

BLOG WRITING MAGIC



SuccessfulBlogging.com



BY **ANNABEL CANDY**

About the Author

- I have 16 years experience in designing and writing for the Internet.
- I have an MA in Design for Interactive Media from Middlesex University in London but I'm not a technical person. I'm a writer who enrolled to get over my fear of technology, and because I realised creative people need the Internet as much as it needs us.
- My main interest is people, and how we can use computers and the Internet to improve our lives. The Internet is a brilliant tool to help people reach and engage with each other, and I want to make it accessible for everyone. It saddens me that many small business owners and creative people are put off blogging because of the technical side. If you're one of those people I want to show you how to outsource technical issues confidently (and make sure they get done properly) without overwhelming you with technological instructions.
- I've written theses on how to build communities, increase user interaction and make the Internet experience enjoyable. I love putting this knowledge to practice on my own blog and teaching other people how to use it to their advantage.
- My blog and writing has featured in print media and online, and I've written for some of the most popular blogs on the Internet including Probblogger, Copyblogger, Zen Habits and many more.
- I'm married with three kids and run my own business, so I focus on getting results fast and saving time.
- After 12 months of starting my blog Get In the Hot Spot, I built it up to more than 1,500 subscribers, with around 5,800 unique visitors per month from 165 countries. As I write this it has more than 3,600 comments from engaged readers - a steadily growing and appreciative community.
- My blog has brought me focus, clarity and confidence in both my business and personal life. I want you to experience the many benefits and opportunities blogging has brought me too.
- I've slept free in Germany, run out of my room naked after having a very realistic nightmare in Greece and hitched rides on a fire engine in Turkey, a gravel truck in Zimbabwe and by donkey cart in Tunisia. I've traveled the globe to spot animals in the wild and ended up sharing my home with scorpions, bats and birds.
- I write travel stories on my blog Get In the Hot Spot (www.getinthehotspot.com) as well as for print and online travel publications. I live with my husband and our three children in Queensland, Australia where I help writers tap into the power of blogging at Successful Blogging (www.successfulblogging.com), take daily beach walks and dream of zipping back to Africa for an extended safari.



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How to Write Hypnotic Headlines that Drive People to Your Blog

People will never read your blog posts if the headline is more fizzle than sizzle.

Even people who've subscribed to your blog by RSS feed or email will read the headline first to decide if they want to read the whole post or not. Sadly, if your blog headline doesn't seem to help with their problem or doesn't arouse their curiosity they'll never read the whole post at all. You can put those violins away though and make sure your blog posts get read by learning how to write hypnotic headlines that people click on.

I can't teach you how to write good headlines, give you any set formulas or wave a magic wand to turn you into a top writer over night but I can give you some ideas, resources and motivation so you can learn the art of headline writing for yourself.

A blog headline should immediately tell people what the blog post is about and give them a reason to read it, so compelling, newspaper style blog headlines are what you need. If you write hypnotic headlines at least some of the time then you'll:

- Get more readers
- Win incoming links
- Gain new subscribers.

Hypnotic Blog Headlines to Get You Started

Some of the most popular types of blog posts are easily translated into great headlines. Here are a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

1. Ask a question - Questions are a good way to arouse readers' curiosity, make them want to find out more and give them a need to read the full story.

- Is starting a blog the hardest part?
- Are anti-wrinkle creams all they're cracked up to be?

- Confused by affiliate marketing?
- Would you Travel 1,846 Miles for this Man?
- Do you know why networking's crucial for blogging success?

2. Ask Why - Try to solve a common or persistent problem your readers have.

- Why you need to write killer headlines for your blog
- Why I got headhunted for a vacation
- Why do people love to travel?
- Why time management is dumb
- Why I'll always back up my work from now on

3. How to - Help your readers do something better, faster, in simple steps or with confidence.

- How to work out what your dream is fast
- How to break the blogging rules with panache
- How to sleep soundly
- How to stay focused in 9 words
- How to use Twitter as a motivational tool

4. Numbered lists - A popular staple for a reason because people love numbered lists. I was scathing of this when I started blogging and wrote 101 ways to feel happy as a joke because I hated the idea of list posts. The joke was on me as it went on to become one of the most popular posts on my blog at that time. List posts are also a great fall back plan if you're in a hurry. Compared to other types of blog posts they can be written quickly and can easily be written bit by bit work if you add a new point when you have 10 minutes to spare.

- 10 ways to get the life you want
- 3 keys to living your dream life

- 101 ways to feel happy
- 5 instructions for better writing
- 7 good reasons to go for a walk

5. Best or worst – Make your readers curious and give them a handy reference they'll keep coming back to.

- Best and worst things about living in Australia
- Worst blogging mistakes and how to fix them
- Best blogs to go for blog writing tips
- Worst blog designs ever
- Best ways to network using social media

Advanced Headline Honing Techniques

If you've read this far that's great news. You must have liked the chapter title and you deserve to know that I had fun brainstorming alone and wrote over 30 headlines (it was originally a blog post) before picking the one I thought would work best. Here are a few other headline techniques I've experimented with:

- Court controversy with your headlines - Why time management is dumb.
- Experiment with rhyme - Don't delay, subscribe today.
- Use alliteration – Best business blogs.
- Use buzz words like 'killer' or 'awesome' that will appeal to your readers - Killer ways to travel for less.
- Cite celebrities or popular culture - A surfer's guide to success or In bed with Seth Godin.

Those are just a few ideas for writing hypnotic headlines, now you just need to practice. Lots. Remember that even top copy writers like Brian Clark, Roberta Rosenberg, and Sonia Simone have spent years practising and improving their writing skills.

If you want more ideas for writing blog headlines I recommend Copyblogger's Magnetic Headlines series.

Another great resource is Sean D'Souza's report: why do most headlines fail?

Last Word on Blog Headline Writing Tips

- Focus on creating headlines that show you provide

useful value to your readers.

- Get in the habit of scanning newspapers and magazines to see which headlines stand out. Make a note of great headlines and see how you can customise them to make them work on your blog.
- Plan your attention-grabbing headlines first then write the post to fit them.
- Try to keep your blog titles short but if they have to be long don't worry, just bear in mind that people may not see the whole headline so get the most important words in first.
- Make sure the font size for your headlines is big enough so people know they're headlines. You've spent time creating headlines you can be proud of, now make sure people can read them.
- Finally the most important tip of all is have fun writing your blog headlines.

Remember those top copy writer I mentioned before ~ Brian, Roberta and Sonia? They didn't get good at writing by reading about writing. They didn't get good at headline writing by thinking about writing. They got good at headline writing just like we will: by practising it lots and accepting that it's never going to be perfect but can only get better.

Blog Headline Writing Practice

1. Come up with five headlines for your blog from each of the styles above: How to, why, question, numbered list and best or worst. If you've got categories on your blog come up with five titles for each of the headline styles above that you could actually use on your blog. For example, if you have five categories on your blog that will be 25 headlines. Don't worry if you don't have all the information you need to actually write the whole post. Just try to come up with titles your readers should find interesting. Have fun with it, channel you inner tabloid newspaper editor and concentrate on writing as many titles as you can. You can always edit and refine them later.

2. Go back through your blog archives and see if there are any boring headlines. Improve them or come up with better headlines on the same topic that you can write about another time

Proven Ways to Write Killer Blog Content and Get More Readers

Once upon a time there was a writer with a mission. She wanted to start a blog and get 1,000 subscribers after 12 months of blogging. After all, how hard could it be? She had 14 years of experience designing and writing for the Web plus 200 friends on her personal email mailing list. She figured if she couldn't do it no one could.

But she rushed into it and made every mistake in blogging history. First she didn't plan her blog properly. Then, because it was just an experiment, she threw the design together in 30 minutes. Next she changed topics as often as Lady Gaga changes her image and finally she switched domain names three times.

It wasn't just her who was confused, her readers were too so they didn't bother subscribing and looked else where for their regular blog reading fix.

It was depressing. But knowing that perseverance is the key to success our fearless writer carried on blogging, scouring the Internet daily for advice, ever determined to work out why her writing was failing to convert casual readers into loyal subscribers.

There was plenty of blog writing advice out there. She read that content is king, people love stories and writers need to have a voice so she wrote more, shared stories and bared her soul. It didn't help.

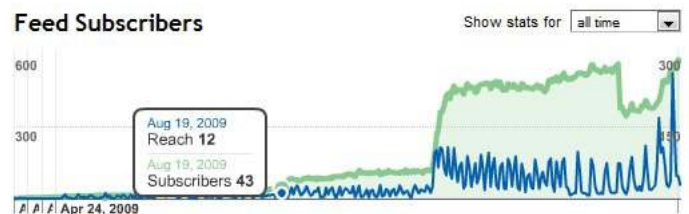
Although she wrote her heart out and updated her blog three times a week **after six months of blogging she still only had 43 subscribers**. Failure loomed.

Finally in a last desperate bid to succeed she resorted to doing what she knew best:

- Write about a topic she knew inside out.
- Give her readers information they were craving.
- Be confident and share from the heart.

She stopped thinking so much about her goals and

started thinking more about her readers' goals. It worked. Check out the graph below and you'll see the upturn in subscribers. The graph doesn't show the whole story but slowly her subscriber numbers crept up and **she got 1,000 subscribers just in time to meet her self-imposed deadline.**



Writing blog posts that get more readers

1. Focus on giving your readers value

Work out why your readers have come to your blog and give them your best information every time. Make your blogs posts clear, useful and actionable. Read the bit about focusing on giving your readers value again and make it your blogging mantra or write it down and stick it on the wall somewhere so you focus on it every time you write.

2. Just write as if you were speaking to your best friend

Use the kind of simple language you use in every day life, don't confuse people with jargon or too many long words.

3. Give your readers clear instructions

They're blog readers not mind readers. If you have tips break them down into easy steps. If you have advice make sure they can understand it. If you want readers to subscribe ask them to. If you'd like them to share your posts on Twitter or Facebook suggest it to them and make it easy for them. If you want them to leave a comment tell them or leave them with a question to answer at the end of your post.

4. Keep it simple

Telling a story helps but to begin with just make sure your blog post has a beginning, a middle and an end. It's the information that people want more than anything, a story's just the icing on the cake.

Writing Static Blog Content That Gets More Readers

Writing useful blog posts that clearly give your readers value is key but to convert new readers into subscribers you also need to pay attention to the static content on your blog too, especially the about page.

Your about page is the single most important page on your blog. Most new readers who visit a blog and are thinking of subscribing will check the about page first before signing up. It's your big chance to convert blog visitors from casual readers into eager subscribers.

Abracadabra Your About Page

Make sure people who hit your about page can instantly read these four things without having to scroll down:

1. The benefits of reading or subscribing to your blog.

Remember your readers want to know that you can add value to their lives. They're not interested in your amazing social life or your exotic travel stories. They might get interested in those one day, but right now they're after one thing: cold hard information and the solution to their nagging problem. If you've got the goods make sure blog readers know it right away by telling them what information they can find on your blog.

2. Your credibility

Readers don't want to invest precious time listening to any old charlatan who sets up a blog and calls themselves a guru. They want to know you have a proven track record of success. Qualifications and experience will go down well too, but don't talk about yourself in the third person - use the word 'I' and write if you were talking to a friend.

3. Social Proof

Anyone can say they're successful but it helps to back

that up with social proof. It's a brilliant way to let people know you're the real deal without talking yourself up. Slipping in name of companies you've worked with, testimonials from happy customers or other third party accolades is the perfect way to back up your claims.

4. Calls to action

Don't forget to seal the deal. Hopefully they'll like what they read and if they do you want to make sure they don't slip off without subscribing and forget all about you. Add another call to action telling them why they should subscribe and including the two words that make people click more than any others: free and now.

You probably guessed that writer whose blogging journey got off to a slow start was me. I finally bought the Get In the Hot Spot and started focusing on writing empowering tips for life and work then and soon realised that my readers were more interested in my web design and web writing tips than anything else. I surveyed my readers to find out what they wanted me to write about and they said writing. So that's what I'm doing. Readership grew and my readers asked me to help them with blogging too and eventually set up Successful Blogging to meet demand.

Today my blogs have thousands of subscribers and one of them is probably you. It's not a miracle, it's because I'm giving my readers the information they need and if you want to grow your blog you should do that for your readers too.

Blog Content Writing Practice

- Pick the topic you know most about and write your most useful blog post ever.
- Include calls to action at the beginning and end of your blog posts.
- Ask a question at the end of your posts to solicit comments.
- Rewrite your about page emphasizing the benefits people will get from reading your blog and why you're the best person for them to get it from.

What's the first thing you're going to change on your blog now?

Blog Post Editing: 5 Steps to Take Before You Hit Publish

A good editor is worth their weight in gold. When you read a book or magazine article it will always have been written by one person, then edited and checked by someone else. There's a reason why at least two people are involved in the print publishing process.

When you write something yourself it's hard to read it properly and notice the typos and errors. We tend to scan anything we wrote ourselves and can easily miss errors that would jump straight out at someone reading it for the first time. Also, when you write something yourself you're too close to the material and may omit vital information, assuming your readers already know it just because you do.

But we bloggers don't have the luxury of an editor to go over our writing, suggest improvements and point out typos or spelling mistakes. We have to do that ourselves. So knowing how hard it is to edit your own writing how can we make sure our blog posts are high quality?

For me blog post editing takes longer than writing the post. I may spend one or two hours writing a blog post then, four to eight hours perfecting it. Even then typos can and do slip in sometimes.

I don't think the odd typo or missing comma matters too much, but if you have multiple typos, spelling mistakes and grammatical errors on one blog post, or your whole blog is stuffed with typos, it is off-putting.

Don't be a perfectionist - your writing may never be perfect - but do make sure it's as good as it can be in the time available. If necessary post fewer high quality blog posts rather than a lot of poor quality posts. Your readers should be able to expect and look forward to good quality writing on your blog every time.

My point here is not to make you paranoid that your blog posts aren't good enough or have mistakes. The

point is that good writing takes time but you can do it if you invest time and keep practising. Try not to see the editing as a process, see it as a fun part of polishing your post so that it's even better.

How to Edit a Blog Post

1. Put Your Hands in the Air and Move Away From Your Post

Write your blog post, then put it aside for a day before editing and checking it. Or at least put it aside for an hour or two so you can read it with a fresh eye and see the errors more clearly. This means you probably can't write a blog post and publish it on the same day. Unless you're a trained and experienced writer like Molly Kelash who blogs at Seriously, and worked for Voice of America for years.

2. Check if it's Huh? or Ha!

Reread your post with your readers in mind then edit it for meaning. We've already talked about how every blog post should have a beginning, a middle and an end. It sounds obvious but make sure your blog post does have a natural progression and a story behind it. Give your post an introduction, a middle and a conclusion or summary, even if that's not what they're called in the post.

Double check the beginning and the end. The beginning is crucial to draw the reader in and make them want to find out more. The end is a great place to reward your reader for sticking around. If you can, end your blog post with a bang, or relate the ending back to a point you made at the beginning to tie things up neatly and give a sense of closure.

Check the message is clear. Keep things simple and try to distill the purpose of your blog post down to one sentence with one message your readers can easily digest and take away. When you reread your post

make sure that message is clear and not muddled by irrelevant information

3. Be Pernickety

No one likes nit picking and fussiness, but you have to edit your blog post for grammar. If you're not sure about grammatical points look them up online. Here are some of the main things that cause problems and a few suggestions:

- use every day language when you write your blog posts. Yes, I do use words like pernickety in real life. Sorry, I can't help it. As a kid I pored over the thesaurus learning new words and I like to use them. But I try to keep long words in check and over-formal writing is my biggest bugbear with blog and website writing. A blog is not a business report. It's a conversation. Make your writing sound natural;
- use contractions just like you would if you were talking to someone. Forget writing I will, you are or she would - make it I'll, you're and she'd;
- apostrophes have two uses:
 - for contractions to show letters are missing like in the examples above, where I will became I'll; and
 - for possessives like the blogger's posts which indicates one blogger, or the bloggers' posts, which shows there are more than one blogger;
- homonyms - words with the same sound but a different meaning. Spell checkers are great but they miss words that are spelled right but used in the wrong context like you're/your, it's/its or their/they're/there. You have to check the right word is used in the right place yourself;
- be consistent - if you make a mistake, make the same mistake every time because that way people might think it's just your writing style.

4. Give it the Chop

Removing unnecessary words makes the reading experience faster and smoother and Molly says the first three rules she learned in the newsroom were: "Omit needless words; omit needless words; omit needless words."

You need to edit your blog post for style by taking away as much of it as you can without affecting the meaning. Reread it to see if you've used five words where one

or two would have been enough. Make sure there are no common words repeated and no fluff that's just in there for the sake of it.

Here are some words and phrases I chopped out of this post:

- Despite all that;
- If I'm honest;
- I think;
- Really;
- Mostly;
- That;
- If this isn't possible;
- Sometimes;
- The other thing is that;
- For some reason;
- It's fair to say.

Horrid isn't it? I'm getting better and starting to catch myself before I write these annoying and meaningless words. You will too.

5 Talk the Talk

Print your blog post out and read it aloud. Whispering will do but reading out loud and from paper will help you notice errors you'd miss on screen or with a silent read. Apparently top editors read backwards to force themselves to pay attention, but hopefully you don't need to take it that far.

Don't panic if this sounds like a lot to take on, but writing the post is just the first step for successful blogging. **Editing is what makes your blog posts shine even more.** I hope these tips leave you feeling empowered to turn your rough first drafts into golden nuggets. Just remember, a good editor is worth their weight in gold, and with a little practice that will be you.

Take Action

Give it a go. Take one of your rough drafts and polish it into something precious. How much shorter can you make it while still getting your point across?

16 Rules of Blog Writing and Layout.

Which Ones Are You Breaking?

Blog Rules Vs. Print Rules

Remember newspapers? People used to get them delivered to their door and read them over breakfast. They're big, awkward to hold and they cover your fingers in black printer ink. Plus, getting them to your doorstep takes hours so, by the time you read a newspaper, the news isn't all that new.

Newspapers have their drawbacks but one thing they do right is make sure their stories are easy to read. By that I mean how they actually format and layout the newspaper and each story.

Of course, first newspapers hit you with a headline that makes you really want to read more. Something like this works wonders:

THE KING OF POP IS DEAD!

How he really died!

10,000 pills in 6 months

Sensational tabloids aside, the content in newspapers is generally good ~ the writing's high quality and they usually get their facts straight.

But quality content isn't all you expect when you buy a newspaper and it isn't enough for blog writing either. All newspapers make sure their content is easy to read by constraining the width of their columns and that's what their readers rightly expect. Blog writers need to do the same and format their blog posts so they're easy to read.

Long narrow newspaper columns mean your eye can easily jump from the end of one line to the beginning of the next without losing its place. If the column's too wide readers will keep getting lost, unless they enlist their finger to help them keep track. Even if they do that they'll get frustrated and won't enjoy the reading experience. This is just one element

of traditional media and legibility knowledge that we can use on our blogs or website layout.

Newspapers follow set rules for the formatting and lay out their stories to make them easy to read and bloggers need to follow some too. Blog writing and formatting content for the Web is more complex than writing for print because how we read on a computer screen is different to how we read in print and more challenging.

Blog Rules are Based on Two Things:

People skim read when they read things on screen

A website or blog is missing the usual cues that let us know how long an article is. Pick up a book or cast your eye over a newspaper article, and you'll instantly be able to gauge how long it is and how long it will take to read. Online the only way to find that out is to scroll down to the end of the blog post and that's what most people do.

While they're at it, they'll also try to scan read the post. A long body of text is scary. Even if the headline appeals to them, with no other clues about the content, people will be reluctant to start reading. By helping people scan your blog posts with good layout and telling them more about what information they'll find in it you can entice them to read the post in full.

It's harder to read things on screen than on print

Screen legibility is improving along with resolution and screen size but there are still some simple rules you need to know to help people read your blog more easily. If you want to make sure people enjoy reading your blog, tell their friends about it and subscribe then you need to make sure the very act of reading your blog is easy.

No matter how great your blog content and writing is,

if it's not easy to read people won't enjoy it and won't come back for more. I recommend you stick to these blog rules.

16 Rules of Blog Writing and Layout

1. Format every blog post

Careful formatting will make your blog posts easier for people to scan. Write your posts with the page layout in mind or edit them to make sure they're well formatted for scan reading.

2. Constrain column width

Keep the blog post column width about 80 characters or less (including spaces) and your readers will thank you for it. Check out these before and after screen shots of Under the Mango Tree. I advised Stacyann to update her blog to make it easier to read and changing the column width for the main body of text was one of the first things we sorted out. Wide columns of text are an instant turn off and very hard to read. The difference is incredible and it's such a simple change.

3. Use Headers and Sub-headers

Headers and sub-headers will break up long blog posts.



help people scan read your blog and convince them to read the whole post. Read How to Write Hypnotic Headlines to read more about the importance of headlines and headers for blog writing.

4. Use lists

Numbered lists or bullet pointed lists help people scan blog posts fast and find the information they're looking for quickly.

5. Use punctuation

Use full stops, commas, dashes and colons to break up each paragraph into smaller pieces of information that make sense quickly. No one wants to read the same sentence several times to try to make sense of it. If you're not confident about punctuation keep sentences short. As you practice writing and start

to improve you can experiment and lengthen your sentences, chucking in a long one here and there to keep things interesting for readers, and make sure they're really paying attention. Long sentences are fine but check that every sentence makes sense and the meaning is clear.

6. Short paragraphs

Because reading is harder online it's best to break text into manageable chunks. Paragraphs should be much shorter online than on paper with two to six sentences per paragraph a good guideline for blog posts.

7. Font type

Sans serif fonts (without the squiggly bits) are generally supposed to be easier to read on screen, in particular Verdana. Get In the Hot Spot uses the serif font Georgia (with squiggly bits) which is also designed for easy reading on screen.

8. Font size

Big is better. Teeny tiny writing is hard to read online, even for people with 20/20 vision like me. Make it bigger. Check out some of your favourite blogs, compare the font size they use and decide what works best for your readers. If they're older they might prefer even bigger text than the average blog reader.

9. Be bold

Don't overuse bold text or it loses its effectiveness but do **use bold text to make a splash and highlight important sentences** that will catch people's attention and draw them into, or on with, the blog post.

10. Drop the italics

Italics are hard to read in print. Couple that with on screen reading already being challenging and banish italics from your blog writing. I hate them. If you can avoid italics please do.

11. Capital letters

Use capitals for proper nouns and at the beginning of sentences but avoid writing all in capitals because it's harder to read. PLUS USING CAPITAL LETTERS CONSTANTLY IS THE ONLINE EQUIVALENT OF BEING SHOUTED AT. Sorry, just wanted to get the point across.

12. White space

Readers need somewhere to rest the eye and good blog layout leaves plenty of blank space. Make sure your blog isn't too busy or distracting and gives readers somewhere to rest their eye from time to time.

13. Background color

Most blogs and websites get the contrast between text color and background color right, but make sure your blog background doesn't make the text hard to read. It makes me sad that a white background with black text has become the default for most blogs. Bright yellow text on a black background is easiest to read but that's quite a confrontational look. Dark text on a light background has a wider appeal but consider using another light color for the background as white gives off a harsh glare. There are plenty of choices which look good and are still easy to read but without the glare of white: try light grey, minty green or pale yellow.

14. Use images

Good use of images will draw readers in to your blog posts. Sometimes I read a post purely because I like the image. Ideally your images will add to your blog or emphasise your message. Even if they can't do that use them to break up text, draw your readers eye down the page and reward them for reading and spending time on your blog. Some blogs like Viperchill turn their headers and sub-headers into images which makes the text look more attractive and helps people scan read.

15. Be consistent

You don't know how readers found your blog. You can't be sure if they arrived straight at your latest post, on your about page or via an archived post. You can't know which order people will read your blog in so every post you write needs to tell the same story about you, your message, your blog and your values.

16. Tell a story

Speaking of stories, every blog post needs to have a beginning, a middle and an end. Think of it as an introduction, the main information and conclusion if you prefer. Even if you don't use those sub-headings because, hopefully, you've come up with hotter ones, do follow the convention to avoid confusing your readers.

Blog Writing Rules Wrap Up

You've probably noticed traditional media like newspapers are struggling and the Internet's taking over. It's amazing to think that in less than 10 years you may not be able to buy the L.A. Times or whatever your favourite newspaper is. Instead, you'll download the whole thing to your iPad in a nanosecond and read it on the go. No dirty fingers, no struggling to read text that runs over a crease and no pages blowing down the street.

I love newspapers, and I'll miss them, but I look forward to the day when every blog is formatted and laid out so it's as easy to read as one of those old newspapers.

Take Action

Go back to an old post which you're proud of and didn't get the attention it deserved when first published. Go through and format it carefully for easy reading and greater appeal. If you like and it's an old post which most of your readers will have missed you can change the headline and republish it now.

5 Secrets of Brilliant Blog Writing

I won't be winning the Pulitzer prize for literature any time soon but I like to think what I lack in writing skills I make up for in enthusiasm and determination.

Those qualities have helped me travel to some of the most exotic and far flung places in the world and they'll take you far too. More than anything, I want you to know that even if your writing's not great today, you do have the potential to become a brilliant writer over time.

I started my first blog in 2006 to overcome my fear of being read. I know it sounds odd but I was used to writing web copy anonymously (I've been a professional web copy writer for 15 years) and was scared of putting my name to my writing and claiming it as my own.

It seems ridiculous today but back then the fear was very real. So real I only wrote one blog post in 2006, and when I finally picked up blogging again in 2009 that fear was still there.

These days I'm not scared of putting my name to my writing and I've become a confident writer. Well, as confident as any writer will ever be. I've experienced having my writing rejected and learned how to bounce back from rejection. That's probably one of the greatest skill you'll need to succeed in writing or life.

Rejection's a natural part of the process of becoming a successful writer and these days I'm happy to send my writing anywhere. If someone rejects it I send it to someone else who might appreciate it more.

All the things I previously feared about writing like rejection, ridicule and judgement don't rule me any more.

My writing may not appeal to everyone but it's more likely to be a reflection of their interests and taste than a personal reflection on my writing.

If I publish something with a typo it's just a typo, not the end of the world.

If someone disagrees with me that's okay, it doesn't make me a bad person.

Here's what I've been doing to improve my writing skills since I started blogging. I hope you'll get stuck in and do them too. My writing might not be brilliant yet but it's getting better and I enjoy the writing process more too. You can't get better than that.

5 Secrets of Brilliant Blog Writing

1. Practise

I've said it before and I'll say it again. All those successful bloggers and brilliant writers weren't born that way. They got good by writing regularly and we need to as well. If you really want to improve your writing you'll have to put in the time too. Write for at least an hour a day five days a week. If you want to be a writer hopefully you enjoy writing anyway so make writing practice a highlight of your day.

2. Have Fun

Write about things that please and interest you. Write about them in a tone that flows naturally and stop worrying about what other people think. I recommend practising your writing but I'm not saying you need to publish it all. But do write about those secret things, the things you aren't ready to share with the world. Do write about the funny things that happened to you today even if you don't think anyone else will be amused. Put your inner critic in time out. Just write and enjoy the process.

3. Bin Your Agenda

Have you heard of writer's block? But builders don't get blocked and unable to lay another brick. Teachers don't run out of things to teach. I can't think of any

other job where people make excuses for not doing their work. If you're having trouble writing forget everything else I told you in the Blog Writing Magic series and just write what comes into your head. You can worry later about if you can make a blog post out of it, if anyone would want to read it or what your colleagues will think when they find out about your quirks and quibbles. Just write.

4. Give Fear the Finger

Actors get stage fright and I bet writer's block is caused mainly by fear. Writing is scary. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with other people is a worry. Especially when you don't know who'll be reading, and let's face it, anyone could be reading your blog, even that old school teacher who told you you'd never make anything of yourself. Putting your neck on the line by teaching other people what you know is scary.

But don't be scared into submission. Just write anything, every day and see what comes of it. Then create compelling blog writing with hypnotic headlines, edit your blog post, format it, be brave and publish it to see what other people think. You'll write killer blog content and some stuff that never gets published but your writing will improve.

5. Share Your Voice

I live in Australia and we enjoy freedom of speech. I hope you do too. Let's make the most of it. Let's stop censoring ourselves by listening to that little voice in our heads which tells us our work and ideas aren't good enough. They are. Please share your unique voice through your blog because your story needs to be told and we want to hear it.

Start Your Blog Writing Practice Now

It's perfectly normal and nothing to be ashamed of to think your writing isn't much good. Now get over it and get writing.

Write about anything. Write about what you see, hear or touch. Write about how you live, work or play. Write about the people you see around you. Just write.

I'm more enthusiastic about writing and blogging every day and I'm determined to help you succeed. Tell me what scares or worries you most about blog writing

and let me know if there's anything else I can do to help you enjoy writing your blog with more confidence.

Thank you for reading Blog Writing Magic. I hope this ebook has helped you with ideas, tips and writing confidence. Let me know what you think or what you need most help with by emailing annabel@successfulblogging.com.

I'll be sharing more tips on blog writing, marketing and blogging for small business owners and writers at Successful Blogging.com.

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- Annabel Candy