



BLOGS OR OPINION PIECES – WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE?

Blogs are great ways to document your reflections, ideas and research progress, and to build collegial networks through a wide range of online media.

Opinion pieces, published in print and online media, are usually around 700 words, need a compelling opening and should give readers new insights into current issues. A bit of controversy also rarely goes astray.

So, which should you use to build your profile and get your research out there?

If you have a ground-breaking study or if your research is very relevant to a hot issue, you may have a good opinion piece.

Tim Dodd, Higher Education Editor for *The Australian*, says: ‘We’re looking for things which say something new, which give people insights that they might not have thought of, and which are well written and clearly written.’

Regular contributors have a history of saying new things in a readable way. ‘Everyone has limited time and limited attention and we actually need to offer stories which people are going to think are worth their time.’

Opinion pieces, which let you maintain control over your content, are a good choice when you want something to change. Hone your main points so they hit the mark with stiletto-like precision, then write to persuade with passion, expertise and conviction.

Give an informed opinion with supporting evidence and leave the rants to columnists who specialise in that type of writing.

As far as blogs are concerned: ‘Creating accessible blog posts about your research, studies or projects can be painless and quick, and is a great route to opening up your content to wider audiences,’ say the authors of *Communicating Your Research with Social Media*.

You can quickly set up a free individual blog online, which may suit if you’re committed to writing regularly. You may also find externally hosted blog collectives with a group of frequent contributors, or professional blogs with academic commentary on sites such as *The Guardian* or *The Conversation*.

From Tell Us: What are you doing? Improving how you communicate your academic research, relevance and expertise by Leslie Falkiner-Rose. Available at abdc.edu.au/shop and online bookstores.

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You can harness almost any content, but you should post regularly if you want to build up a following.

Here's how you can use your blogs:

- **Research.** Unlike peer-reviewed journal articles that have long publishing timeframes, blogs provide instant ongoing commentary and conversations about your thinking, approach to challenges, interim findings and progress. The more insightful and interactive you are, the more people are likely to follow you.
- **Explainers and guides.** Demystify complex areas and expand your audience.
- **Reaching practitioners and policymakers.** What are the practical applications of your work? How might you influence the current narrative? What does your analysis show?
- **Current affairs commentary.** Some disciplines like economics lend themselves to real-time commenting on events.
- **Event commentary.** Report on events such as conferences, with useful summaries and highlighted insights.

For more tips, visit <https://abdc.edu.au/abdc-communications/tips-to-improve-communication/>