

Definition of Genre

An academic blog is an online Web page used to enhance educational learning. This unique form of online publishing creates an opportunity for personal growth and peer-to-peer interactions. In the classroom, teachers incorporate the Web into the educational landscape, allowing students to publish their personal thoughts and opinions. Unlike formal academic writing, blog posts are often short and informal. Academic blogs take a variety of different forms:

- Classroom blogs
 - Professors design class-specific blogs for students to submit essays, complete peer-reviews, and discuss readings
- Public blogs
 - Professors ask students to contribute to public blogs that already exist on the Web
- Interest blogs
 - Departments, professors, or staff members invite students to blog about a relevant topic or event on campus

Use in the classroom

In the classroom, professors may use blogs in the following ways:

- To post assignments, syllabi, exercises, and readings instead of using traditional class websites
- To link suggested readings and other relevant sites for students
- To organize in-class discussions through blog pages
- To manage class seminars and summaries such that class members co-author group posts
- To ask students to create their own blogs on a topic of their personal interest

Pre-writing questions to consider

Good bloggers are good readers. Before contributing to an academic blog, read through previous blog posts and consider the following questions:

- **Who is your audience?** Are they classmates or the entire undergraduate community? Is the blog open to the general public?
- **What is the tone?** Are writers conversational or more formal? Are they humorous? Do writers use personal voice? How do they address the audience?

- **What is the style?** How long are the posts? What kind of punctuation is used? Do they include bullet points? How do they cite other sources?

Composing a post

After reading through previous blog posts, consider the following principles in drafting a post:

- **Make a point.** While the blog may not require a formal thesis or claim, it is important to have an argument with a statement of opinion that readers can follow.
- **Emulate the style and tone.** In contributing to an academic blog, adapt to the precedent that has been set before you. If posts are short and informal, try to replicate that same tone and style in your own writing.
- **Be concise.** On the Web, distractions are abundant. Be sure to use precise language and coherent syntax to keep readers focused.
- **Consider multimedia.** Academic blogs give writers the opportunity to use hyperlinks, pictures, sounds, and videos to supplement writing. Take advantage of innovative ways to advance your ideas and enhance your writing.
- **Proofread.** Just as in formal academic writing, careless mistakes and errors can distract readers and make you less credible as a writer.

Examples of academic blogs at Duke

- Nicholas School Blogs (<http://blogs.nicholas.duke.edu/>)
 - Student, faculty, and alumni blogs showcase the classes, travels, research, internships, and events that comprise the Nicholas School of the Environment.
- A View from the Cave (<http://www.aviewfromthecave.com/2012/01/feeling-conflicted.html>)
 - A Duke professor invites students and colleagues to explore and challenge the world around us.
- Ocean Acidification (http://sites.duke.edu/writing20_12_f2011/)
 - A Duke professor's academic blog for her Writing 101: Ocean Acidification course.

This handout was created by Julia Levy as part of her final research project for EDU 255 Literacy, Writing, and Tutoring in Fall 2012.