

Standards for Safe and Responsible Blogging for Students and Teachers

The most basic guideline to remember when blogging is that the blog is an extension of your classroom. You should not write anything on a blog that you would not say or write in your classroom. Use common sense, but if you are ever in doubt ask a teacher or parent whether or not what you are considering posting is appropriate. If you are going to err, err on the safe side. Here are some specific items to consider:

1. The use of blogs is considered an extension of your classroom. Therefore, any speech that is considered inappropriate in the classroom is inappropriate on a blog. This includes, but is not limited to, profanity; racist, sexist or discriminatory remarks; personal attacks.
2. Blogs are used primarily as learning tools, either as extensions of conversations and thinking outside of regular class time, or as the basis for beginning new classroom discussions. Either way, be sure to follow all rules and suggestions that are offered by your teachers regarding appropriate posting in your class.
3. Blogs are about ideas – therefore, agree or disagree with the idea, not the person. Freedom of speech does not give you the right to be uncivil. Use constructive criticism and use evidence to support your position. Read others' posts carefully – often in the heat of the moment you may think that a person is saying one thing, when really they are not.
4. Try not to generalize. Sentences that start with words like "All" (e.g., "All teachers," "All administrators," "All liberals," "All conservatives") are typically going to be too general.
5. Blogs are public. Whatever you post on a blog can be read by anyone and everyone on the Internet. Even if you delete a post or comment, it has often already been archived elsewhere on the web. Do not post anything that you wouldn't want your parents, your best friend, your worst enemy, or a future employer to read.
6. Blog safely. NEVER post personal information on the web (including, but not limited to, last names, personal details including address or phone numbers, or photographs). (Note: The advice to not use your last name is for your protection. Teachers may choose to use their last names for their posts/comments.) Do not, under any circumstances, agree to meet someone you have met over the Internet.
7. Because your login to the blogging site is typically linked to your profile, any personal blog you create in class is directly linked to your class blog and must follow these blogging guidelines. In addition to following the information above about not sharing too much personal information (in your profile or in any posts/comments you make), you need to realize that anywhere you use that login links back to your class blog. Therefore, anywhere that you use that login (posting to a separate personal blog, commenting on someone else's blog, etc.), you need to treat the same as a school blog and follow these guidelines. You should also monitor any comments you receive on your personal blog and - if they are inappropriate - delete them. If you would like to post or comment somewhere and not follow these guidelines, you need to create a separate login to the blogging site so that it does not connect back to your class blog. You may not use that login from school computers. We would still recommend you follow the portion of these guidelines that address your personal safety (e.g., not posting personal information, etc.)
8. Linking to web sites from your blog or blog comments in support of your argument is an excellent idea. But never link to something without reading the entire article to make sure it is appropriate for a school setting.
9. Use of quotations in a blog is acceptable. Make sure that you follow the proper formatting and cite the source of the quote.
10. Pictures may be inserted into a blog. Make sure that the image is appropriate for use in a school document and copyright laws are followed. Do not post any images that can identify yourself or others.

Successful Bloggers - The following are some traits of successful bloggers:

1. Their posts (or comments) are well written. This includes not only good content, but – because these are school-related blogs – also follows writing conventions including spelling, grammar and punctuation.
2. Their posts (or comments) are responsive. They respond to other people's ideas – whether it is a post by a teacher, a comment by a student, or an idea elsewhere on the Internet. The power of blogs is in their connectedness – they are connected to a larger community of ideas. Participate in that community.
3. Their posts (or comments) include textual references to support their opinions. Adding quotes or links to other works strengthens their response.
4. They participate frequently. To be part of the dialogue, you have to participate fully and consistently.
5. They are respectful of others. It's okay to disagree; it's not okay to be disagreeable. Be respectful of others and their opinions, and be civil when you disagree.