

Introduction to Blogging

Finding a topic, enhancing your posts

Final Project

- Your blog, with
 - an appropriately chosen theme
 - a page describing your blog's purpose
 - at least two on-topic posts
 - tagged, and in categories
 - one of which has a featured image
 - a customized widget
 - something embedded via shortcodes, or a form

Finding a topic

- News for nerds, stuff that matters
- A directory of wonderful things
- PC Gaming since 1873
- In search of beautiful things from videogames

Finding a topic

- The best sites aren't slaves to their topics
- Write for an audience, not to a "vertical"
- Don't stray too far
- If your blog is your journal, go nuts

Finding things to write about

- WordPress.com Reader
- Use the “Recommended Blogs” link
- “Explore Topics” gives you the most common tags, is searchable
- See what topics are popular, and decide what you have to add to the conversation
- Use “Reblog” sparingly. Better to link to the article in your response

Finding things to write about - Personal

- Writing prompts
 - <http://www.writersdigest.com/prompts>
 - http://corbettharrison.com/writers_notebooks.html#topics
 - http://www.writing.com/main/writing_prompts

Finding things to write about - Professional

- Start with large publications or businesses, see if they have blogs
- Try and find experts in your field
- Discuss new concepts, and how they apply to you

Finding things to write about - Small Business

- What about your business or process, is unique or interesting?
- Is there a larger purpose your business serves? (A gym's purpose is health. A florist? Decorating, beauty, socializing.)
- Are you part of a community, geographically or otherwise?

Personal project blogs

- What is your project?
- What is your motivation?
- How are you going to learn how to do it?
- What are each of the steps?
- What surprised you? Tripped you up? Turned out great?
- What's the final result?

Using analytics

- “Top posts” - what content is visited most on your site
- “Search engine terms” - what people are looking for when they find your site
- “Clicks” - where people go when they leave your site
- “Referrers” - sites that point to you

WordPress.com v. Google Analytics

- WordPress.com is your only option if you have a WordPress.com site
- If you are self-hosting, you can use WordPress.com stats with JetPack
- Google Analytics are most comprehensive and accurate

Start lots of drafts!

Organizing your writing

Using an outliner

- Hierarchical list of elements
- Can reorder, promote or demote content
- Most word processors have outline mode
- Web: <http://checkvist.com/>

Day 1 Outline ▾

▾ Introduction

Who am I

What will this course cover?

▾ A brief history of blogging

▾ Originally hand-edited files posted to gopher or the web

▾ First blog was National Centre for Supercomputing Applications (1994)

Whenever a web site was brought online, they would link to it

▶ Second generation of blogs were created by applications, then posted as static files, or centralized apps like Live Journal

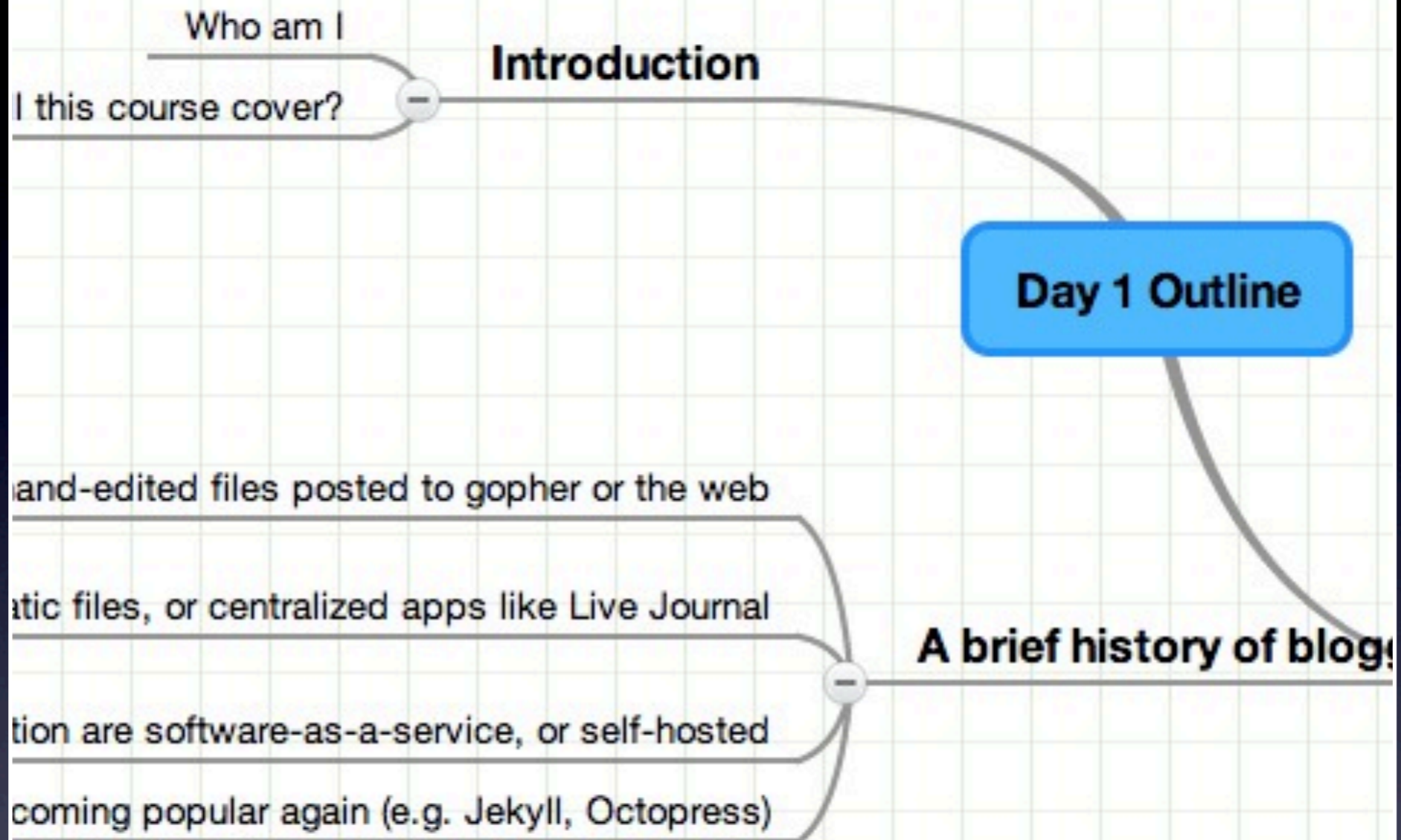
Third, modern generation are software-as-a-service, or self-hosted

Static sites are becoming popular again (e.g. Jekyll, Octopress)

Using an outliner

Using a topic-map

- Similar to outline, but less linear
- Great for visual thinkers
- Desktop: <http://freemind.sourceforge.net/>
- Web: <http://www.mindmeister.com/>



Using a topic-map

Evernote

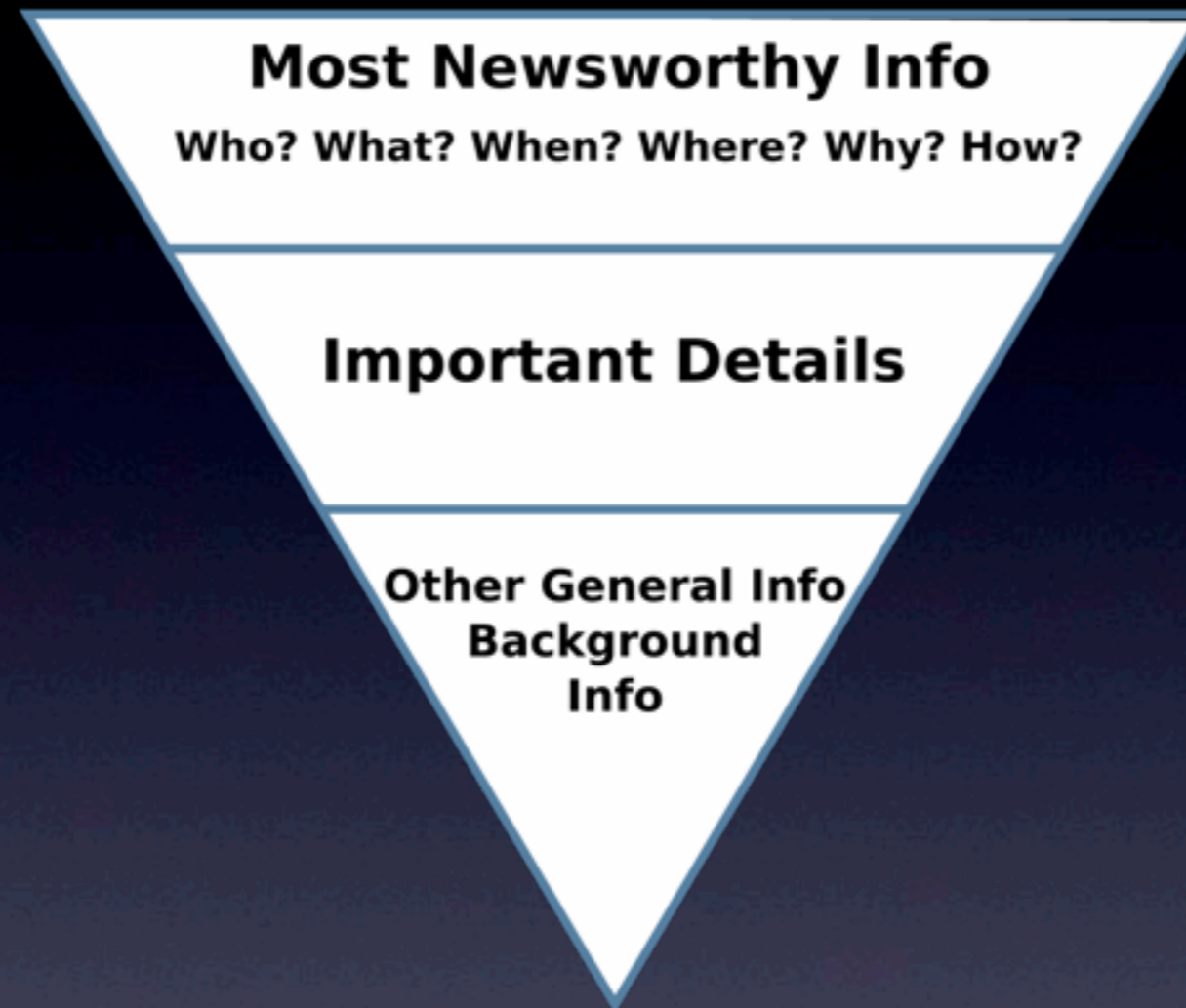
- An “everything bucket”
- Can store links, images, documents, sound, web pages
- Powerful search
- Web, desktop, iPhone and Android versions
- <http://evernote.com>

delicious.us

- Keeps your bookmarks for you
- Works anywhere, your bookmarks aren't on one single computer
- Uses tags to organize (eg "toblog")
- Has search

TL;DR

- Seems to be a sweet-spot of ~500 words
- Longer pieces should be broken up by headers
- Top 10 lists are very popular



The Inverted Pyramid

Links in posts

- Don't link unnecessarily
- Always credit where possible (“via”)
- Link something descriptive
 - Good: check out the gallery.
 - Bad: click here to check out the gallery.

Consider a style guide

- Establish how you'll capitalize headers
- How will you spell ambiguous words? (eg eBook, e-book, ebook)
- Great source for commonly confusing terms: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/styleguide>

Enhancing your posts

Stock imagery

- Photographs or illustration commissioned for general use
- Most cost effective way of adding images to your posts
- Make sure you check the licensing!

Licenses

- Public Domain - usable with no restrictions
- Creative Commons
 - Attribution
 - Commercial
 - Derivatives
 - Share-alike

Public Domain

- Always double check licensing!
- <http://pixabay.com/>
- <http://publicphoto.org/>
- <http://www.sxc.hu/>
- <http://www.freedigitalphotos.net/>

Creative Commons

- Always follow the license requirements!
- <http://www.flickr.com/creativecommons/>
- <http://compfight.com/>
- <http://search.creativecommons.org/>

Editing your images

- Windows: <http://www.getpaint.net/>
- Mac: Use Preview.app
- Online: <http://www.adoberevel.com/>
- Online: <http://flickr.com>
- Crop, rotate, flip directly in WordPress.com

Making the most of your limited storage

- Use an image host that allows embedding or hotlinking
- Make sure it's fast!
- Use the “Insert from URL” option
- Link back to the image host if required

Places to host files

- <http://dropbox.com>
- <http://flickr.com>
- <http://imgur.com>
- Linking other people's images is called hotlinking, and it's frowned on

Shortcodes

- Simplified code that allows you to embed links, images, videos, etc.
- `[vimeo 44633289 w=500&h=280]` puts a Vimeo video with the specified width and height in your post
- All shortcodes are here: <http://en.support.wordpress.com/shortcodes/>

Embedding without shortcodes

- Get the embed code (usually labelled “sharing”) from the site
- Switch to “text” view in your WordPress post form
- Paste the embed code where you want the embed to appear