

BLOGGING FOR BEGINNERS

What is the Social Web?

Way back when.... Internet and Web 1.0:

From the 90's to early 2000's, the World Wide Web was great for giving information to people and providing some online shopping, but the social aspect of the Internet had not been discovered yet. Imagine! Life without Twitter? Facebook?

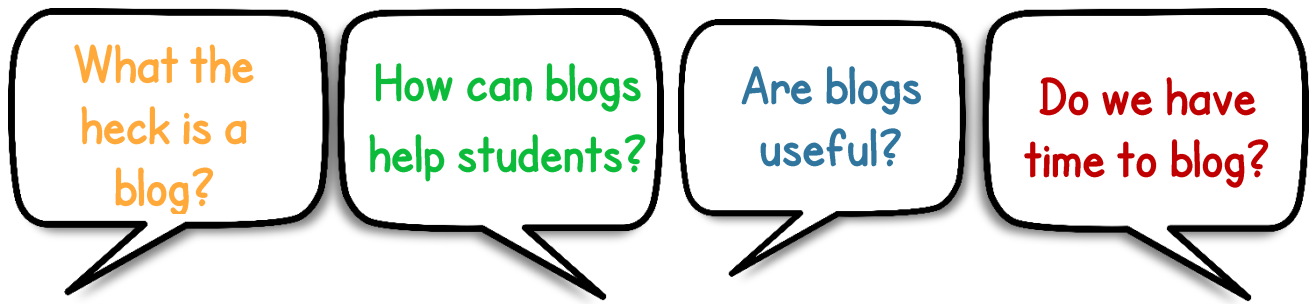
In the early 2000's, the social web was born with users generating their own content. People started getting into conversations online and then, we saw the developments of personal websites, online chat rooms, blogs, social networking, forums and now some people publish everything online! We are all authors.



The Social Web includes:



- Blogs
- Social bookmarking: e.g. Reddit
- Social networking: e.g. Facebook, Twitter
- Groups: e.g. Google, Yahoo, etc.
- File sharing: e.g. YouTube
- Wikis: e.g. Wikipedia
- Virtual worlds: e.g. SecondLife
- Instant messaging
- Online chat
- Forums



What exactly IS a blog?

Internet definition:

As a noun:

a personal website or web page on which an individual records opinions, ideas, links to other sites, etc. on a regular basis.

As a verb:

to add new material to or regularly update a blog.
"I blogged for two hours last night."

A blog = weblog = **web log**

It is:

- A website
- An online personal diary or journal
- A series of entries or posts
- Usually displayed in reverse chronological order, with most recent entry first
- A place where one can share thoughts, interests or passions



General info about blogs

Blogs (shortened from the term web log) can use any layout and can cover many different topics, but they all have basic characteristics in common.



- ≡ Blog entries are posted in reverse-chronological order. The order is similar to a backwards diary, running from the most recent at the top of a page to the least recent at the bottom.
- ≡ Blog entries usually include the date and specific time that they were posted (a timestamp).
- ≡ The blogger's name is usually listed with the timestamp. By default, blogs usually end "Posted by [blogger's name]."
- ≡ Older blog entries are usually found in an archive. Often the archive is sorted by months and years. The archive links are usually in a sidebar on the page.
- ≡ Readers and the blogger can usually comment on (or reply to) a blog entry.
- ≡ The comments can turn into a dialogue, with the readers and blogger talking together.

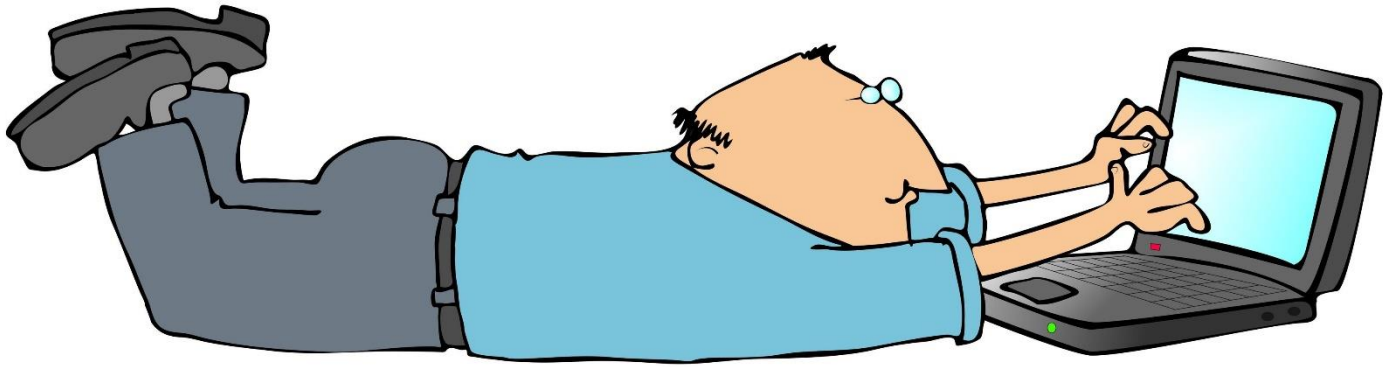
The modern blog

The blog today is:

- an integral part of the social web
- reliant on its community of readers
- includes online networking, bookmarking posts, forums and promotions
- dependent on the blogger and their activities online
- popular! There are more than 100 million blogs entering the blogosphere every day!
- not just an online diary; some bloggers can have an impact on society
- going to only get more popular (hence the reason for teaching with them)
- useful for promoting business ideas
- a relevant and interesting teaching tool

“Blogging isn’t about publishing as much as you can. It’s about publishing as smart as you can.”

— Jon Morrow



Join an online community

There are many benefits of joining a blogging community:

- Your I.T. skills will improve! When you become stuck, look up the solution on YouTube or Google.
- It will improve your writing. Having the discipline to sit down and thoughtfully write a blog will give you the opportunity to practise your writing skills.
- It will open your mind up to new learning.
- It will allow you to interact with others who have the same interests as you.
- It could give you expertise in this area and you could even make a career out of it! If you keep practising, you will go from an amateur to a professional.
- It will hopefully increase your knowledge, passion, focus and purpose in your particular topic or subject.
- It will put you in touch with bloggers and experts from all over the world, giving you new information, resources and insights, which could all assist in making your own blog more popular.



- It will improve your research skills
- You will form a communication network with other bloggers and readers
- As you learn new things and keep writing, so your brain will be stimulated and active – like pilates for the brain!
- Your social abilities will improve as you become accustomed to interacting with all sorts of different people.
- Your continued interest and knowledge in your subject/topic will increase your creativity.
- Blogging will improve your confidence in writing and interacting with others.
- It could lead to self-fulfillment! If we feel we are contributing to something in this world, somehow it makes us feel better about ourselves.
- Being part of a very large community gives you a sense of being very much part of the modern world.
- Once students publish a post, their writing passes into the big, wide world. Their writing now exists for a larger audience -- classmates, friends, and the blogosphere!

“Don’t focus on having a great blog.
Focus on producing a blog that’s
great for your readers.”

- Brian Clark (Blogger)



Tips for choosing a blog topic



1. Choose something you love chatting about!

A blog should be updated often; some blog many times in one day! So choose a topic that really interests you and about which you have knowledge. Stay motivated to keep your blogs fresh!

2. Choose a topic that encourages conversation

Blogs that are successful require two-way conversation between you (the blogger) and your audience (your readers). You need to respond to your readers. As readers leave comments on your blog or email you to discuss your posts in further detail, you need to be responsive and receptive to them. Your blog's long-term success will depend on the sense of community you can create around it.

3. Choose a topic for which you can accept criticism

The blogosphere is made up of people from all walks of life with varying opinions. As your blog grows, more and more people will find it, and some of those people may not agree with everything you write. Successful bloggers enjoy discussing their blogs' topics from all angles and appreciate a healthy debate.

4. Choose a topic for which you have much information, thoughts or opinions

It's always best to write a blog on a topic about which you have knowledge. Although you may have to research when writing your blog, your blog should not be something you know nothing about!

5. Choose a topic that you often research

The blogosphere is constantly changing and one of the most unique aspects of blogs is their ability to provide fresh, meaningful content and discussions about a wide variety of topics. In order for your blog to be successful, you need to enjoy reading about your blog's topic and keeping up with news and current events related to it thereby enabling you to keep your blog's content interesting and relevant to readers.

6. Choose a topic that suits your audience

Every blog has a target audience it's written for. Before you start writing blog posts, determine who your audience will be. Who will want to read your blog and why? Are they seeking professional information and discussions or fun and laughter? Identify not only your goals for your blog but also your audience's expectations for it. Then decide what tone would be most appropriate for your blog, and write in that tone and style consistently.

7, Choose a topic that you can keep writing on

If you want to keep up your blog, then you have to choose a topic that will keep going!

Ideas for blog topics

- A town in Ireland
- Tips for job seeking
- A Community I Love
- Ways to save time
- My children's school
- How to make conversation
- Starting a business
- Going back to education
- What I spend money on
- Watch these TV programmes
- Watch these movies
- Interview with
- Look at my photos
- My travels
- Top ten list
- Story time
- The facts about
- How to live healthy
- Bucket list



Features of a good blog

- Real interest and passion for topic
- Good, relevant content
- Useful information
- Up-to-date
- Appropriate writing style and tone
- Good spelling and grammar
- Personable
- Honest and open
- Dynamic, interesting and enjoyable
- Opportunity to give feedback, comment, etc.
- Links to other social media
- Consistency
- Regular posting
- Catchy headlines
- Colour and images
- Clean design
- The right length
- Conversational tone
- Encourages discussion
- Confidence
- **Not all about self!**



Before you start your blog

Answer each question!

1. What topic are you writing about?
2. What tone are you using for your blog?
3. Who is your target audience?
3. What topics do you need to research?
4. How often are you going to blog?
5. Are you linking other social media to your log? If so, what?



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Tips for writing your blog

1. **Be honest** - Blogs that are written in an honest voice and truly show who the writer is are often the most popular. Remember, your blog's success depends on the community that develops around it. Represent yourself and your content honestly and openly and reader loyalty will grow.
2. **KISS – Keep It Super Simple.** The simpler your blog is, the easier it will be for you to keep writing it.
3. **Provide attribution** - Don't risk being accused of violating copyrights, plagiarism or stealing content from another blog or website. If you found information on another blog or website that you want to discuss on your blog make sure you provide a link back to the original source.
4. **Write in short paragraphs** - The visual appeal of your blog's content can be just as important as the content itself. Write your blog posts in short paragraphs (no more than 2-3 sentences is a safe rule) to provide visual relief from a text heavy web page. Most readers will skim a blog post or web page before committing to read it in its entirety. Text heavy web pages and blog posts can be overwhelming to readers while pages with a lot of white space are easier to skim and more likely to keep readers on the page (or to encourage them to link deeper into the site).



5. **Write in a conversational tone** – You do not need to use fancy words. Rather, a conversational tone could give the impression that you are ‘talking’ to your audience.
6. **Be accurate** - Always check your spelling and grammar.
7. **Show who you are!** Let your personality shine through in your writing. Personal stories and anecdotes are a great way to make a blog post more engaging.

8. **Encourage discussion** - People should want to talk about your blog. Great posts should generate discussion.
9. **Ask for feedback** - Encourage your readers to give their thoughts, opinions or comments. Include a call to action at the end of article to garner a response. Also, respond to comments, emails, and questions!
10. **Keep it Readable** - Bullets, lists, graphs, and images are a great way to make sure your content is easy to read. Always preview your work before you publish.
11. **Keep it the right length** - A blog post should be as long as it needs to be. It should be as long as it takes for you to clearly explain your idea, concept or thought.
12. **Write with authority** - No one will read your blog if your blog sounds unsure. Be confident in what you know and think, and write with authority.
13. **Show your passion** for the topic - It will keep your blog interesting.
14. **Interact and connect with people** - The most successful blogs have a powerful community of people behind them. You need to focus on interacting with people and connecting with them by engaging them through your blog content, comments, and so on. Acknowledge them and talk to them online just as you would if you met in person, so you have a better chance of building a lasting relationship that will ultimately translate into loyalty and word-of-mouth marketing.
15. **Choose a catchy headline!** Your blog post titles are the gateway to your content.
16. **Be safe online!**



Blogging applications

Blogging applications – ask yourself these questions:

*Please note: If you a Beginner Blogger, many of these questions may not relate to you. So ignore them if they don't apply!



1. What are your goals for your blog? The blogging application you choose is largely dependent upon your goals for your blog.

2. How much space will you need to store your blog's images and content?

3. Do you want to display ads on your blog?

4. Do you want to add forums and other features

to your blog?

5. Do you need special features?

6. Do you have technical ability?

7. Do you need an email address specifically for your blog?

8. Do you want to spend money on blogging software? Your budget will have a significant impact on the blogging application you choose. While there are many free blogging platforms available online, those free blogging applications typically offer limited features.

Blogging Platform Comparisons

It is best to browse through these blog sites online. They include:

WordPress.com (Free, Hosted by Wordpress):

WordPress.com is a free blogging platform that provides a limited amount of customization by way of free templates you can download for your blog. It is very easy to learn.

WordPress.org (Paid, Third-Party Host Required):

WordPress.org offers free blogging platform, but users have to pay to host their blogs through a third-party website host such as BlueHost. For bloggers with some technical skills who need advanced customization, WordPress.org is a great choice.

Blogger:

Blogger equals easy. Many novice bloggers choose to start their first blogs with Blogger because it's free, very easy to use, and it allows ads to help monetize blogs. The downside of Blogger is it's prone to outages, so you may not always be able to access your blog when you want to.

TypePad:

TypePad is very easy to use, but it's not free. Even though it doesn't require a third-party host, it does have a cost associated with it. With that said, TypePad does provide great features and a high level of customization without the technical knowledge of some other customizable blogging software options.

LiveJournal:

LiveJournal requires users to pay a monthly fee, and it provides a limited amount of features and customization.

Tumblr: Tumblr enables users to quickly publish images, quotes, links, video, audio, and chats to their own Tumblelogs. Users can easily share and reblog other users' Tumblr posts. Tumblr is free but not as robust as other blogging applications.

Some more advice if you are unsure:

- For bloggers who are looking for a free blogging platform that allows monetization, you may want to try Blogger. If monetization is not important to you, then WordPress.com might be a better choice.



- For bloggers who want full customization and advanced feature capability (and aren't afraid of technical challenges and out-of-pocket expenses), WordPress.org is an excellent choice.

- For bloggers who don't need a lot of features and would rather simply publish quotes, images, and videos without frills, Tumblr is a good option.

- Decide what your goals are for your blog upfront to help you choose the best blogging platform for you from the start.



Choosing your blog name

One of the first things a new blogger has to do is choose a **domain name**. This can be challenging when so many of the best domain names are already taken! How can you find a great domain name?



- Do you want your domain name to be obvious to Internet users? The advantage to having a domain name that is clearly related to your blog's topic is it may help people find your blog through keyword searches. Also, it may be easier for people to remember a blog domain name that explains the blog.

- A creative blog name can become a great brand if your blog becomes successful.

You can even make up a word!

- If you decide you want to choose an obvious domain name, you'll need to research what is available. You can do this through any blog host's website. For example, using a site such as BlueHost will allow you to type in the domain name of your choice (including the extension - .com, .net, .us, etc.) and immediately learn if that domain name is available. Many sites will also provide a list of similar domain names for you to choose from. For example, if the name you searched for is taken, you'll see a list of alternatives that might include a different extension, an additional word or letter added, and more.
- As you try to find an available domain name that you like and fits your blog, it's a good idea to take some time to search for popular keywords related to your blog's topic through a website such as Wordtracker. Using those words in your domain name will certainly help new readers find your blog through their own searches.

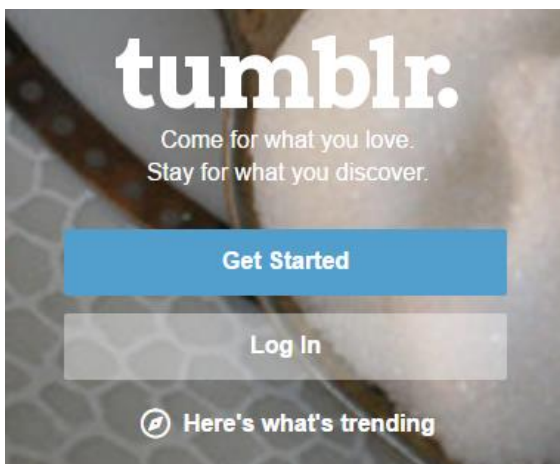
<http://www.wordtracker.com/>

What is a blogging platform?

Most simply, a blogging platform is a place online where you write blog posts and publish them. The platform is a content management system that allows you to keep your blog posts organised for both you and your reader.

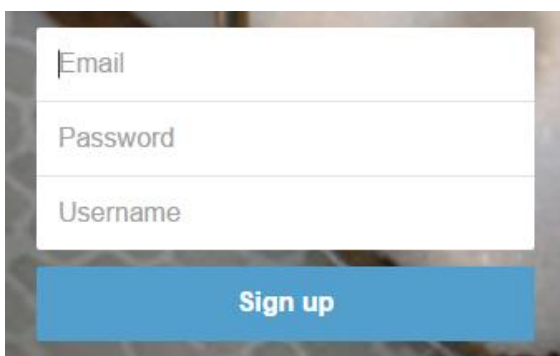
Specifically, a blog platform is a database that holds all of your post text, images, and blog pages organised. Depending on the platform, you can also organise your posts further with tags, categories, and/or labels. You can register a domain for an additional cost if you wish.

Signing up for Tumblr



—Go to www.tumblr.com

—Click on **Get Started**



—Type in your email address

—Choose a password

—Choose a username (that has not been used!)

How old are you?

I have read, understand, and agree to the Tumblr [Terms of Service](#).

Next

- Type in your age
- Read and tick **Terms of Service**
- Click on **Next**

I'm not a robot

reCAPTCHA
Privacy - Terms

Almost Done!

- Tick the box!

What're you into?

Tell us what you like and we'll get you the good stuff.

- Click onto the categories that interest you
- Choose at least 4

Congratulations

Now you're a real user.
You deserve an app.

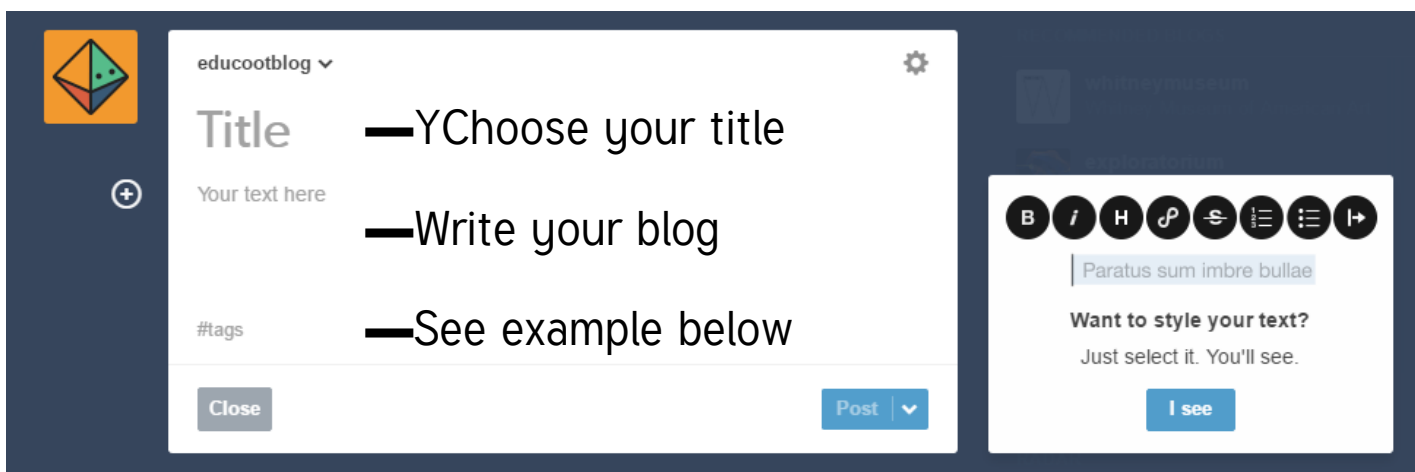
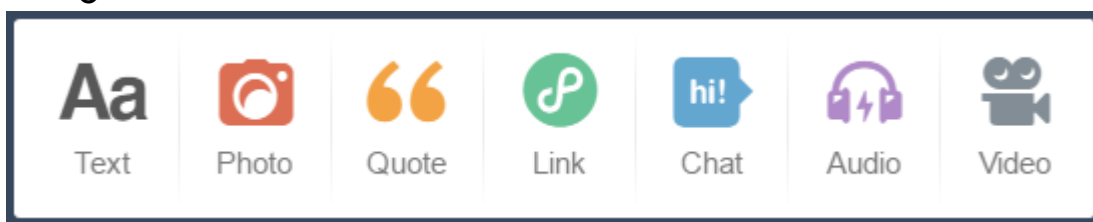
Available on the **App Store**

GET IT ON **Google play**

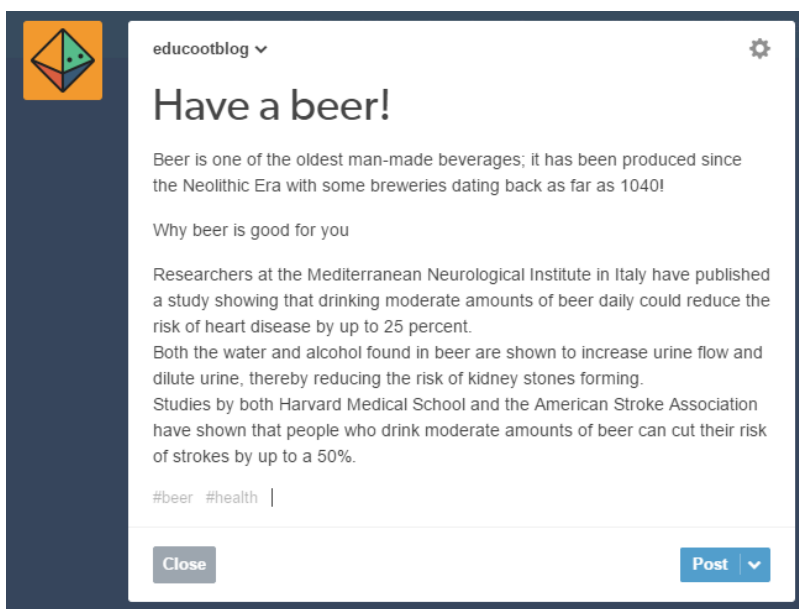
Or, skip to your dashboard

- Check your emails
- Click into the **Tumblr** email
- Click on the link to verify your email address
- Click on **'Skip to your dashboard'**

These below are types of blogs. Click into **Text** to create a text blog.



Highlight words to edit text, e.g. bold, italics, etc.



- ✓ Post now
- Add to queue
- Save as draft
- Post privately
- Schedule

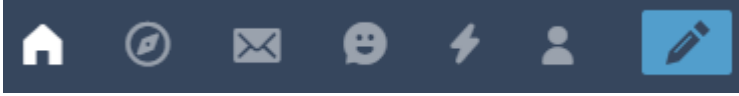
Preview on blog

—Choose what you want to do with your post

—Remember to proofread before posting

Click on the house for your **dashboard**

Click on the pencil to write a new blog



You can edit the appearance of your blog, e.g. background, colour, name, etc.



You can also customise your avatar

You will be given your own URL, with your username in it.

<http://educootblog.tumblr.com/>

There is no need to pay for it if you are using blogging in a casual way.

For more information:

<http://www.wikihow.com/Use-Tumblr>

Baby steps...

STEP 1:

Decide what your blog will be about.

Put some thought into what you will write.

STEP 2:

Register for an account and create your blog.

You will need an email address to register.

STEP 3:

Select your domain, theme and other options.

STEP 4:

Start blogging.

Once you've completed steps 1-3, you're ready to join the blogosphere and start publishing content on your blog.



Reviewing your blog

Ask yourself these questions after posting a blog or two. Think about what you want your blog to be by answering the questions:

1. What are your goals for the blog?

- Are you blogging to create a discussion?
- Does your blog show your passion and interest in your topic?
- Are you blogging just for fun?
- Are you blogging to discuss particular topics? (Examples: news, a hobby, health issues, going back to learning, etc.)
- Are you blogging to raise awareness of your business?



2. What does your audience look like?

- Who is your main audience? (e.g. mothers, tutors, students, people with particular interests or opinions, etc.)
- Does your blog suit your audience?
- Do you have the appropriate design for your audience?
- Is your blog interesting so that readers will want to return to your blog?
- Is the content of your blog appropriate to your audience?

3. Is your blog crystal clear?

- Does your blog give a clear message, idea or opinion?

- Is your blog a topic that would create discussion and comments?
- Does your blog have meaning?

4. Can you be consistent and reliable?

- Do you have the time to update your blog frequently?
- Are you up-to-date about your specific topic?
- Can you keep your blogs fresh and informative?
- Can you be dependable?

5. Can you be friendly?

- Are you encouraging readers to leave comments or questions?
- Remember, blogs can be like conversations; do you have a friendly tone?
- Can you appreciate your readers and treat them well?

6. Do more than just your own blog:

- You have to have a presence, for example, commenting on other blogs (related to your topic) – do you comment on other blogs?
- Is your blog linked to social networking, such as Twitter, Facebook and Linked In?

7. If you need help, just ask

- Most bloggers out there are helpful and more than willing to assist if you ask.
- Are you willing to get help with your blog if you need it?

8. Just be you!

- Are you being yourself in your blog?

- Are you being honest and genuine on your blog?
- What tone are you using for your blog?
(Example: informative / opinionated / business-like / bitchy / casual / formal.....)
- Are you being conversational?



Vocabulary

Here is a list of blogging vocabulary, if you need it.

Address bar- the bar at the top of the webpage where you type the URL.

AdSense- ads from Google that run on the internet, even on your blog if you sign up.

Archive- a list of your past posts.

Beta- a description meaning a program or software is not yet completely finished, but is in test mode.

Blogger- the person who blogs/author.

Blogger- Google's blog systems/platform. It's fairly simple and often recommended for new bloggers due to ease of use.

Blogging- the actual act of writing posts, or, over the long term, the ongoing activity of keeping up a blog is called blogging.

Blogosphere- slang for the world/culture of blogs on the net

Calendar- displays a record of when you've posted

Category/Label- placing each post in a category or labeling it with a topic will help readers to find posts that interest them.

Coding- using HTML codes to alter the appearance of the net, such as making it bold, or to insert links, photos or so on. However, many platforms have this built in with the simple click of a button.

Comment Form- space where your readers are able to interact with you by leaving comments

Comments- feedback and conversation from your readers.

Content- the text entries, photos and videos in your blog

Cookies- when your computer saves info about where/what you've visited on the net.

Dashboard- administrative area where you manipulate your blog

Domain name- what someone types into the address bar to find a site, the URL

Email subscription- when someone signs up to receive an email whenever you post

Flame war- insults, attacks or personal arguments in the comments.

Font- how the type appears

Google news alert- service that sends notice when news stories relating to your topic comes up

HARO- "help a reporter out.com"- a service that connects experts with the people who want to interview them, a wonderful resource for bloggers and journalists

Header- top of a document, blog post or webpage, typically contains the title, author, etc

Link- a pathway to another page on the web

Padding- putting together many posts to get your blog ready to roll out, or to prep for a vacation/time away from writing

Permalink- the permanent place on the web where you can always find one certain post.

Platform- software program used to blog.

Rankings- how well a blog, post, or website performs as far as getting traffic.

RSS Feed- similar to email subscription above

SEO- search engine optimization, making your text optimal for the attention of search engines like Google, which helps you get traffic and ranking.

Title- can be the title of either your blog or of a post.

Widget- items on the side of your blog like calendar, archive, AdSense. Anything in the side columns.

WYSIWYG- What You See Is What You Get (if you are posting in WYSIWYG mode, then you are NOT using code. What you type is what is seen on the blog after you publish.)

For further information

— Watch clips on YouTube on how to set up your blog.

— These articles from About.com Web Logs provide step-by-step instructions to help you with Blogger and Wordpress.

How to Start a Free Blog with Blogger.com

<http://weblogs.about.com/od/creatingablog/ss/BloggerTutorial.htm>

How to Start a Free Blog with Wordpress.com

<http://weblogs.about.com/od/creatingablog/ss/StartWordpress.htm>