



SWTRC Blog Style Guide for Guest Authors

These author guidelines help maintain a consistent style, voice and format on the Southwest Telehealth Resource Center (SWTRC) blog.

The Nuts and Bolts of Blogging for SWTRC

- Content must be original
- Topic – have a telemedicine or telehealth thread
- 500-700 words
- Short and descriptive titles
- Short lead with a strong hook
- Keep paragraphs short – 3 to 5 sentences
- Write in first person – You are the author, not SWTRC
- Write conversationally
- Use attribution, not formal citations
- Include links
- Use bullets and paragraph headings
- Include pictures or video
- Blog editor does final editing
- Review SWTRC blogging dos and don'ts

Content

Any article published on the SWTRC Blog must be original content. Content already published online or in print cannot be reused as a blog article. Content cannot be used to sell or advertise a product or company.

Topic

The SWTRC Blog is all about telemedicine, so whatever topic you choose it's important to have telemedicine or telehealth thread throughout your article. If you're unsure about a topic, you can run your idea by the blog editor.

Length

Shoot for about 500-700 words. Online attention spans are short, so keep your article short and easy to read.

If you want to write more than 1000 words, consider breaking up your content into two articles, or talk with the SWTRC blog editor about doing a longer piece.

Title

Titles should be short and descriptive, no more than 6-7 words long. Catchy titles that include keywords from the article are great.

Keep the Leads Short and to the Point with a Strong Hook

When a reader looks at the main blog page, they only see the first two sentences of the article. These first two sentences are your lead.

Your lead should hook a reader by telling them what the article is about and what information they can expect to get if they continue reading. Good hooks are specific and make the reader want to read more.

Keep Paragraphs Short

Paragraphs should be no more than 3-5 sentences. If an online reader clicks on your article and sees the endless text of lengthy paragraphs, chances are they'll click away. Online readers often scan articles for the information they are most interested in and then read only those sections. Long paragraphs are not online reader-friendly.

Stick to the main point, keep your paragraphs short, and if you want to provide more details, use links to send readers to another online source or website.

Write in First Person – You are the Author, Not SWTRC

You want your article to include your opinions, viewpoint or perspective on your topic. It's okay to use "I" statements and to talk about your own relevant experiences.

For example, maybe you attended a telemedicine event, led or participated in a workshop or training, or participated in telehealth care as a provider or patient. These are all great elements that personalize an article and help readers connect with you as the author.

Write Conversationally

Blogs are meant to be easy, informative and fun reading. Blogs are not academic papers or reports, so leave the out the formalities, the long sentences packed with jargon, and the thick paragraphs.

Write conversationally and informally. Use casual language, and if you use a complex term or concept, explain it or provide a hyperlink to an online definition.

Think about how you might phrase something if you were explaining the topic to a friend who had limited background knowledge.

Use Attribution, Not Citations

Try and think of the last time you saw a newspaper or magazine article with an APA or MLA citation – probably never. The SWTRC blog is meant to reach a broad audience

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and be easy to read, so leave out the academic citations and styling, and instead use hyperlinks to cite your sources. In blogs, sources are cited with attribution and links.

For example:

According to George Gerbner, people who watch more violence on television view the world as a more violent place, a theory he called [Mean World Syndrome](#).

Other examples of attribution include:

In a [recent study](#) by...

[Dr. Spock](#) said...

In [report](#) by the American Telemedicine Association (ATA)...

Include Links

Try to include at least 2-3 links with your article. Links provide supporting information about your topic and tell readers where to go for more information. Links also serve as your citations.

For example:

The SWTRC regularly hosts [trainings and webinars](#) on a variety of telemedicine and telehealth topics.

Rather than include the actual URL, use anchor text that contains the link (as shown above). Limit anchor text phrases to three words. Turning anchor text into hyperlinks is easily done in word processing programs such as MS Word.

Good links include: reports, journal articles, recent studies, news articles, event websites, videos and organization websites.

Using Bullets and Paragraph Headings

You can use bullets to highlight important details or information:

- Key points or phrases
- Analytical data
- Important talking points

You can also bold paragraph headings to break up text and help readers skim your article. Skimming is common in online reading. Breaking up your article with headings and bullets helps readers quickly find information they are most interested in, and also follow the flow of your article.

Pictures or Video

Pictures and/or video are a great way to break up text and make your article more

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enticing for the wandering eye. Relevant videos from public sites such as [YouTube](#), [Vimeo](#) or news sites are great additions and are free to use.

In order to comply with copyright laws, be sure to only include pictures you have permission to use. Include attribution if required, and include photo captions where relevant.

Pictures or other graphics should be at least 72dpi resolution. If possible, any videos you provide a link to will be embedded into the body of your article when it is published on the SWTRC website.

Final Editing

The SWTRC blog editor is the last person to review and edit an article prior to publishing. The editor may make small changes to articles in order to maintain consistency with Associated Press (AP) style guidelines and SWTRC style guides. The editor may also tweak your title and/or lead to include strong keywords for the purpose of Search Engine Optimization (SEO). If you do not provide an image(s), the editor will select a primary image and may include additional images.

SWTRC Blogging Dos/Don'ts

DO

- End your article on a positive note
- Share and explain your opinion, viewpoint, perspective or experience
- Back-up your opinion with sound reasoning and relevant sources
- Link to relevant sources to support your statements/arguments
- Include attribution for direct and paraphrased quotes
- Write conversationally and use "I" statements
- Spell out acronyms upon first use

DON'T

- Give advice or tell readers what to think or what to do
- Use science or medical jargon without providing an explanation
- Make accusations or harsh criticisms
- Ask readers to donate money to a cause

Please contact the SWTRC blog editor if you have any questions or need assistance. Happy Writing!