

# BLOGS IN EDUCATION



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## What is a Blog?

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A blog (or weblog) is a website in which items are posted and displayed with the newest at the top. Like other media, blogs often focus on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news. Some blogs function as online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. Since its appearance in 1995, blogging has emerged as a popular means of communication, affecting public opinion and mass media around the world.

Blogs can be hosted by dedicated blog hosting services, or they can be run using blog software on regular web hosting services.

## BLOG BASICS

The term blog is a blend of the terms web and log, leading to web log, weblog, and finally blog. Authoring a blog, maintaining a blog or adding an article to an existing blog is called blogging. Individual articles on a blog are called “blog posts,” “posts” or “entries”. A person who posts these entries is called a blogger.

A blog entry typically consists of the following:

- Title - main title, or headline, of the post.
- Body - main content of the post.
- Comments - comments added by readers
- Permalink - the URL of the full, individual article.
- Post Date - date and time the post was published.

A blog entry optionally includes the following:

- Categories (or tags) - subjects that the entry discusses
- Trackback - links to other sites that refer to the entry

A blog site typically contains a list of links, or blogroll, of other blogs that the blog author reads or affiliates with.

## HOW BLOGS DIFFER FROM TRADITIONAL SITES

A blog has certain attributes that distinguish it from a standard web page. It allows for easy creation of new pages: new data are entered into a simple form (usually with the title, the category, and the body of the article) and then submitted. Automated templates take care of adding the article to the home page, creating the new full article page (Permalink), and adding the article to the appropriate date- or category-based archive. It allows for easy filtering of content for various presentations: by date, category, author, or other attributes. It allows the administrator to invite and add other authors, whose permission and access are easily managed.

## How Do I Create a Blog?

### TWO SYSTEMS FOR BLOGGING

There are two systems to look at when considering setting up your own blog. They are user-hosted blogs and developer-hosted blogs. With a user-hosted blog, you, the user, installs the blogging software on a server of your own design. You are the administrator of the software and hardware required to run the blog, in addition to being the blogger. With a developer-hosted blog, someone else administrates the hardware and software required to run the blog. You, as the blogger, fill out a few simple forms and you are up and running.

### HOW BLOGS ARE MADE

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

A variety of different systems are used to create and maintain blogs. Dedicated server-based systems can eliminate the need for bloggers to manage this software. With web interfaces, these systems allow travelers to blog from anywhere on the Internet, and allow users to create blogs without having to maintain their own server. Such systems allow users to work with tools such as Ecto, Elicit and w.bloggar which allow users to maintain their Web-hosted blog without the need to be online while composing or editing posts. Blog creation tools and blog hosting are also provided by some Web hosting companies (Tripod), Internet service providers (America Online), online publications (Salon.com) and internet portals (Yahoo! 360° or Google). Some advanced users have developed custom blogging systems from scratch using server-side software, and often implement membership management and password protected areas. Others have created blogs using wiki software, such as the Wikimedia platform. <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog#How\\_blogs\\_are\\_made](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog#How_blogs_are_made)>

## STEPS FOR STARTING A BLOG ON A DEVELOPER-HOSTED SYSTEM

The easiest system to get started with is the developer-hosted system. Once you pick your hosting system there are usually four simple steps to complete.

1. Create an account
2. Name your blog
3. Choose a template
4. Write and Submit your first Post

For each step, the service provider will guide you through the process of filling out the basic online forms necessary to get started. Some services are free. Others require payment for some or all of the functions of that service. For ease of use and because of its popularity, we recommend starting your first blog on Blogger, <http://www.blogger.com>.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED USING BLOGS IN THE CLASSROOM

It is suggested that before you ask your students to read blogs and start blogging, that you do so first. This way you have a solid understanding of the process and can model the behavior you want your students to exhibit. With that said here are some suggestions of how to grow blogging into your class:

1. Start your own blog on any subject you choose and update it regularly. Become a blogger
2. Start small.
3. Start a class blog with simple announcements, homework assignments, and external links.
4. Ask students to read other blogs. Start by supplying a subject related list and review them with your students.
5. Ask students to respond to posts on your own blog.
6. Have students create and maintain a group blog.
7. Ask each student to start and maintain their own blog on a subject of their interest that is pertinent to the class.

# Pedagogy & Blogging

## BENEFITS

Potential benefits as identified by learning specialists Fernette and Brock Eide's and cited by Will Richardson in *Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts, and Other Powerful Webtools for Classrooms*.

- Can Promote Critical and analytical thinking
- Can Promote Creative, Intuitive and Associational thinking
- Can Promote Analogical thinking
- Potential for increased access and exposure to quality information
- Combination of solitary and social interaction.

## USES

Following is an extensive list of ideas of how to use blogs in the classroom, excerpted from Anne Davis's *EduBlog Insights*.

### **You might like to create a reflective, journal type blog to...**

- reflect on your teaching experiences.
- keep a log of teacher-training experiences.
- write a description of a specific teaching unit.
- describe what worked for you in the classroom or what didn't work.
- provide some teaching tips for other teachers.
- write about something you learned from another teacher.
- explain teaching insights you gain from what happens in your classes.
- share ideas for teaching activities or language games to use in the classroom.
- provide some how-to's on using specific technology in the class, describing how you used this technology in your own class.
- explore important teaching and learning issues.

### **You might like to start a class blog to...**

- post class-related information such as calendars, events, homework assignments and other pertinent class information.
- post assignments based on literature readings and have students respond on their own weblogs, creating a kind of portfolio of their work.
- communicate with parents if you are teaching elementary school students.
- post prompts for writing.
- provide examples of classwork, vocabulary activities, or grammar games.
- provide online readings for your students to read and react to.
- gather and organize Internet resources for a specific course, providing links to appropriate sites and annotating the links as to what is relevant about them.
- post photos and comment on class activities.
- invite student comments or postings on issues in order to give them a writing voice.
- publish examples of good student writing done in class.
- show case student art, poetry, and creative stories.
- create a dynamic teaching site, posting not only class-related information, but also activities, discussion topics, links to additional information about topics they are studying in class, and readings to inspire learning.
- create a literature circle.
- create an online book club.
- make use of the commenting feature to have students publish messages on topics being used to develop language skills.
- ask students to create their own individual course blogs, where they can post their own ideas, reactions and written work.
- post tasks to carry out project-based learning tasks with students.
- build a class newsletter, using student-written articles and photos they take.
- link your class with another class somewhere else in the world

**You can encourage your students (either on your weblog using the comments feature or on their own weblogs) to blog...**

- their reactions to thought-provoking questions.
- their reactions to photos you post.
- journal entries.
- results of surveys they carry out as part of a class unit.
- their ideas and opinions about topics discussed in class.

**You can have your students create their own weblogs to...**

- learn how to blog
- complete class writing assignments.
- create an ongoing portfolio of samples of their writing.
- express their opinions on topics you are studying in class.
- write comments, opinions, or questions on daily news items or issues of interest.
- discuss activities they did in class and tell what they think about them (You, the teacher, can learn a lot this way!).
- write about class topics, using newly-learned vocabulary words and idioms.
- showcase their best writing pieces.

**You can also ask your class to create a shared weblog to...**

- complete project work in small groups, assigning each group a different task.
- showcase products of project-based learning.
- complete a WebQuest.

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