

## HOW TO BLOG 101

### Tips to help you blog\*

- Use a personal tone; share your views with passion while tailoring your message to be clearly understood by readers and potential readers.
- Be critical without criticizing: if possible try to go beyond observations and reflect on your experience without falling into criticism.
  - o Make connections with your personal experience, your academic knowledge, or with the Canadian reality of readers.
  - o Keep in mind that people will read your blog from all over the world – perhaps from your partner organization, Uniterra employees and other volunteers – and your post may remain publicly available on the web for years after your experience.
- Use stories about real people to illustrate abstract concepts.
  - o For instance, rather than describing the project you're working with, you could use the example of a person who directly benefits from the support of the organization / project.
  - o When you can, incorporate statistics to reinforce your message.
- Each post (blog article) must be concise (500 words max) and focussed on one subject.
- Avoid jargon and define acronyms.
- Ask questions and try stimulating the discussion with the readership.
- Always respond to peoples' comments: thank them for their comments and incorporate them into future posts.
- Give your posts titles that grab attention and make people want to read the article.
- Use keywords in the title and text to attract search engines and better index your article.
- Re-read each post before publishing it and make sure to eliminate unnecessary words.
- In your posts, integrate photos, videos and links when possible. Some people even choose to do:
  - o A videoblog (or vlog) – a type of blog using video posts instead of writing. Eg. "The Baobab Chronicles" (in French): <http://www.gcius.ca/spip.php?article128>
  - o A photoblog – a type of blog that uses photographs, accompanied or not of a description, and on which people can leave comments. Texts sometimes accompany the pictures to explain the context.
- Use Facebook, Twitter and email to let your network know about your new posts.
- Add tags (keywords) and categories for each post for better referencing in search engines.
  - o Tags: Keywords that characterize your post. Eg: Lilongwe, hospital, HIV and AIDS, arrival, etc.
  - o Category: Classification of all posts in your blog based on broad categories. Eg: Africa, health, etc.
  - o Note that tags and category names are sometimes the same. If you participate in a collective blog, categories may already be predetermined by the administrator.