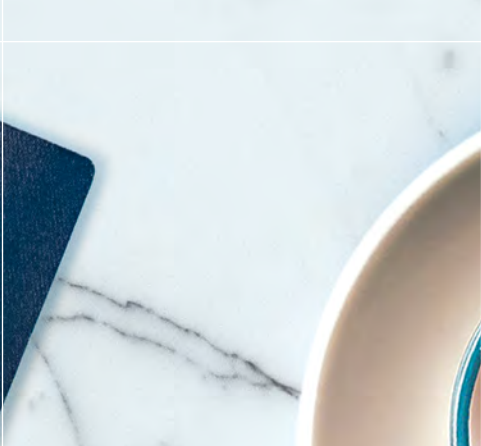
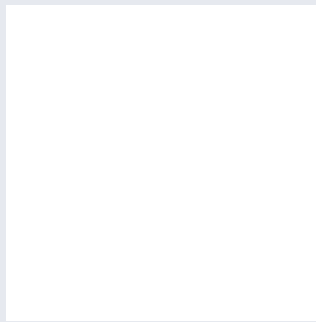
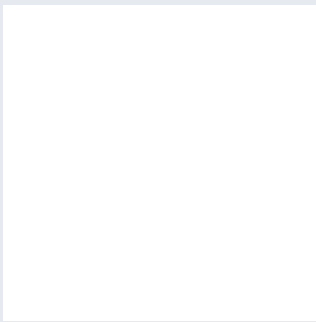
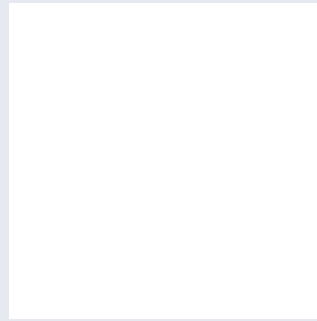
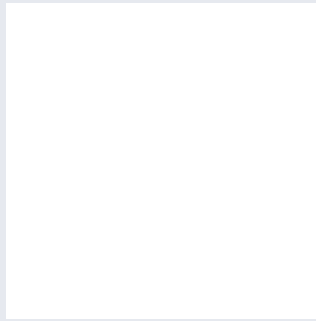
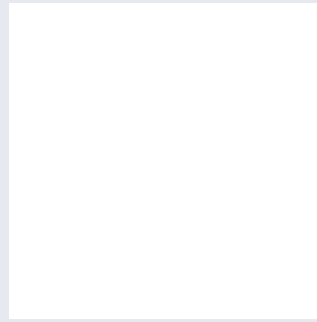
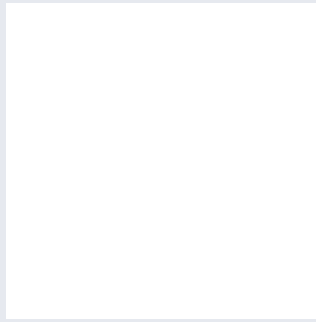


Blogger **PLAYBOOK**

A GUIDE FROM THE BLUEPRINT SERIES



 bluehost



Bluehost was founded in 2003 with one goal: to make a better hosting company. Built on open source technology, it's since grown to become one of the world's largest cloud-based online solutions providers focused on small and medium-sized businesses. Its experts confidently guide users towards a successful web presence, and its platform now powers millions of websites across the globe, serving the needs of small businesses, bloggers, WordPress devotees, entrepreneurs, and more.

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WELCOME TO THE

Blogger
PLAYBOOK

A GUIDE FROM THE BLUEPRINT SERIES

From idea to blog, we've put together some highly informative content to help you create a blog worthy of monetizing and sharing with the world.

Blogging has become one of the easiest and most popular ways to create an online presence and build a name for yourself. It can help you showcase your brand and develop your own unique voice and tone through content that is dynamic and a compelling read for your existing or would-be followers.

This guide has everything you need to start you on this fun and exciting journey.

PART ONE

Creating a Winning Blog

In the first part of this guide, there are some amazing insights from influencers and professional bloggers on must-know topics such as developing a brand and marketing your blog with social media and search engine optimization (SEO).

You'll also find some helpful tips on one of the main focuses of this guide: monetization. The expert advice offered here will certainly get you started on how to go from just a social blogger to a revenue maker.

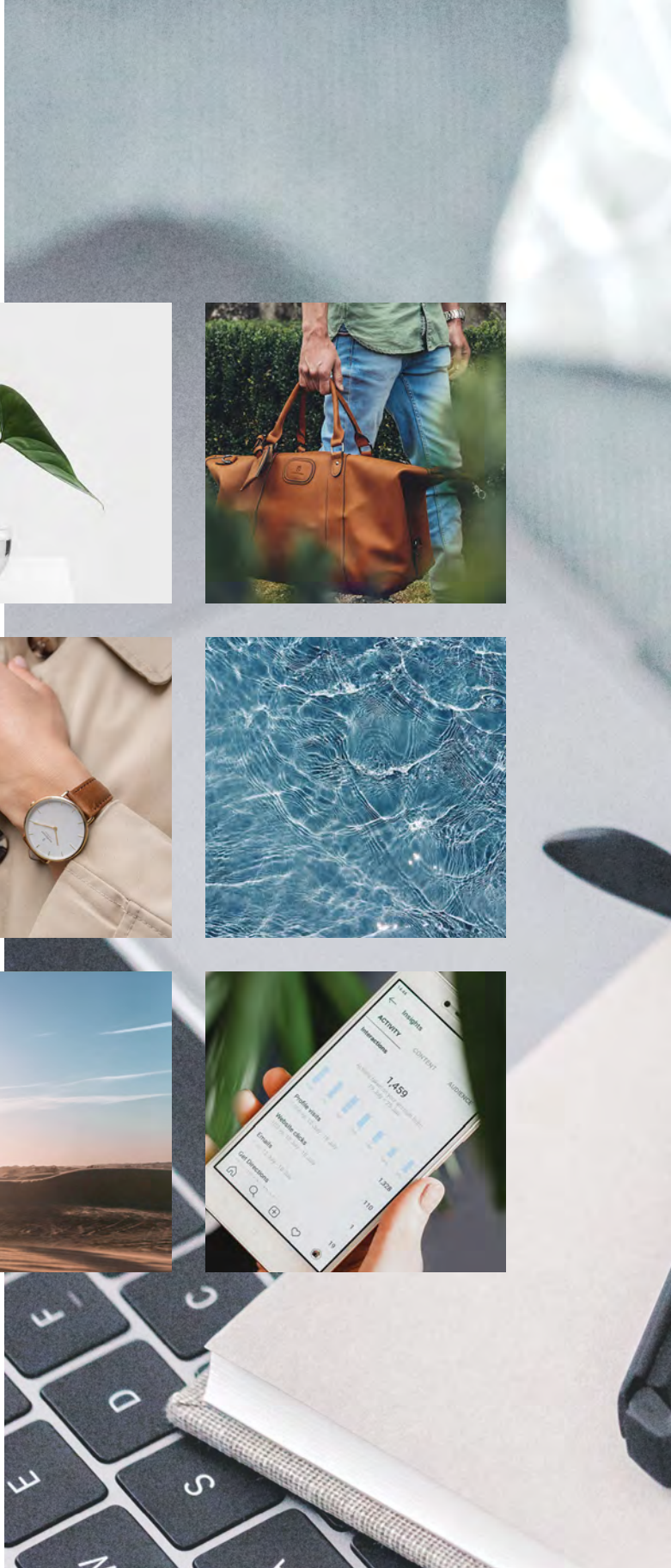
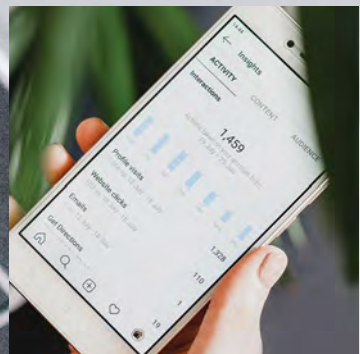
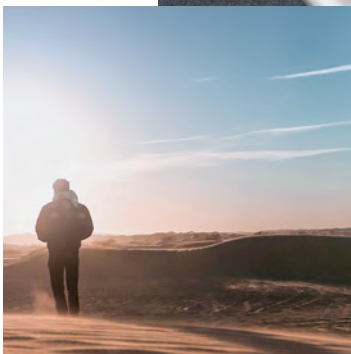
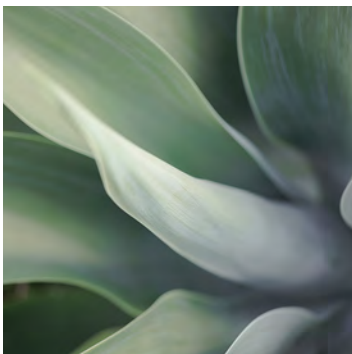
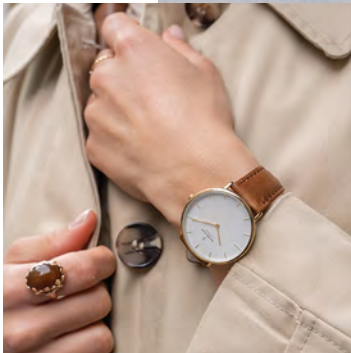


PART TWO

Blogger Insight & Inspiration

In Part Two, you'll meet four niche bloggers who are already pros at everything that we talk about in Part One. They are established influencers and here to share priceless experience-based tips on how they mastered the blogging basics — and then went on to generate revenue from their blogs.

They share personal stories on how they started out and then how they went on to build strong followings of thousands and thousands of readers. Whether they are blogging about food, travel, family, or lifestyle topics, you'll discover not only tools that are commonly valued by almost all of these influencers but also unique tips that can accelerate your own individual approach to blogging success.





PART ONE

Creating a Winning Blog







Branding a Blog

WITH GEORGIA GRACE PENDLETON

[@bygeorgiagrace](#)

Let's talk about branding

**I've heard the word a million times, and quite frankly,
I wasn't super interested in researching it any further initially.**

For me, the word "branding" conjured images of boring corporate logos, big box retailers, and the golden arches of McDonald's. Little did I know at the time that there's so much more to branding than just logos, mascots, taglines, and jingles. And not only is there so much more to branding, but as soon as you even begin to think about starting a blog, you're already wading knee-deep into branding territory.

The first thing to note is that it's never too late to develop a coherent brand. But, it's definitely easier if you come out of the gate armed with specific ideas and direction for developing your very own brand identity.



Your name speaks volumes about you, or rather, in my opinion, it should speak volumes about you and your brand.

Here's how it might start

One day, you're scrolling through Instagram, looking at your favorite influencers and feeling mildly to extremely annoyed, or even jealous, about all the free things they're getting and their enviable jet-setting lifestyles. Then the thought pops into your head, "You know what? I should start a blog!"

What's the very next thought that pops into your head? Well, I can tell you what popped into mine: "What would I call it?" After I had that thought, I was completely useless at work for the rest of the day. I literally spent more than five hours running through endless permutations of names I thought could totally be the name of a top fashion influencer's blog that would have good staying power when my 23-year-old self eventually morphed into my 33-year-old self.

At the end of that day, I was sort of embarrassed that I had spent so many hours musing about such a seemingly superficial subject. But in retrospect, I should've been patting myself on the back. Because what could be more important to a brand's identity than its name? Nothing. Maybe the logo in some cases. But basically nothing.



Your personal brand is ... personal!

For my platform, I chose the most literal name possible: **By Georgia Grace**. As in, “Here’s something I wrote / photographed / produced ... it’s by me.” Essentially, the name “By Georgia Grace” is a signature. It says, “I’ve curated this. I’ve made this. This is my work, and it represents something I’m proud to sign my name to.” And all of that is 100% true in terms of my brand values.



On my platform, I focus primarily on luxury products.

I am interested in highlighting rare, excellent, and beautiful products and experiences that are the best in their respective categories. When I highlight a brand, product, or experience that isn't in the luxury category, you can darn well be sure that I've vetted it and feel it represents quality or some high level of value for myself and my readers.

You can also go the route of something more whimsical and less literal.

Local Milk, Beth Kirby, doesn't write literally about milk that is local (although sometimes she actually does ... she's super into raw milk), but her platform is all about slow living, local stuff, and wabi-sabi values.

Honey & Silk, Stephanie Liu Hjelmeseth, who is a personal friend of mine, shares about all things beauty, style, home, parenting, and lifestyle on her blog. The first time I laid eyes on her feed, I felt like the silky textures and honey hues that abounded were a perfect embodiment of her platform's name.

Then there are unique names imbued with meaning which become a critical part of an influencer's brand identity based on the association with that person. Ever heard of Love Taza? If you haven't, you almost certainly cannot guess what that person's blog is all about. “Taza” in Spanish translates into cups, so could this website be about cups? Once you've glanced at Naomi Davis' website or Instagram, you'll always associate the name “Taza” with the bright, colorful, cheery and joyful family of seven living large in NYC.



The bottom line

WHEN IT COMES TO CHOOSING A NAME

MEMORABLE

Try to choose something that has a ring to it that will stick in someone's mind (in a good way). It's best if it's not too long. Be careful with using foreign languages as well, which might be tough for people to remember if they're trying to type your name into their web search bar or Instagram.

ENDURING

Is it a name that you can envision yourself enjoying for years to come? You could always rebrand later, but if you can pick something that seems like it will stand the test of time, that's the safest bet.

MEANINGFUL

Pick a name that has a meaning associated with it, preferably one that speaks to what your blog is going to be about.

AVAILABLE

Nothing's more annoying than when practical concerns impinge on creative ones. If that awesome name you came up with isn't available as a website domain name or as a handle on Instagram, you could use a different ending like .co or .me, or add other characters to the name on Instagram. But in many cases, it's best to just scrub the idea and go back to your search until you find one that has an available domain and Instagram handle.

A domain name is the gateway to you

Speaking of domain names ... let's pause to chat about what those are for a second.



A domain is your online address — it's how people find your website online.

They can be fanciful or transparently descriptive, used for everything from a personal blog to a large company's website, and having one or more is essential for being visible in a crowded online world. After registering a domain name, it becomes your public address on the Internet, and the gateway to accessing the blog attached to that name.

Domain names are just like a contact in your phone. Rather than typing a complicated set of numbers (the IP address) into your browser, you type in a domain name. That domain name is human-friendly and much easier to remember than an IP address.

Choosing a domain name:

DO'S

- Be creative
- Reflect your brand or business
- Keep it short
- See if it's available on your preferred social platforms

DON'TS

- Don't use numbers
- Don't use hyphens
- Don't use special characters
- Don't use long names





Your photography matters

This is the big one. Photography is your blog's — and your brand's — primary asset. In the highly visual world of Instagram and Pinterest, your photographs can make you or relegate you to the realm of mediocrity. I might be exaggerating a little bit, but for most people, this is totally true.



ESTABLISHING YOUR LOOK

First things first: You need to decide what your aesthetic is.

What “look” do you want for your social feed? Sharply contrasting, moody frames like @happilygrey? Bold colors and simple backdrops that highlight your outfits like @blaireadiebee? Lots of bright color with lower contrast like @taramilktea? Creamy beiges and neutrals like @audreyrivet?

The aesthetic that you choose for your photos will be a defining factor in the overall feel and vibe of your brand. Choose something that speaks to your tastes and style.

EXECUTING A UNIQUE AESTHETIC

Your next step is figuring out how to achieve it.

The easiest way that many people choose is through the use of photo presets. A photo preset is a configuration of settings, designed to achieve a certain look or style of your photo. With just one click on a preset, your photo can be altered to have a film look or to achieve the tones you desire. You can make your own or purchase someone else’s. The benefit of making your own is that you can tweak them to suit exactly the style that you’re looking for. In order to do this, you may need to purchase Adobe Lightroom. It is a highly intuitive photo editing program that is incredibly easy to use. But if you’re feeling lost, there are tons and tons of tutorials out there on how to use every imaginable aspect of it!

Whether you choose to use someone else’s presets, to make your own, or simply batch-edit each set of photos according to their unique aesthetic needs, remember this: The most important thing is to find a style that amplifies and harmonizes with the aesthetic and vibe that you want your personal brand to channel.

Getting the perfect shot

Then we come to the matter of logistics: Will you take your own photos or have someone else take them for you?



TAKING YOUR OWN PHOTOS

I decided to take my own photos, because I was too poor at the time to pay someone to take them for me. I also knew my own eye for composition is very specific and picky, and if I worked hard and honed my skills and my eye, I could take beautiful, professional quality photos. And you know what? I'm basically a professional photographer now!

I shoot photos of myself on a tripod using remote shutter release software. I shoot all my own travel photos. I know the difference between DSLR and mirrorless systems, and a lot about camera bodies, lenses, focal lengths, and sensors. I also know whether or not to use a filter, and what type of filter to use. I know about aperture, ISO, shutter speed, and I always shoot in manual. I recently started shooting with a drone — a DJI Mavic 2 Pro to be more specific — and now I am capable of producing professional quality photographs and videos with my drone.

But five years ago, I didn't know about any of that. I had an iPhone 5s and ended up borrowing my boss's crop sensor DSLR with only a kit lens to start taking photos for my blog. And it did the job.



If you choose to hire an experienced photographer, you will be best served by providing some creative direction based on your brand and style (which will flourish over time).



GIVING CREATIVE DIRECTION

If you have someone else take your photos, you need to be clear about what you want.

If you're hiring a photographer, you need to look at his or her portfolio and see if the images fit your aesthetic. What is the photographer's usual subject matter? If you are hiring someone who does a lot of real estate photography to do OOTD (that's "outfit of the day") shots for you, that person might not produce the best shots at the right angles. It's best to pick someone who is experienced in photographing subjects in the specific niche of your blog.

Some bloggers have their husband, mom or bestie take their photos. It's free, and you don't have to use a tripod! This can be great, but it often results in shots that aren't composed well or don't look their very best.

For a lot of the "top bloggers," their helper has learned over time what that person's best angles are. But sometimes, these bloggers are extremely thin, beautiful, and in general, attractive. Let me be honest, I am not someone who just looks good when you snap a pic of me from any angle regardless of whether or not I have makeup on. I wish I were one of those people, but I'm not. And you know what? Most people aren't one of those people. So, if you're not one of those people, then you will be best served and put out your strongest content when you put some time and effort into thinking about the best composition and angles for individual shots.

Equipment you'll need

When it comes to equipment, get the best quality camera you can afford. Today, that means getting the best phone (because we use our phones for so many photos today!) in addition to the best camera. For cameras, here are my recommendations.

A MIRRORLESS SYSTEM

Sony Alpha A7 and Nikon Z series

Zeiss or Sigma lenses are great for that set-up.

FULL-FRAME DSLR

Canon EOS 5D Mark IV

This is a favorite among many bloggers.

Nikon D850

You can get incredible quality photos by getting a model in the range that is one or two iterations old. Considered by many professional photographers to be the best semi-pro DSLR on the market, and I personally love shooting with the D800.



PURCHASING EQUIPMENT

B&H Photo and Adorama

I buy all my gear here. There are many good cameras out there, you just need to do your research. You can buy used gear on both sites as well, and they have a rating system so you can be aware of the quality that you're purchasing.

eBay

I have heard eBay is a good source as well, but I haven't used it personally.

Letgo

This is an app that has some real treasures!

Tripod shots

This is my area of expertise: 99% of the photos of myself are shot by me from a tripod using a remote shutter trigger.

To take photos of yourself (and kiddos, partners, fam, and friends) by yourself, you will need the following:

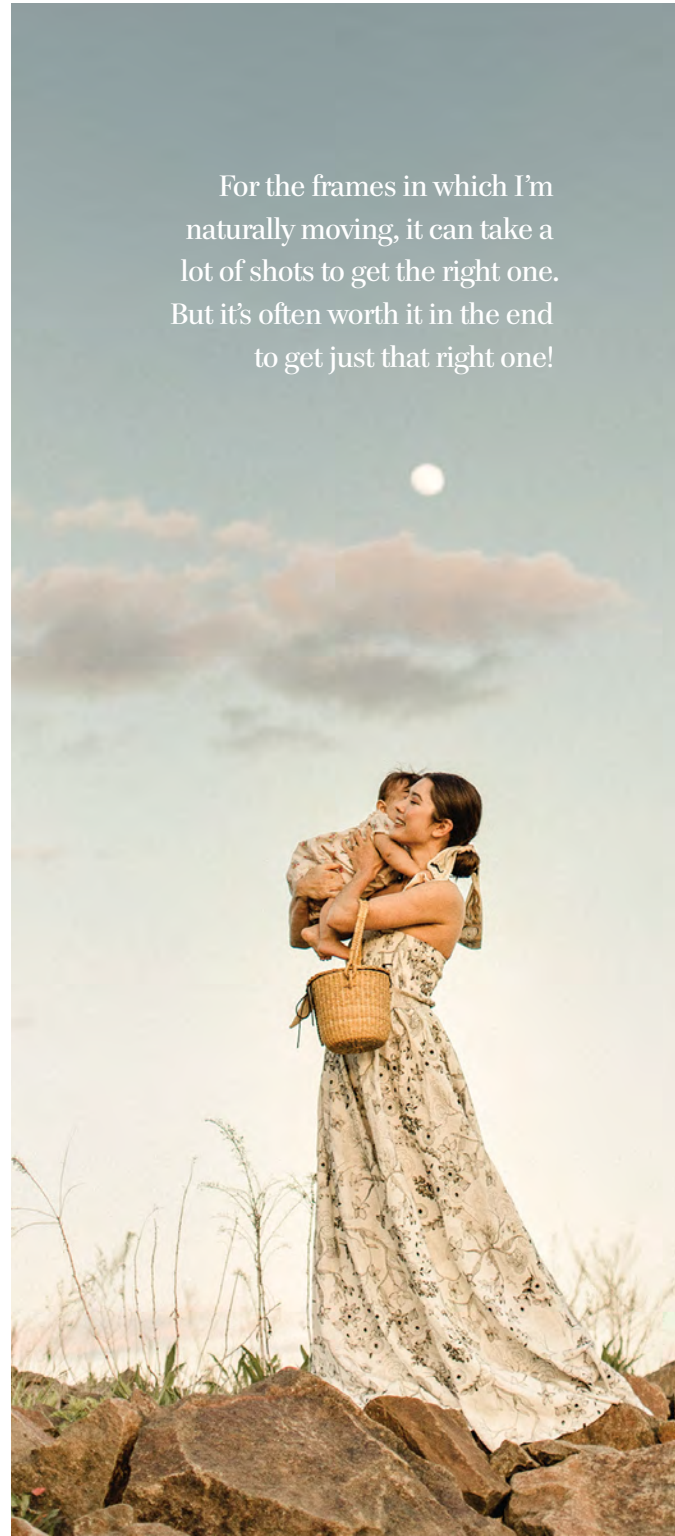
- 01 Tripod
- 02 Camera
- 03 A way to attach the camera to the tripod

Most cameras have a self-timer built in, and some have an intervalometer function which is very helpful in taking multiple shots so you don't have to keep running back and forth to the camera.

Some cameras have an app that you can download onto your phone to see what the camera is seeing. This is super helpful to determine where you and any other subjects will be within the frame. If you don't have the ability to see the camera screen on your phone from a distance, then the best trick is to put some object on the ground where you want to be standing. Then you can see the object through the camera's viewfinder or on the screen which will help you set up your shot.

I like to do some posed frames when shooting via tripod, as well as ones where I'm just naturally moving around.

For the frames in which I'm naturally moving, it can take a lot of shots to get the right one. But it's often worth it in the end to get just that right one!





Finding your voice

Once you've nailed down your name and figured out your niche and visual aesthetic, the next step in developing your personal brand identity is pinpointing the tone and voice of your brand.

A blog is usually comprised of photographs and written words. For me, it was a bit of a journey to find my own written voice. There were a handful of blogs that I read back when I began my own, and almost all of them had their own "voices" when it came to the blog content. When I first started writing, I had an idea of how I thought I should sound and how I wanted to sound on paper, and to achieve it, I basically started copying other people's voices.

In the end, trying to write in a way that wasn't really true to my oftentimes dry, sarcastic, analytical self left me feeling odd, hollow, and off balance.

I finally let go of my preconceived notions about “how a blogger should sound” or “how popular bloggers sound” and just let my writing unfold from my natural stream of consciousness (edited a little bit obviously). It felt so much more empowering and truthful. Also, it turns out it's way easier to write when you're just letting your brain speak its natural language as opposed to forcing it to filter itself through the lens of how you think someone else sounds.

Another note on tone: Different tones are sometimes appropriate for different subjects.

When I'm writing a personal note or oversharing about something as I inevitably tend to do, I like to write in the normal voice that I think and speak in. But if I'm writing a sponsored post on a luxury hotel property, in which I'm trying to evoke a certain aura and weave my words and photos into a photojournalistic tapestry, I might write in a more formal way. You see what I did there?

I probably wouldn't say, “Lol so I just went to this awesome hotel and it was so nice and luxurious you guys.” Because that language, while totally true, doesn't convey the image that I want to create around the hotel brand that I'm writing about. Instead I might write something like, “We recently skipped town and headed to Property X for the most magical weekend.” That's not how I would talk to one of my friends, but it's the tone that I would for sure want to use to set the stage to help someone mentally slip into my shoes as I write about a magical weekend away. Make sense?



The bottom line

WHEN IT COMES TO
FINDING YOUR VOICE

If you follow your instincts, stay honest with yourself about your voice and tone, and then let your fingers fly freely over the keyboard to deliver that voice into the blogosphere, you cannot go wrong.

Your voice will resonate with your tribe, and those are the people that you want to stick around and come on your journey with you. Have confidence in who you are and that what you have to say is worth saying.

Consistency is key

There are many channels out there, from websites to social media like Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Pinterest, and heaven knows how many others.

Consistency is one of the holy grails of branding. Consistency makes people feel comfortable, familiar, and at home, and when people feel comfortable it makes them more likely to stick around.

It's important to be consistent around both your messaging and your content across channels.

If you're using one voice on Instagram and another that seems completely different on your blog, that could be off-putting and cause someone to only want to follow you on one channel, or to not want to follow you altogether. However, this doesn't mean that all your channels should be parroting identical content.

In fact, the best way to strategically drive a following to all of your channels is to have content on each that harmonizes with what is on the rest of them. You'll want to have some key element of uniqueness that would make a person want to follow you on multiple platforms because they are getting something valuable and different from them all.





Be creative about how you share and cross-promote your content to get eyeballs on your channels and drive traffic to your blog! Here's an example:

BLOG

I can share photos of a new makeup collection complete with swatches and a detailed written review on my blog.

YOUTUBE

I would share a tutorial for a face look using items from that makeup collection, which I could embed on my blog post.

INSTAGRAM

I could share more impromptu photos of myself wearing said makeup and include a call-to-action to head over to the blog to watch a detailed tutorial and see swatches.

INSTAGRAM STORIES

I could do stories with swipe-up links to the blog post. At the end of the blog post, I could include a call-to-action to head over to YouTube to see more makeup tutorials and head to Instagram to see more of my everyday life.

The multi-vertical lifestyle blog

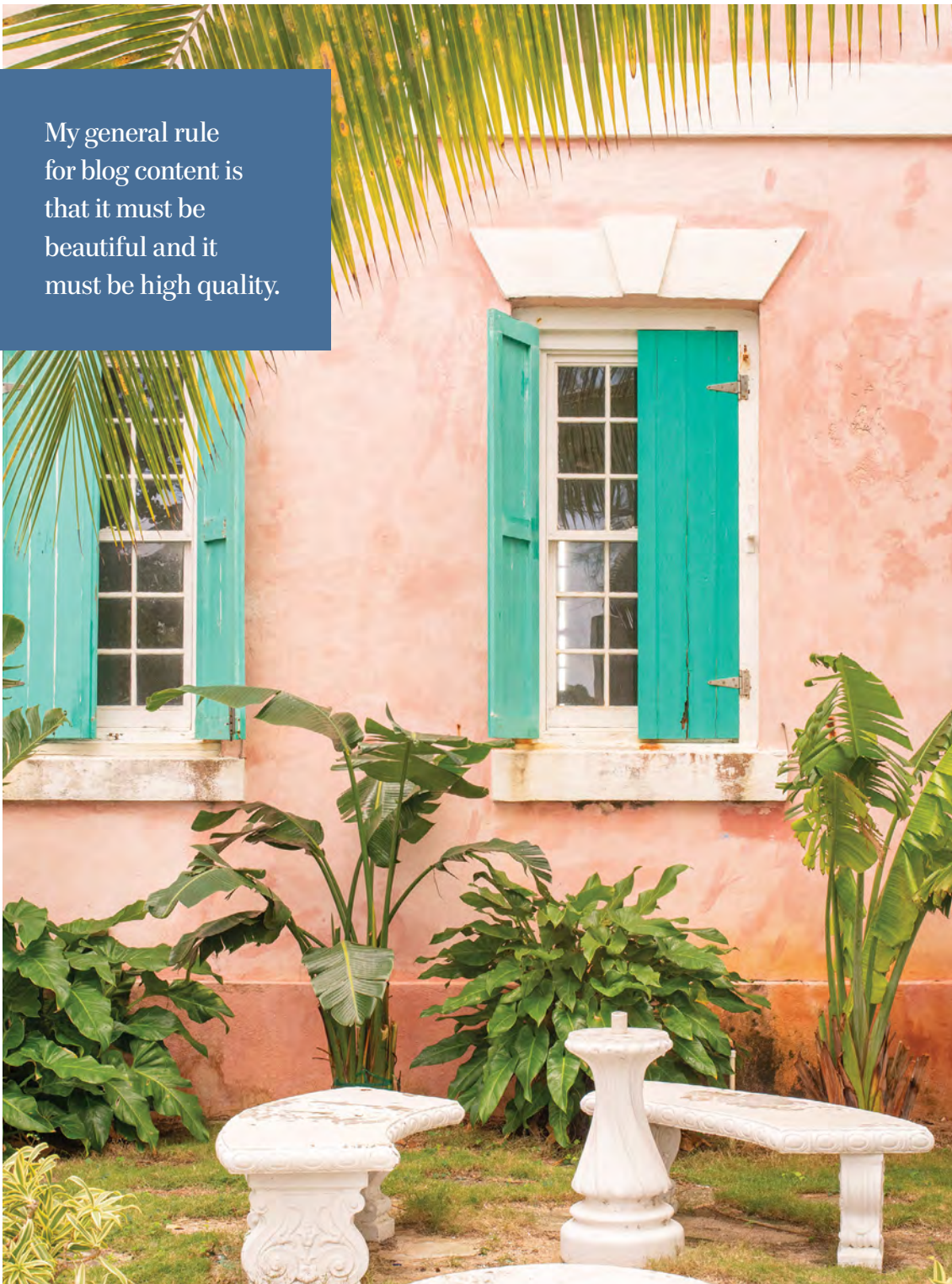
I feel like the well-rounded "lifestyle blog" is the best that blogging has to offer.

Back when I was daydreaming about starting a blog and thinking about what I would write about, I knew I wanted to start initially by just writing about makeup. I didn't want to get overly ambitious right at the beginning. But when I was thinking about my one-year, five-year, and ten-year plans, I knew without a shadow of a doubt that I wanted to build a big, successful lifestyle blog.

And honestly, it was totally selfish. In my mind, I was like, wow, so all these bloggers who write about stuff get free crap. That seems nice. And then the more I thought about it I realized, wow, wouldn't it be so nice to get free makeup? And free clothes? And free stuff for my house? And go on free trips with my family?

Is this getting too real? Please don't judge me. But honestly, I'm also just a magpie for all things lifestyle anyway ... I love my stack of home magazines just as much as I love my stack of fashion and bridal and travel mags. So, in reality, it was really just about making my blog about all the things that I already loved, which happened to be beauty, fashion, home, travel, and lifestyle in general.

My general rule for blog content is that it must be beautiful and it must be high quality.





Tying it all together

I've found the best way to tie it all together is to rotate topics regularly in your posts.

CREATE A CALENDAR

Make an editorial calendar and schedule beauty posts for Monday, home for Tuesday, travel for Wednesday, and fashion for Thursday. Or whatever works for you. Again, that's just an example. You can post about various subjects more often and others less often.

CONSISTENT CONTENT

Remember how I mentioned the importance of consistency? It's an added bonus if you can be consistent about when you post about certain topics, because it will give people that sense of comfort and allow them to know what to expect. If you only post about beauty once a week, but you make it known to your audience that it will always be on Friday, then that's awesome. People will look forward to Fab Fridays or whatever you call it. That's another little thing — if you can think of a cute and memorable name for a group of posts or start a “series,” that will stick in people's minds and will be an element of your blog that they can anticipate and look forward to each week.

Tools of the trade

Last but definitely not least, everyone always wants to know what apps or services are make-or-break for consistent branding, and I'm happy to oblige.

01

PHOTO EDITING APPS

Lightroom
VSCO
Snapseed

02

CREATING INSTAGRAM STORIES

Unfold
Canva

03

VIDEO EDITING

iMovie
VSCO

04

ORGANIZATION

Later

05

PINTEREST

Tailwind



MORE ABOUT THE BLOGGER

Georgia Grace Pendleton

Hey! Georgia Grace here. In my day-to-day life I wear many hats like being a mother, a Christian, a writer, and a blogger who runs the luxury lifestyle platform "By Georgia Grace." I've been blogging since 2015 and create content that spans categories including style, beauty, home, and travel on my website and social media channels. Over my five-year career as a full-time blogger, I have been privileged to work with a number of incredible brands such as NARS, Amazon, Cle de Peau Beaute, Kate Spade, and more. I find this job to be simultaneously exhilarating and terrifying since every day I'm learning new and innovative ways to increase my web presence in the vast world of blogging.

Xoxo Georgia Grace

www.bygeorgiagrace.com / [@bygeorgiagrace](https://www.instagram.com/bygeorgiagrace)







Social Media for Blogging

WITH MACHIELLE THOMAS

@machiellethomas

Why use social media for your blog?

As a blogger, you want your readers to become your followers, right? And you want them to have a good sense of what your brand is all about, don't you?

Well, then, you're definitely going to want to create a branded social media presence on platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. I believe social media is one of the most cost-effective ways to build awareness for your brand, promote your expertise as an influencer, and increase the number of people following you.



Social media handles

Your social media handle is the same as a display name. You'll want to use the same handle on all your platforms, if possible, to help build consistency for your brand.

CHOOSE CAREFULLY

Typically your social media handle is the core part of your domain name with an @ symbol in front of it. Georgia Grace uses @bygeorgiagrace for her handles.

I have seen social media handles make or break the internet presence of some bloggers. For instance, a strong handle can create a memorable presence for your brand. It can make your website easier to find online, and most importantly, the right handle can show that you are a committed, professional blogger.

And always — I repeat always — check the internet for positive or negative associations with the name you would like to choose. If there is any negative association, move onto your next choice.

AVAILABILITY

I recommend that you always research the availability of the names you want to use for your website and across the social platforms so you can pick one that represents your brand and promotes recognition.



Here are some do's and don'ts when you set up your social media handles:

01

DO

Create a username that is no more than 15 characters (which is the limit on Twitter) so you can use it on all your platforms to create consistency in your branding.

DON'T

Create a name that is too long.

02

DO

Pick a name that is unique to your brand.

DON'T

Create a name that is too clever, as that may not be a good representation of your business.



03

DO

Keep it professional.

DON'T

Use personal details or use your actual name if it's not a part of your brand.

Writing your social bio

You may already have a bio on your blog — feel free to use it on your social platforms. Or you can create a version that shows a different side of you for your social platforms, as long as it's consistent with your brand.

Your readers want to know what you're about and why they should care — a great bio is a good way to do all that. Think of it as a perfect place to put your elevator pitch and don't forget to include keywords (which you will learn more about in the SEO section later on!).

I think the best bios are short, to the point, and include at least these six key pieces of information:

01

Who you are

02

What you blog about

03

The topics that interest you

04

What else you may do

05

Your brand's tone

06

How someone can get in touch with you

Think about what other information you may want to say about yourself in your bio. For instance, maybe you want your readers to know how you got interested in becoming a travel blogger. You can also describe your typical reader and what you offer them.

Remember that your bio is the first impression of you and your brand for people that don't currently follow you.





Creating meaningful social media content

Now that you have your social media accounts set up, you'll want to start creating some content.

One of the great things about social media is that it gives you the flexibility to choose which platform can best reflect what you are doing over on your blog. While social content may be the first time new readers meet you, it can also help your current followers understand your brand and your blog in new, creative, and fun ways.

Think of social media as another avenue for building brand authority while developing trust and credibility among all your readers. You can even begin to build an audience once you are fully established.

For social media to work for your brand, however, you have to build a community, not just followers and likes. And to do so, I would recommend that you be engaging, authentic, consistent, and helpful.

HOW CAN YOU BE ENGAGING?

Engagement on social media involves creating content that generates likes, comments, retweets, clicks, and shares.

When you engage with your followers and new readers, people get to know the real you. And engagement gives you a prime opportunity to share information that can directly and indirectly promote your blog and your brand.

Here is how the best bloggers and influencers engage: They create conversations. They ask their readers questions and for their opinions. They also use polls or surveys to find out what people are most interested in. They comment on trending topics, offering their own personal viewpoints on what's hot and what's not. And they continually create new content to keep their followers interested.

Cool visuals that help tell the story are important, and many bloggers do their own photography to keep people engaged.

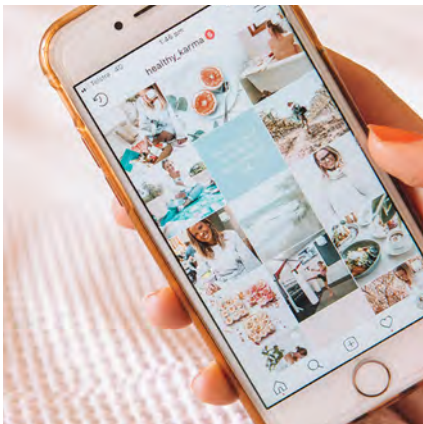


HOW DO YOU SHOWCASE AUTHENTICITY?

Being authentic is a vital component of connecting with your readers and building a community.

Authenticity is all about showing the real side of you and your brand to your followers. Your social posts may be the first impression a visitor has of your blog, and you will want to demonstrate reliability and consistency so they can take interest and engage.

A few ways you can display authenticity is by creating original content, asking for feedback, being transparent, and expressing thanks to your followers. Don't try to appear "perfect" on your social platforms — your followers want to hear your unique voice and will see right through anything else.



HOW CAN YOU STAY CONSISTENT?

Make sure your brand is being seen on social media by posting consistently.

As you begin to develop your blog, you'll want to maintain a regular posting schedule that works for whatever content you plan to post. And you'll want to do the same on your social media platforms.

Using a content calendar or third-party tool can set you up for success by ensuring you don't duplicate content. You'll see in Part Two of this guide that each of the influencers have a slightly different approach to what, where, and how often they post.

You may want to pick one or two platforms to focus on, at least initially, and then determine what kind of schedule works for you. As the influencers say in Part Two, you'll want to post more often in the first few months after you launch your blog to build up your online presence. Whatever you do, stay consistent! If you're having trouble getting your posts up consistently, consider scheduling your posts in advance or outsourcing when needed.

HOW CAN YOU BE RESPONSIVE?

Being responsive to people that engage with you on social media helps to increase brand loyalty and trust.

You'll want to actively reply to every comment you can. And check for direct messages (DMs) on Twitter and Instagram, or message requests on Facebook. Follow your brand mentions on all your platforms.

HOW CAN YOU BE HELPFUL?

Your followers often turn to social media for insights, guidance, and other kinds of help.

Answering people's questions in a way that is helpful is a crucial aspect of maintaining your engagement and increasing your brand's positive sentiment.

Make sure you answer questions quickly. Always put your readers first. Use a helpful tone of voice, and know when to take things offline.

HOW CAN YOU SHOW YOU ARE HUMAN?

Ensure that you are engaging, authentic, consistent, responsive, and helpful.

This will help your readers know that you are a human being that is dedicated to providing high quality content just for them. Doing all of that in your own voice will convey you care as one human to another.

Your genuine reactions and responses will help show that your brand is friendly and that you care about your readers.



Measuring your social media effectiveness



You want your followers to read your blog, share it, and comment on it. And to ensure your social media content is engaging, you'll want to measure the activity on it.

While staying true to your brand persona will help create consistency on your social platforms, if your readers aren't engaging with your content, it's a strong indicator that something needs to be tweaked.

If you feel like you're not getting the interaction you hoped for, it may be time to ask yourself these questions:

- 01** Am I presenting my content in a way that is meaningful to my readers?
- 02** Are my posts too robotic or impersonal? Do they lack personality?
- 03** Is my brand uniquely standing out in the crowd, or blending into the hundreds of posts coming in hourly on social media?

Blog

On your blog, you can measure your effectiveness by the number of followers you have. You can also measure these stats on your blog.

REACH

The number of people who have seen your post directly.

IMPRESSIONS

The total number of times your post has been delivered to someone's feed.

ENGAGEMENT RATE

Number of engagements divided by total reach.

ACTIONS AND ENGAGEMENTS

The total number of times someone completed an action on your post.

Social Media

On your social media platform, the number of followers is typically the most important metric, but you'll also want to measure your engagement.

METRICS

- Likes
- Follows
- Shares
- Comments
- Retweets
- Click-throughs

TOOLS TO HELP MONITOR YOUR STATS

- Brandwatch
- Hootsuite Inbox
- Google Alerts
- Meltwater

don't forget

Resources like style guides and social monitoring tools can help you strategize and identify where your voice can improve.

Driving traffic to your social media platforms



Organic social media traffic — where people find your blog or social posts on a search engine — can take time to build up. And that's where search engine optimization (SEO) comes in, which you'll learn more about in the next section.

Here are some other ways you can connect with your readers and generate traffic to your platforms.

PAID ADS

If done correctly, ads can create an immediate influx of visitors.

EMAIL LISTS

Using email lists can help you promote blog posts, sell products, and connect with followers.

PRESS RELEASES

A good way to help you build brand awareness and generate traffic to your site. Press releases are still widely used by news outlets looking for stories to cover.

TAG INDUSTRY INFLUENCERS AND GUEST BLOGGERS

Gain visibility by expressing your opinions about what they're saying.

QUESTIONS, POLLS, GIFS, AND Q&A CHATS

Use these tools to start conversations and draw people in.

COMMENT

Increase your visibility as an upcoming influencer by commenting on other forums, Facebook groups, and Twitter chats.

LIVESTREAM

Create a livestream event where you can engage with your readers in real time. These can be fun and lively and are good way to showcase your brand and personal voice.



As you'll hear from the influencers in Part Two of this guide, creativity is crucial when you post your content. Using images, videos, and GIFs will increase reader's engagement with your content.



What is a trend?

A trend is anything that is relevant right now and builds momentum over time.

One of the biggest challenges you will have as a blogger is coming up with fresh ideas that will engage your readers, and this is where trending topics can help you out both on your blog and on social media. You can find many different types of trending topics that are relevant to your content. Showcasing them and offering your opinion — nay or yay — is a great way to generate or attract interest or attention on your social platforms.

Whatever the focus of your blog — fashion, food, pop culture, family, or travel — there will be trends on it. All you need to do is search questions like “What’s hot in Latin food?” or “What’s the most popular country to travel to in Europe?” to find the most popular results.

You can then even create your own list of trends based on what you learn through conversations with your readers on your platforms.

Creating content around trending topics can have potentially high rewards like boosting your traffic, increasing the SEO on your website, and getting picked up by a wide range of other platforms for your insights.

We’ll talk about this more in the next section, but remember ... more conversations mean more traffic which ultimately is an SEO boost!

Leveraging hashtags and keywords

When you are commenting on a trending topic, you can leverage the power of social media by using hashtags and keywords that will show up in search results.

TWITTER

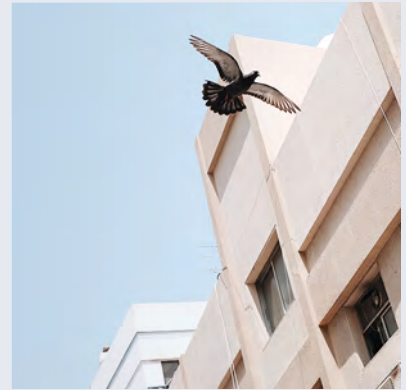
This is one of the few platforms where you can get real-time responses and engagement on a trend in a very quick manner. For instance, if your trending topic is comfort food, you can use the hashtag #favoritecomfortfoods and your post may come up when someone else searches. It's a great way to broaden your reach.

INSTAGRAM

You can use the search and explore page to see what content is being liked and what accounts are being followed with the #trending topics you want to create content around. You can also use hashtags on the explore page and it will populate the top performing accounts and posts based on engagement relevant to that hashtag.

FACEBOOK

Although it's not often a first choice for influencers, Facebook is still pretty popular, so it may be a good one for you. One nice thing about Facebook is that it allows you to have more interactive conversations with people through posts. You can also use Facebook Live for organic engagement and real-time chats with your followers. And you'll want to join Facebook groups where you can comment as a follower and perhaps even as an influencer. You don't want followers on your personal page, so make sure you create a branded Facebook page that is consistent with your other platforms.



Anticipating peak moments

Once you get your blog established and you have a presence, you'll want to try and stay ahead of the curve when creating content if you want to become a true influencer.

When you know a hot trend is about to "peak" due to the buzz on social, you can create some juicy and timely content around it. You can also weave breadcrumbs into your social posts beforehand that will help build up to the peak moment.

Offer promos and product reviews

As you start to get established as an influencer, you may be asked to promote products or services from brands you partner with. This can help you expand your followers, develop interest in your brand, and generate income for your business. Make sure you're only promoting products you believe in and support!

HERE ARE FIVE WAYS TO PROMOTE A PRODUCT ON SOCIAL MEDIA:

- 01 | Add product links to Instagram stories.
- 02 | Run a contest through your blog if you have samples from a brand.
- 03 | Add product links to your social media bio.
- 04 | Attach a promotion code for followers with a link to where they can buy it.
- 05 | Do a product review.

Must-have tools for social

Here are some of the tools I recommend for social media. In Part Two, you'll see each influencer has also supplied a list. Some are favorites that almost all of us use, but you'll also find unique ones in each section. Play around with them and find out what your favorites are.

OUTSOURCING

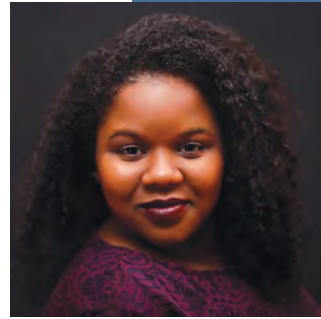
Upwork
Fiverr
Thumbtack

SCHEDULING

Buffer
Hootsuite
Sprout Social

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Airtable
Google Sheets
Monday
Asana
Trello



MORE ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Machielle Thomas

Hey friends, I currently manage content at Bluehost and I've been writing for as long as I can remember. Digital marketing has been my trade of choice for more than 10 years and I thoroughly enjoy content writing, editing, and digital media. The heart of my passion lies in visual and written storytelling, whether I'm creating a blog or photographing a beautiful couple on their wedding day.

I live for working in the sunshine with good music playing in my headphones or traveling to a new city where I can immerse myself in a different culture. I'm an ATX (as in Austin, Texas) native, so I love tacos and will probably be the first person to greet your dog while I'm out walking with my son. I've been blessed to continue learning and thriving in an industry that is always evolving and challenging me to adapt to new content styles.

Machielle

@machiellethomas





Search Engine Optimization

WITH MADDY OSMAN

@maddyosman

What is SEO and how does it help my blog?

If you've read the earlier sections, you know by now that SEO stands for search engine optimization and that it's a critical tool for creating brand awareness and getting people to read your blog.

SEO is a conscious effort on your part to reach your blog's target audience by optimizing your content so it comes up in relevant online searches. As an example, Monique Karabach in Section One of Part Two wants her blog to come up on the first page of a search on Google for food in Austin. As a blogger, it's important for you to understand the basics of SEO to drive traffic to your blog. Here are some quick insights.

SEO basics

When you do a search on Google, you'll see two things after typing in a search query and hitting enter:

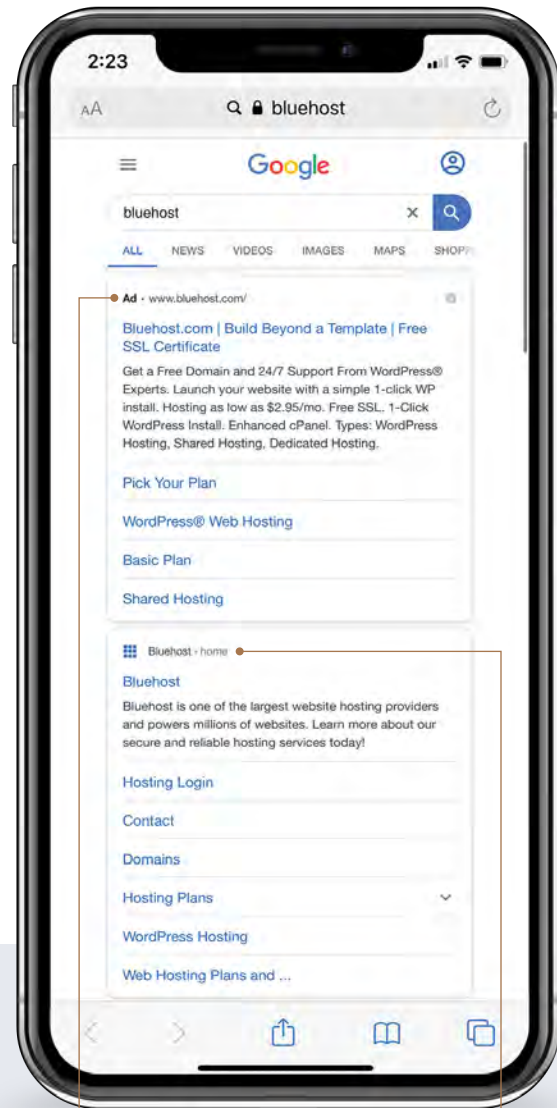
1. SEARCH ENGINE RESULTS PAGE (SERP)

2. PAY-PER-CLICK ADVERTISING (PPC)

These are both marketing tactics aimed at reaching people who are interested in the topic they just searched. Think of these people as potential new followers for you.

One of the major differences between SEO and PPC is that SEO involves organic efforts to drive traffic while, with PPC, you're literally paying for every click from an ad to your website.

I don't know about you, but the bloggers that I know who are looking to be influencers don't necessarily have a large budget for promotional efforts. And that's why learning how to use SEO effectively is so important. It's a free marketing opportunity! It just takes a little effort.



PAID AD

ORGANIC RESULT

The visual difference between organic results and paid ads is not significantly different.

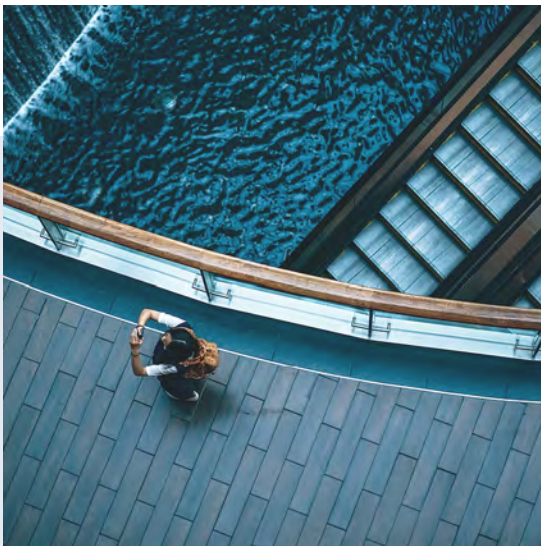
How SEO works

Even after understanding the basics, there are a lot of misconceptions about what SEO actually involves. And properly understanding the nuances involves taking a step back.

Specifically, you need to understand that big search engines like Google don't want us bloggers to know the exact factors that push one piece of content to rank in the number one spot, while another is relegated to page two of search.

Some SEO pros jokingly refer to page two of search as the best place to hide a body, since it's rare for someone — like one of your followers — to consider anything after the first page of results for a given search term.

To the best of my knowledge, there are over 200 ranking signals in Google's algorithm. And some are becoming more dynamic as Google incorporates aspects of cool technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning. Even more confusing to non-techies is that, at any given time, there are multiple versions of the search algorithm in operation, so search results can change on a daily basis.



The three pillars of SEO

Before you get overwhelmed, here's some good news for you. As much as Google's search algorithm changes, the basic tenets largely remain the same over time. And in fact, Google has always made it clear that great content makes for a solid foundation from which to build upon. You just have to put in a bit of time and energy to make your blog indexable (findable) by Google.

Let me introduce you to what I call the three pillars of SEO.

PILLAR ONE

Content

PILLAR TWO

Website technical structure

PILLAR THREE

Backlinks



PILLAR ONE

Content

As a blog writer, the specific choices you make when posting your content can have a major impact on how well you come up in relevant searches. Content is also called onpage, or onsite, SEO, and here's how to make it more easily found in searches.

Start with keywords

One of the first things to consider as you prepare your content is your keyword choices. If you're not familiar with keywords, they are words, concepts, phrases, or topics that the people you are most interested in becoming followers will search. Another way of thinking about this is that keywords are the most important words that reflect your brand, your blog, and your content.

It's critical to identify the keywords that will be most important and relevant to your blog. And to do that, you have to do some research. Keyword research involves using a mix of data and intuition to find queries that you can reasonably rank for in searches. You can become a keyword research pro in no time by following these straightforward steps.

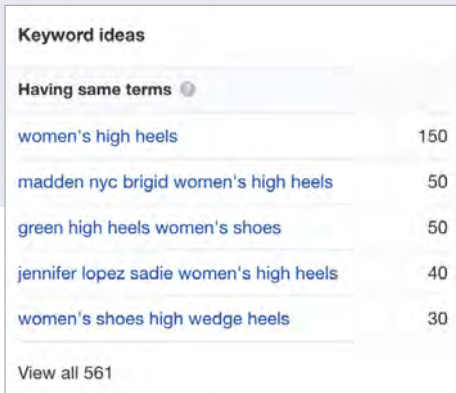
01

RESEARCH KEYWORDS

Start by using a keyword research tool Ahrefs (or one of your choice) to search for a relevant keyword.

If your initial seed keyword isn't returning the results you're looking for, use the keyword ideas or parent topic section on Ahrefs to get more ideas.

In general, the more specific your keyword, the better. Niche phrases of two or more words are called long-tail keywords. The low-hanging fruit (one- to two-word keyword phrases) is gone as far as easy rankings on Google.



Keyword ideas	
Having same terms	
women's high heels	150
madden nyc brigid women's high heels	50
green high heels women's shoes	50
jennifer lopez sadie women's high heels	40
women's shoes high wedge heels	30
View all 561	

02

MANAGE EXPECTATIONS

Consider the impact of keyword intent in relation to your followers and new readers.

Ask yourself: What do my followers expect to find when they type in this keyword? Is this the content I develop for my readers? Does it relate directly to my content? Then, test your assumptions by searching for your target keyword in Google.

03

BE REALISTIC

Pick a keyword that you can realistically rank for when comparing your domain authority or rating to keyword difficulty.

For example, my website, The-Blogsmith.com has an Ahrefs domain rating of 69 and I tend to stick with keywords that have a difficulty of 20 or less whenever possible. For brand new websites that don't have many (or any backlinks), pick keywords with a keyword difficulty of 10 or less.

Skip to the backlinks section on page 56 for more details regarding how domain authority works.

04

NICHE SEARCHES ARE OKAY

Don't get too caught up on search volume for uber specific long-tail terms.

Anything over 20 monthly searches is fair game for a niche topic.

05

COMPETITION

Do a search with your chosen keywords to check out the competition.

You'll want to see if you can realistically rank against who's owning the top results for the term. For instance, do the results pull up a big brands with a big SEO team? This search will also give you ideas for what to include in your own content.

06

RELATED SEARCHES

Research semantic or related keywords.

Use tools like Answer the Public or get clues on Google SERPs using Google Autocomplete, "Searches related to," and "People also ask."

07

CRAFT QUALITY CONTENT

Use what you've learned in the previous step to craft content around what people want to learn about.

Because, although you may be trying to rank each page or blog article for one primary keyword, SEO success is achieved when you can also rank for related (semantic) keywords. You can use semantic keywords in headings and make sure to answer relevant questions from "People also ask" results.

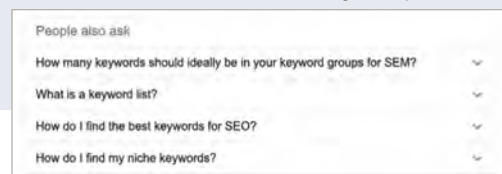
Google autocomplete



Google "Searches related to"



Google "People also ask"



PILLAR TWO

Website technical structure

Besides your efforts with content, you can also impact your website's ability to rank in relevant search with a proper website structure. So ... what is that, exactly?



Though Google doesn't disclose all of its 200+ ranking signals, they periodically share details regarding the most impactful factors. Specifically, they've identified the following as important ranking signals:

MOBILE-RESPONSIVENESS

Increasingly more people access the internet with mobile devices instead of desktop computers. If your website is difficult to navigate on a mobile device, Google will choose to rank similar websites that are mobile-responsive higher than yours. Make sure to test every new website change on a computer and mobile device to ensure that functionality works as expected.

PAGE SPEED

The longer it takes your website to load, the less likely visitors are to stick around. And with human attention spans at an all-time low in the digital age, you should aim for a page load time of three seconds — ideally less. Auto-play videos, high-resolution images, and tons of installed WordPress plugins are some of the likely culprits for slow page load time.

HTTPS

Typically, websites that collect or display sensitive personal information (think online banking and ecommerce websites) install SSL certificates to encrypt data and make users feel secure in their transactions. After Google announced that HTTPS is an official ranking factor, installing an SSL certificate is something you now also have to consider for your blog. Besides SEO purposes, website visitors using the Chrome browser now get notifications cautioning them against visiting websites without an SSL certificate — so it's really worth doing for your followers' experience, in general.

These technical website structure considerations represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of all the optimizations you might consider for your blog — but they are among the most important.

Here are a few additional considerations to get you thinking about your website's technical structure:

BUILD STRUCTURE

Create a sitemap and menu navigation that empowers your readers to find answers within three clicks.

WORKING LINKS

Ensure that there are no broken links on your website. If you link to a page that you later delete, and don't update the link, that hurts your indexability with Google.

A CLEAR PERSPECTIVE

Put yourself in the perspective of your followers. Is it immediately clear that your website is for them? Can you do anything to make it clearer? Does everything work according to expectations?



PILLAR THREE

Backlinks

Put most simply, a backlink is a link from another website to your own.

Google's algorithms make the assumption that other websites wouldn't be linking to yours if you didn't have something worth linking to. The more links pointing to a website, the higher Google's perceived authority of that website. So, when another website with high authority links to your website, you benefit from that site's authority. Conversely, when a website with few or zero links creates a backlink to your website, it's not going to have the same impact.

Building and measuring domain authority is important because of its impact on your ability to rank for relevant keywords.

If you have a high domain authority, backed by lots of high authority backlinks, it will be easier for your blog to come up in relevant search as compared to a blog that doesn't have as many backlinks. But while you are in charge of your own SEO destiny when it comes to having control over your content and website structure, you have decidedly less control over your ability to place backlinks on other people's websites.

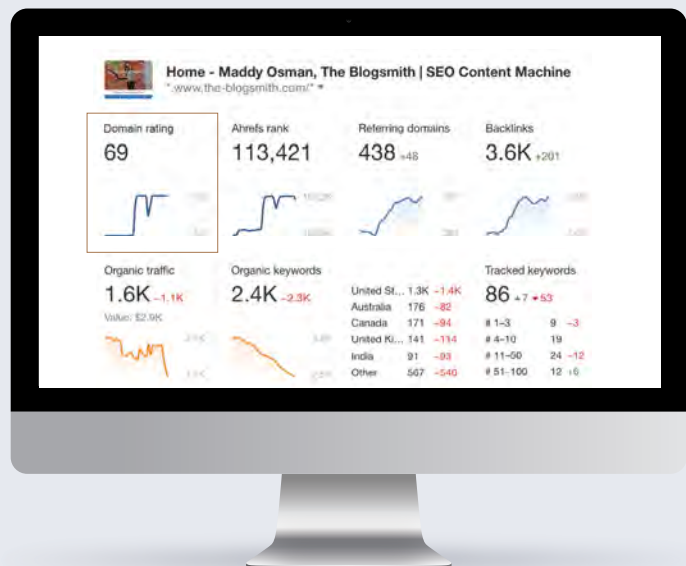
As you might expect, the hardest part about being effective with backlinks is ... getting them. You can't just go on another person's blog and drop a link in the comments — that won't move the needle when it comes to growing your domain authority.

Instead, you'll need to be proactive about asking for backlinks and creating opportunities to receive them. It helps to have amazing content that's easy to link to, but that's likely not enough on its own.

Rule of thumb

NOT ALL BACKLINKS ARE MADE EQUAL

This measure of your domain's strength based on backlinks is referred to as domain authority or domain rating. By using an SEO tool like Moz or Ahrefs, you can determine the measure of your domain's authority now and in the future, as you earn new backlinks.



How to get backlinks

(without being annoying)

In order to get backlinks, you'll need to consider pitching people and publications for placement. To be truly effective, your pitch must address the "What's in it for me?" for the person or brand on the other end.

Specifically, you need to make an offer that's mutually beneficial. For example, offering to share a brand's post with your social followers is one way to add value (if you have a good social following).

Beyond that, show that you did some research. Perhaps interact with something from one of your prospect's social channels before making an ask. After all, you want to get on the good side of these people if you're going to ask them to do a favor for you.

Use the following tactics for getting backlinks:

BEGINNER

- 01 Create linkable resources like a calculator, infographic, or industry study.
- 02 Create a "best of" list featuring industry influencers.
- 03 Find unlinked brand mentions using a tool like Awario and ask to add the link.



ADVANCED

- 04 Land high-authority guest post and contributor bylines.
- 05 Write expert contributions when asked and find opportunities on HARO (Help a Reporter Out).
- 06 Be a podcast guest.
- 07 Sponsor a charity or conference.

Your blog post SEO checklist

After identifying a target keyword, there are certain onpage optimizations that you can use to ensure that search engines like Google know what your content is about.

- Target keyword used in the meta title and meta description.
- Use secondary keyword at least once.
- Make sure the meta title is within the character count (50–60 characters).
- Use secondary keyword in subheading (if possible).
- Target keyword used three times in the body copy.
- Include at least two internal links.
- Target keyword used in at least one subheading.
- Include at least two external links to high quality/relevant sources.



Okay, so what does it all mean?

A lot of these action items refer back to the keywords you came up with during the keyword research process.

You're going to plug your primary keyword (and any additional keywords) into some key signal areas for Google:

- Meta information (title and description)
- The page slug (URL)
- Subheadings
- Body copy

A quick note on meta information:

While you should optimize these fields for search engines, you should write them for your human audience. In order for your readers to actually click through to your blog, your meta title and description must be truly compelling.

KEYWORDS

Don't forget to also incorporate keywords into any image file names or ALT text. Try to weave the keyword into a sentence of text that also describes the image — this is the true purpose for ALT text, which assists people who need help with accessibility via screen readers.

The key is to use keywords naturally. If it doesn't sit right, don't do it. At the end of the day, Google is just a vehicle for getting traffic — you shouldn't cater to it more than you cater to the eventual end user: a human.

IMAGES

Speaking of images, try to include some type of visual (GIFs, videos, or screenshots) for every other subheading, at minimum. A wall of text is overwhelming for your human readers. To appease them, aim for short sentences and paragraphs that average three lines or less.



Before you hit publish, if you haven't already, make sure to include some relevant links.

Specifically, you'll want to add:

INTERNAL LINKS

Links to other pages of your website, like blog articles. Adding internal links helps Google understand the relationships between different pages, which also makes it easier for your website to be indexed.

EXTERNAL LINKS

Links to other websites, such as those that you've referenced in your article or that can provide additional context to what you're talking about. This also helps Google understand the context around your content.

After the article is published, you're still not really finished.

Since Google prefers to rank the most up-to-date resources, add calendar reminders to update articles at least quarterly, when possible, and add the text "Updated on [date]" to the top of the article.

SEO tools of the trade

Being effective with SEO means doing a lot more than guessing. You really shouldn't try to start optimizing your content around a keyword that you don't have data to back up. The following tools will help you find success with SEO on your blog.

Google Tools

Google doesn't tell us everything about their algorithms, but they do give us some clues — and some tools that can help you be effective. Although the data they convey will undoubtedly be priceless in constructing your SEO strategy, you'll be happy to know these tools are all free.

GOOGLE SEARCH CONSOLE

By connecting this with your website, you'll have easy access to indexing information (is Google finding any broken links?) and any errors that may be hurting your chances of coming up in relevant search. You can also use Google Search Console to see what keywords you're ranking for and the average position that your content is ranking within Google search.

GOOGLE ANALYTICS

Installing Google Analytics from the get-go will help you understand audience and traffic trends over time, as well as determining your most popular content.

GOOGLE PAGESPEED INSIGHTS

Plug in your domain name and run this test to see how Google interprets your website from both a desktop and mobile perspective. It can provide insights for improving page load time in both cases.

GOOGLE MOBILE-FRIENDLY TEST

Similar to Google's PageSpeed Insights, you'll run your URL through this tool to determine relevant issues. In this case, the issues correspond to mobile user-experience problems. Google will also share insights regarding how to fix any diagnosed issues.

WordPress Plugins

You don't have to be a web developer to optimize your blog's performance in terms of the major things that impact SEO and the user experience. Here are a few suggestions for must-have WordPress plugins for SEO and other critical things.

UPDRAFTPLUS

This isn't an SEO plugin — it's a plugin to back up the contents of your website in case it breaks. Your web host is probably doing this for you but it's always a good idea to have separate backup copies in separate locations. Before making any major changes to your WordPress website, back up the current version of the website!

WP ROCKET

This caching plugin will help you optimize page load speed.

SMUSH

This image optimization plugin reduces the file size (and page load time) associated with large image assets.

YOAST SEO PREMIUM

This is an SEO plugin and the basic free version is likely sufficient for beginner needs (primarily, optimizing onpage SEO). However, the premium version is worth the splurge for extra functionality which includes automatic redirects when you change a link.

All-in-One SEO Tools

In order to make data-backed decisions, you'll need access to a decent all-in-one SEO tool.

TRACK MULTIPLE INTERLINKING ASPECTS OF SEO

- Your blog's domain rating
- Backlinks to your blog
- Keyword research functionality
- How your keywords are performing in search over time
- Competitor data

AUDITING TOOLS

It should also include audit functionality to catch any technical issues or missed optimization opportunities over time.

The top options on the market:

- Ahrefs
- SEMrush
- Moz

Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. I prefer Ahrefs for its keyword research and backlink tracking tools. All these tools have basic plans that are upwards of \$100/month. For new bloggers, this expense may be out of reach. In the meantime, consider options such as SE Ranking and Serpstat, which offer many of the same features (albeit with fewer data points).

Staying up-to-date with SEO

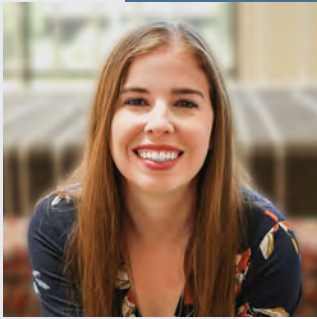
Armed with this section on SEO for blogging, you'll have ample opportunities to rank your blog in relevant search.

But there's still more to learn if you want to keep improving your chances of ranking on page one of relevant SERPs. Google's algorithms change constantly — you'll want to be aware of major changes in case they make a big impact on the effectiveness of your strategy.

Here are a few brands worth following to help you learn more and stay in the loop with the latest news:

- 01 | **Ahrefs**
- 02 | **Moz**
- 03 | **Search Engine Journal**

Ultimately, there's still so much that we don't know about SEO. But there are plenty of people in the industry who are actively working to figure it out! Seek out people who share insights backed with data, and don't be afraid to try some SEO experiments of your own.



MORE ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

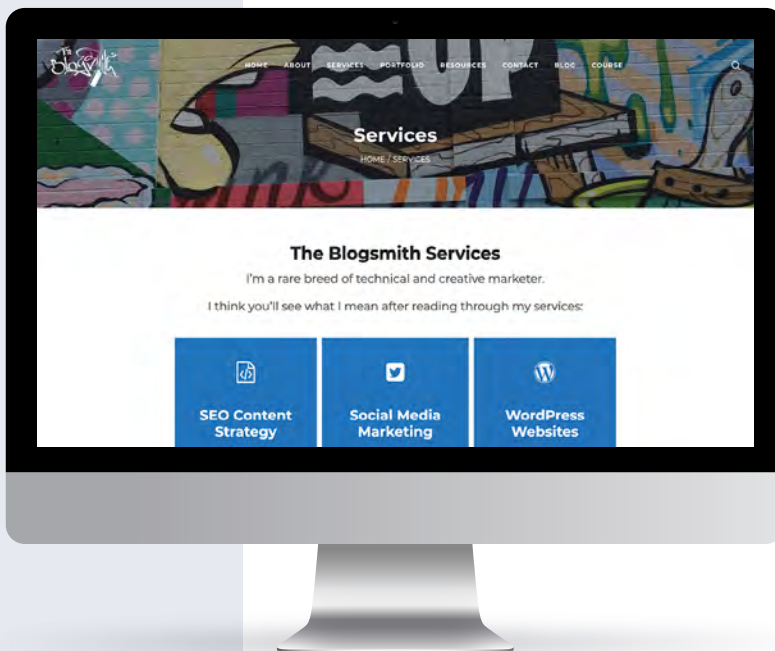
Maddy Osman

Hi, I'm Maddy. I taught myself web design at age 11 and became enamored with blogging after having the opportunity to contribute to my college's student life blog. I taught myself SEO shortly after graduating college in an effort to determine the best promotional strategy for my own blog. What started as a hobby turned into a career, and I founded The Blogsmith, a company that helps technology brands reach their target audience in search.

I share my most in-depth SEO investigations as a regular contributor for Search Engine Journal and I work with your favorite WordPress brands: Automattic, CodeinWP, WPMU DEV, and more. Never one to sit still, my latest involvements focus on helping people use content, SEO, and web design to create better user experiences. I consider myself an ally when it comes to creating a more accessible web.

Maddy

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Monetizing Your Blog

WITH KYLE DAVIS

[@kyle_oneofmany](#)

Here's the million-dollar question:
Is your blog actually making money?

If you're in the majority, the answer is probably not — or at least, not as much as you would like to make. Blogs can be a great source of income, but they will fall flat if you don't perfect your content, optimize your site, and market yourself well.

Now that you've learned how to build your brand, create relevant content, and promote it all using social media and SEO, it's time for me to show you some ways you can start to make money with your site. Whether you create influencer content, sell products, or advertise a service, if you don't get much traffic to your website, it can be hard to start driving up your revenues. There are numerous possibilities to consider when you want to monetize your blog, and for what it's worth, I believe your best bets are affiliate links, paid ads, and banner ads.



Affiliate marketing

Being an affiliate is a great opportunity to develop working relationships with brands you love while earning revenue.

You can identify a brand you would like to support that has products and services that align with your website, sign up to become an affiliate, and you're on your way to start monetizing your blog.

Keep in mind that it's wise to only partner with brands that resonate with your followers.

How does it work?

Adding affiliate links to your website is an excellent way to create a passive revenue stream. It can be pretty simple.

You earn a commission for promoting another brand's products on your own website, which helps generate potential sales for that company. For Bluehost's affiliate program, you can earn \$65 for each qualified sign-up you refer to us.

You'll hear some of the other bloggers in Part Two of this guide talk about how they're doing this now. Here are a few tips on how to select the right type of brand to partner with.

CHOOSE A BRAND YOU WOULD ACTUALLY SUPPORT

If you honestly like the brand, you can create authentic, consumable content that interests your readers. And truthfully, I find it's much easier to write about something you can get behind, don't you?

CHECK THE BRAND OUT FIRST

If you try out the product, or become a valued customer, you can share personal insights on your experiences in your blog and tell your followers why you think they should try out the brand.

CHECK OUT THE QUALIFICATIONS

Many affiliate programs have certain criteria — such as the number of pages you have or the type of blog niche you have — that you must meet. You'll want to make sure these requirements are doable for you before creating an entire business plan around a particular program.

ANSWER THIS: IS IT WORTH YOUR TIME?

Don't sign up for an affiliate program just to drive some income here or there. If you sign up for something that doesn't quite fit your niche, you may be wasting your time because you probably wouldn't get enough followers interested in the brand to be worth your effort. It may be something you're passionate about, and want to write about, but don't plan on money coming in if you don't have the traffic.

Best practices for success

Once you determine a program or series of programs you'd like to promote, it's time to dive into the intricacies of being an affiliate. Here are some of my recommended best practices for working with affiliate programs.

USE ANY AND ALL RESOURCES THE BRAND PROVIDES TO YOU AS AN AFFILIATE

Most affiliate programs will provide resources ranging from product imagery to example copy for you to use on your site. As an example, Bluehost has an affiliate program with offers you can access through a team of account managers to help you optimize your content and help you succeed with best practices.

GET BEHIND THE BRAND'S SELLING POINTS

Generally, for the brands you pick to affiliate with, what they sell on their website is the information they have determined appeals to its customers. So why not use their content? It's a great place to start. Promote the brand in the way the brand is promoting itself. For example, if the company is selling tennis shoes and using the quality of material as a key selling point, it would be wise for you to do the same. If you talk about something that you like but isn't important to the brand's customers, then it could lead to lower conversions for you.

DON'T WRITE AN OUTRIGHT SALES PITCH

Be honest in your writing and people will believe it and be interested. If your content is sales pitchy, you won't sound authentic or that you believe in the brand. Fewer people will connect with your content, and few will go on to purchase anything. Write real copy about the brand — which is why I suggest getting behind brands you actually believe in.

PUT OUT CONSISTENT CONTENT

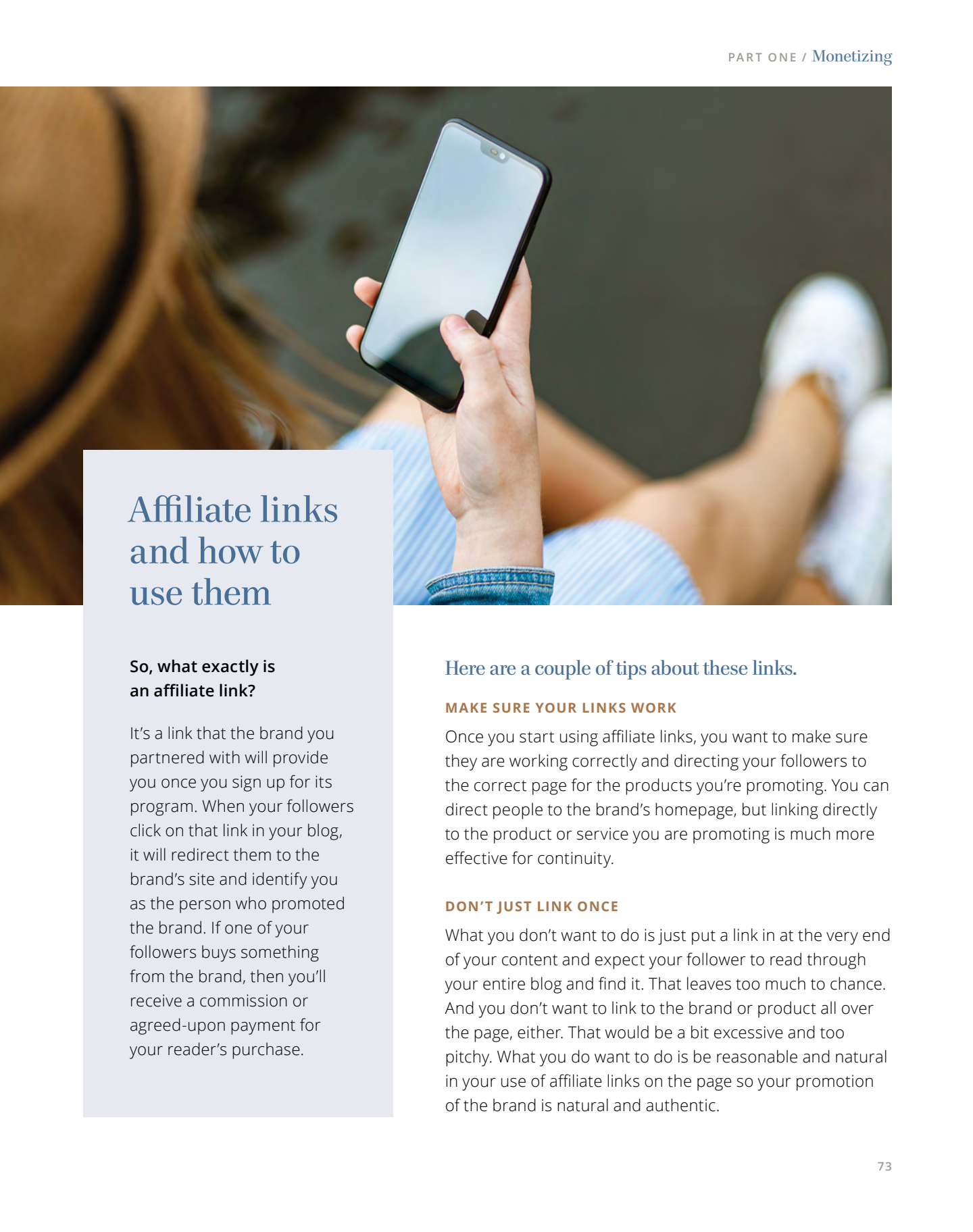
Constantly posting to your blog lets brands know that you are active and dedicated. It also helps with SEO ranking, traffic, and brand loyalty.

KEEP CONTENT UP-TO-DATE

Many brands change their product or service offerings over time. If you notice these changes, update your content to ensure that you are promoting the correct features to your followers. If your content is out of date, then that content is a less reliable source for your readers.

START BUILDING AN EMAIL LIST

Building an email list allows you to connect with your followers outside of your normal blog posts. I like email lists because they can be leveraged after people leave your site with updates and news about the brands you're supporting.

A photograph of a person's hands holding a black smartphone. The person is wearing a blue and white striped shirt and white sneakers. The background is blurred, showing what appears to be a person's legs and feet. The phone screen is dark and reflects the surroundings.

Affiliate links and how to use them

So, what exactly is an affiliate link?

It's a link that the brand you partnered with will provide you once you sign up for its program. When your followers click on that link in your blog, it will redirect them to the brand's site and identify you as the person who promoted the brand. If one of your followers buys something from the brand, then you'll receive a commission or agreed-upon payment for your reader's purchase.

Here are a couple of tips about these links.

MAKE SURE YOUR LINKS WORK

Once you start using affiliate links, you want to make sure they are working correctly and directing your followers to the correct page for the products you're promoting. You can direct people to the brand's homepage, but linking directly to the product or service you are promoting is much more effective for continuity.

DON'T JUST LINK ONCE

What you don't want to do is just put a link in at the very end of your content and expect your follower to read through your entire blog and find it. That leaves too much to chance. And you don't want to link to the brand or product all over the page, either. That would be a bit excessive and too pitchy. What you do want to do is be reasonable and natural in your use of affiliate links on the page so your promotion of the brand is natural and authentic.



Do I need to join an affiliate network?

There are affiliate networks out there where a bunch of brands come together and let you promote complementary products under one umbrella. Before you join one of these, though, you will want to decide if you are going to focus on one category or one brand.

FOCUS ON ONE CATEGORY

If you decide to focus on a broad category or industry, look for an affiliate network to join where you can promote multiple brands and keep track of them all in one dashboard. That will help you increase your revenue faster.

There are many affiliate networks out there, so find the one that works with your niche category. You may want to explore CJ Affiliate, which is one of the largest and oldest networks of this kind, and see if they have brands that match your focus.

FOCUS ON ONE BRAND

If you choose to work with one brand, you can work directly with the company without needing a network. For instance, promoting Bluehost would be one affiliate brand, while promoting multiple sporting goods companies would be an example of an affiliate network.

How to make affiliate marketing work for you

Now that you have signed up to be an affiliate marketer. The next thing you need to do is get your followers — and new potential readers — to your site and your affiliate links!

MAKE YOURSELF STAND OUT

Affiliate marketing is not a “new” industry so there will be competition in whatever niche you choose. Find a way to make your blog stand out with your unique voice and intriguing content.

GET TRAFFIC TO YOUR SITE

This is one of the most common struggles after launching a website. How will you get traffic? Creating your website does not mean anyone will be able to find you. Figuring out how to get traffic to your website will be one the hurdles that you’ll constantly be working on in order to be successful.

TRY OUT GUEST BLOGGING

See if you can gain traction on other established websites and link out to your blog. You can offer a reciprocal spot on your blog as well.

POST SOCIAL MEDIA OFTEN

Make sure you read the section in this guide on Social Media — it’s full of great advice. Meanwhile, I’ll remind you to share your blog on social media whenever you can and try to gain organic traffic this way. Social media is also a great way to show off your unique voice and gain loyal followers who may be interested in what you can offer them.

TARGET LONG-TAIL KEYWORDS FOR SEO

There is also a great section on SEO in the guide as well. I just want to reiterate that SEO plays take quite a while to build until you’re able to view results so it’s better to target more niche keywords where you’ll see a difference quicker. More common keywords will have a ton of established competition and it’s extremely difficult to show up on SEO pages with them.

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AND GOALS

Affiliate marketers do not become all stars overnight. Like when you’re building a following, you need to be consistent and produce relevant content to stay top of mind. Set realistic goals for yourself and get all the help you can from the companies you are promoting.

Pay-per-click advertising

The second most common way I recommend for monetizing your blog is through ads.

Advertisements are a great way to build a revenue stream and drive traffic to your website. There are several types of ads you can use on your website and determining what is the best option for you is dependent on your website goals.

With pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, you can pay to have your ad displayed on another website, like Google's search results pages for example. You pay a predetermined fee — which is the cost-per-click (CPC) — every time someone clicks on your ad. Here's what WordStream says about PPC: "Essentially, it's a way of buying visits to your site, rather than attempting to 'earn' those visits organically."

Banner ads

Selling banner ad space on your website to brands or other related blogs is another great way for you to build a new revenue stream. You'll see banner ads (also known as display ads) on high-traffic websites with links to the advertiser's site when clicked.

Rule of Thumb

FOR BLOGGERS THAT ARE NEW TO THIS FORM OF PROMOTION

Before you go live, seek out any help you may need for optimizing your banner ad campaign. Then get the word out that you have space available through online advertising services like Conversant, Google AdSense, and Exponential.

Here's the great thing about PPC — you can also make space available on your own website for Google PPC and bring advertisers to you. Every time a visitor clicks on an ad, you'll get paid a percentage of what the original advertiser paid Google.



Adding brands to your site

If you're already attracting a lot of traffic to your blog or website, consider getting other brands such as AdSense and Amazon Associates to advertise on your site.

Simply sign up with one of these companies, and they will automatically generate the code that you paste onto your site where you want to display the ad.

If you do sign up for an ad program, make sure that you sign up for one that is blog-focused. And you'll want to pick ads that your followers will find useful and helpful.

Here are a few things I would recommend you consider when exploring these ad programs:

GOOGLE ADSENSE

A program like Google AdSense can help you find the right ads for your followers. It places you in control by helping you identify the ad type that best fits your blog.

AMAZON ASSOCIATES

This is an excellent resource that can provide your followers with items you feel will help them best. It provides the tools needed to feature ads on your site based on the products that you love.

ENTICE ADVERTISERS

Promote ads on your blog by placing a link that encourages them to contact you for a media kit with a list of your rates and requirements. The link can simply say "Click here to find out how you can advertise on my blog!".

BLOGADS

Programs like Blogads allow you to create targeted ad campaigns based on desired platform, budget, or audience demographics. These curated self-service ads are a great way to home in directly to your followers which can drive traffic back to your blog.

Don't forget to do your research to ensure that any brand that advertises on your site reflects the tone and voice you have established for your blog.



Contact the advertisers directly

When your blog starts garnering a lot of traffic, you can search for brands that offer free products and promotions that your followers might be interested in. You can reach out directly and ask the brand if you can advertise for them.

Any ad that is featured on your blog can be viewed as a recommendation of that specific product or service and send your readers directly to that website when they click on it. As your ads grow to be successful, you'll be able to negotiate pricing and terms to help you generate more revenue.

You always want to establish healthy, professional communication with an advertiser whether or not the company establishes a working relationship with you. I know advertisers enjoy a personal touch, so instead of just emailing them, give them a follow-up call that expresses your professional interest in working with them.

Whenever you are outreaching to brands, make sure you have stats about your blog ready for them to review so they can consider all of your qualifications before making a decision.

Plugins can help with monetization

There are countless ways to make money with your blog. Regardless of your preference, using the right WordPress plugins can be vital. Quality plugins can help you efficiently manage your blog and maximize your earnings. Here are a few plugins that I highly recommend:

01 | WooCommerce

Selling products on your blog is one of the best methods to make money online. Not only do you have full control over the products you sell, you also earn the revenue you generate. If you're looking to create an online storefront that helps you to sell your products with ease, WooCommerce is the best plugin available for WordPress. It has a lot of built-in features to help you manage your online store including shipping options, payment processing, inventory management, and more.

You can also find several extensions that can add more advanced features to your online store. WooCommerce is the most popular eCommerce platform on the web. Because the community is huge, you can easily find supported themes and complementary tools to build a powerful eCommerce store.

Here's a little promo for us here at Bluehost. If you choose the WooCommerce plugin, you'll find optimized hosting for it on Bluehost. This means you can leverage the power of your WordPress blog, the reliability of Bluehost, and the versatility of WooCommerce all in one to get your site up and running fast.

02 | AdRotate

When I think of making money from blogging, advertising is often the first thing that comes to mind, and as I discussed earlier, it's one of the easiest ways to start monetizing your existing content.

Using AdRotate makes monetizing your content even easier by managing and serving ads on your site and supporting popular advertising networks like Google AdSense. The basic version is available for free download from the WordPress.org plugin repository. You'll get more advanced features with the premium version, including live ad previews, mobile device detection, geotargeting, and much more. It also comes with an easy-to-use dashboard where you can review how well your ads are performing at a glance with daily, monthly, and yearly stats. The plugin also allows you to sell ad space directly to advertisers, so you can keep the full ad revenue instead of just a percentage.

03 | Easy Digital Downloads

Here's another one of my favorite monetizing streams — selling digital products. Creating a storefront to sell only digital products can provide you with a steady stream of income from your blog. And if you opt for this, Easy Digital Downloads is the best plugin.

Now you might be wondering, why not use WooCommerce to create a digital storefront? It is a good choice if you want to sell digital products along with physical ones. However, it comes with lots of unnecessary options such as shipping and inventory management that you'll never need for your digital storefront. Easy Digital Downloads offers a lighter weight plugin that offers more features specific to digital products. Best of all, the Easy Digital Downloads community is huge, so you can easily find many other useful add-on plugins to help you enhance the features of your digital store.

The bottom line

ABOUT MONETIZING YOUR BLOG

It's important to use the right plugins, promote brands you believe in, and optimize ads that you run on your site. Doing all of this ensures you aren't wasting too much time managing the details.



MORE ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

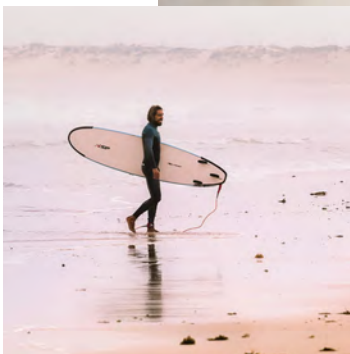
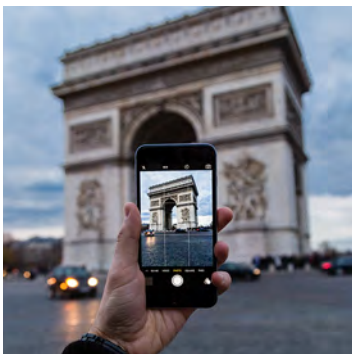
Kyle Davis

I'm the Affiliate Marketing Manager at Bluehost. Having been in the affiliate marketing industry for just shy of a decade, I have loads of experience on how to establish your audience and monetize your website. I've been able to work on both the advertising and publishing sides of the business providing an extremely well-rounded base of knowledge and skills.

I believe that affiliate marketing is one of the tried and true methods for making money online, and this industry will not be going away anytime soon. When it comes to marketing strategy, I'd have to say I am a strong believer in working smarter, not harder.

Kyle

[@kyle_oneofmany](#)





PART TWO

Blogger Insight & Inspiration







Food Blogging

WITH MONIQUE KARABACH

[@atxeatsandtreats](#)

So, you want to be a food
blogger but don't know
where to start?

I've been there (2016 to be exact).

I've learned a lot along the way — from the logistics of how you even buy a website — to learning how to take pictures and creating content that people want to read. There are a ton of misconceptions about food blogging that I want to walk you through, including some things I wish I'd known when I started.

Here's where to begin ...



Ask yourself: What will my blog be about? Who is my target audience? What is my message?

I came up with ATX Eats and Treats because I'm based in Austin, Texas and I wanted something catchy but on topic with what my content would be about. I went to Bluehost.com and used its search tool to find out what domains were available. I've been using Bluehost for more than three years and I've loved my user experience thus far. I've posted over 200 articles with over 30,000 views since starting my blog.

Set clear goals

Now that you have your blog name and a general idea of your messaging, it's time to get specific.

Your next step is to figure out what kind of content you want to produce. For example, you can highlight individual restaurants, create your own unique recipes, or post specific guides (I do all three). Be true to yourself and let your personality shine!

And you don't have to give your whole life story, but people want to know the person behind the blog, so in your About Me page include interesting information about yourself (FAQs or a short bio would work just fine too). I write the way I would talk in person: I use all caps when I'm excited and I give my honest opinions whether it's a restaurant visit or my own recipes.



You want to be authentic and original, but create content that your audience wants.



Become an ace photographer

There are lots of important things to consider when starting a food blog — from your voice to your branding and logo design. However, there is almost nothing more important than the quality of your photos.

CUSTOM PHOTOGRAPHY

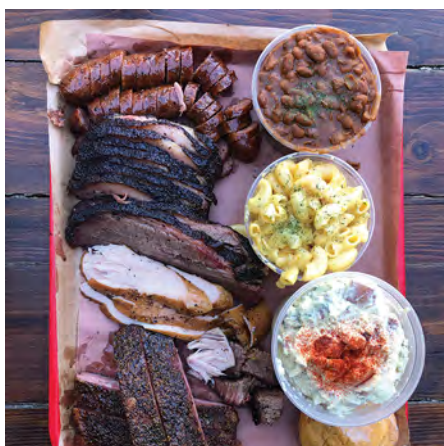
First of all, never use stock photos as a food blogger! You will lose so much credibility by doing this. Taking all your own photos is important because it's an extension of your brand and your work.

CAMERA SELECTION

It's amazing how phone cameras have evolved over the years! I really don't believe you have to buy a fancy, expensive camera when you're just starting out. Use what you have, spend time editing your photos, and keep it consistent. I have a set filter I use in Snapseed for almost all my photos. At the beginning you might want to experiment with different styles and see what people respond to and what speaks to you most.

PHOTO FILTER

Check out the example below of an unfiltered photo. It's dark, the colors are dull, and it's slightly crooked. Next, look at the same photo with the filter I created. It's bright, vibrant, and focused. When you look at my Instagram feed, there's coherence to my style. I do a lot of close-up shots and photos of me with a table full of food.



before



after



Produce mouth-watering content

Content is what makes a blog a blog. You should write catchy titles, but then also get straight to the point. Offer your viewers something valuable.

Look at bloggers that you admire and see what they're doing right. Read the comments and see what people are requesting or saying they really like and appreciate.

CONSISTENT POSTING

I think it's important to post often and consistently — you might want to post more in the first six months. That may be about two or three blog posts a week and five to six posts on Instagram and Facebook. I'm much more active on Instagram than I am on Facebook, and that's pretty common for food bloggers. After all, food is visual and so is Instagram. I'm on Instagram an average of five hours a day responding to comments and engaging with like-minded people and fellow bloggers.

CONSISTENT VOICE

It may sound obvious, but make sure you do your best to avoid typos and stick to the same tense. Meaning, if you're talking about a restaurant you visited, use past tense in the entire post. People are looking for blogs they can resonate with and respect. Even one misspelled word can turn off a reader. Be meticulous and careful. If you have the ability, have someone proofread your work, especially at the beginning!

You don't have to write about food trends. If you don't like sushi burritos, don't write about them. Write about and photograph places and food that you love!





Myth busters

01

MYTH

If you post a recipe, you have to write a bunch of filler at the top.

REALITY

I might be going against the grain, but I never do this! I get straight to the point with the ingredients and directions. Some bloggers post a lot of filler so they can have more ad views and rank higher with their search engine optimization (SEO). It's up to you how you want to navigate this, but don't be afraid to experiment.

02

MYTH

You have to be trained in writing, editing, or photography in order to start blogging.

REALITY

While doing some research on your own is important, you don't have to be a professional to get started! I'm a self-taught chef that didn't go to culinary school, but I'm still successful because I practice and experiment in the kitchen and people enjoy what I present to them!

Grow your readers organically

Developing a following doesn't happen overnight and doing it genuinely takes time. People always ask how I grew my following. Honestly, it's grown as much as it has through years of hard work and meaningful connections.



GROWING A FOLLOWING

I feel very strongly about not using paid advertising or groups to grow my following because I don't think it's genuine. However, I do host giveaways from time to time partnering with restaurants or brands I believe in. This is an easy way to help grow your following by offering something of value!

CONNECTING WITH OTHERS

It's important to connect with people on Facebook or Instagram. I mainly use Instagram, and I like to go to different hashtags and engage with posts that I like by commenting about something in the photo, not just posting a random emoji.

ENGAGING ON YOUR BLOG

Every time someone comments on your post, comment back! Make people feel important (because they are) and thank them for spending time on your page. Most likely the town you're in already has a food community — in Austin we have the Austin Food Bloggers Alliance — and this is a great way to get connected. I met some of my dearest friends through the Alliance years ago, and it's created a wonderful support system that we all benefit from.

It might take a lot of initiating on your part, but don't be afraid to put yourself out there. Also, you can enable or disable commenting on your blog — I have them disabled but encourage people to email me directly through the contact page on my website. I receive a lot of messages and emails because I let people know that I'm here for them.

You want to create meaningful connections, so treat the people you interact with as if they're already your friends.



Wanna get free stuff?

One question I get asked often is if I get free food. Yes, I do, but I didn't for almost a full year.

Once I felt like I created a blog I was proud of, I started asking restaurants I knew and loved if they would be interested in hosting me in exchange for social media exposure. I contacted restaurants that I've visited several times previously, and sent them my Instagram posts and media kit, sharing with them the value of my work. There are a lot of bloggers today getting into the blogging world just to get free food, and that's not why you should become a blogger. It's not a sustainable practice and you will more than likely burn out.

The reason I post about restaurants or products is because I actually enjoy them, and I want to support them by sharing my experience with my followers. I'm at the point where I'm getting paid to post about products that I already love. This level of "influencing" took me years to achieve. Now, restaurants and PR companies reach out to me 95% of the time.

My tips and tricks

There are a few things to fast track your success.

01

UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCE

When you know what people are searching for, you have a better idea of what to write and post about.

02

RESEARCH HASHTAGS

You don't want to use the same list for every post. Home in on niche tags like #austinfoodie and #eateratx. Create your list based on the goal. Do you want people who are searching for where to eat in your city to find your post? Put yourself in your audience's shoes. Would you search #bestfoodaustin to find where to eat? Then use that tag! You want to avoid using widely used tags like #food because there are millions of photos with that tag, and you might think it would increase visibility but your post will get lost in the flood.



03

GOOGLE TOOLS

Great (and mostly free) tools that easily allow you to track blog data, trends, traffic, and more.

04

WORDPRESS PLUGINS

Get a WordPress plugin that allows you to create a "subscribe" form as a pop-up when someone visits your blog. I have hundreds of additional subscribers from using this simple form.

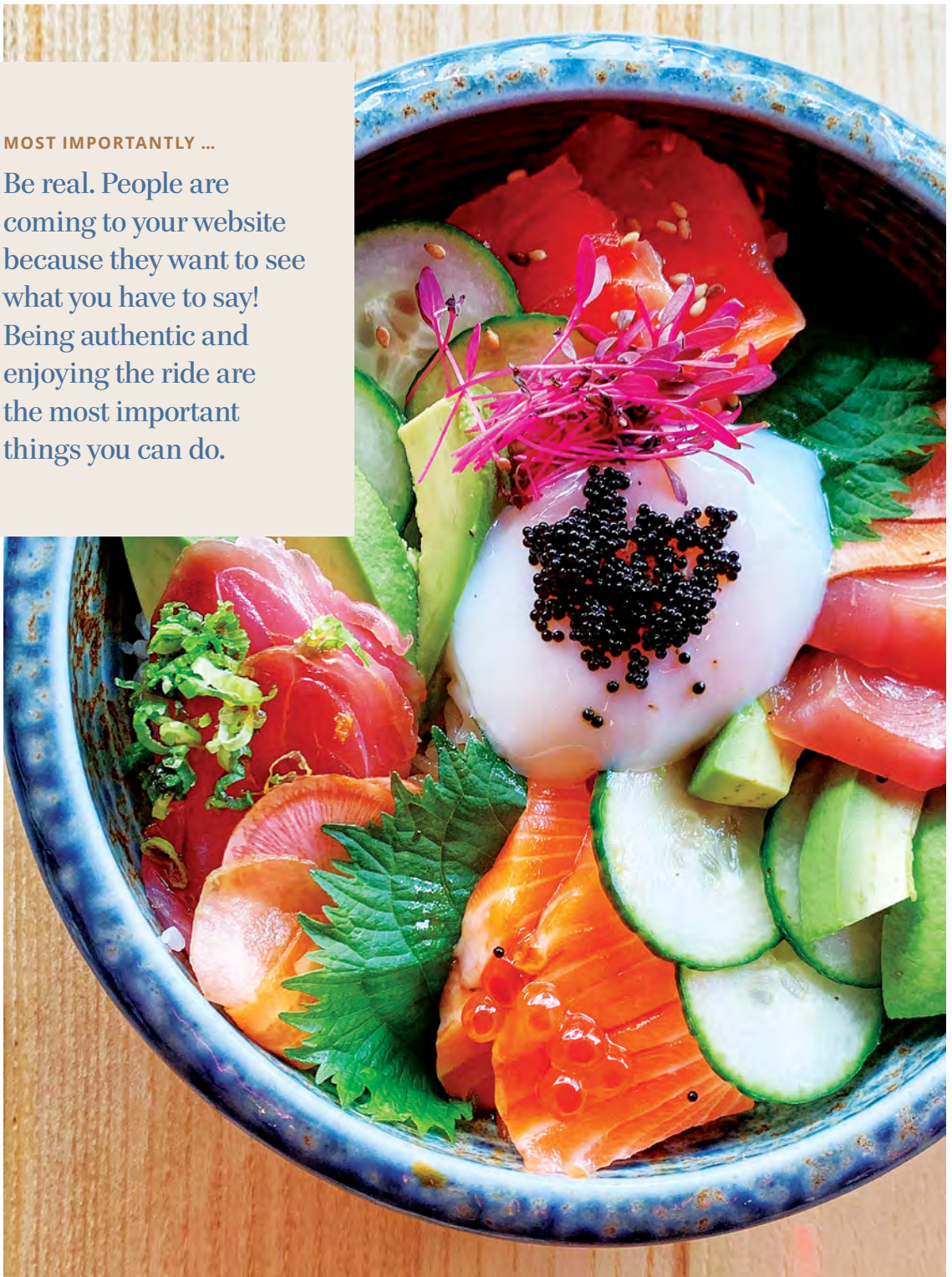
05

BE MOBILE READY!

Remember that most people looking at your content are doing so on their smartphone, so make sure your website is easy to view and access while on your phone!

MOST IMPORTANTLY ...

Be real. People are coming to your website because they want to see what you have to say! Being authentic and enjoying the ride are the most important things you can do.



Blog topics you can steal

If you have a hard time coming up with what to write about, take a look at the following! But I encourage you to write about what you're interested in, not just hot topics or food trends.

01

20 top date-night
restaurants

06

Where to get the best
Tex-Mex in town

02

Hot summer
restaurants

07

Best restaurants
for dinner parties

03

How to make the best
gluten-free lasagna

08

Christmas Eve
dinner ideas

04

Where to eat in
(insert city) in 24 hours

09

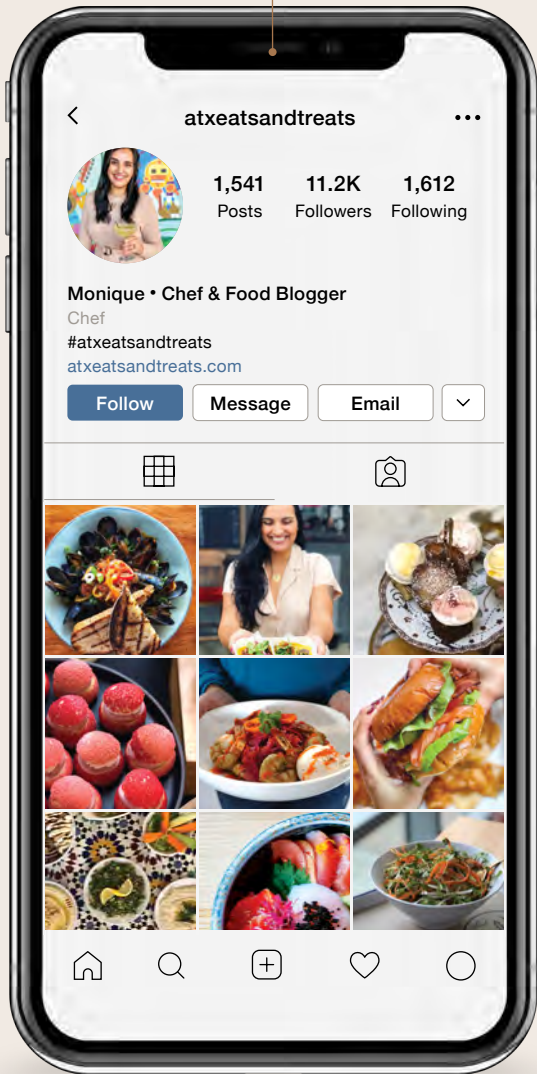
How to make the
best margarita

05

15 places to get
a milkshake in
(insert city)

10

Best wine pairings
for an Italian dinner



MORE ABOUT THE BLOGGER

Monique Karabach

I'm a food blogger, influencer, and private chef in Austin, Texas. I've been blogging since the beginning of 2016 and have worked with hundreds of restaurants, brands, PR companies, hotels, and more!

I've gotten to learn and understand how to effectively share sponsored (and unsponsored) experiences with honesty and sincerity. My whole world revolves around food, whether it's eating, cooking, or writing about it!

Monique

www.atxeatsandtreats.com
[@atxeatsandtreats](https://www.instagram.com/atxeatsandtreats)





Travel Blogging

WITH ONEIKA RAYMOND

[@oneikatraveller](#)

Want to start a travel blog?

Well, as a veteran travel blogger and travel content creator, I get asked how to do so all the time.

To hear bloggers tell it, we live glamorous lives, flitting from beautiful location to beautiful location and making our subscribers burst with wanderlust (and green with travel envy). However, travel blogging isn't quite as easy as sharing words and pictures of your adventures as you globetrot. If you truly want to be successful, there are a few crucial things you need to consider before making your first few posts. Here are my top suggestions.

Pick well-traveled platforms

Choosing an online home for your collection of travel stories and pictures might be one of the most difficult decisions you'll have to make at first.



There is no shortage of platforms on which to share your adventures.

From more “traditional” blogging platforms like WordPress and Squarespace, to “trending” social media apps like Instagram and TikTok, the choices of platforms are both endless and intimidating.

HOW DO YOU AVOID FEELING OVERWHELMED?

Choose your platforms

I recommend that travel-blogging hopefuls limit themselves to posting on only two to three platforms at first until they get the hang of things.

Own your content

I also strongly suggest that beginners launch at least part of their content on a platform they own (like a self-hosted WordPress website) as opposed to entirely on social media. The reason? A self-hosted site means you have more control and ownership over your content. With social media apps, you're completely at their mercy, and if they ever decide to fold, you could lose all of the content you posted on there. Remember Vine? What happened there is a prime example.

WHAT ABOUT VLOGGING AS OPPOSED TO BLOGGING?

Logging your travel adventures on video is also an exciting and immersive way to share your dispatches from the road. Feel free to incorporate video content into your storytelling, but don't feel obligated! Shooting and editing video can be quite an onerous task in addition to photography and writing.



Become an expert in your niche

The best travel blogs have a topic or specialty that guides most — if not all — of the content on the site.

These themes, or niches, allow bloggers to streamline their content to fit the needs and interests of a particular audience. Choosing a niche also allows you to develop your expertise in a particular subject matter, which is important for establishing yourself as an authority in the travel industry.

BUT HOW DO YOU FIND A NICHE THAT IS BOTH AUTHENTIC AND ORGANIC?

Well, looking at your interests, social status, or travel style are great places to start. For example, are you a woman who writes often about traveling on her own? If so, an obvious niche would be “solo female travel,” and blog posts focusing on, say, the best destinations for women traveling alone, or safety tips for solo females, would fit nicely into this theme. Likewise, there are travel blogs that specialize in family travel, adventure travel, or culinary travel. While it’s not necessary to restrict your travel blog to a single niche, I don’t recommend having more than two or three.



Your writer's voice is what will ultimately distinguish you from another blogger.

Be real, authentic, and engaging

How do you get your travel blog to stand out in a vast sea of other travel blogs?

How do you grow a legion of adoring fans who keep coming back to your website for more travel tips and stories?

THE ANSWER LIES IN ESTABLISHING YOUR VOICE AS A WRITER

That means infusing your blog posts with your personality, style, and character. After all, your writer's voice is your unique way of relating your travel tales so that they are intriguing to others and ultimately jump off the page.

BUT HOW DO YOU DEVELOP YOUR VOICE AS A TRAVEL BLOGGER SPECIFICALLY?

While the elements of each individual's voice will vary, writing about your travels openly, honestly, and vividly is always helpful. Additionally, highly descriptive text that is rich in adjectives and imagery will go a long way in giving your readers the impression that they're traveling right beside you. For example, instead of just writing that the fruit market in Bali "smelled good," you could say that it was "pleasantly fragrant." Or instead of writing that the air in Dubai was "dusty," you could describe it as being "so gritty it felt like sandpaper in my mouth."

Regardless of the exact words you use, the most important thing is to be authentic to who you are. I often tell people struggling with this concept to write their first blog posts by narrating them out loud and using a speech-to-text app to dictate!

Up your photography game

By nature, a travel blog is a highly visual niche. While writing about a particular destination or experience is great, stunning pictures are what will really bring it to life for your audience. As such, learning how to capture compelling images is key.

CAMERA SELECTION

A lot of travel bloggers who are just starting out get caught up in what camera they should use. But, as the saying goes in most photography circles, “the best camera is the one already in your hand.” While I love my big, fancy Sony mirrorless camera for travel photography, I’m equally enthused by my tiny phone camera and have taken amazing photos on both my Pixel and iPhone. So, don’t worry about purchasing expensive photography equipment right off the bat. Learn the basic principles of photography first.

ESTABLISHING A VISUAL STYLE

While each photographer’s visual style will vary, I’m a huge fan of vibrant color, interesting architecture, and expansive landscapes when I travel. Whatever your preference for subject matter, it’s good to settle on a consistent “look” for your photos, which may involve using a photo editing program like Adobe Lightroom or Snapseed. I typically use Adobe Lightroom to edit my pics, and create presets within the app, which allows me to achieve a very crisp, colorful visual identity which is very cohesive across all my images.



Rule of Thumb

WHEN IT COMES TO PHOTOGRAPHY

Good travel photos are ones that are sharp, well-composed, and show off an interesting view or perspective of a destination.

Be as visible as you can be

Search engine optimization (SEO) is crucial to gaining visibility for your newly minted travel blog.



WHAT'S THE BENEFIT OF SEO?

SEO is the practice of optimizing your blog posts so that they'll rank higher in a search engine's organic search results. Having your blog appear more frequently and at a higher position on Google or Bing's search page generally means that you'll get more web traffic, which in turn makes it easier to grow your blog's audience.

While the ins and outs of SEO can be tedious, be sure to check out that chapter and know that learning it is well worth the time and effort! Fee-based courses teaching SEO strategy abound — though YouTube is a great place for free info if you're just looking to learn the basics.

Make your readers want more

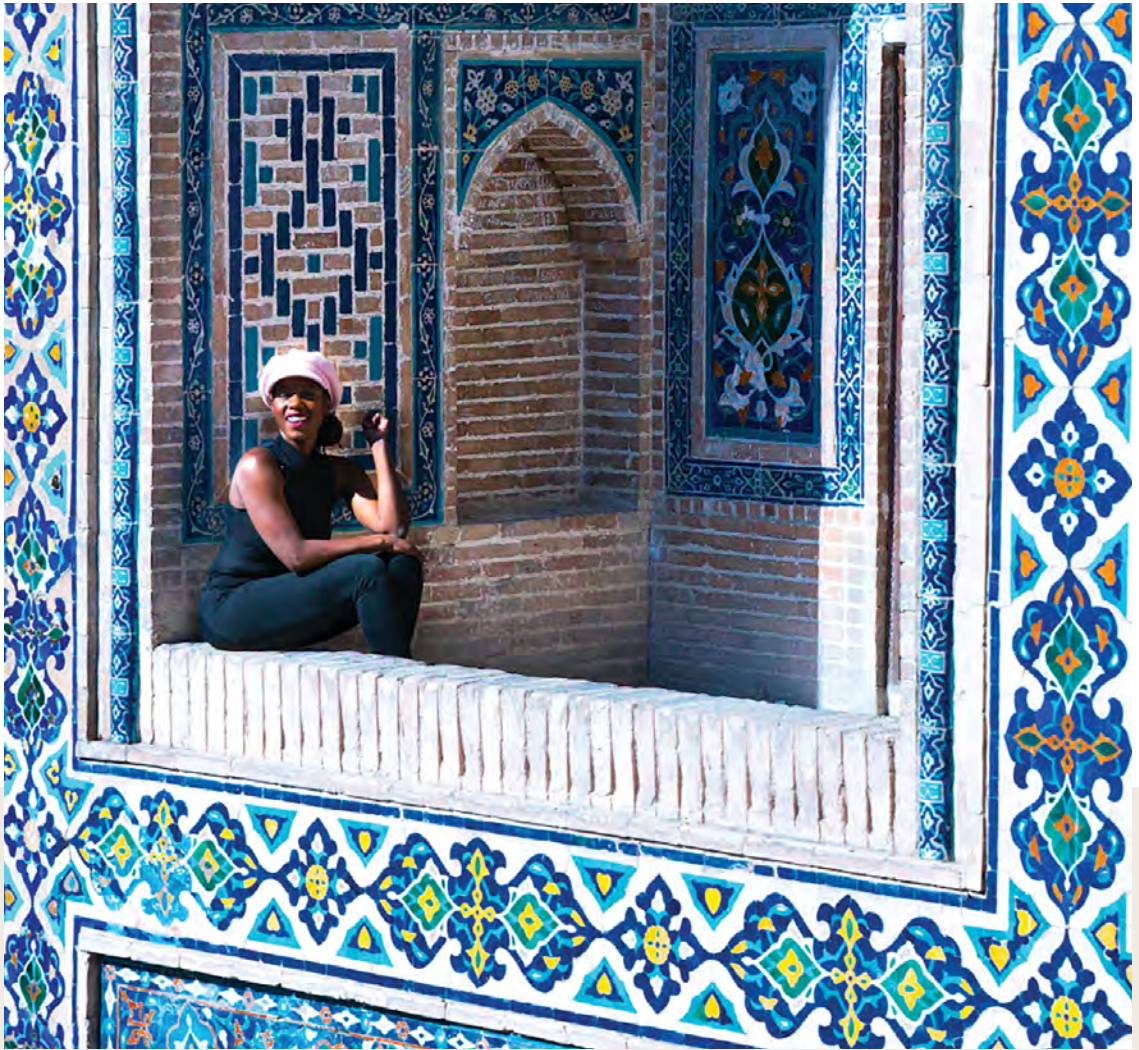
Running a successful travel blog requires not only posting quality content, but also posting that quality content on a consistent basis.

This is particularly important when you're starting out, because growing a fan base means that you have to keep your audience attentive, interested in your blog, and coming back for more.

So, in the beginning, aim to launch your site with at least five amazing blog posts, then continue to post at least two to three times a week (for at least the first two months) to keep the momentum going. Put aside time every week where you can work solely on content creation and don't be afraid to work on drafting multiple posts simultaneously — I personally find it more efficient.



A website without any new content is not enticing to the casual reader who is not yet a loyal fan — you have to reel them in first.



Promote, promote, promote — and promote even more

As a new travel blogger, you'll quickly discover that promotion is integral to the growth and longevity of your travel blog.

Use Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, and Instagram Stories to share links to your articles and think about using a content scheduler like Later or Hootsuite to automatically post at regular intervals. Enlist the help of family, friends, and other travel bloggers to share your content on their social media platforms, and offer incentives like giveaways to draw more potential subscribers in and get more eyes on your work.

Myth busters

Travel blogging comes with its fair share of myths and inaccuracies. Here are some common misconceptions about the industry, versus the more widely accepted realities.



01

MYTH

You have to travel often in order to have a travel blog.

REALITY

While traveling might be the impetus for beginning a travel blog, by no means do travel bloggers have to travel non-stop in order to run a successful website.

In fact, many popular travel bloggers have made names for themselves by becoming local experts — that is, writing about destinations and attractions found in their relative backyards. As someone who has lived in New York City for the last four years, I have endless travel topics I could blog about without ever leaving the city limits. I'm a firm believer that a good travel story can be found right at your fingertips if you're creative enough.



02

MYTH

Travel bloggers get to travel “for free.”

REALITY

A good number of people think that travel bloggers are awash in “free” travel from hotels, airlines, and the like. However, there’s nothing further from the truth. Even if there’s no money exchanging hands, collaborating with tourism boards and sponsors in the transportation, accommodation, and culinary industries requires an exchange of services. For example, if you’re receiving a “comped” (complimentary) hotel room, the expectation is often that you write a review of it on your website.

03

MYTH

If you have a travel blog, you’ll be able to get paid to travel right away.

REALITY

Taking your travel blog from a hobby to a reliable source of income takes time, hard work, and patience. In my case, I blogged part-time for a solid 10 years before I was able to quit my day job as a secondary school teacher and run my travel brand on a full-time, paid basis.

I promise that if you take the time to grow your audience, refine your skill set, and build up your site with quality articles that are both relevant and valuable, paid assignments will begin to come your way. Stellar content along with a strong professional reputation will get you noticed by potential sponsors who have the ability to pay you for your services.

I am a huge proponent of how travel writing encourages people to go forth and explore.





Tools of the trade

New to travel blogging? Here's a list of some essential tools and services I use (and love!) on a regular basis.

01

WEBSITE CREATION

WordPress

WordPress is my top pick for software you can use to create your website. I recommend the paid, self-hosted version over the free version for greater flexibility and control.

Jetpack plugin for WordPress

This plugin is a companion to your WordPress site and allows for greater site customization, security, and social sharing, among other things.

02

ANALYTICS

Keysearch

This web-based tool is a must if you're serious about using SEO to your advantage. It allows you to search for keywords that will help you rank on search engines like Google and Bing.

Google Analytics

Google Analytics is the industry standard for reporting your blog's stats, which are super important when pitching brands or simply assessing what your site traffic is and where it's coming from.

03

GRAPHICS

Canva

This online graphic design platform is perfect for creating social graphics and other visual media for your blog and brand.

04

PHOTO EDITING

Adobe Lightroom

This photo editing program will greatly aid you in improving the quality of your images. While the paid version of the app requires a monthly subscription, the free version for your phone, while limited, is adequate for those looking to make simple, yet effective edits to photos.

TouchRetouch

The free version of this photo editing app is great for removing unwanted content or objects from your photos. I love it as it's extremely quick and easy to use.

Blog topics you can steal

Stellar content is the cornerstone of any successful travel blog. Here are a few ideas for travel blog topics that will be sure to engage your audience.

01

Top travel destinations on a budget

06

5 cities you need to travel to right now

02

How to find cheap airfare

07

The best free walking tours in Europe

03

How to travel with only carry-on luggage

08

How to improve your travel photography

04

Why studying abroad is the best free way to travel

09

The 10 top destinations for traveling foodies

05

How to save more money for travel

10

Best cities in Asia to travel with kids



MORE ABOUT THE BLOGGER

Oneika Raymond

Bonjour! My name is Oneika Raymond and I'm the author of "Oneika the Traveller," a blog that explores travel through an educational and cultural lens.

I first started my blog in 2005 when I was living in France and looking for a way to share my European travel adventures with friends and family back in Canada. After a weak internet connection made sending emails to my loved ones a tedious affair, I decided that uploading my words and images to a blog for everyone to read would be a far more efficient option. Now, 15 years later, I've traveled to nearly 120 countries and work in travel media full time!

Oneika www.oneikathetraveller.com / [@oneikatraveller](https://twitter.com/oneikatraveller)







Family Blogging

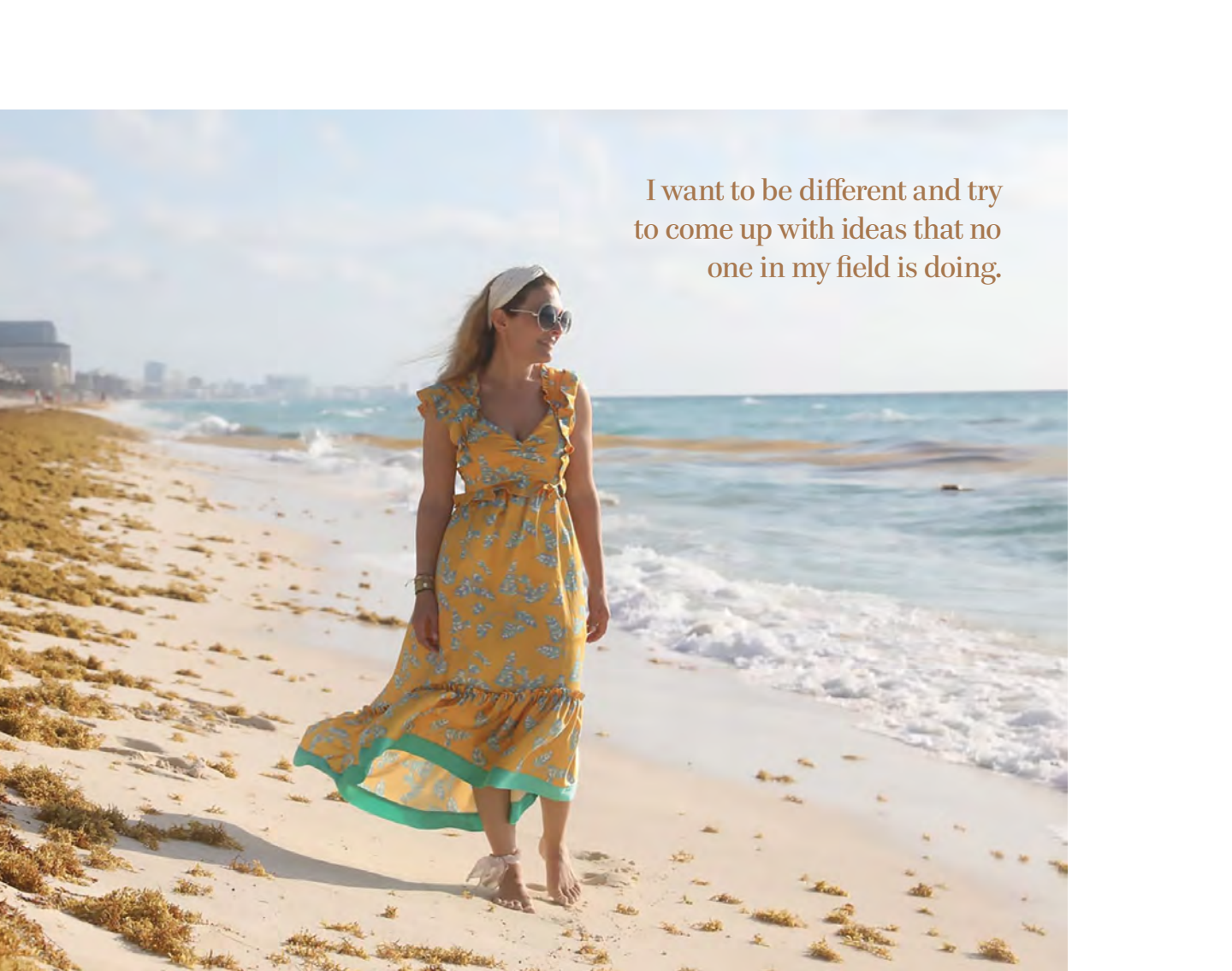
WITH BRIANNE MANZ

@strollerinthecity

How do you start a family-focused blog?

I get asked this question all the time and my immediate response is to just start writing down what you want to share.

Of course, the first step would be to find a content management system that suits you — I use WordPress for my blog. I think the best way to start is to write down a few article ideas, post beautiful photos, and then just start sharing with your friends and family. When thinking about what posts you should start with, think about what you are passionate about. If it's baking, then create your first post on your favorite recipe. Show your readers not only the recipe, but why you love it. Create social media accounts and share your content there as well.

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a white headband, sunglasses, and a yellow floral dress with a green hem, is walking barefoot on a sandy beach. The ocean waves are breaking in the background, and a city skyline is visible in the distance under a clear blue sky.

I want to be different and try to come up with ideas that no one in my field is doing.

Be your authentic self

I believe we are all different and there is enough room for everyone to share their experiences and stand out.

FIND WHAT YOU ARE PASSIONATE ABOUT AND FOCUS ON THAT

I absolutely love fashion and travel, and found a way to marry the two with my blog. For example, I love giving my readers an inside peek into what I'm packing and where I'm traveling to next. I write about what I'm passionate about such as family travel, raising children in New York, and I love to review baby gear. Now that my children are older, I have contributors who write about all things baby so we can still be in the know for new moms.



Quirky and unique is in demand

I'm the type of person that never followed the crowd.

If everyone went to Cancun for spring break, I was the person that would head to Miami instead. Same runs true for my blog.

For example, seven years ago my small little blog (with maybe 10,000 unique visitors at the time) pitched the Four Seasons in Nevis. I visited Nevis, before I developed my site, when I was pregnant with my son Ryder for a "Baby Moon," and wanted to go back with my entire family as a "Family Moon" and cover the property from that angle. Never in a million years did I think Four Seasons would love my idea and sponsor my trip.



Brands want to hear from you and your ideas about how to make their brand stand out. So, if you have an idea, find the right contact person and pitch yourself!



Package your brand — and pitch it!

It's all about pitching.

I spend many hours a week looking at brands I used to work with, pitching ideas, and sending out my media kit.

MEDIA KITS ARE A MUST

You can hire someone to create one for you, or make one yourself. I love using the site Canva to create my media kit. Some key information that should go in one are: your bio, contact numbers, social media handles, and any brands you've worked with in the past. Also, put in case studies about specific brands you've worked with and give data on how well the campaign did.

FINDING THE RIGHT CONTACT

Nowadays, it's pretty easy finding the right contact person. If I cannot find the person on LinkedIn, I will direct message the brand on Instagram and ask if I can be put in touch with the right person. For every five people I pitch, maybe I'll land a gig or two. Do not wait for something to pop up in your inbox. You can also hire a brand manager to do the pitching for you and whatever they book, they will receive a cut of your profits. I think when it comes to finding the right brands to work with, I go back and look at what I'm using in my everyday life and start there. For example, what makeup are you into, or what is your favorite household cleaner you can never live without? Go ahead and pitch those first!

Ready, set — jump!

Once you feel secure and confident enough to leave your day job, and your blogging career has pretty much taken over, take the risk!

I have many friends making the transition to full-time right now. I know some friends were getting paid more money with their side blogging than their steady job, and that's when they decided to make the jump and leave their 9–5.



Capture the sweetest moments of your everyday reality

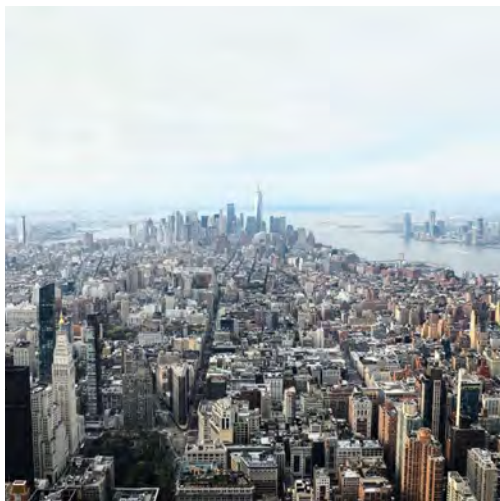
My family is a major part of my blog and sometimes it is hard separating the two because our reality is also our online life. My kids know we get to experience incredible things for my blog and that I'll need a photo here and there to document it.



Once it starts becoming non-organic, I pretty much give up, and try to shoot on another day, or simply do it without my children. Not all of Stroller in the City involves my children. I tend to do a lot of fashion posts or round-ups that do not require photos with my children. Since I have been doing this for ten years, I don't really put a certain amount of time aside if I'm doing something with my kids to document it.

I also love to capture my children in the moment. For example, if I'm having an incredible day with them at the beach, I'll sometimes just snap a few photos without them even knowing as they play in the ocean. My husband is super supportive of what I do and will help snap a few photos here and there.

I just love the fact that when my kids are older, they will have this online journey to look back on. I wish blogging was around when I was little.



Documenting our family has just become part of our everyday life and something we rarely think about.



Stand strong — be true to yourself and your family

STAND UP FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN

There will always be the naysayers or the trolls, and it is your job to stand up for what you believe in. Don't engage with them and remember it's not you, it's them. I've had plenty of mean comments throughout the years, and just decided it's not worth my time to engage or have an answer for them. I encourage you to never spend any time dwelling over hurtful comments from others.

On the other hand, I also believe it's okay for others to have a different opinion than you. For example, if they aren't into that particular dress, it's okay for them to voice their opinion. I think it's super important to communicate with my audience and respond to as many comments as I can, whether it be on my blog, Instagram, or Facebook. This is something my assistant and I do on a weekly basis.

You must have thick skin for this business!

FAMILY PRIVACY

When it comes to the privacy of my children, I want to protect them online. Right now, my son has an Instagram account (we are not there yet with my daughters), but his account is private and, of course, my husband and I have access to it. None of my kids are into social media, and even though they do lead very public lives, I am also mindful about what type of information I share about them online. I've never said what schools or doctors they go to, for example. Now as they get older, I don't share anything that would embarrass them online either.



Build a consistent visual image

01

PHOTO EDITING

VSCO, Snapseed, PicTapGo

To get a consistent look, I would recommend using the same app or filter for each of your photos.

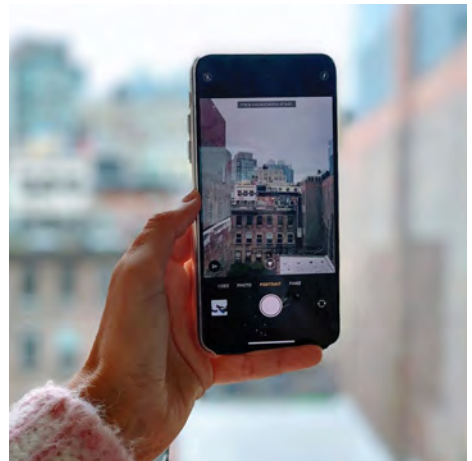


02

LAYOUT

Planoly

I also use an app that helps me lay out my feed so I know which photos look best next to one another. For example, I usually wouldn't post two family photos side by side. I like when you look at my feed, you'll see family photos, scenic photos, some close-ups, and maybe one of just me sprinkled in there. Putting two images of all five of us side by side to me looks a little repetitive. Don't get me wrong — if I like the photo, it will probably appear in my feed the following week.



How often to post

I like to produce new content for my blog four to five times a week. I then take those blog posts, and share them on all my social media channels to gain more traction. If I am sharing a photo of our ski trip on my Instagram handle saying click here to see the article, I'll share a different photo from that same ski trip on my Facebook the following day.

Rule of Thumb

WHEN IT COMES TO POST FREQUENCY

I've learned through the years not to share all the same content at once because you want the most clicks on your content.



Social or blog? The answer: both.

I focus on all platforms, some more so than others. My blog always comes first.

INSTAGRAM

Next, I focus on Instagram. I share IG stories on a daily basis (maybe six a day) to give my readers an insider look into our real, raw life. These are usually not planned out, unless they are from a sponsored campaign where I would have to get approval on posting them. Some brands require a draft review on all content before going live.

FACEBOOK AND PINTEREST

When I do a blog post, I like to stagger out the social media posts that coincide with it over the course of a week. If I'm doing a sponsored blog post, and don't feel the engagement was great — maybe it didn't receive a comment — I will promote the post through Facebook or Pinterest.

Know your audience

In my opinion, the best platforms for family blogging are:

1. **INSTAGRAM**
2. **INSTAGRAM STORIES**
3. **FACEBOOK**
4. **PINTEREST**

I don't think my readers are into TikTok or Twitter as much, but I make sure to grab my handle on every platform available to ensure no one else can use my name. If you are a mom, think about the platforms your other mom friends are using. I know my mom friends aren't using Twitter, so it's a platform I tend to stay away from.

Rule of Thumb

WHEN IT COMES TO SOCIAL CHANNELS

Test out social channels and see which ones suit you.

I don't think all social channels need to have a huge presence across the board. For example, I don't share many recipes, so Pinterest isn't my strong suit. But for something like TikTok, I know it's not my jam, so I won't even try to get on there.



To vlog or not ...

I think you can have a very successful YouTube channel if you are running a family blog. Readers like to see raw footage of our everyday lives.

Instagram is a hyper-stylized feed for me, while YouTube and Instagram stories show a deeper look at our lives. I like to document our travels through videos, but I will say the bulk of my audience is not on YouTube. I love to have YouTube as an option and love to share my videos on Instagram and the blog too.





Must-have tools and services

01

WORDPRESS

This is a great platform for starting your blog. I've hired a web designer to lay out my blog, but you can easily do this yourself through the many WordPress themes.

02

TAILWIND

I use Tailwind to schedule my pins on Pinterest. I do not have the time to schedule pins daily and this platform does that for me easily. I usually schedule out an entire month in advance.

03

DSLR CAMERA OR A PHONE WITH A GREAT CAMERA

I've always used my DSLR camera for blog photos, but just recently started using the new iPhone 11 — it takes just as good of photos as my DSLR camera does. Having great photos is important for your family blog.

04

CANVA

This is a great program for creating pins or collages for roundup blog posts.

Blog topics you can steal

Readers love roundup posts! Sprinkle a few of those in your monthly editorial calendars. Also include tips for traveling with kids, tutorials and recipes — anything educational for children, too!

01

10 best dresses for
Valentine's Day

06

Best makeup tips
for a mom on the go

02

Activities to keep
a two-year-old busy

07

5 learning toys
and tutoring ideas

03

Tips for keeping
kids entertained
on airplanes

08

10 things to do
with your kids during
spring break

04

Best travel spots
for kids

09

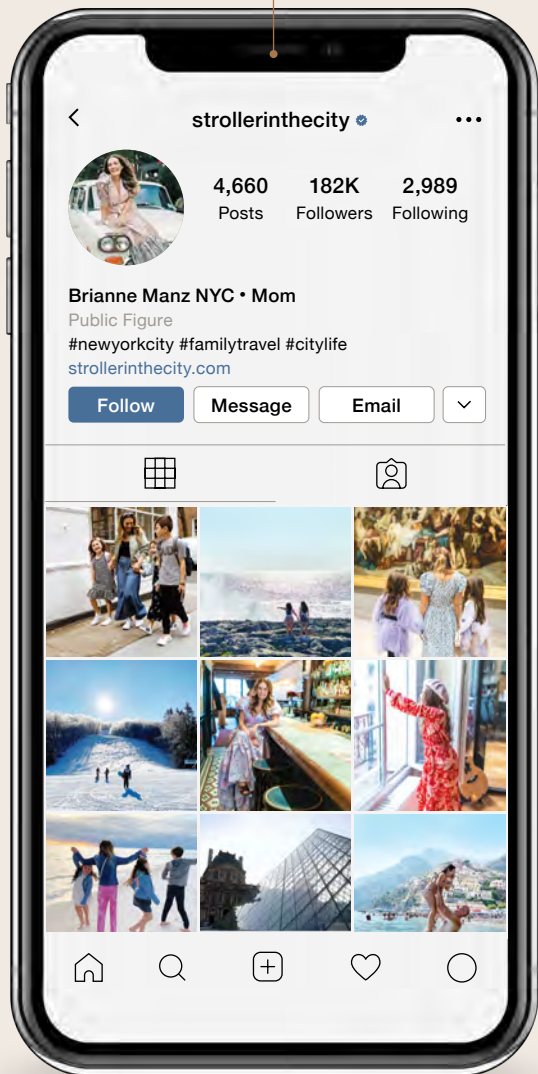
Best strollers
for your child

05

5 dinner
alternatives for the
pickiest eater

10

Quick hairstyles to
get you (and your kids)
out the door



MORE ABOUT THE BLOGGER

Brianne Manz

“Stroller In The City” boasts about city living, family travel, kids’ fashion, and all things mommy. I started my online journal ten years ago after leaving the fashion industry and selling my fashion showroom to become a full-time mom. SITC organically grew through the years and morphed into a lifestyle blog with the expansion of my family.

Now, ten years and three children later, SITC is my full-time dream job. I’ve been featured in and have contributed to multiple family magazines, and was recently featured on the cover of *New York Family*.

Stay true to yourself, keep your head down, and do not focus on what other bloggers are doing.

Brianne

www.strollerinthecity.com

[@strollerinthecity](https://www.instagram.com/strollerinthecity)





Lifestyle Blogging

WITH STEPHANIE HERNANDEZ

@thetinyherbivore

Starting a lifestyle blog

It's well known in the blogging world that having a niche can be more successful than choosing a more general topic for your site.

Lifestyle blogging could easily be made into a more niche category depending on what you're aiming to write about. Every single topic in the "Lifestyle" category is actually its own type of blog. For example, "Food" could easily just be a food blog. "Style & Beauty" can be its own fashion blog. Writing about multiple things can be a little bit more difficult to be successful, but it's not impossible.

When you're starting your lifestyle blog, you need to figure out what your tone of voice is and the specific type of content you want to create. You can go the more personal route and create lifestyle content based specifically on your life. This would be a blog that focuses on things such as your own renovations, your personal recipes, or your clothing. If you don't want to talk about your personal life, that's okay! The type of lifestyle blog I have is more impersonal, which just means it's not so much about my life, and more about information and trendy topics.



Here's the thing ...

Even when an industry feels saturated, there is always space for you.

There are tons of websites and blogs that write just about the exact same content I write about. In fact, the content I create for one of my clients is exactly the same as what I write on my blog. This could be demotivating for some people, but I like to think of it as bread. When you go to the grocery store to buy bread, look at all the options. There's so much bread to choose from.

To differentiate yourself from all of these other sites is to create a brand. This means having a cohesive theme around all of your social media content. Even though my blog has more impersonal, informative content, it still reeks of my personal style of writing, my voice, and my blog itself is eye-catching.

Making your lifestyle pay for itself

One of the trickiest things with lifestyle blogging is making money from it.

It is definitely more difficult than if you chose a more niche topic, specifically ones where you can promote courses and books which always make the most money.

When you run a general lifestyle blog, the best way to make money is through:

ADS ON YOUR SITE

At first, you definitely won't make much money from running ads on your site as you won't have much traffic. As you build traffic, that money will start rolling in.

AFFILIATE MARKETING

One of the best ways to make some money is affiliate marketing. While you may not make as much as you would by selling expensive courses, recommending lifestyle products to people is a surefire way to make commission off of every purchase. My blog focuses on listicle content such as "15 Vegan Boots to Keep You Warm this Winter." Each link to these boots is an affiliate link. This means that I will make a commission with every purchase at no additional cost to the consumer. Amazon has an affiliate program you can use and there are always other sites such as Shop My Style and Rewardstyle that may work as well.

SPONSORSHIPS WITH BRANDS

Another successful way to make money with a lifestyle blog is sponsorships with brands. Brands will usually reach out to you and want you to promote their product on your site. Most times, they'll try to do it for just a free product, but you can easily negotiate your rates with them.



The more views you have to your site, the more likely you are to get paid.



Write your heart out ...

The best thing for me about having a lifestyle blog is the freedom to write about whatever I want.

Lifestyle is basically anything that has to do with living a life. This could be food, home decor, gift guides, beauty, fashion, traveling, blogging, fitness, wellness, and even things like pop culture. Even though you get the freedom to write about all of these topics, it is still important for them to be cohesive. This is why I mainly stick to short-form listicle content for my site.

Bring your life to life in pictures

Because I have the luxury of not having a very personal blog, I don't have to worry much about taking specific photos for my own content.

PHOTOGRAPHY RESOURCES

Pexels and Unsplash

If you're like me, and you want to create a more general website, you can use these sites for free stock photos that don't look like those cringey stock photos you see on Google.

Depositphotos

To invest in paying for more specific photos, I use a monthly membership to get more targeted images for my posts, which is great for making your content look more specific and professional. As an example, I have a blog post about eating vegan at Taco Bell and I was able to legally use a Taco Bell image by having that membership.

CREATING A COHESIVE THEME

If you have a more personal blog, then it's important to find out what your color palette and overall theme is for you as a brand. Having a cohesive theme spread through your social media helps you become more recognizable to people. When coming up with photos for your posts, the image you choose obviously depends on what the topic is. However, having a color story in mind helps you create the images that you want.



Here's an example of two photos that, unedited, don't look cohesive. Once I add my signature winter theme to it, they are more consistent with each other.



PERFECTING FILTERS

Lightroom, Photoshop, VSCO, or A Color Story

An easy way to have a consistent color palette is to edit your images to look essentially the same. You can achieve this by using presets from Lightroom. Or you can use Photoshop or any photo editing app like VSCO or A Color Story. The key is to find one to three presets or filters that you really love and stick with that theme. You don't have to filter your photos, but this is a surefire way to make sure all of your images achieve the same effect.

CREATING A VISUAL THEME

My Instagram has a very cohesive theme, but it changes slightly to match every season.

Winter

Muted, earthy colors to achieve a more cozy look

Spring

A more pastel palette starting to shine through

Summer

Full of bright greens and blues

Fall

Earthy, orange tones that transition to winter

Myth busters



01

MYTH

You can only be successful as a blogger if you have a specific niche.

REALITY

You can be successful even if you have 15 different topics that you like to talk about. What's important is that even though they're different, it's all cohesive and on brand.



02

MYTH

You can't make money as a lifestyle blogger.

REALITY

You can absolutely make money as a lifestyle blogger — you just have to have a few different streams of income since it's not as easy as recommending a bunch of e-courses to people.

03

MYTH

To be a lifestyle blogger, you have to put your personal life out there.

REALITY

You don't need to talk about yourself to be a lifestyle blogger. All you need to do is share topics that you think your audience will enjoy.



Posting schedule

One of my favorite things about lifestyle blogging and writing about numerous topics is being able to post more content throughout the week.

Since most of my content requires less personal work (think of how long it would take to write a blog post about a home renovation project), I can easily complete a blog post in an hour or two if I'm feeling motivated.

My usual goal is to publish at least three posts a week. I typically write the posts the actual day I'm going to publish them, but that's my own personal preference. Writing lifestyle content the way I do, you can easily get away with writing all of your posts in one day and scheduling them out for the week.

The keys to getting found

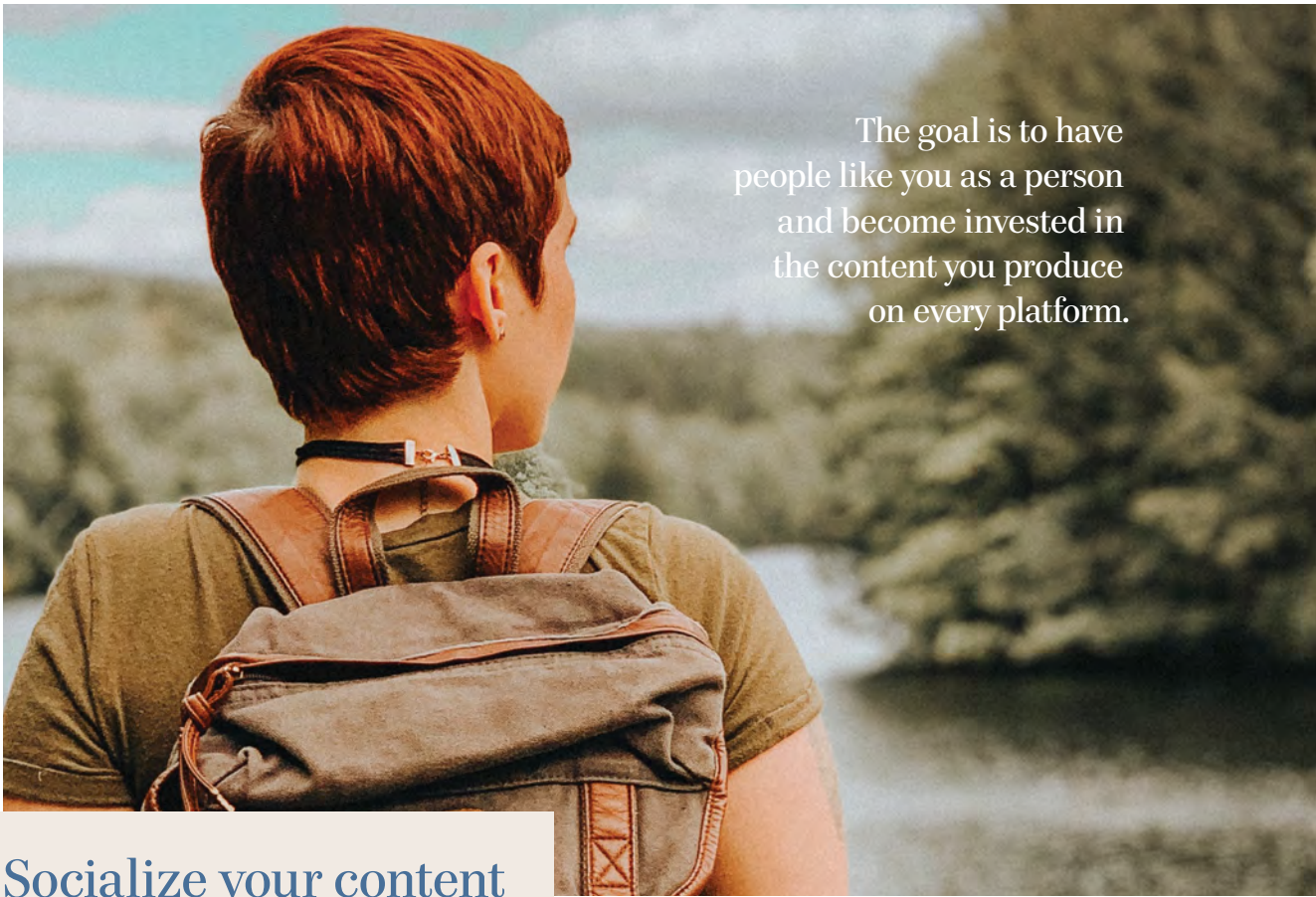
When it comes to blogging, hashtags are not nearly as important as keywords.

SEO

When you are writing about a specific topic, it's important to focus on your SEO for that post. This is why most people say that niche blogs are more successful because you can home in on specific keywords. However, you can do the same for lifestyle blogs!

HASHTAGS

For social media, hashtags are incredibly important and should be unique to each post. Using the same hashtags over and over again will put your account at risk of being flagged as spam by Instagram.



The goal is to have people like you as a person and become invested in the content you produce on every platform.

Socialize your content

When you're trying to build a brand, it's so important to be on as many social media platforms as you can.

This gives you the opportunity to be seen by different people who may not have platforms you use. I have a TikTok account and was able to garner followers to my Instagram page because of that. I personally focus more on making my lifestyle blog its own thing while still incorporating it into my social media pages.

INSTAGRAM

My Instagram has lifestyle content and aesthetic photos on my feed, but I only promote my blog posts on my Instagram stories when I post them.

TIKTOK

My TikTok doesn't have much to do with my Instagram or blog, but it's another way for my target audience to get to know me.



Have a “be seen” strategy

SOCIAL MEDIA

With social media, I try to make sure I have a presence across the board.

My focus:

- TikTok
- Instagram
- Pinterest

Secondary:

- Facebook
- YouTube
- Twitter

I don't focus on Facebook, YouTube or Twitter because I believe it's more valuable to actually put your eggs in a few baskets, rather than spreading yourself thin throughout too many platforms. I would rather create valuable, high quality content on three platforms than mediocre content spread throughout seven different platforms.

VLOGGING

Though vlogging isn't a necessity for all lifestyle bloggers, if you have a much more personal lifestyle blog, it could be beneficial to incorporate some videos into your niche.

This could help grow your audience on a new platform, like YouTube, and you can embed these videos on your site. Doing this can lead to more traffic and more return fans to your site.



I currently use WordPress for my lifestyle blog while hosting it with Bluehost.

Tools of the trade

These are my must-have tools for making my website and my social media platforms as successful as they are.

01

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Trello

This is a must-have for organizing your blog content and social media content.

Notes App

Any simple notes app for your phone helps with brain dumps when you're away from your computer for a period of time. You never want to lose your great ideas!

02

FILE SHARING

Dropbox

An easy way to transfer files around. I use this every day.



03

STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

Pexels

A free stock photo website.

Unsplash

Another free stock photo website.

DepositPhotos

A paid membership for 40 free photos each month for more specific content like pop culture.

04

CONTENT EDITING

Lightroom

An Adobe product perfect for editing photos.

Videoshop

The easiest video editing app you'll find.

Blog topics you can steal

Here is a really quick cheat sheet to help spark some ideas for your new lifestyle blog! Sometimes one simple phrase can spark 20 different ideas in your head and get those creative juices flowing.

01

10 cruelty free brands to try

06

Is microneedling worth the hype?

02

Outfit of the day (OOTD)

07

Vegan recipe round-up

03

Style the same shirt 10 different ways

08

Meal subscription review

04

Tips to manage anxiety

09

Trying a capsule wardrobe

05

Keep the house clean with natural products

10

10 tips to become more minimalist



MORE ABOUT THE BLOGGER

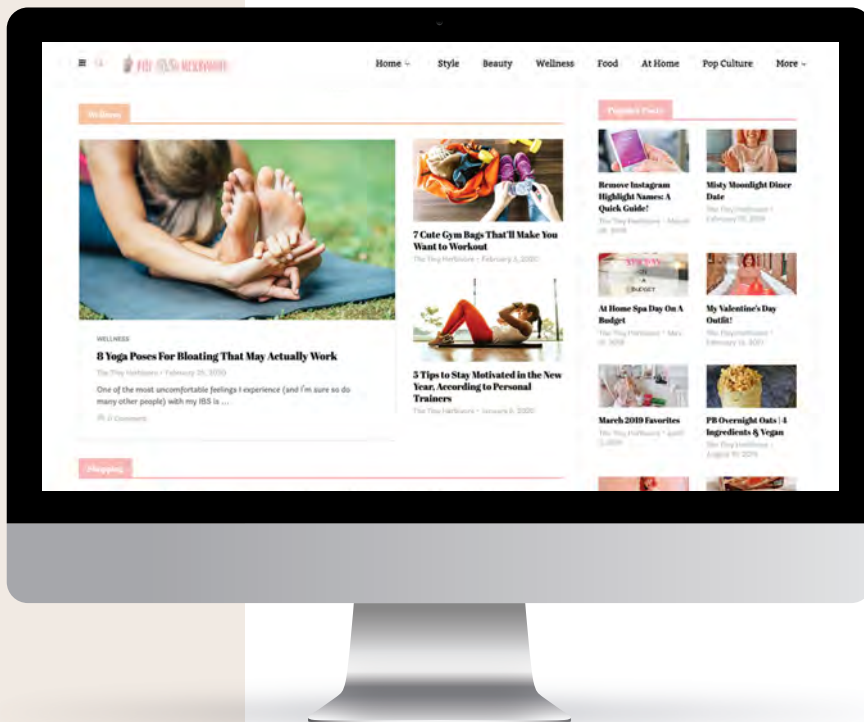
Stephanie Hernandez

“The Tiny Herbivore” is a lifestyle blog focused on content for your everyday life with topics that range from food and wellness to style and pop culture.

I have been blogging for more than three years, but it wasn't until about a year ago that I was able to make it my full-time job. I am also a freelance writer for multiple online publications like SeatGeek, Medium, and most recently BuzzFeed. My blog is the biggest factor into how I was able to become a freelance writer because my website doubles as my online portfolio. It's a dream of mine to be able to showcase my passion for writing through these articles as well as finishing my first novel.

Stephanie

www.thetinyherbivore.com / [@thetinyherbivore](https://www.instagram.com/thetinyherbivore)







The World Is Waiting for You

THE FIRST STEPS CAN OFTEN BE THE HARDEST. THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS WILL HELP YOU GET STARTED ON THE RIGHT FOOT.

SECTION ONE

Publishing Your First Page or Post

If you are a brand new blogger or are just starting out on WordPress (which all of our contributors here use), we have a resource for you! *The Blueprint: A New User's Guide to WordPress* will give you a comprehensive look at everything you need to know to master this content management system and take control of your own blogging destiny. To give you a taste, we've included an excerpt on how to create your first page or post.

SECTION TWO

Keeping Your Blog Secure and Updated

Whether you are a neophyte blogger or a seasoned pro, maintaining your blog is a critical necessity. We'll provide you with some important maintenance and security tips that fall into the category of "must really do!"

SECTION THREE

Glossary

In case you come across a term that you're not yet familiar with, we've created this handy resource for your reference.

SECTION ONE

Publishing Your First Page or Post

An excerpt from *The Blueprint:
A New User's Guide to WordPress*

You're well on your way to publishing your WordPress site if you've chosen a great theme and added some key plugins to help optimize your website. Now you are ready to start creating content to get your site ready to share with the world.

WordPress “Pages”

The first step you’ll take after creating your WordPress account is creating an “About” page for your site. This page should reflect the tone of your site and provide visitors with everything they need to know about your brand or business.

Create your “About” page

STEP ONE

Go to “Pages” in your dashboard and select “Add New.”

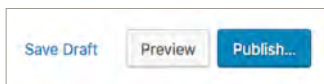


STEP TWO

Create a page name, such as “About Us.” This page can help build trust and connect with audiences who come to your site.

STEP THREE

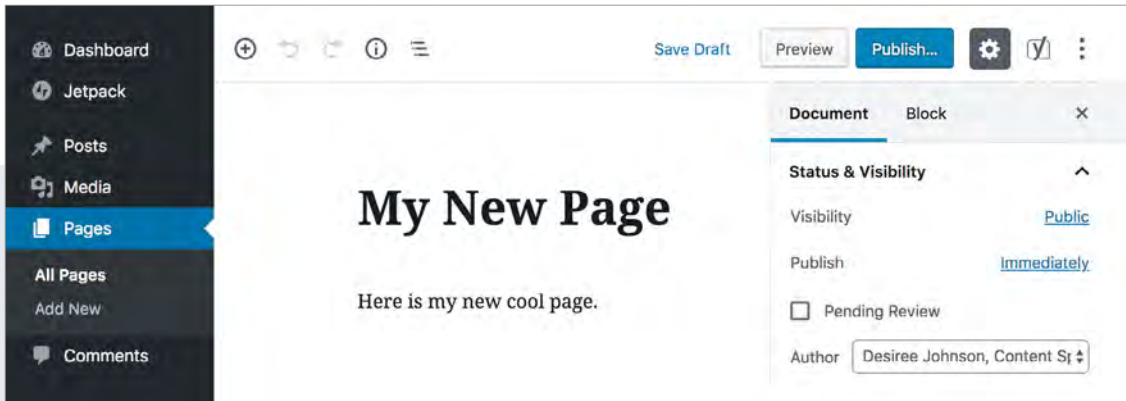
Once you complete this page, click “Save Draft.”



Pro tip

WHEN IT COMES TO CONTENT

Posts are meant to hold time-based content, whether that’s breaking news or an annual report. While posts can be sorted into categories and tags, pages are a good place to write more topical information where the publishing time isn’t very relevant, such as an “About” page or restaurant menu.



Pro Tip

WHEN IT COMES TO TEMPLATES

Because pages are the foundation of a site's content, each page could leverage a different template to look unique.

Many WordPress themes include a page template feature in the **"Pages"** content editor. Page templates allow you to create templates for different sets of pages and apply them as needed when creating a new page. Templates are automatically saved as part of the theme and can be selected from the **"Page Template"** drop-down menu.

Pages differ from posts both in form and in function, and they are generally static. While pages can be freely updated as often as necessary, they typically provide a stable framework that allows your visitors to access important information about your site at any time. Essential pages on a typical website might include home, about, policies, general site information, and resources. WordPress also allows you to create special page types for specific needs, such as landing pages for online sales or portfolio pages for showcasing art or other creative work.

Pages follow a hierarchical structure so that a top-level or parent page can have any number of subpages that are linked to it. For example, a business site might have a main page that introduces its employees and, along with it, a set of subpages that includes individual pages with information about each of them. In the same way, a company's **"About"** page might include subpages about its history, founders, or mission statement.

WordPress “Posts”

WordPress “Posts” are made for blogging or posting other timely content such as announcements, events, or breaking news.

The post feature is designed to support regular, frequent publishing of new content and sharing it widely. Unlike pages, posts are designed for social sharing, commenting, and search engine optimization, and they can be syndicated through an RSS feed so that readers are notified of new updates.

Posts appear on the site in reverse chronological order (newest first), and past posts are archived so that they can always be accessed. Posts have no hierarchy, but they can be grouped according to category pages, dates, or tags to help readers find specific topics. There’s no limit to the number of articles or posts you can create on a WordPress site.

Because posts are designed for sharing, you can install a WordPress plugin like Jetpack that offers a social sharing button that can easily be added to your theme, or other plugins that offer security and sharing abilities. Sharing buttons for many social networks are available, but try to limit it to three to five networks that are popular with your target audience. Other plugin options are available to optimize posts for keywords and searchability or to crosspost the content to other sites.

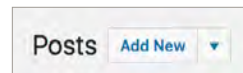
Create a post

STEP ONE

Select **“Post”** from the WordPress admin dashboard.

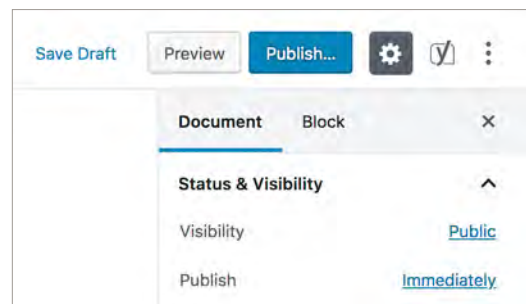
STEP TWO

Choose **“Add New.”** Type or paste your text in the content window and style it with the options available on the toolbar. Images, videos, and links can be added to any post and edited on the spot.



STEP THREE

Once you’re done, click **“Save Draft.”**



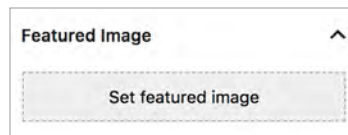
Selecting an image

After you've created your page or post (before publishing), you can choose an image. Adding images in WordPress is very easy. All of your images will be stored and can be managed in the Media Library, but you can take several different paths to get there.

Add an image from within a page or post

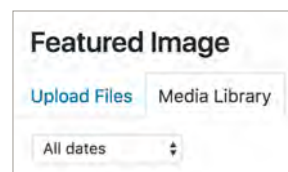
STEP ONE

Select **"Set Featured Image,"** which will direct you to the Media Library.



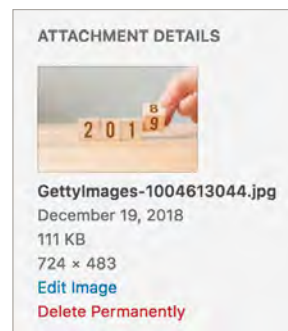
STEP TWO

Once your Media Library opens up, you can add an image from your desktop to include in your current page or post as your featured image. A company or brand logo is great to use for your first published post, or you can use an image that correlates with your content.



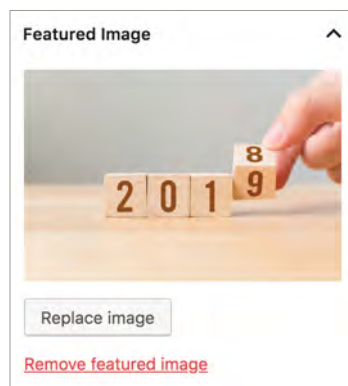
STEP THREE

When you select your featured image, the Media Library will show you details that include the date, size, and file type of the selected image.



STEP FOUR

The featured image will appear in your WordPress page or post for you to preview with an option to remove or replace the image before publishing to your site. You can also add any images in the Media Library in your content draft.



Tags

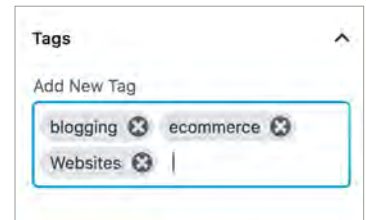
Once you select an image for your post, it's now time to incorporate tags to attach to your content. Every post in WordPress can be filed under one or more tags.

UNIQUE NAMING

Tags help aid in navigation and allow your posts to be grouped with other similar content pieces. Tag names must be unique and specific to your content. The uniqueness and specificity of your tags can help improve your SEO rankings.

ADDING AND SAVING

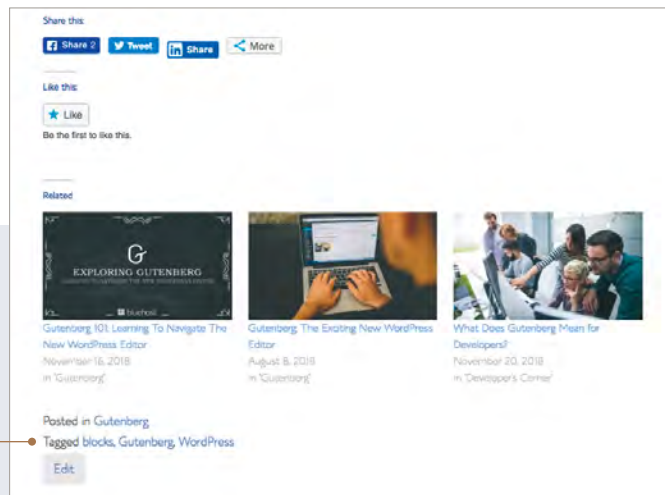
You can add tags to any post you create in the WordPress dashboard. Tags can be manually entered and will save automatically to a post before you publish it.



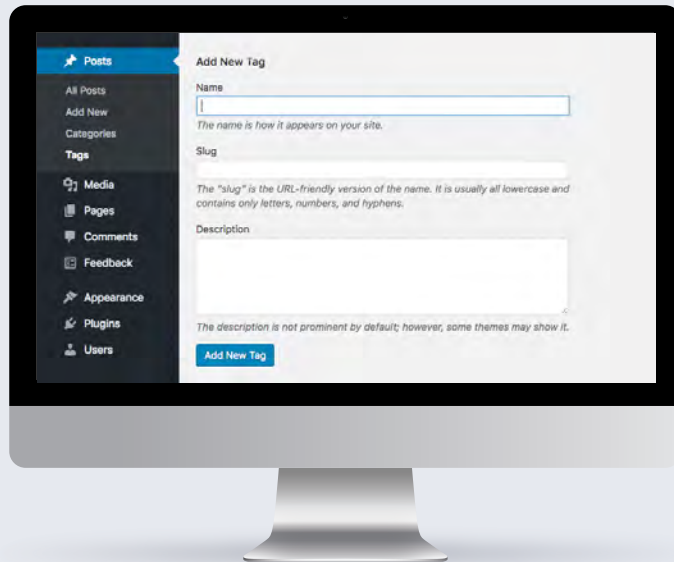
PUBLISHING

When your post is published, the specified tags are displayed under each post that is published on your page. When someone viewing your blog clicks on one of these tag links, a tag archive page with all the posts belonging to that tag will appear. This gives visitors the opportunity to read related posts and content that corresponds with that tag.

TAG LINKS



As you are developing more content for your site, you can create and save tags in the WordPress dashboard, as well as edit current tags, and delete existing ones.



Alt tags and captions

Alt tags are brief, alternative text descriptions that help describe an image to a search engine's automated crawlers, as well as to blind visitors via a screen reader.

While sometimes image captions and alt text can be identical, there are times when alt text should explain the image with more details than the caption may offer. When you apply an alt tag to an image like a product photo, it can also potentially improve your site's search engine rankings.

A screenshot of the WordPress media editor interface. It shows several fields: 'URL' with the value 'https://www.bluehost.com/!', 'Title' with 'Introducing Twenty Nineteen', 'Caption' with 'Hand shows the numbers 2019 emerging from the network connections.', 'Alt Text' (empty), and 'Description' (empty). Each field has a small edit icon in the bottom right corner.

Pro Tip

WHEN IT COMES TO SEO

As you are building your site, incorporating these SEO strategies into each component of your website will potentially increase your site visibility.

Categories

Categories help you organize your content and aid in navigation so posts can be grouped with similar content. You can arrange your categories through a hierarchy and name each category according to the content you will create.

There are two ways you can create categories in WordPress:

- Through the dashboard
- From within a page or a post

01

Create or modify a category through the dashboard

STEP ONE

Click **“Posts.”**

STEP TWO

Select **“Categories,”** where you can create new categories, edit or delete existing ones, and organize your categories.

The screenshot shows the WordPress dashboard's 'Add New Category' form. On the left, a dark sidebar contains a 'Posts' menu with 'Categories' highlighted. The main content area is titled 'Add New Category' and includes three input fields: 'Name' (with a text input box), 'Slug' (with a text input box), and 'Parent Category' (a dropdown menu set to 'None'). Below these fields are two paragraphs of explanatory text. To the right of the form, there are two 'Bulk Actions' buttons, each with an 'Apply' button next to it.

Pro tip

WHEN IT COMES TO ORGANIZING CATEGORIES

Organizing your categories can help improve people's experiences when they navigate to your website. Categories are displayed hierarchically and alphabetically; subcategories are displayed beneath their parents and are prefaced by long dashes.

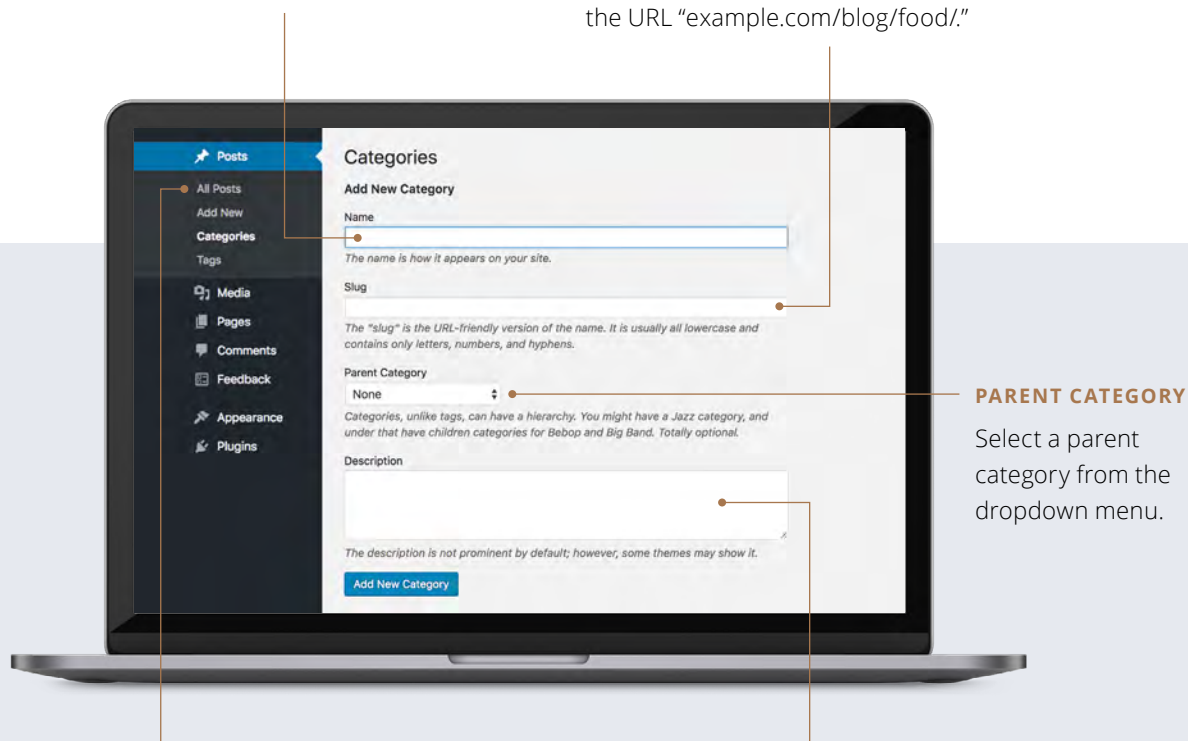
When you add a new category, fill in the name, slug, parent category, and description before you add that category to your site.

NAME

Remember each name must be unique. Click on the category's name to edit the category.

SLUG

The category slug must be unique. It is used in the URL. For example, a category of "Recipes" and a slug of "food" would show all recipe posts with the URL "example.com/blog/food/."



PARENT CATEGORY

Select a parent category from the dropdown menu.

POSTS

The number of posts which are members of the category. Click on the number in the posts column to be directed to the "All Posts Screen," to manage the posts in that category.

DESCRIPTION

Categories may have an optional description.

Once you create your new categories, they populate on the right side of the page alphabetically. You can now start organizing your pages and posts to those corresponding sections. In the WordPress dashboard, you can create your posts and organize them by the category you select.

<input type="checkbox"/> Name	Description	Slug	Count
<input type="checkbox"/> My Cool Category	—	cool-awesome	0

Categories

Search Categories

My Cool Category

Add New Category

New Category Name

Parent Category

— Parent Category —

02

Create a category from within a post or page

STEP ONE

Select **“Categories.”**

STEP TWO

Click **“Add New Category.”** Here you can manually enter in a category that corresponds to your post or page.

Pro tip

WHEN IT COMES TO SEO

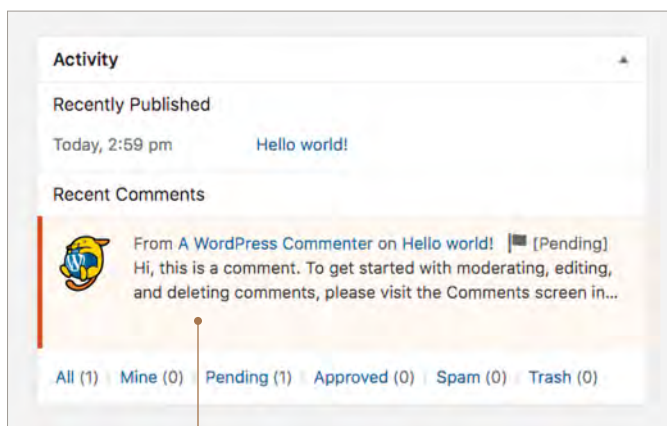
Categories can also add SEO value to your site because you can organize the structure of your categories based on topics or keywords you plan to use frequently in your content. When visitors are using a search engine to find the topics you listed as categories, you are increasing the chances your website will rank as a top page.

Managing blog comments

Now that you've published your WordPress blog, it's time to start managing the comments for your site visitors.

One of the best parts of creating your WordPress site is getting to engage and interact with visitors leaving comments on your blogs. As you begin receiving comments on your site, you can check the status of comments quickly by looking at the dashboard, the admin bar, or the left navigation menu.

When you log in, the dashboard's **"Activity"** box will show you the status of your comments. You can hover over a comment to decide whether to approve, reply, or delete it before it appears publicly on your page.



Feel free to engage with your visitors, ask questions, and use any feedback given to help improve the user experience on your site.

SECTION TWO

Keeping Your Blog Secure and Updated

Now that you understand the basics of becoming an influential blogger and monetizing your content, it's time to think about how to keep your blog secure and updated at all times. Maintaining your blog — all the behind the scenes stuff — is critical, because it keeps your site up and running with minimal security threats or downtime.

Here is a quick look at a few highly recommended practices — from secure passwords and updating WordPress and your plugins to spam detection — for keeping your blog running smoothly.

Applying security best practices

While the list below is by no means complete, these tips represent a good starting point for ensuring your blog is safe.

UPDATE PASSWORDS

Regularly update your passwords for WordPress, your hosting account, and any other related services or software that you use on your blog.

UPDATE WORDPRESS

Regularly update your WordPress installation, theme, and plugins (if you don't have these set to update automatically).

UPDATE DEVICES

Keep your computer and devices updated, as hackers who have gained access to your personal information on those devices may be able to use this to access your website — and vice versa.

IMPLEMENT UNIQUE USERNAMES

Avoid using default usernames in WordPress, as hackers are familiar with these common options.

LIMIT ACCESS

Limit the people who have access to your website, and remember to revoke access from those who no longer need it.

• USE STRONG PASSWORDS

In addition to regularly updating passwords, using strong passwords is a must. Strong passwords prevent your site from being hacked in a brute-force attack, where bots try password after password until eventually guessing correctly. Here are two techniques for the most secure passwords.

01

Longer passwords are more difficult to decipher.

With more unique characters, there are more potential combinations and it takes longer to guess.

02

Passwords should never be reused on multiple sites.

It is very common for hackers to take exposed usernames and passwords from compromised sites and set up scripts to test those credentials on thousands of popular sites. Essentially this means that if you reuse the same password on multiple sites, hackers would easily be able to log in as you on each of them.

Updating WordPress and plugins

WordPress updates

Updating WordPress is a critical component of keeping your site secure and less susceptible to attacks.

As one of the most popular content management systems used around the globe, WordPress is an easy target for hackers, data thieves, and malicious code distributors. If you are not using the latest version, then you are using software that most likely has known security vulnerabilities — and that's what hackers are continuously searching for as they prey on websites running older versions of WordPress.

Besides making your site more secure, you'll also get these benefits from updating WordPress.

BUG FIXES

Even though WordPress releases are thoroughly tested, there are times when bugs are reported. They are then fixed, with timely and minor releases that can happen regularly.

NEW FEATURES

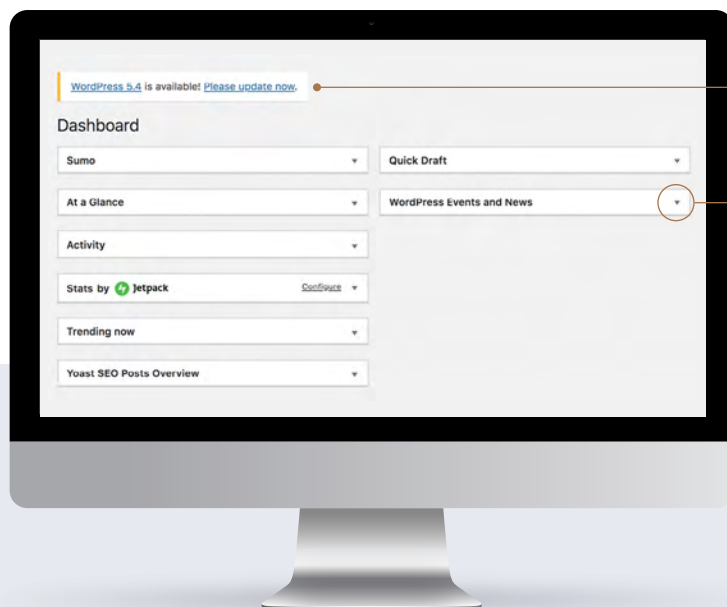
Each time there is a new feature release that can improve your site building experience, you must update WordPress in order to have access to the improved functionality.

SPEED

Keeping WordPress updated helps your blog run efficiently too, as many new releases come with performance improvements.

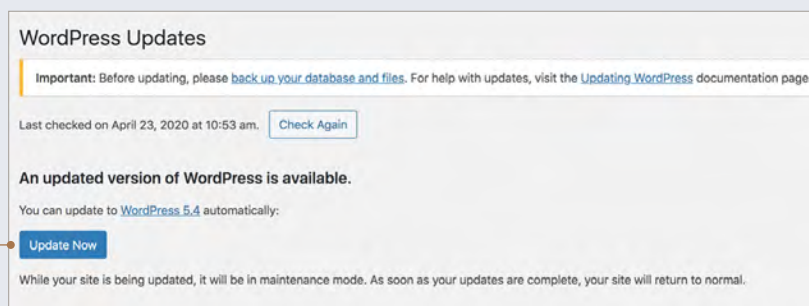
How to update WordPress

WordPress updates can be executed with the click of a button. As always, be sure to back up your site before updating your WordPress installation. Here's how to update.



STEP ONE

Click the link in the **new version banner** (if it's there) or by going to the Dashboard, and **"Updates"** screen.



STEP TWO

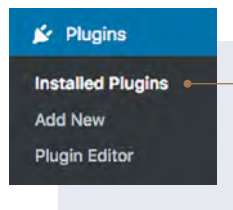
Once you are on the **"Update WordPress"** page, click the button **"Update Now"** to start the process. You shouldn't need to do anything else and, once it's finished, you will be up to date.

How to manage your plugins

It's important for WordPress users to manage their plugin collection by continually checking on whether or not plugins are active or inactive, if they need to be deactivated, or if they should be updated. Here's how to do all that.

STEP ONE

From your site's admin dashboard, click on **"Installed Plugins"** and review all installed plugins. Unless they're deleted, plugins can still take up space in your database and contribute to site slowing. If you'd still like to use the plugin, activate it and install any recommended updates to avoid security and compatibility issues.



STEP TWO

Older plugins that haven't been updated can open the way for malware and viruses, so deactivate and delete them. This will remove all associated files from your site's database, which eliminates the risk of infecting databases with questionable and dangerous code.

STEP THREE

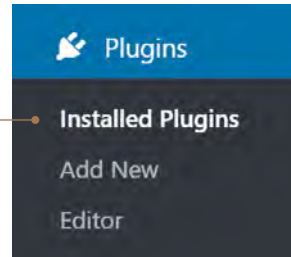
Finally, consider removing any active plugins that have overlapping or duplicated functions and replace them with a single multifunctional plugin. For example, you do not need two plugins that capture subscribers for your newsletter. Choose one plugin and delete the other.

How to deactivate or uninstall a plugin

If you are experiencing any troubleshooting issues with any plugins, WordPress recommends deactivating and uninstalling them from your site.

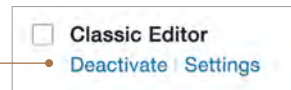
STEP ONE

From your dashboard, click **“Installed Plugins.”** Review all of the plugins that you currently have installed and locate the plugin that you would like to deactivate.



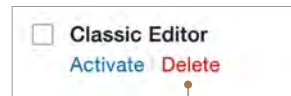
STEP TWO

Click **“Deactivate”** and the plugin will become inactive.



STEP THREE

If you want to completely remove a plugin from your site, once the plugin has been deactivated, you can click **“Delete.”** You will need to confirm that you would like to delete the plugin. The plugin will now be removed from your WordPress site. No worries, if you'd like to get this plugin in the future, you can reinstall.



Securing your blog with an SSL certificate

A Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) certificate is a must-have for every blog or website today, especially because there are free ones available. These digital certificates create an encrypted connection between a browser or user's computer and a server or website.

How SSL certificates work

WITHOUT AN SSL CERTIFICATE

When a connection between a server and browser is established without an SSL certificate in place, any data, such as emails, passwords, and credit card numbers are sent through these connections as plain text. And as such, this information is accessible to anyone who is eavesdropping on traffic on a network. This is called a man-in-the-middle attack and most commonly happens when using public, unsecured Wi-Fi networks.

WITH AN SSL CERTIFICATE

You'll know a website has a valid SSL certificate in place when you see a padlock icon in the browser's address bar. Many users have a trained eye to identify and avoid submitting any information to sites that do not have this padlock. By having an SSL certificate in place on your web server, you provide a more secure experience for your blog readers.

How to install an SSL certificate

FOR BLUEHOST CUSTOMERS

If you are a Bluehost customer, you're in luck! Every new WordPress site is automatically configured for SSL with a free **Let's Encrypt** SSL certificate.

FOR OTHER CUSTOMERS

If you are not a Bluehost customer, check with your web host on how to activate or purchase your SSL.

Minimizing spam comments

Spam is the bane of every blog. Spam comments that show up with generic praises for the quality of your posts along with questionable backlinks can slow your site down and interfere with legitimate comments from real readers.

A number of WordPress plugins are made to handle spam comments, but the Akismet plugin, a spam blocker, tops the list. It is designed with one goal in mind: to stop spam from clogging up the comment function on your WordPress site.

Why you need a spam blocker

Spam takes many forms, but all kinds of spam share a few common features. The official name for spam is “Unsolicited Commercial Email,” which is sent in vast amounts from questionable sites looking for backlinks, that tries to get search engine recognition or “phishes” for users’ personal information.

WHERE SPAM APPEARS

Spam shows up in the comments section of many WordPress sites, especially new ones. These emails often have a message proclaiming how interesting the site is, with no actual reference to the content. Typically, they’re promoting some type of product or service, and they usually include a link to another site.

Left untended, spam emails can accumulate at the rate of hundreds per day. This can slow your site’s performance and even raise red flags with hosts and search engines. And the attention spent identifying and deleting these comments takes valuable time away from other tasks.

SPAM BLOCKING OPTIONS

Spam-blocking plugins identify these kinds of email comments and filter them out, leaving only legitimate comments for you to moderate. Not all websites need spam blockers, though. You can opt to disable comments completely in your WordPress installation. If comments are disabled, spam comments won’t appear.

However, enabling comments allows you to engage with your readers, promote your brand, and build a community, so responding to your site’s legitimate comments can be a valuable tool. And that’s where a spam blocker comes in.

If you are trying to reduce spam or junk email on your blog, downloading Akismet is an easy way to do it.

Block spam automatically

As mentioned previously, the Akismet WordPress plugin is one of the best. It filters comments automatically, leaving (in most cases) only real comments from blog visitors in your comment section. You'll feel like winning the war against spam is made possible when using a plugin like Akismet.

Akismet was developed by Automattic, the development team behind WordPress itself. That explains the "A" in its name. It appears by default in the plugins list of every new WordPress installation, but it requires a few additional steps for activation.

Akismet operates from algorithms that define spam emails based on identified spam from multiple sites. This algorithm can "learn" new spam addresses as it operates so that it can filter with more accuracy. Once identified, these spam comments are diverted to a spam file where they can be deleted. Only legitimate comments should make it past the filter for moderation and responses.

Once Akismet is activated, it runs in the background, blocking spam as it appears, but users can set specific parameters in the filter, such as keywords, links or addresses, too. Because Akismet is algorithm based, it can make mistakes. Some real comments can be blocked, and in some cases, a few spam emails can make it through. It's wise to periodically check the spam file to see if a non-spam comment was missed. Likewise, users can manually mark comments as spam, and Akismet then adds that information to its algorithm for future filtering.

How to set up Akismet

Installing WordPress plugins is fairly easy. Although Akismet appears by default in your plugin list, it requires an API key for activation. This can take a few extra steps on external sites.

STEP ONE

To get started, head to the Plugins section of your admin dashboard.

STEP TWO

Click on **“Akismet.”**

STEP THREE

Select **“Activate.”** The Akismet configuration screen appears, along with a prompt to enter your Akismet API key.

STEP FOUR

To get the API key, you'll be taken to the Akismet website. Click on the button for **“Get a WordPress key.”** This opens a screen with Akismet plans and pricing.

- *Pro plan for a single business website*
- *Enterprise plan for unlimited websites*
- *Single personal site*

Select the plan you want and click **“Sign Up.”**

STEP FIVE

This step takes you to an additional signup with WordPress.com, the hosted version of WordPress that's home to many smaller sites and blogs. You don't need to create a site with WordPress.com, though. You simply need to create a WordPress.com account in order to get access to the Akismet API key.

STEP SIX

After creating a new WordPress.com account, you'll return to Akismet to finish signing up. Once you've selected your plan and payment option, you'll be prompted to get the Akismet key. Your key is stored in your Akismet account and can be recovered at any time.

STEP SEVEN

Copy the Akismet key and return to your WordPress site's plugin list.

STEP EIGHT

Paste the API key into the Akismet configuration screen and Akismet is immediately activated.

Along with blocking spam comments, Akismet tracks statistics on your WordPress dashboard. These stats can show how many spam comments were caught by Akismet and how many are held in the spam folder. Akismet stats can also be displayed to site visitors on pages and posts with the Akismet widget.

blog security

Take charge and be proactive

Ultimately, WordPress security isn't about turning on or off a few options. It isn't about adding a security plugin to your blog and calling it a day.

INSTEAD, IT'S ABOUT:

01

Being proactive regarding your blog's security

02

Regularly checking in on your blog to ensure the options you've chosen are functioning appropriately

03

Continually familiarizing yourself with new vulnerabilities that have been discovered

SECURITY IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

While taking the steps described previously won't guarantee your blog will never be put at risk, they'll go a long way towards making you a less-appealing target to hackers.

SECTION THREE

Glossary

In case you came across a term that you're not yet familiar with, we've created this handy glossary for your reference.

B

BACKLINKS

Backlinks are embedded links to your site from other websites, or embedded links to other sites from your website.

BLOG

A blog is a type of website that shares content through posts that can be static (organized and not updated as frequently) or dynamic pages (multiple articles a day).

BRAND

For bloggers, a brand identifies the content owner's purpose and defines the overarching theme of content. Your brand can help differentiate you — and define why you are unique in comparison to your competition — through a brand name, logo, tagline, content, messaging, and imagery.

C

CALL TO ACTION (CTA)

A call to action asks your followers to take a specified action on your website or in emails.

CATEGORIES

Categories help organize your blog content, provide SEO assistance, and guide readers to the topics they enjoy.

CONTENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A content management system (CMS), like WordPress, is an integrated set of tools and strategies for developing and delivering content on the internet.

CONTENT CALENDAR

A content calendar is a way to organize your content that you plan to publish over a period of time. It can help grow your blog by keeping you organized and consistent while helping you to identify any gaps in your content that you haven't yet covered.

CONTENT REVISIONS

This tool in WordPress tracks a history of edits that are made to text, media, or graphics on a website.

D

DOMAIN NAME

A domain name, which is part of a site's URL, is an online address for a person or brand. When you type a domain name into a browser search bar, the browser uses the IP address it represents to access the site.

E

EVERGREEN CONTENT

Evergreen content has long-term value whether it's a post or page that readers can reference for years to come because the information will always be relevant and valuable.

WORDPRESS EDITOR

The WordPress editor is the place where you go to publish content on your website. It allows you to control the way your content appears on your blog page. It also creates an easier building experience for anyone looking to create a website.

H

HANDLE

Your social media handle is the same as a display name, and is typically the core part of your domain name with an @ symbol in front of it.

HEADLINE

A headline is the first thing people will see on your blog and is aimed to grab a reader's attention.

HEADER IMAGE

This is the full-size image on your website that resembles a cover photo.

I

INTERNAL LINKS

Internal links are embedded links to other pages on your website from a page on your own website.

K

KEYWORD

Keywords are words, concepts, phrases, or topics that the people you are most interested in becoming followers will search on. They are the most important words that reflect your brand, your blog, and your content.

N

NICHE

Your niche is like an industry focus or theme for your blog and the driver of your content, all of which is based on the intention of fitting the needs and interests of your followers.

O

ONLINE MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Online management tools like CoSchedule, AirTable, and Hootsuite help keep you consistent and on track with your goals.

P

PAGES

Pages in WordPress are generally for non-chronological hierarchical content. Product pages, or pages like "About Us" or "Contact," are common examples. Blog content would be considered a post (see next page).

PLUGIN

A WordPress plugin is a miniature program that can be added to your WordPress website to give it additional desirable functionality.

POSTS

Posts are where you create the content for your blog; they are listed in reverse chronological order on your site's homepage or on the "Posts" page in WordPress.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TOOLS

Project management tools like Trello, Basecamp, and Asana help organize projects and tasks, and create organized communication between team members.

S**SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION**

Search engine optimization (SEO) is a set of best practices intended to make websites as appealing as possible to search engines in the hope of scoring high rankings within the search engine results.

T**THEME**

A WordPress theme (or "skin") is a design file that customizes the look and feel of a WordPress site without affecting all the underlying content. Free and paid WordPress themes are available through both WordPress and third-party developers.

TAGS

Tags are used to help website viewers find similar content on a WordPress website. These are smaller in scope and focused on specific topics.

TARGET AUDIENCE

A target audience is the specific group of people you want to reach — essentially your readers that you would like to turn into followers — with your blog.

TRENDING TOPICS

Trending topics are anything new and relevant that has the internet buzzing that you can use as the basis for blog content.

U**USERNAME**

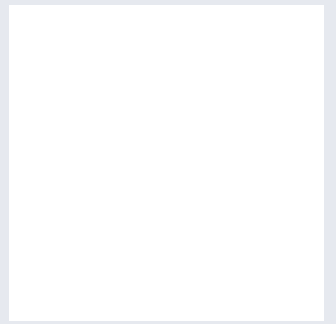
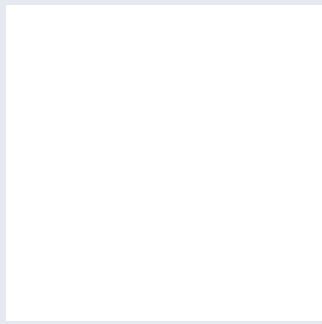
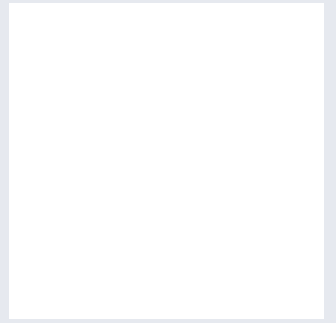
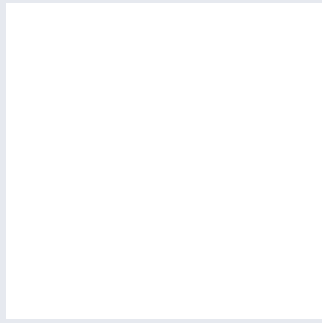
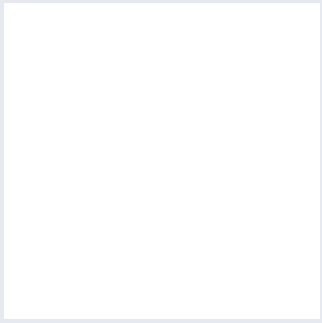
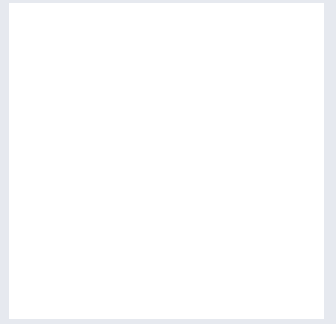
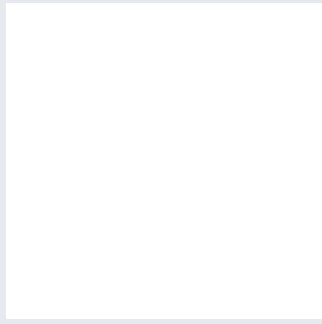
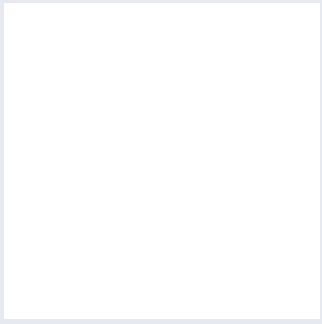
This name is what you use to create your sign-in onto your hosting and social media accounts. It's private and not visible to the public.

V**VLOGGING**

A video blog that allows you to create interactive content on platforms like YouTube.

VOICE

Your "voice" distinguishes your blog by reflecting your personality, style, and character within your blog.





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