

Blogging Resources

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The following information is a compilation resulting from my own experiences writing my blog from July 2005 to the present. I do not consider myself a “blog expert.” However, these resources have been very helpful for me and I hope they help others. Please keep in mind that while this information was accurate at the time of this writing, internet technology and websites constantly become obsolete or are upgraded!

Blog Service Providers

These are “hosting platforms” for blogs. There are many blog service providers in existence. The ones listed below are well known, offer free basic blog accounts, do not require the user to download any software, and a few of them also offer additional “upgraded” accounts with special features that require a yearly subscription fee. All provide step-by-step instructions, templates, customizable design themes, and “Help” forums to assist in blog creation and maintenance. Although they are similar, some are simpler than others to set up and use, some of the features and tools differ slightly between providers, and each provider does have its own style and “feel.” It is advisable to investigate several and choose the one which will best suit your abilities and needs.

Blog.com <http://blog.com/>
Blogger <http://www.blogger.com/home>
TypePad <http://www.typepad.com/>
Wordpress <http://wordpress.com/>

Writing Blog Posts

Microsoft has code embedded in Word that keeps formatting from being preserved if you try to create a blog post in Word & paste it directly into a blog. *Windows Live Writer*, a free Microsoft download, allows you to compose posts on your desktop, then either save them as drafts or publish them to your blog. The whole process is simplified because there is no fiddling around with formatting issues, and it is much easier to upload, resize, and position photos. The way the post looks when you create it is the way it will actually look on your blog. *Live Writer* only works for PCs running Windows; as of this writing there isn't a desktop blog writer program available for Mac users.

Windows Live Writer <http://download.live.com/writer>

Adding Photos

Including several photos in a post is easy, but there may be times when an author has a large number of photos (s)he wishes to share and that can get cumbersome. Some blogs have a tool that creates a slideshow as a permanent part of a blog; the blog's “Help” feature will have specific instructions for doing that. However, if the photos are to be included in a singular post, there are many free online services that can create slideshows to be directly incorporated as part of a post. Some require that the photos are hosted on their site (most offer free accounts); others allow you to upload just the photos you wish to include in the slideshow.

flickrSLiDR <http://flickrslidr.com/>
Picasa <http://picasa.google.com/mac/>
photobucket <http://photobucket.com/>

Slide <http://www.slide.com/>
SmugMug <http://smugmug.com/>

Subscribing & Reading

Once you start “collecting” blogs you enjoy reading, it is time consuming and difficult to remember to visit each blog’s website. Many readers subscribe to their favorites by clicking on a subscription “link” located on the blog and receive email alerts when new posts have been added. An easier way to keep up with all that blogging is to create a free *Google reader* account and subscribe to blogs by following the very easy instructions. Readers then avoid extra emails coming to their inboxes (which can happen easily if they subscribe to blogs that post frequently) and only need to visit one website, their *Google reader* home page, to see if their favorite blogs have new posts. All the blogs you subscribe to and any new posts for each are listed in a sidebar; simply click on each new post and the content (text and photos) appears in a main reading window. If you want to visit the actual blog, clicking on a post title once a post is visible in the reader window will take you there.

Google reader <http://www.google.com/reader>

Copyright Protection

The Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) was signed into law in the U.S. in 1998; other countries have similar laws in effect. To learn more about this and other copyright laws, do an online search. Most blog services have a section in their “Help” forum addressing their policy on copyright protection. The policy states what their copyright law compliance is and outlines the steps to take if content from a person’s blog is “stolen”. Other protective measures an author can take include placing watermarks on photos and obtaining a free copyright license with *Creative Commons*®, a globally recognized, non-profit, legal organization whose mission is to provide standardized legal tools for controlling copyright permissions on creative work in the public domain. The license appears as a link that can be displayed prominently on a blog. Readers can click on it to learn what copyright conditions have been applied to the content they are viewing.

Creative Commons <http://creativecommons.org/>

Tracking Visitation

Many blogs have simple tools to count visits or subscribers, but for those who would like to dig a little deeper, Google has yet another free service, *Google Analytics*, a program that tracks visitation to websites and blogs on a global basis. An account allows you to monitor: number of visits to your site daily, weekly, monthly and over longer periods; where your visitors live, ranging from continent, to country, to city (it does not identify who they are or give residence addresses); the number of new and returning visitors; the amount of time visitors spent on your site; how they found your site (i.e. search engine, referring site, direct traffic); and more. Once installed, it is not visible on the blog, neither to you nor to readers, and you must visit your *Google Analytics* account to view the data.

Google Analytics <http://www.google.com/analytics/>

Publications

When I recently changed blog hosts, I felt a bit of chagrin about “leaving behind” all of my old posts. If a blog does not have any activity after an extended period of time, it will, sooner or later, be deleted by the blog service provider. There are methods to import content from one blog to another, but I did

not want to attempt that. I discovered a company that will print a blog into a hard or soft cover book, complete with photos, *Blog2Print*. The price escalates with the number of pages, but they also offer a very economical PDF download that can be copied to a CD.

Blog2Print <http://blog2print.sharedbook.com>

The only publication with a creative focus I have found about blogging is *Artful Blogging*, a quarterly magazine published by Stampington & Company. It features exceptional photos and inspirational excerpts from artists' blogs, blogging etiquette, tips for improving blog content, and other helpful ideas to get the most out of the blogging experience. Barnes & Noble and Borders carry it or you can order a copy or subscription directly from the publisher.

Stampington & Company http://www.stampington.com/html/artful_blogging.html

Additional Links

Debbie Herd

Yahoo <http://www.yahoo.com/>

Clustr Map <http://www.clustrmaps.com/getone.php>

Gmail <http://www.google.com/webhp?rls=ig>

TAFE program <http://www.tafe.vic.gov.au/tafecourses/search/Courses/Detail.asp?ID=15166>

Happy Blogging!