A No-Excuses Guide to Blogging

by Sacha Chua

A No-Excuses Guide to Blogging:

Summary of 10 blogging excuses and how to work around them
→ sach.ac/no-excuses-blogging

1. I don't know what to write about

↗ Write about what you don't know

⌐ Write about what you're learning

Find tons of topics

Deal with writer's block

2. There's so much I can't write about.

Focus on what you _can_

3. But I'm not an expert yet!

Share while you learn

4. I don't want to be wrong.

R→R Test what you know by sharing

5. I feel so scattered and distracted

Don't worry about your strategy.

○□△ It's okay to write about different things.

Plan, write, organize, and improve.

6. I have all these ideas but I never finish posts...

Turn your ideas into small questions, and then answer those

7. I don't feel like I'm making progress

Be clear about your goals and possible approaches

8. It takes too much time to write

Make sharing part of the way you work.

9. I'm too tired to write

Figure out what you can write better when you're tired

10. No one's going to read it anyway

Focus on selfish benefits

ask for feedback

Get other people to read your posts

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Introduction

If there are plenty of excuses and tips in this book, it's because I've run into those obstacles myself. I hated writing in school. I got Ds in freshman English because I struggled with writing book reports and 5-paragraph essays.

It was only when I started blogging that I discovered that writing could help you learn things that *you* wanted to learn. I've been blogging for more than ten years, and it has become part of the way I think.

You can find plenty of guides about the whys and hows of blogging. I wanted to put together something to address the things that get people stuck. People tell me, "Oh, I don't know what to write about." "I don't have the time." "I'm afraid of making a mistake."

Read this whenever you catch yourself getting in your own way. Look for the excuse that resonates the most with you at this moment, and try some of the suggestions. If you come up with an excuse that's not already here, or if you're still stuck after reading and trying things out, I'd love to hear from you at sacha@sachachua.com . Tell me what you're struggling with or curious about, and I'd be happy to help. I'd love to hear from you if things work, too!

Share this book with other people who are getting stuck. They can find it at http://sachachua.com/no-excuses-blogging .

For more updates and tips, check out my blog at http://sachachua.com or follow me on Twitter (@sachac). Enjoy!

Getting good ideas out of your head: A path to publishing

Sacha Chua
2014-01-31

Common obstacles

I'm not fluent...
Easy solution: Hire an editor. (Fiverr, oDesk, eLance, etc.)

I don't have time to write...
Make time. Writing can help you save time spent explaining.

I type too slowly
Try dictation & transcription.

I don't know where to start...
Brainstorm or collect questions. Answer, then organize.

No one's reading...
Build your audience: one-on-ones, social media...

Harvest the resources you already have.
Check your sent mail. Copy & revise.

↓

Brainstorm or collect questions.
What do people ask you about? What have you learned?

↓

Publish as blog posts!

Answer, revise.
Answer one question. Then the next, and the next...

↓

Organize. Put the resources in a logical order.

↓

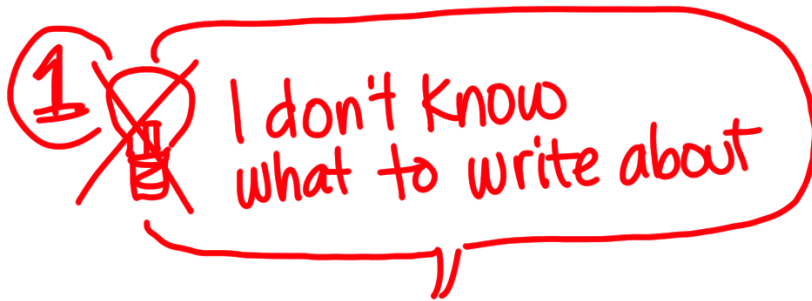**Connect with people.**
Connect with others learning and sharing ideas.

↓

Package. BOOK → for easier reading

#publishing #tips

Write about what you don't know.

Blogging can expand your brain. It's a great tool for learning things. Why limit yourself to what you think you're an expert on? I want to write about things I don't know. Then I can help other people get started, and other people can help me learn. (Hence the preponderance of "Thinking about…" and "Learning…" posts on my blog versus "How to…" posts.)
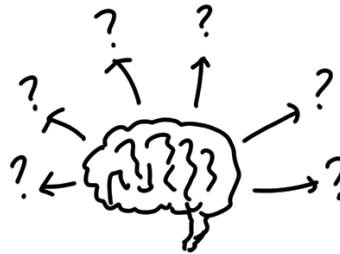
Research lets you jumpstart your learning by building on other people's experiences. Fortunately, you have access to more information than you could ever read, thanks to the wonders of the Internet.

Blogging can help you re-learn how to research and how to synthesize that information for blog posts. It's much more useful when you're no longer trying to pad a school report with three to five reliable sources. Did you come across an interesting post on a blog? A great message on a forum? Go ahead and link to them, no PhDs required. Here are some tips for writing about what you don't know.

1. Make an outline of the questions you want to answer or ideas you want to explore.

You'll be reading a *lot.* It helps to have a framework that shows you what you've covered and what you need to look for next. [Here are some outlining tips from Journalistics. (http://blog.journalistics.com/2010/use-outlines-to-write-better-faster/)](http://blog.journalistics.com/2010/use-outlines-to-write-better-faster/)

Here's an example: my outline for [blogging skills](http://sach.ac/outline#blogging-skills). (http://sach.ac/outline#blogging-skills)

Break the skills or topics you want to learn down into small, specific questions. That way, you can answer each question in one sitting or one blog post.

You don't have to read everything.
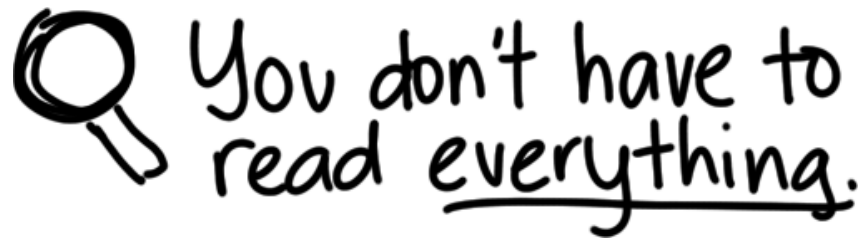
2. Search for "good enough" resources.

Don't worry about finding the absolute best resource. Look for good-enough resources, and prioritize as you find more.

I usually go through the first five to ten pages of Google search results. If people quote an even better source, I follow that link. Sometimes I'll try different search queries based on the titles of blog posts I like.

You can quickly get a sense of whether a blog post is better than other things you've read. Does it give specific, punchy, perhaps unexpected advice illustrated with personal experiences, or is it your run-of-the-mill link-building blahblahblah? Speed-reading can pay off a lot here.

Want to go into greater depth? Look for relevant books and read them, summarizing the key points for your readers. Google Book Search is great for searching inside books, and Amazon's recommendations are handy too. I sometimes check out seven or more books on a single topic and pick out key points for a blog post.

This is an excellent way to add value, because most people won't have the time to read the same books.

You can also check out other channels: podcasts, Twitter conversations, online Q&A sites, magazines, research papers... Go beyond blog posts when looking for resources, and you'll find plenty of relevant material.

Good news – you can't lose. If you find excellent resources right away, then you don't have to write a big blog post. Just learn from those resources, and maybe write a post with your question and links to the best resources you found. If you spend an hour searching and you can't find anything you really like, that's fine too. Chances are that other people are frustrated by it too. Take that as a cue to write the blog post you wish you'd read.

3. Add key points and links to your outline.

By adding to your outline along the way, you'll see how ideas are related to each other and where the gaps are. If you're copying an exact quote, add quotation marks so that you don't accidentally plagiarize it when rereading your notes. Better yet, paraphrase it right away. To make citations easier, add attributions or links. That way, you don't have to chase down references.

Here are Cal Newport's tips on [how to use an outline to write papers quickly](): outline the topic, find solid sources, capture quotes, and then turn that outline into your paper. Works for blog posts too. (http://calnewport.com/blog/2007/11/05/monday-master-class-how-to-use-a-flat-outline-to-write-outstanding-papers-fast/)

4. Reorganize your outline and notes.

Take another look at your outline and reorganize it until the flow makes sense. The order in which you find resources is rarely the order in which you want to share them. For example, you may want to categorize the tips you've picked up, combine similar items, and arrange them in a logical order. You can also compare different viewpoints and line up the arguments for each alternative, then conclude with recommendations. With a little paraphrasing, you might be able to fit the tips into a creative mnemonic. Play around with the structure before you start writing your post.

5. Add value through summaries, insights, and personal experiences.

While searching for resources, you might have noticed an intimidatingly large number of results. For example, searching for [how to do research for your blog]() gets more than a *billion* search results. Why add one more?

You've probably also noticed that many results are missing *something*. Maybe you didn't find a single post that answers the exact question you wanted to explore (or if it did, the answer was buried in an intimidatingly long post). Maybe most of the search results are fluffy self-promotional pieces. Maybe they're badly formatted and hard to read.

There's room for you to add something of value, even if it's just a good summary. Other people *could* spend a few hours reading all those search results and books, and trying to map out the insights from various resources… but if you've already done the work, why not save them some time and share what you've learned so far?

Add your own tips. While researching, you'll probably think of a few points that you can't find in the pages that you've seen so far. Write them down. Maybe other people

didn't write about those tips because they're more experienced than you and they took that for granted, but other beginners will find those tips useful. Maybe other people didn't write about those tips because you're more experienced than they are (or at least you've made different mistakes). Add your thoughts.

Tell personal stories. Instead of just sharing advice, share your experiences in applying that advice. What worked well for you? What could have gone better? This is a great way to learn more, too – you're not just passing on advice, you're trying things out and adding your own perspective. A.J. Jacobs and Gretchen Rubin do this really well in their books on life experiments, and are definitely worth reading.

I hope these five steps will help you learn new things while writing blog posts. You don't have to limit yourself to what you know. You can use your blog to help you learn. Good luck and have fun!

Write about what you're learning.

How can you transform your notes and lessons learned into blog posts? Many people struggle with sharing what they know. "I don't have time to blog." "No one will read it anyway, so why bother." "I'm not an expert." "Knowledge is power, so I should keep it to myself – job security!"
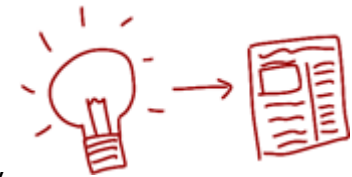
The time you take to share what you learn is the most valuable part of your learning process.

You can spend three hours solving a technical problem or learning more about a skill, but the thing that makes it really worth it is the 30 minutes you spend writing about what I learned. The biggest benefit is being able to refer back to your notes. For me, if I don't write it down, I forget, and I've wasted the time spent learning. If I don't publish my notes, I'm probably going to lose them. It makes sense to invest a little time now so that you can save time later. I can't tell you how many times I've searched for something and ended up at a blog post I'd completely forgotten I'd written.

There's a more subtle benefit, too: **Explaining things to other people exposes holes in your understanding.** It's easy to think that I know something. When I start writing about it, though, I stumble across things I don't quite know how to explain. Filling in those gaps helps me learn even more. Even if I think no one's going to find my explanation useful because I'm working on something so quirky or obscure, the process of explanation helps. (And the Internet being the Internet, I'm often surprised by people who turn out to be working on similar things.)

Sharing lets you help other people, even if you're not an expert. In fact, the best time to write is when you're a beginner, because you run into all the things that other people take for granted. More selfishly, sharing helps you learn from other people. People ask questions that help you learn more. They point out where you've made mistakes. They share better ways to do things. And because you're building these connections, they also pass along professional and personal opportunities. Sharing is an excellent way to learn and grow.

When and what to write

Write early, write often. Don't wait until you've figured everything out. Try to write a blog post as soon as possible instead of waiting until you can write a more comprehensive one. Keep your blog post focused on answering a single question or sharing one thought. This makes the post easier to link to, keeps it (relatively) short, and gets rid of any excuse that would let you procrastinate putting it out there.

Write enough to help you remember. Include enough details so that you can re-solve the problem if you run into it again, place yourself back into the situation if you're reflecting on how things worked out, or share what you've learned so that other people can figure things out (or at least ask follow-up questions). You don't need to answer everything. Sometimes you can skip explaining things because people can always ask you to go deeper if they're interested. You don't have to write a complete guidebook to everything, you just have to add more guideposts to the trail.

How

Isn't it awesome when other people have already done the hard work of writing something up? See what other people have written about the topic. If they've covered everything you want to say, you can just link to what they've said, adding some thoughts of your own. If you can't find a great explanation within the first few pages of a web search–or if you want to dig into something yourself so that you understand it better–then write your own post.

Sometimes you can start with just a question and go from there. Write as if you were e-mailing someone the answer or talking to them in person.

You can also start with a rough outline or your notes. When I explore something I want to learn, I jump around an outline, gradually filling it in with what I come across. When I research, troubleshoot, or try to figure something out, I copy links and ideas into my notes. I've learned that it can be difficult to backtrack your steps to remember the things you tried, or remember the resources that were particularly helpful. It's better to take notes and update them along the way, even if you find yourself sometimes going down dead ends.

Find the tools that fit you. This could be a large text file or document, a collection of notes in Evernote, a set of cards in Scrivener... whatever works for you. In terms of tools, I really like Org mode for Emacs (orgmode.org) because of its great outlining support. My notes are in plain text, so I can search or work with my notes easily. I can collapse or expand parts of my outline, and I can easily reorganize items. I can organize my post ideas into a larger outline. I can export to HTML and share it with others, like I did with the outline for this post. My outline also supports TODOs and integrates with my other tasks, so I can set deadlines, track TODO states, or even clock in/out to see how long something takes.

When you're happy with the outline, turn it into text. To make this easier, you can write detailed outlines that include sections and the key points you want to make in paragraphs. (If you're curious, the outline for this section can be found at http://sach.ac/outline#transform-notes .) When I'm happy with how the outline flows, I copy the outline and start transforming it into my blog post. It's much less intimidating than working with a blank page, and I don't have to flip back and forth between my outline and my blog post editor. Working with an outline gives me an overview of where I want to go with the post, and it can also hold my thoughts when I go on tangents.

The outline doesn't always completely translate into the blog post, of course. If something doesn't feel right, rearrange it or cut it out. You can stash those snippets in a different place in your larger outline, for use in a future blog post. You can move things around, or add more explanations to glue paragraphs together.

When you post the entry, add categories and tags to make posts easier to discover. Use categories for general topics that you write about often, and use tags for specific keywords.

You're probably learning something new every day, so you have an endless source of ideas to blog about. Go for it!

Find tons of topics

The easiest blog post to write is the answer. It is also the most useful. You start with a question, and you stop when you've answered it.
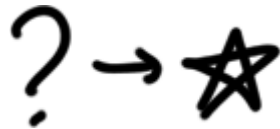
Where do you find questions? In your e-mail inbox, in your conversations, in your work, in your life, in the things you want to learn or do. Everything starts with a question.

Always have questions. Learn intentionally. Make yourself a curriculum of questions you want to explore, and share what you learn along the way. Ask and you shall learn.

You may not know the answer. Write as you figure things out. Share those in-between steps, the questions you ask, the partial answers you find. Show your work. Help people build on what you've shared.

Watch other people who answer questions. Learn not only from their answers, but also their problem-solving techniques.

Don't be afraid to return to a question. The best questions teach you each time you attempt them. For

example: How can I do this better? What is the meaning of life?

Even simple questions like "Where did I put my keys?" can lead you on an adventure of "How can I avoid losing my keys?" and "What would it be like if I were better organized, and how can I get there?"

If you ever run out of your own questions, or if you want to prioritize which answers might be more useful, look at other people's questions.

When you become the person who can answer questions – or at least give a good try – people will come to you with more questions. What a gift!

You can spend a lifetime answering questions. In the process, who knows what you'll discover and share?

Deal with writer's block

Here are some tips for breaking past writer's block:

1. Write for five minutes about anything. Sometimes it's just a matter of getting the words flowing from your mind to pen and paper or to the computer.

2. Tell yourself that you only need to write about your particular topic for five minutes. Just like in conversation, you might get carried away and write even more—but you have to start somewhere.

3. Use mind maps or doodles to see if the problem is that you aren't clear on what you're talking about. Drill down until you find the parts you can't explain, and then work on understanding those better.

4. Record yourself while talking out loud. You can refer to the recording while writing, or you can even have the recording transcribed.

5. Find someone who's curious about the same topic and who wants to ask you questions. Record yourself as you answer, and then use that to write a blog post. You can also use the questions people have posted on Q&A sites like Quora to prompt yourself to answer.

6. Brainstorm topics or outline items. Sometimes that's easier to do.

7. Accept imperfection. Deliberately leave things rough, unfinished.

8. Let your mind fill in the blanks. Start with a list: 10 ways you can ____. Start a sentence and let your brain complete it.

9. Look for something someone else has written about the topic, or pay someone to write a first draft. If it's not quite what you're looking for, all the better – write your own version with that understanding.

10. Take care of your other tasks so that you're not thinking about them. Don't spend the entire day getting distracted, though.
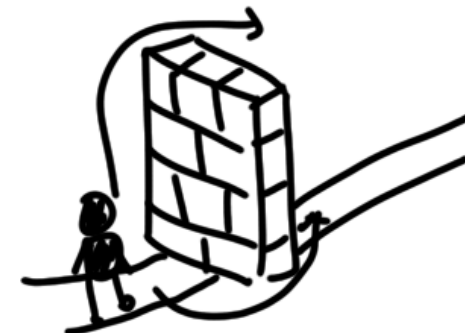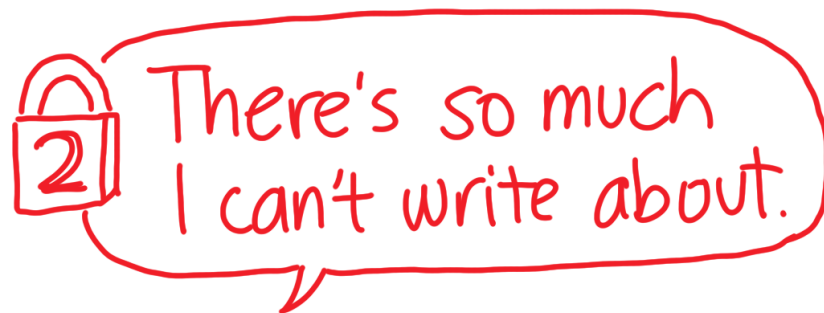
Focus on what you *can* share.

We like scaring ourselves out of complex opportunities. Take sharing, for example. Sharing too much online can backfire badly, so many people don't. College graduates worry about drunken parties and griping about jobs. CEOs worry about disclosure and giving away competitive advantages.

We like scaring other people, too. It's because we worry that they're not smart enough to avoid mistakes, or that they can't deal with growing pains. News articles warn people about the workplace consequences of personal blog posts. TV shows rant about Facebook and Twitter.

The infinite memories of search engines and Internet archives scare most people into silence.

People fear loss more than they get excited about gains. This can screw up your decision-making.

Whenever I talk about sharing, people often bring up that fear. It's a valid concern, but it's the wrong focus. The real challenge isn't dancing around what you can't write. **The real challenge is figuring out what you can share.**

- What can you share that can save other people time?
- What can you ask that will open up new perspectives for other people?
- What can you express that will let other people recognize themselves in it?

You don't have to come up with something universally and timelessly insightful. Just share one thing that one person may not know. Just share one thing that you didn't know a year ago.

Sometimes it's the littlest thing that solves someone else's problems or sparks someone else's epiphany. Sometimes that someone is you, six months down the line.

14

It's not about what you can't write. It's about what you can. As you explore that, you'll discover your passion—what you need to share.

When you're focused on the negative spaces – all the embarrassing things that you don't want others to know – it's hard to see the good stuff.

When you're focused on the good stuff, you'll be too busy sharing to worry about the bad stuff.

It's very hard to share the wrong thing when you're focused on making people's lives better. And if you happen to do so, well, that's part of the learning experience. Sometimes it's the other person's ruffled ego. Sometimes it's you, unconsciously blaming others, or stepping over a line you hadn't realized. The conflict helps you understand more.

When someone challenges what you've shared, you can think about it more. Sometimes you'll change your mind. Sometimes your thoughts will become even clearer.

Changing your mind is good, too. You're human. Change is a sign of growth.

So don't worry so much about being embarrassed. Focus instead on finding out **what you can share with others**. It's hard work, but it's worth it. You'll see the benefits at work and in life.

Focus on the good stuff, and share as much as you can.

Share while you learn

Don't wait to feel like an expert before you share what you've learned. The world needs more beginners. There's value in whatever you can share, even if you're just starting out.

Many people think they need to be an expert before they can help others blog, podcast... Don't wait until then, you'll have forgotten what was like to be a beginner. Others think that all you need to do is to read 4-5 books, and then you're an expert. Don't just regurgitate – add your own experiences and make the learning yours.

Here's what I've learned about sharing your own journey. Hope it helps you gain the confidence to share yours.

Absolute beginner: Yes, it's worth sharing right away! Share your motivations, plans, questions, resources, research. You might find people who will help you, encourage you, and learn along with you. Plus, your notes will help you do before and after reviews. Good stuff!

Learning: Share the problems you come across, the approaches you tried, and any solutions you've found. Share tips, aha! moments. Links, resources. Beginners find these really useful because you ran into the same challenges they're running into now. Share your notes.

Getting the hang of it: Share improvements. Share stories of how you're making it part of your life. Share next steps. Share ideas. This is when you're focused on building competence and routines. You might even come up with improvements.

You understand it now: Share lessons learned. Make an overview. Share tips and answers to other people's questions. Make things easier to learn. Fill in the gaps. Now that you've learned something, now you can see how it fits together. Help others learn better. There's always more to learn, so keep going.

Sharing what you're learning   Sacha Chua

2014-01-08

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Others think that all you need to do is read 4-5 books. Tada!

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ABSOLUTE BEGINNER

Yes, it's worth sharing right away! Share your
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You might find people who will
- *help you*
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Share the problems you came across, the approaches you tried, and any solutions you've found. Share tips, aha! moments, Links, resources...

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#sharing

But you probably weren't waiting for that reassurance. Maybe there's something else holding you back. The more I think about this, the more I recognize (in myself and others) the fear, sometimes, of being less experienced and less knowledgeable than other people think you are.

I've dealt with that impostor syndrome too. When I'm afraid that other people think I'm better than I really am, I work on giving other people as much information as they need to make their own decisions. As for me, I think the best strategy for me is to throw myself into being a beginner, to embrace that figuring-out, to be delighted by the gaps and the mistakes, and to share the journey – especially the detours.

Remember: People are grown-ups and make their own decisions. If people ask me for help, it's because they think I can help them. I share so much publicly, so research is their responsibility.

Give more than you get. I like helping people for free, low-cost, or pay-what-you-want. The feedback helps me validate its value. (I charge more for my time so that people prefer scalable things).

Help. When I feel uncertain, I look for questions to answer and people to help. There will always be people you can learn from and people you can teach.
Guarantee satisfaction (and safeguard yourself) I minimize my commitments. If I do commit, I guarantee my work. Worst-case scenario? Refund – it's straightforward and doesn't jeopardize my safety.

Collect good karma. I collect thank-yous, compliments, testimonials and other kudos. I read them when I need motivation.

Just keep moving. It's good to feel like a beginner. It means there's lots to learn. Collect questions and explore them.

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Dealing with the Impostor Syndrome
Sacha Chua   2014-01-08

Sometimes I wonder if I really know enough to help others...

What have I coded recently?

Other people would be better at this...

Would I really be a good fit?

Here's what helps:

Remember: People are grown-ups and make their own decisions.

If people ask me for help, it's because they think I can help them. I share so much publicly, so research is their responsibility.

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I like helping people for free, low cost, or pay-what-you-want. The feedback helps me validate its value. (I charge more for my time so that people prefer scalable things).

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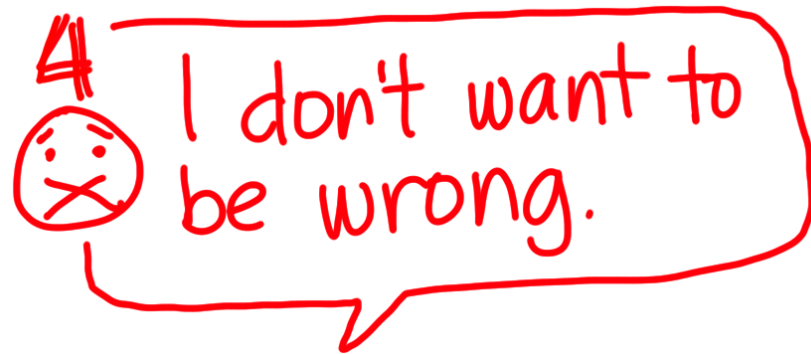
Just keep moving

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Test what you know by sharing

It can be embarrassing to make a mistake in public, but you'll miss out on so much learning if you never make mistakes. There's a saying that goes, "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt." **Me, I'd rather know when I'm being a fool.** How can you find bugs in your code unless you look for them? How can you find flaws in your understanding unless you test what you think you know?

If you don't write, it's easy to assume that you know something. You don't have to explain it to anyone. You just know. But when you *do* make yourself explain it to someone, you discover all these gaps in your understanding.

When you write, you can review your own writing for mistakes. You can ask mentors to see if you understand things correctly. You can share it with strangers who might have different perspectives and experiences.

Your writing becomes a history of change and learning. You'll be able to see your progress. You'll remember the mistakes and lessons learned along the way.
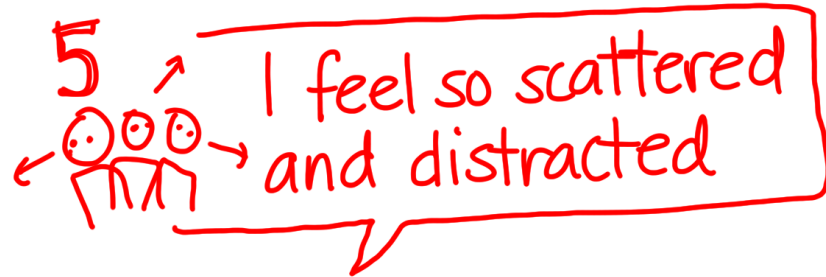
Don't worry about your strategy

Personal branding seems like such a big deal these days. If you're a beginning blogger, you're supposed to pick a topic and focus on it, carefully considering how you want to present yourself. Come up with a catchy tagline. Imitate your favourite blogging stars. Polish, polish, polish.

People often ask me if they should plan their blogging strategies, picking a niche and focusing exclusively on it. They struggle with a variety of interests.

If you're writing a business blog, sure, it makes sense to keep it focused. If you're writing a

personal blog, though, why limit who you are and what you're interested in to one topic?

Don't worry, just write. Don't focus on a niche. Don't hang on to drafts forever. Don't write like a magazine. You might want to think twice about posting things you might regret, but there's plenty of other material to share.

Writing is a skill. You won't know how to do it right away. In fact, if you do it right, you'll never stop learning.

Don't write just for other people. Write because you want to understand.

When you start, you'll be boring. You'll wander around, looking for the point you want to make. It's okay. You're still figuring out what you want to say and how you want to say it. Write. Write. Write. The more you write about something, the better you'll understand it.

Don't write something a million people could write. It's better to be unfocused than to be generic. I generally don't take guest posts from other people because far too many guest posts are soulless entries written more for search engines than for people. Be yourself. Write until

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you know more about who you are, then write some more.

It's okay to tell one story twenty times in order to learn how it's told. Experiment.

The real challenge isn't coming up with one thing to share. Once you open your eyes to the world and discover writing, the challenge is choosing among the many, many stories to tell. You don't have to tell the best story. Just make a choice and get out there.

It's okay to write about different things

How do you balance varied interests and focused niches? Some people write tightly-focused blogs. They might have many blogs, one blog per niche, each almost a silo of content. This is good for advertising, but it's harder to keep track of everything and make sure all the blogs are active.

If you write about lots of different topics like I do, you can use categories to help people sift through the entries for what they want to learn more about. You can offer different subscription options to make it easy for people to get updates for only the specific categories they're interested in. If there are blog aggregators that want to include your work, you can submit a category to them. For example, Planet Emacsen picks up just my Emacs-related posts, so I don't have to worry about being off-topic.

The diversity of topics might result in fewer subscribers than, say, a consistent focus on productivity (or code, or whatever) might, but it can also lead to great conversations about the intersections of interests. It's good to be a real person with many facets, not just a focused and filtered personal brand.

Plan, organize, write, improve

Maybe there are writers who sit down at their keyboards and type out their thoughts in one straight sitting. Maybe there are people who can focus on one project and see it to the end. I'm not one of those people (yet?) – I move from interest to interest, and somehow it works out anyway. It turns out lots of people are like this, too.

I was talking to a writer who felt scattered because she wrote about lots of different topics in bits and pieces. Here are some tips on planning, organization, writing, and improvement. Hope they help!

Planning: Sure, the general advice might be to pick one project and stick with it until it's done. If you're the kind of person who tends to lose interest and switch among lots of different topics, why not embrace the diversity? Keep two or more projects on the go. Take plenty of notes so that you can pick up where you left off. Write first, then organize later. Share along the way.

Organization: Don't worry about making neatly-organized outlines. Don't know what your post is going to look like before you sit down and write it? No problem. Write, then edit afterwards. While it can be frustrating to find yourself editing out overlapping or

duplicate work, it's less frustrating than not writing anything at all.

Writing: It's okay to write out of order, non-linearly, jumping around from piece to piece. You can write about clusters of ideas, gradually linking them up. Re-read everything when you're writing the glue to connect the clusters together, and tweak accordingly. That way, it doesn't feel like you pasted random paragraphs together.

Improve: Popular ways to procrastinate writing are to read about writing; to obsess about pens, paper, software or other tools; to go to endless workshops about the craft of writing. Stop. Remind yourself that people have written so much even with simple tools. Separate the time for writing from the time for working on your writing tools and processes, and make sure you spend time focused on writing – not fiddling around with your word processor, not shopping for just the right journal or pen, not reading yet another book on how to write a sentence. Write.

I hope that helps!

Dealing with feeling scattered as a writer

Sacha Chua — 2013-12-13

I was talking to another writer who felt

s c a t t e r e d

because she wrote about lots of different topics and had many unfinished projects on the go.

That sounds so familiar that I suspect it's actually <u>normal</u>, and the organized ideal we beat ourselves up about is a myth (or at least a rarity).

Here are some things that work for me in terms of planning, organization, writing... adapting to who I am instead of who I wish I could be. ☺

#writing

PLANNING

Ideal: Pick one project and stick with it until completion →

Challenge: I lose interest or want to switch among topics

Adaptations:
- keep 2+ projects
- Take lots of notes so that I can pick up where I left off
- Embrace the diversity
- Write first, organize later
- Brainstorm ideas/ questions so I always have things to work on
- Share small chunks

ORGANIZATION

Ideal: Neatly file notes in pre-determined categories

Challenge: can't predict I don't know how to organize until after I write/research.

Adaptations:
- Learn how to refile things using my computer
- Embrace overlapping/ duplicate work
- Write along the way (as I learn & explore) instead of waiting until things make sense

WRITING

Ideal: Write from the beginning to the end

Challenge: I jump around and work on different parts.

Adaptations:
- Write snippets and then connect them.
- Use an outline or a map to keep track of the gaps
- Embrace rework and revision as part of the learning process

IMPROVEMENT

Ideal: Focus on writing

Challenge: I get distracted by writing tips, tools, ...

Adaptations:
- Remind myself that people have written so much even with simple tools
- Set aside time for writing and time for improving my processes

What are your challenges? How do you adapt? What do you want to improve?

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Turn your ideas into small questions, and then answer those.

Do you find it easy to come up with lots of ideas for blog posts, but then find it difficult to sit down and actually write them–or spend hours drafting, only to decide that it's not quite ready for posting?

I know what that's like. On the subway, I jot a few notes for a post I want to write. At home, I add more ideas to my outline. Sometimes when I look at those notes, I think, "What on earth is this about?" Other times, I write a paragraph or two, and then my attention wanders. Over the years, I've gotten a lot better at getting posts out there. I still have more ideas than I can write, but at least a few of them make it into my blog! Here's what works for me, and I hope it works for you too.

Capture your ideas. Write them down somewhere: a text file, an Evernote notebook, a piece of paper, whatever fits the way you work. You don't have to write everything down, but it helps to have a list of ideas when you sit down to write. I use Evernote to take quick notes on my phone, and I use Org Mode for Emacs for my outline.

"Oh no! Now I have this huge list of unfinished ideas!" Don't be intimidated. Think of it like a buffet – you can choose what you want, but it doesn't mean that you have to finish everything.

Pick one idea and turn it into questions. Pick the idea that you're most curious about, perhaps, or something that you're learning. Turn it into a question so that you have a focus for your writing and you know when you've answered it. Questions help you keep both your perspective and your reader's perspective in mind. Remembering your question will help you bring your focus back to it if your attention wanders. Remembering your readers' potential question will help you empathize with them and write for them.
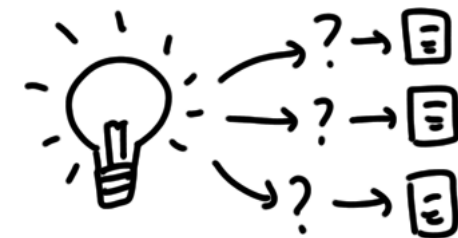
Break that question down into smaller questions until you can actually answer it in one sitting. For example: "How can you blog more?" is too big a question. In this post, I want to focus on just "How do you get past having lots of ideas that you don't turn into blog posts?" Make the question as small as you can. You can always write another blog post answering the next question, and the next, and the next.
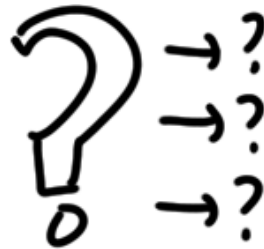
When you find yourself getting stuck, wrap up there. That probably means that your question was too big to begin with. Break it down even further. Figure out the question that your blog post answers, and revise your post a little so that it makes sense. Post. You can follow up with a better answer later. You can build on your past posts. Don't wait until it's complete. Post along the way.

I often run into this problem while writing technical posts. I start with "How do you do ABC?"… and get stuck halfway because of a bug or something I don't understand. Then I turn my post into "Trouble-shooting XYZ" with my rough notes of how I'm figuring things out. I'd rather have written a complete guide, of course, but mistakes and false starts and rough notes are also *useful* in themselves.

Don't think that you have to know everything and write everything perfectly the first time around. In fact, blogging can be more interesting and more useful when you do it as part of your journey.

Perfectionist? Take a close look at that anxiety. See if you can figure out what the root of that is. Is it useful for you, or is it getting in your way? There's an advantage to being outwardly polished, yes, but there's also an advantage to learning quickly and building relationships. One of the tips I picked up from the book *Decisive: How to Make Better Choices in Life and Work* (Heath and Heath, 2013) was the idea of testing the stakes. Make a few small, deliberate mistakes. Ooch your way to better confidence. (See page 138 if you want more details.)

Be clear about your goals and possible approaches.
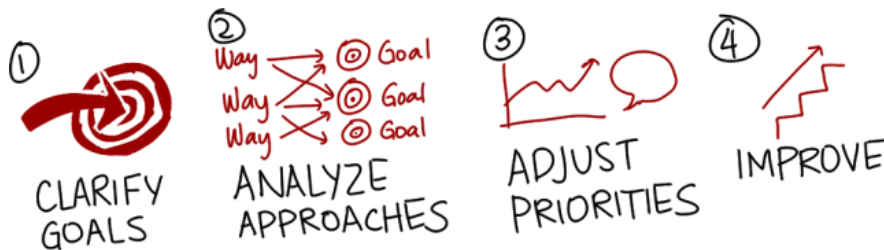
1. Clarify your goals

It's good to know what your goals are and how the different approaches serve those goals so that you can choose the ones that are the most effective. You can also look at each approach to see how you can improve.

I came up with this list of goals for my blog:

1. Learn more effectively by thinking through complexity or explaining what I'm learning
2. Explore assumptions and possibilities; become more aware of them myself, and help other people see them
3. Improve core skills through practice: making decisions, explaining ideas, organizing thoughts, etc.
4. Save myself and other people time spent re-solving the same problems or learning the same things
5. Build a long-term archive that I can use to remember what I'm learning and see differences over time
6. Learn from other people through questions, comments, and conversations

Your list of goals will probably look different. Many people have goals such as building a business by promoting their products or services, educating clients or readers, keeping family members up to date, working through difficult issues by writing anonymously, and so on. Take a moment to think about and prioritize your goals.

If you're having problems expressing your goals, you can also take a look at your recent blog posts and ask yourself, "Why did I write this?" What results did you

want to get? What purpose did it serve? One blog post might work towards several different goals.

2. Analyze the ways you approach those goals

Different actions support different goals to different extents. Think about the different types of blog posts you write. Score them against each of your goals on a scale of 1 to 5, where a score of 5 means that type of post helps a specific goal a lot, while 1 means it does very little or even nothing for that particular goal.

Here are some of the types of posts I share and how they line up with the goals I listed above:

	Goal 1: Learn	Goal 2: Explore	Goal 3: Improve	Goal 4: Save time	Goal 5: Build	Goal 6: Learn from others	Total
T1: Draw original stuff	5	5	5	5	5	3	28
T2: Draw book reviews and events	5	2	5	5	5	5	27
T3: Think out loud	5	5	5	1	5	3	24
T4: Share tech tips, troubleshooting notes, or code	5	5	3	4	2	4	23
T5: Review longer spans of time (yearly, decisions)	5	4	5	1	5	3	23
T6: Write tips that few other people can cover	4	2	3	3	4	3	19
T7: Write tips that other people can also cover	3	1	2	2	2	2	12
T8: Review recent posts (weekly, monthly)	1	1	4	1	4	1	12

Sorting the table by the total score makes it easy to see which approaches you value more. If some goals are much more important to you than others, you can also weight those goals in your calculations. For example, if building a long-term archive was twice as important to me, I could double that column when calculating the total score.

Anyway, this ranking makes it clearer why I feel good about original drawings and sketchnotes, and why I lean towards decision reviews and "thinking through things" posts even if they don't feel focused enough on saving other people time. Most of the blogging advice tends to focus on writing tips, but they don't motivate me as much.

How about you? Do your post types match up with your goals? Are there clear winners that you should focus on? You can write lower-value posts from time to time because they address different needs. For example, I

post weekly reviews because they're useful to me even if they're less useful for others.

3. Adjust your priorities based on feedback

Since these values are subjective, adjust them based on your website analytics or feedback from your readers. For example, if you think a type of post saves people a lot of time, you'll probably see a lot of visits or comments on it. If you have Google Analytics, you can export the **Content – Site Content – All Pages** table to a spreadsheet, classify the top X links, and then see what types of posts people spend their time on. For example, I analyzed the top 500 pages visited in July 2013, classified each by type, calculated average views and time per page, and sorted it by average views to get a sense of which posts tend to be more popular.

Post type	Number of pages	Number of views	Average page views per page	Average minutes per page view	Average bounce rate
T1: draw original	23	2875	125	3.4	67%
T4: share tech	149	12468	84	5.8	74%
T2: draw book / event	41	2346	57	2.3	64%
T3: think out loud	62	2452	40	3.4	72%
T5: review long / decision	14	504	36	2.7	73%
T6: write tip (few)	41	1392	34	3.1	72%
T8: review	9	283	31	1.0	61%
T7: write tip	24	461	19	4.7	73%

(many)					

My sketchnotes are more popular by far. My technical notes are surprisingly durable over time, even though you'd expect them to be superseded by bugfixes, technical changes, better documentation, and so on. Posts as old as 2004 still turn up. Because people still get a lot of value from my old tech posts, I adjusted the "Save time" rating for tech tips from my original value of 3 to 4. (I had started with a lower value because I figured that not a lot of people would probably have run into the same issues I did, but it turns out that time makes up for audience size and the long tail works.) As I expected, tips that few other people have written about get more pageviews than tips that more people have written about, although I'm surprised that people tend to spend more time on the common tips. My "thinking out loud" posts are more popular than I expected. Also, people tend to click on my weekly reviews if I add a brief description to the title, so that's something.

Anecdotally speaking, I get a lot of comments and links to my sketchnotes. I'm also delighted by the conversations that occasionally grow out of the "thinking out loud" posts, and how sometimes people will share even better solutions when I post my technical notes.

4. Identify ways to improve each approach

Now that you've looked at what makes each type of post different, you can focus on how to improve each type by building on its strengths or compensating for its weaknesses. Here's what I'm planning for the kinds of posts I write:

Draw original stuff: It takes me 2-4 hours to make one of these. I like making technical notes (ex: Emacs), sketchnote tutorials (to help people draw more), and other drawings related to life and planning. I'm getting used to drawing them with less up-front planning. Even though I end up moving things around, I think it's useful to just get started. Drawing involves a trade-off because images are not as searchable as text. I can fix that by including the text, but it's a little awkward and it takes more time. Still, people like the drawings a lot, and I like them too.

Draw book reviews and events: I go to fewer events these days, but I'm reading a lot more books. It takes me two hours to read a typical business book in depth, drawing notes along the way. I tend to draw book reviews only when I've already gotten a sense that a book is worth reading in depth. One way to increase my frequency is to draw book notes based on the skimmed parts of books that I'm not reading deeply – perhaps breaking out just the chapter or idea that resonates with

me, and using that to illustrate a blog post reflecting on it. I can also work on getting more high-quality books into my pipeline, or practise by drawing more books with fewer value judgments.

Think out loud: I can improve the "Save time" score by stashing the notes in my outline, adding observations, until I've fleshed it out enough for preliminary findings and advice. It means that the output will be more concise in its reasoning and I'll have to do more learning on my own instead of opening up the conversation early, but then the posts will be useful for other people as well as for me. Mr. Money Mustache is a good example of a blog that mixes personal stories and useful observations. The main thing that was holding me back from doing this before was losing track of my drafts, but my outline is a good step.

Share tech tips, troubleshooting notes, or code: The limiting factor here is that I'm not working on any professional projects that I can write about, so I'm forced to run into and resolve fewer issues. I can replace that with working on my own projects or on open source projects, or helping people with questions. I often tweak or work on things related to Emacs, WordPress, or data visualization, so there's that. If I set aside time and find a good source of small bugs so that I can ease my way into a habit of contributing to open source again, then that

will also help me with my life goal to keep my technical skills sharp.

Review longer spans of time: I can increase the frequency of decision reviews by scheduling them so that I don't lose track of items. Because I manage my outline in Org Mode, that should be relatively easy to do. I can also bootstrap this by reviewing last year and last decade's monthly reviews (if available), or the blog posts if not.

Write tips that few other people can cover: There are lots of information gaps to fill. Sometimes it's because people don't have the time, inclination, or confidence to write about something. Sometimes it's because I have a useful combination of skills or I can bring a different perspective. If I can't find information, that's a good reason to write it.

Write tips that other people can also cover: The world doesn't really need another "how to find the time to blog" tutorial. If I can filter through search results for a good one and make it more findable, that beats writing one from scratch–unless I can add something special or relate different types of advice to each other.

Review recent posts (weekly, monthly): These are low-value in the short term (mostly lists of links, plus the nudge to do my weekly planning process), but I've found

them to be surprisingly useful over the years. They also help keep my large blog archive manageable. That's why I keep posting them. I've started using the weekly and monthly reviews to give people [less-frequent subscription options](#) (daily can be a little overwhelming), so that's helpful too.

One way I can increase the value of the weekly reviews is to add more quick notes to them. For example, in my [most recent weekly review](#), I included an annotated list of links I clipped and books/movies I liked from this week's haul. I think it will provide additional value, and it's a good way for me to review them as well.

Wrapping up

"Get better" is a vague goal. If you can identify the specific goals you would like to work toward, different ways to move towards those goals, and specific actions you can take to improve those approaches, you'll have a lot of flexibility in terms of growing. You'll find it easier to recognize or create opportunities to grow, and you can track your progress along the way. You might also be able to identify counter-productive approaches and replace them with ones that move towards more of your goals. Good luck and have fun!
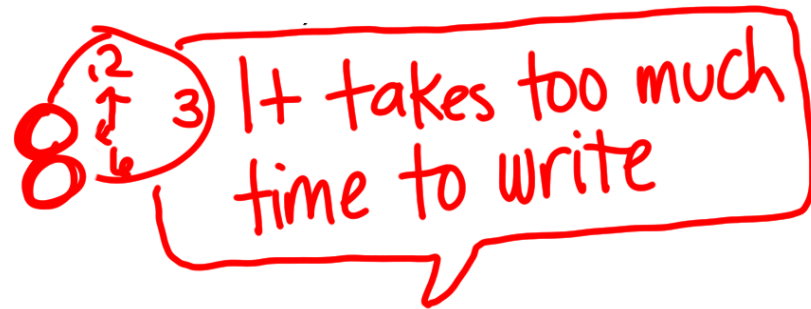
Make sharing part of the way you work.

Sharing is intimidating. You might think that you need to master blogs or wikis before you can make the most of tools to help you share your knowledge and build your network. But even if you never post in public, you've got plenty of opportunities to make a bigger difference through sharing.

Here's a six-step program to help you save time by making sharing part of the way you work, even if most of what you work with is confidential or lives in e-mail. Give it a try!

Step 1. Review your e-mail for information that you repeatedly send people.

organize

Do different people ask you the same questions? Are there links or files you find yourself always looking up and sending? Are there common problems you often solve? Save time by filing those messages in a "Reference" folder so that you can easily find them the next time someone asks that question or needs that file. Save even more time by rewriting your notes so that you can easily cut and paste them into new messages.

You can use your e-mail program to manage this information by saving the e-mails in a "Reference" folder that might be subdivided into more folders, or you can save the information in directories on your hard drive, encrypting it if necessary. The key change is to create a virtual filing cabinet and put useful information in it.

This virtual filing cabinet can save you a lot of time on your own work, too. I often find myself searching for my notes on how I solved a problem six months ago because I have to solve it again, and my notes save me a lot of time.

Step 2. When talking to people, listen for opportunities to take advantage of your reference information.

Now that you've got a virtual filing cabinet of useful information, keep an ear open for ways you can use that information to help people more efficiently. When people ask you a question you've answered before, give them a quick answer and promise to e-mail them the rest of the details.

When you look for ways to reuse the information you already have, you'll find plenty of opportunities to get a lot more benefit from the effort that you've already invested.

Step 3. Reach out.

You've saved time and helped more people by sharing the information in your virtual filing cabinet when they ask, and you've got a better sense of which notes are very useful. Take a moment to review your files and think about who might benefit from learning from that information. Reach out to them, sending them a note about what you've learned and why it can save them time. It might lead to interesting conversations and good opportunities.

For example, let's say you e-mailed one of your coworkers an answer to his problem. Think of other team members who might have run into the same problem, and send them a short note about it too. If you do this judiciously, people will feel grateful without feeling overwhelmed by e-mail.

Step 4. Prepare and take notes.

Now you're getting lots of return on the time you invested into organizing your existing information, and you've got an idea of what kinds of information help you and other people a lot. Proactively write down information that might be useful instead of waiting until someone asks you about it, because you might not remember all the relevant details by that time. In fact, take notes while you're working instead of leaving it for the end. File those notes in your virtual filing cabinet as well, and share them with other people who might find this useful.

In addition to helping you save time in the future, writing about what you're learning or doing can help you think more clearly, catch mistakes, and make better decisions.

Step 5. Look for ways to share your notes with more people.

By now, you've probably developed a habit of looking for ways to take advantage of what you're learning or doing: writing and filing your notes, retrieving your notes when people need them, and proactively reaching out. You can stop there and already save a lot of time–or you can learn about sharing your notes more widely, helping you build your network and increase your impact.

Proactively reaching out to people who might find your notes useful has probably helped you develop stronger working relationships with a small investment of time. However, this is limited by who you know, how much you know about what they're working on, and the timing of the information. On the other hand, if you share some of your notes in public areas where people can search for or browse them, then you can help people you might not think of reaching out to, and they can find your information whenever they need it.
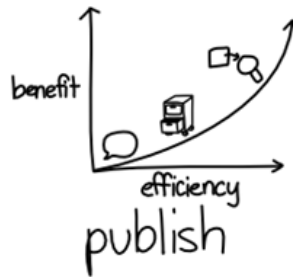
You don't have to share all your information publicly. Review your virtual filing cabinet for information that can be shared with everyone or with a small group, and look for ways to share it with the appropriate access permissions. You can share different versions of documents, too.

For example, I share public information on my blog because blogs make it easy to publish quick notes, and search engines make it easy for people to find what they need even if I posted those notes several years ago. On the other hand, there are many notes that I post to internal access-controlled repositories. Sometimes, I'll post a sanitized version publicly, and a more detailed version internally.

This is where you can get exponential return on your time investment. If people can find and benefit from your notes on their own, then you can reach many more people and create much more impact.

People may not find and use your information right away. Keep building that archive, though. You'll be surprised by how useful people can find your work, and by the number of opportunities and relationships you build along the way.

Step 6. Review your organizational system and look for opportunities for relentless improvement.

You've collected useful information from your e-mails and conversations, organized that in your virtual filing cabinet, reached out to people, and shared some of your notes publicly. Congratulations! You're probably getting your work done faster because you don't waste time solving problems again. Your coworkers probably look to you for answers because you not only help them solve problems, you do so in a timely and detailed manner. And you might already have discovered how helpful your notes can be for others you wouldn't have thought of contacting. What's next?

Review your virtual filing cabinet. Can you organize it for faster access? Can you fill in missing topics? Can you identify and update obsolete information? Look for opportunities to improve your process, and you'll save even more time and make a bigger impact.
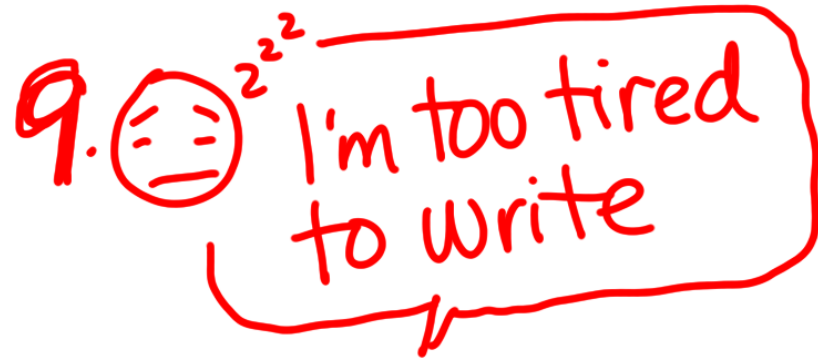
Figure out what you can write better when you're tired.

When you're tired, sick, or under the weather, it's easy to give in to the temptation to sleep or to do other things that don't require much thought. Even when you don't feel alert and awesome, though, there are ways you can practice getting better at writing. If you can get the hang of writing even when you're not at your peak, then fewer and fewer excuses can get in your way.

Outlines help a lot. The mental effort it takes to outline things seems to be different from the effort it takes to

write a post. When you don't feel like writing, see if you can outline instead. Then, when you're writing, you can follow the signposts of your outline.

When you're tired, your inner editor is even more tired. If you're okay with letting the occasional typo escape into the wild and you don't expect to make sense with every post (that's what revisions are for!), perfectionism isn't a problem.

Maybe you can't write as enthusiastically when you're tired. This is okay. It might mean that you sound reasonable and more approachable. This could even be *better*, because then people can relate with you more.

Find ways to take advantage of those down moments. Give yourself time to recover, for sure, but don't write off those days as a complete waste.

Move your schedule around. Instead of writing at the end of the day, when you're tired or stressed, try writing at the beginning. See if you can streamline your routines or lower your expectations so that you can get more time for yourself. You'll never find the time until you make it.

Focus on selfish benefits.

Don't worry about your audience in the beginning. Write anyway, even if you're writing for an audience of one.

Write notes for yourself, because writing can help you think and remember. Write about what you're learning. Write about your answers to other people's questions. Write about your own questions, and write about the answers you find.

At some point—and earlier than you think you're ready—**make it easy for people to come across your blog.** Add it to your e-mail signature. Add it to your social media profiles. Let people find you, read you, and learn more about you.

Look for more questions to explore. Share your notes on your blog. Answer them where you found the question, too, and share a link. Soon you'll find yourself saying in conversations, "Oh yeah! I wrote about that recently and…"

Read blogs, news, books, whatever you enjoy. Blog your questions, your thoughts, your lessons learned. **Name-drop liberally:** link to the person who wrote the post you're thinking about, and maybe they'll follow that back to find you. **Comment on other people's blogs, too** – share what you're learning from them and what questions you may have.

You find your community, person by person. **But you can start by building your blog for yourself,** this ever-growing accumulation of things you're learning and things you're curious about, this time machine that's going to be an amazing resource when it's 2023 and you're wondering what you were like ten years ago. The conversations are icing on the cake.

Your first blog posts don't have to be ready for the New York Times. **Don't worry if no one's reading. You can get plenty of value out of writing even on your own.** (But post in public anyway, because the conversations are a lot of fun and you'll learn a lot from people's questions and insights.) Enjoy!

Ask for feedback.

It turns out that you don't have to write alone, and that you don't have to have all the answers (or all the ideas!) at the beginning.

You can use Twitter and other social networks to share ideas related to upcoming blog posts. For example, I asked people what kept them from taking notes, and I added their thoughts to a blog post that I was writing.

- https://twitter.com/sachac/status/368517791432720384
- http://sachachua.com/blog/p/25914

I shared something I realized about dealing with uncertainty by making potential outcomes arbitrarily better, and that led to back-and-forth conversations that helped me clarify what I meant.

- https://twitter.com/sachac/status/370544279464071170
- https://twitter.com/sachac/status/370572364850806784

Condensing an idea into 140 characters is a great exercise. Bonus points if there's a question in there too.

Try sharing post ideas before you've drafted the posts so that you can see if an idea resonates enough to make you want to write it. Sometimes I share an idea after I've outlined or drafted the first version so I know what I think. I don't ditch post ideas if they don't get a response, but I mix in people's feedback whenever I can.

Editing an upcoming post to incorporate people's thoughts is much easier and more useful than updating something that people have already seen in their feed readers. The Share a Draft plugin is great for giving people links to unpublished posts.

Another benefit of writing posts in advance is that by the time you get around to folding people's insights into your post, **you probably have enough distance to edit your first version ruthlessly.** If you do this at least a few days in advance, you can even go back to the people who shared their thoughts with you and see if you've quoted them properly.

If you blog, try giving people a sneak peek at upcoming thoughts and asking them for feedback. You can do this through e-mail or through social networks. I like Twitter more than e-mail because other people can see and build on responses, but feel free to use whatever works for you. Enjoy!

Get other people to read your posts.

"How can I get other people to read my blog post?" is a useful question, but it's the wrong one. Catchy titles and controversial topics are good at drawing eyes, but you don't want to be just one sensational gimmick after another. Your goal isn't just to get read. Your goals are to share what you know, save people time, and make people think.

The first question then is:
How do you write blog posts worth reading?

That takes lots and lots of practice. Braindump everything you can (http://sachachua.com/blog/2010/03/how-to-brain-dump-what-you-know/) and the important stuff will float to the top of your brain.

The second question is:
How can you find your own posts again?

At least in the beginning, the primary user of your blog will be you. When people e-mail you a question you've already thought about before, find the

blog post you shared the answer in, and send a link. When people bring up something in conversation, follow up by sending them a link to the relevant blog post. When you find yourself solving a problem you solved six months ago, look up the answer in your blog. This is why you need to record as much as you can.

The third question is:
How can searchers find your posts?

Don't worry about search engine optimization. You don't need to be the first hit for popular searches. All you need to do is make sure that people can find the obscure bits of knowledge you've shared in your blog when they need it, even if they don't know you in the first place. If you get the second question sorted out (finding your own posts), this often comes for free.

The fourth question is:
How can people learn from your archives?

Okay, you've got searchers coming in and reading random pages of your blog. Can they easily find relevant posts they might be interested in? Use categories for simple organization, and use plugins to offer more choices.

The fifth question is:
How can people subscribe to your blog?

So people come in becomes of searches or links. They like what they see. They read your archives and they think you've got good things to say. Make subscription easy. Point it out. Offer an e-mail subscription through something like MailChimp or FeedBurner. If you write about a broad range of topics, offer people choices so that they can subscribe to just the kinds of posts they like.

When you've figured out the first five questions, you've gotten the hang of creating useful posts and making them findable long after you've forgotten them.

Then you'll probably feel comfortable cross-pollinating your social networks: mention you have a blog on Twitter, and point to your Twitter account from your blog, put your blog URL in your e-mail signature and your card. Make it easy for people who value what you share in one area to find more from you in others.

Don't worry if, in the beginning, no one reads your blog. Start by writing for yourself. Build an archive. Learn from what people value. Make it easy for yourself and others. And have fun!

The end (for now)

Thank you for reading! I hope you found some useful tips that will help you get started or get back on track with your blogging.

I'm experimenting with **pay what you want** resources as a way to make it easier for people to learn. If you got this for free or cheap and you think it's awesome, feel free to buy yourself (or a friend!) a copy and support the development of more guides:
http://sachachua.com/no-excuses-blogging
Plus, if you get it from there, you can get free updates if I add new excuses and tips.

Still stuck? I'd love to hear from you. E-mail me at sacha@sachachua.com and we'll figure out what can help you move forward.

Did this help you get unstuck? I'd love to hear from you too. If this book has helped, share your stories.

Want to share this book with other people? Send them to http://sachachua.com/no-excuses-blogging so they can get their own copy (and updates). Thanks for sharing.

For more tips, check out my blog at sachachua.com or follow me on Twitter (@sachac).

Looking forward to connecting!

Sacha Chua

Sources

The content was adapted from the following blog posts:

Excuse: "I don't know what to write about."
Write about what you don't know.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2013/08/write-about-what-you-dont-know-5-tips-to-help-you-do-research-for-your-blog/
Pay attention to what you're learning.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2013/09/the-learning-machine-how-i-turn-what-i-learn-into-blog-posts/
Figure out what you think.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2009/09/blog-to-find-out-how-you-think/
Deal with writer's block
http://sachachua.com/blog/2007/12/5-ways-to-deal-with-writers-block/
Find tons of topics
http://sachachua.com/blog/2010/11/where-do-you-find-topics-to-write-about-how-to-have-tons-of-topics/
Excuse: "There's so much I can't write about."
Focus on what you can't help but sharing.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2010/02/its-not-what-you-cant-write-its-what-you-need-to-share/
Excuse: "But I'm not an expert yet!"
Share while you learn
http://sachachua.com/blog/2014/01/share-learn/
Excuse: "I don't want to be wrong."
Test what you know by sharing
http://sachachua.com/blog/2013/10/test-what-you-know-by-sharing/
Excuse: "I feel so scattered and distracted."
Don't worry about your strategy
http://sachachua.com/blog/2010/02/personal-blog-dont-worry-about-your-strategy/
It's okay to write about different things
http://sachachua.com/blog/2010/12/writing-about-lots-of-different-kinds-of-things/
Plan, organize, write, improve

http://sachachua.com/blog/2014/01/dealing-with-feeling-scattered-as-a-writer/
Excuse: "I have all these ideas, but I never finish posts…"
Turn your ideas into small questions, then answer those.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2014/02/develop-ideas-blog-posts/
Excuse: "I don't feel like I'm making progress towards my goals."
Be clear about your goals and possible approaches.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2013/09/4-steps-to-a-better-blog-by-planning-your-goals-and-post-types/
Excuse: "It takes too much time to write."
Make sharing part of the way you work.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2010/08/six-weeks-to-make-sharing-part-of-how-you-work/
Excuse: "I'm too tired to write."
Figure out what you can write better when you're tired.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2013/08/writing-drawing-and-coding-while-tired/
Excuse: "No one's going to read it anyway."
Focus on selfish benefits. http://sachachua.com/blog/2013/06/getting-started-with-blogging-when-no-ones-reading/
Ask for feedback. http://sachachua.com/blog/2013/10/blogging-tip-test-your-ideas-and-get-more-feedback-in-order-to-make-your-posts-better/
Get other people to read your posts.
http://sachachua.com/blog/2010/03/how-to-get-people-to-read-your-blog-post/