

True/Slant's Guidelines for style in your blog posts

1. Write an **original headline for all blog posts**

Search engines scan your headlines initially, so your posts are more likely to be found if they have headlines that are explicit and include things like proper and common nouns. **Do not** hit 'publish' before you've entered a subject heading as this creates problems for the indexing of your blog post.

A good headline for search engine optimization is simple. Publish your post first with this kind of headline:

'Bernie Madoff sentenced to 150 years in jail'

After you've written a more cookie cutter headline like the above, you can edit your post to give it a more clever headline if you like:

'Weekends with Bernie (in jail)'

Publish the post first with the "standard" headline. Then edit it to make it "pretty." The first headline you create should be more craft than art so that search engines know what they're looking at.

2. Categorize and tag your blog posts

Categorizing and tagging is essential to your blog posts being properly indexed in our system and on search engines like Google.

At this time, we are only using 18 **categories**. Please choose one of these -- or at most two -- for each of your posts. This allows us to feature your posts on our 18 Topic pages:

Business
Crime
Entertainment
Environment
Food
Health
Money
Parenting
Politics
Science
Sports
Strange
Style
Technology
Travel
U.S.
Women
World

Have an objection to our 18 category scheme and feel like you're left out? Read the 'fine print' below which answers many questions.

There are no limitations on **tags**. These can be as numerous and as varied as you want. Search engines will find your tags, not your categories, so you must tag them, too.

Zemanta, which is built into the blog post entry page, will suggest tags for your blog post, but it won't always catch all of the major proper nouns or names in your blog entry. Please choose some of the Zemanta tags and manually enter ones that Zemanta missed.

If you don't understand the difference between categories and tags, give your T/S contact person a shout!

3. Style, syntax, and diction

Some things you should do:

- Use single quotes in headlines ('Michael')
- Use sentence case in headlines (The closest thing to a superstar in Obama's cabinet)
- Align photos to the right when you're indenting, or 'blockquoting' text
- Check the formatting of your post after you publish it and see if there any obvious problems that need to be fixed, and let us know when you can't figure them out

Some things you shouldn't do:

- Don't use double quotes ("Michael") in headlines
- Don't use title case in headlines (The Closest Thing To A Superstar In Obama's Cabinet)
- Don't align photos to the left when you're indenting or 'blockquoting' text
- Don't leave large gaps of blank space at the top/bottom of your blog posts
- Don't end headlines with a period

4. Read the '**Story Grab**' memo and follow its guidelines

It's a separate document, in PDF format, with screen grabs showing the typical and non-typical ways of formatting blog posts using the story grab tool and other parts of our system.

5. Adding photos and video

You can use **Zemanta** to find photos. It's on the right hand side of your screen when you're writing a post. It will suggest images based on the text in your post. You can also search images there using key words. Once you choose an image, you can click on it to add it to your post. Once in your post, click on it again and then click the landscape icon in order to align it, add a caption, or resize the image. To add more than one image from Zemanta, simply drag the image into your post and use your cursor to guide the placement of the image.

You can also add photos from your computer, by clicking on the "Add Media" grey, star-like icon. Please make sure to resize your image to no larger than 640 x 480 before you upload it, and to crop it as you want it to appear in your post. Otherwise, it takes up too much space.

You can embed video in your posts, too. Click the tv icon, and a small screen will pop up. Paste the video's **URL** in the text field at the top. Click **Insert Video**. Note that we currently only support video from six websites: YouTube; Hulu; Vimeo; Google Video; Revver; Metacafe.

6. 'Jumping your posts'

To create a "continue reading" or "jump" in your posts, click on the "More" button. It looks like a rectangle divided by a dashed line. This will keep your homepage clean and you'll get more views as people click through to continue reading your posts.

7. Compose your posts in **WordPress**

Please do not draft your posts in Word and transfer them to WordPress. It brings over tags and formatting which cause your posts to look strange. If you draft outside of WordPress, use Notepad. Our autosave feature means that you are highly unlikely to lose your work.

8. Use the '**kitchen sink**' button when blogging

It provides more functionality when editing your posts -- more explanation here:

<http://trueslant.com/help/formatting-posts/showhide-kitchen-sink/kitchen-sink-second-row-of-editing-buttons/>

9. Spell proper names correctly

Create and preserve your credibility by showing a high level of editorial integrity and spelling the names of the subjects of your blog posts correctly.

10. Check your work after it's published

Don't just publish and run. Have a look at your blog post to see if any formatting is off or if you've made any errors or omissions. If you can't figure out how to fix something, consult us and we'll have a look at the problem.

The 'Fine Print' on Categories and Tags

More and more of you are adding categories to your blog posts on a consistent basis - that's great, but the approach we're all taking needs to be consistent.

Effectively, categories need to be simple. Very simple, and broad. When you categorize a blog post, it should relate only to the 18 core topics you'll find below, and it should have one, or at most two, categories.

We won't bore you too much with the details of how our website's internal architecture works. Basically, we associate a category in your blog post with a Topic page.

Imagine categories as the sections of a newspaper. So categorizing a blog post as 'World' tells the blog post to pop up in our World page. On the other hand, categorizing a blog post as 'Iraq' doesn't mean anything. There is no 'Iraq' Topic page, so categorizing a blog post as 'Iraq' will have no effect.

In contrast, tags can be elaborate and specific, which helps your blog posts to be found in search engines. There is an Iraq 'tag page.' For instance, check out this Google search:

<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&safe=off&client=firefox-a&rls=org.mozilla%3Aen-US%3Aofficial&hs=Zs1&num=100&q=site%3Atrueslant.com+iraq&btnG=Search>

You'll notice that the first set of results that come up at the top when searching our website for 'Iraq' are associated with tags, not categories. That's how Google (and other search engines) work. That's why you should over-tag, and under-categorize your blog posts. Tag them however you want, as much as you want.

But when it comes to categories, it's very rare that you'll need more than one, at most two. Obama fires GM's CEO - fine, 'Politics' and 'Business.' Hillary Clinton takes her Mom to Africa - 'Women' and World.' But in most circumstances, it will be one category per post, and that's all it should be.

Now we're not saying there will never be topics other than the 18 core topics we've selected for the homepage topics module.

Right now, up in the network header above your blog entries, you see 'Active Topics.' These will soon be very different in appearance. Instead of seeing 'World' and 'Politics' up in the network header, you'll start seeing things like 'Obama picks Sonia Sotomayor' or 'Kris Allen wins American Idol.' The network headers will be dynamic, and constantly changing to reflect major news developments. We'll be aggregating contributors' posts on hot and developing subjects.

But you don't need to worry so much about creating categories for those topics - that's our job. We can add an 'American Idol' category to a blog post when it's required - it's more important that you categorize the post as 'Entertainment' so it pops up on that Topic page automatically.

Also, there will be new Topic pages created from time to time. So if you want to categorize your posts at their most elemental level on things like 'Pets' or 'Media,' it's fine. But when it comes to the more specific and microscopic of ideas, from 'neurolaw' to 'human behavior' to 'commentary' to 'pakistan' to 'biofuels' to 'catholic church' (all real examples in our topic index) create tags, not categories for those things.

If you have any more questions about where you fit in our category scheme, please contact us and we'll work something out. But some of the solutions are easy. Have a blog post about how religion on reality TV? Categorize it as 'Entertainment.' Spiraling costs of pet care? Categorize it as 'Money.' Chances are you fit somewhere within our organizational scheme.