

Short for “web log”, a blog is a web page that serves as a publicly accessible personal journal. New content is published by the blog's author on a regular basis, often daily. Most blogs are a mixture of what is happening in a person's life and what is happening on the Web, but there are as many unique types of blogs as there are people. The ability for readers to comment on a blog is an important feature that makes blogs an interactive form of online publishing. In this guide you will learn how to create a blog using Edublogs (<http://www.edublogs.org>), a free blogging service for educators. Edublogs provides up to 100 MB of storage space with a free account.

### Setting Up Your Blog

To set up a new blog on Edublogs:

1. Go to <http://edublogs.org> and click on Sign up for free.
2. Enter the user name you want to use in the Username text box and provide a valid email address. You will receive an activation email at that address.
3. Check the box next to “I Agree” to indicate that you accept the terms of service.
4. Choose “Gimme a blog!” at the bottom of the page and click on Next.
5. On the next page, enter a title for your blog, choose whether or not you want the blog to be publicly listed, and select a blog type (Teacher, Student or Other).
6. Select your language and click on Signup.
7. Open the activation email and click on the link in the message to activate your account. You will be taken to a page with your user name and password.
8. Click on Login and enter your login information to get started on your blog.
5. To add the post to a category (this is a group of related posts), click on the Categories tab and check the box of the desired category. To add a new category, click on Add New Category, enter the category text, and click on Add.
6. To allow your users to add comments to the post, click on the Comments & Pings tab and make sure Allow Comments is selected.
7. Click on the Password Protect This Post tab and enter a password if you want the post to be password protected.
8. Choose a Publish Status using the pulldown menu on the right side of the page:
  - Published: the post will be added to the blog when you click on Save to save your changes.
  - Unpublished: will save the post as a draft (it will not be visible on the blog).
  - Pending Review: will save the post but will not make added to the blog until the person designated as an editor or reviewer opens it and changes the status to Published.

### Posting to Your Blog

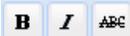
Once you log into your blog you will see the Dashboard page, which is where you publish and manage your posts. To create a new post:

1. Click on Write, then on Post.
2. Enter a title for your post.
3. Enter the text for your post in the Post text area and use the controls on the toolbar to format your text. You can also copy your text from a word processor (such as Microsoft Word) and paste it into the text area.
4. To add tags to a post (tags are the equivalent of keywords that will help your readers search your blog), click on the Tags tab below your post text, enter the desired tags, and click on Add. You can add as many tags as you like. The tags need to be separated by a comma.
9. Check the box next to “Keep this post private” on the right to add a private post that will only be visible to you when you're logged in.
10. By default, your post will be published immediately when you click on Publish. To write a post and have it appear on the blog at a later time, click on Edit to the right of “Publish immediately” and enter a different date and time.
11. Click on Save to save your changes. To preview your post, click on Preview this Post. This will open your blog in a

separate browser window or tab so you can preview it.

### Formatting Your Posts

Above the Post text area you will find a toolbar with buttons you can use to format your post text (usually you will have to select the text first):

- Make the text bold or italic, or add a strikethrough to show text that has been updated. 
- Add a list: place the cursor where you want the list to start, then click on one of the list buttons to add the list. Each time you press Enter or Return on your keyboard, a new list item will be added. To end the list, click on the list button again. 
- Add a blockquote: select the text you want to indent on both sides to create a blockquote and click on the blockquote button. 
- Change the text alignment (left, center or right). 
- Insert More tag: this option allows you display only the first few lines of your post on the blog, followed by a Read more link your visitors can click on to view the rest of the post. Place your cursor before the section you want to be visible only after someone clicks on the Read more link and click on the Insert More tag button. 
- Check spelling: click on the triangle on the right side of the button to choose your language. 

To view additional formatting options, click on the View/Hide Kitchen Sink button. This will display a second row of buttons with the following options: 

- Add a heading: select the desired heading text and choose a heading size using the formatting pulldown menu on the left side of the Kitchen Sink toolbar.
- Change the text color: select the text, click on the text color button and choose a color using the color swatches. 
- Paste text from another program: click on Paste as Plain Text to strip all formatting from the text before it is pasted into the text area, or Paste from MS Word to preserve all formatting applied to a document created with MS Word. 

- Indent text: click on the indent button to move the text in from the left margin. Click on the Outdent button to move the text closer to the left margin. 

To remove the formatting from your text, select the text and click on the Remove formatting button. To undo any change you've made click on the Undo button. 

### Adding Images and Other Content

To add an image on your computer to a post:

1. Place your cursor where you want to insert the image in your post.
2. Click on the Add image button found in the area above the toolbar. 
3. Click on Browser Uploader. This will use a non-Flash uploader that works even if you don't have the latest version of the Flash plugin for your web browser.
4. Click on Browse, locate the image you want to upload and click on Open. To finish uploading the image, click on Upload.
5. Enter appropriate alternate text in the Caption field. Alternate text is used by people who access the web with assistive technology and thus cannot view images.
6. Choose an alignment by clicking on one of the radio buttons at the bottom of the window.
7. Choose a size (Thumbnail, Medium or Full size).
8. Click on Insert into Post.

To upload an image that is already available online, click on the Add image button and enter the URL of the image in the Image URL field. Make sure to enter your alternate text in the Description field and choose an alignment option before you click on Insert into Post to add the image to your post.

As you upload images they become part of your gallery. To insert the gallery into a post (all of the images in the gallery will be added to the post at once), click on the Add image button, then on the Gallery tab. Next, click on Insert gallery into post. This will insert the text "[gallery]" into your post at the cursor location. To preview the gallery, click on View this post on the right side of the screen.

Adding an audio or video file to your post is similar to adding an image. Click on the Add Video or Add Audio button and locate the file you want to upload or enter the URL of a video or audio file that is available online. The video or audio file will be added to your post at the cursor location. Make sure to save your post before you click on View this post to see a preview of your video or audio file on the blog.



Embedding a YouTube video is a little more complicated and requires a basic knowledge of HTML. To embed a YouTube video in a blog post:

1. Go to YouTube and locate the video you want to embed.
2. Copy the code in the Embed field to the right of the video.
3. Return to your Edublogs post and click on the HTML tab above the toolbar.
4. Place your cursor where you want to embed the video in your HTML code.
5. Switch back to the visual editor by clicking on the Visual tab.
6. Click on Save, then on View this post to see a preview of your embedded video.

### Hyperlinks and Special Characters

To add a hyperlink to another website in a blog post:

1. Select the desired link text and click on the Insert/edit link button. 
2. Enter the URL of the site you want to link to in the Link URL text box.
3. Select a Target using the pulldown menu (you can choose to open the link in the current window or in a new window).
4. Enter a title in the Title text box. This is text that is displayed when the cursor hovers over the link.
5. Click on Insert. The hyperlink will be added to the post. To remove a link, select the link text and click on the Unlink button. 

To insert a special character, click on the Insert custom character button to open a popup window where you can click on the special character to insert it into your post (this includes characters from other languages, currency symbols and fractions). 

A common feature on blogs is a blogroll, a list of favorite blogs and other sites that are displayed on the sidebar. To create a blogroll, click on Manage > Links on your Dashboard page, then click on “add new” to add each link. On the Add Link page, enter the name, URL and a brief description for each blog or site, then choose Blogroll under Categories. Click on Save to add each link to the blogroll. To display the blogroll on your sidebar, choose Design > Widgets and click on Add for the Links widget.

### Managing Posts

To see all of your posts, log into your account and once you are on the Dashboard page click on Manage, then on Posts. This will show you a list of your posts arranged in chronological order, with the newest post at the top of the page.

To delete a post, check the box next to the date and click on Delete. To see only the published posts or those that have been saved as a draft, click on the Published or Draft link. You can also filter your posts by selecting a date and category using the pulldown menus above the post list and clicking on Filter. To edit a post, click on its Title to open it and click on Save after you’ve made your changes.

### Managing Tags and Categories

Tags and categories provide a way to organize your blog’s content. Tags are similar to keywords, while categories are used to group similar posts. To manage your blog’s tags, choose Manage > Tags from the Dashboard page. To add a new tag, scroll down on the page, enter the tag name and click on Add Tag. To remove a tag, check the box to the left of the tag name at the top of the page and click on Delete.

To create a new category, choose Manage > Categories, scroll down on the page and enter a category name and description, and click on Add Category. As with tags, you can delete a category by checking the box next to its name at the top of the page and clicking on Delete. A difference between categories and tags is that you can nest categories. For example, you can create a category named

“Assignments” and under that category have subcategories for “homework” and “projects.”

### **The Media Library**

The Media Library lists all the files you have uploaded to your blog. To the right of each file, you will see what post it appears on. Since you only have up to 100MB of space with a free Edublog account, you should delete any media files that are not included on any posts. To manage your Media Library, choose Manage > Media Library. To delete a file, check the box to the left of its thumbnail and click on Delete at the top of the page.

### **Adding Pages**

You can add separate pages to your blog to make it work more like a website. It is not uncommon for a blog to have an About page with a brief bio of the blog’s owner. To add a page to your blog:

1. Choose Write > Page on the Dashboard page.
2. Enter a title for your page in the Title text box, then enter the text for the page in the Page text area. You can edit your page text the same way you would edit a blog post.
3. Click on the Comments & Pings tab and click on the Allow Comments check box if you want visitors to your blog to be able to comment on the page.
4. To password protect a page, click on the Password Protect This Page tab and enter the desired password in the text box.
5. Under Page Parent, choose a page that you want the current page to be nested under. For example, you can have an About Me page that has Hobbies and Classes as subpages.
6. Some themes have special page layouts you can use to create pages for your site map (used to view the hierarchy of all the pages on your site in one place) or an archives page (where older blog posts are listed). To use a page template, click on the Page Template tab and choose a template from the pulldown menu.
7. Pages will appear in alphabetical order in the navigation by default. To change the order, you can click on the Page Order tab and enter a page number.

8. Once you have entered all of your settings and your page text, click on Publish to make the page available on your blog.

To manage your pages, click on Manage > Pages on the Dashboard page. Managing your pages is similar to managing your blog posts. You can delete a page by checking the box next to the date that page was created and clicking on Delete.

### **Creating a Forum**

Forums allow you to add threaded discussions within your blog posts. To create a forum:

1. Choose Manage > Forums on the Dashboard page.
2. Click on New and enter a forum name and description.
3. Click on Save.
4. On the Manage Forums page you will see a Page Code. Copy and paste this code and insert it into a new post to make the forum available to your students.

### **Customizing Your Blog**

Each Edublog blog has a theme associated with it. The theme determines the look and feel of the blog (the text color and size, the header image used, etc.). To change your blog’s theme, choose Design > Themes on the Dashboard page, then click on the thumbnail of the desired theme.

To use a Custom Image Header (this is the image that will appear at the top of every blog page):

1. Choose Design > Custom Image Header.
2. Click on Choose File and locate the header image you want to use (the required dimensions for your image will be shown on the page).
3. Click on Upload.
4. To select a different text color for the title text that will appear in your header, click on Select a Text Color and choose a color by clicking on a color swatch.
5. Click on Save Changes.

### **Using Widgets and Plugins**

Widgets are used to add functionality to your blog and usually appear in the sidebar. There are widgets for showing your posts on a

calendar, adding a search box to your blog, showing your favorite links, and more. To add a widget to your blog's sidebar:

1. Choose Design > Widgets on the Dashboard page.
2. Under Available Widgets, click on the Add link to the right of the widget you want to add to your blog. The widget will be listed under Current Widgets on the right side of the page.
3. Click on the Edit link for the widget and set your widget options (these will vary depending on the widget). To remove the widget from your blog's sidebar click on the Remove button at the bottom of the Edit popup window.
4. When you're done adding widgets, click on Save Changes.

Plugins are similar to widgets, but they add more advanced functionality. Sometimes the functionality added by plugins is not visible on the blog but instead takes care of background functions such as filtering comments for spam and so on.

To manage your blog's plugins, click on Plugins at the top of your Dashboard page. To activate a plugin, click on the Activate link to the right of the plugin.

### **Managing Comments**

To view a list of all comments submitted on the blog, click on the Comments tab at the top of your Dashboard page. To view all comments awaiting some action on your part, click on Awaiting Moderation. You can then approve a comment so that it appears on the blog, mark it as spam, or delete it (check the box next to the comment and click on the appropriate button at the top of the Comments page).

### **Managing Users**

There are two ways you can use Edublogs to allow multiple students to collaborate:

- create a single blog and add each student as a user, then change their role to suit your needs, or
- allow each student to have their own blog under one account.

To add multiple users to a single blog:

1. Choose Users > Add Users on the Dashboard page.
2. Enter the email address of each user and choose a role:
  - Subscriber is the default selection. A Subscriber can see the Dashboard and edit his/her own profile. That is all they can do.
  - A Contributor can draft posts but cannot publish them.
  - An Author can publish posts.
  - An Editor can edit other people's posts and can manage categories, links, comments, and pages.
  - An Administrator can do everything.

The Editor and Administrator roles have the capability to edit posts that do not belong to them. They can edit anyone's posts, including each other's.

Once you have added all of your users, you can manage them by choosing Users > Authors & Users. This screen shows you how many posts each user has added to the blog. To delete a user, check the box next to their Username and click on Remove. To change a user's role, select the new role using the pulldown menu above the user list and click on Change.

If you would rather give each student their own blog under a single site, choose Users > Blog & User Creator on the Dashboard page. Next, choose Student as the Blog Type and select Yes under "Add Admin". This will allow you to go into each student's blog if you need to fix settings and so on. Once you've set the Common Options for all of the blogs, enter the user name and email address of each student (you can do up to 15 students at a time) and click on Create.

To edit your own profile on the site, click on Users > Your Profile. This is where you enter your contact information, select a nickname that will appear on your comments, and enter a brief bio of yourself. You can also change your password on the Your Profile page.

To add an avatar (an image of yourself that will appear on each comment), click on the Your Avatar link at the top of the Dashboard

page, click on Choose File to locate the desired image on your computer, and click on Upload.

### **Blog Settings**

To change the settings for your blog, click on the Settings tab on the right side of the Dashboard. The following tabs will be available at the top of the page:

- **General:** sets your blog title, tagline, as well as your blog's timezone and how dates and times will be formatted on the blog.
- **Writing:** allows you to change the default size of the post text area (where you enter the text for a post) and set a default category for new posts.
- **Reading:** allows you to choose what gets displayed on the front page (your latest posts or a static page such as an About Me page), as well as the number of posts to display on each page or include in your blog's RSS feed.
- **Discussion:** these settings determine how comments will be handled on the blog. For example, you can choose to receive an email whenever a comment is added to the blog as well as require that comments be held for approval before they can appear on the site (this is recommended to keep objectionable content from appearing in the blog through comments). The other settings on this page allow you to improve spam blocking by limiting the number of links included in a comment (spam comments usually have a lot of links in them) or specifying words that will cause a comment to be blacklisted.
- **Privacy:** determines whether or not your blog will be visible in the public listings on the Edublogs.org site.
- **Delete Blog:** as the name implies this will remove your blog. You will receive an email with a link you must click on before this action is final.

### **Importing and Exporting**

Wordpress supports importing from many other blog publishing systems, including Blogger, LiveJournal, and more. To import your posts and comments from another blog system, choose Manage > Import on the Dashboard page. The steps for importing your other blog will depend on which blogging

system you are using. With Blogger, you will be required to log into your Blogger account. To export your blog (for backup or to transfer it to another blogging service that uses Wordpress) choose Manage > Export on the Dashboard page, then click on Download Export File. This will save an XML file to your computer. You can then use the Import feature on the other Wordpress service to import your blog posts and comments.

### **Publicizing Your Blog**

There are many ways to drive traffic to your blog:

- Let people know your blog is available by sending out an email announcement using Edublog's email feature. Once you are logged into your account and are on the Dashboard page, click on Promote Your Blog. Next, enter a message and the email addresses of the people you want to invite to view your blog, then click on Send.
- Submit your blog to a blog directory such as Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>).
- Include the address of your blog in your email signature and as part of your profile on other sites (Facebook, etc.). This address will be in the format `http://yourusername.edublogs.org`.
- Make it easy for people to bookmark and share your posts by activating the AddThis Social Bookmarking plugin.
- Use pingbacks and trackbacks. Pingbacks and trackbacks allow your blog to send a notification when you create a post that references content on another blog.

When you use a pingback, a comment is usually added to the referenced post on the other blog with a link back to your blog. This is how pingbacks can create traffic for your blog.

To enable pingbacks on your Edublog blog, go to Settings on your Dashboard page and make sure the boxes next to "Attempt to notify any blogs linked" and "Allow link notifications from other blogs" are checked, then click on Save Changes.

To add a pingback to a blog post, select some text in your post and add a link to the post that you are referencing. Most blogs will include a permalink (short for permanent

link) at the end of a blog post. This permalink is what you should use when you create your pingback link, as it will ensure that the link will work even after the referenced blog post moves out of the front page and goes into the archives section of the other blog. On Wordpress and Blogger blogs, the title of each post is linked to its permalink. To use the permalink, right-click on the title and choose Copy Link (or something similar, depending on your web browser).

Trackbacks do the same thing as pingbacks but they are used on older blog systems. Trackbacks appear as a link back to your blog along with an excerpt of your post. To use a trackback, look for the trackback link at the end of the blog post, then right-click on the link and choose Copy Link or something similar (depending on your web browser). Once you have copied the trackback link, write a new post on your Edublog blog and then click on the Trackbacks tab at the bottom of the page and paste the trackback URL.

### **Classroom Blogging Ideas**

Your students can use blogs in many different ways, including:

- reflecting on readings and class discussions.
- documenting progress on a group project.
- collecting and commenting on interesting quotes from other blogs and sites around the Web and using those quotes as writing prompts.
- improving writing through peer feedback.
- planning for school activities (prom, special service days, etc.).
- exchanging postcards with schools around the world to practice writing in a foreign language.
- providing the teacher with feedback to improve future offerings of the same course.

### **Blogging Tips**

- Make sure to get parental permission before you start a blogging project with your students. Blogging is a public medium and you need to make sure parents are on board before you start sharing your students' work with a global audience.

- Know your school and district Acceptable Use Policy and spend some time going over it with your students so they understand what they can and can't do on their blogs.
- Discuss online safety with your students and as a class come up with a set of ground rules for posting and commenting.
- Introduce your students to blogging gradually by having them only comment on other blogs for the first few weeks of the blogging project.