

Blogging and Web Research Workshop

What is a blog?

- A **Blog** (or web log) is a discussion or informational site on the World Wide Web consisting of entries or posts, with the most current displayed first. Blogs can be original or curated, contain only text or text with images, can be written by one or many authors, and are often interactive - with readers leaving comments. Popular free services: Wordpress, Blogger.
- **Microblog** is a form of blog that is smaller in size. Popular free services: Twitter, Tumblr.
- **Photo Blog** is a form of blog focused more on images than on text. Popular free services: Instagram, Flickr, Pinterest.

Statistics from Wordpress: 19% of the web runs Wordpress, 75 Million sites globally, 34 Million new posts and 48 Million comments monthly, 66% in English

Why write a blog?

- Communicating with your community, family, friends
- Enlarging your circle, sharing your personal experience and point of view, telling people about your culture and community
- Learn how to write for a larger audience, interact with readers
- Improving your research and writing composition skills through regular practice
- Having fun!

How to Write a Blog Entry

This is how I write Katysblog. Remember that every writer must find her own voice, style, and audience. The best way to learn to blog is to read other people's blogs, then write your own. Expect to spend at least two hours a week working on your blog. Consistent publishing and quality makes your readers want to come back. I have been writing Katysblog since 2005, at the rate of over three entries a week, for a current total of 1,459 posts. I have 878 regular readers (blog subscribers). I also contribute articles to other blogs from time to time. **I welcome Gashora Girls Academy students as guest authors on Katysblog – send me email.**

In putting together each blog entry, I focus on three areas, in this order:

1. Topic
2. Images
3. Writing Composition

I consider a single topic for each entry, picking a subject that I find of special interest. Within that general requirement, each entry topic must also be one or more of the following:

- Entertaining
- Educational or Historical
- Newsworthy

That is, I decide what matters to me and my audience, then I write about it. I enjoy taking pictures and a photo often starts me writing a blog entry – expressing what I found of interest in that image. Once I start composing, I work to ensure that **not one word is wasted**. I see it as being respectful of my reader's time and precious attention to be succinct. Three words of advice for successful bloggers:

- Be authentic
- Be respectful
- Be brief

Once you have established your blog, ask people to read it and send you comments. You can also use web tools like HootSuite to cross-post to other social media venues. Part of blogging is doing research - checking facts carefully and providing links to references or data sources when available. Even after checking my work, I often have to go back to a published entry to make corrections or additions.

Research Using the Web

In writing your blog (and in your school work), research and accuracy are important. Here are some free online tools that will help you.

- **Public web-based search engines** including Google, Bing, and Yahoo can be used in complex ways to give sophisticated results:
 - Use a public web search engine to find what is inside a private website. Not all websites offer easy internal search or navigation. You can use a public search engine instead. *For example: typing "site:newtimes.co.rw women" into your search engine navigation bar will search the New Times website for articles about Women.*
 - To find pictures, search by "Images" not just by "Web". Type your terms into the search bar as usual then click on Images. *Use this to find a picture of your school.*
 - Search engines can function as a calculator by typing your equation into the search bar. This also works for currency conversion: *Type "\$5 in euros" as a test.*
 - A search engine can also be a dictionary. *Try typing "Define: intore" in the search bar for an example.*
 - For updates on current news stories, enter a search term and click "News".
- **Wikipedia** is a collaboratively edited, multilingual Internet encyclopedia. Millions of people contribute their knowledge to create the world's largest and most popular reference work. You can contribute to Wikipedia yourself – read more about the "CRA-W and Anita Borg Institute Wikipedia Project – Writing Wikipedia Pages for Notable Women in Computing". *Try searching for "Kinyarwanda" to see a sample Wikipedia article.*
- **Wolfram Alpha** uses free-form input, analyzes it and uses "curated data" (from real databases) to give you expert knowledge. *Type in "rwanda women education 1970 to 2014" to see what this tool can do.*

Resources

- Bing search engine: <http://www.bing.com>
- Bing Advanced search options: <http://onlinehelp.microsoft.com/en-us/bing/ff808438.aspx>
- CRA-W and Anita Borg Institute Wikipedia Project – Writing Wikipedia Pages for Notable Women in Computing: <http://www.cs.duke.edu/csed/wikipedia/>
- "A Fair(y) Use Tale" (a 2007 short film on fair use and the law by Eric Faden): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJn_jC4FND0
- Introduction to Blogging: http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging
- Teaching Copyright (for kids and teens - by the Electronic Frontier Foundation): <http://www.teachingcopyright.org>
- Google search engine: <http://www.google.com>
- Google Tips and Tricks: <http://www.google.com/insidesearch/tipstricks>
- Wikipedia: <http://www.wikipedia.org>
- Wolfram Alpha: <http://www.wolframalpha.com>
- Yahoo search engine: <http://www.yahoo.com>
- Yahoo Effective Searches: <https://help.yahoo.com/kb/search/SLN2242.html>