

THE BASICS OF BLOGGING



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SO, WHY BLOG?

- Writing a blog about a specific topic, with a commitment and on a regular schedule, makes you smarter and better informed.



HOW COME?

You have to search out new information and keep up with your topic.

It connects you to people with similar interests, since you can send people to their posts.

Blogs are great vehicles for sharing information and knowledge, in a multi-directional conversation.

You're one piece (a node) of a giant network where you can see and be seen, but only if you share and connect with others.

- Source: Mindy McAdams



BEST PRACTICES

- Link out to other blog posts – not just blogs, but individual posts.
- That way, other bloggers will see you and so will other blog readers (via trackbacks).
- Trackbacks are like taps on a shoulder to another blogger that you've linked to their blog. It creates a comment on their post with a link back to your site.



MORE BEST PRACTICES

- Comment on other people's blogs – especially those with content similar to yours. Ask them questions. Be sure to type in your site's url and identify yourself.
- Blog posts can be short. (If not, use subheads.) But they must be well done and stand on their own.
- One way to think of them, for the purposes of this workshop, is as long briefs. Or, they can be small, informative posts about the skills you're working on, or the tools you're practicing with, like a milestone marker along the way.



MORE BEST PRACTICES

- Think of your posts as “quest narratives” or a “hero’s journey.”
- A great blog, seen in its entirety, is often just an incredibly lengthy serial narrative. (So when you look back on your posts, they may encapsulate your workshop experiences.)
- Engage your audience in the pursuit of an arresting question, using every post to stoke their hunger for what happens next.
- Let your audience in on the action as you test and examine different ways to tell stories.
- Look for other ways in which the topics, tools and skills you’re learning are applied.



MORE BEST PRACTICES

- Let your ideas marinate or percolate for a bit – don't post too soon, or before your thoughts are fully formed.
 - Jot it down (or type it up without posting it)
 - Review it
 - Let it develop
 - Then post
- The best posts are well planned, reported and sourced.
- Your posts don't have to be a lot of work, but they should be well presented, visual and interesting.



BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

- Write great titles/headlines to grab attention in search engines. Great bloggers write great headlines.
- Use words (if you can) like these in your headline. If you can frame your post with one (or more) of these words, you might just have a winner.
- Top
- Why
- How
- Will
- Guide
- Best
- Secret
- Ultimate
- Your
- Worst
- New
- Future



BEST PRACTICES, CONT.

Make sure your urls are SEO friendly

Make your post useful

Make the post easy to scan for keywords

Write in plain, concise, common-sense style. Make it conversational and follow the K.I.S.S. rule. (Keep it simple, stupid.)

Publish every post with the purpose of (1) answering a question burning in the hearts of your readers or (2) relaying information you know your readers will find relevant



OTHER STUFF

- Blog audiences are fickle – it's hard to predict what they will like or not.
- Promote your best work by sending it to other bloggers so they'll read it and link to it. You may hit the jackpot and end up on the Huffington Post.

Source: Craig Stolz



MORE OTHER STUFF

- Use pictures. Sometimes that's all you need. Short and visual often serves readers well.
- Use social media—your own or the accounts we'll set up for the workshop—to promote your posts.



ELEVEN POSSIBLE POSTS: #1-3

- 1. Respond to something else on another blog, but don't just post a link to something you think is interesting. (Link-journalism.) It's great if you can add a point of interest to someone else's post, or relate it more closely to the workshop and what you're learning.
- 2. Suggest an idea to another blogger. Don't be shy! (Think of it as a networking opportunity.)
- 3. Interview someone for a short Q & A. (Pick an easy format, like "3 questions with Jennifer Technology.")



ELEVEN POSSIBLE POSTS: #4-6

- 4. Live blog about an event. (This will be challenging given the workshop format.)
- 5. Ask a question of your audience. Of course, you have to have an audience. And you may need to provide information so they know enough to formulate an answer. You could set up a poll, too, but would have to get people to take it.
- 6. Pick a fight. (But don't be unprofessional. Make it a constructive debate.)



Eleven possible posts: #7-9

- 7. Reflect on something, like how you see your students using some of the tools or techniques you're learning.
- 8. Do something visual. (Still or video.) How about audio? See #3 above, but do an audio version.
- 9. Review something, like a book or artist's work that's related to digitally focused journalism.



Eleven possible posts: #10-11

- 10. Make a list.

List 10 links to stories using one of the tools you've been shown or that incorporate some kind of data.

- 11. Write a “how-to” about something you know well.

- Source: Paul Bradshaw

