THE AFFILIATE MARKETING STARTER GUIDE

2026 EDITION

Choose a niche. Find affiliate programs.
Build your first funnel. Start your online business.

A practical beginner’s roadmap

JUANVILLAR.COM

Your roadmap

Start with one audience, one useful offer and one reliable way to reach people. You do not need to buy every tool.

FOUNDATIONS • 3–7

Affiliate marketing, tracking, niche selection, research and offers.

BUILD • 8–13

Your website, useful content, SEO, email, funnel and landing page.

GROW • 14–20

Email sequences, traffic, measurement, compliance, tools, a 30-day plan and launch checklist.

Affiliate disclosure

This guide contains affiliate links. I may earn a commission if you purchase through them, at no extra cost to you. Income is not guaranteed. Check current prices and terms before purchasing.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Read in order or jump to the chapter you need. Keep a notebook for your decisions.

How affiliate marketing works

You recommend a product or service and may earn a commission when a qualifying action is attributed to you.

The four participants

A merchant supplies the product; an affiliate publishes a recommendation; a customer chooses whether to buy; a tracking system records eligible referrals.

Example

A tutorial helps a reader choose an email tool. They click your disclosed affiliate link and subscribe. If the program attributes the qualifying purchase to you, you may receive a commission.

Set realistic expectations

Traffic, trust, conversion rates and program rules affect results. Some months may produce no revenue. Avoid borrowing money to start.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Write down one problem you can help someone solve.

Understand affiliate links

A tracking link identifies your referral. A click alone usually does not earn a commission.

Payment models

Cost per sale pays for eligible purchases. Cost per lead pays for qualifying leads. Recurring commissions may continue while eligible subscriptions remain active. Pay-per-click arrangements are less common.

Attribution

Cookie windows, competing referrals, refunds and device changes can affect credit. Read the program terms.

Track responsibly

Keep a spreadsheet with program, destination, tracking URL, permitted channels and date checked. Never alter tracking parameters unless the program permits it.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Create your affiliate link register before publishing.

Choose your niche

A niche is a specific audience with a specific need, not simply a broad topic.

Start with experience

List three topics you know well or can research responsibly. Identify questions people repeatedly ask.

Narrow your audience

Instead of travel, consider weekend trips for Florida families. Instead of software, consider email tools for solo business owners.

Check commercial fit

Look for useful products, realistic prices and reputable merchants. Avoid choosing a niche solely because commissions are high.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Complete: I help [audience] solve [problem] using [type of solution].

Validate demand

Look for evidence that people need your help before spending money.

Research questions

Use search suggestions, community discussions and customer reviews to find repeated problems. Record exact questions in your own words.

Study the competition

Review five relevant articles or videos. Note missing explanations, outdated screenshots and questions left unanswered.

Score your ideas

Rate each niche from 1 to 5 for knowledge, demand, available offers and ability to create useful content. Compare totals; scores are a planning aid, not proof of profitability.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Choose one niche and write ten content ideas.

Find affiliate programs

Search for a brand name plus “affiliate program” or explore networks such as Impact, Awin, CJ and ClickBank.

Evaluate the offer

Check product quality, audience fit, commission, attribution window, payout threshold, refund rules and allowed promotional channels.

Apply honestly

Describe your actual website, traffic sources and planned content. Approval is not automatic.

Keep alternatives

Select two or three complementary offers. Do not rely on a single merchant or recommend a product you cannot evaluate.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Apply to two relevant programs and record their terms.

Build your online home

A website is useful for evergreen tutorials and comparisons, but you can start with a suitable free publishing channel.

Website basics

Choose a memorable domain, hosting and a mobile-friendly theme. WordPress is one option. Compare renewal prices, backups and support before buying.

Hosting options

Bluehost and GreenGeeks are examples of hosting providers. Hosting and domains may cost money; introductory offers can differ from renewal rates.

Optional resource

Affiliate link: Explore GreenGeeks. I may earn a commission if you purchase. Compare plans before choosing.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Publish an About page, contact information and appropriate privacy and disclosure pages.

Create helpful content

Your content should help readers make a better decision, even if they never buy.

Three useful formats

Tutorial: show how to complete a task. Comparison: explain trade-offs. Review: describe evidence, limitations and who the product suits.

Use AI carefully

AI can help outline and edit, but verify facts, add original examples and never invent product tests or testimonials.

Optional outsourcing

Affiliate link: Explore Fiverr. I may earn a commission on qualifying purchases. Agree on scope, rights and deliverables before hiring.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Draft one tutorial answering a real beginner question.

Make content discoverable

Search engine optimization helps people and search engines understand your content. Rankings are never guaranteed.

Match search intent

Choose a specific question and answer it clearly. Use descriptive titles, headings and relevant image alt text.

Build useful connections

Link to related articles and reputable sources. Add original screenshots where they clarify a step.

Maintain your site

Check broken links, update old prices, improve mobile usability and monitor indexing with Search Console.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Publish your tutorial and link it to one related resource.

Build an email list

An email list lets you follow up with people who have chosen to hear from you.

Offer something useful

Create a checklist, starter guide or worksheet that solves a small immediate problem.

Choose a platform

Systeme.io and GetResponse are examples of email and marketing platforms. Compare current limits and features.

Respect subscribers

Explain what they will receive, collect permission, provide an unsubscribe option and avoid purchased lists.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Write a one-sentence promise for your free resource.

Build your first funnel

A funnel is a sequence of useful steps that guides a visitor toward a decision.

01 Traffic

A helpful article or video invites the reader to download a relevant free guide.

02 Opt-in and delivery

The landing page collects an email with permission. A thank-you page provides the promised resource.

03 Follow-up

A short email sequence teaches practical skills and introduces relevant, disclosed offers.

Optional platform

Affiliate link: Explore Systeme.io. I may earn a commission if you purchase. Review current plan limits.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Sketch: content → opt-in → download → helpful emails → relevant offer.

Create your landing page

Keep the page focused on one action: requesting the free resource.

Headline

State the benefit clearly: “Start Affiliate Marketing With Confidence.”

Description and form

Explain what the guide covers. Request only the information you need. Use a clear button such as “Get My Free Guide.”

Thank-you page

Confirm the signup and provide a working download button. Include privacy information and test both desktop and mobile.

Test the flow

Use a separate test email. Verify the contact record, download and any automated email.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Complete one end-to-end test before sending traffic.

Write your first emails

Send useful messages that deliver on the promise made at signup.

Day 0: Deliver

Subject: Your starter guide is ready. Include the download and one simple next step.

Day 2: Teach

Subject: Choose your first niche. Give an example and a short exercise.

Day 4: Help

Subject: Build your first simple funnel. Explain the steps and disclose any affiliate recommendation.

Day 7: Follow up

Subject: Your next step. Invite a reply and share a relevant tutorial. Include unsubscribe information in each marketing email.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Write the four messages before enabling automation.

Drive traffic without overspending

Pick one main channel and one supporting channel. Consistency matters more than being everywhere.

Search and video

Publish tutorials that answer specific questions. Turn a useful section into a short video with a clear next step.

Social and communities

Share practical tips and participate genuinely. Follow community rules; do not spam links.

Paid advertising

Avoid paid traffic until your funnel works and you understand costs, attribution and merchant advertising restrictions.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Schedule two useful pieces of content this week.

Measure what matters

Track results to learn where the funnel needs improvement.

Example funnel

1,000 visitors × 10% signup rate = 100 subscribers. If 20 click an offer and 2 buy, that is 2 sales. At $30 per approved sale, gross commission is $60. This is an illustration, not a forecast.

Track the basics

Visitors, signups, email clicks, affiliate clicks, approved sales and expenses. Net profit equals revenue minus costs.

Improve one thing

If signups are low, test the headline or offer. If clicks are low, improve relevance. If sales are low, evaluate offer fit and attribution.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Create a weekly tracking sheet and record your baseline.

Build trust and stay compliant

Transparency is essential. Rules differ by jurisdiction and affiliate program.

Disclose clearly

Place a plain-language disclosure near recommendations and links, not only at the end of a page. For video, disclose visibly and verbally when appropriate.

Avoid misleading claims

Do not promise income, guaranteed rankings or results you cannot substantiate. Clearly distinguish personal experience from research.

Email and privacy

Use accurate sender information, provide unsubscribe options, honor opt-outs and follow applicable privacy and marketing laws.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Review each page, email and video for clear disclosures.

Your starter toolkit

Start with the tools you need now. Add paid services only when they solve a real problem.

Funnels and email

Affiliate link: Explore Systeme.io. I may earn a commission if you purchase.

Website hosting

Affiliate link: Explore GreenGeeks. I may earn a commission if you purchase. Compare hosting options and renewal costs.

Freelance help

Affiliate link: Explore Fiverr. I may earn a commission on qualifying purchases.

Other resources

WordPress, Canva, Google Search Console and GetResponse are additional options. Find more beginner resources at juanvillar.com.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Choose one publishing platform and one email platform. Check all current prices and terms.

Your 30-day action plan

Set aside a manageable block of time each day. Focus on completing tasks rather than chasing an income target.

Days 1–7 | Research

Choose your audience, validate ten questions, compare offers and apply to relevant programs.

Days 8–14 | Build

Set up your publishing channel, create a free resource, build an opt-in and thank-you page, and test delivery.

Days 15–21 | Publish

Create two helpful articles or videos, write four emails, add disclosures and check every link.

Days 22–30 | Improve

Share content, review traffic and signup data, fix bottlenecks and plan the next month.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Schedule your first seven days today.

Ready to launch?

Use this checklist before you invite your first subscriber.

Your foundation

[ ] One clear audience and problem
[ ] Relevant approved affiliate offers
[ ] Useful content and accurate disclosures

Your funnel

[ ] Mobile-friendly landing page
[ ] Working guide download
[ ] Permission-based email sequence
[ ] Tested tracking links and unsubscribe process

Your next month

[ ] Weekly publishing schedule
[ ] Results and expenses tracker
[ ] Regular link and content review

Keep learning

Visit juanvillar.com for more affiliate marketing resources. Start small, learn from real results and improve steadily.

YOUR NEXT MOVE

Take one action today. Progress comes from useful work, not promises of instant income.