



What Is A Blog?

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Blogging really has taken off in the previous months and several years. In fact, it is so popular that according to [Technorati](#) (a blog aggregator), around **70 000** new blogs are created **every hour!**

Looking at the above statistic, I think it is safe to assume that *most* people start up their own blogs without much thought to what blogs really are and the history behind them. They just want to get on the blogging band wagon, along with fellow ignorant bloggers. And as a result, they either fail miserably or they lose their interest in blogging and give up.

If you search the internet, you will find multitudes of blogs about blogging, teaching you how to blog. But I am sorry and shocked that **over 80%** of these blogs lack a fundamental feature, which is one of the pillars of such a blog. Their 'tutorial blogs' are a foundation pillar less and they don't even know it.

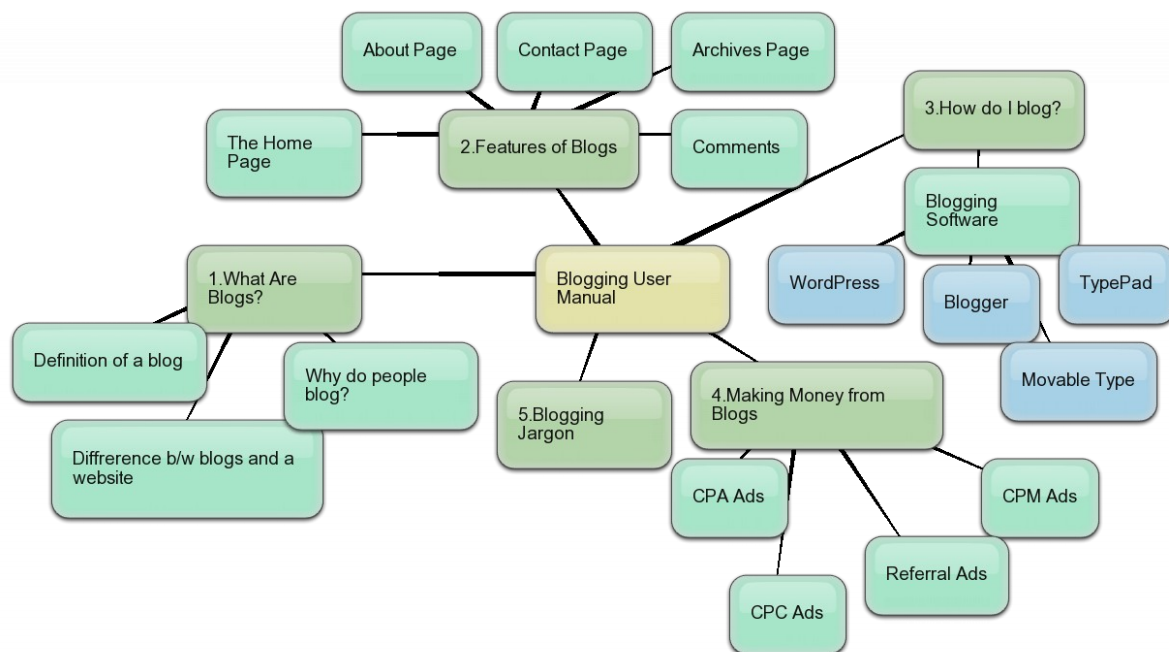
So, what is that fundamental feature, you ask? The answer: **What is a blog?** A majority of these 'blogging about blogging' blogs don't explain what a blog really is! Isn't that stupid? I mean, don't you think this is a basic and essential part of such blogs? Think about it: there is a user-manual with every appliance you buy, isn't there one? That user manual is there to guide you so as to how to use that machine.

So don't you think there should be a user manual for *blogging* too? People who are completely new to the concept need such a user manual to get a hold of the concepts and jargon associated with blogging. They won't learn a thing from such a blog if they don't even know what blogging is! And people make things worse by not explaining to them!

So, I've decided to change things and write up a user manual for blogs and blogging for those who are completely new to the concept and even those who are experienced. Let's start!

The Plan

So, here's a diagrammatic mind map of what we'll be studying about in this e-book. Take a long and good look at it before going ahead:



What Is A Blog?

The word '**blog**' is short for '**web log**'. It is a website. People think blogs are different from websites. (Blogs are websites, but with a different look and feel and purpose.) Blogs are websites where entries are displayed in a chronological order, that is, the latest entry is displayed at the top, while older entries are pushed down.

The function of blogs is to provide *updated* news or information about a particular subject. The key word here is 'updated'. It is essential that blogs are kept up to date; otherwise they don't deserve to be called blogs.

Another important thing about blogs is that they enable readers to comment on a post/entry. I'll explain that later in this e-book. Read on!

NOTE: For the details of blogging's history, [Wikipedia](#) is the place to go.

What's the difference between a blog and a website?

Essentially blogs and websites are the same. So what's the difference, the dividing line between them?

1. **Blogs are kept up to date:** Blogs are kept up to date by their authors, who post relevant information and news on a regular basis, otherwise they die. However, this is not true with a traditional website. You can set up a website and then forget it, it'll still probably prosper.
2. **Blogs encourage social interaction.** Blogs allow readers to comment and discuss about any post. Readers can express their own views and reservations and thus social interaction takes place. Traditional websites however don't allow social interaction or comments.
3. **Blogs are about things which keep evolving.** If you've noticed, people have blogs on subjects which have sustainable and new sources of content worthy of being written upon regularly. You won't find many blogs about HTML, since it won't change. Maybe once every few years but not on a daily or weekly basis. But you'll find blogs about politics and the internet, since these are things that are *dynamic*. They change daily or weekly, *continuously*. They keep evolving, and thus provide enough new content that can be blogged about. Websites however, are good for things that don't keep evolving. You'll find a lot of websites that contain
4. HTML tutorials. They don't need regular updates. They contain what's called 'ever-green' content.

5. **Blogs can be started without enough content.** You can easily start a new blog without content and then gradually build up the content. However, with websites, you need enough content beforehand otherwise the website seems empty and barren.

Why do People Blog?

This is a good question. Three main reasons why people blog:

- **To make money.** This is the most common reason. People blog to make money off them. More on this later in this e-book.
- **As a hobby.** Many people like the internet and computers and therefore they blog, not for any particular reason. They might blog about news or current affairs or any subject, or even just their daily life. It's just their hobby.
- **To promote their hobbies.** Many people have hobbies like gardening or cars or anything. And they blog about them, giving advice to others. Some also make quite a bit of money off their blogging.

Apart from these reasons, there are a whole lot of other reasons why people blog. There are blogs on almost about anything, from gaming to gardening to even knitting. And each has their share of loyal readers.

Blogs are an easy way through which people from all over the world sharing common interests can interact with each other. They talk about things they all love on their blogs and often hold discussions on such topics. There are also things like 'Blog Contests', where people participate in competitions held by bloggers to win nice prizes.

Blogging communities have experienced a rapid growth, leading to the inception of social media sites like [Digg](#) and [StumbleUpon](#), which enable people to share with others what they find useful. Blog aggregators like Technorati have made it easier for people to get to know more blogs and to socialize with bloggers. You can save your favourite blogs on Technorati too. Whole communities dedicated to blogging (think [BlogCatalog](#) and [MyBlogLog](#) have sprung up to allow people to discover new blogs and get their blog discovered and to make new friends.

The Features of Blogs

Blogs have their own unique features. Let's take a look at them.

The Home Page

The home page is found on all blogs. This is the page that you land on when you type in the address of any blog. Now, there are two types of home pages: dynamic and static:

- **Dynamic:** In this kind, the latest posts are show on the home page. As you keep adding more posts, the latest ones move to the top of the list and the

older ones are pushed down and down, and then they disappear off the home page to go into the archives. More about that in a moment.

- Static: In this kind, you specify a static page to be shown as your home page. Your homepage won't change to anything but the static page you specified, regardless of any new posts.

NOTE: There's no debate as to which of the above two is better. It's better to choose the one that suits your needs.

The About Page

This is the page where you introduce your self and where you write stuff about your self. People will usually visit this page to know more about you and what you do other than blogging. It's good to make this page as comprehensive and detailed as possible, so your visitors know everything (which you're comfortable with telling, that is) about you. This helps in trust building. For an example, see my [about page](#).

The Contact Page

This is the most important page any blog should have. The Contact page, as its name says, allows readers to contact the author of the blog. The reasons can be for advertising or just chit chat or what ever. But the main thing is that it allows communication between a reader and the blog owner. Every blog should have a contact page.

The Archives Page/Section

The archives page stores all the posts that the blog contains, from the first one till the very latest one. It's a collection of posts that a blog contains, since it was born. The archives page simply lists out *all* the posts of the blog.

An 'Archives' page is important since it provides a sitemap kind of functionality to your blog. Readers can go to any article within your blog in under two clicks. An archives page also helps in SEO (Search Engine Optimization), since it provides the search engines a clear view of everything your blog contains.

You can view the archives on my blog too. Look at the post titles in the sidebar and the month names (under the 'Archives' heading)? They're part of the archives. Categories can also be considered as archives, (but archives limited to that category) since they provide the links to all the posts I have put in that category. So it's really that simple.

Comments

That diagram above is very rough, as I said. I forgot to put a very important thing in there: comments.

Comments are outstanding features of blogs. Not all blogs support them, but comments help make a blog look populated and lively. On my blog for example, if you want to share your views on any post, you can do so by filling in the comments form at the bottom of each post. It's that simple. People give feedback through their comments, which can be used to improve the blog. If you're reading this e-book on my blog [itself](#), try this out now by filling that comments form below!

How Do I Blog?

So now that you've understood the basics and features of blogs and blogging, the question that arises is HOW DO YOU BLOG?

Blogging Software

You can blog using blogging software, which is the powerhouse behind your blog. The blogging software does 80% of the work for you, that is, storing all the posts and comments, regulating the working of the different parts of your blog, posting all the posts you make, applying the template and theme to the blog, and so on. You, on the other hand, do only 20%, which includes writing and posting the posts, providing the theme to the software, managing your blog (comments, bugs, stats, etc), and so on. So, you see, blogging software is essential.

There is both free and open-source, and commercial blogging software available. There's not much of a difference really in the free or the commercial one.

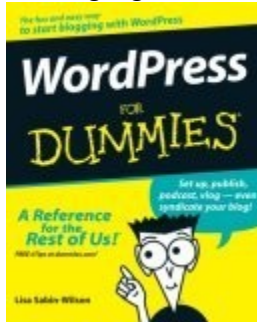
WordPress

The most popular and widely used and most customizable free blogging software out there is [WordPress](#). It powers over 2 million blogs. There are two options you have:

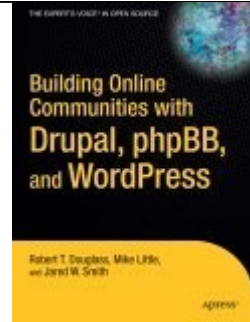
- **A free, hosted [WordPress.com](#) account.** This is like free web hosting. You get a sub domain, (like [siyab.wordpress.com](#)), and the powerful WordPress blogging software to power the blog. The downside to this is that you cannot run JavaScript on such blogs, as it is forbidden. This means you can't use *a majority* of the advertising options which are out there, such as Google AdSense. However, this is more than enough for some bloggers though.
- **Download the free WordPress software and use it on your own hosting.** This method is preferred by many bloggers. You need to have your own paid hosting for this. What you do is that you download the software from [WordPress.org](#) (It's different from [WordPress.com](#)!) and then upload it to your server and activate it. But your server needs to

support PHP and MySQL for this to work. Alternatively, if your web hosting account has Fantastico Deluxe (A PHP based script to install PHP based software, like WordPress) installed, then it's a breeze installing WordPress, you just click a few buttons and it's done.

Here are some REALLY good books(courtesy Amazon) on installing and managing WordPress, which can really make you a WordPress maestro:



[WordPress For Dummies](#)



[Building Online Communities with Drupal, phpBB and WordPress](#)



[WordPress Complete](#)



[WordPress\(Second Edition\)](#)

Note: The links to these books are affiliate links. You won't be charged anything extra, but I'll earn a commission (from Amazon) off the price you pay.

Blogger

[Blogger](#) is a free blogging service provided by Google. It is hugely popular among the free blogs and they now host over 80% of the free blogs out there. The main advantage of Blogger is that it allows almost complete customization of your blog, including the facility of placing ads on them, so you can make money.

MovableType

[MovableType](#) is a blogging software like WordPress, and is powerful also. It's free too. But it's not so popular and doesn't have as many add-ons as WordPress does.

TypePad

[TypePad](#) is an online blogging service like Blogger. You can try out a free trial of their services, but you have to pay to use their services.

The Rest

The above were only some of the blogging tools and services available. You can choose pretty much any one you like, as long as it enables you to do one thing: blogging. My favourites? [Blogger](#) and both versions of [WordPress](#).

How do I make money off blogs?

This has long been a strong magnet for bloggers. It has even influenced non-bloggers to take up blogging! So, how do you make money from your blog(s)? Also, many people have been baffled by the whole system. These are the questions asked by many newbie bloggers:

- How do you get the ads to display on your blog?
- How do you get paid?
- How much do you get paid?
- What types of advert systems are there?

Another thing that I've seen on many 'blogging-about-blogging' blogs is that they don't *explain* the whole process. They just thump [Google AdSense](#) or any other ad network on their blogs and then expect people to click on those referral links so they get commissions. I'm not against using referral links. I only mean that people, especially the new bloggers, should be explained the whole process.

So, I'm doing it for you. Right here in this e-book.

Getting the Ads

OK, now you have your blog all set up and want to monetize it by putting ads on it. So, how do you get the ads?

Well, you can join an *ad network*, such as [Google AdSense](#). How do they work?

Suppose you want to sell a house. You contact a real estate agent and request him to advertise your house and find a buyer, and in return get a *commission* on what ever price the house sells for. So, the real estate agent advertises your house for you and finds a buyer. All's set up and your house is sold, and the estate agent gets a commission off the sale. Familiar enough, this situation?

Well, ad networks are essentially the same as the above. You are the *seller* of ad space on your blog. You join the ad network, which is the *estate agent*, and the ad network finds an advertiser, or the *buyer* for your ad space. All's done and you sell your ad space, earning money and giving a commission to the *estate agent*, in this case the advertising agency or network.

A good question that arises here is the *type* of ads you can display on your blog. There are several different advertisement types:

- **CPC:** Cost Per Click. In this, you get paid per click. The exact rate per click is often not disclosed by the ad agency but it can earn you anywhere from \$.10 to \$5 and perhaps even more than that. CPC is considered to be one of the highest paying ad types that you can put on your blog.
- **CPM:** Cost Per Mille, also known as Cost Per Thousand (CPT). In CPM, you get paid per a thousand impressions of your blog. The money involved in CPM is quite less, normally about \$0.5 or \$1.0 because CPM is normally not considered to be important or of high value.
- **CPA:** Cost Per Action. In this type, you get paid whenever some one does a specified action with the ad. For example, you could get paid whenever some one signs up for a service *through* an ad on your blog. CPA ads are normally high paying, since it is often difficult to convince the reader enough to make him do the action.
- **Referral/Affiliate Links:** This type is similar to CPA. Often, companies which have products to offer will want to spread word about their products. So, they have this affiliate system in place through which you earn commissions by referring people to those products. This pay out quite high, with some commissions going up to \$50 per commission!

So the above were the ad types available to you. Now the question is which one of these suits your blog better?

Which one of these should I use for my blog?

Before choosing any of the above, read through the following tips:

- If your blog contains lots of helpful information on a particular subject, such as gardening, for example, it is better to put CPC ads on them. People will look for more sources of information after reading your blog and are more likely to click those ads. It's better to put CPC ads on pages which receive a lot of search engine traffic, since these SE visitors are searching for information, and the ads on your site can provide them with what they need.
- If you have a blog which contains lots of information on a particular subject, such as gardening, like the above example, why not sign up as affiliates with companies which provide gardening equipment and then

promote their products on your blog? If you're authoritative enough, you're likely to make a sale and earn a commission.

- If you have a blog or site which gets loads of impressions and page views, such as sites providing free tools and services(e.g. MySpace templates, YouTube downloaders, etc), why not put CPM ads on them? You're likely to earn more money off them.
- If your blog contains useful information on any particular subject, then along with affiliate links, you can put CPA ads somewhere on your blog, maybe in the sidebar. Interested readers may click on them.
- If you own a product review site where you review products you can put CPA and referral ads in those reviews, referring people to those products and therefore earning commissions! Nice, isn't it?

I want to sign up!

Here, I've grouped all the ad agencies I use into CPA, CPC, CPM and affiliate (referral) networks:

Note that some networks operate more than one kind of ad, so there may be multiple mentions of the same network. AND, the links in the following list are referral links, which means that I get paid a commission (just like I explained above!) for every person I refer to these services. Don't you think I deserve to get some money for this hard work? ;)

CPC

- [Google Adsense](#)
- [AdBrite](#)
- [LinkWorth](#)
- [BidVertiser](#)

CPA

- [Google Adsense](#)(again!)
- [Chitika](#)
- [LinkWorth](#)

CPM

- [AdBrite](#)
- [LinkWorth](#)

Referral/Affiliate

- [Text Link Ads](#)
- [Google Adsense](#)(and again!)

- [BidVertiser](#)
- [Chitika](#)
- [AdBrite](#)
- [LinkWorth](#)

Note that the above list was the list of the ad networks that I know and which I use on my blogs and websites. This list is likely to be updated over time as I experiment with more ad networks. There are many more ad networks out there. The key to success is to keep experimenting till you find just the right combination. So, start clicking (on these links, of course!) and perhaps you'll soon be clicking all the way to the bank!

Jargon Dictionary

Just-in bloggers and newbie bloggers have long been haunted by the various jargon terms used in blogging. Trackbacks, linkbacks, pingbacks, nofollow, categories?!? Confused? Well, here's my little jargon dictionary which I've prepared to help you all out.

Trackbacks

Trackbacks are a simple way of telling other bloggers that you've written about their posts on your post. Suppose you read some one's post on cheese. You liked it and decided to write about that post. You take the trackback link from the original post itself and you place it in the 'Trackbacks' box of your blogging software and hit Publish. The author of the original post will then be notified that you've written about his post. Read my [post about trackbacks](#), where you can get to know even more about them.

Pingbacks

Pingbacks are long for 'pings'. A ping is a way of telling services such as Technorati and other blogs that your blog has been updated recently. Pings allow services like Technorati and Feedburner to know that you've updated your blog so that they can update their information about your blog.

RSS

RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. It's really simple. The function of RSS is to bring you information about updates to your favourite blogs, without you having to go there your self. The word 'Feed' is associated with RSS often. This simply means that it *feeds* the information about updates to your RSS reader.

You need a *RSS Reader* to be able to save and view RSS Feeds. There are both offline and online RSS Readers. The Mozilla Firefox browser has an inbuilt RSS reader, which you can use to save RSS feeds. You can also use the [GreatNews](#) offline RSS reader(I use that) or, [Bloglines](#) is the most popular online RSS reader available out there.

Linkback

A linkback is simply a link to your blog from an external source. For example, if some XYZ blog links to your blog, or any of its pages and articles, then that link is called a linkback.

Nofollow

Ah, the old debate. Nofollow is a non-standard HTML attribute which is assigned to the link tag (`<a href..>`). What it does is that it tells search engine bots not to follow that link, therefore the bot won't go to the place where the link links to. This system is used mainly by Google, and the other search engines mainly ignore it. More on [NoFollow](#).

Permalinks

Permalinks can be thought of as the address of a particular post. There are different types of permalinks: numerical (like [www.puttingblogsfirst.com/?p=32](#)); date/time based (like [www.puttingblogsfirst.com/2008/01/permalinks-crap](#)) and custom made (you can make up your own kind).

Post Slug

These are not real slugs, but are just a reference to a particular post. For example, a post titled '[The Importance of Keeping Your Word To Build Up Authority](#)' has a post slug of '**the-importance-of-keeping-your-word-to-build-up-authority**'. Post slugs are usually similar to the title of the post, but you can change them too if you like.

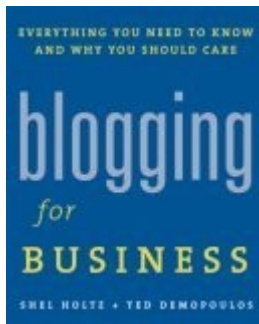
Blogosphere

The world of blogs is called blogosphere. Nothing else.

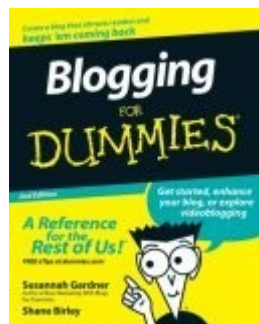
That was my *little* dictionary of blogging jargon!

Further Reading

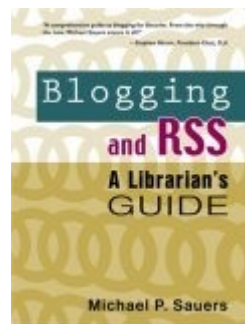
If you want to read even more about blogging and delve into the details, I suggest the following books. Enjoy Reading!:



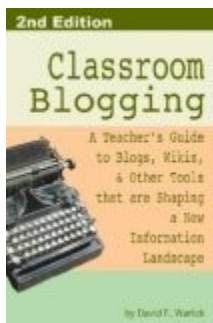
[Blogging For Business](#)



[Blogging For Dummies](#)



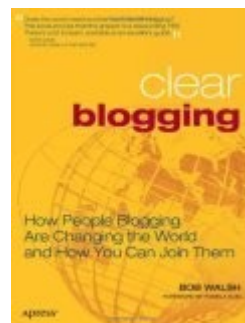
[Blogging and RSS](#)



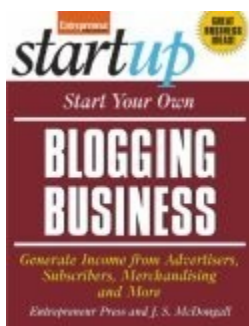
[Classroom Blogging](#)



[blogging heroes](#)



[clear blogging](#)



[Start Your Own Blogging Business](#)



[Blog Wild!](#)

The End

So my friend, that was the end of this e-book, introducing you to the concept of blogging and blogs and the basics of making money from them. I hope you enjoyed reading this. Note that this was only a brief outline of the concepts of blogging and making money with them. There are many more things associated with blogging such as blog design, blog strategy, search engine optimization and more. This was only the basics of it.

I hope to release more such helpful and **FREE** e-books on each of the above topics so stay tuned to [my blog](#) for that! You subscribe to the [RSS Feed](#) also to keep your self updated or you can also subscribe to [updates by email](#).

Muhammad Siyab,
Blog Master.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

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