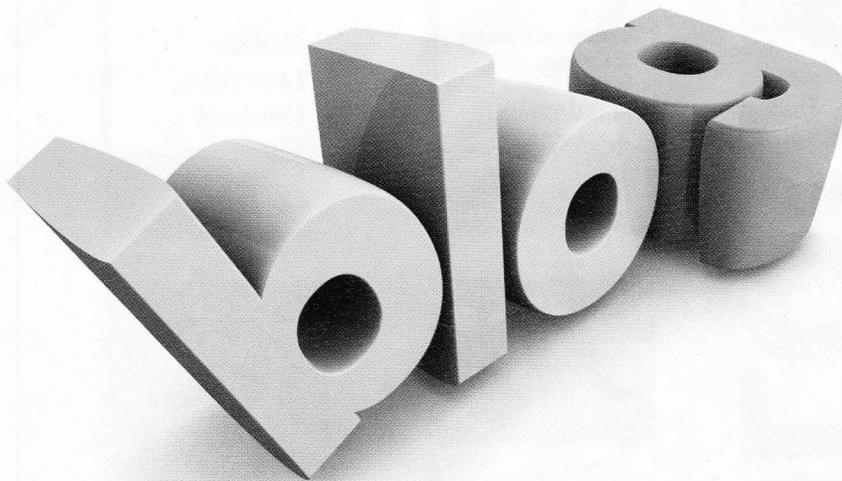


# 10 Tips for the Education Blogger



Blogs in education tend to be much like that famous little girl in the nursery rhyme with the one curl in the middle of her forehead: When they are good, they are very, very good, but when they are bad, they are horrid.

Here are my top 10 tips for educators who want to start a blog:

1. **Choose your URL carefully.** You can change the name of your blog at any time, but the URL you choose at the start of the process is the foundation on which you will build your blogging empire. Keep it short and pithy, and make sure it's something you can live with long term. "SassyTeacherTude.wordpress.com" may seem like a good idea right now, but what if you later decide to use your blog as a parent communication tool? That fun, feisty name has already built online connections but may not be a good fit for future blog plans.
2. **Schedule time several days a week to develop blog posts.** To build an audience and keep them coming back, your blog should be updated at least three times a week. There are infinite blog topics out there for you to address. If you're not doing something interesting, find someone else who is and blog about that. By scheduling times for writing posts, rather than just waiting until inspiration strikes, you ensure a steady stream of fresh content. This is particularly important during the first few months of a blog launch.
3. **Find your voice.** The tone of blog posts is very different than that of an academic paper, casual email to a friend, or piece of journalistic writing. Keep things casual, and let your personality come through. It's okay to use colloquialisms in blog writing that would seem out of place in most written work. A good rule of thumb is to write the way you talk. If it sounds right when you read it out loud, you're likely on the right track for a solid post.
4. **Keep it short.** A journalism teacher of mine once told me that the best pieces were like a woman's skirt—long enough to cover everything and short enough to keep you interested. Inherent sexism of that statement aside, he was right. Most of the posts I write fall in around the 400-word mark. There's no hard-and-fast word-count rule, but the blog format is not for the chronically verbose.
5. **Grammar and spelling count.** Major grammatical errors are distracting to readers and embarrassing for the writer. Even microbloggers need to adhere to the basic rules of the English language. When faced with word limits, many Tweeters will lapse into netspeak or text-message shorthand, but using obscure acronyms without apparent need can confuse the reader.
6. **Links are currency in the blogging world.** If you refer to someone else's thoughts or ideas, link to them. If you mention an article, find the online version and link to it. If you want to talk about a great product you've found, link to the manufacturer's site or the product page on Amazon. Not only will building links into your site help build your blog network, but you improve the reader experience as well. People navigate the web through impulsive clicks. By providing links, your blog can become a starting point for further topic exploration.
7. **The first step to starting an education blog is to listen.** There is a vast and active education blogger community on the web. Find out

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what they're talking about so you know how you can contribute. The weekly Twitter #edchat, held every Tuesday at noon and 7 p.m. EST, is a great way to get to know the topics of interest to web-savvy educators. Edublogs is also a great starting point if you're looking for other education bloggers or want a safe, secure platform to build your own web presence.

8. **Be clear about who you are and why you're blogging.** If you are blogging as an individual, make it clear both in your introductory post and in your "About Me" section that all blog content represents your personal opinions and are not reflective of the positions of your school or employer. This won't completely cover your back if you go off the deep end and

truly offend with your blog, but at least you've made it clear that your blog is not the official voice of the organization you work for.

9. **A blog is not a monologue.** Your first thought should always be, "What's in it for the reader?" Completely self-serving posts isolate your readers rather than embrace them. A blog is a dialogue. As a blogger, you are part of a much larger community of communicators. Think of jumping into the online world as walking into a party where you don't know anyone. Work the room, figure out the tone of the event, and find your niche. Once established as a friendly, polite, and eager guest, you'll find that other education bloggers are more than ready to welcome you into the fold.

10. **Have fun with your blog.** If you don't enjoy blogging, you won't be able to maintain the activity long term. Blogging is a huge time commitment. Choose a blog topic you're passionate about, and you'll find numerous opportunities to grow your professional learning network and expand your interest. But if you're dipping a toe into blogging with only lukewarm interest in a topic, don't be surprised if your blog goes days, then weeks, and finally months between updates. If it's not enjoyable, it's probably not worth doing.

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