

# To blog or not to blog? That is the marketing question

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Few methods can build your practice and reputation as well as blogging—nor can they give you as much grief. Your opinions can become known to a wide audience; you might influence public thinking or behavior; and you might become associated with a particular expertise at almost no financial cost. Yet, having regular deadlines to produce creative content can be stressful, and the time required to do it well has its own cost.

## What is it?

“Blog” is the collapsed expression of “Web log.” Blogging is posting your thoughts on a Web site for colleagues or consumers, or both, to read. Typically, a blog is written as if you were writing a newspaper column; word count varies, from 250 to 1,000 words. Alternative formats are auditory (podcasts) or visual (vlog) but those media require greater technical proficiency and take more time to produce.

Whether you decide to write or record your blog entry, be guided by this advice:

- **The subject matter** can be anything you choose, but will be easiest to write when what you write about is based on your expertise.

- **The format** can be stream of consciousness, essay, or bulleted lists or slides; the latter is the most common and often follows a how-to or list format (eg, “Top [number] strategies to XYZ” or “[Number] of things you didn’t know about ABC”).

- **End the blog with a cliffhanger or a call-to-action statement** that invites readers to comment (especially if you then comment on their comments), to help drive interest.

- **Generate material** at a consistent interval (eg, once a week or twice a month), so your readers can look forward to your soliloquies on a regular basis.

Your professional Web site can serve as a venue for your blog. Using a WordPress<sup>a</sup>-based site, for example, offers a user-friendly way to compose your dispatch, add formatting (headers, bullets, color, images, etc.) as you see fit, and then publish it. It requires little technical expertise and adds no extra expense to your Web site. Alternatively, you might wish to contact editors at magazines or blog aggregators with story ideas, and let them handle the logistics if your content is appealing to them.

## Spreading the word

There is much you can do to publicize your blog.

- **Take advantage of social media.** Build up your contacts on LinkedIn and follow other bloggers and large news sites on Twitter. Often, recipients will respond in-kind. Then, for each new piece, post or tweet it in these accounts.

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<sup>a</sup>WordPress is a Web site creation and management tool.

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### Disclosure

Dr. Braslow is the founder of Luminello.com.

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**Generate material at a consistent interval, so readers can look forward to your posts on a regular basis**

- **Offer an e-mail subscription** so that readers can easily follow you (by means of a free WordPress plug-in, for example).

- **Be found in search engines**, such as Google, by writing high-quality, original content. Don't force certain keywords into your article in the hopes that search engines find them—doing so tends to make writing more robotic and can lower your page rank.

### Successful strategies

Regularly setting time aside so that the process is enjoyable and not onerously deadline-driven lends satisfaction to the experience and comes through in the quality of the composition. To save time, consider dictating your thoughts to your computer or phone, then outsource transcription.

Don't overlook the bounty of material in your day-to-day life: stories from sessions; discoveries from your own reading or the latest news; and lectures you give. All of these can serve as inspiration and material for posts. Jot down these moments in a

notebook as soon as they come up, or else the memory will likely slip away.

Just as with other forms of social media, be mindful of appropriate boundaries. Do not disclose identifying patient information; even revealing facets of your life might not be appropriate for current or future patients to have access to. On the other hand, it might be therapeutic for them to know select personal information, such as how you have handled past dilemmas, that reveals you are a real person (a "whole object" in psychoanalytic terms), and that models meaningful thoughts or deeds.

### You'll find your voice, in time

Getting started with blogging often is the toughest part. Finding the right format, material, and routine will take time. Eventually, you will find your blogging voice, and will value the unique opportunity to brand your practice and yourself, provide valuable content to your readers, and find an outlet for artistic expression.



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