

Tips for Mobile Beginners

Create Your Own Mobile Blog

by Suzanne Ross

TESTED ON: WINDOWS MOBILE-BASED SMARTPHONE

First, what's a moblog? A moblog, or a mobile blog, is an online record of anything you feel like sharing with the world, whether they want it or not. The difference between moblogging and regular blogging is that you use your phone or Pocket PC to post text or pictures.

There are obvious advantages to this. If you get inspired in the middle of a meadow, at your favorite local watering hole, or on a road trip, you won't have to wait until you can get back to your desktop to send your thoughts and photos to the world.

Though moblogging isn't new, it has been gaining popularity and attention, though I don't think the uses of it have been fully explored. It seems a perfect way, for instance, for a real estate agent to show new properties to clients. I've been looking around for a house lately, and I'm frustrated by the lack of pictures on real estate sites. If an agent had a mobile blog, she could take pictures and immediately send them to her moblog.

Then she could call her client on their Smartphone and say something like, 'hey, I just listed a house that seems to be what you're looking for. I'm standing right in front of it. I posted pictures to my moblog. Take a look, and if you like it, you can see it right away.'

In less than five minutes the client could look at the pictures on the agent's moblog on their own mobile device, decide if they like it, call her back, pull up the address on their Pocket Streets map (shameless plug). No time wasted.

There are several types of mobile blogging. One is simply using your Smartphone to post to your regular blog. The blog doesn't have a mobile version. Most major blog sites offer some way to post to your blog with your phone.

Another type of mobile blogging is using your camera to snap a picture, and then posting it to your mobile blog with MMS or e-mail. You can then view your pictures on a mobile version of your site. Textamerica is one popular Web host that does this. They also put car ads on the free sites. It's probably worth it to pay to have your site ad-free, but it's up to you.

There is a text only, bare bones site designed for mobile device viewing. The only company I've seen offer this is Winksite. You can bring in your favorite mobile feeds, add a forum, add a survey, add announcements, and add a chat. The developers put in a lot of functionality, but kept the user interface simple. If you have a forum on a mobile phone, you probably don't worry about color and style. However, it may discourage some from posting, as they're used to mobile sites with photos. I think Winksite would be great for poets – especially those who write Haiku.

[EarthCam](#) adds a twist to the usual photo blog. With a paid subscription, \$4.95 US a month at the time I wrote this, you can access Web cams around the world on your phone. You can also set up your own Web cam on your desktop computer, and view it on your phone. This could be useful for people who want to see their children during the day, or check on a pet. "Nanny or Fido Phones" could be the next big thing.

How do you pick the right moblog? I tested out several sites. What I looked for was:

1. **Don't make me think.** Easy instructions and FAQs that don't have 'how do I find my blog on the Web site' as the last choice.
2. **Privacy.** Allow me to keep my pictures private, or a mix of public and private. I don't want to share pictures of my family with the world, but if I happen to see Elvis or a Yeti, I might want to post my proof.
3. **Features.** I liked the extra features of a forum and survey offered by Winksite, and the Web cam feature from EarthCam.
4. **Personalization.** I want my blog to look pretty. Offer me an easy way to change templates, even if I'm not a developer or a designer. Textamerica does a good job there.

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You'll have your own laundry list of features that you want. Shop around, try the free version that most offer, and have fun. Many sites also offer features that allow you to cross-post – you can send pictures and text from your mobile blog to your regular blog and vice versa.

Once you've chosen your moblog, be sure and add the e-mail address you need to post your pictures to in your contacts, and add the URL of your site to your mobile favorites.

Add to contacts:

1. Press **Start**
2. Select **Contacts > New**
3. Type in the name of your mobile site
4. Scroll down to E-mail: and type in the e-mail address
5. Select **Done**

Add the site URL:

1. Select **Internet Explorer**
2. Select **Menu > Add Favorite**
3. Type in the site URL
4. Press **Add**

Here's an example of how easy it is to use a mobile blog. I signed up for a free blog with Textamerica. They gave me an e-mail address, and a URL for my site. It only took a few minutes, and no credit cards changed hands.

I took a picture of a cloud out the window of my office on my Windows Mobile Smartphone. Better than the coffee cup on my desk. This is how I posted it to my moblog using my Smartphone:

1. Press **Start**
2. Select **Messaging**
3. Select **MMS**
4. Select **New**
5. Select **Menu > Recipients > Add**
6. Scroll to the contact you added following steps above and select
7. Type in a subject, which will be your caption
8. Type in text, which will show up under your image when you open a larger version
9. Select **Send**

One word of warning – yes, this will count on your data charges. If you plan to post a lot of pictures, get an unlimited data plan.

Becoming a moblogger is fast, fun, and one more way to enjoy your Windows Mobile-based device.