

## Creating a killer ESL Blog!

**WebQuest Description:** This webquest aims to introduce ESL students to the concept of "blogging" and guide them to create their own personal blog. They have to work in teams to find out by themselves what blogs are, how they started connecting people around the world and how to create their own blog. Before doing that, they will have to read the best 2006-2007 blogs and then make their own list of Top 5 entertainment, technology and education blogs. They will also have to research on some helpful tools on how to make a killer blog and add videos, powerpoint presentations and podcast to their blogs.

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Curriculum:** English / Language Arts

**Keywords:** esl, blogs, blogging

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### Introduction

Dear ESL students! You have been selected as members of the seventh Annual Weblog Awards Comitee! The Weblog Awards are a non-profit project created in 2001 to award the best blogs. This year you will nominate and select the best Blogs of 2007. In order to do that, you will have to work in teams and find out as much information as possible about blogs and the history of blogging. You will also read and evaluate the most popular entertainmt, technology related and educational blogs of this year. By the end of this project, you will create your own ESL blog using all the information you gathered this week. You will learn how to share your ideas, pictures, videos and even podcasts with the rest of the world!!! Good luck ! We are looking forward to seeing your great ESL blogs online!

### Tasks

Dear EsL students, You will have 3 weeks to work on this project. During the first week you will be working in 3 teams. Each team will have to research on the information from the posted links and answer to a specific list of questions. At the end of the week each team will have 10 minutes to present their information to the rest of the class - you can print and use handouts, photocopies or develop a powerpoint presentation on your topic. During the second week you will have to read and evaluate some of the most popular blogs of 2006-2007. You will each have to come up with your own top 10 blogs and then decide together with the rest of the class which blogs should be nominated for the BEST BLOGS of 2007. During the third week you will have to create your own ESL blogs! Each blog should have at least 3 posts: one about yourselves, another one about your home country and the last one about your experience in USA. You will also have to share a Youtube video and one of the powerpoint presentations you worked on this semester on your blog. At the end of the week you will read and evaluate each other's blogs and vote for the BEST ESL Blog in class! Good luck! Do you want to find out what other ESL students think about blogs and how they can be used in the classroom to improve their English skills and share their ideas, pictures, videos with the rest of the world? Check on this video-interview of my ESL students from the ESL Program at the University of Mississippi. [http://www.teachertube.com/view\\_video.php?viewkey=3063e419773b4f310fc2](http://www.teachertube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=3063e419773b4f310fc2)

### Process

You will have 3 weeks to work on this project. During the first week you will be working in 3 teams. Each team will have to research on the information from the following links and answer to the questions listed below. At the end of the week each team will have 10 minutes to present their information to the rest of the class - you can print out and use handouts, hotcopies, you can create a poster or use flipcharts or develop a powerpoint presentation to cover your topic. Week 1 Team 1 You are the experts in "blogs" and "blooging" . You will have to find out and then explain to your classmates: 1. What is "a blog"? 2. How did it all start - a short history of blogging. 3. What kind of blogs are there? 4. Why do people and organisations

blog? <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog> [http://www.teachertube.com/view\\_video.php?viewkey=b037033dd1149e816d52](http://www.teachertube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=b037033dd1149e816d52) <http://www.problemogger.net/archives/2005/02/05/what-is-a-blog/> [http://www.blogger.com/tour\\_start.g](http://www.blogger.com/tour_start.g) [http://www.pbs.org/teachers/learning.now/2006/05/what\\_exactly\\_is\\_a\\_blog\\_anyway.html](http://www.pbs.org/teachers/learning.now/2006/05/what_exactly_is_a_blog_anyway.html) [http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog\\_history.html](http://www.rebeccablood.net/essays/weblog_history.html) <http://www.unc.edu/~zuiker/blogging101/> <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2005/11/29/20-types-of-blog-posts-battling-bloggers-block/> Team 2 You are the experts in creating a blog! You will have to teach the rest of the class how to create a blog. You will also come up with a list of useful tips to create a "killer ESL blog": How to post? What to post? How to post? You can use examples of blogs you liked or you think are the best blogs available online. <http://www.blogger.com/home> <http://www.slideshare.net/yizmo/10-ways-to-a-killer-blog> <http://www.conversionrater.com/index.php/2006/10/27/fifteen-ways-to-a-killer-blog-with-the-scobles/> <http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/02/14/blogging-for-beginners-2/> <http://lorelle.wordpress.com/2006/01/23/blogging-tips-hundreds-of-resources-for-finding-content-for-your-blog/> Team 3 You are the experts in enhancing a blog! You will have to demonstrate to the rest of the students how to: 1. Share a Youtube video on your blog 2. Upload a powerpoint presentation to Slideshare and the share it on your blog page 3. Make podcasting with blogger [http://www.podcastgnews.com/articles/Make\\_Podcast\\_Blogger.html](http://www.podcastgnews.com/articles/Make_Podcast_Blogger.html) <http://desktopvideo.about.com/od/videohostingsites/ss/embedmovie.htm> <http://google.about.com/od/googleblogging/ss/embodyoutubesbs.htm> <http://www.slideshare.net/> <http://www.techcrunch.com/>

com/2006/10/04/introducing-slideshare-power-point-youtube/http://www.indezine.com/blog/2006/10/slideshare-sharing-slides-and.html

Week 2 During this week you will have to read and evaluate some of the most popular blogs of 2006-2007. You will each have to come up with your own top 10 blogs and then decide as a class which blogs should be nominated for the BEST BLOGS of 2007. The blogs should be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Is the blog well organized and easy to navigate?
2. Does the blog feature relevant pictures, videos, podcasts, links or powerpoint presentations?
3. Does the blog display links to other outside reliable sources?
4. Is the blog authentic - does it reflect its' author's personal point of view regarding its main theme?
5. Is the information displayed on the blog useful?

This is a list of blogs you should read and evaluate:

Educational Blogs:  
<http://learn-english-blog.blogspot.com/>  
<http://educationwonk.blogspot.com/>  
<http://www.bloggerschoiceawards.com/categories/17>  
<http://oedb.org/library/features/top-100-education-blogs>  
<http://esl-advice.blogspot.com/>  
<http://www.rong-chang.com/blogs/>

Entertainment Blogs:  
<http://www.couturecandy.com/celebs/index.html>  
<http://www.thecelebrityblog.com/>  
<http://www.uglybettyblog.com/>  
<http://www.glamour.com/fashionbeauty/blogs/fashion/>  
<http://www.uglybettyblog.com/>  
<http://topsites.blogflux.com/entertainment/>

Technology related &nbsp;Blogs:  
[http://www.forbes.com/2003/03/13/cx\\_ah\\_techblogs/12.html?thisSpeed=335544320000](http://www.forbes.com/2003/03/13/cx_ah_techblogs/12.html?thisSpeed=335544320000)  
[http://www.nytimes.com/ref/technology/blogs\\_101.html](http://www.nytimes.com/ref/technology/blogs_101.html)  
[http://2006.weblogawards.org/2006/12/best\\_technology\\_blog.php](http://2006.weblogawards.org/2006/12/best_technology_blog.php)

Week 3 During the third week you will have to create your own ESL blogs! Each blog should:

1. Display 3 posts:
  - 1) Hello, this is me! (an introduction message about yourself - where you are from, why you came to USA, what special hobbies, interests or "talents" you have, etc)
  - 2) My home country: (write about your home country and some interesting facts related to your culture)
  - 3) My experience in USA (write about your experience in USA, did you have a culture shock, did you make any special friends in USA, have you travelled in USA, etc)
2. Have at least one Youtube video shared on the front page. The video should be related to your posts and it should be accompanied by a short description: how is it related to your blog and why did you choose it to appear on your blog.
3. Have at least one of the powerpoint presentations you created this semester shared through <http://www.slideshare.net/>

At the end of the week you will read and evaluate each other's blogs and vote for the BEST ESL Blog!

## Evaluation

Category and Score	Unsatisfactory	Developing	Good	Excellent	Score
ESL Blog Organisation	The Blog is not well organised and difficult to navigate. The postings are not marked by separate titles and the links are not visible.	The Blog is organised according to separate posts, but they are not easy to delineate. The postings are marked by separate titles but there are no links or the links are not visible on the page.	The Blog is organised but not very easy to navigate. All the postings are marked by separate titles, but there are no relevant links.	The Blog is well organised and easy to navigate. All the postings are marked by separate titles and all the links are conveniently placed on the page.	%25
Posting	The blog doesn't display all the 3 required postings. The grammar and the spelling of the posts is not accurate.	The blog displays all the 3 required postings, but the grammar and the spelling of the posts needs some improvement.	The blog displays all the 3 required postings. Both the grammar and the spelling is ok, but the student needs to revize the posts agan.	The blog displays all the 3 required postings with relevant links and pictures. Both the grammar and the spelling of the posts is accurate.	%25
Attachments 1) Youtube videos 2) Powerpoint presentations through Slideshare 3) Podcasting	The blog doesn't display relevant videos from Youtube and PPP from slideshare.net. There is no podcast under any of the posts.	The blog displays only either videos from Youtube or a PPP from slideshare.net with no description attached to it. The student has not posted a podcast under any of the posts.	The blog displays relevant videos from Youtube and PPP from slideshare.net, but they are not accompanied by any description. The student has also posted a podcast under one of the posts, but the podcast needs some improvement.	The blog displays relevant videos from Youtube and PPP from slideshare.net with a detailed description why the student chose them or how they are related to his/her blog. The student has also posted a podcast under one of the posts.	%25
Authenticity	All the information on the blog is not authentic and doesn't reflect its author's personal point of view on the posted topics. The student has used somebody else's opinion or work to display on the blog.	Not all the information on the blog is authentic. Only some entries reflect its author's personal point of view on the posted topics.	All the information on the blog is authentic, but the student needs to express more personal points of view and more personal ideas related to the blog's topics. The student has not used somebody else's opinion or work to display on the blog.	All the information on the blog is authentic and reflects its author's personal point of view on the posted topics. All the videos and the presentations are done by the student.	%25
				Total Score	%100

## Conclusion

At the end of the third week, the students will have:

1. been familiar with the concept of "blogging"
2. read some of the most

popular educational, entertainment and technology related blogs<sup>3</sup>. evaluated a blog in terms of organisation, features and quality of posting<sup>4</sup>. created their own blogs<sup>5</sup>. enhanced their blogs with shared videos, pictures, music and podcasts<sup>6</sup>. read other classmates' blogs and posted comments <sup>7</sup>. evaluated their own blogs and voted for the best ESL blog<sup>8</sup>. learned how to improve their writing and critical thinking skills using blogs' features

The most important thing about blogs is that the students can further use their blogs outside the classroom for any other purpose: make sure the students are aware of that! Encourage them to share their thoughts, ideas, creations with the rest of the world!

## Teacher Page

I have created this webquest for my ESL Lab class and it is a perfect activity for any Intermediate to Advanced ESL students who need to get familiar with the concept of blogging and start sharing their own work through ESL personal blogs. While designing the lesson plan to go with this webquest, I was following the latest 2007 TESOL and NETS standards: According to the new, 2007 TESOL (Teaching English as a Second Language) Technology Standards for Students and Teachers, ESL students should:

- be able to use basic operating system and browser functions and use available input and output devices (e.g., keyboard, mouse, printer, headset, microphone, media player)
- demonstrate strategic competence as users of technology.
- understand that communication conventions differ across cultures, communities, and contexts.
- appropriately use available technology-based language skill-building tools
- appropriately use available technology-based tools for communication and collaboration
- recognize the value of technology to support autonomy, lifelong learning, collaboration, personal pursuits, and productivity.

While planning and designing their activities, ESL teachers should:

- demonstrate knowledge and skills in basic technological concepts and operational competence, meeting or exceeding TESOL technology standards for students in whatever situation they teach.
- identify and evaluate technological resources and environments for suitability to their teaching context.
- design and manage language learning activities and tasks using technology appropriately to meet curricular goals and objectives.
- evaluate and implement relevant technology to aid in effective learner assessment.
- use communication technologies to maintain effective contact and collaboration with peers, students, administration, and other stakeholders.

NETS standards

According to NETS Planning and Designing Learning Environments and Experiences, teachers should:

- design developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that apply technology-enhanced instructional strategies to support the diverse needs of learners.
- apply current research on teaching and learning with technology when planning learning environments and experiences.
- identify and locate technology resources and evaluate them for accuracy and suitability.
- plan for the management of technology resources within the context of learning activities.
- plan strategies to manage student learning in a technology-enhanced environment.

To get started, you can read the powerpoint presentation I created to put together the most important tips on teaching ESL students how to create a blog on Slideshare: <http://www.slideshare.net/daniMD/creating-a-blog-activity-for-esl-students>

If you are curious to see my students' work, you can read our ESL Class Blog: <http://dvmunca.blogspot.com/> or check on each of my students' individual ESL Blog they had to create as a final project for the 2006-2007 Fall semester in the ESL program at the University of Mississippi:

- Mohannad: <http://mohannadsblog.blogspot.com/>
- Keizo: <http://keizo-trivia.blogspot.com/>
- Nadera: <http://alkoor.blogspot.com/>
- Pauline: <http://po-esl-usa.blogspot.com/>
- Alex: <http://kakacaoz.blogspot.com/>
- Kelly: <http://kellylab.blogspot.com/>
- Gabi: <http://gabilupocketsize.blogspot.com/>
- Ji-Hee: <http://jihee-jun.blogspot.com/>

Video-Interview "Using Blogs in the ESL Classroom"

This is a short video interview of my students sharing their ideas related to how they used their blogs to improve their English skills and share their culture with the rest of the world. [http://www.teachertube.com/view\\_video.php?viewkey=3063e419773b4f310fc2](http://www.teachertube.com/view_video.php?viewkey=3063e419773b4f310fc2)

### Standards

### Credits

### Other