

# Toolkit: How and Why To Blog

## Introduction

Psychoanalysts are experts in the deepest and most complex aspects of the human mind--what motivates us, what drives our decisions, how emotion trumps rationality. I would like to encourage deeper engagement by psychoanalysts in the broader cultural arena. We as analysts need to communicate with the public—sharing our ideas about social and cultural issues, conveying the value and benefit of psychoanalytic treatment. Blogging is one of a number of ways psychoanalysts can communicate directly with a wider public audience. Like every other modality it has particular requirements, strengths and weaknesses. This toolkit will tell you the basics about blogging, as well as provide resources that can help you develop your skills and impact.

## Definitions

**Blog**—A blog is a discussion or informational site on a website consisting of discrete entries—essentially brief essays conveying opinions and/or information. It is also used as a verb: “Did you ever consider blogging to attract attention to your society’s activities?”

**Post**—a Post is an individual entry on a blog. Posts are displayed in reverse chronological order. It’s also a verb: “I posted a new entry on my blog”.

**Blogger**—An individual who blogs is a blogger. Blogs can also be “multi-author blogs” where a group of individuals shares the writing and posting of entries. This is a good option for a society to consider, but keep in mind that responsibilities must be clear—who is going to post what when?

## Components

**Main Content**—articles listed chronologically (newest at the top)

Archive of older content—This can be indexed by category and key words.

Comments section

Blogroll—a list of links to related sites you think will interest your readers

### **Reasons to Blog**

- Find a voice as a public intellectual
- Try out ideas, play with them
- *Practice* writing for the public
- “Thinking in progress”—Write a book, try out new ideas
- Promote psychoanalysis by conveying the explanatory power of psychoanalytic ideas
- Connect to the public and other disciplines
- Give away information—tips, information, new perspectives on an issue
- Self-promotion—draw in potential patients and candidates. Promote a book or event.
- Create a record of your thinking
- Create a data base for your society
- Try new things—ideas, communications tools
- Create content so you are visible on the WWW
- Create your own voice as a public intellectual in the broader community of thinkers

### **Where Can you Blog?**

A blog is a component of a website. You have several options.

- Create a website for the sole purpose of supporting a stand-alone blog. This is an especially good approach if you are thinking of writing a book. The blog becomes a place to record bits and pieces of your thinking that can later be assembled into a book. There are good free applications for this. With a low cost, you can add features such as a personalized domain name.

Often recommended services:

- Blogger.com (formerly known as Blogspot)
- WordPress.com
- Tumblr.com

Check out [startablog123.com/best-free-blogging-sites/](http://startablog123.com/best-free-blogging-sites/)

Example: [richfrankmd.com/blog](http://richfrankmd.com/blog)

- Write a blog one component of a website that includes a variety of other features. This can work for an individual or a society.

Example: [prudencegourguechon.com](http://prudencegourguechon.com)

- Blog on a large site that aggregates blogs. Examples include Psychology Today, Huffington Post, and major newspapers or citywide sites. This kind of blog requires being recommended or applying to the editor of the site. It helps to have a public information professional help your blog get accepted, but this is not essential.

#### **How to do it**

**Audience**—Think about who you are trying to reach. The general educated public? Parents or teachers? Prospective students or patients? Intellectuals in other disciplines? As you write, keep your target audience in mind.

#### **Voice and Style**

- Never assume knowledge of psychoanalytic terminology, even for a highly intellectual audience
- Limit yourself to two or at the most three psychoanalytic terms per post, and always define each one in ordinary language
- Use a conversational tone, as if you're talking to someone in your target audience
- Incorporate stories and humor
- Tell a story
- Use short sentences, short paragraphs, bullet points
- Keep it concise—edit and polish, cut out the fat

## Format

- Title—this is all-important and deserves its own section (see below)
- Length 600-1500 words—or just a couple of sentences!
- Easy to scan—**Bold** Bullet points. Short paragraphs.
- Talking points—A format that always seems to be welcome:
  - “10 things Freud got right”
  - “5 fears that plague children during a divorce and what to do about them”

## Title

- Think: if you saw this title, would you click through to read more?
- Principles
  - Grab the reader
  - Consider incorporating key words and phrases people are likely to type into a Google search
- Example
  - “Is psychoanalysis right for me?”

## Content

- Timely and relevant—offer commentary or opinion on breaking news or a current cultural concern
  - Example: “10 Reasons to Support Gay Marriage”
- “Evergreen”—Give advice that is not tied to a particular event
  - Examples: “Is Psychoanalysis Right for Me?”
  - “How to Manage the Narcissistic Employee”
- Tie your comments to a calendar event—back to school in the fall, graduation or weddings in the early summer, Christmas and family gatherings, etc.

## Images

- Use images in your blogs—they are expected and strengthen the impact

- BUT be careful about images you use. Don't use copyrighted images without permission and attribution. Take your own pictures on trips and around your home and city, and save them for future blog posts. Here are two sources for photographs that are in the “public domain” and therefore can be used freely (usually still with attribution-see details on the site).
  - Wikimedia Commons <https://commons.wikimedia.org>
  - Creative Commons <https://org>
  -

### **Links—Include Them**

- A link is a bit of live copy the reader can click on to jump somewhere else on the web
- Usually highlighted and or underlined.
- Where do you want your readers to go?
  - A page on your society website?
  - IPA website?
  - Example: 10 Reasons to support gay marriage, linked to APsaA position statement
- Learn to substitute short links for long URL's. These apps help you do it.
  - [bit.ly](http://bit.ly)
  - [Goo.gl](http://goo.gl)
  - [Ow.ly](http://ow.ly)

### **Social Media Icons**

Blogs include social media icons in two ways.

- To enable readers to send your blog to their connections on social media
- To invite readers to “follow you” on social media such as Twitter or Facebook

## Frequency

- The marketing pros advising business recommend 11 times a month
- Ideal for an analyst: once a week
- Not too bad: once a month
- Not great, still worth it: bursts of activity alternating with bursts of silence

## Special concerns for psychoanalysts

- What about your patients?
- Analysts who write frequently and widely for the public commonly report that their patients are not especially concerned or interested in their public writings.
- But, always assume your patients are reading everything you write
- Patient reactions, if there are any, can always be considered part of the analytic process
- Think about how revealing you will be about your political opinions.
- Every analyst has to make his or her own judgment about these issues. It can be useful to consult with colleagues who have included public communication as part of their practice for some time.
- Medical/psychological disclaimer?

If you are writing in a way that might appear to be giving advice about psychological illness, you might want to include a disclaimer that this is general information and specific questions should be directed to a licensed practitioner

- What are the implications of no peer review?

Unlike journal articles, a more familiar means of communication for most analysts, or even some magazine articles, blog posts are not subject to peer review or editorial oversight. So you are entirely responsible for the accuracy and appropriateness of your content. This is freeing, as you can experiment with ideas without the pressure of formal academic review. However, it is a responsibility to keep in mind. Some bloggers rely on colleagues to review their content before posting.

- If you work for an institution such as a university, hospital or government agency— Anything you say can reflect on it. Some institutions require vetting before you post your writing. Check with your public information office.
- Disclose conflicts of interest
- What you say **lasts forever** and can be quoted. Never write anything you wouldn't want your patients, your children or your mother to read.

### **Maximize the Benefit: Integration with Website and Social Media**

Integrating blogging with other kinds of public communications on the Internet is the best way to maximize its impact and start to build a community that is interested in your ideas. And to build a network of thinkers who stimulate your own thinking. Here's how it can go:

- Build a website
- Write a blog
- Include links
- Tweet about the blog you wrote
- Post about it on Facebook
- Announce it on list serves
- Include social media icons so that people can share your post
- Include social media icons on your blog so that people can follow you
- RSS feed –this is something you can add to your blog so that readers can subscribe, and be notified by email when there is a new blog post. Especially important for societies who are using a blog to promote events.

### **Other Issues and Advanced Topics**

- **COMMENTS**—blogs are designed to be interactive. Readers are usually invited to make comments, and the blogger can respond to these comments. But depending on where your

blog appears, you may prefer not to accept comments, and you can decide whether or not to respond.

- “TROLLS”—this refers to people who write negative, attacking or otherwise noxious comments. Unfortunately the anonymity of the internet can allow and even encourage irrationality, even viciousness. All experts recommend ignoring comments from trolls. Do not answer them.
- Add MORE COMPLEX VISUALS such as bits of video or infographics (somewhat advanced)
- LANDING PAGES—also an advanced topic, this technique is worth learning about especially for a society that would like to build a database of individuals in the community who are interested in the societies activities. You can use this database to send out newsletters and announcements of events. In your blog, you would put in a link to a landing page. “For more information on parenting adolescents, click here to receive a copy of our white paper on emerging adults”. A landing page is a special purpose page on your website that asks for contact information—name, email address, anything else you want to know about your reader. You gather that information and use it to compile a database for future communications. And don’t forget to send them the paper or information sheet you promised.

**For more information:**

“What is a landing page” <http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/what-is-a-landing-page-ht>

“An introductory guide: How to use landing pages for your business” <http://offers.hubspot.com/an-introductory-guide-how-to-use-landing-pages-for-your-business>

You can view and download a pdf version of this Toolkit here [Toolkit How and Why to Blog.2](#)



## Articles

Inger Mewburn & Pat Thomson (2013) Why do academics blog? An analysis of audiences, purposes and challenges, *Studies in Higher Education*, 38:8, 1105-1119, DOI: 10.1080/03075079.2013.835624

Spina, Carli. Finding Public Domain and Creative Commons Media, Harvard Law School Library

[http://guides.library.harvard.edu/Finding\\_Images](http://guides.library.harvard.edu/Finding_Images)

## Technical advice

Startablog123.com

**Hubspot.com** This marketing firm with offices in the US and Britain specializes in a marketing approach known as “inbound marketing”. Essentially, this method draws people to you by providing them with information—for free. Hubspot practices what they recommend and provides all kinds of free advice. Sign up for their free marketing newsletter.

Useful blog posts and e-books from Hubspot

“How often should companies Blog?” [http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/blogging-frequency-benchmarks?utm\\_campaign=blog-rss-](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/blogging-frequency-benchmarks?utm_campaign=blog-rss-)

[emails&utm\\_source=hs\\_email&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=16987374](http://blog.hubspot.com/marketing/blogging-frequency-benchmarks?utm_campaign=blog-rss-emails&utm_source=hs_email&utm_medium=email&utm_content=16987374)

An introduction to Business Blogging (free e-book) <http://offers.hubspot.com/an-introduction-to-business-blogging>

“Free Marketing Resources” <http://www.hubspot.com/free-marketing-resources>

## Blog Aggregators

These are examples of sites that collect blogs from many different authors. You have to apply or be invited to have a blog on these sites, but it is often possible if you take the initiative and contact the editor or have a colleague who is already blogging on that site contact their editor and recommend you.

[Psychologytoday.com](http://Psychologytoday.com)  
[huffingtonpost.com](http://huffingtonpost.com)  
[psychcentral.com](http://psychcentral.com)  
[chicagonow.com](http://chicagonow.com)

Major newspapers or magazines

Example: Todd Essig in [forbes.com](http://forbes.com)

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