

# How to Have a Successful School Library or Classroom Blog

By

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Once you have chosen a topic or focus for your blog then try and stick to this.

If you want to gain some credibility with colleagues, teachers and students it's better to be consistent in your approach and stay true to your topic or theme. Deal with a topic you love or are passionate about.

Many of us are aware there are millions of blogs out there in the blogosphere and, unfortunately, thousands of these have passed on to the great blogosphere graveyard. One of the reasons for this is because the author/owner just runs out of ideas to share on their school library or classroom blog.

**Here's 7 ways to find fresh content for your blog to help avoid blogger block.**

## 1. Include reviews

Many school library or classroom blogs had their origins in providing a facility to host book reviews either for or by students. It was a bit like a collective book log to encourage young people to enjoy the pleasure of reading for fun.

School libraries have **multiple formats for resources** so why not post reviews about some of these for teachers and students in your school community. You could include reviews about non-fiction material, web sites that will assist students in working through their assignments, teacher reference resources, DVD and video, online databases. Really, there is a smorgasbord of information resources literally on your doorstep that provides the base for developing fresh content for your school library or classroom blog.

## 2. Feed off comments to your posts to create a new post

Monitor the comments that are generated in response to your posts. Often there will be a keyword or phrase that can trigger a new post rather than adding a comment to a comment. Maybe keep a list of keywords and phrases so you begin to gather some words that can be used later.

Also, don't be afraid to **post a question on a topic**. You might be a school librarian or classroom teacher but that doesn't mean you need to know everything. You can develop a collaborative community through your blog whereby those who follow you are also contributors to the content.

Be careful about 'calling for questions' as you might find yourself overwhelmed. If you call for questions you need to be willing to answer them. Here is an extra tip – visit Yahoo Answers and check out the questions being asked. You might be able to weave a popular question back into a post that links to your school library or classroom blog theme.

After you have been blogging for a while you might revisit your archives. It is likely you will find a post (linked to the keywords and phrases you've been collecting) that you can update. Take a couple of paragraphs and create a whole new post from a different perspective.

### **3. Visit other blogs and forums on your topic**

The most sensible thing to do here is **subscribe to other blogs and forums** through RSS feed. This way you get to read (through your RSS Reader) the summarised text on what others are saying about your chosen topic in a centralised place.

You can **contribute comments** to other blogs and forums to keep the culture of sharing alive. Then, post on your blog and make a link back to the original blog or forum that got you started on the new idea. Basically, you need to give **credit where credit is due**.

**Recurring questions** posted on blogs and forums can provide the stimulus you need to research your content and develop a new post. Or, you might see there is something missing in the content on other blogs and forum. Here is your opportunity to **be unique and fill the gaps in the content** by posting new thoughts on the topic on your school library or classroom blog.

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### **4. Skim read magazine, journal and newspaper headlines**

Your school library or classroom blog will have a daily and/or monthly supply of these types of resources. Skim through the index or headings and see what catches your eye. Then, have a closer read.

You can **challenge something** that has been written about, **add further content** to the article or **report that xyz journal had this to say** about your topic.

You might **put a different spin on the published content**. Too often newspaper reports on education topics are negative. Putting something positive out there in your blog post can help to counter balance the scene.

Think about using the same technique for **seminars, workshops or conferences** that you might attend.

### **5. Encourage colleague and guest collaboration**

This is an opportunity to *share the load*. **Another school librarian or classroom teacher** who blogs a similar topic could provide you with a break and allow them to gain new readership of their blog. Include a brief background or biography of the colleague on your blog and, at the end of the post, provide a link back to their blog.

There might be a **teacher in your school** whose class is working around the theme of your blog. Ask them to be a co-author for a period of time. I'm sure there will be some professional learning benefits for all in this scenario.

Maybe blogging is not their scene. Then, see if they would be willing to **brainstorm with you to generate some new ideas for content**.

## 6. Use difference genres

Variety is the spice of life. You can use different styles of posts on your chosen topic so there is some difference in the look and feel of your blog site. Here are some ideas as starting points for you to consider.

- **Hypothetical** - This could be a different spin on using a question as a post. Select something that would generate some comment with a 'What would happen if...?' subject line. If you feel brave and courageous then you might venture forth with this: 'What would happen if there was no school library or classroom blog?' Provide some discussion starters and wait and watch.
- **Informational** – Share information that you have researched on your topic that will be useful for those who follow your blog.
- **Inspirational** – Write about a success story of some real-life experience in the school community. It could be academic awards that students have received, competitions they have entered or successful sporting achievements. If permissible include some images.
- **Instructional** – Provide 'how to' guides and tips for your readers about school library or classroom blog programs and information services. Remember you don't just need to stick to text. You can use video and visual presentations.
- **Interviews** – Depending on how your school feels about profiling students and staff you could develop a simple set of interview questions and get them to fill this out. You could post the interview questions and answers as ready-made content for your blog. Just use first names or nick names and no images if this may be a publishing challenge.
- **Lists** - Now this can be your forte. You can post content that has 'The top ten popular fiction books in the school library or classroom blog', 'Five fabulous web sites on climate change', 'A step-by-step process for creating your bibliography', 'Important points to remember about copyright'. Each list item could actually end up being a series of posts.
- **Profiles** – Pick a popular author of the fiction books you have in your school library, do a bit of research and then present your findings. You can include a list of the books that are in the school library or classroom. Depending on how your school feels about profiling students and staff you could adopt the same process.

- **Reviews** - Review different types of resources that match your topic. This information can be very helpful for the teachers and students in your school.

Don't be afraid to mix these writing styles together.

## **7. Keep a notebook handy**

This may sound like an odd thing to suggest but you do need some way to **capture random thoughts, creative ideas and shared moments**. You are in the staff room and a teaching colleague asks you a question about a school library or classroom matter. Do you think that other teachers in the school would like to know the answer to that question? Think about the most common questions that students ask of you.

Offer your readers lots of quality content on your school library or classroom blog. When they realise you have some very interesting, credible and helpful information they will be keen to come back for more.

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Happy blogging,  
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