



# BITTE BY THE BLOG?

*Everything you wanted to know about blogging, but were afraid to ask*

By Chad Capellman  
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**blog** (blog, blŏg), n. A Web-based publication of articles. People who create blogs are often referred to as *bloggers*. If you encounter a blogger ... do not worry. They are normal people, and some of them even live in your town.

Remember a decade ago when people were touting the wonders of the Internet? One of the things they would say was that “anyone can be a publisher.” Well, technically that was true back then, but it was kind of the equivalent of saying everyone who had a kitchen could be a cook.

In the past couple of years, however, the ability to publish content on the Internet has improved greatly, thanks to something called the Web log or “blog.” What used to be a complicated process has been simplified to basically the push of a button. Think of it as the microwave oven of Web publishing.

And just as the microwave enabled millions to subsist on their own “cooking” abilities, a growing number of people, including many here in Frederick, have acquired an appetite for Web publishing.

Some do it for fun and as an extended form of online chatting. Some do it because they’re curious and like to share what they’ve learned with others in their community. Others have found a calling and—through the magic of blogs—a means to connect with people thousands of miles away without traveling and at a very nominal expense.



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**Michele Clemence (aka Chelly)** is the type of blogger that many think of when they roll their eyes and get fidgety when the conversation turns to the role of bloggers as journalists. That's fine with her, because she doesn't pretend to be one. Her mission is clear from the first glance at the pink home page of [www.bychelly.com](http://www.bychelly.com). "Just some random obscure unknown chick who just feels like typing" is her mission statement, so to speak. And she means every word of it. Especially the typing part.

"I was never one to keep a diary or kept a book around and wrote in it. It just wasn't me," Clemence says. "I like to chat with people online and I figured this is a great way for me to get out whatever's in my head, sort of like a diary, and people can come in and comment on it and I can discuss it back with them."

Clemence, a graphic designer who has lived in Frederick since she was 2 years old, says she has met a lot of people who have discovered her postings.

"It's a great way to chat with other people because, after a while, your friends start to get annoyed with you. My friends are like, 'I've heard this over and over and over again.'"



**Guy Schmidt** also finds that the friends and family for whom he used to do most of his blogging have, for the most part, had their fill.

But that's okay. Since starting his FredNet blog in August 2004, Schmidt has seen a steady increase in audience that more than negates any sense of alienation.

Schmidt's blog, [frednet.blogspot.com](http://frednet.blogspot.com), is an unassuming, simple white Web page with noteworthy postings and musings by its creator about things to see and do around Frederick.

"I've always wanted to do a website about Frederick and then blogging came along and then the two met and it was just serendipity," he says.

Schmidt freely admits that he's not trying to replace the mainstream media or be all things to all people.

"Basically I'm intaking all this news and then spitting out the random things that are interesting to me...It's kind of selfish," Schmidt says.

"Whatever is interesting to me is what I post."

And what interests his readers most?

"People love food," he says. "Any post I do about food, it's almost guaranteed that I'm going to get some kind of comment."

The site now gets visits from between 50 and 100 unique visitors per day, which isn't going to make him contemplate a career change from his current job as a Web content coordinator for a government contractor in Rockville. Still, the loyal following he does have creates a sense of responsibility.

"Some weeks [the posts are] a little bit shorter. I try to keep up with it. Sometimes if I'm a little slow, people are like, 'Hey, what are you doing, where are you at?' They keep me honest."



## How to start your own blog in under 10 minutes. Really.

*It's 6 p.m. after a long day at work, which is the perfect time to demonstrate how easy it is to start your very own blog.*

**Step 1:** Go to [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com).

**Step 2:** Click on the orange "create your own blog now" arrow.

**Step 3:** Fill in all five fields:

Choose a user name, Enter a password, Retype password, Display name, E-mail address

**Step 4:** Acceptance of Terms

Click on the link that says "Terms of Service." If you agree with the terms, click the checkbox next to that link.

**Step 5:** Hit the orange "continue" button.

**Step 6:** Give your blog a title. Make it something that is reflective of who you are and a word or phrase that you'd like to be identified by. One of my blogs, for example, is called "sleepdeprived."

**Step 7:** Create an address for your blog. This will be the address people will type into their browser to see your blog.

There is possibly no one in Frederick who feels that pull more than **Sarah Dylan Breuer**.

What started out as little more than using the Internet as an extended version of a photocopier has blossomed into a robust website with multiple blogs and website visitors from as far away as the Netherlands, Australia, and Taiwan.

Breuer, who goes by the name Dylan, is in the process of being ordained as an Episcopal minister. In December 2003, she posted resources for her Severna Park parishioners online and wrote a weekly reflection on her readings. (These can be found at [www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/](http://www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/))

When the number of people visiting the site grew from 15 to 20 a week to about 1,000 a day, Breuer decided to add more information to the site, including an author bio. "Now, more and more people are linking to it," she says.

One of the biggest complaints lodged against cyberspace is how people don't relate to one another as they do when they encounter the same people face-to-face. But Breuer says that's not always a bad thing.

The blog is "something that's really improved me as a preacher. I think sometimes you get more honest feedback on the Internet than from people who are shaking your hand on the way out," Breuer says. "On the Internet, the comments will be very informative, and sometimes I get very personal e-mails from people saying, 'I was really struggling with this and ... this is how what you said helped me.'"

When she first started out, Breuer says she had very little ability to work with the technical side of blogging and didn't really have any interest in doing so. "I sort of am with technology like I am with my car. I want to turn the key and have it go," she says. "I know a lot more now about technology than I otherwise would have, mostly because I want to be able to make it work and also because I like to help other people make it work."

Breuer's primary focus continues to be connecting with people. "I'm just really taken with what the Internet can do. ... [T]his is a way that more and more of us are connecting with each other all the time anyway, so if you don't offer anything along those lines in whatever your work is, you're really missing opportunities. More and more, it's less optional." ❖

*The author has been immersed in the blog world for the past two years. His site can be found at [www.capellman.com](http://www.capellman.com).*



**Step 8:** Type in the letters you see all twisted up on the screen. This is to confirm that you are, in fact, a human being and not some evil robot bent on creating millions of blogs.

**Step 9:** Hit the "continue" button.

**Step 10:** Pick a design for your blog. To select a design, simply click the little dot under the design you want, then click "continue."

(Blogger gives you a few to choose from here, but you can change it to others at any time.)

After you hit the continue button, you should receive a message that says "Your blog has been created!"

**Step 11:** Hit the "start posting" link inside the orange arrow.

**Step 12:** Give your inaugural "post" a title in the title field.

**Step 13:** Type in your message in the big box below the title field. (Note that the time listed below the message area is set to Pacific time, so you'll probably want to change that.)

**Step 14:** When you've said what you'd like to share with the world, hit the orange "Publish Post" button.

And just like that, you have a new blog!

*You can see the one we started for this demonstration at [easyfredblog.blogspot.com](http://easyfredblog.blogspot.com). For more tips, or if you have any questions, feel free to send an e-mail to [chad@capellman.com](mailto:chad@capellman.com).*