Blogging for an Audience

What is blogging? The term comes from "Web log" and it started out as a kind of online journaling. People wrote (and still write) much as they do in Facebook updates about the minutia of their daily lives. An example of online journaling: Your roommate kept you awake by snoring last night. You write about how tired you are and how it affects your work. That kind of material is good fodder for what we will be doing, and you should do some form of journaling, posting on social media sites or just sending long e-mails home as a way of organizing your thoughts. But that's not what we will publish on the Perpignan Project website.

The term "blogging" has expanded to include online reports more similar to newspaper columns than diaries. That's the kind of blogging we'll do on the Perpignan Project. Call it… blogging for an audience.

The essential element

The most important element of blogging for an audience is valuable nuggets, either insights, facts or some combination of the two that will entertain or inform anyone who is likely to come across your blog – not only people who know you. Ask yourself: Why should anyone want to read this? Make sure each post is insightful, compelling, moving or entertaining – better yet, all of the above!

Subject matter

Your blog for the Perpignan Project should relate to what you are experiencing and learning about Perpignan and France. What's different, surprising, shocking?

Examples:

You go to buy groceries at a produce stand and discover that you are not allowed to touch the produce until you've purchased it. On one hand, this makes the process of buying your fruit take longer. On the other hand, it forces you to interact more closely with the vendor, who might advise you on what to buy. Perhaps your insight is that French culture values personal contact more than efficiency.

A scene or vignette:

The countryside you glimpse outside the train window is flatter and less wild than in the U.S. What geographical and historical forces shaped the way it looks? How do these conditions shape the way people living here live?

Links

Blog posts should include embedded hyperlinks to websites. Think carefully about what sites you link to. Make sure they are credible and have useful information that will enhance the reader's experience of your blog. Appropriate links include websites for community organizations, government organizations, reports, documents, studies, etc.

Photos

Embedding photos can help you make your point, and also enliven the text with images.

Style

The style of your blog should be conversational, between an essay and a long e-mail or letter to a friend. Write in first person, and don't be afraid to express your opinion. But don't fire from the hip; give evidence to support your points. Keep in mind that when you post your blog entries, you will be publishing them for everyone to see. Proofread your work carefully and be wary of anything that could be libelous, offensive or hurtful to people.

Form

Each blog entry should be about 300-600 words in length. Just as in other forms of journalistic writing, it helps to start with a catchy sentence -- something that will surprise and intrigue your readers, making them want to read more. Somewhere in the entry you should also include a sentence that succinctly states the main point of your entry. After that, many different forms can work:

Essay style: Start with a premise that you support with examples, before reaching a conclusion.

Narrative: The whole entry can take the form of an anecdote, told in chronological order.

Descriptive: If the subject of your blog is a specific person, place, thing or idea you can organize it by systematically describing each aspect. For example, an entry could be the profile of a man, describing the color of his hair and eyes, outstanding features like broad shoulders or a scar, the way he moves, the sound of his voice, etc. Just remember all this should add up to a point -- that nugget of insight that makes the reader care.