

EEA310 Blog Workshop

What is a blog?

Wikipedia, the online collaborative encyclopedia provides the following definition of the term 'blog':

*A **blog** (an abridgment of the term **web log**) is a website, usually maintained by an individual, with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse chronological order. "Blog" can also be used as a verb, meaning to maintain or add content to a blog. Many blogs provide commentary or news on a particular subject; others function as more personal online diaries. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs.*


The use of blogs in the EEA310 fits with this definition in some ways and doesn't in others. Certainly the blogs will contain a "description of events", "maintained by an individual", and will allow "readers to leave comments". However, although it is possible to include graphics, the inclusion of video material is not really feasible. The nature of the task probably lends itself more towards text only blogs, although the inclusion of photographic material in initial introductory posts in order to personalise the blog is certainly to be encouraged.

Access the blog tool

The Blog tool to be used in EEA310 is called Blog Wow and is part of Interact. To access the Blog tool, login to Interact and then choose the 'Blog' link in the left hand menu.

Read a blog

Blogs are organised under the name of the 'blogger' (the blog author). When you first access the blog tool you will see a list of the names of everybody who has read or posted a blog. You can return to this list at

any time by clicking on 'All the blogs' or on the  icon. The number of blog postings by this person is listed next to their name.

Exercise: Click on the name of somebody who has posted at least one blog.

All of the blogs by this person are then displayed in reverse chronological order.

View comments

Underneath each blog is a list of buttons. The 'n comments' button takes you to the comments that have been posted on this blog if there are any.

Exercise: Find a blog with at least one comment and view the comments posted.

Post a comment

The 'Leave a comment' button under a blog brings up a box into which you can type a comment. You can either go ahead and publish your comment or cancel.

Exercise: Post a comment on a blog.

Notice that after you publish your comment you remain on the screen that allows you to post comments until you return to 'All the blogs'.

Before you post your first Blog

Before posting your first Blog you should edit your Blog profile by choosing the 'my blog settings' option.

Post an initial Blog

To post a blog click on the 'Add blog entry' option. (If you can't see this option click on



'All the blogs' or on the option.

A text area with a set of editing and formatting tools is displayed.

You must type in a title for your blog or the 'Publish entry' option won't work.

Exercise: Create a blog posting. For now, just use plain text or basic formatting.

Give your blog an informative title, such as "A first experimental blog" or "Classroom management plan". It is important that other students can differentiate between your experimental blogs and the blogs you have created as part of the assignment. You will be able to delete your blog if you wish (see below).

Before choosing 'Publish entry' make sure you choose the 'All members of this site can see this entry' option. Although blog entries are never public because access to the tool requires an Interact username and password, it is important that blog postings are restricted to students and staff involved in the subject.

Exercise: After posting your blog go and view some other students' blogs and post some comments on them.

Edit a Blog

You can edit a blog by clicking on the 'Edit entry' button underneath it.

Exercise: Edit the blog posting you created above.

As a rule it is preferable that you don't edit your blog postings once others have commented on them. This is important because other students will need to include the blogs they have commented on as appendices in their assignment.

Formatting text


The formatting options in the blog editor include basic character formatting such as font, font size, bold, italics and underlining as well as paragraph formatting such as indentation, bullets, numbered lists and paragraph alignment.

Exercise: Create another blog posting and experiment with the formatting option.

As explained below there are some formatting tools that should in general be avoided because they don't work as expected in all cases. These include the Style and Template options.

Pasting text


You can paste plain text using Ctrl-V or by right-clicking and choosing Paste just as you would in any other application.

However, if you want to paste formatted text from Word you should use the following button: . This button provides a window in which to place the text and then converts the formatting before placing it into the editing window.

Exercise: Experiment with pasting unformatted and formatted text from Word.

Adding a picture

In order to include a picture in a blog posting you need to first upload the image file into the resources tool. This can be done from within the blog editor so you don't need to go out of the blog tool to do so.

The first step is to click on the insert image button:  in the blog editor. From here you can do one of the following:

- Specify the web address (URL) of an image that exists on another web site; or
- Use the 'browse server' option to select an image that has previously been uploaded into the resources area of this or another Interact site;
- Use the 'browse server' option, followed by the 'Browse' and the 'Upload' buttons to first upload an image from your local computer or USB drive into the resources area and to then choose this image within the 'browse server' dialog box.

Exercise: Save an image from a web page to your desktop or USB drive, then upload it and add it to a blog posting.

Note that only images in a web compatible format (eg. JPEG, GIF or PNG) can be included in a blog. If you have an image in another format that you'd like to use you'll need to first convert it in an image editing program.

Modify your profile

When viewing the blog posting of a particular 'blogger', the person's profile information is displayed in the right hand column. You can enter textual information and upload a picture that will be displayed as part of your profile. This gives you the opportunity to add character to your blogs.

To enter or modify your blog profile, choose the 'My blog settings' option.

Exercise: Enter some text into your blog profile.

To enter a picture into your blog profile you can either specify the web address (URL) of a picture that is already on the web, or you can first upload an image into the resources area and then copy and paste the link into the URL field in the profile editor.

Exercise: Add a picture either of yourself or of something that you think characterises you into your blog profile, by first saving the image file to your desktop or thumb drive, then uploading it into the 'Images for Blogs' folder in the resources area, and then copying and pasting the link into your profile.

Printing blogs and comments

You will need to print your own blog postings and the comments you have posted on other people's blogs, along with these blogs themselves, and include them as appendices in your assignment.


If you just display a person's blog postings and then choose print not all blog postings are printed. A better approach is to select the postings you want to print with the mouse, choose File-Print and then in the print dialog box specify 'Selection'.

Exercise: Print one of your blog postings along with all comments posted by other students.

Unexpected behaviours to be aware of


After posting a comment, the name of Blogger link leads to a page with broken links

After posting a comment you can get back to a list of the Blogs using the “All the Blogs” option. If you


accidentally click on the Blogger name you can get back to the list of Blogs by clicking on the  icon.

The Permissions link brings up an empty screen

The Permissions option will generally bring up an empty screen. You can return to the list of Blogs by

clicking on the  icon.

Recovering from the unexpected


The icon that looks like the following  will return to the list of Blogs if the other links stop working at any stage.

Other things to avoid

Use of styles when formatting text

The styles options in the editor will change the appearance of the text while editing but the text will revert to unformatted once the Blog is saved.

Use of templates when formatting text

Some of the templates provided in the editor (accessible from the  icon) don't work as expected and so it is safest to not use this option.