

Module #6: Advanced Formatting: Quotes, Links and Subheadings

In this week's module, we're looking at ways to take your blog posts further. We've already covered classic blog posts (Module #2) and list posts (Module #4) – the different techniques we'll go through in this module can work well for both those types of posts.

Everything we cover this week will not only help your posts to look great, it'll make them more useful for readers (and for you!) as well. We're going to take an in-depth look at blockquotes, links and nested subheadings ... and we'll also touch on other types of formatting, like bold text, bullet-pointed lists and images.

Take a look at these two blog post excerpts (from my post [How to Expand a Too-Short Piece of Writing](#)). The text of each is almost exactly the same ... but which one would you rather read?

Version A:

Expand Your Work

There's a crucial difference between expanding and padding, even if the two look similar at first glance.

Expanding your work means going deeper. Padding it means staying on the surface.

When you expand a piece of fiction, you can add a relevant sub-plot: one that sheds light on the themes, heightens the tension in the main plot, or reveals crucial information about the characters. You could include the next part of the story: take it further in the character's lives (perhaps what you think is a finished novel is just part one).

You could look for places to add more tension and conflict. A minor incident could become something much worse. You could turn important passages of summary ("telling") into action and dialogue ("showing"). If your hero did something terrible in the past, show us the event or the effects of it, don't just tell us in a sentence or two. Read [Understanding the "Show Don't Tell" Rule](#) for more help on this.

Version B:

Expand Your Work

There's a crucial difference between *expanding* and *padding*, even if the two look similar at first glance.

Expanding your work means going deeper. Padding it means staying on the surface.

When you expand a piece of fiction, you can:

- **Add a *relevant* sub-plot:** one that sheds light on the themes, heightens the tension in the main plot, or reveals crucial information about the characters.
- **Include the next part of the story:** take it further in the character's lives (perhaps what you think is a finished novel is just part one).
- **Look for places to add more tension and conflict.** A minor incident could become something much worse.
- **Turn important passages of summary (“telling”) into action and dialogue (“showing”).** If your hero did something terrible in the past, *show* us the event or the effects of it, don't just tell us in a sentence or two. Read [Understanding the “Show Don't Tell” Rule](#) for more help on this.

Version B looks instantly more attractive. There's more to engage your eye – and plenty of white space (the blank space around the words) to make it look like an attractive read.

The differences aren't just about looks, though. Version B is a more *useful* post: it's structured in a way that makes it easy to engage with, includes links to other posts, and brings in opinions other than the author's.

In the first part of this module, we're going to take an in-depth look at three formatting features that you might not yet be using to their full. They are:

- Quotes, which might be from fellow bloggers, from books, or from speakers
- Links, which could be to your own posts or to resources elsewhere
- Subheadings, particularly nested subheadings

Using Quotes in Your Blog Post

Before we take a look at some of the factors that affect writing speed, I've got a few quotes from you from different writers about how fast they write:

“ 400 or 500 words is an OK day, 700 or 800 words is a good day, and anything over 1,000 words is an astonishing, greased-lightning, festal superfluke of a day.

[Francis Spufford: How I write](#), Francis Spufford, The Spectator

“ 10k a day is my high point as a professional author whose child is now in daycare (PRICELESS). I write 6 – 7 hours a day, usually 2 in the morning and 4-5 in the afternoon, five days a week.

[How I Went From Writing 2,000 Words a Day to 10,000 Words a Day](#), Rachel Aaron, Pretentious Title

“ If the material fails to convince me after several sessions I put it aside but if direction and form begin to emerge a point will come when the notes merge into drafting. Whether there are ten drafts or over a hundred I carry on until the poem feels settled.

[How Long Does it Take to Write a Poem](#), Myra Schneider, Poetry Magazines

“ So [my wife] and I came up with a plan. I would, for a four-week period, ruthlessly clear my diary and go on what we somewhat mysteriously called a “Crash”. During the Crash, I would do nothing but write from 9am to 10.30pm, Monday through Saturday. I'd get one hour off for lunch and two for dinner. [...] I kept it up for the four weeks, and at the end of it I had more or less the entire novel down: though of course a lot more time would be required to write it all up properly, the vital imaginative breakthroughs had all come during the Crash.

[Kazuo Ishiguro: how I wrote The Remains of the Day in four weeks](#), Kasuo Isiguro, The Guardian

This screenshot is from my post [Why Some Writers Are Much Faster than Others: Four Quotes and Six Key Reasons](#).

With a topic like this, I wanted to go beyond my own experience of writing speed to look at the (very wide) range of what's “normal” for other writers. I did some digging around to find different writers talking about how fast they write, and came up with – I hope! – some interesting quotes illustrating the wide range of different writing speeds.

Why Use Quotes?

Whether you're quoting another blogger, a book, or a speaker, bringing in quotes can make your own work seem more authoritative. Using quotes demonstrates that you know what others are saying about your topic – and a

well-chosen quote can back up what you're saying, or round out your post by adding a different angle or opinion.

If you're struggling to know what to write about, quotes can also be a great way to produce a post. Some blog posts consist mostly or entirely of quotes (and these can become surprisingly popular).

When you want to look at a range of opinions, ideas or experiences, like I did in the example above, it also makes sense to use quotes. Yes, you could link or paraphrase instead – but it wouldn't be so direct and powerful.

How to Use Quotes Within Your Blog Post

There are two key ways to bring quotes into your text: you can use an “inline” quote or a “blockquote”.

When you're quoting less than a single sentence, it normally makes sense to work that quote into a sentence of your own. For instance, if I'd wanted to do this in my post about writing speeds, I might have written something like this:

For literary author Francis Spufford, “700 or 800 words is a good day”. But SFF author Rachel Aaron explains that “[10,000 words] a day is my high point as a professional author.”

When you're using an inline quote like this, you need to make sure that:

- You put the quotation words around the whole quote alone – not around your own words, or around only part of the quote.
- Your sentence actually makes sense! (It's OK to change a word or phrase in the quote by putting it in [square brackets], as I did with the original “10k” in Rachel Aaron's quote.)

If you're quoting a couple of sentences or more, though, or if you want a quote to stand out, a “blockquote” makes most sense. You may well be familiar with this format from writing essays at school or university: the quote is presented in its own paragraph, normally with a left-hand indent.

Different blogs display blockquotes in different ways. You saw how my current blog theme displays them, in the example above – but here are a couple of examples from other blogs:

Whatever the underlying problem, you won't overcome writer's block by moaning about it with author friends for weeks on Facebook ... or by any other distraction mechanism.

The only way to overcome it is through taking action to fix the underlying issue ... and get back to writing.

“ I deal with writer's block by lowering my expectations. I think the trouble starts when you sit down to write and imagine that you will achieve something magical and magnificent—and when you don't, panic sets in. The solution is never to sit down and imagine that you will achieve something magical and magnificent. I write a little bit, almost every day, and if it results in two or three or (on a good day) four good paragraphs, I consider myself a lucky man. Never try to be the hare. All hail the tortoise.” *Malcolm Gladwell*

(From [*Writing Tips: How to Deal With Writer's Block*](#), Joanna Penn, *The Creative Penn*)

2. Break the routine

Routine can be a blessing. It helps us focus on what we're doing and allows us to build consistent, healthy habits. Routine is a great productivity hack, but not every day needs to be a productive one. Take time to break the routine. Try something new. Better yet, try something that makes you just a little apprehensive.

Routine is a great productivity hack, but not every day needs to be a productive one.

ERIN WILDERMUTH

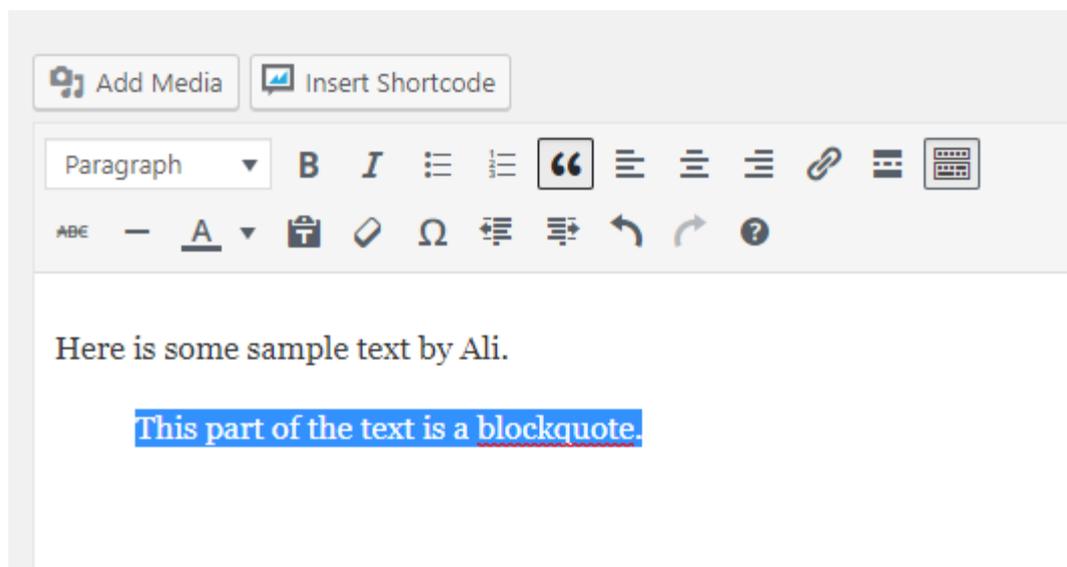


(From [*The Science of Curiosity*](#), Erin Wildermuth, *MichaelHyatt.com* – note that here, the blockquote format is being used for a “pull quote” from the post itself,

and with additional “tweet this” formatting: the little bird icon allows readers to instantly tweet the pull quote.)

To create a blockquote in WordPress:

1. Go to the editing view of your post (in the WordPress dashboard)
2. Type or copy your chosen quote into the correct place in your post.
3. Highlight the quote by clicking and dragging with your mouse, then click the “blockquote” button, which looks like this:



If you prefer to use the Text (HTML) editing view of your post, you can create a blockquote by placing the opening tag `<blockquote>` at the start of the quote, and the closing tag `</blockquote>` at the end of the quote.

Immediately before or after your quote, you should provide a reference to where it's from – with a link to the source, if possible. (We'll be covering links later in this module.)

Where to Use Quotes Within Your Post

Quotes can be useful at *any* point in your post.

Back in Module #2, we broke down post structure into four key parts: title, introduction, main body and conclusion.

You could potentially use a quote in any of these four parts.

Using a Quote in Your Title

If your post is a response to (or rebuttal of) a particular point, it might make sense to quote it. You can often see this in action in news articles:

'Ebooks are stupid', says head of one of world's biggest publishers

(from [The Guardian](#))

Secondary school pupils 'not reading challenging enough books'

(from [BBC News](#))

Using a Quote in Your Introduction

A quote can be a great way to open a post, and some bloggers use quotes at the start of every post. Again, this is a good technique to use if you want to write a post that spins off from someone else's point.

[This post on Daily Blog Tips](#) has a quote (doubling up as a link, too!) in the first paragraph:

Jack Ma, the charismatic CEO of Alibaba, said this year at Davos that "when trade stops, war begins," and selling globally is no longer a right solely of big companies. Technology makes the Earth smaller, and you can buy from Europe even if you are based in Australia.

Using a Quote in Your Main Body

Quotes can be used to bolster particular points that you're making, if you're writing a classic post. In a list post, you might want to use quotes fairly consistently: adding a quote for each of the items on the list, for instance. Of course, some list posts are entirely based around quotes – like this one [from Copyblogger](#), sharing some of their writers' favourite classic quotes:

Stefanie Flaxman

Stefanie's favorite is an artful bit of philosophy:

*"We write to taste life twice, in the moment and in retrospect." – Anaïs
Nin*

Chris Garrett

This one has been attributed to Mark Twain, T.S. Eliot, Cicero, and others, but it turns out it was originally written by Blaise Pascal. *"Je n'ai fait celle-ci plus longue que parce que je n'ai pas eu le loisir de la faire plus courte."*

*"I only made this so long because I didn't have time to make it shorter." –
Blaise Pascal*

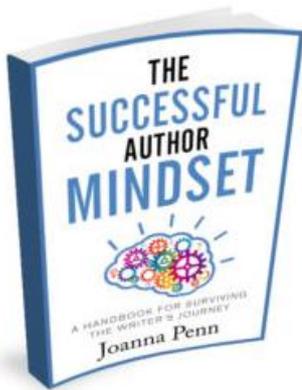
Using a Quote in Your Conclusion

You might want to be a little cautious about giving someone else the last word in your post, but if there's a quote that's particularly apt or that you want to leave readers with, there's no reason not to use it here.

[The example we looked at earlier from The Creative Penn](#) ends with the Malcolm Gladwell quote (before a brief call to action to buy Joanna's ebook):

“I deal with writer’s block by lowering my expectations. I think the trouble starts when you sit down to write and imagine that you will achieve something magical and magnificent—and when you don’t, panic sets in. The solution is never to sit down and imagine that you will achieve something magical and magnificent. I write a little bit, almost every day, and if it results in two or three or (on a good day) four good paragraphs, I consider myself a lucky man. Never try to be the hare. All hail the tortoise.” *Malcolm Gladwell*

This is an excerpt from [The Successful Author Mindset](#). Available now in ebook, print and audiobook formats.



Many bloggers rarely or never bother using quotes. By taking a few extra minutes to incorporate quotes into some of your posts – particularly longer posts, or ones that you link to from your “About” or “Start Here” page – you can really help your blog to stand out.

Using Links in Your Blog Post

Without links, there’d be no internet at all. Links allow us to move from one page or post or site to another, like pathways.

On your blog, you’ll have lots of links already. You almost certainly have a navigation menu, for instance, that links to pages like “Home” and “About”. You’ll have blog categories, which link to posts within those categories. Each post’s title provides a link to that post.

It’s still important to use links *within* your blog posts, though. Keep in mind that a lot of readers won’t actually be reading your posts on your blog itself.

They might have subscribed by email or through an RSS reader for updates – in which case they'll just see the post, not your menu and sidebar and so on.

This is what I see when I read a blog post in Feedly (an RSS reader). This one is [from C.S. Lakin's Live Write Thrive blog](#):

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How to Motivate the Writer Inside of You

16👍 Live Write Thrive by cslakin / 3d // keep unread // hide

Today's guest post is by Arkya Dey.

Writing takes a lot of discipline and commitment. Unlike what most people might think, this dedication to something doesn't come easy.

Most of our friends assume our jobs are romantic. They imagine us curled up in a cozy corner of a house, sitting in front of a fire, and writing away. But we know that is not what ideally happens in our real lives. We are worried about growing our audience, our due dates, and our publications, among other things.

Well, even if it does, there's much more to this scenario than just the cozy imagery. While one might see a picture-perfect image on the outside, there might be a raging war in a writer's mind.

This is how the post looks on the site:

Home About Resources Editing Guest Blogging Contact News and Events Online Courses

in f t RSS

How to Motivate the Writer Inside of You

June 25, 2018 in [Writing for Life](#) with [1 Comment](#)



Today's guest post is by Arkya Dey.

Writing takes a lot of discipline and commitment. Unlike what most people might think, this dedication to something doesn't come easy.

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Well, even if it does, there's much more to this scenario than just the cozy

Search

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Enter your e-mail address to get all weekly posts delivered to you:

Subscribe

9930 readers
BY FEEDBURNER

Don't wander aimlessly- strategize your career!

If your readers are on a mobile or tablet device, they may too only see the post itself. So these links can be vital ways to lead readers further into your site.

Plus, links are useful for *all* readers. They give you an opportunity to point out further information you have on a topic – you can do this to help new readers get up to speed, or to help experienced ones go further with the topic you’re discussing.

Links to other people’s blogs can also save you having to write a post about something that you’re not all that interested in (or that you don’t really have any expertise on).

And ... linking to other people’s blogs is a nice thing to do! It might send them some new readers, and it also demonstrates to *your* readers that you’re someone who (a) knows what’s going on within your bit of the blogging world and (b) gives credit where credit’s due.

How to Use Links Within Your Blog Posts

Before we go further, I want to give you a few bits of vocabulary about links that’ll help make this discussion easier:

URL – this stands for Uniform Resource Locator (*in case you ever need to know that for a trivia quiz!*)

It’s the web address of the resource that you’re linking to. For instance, www.aliventures.com/blog-on-2018 is the URL for the Blog On information/sales page.

Anchor text – the text which a link is attached to. E.g. in the following sentence, “click here” is the anchor text:

You can [click here](#) for more information about my books.

Link – this can mean slightly different things to different people: in this module, I’m using “link” to describe the combination of URL *plus* anchor text.

How Should You Display Links in Your Posts?

As with quotes, there are a few different ways in which you might display links within your posts. Here are the three main options (all these links point to the same place).

Option #1: Give the URL

For more about dialogue, check out my post

<http://www.aliventures.com/everything-writing-great-dialogue>

Option #2: Give the title and make it into a link (the title is the anchor text)

You can find more about dialogue here:

[Everything You Need to Know About Writing Great Dialogue](#)

Option #3: Incorporate the link into a sentence (“more about dialogue” is the anchor text)

I’ve written [more about dialogue](#), if you’re interested in going further with yours.

Option #1 is normally best avoided in blog posts. It tends to look a bit amateur, and it’s normally more reader-friendly to have some “anchor text” for the link instead of just copying the URL itself into the post.

It can be a good option, though, if you’ve written something that’s designed for readers to print. If you want to include URLs there, they’ll need the actual web address!

Option #2 is a good one if you’re giving a list of resources, or if you want to make sure a particular resource really stands out. It’s a bit like using a blockquote: the link is set out on its own line. You can use any anchor text you want, but it often makes sense to use the title of whatever you’re linking to.

If I think a particular link will be especially useful, this is the option I go for: I think it’s the most reader-friendly because it creates a link that’s easy to click on even if you’re on a tiny mobile device!

Option #3 is useful if you want to give a link, but you don't want to break the flow of your text to do so. You can use a single word (or even a single letter!) for the link, though I'd recommend having at least a couple of words to make it as easy as possible to click on.

One of the blogs I write for, Craft Your Content, prefers to give links in this way – it's part of their house style.

You may well find yourself using all three of these options at different times, but any time you want to include a link, think about which will make the most sense.

A final possibility is to add a link to an image. I wouldn't *only* use the image as a link (except for "buy" buttons and similar), but it can be useful to allow readers to click on the images in posts [like this one](#):

[Seven Simple Tips for Writing Great Dialogue](#)

If you're fairly new to writing fiction, or if you've had feedback suggesting your dialogue skills need a brush-up, check out this post. I go through seven straightforward (but crucial) tips for getting it right, giving you an example for each one.



[Stylised Talk: Writing Great Dialogue \[With Examples\]](#)

Here, the focus is on examples that show how accomplished authors write quite different types of dialogue – all of which can be very successful. I also offer some more advanced dialogue-writing tips, and warn you what to steer clear of when attempting these.

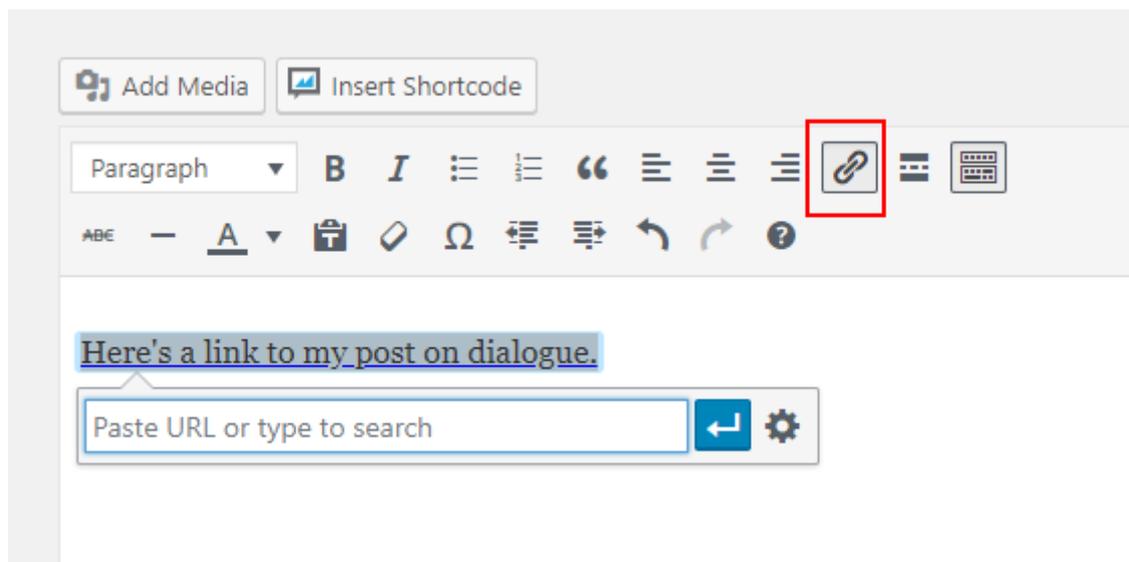


(If you visit that post on my blog, you'll see that you can click the titles that are in blue text or on the images to visit the relevant post.)

How to Create a Link in WordPress

Now that we've explored how you might use links, here's a quick guide to how to create them in WordPress.

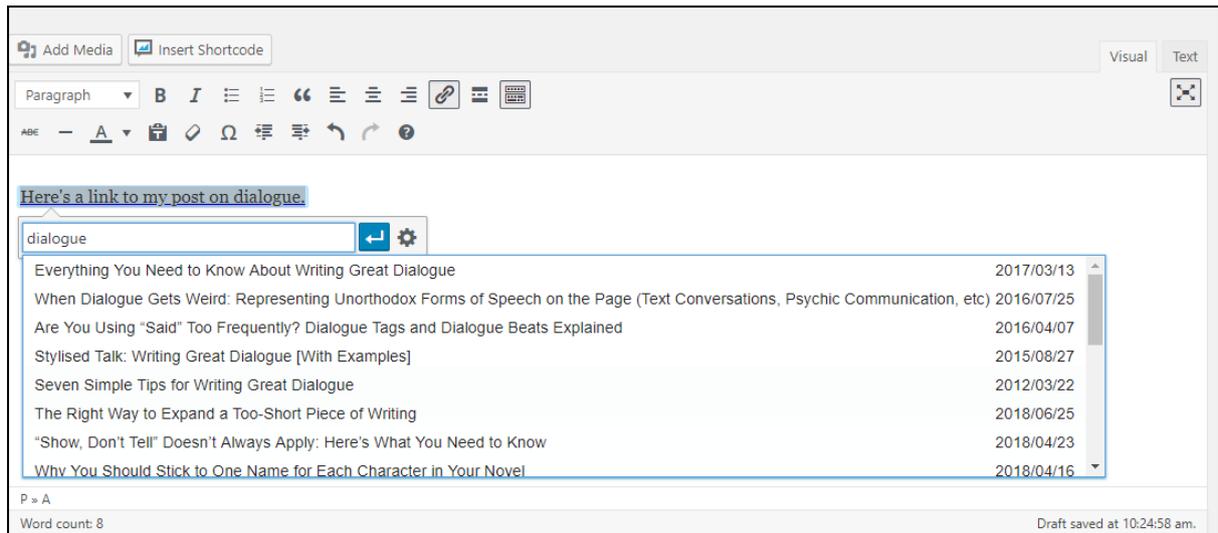
1. Open up your post or page to edit, in the WordPress dashboard.
2. Type (or copy) the word or phrase that you want to become the link's anchor text.
3. Copy the URL (I normally open up the post / website / etc that I want to link to in a new tab).
4. Highlight the anchor text then either:
 - a) Click the "link" button in WordPress and paste your URL into that box (use Ctrl+V on Windows):



Once you've pasted in your link, click the blue button with the white arrow (or hit Enter) to insert it.

- b) (*Even quicker!*) Simply press Ctrl+V while the anchor text is highlighted to create the link.

Alternatively, instead of pasting a URL, you can search for the post on your blog by typing in a word or phrase after clicking the "link" button. This will bring up a list of posts to choose from:



Where to Use Links Within Your Posts

As with quotes, you can use links at almost any point within your post (except for within your title, which is itself a link to the post!)

Using a Link in Your Introduction

If your post is part of a series, you'll want to link to the previous part (or to an index) in your introduction, so new readers can catch up. Here's an example from a short series on guest posting, on ProBlogger – the first sentence of the post includes a link to the previous post in the series:

So, you've realised that [guest posting has loads of benefits for you and your blog](#), but you're not quite sure how to go about it.

Maybe you're worried that you don't have enough experience.

Perhaps you haven't even got an active blog of your own right now.

The introduction can also be a good place to use links to set the scene for the post to come: if you're responding to a news story, for instance, you'll want to link to it early on.

Using a Link in Your Main Body

You can use links within the main body to give extra information – which might mean linking to basic help to get beginners up to speed, linking to something that's only tangentially related but that might be of use, or linking to more

advanced materials for readers who want to go further with your particular topic.

Some types of list post are essentially a collection of links: for instance, if you've written a post titled "My Top Ten Business Books of 2018" then it makes sense to link to each of those. You'll probably also use links in this way on a "recommended resources" page or similar. [Here's an example from Jane Friedman's blog:](#)

Recommended Resources

Updated April 2018

I've probably read, reviewed, or at least seen every single advice book, website, and service for writers. I could recommend dozens of resources, but I'll focus on the most helpful for early-career writers.

The Best of My Advice

- For free: [Jane's Writing Advice Archive](#)
- In book form: [The Business of Being a Writer](#)
- [Learn about my paid services.](#)

Also, [I've created a list of my favorite books on writing and publishing.](#)

High-Level Editing and Coaching

- Writer and editor [Andi Cumbo](#) offers a wide range of budget-friendly services for all types of writers. I recommend her manuscript review, where you can get big-picture feedback before investing in a comprehensive editing job.
- [Nell Boeschenstein](#) is a creative writing professor and extensively published freelancer who offers editing and coaching services for nonfiction writers—including memoir, family history, and narrative nonfiction.

Using a Link in Your Conclusion

This is a great place to encourage readers to check out more posts on your blog. Some bloggers use plugins to show "related posts" immediately after the post itself, but you can also include a link or two in your text.

For instance, you might write, "If you found this post useful, do check out ..."

You might also want to link to a book you've written, your services page, your email newsletter, or something else that you sell – especially if it's closely related to the post the reader's just read.

Here's an example [from this post on The Book Designer's blog](#): the words "independent publishers" at the end of the post link to IBPA (the Independent Book Publishers Association).

Click on the button reading **Publish Your eBook**. Congratulations! Your book should be available soon – most likely in a half a day or less. [ix]

You will be returned to your **Bookshelf** page. Your title will be greyed out; you won't be able to edit any of the settings until it has been published. From that point on, however, you can change any of those settings – subtitle, keywords, categories, cover art, prices, even the book file – as often as you wish. Experiment! See what works!

And welcome to the ranks of [independent publishers](#).

Most bloggers don't include links within their posts as frequently as they should. Before publishing any post, it's worth having a quick look on your blog to see whether there's something else you've written that you can link a reader to. The more posts they read, the more likely they are to stick around long-term!

Using Nested Subheadings

We talked briefly about subheadings in Module #4, when we looked at list posts – but I wanted to take a look at them in more detail here.

Subheadings are invariably in a larger font than the rest of the post, and might be in a different colour. Here's how they look on my blog ([from this post](#)):

Non-Physical Suffering

Subheading (Heading 2)

You can put characters through hell without a single cut or bruise. Here are a few ideas:

#9: Financial Problems

Sub-subheading (Heading 3)

Money (as most writers notice at some point!) can be a massive source of stress. This can work for almost any character, however well-off – e.g. they lose all their money, or they go through an acrimonious divorce, or money is a serious source of relationship stress.

Handy for: putting pressure on a relationship; forcing difficult decisions (especially if physical suffering – e.g. hunger – is on the horizon); conflict between characters.

Example: The gulf between rich men and their (usually female) assistants, who are paying off student loan debt, kicks off drives the plot in *The Assistants* by Camille Perri.

#10: Losing a Job

Sub-subheading (Heading 3)

On its own, this isn't necessarily a form of suffering – but assuming the character wanted or needed the job, then it's likely to lead to financial or social difficulties. They may face a crisis of self-identity.

If losing a job is a bit drastic, an explicit or implied threat to a character's job can be a milder way of achieving some of the same effects. In children's or YA fiction, expulsion from school, or the threat of it, can work in a similar way to an adult losing a job.

Handy for: relationship problems (with spouse, former co-workers, etc); character blaming

As you can see, I'm using nested subheadings, or "sub-subheadings" in this post, to split high-level sections into smaller parts.

In HTML, there are seven levels of subheadings, but for practical purposes, the ones you'll be using are:

Heading 1 – the title of your post. Avoid using this within your post as it can confuse search engines if you have more than one Heading 1 on a page.

Heading 2 – the subheadings within your post. In many posts, this will be the only level of subheading you use.

Heading 3 – sub-subheadings. You might have two sections in your post with a Heading 2 subheading, and each of those sections might be divided into several short parts, with a Heading 3 subheading for each of those parts.

You *might* possibly use Heading 4, if you're writing a very long post with a lot of nested subheadings. I think it's fine to simply use bold text at this level, though (like I do with "Handy for" and "Example" in my post).

When you're writing subheadings, it's good practice to:

- **Make your subheadings match one another, within one level.** If your post is split into three sections, each with a Heading 2 subheading, try to make all those subheadings roughly the same length. You might want to use a question for each of them, or start each one with a verb. Think of them a little like bullet-points: you want them to read consistently.
- **Check that you're being consistent with the Heading number.** For instance, if your post is a list of five items, don't have some of those items in Heading 2 and others in Heading 3. (It's very easy to accidentally get the wrong one when drafting, so this is always a good thing to double-check when you proofread.)
- **Ideally, don't *immediately* follow a subheading with a sub-subheading.** Most bloggers think it looks better to have at least a line or two of text first. This is a very small thing, though, so don't worry if it makes more sense in your post to have a Heading 2 subheading immediately followed by a Heading 3 subheading.
- **Capitalise your subheadings consistently.** I like to use Title Case for all my subheadings, just like I do for my blog post titles, but some of the blogs I've freelanced for prefer to use an initial capital only. There's no "right" or "wrong" here – but it is important to be consistent, certainly within an individual post, but if possible also on your blog as a whole.

Where to Use Subheadings

Subheadings normally belong in the main body of your post. You *might* have a subheading at the start of your conclusion, but this isn't mandatory.

I'd avoid using subheadings at all in the introduction to your post, unless you're writing a very long piece. Your first subheading will normally mark the start of the post itself.

In any post that has a layered structure, with sections split further into different parts, you'll want to consider using sub-subheadings. If you're writing

a very long post (say, 2,000 words or more), nested subheadings can help to break it up visually and orient the reader.

How to Create Your Subheadings

It's simple to create a subheading in WordPress:

Copying from Word

I like to draft my blog posts in Word. WordPress will keep the subheadings at the correct level if you use Word's "Heading" styles then copy-and-paste your post into the Visual editor.

1. Type your subheading into your Word document, on its own line. Highlight it or click on it.
2. In the "Styles" pane on the Word ribbon, click "Heading 2" (or "Heading 3" for a sub-subheading).
3. Do this for all your subheadings, then copy-and-paste your post into the WordPress visual editor.
4. You should find that the formatting is preserved.

Adding Subheadings in the WordPress Visual Editor

1. Type your subheading into your blog post, on its own line. Highlight it or click on it.
2. In the "Paragraph" drop down, select "Header 2" (or "Header 3" for a sub-subheading). *If you can't see the Paragraph drop down, click the `[[TOGGLE]]` button to open up the second row of buttons:*

[screenshot showing Paragraph drop down and the Toggle button highlighted]

Adding Subheadings in the WordPress Text Editor

1. Type your subheading into your blog post, on its own line.
2. Immediately before the subheading, type `<h2>` (or `<h3>` for a sub-subheading)
3. Immediately after the subheading, type `</h2>` (or `</h3>` for a sub-subheading).

All three methods will produce exactly the same result, so use whichever works best within your own workflow.

Subheadings take only moments to add to your post, and they're very simple to format – but they can make a huge difference to the reading experience.

Other Elements to Use Within Your Posts

In the final section of this module, I want to quickly take you through some other formatting elements you may want to try out.

All of these different elements are fairly simple ones, but they can be very handy. I'll introduce them briefly, then go through each in turn:

Bold text – used for emphasis

Italic text – for emphasis or for an aside

Horizontal line – for dividing one part of your post from another

“Read More” link – for splitting your post part-way so that only the first part appears on your home page / in your list of blog posts.

Bullet-pointed lists – for giving information in an easy-to-take-in format

Images – can be used at the start of your post, but also throughout it

Bold and Italic Text

Bold text is great for emphasising a key sentence or point. It's best used fairly sparingly: too much bold text (especially if you tend to use it on individual words or short phrases) can make your post look rather choppy.

Italic text is great for putting stress on an individual word (e.g. to distinguish between “what *was* Sam thinking?” and “what was *Sam* thinking?”) You can also use italic text on a whole sentence or paragraph to set it aside a little from the rest of your text, as with the first line of this post (which I also put into a lighter font colour):

Note: This post was originally published in 2016, and was updated in June 2018.

Do your characters suffer enough?

Even if you're writing a light and fluffy romance, at some point, someone in your novel is going to need to get hurt.

I'm not suggesting all-out graphic torture here, obviously – unless that suits your genre. Suffering comes in a lot of different forms – and I'm going to go through a bunch of those in a moment.

Horizontal Line

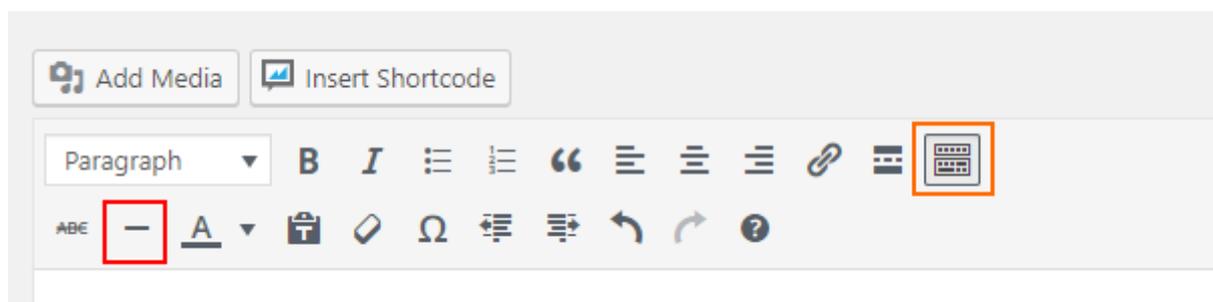
Many bloggers don't know that this even exists, but it's a handy feature!

A horizontal line is a simple dividing line across your post. It can be really useful if you want to have a short section of text before the post itself, or after the post itself.

You might use this, for instance, if you want to begin your post with an announcement that isn't particularly related to it, or if you want to end it with a longer call to action (e.g. inviting people to join your newsletter) that's set off from the post.

[ADD EXAMPLE]

To create the line, simply click the Horizontal Line button on the WordPress toolbar, shown in the red box below:



If you can't see that second row of buttons, click the "Toolbar Toggle" at the end of the top line (in the orange box above).

Alternatively, you can use the Text view to insert the HTML tag for a horizontal line, which is `<hr/>` (standing for "horizontal rule").

“Read More” Link

The “read more” link sometimes gets confused with the horizontal line – but they’re two very different things.

The horizontal line is a visual marker but doesn’t have any functional effect.

The read more line *doesn’t* appear visually in your post itself, but it *does* have an important function. It splits your post into two parts. Only the first part, before the “read more” will appear on the homepage of your blog:



MONDAY, MAY 14, 2018

Everything You Need to Know About Writing Brilliant Blog Posts

by Ali

Comment 10 Share 10 Tweet



Everything You Need to Know About Writing Brilliant Blog Posts
aliventures.com

Over the last eight years, I've written hundreds (probably thousands!) of blog posts for dozens of different blogs.

I've also written quite a bit about blogging. Today, I wanted to share five of my favourite pieces about blogging, all published here on Aliventures over the past couple of years:

[Continue reading >](#)

On that home page, you’ll see the “Continue reading”, “Read more”, or similar link that’s created, but it won’t be in your post itself when you open it up, as you can see:

Over the last eight years, I've written hundreds (probably thousands!) of blog posts for dozens of different blogs.

I've also written quite a bit about blogging. Today, I wanted to share five of my favourite pieces about blogging, all published here on Aliventures over the past couple of years:

Should Your Blog Have a Narrow or Broad Topic?

When I got into blogging ten years ago (yikes), the prevailing advice was to "choose a niche". Since then, many bloggers have realised that picking a *very* narrow



Bullet-Pointed Lists

In WordPress (and in almost any word processing program or blogging platform), you can create two types of lists:

- Unordered lists, normally using a little black dot as the bullet point (though you can change it to a different symbol if you prefer).
- Ordered lists, where each item on the list is numbered sequentially. WordPress (or Word, etc) automatically puts in the numbers ... and renumbers everything if you insert an item mid-way.

Like bold text, lists *can* make your post look a bit choppy if you overuse them. I'd also avoid having really long lists, as they can be a bit much to take in: split your list into multiple categories if you need to.

It's fiddly to do lists with more than one paragraph per bullet point ... but to be honest, I don't think it's very helpful to use bullet points if you're putting loads of information into each. Just use subheadings instead.

Within your list, all items should match. Here's a quick example to show what I mean:

In today's blog post, I'm going to teach you how to:

- *Buy your own domain name*
- *Buy hosting*
- *Setting up a WordPress blog*

That third bullet point should be “set up a WordPress blog”, so that it matches other items on the list and (crucially) it works with the phrase that introduces the list – “teach you how to...”

Images

Back in Module #2, we very briefly mentioned that you might use an image as part of the introduction to your post. Many bloggers use images *only* in their introductions (or don’t even use them at all) ... but it can often be useful to include images within the main body of your post.

You can insert an image in WordPress using the “Media” uploader:

1. Click the “Add Media” button (just above the box where you write your post).
2. Click “Upload Files”, and upload your image, or...
3. ... use the “Media Library” to choose an image that you’ve already uploaded.
4. Click on the image and then click the blue “Insert into post” button (bottom right).

Images are particularly important if you’re writing a “how to” style post, or something like a recipe where readers will want to *see* what they’re aiming for.

They can also be very handy if you’re linking to several different resources (like books or even blog posts or websites) – they add more visual interest to your post, and as we mentioned earlier in this module, you can use the images themselves as links. (To turn an image into a link, edit it and set a “custom URL” under “Link To”.)

When you’re choosing images for your blog, it’s crucial that you *do not* simply search on Google Images for your topic.

That’s so important I’ll say it again: **do not search on Google (or any other search engine) for images.**

Many images online are copyrighted, and you don’t have the right to republish them. You could face a hefty fine if you inadvertently use someone else’s image without permission.

To be safe, you need to source images from a site that offers “creative commons” licensed work that you can use *commercially* (if your blog makes any money at all, or might make money in the future).

I use [Pixabay](#) for most of the images I use in my Aliventures blog post; [Pexels](#) is another good source.

As with other design elements, do try to use images consistently. For instance, if you have a long post with five subsections, you might use an image at the start of each subsection, and you might try to pick images that are reasonably similar (e.g. using photos each time, not a mix of photos and cartoons and screenshots).

Module #6: Recap

I know there’s been a lot to take in here, so congratulations on making it through! You definitely don’t need to master all these techniques at once, and you might only use one or two of them in any given post.

Here’s a summary of what we covered in this week’s module:

- **Quotes allow you to bring in other people’s opinions and expertise.** They add greater depth to your posts, and can be used at any point (even in the title).
- **Links let you guide your readers to extra help and further resources.** You might link to your own posts, books, etc ... or to someone else’s. Linking to another blogger is a great way to do something nice!
- **Subheadings break up blog posts and offer “signposts” for your reader** – as well as making your post look more attractive to read. They’re easy to create, but make sure you’re using the correct level of subheading.
- **You can also use other features like bold and italic text, horizontal lines, “read more” links, and images** to make your posts easy for readers to engage with.

It can be tricky to get to grips with new formatting features, especially if you’ve not been blogging for very long. If you get stuck at any point, do come and ask for help in our Facebook group: [facebook.com/groups/blogonspring2018](https://www.facebook.com/groups/blogonspring2018)

Module #6 Assignment and Check In

This week, your assignment is to write a blog post on any topic you like. It can be a classic post (Module #2) or a list post (Module #4).

Within your post, use *at least* one of the formatting options we covered in this module. Ideally, use more than one!

Once you've written your post, or got as far as you're going to get, check in here to get your reward card stamped:

[facebook.com/groups/blogon.spring2018/permalink/244108566367996](https://www.facebook.com/groups/blogon.spring2018/permalink/244108566367996)

If possible, please share the link to your post with us, so we can check it out. If you don't want to publish it yet, or don't yet have your blog online, you can upload a draft to the Facebook group.

If you prefer not to use Facebook, email me with "Check in" in the subject line.

Don't forget, you need to check in by the end of **Sunday 8th July**. (It's fine to check in even if you haven't quite finished your post.)

Module #6: Recommended Further Reading

All of the further reading is optional, but if you want to find out more about something we've covered in the module, it's highly recommended! If you find other useful resources, you're welcome to share them in our Facebook group.

[The Why, How and When of Using Quotations on Your Blog](#), Ali Luke, ProBlogger

This post (by yours truly) goes into a fair bit of detail about *why* you'll want to use quotes and offers suggestions for how best to use them. I also give some ideas for types of posts you could create using lots of quotes.

[How to Use Subheadings to Add Structure to Your Blog Posts \[podcast\]](#), Ali Luke, ProBlogger

This podcast episode on ProBlogger features me, talking about subheadings. I explain why you should use them, how to use them well, and offer a couple of examples and some technical tips as well.

[A Guide on Where to Find Photos and Images for Your Blog](#), Ramsay Taplin, Blog Tyrant

This is a huge and comprehensive post all about sourcing and using images on your blog. It goes into a bit more detail than most bloggers need, so feel free to skim-read it and focus on the parts that are most helpful to you.

What's Coming Up Next Week:

Module #7: Blog Pages: Services, Products, and Recommendations

Next week, from Monday 9th July, we'll be looking at key pages on your blog. We'll go through the crucial differences between posts and pages, and how to know which you should use when.

We'll take a look at three different types of page you might create: a "services" page (where you offer, for example, freelancing services); a "products" page (where you might promote your books); and a "recommended resources" page (which is a really useful page for *any* blog to have).