

## **BlogWow! Help**

### **What is a blog?**

A blog is an online journal, in which individuals can write entries, ordered by date, which they can share with others. Members of the site can comment on each others' entries.

### **Using a blog in teaching**

A blog can make a interesting learning diary, with students keeping a journal of what they have learnt, and what they would like to find out more about. Some students find that this can offer a useful opportunity to reflect on their own learning. If they choose, students can restrict individual blog entries so that they are only visible to teaching staff and themselves. Blog entries can also be made visible to all the other students in the site, or to the public.

Blogs can be particularly useful if students are working on individual projects, and you want them to be able to follow what the other students in their group are doing. Students can be asked to blog regularly, and to read each others' blogs. Students writing dissertations can be asked to blog to keep their research supervisor informed of progress.

### **Using a blog in collaboration sites**

A blog can also be very helpful for researchers working on a collaborative project. Individual researchers can use it as a research diary, jotting down their findings so far, and reading entries by their colleagues.

Alternatively, research participants can be asked to blog about their experiences, providing a secure and permanent record of the research project. Again, people can restrict individual blog entries so that they are only visible to the site administrators and themselves. By default, all blog entries are visible to the other site participants.

### **The blog tool in Sakai**

The blog tool in Sakai works on a site by site basis – entries that people write in one site will not appear in any other sites.

People will not be automatically notified by email about comments on their blogs, or about new entries in other people's blogs.

Blog entries do not display in the 'Recent Activity' tool on the home page of your site.

## **Reading and commenting on blogs**

### **Reading blog entries**

To read someone's blog, go to the 'all the blogs' page. This is the home page for the tool. You can see this page by clicking the 'all the blogs' link in the actions bar.

Your own blog is linked to at the top of the page.

All the other members of the site are listed below.

If you would like to see who blogged most recently, click on the 'last updated' heading. The blogs will be displayed with the most recent entries first.

Click the name of the person whose blog you would like to read.

You will see all this person's blog entries, with the most recent entry at the top of the page.

If there are any comments on a entry, you will be able to read them by clicking on the 'comments' link below the entry. This will display all the comments on this blog entry.

### **Adding a comment to a blog entry**

You may wish to respond to an entry someone else has made in their blog.

To add a comment to a blog entry, click the 'leave a comment' link.

Write your comment in the box that appears, and then click 'publish comment'.

If you change your mind about leaving a comment, click 'cancel'.

### **RSS feeds of blogs**

To get an RSS feed of someone's blog, click on the RSS icon beside their name in the 'all the blogs' page.

Comments on blogs will not display in the RSS feed.

(This should link to something about What is RSS somewhere in the Sakai help?)

### **Adding a blog entry**

To add an entry to your blog, click the 'add blog entry' button in the actions bar.

You will then see the 'add a new blog entry' screen.

Type your entry in the text box, using the icons to format it. You can include a picture by clicking the 'Insert / Edit Image' icon (the picture will need to be already uploaded to the site). You may wish to save your work as you go along by clicking the 'save work so far' button. Give your entry a title, in the 'title' field.

Now choose who can see the entry. If you choose 'publicly viewable', anyone can see your blog entry, if they have the web address (URL) for it. However, it is not easy for people to find out a web address unless you tell them what it is!

To publish the entry, click the 'publish entry' button.

Note that, depending on settings, teaching / admin staff may be able to add entries to other people's blogs.

### **Editing a blog entry & changing availability**

To edit a blog entry you made, or to change who can see it, go to your own blog (by clicking the 'My Blog' link from the tool's home page).

Find the entry you wish to edit and click the 'edit entry' link beneath it.

You will see your entry displayed in an editable format. Make your changes, and click the 'publish entry' settings

Note that, depending on settings, teaching / admin staff may be able to edit entries in other people's blogs.

### **Removing a blog entry**

To remove a blog entry you made, or to change who can see it, go to your own blog (by clicking the 'My Blog' link from the tool's home page).

Find the entry you wish to edit and click the 'remove entry' link beneath it.

Note that, depending on settings, teaching / admin staff may be able to remove entries in other people's blogs.

### **Editing and removing comments**

Other people can comment on your blog. At the moment, you can't edit or remove their comments.

### **Editing your profile and picture**

Your blog profile and picture appear in the right-hand column beside your blog. This is a description of yourself, perhaps talking about your particular interests in your course, or your research interests. You can also include a photo of yourself.

To set your profile, click the 'my blog settings' link in the actions bar.

Enter your profile description in the text box. You can format the text using the icons above the text box.

If you would like to display a photo of yourself, you will need to have already uploaded it into Sakai. You might want to put your photo into the Resources area of MyWorkspace. Get the web address (URL) of the photo. (You can do this by clicking on 'edit details' link for the photo once you have uploaded it; the web address will be displayed at the bottom of the page.)

Paste the web address of your picture into the field labelled 'URL for my picture'.

Click 'change settings' to save your profile and picture.

Note that your blog profile is not the same as your standard Sakai profile.

If you have blogs in more than one Sakai site, you will need to set your profile individually in each site.