



Affiliate Link Cloaking Tips

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The Reasons For Cloaking Affiliate Links

Cloaking links in any Internet Marketing activity is important, especially in email marketing because:

- 1) In the Internet Marketing game, there are plenty of affiliate link hijackers who will simply substitute your affiliate ID with their own in the link, and earn a commission on their own purchase.

By using a decent link cloaking system there is no visible affiliate link for link hijackers to manipulate to their own advantage.

- 2) Uncloaked links leave you vulnerable to spam complaints and the chance of losing your affiliate account. Uncloaked links in an email have a direct link to the website you are selling the product for, and if a subscriber lodges a spam complaint with their ISP, the ISP could get the website shut down. To counter this, many website owners do not allow affiliates to use their affiliate link directly in email promotions.

Any link cloaking system will have your own website domain in the link which helps to protect the product owner (for whom you are selling the product on commission) from spam complaints.

- 3) Cloaking links can assist in building brand awareness for you or your website. One of the easiest ways to do this is to upload all the webpages which cloak your affiliate links into a folder on your website named "Recommends" or "Go" - the link you use in your emails will look something like this:

<http://www.Your-Website.com/Recommends/This-Product.html>

- 4) Using a link cloaking system you can quickly change the destination page to send your subscribers. Often a product you are selling as an affiliate is withdrawn, or the website is closed. If you have used a direct link to the website or product in the email you sent your subscribers, you will be sending your subscribers to something which doesn't exist, and you will lose credibility.

However, if you have used a link cloaking system, all you have to do is change the link in the webpage on your site (or the service) which does the cloaking and you can send your subscribers to an alternate webpage.

- 5) A decent link cloaking system will provide you with click tracking records. If you participate in any form of email marketing this is important - As an

Internet Marketer you need to know how many subscribers respond to the emails you send so you can fine tune your marketing.

There are an infinite number of variables you could test, and you would do this by using a system known as split tracking. For example, you might want to learn which type of email subject results in the highest click rate. To test this you would create two emails with identical content, but with different subjects and send one email to half your list and the other email to the rest of your list. By using a different cloaked link in each email you would soon learn which subject line resulted in the highest click rate.

How to Cloak Your Affiliate Links

There are a number of methods you can use to cloak affiliate links, some you have to pay for and some which are free. Here are a couple of simple free methods available to you:

- 1) If you just want a simple link cloaker which does not have any built in form of tracking and doesn't require you to install any scripts on your website, you could use the cloaking service available at NicheSiteProfits. You can access the link cloaker by clicking on the following link:

-> [**Free Link Cloaker**](#) <-

Full instructions are given on the link cloaking page and this system works for any affiliate link, including ClickBank links. One advantage of this system is your affiliate link is never visible which makes it a little more secure against link hijackers.

While this system does not have any inbuilt form of tracking, you can still track hits to the page through your hosting webstats.

- 2) If you want a simple link cloaker with built in tracking you could install the free script available from FreeLinkCloaker.com. To run the script you need to be able to run PHP scripts on your website and have access to a MySQL database. You can access the link cloaking script by clicking on the following link:

-> [**Free Link Cloaking Script**](#) <-

installation instructions are given in the email you receive with the script and on the install page you run once you have created the database.

While this system works with any affiliate link, the one disadvantage is your full affiliate URL will be visible in the browser search bar which leaves your affiliate link vulnerable to link hijackers.

Both of the cloaking systems mentioned above can be used for email marketing and for cloaking links on your webpages. You can also use the cloaking systems if you are involved with article marketing because you can include cloaked links in the author bio included at the bottom of each article you submit.

Using Aweber to Cloak Links, Track Clicks and Conduct Split Testing

Aweber is one of the best autoresponder services available to Internet Marketers because it has one of the highest email delivery rates. This means if you use an Aweber autoresponder for your email marketing, you can rest assured that a very high percentage of your emails will actually make it into your subscribers inboxes.

Aweber also have a system whereby you can track clicks on the links in your emails and at the same time cloak your affiliate links. They also have a very useful system which allows you to split test your emails to a configurable percentage of your subscribers.

For example you could write an email and split test two different subject lines by sending the email with the first subject to half your list and the same email but with the second subject to the other half of your list. Aweber will automatically add different tracking links to your emails and display the number of times your subscribers clicked the link in each email. This is a useful way of establishing the type of subject lines your subscribers are responsive to.

When you create a new follow up message or a new broadcast message, you can activate click tracking by checking the "Click Tracking" option in the window you enter your subject and message text into. Checking this option will automatically cloak any website link you include in the message text.

Personalization: Place your cursor in the subject or body and use the box below to select the appropriate values for your messages.

Message:	#2 sent <input type="text" value="4"/> day(s) after previous.
Click Tracking:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Enable tracking of click on links in your message.
Templates:	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 2px;">Basic Plain Template - (none) Bookend - Clover (green/tan)</div>

To conduct split testing you need to create a new broadcast message and click on the "Create Split Test Broadcast" button.

The screenshot shows the Aweber web interface. At the top left is the Aweber logo. On the right, there are links for "Get Started | Help | Account | Logout". Below this is a navigation menu with "Home", "Messages", "Leads", "List Settings", and "Reports". A secondary menu includes "Live Chat - Online", "Follow Up", "Broadcast", and "Blog Broadcast". A "Managing List: plr-profits (Add New)" section is visible, along with a "Change List:" dropdown menu set to "plr-nrnfits" and a "Go" button. Below this, the "Broadcast Messages:" section contains a paragraph of text and two buttons: "Create Broadcast Message" and "Create Split Test Broadcast". A red arrow points from the text above to the "Create Split Test Broadcast" button.

A new window will open into which you enter the split percentage before clicking the "Create Split Test" button.

Broadcast Split Test:

You may test up to 4 split test groups of varying percentages. For example, if you want a split test with 10%, 10%, 10%, and a final group of 70% it will automatically randomly divide your list into unique groups. You can then enter your broadcast text into those messages and send them. Send your broadcasts all at once or wait for feedback and results before mailing each group. If you want to create less than 4 groups just enter the percentages for those groups. For example, 25%, 25%, and 50% would create 3 groups.

Split Test Percentages:

Please enter percentages for each split test group from your list:

<input type="text" value="50"/>	%	<input type="text" value="50"/>	%	<input type="text"/>	%	<input type="text"/>	%	<input type="button" value="Create Split Test"/>
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This creates pending broadcasts which you now need to edit. You open each pending broadcast by clicking on the subject links.

Pending Broadcasts:

Send Date	Type	# Att.	Click Tracking	View	Subject	Spam?	Test	Copy	Actions
08/20/07 08:02 PM	Text	0	off	Split Test 08/20/07 08:02 PM Group 2 50%	! Insert Your Subject Here	0.0	Test	Copy	<input type="button" value="Delete"/> <input type="button" value="Queue Now"/>
08/20/07 08:02 PM	Text	0	off	Split Test 08/20/07 08:02 PM Group 1 50%	! Insert Your Subject Here	0.0	Test	Copy	<input type="button" value="Delete"/> <input type="button" value="Queue Now"/>

Notice that the Click Tracking status is "off" - you need to turn this on by either clicking the "off" link text in the Pending Broadcast view, or by checking the "Click

Tracking" option when you are editing each email.

There is one important point to remember – If you use an affiliate link in your email, you cannot change it once the email has been sent by Aweber. If you have entered the wrong link you have no way of solving the problem.

The secret is to enter a cloaked link into your Aweber email...

If you discover something is wrong either with the affiliate website you are sending your subscribers to, or your affiliate link itself, all you have to do is change your cloaked link on your website.

The simplest way to do this is to create a redirect using the NicheSiteProfits free link cloaker, save this as a webpage and upload it to your website. You then enter the URL to this webpage in your Aweber email. If you want to change this at any point, all you have to do is create a new cloaked link and save it using the same name as your previous page. The link in the Aweber email your subscribers have received remains the same, but you have changed the destination where your subscribers will end up.

The Aweber autoresponder service is one of the most reliable autoresponder services available today...

- When you open an Aweber account you can create an unlimited number of autoresponders and rest assured that your emails will be delivered.
- Your Aweber account has a simple user interface to create opt-in forms which you can add to your websites.
- If you're not sure what to do, you will find free training guides and videos inside your Aweber account.

Click the following link to take a FREE test drive of the Aweber autoresponder system:

-> [**Aweber Test Drive**](#) <-