

What is a blog?

A blog is a type of website, usually maintained by an individual with regular entries of commentary, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or video. Entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order.

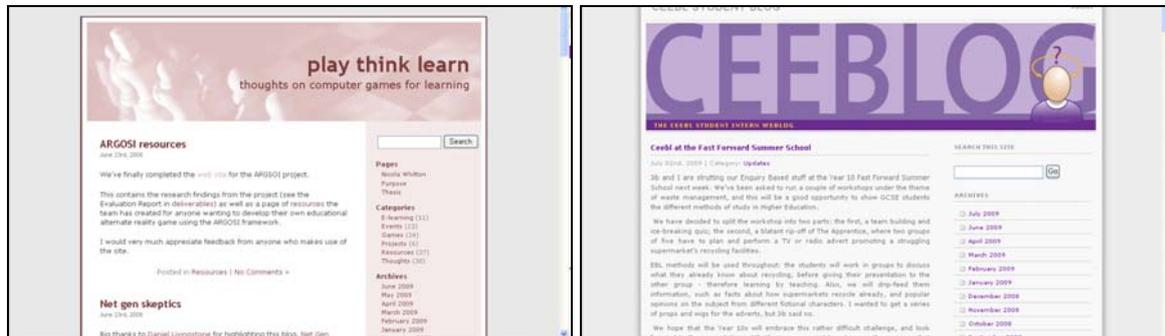


Figure 1: Typical blogs created using Wordpress

Why use a blog?

Blogs can be used to facilitate group working, a number of commentators argue that blogs encourage reflective learning (Chen et al., 2005), they can be used as a diary to keep a record of achievement and of interesting material. The way that blogs are typically organised allows the reader/viewer to re-contextualise posts according to categories and dates as well as allowing the user to use key words to search for posts on any topic. Blogs can decrease feelings of isolation for distance students (Dickey, 2004), and promote the shift from surface to deep learning (Bartlett-Bragg, 2003; Oravec, n.d., in Williams & Jacobs, 2004). Ferdig and Trammel (in Williams & Jacobs, 2004) argue that the immediacy and commentary based systems of blogging lead to reflection and analysis and contextualisation of learning via hyperlinks. They further contend that blogs are more successful in promoting interactivity that is conversational as opposed to other online discussion. Research also suggests that blogs allow a more creative response from students (Oravec, 2003) and that the open and interlinked nature of blogs connects learners to contexts beyond the classroom (Baim, 2004; Halavais, 2004).

How are blogs used in education?

Educators are using blogs in many ways including as online portfolios, for student personal reflective journals, as a record of field notes, as discipline specific spaces for knowledge sharing, as a space for student dialogue and for class administration. To keep up with cutting edge research as it happens.

Where can I get a blog?

There are many free and inexpensive blogs, such as Wordpress¹, Blogger², and Typepad³. Some blogs are hosted online by their provider others require the user to install the blogging software on a server (typically on their institution's webspace or with a commercial host).

- Baim, S. (2004, August). Blogs help create learning community. *Online Classroom*.
- Bartlett-Bragg, A. (2003). Blogging to learn. *Knowledge Tree E-Journal*.
- Chen, H. L., Cannon, D., Gabrio, J., Leifer, L., Toye, G., & Bailey, T. (2005). *Using wikis and weblogs to support reflective learning in an introductory engineering design course*. Paper presented at the 2005 American Society for Engineering Education Annual Conference and Exposition.
- Dickey, M. D. (2004). The impact of web-logs (blogs) on student perceptions of isolation and alienation in a web-based distance-learning environment. *Open Learning*, 19(3), 279-291.
- Oravec, J. (2005). Blending by blogging: Weblogs in blended learning initiatives. *Journal of Educational Media*, 28(2.3), 225-233.
- Williams, J. B., & Jacobs, J. (2004). Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in the higher education sector. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 20(2), 232-247.

¹ <http://wordpress.org/>

² <http://www.blogger.com/>

³ <http://www.typepad.com/>