Join it.
Then cap it at 35%.

Priya Shah · Kinsta affiliate programme terms · 7 April 2026

JOIN, SIZED SMALL: The economics here are among the best available to you and the tracking is unusually clean, which is why the verdict is join. The reason to size it rather than lean on it is section 6.2, the standard termination-and-settlement clause that sits in almost every affiliate agreement ever written. It is not a mark against this programme in particular. It is the reason no single programme should carry your whole income. **Cap this one at 35% of expected income, not the 55% the scout modelled.**

Section split	Cookie window	Recurring	Clawback window
2 · 4 · 2	60 days	10% for life	Not stated
pass · warning · fail	Resets on click	With exclusions	Silence

Documents read: Affiliate Program Terms and Conditions, updated 12 December 2024, and the Affiliate Program documentation page, updated 2 June 2026. Note the gap: the docs have been revised more recently than the contract, and the docs carry a commission change the contract does not mention. Every clause quoted below is from the terms themselves, not from a summary.

This is a commercial read of a commercial contract, not legal advice. Where something turns on enforceability, that is a question for a lawyer.

1. ATTRIBUTION PASS

Last click within the window. Section 5.7: if a customer "clicks on a different Affiliate Link while using the same web browser, a new cookie will be placed and will overwrite the original cookie." So another partner can take a customer you warmed up, which is standard.

What lifts this to a pass is section 4.5.11, which bans affiliates from placing links to Kinsta "on coupon websites" at all, and 4.5.10, which bans presenting Kinsta's ongoing discounts as coupon codes or deals. **The single biggest systematic threat to last-click attribution is coupon and extension traffic, and Kinsta has excluded it from the programme entirely.** That is unusual and it is in your favour.

Two things to know. Section 5.6: only one affiliate is paid per customer and where there is a dispute "Kinsta's decision in this matter shall be final." Section 5.8: no commission is paid for tracking errors "of any kind", including a customer deleting their cookie.

2. COOKIE WINDOW PASS

60 days, and it resets: a fresh click places a new cookie and restarts the window. For a purchase your audience researches over a few weeks, 60 days is adequate. It is not generous, and it is a third of Semrush's 120.

> **The caveat that will actually cost you money.** Section 5.7: "Tracking cookies are stored by individual web browsers... At signup, the Referred Customer will be assigned to the Affiliate whose Affiliate Link is identified by the tracking cookie stored by the web browser used by the Referred Customer to sign up." Your reader reads your comparison on their phone at the weekend and signs up on their desktop on Monday. You are not paid. There is nothing you can do about this beyond writing for the desk rather than the commute.

3. RECURRING TREATMENT WARNING

10% monthly, for the life of the customer, on Managed WordPress Hosting. That is genuinely good and it is the reason to be here. The warning is about what the 10% is calculated on.

Section 5.5, three exclusions in one sentence: "One-time fees, overage fees, and add-on subscriptions shall not be considered in the calculation of Commissions." Kinsta sells add-ons. Your referrals will buy them. You earn nothing on any of it.

Same clause: "If the Referred Customer has received a discount, the Commission is calculated from the discounted Fee." Kinsta's annual billing is cheaper per month, so a referral who pays annually is worth less to you than one who pays monthly.

> **The scope has already been narrowed once.** The June 2026 docs page states: "We no longer pay commission for new Application and Database Hosting referrals. If you have existing referrals, you'll still receive your monthly recurring commission of 5%." That is a category removed and a surviving rate at half the WordPress rate. It is not in the contract, which has not been updated since December 2024. This is section 7 happening in front of you.

4. REFUNDS AND CLAWBACKS WARNING

Section 5.5: "If any Fees are refunded to a Referred Customer for any reason, Kinsta may setoff such amounts from Affiliate's future Commissions."

No time limit is stated. The terms are silent, and silence in a contract you did not draft resolves in favour of the party who drafted it. Read strictly this is an open-ended setoff right, which would ordinarily score a fail. I have held it at warning because the practical exposure on hosting is bounded: refunds cluster in the first weeks, and Kinsta's money-back guarantee is itself time-limited. But the clause does not say that, and you should ask.

Separately, the docs describe a qualification period: the one-time commission accumulates until "your referred customer has had an active WordPress hosting subscription for 2 months and settled all payments", and **recurring commissions do not start accruing until the one-time commission is approved.** A customer who cancels inside 60 days shows as "Cancelled before 60 days" and pays you nothing. So your first money from a referral is roughly two months behind the signup.

5. PAYOUT MECHANICS FAIL

The good parts first, because they are real. The threshold is low: section 5.9, commissions are paid once the balance reaches **$50**. Payment is by PayPal or Kinsta account credit. The UK is not restricted.

Now the clause that decides the verdict. Section 6.1: "Kinsta may in its discretion terminate the Program, this Agreement, and/or your Account **at any time without formal notice**." Section 6.2: on termination "Kinsta shall have no further obligations to Affiliate under this Agreement, **including the payment of any pending or prior earned Commissions**."

Read those together. Commissions you have already earned, on customers who have already paid, can be forfeited on an account closure that requires no notice and no stated cause. Section 12.2 then caps Kinsta's total liability at "the amount of your earned and unpaid commissions", which is the same money.

This is a fail on the plain criterion: an unpaid balance is forfeitable on account closure. It is also, in fairness, close to boilerplate across the industry, which is the subject of the argument against this verdict at the end.

WHAT TO ACTUALLY DO ABOUT IT

Your exposure is not only future income, it is **the balance sitting unpaid at any moment**. With a $50 threshold and PayPal payouts, that balance should be small and frequently cleared. Do not let it accumulate. Reconcile monthly. If a payout is missed, chase it that month rather than the next quarter.

Also relevant: section 5.3.3 requires that "Affiliate's Account is active at the time the Referred Customer pays its Fees to Kinsta." Your recurring income depends on your account staying open. Do not let it lapse quietly.

6. PROMOTIONAL RESTRICTIONS WARNING

Section 4.5 is long and three of its clauses land directly on the plan you were about to run.

CLAUSE	WHAT IT SAYS	WHAT IT DOES TO YOU
4.5.14	No self-referral, including "any operation or website in which the Affiliate has a controlling, proprietary, or equitable interest. Any referral where payment is made utilizing a form of payment controlled by or belonging to the Affiliate shall be considered a violation"	**The expensive one.** You sometimes set up client hosting on your own card. Under this clause that is a violation, not a referral, and self-referral is the most common reason affiliate accounts get closed
4.5.12	No placing "an affiliate link directly on a third-party social network or content hosting platform". Video platforms and code repositories are the stated exceptions	No affiliate links in LinkedIn posts. You link to your own article; the article carries the link
4.5.6	No referring traffic "through any pay to read, pay to click, banner exchanges, click exchanges, **PPC advertising**, pop-up/under, press releases, or similar methods"	Read plainly, this bans paid traffic, not merely brand bidding, which 4.5.5 covers separately. Ask before you spend anything
4.5.9	"Kinsta" may not appear in a domain, subdomain or social profile name. In a URL path it is fine: yoursite.com/kinsta-review yes, kinsta-review-site.com no	Constrains naming, nothing more
4.5.3	Affiliate shall not "disparage Kinsta and its representatives, the Services, or the Program"	Undefined, and your whole model is honest comparison. An unflattering finding in a versus post is arguably caught. Worth a written answer
4.4.2	Affiliate "shall promptly comply with Kinsta's instructions to modify or remove Promotional Content"	Editorial control over your own site, at their request

One clause runs the other way and is worth pointing at. **Section 4.4.3 requires disclosure:** promotional content "shall include a disclosure that Affiliate is a member of the Program and has a marketing relationship with Kinsta". This playbook requires the same thing next to every link, so the contract and the method agree.

THE CLAUSE ALMOST NOBODY FINDS, AND IT IS BUILT FOR YOU

Section 5.1.4 allows a referral "by entering an Affiliate ID when initiating the transfer of a site from an existing MyKinsta company to a potential Kinsta customer". The client then receives a transfer acceptance email containing your affiliate link.

That is your job description. You build a site, you hand it to the client, the client pays on their own card and owns the account. Done this way it is a qualifying referral rather than the self-referral 4.5.14 prohibits, because the money and the ownership are theirs. Get this confirmed in writing before relying on it, then use it on every handover.

7. UNILATERAL CHANGE RIGHTS FAIL

Section 5.4: "The amount of and methodology of calculating Commissions are determined, and subject to change by, Kinsta in its sole discretion."

Section 1.3: they may change the terms "at any time at our sole discretion", and notice consists of "revising the date at the top of these Terms". There is no email, no announcement, and continued participation is deemed acceptance.

Every programme reserves some version of this. What makes it a fail rather than a shrug here is that **there is evidence in front of us that it gets used**: the Application and Database Hosting commission was removed for new referrals and halved to 5% for existing ones, and it appears in a docs page rather than in the contract, which still carries a December 2024 date.

State it plainly: **the economics in section 3 are not a promise.** They are today's numbers, changeable without notice, and the only defence is position sizing.

8. LEAKAGE AT CHECKOUT WARNING

- **Add-ons and overages pay nothing** (5.5). On an agency-shaped customer that is a real slice of their bill.
- **Beta Services pay nothing.** Section 5.1 excludes any customer creating a MyKinsta Company in connection with Beta Services.
- **The sales route is unaddressed.** Kinsta runs a "Talk to sales" path for larger accounts. The terms define a Referred Customer as someone who clicks the link and registers a new MyKinsta Company. Whether a customer routed through a sales conversation still qualifies is not stated. Your best referrals are the largest ones, so this matters.
- **Coupon leakage is closed off** by 4.5.11, which is the usual biggest hole and is absent here.

QUESTIONS FOR THE PROGRAMME MANAGER

Every one of these is unanswered by the terms. Paste them as they are. A manager who will not answer these in writing has answered them.

1. Section 6.2 removes the obligation to pay pending or prior earned commissions on termination. In what circumstances have you actually withheld earned commissions from a closed account?
2. Section 5.5 allows setoff of refunded fees against future commissions. Is there a time limit on that setoff? If so, what is it, and can you confirm it in writing?
3. Section 4.5.6 lists "PPC advertising" among prohibited traffic methods. Does that prohibit paid traffic to my own content which contains an affiliate link, or only paid traffic pointed directly at kinsta.com?
4. Section 4.5.12 prohibits placing an affiliate link directly on a third-party social network. Does linking from a social post to my own article, which contains the affiliate link, comply?
5. I build and hand over client sites. If I initiate a Site Transfer under 5.1.4 using my Affiliate ID, and the client pays with their own card and owns the account, is that a qualifying referral rather than self-referral under 4.5.14?
6. Section 4.5.3 prohibits disparaging the Services. Does an honest comparison review that identifies areas where a competitor performs better fall within that prohibition?
7. What determines where in the $50 to $500 band a one-time commission lands? Is that schedule published?
8. Do recurring commissions continue when a referred customer switches to annual billing, and are they calculated on the discounted annual fee?
9. I am a UK sole trader. Section 5.3.4 refers to Form W-9, which is a US form. Which document do you require from me?
10. The June 2026 documentation removed commission on new Application and Database Hosting referrals. Were existing affiliates notified in advance, and through what channel?

Ask one more that is not about the terms: **Kinsta runs a separate Agency Partner Program alongside this one.** Given that you build and support client sites for a living, ask which of the two you should be in, and whether you can be in both. It may be the better door and it is not what this report graded.

THE BIGGER QUESTION BEHIND ALL OF THIS

The eight sections answer whether this programme pays fairly. The larger question is whether what your audience buys is earnable on at all, and a lot of people spend a year on the wrong side of it.

Here, the answer is yes, and it is the good version. The purchase is **recurring** rather than one-off, so one conversion pays for years instead of once. The order value is **£25 to £150 a month** and it is **business money**, not discretionary consumer spending, so it does not churn on price. And it is a **researched** decision, made over weeks, which means a piece of writing can genuinely influence it in a way no email can influence an impulse.

That is the right shape for this model. Most audiences do not have one.

THE STRONGEST ARGUMENT AGAINST THIS VERDICT

Both fails are close to industry boilerplate. Termination without payment of earned commissions, and unilateral rate changes at sole discretion, appear in most affiliate agreements you will ever read. A grader that fails Kinsta on them will fail nearly everything, and a test that fails everything is not a test.

The honest counter is that this worker is not ranking programmes against each other, it is sizing a position. The clauses are real whether or not they are common, and their commonness is an argument for capping every programme rather than for ignoring them here. Kinsta's own conduct also points the right way: a published churn rate under 4%, a public agency partner programme, and affiliate case studies on their own site are not the behaviour of a company looking for reasons not to pay.

One caution on that churn figure, since the scout leaned on it. Kinsta states "less than 4%" without saying whether that is monthly or annual, and the two readings are years apart in what a referral is worth. The scout's 30-month assumption is defensible on the monthly reading and conservative on the annual one, but it rests on the merchant's own unqualified number and should be treated as such.

JOIN, SIZED SMALL: Cap Kinsta at 35% of expected income rather than 55%. Clear the balance monthly, never pay for client hosting on your own card, use the Site Transfer route on every handover, and get questions 2, 3, 4 and 5 answered in writing before you publish anything. Then run **grade this affiliate program** again on Kit, whose terms three sources disagree about.
