to your site. Because you know that your site is search engine optimized by keyword, this gives you a glimpse into how well your keywords are helping search engines list your site in search results.
- ✓ **Keywords:** The Keywords report shows which are the most popular keywords that bring visitors to your site. No better tool is out there for finding out if you've chosen the right keywords for your site. You can then use this information to ensure that your site is targeted accurately to the keywords that bring people in. In turn, your AdSense ads will be further optimized to the correct keywords.



Figure 14-5: See where visitors to your site come from in this report.

In addition to the Traffic Sources reports, the Content reports also contain some useful insights. All these reports are related to the content on your site, so if you want to know what's working and what's not, this is where to find out. The most useful reports from this section include

- ✓ **Top Content:** This report lists the most viewed content on your site. Do you want to know what visitors to your site are looking at or how long they're spending on specific pages? This report tells you. The report, as shown in Figure 14-6, lists the top URLs. You can then click each of the URLs to view more in-depth information, such as the time users spend on the page and the number of visitors that exit from that page.
- ✓ **Top Landing Pages:** *Landing pages* are where a visitor first “touches down” on your site. The Top Landing Pages report shows you exactly which of your pages those are. This is useful in a couple different ways. First, if you're conducting marketing with a specific entry page, you can track how effective that marketing is. Second, this information is helpful when you want to know what pages users seem to be finding on their own, especially if you're not conducting any marketing campaigns.

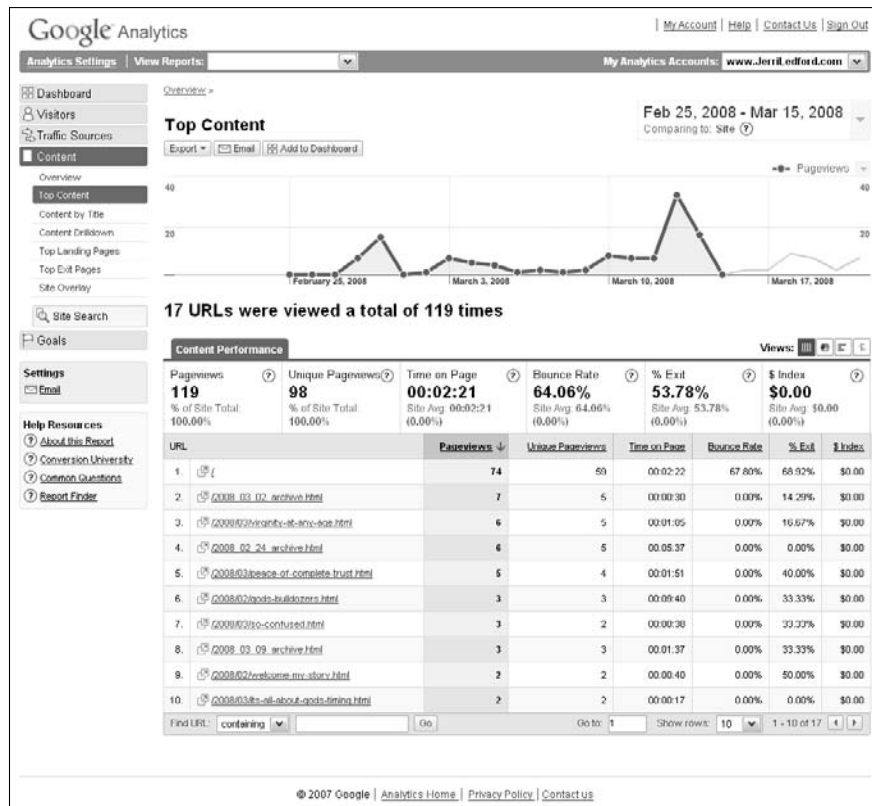


Figure 14-6: See the most viewed pages of your Web site in this report.

- ✔ **Top Exit Pages:** Similar to the Top Landing Pages, this report shows you information about how users move about your site. The Top Exit Pages report shows you where users jump away from your site. If you're an AdSense user, this information can be invaluable. Most AdSense users don't put ads on every page on their site. Instead, they place ads on certain, optimized pages. This report, as shown in Figure 14-7, lets you know if those pages are where visitors are leaving your site. It's not a guarantee that your ads are working, but it's definitely an indicator that your ads could be performing well. You can use this information along with the data provided in AdSense reports to see which pages seem to be working better for ads.
- ✔ **Site Overlay:** For AdSense information, the Site Overlay is my favorite of all Google Analytics reports. The Site Overlay report literally overlays your Web site with a graphic that shows you which links on the site are most clicked, as shown in Figure 14-8. Above all other reports, this one is the most telling of how well your AdSense ads actually work.

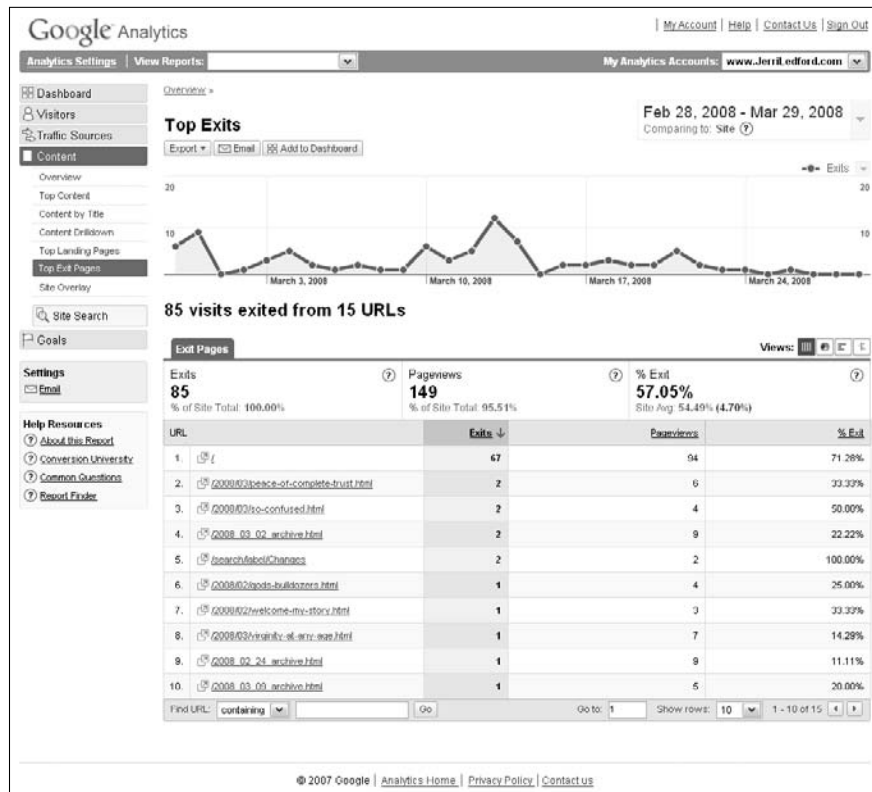
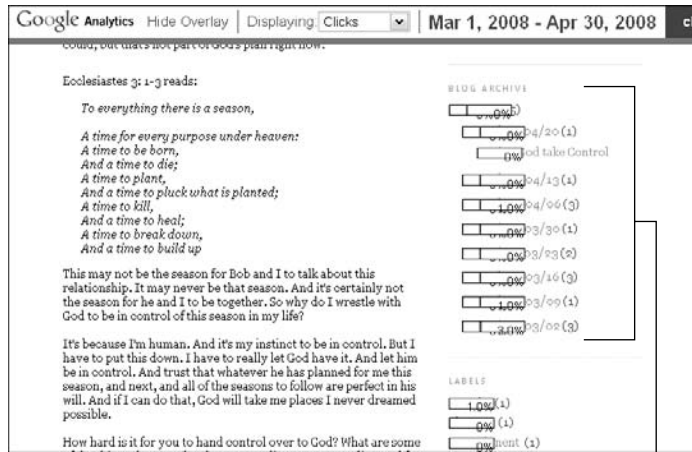


Figure 14-7: See from which pages visitors leave your site in this report.

Figure 14-8:
The Site
Overlay
shows what
percentage
of clicks is
received on
each link.



Site Overlay

Each of these reports is presented in graphical format. At a glance, you can see the most basic information for the report. You can also dig deeper into the report and further segment the data by using drop-down menus (when provided) and by clicking blue, linked text. Each report has a different set of capabilities, so take some time to get to know the finer side of each report.

Remember that Google Analytics alone won't tell you *everything* you need to know about how your AdSense ads perform. Combine your AdSense stats — the ones found in your AdSense reports, which I cover in Chapter 15 — with your Google Analytics stats and then you can get a clear picture of what's working and what's not.



Keep in mind that it takes some time to establish a baseline from which you can determine which efforts seem to be working and which don't.

Channeling with AdSense

When you're tracking what works and what doesn't in AdSense, you soon discover that no single tracking method works best. Instead, a combination of tracking technologies helps you gather all the data you need. In addition to a Web site traffic statistics program, such as those I discuss earlier in this chapter, AdSense offers another method of tracking that can help you determine which ads perform best — channels.

Google explains channels this way:

Channels enable you to view detailed reporting about the performance of specific pages and ad units. By assigning a channel to a combination of pages or ad units, you could track the performance of a leaderboard versus a banner, or compare your motorcycle pages to your automobile pages. You can even create a channel to track each of your separate domains, so you can see where your clicks are coming from. While channels can be used to track performance and revenue, they won't have any effect on your earnings or ad targeting.

The way you use channels is determined by how you want to track your ads and by the revenues generated from those ads. You can track them by ad, page, and even Web site — whatever works best for you. When you have that information, you can cross-compare it to your Web site traffic statistics to figure out even more about what's working and what's not.

Understanding AdSense channels

AdSense offers two different types of channels: URL channels and custom channels. *URL channels* track your AdSense ads by URL. You can track either single pages or you can use the top URL (`www.sitename.com`) to track every page within a Web site.

Custom channels allow you to track specific ads, according to parameters that you define. You can use a single custom channel to track multiple ads on multiple Web sites, as well.



When using channels to track your AdSense ads, the code that's generated for your ad differs slightly from what would be generated if you weren't tracking the ads with a specific channel. However, the code should still be pasted into your Web site or blog in the same manner that you added code that isn't tracked by channels.

Creating effective channels

One very useful facet of using channels is that these differentiators allow you to track the effectiveness of changes that you might be testing in your ads. For example, if you're running two sets of ads on your page, one with borders and one without, you can assign different channels to these ads to see which performs better.



Here's a hint: Ads without borders nearly always perform better than ads with borders. Taking the border away seems to make some site visitors more willing to give an AdSense ad a try — maybe because it doesn't really *look* much like an ad.

The first thing you need to do when you decide to use channels is to figure out exactly what purpose the channels have. Why do you want to use channels? Do you want to see how well a specific ad design is performing? Or do you want to track how effective ads on a specific page of your site are?

After you determine what you want to track with channels, you can begin to create the channels that will serve your needs. You can create up to 200 different channels in your AdSense account, and after you create a channel, you can rename, deactivate, or delete it completely if you're no longer using it. The next few sections give you all the details.



When you start to create a new channel, the process is set to create channels for AdSense for Content ads. You have the option to create channels for Referrals and Mobile Content, too. If you choose to create a channel for one of the other types of AdSense, click the blue linked tab for that option. AdSense for Search is the only type of ad that you can't create a URL channel for.

Creating URL channels

Creating AdSense channels is an easy enough procedure. When you're creating URL channels, have the specific URL that you want to track. If you want to track a whole site under a single URL, the top-level Web address is the one that you need to use. If you're tracking a specific page on your Web site, be sure you have the exact URL for the page that you want to track. With that information in hand, here's how you can create your first URL channel:

- 1. Log in to your AdSense account and go to the AdSense Setup tab.**
- 2. Click the Channels link on the AdSense Setup tab.**

You're taken to the Channels overview page, as shown in Figure 14-9.

- 3. Click the URL Channels link.**

The page view refreshes to show URL channels that have been previously created (if there are any).

- 4. Click the + Add New URL Channels link.**

The page refreshes to show a form for entering URLs, as shown in Figure 14-10.

Figure 14-9:
Create new channels from the Channels overview page.

URL Channels link

Figure 14-10:
Use the form that appears to add new URL channels to track.

5. Enter the URLs that you want to track in the text box provided.

Make sure you only enter one URL per line.

To track a single page: Enter the full URL (example.com/sample.html)

To track a script that generates multiple pages: Enter the full path of the script, without the ? (example.com/sample.asp?keyword=one)

To track all pages below a specific directory: Enter a partial URL (example.com/sample)

To track only pages across a specific subdomain: Enter the subdomain (sports.example.com)

To track all pages on a domain: Enter the domain name (www.example.com)

To track all impressions and clicks across the domain (including any existing subdomains): Enter the domain name without the www (example.com)

6. After you enter the desired URLs, click the Add Channels button.

Now you have URL channels available to you if you want to use them to track your ads.

Adding older ads to a channel

After you create a channel to use for tracking, the ads that already exist on your Web site aren't automatically tracked. Instead, you have to update those ads or create new ones. To edit ads:

1. Log in to your AdSense account and go to the AdSense Setup tab.

2. Click the Manage Ads link.

3. On the Manage Ads page, select the ad that you would like to edit.

You're taken to a page that looks like the original setup wizard for the ad except that it's all contained on a single page, rather than on several pages.

4. Make the changes that you want to make — in this case, you're choosing a channel from the drop-down menu.

5. When you're finished, click the Save button at the bottom of the page.

That's it. Editing your ads really is that easy. And if it's new ads that you're working with, you can find more information about creating a new ad in Chapter 2.

Creating custom channels

You create custom channels pretty much the same way you create URL channels. The difference is that with custom channels, you use a specific channel name rather than a URL. When you're creating your custom channels, use descriptive names for the channel. For example, if you're testing large

rectangles against link units, you can create two channels, naming one Large Rectangles and one Link Units. When it's time to see the reports broken down by channel, there's no doubt what each channel refers to.

Here are the steps for creating custom channels:

1. **Log in to your AdSense account and go to the AdSense Setup tab.**
2. **Click the Channels link at the top of the tab.**

You should be taken automatically to the Custom Channels page, but if you're not, click the Custom Channels link.

3. **Click the + Add New Custom Channels link.**

You're taken to a channel creation page, like the one shown in Figure 14-11.

4. **Enter the desired name for the channel and then select whether to allow the channel to be shown to advertisers as an ad placement.**

If you choose to allow the ad placement option, the channel is shown as available for advertisers to place *cost-per-impression* ads — ads for which you'll be paid based on the number of people who see the ads.

5. **If you choose to show the channel to advertisers, the form you're filling out expands, as shown in Figure 14-12. Enter the requested information and then click the Add Channel button.**

If you don't choose to show the channel to advertisers, you can move on to the next step.

You're returned to the front channel page where you began, but now you see the channel you created listed below the + Add New Custom Channels option.

Figure 14-11:
Creating custom channels requires different information than is needed to create URL channels.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense 'Add channel' page. At the top, there's a Google AdSense logo and user information: 'G.Geek07@gmail.com - Last login: 4 days ago - Log Out - Help' and 'Publisher ID: pub-6630304584312230'. Below that is a search bar for 'Search AdSense Help'. The main navigation bar includes 'Reports', 'AdSense Setup', 'My Account', and 'Resources'. Under 'AdSense Setup', there are links for 'Get Ads', 'Manage Ads', 'Color Palettes', 'Channels', 'Competitive Ad Filter', 'Site Authentication', and 'Allowed Sites'. The current page is 'Channels > Add channel'. The main heading is 'Add channel'. Below the heading is a text box for entering a name for the channel. A note says: 'Enter a name for your desired channel below. You can also make this channel available for advertisers to target. If you choose to do so, the channel external name and description will be shown to advertisers. [Learn more...](#)'. Below the name field is a 'Targeting' section with a checkbox labeled 'Show this channel to advertisers as an ad placement [?]' and an 'Add channel' button. On the right side, there's a 'Common Questions' section with several links: 'Optimizing with Channels', 'How do I create URL channels?', 'How do I create custom channels?', 'How can URL channels track my subdomains?', and 'Why are my channel reports showing more data than my aggregate reports?'.

Google AdSense

G.Geek07@gmail.com - Last login: 4 days ago - [Log Out](#) - [Help](#)
 Publisher ID: pub-6630304584312230

[Search AdSense Help](#)

Reports | AdSense Setup | My Account | Resources

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

Channels > **Add channel**

Add channel

Enter a name for your desired channel below. You can also make this channel available for advertisers to target. If you choose to do so, the channel external name and description will be shown to advertisers. [Learn more...](#)

Total URL and Custom Channels remaining: 197

Name:

Targeting: Show this channel to advertisers as an ad placement [?]

These fields will be shown to advertisers

External name: [?] **yoursite.com - Homepage, Multiple locations**

Ads appear on: Homepage
 Other pages

 e.g. Sports articles; Electronic homepage

Ad location:

Description:

▶ advanced options

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

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Figure 14-12:
Additional information is required to show channels for advertiser placement.

After you create a custom channel, you can go through the same process you used for URL channels to add ads customized to the channel or to edit existing ads. (See the preceding section, “Creating URL channels,” for more info.)

Tracking your AdSense results should be a regular part of your AdSense activities. Through tracking these results, you discover your successes — and failures. As with any technology, throwing it on the Web without thought of what works and what doesn’t isn’t likely to get you anywhere. But with some consistent effort, and tracking, you’ll figure out what works and what doesn’t. Then you can make the most of your AdSense efforts.

Chapter 15

Using AdSense Reports

In This Chapter

- ▶ Understanding quick, custom, and advanced reports
 - ▶ Using report templates and the Report Manager
 - ▶ Setting up automatic reports
 - ▶ Stay on the crawler's good side with site diagnostics
 - ▶ Managing your AdSense account
-

Web site owners who publish AdSense ads on their sites tend to be obsessive about checking their numbers to see what levels their revenue is reaching. If you find yourself logging in to AdSense 15 times a day to see how many people have clicked your ads, there's an easier way to keep track of things.

With Google's set of AdSense reports, Google provides you with the tools you need to see exactly where you stand — all in just a few minutes. Some of the reports can even be automated, so you don't even have to log on to the Web site. Setting up these automated reports can save you time; time that you can spend creating better content, adding pages to your site, or tweaking the keywords that you use to help the AdSense crawler target ads to your site.

The Overview

Google makes it easy for you to automatically know how much you're earning on any given day, just by signing in to your AdSense account — you know, that little gold mine you keep at www.adsense.com. When you log in to the account, the first page you see is the Overview report, which provides you with a quick look at your daily earnings. In fact, right there in bold print (and it's probably the very first thing you see) is the Today's Earnings heading. In green, next to the heading, you see the amount of money that you've earned that day.

A little farther down the page, you see a table with details about how you've earned that money. The table lists the different types of AdSense ads you're showing as well as the following statistics, all designed to help you understand quickly what's working and what's not:

- ✓ **Page Impressions:** This is the number of people who have viewed your ads on a given day. This number represents all the visitors to your site, whether they stayed on the site or bounced right back off.
- ✓ **Clicks:** This column adds the number of times folks have clicked one of your ads.
- ✓ **Page CTR:** Short for *Page Click-Thru-Rate*, Page CTR shows the percentage of people who came to your site and then clicked through your AdSense ads to the advertiser's page. The higher your percentage, the better your ads are performing.
- ✓ **Page eCPM:** Don't ask me how they get *Effect Clicks Per Thousand* out of eCPM. (The acronym has something to do with the metric version of measurement, which really doesn't matter to you one bit.) What you *do* need to know is that this figure is arrived at by dividing your total earnings by the number of impressions in thousands. For example, if your site earns \$100 from 10,000 impressions, your eCPM is \$100/10 or \$10. This represents the amount that you're making per thousand impressions, however, and doesn't represent exactly how much you're making. Instead, it's a measurement that you can use to compare results across channels or advertising programs.
- ✓ **Earnings:** The actual amount that you've earned over a given timeframe is shown in this column. Specify the timeframe you want to examine with the View drop-down menu, shown in Figure 15-1. You can view results by Today, Yesterday, Last 7 Days, This Month, Last Month, and All Time.

Figure 15-1:
Use the View drop-down menu to change the report timeframe.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense dashboard. At the top, there are navigation tabs for 'Reports', 'AdSense Setup', 'My Account', and 'Resources'. Below these are sub-tabs for 'Overview', 'Advanced Reports', 'Report Manager', and 'Site Diagnostics'. The main heading is 'Today's Earnings: \$0.00' with a link to 'View payment history'. A tip box suggests monetizing mobile content. A 'View:' dropdown menu is open, showing options: 'All time', 'Today', 'Yesterday', 'Last 7 days', 'This month - February', 'Last month - January', and 'All time'. Below the menu is a table with columns: 'When do I get paid?', 'Page Impressions', 'Clicks', 'Page CTR', 'Page eCPM [1]', and 'Earnings'. The table shows data for 'AdSense' (230 impressions, 4 clicks, 1.74% CTR, \$9.23 eCPM, \$2.12 earnings) and 'Referrals' (no data available). A 'Total Earnings' row shows \$2.12.

	Page Impressions	Clicks	Page CTR	Page eCPM [1]	Earnings
AdSense	230	4	1.74%	\$9.23	\$2.12
Referrals	- No data available -				
AdSense for Mobile Content - Get started					
Total Earnings					\$2.12

View menu



The Overview page shows more than just how much money you're making. This page also contains notes from the AdSense team, messages that you can view — stuff like the monthly optimization report that's sent to AdSense advertisers — as well as links to quick reports. “What are they?” you ask. Read on and become enlightened.

Understanding Quick Reports

AdSense calls reports that you've preset certain variables for — dates, for example — *Quick Reports*. These reports are easy to get to. When you log in to your AdSense account, the page that you land on is the Main Report page. You'll find the Quick Reports section at the bottom of that page. These reports are already set up for you — basically —, so all you need to do is click the link for the report, and a new page loads with those variables already in place.



When a new report loads, notice the customization options shown at the top of the page. (They're above the fold; you actually have to scroll down the page to see the report data.) These customization options allow you to change dates, products, and even ad unit information to further customize your report view. I give you more information on how to use custom and advanced reports a little later in this chapter.

Figure 15-2 shows your Quick Report options for AdSense for Content ads. Here's what each report entails:

- ✓ **This Month, By Day:** If you select the This Month, By Day report, you get pretty much the same information as shown in the Overview report, such as page impressions, clicks, and earnings, but you get that info for each day of the current month.
- ✓ **Last Month, By Day:** Instead of displaying the current month's data, this report lets you look a bit deeper into the historical data to see what trends might be emerging. (Okay, *deep* here is a relative term; I'm only talking last month.) For example, are certain days better for generating AdSense income? If you can see those patterns and use them to develop useful theories and scenarios, you can test those theories in an effort to further increase your AdSense earnings.

If you use AdSense for Search on your site, additional reports may provide further statistics about your AdSense revenues. Even though AdSense for Search is a little different than AdSense for Content, the reports should have the same outward appearance. The functions of ads are different than the functions

of searches, but you end up tracking the same information — clicks, impressions, earnings, and so on. Like AdSense for Content, you have reports for This Month, By Day and Last Month, By Day, This Month, By Channel & Day, Last Month, By Channel & Day, but you also have an additional report — Top Queries.

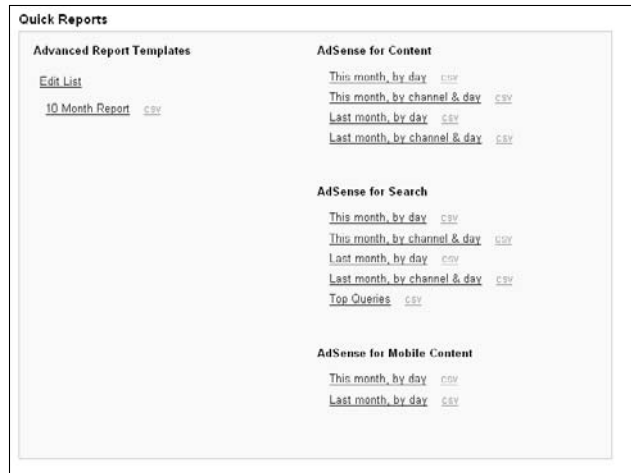


Figure 15-2:
Pick a Quick
Report,
any one.

Remember, channels are just tracking capabilities. In the reports listed above, By Channel just means that each different channel — or tracking group — you’ve created will have its own section on the reports.

All the remaining report options are pretty self-explanatory, except for the Top Queries report. That report actually shows the same information as the other reports, but the information is ranked from most popular to least popular, based on search queries that visitors conduct from your site with the search box that you placed on your site.



If you don’t use AdSense for Search on your Web site, these reports just return empty, without any data.

Keep in mind that all such reports, whether they’re for AdSense for Content ads or AdSense for Search ads, come to you already pre-defined. You still have the option to change any of the variables in the report so that you can further *segment* (or separate) data that concerns your AdSense activities. That’s where custom and advanced reports are useful — so useful, in fact, that they deserve their own section.

Using Custom and Advanced Reports

Custom and advanced reports start out just like any other report that you run from AdSense Quick Reports except no data is preset for display.

When you select the Advanced Reports link on the Reports tab — remember, that’s where you land when you log in to your AdSense account — a page loads displaying your options when it comes to creating reports, as shown in Figure 15-3. These options allow you to define custom reports that feature the information that you actually need at the moment, rather than information that someone else decides you might need.

Figure 15-3:

Create custom and advanced reports with the options provided.

By picking and choosing among the various options, you can tailor a report to your precise needs. Your options are as follows:

- ✓ **Product:** With the Choose Product drop-down menu, you can specify which AdSense product you want to use as the basis for your report. Products here include AdSense for Search, AdSense for Content, Video Units, Referral Programs, and any other type of AdSense ads that you’ve allowed.

Only those products you’ve enabled in your AdSense account show up as options in the drop-down menu. Your Choose Product drop-down menu, therefore, may be different from mine.

- ✓ **Date range:** If you use this section’s first radio button, you get to choose from preset date ranges that mirror those available in the quick reports (Today, Yesterday, Last 7 Days, This Month, Last Month, and All Time).

But hey, why go with the standard date range? I don’t run my weeks according to Google’s schedule, so I take advantage of the customized date ranges associated with the second radio button. The drop-down menus there allow you to specify the exact date range you want to use. If you need a report for a three-day period or a three-week period, or if you just want a report from Monday through Sunday, you can create it.



✓ **View options:** Another feature of the advanced reporting capabilities that you might find useful is the ability to change the way your data is shown. By default, the Show Data By drop-down menu is set to Page, which means that your data is sorted according to page impressions — the number of times your page is viewed, whether users click links on the page or not. Only there's a catch — isn't there always? It doesn't matter how many different ads or types of ads are shown on your page; each page counts as only one impression. If you're thinking about your impression figures in terms of having multiple ads on your page, they may seem low.

Another choice here is to show data by Ad Unit. This data display shows your page impressions according to the number of ads that are on your page. So, if one visitor comes to your site and clicks all the 15 ads that you have on your page, you'll see 15 page views for that single visitor. Now you have the opposite problem from the Page option. Instead of having page impressions that appear low because each visit counts only for one impression — no matter how many ads you have — now only one visit can create multiple impressions.

Using both of these Show Data By measurements can be useful in that you can see how many visitors have seen your ads as well as how many ads your visitors have seen. If, for some reason, AdSense is displaying a single ad in the place of a large rectangle, for example, you can see immediately what's happening. And it does happen from time to time when AdSense doesn't have enough matching ads to fill the rectangle, which can usually hold several ads.

A final option in the Show Data By drop-down menu — the Individual Ad option — changes your view of the data even more. When you use this display, you see how many impressions your site gets according to the number of actual ads that are displayed. Some ad displays show only a single ad — banners are one; you get one ad in a banner, nothing else — but others, like rectangles or link units, show more than one ad. When you view your report data with the Individual Ad option, you see multiples of impressions, based on the number of actual ads that are on your site.



At the Individual Ad level, you can see your ads by what type of ad targeting is used: contextual or placement targeting. Contextual ad placement is when ads are placed within your content because the ad jibes in some way with the subject of the content. Placement targeted ads are those ads that are placed on your site because the advertiser chooses to have its ads shown on your page. This is an additional detail you don't see in any other view.

You also have the option to show aggregate data or channel data. *Aggregate data* is just a collection of the tracking information for all your ads. *Channel data* is a collection of the tracking information for ads broken down into the channels that you have selected to use to track individual ads or groups of ads.

When you've finished selecting the options that you would like to display for your ads, then all you have to do to see the report is click the Display Report button. The page reloads, and your desired information is displayed.

Each different data display shows the impressions on your site slightly differently. Because the data is considered differently in each view, you see changes in your eCPM measurements as well. The fewer impressions shown, the higher your eCPM is.

Page impressions, clicks, and other report data, along with these different data views, allow you to compare ads and see which ones perform better than others. It takes some time to gather enough stats to be able to make any real determinations — if you have plenty of people visiting your site, a week might be enough; low traffic requires a little longer. With this data readily available to you, you can test different ad placements and types to discover what works best on your Web site.

Using Report Templates

The basic reports AdSense provides are useful enough for most purposes, but at times — recurring times — you need a report with a specific set of information and you don't want to have to re-create it every time you want to run that report. No sense in reinventing the wheel, right?

Report templates allow you to set up reports, based on your specific needs. Each time you want to run that specific report, all you have to do is select the template, rather than re-creating the report each time that you need it.

Here's the rub: You can't create reports that are any more sophisticated than what you can do with the advanced reporting capabilities I talk about in the previous section. What you can do, however, is create the report once, fashion a template based on that report, save the template, and reuse it whenever you want. (The idea here is to keep the template on hand so you don't have to go through setting up the report every time you need it.) Here's how you save a report as a template:

- 1. Log on to your AdSense account.**

The Reports page appears, with your Today's Earnings prominently displayed.

- 2. On the Reports tab, select the Advanced Reports link.**

Your report options appear. (Refer to Figure 15-3.)

3. Create the report that you want to use as a template.

Set date ranges, choose the type of report — aggregate or channel data display — and choose the product (AdSense for Content, AdSense for Search, Referrals, and so on).

4. Click the Display Report button to run the report.

When the report has processed, you see a Save as Report Template text box at the top of the report, as shown in Figure 15-4.

5. Enter a name in the Save as Report Template text box and then click Save.

You see an orange confirmation box displayed if the report was successfully saved. If the confirmation box doesn't appear, go through the creation process again in case you've forgotten steps or there's a problem with the service.

Figure 15-4:

Enter a name in the provided text box to save the report as a template.

The screenshot shows a report for the date range 'October 1, 2007 - January 31, 2008'. At the top right, there is a 'Save as Report Template' section with a text input field containing 'Enter new name...', a 'Save' button, and a 'CSV' link. Below this is a table with the following data:

Date	Targeting [?]	Ad Impressions	Clicks	Ad CTR	Ad eCPM [?]	Earnings
Totals		967	4			\$2.12
Tuesday, October 30, 2007	Contextual	07	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
Wednesday, October 31, 2007	Contextual	21	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
Thursday, November 1, 2007	Contextual	9	0	0.00%	\$0.00	\$0.00
Saturday, November 3, 2007	Contextual	10	1	10.00%	\$38.76	\$0.39

That's really all there is to it. After you create an advanced report, it's saved as a template in case you want to run it again in the future. When you're ready to run the same report again, select it from the Advanced Reports section on the Quick Reports screen. You still have to change the date range, but your other selections are automatic.

Working with the Report Manager

Each time you generate a report, it's automatically saved to a little corner of the AdSense world — the Report Manager. To get your hands on reports saved to the Report Manager, click the Reports Manager link on the Reports tab. Reports are collected here so that you can view them online or download them in CSV (*Comma Separated Value*) format, the standard used by most spreadsheet programs. To download the report, just click the CSV link, and

use the Save As dialog box that appears to choose the location you want the report saved to and to choose a name for the report. When you've entered this information, click Save.

After you download a report and save the file to your hard drive, you can open it in Microsoft Excel or any other spreadsheet program that opens CSV files — Google Docs & Spreadsheets, for example.

For example, here's how to open the file in Microsoft Excel:

- 1. Launch Excel and then choose File⇨Open.**

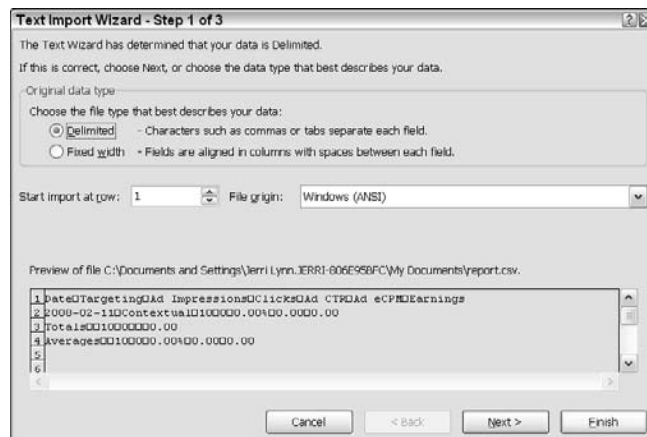
The Open dialog box appears.

- 2. In the Open dialog box, browse to the file you saved to your hard drive, select the file, and then click Open.**

Excel's Text Import Wizard appears, as shown in Figure 15-5.

The file that's provided by AdSense is a *delimited* file — the columns of data are literally separated. On the first screen of the wizard, you don't need to change anything.

Figure 15-5:
The Text Import Wizard walks you through opening the file properly.



- 3. Click Next.**

The second page of the wizard appears.

- 4. In Step 2 of the wizard, select the *delimiter* — what separates each column of the spreadsheet you're importing — and then click Next.**

In this case, the delimiter is a tab (because you usually tab from one column to the next). That's probably already selected in the wizard.

5. (Optional) In the final page of the wizard, feel free to change the formatting of the columns that you're importing by clicking anywhere in the column and then selecting the proper formatting from the options in the upper-left corner of the wizard.

For this file, the formatting for all the columns should be General.



You can see your formatting without clicking each column by looking at the very first cell at the top of each column. This cell doesn't appear on the spreadsheet, but in this wizard view, it shows you what type of formatting is already in place.

6. After you check or adjust the formatting, click **Finish** to complete the importing process.

The Excel spreadsheet opens. If you want to keep it in Excel format, you have to resave the file as an Excel workbook.



If you really don't want an offline copy of the report, you don't have to save the file to your hard drive. Truth is, you can access your reports from the AdSense Web site for quite a while — about a year, in fact. After that period of time, reports get deleted from the site.

Scheduling Automatic Reports

One real timesaving feature of AdSense reports is the ability to schedule said reports to run automatically, rather than having to manually set up the report and run it on the site each time you need it. To take advantage of automatic scheduling of reports, though, you have to create a report template before you can schedule it to run automatically. (If the whole idea of templates sounds a bit fuzzy to you, check out the “Using Report Templates” section, earlier in the chapter.)

After you create a report template, you should see it as an option in your Report Manager. (If it's not there, then the template wasn't successfully created and you need to go through the creation process outlined earlier again.) Follow these steps to schedule the report to run automatically:

1. **Log on to your AdSense account.**

The Reports page appears.

2. **On the Reports tab, click the Report Manager link.**

3. **On the Reports Manager page, scroll down until you see the Saved Report Templates section.**

The Saved Report Templates section shows you all the reports that you've saved as templates. Next to each report is a Frequency column, a Send To column, and a Format column, as shown in Figure 15-6. (More about these columns in a bit.)

Figure 15-6:

Use the tools provided to schedule reports to run automatically.

Report name	Frequency	Send to: (edit addresses)	Format
<input type="checkbox"/> 10 Month Report	Weekly	jemlynn@gmail.com	CSV-EXCEL

Buttons: Save changes, Delete checked reports

4. Using the Frequency drop-down menu, select how often you want the report to run.

Your choices are Never, Daily, Weekly, and Monthly.

After you select a frequency, the default e-mail address is displayed for your account in the Send To column. That's where the report will be sent unless you change it.

5. To change the default e-mail address, select an address from the Send To drop-down menu.

If the address you want to send the report to isn't listed in the drop-down menu, do the following:

a. Click Edit Addresses.

You're prompted to save your changes before you continue.

b. Save the changes or click OK.

A form opens into which you can type new addresses.

c. Add the new e-mail address.

You can add multiple addresses, too. Enter the addresses one per line.

d. Click Save Addresses.

The new e-mail address(es) appear in the Send To drop-down menu.

6. From the Format drop-down menu, select the format for the report that you want to send.

Your choices here are CSV or CSV-Excel. (CSV Excel is just a report format that's specifically set for Microsoft Excel.)

7. Click Save Changes.

You're done!

Your report is set to run automatically, but here's a disappointing fact: You can't automatically send the report to more than one person. You could set up multiple reports that are the same and send each one to a different person, but it's much easier just to forward the report after you get it to those who need to see it. Maybe Google will add a Multiple Addresses feature in the future, but for now, you're stuck with one address per report.

Using Site Diagnostics

In order to track down all the data needed for ad placement — as well as tracking down all the data that goes into the reports I talk about in this chapter — AdSense needs to be able to crawl your Web site. The crawler — not the same crawler that Google uses to include your site in search results, by the way — visits your site once each week to check for content, design, and usage information. I cover how this works in a lot of detail in Chapters 2–4, so if you need a refresher, you can flip there. I'll wait.

Done? Good. The AdSense crawler visits your site once each week. During that visit, the crawler looks at all the pages on your Web site to ensure that your ads are properly targeted. If the crawler encounters a problem, such as a page that's redirecting unexpectedly (and without the proper redirect information in place), or if the crawler is denied access to the site, it flags that issue in the Site Diagnostic area of your AdSense account.

To get to the Site Diagnostic area, do the following:

- 1. Sign in to your AdSense account.**
- 2. From the Reports tab, choose the Site Diagnostics link.**

When that page opens, a list of problems that were encountered with your site is displayed.

If the crawler didn't encounter any problems, the list is mostly blank, displaying only the You Currently Have No Blocked URLs message in light gray.

If you do have issues — if the crawler can't get to your site for some reason — the reason is displayed in the table provided along with the date of the last crawl attempt on your Web site.



It's possible (though highly unlikely) that when you updated your site, Google was trying to crawl your site at the exact same time. Sometimes, if you're uploading files, the crawler can't access the site at the same time. If that's the case, the date of the last crawl reflects that.

Far more likely, however, is that a flaw in the site design or some other problem is keeping the crawler off your site. If that's the case, the error displayed helps you to figure out what needs to be done to allow the crawler to have access.

In a lot of cases, the problem is simply that you have a `robots.txt` file that denies access to certain portions of your page. (Remember this little bugger? I tell you all about him in Chapter 3.)

Sometimes, you deny a crawler access to a page on your Web site for good reason. For example, if you have several pages that are essentially the same, you might not want a crawler to look at all the pages. The redundancy could cause your search result rankings to drop. Usually, if you've designed your site well and with the Google Webmaster Guidelines in mind, you have no reason to keep the crawler off any pages of your site.

Sometimes, though, the errors that the crawler encounters aren't directly related to that `robots.txt` file. If that's the case, you see the exact error listed on this diagnostics form. You can then repair the error. After you do, however, it might take up to a week for the crawler to hit your site again. You may have to be patient to see the results of your repair.

A good example here is when a crawler can't navigate your site because of broken links. If the crawler can't follow the site navigational links, it will leave your site and come back at another time. If you fix the broken links, the next time the crawler comes through you shouldn't have any problems.

Managing Your Account

No two ways about: Part of your day-to-day site administration involves managing your AdSense account. Now, with any Google application out there, managing the application or program is pretty straightforward. AdSense is no exception.

To manage your account, log in to AdSense and then select the My Account tab. From this tab, you have several options for account maintenance, including: Account Settings, Account Access, Payment History, and Tax Information, as shown in Figure 15-7. I cover each option in greater detail in the next sections.

Google AdSense

- Last login: 16 hours ago - [Log Out](#) - [Help](#)
 Publisher ID: pub []

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

Account Settings | Account Access | Payment History | Tax Information

Login Information [\[edit in Google Accounts\]](#)

Email address: @gmail.com
 Password: *****

Language and Contact Preferences [\[edit\]](#)

Display language: English (US)
 Email preference:

- We'll send you service announcements that relate to your agreement with Google.
- In addition, you have chosen to receive periodic newsletters and occasional surveys to help us improve Google AdSense.

Payee Information [\[edit\]](#)

Contact: Jerri L. Ledford
 UNITED STATES
 Phone:
 Fax:
 Best time to call: any time

Payment Details [\[edit\]](#)

Payment Type: Electronic Funds Transfer
 Currency: US Dollar
 Account Holder Name: Jerri L. Ledford
 Account Nickname:
 Account Number:
 Notifications:

Payment Holding [\[edit\]](#)

Payment holding: Please send my payments monthly.

Ad Type Preference [\[edit\]](#)

AdSense will display: Text and image ads in all ad units.

- You may override your ad preference on a page-by-page basis, by selecting the desired Ad Type option in your Ad layout code page.

Property Information

AdSense for Content: ca-pub
 AdSense for Search: partner-pub
 Referrals: ca-ref-pub
 AdSense for Mobile Content: ca-mb-pub

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

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Figure 15-7:
 Use the My Account tab to manage your account information.

Your account settings

The Account Settings section of the My Account tab lets you add or change e-mail addresses and passwords, update your address and payment information, and/or change your ad type preference.

To change any of the settings here, click the blue Edit link next to the header for that section. When you click this link, a new page opens from which you can change the information that's pertinent to that segment of the Account Settings section. After you make whatever changes you want to make, click Save to update your account settings.



The Account Settings section has a Property Information area. The numbers shown here are your account IDs for each area of AdSense that you choose to use. For example, if you're using AdSense for Search, AdSense for Content, and AdSense Referrals, you have three different IDs shown. In most cases, you don't need to know these IDs. Google keeps up with them for you and includes them in the code that's generated for the ads you display.

However, if you ever do need to know them (say, if you're having trouble with your AdSense account and you call tech support), this is where they're located. Don't share those ID numbers with anyone, though. They're specific to your account, and if you give them out, someone else could gain access to your account.

Granting and denying access

The Account Access area on the My Account tab is where you can see who else has access to your AdSense account. Unless you specifically grant an organization or another person access to the account, you should have no one else listed here.



If you're using Blogger or some other applications (such as FeedBurner) with AdSense, that organization needs to have access. Keep in mind that the company can't see your earning statements or make changes to your account beyond the changes that you authorize while setting up or changing ads. They're still listed as *hosts* in your Account Access area — someone who is hosting your blog, RSS feed, or other aspect of the Web site on which you have ads displayed.

You can disable any and all hosting applications at any time by clicking the blue Disable Access link to the right of the hosting company's name. After you click that link, however, the account no longer has access to the elements of your account needed to allow you to show ads through that service; so the ads that you have active no longer display, or if they do, they display with errors.

Unless you've changed your mind about having ads on your blog or in your RSS feed, you shouldn't adjust the status of these hosts. Allow them to have the access they need to ensure that your ads continue to display properly.



You can't add multiple users to an AdSense account. You can share your username and password with others but you can't physically add an additional user to your account. If you have an account that you want to share with your spouse or partner (or some other member of your staff), he must use your login.



When you allow someone to use your username and password to access your AdSense account, she has all the same privileges that you do, meaning she can change your account in any way she chooses. She can change ad types and placement, she can change reports, and she can even change your password and lock you out of the account.

Use caution if you plan to share your account with someone. Make sure it's someone you trust. Better yet, don't share. I know, you've been told all your life that sharing is good. In this case though, go ahead and share reports and information gleaned from your AdSense account, but keep actual access to the account to yourself, just to be on the safe side.

Reading your payment history

The Payment History section of the My Account tab is where you can see what your current balance is or what payments have been made to you in the past. AdSense doesn't send out payments until you reach \$100, so if you're below that level, the balance carries forward each month until you hit the \$100 level. Payments can then be issued through check or direct deposit.



The View drop-down menu in the Payment History section lets you change the months for which you're viewing your payment history. Your options are Last 3 Months, Last 12 Months, or All Time.

You should've set up your payment method on the Account Settings page when you first opened your AdSense account. If you didn't, AdSense can't pay you, but you can't change those details on this page, either. This page is strictly a reporting page. You have to go to your Account Settings page to make changes to your payment method and information.

Next to each month listed on the Payment History page is a blue Details link. Click this link to go to a page that details how your earnings are categorized (AdSense for Content, AdSense for Search, and so on), what the subtotal is, and how much your monthly earnings are. You can also download this information to a CSV file by clicking the Download CSV File link at the top of the Details report (or next to the View drop-down menu on the previous page, as shown in Figure 15-8).

Farther down the Payment History page, you also see a payment schedule. AdSense payments are sent at the end of each month and are sent either by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), Express Secured Delivery, or Standard Delivery. The Account Settings area is where you make changes to your payment delivery method and account numbers if you're having payments delivered via EFT.

Figure 15-8:
Click the CSV link to download a file detailing your monthly earnings.

Google AdSense

- Last login: 16 hours ago - [Log Out](#) - [Help](#)
Publisher ID: pub

[Search AdSense Help](#)

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

[Account Settings](#) | [Account Access](#) | [Payment History](#) | [Tax Information](#)

Payment History

How payments work
AdSense payments are made on a monthly schedule. If your account balance reaches \$100.00 in any month, we'll send your payment before the end of the following month, provided there are no holds on your account. For example, if your account balance reaches the payment threshold during November, we'll send you a payment at the end of December. [Learn more...](#)

Helpful Links

- [When will I get paid?](#)
- [Payments Guide](#)
- [What's the difference between earnings and payments?](#)
- [Introduction to Payments demo \(Flash\)](#)
- [Payment schedule demo \(Flash\)](#)

Earnings and Payments Summary

View: [Last 3 months](#) - [CSV](#)

Month	Date	Description	Earnings/credits [?]	Payments/debits [?]	Monthly balance
Earnings carried over from previous months					

The CSV link

Giving Uncle Sam his due

I don't know about you, but I hate paying taxes. I could get on a major soapbox about the whole tax system, but this isn't the forum for it. Unfortunately, AdSense income, like every other type of income, is taxable. That means Google has to have tax-withholding information for you, so before you can be paid, you have to fill out an IRS Form W-9.

The first time that you log in to the Tax Information section of the My Account tab, you're prompted to fill out a Form W-9. After you fill it out and submit it, you need to worry about it only if there are major changes in your life (such as a name change caused by getting married or a change in withholding status).

I'm no accountant, so I can't tell you exactly how you should fill out this form, but I can tell you that any time you need to update it, log in to your account, go to the Tax Information page, click the blue Change Your Tax Information link, and you're taken to the Tax Information Wizard.

The wizard asks questions about your citizenship, your filing status, and your personal information. It's really a simple process and not nearly as confusing as filling out a Form W-9 for your employer.

Walk through the wizard, answer the questions, and then click Finished. Your information is updated automatically, and you'll stay on Uncle Sam's good side, at least where AdSense is concerned. Easy-peasy-lemon-squeezy.

Chapter 16

AdSense Revenues

In This Chapter

- ▶ Setting up payments
 - ▶ Making changes to your payment account
 - ▶ Adding Web sites to your AdSense account
 - ▶ Understanding revenue sharing
-

AdSense is all about the money, right? As far as I know, that's the only reason to lease advertising space on your Web site or blog. Because that's the case, it'd be nice if you could get paid.

Assuming you're generating enough income from your AdSense ads, payments should be sent to you on a monthly basis — after you've set up your account to receive payments, that is.

Setting Up AdSense Payments

Setting up your AdSense payments is easier now than it used to be. In the bad old days, you couldn't effectively set up your AdSense payments until you reached \$50 or \$100 in revenues. Now, you can set up your payment account and payment type almost immediately after you create your AdSense account.

Everything you need to do is found on the My Account tab in your AdSense account. The first thing you need to do is set up your payment account, so follow these steps:

- 1. Point your browser to the AdSense Web site at www.adsense.com.**
- 2. Sign in to your AdSense account and then click the My Account tab.**

The tab should open to Account Settings, but if it doesn't, select Account Settings from the links below the tab.

3. In the third section of the Account Settings page — the Payee Information section — as shown in Figure 16-1, click the Edit link next to the Payee Information title.

You're taken to a page where you can change or update account information, such as your name and address. (See Figure 16-2.)

Figure 16-1:
Payment details are set using the Account Settings page.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense Account Settings page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with tabs for Reports, AdSense Setup, My Account, and Resources. Below this, there are links for Account Settings, Account Access, Payment History, and Tax Information. The main content area is divided into sections: Login Information, Language and Contact Preferences, and Payee Information. The Payee Information section is highlighted, showing fields for Contact (Jeri L Ledford), Phone, Fax, and Best time to call (any time).

Figure 16-2:
If necessary, edit the address and phone number for your payee information.

The screenshot shows the Google AdSense Payee Information page. At the top, there's a navigation bar with tabs for Reports, AdSense Setup, My Account, and Resources. Below this, there are links for Account Settings, Account Access, Payment History, and Tax Information. The main content area is titled "Payee Information" and contains a note: "Please note that changes to your form of payment must be made by the 15th of the month to affect the current month's payment cycle." Below the note, there are fields for Payee name (Jeri L Ledford), Street Address, City/Town, State (Alabama), ZIP, and Phone. There are also fields for Fax and Best time to call (anytime). At the bottom, there are "Save changes" and "Cancel" buttons.

4. Enter your information or make changes to the existing information.

You're asked to provide your name, address, phone, and fax information. You can also choose the best time for someone from AdSense to call you. AdSense employees don't usually call, but this information is requested in case a situation develops where the company needs to contact you fast.

5. When you're finished entering your contact information, click the **Save Changes** button.

After you set up your payment account, you still have to verify the account. For that, you need a PIN (personal identification number) from AdSense, which isn't sent out to you until you have at least \$10 in AdSense revenue. (AdSense used to send the PIN out when an account reached \$50, but the process struck AdSense users as a tad slow — hmm . . . maybe AdSense wanted to keep the money for as long as possible? — so the company reduced the amount to \$10.) When you reach the \$100 level, use the PIN to authorize a payment to you.

I hear the grumbles already. You have to wait until you make \$100 to get paid? Yep. The cost of processing payments is pretty high, and in an effort to make it less costly, AdSense doesn't process smaller payments. Think of it this way: If they were sending out checks to everyone who made under \$100 each month, the cost of issuing those checks would explode exponentially. To cover the cost, AdSense would have to cut the percentage that you receive for showing their ads, which means you'd make less money.



Rather than being aggravated because you aren't getting paid immediately, work to optimize your site and your AdSense income so that you're generating enough revenue to actually get paid as quickly as possible. If you're not sure what you need to do to optimize your Web site to gain the most traffic, flip to Chapter 4. I provide a thorough explanation of optimization there.

Selecting how you get paid

Setting up your account for payment is only half of what needs to be done. You also have to choose *how* you want to get paid. With AdSense, you have three choices:

- ✓ **Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT):** Your AdSense payments can be directly deposited into your (U.S.) bank account — after you're set up to receive electronic payments, of course.

- ✓ **Check-Standard Delivery:** Standard delivery checks go out around the 15th of the month and could take two to three weeks to arrive in your mailbox.
- ✓ **Check-Secured Express Delivery:** Checks sent Secured Express Delivery go out about the 15th of the month, but they're guaranteed to arrive at your doorstep within a week. The rub? It costs you \$30 for the privilege.

No matter which form of payment you receive, you still have to make \$100 in revenues before the payment's sent to you. If you select EFT, however, you can set that up before you reach the \$100 cut-off point.

If you're an International user, you may have two options for payment. AdSense will send checks to all supported countries — if you're not in the U.S. and you can use AdSense, then you're in a supported country — or in some countries you can receive an EFT payment. The countries in which EFT is available are

Australia	Mexico
Austria	The Netherlands
Belgium	New Zealand
Canada	Norway
Czech Republic	Poland
Denmark	Portugal
Finland	Slovakia
France	Spain
Germany	Sweden
Ireland	Switzerland
Israel	Turkey
Italy	United States
Japan	United Kingdom

In all of the countries, payment is available in that country's national currency.

Setting up the EFT account is pretty simple. Follow these steps:

- 1. Point your browser to the AdSense Web site at www.adsense.com.**
- 2. Log in to your AdSense account and go to the My Account tab.**

If you're not automatically taken to the Account Settings page, select that link below the My Account tab.

3. Scroll down to the Payment Details section of the page and click the Edit link.

4. In the new page that appears, choose the Add a New Bank radio button and click Continue.

You are taken to the Bank Account Information page, as shown in Figure 16-3.

5. In the Bank Account Information page, enter your bank account information and then click Continue.

Your account information is checked automatically to ensure that it's accurate. If everything is correct, you receive a confirmation message.

6. Wait.

You have to wait a few days — four to ten days to be exact — for AdSense to make a small deposit — the amount varies, but it could be anything up to about \$1 — into your account.

7. After you receive your initial deposit, log back in to your account and return to the Payment Details section of the Account Settings page.

8. Enter the deposit amount in the Deposit Amount field and then click the Confirm button.

That last click does it; you're set up for direct deposits.

Figure 16-3:
To add a new payment account, supply the requested information on the Bank Account Information page.

Google AdSense

- Last login: 1 days ago - [Log Out](#) - [Help](#)
 Publisher ID: pub-
 [Search AdSense Help](#)

Reports | AdSense Setup | My Account | Resources

Account Settings | Account Access | Payment History | Tax Information

Bank Account Information

- 1. Enter your information**
Enter your bank account information below.
- 2. Test deposit made**
Google will fund your bank account with a small test deposit.
- 3. Check your account**
Check your bank account within the next 4 to 10 days for a small deposit from Google.
- 4. Verify the deposit**
Return to your [Account Settings](#) to verify your account by entering the deposit amount.

Enter your bank account information for electronic funds transfer in the fields below. Your account information may be available from your bank card or statements, or by contacting your bank.

Account Holder Name: Jeri L Ledford

Account Nickname:

Routing Number:

Account Number:

Account Type:

Important:
 • Do not enter dashes (-).
 • Account Nickname is a description of this account that will help you identify/remember it.

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

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If you prefer to have your payments made the old-fashioned way — by check — all you have to do is log on to the Payment Details section of the Account Settings page and select one of the check options. If you happen to live outside the U.S., you don't have any choice but to receive your payment by check.

Hold, please . . .

My life is nuts. I've moved every couple years for most of my life, and even as an adult, I still find myself moving more often than anyone I know. We're not talking little moves, either. If I'm moving, it's across state lines.

Moving across state lines means things have to change — addresses, telephone numbers, and even bank accounts. When it's time for me to make these kinds of moves, I have to put direct payments on hold. My agency is accustomed to it, but sometimes I have to juggle other payments (or bills). AdSense isn't one of those companies that I have to worry about.

AdSense gives you the ability to place your payments on hold indefinitely. "Indefinitely" could mean a lot of different things to you, but during that time you don't have to worry about your payments bouncing around cyberspace while you're getting your banking details under control (or while you're on vacation or whatever).

To put your payments on hold, do the following:

- 1. Log in to your Account Settings page.**
- 2. Click the Edit link next to the Payment Holding section of the page.**
- 3. On the new page that appears, select the Hold Payment check box.**
- 4. Click the Save Changes button.**

Now your payments are on hold until you return to the page and deselect the Hold Payment check box.

Your money doesn't disappear into no-man's land, either. While on hold, payments simply accrue. Then, when you reactivate payments, you're paid the full amount during the next regular billing cycle.

The exception to how these holds and payments work (there's always an exception, isn't there?) is around the 15th of the month. If you make changes to your payment status, payment account, or payment type around the 15th of the month, everything gets a little squirrely.

According to the AdSense Web site, holds placed or released *around* the 15th of the month may or may not process that month. The best thing you can do is try to make adjustments to your payment details around the beginning or end of the month. If you have to make adjustments after about the 10th or before the 20th, watch your account to make sure the changes take effect.

Changing your payment account

Changing your EFT payment account, unlike changing your underwear, isn't something that you'll do every day. However, you will have situations (like getting a new account or getting married) when you'll need to change the account that your deposits are made to. Changing the account is easy:

- 1. Log in to your AdSense account and go to the My Account tab to be taken to the Account Settings page.**
- 2. Scroll down to Payment Details.**
- 3. Click the Edit link, enter the details for your new account, and then click the Save Changes button.**

You're good to go.

You have to go through the same verification process — waiting for a deposit from AdSense and then entering the deposit amount on the verification page — but then your account will be active, and you can delete the old account. Just like setting up your first account, though, the process can take four to ten days.

To delete an account:

- 1. Log in to your AdSense account and click the My Account tab to be taken to the Account Settings page.**
- 2. On the Account Setting page, scroll down to Payment Details and click the Edit link.**

This will take you to the Choose Form of Payment page.

- 3. Select the radio button next to the account that you want to delete and click the Continue button.**

Doing so takes you to the Account Editing page.

- 4. On the Account Editing page, click the Delete this account button.**

You may be prompted to confirm your desire to delete the account. Then the page reloads and you see a confirmation message.

That's all there is to it. Just remember that if you delete an account that you don't really want to delete, you have to go through the confirmation process all over again.

Adding Sites to Your AdSense Account

As uptight as Google can be about the sites that display AdSense ads, you'll find this next little bit hard to believe — I did.

Many people (myself included) have more than one Web site or blog. Because AdSense only allows you to have one account, if you want ads on all your sites, you need to have multiple sites listed on your AdSense account, right? Wrong. You only need to have the one site that you listed when you first created your AdSense account.

Then, all you have to do is create your ads and copy and paste the code onto whatever Web site you choose. Really. Of course, that makes it a little confusing if you want to track your earnings by site, but AdSense even has an answer to that conundrum.

Use channels. (If you read Chapter 15, you might remember the details I gave you about channels.) Well, this is where channels are really the most useful. When you have multiple Web sites that you want to place AdSense ads on — but you want to be able to track them all separately — use different channels for each site.

Creating channels is easy:

- 1. Log in to your AdSense account and go to the AdSense Setup tab.**
- 2. Select Channels and then select the type of ad that you want to create a channel for (AdSense for Content, Search, Referrals, and so on).**
- 3. Click the Add New Custom Channels link, type the desired name for your channel, and click Add Channel.**

See? I told you it's easy.

After you have channels set up and you create an ad, choose the channel that you want to use to track it, and then that linkage is built into the code. When you're ready to track your ads, you can view reports by channel.



Don't feel compelled to add multiple Web sites to your AdSense account to keep your revenues separate. All you have to do is create channels that let you track which site generates which revenue. To make it a little easier, you can also track everything together so you have a consolidated view of how much you're making.

Sharing AdSense Revenues

People who publish AdSense ads on their Web sites are always working to find new ways to increase their earnings from AdSense ads. Usually, that means creating new Web sites and blogs and then populating them with content. That's followed by upkeep on those sites, and over time it becomes a full-time j-o-b.

Not everyone has time to keep up with all that, so some people who publish AdSense ads on their Web sites have come up with an innovative way to show AdSense ads without investing so much time and effort. This innovative way is AdSense Revenue Sharing, and it's just this side of legal, according to the AdSense Program Policy.

AdSense Revenue Sharing is usually accomplished by setting up a forum in which different people from around the world can contribute. *Forums* are the message board systems you find all over the Web, and they tend to rank pretty well in Google search results because they're usually very narrowly focused, and they change their content often, which is why so many sites now have them.

The forum owners set up the forums so that users who also publish AdSense ads can enter their AdSense account number to show their AdSense ads — based on the number of times that the person wanting to publish their AdSense ads starts and responds to threads within the forum.

For example, if you were to sign up to participate in the forum on Flixya.com — a video-, photo-, and blog-sharing service — you could include your AdSense Publisher ID during the sign-up process. Then, each time you post on the site, AdSense ads could potentially be shown in association with your post. The percentage of times your ads are shown is usually determined by the forum owner and is dependent upon how you post — meaning how relevant your posts are to the topic that you're posting in — how often you post, and what your status is — or how much you contribute to the community.

When your ads are shown on these sites, and other site visitors click through them, you receive either a percentage of the earnings or all the earnings, depending on how the site is set up. Flixya.com actually allows AdSense publishers to keep all their AdSense revenues.

Of course, if you're using this method to show your AdSense ads, you're also showing them against the site owner's ads. The site owner will most certainly run her own ads the majority of the time. If you're looking for a way to boost your income though, this might help — a little.

Your earnings from these types of AdSense Revenue Sharing schemes aren't high. The earnings might be enough to buy you a sandwich from the Dollar Menu now and again, but you certainly won't get rich with ad-sharing programs. For starters, posting often enough to keep your ads in front of visitors is a full-time job. Second, you're not the only person showing ads at any given time, so the competition for visitors' clicks is pretty high.

The thin, red line

Another small problem with the AdSense Revenue Sharing scheme is the whole concept of *you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours* that comes along with it. What I mean is that, in most of these forums, it's implied that if you click my ads, I'll click yours. That's skating very close to the thin ice warnings that Google puts out about enticing others to click your ads.

Google expressly forbids in their program policies asking other people to click your ads or anything on your site that could be construed as trying to coerce others to click your ads. Placing your ads in these forums could be construed as that kind of activity.

Google doesn't have any policy about your ads not appearing on other people's Web sites, though. As long as nothing's implicit on the site that instructs users to click ads, you're safe.

Participating in revenue sharing

You can participate in revenue sharing in two ways. You can sign up with a site that already offers a revenue sharing program and then provide your AdSense Publisher ID and start posting to forums, or you can create your own site and revenue sharing program that other people sign up for.

Option A is a cinch. All you have to do is sign up. Option B, however, is another matter, which is why I spend a bit more time discussing it. Option B requires that you first create the Web site and then add forums to that site. If you're a Web site designer, it might not be as difficult for you as it'd be for me because I'm no Web designer. I can do just enough to get me by.

If you're like me, you're best served by hiring someone to create the forums for your site. In the process of designing them, you need to put into place an AdSense serving application that rotates through the Web sites of people who publish AdSense ads according to how they post on your site.

If you're creating this type of site, I suggest saving your AdSense ads for the main body of your site. Include them in your site content but keep them off the forum, which is where your posters' ads are running.

After you have the forum up and running, get word out. Plenty of other people who publish AdSense ads are all too happy to post in your forum for the chance to have their ads shown. Just make sure you have your program policies, outlining how and when ads are shown, posted clearly for publishers to find. If you're not sure what to include, check out some of the other AdSense Revenue Sharing programs on the Web. A quick Google search turns up hundreds of them.

Just remember that the point of having forums isn't necessarily just to publish your AdSense ads or to allow others to publish theirs. It's to provide a place where your site visitors can go to find the answers they seek on a specific topic. Set up your forums with that goal in mind, and you'll be able to create a whole new way to generate income.

In general, though, what should be included in your program policies are guidelines on how often forum posters need to post, where and how they should post, and how long they must be a member or how many posts they must have before their ads start showing. Spell out these policies very clearly. For example, some forum owners require that forum posters who want to have their AdSense ads shown should have been a member of the forum for three months or have at least 50 high-quality posts — posts that were on-topic and that provided useful information to a majority of the users for that message board — before their ads are shown. These owners also divide (by percentage) how much of a chance posters have of their ads showing if they start a thread, end a thread, or are topic administrators.

In general, the AdSense Revenue Sharing plan could be a good idea for driving traffic to your site, but I don't see it as being a good way to generate a lot of AdSense revenue. I really think it's a waste of time for you to spend that much time either building a forum and drawing publishers to it or participating on message boards where your ads may or may not be shown.

Personally, I spend more of my time generating great content for my own sites, building a community of users who know they can find what they need on my site, and tweaking my AdSense ads on my own site. That's my personal preference, but if you prefer to participate in an AdSense Revenue Sharing program, I wish you luck. I hope that it turns out to be lucrative for you.

Part V

The Part of Tens

The 5th Wave

By Rich Tennant



“We have no problem funding your Web site, Frank. Of all the chicken farmers operating Web sites, yours has the most impressive cluck-through rates.”

In this part . . .

This part is everyone's favorite part of a *For Dummies* book. The Part of Tens includes lists that give you short, easy-to-digest bits of information that you can take in quickly when you don't have a lot of time to devote to reading.

This part gives you a list of ten (plus two) tools you can use to improve your AdSense ads and increase your AdSense revenue. To help you avoid making mistakes and to ensure you're generating the most revenue possible, I also added a list of AdSense things you should definitely *not* do. Lastly, I give you a list of suggestions to improve Web site traffic, which translates into dollars in your bank account. Enjoy!

Chapter 17

Ten (Plus Two) Must-Have Tools for AdSense

In This Chapter

- ▶ Discovering what keywords earn the most money
 - ▶ Keeping up with your AdSense earnings
 - ▶ Finding AdSense help when you need it
-

Even though AdSense can be a pretty complicated application, you can probably find your way through it all on your own, given enough time. Why would you want to though? You have dozens of great tools available to you that can help shortcut the learning process and jumpstart the earning process.

What follows are just a few of the tools that I find useful. Many others exist, so if something here doesn't meet your needs, use your favorite search engine to scour the Web for more. You'll probably have no problem finding what you're looking for.

AdSense Sandbox

www.labnol.org/google-adsense-sandbox

The AdSense Sandbox is a great preview tool. If you want to see what types of Google AdSense ads will appear on a page — based on the type of content on that page — this tool does a pretty good job of showing you, even if it's not 100 percent accurate.

To get AdSense Sandbox to work for you, go to their Web site and enter the URL of the page you want to see ads for. Alternatively, you could just enter specific keywords that you have in mind.

The result is a list of up to 20 AdSense ads that relate to that URL or keyword.

AdSense Preview Tool

```
www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/answer.  
py?answer=10005&topic=160
```

AdSense Sandbox (see the preceding section) is third-party software, unaffiliated with Google AdSense. The AdSense preview tool, however, is an official Google application that, like AdSense Sandbox, allows you to see what types of ads might appear on new Web pages that you've created. You can then use this information to decide whether you want to add AdSense to that page.

With the AdSense preview tool, you can also check the destination of ads that are on any of your Web pages, view how the formats and colors of ads will appear on your page, and see what ads users in other countries will see.

The preview tool requires that you install a registry file on your computer. To do so, follow these steps:

- 1. Go to the Web page listed at the beginning of this section and find the AdSense Preview Tool link.**
- 2. Right-click the link and choose Save Target As from the menu that appears.**
- 3. Save the registry file to a location where you can find it on your hard drive.**

I suggest saving it to your My Document file or to your Desktop.

- 4. Double-click the file after the download completes.**

A confirmation window appears.

- 5. Select Yes in the confirmation window to update the registry.**

The registry file is a self-installing file, so you don't have to search for the correct place in the registry to place the file.

- 6. After the installation is complete, restart your Internet Explorer window so the installation can take effect.**

That's all there is to installing the preview tool. After the tool's installed, you can use it by right-clicking in any Web page. From the menu that appears, choose Google AdSense Preview Tool to launch the preview tool. When it's launched, you can see the ads in the new window and even click your own ads without fear of inciting Google's ire. As long as you're in the Preview window, clicks don't count.

Note, however, that should you ever decide to uninstall the preview tool, the best way to do it is with the AdSense Preview Tool Uninstaller, available through the AdSense Help Center (www.google.com/adsense/support). Also note that the AdSense preview tool only works with Microsoft Windows Internet Explorer 6.0 and higher.

AdSense Calculator

www.seoachat.com/seo-tools/adsense-calculator

If you've ever wondered how statistics, such as daily page impressions, click-through-rates (CTR), or cost-per-clicks (CPC), affect the amount of your AdSense earnings, here's a tool that helps you figure it all out.

To use the AdSense Calculator, enter any or all of the values and then click Calculate. For example, I entered the following values:

Daily page impressions: 1000

Click-through-rate: 1.5%

Cost-per-click: \$.06

These are numbers that I mostly pulled from the air for an example. The exception is the 1.5 percent click-through-rate. Experts estimate that 1.5 percent is the average CTR for AdSense ads.

My results are

Daily earnings: \$.90

Monthly earnings: \$27.00

Yearly earnings: \$328.50

Daily clicks: 15

Monthly clicks: 450

Yearly clicks: 5,475

In other words, if I have an average of 1,000 daily impressions and an average cost-per-click of \$.06, I would see the results in this list as the average amount of clicks and earnings that I could receive in the given amount of time. Figuring this out isn't an exact science, but it gives you a pretty good idea of what you could earn on your Web site if certain conditions are met.

AdSense Notifier

<https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/500>

The AdSense Notifier is for those who use the Firefox browser instead of Internet Explorer. The *Notifier* is an add-on that shows your AdSense stats on the status bar of your browser and updates those stats automatically.

To install the Notifier, go to the Web address in the beginning of this section and click Install Now. A software installation dialog box pops up. Allow the dialog box to load completely and then click Install Now. The installation takes a few seconds and then you're prompted to restart your Firefox browser. Select Restart Now, and the browser closes and then re-opens. You're logged in automatically, and your stats display in the bottom-right corner of the browser.

AdSense Heat Maps

www.google.com/adsense/support/bin/answer.py?answer=17954&topic=8970

Heat maps, like the one shown in Figure 17-1, are maps that show the best placement for your ads on a given Web site. The link here leads to Google's suggested best placement. However, it only takes certain factors into consideration. For example, this site has no consideration for scrolling Web pages.

Another resource for heat maps that might be more useful is

www.vaughns-1-pagers.com/internet/google-heatmap-2.htm

These heat maps show some of the different variations that you might need to take into consideration due to the unique nature of your Web pages — variations like scrolling pages and different navigational structures. Just remember, this isn't an exact science. Test everything before you make any final decisions about what works best on your particular site for your particular audience.

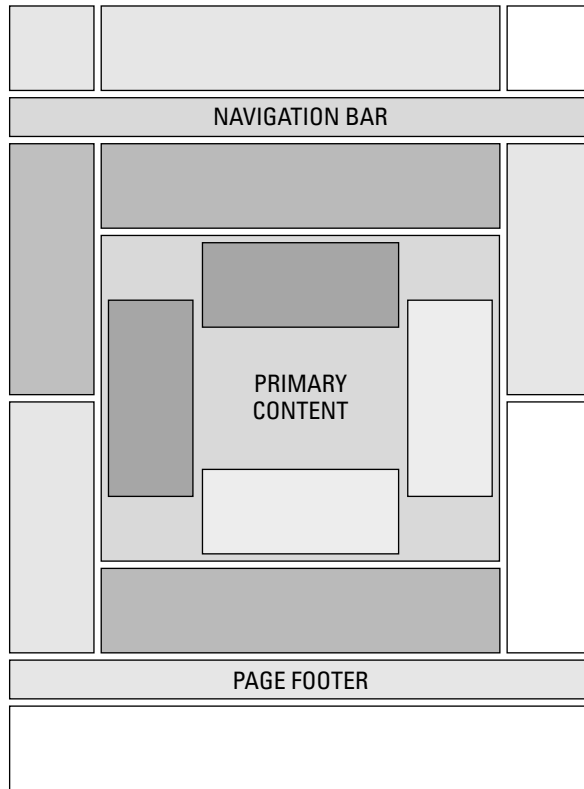


Figure 17-1:
This heat map shows the suggested ad placement from AdSense.

AdSense Accelerator

www.adsenseaccelerator.com

This is the first tool featured here that's not free. At \$47 a month, this may be more than you're ready to invest in if you're just getting started in AdSense. However, if you're looking for ways to build a Web site based on high-paying keywords, you may want to make the investment.

The AdSense Accelerator shows the bids for the top-ten placement ads on Google. You can then use this information to ensure that you're targeting the right keywords — which aren't necessarily the top ten. Keep this in mind: Just because a keyword is in the top ten doesn't mean that it's the right keyword for you to target.

Basing your Web pages on the highest-paying keywords is a constant frustration because those keywords change daily. However, you can use the AdSense Accelerator to figure out which keywords consistently pay out at higher rates.

No contract's involved, so I suggest trying it out for at least a month to discover more about what you could do to improve keyword targeting for the ads that you want to display on your Web pages.

AdWords Traffic Estimator and Bid Tool

<https://adwords.google.com/select/trafficEstimatorSandbox>

Remember AdWords? That's the advertising side of AdSense. AdWords is the program that advertisers use to place the ads that you show on your Web site using the AdSense program. The AdWords Traffic Estimator and Bid Tool is actually an AdWords tool, but because AdSense *is* the other side of AdWords, you may find it useful to help determine which high-paying keywords you should be targeting with your Web site.

It works simply enough. Enter a few bits of information into the form provided — information like keywords, bid amount, and targeting location — and then the program generates a report that shows you how much traffic can be expected for an ad based around the keywords you provided. Here's how to use it:

- 1. Log in to the Web site listed at the beginning of this section.**
- 2. Enter a list of keywords that you want to target in the text box provided, as shown in Figure 17-2.**
- 3. Enter a maximum cost-per-click in the Choose a Currency section.**

You may have to use your imagination here, but don't choose a cost-per-click that's too low or too high. Instead, think in terms of an average cost. There are no averages for what users can expect to pay for the use of a keyword, but my suggestion is to use a figure that's no less than \$1 per click and no more than \$10 per click. You want to keep your options as wide open as possible, but you can also experiment with the numbers to see what you find.

- 4. (Optional) Enter a daily budget.**

I don't usually bother with this. I leave this blank so that I'm not limited by the hypothetical budget because a daily budget is really only relevant if you're planning to use the AdWords service where you pay to have your ads placed on Web sites.

Figure 17-2:
Use the
AdWords
Traffic
Estimator
and Bid Tool
to discover
the poten-
tial of the
keywords
you're
targeting.

Google AdWords
It's All About Results™ Help | Contact Us

Traffic Estimator
Get quick traffic estimates for new keywords without adding them to an account or using the AdWords sign-up wizard.

1. Enter keywords, one per line.

keyword = broad match
"keyword" = match exact phrase
[keyword] = match exact term only
-keyword = don't match this term

Set optional individual CPCs using this format:
keyword ** 0.23

2. Choose a currency. Enter a specific Max CPC for your estimates, or leave the field blank and we'll provide estimates based on our suggested Max CPC.*
US Dollars (USD \$)

*Suggested value should deliver ads in the top position 95% of the time.

3. Choose daily budget (optional). See estimates for the amount you want to spend each day, or leave field blank to see all available clicks.

4. Select targeting.

a. Language
English
Chinese (simplified)
Chinese (traditional)
Danish
Dutch
Finnish
French

b. Location Targeting
 Countries and territories - choose countries
 Regions and cities - choose states and regions and/or enter cities
 Customized - enter a radius and address or coordinates

c. Countries
Available Countries and Territories
All Countries and Territories
Australia
Austria
Belgium
Brazil
Canada

Selected Countries and/or Territories

Continue >

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5. Select your regional targeting — language, location, and countries — and then click Continue.

A new page appears, displaying stats for the keywords that you selected. You'll see Average CPC, Estimated Clicks Per Day, and Estimated Cost Per Day.

Use the statistics that are returned to get a feel for which keywords you have under consideration that will pay the highest in terms of CPC and cost-per-impression. Again, it's not an exact science, but getting a feel for what advertisers are paying helps you better understand what you can expect (very roughly) as far as earnings are concerned.

Keyword Tools

<https://adwords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal>

The AdWords Keyword Tool is designed to help you generate new keywords, based on the words or phrases that you enter into the keyword generator. This is another of those tools that, although it was built specifically with AdWords in mind, might also prove useful for AdSense types as well.

One particularly useful feature of the Keyword Tool is that it lets you enter the URL of a specific Web site to see what keywords are generated, according to the content of the site. With it, you can enter the URL of the page you're optimizing for AdSense ads to see what keywords are being recognized on that page.

The Keyword Tool is a great way to make sure that your page is being recognized for the keyword ads you're targeting. As an added bonus, it has a neat little progress meter at the bottom that processes while it's examining the page that you entered. I know . . . small things for small minds, which mine definitely is at times!

The results that are returned when the page is finished processing are pretty comprehensive. You'll probably see the keywords you're targeting as well as some that you hadn't thought of. All in all, a very useful tool.

Keyword-Ranking Tools

<http://freekeywords.wordtracker.com>

If you're looking for something to complement the Google AdWords Keyword Tool, try the keyword-ranking tool from WordTracker. This keyword-ranking tool works much like the Google tool with a few minor differences.

The most noticeable difference between the WordTracker version and the AdWords Keyword Tool are that WordTracker only lets you generate keywords by plugging in a word or phrase — it doesn't allow you to generate keywords based on a Web site URL, in other words. WordTracker does, however, show you the estimated daily search volume for the keywords shown.

Oh, WordTracker also doesn't offer a cool progress meter. WordTracker makes up for this, though, by knowing how many times each day a certain keyword is searched for because the number of daily searches is a clear indicator of what's popular. If your site's based on a set of keywords that ranks low in the results, a simple change of keywords might bring more success for your AdSense ads.

Sitemaps

```
https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools/docs/en/sitemapgenerator.html
```

The Google *sitemap generator* is an application that examines your Web site and creates a sitemap based on the structure of the site. “But why do I need a sitemap?” you ask.

Simple. A sitemap is the easiest way to get Google to crawl all the nooks and crannies of your site. The problem is that the sitemap generator is a little difficult to use.

First, you have to download the sitemap generator from the Web site listed at the top of this section, and then you have to create a configuration file for the sitemap. After that, you need to upload specific files to your Web site, run the sitemap generator program, add the sitemap to your Google Webmaster account, and set the process up to be repeated.

Those steps are a tough process to get through. If you’re really relying on Google when it comes to your search engine ranking, though, this sitemap generator is worth the time and effort.

If you’re okay with using a different sitemap generator, however, you might find the XML Sitemap Generator (www.xml-sitemaps.com) a little easier to use.

All you have to do with the XML Sitemap Generator is enter the URL, wait for the program to process, and then download the resulting file to your computer. After that’s done, log in to your Google Webmaster account, add the sitemap URL, and you’re good to go.

The sitemap is a tool — not a requirement. If you have a large site, you may find that your AdSense results for deep pages are much better if you have a sitemap in place to lead search engines to the pages.

AdSense Blog

```
http://adsense.blogspot.com
```

If you want to stay on top of what’s happening with AdSense, the AdSense blog is the place to do it. This blog is updated a couple times a week (sometimes more) with tips about using AdSense smarter or with news about AdSense that might affect you.

Several people from the AdSense team work on the blog, so the voices are as varied as the information that you get.

Add it to your RSS — this usually requires adding the blog URL to your RSS reader, but the steps vary depending on the reader that you're using — because it's always nice to know what's going on in AdSense Land.

AdSense Help Group

<http://groups.google.com/group/adsense-help>

The AdSense Help files add up to a pretty comprehensive document. Like other aspects of Google Help, the Help files can be a little circular at times, and it's certain that it won't answer all your questions. When you need an answer that you can't find, the AdSense Help Group — through Google Groups — is a useful list to be involved in.

Post your questions to the list, and other listers — or sometimes the moderators themselves — provide answers if they're out there to be had. Don't be discouraged if it takes a little time to get an answer, though. Everyone on the list seems a little busy, so answers can occasionally take days or even weeks to come by. Most of the time, though, you'll have your answer in a much shorter time.

Chapter 18

Ten AdSense Don'ts

In This Chapter

- ▶ Creating Web sites for people — not for ads
 - ▶ Avoiding less-than-ethical practices
 - ▶ Distinguishing best practices from deceptive actions
-

The list of activities that you can use to improve your AdSense revenues is long and involved, but so is the list of strategies that you should avoid. In that list, however, some stand out far more than others.

What follows is a list of the top-ten practices that you should avoid when creating your Web site and implementing your AdSense ads. Somewhere along the line someone likely told you that you should try one of the practices listed here.

Don't do it. The results might be nice for a while. You could temporarily bump up your AdSense revenues. However, over time, the risks become much higher, and ultimately, you'll probably end up getting caught by Google, which results in losing the privilege to show AdSense ads — and the right to earn AdSense revenues.

Ultimately, it's just not worth the risk.

Don't Build Your Web Site for AdSense

If I've said it once, I've said it a dozen times in this book: Don't build your Web site for AdSense. AdSense is about getting advertisements in front of *users*. Google has to get those ads out there because the advertisers that are using AdWords — the advertising arm of Google, where advertisers can place their ads to be shown on Web sites like yours — are paying the company to do so. If you build your Web site exclusively for AdSense, the only thing that sees the ads is the crawler that periodically takes stock of your pages.

Build your site for actual, real, live visitors instead. You know, those people sitting on the other side of the computer screen? They play with the keyboard and mouse, and they're looking for something that they hope to find on your Web site. They're *visitors*, and they're your site's target. The more specific the type of visitor, the better.

When you build your site for visitors, you have to put serious thought into how the visitor will use the site. Think about what draws him to your site first. If he's searching for information or products, what keywords will he use to search? If he's randomly typing in a Web address, what address will he use? (Don't laugh. It happens. I usually try the direct URL method of searching before I go to a search engine.)

After you get the user to your site, the next consideration is what he'll do while he's there. This is where your AdSense considerations come into play, because when the user's on the site, you want AdSense to be a natural part of the site for him. Only when you build a site this way — for the visitor first and foremost — will you find that you have success with AdSense.



When you build the site exclusively for AdSense, you're also in the position of being banned from the AdSense program. Google wants visitors to click ads. Your job, as someone who publishes AdSense ads, is to ensure that AdSense ads are displayed to as many potential clicks — that would be *visitors* — as possible. That means putting visitors first, always.

Don't Cut Corners

This rule is sort of a fall-back to *don't build your site for AdSense*. When you cut corners on your site, you take out all the elements that make people want to visit the site. For example, cutting a corner would be using the same tired articles that many other Web site owners are also using. Don't do it. Users quickly figure out that your site doesn't contain quality content, and they'll move on to the next site.

Instead, take your time to create the best possible Web site to meet the need your site was designed to meet. If you're peddling information about kangaroo farms, be the most comprehensive site on the Web about the topic. If you're selling pogo sticks, not only should you include a variety of different models, but you should also include information that's of value to your customers, including how to care for the pogo stick, what types of tournaments there might be, what associations there are, and what kind of creative activities involve pogo sticks.

Give your visitors everything they're looking for. This creates return visitors and great word-of-mouth traffic (or *buzz*), which work together to increase the amount of exposure for your AdSense ads. The more times people look at those ads, the more likely they are to click them and increase your revenue stream.

Don't Hide Your Ads

I know it sounds crazy, but some people do hide their ads. What they do is hide the text of the ad, leaving only the URL visible in an attempt to make visitors think that the URL is part of a list of links or a *blog roll* — the list of links to other blogs that you (as a blog owner) recommend. Do I need to tell you that Google frowns on this practice?

You might think hiding the nature of your links sounds like a great idea, especially in the context of blending your ads into your Web pages as much as possible, but it's not. Don't be fooled if someone tells you she's done this and it worked well for her.

If you try it and Google catches any indications that you're doing something deceptive like this, you'll be banned from the AdSense program. What's more, you could also be excluded from search results generated by the Google search engine.

If you intend to show AdSense ads on your Web site, let them be seen. You can blend them with the other text on the page or even make the backgrounds the same color as your page background. Don't hide the text leaving only the link visible. It might garner you a few clicks in the beginning, but the end results could be disastrous.

Don't Click Your Own Ads

Of all the no-nos you hear about AdSense, this is the most important one. *Don't click your own ads.* Clicking your own ads might seem like just the thing to do. After all, you don't want ads on your site that you don't know where they lead, and it wouldn't hurt to bump your income just a touch.

Hold it just a minute! That's completely the wrong way to think about it. If everyone could just click their own ads and run up their profits, life would indeed be grand, but clicking your own ads is a form of click fraud. *Click fraud* is when you fraudulently drive up the number of ad clicks from people (yourself included) who aren't actually interested in whatever the ad promises.

See, AdSense only works if AdWords works, and AdWords only works if people are truly interested in the ads that AdWords users create. AdWords users place their ads for people to see, and Web site owners who use AdSense then publish the ads for their Web site visitors to view and (hopefully) click. If no one clicks the ads, AdWords users aren't charged a fee for placing the ad and AdSense users aren't paid for placing the ads. If someone *does* click through the ads but never makes a purchase or completes a transaction with the advertiser, advertisers will quit using AdWords and people

like you who want to make money from showing ads will have no ads to display. Make sense?

When you click your own ads, you're not usually interested in the content of the ad. That said, I admit that I've clicked one of my own ads because I truly was interested in what it was advertising. Of course, I realized my mistake almost instantly, and I never clicked one again. If I see an ad I'm interested in, I go directly to the URL that's provided.

I understand that you probably want to know where your ads lead. I don't blame you, and neither does Google. That's why there are tools, such as the AdSense preview tool — the AdSense extension for Firefox that lets you preview how ads appear on your page and where those ads lead to. (For more on the AdSense preview tool, see Chapter 17.)

The AdSense preview tool is a free tool, and when you use it as directed, you can click the ads on your own pages without fear of repercussions. What repercussions you might ask? Getting banned from AdSense, of course!

Don't Change the AdSense Code

This one is right up there with the AdSense Don't in the preceding section. Don't change the AdSense code. Google takes creating AdSense code very seriously. Although a program generates the code for your Web site, that program is constantly tweaked and improved (just like everything Google).

The code AdSense generates for you is exactly what Google needs to provide the ads that will appear on your Web page as well as to track the results to those ads, which are important factors.

Keep in mind that AdSense works only because AdWords works (or it could be that AdWords works because AdSense works; which came first, the chicken or the egg?). The only way to prove that either one of them works is in the tracking that Google does. For that tracking to be accurate, the code provided to make ads appear on your Web site must remain intact, as written.

The only exceptions to this are changing style elements of the code, such as colors, and that should be done only with the AdSense code generator. If you create an ad and then re-design your site to have different colors, you can always go back to AdSense and edit the ad that you've created. If you're thinking of messing with anything that's not style related, however, don't — it's just not worth the grief that you get.

What is that grief? Say it with me: Getting banned from the AdSense program.

Don't Use Clickbots

Remember click fraud from a few paragraphs ago? Clickbots are another way to commit click fraud. A *clickbot* is a script or program that's designed to click the ads on your page, and they're readily available on the Web, usually inexpensively.

Just because clickbots are there doesn't mean you should use them, though. Clickbots do the same thing that you'd do if you were clicking your own ads, except on a much larger scale. They inflate the revenue that's generated without increasing the interest in the product or service that's being advertised.

Now, a common misconception is that people only use clickbots to click their own ads — not true. Some people have been caught using clickbots to click *other people's ads*, too. These people are usually AdWords advertisers who are trying to push their competition out of the way.

See, each time someone clicks an ad, it costs the advertiser a set amount of money. A clickbot can click an ad dozens, hundreds, or even thousands of times, driving up the cost of the ad. This can affect how many times an ad is shown in a given period of time, and it can also cost an advertiser a large amount of money. After the budget limit is reached, that advertiser is out of the way until the next billing cycle, allowing the next highest bidders to have their ads shown more often.

Clickbots form a vicious cycle that can be very costly for the person or company that falls victim to this type of click fraud. If you're the one committing it, both AdSense and AdWords will ban you from their programs.

Don't Get Banned for Taboo Content

Taboo content — content that Google's deemed inappropriate for all audiences — is another way to end up on the bad side of AdSense. Examples include content that refers to

- ✓ Certain weapons, including guns
- ✓ Illegal drugs
- ✓ Alcohol
- ✓ Tobacco
- ✓ Pornography
- ✓ Designer knock-offs

If your Web site contains these types of content, AdSense doesn't want ads displayed on it for one simple reason — image. Google, AdWords, AdSense, and all the other arms of Google have an image to uphold. Placing ads for goods or services on inappropriate sites isn't the way to do that.

Google has to screen some of the Web sites on which AdSense ads will appear. If you have a site that's likely to be offensive to a large number of people because it contains any of the content listed earlier, AdSense denies your request to put ads there.

Some folks think it's smart to put the ads on their site and then later change the site and add disagreeable content to it — bad move. If you're using AdSense and the crawler finds this type of content on your site, you're asked to remove the content, and if you don't, you can be banned from the program.

If your site contains any of the topics listed in this section, you might want to look to other affiliate and advertising programs for ways to generate a revenue stream.

Don't Hold Clicking Contests

Here's another facet of click fraud. *Clicking contests* are conducted when someone who publishes AdSense ads creates a contest for which site visitors must click an ad to qualify. The contest is usually monitored with a secondary script that the Web site owner creates.

This artificially inflates the number of clicks that you receive on your AdSense ads, driving up the revenues that your site generates. This is bad for two reasons.

First, you're creating an artificial bump in revenues. That means to maintain that level of revenue, you have to come up with increasingly creative ways to get people to click your AdSense ads until you've reached the point of outright fraud. Never good.

Second, artificially inflating the number of times that someone clicks one of your ads causes the system to be skewed on the Google side, too. The advertisers have to pay more for advertising. Even more troublesome though is that your site could be taken as a site that generates a lot of traffic and so might benefit from a cost-per-impression ad.

Great news for you *if you have a ton of traffic*, but if you don't, you could end up on the losing end of that proposition. Being limited to cost-per-impression ads also means that the advertisers that are specifically targeting your site lose out. In turn, Google loses out on potential revenues.

Now, you may not give a flying flip about the other people and companies in the mix, but you should care that if you get caught using this kind of tactic to increase your AdSense revenues, you'll lose your AdSense privileges.

Don't Pay Others to Click Your Ads

Here's another one that falls into the same category as not using clickbots or holding clicking contests. Don't pay other people to click your ads.

These kinds of programs are sometimes billed as affiliate programs. People who put them together offer a portion of their revenues to a person or group of people who in turn click their AdSense ads. That's all great, and it might even work for a little while, but eventually someone will squeal or Google will catch on.

The penalties for falsely inflating your AdSense revenues can be stiff. You can (of course) possibly lose your AdSense privileges, but there's a darker side to click fraud if you get caught with your hand deep enough in the cookie jar. Google has been known to prosecute people who commit click fraud, especially in cases that are considered extreme.

The best strategy for increasing your AdSense revenue and maintaining that revenue long-term is to do it by-the-book. Use the strategies I talk about in this book — all the chapters include some kind of strategy that should help you increase your revenues — and avoid anything that can get you into hot water with Google. Because you've gone about building your AdSense business the right way, you'll continue to see returns on your AdSense efforts for a long time to come.

Don't Use Any Other Underhanded Methods

Click fraud is just one of the underhanded methods that some people use to increase their AdSense revenues. Whether you're using click fraud or some other deceptive practice doesn't matter though. If you're trying to get the upper-hand on Google, you'll probably fail.

That doesn't keep some people from recommending the wrong methods of increasing Web site traffic and therefore increasing AdSense revenues. What do these people care if you're kicked out of the AdSense program? You getting kicked out doesn't affect them at all.

It's much smarter to avoid *anything* that seems less than honest. I talk about some of the methods that you might see recommended — but that you should never try — in the list here:

- ✓ **Cloaking:** By putting one set of content in front of a search engine crawler and then presenting users with another set of content, cloaking deceives potential site visitors into believing they're entering one type of site when in fact they're entering another.

Cloaking can apply to AdSense, too. If you're using cloaking techniques, you could be baiting AdSense ads for extremely high-paying keywords, but the content on your site doesn't relate to those keywords at all. Site visitors click into your site, but because they don't find what they're looking for, they often click the ads that are displayed instead.

Cloaking is a bad practice that Google figures out very quickly. When they do, you pay the price for your deception — as in, kiss your membership in the AdSense program goodbye.

- ✓ **Duplicate content:** No one wants to see the same boring stuff all over again — just like no one wants to watch reruns on TV — which is why I'm always recommending that you use as much unique, fresh content as you can generate, rather than loading up your site with content found elsewhere.

What makes duplicate content so troublesome for AdSense is that if dozens of sites all carry the same content, a limited number of relevant ads can be shown on those sites. Duplicate content can also indicate that a Web site isn't regularly updated, meaning that it won't have as much traffic as a site that maintains dynamic content.

Google wants AdSense (and AdWords) to be successful. So, naturally, the more diverse the sites are within a topic, the more ads that can be shown. Although duplicate content probably won't get you banned from AdSense, it certainly reduces the effectiveness of your site and value of the ads that are shown on the site. You know what that means: less revenue.

- ✓ **Hidden text:** This is yet another “helpful hint” you may have suggested to you in the context of improving the AdSense ads that appear on your site. Hidden text involves text that, while present on your site, is colored the same as the background so that it blends into the site and isn't *seen* by site visitors — only Web crawlers can read the text.

Most of the time, hidden text is used to target a specific keyword that's unrelated to the actual content of the site. People use this tactic to draw ads for higher-paying keywords because these ads are likely to pay better than the ads that appear based on the actual content that the visitor sees.

The problem here is that the ads that can be influenced by hidden text aren't likely to be as relevant to your site visitors, which means that they're likely to get clicked less. That means a reduction in your revenue volume, even if the payment-per-click is higher. In the end, hidden text doesn't work because it's usually more effective to have more clicks at a slightly lower payout than it is to have fewer clicks at a higher payout.

Having relevant ads also means that your site will be more useful to your visitors, making it more likely that they'll come back in the future and click your ads again.

- ✔ **Spreading malware:** Malware involves applications that are created specifically for some malicious intent. These days, most malware is created to help the process of identity theft. It's not at all uncommon for criminals to pay Web site owners to spread malware, even though it's not exactly a nice thing to do. If you're distributing that malware on your Web site, Google wants no part of your activities.

Besides, spreading malware is illegal, and the pay-off could be jail time. Is it really worth the risk?

- ✔ **Using false tactics:** Any kind of false tactics that you might employ to trick users into clicking your AdSense ads is forbidden. I know, when you're looking at click revenues of pennies a day, a lot of different strategies look appealing — especially if they increase the amount of money that you're making.

Just remember, it's only more profitable if it helps you to build a long-term AdSense revenue stream. If not, and if it seems even the slightest bit out of line, don't do it. Any risk to your good standing with AdSense means that you could lose whatever revenue stream you've legitimately created.

Chapter 19

Ten Ways to Improve Web Site Traffic

In This Chapter

- ▶ Drawing site visitors with great content
 - ▶ Taking advantage of publicity opportunities
 - ▶ Marketing your Web site offline
-

Improving your Web site traffic is a tricky business. You can take advantage of quite a few different strategies — many won't cost you much whereas some won't even cost you a dime. The trick is to find the right balance of strategies and then be consistent in your efforts to draw people to your Web site.

Consistency is also a very important factor in improving the traffic to your Web site. Every day you should be plugging away at your marketing efforts, in whatever form works best for your site. Web site marketing does require constant attention, however. Pushing for a short period of time to improve your traffic but then letting the efforts fall by the wayside does no good. Doing so might get you a temporary increase in traffic, but as soon as you stop your efforts to bring people to your site, you'll see your traffic statistics begin to fall again.

What follows are some of the strategies that you can use to improve your Web site traffic. No single strategy works by itself, but a combination of those shown here — and others that you figure out on your own along the way — gets you moving in the right direction.

Great, Dynamic Content

Everyone seems to be seeking the key to more Web site content. In today's information-driven society, great, dynamic content is the key. People are usually online because they're looking for something — relationships, information, products, or services. Content is the way they find what they're looking for.

Think about it. A decade or so ago, if you wanted to find information on anything, you had to go to the library or the bookstore to find that information. Today, finding what you seek is as close as your computer. Just open a Web browser, type a few words, and what you're looking for is sitting right in front of you. Very little information can't be found online these days.

Here's what makes one site better than another though. When I'm looking for information online, I click into and out of a site in the time it takes most people to take a sip of coffee. That's because I know exactly what I'm looking for, and when I don't see it, I move on to the next search result.

When I do find what I'm looking for, though, I tend to stick around. I'll read the article that brought me to the site and then I'll click through all the articles that are linked to it, and I might even click some of the ads shown on the page if they seem interesting. When I'm done, I bookmark the page to come back later and see what's new.

That is what good content does for a Web site — it buys you time with your site visitors and it buys you return visits. If you don't have content with that kind of stickiness, the first thing you can do to improve your Web site is to create that content. Just remember, don't try buying it from a content *broker* — someone who commissions content from writers and then resells it to Web site or publication owners — if you really want something fresh and new because everyone else in your area is using the same content broker.

Referral Programs

Referral programs have a couple different sides. One side of a referral program is the side on which you make money. That's for putting referral buttons on your Web site.

What if you flip that around and create your own referral program where you pay visitors to share your site with others? You can do that — and should — if you really want to build a sizable flow of traffic to your site.

Creating a referral program isn't too difficult. The first thing you need to do is determine what you can afford to invest in the program. Typically, those who refer your site are paid anywhere from about a penny-a-click to as much as \$5 per click or more. Some referral programs promise a flat fee for any referral that results in a purchase.

Your budget is the determining factor here, but remember this: The more you pay, the more likely others will want to refer your site to their site visitors. They're sending traffic away from their site to yours, so you must make it worth the referrers' efforts.

Remember that for a referral program to be effective, it should also be simple. If you're telling people you'll only pay them a referral fee if they send someone to your site who then makes two purchases over a 60-day period, unless your site is truly amazing or the products that you offer are completely unique, not too many people will refer their visitors to you. It's just too hard for them to earn a reward for that referral.

A referral program also has to make it easy for referrers to be connected to the people that they refer. A simple form that includes a Referred By box is okay, but it's only as effective as the memory of the person filling out the form. A link that connects referrers to your referral program so that you can track who they refer is much more effective for the people who are spreading your name around.

Setting up an easy-to-use referral program might be more difficult on your end, but it's worth the investment. The less work that someone has to do to refer people to you and collect a reward for that referral, the more likely he'll use your referral program.

Amazon.com has a referral program that's an excellent example of what really works. They provide all the tools that users need to refer others to Amazon products. All the user has to do is plug a piece of code into her blog or Web site. Amazon and the visitors clicking through the referrals do the rest of the work.

Now, I know you don't have the budget that Amazon has, but you should be able to get the technology you need without having to break the bank. A quick search on Google turns up referral marketing systems that are fairly cost effective. For example, ReferralBlast (www.referralblast.com) is an easy to use program that offers four different levels of referral programs — from a basic program to a highly customized program — that range from \$99 per year to \$999 per year. Another program that's available, and that is fairly easy to use, is ReferralSoftware.com (www.referralsoftware.com). This software — unlike ReferralBlast — allows you to set up referral programs for a one-time fee of \$299, after which you never pay another fee.

Links and Linking Strategies

You wouldn't think that the links on your site would make too much difference to the traffic on your site, but they do. The Web is an interconnected group of pages. The connection from one page to another comes in the form of a link. So, both on your site and from others' sites, links are an essential part of drawing people in.

One of the easiest ways to begin building a linking strategy is to contact the owners of Web sites that you like and ask them for a reciprocal link. *Reciprocal links* are when you put a link to that site on your page in exchange for a link back to your Web site. Reciprocal linking strategies are very common on the Web.

Another way to get people to link to you is to offer something completely unique on your Web site. For some, that means adding a special download to the site that's not available anywhere; for others, it means adding videos, podcasts, or some other element that's completely unique. Whatever your draw is, keep it unique and fresh. A podcast or video can be effective for a few days, but after a while, it loses its effectiveness and needs to be replaced with something new.

When you have an intricate linking strategy in place (one that leads to other sites of interest and back to you from other sites), you start seeing the results of the strategy — more traffic. The linking strategy takes a little time to create, but it's well worth the effort.

Advertisements

If you haven't already done it, check out AdWords. AdWords is the advertiser's arm of AdSense. With AdWords, you can bid to show your advertisements based on keywords that you select. **Remember:** Although AdWords is an advertising program, it's not good just for products. You can use AdWords with your services or even content Web sites, too. The point of using AdWords is to advertise your site to users who might not otherwise find you. What you sell or provide on that site is up to you.

The cool thing about AdWords is that you can set a budget that keeps you from spending way more than you have available to spend on advertising your site.

Of course, AdWords isn't the only game in the advertising world. You can also consider banner ads or even other pay-per-click advertising options. What's important is that you get your Web site in front of as many people as possible.

Advertising probably isn't the most effective method of getting your name out there — positive word of mouth and great content are your best shot — but if you have some cash to spend on getting your name known, it's definitely a strategy that you should consider.

Blog Promotions

If you have a blog, you simply have to have a blog promotion (or 12). Really. Blogs are cool, but if you're not out there promoting your blog every single day, your numbers will suck pond scum. One of the most effective types of blog promotion is simply to read and post on other people's blogs. When you post on other people's blogs, their readers see your post. They can click through any links that you have connected to your display name or within your comments to see your blog — in fact, you have the opportunity to include your blog URL when you post on most blogs, and you should always include it. Including your blog address gives you free exposure, just for sharing your opinion.

Blogs have become so popular that even corporations now use them to advertise products, services, and events or just to keep readers updated on what's happening with the company. The downside though is that blogs have become so popular that every person who even thinks they might possibly have something of interest to say has a blog.

Making your blog stand out from the rest of the pack is a very difficult process. Start with a truly interesting blog — will it captivate every person on the Web? No. If you can make your blog fresh though, you can potentially gain a huge mindshare in the area in which you specialize.

After you come up with that perfect blog, you have to get the word out. Start by posting comments on other blogs, but don't stop there. Spread the word through your friends and ask them to spread the word, too. Join mailing lists and make sure your blog address appears in the signature line for every post that you make to the list (and you *do* have to post to the list — preferably interesting, useful posts).

Consider other promotions, such as *blog tours* (where a blog author appears on several different blogs as a guest blogger), giveaways, and other contests.

Be creative, but also think in terms of what appeals to potential blog readers. If your blog is about a group of teens that are band groupies, a contest where the giveaway is a copy of *War and Peace* might not be the best idea. If the prize in your contest is a \$25 iTunes card, the response could be much more than you even dare to hope for.

As with all types of promotions, think outside the box. Better yet, think of a way to create a whole new box.

Publicity and Public Relations

All too often, publicity and public relations are all lumped into the same category of advertising. From where I sit, publicity and public relations are two different things. Publicity is free, and it includes coverage from other media sources, including newsletters, newspapers, radio stations, television, or whoever else may pick up word of what you're doing.

On the Web, publicity usually takes the form of word-of-mouth type publicity. Someone sees your Web site and then tells someone else who happens to have a blog, so that person writes a blog post about it, which is then picked up by other bloggers, and it then catches the eye of some radio host or newspaper journalist who then runs a brief article or makes mention of your site to their audience.

You get the picture — and that's really a best-case scenario.

Did you know that you can influence publicity, too? You can — by getting the name of your Web site in front of as many people as possible. One way to do that is to write articles that are complete and ready to run, and then distribute them to news outlets, newsletter owners, other Web site owners, or anyone else who has a publication and might be interested in your site. The catch is that to run the article you provide (for free), the publication must also run a short blurb about you, including your Web site address.

That takes care of publicity. *Public relations*, on the other hand, deals with how you handle people, especially in a public setting. You can put that to work for your Web site, too. Public relations can be the donations that you make (in the name of your Web site) to charity organizations, or it can be you taking the time to teach about your topic within your community. Guess what? Just putting your knowledge to use by answering questions posed by folks in search of answers can count as public relations.

Creating a relationship with the public is what public relations is all about. When you use public relations — along with publicity — to get your Web site in front of people, you're building your traffic levels (which in turn helps build your AdSense revenues). Creating public relations and publicity is a time-consuming process, though, so don't make the mistake of thinking that you can spend ten minutes here and there and immediately see results.

Professionals set aside several hours each week to devote to public relations and publicity efforts. You should do the same if you're truly serious about creating a real brand with your Web site that people will think of and recognize when they consider topics related to your site and products. (Creating a *brand* simply means making your Web site or blog immediately recognizable, just like other products [Pepsi, Kleenex, Saran Wrap] are immediately recognizable. The goal is to be the first site or blog that comes to mind when your topic or product is considered.)

Lead Generation and Follow-Up

One thing that Web site owners don't often think of in terms of driving traffic to their sites is lead generation. *Lead generation* in this context is nothing more than the process by which you gather the names and e-mail addresses of people who may be interested in your Web site or blog — these are all potential visitors. And following up on those leads is how you convert those potential visitors into actual visitors. Lead generation takes place in several different ways. For some sites, it's a newsletter sign-up, but for others, it's a contest or promotion that you e-mail to a mailing list you purchased from a marketing company.

How can generating leads help you build traffic on your site? It's easy, really. If you're collecting leads, you can keep your site in front of potential visitors more often.

That does require follow-up, though. Although some Web site owners are great at collecting leads, they don't do much with them — you should. If you have a collection of people who have willingly given you their e-mail address, you should be using that address as often as you can to keep in touch with those potential visitors.

Many Web site owners do collect e-mail addresses (which in this case are your leads). Having folks sign up for a newsletter is one of the most popular *harvesting* methods out there. You can also collect the e-mail addresses of visitors when they register for your site or when they purchase goods or services from you.

However you collect the addresses, they're no good to you if they just sit on a list doing nothing. After you have your e-mail addresses, use them to put your name in front of those people — and the more helpful you can be in the process, the better it is for your Web site.

Here's an example: One Web site owner collects people's e-mail addresses for a newsletter. The newsletter goes out without fail (consistency is key with newsletters) every two weeks. That same Web site owner also sends out a message about once a month that contains tips that the readers can use immediately to improve their business.

This type of extra information — service above and beyond the call of duty — is what helps build traffic for the Web site. When potential visitors turn to the area that the site addresses, that site is of course the first site to come to mind because the Web site owner has kept the site's name in front of them as often as possible.

Keep in mind this fact though: It's absolutely essential that the communications you have with your potential visitors be useful. Sales, extra information, even contest announcements are useful. Just sending a note to say hello? Nothing useful about that at all, and users won't appreciate it.

The idea is to create a feeling of appreciation so that you're first in the visitor's mind when she thinks of the area that you serve. Being first means more Web site traffic for you.

Contests

I briefly mention contests a little earlier in this chapter. I bring them up here because contests are a great way to bring traffic to your Web site. Everyone loves a good contest, especially when the prizes are neat.

Deciding what the prizes are for your contest is very important. Think of what appeals to people who would be interested in your site. I mention earlier in the chapter that if your site's about music, giving away copies of *War and Peace* just won't cut it because such a contest wouldn't target the specific people that you want to see your site.

When you're considering the prizes that you should give away, consider what type of prize would draw the kind of person that would be interested in your site. If the purpose of the contest is to draw visitors to your site, the wrong prizes won't help you at all.

Devising the type of contest to have is the next step. What is it people need to do to get the prize? One thing that many Web site owners do is require that users register for a newsletter, and then the winner is drawn from those who signed up for the newsletter. Bloggers often run contests where visitors are required to leave a comment on the blog.

After you create your contest, all you have to do is get the word out. Announce the contest on your Web site, blog, and any mailing lists that you have. Tell your friends and ask them to tell their friends. If the contest's good, word gets around quickly.

You'll see a spike in the amount of traffic that you have to your site during the contest period, but if you conduct it right, an overall increase will remain after the contest is over. Take the time to design your contest to meet the specific goal of creating traffic (especially return traffic) to your site, and you'll see the benefits of this strategy the first time you try it.

Social Media Marketing

Social marketing is a relatively new concept that's based on a phenomenon that's grown despite the fact that no marketing experts saw it coming, and it's all based on social networks, such as those brought into being by MySpace and Facebook.

The idea with social networks is that you have an online community where you can connect and share with people who have the same interests that you do. For some, that might be an interest in specific people or hobbies. For others, the interest could surround employment or education. What's important is that a social network lets you create a circle of like-minded friends and acquaintances — also called a *community*. For example, with MySpace, the concept is to build a home page where you and your friends can connect. You can also connect with others who are potential friends because they can view your MySpace page and learn about you and your interests.

If you're marketing with social networking, create your network, and as you have something to market, share it with that group of friends in your community. They then share it with their friends, and before you know it, a network that's far beyond the group you could reach on your own knows what you're doing.

Here's the catch with social media marketing though: If you develop a social network specifically to sell something to the people in that network, you'll fall right on your face. Really. Social networks are created by people who have something to share with other people who think like them. If you barge into the network with a sales pitch and nothing more, you'll be completely ostracized.

To be truly effective, you have to actually participate in the communities that you join. That means interacting with people and offering up something that others can use most of the time without expecting anything in return.

If you really want to see how social media marketing works, check out some of the organizations that have successful sites on MySpace or Facebook — Christian bands like Three Days Grace, for example. To get to the point where a social media marketing strategy is successful requires a lot of effort and attention, but the results can be very much worth the time you put into developing your place on the network.

Offline Marketing Strategies

Offline marketing strategies are probably the last type of marketing you'd expect me to address when it comes to Web sites, but sometimes the offline strategies can really work — it does depend on how you go about it, though.

Offline marketing strategies can be anything from press releases to T-shirts to direct mailings. Think about all the commercials that you see during the Super Bowl. How many of those commercials had Web site addresses attached to them? Did you know that those companies paid millions of dollars to have those commercials shown?

You may not be in a position to pay millions of dollars to have your Web address plastered all over the television, but that doesn't mean you should avoid offline advertising methods. Some of the things that you can do on a very small budget include putting magnetic signs on the side of your car, wearing T-shirts with your Web address on them, doing radio interviews, sending out press releases, sponsoring a little-league sports team, and the list goes on nearly forever.

The trick with making offline advertising work is to make sure that you're not investing too much into it, and that it appears in front of the widest audience possible. I wouldn't suggest that you spend thousands of dollars on offline advertisements, but spending a few hundred here and there could increase your traffic in small, but valuable increments.

Ultimately, the best way to draw more traffic to your Web site isn't a single way but is more a combination of all the ways listed here. You have to work to find the right balance of what works, but with enough time and effort, you can get the word out there and draw in visitors.

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