

Blogging FAQs

This FAQ was originally part of a webinar on blogging but the principles should still apply.

Which blogging platform should I use?

There are many blogging platforms that are simple and free to use. Wordpress, Moveable Type and Blogspot allow you to use templates or customize your blog to your specifications.

Who should we tap to write most of the entries for our blog?

A blog can be written with anyone who has a passion for a particular subject. The writer should have a clear and distinct voice that is interesting to readers and a connection to your content. Producers can write about their programs and any member of your station team could also blog about a particular passion they may have.

Can more than one person write on a blog?

Yes, group blogs are common. Just be sure to identify all of the writers and be clear about who is writing each individual post. Then, if the writing style or voice shifts, the reader will not be confused. When using multiple writers, however, it is a good idea to establish a general tone of the blog so that all of the posts go together.

How often do I have to blog?

The frequency of your posts can vary from several times daily to daily or even weekly. However, do not let too much time go in between posts, or your readers will suspect that the blog has ended. If you do set a regular posting schedule (for example, every Wednesday), try to stick to the schedule as readers will show up at the particular time, expecting a new post. Again, if you do not stick to a rigid schedule, make sure the frequency remains closely the same between each post.

Should I moderate the comments on my blog?

Your first step is to check to see if your station or company has a policy about users' content on your website. If there is little restriction or no current policies, consider the following steps. They are offered as broad approaches, not specific solutions.

- Block robot spam. A program called Captcha will install a little box on your comment form. Users will have to type in the letters or numbers in the box before posting a comment.
- Use a foul language filter. These programs are usually preset with a vocabulary of common vulgarities (including phrases used in hate speech). Web Purify costs \$50 dollars per year for non-profits and is widely recommended.
- Include input boxes for names and e-mail addresses (not to be published) on the comment forms.
- Add a layer of human moderation. Blog authors and/or editors should be expected to moderate their comments at least daily---to screen any comments captured by a filter, or at least to read (and if necessary remove) any inappropriate post.

How do I get people to read my blog?

Using keywords (also known as "tags") in your blog posts is the easiest way to help people find your blog. You can do this several ways. First, make titles very clear and specific, using keywords that are related to exactly what your post is about. Second, use keywords in the first paragraph of your post to give a good overview of your topic and make the post searchable. Finally, place keywords in hyperlinks that send your reader to other websites. All of these tips will help your blog rank higher in search engine searches, sending readers to your blog.

Should my station try to promote pledging and membership via our blog?

Your blog should not be used for highly promotional reasons, in fact, if you put too many links in your posts or on the page users will be turned off to donating. Users are more understanding of advertising if it is targeted directly for them. Say you're blogging about a local event, it might be appropriate to say something like "In order to continue bringing you great events like this, we rely on viewers like you to support our station." -- but it needs to be very low key. You might also look into accepting micro-payments.

My station has had the most success from a staff member's personal hobbies. Do you recommend looking for this type of content from staff?

A blog should have an overall focus or tone, in order to attract users based on an interest or topic. Personal hobbies are a good way to do this. Broader topics such as art or sports in your community could also work. A blog should have a personable voice that readers can relate to, so picking a topic that the writer is familiar with would be ideal.

How do you get past the 'walled garden' mentality? I get a fair amount of resistance to adding outside links because of the implied endorsement aspect.

Adding outside links to your blog drives traffic and builds relationships with other bloggers outside of your immediate sphere of influence. Linking to previous posts will also increase readership and encourage readers to explore posts that they may not realize exist. If you are concerned about the endorsement aspect, we recommend linking to a specific point of interest on a site, rather than the site in general. For example, link to a particular article in the New York Times, rather than the Times homepage. Linking outside of your own site shows a respect for your users, and they will come back because of it. They will begin to equate your site and your brand as helpful and resourceful. Users know you don't have all the answers, so you're providing a service to them by not leading them on.

Can we use Google Analytics to track blog traffic?

Yes. This service is a great and simple way to see what readers like on your blog. At the most basic level, Google Analytics lets you see a breakdown of traffic numbers by day and compare numbers to previous time periods. The service also offers more sophisticated options: seeing where your traffic comes from, tracking referral traffic and exploring what content leads readers to other parts of your site. Over time, you will be able to see trends and make educated decisions about the content you produce. You can also build URLs that tell Google Analytics to track blog ads or other forms of outreach. <http://www.google.com/analytics>

What is a blog roll?

A blog roll is a list of blogs that appears on a sidebar of your blog. The list contains links to other blogs that are related to your blog – either in a partnership, another blog at your station, or a common interest to drive traffic back and forth from one blog to another.

How do I get others to add my blog to their blog roll?

First, ask other bloggers you already know, friends, colleagues, family members, to add your blog to their blogroll if appropriate. Then, begin to develop relationships with other bloggers who cover similar topics, are in your geographic area, or who otherwise may have a readership you would like to attract. Use the comments area on their blog to show yourself as a regular and reliable user in order to gain respect and make connections.