

## **Blog Setup**

Now that you've got your ideas about blog content sorted out, it's time to make some decisions about setting up your blog. I'd like you to start by considering the following three questions:

### *1. What kind of blogging software would you like to use?*

We're going to discuss blogging software and how it relates to blog hosting later, so you don't need to answer this question just yet. But I'd like you to start thinking about a few options:

- Are you willing to pay for a blog host? If so, how much would you be comfortable paying each month?
- Do you want to use a free host for your blog?
- Do you mind installing blog software on your computer?
- Would you prefer to rely on an online blogging software option where you won't need to have any software installed?

### *2. What is your blog's name?*

Think about what you'd like to name your blog. Be as creative as you like. For example, if you're writing about your son's basketball team named the Miami Mudcats, you could name your blog *Hoops, Dribble, Basketball Blog, Mudcats' Blog, Miami Mudcats' Blog*, or maybe *My Son's Basketball Team*. The choice is up to you. And the options are endless—unless someone else has already used the same name. Be sure to do a search to make sure your prospective blog title is unique.

### *3. Who will have access to your blog?*

When you create a blog, you get the option to set up privacy levels, including the privacy levels for viewing the blog and posting comments. Are you willing to let everyone have access, or will you need to establish some limitations?

For example, you could let everyone read your blog, but limit comment privileges to the people related to your business. You could permit only your students or friends to view and post on your blog. Or you could allow anyone to view or post. Which scenario would work best for you?



### **Note**

You'll also need to plan the design for your blog, but you don't need to worry about this now. You'll make your decisions about the look of your blog using the design options provided by your host when you actually set up your blog.

Here is how these questions were answered for the waterfowl park's blog:

### ***Setup Plan for Waterfowl Park***

- 1. What kind of blogging software would you like to use?  
We're planning to use free online blogging software provided by a blog host.*
- 2. What is your blog's name?  
We'd like to use part of the park's name in the title and are considering Sylvan Heights' Blog.*
- 3. Who will have access to your blog?  
We'd like to allow everyone access to view the blog and post comments, and we plan to keep access open like this unless the comments posted are inappropriate.*

So what are your responses to these questions? It's okay if you don't have a response for each one at this point. Just begin to think about these questions, and try to answer them by the time you access the next lesson.

### **Blog Maintenance**

Let's consider how you will be maintaining your blog. You've got to keep that blog current if you'd like it to be successful. The following questions will help you create a plan to keep your blog active. Most bloggers consider an active blog to be one that has a new entry not more than a month old. Active means that someone is still there adding new posts to it.

## 1. Will you work alone?

Blogs can be a solo adventure, of course, but some bloggers ask others to contribute. If you work for a business, consider asking your coworkers to post, too. For example, the panda post I commented on was written by one of the many San Diego Zoo employees that keep the blog current.

You could also use guest bloggers. Guest bloggers are individuals who you invite to post on your blog. Usually, guest bloggers are experts in the field that you're blogging about or have their own blogs on a similar topic.

Using a guest blogger is a win-win situation. You don't have to worry about writing a blog for the date the guest blogger posts, and the guest blogger gets the benefit of being read by your blog readers. In many cases, the guest blogger will link to your blog, too, and this will direct more traffic to your posts.

Working with a guest blogger is a great way to promote your blog. It's like how some cooking or do-it-yourself television shows invite special guests to be on an episode. The show benefits because the special guest appearance improves their ratings, and the special guest benefits, too, by getting airtime and exposure.



### **Note**

Most guest bloggers will be willing to contribute to a blog that is more popular than their own. They do this to help promote their blog. So keep in mind that since you are just starting out, you may be the one doing the guest blogging for a while until your blog has a bigger audience.

## 2. How often will you post new blog entries?

While there are many different views on how often someone should post, I recommend adding something new at least once a month. This is the absolute minimum. For example, if you're blogging about the book, flower, or product of the month, you can get by posting monthly. But if you become an affiliate for a company and link to their items on your blog, and then

you don't put up any new posts for a month, they may contact you because your blog is no longer active.

On the other end of the spectrum, you probably don't need to post more than once or twice a week at a maximum to keep your readers interested. However, if your blog is news-related or chronicles a daily event, you may need to post more often just to stay on top of the latest news, just like a daily newspaper would.

In fact, I like to compare blogs to newsletters, magazines, and newspapers. Sometimes a weekly newsletter gives you everything you need. For other topics, a monthly magazine is better for staying up-to-date. Other times, you need a daily paper to keep on top of current events. If, for example, you're blogging about daily online deals, you may find that you're posting more than 10 times a day just to keep current. A good rule of thumb is to let your topic dictate how often you post. Just ask yourself, "How often would I like to read updated blogs on this topic?"

### 3. How long will your blog last?

How long would you like this blog to last? Would you like to keep it going for a few months, a season, a year, more than a year, more than five years?

It's good to know where a project is going before you devote your precious time to it, right? Obviously, if you're looking to create a blog that will only last as long as T-ball season, you won't need to put as much time and effort into promoting it as you would a blog that you're hoping will last indefinitely.

Here's how the waterfowl park project relates to these questions:

### ***Maintenance Plan for Waterfowl Park***

#### *1. Will you work alone?*

*Three staff members will be responsible for the blog.*

#### *2. How often will you post new blog entries?*

*Once a week.*

#### *3. How long will your blog last?*

*We're hoping that the blog will be successful and be an ongoing project.*

Answering these questions about maintenance will help you create a successful blog, and they'll help you save time, too.

For example, if you start out posting daily, your readers are going to expect you to continue to post daily. So if you really only want to post once a week, you should start that way. Planning your blog's maintenance will help you determine the pacing of your posts and keep you from wasting your time with posts you don't want or need to write to meet your goals.

So, we've reached the end of your first blog planning session. You may need to give your plan more time to develop. But are you starting to see the outlines of your blog's content? Are you getting ideas about your blog's setup and what you'll need to do to maintain your blog? Keep those ideas coming. You're off to a great start!

### Assignment

Please locate and familiarize yourself with a blog that's written about a topic similar to the one you're planning to write about. For example, if you'd like to blog about the current fishing conditions at the lake near your home, try to find a blog that someone else has created that discusses fishing reports in his or her area. Take some time to explore that blog, and take note of what works well and what needs to work better. You'll use that knowledge as you begin to create your blog in the following lessons.