

## Introduction to Blogs

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### **Blogs – the basics**

A blog (weblog) is essentially a content management system enabling quick and easy publishing from anywhere that has an internet connection, even a mobile phone. It comprises entries that are created on a regular basis and the default arrangement is a chronological sequence with the most recent entry at the top. The blog can be hosted either on your own server or by a third party service. Blogs can be single or multi-authored, and some have options for inviting 'guest' authors who may have restricted posting and editing privileges.

Blogs can be used to produce newsletters, alerting services, for recording product development, or as marketing tools. They can even be used to generate small web sites (for example Newsbriefs Oman at <http://www.newsbriefsoman.info/>)

### **Main features**

#### **Chronological order of entries**

The entries or postings are displayed in chronological order on the main (home) page with the most recent at the top.

#### **Archives**

Entries can be automatically archived by week or month.

#### **Categories or tagging**

Most blogging software has options for assigning categories or tags to a posting. This feature was missing from Google's Blogger but has now been included in the latest upgrade. There are also third party services such as Wanabo (<http://wanabo.com/>) that can be add tag clouds or categories to your blog.

#### **Permalinks**

The most recent entries to your blog will have the URL of the blog 'home' page. The URL will change when the story is archived. The permalink is the unique URL for each individual entry in the blog and does not change.

#### **Comments**

All blogs have a comment option which enables any reader to comment on a posting. This can be left as a free-for-all comment but there is the risk that the comment field will be spammed. Blog owners usually have options to disable it, to moderate or vet comments, or to set up a 'captcha' procedure. 'Captcha' presents an image of several letters to the person who is commenting and requires them to type the letters into a box underneath their comment. It is a system designed to stop automated spamming programs.

#### **Author profile, About us**

This may or may not be present. Its absence suggests that the poster may have something to hide. Most blogs, though, are 'up front' about who the posters are and their agenda.

## **The Blogroll**

Yes – it really is called that! The Blogroll is where the blogger lists the blogs, RSS feeds and web sites that they regularly read. Alternatively, the list may be called related links, web sites etc. Once you have found a blog that is relevant to your subject area, the blogroll will usually direct you to other blogs and sites in your sector.

If you have a blog and want a quick and easy way to maintain your blogroll, try Blogrolling (<http://www.blogrolling.com/>).

## **RSS feeds**

RSS feeds enable you to keep up to date with new postings on your favourite blogs without having to log on to the site each day. Many blog programs automatically generate feeds but if yours does not there are third party services such as Feedburner (<http://www.feedburner.com/>) that will do the job for you.

## **Tracking down blogs**

There are many search tools dedicated to searching blogs and their feeds, some of which are listed below:

Google Blogsearch <http://www.google.com/blogsearch>

Ask Blogs and Feeds <http://www.ask.com> or <http://www.ask.co.uk> and click on the Blogs and Feeds option.

Live Search Feeds <http://search.live.com/feeds/>

Technorati <http://www.technorati.com/>

Blogpulse <http://www.blogpulse.com/>

Crossengine <http://www.crossengine.com/> Click on the Blogs link

Trovando <http://www.trovando.it/> Click on the Blogs tab

## **Blogging services and software**

Blogger <http://www.blogger.com/> Owned by Google and free. Can be hosted on Blogspot or on your own web site.

Typepad <http://www.typepad.com/> Priced service. Hosted on Typepad

Moveable Type <http://www.sixapart.com/movabletype/>. Priced software for downloading onto your own servers.

Live Journal <http://www.livejournal.com/>. Free. Hosted on Live Journal's site.

Vox <http://www.vox.com/> Free. Hosted on the Vox site.

WordPress <http://wordpress.org/> for free WordPress software that can be loaded onto your own server

WordPress <http://www.wordpress.com/> Free. Hosting service for WordPress