

## SIERRA TRADING POST® AFFILIATE PROGRAM

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# AFFILIATE COMPANION

## Welcome to the Sierra Trading Post Affiliate Program!

Please select one of the options listed here:

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# Affiliate Program Basics



AS A SIERRA TRADING POST AFFILIATE, you are not only a valuable player in the way we market our products, you are also a very important part of our marketing team! We view you as part of our sales force, and as most marketing folks are given a set of tools to help them do their job, we try our best to make sure you have everything you need to do yours. This means top-notch service, a huge selection of links, regular promotions, and much more!




Our offer to you:

- 5-10% SKU-based commission structure on any sales you refer to us!
- 14 return days!



Why promote Sierra Trading Post?

- Average Order/Click ratio greater than 10% among active affiliates – this is much higher than the average merchant!
- Always 35-70% off famous name-brands. OUTLET PRICES!
- Highly visible and continually updated links.
  - Banner, Text, Dynamic Rich Media, Datafeed, Product Showcase Creator, Linkbuilder, Search Box
- Free product datafeeds
- Occasional coupons
- Huge sales
- Best-selling items for every season of the year, and product categories to fit any site:
  - Outdoor Apparel & Gear
  - Men's Clothing
  - Women's Clothing
  - Shoes & Boots
  - Kids' Clothing
  - Home Décor
  - Travel Gear
  - Dress Clothing
- Outstanding affiliate service
  - Direct email and phone communication with the Affiliate Manager
  - Always open to ideas and suggestions you have that will improve our program.



Treat your site visitors to deals that cannot be beat – everything we sell is always 35-70% off retail prices of name brand clothing, footwear, outdoor gear, home furnishings and more.

***Always 35-70% off famous name-brands - that means conversions!***

# Getting Started

If you're new to the idea of affiliate marketing or website development, here is some information on the tools you need to get you up and running as soon as possible.

## Domain Names

- Deciding on the right domain name is important, because it will most likely be your “brand name” for the entire website. Usually, domain names that are short, relevant, and easy to spell are the ones that people will remember and revisit. There are many resources on the web where you can go to check the availability of domain names, and you can usually get one for about \$20/year. See the [resources](#) section for suggested providers.

## Paid Website Hosting vs. Free Hosting

- Paid – this type of hosting is preferable in terms of the amount of control you will have over your website. With paid hosting, you control the amount of server space you have access to, you can get your own domain name, have your own email accounts, and usually access your website files via FTP, which is much more efficient than a web-based file manager. Paid hosting can run as cheap as \$50/year. See the [resources](#) section for suggested providers.
- Free – the obvious benefit of this is that it requires no money from you, so if you want to use a free hosting plan in order to learn about web development, this may be a good option. The downside to free hosting is that many times providers require that you place unwanted advertisements on your site, lack of complete control over your file structure, inability to use your own domain name, and no FTP connection for file management. See the [resources](#) section for suggested providers.

## Website Design Software

- The easiest way to design websites is to use an HTML editor that will allow you to work in a “design” view without having to code out all the HTML by hand. If you already know HTML, you may prefer to use a simple text editor like Notepad to build your pages, but if you do not know HTML, and you would like to concentrate more on the design elements, we recommend several Webdesign software editors in our [resources](#) section.

## FTP Client Software

- The easiest and most efficient way to transfer your files between your computer and your web server is to use FTP software (unless your webserver is on your own network). Some of these are stand-alone software programs, some come bundled with HTML editors, some are free, and some cost money. Check out our [resources](#) section for suggested providers.

## Graphics Software

- If you're going to use images on your site, you'll need some type of program to create and edit these. See the [resources](#) section for suggested providers.

# Getting Started (continued)



## Affiliate Links

- Every merchant that you market for should provide you with a variety of links you can use. Merchants that run an in-house affiliate program will usually make these available to you on their own website or through email. Merchants who use affiliate network providers like Linkshare, BeFree, Commission Junction, and others allow you to pick up their links by logging into your account at the network provider's website. Once you have a merchant's link on your website, any clicks made on that link will be tracked, and if an order is made on the merchant's site that originated from a click-through on your website, the merchant will reimburse you as they have promised in their affiliate agreement. Sierra Trading Post currently pays you 5% of the sale for any orders you refer to us!
- To grab links for Sierra Trading Post, login to your Linkshare account and click on Sierra Trading Post in the Create Links section. Select the type of link you would like to place on your website, and copy and paste the appropriate code directly into your site.



## Return Days / Cookie Duration

- Because online shoppers don't always make a purchase on their first visit to a website, most merchants offer a period within which they will credit you for orders generated from your site visitors. Sierra Trading Post will give you credit for any sales generated from your site visitors for a full two weeks after they initially clicked through!



## Reporting

- Every merchant's affiliate program must also provide some type of reporting, so that you can see how well your website is doing in terms of clicks and orders. To run reports for Sierra Trading Post, login into your Linkshare account and click on Run Reports. Select your date period and the type of report you would like to run, and a report will be furnished to you. Account activity is updated once daily, so you can login to check your reports at any time to see how your links are performing.

Sierra Trading Post spends a lot of time developing new creatives for you to use on your website. We have marketing material available for any type of website, with many category-specific links that will target your niche market perfectly. Here's a summary of what we have available for you:

- Text, banner, and dynamic rich media links.
- Linkshare's Linkbuilder tool – allows you to create affiliate links to any page on our website that interests you.
- Product datafeeds – allows you to use our entire product catalog for your database-driven website.
- Product Showcase Creator – this is a tool that will generate all the HTML code you need to create your own customized web pages with our product. See the [resources](#) section or check out the tool here: <http://psc.afftools.com/sierra/creator.pl>
- Marketing Copy – if you wish to post some information about our store on your site, feel free to use any of the pages on our website as a content resource, write up your own positive thoughts on our store, or use some of the following text:
  - SierraTradingPost.com is Your In-Home Outlet Mall® for great deals on name brand casual, dress, outdoor clothing and adventure gear. Check out our clearance, closeout and overstock men's and women's clothing, outdoor and sports gear, shoes, boots, kids clothing, and home furnishings... all at savings of 35-70% off retail!
  - SierraTradingPost.com offers savings of 35-70% on name brand casual, dress and outdoor clothing and gear. Check out our large selection of men's and women's apparel, outdoor adventure and sports gear, footwear, kids clothing, and home furnishings.

Here is a list of some of the ways we see as very effective affiliate web marketing tactics. These are just a few suggestions - the most successful affiliates find ways to get creative with tips like these and find the market that pays.

## Use Product Links

- These links consistently show high conversion rates!
- Use our product datafeed, our Product Showcase Creator, the Linkbuilder feature in Linkshare to create links to any page you want, or use our pre-made product links already available to you in your Linkshare interface.

## Search Engine Optimization

- Create sites that are easily crawled by search engine spiders.
- Optimize the copy on your site for what people are searching for!
- To find out what people are searching for, use tools like Wordtracker or Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool. See the [resources](#) section for links to these tools.
- To search engines, "Content is King." Make sure your site has plenty of content that is related to the products you are trying to sell. Web pages that search engines see as "informational resources" rank much higher than pages that give no information on a topic.
- Build your link popularity!
  - If you have a valuable resource on the web, tell other webmasters about it! Try to get them to link to your site, and offer a reciprocal link in exchange possibly. Remember, outgoing links, as well as incoming links, play an important role on how your site ranks; remember the airport analogy - "A web page is ranked like an airport, if it has no flights (links) arriving, it is not a very important airport, if it has no flights departing, it is not very important, if it has flights arriving and departing, then it is a valuable resource for people who are trying to get somewhere."
  - Get your site listed in major directories - these get crawled by spiders and contribute to your link popularity.

## Email Newsletters

- Does your website offer its members newsletters via email? If so, pop a Sierra Trading Post banner or text link in it!
- Nowadays, all email lists must be opt-in, and members enjoy getting your newsletter. By placing our links in your newsletters, you might be adding value to your user's reading material

Regardless of the way you choose to market your website, it is important to analyze your website statistics so that you can make the necessary adjustments to improve your traffic. There are a variety of ways to analyze your traffic – sometimes your webhost provides an analytic package, sometimes they offer access to your server log files, and sometimes you can purchase a third-party analytics software package.

Here are a few suggestions to fit every budget:

## Log File Analysis

If you can get access to your server log files, this is probably the best way to measure your website's activity. You can obtain a wealth of information from looking at these files in both raw form and through reports run off of the files. These files are usually saved daily in .txt format, and here are a few things you can do with them that may help you out:

- To see if the search engine bots that have visited your site:
  - Open your log file in a text editor and do a search for the user-agent's name. To see if Google has been crawling your site, for example, do a search for "googlebot" and check to see every page it went to on your site. Yahoo's bot is called "Slurp", and there are many others. Here is a link to a current list of user-agents: <http://simplythebest.net/info/useragents/spiders.html>
- To see how people found your site (are most people getting to your site through incoming links or search engines?), the number of pages they looked at on your site, traffic trends, and much more, we recommend using a Log Analyzer. You can spend as much or as little as you want on one of these, and many times even the most basic ones will help you make decisions on how to modify your site. See the [resources](#) section for suggested providers.

## Live Website Statistics

If you're in need of live tracking data for your website, there are many providers available, but they usually come with a hefty price tag. If you're generating a lot of traffic, this might be a good option because it allows you to track in real-time your website activity, and make critical adjustments if you see underperforming areas. Therefore, you have the possibility to route your traffic to more profitable areas of your site to optimize your revenue without having to download your log files. See the [resources](#) section for suggested providers.

## Help from Sierra Trading Post's Affiliate Team

If you're wondering about the type of traffic that you refer to our site, we'll be happy to email you reports on all traffic that you referred to us. We can see the exact pages on your site that sent traffic to us and the volume of traffic that you sent. This may help you in optimizing our link placement on your pages, or to see where you want to spend more of your time when looking at making modifications to your site. If you want a quick report on this, just send us an email with your Linkshare username and website URL that you want us to look at, and we'll get back to you with your statistics as soon as possible.

# Affiliate Resources

Here is a collection of some resources that may be of interest to you in your web development and marketing efforts. These are only suggestions, and we encourage you to look around and benchmark your options.

Sierra Trading Post's affiliate program web resource:

<http://www.sierratradingpost.com/Linkshare/affiliate.asp>

Domain Names:

<http://www.uplinkearth.com>

Website Hosting (paid):

<http://www.uplinkearth.com>

Website Hosting (free):

<http://www.homestead.com> 30-day free trial

<http://www.tripod.lycos.com>

<http://www.bravenet.com>

Web Design Software (paid):

<http://www.macromedia.com/software/dreamweaver/>

Macromedia Dreamweaver MX 2004 - 30 day free trial, includes FTP software.

Web Design Software (free):

<http://www.evrsoft.com> 1st Page 2000 from EVRFSOFT free edition – HTML Editor

<http://webpage.vendercom.com> Trellian WebPage - WYSIWYG and HTML Editor

FTP Client Software:

[http://www.ipswitch.com/Products/WS\\_FTP/](http://www.ipswitch.com/Products/WS_FTP/) WS\_FTP Pro from ipswitch. \$44.95 Full version, Free Trial

Graphics Software:

<http://www.macromedia.com/software/fireworks/> Macromedia Fireworks MX 2004

Product Showcase Creator:

<http://psc.afftools.com/sierra/creator.pl>

Search Engine Optimization:

<http://inventory.overture.com> Overture's Search Term Suggestion Tool

<http://www.wordtracker.com> WordTracker

Log File Analysis:

<http://www.weblogexpert.com/lite.htm> (free)

<http://www.clicktracks.com>

Live Website Statistics:

<http://www.statcounter.com> (free)

<http://www.clicktracks.com>

<http://www.websidestory.com>

<http://www.netiq.com/webtrends>

**External Link Disclaimer:**

Some pages in this document may provide links to other websites for the convenience of users. Sierra Trading Post is not responsible for the availability or content of these external sites, nor does Sierra Trading Post endorse, warrant, or guarantee the products, services, or information described or offered at these other websites. Users cannot assume that the external sites will abide by the same [privacy policy](#) to which Sierra Trading Post adheres. Tracking codes may be appended to some external URLs in this document for the purpose of tracking traffic activity only, and in no way will serve as a way to track sales.

**Sierra Trading Post's Affiliate Terms of Service Agreement:**

Please ensure that you remain in compliance with our terms and conditions. Our agreement can be found here: [http://merchant.linksynergy.com/fs/declares/2640\\_42083\\_2.txt](http://merchant.linksynergy.com/fs/declares/2640_42083_2.txt)



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