

## Bloggging at The Washington Post

*This memo describes guidelines for our newsroom for creating, maintaining (and ending) blogs. Blogs, like all content on washingtonpost.com, are published under the supervision of editors at wpni. This primer aims to help reporters and editors at the newspaper decide when, how and whether to launch a blog.*

All blogs should draw on our principles for Washington Post journalism on the web, including meeting our standards of accuracy and fairness and rules for expressing personal opinions.

### WHAT WORKS?

- A news column/opinion blog with two or a single contributor. Examples: Raw Fisher, White House Watch.
- A breaking news or event-driven blog that can accept many contributors but should generally be supervised by one editor. Example: The Trail.
- A blog oriented around a relatively defined issue with two or a single contributor. Example: soccerinsider..
- Blogs with voice, a consistently strong (even provocative) writing tone. Example: Achenblog.
- Blogs with active editors. Guidance is important and all blogs need editing and benefit from the back-and-forth between the author and an editor.

### WHAT DOESN'T WORK?

- Group blogs that lack focus.
- Blogs that lack voice.
- Blogs that are not updated (several times a week AT LEAST).
- Grab-bag blogs that are a dumping ground for notes that will not make the paper.

### TYPES OF BLOGS

**Breaking News Blogs.** Created for a big breaking news story, such as the Virginia Tech shootings. One editor should supervise the blog content and another editor the coverage in the newspaper. The two editors should be in constant communication with each other and the corresponding wpni editor.

**Event Related Blogs.** Created for a one-time or periodic event, such as the Maryland Legislature or the ACC Tournament. An editor should be assigned to oversee the blog in collaboration with the editing of the newspaper's coverage.

**Subject Blogs.** These are long-term blogs around a clearly specified topic. In most cases the number of contributors should be limited to fewer than three reporters, with exceptions such as The Trail.

## **BLOG LAUNCH “9 POINT CHECKLIST”**

*Proposals for new blogs are welcome from across the newsroom. Proposals should address the following questions:*

- 1. What’s the blog’s topic or what event will it cover?** Blogs with relatively narrow topics do better than loosely defined blogs. Either way, the topic of each blog needs to be clearly defined. A strong personality or voice can serve a similar defining function (Achenblog, the Kurtz media summary).
- 2. What’s the competition, and how will your blog win?** You’re unlikely to find many topics that someone else isn’t already blogging about. Identify the competition and tell us why your blog is special.
- 3. How will your blog supplement what appears in print and online?** Blogs on washingtonpost.com must contain original material – newsworthy reporting, useful information and/or strong commentary. Some of the best blogs have a live and fresh feel precisely because they take readers inside the news. Outline how your blog will relate to existing print and online features.
- 4. How often will it be updated, and at what time(s) of day?** Blogs need to be updated at least once each weekday.
- 5. Who will write your blog?** Blogs usually benefit from a distinctive voice. At the same time, reporters can’t offer personal opinions on a blog in a way that would not be acceptable in the newspaper (critics exempted, for example). Proposals should include at least three “test posts” to judge whether the writer can produce posts with effective and acceptable voice.
- 6. Who will edit your blog?** Blog items need to be edited. Your proposal needs to say who will edit blog copy.
- 7. Who will moderate comments on your blog?** User comments typically account for 10-25% of a blog’s traffic and are a key to success – but need to be moderated. Who will review comments that appear to violate the site’s discussion policy and delete them if necessary?
- 8. How and where will your blog be promoted?** Successful blogs typically “live off the land” by attracting bloggers who link to them and a loyal audience. But promotion on washingtonpost.com and in print is helpful, particularly at launch. Work with appropriate editors on both sides on a realistic promotion plan.
- 9. What names and “taglines” do you propose for your blog?** Since many names are already taken, you should include several possibilities in your proposal, and do a quick web check to make sure none is in use.