

A Complete Guide to SEO-Friendly Blogging ***How To Blog Effectively for SEO & Usability***

Ready to start blogging? Already have but aren't seeing any results? Read this document outlining the in's and out's of SEO-friendly blogging and content creation.

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Blogs are one of Web 2.0's most interesting and sticky developments; they've changed the way users find and interact with content and brands. The online experience was changed when blogs first started becoming popular, and now they're fast becoming an integral part of many companies' online marketing initiatives and web presence.

Blogs are a multi-dimensional communication channel that can be utilized for a variety of purposes. Whether you need to draw traffic to your site, gather customer feedback, generate awareness, communicate with customers or those within your own organization, blogs are a quick, easy, and effective way to create an online presence without knowing even a single line of code. Blogs are information sharing tools for connecting users to businesses and brands.

No matter your objective, blogging can be a powerful tactic for [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) and branding. Your work will create valuable incoming links while reinforcing and expanding upon the concepts and content unique to your website. Search engines like Google and Yahoo love this type of fresh content, and blogs can be updated frequently. For this reason, blogging is now an essential part of many SEO campaigns.

Below, we'll outline the methods of SEO-friendly blog writing and relevant content creation.

Stage 1: Planning Before You Start Writing

- Prior to beginning the actual writing, it's critical that you **define** the objective(s) of your blog(s).
 - For some companies, a single blog is enough, as it's written to accomplish a variety of objectives.
 - For other companies, several blogs (each with their own purpose and theme) are required.

- Below are a few suggested objectives of a blog:
 - Increase visibility for your company
 - Reach out to your customers with fresh content and frequent updates
 - Enrich clients' understanding of your business, products, services, etc.
 - Communicate effectively with your target audience
 - Gain insight on upcoming trends
 - Generate awareness for upcoming products and events
 - Test new ideas (use blog as forum) to gain valuable customer feedback
 - Contact a global audience with a global medium
 - Position yourself as a thought leader or nexus of change
 - Manage projects and share knowledge internally
 - Highlight success stories and relevant [case studies](#)

- At this early stage, it's advantageous to create *as many* blogs as can be effectively managed and updated. By "effectively," we mean updating them (*ideally*) two to three times a week, but if you can manage more, by all means do so.
 - **Remember the SEO mantra, "Content Is King."**
 - The major search engines (especially Google) share this viewpoint as well, so a frequently updated, well-written, and optimized blog always outranks a stagnant one.
 - As you've seen, blogs are the perfect channel for sustained communication with your customer base
 - Blogs present a friendly, informal voice that visitors come to know and trust.

Stage 2: Setting Up Your Blog

- After defining the purpose(s) of each individual blog, it's time to **set up** your blogs. At this point, I'd recommend hosting a few of them on your site and hosting a few of them on free blogging platforms.
 - Content management systems (CMS) like Drupal and Joomla may have built-in features that allow for easy blogging.
 - However, many of these are too basic. Many companies considering developing a serious online presence prefer to have a **custom content management systems** built to allow for more flexibility.
 - You can always opt to create a blog on one of the several **free** platforms mentioned below. The most flexible options give you the option of hosting your blog on your own site, or for free on their platform.
 - It may be easiest to create individual accounts for *each* blog you're writing (as opposed to signing up with the same username and password for all), as that way you'll have control and have administrative access to each individual blog.

- Here are some sample blogging platforms you can use:
 - **Blogger** - 34,104,000 users - up 58% from last year
 - blogger.com/start (Must have Google Acct.) (Host on own site)
 - **Wordpress** - 11,440,000 users - up 444% from last year
 - wordpress.com/signup
 - To host on your own site, read:
faq.wordpress.com/2006/11/10/domain-mapping/
 - **TypePad** - 10,601,000 - up 20 % from last year
 - typepad.com (**Not** free but a solid platform)
 - **LiveJournal** - 3,366,000 - up 27%
 - livejournal.com

- Once you've got your blog set-up, you're almost ready to begin writing. But before you do that, pay special attention to **Keyword Analysis**. An effective web presence addresses your primary and secondary keyword phrases (KWP) for SEO purposes.
 - You'll want to weave these KWPs into the URL, title and description of *each* blog post.
 - Your title, description, and URL should feature the keywords specific to the content of the blog to capitalize on search engine indexing and visibility.
 - Use **unique** titles for all your blogs, **never** repeat titles.
 - For example, if one of your primary KWPs is "Denver bars" title your blog something like: "The Night Owl: A Guide to Denver Bars & Nightlife"
 - Also, try to use a URL that uses those keywords too, something like:
 - <http://www.denverbarreviews.com> or <http://denver-bar-blog.com>
 - Always use hyphens (-) and not underscores (_) as hyphens are better for SEO
 - (Underscores only allow search engines to see titles like this as one word, while hyphens indicate these words are not one string)
 - In almost all cases, it's better to focus one blog solely on a single topic.
 - Be an expert in one topic instead of a intermediate in many
 - This will broaden the scope of your blogging efforts. Blogging is like investing, and diversification is the best strategy to ensure long term success.

Stage 3: Writing Your SEO-Friendly Blog

- Now that you've created your blog(s) with SEO friendly titles, URLs, descriptions, and keywords, you're ready to start writing!
- Once you've completed this critical foundation step, you will have created your blog around the most potent keywords, which you'll feature when you write your posts.
- Many bloggers find it helpful to write their blog posts with a list of KWPs in front of them. This way they can reference the list as they write.

Writing Your Blog Posts:

- Start with the title, the most important part of your posts (in terms of SEO). Include your most competitive keywords in this title.
- While it may be tempting to simply combine all of your keywords, it's imperative that your title remains both condensed *yet* descriptive. Think like a journalist and a searcher here when [writing for the web and online audiences](#).
- All of the major search engines start by looking for keywords in titles, so be sure to give them what they're looking for in order to capitalize on relevancy.
- Observe these rules and you'll also attract those all important human readers.
- After you've crafted the title, it's time to start writing the body of your post.
- Begin by isolating several related KWPs from the master list to maximize your SEO potential.
 - Don't fall victim to the constraints you'll encounter with the use of just *one* keyword or phrase.
 - Instead, use a web of related keyphrases to expand your reach. Alternate permutations like of primary KWPs will invariably broaden your scope.
- These various combinations allow your post to appear in results for these related phrases as well. Try rotating various combinations of keywords in the body of the post as well to create more diversity and cover more ground.
- For example, if you were writing an optimized post about skiing:
 - "Today we began our epic [ski vacation in Colorado](#), and immediately we were amazed by the serene beauty of this state and our resort, the [Lodge at Aspen](#). Unlike many ski resorts in Colorado, Aspen had short lift lines and the slopes weren't crowded like they can be at [Steamboat](#) or [Vail](#). Crested Butte is also a great resort, with terrain ranging from beginner level to expert bowls and tree

runs. They even have freestyle terrain for snowboarders. One of my favorite runs is the "Mogul Mammoth," an intermediate mogul run. See this run on a [map of Crested Butte's terrain.](#)"

- As you can see, these are hypothetical places within your posts to build valuable incoming links
- Rather than using the same keyword phrase repetitively and sounding like a broken record (which drives human readers away), sprinkle other keyword combinations to expand the SEO value of the post without detracting from readability.
 - Be creative here, but don't try to overload on keywords or your blog won't flow like good writing should. A good rule of thumb is to write with an eye for your keywords, incorporating them into the post when natural opportunities arise.
- Once you've finished writing your post, read over it again and circle or highlight your keywords in red. Does it sound natural or look like a finished New York Times word search? If so, take a step back and ensure your work flows while maintaining [SEO copywriting best practices](#) and a healthy keyword density.
 - You can check the keyword density of an individual page by visiting: <http://www.seochat.com/seo-tools/keyword-density/>
- Also, make sure you "tag" your posts. Each platform will have a field where you include the terms that describe the content of the post.
 - For example, if you just wrote about Aspen, your tags would presumably be: Aspen, Aspen skiing, skiing in Aspen, Colorado Ski vacations, Colorado ski resorts, etc.
 - Make sure your tags are specific and relevant
- Next, look for instances of your keywords where you could include another **backlink** to your site or to other posts in your blog. This will allow you to build valuable incoming links to your site, which are a major determinant of search engine positioning.
- Remember to use the full URL in your link if you can't employ anchor text, as this will ensure your link is indexed and available to search engines and readers alike. For example, see the two sample paragraphs above to see how I linked the KWPs
 - This is the way to create a link: `ANCHOR TEXT`

- The text that makes up a link is known as "anchor text." Always use anchor text to link, and remember not to link to the same page every time. Try to have only a single link to each page on your site, and maybe two to your homepage, but spread them out as best you can to avoid over-optimization penalties incurred with too many links to the same page in a single post.
- One of the great SEO advantages of blogs is that they already have optimized site architecture. Most are set up with a clear navigation, where every page is set up to link back to the other main pages. Thus, they have the inherent potential to be well-linked.
- All the blog platforms I listed above are created from templates like this, but if you build your own, ensure you have a feature like this included.
 - Remember to link to other posts in your own blog. For example, you could post an image map of Aspen's terrain or a video of a skier there, and then link to those entries in other posts.

Stage 4: Publishing and Publicizing Your SEO-Friendly Blog Posts:

- One of the most important aspects of blogging is publicizing your blog. Even if you have amazing content, it won't make a difference if users (or search engines) can't find it. This is why you need to submit your blog to relevant directories. For a list of the top blog directories, visit: <http://www.toprankblog.com/rss-blog-directories/>
- You also need to have an RSS feed for your blogs. All of the blogging platforms will create one for you, but if you host blogs on your own site you'll need to create one.
 - Make sure you make it easy for readers to subscribe to your RSS feed.
- Also, remember to include the following code block at the bottom of all of your posts. It is a Social Bookmarking button, allowing readers to add it to Digg, Stumble, Del.i.cio.us, Reddit, and many other social bookmarking sites:

```
<!-- AddThis Bookmark Button BEGIN -->
```

```
<a href="http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php"
onclick="window.open('http://www.addthis.com/bookmark.php?pub=ihastings&url='+en
codeURIComponent(location.href)+'&title='+encodeURIComponent(document.title),
'addthis',
'scrollbars=yes,menubar=no,width=620,height=520,resizable=yes,toolbar=no,location=
no,status=no'); return false;" title="Bookmark using any bookmark manager!"
target="_blank"></a>
```

```
<!-- AddThis Bookmark Button END -->
```

- Another effective way to promote your blog is through social media marketing. This allows you to position content within targeted online niches
 - This is another good reason to add lots of rich media to your blogs, whether movies, images, photos, anything that will bring the blog to life by including more than just written words.

- **Always allow comments.**

- When people add comments to your blog it's like getting new content for free, and the more content you have on a page the better.
- Too many people do not allow comments on their site because of rampant comment and blog spam.
- However, most blogging platforms have effective spam filters that let you approve or reject comments before they appear publicly on your blog.

That is your complete guide to SEO-friendly blogging. Consider the following: Not only do blogs allow you to publish and distribute fresh content on as frequent a basis as you like, but Google and other search engines grant high value to blog content due to the frequent updates, links and networks, and archival nature of the blog platform itself.

Thanks to the Google algorithm, this makes blogs a valuable tool for SEO and improved organic search positioning. Just remember to update frequently!

Please contact Nick Yorchak at Fusionbox for more information, or if you have any questions about blogging best practices.

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