



Tech Tools for Teachers: Blogging

By Nik Peachey

Nik Peachey looks at blogging and explores how we can use it as a tool to support language learning both inside and outside the classroom. Nik provides a comprehensive overview article on blogging, including a list of tools to create activities around videos, a downloadable lesson plan and a printable how-to guide.

What is a blog?

The word *blog* originally comes from the term *web-based log* or *weblog* and was first used in 1999. *Blog* soon became both a verb and a noun, and the name for the person who writes a blog is a *blogger*. The Macmillan Dictionary defines a blog as 'a web log: a website containing short articles called posts that are changed regularly. Some blogs are written by one person about their own opinions, interests and experiences, while others are written by many different people.' The posts that form the main content of the blog usually allow visitors to leave comments for the writer and so introduce an element of audience interaction into the process of writing and publishing.

In this article, we look at *blogging* to see how it can be used to support language learning both inside and outside the classroom. **All downloadables relating to this article can be found in the 'Related files' section on the top right-hand side of this page.**

Equipment needed

Blogs are very simple to produce; all you need is a computer with an internet connection and web browser. From my own experience, I would recommend Firefox as the most stable and versatile browser. You can download it for free from: <https://www.mozilla.org/en-GB/firefox/new/>

Why are blogs useful for language teaching?

- Blogs enable teachers and students to create a free platform where they can produce and share online materials and on which they can communicate and interact either inside or outside the classroom.
- The ability to blog or publish your writing online is becoming a necessary skill in order to be digitally literate and can be very empowering for students.
- Blogs can help us create a genuine purpose for writing activities and give students an audience for their finished work.

- Blogs can enable the integration of other kinds of multimedia resources such as videos, images and audio clips into syllabuses, as many blogging platforms also support the use of these other features.

Optional keyword

- Remember that just creating a blog isn't motivation enough to turn your students into keen writers. You still need to give them motivating writing tasks that have a purpose.
- Consider whether the blog should be used for work in progress or only for finished work. Some students will want the work they publish to be 'perfect' before it goes on their blog, whereas others may be happy to post drafts, get feedback from you or their peers and rewrite.
- Be sure, especially with younger students, that they don't share any personal contact details and that they don't allow anonymous comments on their blogs as this could lead to harassment.
- If you use blogs with younger students or teens, you should let your school know what you are doing and, if possible, get permission from parents too. Parents may well want to see their children's work, so it's a good way to involve them.
- Try out a few different blogging platforms and see which one best suits the work you want to do with your students.

Teaching suggestions and activities

Creating a class showcase

Create a single blog and use it as a way to showcase the best written work from your students. This is a great way to recognise outstanding work that your students produce and share it with their peers and with parents. Try to select one or two of the best compositions each time you set a writing task for the group.

The flipped classroom

Use a blog to post a useful video that your students can watch before class. You just need to paste in either the URL or embed code (see the **video screencast tutorial** under related videos on the right-hand side of this article), put it into your blog posting and then set a viewing task for your students. In the next class, you can explore and consolidate what they have learned from watching the video.

Digital journal

Your students could create a blog and use it as a digital journal. Ask them to write a set amount of words each day or each week saying what they did and add in images. Alternatively you could ask students to keep a learning journal and write about what they learned in class and what they found easy, interesting or difficult. When getting students to write learning journals, it's important that you encourage reflection rather than just recollection. Many students just write about what they did in class ('We read a story and talked about it.') rather than reflecting on the content of the class. Try to encourage them to reflect on what they studied and ensure that you leave comments on each blog posting to encourage this reflection.

Class resource

Use a blog to post links to useful online activities and resources that students can use at home to supplement their English studies.

News or gossip

Teacher development

Create a blog for your own teacher development. You could start by posting reflections on your teaching, what happens in your classroom and the things you try in your classes. It's a good way to share your thoughts and develop a learning network with other teachers.

Tools for creating blogs

Weebly

This is a very simple-to-use platform for building different types of website. Weebly offers both 'pro' and free accounts. Using a free account, you can create a blog or a more complex website and drag and drop different elements into your blog or website, such as images, audio or video. It's very simple to use and has lots of design templates that you can customize so that your site looks unique. You can also set up a site that has multiple users, so it's very useful for creating a class website with multiple contributors. This is much easier to manage than getting each student to create their own site or blog, especially for younger learners.

You can download a onestopenglish **printable how-to guide** at the top right-hand side of this page.

WordPress

This is a very powerful, professional-level blogging platform which requires download and installation on a server. Many commercial websites are built using WordPress and you can also use it to create online learning sites. If you're serious about blogging, then this is a good platform to choose.

Edublogs

This company offers a range of blogging options for education professionals. You or your students can easily create a free blog or you can choose a premium service if you want something more sophisticated. It's probably better to start off with something free and see how you like the platform before thinking about whether you need to pay.

Further reading

[Teacher Training Videos – Introduction to Blogger](#)

This is a set of video tutorials from Russell Stannard. In the series of videos, he shows you how to produce your own blog on the Blogger platform. He also goes into quite a lot of depth about how to use many of the additional features of the site.

Downloads

Click link to download and view these files

[Weebly video screencast tutorial](#)

PDF, Size 26.14 mb

Creating a music review for a blog: Lesson plan

Optional keyword

Creating a blog using Weebly: How-to guide

PDF, Size 1.08 mb

Creating a music review for a blog: Worksheet

PDF, Size 86.61 kb

Creating a music review for a blog: Lesson plan

PDF, Size 85.73 kb

DOWNLOAD ALL