

LESSON 1 UNDERSTAND THE PROCESS

Affiliate marketing starter guide

A practical first week: choose a useful topic, check a program, create honest content, and keep a simple record.

Affiliate marketing means referring people to a business through its tracked links. A program may pay you for an eligible purchase or other qualifying action under its rules. A click does not automatically mean you have earned anything.

A simple workflow

- 1 Choose a specific audience**
Start with one group and a problem you can genuinely help solve.
- 2 Build something useful**
Create an explanation, comparison, or demonstration with original value.
- 3 Check and apply**
Read the official terms. Apply yourself on the program's official site.
- 4 Use authorized links**
Wait for any required approval, then create links with the program's tools.
- 5 Disclose and publish**
Explain your relationship clearly and use only permitted channels.
- 6 Review and improve**
Check program reports, payment status, costs, and audience questions.

Set a realistic first goal

Aim to publish one genuinely helpful piece and understand one program. Approval, traffic, sales, and earnings are not guaranteed. It may take time, and you may earn nothing. Avoid spending money based on expected commissions.

This guide is educational, not legal or tax advice. Check current program rules and the laws that apply where you operate and where your audience is. EarnSource is a working project name; trademark clearance has not been established.

LESSON 2 FIND YOUR FOCUS

Choose an audience and topic

Choose a small, useful starting point rather than trying to recommend everything.

Use three filters

People: Who do you understand well enough to help?

Problem: What decision or task keeps coming up for them?

Evidence: What can you demonstrate, test, or explain accurately?

An example to adapt

Audience: people organizing a small kitchen.

Problem: choosing storage that fits a narrow cupboard.

Useful content: a measuring checklist and a comparison of dimensions, limitations, and alternatives.

Before you publish

- ☐ Answer one real question, including when a product may be a poor fit.
- ☐ Separate firsthand experience from research. Do not imply you used something you have not used.
- ☐ Verify product facts with current sources. Date information that changes, such as prices.
- ☐ Use your own media or material you have permission to use. Check brand and image rules.
- ☐ Keep comparisons fair. A higher commission is not evidence that a product is better.

Your first content worksheet

I want to help this audience with this specific problem

My first useful article or video will answer

Evidence I have and facts I still need to check

Good first formats: a practical how-to, a fit checklist, a transparent comparison, or a demonstration based on actual use. These are starting ideas, not promises of results.

LESSON 3 CHECK BEFORE APPLYING

Read the rules and apply

A program listing is a lead to investigate. It is not approval to promote or a promise that you qualify.

Check these details on the official site

- ☐ **Eligibility:** accepted countries, age requirements, website or social channel requirements, and any audience or content standards.
- ☐ **What counts:** eligible products or actions, exclusions, attribution window, and which referral receives credit.
- ☐ **How payment works:** current rates, approval or validation steps, reversals, payment timing, thresholds, and available methods.
- ☐ **Where you can promote:** website, social, email, paid ads, coupons, or other channels. Permission can differ by program.
- ☐ **What you can use:** link formats, brand names, images, pricing, product data, and required disclosure wording.
- ☐ **Ongoing obligations:** deadlines, content updates, inactivity rules, account review, and termination terms.

Keep application and approval separate

Prepare an accurate description of your content and the exact public URLs you will use. Submit only on the official program site, and save its confirmation. Some programs review applications in stages. Amazon Associates, for example, has its own review process and agreement. [3, 4]

Use this status sequence in your tracker: **Researching → Applied → Under review → Approved or declined**. Record the actual status shown by the program. Receiving a tracking link does not always mean final approval.

After you are allowed to promote

Generate links with the official tools and confirm the destination and tracking ID. Keep the required disclosures nearby. Never test by making a self-purchase or arranging artificial activity. Follow the program's rules on test clicks and tracking.

Keep private details out of EarnSource. Enter identity, payment, or tax information only in the official program's secure process if needed. Do not store passwords, bank details, or tax identifiers in worksheets or app notes.

LESSON 4 PUBLISH RESPONSIBLY

Make your relationship clear

Keep your recommendations useful and your financial relationships clear.

Put the disclosure where people will notice it

The FTC advises making brand relationships clear within the endorsement. Explain yours close to the recommendation and link, before a reader must expand the post. Avoid profile-only notes and buried hashtags. Disclose within videos and periodically in live streams. Use clear language matching the content. [1]

A starting disclosure to adapt

"I may earn a commission if you buy through links in this post."

Describe any additional relationship, such as a free product or sponsorship. Check the program's required wording and the context; this sample does not guarantee compliance. [2, 4]

Protect the reader and your reputation

- ☐ Never invent a review, a test result, a testimonial, scarcity, or an earnings claim. Be clear about what you actually know. [1, 2]
- ☐ Do not send unsolicited mass messages, buy fake activity, hide the destination of a link, or drop promotions into unrelated conversations.
- ☐ Check platform rules and the program's permitted traffic sources.

Track learning and money separately

Content: topic, publication date, channel, and audience questions.

Program reports: tracked clicks, qualifying actions, pending commission, approved commission, reversals, and actual payouts.

Costs: tools, hosting, products, advertising, and time spent.

Pending commission is not money received. For a simple cash view, subtract money spent from payouts received over the same period. This is not a tax calculation. Avoid drawing firm conclusions from small samples.

Back up your EarnSource progress

The app has no accounts or cloud sync. Notes and progress stay in this browser on this device and can be lost when browser data is cleared, private browsing ends, or devices change. Export a backup regularly.

Check local requirements as well as U.S. FTC guidance. Official resources are on page 5.

LESSON 5 TAKE THE FIRST STEPS

Your seven day starter plan

Use the days as a flexible checklist. If approval takes longer, keep improving your content while you wait.

- ☐ **Day 1** Pick one audience and one problem. Complete the worksheet on page 2.
- ☐ **Day 2** Research the problem. Gather reliable facts and useful questions.
- ☐ **Day 3** Outline and create one helpful article or video using what you know.
- ☐ **Day 4** Check one relevant program's official terms and eligibility.
- ☐ **Day 5** Apply yourself if ready. Save the status and any required next step.
- ☐ **Day 6** If permitted, add official links and disclosures. Review before publishing.
- ☐ **Day 7** Check available reports, record costs, improve one thing, and export a backup.

Application worksheet

Program name and official application URL

Required next step or eligibility gap

Current status and date checked

Next review date and action

Use a separate sheet for each program. Keep only non-sensitive planning notes here.

Official resources

1. **FTC Disclosures 101**

When and how to disclose a brand relationship.

2. **FTC Endorsement Guides questions and answers**

Additional context, including affiliate links.

3. **Amazon Associates application review**

One program's review process; not a universal standard.

4. **Amazon Associates operating agreement**

Program-specific obligations and linked policies.

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