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# Introduction

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Whatever your motivation for blogging, you'll want to have readers. Not just passing traffic – but engaged, interested readers who keep coming back for more, and who eventually become loyal fans.

- If you're blogging to market your small business, you need readers. They'll eventually buy your products or services.
- If you're blogging to raise your profile within your industry, you need readers. They'll spread the word, and may include influential individuals in your corner of the blogging world.
- If you're blogging to get feedback on your writing, you need readers. They'll leave comments and send emails.
- If you're blogging to make money directly from your site, you need readers. They'll view ads, purchase your e-products or buy the affiliate products that you review.

This Guide is designed to help you grow your blog. It focuses on sustainable and lasting ways to do that – not ways to get a quick traffic hit that does nothing to help you towards your goals.

Whatever stage you're at right now, whether you have three readers, three hundred, or three thousand, this Guide is for you.

Here's what we'll cover:

**Part One: Getting Your Blog Ship-Shape** – before you start attracting lots of readers to your blog, you need to make sure that it's looking good, and that there's plenty of great content for them to read.

**Part Two: Attracting New Readers** – there are plenty of simple techniques you can use to draw new readers to your blog, and we'll cover social media, search engines, emails / forums, and guest posting in this part of the Guide.

**Part Three: Growing Your Blogging Influence** – a big factor in growing your readership is your relationships with other bloggers. We'll be looking at how you can get to know the "A-List bloggers" of your niche ... as well as how you can encourage your readers to share your blog content more widely.

**Part Four: Keeping Your Readers Loyal** – as a blogger, you want readers who are loyal and engaged, who keep coming back for more, and who bring other readers along too, so this

part covers ways to ensure that your readers will want to stick around and help you grow your blog.

**Part Five: Analysing What's Working** – it's important that you step back on a regular basis to look at what is and isn't working in your marketing efforts. This part covers Google Analytics, as well as other statistics that you can use to figure out what's working for you and your blog.

Note: I'll be using WordPress – the blogging platform most widely recommended by experts – to give examples and step-by-step instructions where appropriate. If you're using Blogger or a different blogging platform, you'll find that plenty of the advice still applies.

# Part One: Getting Your Blog Ship-Shape

You're probably keen to see your readership stats increase ... but if your blog isn't ready for new visitors, all your promotional efforts will be wasted.

This part of the Guide focuses on ensuring that your blog is in good shape, so that first-time visitors get a great impression and stick around for more.

# Chapter One: Four Quick Fixes for Four Common Issues

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Often, a few small changes can make a dramatic difference to how your blog comes across to visitors.

If your blog suffers from one (or even all!) of these common issues, don't worry. They're all very easy mistakes to make – and they're all quick ones to fix.

## Problem #1: Your Sidebar is Cluttered and Confusing

This is one of the most common problems I see on blogs of all sizes – and it's often one that occurs with blogs that have been around for a while. Perhaps you put a few cool widgets in place when you started out, and you've slowly added more and more ... and now your sidebar is cluttered.

Having lots of widgets might sound like a great idea – as it gives readers plenty of choice – but it also presents problems:

- Readers won't be able to quickly find the information that they're looking for.
- Too many options can lead to readers taking no action at all.
- Some widgets look clunky and unattractive, and they make your blog look bad.
- Out-dated widgets may be broken or not working as you expected.

*For whatever reason, Blogpost blogs seem particularly prone to sidebar bloat! Here's an example from [Presenting Lenore](#) – a nice-looking blog in many respects, but with rather a lot going on in the sidebar.*

*The long list of favourite blogs and sites – I've just included a small segment of it to the right – could probably be culled a little, and I'm not convinced that the PageRank button adds anything (I'd also probably remove the Team Peeta badge, given that The Hunger Games came out a good few years ago.)*



## **Solution #1: Clear the Clutter!**

Go through every widget on your sidebar, and decide whether it's:

- Essential
- Important
- Useful in some circumstances
- No longer needed

The exact widgets you choose to keep will depend on your blog's purpose and audience ... but the following few problems and solutions will hopefully give you some ideas about what's most essential.

## **Problem #2: No Clear Way to Subscribe to Your Blog**

Even if *you* like to read blogs by visiting individual websites that you've bookmarked, many readers will want to subscribe to yours, probably by email – or, if they're a bit more techy, by RSS.

RSS stands for “Really Simple Syndication” – it's a technology used to provide a stream of updates from blogs, news sites, and other websites that are regularly updated with new content.

But if readers can't sign up for emails (or if they don't notice the option to do so), then chances are, they'll leave your site ... and forget all about your blog.

## **Solution #2: Offer Email Subscriptions to Your Blog and/or Newsletter**

Make sure there's an easy way for readers to subscribe to your blog by email. You've got a few options here:

1. Provide an email version of your blog's RSS feed (so they get your blog posts into their inbox, rather than into an RSS reader).
2. Set up an email list and send out each blog post to that list, perhaps as a “teaser” with a link to read the whole thing.
3. Send out an email newsletter that's completely separate from your blog, but which contains a link to your most recent post(s).

Here are examples of each of those in action:

### **1. Blog Posts by Email**

This is what I offer on my site Aliventures. The emails simply include the full blog post, like this:

[Aliventures blog] Marketing Your (Self-Published) Novel: Five Books Reviewed

[Marketing Your \(Self-Published\) Novel: Five Books Reviewed](#)

Posted: 27 Jun 2016 11:10 AM PDT



Long-time Aliventures readers might remember that the first half of 2012 was a little hectic for me. I'd just launched my first novel, *Lycopolis*, and started [Writers' Huddle](#) ... and I had five months to turn in the manuscript of *Publishing E-Books for Dummies*.

And on the very day I handed in the final chapter of the *Publishing E-Books* draft ... I found out I was pregnant with Kitty.

Which was, of course, lovely news! But the first-trimester exhaustion hit me like a truck (thankfully I got off easy on morning sickness) ... **and all my great plans for promoting *Lycopolis* came to nothing.**

I didn't have time to market the novel and write more novels, so I chose to stick with writing. (And motherhood: as well as now 3-year-old Kitty, I have 18-month-old Nick.)

## 2. "Teaser" Emails to Newsletter List

This is what Jon Morrow does on Smart Blogger:

New post: [Why Most "How to" Posts Suck \(and How to Write Great Ones\)](#)

 **Jon Morrow** [support@boostblogtraffic.com](mailto:support@boostblogtraffic.com) [via](#) [infusionmail.com](#)  
to me ▾

Here's my take on why "how to" posts don't get nearly the same traction that they used to:

[Why Most "How to" Posts Suck \(and How to Write Great Ones\)](#)

Once you grasp this, it's a real game-changer.

Talk soon,

Jon

PS. If you like it, you know what to do - share it! :-)

## 3. Separate Email Newsletter, with Blog Post Link

I offer this in addition to the blog posts by email (*my blog posts come out on a Monday, the newsletter on a Thursday, to avoid overwhelming readers*).



## Hello!

I'm off on holiday tomorrow (and thoroughly looking forward to it!) -- I'll be spending a week at the somewhat chilly British seaside, in East Yorkshire, with my parents, husband and kids. I'm hoping to get in some time on my novel, but won't be working other than that.

(I'll have limited email access: if anything super-urgent crops up, of course I'll address it -- otherwise, I'm afraid you'll have to wait for a reply until I'm back!)

If you haven't yet had a chance to read this week's Aliventures blog post, here it is:

[Marketing Your \(Self-Published\) Novel: Five Books Reviewed.](#)

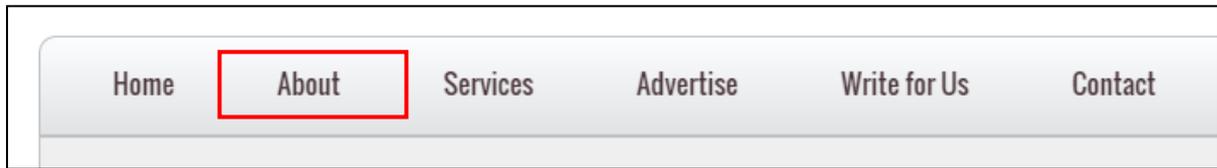
There are pros and cons to each option: what really matters is that readers have some way to sign up to get updates by email.

If you also want to include an RSS link or button, this should normally link to [www.yourblogname.com/feed](http://www.yourblogname.com/feed). If you're using Feedburner, it will be in the format [feeds.feedburner.com/yourblogname](http://feeds.feedburner.com/yourblogname).

I go into detail on how to create an email subscription option in Chapter 15, so if you need help with the techy details, head on there!

## Problem #3: No About or Contact Information Visible

One of the most-visited pages on your blog is the About page, which we'll be covering in the next chapter. This should appear in your navigation (menu) – there's an example below from Write to Done:



Even if you have a good About page, though, readers may not see it straight away. If they've arrived on your blog without knowing much about you (e.g. through a search engine or through a link on social media), you want to build a connection as quickly as possible.

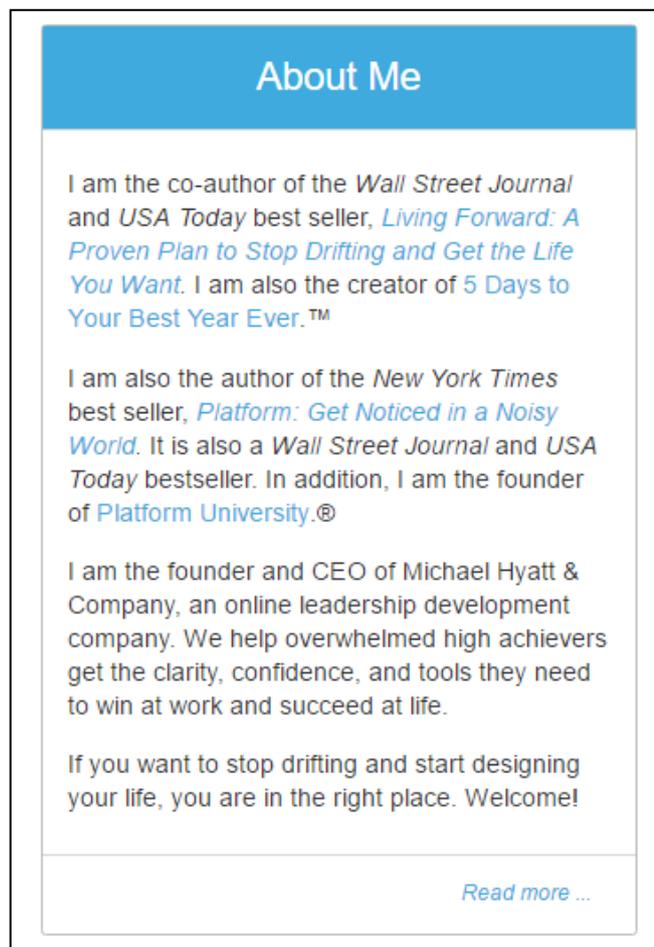
### Solution #3: Use Your Sidebar

It's often helpful for new readers if you include some brief About information in your sidebar – even if that's just your name and photo, and a line or two about your blog.

The screenshot to the right shows the About Me section on Michael Hyatt's blog sidebar at [www.michaelhyatt.com](http://www.michaelhyatt.com).

You can do the same with contact information. New visitors might be keen to follow you on Twitter or like your page on Facebook – it's a good idea to include buttons or links to your social media profiles in the sidebar.

If you feel your sidebar is getting cluttered (see Problem #1), you can leave this section out. Make sure that you have very clearly named "About" and "Contact" pages in your navigation, so readers can find these easily.



## Problem #4: Cramped, Small, Hard-to-Read Text

Reading on a screen is harder than reading on paper ... and many bloggers don't make life easy for their readers. **If your default font size is small, readers may be put off from even starting on your posts.**

Font size isn't the only culprit, though, when it comes to hard-to-read text. Avoid white text on a black background – even if this suits your brand. Instead, go for black or very dark text on a white or very light background, which is much easier to read.

If the lines of text are too close together, that will also make them tough to read: adding slightly more white space will make your posts much more attractive to readers. In this screenshot from ProBlogger, you can see that there's quite a bit of space between the lines (check out the site at [www.problogger.net](http://www.problogger.net) and click on any post to see the actual font size.)

Online courses are the hottest thing right now. Everyone seems to be launching their own course, and looking for ways to make what they believe is “passive income” – but here are five of the biggest makes people are making with their online courses right now:

### 1. Not thinking about who they are writing for

When you are creating a course, you need to think really carefully about the end user. Who are they? How much do they know already? What do they want the outcome to be? How do they want to consume the information?

(From [5 Mistakes Bloggers are Making with Online Courses](#), Sam Nordberg, ProBlogger.)

## Solution #4: Change or Modify Your Theme

Your blog's theme or template is usually responsible for font size – and you can change to a new theme with a more readable font, a larger font size, or both.

If you don't want to change your theme, you may be able to modify it. Some themes allow you to change font size options – with others, you'll need to alter the CSS code.

With those problems out of the way, let's move on to take a look at the three most crucial pages on your blog ... and how to get them right.

## Chapter Two: The Three Most Crucial Pages on Your Blog

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When a new visitor comes to your blog, there's a good chance they'll browse around – and you want to ensure that they find what they're looking for.

All your posts and pages should pull their weight, of course ... but these three pages are especially crucial:

- About
- Contact
- Services (or Shop, Hire Me, Products, etc)

### Your About Page

If you look at your blog's stats in Google Analytics (see [Chapter Seventeen](#)), then you'll probably find that your About page gets a fair amount of traffic.

New readers want to know who you are and what your blog is about – and you want to give them the best impression possible, in the hopes of enticing them to stick around.

Your About page should:

- **Give brief details about who you are** – this might just be your name (or pseudonym) and a short bio. You may also want to mention hobbies or interests, particularly if they're related to your blog's topic. If you have relevant credentials, your About page is a good place to include those.
- **Focus on what your blog is about and how it can help the reader.** Unless you have a blog that's very much centred on you and your life (a diary-style blog), then you'll want to use your About page to help ensure that visitors understand the benefits they'll gain from reading your blog.
- **Mention any products you sell or services you offer.** Not only does this prompt readers towards buying, it also helps establish your credibility – if you blog about knitting, for instance, and sell your own hand-knitted baby clothes, then readers will take you more seriously.

You may also want to give links to posts on your blog that you're especially proud of (or the ones that you want beginners to start with) – or you could do this separately on a "Start Here" page.

## **Examples:**

A couple of good About pages you might like to take a look at are:

[Michael Hyatt's About page](#)

[The Creative Penn's About page](#)

These two pages are structured differently, and both take a different tone and approach. Yet they both hit all the above points for About pages – and they're both great introductions to their respective blogs and bloggers.

## Your Contact Page

It's important to separate your About page from your contact details. Some bloggers try to simplify by including their contact information at the bottom of the About page – but this just makes it tough for new visitors to find.

**Your Contact page should give, at a minimum, your email address.** Some blogs only do this, but it's usually a good idea to also include:

- Links to your social network accounts.
- A contact form to help readers get in touch.
- A brief note to set expectations (e.g. "I'd love to hear from you – fill in the form to say hi!" creates a different expectation from "I receive a lot of email, and can't get back to everyone. Please read the FAQs here to see whether I've answered your question already.")

If you find you get a lot of emails asking the same few questions, you can use your Contact page to pre-empt possible questions and to point readers towards other sources of help.

**Note:** Some blogs only give a contact form and no email address. Unless you're getting inundated with spam, I would definitely recommend including your email address too – some people don't like using contact forms.

If you do have a form and no other contact options, make sure you regularly check that the form is actually working!

### Examples:

#### [Copyblogger's Contact page](#)

Copyblogger sells a whole range of products and services; their contact page helps people find out where to get support and assistance. (There's also a contact form at the bottom.)

#### [Productive Flourishing's Contact page](#)

This page is clear and succinct, with a link to Frequently Asked Questions, then contact options (email, contact form, and phone).

## Your Shop / Services Page

If you have any products or services for sale, it's important to make this abundantly clear. It might seem obvious to *you* that readers can hire you – the author of, let's say, a logo design blog – for your freelancing logo design, but readers may not necessarily realise that.

**You don't necessarily need to include full details of every single product you have, or every service you offer, on this page.** You should, though, give readers the basics about your key products and services, with links to more information where possible.

Different bloggers take different approaches to naming this page, and you may even find that you want to have multiple pages for different offerings. The main possibilities are:

- Shop (or Store)
- Online Shop (or Online Store)
- Products
- Services
- The name of your particular product / service, e.g. "Copywriting Services" or "Hand-Knitted Goods" or "Speaking" or "Consulting" or "eBooks"

### Examples:

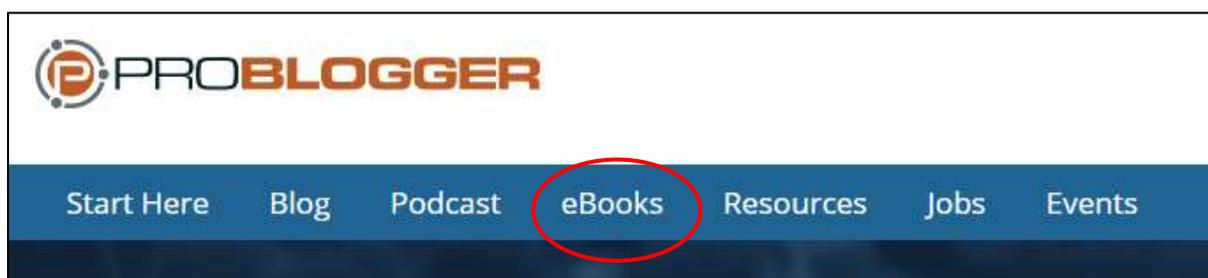
[Productive Flourishing](#) – using "products" and "services" (the "free planners" page also contains a link to their premium planners).



[Michael Hyatt](#) – using "Work With Me" and "Store".



[ProBlogger](#) – using "eBooks".



## Chapter Three: Creating Great Blog Content

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When new readers come to your blog, the design and layout will be the first thing they notice. You can succeed very well with a simple design, though (or even a less-than-great one) – *if* you have great content.

However, the best design in the world isn't going to make up for poor quality content. Readers might stick around briefly – but they won't become loyal fans.

When it comes to content, three common situations you might struggle with are:

1. You have a very new blog without much content.
2. You've written quite a few posts, but you're aware these aren't quite as high-quality as you'd like them to be
3. You have some fantastic content, but it's buried deep in your blog's archives – and new readers are unlikely to stumble across it.

In this chapter, we'll be covering ways to solve all three of these problems.

### Not Got Much Content? Or Not Happy with What You've Got? Create Cornerstone Content

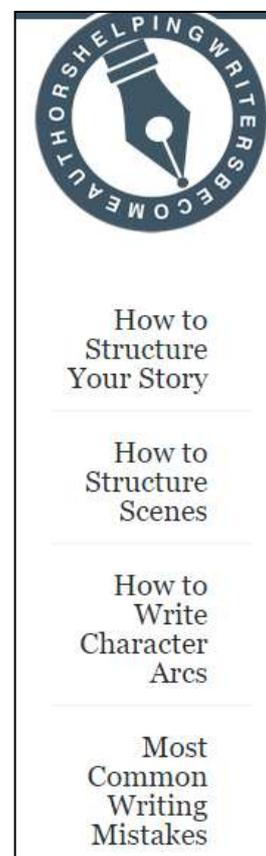
If your blog is new – or if you're not happy with the quality of your existing posts – then you're in a great position to create some very valuable, attractive content for your readers.

In the blogging world, this is sometimes called *cornerstone content*, *flagship content* or *pillar content*: posts that will stand the test of time and support your blog as a whole.

#### Example:

##### [Helping Writers Become Authors](#)

K.M. Weiland's cornerstone content (mainly, series of posts) is prominently listed down her left-hand sidebar, which appears on every page of her blog: you can see a screenshot on the right.



When you're coming up with ideas for cornerstone content, think about:

- **Writing a series of posts that all fall under a particular topic.** You can add more series of posts in the future.
- **Focusing on beginner-friendly content.** Unless your blog is aimed squarely at an advanced segment of the market, most of your readers will be beginners (especially when they first come to your blog!)
- **Concentrating on “How to” posts or list posts – these are easy ways to deliver value to the reader.** Posts that focus on your own story might not be so compelling, unless you can tie these into actionable tips for readers.
- **Thinking about your brand.** These posts need to create the right first impression. You might want to consider your writing style (formal or informal?) your use of images (humorous or informative?) and even the way you structure your posts as part of your brand.
- **Looking for keywords that relate to your niche.** Your cornerstone content will be a great way to draw search engines, as well as readers, to your blog. (For more on getting search engine traffic, read [Chapter Seven](#).)
- **Using existing content.** If you already have some well-structured posts that get a fair amount of traffic, then you could potentially update those to make them even more valuable, and link to them from your About page, sidebar, or a “Start Here” page.

It's worth setting aside some quality time to work on your cornerstone content. You don't need to clear a whole day – but look for ways to find at least an hour or two when you won't be interrupted.

This content needs to be well-structured and well-written: if you have a copy of [The Blogger's Guide to Effective Writing](#), this is a great time to brush up on your post-writing skills. You can also check out the section later in this chapter on “How to Improve Any Post, Fast” for quick tips that will help.

## **Cornerstone Content for Personal Blogs**

**If you're writing a personal blog – one driven by the events of your life and your thoughts about them – then some of the usual blogging “rules” might not seem to apply.** For instance, if you blog about your experiences of being a full-time parent to five kids, you might be more interested in sharing anecdotes than in writing “how to” style posts.

Your blog can still have cornerstone content, though. These might be fairly in-depth posts that tell a larger part of your story (rather than focusing on a single isolated incident), or

posts that work especially well to showcase your writing voice – perhaps particularly funny or moving pieces.

## Got Great Content to Highlight? Create a Popular Posts List for Your Sidebar

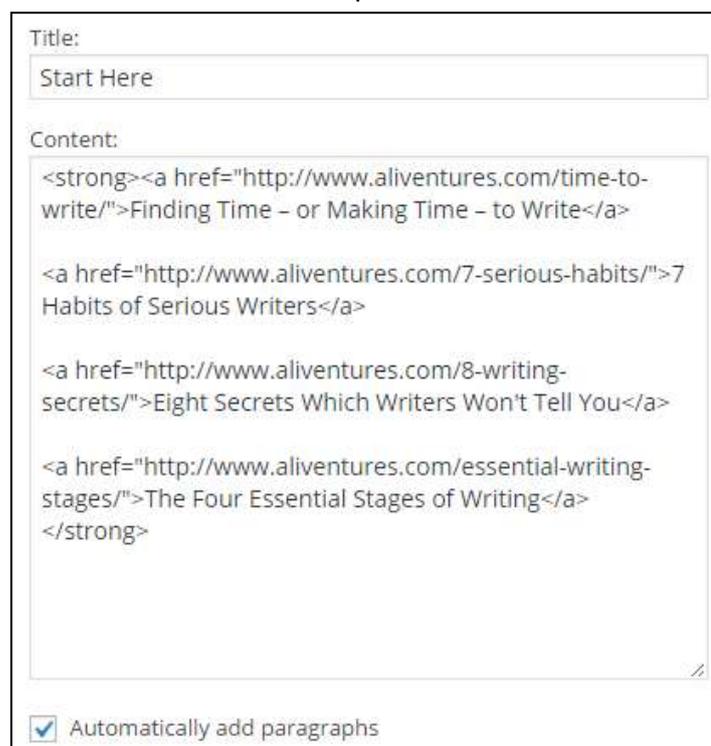
If you already have some great cornerstone-worthy posts on your blog – or if you’ve put together your cornerstone content – then it’s a great idea to create a “popular posts” list for your sidebar. This highlights your best content for readers.

**If you’re not sure where to begin, look at your blog’s stats to see which posts are currently getting the most traffic.** (You might also want to consider bounce rate, and time spent on the page: [Chapter Seventeen](#), on Google Analytics, will help you with this.) Posts with lots of comments, tweets, Likes, or similar are also great candidates for your list.

If “Popular Posts” doesn’t it the list you’ve come up with, then you can easily use a different heading – “Best of [Blog Name]” or “Top Articles” or “Start Here” or whatever suits you and your blog.

To create your list:

1. Decide which posts you want to include. You could choose the ones that have had the most comments, the most tweets, or the most views.
2. Add a text widget for your blog, and enter the titles for your posts, each on a separate line.
3. Use HTML code to add in the link to each post. It should look something like this:



The image shows a screenshot of a Blogger text widget configuration. The 'Title' field contains the text 'Start Here'. The 'Content' field contains the following HTML code:

```
<strong><a href="http://www.aliventures.com/time-to-write/">Finding Time – or Making Time – to Write</a>  
<a href="http://www.aliventures.com/7-serious-habits/">7 Habits of Serious Writers</a>  
<a href="http://www.aliventures.com/8-writing-secrets/">Eight Secrets Which Writers Won't Tell You</a>  
<a href="http://www.aliventures.com/essential-writing-stages/">The Four Essential Stages of Writing</a>  
</strong>
```

At the bottom of the widget, there is a checkbox labeled 'Automatically add paragraphs' which is checked.

## Got Great Content Buried in Your Archives? Create a Start Here Page

This is a similar concept to a Popular Posts list ... but it gives you the opportunity to go into much more depth. It's best suited to quite large blogs which have been running for at least a few months.

Instead of a sidebar list, you devote a whole page to new readers, giving them additional guidance on where to start. Different blogs have different names for this type of page – “Start Here” or “New Here?” are the most common.

For this page, you might pull together a list of 10 – 20 posts that will give readers a strong grounding in your topic, and a great introduction to your blog. It's often a good idea to separate these into different groups (e.g. related to different key subjects) so readers can quickly home in on the most relevant ones.

### Examples:

#### [Productive Flourishing's "New Here?" page](#)

This page is an introduction to Productive Flourishing, with a list of cornerstone “How to” posts that form a great place to start – plus a free downloadable ebook.

#### [Planning With Kids' "Where to Start" page](#)

This page has lots of links, separated into seven different areas, with a quick introduction to each area. In most cases, just the post titles are given, but there's a note alongside guest posts to explain who authored them.

## How to Improve Any Post, Fast

Although we don't have the space to cover every aspect of writing great blog content (that's [another Blogger's Guide entirely!](#)) these tips will help you to improve any blog post – whether it's one you're working on right now, or one that you wrote a year ago.

**It's always a good idea to give old content a quick polish, if you'll be including it in a “Popular Posts” or “Start Here” list** – your writing skills will have improved over time, your writing voice may well have become stronger, and you might also have changed some of the goals of your blog.

## Step #1: Check Your Post Structure

Many bloggers sit down with a blank document and a topic, then write their post as a stream-of-consciousness. While this is a perfectly good technique for personal journaling, or even a rough first draft of a post, it's unlikely to result in a great finished piece for your blog.

**The structure of your post – the way it's put together – makes a big difference to how readable it is.** If you go off on a long tangent or give information in a confusing order, readers may well give up and go elsewhere.

Your first step when editing a post – old or new – should be to make sure that the structure is solid. If you've included paragraphs that aren't relevant to your main point, cut them (you might consider saving them for a future post). If your post doesn't flow logically, move the paragraphs around.

***Bonus tip:** To prevent structural problems in future, always create an outline for your post before you begin to write.*

## Step #2: Strengthen the Introduction

**Your introduction has a crucial job to do: it needs to grab readers' attention and make them interested enough to read on.** Sadly, many blog posts introductions don't work as effectively as they should – and may even put readers off by being over-long and unfocused.

To strengthen your introduction, you could try:

- **Cutting the first paragraph** – some writers find they often produce a “warm up” paragraph that doesn't really say anything
- **Removing any extraneous details** – in almost all cases, the reader doesn't need to know the backstory of this post (e.g. “I was wondering what to write about today, and I decided to choose a topic close to my heart...”)
- **Opening with a (relevant) question**, such as “Do you ever procrastinate?” This can create an instant sense of connection, as the reader is prompted to think about their answer to your question. It's also a great way to get the word “you” in right at the start of your post.

***Bonus tip:** If you struggle to write introductions, try writing them after you've completed the rest of your post. That way, you'll know what you're introducing.*

## Step #3: Add a Call to Action at the End

If you've not come across the term “call to action” before, it simply means asking the reader to do something. (We cover calls to action in greater depth in [Chapter Sixteen](#).) The best place for this is at the end of your post – where readers will be making a decision on what to do next.

**Your call to action should be something that helps you to meet your current goals for your blog.** For instance, if you want more subscribers, your call to action might be:

Enjoyed this post? Pop your email address in the box below, and you'll get every post straight to your inbox.

If you want more comments, your call to action might be:

Which of these ten tips will you try out this week? Let us know in the comments...

**Bonus tip:** *When you plan your next post, think about what you want people to do after reading it. That way, you can craft a piece that naturally leads into your call to action.*

### **Step #4: Edit for Accuracy and Clarity**

Editing doesn't just mean checking for spelling mistakes and typos – it also means ensuring that your sentences and word choices are clear. When you edit, look out for:

- **Clumsy sentences that run on too long, or that lose the reader half-way.** The best way to deal with these is usually to re-write them as two separate sentences.
- **Jargon that you haven't explained** (unless you're confident that your audience will already understand the word or phrase). It's often helpful to spell out acronyms the first time you use them.
- **Facts and figures that you might need to double-check.** It's a good idea to check that all your links are working, too.
- **Any grammar or spelling mistakes**, or words you accidentally mistyped – don't rely on your spell checker to spot these. Some typos, like missing words, won't get picked up.

**Bonus tip:** *Read your post out loud when you edit – you'll spot areas where the words don't flow as smoothly as they should, as well as typos and other mistakes.*

### **Step #5: Include Images and Formatting**

One great way to enhance your posts is to include an image (or several images). These can be used to:

- **Draw the reader's eye** – especially right at the start of your post.
- **Add useful information** – perhaps in the form of a graph or screenshot.
- **Break up long sections of text** – if your post runs over 1,000 words, consider using a small image within each sub-section.

- **Set the tone, or reinforce your brand** – perhaps you always use cartoons to signal that your posts are light-hearted, or you take your own photos to emphasise the personal nature of your blog.

As well as images, you can include formatting to make your text easier for readers to take in. This means adding:

- **Subheadings to signpost major posts.** Make them clear and descriptive, as search engines will pick up on these too.
- **Bold text to emphasise key sentences or points.** Try to be consistent in how you use bold text (e.g. the first sentence of each subsection) as it can start to look choppy and distracting otherwise.
- **Blockquotes to set out any quotations that you include.** Your blogging software will have a button for these (it often looks like double quotation marks).
- **Bullet points to set out individual items.** If you have a list within a paragraph, this can be hard for readers to take in; splitting it out with bullet points creates more white space on the page and makes the list much easier to read.

***Bonus tip:** Keep your sentences and paragraphs short. This goes a long way toward making your post more readable – even if you forget to include much formatting.*

## **Step #6: Edit Your Post's Title**

The most important element of your post is its title. **If you get this wrong, you'll miss out on a lot of readers – and the rest of your post, however brilliant, won't get the attention it deserves.**

If your post has been around a while, you *may* want to consider whether or not it's a good idea to edit your title – if you have lots of links to that post from other blogs that use the existing title, it could potentially be confusing for readers. Generally, though, I'd say that the benefits of a great title far outweigh any possible confusion caused by changing it.

(Do be careful, though, not to change the permalink of your post when you change the title – even if your permalinks normally match your titles. Otherwise, you'll have broken links.)

Great titles:

- **Are specific rather than general**, e.g. *7 Simple Ways to Grow Great Tomatoes* not *Growing Tomatoes*.

- **Often use numbers.** Just take a look at the Popular Posts list on Write to Done, to the right, and you'll see how many of those have a number in the title.
- **Have adjectives.** Words like *easy*, *simple*, *straightforward* or *quick* can help lift a title. You can also try *secret* or *little-known* to create a hint of mystery. *Powerful*, *great*, *killer*, and *must-know* all help make your post sound more interesting ... but do make sure your post can live up to the hype of the title.

## Popular Posts

[How to Write Better: Naked Emotions](#)

[How to Write Better: 7 Instant Fixes](#)

[11 Ways to Write an Irresistible Intro](#)

[3 Habits that Separate Good Writers from Tragic Wannabes](#)

[How to Write Funny](#)

[201 Ways to Arouse Your Creativity](#)

[31 Ways to Find Inspiration for Your Writing](#)

[Learn from the Greats: 7 Writing Habits](#)

**Bonus tip:** *Come up with three or four possible titles for your post, and choose the best. You might want to ask friends for their input.*

## **Part Two: Attracting New Readers**

Now that your blog is in great shape for readers, you'll want to start bringing them in! This part focuses on key ways to bring new traffic to your blog – from social networks, search engines, and other blogs.

## Chapter Four: Using Twitter Effectively

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If you're not already on Twitter, I highly recommend setting up an account there. Twitter is very popular with bloggers and it's a powerful way to build connections with peers – and with influencers – in your blogging niche.

Even if you don't use Twitter very much, fellow bloggers may want to link to your posts, tag you in their tweets, and so on, so it's worth at least setting up an account.

Although you don't need to have a Twitter account in order for readers to tweet about your posts, it's useful to be able to join in the conversation and respond to questions. As you use Twitter, you'll also come to understand more clearly how it works and what makes something tweet-worthy in your readers' eyes.

### Setting Up Your Twitter Account

It's quick and straightforward to register for a Twitter account: just go to [www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com) and follow the instructions.

To make the most of your account:

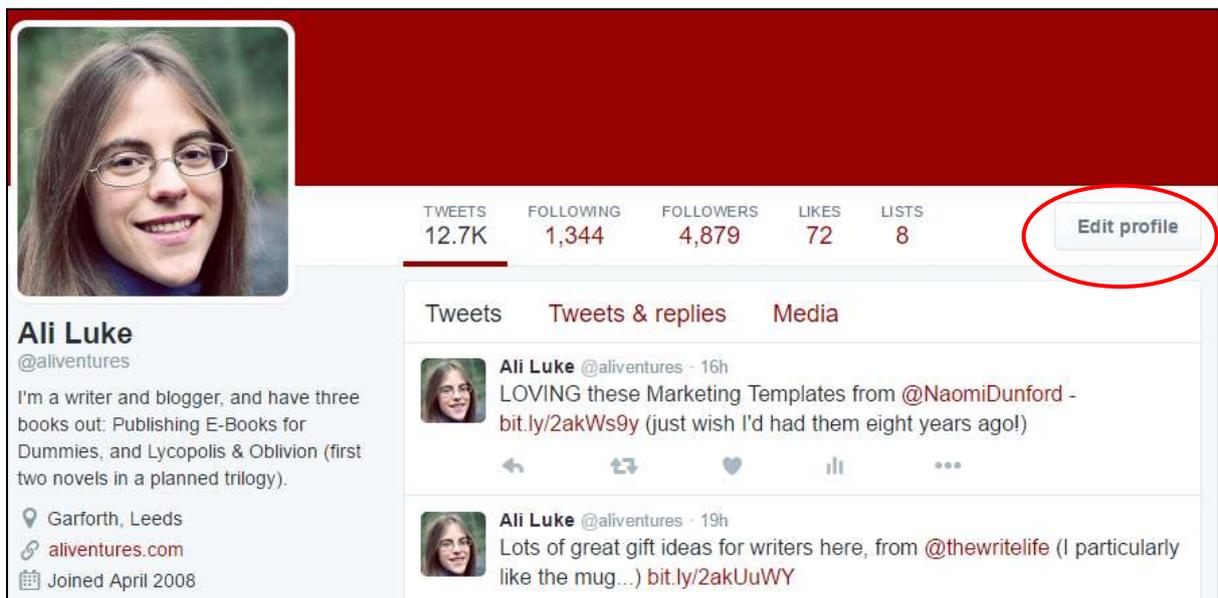
- **Fill in your bio.** When Twitter users are deciding whether or not to follow you, they'll look at your bio for clues about who you are and what you do. You only get 160 characters, so make them count.
- **Upload a profile image.** Most bloggers simply use their face – though some prefer to use a logo. Without a profile image, your account will have the default egg, often associated with spam accounts.
- **Include your blog's URL.** If you want to add this after you've set up your account, go to Edit Profile (<https://twitter.com/settings/profile>) and enter your blog's URL in the Website box.



You may also want to include a header image, which is a wide banner image that appears when your profile page is viewed. Some bloggers use a screenshot of their blog, or a design based on their blog; authors often include their book covers here. Here's Jeff Goins's header image:



You can add or change your header image (and your profile photo, your bio etc) by going to your profile page and then clicking Edit Profile on the right:



## Finding People to Follow on Twitter

On Twitter, you *follow* people who you're interested in. This means you'll see their tweets (updates) in your main tweet stream:



Other people can also follow you (they're your "followers").

Quite often, when you follow someone, they'll follow you in return. Bloggers with a large Twitter following (more than a few hundred people) often won't do this, though – not because they're being rude, but because they just can't keep up with that many people.

Even if someone isn't following you, you can still contact them on Twitter, by including their Twitter name (e.g. **@aliventures**) in your Tweet. Keep in mind that if they get a *lot* of tweets, they may not necessarily spot yours.

When it comes to following people:

- **Start off with the bloggers who you're already a fan of.** If you look at the blogs you read, there'll often be a Twitter link / icon / name in the sidebar, or on the About or Contact page.

- **Once you're following a few people, look at who *they* follow** – you might find some really interesting bloggers who you've not come across before.
- **Don't feel that you have to follow masses of people all at once.** You might aim to follow ten new people each day to begin with.
- **Don't automatically follow everyone who follows you.** Take a look at their profile first. Does their bio suggest that they'll be interesting to follow? Are their recent tweets engaging – or just self-promotion or spam?
- **Avoid automated tools or services that promise you thousands of followers** – they'll achieve this by following lots of people, then unfollowing those who don't follow you back. This is considered very poor Twitter etiquette, and will often result in low-quality followers – people who have no interest in what you want to say.

## What to Tweet About

There are no “rules” for how best to use Twitter. **Most new Twitter users find that it's helpful to watch what others are doing, learning from them.** For instance, if your favourite bloggers share lots of useful links, that's a strategy you might well want to adopt.

Usually, you'll want to strike a balance between:

- Promoting your own blog, products or services.
- Promoting other people (e.g. linking to their blog posts).
- Joining in casual conversations.
- Taking part in organised Twitter chats (you can find [a list of blogging-related ones here](#)).

Too much promotion of your own stuff may mean that people “unfollow” you – they don't want to hear, yet again, about your blog or your ebook.

Too much promotion of other people's stuff may mean that you don't get the results from Twitter that you're hoping for – you may well build a good follower base, but these people won't ever be prompted to visit your blog!

Too much conversation may mean that your Tweet stream becomes very insular – especially if you use Twitter to chat with just a handful of close friends or fellow bloggers. It's good to put out some more general tweets, as well as @replies, from time to time.

**How often should you tweet? It's up to you – but between two and eight times a day makes a good average for general updates.**

For replies (messages starting with @name), you can definitely go over this – though remember that email or instant messenger is usually better way to have an extended conversation.

## Twitter Tools and Plugins

While there's no reason you can't simply use the Twitter web interface ([www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)), many bloggers find it helpful to use specific tools and plugins to make their tweeting more efficient.

Here are three that will help you grow your blog traffic faster:

### Buffer

[www.bufferapp.com](http://www.bufferapp.com)

I use Buffer to pre-schedule my tweets (and have seen a rise in both followers and email subscribers since doing this). Usually, my pre-scheduled tweets are links to useful resources, or interesting quotes about writing.

If you choose to pre-schedule tweets, avoid making them sound too conversational – as people may expect you to be there to reply! For instance, don't ask questions in pre-scheduled tweets, as your followers may try to tweet back. Try to log into Twitter at least once, preferably twice, each day to check for replies and to join in conversations.

### TweetDeck

[www.tweetdeck.com](http://www.tweetdeck.com)

and

### HootSuite

[www.hootsuite.com](http://www.hootsuite.com)

Both TweetDeck and HootSuite allow you to use Twitter without having to ever go through the web interface. Many people find this easier to work with – though plenty of others are perfectly happy just using the website.

TweetDeck and HootSuite are free to use, and have similar features – such as giving you the ability to schedule tweets and manage multiple Twitter accounts – so you might want to try out both and see which you prefer.

## Chapter Five: Using Facebook Effectively

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Facebook is the largest social network – currently boasting a staggering billion user accounts (and it's still growing). It has a wide and diverse user base – there's a good chance that your dad, niece, best friend and grandma are all on there.

**If you're not already familiar with Facebook, create an account so you can see how it works.** Even if you only use it a little, you'll get an idea of why Facebook is so popular, and how people use it.

### Keep Business on Your Business Page, Not Your Personal Profile Page

Don't use your personal Facebook profile (sometimes called your "timeline") for business. Facebook isn't like Twitter – if someone wants to be your friend, you have to be their friend in return, which can quickly clog up your news feed with irrelevant updates from people who you don't even know.

Facebook also has policies against using your profile to do business – though you're unlikely to face problems if you occasionally mention your blog or what you're working on.

In their answer to [How are Pages different from personal timelines?](#), Facebook say:

*"Personal profiles are for non-commercial use and represent individual people. You can follow profiles to see public updates from people you're interested in but aren't friends with. Pages look similar to personal profiles, but they offer unique tools for businesses, brands and organizations."*

Also, many bloggers like to use Facebook to update family and friends on personal matters – and you may not want to broadcast these to the world in general.

The best ways to use Facebook to build your blog traffic are:

- Create or join a group on a particular topic or interest area.
- Create a business page for your blog (or your business).

## Understanding Facebook Groups

Facebook groups are a little bit like online forums. You use your personal Facebook account to join groups, but you don't need to be friends with everyone in a group in order to talk to them.

**There are loads of different Facebook groups out there – and there's bound to be at least one that interests you!**

Groups can work in a similar way to forums (see [Chapter Ten](#)) – they're a great place to build connections with people who have similar interests, who may well become readers of your blog. Some groups will encourage you to post links to your blog posts; others may frown upon this. Take your lead from what other members of the group are doing.

## Creating a Facebook Page for Your Business

A Facebook page is like a profile for your blog or business. Facebook users can "like" your page – and see your updates – without you having to befriend or approve them.

To set up your page, go to [www.facebook.com/pages/create.php](http://www.facebook.com/pages/create.php), choose the most appropriate category (probably "Company, Organisation or Institution") and follow the step-by-step instructions.

**You'll want to update your page on a regular basis – at least weekly, but preferably every day or two.** Frustratingly, Facebook currently won't show your updates to all your fans, only a proportion of them (unless you pay!) This means that it's a good idea to craft updates that people are likely to share, like or comment on, as this will make them more visible to others.

Good updates include:

**#1: Questions** – these are great on any social network (or on your blog) for encouraging responses. It's best if they have some relation to your blog topic – though making them fairly informal or silly can help to get the conversation flowing.



*[From Darren Rowse's Facebook page.](#)*

**#2: Images** – these often get shared on Facebook – which means they’ll become visible to friends of your fans. Make sure you have permission to use the image; this could mean Creative Commons licensed images from Flickr, or taking your own photos, or paying for stock images from a site like iStockPhoto.



[From the Marmite Facebook page.](#)

(You can also combine a question with an image, to help catch fans’ attention. Note that when you link to a blog post, Facebook will normally automatically show an image from that post – if there are several images, you can choose which to show, or include all of them!)

**#3: Links** – these could be to your own blog posts, or to useful resources by other bloggers. Try not to *only* link to your own materials, as this can seem self-serving. Your Facebook fans will really appreciate it when you help them find great resources on other sites that they might otherwise have missed.



*[From The Creative Penn's Facebook Page](#)*

Facebook also allows you to purchase advertising, either by “boosting” a post on your page, or by creating a separate ad post: you’ve probably seen these coming up in your Facebook feed. While advertising can be a great way to bring traffic to your blog, it can also be a very expensive way of doing so.

If you are interested in exploring Facebook advertising, Luke Moulton’s post [5 Tips for Optimising Facebook Ads Campaigns](#), on ProBlogger, is a good place to begin.

# Chapter Six: Putting Basic SEO Into Practice on Your Blog

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SEO stands for Search Engine Optimisation. It covers a wide variety of ways to “optimise” your content (your blog posts and pages) to gain more prominence in search engine results.

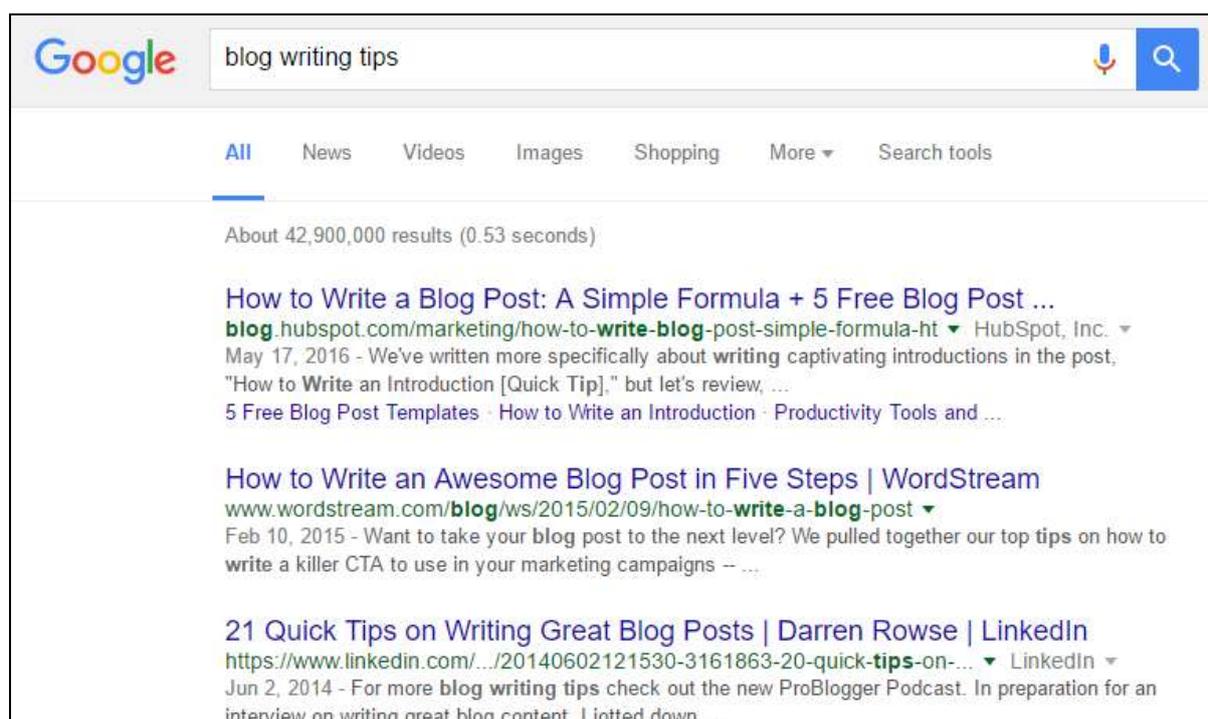
Since Google is the biggest search engine by far, most SEO techniques focus on optimising for Google. Pages that rank well in Google are likely to do well in other search engines too.

Although SEO can seem a bit technical or confusing, bloggers have a natural advantage. As a blogger, you’re producing lots of content (the more pages you have, the more chances there are for someone to find your site) and you’re also writing reader-friendly content, which is what Google naturally wants to promote most.

**The other great news for bloggers is that WordPress is well-designed for SEO** – as are other major blogging platforms. We’ll cover some basic tweaks during this chapter, but rest assured that your blog already has an advantage over other websites.

## Understanding Search Engine Optimisation

When you type a query into Google, the results you see should be relevant to what you’ve typed. The best results – the ones that are highly relevant, and from great quality websites – are the ones that you want to show up first. And Google wants to give you what you want, so that you keep coming back.

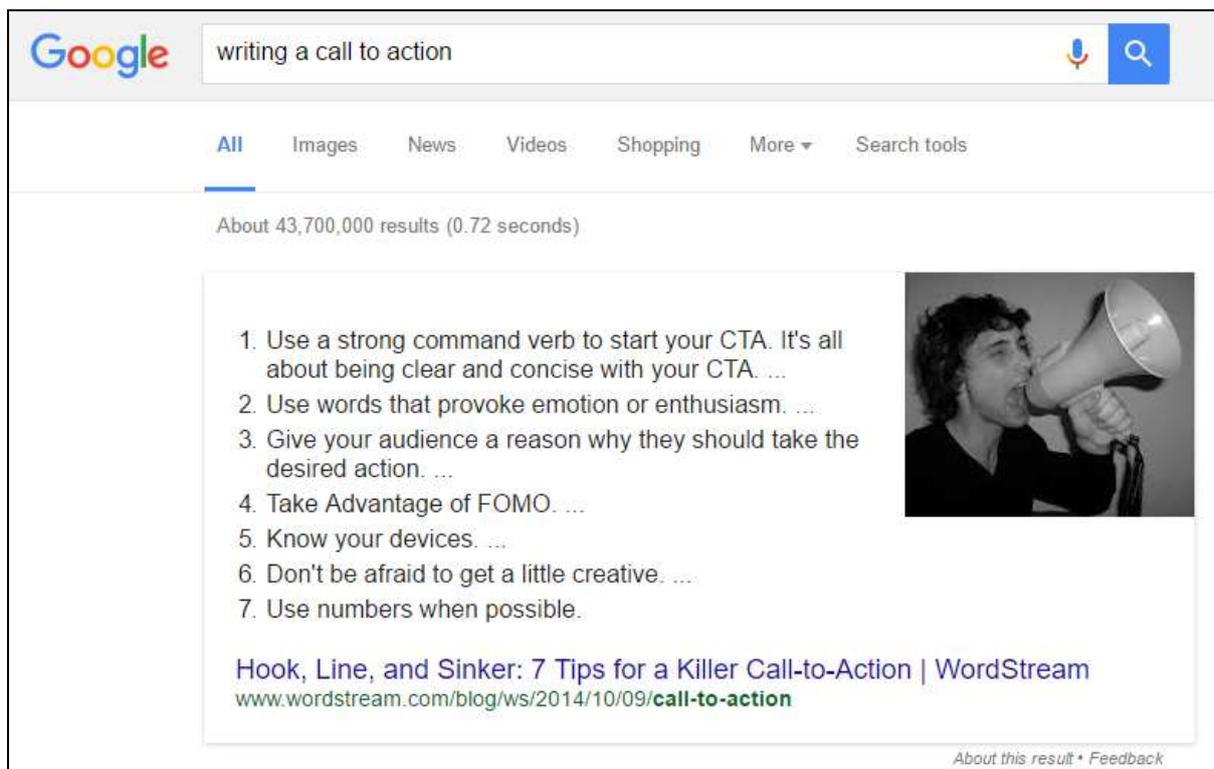


Google has to decide which blog posts (and other web pages) are most relevant for your search. To do this, it takes into account a number of factors, including:

1. **The title of each blog post.** For instance, if you search for “Writing Tips”, then posts that have “Writing Tips” in the title are likely to be relevant.
2. **The whole text of the post.** A post that has “Writing Tips” in the title but never mentions the words “writing” and “tips” again probably won’t be so relevant as one that has these words in the post itself. Subheadings will be given especial weight. If the post includes images, Google will look at the alternative text set for these too.
3. **The number of links to that post** (and to the site as a whole) from other websites. The more links to a website, the more authority it has in Google’s eyes. If those links come from high-quality sites, even better!

As a blogger, it’s your job to make Google’s life easy. You don’t need any special technical knowledge – you just need to put a little bit of thought into SEO before you publish your posts.

Sometimes, Google will create an “answer box” or “featured snippet” and put this result right at the top of the page (this is called “position zero” by SEO gurus):



You can’t force Google to do this, but if you want to maximise your chances of getting a rich snippet, check out the advice here (from WordStream, who got the rich snippet above): [3 Tips for Ranking in the Featured Snippet \(AKA Position Zero\)](https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2014/10/09/call-to-action).

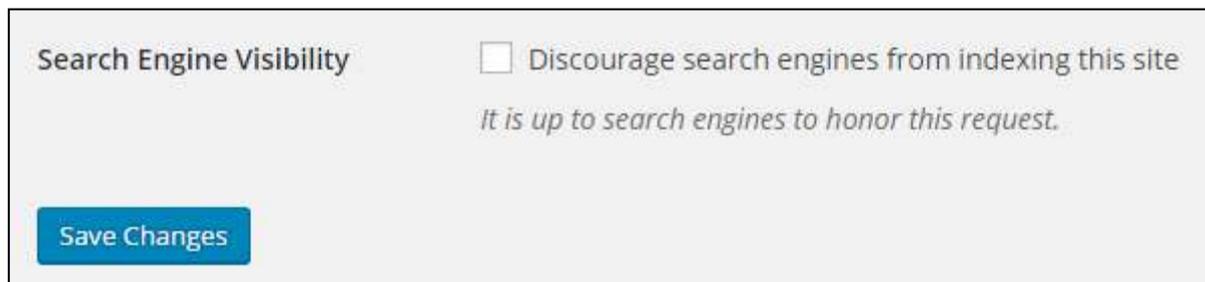
## Quick SEO Tweaks for Your Blog as a Whole

There are a few simple tweaks you can make to improve the overall SEO of your blog. These only take a few minutes – and could potentially make a big difference to your visibility in search engines.

### #1: Check Your Blog is Visible to Search Engines

When you set up your WordPress blog, you'll have seen an option to hide it from search engines. Many bloggers like to do this while they're getting their blog up and running (writing cornerstone content, tweaking the design, etc) – but **it's crucially important to remember to *unset* this option when you're ready to be found.**

To double-check whether search engines can see your blog, go to your WordPress dashboard, then Settings → Reading. At the bottom of this page, there's a checkbox for Search Engine Visibility. If the box is checked, uncheck it and click Save Changes.



### #2: Use Keyword-Rich Permalinks

Every post on your blog has its own permalink (URL), and search engines can read this link – and take it into account when deciding where your post ranks.

You want to avoid having permalinks that look like this:

<http://www.aliventures.com/?p=123>

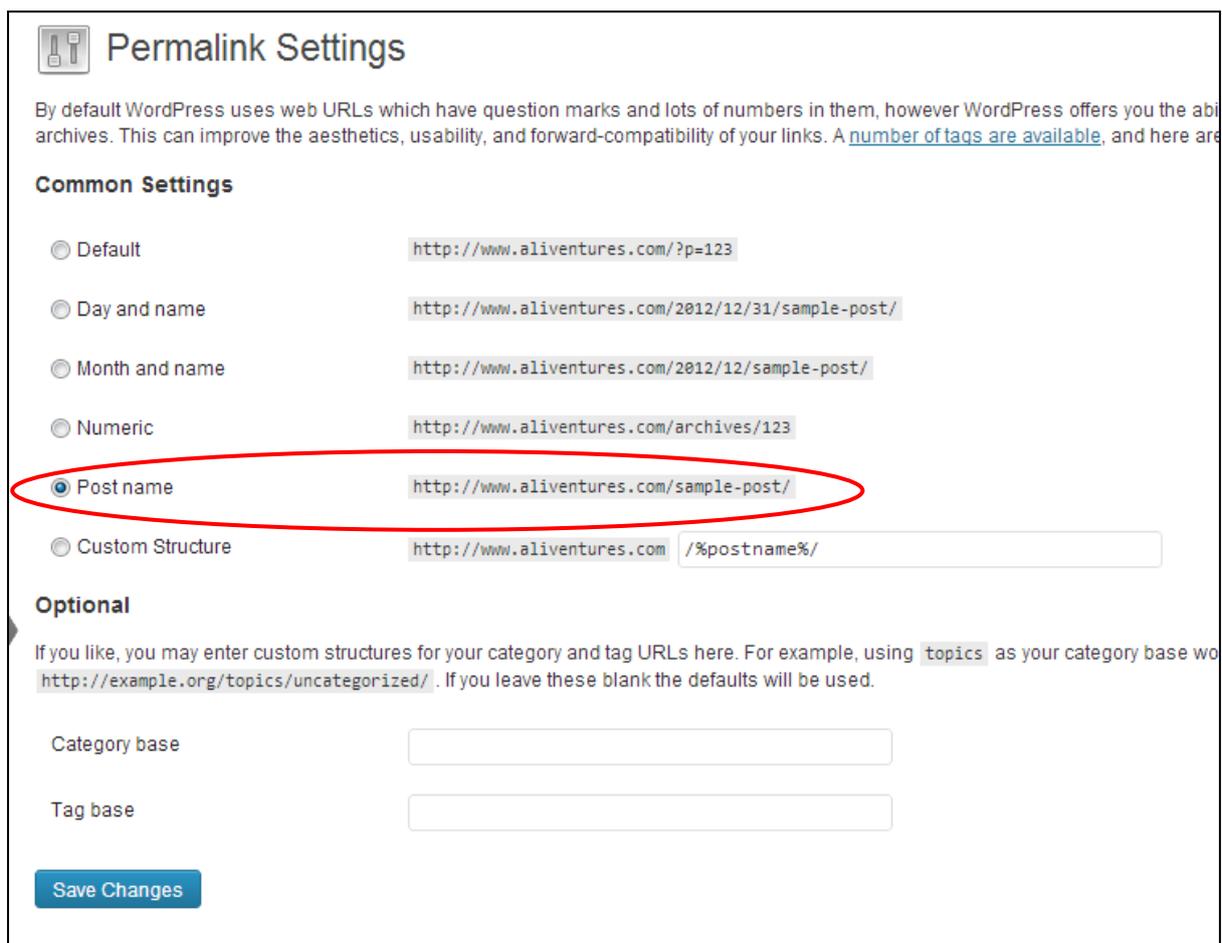
That's not very helpful to readers (who may see the URL when it's linked to on, say, Facebook) – and it's not helpful to search engines either.

The option that most bloggers prefer is to use the title of the post, or a modified version. This way, your permalink will look something like this:

<http://www.aliventures.com/six-quotes-get-writing>

To change your permalinks:

- Go to Permalink Settings.
- Click on the "Post name" radio button.
- Click the blue Save Changes button.

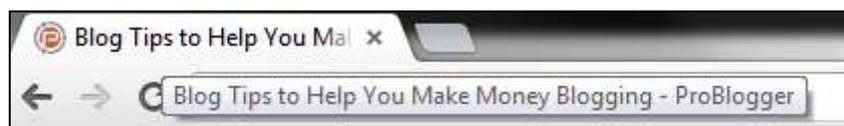


(You could choose to use the “month and name” option, but this not only makes your URL longer and less attractive to readers, it also clearly labels your post as written at a particular time. Readers will often favour newer content, even when the old content is still perfectly relevant, so you may not want to make it *too* obvious when posts were written.)

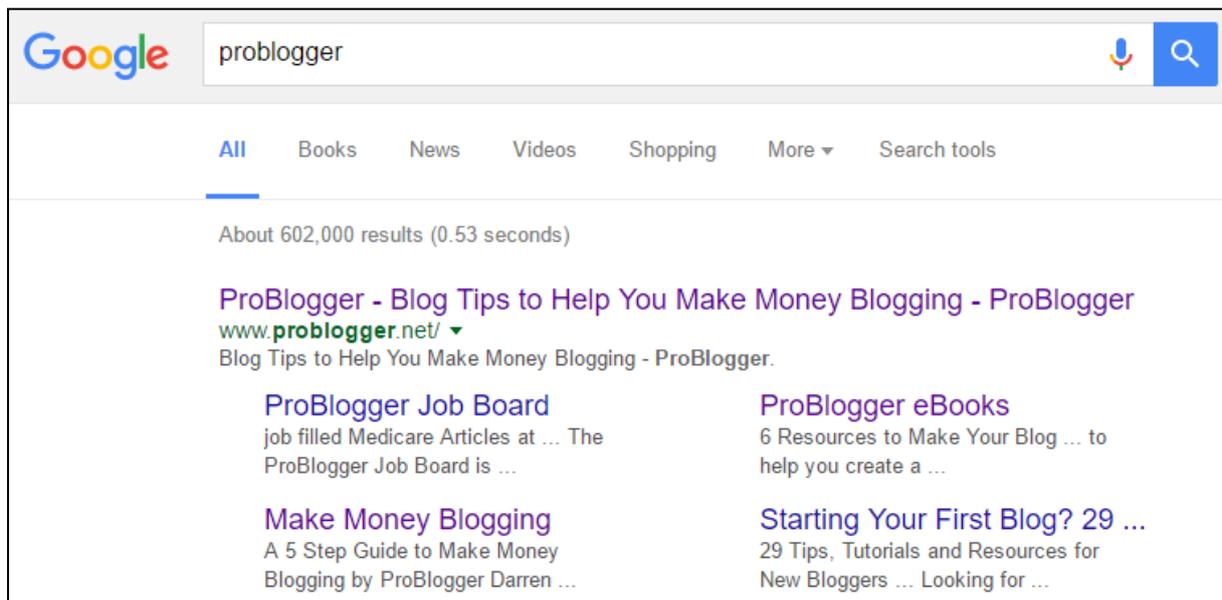
### #3: Give Your Blog a Good Title

Every page on your site has a title that appears in the title bar (at the top of the browser window) – and this is also used in search engine results pages.

Here’s ProBlogger’s title, shown in my browser when I’m on the homepage of the site. I’ve hovered the mouse over the browser tab to make the full title appear:



And here's how the title appears in search engine results:



As well as boosting ProBlogger's ranking for words like "blog tips" and "make money blogging", this title gives readers more incentive to click than simply "ProBlogger". (Though note that I'd personally suggest having a different meta description for the homepage – it seems a bit odd to just repeat the title.)

You can set your blog's title under Settings → General, but this will change the title in your blog's RSS feed too. Instead, you may prefer to use an SEO plugin (covered later in this chapter) to set the blog's title for search engine purposes.

## Basic SEO Steps for Every Post You Write

To help Google find and deliver your content to potential readers, aim to:

**#1: Give your posts clear, rather than clever or cutesy, titles.** For instance, "[A 3-Step Process for Painless Keyword Research](#)" (a post by Beth Hayden on Copyblogger) is a great clear title that works well both for search engines and for readers.

**#2: Keep your posts on one topic.** If you write about five totally unrelated ideas in the same post, then it's going to be harder for it to rank well in Google for any of those topics.

**#3: Get links to your posts (and your site as a whole) from other sites.** Guest posting (see [Chapter Eight](#)) is one great way to do this; you may also want to occasionally approach one or two specific bloggers to ask for links – obviously, don't over-do this, and be polite!

## Using SEO Plugins

There are also some great WordPress plugins that you can use to boost your SEO efforts. The two most popular ones are All-in-One SEO and WordPress SEO – and they’re both free.

If you have a premium theme, such as the [Get Noticed! theme](#) from Michael Hyatt, then your theme may have built-in SEO options and you won’t need to install an SEO plugin (in fact, doing so might cause conflicts with your theme’s SEO). Your theme should come with documentation to help you.

These two SEO plugins are widely used and recommended by bloggers:

### #1: [All in One SEO Pack](#)

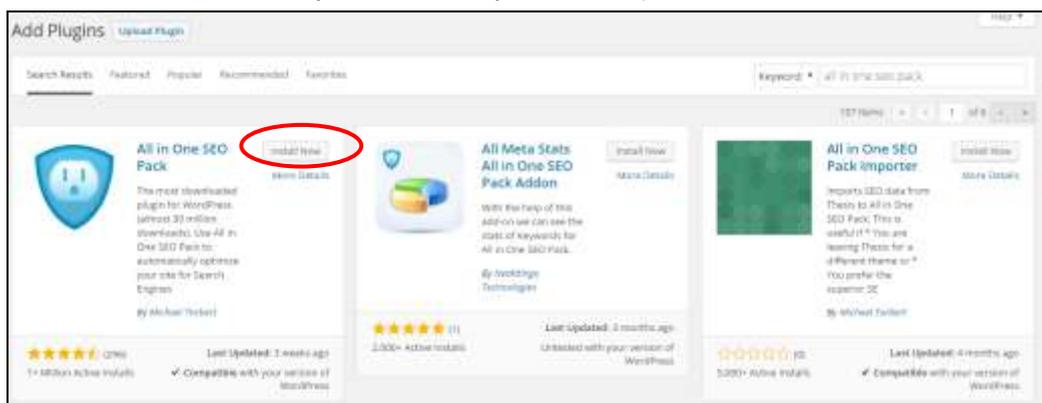
If all this talk of SEO has been making your head spin, then try the All in One SEO Pack. It’s easy to use, and focuses on core areas of SEO that will make a big difference to your blog.

### #2: [WordPress SEO by Yoast](#)

WordPress SEO (aka “Yoast SEO”) has some more advanced features, and is favoured by SEO experts in the blogosphere. If you’re fairly new to blogging, though, you’ll probably find that All in One SEO Pack is easier to work with.

To install your chosen SEO plugin:

1. Login to your site’s dashboard.
2. Go to Plugins → Add New.
3. Search for the plugin by name. Make sure you choose the right entry (if you don’t use the full name, it may not come top of the list).



4. Click the “Install Now” button (indicated in red above).
5. Once the plugin is installed – it should only take a few seconds – you’ll need to click an *Activate* link to activate it.

## Building Links to Your Blog

Your SEO plugin will only help you with *on site* optimisation – things that you do with your own blog, like having great title tags for your posts.

**The other half of SEO involves *off site* optimisation – things that you do elsewhere on the web to boost your site in Google’s eyes. This all comes down to getting links.**

The simple way to look at this is that the more links you have pointing to your site, the more authoritative your site will seem to Google. If the sites linking to you are big ones – such as major blogs in your niche – then this will give those links extra power.

However, if you have lots of links from low-quality sites – ones that are basically just spam – then Google won’t look favourably on this at all, and your site may actually rank lower than it otherwise would. This is why it’s important not to buy links from a shady SEO company: it’s much better to get those links in a natural way, from reputable websites.

**Tip:** Reciprocal links (where you link to another site and they link back to you) don’t have so much power. This is because a lot of bloggers and website owners have, in the past, engaged in a practice called “link exchanging” – essentially “you link to us and we’ll link to you.” Because this was often done indiscriminately, these links are seen as poorer quality.

So how can you get another site to link to you?

- **Write valuable posts.** If you want to attract links, then you need to have some really good blog posts for people to link to. If you’ve been through Part One of this guide, you’ll hopefully already have some strong cornerstone content.
- **Guest post on other sites.** When you guest post, you provide a free piece of content (a blog post) in return for a short bio a link to your blog, or a post / page of your choice. We’ll be going into detail on this in the next chapter.
- **Ask for a link.** Sometimes, all you need to do to get a link is to ask ... but don’t simply target bloggers out of the blue. Take time to build up a good relationship, perhaps by commenting on their blog, retweeting their content, or offering them something first. (For more on connecting with influential bloggers, see [Chapter Eleven](#).)

There are also bloggers who post regular link roundups of interesting posts they’ve found: it’s worth getting on the radar of these people – though don’t pester them for a link.

Here’s an example of a round-up from Joel Friedlander, of The Book Designer. (From [This Week in the Blogs, July 16 – 22, 2016](#).)

Is the weather hot where you are? It sure is here so I'm thinking that I'm going to spend some time inside in the air conditioning doing some reading about [self-publishing](#). If that sounds good to you, too, these articles might be a good place to start.

**Frances Caballo** on Social Media Just For Writers

[Facebook, Content Marketing, and Selling Courses: Do you really need them?](#)

"I don't begrudge successful author entrepreneurs or social media experts with enticing offers. I also use email marketing and hawk my books and services from time to time too. ... But last week it just seemed like too much. Let me give you some examples of the headlines in my inbox"

**Dan Blank** on Writer Unboxed

[A Hobbit's Guide to Launching Your Book](#)

"A great book launch relies on word of mouth marketing. Today, I want to share advice I tend to give authors for setting the foundations for word of mouth marketing."

**Laurie Boris** on Indies Unlimited

[What's Smashwords Good For?](#)

"Recently, for a number of reasons that will take too long to explain here, I decided to pull a few of my titles from the KDPS (Kindle Direct Publishing Select) program and make them available for other retailers as well as Amazon."

**Best of all, you'll find that some links naturally come in over time, from your readers.** For instance, if a reader is inspired by something you write and creates a post leading on from it, they'll almost certainly link back to your original post.

The more readers you have – and the more engaged and loyal they are – the more likely you are to get these natural, spontaneous links.

## Chapter Seven: Guest Posting to Grow Your Audience and Reach

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A guest post is a piece of content that you write for another blog, for free. At the start or end of the post, you get a “bio” – usually a couple of sentences about you and/or your business (you choose what to write), along with at least one link to a webpage of your choice.

Writing guest posts for other blogs – especially large ones – has a huge number of benefits for you. These include:

- **A high-quality link to your own blog, or to a page / post on your blog.** If you can get guest posts onto several sites in your niche, you’ll have given your SEO a real boost.
- **A much bigger audience for your writing.** Some of the people who read your guest post will click on your link to visit your site, and they may well stick around. When I guest post on large blogs, I always notice an increase in traffic and email subscribers.
- **The chance to try out a different writing style, a different topic, and/or a different audience.** Guest posting can be a great way to avoid getting stale with your blogging – or a way to explore topics that interest you, but that don’t fit on your own blog.
- **New readers for your own blog ... or new customers for your business.** As well as being great for SEO, the link in your bio is an opportunity to entice readers to click through and read your blog (or sign up for your newsletter). Alternatively, you can link to one of your products / services and get new customers.
- **Strong relationships with prominent bloggers.** It can be tough to get on the radar of busy bloggers through comments, emails or tweets – but if they accept a guest post from you, they’re much more likely to remember your name.
- **Name recognition within your field.** If you find the top three – five blogs on your topic and guest post there regularly, readers will start to notice you. They’ll see you as an expert in your field because of your association with these blogs.

## Finding Blogs to Guest Post On

Your first step as a guest poster is to choose a target blog. (Some people try writing their guest post first, then look for a blog where it would fit – but choosing your blog first helps you target the post and improves your chance of acceptance.)

**Start with the blogs that you already read and enjoy.** You'll already know what sort of content they typically publish: what topics they cover, how much depth they go into, the style they use, and so on.

It's a good idea to look for blogs with a larger readership than your own: a good rule of thumb is to aim for blogs with at least five times as many readers as yours. This means that if you have, say, 500 subscribers, then look for blogs with 2,500 or more readers.

You might also want to consider how useful your target blog will be for SEO purposes. A high PageRank (4 or higher) and a low Alexa rank (under 1,000,000) are good signs.

(You can check a website's PageRank at [PR checker](#). To find a site's Alexa rank, go to [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com) and type in the URL of the site. There are also plugins for many browsers that will show the PageRank and Alexa rank of any page that you visit.)

**Tip:** As well as thinking about how big and how reputable your target blog is, spend some time looking at the comments there. If the readership seems very negative, or if they appear to react badly to guest posts, you might want to go elsewhere.

### Does the Blog Accept Guest Posts?

Not all blogs take guest posts, so it's a good idea to check whether they do *before* crafting the perfect piece for them. Look for:

- **Guest post guidelines.** These aren't always prominent in blogs' navigation: a quick way to find them is to go to Google and type in "*guest post guidelines + site:www.sitename.com.*" You could also look on the blog's Contact page, which may indicate whether or not they accept guest posts.
- **Existing guest posts.** If the blog already has guest posts (look for multiple author names, or "This is a guest post by..." or similar), then there's a good chance they'll be open to taking more. Do check their contact page or guest post guidelines too: some blogs only occasionally take guest posts, or only take guest posts from people they already know.

If you're still not sure whether a blog takes guest posts, and you're keen to write for them, send a quick tweet or email to the blog owner / editor to ask.

As well as targeting blogs that you already know, you might want to widen your search for guest posting opportunities. You could try:

[The Ultimate List of Blogs that Accept Guest Posts](#), from Effective Business Ideas – it’s split into categories, to help you find blogs relevant to you.

[Earn Money Online: 92 Websites That Pay Writers \\$50+](#), from Make a Living Writing – again, this list is split into different categories.

## Working With the Guest Post Guidelines

All blogs have slightly different guidelines, so even if you’re an experienced guest poster, it’s important to check a new blog’s guidelines (and refresh your memory when you’re returning to a blog that you’ve not written for in a while).

Usually, guidelines will include:

- **A requirement for your post to be 100% original**, and not previously published elsewhere online. This is because Google frowns on duplicate content. It’s fine to include short quotes from other posts (your own or other people’s) though.
- **A minimum length – often 500 words**. Short posts tend not to be so valuable for readers and for search engines. Most blogs won’t state a maximum length, though some will split very long posts into two parts.
- **Instructions on formatting**. Some bloggers will want your post in HTML. The easiest way to produce this is to write it in Word, then copy and paste it into your WordPress blog’s visual editor (create a draft post or page – make sure you don’t accidentally publish it!) Click the “Text” tab and copy all the code there into a Notepad document or similar.
- **Instructions on how to send your post**. There may be a specific email address to use, or you may need to send a pitch before agreeing the full post.
- **Rules about what you can and can’t include in your bio**. Most blogs will be happy for your bio to be strongly self-promotional (e.g. you can pitch a product) – though do check, as some prefer you to link to your blog, newsletter, or another free resource. Many blogs dislike or ban affiliate links in bios.

If guest posting guidelines seem unnecessarily restrictive or fussy, you may want to take your writing talent elsewhere.

## Examples:

Even if you're not quite ready to guest post yet, it's worth getting an idea of what typical guidelines include. The best place to start is with the sorts of blogs that you'll be targeting – but if they don't have guidelines, or if you're really not sure where to begin, here are some examples of fairly typical guest posting guidelines:

### [Contributing To Dumb Little Man](#)

### [Guest Post Guidelines \(Write to Done\)](#)

I sometimes find that it's helpful to print off the guidelines and to go through point by point, ticking off the ones that I've completed. This is especially true if the blogger wants lots of extra information besides your post – for instance, they might want you to send a headshot, your Twitter profile link, your blog URL, and/or links to previous posts you've written.

## Planning Your Guest Post

**Just like every piece of content that you write, your guest post should be carefully planned. This will save you a lot of head-scratching while you're writing ... and a lot of frustration when you're editing.**

Because this is a post for someone else's blog, you'll need to add an extra step into your planning process: reading several posts on the blog in question.

First, look for a representative range of recent posts. If there are a lot of guest posters on the blog, try choosing one post from each of them. Aim for around five posts in total.

Next, copy each post into a separate Word document. Find out:

- **How long each post is, in words** – Word will tell you this
- **How the posts are structured.** Break down each post into a list of bullet points or major sections so that you can see the underlying structure. You could also use different colours to indicate different parts of the post.
- **What sort of tone is used.** Are the posts all quite formal, or very informal and chatty? Is there a wide range of tones? (This may well be the case if the blog uses a lot of guest posters.)
- **How much formatting is used.** Do the posts typically have plenty of images, bold text, bullet pointed lists, quotes..? See if any elements occur in all or almost all your sample – you may want to pay particular attention to these when you format your own post.

Use what you learn to inform your planning. For instance, if a list post format seems especially popular on that blog, you might choose to create a list post rather than an essay-style piece. If all the posts are written in an upbeat, dynamic style, you might decide to adjust your usual laid-back writing voice a little.

**Keep in mind that not everything you see will necessarily be worth copying.** For instance, you might find a sub-par post on the blog that doesn't make good use of formatting, or that has no clearly discernible structure. Use what you already know about great blog post writing to help you evaluate the posts.

Once you've done this, you can plan the post in the same way as any other post that you'd write (though you may want to put a little more time and attention into this than usual).

## Writing and Editing Your Guest Post

You might find that you feel stuck or blocked before you even begin to write your guest post. Maybe you're anxious about whether it will be accepted, whether you can do your topic justice, or simply whether you're a good enough writer.

Rest assured that *all* bloggers and writers feel like this at times – even really big names. You might check out Joanna Penn's book [The Successful Author Mindset](#) for her experience with this, and her advice (Jo is a best-selling fiction author and a very successful blogger).

**Once you push through your initial discomfort and start getting words down, you'll find that it becomes easier.** If it helps, you might want to think about writing the post to one specific reader – imagine you're writing an email.

If you get stuck on the introduction, don't worry. Just write whatever comes to you, and put it in a different colour or font so you can easily come back to it later. Then get on with the rest of the post.

After you've drafted your post, let it sit for at least a day – regardless of how good or bad you think it is. The following day, read through it. You might well be surprised to find that it's better than you expected (or, alternatively, that you can now spot a few errors and omissions that weren't obvious before).

**Give yourself plenty of time to edit your post: you'll only have one chance to make a great first impression on your host blogger.** You might want to:

- Print your post out so you can edit on paper – this can help you see it afresh. Converting it to .pdf format, or even simply changing the font, is a good alternative.
- Ask a friend to read through the post and offer feedback. It's often useful to give them specific questions to consider – e.g. “Was the introduction gripping enough?” or “Do you think the list points should be in a different order?”

- Proofread especially carefully. If you know that spelling and grammar aren't your strongest points, make sure you pay extra attention to these. If you're a UK author writing for a US blog, or vice versa, adjust your spell-checker accordingly and watch out for words like "mobile [phone]" (UK) for "cell [phone]" (US).

## Crafting a Great Guest Post Bio

Your "bio" – the couple of sentences about you at the end (usually) of the post is your opportunity to get readers to click on a link to your blog, or to your products, services, or newsletter.

Your bio should:

- Follow any guidelines that the host blog has, particular regarding the length of the bio and the number of links you can include.
- Be written in the third person ("Ali Luke is..." not "I am...").
- Clearly say who you are and what you do.
- Ideally contain some brief reference to the content of your guest post.
- Include at least one link (some blogs will let you have more than one – up to you if you want to use them).
- Give the reason a reason to click on your link – "click here to read my blog" isn't usually enough. You might want to link to a specific blog post instead of your homepage.

Here are a couple of examples of good guest post bios:

### Nicole Avery's Bio, on ProBlogger

*Nicole Avery is a Melbourne mum to five beautiful kids aged seven to 17. She is the master organiser behind the popular parenting blog [Planning With Kids](#) and the author of a book by the same name, where she shares tips and tricks for organising the chaos of family life. She is slightly addicted to spreadsheets, tea, running and, of course, planning!*

This bio is from Nicole Avery's post [The Science and Art of Batching to Increase Your Productivity](#), on ProBlogger. It's a fairly classic bio, with a link to Nicole's blog, and some key biographical information about her.

The one tweak I might make here is to link to a *specific* post, especially as the broad topic of the blog isn't necessarily super-relevant to ProBlogger's readers ... so the blog name alone won't necessarily be enough to get them to click through.

## Kelly Exeter's Bio, on Copyblogger

**AUTHOR**

Kelly Exeter

Kelly Exeter is a writer and editor whose [article critique service](#) helps other writers, bloggers, and entrepreneurs level up their writing and get noticed by the right people. Connect with her on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).



This bio is from Kelly Exeter's Copyblogger post [4 Places Writers Leave Money on the Table](#). Kelly links to a specific service that's very on-topic for the Copyblogger audience. (A writing service, where she produces content for the client, likely wouldn't be such a good fit.) The social media links make it very easy for interested readers to find Kelly and get in touch.

## Submitting Your Guest Post

Once your post is finished and edited, you'll need to submit it. I know how scary this stage can be – my first guest post for Copyblogger sat in a folder on my computer for a week before I could get up the courage to send it off.

If you're feeling nervous, remember that:

- **Even if your post is rejected, it's not a reflection on you.** The blogger might simply have lots of guest posts in the queue right now. (Some blogs get inundated with submissions and can only accept a fraction of them – regardless of quality.)
- **The worst that can happen is that the blogger says "no, thanks."** If that happens, you can simply move on to a different blog.
- **Even if you wrote a very poor covering email, it almost certainly wouldn't be the worst the blogger has ever seen.** I'm by no means an A-List blogger (see [Chapter Eleven](#)), but I receive guest post pitches all the time from marketing agencies – and some of these are really awful, mass-produced emails, pitching topics that have no relevance to my blog.

Of course, there's plenty that you can do to boost your chances of success. The most crucial thing here is to ensure that you follow the guest post guidelines, which most blogs will have.

**Tip:** Once you've submitted the post, you may need to be patient. Some bloggers will get back to you quickly; others may take a week or two to review your post. If two weeks have gone by without any contact from the blogger (and you haven't received an auto-reply saying that they're on holiday) then you can drop them a follow-up email to check whether they received your submission.

## **Part Three: Growing Your Blogging Influence**

In this part, we look at ways to reach out beyond your existing blogging circles, growing your influence – not just readership numbers, but also name recognition in your field. We cover a range of methods, like emails, comments and forums, and – most importantly – connecting with influential bloggers who write on similar topics to yours.

## Chapter Eight: Using Emails to Create Stronger Connections

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Email has been around for much longer than social networks like Facebook and Twitter – and there are plenty of people with no social media accounts and no web presence who do, however, use email. This makes email a crucial way to connect, especially if you’re targeting a slightly older audience.

You have a couple of key ways to do this:

- With individual, personal emails – every blogger can do this from day one.
- With an email list – many bloggers set this up once they’ve been blogging for a little while, though there’s nothing stopping you from getting started straight away, whatever stage you’re at.

### Sending Individual, Personal Emails

There are plenty of times in your blogging life when you’ll want to get in touch with someone by email. You might be pitching them a guest post, for instance, or perhaps replying to a question that they’ve asked on their own blog or in their email newsletter.

Other great opportunities include:

- **Emailing your blog’s readers.** If someone leaves a great comment, drop them an email to say thanks (as well as replying to the comment). This can really make an impression on a new reader – or a longer-term reader who’s stepped up to comment.
- **Emailing a blogger simply to say “thanks” – without asking for anything.** If you’ve learnt a lot from a particular blog, it only takes a few minutes to send a thank you note by email – and this can be a great way to make a good impression on a blogger.
- **Emailing speakers whose sessions you’ve attended at a conference.** Even big-name bloggers can be quite nervous about speaking ... and saying “thanks”, or telling them what you particularly enjoyed in their talk, is another great way to make contact.

When you email anyone in a one-to-one context, treat your email as a piece of content that’s worthy of your time and attention. That means writing clearly, paying attention to the structure of your email, checking for typos, and getting the tone right.

Generally, there’s no need to sound very formal – even if you’re emailing someone who’s a big name in your field – but it is important to be polite and courteous.

**Tip:** Make sure you spell the recipient's name correctly (and the name of their blog too, if applicable). I know that sounds obvious – but it's easy to make an instantly poor impression by getting it wrong.

## Creating an Email List

Unless you're emailing a small group of personal friends, or close online acquaintances, you should avoid sending out emails that are copied to lots of people. (And if you must send out a group email, put your own email address in the "To" field and make sure you use the BCC field not CC for the recipients' email addresses – this preserves people's privacy.)

**To build an email list for your blog – a list of interested people who want to receive updates, news, or content from you by email – you'll need to use a service like [Aweber](#) or [MailChimp](#).** These sites let you manage a big list of lots of names and email addresses, and they prevent you from running into problems with being accused of spamming.

Different bloggers have different approaches to email lists. Some use them simply to send out a brief update plus a link to their latest blog post; others provide exclusive content for their email list that never goes onto their blog.

With your list, you'll want to think about:

- **How often you'll email readers.** Once a day? Once a week? Once a month? The perfect frequency depends on how much content your readers want, and how much (quality) content you can produce. Starting with once a week or once every two weeks is best; every day is often too much for your readers, and they'll unsubscribe.
- **What content you'll provide.** I write shortish (under 500 word) writing-related articles for my newsletter, and keep long pieces for my blog. Other bloggers provide links to their latest blog posts. Whichever approach you take, it's nice to make your emails feel a little more intimate and one-to-one than your blog posts. For instance, I usually open my newsletters with a line or two of personal news.
- **What incentive you'll provide to subscribers.** Hopefully, of course, readers will be motivated to sign up for your newsletter because they want the content you provide – but it's a good idea to offer them something extra too. Many bloggers provide a free, short ebook to their email list subscribers.
- **What you'll call your email list.** "Email list" isn't a very attractive term for your readers – choose something that sounds more compelling. *Email newsletter*, *e-newsletter*, or simply *newsletter* are all common options. Some bloggers will get more creative and call their email list an "insiders' club" or similar.

**Tip:** Your email list is separate from your blog posts (which you may well also offer by email – see [Chapter Fifteen](#)). Try to encourage readers to sign up for both of these – and make it clear to them how your email list differs from your blog.

If your email list *is* just a way to distribute blog posts, then consider removing the Feedburner email subscription option (there's no need for you to provide both, and readers may get confused).

## Using Email Signatures

One very simple way to get more eyes on your blog is to include your blog's URL in your email signature. In this context, a "signature" is a block of text that appears at the end of each email you send.

Here's mine:

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**Ali Luke**  
Web: [www.aliventures.com](http://www.aliventures.com)  
Twitter: [@aliventures](https://twitter.com/aliventures)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/aliventures](https://www.facebook.com/aliventures)

Writers' Huddle: [www.writershuddle.com](http://www.writershuddle.com)  
Blogger's Guide ebooks: [www.bloggers-guides.com](http://www.bloggers-guides.com)  
*Publishing E-Books For Dummies*: [from Wiley](#)

As well as your blog URL, you may potentially want to include your Twitter account, your Facebook page, a link to one or more of your products, a pithy quote, or anything that you feel will work well to promote you and your blog.

By including this information in your signature, you:

- **Come across as a professional.** Almost all business people use email signatures (usually containing their contact details, like a business card).
- **Make it easy for current readers to find out more.** If you're involved in an email exchange with a reader, they might want to connect via Facebook or Twitter, or they might not realise you have a new product out until they see it mentioned in your email signature.
- **Potentially get new readers from former colleagues, old acquaintances, or any other individuals who contact you without knowing about your blog.** It might feel a little awkward to email these people just to tell them about your blog ... but by

including a simple signature at the end of your email, you may well find that they click through out of interest.

It's a good idea to review your email signature on a regular basis, to see whether you want or need to update it. For instance, you might join a new social network, launch a new product, or even change your website URL.

Changing your signature occasionally also helps prevent your correspondents from becoming so familiar with it that they automatically tune it out – a bit like “ad blindness”, when readers ignore ads on websites.

## Using Email Signatures for Email Lists

As well as using an email signature on your personal emails, you can add a standard closing for your email list. This is a great way to ensure that readers can quickly and easily find key details that they might need.

Here's the text that appears at the bottom of my email newsletters (*password redacted*):



When I added social media links, I found that I gained more connections on my social networks (because my email subscribers could easily find me).

## Chapter Nine: Using Forums to Meet Potential Readers

Forums are a great source of potential readers. They already include people who are interested in your topic – and people who are familiar enough with the web to create a forum account (meaning that they'll likely be perfectly comfortable with subscribing to your blog via RSS or email).

It's often tempting to find lots of forums that relate to your blog, and post about your blog to encourage readers to come over and take a look. This is often frowned upon (or even forbidden) by the forums, though. After all, if everyone did this, forums wouldn't be a place for discussion, they'd just be a series of links to people's blogs.

### Becoming a Valuable Member of a Forum Community

A much better tactic is to join a small number of forums – perhaps between one and three – where you can dedicate your time and energy to becoming part of the community there. Be as helpful and useful to other members as possible, answering questions and offering encouragement and support.



[\*The Digital Point forum.\*](#)

When you create a topic or leave a reply on a forum, if it's appropriate to link to one of your blog posts (and if that's OK under the forum's rules), then you can do so. Make sure, though, that your blog post really is relevant to the topic under discussion.

**Tip:** Forums are a great place to build relationships with other people in your niche: be proactive in taking these relationships beyond discussion within the forum itself.

For instance, if a particular forum member consistently posts useful advice, you might invite them to guest post on your blog. Some forum communities arrange real-life meet-ups – a great way to form stronger connections with people you’ve already “met” online. (Obviously, be sensible and safe about meeting any online connections in person.)

## Using Your Forum Signature Effectively

Many forums allow you to create a signature that will appear at the bottom of each post you write – this can work in a very similar way to your email signature, though your posts will reach many more people than your personal emails do!

Do check any forum rules or guidelines carefully, as it’s sometimes the case that you’re not allowed to include links or promotional content in your signature.

Even if the forum doesn’t restrict the size of your signature, it’s a good idea to keep it fairly compact – if the signature is several times longer than many of your posts, that’s going to get annoying for other forum users.

**Just as with email signatures, you’ll want to regularly review your forum signature to ensure it’s up to date.** If you belong to several different forums, try to tailor your signature to each one – thinking about the core audience there. For instance, you might include a link to your “101” series of posts on a forum populated mainly by beginners in your field.

# Chapter Ten: Connecting with Influencers in Your Blogging Niche

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As soon as you've been around the blogging world for more than a few weeks, you'll notice that there are different levels of blogging. Some bloggers are pretty much anonymous, with small websites that not many people know about – and other bloggers are right at the top, with huge sites that get loads of attention.

**These top bloggers are sometimes known as “A-List bloggers” or “A-Listers” – though their celebrity status rarely extends beyond the blogging world!** They're people who speak at conferences (perhaps even delivering keynotes), who get book deals, and who often make a full-time income as a result of their blog.

In the blogging-about-blogging world, for instance, some notable influencers are:

- Darren Rowse from [ProBlogger](#)
- Chris Garrett from [chrisg.com](#)
- Brian Clark and Sonia Simone from [Copyblogger](#)
- Corbett Barr from [ThinkTraffic](#)
- Yaro Starak from [Entrepreneurs-Journey.com](#)
- Michael Hyatt from [MichaelHyatt.com](#)
- Neil Patel from [QuickSprout](#)
- Jon Morrow from [Smart Blogger](#)

You might think that a fast route to blogging fame and fortune would be to write a book with one of these A-Listers, or to even get them to link to your posts or praise you on Twitter. An endorsement from someone well-known will indeed help you rise to the top – the problem is that all of these A-Listers are inundated with requests from other bloggers.

**It's not a good idea to email A-Listers and ask them to link to your posts (or tweet about your sale, or consider your book proposal).** They won't know who you are and might not even open your email. That's not because they're stuck-up or think they're better than you – I've met many A-Listers in my own field, and they're all lovely, humble people. It's because they simply don't have the time to respond to all the requests that they get.

## Understanding the A-Listers' Perspective

Influential A-List bloggers have a *lot* of people vying for their attention. They often have a huge workload, which can involve managing a team, working on monetization, researching trends and general admin tasks. These tasks take much longer than they would for bloggers

with a smaller audience, because there are more nuances to each decision – and worse consequences if things go wrong.

All this is on top of the normal blogging demands and their life outside of the internet.

**Basically, they are usually extremely busy. Email is often a point of stress for them.**

If you get in touch by email, your email may well be deleted or archived because it requires too much thinking. These influencers won't know who you are or whether they can trust you – so if, for instance, you email to ask them to link to one of your posts, they may simply not have time to check into whether you provide good advice or not. They've spent a lot of time building up trust with their readers, and they don't want to damage that by potentially endorsing someone who's offering poor quality content.

**Many people will suggest that you interact with bloggers prior to making a pitch because that way, they'll recognize you.** This does work, but it also risks the chance that you will alienate them. There are a lot of other bloggers using the same techniques, and it can make the A-Lister feel like they are being used. (There's also a fairly good chance that they won't remember the tweet you sent them several days ago, or the comment you left last week.)

A much better technique to get on A-Listers' radars is to identify who their digital gatekeepers are, and contact those people instead. Here's how:

## Going Through the Gatekeepers

A gatekeeper is someone who restricts the flow of information to an influencer. They might have an official role, either as a team member, an assistant, or the person that fields the influencer's emails – or they might be a friend who unofficially passes on the best information.

For the purposes of this chapter, we'll assume that you're targeting gatekeepers who have an official role. Sometimes those people will be full-time employees, but they're more often freelancers who may work with several influential bloggers.

## Connecting with Gatekeepers

You will have the best chances of success if you approach the gatekeeper with a win/win/win proposal. They are always looking for opportunities that will help their client achieve their goals – as this makes them look good too!

Let's say you've identified the decision maker – e.g. a blog's editor, or someone who provides email support. Now you need to give them all the information they need to make a good decision.

This means:

- Stating *exactly* what you want. Explain how it will benefit the influential blogger.

- Supplying relevant social proof (such as quoting briefly from testimonials you've received). This saves them time Googling you and your reputation
- Letting them access review copies and any affiliate material, if you're asking for their help promoting an ebook or another product.

So many people go straight to the A-Lister – and get nowhere. Go to the person who makes the decisions and you will get a faster response *and* a better chance of your idea being considered.

To make your email stand out:

- **Be professional.** Sadly, some people see gatekeepers as unimportant or even a nuisance, and this comes across in their approach. If you're rude to the gatekeeper, you can be pretty sure they will warn their peers, and superiors, about you.
- **Make their job as easy as possible.** Provide all the information they need the first time, and, if they ask for anything else, reply promptly. Treat them like you would the A-Lister themselves.
- **If they turn you down, ask if they have any recommendations.** For instance, a particular product or promotion may not be a great fit for this particular blogger, but the gatekeeper might know someone else you can approach.

## Becoming Part of an A-Lister's Community

If you're not able to find a gatekeeper – perhaps the influencer you're targeting seems to primarily work alone – then you will need to attempt to get on the A-Lister's radar. To do this, focus on building up a real relationship and, if possible, giving them something of value. Even if you don't get an instant result (like having them link to your blog), the relationship can still be very rewarding.

Some good ways to become part of an A-Lister's community are to:

- Write guest posts for blogs that you know they read – or for their blog.
- Retweet their posts (not necessarily every single one, that could seem a little creepy).
- Leave thoughtful comments on their posts that add to the discussion.
- Create great content for your own blog, and encourage your readers to share and tweet it – this increases the chance that it will come to the attention of your target A-Lister.

- Buy their book / product and write an in-depth, honest review of it on your blog. (This is a *great* way to get noticed by A-Listers, and not many bloggers do it.)
- Join their membership site, mastermind program, or other closed community. Although this will generally cost money, it's normally an effective way to get attention from the A-Lister.

## Using A-Listers' Inner Circles

**You can fast-track the process of getting noticed by influencers by looking at the people who they surround themselves with** – not just their (paid) gatekeepers, but other bloggers who they have strong connections to.

Pay attention to:

- Whose blogs they link to, if they run regular link roundups
- Who they talk to on Twitter (or Facebook or Google+) on a regular basis
- Who they retweet, or whose updates they share on other social networks
- Who comments regularly – and gets replies from them – on their blog
- Who provides testimonials for their products or services

Like gatekeepers, these individuals are likely people who the A-lister will listen to. They might not have tens of thousands of blog readers of their own ... but they can help you get noticed. By taking the time to build a relationship with this “inner circle”, you'll get onto the A-lister's radar that much quicker.

## Curate to Connect

Being part of a particular community – like “golf bloggers” – is a great way to build your authority in that niche. However, you are often competing with people with similar goals: after all, everyone wants more readers, and readers only have so much time to spend looking at blogs.

**One way to stand out is to curate the best information within that community.** This means creating resources that summarise key topics or conversations. Your resource could be:

- A round-up post, such as ProBlogger's [weekly Reading Roundup posts](#).
- A list post, such as Make a Living Writing's [annual post on websites that pay writers](#).
- A comparison of several products, or a list of popular products in your field.

**People will turn to you as the person who knows what is going on.** You can become known as a super-connector. This makes you really valuable to the A-Listers in your field, as you're collating and summarising information that would take them a long time to go through themselves. This way, you go beyond simply forming connections with people in their inner circle – you become part of it.

# Chapter Eleven: Leaving Comments to Get Noticed

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If you've done any research into "getting more traffic" or "getting more readers" to your blog, you might well have come across the advice to leave comments on other blogs. This can be a good technique in the very early days of your blog (when you have zero readers, or very few) – but it doesn't tend to result in significant amounts of traffic.

**Sadly, all too often, bloggers who use commenting as a way to get new readers don't do so in a thoughtful and effective way.** They try to leave as many comments as possible – perhaps not even reading the post before commenting, or writing very generic comments like "Great post, thanks for the advice." They rush to be the first comment on new posts, knowing that early comments are likely to get more attention.

## Leaving Comments to Build Relationships

A more effective way to use commenting is as a relationship-building tool. To do this well:

- **Use your real name, not the name of your blog or a keyword.** Many bloggers will delete comments that abuse the "Name" field. So, "Ali Luke" is fine, "Awesome writing tips from Aliventures" is definitely not! You might get away with something like "Ali Luke – Aliventures", but even that may not be allowed.
- **Don't forget to include the URL for your blog, or your website home page.** This will turn your name into a clickable link.
- **Use a valid email address.** Don't worry, you're not going to get spammed – the only person who sees your email address is the blogger. A valid address allows them to potentially contact you – e.g. if they want to invite you to guest post.
- **Set up an account with [Gravatar](#).** This will link your email address with your Gravatar account, meaning that your chosen "avatar" (an image, probably a headshot) will appear beside your comments on many blogs and, often, your posts on forums.

Here's an example of a good comment on the post [The Best of Copyblogger in 2012](#):

**Eric Walker says:**  
December 28, 2012 at 10:22 am

If all I did — if all ANYONE did — was spend their 2013 implementing what's found in these best-of posts, they'd be 100% ahead in their business and likely their industry too. It's these annual best-of posts that put in perspective just how useful the content here at Copyblogger really is. Thanks! Happy New Year.

[Reply](#)

## Developing Your Commenting Strategy

It's a good idea to find a few blogs where you can comment regularly – perhaps aiming to comment on five or six different blogs each week. Look for ways to be useful and helpful – you could:

- **Add an extra idea or point to a list post**, or explain how you used a particular piece of advice from the post.
- **Leave a comment with a short testimonial or recommendation** on a post where a blogger is promoting a product / service. (Obviously only do this if you've used the product / service and can vouch for it.)
- **Answer another reader's comment** – this is a great way to extend the discussion, and also helps make the blog look like a friendly community. (This will definitely get you in the blogger's good books!)

**Warning:** Don't leave snarky, negative comments, criticising the blogger. This is a really poor way to get noticed by the blogger in question, and they might even delete your comment. If you spot a glaring typo or an incorrect fact, either point it out in a tactful, low-key way, or let the blogger know by email or a direct message on Twitter.

Negative comments are also likely to make you look bad in the eyes of other readers, and may scare people away from interacting with you or visiting your blog.

## **Part Four: Keeping Your Readers Loyal**

Once you've intrigued readers enough that they've subscribed to your blog (or bookmarked it, or joined your email list) then you'll want to encourage them to get increasingly involved. In this part, we'll look at ways to do that, through consistency in your blogging, engaging with your readers, making it easy for them to subscribe, and encouraging them to take action.

# Chapter Twelve: Being Consistent With Your Blogging

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At times, growing your readership can feel like a slow and frustrating process. Of course, I'm hoping that you've tried out many of the tips in this Guide already, and that you've seen great results – but sometimes your efforts won't pay off instantly, and there will be days when you question whether the time and energy you're putting in is worth it.

**One of the key deciding factors in whether or not your blog is a success is *how consistent you are*.** Many bloggers make the mistake of throwing themselves into an unsustainable blogging routine – only to burn out after a few days or weeks.

Consistency is good for you and good for your readers. At its most basic level, it means posting on a regular schedule. This doesn't need to be set in stone – but you should ideally be posting at least once every couple of weeks. Wild inconsistency, like posting five times in one week then publishing nothing else for the rest of the month, can really put readers off.

## When You Can't Be Consistent

What about times when you know you simply won't be able to keep up a blogging routine? Perhaps you're heading off on a three-week summer trip, going into hospital for surgery, coming up to a very busy period at work, or expecting a new baby.

Whatever the situation, if you know about it in advance, you can make a decision on how to tackle it. You could:

- **Do nothing at all.** Simply stop blogging one day and return to it when you're ready. This isn't the solution I'd recommend, because you may find that your readers drift away in the meantime. (If you have an especially loyal following, they may well be worried about what's happened to you.)
- **Announce that your blog is going to be on hiatus for a while.** Yes, this breaks with the "rule" of consistency – but if you won't be around to write posts and answer comments, it's often better to make a clear break with your blog than to struggle on.

To make this work well, let readers know roughly how long the hiatus will last. Encourage them to subscribe to your blog by RSS or email, so that they don't have to keep checking back on your site to see if you've returned. Suggest some great posts on your blog that they might like to read while you're away.

In the past three years, I've put my blog on hiatus three times (each time for several months) – two babies plus a major house move and redesign of the blog. The reaction from my readers has been unswervingly positive and supportive.

- **Get ahead with your posts.** You can write and schedule posts ahead of time, so that they go out onto your blog without you needing to be actively involved. (You might want to turn off comments on those posts, or put a brief note at the bottom warning readers that you may be slow to reply to their comments.)

Another option here is to line up guest posts that will run while you're away. Fellow bloggers may well be delighted to help out, as it means an opportunity for them to reach out to your audience and gain new readers for their own blog.

Keep in mind, though, that this probably isn't a great option if you'll be away for several months: you'll have a huge amount of work to do getting ahead!

If you do need to take a short unplanned break from your blog occasionally, though, that's no big deal. Maybe you wanted to get ahead before a week-long vacation but didn't manage it. Don't worry about one or two missed posts: your readers won't mind at all ... and they may not even notice.

## Being Consistent with Your Topics and Branding

Readers like to know what to expect – and if your posts cover a range of unrelated or only semi-related topics, you may find that people stop engaging.

If you're really keen to write about lots of different topics, you might consider starting a second blog, or guest posting on blogs that deal with those particular areas.

Be particularly careful if your blog is part of your business. If you're, say, a freelance writer, clients aren't likely to be interested in your sideline in gardening or parenting advice.

**Tip:** If you find that you want to make a significant change to your blog's main topic, you may want to try doing this over time, rather than very abruptly. When I started Aliventures, I mainly blogged about personal development, but I sometimes posted about writing. Now, the blog is very much writing-focused – though I do still tackle issues like procrastination and motivation, from a writer's perspective.

**Don't be afraid that you'll lose readers by dropping one or more of your existing topics.** You might find that some switch off – but you'll see that others are far more engaged now that every blog post is of interest to them.

As well as your topics, you want your brand to be consistent. Your brand is your image: how people think of you, or your company. It's up to you to set the right tone – and depending on your goals and your personality, your brand might be:

- Laid-back and funny
- Professional and straightforward
- Friendly and supportive
- Outspoken and provocative

**None of these brands are “good” or “bad” in themselves. What's important is that you keep your brand consistent.** If you want to come across as very professional, with a reputation for great quality, it's not a good idea to post an angry rant on your blog. If your focus is on being friendly and supportive, jokes that poke fun at major figures in your industry might strike your readers as surprisingly spiteful.

## **Being Consistent with Growing Your Readership**

Some activities will result in an instant, visible growth in your readership: guest posting is a good example.

Other activities have more of a trickle effect. If you're just getting started with Twitter, for instance, it might not be a big source of traffic for you. By being consistent – which probably means setting aside time each day to tweet about great resources or to share insights with your audience – you'll find that your efforts start to pay off over time.

Another example of the trickle effect is search engine optimisation (SEO). A single new link from a good website isn't going to rocket you to the top of Google ... but building up dozens of strong links will have a dramatic effect over time.

**You might find it helpful to develop a checklist for some of your marketing activities.** For instance, you could aim to:

- Write one guest post every month.
- Tweet two useful links every day (to other people's posts or resources, not your own).
- Post three shareable images on Facebook every week.
- Answer comments on your blog very day, or at least every other day.

- Write two helpful forum posts every week.
- Leave one thoughtful comment on another blog each weekday.

(In [Chapter Nineteen](#), you'll find suggested readership-growth plans that you can use on a regular and occasional basis.)

**Tip:** You don't have to do everything and be everywhere. It's often better to concentrate on being consistent in one area, rather than spreading yourself thin across ten different ones.

## Providing Consistent Quality

One of the sad things that I sometimes see in the blogging world is successful blogs – with large readerships, often well into the tens of thousands – that slowly diminish in quality.

I can see why this happens: the blogger gets busier, or feels that their work is basically done; after all, they've established themselves as a major player in their niche, and they no longer need to deliver such high-quality content in order to stand out.

Even so, if posts come across as rushed or sub-par, or if the blogger takes on a string of guest posters who aren't up to the blog's former standards, readers will slowly drift away and the blog will start to lose its formerly strong reputation.

**Whatever stage your blog is at – whether you have thirty readers or thirty thousand – it's important to keep up high standards of quality.** It's always better to focus on quality over quantity: so, if necessary, write fewer posts (but make them great!)

If you do want to take on guest posters, have clear guidelines for them – and don't be afraid to be choosy. To begin with, you might want to only accept guest posts from people who you've approached personally, so that you can have confidence in their writing abilities and in the value that they'll provide for your blog and your readers.

**Keep in mind, though, that quality doesn't necessarily equate to spending hours of time writing each blog post.** A rambling, over-long post might take you a whole day to write – but it won't necessarily be a great quality one. A short, focused post that rounds up some great resources may be much less work, while providing far more value to your readers.

# Chapter Thirteen: Engaging With Your Readers

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One of the best ways to turn a casual visitor into a loyal reader is to engage with them, making them feel that you're offering them a warm welcome. That could mean:

- Answering their comment fairly promptly.
- Replying to their email, Tweet, or Facebook message.
- Checking out *their* blog and leaving a comment there.
- Thanking them for retweeting you or for sharing your blog post.

Some readers may be shy; others may not realise that you'd welcome their feedback or comments. To encourage them to reach out, you can:

## #1: Use Your Contact Page

Make sure that you have an easy-to-find page on your blog with contact details, and prompt readers to get in touch. This will often be a page called "Contact", though some bloggers use their About page for this.

Ideally, include your email address, as well as a contact form: different people will prefer different ways of reaching you. You may also want to include a link to your social media accounts – but make sure you only link to ones that you check regularly.

**Example:** from [author Icy Sedgwick's contact page](#).

You can email me at [icy@icysedgwick.com](mailto:icy@icysedgwick.com), or follow me on Twitter [@IcySedgwick](#). I also have my own [YouTube](#) channel, and I loiter on [Facebook](#), mostly sharing photos of animals and chatter about horror.

Come and say hello!

## #2: Ask Questions to Prompt Comments

Ask questions at the end of your posts, and explain that readers can leave a reply in the comments.

If you've been around the blogosphere for a while, this might seem obvious to you, but readers won't necessarily realise that they *can* comment. Asking a question also helps give them ideas about how to respond to your post.

**Example:** from [What No One Ever Told You About Work-Life Balance](#), Michael Hyatt, MichaelHyatt.com

*Question: What do you think about the possibility of work-life balance? How does this perspective affect the way you look at the question? You can leave a comment by [clicking here](#).*

### #3: Highlight Readers' Comments or Emails

If a comment inspired you to write a particular post, quote that comment (or use a screenshot of it) at the start of the post. That way, others will realise that you pay attention to your readers – and they may well be prompted to leave a comment too.

(Note: if you want to quote from a reader's email, check with them first, as email correspondence is generally assumed to be private.)

You may well find that posts inspired by readers become some of your most popular pieces, as you're using a direct insight into what your audience wants.

**Example:** from [Ideas #1: How to Come Up With Lots of Great Ideas](#)

Ali,

I wonder at what point in time you are planning on explaining to your readers how it is that you manage to come up with so many bright ideas. It seems like your mind works like a computer and you can fire off ideas with the speed of a bullet.

(Archan Mehta [in a comment](#) on Copywriting Essentials from A to Z, Copyblogger)

I've been guest posting a lot over recent weeks, and you might well have seen my name popping up around the blogosphere. Archan's not the only person to wonder how I do it.

### #4: Prompt Newsletter Readers to Reply

Let your newsletter / mailing list readers know that they can reach you by simply pressing "reply" (make sure your newsletter comes from your regular email address). If you also ask them a question, this can be a great way to prompt them to interact with you.

You may also want to let your blog readers know that, if they receive posts by email, they can simply hit "reply" to get in touch.

Here's an example, which came at the end of an email from Neil Patel of [QuickSprout](#):

I am doing my darndest to make this easy for you to learn... and the biggest reward is seeing my readers get results. So take action right now... and then hit reply to let me know what happened so we can celebrate together.

Talk soon,  
Neil

## #5: Ask Questions on Social Media

Ask questions on Twitter and on Facebook to get readers to tell you what's on their mind. These sites are a quick and casual environment for this: readers who might never comment on your blog may instead send you a quick tweet, or leave a reply to a Facebook post.

Example: from [Productive Flourishing's Facebook page](#)



The screenshot shows a Facebook post from the page 'Productive Flourishing'. The post text reads: 'So happy to feature Lisa Robbin Young's post on the different types of creative entrepreneurs on Productive Flourishing. Which type are you?'. Below this is a shared post from 'Lisa Robbin Young' dated 20 June, which says: 'It's LIVE! My first guest post on Charlie Gilkey's Productive Flourishing blog. Please read and share with the creative entrepreneurs in your life! http://www.productiveflourishing.com/three-types-creative-.../'. A 'Like Page' button is visible next to the shared post.

## #6: Run a Survey

Run a survey, using a site like [SurveyMonkey](#), to find out more about your readers. This isn't just a great way to do free market research, it's also a way to show readers that you care what they think. Ask for email addresses (though make this optional) so that you can follow up with readers after the survey, if necessary.

You may want to run surveys on a regular basis: quite a few bloggers run them every year or two, especially if their audience has grown or changed significantly.

**Example:** [The Creative Penn Community Survey 2014](#), Joanna Penn, The Creative Penn

If you're part of the regular Creative Penn community, please take the short survey below to help me serve the community more effectively.

### The Creative Penn Community Survey 2014

1. How can I help you on the writing journey?

Please answer this short survey so I can improve The Creative Penn and serve the community more effectively.  
Thank you!

**1. How do you consume the material on The Creative Penn?**

I read the text articles on the blog

I listen to The Creative Penn podcast

Create your free online surveys with SurveyMonkey, the world's leading questionnaire tool.

**Genuinely caring about your readers, and taking the time to respond to them, will make them feel great about you – they'll come to like you and trust you.** This means they'll be more likely to buy from you and more likely to share your blog posts ... but if you're like most bloggers, this won't be your only motivation.

Simply receiving comments and emails can be hugely encouraging and rewarding, and you may well find that this positive feedback is just as important to you as the strategic benefits of engaging with your readers.

## Chapter Fourteen: Encouraging Readers to Subscribe to Your Email List

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Although it's great to have lots of visitors coming by your blog each day, you ideally want to focus not just on page views or "hits", but on how many email subscribers you have.

**When someone subscribes by email you've got an easy way to reach them.** If they don't subscribe at all, you have to rely on them continuing to come back to your blog to check for new posts.

Some readers will prefer to subscribe to blog posts by RSS rather than email. That's absolutely fine, and you shouldn't stop them! Ideally, though, you want to encourage email subscriptions so you have the option of sending out material separately from your blog.

**Tip:** Don't let the word "subscribe" confuse you. Although subscribing to a magazine or regular service costs money, subscribing to a blog is free.

There are a few different ways in which you can run your email list:

1. Just provide an "RSS-by-email" subscription, where readers get your blog posts – but nothing else – straight into their inbox.
2. Send out your blog posts, in full, plus occasionally send out other emails (e.g. if you're running a sale on your ebook or ecourse).
3. Send out a "teaser" for each blog post, with a link so that people can click through to read it on your site.
4. Send out a full newsletter with exclusive articles, resource-roundups, etc.

None of these are "right" or "wrong" – think about what's going to work best for you and your readers.

## Using Jetpack to provide RSS-by-Email

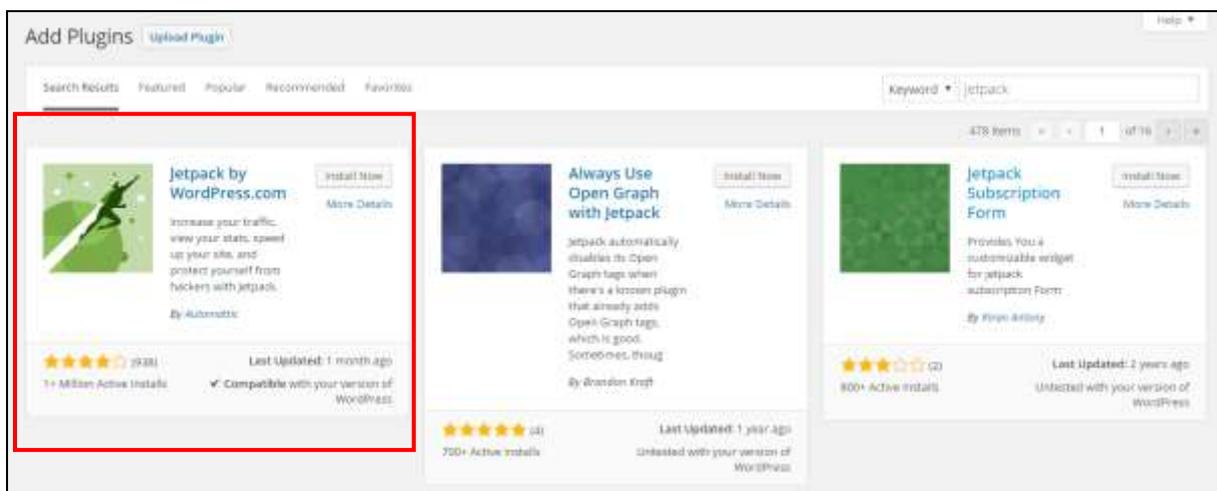
There are a lot of different services that let you run RSS-by-Email; I'm going to go through just one here, to keep things simple. If you prefer to use something different, that's fine.

When you set up a blog, it comes with an RSS feed (usually [www.yourblogname.com/feed](http://www.yourblogname.com/feed)). On its own, this doesn't allow readers to sign up to get the feed by email.

To install Jetpack:

**Step #1:** Go to Plugins → Add New

**Step #2:** Search for “Jetpack” and look for “Jetpack by WordPress.com”. Click “Install Now”:



**Step #3:** Once you've installed Jetpack, click the “Activate plugin” link (or find it under Plugins → Installed Plugins and click the Activate link just beneath its title).

**Step #4:** Click the “Connect to WordPress.com” button:



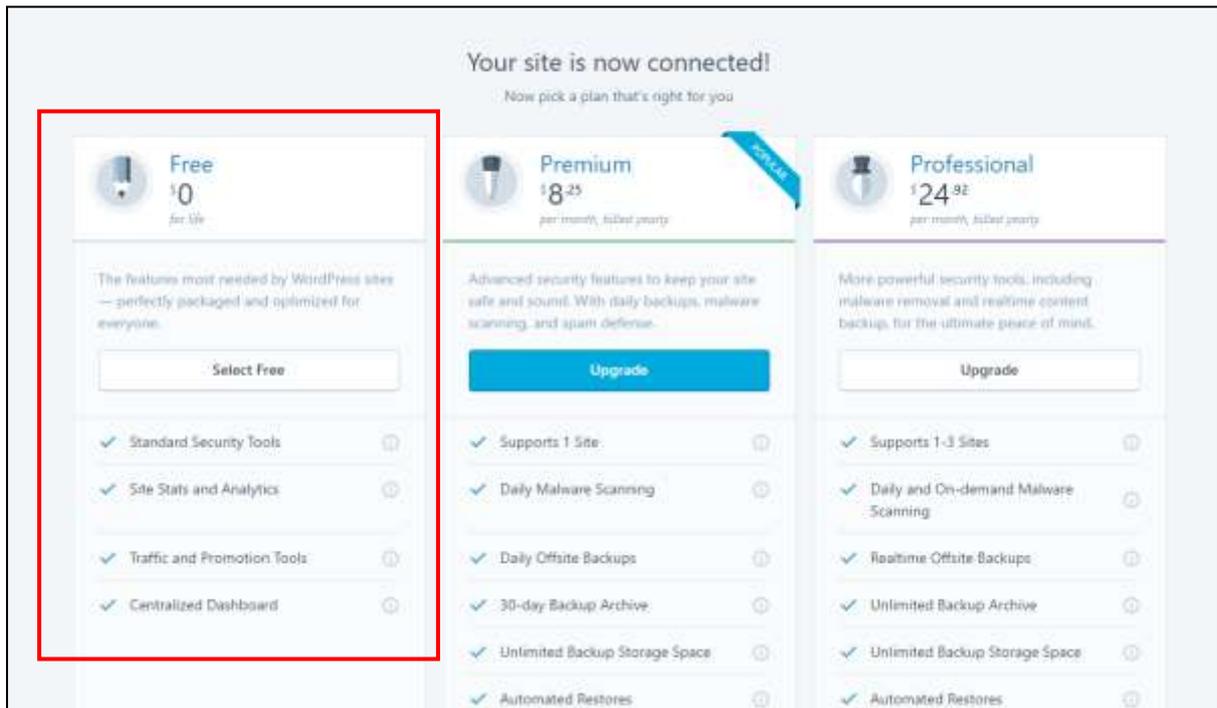
**Step #5:** Either sign into your WordPress.com account, if you have one, or click the *Need an account?* link (indicated by the red box below):



**Step #6:** Set up your account (*if you need one*):

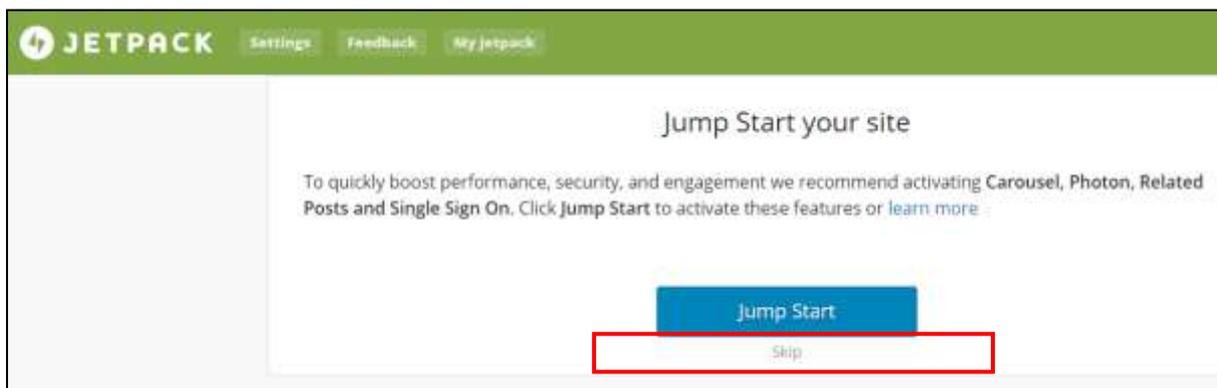
The image shows a form titled "Create your account" with the subtitle "You are moments away from connecting your site." The form is set against a light blue background. At the top left of the form area, there is a small globe icon followed by the text "Ali Luke" and "www.aliluke.com". Below this, there are three input fields: "Your email address", "Choose a username", and "Choose a password". The password field has a small icon of a crossed-out key on its right side. At the bottom of the form, there is a line of text: "By creating an account you agree to our fascinating [Terms of Service](#)." Below this text is a prominent blue button with the text "Sign Up and Connect Jetpack" in white.

**Step #7:** Once you have Jetpack connected, you'll need to pick a plan. Select the free one unless you happen to want the features of one of the others:

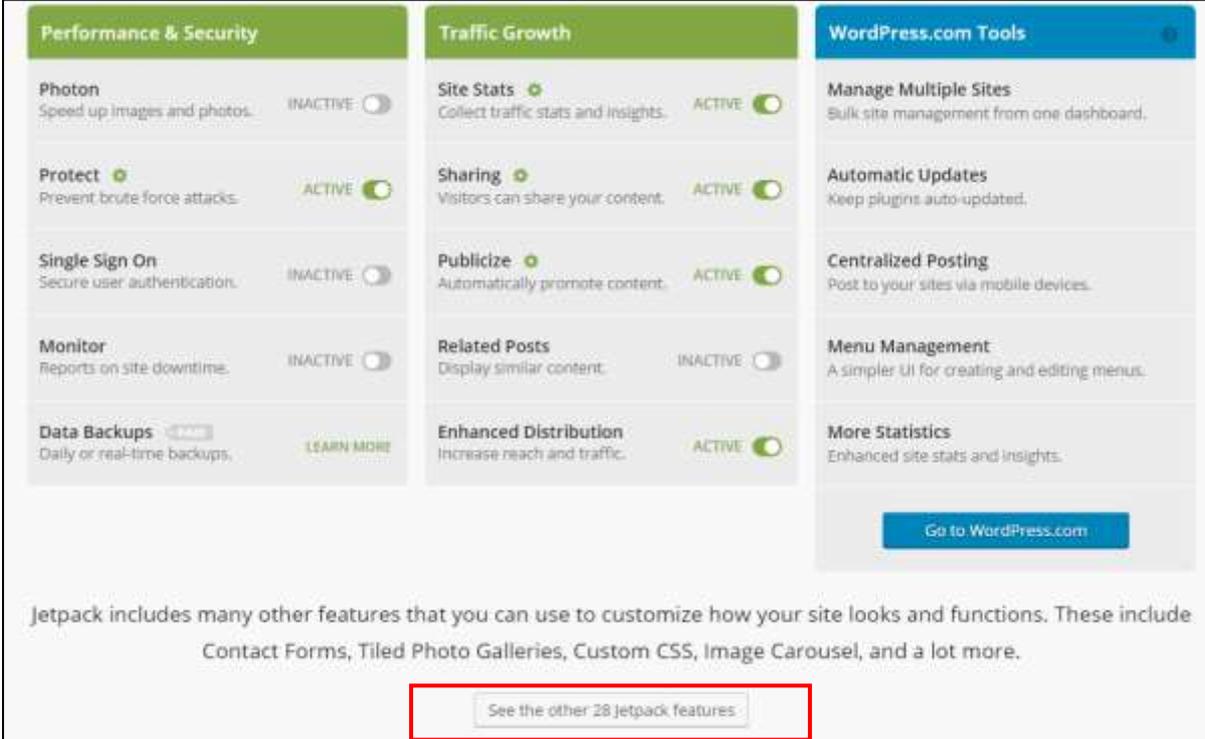


You should then be redirected back to your site (you may need to login again).

**Step #8:** Jetpack will prompt you to activate various aspects of the plugin – it offers a lot of different features. For now, just skip these; you can easily switch them on at a later stage if you want to.



**Step #9:** Scroll down a little on the next screen and click the “See the other 28 Jetpack features” button:

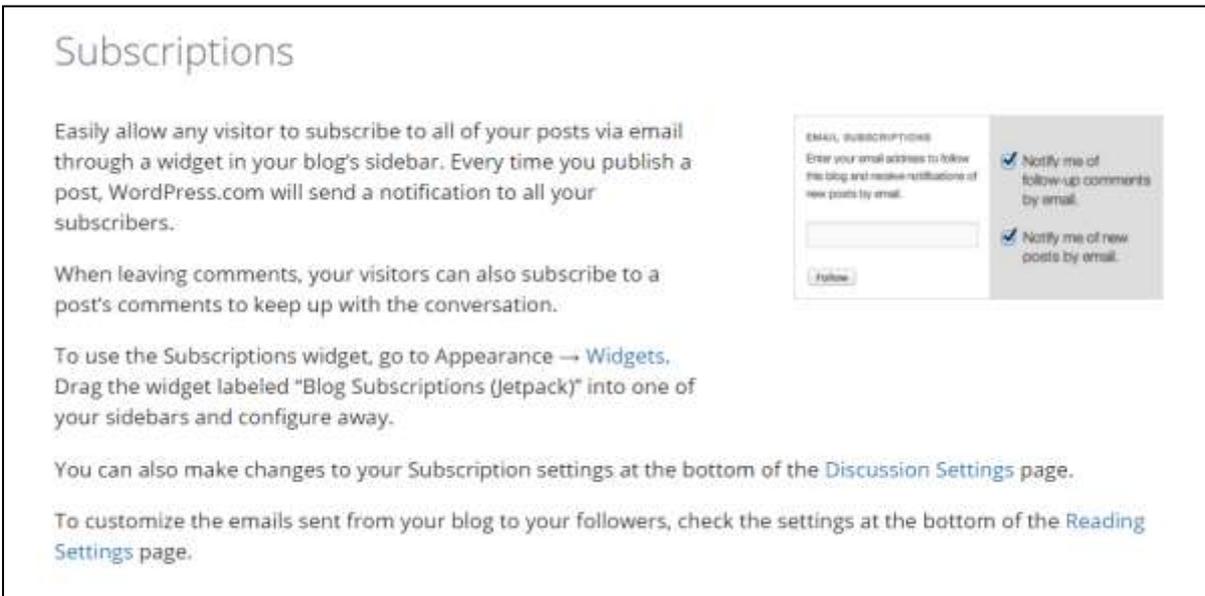


The screenshot displays the Jetpack settings interface, organized into three main columns:

- Performance & Security:** Photon (Inactive), Protect (Active), Single Sign On (Inactive), Monitor (Inactive), and Data Backups (Inactive).
- Traffic Growth:** Site Stats (Active), Sharing (Active), Publicize (Active), Related Posts (Inactive), and Enhanced Distribution (Active).
- WordPress.com Tools:** Manage Multiple Sites, Automatic Updates, Centralized Posting, Menu Management, and More Statistics.

A blue button labeled "Go to WordPress.com" is located at the bottom right of the settings area. Below the settings, a text block states: "Jetpack includes many other features that you can use to customize how your site looks and functions. These include Contact Forms, Tiled Photo Galleries, Custom CSS, Image Carousel, and a lot more." A red rectangular box highlights a button labeled "See the other 28 Jetpack features" at the bottom center of the page.

**Step #9:** Scroll down to “Subscriptions”, which should already be activated (*in blue, with a blue bar to the left-hand side*). Click on the Subscriptions to see instructions on how to add a subscriptions widget to your blog, and how to customise the emails that you send:

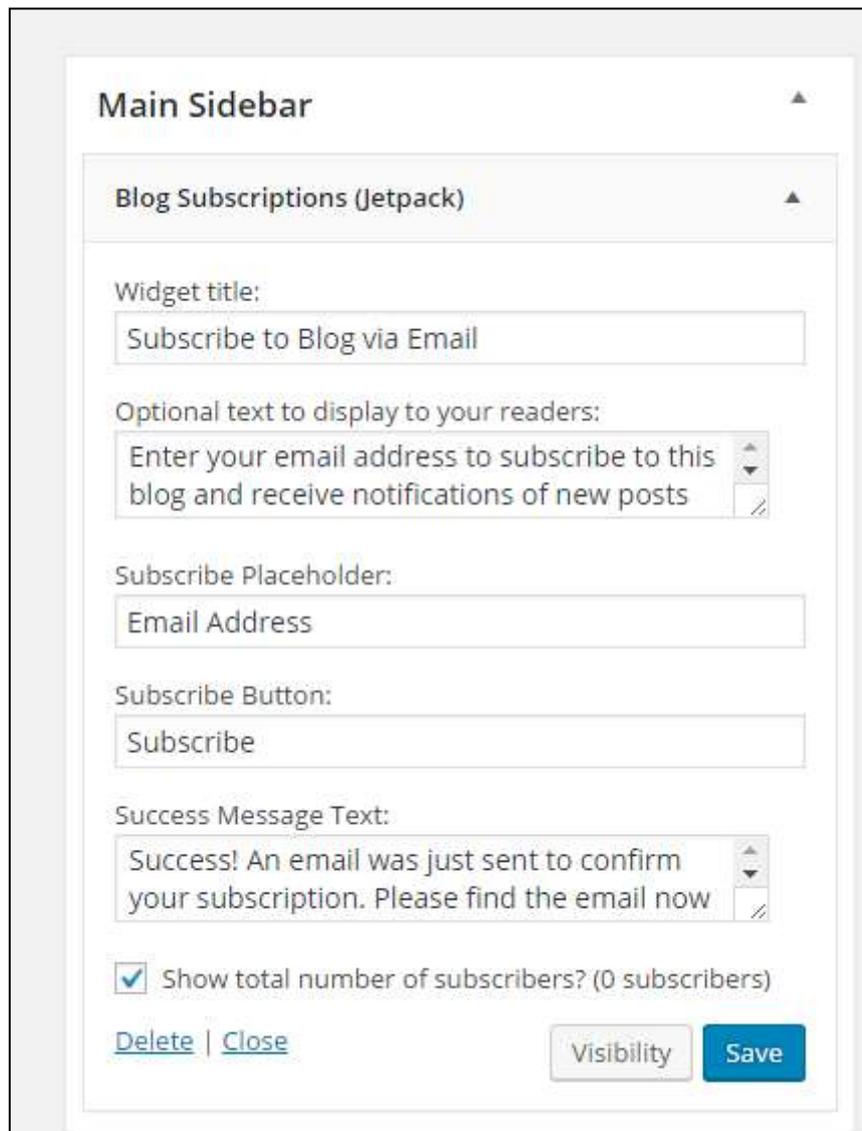


The screenshot shows the "Subscriptions" settings page. The title "Subscriptions" is displayed in a large, light blue font. The page contains the following text:

- "Easily allow any visitor to subscribe to all of your posts via email through a widget in your blog's sidebar. Every time you publish a post, WordPress.com will send a notification to all your subscribers."
- "When leaving comments, your visitors can also subscribe to a post's comments to keep up with the conversation."
- "To use the Subscriptions widget, go to Appearance → Widgets. Drag the widget labeled 'Blog Subscriptions (Jetpack)' into one of your sidebars and configure away."
- "You can also make changes to your Subscription settings at the bottom of the Discussion Settings page."
- "To customize the emails sent from your blog to your followers, check the settings at the bottom of the Reading Settings page."

On the right side of the page, there is a preview of the "Email Subscriptions" widget. It includes a text input field for an email address, a "Follow" button, and two checked checkboxes: "Notify me of follow-up comments by email" and "Notify me of new posts by email".

**Step #10:** Go to Appearance → Widgets and add the “Blog Subscriptions (Jetpack)” widget to your sidebar. I suggest putting it at the top, or very near the top, of your right-hand sidebar:



**Main Sidebar**

**Blog Subscriptions (Jetpack)**

Widget title:  
Subscribe to Blog via Email

Optional text to display to your readers:  
Enter your email address to subscribe to this blog and receive notifications of new posts

Subscribe Placeholder:  
Email Address

Subscribe Button:  
Subscribe

Success Message Text:  
Success! An email was just sent to confirm your subscription. Please find the email now

Show total number of subscribers? (0 subscribers)

[Delete](#) | [Close](#)      [Visibility](#)      [Save](#)

You can customise the text of the widget (I’d suggest using something other than “Subscribe”, perhaps “get new posts”).

**Note:** If you’re using Jetpack to provide posts by email and you want to give readers a bonus when they subscribe, you can use [Yoast’s SEO Plugin](#) to add a link in the footer of your blog’s RSS feed, i.e. at the end of every post. You can’t use Jetpack to send out emails separately from your blog posts.

## Encouraging Readers to Subscribe

Tell readers what to expect from your newsletter. I have a whole page for my newsletter here:

[www.aliventures.com/newsletter](http://www.aliventures.com/newsletter)

You might choose to avoid the word “subscribe” – you could use one of these options (or your own version) instead:

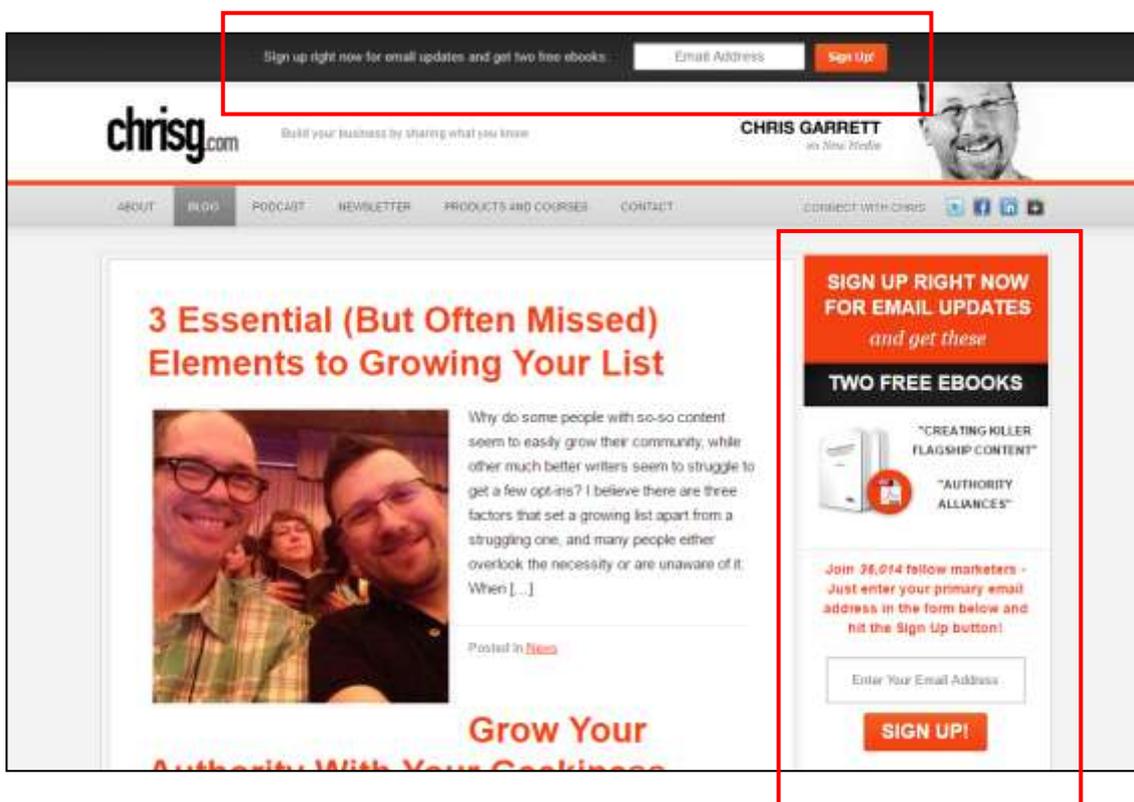
- *Get updates straight to your inbox.*
- *Get updates straight to your RSS reader.*
- *Never miss a post! Enter your email address here.*
- *Free updates! or Sign up for free email updates.*

## Positioning Your Subscription Options

Most blogs will place their email and/or RSS subscription options right at the top of the right-hand sidebar; this is where experienced blog readers will look first, so it’s definitely worth using this space for subscriptions unless you have a very good reason not to.

Some bloggers also choose to have a sign-up bar that runs along the top of the screen, so it’s instantly visible.

Example: [Chris Garrett’s blog](#) (sign up options indicated in red)



Example: [Write to Done](#)'s prominent sign-up offer, just below their navigation menu:



If your mailing list is a newsletter that's separate from your blog, make sure that you're clear about the difference: otherwise, readers may sign up for the newsletter and think that they'll receive all your blog posts too – only to end up confused or disappointed.

## Offering Incentives for Subscribing

To encourage readers to subscribe to your blog, or to your newsletter, it's often a good idea to provide an incentive. A common one is a free ebook – in fact, this has become so common that readers may be getting a little jaded to it. While free ebooks can still work well, you might also consider:

- **A mini-library of ebooks or resources.** They can be short (my free ebooks are around 3,000 words each) – but they should offer valuable content.
- **Cheatsheets, prompts, or other quick wins.** ProBlogger, for instance, offers [180 blogging prompts](#) to newsletter subscribers.
- **Exclusive audio or video content** – depending on how your audience like to learn, they may prefer this to ebooks.
- **Discounts on your products / services.** This probably shouldn't be your *only* incentive, as not all of your readers will be ready to buy straight away. It can make a good additional incentive, however.
- **Access to a special "members-only" area of your site.** This could be anything from pages of exclusive content to a forum where readers can interact with you.

When you're promoting your email list or blog subscriptions, keep in mind that "free" isn't necessarily enough reason for someone to subscribe. You need to provide information about your incentive(s) – and you may want to create a special landing page for them, as though they were paid products.

Here's [my landing page for my newsletter list on Aliventures](#):

## Join the Aliventures Newsletter

Get Exclusive Writing Tips, Bonus Resources, and Discounts on my Ebooks and Ecourses

Could you use some support with your writing?

Once you join the Aliventures newsletter, you'll receive:

- **Time to Write and other free mini-ebooks** to help you go further with your writing, faster
- **A weekly email** with a quick tip or "how to" on an aspect of writing, plus links to useful blog posts
- **Early notification, discounts and free samples** for every new ebook and ecourse that I create

As soon as you sign up, you'll get access to *Time to Write* and my library of mini-ebooks (even if it's 3am).

Sounds like what you need to give your writing a boost? Just pop your email address in the box above.



Grab your free ebooks and weekly writing tips:

Email:

**Sign Up »**

We respect your [email privacy](#).

### What to Expect From the Newsletter



**The weekly emails are short and snappy:** I know you don't want to spend hours in your inbox. They include a short article about a particular aspect of writing and a Q&A section.

**Every few months, I'll send you a completely free ebook.** You can read it on screen, print it out, pop it on your Kindle ... whatever you want. It's yours to keep, no strings attached.

As you can see, I give readers information on all the goodies they'll get when they join the newsletter – and since I created this page (and the incentives), I've seen sign-ups increase significantly.

## Delivering Your Incentives

Obviously, you'll need a way to get your ebook or your audio, video, or membership content to your subscribers.

There are several straightforward ways to do this, depending on what sort of content you're providing, and what sort of subscription service you're using.

This method works well for me, and for many bloggers who I know:

### Step #1: Create a password-protected page on your site.

This is where subscribers will go to get their freebies. (You could send your ebook directly by email, but Aweber and MailChimp have file-size limitations – if the ebook has a big cover graphic, it will probably be too large.)

Simply create your page as a normal page in WordPress, and then set the visibility of the page to "Password protected":



You'll need to choose a password – this will be the same for everyone who accesses the page (your newsletter readers won't have individual passwords).

**Step #2: Upload your ebook file (in .pdf, .epub or .mobi format – or all three) to your site via the WordPress media upload.**

Login to your dashboard and go to Media → Add New.

If you have an audio or video file, you'll probably need to upload it to your site via FTP, as it may be too large for the media uploader. I use [Core FTP LE](#) to access my site in this way.

**Step #3: Link to the file from your password-protected page.**

(Note that the file itself won't be protected, and could theoretically be accessed by someone typing in the location of the file – since this is free content, you probably don't need to worry too much.)

You can get the link when you upload the file to your site, or by going to the Media Library after you've done the upload.

**Tip:** If you want to screen off a whole area of your site for subscribers, you'll need membership site software. I currently use [DAP \(Digital Access Pass\)](#) for my Writers' Huddle membership site; you could also try [Wishlist Member](#).

An alternative, simpler, method is to simply use Step #2 above and then include the link to your incentive in your first mailout. The potential problem with this is that some people may struggle to download the file straight from their inbox – and, if you have multiple files for them, these can be more easily and attractively displayed on a web page.

## Chapter Fifteen: Using Calls to Action

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**The easiest way to get readers to *do* something is simply to ask them!** You can use a “call to action” (a request or suggestion to your reader) in order to:

- Convert casual visitors into newsletter subscribers.
- Encourage readers to implement what they’ve learned from your post.
- Get more comments, shares, tweets, etc.
- Persuade regular readers to take a look at the sales page for your product(s).
- Boost sales of your products through those pages.

This Copyblogger post ([3 Smart Moves that Supercharge Sales Funnels with Content](#) by Amanda Cook) uses two calls to action: one to get the reader to do something practical, and one to encourage them to comment:

### **Action step**

Make a list of content topics based on the ideas above and remember to include topics that provide a “little slice” of your opt-in gift, as well as topics that address the concerns of prospects in the **Awareness Phase** and prospects in the **Consideration Phase**.

Plan this content into your editorial calendar to [meet your ideal customers’ needs](#).

### **Over to you ...**

When you follow these three methods, you’ll find that your content attracts more of the right customers who also want to share your useful content.

How do you make sure your content helps convert prospects into customers? Share in the comments below.

## Calls to Action Help Readers Answer “What Next?”

At the end of a post, readers are often considering what to do next. They have a lot of options, from reading more posts on your blog, to heading elsewhere online, to going and getting a coffee.

While you obviously can't *force* readers to take any particular action, you can give them a suggestion of what to do next. Some bloggers worry that this seems pushy, demanding or needy – but, done well, it benefits both the reader and you.

**Tip:** Often, when I review posts by other bloggers, I find that they've missed out the call to action at the end. This is a lost opportunity, and it's a good idea to get into the habit of always checking, before you hit “Publish”, that you've included some sort of call to action.

It's a good idea to vary your calls to action, rather than constantly using the same one: this means that each will have more impact.

You may also want to consider tying your call to action into the content of the post – for instance, if you posted your top ten tips on dog grooming and you have an ebook all about running a dog grooming business, it would make perfect sense to gently promote that ebook at the end of your post.

Here are two examples of calls to action from different blogs, both designed to help the blogger and their readers:

### Example #1: Michael Hyatt – Encouraging Comments

From [One Trap Leaders Can Avoid if They Choose](#), MichaelHyatt.com.

Being visionary and future-focused is an asset. But it can easily become a liability if we're not careful. These three practices from Shauna Niequist's *Present over Perfect* can keep us fully engaged with the people and moments that restore our energy and enable us to live and lead with excellence.

*Question: Have you ever struggled with perfectionism? What did you do to overcome it? You can leave a comment by [clicking here](#).*

Michael consistently ends his posts with a question (in fact, often two questions in a row, like this) which he puts in bold italics so they stand out. There's always an invitation to leave an answer in the comments.

**Why this helps Michael Hyatt:** The blog consistently gets a lot of thoughtful comments, helping to build a sense of community – but also potentially giving Michael ideas for future posts.

**Why this helps the reader:** Leaving a comment requires readers to think through what they've read, and apply it to their lives. Instead of just skimming a blog post and forgetting about it, they'll be more likely to use the good advice contained in it.

## **Example #2: Digital Photography School – Offering Related Reading**

From [Posing Guide: 21 Sample Posts to Get You Started with Photographing Groups of People](#), Kaspars Grinvalds, Digital Photography School.

### Check out our other Posing Guides:

- [Posing Guide: Sample poses for photographing Women Part 1](#)
- [Posing Guide: Sample poses for photographing Women Part 2](#)
- [Posing Guide: Sample poses for photographing Men](#)
- [Posing Guide: Sample Poses for photographing Children](#)
- [Posing Guide: Sample Poses for Photographing Couples](#)
- [Posing Guide: Sample Poses for Photographing Groups of People](#)
- [Posing Guide: Sample Poses for Photographing Weddings](#)

This call to action focuses on offering extra useful information to readers, with links to other Posing Guides on Digital Photography School (DPS). This is a technique that DPS uses on a regular basis, as many of their posts are related to one another.

**Why this helps DPS:** The more posts new visitors view, the more likely they are to become regular, loyal readers. Readers often won't think to use the search feature on the blog to find more information, so it's a good idea to clearly highly related reading in this way.

**Why this helps readers:** A reader who's interested in posing groups of people may well be interested in other posing issues (photographing weddings, or children, for instance). Having these links at the end of the post makes it very easy for them to find more information – without needing to hunt around on the blog.

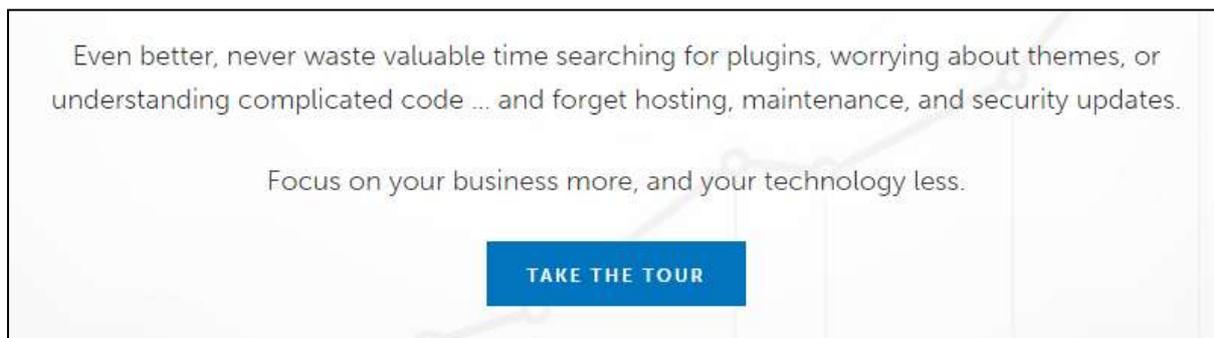
## Calls to Action on Marketing Pages

Although this Guide focuses on creating loyal readers rather than selling to customers, there's also a good chance that you have a product or service to market to those readers. Your Services / Products pages (see [Chapter Two](#)) need to include powerful calls to action.

In these cases, your call to action will usually aim to get readers to do one of the following:

- Join a mailing list.
- Fill in an enquiry form.
- Learn more about a product or service you offer.
- Buy one (or more!) of your products or services.
- Sign up for a regular subscription.

The call to action in these cases will often be a button that the reader needs to click on. Here's an example:



*From Copyblogger's ["Rainmaker Platform" sales page](#).*

When you craft these calls to action, emphasise the benefits to the reader, or at least make the action sound attractive. "Take the Tour" sounds welcoming (and fairly specific), so it's better than "Click to Learn More."

Although you'll often see "Buy Now" used on buttons, it's not necessarily the best choice, as it emphasises the *loss* to the reader (of money) rather than what they'll gain. Some good alternatives are:

- Join Now (*for a membership site or mailing list*)
- Add to Cart (*for a product*)
- Book Your Free Consultation (*for services*)

You might even want to test different calls to action to see which ones bring you the most customers. This is often called "split-testing" (when you have two versions of a sales page, with one small difference between them, and see which performs better).

## **Part Five: Analysing What's Working**

Not all techniques will work equally well for every blog ... and sometimes, you might be surprised to find out where your existing readers are coming from, or which posts they're reading. By taking a look at your blog's statistics – through Google Analytics and other metrics – you can build on what's going well, and ditch anything that's having little or no impact.

# Chapter Sixteen: Using Google Analytics to Grow Your Readership

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**Google Analytics is a free service from Google that gives you insights into the visitors to your blog.** It doesn't track personal data (you won't find out visitors' names or email addresses) but it does record every visit to your blog, including information such as where visitors came from and what pages they viewed.

If you don't yet have Google Analytics installed on your blog, make it a priority to get it on there as soon as possible. There are other statistics packages that you can use, but there's widespread agreement in the blogging world that Google Analytics is the best.

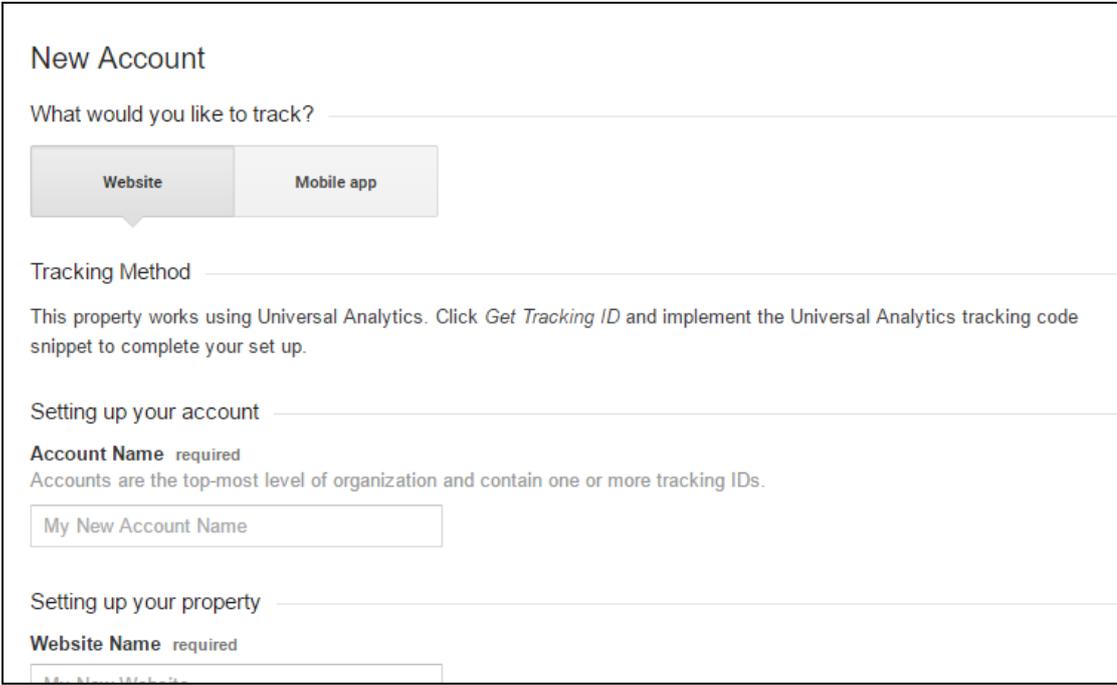
## Joining Google Analytics

You can sign up for Google Analytics with your existing Google account. (You'll have a Google account if you use Gmail, Google Plus, or other Google services.)

If you don't yet have a Google Account, you can [sign up for one here](#).

Next, go to [the Google Analytics homepage](#) and sign in.

1. Once you've signed into Google Analytics, you'll need to click "Sign Up" and then add information about your website. There's a simple form to fill in:

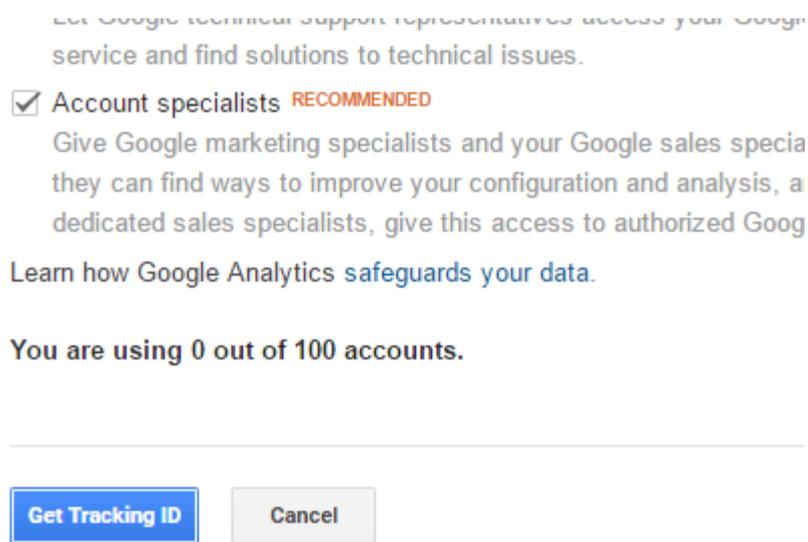


The screenshot shows the 'New Account' setup form in Google Analytics. It is divided into several sections:

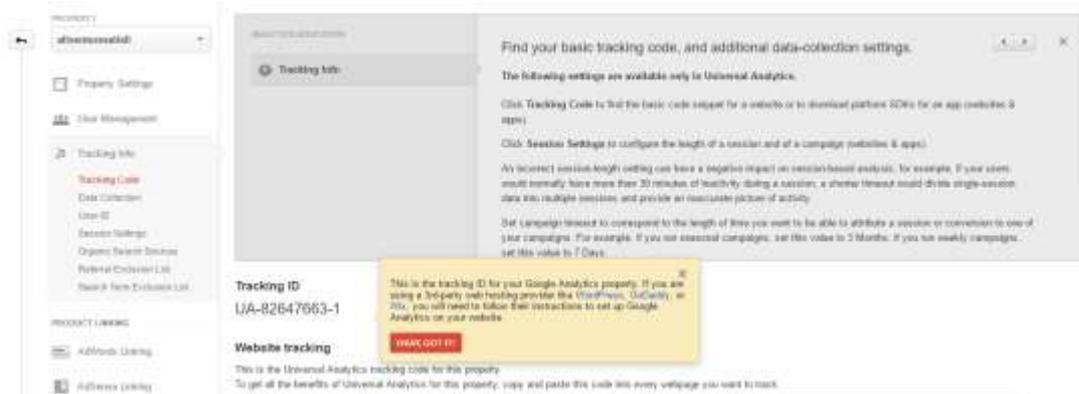
- New Account**: The main title of the form.
- What would you like to track?**: A section with two buttons: 'Website' (selected) and 'Mobile app'.
- Tracking Method**: A section with a dropdown menu set to 'Universal Analytics'. Below it, text reads: 'This property works using Universal Analytics. Click *Get Tracking ID* and implement the Universal Analytics tracking code snippet to complete your set up.'
- Setting up your account**: A section with a label 'Account Name required' and a subtext 'Accounts are the top-most level of organization and contain one or more tracking IDs.' Below this is a text input field containing 'My New Account Name'.
- Setting up your property**: A section with a label 'Website Name required' and a partially visible text input field below it.

2. It is up to you whether to allow "Data Sharing" but I suggest leaving all the boxes checked by default. Google isn't up to anything nefarious!

3. Once you've completed the form, click the "Get Tracking ID" button at the bottom.



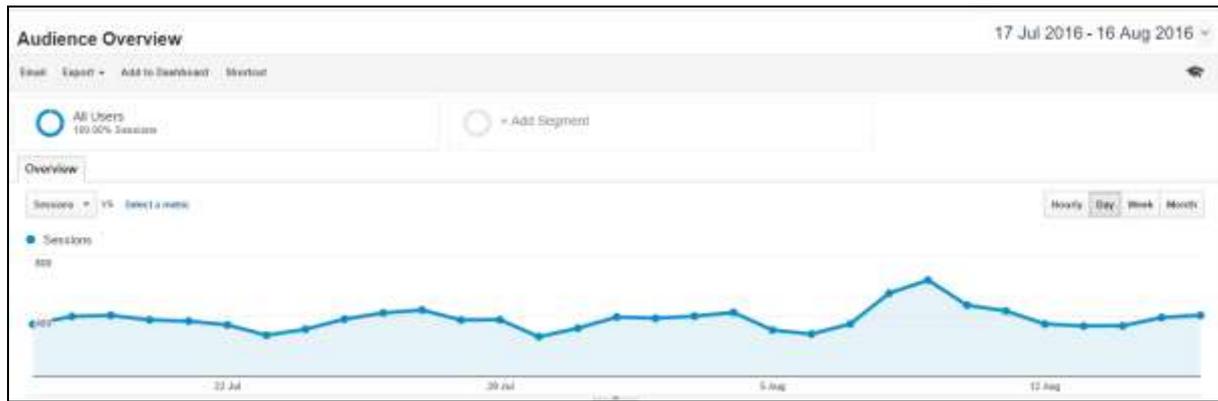
4. You will then see the Terms and Conditions; click "I Accept" to continue.
5. You'll be shown your Tracking ID and code (beneath it) on the next screen:



To install this on your WordPress site, you can use a plugin like [Google Analytics](#). Some premium themes also have an area where you can add the Tracking code.

## Using Google Analytics

When you first log in to Google Analytics, the most prominent statistic shown is the number of hits you receive per day. Obviously, it's great to see if this is going up over the course of a month, or to work out why particular days saw a spike in traffic – but you can also use Analytics to drill much further into how readers of your blog are behaving.



These are two very useful pieces of information that Google Analytics will provide you with:

- Where your visitors come from (“Acquisition”)
- What content is most popular (“Behaviour”)

## Where Your Visitors Are Coming From

To instantly see where your visitors have come from over the past month, click on the Acquisition → All Traffic → Channels on the left-hand side. You’ll see a breakdown of the types of traffic that you’re currently receiving.

**Organic Search** is from search engines like Google, Yahoo and Bing.

**Social** is from websites like Twitter and Facebook

**Direct** is from people who come straight to your website, by typing in the URL.

**Referral** is from other blogs or websites.

**Email** is from people clicking a link in their email client (e.g. if you send out an email newsletter).

	Default Channel Grouping	Acquisition			Behaviour		
		Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages/Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?
		11,815 % of Total: 100.00% (11,815)	82.67% Avg for View: 82.66% (0.02%)	9,768 % of Total: 100.02% (9,766)	86.81% Avg for View: 86.81% (0.00%)	1.26 Avg for View: 1.26 (0.00%)	00:00:57 Avg for View: 00:00:57 (0.00%)
<input type="checkbox"/>	1. Organic Search	5,557 (47.03%)	84.33%	4,686 (47.97%)	90.08%	1.19	00:00:51
<input type="checkbox"/>	2. Social	2,308 (19.53%)	86.14%	1,988 (20.35%)	91.55%	1.12	00:00:25
<input type="checkbox"/>	3. Direct	2,169 (18.36%)	79.39%	1,722 (17.63%)	82.16%	1.36	00:01:10
<input type="checkbox"/>	4. Referral	1,550 (13.12%)	83.03%	1,287 (13.18%)	75.16%	1.52	00:01:38
<input type="checkbox"/>	5. Email	191 (1.62%)	37.70%	72 (0.74%)	81.15%	1.73	00:01:39
<input type="checkbox"/>	6. (Other)	40 (0.34%)	32.50%	13 (0.13%)	90.00%	1.22	00:00:36

It's interesting to know how your traffic breaks down, but simply looking at the pie chart isn't especially useful. You'll want to find out more details about each source of traffic, so that you know how best to get more readers (and more engaged readers) for your blog.

You can drill down to get more details by clicking on one of the broad categories in the left-hand column above. For example, clicking on "Referral" will show you which sites sent you traffic:

Source ?	Acquisition			Behaviour		
	Sessions ? ↓	% New Sessions ?	New Users ?	Bounce Rate ?	Pages/Session ?	Avg. Session Duration ?
	1,550 % of Total: 13.12% (11,815)	83.03% Avg for View: 82.66% (0.45%)	1,287 % of Total: 13.18% (9,766)	75.16% Avg for View: 86.81% (-13.42%)	1.52 Avg for View: 1.26 (20.63%)	00:01:38 Avg for View: 00:00:57 (73.84%)
<input type="checkbox"/> 1. <a href="#">tinywriters.com</a>	434 (28.00%)	100.00%	434 (33.72%)	81.57%	1.22	00:00:25
<input type="checkbox"/> 2. <a href="#">writetodone.com</a>	247 (15.94%)	81.38%	201 (15.62%)	70.85%	1.89	00:02:59
<input type="checkbox"/> 3. <a href="#">thesitsgirls.com</a>	146 (9.42%)	92.47%	135 (10.49%)	85.62%	1.25	00:01:02
<input type="checkbox"/> 4. <a href="#">thewritelife.com</a>	98 (6.32%)	82.65%	81 (6.29%)	76.53%	1.51	00:00:57
<input type="checkbox"/> 5. <a href="#">positivewriter.com</a>	81 (5.23%)	80.25%	65 (5.05%)	74.07%	1.49	00:01:04
<input type="checkbox"/> 6. <a href="#">probblogger.net</a>	74 (4.77%)	36.49%	27 (2.10%)	54.05%	2.09	00:03:52
<input type="checkbox"/> 7. <a href="#">com.google.android.googlequicksearchbox</a>	48 (3.10%)	100.00%	48 (3.73%)	91.67%	1.15	00:01:23
<input type="checkbox"/> 8. <a href="#">joaonunes.com</a>	38 (2.45%)	52.63%	20 (1.55%)	78.95%	1.26	00:01:45
<input type="checkbox"/> 9. <a href="#">indonovel.com</a>	32 (2.06%)	84.38%	27 (2.10%)	59.38%	2.12	00:06:09
<input type="checkbox"/> 10. <a href="#">feedly.com</a>	29 (1.87%)	44.83%	13 (1.01%)	86.21%	1.28	00:01:00

This can help you get a sense of what promotional tactics are working well (e.g. I can see that a recent guest post on Write to Done has resulted in quite a bit of traffic from their site – and those readers stuck around for almost 3 minutes, considerably better than average).

You can use this to make sure your future efforts are effective – for instance, by targeting sites that brought in good traffic from your guest posts, or by reaching out to sites that are already linking to you.

## What Content is Most Popular?

In most cases, the top page on your blog will be the homepage (shown as a forward-slash followed by nothing, as in the screenshot below). There'll be plenty of other pages that prove popular, though – this could be because they're highlighted prominently on your front page, or because readers are finding them through a search engine or through a link on another website.

Take a look at Behaviour → Overview for a list of popular pages:

Page	Page Views	% Page Views
1. /make-a-living-writing/	2,410	16.14%
2. /writing-great-dialogue/	1,268	8.49%
3. /8-writing-secrets/	1,260	8.44%
4. /	1,211	8.11%
5. /choosing-viewpoint-fiction/	673	4.51%
6. /essential-writing-stages/	651	4.36%
7. /novel-in-two-years/	505	3.38%
8. /25-ways-to-great-ideas/	405	2.71%
9. /about/	364	2.44%
10. /7-serious-habits/	327	2.19%

[view full report](#)

It's useful to know which posts are especially popular so that you can optimise these for new visitors. If they're posts that you wrote a while ago, you might want to go back and update them, perhaps adding in a call to action, or improving the formatting of the post to ensure that you make a great first impression.

By clicking the "View full report" link, just below the bottom right corner of that table, you can see additional information about these pages:

Page	Page Views	Unique Page Views	Avg. Time on Page	Entrances	Bounce Rate	% Exit
	14,933 % of Total: 100.00% (14,933)	13,432 % of Total: 100.00% (13,432)	00:03:37 Avg for View: 00:02:37 (0.80%)	11,882 % of Total: 100.00% (11,882)	86.94% Avg for View: 86.94% (0.80%)	79.57% Avg for View: 79.57% (0.80%)
1. /make-a-living-writing/	2,410 (16.14%)	2,169 (16.10%)	00:05:27	2,065 (17.38%)	88.25%	85.85%
2. /writing-great-dialogue/	1,268 (8.49%)	1,185 (8.82%)	00:06:58	1,175 (9.89%)	93.53%	92.35%
3. /8-writing-secrets/	1,260 (8.44%)	1,173 (8.73%)	00:03:43	1,122 (9.44%)	92.16%	90.24%
4. /	1,211 (8.11%)	1,075 (8.02%)	00:01:57	938 (7.89%)	60.13%	56.32%
5. /choosing-viewpoint-fiction/	673 (4.51%)	647 (4.82%)	00:05:12	640 (5.38%)	95.31%	94.65%
6. /essential-writing-stages/	651 (4.36%)	532 (3.98%)	00:02:16	502 (4.22%)	90.44%	77.73%
7. /novel-in-two-years/	505 (3.38%)	464 (3.46%)	00:04:52	453 (3.81%)	83.92%	82.97%
8. /25-ways-to-great-ideas/	405 (2.71%)	348 (2.59%)	00:08:27	347 (2.92%)	89.34%	85.43%
9. /about/	364 (2.44%)	305 (2.27%)	00:02:53	180 (1.51%)	82.70%	62.36%
10. /7-serious-habits/	327 (2.19%)	312 (2.32%)	00:04:11	264 (2.22%)	85.23%	79.51%

Show rows: 10 | Go to: 1

If a page has a high bounce rate, like the */choosing-viewpoint-fiction* above, it's worth looking at ways to encourage readers to stay around after they've read the post. One easy way to do this is by linking to other blog posts within the text or in a call to action at the end of the post.

(Keep in mind, though, that the source of that page's traffic may be the reason for the high bounce rate. For instance, readers coming from StumbleUpon rarely stick around.)

**Tip:** Set aside some time to dig into your analytics on a regular basis, perhaps once a month. Each time you do so, have a blank document or piece of paper handy, so that you can jot down action points – e.g. new posts to write, posts to revisit and improve, or sites to target for more traffic.

# Chapter Seventeen: Key Metrics That Show How Your Blog is Doing

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Google Analytics does a great job of showing how many readers you have, which pages they visit, and how engaged they are (how long they stay on your site) – but there are also other metrics that you may want to track.

These include:

- The number of comments you get on each post.
- The number of tweets (or Facebook likes or shares) you receive for each post.
- The growth in your email subscribers.

Think of these statistics as a health check-up for your blog: the numbers can help you tell whether you're on the right track, and whether you need to focus your attention on any particular area.

## Number of Comments

The most important thing to keep in mind with comments is that *if a post doesn't receive many comments, that doesn't mean it's in any way a failure.*

**Some posts naturally encourage more comments than others.** For instance, if you post the news that you're getting married, then you're likely to get a lot of comments saying "Congratulations!" However, that post is unlikely to be one of your pieces of cornerstone content (unless marriage relates to your blog topic).

Other posts can be effective although – or even because – they've not received many comments. If you're posting about a new ecourse you've created, for instance, you want your readers to check out the landing page for the ecourse (or even buy it straight away). They may well not hang around to leave a comment.

**Overall, however, the number of comments that you're receiving gives you a rough indication of how well your readers are engaging with you and your content.** A small number of highly-engaged readers can be far more valuable than a larger number of casual visitors. (For instance, you may well find, as I do, that readers who've commented on your blog are more likely to buy a product / service from you.)

If the number of comments you receive per post is gradually growing, you're on the right track. If it's stagnant, or declining, then you may want to think about why.

Perhaps:

- You've been too busy to reply to comments recently, which has given readers the impression that you don't really care.
- You haven't been encouraging comments with a call to action at the end of your posts. (See [Chapter Sixteen](#) for more on this.)
- Your comments functionality isn't working properly. If you normally get a least one comment on each post and then receive none at all for a period of time, do double-check this! For instance, you may find that there are lots of comments waiting in your moderation queue.
- Or ... it could just be that your readers are interacting in other ways. Perhaps you're getting fewer comments but more tweets / Facebook likes / emails ... this has been the case for my blog, Aliventures, over the past couple of years, and I think it reflects a broader trend.

## Number of Tweets / Likes / Shares



WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2016

# 7 STEPS TO TAKE BEFORE YOU QUIT YOUR JOB

*How to Pivot with Dignity and Respect*

Comments **f 440** Tweet Email Print

**F**ace it. You will eventually quit your job. It may be this year. It may be next. It may be ten years from now. But it's inevitable. It's only a matter of time. The only real question is: How do you pivot (professionally) without burning your bridges?

From [7 Steps to Take Before You Quit Your Job](#) on [MichaelHyatt.com](#)

Depending on which social network(s) are your priority, the exact metric you're tracking here will be different – but the principles remain the same. I'm going to use "shares" for simplicity's sake, but you may want to substitute "tweets" or "+1s".

**The number of shares that a post receives is a good indication of how popular it is with readers.** There's often a snowball effect here – the more people who share your post, the

more Facebook users will see it – and some of them will read and re-share it, or at least “like” it.

**Tip:** It’s sometimes very hard to predict which posts will do well on social media. If you do notice that a particular post has many more likes than average, see if you can work out why. Perhaps it had a really strong title. Maybe it addressed a common question or worry. The day of the week, and even the time of day, that you post can also have an effect.

If you aren’t receiving much response on social media, think about the possible reasons. Maybe:

- **You rarely or never share content from other bloggers in your niche.** There’s often some degree of reciprocity on social networks, particularly Twitter – and if you share great content from other people, they’ll be more likely to share yours.
- **You don’t have an easy way for people to share your content.** In the example from Michael Hyatt’s site, above, there are easy buttons to click to share the post on Facebook and Twitter.
- **You never ask for shares.** Sometimes readers need prompting! It’s fine to put a call to action at the end of your post to encourage readers to share it on their favourite social network. You won’t want to do this with every single post, but readers will respond well to occasional requests.

## Growth in Email Subscribers

**Your RSS subscribers – people who receive your newsletter or blog posts by email – won’t show up in Google Analytics unless they click through to read your post on your site or to leave a comment.** However, the number of email subscribers you have is probably the most important metric of all – as these people are more likely to buy from you than casual, passing blog readers are.

Over time, your email subscribers should be steadily increasing. Some people will inevitably unsubscribe, but you should be gaining more than you lose.

You don’t need thousands of email subscribers to be successful, of course. You may see large blogs in your niche with very impressive figures, but (depending on your goals) you can be perfectly successful with a few hundred subscribers.

**What’s important is that that your subscriber numbers grow – whether quickly or gradually – over time, and that you get a reasonable number of people opening your emails, clicking on links, and so on.**

**Tip:** It's a good idea to pay particular attention to your subscriber numbers if you've recently engaged in a particularly large promotional effort – such as writing a guest post for a large blog in your niche. Hopefully, that guest post will result in a significant increase in email subscribers, particularly if you've deliberately linked to your sign-up incentive in your guest post bio.

## Solving Slow (or Negative) Subscriber Growth

If you find that your email subscribers are stagnant or even falling over time, then there are several possible causes. Perhaps:

- **It's not obvious to readers how to subscribe.** Your email sign up form should be prominent, preferably at the top right of your sidebar. See [Chapter Two](#) for more on this. You may even want to implement a pop-up: yes, these can be intrusive, but they're also very effective for getting readers' attention.
- **You're posting / emailing too frequently.** Readers could be getting overwhelmed by the volume of emails – and this might prompt them to unsubscribe.
- **You're not giving people a good reason to sign up.** While you don't *have* to offer a special freebie, you do at least need to let people know about all the benefits they'll get from receiving your email newsletter. If you just send out blog posts by email, rather than a separate newsletter, it may be tricky to give readers a clear reason to sign up – so an incentive is particularly valuable here.

## Other Metrics to Consider

There may be other metrics that you want to consider for your own blog. For instance, if you provide consulting services, the number of enquiries that you receive on a weekly basis is well worth tracking. If you're getting more enquiries as time goes by – and these are high-quality leads – then your blog is definitely working well for you.

Of course, probably the ultimate metric is how much money your blog brings in (assuming you're aiming to make money). If you're reaching your income goals, then it really doesn't matter whether you have a lot of readers or just a few!

Depending on your blog and your goals, you could also think about:

- How many ebooks you sell each month.
- Your [Alexa](#) rank (*lower is better!*)
- How many sites are linking to you (*Alexa will tell you this too*).
- How many Twitter followers or Facebook "likes" you have.

**Tip:** Don't get too obsessed – or too relaxed – about metrics. There's no need to check them several times a day, and minor fluctuations are usually nothing to worry about. On the other hand, if months go by without you ever glancing at your subscriber numbers or thinking about whether sales are up or down, you're missing out on valuable information.

# Chapter Eighteen: Your Next Steps

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It's easy to feel overwhelmed when it comes to growing the readership of your blog. Writing regular, valuable posts may be a big enough challenge on its own – and using social media, paying attention to SEO, reaching out to influencers, and so on, can seem like a lot to think about.

**The best approach that I've found here is to engage in a few simple activities on a regular basis, and to have occasional periods of greater activity designed around growing your readership, and keeping existing readers loyal.**

Here's a basic example of how you might do that, with chapter references for further information where appropriate. You can certainly include more activities if you want, but it's often best to start with a few tasks and gradually add more over time.

## Regular Activities

### Daily:

- Send out three tweets. You can use Buffer, HootSuite or TweetDeck to pre-schedule these updates. ([Chapter Five.](#))
- Ensure that at least one of these tweets is a link to a useful resource – e.g. another blogger's post.

### At least twice-weekly:

- Check for and answer any unanswered comments.
- Post one update on Facebook. ([Chapter Six.](#))

### Weekly:

- Write a high-quality blog post, ensuring it has a clear call to action. ([Chapter Three](#) and [Chapter Sixteen.](#))
- Email one reader, or one blogger who you want to get to know. ([Chapter Nine.](#))

## Occasional Concentrated Efforts

Every three or four months, schedule in some time for a focused growth campaign.

It's a good idea to make sure your own blog is in really good shape before you start this – so update your About page, clear your sidebar clutter, and make sure you have some very strong recent posts. The first part of this Guide will help you with this.

Here are a few ideas for occasional marketing tasks:

- **Putting together an interview post or a series of posts**, involving at least three key influencers in your field.
- **Guest-posting on five (or more) major sites in your niche.** You might find it easiest to plan out all your posts first – perhaps plan a couple of spare ones, so you can choose the five strongest.
- **Launching a newsletter, or a new incentive (e.g. an ebook) for subscribers to your newsletter.** You might want to link to this in your guest posts.

If you find that a particular technique is especially effective for your blog, then you might want to make it a regular part of your marketing activities. For instance, if one of the sites that you guest post for sends you lots of traffic, you could try posting there every three months – or even every month.

**Tip:** Ditch any techniques that don't work for you. Perhaps a particular method simply doesn't suit you – I avoid forums, for instance, because I find myself getting overwhelmed. Or maybe some methods aren't right for your blog, and are only bringing in a handful of new readers. By all means try out new ideas, but don't feel that you have to do everything!

## Epilogue: From Here On Up...

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Congratulations on reaching the end of *The Blogger's Guide to Loyal Readers*! I hope you've picked up some ideas and tactics to apply to your own blogging ... and, most importantly, I hope you've had a chance to give some of these a try.

Every blog – and every blogger – is different. You might find that some techniques don't suit you, or don't seem to have much impact on your audience. **Regardless of the exact methods you choose to follow, though, taking action on a consistent basis will result in growth.**

Over time, your efforts will snowball: the journey from 1,000 to 2,000 subscribers, for instance, is almost certain to be faster than the journey from 0 to 1,000. As you gain more readers, you'll gain more tweets, Facebook shares, and online visibility.

I wish you the very best of luck with your blog ... and I hope I'll see you around the blogosphere. 😊



You can find me:

- Blogging at [aliventures.com](http://aliventures.com) (weekly posts about writing / blogging / publishing).
- Tweeting at [twitter.com/aliventures](https://twitter.com/aliventures) (regular links to great posts I've read).

**You might also want to check out my site Writers' Huddle:** it's a teaching / community site for writers (including bloggers!) who want to take their craft further with the support and encouragement of like-minded new friends.

Writers' Huddle only opens periodically for new members, but if it's currently closed, you can add your name to the waiting list here: [www.writershuddle.com](http://www.writershuddle.com).

Ali x

# Further Reading

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## Part One: Getting Your Blog Ship-Shape

### Chapter One: Four Quick Fixes for Four Common Issues

[How to De-Clutter Your Blog](#), Ginny Soskey, Shareaholic

Four key decluttering tips – great for anyone who’s been blogging for a while, as blogs have a tendency to get a little cluttered over time. The suggested blog post blueprint is also a good one that you could base your own posts on.

[31 Blog Design Mistakes \(& How to Fix Them\)](#), Heidi Cohen, HeidiCohen.com

A great list of common design mistakes, with fixes for each. Your design needs to be attractive enough for readers to stick around and read your great content.

### Chapter Two: The Three Most Crucial Pages on Your Blog

[Are You Making These 7 Mistakes with Your About Page?](#), Sonia Simone, Copyblogger

Great, easy-to-implement advice about crafting a great About page. Whether you’ve got an existing About page that you want to revise, or you have yet to get your page in place, this is well worth a read.

[What to Include in a ‘Services’ or ‘Hire Me’ Page on Your Blog](#), Tom Ewer, ManageWP Blog

Useful advice for services pages, some of which (e.g. focusing on benefits and USPs) also applies to bloggers who are selling products.

### Chapter Three: Creating Great Blog Content

[Creating Killer Flagship Content](#), Chris Garrett, chrisg.com (*free ebook*)

This short, focused ebook covers the why of flagship content, and gives you “10 Instant Flagship Content Ideas” to help you get started.

[The Blogger’s Guide to Effective Writing](#), Ali Luke (*premium ebook*)

If you haven’t already got your copy, this Guide takes you through everything you need to know about writing great blog content. It comes with exclusive post templates to help you nail the structure of your posts, and bonus videos to show you real life examples.

Discount code: **loyalty** will take 40% off the usual price of [The Blogger’s Guide to Effective Writing](#).

## Part Two: Attracting New Readers

### Chapter Four: Using Twitter Effectively

[How to Twitter: The Ultimate Beginner's Guide for Using Twitter](#), DJ Thistle, SteamFeed

A straightforward introduction to Twitter, with clear explanations of common symbols used, like @ and #. If you're finding Twitter a little confusing, or if you're not sure where to begin, this article should help you.

[How to Use Twitter Effectively](#), Dominique Jackson, SproutSocial

These suggestions, aimed at businesses, are great ones for making the best use of Twitter – with plenty of specific, practical ideas.

### Chapter Five: Using Facebook Effectively

[19 Essential Tips for an Engaging Facebook Business Page](#), Ginny Mineo, HubSpot

These detailed tips cover everything from setting up your page to knowing how frequently to post to it. There are plenty of screenshots to help you see how to implement different options on your own page.

[17 Awesome Facebook Business Page Post Ideas for Small Businesses](#), Heather Heuman, Social Quant

If you're struggling to know what to post on your Facebook page, here are plenty of handy ideas (with examples for many of them).

### Chapter Six: Putting Basic SEO Into Practice on Your Blog

[SEO Made Simple: A Step-by-Step Guide](#), Neil Patel, NeilPatel.com

This straightforward guide has lots of explanations and plenty of links to further information and studies.

[SEO basics: 22 essentials you need for optimizing your site](#), Christopher Ratliff, Search Engine Watch

This beginner-friendly piece explains what SEO is, what search engines are looking for, and what to avoid. There are handy of screenshots and extra links throughout.

### Chapter Seven: Guest Posting to Grow Your Audience and Reach

[The Essentials of Guest-Blogging Strategy for SEO, Traffic, and Audience-Building](#), Sonia Simone, Copyblogger

Clear advice on why guest blogging (aka guest posting) is a great strategy, along with lots of handy links to posts on Copyblogger and on other sites.

[Earn Money Online: 92 Websites That Pay Writers \\$50+](#), Jennifer Roland, Make a Living Writing

At least once a year, Make a Living Writing publishes a post of websites that pay writers to blog. Often, this can give you the best of both worlds: steady income plus the chance to get your name and bio out there.

## **Part Three: Growing Your Blogging Influence**

### **Chapter Eight: Using Emails to Create Stronger Connections**

[The 15 Emails You NEED to BE Sending to Your Email List](#), Sarah Peterson, SumoMe

If you're not sure what to write when you email your list, or if you're worried you've missed a step of the process ... Sarah has you covered.

[30 Day List Building Challenge](#), Nathalie Lussier

This free 30-day challenge is a great (and fun) way to learn some list-building fundamentals, and to take small but crucial actions to build your own email list.

### **Chapter Nine: Using Forums to Meet Potential Readers**

[Blog Traffic: How to Use Q&A Sites and Niche Forums to Increase Blog Visitors](#), Wishpond

This post is packed with great tips for using not just forums but also Q&A sites (like Quora and Yahoo Answers).

[8 Tips To Get Traffic From Online Forums](#), Tristan Higbee, DailyBlogTips

This older but still very relevant post has plenty of advice on using forums effectively to drive more readers to your blog, with plenty of clear, practical tips.

### **Chapter Ten: Connecting With Influencers in Your Blogging Niche**

[Blogger Outreach: How to Get Influences to Promote Your Content for Free](#), Brian Dean, SmartBlogger

One of the "secrets" behind blogs that grow rapidly is the time and energy they invest into outreach. In this post, Brian Dean explains what they do – from identifying influencers to making initial contact with them to reaching out with a request for help.

[7 Tools for Finding & Connecting With Influential Bloggers](#), Ann Smarty, HubSpot

As well as a handy round-up of tools – each with a screenshot – Ann’s post includes some crucial tips on connecting with influencers (like “don’t bulk-email”), and explains the “why” behind them.

## **Chapter Eleven: Leaving Comments to Get Noticed**

[Blog Commenting in 2015: Making one of the Oldest SEO Strategies Pay Off Big Time](#),

Robin Burton, SEO SiteCheckup

This in-depth post takes a look at whether commenting on other people’s blogs is still effective in terms of SEO (search engine optimisation) and provides plenty of tips on how to use comments effectively.

[The Ultimate Guide to Leaving Comments On Blogs](#), Darren Rowse, ProBlogger

SEO is definitely not the only reason to comment on blogs, of course. Darren lays out some other great benefits of commenting ... and explains how to do it right.

## **Part Four: Keeping Your Readers Loyal**

### **Chapter Twelve: Being Consistent With Your Blogging**

[How to Create an Editorial Calendar for Your Blog](#), Kaleigh Moore, Entrepreneur.com

Planning ahead makes it so much easier to consistently produce content for your blog. Here, Kaleigh shares handy tips on how to do that, and recommends some tools that can help.

[The 8 Habits of Highly Effective Bloggers](#), Annabel Candy, Copyblogger

Useful tips on what successful bloggers do – consistency is one of these, but the others are all good ideas for getting into great blogging habits.

### **Chapter Thirteen: Engaging With Your Readers**

[How to Engage Your Blog Readers](#), Jessica Slaughter, JessicaSlaughter.com

If you’re blogging in a more personal rather than business-focused way, there are lots of great tips here (and almost any blogger will pick up something from this post).

[How to Engage and Delight Your Readers \(So They’re Begging for More\)](#), Henneke

Duistermaat, Enchanting Marketing

If you struggle to be personable, or find yourself adopting a bland corporate tone or a stuffy academic voice, Henneke has some great tips for changing things around.

### **Chapter Fourteen: Encouraging Readers to Subscribe to Your Blog**

[41 Tips that Put Over 10,000 People on My Email Subscriber List](#), Ramsay, Blog Tyrant

This (regularly updated) post is packed with great advice for growing your online presence, particularly your email subscribers. Some of these are broad tips (e.g. about consistency) and others are very specific tips, like redirecting first-time commenters to a “thank you” page.

[16 Ridiculously Simple Ways To Get More Email Subscribers in Less than 5 Minutes](#), Kevin J. Duncan, OptinMonster

These tips are all very specific, quick ones you can put into action right away ... and chances are, you won't have come across many of them before.

## **Chapter Fifteen: Using Calls to Action**

[Calls to Action – 12 Tips to SNAP Readers Out of Passivity](#), Darren Rowse, ProBlogger

Great advice from Darren on why calls to action are important, with key tips on how to make them work (such as “make the action simple and achievable”).

[20 Mistakes That Will Undermine Your Call to Action and Cost You Sales](#), Greg Digneo, Copyblogger

If you're struggling to write calls to action, or if yours don't seem to be working, give this post a read. Greg splits these mistakes into three levels (beginner, intermediate and advanced) to help you find the appropriate help for the stage you're at.

## **Part Five: Analysing What's Working**

### **Chapter Sixteen: Using Google Analytics to Grow Your Readership**

[The Absolute Beginner's Guide to Google Analytics](#), Kristi Hines, Moz

In this in-depth post, Kristi explains everything you need to know to get started with Google Analytics, from installing it to setting up goals. She includes a handy list of frequently asked questions, too.

[20 Must-Know Tips & Tricks To Master Google Analytics Data](#), Jake Rocheleau, Hongkiat

If you've got Google Analytics installed but you're not sure you're using it as fully as you could, this article has loads of clever tips for you to try out – from seeing how engaged your readers are to discovering which sites are linking to you.

### **Chapter Seventeen: Key Metrics That Show How Your Blog is Doing**

[15 Blog KPIs You Should Already Be Tracking](#), Pamela Vaughan, Hubspot

This business-focused post looks at different KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) that matter on your blog – from simple ones like overall visits to more complicated ones like conversion rate and top lead-generation or customer-generation posts.

[The 4 Types of Content Metrics That Matter](#), Jay Baer, Ceros

This post takes a higher-level view of metrics, dividing them into four key categories (consumption, sharing, lead generation and sales) and explaining why each one is important.