

Part 8 – Blogging

Making the Miles Fade

Using your smartphone, tablet, PC or laptop to bring you closer to friends and family who live far away (*and those who don't*)



Tech Inner Circle Edition

THE
HELPFUL BOOK
COMPANY

An Employee-Owned Company

Making the Miles Fade

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A note about this chapter

Hello

In this final chapter of the book, you'll learn about blogging – which is a bit less about talking directly to your friends and family, but is a great way to share your thoughts with more people at once.

You can do an awful lot with WordPress – the website we'll be showing you how to use. But don't feel like you have to learn it all at once! This chapter just covers the basics, to get your blog off the ground.

If you want to learn how to use any of the more fancy features, there's loads of help on the website. If you're struggling to find the help information (they call it “support”), just drop one of us a message on the [Inner Circle Clubroom](#) and we'll point you in the right direction!

Chapter 8

Blogging

What are Blogs?

Blogs are online journals or news sites, and the internet is full of them. Some are very useful and absolutely fascinating, and some are a complete waste of time. You can join in and make your own in a single afternoon. Or you can subscribe to any blogs that you find interesting.

Why do people make blogs?

Blogs have a similar purpose to social media – they’re a way of sharing information (and often photos) with people who are interested. For example, travel blogs are very popular – a lot of people make them to share photos or anecdotes from their holidays, and to let their friends know about any hidden gems they’ve discovered.

Many blogs are about people’s hobbies, which can be anything from crochet to photography to underwater basket-weaving. Some hobby bloggers are just starting out and use their blog to document their progress, whereas those who are more experienced might use it to offer tips and tricks to their readers. For example, lots of “foodies” have cooking blogs where they share their favourite dishes. These are great for finding new recipes, although you may have to scroll through a few paragraphs about why aubergines are their favourite vegetable before you get to the actual moussaka recipe!

There are home improvement blogs, from DIY to home decorating and gardening tips. Animal lovers sometimes make pet blogs full of pictures and funny stories about their furry or feathered friends, and offer tips on pet care for their readers. Some people make health blogs, where they keep a record of the diet they’re following and share their fitness routine with others who want to get into shape. Basically, if you can think of it, there’ll be a blog about it somewhere on the internet!

There are a lot of websites you can use to create a blog, but some of them are quite complicated to use (if you’re not a tech genius) and they can get pricey. I’d recommend either WordPress or Google Blogger, as they’re easy for beginners to use and they’re free.



What’s the difference between a blog and a vlog?

A lot of “vloggers” seem to use their vlogs to document every second of their day... I don’t know how they have the time!

Another thing you might have heard of is “vlogging” – this means creating a video blog (vlog) and posting it on YouTube. Some vlogs are meant to be tutorials, so the vlogger might demonstrate how to do a particular hairdo, or how to pack two weeks’ worth of clothing into a hand-luggage sized bag...

I wouldn’t worry too much about vlogs, if I’m honest. It takes a lot of confidence and a certain amount of technical know-how to make and upload a vlog post, so I won’t be showing you how to make them. But at least now you know the difference.

Starting a Blog in WordPress

You might be surprised how quick and easy it can be to start your own blog. It might not be as fancy as some you've seen, but there's still lots you can do using free services from sites like Google and WordPress. Over the next few pages I'll show you how to get started in WordPress.

There's also a WordPress app for both Android devices and iPads/iPhones. Both apps get pretty good reviews, but you'll probably only want to use an app for checking statistics, etc., unless you're very comfortable typing your blog on an on-screen keyboard.

Starting your own blog

WordPress is a pretty easy way of setting up your own website with your own blog that you can update as often as you like. It'll offer you some fancier bits that you can add later on if you'd like, and it'll probably suggest some of the paid options. These are designed for people using the website for a business – but their free services are a great place to start.

- 1) Type www.wordpress.com into your browser's address bar.
- 2) You can create your own WordPress blog by clicking on the "Start your website" button.
- 3) You'll then be able to choose various things about your blog to get set up – I'll talk you through it below.



Setting up your blog account

- 1) The first step is to give your name and email address, and choose a password.
- 2) Next you'll need to choose what kind of website it's going to be (a blog), and say roughly what it's going to be about, say food, DIY, or maybe even single malt whisky...
- 3) You'll then be asked to choose a snappy name for your blog. You can also pick a design style for it.
- 4) You'll then be asked to choose a web address for your blog. If you type something into the search box, WordPress will suggest addresses that are available based on your search. Some addresses are free – it'll suggest ones you need to pay for as well, but unless you want a very specific web address for your blog, I would just pick one of the free ones.
- 5) It'll ask you if you want a free plan or a paid one – again I'd stick with the free one for now, by clicking on this button at the top of the screen. You don't really need a paid plan unless you're using the blog to help you run a business, but you can always upgrade later if you want to.



- 6) And that's the first bit out of the way – the website is created. There are a few more things it suggests you do – you'll need to confirm your email address by clicking on a link that they'll have emailed to you, for a start (you can't post a blog without doing this bit). It'll also ask you to fill in extra bits of detail on your website, although you don't have to do it all straight away (or ever!). On the next page I'll cover writing a blog post.

WordPress does try to make money out of you with optional extras (like fancy domain names). It's always very clear if you have to pay for something, though, and what it offers for free is excellent.

Blogging in WordPress

Right, let's get stuck straight in and write a blog post...

Creating a post (entry to your blog)

- 1) To create a new post, start by clicking or tapping on the “Write” button, which is usually at the top of the screen:

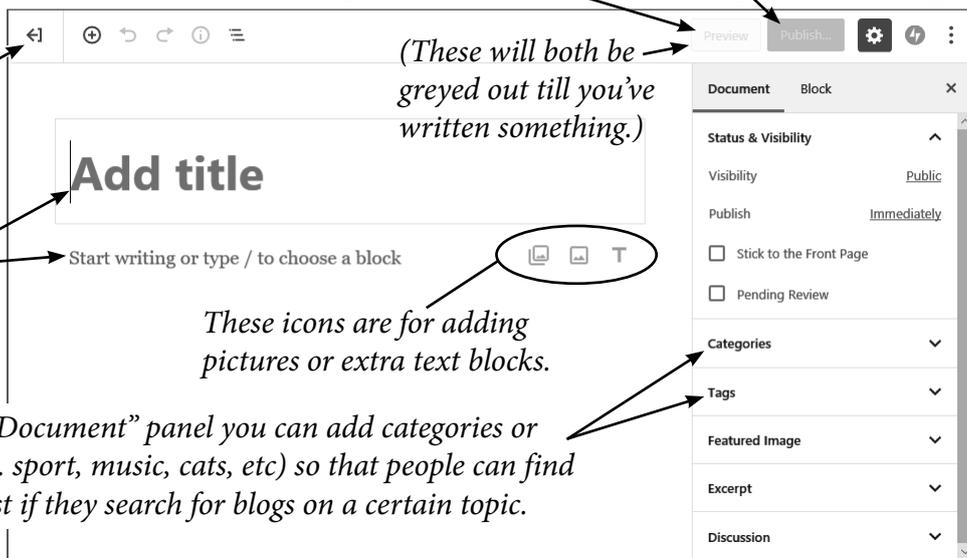


- 2) You'll get a screen that looks something like this:

Click on “Preview” to see what your post will look like. When you're happy with how everything looks, click “Publish” to add the post to your blog.

Click or tap here to go back to a list of your posts.

Click or tap where it says “Start writing...” or “Add title” and type what you want there.



(These will both be greyed out till you've written something.)

These icons are for adding pictures or extra text blocks.

In this “Document” panel you can add categories or tags (e.g. sport, music, cats, etc) so that people can find your post if they search for blogs on a certain topic.

If you're using the website on a tablet, it's best to hold it sideways so that it you see the side panel (it disappears if you hold it upright). The website doesn't fit very well on a small-screen phone, even held sideways (especially if you're typing, because the keyboard takes up so much of the screen). You could try the app instead if you want to do your blogging on a phone.

Editing and formatting

Once you've written some text, you might want to format it (or go back and edit it). As you might expect, you just tap or click on it. You can then select text to change or add more. When you do this, you also get some more tools appear so that you can format it:

These are for changing whether the paragraph is left, centre or right aligned.

You can make selected text bold or italic using these buttons.

This lets you add a website link (see next page).

This gives you more text options like underlining.

There are even more options hidden here.



This funny symbol means this is a “Paragraph” block. If you click or tap on it you can change the block type to be a list, a heading, a quote, etc. These “block types” all have pre-formatted styles – you can try them out and change back to paragraph if you don't like them.

And there are more settings in this “Block” panel at the side, which opens automatically when you click or tap in a text block. Any changes you make here apply to the whole paragraph block, not just selected text.

Adding pictures

There are a couple of different icons for adding pictures – here’s what they mean:



1) This is for adding a single picture.



2) This is for adding a gallery of pictures that all show up together as a block.

Once you’ve added photos to your Media Library, you’ve got them there to use again if you like. You can delete them if you prefer though.

Whichever option you choose you’ll be asked to either upload some photos or “insert from URL” (see note below). To upload one of your own, there are two options – “Upload” or “Media Library”, and I’d choose “Media Library” because at the moment that seems to be more reliable.



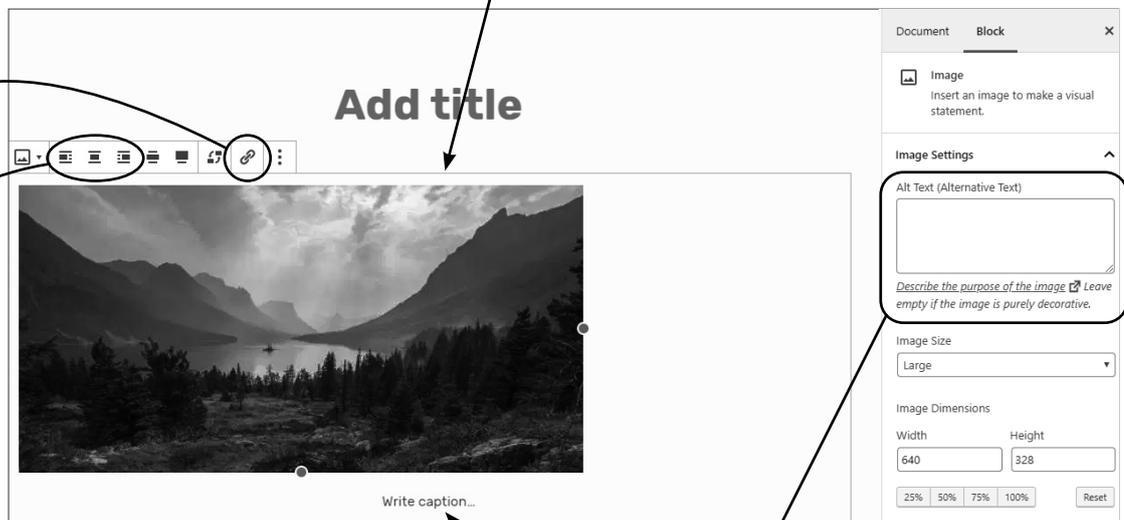
It’ll then let you either choose from photos you’ve already uploaded or add new ones by clicking or tapping on “Add new”.



To insert a photo in your blog, select it by clicking or tapping, then choose “Insert”. It’ll place the picture in the blog, like this:

This button lets you add a website link to your post (see below).

These buttons are for changing whether the picture is left, centre or right aligned.



There’s space under it for adding a caption, and in the “Block” column on the right you can add some alternative text to tell people what the photo is of if they’re struggling to view it (e.g. “Beautiful view”).

Adding website links

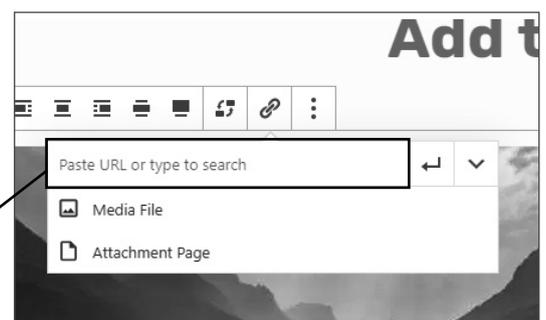
If you want to add links to your blog, you use this button, as I mentioned above:



It’ll ask you for the “URL”, which just means the web address of the page on the internet. It’s what’s found in the address bar at the very top of the webpage – for example, the URL for our company’s website is helpfulbooks.co.uk

- 1) If you want to add one, open that webpage in a new tab. Then click or tap in the address bar and highlight it all to select it.
- 2) Right-click and choose “Copy” from the drop-down menu.
- 3) Then come back to where it asks for a URL in WordPress, then right-click in the box and select “Paste”.

You can also add photos by putting in a URL for a photo on the internet. Choose “Insert from URL” instead of “Media Library” when adding a photo.



The last page of the book...

Well done – that’s the last page of this book, but don’t feel like you need to stop there...

Don’t stop learning...

I haven’t covered every possible method of contacting people – carrier pigeons and smoke signals are a bit beyond the scope of this book, sadly!

But I hope this book will have given you a feel for the many different options out there. And I hope it’s given you a bit more confidence with using your phone, tablet or PC to stay in touch – enough to “have a go” at least.

But don’t feel like you have to do it all, either

The other thing I’ve got to say is don’t feel that you have to use all these methods of keeping in touch with people.

For most people, getting to grips with two or three of these methods is enough – you might use calls for family and Facebook for friends, and send the occasional email to relatives overseas. You might find that blogging is fun to play around with, or you might not want to bother with it at all.

And that’s fine...

That’s all from me!

I hope you’ve enjoyed this book – and thanks for reading.

Thanks for reading!

I hope you've enjoyed the book and picked up some useful tips along the way – whether that's how to answer a call on your mobile phone (not as obvious as it should be!), or how to share a new hobby with the world on a WordPress blog.

As ever – if you have any questions about how to keep in touch with your friends and family, just drop us a line on the [Inner Circle Clubroom](#) and Mike, Jess or Kathryn will help you out.

All the best

Julie Wakeling and The Helpful Book Company

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