



## Top ten tips to writing successful blogs

Writing well for a blog is quite different from most other ways you might record an event, such as taking minutes or writing a departmental report. The tips below should help you write a blog post that is engaging, attractive, accessible to non-specialists and easy to find!

**1. Cover the key points.** The blog post format lends itself to short summaries and reflections, rather than exhaustive accounts of an event. UCL Events blog posts should be 600-800 words, certainly fewer than 1,000, so put yourself in the shoes of someone who didn't attend – what would you highlight to attract their attention and demonstrate why the topic is relevant to a general audience? What were the main thrusts of the arguments presented, and are there any controversial aspects that might interest the lay reader?

**2. Write for a non-specialist audience.** Events blog readers will largely be well educated, as many will come from the university itself, but they will come from all disciplines. Imagine you are writing for a friend or a relative who is not a specialist in the area – avoid jargon, spell out acronyms and try to demonstrate why the subject matter is relevant to the general public. Feel free to draw on your own knowledge of a subject to enhance your piece.

**3. Make it personal.** Everybody's idea of what is interesting is different; a highlight for you might be one speaker's presentation manner, a memorable statistic, or the question and answer session that followed a lecture. You don't have to cover all elements of an event equally. Feel free also to link the subject matter in with relevant reading you may have done.

**4. Make your headline work.** Your headline should use keywords or even a list-format ("Seven ways that...", "Five reasons why..."), so that readers know at a glance the area covered, and search engines can find them more easily. Your headline can also include a short phrase or quote from the event that is attention-grabbing.

For example: Sir Gus O'Donnell on the Cabinet Manual: "Not just a Janet and John guide"

Headlines shouldn't be much longer than the example however, so there's a balance to be struck. Many people find it easier to write the headline after they've written the blog post, as the key element to highlight is often clearer after you've got your thoughts down.

**5. Draw readers in with your first line.** Usually, only your first paragraph will be visible on the Events blog homepage, so your opening should entice readers to click through to the full post. You'll also need to get the key facts about the event in here too. Classic ways to grab attention are to start with:

- a controversial comment
- a statistic
- a question.

For example:

- Funding arrangements do not "satisfactorily guarantee" the Supreme Court's institutional independence, said Lord Phillips (President of the Court) in his lecture at UCL on 8 February, which launched the Constitution Unit's project on the politics of judicial independence.

- Who is to be blamed for the financial crisis, and who should bear the costs? UCL Laws student Elettra Bietti discusses the highlights of a panel discussion on the subject held by the *UCL Jurisprudence Review* on 3 February.

**6. Make your text scannable.** People find it harder to read online than to read print publications, so they tend to scan online text, rather than read it closely. You can make your posts easy to scan and digest by using:

- short paragraphs: one or two main ideas should be grouped together in a paragraph, no more. It might look strange in your Word document, but it will work well online
- subheadings for different sections. These should be short and punchy – using puns and alliteration can help
- bullet points, wherever appropriate, for lists
- short, direct quotes: these can break up the text and help bring the discussion to life

**7. Make your post ‘findable’.** As well as an informative headline, relevant links will help your blog post be better indexed by search engines. Feel free to link back to the department that held an event, the homepage or organisation of the speaker, or previous coverage on the topic by UCL News or by the mainstream press. Links have the added benefit of allowing non-specialist readers to delve more deeply into a topic if you have whetted their appetite.

Points to consider:

- Link text needs to be descriptive and self-explanatory (avoid “click here”) to support quick navigation and accessibility. For example:  
“To read reviews of Lunch Hour Lectures, visit the [UCL Events blog](#)”
- Tags are thematic keywords that are used to make blog posts more attractive to search engines. When you submit your post to us, please suggest some tags and indicate if the event took place outside UCL, so that we can give it the tag, “Off campus”.

**8. Be professional.**

- ALWAYS SPELLCHECK your post.
- ALWAYS ASK SOMEONE ELSE TO READ IT – not just for grammar and spelling, but to see if there’s anything unclear or ambiguous to someone who didn’t attend the event.

After all, the blog posts will be permanently archived, and you might want to refer someone back to your posts in future as an example of your writing.

**9. Use engaging photos.** If you are being so good as to provide a photo of an event, try to choose one that demonstrates some dynamism, for instance a speaker gesticulating to emphasise their point. Remember that the photo will be quite small in the blog post, so better to crop in or use a close-up rather than a view of an entire room.

If an image is from an external source, please ensure that you have the rights to use it. NB The Events blog team can advise you if you are unsure and may be able to suggest alternatives.

**10. Learn from others.** There are plenty of excellent blogs that you can learn from – why not sign up to a couple in your area of interest to get some good ideas? The articles below provide some more guidance on best practice.

- [Top 10 Blog Writing Tips: Write a Blog You’d Want to Read](#)
- [How to Write Great Blog Content](#)
- [Writing blog content: make it scannable](#)
- [Writing for the web](#)