

Guest Posting

Your Step-By-Step Guide



By Jennifer Blanchard

Step 1: Do Your Research

Before you can guest post, you need to figure out where it's best for you and your business to be published. Notice I said for you, not for everyone else. It seems as entrepreneurs we compare ourselves to others and think we have to do what they are doing.

While getting published on the Huffington Post might be awesome for name-dropping purposes, it may not be the best fit for every business. You need to get your guest posts in front of your target audience, whether that's the Huffington Post or another site entirely.

To find out, you've got to do some research.

Visit Google and search for “blogs” and “your topic” to see what comes up. For example, if I'm looking for places to guest post, I'd search for “fiction writing blogs,” because that will point me to blogs where my target audience is hanging out.

You probably already have a few blogs in mind. Write those down. Then do some research and find other blogs to add to the list. This is your “Potentials” list.

Include blogs that aren't your specific topic, but are a related topic where your audience may also be hanging out. For example, I could write a guest post for a retirement blog, because a lot of retired people want to write books. This isn't necessarily my topic (writing), but it does focus on my main target audience, which is people age 45 and older.

Next, deepen your research a little. For each of the blogs on your Potentials list, find out:

- **Topics covered**—these are the overall topics
- **Most recent posts**—write down the most recent 5 to 7 posts the blog has published
- **Guest post information**—do they list any guest post guidelines on the site? If so, be sure to save the link so you can reference them later. Also, look for a contact name, link or email address.

Having this information about each blog you're interested in writing for is important for putting together the perfect pitch

Step 2: Pick A Target

Now that you've done your research and have a list of potential places to submit guest posts, you'll want to pick one to start with. You can target more than one blog at a time, but I recommend doing one at a time in the beginning, until you get the hang of it and have the process down.

Most people will come up with one guest post idea and then pitch it to a bunch of blogs at the same time, without getting specific to one blog or another. **This is a major mistake that will get you rejected.**

You're going to do this the professional way. And that means pitching one idea to one blog, not multiple blogs.

That's why you have to pick a target blog. Take a look at your Potentials list and decide where you want to start.

Once you have your target, you can move on to the next step.

Step 3: Gather Pitching Ammo

Go back and look at the information you gathered about this potential blog. Did you find guest post guidelines? If so, read them and follow to the letter. Disregarding the site's guest post guidelines will automatically get you rejected.

If you're not sure if the site has any guidelines, you can do a search on Google for "guest post guidelines" and "site name" to see what comes up.

Next, take a look at the topics they typically cover and what their most recent blog posts were. This will let you know exactly what the site's readers are interested in.

Finally, visit the site and check it out. Get to know it. Join their email list. Become a fan on Facebook

Step 4: Brainstorm Ideas

Now that you know your potential target site better, it's time to brainstorm ideas for guest posts you can pitch them. There are two ways to go about this that will get yeses from blog editors:

1. **Pitch something similar** to what they already cover on their blog—what can you provide that will continue to add to the conversation?
2. **Pitch something they're missing**—a gap you can fill with your content. Think about what they're not covering on their blog, but should be and how you can plug the hole.

Brainstorm both options and see where you land.

Another way to brainstorm—and an exercise I love and use personally—is to “headline brainstorm.” I learned this from Darren Rowse of Problogger. Here's how it works:

- Go to Barnes and Noble (or Google images) and check out magazine covers for magazines outside your genre
- Using the magazine covers, make a list of possible guest post ideas using the headlines you see.

For example, if the headline says “10 ways to improve your health in the New Year,” and I'm brainstorming guest post ideas for a blog about cleaning and organizing, I can change the headline around and instead say, “10 ways to organize your office in the New Year.”

Repeat this with different magazines until you have a bunch of guest post ideas. You can [learn more about how to do this brainstorm technique here](#).

Review your list and pick the best idea—the one you think is the best fit for the blog you're targeting.

Step 5: Pitch

Now comes the part where you pitch the blog's editor with your guest post idea. If you've done your homework, you should be set up for an easy yes.

Your pitch needs the following components:

- **A subject line**—let them know you're sending a guest post, using "A Potential Guest Post." Or you can use the headline for the blog post you're pitching, like this: "Guest Post: 10 Ways to Organize Your Office in the New Year"
- **Opening**—this is when you, in a genuine way, compliment the editor. Talk about how the blog has helped you or what you like about the work they're doing. Let them know who you are, but keep it short.
- **Body of the pitch**—show the value you can bring to the blog with your guest post. How will the site's readers benefit? What's in it for them? (Hint: that's what the editor cares about.) Show the editor you did your homework and know the kind of content they publish.
- **Closing**—thank them for considering your request, wish them a good day and close with your name and contact info (website link, email address, phone number, whatever you want).

After you write your pitch, if you're able, have someone look it over. Then send it off via email.

From here you can choose to either go through steps two through five again with another blog on your Potentials list, or you can move on to step 7 and truly do one guest post at a time.

Step 6: Track and Manage

You need a way to track and manage the guest posts you're pitching and sending out. After awhile, it can be a lot if you're not keeping tabs on it.

Create a document or spreadsheet that tracks:

- The blog you pitched (and the editor’s name, if you know it)
- When you pitched it
- What you pitched (listing the headline for reference)
- What the response from the editor was
- If yes, did you send them the article yet, and when
- When will the article be published
- Overall results (how much traffic, how many newsletter subscribers, any sales, etc)

This will help make sure you keep on top of everything, so you have a record of which guest posts were most successful.

Step 7: Write the Guest Post

While you’re waiting to hear back from the blog editor that you pitched, you can get started writing the guest post.

If you want to wait ’til you hear back, make sure you at least have an outline of the article, so you can put it together quickly once you get a “yes.”

Writing the article either way is always great practice and if the editor says no for some reason, you can always do one of two things: pitch the idea (in a slightly different way) to someone else, or use the article on your own blog. (Plus with the awesome pitch you just put together, they’re going to say yes.)

You want to make sure your guest post has the following:

- **An introduction**—open with a story or something specific that will get the reader’s attention.
- **An easy-to-digest article body**—including subheads to break up the text, and bullet points or numbered lists to highlight information
- **A conclusion**—wrap everything up at the end and include a

- **Call to Action**—usually a question that prompts readers to leave a comment
- **A short bio**—around two to three sentences, and include two to three links to your work, website, social media, etc.

If you can, have someone look the post over before you submit it.

Step 8: Handle Replies

Soon after pitching your guest post, you'll receive a reply.

If you get a yes, send the promised guest post within 48 hours (72 hours at the latest). Don't wait any longer or you'll give them a chance to forget about you. And ask if they can give you a publish date, so you can plan for day-of comment moderating.

If you get a no, see if they listed a reason why (usually they will, and most of the time it will be something out of your hands, like they don't accept guest posts). If they gave a reason, add it to your track-and-manage spreadsheet (from step #6). This is good information to have.

Regardless of reply, be sure to record the responses, if you sent the guest post over and when you sent it.

Step 9: Follow Up

Most likely you'll hear back from the person, usually within a few days (sometimes up to a week). But if for some reason you don't, follow up.

Send a second email to the blog's editor, letting him/her know you're following up on a previous email (and let them know when you sent the original). Explain why you're emailing them. Tell them you'd appreciate hearing back from them either way. Short and sweet.

If the editor said yes and you've sent the guest post already, but haven't heard back, send a follow up email to confirm they received the guest post, and

attach another copy—just in case they missed it. Ask if they can get back to you with a publication date so you can plan for day-of activities (see step 10 for more on this).

Step 10: Day of Publication Duty

Congratulations—it's publication day. Your guest post is now live on the site you pitched.

While you can expect the blog's editor to do some promotional activities, you need to also be planning promo activities of your own. Here's what you should be doing on the day your guest post goes live:

- **Comment Moderation**—you'll want to visit the comments section of your guest post several times throughout the day and reply to anyone who leaves a comment. Try to add value through your replies and keep the conversation going.

Reply to everyone, even if it's just to say “thanks for checking the article out” or “thanks for leaving a comment.” People like to be acknowledged and the blog's editor will take notice.

- **Share the link with your people**—share a link to the guest post on all of your social media sites. Send the link out to your email list.
- **Create a link post on your blog**—a link post is when you write some commentary on your blog, and then link to an article on someone else's blog. In this case, the other article is your guest post. So in your write up, talk about the fact that you're guest posting on another site and mention what the post is about. Maybe even give a couple snippets from the guest post, highlighting why your reader should click through and read it.

Warning: do not, I repeat, do NOT re-post the guest post (in its entirety) on your blog or anywhere else on the internet. Guest posts should be original content created exclusively for the blog publishing it.

- **Ask others to share it**—yes, the oldie, but goodie: asking other people to share your stuff. You don't have to do this all the time, but with a guest post, it's a great way to get even more exposure. And most of the time, people will share if you ask them to.

Step 11: Post Guest-Post Day

The day after your guest post goes live, consider a few post-publication activities:

- **Send a thank you note to the blog's editor**—a quick email to say thanks for having you on the site can go a long way toward building rapport with this person. Especially important if you want to guest post there again. You can even feel free to pitch another idea to them.
- **Check for additional comments**—sometimes comments come in over night, so do another check to see if anyone else left one. If they did, be sure to reply. If you're really good, you should check it one final time three days later. By then, five days will have passed, and the guest post is buried enough where you won't get very many more comments.
- **Add a link to the guest post**—if you have a media page on your site, you can add the guest post link there along with the site's logo. If you have an "As Seen On" section, you can add the logo there too.
- **Keep on sharing**—keep this link in rotation when you're sharing content via social media.

Repeat this process with other guest posts on your "Potentials" list.

About the Author

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I'm a fiction-writing coach who helps emerging novelists write and revise their novels.

I'm the author of: Butt-In-Chair: A No-Excuses Guide For Writers Who Struggle to Get Started; Pen Name: How To Create Yours; and Creative On Command: Instant Inspiration Exactly When You Need It.

My articles have been featured on Copyblogger, Problogger, Paid To Exist, MindBodyGreen, SavvyAuthors and StoryFix, among others. I have more than a decade of experience as a professional writer; a journalism degree from Utica College; and a certification in Holistic Health Coaching from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition.

I'm a multipotentialite entrepreneur with a passion for fiction writing, being wildly creative and eating clean. When I'm not

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