



The Blogger's Guide to Creating Great Content

How to Give Your Readers What They Want - and Look Good Doing It

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Introduction

Aloha from Hawai'i and thanks for reading *The Blogger's Guide to Creating Great Content*!

My name is Charles Bohannon of Wordful.com. I'm in my sixth year of blogging and for 11 years before that, I've been a professional writer and editor for various commercial and non-profit businesses.

It's not every day I get to write a book loaded with all my best advice, tips and insights on creating content, so you can bet I'm personally committed to making this one of your best blogging education investments ever.

This guide is specifically designed to make it easy for you to create not just okay content, or even good content—but **Great Content**. We're talking about content that consistently attracts attention, builds your brand and makes you money!

I've also taken great care to make this book as clear, concise and easy to follow as possible. Everything here is

based on my own ideas and experiences, which I hope you find interesting and personable.

What You Can Expect from This Book

The goal of this book is very simple: to help you become a content creation expert, which in today's online world is one of the most valuable and in-demand skills to have.

In other words, I am going to teach you how to make your readers and customers happy while making you look really good in the process!

Here are just some of the ways you will benefit by creating great content:

- Your professional credibility and confidence will quickly grow and strengthen
- You'll increase your wealth by creating content worth charging for
- You'll save tons of time and money by knowing exact-

ly what kind of content “works” with your readers

- You'll permanently overcome “writer's block” and other fears you have of publishing
- You'll consistently attract loyal readers, fans and customers with the kind of content you're proud to talk about
- Best of all—you'll have lots of fun creating great content!

I've divided this book into 5 easy-to-follow sections for your convenience:

Part 1: Writing

Great content starts with basic writing skills, and in this section I'll teach you the 3 must-know pillars of writing: clarity, consistency and personality. Once you get these, you'll be able to get your point across with more power and less effort every single time. You'll also learn why you don't need to be a great writer to be a great blogger, and how to avoid some of the most common (and embarrass-

ing) mistakes in blogging.

Part 2: Editing

Editing is by far the most valuable skill any blogger or Internet marketer can have, and this section will show you how to be an expert editor. You'll learn how to proofread your posts the right way, and best of all—you'll learn the simple but powerful secret to keeping your readers happy every time.

Part 3: Publishing

The publishing section will teach you how to treat your blog as a professional publication. This section covers everything from choosing your blog platform to posting to graphics and more. I've also added some advice on what to watch out for if you're thinking about outsourcing your content.

Part 4: Marketing and Business

Marketing gets you the attention you need to build your blogging business, and it's just as important as content. This section gives you a few special tips to get you started

on marketing your blog, including naming your blog and search engine optimization (SEO). The section on business will give you a few tips and ideas to get you started on treating your blog as a business.

Part 5: Mindset and Productivity

Adjusting your mindset is one of the best things you can do to build your confidence and accelerate your productivity. This section includes a ton of advice to get you more focused and in the zone of a successful blogger.

What I Expect from You

It's pretty simple, really: All I expect you to do is:

- Refer to this guide often
- Believe in yourself
- **Take action!**

Please Spread the Word

And if you really like it—which I hope you do—please tell your friends, family and anyone else you know would benefit from it.

Help Me Improve the 2nd Edition

I am already planning a 2nd edition of this ebook and I'd really like to hear from you! Please don't hesitate to contact me directly at feedback@wordful.com with any of your feedback, comments, suggestions, reactions or anything else.

Why This Book is Very Important for You

These days on the web, most people consider themselves marketers. You and I are no different. We focus on capturing people's attention so we can turn them into customers. And when our marketing works, we sell things, and we make money and everyone is happy. Right?

Marketing is essential to your business, but there's another half of the equation that isn't getting enough attention these days: **Content**. There's a whole lot of content out there that is—let's face it—pure junk.

Good marketing can sell both awesome content and bad content. But only awesome content will create the kind of value you'll need to build loyal, long-term customers.

So if there's one thing I want you to learn from this book, it would be the **value of great content**. I want you to learn exactly what great content is, how to create it and how to use it to launch your success in blogging and internet marketing.

It's really important you understand the value of great

content before you go any further. You don't want to end up wildly chasing a career in marketing, only to find out that what you're trying to sell to people is junk. Then you might find yourself scrambling to sell the next piece of junk, and so on.

Publishing or selling bad content will at minimum cost you some pride, but chances are you'll lose some credibility and trust, too. Building the business of your dreams without credibility and trust will always be a slippery slope.

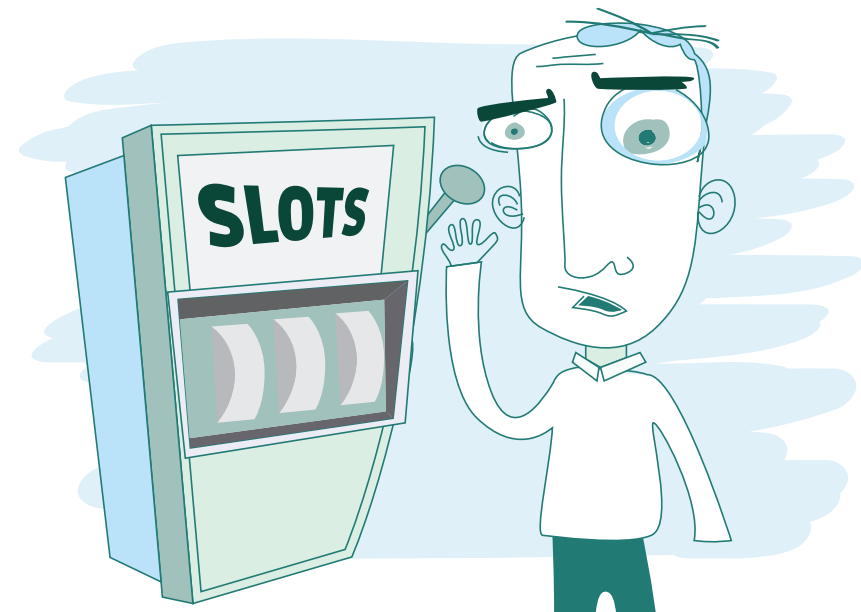
Think about this: there are millions of blogs out there, and only a few hundred are really doing well as far as business, traffic and authority. The ones that stand out are the ones that provide the most value to its readers. Don't you want to be one of these people?

So, if you want to make money blogging, your content has to offer value, it has to be great.

And that's what this book is all about!

What this Book is Not

It's not a get rich quick guide.



I wish I could say it was, but the Universe simply doesn't work that way. Building wealth takes time, focus and persistence and most of all — your willingness and capacity to create abundant value for others.

If you're just going after the money, your creativity and ability to create value for others will inevitably evaporate. Then all you're left with at this point is your dreams, and still no reality!

No matter what level of experience you have as a blogger, the last thing you want to do is blindly follow the people who are trying to sell you the same “get rich quick” dream over and over. I'm talking about those “hit it and quit it” marketers who promise to teach you the latest “overnight wealth strategies” or “how to make \$3,000 a day just by surfing the web.”

Let's face it: those systems don't work. If all you're doing is going from one shiny product to another, hoping to strike it rich, you're going to fail. You'll be nothing more than a serial *opportunity seeker*, floating from one opportunity to another and wasting your time, energy and money in the process.

Another thing you need to watch out for is the lure of the “make money online” (MMO) niche. It's such an attractive niche to get into because you're led to believe that you'll

magically make money doing it. In order to succeed in this niche, you have to tell people how to make money online, but the problem is first having to make some yourself!

The most eager and naive MMO bloggers usually publish garbage content that they think will make them rich. What ends up happening is they quickly get bored and passionless because nobody reads or comments on their stuff. Then, eventually, their blog shuts down, forever forgotten in cyberspace.

If you really want to get into the make money online niche, I wish you the best. Just remember that you have to be at least as good as or better than the current heavy hitters like John Chow (“I make money online by telling people how I make money online.”) and Shoemoney (“Skills to pay the bills.”)

It's not an internet marketing course.

While I do offer a few modest and helpful internet marketing tips in Part 4, this book is more about creating content so great that it could practically market itself.

So you're not going to find much in here about how to build your traffic, grow your list or build a high-converting squeeze page. There are literally thousands of free and awesome resources out there that can help you with internet marketing.

John Chow, Jeremy “Shoemoney” Shoemaker and Brian Clark of Copyblogger are very respectable and down to Earth guys (I've met all of them in person) who will teach you just about every internet marketing trick in the book. You can find them listed along with a few others in the [Wordful Internet Marketing Resource List](#) on page 80.

It's not a copywriting course.

Copywriting is a style of writing which aims to persuade people to think a certain way or take some sort of intended action (usually buy something). Perhaps you saw the sales page to this book — that, for example, was the work of a copywriter.

Copywriting is by far one of the most important disciplines of internet marketing, and also one of the most difficult to master. It can be very powerful when you

want to boost sales and conversion. But I tend to think of copywriting like tip of a spear: it's good to use right at the moment you need to “make a kill.”

If all you write is persuasive copy, people will catch on pretty quick that you're always trying to get them to do something for you, and your relationship with them will likely never get past first base.

The kind of great content I obsess about in this book is quite different than copywriting. My kind of content is the stuff you can create without the intention to persuade or coerce people. It's much easier to write because it allows you to just be yourself and engage with people on a more humanistic level.

Master the art of producing great content is the real path to growing your credibility, your relationships and eventually—your customers.

What is Content, Anyway?

Content is the life of the web. It's the reason we go online: To consume information, news, blogs, articles within billions of web pages every day.

But what exactly is content?

On the web, we define content as the topics, ideas, facts or statements in a webpage, website or information product (free or paid). Content is mostly made up of text but also includes images, audio and video.

Great content should either **enlighten** (solve a problem) or **entertain** (amuse) people, or both.

Seven Types of Niche Content

Most web content falls into one of these seven niches:

1. News: information, facts, headlines and reports of a broad or focused topic. Examples: *CNN, The Huffington Post, Techcrunch*
2. Education: tips, help, answers, advice, self-improvement, personal development and productivity. Examples: *Problogger, Copyblogger, Entrepreneurs Journey.*
3. Humor: wit, jokes, sarcasm, and other all-around silliness. Examples: *College Humor, The Onion, The Oatmeal*
4. Gossip: the latest rumors and 'exposed' tidbits on people or companies. Examples: *Perez Hilton, Radar Online*
5. Commentary: opinions, reviews, observations or interpretations of a particular subject, service or product. Examples: *Talking Points Memo, Daily Kos.*
6. Community: groups of people linked by common interests. Includes social media. See: Facebook, Twitter, UStream.
7. Narrative: fictional and non-fictional stories and anecdotes. See: [Aric with an A](#), History.com.

Great content requires great thinking

When you create content, you should always make sure you are focus on these three virtues: **quality, clarity** and **relevance**.

Quality refers to the originality and depth of your ideas, *clarity* refers to how well you express those ideas and *relevance* refers to how well your content relates to your audience.

Following all three of these virtues is the foundation of creating great content. If you leave even one of them out, your content won't be great.

Content should also never be used as filler. In other words—don't publish content that doesn't truly enlighten your readers.

A simple analogy is to think of every piece of content you create as a brick you're laying to build a house. You wouldn't want to use cheap materials (bad or 'imitation' content) or shoddy workmanship (sloppy writing) when laying your bricks because you're going to create weak

spots that will compromise the overall integrity of your website, blog and brand.

So if you're ever faced with the choice of publishing content high in quality or high in quantity, **always go with quality**.

I know this isn't always easy—especially if you don't have much time, but you're better off in the long run because high value always wins.

Content comes first

Let me say it again: the web runs on content.

It's your job as a blogger to create it. The better your content is, the more it's worth in terms of authority and price.

Part 1: Writing

Words make the web work.

Introduction

Without words and without writing, websites would be empty, content would not exist and search engines would not function...and you wouldn't be a blogger!

Knowing how to write is one of the best skills you can have on the web. When you can write, you can create content. And when you can create your content, you can build your own information products to sell at excellent profit margins.

Anyone can slap up a blog but very few bloggers can write in a way that engages people by building trust, authority and likability. This section will help you do just that.

Writing versus Copywriting

There's a major difference between writing and copywriting, and I'm going to repeat what I just said in the previous section:

Writing is the stuff you read when you open a magazine, newspaper, book or blog posts—it's content that's pro-

duced for consumption. Writing is designed to engage and inspire people, and build relationships. Most of your content will consist of this kind of writing.

Copywriting, on the other hand, is designed to sell things or get people to do a very specific, targeted action. Writing highly persuasive copy can be very challenging, but it's also a very lucrative craft if you're good at it.

It's very important you make the distinction between writing and copywriting. I've noticed on the web that there's a strong, almost overbearing emphasis on always needing to write "copy" to create blog posts. In fact, a lot of people falsely believe that copywriting is the only way to create content.

Not true! Don't think this way!

If you mistake copywriting for writing, your content will end up sounding like one continuous sales or lead generation pitch. The other problem with using copywriting for content is that it's easy to leave out that personal touch and authenticity, which could make it much harder to make lasting connections with your readers.

Why You Don't Need to Be a Great Writer to Be a Great Blogger

You Just Have to be Good Enough

The fact I'm an English major and passionate about writing has actually been more of a problem to me since I became a blogger.

The reason why is because I often get too caught up in my writing and choice of words, and I end up wasting time trying to find a better way to say something—instead of just saying it.

But here's the deal about blogging: you don't have to be a good writer to succeed. You just need to be good enough.

This means you just need to be able to get your point across in a clear and concise manner, which you can achieve by following these simple **3 Pillars of Good Enough Writing**:

1. **Clarity:** Use clear and efficient language to get your point across

2. **Personality:** Be comfortable being yourself

3. **Consistency:** Produce relevant content on a regular basis

This entire section is going to walk you through each of these three pillars so you at least can be a *good enough* writer.

Clarity

Clarity is the most important element of good writing, and one of the greatest gifts you can give your readers. Without it, they won't stick around for very long!

In blogging, there are 3 major benefits to clarity:

- **People will understand you.** If you embrace clarity in all that you do, people will understand you the first time around, which is often the only chance you'll get.
- **It saves time.** Clarity removes unnecessary time spent figuring out the “say what you mean and mean what you say” game. If you can save people's time, you'll gain instant appreciation.
- **It saves space.** Clarity allows you to say more using less words. A sharply-written, 300-word blog post can speak volumes more than a 1,000-word blog post that waffles.

To have clarity when you write means to be direct, precise and orderly with your words. Doing this prevents any kind of confusion with your readers.

Clarity also simplifies complex ideas and makes them easily understandable to the average reader. This can be very important when you're trying to get people to support an idea that has a lot of intricate details.

Clarity in your content is also more important than persuasion. If nobody can understand what you're trying to say, you'll have to be that much more clever (and possibly deceiving) in your marketing efforts.

Be Direct By Being Efficient

Being direct is the best and quickest way to get your point across in blogging. The only way to do this is to **use only as many words as you need** and no more. Using too many words is a sign of a bad writer.

In fact, bad writers believe that people are more likely to listen to them if they use a bunch of extra words that

“fluff” or “pad” their blog posts. The truth is, attention spans are very short on the web, and people don't have any time to figure out what you're trying to say. If you can't capture their attention in the first 3-10 seconds, chances are you'll lose them forever.

The best way to be clear is to just **say what you need to say!** You'd be surprised how few words you actually need to get your point across.

Remember: **less is more**, so choose your words carefully. This applies to writing short posts, long posts or anything in between.

Your Choice of Words and Vocabulary

The majority of people who read on the web are far more likely to listen to someone who is comfortable using common, everyday words like the ones we use in daily conversation.

In general, it's best you keep your vocabulary to a middle school reading level. Of course, this may vary depending

on your niche, where you may have to use some big and fancy words, but for the most part—just keep it simple.

You should especially use everyday words if that's what you're most comfortable using. There's nothing worse than someone trying to use big words when it's not necessary or when they just don't know what they're talking about. This is really embarrassing!

The best thing to do when writing in your blog is to shoot for *elegant simplicity*. If you want an example, try reading anything from Ernest Hemingway. His style is direct and simple but very flowing.

For example, read this famous first line from Hemingway's short story *The Old Man and the Sea*:

He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish.

Now how does that sound to you?!

Using Proper Spelling and Grammar

Sometimes it hurts me to say this because I come off sounding like a spelling or grammar cop, but writing with clarity also includes spelling words correctly. It shows you possess a basic understanding and respect for the most basic rules of writing.

Misspelling words, especially on a regular basis, is one of the quickest ways to lose your credibility.

Grammar is a little different because the rules are very flexible (depending on your situation). You should also have a good understanding of basic grammar, though, so you know when it's cool and when it's not cool to bend the rules.

For a list of common spelling and grammar errors, please refer to Part 1: Editing.

Narrative Point of View

Narrative point of view is simply the way in which you ad-

dress your audience.

- **1st person** is when you speak from your point of view using *I* (direct) and *me* (indirect). 1st person plural is *we*.
- **2nd person** is when you speak directly to your reader using *you* (direct and indirect are the same).
- **3rd person** is when you speak about one or more things or people who are not your reader, using *he*, *she*, *it*, and *they* (direct) and *him*, *her*, *it* and *them* (indirect).

Don't worry too much about which narrative point of view to use when you blog, just as long as you are clear who you're speaking to or speaking about!

Obviously, using 1st person (I) makes the most sense, but you have to keep in mind that it can sound too self-centered if you're constantly speaking from your perspective. Speaking to your reader in 2nd person narrative (you) is very powerful because your reader will feel like you're

speaking directly to them.

Personally, I like to mix up my narrative points of view. Sticking with just one really limits my style and delivery.

Tense

There are a few tenses to know about: past (what happened), present (what's happening now), future (what will happen) and conditional (what would or could happen).

It doesn't matter at all what tense you use but make sure you keep it consistent within a blog post! Far too many bloggers make the mistake of mixing past and present in their posts, when just one tense will do.

Cut "That" Out

Here's a little trick: try getting rid of the word "that" from your writing. Most of the time, you don't need it.

This sentence:

She knew that she hated him and he knew that he hated her, too.

can be reduced to:

She knew she hated him and he knew he hated her, too.

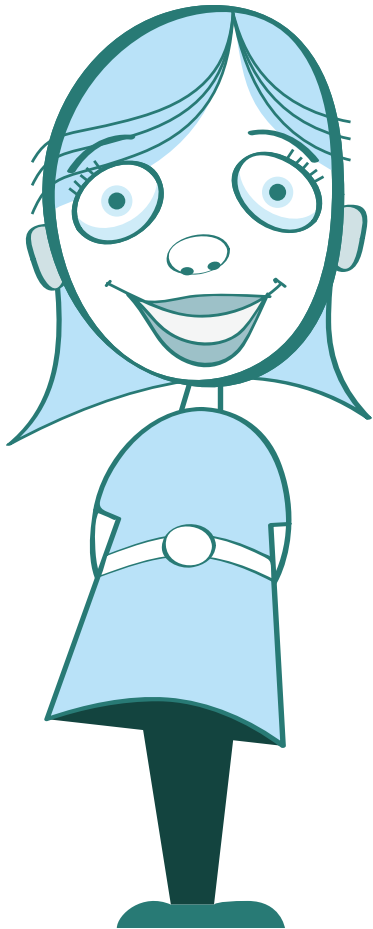
This tiny change will tighten your writing and make it sound smoother, too. Here's an excerpt from one of the best books on English writing ever, Strunk and White's "Elements of Style":

The ear, for example, must decide when to omit "that" from a sentence, when to retain it. "She knew she could do it" is preferable to "She knew that she could do it"—simpler and just as clear.

Of course, you don't always have to cut "that" out. Again, Strunk and White:

But in many cases the *that* is needed. “He felt that his big nose, which was sunburned, made him look ridiculous.” Omit the *that* and you have “He felt his big nose...”

Remember this advice the next time you write. Your readers will be thankful soon enough.



Personality

Be comfortable being yourself

In my experience, the most successful bloggers are the ones who aren't afraid to show their personalities to the world.

Instead of trying to change themselves to please everyone, they simply act as natural as possible and let things take their course. This makes for very comfortable writing, by the way!

One way to be yourself online is to write the same way

you talk. This is pretty easy to do, and once you get some practice, you'll develop a strong conversational voice that your audience will find very approachable.

Another way to be yourself is to share your personal stories. Humans constantly seek empathy—a way to relate the world to themselves—so anything personal you share has a good chance of making a significant impression.

Whatever you do, just be you!

What Exactly is Style and Voice?

Style is the way in which you communicate with your audience, including the form and structure. Unlike journalism or academia, the style of blogging is way more relaxed, informal, opinionated and conversational.

The casual style of blogging makes it very easy to let your personality shine online. This is what makes blogging so awesome!

Voice

Your voice is what sets you apart from everyone else. It's the way you come across in attitude and perspective, the things you choose to say and not say and the way you say them. In blogging, your voice is also your trump card—the one thing that can make you or break you.

Just like your real voice, your writing voice has a unique “sound” that people can distinguish from others. It's no surprise that bloggers with a strongest voice tend to get way more attention than bloggers with a weak voice.

Another important part of your writing voice is your rhythm, which is the way you blend your words to create a “speaking flow.” When you've got good rhythm, your readers will feel like their gliding through your posts with ease instead of stumbling and fumbling.

An easy way to inject some rhythm into your writing is to use some variation in your sentences. Mix long sentences with short ones. Think of long sentences as being more slow and thoughtful, and short ones as being more sudden and dramatic.

A one-sentence paragraph like this can create some much-needed tension.

3 Ways to Discover and Strengthen Your Writing Voice

Writing is just like exercise: the more you do it, the better you'll be at it. A strong writing voice comes across as confident and attractive. Here are a few exercises to help you develop that attractive confidence:

1. Keep a private blog or journal

All you need to do is write a minimum of 100 words a day about anything you want. Nobody has to ever read it. After awhile, you'll get comfortable writing in front of yourself and your voice will begin to emerge.

2. Read as much as possible

Read anything, and read as much as time allows. You'll soon discover which writers have a strong voice and which ones don't, and I guarantee you'll be attracted to the ones who do.

If you admire someone's voice, try to write like they do. You obviously won't be able to duplicate it, but it will give you a great starting point to develop your own distinct voice.

3. Listen to your favorite lyrical music

In any given song, every word counts. Listening to some of your favorite lyrics will help you discover why what you say is just as important as how you say it.

My personal favorite is rap music. I've always admired rappers because of their mastery of language and their ability to deliver extremely powerful messages in just a few phrases. Of course, rap music isn't for everyone, but I recommend it anyway!

Breaking the Rules of Writing for Fun

As you get better at writing (and you will if you keep practicing), you'll find a lot of opportunities to break some of the rules of writing. I won't get into detail, but let's just say that breaking a rule every now and then can add a lot of character and personality to your writing.

I love breaking the rules of writing. For example, I start a lot of my sentences with "But" or "And," when technically you're not supposed to. Granted, it's a small gesture, but it adds an occasional dash of my own character into my content.

Be the Exception to the Rule

If you're one of those people who will always struggle with writing, don't worry about it. In fact you may even be able to work this to your advantage.

Jeremy "Shoemoney" Shoemaker is a great example of someone who doesn't need great writing skills to get a lot of attention. He is one of the most successful (and richest!) Internet marketers in the world and runs a very popular, influential and heavily-trafficked blog.

From a writer's perspective, Shoe is mediocre at best. He can't spell very well and he breaks a lot of simple grammar rules—this is not intentional. The reason why his blog does so well is because he has a very strong voice. Everything he talks about he does with absolute honesty, conviction and confidence.

He's not afraid to talk about once being morbidly obese, or that a certain New York Times reporter "is a dipshit with no real world experience," or that the Subway Sandwich shop in his hometown "made me feel like a sucker... like I just got punched in the face... and paid for it."

Jeremy often admits his mistakes, but goes on to say that's just the way he is. In fact, he's even clever enough to sometimes intentionally make a typo to see how many people will comment on it, which inevitably more people do. He says:

It's so funny how when you make typos...it engages people to interact with you, whether it's positive or negative.

So if you're not the best writer, don't ever let that stop you from blogging. There are always ways around it.

Just make sure you're being true to yourself and your readers. Wordful, for example, could never get away with sloppy writing!

Consistency

Successful bloggers are consistent writers. This means two things: they produce content on a regular basis and they stay within their niche as much as possible.

Getting Started with Blogging Consistency

Writing your 1st post

Writing your first post is probably the scariest one you'll ever have to do. It's the point where your decision to become a blogger intersects with the point where you actually become one.

The easiest and fastest way to write your first post is state as boldly and as passionately as possible why you're starting your blog. You can also throw in what your dreams and expectation are, who you hope to influence and why and where you see yourself in the future.

This is a really good way to start your first post. As for me,

I had no idea what I was doing for my first post on Wordful.com.

I very clearly remember writing it on October 1, 2008. I sat in front of my computer and rewrote the same sentence over and over and over and over until it sounded perfect. The post, entitled "[The Rising Value of Editors on the Web](#)" ended up only being 140 words and it took me over 6 hours to write!

It was a maddening experience to say the least, but I did end up following the formula I outline above. Of course, I'd never want your first post experience to be as painful as mine!

Writing your 2nd post

If you consider your first post to be the "thesis" of your blog, then the one right after that should be about you.

In this second post, I recommend you introduce yourself to the world: tell them your name, your story, your likes and dislikes...basically whatever it is that makes you who you are.

The awesome part about your second post is that you can combine it with the first one and use it for your about page. All you have to do is steal the content (yes you can plagiarize from yourself!) and publish it on your about page.

You can always update your about page, too, as your ideas start to grow and evolve. But your second post will remain as a permanent snapshot of who you were when you started your blog.

Writing your 3rd post

If you can get past your first two posts, then your third one and all the ones to follow should be a breeze. It doesn't really matter what you write, just as long as you stay on topic.

Get past your first three posts and you're on your way to consistency!

Sticking to a Posting Schedule

You don't have to publish a post a day, but whenever you do post should be consistent. Make an agreement with yourself to write something a certain number of times a week and stick to that no matter what.

This kind of discipline separates the professional bloggers from the amateurs.

1st Person Narrative: A Quick Fix to More Plentiful Writing

If you struggle with writing or blogging on a regular basis, try writing in 1st person narrative for awhile. Start using more *I* and *we* and less *you*, *he*, *she*, *they* and *it*.

I personally find it a heck of a lot easier to write from my own point of view than it is from someone I don't know. It feels more like talking—natural, unforced and personal.

One big reason why blogger Chris Brogan has no problem writing an average of 2-3 posts a day is because he almost

always writes in 1st person narrative. In other words, he gets to be himself every time he writes.

If writing in 1st person feels better and makes your writing easier—and still deliver value to your reader—you should go ahead and do it.

1 Way to Very Quickly Boost Your Consistency

If you're really serious about improving your blogging skills, try publishing a post every day (Monday through Friday or more) for one month.

Here's how you'll benefit:

Your writing will get better

Much better, in fact. Having the discipline to write and publish everyday is just like exercise: you eventually get into shape. You start sounding more relaxed and the act of writing doesn't hurt so much.

The first week is especially tough, I will admit. It's painful to force yourself to do something that can feel so uncomfortable and strained. Getting past the second week is pretty rough, too.

But once you get to the third and fourth week, you'll start to hit a stride. After that, blogging every day doesn't feel like such a task. It's actually quite enjoyable.

Perfection will no longer get in your way

Part of the reason I was such an infrequent blogger (one post per week, sometimes less) is because I really dragged and took my time to “handcraft” each post to what I felt was a state of perfection.

We have to remember that blogging is not like book publishing where a team of editors refine our work until it's ‘perfect’ (*ahem* there is no such thing as perfect). That's the old way of doing things!

Blogging is meant to be more rapid-paced and fluid. When you commit to doing it every day, it becomes “publish or perish.”

So no matter what kind of day you're having you know a new post has to be live before you go to bed. That kind of pressure forces you to ship your work (make it public) by making snap, creative decisions.

You'll start to find your voice

This is by far the biggest benefit to daily blogging.

Like any novice, beginning bloggers tend to copy the styles of the more established bloggers because they haven't yet discovered their voice.

But when you write every day, you get more comfortable with yourself and your words until it starts to feel like... you. Your blog becomes you.

Pretty soon your writing feels more natural, like speaking. Your personality starts to emerge, and people start to get comfortable around you.

That personal connection is vital for building the kind of relationships you'll need to build your fan base.

11 Unconventional Reasons to Motivate Your Writing

Does writing come natural to you or do you make clichéd excuses and watered-down reasons why you're not doing it everyday?

Let's throw your writing a curve ball: here are some not-so-typical reasons why it's worth the daily discipline and persistence:

- 1. Producing feels better than consuming.** Writing is an act of production, and while it's not as easy to do, it certainly feels more rewarding to give than to take. Be a word philanthropist!
- 2. Words command attention.** Do it good and the world will listen to you. Do it right and they will act.
- 3. Teach yourself something new everyday.** Unlike "ordinary" thinking, writing actually connects the disparate ideas in your head into something concrete, useful, portable and public.

4. **Talk to yourself without going crazy.** Writing purges the clutter in your head that leads to temporary, or even permanent, insanity.
5. **Play offense and defense in sticky situations.** Powerful writing can get you through some tough moments in life. I've shut down enemies, secured two mortgages and received tens of thousands of dollars in help—all from very carefully chosen words arranged on a page.
6. **Sometimes it's all you got.** Writing is a healthy alternative to giving up on life. If you find yourself in a frustrating, disappointing or otherwise shockingly horrible situation—just write. It really does help. Trust me.
7. **Lay down your legacy.** Every time you write, every time you publish, you leave a trail of yourself, of who you are and what you represent. These words will not only outlive you but also eternalize you. Just a little something to think about.
8. **A little writing goes a long way.** One word or phrase can make all the difference. Sometimes it's all you need to make that magic connection with people. If you don't believe me, try writing to your close family members every now and then.
9. **Can be lucrative.** I can't possibly express this point any better than Brian Clark of Copyblogger [does in this post](#).
10. **It helps burn calories.** A good day of writing can increase your appetite and leave you feeling like you've just moved your aunt's piano to her new penthouse across town. There's probably no scientific evidence to support this, but I'll vouch for it.
11. **It feels greeeeeeeat!** When you get into a solid groove of writing, there are few other activities that satisfy your intellect, emotions and personal goals all in one fell swoop.

Part 2: **Editing**

The most important part of creating great content.

Introduction

I'm going to let you in on a big secret: the editor is the most valuable person on the Internet.

The reason why is because the web is overflowing with content, and somebody needs to filter out the good stuff.

This is the primary function of the editor—to choose.

For you as a blogger, being an editor means two things: proofreading content for readability and selecting content that will make your readers happy.

Both jobs are extremely important to your success. And you, fellow blogger, need to think like an editor—starting right now!

Proofreading

Proofreading is the first stage of editing. It's largely detail and task-oriented and involves fixing spelling and grammar errors, cutting and adding text and rewording

things so they sound good.

Always, always, always proofread your content. When you proofread, you will inevitably catch errors that could damage your credibility or worse—damage the credibility of others.

Proofreading everything you plan to publish will also set you far apart from the bloggers who don't bother to proofread. In fact, there may be another blogger in your niche who knows a lot more than you, has better connections or publishes more content. But if you're proofreading and they're not—you're going to look better every time.

Here's a related example: take the last movie you saw. Imagine how painful it would be to watch that movie before it was edited. There would be scenes out of place, no music, no sound or special effects. Just raw footage and dialog. It would totally suck, right?

It's the same thing with your blog. You need to edit it. Publishing posts that aren't edited is like releasing raw

footage from a movie to the public. It's going to suck and turn people off, and they won't come back!

So do it right—proofread!

How to Quickly Proofread Your Blog Posts

After you've written a post, take a minimum 30-second break from it. Better yet, walk away for a little bit. Then come back to re-read it carefully to fix the spelling and grammar mistakes.

Then repeat the break and come back once again to check the content and smooth things out for style points.

5 Bonus Proofreading Tips to Make Your Posts Really Shine

- 1. Have someone else look over your post.** A second set of eyes will almost always catch mistakes you won't see yourself. My dad does this for me and sends me an email. And despite my editing skills, he almost always finds something. This is hugely helpful.
- 2. Don't be afraid to cut.** In other words, don't get so attached to your words that you aren't willing to let them go. Sometimes you need to remove obstacles in your writing to get to what you're really trying to say.
- 3. Mix things up a bit.** Try mixing long-winded sentences with short punchy ones. Create a sense of movement so you don't drag things along or go too fast.
- 4. Make your posts pleasing to the eye.** There's a lot to be said about visual formatting of blog posts. Try stepping back from your screen about 6 feet and squint at your post. Does it look like something people would have an easy time reading? A good way to improve the aesthetic of your posts is to mix up a variety of short paragraphs (1-3 sentences), subheads, bullets point, graphics, blockquotes, bold and italics.
- 5. Add some X-Factor** - So you've written a great post, or so you think. What's one thing you could add or subtract to make it even better? Do this every time you write a post and see what happens.

Common Spelling Errors in Blogging

Incorrect	Correct
alot	a lot
defiantly, definately	definitely
seperate	separate
independant	independent
convenience	convenience
desireable	desirable
tomorrow	tomorrow
disapear	disappear
disapoint	disappoint
damnit	dammit

Commonly Confused Words

loose / lose

loose means something is not tight // *lose* means to not win

The lid on this jar is *loose*.

I'm about to *lose* my mind.

conscience / conscious

conscience is your sense of right and wrong // *conscious* is your thoughts and perception, or state of awakening

I had a guilty *conscience* after shooting the rabbit.

She was not *conscious* after fainting.

precede / proceed

precede means to come before // *proceed* means to come forth or to continue

For most people, high school *precedes* college.

You may *proceed* with the show after the clowns leave the building.

then / than

then is used either as a time marker or with a sequence of events // *than* is used to compare things

I'll take a vacation, *then* work really hard. or Back *then* I always chose the blue pill.

The pixel is mightier *than* the paper.

lay / lie

lay is used when you want to lay something down (someone is laying something else down) // *lie* is used when the someone or something wants lie down by itself

Can you please *lay* the baby down for a nap?

I'll think I'll *lie* down on the sofa for a nap.

Grammar Cheat Sheet

Disclosure: I'm a proud English major, but I have to be honest: I don't know the hard rules of grammar. I go by a pretty basic understanding of grammar and it seems work pretty well for me.

Here are a few of the grammar rules that help me get by:

The Apostrophe

- **Possessive:** used to indicate that something belongs to someone
The cat's meow. (the meow of one cat)
The cats' meow. (the meow of many cats)
If a word already ends in s, you still need to add 's, like this: Charles's website is awesome.
- **Contraction:** used when you combine *am*, *is* or *are* with a pronoun (I am = I'm, he is = he's she is = she's, they are

= they're, etc.) or with the word *not* (we are not = we aren't, etc.)

Here are some typical examples of how people get confused:

- **Your vs. You're:** *Your* means it belongs to you; *you're* is a contraction of *you are*
Possessive: *Your* blog is the blog that belongs to you.
Contraction: *You're* blogging means *you are* blogging at the moment.
- **Its vs. It's:** *Its* means something belongs to it; *it's* is a contraction of *it and is* or *it and has*
Possessive: The tiger scratched *its* fleas all afternoon. (The fleas belong to the tiger.)
Contraction: *It's* been ten years since I saw her. (*It has* been ten years...)
or You never know when *it's* going to rain. (...when *it is* going to rain)

Homonyms (words that sound the same but are spelled differently)

- **to / too / two:**

To is a preposition that indicates spatial movement: I'm going *to* the zoo.

Too can mean also: She *too* had a craving for pineapple. or in excess: There were *too* many mice for the lone cat to handle.

Two is 2: My pet monkey turned *two* last week.

- **there / their / they're:**

There means in or at that place: Your keys are over *there* by the fountain.

Their is possessive for more than one person: *Their* goal is to win.

They're is a contraction of *they and are*: *They're* surfing when the waves are up.

- **accept / except:**

accept is to receive with consent / except is to leave out
I *accept* the terms of payment.

Everyone *except* Julio knew where to hit the piñata.

- **affect / effect:**

affect means “to influence,” and you use affect as a verb; effect means “a result”, and you use it as a noun.

Your laughing *affects* my ability to concentrate.

The *effect* of the recession has forced people to change their complacent ways.

Listing

- When you have a list of things, some people prefer to use a comma between the next to last item and the last item. I prefer to leave it out. It's totally up to you.

I and me

- It is incorrect to say: “The guard gave the keys to Kimo and I.”

Instead you should say, “The guard gave the keys to Kimo and me.”

However, when you use a verb after the clause you need to say *I*. For example: “Kimo and *I* took the keys from the guard.”

One Word Can Make All the Difference

Be mindful of what you publish, because **one single word can destroy a lifetime of hard-earned credibility.**

The act of harming or injuring another person's reputation through false statements is called **defamation**.

Defamation in writing (as in blogging) is called **libel**; in speaking it's called **slander**. These offenses can sometimes offend the wrong people and land you in a world of legal and other nightmarish trouble.

Now I'm not saying that as a blogger you have to always hold your tongue and be the nice guy or girl (after all, blogging is one of the best way to exercise your freedom of speech!), but make sure you're not choosing and using words which make false claims against others.

Sometimes it won't matter if you make an honest mistake or use certain words out of context. Some people might not have the tolerance to let it go.

So just remember:

Your words are the extension of your ideas.

Great words = great ideas, shoddy words = shoddy ideas.

Everything you say on the web is being **recorded for the rest of future history** to see.

Avoid being reactionary.

If something or someone bothers you, know your immediate response is usually not your best one. Step back and think about how you can tactfully disarm, reverse or avoid the situation. If you're defending yourself, try your best to take the high road.

The right words can make you **rich, famous, loved and admired.**

The wrong words can do the exact opposite.

Keeping Your Readers and Customers Happy

To create great content, you must give people exactly that.

In addition to proofreading, your greatest skill as an editor is to know what your readers really care about, and then give them what they want.

This is how you create value, which is the only true way to

build a blog, a business and an audience that will reward you with traffic, attention, influence and money.

Now this doesn't mean you have to completely abandon your passion for something just to please people, but you should definitely choose a niche that a group of people are interested in. The perfect blogging scenario is when you share the same passion as others for a particular topic. In fact, the more the merrier!

You see, there's a huge difference between the average



blogger and the awesome blogger. The average blogger writes post after post without giving much thought to the reader. The awesome blogger puts her readers first, and is therefore very strategic with her content.

How to Master the Editor's Greatest Skill

Being an editor will require you to understand and interact with your readers as much as possible.

Now granted, there are some very successful bloggers who appear to be spouting off their mouth, but you need to keep in mind there's something they're saying that people find valuable.

You will need the input of your readers in order to set the tone and direction of your content. You have to be truly excited to talk to and observe people and find out what they really care about, which often means you have to listen to the things they *don't* say.

You also need the ability to filter ideas. This involves listening to what other people are saying in their blogs, websites or social media platforms and knowing immedi-

ately if you can pass on the idea to your readers for their benefit.

You have to choose ideas not because *you* like them, but because you know your readers will.

If you can imagine your reader standing beside you as you write, you're on the path to blogging success. Take some time to understand who they are, what makes them tick and what gets them excited.

Doing this is the best way to get them to trust you, like you and buy things from you!

All About Posting

In blogging, we usually use the word “post” to mean article. There are a few things you need to know about posting that will help your publishing strategy.

Types of Posts

Evergreen

Also known as the *pillar*, *flagship* or *cornerstone* post, the evergreen post is content that's highly resourceful, compelling and timeless. Evergreen posts contain your very best ideas, and are the kind of content you should almost always strive to create. An evergreen post is also the stuff you're always proud to tell people about.

The great thing about an evergreen post is that it will continue to attract readers long after you've written it. In fact, the more value people get out of your post, the more likely it is to spread virally. Evergreen content also helps build your blog and your brand, gives good natural SEO rankings and rewards you with authority and recognition in your niche.

You're probably wondering what it takes to create an evergreen post. The truth is that—like any good thing—they are a lot of work. You really have to put a lot of attention and effort into both the thinking and the writing of an evergreen post.

One great way to create an evergreen post is to think about the “6 Cs:”

1. Who **C**ares?
Is the content worth your readers time? What do they get out of it?
2. Is it **C**ompelling?
Even if people care, is it interesting enough to attract their attention...and sell?
3. Is it **C**lear?
Can you make the content simple enough to understand? Or is it just filler?
4. Is it **C**omplete?
Are you giving a whole or fair story? Can the reader do

something with it?

5. Is it **C**oncise?
Can you get right to the point in your first paragraph?
Are there details you can cut?
6. Is it **C**orrect?
Are your facts right? How about the names of people
and places? Quotes?

Thanks to Gerry McGovern, author of *Killer Web Content* for the 6 Cs -- [read the Wordful review of Killer Web Content here](#).

If you can successfully answer all those questions, then you have the makings of evergreen content!

Newsy

Newsy posts are exactly what the name implies—news. This is the kind of content that is dependent on something happening in the present. Whether there's an event you're covering or a late-breaking development, a newsy post will give details about it.

Newsy content need not be so thoughtful or powerful as evergreen content. It's more about getting the information out as quickly as possible. You don't have to worry so much about creating *timeless* value but rather *time-dependent* value.

There's a ton value in newsy posts, too. If your timing is good, or if you're the only one covering the some late-breaking news, or if you have a unique "insider" angle, people will worship you!

Also, if you're running a blog that covers a fast paced industry or social scene (like celebrity gossip), then newsy posts are definitely the way to go.

Editorial

Editorial posts are also known as opinion posts. There might be a little crossover with evergreen and newsy, but editorials are mostly centered around how you feel about something and why.

Editorial content can be immensely powerful depending on your reach and influence in your niche. There are a lot

of big-name bloggers who aren't afraid to rant on a well known person or company every now and then. The reason why is simple: they have a large and captive audience ready to go.

When creating an editorial post, it's obviously good to clearly (and boldly) tell readers how you feel, but don't forget you need to make a good case as to **why** you feel that way. Ask yourself what reason people would have to care about the way you feel. How would the issue affect them? Just complaining about something because you don't like it isn't going to cut it.

Earlier in this book I mentioned Shoemoney complaining about Subway Sandwiches ([read the NSFW post here](#)). Go ahead and read it — it's a real off-the-cuff editorial post but very well articulated.

Posting Frequency

There's really no such thing as how often you're "supposed" to post. What you should do is start with a number of posts per week (or create a posting schedule for certain days of the week) and just stick to it. You need

to create an expectation for your reader in which they know they can come back to you at a certain time for new content.

Being consistent can be a challenge if blogging is new to you, but trust me—the discipline will set you apart from the amateur and hobbyist bloggers. A great tool to help with consistency is the Editorial Calendar Wordpress plug-in (mentioned earlier in this section), which allows you to plan your posts (both frequency and type) ahead of time.

One last observation on posting frequency: I've noticed that some of the most successful bloggers post content at least once a day. This is by no means the rule, but you might want to set a goal to do this. Just make sure you're not publishing junk just to fill space—remember that quality always trumps quantity!

Categories

Categories are crucial to providing your readers with a good experience on your blog. They are a great way to organize your posts into the different "main ideas" within

your niche. Categories are built into Wordpress, and are very easy to add, update and delete.

For example, if your blog is about surfing in Alaska, then your categories might be: Adventures, Gear, Surfboards, Surf Spots, Surfers and Miscellaneous. As you can see, each of those categories are centered around a distinct topic within the niche of surfing in Alaska.

To keep things simple for your reader, you should have **no more than 7 categories on your blog**. In my experience, any more than 7 and your blog starts to get a little chaotic and disorganized. Once you get into the groove of blogging, it will take some time and thought to get your categories set. Just make sure you structure them for clarity and maximum value to your reader.

I have found it helpful to keep one category labeled “Miscellaneous.” Every now and then you’ll create a post that simply doesn’t fit into your other categories. Think of Miscellaneous as your “wild card” or “trump card” category.

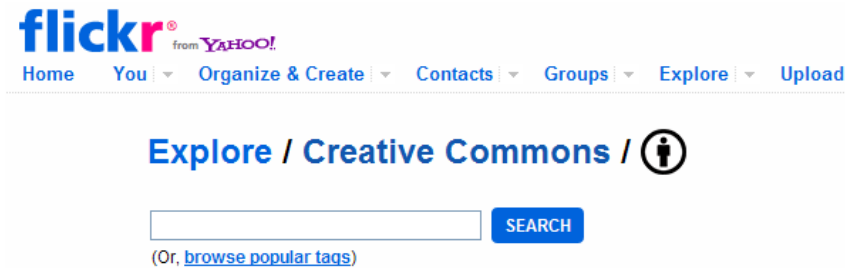
Lastly, categories are extremely important to the structure of your site from a search engine’s point of view. The better optimized your categories are, the easier it will be for Google (and other search engines) to find your content.

This book does not cover optimizing Wordpress categories, but you can find a ton of free resources out there on the web.

Adding Images

Having a strong visual presence in your blog posts are vital to balancing out the monotony of text. A really good image will add a lot of depth, character and aesthetic to your post. You should always put a little thought into what kind of image would complement the ideas in your post.

Depending on your content, you may already have an image (or images) that directly relates to what you’re taking about. Oftentimes, however, you won’t. What I (and a lot of other bloggers) like to do is head over to the photo sharing site Flickr to grab a free image.



To get an image from Flickr, head over to the Flickr Creative Commons search page (www.flickr.com/creative-commons/by-2.0/ – make sure it says Creative Commons) and type in a word or short phrase that you think best sums up your post. When the results come back, click on “Interesting” in the “Sort” option and then take a look at the images you get back.

You will really enjoy doing this. It forces you to think creatively about your post, but without being too abstract. When you find a good image, download it and—if you want—crop it and/or play with the light and shadows so that you frame the image in a visually compelling way.

Then—this is very important—make sure you give credit to the photographer within your post, with a link back to the page of the original photo. I like to add this line to the bottom of post for image credit: *Photo by [personwhotookphoto](#).*

Flickr images are usually used in a more creative and symbolic way. You may have a completely different type of blog, in which case your images will vary. You can see what I’ve done at Wordful by visiting any of my blog posts at <http://wordful.com>.

Engaging With Your Readers

Comments

Comments are the lifeblood of your blog. They tell you that people are not only reading your stuff but also responding to it. Getting a comment, whether it’s good or bad, is usually a rewarding experience.

There are 5 types of comments, and each one deserves a different type response:

- **Spam.** If your spam filter doesn't catch it, a spam comment will still be pretty obvious. It's usually someone saying something very generic, with a link back to some spammy site, and chances are the spelling and/or grammar will be a little off.
Action: send spam to your spam filter.
- **Simple statement:** you'll get a lot of these. Usually it's someone saying something very generic that doesn't really solicit a response like, "Yeah, I had one of those, too."
Action: acknowledge the comment or just ignore it.
- **Simple compliment:** these are also very common. It's usually someone saying something nice like "I like your post!" or "Awesome!"
Action: thanks the commenter, ignore it or ask them why they like it.
- **Hatemail:** these comments can be discouraging, but at least it shows you're getting a passionate response out of someone.
Action: best ignored, or if you're daring enough—a

great opportunity for a killer comeback!

- **Thoughtful engagement:** these are the best comments to get! These are left by people who are interested in your ideas enough to engage with you further. They can be positive, negative, challenging or all three. Thoughtful engagement comments can also be a way for you to strengthen your position and polarize your audience, or learn a little something.
Action: by all means respond, and do it in a way that transcends the post. You'd be surprised what can come out of fruitful conversation that's been generated by something you wrote.

Engaging with your readers in the comments is the best way to sharpen your skills as an editor, too. You'll get a sense of who your audience is and what they're passionate about. You might even make some friends along the way!

Part 3: Publishing

The logistics of blogging.

Intro

This section will teach you how to run your blog as a professional publisher. It includes things you need to know about blogging tools, setting up your blog on Wordpress, blog design, outsourcing writing, dealing with plagiarism and more.

Wordful's Blogger Equipment Checklist

It's very simple, actually. You only need 3 things:

- **Notebook and pencil.** Carry these with you like a photographer carries a camera (everywhere). You need to be able to capture your ideas and take notes at any given time. Don't rely on scratch paper because it gets easily lost, and transcribing is a waste of time. Don't worry about people looking at you funny, either, because toting around a notebook and pencil is not as funny looking as you think.
- **Computer.** I prefer laptops, because they're portable.

- **Internet connection.** Self-explanatory!

Some Advanced Blogging tools

- **Evernote.** Evernote is a brilliant web-based application (available for smartphones and Windows as well) that's like an enhanced digital notebook. You can save text, photos and audio as "notes" that gets stored in your online account. I use Evernote heavily, especially when I am drafting a blog post. It doesn't replace my low-tech notebook and pencil, however. There is a Free version and a [Premium version](#). The Premium version includes more storage space, offline access, PDF searching, no ads, priority support and more (Very reasonable at \$5/month or \$45/year)
- **Editorial Calendar.** This Wordpress plug-in by *Stress-limit* is great strategizing your content by planning your posts ahead of time so you stay on track.
- **Tick Tock Timer.** This is an online timer that looks just like the kind you might have on your wristwatch. All you do is set the amount of time you want and start the timer. The idea is to write focused and without

distraction while the timer is counting down.

- [iA Writer](#). If you have an iPad, get the Writer app. It's simply brilliant, and only \$4.99. [You can read the Wordful review of Writer here.](#)

3 Hot Tips on Choosing your Niche

Deciding what you want to blog about is obviously a major decision. As mentioned earlier, you definitely want to create content that primarily offers value to other people ...but also gives you satisfaction.

Here are 3 tips to get you started:



Loveable

If you really want your blog to take off, your starting point is to pick a niche people are already passionate and excited about, and that you have an interest in as well.

The way to discover this is to start reading, watching and listening to what's going on in your desired niche. What are people saying about it? What's popular? How do things going on in the world effect it?

When you start to get your finger on the pulse, so to speak, try to really narrow down a specific angle of your niche that you're confident people will be interested in.

- For example, let's say you live in Alaska and you love surfing (*surfing* is your niche). Somehow you've figured out a way to traverse through miles of dangerous and uninhabited coastline to get to some excellent surf breaks. You also know a great deal about the equipment you need to do this. Then you discover that people are starting to talk about surfing in Alaska in some of the leading surf magazines and on the web. Instead of just talking about surfing in general, you narrow down your niche to surfing in Alaska. [By the way, someone really did this: <http://www.surfalaska.net>.]

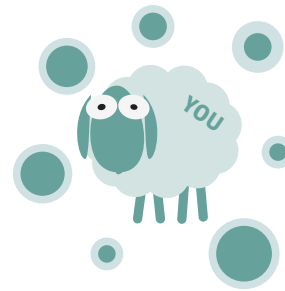


Profitable

Obviously this is important. Monetizing your content is a huge topic far beyond the scope of this book, but it's something you absolutely must be mindful of from the start.

A couple of ways to see if your niche is profitable is to check out other sites in the same niche. What are they selling and how are they selling it? Are they selling ebooks, a monthly membership, training program? Maybe they're reviewing or recommending related products and getting a cut of the sale? (this is called affiliate marketing)

Sometimes the content in your niche won't be something you can sell (for example, if content is newsy, like celebrity gossip). In this case you'd be focused on building a lot of traffic so you can sell advertising space. Some good examples of the ad revenue model is Techcrunch and The Huffington Post.



Brandable

Not too many blogging experts will tell you to focus on building a publishing brand, but it has been one of Wordful's top priorities from Day 1.

In a nutshell, being brandable means having a strongly recognizable character/personality/emotion when people think about your blog.

So when you're choosing a niche, think big. Think about how you can create an identity that will make an impact in your niche. A great example of a publishing brand is Copyblogger.

Above anything, remember that the best thing to do is get started!

Wordpress: the Ultimate Blogging Platform



Wordpress is a free, open-source software that is powering most of the blogs around the world. Since it has such a massive user and developer base, it has quickly become one of the best supported, most secure and flexible platforms for anyone with a website.

Wordful gives a 100% recommendation for Wordpress.

There are two versions of Wordpress you can use:

Self-hosted (recommended)

Self-hosted Wordpress is a software that you install from your own hosting account that you pay for (Wordful recommends [Bluehost](#) — it's less than \$7 a month and comes with a free domain name). Installation is very easy (see

this video: <http://tutorials.bluehost.com/wordpress/>) and takes less than 3 minutes to complete.

The major advantages to self-hosted Wordpress are:

- You own your TLD (top level domain, like [www.wordful.com](#)), which is an absolute must for branding.
- You have complete control over your search engine optimization (SEO).
- Full plugin capabilities allow you to extend and enhance the functionality of your website
- There are no restrictions on advertising on your blog.

Self-hosted Wordpress is the option you need to go with if you're serious about making your blog a significant part of your business.

Hosted (not recommended)

Hosted Wordpress is done through www.wordpress.com and is free to use (hosting is included), and you don't have

to install anything.

The disadvantage to running your blog on hosted Wordpress is that your domain name will look something like this: www.yourblogname.wordpress.com. Hosted Wordpress also puts several restrictions on the kind of advertising you can have on your site (see here: <http://en.support.wordpress.com/advertising/>), as well as limited SEO and plugin functionality.

I recommend the hosted option if you don't have money to pay for your own hosting. Just keep in mind that at some point you'll definitely want to switch over to a paid, self-hosted Wordpress account. [Again—Wordful uses Bluehost which includes a [free domain name](#), plus you can host unlimited domains and therefore, unlimited blogs!]

If you switch from self-hosted to hosted in the future, you'll also have to find a way to transfer your content over from your old blog to your new one. This might cost you just as much or more than the hosting account itself!

Good Blog Design

Good blog design is a must for establishing instant credibility with your readers. If someone arrives at your site and it's ugly, distracting or otherwise unprofessional, chances are they'll immediately click away and never come back.

When it comes to the design of your blog, remember that **the design supports the content**, not the other way around.

This means you need to make sure that your content—whether it's text, images or video—must be the most prominent piece of your site. Too often people get so caught up in the design of their blog that they end up with a site that's too fancy or confusing or loud...plus they end up ignoring their content!

Go with a Wordpress Theme that Works

The really good news about blog design is that it's now become very easy and affordable to get. In fact, you don't even need to hire a designer to help you. All you need is a

Wordpress theme, which is basically a ready-to-go design that you can add or change at any time to your blog.

There are two types of themes: free and paid. Both are really good. If you Google “free Wordpress themes” you’ll find more than enough themes out there to get you started.

The advantage of a paid Wordpress theme is they usually look a more professional and they come with support and updates. You can expect to pay anywhere between \$20-\$150 for a paid theme.

If you really want to go all out with your blog design, you could also get a custom theme. This means you hire a designer to make a theme just for your blog, and then pay to have the design converted to a Wordpress theme. Getting a custom theme could cost you anywhere from \$200-\$5,000+.

How to Save Time and Money on a Custom Design

If you want a custom theme, but don’t have a lot of resources to pay for it, visit some of the leading blogs or

one that you really like and ask a designer to help you create something similar to it. Chances are if the blog you like is doing well, there must be something about the design that’s working for people.

Just be sure not to copy the site verbatim (obviously!)—use your own colors, logo, etc. There’s nothing wrong with duplicating basic layout and structure of something that works instead of having to start from scratch.

Wordful Recommends Organic Themes



If you’re looking for an awesome paid theme for your blog, I highly recommend you check out Organic Themes (<http://organicthemes.com>).

They offer about a dozen out-of-the-box themes, all of which are very beautifully and smartly designed. I recommend the Verbage, Structure or Block themes for your

blog. Organic Themes is also known for their great customer support.

Wordpress Frameworks

One very popular and advanced Wordpress theme option is to have your custom design fitted into a special and powerful kind of Wordpress theme called a *framework*. This is basically a “blank canvas” theme built for complete design flexibility and user-friendly control.

There are several awesome Wordpress frameworks:

- [Thesis](#), by DIY Themes — [read the Wordful review](#)
- [Genesis](#), by Studiopress
- [Standard Theme](#)
- [Headway Themes](#)
- [Startbox](#)

Getting Other People's Content on Your Blog

There might come a point when you want to grow your blog and you need more content than you can handle producing on your own. This section offers a very brief and general overview of outsourcing content.

Outsourced Writing

Outsourcing writing means you pay someone to write for you. There are obviously big benefits and big downfalls to this, so you need to consider your intentions. The way I see it, there are two ways to outsourcing: hiring a writer with a good reputation or hiring a generic outsourced writer who has zero reputation.

Obviously going with a reputable writer is the way to go. There are many ways to find one, including other bloggers, word-of-mouth, job boards, etc. Hiring freelance or staff writers is beyond the scope of this section, so I will go on to focus on outsourced writers.

If you're looking for quick, cheap and easy “article”-type

content for your blog, you can easily find writers at various outsourcing sites who fit the bill. But remember, you get what you pay for: cheap content will take you more time to edit than if you just write it yourself. The other problem is that your readers will be able to detect if your hired content is faking passion.

One of the reasons bloggers outsource their content is to build traffic by hiring writers to write keyword-rich articles pertaining to their niche. You may have some short-term success doing this, but I suggest you take a serious look at your brand and ask yourself where you want to be 3-5 years from now. Do you want to leave a great publishing legacy or are you looking for a quick fix?

I'm not a huge advocate of outsourced writers, unless it's a reputable writer with exceptional skill and genuine passion. The aim of Wordful is to become a mainstream publishing brand, so I publish my content accordingly.

Guest Posts

Guest posts are an awesome way to get quality content for your blog. Unlike outsourcing, guest post submissions

come from fellow bloggers who share similar passions as you and your readers.

The benefits of guest posting are plentiful: it adds content to your blog, you build relationships with other bloggers, you give your readers a fresh voice and you help out other bloggers by giving them a byline with a link.

Now just because you get a guest post doesn't mean your work is done. This is where your skills as an editor are absolutely crucial: you need to ensure the guest post fits the tone and personality of your blog, it well-written and the content is something your readers will appreciate.

Fellow blogger [Chris Garrett](#) is an expert on Guest Posting—he even wrote the book on it!

Chris's [awesome guide on Guest Posting](#) covers everything you need to know, including headline templates, pitch email templates, worksheets and more.

[Check out GuestPosting.info here.](#)



Scraping and Autoblogging: Why They Suck

If you're looking for content for your blog and you come across something telling you this:

Just push the button, sit back and watch your content draw in visitors like a powerful magnet, earning you massive profits in a fraction of the time it would take "real" bloggers.

Stay away from it! This is a sales pitch to draw you into an autoblogging and/or scraping scheme.

The two terms are basically the same thing, but with a slight twist in semantics:

- Scraping refers to automatically copying full articles from other blogs (or RSS feeds) for publishing on your own site.
- Autoblogging just snatches the headline and excerpt for your site, and supposedly links back to the origi-

nal article.

Some of the more sophisticated methods involve some sort of “magic bullet” software that does everything with a push of a button: you type in your keyword and the software just starts adding content to your blog from other sources. At this point it becomes a fully automated system.

Why Would You Do This?

Scraping content is a quick and easy way to get free content into your website, where it could rank well in search engines for whatever keyword(s) you're targeting. A good ranking can yield good traffic, which you can then monetize with Google AdSense.

Get enough of these sites going and you'll soon have that cherry red Ferrari and playboy mansion on the beach! (*Just kidding*)

Internet marketers who like to think of themselves as dignified (but actually aren't) prefer the term *autoblogging* because—technically—they're only using the headline

and excerpt and then linking back to the original article.

They argue that autoblogging is okay because all they're doing is providing “articles of interest” to readers and searchers.

What's Wrong With It?

It's pretty obvious what's wrong with this picture, but since I'm hot on the topic, here are my reasons:

- **Scraping is stealing.** There's no other way to say this, really. Taking other people's content without due respect to them is textbook plagiarism. Then to use it to game the search engines for traffic? Suffering succotash!
- **Scraping evaporates all of your credibility.** I can't see any sort of content scraper “movin' on up” to a respectable blogging or editing gig. Seems to me that once you do it, you mark yourself for a life among spammers. Can you even repent something like this?
- **There is zero brand equity.** Yeah, forget building a

brand. Stealing content for the *chance* of making some quick cash is not going to build much of anything but a gang of victimized but angry bloggers. Forget building a business while you're at it, too.

- **No value provided whatsoever.** When you scrape content for your “autoblog,” you're not only violating the author—you're also insulting the reader by providing false value. You're luring them in with the promise of something good, but not delivering.
- **It's stealing.** Yes I'm repeating that. It's so bad I have to say it twice!

Whether you call it black hat, gray hat, or even white hat, scraping and autoblogging are instant credibility breakers in my book. If you need to select content from other sources, do it manually and attribute accordingly.

The whole point of blogging is to create genuinely interesting content from a personal perspective. You just can't automate that. The only bloggers are human bloggers!

Live blogging

Live blogging is blogging an event you're attending as it happens. Here are some powerful live-blogging tactics I learned from blogger John Chow that will be sure to make you an ace live blogger:

Always be Present

I'm not trying to oversimplify this, but it's priority number one that you fully participate and be present in the event. This means not doing things the night before that you know will ruin you the next day.

John is one of the first people to be in the presentation room every morning. This gives him several advantages: he gets the best seat (front and center, of course), he allows plenty of time to set up his equipment and—best of all—he has time to relax.

There's nothing worse or more embarrassing than entering a room late when everyone is sitting down and listening to the speaker. Then there's the irritating part of setting up your laptop, trying to catch the stuff you missed

and basically looking like a jackass.

Publish often.

Call it guerrilla blogging. Covering a live event means you must write, edit and publish as fast as you possibly can.

Live blogging is much different than regular blogging in that you have to be very fast—there's not much time for deep thinking or philosophical ramblings. That's stuff you can do after the event is over (which I recommend you do).

At an event, I personally witnessed John publish 6—make that 7—posts! I tried to keep up with him and just couldn't...at least yet. And it wasn't a matter of better equipment -- we roughly had the same hardware (although I must admit his gadgets were much newer than mine).

Have the right equipment.

I didn't say the best equipment, I said the right equipment. John and I were both armed with these live blog-

ging essentials:

- Laptop and charger
- Video camera (I had a Flip Ultra HD and John has a Canon HFS100)
- Digital still camera (both Canons)
- iPhone (as backup camera or voice recording)

With the proper tools you can actually enjoy live blogging instead of getting fumbled up over petty glitches.

Dealing with Plagiarism

The first reaction of any hard-working blogger being plagiarized is to get angry. But then what? If you do a Google search on “blogging plagiarism,” you'll more or less get these recommendations:

1. Contact the plagiarist and ask them to remove your content.

2. Contact their advertisers and file a “duplicate content” complaint.
3. Report them to the search engines.
4. Take legal action.
5. Name them and shame them.

These steps are good but not always practical. Contacting the plagiarist of a scraper site (step 1) is like trying to ask the guy who runs a chop shop to give you back your stolen car—it’s useless. In fact, the most you’ll find on scraper site is an overly generic about page (if even that) and the name “Admin.” Forget about contact info and a photo!

Steps 2-4 can be serious time-suckers, especially #4. If you’re a solo blogger, time is your most precious asset. The time it would take to contact advertisers, search engines and, dare I say—lawyers—could permanently cripple your productivity and wallet.

#5 “Name them and shame them” is a good option, even if it’s for your own posterity. This is the really good if you have just a few aggressive minutes to spare. Unlike the other, more traditional options, naming and shaming a plagiarist takes a true guerrilla-style approach to copyright infringement warfare.

There are a few ways to name and shame a plagiarist, but the **quickest and most powerful is Twitter**. It’s instantaneous and widespread, which is just the weapon you’ll need.

The first thing you should do is tweet a rant about being plagiarized, and it’s likely within one minute you’ll have a **small army of people** joining you in passionate disgust of plagiarism. This alone will make you feel a little better.

You should also follow-up with **an assertive comment on the offending site**. Tell them what they’ve done and how you feel about it.

If there’s a way you can track down the plagiarist, do it and let everyone know who they are!

To see if your content is being duplicated, check out this handy little tool called Copyscape <http://www.copyscape.com/>.

Part 4: Marketing & Business

What you need to turn your readers into customers.

Intro

Marketing your content, and yourself for that matter, is not an option—it's 100% required if you want to build traffic, authority, popularity and profits.

Internet marketing is so important and such a massive topic that there's no way I could cover it all in this book. (Besides, this is a book on helping you create content that practically markets itself!)

So instead of going into the details of all the latest and greatest marketing techniques, I've decided to go in-depth with two aspects of web marketing that I've had some success in: how to name your blog (Wordful has been at the #1 position in Google for over a year for the term "[how to name your blog](#)"), and basic search engine optimization (SEO) for bloggers.

As far as everything else marketing, I provide a list of some of my favorite resources on the web at the end of this section. Even then, it's just barely scratching the surface!

The business section is also just a primer but gives some insight and ideas on the kinds of business opportunities available for bloggers and content creators. Enjoy!

Basic Internet Marketing Terms

When I first got into marketing in 2004, I was clueless. There were a bunch of marketing terms I'd heard of but never knew what they meant. I figure I'd decipher them for you:

- **Content marketing:** using content to build relationships based on trust and authority, with the intent to turn loyal readers into loyal customers
- **Viral Marketing:** your content is so good that other people can't help but share it with others on their own
- **Guerrilla Marketing:** taking marketing into your hands: rapid-fire-do-whatever-works marketing
- **Affiliate Marketing:** the art and science of selling other people's products for a cut of the revenue

- **Search Engine Marketing:** paying for sponsored results on search engine results page (SERPS), also known as pay-per-click
- **Article marketing:** writing and publishing many articles around the web
- **Email marketing:** building relationships and selling products through permission-based marketing via emails
- **Social media marketing:** using social sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to generate buzz; build trust, authority and relationships; and sell your products
- **Media buying:** buying ads (text, banner, etc) on other sites to promote a product

How to Name Your Blog Part 1: What Makes a Great Name?

www.?.com

Introduction

Make that name stick, make it electric!

A great blog name gives you an immediate upperhand when it comes to branding, readership and overall loveability. It's often the first point of contact with your readers and the one thing that remains constant as your blog evolves. If you can secure a fabulous name for your blog, the brand recognition alone it can generate can help draw attention from more established blogs with inferior names.

The problem for most people naming their blog is that

every great name must also have its matching available domain. Domainers and cybersquatters have made this process very frustrating and difficult for those of us who just want to register our websites and get on with things.

I'd like to say that naming your blog is a breeze, but it really isn't. There are certain unofficial guidelines you must follow to make your name original and brand-able. All too often I see people jump into a name without much imagination or patience. The result is more embarrassing than anything.

First let's start with naming fundamentals:

Three Elements of a Great Blog Name

1. **It sounds good.** Your blog name really needs a certain ring to it so that it pleases not just your ears but everyone else's as well. As you go thru your names say them out loud to yourself and others and assess your reactions. Beware of overthinking it or trying to sound too cute, because the results can be rather abrasive (like [vacationsexpress.com](#) or [whorepresents.com](#); also *Jaiku*, *Plaxo*, *Plurk* and *Orkut* sound

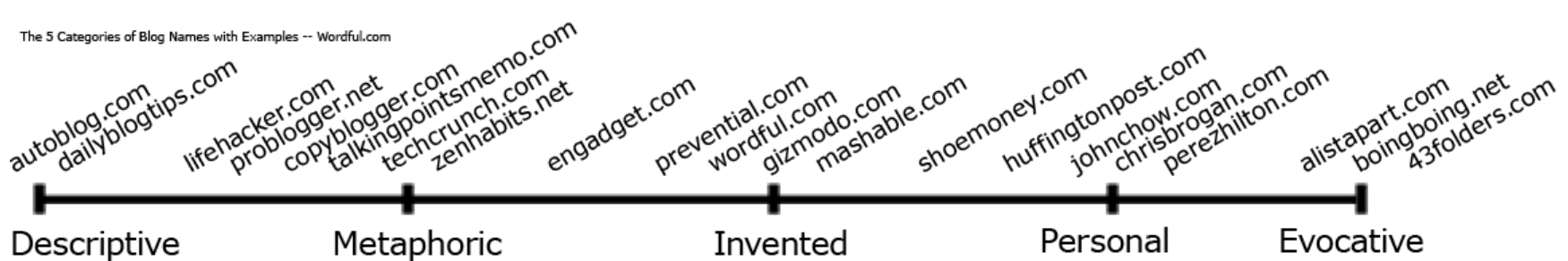
pretty unpleasant to me).

2. **It's catchy and memorable.** Remove any signs of boredom or mediocrity, or that you've settled for second best. I used to think [Amazon.com](#) was such an odd-ball name but I guess that's the point! Ask yourself: would someone remember it after seeing it just once? Can it be spelled after reading it once? What image does it convey?
3. **It's short.** The name should be concise. Try to avoid articles (words like 'a', 'an' or 'the') and other superfluous modifiers (such as 'best' or 'most' or 'happiest'). Another way of looking at it is to keep it under four syllables — any more than four and repeating it becomes a chore. There are exceptions to this, like when you might use your own name ([garyvaynerchuk.com](#)) or it just flows nicely ([cinematical.com](#)). Examples of good short names include: [woot.com](#), [JohnChow.com](#), [Skype](#), [Dooce.com](#), [Gap](#), [Hotair.com](#).

This concludes blog naming basics. With this advice you should start brainstorming and writing down your ideas.

And if you've already started on this, strongly consider scratching off the names that don't follow these rules.

How to Name Your Blog Part 2: What's Your Type?



Naming your blog is not much different than naming a new company or new product. You've got to have something catchy and unique that inspires people whenever they engage with you — both online and offline.

In the corporate world, people often pay top dollar for professional naming and branding companies to help them discover that perfect name. The process is extensive and deep, but results can be quite effective.

Hiring a naming consultant isn't totally realistic or necessary in the blogging world since most blogs have zero startup funds. Also, blogs usually start out as personal endeavors, so the name you choose should reflect (to a degree) who you are, what your passion is and how you choose to express yourself. In fact, coming up with a perfect name is half the fun.

There is a bit of a semantics when it comes to name selection. Names can fall into one of five categories:

The Five Categories of Blog Names

Descriptive

Descriptive names are straightforward and functional. They generally describe in literal terms what your blog is about. Since they are so direct, there is little dispute over the meaning of these names. Examples: autoblog.com, copyblogger.com, dailyblogtips.com.

Upside: easy to invent, easy to recognize, easy to brand, good for search engines, can sound authoritative, and if well-constructed it can dominate a niche (blogtips.com/dailyblogtips.com).

Downside: in popular niches, most of these (domain) names are taken, so expect to pay a lot if you want them; limits you to one focus; can sound generic, boring and copycat-ish when alongside similar names; trademarking can be sticky.

Metaphoric

Metaphoric names use one word (or more) to suggest the

likeness or analogy of another. To provide additional clarity, metaphoric names can be compounded with a more descriptive word (which usually but not always comes first). Examples: techcrunch.com, JetBlue, Facebook, SEO-Book, zenhabits.net.

Upside: name tends to make sense and sound good, easy to remember, easy domain name acquisition, easy to construct (limitless possibilities), combined words create interesting meanings.

Downside: not too many downsides, except for the possibility of being too long.

Invented

An invented name is poetically crafted and based on the experience and rhythm of saying it. It may or may not contain a real word or two that conveys some meaning. Examples: wordful.com, mashable.com, gizmodo.com, prevential.com, tipd.com. Not blogs: Skype, Flickr.

Upside: easy domain name acquisition, highly memorable, engaging and energetic, fun to say.

Downside: difficult to think of, may be challenging to recognize, might sound gimmicky or cheesy, don't necessarily provide any up-front meaning.

Personal

Personal names are made from the name of the author of the blog. Usually it's the first and last name in that order, but some lucky few are using their first name. Examples: garyvaynerchuk.com, johnchow.com, chrisbrogan.com, ted.me

Upside: easy to create, very strong personal brand potential, allows you to focus on anything, shows people you stand behind what you say, conveys personality.

Downside: may be hard to spell or say depending on your name, doesn't provide any up-front meaning, no separation from your name and your blog (for privacy or other reasons), being personally labeled may indefinitely affect how you are perceived, you'd have a hard time selling it.

Evocative

Evocative names make use of an unrelated word to evoke and compliment the positioning of your blog rather than describe its niche. Examples: 43folders.com, amazon.com, boingboing.net, Apple

Upside: a rare type of name that is easily differentiated, multidimensional and very engaging, can create a brand that dominates your niche.

Downside: difficult to construct properly, risky brand positioning, likely difficult domain name acquisition if the name is short.

As you might expect there are exceptions and hybrids to these name types, such as combining a personal name with a descriptive or metaphoric one (kind of like Shoemoney). There are also pun type names (like automattic.com) and initials/acronyms (tmz.com, tuaw.com).

How to Name Your Blog Part 3: 5 Tips to Make it Easy

So you need a name for your blog. I know that feeling very well. I've been there a few times, often for weeks on end, mulling over hundreds of names but never quite feeling satisfied.

The challenge with naming your blog is that it's likely to be the first thing in a series of things you want to be perfect. Right?

Wordful was my very first naming challenge. Back then I worked a dead-end office job that offered very little opportunity for creative expression. I got fed up one day and decided to start my own web copywriting company. For the name, I wanted it to truly and succinctly represent who I was and what I had to offer—in this case, writing and words. Thus the name Wordful.

I learned quite a bit from that experience, and now it's sharing time. If you want to great name for your blog and don't want to spend the money, take note of these five

simple tips:

Start with a Massive, Organized Brainstorm

Open your notebook and prepare to let loose. On the top of the page write a sentence or two describing as clear as possible what your blog is about and what it strives to achieve.

Under that make two columns: in the left column write words that are directly associated with your blog. In the right column, use your imagination and write down adjectives and metaphors that describe your left column words. Do not hold back at this stage—just start writing everything that comes to mind.

Experiment

Here's the fun part: take those two columns of words and start fusing some of them together, breaking them apart, bending and stretching them, misspelling them, seeing how certain sounds come together—you get the idea. You can even add more words as you go. If you're really struggling, know that compounded metaphoric names

are going to be your best bet—they're fairly simple and straightforward to put together.

Take a Break

That's right—get up and move away from your familiar surroundings. Go and find a sacred space where your mind can relax and un-focus for awhile. This zen moment can be a time of great inspiration, and you may be pleasantly surprised what surfaces to your consciousness. Just be sure to write it down!

Get Input from Other People

When you've got a decent list of names, be sure to run them by some people to get their feedback. This is a vital step because you need to know how the names are received by an audience. They might love a name you ignored or hate one you were clinging to for your own quirky reasons.

Play the Domain Name Game

Let me warn you right now: this step is a real showstopper, and you might find yourself getting frustrated early

on. This is because most good domain names are taken by someone who thought of it and purchased it before you. With that said, however, your chances of domain name success are greater if you: use your own name, invent a word or construct a compound metaphor (like Facebook or TechCrunch). [Word of advice: always try to get the .com top level domain (TLD)—it boosts your viability.]

You may have to repeat a few of these steps to make progress. Remember—**don't ever settle for a mediocre name**. It may never catch on and you could fall flat early in the game.

If you persist and hold out long enough, the right name will come to you. It took me about two months to come up with the name Wordful and another 14 months to get the .com domain name (that's another story). But I love it and it's mine forever!

So if you can get through all five of these steps, you should have a great name for your blog. Then you can really get to work.

An Abbreviated Example

1. Brainstorm: “I want my blog to be a community for everyday people who go running to stay in shape.”
2. *Left column*: running, runner, runners, run, jogging, exercise, everyday people, training, athletic, athlete, staying in shape, recreation.
3. *Right column*: happy, dedicated, common, amateur, average, shoes, soles, pavement, road, roadrunner, rabbit, friends, buddies, treadmill, steady, sweaty, group, pack. (*You should have WAY more words than this by the way*).
4. Experiment: commonrunners, thecommonrunner, treadmillbusters, packrunners, runningrabbit, runningrabbits, rabbitrunners, happyrunners, averagerunners, runtolive, pavementpounders, everydaysoles, runningbuddies, runningbuddy
5. Breaktime: came up with bunny (a friendlier version of rabbit): runningbunny, runningbunnies, runnerbunny

6. Input: treadmillbusters, averagerunners, everydaysoles, runtolive
7. Domain Acquisition: runnerbunny.com

Creating Your Post Headline

Headlines are a small but *hugely* important part of your blog posts. With all the content out there, people are going to click on the headlines that stick out and catch their attention .

In blogging, writing your headline is one of the only times I'd recommend you practice and apply some copywriting techniques. Since this book is not focused too heavily around copywriting, I recommend you check out [Copyblogger's definitive series on headline writing](#).

Note: You don't always need a perfectly copywritten headline. Sometimes your post will be more personal or deeply expressive, and a flashy headline won't feel quite right. Or maybe the headline you create sounds great but isn't designed for getting the most clicks. Don't be afraid

to use it!

Tip: If you want to see great headlines, read the New York Times. There's something very tactful about their headlines that tell a small part of the story in a very compelling way without sounding too sensational (like the cover of Cosmopolitan magazine).

Why Search Engines Need Bloggers

It's a fact: search engines LOVE blogs. Why? Because blogs feed the web with frequently updated, content-rich sites that encourage reader engagement.

Therefore, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is a natural fit when it comes to blogging.

Unlike paid traffic—where you have to keep paying to get results—SEO offers free, organic traffic without a whole lot of effort on your end. It's one of the best long-term strategies you can have for getting traffic to your site.

The Problems Bloggers Have with SEO

A lot of the time we like to imagine our content as being so awesome that people will find it no matter what. So when it comes to SEO, we come up with excuses:

- It makes no sense
- It contaminates the “purity” of my writing
- I can't afford to hire someone to do it
- I don't like following rules
- I don't have time for it
- I'm not a marketer
- I do social media, so I don't need it

These sort of excuses will ensure you won't get found on the web for a long, lonely and frustrating time.

What you need to realize is that a good result on the search engine results page (SERP) is all it takes to hook a new loyal fan.

SEO Doesn't Have to be Difficult

I won't deny it—SEO is a complex and ever-shifting discipline.

In the past, I spent hundreds of dollars on Aaron Wall's SEOBook and SEOMoz's Pro Membership, only to find out I have zero desire to learn about things like page sculpting, backlink analysis tools and crawl tests. I'm a content creator, dammit!

Through trial and error I learned that you don't need to be an SEO guru to rank well in search engines. While the training programs out there are good, they're also expensive and overly comprehensive, designed for people who want to compete for traffic in crowded niches with low brand equity.

SEO is much easier to deal with when you've got great and unique content to contribute: something cool and

quirky and popular and long-tail. Your content, I assume, goes something like that.

5 SEO Tips for Bloggers

1. Always Write for Your Reader

This is the most important rule of SEO: Write for people, not search engines. Your content should first be useful, relevant and likeable before it's filled with all the right keywords.

It's not nearly as hard as you think, either: just keep being yourself and write as naturally as possible. Keep your writing rich and unique. Google does not favor writing that sounds artificial.

According to Rand Fishkin of SEOMoz, the quality of your writing is “always the number one most important factor in blog readership, return rate and longevity.”

2. Stick to One Idea per Post

Think sharp and singular: each single post should cover

no more than one main idea. All of your content should go towards supporting that idea. If you have more than one main idea, make it into another post.

Tip: Write your headline first, before your content, to keep you committed and focused on your one idea.

3. Plan Your Keywords Ahead of Time

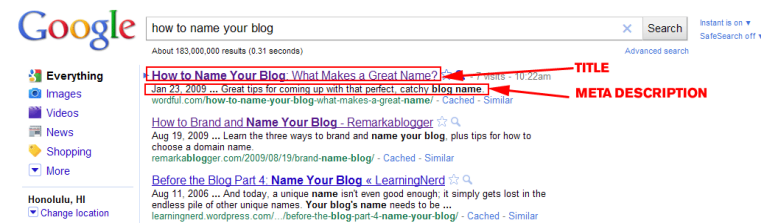
Keywords are a set of words (like a phrase) that people use to search for something online.

Before you start writing, ask yourself: “what keywords would I want this post to rank for?” Once you know what they are you can start writing your content with those keywords in mind.

Don't try optimizing a single post for more than one main keyword and possibly one secondary related phrase.

For example, this primary keyword for this section is “SEO”, and the secondary is “bloggers”. “SEO” is too broad to rank for anything, but “SEO bloggers” narrows it down to something someone might actually search for.

4. Fill Your Title, H1 and Meta Description Tags



The **title** tag is the most important factor in on-page SEO because it's the very first place Google looks plus it's the first thing people see in the search engine results page. Think “first impression.”

Tip: Put your main keyword phrase into the HTML <title> tag of the post you're optimizing. Keep your title to 10 words or less and make sure your keyword phrase is within the first 65 characters, preferably at the beginning. If you're using Wordpress, you can use the ScribeSEO plugin to do this (see the next section).

You can also put your keyword phrase in the <h1> tag at the top of the content area of your post. Just make sure you're only using one <h1> tag per post.

Finally, give some personal attention to your **meta description** tag. In the SERPs, this is the little blurb below the title which describes the page you're searching for (see image on previous page).

If you don't fill out the meta description yourself, Google and the other search engines will do it for you by stitching a part or parts of your post together automatically.

Leaving the meta description to Google is a hit and miss strategy. It's best to fill it out yourself (using ScribeSEO) so you have precise control over how you want to sell the post. Aim for a compact summary of your page, with a maximum of 200 characters (about 30 words) or less.

5. Use Internal Linking with Anchor Text

Another really easy way to help your posts rank well is to link to it from within other posts or from the list of "related posts" within your blog. This is called *internal linking*.

When doing this, make sure the keyword phrase you're trying to rank for is the actual link text that can be clicked on. This is called the *anchor text*.

The Perfect SEO Tool for Bloggers

[Scribe SEO](#) is a paid WordPress plugin with a catchy name that helps your content rank higher in search engine results.

With a click of a button, your content is analyzed and given a score based on its structure and keyword density. If your score is less than 100%, Scribe will tell you exactly what to do to make it higher.

The higher your score, the better chance you have of ranking. Think of it like having a personal SEO consultant look over your content every time you publish something.

It really works.

I'll make a long story short: the day after I installed [Scribe SEO](#) and optimized [Wordful's most popular post in Google](#), I saw its ranking in Google go to #1 from #3.

Keep in mind that a number one ranking in Google is like the difference between an Olympic gold medal and a

bronze...or no medal at all. It means you're considered a top authority for a given search term, which could be a really big deal.

So even though the post was good enough to get to #3, it wasn't perfectly optimized. Scribe SEO did all of that behind the scenes with a click of a button.

ScribeSEO is for bloggers who don't have the time or desire to master SEO

ScribeSEO is pretty forgiving on people who love to write but hate to optimize. It has a rather pleasant way of eliminating the fear, impatience, frustration, confusion or anger you may feel about SEO.

What I like about Scribe is its simplicity and ease of use. It merely suggests you place the right amount of keywords in the right places. There's nothing tricky about that!

It also has a few other perks, such as keyword analysis (shows you which keywords you're targeting), search

engine results page preview and my favorite—tags, which gives you a list of suggested tags to use on your post.

The happy ending with Scribe is that you never have to worry about compromising the integrity of your content. For bloggers, this is everything.

Scribe includes an ever-growing list of robust features

From the Scribe web page:

Internal Link Strategy Tool

An important aspect of SEO is the organization of links within your site (strategic cross-linking between content).

The new Internal Link feature will automatically identify pages within your site that you should insert links to your Scribe-optimized posts and pages, based on your primary keywords. You'll get an bush-button list of the pages of your site that are search relevant to the pages you want to rank well, so you can cross-link to them with keyword

focused anchor text.

Outside Link Building Tool

The new Scribe Link Building tool identifies authoritative websites and blogs whose content directly relates to your Scribe-optimized content. This new tool is designed to help you market your content on related sites via highly targeted promotion, guest posting, and comments. We've also got educational seminars coming that give you the tips and strategies you need to make quality links happen.

Social Media Connection Tool

Twitter is the primary content distribution platform in social media, so developing strong connections with relevant users is an important part of content marketing and link building. This new tool will identify authoritative Twitter users who are talking about topics related to your primary keywords, and allow you to connect with those who'll want to share your content. This results in even more organic links flowing in to your content.

Scribe is priced as a monthly subscription service. It's available in different price levels based on how many content evaluations you need per month. There is also a free trial version available.

Last thing: Scribe SEO works with WordPress, Joomla and Drupal and includes a web-based interface as well.

[Click here to check out Scribe SEO.](#)

One of the best ways to market your blog, your business and yourself is to...

Attend events!

Conferences, meetings, tweetups, whatever...just get yourself out there and get to know people. You'd be surprised how easy it is for people to promote you once they've actually met you in person.

Wordful's Internet Marketing Resource List

As promised, here are my top favorite blogs of some of the very best and brightest internet marketers out there. These are people who over the years have inspired and mentored me with their ideas and accomplishments:

Seth Godin: <http://sethgodin.typepad.com/> Highly influential modern marketing leader and brilliant blogger. Author of many great books on how to stand out in your industry, including *The Dip*, *Purple Cow*, *Tribes* and *Linchpin*

John Chow: www.johnchow.com The true and original “make money online” blogger. John’s blog is all about how to monetize your blog by turning it into a full-fledged business. His website slogan is “I Make Money Online by Telling People How I Make Money Online.”

Jeremy “Shoemoney” Shoemaker: www.shoemoney.com. Likely the most successful Internet Marketer of all time. Shoemoney’s blog is a rich and very entertaining place on

the web. He is also the creator of the [Shoemoney System](#), a comprehensive training program for aspiring Internet Marketers. You will also want to check out Jeremy’s “[Weapons of Marketing](#)” video—it’s a classic.

Brian Clark: www.copyblogger.com. Copyblogger is one of the top resources on the web for content marketing, including copywriting, link building, positioning, blogging and building relationships online. Copyblogger’s content is based a lot on guest posts from bloggers with rich and varied Internet Marketing backgrounds.

Chris Brogan: www.chrisbrogan.com. Chris is a highly approachable, multi-faceted and deeply sincere internet marketer. Chris cares primarily about people, which is the theme of his book *Trust Agents*. He is also a “writer’s writer” who shares a great deal of ideas on craft of writing, blogging and creating great content.

Aaron Wall: www.seobook.com. Aaron Wall is an SEO mastermind and the creator of the *SEOBook* membership site, of which I was once a member. His blog is one of the most insightful, provocative and intelligent SEO blogs

out there.

Yaro Starak: www.entrepreneurs-journey.com. Yaro Starak is a one of the original probloggers who has given away tons of value to aspiring entrepreneurs at his blog and in his free [Blog Profits Blueprint](#) report. He is also the creator of [Blog Mastermind](#), a comprehensive 27-week course designed to take you from complete newbie to problogger. I've gone through the course and it's absolutely excellent, 100% recommended—it's helped me get to where I am today!

Darren Rowse: www.probblogger.net. Darren is one of the most generous and hard-working bloggers around. His blog is a vast resource of everything having to do with getting started in blogging.

Blogging and Content as a Business

Which Blogging Business Model is Right For You?

Let's look at two leading affiliate bloggers in the Internet Marketing space, Shoemoney and John Chow. Both bloggers publish seven days a week in the same niche. How do their blogs power their businesses?

John Chow: The Blog is the Business

John Chow's blog is the home base of his business. This means his content is written for the purpose of attracting a high readership, which he hopes to convert to paying customers.

The more traffic John gets, the more leverage he has over pricing his services like site reviews, banner ad space and sponsored tweets. The last time I checked, John charges \$500 for a site review, between \$250-1,000 for an ad and

\$117.65 for a sponsored tweet. Not too shabby.

But that's not really how JohnChow.com makes its money. The real profit is in the list, as they say. When you subscribe to receive John's Make Money Online free report, you automatically start receiving his autoresponder email series. These carefully timed, automated emails detail how you can go from zero to \$40,000 a month with your blog, just like John did.

John makes money as an affiliate from the products he recommends in his autoresponder series and his blog. Some products have monthly recurring payouts, like [Aweber](#), so John will continue to get paid as long as you're subscribed to the service he recommends.

The more content John puts out, the larger his influence spreads over the Internet Marketing space. More influence equals more readers, more readers means more income, and so on.

Shoemoney: The Blog Compliments the Business
Shoemoney's blog is a bit different than John Chow's. For

one thing, it's not the entire backbone of his business. He makes most of his money from successful Internet marketing ventures in various niches as well as his own products, such as the [Shoemoney System](#).

Shoemoney's posts are off-the-cuff but really insightful on how he's done so well for himself. Where John is exclusively a blogger—and a good one at that—Shoemoney leverages his blog to speak whatever is on his mind. He makes a lot of editorial observations about what's going on in the Internet Marketing world and elsewhere.

Shoemoney makes really good money with his blog as well. Aside from freely promoting his own products, he has the Shoemoney marketplace which allows advertisers to pitch their product once a week on his blog. He may also throw in the occasional affiliate offer in his posts.

Which model is better?

There's no right answer to this, because each one works pretty well. It all depends on the path you want to pursue. There's no right way and there are a million other ways as well.

But if you want to make blogging your business, listen closely to John's advice and read his book "[Make Money Online](#)" ([Read the Wordful review of John Chow's Make Money Online here](#)).

If blogging isn't your main thing, check out Shoemoney's "[Shoemoney System](#)." In it, he teaches you the exact same methods he uses to make his money, all the way from eBay to Facebook and a whole lot more. (I've seen the system and it's solid.)

Deciding which model you like really depends on what kind of lifestyle you want. John tells me he prefers the freedom of being able to blog from anywhere in the world from his computer. Shoemoney, on the other hand, has a bigger operation, complete with an office and employees.

3 Proven Ways to Succeed in Publishing

Now is a good time to start a commercial publishing operation. Startup costs are low, marketing is free and of course—great content is always in demand.

The question that has everyone stumped, however, is how to make publishing profitable. Print as we now know it is a slippery slope. Slapped-up AdSense and banner ads aren't cutting it, either. And those magic, get-rich blogging formulas—so tragically 2008.

Here are 3 models that are working. Of course, success with any one of these rely heavily on your editorial integrity and what David Meerman Scott calls [The New Rules of Viral Marketing](#).

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Ebook

Summary: one-time download designed to solve a specific problem

Editorial: solution-based self-help booklet targeted to a specific audience

Marketing: customer research, heavy SEO, flexible branding, attention more on solution than author

Revenue model: direct and affiliate sales of ebook product

Benefits: low overhead, affiliates help boost sales, low community value, passive income

Challenges: less perceived “community” value, could be perceived as gimmicky, involved formatting process

Example: howtosellyourebook.com (an ebook on how to sell ebooks)

For people low on resources, the ebook model offers a lower-risk entry into publishing. Some cheap market research and SEO can help you can craft and target an ebook that solves a specific problem to a specific group of people.

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Single Author Blog

Summary: solo blogger strikes a chord with readers, organically builds community

Editorial: single voice with distinct persona, artful blend with commercial

Marketing: self-branding on social media platforms

Revenue model: blog-to-book deal

Benefits: ultra-low overhead, high creative latitude, perfect for one person, catching on with big-name publishers looking to discover up and coming authors

Challenges: time consuming, often lacks editorial strategy, tough to monetize

Example: savvyauntie.com

The single author blog model is by far the quickest: you can have a free blog and social media platforms set up in minutes. Of course the real challenge is writing content

interesting enough to excite readers over the long haul.

The other side to the single author blog model is to scout for up and coming authors (bloggers) and approach them with a blog-to-book deal. Many of the bigger companies are following this trend, so you'd need at least a basic education on how the book industry works and how to negotiate contracts with authors.

On that note, one Harper Collins editor says they're experimenting with a 50/50 split model, where all revenues and costs go into a big pot and the profit is split at the end. The publishers front the costs but all decisions are made jointly with the author.

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Online Magazine

Summary: commercialized niche topic with multiple authors and intense community herding

Editorial: journalistic, with focus on special interest and newsy articles

Marketing: strong branding, equal parts SEO and social media

Revenue model: banner and contextual ads, premium memberships, mailing list, affiliate sales

Benefits: can dominate market, multiple voices/variety, dispersed workload, high profit potential

Challenges: rigid content strategy, rigid editorial strategy, requires high overhead and management

Example: treehugger.com

The online magazine is more involved and riskier, but has

the greatest revenue potential. If you can pinpoint the right niche, manage multiple authors, invest in content strategy, then strap yourself in for an exciting ride.

Why Local Publishing is a Golden Opportunity

If you're enterprising, have a penchant for web publishing and need some direction, try this tantalizing opportunity: publish a site around a niche that exists in your local geographic vicinity.

The gist is to build an online community that uses specific content to directly enhance the lives of interested people in your area. No personal branding, no blogging for sales leads, no SEO—just good old fashion high-quality content.

The best part is you don't have to rely so much on social media to market yourself. All you need to be is social.

Why Do It?

Because nobody else is. The competition is very low right now.

Most mainstream niche sites these days are too large, messy and clunky and void of local perspective. Launch-

ing a micro-publishing venture could attract people who are savvy to RSS but continue to value the character and nuances of their home community.

Another reason to go local is because it's much easier to build trust when people can get to know you in person. What might take someone 1 year to make 10 good acquaintances online, you could probably make in 1 hour in real life.

Low competition and easy-to-build trust aren't the only benefits to local publishing. Remember that:

- Locals appreciate a local's perspective, especially in today's anonymous world.
- You're more likely to find work or other business leads in your area.
- People you meet provide an endless supply of content, because people are interesting to write and read about.

Your Editorial Mindset

As a local publisher you want to possess the virtue of being a good editor. Strive to position yourself as someone who has a solid grasp on the subject matter.

Don't be just another blogger. What I suggest you do is build a site that is one part [Seth Godin Tribes](#) (you lead by passion and direction), one part Copyblogger (consistently useful content) and one part "Paris Hilton marketing" (constantly promote other people, products, programs, etc. in your niche).

Publish what your readers need and want to hear without losing your personal touch.

Want an example of a local site in my area that publishes like this? Check out [Share Your Table](#). New York City? Try [Curbed](#).

Cheap and Easy Setup

Theoretically, you could be up and running in 10 minutes if you follow this simple and affordable website setup formula:

1. Come up with a brilliant domain name.
2. Purchase [a hosting plan that includes a free domain name](#). (\$6.95/month)
3. Login to your hosting control panel and install WordPress.
4. Start publishing.

Because good design matters, I also recommend you look into purchasing a premium WordPress theme, as discussed earlier.

Going Local

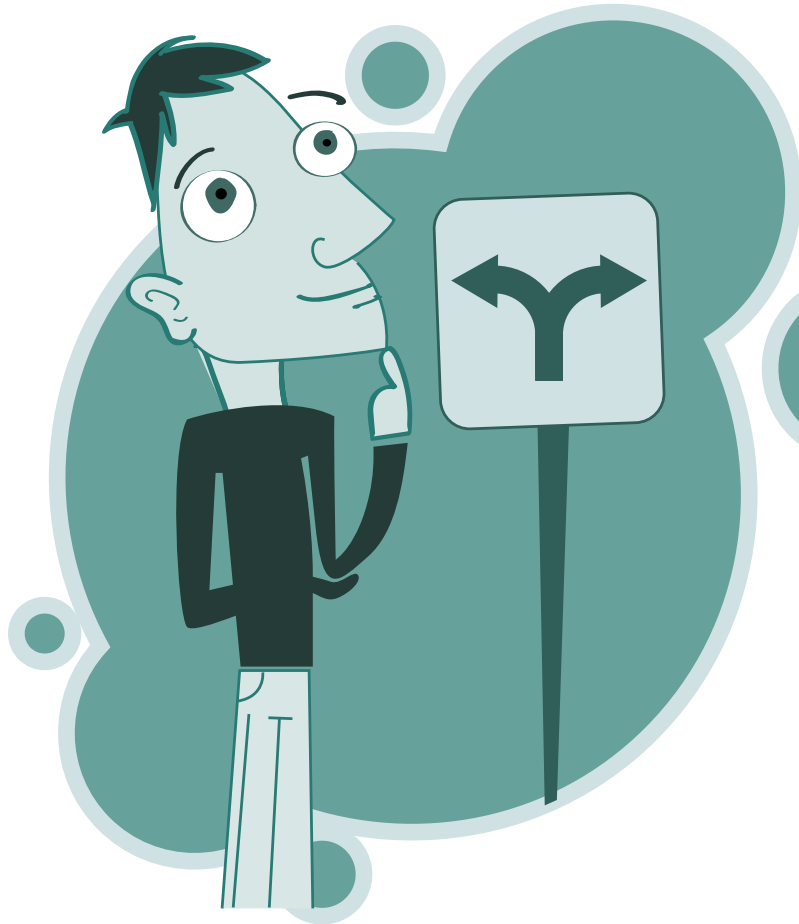
You hear the expression all the time when it comes to food -- "buy local," "support your local farmers," etc. So why not push it with your website?

There's not much difference in asking your community to support their local website like they would their farmer's market.

If you can create a well-designed site with awesome content and an empathetic voice—with the added advantage of actually knowing your readers—you have the makings of a bright and lucrative future.

Part 5: Mindset and Productivity

Attitude is everything.



Mindset: Your Journey is My Journey

Like any worthy endeavor, your success depends primarily on your attitude. It's pretty simple, really: if your attitude is good, you'll find ways to solve your problems. If your attitude sucks, there's not much you can do to help yourself...let alone others.

I'm certainly no exception to this rule, either. By far my biggest challenge when I started blogging was trying not to be jealous of people who were selling things and making money online. For the longest time, I refused to accept that having a blog was not about me. It was about my audience.

Eventually I got over this, but it took two years and probably cost me more time and opportunities than I care to imagine. So if you're just starting out on your blogging journey, or you're somewhere along the way and maybe feeling stuck or frustrated, I know how you're feeling—insecure, confused and hopeless. I've definitely been there—I just wish I had a little book like this to help me along the way!

You see, being a blogger is pretty cool. It's super easy and cheap to get started, and you get the freedom to express yourself any way you like. You can make some *really* good money from blogging, too, not to mention countless other opportunities. In fact, these were the exact reasons why I started blogging. Wordful.com launched on October 1st, 2008, with the dream that I'd quickly get rich and famous like others before me.

Those first stages of blogging were anything but easy. There were a few high points, but it was mostly a lonely, invisible experience. I'd spend hours crafting a post—often neglecting my other paying work—only to have nobody comment on it. I barely got any traffic, and I definitely wasn't making much money.

After a while, some resentment and jealousy set in, and I began to wonder if all my time and effort were destined for embarrassment and failure.

I was also stubborn and naive. Like many beginning bloggers, I was convinced that my ideas were so good that the market and the customers couldn't afford to ignore me,

and the money would magically find its way to me.

But then something changed.

I started to see some problems with the way I was *thinking* about blogging and business. I realized that I didn't quite know what my blog was focused on. I knew it had something to do with writing and editing, but I had no idea who I was writing for besides myself.

Focus on Being You

One of the hardest things you'll go through as a blogger is trying to define who you are. I don't mean what you're talking about in your niche, but more like what is it that sets you apart from everyone else?

When we struggle with establishing our online identity, it's really easy to try and copy the styles and personalities of people we admire. And while this can be helpful to a certain degree, it's always good to just focus on being you.

What I mean by this is simple: just be yourself! Be loose and casual and let your personality shine through in your content. Your writing will be a lot easier and you'll come across as more relaxed and confident. People will sense that. They'll like it.

Now here's something strange: once I saw a line in one of those free "viral traffic" reports that really stood out to me: It said:

Today we are going to show you how to appear like an inspirational, creative, buzz generating genius, with almost zero effort.

Hmmm...why would anyone want to merely *appear* genuinely inspirational and creative? Why not just be genuinely inspirational and creative? And is it really possible to do this *with almost zero effort*?

Standing out from a crowd takes effort, no matter who you are. But you have to turn your back on them to lead. You have to look inside yourself and realize that even though you might not feel like a leader today, you have

every opportunity to be one tomorrow.

Doing this will help you become a more powerful and genuine thinker, writer and editor. Only then will you be able to produce content that doesn't just *appear* excellent, but really *is* excellent. Plus you'll have the freedom and confidence to express yourself.

Why Are You Blogging?

I hope at some point you've really thought hard about why you're blogging. If you're doing it just to make money, then you should either quit right now or rethink your reason. It's a fact: anyone who chases money stays broke, and this includes bloggers.

Believe it or not, there is only one true answer to this question, which is:

"I'm blogging to create value for other people."

That may not be the answer you were expecting, but I can tell you right now that if you really want to build a suc-

successful business around your content, **you need to give people what they want.** Your content needs to enlighten or entertain people, or both.

You see, when you blog to create value for people, they will be more than happy to pay you back in dividends, whether it's in attention, affection, money or whatever. And since people are happy to pay for value—the more value you create, the more money you'll make!

Of course there will be other reasons why you're blogging. Perhaps you want people to listen to your ideas. Or you want to influence people to do something. Maybe you just want to be liked. Those are all perfectly valid reasons, but just remember that your number one priority is to create value for other people.

Is there Really a Future in Blogging?

Is it true that if we really work hard and smart that something great is bound to happen? Is there really a future in blogging?

Yes, there is a future in blogging. Despite what you may think, the “gold rush” is just beginning. There are even bigger and better and more profitable opportunities if you're willing to think big and take action.

Right now, many of the old giant media companies (which include newspapers and magazines) are failing—they can't figure out how to turn a profit with their content. Meanwhile, the blogging business model is proven to be viable.

Old media and new media haven't collided yet, but when they do, you'll see a completely new landscape. You'll see large media companies buying out successful independent bloggers (which is already happening) OR independent bloggers will start building their own media companies based on new rules, new markets and a much more level playing field.

Bloggers who really want to make it big will need to think and act far above and beyond what the experts are telling us to do. Like everything else on the web, blogging is evolving, and there will be new opportunities for you to

reshape the blogosphere. Stuff you're learning now, like how to write headlines or use Twitter, will merely serve as the foundation of what's to come.

If you're shooting for the stars, it's time to think of where blogging is headed and how you will help shape it. Wordful has a few ideas to get you started:

- Expand your definition of blogging. It's not just about writing or social networking or traffic. Remember that you're also editor and publisher. Treat your blog more like a publication than a reverse-chronological collection of posts and articles. Never get too comfortable or complacent with your blog, either, or people might lose interest.
- Offer value beyond belief, every time. Take the extra time and effort to ensure everything you publish is worthy of publication, worthy of attention. Don't just write something because you have to. Always choose quality over quantity.
- Spend your spare time building your brand. Always be thinking about and refining your brand. Make sure it becomes a natural (not artificial) extension of who you are and what you stand for. As long as you're true to yourself, this can be achieved with little effort.
- Be current. Try to stay one step ahead of the crowd by following the news, other blogs and the top people in your niche. It's always best if you can write that killer post before anyone else does, then quickly move on to the next one while the rest are still talking about your idea.
- Be different. No pressure here—just be different from everyone else. Especially those who are most similar to you and your interests. If you find yourself copying other people more often than not, step back and ask yourself if you're striving to be a leader or a follower.

Don't Let Your Blog Only Exist in Your Mind

Thought and **action** are the two true fundamentals of blogging, which can be further refined to *creativity* and *writing*. One cannot exist without the other, otherwise you'd end up with thoughtless action or action-less thought. Neither scenario is productive.

Blogging vs. the Idea of Blogging

The human mind can be abundantly creative. There's nothing more enjoyable than imagining the potential of our greatest ideas.

When I decided to start blogging, all my dreams, plans and goals opened like floodgates. I planned and scrutinized every possible detail of the Wordful blog in my head. I read every possible related blog and expert report I could get my hands on. Weeks went by and my emotions calmed down, but I still wasn't taking action. The only blog I had was the one in my head!

Here are a few things you can do to get yourself unstuck:

- **Carry a notebook and pencil with you** to take a lot of notes. You need to be able to capture your ideas at any given time in any place.
- **Start a secret, personal blog.** If you're not ready to "go public" with a blog, try starting a private one that nobody will read. You don't even have to use your name. Just take a few minutes a day to write anything you want. After time, you'll get comfortable materializing your thoughts every day and the thought of a more mainstream blog won't seem as tough.
- **Learn the natural rhythms of your creativity.** Nobody is "on" all the time. When you feel like your ideas aren't flowing as smoothly as they were earlier, it helps to just sit down and write. By writing, you'll accomplish two great things: you'll have created something to publish, and your creativity will be restored (or even heightened).

- **Write consistently**, even when you know it sucks. Sometimes we just don't have the energy to blog, especially if we're new and relatively unknown and possibly discouraged.

What to do when you just don't feel like blogging

Blogger Chris Brogan says that consistent blogging requires discipline, practice and ideas.

But what if you're just not in the mood? Like those days your body and mind are sluggish and everything you've learned about blogging suddenly doesn't matter. Try this:

Relax

Trying talking like you write. Keep a conversational tone that's comfortable for you and your readers. Pretend you got everyone sitting around the fireplace with hot chocolate.

When you stop sounding forced, contrived or labored,

you'll enjoy blogging a whole lot more. You'll feel like you're writing from the heart and sharing your knowledge freely. People are more likely to listen to you when you don't sound so pushy.

In fact, I'd say that being relaxed when you blog is more important than knowing all the strategies and techniques of blogging. When you're relaxed is the very best time to express your ideas and actually enjoy what you're doing.

Be Sharp

Being sharp means not being sloppy. Or lazy. If you've got something to say, say it with clear language and with conviction. You know the adage: *say what you mean and mean what you say*. There's no need to beat around the bush with needless, fluffy words.

Being sharp also means being acutely aware of your surroundings, which, in blogging, consist of two things: your ideas and your readers. The whole point of blogging is to share your ideas with an audience with great efficiency. This means knowing what audience values and what they

don't, and delivering accordingly.

Be Humble

Being humble can boost your popularity. The way to do this with your content is to structure it around *us* instead of *me* or *you*. This way you create empathy and people have an easier time relating with you.

Another tip for being humble is to speak to your reader out of the context of your niche, and relate to them in bigger ways. Talking about your life, story and feelings can have a huge and powerful effect on people, especially when you lower your guard and expose your weaknesses.

You don't have to do this every time, but once and awhile can make all the difference in your likability.

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Bloggers

In all the hours I spent reading other people's blogs, I've noticed that all successful bloggers pretty much follow the same patterns:

1. **They are consistent.** This is number one for a reason. Their blogs are like rivers in that content is always flowing, with average posting frequency of at least once a day. Consistency equals hard work plus solid routine.
2. **They are passionate.** I've never read a good blog post that indicates the author is bored, disconnected or hating what they're doing. Every one of them believes in their work and the value they offer their readers. You can't fool loyal readers with fake passion. Sooner or later it's going to backfire.
3. **They are original.** So many niches are saturated with copycats obsessed with mediocrity. A top blogger is well-learned, but they're always learning and innovating and trying new things. What results is leadership.
4. **They are generous.** If you tend to hold out on your good ideas, perhaps out of fear of someone taking them, someone is going to take them anyway. That's because there are so many bloggers out there with reasonable intelligence that sooner or later they'll

make the same connections as you. The difference is they'll want to share them and you won't.

- 5. They take risks.** How many blogger back-stories do you read where they got paid huge salaries to blog when they first started? *None.* Fortune favors the brave. If you got some time on your hands, read these stories: [Darren Rowse](#), [Jeremy Shoemaker](#) and [Aaron Wall](#).
- 6. They are in touch with their audience.** How can you lead without knowing and responding to your followers? For the answer to this I defer to Gary Vaynerchuk of Winelibrary.tv for an impassioned explanation: "You have a community when one person listens to you."
- 7. They edit their work.** Sure, it's a little mundane to go over what you've just written, but in my experience *editing is where the magic happens*. It's where you take a raw piece of writing and refine it so the language, ideas and subject matter is tangible and brilliant. Not to say all top bloggers sound brilliant,

but I bet they go over their post before publishing to avoid any silly errors.

Notice I didn't say anything about being an awesome writer? That's because it's not too important. It's better to write for the sake of educating, entertaining or engaging your reader than it is for the sake of writing. Everyone has their own style, and that's what gives bloggers their personality.

7 Bad Blogging Habits You Must Avoid

Maintaining a credible blog is challenging. When I first started blogging, I told myself that I must publish something every day. It started off relatively well until I fell into some bad writing habits. None of these habits had anything to do with *what* I was writing, but rather *how* I was writing.

I'd like to share some those bad habits you should watch out for:

- 1. Overthinking.** This was my first and most fatal blog-

ging mistake. Days and weeks used to go by where all I did was think about how cool my blog was going to be. Can you guess how far that got me?

2. **Lack of confidence.** There's a dangerous part of us that likes to talk us out of executing our best ideas. That part is called fear. My fear used to be worrying about what other people would think about my writing. Would it be hated or even worse, ignored? My best advice here is simple: just be yourself and do your best to connect with your readers on a human level. Once you get comfortable and more confident, you become the authority.
3. **Too much focus on end results.** The money, the attention, the praise, the popularity. Don't deny you want to be at the top — who doesn't? But how do you expect to get there if all you focus on is being there? We often look up and envy successful bloggers without appreciating the hard work and innovation they put into their work. No work = no results.
4. **Reading too much content.** The amount of good,

relevant content out there is just about at the point of infinity. That's a huge number if you can get your mind around it. I used to spend hours and hours fooling around between my favorite sites and email. And guess what? Less than 20% of the content was valuable. The other 80% was fluff and filler. If you're hitting refresh and it's the exact same content, you're overdoing it.

5. **Lack of consistency.** Put it this way: Did you know that the top 100 blogs in the world publish an average 14.5 posts per day? How's that for consistency? Granted, you don't need to produce much content, but whatever content you do produce needs to be consistent. So while it may feel great to publish a post you worked hard on, that doesn't mean you stop publishing!
6. **Shifting of blog topic.** For the first year of Wordful.com, I had no idea what it was about. I knew it had something to do with words and writing, but getting more specific was tough. Many times, I tried "settling" on a style like inspirational or ranting or newsy,

but none of them stuck. My advice here is to stick to your main idea (your niche) and then write whatever you can to support and express that idea. Follow this simple formula and your blog will organically unfold.

- 7. Perfectionism.** There's nothing wrong with writing one perfect post after another, but what exactly does that mean? For me, having worked as an editor for years, *there is no end to what can be made perfect*. You could theoretically edit a single post for years and never be happy with it. I recommend trying some of Seth Godin's wisdom, which says to stop trying to be so perfect — just get it out there! It's still okay to go back and edit but make sure new content gets priority.

Okay, there you have it: seven fatal mistakes to avoid when blogging. To sum it up, remember good blogging is more about a shift in your habits than it is about subject matter. Thought must be followed with action or nothing will ever evolve. Trust me, it's no fun being your blog's only fan.

And here's a bonus tip: **stop making excuses!** When it comes to making excuses, you'd be surprised how clever and sneaky your mind can be. This can only go on for so long until you realize that you have no content and no readers.

How to overcome your fear of writing in public

I'd like to touch on a huge problem that could be the only thing holding you back from succeeding: it's called scriptophobia, which is the fear of writing in public, or the fear of being publicly identified (aka 'closet blogger').

I'm not referring to being anonymous because you have to (such as a corporate employee with a personal rant blog), but rather being anonymous because *you're terrified of people getting to know the real you*.

I want to let you know that I've been there. It took me almost 15 years to get over scriptophobia! Finally I worked up the courage to start Wordful.com, picked a date to

publish, and just did it. I haven't looked back since.

Perhaps you're scared that people will laugh or get angry at something you said?

It's better to get people laughing or angry than not have them feeling anything at all. Nobody listens to someone who doesn't take a stand. In fact, if you're upsetting someone, that's a good thing. It means you've got their attention and you've made them feel something.

Maybe you struggle with the mechanics of writing?

It's no big deal, really. As I mentioned in [Part 1: Writing](#), you don't need to be a good writer to be a great blogger—you just have to be *good enough*. Sure, there are few basic spelling and grammar rules to learn (see [Part 2: Editing](#)), but it's really more important to everyone that you *just be yourself* no matter what.

Maybe feeling “dark” and “anonymous” is getting a little too comfortable?

There's a certain dysfunctional comfort from being a closet blogger. You get to say what you want and nobody ever gets to know who you are, then you get to snicker to yourself as people react to you. The problem is you'll never gain the spoils of recognition by being anonymous.

I find the best way to deal with scriptophobia is to keep a tiny private blog that nobody in the world knows about—something you could even inform people about after you've died!

With this blog you are free to say all the things your heart desires. This technique is very liberating and cathartic. Then, when you've gotten settled into that, start your public blog. By this time you should be comfortable enough with yourself to let others into your space.

You wanna go places, earn some respect, make some money, right?

Then it's time to put your name in lights and enjoy the ride!

Productivity

I remember when I was in my early 20s and I used to frequent some waterfalls and tropical pools behind my house in Hilo, Hawaii. My friends and I would stand at the top of these cliffs overlooking the water and then jump off. Sometimes the height was over 40 feet.

Many times I could not bring myself to jump. I would end up standing on the cliff, peering down and thinking so hard about doing it but not being able to. My mind was over-analyzing a situation of fear and anxiety, and it was preventing my body from acting.

It wasn't until I learned how to let go of my thoughts that I began to enjoy jumping off of cliffs into water. The feeling of free falling and splashing into a turquoise cool pond was sensational, and it liberated me from the limitations of my thoughts.

Overthinking has long been a pitfall of mine, and I still sometimes struggle with it. The best thing I do to, as they say, get over myself is to **stop thinking and start doing**.

How to Beat Content Gluttony

Over consumption of content is just as bad as overeating. But instead of health problems, we run into time problems and eventually—life problems. If you spend too much time around purposeless content, your life will begin to reflect those values.

There are three main types of content on the internet: information, entertainment and community (a fourth one – products -- exist but we won't worry about that). They're all part of any human's healthy "content diet."



Some people require more of one thing than others to thrive.

At some point or another we've all been guilty of blowing off a whole day at work to read news, catch up on gossip, buy something cool or play a meaningless but highly addictive video game. And maybe we leave our desks feeling unfulfilled and guilty, knowing that we're one day farther away from realizing our life goals.

My advice: treat yourself as you would treat your readers. Give yourself only the best information that you know you'll benefit from. Be your own editor and locate, filter and use content that helps steer your cause, whatever that might be. If it's entertainment—laugh your brains out and then move on. Can't peel away from Facebook? Then use it to build your network and save the banter with your old chums for after hours.

There's too much out there to know and learn so don't even try to consume it all. Once you get this under control, you'll then be gifted with the power to create your own content.

Write Now, Read Later

Think for a minute about your daily routine. When you turn on your computer, what's the first thing you do? Do you read first or write first?

It certainly feels easy and natural to start our day with hearty helpings of content. Emails, blog posts and news stories are cooked up to perfection like an all-you-can eat buffet, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. All you have to do is open your browser and start reading.

But the problem with reading before writing is you never end up reading just what's served to you. Much like the all-you-can-eat buffet, one article leads to another, which has a link to a helpful blog post, which contains a great YouTube video, followed by another one, and so on.

Before you know it your brain is stuffed and you can barely make it out of other people's domains to get started on your own writing.

So what would happen if you reverse the schedule and try

writing first and reading last? I can think of at least three positive, linear changes:

Your ideas will become more original

While it's certainly good to be a well-read writer, it's no longer realistic. There's just too much out there to get every angle.

So why not write with a clear mind, free of other ideas and influence?

Try this: write a coherent rough draft before you do anything. Write your purest and deepest ideas. Then go out and read and compare other people's ideas to yours, but don't comment on them..yet. Instead, come back and edit your draft and be mindful of your observations.

Did the quality of your post improve?

You'll engage eye-to-eye with others

Once you've edited your draft and published it, go back out to some of the more provocative posts you read ear-

lier and plant your comments.

Since you've already written a remarkable post, the comments you leave should be more insightful than the average comment. And if the author is paying attention, she'll likely comment back or visit your blog, or both.

If she visits your blog, chances are she'll read your post, the genuine, conscientious one you just wrote. And if she's impressed—which by all means she should be—chances are she'll subscribe to your content, or better yet, tell her friends about you. Not a bad way to do some marketing!

You'll go from consumer to creator

Now you're at the top of the content food chain. You've built your own readership and have enough confidence in your own ideas to rely much less on the ideas of others to thrive.

People now come to you to satisfy their content cravings—all because you made a small but important change to your habits. Now you might even have the luxury of

more time. If that's the case, invest that time back into your writing and make it even better.

Read fast, write slow.

7 Reasons to Ditch Your Home Office

Work from home or home from work? That is the question.

If you're **self-employed or at least thinking about it**, the commute down the hall to work in your underwear may seem like a really enticing option. There's no dealing with traffic or annoying people, and you may qualify for a fairly decent tax write-off on your office.

I worked from home in a small spare bedroom office from August 2006 to May 2008. Most of that time I was an employee for an airline charter company based in Alaska. The work I did for them as their web marketer could all be done remotely (from here in Hawaii), so **in theory the setup was perfect**. When the company got bought out and I lost my job, I continued to work at home as a full-

time, self-employed consultant.

And yes, for the record, I did work in only my underwear, often unshaven for days, unbeknownst to my employer or my clients!

I eventually chose to move my business into an office rental, and to this day it's one of the best decisions I've made. Here are seven reasons why you should consider not working from home if you're self-employed:

You must separate work from family.

You've probably heard this before, and I can tell you it still holds true: When we work from home, we tend to blur the line between our personal and professional personas.

At a workplace, we are required to put on a "public face" that shapes who we are, how people perceive us and where we're headed in the professional world. Being at home is where we release our stress from work, recharge and enjoy the company of family and friends. A home office can easily upset this vital balance of public and private life.

It's hard to focus on work at home

The home phone rings. The kids are bickering. Your favorite show is on. The FedEx guy just delivered your new massage chair. Your partner is “in the mood.”

At home, distractions fall into two categories: annoyances or temptations. Both steal precious time and slow productivity. And no matter how hard you try, there will always be distractions at home. Completely removing yourself from those distractions will naturally allow you to focus.

People will take you more seriously

A few times when I worked out of my home, I needed to meet with a client. You can bet it never happened at my place. I didn't want to lead them into my house and have them trip on my kids' toys on the way to the office. Coffee shops weren't cutting it, either: too loud, no privacy and tiny tables.

When people visit my office nowadays, we have a clean and quiet place to meet that reflects my professionalism and my brand. Clients take note of this, which often gives

you the leverage to charge more premium rates.

Everyone will appreciate the space

If you're married and have children, or are planning to start a family, you can never have enough space at home. The spare bedroom you might be using as your office can easily be converted back to an extra room for the kids, guests, or a new baby.

Also, when you work from home, you leave open the possibility of a small and innocent child from entering your office undetected to innocently sabotage something important (I know about this!). Combine an event like this with the regular stress of work and the result can be emotionally disastrous for all.

Getting out of the house is healthy.

I personally find it refreshing to get out of my house during the day to see the world in action. The commute to work gives me a change of scenery and a chance to reflect and refine my thoughts.

My office is less than a mile away, so I'm able to ride my bike and get a bit of exercise, too. Moving my body and seeing people in action helps to contrast the hours I spend sedentary at the computer. You should try it.

You never know who you'll run into

Leave it up to chance or fate or luck, but every now and then you'll bump into someone who offers you something of value, and vice versa. Whether it's friendship or a business lead or even a flattering compliment in passing – the encounter is almost always positive.

There's also the people you'll see every day—other professionals like you who offer their own dynamic perspectives on life. You never know what you're missing if you never leave your house.

You will love your office

My office gives me happiness. It's a tiny corner unit facing a garden in the back of a small cluster of cottages. Every morning I come in, I feel at peace and ready to work. Much like at home, I've created a sacred space here which

enables me to focus solely on my career and livelihood.

This means I can focus on being the best at work and at home without interference of the other. Plus, my absence from either location helps me to appreciate the other even more. When you work at home, everything is the same!

...But What About Blogging?

A problogger might argue that if you don't ever need to meet with clients and you only work a couple of hours a day, what's the sense of a separate office space? To that, I say the concepts I've laid out above don't really change.

You're still a professional with a personal life, and it's simply wise to separate the two. When I make it blogging, the office stays.

What if I Can't Afford an Office?

A fair question indeed. If you're short on funds, stay at home until you can afford to move out. This is what I did until I applied for a small business loan that got me

going. My advice, though, is not get too comfortable at home, or you'll never make it out. This can be a challenge when your home amenities are just a few steps away.

What if I Have a Perfect Home Office Setup?

I'll admit that some people can pull this off, but not many. Unless you're running a proven, efficient and profitable home-based business, chances are it's worth investing in an office away from home.

How to Overcome Writing Anxiety

Allow me to be honest with you: **I used to frequently suffer from writing anxiety.**

When I sat down to write a blog post, I usually stared at the screen for about ten minutes, thinking of the most effective opening line. When I finally squeezed that out and revised it a few times, I moved on to the second line and did the same. Then the third, and fourth, and so on.

When I got a little momentum going I was able to write a

few lines without stopping, but not often. Usually I went over each phrase or word I just wrote and revised it until I felt it was perfect, though it never is. This constipated writing produced about one blog post every four days.

Pretty pathetic, I know, which is why I want to share this advice with you: The way to overcome writing anxiety is very simple: **let your heart be your writer and let your brain be your editor.**

In other words, don't let the "steps," the "tips" or the factual data of your post dominate the story you're telling. Treat those details as the **support structure** to be added once the **essence of your post** has been rightfully established.

You see, if we write with our brains first and heart second, we end up not writing much at all. Mostly what happens is a repetitive cycle of **self-criticism, over-editing and ego-stroking**. Writing like this is clunky and frustrating, and creates even more anxiety.

Without our personalities in our writing **even the most**

useful information can go unnoticed. The reason for this comes from a narrow, obsessive and even conditioned focus on producing the kind of “valuable” content we think will appease the most amount of people in the shortest amount of time. You could call this *selling out*.

So while “valuable” content can be factual, relevant and useful (characteristics of the editor), it should also be firmly affixed in a personal, perceptive and insightful narrative (characteristics of the writer). Both forms of value are of equal importance if you want to achieve success in blogging.

If your voice is not authentic, it's just another attempt at journalism: here today, gone tomorrow.

Applying a personal touch to your writing is not as hard as you think. If you're inhibited to write this way on a public blog, I recommend you **keep a secret, anonymous blog** somewhere. Write whatever you feel on it—anything at all. There will be no audience listening except you.

After doing this for awhile, I guarantee your inner writer

will rise to the surface and blossom. You'll soon be aware and in control of some of **your most valuable assets as a blogger:** your voice, tone, style and your inherent ability to empathize with people on much deeper and meaningful levels.

And nobody will be able to duplicate this, I assure you.

When you **write from the heart** – and I suggest you give it a try– your words will flow very naturally and with little interruption.

You'll feel like no matter what, no matter how many times people have written about the subject, **yours will be the one that gets remembered.** Sometimes that's all you need to make it to the front of the line.

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