



55 – Guest Post Guidelines: What to Include

POSTED MARCH 29, 2021 | Laura Christianson

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This is **part 2** in my mini-series on guest blogging. In [Episode 54](#), I explained 6 surefire ways to guarantee your guest blogging pitch gets instantly **rejected**. I showed you several examples of truly awful pitches, complete with the original spelling and punctuation errors.

Today I have a “**swipe file**” for you. That means you can copy the transcript below and adapt my guidelines for your own use.

What to include in your guest post guidelines

If you are actively seeking guest submissions, here are tips for what to include in your guidelines:

Overview of your readership

Example: The Blogging Bistro audience is comprised mainly of authors and other entrepreneurs who classify themselves as “tech-challenged.” They’re here to learn. They want *specific*, practical ideas they can implement immediately.

Topics you’re looking for

Topics must align directly with the core products, services, and programs you offer.



What you're NOT looking for

When I was accepting guest posts (**which I no longer do, so please don't send me pitches!**), I stated that I did not want *general* articles such as, “why it’s important to blog.” That topic has been covered by every blog on the planet, including mine.

I countered that with an example of a topic I knew would appeal to my readers, such as “how I increased my blog readership 500% in one month.”

I also noted that I would not accept articles that come across as sales-y. Many guest bloggers make subtle or blatant pitches for their own products, or for the company that has hired them to guest blog on their behalf.

The type and tone of the articles you're looking for

- Should guest posts be structured as step-by-step tutorials? Q&A?
- Do you want your guest to include personal anecdotes? Stories? Case studies? Statistics?
- Do you want the article to be written in an informal, conversational tone? Should the guest blogger talk directly to the reader using the first person point-of view?
- Or do you prefer a more formal third-person tone, such as “Business owners today...” or “Brands must engage their audience...”



How guest posts should be structured

- What is the minimum/maximum length requirement?
- How long should paragraphs be?
- Do you want the guest to break up long blocks of copy with sub-heads and numbered or bulleted lists?
- How should hyperlinks be incorporated into the article?
- How should the guest attribute expert sources and quotes?
- How do you want them to conclude the article? Do you want them to encourage comments by asking an engaging question?

Requirements for images, graphics, and/or videos

- Do you want the guest blogger to include original images, royalty-free stock photos, screenshots, and/or a video to visually enhance their article?
- If they include royalty-free stock photos, is the guest required to include a link to the source from which they downloaded the image, as well as copyright and licensing information, and an attribution to the photographer?
- What size should images be? Should the guest send them as attachments, or upload them to an online file sharing service?



How to format guest submissions

A correctly formatted article saves me a ton of time. When a blogger takes the time to format their post to my specifications, it shows me they are professional and reliable and that they care about details.

If you want to get invited back to guest post on a certain blog, carefully follow the guidelines for formatting your submission.

Here are the formatting tips I specified in my guidelines:

- Draft your guest post in Word (.doc or .docx).
- Do not use special formatting (e.g., bold, italics, centering, larger font) for the title, subheadings, etc. We will add formatting for you.
- Put a suggested title for your post at the top, left justified. When crafting your title, ask yourself, “What would someone *google* to find this article?”
- On the next line, insert your byline.
- Do not indent paragraphs.
- Left justify the entire article.
- Space ONCE after all end punctuation (do a *Find and Replace*).
- Hit the *Enter* or *Return* key one time at the end of each paragraph. Don’t insert a blank line between paragraphs or use the automatic paragraph spacing feature.



- Delete extra spaces (i.e., double spaces or triple spaces) at the ends of paragraphs.
- When you reference other sites, include the full URL of the page.
- Carefully edit your article for correct grammar, usage, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization.

Include this disclaimer:

If I accept your submission for publication, I reserve the right to edit as I deem necessary.

Note the word “if.” **IF** we accept. You’re not guaranteeing that you’ll publish the submission. You’re guaranteeing that you’ll *review* it, and that you reserve the right to say “no” if it doesn’t meet your guidelines.

Items the guest should include in their bio

I recommend requiring your guest to state their real first and last name. Ask them to include a link to their website, and possibly, to their favorite social media account, in their bio. **Check out all links** and attempt to discern whether the guest is legit **before** you accept their submission.

Provide length requirements for their bio. Will you accept one sentence? Two sentences? 50 words? 100 words?



Request a headshot.

This can be tricky, as guest bloggers often send headshots that are postage-stamp sized, blurry, or posed weirdly. Ask them to send a high-quality headshot that includes a neutral background.

Include this disclaimer:

I reserve the right not to use your headshot if it does not meet my quality standards.

Where to send the submission

Provide the email address they should submit to and instruct them what to put in the Subject line.

Sample Subject Line: Guest post submission for [insert your name or title of your blog].

What happens after they submit their guest post

- Will you acknowledge receipt of the submission? If so, within how many hours or days?
- How long will it take you to review their submission?
- Will you let them know whether or not you accept their submission for publication?



- If you accept their guest article, when will you publish it?
- How will you notify the guest when their article gets published on your blog?

Information about payment

Specify whether you pay for guest post articles. (Most bloggers do not offer compensation to first-time guest bloggers.)

Also specify whether you accept payment from guest posters (some companies offer compensation for publishing guest posts that include a link to the sponsor's website).

Details about rights you are you granting the guest blogger

- Is your guest required to submit unique content that will be published exclusively on your blog? Or can they submit the reprint of an article that has been published somewhere else? An adaptation of another article they've had published elsewhere?
- After you publish their article, are they allowed to submit the same article to other publications? If yes, within what time frame?
- Can they submit it immediately after it is published on your blog? Or do you require them to wait 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, or longer before submitting it elsewhere?



Why guest post guidelines are a must-have

Crafting guest post guidelines requires a lot of thought and decision-making. But guidelines are well worth your time investment.

The first thing you should do when a potential guest sends you a pitch is **send them the link to your guidelines**. (Often, guidelines are published as a page on your website that doesn't display in the main navigation tabs. Or you can create a PDF of your guidelines and send it as an attachment.)

Detailed guidelines will deter bloggers who **aren't serious** or who **don't care** about following guidelines. If they persist in submitting something, guidelines give you a built-in way to say "no, thank you," because you can point out that their submission didn't abide by your guidelines.

Prospective guest writers who are **motivated to do a great job for you** will thoroughly read and carefully follow your guidelines. When that happens, it's a delight, for both your featured guest and for you.

Guest blogging opportunities often lead to **long-term relationships with your guest**, either as a regular guest blogger, as an employee, friend, or even, as a future business partner!

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PAGE 9



Please share this series

If you've enjoyed my mini-series on guest blogging, please share episodes 54 and 55 with groups for bloggers and writers that you're a member of, as well as with your friends and followers on social media. Here are the links to share:

Episode 54: 6 Surefire Ways to Guarantee Your Guest Blogging Pitch Gets Rejected

<https://bloggingbistro.com/podcast/6-ways-to-guarantee-your-guest-blogging-pitch-gets-rejected/>

Episode 55: Guest Post Guidelines: What to Include

<https://bloggingbistro.com/podcast/guest-post-guidelines-what-to-include>



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PAGE 11



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Thank you!

Laura