

Blogging Basics

Tips to help Beginning to Advanced bloggers

By GrowWithStacy.com



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Introduction to Blogging

There are many different types of blogs out there and anyone can have their own blog! There are blogs on all sorts of topics and for all sorts of purposes.

If you have not started a blog yet then the best thing to do is figure out your goals. Some things that you will want to consider:

- **What do you want to blog about?** Be *specific* because most people don't follow blogs that are about everything, with topics that are all over the place. It's fine to have an overall topic or niche that encompasses different topics, but you don't want to blog about cows one day, hair loss the next, scrap booking the next, and camping the next. Your readers want to know what to expect when they visit your blog. Only your mom is interested in stopping by if the topics are always changing.
- **Who are your readers going to be?** This is similar to the above question but different enough that it deserves it's own time of consideration. It can even help you focus more directly on your specific topic or niche.
- **What are you passionate or excited about?** You want to choose something that you will love writing about. If you don't have much to say on the topic or if you lack enthusiasm it will come through your writing and your readers won't be interested.
- **What are your blogging goals?** Do you want to spread the word about something that means a lot to you, such as the importance of saving the planet or getting sugary foods out of schools? Do you want to make money? Do you want to inspire others toward better living?
- **Where will you get your inspiration?** After 50 or 100 posts you may find yourself in need of fresh ideas. Where will you get those ideas so that your blog doesn't get bland and dry? Books, magazines, forums, other blogs, etc. are all great resources. Find good resources that will keep you inspired when you lack inspiration.
- **How much are you willing to spend on blogging?** Some people look at it as a valuable hobby and are willing to spend \$100-300 per year on it. Other people want to make money at blogging are willing to treat their blog as a business expense and spend much more money on it. Meanwhile others are strapped for money in this economy and are unable to spend a penny on their blog. The things that you can do with your blog will vary depending on how much you are willing or able to spend.
- **How much time do you have to devote to blogging?** You will want to set aside a certain amount of time each week for blogging. You need the time to write out posts, add images, promote your posts, respond to comments, update

your blog as needed, and more. You will want to keep your blog and content fresh and interesting to bring back readers.

Once you have answered those questions you are at a great place to begin your blogging adventure! You will have solid goals and you will know where to go with setting up your blog. It will make the setting up process a lot simpler!

Even if you have your blog set up already it is always a good idea to reevaluate your goals in order to keep your blog going in the right direction! Now might be a good time to consider the questions posed above.

Which Platform to Choose?

There are many choices for where to host your blog but you want to make sure that you choose the one that is best for your blog and your blogging goals.

Many serious bloggers choose WordPress (wordpress.org) as their platform for many reasons.

Why use WordPress as your platform for blogging? What is so great about it? What does it have to offer that others don't? Why should I use it?

People who have been blogging for a while on other platforms obviously worry about having a hassle of transferring their whole blog over if they don't have to. Who could blame them?

I have had various other blogs over the years and I've used quite a few different platforms. My first was on livejournal and I even paid a little bit of money for a while to have a really cool design. I have had a couple of blogs on blogger and a couple on vox, not as popular as the other two but I had fun with it because they had a lot of great choices for free layout designs.

At the same time I was not a *serious* blogger. I doubt that I had more than a handful of people even reading what I wrote unless I was posting the link on forums. Though I was moving more in the direction of serious with my last one which I was posting my new links on facebook for all of my friends to see. Quite a few were interested and replied, but usually on my FB link and not onto my blog itself.

I also had no idea about SEO: Search Engine Optimization. I was becoming aware of affiliate marketing as I had google ads on there and one book on there from clickbank which was related to the topic of my blog. I don't think that I'd even heard of

WordPress.

Then came the day that I started learning about WordPress and why I would want to use it with a blog that I was serious about developing. I learned from other bloggers who were very serious and doing extremely well with their blogs. I knew that this was what I needed and that I wanted to start a serious blog.

So, what exactly did I learn? Why did I become sold on WordPress?

You get to use your own domain name. *You get your own .com which shows people that you are serious because you would not be serious if you didn't go to all the trouble to secure your very own domain name and pay a monthly fee for it to be hosted. (I use [HostGator](#) which has been working great for me and has a very low monthly fee.) Using WordPress with your domain name is free, so there are no additional charges! It doesn't matter if you are running a commercial blog or a personal one it's still free.*

It's easy to use. The back area where you do all of your work (from blog design to posting) is laid out in a very easy to understand way. I don't often have to go searching for what I'm looking for. It's also easy to install into your domain name.

The support is second to none. If you do have trouble with something the support is amazing!! I can't say enough good things about the helpful people on the help forums!! I had some major issues with feedburner when I first got my blog going and I was so frustrated and I couldn't get any help from anywhere else, but the guys at the WP support forums worked with me until the problem was resolved. I couldn't have resolved the issue without them!

Themes, themes, and more themes! There are countless themes to choose from, including many great free ones. You can also purchase premade themes from many different sites and you can hire a designer to design one just for you. It's all up to your needs and resources.

SEO. I have to admit that I still have a lot to learn about Search Engine Optimization even though I have already learned a lot. But one thing that all of the experts agree on is that WordPress is perfect for SEO. The way that it is set up is practically made to bring your blog to the limelight if you know some basics about SEO.

Plug-Ins. There are plug-ins for just about everything! In fact it can be really tempting to install pages and pages of plug-ins. But I don't recommend it, install one at a time and test your blog. When I first started I installed a whole bunch of them and then in order to fix that feedburner problem that I mentioned earlier, I had to uninstall every single one and reinstall them. I finally figured out that one of them was

the cause of my feedburner issue.

But as long as you install them one by one and do your research on the plug-ins first - you can ask other bloggers what they think of plug-ins and you can also read feedback others have left and they are all rated by stars – then you should be fine adding new plug-ins. I haven't had any issues since that first one. I'm very careful to only install one at a time and then test them.

You can install plug-ins for many things: comments, widgets, SEO, anti-spam, comment forms, social media sharing, linking related posts, and so much more!

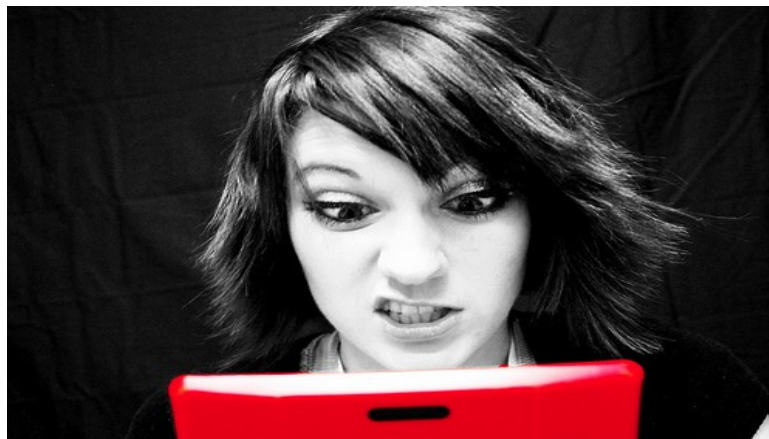
Updates. There are updates available all the time, everything is always being improved upon! They are constantly fixing bugs and getting user feedback so that you have the most up to date software available to you. Whenever you want to upgrade to the newer versions it is *super easy*. Just back up your blog (either at your host or use a plug-in) and then click one button and your blog is upgraded!

If you would like to learn even more about WordPress from other users please see the comments section of this blog post of mine: [Why WordPress?](#)

Also if you are considering using WordPress please keep your eyes out for my next ebook which is going to be a step-by-step guide to setting up a WP blog! You will want to [subscribe to my feed](#) for updates on the new ebook.

New Blogger Tips

Setting up your blog can leave you feeling a little like this sometimes...



I mentioned that I've had several blogs on blogspot, vox, etc. so I'm familiar with the whole blogging process and set up. I've also created a couple message boards from scratch with a domain name (dot-com) so I didn't *think* that it would be too difficult

creating a new blog from scratch with a domain name. So I took on the task myself instead of hiring someone.

It may be worth your money to hire someone to get your blog set up, a lot of people find the headaches saved to be well worth it! If it's in your budget then you will at least want to look into it. Otherwise I do hope that you have some experience with web design.

Once I got my blog up and running I started reading other blogs to get ideas and I especially paid attention to the ones that gave blogging tips, thankfully there are a lot out there! There is a lot of great advice from those who have been there and done that and it's been helpful, but at the same time not so helpful because I found myself getting overwhelmed and unable to keep up with some of the technical difficulties that I experienced!

It was a great way for me to put into practice all of the personal development skills that I have been learning for the last decade or two. I'm not entirely sure when I started taking charge of my own personal development, I think it started as early as my preteen years when I would read advice columns from teeny bopper magazines. As I got older my sources of personal development matured and I continue to look for new sources.

But I digress. I found myself highly discouraged due to some of the technical difficulties that I was experiencing, mostly due to my own errors because I was adding this widget and that plugin at an alarming rate. By the time that I had discovered an issue with my blog I had 10 or so new additions and often it wasn't easy to pin down the real culprit – or two or three which didn't work together. I must admit that I was tempted to throw in the towel on the whole blogging thing after a couple of really big hiccups that took hours or even days in one case to solve.

I did not allow myself to give in and give up, I am not a quitter! I pressed on, I learned a lot, I came out victorious! Now I am here to share some tips that I have learned in hopes of helping other new bloggers!

If you have not started your blog yet set yourself up with a WordPress blog!

It is by far the easiest platform to use, but you just read all about that!

Keep the learning curve in mind! The learning curve can be frustrating at the beginning, that is where the most work and learning takes place with the least amount of rewards. When you are learning anything new the beginning is always the most work. If you've ever learned a new language, started a new business, etc. you know what I am talking about. Eventually you will get the hang of things and you will be sailing smoothly.

Stay patient with the learning process and with yourself! This goes along with the previous point, if you remember which side of the learning curve you are on remember to have patience with yourself and the process. Things WILL get easier!! It WILL all come together!! Hang in there!!

One step at a time. Only add one new piece (widget, plugin, etc.) to your blog at a time and then test it before you move on to adding another. This will help prevent not knowing what has caused a glitch in your blog and will save you a lot of time!

Know where to find support. When you do run into an issue that you can't solve yourself you will want to know where you can find support, either through a forum or submitting a trouble ticket. For instance I had a major issue with my RSS feed which took me three days to finally fix. I sought help through the wordpress help forums, the google feedburner board (no replies given), and the comluv.com problem ticket center. Between the wordpress forums and comluv center I was finally able to figure out what my problem was – it was with feedburner! (Speaking of which, if you were one of my blog subscribers you will need to re-fill out the form on the right to receive updates to my blog, it will work this time! Also, if you weren't one of my previous subscribers please subscribe now so that you can receive all updates!)

Learn from other bloggers and blogs. Look around at the other blogs and see what you like and don't like. There are all kinds of fun features to add (I still have more that I want to add) and you will find a lot of them on other blogs. Also keep an eye out for posts where people share their favorite widgets and plugins. Just remember to install each one separately just in case there is some sort of glitch for you to work out.

Never stop learning. Once you get your blog exactly how you like it remember that there will always be new things that you can add that will make it more user-friendly for you and your readers. Also changing things up will keep it more exciting! Variety is the spice of life. Just don't go overboard!

The Great Debate: Blog Post Frequency

You don't have to read too many blogs before you come to the topic of blog post frequency. At least I haven't, I've read numerous opinions on the subject by various bloggers. There are plenty of opinions – pretty much as many opinions as there are bloggers!

One very successful blogger posts about one blog post a week and that is her recommendation for others. She is very busy and puts out extremely valuable posts. It works well for her because her posts are so valuable that when she publishes a new post thousands flock to read her post and be the first to comment on her blog. People

know that she offers great value and waiting for her posts is no problem.

Another very successful blogger that I have read suggests one blog post per day and he lives up to that himself. He also publishes very valuable information and has a large following who eat up every word that he says. This works well with him and his readers also expect his daily blog posts so they know that they don't have to wait.

There are also plenty of other successful bloggers who post anywhere in between those two, and some who even post 3-4 posts a day!

So, what is the real key to successful blogging when it comes to blog post frequency?

The answer is that there is no answer. I'm sure you're thinking, "Great, thanks. That really helps!"

Truly, there is no one-size fits all answer. Just as you can see with the examples of the successful bloggers that I have mentioned. What works for one doesn't necessarily work for another.

It's all about goals. You need to define for yourself what YOUR goals are in blogging.

You also need to take a realistic look at your life and how often you can blog. If you are a full time entrepreneur (or otherwise don't have a j.o.b.) you will have more time than those of us who are still working for a living. A single person will probably have more time than a married person or a parent. There are so many variables in life! We all have different responsibilities and different schedules.

Life happens and sometimes we have less time or energy than normal. Sometimes we get sick or someone we care for gets sick or injured. A couple months prior to this writing was one of those weeks for me. We had a huge temperature spike (by about 20 degrees!) and we don't have any AC in our home and I could barely function. Did I mention that I was five months pregnant? I was about as useful as a lump on a log all week long. The *thought* of getting on the computer was enough to make me fall asleep from exhaustion! In fact, the only reason that I had post at all that week was because I'd written it the day before when we still had enjoyably chilly temperatures.

If you are interested in reading the thoughts of other bloggers on this topic, see the comments section of my blog post [The Great Debate](#).

Five Ways to Attract Targeted Blog Followers

It's great to have a large following of blog readers, it's something that every blogger should definitely working be working on! You want to maintain the readers that you have and you always want to be finding new ones too.

But what we all really want is to have *targeted* blog followers. Why are targeted blog followers so important?

They are more likely to visit often because they are genuinely interested in what you have to say. They are also likely to tell others about you and if they are already in the same niche they will know other people who will be targeted blog followers.

Five Ways to Attract Targeted Blog Followers

-Follow other blogs *in your niche* and be sure to read them and give valuable comments on the posts. When other readers of those blogs read your comments which offer value they will be drawn to you and want to visit your blog.

-Find others in your niche who are on twitter, facebook, youtube, and other social networking sites. Share value on those sites and you will have similar results. You also have more of an opportunity to share links to your blog posts than commenting on other blogs, the bigger opportunity here is that you have more opportunities for directly promoting your blog posts.

-Add good SEO plug-ins to your blog and *use them!* I personally like the All In One SEO Pack and Clean SEO Slugs.

-Join a community (message board, discussion forum, tribe, etc.) with a focus that is closely related to your niche and offer value to the community. You don't need to be pitching your links all of the time, but as people begin to know and trust you they will be interested what you have to offer and will be eager to read your blog on the rare occasion that you pitch it. Another way you can get the word out about your blog is to have it in your signature. That is really valuable because you don't have to actively pitch your blog but there is the link under every post you've made!

-Participate in blog memes which are becoming more and more popular and are available for most every niche out there. Look around on other blogs for one that you like or google one. You can even start one yourself!

Bonus #6: Most of all have fun! If you're having fun then others will enjoy your blog naturally.

Commenting on Other Blogs Benefits YOU!

If you are blogging but you aren't making a habit of commenting on other blogs you are really missing out! There are a *lot* of reasons that commenting on other blogs benefits you! I won't go over every single reason here, but I will share *three good reasons* that it benefits you! Hopefully after reading this you will be eager to get out there and comment on blogs!

First of all it is a GREAT way to build relationships and you really want to build relationships if you desire a successful blog. You want people coming back to your blog time and time again. If you post quality comments on other blogs people will find value in what you have to say and they will be interested in checking out your blog. I have even heard a story of two bloggers becoming *best friends* through their blogs! Now that is definitely benefit to commenting on other blogs!

Commenting brings exposure to your blog! When you comment on a blog your name field will be a link to your blog, and this is where quality comments come in handy. The other readers of the blogs that you are commenting on will see your comments and see you as someone who offers value and they will be far more likely to want to visit your blog and potentially be a loyal follower!

Also if the blogs that you comment on have the comment luv plug-in it will show the title of your most recent post. That is plug-in that I *luv*! I often click on other people's latest blog post from comment luv and I have found some blogs that I love that way! I'm pretty sure that others have done the same with mine. So having a catchy title to your posts is handy for blog exposure too! Though if your comments lack value a catchy title won't get you too far.

It helps you to grow intellectually! In order to write a thoughtful and valuable comment you need to really think about the original post (because you wouldn't comment without actually reading the post!) so it can help you to stretch your intellect muscles. It comes a little quicker the more that you practice, as they say practice makes perfect! Especially if you find yourself reading quite a few posts on similar topics you will find that you have more to offer when you comment because you'll have stored away nuggets of insight from other blogs that you have commented on. You can learn a lot from other blogs and also from reading the other comments that readers leave!

How to Get Your Picture On Your Blog Comments

I see a lot of bloggers who comment on blog posts who don't have their picture show up next to their post. If that is the case for you and you would like to see your picture

up I have good news, it is very easy and I am here to show you how to do it! It's called a gravatar which means Globally Recognized Avatar.

Let's get started shall we?

First you choose a picture that you want to show up by your posts. You will want to put a little bit of thought into this as this picture will show up by all of your comments. Do you want a professional photo? Do you want a silly photo? Do you want a photo of you with your dog or kids? You may want to take some pictures of yourself if you don't have one that you want to represent you by all of your comments. Or perhaps you will want to alter a photo in some way, make it black and white or add text.

You may not want a photograph at all, if you are feeling camera shy you still have options to have something else as your gravatar. You can pick out a regular avatar to use or you can use a photo of your favorite pet or a sunset. If you have a badge for your blog then that definitely works! Have fun, be creative.

Once you have your image picked out head over to gravatar.com. Once you are there it only takes a very short time to set up a *free* account. Then you upload the image and fill out the details (your website, email address) and you are set!

That's it! You probably didn't expect it to be that easy did you?

Earn Extra Income With Your Blog

There are MANY ways to earn income through your blog!

The type of blog that you have, your personal tastes, and the needs of your readers are three important aspects to consider when you are deciding how you want to earn income with your blog.

Obviously if you are running a business blog your tactics will be far different from someone who has a personal blog.

Either way you don't want your blog to feel like one big advertisement. Most people going to blogs will feel put off if they feel that you just want to make a buck off of them.

If you offer value to your readers you will have them coming back for more! They will get to know you as a person, they will grow in their trust of you. They will truly be your follower and they will be much more likely to buy the products that you recommend because of the value that you offer.

Again, the type of value that you offer will vary depending on the type of blog that you have. For one blogger the value may be free blogging tips, for another it may be health tips, for another it could be a dose of daily humor.

One way to earn money on your blog that many bloggers have found effective is to use [affiliate programs](#). These are great because it involves minimal work from you as you are promoting someone else's product and when someone buys through your link you get paid! Sometimes you even get a really good percentage of the sale!

If your blog is about your kids or your life you will want to find some affiliate programs that are related to topics that you post about and that your readers will find useful.

For instance before I started this blog I was active with a blog on healthy eating and I was using a link to an e-book on how to become a vegetarian. For this blog I use completely different affiliate links because the subject matter is completely different, although healthy eating can certainly fit into the topic of personal development in the health and wellness category!

Some of my favorite affiliate programs are ones that help bloggers and entrepreneurs. I always have my eyes and ears open for a new opportunity, for instance recently one of my favorite authors and speakers, [Todd Falcone](#), announced he was starting an affiliate program for his products and I could not join his affiliate program fast enough! There are other great ones that I love, if you are interested please look at my [Recommended Tools](#) page.

Another way to use your blog for extra income is to have a "Join Me" or "Work with Me" page on your blog if you are involved with any business opportunities. This gives your readers the opportunity to join with you in these ventures. If you have provided enough value on your blog your readers will often be more interested in joining *you* than whichever particular business you are in. I personally am involved with two wonderful business opportunities which I love and believe in! For an example you can see my Join Me page: [Join Stacy](#).

Which leads me to a very important point in earning income on your blog. Don't promote anything that you have not personally used just to make money! Your readers follow you because they trust you and you should offer them products that you personally believe in and use yourself. Offering value to your followers is extremely important, much more important than making a buck!

Is Your Blog NoFollow or DoFollow?

If you are interested in SEO for your blog then you are definitely interested in whether or not the blogs that you are commenting on are "NoFollow" or "DoFollow" blogs.

What's the big deal about that? There is a lot of buzz around the blogging world on this topic – and for good reason!

We have plenty of reasons for wanting to comment on other blogs and one reason is definitely to get the back link. What many people don't realize (I know that I didn't!) is that not all blogs are set to give you the back link that you want. *Those blogs are called NoFollow.* The blogs which do give the back links are called DoFollow.

If you are using a self-hosted WordPress blog then you need to know that your blog is automatically set up as a NoFollow blog! That was certainly news to me when I found that out! I thought the complete opposite, that WordPress was set up as a DoFollow blog.

I thought that I was giving back links to all of my commentors! On the bright side I have had comment luv up and running since the get-go so at least I've been giving them some advertising even though I wasn't giving them the back links.

There's a plug-in for that!

Go to your plug-in page and find the plug-in conveniently called "DoFollow" and install and activate it and you will be hosting a DoFollow blog! That was easy!

BUT make sure that you have also activated an anti-spam plug-in. My personal favorite is WP-SpamFree, in about three months time it has blocked about 200 spam comments from my blog! A very tiny few still slip by, but that's because they take the time to post some relevant looking comment. But on the *rare* occasion that does happen I mark them as spam and I don't hear back from them again! Some people also like the Captcha plug-in but I am not a fan. Seriously, it's not needed if you use WP-SpamFree.

If you would like information on how to find out if other blogs that you are commenting on are NoFollow or DoFollow then please see my post [Is the Blog You are About to Comment on NoFollow or DoFollow?](#) There is also some great information in the comments left by some of my readers that you will find useful!

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