

InLinkz.com

# InLinkz Linkups

How to throw a successful blog party



## What is a linkup

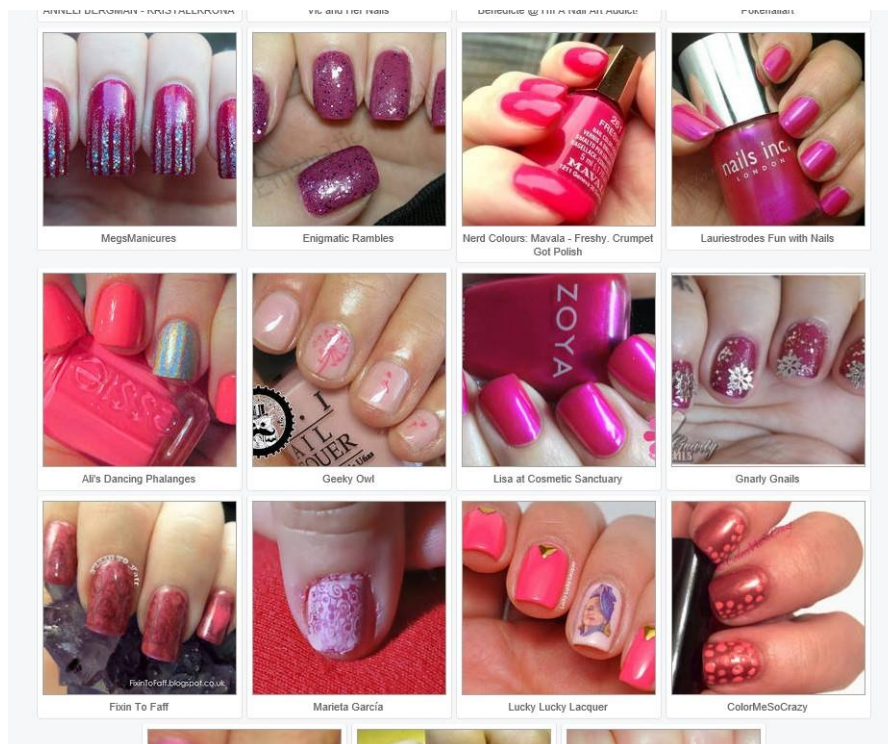
Whether you call it a “linky tool”, a “linky”, a blog party, a grid or a blog hop, the linkup is a very efficient way to connect with your readers. It is an active social blogging event that brings bloggers together. The way linkups work allows you, the blogger that runs the linkup, to create a different kind of relationship with your readers.

What usually happens is that the blog reader acts as a content consumer. They visit, they read and leave. There are some occasions when they may leave a comment here and there but that is all. As soon as the blog post is read, it is discarded and the reader just waits passively for your next post to repeat the process.

What needs to be done is to engage the reader and make them feel this is their blog too; that there is something they own in this blog post. This will turn them into a more loyal, active reader and a contributor to your blogging success. This is where the linkup comes in:

## How it works

The InLinkz linkup tool will let you create a widget within your blog post, that allows your readers to add their own links to your linkup. This produces a colorful gallery that is built by your readers with their own posts:



## How does this help my blog

Let's start with raw traffic. Bloggers that see your linkup and add their own post, will create some traffic for you. These will most probably be your readers already, so, the change may not be that big. You just recycle your following.

Actually, if you stop here, it will probably not help that much.

Most linkups that fail, do so for one reason. They just exist. Some of your regular readers, that already read your blog, will add their link in that failed linkup and they will also expect to get some traffic out of it. Imagine what happens next! Well, nothing happens.

It is like having a knife and expect it to work by dropping fruit on it. You have to use it properly.

Here are the first steps you can take so you get the most out of your linkup:

### Ways to increase your linkup traffic

Running a linkup is somewhat like organizing a party at your home. You organize the party, guests come, they bring some presents (maybe), they party and get to know each other and then they leave.

Let's analyze the above party. The "Invitation" part is deliberately missing from the above sentence. Imagine what a party it would be if no one showed up. Because we didn't invite anybody!

So you prepare and send out invitations. In the blogging counterpart, you need to set up and announce your party (your linkup).

### Preparation

Preparing for your linkup is most of the work that has to be done. In order to fully engage your audience, you need to have a well-prepared linkup. Following is what you need to have before you start partying:

### Theme

Your linkup needs a theme. In real life, you celebrate something. Your party has a theme. A Halloween party or 5 years of marriage. Or just come and grab a mojito.

In the blogging world, it depends on your blog content. The most obvious example would be a photography blog where each reader that links up, should, for example, add a macro photo of nature:



Each blogger group of course, will have different categories where you can base your theme. There are literally thousands of different themes out there and the only limit is each blogger's imagination. Just make sure that the theme you choose will not be either too vague, or too difficult for entrants to capture.

Not having a theme will allow, well, anyone to take part in the party. And this is not always good as it could be an awkward and ugly linkup where nothing fits anywhere. Moreover, readers love a challenge.

You want to have an effective linkup that people visiting your blog, will also visit the bloggers that added those entries too. Your participants will notice the difference and they will appreciate the opportunity to expose their work through your blog.

In general, a theme helps not only to bring the right quality of bloggers to your linkup, but to produce an aesthetically pleasing thumbnail grid as well. This will increase your blog's "WOW" factor to new visitors and make it easier for them to remember that your linkups have awesome entries! Guess what. This will make them come for more!

### Rules

Rules are necessary. While hearing the word "rules" makes you think that it is a list of things your participants should not do, it is actually the roadmap to making the whole party awesome.

One of the rules, we've already mentioned. It is the theme. You should set the theme so you get a nice linkup. Entrants should follow the theme in order to enter their links.

You can also set some rules on what each participant needs to do in order to be accepted.

Some of these rules can be:

- Notify their following.
- Promise to visit/leave a comment on other participants blogs too
- Follow you on your social media accounts.
- Agree to be notified about subsequent linkups.
- Put a banner on their own blog that they are partying here.

All these are traffic-enhancers. Let's see them one by one:

### Notify their following.

This would be to tweet, pin or post your blog post to facebook. With this, they will actually notify all their followers that they added their link to your linkup so "come and see". The party equivalent would probably be "Bring a friend".

This is one of the most powerful methods to increase your traffic. Fact is, you can only reach your followers. Say you announce your linkup to all your twitter followers, your facebook friends and send some emails too. But you cannot reach your readers' followers. They will do it for you. And they'll be happy to do so.

InLinkz provides tools to easily announce the links each participant adds, as soon as they them. Of course, in the tweet/post/pin, both the entrant's link and yours are present by default so they get to brag about it too! This is a win-win situation.

This brings purely new visitors for you. Some of these new visitors will be next linkup's contributors which will, in turn, invite their own following (and make your next linkup entry count bigger and grow your subscribers list)

Visit/leave a comment to other people too

*"Please visit/leave a comment to at least two links before and after your own".*

This is a very powerful sentence. Why? Because it will bring traffic to participants, yes. And they'll be glad and they'll come back next time you throw a party. But the key is to visit the people AFTER. Apparently, those who will do what the sentence says, will have to wait a while and come to your site again after a couple of hours/days to see who those, after their own link are. This is not only good for traffic. It is good because, while visiting, they may see something they like.

Leaving a comment is much more powerful as it connects them emotionally and makes the traffic increase they get from you, much more obvious. Moreover comments are a major drive for your readers to keep the blog running and provide precious feedback.

#### Follow you on social media

Another important step for future linkups. Setting as a rule to follow you on social media (mainly in twitter, facebook, google plus and pinterest) will allow you to quickly build those communication channels too. While you will get the chance to let them know by email (see below), you will also get a chance to ask them to spread the word. Nobody would forward your email to a thousand people. Almost everyone would retweet your tweet though (of course, tweets are less effective than email so you still need the email list we discuss exactly below).

Do not forget. Having a decent following, gives the impression that you are an important person and makes someone easier to follow you.

***Small tip:*** keep your followers number always bigger than the ones you follow. It shows prestige and helps you actually read some tweets from the people you are really interested in what they are saying.

#### Agree to be notified about subsequent linkups

After each linkup ends, you have the option to grab the emails of all the entrants. This is a very good way to build your mailing list.

For example, using mailchimp (see how to connect mailchimp to InLinkz [here](#)) you can keep a full list of all your readers. As you may already know, mail is one of the most powerful marketing media and building a list is very important. Just make sure you let your users know that you may use their email addresses to let them know about your linkups or they may mark your emails as spam.

*Small tip: Using web applications like mailchimp instead of your own gmail account is preferred, as these applications are optimized for this kind of usage and they even kick those who mark you as spam, out of your list. Sending through gmail, you risk not only being marked as a spammer and getting your email address blocked but in some cases, if you send to a whole list using your CC field, you expose all your readers' email addresses to everyone and this really pisses readers off.*

Put a banner on their blog that they are partying here.

Asking for your participants to put your banner in their blog is like leaving a note in their door that notifies their visitors where they're partying. This has two major benefits:

First, it is the obvious benefit of increased traffic. Your participants' readers go to their blogs, see their post (for example the "*macro photos of nature*"). Then they see the banner that links to you, they will click through it and come to see more like it.

The other benefit of the banner is getting **backlinks**. As you may already know, in order to get ranked higher from search engines, you need to have good referrals from other blogs. The links that go from other blogs to yours, act as referrals. It is like asking for a good photographer in your neighborhood and everyone directs you to one specific person. Well, he has the most backlinks in the real world. The exact same happens here too. When they ask around, they find you. In addition, you have the major know-it-all, Google, that sees who is referring to you and plays along.

**Note:** (banners should get your reader's eye so we'll talk about that too in a future post)

Participants may ask: "why should I put the banner on my blog?" Well, the answer is because you do the same for them, by exposing their link to all your followers and to the followers of all the people they will come visit through everybody else participating and putting your banner in their blogs.

If you are really serious about backlinks, you can even enforce this rule from the InLinkz dashboard. Nobody will be able to add their link to your linkup unless InLinkz detects a valid backlink on their blog post.

### Plan ahead

Strategy is a big word. What that means, is, that you need to know where you are heading with a linkup. Running a linkup for no reason will probably do some good. But having a specific strategy with your linkup will allow you to have measurable results.

If you consider running a linkup, prepare your steps in a notepad (see at the bottom of this article for a list of actionable stuff to do when running a linkup).

Having a couple of themes noted down for future linkups will help you feel productive instead of searching to the last minute for something hastily souped-up.

And remember: put yourself in your reader's shoes. Do you ask for too much? Would it seem strange to go by the rules you've set maybe? Is what you set in your theme feasible by your

readers? You might be able to create exquisite ornaments from seaweed. But you would be probably the only entrant in this “seaweed ornament” themed linkup.

### Tracking

By tracking I mean to watch the traffic statistics. This is a good habit to have as a blogger in general, not only for linkups. And most platforms provide a way to keep an eye on your traffic. This is the only true way to see if something you did, had a positive impact to your blog.

The top dog in website traffic statistics is Google Analytics (GA). It is probably the most intimidating to start with too. *(there is a post about GA for mommies in the works though, just to get you started so you can see the results you get from InLinkz as hard numbers)*

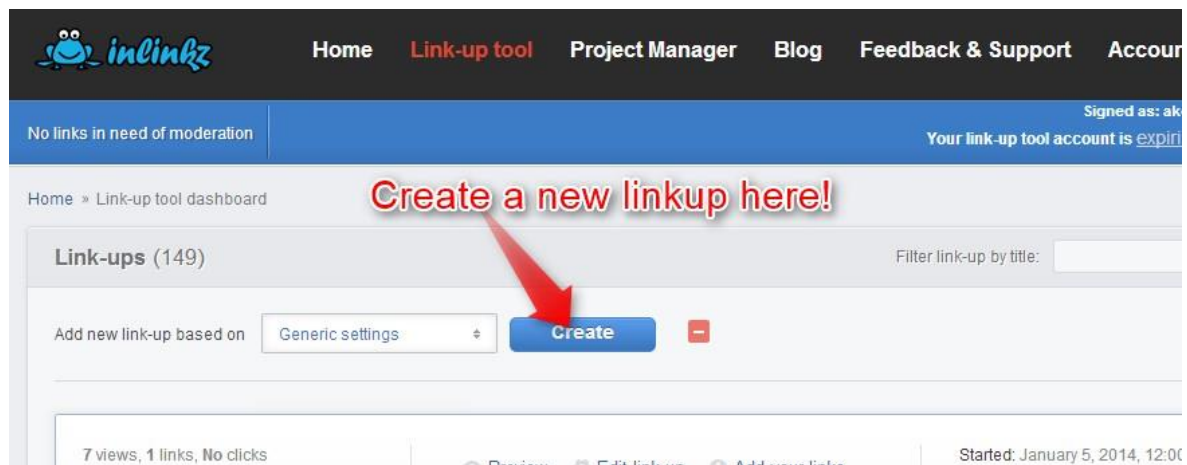
### Technical

Running your first linkup might be a little intimidating if you haven’t done so before, so there are a few things to boost your self-confidence before you go public.

### Creating the linkup itself

This is where you will use the InLinkz dashboard.

You go to your linkup tool dashboard and click on “Create”



The most important fields you need to fill are the description and the start and end dates:

The screenshot shows the 'Name & description' and 'Duration' sections of the InLinkz configuration interface. Three red arrows point to specific fields: the first points to the 'Description (displayed on your blog)' text area, the second points to the 'Start Date' field in the 'Duration' section, and the third points to the 'End Date' field. The 'Link-up name' and 'Unique name' fields are empty. The 'Path' field contains 'p'. The 'Start Date' is set to January 11, 2014, at 18:00. The 'End Date' is set to January 18, 2014, at 17:55. There is a checkbox for 'Enable vote on Photos (only on thumblinks)' which is currently unchecked.

These will allow the linkup to open and close when you want it to.

You can always set the Start Date in the past so as soon as you post your linkup, it will be immediately open for submissions.

Regarding the description, since this is rendered through the script, it will not be visible to search engines so you should consider putting all your rules and linkup description text in your blog post instead of there. This goes for the blog button as well.

The only case you would want the description to include the rules and/or button is when the linkup will be displayed in different blogs at the same time (a “blog hop”). By putting the rules inside the description, you make sure that everyone sees them regardless of the blog she adds her link to.

*(Note: as mentioned below in more detail, the script acts only as a placeholder so when you put the script to multiple blogs, the same links appear to all blogs. No matter where a link is added from, it will be shown on all the places where the script is used)*

### Experiment

Make sure you subscribe for an InLinkz account a few days before the actual day you will run your linkup. If you already have one, that is best.

A tip for experimenting with stuff in general on your blog (not just InLinkz) is to get another blog that will be used only for testing purposes. This is by far easier on free platforms like wordpress.com, typepad and blogger.

You could for example get a blog named xxxxxtest.blogspot.com (where xxxxx is your actual blog name) and run your experiments there. Moreover, in most platforms, you can restrict access to other people so whatever happens at that blog posts, stays there.

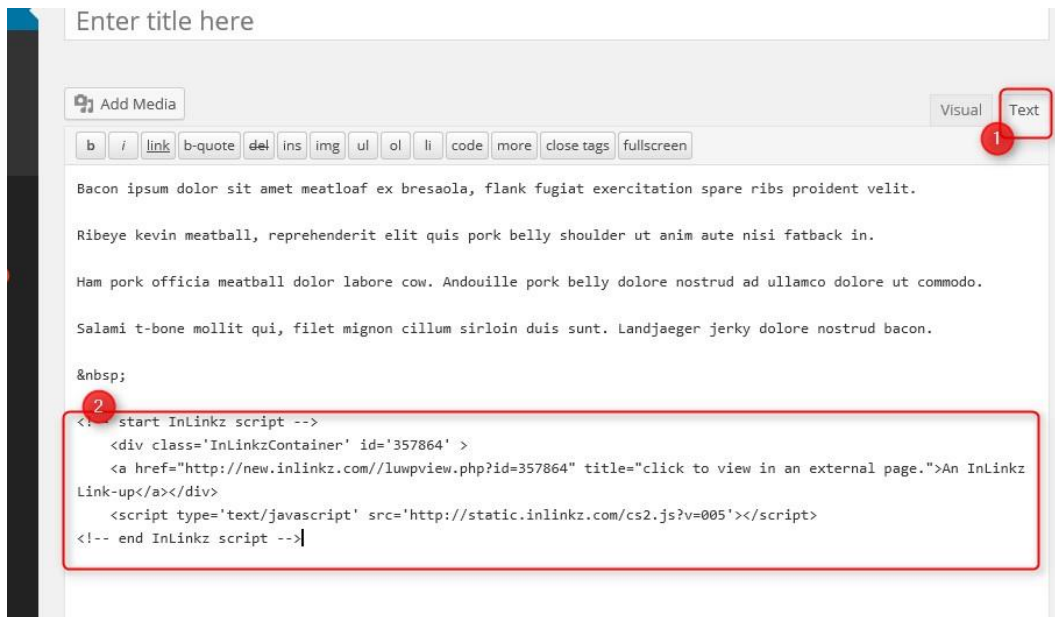
One thing to remember, is that the InLinkz script you put in your blog post, acts only as a placeholder. This means that when a browser stumbles upon the script code when rendering the web page, it then asks from the InLinkz server to produce the widget. The links are stored in the InLinkz server, not in your blog post. What that means is that you can move, modify, change or cripple the script, without harming the links. Nothing you can do in your blog post will affect your linkup. The only way to modify your links is through the InLinkz dashboard. So if you feel you did something wrong, just discard the old script and get a fresh copy from the Inlinkz dashboard. Your links will still be there.

The script code is inserted while you are in the “HTML” editing mode of your blog editor.

*Blogspot* blogs name it HTML :



In *WordPress* and wordpress-based blogs, the same mode is referred as “Text” mode:



**Small tip:** Keep in mind that in some cases, the preview of the blog editor you have, may not render the widget and you will need to publish the post first. This is where the test blog comes in handy, or, you can also use a very old post of yours where you can put temporarily the code. The later method has the advantage of putting the script in the same environment as your final post (same plugins, same blog code) and not alerting your blog subscribers with messages of blog posts being published since it is an old post.

Another technical issue is the **placement of the widget code**. You usually want the linkup to be the last thing in your blog post. When you switch to your blog editor, the easiest way to do is to just go to the very end of your post and add it. In case you want to add it somewhere in between the post, then it is suggested to first finish the post completely, check that it behaves correctly in preview and then add the linkup code.

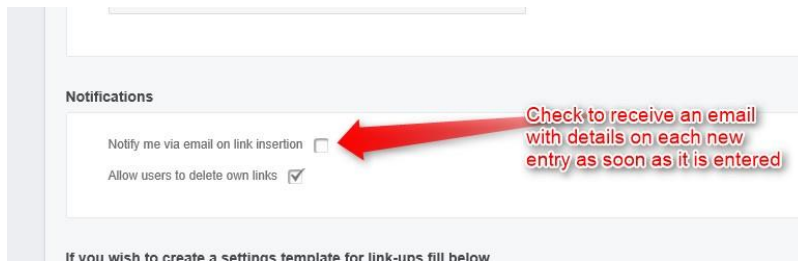
Make sure the **code is not inside another HTML tag** as it might cause problems. If for example you place the InLinkz script code inside a link (an <A> tag), then there is a chance that the widget will be unclickable because the tag you inserted it into, is a link to somewhere else and it will make the widget behave like a huge link. Another common source of error in code placement is the button that you may use for other bloggers to put in their own posts. The button code snippet is a bit more complex than usual HTML code and forgetting to check it thoroughly, or adding the InLinkz code within its HTML code, will again make both behave erratically.



## Linkup options

There are many of them and probably not in the scope of the current article as it would get ridiculously long and boring, explaining every little button.

One thing you might want to know in advance though, is that you can set InLinkz to send you an email each time someone enters a link. In new users, running their first linkups, this is a great confidence booster. Be careful though, if you are a seasoned blogger with thousands of readers. It might flood you with emails. Of course there is a single click unsubscribe from further messages at the bottom of each email so you can immediately stop receiving them:



You can also do minor moderation from that email. That means, you can see what it contains, where it goes, who entered it (and a rough location estimate based on user's IP address) and there is a single click delete.

## Announce!

Announcing the linkup is a big step. You already know what the theme is, when it starts and when it ends and you have set the (not overwhelming) rules of the party. Now it is time to let people know.

Of course you will be sending to your mailing list if you have one. Other ways of notifying people is of course your social media and your blog.

New blog posts generate new feed items so adding a small blog post just to announce the linkup a couple of days before the actual event is a great idea. Keep it short so it displays all important information before any "read more" links and if your theme is a visual one, add the best photo/illustration you can find that represents that theme.

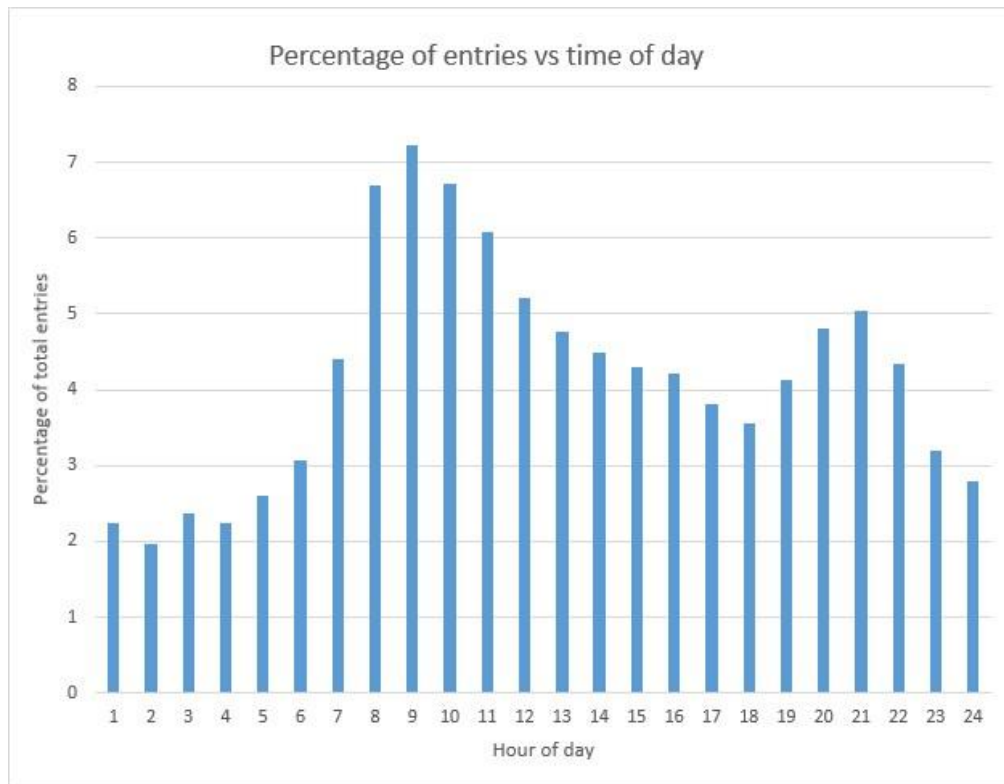
### Announcing time

You want to take into account when your readers are most active. This will help you to land your announcement in their mailboxes and feeds at the right time. Just think of your own twitter feed. We usually read only stuff that is at the top of the feed, while we are online. Again, mail is better for announcement because eventually, everyone will read their emails but tweets and posts to FB, are forgotten once they start moving towards the bottom.

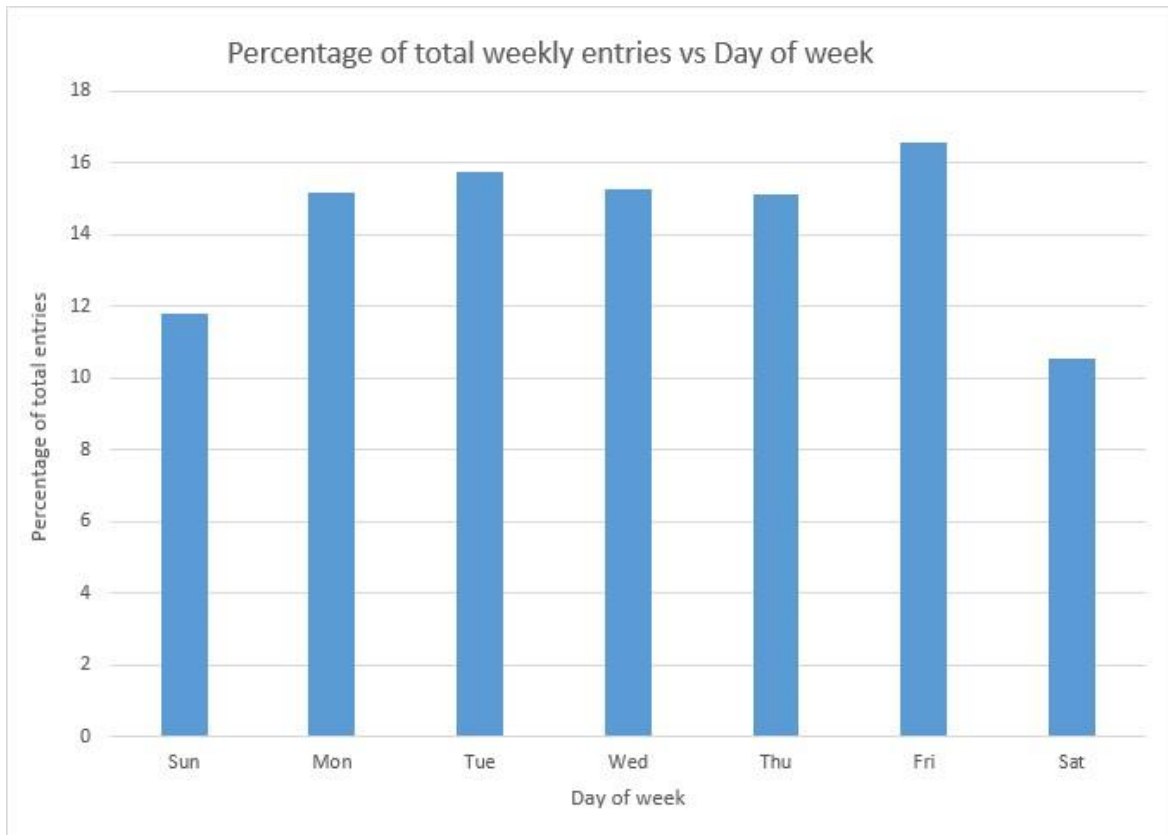
The following graph displays InLinkz activity throughout a typical week. You will notice the trend that wants people being active at the morning and then again late in the evening. Moreover, weekends seem slower than weekdays.

*(the sample data for these graphs are based on the last 1.000.000 links entered in various InLinkz linkups)*

Percentage of weekly entries vs time of day



Percentage of total weekly entries vs Day of week



Daily Percentage of Links entered per hour

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
00-01	1,92	2,43	4,40	4,52	3,29	3,49	2,47
01-02	1,52	3,06	3,02	3,45	3,31	3,34	2,00
02-03	3,11	2,80	4,57	3,42	3,12	3,76	2,82
03-04	2,69	2,67	4,21	3,08	3,47	3,18	3,18
04-05	3,89	4,28	4,44	3,85	3,03	3,93	2,60
05-06	3,89	3,94	4,23	5,03	4,30	5,50	3,70
06-07	3,58	6,16	7,16	7,66	6,58	7,95	5,02
07-08	5,32	9,41	12,05	11,70	8,83	13,47	6,07
08-09	6,31	10,01	10,70	12,78	11,10	13,74	7,59
09-10	5,77	10,80	9,53	11,68	10,10	12,65	6,66
10-11	4,97	9,61	9,76	10,06	8,07	11,40	7,01
11-12	5,55	7,36	8,04	8,79	7,33	9,86	5,26
12-13	5,43	7,32	6,74	6,99	7,44	9,34	4,34
13-14	6,88	7,40	5,99	5,77	6,28	8,16	4,44
14-15	5,82	7,30	5,73	6,20	6,22	7,01	4,78
15-16	5,65	6,36	7,06	6,06	6,53	5,90	4,66
16-17	5,22	5,77	5,56	4,95	5,45	6,18	4,93
17-18	4,80	4,01	5,07	6,40	5,16	5,45	4,68
18-19	5,61	4,93	6,67	4,35	6,75	6,79	6,17
19-20	7,35	8,39	9,73	5,36	7,66	5,33	4,32
20-21	8,12	9,81	7,74	7,08	8,54	5,13	3,95
21-22	6,28	6,37	6,42	5,66	8,46	7,07	3,05
22-23	5,17	6,31	4,23	4,20	5,05	4,21	2,72
23-00	3,27	5,17	4,68	3,79	5,35	2,85	2,91

You can use the scheduling capabilities of email list webapps (such as mailchimp mentioned earlier) and you can also use timed tweets (hootsuite does this) so you can schedule your tweets and facebook posts too. This will allow you to layout your mentions in time where your readers will be most active. Don't hesitate to ask from people to like/retweet. You'll be amazed of how effective it is to just ask to retweet your message.

#### *While partying*

From now on, you will start receiving new entries.

Almost the same as above, is valid after the linkup opens. This is where you get social mentions from your entrants.

You can help and promote your linkup by retweeting and saying thank you to your partygoers! The most efficient method, though, is to leave a comment on the blog post they linked up. It is immediate gratification for them and it is so easy to just say thank you when you get your first links in your linkup!

It is also very easy, if you setup InLinkz to send you an email when someone enters a link because you can check and visit the target blog with a single click. No need to search all your links and try to find which one you haven't left a comment at yet.

**Yay!**

A new link was added to your InLinkz collection [multifield\(click to visit web page/blog\)](#)

Time/date: August 31, 2013, 3:10 pm CST  
Links to: <http://www.synthfrog.com/>  
Name/Description: SynthFrog  
Email entered: test  
Thumbnail:  


[Click to go directly to target blog](#)

Added from Ip:  (Click to see where in the world was added from!)

Click here to visit the [linkup's moderation page](#) to view/manage all the entries

Click here to [edit the link](#)

Click here [here](#) to delete the link (beware: no warning, no undo!!!)

One thing worth mentioning is that links displayed in the widget, have buttons to make easier to share both the target blog link and yours with a single click:



Your readers (and you of course) can use this to tweet/post/pin to their followers whichever link they like. So it is a good practice to remind it to them if you can (preferably in your blog post).

**One last tip:** You can **schedule a blog post/tweet/facebook post/Google plus post about a day before the linkup ends**. This will remind people that the party is going strong but it will soon end so they better hurry up!

A sense of urgency in your words will make those that leave stuff for the last minute (which is a big chunk of the human population) to come and see and still give them enough time to prepare something to link up with.

Notifying people just a couple of hours before expiration is almost pointless as they will feel they lost the party.

### After-party

There is a major difference between normal parties and linkups. In the latter, you do not have to clean up the mess. You probably got some awesome blog love and your linkup is bigger than last time. You also have new happy readers. Yay!

First of all, you need to thank them properly. It is easy! Since you have their email addresses, export them to a **new** list in mailchimp. Then, send an email to this new list with a *thank you* notice. After sending those emails, you can merge this new list with the main list you collect

your email subscribers (If you do not have one yet, this will serve as your main list also). You can also include a teaser of next time's theme. If they liked this one, they'll love the next! Remember what we've mentioned of having a couple of themes thought out in advance? This is where you will need them.

From there on, you can check your statistics. You might want to wait a day or so, as GA has a small lag in updating its data. You'll have a complete image after this.

You can also enjoy the rest of the day by just browsing. Your party was awesome, your house is clean and you just need some time to yourself now!!

## **WELL DONE!**

### **Here is a list of actions to keep in mind while planning a linkup:**

1. Find theme (or find more than one and note the rest for future use)
  1. Theme requirements
  2. Rules
    1. Notify their following.
    2. Promise to visit/leave a comment on other participants blogs too
    3. Follow you on your social media accounts.
    4. Agree to be notified about subsequent linkups.
    5. Put a banner on their own blog that they are partying here.
2. Create the blog post
  1. Create your button if any.
  2. Experiment in another blog
  3. Play with linkup widget (at least if you are new to this)
  4. Make sure code of post is correct before adding widget
  5. Don't just put the linkup code. Put rules and description in your blog post so search engines can crawl it.
  6. Do you want notification emails ?
3. Announce linkup to twitter/Facebook/google plus
  1. Time your announcements/schedule post and emails/tweets
  2. Mention start/end dates, theme (roughly at least, so people have time to prepare their posts, if needed)
  3. Ask to retweet, spread the word.

4. Email your mail list subscribers about the upcoming linkup.
4. While running.
  1. Say thanks (using the notification email to save clicks) to entrants' blogs
  2. Retweet your entrants' tweets, like their posts
  3. Notify people about a day before party closing time (with a sense of urgency)
  4. Be a good host.
5. Ending
  1. Create new list from emails
  2. Send thank you
  3. Merge list with original
6. Enjoy!