Ten Tips for Writing an Effective Blog Post

1. **Titles** should not be longer than 70 characters (including spaces) as Google truncates them if they are longer and Twitter only allows 140 characters per tweet. Think of a title that is concise and provides a key description or entry point to entice a reader to read on. Use key words in your title.

2. **Use keywords and phrases** within the title and throughout your blog post so that it will be picked up in internet searches more easily. Keywords and phrases will also stand out to the reader who is scanning the web page.

3. **Introductory paragraph** provides a concise message of the blog, succinct information which can be utilized when promoting it through other social media channels such as Google+, Facebook, LinkedIn etc. Will also more likely to be absorbed by someone scanning the web page.

4. **Sub-headings** break up the text into paragraphs or blocks of information – should ideally encapsulate message of each section (points reader to your message when scanning page). You may want to think about each block one as 2 to 3 sentences. Try to be concise in your paragraphs. Use key words.

5. **Word count.** Blog post vary in length. A word count of 500 to 800 words may be easier to achieve if you are new to blogging. A blog post of 1,000 words (or more) is quite lengthy. Shorter, concise, blog posts, can be hyperlinked together and may be more effective than a lengthy blog post, especially when you consider that many people just scan the page! Develop your professional, informal voice (i.e. blogs tend to be first person and conversational in style so it is good to avoid being overly academic). Blogging is an opportunity to write about your perceptions and your work in a more informal way. Informal does not mean lack of rigor as you still need to include references where applicable. Aim to be informative, to engage debate. If you can, include a call to action, if applicable (i.e. what do you want the reader to do, if anything?)

6. **Images** – a good way to break up your text, make your post more interesting, and communicate your message but images need to be credited under a creative commons license.

7. **Acronyms, technical terms, definitions**: spell out acronyms, explain technical terms, and provide a definition of your concept/s so that your blog post is accessible to everyone and not just experts in your field. Add hyperlinks to other web pages which contain the details.

8. **Include hyperlinks and references.** A blog can be personal and informal but still need to be professional and include references where applicable. Another feature of blogs is to hyperlink to other, relevant, websites, videos, materials and this is an effective way of drawing on the context in which you are writing and showing that your work is connected, relevant and current.

9. **Author Information:**
    o Confirm your title, names, job title/role, institution, country
    o Website URL
    o Include a short paragraph with your biographical details (70 to 100 words)
    o Add a small photograph of yourself.

9. **What is your message?** Be clear about your message. Be concise in how you communicate it – this is, again, because people tend to scan web pages so how you communicate needs to help them to digest the key points from your blog and, ideally, draw them in to reading it fully.

   Blogs, as do all stories, need a beginning, middle and an ending, so you could think about:

   - **Tell us what you are going to say (introduction)**
   - **Say it (middle)**
   - **Tell us what you've said – and what it means to you (conclusion)**

   Another technique is to ask yourself '**So What?'** as a prompt as you go through the writing process. This technique can be particularly helpful at the rewriting stage. Ask yourself 'so what?' after each section to be sure that you have clarity in your message, have communicated any assumptions or implications, and anything that you can add to make your message clearer.

Blog sites you can visit to see how others are blogging:

- CILIP Blogs http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/blog
- IDS Blogs http://www.ids.ac.uk/news-and-blogs/blogs/about-ids-blogs
- Guardian blog about running http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/the-running-blog/2015/oct/26/how-was-your-weekend-running
- Top Ten International Development Blogs http://social-media-for-development.org/top-10-international-development-blogs/
- http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/doing-development-differently-a-great-discussion-on-adaptive-management-no-really/