WRITING A BLOG POST:
A GUIDE

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WHAT WILL THIS GUIDE TEACH YOU?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

1. What are blog posts and why are they important?

2. The difference between writing in a blog post style and an article style.

3. How to turn ideas into a series of posts

4. The basics of writing a blog post.

5. How to turn your posts into effective tools to garner repeat readers.

6. How to upload your posts to WordPress.

WHAT IS A BLOG POST?

PURPOSE:

- Informs and entertains the reader.

- Branding: Helps the reader learn what GIS is about. Sets the business out as a contemporary, consumer-driven organisation and helps demonstrate its '4 Corners' philosophy. This helps establish GIS as a relevant and reputable source.

MARKETING:

- Creates exposure. Producing blog content increases the number of social media posts and chances of being discovered by target audiences.

- Builds Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) ranking. Consistent flows of uploads continue the brand's presence online and increase the probability that GIS's website will be made visible on search engines.

OBJECTIVES:

- Reader retention: Keep visitors on the site for as long as possible. Interesting content encourages visitors to read more posts and build trust in the brand.

- Lead generation: Turn visitors into subscribers or returning readers through consistently producing high quality content.

Note for blog post authors: It is important that you enjoy what you're writing about to some extent. Business is important, but if you're stuck on the technicalities the business won't produce content. Follow your personal interests or read around and see what piques your interest. It is likely there will be a way to make it relevant to the business' objectives.

WHAT DISTINGUISHES A BLOG FROM AN ARTICLE?

	BLOG POSTS	ARTICLES
PURPOSE	To keep a visitor on the site for as long as possible. To keep them hopping around from post to post using internal and external links (keywords will also be valuable for this). Lead generation and build SEO ranking.	Written to spread news topics in depth. More focus on informing than retaining readership.
LENGTH	Shorter. 500-1000 words. Needs to be easily digestible to keep reader online and reading multiple posts.	Longer for detail and analysis, providing a comprehensive view of a topic. 1500+ words.
TONE	Casual tone. Don't get lost in jargon and professionalism.	Formal/scholary tone.
RESEARCH	Not based on interview/research. Contains opinions, tips, lessons, and tools etc. Can include facts and information, but personality and opinion is central.	Written to convey facts, information, news. Fact based and relies on interviews, research, explanation and analysis.
OPINIONS	Mostly own opinion.	No personal opinions.
SEO	SEO keywords important.	SEO less important
PERSPECTIVE	First person.	Second/third person
IMAGES	One or more images.	Graphs, stats and images

BEFORE YOU WRITE

CHOOSING THE RIGHT TOPIC

Your topic should be able to, in some way, link to one or more of GIS' 4 Corners theory: Economy, Technology, Environment or Wellbeing.

Brainstorming may help you identify some other topics of interest. For example, you may be interested in politics, gaming, travel, fashion, nature, music, finances, or exercise.

Most topics can be made relevant to GIS' 4 Corners and are suitable for blog posts.

Brainstorm specific interests within these identified areas:

1. Exercise: You might have gone through a fitness journey and could discuss how fitness has affected your wellbeing.

2. Gaming: You might really enjoy a particular franchise e.g. Mario. You could discuss what it's progression can teach us about graphics technology and its future.

3. Nature: You could discuss how urbanisation is impacting on your favourite wildlife.

4. Finances: You might be intrigued by the emergence of non-fungible tokens (NFTs). You could discuss their impact on various aspects of the economy.

Read up on current events and recent news stories. e.g. upcoming Environment Conferences; New Financial Schemes; the release of a new type of technology.

Check out these News sources/blogs for 4 Corners related topics:

- **ENVIRONMENT:** National Geographic; NASA; Grist; CleanTechnica

- **ECONOMY:** Bloomberg; The Wall Street Journal; The Economist; Financial Times; Forbes

- **TECHNOLOGY:** TechCrunch; Cnet; Wired; ArsTechnica, Vox Recode, The Verge

- **WELLBEING:** Medical News Today; Healthline; ScienceDaily; World Health Organisation

Remember: Check out the technology, economy, environment and wellbeing sections of mainstream media websites such as Reuters, The Guardian, BBC News etc.

Remember: You don't have to agree with these posts. They are there to indicate current, and therefore valuable, talking points.

STUCK FOR IDEAS?:

- Write about annual festivals, such as Halloween, Easter, Black Friday (wasteful consumption), "New Year, New Me", Christmas (e.g the role of pine trees in the ecosystem).

- See what others are writing about. Search for "environment blog" "economy blog" etc ...

Still stuck for ideas? Google Trends can help identify currently trending topics.

TOPICS TO AVOID:

- Topics that veer away from the 4 Corners.

- Controversial topics: Controversial topics should be avoided for branding reasons. At GIS, Margaret will determine whether a topic is considered too controversial for her website.

Remember: Be mindful of GIS' plans. For example, GIS wants to build relations with a Moscow University, Russia.

APPROACHING YOUR TOPIC

WRITING UNIQUE CONTENT

Consider unique ways you can approach your topics. Not every post has to be of an essay like structure.

Alternatives to a block of text: (Implementing various formats creates interest for the reader and may make creating your posts easier and more interesting for yourself.)

1. **How to** ... formats.

- "How to secure your information online"; "How to use the stock market"; "How to repurpose your old [insert old item here]."

2. **Curated lists,** e.g. recommendations.

- "5 most useful technologies to get your hands on in 2022."

3. **Tips and advice**

- "How to make the most of your time off work."

4. **Definition based posts.** Explaining meanings of jargonistic terminology.

- "What is greenwashing?"

5. **Myth debunkers**

- "No, the vaccine cannot turn you into a monkey."

6. **Beginner's guides**

- "A Beginner's Guide to Digital Currencies."

7. **Case studies**

- "The Effect of South America's Dry Corridor on Livelihoods."

8. **Pillar Posts.** These cover all aspects of the topic in a single post. They are used to link to more in depth coverage of different aspects of the topic.

- A Pillar Post on Environment. "Your weekly summary of environmental news." This post would link to other GIS posts on the news topics discussed.

9. **X vs Y posts**

- "Facebook vs Twitter: Which platform spreads the most misinformation?"

TURNING IDEAS TO SERIES'

WHY ARE SERIES' IMPORTANT?:

1. To increase engagement. To reduce the number of one-time readers by turning them into repeat visitors. Series' are also essential ways of communicating GIS' brand.

2. Demonstrate 4 Corners theory: Linking topics demonstrates that the 4 corners overlap and link to each other in various ways.

SPOTTING PATTERNS & CREATING SERIES IDEAS:

1. You can explore one topic from 4 different viewpoints along the 4 corners.

E.g. You really enjoyed watching Squid Game. This could make a series:

- "5 lessons Squid Game taught us about money"/anything on Squid Game Crypto. **(Economy)**

- "Squid Game's Sang-woo: Appearances can be Deceiving." **(Wellbeing)**

- "Data Analytics; Motion Detectors; Facial Recognition software. Squid Game warns of the dark side of AI." **(Technology)**

- "Stop Playing the Climate Squid Game: activists critique leaders at COP26." **(Environment)**

2. You can focus on one aspect of the 4 corners, explored deeply.

E.g. You're really interested in exploring Amazon's role in the **economy:**

- What made Amazon so successful?

- Amazon and Paying Taxes.

- Amazon and the Labour Force.

- The Amazon Effect: Destroying Inflation.

- Amazon: Pro or Anti Small Businesses?

3. Easy ways to create a series:

- Weekly roundups of 4 corners news e.g. "This week's Roundup of Environmental News."

- Monthly summaries of content GIS has produced: "5 of GIS' best articles from November."

CHECKLIST; IS YOUR TOPIC VIABLE?:

- ✅ Does this link to the 4 Corners, in some way?

- ✅ Does this interest me, to some extent?

- ✅ Does this work in a series format?

- ✅ Is this topic free of controversial points?

- ✅ Does this idea have a positive spin? (If not, can you turn it into a "Lessons learnt from ..." style post.)

THE WRITING PROCESS

THE BASICS:

- **Word count:** 500-1000 words.

- **Tone:** Casual. Don't get lost in jargon and scholarly writing.

- **Opinions:** Blog posts are opinion based. Including facts with hyperlinked references is fine, but this should mainly be done to support an opinion. This means blog posts do not require extensive research.

- **Audience:** Young people interested in learning more about contemporary issues.

- **Time Spent on Creating:** Maximum 1 week. Because research is not central to creating blog posts, time should instead be spent thinking through your opinions. Research may be required to understand a topic and form an opinion.

WRITING YOUR POST:

- You will need to download the free LibreOffice software for writing your post. You can find a link to download it on the last page of this guide.

- Draft your post on Google Docs. After proofreading, paste your writing onto a LibreOffice file and add this to NextCloud.

- Nextcloud > All Files > Main > Blog Posts and Articles > Completed Posts.

- You can then upload your post to the WordPress.

RESEARCH & WRITING
THE RESEARCH

THE BLOG POST CREATION PROCESS

at Global Initiatives & Solutions

DAY 1:

Select and refine your topic area. Figure out how this topic can can transformed into a series of posts.

DAYS 1-2:

Research your topic area and form your own opinions. Plan the structure of your post, including its sections.

DAY 3:

Draft your post and edit where necessary. Review for errors.

DAY 4:

Post in the Blog Project's Proofreading Chat on Discord for two team members to review.

DAY 4:

Add Links and Formatting. Upload to WordPress and complete the SEO process. Schedule for upload the same/next day.

PROCESS:

1. Beginning with a broad topic, narrow down particular areas of interest. This can be done by reading about your topic and spotting common themes in the research.

2. There may be an abundance of sources in your topic area. Choose 3-5 key sources to focus on. These sources should be checked for reliability. It's good to research different points of views to create a coherent argument.

3. Skim your sources for subheadings. This will give you an idea of some key ideas you can touch on in your own post.

4. Read actively and make notes.

5. Write down any unanswered questions you have. These are points you should look up before you write, so you are better able to comprehend the topic. These questions could also make good topics for blog posts in themselves (and could be worked into a series).

> **Remember:** Cite important sources in your post using hyperlinks.

CREATING A HEADLINE:

• Create an alluring post title that stimulates curiosity and encourages clicks.

• Include Keywords. Use the following websites to focus your headline to attract readers: Answer the Public, Ubersuggest.

STRUCTURE:

• Information and detail are important, but visitors will begin to skim if the content contains lengthy paragraphs and will likely leave the site.

• Ensure your opening line clearly defines your topic and hooks the reader.

• Include subheadings, which should act as mini headlines. They indicate a change of topic or focus, to help your reader find what they're looking for. This helps make your post more digestible.

• Where you do use paragraphs, ensure they are short with spaces in between. You can also use lists, images, and standout quotes.

HOW TO LINK TO OTHER POSTS:

- **Series':** The most effective manner of demonstrating links between posts. Each post should make it clear that it is part of a series. Each post in a series should allude to the previous and upcoming posts in the series.

- **Hyperlinks:** Link to other GIS blog posts using links contained within the text. For example, Mateus used "history of money" to link to Murray's post on "The Evolution of Money." This can be done throughout your post at relevant points. See the Google Sheets "Links" section for some indication of which posts may link to your own. You can learn how to create hyperlinks here: https://www.authormedia.com/how-to-add-a-hyperlink-to-wordpress/

- **Summary Sentences:** Conclude your post with a call to action to check out other GIS blog posts. E.g. at the end of Murray's post on COP26's aims to minimise our impact on climate change, a summarising sentence links to Dominik's relevant post outlining methods of Reversing Pollution. This can link to multiple GIS posts.

> Remember: When you add your post into the Google Sheets Schedule, fill out the "Links to Articles" for your post in the final column.

THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL
DECLINE OF
YOUNG ADULTS

WRITTEN BY MATEUS EVANS
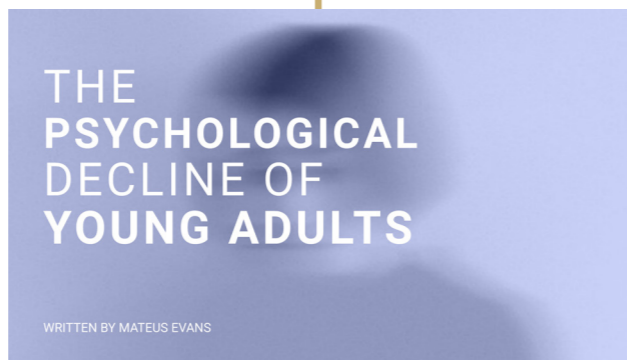
Before we look to the future of money, we must first discuss the history of money.

THE **TRUTH**
ABOUT LIFE
ON **MARS**

WRITTEN BY DAVID McLEISH

HOW TO LINK TO EXTERNAL RESOURCES

References are not important when writing in blog format, given their opinion-centric nature. However, where they feel necessary, add embedded hyperlinks throughout your text.

> Remember: If there is anything you don't know how to do, go on Youtube or Google "how to ... on WordPress".

WORDPRESS FORMATTING:

- Check out existing posts on the website and replicate their formating on your own posts.

- Include the feature image that Fraser creates at the top of your post. Ensure it is aligned centrally and edit the image to custom size 700 x 406.

- Make sure to align all your text to the left and Introductory text should be in bold.

- Add an empty line between your paragraphs and before your headings.

INCLUDING IMAGES:

- For your featured image, and any other images you include, use stock images from free image sites.

- Find some free image sites listed here: Unsplash, Pexels, unDraw, LifeOfPix, Gratisography.

- Images you add throughout the text should be edited to size "large;" they should be centred and should have a caption.

- At the bottom of your posts add a dividing line preceding calls to action in bold font.

- To add a dividing line click Toolbar Toggle, then click Horizontal Line.

GLOBAL INITIATIVES & SOLUTIONS

CONCLUDING YOUR POST

Include a Call to Action at the end of your post. This is an important objective of blog posts. Currently, this will take the form of summary sentences, linking to other posts:

- "If you enjoyed this, check out [GIS author]'s blog post on [Topic] here"

POSING ENGAGING QUESTIONS

When GIS implements a comment section, this will allow authors to ask them to reply in the comment section. Alternatively, comments can be shared on social media by sharing the post. When GIS implements its subscription service, this will include a request for the reader to Sign Up to its subscription service.

Upon concluding your post, you may have come across other ideas or themes that you are intrigued by. If this is the case, you may be able to implement these as another section of your series.

AFTER WRITING YOUR POST:

1. Proofread. Check for grammatical errors. Grammarly is a useful tool for this.

2. Check for content errors. This is to ensure your posts are not misleading or contain false information.

3. Readjust your headline. After writing, you may find that your title no longer accurately describes the content of your post. Make sure it accurately describes the content of your post; it is simple, and

it has the target audience in mind. Include interesting adjectives and create a sense of urgency within the reader. You will learn more about this throughout the SEO process on WordPress. Use this (https://www.wix.com/tools/title-generator) title generator if you need some help.

4. Post your final blog post into the Proofreading Chat in the "GIS Projects" server Blog Chat as early as possible before the scheduled upload date. Ideally, this should be done the date prior to upload. Two people should proofread your post for grammatical errors.

SCHEDULING YOUR SERIES

For consistency, it would be ideal to post your series on the same day each week. (E.g. first post on Monday 1st November ; second post on Monday 8th November; third post on Monday 15th November).

Alternatively, this can be done on consecutive days (Monday 1st November; Tuesday 2nd November; Wednesday 3rd November).

UPLOADING A BLOG POST

Stuart's video on the subject explains the blog post uploading process. If it's your first time uploading to the website, you will need to message Stuart to gain access to the WordPress. You will also need to add a bio, and image if you feel comfortable, to your WordPress profile.

Remember: Don't upload your post until the feature image is ready and you have attached it to your post.

WHAT IS SEO? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

SEO refers to Search Engine Optimisation. This is the process of improving your post to increase its visibility when people use search engines. With better SEO, you are more likely to gain attention and attract prospective and existing readers to your posts. Some points about SEO are:

- Your posts need to be SEO optimised: title, keywords, meta-tags. WordPress will advise you on how to improve these for your post.

- Aim for a "Green" SEO rating (80+). Mateus Evans should be able to help you with questions regarding SEO.

- Add keywords and links: Keywords, Tags and Categories sections on WordPress are particularly important for creating links between posts

FINALLY:

- Update your post information in the Blog Post Tracker.

If you have any questions, please ask.

BLOG POSTING FAQ'S

1. Who do I go to if I have any questions?:

- Katie Hague: Any questions regarding scheduling/writing/series.

- Stuart Giles (Juggy): Technical questions relating to WordPress.

- Fraser Anderson: Questions relating to images.

- Tey Varasit: Anything related to blog-related social media posts.

- Andrew Napier: Any queries on blog post-based podcasts.

2. Who else needs to know about my posts, and what do they do?:

- Branding,

- Social Media/Marketing

- Podcasts.

Don't worry – you don't need to approach these teams individually.

If you keep the blog post schedule up to date, all parties will be informed about your posts.

3. How do I know if my idea is okay?:

- If you are concerned about your topic or series idea, check with Katie Hague to see whether it is viable.

4. What keywords should I use?:

- Key themes or topics within your post

- Commonly searched terms are especially important

5. Do I have to create a series?:

- Yes. All posts should be linked to other posts, to demonstrate the interconnected nature of the 4 Corners' theory.

- The best way to do this is through creating series'.

- Therefore, most of your ideas should be able to fit into a plan for a multi-part series.

6. I don't understand how to create a series, what do I do?:

- Talk to Katie Hague for a more in-depth explanation of series' at GIS and to help you with your own ideas.

7. Why do I need to keep the schedule up to date? Why is it so important?:

- Branding, Social Media and Blog Posting teams all rely on this document to shape their work.

- Branding uses the document to see which posts they need to create featured images for.

- Social media uses the document to prepare post descriptions matching the blog posts.

- Blog Posting needs to schedule a steady and consistent stream of uploads. It is also necessary to see links between posts that others can include in their work.

- The document must be kept up to date so that these teams can work together efficiently.

8. I don't know how to do something on WordPress, what do I do?:

- The easiest way is to Google it. Youtube has some great videos which help you with various WordPress queries.

- You can also try contacting Stuart Giles.

LINKS

Blog Post Tracker

GIS Blog Posting Tutorial

Creating hyperlinks on WordPress

Popular topics and keywords: Google Trends; Answer the Public; Ubersuggest

Free Images: Unsplash; unDraw; LifeOfPix; Gratisography; Pexels

Title Generator

Proofreading/Grammar Checking: Grammarly

LibreOffice