

# Introduction to Blogging

Thompson Writing Program

## What is a blog?

The word "blog," a contraction of "web log," is an informational web page that consists of discrete units called "posts." The term "log" comes from the history of nautical navigation and originally referred to a record of chronological events kept by a ship's crew (Rettberg 30). Like a ship's log, blogs on the web tend to maintain an ordered chronology, although they often unfold in reverse order. Blog posts are often shorter and less formal than other types of writing.

Blogs can be personal, artistic, <u>academic</u>, or professional. It is a unique form of online publishing that creates opportunities for producing knowledge, sharing research, building social networks, developing professionally, or documenting personal growth.



toddbacile.wordpress.com

## Composing a post

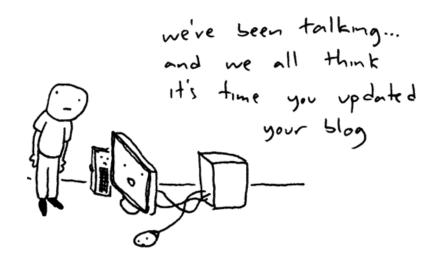
You want your blog to invite readers in and keep them coming back for updates. Great blogs are vibrant and visually interesting, but they are also thoughtful and purposeful. Every post matters for generating and holding attention. Consider the following principles when composing:

- Make a point. While posts do not require a formal thesis or claim, it is important to have an argument, opinion, or purpose in mind when you compose.
- Be concise. Use precise language and coherent syntax to make your posts easy to read.
- **Post often.** Blogs should be updated regularly to hold readers' interest. Actively generate new and interesting content on a daily or weekly schedule.
- **Consider inviting guest bloggers** to appeal to diverse readers, broaden your blog's scope, or refresh your own perspective on the project.
- **Proofread.** Careless mistakes and errors can distract readers and make you appear less credible as a writer.
- **Create visual interest.** Consider which aspects of your content would pair well with visual elements such as photographs, figures, or videos. Break up large chunks of text with visual elements to make your blog more readable.

#### Using Multimedia

Audio and visual interest helps grab a reader's attention. Blogs give writers the opportunity to use design, images, audio, and video to supplement their writing. Take advantage of these innovative ways to enhance your presentation! Here are some guidelines to have in mind when you choose your blog's multimedia elements:

- Use appropriate content, size, and quality. Make sure your chosen images complement the layout of your text visually. Images should be easy to see without obstructing the text of a post. Choose the highest possible quality image while also making sure it is easy to load. You don't want your readers squinting at blurry pixels, but you won't want them to wait 10 seconds for something to load, either.
- When linking to an online video, consider using a screen shot from that video as your hyperlink. A screen shot can make a reader more likely to click on a link. It can provide a visual preview, as well as demonstrate the clip's relevance to your post.
- Attribute your sources. Like ideas, images and videos are someone else's intellectual property. Whenever possible, provide captions for the reader. Even a simple caption (Image courtesy of msnbc.com) will help readers identify the object's origins.



Toothpaste For Dinner.com

#### Using Hyperlinks

Hyperlinks are an important part of blogging and can really increase your credibility. They create a sense of conversation, act like citations in more informal circumstances, and demonstrate that you are engaged with other people's work. *[add a line space here?]* 

• Examples of Effective Hyperlinks

• <u>http://blogs.nicholas.duke.edu/thegreengrok/art-makes-environmental-change-real/</u>

- Links to scientific sources
- http://www.npr.org/blogs/health/2014/04/03/298358419/good-day-sunshinecould-morning-light-help-keep-us-lean
  - Links to other news stories, scientific research, and biographical information for story's interviewees

### Tips To Maintain a Successful Blog

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- Make post titles eye-catching but also reasonably accurate.
  - Example: "Trash Talk" is a post about waste management.
    - http://blogs.nicholas.duke.edu/devilfish/the-trash-talk/
- Consider using the tag function in each post. This will help guide readers through your content thematically instead of chronologically. Keep tags consistent, including punctuation. For example, "African-American" and "African American" would be regarded as two different tags because of the hyphen.
- If your hosting platform allows, link to similar blogs in order to increase your traffic.
- Unlike other writing contexts, you may find it difficult to identify your audience when you are composing blog posts. If your blog is public, you could have a large, diverse, and even global readership. Be aware that you are potentially addressing people with very different knowledge bases and cultural assumptions than yours.
- Handle comments with care. As the blog's creator, the way you handle dissenting or inflammatory voices sets the tone for your readers. Consider adjusting your platform's comment settings if you need to regulate the conversation. For instance, requiring minimum identification to post a comment can address the problem of inappropriate posts by increasing a writer's accountability.

## **Examples of Blogs**

Academic and Professional Blogs

- http://blogs.nicholas.duke.edu/
  - Student, faculty, and alumni blogs related to Duke's Nicholas School of the Environment.
- <u>http://www.wired.com/category/elemental/</u>
  - The science blog of *Wired* magazine's Deborah Blum.
- <u>http://www.scotusblog.com/</u>
  - Updates and news from the Supreme Court of the United States.
- <u>http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/culture/emily-nussbaum</u>
  - Notes on arts and culture from the New Yorker's TV critic.

Personal, Project-Based, and Narrative Blogs

- <u>http://dooce.com/</u>
  - Although she was one of the first people fired for the content of her personal blog, Heather Armstrong has been updating it for over a decade.
- http://fortydaysofdating.com/
  - Two best friends decide to date for 40 days and record their interactions.
- <u>http://www.greenkitchenstories.com/</u>
  - Vegetarian recipes and lifestyle tips plus glossy food photography.
- <u>http://ww2today.com/</u>
  - o Martin Cherritt's blog covers World War II one day at a time.
- <u>http://blog.inkyfool.com/</u>
  Collected musings on words, phrases, grammar, and rhetoric.
- <u>http://maddieonthings.com/</u>
  - Theron Humphrey takes photographs of his coonhound, Maddie.



## Works Cited

Rettberg, Jil Walker. *Blogging*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge, UK: Polity Books, 2014. Print.

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maddieonthings.com