

**BLOGGING '101**

**A VOICES OF YOUTH  
BEGINNERS GUIDE  
TO BLOGGING**

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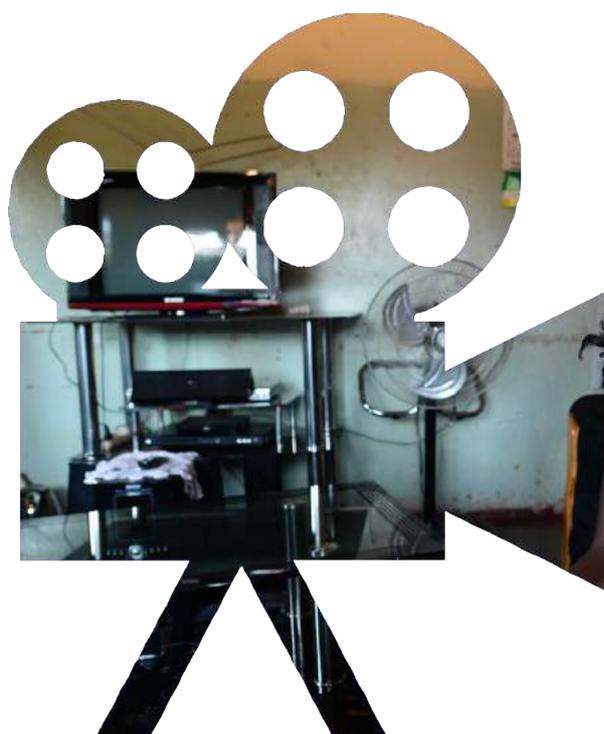
# 1 What's a blog?

A blog is a type of website that is regularly updated by one person or a group of people, containing articles - also called blog posts. Blog posts reflect the author's view or opinion on a particular topic and are written in more informal, conversational language.

Usually a blog focuses on one or a few topics - such as youth issues, travel experiences, global development, music reviews etc.

On the one hand, there are platforms that allow you to create and manage your own blog, such as [Wordpress](#), [Tumblr](#) or [Blogger](#). On the other hand, there are bigger blogs that feature posts from various contributing authors, such as [Voices of Youth](#), [Medium](#) or [Huffington Post](#).

Many blogs - whether they are personal blogs or bigger blogs - are very popular, with thousands of weekly readers and dedicated followers.





## 2 What's a blog post?

A blog post shares certain similarities with a news article - it's composed of a title and a body of text, which is made up of a few paragraphs. Usually a blog post contains an accompanying photo and sometimes a video.

What makes blog posts different from a news article is the tone or style in which they are written. A news article focuses on presenting the facts on a given topic and being objective. A good blog post also contains facts, but normally blog authors focus on their own opinions on a given topic.

### 3 What's a good blog post?

A good blog post is a clear and succinct piece that captivates readers, leaving them wanting more. To make sure that your blog post is of high quality and interesting for your readers, consider the following six tips.

#### **Your blog post is about your view on something**

It doesn't matter whether it is a serious issue or a fun issue, a global issue or a local issue, make sure to express your personal thoughts.

#### **Your blog post has a coherent structure**

Make sure that your post has an introduction where you introduce the issue, a main body of text where you develop the issue and a conclusive section where you wrap it all up.

#### **Your blog post is captivating**

Make an effort to tell a compelling story to your readers. There are many ways to make a post powerful – try to write something inspirational, funny, sad, uplifting, troubling, philosophical or critical.

#### **Your blog post is clear**

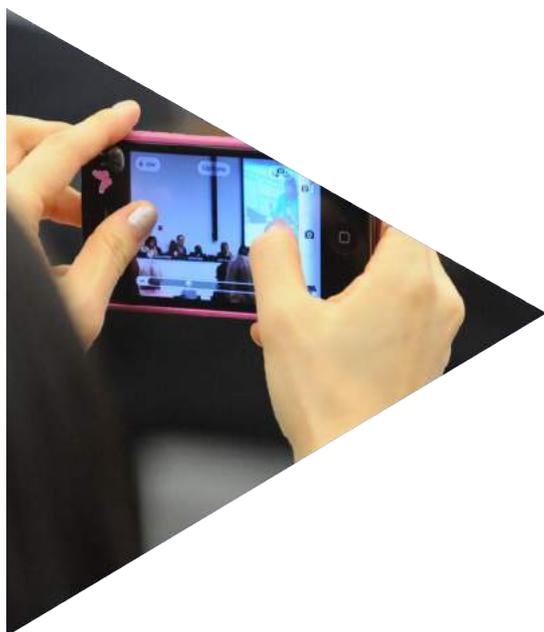
Make sure that your text not only makes sense to you, but also to your readers. This means sometimes you'll have to explain details that seem obvious to you, but not to the readers...and always check spelling and grammar!

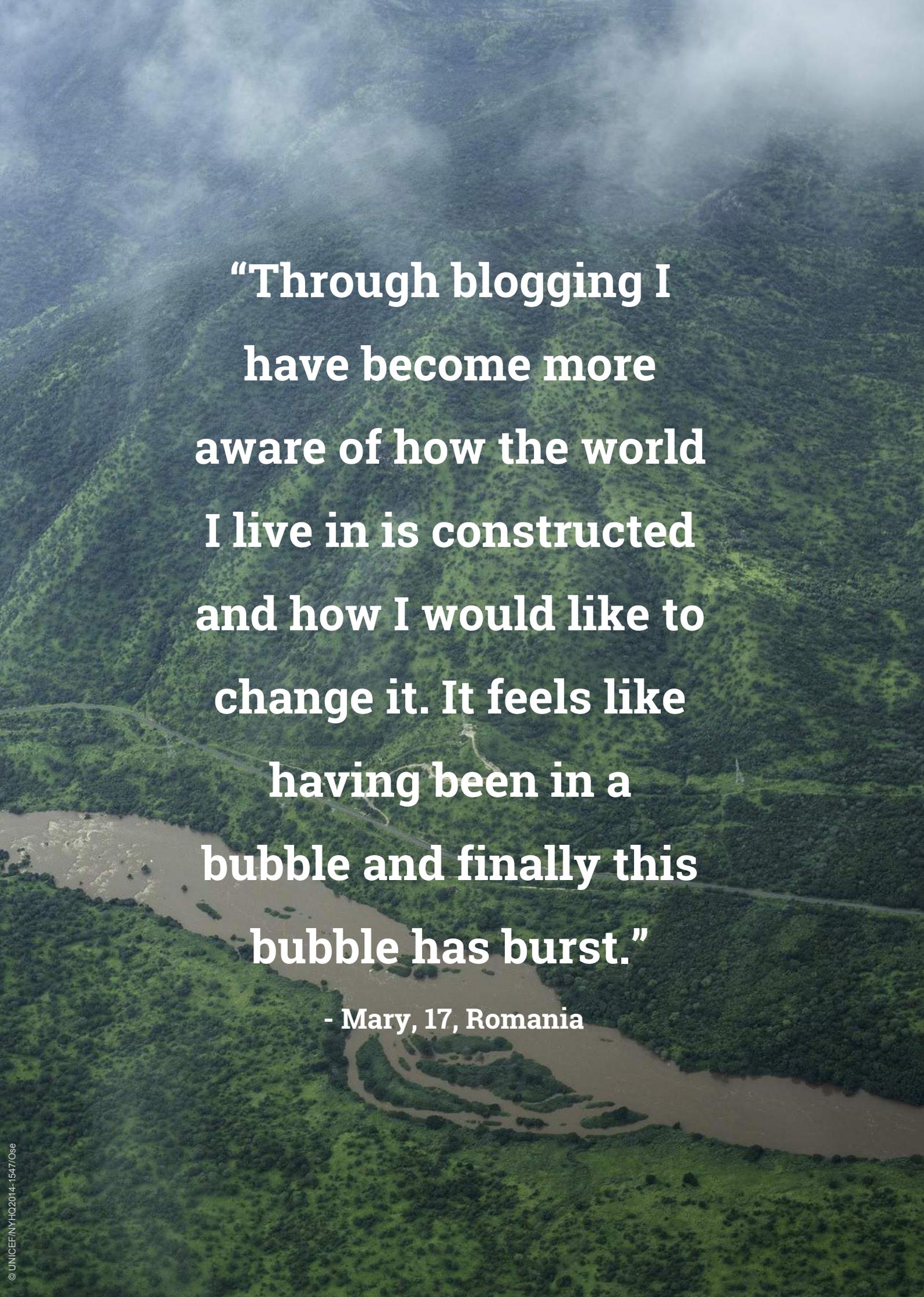
#### **Your blog post is neither too long nor too short**

Find the right length for your post. Make sure that your blog post is at least 300 words and maximum 1000 words - ideally it will be somewhere in between. Poems are an exception.

#### **Your blog post uses proper referencing**

You are not expected to reference every line of your text – please don't! However, if you mention facts or statistics in your post, indicate a source by using hyperlinks.



An aerial photograph of a lush green valley. A wide, brown river winds through the center of the valley, surrounded by dense green vegetation. In the background, misty mountains rise, partially obscured by low-hanging clouds. The overall scene is serene and natural.

**“Through blogging I  
have become more  
aware of how the world  
I live in is constructed  
and how I would like to  
change it. It feels like  
having been in a  
bubble and finally this  
bubble has burst.”**

**- Mary, 17, Romania**

## 4 What should I write about?

Your posts should be about your perspective on problems, opportunities or events occurring in your community and/or around the world. These can be linked to politics, social issues, culture, technology, economic development or whatever else comes to mind.

Write about something you are passionate about, something that is of concern to you and your environment.

When your post is finished, put yourself in your audience's shoes and ask yourself, "Would I enjoy reading this story if I came across it randomly? Does the post speak to me as a reader? Would I want to share this post with family and friends?"



## 5 How do I do proper research?

There are plenty of online search engines available that you can use for your research, such as Google, Bing and Yahoo. When it comes to finding useful information online, make sure the sources you are using for your posts are trustworthy.

Wikis, such as Wikipedia for example, can provide you with lots of useful basic information. However, make sure you review and double-check that the content you found is accurate and up-to-date, as wikis are websites that are open to all users for editing, not necessarily experts only (more info on wikis can be found [here](#)).

Another way of acquiring useful information is by interviewing experts - sending them a list of questions via email or scheduling a phone or Skype call is the right way to go.

Finally, first-person testimonies from fellow members of your community can also be great sources of information.



## 6 How do I properly reference within my blog post?

Whenever you state a fact, a quote, statistics, or a historical or political occurrence in your post, you should give your readers the opportunity to verify the validity of your statement. You can do this by using references - references point readers to the source where you have the information from.

By properly referencing your text you will increase the credibility of your blog post. To be clear: your personal thoughts and opinions do not have to be referenced - only information that can be verified should be referenced.

An easy way to reference is by using hyperlinks. By hyperlinking one or multiple words in your text and linking it back to a website where readers can find more information, your audience can easily verify your sources and learn more about the topic if desired.

Some helpful info on how to create hyperlinks with MS Word can be found [here](#).



## 7 How do I create a catchy title?

The title is a crucial element of your blog post, as it makes readers decide whether or not to read your post. Writing a catchy title can be tough - here are some tips that will help you.

### Your title should always...

#### ...be accurate

Make sure the title reflects what your post is about.

Don't write titles that are misleading - your readers won't appreciate it.

#### ...contain key words

Try to use the most important keywords from your post in your title, for example, "What Youth in South Africa Think About the MDGs" or "How I Stood Up to the Bullies in My Life".

#### ...be the right length

Don't make your titles too long - staying under 50 characters is usually a good idea.

#### ...pass the test

A good test for evaluating your own title is asking yourself, "Would I want to read this post?"

### Your title can sometimes...

#### ...use numbers

If your blog post is a listicle, consider using numbers in your title, for example "Five Things I Learned While Volunteering".

#### ...feature an excerpt from your post

Sometimes it is appropriate to use a question or a strong statement from your post as title - but try not to be too obscure or vague.



An aerial photograph of a coastal town at dusk. The town features numerous buildings with red-tiled roofs. In the background, a large ship is visible on the sea. The sky is a mix of purple and blue, indicating the time is either dawn or dusk. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

**"Blogging is a more  
powerful weapon than  
a gun – national and  
continental borders  
can't stop it."**

**- Murhula, 24,  
Democratic Republic of Congo**



## 8 How do I create a clear and captivating body of text?

As a blogger your goal is to inspire others. Many bloggers have very interesting ideas, but they fail to convey them to their readers. This means that clarity is key. To make sure that your posts are clear, consider the following points.

### **Your audience**

Who are you addressing? Think about who you are targeting with your post - this can be any group of people, such as youth, foodies, politicians, music fans or the general public.

### **Your ideas**

What's your post about? Try to captivate your readership in the introduction - the first few lines of your text are key. What are the ideas you want to convey? Try to develop the main messages of your post within the main body. What's the resolution of your post? In the conclusion, try to inspire others or stir a debate.

### **Your outline**

As soon as you decided on the points above, try to draft an outline of your post. Jot down a few bullet points for the introduction, the main body and the conclusion. The outline will help you to draft a clear and structured post.

### **Proofread!**

After you crafted a first draft of your post, make sure to proofread it several times. Try to be a critical reader of your draft and ask yourself if you managed to convey all of your ideas clearly.

## 9 Where do I find an appropriate image?

A good image is gold for your blog post - it not only allows you to make it visually more appealing for your audience, but also underlines the message of your post.

The best way to get a powerful image is by taking it yourself - grab your camera or cellphone, go out, find a suitable subject, snap a picture and edit it if desired.

If you prefer to use an image you have found online, make sure that you have the rights to use it! Many images you find on the web are copyright protected - you are not supposed to use these images without the consent of the owners.

Images under a Creative Commons license can be used for blog posts under certain conditions - find out more about this [here](#). Images under a *Public Domain (CC0) license* can usually be used for blog posts without any concern, but make sure to credit the owner of the image by indicating © and the name of the owner either in or below the image.

Some databases containing, amongst others, *Public Domain (CC0) license* images can be found [here](#).



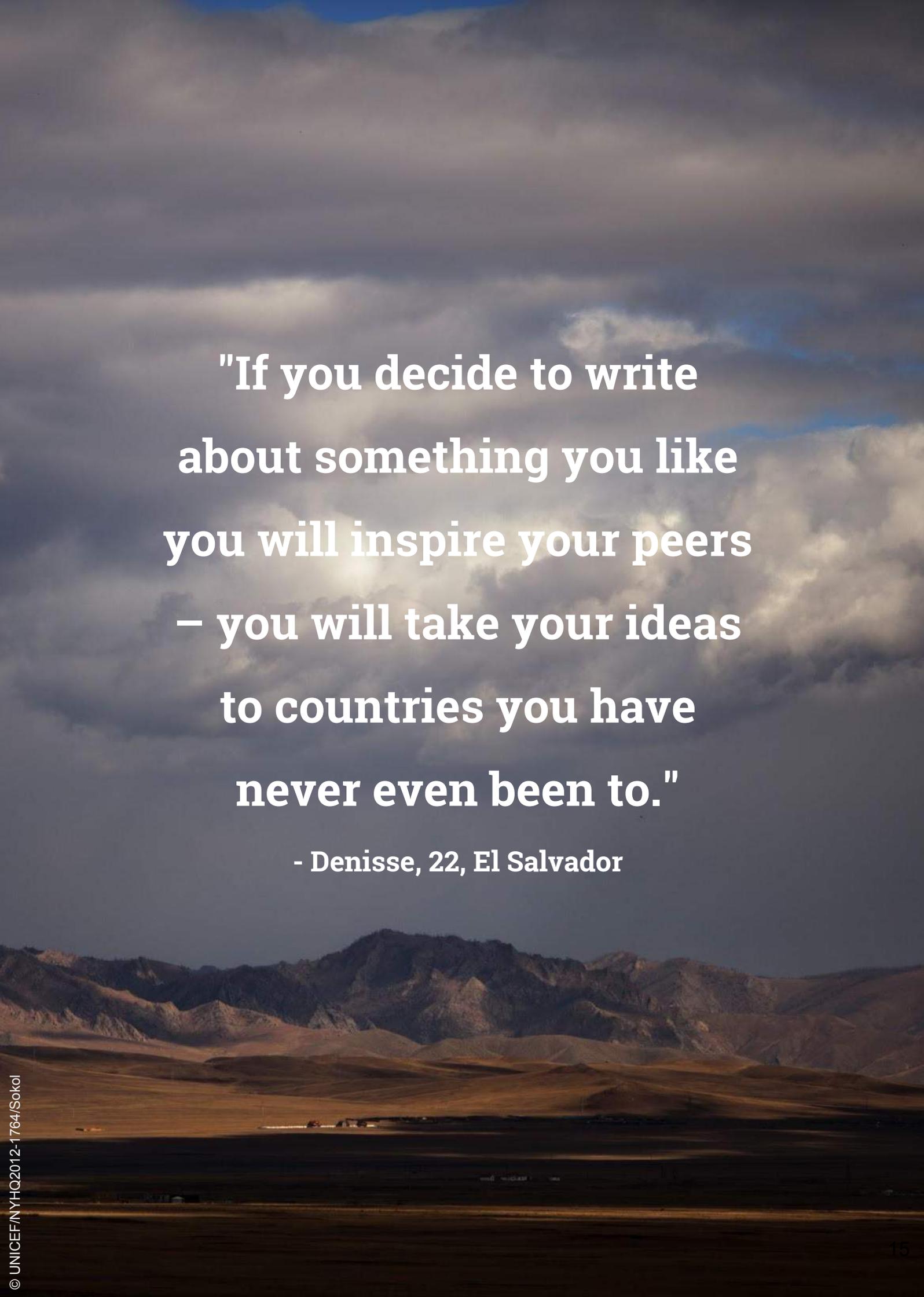
## 10 How often should I post?

How often you post depends on whether you manage your own blog or you contribute to a larger blog that features various authors.

If you have your own blog you should post at least once a week. As long as your content is interesting, there is no real limit to the number of posts you can publish. If you are contributing to a larger blog, one post every two weeks is sufficient.

The most important thing to remember is: quality over quantity! Ask yourself, “Do I have something new to say? Do I have new information or insights to share?” Don’t write simply for the sake of writing - in the long run this will make your readers less interested in what you have to say.





**"If you decide to write  
about something you like  
you will inspire your peers  
– you will take your ideas  
to countries you have  
never even been to."**

**- Denisse, 22, El Salvador**

# 11 How do I promote my blog post?

Almost any blogger will want to share her or his blog posts with the world - that's why we write in the first place, to inspire our surroundings. If you want to extend the readership of your blog, it is crucial that you promote your posts via social media.

No matter what social media platform you are using, make sure you make your messages snappy, clear and sharable. Try to inject emotion in your messages and make them powerful, surprising, moving, shocking and/or empowering.

There are dozens of social media platforms out there, each one serving a specific purpose and audience. You may already be using some of them or you might be looking to use a new one. Make sure that you choose a platform or platforms that will help you reach the right people with your messages. You can learn about the various benefits of different social media platforms [here](#).

Remember that when you open a new account on a social media platform it can take a while to build up a following. See who else is talking about what you're passionate about - engaging with them can help you reach new people.

To stay up to date on the newest trends and developments in social media, visit [Mashable](#) - a leading blog on social media news.



## 12 How do I use blogging for advocacy?

Advocacy is a process where individuals or a groups aim to influence decision makers, be they in government, corporations or the community at large. The process contains a few key stages: raising public awareness about a certain cause, mobilizing as many citizens as possible around the cause, and bringing a joint and unified message concerning that cause to decision makers.

Because decision makers tend to listen more to big groups of citizens than small groups, advocacy is an effective democratic instrument.

Blogging can be a powerful tool for advocacy. A blog post that raises awareness about a certain cause - for example an injustice or misconduct - and is well promoted on social media can potentially reach and change the minds of thousands of people. A blog post can also be used to mobilize supporters for a cause, for example by launching a petition or starting a social media campaign. Finally, in the form of an open letter, a blog post can directly address specific decision makers, presenting them the common message of the advocacy movement.

When you use blogging for advocacy purposes, make sure you have solid data and evidence to support what you're saying and respect the right to dignity of other people.



## 13 What are the “no-go’s” for a blog post?

If you have read until here - congratulations! You have learned some hands-on tips and tricks to improve the quality of your blog posts. However, it is important to also point out the few things that you should never do as a blogger, as they will reduce the quality of your posts and compromise your credibility as a blogger. Here is a short list of the most common “no-go’s” for any blogger.

### **Never plagiarize!**

Never copy any content and pretend that it’s yours. It’s fine to quote content, but if you do, always indicate the source by referencing it properly.

### **Write blog posts, not tweets!**

Blog posts are supposed to have a certain length and depth, allowing readers to dive into a story. Never just only write a few lines - if you do, it’s better to publish it on Twitter than on a blog.

### **Never be boring!**

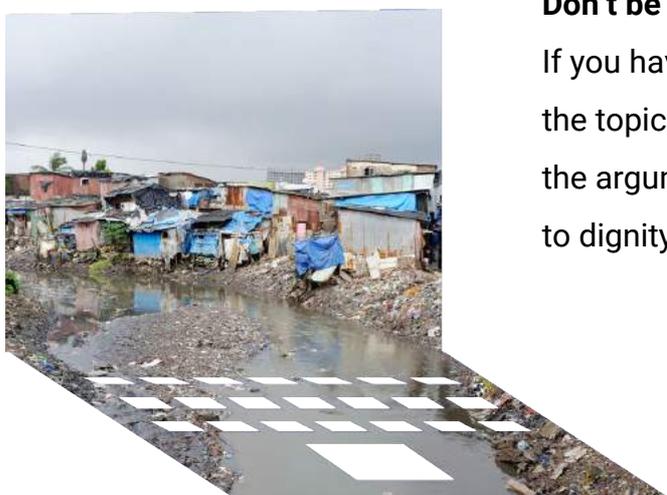
A blog post is not a scientific paper - it doesn’t need dozens of numbers, statistics and references to be interesting. Never treat your blog post like a scientific paper - if you want to write a scientific paper...write a scientific paper!

### **Don’t try to be someone else, be yourself!**

Sometimes it takes a while to find your “voice” when writing - but trust yourself, you will surely find it! Don’t write blog posts that are dishonest or inauthentic. Good blog posts are a reflection of you and your thoughts...and your readers will appreciate you for exactly that.

### **Don’t be mean or hateful!**

If you have an opinion on something, make sure you research the topic properly and try to understand the different sides of the argument. Having an opinion is welcome, violating the right to dignity of other people is not.



**That's it.**

**Now all there is left to do is to get started!**

As soon as you feel confident about the quality of your blog posts, feel free to go to [www.voicesofyouth.org](http://www.voicesofyouth.org) and share them with the world.

**The world is waiting for you!**

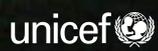
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