

LEARNING MADE EASY



6th Edition

Blogging

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Choose a blogging
topic and platform

Use your blog to build
your personal brand

Monetize your blog
through advertising

Amy Lupold Bair

*Author of Raising Digital Families
For Dummies*

Blogging

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand



Blogging

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

6th edition

by **Amy Lupold Bair**

for
dummies[®]
A Wiley Brand

Blogging For Dummies®

Published by: **John Wiley & Sons, Inc.**, 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774, www.wiley.com

Copyright © 2016 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey

Published simultaneously in Canada

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning or otherwise, except as permitted under Sections 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without the prior written permission of the Publisher. Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permissions>.

Trademarks: Wiley, For Dummies, the Dummies Man logo, Dummies.com, Making Everything Easier, and related trade dress are trademarks or registered trademarks of John Wiley & Sons, Inc. and may not be used without written permission. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. is not associated with any product or vendor mentioned in this book.

LIMIT OF LIABILITY/DISCLAIMER OF WARRANTY: THE PUBLISHER AND THE AUTHOR MAKE NO REPRESENTATIONS OR WARRANTIES WITH RESPECT TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE CONTENTS OF THIS WORK AND SPECIFICALLY DISCLAIM ALL WARRANTIES, INCLUDING WITHOUT LIMITATION WARRANTIES OF FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE. NO WARRANTY MAY BE CREATED OR EXTENDED BY SALES OR PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS. THE ADVICE AND STRATEGIES CONTAINED HEREIN MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR EVERY SITUATION. THIS WORK IS SOLD WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PUBLISHER IS NOT ENGAGED IN RENDERING LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, OR OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES. IF PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE IS REQUIRED, THE SERVICES OF A COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL PERSON SHOULD BE SOUGHT. NEITHER THE PUBLISHER NOR THE AUTHOR SHALL BE LIABLE FOR DAMAGES ARISING HEREFROM. THE FACT THAT AN ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE IS REFERRED TO IN THIS WORK AS A CITATION AND/OR A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF FURTHER INFORMATION DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE AUTHOR OR THE PUBLISHER ENDORSES THE INFORMATION THE ORGANIZATION OR WEBSITE MAY PROVIDE OR RECOMMENDATIONS IT MAY MAKE. FURTHER, READERS SHOULD BE AWARE THAT INTERNET WEBSITES LISTED IN THIS WORK MAY HAVE CHANGED OR DISAPPEARED BETWEEN WHEN THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN AND WHEN IT IS READ.

For general information on our other products and services, please contact our Customer Care Department within the U.S. at 877-762-2974, outside the U.S. at 317-572-3993, or fax 317-572-4002. For technical support, please visit www.wiley.com/techsupport.

Wiley publishes in a variety of print and electronic formats and by print-on-demand. Some material included with standard print versions of this book may not be included in e-books or in print-on-demand. If this book refers to media such as a CD or DVD that is not included in the version you purchased, you may download this material at <http://booksupport.wiley.com>. For more information about Wiley products, visit www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Control Number is available from the publisher: 2016940948

ISBN: 978-1-119-25780-6

ISBN 978-1-119-25781-3 (ePub); ISBN 978-1-119-25782-0 (ePDF)

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Contents at a Glance

Introduction	1
Part 1: Getting Started with Blogging	5
CHAPTER 1: Discovering Blog Basics	7
CHAPTER 2: Entering the Blogosphere	29
CHAPTER 3: Choosing and Hosting Blog Software	45
Part 2: Setting Up Your Blog	73
CHAPTER 4: Starting a Blogger Blog	75
CHAPTER 5: Starting a WordPress Blog	99
CHAPTER 6: Starting a Tumblr Blog	119
CHAPTER 7: Creating a Squarespace Blog	131
Part 3: Fitting In and Feeling Good	143
CHAPTER 8: Finding Your Niche	145
CHAPTER 9: Creating Great Content	159
CHAPTER 10: Building Community with Comments	173
CHAPTER 11: Blogging Anonymously	193
Part 4: Going Beyond Words	203
CHAPTER 12: Working with Photos	205
CHAPTER 13: Starting a Podcast	221
CHAPTER 14: Diving into Vlogging	241
CHAPTER 15: Leveraging Community with Forums	249
Part 5: Marketing and Promoting Your Blog	259
CHAPTER 16: Making Your Blog Easy to Find	261
CHAPTER 17: Getting to Know Social Networking	271
CHAPTER 18: Joining the Big Four Social Networks	283
CHAPTER 19: Measuring Blog Presence	301
Part 6: Getting Business-y with It	315
CHAPTER 20: Making Mad Mad Money	317
CHAPTER 21: Blogging for Companies	333
Part 7: The Part of Tens	349
CHAPTER 22: Ten Ways to Grow Community	351
CHAPTER 23: Ten Things All Bloggers Should Do	359
Index	367

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	1
About This Book	1
Foolish Assumptions	2
Icons Used in This Book	3
Beyond the Book	3
Where to Go from Here	3
PART 1: GETTING STARTED WITH BLOGGING	5
CHAPTER 1: Discovering Blog Basics	7
Making Yourself Comfortable with Blogs	8
How people use blogs	9
Recognizing a blog	14
Blog anatomy: Dissecting a typical blog	17
Starting a Blog	21
Choosing What to Blog About	23
Creating a Successful Blog	24
Setting goals	24
Writing well	25
Posting frequently	26
Interacting with comments	26
Designing for Success	27
CHAPTER 2: Entering the Blogosphere	29
Assessing Your Involvement	30
What Happens When You Publish?	32
Blogging Ethically	33
Telling the truth	34
Making mistakes	36
Handling dialogue	39
Keeping Your Job While Blogging	39
Blogging without Embarrassing Your Mother or Losing Friends	41
Understanding what's at stake	42
Protecting others in your life	42
Protecting Your Privacy and Reputation	43
CHAPTER 3: Choosing and Hosting Blog Software	45
Having Your Own Domain Name	46
Picking a domain name	46
Registering a domain	49

Finding Web Hosting	51
Doing your research	52
Buying web hosting	53
Deciding on the Right Blogging Software	55
Budgeting for software	57
Making sure you get the basics	58
Upgrading with bells and whistles	60
Understanding Hosted Blog Software	61
Reaping the benefits	61
Living with the limitations	62
Choosing hosted software	63
Understanding Blog Software That You Install on Your Own Server	67
Reaping the benefits	67
Living with the limitations	68
Choosing non-hosted blogging software	69
Installing blog software	71
PART 2: SETTING UP YOUR BLOG	73
CHAPTER 4: Starting a Blogger Blog	75
Starting a Blog with Blogger	75
Creating an account	76
Naming your blog	76
Using the Dashboard	78
Writing a Post	79
Adding a link	80
Spellchecking your text	82
Including an image	82
Publishing Your Post	84
Previewing your post	84
Configuring post settings	85
Launching your post	86
Viewing Your Blog Post	86
Selecting the Dashboard Settings	87
Making basic changes	88
Making comment changes	89
Making email changes	90
Customizing Your Blog	91
Choosing a new template	92
Using the Template Designer	93
Editing page elements	96

CHAPTER 5: Starting a WordPress Blog	99
Choosing between WordPress.com and WordPress.org.....	100
Installing WordPress.....	102
Registering a domain	102
Selecting web hosting.....	103
Getting the software.....	104
Uploading the WordPress files	105
Setting up the database	107
Running the install script	109
Getting Familiar with Settings	111
Logging in	111
Setting up an Editor account	111
Using the Dashboard	113
Checking out the panels.....	115
Creating a Post.....	115
Customizing Your Design	117
Finding Out More about WordPress.....	118
CHAPTER 6: Starting a Tumblr Blog	119
Introducing Micro Blogging	120
Starting a Micro Blog with Tumblr	121
Creating a Text Post	122
Formatting your blog post	123
Adding an image to your post	124
Adding links to your post	125
Publishing your post	126
Creating Non-Text Tumblr Posts.....	126
Customizing How Your Blog Looks	127
Configuring Your Settings.....	129
CHAPTER 7: Creating a Squarespace Blog	131
Creating a Squarespace Account	132
Selecting a template	132
Choosing a site name	134
Adding Blog Content.....	135
Uploading images	137
Importing content from other platforms.....	139
Customizing and Connecting.....	140
Linking your social networks.....	140
Using the Squarespace sidebar.....	142

PART 3: FITTING IN AND FEELING GOOD	143
CHAPTER 8: Finding Your Niche	145
Deciding What Belongs on Your Blog.....	145
Parent blogging	147
Turning your offline hobby into a blog.....	148
Talking technology.....	148
Getting political with it	149
Reporting news	150
Revealing it all	151
Sharing a deal.....	151
Design, lifestyle, DIY – oh my!	152
Examining a new niche.....	152
Learning from the Pros.....	154
Lurking on other blogs	155
Participating by commenting.....	156
Reaching Out to Other Bloggers.....	157
Meeting in person	157
Using social networks.....	158
CHAPTER 9: Creating Great Content	159
Knowing Your Audience	160
Finding your competitors	160
Discovering the secrets of success	161
Profiling your audience.....	164
Writing Well and Frequently	166
Linking to Serve the Reader	168
Breaking Through a Blank Screen.....	170
CHAPTER 10: Building Community with Comments	173
Getting Interaction Going with Comments	174
Getting involved.....	174
Enabling comments.....	176
Managing Comments	178
Establishing community guidelines	178
Editing comments	180
Deleting comments.....	181
Moderating comments.....	182
Recognizing Spam Comments.....	183
Fighting Spam with Software.....	187
Protecting your comment form.....	187
Screening for spam.....	189
Dealing with Coverage on Other Blogs	191

CHAPTER 11: Blogging Anonymously	193
Deciding How Much Anonymity You Need	194
Going Anonymous	196
Establishing a pseudonym	196
Setting up a new email address	196
Choosing passwords	197
Starting your anonymous blog	197
Being time and location aware	198
Approaching Content Cautiously	198
Stepping Up Security	199
Understanding IP addresses	199
Using software safely	200
Keeping up	201
Resources	202
PART 4: GOING BEYOND WORDS	203
CHAPTER 12: Working with Photos	205
Getting Equipped	206
Picking a digital camera	206
Choosing photo-editing software	207
Choosing a photo-sharing tool	210
Choosing Visuals for Your Blog	213
Taking photos	213
Using art from other sources	214
Editing Photos	215
Getting photos into Google Photos	216
Cropping a photo	216
Adjusting brightness and contrast	217
Adjusting color	218
Optimizing a photo for the web	218
Inserting Photos into Blog Posts with Flickr	218
CHAPTER 13: Starting a Podcast	221
Deciding to Podcast	222
Reaching a wider audience	223
Choosing between audio and video	224
Planning Your Podcast	225
Assessing the Tools	227
Dressing Up Your Podcast with Music and Sound Effects	228
Creative Commons Search	229
Magnatune	230
Freesound	230
Free Music Archive	231

Publishing Your Podcast.....	231
Assigning metadata.....	231
Choosing a format.....	232
Storing your podcasts.....	232
Delivering your podcasts.....	234
Promoting Your Podcast.....	234
Adding your podcast to FeedBurner.....	234
Adding your podcast to iTunes.....	237
Getting listed in podcast directories.....	239
CHAPTER 14: Diving into Vlogging.....	241
Defining Vlogging.....	241
Understanding why you should vlog.....	242
Discovering available vlogging platforms.....	243
Setting the Stage.....	245
Choosing the right equipment.....	245
Creating a vlogging space.....	245
Editing Your Vlog.....	246
Promoting Your Vlog.....	247
CHAPTER 15: Leveraging Community with Forums.....	249
Deciding Whether Forums Will Work for You.....	250
Researching Software Options.....	252
Choosing between Free and Commercial Forum Software.....	252
Browsing commercial forum software.....	253
Perusing open source forum software.....	253
Getting Finicky about Features.....	254
Installing Forum Software.....	256
Cultivating Community Standards.....	257
PART 5: MARKETING AND PROMOTING YOUR BLOG	259
CHAPTER 16: Making Your Blog Easy to Find.....	261
Diving into SEO.....	261
Understanding SEO.....	262
Creating an SEO-friendly blog.....	262
Utilizing SEO tools.....	263
Branding Your Blog.....	264
Telling them what you're going to tell them.....	264
Showing them what you're going to show them.....	264
Reaching Out with RSS.....	265
Getting the goods on web feeds.....	265
Breaking it down further.....	266
Generating web traffic.....	267
Creating a feed for your blog.....	268
Making the Most of RSS.....	269

CHAPTER 17: Getting to Know Social Networking	271
Thinking Strategically	272
Connecting with your audience	272
Selecting networks	273
Protecting your privacy online	274
Getting Familiar with Social Networks	274
Friend-based networks	275
Hobby-based networks	276
Professional networks	278
Media-sharing networks	278
Informational networks	280
Location-based networks	281
Sharing It All	282
CHAPTER 18: Joining the Big Four Social Networks	283
Joining Facebook	283
Creating a Facebook Page	284
Utilizing your Facebook Page	286
Understanding Twitter	287
Getting Started	289
Signing up for an account	289
Tweeting	291
Exploring the Settings	293
Tying Your Blog into Twitter	294
Getting Started with LinkedIn	294
Connecting through LinkedIn	294
Creating your LinkedIn account	295
Getting Pinny with It	296
Blogging and Pinterest	296
Creating Pinterest content	297
Utilizing Pinterest to grow your audience	299
CHAPTER 19: Measuring Blog Presence	301
Exploring the Power of Statistics	302
Knowing What the Statistics Mean	304
Hits	305
Page views	305
Unique visitors	306
Repeat visitors	306
Errors	306
Getting Web Stats	308
Choosing hosted statistics software	308
Choosing installable statistics software	310

Finding Out What Others Are Saying	312
Google Alerts	312
Twitter	314
Alexa	314
IceRocket.....	314
PART 6: GETTING BUSINESS-Y WITH IT.....	315
CHAPTER 20: Making Mad Mad Money	317
Finding Out How Advertising Works.....	317
Planning for advertising	319
Looking at the formats	319
Assessing business models	320
Getting Advertising Going	321
Google AdSense.....	322
Matomy SEO Media Group.....	323
SiteScout.....	323
Putting Ads on Your Blog	323
Putting Ads in Your RSS Feeds: Feedblitz.....	324
Getting Paid to Post.....	325
Placing products on your blog.....	325
Blogging professionally.....	326
Tying in Affiliate Marketing	326
Amazon Associates Program.....	327
Rakuten Affiliate Network	327
Seeking Sponsorships.....	327
Negotiating a sponsorship experience.....	328
Setting boundaries	330
Accepting Gifts, Not Obligations	330
Viewing Your Blog As an Influential Platform	331
CHAPTER 21: Blogging for Companies	333
Putting Blogs to Work for Your Business.....	334
Considering the benefits of a business blog.....	334
Checking out businesses that blog.....	335
Deciding whether to blog.....	336
Planning for Business Blog Success	338
Setting goals.....	338
Choosing a blogger	339
Deciding what to write	340
Generating sales or action	342
Delivering with Technology	343
Enabling comments.....	343
Creating RSS/web feeds	343
Podcasting	344

Starting a wiki	344
Joining a social network	344
Advertising on Blogs	345
Going contextual	345
Advertising via ad networks	347
Sponsoring a blog	347
PART 7: THE PART OF TENS	349
CHAPTER 22: Ten Ways to Grow Community	351
Write Often	352
Listen and Respond to Readers	352
Visit and Participate	352
Guest Blog and Invite Guest Bloggers	354
Communicate via Email and Newsletters	354
Get Social	356
Involve Your Readers	356
Connect Offline	357
Go Mobile	357
Diversify	358
CHAPTER 23: Ten Things All Bloggers Should Do	359
Discover Your Voice	359
Stoke Your Muse	360
Survey Your Readers	361
Find Your Tribe	361
Know Your Traffic Sources	362
Set Goals	363
Define Success	364
Create a Monetization Plan . . . or Not	364
Prepare to Grow	365
Know When You're Done	365
INDEX	367

Introduction

Allow me to be the first to welcome you to the *blogosphere*, an exciting and energetic space online that people are using to reach out, build communities, and express themselves. *Blogging For Dummies*, 6th Edition, is designed to help you through the process of starting a blog quickly, and it gives you the tools you need to make the most of your experience in the blogosphere. The entire book is updated and includes the very latest in blogging tips and tricks. Prepare to join the world of blogging!

About This Book

This book is designed to be useful for all kinds of bloggers, whether you're the CEO of a major corporation or a hobbyist with a passion for communicating. I focus on what makes a blog work — and how a blog can work for you. Also, I realize that not everyone has the technical skills necessary to start a blog, so I provide options for all levels of experience.

This book is useful to you whether you're taking part in the conversations in the world of blogs or becoming a blogger yourself. I cover everything from technology to legal issues, so you can go forward knowing you have a resource that covers every aspect of this exciting medium.

Whether you're building a blog as a rank beginner or redesigning an existing blog to make it better, you can find everything you need in these pages. The fact that you're holding this book likely means you have some ideas about starting a blog — and I want to get you started right away!

The first part of the book gets you blogging quickly and safely. Chapter 1 introduces you to blogging, Chapter 2 walks you through the world that is the blogosphere, and Chapter 3 helps you choose the software and tools you need to get started. In Chapter 4, I show you the fastest and easiest way to get started immediately with your very own blog.

However, you don't have to memorize this book or even read it in order. Feel free to skip straight to the chapter with the information you need and come back to the beginning later. Each chapter is designed to give you easy answers and guidance, accompanied by step-by-step instructions for specific tasks.

I include sidebars that give you more information, but you don't need to read those sidebars if you're short on time. A Technical Stuff icon also indicates helpful extras that you can come back to when you have more time.

Keeping things consistent makes them easier to understand. In this book, those consistent elements are *conventions*. Notice how the word *conventions* is in italics? That's a convention I use frequently. I put new terms in italics and then define them so that you know what they mean.

URLs (web addresses) or email addresses in text look like this: `www.resourcefulmommy.com`. Sometimes, however, I use the full URL, like this: `http://traction.tractionsoftware.com/traction` because the URL is unusual or lacks the `www` prefix.

Most web browsers today don't require the introductory `http://` for web addresses, though, so you don't have to type it in.

Foolish Assumptions

Just because blogs have a funny name doesn't mean they have to be written by funny people — or even humorous ones! If you can write an email, you can write a blog. Have confidence in yourself and realize that blogs are an informal medium that forgives mistakes unless you try to hide them. In keeping with the philosophy behind the *For Dummies* series, this book is an easy-to-use guide designed for readers with a wide range of experience. Being interested in blogs is all that I expect from you.

If you're new to blogs, this book gets you started and walks you step by step through all the skills and elements you need to create a successful web log. If you've been reading and using blogs for some time now, this book is an ideal reference that can help you ensure that you're doing the best job possible with any blog that you start or manage.

That said, you don't need to know much more than how to use a web browser, open and create files on your computer, and get connected to the Internet, so you don't need to be a computer genius, either.

Icons Used in This Book

Here's a rundown of the icons I use in this book:



REMEMBER

The Remember icon reminds you of an important concept or procedure to store away in your memory bank for future use.



TECHNICAL
STUFF

The Technical Stuff icon signals technical stuff that you might find informative and interesting, but that you don't need to know to develop the blogs described in this book. Feel free to skip over these sections if you don't like the techy stuff.



TIP

Tips indicate a trick or technique that can save you time and money — or possibly a headache.



WARNING

The Warning icon warns you of any potential pitfalls — and gives you the all-important information about how to avoid them.

Beyond the Book

In addition to what you're reading right now, this product also comes with a free access-anywhere Cheat Sheet that tells you how to select blogging software, guides you on what kind of blogger to be, and tells you all about the blogging software applications that are out there. To get this Cheat Sheet, simply go to www.dummies.com and search for "Blogging For Dummies Cheat Sheet" in the Search box.

Where to Go from Here

Turn to Chapter 1 to dive in and get started with an intro to blogs and an overview of why this medium is so exciting for so many people. If you just want to get started blogging today, read over Chapter 4. Otherwise, spend some time thinking about the best blog software solution for your situation — which you can read more about in Chapter 3. Already have a blog, but want to do more with it? I think Chapter 9's coverage of great content might be a great place to dive in. Good luck!

1

Getting Started with Blogging

IN THIS PART . . .

Recognizing the hallmarks of a blog, deciding what to blog about, and finding out how to be a successful blogger

Understanding what happens when you publish, setting your standards, and using some commonsense guidelines when it comes to your job, family, and identity

Getting a domain name, finding a good web host, determining whether to use hosted or non-hosted software, and getting your blog software in place

Chapter 1

Discovering Blog Basics

By now, you've probably heard the word *blog* tossed around by all kinds of people, seen it show up in news stories or cited on TV news broadcasts, or you may even have a child, friend, or coworker who has a blog. Bloggers are showing up inside businesses, and businesses are even using blogs to reach out to their customers. But what exactly do all these people mean when they say they have a blog? And what does a blog written by a teenager have in common with one written by a CEO?

Don't be too hard on yourself if you aren't exactly sure what a blog is. The word *blog* actually originated from a mash-up of two other words — web and log — so if it sounds made up, that's because it is. At its most basic level, a *blog* is a chronologically ordered series of website updates, written and organized much like a traditional diary, right down to the informal style of writing that characterizes personal communication. Over the years, the term *blog* has come to describe a wide variety of online communications and media. Blogging has come a long way!

In this chapter, you find out just what makes a blog bloggy and why so many people are outfitting themselves with one like it's the latest celebrity fashion trend. (Hint: It's not just that we're all narcissists!) You can get some ideas that you can use to start your own blog and become part of the *blogosphere* (the community of blogs and bloggers around the world).

Making Yourself Comfortable with Blogs

I talk to a lot of people about blogs, many of whom know that you find blogs online, but some who also have the impression that all blogs are written by extreme thinkers, cranky complainers, or fashion-obsessed teens. Some blogs really are diaries in which the blogger records the minutiae of day-to-day life — but blogs can be much more than that, and all kinds of people write them.

One of my favorite blogs (see Figure 1-1) falls into the personal diary category: The Bloggess (<http://thebloggess.com>). The personal blog of writer Jenny Lawson, The Bloggess follows everything from stories of taxidermied raccoons riding on cats to giant metal chickens left on doorsteps.

Think of a blog this way: It's a kind of website. All blogs are websites (the opposite isn't true, though), and neither the content nor the creator makes a blog a blog — the presentation does. A blog can be many things: a diary, a news source, a photo gallery, or even a corporate marketing tool. Blog content can include text, photos, audio, and even video, and bloggers talk about nearly any subject that you can imagine.



FIGURE 1-1:
The Bloggess
blogs about her
life — hilariously.

Source: www.thebloggess.com



One of the reasons blogs have become such a popular way of publishing a website is because they're particularly good at generating high search-engine rankings. If you have a blog, it's more likely than a standard website to come up high in lists of search results for the topics you discuss. The reason? Your posts are fresh and recent. Search engines give an extra boost to web pages that have the most recently updated or created content related to the keywords that someone is searching for. And better search-engine listings mean more visitors, more readers, more comments, and a more vibrant community. Individuals and companies have taken advantage of the blog medium to reach out to web users.

How people use blogs

With millions of blogs in the world — the blog platform Wordpress.com (<http://wordpress.com>) reports that a new Wordpress.com blog is created every six seconds — it's obvious that blogging is a popular and successful format for publishing a website. But just what are people doing with blogs? They can't all be posting pictures of their cats!

And they aren't. Bloggers are using the blog format to communicate effectively in all kinds of information spheres, from the personal to the professional. In fact, many blogs serve multiple purposes at the same time, mixing posts about activities at home with news pertaining to work. Your blog can serve many purposes in your life.

Documenting your life

A lot of folks use blogs for the same reason they might keep a diary — to chronicle their lives and activities. This urge to communicate appears in all kinds of mediums, from scrapbooking to taking digital photographs. If you're interested in sharing personal details with others, a blog gives you a fast, efficient way to do so.

If you send holiday newsletters every year or email a group of friends and family to let them know about exciting events in your life, you can have a lot of fun with a blog. You can blog as often as you want, and your readers visit when they're ready to get more information. Best of all, each blog post gives your friends and family a quick way to respond to you; they have only to leave a comment on your blog post. You might find you're talking more with your family than ever before!

Of course, not all lives come up roses every day; they can't all be wedding and travel blogs. Personal blogs can be intense when they document rough times. Amanda Henson (<http://itsmeamanda.com>), a Kentucky-based blogger, uses her

blog It's Me, Amanda, shown in Figure 1-2, to document her experiences with breast cancer along with other aspects of her life from family to career. She uses her blog as a place to share insights as well as the much-needed laugh:

"Halloween is the best time to go bald. The costume options are seemingly endless! Pirate? Aye! Zombie? Braaiinnsss! Cancer patient? Check!"

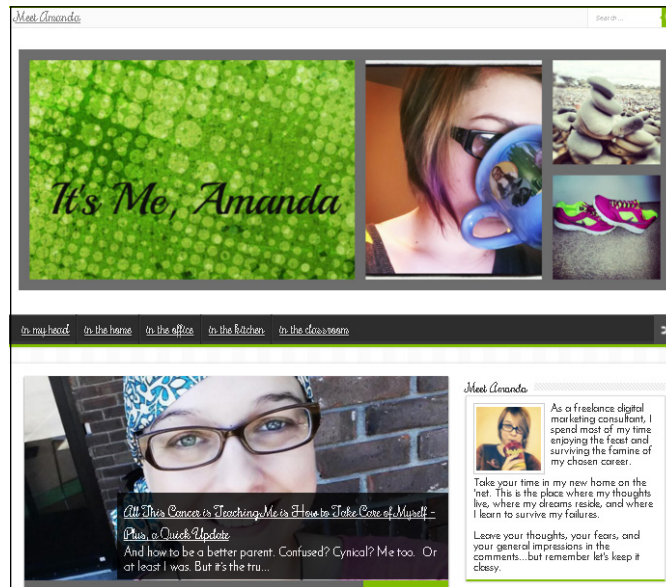


FIGURE 1-2: Amanda Henson uses her blog It's Me, Amanda to connect with others and cope with her illness.

Source: [www. itsmeamanda .com](http://www.it smeamanda.com)



WARNING

In your eagerness to let your friends know about what you're up to, don't forget that anyone in the world can access a blog (unlike a real diary or scrapbook), now and in the future. Don't publish anything that you might find embarrassing in the future, and have the same consideration when you talk about others or use photographs.

Exploring a hobby or passion

If you have a passion or hobby that you just love to talk about, consider doing so in a blog. Anyone who shares your interest is a potential reader and is bound to be looking for more information wherever he or she can find it.

You can detail your own experiences, offer advice to others, drum up support for whatever you like to do, or just talk about what you love. Best of all, you might be able to make connections with others who share your infatuation, making friends and finding ways to get involved with your hobby more deeply.

Bob Aycock blogs about one of his biggest passions: Disney. Magical Daddy (www.magicaldaddy.com) is his personal labor of love where he writes about his family and their love of all things Disney, from the parks to the movies, to the man and his mouse. Magical Daddy is also a great way for Bob to introduce readers to the Disney Parks Moms Panel, where he helped answer questions from future Disney Parks guests. Check out Magical Daddy in Figure 1-3.



FIGURE 1-3: Magical Daddy is the pixie-dust-filled online home of Bob Aycock.

Source: www.magicaldaddy.com

Sharing information

Sometimes a blog is all about sharing information. Journalists use blogs to report on local, national, and international news; critics and commentators use the medium to state their opinions and predictions; educators keep parents and students abreast of classroom happenings and dates; coworkers let colleagues in geographically distant offices know what's going on in relation to collaborative projects. The uses of the informational blog are really limitless.

One popular information blog is TechCrunch (www.techcrunch.com). This guide to all things Internet covers everything from the latest startups to the newest tech gadgets and, of course, is a frequently updated home to breaking news in the world of tech. You might not find every post useful, but if you're trying to keep up with the breakneck pace of technological innovation on the Internet, you may find TechCrunch (shown in Figure 1-4) and blogs like it invaluable resources.

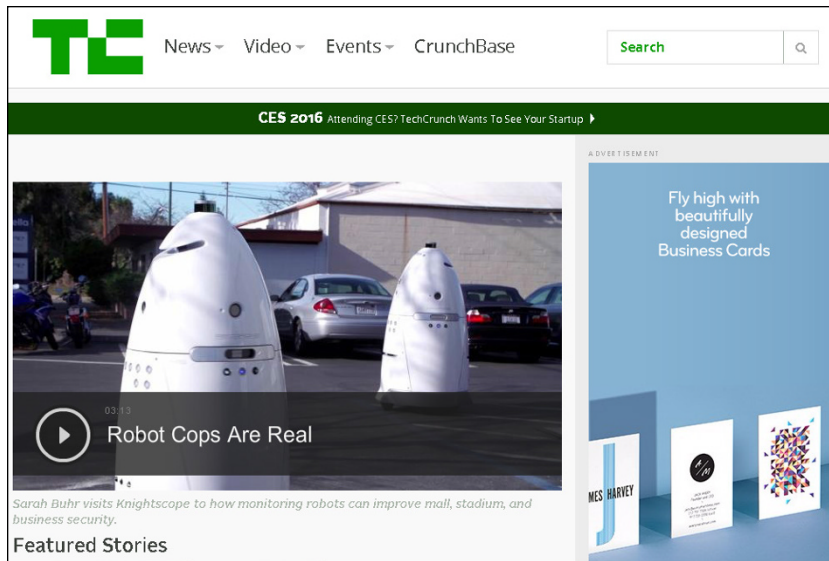


FIGURE 1-4: TechCrunch is your source for satisfying your gadget news appetite.

Source: www.techcrunch.com

Making money

You have spent a lot of time producing your blog, and that time has paid off in the form of a large audience. Why not turn that influence into dollars? That's a question many a popular blogger has asked, and you can make it happen in increasingly varied ways. As the online world changes and grows, so do the ways for you to cash in!

A common and straightforward technique involves including advertisements on your blog pages. For example, Google AdSense (www.google.com/adsense) provides in-page advertising that's designed to match the content of your blog and therefore be of interest to your readers. Each time a visitor to your blog clicks one of these advertising links, you earn money from Google. I talk more about making money from advertising programs, affiliate links, sponsorships, and more in Chapter 20.

Of course, companies haven't missed out on the fact that blogs can help them drum up interest in their products and services, or inform and connect with consumers. Many companies, small and large, have added blogs to their websites, and they use the blogs to start conversations with their customers and potential customers. In many cases, use of the informal voice of the blog medium has helped customers connect with the real people who work within these organizations. This personal connection improves a company's credibility and often enhances customer recognition of its brand and values.

Southwest Airlines has taken this approach on their blog, Nuts About Southwest (www.blogsouthwest.com). On the blog's About page, Southwest says, "Our goal