

# Rakuten Affiliate Network Signature Overview

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## Using Signature

Many different sites and business models are a good fit for using Signature for their tracking needs. Here are some ways publishers use Signature:

### **Loyalty Sites**

These publishers offer members points, cash, and other rewards for purchases made through their sites. They use the member ID field to determine which member receives a reward.

### **Fundraising and Charity Sites**

These publishers allow visitors to donate a portion of a purchase to a specific organization. They use the member ID field to determine which organization receives a donation.

### **Community and Member Sites**

These publishers provide their users and members with personal publishing tools and services to create online environments. They use the member ID field to track the commerce activity generated by the sites that the users create.

### **Tracking Campaigns and Ad Placement**

Both publishers and advertisers have used Signature to track the success of various campaigns. For example, the member ID field can be used to track different links in an email campaign.

## How Signature Works

Signature can track commerce to the transaction level for each member, organization, and subsite with the member ID field.

### **Member ID Field**

The member ID field is the identifier that represents each of your members or organizations, and it is denoted by a '&u1=' that you must append to your advertiser

partners' link code. The value following the equal sign represents your member, organization, or subsite and is created by you. This identifier can be up to 72 alphanumeric characters in length. Each individual member, subsite, and organization should be correlated to a certain alphanumeric character string, such as Jane Doe = 1234 and Bob Smith = 5678.

**Security Note:** For privacy reasons, never use a customer's email address, phone number, social security number, or any other private or sensitive information in the u1 field.

### ***Using the Member ID Field***

You must place `&u1=` plus the identifier at the end of the first href string in links. The member ID is case sensitive: a lowercase "u" and the numeral "1" must be used for the member ID identifier to be tracked.

The use of cookies is not advised because the member ID field will not be tracked if one of your members has disabled their cookies.

We suggest using a placeholder such as `&u1=defaultmemberid`. If you only have a few codes to edit, it is easiest to do so manually. For those employing a login for site services, a unique identifier can be passed to the link code or swapped out in place of `defaultmemberid` in several different ways, including JavaScript.

An advertiser link that has been properly appended with the member ID might look like this:

```
<a href=http://click.linksynergy.com/fs-
bin/stat?id=/FYI6fQ9Pws&offerid=7097.10000015&type=3&subid=0&u1=Bob12
3>Rakuten Affiliate Network Referral Program</a><IMG border=0 width=1
height=1 src="http://ad.linksynergy.com/fs-
bin/show?id=/FYI6fQ9Pws&bids=7097.10000015&type=3&subid=0" >
```

In this example, `&u1=Bob123` is representative of one particular member or organization of the publisher using Signature.

The member ID changes for each individual member or organization that belongs to your site, making it possible for you to distinguish between members and between organizations within the Signature Orders Report. This report shows the benefit of using a placeholder such as `'&u1=defaultmemberid'`. If you find that a transaction in your reports shows a u1 value of `'defaultmemberid'` instead of `'Bob123'`, an error could have occurred on your end with the way the member ID was appended.

## **Advertiser Compliance**

Signature works exclusively with advertisers within our network. More than 99 percent of our advertisers are compliant with Signature technology. If an advertiser is not able to work with you, it will be noted in their details page in your Publisher Dashboard. Additionally, transaction-level data will only be recorded within your Signature Orders Report if you have acquired the advertisers' links through our network.

## **Accounting**

You are responsible for all the accounting related to your members or organizations. The payments you receive from advertisers or from the network will be aggregate payments that reflect the total commissions earned from all the members, organizations, and subsites combined according to the payment period agreed upon. You can divide and distribute the aggregate commissions among your members, organizations, and subsites.

You will not receive an outlined invoice with all of the transaction-level data for your members or organizations. Use the Signature Orders Report and Signature Activity Report to facilitate the accounting process.

The checks will be made out and sent to the company or person you have designated within your account. If your payment contact is different from your primary contact, please indicate this in your account.

## **Reporting**

Use the Signature Activity Report and the Signature Orders Report to track the commerce activity of your sites. These reports can be accessed when you log in to your account:

- **From the new Publisher Dashboard "Beta"**: go to **Reports** in the navigation header and click **Performance**.
- **From the legacy Publisher Dashboard**: go to **Reports** in the navigation header and click **Reporting**.

## **Signature Activity Report**

This report records all the click-throughs that are generated from your site to the sites of your partner advertisers. The following fields are included in the Signature Activity Report:

Field Name	Description
<b>Member ID (U1)</b>	A variable field you define. This can contain up to 72 alphanumeric characters, with mixed-case letters.
<b>MID</b>	Rakuten Marketing's numeric value that identifies a particular advertiser. This value is a constant.
<b>Advertiser Name</b>	An advertiser's name as it appears to publishers within the Rakuten Marketing network. The advertiser can alter this value without notice to either Rakuten Marketing or the publisher.
<b># of Clicks</b>	The total number of clicks recorded in the given period.
<b>Sales</b>	The total pre-tax and pre-shipment price of the line item multiplied by the quantity.
<b>Total Commission</b>	The dollar amount of the commission you earned as the referring publisher. All commissions are pending credit card authorization and returned merchandise.

### ***Signature Orders Report***

This report itemizes transactions made by each member, organization, and subsite. The fields included in the Signature Orders Report are described in this table:

Field Name	Description
<b>Member ID (U1)</b>	A variable field you define. This can contain up to 72 alphanumeric characters, with mixed-case letters.
<b>MID</b>	Rakuten Marketing's numeric value that identifies a particular advertiser. This value is a constant.
<b>Advertiser Name</b>	An advertiser's name as it appears to publishers within the Rakuten Marketing network. The advertiser can alter this value without notice to either Rakuten Marketing or the publisher.
<b>Order ID</b>	The order number that is assigned by the advertiser. This represents one shopping session.

Field Name	Description
<b>Transaction Date</b>	The date that the consumer completes their order as reported by the advertiser.
<b>Transaction Time</b>	The time the consumer completes their order as reported by the advertiser.
<b>SKU Number</b>	The stock-keeping unit that is assigned by the advertiser. Each product in an advertiser's inventory has a unique SKU value.
<b>Sales</b>	The total pre-tax and pre-shipment price of the line item multiplied by the quantity.
<b># of Items</b>	The number of each product a consumer buys in their order.
<b>Total Commission</b>	The dollar amount of the commission earned by the referring publisher. All commissions are pending credit card authorization and returned merchandise.
<b>Process Date</b>	The date the transaction was processed through the Rakuten Affiliate Network system.
<b>Process Time</b>	The time the transaction was processed through the Rakuten Affiliate Network system.

### ***How Transactions Appear in the Signature Orders Report***

Each line-item transaction represents a unique product that is purchased. Many products can be purchased during a single shopping session. This is why one order ID may be represented on several lines of the report.

### ***Returns and Cancellations***

When items purchased are returned or orders made are cancelled, the returns and cancellations will be deducted from your reports. They will appear as separate lines in the Signature Orders Report, with the same information as the original transaction, except that the sales and commission columns will reflect negative amounts and the process date and time will be different.

Keep in mind that returns and cancellations are posted to your account as the network receives this information from the advertisers. The timing of this is dependent on each advertiser's return and cancellation policy. Contact advertisers directly for specific information regarding their return and cancellation policies.

## **Signature Orders Report Download Feature**

To make the process for receiving the Signature Orders Report more efficient, you can automate the process and receive transaction and member ID information daily by:

- Scheduling the report to be sent to you via email or FTP/SFTP/SSH on the date of your choosing.
- Downloading the report via API. This enables you to get reporting data for a specified period without logging in to the Publisher Dashboard. You can download the Signature Orders Report up to 300 times in one day.

### **Download Feature Instructions**

The Signature Orders Report can be downloaded using the following URL syntax:

```
https://ran-reporting.rakutenmarketing.com/en/reports/signature-ordersreport/filters?date_range=this-month&include_summary=Y&network=1&tz=GMT&date_type=transaction&token=<token>
```

You will need to input your security token after `&token=`.

For more information about using the Signature Order Report API, please see “How to Use Dashboard Reporting APIs” in the [New Publisher Help Center \(beta\)](#) or the [Legacy Publisher Help Center](#).

## Best Practices

### **Choosing Advertiser Partners**

Our list of Premium Advertisers recognizes advertiser programs that conform to publisher-friendly practices. These Premium Advertisers:

- Pay publishers monthly.
- Pay publishers based on a maximum \$25 threshold.
- Offer seven return days or more in their baseline offers (this does not apply to advertisers with pay-per-click programs).
- Supply complete and current contact information in their profiles.
- Use our network’s check-cutting service. This allows us to publish detailed information on payment status in their payment reports and provides a trackable process for consistent, timely commission payments.

- Ensure prompt authorization of publisher payments so publishers are paid at the end of the following month.
- Are active and in good standing.
- Provide excellent customer service and logical navigation on their site.

Additionally, we recommend that you:

- Read advertisers' offer terms and legal agreements.
- Use dashboard Payment Reports to identify the advertisers who have paid you in a timely manner:
  - **From the new Publisher Dashboard "Beta"**: go to **Account** and click **Payments**.
  - **From the legacy Publisher Dashboard**: go to **My Account** and click **Payment Info**. From there, click **Payment History**.

### ***Reporting Transactions to Members, Organizations, and Subsites***

When reporting transactions to your members, organizations, and subsites:

- Be advised that advertisers have 90 days from the date of a transaction to report a return or cancellation.
- Develop a schedule for reporting any money or points that takes returns and cancellations into account.
- Consider posting transaction data to a "pending verification" area they can view until you are comfortable with releasing funds.
- Provide detailed information about when transactions will be reported to manage their expectations.

### ***Constructing Member IDs***

When constructing members IDs:

- Script the pages with a default member ID such as "defaultmemberid" that is replaced with the actual ID of the member when they log into your site.
- Once a member or visitor is assigned a unique ID, when the member visits the site again, the same ID should be assigned. Do not randomly generate a new ID each time the member revisits your site.

- If applicable for your business model, construct member IDs that contain both:
  - an identifier for the member who is shopping.
  - an identifier for the organization or charity designated by them.

### ***Fraud Prevention***

Take these steps to help prevent fraud:

- Redirect all clicks away from your site through your own servers prior to sending the visitor through the network link to detect the IP address of your members.
- If you work with per-form and cost-per-click advertisers, watch for an unreasonable number of click-throughs to a particular advertiser for the same IP address in any 24-hour period.
- If you work with cost-per-click advertisers, use click data to reward members and not your server's click data.
- Flag very large purchases as a precaution.

### ***Payment to Members, Organizations, Or Subsites***

We invoice advertisers for publisher payments within five days following the close of a month. At the end of that month, payment is due, and the advertiser will either issue publisher payments directly to publishers or to the us, in which case we will issue payments to the advertiser's publisher partners on their behalf within three to five business days.

Issue payment to members, organizations, or subsites after you have received payment from the advertiser.

### ***Promoting Advertisers***

Promote advertisers in your online and offline marketing initiative, including sending emails and newsletters to your member base. Leverage top real estate on your site for top tier offers with advertisers.

### ***Using Additional Reports***

In addition to the reports listed in the Reporting section above, we recommend you track activity with the following reports:

- Use the live push of events via the Events API. This reflects events that occurred but were not yet confirmed as commissionable by the advertiser, as well as orders that were placed and confirmed.
  - If you cannot implement a real-time push, use a recurring pull throughout the day. This allows you to show users your order activity with updates throughout the day.
- Daily ingestion of the Signature Reconciliation Feed Daily U1 transaction report.
  - These files include all the confirmed orders reported from the previous day and are more complete than the Events API, hence better for reconciliation activity than the Events API.
- Daily ingestion of the Signature Reconciliation Feed Payment Report.
  - This provides the payment details for payments issued the previous day and includes the order/SKU level data for orders that have been paid by the advertiser.
  - If this file cannot be used, then a daily process using the Advanced Reporting API should be used to pull payment IDs for payments issued, and from there the invoice numbers paid by your advertisers, and from there the order-level details from each invoice.
- Monthly ingestion of the Signature Reconciliation Feed Monthly Transaction Data report.
  - This report shows all the final data for the previous month, especially for tiered offers where commission rates vary depending on the amount of sales pushed in a given month.
  - If you do not participate in such offers, then this monthly report may be unnecessary.

Note that you need to be enabled for Signature Reconciliation feeds. Please send an email to [pubsupport@rakuten.com](mailto:pubsupport@rakuten.com) requesting enablement.