# blogging ·101·

THE ABC'S OF STARTING A BLOG FROM SCRATCH

## tradecraft

by ✉ ConvertKit

# IN THIS ISSUE

# Letter from the editor

**B**logging has evolved in so many ways since its earliest days nearly 20 years ago in the late 90s and early days of the Internet. We've gone from simple hard-coded HTML pages created by the early blog pioneers to hundreds of millions of individual blogs online today.

Whereas 20 years ago, most people would've asked what a blog is, today it's widely accepted and understood that many people have a blog. That's especially true for generations X and Y who were coming of age and growing up with the advent of the web.

But one thing that's still not widely understood is that blogs are not just an online journal – they are fueling one of the most powerful shifts in small business perhaps ever in the history of the world.

Blogs are the difference between advertising with infomercials to mail educational DVDs to customers and the ability to sell a digital download directly to customers all over the world, instantly. Blogs are the difference between teaching an art workshop in your small hometown to the three people who were interested and being able to teach art to thousands of people at the same time without having to leave your house.

Blogs have changed everything about what's possible for a budding entrepreneur, young or old. And it's the hope, the opportunity, and the aspiration that comes with that reality that attracts so many people to get started as bloggers, even now. There have never been so many blogs online as there are today and that number will only continue to grow. What better time is there to get started than right now?

Before you do, you should know: the game has changed. It's no longer enough to build a quick website and haphazardly post your thoughts here and there. There's too much noise coming from every direction to break through by simply hoping and aspiring to be great.

Breaking through the noise today requires careful thought and strategy. It requires you to intentionally choose a topic to cover persistently and an audience to serve like your business depends on it (because it does). It requires you to plan ahead for how you'll turn that blog into a business (a blog isn't a business in and of itself, after all), what platform you'll use, and what you'll write about.

More than anything, making it as a blogger today requires more than tactics. For beginners, blogging appears to be as much about the understanding of how the Internet works – marketing funnels, email marketing, metrics tracking, conversion rates, opt-in forms, affiliate marketing, ads, and all of the other things you think you're supposed to know – as anything. And that's why so many bloggers lose their way.

Blogging is also about the craft. It's about the thing you choose to write about day after day and week after week. It's about the work you put in to become more of an expert than 80% of the people in the world when it comes to your topic. It's about the long hours of research, writing, and editing. It's about caring enough to serve your audience with the best content on the web for your topic.

Your job isn't to start a blog. Your job is to start a blog that creates change in the people who read it. That's going to take real work, and it's going to take a relentless focus on honing your craft. But if you can approach it with the right attitude, you just might find that your blog turns into a business that turns into your full-time career doing work you believe in.

So, are you ready? This month's issue walks you through blogging 101. There's plenty of competition, but there will never be a better time to get started. So go, don't delay another second. You have work to do.

Happy writing,

*Barrett and the ConvertKit team*

# How to Choose a Blog Topic You Love

The biggest decision you have to make when you're starting a new blog is deciding what you'll be blogging about. The possibilities are endless and it's difficult to know here at the beginning which one will pan out. And even if you have a good idea for your topic, are you sure it's in a niche that will be specific but also last over time?

People search the Internet to solve a problem, learn, reach a goal, and/or be entertained (sometimes all of the above at the same time). To have a successful blog that stands out among the masses, you need to find a topic that suits you well and is specific enough to draw in a loyal readership while playing to those reader goals.

## How to choose your blog topic

Your blog topic will be the basis for everything you write, podcast, or make videos about on your new blog. That can feel like a lot of pressure when you're just getting started, but that's perfectly normal. The only way to move past the discomfort and fear is to make the best choice you can right now and get started, adjusting as you learn more over time.

The first step to finding a solid idea for a blog topic is to **make a list of all the topics you think you would enjoy blogging about.** Don't try to narrow it down at this point, just write down everything you can think of. If you need a little help brainstorming, here are some questions to ask yourself:

- When I was a kid, what did I spend time doing when no one was telling me what I should do?

- What are my hobbies?

- How do I spend my free time?

- What is the one topic I could go on about for hours if my friends or family let me?

- What types of classes did I enjoy in high school or college?

- What do I enjoy reading and learning about?
- If I could do one thing the rest of my life regardless of salary, what would I do?
- What's one thing I've been wanting to learn more about?
- If I had more free time, what would I spend it doing?

**Next, ask yourself "Is a goal of this blog to help me make a living?"** This may seem like an odd question to ask yourself when you're choosing a blog topic, but knowing that answer will help you qualify or disqualify ideas in your list. And maybe it's not "make a living" but more "bring in extra income" or "help me build up my savings". But as long as there is a monetary goal, your topic should have these three main qualities:

1. You should have interest in the topic
2. You should have some expertise on the topic (or at least a desire to build more expertise with time)
3. Other people should value the topic enough to pay money for products or services related to that topic

You've probably seen something like this in a venn diagram before.
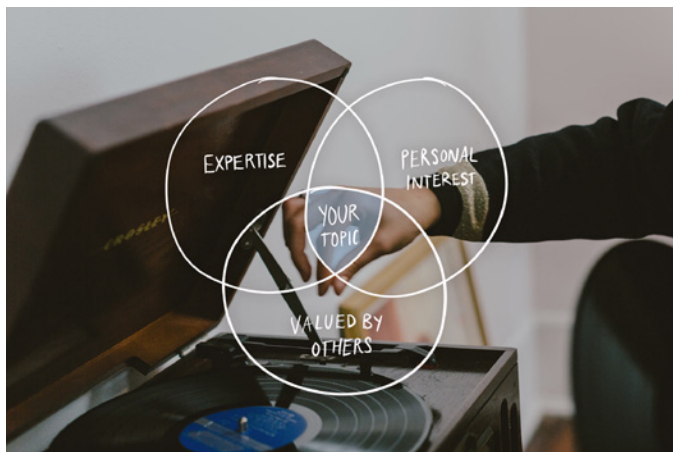


There will always be an audience that values information about any topic, so I wouldn't worry too much about that right now. Let's focus on your personal interest and expertise first.

- Being interested in your topic is obviously important. Don't choose a topic because of it's trendy vibe or how much everyone is talking about it. No matter how popular the subject might be, if you don't find value in

it, the blog just won't work. Your readers are smart and will be able to tell that your content isn't genuine. So stick with what you're interested in no matter what the hot topic of the day is.(The corollary, of course, is that if you're genuinely interested in a hot topic that's taking off in popularity, that might be a great fit!)

- [Expertise is one of the most valuable assets you can have as a blogger.](#) The more you know about a topic, the more you can teach about that topic. But that doesn't mean you're absolutely ruled out of starting a blog on a topic you have interest in just because you lack expertise. Instead, the corollary would be, the more you learn about your topic the more you can teach about that topic. This is sometimes referred to as being a "leading learner."

Don't give up on a choosing a blog topic just because you don't have pre-existing expertise. The journey will be more difficult than if you already had that expertise, but it is still possible if you're willing to learn.

If you need further inspiration, here's a list of blogging topics we've made for you, in the order of popularity for the blogging industry based on our [State of the Blogging Industry Report:](#)

| MOST POPULAR | SOMEWHAT POPULAR | A LITTLE BIT POPULAR | A TINY BIT POPULAR |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Personal development | Education | Crafts | Writing |
| Entrepreneurship | Web/Graphic Design | Culture | Music |
| Small business | Leadership | Management | Social Enterprise |
| Online business | Parenting | Faith | Sustainability |
| Productivity | Travel | Finance | Science |
| Marketing | Food & Beverage | Home Improvement | Sports |
| Lifestyle Design | Startups | Outdoor Recreation | News |
| Technology | Fashion & Lifestyle | Photography | Nonprofits |
| Career Development | Web Development | Interior design | Celebrities |
| DIY | Fitness | Art | Real Estate |

Of course there are hundreds of other potential topics for your blog, but we've found that this list gives you a good starting point in that it represents the majority of existing blogs.

# How to give more focus to choosing your blog topic

Once you've chosen your blog topic, it's time to make sure you've focused in enough to get started. Niche blogs are really where it's at these days. Honing your skills and topic into one very small area might sound like a bad idea, but this is how you build loyal followers. The more dedicated and narrow-focused you are for your blog, the more trust you build with an audience. Here are some ways to help you niche down.

## Be yourself

What's amazing about the blogging industry is that your unique personality plus your unique audience gives you an extra unique spin on your topic. That means that five blogs with the same topic might seem like drastically different blogs even though they cover essentially the same material.

## Get specific

It's a good idea to ask, "More specifically, what do I want to cover about this topic?" The goal in making your blog topic a bit more specific is to make it possible to differentiate your blog compared to all of the other blogs out there. For example, it would be tough to believe a given person is an expert on every kind of baking. But if you say you're the expert on baking breads, that's a much more believable statement.

## Create categories

Categories exist to give structure to your topic. That means the better defined blog categories you have, the clearer your focus is for your topic. For example, if you were starting a site about craft beer, you would need to create blog categories that help you tell your audience what aspect of craft beer you were talking about in each post. Tasting notes, brewing techniques, and the best places to find craft beer in Nashville, TN are all very distinct kinds of posts.

If you wanted to focus on the types of craft beers, your blog categories could be IPAs, Wheat beer, Stouts, Lagers, and Belgians. But if you wanted to focus on breweries, your blog categories might be Microbreweries, Regional Craft Breweries, and New Breweries. By creating these blog categories you'll help differentiate your blog about craft beer and narrow your focus for creating content.

Getting clear on specific blog categories of interest your readers might have related to your topic will also help you set up your content calendar, generate more blog post ideas, and will help your readers navigate your blog to find what they need.

*Pro Tip: If you're still in the process of deciding between a few topics, try to come up with five categories of content you can create on your blog within that topic. This brainstorming will help you find out if 1) you know enough about the topic to get started and 2) there is enough potential material to justify an entire blog on the topic.*

# Are you ready to choose your blog topic?

Choosing the right blog topic is the first step on your blogging journey. By identifying what you will love creating content around and thinking through whether it will be valuable to your readers you'll be more likely to stay true to your journey down the line.

If you haven't already, start making a list of all your blog topic ideas and start narrowing them down. Do you know what categories you would have or how you could create a unique spin on the topic? I'd love to discuss this more with you, so if you have any questions just reach out on Twitter.

*Dani Stewart*

CHOOSING an AUDIENCE

# Did You Know You Can Choose Your Blog Audience?

**W**hether you refer to it as your target market or your blog audience, the people who read, watch, or listen to your content are the most important people in your blog world. These blog readers are your advocates, your supporters, and hopefully your customers, so it's important that you pick the right blog readers. That's right– I said "pick".

You might think your blog audience chooses you, but do you know you can choose your blog audience?

No, I don't mean you can go out into the Internet and tell specific people that they have to be in your readership. You can't actually make people read your blog. Pretty sure that would have the exact opposite effect.

What I mean by "choosing your blog audience" could also be described as fostering or nurturing a blog reader through a journey. It's about whittling down a huge group of people to a targeted blog audience, because if you want a successful blog, you need the right audience.

That right blog audience is going to be different for everyone, but in general it needs to be a niched-down, loyal, dedicated, and excited group of readers.

## Two reasons why the right blog audience is important

Most people think "the bigger the better", right? Wouldn't a bigger blog audience automatically mean more sales, more social shares, and a more successful blog? It absolutely would, but only if you have the right audience.

It wouldn't matter how many views or hits you have on your site if no one is taking any action. Same for you email list. If you have 10,000 email subscribers but only 150 of them are active, would you call that a success?

You can do better, and the first step to doing better is understanding why the right blog reader is important in the first place. There are two main reasons why choosing the right audience for your blog is important.

**Reason #1: Choosing the right readers helps you know what kind of content to create.** Defining your ideal blog reader is a major step in narrowing down your topic and creating super targeted content just for them. After all, how can you begin creating content before you know who your blog audience is? And the more targeted your audience and content are, the easier it will be to create the kind of content that establishes you as an authority on your topic.

**Reason #2: Choosing the right readers means an increase in your conversions.** Again, thousands on thousands of page views don't mean much if you aren't making sales. A small handful of invested blog readers can be more powerful than a huge list of lukewarm visitors.

Once you've decided what kind of audience you're going after, you can create the targeted content that speaks to their goals and ambitions. It's in that space that you build the kind of trust and authority that leads to sales.

But you can't build your blog and expect the readers to flock. There's no honing siren that vibrates pulses of content energy to the right blog readers. You need to go looking for them.

# How to choose your blog audience

First things first, how to choose your blog audience begins with knowing what type of person you're going after. Now you might expect me to teach some kind of avatar exercise to define your perfect audience member. While I do think it's a great practice, you can read about creating avatars everywhere. It's been talked about enough. Instead, I want to talk about real people you already know.

When you put your ideal blog reader in terms of someone you know, everything changes. You likely already know their goals and ambitions for their life. You've probably talked about things like what they want to learn to grow in their career, who influences their work, or their favorite social media channels. With that info it's as if the clouds part and blog ideas just starting free-falling from the sky.

So how do you figure out who represents your ideal blog reader? Here's four steps to make it happen.

## Step 1 – Make a list of people

Open a word document or grab a sheet of paper and write down the names of at least 10 people you already know (ideally 25 or more) who you would love to have as readers and customers.

## Step 2 – Make a list of attributes you want in a blog reader

These attributes should describe your ideal reader, the person who would most benefit from learning about your topic. Why would they care about your topic? What are their struggles related to your topic? What inspires them about your topic? What motivates them to learn more about the topic?

## Step 3 – Compare the lists

Who on your first list has at least some of the attributes on your second list? If you don't know for sure, who on your first list is likely to have at least some of the attributes on your second list?

## Step 4 – Pick a name.

We need at least one name, but if you have more that's great. If you don't have one real name, then look through your contacts in your phone, Facebook friends, and LinkedIn connections until you find at least one person who fits the bill.

That one person now represents your ideal reader. Everything you write and create for your blog should be with this one human being in mind. By focusing on one specific person to start, you'll eventually find the universal content that matters most to what will be your now narrowed down blog audience.

I promise that if there is at least one reader like this, there will be many more just like them. It's like when your teacher would tell you not to be afraid to ask a question because most likely one of your classmates has the very same

question. That one person you narrowed down in this exercise is not alone in their goals and ambitions.

It's possible to have thousands upon tens of thousands of other blog browsers interested in that same niched content. It's just a matter of finding them.

## Where do you find your ideal blog reader in real life?

Now that you've picked your ideal reader for your blog, it's time to go into the Internet (and sometimes real life), find them, and connect.

### Identify your potential readers' hangouts

If you want to meet someone, you need to be where they're hanging out. What social media channels do they use? Are they in any Facebook groups or Slack communities?

And it doesn't need to be all virtual. Check out the local meetups in your area, attend conferences, or if you have the means, host your own meetup. Those face-to-face connections are powerful and should never be overlooked even though you're running an online business.

### Join in on the conversation

But it takes more than just showing up. Once you know where your potential blog audience is, get involved. You have to put your networking hat on and jump in the conversation. Lend your advice in forums (like Quora) and online communities. Spark up new conversation that gets people interested (but don't walk in guns blazing by promoting yourself and your new blog nonstop).

Doing this is also a great way to start coming up with blog topics. Ask your new community friends what problems they're facing in the industry and what they want to learn more about. It's like getting the results of a survey without having to actually send out a survey.

### Think outside the box

Every point of contact doesn't need to spring from your core topic. When you're looking for your ideal readers, think about other topics that correlate to yours that would draw similar people. For example, if your topic is about creating wedding cakes, you could also look through communities that focus on pastry baking or cake decorating.

## Who will be your blog audience?

Choosing your blog audience and then reaching out to grow your readership takes time. Stay persistent, keep reaching out, and get involved. The more you do and the more authentic and honest you are, the more your ideal reader will naturally be drawn to you and your work. Basically, keep being your smart, thoughtful, creative, helpful self– and do it in public.

Take time today and do Steps 1- 4 to start dreaming up your ideal reader and let me know how it goes. What attributes are you looking for in your blog reader? And where do you think you'll start looking for them? Share your thoughts on Twitter and let's discuss!

*Dani Stewart*
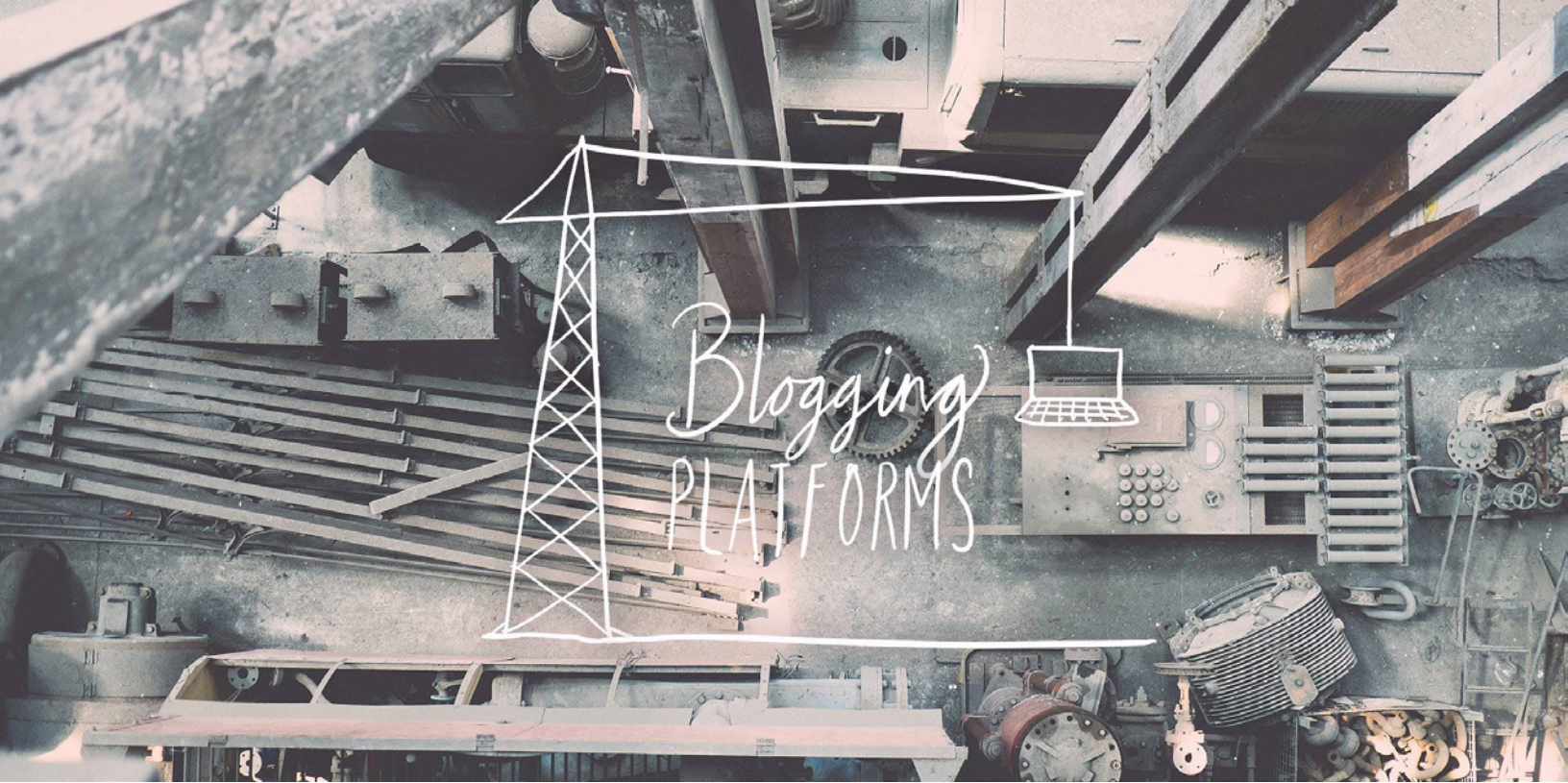
# How to Choose the Best Blogging Platform for You

**H**ey, soon-to-be-blogger! How's it going? A little overwhelmed? I know when you're just starting to think about blogging there's so much to figure out. You have to decided on your core topic, how you want to be seen as an online businessperson, how you want to interact with your audience, what you want to sell, how you'll sell it– the conceptual questions are never-ending and can give you reason to hesitate. If you think you have to have all those high-level questions answered before moving forward, it's possible you're going to be stuck in idle for a long time.

I want to take your mind off all those big picture decisions right now and help you make one quick and very basic decision today. Let's talk about what blogging platform you're going to use.

## How to choose a blogging platform

The first thing you have to figure out once you decide to build your blog is what you want to build it on. Tool #1 in your blogging handbag is your blogging platform.

You've probably heard people say that a professional blog has to be on WordPress or it has to be on Squarespace to be taken seriously. I don't think so.

Bloggers, like anyone else you'll meet in life, are individuals. There's no blogger mold we're cut from. We don't all operate the same way. We all have different levels of experience, creative processes, and goals we're trying to reach. And because of our unique differences even blogging platforms, the most basic of blogger necessities, will vary between all of us.

Different blogging platforms are designed for specific niches of bloggers. For instance, a beginner blogger would need a different platform than a geeked-out, code nerd

who wants customization and complete control of their blog's format and style. And someone solely working on building their email list wouldn't need a platform that joins blogging with e-commerce like a maker who blogs to help sell her physical products might.

Figuring out which of the many blogging platforms will work best for you involves some research. You need to think about cost, features, support, ease of use, integrations, design, and more. But to help you make this sometimes frustrating decision, I've gone ahead and done all that for you.

# The pros and cons of 7 top blogging platforms

Ready to dig into the pros, cons, and blogging features of some of the top platforms? There are absolutely more blogging platforms out there, but these are the ones we get asked about the most at ConvertKit. So take some time and read through the list and find the one that fits you and your blogging needs just right.

## WORDPRESS.ORG

**Price:**
Free + hosting and domain name

**In a nutshell:**
With 60 million users, WordPress is the largest blogging community on the web. But did you know there are two different versions of WordPress? This first one, WordPress.org, is where you can grab the content management system software for free. With only the software, you have to put in a bit of up front work to find a hosting company and domain name. But once you have those in place, you'll be set to have complete control over customizing your blog.

**Pros:**
- Offers self-hosting
- Gives you the power for customization and usability
- Allows custom plugins and themes
- Many host sites offer a free single-click install
- Great support

**Cons:**
- Need to buy a domain name and webhosting first
- You have to perform routine backups
- You have to maintain the blog on your own
- May not be easy for beginner bloggers

**WordPress.org works best for:**
- Serious bloggers of all genres.
- Bloggers who want complete control over their customization.
- New and experienced bloggers looking to maximize and capitalize on their site traffic.
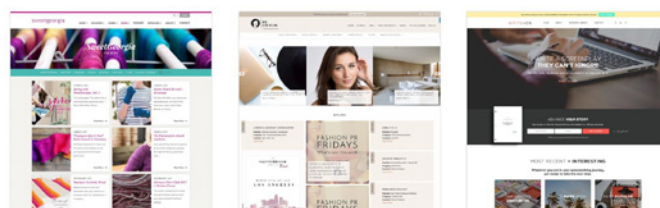


sweetgeorgiayarns.com/blog • prcouture.com • writeandco.com

## WORDPRESS.COM

**Price:**
Free – $24 a month

**In a nutshell:**
With around half of the blogging features as its .org sibling, WordPress.com is a more simple, no-hassle platform. With tools and features that can be used as advanced or as simple as you want them to be, think of WordPress.com as a starting point and maybe move to .org when you're ready to take on a more customized site.

**Pros:**
- Offers hosting and custom domains
- Multiple plans to fit your budget
- Plugins for social media, polls, etc.
- Hundreds of themes
- Mobile friendly
- Paid upgrades available

- Simple blog creation
- Great support

**Cons:**
- No custom themes, plugins, or HTML editing
- Have to pay for extras – custom domain name, third-party embeds
- Strict on their affiliate links policy
- Domain includes ".wordpress.com" unless you pay an extra fee
- Ads are placed on free sites- You can pay an extra fee to have them taken off.

**WordPress.com works best for:**
- Bloggers who want to create a simple portfolio site to accompany their work.
- Personal bloggers not looking to build a business site.
- Bloggers who want a basic introduction to blogging and will eventually move to something with more control once they feel comfortable.
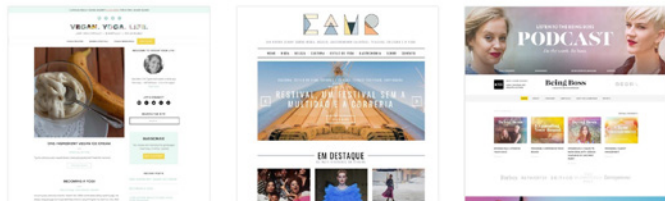


veganyogalife.com • estiloaomeuredor.com • beingboss.club

## SQUARESPACE

**Price:**
$12- $18 per month (when you pay annually)

**In a nutshell:**
Squarespace is where bloggers go to create simple and elegant websites. Without needing to leave the site, you can create your entire website or blog using their professional templates and style editor. No programming knowledge needed here to build a blog that looks seamless and has all the tools you need to get the most exposure for your work.

*Ps- Our Onboarding Specialist Matt Ragland made an amazing tutorial on how to set up a Squarespace website in just two days.*

**Pros:**
- Doesn't require code knowledge to customize for basic setup
- Easy-to-navigate interface
- Drag and drop editor
- Offers an e-commerce platform
- Allows third-party embedding for content
- Easy to add team members
- Mobile-friendly

**Cons:**
- E-commerce addition costs extra
- Less customization
- Can be hard to learn if you're an experienced WordPress user
- No free plan
- Only available as a hosted offering
- No Paypal integration – only Stripe is used for e-commerce

**Squarespace works best for:**
- Bloggers who put high emphasis on image-based content.
- Business owners looking to quickly create a website with blog and e-commerce capabilities.
- Beginner bloggers or bloggers who do not want to tinker with code to create customizations.
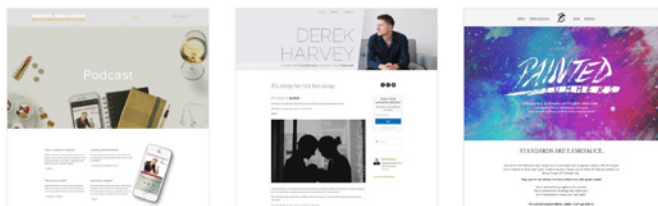


espanolautomatico.com • derekharvey.me • paintedsummers.com

## MEDIUM

**Price:**
Free

**In a nutshell:**
Medium was created as a simplified, alternative blogging platform for anyone wanting to express themselves online. The average post could be anything from a political soapbox diatribe to a personal essay of tragedy or triumph. Basically, it exists because its creators believe you have a voice and have the right to be heard.

However, because of how Medium encourages readers to participate in conversations, companies have begun to use this platform as another extension of their marketing strategies. So while you see posts from your neighbor, you'll also see posts from companies like Buffer, REI, BMW, and even us now!

**Pros:**
- Built-in audience and sharing with Medium readers
- Allows third-party embeddings for video and other content
- Publish on a custom domain or as a sub-domain of Medium
- Ranks and promotes content based on quality metrics
- Can tag up to three categories per post

**Cons:**
- Required to use the hosted Medium site
- Standardized template
- Limited control over branding
- Needs third-party opt-in forms

**Medium works best for:**
- Beginner bloggers who don't want to deal with creating an actual website.
- Bloggers who don't care about building an audience of their own and place a higher priority on getting their thoughts and opinions out in the world.
- Marketers looking for new avenues to create content.
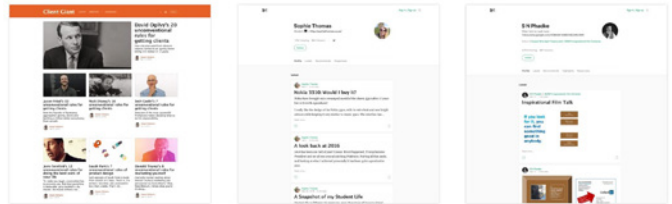


clientgiant.us • medium.com/@sophiethomas • medium.com/@SNPhadke

## BLOGGER

**Price:**
Free- Just need a Gmail account

**In a nutshell:**
Blogger is Google's free blogging tool that you can use to create up to 100 blogs per account. Because of its simple type-and-publish blogging process, as long as you have a Gmail account, you can create your account for free and have your first blog post up within an hour.

While its simplicity is a bonus for new bloggers, it also means you'll likely grow out of the platform the longer you keep at it.

**Pros:**
- Because it's owned by Google it integrates well with other Google products- AdSense, Analytics, Google+, etc.
- Simple type-and-publish process
- Can edit HTML and add widgets
- Easy drag and drop options

**Cons:**
- Have to pay $10 for a domain without a .blogspot.com
- Google owns Blogger: meaning your blog can be pulled and you have no say over it
- Can't categorize posts
- Can't self-host
- Limited design options
- Can't structure links the way you want
- Not much support

**Blogger works best for:**
- Beginner bloggers who have no web experience and are happy to not be bothered by options.
- Bloggers who aren't ready to start making money from their efforts.
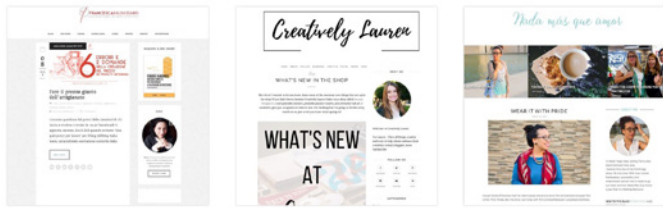


francescabaldassarri.blogspot.it • creativelylauren.com • nadabutamor.com

## WEEBLY

**Price:**
Free– $25/month

**In a nutshell:**
Weebly is a DIY website builder with blogging and e-commerce capabilities. Created with the first-time business owner in mind, the true appeal of this platform is how easily you can build a quality site without any previous web experience. Weebly is great as a one-stop shop for business owners who need both a website and a blog.

**Pros:**
- Quick to create and update without a lot of hassle
- Wide range of easy-to-use features like drag and drop options
- Free templates
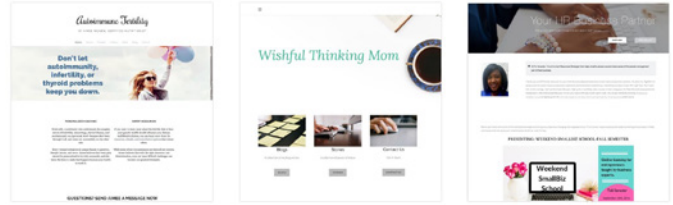- Free hosting
- Third-party integrations

**Cons:**
- Doesn't allow for coding
- No self-hosting
- Does not offer a free domain option

**Weebly works best for:**
- Beginner bloggers who need e-commerce and a website.
- New business owners who need a blog and website

but don't have the technical skills for a platform like WordPress.



aimeemcnew.com • wishfulthinkingmom.weebly.com • amandawhetstone.com

## WIX

**Price:**
Free- $25/month

**In a nutshell:**
Wix is a cloud-based website building platform with over 90 million users worldwide. Their user-friendly, drag-and-drop templates are built with specific industries in mind, making it easy for you to know which design will best work for your online business.

**Pros:**
- Beautiful templates with layouts for different industries
- Flexible drag and drop editing
- Offers text and other element animations
- Third-party integrations

**Cons:**
- Your template is locked in. That means you can't change your mind and change the template mid project.
- Wix places ads on websites with the Basic plan
- Lack of customization

**Wix works best for:**
- Artists, musicians, photographers, creatives who want a blog and a site to showcase their work.
- Small business owners of restaurants or online stores looking for industry specific website templates.
- Users with no design skills who want to build their blog from scratch.

sustainnutrition.ca • firstgencollege.me • livewell.live

# Top Blogging Platform Comparison Chart



## Top Blogging Platform Comparison Chart

### BLOG FEATURES

| | wordpress.org | wordpress.com | medium.com | squarespace.com | blogger.com | weebly.com | wix.com |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hosting included | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Custom domain capability | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Plugins and extensions | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| HTML Editor | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |
| SEO plugins | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Spam blockers | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Social media plugins | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Drag and Drop editor | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Mobile-friendly | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

### BEST SUITED FOR

| | wordpress.org | wordpress.com | medium.com | squarespace.com | blogger.com | weebly.com | wix.com |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| E-commerce | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ |
| Beginners | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Pros | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ |
| Creatives/Artists | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✗ | ✗ |
| Business | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Personal | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ | ✗ | ✓ |

Get more blogging advice at
**convertkit.com/issues/blogging**

# Ready to choose your blogging platform?

Now that you've read through the pros and cons and compared features between some of the most popular blogging platforms, are you ready to decide? Making this first big step will hopefully create a snowball of momentum to keep you moving toward your blogging goals.

If this post helped you decide on a platform, let us know! Tell us which blogging platform you will or are currently using on Twitter or share this post on social media to help other soon-to-be-bloggers get closer to their goals too.

*Dani Stewart*

# How to Design Your Blog Home Page for Focus and Clarity

The homepage of your blog is like the cover of a book. Though we all know not to judge a book by its cover, we'll likely pick the one with an intriguing title and beautiful imagery over something that looks dated and bombards you with too much text.

The same is true of your blog homepage design: it could be the make-or-break reason why someone decides to dig deeper into your content or to leave the site and search elsewhere.

If that sounds daunting to you, don't panic. Creating a good blog homepage that makes readers stick around is all about making the right choices in what content you choose to display, and I've got some advice to help you do just that.

## The purpose of a blog homepage

Your homepage is the hub of your blog. It serves three key purposes as laid out by the Inbound Marketing blog:

- To attract and captivate visitors
- To educate visitors on your brand
- To encourage readers to visit other pages on your website

So when you're thinking about what to include on your homepage, make sure it fits with those three goals. Visitors will use your homepage as a jumping off point to dive into your content, projects, and products so making it easy to navigate is a must. They should also be able to get a quick overview of your brand and what you're all about so they know they're in the right place.

Creating a blog homepage layout that hits those goals takes planning and thoughtful design. It's well worth spending the time on getting it right, so here's some advice for what to consider and how to go about designing it.

How to structure your blog homepage design

As the late Steve Jobs once said,
*"Design isn't just how it looks. It's how it works."*

So before you start thinking about your logo and what color you should make your buttons, let's think about how you're going to structure your homepage and what information you're going to provide on it for your visitors.

These days many bloggers are moving away from the classically simple stream-of-posts-with-a-sidebar and are instead creating custom dynamic homepages highlighting certain posts or categories, integrating their social media feeds, and making it easy to buy their products.

## Static blog homepage vs featuring recent posts

A homepage that simply features a reverse chronological (aka newest first) stream of posts is one designed with a regular visitor in mind. They're the ones who will be coming back to your blog regularly looking for the latest content. That's great and you definitely want your latest articles to be easy to find, but what about newer readers?

Rather than only serving up your most recent content, it might be a good idea to feature a few posts you feel are "recommended reading" for new visitors to your blog to get them up to speed, or perhaps give a selection of categories to choose from so they can easily find the most relevant content for them.

Check out Sarah Morgan's blog homepage design on xosarah.com as an example. She has clear navigation that makes it easy to click on 'blog' and get her latest posts if you're a regular reader, but the homepage features a short explanation of what her site is all about, enticing links to some of her courses, and then links to a few new posts. Her blog homepage provides great choices for jumping into her content if you're new to her site. You're bound to find something to learn from, no matter what level you're at.

An example that focuses more on the content is fashion/beauty blogger Lily Pebbles. Her site features a grid of her latest posts mixed in with her latest YouTube videos, Instagram posts, and links to things like her curated store

or particular categories. This mix of content gives you a good idea of what she's all about and lets you easily access her latest posts while being a bit more interesting than a simple chronological stream.
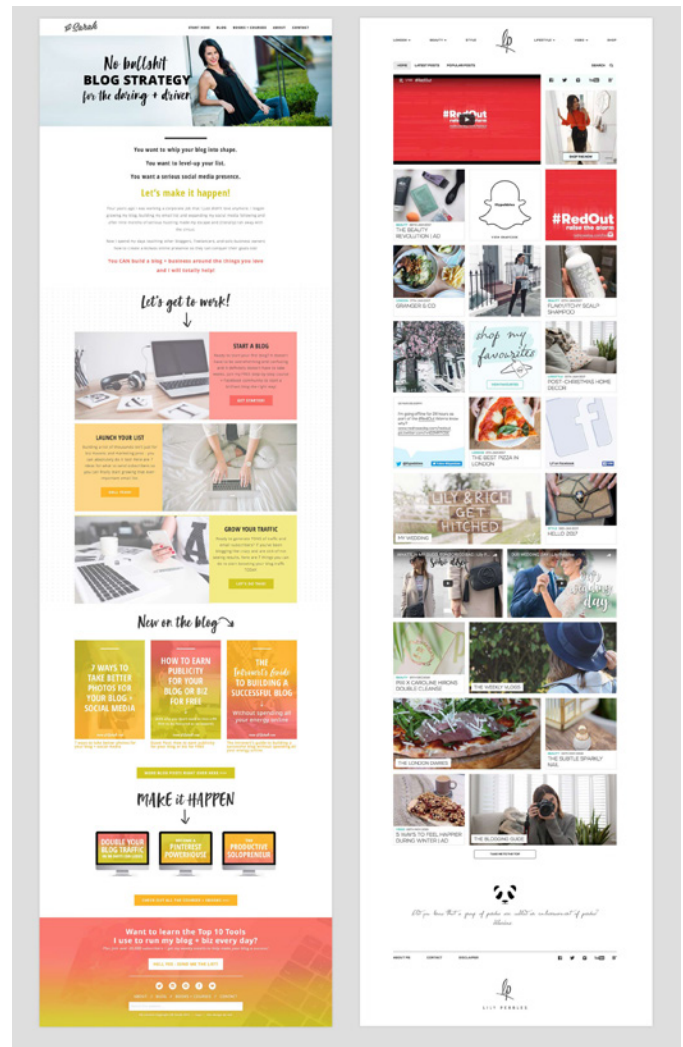


## Elements to include on your blog homepage design

Once you realise there can be more to a blog homepage than simply your latest posts, it opens up a lot of different options for elements that could go on it. What you choose will depend on your industry and business, but here's some ideas of elements you might want to include on your homepage:

- Recent posts

- Categories

- Featured posts

- Information about you

- Social media links

- Navigation

- Digital products

- Email list sign up

- Instagram feed

- Latest YouTube videos

- Twitter feed

- Resources

That's not to say you should include every element on that list. Think of your homepage as a taster of the different kinds of content you offer, but don't try to cram too much in. You don't want to overwhelm your reader with too much information or too many choices, so only include what is most relevant.

The Content Strategist said it well:

*Hold back from integrating every widget and feature available into the homepage. Every element of the page should have a purpose for the content to thrive and stand out.*

Abby Lawson handles this well on Just a Girl and Her Blog. She has clear categories up at the top that immediately give you an idea of the content she blogs about and a call-to-action to sign up to her email list. Then underneath you see her latest posts with a sidebar that features a short bio and links to her social media and digital products.
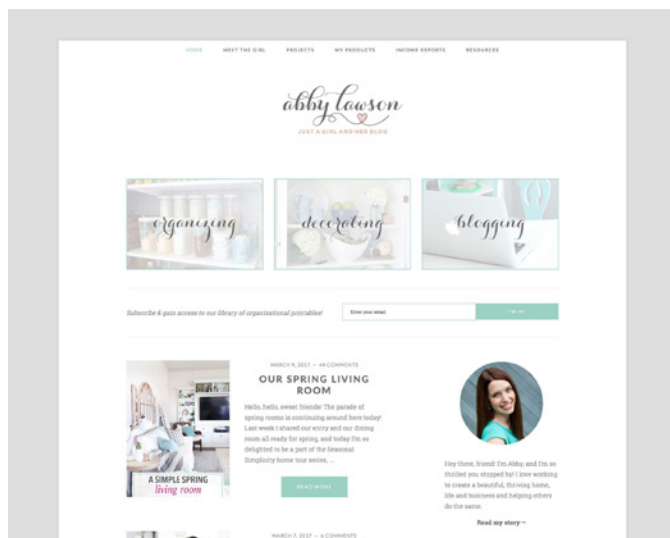


That's a lot of information! But the way it's organised makes it very easy to navigate and lets the content shine, both of which are essential to a good blog design.

Speaking of which...

## How to create focus with content on your blog homepage

When it comes to the visual design of your blog, don't overdo it. Nothing makes a homepage feel more cluttered than filling it with lots of decorative elements or a complicated background. Instead, let your content be the thing that personalizes your site. Your brand will come across in the way you write about your topic and the imagery you use.

A key to letting your content stand out amongst all the other elements you've chosen to include on your homepage is establishing hierarchy. This means making the most important information the focus of the page.

Be strict on yourself with this! Sure you want your readers to look at your courses, read your posts, follow you on social media, and sign up to your email list, but if you try to encourage them to do all of those things at once you'll overwhelm them. It won't be clear where they should start.

To combat this, choose one action to focus on and make that your main call-to-action on the page. The rest of your content can still be there of course, but they shouldn't overshadow your main action. When you try to make everything stand out, nothing stands out!

## Are you ready to build your homepage?

Take it one step at a time, starting with deciding what content to include and then designing the page so that your main call to action is the most obvious. To give you some inspiration, here are three different blog homepage wireframe ideas that each have a different focus.

## FOCUS ON: COURSES

Header with logo and links

Intro to you and your expertise

Feature a course with a juicy call-to-action button

Email sign up for if people don't want to purchase right now, but want to learn more.

Recent blog posts that relate to the topic of your course.

Footer with social media & navigation links

## FOCUS ON: CONTENT

Header with logo, tagline and links

A bio introducing you, perhaps with a photo of yourself!

Carousel with featured blog posts you want visitors to read first.

Email sign up in sidebar

Your latest blog posts, with links to their categories for easy navigation

Links in sidebar to your products, courses or guides, or even to certain blog categories.

Footer with social media & navigation links

## FOCUS ON: EMAIL LIST

Header with links

Logo and explanation of what people will recieve from you if they join your email list.

Email sign up front and centre!

Testimonials from people who LOVE being on your email list and found your content valuable.

Blog posts, either your latest, or a selection of featured posts

Footer with social media & navigation links

We shared a few examples in this post, but what are some blog homepage designs you love? Link them to us [on Twitter](#)!

*Charli Prangley*

# How to Create a Year-long Content Strategy

**B**logger burnout. Have you ever heard of it? More importantly, have you ever felt it? It's what happens to a blogger when they're constantly giving all their creative energy and mental capacity solely to their blog posts. And when it happens, it's hard to recover from.

As a blogger yourself, you know that running a blog is about so much more than just your posts. Yes, your blog is important for creating value for your readers, helping out your SEO ranking, and serving as a communication point, but there is so much more to be done.

There's social media, email marketing, high-level vision casting, managing your team (if you have one), product development, creation, distribution, sales, and so much more. You have to find a way to spread your creative capacity and problem-solving abilities to all aspects of online business.

One way to avoid blogger burnout is simply to put a content plan into place. After all, your content's success is

only as good as the plan you give it. It needs a foundation to stem from and your commitment to set it in motion.

I could give you an easy task and talk about how to create a month's worth of content, but I want to challenge you to take it a step further. I'm going teach you how to create a content strategy for the next 12 months.

## Why you need a content strategy

You might think that creating a year-long content strategy is a waste of time. What about spur of the moment creativity? What about breaking news? What about keeping up with current trends?

I hear all that and absolutely agree with you. When inspiration strikes, write it. When breaking news breaks, report it. When a fashionable trend pop ups, give it a spotlight.

This process is not about setting up a strict and inflexible calendar. It's about helping you see the bigger picture for

your blog's content. It's about giving you guidelines and the space to create the best content you can. Not convinced it's worth all the effort yet? Here's some more reasons:

## Do more research

Being aware of what content you have coming up allows you to always be on the lookout for facts and figures to back you up. The more research you can put into your blog, the more your readers will trust your content and the more authority you'll build in your topic.

## Edit your work with more intention

According to our survey, [52% of bloggers write either the day before or on the same day as they plan to publish](#). Writing, editing, and posting content in 24 or even 48 hours span is never a good idea. Getting ahead of the game with your content means you have more time to edit and finesse your writing. You can leave it for a week and come back to it with a fresh pair of eyes or even send it to a friend for feedback.

## Create space for guest posts

Blogging alone is hard work. When you put a content calendar in place, it's a living document you can share with other team members, potential collaborators, or guest bloggers. They can see the overall vision for the blog and offer to help you fill in the blank spaces. Sometimes you might even have a friend who could write a better version of a given post than you could on your own. Planning ahead gives you the time to reach out.

## Create a system of accountability for yourself

No more procrastinating, going a week without publishing, or putting up subpar content. Putting together a content strategy helps you create rhythms for your blogging. You'll have systems and processes in place for SEO, [content upgrades](#), internal links, promotions and all those things that take your blog to the next level.

You want all those things for your blog, right? Of course. Your blog will be an asset for your online business if you plan your content wisely. It will take a lot of effort to plan out and keep up with, but it will be well-worth it.

## Four things to know before creating a content strategy

Before you can sit down to create your content calendar, there are a few things you need to decide on. These things will help you know everything from how many post ideas you need to come up with to how to organize those ideas.

## How to find a content calendar tool

Choosing (and using) an editorial calendar tool will change the way you approach your blog. With the right one, you'll start to see the big picture and use your blog to it's greatest potential. Check out [our post about choosing a content calendar tool](#) to find one that's right for you.

## How often do you want to publish on your blog?

This one question will determine how much content you need to plan for. To figure this out, think about:

How much do your readers actually read? What other types of content are they consuming when you find them? Are they are on sites filled with Buzzfeed type lists, in-depth essays, or short-form blogs filled with images, etc? This can be done in the "[Choose your audience](#)" phase of creating your blog.

If you're just starting out, you need a lot of content to start hitting your SEO goals. You might need to be creating content to publish three, four, or even five times a week at the beginning to increase your possibility of ranking well in the search engines. If you're more of an established blogger, you can focus on publishing solely for your audience's needs.

## Pick a few blog categories

Categories are not just there to help your reader find what they want. Setting up categories you want to blog about is key to making sure you're consistently covering all your bases. If you're just starting out blogging, three to five categories is great place to start, but you'll most likely find that your categories section will expand as you get further into your journey.

## Think in theme for your blog

This last bit is not necessary, but when we create our content strategy here at ConvertKit we've found that giving themes to each month helps narrow our focus. The themes we come up with turn into each issue for [Tradecraft](#), like this one about blogging for your online business. By creating a main theme we're able to think about all the individual topics you might want to know about when it comes to that theme.

Once you've got your basics ready to go and have thought through categories, keywords, and how much content you need to come up with, it's time to create your long list of content ideas.

# How to come up with ideas for your blog posts

There will be times as a blogger that you'll have unending blog topic ideas. One idea leads to the next and suddenly you've got five weeks worth of content you could write. But there will also be other times you'll feel stuck. You'll feel like your creativity well has been emptied and there's no way an original thought will ever come from your brain again. During those times, it's good to have a reservoir of idea-generating tricks to help you fill up your calendar.

Here are a couple of those tricks:

## Use your keywords

The first thing you want to do when starting your list of ideas is to think about your keywords. What are the main SEO-driven keywords your readers are likely to be searching for when your site pops up? Take that list and brainstorm five to 10 different blog titles for each keyword. Tools like [Google Adwords Keyword Planner](#) and [Moz's Keyword Explorer](#) can be incredibly helpful for finding keywords that are worth your time and cater to your audience.

## Keep track of questions you're asked

The more you build trust with your readers, the more they will come to you with questions about your topic. While you should answer those as they come up, you should also write them down as potential blog topics. If one reader is asking a question, then it's most likely other readers have the same question.

A great way to solicit questions from your audience is to send a welcome email to each reader when they join your email list and close the email with, "What are you struggling with right now when it comes to [insert your blog topic]?"

## Survey your readers

The best way to give your readers the valuable information they want is to simply ask them what they want to learn. This can be done in a bunch of different ways. You could schedule 30 minute calls with potential blog readers, post a question on social media, or send out a survey asking specific questions you want to find out.

*I start all my conversations with 'Whaddya Want?' I ask teachers (my clients) what their biggest challenges are in teaching and learning, what mistakes do learners make in writing, and the real killer question – what annoys them the most!*

*This gives me a list of their problems and titles for my next blog post.*

**– JAZ AMPAW-FARR**

Even better, you could use an email marketing tool like ConvertKit to automatically send your survey to every new email subscriber to find out what your readers want on an ongoing basis.

## Pay attention to your surroundings

What's everyone else talking about? Keep up with the latest industry buzz through your social media channels, news sites, and other blogs you follow. If something is coming up a lot, you should probably write about it. But please don't just regurgitate what you read. Make sure you have a new angle to the story. Think about how it pertains to your readers and how they interact with your business.

## Give a behind the scenes look at your business

Depending on what type of business you run, it's possible your readers will want to know what's going on behind

the scenes. What are you learning and figuring out that would also help your readers? We call this "teaching what you know" and it's actually why we launched our second publication Work in Public.

If your readers don't want to know about your business, perhaps they do want to know about how you're continuing to learn about your industry. If you have a blog about baking, it can be a great strategy to share your own experiences in the kitchen and teach what you're learning along the way. So whether your readers want to know about your business or your own experiences, this strategy can work well.

## How to create a year-long content calendar

Finally, here we are at the execution phase. You have your content calendar open, strategies to come up with blog ideas (whether they're thought out headlines or scraps of ideas), and you're ready to get brainstorming.

### The content formula

To find how many blog posts you need to come up and how to organize them let's talk some math. Take the number of posts you want to publish a week and multiply that by 52 to get the total number of posts you need to write this year.

$$\text{# of weekly publishing frequency} \times \text{52 weeks} = \text{Total # of posts to write}$$

It's probably a really big number, but don't get overwhelmed! Now take that number and divide that by the number of categories you created. This will tell you how many posts you need to write to evenly space out your content between your categories. (This isn't necessary, but I think this step helps you organize your ideas a little easier.)

$$\text{Total # of posts to write} \div \text{# of categories} = \text{# of posts per category}$$
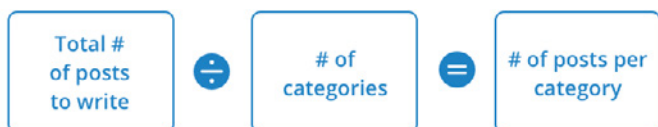
## Brainstorm

Now comes the fun part. It's time to brainstorm ideas. Take all those strategies from the section above and write down as many ideas as you can. Think about everything your audience might want to know in terms of your categories and let your creativity flow.

*Every 90 days I get away for two days to think, plan, and schedule for the next quarter. I use CoSchedule to schedule one idea per week that will eventually become my featured blog post. I'll also take that same idea and turn it into a podcast for iTunes and a video for Youtube.*

**– JONATHAN MILLIGAN**

### Organize your ideas

Once you've got a long list of ideas you can organize them to help you know what to write first.

You can prioritize them:

- **In order of the biggest impact for a beginner** – This lets you start creating content from the ground level up.

- **How much you already know about the subject** – Think about how much research or help you'll need to write a blog post for each idea. You should start by writing the content that requires little to no research that you can freely write about. Doing this gives you the opportunity to write a lot of content quickly at the beginning and will help you get a few weeks or possibly months ahead of your calendar.

- **By your theme for the next month** – This gives you a great template to think about your whole year. Themes can incorporate many blog post ideas spanning all your categories and bring them together in a cohesive plan. If you want to see how this can work, just go back and look at issues one and two of Tradecraft.

### Fill your content calendar

Now that you have your list of ideas organized, it's time to start filling out your content calendar. It's pretty simple at this point. Just take your ideas and plug them into the days you want to publish and you've got your content scheduled.

No pressure to get your whole year's worth of content figured out in one sitting. Now that you have a lot of your content figured out, you can better see all the gaps in your schedule and have more time to think of blog ideas or even time to reach out to other bloggers for guest posts. But no matter what you decide, I bet you at least have a few months of content scheduled and for that you deserve to celebrate.

## Are you ready to commit to your content calendar?

Just because it's on your calendar doesn't mean it's going to write itself. Now that you have everything set you have to commit to yourself, your calendar, and your readers to make it happen. You've got to show up every day and make magic happen even when you don't feel like it.

But by having a plan set up from the beginning, you already have a head start. Your content plan is the best way to make sure you're regularly publishing and creating value for your readers.

And remember– just because it's on the schedule doesn't mean it's set in stone. If you get to a blog post and it's not relevant anymore, scrap it and go for something else. If you get inspired and write a different post, shift things around. Having your calendar set so far in advance gives you the flexibility to keep it fresh and exciting.

Are you ready to commit to your blog's success and create a year-long content calendar? I know you can do it!

If you have any more questions about creating your own content calendar, let's talk about it on Twitter. I'm here to help in anyway I can.

*Dani Stewart*
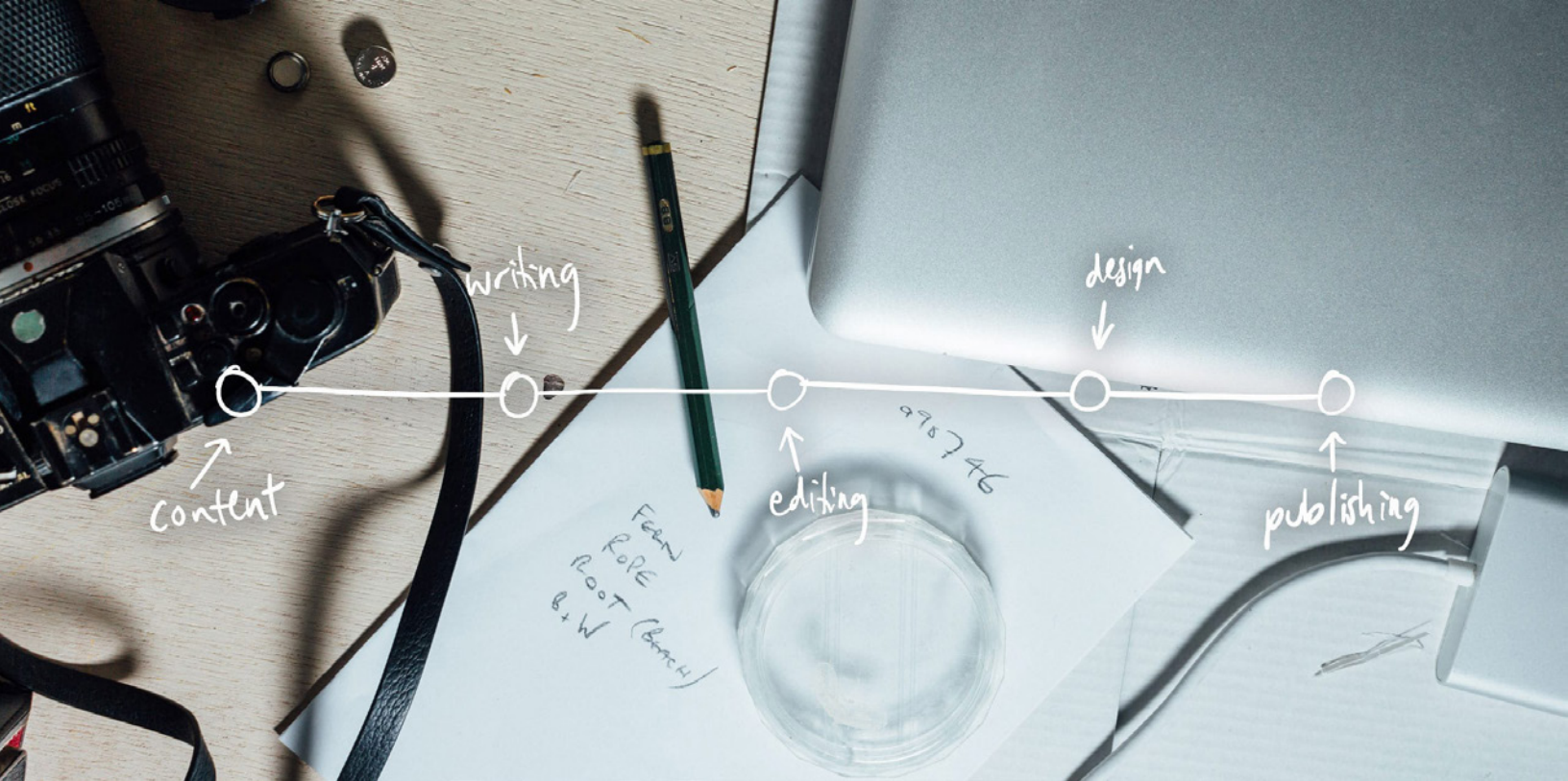
# This is the Process We Use to Create High-Quality Blog Content

**W**hen we reviewed our blog process at the end of fall 2016 we realized we wanted our blog to create more value for our readers and lend itself to a more stylistic vision we had for our branding. At that point, we had content set and uploaded in WordPress through the end of the year so we had some time to dream and plan.

We thought a lot about what it means to create a remarkable online reading experience for our readers. Each person on our team asked ourselves: "If I was a busy professional blogger (or podcaster or YouTuber), what would I look for in a blog I chose to subscribe to?"

We considered many different formats and approaches to delivering great content, and eventually we landed on the fact that our readers are a sophisticated bunch who want to build advanced knowledge that will help grow their business and pay it forward. We want you, our reader, to come to us for a no-nonsense filling of the information you need to get better every day.

With that in mind, we decided to curate content in a magazine style, releasing one issue a month dedicated to a main theme. That means you can read in-depth on a topic designed to help you run a successful business. Each issue has eight to 12 high-quality articles from our team and experts from across the blogging industry and features real stories of entrepreneurs that we hope will resonate with you.

When we changed our blog to the Tradecraft structure, the planning and writing process for our blog completely changed. As believers in "teaching everything you know" and "working in public" it's about time to give you an inside look at this blog process.

It involves the whole marketing team, multiple planning meetings, a lot of research, and dedicated writing, editing, and designing time. It's truly a group effort and I'm excited to share it with you in the hopes it can help you set up structure around your own content strategy.

# Creating our year-long content strategy

Once we had decided that our new blog would be based on monthly themes, Barrett and I sat down to come up with a year-long content strategy. We want our issues to be centered around ideas that give you advice, actionable steps, and inspiration to grow your business no matter what stage you're at in the process. They need to be topics that online entrepreneurs want and need more information on. Basically, we want to be the go-to source for in-depth coverage of every topic a blogger needs to know to grow an online business.

## The monthly themes

With those criteria in mind, we set out to create a content strategy for the rest of 2017. We came up with a long list of ideas and narrowed them down based on what we felt were the most pressing for bloggers that could contain in-depth articles for more advanced bloggers as well as basic how-tos for the newer bloggers.

While we have our ideas set through the end of the year we aren't married to having them scheduled in the timeline we have set as of the beginning of the year. We may decide that November's issue would actually play well after May's issue once we get into it, but for now the important thing is we're ready to roll on each issue as it comes up.

## The monthly posts

For each issue, Barrett and I meet for 30 mins to an hour to discuss the articles that will go in that issue. We think about the theme and write down everything we can think of that a blogger would want to know about it– which usually ends up being more blog topics than we can fit into one issue.

I walk away from that meeting with our list and start researching. It's my job to find what information already exists on that topic and document it. I read through and pull the top three to five blog posts on the topic based on search ranking.

This process helps me know how much research has already been done, if the topic is relevant for our readers, and if I have enough facts to back up our hypotheses and

theories. It also helps me understand how to write a better article than what already exists on the topic and then fill in the gaps that were left by the existing articles.

Next, Barrett and I get back together for another hour-long meeting to create outlines for each post. We narrow down that long list of blog topics based on interest, actionability, relevance to our audience, and if there was enough research to back our idea. That usually throws out three or four topics and we're set for our issue. At this point we're ready to create outlines. These outlines include:

- **A reader outcome–** We ask ourselves, "What do we want our reader to walk away from this post with?" Knowing this answer helps us narrow the focus of the post to one main idea.

- **Keywords-** We think through what readers will be searching for when this blog post comes up. We check the keywords in Moz's Keyword Explorer to see how they rank and decide from there on the two most relevant keywords to use as much as possible (while still being natural) in the post.

- **Main points to hit throughout the blog post–** We talk about the angle we want the post to take on the topic and list three or four main points to hit in the post. Occasionally we'll have enough thoughts on the topic that we walk away with a thorough outline that makes the writing much easier.

- **Graphics-** We always want to create interesting and exciting graphics for each post, so we take time to come up with what we think Charli can create as downloads, charts, or graphs to enhance the content.

- **Call to Action (CTA)-** This is the main action we want our reader to take when they finish reading. Do we want them to share the post on social? Do we want them to create something? Do we want them to comment? It's important to give your reader a clear next step when they finish an article so that you keep their engagement level high.

Once we feel good about the outlines we've created, it's time for the biggest part of my job– the writing.

## Blog writing process

The first thing I do when approaching a fresh blog post is

to revisit my preliminary research. I re-read those posts and look for gaps in the information that I can fill. Our goal is to create comprehensive guides for our readers, so that means I need to compile research from all over the Internet and then figure out how to add more valuable information on top of it.

## Writing

I pull up the outline Barrett and I created and start filling it in with the research I find as well as our own advice, opinions, and strategies. I always compare it to writing research papers back in high school and college.

Were you taught the "state a fact, back it up with research, and then explain why" strategy to research papers? It takes the mystery out of writing and gives it more of a "plug and play" feel. Just add transitions and you're done. Just kidding!

There's so much more nuance, complex problem-solving, and creativity involved than that, but thinking of your blog posts that way gives you an excellent structure. From there you can add your flare, turn-of-phrase, and writing and teaching style that makes you unique. It gets even better if you can add in stories and anecdotes about your readers and customers here and there to illustrate your points on top of the research framework.

One way we've found helpful to think about an outline of a post is like this:

1. Opening anecdote or story
2. Thesis of the article
3. The problem many people experience with this topic
4. Step #1 to solving the problem or argument #1 to support your main point
   - State the fact
   - Back it up with research
   - Explain why
5. Step #2 or argument #2
6. ...
7. Final step or argument
8. Moral of the story (tell 'em what you told 'em)
9. Call to action

Tactically speaking, I go through my research-filled outline and start writing the sections I'm most comfortable with. Many times that's the actionable section that makes up the core of a post where I give tips or steps for you to follow to reach the goal of the post. Thinking through those action items first gets me in the right mindspace to go back and write the beginning of the post.

My overall goal is to get to a point where I'm researching each post for one to two hours and writing for four hours. Sometimes that happens and sometimes it doesn't. Some posts are just easier to write than others and that will always be the case. But I like having the goal out in front of me with each post.

Once I'm done writing, I plug the post into our handy blog post template we use to standardize all of the elements of every post we write. It has space for headline options, keyword research, a meta description, social media posts, and more.

[Download the blog template](#) we use to produce high-quality posts every time for your own content strategy.

When I'm done filling in the template blanks, it's off for editing.

## Editing

As editor of Tradecraft, it's Barrett's job to read through everything we write with a creative and critical mind. On top of grammar and punctuation fixes, he's looking for ways to add more value to the post be it in content or images.

Barrett's analytical mind is so useful in this stage. When he steps back and looks at the post as it relates to the whole Tradecraft issue he always comes back with great ideas to make it more valuable to our reader. He is relentless in helping us create at our highest level and his editing style and abilities keep us on par with that goal.

After he lets me know the editing stage is finished, I hop back into that document and adjust, add, and challenge his edits when necessary. The process ends up creating an incredibly fulfilling back and forth that results in a great end product that none of us could have created by working in a silo.

## Design

At the same time Barrett is looking at the post from a content perspective, our designer Charli is also looking at the post from a design perspective. Charli is in charge of creating interesting graphics, extras, and the design for Tradecraft.

For example, we had an idea for a Venn Diagram for another article in this issue. Charli took it for a super basic image to a fun, stylistic graphic that fit our new branding.



*Before*                              *After*
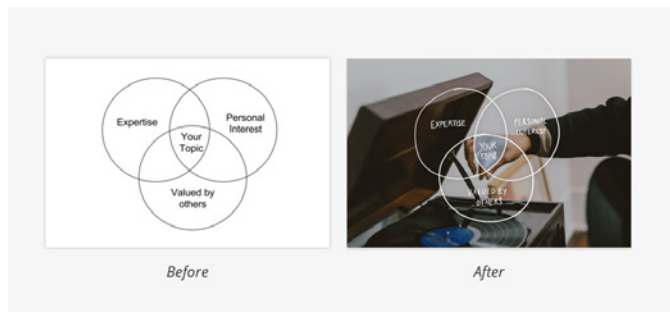
We really lucked out when Charli joined our team. I love brainstorming graphic ideas with her and seeing the spin she puts on them when all is said and done. We would not be able to create Tradecraft without her level of professional, creative, and strategic design skills.

## Publishing

The final stage of Tradecraft happens when we hit publish. I set each blog post to fall in line with our table of contents and schedule them for the morning of our release date. Publishing also includes setting up an email sequence for our readers who enjoy taking our issues at a slower pace.

## Set up your own blog process

Now, we recognize most of our readers won't have an entire of team of people to focus on creating blog content. Instead, you're more likely the only person on your team and that's ok! We didn't share our process to make you feel like you'll never get there, but rather to give you inspiration for creating a process that works for you.

As a single blogger you'll most likely have to scale this blog process down a bit to make it work for your schedule and flow, but you absolutely have the ability to set this same type of blog process up for yourself.

For example, you can set aside separate time to plan a year-long content strategy, brainstorm individual post ideas, research and outline, write, edit, and publish. The same core process works no matter how many people are working on your content.

Don't settle for working in a silo just because you're a solopreneur either. If you're in a mastermind group you can ask one of your group members to be your editor and vice versa. As your business continues to grow, you can outsource design for your blog content if you work ahead. Be creative and design your process to cater to your workflow.

## Questions?

So that's it! That's everything it takes to create a single blog post as well as how those add up to a full issue of Tradecraft here at ConvertKit. When your goal is to create a high level of valuable content on a consistent basis, it's going to take this kind of planning, strategy, and goal setting.

Since we moved to our issues format with Tradecraft, we've been able to deliver more highly focused content. Changing up our blog process was exactly what we needed to bring focus and fresh perspective to our blog here at ConvertKit.

Do you have any questions about how to set this up for yourself? Do you have parts of your process that might improve on what we've outlined here? Let's talk about it on Twitter.

## Blog Post Template

*Note: Use this template to write new blog post drafts.*

### Headline Options

*In this section, choose three potential headline options based on keyword research, at the intersection of the blog post topic and our audience of independent online entrepreneurs. Use CoSchedule's Headline Analyzer to rate them.*

**Option 1:**

**Option 2:**

**Option 3:**

## Reader Outcomes

*In this section, list the number one takeaway a reader might expect from reading this post in two sentences or less.*

## Target Keyword(s)

*In this section, choose one primary keyword for the post, and up to three secondary keywords for the post. The primary and secondary keywords should be related. Use Moz's Keyword Explore to rate them.*

**Primary Keyword:**

Volume:

Difficulty:

Opportunity:

Potential:

**Secondary Keyword:**

Volume:

Difficulty:

Opportunity:

Potential:

## SEO summary

*In this section, write a 156 character SEO summary that shows the direct benefit the reader will get from this post. This should reflect the reader outcome and primary keyword from above.*

## Format

*What format will this post be:*

- *How-to (teaching)*
- *Case study (customer stories)*

- *Behind the scenes (how you operate)*

## Categories

*Which of your categories best fits this blog post.*

## Content

*In this section, write your draft of the post. The post should be actionable and only as long as necessary to deliver the benefit promised in the headline.*

## Call to Action

*In this section, include the final sentence or paragraph of the article, including a call to action to share in the comments.*

## Tweetables

*In this section, choose three quotes or paraphrases from the article to serve as Tweetables. The copy should be no longer than 105 characters, and they should be well-spaced throughout the article.*

**Tweetable 1:**

**Tweetable 2:**

**Tweetable 3:**

## Author Bio

*If this post is written by a guest writer, use this section to include an author bio of less than 400 characters.*

■ *Dani Stewart*

# How to Create a Visual Identity for Your Blog

**A**s a blogger you have to wear many hats. Usually when you start a blog, you're a team of one. You're a CEO, a writer, a strategist, product developer, and so much more. You have to juggle it all, but one role that most people think they can't tackle is the role of designer.

A good designer is worth their weight in gold. When you find a designer whose work style matches yours and you have a good rapport, keep them close. Having that relationship will be invaluable for business.

But as a new blogger, you might not be able to afford a professional for all the designy things you need for your site. There will always be small graphics, social media images, and blog post images to make that you either don't want to or just can't constantly be hiring someone to create for you.

For all those times, you need to have some basic skills to create images and graphics for yourself. Later on I'll share some links for easy-to-use image creators and extras to create blog imagery no matter your skill level, but let's talk about the overall aesthetic of your blog.

## Why good blog design gives your blog a boost

You probably already have a general sense of why good design is so important because you experience it every day. Before you dive into written content, you pay attention to the blog design, right? And when something is visually pleasing, there's an automatic attraction. You're drawn to one book cover because it's more aesthetically pleasing than another, or you read Blog A because their graphics are more consistently cohesive than Blog B.

But creating good blog design does more than just visually stimulate the reader. Good blog design also:

• **Shows value in your work–** A well-designed site with interesting graphics and images shows a new reader that you've put a lot of effort into your site and care about

your work. It shows that every aspect of how you present yourself matters and can lead the reader to assume that you will take the same kind of care with them.

- **Helps communicate quickly–** Readers on the web tend to be skimmers. If you can create content that conveys your point with a graphic, you'll be more accessible to the average reader. In fact your image may connect with your reader in 13 milliseconds (or less).

- **Increases your brand, experience, and marketing–** Articles with relevant images get 94% more page views and 50% more shares than pages without images. That means if you want your blogs to get shared across the Internet you need a solid game plan for creating images and graphics.

Now that we've realized how important the look of your blog is to the future of your business, we should start talking about where blog design should spring from. Before you can create images for your blog, you need a strategy to create consistency. This is your visual identity.

## Why your blog needs a visual identity

Creating a visual identity is an aspect of blog design that many bloggers don't think about, especially new bloggers. The problem with that is, without realizing it new bloggers will pull images, create graphics, and build flows in their blog that talk over each other or just don't look good with each other when you step back and see the bigger picture.

Our designer, Charli, says it best:

*Think about your blog design and imagery as the visual representation of what you stand for as a brand. You want people to look at your content and get a sense of who you are, so when you're choosing imagery, fonts, and colors ask yourself if they give the right message that you want to portray.*

If your blog is a representation of you who you are, don't you want to create a calm, well-thought-out space for your reader? Creating one-off images and changing your point-of-view every week is going to look like chaos.

*Having cohesive imagery that ties together nicely throughout your blog (eg: same photo style, a small set of fonts and colors used throughout) also makes your blog look way more professional and strengthens your brand.- Charli*

Setting your standards for design at the beginning of your blogging journey will help you avoid visual confusion and keep you from spinning your wheels with new designs. To make sure you stay on track with what you believe are your standards, it's time to create your blog's brand guide.

## How to create your blog brand guide

A blog brand guide is a manual you create that documents your visual identity. It explains how and when design elements are used and helps create a cohesive style for your blog. It's also great to have set up before you bring on any team members so they can be brought up to speed quickly on your visual identity.

There are many pieces of design that can go into a blog brand guide. But to start out, here are the four main aspects you need to be set on to create images and graphics for your blog and social media.

### Four aspects to hit in your blog style guide

1. **Fonts:** Pick 2- 3 fonts that compliment each other to use in your blog posts for body content, subheads, and graphics you create.

2. **Color:** Choose 2-3 primary colors that are consistent with your brand for things like background and font color. Choose 3-4 secondary colors that can be used to add interest (ie- buttons, links, forms).

3. **Logo:** Create a couple versions of your logo that fit different sizes and varied backgrounds.

4. **Photos:** This can include what sites you use for stock photography, what style of images you use (landscapes, portraits, objects, color schemes, etc), and sizes.

Once you have these set, make sure to always check back with your brand guide to make sure you're staying true

to your new identity. But don't be afraid to redefine your visual identity when the time comes.

If you haven't noticed, we recently changed the visual identity for our blog. Here's Barrett, our Tradecraft editor and Director of Marketing, on why we changed it up and how we're moving forward,

*As we took a step back to look at our overall blog strategy, we had this rare opportunity to reconsider everything about the way we were running our blog here at ConvertKit. That included everything from the blog categories, to the topics we were covering, to how often we publish to, yes, the photos we use for our posts.*

*As I scrolled through our old blog posts, I was uninspired by our imagery. Desk photos had become a defacto part of every blog post, as had stock photos of Apple products, planners, and writing utensils. It left me wanting so much more from our imagery.*

*We knew we wanted to do something different – potentially drastically different. In considering how to do that, we asked ourselves what it is that inspires our readers. What do they aspire to? What kinds of imagery represents the lives they hope to lead as a result of starting a blog?*

*We ended up settling on this kind of hipster-chic, outdoorsy, Instagram-perfect imagery that's very much of the moment we're living in and representative of the lifestyle so many of our readers are attracted to. We also decided to go for a more crafts(wo)man aesthetic to the workspace photos we use from now on.*

*To the raw photos, Charli has added this subtle but beautiful layer of hand-drawn (on her iPad) embellishment that adds just enough flare and personality to turn the photos into our own visual identity for Tradecraft.*



# The tools you need to make images and graphics for your blog design

Good blog design is all around us, and creating it doesn't have to be outside your reach. There's no need to pay a lot of money to buy products like Photoshop to help your blog look good.

Here are some free to minimally priced tools and assets to help you create social media and blog posts images that will help you create a cohesive visual identity:

## Image editors

Canva- (my personal favorite)
GIMP – a photoshop alternative
PicMonkey – often used for adding text to images

## Graphics

Easel.ly– infographic creator
Piktochart– infographic creator
Infogr.am – chart and graph creator
Beacon- content upgrade creator

## Photography

Death to Stock
Stocksnap
Unsplash
Startup Stock Photos
Getty

## Icons

[Noun Project](#) (Unless you sign up for a Pro account, Noun project icons are creative commons, meaning you have to give credit to them on their site.)
[Iconfinder](#)

## Backgrounds

[Subtle Patterns](#)
[CSS Author](#)

# Create your own graphic for this post and share it!

A lot of planning goes into finding the right feel for your blog design, but keeping up with those standards on your own is absolutely possible. There will be times when a professional designer is needed, but now you're prepared to take on those smaller, day-to-day images all by yourself. All you need are tools you're comfortable using, professional looking assets, and a visual identity to check in with.

Did this spot give you the confidence to design your own social media and blog images? If so, share this post on Twitter and attach your own graphic for the social post's image. Show us what you've got!

*Dani Stewart*

# Writer's Block is Not an Excuse. How to Get Your Work Done

**W**riter's block is not an excuse. Actually, Jerry Seinfeld said it better,

*Writer's block is a phony, made up, BS excuse for not doing your work.*

When it comes down to it, writing is work. If you're blogging for your online business, you need to put in the work to make it successful no matter how creative you're feeling.

Don't get me wrong, inspiration and muse are real. There are inspired moments and when you have them, set everything else aside and ride them out as long as you can. They are a beautiful gift of authentic, creative thought. But they can't be how you run your business.

Inspiration can't be your go-to system for creating content. You can't wait on it because more often than not, you're going to find yourself on a deadline and inspiration is nowhere to be found.

If you only blogged after those times of inspiration there would be no consistency to your work. It would be difficult

to build an audience and you wouldn't hit all the topics you want and need to cover as an authority on your topic.

Even creative writing doesn't always spring from effortless inspiration. You have to nurture it. You have to set systems in place to help you make that magic happen when it doesn't spark on it's own.

## Six ways to nurture the creativity you need to fuel your writing

I've been a professional writer for over a decade now. That's more than 10 year's worth of blog posts, brochures, website copy, billboard ads, radio spots, promo film scripts, newsletters, taglines, and countless deadlines to hit.

Do you think magic happened for all those projects? That would be impossible. If I pulled that writer's block card every time I felt it was true, you would see maybe one-third of these issues published on time.

Over the years I've figured out a few strategies that help

me work around writer's block when I just don't feel like inspiration is anywhere to be found. Here are six of those strategies that I try to adhere to every day.

## Rely on muscle memory

Creativity is a muscle. If you set up a designated time in the day to write and stick to your schedule, after a while your brain will know it's time to get down to business. Let muscle memory be your guide and just start writing. The big prerequisite to this is to know when you're at your most creative.

At ConvertKit we recently asked ourselves what an ideal day would look like. Thinking through this question made me realize I'm at my most creative in the morning hours, sitting at my kitchen table with a cup coffee. I like having lunch as a deadline to get X amount of writing done and then I have the afternoon free for administrative work.

## Set deadlines and keep them

A big benefit of creating a content calendar is having accountability with yourself. If you've set up your year-long content calendar you know what you need to write and when it needs to be done far in advance. Don't let yourself fudge those dates. Treat them the same way you would treat a deadline for a college paper (assuming you turned things in on time) and don't let yourself make excuses.

## Free write

If I'm not writing personally, I'm not writing well professionally. I have to create space in my day for my own creative writing. It helps clear my head of anything I've been thinking about in my life so I have more room for work tasks.

To do this, I set a timer for 10 minutes every morning and free write. That means I don't stop to think about what I'm writing or why I'm writing it, I just write. Ten minutes may sound like a lot of time, but after a few days you'll notice that you keep writing past the buzzer. And honestly, what comes of out of those 10 minutes really surprises me sometimes. Self-revelations abound when you're not paying attention.

## Change venues

Sitting in the same place every day all day doesn't lend itself to creativity. If you're feeling stuck, moving to a new work space can be just what you need to trick your brain. This can be as simple as moving to a new room if you work from home or heading to a coffee shop for the afternoon. Many creatives are turning to collaborative workspaces for this issue as well.

## Edit later

Don't be too hard on yourself. I struggle with this one personally. Every sentence you write doesn't have to immediately be 100% perfect. Writing is a process and sometimes you have to go through a few terrible drafts to create the polished and refined piece you want in the end.

So, write now. Get every idea you have on the paper. Flesh those ideas out as best as you can and go back to edit later.

## Give your brain a break

To be at your most creative and problem-solving self, you need to set boundaries on your work. If your brain is overworked, it's not going to operate at it's highest quality. This can lead to hours of wasted time staring at a blank screen.

I don't know about you, but writing wears me out. It's not good for me to write for multiple, eight hour days in a row. No matter how much I love the subject matter, my body, mind, and soul are drained from working with too many words. And I know that's not only true for writers. All creative and non-creative work wears on the body in different ways.

To stay fresh and excited about your work, you have to take care of yourself by stepping away from it. That means having a dedicated end-of-the-work-day time as well as making time for vacation. Get outside, exercise, read books, try new things, or hang out with friends. Stop thinking about work so much and you just might find that your work will start to feel more effortless.

# No more excuses. Get your work done.

While the effects of some of these strategies can be seen quickly, most of them are long-game solutions. Putting them into practice now will help you find creativity in your work no matter your circumstances. Also, these strategies can be applied to more than just writing. Any kind of entrepreneurial or creative work can create the frustrations of mental blocks. Use these same tips to work around them.

I challenge you today to figure out what your ideal day is and start from there. Figure out when you're at your most creative and build a schedule around that. Do your most creatively challenging work when you're at your best and figure out how to structure your day to power through when inspiration is low.

In the end, work is work and it needs to get done whether you feel like it or not. Don't let writer's block be an excuse any more.

*Dani Stewart*

# Why Email Subscribers are Important and How to Get Them with Incentives

**M**any articles you read about email marketing will tell you how to convert a casual blog reader into a customer. Sounds like a natural progression, right? After stumbling upon your blog a couple times and reading some posts at random, a reader will have enough information to know what you're about, trust that you're an authority in your industry, and hit that Buy button.

The reality of that happening is actually highly unlikely. All those posts you were previously reading about the transition from reader to customer are missing one really important step– email subscriber.

The true progression of a reader looks something like this:



There's a level of trust you have to build with a reader before they'll be willing to become a customer, and that can't be done correctly when you're just hoping and waiting for them to keep stumbling on your site. In fact, it's a widespread misconception that readers are going to start buying your products after just reading posts on your blog.

Don't fall into this same bucket of misguided bloggers. It's time to stop expecting your readers to sing your praises and buy your products without first creating trust and authority. It's only through this work that you can create loyal and dedicated followers (aka profitable customers). And to do this, you need to focus on that sometimes overlooked Subscriber stage.

## The importance of an email subscriber

You could have thousands of views on your site, but those views don't necessarily translate into money or progress toward your goals. A subscriber, however, represents a

certain level of commitment from a reader. It means they're invested in your brand, interested in what else you have to say and teach, and are more likely to buy a product you've created.

Building an email list to keep track of those subscribers as soon as you start out is your most valuable asset as a blogger. When a reader gives you their email address, they're also giving you permission to show up in their inbox.

Email is the most direct, personal, strategic, and constant form of communication between blogger and reader. Unlike social media, you have complete control over your email list. Once you have an email address, you have an open invitation to write directly to that person and a greater likelihood of turning that individual human into one of your life-long [raving fans](#).

Through your email list, you're able to build trust and create a relationship that feels personal to your audience, which in turn sets you up for pitching and selling your products and services. And while your job is always to serve your audience, the end goal has to be to make money, right? Making a living with your online business is the only way to earn the privilege to keep doing this work.

You're a blogger because you want to make a living by teaching what you love. To do that you probably create products or offer services to help your audience reach their goals through your teaching. So to get readers to buy your products, you really do need them to move from casual reader into the Subscriber stage.

The big problem here is that so many people often get stuck in the Reader stage. Without any reason to stick around on your site, they'll move to another site that offers similar information and will probably keep blog hopping from there.

Readers are looking to be drawn in. They need targeted content that sounds like it was created just for them. If that's true, the solution to move readers into the Subscriber stage is to create material that provides incredible value for your readers and offer it in exchange for their email address.

# Four ways to add value with incentives

There are a lot of aspects of your site you can control that help keep a reader sticking around. A [well-designed homepage](#), [valuable content](#), and [interesting images and graphics](#) are the bright shiny objects that initially grab a reader's attention. Once you have them with that, it's time to offer up a little extra incentive.

Providing value can come in many different avenues. You could create a weekly or monthly newsletter to keep up with your updates. That works, but it's also pretty boring. If you really want to add value and show your readers that you care about them, creating a true incentive is key.

Incentives are the easiest way to turn readers into email subscribers because you're giving them something valuable in return. As long as your audience sees that value, they are more likely to want to see what else you have to offer and will give you their email address to stay in touch.

Here are four examples of incentives that your readers are look for to entice them into becoming email subscribers:

## Content upgrades

Content upgrades are an incredible way to increase your conversion rate. In fact, [Brian Dean increased his site-wide conversions from .54% to 4.82% in just one day with content upgrades](#)

The upgrades can take many forms depending on your content and the needs of your audience. Whether you're [creating a checklist, how-to guides, templates, eBooks, or other bonus downloads](#), creating something extra for your reader shows an extra level of care. You can learn more about these incentives with our [Complete Guide to Content Upgrades](#).

## Email Courses

If your main product is a course and you're trying to get new traction, giving away a part of that course through an email is a great idea. [Learn more about email courses](#) and [how to set up an email course using ConvertKit with Zen Courses.](#)

## Webinars

Hosting a special webinar where you focus on teaching instead of selling shows your readers that you care about helping them reach their goals. It's also an important way to get face-to-face time with your readers to help you build trust and authority. Learn more about hosting your own webinars with the Run Webinars Like a Pro Toolkit.

## Exclusive offers

Everyone loves a limited time offer or to know that you've created something just for them (maybe in a community or group). Your offer could be anything from a discount on a product/service (this works especially well with physical products) to a personal 1×1 consulting service.

Exclusive offer incentives are also smart to add to any guest posts you have coming up. Catching a new readership's attention with an exclusive offer they can't refuse will guide them to your site and into your email list with ease.

## How to promote and deliver content upgrades and other incentives

To promote content upgrades on your site, you'll need to use forms. These are the boxes you see at the end of a post or on the side bar that ask for an email address. Normally it's a simple "Sign up for my newsletter" situation, but now you can create exciting content that readers won't hesitate to trade in their email address for.

Delivering on your promised content is easy to do with ConvertKit's incentive email. The incentive email is what is sent immediately after someone subscribes to your list through your email form on your site. You may know it better as the confirmation email or the double opt-in process. We call it an incentive email because we deliver your signup incentive while also asking for confirmation, turning a two-step process into just one.

Want to watch a video of how to deliver an incentive? Check out Megan Minns' post, "How To Deliver A Free Download Using ConvertKit."

## Ready to turn your blog readers into email subscribers?

Now that you know the benefit of an email list and how to give your readers more value, what will be your first incentive that you create? Share your ideas in the comments as well as any questions you might have about creating incentives to turn readers into email subscribers.

*Dani Stewart*

# 100 High-Quality Blogs to Look to for Inspiration in 2017

**A**s a blogger, do you ever feel like you're out there on your own? I know we don't all conform to the typical stay-in-your-pjs, never-leave-the-house, social-introvert, I-like-to-work-by-myself mold that we're often put into. But even still, blogging can feel isolating at times.

If you're at the beginning of your blogging journey, you most likely are working on your own because you can't afford to hire a team or rent a space to work from. Your non-blogger friends and family have a hard time understanding how you make a living, and you might not even have many blogger friends to look to for advice and inspiration.

The good news is, you don't have to look far.

## Keeping up with your fellow bloggers

The people in the blogging industry are a curious group. As a blogger, you need to be a dedicated self-starter with relentless passion for your topic. Of all the entrepreneurial circles you could come across, you'd be hardpressed to find the same kind of single-minded ambition spanning such a broad range of topics.

With all the industries, sub-industries, and completely niched-down topics blogs can cover, it's almost impossible to ever have a solid grasp of what's happening in the blog-o-sphere. The Internet is so alive with blogs that just keeping up with bloggers in your specific industry can be difficult. If that's true, I think it's safe to say you also might not have time to take a peek into how other industries that are blogging either– something you should definitely take the time to do.

Keeping up with blogs outside your niche will help you stay fresh in your writing, your blog topics, and creativity. No matter what your core topic is, browsing blogs from all industries is a great way to stay up-to-date with trends, news, and new ideas in the blogging community.

More than anything, it's important to have other bloggers

you look up to. These are people who set the bar for the quality of work you hope to produce, the level of insight you hope to provide your readers, or the amount of time and research you'd like to put into each post you publish.

We all have things to learn and teach each other whether it's a fresh way to pitch a course, a new app that's changing your daily work flow, or even picking up a dinner recipe to try out. Look no further than the bloggers around you for inspiration. After all, we're all in this together, right?

# 100 Bloggers to We Love to Follow

In case you fall in that camp of never having time to explore the great expanse of blogs, I've pulled together a list of some of the blogs inspiring us here at ConvertKit right now.

There were no special requirements, conditions, or applications to get on this list. It's simply a compilation of blogs we admire. I've broken it down into industries so you can browse through your kindred bloggers and hopefully find some new favorites to follow!

*(Fun fact, many of our own customers made the list! You can tell who's a ConvertKit-er by the \*\*\* with their web address.)*

## Art

Made Vibrant

Art to Self

Make Something

Format

## Beer, wine and cocktails

Punch

The Hop Review

Vindulge

Imbibe

## Boating

Where is Baer

## Careers

Jenny Blake

The Cooper Review

Nir and Far

Life After College

## DIY & Crafts

The Artful Parent \*\*\*

Oh, Happy Day!

Paper and Stitch

## Education

Dave Stuart Jr \*\*\*

## Fashion

Sazan

In the Frow

Effortless Gent \*\*\*

Andy Heart

## Fitness

Black Girls Run

Nerd Fitness

Daily Burn

## Food

Food52

Minimalist Baker \*\*\*

Naturally Ella

The Modern Proper

Husbands that Cook

Spoon Fork Bacon

## Design

The Nu School

iPad Calligraphy •••

Webydo

Invision

99designs

## Smashing Magazine

Emily Henderson

## Interior design

Hommemaker

The Vintage Rug Shop

Amber Interiors

## Home improvement

Ana White

Apartment Therapy

Ugly Duckling House

## Leadership

James Clear \*\*\*

Laura Roeder

Abernathy Magazine

## Lifestyle

A Cup of Jo

Design*Sponge

Design for Mankind

Design Love Fest

Just a Girl and Her Blog \*\*\*

## Marketing

Elle & Co \*\*\*

Seth Godin

Moz

Kissmetrics

Social Media Examiner

## Nonprofits

Speak Your Silence

Wipe Every Tear

## Online business

Helene in Between ***

Money Lab

Fizzle

Smart Passive Income ***

Sean Wes

by Regina ***

Marie Forleo

Michael Hyatt

My Wife Quit Her Job ***

## Outdoor and adventure

Semi-Rad

Dirtbag Diaries

Adventure Journal

Trail to Peak

National Geographic

## Parenting

Rage Against the Minivan

Design Mom

## Personal development

Amber Rae

Tim Ferriss

Zen Habits ***

Live Your Legend

## Personal finance

Making Sense of Cents

Mr Money Mustache

The College Investor ***

## Photography

Jenna Kutcher

Click it Up a Notch ***

Fstoppers

## Real estate

Housingwire

## Sports

Outkick the Coverage

A Football Report

## Travel

The Blonde Abroad

Ordinary Traveler

Runaway Juno

Oneika the Traveller

## Wellness

Nutrition Stripped ***

Wellness Mama ***

Chris Kresser

Becoming Minimalist ***

## Writing

Brain Pickings

Jenna Arak

Steven Pressfield

## Video

Leftcoast Media House ***

Noam Kroll

Wes Wages ***

*Dani Stewart*