

Script: Blogging Script
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Blogging isn't new, but for a lot of journalists, it's still uncharted territory. If we're to define it, in its most common sense, we'd say that a blog a website that contains online personal reflections, comments from the audience and often hyperlinks provided by the writer.

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For journalists, though, blogs are a way to complement our regular news coverage...

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in a way that gives our readers, viewers and listeners a behind the scenes look at our coverage...

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in a space not limited by room on a printed page or time in a newscast. We're able to use blogs to get into deeper detail and to create a more immersive experience for the audience.

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Some of the best journalism blogs out there – attached to news publications – are those that have a narrow topic. For instance, maybe it's a newspaper's politics blog or weather blog. At the end of this video, I'll offer some ideas of niche blogs that might work well for high school journalists and the audience they serve. I'll tell you this now...

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...each of the examples I'm going to give you offer you and your staff the opportunity to post frequently. We've found that bloggers create a loyal community – among their readership and the other bloggers in that space. So, it's best to capitalize on that loyalty and give readers what they want: Regular updates. If possible, that means at least once a day... but at the very least, your staff should be posting weekly.

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When they do, they should be prepared to interact with readers. I mentioned the idea of community that's often built around a blog? Well, once you've opened the dialogue with readers by publishing that blog post, it's up to you to keep it going, by engaging with commenters.

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Let's face it: Good writing is good writing. But, to be a good blogger, you need to take it to a slightly higher level. Be conversational. Write in active voice. Keep in mind that your work will live online forever... so, words like "yesterday," "today," or "tomorrow" don't

work as well online as they do in print. People may be reading your blog posts days, weeks – even years – after you write it. A good blogger will include time references that makes sense.

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And finally, a good blogger will take full advantage of the power of the platform. We talked a bit about the idea of not being limited by time or space? Well, I dare you to try to publish video in your newspaper. You can't. But you sure can embed it in your blog. The best blogs have a nice mix of text, audio and video.

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Let's take all of that a step further – and talk about the elements that set a journalist's blog apart. For instance, when a journalist blogs, they're going to bring your attention to the news. What is happening right now? And, why do you need to know about it, right now. Newspapers that have breaking news blogs often find that those tend to draw the majority of their day-to-day Web traffic. That's because readers know they can go there – anytime day or night – to find the latest information as it's happening.

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Skilled bloggers posts may not always be long – but they are deep. That's because they're able to use the platform to deliver added value to their readers by bringing in other sources of information

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...and linking to other web sites. This is the beauty of the internet, right? We can link to other sources of information. Journalist and professor Jeff Jarvis has a saying about this – “Do what you do best and link to the rest.” The idea behind that is to use the web as it's intended, to continue to connect “like” pieces of information.

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And, while the stories you run in print or on the air *will* have context – they'll tell your audience why the issue matters to them... you and your staff can use the blog to provide some of your own perspectives and analysis...

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...for instance, and really get into the nitty gritty of why this matters and what's likely to happen next.

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For a lot of people, the idea of getting away from traditional print or broadcast platforms can be scary. If you don't know how to code using HTML, HTML5, CSS or Javascript... the idea of publishing online on a daily basis is understandably intimidating...

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...but most blogging platforms today have WYSIWYG interfaces. WYSIWYG: what you see is what you get. Trust me, I'm no expert when it comes to coding. For years, I've had my own "coding cheat sheet" and when I need to code something by hand, I copy, cut and paste it into a content management system. That photo you see on the right, though, that's a screenshot from the website my colleagues and I use to publish some of our student work... using WordPress.

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WordPress is among the most common of the blogging platforms out there. According to its own statistics, there are more than 20 million sites that use either WordPress dot com or WordPress dot org. You'll find they're pretty similar in interface... but the dot com site is free to use, while the dot org site isn't. What do you get for paying? Basically, the free sites are fairly templated, while the paid sites give you more control over appearance and functionality.

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Whichever WordPress site you think is best for you and your staff, I think you're going to find it very easy to use. When it comes time to create a post, you'll enter your text and format it just as you would using any standard word processing software. Even the icons on the interface are the same! And, it's very easy to upload and embed multimedia. In most cases, you'll upload photos directly. Video tends to work better when you upload to another site – like YouTube or Vimeo – first, and then embed it using a sharable embed code.

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Most importantly – both WordPress offerings make it very easy for you to both publish and read posts using mobile devices. The templates are purposely created to be responsive... so that your readers can enjoy your posts on desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile.

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The next most popular blogging platform is Blogger. You'll find that it offers you the same ease of use

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... but because it's a Google product, it has seamless integration with all of the other Google products, including YouTube and Google Analytics. Having that level of access to Google Analytics is definitely something to consider if measuring your audience – and its habits -- is something of interest to you and your staff.

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A couple of other platforms that are worth mentioning... Tumblr is popular among young people... and perfect for photo blogs. If you want to reach a fairly big reader base, Medium is for you. In addition, the post editor is easy to work with, the analytics are

built-in and the site encourages reader interaction. Weebly and Wix – while not as popular or as common – offer some easy, basic drag-and-drop options.

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So, I promised you some ideas for blogs you could add at your school. The most obvious? What about a sports blog? Chance are you're sending a reporter to cover the biggest games, meets and matches – so why wait until your next edition or your next newscast to publish those stories? Write up blog posts on the day of the game. Give people the breaking news... tell them who won, run the box scores, show off those great photos and videos... Reverse publishing, web to print, is not a bad idea... and sports is the best place to start.

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Idea number two? Create a repository for the daily announcements. Surely someone's going to want to get more info on something they heard at the start of the school day. Put those in a blog with links to the groups sponsoring events, or where and how to sign up for the ACT, where to buy a ticket to the homecoming dance... well, you get the drill. Moreover, this is also a good opportunity to break other news going on in your school. You might want to start live blogging school board or student council meetings – things that students might not attend en masse, but have an interest in what goes on there.

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Here's one more idea... A photo blog! What if you were to have a staffer whose main job it was to take one photo a day of something going on in the school... a true picture story. Then, you could publish that photo along with a caption to describe the who, what, where, when and why. Not only does it establish a defining moment each day... it can help you and your yearbook staff get a leg up on shooting candids!

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