

## How to Write a Blog:

- **Headline** (title of the post)
  - Your title should lure the reader in.
  - Example: Black Death not initiated by a plasmid OR a moron? Turns out it \*we\* were the morons! (example provided by scienceblogs.com)
- **Format**
  - **Write less:** Omit all unnecessary words.
  - Use the simplest possible word and sentence structure. Aim at keeping your posts about 300 words. If you have more to say, use it in another post!
  - In general, write for an 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading level. When writing on more specific content make sure to provide definitions of uncommon vocabulary words.
- **Tone and language**
  - Use **word picture** (a graphic or vivid verbal description) language
  - Focus on your role and research.
  - Write in a voice similar to how you would speak at a party with your non-scientific friend as much as possible.
  - Try to describe rather than tell. Explain why you enjoyed something and what you learned from it, instead of saying you thought it was great (word pictures!).
  - Don't take yourself too seriously and never lose your sense of humor. Humor will help you connect to readers, especially those who are not coming from a science background.
  - **Avoid jargon and acronyms.** If you use either, be sure to include a definition and spell out the acronym the first time you use it. Remember that not everyone reading your post will be familiar with your field.
- **Photography**
  - Photographs will help you show the reader what is going on in your research.
  - If it's not your photo, don't forget to *give credit to the photographer*.
- **Tips**
  - Always try to avoid being negative. If there is something you don't like, use it as a teachable moment. Explain the way you see it and why.
  - **Take advantage of guest bloggers.** This creates more outside interest when those bloggers send links to their friends.
  - Give credit! Try to get permission from the photographer or author if possible.
  - Try to question your reader and ask for their response to what you have written.
- **Check out these science-based blogs for ideas and inspiration:**
  - ScienceBlogs (<http://scienceblogs.com/>)
  - New York Times Green Blog (<http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/>)
  - Sciblogs (<http://sciblogs.co.nz/>)
  - Okeanos Explorer (<http://oceanexplorer.noaa.gov/okeanos/>)
  - Web Developer (<https://webdeveloper.nos.noaa.gov/>)
- **Other**
  - Always be polite and respectful of other cultures and opinions.
  - A comments policy will be in place. We will contact you if we need you to respond specifically to a comment

## **What to Write About in Your Blog:**

The idea of your post is to help reveal the “man behind the curtain.” What drives you to come into work every day? What does your day look like? The public sees the final product of your work, but never gets an insight as to the process of conducting your research. The aim is to help everyone outside of your research team understand each aspect of your project, and its importance. In writing your post, there are many things you may want to consider. Below is a list of ideas for you to start with. You don’t have to talk about everything below, and feel free to talk about other things. Hopefully, this should give you a starting point when you begin to write, but, if you need more ideas, just let me know!

- The Value
  - Simply, answer the question, “why?”
  - Why should the public care about the research you are doing?
  - What impact do your results have on the scientific community, government officials, and/or general public?
  - What benefits have already come out of your research?
- The Process
  - What process did you have to take to get your research running?
  - How long did it take to set the project up?
  - Who did you have to talk to?
  - What was it like to set this research up? Was it stressful? Exciting? Overwhelming?
  - What are some important factors you had to keep in mind while setting up your research (i.e. the seasons)?
  - How long has this research been going on? For how long do you expect it to continue?
- The Stakeholders and/or Partners
  - Who has stake in the research you are doing?
  - What impact does your research have on the stakeholders?
  - Did you work with any of your stakeholders while conducting the research?
  - What other organizations did you partner with to do this work?
  - Remember, NOAA is a recognizable entity for the public, but the Organization for Arctic Conservation (I just made that up, so don’t panic) may not be. Describe the other organizations you worked with, and what roll they played in your research.
  - Did you develop new partnerships, or are you working with pre-existing groups?
- The Work
  - Who was doing the research?
  - Did you have field techs standing outside in the rain for 8 hours a day collecting samples? Did you use local scientists?
  - What is doing field work like?
  - What does it mean to be able to go out to the field and collect data? How does it help the research you are doing?

- Putting pictures of the scientists in the field will help relay what it was like to do your research.
- Experiences and Stories
  - Anecdotes are an easy way to connect with readers, so use them!
  - Did something funny happen to you or one of your researchers while in the field?
  - What were your feelings while doing the work?
  - Was there ever a time you second-guessed yourself?

## **Potential Topics**

### Energy

NCCOS research informs a variety of decision makers overseeing ocean and natural resource management issues. This topic will feature posts by NOAA and partner researchers doing the science, and the managers using that science for their energy planning and decision making.

### Socio-economic and Cultural Dimensions

Beyond the science, these posts will explore how science is helping to answer community-driven questions about balancing coastal communities' socio-economic way-of-life and ocean resource management decision making. Perspectives featured will include NOAA researchers and their scientific partners as well as community members involved in the design and execution of the studies.

### Technology

Technology continues to play an integral part in NCCOS' ongoing research. This topic will highlight technologies and tools being developed and utilized by our researchers as they seek to answer coastal managers' questions in the Caribbean.

### Ocean Discoveries

Sometimes in the pursuit of science, NCCOS comes across unexpected discoveries. These posts will feature live blogging during the 2012 Nancy Foster mission to map uncharted areas and habitats within the Caribbean.

### Partnerships

NOAA science is better when done in partnership. We will feature existing NCCOS partnerships, showcasing the importance of collaboration for meeting joint ocean research goals between federal, regional, state and local organizations. This may become a regular feature of the blog in the future.