

Moms Internet Guide

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Start Blogging and Express Yourself

Hi, I'm Sarah. Welcome to Moms Internet Guide—the place to find straightforward answers to all your questions about the Web. For the past few years, it seems like I haven't been able to turn on the TV or flip open a magazine without hearing something about blogging. At first I wasn't even sure what the word blog meant, but then I started reading a few of these online diaries or journals.

They're just simple Web pages where one person—or sometimes a group of people—shares news, opinions, and helpful information. Often, blogs focus on a specific topic, such as motherhood or crafts. You might find a funny story about a school field trip gone awry or a cool scrapbooking technique. Most blogs include pictures and links to other interesting websites. And people can add comments on the blogs they read.

I like www.dooce.com because it's basically a diary written by another mom. She posts something new almost every day. If I'm looking for a quick pick-me-up, I might log onto www.cuteoverload.com to peek at the adorable animal pictures. There are millions of blogs online, but you can find a list of the most popular at www.technorati.com.

After a few months reading blogs, I thought I might like to start my own. Blogging just seemed like a fun hobby. A way to express myself and squeeze in a little “me” time after the kids go to bed.

I was surprised to find out how easy it is. You don't need any special technical skills, and it's free to start a basic blog. In fact, you can have your own blog up and running in about 15 minutes.

To get started, visit a free blogging site. I like www.blogger.com and www.livejournal.com, because they're simple to use.

First, you need to create an account to establish a username and password—it only takes a minute or two. Then, you'll be able to choose a design and title. It helps to pick a title that lets people know what you plan to write about. Not sure what your blog should cover? Think about your interests. If you're a knitter, you might write about your latest projects or favorite yarns. You can also approach your blog as a journal where you write about daily life.

Next you'll want to check the settings on your blog. You can choose to make it public—so anyone on the Internet can read it—or just invite a few friends to enjoy your entries. If you choose the public setting, keep in mind that anyone can read your blog. They can find it by searching, or from links on other sites. Be careful about sharing personal details, and don't write anything you wouldn't be

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comfortable with your boss, husband, mother, or children reading. Also, leave off people's last names.

Now it's time to put up your first post. With most blogging sites, it's as simple as typing an email. You put your thoughts on the screen and hit a button. They'll be on your blog a few seconds later. You can write once a day or once a week—but posting more often helps keep people interested. Photos also help bring your words to life. Last week, I put a vacation photo on my blog. There was a simple menu option that helped me upload the image. I also like to point my readers to fun things I run across on the Web. It might be a link to another site I like—or just an interesting tidbit or news story. If you're blogging about knitting, for instance, you might point people to an online yarn store.

There's really no limit to what you can do with your blog. You can make it whatever you want it to be. Just don't forget to let your family and friends know where they can find your new creation!

Sites to Try:

www.dooce.com

www.cuteoverload.com

www.technorati.com

www.blogger.com

www.livejournal.com