

A Style Guide to Writing an Engaging Blog Post for *AHA Today*

The genre of a blog post requires a distinct kind of writing. You want your post to be, first and foremost, easy to read. Remember, too, that part of the mission of *AHA Today* is to help historians reach audiences they have not previously reached.

Issues of tone, length and/or focus, and characteristics of blog formatting are the most common editorial comments. Here's how you can address them in your first draft.

Tone

- Use a **casual tone of voice**. Try to write as though you were **telling the story** to someone in speech rather than writing.
- Try to **avoid overly long sentences and scholarly jargon**.
- **First person narration** is encouraged, but not required.

Length and Focus

- When you are trying to make a point in 800 words or less, you need to **be succinct**. You don't have to cover everything that happened at an event or provide an overview of an entire project. You just have to give enough context to answer the "so what?" question of the post. If background is needed, see if you can add it through a quick explanation (often a single phrase is sufficient) and then provide a link to related web content where the reader can learn more.
- **Anecdotes are good for blogs**. They give an article dimension. If you're stumped about how to begin your post, why not briefly relate a personal experience that demonstrates what you're going to talk about?
- If you're giving tips of some sort, **don't be afraid to put your advice into a short list** if that is how it can best be structured. Open with an explanation of the problem/challenge you're trying to help solve, discuss how you arrived at a solution/process for solving the problem, and then put your steps in a list. Wrap up with a pithy conclusion.

Blog Formatting

- **Link to other online articles related to your topic**. This serves a threefold purpose:
 - 1) It makes you look like an authority on the topic.
 - 2) It gives your readers additional sources without having to append a lengthy bibliography to the piece.
 - 3) It improves the post's SEO (search engine optimization), which makes the web editor smile.
- **Please include images** (along with captions and credits). Granted, not all posts lend themselves to visuals, so this is not a must. But posts with images are easier to read simply because they do not look like a mass of text. Images add visual interest to the whole post.

General Guidelines for Guest Submissions

What We Publish

AHA Today publishes posts on a variety of topics relevant to AHA members and the history discipline. Authors may reflect on current historical research or projects, issues of importance to the history profession, and methods for teaching history. Pieces should be substantive in nature, not simply accounts or summaries of the topics being covered; posts should have a main idea and examine the subject from a specific perspective. The AHA is interested in the experiences and work of members and historians at large, and we encourage submissions for AHA Today.

What We Do Not Publish

- Publicity for books or similar works: While a post may mention a scholarly work, the focus of the post must be distinct from the book itself.
- Sponsored articles or promotional material for commercial products or services.
- Announcements: If you wish to submit an announcement of any kind, please enter it into our free Calendar. Selections for inclusion in AHA Today's "Grant of the Week" series are at the discretion of AHA editorial staff.
- Any content with a polemical tone: AHA Today is meant to be a space for constructive discourse.
- Overtly political content: The AHA is a non-partisan organization, and as such AHA Today is a non-partisan blog. While posts on the historical context of a given political subject are encouraged, we will not consider posts which take a stance on the issue itself. (A political subject the AHA does take a stance on, and which we are happy to discuss on the blog, would be legislation or government regulations relating to the work of historians.)

Technical Guidelines

AHA Today posts range from 500 to 800 words in length. All guest posts are edited; AHA editorial staff will review the post and then contact you with any suggestions for revisions. We reserve the right to refuse a post if we determine it is inappropriate for publication on AHA Today.

If you refer to online materials in your post, please include hyperlinks to them. If you wish to include photographs, send them in the email along with your post text; JPEG, TIFF, and PNG are all acceptable file formats. Be sure to provide captions and credits for any photographs. It is the responsibility of the guest blogger to secure permissions from the image copyright holder. Permissions should be forwarded to the web editor along with the image and the associated credit line.

Along with the body of your post, please send a biography of no more than 50 words. You may include a headshot of yourself, as well as references and links to your professional website and/or Twitter handle.