Your Ultimate Guide

to

Pinterest

As a Personal Finance, Money, or Frugality Blogger

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Pinterest is the fastest growing social media site, so why shouldn't we, as personal finance/money/frugality bloggers use Pinterest just like everyone else?

When I first started blogging at [Retired by 40!](), I really didn't think that I could use Pinterest generate traffic, even though I desperately wanted to. The way that I built my blog so quickly was by studying successful bloggers and doing what they were doing. When it came to Pinterest, however, I couldn't really find any personal finance bloggers that were using pinterest effectively enough to model my strategy after. So, knowing how powerful Pinterest was and still is, I set out to find out how to make it work for me!

I started studying the most influential Pinterest power users: how often and when they pinned, what types of things they pinned, and the descriptions they used for their pins. I did so without regard to niche or subject matter. What I was looking for was the common denominator between the most powerful people on Pinterest so I could use those strategies to grow my blog.

This didn't start out as the 22-page guide that it is right now. Originally, I had intended it as a blog post (or series). However, as I sat down to put together a list of tricks that I have used to help me grow traffic to my site from Pinterest, I realized that the list was huge, and would be better suited to an eBook or guide in downloadable .pdf form.

If you're looking for something short and sweet, a "quick fix' to give you overnight success on Pinterest, **this is not your guide**. This is many, many steps to creating good images within your blog, making your blog Pinterest-friendly and lastly learning how to use the actual social media site effectively. The steps I'm giving you will take time - so don't try to get them done overnight!

If you're a checklist person, I've created one at the very end of the document for you, so that you can conquer one or two tasks a day and check them off as your work your way through the guide. And as is always true with the blog, I am here to help and to answer questions. Feel free to reach out by emailing me at [retiredby40blog@gmail.com]() or leave a comment on one of my posts - I'm always happy to help!

What on Earth Makes me Qualified?

Great question! After all, I just passed my first year blogiversary. I'm not seasoned like some other bloggers! What makes me qualified is how much success I've had with Pinterest and the fact that I feel personal finance bloggers are severely under-using this social media site!

First of all, I have a classic Type-A Personality. I like to control everything and I am a perfectionist! When I couldn't find a personal finance blogger's whose example I could follow on Pinterest I started reading everything I could get my hands on relating to pinterest and blogging - no matter what niche of blog the information was written for.

From there, I adapted, and I learned several core principles that have worked really well for me!   We'll talk about these later!

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How well has it worked?

As of now, Pinterest generates approximately 60% of my traffic. I know you're thinking "ok, she gets the traffic there, but does she keep it?"

You would be right to ask, and the answer is "Yes!" My bounce rate is currently 29.8% (according to Alexa) and my analytics tell me that not only do Pinterest users visit my site consistently, they read the entire article they came to read. Once they're done with the first article, they read, on average, 2.3 more articles on my site, and 30% sign up for emails! Additionally, the average length of visit to my site is just over 12 minutes! I'd say it's working!

Let's get started:

I want to start with the most basic of steps: Setting up your Pinterest account and your boards. I lot of you said that you had no idea how to get started with Pinterest, but even if you have an established Pinterest account, make sure to at least glance over this section so you know you've hit all the necessary steps.

Setting up Pinterest

First and foremost, if you haven't set up a Pinterest account, or yours isn't set up completely, do it now! A complete Pinterest profile includes:
- A verified web address
- A picture of you (preferably of your face, not your blog logo)
- A catchy, short description of you and your site
- Pinterest Boards
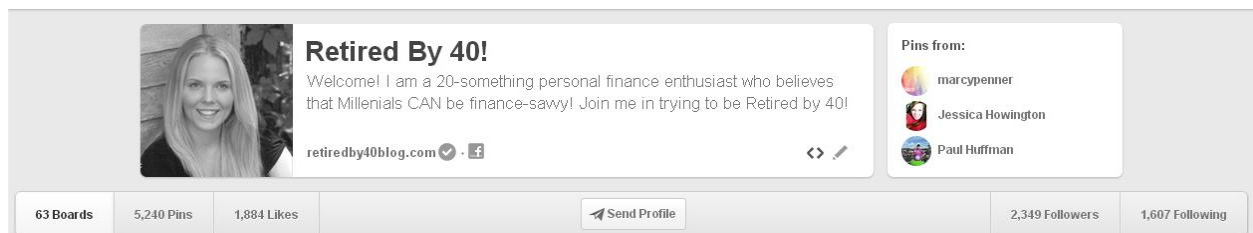
Verify you site with Pinterest

When you put in your blog's web address under your account settings, it will walk you through the steps to verify your blog. There are a couple of options, but I find the easiest is to embed the piece of code they give you for a few minutes and then verify.

Once you verify your blog, your blog's web address is hyperlinked underneath your profile description so that visitors can click directly to your site from your Pinterest profile. If you don't verify, your site will still show up, but Pinterest will give a warning to anyone trying to click through that the site is unverified. When you verify there is no warning box and a flag display beside the URL denoting that the site has been verified.

Add a Picture

Now that you've verified your site, you need to add a picture. When I blogged anonymously, I used my website logo. Now that I'm not blogging anonymously, I use my actual picture. Quite frankly, using your picture is the best way to go. Many studies have determined that social media users respond better to pictures of actual people than to that of a business or blog logo. If at all possible upload an actual picture of you :-)

Create a Description

Your Pinterest description should be short, but catchy and capture the essence of your blog. I find it helpful to use the short description of myself that I use in my sidebar, but perhaps you can pull from an author profile that you've used previously. Whatever you choose, keep it short and sweet, as this is the first impression of you and your blog that many people will get!

Concentrate On Your boards

Now it's time to set up boards. It's ok if you don't have anything pinned to those boards yet - just get them set up for now! Think about your niche, as well as your most popular posts. Set up board for those topics, as well as some that are of personal interest to you. 20 boards is a good, manageable number to start with. After all, your readers as well as Pinterest users want to get to know you, not just your blog!
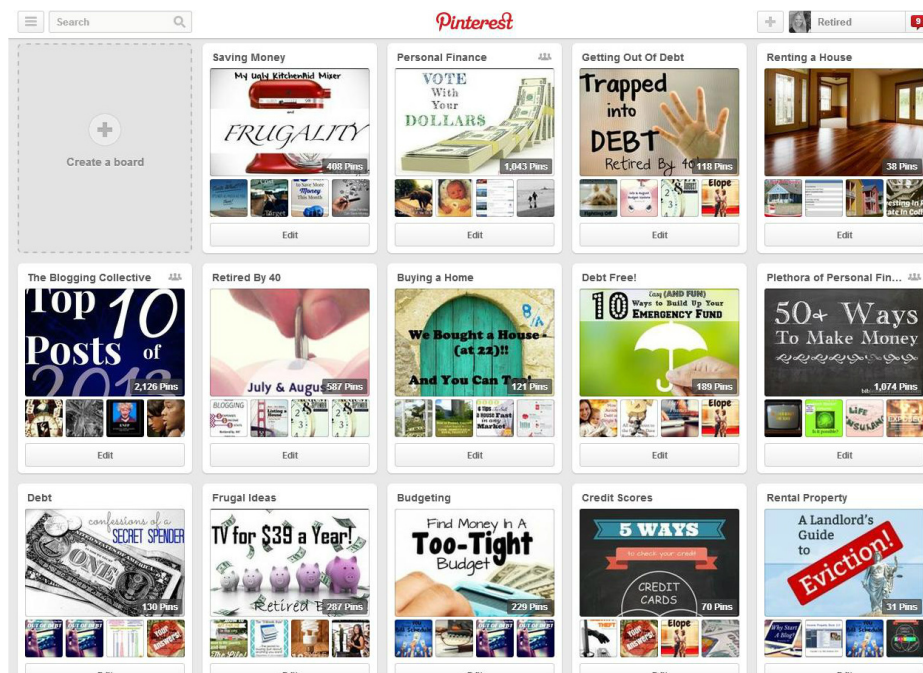
Don't be afraid to bring a human element to your boards by using funny slogans or phrases! Be sure to also set up a board for your blog that you strictly pin you blog posts to as many times as you want. I call mine Retired by 40!, but I could call it Best of Retired by 40! or My Awesome Blog! The board name should clearly convey that the only thing pinned there will be pins from your blog.

As you're setting up your boards, add descriptions telling users what this board contains as well as categories, so that when users are searching for something specific they can find you more easily. Writing board descriptions and categorizing them is one of the easiest things to miss - and harm your Pinterest success the most! Ironic, isn't it?

Take a minute and brainstorm to come up with board titles:

- What is your niche?
- What topics do you cover in your blog?
- What SEO keyword to you commonly use?
- What topics are of personal interest to you? (Babies, kids, home decor, or crafts)

Get your blog

Pinterest

Ready

Getting your blog Pinterest-ready is not a simple task, especially if you haven't been using Pinterest up until this point. The longer you've been blogging, the greater challenge it will be. The biggest thing to keep in mind is that you cannot implement every single thing in a day. *Take it one step at a time, okay?*

First up: Images

Pinterest is almost entirely visually oriented. When you're on Pinterest, how many images do you just scroll right past because they don't catch your eye?

Thousands

Yes, thousands. I'm not exaggerating! If you want to stand out on Pinterest you have to have killer images.

Size matters, first of all.

Images within the blog should be large and in-your-face. Some say awesome images detract from awesome content, but I disagree. Large images, when done correctly only enhance the the written content. Additionally, if your images are too small, when pinned to pinterest will show up like this:

See that border on the right and left sides? <u>That's bad</u>. That makes you seem unprofessional, and will definitely **NOT** make you stand out! You might have the best content in the world, but no one is going to see it, because they're not going to click on something that looks like this!

The minimum size that I've found that works for images is 300x450 px. You need to experiment to find what works for you though, because I've heard of bloggers using images smaller than having them pin just fine. Just remember: **Bigger is better with images!**

Orientation Matters, Too

Taller images perform better than wider ones. This is because, if you haven't noticed, images on Pinterest can be super tall and display the whole thing, but won't display if they're really wide. It's just how Pinterest is set up. We've all seen one of the thousand of infographics out there on Pinterest, and love them or hate them, they do catch the eye. Take a cute from infographics and make your images tall!

This doesn't mean that every image you use needs to be infographic size. None of them need to be, actually. Just remember that taller, or portrait oriented images perform better. Canva (which I'll talk about later) has templates already set up in the perfect size and orientation for Pinterest. Take a look at the orientation examples below to see what I mean about how taller images catch the eye:

Bad:	
	Good!
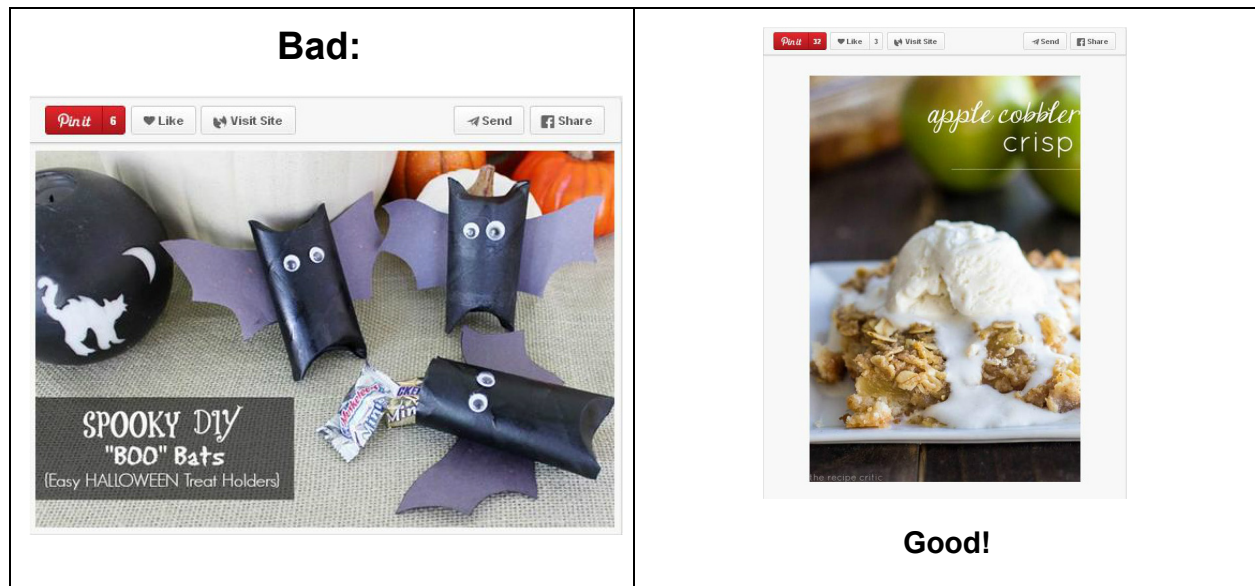
High quality.

Stock photos (without any manipulations) are not going to cut it on Pinterest, but that doesn't mean you need to pay for better, premium images! Below is my list of websites that offer free, copyright-free, high resolution images! Some of them do offer paid images, though, so watch out for those! I have used every single one of these sites myself and can vouch for the quality.

- Free Pixels
- EveryStockPhoto
- Open Photo
- Image Base
- Iconfinder
- iclipart.com
- http://www.gratisography.com/
- http://splitshire.com/
- http://littlevisuals.co/
- http://www.lifeofpix.com/
- http://superfamous.com/
- http://superfamous.com/
- http://www.imcreator.com/free

- http://nos.twnsnd.co/
- http://getrefe.tumblr.com/
- http://snapographic.com/ - Favorite!
- Free Digital Photos.net
- Pixabay - Favorite!
- Unsplash - Copyright free images - Favorite!
- Death to the stock photo - Favorite
- Morguefile
- Wikipedia creative commons
- flickr - make sure to change search parameters to images licensed for reuse
- Google images - change search to only search for images that are licensed for reuse!
- Photo Pin - a way to access Creative commons and Google images that are free for bloggers to use

Another important thing to note is that your images *don't necessarily have to have a credit card or money in the background.* Half of the images I use are completely unrelated to the topic they're attached to, but they catch the eye. Once you have a high-quality images, it's the eye-catching qualities and the wording on the picture that take your images to the next level.

Catching the eye

The next key to images is making sure they catch the eye. We already talked about why your images have to stand out in order to be pinned and clicked on, so now I'm going to talk about how to actually pick those stand-out images.

My strategy is easy: I pick what appeals to me. I pick one of the above websites for images, say Unsplash, where they post 10 high-res photos every 10 days, and I scan through the pages quickly. I only stop when something catches my eye. If it catches my eye now, you can bet with a filter and some wording it will catch a Pinterest user's eye as well!

I have to say a quick note about colors: The most eye-catching color is red, but all bright colors can catch the eye when used correctly. Pinterest "experts" have noticed that red images get pinned twice as often as every other colors - so use that to your advantage! I however, gravitate towards blue and pink images. Do whatever speak to you as long as the images catch your eye using the method I described above.

Should You Use Varied or Similar Images?

Some bloggers use the same layout for every single blog graphic so that their images have a consistent look and feel. Others go with whatever strikes them or catches their eye.

Honestly, both methods work. Using images with a consistent look and feel trains your reader and pinterest followers eye to look for them, which can only help you! Using varied, eye catching images, however also works. Why? Well, because they catch the eye!

An example of similar images:

Thanks byregina.com for the screenshot!

Wording:

You all know by now how important wording is to your post titles. It is what draws the reader in. The same is true on Pinterest, except your title is second to your images. In order to put your title over your image you need to find a photo editor that works for you.

Hands down, my favorite is Canva. This is a completely free service to use. They have premium elements available for purchase, but I have successfully used Canva for months without ever incurring a charge. Canva is amazing because it provides templates designed by graphic designers that you can put your own wording into as well as background!

These are some example of images I created from Canva:

Notice how all of these images are very visually appealing! I literally created them in less than 5 minutes! I feel that each one of these catches the eye. Each and every image clearly displays the title of the article is is contained within and also another important element: **my Blog name.**

Also called a **watermark**, you need to make sure either your URL or the name of your blog is on every single image you place within your blog. Repetition is the key to learning, and also the key to bringing people back to your blog time and time again. Always place your watermark or blog name in roughly the same position within your graphics and in the same font. Your title can use fun fonts, but your blog name or watermark should be consistent!

A word of caution: Change up the 'canned' designs a bit. When you use the exact design that Canva gives as a template and only change the wording not only do you look lazy and unprofessional, no one is going to click on it because everyone knows it came directly from Canva :-) Add your own background, and play with the filters to make it your own!

Also, be sure to compress your images both before and after uploading them to your blog. When you're downloading high-res photos and using them to create graphics on Canva, your file size is going to be huge! Before uploading them to your blog, I suggest saving the original photos and then compressing it and saving a compressed version into wordpress. If you use the huge file it will really slow down your load time!

Once you've uploaded the image to your blog, use a plug in such as Smush.it to compress the images even more!

Image Creation Resources:
- Canva: My personal favorite. The easiest, prettiest tool to use - and it's free!
- PikToChart: Turns any info into an infographic
- Image Optimizer: Compress Images
- PicMonkey: free, easy to use photo editor
- Quozio: Creates beautiful quotes for Pinterest
- Pinstamatic: This tool was designed with strictly Pinterest in mind. Mostly automatic creation of graphics, but if you need something quick this is an awesome go-to.
- Pixlr: another photo editor that has more in-depth options than PicMonkey

Pinterest Plugin

Now it's time to add a couple things to your site that will help you get more pins from the amazing graphics you just created, as well as generate more pinterest followers! .The plugin I use it "Pinterest Pin it Button For Images." I like this button because it has everything you need in a Pinterest plugin:

- It displays a pin it button on all of my blog images when the mouse hovers over it
- The pin it button is in the top left hand corner (this isn't a set-in-stone rule, it's just my personal preference)
- The image is slightly grayed out when the mouse if hovering over it, letting the reader know that there is a pin it button there
- Little to no added load time -a biggie to me

It really, truly doesn't matter what plugin you use as long as it has all of those things listed above. Some other examples would be

- [Pinterest "Pin it" Button](#)
- [Pin it On Pinterest](#)
- [Pinterest For Galleries](#)
- [Pinterest Image Pinner from Collective Bias](#)
- [Pinterest Image Pin](#)

Add Descriptions to Your Images

Now that you have a plugin that allows readers to quickly and easily pin directly from your website, don't you want a nice, catchy description to show up when they do? I don't know about you, but having "phones optimized" show up as the description when someone pins a graphic from my blog is pretty unappealing.

If we're being honest, most people won't change the Pinterest description, and even if they do, it will be a 3-word description that doesn't catch anyone's attention. Obviously, this leads to less repins and less clickthroughs! If you add a description to each blog graphic (you can do this in your media library) that gives a really good explanation of what the pin contains, not only will that show up as the default description when a photo gets pinned from your blog, it makes it more likely to be re-pinned and clicked on!

Getting followers:

Now it's time to actually get followers. The more followers you have, the more repins and clickthroughs you get - it's really that simple! There are a few ways to go about it:

Curating Content:

Now that you have your boards set up, it's time to start curating content. I try to pin 20 images, 3x per day according to the schedule that is listed in the checklist. The best rule of thumb is to pin 75% other's work and 25% of your own. If you only pin stuff from your blog not only is the number of followers not going to grow, some might actually unfollow you!

Pin only <u>eye-catching images</u> that have great descriptions and mind-blowing content when you click through to the actual content. Make sure the content is not only relevant to the boards you've set up, but relevant to your niche as well.

<u>Always, always, always click through</u> to the content to make sure the pin is not spammy and contains information relevant to your niche. This also insures that you're pinning from the original source, which is always a best practice!

Curating content not only gets pins on your boards, it gives new followers a page to land on when them click on your profile. If you have awesome boards that contain highly relevant pins, they will follow you. If you don't, users recognize this very quickly and will shy away.
Bottom Line: You want your boards to be a resource for your followers :-)

Arrange Your Boards

This is a short but important point. While there is nothing inherently wrong with arranging your boards in the order in which they were created, this method does not draw in potential followers. I suggest arranging your boards like this:

- **Above the fold:** Your blog's board & your most popular boards (as long as they're filled with content).
- **Below the fold:** All of your other boards that have content but aren't necessarily the most popular
- **Group Boards:** Should come after your boards that have content. You don't necessarily want to display these but you have to put them somewhere!
- **Boards in progress:** Below group boards should come boards that you're working on filling with content, but aren't quite there yet. You want to kind of hide these boards, so place them as low as you can!

One final note: Change the covers on all of your boards to be super visually appealing. Studies show that board covers in bright colors and without words perform best, but the most important thing to consider when setting board covers is that they represent the content of the board.

Group Boards

The single best strategy I've used not only for gaining Pinterest followers, but getting traffic to my blog is Group Boards. Group boards are really simple - they're boards that are contributed to by many people. As a result they have some of the best content and reach the most people. I myself have only 2,500 Pinterest followers, but I have been invited to pin to group boards that have 55,000 followers - that's a huge audience to reach! Many people that pin my pins from group bards have also followed me.

Group boards can be found in several ways. The first way I've found is through [Pin Groupie](). This is the single best (searchable) source of group boards I've found. You can search by topic, such as "Saving Money" and results will appear with a link to the board as well as the name of the administrator who needs to invite you if you want to pin to that specific board.

The other way to find group boards is to find other bloggers or users whose content you really like and take a look at what group boards they belong to. Chances are they will be a good fit for the content you're pinning.

Getting invited to pin to group boards is a whole other world, but not really that difficult. It's just that every board is different. Once you've found a group board you want to join through [Pin Groupie](), go to the board and read the description. Usually it will contain instructions for how to be invited, such as leaving a comment on one of the administrator's pins or emailing an admin email. If there are no instructions, try messaging the administrator or leaving a comment on one of the administrator's pins. It can't hurt! Always, always, always follow all of the administrator's boards -it's the polite thing to do!

Once you've been invited to a group board, it is really important that you read the board description for any instructions - such as limiting pins to 2 per day. Not adhering to the board guidelines can *(and will)* get you kicked off of the board! When I was really new to Pinterest I didn't read my group board guidelines and got kicked out of one, so believe me, it does happen!

You can also start your own group boards! This is a great way to get more followers (and more repins and traffic), gain credibility, and develop your boards more thoroughly to be a resource for your followers!

Sidebar Plugin

Another way to encourage your blog readers to follow you on Pinterest is to install a plugin that displays either a certain pinterest board or your pinterest activity in your sidebar or below page content. I use [Easy Pinterest](#), but there are many to choose from, such as:

- [Pinterest Badge](#)
- [Pinterest RSS Widget](#)
- [Pinterest Pinboard Widget](#)
- [Pretty Pinterest Pins](#)

Although I haven't personally used each one of these pins, the feedback I've gotten on them is excellent. It's up to you which one you use, just make sure whichever method you choose fits within the look and feel of your site.

Using a plugin like this in your sidebar makes it easy for your readers to be drawn in and follow you on Pinterest. And, as I've said many times before: **more followers = more repins = more clicks = more traffic!**

Ask Your Readers

Another time-tested method of gaining Pinterest followers is simply asking them. I'm sure you've seen another blogger do it. Either before or after your content asking your readers *"If you like this article, follow me on Pinterest for more!"* Or say *"I'm trying to get more Pinterest followers. Would you consider following me?"* It seems like such an in-your-face way to gain followers, but it works and I don't know of anyone who would be turned off by a blogger asking that!

Time

Regardless of whether you use any of the above methods to gain followers on Pinterest, you will probably gain some over time as long as you're pinning on a regular basis. Growth will be slow, but if you're not quite all-in yet, just pinning on a schedule will grow your following!

When to Pin:

The Best times to pin on Pinterest are:

- **Weekdays 2-4pm**
- **Weeknights 8-11pm**
- **Saturday Morning 9-11am**

It's really very simple!

I've found that it can be crazy to keep all of my own boards, my group boards, all of their rules, as well as having to be on Pinterest two or three times a day! So, if you want to maximize your pinterest reach, you should probably invest in a scheduling tool. I used to use CoSchedule - and I loved it! - until they abruptly stopped integrating with Pinterest. Needless to say, that tool was out!

Now I'm using ViralWoot (previously called PinWoot). It's admittedly less user-friendly, and doesn't offer unlimited pins like Coschedule did (and it's more expensive) but at $15 a month with 1,000 pins allowed to be scheduled at a time it handles my needs and is within my budget. There are, however, other options as well:

- ViralTag: Arguably the best, but with pricing starting at $49 a month, it's out of my budget. If you have the budget for it, I've been told it's awesome! You can also integrate your ViralTag account with HootSuite, which makes me seriously consider it!
- ViralTag (Free): You can use ViralTag for free, but you are only allowed 3 pins in your queue. Not really worth the effort in my opinion.
- Tailwind: plans starting at $149. This is an extremely expensive option, but I've been told it's amazing! I've also been offered a demo by the company, so I'm definitely going to give it a try and see if it's worth the price tag! I should also mention that you can use tailwind for free, but it doesn't have any pin scheduling. You do, however, get some valuable Pinterest analytics insights. Additional note: When I spoke with the TailWind Developer, he told me that late September, early October they are set to release a pure scheduling tool without the analytics for around $15 a month. Pricing isn't set in stone, but based on what I've seen will be the most user-friendly tool I've found (more so than CoSchedule even) and will be 100% worth it! I'll be sure to post about it when it happens!
- GoPixel: You can use this for free, but you are only allowed 3 pins per day. Their paid plans start at $19 a month with the lowest plan allowing 25 pins in a queue per day. I believe right now they are not taking new accounts, but I have an email in to find out what's going on with them.

Maybe you're not ready to jump into a paid service - and I totally get that. Just try pinning at the best times, say, 3 days a week and see what results you get. Maybe you'll find you like the boost in traffic you get, or maybe it won't be for you.

As with any social network, be sure to pin 75% others' content and 25% your own content except with group boards, to which you should only pin your content. During each of the optimal times I try to pin 20 pins: 5 of my own and 15 of others' work. By selfless promoting others, everyone wins!

PINTEREST

Fallacies

So-called experts like to circulate rumors about the best Pinterest strategies, and quite frankly, some of them make me want to go bananas!

- **"Liking" every repin:** Despire what some "experts" might say, there is no need to "like" every repin of your content. Quite frankly, it will drive you crazy and no one even looks at "likes" on Pinterest.

- **Pinterest takes a lot of time:** This one is partly true. If you don't manage your time carefully, Pinterest can be all-consuming. I started getting overwhelmed, but when I switched to a scheduling tool my life got way easier!

- **You have to have tons of followers to be successful:** More followers are obviously better, but group board can give you exposure to thousands of people who don't follow you. And who knows? They might just turn into followers!

- **Images must be relevant to the content:** Entirely False! Images need to catch the eye. If it catches the eye and is relevant, great! But don't' get hung up on it. The relevance should be found in the title of the pin as well as the description.

- **You HAVE to have the content's URL in the description:** While it certainly doesn't hurt to put the URL in the pin's description (this allows the user to click straight through to the article rather than clicking on the pin and then clicking again) it really is not necessary. Pinterest users are used to clicking twice and it really doesn't bother them.

Pinterest Checklist

Set Up Pinterest
- Verify your web address
- Use a picture of you as your profile
- Write a short description of you and your site
- Create boards that are both within your blog's niche and of personal interest to you.

Get Your blog Ready

Images
- Do they catch the eye?
- Are they tall, or portrait orientation?
- Are they big enough to be pinned without a side border?
- Do the word over them grab readers' attention?
- Are they watermarked with your blog name?
- Are varied or similar images right for your blog?
- Does your blog have a plugin that displays a pin it button when a reader's mouse hovers over your images?

Gaining Followers
- Do all of your images have exciting descriptions?
- Do you have a sidebar Widget in your blog?
- Join Group Boards
- Pin 75% other's content and 25% yours
- Curate content within your niche - you want your Pinterest boards to be a resource!
- Are your boards arranged strategically?
- Have you asked your readers to follow you?

Strategic Pinning:
- **Weekdays;** 10-11am
- **Weekdays** 2-4pm
- **Weekdays:** 8-11pm
- **Saturday Morning:** 9-11am
- **Is a scheduling tool right for you?**