

DeVoe L. Moore Center

Blog Writing Guide 2.1

Principal Author: Giovanna DaSilva, Blog Content Manager

Revised: Abby Swatts

1. Overview

Blog articles are the DeVoe Moore Center's primary tool for introducing and distributing research to the general public. The analysis in the posts should be driven by evidence, not opinion, and fit within the Center's mission.

2. Strategic Goals and Purpose

Blogs serve a number of critical purposes for the Center by:

- Providing the general public with broad access to policy relevant academic research.
- Contributing to current policy discussions and debates.
- Expanding the knowledge base for those working in public policy.
- Establishing and sustaining a cyber footprint for the DeVoe Moore Center's work in its core issue areas.
- Providing a portfolio of professional work output for staff and researchers affiliated with the Center.

3. Core Content and Metrics

The DeVoe Moore Center has adopted a core objective of publishing at least one blog post per week. To accomplish this objective, we have set specific goals that include:

- Interns, DIS & research assistants: 1 blog post/month
- Working groups:
 - Policy Analysis Group: 4-7 blog entries/ month
 - Data Analytics Group: 3-5 blog entries/month
 - Social Entrepreneurship Group: 3 blog entries/month

The DeVoe Moore Center has adopted a rigorous internal review and editorial process to ensure all published content meets a high standard of quality. This process includes three stages: review by group managers (Catherine, Val, Austin), review by blog content manager (Gio), review by the DMC's senior editor (Kathy), and final approval prior to publication by the Center director (Sam).

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4. Outline of Editorial Process

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Identify research topic with working group manager & begin research	<u>Stage 1 Editing</u> a. Submit draft to group manager for review and comment after one (1) week after assignment b. Revise accordingly	<u>Stage 1 Editing</u> a. BCM edits and comments on draft v1.2 same day or 1 day later, b. Intern revises and resubmits draft 1 day later (1.3) c. Repeat as necessary	<u>Stage 3 Editing</u> a. BCM reviews edits of draft v2.0 with author. b. Author revises accordingly. 1-2 days later (2.1)
Begin writing blog post	a. Work group manager submits draft to blog content manager (1-2 days later).	a. BCM sends draft to Senior Editor (Kathy) b. Sr Ed provides editorial feedback (in 2-3 days later) c. Draft renamed v2.0)	a. BCM reviews and sends draft v3.0 to Dr. Staley (3.0). b. Center Director (Dr. Staley) provides feedback to BCM. c. If feedback is minor, BCM will finalize edits. d. If feedback involves substantive changes, BCM revises with author and resubmits to Ctr Dir for approval
Collect additional data on topic as necessary	a. BCM provides feedback on draft (in same day or 1 day later) b. BCM cc's working group manager		a. BCM publishes blog on DMC website, b. Outreach Manager (Mike) shares blog on social media
a. Submit to BCM/Gio (Week 2) b. File Title draft: Last name_subject_v1.0	a. Author revises draft (in 2 days) b. File renamed: last name_subject_v1.2)		Cycle repeats itself

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5. Blog Post Specifications

Blogs are intended to be short, concise, and evidence based. They should provide readers with a quick, substantive, and easily understandable analysis of a particular issues, concern, or topic.

- Length: 500 word max
 - Blog posts longer than 500 words can probably be broken down into two posts
- Font: Times New Roman or Garamond (12 point font), single space
- Blog articles MUST be drafted in google docs. Make sure to send a sharable link with access to editing
- Submit all drafts to devoemoorecenter@gmail.com
 - This does not include the first preliminary draft. This first draft will be sent to your lab supervisor at their respective emails.
- Name your blog post Last name_subject_version#.
 - 1.0 = first draft of the blog sent to Gio
 - 1.1, 1.2, 1.3= first, second, or third draft edited by Gio and sent back to you
 - 2.0 = Draft version ready for Kathy's editorial review
 - 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 = Draft version edited by Kathy and given back for you to edit
 - 3.0 = Draft version ready for Dr. Staley's approval and/or feedback.
- Cite and link to ALL sources. You will do this by providing [hyperlinks](#) within the post.
- Policy reports and perspectives require Chicago-style citation

6. Citations and Referencing

- **Citation style.** Consistent with journalistic style, cite authors and affiliations in the narrative when possible without being too cumbersome. Example: "Nobel prize winning economist Douglass North was among the first academics to examine the importance of property rights in social and cultural development."
 - If the reference includes many authors, the citation might read: "Douglass North and his coauthors found...."
- **Number of citations.** Use or cite at least 7 sources within your blog post.
- **Citing on-line source material.** When citing a pdf or book, include the page number for the specific reference in a parenthetical comment. (NOTE: This will not appear in the final edit of the blog post but is rather an easy way for the editor to keep track of where you are pulling your sources from.)
- **Sources and references.** Utilize academic sources as much as possible although reputable non-academic sources are also acceptable. This includes using data from think tanks such as James Madison Institute, The Mercatus Center, Cato, etc. Try to avoid advocacy groups or general newspapers unless the source material is unique to that organization. Policy points and recommendations, however, ought to come from more academic sources.

7. Author Guidelines for Writing Blog Articles/Posts

DO....

- Focus on ideas, not people or personalities (especially if they are living).
- Focus on one major point.
 - Keep paragraphs focused on one point that supports the main thesis
- Anchor your blog in a coherent thesis outlined from the beginning. Don't phrase it in an obvious way, like "I will be covering X." instead, phrase it as such: " X policy is the most effective measure in mitigating the risk of Y."
- Have lead/hook in first paragraph; lead paragraph should be 2-3 sentences at most
- Be concise, active and direct language, and precise wording.
- Use a journalistic and familiar writing style.
- Vary word selection. Don't repeat the same word or phrase within the same sentence or multiple times within a paragraph.
- Use shorter sentences (no more than two independent/dependent clauses).
- Use complete sentences (sentences with a noun & verb).
- Keep tenses consistent in paragraphs (e.g., past vs. present tense).
- Keep sentences parallel in tense, number, etc. (singular vs. plural).
- Keep conclusions and "calls to action" in a concluding paragraph.
- Leave the reader with a positive and constructive direction for the future.
- Look at previous blog posts published at the DMC to get a feel for our writing style.

DO NOT....

- Engage in personal or ad hominem attacks.
- Write the way you speak.
- Use dangling modifiers, ambiguous phrases (check wikipedia for an explanation of this)
- Use flamboyant, exaggerated descriptive language (e.g., an "exciting" array of programs, "brilliant" beaches and "pastel" sunsets, etc.)
- Use vague language (e.g., X has many problems; Y program experienced serious issues, etc.).
- Use comparative words (e.g., more, less, most, etc.) without including a point of comparison.
- Use passive voice or indirect language (e.g., it is well known that....; it is important to note..." (unless grammatically necessary, check with Gio or Kathy).
- Write sentences linking two or more dependent clauses.
- Write run-on sentences (e.g., The dog ran up the stairs and into the elevator and into freezer).
- Repeat points, ideas, or evidence.
- Use jargon and/or academic language (e.g., military industrial complex, demand elasticity)
- Use value-laden language or conclusion in the body of the text (e.g., "Cooperation is essential to the success of economic development programs").

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- Write your draft as one large paragraph.
 - Separate your points by creating a new paragraph.
 - As in journalism, the four sentence rule doesn't necessarily apply here.
- Cite websites such as wikipedia, buzzfeed, etc. as a primary source
 - These websites can be used if the link is to provide additional explanation or define terms. For example, you might write: "Public choice economics is the application of economic principles and insights to political behavior." You could (and probably should) link to the wikipedia entry on public choice economics.
 - Be aware of the unreliability of some of these websites. For example, the wikipedia climate change website should almost never be used when referring to specific contributions to this topic. Go to the original or primary sources.

8. References and Useful Links

- Grammar
 - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/1/5/>
 - Thesaurus.com/Dictionary.com
 - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/> (Chicago-style citations)
- Useful and reliable think tanks
 - The Cato Institute, www.cato.org
 - The Mercatus Center, www.mercatus.org
 - The James Madison Institute (Tallahassee), www.Jamesmadison.org
 - The Heartland Institute, www.Heartland.org
 - The Tax Foundation, www.Taxfoundation.org
 - The Heritage Foundation, www.heritage.org
 - The Independent Institute, www.independent.org
 - American Enterprise Institute, www.aei.org
 - Brookings Institution, www.brookings.edu
 - Urban Institute, www.urban.org
 - The Rand Corporation, www.rand.org
 -
- Useful sites related to government
 - Florida Open Government, www.floridaopengov.org
 - Florida Office of Open Government, http://www.flgov.com/open_government/
 - Florida Open Government Watch, www.Fogwatch.org
 - Florida state statutes, <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/>
 - Tallahassee City Government transparency website, <http://www.talgov.com/transparency/opengov.aspx>

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- Leon County, <http://cms.leoncountyfl.gov/>

- State & Local news outlets
 - Tallahassee Democrat (daily), <http://www.tallahassee.com/>
 - Tallahassee Reports (on-line, biweekly), <http://tallahasseeereports.com/>
 - WCTV, <http://www.wctv.tv/>
 - FSU News, <http://www.fsunews.com/>
 - Florida Watchdog, <https://www.watchdog.org/florida/>
 - Florida Verve (James Madison Institute), <http://floridaverve.org/>