

# Blogging Checklist

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## Before You Start

1. **The "So What?" question.** What visitor, guest, or customer need or question does this post answer? How will it fit into your blog's topics and category structure, which then feeds into your overall marketing plan?
2. Have a plan for what you are going to blog about and when - an **editorial calendar**. Use a simple spreadsheet, a Word document, or even a sheet of paper for upcoming posts. List which topic/category the blog post falls under, its title, short overview of the content including any needed graphics/video/audio, keywords/SEO for the post, which of your visitor personas it is for, and your CTA (call to action – what do you want the reader to *do*?)
3. What sort of **image(s), graphics, audio, or video** will add to the storytelling or informational punch of the post? If you don't have them on hand or available through appropriate channels online (for photos check Pixabay, Unsplash, or Flickr Creative Commons pools) you may need to set aside time for your own photo/video shoot.
4. What are the **keywords**/key phrases that people will use to find this post? What is it about? Provide the answer to what your market is Googling for, *in the words that they use to search for it*.
5. A note on "writer's block...." Some people get into a groove by starting with the post title. Some lay out a quick list of points they want to make, then start building supporting sentences/paragraphs, and they figure out the title at the end. Some just start writing and sort it all out through the review and editing process. If you feel stumped, **think of how you'd say the words to a visitor standing right in front of you**, and begin with that.

## Building a Blog Post

1. Opening short paragraph or two, drawing people into the post (often a good quote works.) Put your chosen keywords and phrases right up there at the top. Punch readers right in the face with where you're going with the post; avoid "throat-clearing." **Front-load the good stuff**, don't bury it.
2. Build out the points you want to make, using a combination of sections,

sub-headers (h1, h2, or h3 tags in HTML,) bolding, bullet points, and single sentences standing alone. Solid blocks of text are hard to read online; break them up with **white space**. Include some sort of visual (static image or video) or audio element whenever possible. Try for 300-500 words minimum.

3. **Link internally** to previous posts of yours that provide additional background information, or internal website pages as applicable. **Link out** to other helpful information when it makes sense. Use descriptive, SEO-friendly **anchor text** as the hyperlink, not phrases like "click here" (unless it's something like, "click here for more about the 2019 BlahBlah Festival.")

4. Close with your CTA (Call to Action.) **What do you want readers to DO?** Visit a certain website? Sign up for something? Like a Facebook Page? Share the post (via your Share buttons) with their social networks? Comment?

5. Spend time on your **blog post title** – it's critical. It should include your keywords, and it will often determine whether someone clicks through when they see the post link on social networks. Make it sing.

6. If you're on WordPress, **use an SEO plugin** like Yoast SEO. Fill out your meta-description, tags, etc. so your post will be found.

## Wait, There's MORE Work?!

1. Have a plan for how people are going to find your blog post, because there's **work to do after you hit Publish**.

2. **Plan out distribution** on your social media channels, to your blog subscribers through email, and inclusion in your email newsletter.

3. **Archives:** Have a plan to re-share your past posts across social networks, especially evergreen and seasonal posts. Use them to help answer visitor questions on social media. If on WordPress, the Broken Link Checker plugin helps ensure that older posts stay accurate.

4. A possible **blog post format example** for when you have brain lock:

"Great Local Breakfast Places in XYZ"  
Strong opener, often a quote  
(bullet list or 3 headers)  
Mom's Cafe (farm-to-fork)  
Selena's Taqueria (breakfast tacos)  
Fred's Downtown Diner (Old School)  
Closing words, call to action

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