

Getting Started with Blogging

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Thank you to my [Women in Consulting \(WIC\)](#)
Colleague [Kathryn Smith](#) for her
contributions to “Blog Writing Hints & Tips,”
“Writing for Search Engine Optimization,” and
“WordPress Cheat Sheet.” We originally developed
these sections to guide WIC bloggers.

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Blogging Basics

A blog is a website that typically arranges posts in reverse chronological order. Posts are as varied as the people who write them, and each blog typically has several categories under which posts are arranged, but these categories are more often than not all related to a larger over-arching topic. Most blogs are written by a single person, but there are group blogs as well. [Women in Consulting's blog](#) is one example of a blog with multiple authors.

A blog is a great way to share information and engage your audience. Like any social media tool, a blog should never be about imparting your wisdom and messaging to the masses. Rather, it should be about engaging your audience and participating in "the conversation." As such, readers are usually allowed to post comments. In fact, I don't recommend launching a blog unless you're willing to allow comments. It's not about controlling the conversation. It's about opening up the channels of communication.

First Steps

- **Determine the purpose of your blog** and design it to support that purpose.
- **Determine the overall topic of your blog** and the various categories you want to cover.
- **Establish how often you're going to publish**, and have a few posts ready in the queue before you launch the site.
- **Choose a platform**: there are many to choose from, but WordPress is by far the easiest and most robust.
- **Hire a WordPress jockey** to build your blog. Yes, WordPress is easy. However, it's faster to have someone well-versed with the software build your blog for you. You'll have fewer headaches. It will function more efficiently and effectively. And it's not that expensive.
- **Start blogging** and do it regularly!

Blogging Best Practices

- **Allow commenting—good and bad.** Use negative feedback as an opportunity to demonstrate your responsiveness and willingness to engage and help your audience. Not allowing comments at all conveys that it's all about you. Allowing only positive comments conveys that you're trying to hide something or control the conversation or both.
- **Let go of control.** Social media tools aren't about controlling what is said and not said. They're about conversation. They're about engaging with your audience and listening to what they have to say.
- **Develop targeted search terms**—ideally with the help of a search engine optimization (SEO) consultant. If you don't go through a keyword exercise and the

other associated strategic tasks, the other SEO work is basically for not. These key phrases should be the ones you'd like your blog to appear in the results for when a user does a search; and therefore should be used as much as possible in your posts—without being forced. Not every post will be key-phrase rich, but you should try to incorporate them as much as possible (see Writing for SEO Optimization below).

- **Limit the number of categories you have.** The key is to not spread yourself too thin, especially if you care about SEO or you want to be viewed as authoritative.
- **Make it easy for users to find older posts.** There are a lot of ways to archive your blog posts. Two of the most common and useful to users are by date and by category topic. If you have multiple authors, you might also consider an archive by author. The key is to avoid making users repeatedly click the “previous” button and scan numerous pages. Search is a good option, but don't let that be the only way readers can access your archives.
- **Provide some type of automatic feed/syndication.** RSS feeds (see Blogging Terminology below) push updates out to readers who add your feed to their feed reader, allowing them to read updates without having to manually go to your blog to see if you've posted anything new. Make sure the link for the feed is prominently displayed in the sidebar.
- **Include prompts for sharing individual posts via various social media tools,** such as Delicious, Digg, Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Reddit, StumbleUpon, Twitter, and more. [Tech for Luddites](#) does a good job of this; simply go to the bottom of any blog post and mouse over the “share” button to see all the ways the site makes it easy for readers to share and bookmark an individual post.
- **Register your blog in the various directories** after it has been active for about four – six months, and you've posted regularly.
- **Participate in the blogosphere.** Don't just post to your own blog. Read other blogs relevant to your area and participate in the conversation on those sites (i.e. comment on other bloggers' posts).

Blog Writing Hints and Tips

- Have a clear goal
- Write in the first person—blog writing is like thinking out loud
- Don't use marketing or corporate speak
- Use a conversational tone; informal grammar and slang are okay, such as gotcha
- Let yourself go, have fun, be real—and real isn't perfect; although write as if it will be published, because it will
- Be consistent in how you write
- Develop your own distinct voice/style—and RELAX!
- Provide points of view
- Write for scan-ability: use heads, subheads, bullets, bold text where appropriate; minimize the number of paragraphs over four or five lines, and manage white space
- Encourage comments by the way you write your post
- Admit to the “uncomfortable-ness” and be self-revealing if/when it fits the situation/topic
- Include counterpoints, exploring and addressing both sides of an issue
- Boil down complex thoughts to a few sentences—less is more
- Include at least one link to something pertinent in each post, if at all possible
 - Linking gets and keeps things going
 - No permission is needed to link
 - Don't link to download files, link to the previous page instead
- Read other blogs for inspiration, such as:
 - Prologger.com (good resource about blogging)

- Jonathan Schwartz, CEO of Sun Microsystems: <http://blogs.sun.com/jonathan/>
- Dell's Direct2Dell blog: <http://direct2dell.com/one2one/default.aspx>
- HP's central blog page: <http://www.hp.com/hpinfo/blogs/index/html>
- HP's Eric Kintz (VP Global Marketing Strategy & Excellence): <http://h20325.www2.hp.com/blogs/kintz/>
- Google's corporate blog (edited by Karen Wickre): <http://googleblog.blogspot.com/>
- Debbie Weil's podcast interview with Karen Wickre: <http://tinyurl.com/39bnfb>
- "Why Blogging Matters"—Eric Kintz, HP (award winning)
- "How & Why to Add Video to Your Blog from WorldBiz Report"
<http://www.debbieweil.com/2006/12/17/how-why-to-add-video-to-your-blog/>

Writing for Search Engine Optimization

- Include your targeted search term in the:
 - Main headline
 - Subheads as much as possible
 - Body copy as many times as possible (three times is ideal)
 - "Tags" field in WordPress (see WordPress cheat sheet below)
 - Bulleted text
- Don't forget that your primary audience is human, so if there's a conflict between the human audience and the search engines, favor your human audience. ☺

Blogging Terminology

- **Archives:** a means of organizing your posts so readers can easily find what interests them. You can create archives based on a number of organizational structures: date, topic, author, alphabetically, and more.
- **Blogroll:** a list of web pages (and associated links) that you find worthwhile or interesting. Typically, the links are to other blogs. A Blogroll can be a sidebar on your blog or a separate page. [Blo.gs](#) and [BlogRolling](#) are good resources for managing and understanding a Blogroll.
- **Comments:** allows users to comment on your posts and link to your posts.
 - Trackbacks: are similar to references at the end of an article or academic paper. They notify another author that you referenced his/her post on your blog.
 - Pingbacks: lets you notify the author of a post that you linked to it from your blog. If the blog that you're linking to is pingback-enabled, then the author of that blog is notified (in a pingback) that you linked to his article.
 - Moderating:
 - Spam:
- **Feed/Syndication:** an automated process for notifying readers of new posts. Examples of feeds include Atom, RSS (Really Simply Syndication), and RDF. For a comprehensive description, read Dave Shea's "[What is RSS/XML/Atom/Syndication?](#)" A feed reader checks blogs you've tagged for updates and automatically downloads them for you, displaying an excerpt (or sometimes the whole post). All you have to do is add the links of blogs you like to the RSS feed; and the feed reader will inform you when any of the blogs have new posts.
- **Pages:** static information about you or your blog, such as "About this Blog" or "About the Author" or something similar.
- **Plug-in:** code that can extend the functionality of a standard WordPress blog. These are typically loaded in the "wp-content/plugins" directory on the web server where you've installed WordPress. You can enable the plug-ins within the WordPress

interface once you've uploaded them to the server. Key ones to include on your blog, include:

- Akismet
- All-in-One SEO Pack
- FD Feedburner (for managing feeds)
- Google XML Sitemaps
- Search Everything
- Similar Posts
- TinyMCE Advanced (a must, as it provides all the formatting buttons, such as bold, italics, bullets, etc. that make formatting a post much easier)
- **Post:** the individual articles you "post" (publish) to your blog.
- **Search:** allows visitors to search the blog, just like an other search functionality; typically requires a plug-in such as "Search Everything"
- **Sidebar:** the column on the left or right side of your blog that includes links to tools and various information about the blog: search, RSS feed, archive, categories, Blogroll, and more.

For a complete list of terms and their definitions, [read the glossary on WordPress.org](#).

WordPress Cheat Sheet

How to Write and Edit Your Post

- Either enter the Blog from your website (if linked from there) or go directly to your blog's URL.
- At the bottom of the sidebar (typically), under 'Meta', select the '[Log in](#)' link to log in with your name and password or go to wp-admin ([www.url.com/blog/wp-admin](#) or [www.blogurl.com/wp-admin](#) or similar URL).
- Enter your username and password.
- Under the blog header, in the upper left side, click the down arrow next to "Posts" and then select "Add New." This is the page on which you write your blog post.
- Enter the title of your post in the 'Title' field at the top of the page under "Add New Post."
- Copy and paste your article copy or your text into the 'Post' box *or* type it all yourself.
 - If pasting from Word, make sure to click the icon with the little "W" in it, so that it strips out all of Word's "weird" stuff.
 - If you don't see the little "W," you need to click the "Kitchen Sink" icon in the top row, far right. That will give you all the other editing tools, including the one for pasting from Word.
- After you've entered the text, use the editing buttons above the post box just as you would if you were using Microsoft Office Word when you are in the 'Visual' tab section.
 - Select 'Toggle full screen mode' (just to the left of the right-most icon in the top row) if you'd like to work in full screen mode.
 - Select 'Kitchen Sink' in the most upper-right corner of the screen if you need more editing choices.
 - Add links by highlighting the text you want to link, and click the chain icon in the middle of the top row, which will launch a new, smaller window.
 - Enter or paste the full URL, including http://, in the "Link URL" text box.
 - Select "Open in this window / frame" from the "Target" pull-down menu, if the link is to another area on your website.

- Select “Open in new window (_blank)” if linking to another site besides your own.
- Click the “Insert” button when done.
 - Use Bold to highlight your subheads.
- Use the advanced options as appropriate. If you are unsure what these are for, you can check various online references, including WordPress Help in the upper right corner.

Adding Tags, Categories and Related Posts to Your Post

- NOTE: You can delete and change tags and categories at any time, so don't worry if you change your mind during this process.
- Choose only one category and as many tags as are appropriate for your post.
- Select the appropriate category under the “Categories” header by clicking the checkbox next to your chosen category.
- Enter all appropriate tags under the “Tag” header
 - Use all lower case for every tag
 - Separate tags by commas
 - If there is already a tag related to your topic, please use that wording, as WordPress will group like articles together by tags (see the right column on the live blog site for existing tags—they will also appear beneath the tag text box as you type, if what you're typing matches the phrasing already used)
 - Click 'Add' when you've entered your tags.
- Enter “Related Posts” under that category.
- If you know there's already a post on the blog that you want to cross link with, simply type the title in the “Search posts” text box and then click on the post in the resulting list that you want to link to (click “No” if it asks you whether you want to leave the page).
- Do this for each post you want to add.

Adding Media to Your Post

- Add media to your post by selecting the image or embedded media icons in the top row (one is a tree, the other a film strip).
- Remember that adding media and links makes the post more interesting and will get your blog more attention. You can find media on YouTube, Flickr, and many other sites.

How to Publish a Post to the Your Blog

- If you're an administrator and you have multiple authors on your blog, make sure the appropriate author name appears in the “Author” pull-down near the bottom of the page. When entering a post for someone else, be sure their name appears, as yours will be the default.
- Click the “Save” button in the right channel near the top of the page (in a black box) before you publish and before you click “Preview this Post” to ensure you don't lose your entry.
- Click the “Preview” button to check your post for mistakes, etc. before publishing.

- Click the blue “Publish” button in the right channel when you’re ready to push your post live
 - Check your post on the live site to be sure no errors occurred in the transition
 - Click “Edit” next to your name to make any changes
 - “Save” again, after making the changes, and proof the changes.

Adding/Editing Tags, Categories and Related Posts to a Live Post

- Find the article on the site you wish to edit.
- Click the little red “Edit” link underneath the title and to the right of the author’s name. This will take you to the data entry page containing all the information about the post.
- Find the “Post Tags” box in the right channel, just underneath the blue “Publish” button. You can enter as many different tags as you like. Just remember to use lower case in all instances and to separate each tag by a comma. A tag can be one word or a phrase.
- “Categories” is just beneath “Tags.” As a reminder, you can only have one category. While it’s tough sometimes to narrow it down, you should choose just one. (It’s better for SEO.)
- Scroll back up once you’re done making these changes and click the “Save” button, in the right channel under “Publish.”
- Enter “Related Posts” near the bottom of the page—exact location depends on which plug-ins you have loaded.
- If you know there’s already a post on the blog that you want to cross link with, simply type the title in the “Search posts” text box and then click on the post in the resulting list that you want to link to (click “No” if it asks you whether you want to leave the page).
- Do this for each post you want to add.

Managing Comments

- Look for comments to your postings.
- Respond appropriately and in a timely manner; bloggers like to know a ‘real’ conversation is taking place.
- You should get notices in your email from WordPress when a comment is made to your post. You can click on the link to approve and then add your comment. You may need to sign in when you go back to the WIC blog site.
- Encourage the bi-directional discussion.
- If the comment is spam, delete it.
- Do not automatically assume all comments are fair game simply because they’ve been made. Watch for spam and inappropriate comments.

Additional Reading

Many of the articles that are listed here were gleaned from my social networks on LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter—a lot from Twitter. If nothing else, social networks are great for sharing information.

- 45+ Essential WordPress Plugins for Pro Blogging (Blog Perfume)
<http://www.blogperfume.com/45-essential-wordpress-plugins-for-pro-blogging/>
- How to back up your WordPress Blog in 60 Seconds (Christopher S. Penn)
<http://www.christopherspenn.com/2009/05/16/how-to-back-up-your-wordpress-blog-in-60-seconds/>
- Top WordPress Resources to List Your WordPress Blog & Build Links (Search Engine Journal)
<http://www.searchenginejournal.com/wordpress-blog-directories/9323/>
- WordPress Blog Glossary
<http://codex.wordpress.org/Glossary>
- Use a Feed Reader to Keep Up to Date with Your Favorite Blogs (Tech for Luddites)
<http://www.techforluddites.com/2009/02/use-a-feed-reader-to-keep-up-to-date-with-your-favourite-blogs.html>
- What Is a Blog (ProBlogger.com)
<http://www.problogger.net/archives/2005/02/05/what-is-a-blog/#more-5>
- 31 Days to Build a Better Blog (a workbook by ProBlogger.com)
<http://www.problogger.net/31dbbb-workbook/>
- ProBlogger: Secrets for Blogging Your Way to a Six Figure Income (Darren Rowse, ProBlogger.com)
<http://www.amazon.com/dp/0470246677?tag=probloggerbook-20&camp=0&creative=0&linkCode=as1&creativeASIN=0470246677&adid=1S1SG4K2KRD82XP7CXYF&>

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