

HOW TO CREATE MOUTH-WATERING BLOG POSTS



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Table Of Contents

Chapter 1	4
You Need an Idea	4
Blogging is a piece of cake when you have the recipe. Here are 31 tips to make your blog a mouthwatering treat that will keep readers coming back for more.	4
Chapter 2	9
Your Idea Needs a Headline	9
Your blog post headline says only one of two things: “Read me” or “Don’t bother”. Here are six ways to make sure that your headline says, “Read me.”	9
Provide a specific benefit in your headline or title	12
Include numbers in your headline or title	12
Include keywords in your headline or title	13
Include words like “how” or “why” or “you” and “this” in your headline or title	15
Make your headline or title around 60 characters	16
Now, that’s a headline!	17
CHAPTER 3	18

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Writing Style	18
How you write your blog posts, in plain language and easy to read, will determine whether anybody reads what you write. Here is how to keep people reading.	18
Write your blog post in plain language	21
Write with simple words	22
Write in short sentences	22
Write your blog in the active voice	25
Speak to the reader when you write	26
Don't ramble forever	27
Chapter 4	28
Blog Posts Need Better Images	28
Stock photography makes your blog look uninteresting. And it fails to deliver the most important marketing results. Here's what to do instead.	28
Publish an original image on each blog post	31
Make your images load fast	33
Imagine that!	34
Chapter 5	35

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Your Blog Post Appearance	35
It's not just what you write in your blog that counts. It's also what your blog looks like.	35
Create white space in your blog	38
Use short paragraphs	38
Add bullet lists to your blog	39
Use lots of subheads	40
Include multiple images	41
Add Pre-fab tweets for Twitter sharing	42
How to make your blog post look mouth-watering	42

Chapter 1

You Need an Idea

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



Blogging is a piece of cake when you have the recipe. Here are 31 tips to make your blog a mouthwatering treat that will keep readers coming back for more.

I love to blog. In fact, I just love to write. And writing is a huge part of blogging. It's the meat of the meal. But it's not the only thing that makes or breaks your blog posts.

There are five main aspects to your blog posts that are all equally important. Let's take a quick look at each one:

The idea is the most important. If you get the idea right, you can be forgiven for typos and even awkward language.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Your best bet is to pick a proven topic, one you know your audience loves. But present it in a fresh, new way they've never seen before. You can't miss if the topic is audience-focused, as long as you don't repeat the same lines they've grown weary of hearing from other bloggers.

List posts work best. Time-tested, they make a blog successful. But telling a story can also be successful, because you can pull readers deeper into your posts. Like opening up a post [with a Jenna Coleman story](#). Or writing a parable [based on Julia Child](#).

Whenever possible, support your claims with data.

The Headline is critical. Some people spend as much time writing an 8-word headline as they spend on the 1,000 other words in the article.

The key to a successful headline is to make people feel there will be value reading the article. Providing a specific benefit is therefore a top priority. The title of this post tells you exactly what you'll learn.

It fully explains the topic.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

It is specific, right down to the number of tips.

It does not include keywords. Sorry, but I'm writing this for you, not for Google. But if rankings are important to you, so are keywords.

In the image in Chapter 2, we suggest some words that draw in readers. You can't include them all in your title, and they are not the only successful title words. So try and include at least one, and don't be shy to use those words in other places that can draw people in, such as:

- social media sharing
- the lead-in paragraph
- images with text on them

The writing is the meat of your blog post. At very least, use proper spelling and grammar.

Write in plain English, so that people can actually understand what you have to say without having to work at it. Use short sentences and paragraphs. Use short and common words. Speak to the reader in the active voice:

- **Like this:** Write for the reader.
- **Not like this:** Blogs should be written for the reader.

You don't need to write 3,000 words, but write enough to cover the subject. If it takes more than seven or eight minutes to read, maybe you should split the post into two or write an eBook instead.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

The image is what people see. Restaurants know how to get you to order preferred dishes by making them look yummy on their menus.

The image should be original. [No cringe-worthy stock photos](#), please.

The right images will make your blog look yummy in social media and when readers land on your page. The image should show what the post is about, which usually means that there should be text in the image. It should be able to stand on its own in social media (so that people share it). People are drawn to faces, so try to include them in your image(s).

An Infographic is a great example of an original image that stands on its own and includes text.

Optimize for speed, so as not to slow your page's load time. I use [Optimizilla](#) to reduce the size of this Infographic by 60%. That's better than most.

The design counts, too. This is how the meal looks when laid out on your table. If it's too cluttered, it looks messy.

Leave lots of white space.

You can do this by putting some information into bullet lists. You can break up imposing blocks of text with shorter paragraphs and frequent sub-headings. These things also help make your post easier to read.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Images are not just for social media. Multiple images, hopefully useful ones, also break up the text.

Adding a few tweetable quotes can help, too. Some people use call-outs, with the same effect (except that call-outs don't encourage sharing).

Ready to head to the kitchen to cook up a mouth-watering blog post? See how many of these tips you can use, and let me know if you create a post with all of them.

Chapter 2

Your Idea Needs a Headline

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



Your blog post headline says only one of two things: “Read me” or “Don’t bother”. Here are six ways to make sure that your headline says, “Read me.”

The headline or title of your blog post fulfills several functions, all of which lead to the same thing. The goal of the headline is to draw the reader in.

The actual functions are:

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

- Make passers-by on your website start reading the post.
- Make Google show your post (so that searchers can click on the link and read it).
- Make passers by in social media and in search engines click on the link (and, of course, read your post).
- Make people want to share the post when they see it in social media (so that their followers can click on the link and read it).



Provide a specific benefit in your headline or title

Passers by will read your blog post if they feel it is worth their time. On Gilligan's Island they would read your blog post over and over and over. They have lots of time and little to read. On the Internet, we have lots to read. Lots and lots and lots.

Don't forget that people's time is very valuable...so your title must show that your blog post is even more valuable. Else, why would they spend their time, never to recoup it again, reading your blog post?

If your title can explain a specific benefit of reading your post, it will have done its job. That is its main function: to say, "Read me."

Include numbers in your headline or title

One of the problems with information overload is that so much of it is just blah, blah, blah. Lots of generalities and platitudes, and lots of repetition (especially in the news). It's like ponying up to a buffet serving nothing but rice.

So much of what people read is general and not helpful in their specific situation. That makes numbers all the more important. Numbers are specific. The more specific the numbers, the more useful they will appear.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

So we see that blog post titles with numbers are more successful. And [headlines with odd numbers](#) (like 7, 11 and 137) get the most attention. Why? Because 10, 25 and 100 are round numbers. They might be accurate, but they sound like somebody just took a guess.

But 11 is a very specific number. It looks like somebody counted or took a measurement. They appear to be more credible and authoritative. People don't assume that you added something or removed something to get a 7 or an 11, as they might with 10 or 25.

Include keywords in your headline or title

This is one aspect that a lot of online marketers “get” – but only for one of two important reasons. Other bloggers and businesses generally don't seem to get either reason.

The first reason, the more obvious reason, is for SEO. [Keywords in the right places](#) boost search engine rankings. Few places are more “right” than the blog post's heading.

No need to write on and on about the SEO benefits of keywords in the headline. There is a less-known reason to include keywords.

When people land on your page or see the title in social media, a keyword-based title tells them what the post is about in their own language. This is important.

They will read an article that tells them what they want to read.

They will click on a link that promises what they want to read.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

How do you know it's what they want to read? How will they know it's what they want to read? Because you used their language, the words they use to search for content. That's the power of keywords.

POP QUIZ!

If people are searching for “wallpaper ideas”, which of the following headlines will get them reading and clicking most?

- Creative spring wall covering ideas
- Creative spring home décor ideas
- Creative spring wallpaper ideas
- Creative spring beached whale rescue ideas

This principle is not just about blog posts. In my media relations days, I kept watch for news releases related to issues I was dealing with.

Some news releases had very straightforward titles. They said exactly what was being announced. A busy reporter could quickly scan the title to decide if he or she wanted to cover the story.

Other news releases had very cute titles. Yes, the writers were very clever, loved puns and were sure that their news releases would stand out from all the others because of their clever titles.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

But a busy reporter would have no idea what the story was about, so they had no motivation to read the release. It was news releases like those that kept wastepaper baskets gainfully employed.

No need to keep the “delete” button gainfully employed. Use the searcher’s language in your title, so that they will want to click.

Include words like “how” or “why” or “you” and “this” in your headline or title

There are certain words that catch people’s attention and [promise a benefit for reading](#), no matter what the topic.

“You” is a magic word. It promises to provide something related to the reader. It speaks to the reader. The reader is the center of the reader’s universe, so make them the center of your headline.

“How” and “why” instantly tell a reader that there is something useful to read. “What” can be equally powerful.

“How” gives very practical information. It tells readers that by the end of the post, they should be able to do something. They will have a new skill.

“Why” helps them understand the reasons behind decisions or options. It helps people make better decisions.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Together, “how” and “why” are powerful words that promise concrete benefits.

“What” can tell them what they need to do, what they need to know or what is happening (so they stay informed).

“This” tells them there is something specific. It’s like pointing the way for them.

SPOILER ALERT. In this six-part series, note that I start the headlines with “what” once and “why” once.

Make your headline or title around 60 characters

There is an [optimal length for a headline or title](#).

Too short, and people might assume that the article is not substantive. Plus, a short title can’t convey what’s in an article as easily as a longer title. A title is, after all, a summary of sorts.

Too long, and people yawn before they get to the end.

At 60 characters, you should be about 12 words. The latest research shows that longer titles, 15 to 17 words long, attract more links.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

So, there are varying factors in choosing the title length. My advice will always be to write the title that will be of most interest to readers, never mind advice or data about the “ideal” length. Just remember that titles over 60 characters might get truncated in search engine listings. So you should make sure any critical words remain within 60 characters.

Now, that’s a headline!

Many people spend as much time tweaking their title as they do writing their blog post. This might be overdoing it, or at least over-thinking it. But the headline is by far the most important part of your blog post.

So take the time to do it right, and apply these six steps as often as possible.

Need help? [Let us write your blog posts.](#)

CHAPTER 3

Writing Style

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



How you write your blog posts, in plain language and easy to read, will determine whether anybody reads what you write. Here is how to keep people reading.

How you write is not as important as what you write. For instance, the quality of your writing is not as important as the what your headline says.

But if you come up with the best idea for a blog post and give it the most deliciously seductive headline, all that work will be wasted if people leave your page after a few seconds.

Why might they leave?

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

- If it's not obvious right away that the content matches what they came for
- If the writing is sloppy, with poor spelling and bad grammar
- If it's hard to read, with long rambling sentences

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



Write your blog post in plain language

Your top job when you write your blog post is to be clear. You want your reader to understand what you write, and it had better be what they came to your page for.

Get to the point. In very clear language, make sure that they know what the post is about.

To do this, try to write to a Grade 8 reading level or lower.

I am writing to nuclear physicists. They have 20 years of education. Can I write to a Grade 20 reading level for them?

This is a superb question, because you should always write to your audience using the words they will understand best and the frame of reference they will relate to.

But the answer is, “No.” You should still write to a Grade 8 level for an audience of nuclear physicists. They read long, complex, mind-twisting, headache-inducing, torture-chamber texts when they have to. When they don’t have to, why would they continue the torture?

The only difference between writing for the public at large and writing for nuclear physicists is that you might have to use some big, technical words. That’s OK. The in-between words should still be simple. And all the other guidelines of plain language should absolutely apply.

Write with simple words

Aside from technical words that might be needed for a specific topic and a specific audience, you should always use the simplest, most common words. These are the words people use when they talk. These are the words people will understand without having to stop or slow down to think.

If people have to read slower to think about what they are reading, you've lost them. The only thing that should make people stop and think, or slow down and think, are your amazing, show-stopping ideas.

Write in short sentences

This should be easy. This is a short sentence. But it's often not that easy. People can get quite long-winded when they write.

Sometimes, it's because they add a lot of clauses that begin with "because", "given that", "in light of", "since", etc. These words are just a few of the ways that writers weld multiple sentences together, creating a beast no reader wants to tame.

So, you had best tame the beast for them. Here is how.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Many times, these descriptive or contextual clauses are just repeating information you've already mentioned. If such information was last mentioned a couple chapters earlier, you might want to repeat it. If it was mentioned just a couple paragraphs earlier, this "context" is already there. Unless you made a purposeful break from the earlier information, it is already context in your readers' minds. No need to repeat it. Just take it out!

On the other hand, if you had not mentioned the context before, or if it was last mentioned a couple chapters ago, you will need to remind readers. But you don't need to remind readers of all the context in the same sentence.

In fact, follow this golden rule:

Each sentence tells the reader one thing. Just one. So divide those multi-clause sentences into two or three. One complete thought in each shorter sentence. That's how to communicate clearly.

Sometimes, sentences are long and convoluted because they contain lists. Some of those lists are simple, with several short items. For instance, your shopping list:

- bread
- milk
- cereal
- fruit

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

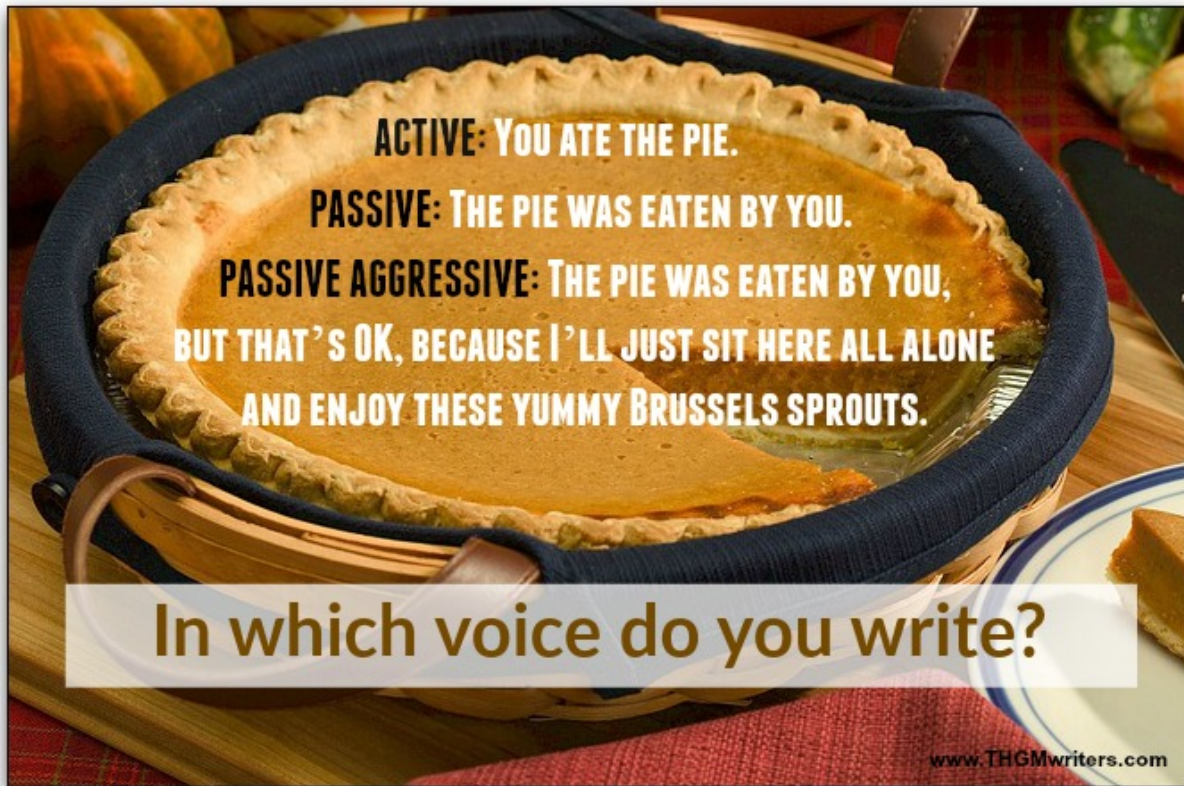
Put these into a sentence, and it's not all that hard to read. But sometimes, the items are long and might even be complex in themselves. For instance, the reasons for [hiring a ghostwriter](#):

- to get started, because you never seem to have the time to begin
- to get the job finished sooner than if you do it yourself
- to ensure professional quality English that is easily understood by the reader
- to organize the material logically, so that the ideas will flow well for the readers

Try putting those four items into a sentence, separated by commas, and read it ten times fast.

Exactly – that's a mess, and readers don't want to struggle through a mess.

Write your blog in the active voice



This is a very simple concept. We learn to speak and read English using the active voice, which places words in this order:

1. subject
2. verb
3. object
4. (qualifier)

For example:

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

- He ate the bread.
- You met her.

Or with a qualifier:

- He ate the bread at noon.
- You met her at the store.

Because this is how we learn English, this is how we most easily read it.

If we use the passive voice, it not only sounds strange, but it is harder to read. We have to stop and ask ourselves, “Wait, who is doing what to whom?” For example, we would not say:

- The bread was eaten by him.
- She was met by you.

You can almost always eliminate the passive voice, so do it now.

Speak to the reader when you write

A blog post is not a theoretical academic paper postulating on the possibility that some organism might have evolved in the Jurassic era.

A blog post is a conversation with your readers. Speak to the reader. Use the imperative voice. That’s the command, as when I said to you, “Speak to the reader.”

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Your readers are the centers of their universes, so make them the center of your blog. I wrote about maximizing the effect of pronouns [here](#).

Don't ramble forever

Seven minutes is tops; less is more. If you run over five minutes of reading, you risk putting your readers to sleep. Chances are you have enough material for two or more blog posts.

Or you could write a book.

But first, edit your draft.

You might find that some of the information can be collapsed and made more concise. Your readers will love you for making it more concise.

There might be some things you don't need to explain, because there is already good information on the Internet to link to. Why clutter up your blog post with other people's ideas, when you obviously have so many of your own?

All these approaches can improve your blog posts to increase the reading, engagement and sharing. But, of course, your idea has to be worth reading in the first place.

And you would not be blogging if you weren't overflowing with amazing ideas, right?

Need help? [Let is write your blog posts](#).

Chapter 4

Blog Posts Need Better Images

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



Stock photography makes your blog look uninteresting. And it fails to deliver the most important marketing results. Here's what to do instead.

A picture is worth a thousand words. Well, some pictures are. Stock photography is worth perhaps five or maybe even six-and-a-half words.

Amazingly, some blogs still have no pictures. Not even five- or six-and-a-half-word pics.

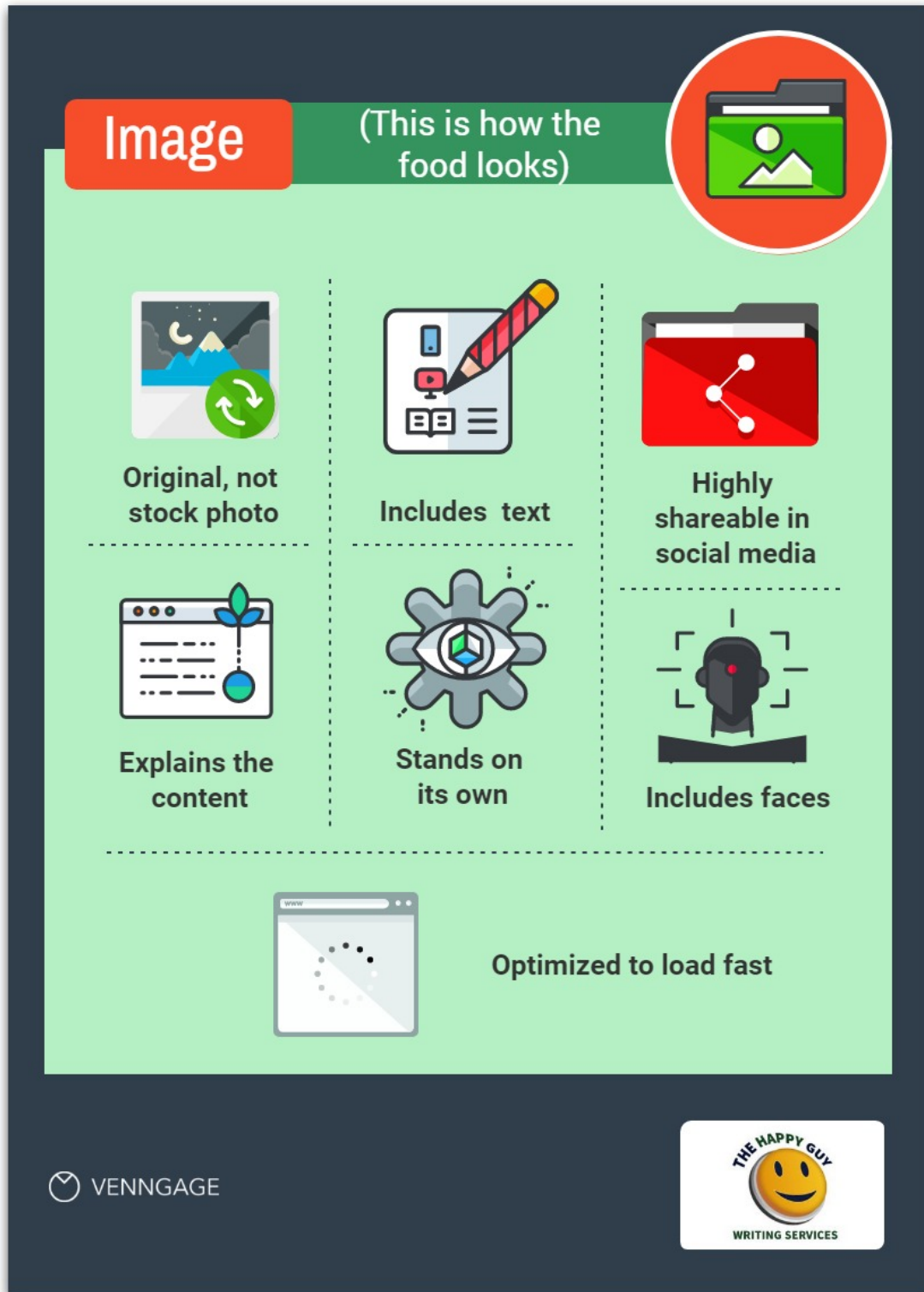
Why does a blog need images? Let's answer that by looking at what images do for a blog post.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

- Images turn visitors into readers by breaking up the text and making it more inviting to read.
- Images convey information to the reader, complementing the written information .
- Images convey information to the reader, re-enforcing key points.
- Images make ideas look real, more tangible than text explanations.
- Images make a post sharable to social media platforms.
- Images in social media drive traffic by enticing people to click through to your post and become readers.
- Images in social media increase reach by enticing people to re-share your posts.
- Images allow your post to show up in image searches.

Not every image in every blog post will play all these roles. Most images in this blog play most of these roles. Stock photography plays only the first role: breaking up the text. That's like going to a concert and listening to a minute of buzzing between each piece.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



Publish an original image on each blog post

You don't have to be an artist or a photographer to create an original image. Most of mine start out as stock photography.

I try to choose photos that are interesting to start with, then look to see that there is plenty of blank space to write over.

Then I add words that re-enforce the key message or complement the text. Sometimes these words list action items. Sometimes they are a quote or a key message.

What do these types of messages have in common?

- They are all original by the time the edits are complete.
- They all include text as part of the image .
- They all explain the content, or at least a key point in the content.
- They all stand on their own, if separated from the post (such as on Facebook or Pinterest).
- They are all highly sharable to social media platforms (because they are interesting and because they stand on their own).

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

And they all include faces. Well, no, actually they don't. Not every pic has to have a face. But we humans relate to other humans. A friendly face in an image puts a friendly face on your blog.

Yes, that's a "du-uh" moment.

The fact is that friendly faces sell everything from beer to books. Putting a friendly face on your blog post, and on the social media posts that people share about your blog post, will increase interest and favorable impressions of your blog post, your blog and you.

In the above array of pics from my blog, not all have faces. But they are all original, based on a stock image that is not among the most boring to begin with.

They all include text as part of the image.

Notice also that they all have a clear, stand-alone message. They make sense on FaceBook. They make sense on Pinterest. You don't have to click-through to "get" them, which makes them easy for others to re-share or repost.

Yet, notice that they all arouse curiosity. If the topic is of interest, you will likely click through to read more.

Make your images load fast

Confession time. I don't always check the size of my images, nor optimize them for speed. But I generally create reasonably sized images to start with.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

You don't need magazine-quality images for online use. They don't have to be 3,000 pixels wide or high. Mine are usually about 650 pixels wide. That's plenty. And even a dozen of those on a page shouldn't slow the page loading time too much.

But, if you have a very big image, it will slow the load time. That will put off readers. That will also hurt your SEO efforts, which these days relies on fast loading.

Imagine that!

The images are not the most important aspect of your blog post. But they can determine the success of the aspects that are.

Don't throw up stock photos. Make sure your photos work for your success. Make them interesting. Make them carry your message. A little time spent creating an original image is worth the effort.

Chapter 5

Your Blog Post Appearance

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts



It's not just what you write in your blog that counts. It's also what your blog looks like.

Have you ever noticed how effective a plate of food is on a menu? Studies show that people tend to [order the items pictured](#) much more than those that are included just as text.

In fact, they tend to order things that look appealing. Never mind that looks have no bearing on taste; looks have every bearing on whether people expect the dish to taste good.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

It's the same way with a blog post. People tend to read the posts that are visually appealing, with all the ingredients organized just right. Never mind that looks have no bearing on accuracy, usefulness or relevance; looks have every bearing on whether people expect the post to be worth their time to read.



Create white space in your blog

White space is very important. People prefer to drive when they can afford to, because they don't like crowded buses. They don't like crowded elevators. They are protective of their personal space.

On your blog, give your readers their personal space.

There are two aspects to this. The first is a one-time fix. It's how your blog is laid out. Are the headers and margins over-crowded? Is there space between the site-wide elements and the individual posts.

It's worth your time to hire a designer to add white space to your overall theme.

Consider also how your text looks. Does the font look crowded? Is there white space between paragraphs and between words? Much of this can be set in the CSS file, and it will affect the entire site.

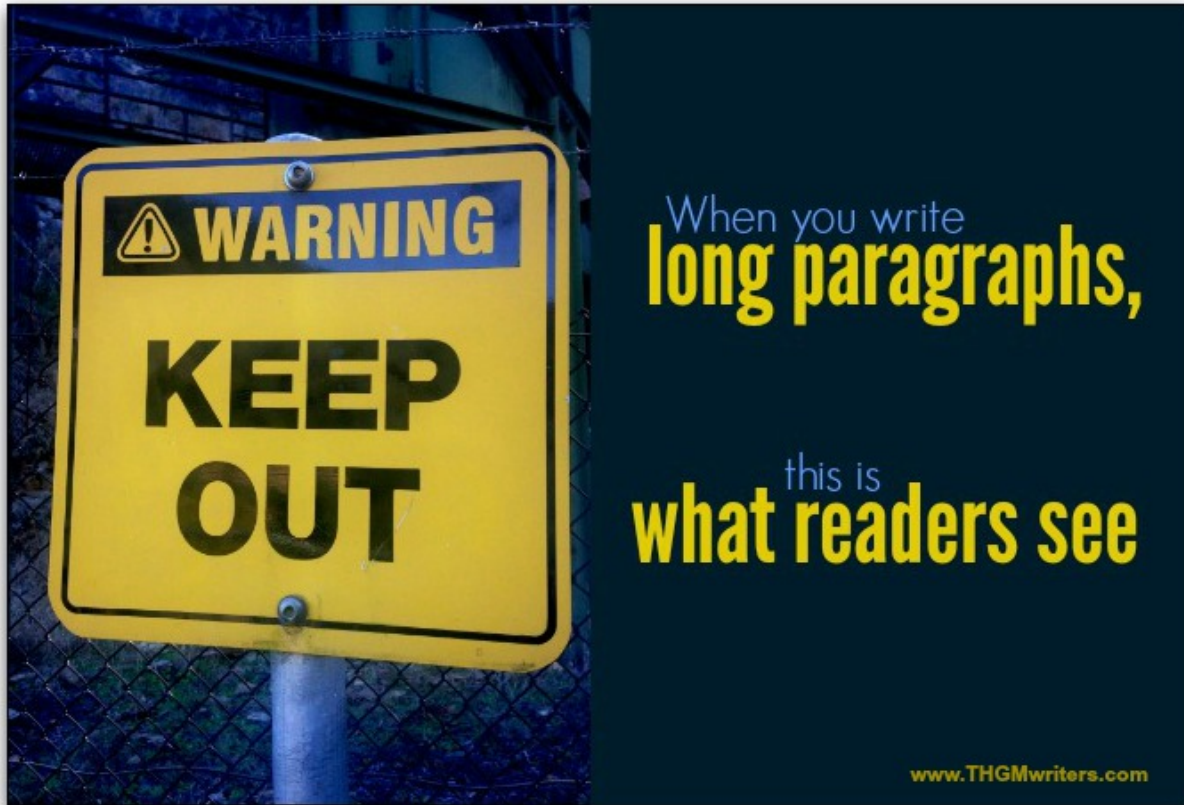
Use short paragraphs

The other aspect is how you create each blog post.

What you want to avoid are long paragraphs. They form large blocks of text that make the page feel heavy and crowded. They make it look like this will be a lot of work to read. Only the truly committed will risk that burden. You'll lose most other readers.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

You might as well post a “Keep out!” sign.



Break up long paragraphs into smaller paragraphs. And vary the length as much as possible.

Add bullet lists to your blog

Use bullet lists whenever they will work.

- Bite-sized information is so much easier to read.
- Plus, it looks organized (and, therefore, less work to digest).
- And bullet lists are nests for white space, making the page less intimidating to read.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

More importantly, bullet lists replace long, unwieldy sentences that not only look hard to read, but *actually are* hard to read.

Fan fact: unless you need the list to be in a certain order, list the items from shortest to longest, forming a visual pyramid on the page. Research shows that readers find this special structuring easier to follow, and they are more likely to read the list (and the page).

Why? Perhaps it's just because the list looks more organized, so the brain can focus on the words and their meaning, rather than trying to make sense of a hodge podge.

Use lots of subheads

Subheads break up the text, creating extra white space. But they serve a couple other purposes.

Like bullet lists, subheads structure your information. More importantly, they show your reader that the information is structured. In other words, this won't be a mess to read – the “cost” of reading is lower.

When your information looks organized, it looks more professional and more credible. In other words, there is more value to reading it.

Less cost. More value. No wonder bullet lists and subheads make sense.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Subheads also allow people to find what they are looking for more easily. Rather than losing people who don't care about most of your information, you send them directly to what they are looking for.

Subheads also give the appearance of several smaller articles. Give people bite-sized food, and they will eat more than if you give it all to them on one plate.

And subheads also have the benefit of pulling in scanners. A “reader” might have left the text, started scanning to see if there is anything else worth reading, then get pulled back into your post by a subhead further down. You can recapture lost readers with good and frequent subheads.

Include multiple images

The more visual content, the more enticing a blog post is. Remember the menu? The more images, the more people are drooling to order.

Multiple images makes the blog post look more vibrant, more alive...and therefore less boring to read.

What else do images do? You guessed it, they break up the text. So the more, the merrier.

Images that convey information are best. They serve the added purpose of pulling in scanners, acting as subheads.

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

Images that convey information are like mini, visual articles. Even if someone has decided they don't want to read through a lot of text, the images are easy to read. At least you've gotten some information through.

And if that information piques their interest, they might end up reading some of what you've written.

Add Pre-fab tweets for Twitter sharing

You've seen them before, right?

The obvious purpose for including pre-fab tweets is that they help readers more easily share your blog post. That's why they are there.

But they serve another purpose. They break up the text and add white space. As with most of the other visual elements we've looked at, they give the reader that crucial room to breathe.

How to make your blog post look mouth-watering

What we've learned here is that the look of your blog post can convert traffic into readers. Or it can drive them away, just as easily.

What you want to avoid is large, crowded blocks of text. What you want to strive for is:

How to Create Mouth-watering Blog Posts

- lots of white space – room for readers to breathe
- structure, so that your information looks organized and therefore easy to read and to understand
- color and variety, so that it looks interesting and pleasant to read
- subheadings and images that help your reader see options for getting your information

These tips will help you attract readers, retain readers and recapture escaping readers.

Optimize your blog visually, to drive the highest readership possible.

About David Leonhardt

A native of Montreal, David Leonhardt's career as a writer began in high school, where he served as Co-Editor of his school newspaper.

He came to Ottawa to study journalism at Carleton University, but changed his mind when three major Canadian dailies closed that year, opting instead to study political science and mass communication.

It was not long before he learned that what they teach you in “political science” and what goes on in the world of politics are poles apart, as he took up a position with his local Member of Parliament, Gerry Weiner. During those years, he discovered the importance of writing effective letters, press releases and publicity materials. He also learned how to handle both government and the media.