

University of Florida

UF/IFAS Blogging Best Practices Guide

For UF/IFAS Bloggers

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Executive Summary

Purpose of this Document

- To help UF/IFAS bloggers better understand the blogging medium
- To show UF/IFAS bloggers how they can use blogging as a tool for professionalizing and connecting with colleagues and clientele
- To outline tips and strategies for creating quality blog posts that will further the goals stated above

Main Ideas

Definition and Rationale for Blogging

- A blog is a continuous record of entries displayed on a website in chronological order. These entries are called posts.
- Blog posts are typically short, informal and conversational. Blog posts deliver an individual voice and personality.
- As a UF/IFAS blogger, you and your unit can use a blog to interact with the world in a more dynamic, personal way that often is not possible with a traditional website.
- Blogging lets you get your message to a wide range of people.
- You can use blogging to advance your professional goals and as a timesaving tool.

Blogging Tips and Strategies

- Identify and write for your target audience(s) by determining who they are, what they know, what they want and how you want to impact them.
- Use tone to convey your attitude toward your subject matter and encourage your audience to feel a particular way about that subject matter.
- Be mindful of how people consume information on the Web, and tailor your writing style, organization, visual design and images to those needs.
- Use search engine optimization (SEO) to make your content easy to find through search engine queries.
- Avoid plagiarism through proper citation and use of source materials.
- Avoid bias by sticking to scientific findings and recommendations.

Introduction

This document explains what a blog is and why blogging can benefit you and your team. This document also covers best blogging practices and strategies you can use to enhance readership and improve the overall quality of your blog.

What Is a Blog?

Blogs began to appear online in the late 1990s and have since become an extremely popular medium among internet users.

The term *blog* originated from the term “web log.” As the “log” part suggests, blogs are a continuous record of entries displayed on a website in chronological order. These entries are called **posts**.

Posts contain text, other media, such as photos or videos, or a combination of the two. Blog posts focus on one theme or topic and are typically short, informal, and conversational. Unlike many traditional websites whose content is generally the same day to day, blogs are regularly updated with new posts. The changing nature of a blog keeps readers coming back to read this newly added material.

These differences between traditional websites and blogs means that our experience of each format is different. When we visit a traditional website, we encounter an institution or a brand, and we feel a distance between us and whoever created the site. When we visit a blog, we get to know an individual voice and personality.

However, because the blog format creates the sense that we are interacting with an individual, large organizations, such as news media groups and universities, now use blogs to cultivate an online presence that is more personal and immediate than that offered by a traditional website.

What this means for you: as UF/IFAS blogger, you and your unit can use a blog to interact with the world in a more dynamic, personal way that often is not possible with a traditional website.

Why Blog?

In the most general sense, people blog because they want to share information and ideas with the world. If blogging is part of your professional duties, you will blog to share news and knowledge related to you and your team’s work.

In contrast to other mediums, such as newsletters or academic journals, blogging lets you reach both your peers *and* the general public—anyone with an internet connection can read what you have posted. Furthermore, because visitor activity on a blog is quantifiable, blogging data can help you demonstrate and measure the reach, engagement and impact of your work, making blogging a positive addition to an annual report or promotion and tenure packet.

In addition to advancing your professional goals, blogging also helps you and your team establish an online identity—when someone searches for you on Google, your blog will be one way in which he or she will learn about and interact with you.

Lastly, a blog allows you to communicate efficiently with the people you serve. For example, rather than repeatedly answering the same common question from the public, you can write a blog post that responds to the question. Then, the next time someone asks the question, you can simply direct him or her to your blog post.

What this means for you: Blogging lets you get your message to a wide range of people. You can also use blogging to advance your professional goals and as a timesaving tool.

Best Blogging Practices

Readership is crucial to any blog. The following sections explain how to write and structure blog posts that will attract readers and keep them interested; the final section covers ways to avoid plagiarism and bias while blogging.

Writing for Your Target Audience

The way we deliver information depends on the person or persons with whom we communicate. For example, an Extension agent will communicate to growers in one way but will deliver the same information to a group of 4H'ers in another way. This is because these two groups have different backgrounds and needs. As a blogger, it is up to you to understand the people who will be reading your blog and modify your message accordingly.

The people who read your blog and the people you want to read your blog are your **target audience**. Understanding *who* these people are, what they *know*, what they *want*, and how you want to *impact* them will help you tailor your blog posts to your target audience.

To start creating a target audience profile, ask yourself these questions:

- Whom am I writing for? Or, who will benefit from or want this information?
 - Is he or she a homeowner? Grower? Extension agent? UF researcher or faculty member? A regular Joe?
- When it comes to the topic I am writing about, what does my audience know?
 - What kind of background information does my audience need to know to understand what I am writing about?
 - What information will most benefit my audience to know?
- What does my audience want to get out of reading my blog or post?
 - Why is he or she looking for this information?
 - How will he or she use this information?
- How do I want to impact my audience?
 - Do I want to inform my audience?
 - Do I want teach my audience to do something?
 - Do I want to change my audience's behavior?

For example, a blog post about buying produce in season may have the following target audience profile:

- **Who?** Consumers in Florida who are interested in sustainability

- **What do they know?** They know produce can be bought in season, but they do not know when various items are in season.
- **What do they want?** They want a reference for when different fruits and vegetables are in season in Florida.
- **How do I want to impact my audience?** I want to inform my audience by giving them information about when fruits and vegetables are in season.

Creating a target audience profile can be a great pre-writing exercise because it helps you decide what to include and exclude from your post. Understanding your target also helps you determine the post's [tone](#), [writing style](#) and [organization](#).

Keep in mind that *your target audience may shift depending on the topic and content of your posts*. As a whole, your blog will have a general target audience, whereas each blog post will have a more specific audience. For example, the target audience for a blog about home gardens may be people interested in home gardening, but the target audience for a blog post about growing organic vegetables is going to be a subset of those interested in home gardening.

Using Tone

Tone is the attitude the writer expresses toward the subject matter he or she is writing about. By conveying this attitude, tone encourages the audience to feel a particular way about that subject matter.

As a blogger, you can use tone to shape your audience's response to your writing. Using the right tone will help your writing better impact your target audience.

Below are some examples of tones commonly used on UF/IFAS blogs.

- **Instructive and helpful**
Writer's attitude: What I'm writing about will help someone achieve a goal
Audience feeling: This blogger is here to help me and improve my life
Example post: "How to Set Up a Hydroponic Garden at an Elementary School"
- **Playful and fun**
Writer's attitude: I am writing about an experience others will find enjoyable
Audience feeling: I want to be involved with what I read about because it could be enjoyable
Example post: "Turning Nutrition into a Family Activity"

- **Enthusiasm and excitement**

Writer's attitude: I am enthusiastic about this idea or development

Audience feeling: I am pleased by this development

Example post: "Local Extension Agents Help Save Farmer's Operation"

- **Serious and matter of fact**

Writer's attitude: I am writing about a serious issue and people should have all the facts

Audience feeling: I should pay attention to this issue

Example post: "New Invasive Species Identified in Florida"

- **Urgent call to action**

Writer's attitude: People should change their behavior to avoid contributing to a problem

Audience feeling: I need to change my behavior to avoid negative consequences

Example post: "Preventing Pollution Caused by Lawn Runoff"

Of course, a blogger may want to *combine multiple tones to best suit his or her goals*. For example, a blog post about setting up a hydroponic garden at an elementary school might combine an instructive and helpful tone with a playful and fun tone. Similarly, a blog post about a new invasive species may incorporate both a serious and matter of fact tone and an urgent call to action.

Writing Style

Writing style is how a writer uses word choice and sentence structure. Your target audience and tone will often determine the kind of writing style you use, but there are some general guidelines that all bloggers should follow:

- **Use short sentences.** As a rule of thumb, if a sentence is more than twenty words long, try breaking it down into more than one sentence.
- **Use short paragraphs.** Readers tend to avoid or skip over long paragraphs. If your paragraph is more than five sentence long, consider breaking it into smaller paragraphs.
- **Make direct statements.** This means avoiding **passive voice** by putting the thing performing an action at the beginning of the sentence.
 - *Passive voice:* The new invasive species was identified by UF/IFAS researchers.
 - *Active voice:* UF/IFAS researchers identified the new invasive species.
- **Avoid jargon.** Since your audience probably does not share your expertise, do not use words they do not know. You will only confuse readers. Instead, explain concepts in terms they will understand.
- **Use titles and headings that will grab readers' interest.** Readers judge a post by its title. If the title makes them want to know more, they are more likely to read the post. However, *avoid*

titles that sound gimmicky. This may make readers mistrust the post and author. Below are some do's and don'ts when it comes to titles and headings:

- o *Do...*
 - Keep titles and heading short but informative.
Example: "New Citrus Rootstocks Created by UF/IFAS Researchers"
- o *Don't*
 - Use long cumbersome titles or headings.
Example: "Five New Citrus Rootstocks Have Been Created by Citrus Researchers at Citrus Research and Education Center, Lake Alfred, Florida"
- o *Do...*
 - Use question words (who, what, where, why, when, and how) to set up your title or heading.
Examples: "How to Prepare for El Niño"; "What You Need to Know about Africanized Bees"
- o *Don't...*
 - Use charged or alarmist language.
Examples: "Stop El Niño from Destroying Your Home"; "Keep Your Family Safe from Killer Bees"

Organizing Information

How information is organized is just as important as the information itself. The structure of a post should guide readers through information in a logical way.

A well-organized post should have the following:

- **An introduction or introductory statement.** Begin the post with some background information on your topic. This establishes the focus, context and purpose of the post. An introduction need not be a formal section of the post labeled "Introduction." A few sentences as the beginning of the post may be all you need.

Example: When plants are grown hydroponically, they are grown in a solution of water and nutrients instead of in soil. A hydroponic garden is a great way to introduce children to agriculture and start a conversation about where their food comes from. This post will show you how to construct and maintain a small-scale hydroponic garden for teaching purposes.

- **A body with identifiable subsections.** Most of the content of your post will appear in the body of the post. This middle section is where you will accomplish the purpose of your post. For example, if the purpose of your post is to show your reader how to do something, the body will layout the step-by-step instructions for completing this task. If the purpose of your post is to inform, the body will contain the facts and details you want your reader to know. It is important

that the body have a clear structure in the form of subsections. See [Organizing the Page](#) for more about visually establishing this kind of structure.

- **A conclusion or summary statement.** End the post by summing up its main points or take-away message. Here you can remind readers of the purpose of the post and explain how it was accomplished.

Example: Now you know that with some supplies from the hardware store and a do-it-yourself attitude, educators can get their students interested in agriculture and where their food comes from.

Organizing the Page

When you decide how to visually organize content in a post, it is important to recognize that people do not consume web material and printed material in the same way.

People usually consume printed material, such as a book or magazine article, by reading it from start to finish. However, when people consume information online, they do not read everything they see but rather **scan** for material that interests them, jumping from one piece of content to the next.

For example, when someone opens up their favorite blog, she will not go to the top of the page and read all the way down to the bottom; instead, she will scan the page and choose a post, usually based on its title, that interests her. Once she has chosen a post, she will scan it for key pieces of information and then decide to read more or leave the post to find other content.

Efficient Home Irrigation

Posted by [sgrenrock](#) on March 7, 2016

[Leave a Comment](#)



It's raining, as it often does in Florida, and all of a sudden you realize that your sprinklers are on. You think, *what a waste!*, perhaps vowing to keep better tabs on the weather forecast. However, efficient home irrigation may be even more important than you think.

Nearly half of all public drinking water in Florida typically goes to outdoor water use around the home. This means that minimizing the amount of water used to irrigate lawns and gardens is an important part of conserving water in Florida.¹

Automated irrigation systems, the ones that you set and let run at regular intervals throughout the year, are much less efficient than non-automated irrigation—for example, watering your lawn with a hose.¹ Fortunately, advances in irrigation technology can make irrigation both efficient and automated.

Figure 1. When you scan this blog post, where do your eyes go?

The visual organization of a post should accommodate the way people scan, rather than read, online. If a reader can easily scan a page, he is more likely to stay on the page; however, if a page is difficult to scan, a reader will probably leave the page, even if the material is relevant to his interests. Below are ways you can visually organize your posts to make them easier to scan.

- **Use titles that will pique a reader's interest and make her want to read further.** See title do's and don'ts in [Writing Style](#).

- **Break content down into identifiable chunks. Chunking** information helps readers find the information they want more easily.
 - Include an *introduction* or introductory statement. After the title, this is the first place that readers will go to find out if they want to continue reading. See [Organizing Information](#) for more on writing introductions.
 - Use *headings* and *subheadings* to show how information is organized. Readers will scan headings to get an idea of what is discussed in a post. They may read only those sections of the post with headings that interest them.
 - Use *short sentences* and *paragraphs*. In addition to making your writing easier to read, short sentences and paragraphs make it easier for readers to scan for and find information they want. The **white space** created by shorter paragraphs also invites readers to scan the page.
 - Use *bullet points* or *numbered lists* to organize items, key ideas, or steps. Bullets and lists attract readers because they offer information in bite-sized pieces.
 - Put key terms or ideas in *bold* or *italic fonts*. The eye is drawn to the contrast created by bold or italic fonts. Warning: do not overuse bold or italic fonts because this will diminish their impact and make the text look busy and disorganized.
- **Use images to break up the text and create interest.** A post with an image is automatically more interesting than a post without one. An image will be one of the first things readers will scan for and use when deciding whether or not to stay with a post. See [Using Images](#) for more on selecting good images.

Attracting Wildlife to Your Backyard

Posted by [sgrenrock](#) on February 15, 2016

[Leave a Comment](#)



I always love the first time I notice that cardinals have returned to my yard, which is usually around this time of year. It's great fun watching their bright red bodies flit around in the trees and listening to their calls.

A photo draws the eye down the page.



Dakota L., CC BY-SA 3.0

If you also enjoy seeing local wildlife in your backyard, you can encourage them to visit by turning your yard into an attractive habitat. Doing so not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of your yard, but also increases biodiversity and promotes the health of local ecosystems. As human development continues to encroach on natural habitats, giving animals a place where they can find food, water, and safety is more and more important for their survival.¹

Tips for Attracting Wildlife

The heading helps organize information.

- Create areas and structures where birds and other animals can **hide**.

Bulleted lists and short paragraphs create white space.

Lawns are open spaces that leave wildlife exposed to predators, so animals are attracted to denser areas of shrubs and trees. Bird and bat houses are also places for refuge.¹

- Plant **native plants** and removing invasive or non-native spaces.

Local animals prefer plants that are also native to the area because these plants provide the kind of shelter these animals need or the food they eat. Look for plants that produce the berries, seeds, fruit, or nectar local wildlife like to eat.^{1, 2}

- Provide **water and food sources**.

Bold fonts emphasizes key information.

Bird baths and ponds give wildlife a place to drink and clean themselves. Birdfeeders can also be used to attract various birds to your yard.²

Figure 2. A blog post demonstrating chunking for visual appeal

Using Images

Including images makes a post more lively and engaging while also helping your reader scan the page. You can access high quality photos by UF/IFAS photographers in the [UF/IFAS Photo Database](#) with your UF login.

Below are some tips for choosing and incorporating photos into your blog. For more on taking and selecting quality photos, see the [UF/IFAS Branding Guide](#).

- **Choose photos that are relevant to the post.** While an image of an alligator might convey school spirit, unless the post is about alligators, do not use it in the post.
- **Choose photos that are informative.** Photos should demonstrate a concept or fact mentioned in the post. For example, a post asking people to report appearances of invasive species would benefit from a photo of the species and a photo demonstrating what someone should do when he or she encounters it.



Figure 3. A photo demonstrating how to perform a task. UF/IFAS Photo by Tyler Jones

- **Choose photos that are high resolution and have good composition.**
 - High **resolution** photos are crisp and show depth and detail; they look professional and polished. Low resolution photos look fuzzy and pixelated; they look amateur and sloppy.

- **Composition** refers to the things in the photo and how these things are arranged. Well-composed photos usually have a clear subject or focus that appears in or near the center of the photo.
- **If using images of people, choose photos that show action.** Photos of people standing around posing for a picture are unexciting. Photos showing people in action are more interesting because they tell a story. See [Using Photos and Other Images](#) in [Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism](#) for more on getting permission to use photos of people.
- **Make sure you can legally use the photo.** See [Using Photos and Other Images](#) in [Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism](#) for more on image copyright law and permissions.



Figure 4. A high resolution photo that will well-composed and shows action. UF/IFAS Photo by Tyler Jones

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): Making Google Work for You

Search engines such as Google work by matching the words you have searched for with places online that contain those same words. For example, if you enter “Florida citrus” into a search engine, the search engine will find all the places on the Internet with those words and then order these search results according to popularity.

You want to make it easy for people using a search engine to find and visit your blog. **Search engine optimization (SEO)** involves using words in your blog posts that people are likely to use when searching for your information online. For instance, if your blog post is about keeping pets cool in the heat, search engine optimization means identifying which words and phrase people will likely use when trying to find this kind of information and then including those words in your post.

These searched-for words and phrases are called **keywords**. Include keywords in

- the **title** of the post.
Example: “Keep Pets Cool in the Heat”
- the first **sentence** of the post.
Example: “Keeping your pet cool in the heat is important to maintain her health and comfort.”
- the **body** of the post. Include keywords two or three times throughout the body of the post.

- the **alt attribute** of an image. An alt attribute of an image is a description of the image that can be added when the image is uploaded into the post.
Example: “A pet owner keeps her pet cool in the heat by keeping his water bowl full.”
- the **meta description tag**. The **meta description tag** is the short string of text that appears below the title of a page when the page appears in search engine results.
Example: Keeping pets cool in the heat keeps pets safe and happy. Find out what you can do to keep your pet cool and comfortable in the heat.

Having trouble coming up with keywords for a blog post? Try using a search engine to find information about the topic on which you are writing and note which words and phrases led you to pages that are most similar to your post. Use these words and phrases as keywords.

A word of warning: though keywords are a great tool in SEO, using keywords too frequently causes your writing to sound forced and unnatural, detracting from the overall quality of the post.

For more information on SEO, please see the UF/IFAS Communications “[SEO for blogs.IFAS](#)” webinar.

Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism and Bias

We recognize that the rise of the Internet has made information easier to access and that it is sometimes hard to know what material is permissible for a particular use.

Plagiarism is the act of claiming credit for intellectual work you did not do or helping someone else to claim credit for work he or she did not do. It is a serious offense in the academic world.

Plagiarism is prohibited on UF/IFAS blogs.

It is also sometimes difficult to distinguish between opinion and scientific recommendations, which can lead to biased writing. We want to help all UF/IFAS bloggers avoid plagiarism and bias. We hope the following guidelines will make it easier for UF/IFAS bloggers to post material that is appropriately sourced, cited and presented.

Please note—if you post material to a UF/IFAS blog to earn credit from UF or to fulfill requirements for tenure and promotion, your work may be subject to academic-honesty policies that are different from the guidelines presented here. Please check with your academic advisor or work supervisor for more information.

Sourcing

Text in UF/IFAS blog posts should draw material from UF/IFAS sources whenever possible.

It is okay to paraphrase material from non-UF/IFAS sources, but it is important to cite the source(s) involved. See below for information about [paraphrasing](#).

It is okay to quote material from non-UF/IFAS sources, but this should be done only when there is a compelling reason, for example, when you want to add another viewpoint or use the author's original wording because it is well-written or significant. Whether the source is from UF/IFAS or not, it is always critical to cite the source(s) involved. See below for information about using [quoted material](#).

In some instances, it is okay to publish posts that have no sources at all. For example, if the post is very short and follows an approved format (see the section on [Citation](#) below), it does not need sources. Sources are also not required if the writer is describing a personal experience and avoiding technical discussions. Some examples of posts that do not need sources include in-person accounts of live events such as field days and expos, visits to farms and natural areas, personal reminiscences and behind-the-scenes descriptions of projects.

Citation

For very short posts (2–4 sentences) that promote a single EDIS publication, the only citation needed is

- a reference to the name of the publication,
- the names of the authors (if there are more than three authors, you may include just the first author's name followed by "et al."),
- the department under which the publication was published (e.g. the UF Department of Entomology and Nematology),
- the month and year of publication (e.g. January 2016),

- and a link to the publication on the EDIS website. This link should appear in the final sentence.

For very short posts (2–3 sentences) that promote an event, no citation is needed so long as the text is simply a brief description of the event's purpose, time, place, admission policies, etc. The post should include contact information or a URL to a website with more information about the event.

For longer posts, all sources must be cited, even if they only provided ideas that you used. In other words, *both* quoted and paraphrased material must be cited.

UF/IFAS bloggers may use any well-known citation format, such as Chicago or APA style. To simplify the task of citing sources, it is okay to use one of the many free websites that offer citation generators that

will put raw information into proper citation formatting. (Keep in mind that these generators are not perfect every time, so always check the results for accuracy.)

Using Quoted Material

Using quoted material means taking a word-for-word excerpt from an existing piece of writing and using it in your blog post. Word-for-word transcriptions of material from conversations or speeches are addressed in [Interview Material](#).

It is okay to use quoted material in UF/IFAS blog posts, but it should only be used when it seems best to use the original author's exact words.

Use quoted material properly:

- Quote only what is necessary to make your point—usually a paragraph or less.
- Quoted material should be set off from the rest of the text by quotation marks. Place longer quotes in a separate paragraph.
- Quoted material must be cited according to the requirements of the citation style you are using.

When quoting material from non-UF/IFAS sources, **IF** you take a significant amount of text and use it as a substitute for your own writing, copyright law may give the original author the ability to sue you for using their material. Therefore, you should limit your use of quoted material to brief quotations for a specific purpose—to add another viewpoint, comment on the author's viewpoint, provide historical background, rely on the author's original wording because it is well-written or significant, etc.

Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing is the act of describing or restating someone else's written or spoken statement in your own words, generally for the purposes of simplifying or condensing it.

It is okay to use paraphrasing in UF/IFAS blog posts, but it must be done properly:

- Paraphrasing is not the same thing as duplicating a passage and making a few word substitutions in it. A well-written paraphrase will not have any obvious resemblance to the source material, except that some of the same facts and ideas will be involved.
- It is not appropriate to reproduce large pieces of an existing document by paraphrasing, even if you cite the source; this is a form of plagiarism. If you are promoting an Extension publication or some other UF/IFAS document, then you should write a shorter promotional piece that links to the document.

- Paraphrased material must be cited according to the requirements of the citation style you are using.

Interview Material

It is fine if your blog post incorporates interview material that was obtained from in-person discussions, phone calls, e-mail or other electronic exchanges, etc. with sources. Also, spoken-word material presented to an audience at an event, such as a speech or lecture, can be treated as interview material and used in a blog post, even if the writer does not interact directly with the speaker at the event. Interview material can be quoted or paraphrased.

It is important to use interview material properly:

- Use UF/IFAS sources whenever possible.
- In the body of your post, mention the source's name, title and location and the fact that this person was communicating with you via an interview or event. Generally, the best place to put this reference is right before or right after you have presented the first piece of information that came from the interview or event.
- Use quotation marks to set off any material that represents a word-for-word transcription of the source's statement. (It is okay to delete false starts, misstatements and "ums" and "uhs" from spoken-word statements.)
- If you paraphrase the source's statement, end the paraphrase with an attribution such as "Dr. XYZ said" or "she said."
- Cite the interview according to the requirements of the citation style you are using.

Using Photos and Other Images

Photographs, drawings, charts, graphs and other visual images are subject to copyright law, just like text.

It is okay to use photos and other images in UF/IFAS blog posts, but it must be done properly:

- Use UF/IFAS photos whenever possible. This includes photos taken by any UF/IFAS employee as part of his or her job.
- Use photos from the [UF/IFAS photo database](#). You are welcome to use photos from it so long as you credit the IFAS photographer.

- If you or someone else in your UF/IFAS unit needs to go take photos to use in your blog post, please make sure the photographer carries the current [IFAS Photo Release Form](#) and has it filled out and signed by the people who appear in the photos. This is a requirement for all photos taken by UF/IFAS employees for official business use—it is meant to ensure that the people appearing in the photos understand how UF may use the photos and that they give their permission for UF to use the photos.
- Avoid photos and other images from non-UF/IFAS sources unless you are certain that it is okay for you to use them—for example, the material is in the public domain, it is subject to a creative commons-type license that allows your use, etc. If you use a photo that is subject to a license, make sure you follow all of its licensing requirements.
- All photos and other images should include a credit line in the photo caption that includes the name of the photographer and other information, such as licensing or permissions, if applicable.
 - If you are using a UF/IFAS photo from the UF/IFAS Photo Database or elsewhere, credit it according to the UF/IFAS Branding guide lines:
 - UF/IFAS Photo by [insert name]
 - UF/IFAS [Department Name] Photo by [insert name]
- *Always include a credit line, even if you took the photo.* This makes the origins of the photo clear. A photo without a credit line can look suspicious because it is hard to know where the blogger obtained the photo and if he or she has permission to use it.

Avoiding Bias

Even though blogs posts are typically written in a more personal, conversational style, UF/IFAS bloggers should not include personal opinion in their blog posts. Instead, bloggers should remain unbiased by sticking to scientific findings and recommendations. For example, in blog post about fertilizer use, the position that fertilizer should never be used is an opinion. On the other hand, explaining the fertilizer rates recommended by UF/IFAS is a position based on scientific testing and evidence.

Summary

This document introduced you to the blogging medium and explained how you can use blogging as tool for professionalizing and connecting with colleagues and the general public. This document also outlined tips and strategies for creating quality posts that will attract and retain readers.

These strategies and tips included

- Identifying and writing for your [target audience](#)(s) by determining who they are, what they know, what they want, and how you want to impact them.

- Using [tone](#) to convey your attitude toward your subject matter and encourage your audience to feel a particular way about that subject matter.
- Being mindful of how people consume information on the Web and tailoring your [writing style](#), [organization](#), [visual design](#), and [images](#) to those needs.
- Using [search engine optimization \(SEO\)](#) to make your content easy to find through search engine queries.
- [Avoiding plagiarism and bias](#) through proper citation, use, and presentation of information and source materials.

Questions and Contact Information

Have questions about something you read here? Please contact [UF/IFAS Web Services](#).

Index of Key Terms and Definitions

Alt Attribute of an Image – a description of the image that can be added when the image is uploaded into the post

Blog – derived from the term “web log”; a continuous, regularly updated record of entries displayed on a webpage in chronological order

Composition – the things in the photo and how these things are arranged

Chunking – breaking content into identifiable pieces to convey structure and facilitate scanning; using headings, white space, short sentences and paragraphs, lists and bullet points, and contrasting fonts to achieve this

Content – text and other media that make up what users see on a webpage

Keywords – words people often use to search for information on a particular topic

Meta Description Tag – the short string of text that appears below the title of a page when the page appears in search engine results

Passive Voice – a sentence construction in which the thing receiving an action appears at the beginning of the sentence; to be avoided when blogging. *Example: The shoreline was hit hard by the hurricane vs. The hurricane hit the shoreline hard*

Plagiarism – the act of claiming credit for intellectual work you did not do or helping someone else to claim credit for work he or she did not do; a serious offense in the academic world and prohibited on UF/IFAS blogs

Post – individual entries in a blog that contain text, visual media or a combination of the two; usually focus on one theme or topic and are typically short, informal and conversational

Resolution – the degree of clarity and detail shown in a photo

Scanning – glancing over a webpage to see if there is anything of interest; the way people look for and assess information on a webpage

Target Audience – the people who read your blog and the people you want to read your blog

Tone – the attitude the writer has toward the subject matter he or she is writing about

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) – using keywords in your blog posts that people are likely to use when searching for your information online

White Space – the space on the page that does not contain content; white space allows the eye to rest and facilitates scanning

Writing Style – how a writer use word choice and sentence structure