

Blogging: A Teacher's Guide

This guide will walk you through the steps needed to start a teacher blog using edublogs.org. It's a free service and provides the settings appropriate for making sure that students have a safe experience blogging as an extension of your classroom. In this guide you will find the following:

- Safety precautions
- Signing up for an edublogs.org blog
- Helping students sign up with edublogs.org
- Inviting students to post to the blog
- Setting students as contributors
- Configure settings to ensure that everything being published is approved by you

Before you begin

Blogging is nothing new to students, but student blogging in the classroom is. Therefore, there are a few things you will need to do before having students blog.

Talk to your school's technology coordinator

It is always a good idea to check with your school's Technology Coordinator to ensure that your blogging is supported by your school's local policies.

Safety

There are many laws and regulations that cover what information is revealed about students. Make sure that students never reveal their first and last names or reveal any personal identity information. Through your monitoring process you should ensure that no students are writing anything that violates your school's current rules and policies.

Acceptable Use

Not all acceptable use policies are created equal, and there are some that may need to be updated to include rules for what students should and should not publish to the web. Check with your Technology Coordinator to ensure that what you are doing is covered by your current AUP.

Blogging: Getting Started

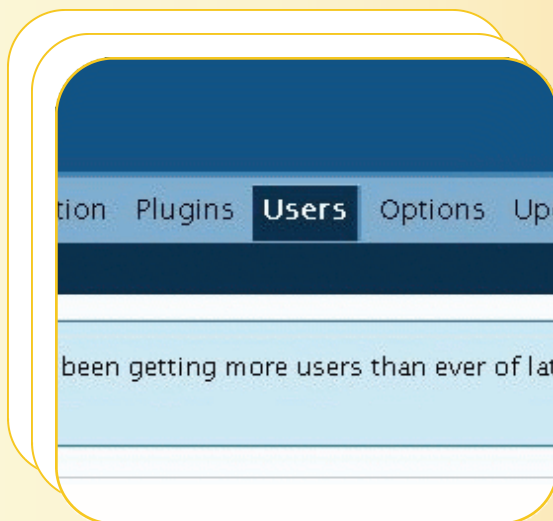


Step 1

Navigate to Edublogs.org and sign up for their free service. During the setup process you will:

- Create a Username that will be your identity on your blog
- Enter the email address where you wish to be contacted with notifications of posts and comments
- Set your domain name and blog title

Each student blogger will need to repeat this step making sure to select **“Just a username”**



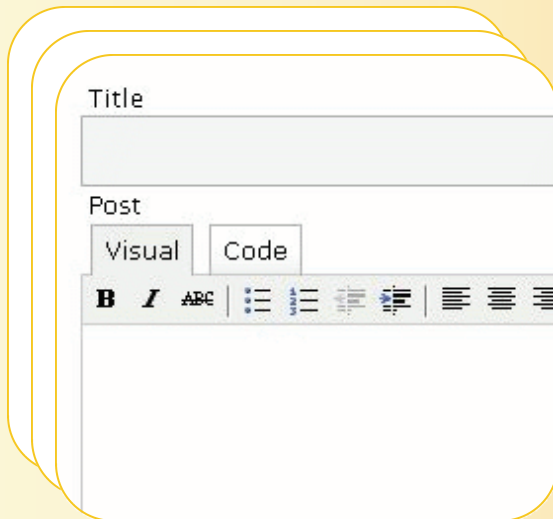
Step 2

Log into your edublog account at “yourdomain.edublogs.org”. After logging into your Edublog account you will see your dashboard. To add students:

- Go to the Users menu and scroll down to “Add User From Community”.
- Enter the email address they signed up with. Make sure you select **contributor** from the drop-down box.

NOTE: Setting each student as a contributor ensures that their access privileges are restricted to writing only. They will be able to write when they want to, but you will have to allow it to be published to the web. It also restricts the ability to approve comments.

Blogging: Writing and Publishing

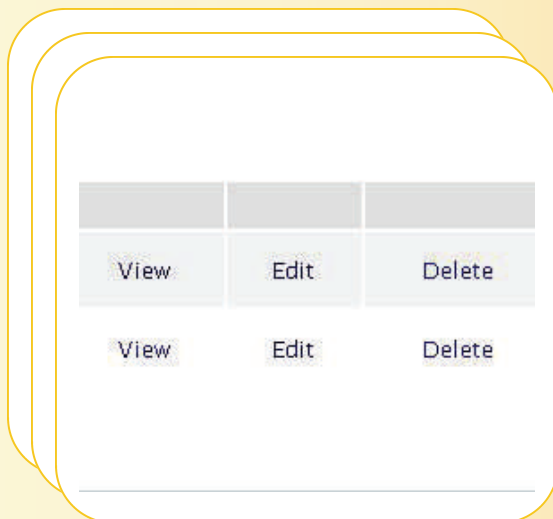


Step 3

When students are ready to write their articles, they will need to log into their dashboard using their username and password.

- Navigate to the write tab in their dashboard
- Add a subject title
- Enter their text in the post box
- Save.

Student work will not appear until an administrator approves it.



Step 4

To approve student posts:

- The teacher logs in and Navigates to the “Manage” tab in the dashboard.
- On each unapproved post, select edit.
- Select publish at the bottom to allow it to be visible on the web.

To approve comments:

- Navigate to the “Comments” tab
- Options to approve, delete, edit, or mark as spam.

These options only appear on the administrator’s dashboard.

NOTE: Since each post or comment must be approved by an administrator, it is recommended that you check back frequently or have a schedule. Students tend to lose enthusiasm with longer waiting periods. Comments will also need to be checked regularly.

Blogging: Extras

Having followed the steps, your students can safely post information on the web. These next few steps are optional enhancements to your blog.

Change the blog's appearance

By default, Edublogs includes numerous pre-designed templates for your blog. To browse the selections, navigate to the "Presentation" tab. You will now see a number of designs. To apply a theme, simply click on it.

Plugins

Plugins add additional features to your blog. Sign in to your blog account. On the dashboard you get, you will see tabs and menu bars across the top. To view the available plugins, navigate to the "Plugins" page. Some of these plugins add functionality (to add podcasts, prevent spam, add a contact form, and so on.)

Note: A good plugin that really triggers excitement in the students is the Google Analytics plugin. By signing up for Google Analytics and activating this plugin students can see several details about where the viewers are coming from, how long they stayed, and what they looked at.

Add pictures, videos, etc

Students can always add pictures and video to their posts using html, however, from the administrator account you have the ability to upload pictures directly, giving you drag and drop functionality to place the picture in the desired location.

Add Categories

When you are approving posts it is wise to give it at least one category for easy archiving. On the right, next to the post, type in a general category and select add. You can now place a check mark next to the post's qualifying category.

Change the permalink address

Articles appear on their own page when the title is clicked. Each article has it's own address. This is called a permalink. To make it easier to find from search engines it is wise to change it. Under Options>Permalinks add this custom structure `"/%postname%//%post_id%/"`.(without quotes)