



NICHE VALIDATION WORKSHEET

The Real AI Side Hustle — Free Companion Resource

This is the five-step sequence from Chapter 6, turned into a working document. Fill it in before you build anything. The whole thing takes an afternoon — and it will save you months on a niche you'd have eventually quit.

STEP 1 YOUR INTEREST LIST

Write down everything you're into: hobbies, interests, things you've spent real money on, stuff people text you to ask about. No filtering. No keyword tool. Just the raw list. Then mark each with what you actually bring to it.

Interest / Topic	Passion?	Experience?	Authority?	Score 1–3

Passion — you'd happily read about it for fun; won't burn out writing 100 articles.

Experience — you've done it, bought the gear, made the mistakes. You write from memory.

Authority — people already come to you for recommendations here.

Your top 2–3 candidates (2+ marks each):

- _____
- _____
- _____

STEP 2 NARROW EACH CANDIDATE

For each top candidate, write the **continent** (too broad), then **3 towns** (specific enough to win).

Candidate 1

Continent (too broad)

Town option A

Town option B

Town option C

Candidate 2

Continent (too broad)

Town option A

Town option B

Town option C

RULE OF THUMB If you can find a magazine for it, it's too broad. "Home decor" is a continent. "Small-apartment living room decor" is a town.

STEP 3 VALIDATE THE DEMAND — THE SCREENSHOT LOOP

Run this loop for each narrowed candidate. You need: Claude (free tier), Mangools KWFinder (or Google Keyword Planner as a free fallback).

THE CLAUDE PROMPT — VERBATIM, SWAP IN YOUR NICHE

“I’m thinking about building a content website about [your narrowed niche]. Give me 5 or 6 clusters of keywords I could check in a keyword research tool – the kind real buyers and researchers actually type. Mix in ‘best [thing],’ ‘top [thing] under \$[X],’ ‘[thing] for beginners,’ ‘[thing] vs [thing],’ and ‘how to [do thing]’ phrasings. Group them by intent – just learning, comparing options, or ready to buy – and keep them specific, not broad.”

Paste the result into KWFinder. Screenshot the results. Paste the screenshot back into Claude: “Based on these search volumes and difficulty scores, does this niche look viable for a new affiliate site? Summarize the opportunity.”

DEMAND CHECK FOR EACH KEYWORD CLUSTER

Keyword phrase	Monthly volume	KD score	Intent	Pass?

Two gates to clear

- Volume in the thousands** — aim for 1,000 to tens of thousands/mo. Below, the pool may be too small; way above, you’ve drifted back to the continent.
- KD under 30** (KWFinder-specific — don’t compare to Ahrefs/Semrush). Under 30 = a brand-new site has a fair shot.

Intent check

- At least some keywords show “**comparing options**” or “**ready to buy**” intent — these drive commissions.
- Not just **informational** searches, where people want answers, not products.

Overall opportunity _____ **Pass / Fail / Maybe** _____

STEP 4 CHECK THE MONEY DOOR

Before you build, confirm you can actually get paid. Search: “[your niche] affiliate program”

Program name	Commission	Approves new sites?	Notes
Amazon Associates	1–4.5%	Yes (almost everyone)	Start here

Key question: Do the programs that pay well (above ~3%) accept new sites with no traffic yet, or require existing traffic first?

- At least one **beginner-friendly program** accepts new sites in this niche.
- High-payout programs** are available (even if gated for now — you can qualify later).

If you hit the gated-program problem (like Site 1’s credit-card trap): start with Amazon Associates and add the better programs once your traffic qualifies. **Sequence it — don’t abandon the niche.**

Money-door verdict Open / Gated (manageable) / Closed _____

STEP 5 FINAL DECISION

	Candidate 1	Candidate 2	Candidate 3
Interest score (Step 1)	/3	/3	/3
Demand clears both gates?	Y/N	Y/N	Y/N
Money door open?	Y/N/Gated	Y/N/Gated	Y/N/Gated
Still writing about it in month 6?	Y/N/?	Y/N/?	Y/N/?

The niche I'm building _____

Why this one and not the others:

THE HONEST REMINDER

The data is a filter, not a verdict. Two niches I researched cleared every gate (compact home-gym setup, espresso machines). Good volume, low KD, buyers everywhere. I built neither — I'm interested in both, but not enough to still be writing about them a hundred articles in.

Among the niches that pass all four steps, pick the one you won't quit. The one that compounds is the one you keep showing up for.