



## CHAPTER 2: BLOGS: A QUICKSTART GUIDE

A blog is a Web site that combines commentary with images and interactive content like links to other blogs, Web pages, and video. Readers post comments, and a virtual dialogue takes shape. Some blogs have themes based on personal interests like celebrities or travel. Other blogs now compete with the nightly news to break stories.

Blogging is a great way to express yourself and communicate with fellow students in your online class. Best of all, starting a blog is easy. Here's how:

### The Basics

1. Sign up for a free blogging service like Wordpress ([www.WordPress.com](http://www.WordPress.com)) or Blogger ([www.Blogger.com](http://www.Blogger.com)).
2. Choose a template, also known as a theme. You can use the default template (beginner), browse and modify templates in the blogging service's gallery (intermediate), or obtain and install templates you find online (advanced).
3. Add widgets. Widgets are mini-applications that you download and install into your blog to add functionality like music, images, news, and weather. You can find widgets through your blogging service or by searching for them online.
4. Give your blog a title and tagline. Decide on your content. Personal? Political? Professional?
5. Write a post. Publish it. Write another post. Publish it.

## Blog Do's and Don't

Follow the following tips to boost your blog.

### ***Blog Do's***

- **DO imagine a use for your blog.** It could be as simple as keeping your family informed of your college experience or as involved as chronicling a cause you care about.
- **DO unify your content.** The best blogs have a centralized theme. Examples range from adorable animals ([www.cuteoverload.com](http://www.cuteoverload.com)) to must-have gadgets ([www.gizmodo.com](http://www.gizmodo.com)).
- **DO see what your blog can do for you.** Affiliating ads from companies like Google or Amazon can earn you cash for clicks. But money's not everything. A well-done blog can become a part of your resume, a way to meet people with similar interests, and a rewarding pastime.
- **DO make blogging a routine.** Not only will this improve your writing skills, but also your readers will appreciate the updates.
- **DO think before you blog.** Blogs can be viewed by the world. Even if you delete a post, it may be cached (kept for a period of time) or saved and republished by someone else. What you write today can come back to haunt you tomorrow.

### **Blog Don'ts**

- **DON'T bore your readers.** What you ate for breakfast or how bad traffic was today aren't subjects with universal appeal.
- **DON'T plagiarize.** Cutting and pasting something online into your blog may constitute plagiarism. Many blogs and Web sites allow republishing or grant limited rights to republish, so read the fine print.
- **DON'T be too flashy.** Resist the temptation to post huge pictures or flashing banners that will stall browsers and frustrate readers. Your theme should complement, not distract from your blog.
- **DON'T be too revealing.** In the blogosphere, nothing is sacred. Protect yourself from identity theft and stalkers by refraining from posting personal information like your name and location.
- **DON'T violate privacy.** Posting information about other people without their permission may be harmful to them. See above under "Think Before You Blog."

### ***Find Blogs***

Tons of tutorials on blogging are available on the Internet. You may find them helpful in the beginning, but one of the best ways to learn is to read other blogs, note things you like, and try them on your blog. Find blogs here:

- <http://www.technorati.com>
- <http://www.icerocket.com>
- <http://www.bloglines.com>

- <http://www.blogscope.net>
- <http://www.sphere.com>