

BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

HOW TO WRITE A BLOG POST

Blogging offers a more informal, personal and engaging format for writing about your research. It allows you to 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 your audience above all else. Focusing on your reader will help you hone what you want to say and how you 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.
- Ask, "what is my chosen reader interested in?" Make the content relevant and interesting for them. Why should they care about your research?

Find your story

- Write about things that are new, timely, weird or surprising, notable (biggest, smallest, oldest, longest), or have a personal angle. All make a good story.
- Hang your piece off a topical 'hook' to attract more readers. Grab people's interest by linking your research with what's in the news – even if it's only tangentially related – or a particular anniversary or awareness day.

Choose a platform

- **The Conversation** is an academic blogging platform with specialist editors and a wide international readership. Contact the Research Engagement and Communications team or Press Office for advice about [pitching an article](#).
- **Connecting Research** is the University blogging platform dedicated to showcasing research from Reading academics. The site draws upwards of 20,000 page views every month.
- **Personal or subject-specific blogs** can help you build a strong following with a specific audience.

Structure it carefully

- Put the main point in the first paragraph and then expand on 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.
- Some blogs may have defined formats for articles. Examples include 'listicles' (see '[Seven things you probably didn't know about life in medieval castles](#)'), [personal profiles](#), [deep dives](#) on a particular topic, or [opinion/comment pieces](#) that give 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.

Make it easy to scan

- Write only one idea per sentence, and keep sentences short. Use only the words you need to get the essential information across. Keep your overall **word count** between 800 and 1200 words – although different platforms may have different requirements.
- Keep paragraphs short, too. Short, meaty paragraphs are easier to scan 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, images, pull quotes and boxes all help to keep the text scannable and signpost the main points of the piece.

Write like a human!

- Avoid academic jargon. If you really have to use a technical term, define or explain it in way that a non-expert would understand.
- Spell out acronyms the first time they are used. Even if you're writing for fellow specialists, they still may not be familiar with terms used in your specific area.
- Write in plain English. Use active words and avoid the passive voice. Keep the flow moving.
- If it's appropriate, make it personal. Personal stories are always more engaging than something generic.

Include images and/or video

- The old adage is true: a picture is worth 1000 words. Aim to include at least one with your blog post to make your content more visually appealing.
- But make sure you use the right image to convey your message. Poor quality, poorly-lit, unimaginative or inappropriate images can undermine your content.

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.

Promote your piece

- Once your blog has gone live, you want people to read it!
- The Research Communications team will share your blog on social media (our primary channels are the [Research at Reading BlueSky](#), [X](#) and the [University of Reading LinkedIn](#)), but any additional promotion you can do yourself will make a big difference.
- Share with your networks on your preferred social media platform – and make sure to tag and use hashtags!