

# Best Blogging Practices

Let's talk about the anatomy of an effective blog post. There are a few key factors to identify within a good blog post:

## Rule #1: Create good blog post titles

Search engines and humans typically want different things out of a title; to be successful you must strive to please them both. In technical terms, your blog post title is a header tag, this means it is the first thing a search spider will encounter. You must think about adding important keywords/phrases to this area. Always be specific, entering localized information that easily allows the spider to identify your content goals. At the same time, you must consider the human value proposition. Don't just jam your title full of keywords and phrases that have little to no specific value. Make those phrases work so that your human reader can immediately identify your value proposition. This is the make or break in enticing them to read further.

## Rule #2: Effectively leverage your content

Again, search spiders display certain behavior patterns. They tend to digest content that is toward the top of a page or post first. If left unsatisfied, they may skip on to index other pages and flag the rest of that content for later indexing. Give them a taste of what they want upfront. Create compelling first paragraphs that include your target keyphrases and easily demonstrate the human value proposition. The spiders will love you and your readers will be compelled to read on.

## Rule #3: Add valued links to your post

In the world of search, links are very important metrics. However, you must be very careful about your linking strategy. A link will only work to your benefit if it is relevant to the overall value proposition of a post. The best way to figure this one out is to put yourself in your readers shoes. If you were reading your own article, what link resources might you find valuable? You should offer several links to outside resources and several links to resources (other relevant articles) within your own blog. At the same time it is of the utmost importance to always think about linking to those tools on your website (such as MLS Search, Home Value, Email Alerts) so that readers have the chance to become potential leads. If you can, use "link in a new window" so that readers don't become confused when they navigate away from your blog.

## Rule #4: Use Proper Formatting

Most internet readers give you only a few seconds to qualify whether or not they think they will gain anything by reading your post. It is imperative that you make it simple for them to do so. Use simple formatting and a clean layout for every blog post you create. Bullets and numbers are a great way to call attention to your main points. Fonts should be uniform throughout, photos and links well placed. If it's a train wreck for the eye, people will typically not give it a chance.

## Rule #5: Identify a Call to Action

Every post you write should have purpose. No matter what your subject matter, you should always think about providing a call to action at the end of each post. After all, this is a business tool - we are trying to generate leads! As I mentioned above in the Linking Rule, one of the easiest ways to create a call to action is to link to the relevant lead capturing tools that you already have on your website. If overlooked, this one action could be the downfall to the success of your real estate blog. Try to make sure that the lead in is relevant to the post you've written. Target buyers with a complimentary MLS Search or signup to a first time homebuyers seminar, catch sellers with a Neighborhood CMA or FREE Home Valuator, entice people to subscribe to regularly receive your posts by email or RSS. Think about new and different ways to connect with every post you release.

## Rule #6: Use relevant categories and tags

Categories and tags can be confusing as compared to one another. Here's a simple rule of thumb. Categories help humans find and organize content and tags do the same for search engine spiders.

Tags: Your tags should be considered 'keyphrases' - specific 1-4 or 5 word combinations that serve as descriptive bullets for the content you've just written. They must be on topic with the post - the tag section is NOT a place to dump all your top level keywords and keyphrases. If the keyphrase is not relevant to the post you've written this behavior is harmful. Search spiders are smart, this is considered keyword stuffing - don't do it! As a general rule of thumb, less than 10 tags or keyphrases (not words) is suggested per post.

Categories: Your categories should be 1-2 or 3 word phrases that help a human to locate pertinent blog posts by topic. Kind of like naming folders on your C Drive - this is meant for quick reference and easy recall of information.

**Best practices are meant to be followed as a general rule! Sure discipline is no fun, but don't forget this is about making the most of your investment and leaping over your competition on the web!**

