

One Page: Writing a Blog That Isn't Blah

1. A blog is merely a format. Just like the inverted pyramid is merely a format. It is a vessel that can contain any content. News. Opinion. Observation. Promotion.
2. Your blog should have a narrow focus that you can describe in one word. Me. Breaking News. City Schools. Peeps. Immigration. Doggies. These are all good topics for blogs. ... The newspaper staff. News. Education. Marshmallows. Hot-button issues. Animals. These are all bad topics for blogs.
3. Event-driven blogs are easier to write than author-driven blogs. Ask yourself: What events will drive my posting schedule? Answers like school board meetings, basketball games, arrests or the 3 p.m. story conference probably bode well. Answers like "Waking up and not wanting to get dressed" probably do not.
4. A post is not an article. It is a single idea. If you think to yourself "This post needs a better transition" or "I really did a good job reflecting all sides of the issue" then your post is probably too long.
5. Post at least once a day. This works in conjunction with Number 4. Shorter posts = more frequent posts = more visits = more ad impressions = more revenue = your paper stays solvent. Maybe.
6. Don't wait to post. If you have one new tiny bit of information, then post it. This shouldn't be hard. You're in the news business. Your readers will get the next bit of information in the next post.
7. Be conversational. Don't be afraid to use first person and second person pronouns if you can do it without sounding condescending. Try this: When you write a post, imagine that you're appearing on a radio show as an expert on your topic. Write posts in the same voice you'd use to respond to questions from the host and from listeners.
8. Be authentic. You aren't Jon Stewart. You aren't Barry Saunders. Speak with your own voice, as frightening as that may sound.
9. Be a good host. Your blog is your house. Invite people in. Introduce them to each other. Throw a party, but be sure your guests know whether you're serving crumpets or doing keg stands.
10. If you don't like word "blog," don't use it. Call it "dispatches." Call it "filing string."

Further Reading:

- <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/02/14/bloggng-for-beginners-2/>
- http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging
- www.niemanwatchdog.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=background.view&backgroundid=00193

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