

**BLOGYOUCADEMY**

*Your*

**BLOGGING ROADMAP**

**TO**

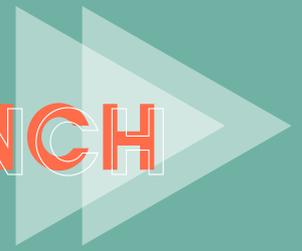
*Launch*

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO  
BUILDING YOUR DREAM BLOG

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# ROADMAP TO LAUNCH



What's your Big Idea? Many people will tell you simply to 'follow your passion' but I don't recommend basing a business on this. Passion alone doesn't always equal a sound business model. You need to blog consistently about your topic for the long haul. [The Nail Your Blog Niche challenge](#) helps you uncover a niche idea based on a more sustainable three-pronged formula:

1. YOUR STRENGTHS ( personality tests are an excellent, impartial way to uncover these!)
2. YOUR EDUCATION, SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, TALENTS AND LIFE EXPERIENCE
3. YOUR INTERESTS, HOBBIES, PASSIONS AND CAUSES

Choose 2 or 3 of the most compelling from each and brainstorm how you might combine these in a way that could prove useful or beneficial to other people in some capacity.

Is there currently a market for your niche idea? Check out the competition and decide if there's already a healthy interest in your subject. Google your idea with the word 'blog' after it. What blogs are already out there? What do the blog comments say? Join related groups on facebook. Ask questions! What are people struggling with? Can you provide better solutions? What are people searching for on Pinterest or Google? Check out Youtube, Amazon or Udemy, what are the reviews telling you they're doing wrong? What are people asking on Quora, Reddit and Yahoo Answers? Browse Pinterest for articles and blog posts. Which topics are people following and pinning the most? Do you already have clients? What do they want and would they pay for this knowledge in a different format? Can you think of at least one viable product, course or service you could offer once your blog is established?



Sometimes called an Avatar, sometimes called a Muse, however you define your ideal client or reader, it can be really helpful to get pretty specific about exactly who they are. Conventional marketing advice tends to suggest you give them a sex, name, age, job and get specific on relationships and salary, where they shop and even what they eat! This isn't bad advice at all but it may help to think in terms of AUDIENCE MINDSET because, surprise surprise, a 40-year old can sometimes have the same lifestyle and motivations as a 30-year old, and being female with kids is way too broad to prequalify you simply as a 'Mom Blogger!' Mindset Muse is more nuanced and works better on so many levels, but feel free to riff off this idea and get as specific as you like if it works for you!

Now you know exactly who you're speaking to it's time to get specific on what you offer (your Unique Value Proposition). Now is also the time to define the core business goals and values that will form the basis of your brand. You should then be able to sum it all up in a couple of simple sentences.

Fill in the gaps:

I help\_\_\_\_\_ (your audience) overcome\_\_\_\_\_ (their struggle) so they can\_\_\_\_\_ (achieve benefit / transformation) in\_\_\_\_\_ (optional time frame)

Think of this as your elevator pitch. Next you'll need to condense this further into a single tagline (for your blog and social media profiles) e.g 'Helping Solopreneurs build sustainable, blog-based businesses'



Opt for a short, memorable brand name that conveys your unique value proposition or use your own name. Make sure it's easy to read on screen, doesn't look strange as a URL and works well in print. Check that it's not already Copywrited as a brand name or being used by an active blogger or company. Use [Knowem](#) to check if it's available across all social media profiles.

Next purchase your domain name ([Namecheap](#) is a good option). Avoid hyphenating your URL or social media handles. If everything checks out, go ahead and purchase the domain name and set up your accounts across all social media profiles.

I've tried many hosts over the years and now use, love and recommend [Siteground](#) for its superior support, constant uptime and easy, free SSL certificate integration. If you have an existing site they'll even migrate it for you for free! I always recommend Wordpress as a blogging platform regardless of technophobia, if you plan to blog professionally it's absolutely worth the learning curve.

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LEARN  
SEO  
BASICS

SEO is simply a framework of processes and best practices to help your content get found and rank in search engines. Some of it's pretty techie but much is really straightforward. The underlying premise is to create a human-friendly, value-packed quality experience for end users. Focus on creating a well branded, easily navigable website featuring amazing, long-form content that solves a problem for your audience. Keywords do matter but less than in previous years. Aim for long tail keyphrases and related search terms but don't 'stuff' your content with them. Finally, work on building your brand and authority and your site's backlink profile and you're all set for search engine domination! The [Moz Beginner's Guide](#) is a great starting point if you're new to SEO. The [free blog Post Checklist](#) will help you create SEO-friendly blog posts every time.

Content is the backbone of your business and needs to explore different aspects of your audience's transformation or Discovery Journey. Your guiding tenet is 'It's not about me, it's about them'. If you already have clients, FAQs are a great basis on which to structure your core content. If not, go back to your facebook groups, forums, Reddit etc and research what people are actually asking in your niche. Seek to answer these questions in your posts. Break your big idea down into 2-7 main topics, which will become your main blog categories. It's a good idea to launch with a few blog posts, so ensure you're covering topics across each of these categories and continue to build your content library by diving deeper into these categories.

Ensure a mix of evergreen, pillar content (epic, value-packed 1500 + word posts on one topic) and shorter posts delivering 'quick wins'. Case studies, lists, tutorials, round-ups and guides are all hugely popular and most likely to be shared. Using positive sentiment while helping readers achieve a transformation - however small - is a winning content strategy. Don't forget your business and monetisation goals! Plan content so it moves the needle for your business as well as your audience. Finally create an editorial calendar (quarterly works best) so you have content in the bag and ready to go.

PLAN YOUR  
CONTENT  
STRATEGY

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CREATE  
CONTENT  
UPGRADES

Your email list is a gold mine of loyal, engaged fans who are more likely to purchase your products or purchase your affiliate recommendations down the line. Nurture them and build trust with regular contact via a newsletter offering valuable content and 'added-value' freebies. A Content Upgrade is simply a free downloadable piece of content like a checklist, cheatsheet, workbook or infographic that is offered in return for a subscriber's email. I like to add content upgrades on pretty much every blog post. Some bloggers prefer to offer one main site-wide opt-in. Promote your Freebies in your social media bios, social media posts and even in ads. I make all of mine in [Canva](#). It's a free online graphics tool and super easy to use. Check out their excellent design tutorials for more help. PDF Escape is a free online tool to that allows you to add editable fields on your PDFs.

Surprised to see this so far along in the process? Time and time again advice focuses on this aspect far too early in the process (often it's the first thing you're told to do). It's totally fine to gather inspiration and fill notebooks, but it's a TERRIBLE idea to create branding and visual assets until you have some content and a really solid handle on your brand values, voice and prospective audience. You will likely feel very differently two months into the content creation process than you do at day 5, so build your business foundations and content strategy first and then focus on perfecting your visuals. Your brand will be stronger for it. Try Google fonts for font ideas, Colors.co for colour palette inspo and [Creative Market](#) for gorgeous pre-made logos and branding kits. If you're DIYing, Canva and Gravit Designer are my go-to free online graphics creation tools. Check out Unsplash.com for cheese-free, royalty-free 'use anywhere' images.

CREATE YOUR  
VISUAL  
BRANDING

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Cont...

Here's a list of some of the main visual assets you might need for your branding:

A **main logo** and a secondary, smaller logo (which can also work as your website's favicon)  
Logos in .PNG and vector format.

**Fonts** - a title and paragraph font as well as a complimentary font such as a script or brush style  
High quality **photographs of you** for your website and promo materials (consider a main 'Hero' image for your website and lifestyle shots of you 'in action' etc)

**Profile shots** for your 'About' page and social media profiles.

A **brand colour palette** of four to five brand colours

Additional **textures and patterns** for use on your website and social media posts.

Branded **background banners** for all social media profiles (promoting your main freebie Opt-in)

Branded **Social Media and blog post templates**, (the free social media templates in this Launch pack are editable and can be adapted to suit your brand's style)

**Brand Style Guide** - a one-page swipe file detailing your brand's fonts, colours, logos, and textures.

Luckily I've got you covered here too with the **free, editable Brand Style Sheet Template**.

By now you should be very clear on your blog's categories, your branding and how you want to convey this on a website. Start by planning your website elements on paper. Where do you want the navigation menu to sit, do you prefer a full-width style homepage or a sidebar? Do you plan to feature your latest blog posts on the main homepage? Do you need an obvious opt-in button to encourage email sign-ups? (yes!). All of these considerations will inform the style of theme you purchase. Look for an HTML5 theme and ALWAYS choose a responsive, mobile-friendly layout. I use the **Genesis framework**, a well coded HTML5 based Wordpress framework by Studiopress which is a bit like a good bone structure for your website.

**Restored316 Designs** offer gorgeous feminine 'child' themes for Genesis and act as the 'pretty face' for your website. I love how well optimised they are for conversions making them ideal for bloggers. Don't be swayed by a theme's slick photography, focus on what it does for your needs. Users should be able to reach content in no more than 2-3 clicks and your homepage needs to convey what your website and blog is about in about 3 seconds flat, so make it work for you!

Essentials for a user-friendly website: A Start Here or Contents page with a description of what your site is about (including helpful links to posts), an 'About' page with a short bio, a 'Blog' page (obvs!), a legal page containing T's & C's, Privacy Policy and affiliate disclosure. Don't forget to add a Search bar and a Cookie consent pop-up if you're EU based. Include links to your social media profiles but don't make them too prominent - the idea is to keep visitors on your site. DO include obvious ways for visitors to share your content, however! The **Social Warfare plugin** is the only plugin you'll ever need and 100% worth the small investment.

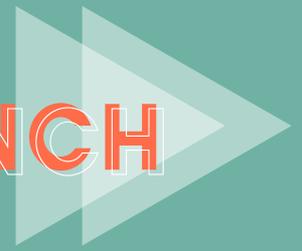
No content strategy is complete without data. Your website metrics are vital for measuring and analysing what's working and what's not. Sign up for Google Analytics and Google Search Console and also Bing Webmaster Tools. Take the time to watch video tutorials on how to use them along with the metrics you need to pay attention to. You can sign up to Google's own **free training academy** for an in-depth dive into how it all works.



CREATE  
YOUR  
WEBSITE

GOOGLE  
ANALYTICS  
BASICS





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## CHOOSE EMAIL SERVICE

As a new blogger it's vital to grow a subscriber list of fans who will buy your future products, services and recommendations. Your Email Service Provider (ESP) is kind of a big deal. It needs to provide automation (the ability to auto send autoresponder emails: a series of mails 'dripped' to subscribers over a specified time period) along with the ability to store and deliver your freebie PDFs and files. It needs to provide robust list management capabilities that allow you to tag and segment subscribers according to when they opted in and to which content. Not all subscribers have the same interests and goals and they will potentially be opting in from multiple places. Tagging and segmentation are powerful ways to help personalise communications with them. This is one area of your blogging biz when you really don't want to put budget over performance and why it's essential to get clear about where you hope to be in a year's time.

Many bloggers start out with Mailchimp because it's free up to the first 2000 subscribers. However, Mailchimp lacks sophisticated segmenting capabilities and you'll need to store your freebie files on an external host like Dropbox or Amazon S3. I also hate that they charge per email address rather than per subscriber (not great if your readers are opting in to multiple freebies). There are other great options (Drip, ActiveCampaign and Mailerlite) but, like many bloggers, I switched to [Convertkit](#) and love it. It's incredibly user-friendly and they'll even host your freebies for ease of delivery (I also use Amazon S3). Convertkit's support is amazing and the ability to create landing pages is the icing on the cake. Oh and they only charge once per subscriber (unlike Mailchimp). They've recently introduced visual automations (a visual 'map' of your email sequences and funnels) which is BRILLIANT. Definitely one of the best investments you can make in your blog. Monica from Redfining Mom's comprehensive course really helped me get the best out of Convertkit.

This is your main value-packed freebie that you'll feature on your website or anywhere you can add or mention a link! It's a bit more than a single post content upgrade but not necessarily as comprehensive as a paid product. It could be a mega PDF workbook, a webinar, an email challenge, free printables, stock photographs, an epic recipe pack, a generous one-time discount, an ebook, access to password restricted content or whatever you can think of that will thrill potential readers and compel them to sign up on the spot! Readers can opt-in directly via a link or button, or you could send them to a beautifully designed landing page and have them sign up there.

## CREATE MAIN FREEBIE (OPT-IN)

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## CREATE WELCOME EMAIL

You've got an email provider and created a compelling freebie, now all that's needed is a welcome sequence to onboard your new subscribers and let them know what to expect, how often you will communicate and a little more about who you are and what your blog is about. The idea is not to overwhelm but to help new subscribers become familiar with your vibe and offer them some extra helpful tips, stories or links through a steady 'drip' sequence of welcome emails over a period of days. This could be daily for 5 days or even once every couple of days for a week or two. If you're pre-launch you might just want to drop them 2 or 3 mails with a little about what to expect, provide an extra nugget or two of value and give them the opportunity to connect with you on social media and share to friends. Pro tip: Don't forget to add tags to your subscribers in your email service provider so you know where they signed up! [Meera Kothand](#) offers some great tips on email marketing.

As a new blogger, with zero followers your initial focus will be on growth and building your list rather than trying to create paid products, courses and services. (Of course you can do all of these things, but I wouldn't recommend it until you've figured out exactly what your audience wants - great if you already know!). If not, put some juicy content out there first, network and build a following, then ask them what they want to buy from you. You can begin generating income right away using Affiliate marketing.

Affiliate marketing isn't sleazy and isn't terribly difficult, but do need to have a strategy in place. It's not just a case of throwing random links into your content. You've got to stand by every product you recommend and only recommend things you know your audience can truly benefit from. That being said, it's entirely possible to generate a small income stream in the early months using affiliate links. You don't need 1000 people on your list despite what many bloggers tell you.

I've successfully used affiliate links on Pinterest using for some time without selling to an email list. Start with affiliate links from the get-go and your audience will learn to accept them as part of your regular content. This also means you won't have to go back over old posts trying to figure out what can be optimised for relevant affiliate products.

While it's OK to promote affiliate links directly on Pinterest pins, use sparingly on social media and only if giving exceptional value. Instead promote your blog posts containing affiliate links. The beauty of affiliate marketing is that links continue to perform well months or years after a post is written meaning you can enjoy truly passive income while you focus on other products and services to grow your business. Just be sure to read up on Affiliate Disclosure law in your country and add any necessary disclaimer to your website's legal pages and posts. Popular affiliate networks are Ebates, Shareasale, Rakuten, Affiliate Window and CJ Affiliate.

By now you should have a good foundation to launch your beautiful new website and blog. Savvy bloggers are constantly looking for ways to build their community and online tribe. As you build relationships, your backlinks will grow too, adding much needed authority to your website and help boost your Google rankings. Fledgling relationships built on social media, membership sites, mastermind groups, conferences and via email can blossom into rock solid friendships that hold you accountable, get you through those inevitable periods of overwhelm or when comparisonitis has got you down.

Be genuine, be yourself but don't miss opportunities that could also be beneficial for your business. Influencer outreach can be scary, but good old fashioned politeness, showing a genuine interest and yes, even a little covert flattery can work wonders. Guest posts are a great way to reach wider audiences and complimentary niches to your own so be on the look out for opportunities. Make a list of the influential blogs and influencers in your niche you could reach out to with a helpful pitch. Engage with them on social media first, be interested. Share their content. Be helpful to members in their facebook groups. Understand their time is limited so get to the point and always make your pitch relevant to their audience and what it can do for them.

## 15 CREATE AFFILIATE MARKETING STRATEGY

## 16 BUILD YOUR NETWORK

Social Media doesn't have to be a huge time suck and shouldn't overwhelm. Don't try to be everywhere, stick to a couple of platforms you're comfortable with and where your audience is hanging out. (With one exception: ignore Pinterest at your peril, it's one of the best sources of free traffic in any niche). Be purposeful about what you post. Ask yourself what is this doing for my readers and my growth? Curate relevant, helpful and inspiring content (I love Feedly for this) along with self-promo posts at a ratio of about 60/40% respectively. Here's a brief overview of the main platforms:

**PINTEREST:** More of a visual search engine, this is every blogger's secret weapon for traffic generation. There's a lot of Pinterest courses out there, most regurgitating the same basic stuff you can easily get for free searching Pinterest. Megan from Love Family Health's [Pinterest Ninja course](#) is different and has a ton of strategies guaranteed to help you see real results and get your Pinterest strategy licked.

**FACEBOOK:** A fave of many bloggers. Join fb groups in your niche to mine content ideas, network and promote your content and products. Create a business page but don't expect much organic interaction (FB wants you to buy ads). Instead consider hosting your own group if you have the time and inclination to moderate and drive community interaction on a daily basis. The rewards can certainly be worth the effort, but it's not for everyone and there's a LOT of crappy groups out there.

**INSTAGRAM:** My preferred platform after Pinterest, though many bloggers still don't know how to leverage it properly. Sign up for Linktree to drive traffic to your opt-in freebie and website, learn how to design your layout BEFORE you start posting randomly (Planoly is my fave planning tool). Mix up your content with video, slideshows and Stories, use lots of relevant hastags and regularly follow, like and comment on accounts within and complimentary to your niche.

**TWITTER:** I've really fallen back in love with Twitter! Great for networking and real-time convos with peers and influencers as well as followers. Use it for content curation ideas, twitter chats, networking and to get your content out to the right influencers. [Followerwonk](#) is a great tool to help you connect with influential twitter users.

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CREATE  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
STRATEGY

By now you should have what you need to get set up and launch your blog. In truth, there's never a right time and truthfully you don't really need to launch with any great fanfare. Just go live and get on with it! Procrastination is the enemy of bloggers so don't fall into the trap of thinking everything has to be perfect.

Your blog will likely change and evolve hugely over the first year so expect the unexpected and be prepared to pivot and evolve as you gain followers and experience. Embrace the learning curve, expect a ton of hard work, overwhelm and occasionally self-doubt but never allow them to consume you. Learn to enjoy getting out of your comfort zone and try new things (live video anyone?!) because this will propel your business forward.

Blogging is one of the most liberating and life-changing things you can do. Make this the year you launch your dream blog. I'll be right along side you growing [blogyoucademy](#) and sharing all the strategies I've learned over 12 years of blogging, writing and running an Etsy business.

Ready?. Let's do this!  
Samx

Did you find this roadmap useful? Do you have any questions?  
Get in touch at [sam@blogyoucademy.com](mailto:sam@blogyoucademy.com)

READY,  
STEADY  
LAUNCH!

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