

A Professional Weblog with Blogger.com

If Blogger.com is not the most used blogging tool on the Net, then it is certainly the one that I see most often as I graze education related weblogs. It may not be the best, but it is free, and provides many options to education bloggers. Its one distinguishing characteristic is that weblogs, hosted by Blogger, have a similar URL:

<http://somebody.blogspot.com/>

To begin your Blogger.com blog page, go to the site at:

<http://blogger.com/>

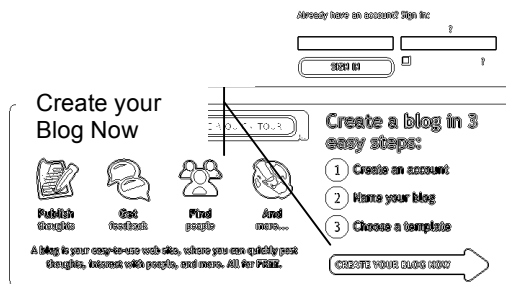


Figure 42

The layout is very simple, and you can tell where to get started right away. Just click the orange **Create Your Blog Now** button.

You will be asked to supply some basic information; your user name (the name that you sign in with), a password (must be 6 characters), a display name (name used to sign your blog posts), and your e-mail address.

Next, you will be asked about the blog you want to write. The blog title should be something distinctive. But, simple is better. I've chosen *Hillbilly Wisdom* again. One helpful feature of Blogger is that you can choose a title to be part of your blog site's URL. So I enter *hillbillywisdom* here, making the URL of my site:

<http://hillbillywisdom.blogspot.com/>

When I click the **Continue** button, Blogger checks its databases to make sure that title has not already been taken, and if it has not, you have a chance to select the blog template you will use. The template describes the overall look of your blog page. There are many very distinctive (fancy) templates, and some that are more minimal. As I said earlier, the style of the day is more minimal, so that the graphics do not distract from your content. However, the decision is yours. Your blog is a statement of your ideas and your sense of style.

For each template, you can click the **View** button and see what it would look like as a blog page. To select the template, click the radio button by the template title. I will select No. 897. There are many more templates to choose from later, if you get tired of the one you select upon creating your blog site.

After you select your template and submit it, Blogger.com will take a moment to set up your blogging site. When that is complete you can start posting information, because Blogger takes you directly to the article posting page.

Lets take a tour of your posting page, to learn just what you can do to communicate through your blog pages. At the top of the page is the main tab menu. The first tab is **Postings**, for your articles. The subsections allow you to post or **Create** a new article. You can also change existing articles or **Edit posts**, and you can check the **Status** of your posting, indicating if they have been published or not.

The **Setting** tab helps you to customize your blog page in a number of ways. The **Basic** settings page is important. Here you can change the title of your weblog. You can also enter a description of the blog site, which will appear on each of your blog pages. You can also determine the following settings:

- You can have your blog listed on the Blogger directory.
- You can equip your blog pages with an edit button, that only you will see when you are logged in and that will take you directly into edit mode so that you can edit your blog article very easily.
- You can also set your blog pages so that people can automatically e-mail specific articles to friends.
- Finally, you can toggle between the composer mode for your blog editing (WYSIWYG), or plain textboxes.

Publishing allows you to continue to use Blogger.com to host your blogs, or you can transfer the blogs to your own web site. **Formatting** allows you to set information formatting, such as how the time stamp and dates are formatted. There are other formattings that you will probably not have to change. However, feel free to experiment. **Comments** allows you to decide how comments* will be posted and who can post them. **Archiving** lets you see how often the articles will be displayed as archives, **Email** sets the address that blog queries will be sent to, and **Members** allows you to add blog authors to your site, so that the blog can be a team effort.

* Most blogs will allow people to read the articles and then post comments about the article. Comments are usually displayed at the bottom of the blog, but may appear as popup windows.

I skipped over **Site Feed** because I wanted to devote more time to it. We have already explored RSS and its benefits. It is important to understand that many of your readers may prefer to have access to your articles through their RSS aggregators. Unless there is a good reason not to, this feature should be switched on. You will also find the address of the feed on this page. It might be a good idea to remember this address. It is easy. Simply add to the address of your blog, */atom.xml*.

The **Template** tab allows you to adapt your template. Most people will never work with the **Edit current** section, for obvious reasons. It is the HTML code that makes the template work. We will work with it, though, but a little later. You can also click **Pick new**, in order to select a different template, if you should get tired of the one that you originally selected. There are more than thirty to choose from.

The Next section is the article editor. The default is **composer** mode, which allows you to format text using buttons, rather than typing HTML into the article. For most educators, composer makes more sense, because of time constraints.

The following action icons require more explanation:



It is important to include hyperlinks in your blog. Like the World Wide Web, the blogosphere is a web of information. The difference is that the content is conversation. As you mention places, people, and concepts that have web pages devoted to their explanation, then hyperlink them.

It is easy with Blogger.com. Just highlight the words you wish to link, click the **Link** button, and type the URL of the site to link to, in the text window that appears.



Another way of connecting blogs together is to quote them. As you write a blog about another person's article, include quotes of their article in yours, along with a hyperlink to the original blog. Extended quotes in blogs are indented, just like research papers. To accomplish this, highlight the paragraph of the text being quoted and then click the **Quote** button.



Finally, inserting images into your blog will be slightly more difficult than with Bloglines. You will have to completely construct the HTML code to insert the image, but this is not difficult. As with Bloglines, you must get your image up onto the Net first, and ImageShack® (<http://imageshack.us/>) will work fine. When you have copied the URL of the image into your clipboard, then you can construct the code directly into your blog text.

Place the cursor in the position where you wish the image to appear and then type the following code, pasting the image URL where it says, *paste here*.

The *align* element has been added in order to have the image align to the right, with text wrapping around to the left or visa versa.

When you have completed the article and formatted it for viewing, then click the **Publish Post** button at the bottom of the page. This will take a moment, but when the article has been successfully published, you can click the **View Blog** tab at the top to see the public version. Figure 44 illustrates the results.

The point of blogging is conversation. Unlike, standard web pages, where you put the content up and then rarely change it, your first blog article should be followed by more – conversation. As you wish to add a new article to your weblog, simply go to Blogger.com and login, using the user name to be entered when you first set up your account and then your password.

On the page that appears are two pieces of information. The first is a listing of your blogs. You can click the name of the blog you wish to work with to receive a list of existing articles. Then you can edit any of those articles by clicking the



Figure 43

corresponding **Edit** button.

You can also start a new article by clicking the **New Post** button. The **Change Settings** button will take you directly into the settings pages for that blog. Here is where you will add new articles to your conversation.

Remember, that publishing to the Net may be our best opportunity to reassert ourselves as the experts on education and the group that should be taking leadership in retooling classrooms for twenty-first century teaching and learning.

It is also a good idea to set up a profile for yourself. This enables readers to learn who you are and from where you speak. As in a meeting, you want to exude a presence that causes people to pay attention to you. Your profile should also have the same effect. When you go into your profile page, there are a number of specific demographic details that you can enter. However, to lend credence to your message as a professional, skip down to the **Extended Info** section. Here you can enter text about your interests, bio, your favorite movies, music and books. Each of these items of information should be couched within the context of what and how you teach. Remember that publishing to the Net may be our best opportunity to reassert ourselves as the experts on education and the group that should be taking leadership in retooling classrooms for

twenty-first century teaching and learning.