

WRITING ACADEMIC BLOG POSTS



You might have been asked to write a blog post for a class, or maybe you're interested in writing your own blog post for your personal blog, a school website, a community newspaper, or on one of the many blogging networks like Medium.com. Although personal blogs where people share stories about their lives are very popular, they aren't necessarily the best way to communicate research: in that case, the Academic Blog post is a more appropriate genre.

What is it?

An academic blog post is a place for you to share your own unique take on a topic you have spent some time researching. Academic blog posts use evidence and analysis like an essay, but they're written in more conversational, informal language. You may not need a formal thesis statement, but you should still present your perspective on an idea, issue, or current event.



Call to action: Blog authors often end their post with direct language that asks their readers to do something. The purpose of an academic blog post might be to inform, educate, or debunk misinformation, so the call to action might be something "Now you know how important it is to exercise your civic duty in your next municipal election" or "Remember that next time someone tells you that history isn't important."

What does it look like?

Because blog posts are online, you should make use of the multiple modes of communication at your disposal: not only can you use different fonts and formatting, but you can also embed links to other websites, include images, gifs, and even embed audio and video. In fact, the most engaging blog posts are the ones that make the most use of their digital space and embrace this multi-modal communication.



Tip: Avoid using more than 2 fonts. You could use a serif font (something with 'tails' on the letters, like Baskerville Old Face) for headings, because those fonts stand out, and a sans-serif font (something that is plainer, without any frills, like Arial) for the text, since they are easier to read on screens.

Readers of blog posts expect to see short paragraphs broken up with images, block quotations, or even headings. These can help your reader skim through the post before they decide whether or not to read it. You should also use simple, clear language – don't be afraid to use personal pronouns (e.g. I, you, and we). These all have a place in academic blogging.

Block quotations: repeat an important sentence or quotation in a different font to emphasize the point.

What is it about?

Although academic blog posts can be about any topic that the author has researched, the real value lies in the author's unique perspective on something they care about. The best blog posts offer insightful commentary on events that matter to the readers today. Think about what experiences, identities, education, or informed opinions you have and use those to help your readers understand a timely topic from a new point of view. For example, a Rec and Leisure student who plays in a women's hockey league might have something insightful to say about the pay gap between professional women and men's hockey athletes.



Reading

What Should I Read?

- + Read lots of different blog posts.
- + Research credible sources like newspapers, journal articles, and peer-reviewed books.

Why Should I Read?

- + Reading widely will help you learn what blog style you enjoy. Will yours be funny, personal, formal, inspirational, educational, or something totally different? Check out the WCC Blog for some great examples. Reading posts on your topic will also give you real opinions to respond to.
- Research credible sources like newspapers, journal articles, and peer-reviewed books. Although blog posts can be personal, academic blog posts should use credible evidence to support opinions and arguments. Ask your instructor about quoting and citing.



Planning

What Should I Plan?

- + Figure out who your audience is.
- + Identify your main message and sketch out the points you need to make to support that message.
- + Find pictures and develop metaphors and analogies.

Why Should I Plan?

- + Even though blog posts are often public, you should still identify a specific target audience so that you can use what they know and care about to choose appropriate language, arguments, and explanations.
- + Not all blogs have explicit thesis statements, but they do still communicate a central message that is relevant today. Many blog posts also include a call-to-action or a final statement to remind their readers of the point of the post.

- + Use pictures, memes, and gifs as well as written metaphors and analogies to make your topic relevant to your audience. References to current events help your audience understand why they should be reading the post now.



Drafting

What Should I Draft?

- + Write a first draft.
- + Test out different hooks to grab your audience's attention.
- + Brainstorm different snappy titles.

Why Should I Draft?

- + Good blog posts usually have a strong opening statement to 'hook' the reader. This might be a funny or relatable story, an insightful question, a surprising fact, a personal confession, or something intriguing.
- + Blog posts rarely have formal titles like you see in journal articles. Instead, they tend to be catchy and intriguing. Think about the titles that make you click on something to read or watch: they are simple, clear, and enticing.



Format

What Should I Format?

- + Choose appropriate fonts and formatting for different sections.
- + Include links to other blog posts, websites, articles, and videos.

Why Should I Format?

- + You can make headings, important concepts, and block quotations stand out by using a different font, size, and style (bold, italics, underlined, and even strikethrough).
- + Linking to other online material not only shows your reader where you got your information, but it also tells them that your writing is relevant to other conversations.



Revise

What Should I Revise?

- + Look over your draft and revise it for clarity, conciseness, and relevance.

Why Should I Revise?

- Bloggers tend to write in the active voice, because those sentences feel more urgent and personal. See our “Active and Passive Voice” resource. Like any form of writing, blog posts should go through multiple revisions. See our “Revision” resource.
- Get feedback from a friend, an instructor, or the Writing and Communication Centre: book an appointment!

References

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