me.com

Start My Blog

The digital world continues to change how we do things. Getting a job used to entail resumes, references and more. Scholarships necessitated proof of what you've done. Today, creating a blog is one way to provide proof of your abilities and experiences.

Start My Blog

Steps

1. **Why?**
Before you start blogging, ask yourself why you are starting a blog. Is it to showcase your talents? To share things that are important to you? To make money? You need to be passionate about what you plan to do. Your passion will allow you to continue working on your blog and not abandon it when the work becomes hard.

2. **Niche: Single or multi-faceted.**
Are you going to concentrate on just one thing? Are you interested in a lot of things? You have to decide what you are going to feature so your message is consistent and your audience stays with you over time. This will be your niche.

For example, when I started blogging, it was all about the Enrichment Project. My blog was pretty singularly-focused. However, I've added crafting via Grab 'N' Go sheets and design via templates. I'm writing fiction and non-fiction that will eventually go up and I've been seriously thinking of starting a podcast. For all of this, I made a subtle change to larajla creates since this is all my interests.

3. **The competition.**
Look at what other people in your niche are doing. Find the main blogs in your category. Are the topics you'd like to cover already covered well? If so, you'll need to find a way to differentiate yourself. If you start your blog as a "me too" site, you'll find that people who are already reading about your interests are too swamped to read your blog as well.

If there is a lack (or no) competition, you'll need to educate your audience as to why they need to read your blog. Start by subscribing to large publishers (Huffington Post, for example) so you can see what they are doing to pull in readers.

4. **Name.**
You'll notice many people use their names. My full name, Laura Rajsic-Lanier, was too long for a URL. No one would remember it. So, taking a nickname from college and adjusting it, I came up with *larajla.com*. It's short enough to remember, but unlikely that others will be using it.

Of course, you may choose to name it after your business or project, favorite stuffed animal or anything else that you feel will be easy to communicate. In choosing a name, you want to make sure that your audience will remember it and will find it easy to share. Make a list and start searching to find out if it is already being used. Keep working on it until you have a domain name that you can register.

5. **Technical stuff.**
Here are some questions you'll need to answer.

- *Where will you host your blog?* This is where your blog will live. You'll need to compare and review sites to find out what works for you. Each will have its good and bad points. I chose Host Gator because I can upload a lot of files for downloading (badge programs). My previous host had a limit which caused me a lot of frustration.

  NOTE: *WordPress.com* offers a free site, but your URL will be *wordpress.com/<your name>*. By paying a small fee, you can have it instead be *<your name>.com*. By having your own URL, you will attract a larger audience.

- *What blog software would you like to use?* I would recommend WordPress. Between ease of use, availability of self-help videos and being free (best reason of all), it seemed the best choice for me.

- *What plug-ins do you need?* Each plug-in provides functionality based on what you plan to do with your blog. Don't just make a list of them. Start with one and play with it. Figure out how it works and maximize it for your usage. Then go to the next one.

- *What theme / design do you want to use?* You can use the basic templates provided by your blog software or you can find other templates. Often the colors, fonts, etc. are included in themes. Be sure to keep notes so that all of your subheads are the same color, design elements are consistent, etc. This will build your brand.

- *Are you going mobile?* Your design will need to feature larger fonts or be converted on-the-fly for mobile viewing. Keep this in mind while looking at themes and designs.

6. **Posts vs. pages.**
Blogs allow you to do posts, where the latest is at the top and as you move down, you can find older ones. In addition, you can make static pages so that are standard web pages. Landing pages (where you direct your audience from other locations) are one type of page you'll want to invest time into creating and utilizing to help build your audience. Find out more about landing pages.

7. **Your audience.**
Think about the person who will be reading your blog. This is your "ideal reader". You might want to actually "create" an imaginary person to help you visualize this person. When you write your posts and pages, you need to write to that one person. When your audience reads your blog, it will be one at a time. They need to feel that you are writing to them.

8. **Written content.**
You will need to create written content — and a lot of it. Start with your voice. Will you be friendly or serious? Will your vocabulary be more "popular" or "formal"? Will you let your personality show through? Your voice needs to be consistent in everything you create.

Now that you've determined your voice, let's look at what you're going to write. Here are a few things to get you started:

- Keywords — Create a list of 10-20 words related to your niche to refer to while writing.
- Blog topics — Keep a list of blog topics you'd like to cover. This will help you when you get "stuck" for ideas, looking for supporting post ideas, etc.
- Headlines — Keep a list of headlines you feel will grab your audience's attention.
- Posts — Write your blog posts. You may want to keep a few for when you aren't feeling inspired. You need a few that are partially done or ready to release.

Start writing and building up your content repository.

9. **Other content.**
Your blog is going to need more than just writing. You'll want at least one image per post. This image can be used by anyone on Pinterest to link to your article. Be sure to include the URL on your image. If something happens to the link, people will still be able to find you. Here's a list of items you might want to add to your blog.

- Clip-Art
- Photos
- Sketches
- Original art
- Infographics
- Charts / graphics
- Podcasts
- Video
- Documents (PDFs, EPUBs, etc.)
- Links

10. **Editorial calendar.**
You want to be consistent in posting. For example, I try to make sure I put something out every Tuesday morning. This way, my audience knows to look for it. An editorial calendar can be used to track posts, writing and more. Think of this as a schedule more than a "to do" list. You need to commit to a deadline and follow through.

11. **Proof.**
Before you release your page or post to the world, proofread everything one last time. I usually give myself a minimum of two days from when I put something up and I do the final proof. You want to look professional, not sloppy. Grammatical errors and misspellings can undermine your message.

12. **Test.**
Make sure everything is working. While proofing is checking the written parts, your testing should be to make sure links work, attached items can be viewed, etc. Be sure to test on more than one platform. For example, you can view the page using two or more browsers or see how it looks on your mobile devices versus your computer monitor.

13. **Optimize.**
Keywords, links, tags and more allow search engines to find you. The more you optimize your post, the more likely your audience will find you. Look at your software and explore how you can optimize your posts.

14. **Distribute.**
Your software or plug-ins will allow you to distribute your blog to the world. From links to popular social media sites to guest posting to an email list, you can find many ways to let your audience know that new content is available. Be sure to make a process so you are consistent in your distribution.

15. **Measure.**
Track how many people visit your blog, what posts are popular and other metrics so that you can refine your message and improve your blog. Also, review any feedback you receive objectively.

Sites to Explore

wordpress.com
blogger.com
tumblr.com
www.huffingtonpost.com
www.makeuseof.com/tag/5-blog-sites-wordpress-blogger
www.digitaltrends.com/social-media/best-free-blogging-sites
www.howtostartablog.org
www.problogger.net/archives/2007/06/09/how-to-build-your-personal-brand-through-your-blog
www.nimble.com/blog/build-your-personal-brand
www.altdotlife.com/what-makes-a-personal-blogger-worth-reading
www.jeffbullas.com/2010/11/29/23-steps-to-build-your-personal-brand
boostblogtraffic.com (sign up for "52 Headline Hacks free)
www.copyblogger.com/wordpress-website-tips
heidicohen.com/infographic-how-to-plan-your-blog
heidicohen.com/newbie-blogging-guide-what-experts-do-not-tell-you

*Check out larajla's Enrichment Project
to start your own adventure.*