



HOW TO: BLOG

Blogging is a great way for students to hone their writing and critical reading skills. Setting up a blog for your students lets them realize the excitement of publishing to a global audience and become more comfortable with online media. Best of all, it's free!

STEP 1 - SET IT UP

The two best free blogging services are Wordpress and Blogger. Each offers similar functionality and a choice of look, so whichever you choose is based mainly on personal preference.



Go to wordpress.com and click on "Sign up now". Fill in a username (also the address of your blog), password, and email address and click "Next". You'll get an email asking you for confirmation. Click the link therein and login to your new blog!



Go to blogger.com and click on "Create a blog". Fill in a username, password, and email address and click "Continue". Choose a title for your blog and an address, and move on to choosing a look!

STEP 2 - CUSTOMIZE IT

The last step in the Blogger setup involves picking a template, which determines how your blog will look. Wordpress automatically assigns a default theme (or template) to new blogs. There are hundreds of themes and templates to choose from, and they can be changed whenever you like. In Wordpress, after you log in, you can change the theme under the "Appearance" tab in the left-hand menu. In Blogger, you can change the template by clicking "Pick a new template" under the "Layout" tab.

STEP 3 - INVITE USERS AND START POSTING

Once you've got your blog set up, you can invite your students to post to it by adding them as users. In Wordpress, click on "Invites" under the "Users" tab and fill out their email address. In Blogger, click on "Permissions" under the "Settings" tab. Then, click on "Add Authors". They will receive an invitation to join the blog and can start posting and commenting on entries! **NOTE** If your students don't have email addresses, they can get them for free at gmail.com or hotmail.com.

STEP 4 - ADMINISTER AND MODERATE


Both Blogger and Wordpress allow you (the administrator) to easily moderate what your students are posting and how they're commenting to other posts. Inappropriate language and material can be easily edited or deleted. You can also make selected posts (or the entire blog) private and password-protected, meaning they won't show up in search engines and you'll need a password to read, post, or comment.

Blogs are powerful tools of self-expression and can be extremely well-utilized in a classroom or educational setting. Traditional forms of literacy (such as critical reading and writing for an audience) are exercised, and students develop good media and digital literacy skills and habits that allow them to safely engage with technology and which foster a critical awareness of language and media.

Blogs are also tremendously flexible, not only allowing for text, but images, videos, and sounds as well. For examples of other forms of blogging and useful tools, [please refer to the other side of this sheet.](#)

PHOTOBLOGGING

Instead of using words, photoblogs use photographs and images to tell a story or share an experience. The following sites make it easy to store your photos and put them on your blog.


 Flickr is a photo storage and sharing website with a vibrant community and many built-in photo editing tools. (flickr.com)



Picasa is also a photo sharing service with built-in tools. It also offers private photo albums, so only authorized viewers are allowed. (picasa.com)

VIDEOBLOGGING

If your school or students have access to video recorders (in cell phones, pocket cameras, or camcorders), why not try posting a daily or weekly video record of classroom activities?

 Youtube is the largest video sharing site on the web and gives users the ability to make their own “channel” and store videos for free. Videos can be password protected and easily embedded in your blog. (youtube.com)



Vimeo is another video hosting and sharing site, though it's geared more towards professionals. Use this site for inspiration and constructive criticism. (vimeo.com)

RSS (REALLY SIMPLE SYNDICATION)



RSS is a way to manage and organize posts from various sources on the web, including blogs. Instead of visiting every interesting site and scrolling through their content, you can subscribe to a site's “feed” using an RSS Reader like [Google Reader](#) or [Feedburner](#) and view a concise list of headlines or post excerpts from that site. Almost every blogging service has an RSS feed built in, so it's easy to keep track of large amounts of content and, depending on which reader you use, you can be notified via email whenever new content is posted.

FOLKSONOMY (TAGGING)

A folksonomy is a system of classification derived from the practice and method of collaboratively creating and managing tags to annotate and categorize content. In blogging, tagging allows the author to provide contextual indicators about what the post is about at the time of writing.

[Social bookmarking](#) tools also use tags, and they allow you to access your bookmarked sites through any web browser.



Delicious is a social bookmarking service that lets you save, share, and organize interesting things you find online using tags. (delicious.com)



Stumbleupon differs from Delicious in that it provides a more randomized web surfing experience. Users “stumble” from one site to another based on the tags used by visitors to describe those sites. If Delicious is like a bookmark database, Stumbleupon is like website channel surfing. (stumbleupon.com)

MICROBLOGGING

A microblog differs from a traditional blog in that its content is typically much smaller. A microblog entry could consist of nothing but a short sentence fragment, or an image or embedded video.



Twitter limits post length to 140 characters, so it forces concise writing, and its own tagging system (known as hash [#] tags) means you can keep track of popular topics in real time. (twitter.com)



Tumblr is a pared-down blog service perfect for quick posts or links to videos and photos. Really simple interface makes posting easy. (tumblr.com)