

Academic Blogging Guidelines

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Welcome to academic blogging. Here is a set of principles and guidelines to get you up and going quickly with blogging. Note that technical details such as how to post are not included. It is assumed you can find online tutorials for these basic steps.

PLATFORM

If a blog has not been assigned within a given platform, then choose a blogging platform to suit you. Good possibilities are Blogger, Wordpress, and Tumblr. Consult Google or YouTube for information on setting up a blog.

ETHOS

Your character is what you are building through your blogging. You need to be personal and let people know who you are. They will trust you and be interested in you if you tell them candidly a bit (appropriately) about yourself. Your content reveals your character, and people will connect with this. Find ways to link your ideas with your life. (At a certain point your content may become more formal as it is developed, but start more personally).

NO MONOBLOGGING

Monoblogging is using the blog to speak but not to listen or interact. Budget time in your blogging to read and respond to others, to search for people to broaden your personal learning network, and to read and research topics to which you can link and upon which you can comment. Your blog is not a place to deposit content and walk away; it is a social platform that allows for interaction.

COMMENTING

If you are not commenting and interacting in discussions, you are not yet really blogging. Some of your blog posts will naturally come about as a response to other's posts. Sometimes, it is while writing a longer comment that you realize that this is actually the subject of an independent post. Commenting on others' posts is showing interest and commitment to others and they will generally reciprocate. You must cultivate responses by being a good responder to others.

FREQUENCY & INFORMALITY

Academic writing is typically formal and long; online writing is typically briefer and less formal. Success in blogging is correlated more to brief, regular content being posted and discussed (rather than infrequent, more formal, longer pieces that are less consumed and discussed).

TITLE

Give each blog post a meaningful title. This might be a summary or a hint about the blog post content, or a teaser of some kind. Do not make your blog posts titled “Assignment #4” or anything like that. Give your titles meaning, even when the posts are casual.

LENGTH

Use the length of a screen for a rough estimate as to how long a blog post should be. Note: One may certainly go longer than this, but this should be treated as content unlikely to be read by most who browse the blog.

THE JUMP BREAK

For content that exceeds about a screen’s worth of length, use the jump break to indicate to a reader to click in order to read more. Then, make sure that you front load your content so that the essence of your blog post is all covered “above the fold” in the first screen’s worth of content.

TAGS / LABELS

Every blog post should include metadata (data about data) in the form of tags or labels. In the Blogger platform that can be found on the right side when in the editing mode. Use “posted by [your first name” as one of the labels for every post you write (minus the quotation marks), and your team’s name once you’ve been give that. Try to use meaningful keywords as part of each post.

DESIGN

If you have your own blog, then attend to the visual design of the blog as a whole, including the presence and arrangement of a banner, widgets, etc. If you are only concerned about designing an individual blog post, follow these principles:

- **FONT and COLORS.** Use a legible font. Be careful about playing too much with fonts, and don’t use a color of font that makes it hard to read against the background. A dark color of letters against a light background will show better than light letters against a dark background. A dim font against a dark background is not good.
- **TABS and SPACING**
Do not use tabs to begin paragraphs, and use a space between paragraphs (but not too many spaces)
- **IMAGES**
Try to use at least one image in a blog post. Be sure that you [search creative commons](#) for images that are available to be used free of charge provided you give attribution for your source. You may also consider creating your own illustrations or images. Be careful not to let this part take over too much of your time. When using images, consider including a caption. The caption can be where you give attribution for creative commons licensed images, or where you can connect the image to the content of your post. When using multiple images, space these across the post and consider alternating placement on the left or right sides.
- **BREAKS**

Create frequent breaks and avoid the “wall of text” phenomenon. This may mean USING BULLETED OR NUMBERED LISTS, or perhaps a BLOCKQUOTE. You can bring in additional images or embed videos, too.

- **FORMATTING**

Use the “preview” function to examine your post before posting it. Watch to see if there are problems like line spacing or font size differences. If you have created your post in a word processor and copied the text over to Blogger, you likely carried with you formatting codes that will not be consistent with the blog. One way to prevent this is to use the “remove formatting” tool inside blogger. It is an icon on the bar that looks like a large T with a red X in the bottom corner. Highlight whatever you have imported and click on that button to remove formatting.

LINKS

Link to related content, in part to increase the design quality of your blog and in part to take people to valuable content outside of your blog. Get in the habit of linking back to your own content or to that of other students (and outsiders)

COHERENCE & CONTEXT

Remember that you should prepare for readers to come across each of your blog posts cold -- with no memory or even acquaintance with any of your other thoughts or writing. Just as in standard writing topic sentences are needed to orient readers and connect parts of the argument, blog posts need to point continuously to your prior posts (and use other kinds of links, too). And unlike regular academic writing, where context is brought in through an introduction, each blog post bears the burden of introducing the topic afresh. This can be done efficiently through a paraphrase or a quick link back to a prior post where you already introduced your topic at more length. Always ask yourself, *if someone stumbled across just this one post, have I given them enough information and connections (links) to make sense of what this post is doing?*

GENRES OF BLOG POSTS

There are many types of blog posts that you can create:

- the photo essay
- the brief editorial
- the embedded video + commentary
- the annotated bibliography
- curated set of content of any topic or medium
- outline for a paper
- draft pages or sections of a prospective paper
- correspondence with others relative to advancing your topic (emails, screenshots of social proof from various sources]
- altruistic research done on behalf of another’s topic
- a biography / autobiography / selfie

- a rant or a manifesto
- personal narratives