

Becoming a blogger

How to set up a free blog

You can do it with blogger.com or wordpress.com. They are very easy to use, and you can set your account up in minutes. You'll get your own website address such as you.blogspot.com or you.wordpress.com. If you go with Wordpress, you can switch to a custom address later if you like (at a cost.)

How to attract readers

- Comment on other blogs (and put your website in your profile.)
- Add blogs to your blogroll and ask to be added on theirs.
- Put your blog on lists such as blogcatalog.com, delicious.com and stumbleupon.com.
- Start a Twitter account and set it to automatically tweet your blog posts (install the Tweetable plugin on Wordpress.)
- Post links to your Facebook, MySpace, Bebo, Tumblr, LinkedIn, etc. if you have them.
- Write catchy titles, use eye-catching pictures and write in small paragraphs. Internet users have a VERY short attention span - grab their attention quickly.
- Increase your google hits by writing longer titles, and using tags and categories. Google does not search your whole post for key words, just those three places and any images.
- Label images correctly so they appear in a Google Images search – this will boost your hit rate, and improve your rating in Google searches.
- Use Google Analytics for blogger or the Wordpress stats to check where you're readers are coming from. Find out what works and what doesn't.
- Lastly, don't be overzealous! You will build up a solid readership over time. Excessively marketing your blog at every opportunity can do more harm than good.

Managing comments

- Install a spam filter such as Akismet on Wordpress, or enable word verification on Blogger.
- Check comments regularly and delete any spam.
- Respond to people who write negative comments, but don't be rude.
- Don't delete comments just because you don't like them, it makes you seem untrustworthy.
- Reply to comments that ask questions, be helpful whenever you can.

Suggested reading

The who's who of science blogging

Carl Zimmer at The Loom	http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/loom/
Ed Yong at Not Exactly Rocket Science	http://blogs.discovermagazine.com/notrocketscience/
Ben Goldacre at Bad Science	http://badscience.net
Neurotic Psychology	http://scientopia.org/blogs/scicurious/

Other great writers

Deep Sea News (biology)	http://deepseanews.com/
ERV (biochemistry)	http://scienceblogs.com/erv/
Lab Rat (bacteria)	http://labrat.fieldofscience.com/
Science Geek Girl (Sci comm)	http://blog.sciencegeekgirl.com
Carbon-Based Curiosities (chem)	http://coronene.com/blog

My details

I'd love to connect with other Australian science bloggers. If you're just starting out, e-mail me a link to your new blog at aschoonerofscience@hotmail.com or tweet me @CaptainSkellett

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