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How To Start A Blog

The Definitive Guide

How To Start A Blog: The Definitive Guide

So you want to know how to start a blog, huh? It's a question I get quite a bit and I decided to put all the information you need in one place for you to reference. Why bother listening to me? I've built multiple blogs (beyond just the IMPOSSIBLE network) from anywhere between 10,000 and 900,000 visits/month. In addition to my own sites, I've also run [an online marketing agency](#) that has built and optimized sites for dozens and dozens of clients.

[Sign up for InMotion Hosting today & get a 20% discount on your overall hosting package JUST for Impossible HQ readers.](#)

But, more importantly, I know how hard it is to **start a blog** in the first place. When I first wanted to know how to start a blog, I had to teach myself and, because I knew absolutely nothing when I started, I deleted my database 3 times simply because I had no idea what I was doing. Needless to say that I used up a lot of time and cuss words trying to figure out how to start a blog on my own. I know the frustration.

However, over the past 3 years online, I've actually learned quite a bit about how to start a blog. I no longer randomly delete databases (hooray!) and I've even made some money off of them. In fact, over time, I've slowly started to figure out what I'm doing and I've

actually created a systemized checklist to use to save me time every time I create a new blog.

After getting lots of requests on how exactly I go about starting a blog, I took my checklist, polished it up, and decided to share this definitive guide. **So, if you want to learn how to start a blog,** here's your definitive guide – step by step by step. Lets get started.

How To Start A Blog

This is the “How To Start A Blog” index. Click a link to jump to a specific step, or read the full guide on how to start a blog.

1. [How To Start A Blog: QuickStart Guide](#)
2. [Choose A Blogging Platform](#)
3. [How To Start A Blog For Free](#)
4. [Choose The Best Hosting Company](#)
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How To Start A Blog: Quickstart Guide

If you want to skip the “*how to start a blog*” tutorial and just grab the tools I use to get started with blogging, here are the top tools and resources I recommend. You’ll find them again at the end, so feel free to read the entire post first before coming back to these. Important: don’t become obsessive over the tools of blogging. HOW you write is just as important as WHAT you use to write.

Remember that.

Domain Name: [FREE Domain with InMotion Hosting](#)

Hosting Provider: [20% off InMotion](#)

WordPress: [Genesis Framework](#) | [Genesis Child Themes](#)

Plugins: [Yoast SEO](#) | [Gravity Forms](#) | [Lead Pages](#) | [Pretty Link](#) | [WP Super Cache](#)

Email Newsletter: [\\$1 AWeber Trial](#) | [Infusionsoft](#)

Coaching Course: [Start A Blog That Matters](#)

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If you’re ready to jump into this blogging tutorial, get reading!

Choose A Blogging Platform

[Recommended WordPress.org Self Hosted](#)

If you want to build out your blog or other platform, [just use WordPress](#). If you want to know how to start a blog, WordPress is hands down the easiest and simplest way to build a site. Don't over-think things here. Yes, there are free alternatives, but WordPress is the best system out there and it's used by the majority of bloggers for a reason. If you're serious about creating a site or a long-term web presence, [WordPress is really the only option worth considering](#). For that reason, the rest of this guide on how to start a blog assumes you'll use the WordPress framework.

How To Start A Blog For Free (with a Hosted Solution)

If you're not that serious about blogging, you might want to start a blog for free. Many people use a free version of [Blogger](#) or [WordPress.com](#) to start a blog instead of their own hosted solution.

I do not recommend this. Anyone who is remotely serious about blogging should skip both of those options and invest in their own domain and hosting so that they own all of their own data. Both of those solutions, while free, severely limit your ability to do anything with your sites in the future, both from a functionality perspective and a portability perspective.

Instead, if you're not sure how deep you want to get into blogging, take a look at the following options:

- *If you want a place to just write with, check out [Posthaven](#). It's \$5/month, guaranteed forever, and is the easiest way to just focus on writing & nothing else.*
- *If you're not really interested in how to start a blog, but are just looking to share photos, videos and gifs, [Tumblr](#) is what you're looking for.*

However, if you're looking to make blogging a serious activity, you'll want to [install WordPress](#) on your own domain. The next steps in this guide show you exactly how to do just that.

How To Set Up Your Blog

Blogging Tools & Resources

Find A Killer Domain Name

First things first, in order to start a blog, you need to brainstorm domain names.

If you can, keep your domain name short (Impossible HQ is much easier to remember than Blog of Impossible Things). Unfortunately

most one word domains are taken at this point in time. Don't fear, there are still plenty of good domains out there.

Free services like [LeanDomainSearch](#) or [Bust A Name](#) can help you generate domain ideas and see if they're available. Trust me, I know – I've got nearly 100 domains (I may or may not have a problem). If you can, get a .com, .net, or .org. A .com is obviously preferred, but any of the top 3 are fine.

Don't fall into the trap of thinking that you absolutely need a .com domain. Two of the biggest blogs on the internet ([ZenHabits.net](#) and [GetRichSlowly.org](#)) both have non-dot-com domains and they're some of the most trafficked in the world – so it's not the end of the world if you can't get a .com. It's more important to find a domain name that's memorable and easy to spell. I'll show you how to find and buy an awesome domain in the video tutorial below.

How To Find & Buy An Awesome Domain Name Video Tutorial

> Find an available domain with [Lean Domain Search](#) or [Bust A Name](#)

Buy Your Domain Name

[Get A FREE Domain with InMotion](#)

Once you decide on a domain, you need to pony up the cash and register it. GoDaddy is probably the most well known place to register domain names because it has terrible commercials like this:

Because it's so well known, it's where most people start. I started there but I (like everyone I know) soon got out as quickly as possible. The user experience is horrible and they're always trying to sell you on something that you don't need. On top of that, they have terrible commercials and [their CEO poaches elephants](#). I'm not a fan of PETA, but overall the company is not one I really want to be giving my money to.

Don't play games, but if you register to host your blog with InMotion (we'll talk about this in a second), you'll get a free domain with no fuss. If you want more than just one domain, you can pick up a .com/.net/.org domain will cost you \$7-10/year which is dirt cheap, and no-brainer investment if you're really serious about starting a blog.

> Get Your FREE Domain with InMotion

Get A Rock Solid Hosting Provider For Your Blog

Recommended Choice: InMotion Hosting

Once you buy a domain name, you need somewhere to store your files. If you think about your website like a house, the domain name is the address, but the hosting service is the house itself – it's where you put all the stuff. Now, there are a ton of different hosting options out there for your brand new blog, but I use InMotion & I convinced the team over there to hook up IMPOSSIBLE readership with a [20% discount on your hosting package](#).

[Sign up for InMotion Hosting today & get a 20% discount on your overall hosting package just for IMPOSSIBLE readers.](#)

For the sake of transparency, I started out hosting my sites [with Bluehost](#). They're a solid hosting service, but they simply couldn't keep up when I started getting traffic. When I started getting visitors, I upgraded to InMotion and it hasn't let me down for a second (even serving over ~900,000 visits in a month). I highly recommend InMotion. They even help install WP for you when you first sign up. If you're starting a serious blog, go with [InMotion](#) from the start and save yourself a headache.

[> Get Hosted with InMotion \(and get a 20% discount\)](#)

Create Your WordPress Framework **For Your Blog**

Install WordPress

The WordPress install can be done in a few different ways, depending on your hosting provider (but they're all really simple still). I recommend you use InMotion. Here's a quick video on how you install WordPress on your InMotion hosting environment.

How To Install WordPress In Less Than 5 Minutes ([with InMotion Hosting](#))

Installing WordPress is really, really simple. In fact, it's so easy that WordPress calls it the "famous 5 minute install." However, if you really don't want to deal with any of this, you can call up your hosting support with [InMotion](#) and have them install it for you. You can also watch the quick video tutorial above and watch me walk you through exactly how to install WordPress yourself (because, lets face it, you're a go-getter), and want to get started on your blog straight away.

Get A Solid Theme Framework

[**Recommended Choice: Genesis**](#)

Genesis is the framework I wish I would have known about when I first learned how to start a blog. It's a rock solid basic framework and the foundation for a lot of great child themes and custom designs. It also comes with a solid SEO codebase and a responsive theme (one that displays well on mobiles, tablets and desktops right out of the box). With the influx of new devices on the market, this is absolutely mandatory for anyone starting a blog. I start all new sites, projects and blogs based on the Genesis framework and will be transitioning all remaining ones onto it in 2013.

[> Start Your WordPress Framework With Genesis](#)

Get A Solid Child Theme For Your Blog

You can use the Genesis framework to build your blog right out of the box but, if you want to add a little design flair to your site, you'll want to get a child theme. There's a bunch of [genesis wordpress themes](#) you can check out here. If you want to get off the ground quick, this is your ticket. And don't worry, the Genesis theme and the child theme combined will run you less than \$100 combined. That's a pretty solid deal when you consider that starting a blog with a custom responsive theme can run you over 5k on its own.

Dig around with a bunch of [genesis child themes](#) and go nuts!

Install Essential WordPress Plugins For Your Blog

Plugins are a tricky territory. On the one hand, they can expand the functionality of your site tenfold if you use them effectively. On the other hand, it's easy to go overboard and install a bunch of plugins that either do the same thing or don't add much to your site other than bloat your code and slow your site down. You can waste a lot of time and energy on these if you try to wade through them yourself when you're first learning how to start a blog.

You're in luck. I've taken the guesswork out of this equation. After 3 years of installing and uninstalling hundreds (maybe even thousands) of plugins, I've filtered out the good from the bad and settled on a few plugins that I can't live without – my essential WordPress plugins for starting a blog. Here it is: the definitive list of plugins that I use on every single one of my site setups.

Yoast WordPress SEO

Yoast WordPress SEO is hands down the best SEO plugin out there (and it's free). It gives you a super simple way to understand and evaluate SEO on your posts (with a simple red/yellow/green mark) without having to delve into a masters course on title tags and meta descriptions. This is the best way to do a quick SEO evaluation of your sites without wasting hours and hours of your time trying to figure out your keyword density on a page.

> Yoast SEO WordPress Plugin

Gravity Forms

There are a ton of contact forms out there, but Gravity Forms is the only one I use now due to its simplicity in setting up. Some have a lot of random fields, and don't display well with certain themes. Depending on which free form plugin you pick out, it might not even work!

Even though Gravity Forms is a paid plugin, it's absolutely worth it. It's rock solid. You build the form. You post it on the page like you would a photo or video. And bam. There's your contact form. Dead simple. Use it.

> Gravity Forms Plugin

Digg Digg Social Plugin

Social plugins make it simple for people to share your content. Digg Digg is owned by [Buffer](#) and is the best all-in-one social plugin out there. But slow down. Just because it has a ton of options, that doesn't mean you should go overboard and enable every network out there. I recommend enabling the big 3: Twitter, Facebook and Google+ (and possibly Pinterest or Stumbleupon if your blog warrants it), but don't go social crazy. If you give people too many choices, often they don't pick any of them. Also, be sure to enable

“lazy loading” on the plugins as it will help keep your blog speedy by loading all the buttons after the content has loaded up.

[> Digg Digg Social Plugin](#)

Pretty Link

Pretty link allows you to create quick, “pretty” links that redirect to wherever you like. You can use this for masking affiliate links and it makes creating shorter links to share your content super simple. It comes in a free (lite) version and a pro version if you need a few more features. This is absolutely the easiest way to make quick short links and redirects on your site both for affiliate products and when you just want to make a quick short link that’s easy for people to remember.

[> Pretty Link Lite | Pretty Link Pro](#)

Lead Pages

If you need to create landing pages in order to drive email captures or sell something down the road, Lead Pages makes things stupid simple. I used to use [Premise](#), but Lead Pages has made it obsolete. It’s replaced Premise, Launch Effect & Optimize Press across all my sites. It’s even got a “Welcome Gate” plugin for free that is a non-annoying variation on a pop-up. It seems a bit pricey at first (\$200), but if you sell anything of any magnitude, it more than

makes up for it. It's created the highest converting landing pages for me that I've ever had & it's not only simple to use, but you also get an end result that looks pretty good too! Considering it's brand new on the market, Lead Pages is already the best plugin on the market for this and it has huge potential. And while, it's technically more than just a plugin (you can host pages on their site, on facebook, etc) it integrates seamlessly with your wordpress install. Not to mention – it's responsive – so the pages show up great, no matter what site you're on.

If you're *starting a blog* & want to sell anything (or even just make opt-in pages that don't scream "cheeseball"), Lead Pages is the program you need to take a look at.

[> Create Landing Pages With LeadPages](#)

nRElate Most Popular & Related Content

If you want people to find other content on your site, there are a ton of related post plugins, but this is the best one to handle the job. You can install two different plugins from nRelate: one to show your most popular content and one to show other related content to a specific page or post.

[> nRelate Most Popular Plugin](#)

[> nRelate Related Content Plugin](#)

Akismet

If you like getting notified about “great deals on gucci purses” or free offers to grow your nether regions, don’t install this. If you’d rather not get spammed to high heaven, install Akismet and forget about spam forever. If you want to start a blog, you’ll want this one (if you’re not sure why, just wait until the spam starts coming).

[> Akismet Plugin](#)

To activate Akismet, you’ll need a personal API key which you can pick up below for free:

[> Personal API Key \(Free\)](#)

WordPress Super Cache

Along with having a good host, a solid caching plugin will do the second most important job in keeping your site up during a traffic spike. A caching plugin basically reduces how much data your blog has to load every time one of your site’s pages loads. That reduces bandwidth and can keep your site online if you ever get a burst of traffic that’s over your server’s head. While traffic spikes sound awesome in theory, when they crash your site and you get a huge influx of visitors who can’t see anything, it’s significantly less awesome.

[> WordPress Super Cache Plugin](#)

Subscribe to Comments

This is a simple plugin that adds a checkbox to your comments section so people can subscribe to the comment conversation and get email notifications if new comments are posted.

[> Subscribe To Comments Plugin](#)

Create An Email List For Your Blog

If you're learning how to start a blog, you need to get an email list.

Seriously, listen up.

You need to create an email list. **Now.** Like seriously now. [Click this link](#), start a trial for \$1 & go do it.

This will cost you if you don't do it.

I know, because I'm the idiot who didn't do this the first time he tried to start a blog. Look:

1. The first blog I ever set up, I neglected to set up an email capture for the first 9 months. 0 subscribers for 9 months. Oops. **BAD**

2. The second blog I made, I didn't have an incentive offer for my email and got ~200 subscribers in 6 months. **SLIGHTLY LESS BAD, BUT STILL TERRIBLE.**
3. The third blog I created, I finally learned my lesson, set my email list up from the get-go and got 1,000 subscribers in a month. **GOOD!**

Get the picture? **MAKE AN EMAIL LIST. It's that important.**

So how do you actually go about making an email list? Well, which email provider should you use? Here's how I usually break it down.

- [Mailchimp](#) is free for the first 2,000 users. That's about the only good thing about Mailchimp. If you want to do anything besides sending a newsletter out once/month, spend the money and go with [AWeber](#).
- [Aweber](#). If you're serious about starting a blog (on the most basic level) and you want to do this for a long time, use [AWeber](#). AWeber recently updated their interface and it's purrrrrty. Honestly, with the updated redesign, I have a hard time recommending someone use anything BUT Aweber to start . [Spend the \\$20/month – that's a couple of beers on a Friday night out. It's worth it.](#)
- If you're a baller who needs to cross-sell, up-sell and do crazy things with your contact database, choose [Infusionsoft](#) (Infusionsoft is pretty expensive but worth it if you have 10k+ subscribers and 3 or more products).

I've used all three for both myself and for clients who are starting blogs. Mailchimp gives you a free trial which is great to start, but it ends up costing slightly more than AWeber when you transition to the paid plans. AWeber has better segmentation options for your lists than MailChimp (which is more important than you think it is right now – trust me). Almost everyone serious about blogging will be served best with [AWeber](#). Even with the initial fee, Aweber is still very affordable. [Infusionsoft](#) is really awesome, but can be complicated and expensive (especially for new bloggers). If you have an established blog or business, however, go for it.

[> Start Your Email List Now with a \\$1 Trial from AWeber](#)

[> Become An Email Boss With Infusionsoft](#)

How To Write A Good Blog

Now, if you're going to start a blog, you're going to want to make sure it's actually good. Here's how you go about starting a blog that doesn't suck.

Write

This is the hard part. You actually have to write! Shocker, right? This is the part where most wannabe bloggers fall off. They don't blog! They'll create and set up a dozen half-baked ideas, but when it comes down to writing, they never execute.

Execute. Write. Repeat.

Over and over and over again.

Create A Schedule

Create a schedule and stick to it.

I'd almost go so far as to say this is mandatory for new bloggers who are trying to learn how to start a blog. Once, twice, or 3 times a week. It doesn't matter. Just pick a schedule and stick to it.

People say "it doesn't matter", but it does. If you want to form a new habit (and blogging is a habit), you need to set a schedule and stick to it.

Yes, you will suck at first. Yes, you will probably have zero readers. But having a schedule will make you commit to focus on executing, which in turn will help you get better, which in turn will help you gain more readers.

Make a schedule and stick to it!

Be Interesting

The first mistake that most people make when learning how to start a blog is that they're terribly boring. Seriously.

Don't write about your cat. Your cat is probably awesome, but nobody cares about your cat.

If you want to write interesting things, be interesting yourself. Do something interesting with your life. Then write about them. People are drawn to good (read: interesting) stories. Live one, then write about it.

Don't Be Uninteresting

Seriously, if you bore people, they will leave. I can't emphasize this enough.

Solve Problems

Nobody cares about your cat, remember? So, instead of writing about stuff that only you care about (i.e. your cat), write about stuff that other people care about as well. Find out what problems people have and figure out how you can help them solve their problems.

You have to give people a good reason to stay on your site and read your words, and the best way to do that is to answer a specific question that they're asking. Once you do that, you start to become trusted and your readers might even come back to read more!

Answer Questions

If you're confused about what sort of problems people need solving, ask questions and then answer them.

Tell A Good Story

People love a good story. Stories have the ability to connect with people and relay truth like nothing else. If you tell a good story, you won't have any trouble being interesting.

Be Honest

Make sure to be honest. Storytelling is great, but making up a work of fiction and pretending it's fact is not only lame, but stupid. Be honest. You don't want to build a reputation based on deceiving people. Don't waste time lying. People can spot a liar from a mile away. Even if you somehow manage to evade their B.S. detectors, it's not worth it. You will be found out. It's also way easier to keep your stories straight. Get this right when you first start your blog and you're way ahead of most people.

*If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything. - **Mark Twain***

Keys To Starting A Successful Blog

I'm not the biggest blogger in the world, but after doing this for several years, I feel like I've figured out a few things that work. They may suffer from [survivorship bias](#), but these keys to successful blogging are still worth considering, in my opinion, if you're really serious about learning how to start a blog.

Don't Give Up

If you like to quit things as soon as they get hard, just go find something else to do because blogging takes a long time. The main differentiator between those who start a blog and succeed eventually and those who don't is whether or not they keep going (screw blogging, this is true in almost everything in life). If you want to know how to start a blog, there's one thing that's really important: don't give up.

Seriously Don't Give Up

Blogging isn't for quitters.

Get Some Thick Skin

Get used to these words: gay, dumb, stupid, lame, suck, and a bunch of more profane ones. If you're going to start a blog, you better grow some thick skin to deal with this one simple fact: **some people will not like you.** If you're going to get hurt over that, either stop or get over it quick.

Grow some thick skin and realize that being insulted is better than being ignored. Keep going anyways.

Follow Through: Do What You Say

If you say you're going to do something, just do it.

Get Good Photos

Attention new bloggers: If you want to start a blog and do one thing to make your blog really stand out, you need to get good photos.

Good photos can make or break a site design. Great photos can turn a stock theme that everyone and their brother has into a semi-professional looking site that's instantly recognized as yours.

So many people neglect this area, but putting a little effort into nailing this can be huge in setting your site and you apart as you learn how to start a blog.

I can never understand how people are willing to spend \$5,000 on a custom site design and unwilling to spend a couple hundred bucks getting a decent photo of their mug (Instagram selfies don't count). Get good photos – people will notice. If you're in the Chicago or Napa Valley area, I highly recommend [Spyr](#) (they do all my photos).

Life -> Blog not Blog -> Life

If you want to start a blog, your blog should flow out of what you actually do. This goes along with being honest and congruent about what you say and what you do.

Your blog should be an extension of your life, but it shouldn't be your whole life. If you really want to know **how to start a blog**, *this might be the most important piece of advice you read.*

Worthless Blogging Advice

Just “add value” and write “EPIC” content about “stuff that matters” and readers will come in droves.

No one quite knows what this means and everyone says it. It's relatively annoying, especially when you're first learning how to start a blog. Ignore this.

Better advice: Answer questions, give direction, provide resources, solve problems.

Make Sure You're On Every Social Networking Site Known To Man

Make sure you set up every single social media page available. I hear this “social” stuff is gonna be big.

Better Advice: Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Pinterest. These are all promotion outlets, not creation outlets. Create content first (stuff worth sharing), then move on to worrying about promoting it later. Instead of jumping on 20 social networks at once, focus on 1 or 2 avenues and do those really well.

Focus All Your Effort on SEO

SEO is powerful, but if you spend all your time focusing on writing SEO content, your content will probably suck, and no one will want to read it. If you're first learning how to start a blog, it's best not to focus too much on this and simply focus on writing.

Better Advice: Write for people first and search engines second.

Completely Neglect SEO

At the same time, there are people who brag about being ignorant of SEO. I think it's a little disingenuous and a little dumb to be careless about this once you're a few months into blogging and can actually see which terms people are using to find your site. SEO is hugely powerful and changing one word can sometimes have huge implications if you're just learning how to start a blog.

Better Advice: Be aware of SEO opportunities, and capitalize on them when possible, but don't obsess over them or scoff at them.

Additional Resources For Starting A Blog

My friend Corbett Barr runs a course called [How To Start A Blog That Matters](#). I'm not typically a fan of people who blog about blogging, but Caleb and Corbett do a bang-up of walking you through **how to start a blog** in this course.

BOOM

Boom.

There you go. **That's the definitive guide on how to start a blog.** Any questions?

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Essential Blogging Tools Overview

In case you forgot, here's the super quick overview of all the blogging tools you need in order to learn how to start a blog:

Domain Name Registrar: [FREE Domain with InMotion](#)

Hosting Provider: [20% off InMotion Hosting](#)

WordPress: [Genesis Framework](#)

Plugins: [Yoast SEO](#) | [Gravity Forms](#) | [LeadPages](#) | [WP Super Cache](#)

Email: [\\$1 Aweber Email Trial](#)

If you have any more questions about **how to start a blog**, leave a comment below and I'll do my best to help!

Now start blogging!

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[Sign up for InMotion Hosting today & get a 20% discount on your overall hosting package JUST for Impossible HQ readers.](#)

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For more reading, check out [25 Blogging Tips for New Bloggers](#).

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