

Lesson Plan: Anatomy of a Blog Post

Daniel Murphy

Department of Kinesiology

San José State University

Lesson: Anatomy of a Blog Post

Timeframe: approximately 70 minutes

Target Audience: Upper-division undergraduate students in research writing courses will benefit from this lesson plan that provides the basic structure of a blog post and the components of a compelling blog post.

Instructor Materials and Preparation: Prior to class, direct students to research two blogs in their field and develop a one page document discussing the positive aspects and constructive criticisms of each blog (optional). Instructors will need access to the internet, knowledge of WordPress (<http://wordpress.com/>) or Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com>), and an understanding of internet communication mediums.

Students will need access to the items on the bulleted list below.

Student Materials:

- computer and online access
- handouts included with this lesson plan
- an email address
- LMS or faculty web page access

Objective: After the lesson, students will be able to develop a professional blog post on relevant academic and professional themes.

Background: The growth of social media communication technologies (SMCT) in public and private sector industries has transformed the ways institutions, companies, and professionals engage users, stakeholders, employees, and colleagues.

[Henry Farrell](#) (2012) likens the blogosphere to a “carnival of ideas” and believes it will “transform how we think of ourselves as scholars”:

“Why are so many academics beginning to blog? Academic blogs offer the kind of intellectual excitement and engagement that attracted many scholars to the academic life in the first place, but which often get lost in the hustle to secure positions, grants, and disciplinary recognition. Properly considered, the blogosphere represents the closest equivalent to the Republic of Letters that we have today. Academic blogs, like their 18th-century equivalent, are rife with feuds, displays of spleen, crotchets, fads, and nonsenses. As in the blogosphere more generally, there is a lot of dross. However, academic blogs also provide a carnival of ideas, a lively and exciting interchange of argument and debate that makes many scholarly conversations seem drab and desiccated in comparison. Over the next 10 years, blogs and bloglike forms of exchange are

likely to transform how we think of ourselves as scholars. While blogging won't replace academic publishing, it builds a space for serious conversation around and between the more considered articles and monographs that we write."

It is necessary for students to understand how to develop theme, content, narrative, and structure when writing multi-media communications that are propagated via numerous technological delivery systems, including the internet and mobile devices.

The expansion of SMCT and accessible technological tools demands that faculty place greater emphasis on teaching university students the 21st century techno-cultural communication skills they will need to be successful in constantly shifting socioeconomic landscapes.

Introduction to Lesson [5 minutes]:

Instructor Note: The lesson will open with a brief overview of the topic and the assignment using documents posted on a LMS. The instructor will review the basics of the assignment, cover the assignment timeline, and outline the details of the lecture plans. Prior to class, students will have read four online articles and two research articles on the topic (see resources below), and students will also have reviewed relevant assignment documents on a LMS (see the optional assignment).

Instructor Prompt: "Blogs have become powerful vehicles to develop digital professional profiles, and they have become a space where professionals can explore issues, connect with colleagues, and make deeper impacts on their fields. Writing a blog post is a craft that can be developed. It is important to develop a blog presence that is not already well-covered on the internet. Compelling, widely read blog authors approach critical topics in niche areas and avoid broad topics or jumping between disparate topics. Well-developed blog posts offer new content, new ideas, and critical discussions. The purpose of today's class is to introduce you to some techniques you can use to develop a blog post."

Write agenda on the board:

1. Blog Post Introduction
2. Group & Class Discussion
3. Blog Post Assignment Overview
4. Morphology of a Blog Post
5. Hands-on Activity: Build a Blog Post
6. Closure

Procedure [approximately 60 minutes]:

Part 1: Morphology of a Blog Post [2-3 minutes] (Use PowerPoint Slides 1-3)

Review slides 1-3 in the PowerPoint presentation. Discuss the basic morphology of a blog post including how to develop themes, voice, and purpose; relate back to assignment guidelines using examples of topics from department disciplines.

Part 1, Step A: How to Develop a Blog Post Introduction [5 minutes]
(Use PowerPoint Slide 4)

Display slide 4 in the PowerPoint presentation. Distribute blog post grading rubric handout. (For more extended study of this topic, distribute the *optional* blog post topic proposal assignment.)

Instructor Prompt: “For the assignment, you will develop a single blog post. Topics will be based on your academic and/or professional interests, and you must cover new topics related in your fields of study. This may include analysis and discussion of new technological advancements in the forms of theories, practice, or tools.

- The blog post must have 3-4 paragraphs: introduction, support, and conclusion.
- The blog post will be no less than 200 words and no more than 400 words.

The purpose of the lesson is to a) learn about the basic structure of a blog post and b) understand the components of a compelling blog post.

The assignment will be worth XX% of each student’s overall grade.

Now that you understand the basics of what we are doing, let’s examine the basic structure of a blog post.”

Part 1, Step B: Basic Structure of a Blog Post [5-7 minutes]
(Use PowerPoint Slide 5)

Display slide 5 in the PowerPoint presentation. Review the following material and take questions from the students as necessary.

1. Opening Paragraph – The first sentences should overview the topic and draw the reader into the discussion. Make a case for the issue and explain why it is relevant and important for your readers to engage. (5-8 sentences)
2. Supporting Paragraph – In this section, you should provide detail about the topic/issue being discussed. (5-8 sentences)
3. Conclusion Paragraph – Wrap up key issues, point toward future concerns, call to action for community, call for comments and blog interaction, provide reasons why this issue will continue to be important. (5-8 sentences).

Part 2: Group Discussion – Social Media and Blogs [10 minutes]
(Use PowerPoint Slide 6)

Display slide 6 in the PowerPoint presentation. Conduct group and then class-wide discussion about social media and blogs. In groups of four, students should answer the following questions. Each group has a captain (speaker), moderator (engages the group), and recorder (develops notes). The instructor should write responses on the board.

Questions:

1. “Do you currently use social media? Which platforms? Why?”
2. “Do you read blogs? If yes, why do you read them and what are the topics these blog authors cover?”

Part 3: Introduce Basic Elements of Blog Posts [10 minutes]
(Use PowerPoint Slide 7)

Display slide 7 in the PowerPoint presentation. Review the “10 Essential Elements of a Blog Post.”

Instructor Note: A complete list can be found online at <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/23-essential-elements-of-sharable-blog-posts/>. This resource can be provided to students if you’d like to give them an additional resource.

10 Essential Elements of a Blog Post:

1. a title that grabs the reader’s attention
2. exploration of news ideas and content
3. content that is useful to others, not just the author
4. content that adds something new to the community
5. accessible style and form
6. text that is easy to read and formatted
7. text that is written in a “human” voice (avoid academic-ese)
8. informative content that is worthy of a second read
9. considerable use of links to resources
10. comment sections and “share” options for readers

Part 4: Hands-on Activity: Build a Blog Post [2 minutes]
(Use PowerPoint Slides 8-9)

Display slides 8 and 9 in the PowerPoint presentation.

Instructor Prompt: “In groups of four, you are going to choose a group topic for a sample blog post that we will develop in class. Each member of the group will choose a section of the blog post and write a short paragraph on paper for the blog post. When completed, each student will then write the short paragraph on the board in the order the paragraphs would appear in the group’s blog post. The blog title should appear above the post. At the end of the group activity, each group’s blog post and title will be written on the board. As a class, we will then read each blog post and discuss the structure, grammar, and content of the post.”

Part 4, Step A: Group Activity Organization [1-2 minutes]

Create groups of four students who have similar academic and professional interests.

Part 4, Step B: Group Member Interaction and Blog Post Topic Brainstorm [3-4 minutes]

Tell group members to choose a topic in their discipline that will be used for a sample blog post to be developed in class. Allow time for the students to make their decision.

Part 4, Step C: Group Paragraph Development [8-10 minutes]

Each member of the group will choose a section of the blog post (introduction, supporting paragraph x2, and conclusion) and write a short paragraph on paper (or computer) for the blog post. Give the students time to complete their paragraphs.

Part 4, Step D: Group Editing and Blog Write-up [7-8 minutes]

Give students time to discuss the blog post and edit their paragraphs. Each student in the group will then write his or her short paragraph on the board (or post online) in the order the paragraphs would appear in the group's blog post. The blog title should appear above the post.

Part 4, Step E: Class Discussion of Group Blog Posts [5-7 minutes]

At the end of the group activity, each group's blog post and title will be written on the board. As a class, read each blog post and discuss the structure, grammar, and content of the post. Be sure to point out strengths and weaknesses, and make sure that all posts contain the essential elements outlined on the PowerPoint slides.

**Closure/Evaluation [5 minutes]:
(Use PowerPoint Slide 10)**

Instructor Prompt: "Today, we have learned about the basics of how to develop a blog post. Our next step is to write your own blog post and bring a copy of the post to the next class session for peer edits."

Student Workflow Tip: "Having trouble developing your blog post? Develop a brainstorm bubble map and then fill in the bubbles with ideas or concepts you are passionate about in your field. Think about how those ideas are related to your field and are important to the field at large. Conduct an internet search for current blogs that cover those areas."

Instructor Note: Review assignment guidelines and deadlines

1. Review deadlines and guidelines for the blog post.
2. Final Class Question: Ask students verbally about the main elements of a blog post.
3. **Optional Assignment:** Download the blog topic proposal handout, fill in the questions and prompts, and upload to the LMS by XX date.

Academic Research Readings (accessed on Academic Search Premier; EbscoHost)
To be read by students prior to class.

Dyrud, M. A. (2012). Posting, tweeting, and rejuvenating the classroom. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(1), 61-63. doi:10.1177/1080569911432738

Sacks, M., & Graves, N. (2012). How many “friends” do you need? Teaching students how to network using social media. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 75(1), 80-88. doi:10.1177/1080569911433326

Web Readings (accessed online) – To be read by students prior to class.

The Immanent Frame (n.d.) .1 Why bother with blogs. Retrieved from

<http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/religion-blogsphere/religion-blogsphere-1/>

Rowse, D. (2006) How to blog: Tips for beginners. Retrieved from

<http://www.prologger.net/archives/2006/02/14/blogging-for-beginners-2/>

Stutzman, F. (2006). Blogging and academic divide. Retrieved from

<http://chimprawk.blogspot.com/2006/08/blogging-academics-digital-divide.html>

Dayal, G. (2005). PH.Dotcom: What if professors could lecture 24-7? Blog culture invades academia. Retrieved from <http://www.villagevoice.com/2005-04-05/art/ph-dotcom/>

Additional Readings – Optional http://sixrevisions.com/web_design/10-important-traits-of-a-great-blog-design/

<http://www.businessesgrow.com/2010/11/30/the-five-elements-of-a-perfect-blog-post/>

<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/23-essential-elements-of-sharable-blog-posts/>

<http://heartifb.com/2011/10/04/elements-of-a-good-blog-part-i-design-template/>

<http://www.rosettathurman.com/2010/07/10-reasons-why-every-young-professional-should-have-a-blog/>

Blog Samples

<http://pressthink.org/>

<http://thelifeacademic.wordpress.com/blogging-academia/>

<http://www.academicproductivity.com/>

Teaching Resources

Curriculum: <http://www.common sense media.org/educators/curriculum>

Teaching with blogs: <http://www.readwritethink.org/professional-development/strategy-guides/teaching-with-blogs-30108.html>

Basics of Student Blogs: <http://edudemic.com/2012/02/blog-with-students/>

Teaching Social-Tech Identity: <http://www.edvoices.com/blog/2012/03/26/student-digital-identity/>

Portal Site: <http://oedb.org/library/features/top-100-education-blogs/>

Instructor Resources - Infographics

Blogging Business: <http://www.socialmagnets.net/seo-infographic-blogging-trends/>

Blogging Delivery: <http://blog.kissmetrics.com/science-of-social-timing-3/>

History of Blogging: <http://www.magnet4marketing.net/2012/04/17/the-evolution-of-blogging-infographic/>

Blogging Overview: <http://www.hongkiat.com/blog/blogging-blogsphere-infographics/>

Top 2012 Social Media Infographics: <http://pinterest.com/1stwebdesigner/top-social-media-infographics-in-2012/>

Sample Assignment Schedule*

Assignment	Date	Pts.
Blog Research (optional):	Month Day,	(5pts.)
Student Blog Project Proposal (optional):	Month Day	(5pts.)
Write Post 1:	Month Day	(5pts.)

* Subject to change with advance notice to class.

Blog Post Grading Rubric

+ %

Department Name

XX

University Name

Name: _____ Date: _____

Content	
_____ Appropriate title	_____ Includes integration of reference material
_____ Appropriate content	_____ Includes hyperlinks
_____ Includes video link	
Organization	
_____ Topic of paper introduced in first paragraph	_____ Use of section headers
_____ Transitions between paragraphs and sub-topics	_____ Summary in final paragraphs
_____ Organization of content	
Analysis and Critical Thinking	
_____ Evident in paper	_____ Integration of course concepts _____ Synthesis of materials
Writing Skills	
Clarity: _____ Content is clear	Correctness: _____ Few grammatical errors
	_____ Few spelling errors

_____ Tense agreements	_____ Use of Pronouns	_____ Strong sentence structure	_____ Syntax
Formatting			
_____ Indentations	_____ Paragraph Information	_____ Section Organization	
_____ Ref pgs.	_____ Headers	_____ Margins	
Blog Post			
_____ Clear development of theme			
_____ Use of related social media platforms			
Grades & Timeline			
On time	Late, -1 grade step	Late, - 2 grade steps	Late, - 1 full grade
_____ Blog Post 1	Content _____	Grammar _____	Syntax _____ Theme _____
Overall Grade: _____			
Problems & Issues			
_____ need more formal writing style			
_____ too anecdotal			
_____ more effort overall			
_____ missing parts of writing assignment			
_____ need to paraphrase more			
_____ thin on content/analysis			
_____ poor blog formatting			
_____ more use of multi-media			
_____ too informal			
_____ post too short			
_____ post too long			

Qualitative Instructor Feedback:

BLOG TOPIC PROPOSAL ASSIGNMENT (*optional*)

OVERVIEW:

- I. 3-5 pages in length
- II. XX% of overall grade
- III. Type in answers directly after prompts; do not delete prompts

GRADING:

- Development of blog topic
- Critical thinking
- Completion of all sections
- Valid and related blog url selections
- Grammar and proper usage
- Punctuation and proper usage
- Format
- Agreement, parallel construction
- Capitalization

NOTES:

- In this assignment, you will develop the main approach to your blog post.
- Read the research articles and online articles available on the class LMS to help you develop your proposal.
- The more detail here the better, but make sure you are actually writing with purpose and not filler.
- Start the assignment by completing a concept map.
- Brainstorm ideas and concepts related to your topic.
- Bring the concept map and blog topic proposal assignment to the next class session.

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Fill in the following fields with as much detail as possible:

RESEARCH OVERVIEW

1. Blog Post Topic? (What will be the focus of your blog?) (Write a minimum of two paragraphs. Be specific with theories, approaches, key concepts, scope, and overview.)
2. Is the topic problematic in research (meaning differing opinions on approaches...be specific)?
3. List three critical questions you should ask yourself about the topic before you begin:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
4. Audience Demographics:
 - a. Professions:
 - b. Interests:
5. What are three potential titles for your blog post?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Blog Post

6. What will be the topic of your first blog post?
7. What is the larger significance of your topic in your field?
8. Who or what could benefit from your blog post?
9. How will your topic address/include multicultural/diversity perspectives?

RESEARCH AVENUES

10. List three urls for blogs that are related to your field and your blog post focus?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS - REFLEXIVITY

11. What drew you to this topic?
12. How will your relationship, or preconceived notions, affect your research and writing process?

Anatomy of a Blog Post

Daniel Murphy
Department of Kinesiology
ANNAPISI Grant Workshop
Lesson Plan
Fall 2012

What is a Blog?

- A blog (a weblog or web log) is a website consisting of entries (also called posts).
- Entries appear in reverse chronological order.
- The most recent post appears first.
- Comment sections and links are used to increase user interactivity.
- They are created using publishing software.



Introduction to Blogs

Students can use blogs

- to explore issues in their fields;
- to connect with colleagues;
- to make deeper impacts on their fields.



A quality blog post includes

- links,
- an engaging style,
- new content and new ideas,
- and reader interaction and critical discussions.

The purpose of this lesson is to introduce some of the techniques to develop a blog post.

Part 1: Step A

How to Develop a Blog Post Introduction

Goals:

- a) learn the basic structure of how to develop a blog post
- b) understand the components of a compelling blog post

The assignment will be worth XX% of each student's overall grade.

Assignment: Develop a Single Blog Post

1. Topics will be based on your academic and/or professional interests.
2. The post must cover new topics related to your field of study (e.g., analysis and discussion of new technological advancements in the forms of theories, practice, or tools).
3. The post must be no less than 200 words and no more than 400 words.

Part 1: Step B

Basic Structure of a Blog Post

- **Opening Paragraph** – The first sentences should overview the topic and draw the reader into the discussion. Make a case for the issue and why it is relevant and important for your readers to engage. 5-8 Sentences range.
- **Supporting Paragraph** – In this section, you should provide detail about the topic/issue being discussed. 5-8 Sentences range.
- **Conclusion Paragraph** – Wrap up key issues, point toward future concerns, call to action by community, call for comments and blog interaction, provide reasons why this will continue to be an important issue to think about and discuss. 5-8 Sentences range.

Part 2: Group Discussion: Social Media and Blogs



- **Work in groups of four for ten minutes.**
- **Assign a captain (group speaker), moderator (ensures all participate), and recorder (develops notes).**
- **Answer the following questions:**
 1. How do you currently use social media? Which platforms?
 2. Do you read blogs? If yes, why do you read them and what are the topics these blog authors cover?

Part 3: Basic Elements of Blog Posts

10 Essential Elements of a Blog Post:

1. a title that grabs the reader's attention
2. exploration of news ideas and content
3. content that is useful to others, not just the author
4. content that adds something new to the community
5. accessible style and form
6. text that is easy to read and formatted
7. text that is written in a "human" voice (avoid academic-ese)
8. informative content that is worthy of a second read
9. considerable use of links to resources
10. comment sections and "share" options for readers

Part 4: Hands-on Activity: Build a Blog Post

In groups of four,

1. choose a group topic for a sample blog post;
2. have each member of the group choose a section of the blog post;
3. write the short paragraphs on paper for the blog post;
4. write the short paragraphs on the board in the order the paragraphs would appear in the group's blog post;
5. include the blog title appear above the post.

At the end of the group activity,

- review each group's blog post that is written on the board.
- discuss the structure, grammar, and content of each post.

Part 4: Hands-on Activity: Build a Blog Post

The introduction paragraph should include

- title for the blog post,
- a succinct statement that introduces the blog post topic,
- a follow-up statement giving basic background on the topic,
- a statement about why the topic is important in the field,
- and an overview statement about current issues.

Two supporting paragraphs should include

- details about the topic,
- main issues, theories, or ideas,
- opposing ideas and theories.

The conclusion paragraph should include

- summary of content,
- possible solutions if discussing a problem,
- consequences of inaction,
- and final remarks.

Part 5: Closure/Evaluation

Student Workflow Tip: “Having trouble developing your blog? Develop a brainstorm bubble map and then fill in the bubbles with ideas or concepts you are passionate about in your field. Think about how those ideas are related to your field and are important to your professional life. Conduct an internet search for current blogs that cover those areas.”

Summary:

- Review deadlines and guidelines for first blog post.
- Final Class Question: What are the main elements of a blog post?
- Assign and explain the blog proposal assignment (*optional*)

Text References

- Brogan, C. (8, June, 2009). 23 Essential Elements of a Sharable Blog Post. Retrieved from <http://www.chrisbrogan.com/23-essential-elements-of-sharable-blog-posts/>
- Grow. (30, November 2011). The Five Elements of a Perfect Blog Post. <http://www.businessesgrow.com/2010/11/30/the-five-elements-of-a-perfect-blog-post/>

Image References

- Blog Logos: http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_djOrIbHcuel/RwK3HidWSyI/AAAAAAAAAOI/OZARiosnWjo/s200/blog_logos.jpg
- Blog Word Cloud: <http://blogs.ukoln.ac.uk/cultural-heritage/files/2010/06/Web-2.0-word-cloud.jpg>
- Man Using Megaphone: <http://us.cdn1.123rf.com/168nwm/darrenwhi/darrenwhi0902/darrenwhi090200003/4311903-black-and-white-illustration-of-a-man-using-a-megaphone.jpg>
- ShareThis! Logo: <http://www.simplyzesty.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/sharethis-logo.jpg>
- Tweetmeme Logo: <http://techvark.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/tweetmeme.com-logo.gif>
- Use of images adheres to Fair Use Standards.