

# blogging opportunities

## what is a blog?

A blog is a specific type of website that typically identifies itself by a flow of constantly updated information. There are two basic types of blogs: information-based and personal journals. Both formats are distinguished from the broader term "website" by the fact that they remain highly personal in their tone and design, with stylized and pointed formats in terms of content.

A blog for the most part is a virtual communication tool. It has the ability to put first-hand the thoughts, experiences and/or opinions of its author online for the world to see. The rapid-fire nature of the content, frequently updated and constantly changing, ensures that readers have new information to read on a regular basis.

## why bother?

The blog is a personal marketing tool; it's an avenue to express yourself (in journal format if you want, or by the commentary you provide around the articles you decide to link to) in the virtual world, where readers can be found in all corners of the earth. It builds a sense of community around you and your work, which in turn creates even more avenues for not only selling products, but for introducing like-minded people to your work and your world.

A blog has the ability to create buzz around your latest project from its onset to its publication and beyond. The simple act of working through your process online lets readers know a little bit of what you're thinking, why you're creating a certain character, what research you've been doing—it builds excitement for a project and/or product well before the book finds its way into publication.

There is a danger, however, of revealing too much too soon. The debate remains whether or not it's a good idea to blog about the very subject you'll be publishing in book form. There are a number of ways to work around this problem:

Make your blog very specific in its focus. If you've written a nonfiction book, focus on subjects that influence and have an impact upon your chosen subject matter. If you're written fiction, blog about your book tour, how to create characters, the process of writing.

Instead of doing a journal-type blog, perhaps consider creating an information-based blog instead. Writers are by nature readers, and there's no doubt that you'll see a number of interesting things online that you'll have an opinion about. Remember that the purpose of a blog is for readers to get to know you, to create a one-to-one relationship with them. If you're worried about giving away what you're trying to sell in print, than simply change the focus of your blog.

The blog is a relatively easy way to participate in online promotion. With the proliferation of the free solutions that allow writers to post and publish for free, having your own web site is no longer cost prohibitive. In fact, in this day and age, to have no web presence belies the grassroots benefits and capabilities of the online world. It's quick, easy and accessible, and it'll bring you a world of new readers.

## how do i start a blog?

There are a number of reputable free solutions that make starting a blog extremely easy. The only necessary thing you would need to have is access to the internet. For the most part, you can blog from anywhere in the world, the majority of blog hosting companies will give you a username and a password, which means all you do is log in and away you go!

### # 1 find your blog a home

Find a hosting company you feel comfortable using. There are several different options available.

**BLOGGER** is run by Google, so the chances of it being shut down due to any number of reasons (this is the internet, and permanence isn't really its strong suit), are slim. Blogger is free, extremely easy to use and highly popular amidst the blogging world. See here: [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

Setting up your blog with an established company like Blogger ensures adequate server space, excellent technical support in case you have problems, and the benefits of having a solid, proper web design to maintain your site. Little details like individual urls for each post, comment features, easy-to-use toolbars and the ability to input images are extremely important when it comes to creating an individualized blog that stands out from the rest.

Other Platforms:

Typepad [www.typepad.com](http://www.typepad.com)

LiveJournal <http://www.livejournal.com>.

WordPress <http://wordpress.com/>

### # 2 pick a template

A template is a shell site that's already been designed, but empty of content. Simply choose a look and feel that you are comfortable with, and move on to step three.

### # 3 pick a name

The name of your blog should be closely related to the content you're going to be writing about. If you want to focus on your book, and the process of publishing, choose the name of your book. If you want to build your brand as an author, use your own name, or if you want to create something cute and funky, go ahead and get creative. Just make sure it's not too complicated, or else people will never remember it.

### # 4 start posting!

Now, you're reading to begin posting! For your first post it's a good idea to introduce yourself, give a little bit of background information and / or link off to something that caught your eye that day.

## blog content

Good content is the heart and soul of a blog. The best blogs in the blogosphere right now are sharp, witty, focused, irreverent and, overall, smart. These are qualities that most writers have in abundance.

The most successful blogs make a point of posting frequently. The best way to get is to get into a habit of keeping up your blog—creating an entry every day or every couple of days, depending on the basic focus of your site, is a good metric to aim for.

After you create a number of posts, you'll find your online voice will start to come through. The ins and outs of online writing differ from classic journalism in the sense that articles are shorter, more focused and much more direct. For the most part, web writing strives to feel off-the-cuff, but good writing is good writing, and the biggest mistake you can make is to ignore basic rules of grammar, punctuation and composition.

Each post, or even series of posts, should be about one specific thought. If you want to write about two or three different ideas, it's better to separate them into different entries. If you're keeping track of the books you read, give them an entry each. If you found three different news stories you want to comment on, they each require independent entries.

Within your posts though, feel free to link off to as many different sites that might explain what you're talking about—just make sure the theme of that particular entry doesn't change.

Be opinionated. Be interesting. But most of all, you need to be yourself, what interests you, what are you thinking about, who did you see, read, hear, what did you do and why were you doing it—all of this makes extremely good blog content.

## tips and suggestions to ensure unique content

Do not use the blog to mimic catalog and flap copy. The blog is a forum for you to share original content with your readers, fans, critics, etc. Original content can include:

- > Videos
- > Photos
- > Audio clips
- > Essays, articles, op-ed pieces either written by you or featuring you and/or your work(s).
- > Short anecdotes about your pre-publication, release, tour schedule, etc.
- > Your profile or your interests which may include, but are not limited to the following: favorite books, bands, blogs, websites, etc. The more you reference and have links to on your blog, the stronger your presence will be within the blogosphere.

Items you should include:

- > Jacket cover, title, publication date
- > Purchase links
- > Link to imprint site, catalog page, and/or external author/book site

## tips for increasing blog traffic

- > Link to your blog from your Facebook profile.
- > Use other social networking tools, such as Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn
- > Increase your activity on other blogs by leaving comments and include a link to your own blog in your signature.
- > Link exchange: Create a section to list all your favorite blogs, sometimes called a "blogroll," and let the bloggers know you've linked to them.
- > Offer links for users to tag your posts on social bookmarking sites such as del.icio.us and StumbledUpon.
- > Contests: Run occasional giveaways or offer your readers free downloads.
- > Provide useful information: lists of tips, best-of lists, good advice, links to cool stuff you found on someone else's blog, Q&As/podcasts with high profile people (or a link to one on another blog), etc.
- > Create good titles for your posts.

## tips for increasing sales of your book

Post a link to RandomHouse.ca and Amazon.ca

Post the book jacket in a central location on your blog that links to either page spreads or the "buy this book" links.

Make routine posts close to your book's on sale date.

Collect email addresses: Invite people to sign-up for news about your book, etc. Once the book goes on sale, you can use this mailing list to remind your site visitors about the on sale date.

## examples of good blogs

- > Terry Fallis <http://terryfallis.com/>
- > Todd Babiak <http://www.toddbabiak.com/>

## how random house can help promote your blog

Random House will support your blog in many different ways. We'll link to it from your Author Spotlight page on [www.RandomHouse.ca](http://www.RandomHouse.ca). We'll include it in any print advertising that makes sense. We'll promote it in any online advertising we have allocated to your project. We'll buy Google Ad Words and manage the campaign for you where feasible. We'll also look at creating Blog Ads campaigns or buying other online advertising, again, where the budget permits.

All in all, we'll work very closely with you to ensure that the process of blogging is enjoyable, exciting and successful.