

**NB: INFORMATION ON THIS HANDOUT HAS BEEN COLLATED FROM SEVERAL WEB RESOURCES**

### **GENERAL TIPS FOR ONLINE WRITING**

- Use good grammar and spelling. Proofread, proofread, proofread.
- Write with your audience in mind: Who are they? What do they need to know? What do they want to know? How will they use your information?
- Ask questions in your writing. Be open-ended and open-minded when writing about a topic. Convert “why?” questions into “what?” questions, for example, “why did you do this?” converted to “what happened?” or “what decisions led you to do this?” often generates more detailed and revealing answers.
- Provide links to help readers learn more about your topic. Pay attention to copyright. Use other people’s work with respect and link to your sources. Only post information you can verify as accurate.
- Stick to the topic. Don’t write about your weekend plans or gossip.
- Think before you post. Ask yourself, is this something I want my parents, teachers, friends, strangers to see? What are the consequences if you post this?
- Meet your deadlines. Plan ahead to give yourself time to brainstorm, research, write, and edit.

### **ONLINE PERSONAL SAFETY GUIDELINES**

- Never post or share personal information online. Or your friends’ personal information.
- Never share your internet passwords with anyone, and only in the extreme case/need, someone trusted (like a parent, close friend, etc.).
- Never meet anyone face-to-face whom you only know online.
- Never use your last name online. Use your initials or first name and the initials or first names of people you refer to.

### **ONLINE COMMENTING GUIDELINES**

- Read the article. Read all the comments. Be part of the full discussion.
- Comments should be at least 3-5 sentences, not less; nor should you go on and on at great length; be concise and to the point.
- Write comments that add to the conversation. Ask a question. Provide a link that might clarify a point. Copy/paste a specific passage from the blog post that interests you then write your comments and questions.
- Use comments to show what you think is important, interesting, controversial, thoughtful.
- **Constructive criticism only.** Critique the idea, not the person. Being derogatory or inflammatory distracts the conversation. Respect other people and their opinions and ideas. Treat people the way you want to be treated.
- Use good grammar and spelling. Mistakes cause readers to focus on how you write, not your ideas.

In addition, these response prompts for comments, from Scattergood Biology, also might be helpful for students to keep on topic and ensure high quality comments:

- This made me think about
- I wonder why
- Your writing made me form an opinion about
- This post is relevant because
- Your writing made me think about
- I wish I understood why
- This is important because
- Another thing to consider
- I can relate to this
- I don't understand
- I was reminded that
- I found myself wondering

**Structuring your blog posting:** A well-structured blog posting will catch readers' attention and make them want to read what you have to say. You can help do this if you follow these tips:

- Give the blog posting a title that will catch the reader's eye. This is the first thing they see and will help them decide if it is of interest to them.
- Put the main point in the first paragraph. This is the first thing readers see and it will make them want to read on.
- Put the details in the following paragraphs of your posting.
- Finally, in the last part of the posting add the background information and your name if you wish to.

### **Writing Style**

- Try to write in a friendly and informal style. Use first person 'I' and try to include reference to your own context and experience. Remember that the honest and open views of a novice can be just as interesting and informative as those of an expert. Think about your readers and what they can learn from your experience.
- Try to describe rather than tell e.g. instead of saying you thought a book was great, try to explain why you enjoyed it and what you learned from it.
- Try to pose further questions of the text and prompt readers for their response to what you have written.
- Always be polite, respectful of other cultures and opinions, and informative.

### **Content topics**

- It's always best to write about something you know and are enthusiastic about.
- You need to choose a single broad theme and extend it each week.
- You can still write about something different for each blog post, but make sure it clearly relates to the broader theme of your blog.

**Reflections on the Reading:** Write about your thoughts on the readings, such as:

- **New ideas or insights you gained**, including problems the reading posed in connection to relevant socio-historical or political contexts; or, the author's and/or your own suggestions for how these problems or issues might be resolved.
- **Recommendations for articles, books, websites** that you have read or found useful for further exploring some of the problems, issues, or themes raised by the reading.
- **Reflections on other projects or interests** you are involved in, such as how the reading connected to your academic research, creative writing or other artistic practices, community work or activism, or other extracurricular activities.

#### **Things to avoid**

- Always try to avoid being negative. If there is something you don't like, then it's better just to not write about it.
- It's important to raise issues, but don't try to impose your beliefs on others.
- Don't include links to commercial sites or resources.
- Don't include links to inappropriate materials.
- Never give specific names, places, addresses or contact details.

<https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2015/02/09/how-to-write-a-blog-post>

## **10 Useful Blog Content Writing Tips for Beginning Student Bloggers**

**by Lee Watanabe-Crockett | Jul 23, 2018 | Writing**

<https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/blog-content-writing-tips-student-bloggers>

*This is a guest post on blog content writing tips from author Kaitlyn Lee.*

Many of us have wondered how it is to be a writer at least once in our lives. For me, this period of doubts was long. Though, in the end, I decided that enough was enough—if you want something badly, go for it. And so, my own blog was created. The most important thing I want to tell all those people who are just like me a few years back—being a writer is easy. You may think that all those people who have reached success in this area just have a talent for it and you cannot change who you are. Yes, you can. Learning to write, to actually create something, is possible. You just have to know where to start. For me, the beginning of my writing advancement was the creation of my own blog. As a young author who is still learning, you would want to choose a convenient way to practice your skills. Reading theory is always good, but practice makes perfect. Once deciding to write something for the audience, I had to choose the right way to do it. I'm glad that this student's forum I've frequently visited during my studying years helped me to find the best solution to my doubts. Besides, I'll share a little secret of mine with you—this is an awesome place to find new ideas for my blog as well. You can take any issue discussed in a thread and share your thoughts in a blog of your own. This way, you not only create interesting content but also help other people in need of an answer.

## 10 Blog Content Writing Tips for Students

I wholeheartedly encourage all people who think about writing to go for their dream and start with their own blog. I understand that it may be difficult in the beginning, but I can share a few other blog content writing tips for beginners.

- 1. Keep it interesting:** While you may have a list of ideas for your new blog, they are bound to come to an end sooner or later. I hope it's rather sooner. No, I don't think your ideas are bad, but you need to learn to look for the new ones. You have to keep your eyes open and stay alert at all times. Once you hear several of your friends talking about some common issues, you know that the topic is hot. Don't shy away from social networks, they always tell you what is trendy. However, you should pick up only those topics that suit your blog theme and are interesting to you. Another place to look for interesting topics is Q&A services. They are full of questions regular readers are interested in.
- 2. Create high-quality content:** High quality content is what instantly indicates a professional blog. Choosing the right topic is not enough to attract people to your page. An issue has to be masterfully uncovered. There are countless opportunities to improve your writing skills. For me, the most useful source of blog content writing tips are some non-fiction books by famous journalists and authors. They share their success stories and reveal a few secret techniques they've been using for years. It may sound a bit boring but once you read at least one book of the kind, you'll know how great they are. In addition, there are many online courses and materials meant to improve your skills. You can find most of them for free. It's never too late to learn.
- 3. Catching headlines:** What is the first thing that attracts your attention in an article? It's a headline. No matter where you post it, on your blog or a general publishing website, the right title is what makes your work interesting. Writing blogs requires much thought, but so do the titles. The best blogs usually feature the best titles. This is the first step to success. In my experience, even the most amazing article can be lost in the piles of useless stuff if given a boring headline. So don't neglect this detail and you'll up your chances of getting more comments and likes.
- 4. Start strong:** Your first blog post is going to be the face of your digital image. It tells the audience who you are and how you write. Don't disappoint your first readers. Create something unique and interesting; something that would compel people to read more and more of your posts. No matter how you decide to advertise your blog, it's going to be the first post that is regularly used. There are many ways to introduce yourself. You may add actual bits about what you do and what inspires you, you may dwell on what this blog is going to be and how much it matters to you, and, finally, you may start with something mysterious and intriguing—keep them hooked up!

5. **Joke around:** I'll tell you a secret—nobody likes boring bloggers. So spice it up with a few jokes here and there. Don't be monotonous. There is always a place for a joke (well, almost always with exception of a few delicate topics). A funny blogger is a popular blogger. Just look around and notice what people have the most of popularity in the modern digital world. Successful and easy-going bloggers rule the Internet. If you don't want to be left behind, just relax and think about the audience as your friends. You can share a few jokes with them, right?
6. **Read other blogs:** My advice is to read other successful blogs and notice what they use the most frequently and what makes their posts popular. Try to notice the most evident writing techniques they use—when you read several posts of one author, you notice some reoccurring details. Besides, some bloggers are generous enough to openly share a few tips now and then.
7. **Learning the basics:** When it comes to creating your own blog, writing is not enough. There are many other aspects to the “trade” that even a young blogger has to know. Learning the basics of WordPress, Photoshop, and other services meant to help you with your content is a must. Read manuals and tutorials, choose the features most useful for your work, write steps down, and try using them later when posting your next update. Choose an elegant theme for your blog and add pictures regularly. People like visual content just as much, if not more. Get to know all the technical aspects of a good blog; they'll be a useful addition to your skills.
8. **Update regularly:** The main key to success in a world of bloggers is to update regularly. Constantly creating new content may be tiresome, but you want to keep your readers. It may not be a full long-read post each time, but try to share at least a few words regularly. Create your own schedule and try to stick to it with your posts. It'll also keep your own interest in the blog. You can't even imagine how many times I've tried to write a blog just to abandon it a few weeks later! Now, I understand that consistency is the key.
9. **Create your own image:** Your own unique image, or a brand if you'd like, is just as important as the headlines and other components of a successful blogger. You create something that will be easily recognized by your readers, no matter where they find your posts. You may use a particular blog post template, use some trademark phrase or just come up with a unique way to connect all your posts into one network under your name. It'll also protect your content from those shameless thieves who want to make money on other people's work.
10. **Just be yourself:** Finally, the most important thing to remember—just be yourself. Creating content for people doesn't mean becoming a robotic writer who conforms to every wish of the audience. People like opinionated bloggers who are not afraid to tell what they actually think.

I have to highlight that this is not a rating of top blog content writing tips that you have to follow. This is a simple list of the few things I've learned on my journey as a blogger. I definitely have several others left, but I cannot include all of them. Each tip is just as important as the others and it's up to you to decide which ones you'll use. You don't have to follow all of them at once and check every step you take.

Leading a blog is a creative work and you have to be passionate about it and not just conform to the set of rules and guidelines when creating your next post. Remember that readers always feel when an author is passionate about their creation and enjoys writing it. No matter what current trends tell you to write, use your own head, keep to your interests and explore only those new things that capture your attention.

You'll definitely pick up a few rules of your own when you start updating your blog regularly. Find those things that work for you and your audience, even if everybody tells you that it shouldn't be working. This is a place where you are in control and you decide its future.