

# **Five Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Start a Blog**

It seems every aspiring author has a blog these days, and why not? They're free, a fantastic way to promote your writing, and relatively simple to set-up. If you're considering starting your own blog, here are five things to think about.

## **1. Why do I want a blog?**

Many writers start a blog out of peer pressure or as a shortcut. They see other writers blogging and they feel left behind, or they think it's a fast track to get noticed by agents and editors. There are several valid reasons to blog, but jumping on the blog bandwagon because everyone is doing it or counting on agents and editors to find yours will only disappoint you.

Here are a few good reasons to start a blog:

- It promotes you as a writer.
- It's a platform tool to reach potential readers.
- It will build your writing skills.
- It shows agents and editors you're able to promote your work.
- It can be a social network to interact with other writers and readers.

For a blog to enhance your reputation, you will have to put effort into it. It needs to look professional, be updated often, and provide readers with interesting content. A blog is an interactive tool that needs care. It's not a website that can be left alone.

## **2. What will I write about?**

Maybe a better question to ask: who is my audience? It can be tempting to share every detail of your life on a blog, but your mother, your pastor, and a teenager over in Scotland all have access to the Internet and all can read your blog. What information do you want the entire world to know? You're basically sharing a bit of yourself, your values and ideals on your blog, but it can be as personal or impersonal as you'd like.

Every blog should have a theme. My theme is Motivation and Encouragement from One Writer to Another. Spend time thinking about what your message is. It should reflect your personality and the writing you intend to publish. A blog about plant identification will not help you sell your Regency romance novel.

It may take time to discover your theme. If you aren't certain what your blog should be about, that's okay. Post regularly and your voice will become clear. You'll realize your writing conveys your wit, sarcasm, or encouragement, and your style will loosen up. Your theme will jump out at you when you've blogged for a few months.

As far as content, write down a list of topics you could post about. Take it a step further and jot ideas for each month of the year. Some bloggers share their music lists, favorite movies, or cherished recipes. Some write informative articles or they review books. Others write personal journals chronicling their writing journey. One word of caution on the personal journal: keep it interesting. If you can't make your daily chores sound entertaining, don't write about them. You don't want to bore your readers.

Play to your strengths and nourish your voice—that's what will bring readers back for more.

### **3. How often will I post?**

Decide in advance how often you will post on your blog. If you're intimidated, start by posting once a week. No, you won't get oodles of followers this way, but you will gain confidence in your skills. It's important to find your comfort zone before you worry about site traffic.

If you're pumped up about blogging, go ahead and post more often. Frequent updates attract readers. Many bloggers post every day of the week. Some write every weekday. I post three times a week on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. It works for me. Find out what works for you by experimenting.

The number one complaint I hear from writers who've been blogging for less than a year is they started out posting every day then ran out of ideas and stopped for long periods of time. What do you think readers want more—a great blog with posts every day for two months then nothing for weeks or great posts twice a week every week of the year? Be consistent. If you stop posting, you'll lose readers. It's okay to take a few weeks off if necessary, but let your readers know when you'll be posting again so they'll come back.

I also strongly recommend you write your posts at least a day in advance. This gives you time to edit. You don't want to post sloppy work. Take time to put your best work on your blog. Writing your posts in advance is also a great way to avoid long breaks between posts because you can schedule them.

### **4. How much blogging knowledge do I have?**

When you start a blog, there is a learning curve. You have to sign up for a service (such as Blogger or Wordpress), decide on a URL, pick out a template, play around with the layout, and figure out how to post. It can be stressful, but it's very fun and rewarding. Don't worry; your blog service will have a guide to get you started and an extensive help section.

If you don't know the first thing about blogging, start small and add bells and whistles as you go. Don't worry about learning everything in three days; you'll just stress yourself out. You can use an easy to set up template from a site such as [www.thecutestblogontheblock.com](http://www.thecutestblogontheblock.com), [www.shabbyblogs.com](http://www.shabbyblogs.com), or <http://btemplates.com>.

When you become comfortable with blogging basics, you'll naturally desire to expand on your skills. You'll wonder how you can add great photos and links to your site. A quick Internet search will show tons of blogs with detailed posts on these subjects.

One more note: the address people type in to get to your blog is the URL. It will look something like [yourblog.blogspot.com](http://yourblog.blogspot.com) or [yourblog.wordpress.com](http://yourblog.wordpress.com), depending on which service you use. My blog URL is <http://jillkemerer.blogspot.com>. When you sign up with a service, include the name you want to be published under in your URL. This means either your real name or your pen name. Why? Readers Google author names, so it will make your blog easy to find when you're published.

## **5. How will I know if blogging is for me?**

Blogging takes time and dedication. It takes a long time to build a readership. If you already struggle to find time to write, I wouldn't recommend starting a blog. However, if you're looking for a way to build a platform and gain a web presence, go ahead and invest the time. An excellent article by Rob Eager—[The Dangers of Blogging](#)—might help you decide.

If you decide to start a blog, you might notice an unexplainable shift in your attitude after you've posted regularly for a few months. The terror of starting a blog gives way to a feeling of accomplishment. You no longer sweat over every word you write; you trust yourself, especially since you're writing in advance and allowing time to edit. You also feel terrific about sticking to your schedule.

Who doesn't love to feel confident? I do!

Confidence will prod you to promote yourself. When you reach the point where you feel comfortable blogging, you'll look for ways to attract readers. You'll visit other writer's blogs and leave comments. You'll want to make your site more visual, and you'll include more links. You might even add a statistics program to track your visitors.

Curiosity didn't kill the cat—it made your blog go from amateur to awesome!

## **Final Thoughts**

A blog can be a terrific promotional tool for unpublished authors. Don't make the mistake of thinking promotion is only for published authors. Everything you release to the public, including a blog, is a promotion of yourself.

Whether you want to get published ASAP, or sometime in the distant future, you will have to submit your work to editors or agents to reach that goal. When nothing you've written has been published, having a blog and website can increase your odds of getting an editor or agent to take a chance on you.

I include my website and my blog address in my letterhead whenever I query. Even if the editor doesn't look at my website or blog, she knows I'm web-savvy. If the editor does look at my blog, she'll see an archive of posts. She'll know I post every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and deduce I can handle deadlines and am dedicated to my craft. She'll also get an idea of my voice, my writing style, and my skill level in regards to writing mechanics.

I'm positive these will only help a new author's career. If an editor is undecided between two equal projects, I believe the author with promotional tools in place would edge out the other one. Promotion is a big part of the business; make an editor's job easy and learn about it before you get published.

**What are you waiting for? Go out there and start a blog!**