

# MODULE #5: CRAFTING A COMPELLING GUEST POST BIO

## IN THIS MODULE:

This week, we're digging into a very important (but often neglected!) part of your guest post – your bio. We'll look at why it's so crucial, what you might want to include, and very importantly, what to link to. We'll cover some real-life examples of bios to learn from, too.

Before we get into today's module, I wanted to show you what a guest post bio looks like, so it's clear what we're talking about.

This isn't a "perfect" bio (we'll come onto some specific tips later) but it should give you an idea of what one looks like:



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**  
**Inna Yatsyna**

Inna Yatsyna is a content marketing specialist at [Serpstat](#), an all-in-one SEO platform. She is a passionate lover of writing, traveling, reading and helping people

[Other posts by Inna Yatsyna »](#)

(From [4 Tips to Improve the Visibility of Your Facebook Page, Inna Yatsyna, Social Media Examiner](#))

Your bio is essentially the "payment" for writing a guest post. You write it yourself, and within it, you can normally link to anything you want – though some sites have specific rules about this.

This means you can use your bio to help you reach your goals, which we discussed back in Module 1. If you've written a book, for instance, you might use your bio to promote that; if you're trying to build your email list, you could link to a page on your site that explains what people get when they sign up.

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Bios are generally written in the third person, not the first person (“Ali Luke is a freelance writer...” not “I am a freelance writer...”)

## Why is Your Bio So Crucial?

We’re devoting a whole module of this course to writing your bio, and you might wonder why it’s so important.

Many guest bloggers do treat the bio as essentially an afterthought: they write their post, then hastily tack on a bio at the end – or fail to write one until the editor requests it. (And trust me, I’ve been guilty of this in the past!)

But your bio is really crucial. A good bio will help you reach your goals: a mediocre one won’t do any harm, but it won’t do much good, either.

**Even if you’re getting paid for your guest post, you should take advantage of the opportunity to craft a good bio** (if you’re allowed one – some blogs that pay don’t also provide a bio). After all, why *wouldn’t* you want the opportunity to get more people to buy your books, hire you for your services, or become loyal readers of your blog?

## How Your Bio Helps You Reach Your Goals

Let’s take a look at some different bios that are designed for different purposes. We’re going to cover:

1. Getting a link to help search engine rankings
2. Encouraging readers to check out *your* blog
3. Getting more social media followers
4. Promoting a product (e.g. a book or course)
5. Promoting a service (e.g. freelance writing or editing)
6. Pointing readers towards your email list

With each bio, we’ll take a look at why the guest blogger has crafted it the way they have, what’s working well, and (if appropriate) what *isn’t* quite working and could do with tweaking.

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## Purpose #1: Getting a Link to Help Search Engine Rankings

*Joe Williams runs Tribe SEO, offering online courses to help you get to grips with SEO fast. He's the lead SEO lecturer at the Digital Marketing Institute, and has been featured in the Guardian, Cosmopolitan, and Huffington Post.*

(From [How to Structure a Great Blog Post That Readers AND Search Engines Will Love](#), Joe Williams, DailyBlogTips)

One very basic reason to include a link to your site (or a page on your site) in your bio is that the more links you have on the web to your site, the higher your site will rank in search engines.

The above bio is for my friend Joe Williams, who has recently rebranded his business from Zen Optimise to Tribe SEO. His website has moved from [www.zenoptimise.com](http://www.zenoptimise.com) to [www.tribeseo.com](http://www.tribeseo.com).

As a result of the move, his key goal right now is to build up more links to the new website. Even though he hasn't yet launched the courses he wants to promote, he wants to get guest posts out there so that he can have a link back to his site.

While your main goal probably isn't *just* to get your website or blog to rank highly in search engines, it's definitely an advantage to have new readers coming in through searches – so even if you only include a link to your homepage, that's still worth having.

## Purpose #2: Encouraging Readers to Visit Your Website or Blog

**About the Author:** Kevin J. Duncan runs [Be A Better Blogger](#), where he uses his very particular set of skills to help people become the best bloggers they can be.

(From [The 5 Best Free Blogging Platforms in 2019 \(100% Unbiased\)](#), Kevin J. Duncan, SmartBlogger)

Kevin links to his website here, with a clear explanation of the benefits of that site. This is an unusually short bio (partly due to SmartBlogger's limitations, I

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believe) so it's very focused. It helps that Kevin's blog has a name that also makes it very clear what he's all about!

I'd like to have seen a link to a specific post or resource on Kevin's site, ideally something that ties in with the topic of the guest post that readers have just finished.

This guest post is hugely in-depth and valuable, so hopefully curious readers will click through just based on his blog's name and description. But linking to a particular post could help entice readers to click – for instance, his post "[The Step-by-Step Process for Starting, Growing and Getting Traffic From Your Blog's Email List](#)" could be a great follow-up for readers interested in what blogging platform to use.

### Purpose #3: Getting More Social Media Followers

*Larry Alton is an independent business consultant specializing in social media trends, business, and entrepreneurship. Follow him on [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#).*

(From Larry Alton, [How to establish your brand on Pinterest \(and make it popular\)](#), ProBlogger)


If you don't yet have a blog set up, or if you've got a static website instead, it might make sense to encourage people to connect with you on social media – as Larry does here. I'd suggest including at least two different links (Larry's gone for Twitter and LinkedIn, which makes sense as he's a consultant).

With this particular option, it's important to make it clear what you actually do: why should people connect with you? I'd have liked to see Larry include a few more words at the end of his bio – e.g. "Follow him on Twitter and LinkedIn for key tips about growing your online business" or similar.

Many blogs will allow you to include a link to your blog/website in your bio *and* links to your social media accounts: if that's the case, it definitely doesn't hurt to use all of those.

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## Purpose #4: Promoting a Product

	<p><i>Martha Conway</i> View posts by Martha Conway</p> <hr/> <p>Martha Conway is the author of <a href="#"><i>The Underground River</i></a>, which was a New York Times Editor's Book Choice, and features a neurodivergent character as the protagonist. She teaches creative writing for Stanford University's Continuing Studies Program.</p>
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(From [How to Describe Neurodivergent Characters](#), Martha Conway, JaneFriedman.com)

If you've written a book, guest posting can be a great way to promote it – *if* you can tie your book in with the content you've written.

Martha does a great job of this here: her guest post is all about writing neurodivergent characters – those on the autism spectrum – and her bio ties in with this, creating an instant reason for the reader to be interested.

If you're promoting a product, it's also important to make the product's credentials (or yours) clear: Martha does this skilfully and economically, stating that her novel "was a New York Times Editor's Book Choice" and also mentioning that she teaches creative writing at Stanford. Both of these are great indications that her writing will be high-quality and worth checking out.

## Purpose #5: Promoting a Service

*Lisa Kilian is the author of the blog, [What Not To Do as a Writer](#). She has had essays published at [Beyond the Margins](#), [Best Damn Creative Writing Blog](#), and [Write It Sideways](#) to name a few. Follow her [@LisaKilian](#) or email her at [lr.kilian@gmail.com](mailto:lr.kilian@gmail.com) She would love to read your work.*

(From [I Paid For This?! Surviving the Editorial Letter](#), Lisa Kilian, Write to Done)

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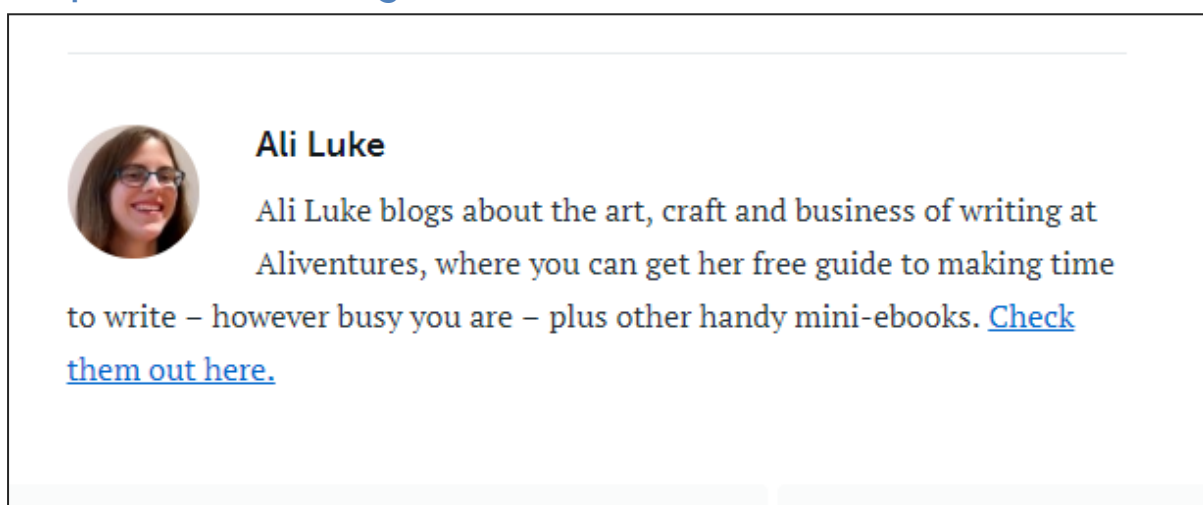
Lisa's guest post is all about what to expect from your editor – which ties in very well with her own work as an editor.

It's clear what she does from the post, though I'd like to have seen her mentioning in the bio too that she edits writers' work – it seems like her main goal here is to get more clients ("She would love to read your work"), but this could be presented a bit more clearly and strongly.

The focus on where Lisa has been published helps establish her credentials as a writer, but not necessarily as an editor: it might be more effective to list novels that she's edited, or even to quote from one of her clients.

Including her contact details (Twitter and email) is a good idea, though, as it allows interested potential clients to get in touch straight away without needing to visit her website.

### Purpose #6: Pointing Readers Towards Your Email List



(From [The Truth About Overnight Success \(and What You Need to Do About It\)](#), Ali Luke, Copyblogger)

I wanted to include this example in part because it shows something we're going to come on and talk about next: it's an "author bio box" that displays on *all* of my posts on Copyblogger (and also at the top of [my author page here](#)).

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This means that, although it's a few years since I last wrote for Copyblogger, I've been able to get my bio updated site-wide so that readers who visit those older posts see a *relevant* bio!

Here, I wanted to focus on getting more people onto my email list, so I'm linking directly to a page all about that. If I was trying to sell something to them, I'd include something about my credentials, or a very short testimonial from a happy customer – but as I'm offering them free ebooks, I don't need to be particularly salesy.

We're going to take a look at author bio boxes in the next section.

### How Will Your Bio Work?

**If you're going to write more than one post for a particular blog, it's crucial that you're clear about *how* the bios on the site work.**

There are two key possibilities:

1. Your bio is entered within each post, probably as a paragraph in italics at the end. You can have completely different bios on different posts.
2. Your bio is nicely formatted in a little "author bio box" that appears on *every* post you write for that site (so you have the same bio on each). This is sometimes called an "author info box" or "author bio".

There are pros and cons to each.

With the first option, it can be tricky to get your bios changed in the future (the blogger isn't likely to want to edit a dozen or so posts of yours to change each bio). However, you can craft a different bio each time, to suit your post and your purposes at that point.

With the second option, you can't easily tie your bio in with the content of your post. If you want a new bio on a new post, your bio will change on all the older posts too (and while those might not be getting *tons* of traffic, they're likely to get a steady stream of readers coming from search engines).

However, if you do want to change your bio because you no longer sell a

particular product or offer a particular service, it's really quick and easy for the host blogger to update it.

When I started guest posting in 2008, the first option – a text bio in the post itself – was by far the most common. These days, I'm seeing more and more sites moving over to using author bio boxes – probably because it's a bit easier for them to implement and it tends to look more polished.

**Before you craft your bio, you need to know what type it'll be.** You can normally find out by looking at other guest posts on the blog, or you can just ask the blog's editor.

### What Should You Include in Your Bio

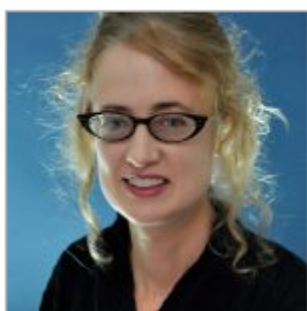
There's no one "right" way to craft your bio, but in almost all cases, you'll need to include these three things:

1. **Your full name** (or pen name) – it's rare to see bios that only use a first name.
2. **At least one link!** If you don't have a website, you can link to your Twitter account or Facebook page. If you don't have *any* online presence, give your email address so readers can contact you.
3. **A quick explanation** of who you are, what you do and/or what your blog is about.

Here's an example. This isn't exactly how I'd craft a bio (I think the author has got a bit hung up on the idea of writing a proper "author bio" and hasn't focused enough on encouraging the reader to *do* something as a result of reading it) ... but it includes all these three key elements:



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Beth Castrodale has worked as a newspaper reporter and book editor. Her novel *Marion Hatley* (Garland Press, 2017) was a finalist for a Nilsen Prize for a First Novel from Southeast Missouri State University Press. Her upcoming novel *In This Ground* will be published by Garland Press in September. Beth has published stories in such journals as *Printer's Devil Review*, *The Writing Disorder*, and *Mulberry Fork Review*. Connect with Beth at [her website](#), on [Facebook](#), and on [Twitter](#).

(From [Researching Novels in an Age of Information Overload](#), Beth Castrodale, Live Write Thrive)

You might well be asked to provide a photo (usually a headshot) to go alongside your bio – so it's worth making sure you have one handy that you're happy to use.

### What Shouldn't You Include in Your Bio?

Looking at Beth's bio above, I probably wouldn't have included so much detail about different novels and publications.

If Beth's goal is to get an agent interested in her work, then this might make sense – but the audience of Live Write Thrive are mainly writers. Her work background doesn't appear particularly relevant, either, so I'd cut out those details.

When you're guest posting, your bio will often be limited to 100 words – perhaps even 50 – and you want them to count. This isn't the place to list *everything* you've ever had published, or *every* hobby you have.

I expect these go without saying, but you also should avoid including:

- Off-colour language – the host blogger may well not allow this anyway.

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- In-jokes or pop culture references that other people might not get.
- Inflated claims about your own importance (“Ali Luke is THE expert on every aspect of writing...”)

It’s also worth thinking carefully about anything you’re including that’s going to be outdated quite soon.

If you’re running a time-limited sale on your ebooks, for instance, a bio can be a great way to get more customers – but you might need to mention the date the sale ends, so that future readers don’t end up disappointed when they visit your site.

### What Should You Link to From Your Bio?

A lot of guest bloggers link to their site’s homepage or their main blog page. While I can understand why – you want people to check out your blog! – this isn’t a particularly effective use of your link in most cases.

(The main exception is if you’re guest blogging mostly for SEO purposes and you want to build as many links as possible to your home page.)

Instead, think about linking to:

- **A post you’ve written** that’s strongly related to your guest post: maybe it covers a related topic, or it helps readers go further with the same topic. This is a great way to draw readers over to your blog – where they’ll hopefully read more posts and stick around for the long-term!
- **Your newsletter subscription page** – especially if you’re giving away some sort of freebie for people to download once they sign up.
- **A product that you sell or a service that you offer.** If someone’s looking for, say, a book editor, this can be a great way to get them straight to the page where you explain what you do and why you’re great at it.
- **Your social media accounts** – I don’t think it’s generally worth including these as the *only* links, unless you’re desperate for social media

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followers above all else. But it's useful to include them as additional links, if the host blog allows it – especially Twitter, as readers will want to tag you if they tweet about your post.

## Template Bios to Help You Get Started

You can craft your bio however you like – I'd suggest looking at some guest posts on the blogs that you plan to write for, so you can see what's standard there. Which bios grab your attention and make you want to click through? Could you do something similar with your own bio?

If you're stuck, you might want to use one of these templates as the basis for your own bio:

### Template #1

[name] blogs about [topics] at [site name and link]. You can get [his/her] new book, [title], from [link].

Example:

Ali Luke blogs about the art, craft and business of writing at Aliventures. You can get her new novella, *Not So Imaginary*, here on Amazon.

### Template #2

If you enjoyed this post by [name], check out [title of post and link] for lots more tips on [topic].

Example:

If you enjoyed this post by Ali Luke, check out It's Not Just About Making Time: How Can You Find the Energy to Write? for more tips on fitting writing into your life.

## Your Module #5 Assignment

### ASSIGNMENT

Your assignment this week is fairly quick and straightforward (which is probably a relief after last week)!

**Write a bio for the guest post you worked on last week.**

(If you haven't written your guest post yet, that's fine: just pick an idea that you have and write a bio to fit that post.)

Once you've had a go at writing your bio, or got as far as you're going to get, come and "check in" on Facebook to get your reward stamp for Week 5. If you're willing to, share your bio with us:

[facebook.com/groups/successfulguestblogging2018/learning\\_content/?filter=566523103792245](https://www.facebook.com/groups/successfulguestblogging2018/learning_content/?filter=566523103792245)

If you prefer not to use Facebook, you can email me ([ali@aliventures.com](mailto:ali@aliventures.com)) with "Module #5 check in" or similar in the subject line.

## Module #5: Further Reading

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

**[How to Write a Bio That Will Turbocharge Your Guest Posts](#)**, Alexander Limberg, Write to Done

While I find the writing style of this post a little irritating (there are rather *too* many one-sentence paragraphs), there are some great tips and examples in here – plus lots of advice on taking a great author photo.

**[The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Guest Blogging Author Bio](#)**, James Parsons, GuestPost.com

There are lots of good, specific tips here on what to do and what not to do, plus detailed advice on how to use the links in your bio. (I'd disagree slightly with James here: I'd normally prioritise a website link over a social link, but it's really up to you and depends on your goals.)

**[10 Top Bloggers Reveals Secrets Behind Their Author Bio](#)**, Tom Hunt, Linkology

The post title possibly makes this sound a bit more exciting than it is: there aren't really any "secrets" here, and the authors in question don't actually have their bios in the post! Instead, they're giving tips on writing a bio to go on your guest post. You'll probably notice that some bloggers have quite different advice from others – which helps show that there's no single "right" way to approach crafting your bio.

### What's Coming Up Next Week:

Well done on reaching the end of this week's module. Remember, if you have questions at any point, please do ask in our Facebook group. If it's something you'd prefer to discuss privately, you can send me a message via the Facebook group or you can email me at [ali@aliventures.com](mailto:ali@aliventures.com).

Here's what to expect in Module 6 next week:

#### MODULE 6:

Next week, from Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December, we'll take a look at what you can do *after* your guest post is published. We'll cover what to expect on the day your post goes live, how to establish an ongoing guest posting relationship (if you want to), and how to move on from guest posting for free to being a paid blogger.