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## ESL Podcast 515 – Starting a Blog

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### GLOSSARY

**blog** – a special kind of website or a part of a website that has a lot of information about a particular topic, with the newest information appearing on the top, and that gives other people the opportunity to write their opinion about what they have read

\* Since we like to eat out, we read a blog that reviews restaurants in our town.

**blogger** – a person who regularly writes new information for a blog, usually once a day or a few times a week; the owner of a blog

\* The most popular bloggers are knowledgeable, informative, and entertaining when they write about their favorite topics.

**to take the leap** – to begin to do something, especially if it is new and unfamiliar

\* Did you hear that Drake has finally decided to take the leap and open his own business?

**template** – a model for creating other documents on a computer so that they all have a similar appearance, organization, and layout

\* Where can I find some good templates for fax coversheets?

**to customize** – to change something so that it meets one's needs and is slightly different than anyone else's

\* When we bought the car, we customized it by painting it bright orange and installing really big stereo speakers.

**flavor** – a particular taste, style, or characteristic

\* Her novels have an interesting regional flavor that reflects her childhood in the Deep South.

**to launch** – to begin something for the first time, especially an important project or adventure

\* They launched the organization in 1984 and were pleasantly surprised by its rapid growth.

**post** – one entry in a blog; a small section of text that is added to a blog all at once for other people to read and comment on

\* Did you read the last post about nuclear energy?

**to update** – to add the most recent information, making something current and/or complete

\* Please update the sales report with these revised figures.



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**to catch on** – to become popular and well-known or used by many people

\* Once cell phones became less expensive, they caught on very quickly.

**blogosphere** – the group of all blogs on the Internet

\* The blogosphere keeps growing every day as more and more people start their own blogs.

**self-promotion** – efforts to draw attention to oneself or one's work, trying to get other people's interest and admiration

\* When you apply for a job, your cover letter is an opportunity for self-promotion, so use it to tell the company why you'd be a great employee.

**search engine** – a website and computer program that helps you find other websites or specific types of information

\* Google, Yahoo, and AltaVista are some of the most popular search engines.

**to swap links** – to exchange URLs; for website A to agree to show the link to website B when website B agrees to show the link to website A

\* Nashwa has a travel website, and he's trying to swap links with websites for airlines and hotels.

**hit** – the moment when someone lands on (visits) a website

\* Hessea's website gets about 3,000 hits each day.

**to take (something) to heart** – to listen carefully to what someone says, believe it, and seriously consider doing it

\* When his music teacher told him that he should be a professional singer, he took it to heart.

**comment** – a message written by someone who has read a blog post and wants to add his or her opinion or additional information

\* The Washington Post has some interesting blogs, but the comments are much more interesting, because people have very strong opinions and like to argue with each other online.



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### COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. What did Traver give him?
    - a) Topic ideas for the first few posts.
    - b) A website that he can adapt for his blog.
    - c) A tool to count the number of hits.
  
  2. What does it mean to increase hits?
    - a) To attract more website visitors.
    - b) To have more comments on a blog.
    - c) To get more media coverage of a website.
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### WHAT ELSE DOES IT MEAN?

#### **post**

The word “post,” in this podcast, means one entry in a blog, or a small section of text that is added to a blog all at once for other people to read and comment on: “On this website, anyone can add a new post, as long as it’s related to the current topic.” A “post” is also a strong, tall piece of wood or metal, usually used to hold something up: “I wish there wasn’t a post in the middle of the living room.” Or, “They’re putting two posts in their backyard so they can hang a rope between them and dry their laundry outdoors.” The word “post” is often used in the name of a newspaper: “Which newspaper do you prefer: the Washington Post or the New York Post?”

#### **hit**

In this podcast, the word “hit” means the moment when someone lands on (visits) a website: “The Red Cross website has an increased number of hits in the days and weeks after a major disaster.” A “hit” is also something that is very successful and popular, especially in entertainment: “That song was one of the greatest hits of the 1980s.” Or, “The fancy birthday cake was a big hit with all the kids.” A “hit list” is the list of names of people whom an organization or group is trying to hurt: “After the police arrested the murderer, they found his hit list of other people he had been planning to attack.” Finally, a “hit man” is someone who is paid by another person to kill someone: “They tried to hire a hit man to kill their boss.”



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### CULTURE NOTE

The blogosphere is “growing by leaps and bounds” (growing very quickly) as more and more people and organizations start their own blogs. Sometimes it doesn’t seem like there can be enough topics “to go around” (enough topics so that each blog has a different one), but people are always finding something new to write about.

Blogs can “cover” (be about) almost any topic, but three types of blogs are most “common” (most often seen): personal, technical, and political blogs. Personal blogs have information about someone’s daily life. Many people start personal blogs when they go on an interesting trip or have a new baby and want their friends and family members to know what is happening in their life.

Technical blogs are usually about computers, the Internet, or business. Many technical blogs help people learn about new “developments” (important changes) in information technology and “troubleshooting” (ways to solve technical computer problems). Other technical blogs give businesses ideas for improving their “profitability” (the amount of money a company makes), finding more customers, or opening other offices. Some technical blogs are written by individuals, but others are written by companies that want to “interact” (communicate) with their customers.

Political blogs are used to discuss politicians and their “platforms” (the ideas, plans, and things politicians believe in), as well as specific “policy” (laws; rules) decisions. Other blogs are created so that the author can share his or her political “commentary” (opinions and reactions to current events). Political blogs play an important role in American elections, and most “candidates” (people who are trying to be elected for a particular job) have a blog on their website.

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Comprehension Questions Correct Answers: 1 – b; 2 – a



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**COMPLETE TRANSCRIPT**

Welcome to English as a Second Language Podcast number 515: Starting a Blog.

This is English as a Second Language Podcast episode 515. I'm your host, Dr. Jeff McQuillan, coming to you from the Center for Educational Development in beautiful Los Angeles, California.

This podcast has its own website. You may know it, it's eslpod.com. Go there to download a Learning Guide for this episode that will help you improve your English even faster. You can become an ESL Podcast member on our website. We're able to provide this audio for you for free because of our members, so do consider becoming one by going to eslpod.com.

This episode is called "Starting a Blog." It's a story that uses a lot of common vocabulary that we use when talking about weblogs or, as they're commonly called, blogs. Let's get started.

[start of story]

I've been thinking about starting a blog for a long time now, and after talking to my friend Traver, a popular blogger, I've decided to take the leap.

Traver got me started with a basic template, but I wanted to customize the blog to give it my own flavor before launching it. I already have my first few posts ready to go, and I plan to update it a few times a week.

Traver told me that it may take a little time for my blog to catch on and become known in the blogosphere. He suggested I do some basic self-promotion. He told me to register my website with the major search engines and to swap links with other bloggers writing on similar topics. He gave me some other advice to increase hits and I'm taking it all to heart.

I can't wait to get my first comments and to start talking to other people about our common interest: Our love of cats!

[end of story]

Our story begins with me saying that I'm thinking about starting a "blog," a special kind of website that has information that you can easily update – you can easily put on the website. Blogs usually have content that is added at least a



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couple times a week, or once week, sometimes several times a day. So, I'm thinking about starting a blog, and I talk to my friend Traver, a popular blogger. A "blogger" is someone who has a blog; it's the person who has the blog.

I say that I've decided to take the leap. The expression "to take the leap" (leap) means to begin to do something that's new and perhaps unfamiliar to you; you don't have a lot of experience, but you're just going to start and do it anyway. You're going to take the leap. A "leap" is normally a jump from one point to another, where you physically go up into the air. But here, it just means to get started.

Traver got me started with a basic template. A "template" (template) is a model for creating, in this case, other documents or other web pages. A template, in general, is sort of like a model that you use to start something. So for example, you might have a fax machine and you find on the web a fax template. It's a form that has all of the information that you can then add to – add your own personal information to. That would be a template. Websites, especially blog sites, often give you some templates so you don't have to create the site all by yourself.

I say that I wanted to customize my blog. "To customize (something)" is to change something so that it's different from everyone else's. So, you may use a blog template, but you want to use your own pictures or you want to change the way that the writing appears – the font. That would be to customize it, to make it your own. I say I want to customize the blog to give it my own flavor. Here, "flavor" means my own style, my own characteristic, my own taste. Normally, we use the word "flavor" to talk about food, but here I just mean my own particular style.

I want to give the blog my own flavor before launching it. For some reason, we use the verb "to launch" when we are talking about putting up a new website; we also use it in business to talk about starting a new project: "We're going to launch a new kind of deodorant." "Deodorant" is what you put underneath your arms so that you don't smell so bad. Taking a shower also helps! Anyway, to launch a new product or a new service means to start something, so here I'm talking about starting my blog by launching it.

I already have my first few posts ready to go. A "post," when we're talking about a blog, is what we might also call an "entry" (entry). It's a small section of text that you add; it's the new piece of information. So I may type up a couple of paragraphs and then put it on my blog with today's date. That would be one post, and then tomorrow I may add a couple of paragraphs about a different topic. That would be another post. So, a post is each section of your blog – it's



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each entry of your blog. “Post” actually has a couple of different meanings, so take a look at that Learning Guide for some more explanations.

I say that I plan to update my blog a few times a week. “To update” means to make it more current, bring it up to date, give information that is new.

Traver told me that it may take a little time for my blog to catch on. “To catch on” is a two-word phrasal verb meaning to become popular, something that is used by or done by many different people. We often talk about products – things that are sold that may catch on. For example, cell phones. Fifteen years ago very few people had mobile phones (or cellular phones), but when the price became lower and lower – when it became cheaper and cheaper to buy a cell phone, and the phones became smaller, then cell phones in many countries caught on. They became popular. Slang expressions is another example of something that would catch on – that would become popular

Traver said that it may take a little time for my blog to catch on and become known in the blogosphere. The term “blogosphere” refers to all of the blogs on the Internet. It is sort of related to another word, “atmosphere,” which refers to everything around our planet – the air around the planet. Blogosphere refers to all the blogs throughout the world.

Traver suggested that I do some basic self-promotion. “To promote” means to publicize, to let other people know about your product or service. “To self-promote” means to promote yourself, to let other people know about you. “Self-promotion,” then, is letting other people know about something that you are doing; in this case, your blog.

Traver told me to register my website – to send in my website information to the major or most important search engines. A “search engine” is something like Google, Yahoo, AltaVista; they’re websites that help you find other information on the Internet. He also suggested I swap (swap) links. A “link” on the website is something that you click on that takes you to another website or takes you to another file that is on the website. To “swap” means to exchange; I give you something and you give me something back. This is a popular way of letting other people know about your website, is to swap to links. I’ll put your website’s link on my website, and you put mine on yours.

Traver also gave me other advice to increase hits. A “hit” on a website is when someone comes to your website – when something is visited on your website. That’s not the complete technical definition, but it’s close enough for our



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purposes. “Hit” has several different meanings in English that are not related to a website; take a look at the Learning Guide for some more explanations of those.

I say that I’m taking all of this advice to heart – I’m taking it all to heart. The expression “to take (something) to heart” means to listen carefully to what someone is saying, to think about it seriously, to consider it seriously.

Finally I say that I can’t wait to get my first comments and to start talking to other people. Your “comments” are messages that other people put on your website. So, they come to your website, and if the blog allows it, they put their own ideas and then they post them – they put them on your website. They can comment on what you are saying; it’s a way of starting a conversation, perhaps, with people who are reading your blog. And what is my blog going to be about? It’s going to be about my love of cats, so you know that this story is definitely fiction!

Now let’s listen to the story, this time at a normal speed.

[start of story]

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[end of story]

The script for this episode was written by the popular blogger, Dr. Lucy Tse.

From Los Angeles, California, I’m Jeff McQuillan. Thank you for listening. Come back and listen to us next time on ESL Podcast.





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