INTRODUCTION

Chances are you've heard about blogging. You may have heard a story about blogger uncovering information about a politician or controversial subject. Maybe you've even read a book or seen a movie based on a blog. What exactly is a blog, anyway?

In this lesson we will learn
- Blog basics
- Subscribing to blogs
- Starting your own blog
- Choosing a blogging service/provider
- Promoting your blog
- Copyright & fair use
- Additional Resources

SECTION I: BLOG BASICS

What is a blog?

A blog is a type of website that is updated regularly with new content. Most blogs contain short, informal articles called blog posts. These posts usually contain some combination of text, photos, videos, and other media. At its core, a blog is just a space on the Web that you can create to record and express your opinions, experiences, and interests.

If you spend much time browsing the Web, you've probably read a blog post before, even if you didn't realize it at the time. Some of the most-read blogs are a bit like online magazines because they're written by a team of people who are paid to update the blog with new posts several times a day.

However, a majority of blogs are written by one person. As a result, the average blog is fairly personal, reflecting the interests and personality of the person who writes it. This is the type of blog we'll focus on in this tutorial.

Who blogs?

The people who write blogs are called bloggers. From what you hear on the news, you might think bloggers are all a certain type of people—young, politically inclined, and tech-savvy. Or maybe you've heard about bloggers who've written about amazing experiences or ambitious projects, then turned their blogs into bestselling books. While some bloggers do fit these descriptions, a majority of bloggers don't. In fact, there's no "average" blogger—blogs are written by people of all ages and backgrounds and from all walks of life.
Why blog?
As you saw in the graphic on the last page, most bloggers consider blogging a hobby. It can be a fairly time-consuming hobby, as many bloggers spend several hours each week writing blog posts, replying to comments, and more. So why do they do it?

For their State of the Blogosphere 2011 Report, the people behind Technorati.com conducted a survey of more than 4,000 bloggers. Here are some of the most common responses bloggers gave when asked why they blog:

- To share my experiences and expertise
- To speak up about an issue I care about
- To become more involved with my hobbies and passions
- To be part of a community
- To advance my career or start a career in writing
- To keep my family and friends updated about my life

No matter what their main reason for blogging is, most bloggers have at least one thing in common: They're passionate enough about a topic to write about it over and over again, usually for free. If there's a subject you care deeply about, you might enjoy blogging about it. When you have your own blog, you have unlimited space and freedom to express your opinions and discuss the things you care about with others.

Blogging for money
Another reason some people blog is to earn money. People earn money from their blogs by hosting advertisements, selling products, or publishing their blog posts in the form of a book or printed articles. The media often reports on bloggers who have done this successfully, turning their blogs into careers and even book or movie deals.

While it's fine to try to earn money from blogging, you should be aware that these success stories are very rare. You may see advertisements for services that promise to help you make your blog profitable with little effort. However, making money this way is not as easy as it may seem. Many bloggers write for years without ever earning a cent from their blogs. Keep this in mind as you begin blogging.

What do people blog about?
A blog can be about literally anything. There are people blogging about every topic imaginable, from their political views to their pets. Think of any interest or hobby, no matter how unusual or specialized—there's bound to be an entire community of blogs devoted to discussing it. Although it's impossible to list all of the subjects people blog about, there are certain topics that are commonly covered. We'll take a look at a few of these popular topics on the next page.
Enjoying the Small Things (www.kellehampton.com) is an example of a personal blog, a type of blog that discusses a blogger's life. Here, Kelle Hampton posts stories and photos of her two daughters, one of whom has Down Syndrome. Blogs about parenting are sometimes called mommyblogs.

Smitten Kitchen (www.smittenkitchen.com) is an example of a hobby blog, a blog that documents a particular hobby the blogger enjoys—in this case, cooking. Blogger Deb Perelman posts her recipes complete with photos.

Campaign Tracker (campaigntracker.blogspot.com) is an example of a political blog. Journalist Jim Morrill posts short, timely reports about news in politics. Most political blogs have a strong point of view. Political bloggers write to express their opinions and influence policy.

Only Half Kidding (onlyhalfkidding.com) is the photoblog of photographer Eliza Sohn. Some photoblogs focus on a particular place or subject, while others are simply collections of a photographer's favorite or most recent photos. Most photoblogs include very little text.

Lunch Bag Art (lunchbagart.tumblr.com) is an example of a microblog. Microblogs are made up of short posts that often contain images or links. The blogger behind Lunch Bag Art is a father who posts photos of the daily drawing he does on his kids' lunch bags.

SECTION II: SUBSCRIBING TO BLOGS

Reading a variety of blogs can be a great way to learn about new things, be entertained, or get news from a certain perspective. But the more blogs you read, the more difficult it can be to keep up with them all. Fortunately, you can easily keep up with a large number of blogs by subscribing to the ones you read most.

When you subscribe to a blog, you get all of its new posts and updates delivered to you. You subscribe to blogs using an RSS reader, which is a tool that lets you read posts from multiple blogs on one page.

There are many advantages to subscribing to your favorite blogs:

- It saves time. You won't have to check multiple blogs each day to see if they've added new posts.
- You won't miss any updates. It's easy to miss some posts if you don't visit a particular blog very often. When you subscribe to a blog, every single one of its posts is sent to your RSS reader. Even if you don't check your reader for a week, the posts you haven't read will still be there waiting for you.
- It creates a feed of stories interesting to you. You'll be able to read posts on many topics and from various blogs, all in one place. It's like having a newspaper written just for you. Many RSS readers even recommend blogs similar to the ones you subscribe to so you'll always have something to read.

Choosing an RSS reader

There are many RSS readers to choose from. If you're just getting started, you might want to try one of the RSS readers below. They're all simple and easy to use, even if you've never subscribed to a blog before.

- Feedly
- Digg
- Feedspot

If you have a smartphone or tablet, you could also try one of the news reader apps below. News reader apps aren't much different from traditional RSS readers, but they're designed specifically to be used on mobile devices. These apps collect, or aggregate, content from major blogs and news sites. They can also be used to subscribe to any blog with an RSS feed.

- Flipboard
- Pulse
- Google Play Newsstand
SECTION III: STARTING YOUR OWN BLOG
Starting a new blog might seem a little overwhelming at first, but planning some things ahead of time can make the entire process a lot easier. You'll make decisions about things such as:

- Your blogging goals
- The topic you want to blog about
- How much time you want to spend blogging
- How much personal information you wish to share on your blog
- Your blog's design

Identifying your blogging goals
The first step toward developing your blog is to know your blogging goals. The two main questions to consider in order to understand your goals are:

- What's the main reason you want to start a blog?
- Who do you want to read your blog?

The graphic below gives some examples of how a few typical bloggers might answer.

The main reason you want to start blogging is your primary goal. However, most people have more than one reason for blogging. These extra reasons are your secondary goals. Examining your primary goal and your desired audience can help you identify your secondary goals.
For example, as you can see from the image on the previous page, Jessie’s primary goal is to keep her friends and family updated about her kids. However, the blog is not just for those people—she says she’d also like for other moms to read her blog. So one of her secondary goals might be to meet new people and be part of a community of moms who blog. If she’s interested in having a lot of people read her writing, she might also use “to become a better writer” as a secondary goal.

In short, anything that motivates you to blog, no matter how minor, can be one of your blogging goals. As you develop your blog, keeping your goals in mind will help you decide exactly what you want your blog to be like.

Defining your blog’s topic
One of the biggest factors in your blog’s success is having a topic you find interesting. After all, blogging is something you’ll be doing in your spare time, so how much you write will largely depend on how much you enjoy it. Having a topic you like will make keeping up with your blog easier and more rewarding. One way to test whether or not you’ve chosen a good topic is to think of potential posts that fit that topic. You may even want to make a list, like Elena’s list in the graphic on the right. Remember, you don’t have to commit to writing any of the posts that you come up with. You’re just exploring your topic to see if you’re interested in it enough to blog about it over the long term. If you have trouble coming up with ideas for posts, you may want to reconsider or adjust your topic.

Narrowing down your topic
If you chose to write about a broad topic, you might consider narrowing it down to a smaller one. This can help you keep focused on the topics you’re most interested in. It may also make your blog stand out from other, more general blogs. One way to narrow down your blog’s focus is to think of subjects that fall within the scope of your overall topic. These subjects are potential subtopics. Are there any that particularly interest you or seem like they’d be easy to write about? You might consider focusing mainly on one or two of those subtopics.
In the image above Craig narrowed down the focus of his cooking and food blog to two narrow subtopics: recipes and cooking tips.

**Writing about multiple topics**

Some people prefer to blog without limiting themselves to a few related topics. Instead, they write "lifestyle" blogs that cover a range of subjects that interest them, including their own lives. A lifestyle blogger might write about a personal experience in one post, then review products in the next.

For instance, Jessie, who started a blog about her kids, could later decide to expand her blog's focus to include other topics. She might write about her personal life, as well as her hobbies and other things she's interested in, like fashion, crafts, and community issues. She could sort her posts on various subjects into categories so readers could easily find the posts that interest them.

Blogging this way can be fun because you can regularly write about anything that comes to your mind. That said, it does have a few drawbacks. It may be more difficult for you to attract readers who don't personally know you. Also, not all of your readers will be interested in all of the subjects you write about. This can be especially true if you mix personal posts with more polarizing, controversial ones. For example, readers who enjoy Jessie's posts about her kids may be turned off or even offended by some of her posts on sensitive subjects like politics.

**Deciding how much time to commit**

It's difficult to get people to read your blog if you don't update it regularly. While it's easy to be enthusiastic about your blog and post frequently when you first get started, you may find it more challenging to keep up with posting as time goes on.

Having a posting schedule can make it easier to find time for your blog. How you create your schedule is up to you. Some people work best with a strict schedule and may prefer to set aside a little bit of time every day to work on their blogs. Others might be happier choosing a loose schedule. With this type of schedule, they might post twice a week but not always on the same day or at the same time.

When you're deciding how much time you want to commit to your blog, make sure to consider all of your other commitments, and be realistic about the amount of time you actually want to spend writing.

**Using drafts and scheduling posts**

You can also manage your time by writing drafts of your blog posts ahead of time, then posting them at a later date. Most blog services even include a feature that lets you schedule saved posts. Once you've scheduled a post, it will automatically be published at the time you specified. Scheduling posts can be a good way to guarantee that you post about the same number of updates each week.
These drafts and scheduling tools can be especially useful if you find it difficult to set aside a particular time of day for writing. You can create drafts when you have a lot to write about and post them later, when you're feeling too busy or uninspired to write.

Deciding how much personal information to share
Before you write your first blog post, you should already know how personal you want your blog to be. Some bloggers choose to blog with their real names and include personal details about their lives. Others blog with a pseudonym, or fake name. If you're either a private or open person, the decision on whether or not to reveal personal information on your blog probably seems pretty straightforward. However, there are a few things everyone should consider when decideing how much to share. Take a look at the graphic below to learn about the pros and cons of sharing personal details on your blog.

What's the best choice for you?
Now that you understand the pros and cons of sharing personal information on your blog, look back at your blogging goals and the audience you decided to write for. Depending on how you're going to use your blog, you might have to share at least a little information in order to reach your goals.

Blogging openly
For example, if you're like Elena and want to use your blog to promote yourself or build a career, you'll need to include at least some personal information. You don't have to include many personal details—just enough that someone looking to learn about your work would be able to find your blog and get in touch with you if necessary.

Blogging anonymously
On the other hand, if you have a more personal blog you may not want to link real-life information like your full name and location to the things you write. In Jessie's case, there's no real need to share identifying information on her blog. Her main audience is her family and friends, who already know who she is.
Blogging cautiously

Whether you choose to make your identity public or be completely anonymous, you should be cautious about sharing personal details online. As you decide how much you feel comfortable sharing, keep this in mind: Once you post information about yourself online, it’s almost impossible to be totally anonymous later, even if you remove the information you shared.

Unless you're like Elena and have a real need to share personal details, we recommend starting out by sharing a minimal amount of information about yourself. As you get more comfortable blogging, you may choose to share more about yourself with your readers.

Before you share any kind of personal information on your blog or other social media, it’s important to make sure that you're not compromising your safety.

Designing your blog

Much of your blog's design will depend on the blog service you choose to host it. It's difficult to plan the appearance of your blog in too much detail before you've actually signed up with a blog service. However, there are a few components of your blog's design that you can decide on ahead of time.

Blog name

Your blog name is important because it's the first thing people will see about your blog. There's no single rule or formula for coming up with a good blog name, but these tips can help:

- **Make it relate to your topic.** This can help you attract readers who are looking to read about a specific subject.
- **Make it interesting.** "Craig's Cooking Blog" is a descriptive title, but it doesn't really make you want to read it. Think of the blogs you read. Which ones have names that sound interesting to you? What do these names have in common?
- **Make it easy to remember.** The best way to do this is to make it short—three or four words at the most. If you choose to use a made-up word for your blog's title, make it even shorter, and be sure it resembles or contains a real word.
- **Make it something that can work as a logo.** One way to test this is to visit Wordmark.it, a site that lets you preview any word in every font you have installed on your computer. While you'll probably want your final logo to include some color or other graphic design elements, this can be a good way to test out your title.

Design elements

As mentioned above, you'll get to customize the appearance of your blog when you create it with a blog service. Most major blog services offer various themes, or templates, you can use to select the layout of your blog. Some are offered for free, some themes however are premium themes that are not free. Before settling on a template, try and find one that is responsive and will work seamlessly on a variety of different screen sizes. Once you choose a template, you can further customize its appearance by choosing a new color scheme and organizing your posts into categories.
Blogs & Blogging for Beginners

Making choices about your blog’s appearance will be easier if you already have an idea about how you want your blog to look. Look at blogs that you find visually appealing. Ideally, these blogs should also have similar subject matter to your own—after all, a design that works for a political blog may look strange on a photoblog. However, this isn't essential. You can use any blogs you like as design inspiration.

Try and keep the design of your blog as simplistic. You do not want the readers of your blog to struggle to find information that they're looking for, or have the blog be too busy that the reader loses interest. Selecting a limited color scheme, font choice and having only elements that benefit your blog and readers will help eliminate bogging down your viewers.

Once you've found blogs whose design you like, the next step is to figure out what they have in common. You can then use those design elements in your own blog.

SECTION IV: CHOOSING A BLOGGING SERVICE/PROVIDER

Once you have an idea of what you want your blog to be like, the next step is to pick the blog service you'll use to create your blog. There are many different sites that offer blog hosting. Which one should you use? It depends on what you want to share and how you want to share it. You may even find that you'd rather share with a microblogging service like Tumblr or Twitter, or a social network like Facebook. Let's take a look some of the options and once you're familiar with these services, you'll be able to figure out which one is best for you.

What is a blog service?

A blog service is a website that lets you create and maintain a blog. It hosts your blog, which means it gives your blog its own web address, or URL. Your blog service also stores your blog's data. Each blog service has different features, but they all let you share your opinions, interests, photos, and more. There are two basic types of blog services: traditional and microblogging.

Traditional blog services let you create a website for your blog. Blogs created with these services can include sections, categories, and other features that let you organize your blog posts. These services also include features that let you permit and manage comments, as well as tools to customize the appearance of your blog. Traditional blog services are best for creating text-heavy blogs, although you can use them for any type of content you want. It's likely that the blogs you're most familiar with use traditional blog services.

Microblogging services let you create blog posts that are very short, often consisting of only a line of text, an image, or a link. Most microblogging services are designed to be used in a certain way. For example, Twitter places a 280-character limit on the length of posts. Users can write whatever they want, but they must do so in fewer than 280 characters. Social networking sites that allow sharing, like Facebook, can also be considered microblogging services.

Traditional blog services

The two biggest traditional blog services are WordPress and Blogger. Both allow you to create and customize your own blog, and both offer good options for creating all types of posts. The main difference between the two is the options they offer and their ease of use.
WordPress

WordPress.com (www.wordpress.com)
WordPress is the most popular traditional blog service. It offers advanced blog customization features that let you control your blog’s appearance and manage comments, blog post drafts, and more. Some of its advanced tools are designed for people who are familiar with HTML, which is a special computer language used for formatting websites. Even if you know nothing about HTML, you can still customize your WordPress blog’s appearance with templates, or themes. The downside to these options is that WordPress's blog management interface, called the Dashboard, can be a little confusing to navigate at first. However, WordPress has extensive support tools to help you get started.

WordPress.org (www.wordpress.org)
Another WordPress platform that exists and is similar to WordPress.com is WordPress.org. This version of the platform offers a more comprehensive and advanced form of the WordPress blogging service allowing users to self-host their websites have better control over your blog’s appearance with a wider selection of templates, themes and plugins allows for SEO and Google Analytics and maintenance.

Blogger

Blogger (www.blogger.com)
Blogger is the second most popular traditional blog service. It offers slightly less blog customization and management features than WordPress, but it still includes plenty of ways to control your blog’s appearance, including a large selection of themes. Because it includes fewer options, Blogger’s interface is simpler than WordPress', so you may find it easier to use. Blogger is a Google product, so if you already have a Google account getting started with Blogger will be especially easy.

Microblogging services

Tumblr, Twitter, and Pinterest are three of the most popular microblogging sites. Facebook, a social network, can also be used for sharing.

Tumblr (www.tumblr.com)
Tumblr is a microblogging service that lets you create and update your own blog. People use Tumblr to share images, videos, links, and short text posts. Tumblr’s simple posting tools and visually appealing layouts make it ideal for photoblogs, humor blogs, and other blogs that are updated frequently with short posts.

Like traditional blogging services, Tumblr offers options to customize the appearance of your blog, including a variety of visual themes. In other ways, Tumblr is different from traditional blogging services. For instance, Tumblr doesn’t include an option to leave comments on blog posts, which means it’s not an ideal tool for having a discussion. Instead, readers can like a post or re-blog it, which shares the post on their own Tumblr blogs.

Pinterest (www.pinterest.com)
Pinterest is a microblogging tool that lets you create and share collections of interesting links, images, and more. These collections are called pinboards. The items you share on your pinboards are then shared with others on Pinterest, who can then add your posts to their own pinboards. Pinterest can be a good tool if you’re interested in sharing the things you enjoy with a wide audience but don’t necessarily care about writing and managing your own blog.
Twitter ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com))

Twitter is a tool that lets you post short text updates of 280 characters or less. Unlike Tumblr or traditional blogging services, you can't use Twitter to create your own blog. Instead, your updates appear on your Twitter profile, in a feed that people can view or subscribe to. People use Twitter for many reasons, including sharing news and events, keeping up with friends, and engaging in discussions. If you have a traditional blog, Twitter can be a good way to promote your blog by connecting with other bloggers and linking to your own blog posts.

Facebook ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com))

Facebook is the world's largest social networking site. The main reason people use Facebook is to stay connected with friends and family. However, sharing is also a large part of the Facebook experience. You can post links, photos, and videos to your profile and share longer, blog-like posts with the Notes tool. If you decide that you don't need your own blog and just want to share occasionally, Facebook can be a good way to do that.

Most people use Facebook just for sharing with people they know. However, you can also use Facebook to reach a wider audience by allowing others to subscribe to things you've shared publicly, or by setting up a Facebook Fan Page.

Even if you choose to use a traditional blog platform to create your blog, you can enhance your blog with microblogging. Many bloggers promote their blogs by maintaining Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest accounts for their blogs and posting links to their blog posts. (We'll discuss promoting your blog later).

Which blog service is right for you?

Choosing the right blog service is important. Your blog service will affect your blog's appearance, as well as what you're able to do with it. Every blog service has some limitations, and some services are better than others for certain purposes.

Now that you know about various blog services, you can think about the features you want for your blog and decide which service is best for you. For instance, if you want a blog that's more like a website with different categories and sections, you should probably choose a traditional blog service.

Keep in mind that more features doesn't always mean a better blogging experience. The more options your blog service has, the more complicated blogging can become. If you don't actually plan on using the advanced features traditional blog services like WordPress and Blogger have to offer, you'll probably find a simpler service like Tumblr better suited to your needs.

Use the flowchart below to help determine which blog service you should use.
Choosing a Blog Service

There are many blogging and sharing services to choose from, and they're all different. Follow the flowchart to figure out which one is right for you. Get started here.

- **Do you want your own website that you can customize?**
  - **Yes**
    - **Do you plan on writing mainly posts with lots of text?**
      - **Yes**
        - **Tumblr**
      - **No**
        - **Facebook**
  - **No**
    - **Who do you want to see the things you share?**
      - **Only people I know**
      - **Everyone**
    - **When it comes to customizing the appearance of your blog, which is more important?**
      - **Easy-to-use customization options**
      - **Advanced customization options**
    - **Twitter, for sharing short, text-based updates**
    - **Pinterest, for sharing images, links, and more**

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SECTION V: MAKING THE BLOG

We’re going to focus on making a WordPress blog in this class. Like it says above, there are lots of different ways to blog but this will show you all the steps that most of the blogs need for you to have one. Basically, how to log in and get the whole thing set up.

Getting Started

When you log in to Wordpress for the first time you will prompted to make a new account. You should see something similar to what you see on the right of this page. You will need an email to sign up for the account. So make sure you have one of those first before starting a Wordpress account.

After you have made your account will answer a few questions about what type of blog you are starting, what type of audience you are trying to reach and few other questions that can be changed later on in the process. So if you don’t know the answer to something, simply fill it in and it can be changed later in the settings tab.

The main thing to focus on after getting signed in is to choose a domain name that sticks out and to choose how much, if anything, you are willing to pay for the website. There are few options that give you some perks, but the more you pay, the more perks you get.

The screenshots below will give you an idea of the questions you will need to answer.
THE INTERFACE

After you have made your account you have a number of options to look at to customize your page:

- In the photo above, you can see on the left hand side that we have the stats tab open. This tab lets you see the activity, or the number of people, that have come to look at your page.
- The tab below that, the activity tab, keeps track of all changes that have been on your new website. It allows you to look back on all the posts you have made on the website and see what changed on each one. Did you add a picture to a certain post on a certain day and want to find it? Look here. Did you make some changes that are no incorrect and can’t find the post? Look here.
- All the tabs under the manage section allow you to really interact with the people looking at your site and allow you to truly customize how it looks.
  - The blog posts tab allows you to conveniently look at all the posts you’ve made.
  - The media tab allows you to look through all the videos and photos you’ve uploaded to your site, regardless of whether or not you’ve used them for anything.
  - The comments tab allows you to read all the comments people have posted on your website. And you can even respond to them as well.
- There are many other buttons, such as the plug in tab, that you may want to become familiar with the more you develop the site. But, for now, as beginners, we want to focus on getting the website up and running and making blog posts.
Making a Blog Post

The most important part of the blog, are the actual blog posts. Below is a screen shot of what it looks like to make an actual blog post. To find this section of the website, go to the homepage of your new website on Wordpress and press the blog post tab on the left hand side. Then click Add.

This section of the Wordpress allows you to create the content people will see on your website.

You can use this section to type as little or as much as you want. You can add videos and photos and you can also add tags, located on the right hand side of the screen. Tags help people find your website when they are searching the internet. So if you have a blog about cooking, you want to make a tag that says cooking, so when people search the internet you have a better chance of your website showing up.

And when you want to see what your post is going to look like on the internet, save your post by clicking save at the top of the page, go back to the main page, and click view site at the top right of the screen.
SECTION VI: PROMOTING YOUR BLOG

Once you've gotten your blog set up and written a few posts, you can start thinking about attracting readers. While there's no single magic method that will guarantee more readers for your blog, there are a few things you can do to help people find your blog and encourage them to keep reading it.

Improving your blog's readability

The most essential step you can take to get more people to read your blog is to improve your writing. The best blogs feature writing that is engaging, distinctive, and easy to follow—in short, writing that is entertaining and highly readable. Having a well-written readable blog doesn't require that each post be a masterpiece—it just means you should think before you post. There are a few simple things anyone can do to improve their blog writing, regardless of their skill level or past experience as a writer.

Connecting with a blogging community

No matter what you write about in your blog, there's bound to be other people out there who are blogging about the same or similar subject. Becoming part of this community of bloggers is a good way to get more people to read your blog. People who know you and who share your interests are likely to read your blog posts and even recommend them to others.

Being part of a blogging community can also make writing your blog more enjoyable. When you're not sure who's reading your blog, writing can feel a little bit like shouting into a void. In contrast, when you're part of a community, you may feel like you're participating in an established discussion. Many bloggers like the feeling of writing for an audience of friends.

Find similar blogs

You probably already read at least one blog that discusses the same topic as yours. Many bloggers frequently post links to other blogs. Following these links can be a good way to find similar blogs with relevant, interesting content. If you're not familiar with any other blogs on your topic, consider searching for blogs using a blog search service like Google Blog Search or Blog Catalog.

Comment on other blogs

Engaging in discussion with other bloggers is a great way to get them interested in what you have to say. The best way to start doing this is to leave comments on the blog posts you find notable. Many sites require you to register and create a profile in order to comment. When signing up, look for a field that lets you enter a link to your website. If you enter your blog's URL, people will be able to navigate to your blog from any comments you make.

You can also include links to your blog within your comments. However, be careful not to post too many links. If it seems like you're more interested in promoting your own blog than responding to someone else's writing, you'll seem rude—not a great way to get other people to read your blog. Only share a link to your blog if it adds something to the discussion.
Reach out with Twitter and other social media
Consider using Twitter to keep up with people who are interested in the same subjects as you. By replying to their tweets and posting relevant updates of your own—including links to each of your posts—you can build up relationships with people and encourage them to read your blog. This sharing strategy isn't just for Twitter. You may also want to try using Pinterest, which lets you share links with a broad audience of people who have interests similar to your own.

Promote blogs you like
When you find other blogs you like, consider including links to them on your own blog. You can do this either by referring and responding to other blogs in your own posts, or by setting up a blog roll. A blog roll is simply a list of blogs that you want to recommend to your readers. People usually add blog rolls to a sidebar on their blog, or on a special "links" page. Most blog templates include a space for you to add favorite links. This is an easy place to put your blog roll.

When you link to someone's blog, they may choose to link back to yours. However, linking back isn't required, and it's considered very rude to ask someone to include you in their blog roll or confront them if they don't.

Making your blog easy to find
Even if you write the best blog posts on the Internet, you'll never get many readers unless people can easily find your blog. The internet is a big place, and making your blog stand out from millions of others is a challenge. Still, there are a few things you can do to make it more likely that new readers will visit your blog.

Help search engines find your blog with SEO
Search Engine Optimization, or SEO, is a set of techniques you can use to make your blog more visible to people who are using search engines. The more visible your blog is, the more likely it will show up in search results.

Most SEO strategies are based on the way you write your blog. For example, including keywords in your posts can influence the search results your blog shows up in. Making sure that your website is able to be viewed seamlessly across various different devices allows for your blog to be displayed more in mobile search results. To find more information about optimizing your search engine results, try Googling SEO for more information.

Link to your blog elsewhere
A simple way to let people know about your blog is to link to it. For instance, you could send the link to your blog to people you think would enjoy it. To reach more people, you can use social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. You can also use the networks' sharing tools to post links to individual blog entries which you think your online friends will find particularly interesting. You can create social networking accounts specifically for your blog—your blog's own Facebook Fan Page or Twitter feed. For people who want to keep their personal life separate from their blog, this can be a better choice than using your own Facebook or Twitter account.

Make your blog easy to navigate
When people visit your blog, they should be able to easily find the posts they're interested in. There are a few things you can do with your blog posts that will make them easier for visitors to find.

- Give posts descriptive titles, so that people can skim your blog and find what they're looking for.
- Organize your posts by subject with tools like categories, tags, and labels.
• Your blog's design will also influence how easy your blog is to navigate. Design elements like layout, color scheme, and text size will all affect your readers' experience, so you should consider these things carefully.

SECTION VII: COPYRIGHT & FAIR USE

As you write blog posts, you may find that you want to include images you find online. Or maybe you found a great piece of writing—a recipe, a story, or a review—that you want to highlight on your own blog. It’s important to know that almost all of the content you find on the Web belongs to someone. Just because you can take images, text, and more from other sites doesn’t mean it’s right to do so—ethically or legally.

What would a discussion about legalities be without a legal disclaimer? So here it is: The laws discussed here are United States laws. No lawyer was involved in preparing this lesson. We are not legal experts, and this lesson should not be taken as legal advice. This is just meant as a general overview of copyright and fair use.

Understanding copyright

Copyright is the legal concept that works—art, writing, images, music, and more belong to the people who create them. According to copyright law, any original content you create and record in a lasting form is your own intellectual property. This means other people can't legally copy your work and pretend it's their own. They can't make money from the things you create either.

To use, copy, or change a copyrighted work, you need permission from the person who holds the copyright. This permission is called a license. Even though everyone has the right to require that others respect their copyright and ask permission to use their work, some people and organizations choose to license their content more freely. They do this by giving their work a Creative Commons license or by placing their work in the Public Domain.

Review the chart to get an overview of the differences between traditional copyright, Creative Commons, and Public Domain.
Using Public Domain and Creative Commons content

If you don't want to spend money on the images and content you use for your blog, you may want to use Public Domain and Creative Commons-licensed content.

Using Public Domain content

There are no restrictions on using works that are in the Public Domain, which means you can use them however you want—short of claiming you created them. Unfortunately, it's not always easy to tell whether or not something is in the Public Domain. There may be some cases when you know for sure that a work is Public Domain—for instance, if you find a photo or text that you know was published before 1923—but for the most part, the best way to find Public Domain content is to search for it.

Sites for finding Public Domain content:
- Prelinger Archive (http://archive.org/details/prelinger/)
- PublicPhoto.org (http://publicphoto.org)
- TotallyFreelimages.com (http://totallyfreelimages.com)

Using Creative Commons content

Although Creative Commons content won't cost you any money to use, it's not totally free; to use it, you must follow certain rules. People who choose to make their content Creative Commons can choose one or more of these licenses to apply to their work:
- Attribution: You must credit the creator in order to use, copy, or share the content.
- Non Commercial: You can't make a profit from the content.
- No Derivative Works: You can't change the content.
- Share Alike: You can change the content, but you have to let other people use your new work with the same license as the original. In other words, you can't treat any Share Alike work you adapt as your own copyright, even if you radically change it.

How to tell if content is Creative Commons

To tell if a piece of content is Creative Commons, look for the Creative Commons symbol ©, as well as symbols that indicate exactly which licenses apply to it. For instance, the symbols in the example below indicate that the photo has three licenses: Attribution, Non Commercial, and No Derivative Works. This means you can use this photo if you credit the person who created it, don't make money from it, and don't change it.

Sites for finding Creative Commons content:
- Wikimedia Commons (http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Main_Page)
Using copyrighted material
As you learned earlier, you generally need to license copyrighted material in order to use it, which often costs money. The exception to this is a rule called Fair Use. Fair Use means you can use copyrighted material without a license only for certain purposes. These include:

- Commentary
- Criticism
- Reporting
- Teaching

For example, you can't just grab a copyrighted photo and use it on your blog because you think it's pretty. However, it probably would be considered Fair Use if you included that photo in a blog post that commented on and analyzed a photographer's work.

Guidelines for Fair Use
- A majority of the content you post must be your own. To return to the example above, it's probably Fair Use to include a few relevant photos in a long post. However, using those same photos in a post with only a few lines of commentary might not be Fair Use. For another example, let's imagine you found a useful tutorial you wanted to feature on your blog. Including one tip from the tutorial would be Fair Use. Including the entire tutorial would not be Fair Use, even if you linked to the original source.
- Give credit to the copyright holder. In order for something to be Fair Use, you must give full credit to the person who created it. This includes the creator’s name, as well as other information that will help people find the original work or source. For example, if you’re posting and commenting on an image that was published on a newspaper’s website, you should include a link to the original story.
- Don't make money off of the copyrighted work. In general, it's much easier to claim Fair Use when you're using the copyrighted material for noncommercial purposes. While posting images of your favorite TV shows and adding funny captions and commentary might be considered Fair Use, selling those images on T-shirts would not. Making money from ads on your blog can also limit your ability to claim Fair Use.

Misusing copyrighted material
Keep in mind that even if you post content in good faith, the copyright holder may not agree that it's Fair Use. If someone requests that you remove their work from your blog, you should do so immediately. Otherwise, you can suffer serious consequences:

- The copyright holder may complain to your blog service and have your blog shut down.
- The copyright holder may sue you.
Licensing copyrighted content
If you want to use copyrighted content in a way that doesn't fall under Fair Use, you'll have to license it in order to get permission to post it. If you're interested in purchasing the rights to use images, video, and other media on your blog, you may want to visit a few of the following Stock Photo sites:

- iStockphoto (http://www.istockphoto.com/)
- Photos.com (http://www.photos.com)
- Fotolia (http://www.fotolia.com)

Sharing copyrighted videos
Video-sharing sites like YouTube and Vimeo offer the option to post videos to your blog by embedding them. When you embed a video, it automatically creates a link back to the place where it was originally posted. Because the original creator or poster is automatically credited, you don't have to worry about going through any extra steps to give credit. Be aware that many videos on these sites—particularly videos of TV shows and movies—are in violation of copyright law and may be removed from YouTube at any time. If a video you've embedded is removed from YouTube, it will also be removed from your blog. You should never embed a video that you know is breaking copyright laws.

Protecting your intellectual property
Copyright protects the things you create too. You own the original content you post on your blog. If people copy or steal your intellectual property, you have the right to try to stop them.

Guarding your content
The best way to protect your content is to keep an eye out for it elsewhere. These tips can help you tell if your content has shown up on another website or blog:

- **Use plagiarism search services.** These services analyze your blog or site, then search for sites with identical content. Copyscape.com is a reputable site with a free plagiarism search.
- **Set up Google Alerts for excerpts of your posts.** Google Alerts is a service you can use to automatically email you when sites post new information about a person, thing, or event. You can create alerts for individual posts by entering a few sentences from your post in the Search Query field. (Make sure to use quotation marks.) If that text shows up elsewhere on the Web, you'll receive an email. Creating a Google Alert for each of your posts can be time consuming, so you may want to limit your alerts to posts that people are likely to copy, like tutorials.
- **Add watermarks to your images.** A watermark is something you add to an image to identify yourself as its creator—usually a symbol or some text. Watermarks make it easy for you and your readers to recognize images you created. They also can have the effect of discouraging others from taking your images in the first place. You can easily create watermarks in image editing programs like Picasa and Photoshop.
What to do if you find your content on another site

There are two things you can do if you find your images, text, or other media on another website or blog. First, contact the person who runs the blog or site that took your content. Most blogs list a contact email address, but if you can't find one you can always leave a comment on the offending post. Ask them firmly but politely to remove your content (or give you credit, if you don't mind sharing it). This can work, especially in cases where the other person didn't realize any wrongdoing had occurred.

If contacting the blogger doesn't work, you may want to file a DMCA takedown request. DMCA refers to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, a law designed to help copyright holders protect their content. Under this law, if a site steals your original content you can complain to that site's service provider. If the service provider finds your complaint valid, it will take down the content.

SECTION VIII: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The TechCenter at the Main Branch of the Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County hosts over two dozen technology related classes each month. Ask your instructor today for a calendar of upcoming events or visit our website at www.cincinnatilibrary.org/programs/ for a complete list of all Library events.

Online
The Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County offers a variety of databases to all card holders which provide excellent learning opportunities on a variety of topics, including computers and technology.


Lynda.com is an award-winning library of video tutorials for learners who want to gain specific software, technology, creative, or business skills. Free with your library card. From http://www.cincinnatilibrary.org, click on Research & Homework > Research Databases > Education > Lynda.com.