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# The Biggest Blogging Mistake I Made (And How to Avoid It)



Matt Fish

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Making your first foray into blogging means stepping out into the dense jungle of content on the internet and trying to create memorable, engaging work. This translates into a lot of trial-and-error as you find your voice and refine your writing skills.

**In other words, making mistakes is normal.**

Katy Velvet

That said, blog posts that break down some common mistakes and how to avoid them are always at the top of my must-read list, so today I want to do my part to ease that learning curve for all the beginner bloggers out there looking to make a name for themselves.

In this post, I'm going to outline the biggest mistake I made repeatedly when I first started blogging regularly and how you can take steps to avoid falling into the same trap with your writing.

**Previous Experience Can Sometimes Hold You Back**

Katy Velvet

Before I started blogging consistently in 2010, I was a communications major who had always dabbled in creative writing. Short stories, half-baked screenplays and novels, that sort of thing. I had always gravitated towards the written word and excelled in English classes but relied on my raw writing ability and never took the nuts and bolts of the craft too seriously.

My first steady gig as a blogger was an unpaid one, writing about the biggest storylines and players in the NBA. Because a lot of the posts I produced were time-sensitive, it gave me my first taste of deadlines (usually tight ones) and working with an editor who, bless his heart, was very patient with me.

I can remember submitting those first few pieces as quickly as I could. My fingers raced along my keyboard as I built pieces about the league's hottest targets at the trade deadline, who had the advantage in an upcoming playoff series and so on. Looking back, I can only imagine how much my editor's skin must have crawled when he opened yet another unruly draft from yours truly.

The problem wasn't *what* I was writing about — the issue was rooted in *how* I wrote.

## Choosing Your Structure Wisely

Katy Velvet

As I quickly found out, writing long-form fiction and writing long-form blog articles are two very different things.

My problem was structure. Coming from a purely creative writing background, I would build up these unwieldy paragraphs full of adverb-heavy prose and passive sentence construction. Blogging requires you to do the exact opposite:

Katy Velvet

Get to the point by using small, digestible paragraphs and an active voice.

Barbara Radisavljevic and Camille Brichard

When I first started, a typical paragraph in one of my sports blog articles would read like this:

Last night, well-loved Trailblazers power forward LaMarcus Aldridge looks to have requested a trade out of Portland. A Texas Longhorns alum, widely known for his size, strength and scoring prowess under the basket, Aldridge had asked to be traded following a gracefully powerful 35-point, 12-rebound effort. Trailblazers staff released a statement saying that they will listen to trade offers but aren't feeling pressured to let their prized big man walk for next to nothing. There are rumors that Aldridge could also veto a potential trade if the other team is one that he considers undesirable.

Ick. A big, fat mess of a blog paragraph that, with some light editing, could be made so much more readable and informative. Knowing what I do after years of experience, I'd write the same paragraph this way:

Trailblazers power forward LaMarcus Aldridge requested a trade out of Portland late last night. The Texas Longhorns alum's demand came after his 35-point, 12-rebound effort against the Hornets.

Trailblazers staff said that they aren't feeling pressured to let their prized big man walk for next to nothing. Aldridge could also veto a potential trade he chooses, thanks to a clause in his contract.

See what a difference that makes? Straight to the point, minimal adverbs or unnecessary language, all constructed in active, easy-to-understand sentences.

Yvonne Lynn

## Changing My (Writing) Ways

Katy Velvet

As easy as that advice was to see and hear from my editor (thankfully, I did and still do take feedback and criticism reasonably well), the practical task of

changing my writing style didn't happen overnight.

In fact, it took years of diligence and hard work.

The funny thing is, the further away I got from my bad writing habits, the more I enjoyed the weekly process of crafting, submitting and editing my articles. When the final version was published, I felt a sense of satisfaction. I could see that hard work paying off before my very eyes.

Meghan Madness and Barbara Radisavljevic

The biggest takeaway here? Write as clearly, concisely and informatively as you can.

Yaroslav Solonnikov and Meghan Madness

If your prose feels bulky or difficult to read, you should backtrack and examine your sentences. Can this 30–50-word monster be condensed to 15 or 20 words? Is there a more efficient way to get an idea or message across?

Jessica Lovejoy and Barbara Radisavljevic

In other words, can you trim all the excess fat and leave your reader(s) with just the meat on the bone?

Jessica Lovejoy

Once I realized that this was the larger goal of blogging, I remember by intensity ramping up a great deal with each new project. Eventually, I talked my editor into letting me try my version of a concept that [Bill Scheft](#) did so well at Sports Illustrated for many years: one-liner jokes about the week's sports news.

It was a whole different ballgame (no pun intended) since I now had to distill an idea in the form of setups and punchlines. After a so-so start, the format came easily to me and I was able to churn out 40–50 jokes each week and then select the best 20–25 for publication. For a broke student doing all this for the pure adrenaline that came from the process itself, it was exhilarating.

That column led to me writing jokes for local stand-up comedians, which then served as a gateway of sorts into networking opportunities that helped me get jobs in broadcasting and, later, as a paid writer. Without that fundamental switch in thinking, I don't think I'd be able to write to the degree that I do now, nor strive for consistent improvement like a madman.

Wherever your writing or blogging journey takes you, just remember: clear, concise, informative. Bring those three qualities everywhere you go and the projects will feel like they write themselves.

Barbara Radisavljevic and Mint Miller

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Written by Matt Fish

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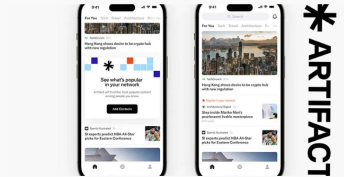
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