FCO Blogs :: Top Tips

As with any self-publishing platform, maintaining a high editorial standard, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is crucial to both engagement and reputation. This guide summarises the top editorial issues on our blogs platform. Please take some time to go through these. Over time, we hope and expect best practice to trickle down across the web editor network. As always, get in touch with your regional hub with any issues, or blogadmin@digital.fco.gov.uk for technical queries.

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1. Remove rogue formatting

Text formatting has affected some posts, which arises when copying material directly from Microsoft Word. This copies its own bespoke formatting which overrides the default Wordpress style. As a result, everything from fonts, line spacing and paragraphing will look slightly different.

There are several ways to correct (starting from most simple):
- Draft directly from the Wordpress visual editor.
- Use the **Copy from Word** option above the editor (you may need to enable the extra row of settings by selecting "*Show/hide the Kitchen Sink*" - see image below).
- Use the **Copy from Text** option (as above), or import the drafted post via Wordpad.
- Enter the HTML editor and manually remove the extra code around your body of text. This is the most time-consuming and is not recommended.

2. Using images effectively

Where possible, images should be full-width and fully aligned, supported by captions and used strategically to help users navigate longer posts. In Wordpress, the default post width is 500 pixels, so try to source images that are 500 pixels minimum. If images are generic or of lower quality (less than 500px), it is better to wrap the image with text (see **Alignment** in **Image Settings**).

 The photo itself should be of decent quality – we have in the past and will continue to remove blurry photos. Tiny thumbnails add nothing to the visual quality of the post and will be scaled larger or removed.

When appropriate, attribute the source of your images (anything not Crown Copyright) and be careful of using images for which you do not have permission to publish or own the copyright to do so. You can make attributions via the 'alternate text' or the Caption (which also supports hyperlinks).

Please consider optimising your images – full width photos of 500 pixels wide can easily be optimised to 100kb or less. This hasn't stopped several bloggers uploading images 3-5Mb large. This isn't just detrimental to the blog performance but also the end user.

3. Using image URLs

Image hyperlinks are mostly unnecessary for Media Library content. They also make it easier for others to embed our image content on external sites. Try to disable these in your posts if possible (set **Link URL** to *None* in **Image Settings**). If you are encouraging users to download images, it best to embed an externally hosted image via Flickr or Facebook.
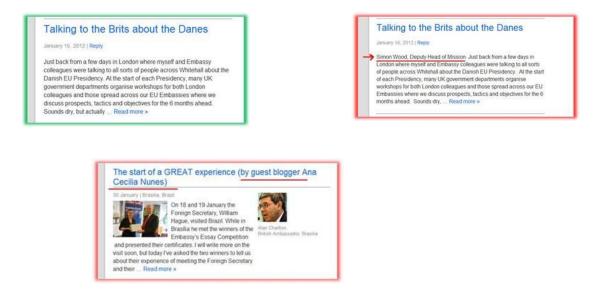
For external image content, try to ensure hyperlinks open the original content page in a new tab (in **Advanced Link Settings** in **Image**

Settings) or add such links to the image caption. When applicable, linking to a parent Flickr Set of a photo allows interested users to explore related photos, as in the following clickable linked image:

4. Guest blogging

We insist that Foreign & Commonwealth Office staff blog from a user profile – it is easy to set up, looks significantly better and enables the original blogger to moderate their own comments and continue the discussion.

If external guest bloggers are posting, we recommend including an opening introduction from the main blogger followed by the guest post itself. For the homepage excerpt, please ensure the **Manual Excerpt** is used to properly capture the start of the guest post (at the top of the Edit Post screen, choose **Screen Options**, check **Excerpt**, and add text to the new window). This ensures the excerpt makes sense to a user (see above examples). Please avoid adding the guest blogger details to the title either.

5. Using inline links

Hyperlinks should be inline and seamless with the text, so avoid using raw URLs (http://www.fco.gov.uk) or asking users to "click here".

Please try to ensure Twitter handles are hyperlinked where possible e.g. "Please follow the @ForeignOffice on Twitter".

6. Linking to external files

Linking to externally hosted files is encouraged where appropriate. Please ensure they follow the following format after the file hyperlink: [.PDF, 1.3MB]. Also ensure the link is set to open in a new window/tab (**Insert/edit Link** in the Kitchen Sink).

The Media Library now supports uploading most file types, so you can upload supporting documentation here if you wish. We also recommend embedding or linking to content via **SkyDrive**, as users can preview documents inline and in the case of hyperlinks, link to a version that opens Office Online in the browser.

7. Cross-promote content/campaigns

There is a wealth of content across the FCO's network of websites, so try to be aware of opportunities to cross-promote our content or campaigns.

This could be linking to relevant news items, adding hyperlinks to related content or promoting new pages and sites that serve to enhance a user's experience.

Take the following London Conference on Somalia widget we prepared for one of our blogs:

8. Infrequent Blogging

Try to maintain a regular publishing frequency, as a neglected blog is bad for engagement and corporate reputation. We use Google Analytics and other metrics to help evaluate blog performance – if you are interested in stat reports just let us know. If you intend to close your blog, please let us know so we can correctly archive it.

9. Double-spacing

Several bloggers use double-spacing between sentences. It is strictly unnecessary to do so. In the excerpt and other areas, they will stand out and compromise web aesthetics. Please try to avoid double-spacing and always proof-read your blog posts before publishing.