

Blog writing tips for the IDS Alumni blog

Audience and subject

The official IDS Alumni blog is moderated by IDS and accepts contributions from members of the Alumni Association. There are no specified themes for the blog and we hope it will provide a stimulating space for IDS Alumni to share their learning, views and experiences of development research and practice. Although some bloggers may choose to reflect on their time at IDS and how this has influenced them, we hope to grow the audience for this blog far beyond the Alumni Association or even the wider IDS community. Therefore, the vast majority of posts should aim to be relevant to everyone with an interest in development. IDS will promote the blog and individual posts to a wide range of audiences via our website, social media platforms and media partners.

Blog principles

- **Keep it simple:** Because of its wide readership, the blog should avoid language which is too technical or overly academic. It should make few assumptions about a reader's existing knowledge of the subject, and should not assume English is their first language.
- **Give your opinion:** Contributions to the blog should express a viewpoint. They should also invite discussion and debate.
- **Be sensitive:** Don't reveal confidential information, and observe 'Chatham House Rules'. Please email s.hayward@ids.ac.uk if you are unclear about what might be confidential.
- **Be respectful:** You should not use the Blog to attack or abuse colleagues. You should respect the privacy and the feelings of others.

Practical considerations

Length: Most posts will be 500-800 words. However, posts can vary in length from 100 to an absolute maximum of 900 words. Submissions exceeding this word limit will be edited down.

Submit your post for editing: Submit your entry to the blog's editors (s.hayward@ids.ac.uk). If any editing has been carried out, this will be checked with the author prior to being published.

Copyright: We will consider republishing blogs that have appeared elsewhere or cross posting as long as there are no copyright restrictions. We will always cite and link to the original post.

Photos: Images can be included but should either be owned by the contributor or sourced as free-to-use. Please supply as jpegs and provide an appropriate caption and credit.

Blog format and style

Why not choose the style of post that best suits you?

- Articles about your research

- Opinions on other research / key external reports
- Comments from events and conferences that you attend
- Views from field trips
- Comments on current affairs/topical issues
- Opinions on, and links to, media stories
- Multimedia posts – including podcasts, slideshows and images
- Top-5 lists
- Commentary on working in development

12 Top blog writing tips

- 1. Make your opinion known.** Tell people exactly what you think, using the fewest words possible.
- 2. Make Headlines snappy.** Contain your whole argument in your headline. Titles that are questions provoke conversation.
- 3. Get to the point** right away and mention the core ideas, then fill in the details in later paragraphs. The first and second sentence should allow people to decide if they want to continue reading.
- 4. Use links.** Support your post with links to other web pages that are contextual to your post. The first link is the one most people click on, so it should also be the main link for your article.
- 5. “Webify” your text** for example, by using short sentences and short paragraphs.
- 6. Include bullet point lists.** It structures the info in an easily digestible format.
- 7. Make your posts easy to scan.** Use subheadings. Make sentences short and to the point.
- 8. Be targeted.** Write about things that people are already talking about online or in the media.
- 9. Litter the post with keywords.** Think about what keywords people would use to search for your post and include them in the text, headline and sub-headings.
- 10. Use quotes and images.** They lighten up your article and make it easier to scan.
- 11. Credit your sources** with a mention and link. As opposed to mainstream news posts, bloggers usually tell where they got the story from.
- 12. Be responsive.** If people comment on your blog, respond with another comment.
- 13. Promote the blog** – by adding it in your email signatures, promoting via social media and by commenting on other people’s blogs and mentioning it, by flagging it up to networks

Authorship and editorial control

Who will write the blog posts?

The blog will be written by changing IDS alumni, although there will be opportunities for guest bloggers - this will keep the blog fresh, reactive and creative. The blog's editors may, on occasion, 'ghost write' blog posts to be approved by (and posted as) one of the alumni. We will aim for a minimum of one blog post per fortnight.

What is the editorial policy?

- The blog will encourage debate and the expression of differing opinions on the issues discussed. The posts will express the views of each individual author, and not of IDS or any other institution or group.
- The responsibility for each post lies with the author. Authors are expected to refrain from any language which is offensive, may be deemed inappropriate or at odds with IDS values. The blog, as an IDS output, is subject to the same [Conditions of Use](#) as the IDS website.
- IDS Central Communications reserves the right to remove, review, or edit any content which does not meet the above criteria, at our own discretion.

Who will ensure the blog is updated regularly?

The blog will be updated regularly by alumni who will email contributions to s.hayward@ids.ac.uk. Alumni ambassadors will also have a role in encouraging contributions or blogging themselves, as explained in their terms of reference.