

VirtualRiders

What is a blog?

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What is the point of a blog?

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How do I create a blog?

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[The Wikipedia definition of a blog](#) is a website where entries are made in [journal](#) style and displayed in a reverse [chronological order](#). One of the easiest and simplest websites for setting up a blog (www.blogger.com) says "In simple terms, a blog is a web site, where you write stuff on an ongoing basis. New stuff shows up at the top, so your visitors can read what's new. Then they comment on it or link to it or email you. Or not.... Your blog is whatever you want it to be. There are millions of them, in all shapes and sizes, and there are no real rules."

There are many different reasons for setting up a blog. It can be personal, or it can be organisational. Either way it is about sharing your thoughts and knowledge or about promoting yourself or your organisation. A good example of sharing experiences (a form of self-help and awareness raising), is the Touching Tiny Lives Campaign from Action Medical Research. Another example is from [AskCharity](#).



As a voluntary organisation there are a number of ways a blog might be useful, such as:

1. To report back from an event or conference
2. To involve staff and take advantage of their knowledge
3. To involve volunteers and document their work
4. To provide resources and information to constituents
5. To provide resources and information from constituents
6. To give constituents a place to voice their opinion
7. To give constituents support
8. To create the media coverage constituents want
9. To give constituents the power and tools to create change
10. To reach potential donors

Extract from Consultant Britt Bravo's [10 Ways Nonprofits Can Use Blogs](#)

In addition there are commercial reasons why a blog can be useful:

- Position your organisation as an expert
- Search Engine Marketing
- Open Direct Communications
- Media & Public Relations
- Brand Awareness
- Educational Marketing
- Reputation Management
- Internal Communications & Project Management

And personally, a blog is simply a public diary, allowing you to rant and rave (and make valid points) which you can share with the world. Although people may not read your blog, there are over 55 million blogs worldwide, with specialist search engines such as [Technorati](#) and [Google blogsearch](#) tracking around 1.2million updates a day... and it is growing. Blogs are a social phenomenon and a way of easily communicating with people. At the simplest level, rather than having an email group where you tell people things on a

regular basis (e.g. funding links, newsletter etc.), just write a blog and tell people where to find it.

How to create a blog.

Firstly, because blogs are web pages, they need to be hosted on a web site. Secondly, because blogs use some nifty software to make things simple, there are particular programs that have to be used (not by you, unless you want to do it yourself). The [ICT hub](#) has a list of what is available as do [Techsoup](#), and a superb site is volresource's [Charityblog](#) where you can register and get up an running for free. Otherwise try: www.blogger.com or www.blogsome.com which are free.

Once you have registered, all you need to do is log on to your blog and get typing. It is probably worthwhile spending a little time going through frequently asked questions, how to do things and forums. As with all things on the net, the chances are that someone else has already had your problem, but you have to know how to ask the question in order to get the answer. A [Glossary of terms](#) might be a good place to start.

An example blog which forms the basis of this document (or vice versa) is:

<http://virtualrider.blogsome.com>

which was created in about 10 minutes.

There are lots of hints and tips for writing a good blog, and for how to make it more popular. The following links might help:

- [Blogger help](#)
- [How To Gain and Keep Blog Readers](#)
- [Use IT's top 10 design mistakes](#)
- [How to write a better weblog](#)

Once you get going there are numerous other elements to weblogs... the list goes on and on. For voluntary groups and partnerships, one of the most interesting ideas is that of the group log where a group of people contribute. In effect it is a published forum.

Because it is so easy to set up, the best approach to blogging is to set one up, see what you (and your colleagues) think and take it from there!