

More Blog Tips

I wrote this article as a handout for a presentation. Some of the material is covered in my other blogging article, but this is a nice tip sheet to print out if you're interested in starting a blog.

Pros and Cons of Blogging:

Pros:

- To build a platform (a platform is any avenue you promote yourself as a writer)
- If editors or agents do an online search for you (and they will), it shows them you're willing and able to promote yourself. It also displays your writing skill, your voice, and your dedication.
- Instant gratification—someone's reading your work!
- If you make an effort, you can connect with many wonderful writers. Blogging can provide a supportive network.
- If you post regularly, you will nourish your voice, your values, and you'll be able to determine what people are interested in.
- It can help you see yourself as a serious, committed writer when you advertise your writing to the world.

Cons:

- Time consuming
- If editors or agents do an online search for you (and they will), it could show them you **aren't** willing to promote yourself if you don't post regularly. If you don't edit your work or just throw something down, it may reflect a lack of writing skills and a lack of dedication.
- It takes a long time to build a readership, and it takes work. Don't expect to write something and magically have people find you. You will have to make an effort with other bloggers by commenting on their blogs, getting on a blog carnival, or guest posting on someone else's blog.
- If your time is limited, your blogging time can take over and prevent you from writing your books.

So should *you* blog?

If you have limited time and already struggle with writing on a schedule, I'd recommend putting your energy elsewhere. Facebook and Twitter are valid ways to build a platform. Or set up a leave-alone website to show editors and agents your writing credentials.

Do editors and agents expect you to blog?

It depends on who you talk to. Every editor and agent will say first and foremost—write your book. Get your craft to the highest level. Self-promotion won't sell your book if your writing isn't stellar. However, in this crowded market, there are plenty of good writers. Some agents have recently posted on their blogs that they don't seriously

consider projects by new writers who don't have a solid platform in place. Other agents judge only the book. Research your dream agents and editors. If a platform is important to them, you may want to get a head start now.

Tips on starting a blog:

- Pick an easy to use service such as Blogger or WordPress. Both are free, simple to set-up, and extremely accessible. You can add things to improve your traffic like a blog roll, your Facebook and Twitter pages, links to your website, pictures, etc...
- When you sign up, you will have to pick the URL directing readers to your blog. Use the name you will be writing under, whether it's your real name or a pen name. Why? Readers Google their favorite authors. Make it easy for them to find you. Don't be tempted for something vague like <http://fabwriter.blogspot.com>. Your blog URL should look something like this: <http://jillkemerer.blogspot.com>
- After you pick your template, you'll need to decide on your blog name. I recommend prominently displaying your name in the header, followed by your brand or the genre books you write. In a separate box, you can write the theme of your blog. Example:

Jill Kemerer (*name*)

Sweet, Emotional, Sparkling Romance (*brand*)

Motivation and Encouragement for Your Day (*theme*)

- Decide on a theme. Will you post about your writing journey? Writing tips? Things that interest you? Your daily routine?
Caution: Keep It Entertaining! People do not want to read a boring journal, and there are hundreds of blogs sharing writing tips. You don't have to reinvent the wheel, but if you want people to come back, entertain them and engage them.
- Layout tips:
 - Light background with dark text is easiest on the eyes
 - If you have a website, carry over the colors, pictures, and themes for visual Connection.
 - When setting the layout, keep the most important permanent extras toward the top of the page. I recommend this order: your profile, your picture, link to your website, Follow button, Subscribe to Feed, Facebook/Twitter links, Archives, blog rolls, your favorite links, any extras, like blog awards, last.
- Length and Frequency
- Post a minimum of once a week, preferably four to seven times a week. I started out writing once a week, but now write three times each week. It works for me, but many bloggers write every weekday and some post every day. If you don't post on a regular basis, you will not attract and keep readers. You'll look unprofessional if an agent/editor does an online search and sees that your last post was three months ago.
- Consider writing all of your posts for the week at the same time, editing them a day or two later, and scheduling them for the following week. It

- saves time, energy, and ensures you're putting out your best work.
- Posts can be long or short, but 500 words is optimum. Break up writing into short paragraphs, and highlight phrases in bold font. Add pictures for visual interest. Leave plenty of white space and try to avoid unnecessary clutter.
 - Tracking your progress
 - Google Analytics is a free service which tracks your visitors, page views, the country of origin, and where the visitors find you from. I highly recommend it.
 - The vast majority of people reading a blog do not leave comments. I think it's scary for people to leave an opinion online. Encourage them to interact with you by asking questions. Respond to their comments if you have time. When someone does leave a comment, check out their profile and see if they also have a blog. Be kind; leave a comment on their blog. If they don't have one but do have an e-mail address, e-mail them a thank-you. If there is no way to contact them, simply respond to their comment with a thank you.
 - Recently, I came across a statistic that up to 84% of people who come across your blog URL do not read the post, but just seeing your URL on a regular basis subliminally builds author name recognition and sells your books. Amazing!

Blogging is a time-consuming business. You need to be dedicated, post regularly, and edit your work before publishing. It can take months, even years, to build a solid readership. Some writers get so caught up in blogging, their books take a backseat. Always remember your focus is on getting published. What's going to get you published? Writing a blog or writing books? If you're comfortable doing both, by all means do.

I find blogging very rewarding. Who doesn't love having people enthusiastically respond to their writing? I started out blogging to build a platform, but I've gotten so much more out of it than a statistic to tell an agent. I've made good friends, even formed a critique group with a few fellow bloggers, and I've learned a valuable lesson about promotion.

It's not about YOU.
It's about your READERS.

Be accessible, be considerate, and be entertaining!

For more articles, go to www.jillkemerer.com/articles

Copyright. Jill Kemerer. 2009. All Rights Reserved.