TEN EASY WAYS TO ATTRACT READERS TO YOUR BLOG AND KEEP THEM THERE

Introduction

If you haven't already read it, you might want to start with my mini-ebook *Ten Powerful Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Stronger.*

You can download it here:

aliventures.com/newsletter-secret

Password: **alinewsletter**

I've written this follow-up ebook to address one huge question:

Why is no-one reading my blog?

Good news: it's probably not because your posts are boring or badly written. If you've been implementing the tips in *Ten Powerful Ways* then you'll have some great pieces on your blog that readers would love to dig into.

But … however awesome your content is, readers are very unlikely to just happen to find it.

Plus, once they're on your blog and reading, you want them to stick around.

We're going to begin with five ways to get your blog into great shape – so that it encourages readers to stick around.

After that, we'll look at five ways to get those readers to come to your blog in the first place.

If that seems a bit backwards, think of it this way: we're tidying up your house first, then inviting the guests over to sit down and relax.

#1: Make Your Blog Easy to Read

In Ten Powerful Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Stronger, we looked at using formatting (subheadings, bold text, lists, etc) and conversational language (particularly using "you") to make your blog posts easy to engage with.

Here, I want you to think about how easy your blog is to *physically* read. When someone looks at the screen, what do they see?

The Text Itself

Some common problems which I've seen crop up again and again are:

Problem: The Font Size is Too Small

Fix: Increase the font size! This might mean switching to a different theme for your blog, or editing the current theme. [Daniel Scocco has a great post about how increasing your font size keeps readers on your site.](#)

Problem: The Font Itself is Difficult to Read

Fix: Use a sans-serif font such as Arial or Geneva. Avoid any fancy, handwriting style fonts except for very limited use (e.g. in your logo is OK, if the font fits your brand).

Problem: The Background Colour Makes it Hard to Read the Text

Fix: Avoid white text on a black background (however cool it looks) – it's tough to read. Avoid white text on a pale background, or black text on a bright background. Ideally, stick with black text on white, or something close (e.g. very dark grey on white, black on cream).

Too Much Clutter

Blogs can also become difficult to read if they get cluttered. Perhaps you've got every widget known to mankind in your sidebar, making it hard for readers to spot the relevant information (like your list of popular posts).

Be especially careful with adverts. Yes, your Google AdWords box might be converting well because you've jammed it in the middle of every post – but it could be annoying readers and driving them away from your blog. Instead of making pennies on AdWords, think long-term: loyal readers will often become loyal customers.

Is Your Blog Attractive to First-Time Readers?

If you really want to improve your blog, find someone who's never seen it before and ask them to take a look. (You're welcome to ask me – ali@aliventures.com.)

Get them to tell you whether there's anything which makes it hard for them to read your posts – and be prepared to make some changes based on their feedback.

Exercise #1:

Increase your font size slightly. You might decide to change to a different theme, or edit the font size in your style.css file. *(Note that changes may be lost if you update the theme in future.)*

If your background makes the text hard to read, change that too.

Further Reading

[7 Quick Tips to Make Your Bog Design More Readable](), Nicholas Tart, Income Diary

Practical tips on making your blog easier to read, with handy "how to" information on the technicalities of actually getting it done.

#2: Update Your "About" Page

When did you last update your About page?

Many bloggers set up an About page when they first start their blog – and never touch it again. (Some even leave their blog platform's default text in place.) But the About page is probably one of the most-read pages on your site, and it's crucial that it draws readers in.

You'll want your About page to:

- Explain the purpose of your blog, in an engaging way.
- State who the blog is for (e.g. "entrepreneurs", "writers", "women").
- Tell the reader a little bit about your own story – make it clear why you have the credentials, experience or skills to write this blog.
- Give links to encourage the reader to check out some of your best posts.
- Mention any services or products that you sell on your blog (or elsewhere).

It's fine to write about your personal life – perhaps your hobbies, or your family. But try to keep this towards the bottom of your About page. New readers won't yet be particularly curious about you – what they're interested in is how you can help them, through your blog or your services.

How Much Detail Should You Include?

It's best to keep your About page fairly short. Try to focus on information that will (a) help readers know if your blog's right for them and (b) help them feel a sense of connection to you.

When it comes to personal details, I'd recommend including:

- Your full name (or full pseudonym).
- A smiling photo of yourself. (If you prefer to remain anonymous, you might use a photo of your workspace, a cartoon, a toy or something else that can represent you.)

Beyond that, it's up to you. Some bloggers are happy to talk about their family life; others won't mention their partner or kids at all.

-

Updating Your About Page Regularly

Many bloggers find that, as time goes by, the purpose of their blog shifts slightly. For instance, back in 2009, my blog Aliventures was originally focused on topics like time management and self-development. It took months before I decided to focus on writing advice and aim the blog at writers.

Even if your blog doesn't change direction, you'll find that you write new, better posts which you want to link to, or you release new products to promote.

Your life will move on, too. You might graduate from a degree, get married, have a child (or another child), move to a new city … *(I've done all of those since I started Aliventures).*

It's worth making a note to revisit your About page on a regular basis, maybe once a month. That way, you can make sure it's always up to date.

Exercise #2:

Look at your About page. Does the first paragraph clearly explain what your blog is about? If not, rewrite it!

Further Reading

[Are You Making These 7 Mistakes with Your About Page?](#), Sonia Simone, Copyblogger

Straightforward advice on what not to do with your About page (and what to do instead). If you're unsure about some of the *whys* of what I've recommended in this chapter, head here!
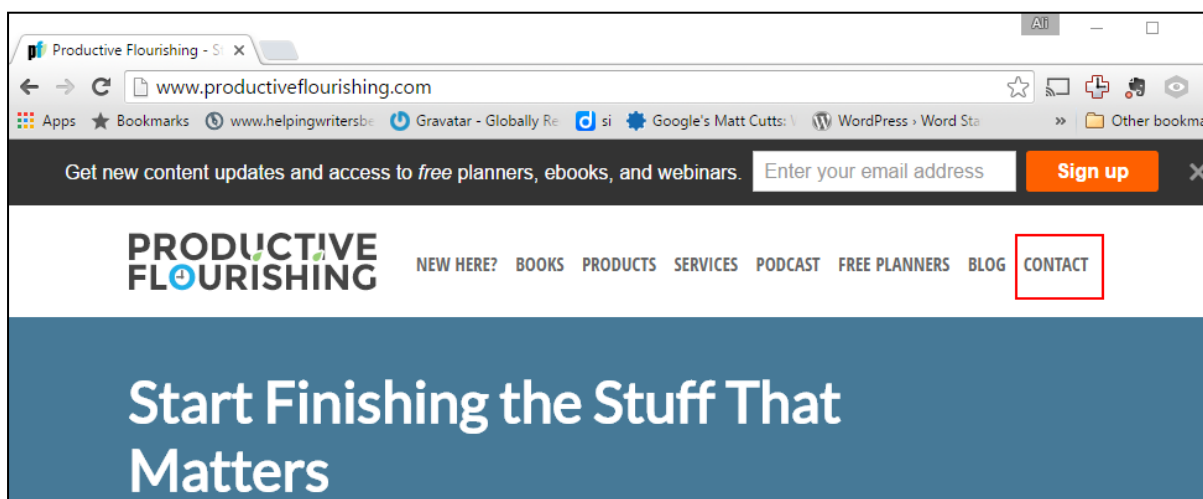
#3: Offer Multiple Means of Contact

One great way to engage readers is to build a personal relationship with them. Obviously, you won't be able to do this with every single person who comes to your blog – but you can make sure that readers who want to get in touch can do so easily.

(Often, readers who get a response to their comment or a reply to their email will become your biggest fans. They might well come back repeatedly, share your blog with their friends, and buy your products.)

If you're in a real hurry right now, just put your email address in the sidebar or on your About page. Set aside some time in the next week or two, though, to create a dedicated Contact page.

Your Contact Page

Most websites have the Contact page as the right-most link in the menu. Here's Productive Flourishing's (I've drawn a red box around it):

You don't *have* to put it your Contact link on the far right, but doing so makes it easy for the reader to find it at a glance.

Your Contact page should ideally include:

- **A form that readers can fill out to get in touch** (I like the Contact Form 7 plugin for Wordpress, which makes it easy to create nice-looking forms).
- **Your email address**, preferably in an easy format to copy and paste.

Why both?

Some readers like to use contact forms – it saves them opening up their email account and writing an email.

Other readers prefer to have your email address so they can email directly – they might not trust that the contact form will get their message safely to you.

You may also want to include:

- **Links to your social media accounts** – this is a simple way to increase your Twitter followers or Facebook fans.
- **Your business phone number or Skype ID** – give this some thought, as you may prefer to avoid the risk of cold calls (or crank calls). I only give out my Skype ID and phone number by email, when these are actually needed.
- **Answers to any frequently asked questions** – e.g. a link to your guest post guidelines, information about whether or not you accept ads.

Exercise #3:

Create a contact form for your About page. Allow fields for readers to give their name, email address and message. You might also want to include a field for the subject line.

Further Reading

[Five Common Contact Page Mistakes … and How to Fix Them](), Ali Luke, DailyBlogTips

While your contact page might well be the shortest, simplest page on your blog … it's still easy to get it wrong. Use this post as a checklist to make sure you're not making any basic mistakes.

#4: Add Social Media Buttons to Your Posts

How easy is it for readers to share your posts with their friends? If their only option is to copy-and-paste your post's URL into Twitter or Facebook, then they might well not bother.

By including a "Tweet" button (for Twitter) or a "Like" button (for Facebook) on every post, you allow readers to easily share your work with a single click.

Here's an example from the bottom of a post on ProBlogger:

The reader clicks the button, which instantly generates a Facebook post, tweet, etc – it can be modified, or sent as-is. There's no need for the reader to copy out the title of the post.

Many social media buttons will also offer social proof: readers can see how many other people have shared the post too.

You can even add "Tweet this" links to specific points in your post – e.g. if a particular phrase or sentence would make a great quote. There's an example in Charlie Gilkey's post Websites Are Like Gardens – You're Never Done:

Websites are like gardens—they're always growing and needing to be tended. (Tweet this)

The garden analogy bears even more fruit because it accounts for the fact that website redesigns get harder as your website and experience mature. When you're just starting out, you have six *really hard* pages to create. In our case, we have over a thousand posts, pages, podcast episodes, and so on to replant or tend. If you count downloads, well, it gets out of hand pretty quickly.

You're never done with a garden. At best, you're done with gardening *for now*. And that's where we find ourselves: happily done(ish) with *major* gardening, for now.

Exercise #4:

Add a plugin that will let you include social media buttons your post. Next time you write a post, mention to your readers that those buttons are now there – and encourage them to share your post.

Further Reading

[Top 10 Social Media Plugins for WordPress](#), Megan Totka, Small Business Trends

This is a round-up of handy plugins that let readers tweet and share your posts easily. They all have a different look and feel (and in many cases slightly different features) – but whichever you choose, it should help you boost your posts' shares.

#5: Set Up an Email Subscription Option

Back when I first wrote this ebook in 2011, I recommended running your blog's feed through FeedBurner, in order to collect statistics about your subscribers and to offer email subscriptions.

Many bloggers do still use FeedBurner, but a lot of experts – such as the WPBeginner blog – have now suggested avoiding it, as it can be buggy and the FeedBurner software is no longer regularly updated.

There are a fair few alternatives out there, some of which you'll need to pay a monthly fee for. I've linked to a great round-up of alternatives in the Further Reading, below.

Why Email Subscriptions?

If you subscribe to blogs in an RSS reader, like Feedly, you might wonder why your readers wouldn't do the same.

Well, unless you're blogging about something fairly techy, there's a good chance that your readers won't be keen to get to grips with a whole new technology. They're already familiar with email – and they'd prefer to use that.

From your point of view, email subscribers are more valuable than RSS subscribers. They're more likely to read your posts – and you can potentially contact them directly by email, as you'll have their email addresses. This is handy if, for instance, you want to send out a special offer by email that you're not including on your blog.

Setting Up Email Subscriptions

The simplest free solution is to leave your default (and free!) feed as-is. You can install Jetpack (a WordPress plugin) to offer basic email subscriptions – see: How to Add Email Subscriptions to Your WordPress Blog on WPBeginner.

To see how many subscribers you have, and find out more about them, you can install the [Simple Feed Stats plugin](#).

Make your email subscription option prominent: the very top of your sidebar is a great place. I also include the email subscription box on key posts.

Tip: Avoid using the word "subscribe" on your blog: some readers will assume that it means they have to pay to get your posts. Instead, try "get updates" or "get posts straight to your inbox".

Exercise #5:

Decide what solution(s) you'll be using to (a) check your feed's stats and (b) send out your feed by email. The Further Reading link offers a number of choices, with clear pros/cons to each. If you're still stuck, you might want to ask blogger friends what they use.

Further Reading

[What Are The Best Feedburner Alternatives?](#)

This is an in-depth summary of alternatives to Feedburner, with the various pros and cons of each clearly marked in a table. Some are free; the more feature-rich require a monthly subscription.

So, your blog is in great shape to welcome lots of new readers. Now you need to throw open the doors and encourage them in!

In this section, I'll start with the easiest, quickest suggestions and work up to the harder, more time-consuming ones.
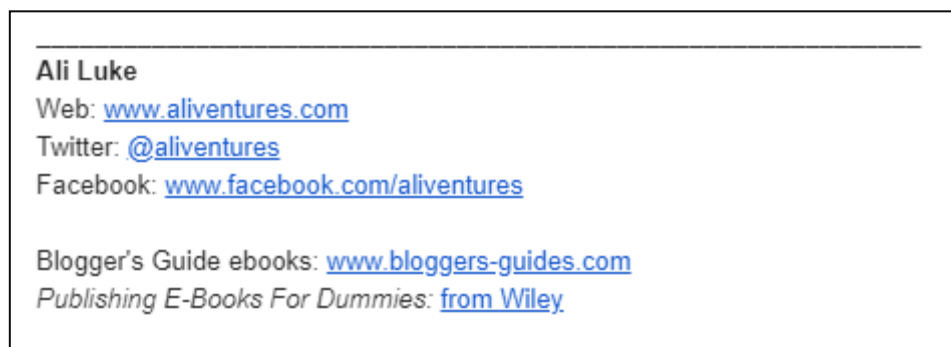
#6: Add Links in Your Signatures

A "signature" is the piece of text which appears at the bottom of every email that you send, or at the bottom of your forum posts.

It takes just a minute or two to create or update your signature – but doing so can bring in thousands of new readers over time. You can make every email you send (and every forum post you write) a chance to gain readers for your blog.

Creating an Email Signature

With Gmail, you can set up an email signature in your Settings: instructions here. This is my current one:

_____

Ali Luke
Web: www.aliventures.com
Twitter: @aliventures
Facebook: www.facebook.com/aliventures

Blogger's Guide ebooks: www.bloggers-guides.com
Publishing E-Books For Dummies: from Wiley

You might want to include:

- The URL of your blog (pretty important!)
- Its tagline – especially if the topic isn't clear from the name.
- Links to your social media accounts.
- Links to anything you especially want to promote (e.g. a new ebook).

Keep in mind that too many links or options can be overwhelming – or annoying – for the person receiving your email. Also, if you'll be emailing work contacts or a lot of people with no connection to your blogging life, you may need to keep self-promotion to a minimum.
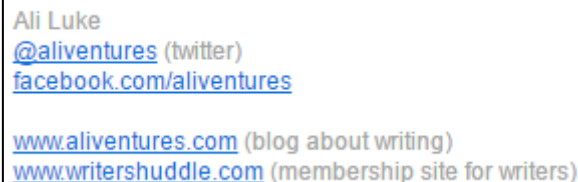
Create a Forum Signature

If you're a member of any online forums, check whether you can add a signature to your account. If the functionality is there, you should be fine to use it – but read the forum rules to find out whether it's okay to include a URL.

Your forum signature will appear under every post you write, so keep it short and straightforward. You'll probably want to include:

- Your name or pseudonym.
- A few words about who you are/what you do.
- The link to your blog, or to a specific post or resource.

Here's an example:

Ali Luke
@aliventures (twitter)
facebook.com/aliventures

www.aliventures.com (blog about writing)
www.writershuddle.com (membership site for writers)

Exercise #6:

Go into your email account and create a signature. Don't worry about making it perfect. Just put in your website name / URL, and perhaps a link to your Twitter account or Facebook page.

Further Reading

[The photographer's guide to email signatures](), ForegroundWeb

Although this advice is aimed at photographers, there are a lot of good, in-depth tips here for anyone who's marketing using an email signature.

#7: Build Links to Your Blog

While Google regularly changes exactly how their algorithm works, it's always been true that links to your site – ideally from large, reputable sites – will boost your position in Google's rankings.

So, links mean more search engine traffic – plus direct traffic through the link itself.

When you're just starting out, though, building links can be tricky. You don't want to go about it the wrong way and annoy other bloggers (or worse, Google!)

Here's what to do – and what not to do.

Do…

Do write great content that's worth linking to. This is essential. But (despite what some bloggers think), on its own, it's not enough.

Do ask fellow bloggers to link to your posts. They might share the link on social media or (even better) on their blog. Be careful not to overdo this, though – you'll quickly annoy people.

Do include links to your own posts when guest posting. Again, don't overdo this, and make sure the links are super-relevant. Some blogs won't allow you to link to your own posts, or will only allow one or two links.

Don't…

Don't mass-email people to set up "link exchanges". These tit-for-tat link exchanges are frowned on by Google (and you'll end up annoying a lot of bloggers).

Don't be stingy with your own links! Make sure that you tweet/share other bloggers' posts, and that you include links to great posts on your blog (either in a special round-up post or when the opportunity arises within regular posts).

Don't buy links from other blogs or websites. This is frowned on by Google. *(If you do buy links, they need to be "no-followed", which means that they won't contribute to your Google ranking.)*

Exercise #7:

In your next post, include at least one link to a post on someone else's blog. (Ideally, go for a fairly small blog – one where they'll be glad of a link). If they get in touch to say thanks, you can suggest one or two of your posts that their audience might enjoy. Hopefully, they'll be willing to share or link to them – but don't push it if not.

Further Reading

[10 No-Nonsense Ways to Build Backlinks](#), Gregory Ciotti, ProBlogger

Lots of detailed advice on getting links to your blog – some of these techniques are fairly advanced, but you'll definitely find at least a few you can implement straight away. I particularly like the "resources pages" and "roundups" ideas.

#8: Leave Comments on Other Blogs

You might well be doing this already, as it's a quick and simple way to start making your blog visible to people who might be interested.

Whenever you leave a comment on another blog, you'll be able to link your name to your blog by entering your blog's URL in the "URL" field.

If your comment is interesting, you'll find that some readers click through to check out your blog.

Here's an example from a comment left on my own blog:

Kim's name is a clickable link to his blog, and the link to his latest post at the bottom is generated by the CommentLuv plugin (more on that in a moment).

When you're using comments to build traffic, there are a few things to avoid:

Don't use your blog's name or a keyword – this comes across as spammy, and bloggers may even delete your comment. For instance, I leave comments as "Ali Luke" not as "Aliventures" or (worse) "Writing Tips".

It's OK on most blogs to use your name *plus* your blog's name, e.g "Ali Luke | Aliventures", though even that can look a bit self-serving.

Don't rush to leave a comment just to be first – read the actual post! It's true, though, that early comments tend to get the most attention – so you might want to check when posts normally go up on your favourite blogs.

Don't pick a fight to get attention – this is unlikely to endear you to the person who owns the blog and your comment might well get deleted.

Don't leave comments unless you have something to say. "Great post!" or "Thanks!" might be nice for the blogger to hear – but it won't add to the discussion and readers won't be intrigued enough to click on your name to read more from you.

You can add a photo of yourself (which will appear beside your comments on many blogs) using Gravatar – this may encourage readers to click your name.

The CommentLuv Plugin

To make your commenting more effective, look out for WordPress blogs which have the "CommentLuv" plugin. This is a clever little bit of software which will link to your most recent post, underneath your comment.

You can see it in action on my own blog in Kim's comment, above.

Using Comments to Build Blogging Relationships

Leaving comments will bring in some quick, short-term traffic – but it's also a powerful way of building up relationships with other bloggers (which makes it easier to ask for a link or a retweet).

You might want to start off by commenting regularly – not necessarily on every single post – then follow this up with a guest post submission (see the next section for more on that).

Exercise #8:

Pick three blogs – ideally, ones you're already reading. Leave a thoughtful comment on the most recent post on each. I normally aim for 50 – 150 words: it's hard to say anything substantial in a shorter space, but anything longer will get skimmed, not read.

Further Reading

[How to Generate Insane Volumes Of Traffic Through Blog Commenting](#), Think Traffic

There are lots of good, straightforward tips here for using blog comments effectively – including "be consistent" (comment regularly on the same blogs, so your name becomes known to the blogger and to readers).

#9: Write a Guest Post for Another Blog

Many big, popular blogs don't just link out to anyone who asks – but there's an easy way to get a valuable link by creating a win-win situation for you and for them.

Write a guest post.

I know this can be a daunting idea, especially when you're new to blogging. You might think that no-one will want a guest post from you.

But the truth is, most big blogs are very keen to have well-written, on-topic content from guest writers – and they don't mind whether your own blog is brand-new or well established.

I used to write guest posts when I didn't have an active blog at all (I was promoting my ebook) – and not a single blogger cared!

How to Write Your Guest Post

Step #1: Pick a target blog *before* writing your post, so you can tailor it especially to them. Aim for a large blog in your niche which uses guest writers. If they have submission guidelines, read them – carefully.

Step #2: Read several posts on the blog. Come up with some ideas that seem like they'd be a good fit.

Step #3: Choose your strongest idea and develop a plan. (You might want to check if there's a consistent format to posts on the blog – look at their titles, their length and the way in which they're structured.)

Step #4: Draft your post. If you find yourself getting stuck or bogged down here, take a look at the comments on your target blog. Choose a single commenter and draft the post as if you're sending them a personal email.

Step #5: Edit your post, using the techniques which you learnt in 10 Powerful Ways to Make Your Blog Posts Stronger. Make sure you proof-read carefully too.

I see some would-be guest posters fall down by producing something half-hearted and scrappy – remember that your post will only be accepted if it's good, and readers will only want to come on over to your blog if they're impressed.

It's better to write one or two really strong guest posts than a dozen rushed ones.

Writing Your Bio

You'll almost certainly get to write a short bio to go with your post. Most blogs put this after your post; some include it in a sidebar or put it at the start.

Make sure you include your full name, a few words about yourself, and a link to your blog – or, even better, to a specific resource, like a post on your blog or a free ebook.

Here's an example, from a guest post I wrote for **Write to Done: Traditional Time Management for Writers? Why It Doesn't Work (And What To Do Instead)**:

> About the author:
>
> Ali Luke is the author of "Lycopolis," "Oblivion," and "Publishing E-Books for Dummies." If you want to get serious about your writing, download her free ebook "Time to Write" for practical, encouraging ideas that you can get started with right away.

I saw a *huge* upswing in email signups when that post went out!

(Note: because WtD put all bios in italics, they've put quotation marks around my book titles – I'm not so keen on that stylistically. Like me, you may find you have to accept editors tweaking your bio.)

Exercise #9:

Look through blogs which you read regularly. Pick one that publishes guest posts. Find their guest post guidelines or submission requirements (often linked to from the About or Contact page) and plan a post that would suit them.

Further Reading

[How Seven A-List Bloggers Used Guest Posting to Massively Improve Their Reach](), Ali Luke, Zen Optimise

If you're unsure about the value of guest posting, take a look at these short case studies of seven different bloggers who all did brilliantly from it. There's a quick "take away" point for each one, to help you with your own guest posts.

#10: Create Valuable Content, Regularly

Finally, we're onto one of the hardest – but most crucial – factors in getting and keeping readers.

You need to write valuable content on a regular basis.

Valuable means that it offers something which your readers want. That usually means entertaining them, encouraging them or educating them.

Regular means that you keep up your good work! You won't gain much traction if you publish one great post every few months. One post a week, or at a push, one every two weeks, is enough to keep readers engaged.

A great way to create valuable posts – and to have so many ideas that you can always write something – is to answer this question:

What Do Your Readers Want?

You can figure it out by:

- **Reading their comments** (on your blog, or on other blogs that cover the same topics as yours).
- **Running a survey** to find out what big questions or concerns they have: I normally do this once a year.
- **Using Google Analytics** to find out which of your posts are most popular. This provides clues about what readers are searching for – or what they are engaging with.
- **Looking at posts which get shared a lot**, and which get lots of comments: these are also good indications that you hit on a popular topic.
- **Reading books or magazines aimed at beginners** in your area, to see what popular topics they cover – can you blog about any of these?
- **Emailing individual readers** to ask if there's anything they'd like you to write about. (When readers comment, you get to see their email address – look in your blog's dashboard.)

Valuable content will get linked to and retweeted by your readers, drawing more people in. It'll also keep your existing readers engaged – they'll be more likely to sign up to get posts by email, so they don't miss anything.

Exercise #10:

Write down five post ideas, based on questions which readers are asking or following on from posts which have clearly struck a chord with your audience.
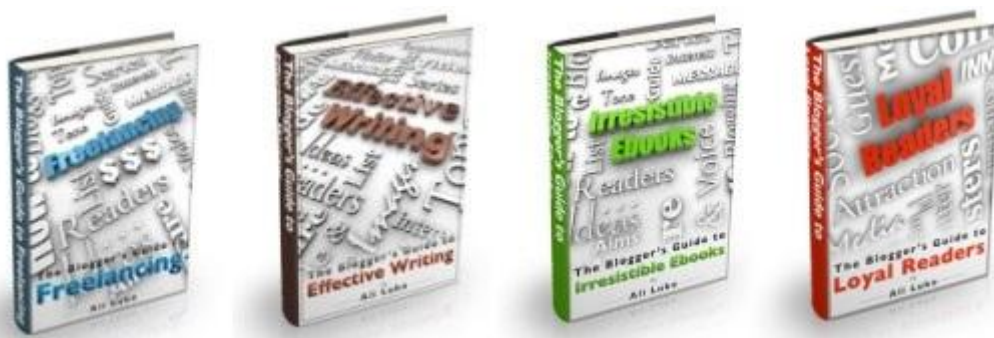
Further Reading

[How to Blog Consistently and Build Your Audience: Eight Simple Steps](#), Ali Luke, Aliventures

If you're struggling to write for your blog on a regular basis, this post explains my step-by-step method for creating blog posts by "batching" tasks together (e.g. coming up with a bunch of ideas, then writing several plans, then drafting).

Where Next?

Congratulations on making it to the end of this ebook!

To take your blogging or writing even further, make sure you keep reading the Aliventures blog regularly (you can get posts straight to your inbox – note that this is separate from the newsletter).

Also, check out my Blogger's Guides, particularly **The Blogger's Guide to Loyal Readers**. It's jam-packed with advice on getting more readers and turning them into true fans, and includes three key sections on:

- Getting Your Blog Ship-Shape
- Attracting New Readers
- Growing Your Blogging Influence

You can find out more and get your copy here.

Remember to use the code alinewsletter to take 35% off the standard price.

About Ali

I've been blogging for over ten years now, and I've written for many big sites – including writing/blogging sites like Copyblogger, ProBlogger, Daily Blog Tips, Write to Done and The Write Life, and Craft Your Content.

I'm the author of *Publishing E-Books For Dummies* (Wiley, 2012) and three novels *Lycopolis*, *Oblivion* and *Dominion*.

I have a BA (Hons) in English from Cambridge University and an MA in Creative and Life Writing from Goldsmiths College, University of London.

I live in Leeds in the UK with my husband Paul, and our two children.

Feel free to get in touch any time:

- **Twitter:** @aliventures
- **Facebook:** facebook.com/aliventures
- **Email:** ali@aliventures.com