

## How to write a blog post

Why blog? Research is all about the discovery of new things. That makes it a rich source of interesting stories that can be turned into blog posts. Blogging offers a more informal, personal and engaging format for writing about your research that can communicate your work to wider audiences than you'd reach by publishing a research paper or presenting at a conference.



### Who is the blog for?

Consider who you're writing for above all else. Having your reader firmly in mind will help you hone what you want to say and how you want to say it. Even if you are aiming your blog at several different audiences, having one person in mind when you're writing makes for a stronger piece.

### Find your story

Ask yourself what your chosen reader would be interested in? Make the content relevant and interesting for them.

Things that are new, weird or surprising, notable (biggest, smallest, oldest, longest), or have a personal angle all make a good story.

If you can hang your piece off a topical 'hook' then so much the better. Even if the research is only tangentially related, if you can grab people's interest by linking your research in with what's in the news or a particular anniversary or awareness day (and therefore already on people's minds) you have a greater chance that they will want to read your piece..

### Structure it carefully

Put the main point in the first paragraph, and then expand upon it. Think of an **inverted pyramid** when you write, with the key information (the 5Ws: Who, What, Why, When, Where) in the first couple of paragraphs and the supporting details towards the end.

Write only one idea per sentence, and keep sentences short. Use only the words you need to get the essential information across.

## Make it easy to scan

Keep paragraphs short too: people don't read web pages, they scan them, so having short, meaty paragraphs is better than long rambling ones. You can also use lists - but not long ones. Studies have shown that people can only reliably remember 7-10 things at a time.

Sub-headings, pictures, pull quotes and boxes all help to keep the text scannable and signpost the main points of the piece.

## Write like a human!

Write as if you're speaking to another person, not like a robot. Avoid academic jargon, or if you really have to use a technical term define it or explain it in way that a non-expert would understand. Even if you're writing for fellow specialists, they still may not be familiar with terms used in your particular niche. Everyone appreciates plain English.

Use active words - tell your readers what to do. Avoid the passive voice. Keep the flow moving.

## Think about format

Some blogs may have defined formats for articles - for example there are 'listicles' (see '**Seven things you probably didn't know about life in medieval castles**'), **personal profiles**, **longer-form pieces** going into more depth about a topic, or **opinion/comment pieces** giving an expert view on something in the news. Blog editors can advise on what format might suit your idea, or if you're writing for your own blog you could consider adopting some of these styles - or coming up with your own.

You could also consider writing for The Conversation academic blogging platform which has a wide international readership. Specialist editors work with academics on blog posts and they are only published when both parties are happy. Find out more about **pitching an article idea** to them and contact the Research Engagement and Communications team or press office for advice and support.

## Include images and/or video

Aim to include at least one picture with your blog post - it makes your content more visually appealing and the old adage that a picture is worth a thousand words is true. However, it's important to use the right image to convey your message. Poor quality or inappropriate images can undermine your content. Dismal, poorly-lit pictures of a distant figure presenting at a conference will not encourage people to read your blog post.

Check that your image or video clip:

- Is of sufficient resolution/size (at least 72 dpi resolution, or around 600 pixels across for a standard image on a web page (or 1400 for a larger banner image)
- Is in focus, properly lit and well framed/composed
- Is licenced for use - **pixabay** and **wikimedia commons** are good free sources of images
- Has appropriate consent from subjects appearing in the image
- Does not include inappropriately dressed subjects.

### Other useful guidance from the Research Communications and Engagement Team:

- Communications planning toolkit
- Writing a blog post
- Writing a policy brief
- Using social media
- Measurement and evaluation
- Audience development and networking

 For more information, please contact:

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