

Better Blogging

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1. Eight Tips for Beginner Bloggers

I have been thinking quite a bit recently about what people need to do before they start a blog. I know that one should say that blogging doesn't necessarily suit everybody, but, to be honest, if there is novel in every person then there should be a blog too.

So, if you are thinking about starting a blog for yourself, here some stuff you might want to consider first.

1. Why blog?

What exactly is the purpose of your blog? It doesn't have to be anything profound, but it might be a good idea to have a sense of purpose. Is there, for example, a particular niche that you want to cover? Are you blogging for you, or your organisation? The answer to these questions will inform a lot of the issues discussed later on in this post.

If you want lots of people to read your blog, it's best to find a fairly specific subject to write about. Something that marks you out a bit from the crowd. Personal, journal-type blogs are nice, and can be interesting, but unless people know you, why are they going to read it?

Pick a topic you're interested in, whether technology, or Web2.0 or something to do with your line of work. It doesn't even have to be a topic you know a lot about - blogs where the blogger learns about stuff as they go long can be cool too.

But when you start out, why not try out a few different topics? Widen your scope to start with, to find out which you like writing about the most. That way, you won't annoy the people who subscribed to a blog about web based office applications only for it to change to being about toilet paper manufacturing after a month.

2. Read more blogs

The great thing about blogs is that they produce [RSS](#) feeds. And the great thing about RSS feeds is that they mean you don't have to visit every web site you want to read. Some people are subscribed to hundreds, maybe even thousands of blogs - and to bookmark and visit those sites would become a nightmare. RSS feeds mean you don't have to - you just subscribe to the site and every time it's updated, the new material gets sent to your [reader](#) application (also known as an *aggregator*) automatically. And it's not just blogs that produce these feeds - many news and other sites do too. Soon you'll find yourself spending as much time in your reader as your browser!

There are two main routes to go down when it comes to a feed reader, either desktop based, where you download some software onto your machine, or browser based, where you visit a web site which displays your feed within your web browser. If you only read feeds on one machine, then it might be an idea to use a desktop app. If you travel around and use lots of different computers then the flexibility of a browser-based option might suit. Personally, as a Mac user, I use [NetNewsWire](#), a desktop application which can synchronise

with the [NewsGator](#) online service, so I get the best of both worlds. Other online options include [Google Reader](#) and [Bloglines](#). These have the advantage of not requiring any software to be downloaded, so you might be able to get away with using them at work.

How you arrange your feeds is another thing to think about. Me, I just line them all up in one big list. But you can generally put them into folders or tag them so you can group similar feeds together. Another way of viewing feeds is as a '[river of news](#)' - with all the entries in chronological order on one screen that you scroll through. I like this style because your attention is grabbed by content, not by who you might be reading, so some interesting stuff gets thrown up that you might otherwise miss. You can get a very good version of a river of news using Google Reader.

Which feeds should be subscribe to? *All of them!* Seriously, the key to this is not to be selective in the feeds you subscribe to. You never know when something really interesting might pop up on them. As to where to start looking, [Technorati](#) is a good place to start - have a look at the [top 100 list](#) or the [top favoured list](#) and subscribe to those feeds you think might be interesting. Not because they are popular, or well regarded (though that is important) but because these guys often generate a lot of links out of their blogs to other people's, giving you yet more feeds to check out. Some bloggers have link blogs (like [Scoble](#)), or updates from their del.icio.us accounts (like [Steve Rubel](#)), providing yet more tidbits. Also subscribe to sites like [TechMeme](#) and [Digg](#) to spot bigger stories as they come over the horizon. [Twitter](#) is a good source of interesting blogs too, when your contacts post stuff they have spotted online.

You can't read every word of every feed, so don't. Instead, scan, scan, scan. This is why a 'river of news' view is cool when reading through feeds. Flip through them all, don't read every word, just look out for the things that interest you. Most readers have a method of marking posts for later review, whether by chucking them into a news bin or marking them with a tag or star. That way you can go back to them for further reflection and to pick bits out to quote in your own posts.

These days it's not just text based blog posts that can be delivered to you through RSS though. Podcasts are audio files, usually in .mp3 format, which you can download and listen to, whether at your computer or through your .mp3 player. You have to be more selective with these, as, unlike blogs, you can't scan them! Subscribe to the blogs first, then, when you find you trust the author/s, start downloading the podcasts too.

There are essentially 3 things to do to read more blogs: a) choose a system you are comfortable with; b) subscribe to everything in sight; c) scan first, don't read.

3. Choose your platform

The system you use to blog with is important, because if you blog often, you'll be spending a lot of time in there. There are many blog engines out there, online services which act as content management systems, theoretically allowing you to concentrate on the content while the engine does all the hard work for you. Some of the more famous and popular ones are [Blogger](#), [WordPress](#), [TypePad](#), [Drupal](#), [TextPattern](#) and many more. I use WordPress, it is

to my mind the best platform there is, in terms of features and ease of use. Most services offer a free version, whether only as a trial or forever so it's worth playing around with them. Many also offer the ability to import the posts you have made in one system into another, so you can carry your experiments around with you.

It's also a good idea to decide whether you want to host your own blog, or let someone else do it for you. The difference is basically one of time and effort. For example, if you go down the hosted route, there is no installing of possibly complicated software, no web hosting costs, no domain name renewals and so on. But if you did host your own blog, you would get the chance to customise your blog engine's installation, using plug-ins and other third party extensions, you could completely redesign your site's look or use one of thousands of available templates. You could also implement an advertising programme to try and earn some money back on your investment. Using a hosted service also often means you can't have your own snappy URL, and it might be the case that your chosen address for your blog is no longer available, which can be very annoying!

It is probably fair to say that the best option for the beginner is to try out a hosted service, like Blogger, WordPress.com or TypePad. Then, when your blogging really takes off you can consider having a domain of your own and can start to experiment with your chosen blog engine.

All the main blog engines come with an editor built in. These are web pages you visit to either enter new posts or to edit existing ones. It means that you can do it wherever you are and you don't have to bother installing new software.

But sometime that just isn't enough. There are a whole heap of blog editors out there - effectively stripped-down, blog-enabled word processors, which sit on your machine like any other application and which allow you to type at your leisure - maybe at a laptop without an always-on internet connection. It means you can save posts and mull over them before you send them to your blog. And you can generally do that by just hitting a button. No copying-and-pasting required. They can also do other cool stuff, like uploading images for you, or adding tags to your posts, or presenting you with a preview of what your post will look like online. It's worth giving these a go: try [Windows Live Writer](#) or [BlogJet](#) a go on Windows, or [Ecto](#) or [MarsEdit](#) on the Mac.

4. Link, link and comment

Linking makes your blog grow in popularity. There are three reasons for this. One, it makes your blog posts more useful if they provide links to what you are talking about, rather than making people hunt stuff out themselves. Second, the people you are linking to will realise you are talking about them and come and check you out. Thirdly, doing plenty of linking will do your search engine profile no harm at all.

Links really are what drives the blogosphere. If you get linked to by one of the big boys, like a [Scoble](#), then you'll find your traffic goes through the roof. It will also give you a boost in the search engines. So if you are generous with your links, giving people credit where it's due, providing readers with plenty of extra reading material, it's got to be a good thing.

Sometimes, links to your blog can mean disaster. I'm talking about a link from a site like [Digg](#), or [Slashdot](#). Both these sites have an eponymous 'effect' that can spank your site's bandwidth and possibly bring your blog down. This might not be a problem if you have a hosted blog, but if you pay for your hosting like I do, you could end up with a big bill! That this has never happened to me is testament to my policy of writing deliberately uninteresting and non-linkworthy posts.

What if you have seen an interesting story but don't have much to add? There are two ways of dealing with these. One is to set up an account at [del.icio.us](#) - where you can bookmark pages for further reading. You can then set up a daily posting, so that your links appear in a bulleted list in a single post every day, thus making the stuff you are reading available to your readers too. The other method would be to create a link blog, a separate blog where you dump either full text or stripped down versions of the posts you read.

I prefer the del.icio.us method.

Another way of providing links is through tagging. You'll notice that a lot of posts on many blogs have tags, links at the bottom of each post that send you back to [Technorati](#), a blog search engine, to look up a certain key word. These are a great way to get traffic as anyone who searches Technorati for those keywords will come across a link to your blog. Other blogs have an internal tagging system, like this one, which works in a similar way.

Comments are important. You really ought allow them on your blog to let people give you feedback or start a conversation. Receiving comments on your blog are a great sign that people are taking notice of what you are writing. Treasure the comments people leave - and always do the courtesy of responding, even if it is just with a 'thanks!'.

When you link to someone else's post, why not leave a comment there while you are at it, linking to your blog or even the specific post where you mention it? It's a good way to get some more traffic. But only do it when you actually have something to say, otherwise you are effectively spamming people's comments. That's bad.

You can subscribe to comment feeds with most good blog engines (well, I know [WordPress](#) allows it). This can be a great way of tracking conversations you are interested in. You can use services like [CoComment](#) as well to track your comments around the blogosphere. Some blogs offer the ability to have email alerts when people respond to a comment you've made - again, I have this function on this site. Not only is it useful for readers, but it also produces some interesting stats!

Links and comments make the blogosphere go round. Make sure you're fully engaged with them.

5. Keep notes

Writing blog posts that are interesting and well-informed isn't easy. Sitting down in front of your blog editor waiting for an idea to come is pretty hard. Ideas for posts, though, can hit

you at any time. So you need to be ready, with a system for taking notes that you're comfortable with.

While you are browsing the web, or reading through your RSS subscriptions, you'll often come across posts you like and want to have another look at later, or maybe just save a quote from it and the link back to the post. I used to keep a copy of a text editor (like Notepad on Windows) open all the time to copy snippets into. This is still a pretty good system, but there are far easier ways of doing it.

[Google Notebook](#) is great for storing post ideas. You can select text on a web page and then insert it automatically into a notebook entry - no need for copying and pasting. You can have several notebooks (I have one specifically for this blog, for example) and divide them up with headings. It's possible to turn them into pseudo-wikis too, by inviting friends to edit them and making them public as web pages.

Similar ways of storing notes like Notebook are the other free wikis that are available, like [WikiSpaces](#), [BackPack](#), [PBwiki](#) or [Stikipad](#). I use WikiSpaces myself for various things and it's a great, simple solution for those that are new to the world of wikis.

Your news reader will probably provide a clipping, sharing or news bin type feature, where you can store or mark posts for future reference. You could also post interesting tidbits to your [del.icio.us](#) account.

The advantage of these solutions, being web based, is that they are accessible from anywhere. But if you would prefer a system saved on your own computer, or a USB key, say, then you don't have to stick with the text file option. [TiddlyWiki](#) provides a full wiki experience inside a single HTML file you can run on your PC without being connected to the web. It's worth mentioning here, though wildly off topic, the [GTD TiddlyWiki](#) for fans of [Getting Things Done](#), which is great.

Of course, you can always just write things down. Get a nice notebook, like a [Moleskine](#) maybe. Or just fold a sheet of A4 into quarters and use the different sections for organising your notes. I use my Moleskine all the time for jotting down ideas for posts - as much as I love the web, lo-tech is just as effective sometimes.

So it's really important to have a system you like for holding onto posts and information you'd like to use later. Part of the joy of RSS is the fact that you can access so much more information than before - but keeping a handle on it becomes harder. Fortunately the tools are out there to help you. So try them out and stick with the one that works for you. Your blogging will become much easier, and the ideas will flow!

6. Presentation matters

Before we get onto the subject of blog design, I think a decent standard of writing is vital. It doesn't have to be brilliant, just competent. I'm basically talking spelling and grammar here. There is nothing worse than reading blogs full of weird spellings, txt spk, un-punctuated sentences and, my personal number one bugbear, errant apostrophe's. So check your words

before you write them. It makes you look more professional, and like you care more, as much as anything else. See if you can include some graphics or images to accompany your text to enliven the appearance of your posts. I'm pretty useless at this, generally speaking, though I do try. The one thing I do do, though, is try and grab logos and things from other sites to use to brighten things up when I am writing about them.

How your blog looks *is* important. Don't believe people when they claim otherwise. Often the argument goes that as people are going to be reading you through your feed anyway, what does it matter? The answer to this, of course, is that people have to visit your site before they can subscribe, and if it is some multi-coloured nightmare with scrolling text and other horrible c1997 type stuff, they aren't going to be subscribing to *anything*. Here's a quick list of stuff you might want to bear in mind:

- Make sure your site is reasonably standards-compliant so that as many people as possible can read it. Check it with the [w3.org validator](http://w3.org/validator)
- Ensure that the site won't take too long to load - so not *too* many fancy graphics!
- Try to keep things clean and simple - ensuring that your navigation is obviously separate from content, otherwise people will be confused
- Let us know who you are: let's have a photo and some contact details on the blog home page
- Don't have a gigantic blogroll on your index, which makes the page go on and on and on. Have a separate page for links if you have thousands and are desperate to show them off
- Make it clear where people can subscribe to your blog - a little orange (or even a big blue) [RSS icon](#) never goes amiss!

The other issue is what your blog system allows you to do to tart up your blog to add a little extra content which might well enrich your readers' experience. Why not consider:

- A list of recent posts towards the top of the page
- A recent comments list
- A Flickr badge showing the latest photos you have uploaded
- An update from del.icio.us on the latest sites you have bookmarked
- Clickable icons for readers to subscribe with their aggregator of choice
- Nice touches like MyBlogLog communities so people can see who else reads you
- Links to your presence of other social networks like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook etc

There really are tonnes of options to have a look at - check out what your blog engine will let you do. This can be an area where having your own, self-hosted blog can help, as it gives you far more flexibility in designing your blog and sticking cool stuff on it.

7. Stick at it

No-one's leaving comments. No-one is trackbacking to your posts. You don't register until the 300th page on a Google on your name. Welcome to my world!

But don't give up. Think about why you started your blog. Was it for fame and adulation?
Yes.

Was it to get an enormous Google PageRank? Yes.

Oh. Well, that isn't going to happen, at least for a long, long time, or until you get a job at Microsoft or Google. Instead, focus on the smaller positives. Maintaining a blog keeps you in touch with friends and family who might read it. And if you only have a small number of readers, well, you owe it to them to keep going. Plus, your blog posts are improving your skills as a writer, which **has** to be a good thing. But most of all, you are taking part in a collaborative project, the blogosphere, which is on a quite remarkable scale. Someone, somewhere, *is* listening.

8. Further Reading

Not really tips from me, but the eighth item is a list of cool posts about getting your blog off to a good start.

- [Before You Begin Blogging: A few things you should know](#) (Performancing)
- [Starting a new blog? Get your own domain name!](#) (How to Blog)
- [Before You Begin Blogging: A few things to take care of before that first post](#) (Performancing)
- [7 Steps to launching a Great Blog](#) (Performancing)
- [Five Beginner's Blogging Tips](#) (John Chow)
- [The First 7 Days of Blogging](#) (Pronet Advertising)
- [How to Get Top Blogs to Notice You](#) (Chris Garrett)
- [How to Develop "Stickyness" to Your Blog](#) (Blogging Tips)
- [10 Quick Methods to Increase Blog Comments](#) (Legal Andrew)
- [10 Blogging Mistakes to Avoid](#) (John Chow)
- [10 Ways to Become a Better Blogger](#) (TechRepublic)
- [101 Steps to Becoming a Better Blogger](#) (LifeHack.org)

2. The Different Types of Blog Post

There are a number of different blog post ‘types’ and it’s best to use a number of them regularly, otherwise your blog might end up a bit of a one-trick pony. Here I go through seven different types of post that I have identified.

1. List posts

You must have seen these around: “10 ways to make your blog accessible to cats”, “5 ways to ensure you are bankrupted by the Digg effect”, “33 ways having a blog makes you less attractive to women”. That sort of thing.

List posts are very good for being noticed on social bookmarking sites like Digg and Reddit, for example.

List posts are a useful framework to hang ideas from, and if you are struggling for inspiration, they are a good way of driving yourself through bloggers’ block. Everyone knows this though, so if you use them too often, you end up looking a mite desperate.

2. Reblogging

A lot of people are bemoaning the large amount of reblogging that goes on these days, but I still think there is a place for it. Effectively, it’s just picking a news item that’s particularly hot, linking to a popular post about it, sticking in a quote from said blog and then maybe adding a line or two of comment at the bottom.

You don’t need to be terribly creative to do this, and it serves a purpose to highlight stories you think are important to your readers. But, if it’s all you do, then you will probably come across as looking pretty pointless. You need to add a little more value now and again.

3. How-tos

How-tos are great, because they can be genuinely useful for your readers. Pick a topic, maybe something you have done yourself recently, and write a run-through of how you did it, with plenty of links and screenshots. Everyone will love you for it, but they take quite a long time to do and require some real dedication - if they were all you did, you’d soon go mad.

4. Summary Posts

These are quite tricky to do well, but can be really good for catching new traffic and generally interesting for everyone. It’s where you take a current news topic, quote a few different sources about it and try and weave your own views in-between. Again, it can take ages to find decent quotes and then come up with something original to say about it all.

5. Random brain dumps

You can get away with these only every once in a while, but they can be pretty entertaining. Say something has been nagging away at you for a little while, well, just start writing about it with no idea where you are ending up. It's just possible that somewhere in your witterings will be a gem or two - but you are likely to be relying on your readers to point them out to you in the comments. These posts are great for starting big "what if..." type conversations and even sparking things to get done or built. However, if all you post is this sort of stream-of-consciousness stuff, the only thing likely to get done is your readers' heads (in).

6. Reviews

I used to do quite a bit of reviewing of new web 2.0 stuff that cropped up, and I really want to start doing it again. Take a new service, explain what it does, compare it to the competition and summarise your thoughts. Dead useful.

7. Asides

Sometimes it just isn't necessary to produce huge screeds of text to make a post useful. It can just be a one liner, or a couple of sentences. [Euan Semple](#) is great at these - just chucking a thought out there and seeing how people react to it. It's possible that microblogging platforms like Twitter are starting to be the best place for stuff like this, but I think it's nice to have a more permanent record, with the structured responses in the comments that you get with a blog.

3. Who are you Blogging For?

A key consideration for a blogger is who the blog is being written for. I am going to try my best throughout this post not to use the word 'audience', because the people that read blogs are more than that, not least because of the interaction they can have through comments and pings from their own blogs. But even if we avoid thinking of the readership - or intended readership - of a blog as an audience, we still need to have an idea of who they are. It might be that a blog is written primarily for the author's purpose, more than anyone else, for example.

It's fair to say, I think, that a log can probably be written for several groups of people, indeed maybe the question is who is this blog *post* for, rather than the entire blog itself. But it might be useful to try and break down the different groups.

1. Blogging for yourself

This doesn't necessarily mean making very private thoughts public - maybe a handwritten diary is best for that kind of thing. But blogs can be used as notebooks, capturing thoughts and ideas so you can return to them later. Again, the blog format, including stuff that appears in the sidebars as well as in actual posts, allows it to become your hub on the web, so you can have in one place your del.icio.us links and flickr photos, say. The blog almost becomes your online scrapbook, but one which you share with the world and welcome their thoughts on - if you have comments turned on, that is!

2. Blogging as 'consultation'

A blog can also be used as a sounding board, putting your writing out there for people to come back to you on, which you may then use for another purpose. A lot of the stuff I write here on blogging, and getting started with other social media and web 2.0 tools is slowly being edited and added to, and one day when I have some time I might try and put it into an e-book format or something. This is a bit like 1, really, as the beneficiary of it is yourself, but if you publish what you do put on your blog with a Creative Commons licence, say, then others can benefit too.

3. Blog your experience to create a niche

There are plenty of niches about, and one way you can carve one out for yourself is to write about an area of expertise that you have, sharing your ideas and good practice with others who do similar stuff. You can soon make your blog the centre of a community of interest in your sector, as you tailor what you write to meet the needs of the people you work with, whether in your organisation or others.

4. Family and friends

It's quite legitimate to use your blog just to communicate what you are up to so that family and friends can keep up to date with your movements. Using photos and video in your blog

means that it will be a fair bit more exciting than your average round-robin letter or email. If your content is good, too, you might pick up some readers who just enjoy what you post, even though they don't know you. Having said that, though, your readership is generally going to be pretty limited if you concentrate all your writing for family and friends!

5. People with the same interests as you

You can use your blog to write film reviews, or book reviews. A [good friend of mine](#) has started a blog doing just that and after a little over a year is now seeing publishing using his reviews on book jackets. Now, it helps that he is a fabulous book reviewer, but the fact that his blog features book reviews and book reviews only means that he attracts an audience of book lovers, ie people who share the same interest as him.

6. People who can help you

You can use your blog to attract the attention of people who can help you achieve something. Say you have a great idea for a web service but no idea how to put it together, well, by blogging about it, interested folk will come across you when Googling and can offer their help. Don't just write one "HELP!" post, but write a few, explaining what you want to do and why, and how you are going about trying to fill the gaps in your knowledge. By making it look like you are making an effort, people will be more likely to help you, and you may well be informing others, too.

7. Future employers

Your blog can become your online CV, and the best thing (actually it could be bad...) about this is that it provides a snapshot of exactly who you are: your interests, your style and your ability to work with different types of media. For example if your CV or application forms claims that you have amazing communication skills, it's fabulous to be able to back that up with a real example, of which a well-written blog is a great one.

4. It's Not Just the Blog

No blog exists within a vacuum, and if you to get the most out of yours, you need to be engaging with other online social services too. Here I run through the essentials.

1. Flickr

[Flickr](#) is a photo hosting and sharing site. What that means is that you can upload photos onto the web, and embed them into your blog posts without having to worry about whether you have them in the right size to suit your blog's theme – Flickr resizes them all for you. You can then link back to the photo's page on Flickr, allowing your readers to see larger versions, for example. You can also tag your photos with keywords that make it easier for people to find them and for you to find similar content uploaded by others.

Flickr is a social network in itself, of course, and therein lies another of its strengths for the blogger. If someone comes across one of your photos through Flickr and likes the look of it, the chances are that they will click a few links and find their way to your blog. Bingo! Another reader.

Along similar lines when it comes to media sharing are [YouTube](#) for video content and [SlideShare](#), which allows you to embed and share PowerPoint presentations.

2. Technorati

[Technorati](#) used to be the number one search engine specifically devoted to blogs, but now it has pretty much been overtaken by the Google juggernaut. Having said that, though, it is still a pretty useful service.

Once you have claimed your blog on Technorati, it lets you track who is linking to you, which is both heart-warming and useful. You can assign tags to your blog, which can help people find you. Other things you can do include putting a little badge on your blog, linking people to your Technorati page and encourages them to mark your blog as a favourite. Other people are then alerted to the act of favouritisation, and so they too are aware of your blog.

It's essentially another service to make your blog more discoverable. And that's a good thing.

3. MyBlogLog

[MyBlogLog](#) is a service from Yahoo! Which helps you both find out a little more about your readers as well as building a bit of community spirit around your blog. It does a number of things: it tracks where people are coming to your blog from, and where they leave it to; it logs members of MyBlogLog and displays their photos on your blog; and it allows people to join a community page for your blog and have discussions with one another.

It's a great way of finding out more about your readers, what they are interested in and what topics, or styles of writing, attract are most popular.

4. Del.icio.us

[Del.icio.us](#) is a social bookmarking service. Rather than just save sites you see as useful to your browser, it allows you to save them to a publicly viewable website. Like Flickr, you can tag your bookmarks, which will help people to find them.

Del.icio.us also lets you integrate its service with your blog. So, you can have a daily posting of the links you have bookmarked that day to your blog. This is a great way of flagging up stuff you think your readers might find interesting but which you don't have an awful lot to add to. You can also have a cloud of your popular tags in your sidebar, so folk can access links you have recommended on a certain topic.

You can also make it easier for your readers to add your posts and pages to del.icio.us too, by including links in each one which they can click to be taken straight through to the del.icio.us site. These can also tell you and your visitors exactly how many people have already bookmarked a particular posts, which is another great way of finding out what's hot on your blog.

5. Twitter

[Twitter](#) is a micro-blogging service, which allows you to post updates on what you are up to that are of up to 140 characters. The limit is important because some people used text messages on their mobile phones to both provide their own and receive updates from others.

Twitter can also be used to inform people of when you have made a new posting to your blog, which is another effective way of publicising your content. Twitter regularly features as the top referring site for DavePress, for example – people do follow the links that appear there.

5. Five Blogging Foundations

Here are five quick fundamental things your blog needs to succeed. Think of it as a distillation of everything that has been written so far. In other words, if you read nothing else, make sure you read this!

1. Authenticity

Your blog has to represent your voice. If you get someone else to write it, or just regurgitate press materials, then your readers will spot it immediately, and won't be impressed. It's your blog, make sure it represents your ideas, and your style.

2. Regularity

You don't have to post three times a day, but it helps if people expect new things from you on a regular basis. You don't want people unsubscribing from your blog, for example, because there hasn't been anything new on it for several weeks. The best position to be in is where people are checking their news readers because they're pretty sure you might have written something. Unless you're regular, that isn't ever going to happen.

3. Responsivity

To keep people interested, you have to respond to their interactions with you. That means replying to their comments as soon as you can, and checking the blogosphere for people writing about similar things to you so you can link to them, or comment on them. By starting a blog, you're joining one of the biggest communities in the world – make sure you are active within it.

4. Integrated

Make your content viewable and usable by everyone, and use social media sharing services to open your stuff up to other people. Make a presence for yourself where other people are, to increase your readership and to add value to your content for others.

5. Longevity

Building a successful blog with a strong readership takes time. You have to stick at it, even if things seem terribly slow to begin with. With time comes experience, and with experience your blog will become better written and therefore more influential. All blogs that are really successful have built that success over time. Not expecting it immediately is a key lesson for the beginner blogger.