

HOW TO START AND MAINTAIN A BLOG WHEN ON A TIGHT BUDGET

For the Entrepreneur New to Blogging

(Blog Startup Series #1)



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INTRODUCTION

As an entrepreneur, you may have considered using a blog as a way to educate your clients. At the same time, the blog will help you create awareness for your products and services. A blog will usher you into a market you previously had no way of accessing.

A blog is a great investment for your business, and you don't have to break the bank to have one. It is very affordable if you have the right information and service provider.

Maintaining a blog is easy, and you can manage it if you are not in a position to hire professional help. Whether it's a free or self-hosted blog, web hosting companies have made it easy to open and maintain your blog.

With this guide and a bit of research, you can have a blog up and running within half an hour.

How to Start and Maintain a Blog When on a Tight Budget will cover the following topics:

- What is a blog?
- Before you start a blog
- What do you need to open an account for your blog?
- How do you start a blog? (Free and Self-hosted blog)
- Maintaining your blog

After reading this guide, you should be able to open a blog and start posting your content immediately.

How to Start and Maintain a Blog When on a Tight Budget is #1 in the **Blog Startup Series**.

WHAT IS A BLOG?

A blog is a type of website where you post content regularly. It is a great place to share your ideas with the world. Most people post written content in the form of blog posts or articles. Some post videos and audios. They invite their readers to join their mailing lists to receive regular updates when they post anything. You can post articles, videos, or images on your blog, depending on what you want to communicate to your readers.

How to Start and Maintain a Blog When on a Tight Budget focuses on starting a content blog where you write blog posts.

A blog differs from a website, but people use the terms interchangeably.

A website has information that is not updated regularly. It contains a company or organization's profile, products, services, contacts, and latest offers. A website can have one page or several and shows what a company does and where it is located. Nowadays, websites have a blog section, which is not part of the main site. A website allows you to display your products and services using images and a way to purchase them online.

A blog is a site where you post content regularly. The purpose of your blog determines the nature of your content. The main focus of your blog is the content, not products or services, although the content helps you sell them. A blog is mainly used to influence others by posting new information, personal reflections, prayers, teachings, or anything in your heart you want to share with your readers.

The beauty of a blog is that you can open one in less than half an hour and start blogging. Anyone can open a blog and start posting content immediately.

BEFORE YOU START A BLOG

Starting and maintaining a blog doesn't have to overwhelm you. You only need to make a decision on certain factors which include the following.

1. **Purpose of the blog.** Clarify the purpose of your blog and the message you want to communicate to your audience. This will guide you as you develop your content and create a content calendar.
2. **Identify your audience.** When you know your readers, you can tailor your content to suit their needs. For example, are they marketplace professionals, business people, or ministry leaders? How would you describe them? Do you have a profile of your ideal reader?
3. **Time to blog.** Bloggers have different backgrounds, for example, some are full-time employees, entrepreneurs, stay-at-home moms, freelancers, travellers, etc. Posting a blog article takes about five minutes yet writing it can take two hours or days. Decide on the amount of time you will allocate per day or week to research, write and edit your posts.
4. **Frequency of writing.** Many new bloggers wonder how often they should write blog posts. There is no set frequency to blog, it is at your discretion. Frequency of blogging depends on several factors.
 - *Your time and preference.* This depends on the time you can set aside to come up with new content and how often you would like to post your content. You can post your articles daily, weekly, bimonthly, or monthly. Content generation can drain you if you do it too often. Many blogs that post daily have a writing team.
 - *Content overload on the internet.* There are millions of blogs on the internet, some with content similar to yours. Your readers also subscribe to many other blogs and only have so much time to read them all. Can they keep up with your content if you want to post daily or weekly? Heavy content requires more time to digest and your readers will need sufficient time in between your posts. How often do you like to hear from others?
5. **Does your blog need a rhythm?** Yes. You are unique and your blog will be unique as well. Find your own rhythm! Don't copy what works for others, find out what works for you. However, if you can find one thing that works for you from another blog, by all means, incorporate it into yours. Rhythm lets your readers know what to expect from your posts.
 - *Length of blog posts.* If you want or are good with short posts, go for it. If you want or are good with longer ones, knock yourself out. If you want to

post an article and a video or alternate them, that's okay. Focus on your strengths. You'll find that readers who love your kind of writing will enjoy your posts.

- *Post what God puts in your heart for your readers.* God has gifted writers differently. Some are good with short posts, others with long ones, others are good storytellers, while others are good with prayers and poems. Embrace your unique writing style.
 - *As you grow*, the content on your blog may change or take on a different perspective or twist. This is no cause for alarm. If your rhythm changes, you can always let your readers know in advance so they will know what to expect.
6. **Does your blog have to fall into a category?** No. Categories are the way the world wants to simplify things when it wants to put people and things into distinct groups. *Do Not* open your blog based on a category. It will fall into one anyway. Your purpose defines the nature and content of your blog. If you want to explore different areas of interest when blogging, that is acceptable. Here's a little secret: *Many people open blogs and later close them when their message becomes clearer. They then open a new one with a new name and perspective.*
7. **Can you be an anonymous blogger?** Yes. There are many blogs with anonymous owners. The blog owner either uses a pseudo name or does not include their personal information or profile. Bloggers do that for many reasons, which are usually personal.
- Some want to share confidential information without others knowing who they are. They feel they can only be real when people don't know them. This means they can't reveal their identity even on social media.
 - Others want people to focus on their message and not them. In this case, they reveal their identity when they want. They are anonymous but not to keep their identity a secret.
 - The biggest question here is: why do you want to remain anonymous? What is your motive? Do you want to remain anonymous to hide your identity or for your readers to focus on your content? Being an anonymous blogger means your readers will never know you. Keep in mind that readers want to know who they are connecting with on social media.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO OPEN AN ACCOUNT FOR YOUR BLOG?

To open a blog, you will go to a blogging platform and open an account. The following items will fast track the opening of your blog. Having these things ready will enable you to start your blog immediately.

1. **Email address.** Whether you are opening a free or self-hosted blog, you will need an email address. You can use your current one or create one for your business. Your service provider will use it for communication purposes.
2. **Mobile phone number.** Some websites will ask for a mobile number if they use the double authentication login method.
3. **Blog name.** Decide on the name you will use for your blog. If you find it is taken, you will have to choose another one. If you are opening a self-hosted blog, check if a domain name (website address) is available for your chosen blog name.
4. **Blog subtitle.** It describes the purpose of your blog in one short statement. You can check out other blogs for inspiration.
5. **Topic.** The overall theme of your blog will guide you on the topics to cover in your content. Is it purpose, passion, empowering Christian ministers, or encouragement for women/men? Your topic comes from your purpose and the message God has given you for your audience.
6. **Blog author bio.** This is a short description of yourself or your business. You can use your personal profile and post it on the “about” page of your blog. It can be one paragraph or several.
7. **A description of your blog.** Readers want to know more about your blog. They want to know what inspired you to start it. This is where you state whether your blog is for articles, devotionals, videos, etc.
8. **Your photo.** Readers will look for your photo because they want to know the owner of the blog. Your photo should be of good quality; it doesn't have to be a studio photo. You'll notice a lot of artists, lifestyle bloggers, and creative writers have photos taken from any location in the world. Use a photo that reflects your authenticity.
9. **Image for your blog banner.** You will need an image for your blog banner. It is the image others see when they land on your blog. It should be relevant to your blog's message. Some bloggers opt not to use an image, and that is fine.

10. **Product or service images.** You can include images of your products, services, or events on your blog. A blog comes with pages where you can list them. The sidebar also allows for some images.
11. **Blog colours.** Choose your blog colours, whether for the theme or blog post headings.
12. **Links to your social media profiles.** If you want to connect with your readers via social media, add links to the social media profiles you actively use.

The above list is not exhaustive. You can include other things you would like to post on your blog. Having these items ready will help you open your blog faster.

You can also think about the pages you want to have on your blog and prepare a write-up for each. Pages you can include are "About" (you or your business), products/services, books, free resources, events, and contacts.

HOW DO YOU START A BLOG?

Starting a blog is not difficult, you only need to know where to begin. There are two options when opening a blog: free and self-hosted.

1. FREE BLOG

A free blog is an ideal option when you are starting out and are still looking for your writing voice. It allows you to learn what blogging is and hone your craft of writing. If you are not sure about the content you want to post, a free blog allows you to engage in trial and error without having to pay for it. If you are not ready to get a blog on a paid plan, start with a free one.

There are many platforms for opening a free blog. All you need to do is go to the website of the blogging platform and open an account. You will require an email address to do so.

The following are two popular free blogging platforms.

1. **WordPress.** This is the most common and widely used free blogging platform. It has blog templates suitable for new bloggers. The free WordPress ends with *.com* and the one used by self-hosted (paying) bloggers is *.org*. When you open a free blog, you will have a URL that looks like this: <https://suziesq.wordpress.com>.

2. **Blogger.** This is a free blogging platform by Google. It is easier to use than WordPress but has fewer features. On this platform, you will open a blog using your Gmail account. Your blog URL will look like this: <https://suziesq.blogspot.com>.

Other free blogging platforms include [Wix](#), [Weebly](#), and [Squarespace](#), among others. [WP Beginner](#) has a comprehensive list.

Free blogs have limited features and you get more when you upgrade your account to a paid plan. Be sure to read terms and conditions. Read reviews about free blogs before opening one so that you will know the pros and cons of each.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN OPENING A FREE BLOG

1. **The capacity of the blog.** It's important to check the capacity of the blog on offer to see if it suits your needs. Blogging platforms give 20GB, 100 GB, 500GB, etc. Content blogs require less capacity than image-based ones. You may get a free plan that soon gets exhausted and you are forced to look for an alternative prematurely.
2. **Subdomain name.** This is the URL for your free blog. Choose the one you like, for example, *blog.wordpress.com*, *blog.blogspot.com*, *blog.weebly.com*, *username.wixsite.com/blog*, etc.
3. **Themes.** Each blogging platform has free templates or themes for your blog. The theme is the face and layout of your blog. Does the platform have enough themes from which you can make a selection? How easy is it to change a theme? Do you lose everything when you change a theme?
4. **The number of pages.** You want a blog that allows you to open several pages for your profile, resources, contacts, etc. Most blogging platforms allow you to open several pages. Some offer you only one page.
5. **The cost of upgrading to a paid plan.** Many blogging platforms offer a free plan with the option to upgrade to a paid one. Before registering your blog, find out the price per month or year you will pay should you choose to upgrade. Find out what the hosting package includes and compare that with what other web hosting companies are offering for the same price. This is how you identify a good deal even before registering a free blog.
6. **Terms and conditions.** Pay attention to the ones that touch on the copyright of your content. If you choose to open a self-hosted blog on another platform, can you post your content to your new blog or will you be violating their T&C?

When you are on a tight budget, you want to make fewer mistakes as you start a blog. The cost of moving to another platform or plan can be costly when you don't have the correct information. Remember to always read reviews relating to the questions you have about a platform.

2. SELF-HOSTED BLOG

If you want a personal domain name, then the self-hosted blog is the best option for you. You pay an annual fee to maintain it and you own the content. There are two ways of getting a self-hosted blog.

1. **Upgrade your free blog.** If you open a free blog and later wish to migrate to a self-hosted one, you will choose a premium plan from your blogging platform. They will direct you through the process of setting up your personal domain.
2. **Using a web hosting company.** You can use a hosting company like [Truehost](#) in Kenya, or [Bluehost](#) which is popular with international bloggers. These companies help you register a domain name and offer you a hosting package. [The Urban Christian](#) blog is hosted by Truehost with the Silver Hosting package and a WordPress.org theme. After expiry of the free SSL, I got one from [Let's Encrypt](#) following instructions in the Truehost knowledge base.

Web hosting companies have made registering and maintaining a blog easy and affordable. In fact, you don't need technical assistance to do so. For a self-hosted blog, you will buy a domain name and a hosting package. To get your personal domain name, you have to do a search to find out if it is available. If not, you have to choose another one. Domain name search is a service you can get on the internet or on the home page of your chosen web hosting company.

Once you confirm that your domain name is available, you can go ahead and pay for it. You will get a personal domain name like <https://suziesq.co.ke> or <https://suziesq.com>. If you are on a tight budget, go for the hosting package that includes the hosting of one or multiple websites, free [SSL](#) certificate, hosting on CPanel and with a WordPress theme. The domain name comes as a separate cost but you will make one payment (domain plus hosting). This option simplifies the process of opening and maintaining your blog.

Web hosting companies give you 1-click installations and templates (blog themes) that simplify the process of building your blog from scratch. They also give you 24/7 customer support in case you have any issues. Web hosting companies also have a knowledge base to help you resolve issues without having to get in touch

with their customer support. You can have a self-hosted blog for as little as Ksh. 2,000 or \$20 per year, without hidden costs.

You can also move your domain and hosting package to another web hosting company if you are unsatisfied with the services of your current provider.

Always compare plans between different web hosting companies to get the best deal. Don't forget to check out reviews to stay well informed.

WHAT TO LOOK FOR WHEN OPENING A SELF-HOSTED BLOG

Below are some of the things you can consider when opening a self-hosted blog using a web hosting company.

1. **Domain name.** Web hosting companies offer you a domain name for your blog. They offer it at a separate fee from the hosting package. Some offer one package that includes a domain name plus hosting. If you want a *.com* domain, you can use an international or local hosting company. For a local domain like *.co.ke*, you have to use a local web hosting company. You can check the domains a company offers before buying a hosting package to make sure you can get the one you want. Domain names come at different prices depending on the web hosting company.
2. **Hosting packages.** What is included in the hosting package of the blogging platform you want to use? Some of the things included are capacity of the blog, number of websites or subdomains you can host, SSL certificate, number of email accounts, WordPress themes, backup, customer support, etc. Some companies offer these as separate products. When a package includes all these, it will save you money and still give you value for your money. Check out the different web hosting companies and compare their hosting packages.
3. **Website.** Some web hosting companies will offer you a hosting package that does not include a website. This means you will have to buy a website design package from them at an additional fee. If you want a blog you can open without technical assistance, get a package that offers WordPress themes. Check and see if a website is part of the deal or not.
4. **1-click installations.** These make it easy for you to open a blog because all you do is click a button to perform a certain function. You don't need any technical assistance. The coding has been done for you. Most of the packages that allow you to open your blog at the press of a button use the CPanel platform. It is a platform that is easy to use and your web hosting company will have installed WordPress in it.

5. **Email accounts.** Many hosting packages come with professional emails that you can use for your business. If you are also looking for a professional email, find out if it's part of the package or whether it comes as a separate service. If on a budget, you may consider getting a hosting package that includes email accounts. This allows you to have emails for your administration purposes, for example, admin@, hello@, info@, jane@, etc.
6. **1 dollar offers for domain registration.** Some web hosting companies offer you a very cheap, almost free entry point for getting a domain and hosting package. Some offer as low as \$1(Ksh.100) and many of these offers come as advertisements when you are searching for a domain name. When you click on their ad and visit their domain you'll notice the price is per month and usually for the first month. Pay attention to the renewal price, it could be much higher than you can afford in the long run. Count the cost before considering such an offer.
7. **Customer support.** Sometimes you will get an issue you can't resolve on your own. It's therefore important to get a web hosting company that can assist you over email, online chat or Whatsapp. Having real-time support means your website issues will be resolved immediately.
8. **Knowledge base.** Most web hosting companies have a knowledge base to help you with simple issues that you can resolve on your own. This makes maintaining your blog easy because you have real-time solutions that save you time and money.

It's possible to open and maintain a blog without having to hire a website designer. If your budget does not allow you to hire professionals for web services, get a hosting package that offers a self-service plan. When you need a more complex website in future, you can consider hiring a professional.

When starting a business or ministry, you may not have enough funds for some services and you will need to learn how to do some things yourself.

MAINTAINING YOUR BLOG

After successfully opening a blog, you will probably worry about how to maintain it. Blog maintenance is simply making sure it is always up and running all the time. Most of the time you will not have to do anything other than post your articles.

Some of the things that will be part of your maintenance plan include the following:

1. **Changing blog settings.** Sometimes you will want to change things like fonts, layout, or theme. This is something you can do from your blogs settings panel.
2. **Adding or deleting blog pages.** From time to time you may want to add or remove a page. For example, you may want to include a free resources page or delete a *contact information* page and put it under another one. You can add or delete pages at the click of a button.
3. **Editing a blog post.** If you want to make changes to a blog post, you can easily access the post and edit or update it.
4. **Website update.** If you have a WordPress based website, there are times you will need to update it. The prompt to update it comes as a notification when you log into the admin panel of your blog. Updating is at the click of a button.
5. **Liaising with customer support.** Sometimes you have an issue you can't resolve on your own. You can chat with a customer service representative and follow their step-by-step instructions to resolve the issue. An example of an issue would be: your blog is unreachable or your SSL certificate has expired and you need to renew it.
6. **Blog renewal.** This involves making a payment for the annual renewal of your blog. You will receive an email notification alerting you on your renewal date.
7. **Plugins.** If you have a WordPress blog, you will add or remove plugins to ensure the health of your blog. Plugins are of different kinds and perform different functions, for example, search engine optimization, image resizing, social media sharing buttons, etc.
8. **Email subscription.** If you want your readers to subscribe to your mailing list, you will use a third-party email service. Maintaining it means you ensure it works effectively at all times. You can also change to another one that better meets your needs.
9. **Content backup.** It's important to have a backup copy of your blog posts in case of any eventuality. You can use your Google Drive, Dropbox, PCloud, or any other backup software.
10. **Read widely.** There is a lot of useful information on the internet on how you can make your blog better. You don't have to know everything immediately, you can read about something specific you want to know about blogging. It's helpful to know what other bloggers are experiencing and how they are dealing with their issues. You can subscribe to websites that give useful information on blogging.

The above list is not exhaustive. Maintenance depends on the needs of your blog and the platform you are using.

CONCLUSION

Being on a tight budget does not mean you will lose out on blogging. With the right information and a willingness to learn, you will find that it is affordable to start and maintain your blog.

You can have a website that has a blog which will allow you to display your products and generate new content. It's also possible to add an e-commerce platform should you wish to sell some things on your blog.

Your blog will also need a terms and conditions page or a privacy policy one. With a WordPress blog, you will get a template that you can edit and personalize for your blog. You can also check out the privacy policies of other blogs and see how they are done. These are services that your lawyer can help you with but if you are in a tight spot, you can use the free templates provided by blogging platforms.

You will not know everything about blogging in one day, but once you start your blog, you can do your research as you go along. Aim to learn at least one new thing per week and you will know a lot about blogging.

Follow blogs that teach others how to blog the right way, but remember to only pick what works for you. If you are not at peace with any trend in blogging, you don't have to follow it.

Once you open your blog, you can post your articles immediately. You don't have to wait. If you want to learn how to create a blog post, check out the ***Blog Post Checklist (#2)*** guide and start blogging!

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Josephine is a self-published author of three eBooks: *Maiden Book: How to Plan, Outline and Write Your First Book*; *Demystifying the Grey Kingdom: The Truth about the Kingdom of Light and the Kingdom of Darkness*; and *Life Purpose: A Beginner's Guide*. They are available in eBook [stores](#) worldwide.

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