

By the author of Blogger Buster



The **Blogger Template Book**

Your complete guide
to choosing, installing
and optimizing Blogger templates

Amanda Fazani

BLOGGER BUSTER PRESENTS

The Blogger Template Book

Copyright © 2008 Amanda Fazani (www.BloggerBuster.com)
All rights reserved.

Except as permitted below no part of this eBook may be reproduced, displayed, copied, translated, adapted, downloaded, broadcast, used or republished in any form including (without limitation) distribution, or storage in a system for retrieval.

Permission is granted to electronically copy and to print in hard copy for the sole purpose of using this eBook as a private non-commercial information resource, provided that all copyright notices are included and no alterations or additions are made to the content.

For the purpose of promotion and review, you may embed or use the eBook preview which can be obtained from <http://bloggerbuster.com/thebloggertemplatebook/review.html>

Published by Blogger Buster

Website: <http://www.bloggerbuster.com>
Enquiries: amanda@bloggerbuster.com



Helping you build a better blog...

Table of Contents

Preface	i
An overview of chapters.....	i
Who is this eBook for?.....	ii
Conventions.....	ii
Code Examples.....	iii
Notes and ideas.....	iii
Questions and Feedback.....	iii

Chapter One

Why use a non-standard template?.....	1
Stand out from the crowds!.....	1
Ensure your template matches the style of your blog.....	1
New Templates offer better functionality!.....	2
Chapter Summary.....	2

Chapter Two

Template layouts and design styles.....	3
Blog Layout Styles.....	3
How many columns? One, Two Three or More?.....	4
Single column layouts.....	4
Two Column Layouts.....	6
Three Column Layouts.....	9
Magazine Style/Anti Layout.....	11
Choosing the ideal layout for your blog.....	13

Five major template design trends.....	13
Minimalist Designs:.....	13
Free Minimalist Blogger Templates.....	14
Dark designs.....	17
Free Dark Blogger Templates.....	17
Colorful/Ornamental Designs.....	20
Free Ornamental Blogger Templates.....	20
Corporate Designs.....	24
Free Corporate Blogger Templates.....	24
Ad Optimized Blogger Templates.....	27
Free Ad-Optimized Blogger Templates.....	27
Things to consider when choosing a design style for your blog	30
More Free Blogger Templates to Download.....	30
Chapter Summary.....	31

Chapter Three

Template formats and installation.....	32
Three things to know before installing a new template.....	32
1. Installing a new template will delete your existing widgets.....	32
2. Some Blogger templates require you to host your own images.....	33
3. Your uploaded template may not look the same as the demonstration blog.....	33
Two different template formats and how to install them.....	33
XML format template files.....	34
Text Based Template Files.....	35
Troubleshooting tips.....	38
Hosting your own template images.....	39
Chapter summary.....	41

Chapter Four

Advanced installation methods.....	42
Four Steps to a Complete Blogger Template Upload.....	42
Step 1: Create a test blog.....	43

How to create a test blog.....	43
Add some filler posts.....	44
Change some settings for your test blog.....	44
Step 2: Upload your new blog template.....	46
Error codes?.....	46
One final check!.....	46
Step 3: Transfer widget templates to your test blog.....	47
Prepare widgets in your existing template first!.....	47
Access the template code for new and existing templates.....	47
Copy the widget codes from your existing blog layout.....	47
Copy the widget codes to your test blog.....	49
Step 4: Upload this customized template to your main blog.....	50
Copy the HTML code from your test blog's template.....	50
Paste your new template to your main blog.....	51
Move widgets back into position.....	51
Chapter summary.....	51

Chapter 5

Customize your Blogger template.....	52
Add your blog's logo to the header.....	52
How to upload your logo.....	52
Considerations for logo size.....	53
Change the color scheme of your template.....	54
Using the fonts and colors menu.....	54
Changing colors by editing your blog's HTML code.....	55
Useful color scheme resources.....	57
Add a background pattern/image to your blog.....	57
Add a repeating pattern to the background.....	58
Add a pattern which repeats across the top or side of your blog.....	59
Using a larger, static background image.....	59
Other useful customizations.....	62

Chapter summary.....	62
-----------------------------	-----------

Chapter Six

Optimize your blog loading time.....	64
---	-----------

Tips to help your blog load more quickly.....	64
--	-----------

Find out how quickly your site loads.....	64
---	----

Remove any widgets/scripts you don't really need.....	66
---	----

Reduce the number of images you use in your layout.....	67
---	----

Reduce the file size of your images.....	67
--	----

Simplify your CSS.....	67
------------------------	----

Optimize the placement of scripts/widgets in your template.....	69
---	----

Reduce the number of posts which appear on your front page.....	69
---	----

Have these changes improved your blog's loading time?.....	70
--	----

Chapter Overview.....	70
------------------------------	-----------

Chapter seven

Optimize your template for search engines.....	72
---	-----------

URLs, Title and Meta Tags.....	72
---------------------------------------	-----------

Your Blog's URL.....	72
----------------------	----

Make Optimal Use of Title Tags.....	73
-------------------------------------	----

Meta Description and Keyword Tags.....	74
--	----

Optimizing your blog's title heading.....	74
---	----

Allow search engines to find your blog!.....	76
--	----

Optimizing Links in your Blogger Template.....	77
---	-----------

Using titles in your links.....	77
---------------------------------	----

Applying these techniques to your Blogger template.....	77
---	----

Optimizing Images in your Blogger Template.....	82
--	-----------

How Search Engines See Images in Your Site.....	82
---	----

Optimizing Images in your Blogger Template.....	82
---	----

Adding ALT and TITLE Tags to Images Contained in Widgets.....	83
---	----

Optimizing Images in Blog Posts.....	84
--------------------------------------	----

Chapter Overview.....	85
-----------------------	----

Chapter eight

Blogger Template Resources.....	86
Free Blogger template providers.....	86
Blogger Template Collections.....	88
Blog Design Showcases.....	88
Showcasing Blogger Designs.....	89
Showcasing Blog Designs in General.....	89
Inspirational Design Resources.....	89
Useful Cheat Sheets.....	89
HTML color codes.....	89
Glossary.....	93
Index.....	96
About the author.....	99

Preface

0

Preface

Blogger offers us the ability to change our default templates. By uploading a new template or customizing your existing template, you can create a design more suitable for your blogging needs.

This eBook offers practical advice for your Blogger template requirements. From choosing a third party template through to customizing an existing design and beyond, this eBook is intended to help you make the most of your template and build a better blog with Google's Blogger platform.

An overview of chapters

Chapter One explains why you should use a non-standard template for your blog, providing an introduction to third party templates and customizing your existing blog design.

Chapter Two will draw your attention to the different styles of layout and design. Here you will find inspiration and examples of free Blogger templates which you can download for use in your own projects.

Chapter Three explains the basic process of uploading a new Blogger template, with clear instructions and troubleshooting tips.

Chapter Four offers an advanced method of uploading a new template, which enables you to retain important widgets from your current design.

Chapter Five provides useful tutorials for basic customizations of your Blogger template, which are useful adaptations for both third party and existing template designs.

Chapter Six will help you understand how fast your blog loads and offers useful tips to help your blog load more quickly.

Chapter Seven covers methods of optimizing your blog template for search engines which enables search engine spiders to index your blog content more efficiently.

Chapter Eight provides links and resources to take your Blogger template design to the next level.

Who is this eBook for?

This eBook is written for those using the current Google Blogger platform who would like to use a new Blogger template or customize their existing design.

The code and examples provided in this eBook are primarily useful for those using the XML Layout template style, though many references are useful for those using Classic HTML based templates too.

The methods used in this eBook do not require you to have any prior knowledge of HTML, CSS, XML or related technologies; instead, everything you need to know is covered in the relevant chapter or section. You can also find useful information for technical terms covered in the glossary.

Conventions

In this eBook, I have used different styles of formatting to draw your attention to code and other important statements.

Important words and statements are highlighted in bold text to help them stand out from other elements on the page.

[Hyperlinks appear like this](#) in the body of text and are clickable. This means you can visit the page referenced directly from this PDF document.

When explaining how to perform a function within your Blogger dashboard, I will reference the page like this:

Layout>Page Elements

This means you should click on the Layout tab while logged into your blog, then on the Page Elements link on the layout page as in Figures 1 and 2:



Figure 1: Click on the Layout tab first...



Figure 2: Then click the Edit HTML link on this page

Code Examples

Sections of code will appear in three different ways. When pointing out a section of code within a sentence, the code will be formatted like this:

Here is a layout tag: `<data:post.body/>` This tag is used for the main post content.

Larger sections of code will appear like this:

```
<b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == &quot;index&quot;.'>
<title><data:blog.title/></title>
<b:else/>
<title><data:blog.pageName/></title>
</b:if>
```

When I need to draw your attention to a particular line in a section of code, this will be highlighted in bold red, like this:

```
<b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == &quot;index&quot;.'>
<title><data:blog.title/></title>
<b:else/>
<title><data:blog.pageName/></title>
</b:if>
```

Notes and ideas

At several points throughout this eBook, I will draw your attention to notes and ideas.



Notes will appear like this in the page. These notes offer important information regarding the content presented on that page.

In contrast...



Ideas will appear like this. These sections offer ideas or other useful information about the content on that page.

Questions and Feedback

If you have any questions about this eBook, you can contact me by email at amanda@bloggerbuster.com and I will do by best to get back to you as soon as possible.

The Blogger Template Book

I also appreciate any feedback offered about this eBook and suggestions for future publications which can be distributed by Blogger Buster.

For more information about using Blogger, please browse my main website:
www.BloggerBuster.com or participate in the [Blogger Buster Forums](#).

Why use a non-standard template?

Blogger provides over 20 default templates, allowing swap between default designs at the click of a button. So why would you want to use a non-standard design?

One of the best features of Blogger's free platform is that we can change our blog templates at will, either by using a brand new template or by customizing the existing template code. With so many different designs to download from Blogger template providers, and infinite possibilities when customizing our own templates, why settle for a standard design?

Stand out from the crowds!

There are millions of Blogger users from all corners of the globe, and only 27 standard Blogger templates to choose from. If you are using a standard template, you can be sure that thousands of other bloggers will be using this same template too.

Your blog design is the first thing a visitor sees when they land on your blog pages. If you use a standard template, there is little visual appeal which will make your blog memorable.

By choosing to use a non-standard template (or customizing your existing template), you are assured that far fewer people will be using the same design as you.

If you also decide to customize your design with your own blog branding, your template will be as unique as you are!

Ensure your template matches the style of your blog

Blogger's default templates are generic: their design was created to be fitting for any style of content.



Wouldn't you feel better about your blog's design if the style was more fitting to your blog's content, style and personality?

Using a brand new, non-standard template offers you the choice of styling your blog's design to match the style of your blog *quickly and easily*.

There are literally hundreds of "third party" designs to choose from; with such a huge variety on offer, you're sure to find something which matches the style of your blog and personality.

If you prefer to customize your existing template, there are many simple yet effective techniques you could use to change the overall appearance of your blog in just a few steps. Using a different color scheme, background, font styles and adding a custom logo to the header section can totally transform a generic template into something unique and interesting.

New Templates offer better functionality!

Navigation bars, space dedicated to ads and dual sidebars are features which are not present in Blogger's default designs. These features *are* included in many third-party templates, or can be added manually by customizing your existing design.

Visitor experience is crucial to the success of any blog or website. If your template is easy to navigate; help readers find the content they like to read, and is aesthetically pleasing, you're one step closer to building a solid reader base.

Chapter Summary

In this short chapter, we've explored some of the reasons why you would prefer to use a customized or third party template for your blog.

Now we need to learn more about blog design trends and the availability of third party templates:

- Which style of layout would work best for your blog?
- What would be the ideal design style for your blog?
- Which styles of template are commonly used in Blogger blogs?
- Where can I find free third party templates to download?

We will answer these questions in the next chapter, which will provide you some design inspiration and links to free Blogger themes.

Template layouts and design styles

With hundreds of Blogger templates to choose from, how can you decide on the best design for you? In this chapter, we'll look at some different styles of layout and design trends for Blogger templates and how they are used effectively for different types of blogs.

Finding or creating a template to match the style and theme of your blog is an important step towards building a great blog design. It's essential that the overall design of your blog reflects and complements the content. This reinforces a sense of trust in your readers for the content you have to offer them.

The layout style of your blog should be an important consideration. There are different styles of template to consider depending on the content you post, whether you intend to monetize your blog with ads, and how much miscellaneous content you need to display outside the normal post area.

Furthermore, different design styles are appropriate for different niche subjects and types of blog. A business blog, for example, would not appear so professional if presented with an extravagant, floral theme!



Think about the design of the blogs you visit most. What aspects of the design attract you? More importantly, how does the overall design and layout complement the content presented in these blogs?

In this chapter, we'll look at different styles of layout and overall design, with examples of existing templates which are available for free download.

Blog Layout Styles

Blogger's default templates feature the classic style of blog layout:

- An overall width of 800px or less, optimized for small screen sizes
- A fixed width layout (with the exception of ?? which is a fluid template designed to fit any size of screen)

- A simple two column layout with one sidebar
- A wide header which spans the width of both columns

In contrast, modern blog templates feature **a range of different layout styles** with more than one sidebar, an interactive header area and generally wider blog width to accommodate the trend in increased screen resolutions.

Let's take a look at some of these layout styles in more detail.

How many columns? One, Two Three or More?

Blog templates usually feature a main posts column and one or more sidebars (totalling at least two columns).

Recent shifts in web design trends have resulted in the availability of more complex layout styles, ranging from a single column to three or more columns and even magazine styles!

These different layout styles may be adapted to complement the theme and content of different blog types.

Single column layouts

Single column layouts include only the main posts column and do not have a regular sidebar. Many single column layouts will feature a multi-column footer beneath the main post column or above the posts, where navigation and other miscellaneous content can be placed.

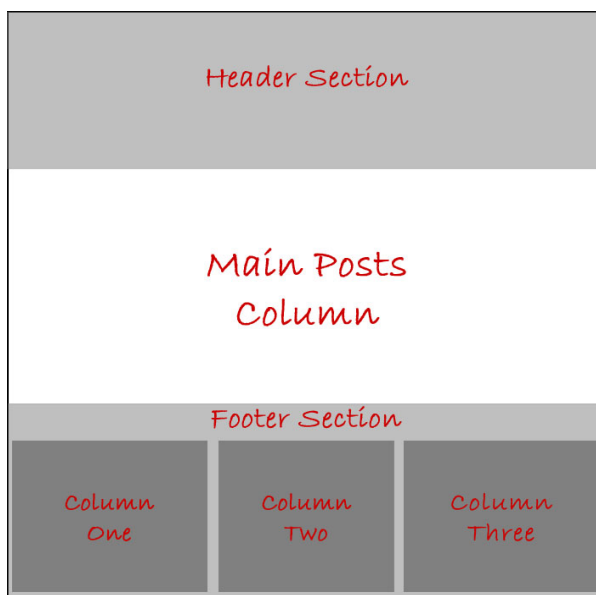


Figure 3: Example layout of a single column blog template

Blog templates with a single column layout are an excellent choice for photobloggers, designers and other writers who showcase imagery in their posts. This is because the

single column structure draws visitor focus on the content presented in this single column, while navigation and other non-essential content need not be immediately available.

Here are a few examples of free single column Blogger templates for inspiration and download:

Minimalista Negro by Binary Bonsai, converted by Blog and Web

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 4: Minimalista Negro by Binary Bonsai, converted by Blog and Web

Ambiru by Gecko and Fly

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

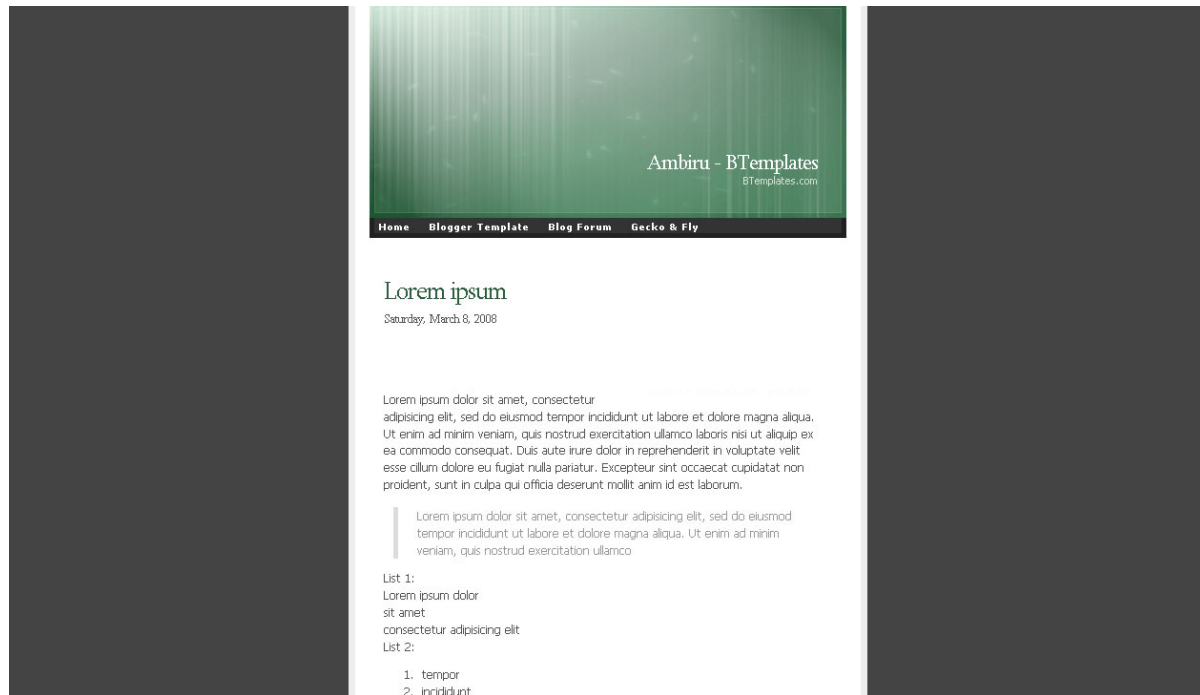


Figure 5: Ambiru by Gecko and Fly

Restoration by Frivolous Design

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

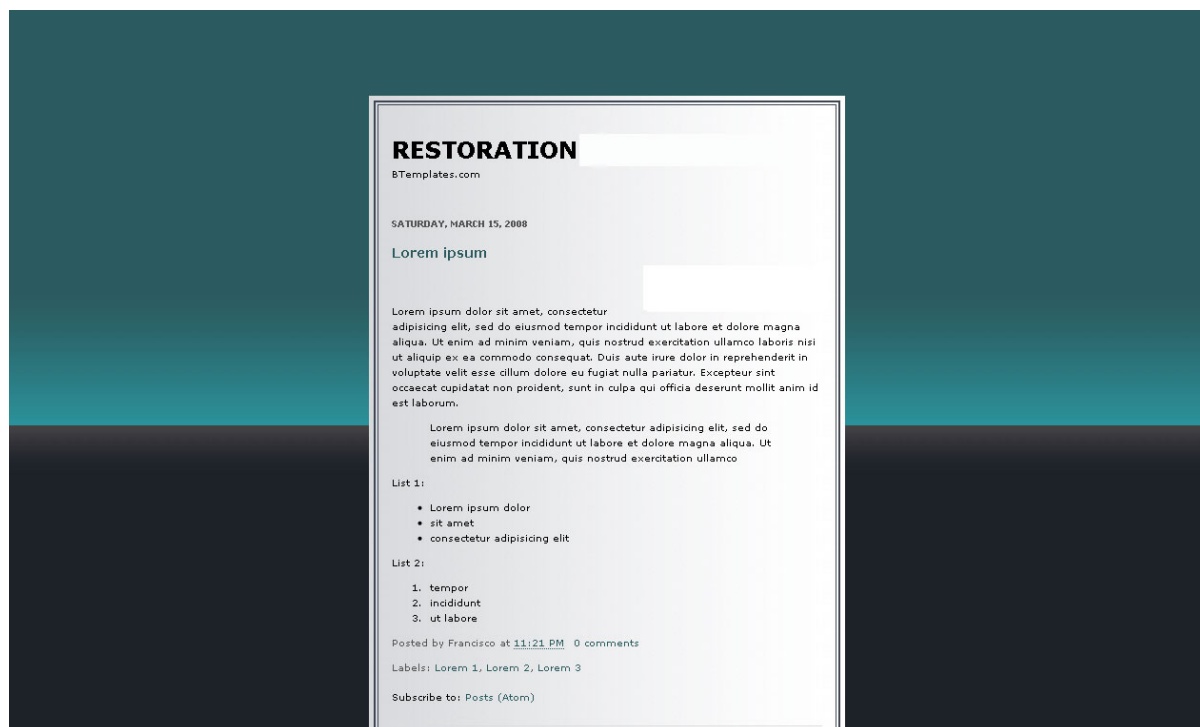


Figure 6: Restoration by Frivolous Design

Two Column Layouts

The two column layout is still a hugely popular layout style among bloggers.

Modern blog designs tend to feature a wide sidebar to the right of the main posts section. This allows room for wider ads and widgets in the sidebar, and also balances the layout against the wider style of main column.

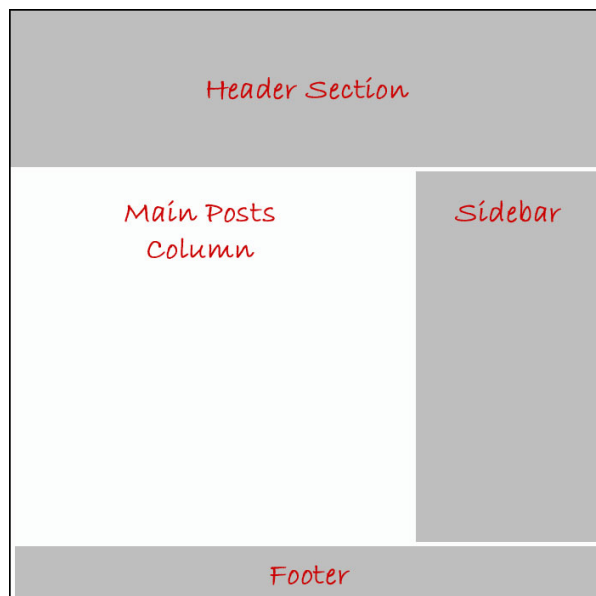


Figure 7: An example of a two column blog layout

Two column template styles are suitable for most styles and subject matter. Here are some examples of free two column layouts (in varying styles) for inspiration and free download:

Emire by Gecko and Fly, converted by BlogCrowds

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

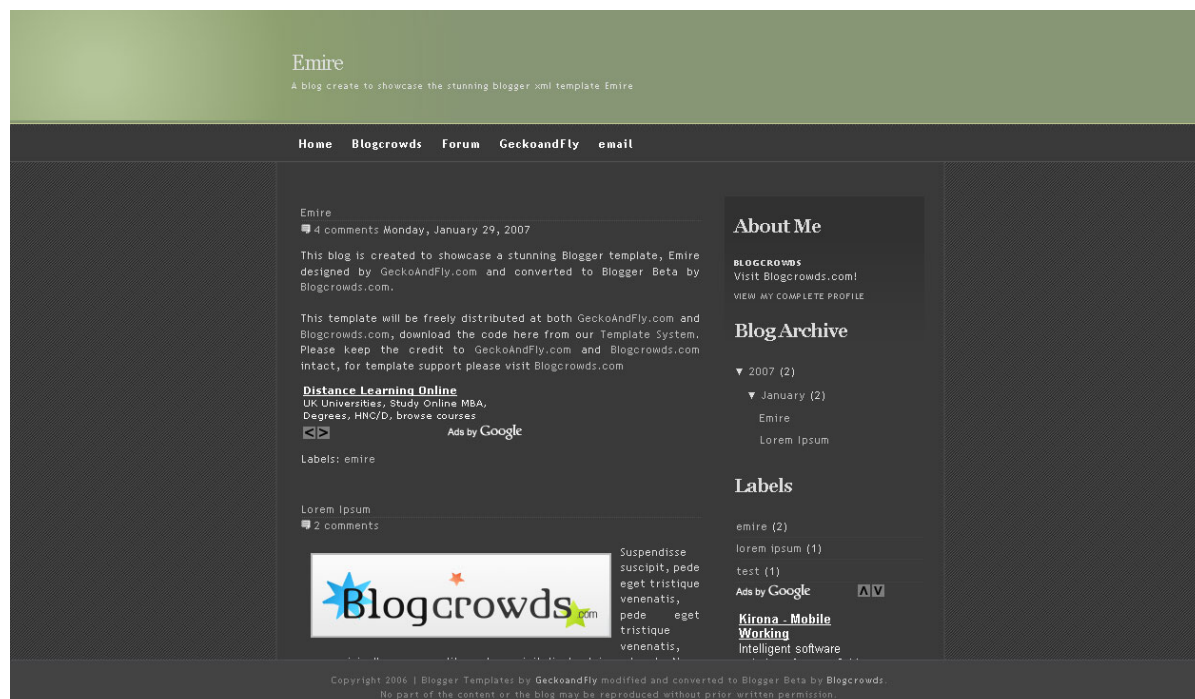


Figure 8: Emire by Gecko and Fly, converted for beta by BlogCrowds

iWork by Jackbook

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

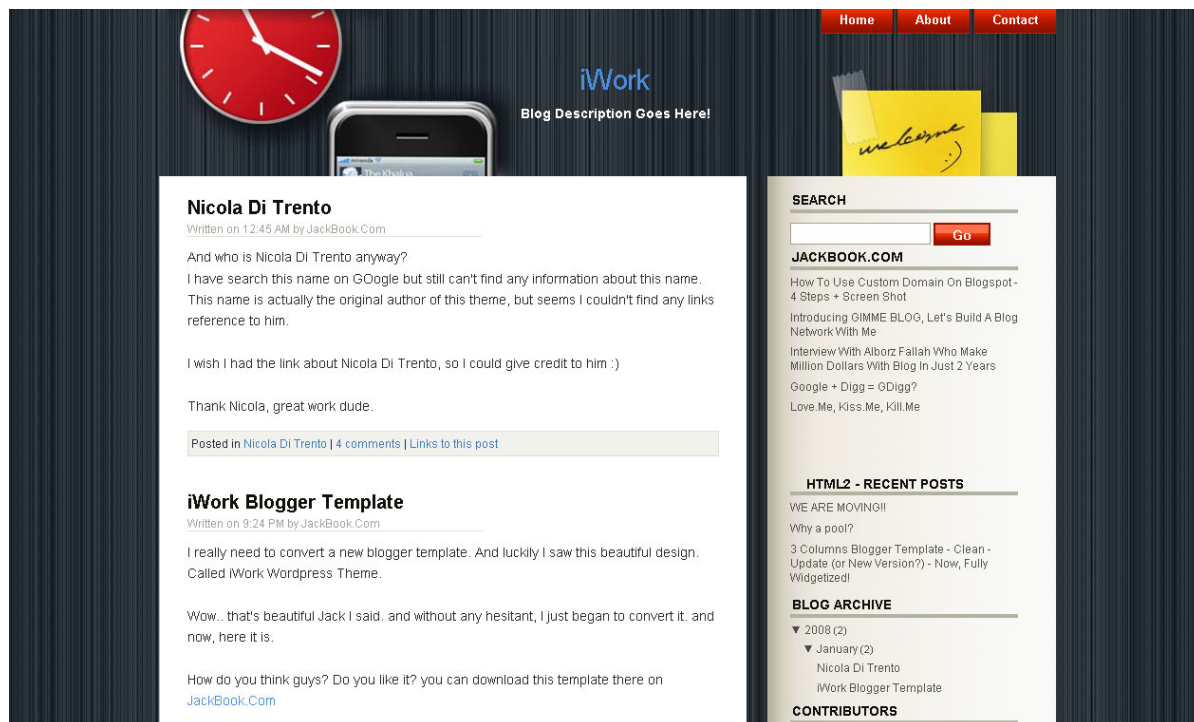


Figure 9: iWork by Jackbook

Natural Beauties by Aborregate

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 10: Natural Beauties by Aborregate

Three Column Layouts

In the past couple of years, three column blog templates have become a common style of layout. [Smashing Magazine estimates](#) that over 50% of the world's top blogs use three (or more) columns in their blog layout.

There are two main layout styles for three column templates:

- A sidebar on either side of the main posts section
- Two sidebars to the right of the main posts section

Both sidebar styles offer extra space for navigation, ads and miscellaneous blog content which is required by large or professional blogs or those who have requirements for blog information.

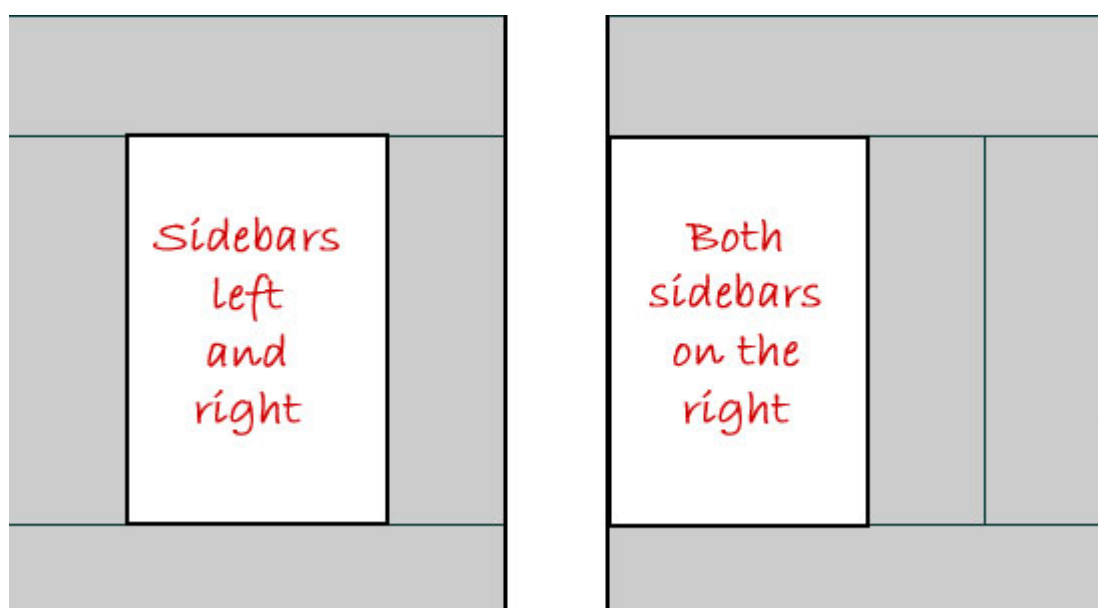


Figure 11: Two different formats of three column blog layouts

Here are some examples of three column Blogger templates for inspiration and download:

Sky 3C by BlogCrowds

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

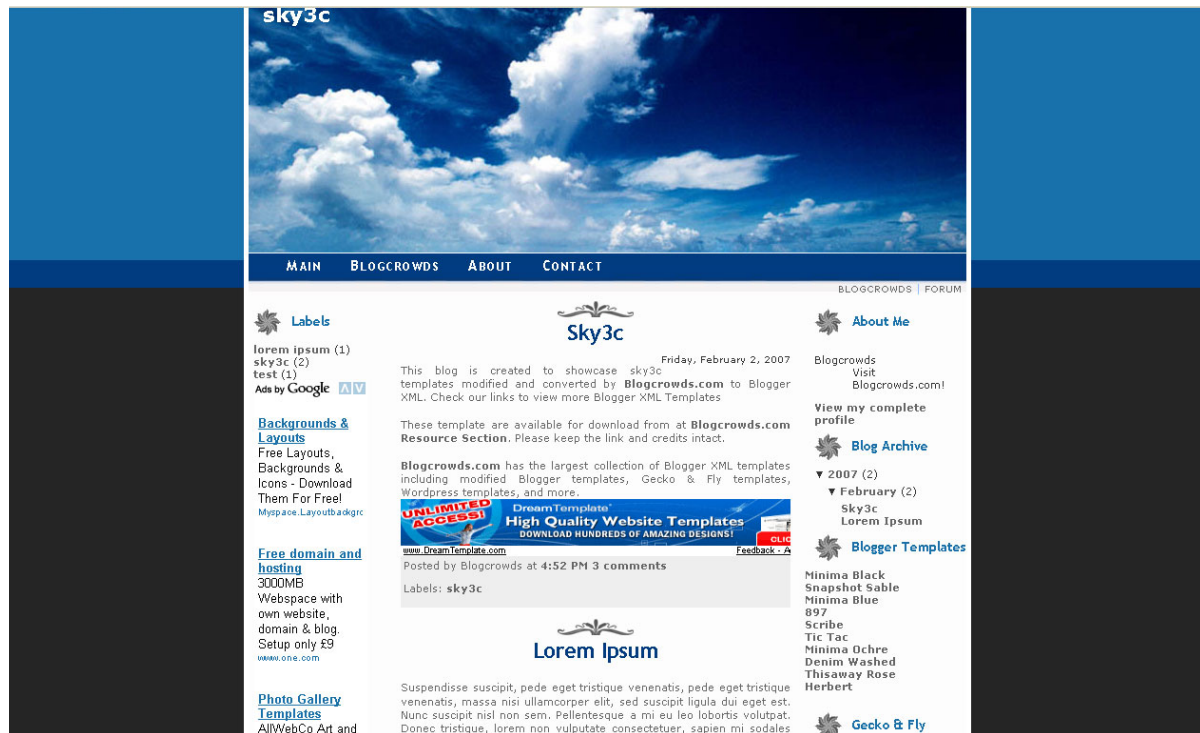


Figure 12: Sky 3C by Blog Crowds

iTheme Techno by Jackbook

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

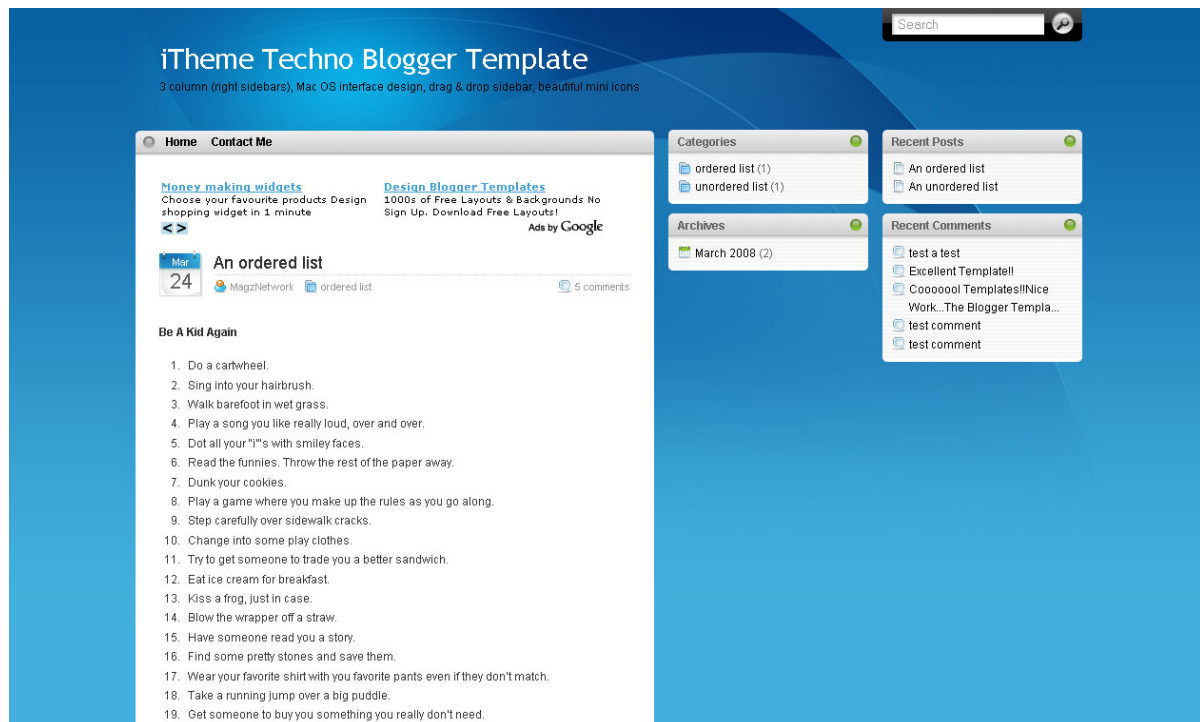


Figure 13: iTheme Techno by Jackbook

Embouteillage by Aborregate

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

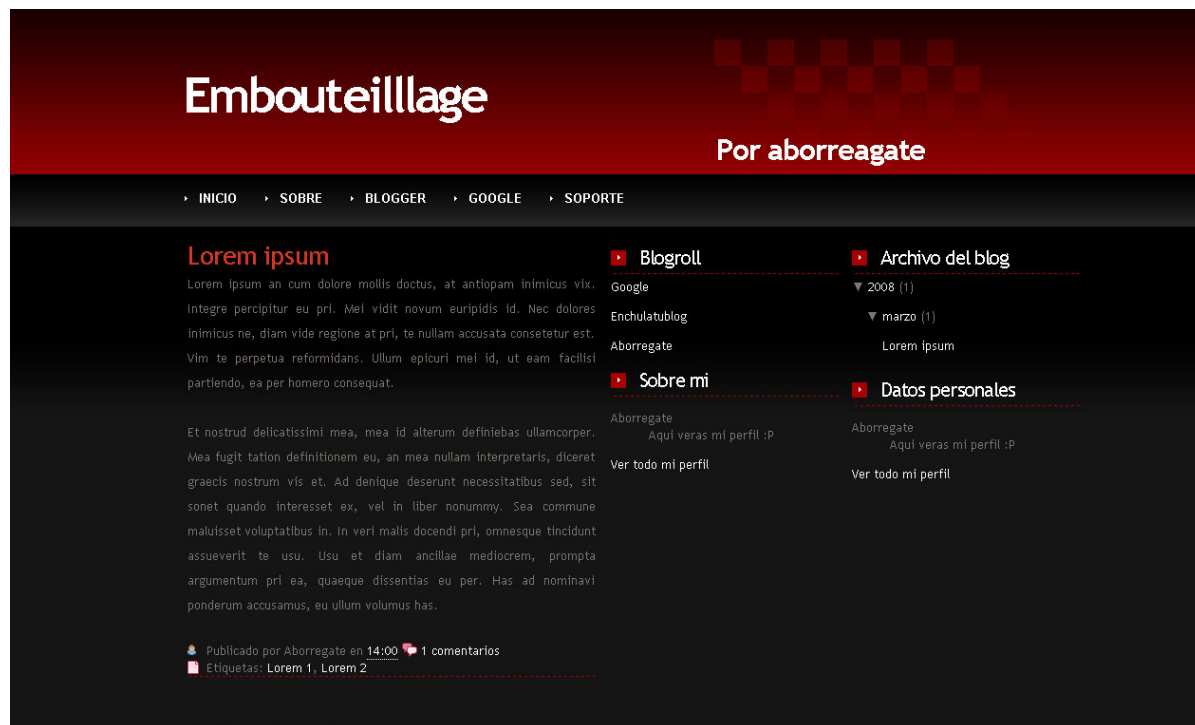


Figure 14: Embouteillage by Aborregate

Magazine Style/Anti Layout

An emerging trend of blog layouts is the magazine style (often referred to as “anti-layout”).

This style features numerous columns, often with a different front page layout to individual post pages. It's well suited to news and technology blogs, or sites which require enhanced navigation options for readers to locate articles and content.

At present, few Blogger templates are available to download which feature this style of layout, though I expect more will become available as this layout trend continues to grow.

Here are a couple of magazine style templates for Blogger for inspiration and free download:

Visionary Reloaded by Justin Tadlock, converted by Blogger Templates

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

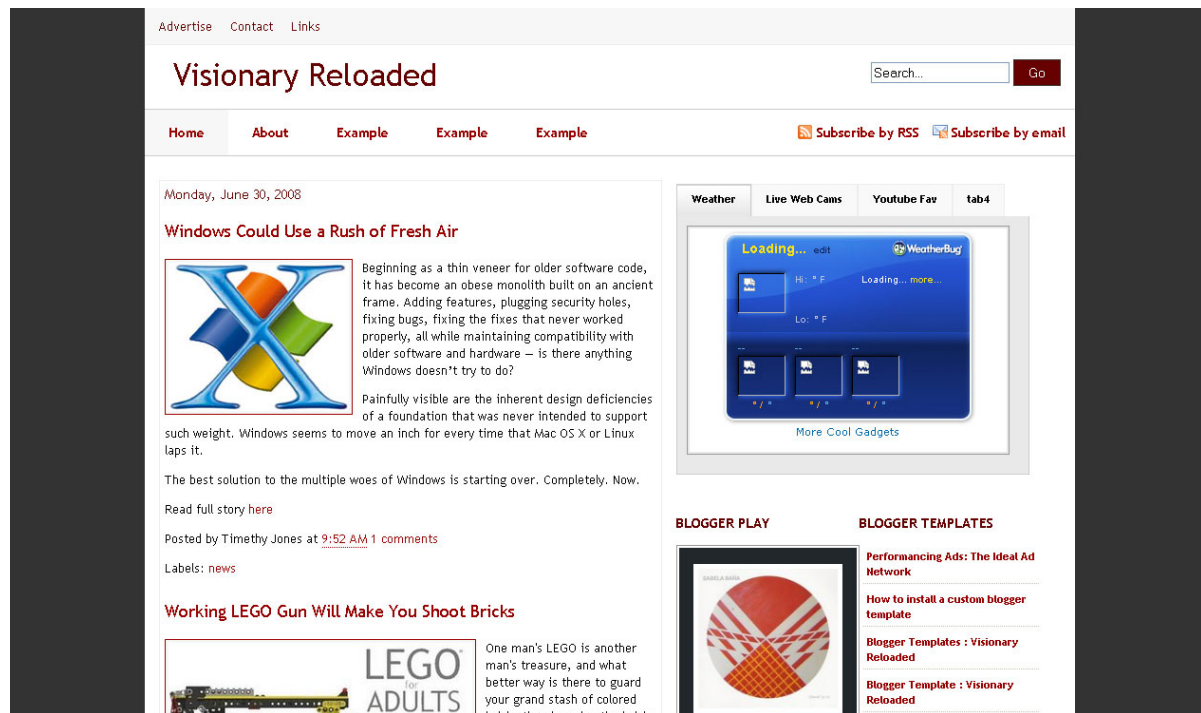


Figure 15: Visionary Reloaded by Justin Tadlock and Blogger Templates

Magazine Style Template Red by Jackbook

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

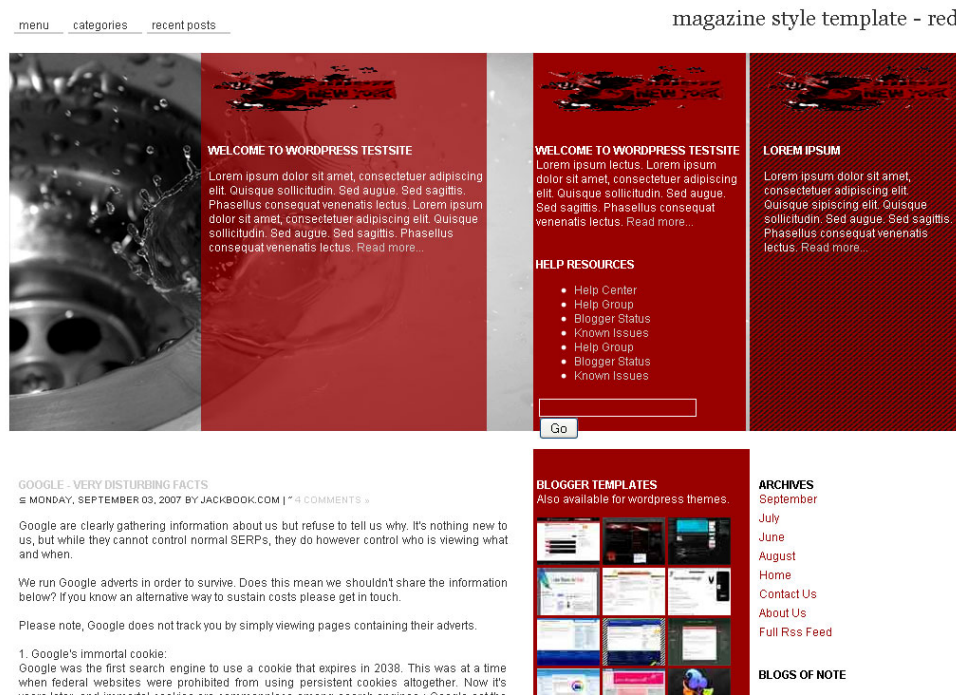


Figure 16: Magazine Style Red by Jackbook

Choosing the ideal layout for your blog

To help you discover the perfect layout style for your blog requirements, you should consider the following:

- Do you want to display ads in your layout?
- What forms of navigation and other non-post content do you need to display in your blog?
- How much space is required to display non-post content?

The style of layout you choose can depend on the space required of your non-post content. Many ads, navigation sections and other widgets are best contained in a wide two or three column template, while simpler blogs and photo archives look great when displayed in a simple single column design.

Now that we've covered the main principles of blog layouts, let's move on to explore the more general appeal of **blog design trends**.

Five major template design trends

I've worked with many different styles and types of Blogger templates, and overall I would group these into five main design trends which can be adapted to different niche subjects and styles of blog content:

1. Minimalist
2. Dark
3. Colorful/Ornamental
4. Corporate
5. Ad-optimized

In the rest of this chapter, we'll explore each of these five styles and look at some free Blogger templates which you can download or use as inspiration for your own designs.

Minimalist Designs:

Minimalist templates are the easiest style of template to work with; they can be applied to any style of blog, content and niche.

Design features: Clean, white with lots of space and few (if any) images. Minimalist templates are very easy to customize and can be enhanced by colorful images, striking logos and stylized posts.

Used by: Many blogs in the [Technorati Top 100 list](#) use a minimalist style of blog template.

Tech news sites [Mashable](#) and [TechCrunch](#) are among the most memorable blogs which use this style to great effect, as the clean layout emphasizes content and ensures posts are easy to read.

Free Minimalist Blogger Templates

Here is a selection of free Blogger templates which are based on this Minimalist style:

Miniml by BlogCrowds

Miniml is a pale, two column template. It features a playful logo and matching colors for titles and links, and is suitable for most types of blogs.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 17: Miniml Blogger Template

Ser Photoblogger by Ser Turista and Brian Gardner

Ser Photoblogger is a simple, one column template. It includes plenty of room for photographs and blog posts, and features three columns in the footer for meta-data, blogrolls and other widgets.

This particular template may not be suitable for blogs which need space to include many different widgets; however, this is certainly an elegant and well designed Blogger template.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 18: Ser Photoblogger Template

Simpres by Deziner Folio and Blog and Web

This is a much more versatile design which takes advantage of the increased screen size of modern web browsers.

It features two sidebars and a flattering header section; you can be sure to fit many widgets in this layout, while maintaining an overall clean design.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

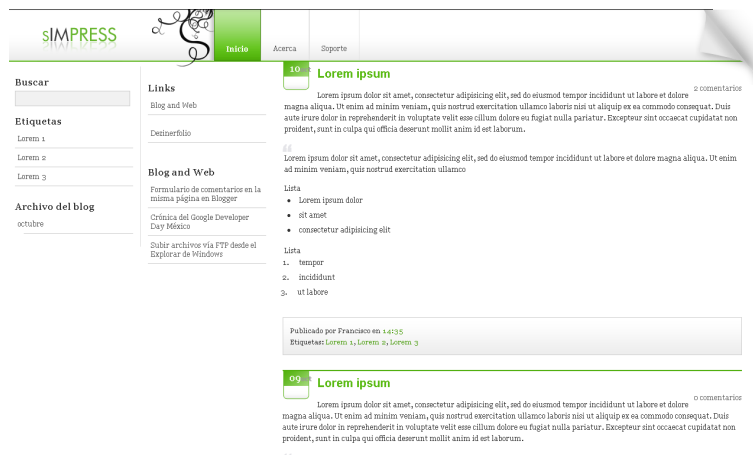


Figure 19: Simpress Template

Clips by Btemplates

This minimalist design has is stylish and functional. It features tabbed sidebar navigation which is built into the template code and is versatile for any blog niche subject.

[Demo](#) | [Downloaded](#)

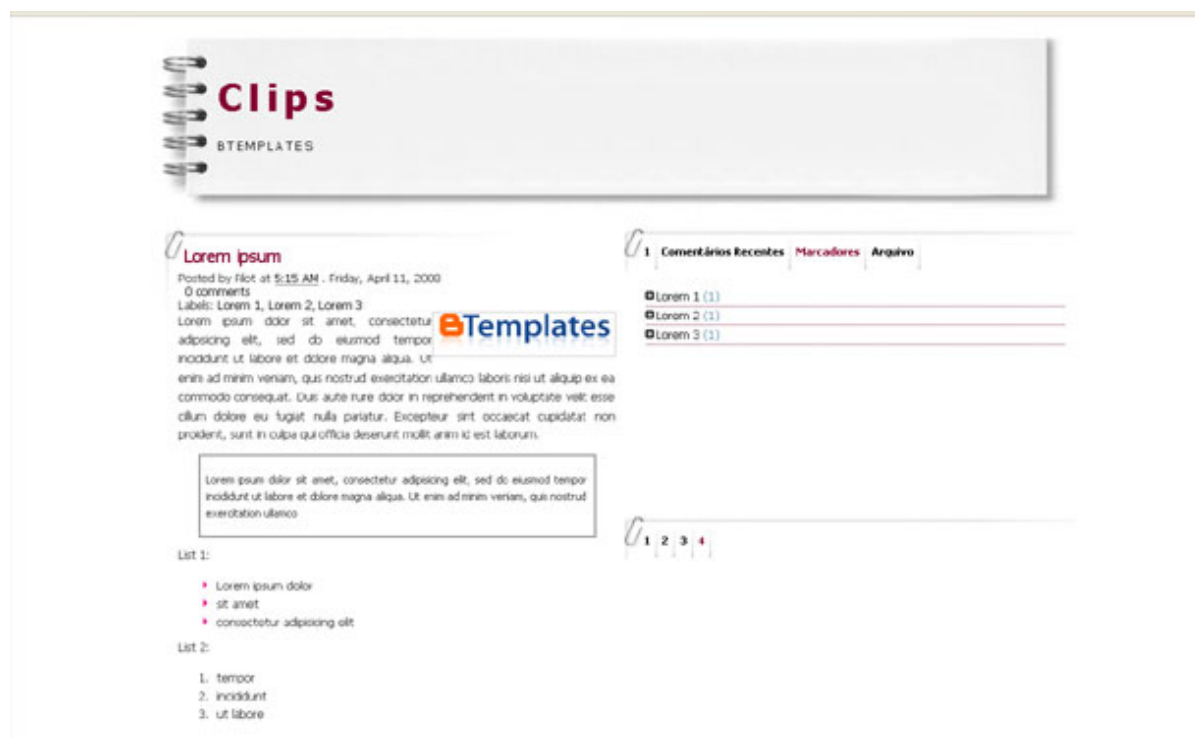


Figure 20: Clips by Btemplates

Pop Blue by Zona Cerebral

This pale design is accented with hints of blue. It features a built in navigation bar beneath the header for links to your important blog pages.

The layout includes three columns with two sidebars to the right of the main post column, and is fluid to adapt to different screen sizes.

[Demo](#) | [Downloaded](#)



Figure 21: Pop Blue by Zona Cerebral and Blogohblog

Dark designs

Dark blog designs feature a dark backdrop which is accented by pale text and colorful images. Striking imagery can be set off against a dark background to great effect, which makes this style an ideal choice for designers and photobloggers.

Design features: Dark designs offer a powerful visual impact. However, the contrast between a dark background and pale text can make long paragraphs difficult to read.

Used By: Photobloggers, designers and sometimes technology related sites. [Post Secret](#) uses a dark template which sets off the homemade postcards perfectly, while [Deziner Folio's](#) template provides a striking example of how colors can accent a dark backdrop to great effect.

Free Dark Blogger Templates

Here are some examples of dark Blogger templates which are free to download:

Photoblog by Ser Turista and Blog oh Blog

Photoblog is a simple, one column design which is perfect for photo-bloggers and designers who use their blog to showcase their work.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 22: Photoblog Template

Colourize by Blog and Web

Here is a delicious dark template for you to enjoy!

I wish I could have included more of this excellent design in the screenshot as it includes so many useful features!

Colourize is a two column design with a wide sidebar to the right. It includes a built in navigation bar and search box in the header, while the footer is divided into three sections for your miscellaneous content.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

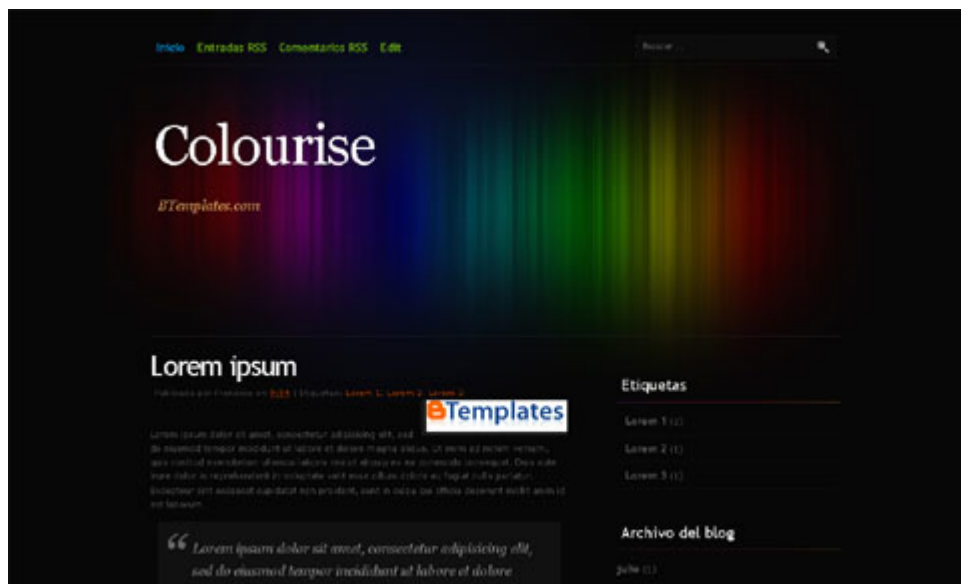


Figure 23: Colourize by Blog and Web

Wiremesh by Aborregate

Wiremesh is a striking two column template which includes plenty of space for widgets.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

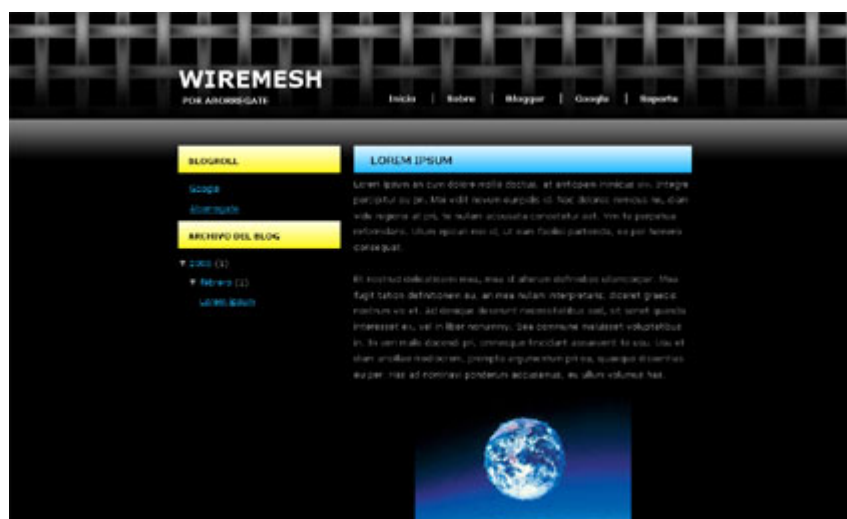


Figure 24: Wiremesh Blogger Template

DF Theme by Deziner Folio and converted by Jackbook

This dark design would be an excellent choice for designers or technology bloggers. Converted from Deziner Folio's original Wordpress theme, this has proved a popular template for Blogger users and includes many useful features.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Hemingway (Ported for Blogger by BlogCrowds)

This is one of my all-time favorite Blogger templates! It features a unique side-by-side post display on the home page; elegant styling on post pages, and three columns in the footer.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

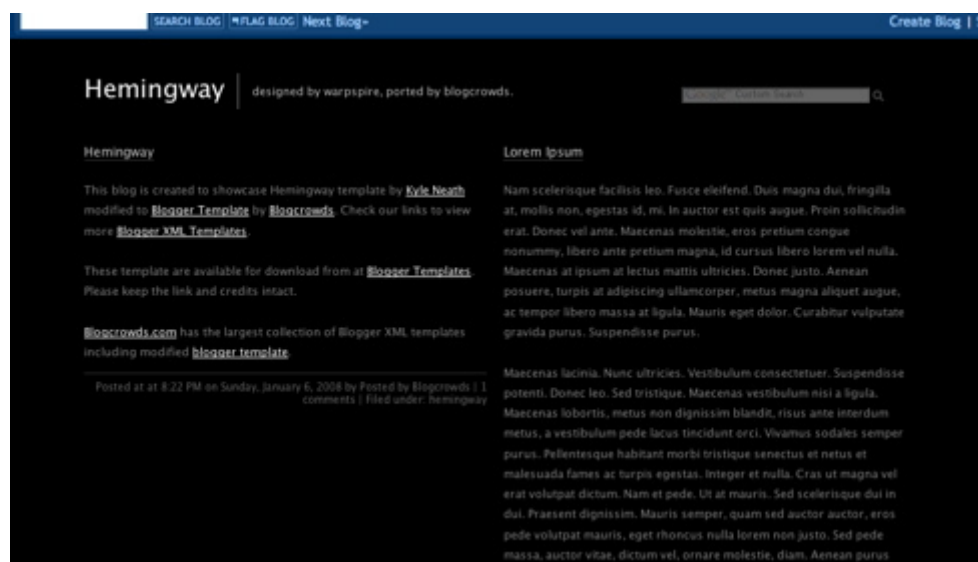


Figure 26: Hemingway for Blogger

Colorful/Ornamental Designs

Colorful and highly decorated templates have a striking visual impact on the reader and are instantly memorable.

While such templates may be beautiful and eye-catching, you must be sure that the design is fitting for your subject matter! While suitable for design, art and personal blogs, such designs are not effective for branding professional and technical blogs.

Design Features: Highly decorative and generally colorful, with many background images, sections and stylistic effects.

Used by: Designers, artists and personal diarists to great effect. [Web Designer Wall](#) and [Veerle's blog](#) are prime examples of colorful and ornamental blog designs.

Free Ornamental Blogger Templates

Here are some examples of elegant and ornamental designs which are available for free download:

Rainbow Garden by Jackbook

This is a highly ornamental (and utterly gorgeous!) design for Blogger. Rainbow Garden features three columns (with a sidebar to each side of the main posts section); this design would be ideal for a personal blog, or a site with a niche based in the arts.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 27: Rainbow Garden Blogger Template

Made in Spain (Distributed by eBlog Templates)

This stunning design appears like a notebook, with a sidebar on the right-hand page and tabs used for navigation to the left.

First impressions of this template would invoke the sense of a journal or idea notebook; as such, this design would be best suited to subjects such as these.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 28: Made in Spain Blogger Template

Lemon Twist by Far From Fearless, converted by Jackbook

As Jacky Supit says in his announcement of this template, this design is virtually PERFECT! It is one of the most stunning Blogger designs I have ever seen, and believe me this screenshot does not do justice!

This template is highly ornamental, with stylized date icons, and a tabbed navigation bar which is built into the design. Sidebars are accented with a complementary color scheme, and a fabulous script on post pages which delivers a list of all commenters in addition to the regular comment section.

If you are seeking a beautiful ornamental design for your blog, I strongly recommend that you take a look at Lemon Twist!

[Demo](#) | [Downloaded](#)



Figure 29: Lemon Twist by Far from Fearless, converted by Jackbook

Graffiti Art by Blogger Tricks

This stunning template includes many different colors highlighted against a dark background. It includes built in tabs for links to important blog pages and a feed icon embedded in the top of the sidebar.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 30: Graffiti Art by Blogger Tricks

Birdie's Good Life

This design has a somewhat feminine appeal. I've seen this used to great effect on craft blogs as well as personal/women's' interest blogs.

[View preview and download](#)



Figure 31: Birdie's Good Life Blogger Template

Corporate Designs

This style of Blogger template feature clean lines, often with a contrasting color in the header, and generate a visual impact of authority.

Design Features: Clean lines, structured layout and little (if any) ornamentation.

Used by: Professional/corporate style blog designs are particularly suitable for businesses, technology blogs and other niche subjects which require a sense of authority.

[Caroline Middlebrook](#) and [ProBlogger](#) are both examples of effective, corporate blog designs which convey authority in reflection to their niche content.

Free Corporate Blogger Templates

Here are some examples of professional and corporate Blogger templates which are available for free download:

Revolution by Brian Gardner (converted by Zona Cerebral)

This is by far one of the most professional and well designed Blogger templates I have ever seen! Converted from Brian Gardner's excellent Revolution theme for Wordpress, this has been widgetized and converted for use with Blogger by Zona Cerebral.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 32: Revolution Theme for Blogger

iPlantilla by NDesign Studio, converted by Blog and Web

This Blogger template's theme would be ideal for a technology-related site as the color scheme and background color are typical of this niche. With clean lines and defined sidebar sections, iPlantilla appears professional and business orientated.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 33: iPlantilla theme for Blogger

WP Premium Black by Zona Cerebral

Here is a truly elegant design which is perfect for professional bloggers, which is a conversion of the original Wordpress theme by R Bhavesh.

This features a built in search bar and navigation for your important blog pages.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

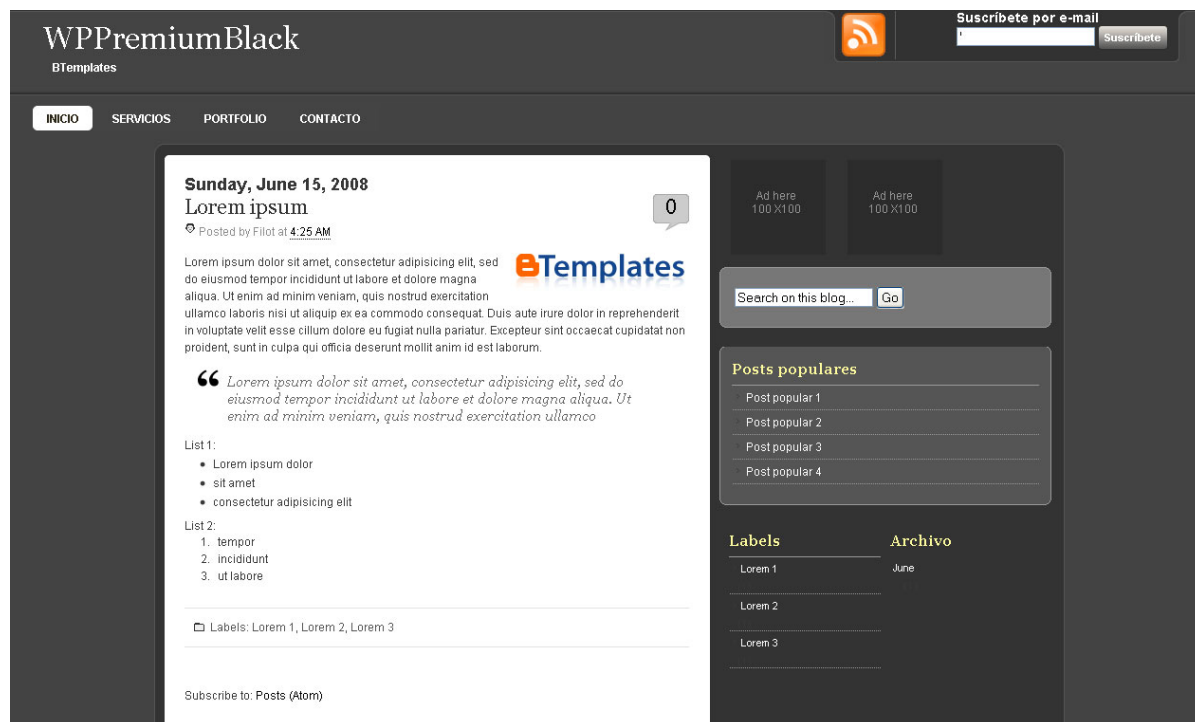


Figure 34: WP Premium Black by Zona Cerebral

Field of Dreams by Blogger Tricks

Many corporate websites reinforce a sense of trust by using landscape inspired designs in their design. This is an excellent example of how a Blogger template may be adapted to the same principles.

This design features a stunning header section with a navigation bar and subtle sidebar. A search box is built into the template, and you can also add links and a copyright notice in the footer section.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

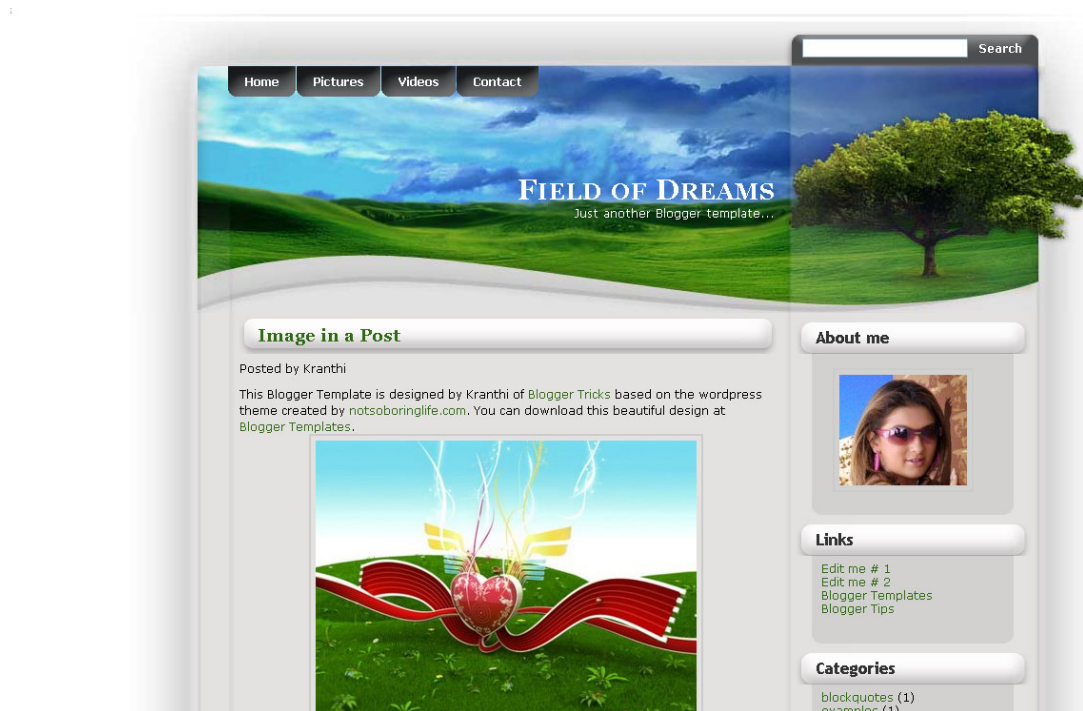


Figure 35: Field of Dreams by Blogger Tricks

DropShadow by Brian Gardner, converted by Mizake

DropShadow is an elegant and wholly professional style of Blogger template. This was originally designed by Brian Gardner, and has been converted for use in Blogger templates by Mizake.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 36: Dropshadow Blogger template

Ad Optimized Blogger Templates

Ad-optimized templates are designed for professional bloggers. These are structures around prominent areas of blog "real estate" for optimum visibility of advertisements.

Design features: Ad optimized templates feature little ornamentation (which would detract from the visual impact of advertisements), a clean simple layout and integrated ad-spaces.

Used by: Professional bloggers who need maximum exposure for their advertisements and affiliate banners.

A prime example of a template which is optimized for ad exposure is John Chow: on this site, you can see every possible space is optimized for ad integration; rather than appearing disjointed, it is clear the template was structured around these spaces.

Free Ad-Optimized Blogger Templates

Here are some examples of ad-optimized templates which are free to download:

Ads Theme Blogger by Btemplates

This is a typical example of a blog theme which is optimized to display ads. Ads Theme includes ad slots in the header; a sidebar capable of displaying three 125px ads side by side, and a large rectangular AdSense advertisement.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 37: Ads Theme Blogger Template

WP Polaroid by Adii, converted by eBlog Templates

This pale design has some excellent spaces available for ad placements. The most prominent place is the three squares section at the top of the sidebar, though you will also discover ads can be placed above the main posts section, in the sidebar and even in the footer.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 38: WP Polaroid Blogger by Adii and eBlog Templates

Forte by Blog and Web

This simple template features a wide sidebar which is optimized for 125px square ads. You could also add wider square ads in this section and half-banners above the main posts section.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

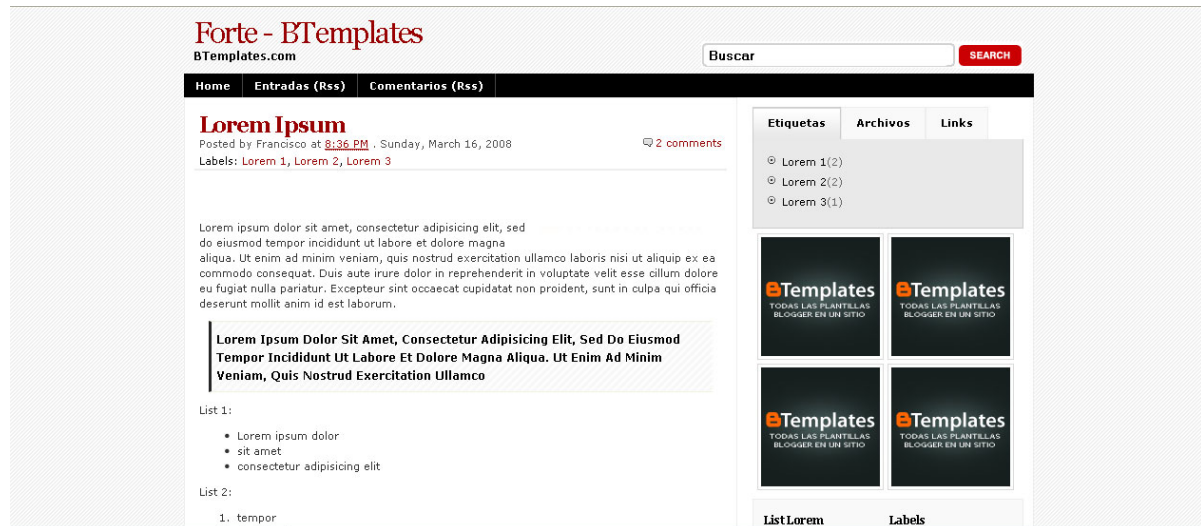


Figure 39: Forte by Blog and Web

Bloggerized Adsense by Blogger Beta

This dark blog template has lots of ad spaces: above the main posts section; a wide link bar below the header, and a sidebar which can include wide AdSense advertisements or banners.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)

Figure 40: Bloggerized AdSense Template

Premium Blogger by R. Bhavesh, converted by Jackbook

This Blogger template features a helpful tab view in the sidebar which frees up space so ads are visible above the fold. The sidebar is wide enough to accommodate three 125px ads or a wide rectangular ad.

[Demo](#) | [Download](#)



Figure 41: Premium Blogger Template

Things to consider when choosing a design style for your blog

Here are a few ideas to think about while searching for the perfect design style for your blog:

- What is your blog's niche subject?
- Are there trends of design for other blogs and websites in your niche?
- Which styles and colors appeal to you the most?

Considering these factors will help you decide on the style of design best suited to your blog and template requirements.

More Free Blogger Templates to Download

The themed examples of Blogger templates are just a small percentage of the free themes available to download.

For even more inspirational templates, take a look at the [101 excellent Blogger templates showcase](#).

In Chapter 8, you can also find resources to the best free Blogger template providers, and collections of templates to showcase the variety of templates from different authors.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter, we have explored different styles of blog layout and design trends, including:

- Single column templates
- Two/three column layouts
- Magazine style layouts
- Five different design trends
- Considerations for your ideal layout and blog design style

Each section has been illustrated with examples of free templates you can download to use in your own blog, or as inspiration to create your own design.

Let's move on to explore the different template formats and basic methods of installing a new blog template.

Template formats and installation

Once you've found your perfect Blogger template design, you'll need to know how to install it. The method for installation depends on the type of template you have downloaded, and whether or not you are required to host images yourself.

In this chapter, we'll explore the basics of Blogger template formats and how to download and install a new Blogger template, from saving the file to your computer through to viewing the finished design.

But before we get into the details, there are a few things you should know and understand before attempting to upload your new design.

Three things to know before installing a new template

Before attempting to install a new template, there are a few things you should be aware of:

1. Installing a new template will delete your existing widgets

If you install a new Blogger template using one of these basic methods, you will lose all of your existing widgets.

This is because the widgets you have installed in your existing template allocate widget templates in the HTML code. Unless these widget templates are in place in your new template, Blogger assumes these widgets are no longer necessary, and deletes them.



In Chapter 4, we will look at an advanced method of installation which allows you to transfer widgets from one template to another.

2. Some Blogger templates require you to host your own images

You may be required to host the images for your template. Most blogger designers will inform you if this is necessary, either within the blog post/page explaining the template, or in a "read me" file which you receive with the template download.

Many third party Blogger templates include background images in the layout. Background patterns, rounded corners, logos and icons are all images which need to be hosted in an online location. You cannot upload these to Blogger!

There are many free image hosting services you could use to host these images, which are linked to later in this chapter.



You do not need to find hosting for any images used in the templates provided by Blogger Buster. All images used in these templates are hosted for you, with the option to download if you prefer.

3. Your uploaded template may not look the same as the demonstration blog

Most Blogger template designers will upload their free templates to a demonstration blog. This allows you to see the template in action and make an informed decision about the suitability for your own requirements.

These demo blogs are set up to enhance the overall design of the blog, and may feature header images, ads and widgets which are not present in the basic template download: **they are intended to showcase how your design *could* appear.**

So please don't feel let down if – on initial installation – your design doesn't look as good as the demonstration blog! With a few tweaks, some additional content and the installation of widgets, you can have your new layout looking *at least as good* as you hoped.

Two different template formats and how to install them

There are two different formats of Blogger template which may be available for you to download:

- **An XML file:** the most common type; quick to install though sometimes problematic.
- **A text file** (less common but easier to install).

Both of these formats can be used to install a Blogger XML template. However, there are differences in the ways these file types should be downloaded and installed.

XML format template files

Blogger's layout templates are formatted in XML (eXtensible Markup Language) which enables your posts and sidebar widgets to be dynamically added to the design in their appropriate place.

XML templates are formed in a tree-like structure, where elements can be expanded. As such, if you try to view an XML template using a basic text editor or your web browser, you may notice the mark-up seems odd, with dashes before each line of code.

How to download an XML format template

Most Blogger template designers offer XML templates in a compressed Zip or Rar folder. These compressed files may be uncompressed and opened using Winzip or WinRar.

You should download this compressed file to your computer, and then decompress using a suitable program.

If you are using Windows XP or another recent operating system, you may already have decompressing software installed on your computer. In this case, you will be prompted to use the appropriate program to open the Zip or Rar file once downloaded.

If you don't already have such software installed, you can download free versions of below:

- [Winzip](#) (try free for 45 days)
- [WinRar](#) (trial version)

Sometimes, blog template providers offer the raw XML file for download (which is not contained in a compressed folder).

In this case, you will be offered a link directly to the download location for the raw XML file. You should right-click on the link and choose "Save As", or follow the link and choose "Save" from the File menu in your web browser. This should save the template on your computer with the .XML extension.



If you follow a link to a raw XML template file, this may look rather strange in your browser! You may see dashes appear before each line of code, or see an awkward, disjointed version of the template.

Do not try to copy and paste the code from a raw XML template file! This will not suffice for installation, and usually results in an error which says "Your template could not be parsed as it does not contain the correct mark-up". Instead, you should follow the instructions above.

How to upload XML templates to your blog

Once you have successfully saved your XML format template to your computer, you can upload this to your blog through the Blogger dashboard.

1. Log in to your Blogger account and select the blog you wish to work with. Next, click on the Layout tab and choose the Edit HTML option.

2. Near the top of this page, you will see a section which says "Upload a template from a file on your hard drive". Click on the "Browse" button to locate your new template's XML file in its stored location on your computer.

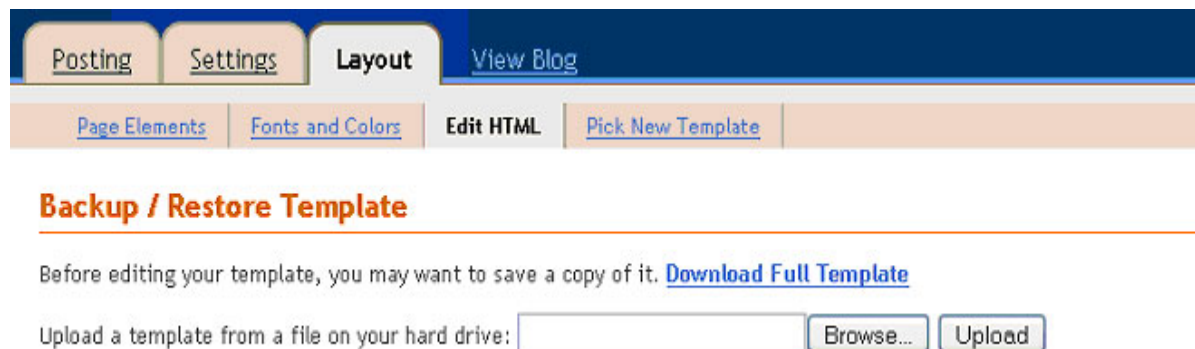


Figure 42: Upload your new Blogger template

3. Finally, click on the "Upload" button, which will load your new XML template into your blog.

You may be prompted to confirm deletion of any widgets present in your template before your new template will be saved. If you don't mind losing these widgets, you can confirm these changes.



When you upload a new XML file for your Blogger template, your existing template will be deleted. Be sure you have made a back-up of your existing template before uploading a new one!

Text Based Template Files

If you are offered a text file to upload your new Blogger template, you will need to copy the contents of this text file and paste this into the Edit HTML section of your blog's dashboard.

While text-based templates appear like regular HTML files, these templates will be formatted as XML templates once uploaded to your blog.

How to download text format templates

Text based Blogger template files may be offered as text to copy and paste directly from the designer's website/blog (as in the case of [BlogCrowds templates](#)), or as a text file which can be downloaded to your computer (see Figure 19).

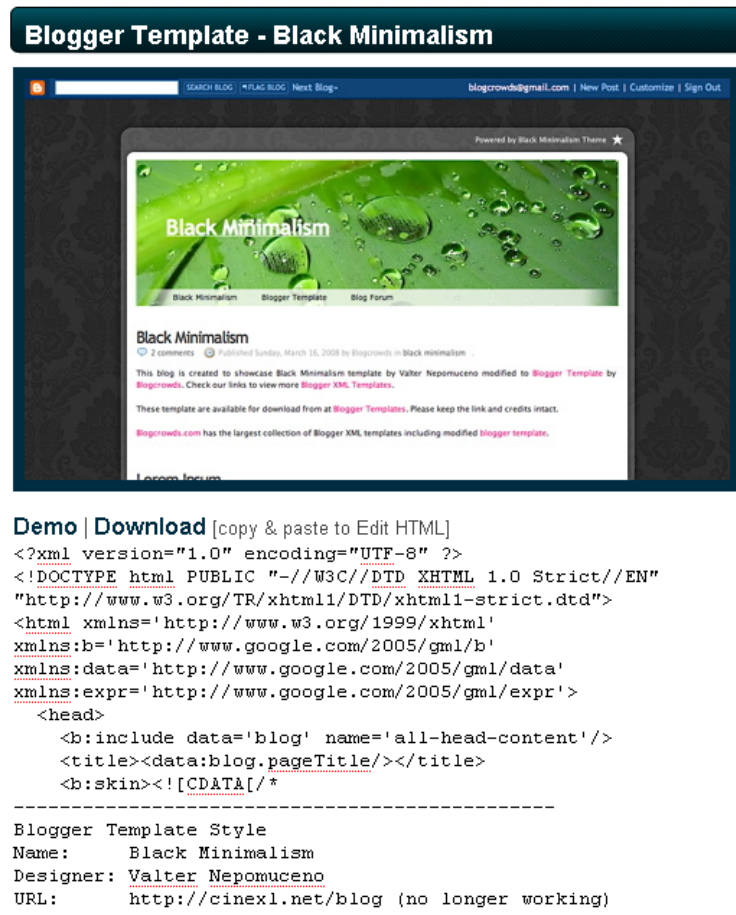


Figure 43: A text based template download from BlogCrowds

In either case, you need to highlight and copy the entire body of template code to your clipboard. Copying to your clipboard can be achieved in the following ways:

- Use the CTRL+C or CMD+C keyboard shortcut.
- Select "Copy" from the edit menu of your operating system/web browser.
- Right click the selected text and choose "copy" from the options given.

How to upload text based templates to your blog

Once you have copied the text-based Blogger template to your clipboard, you are ready to replace your existing Blogger template with this new file.

1. Log in to your Blogger dashboard and select the blog you need to work on. Click on the Layout tab, then on the Edit HTML option.
2. On this page, you will see the template code for your existing template file; this is housed in a scrolling box:

[Posting](#)
[Settings](#)
[Layout](#)
[View Blog](#)

[Page Elements](#)
[Fonts and Colors](#)
[Edit HTML](#)
[Pick New Template](#)

Backup / Restore Template

Before editing your template, you may want to save a copy of it. [Download Full Template](#)

Upload a template from a file on your hard drive:

Edit Template

Edit the contents of your template. [Learn more](#)

☐ Expand Widget Templates

```

<?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>
<!DOCTYPE html PUBLIC "-//W3C//DTD XHTML 1.0 Transitional//EN"
"http://www.w3.org/TR/xhtml1/DTD/xhtml1-transitional.dtd">
<html xmlns="http://www.w3.org/1999/xhtml" xmlns:b="http://www.google.com/2005/gml/b"
xmlns:data="http://www.google.com/2005/gml/data"
xmlns:expr="http://www.google.com/2005/gml/expr">
  <head>
    <b:include data='blog' name='all-head-content'/'>
    <b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == "index":'>
    <title><data:blog.title/></title>
    <b:else/>
    <title><data:blog.pageName/></title>
    </b:if>
    <b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == "index":'>
    <meta content='Blogger templates, tutorials and tools. Simple techniques to help you
build a better blog.' name='description'/'>
    <meta content='blogger, template, tutorial, resources, tools, customize, web design,
blog design, free blogger templates, blogger help, three column, themes, favicon,
seo, google blogger' name='keywords'/'>
    </b:if>
    
```

[Revert widget templates to default](#)
[CLEAR EDITS](#)
[PREVIEW](#)
[SAVE TEMPLATE](#)

Figure 44: The complete HTML code for your Blogger template

3. Select all of the text inside this box.



The easiest way is to place your cursor inside the box, then use the CTRL+A (or CMD+A for Mac users).

4. Once all the text is highlighted, you can paste the **new** template code from your clipboard **in place of the existing code**.
5. Before attempting to save your template, you can preview the changes first. If there are any errors with the template, you will be alerted of this during the preview.
6. When you are sure the template appears properly in your blog, you can proceed to save the template.

Troubleshooting tips

While these are basic instructions for uploading your new Blogger template, there are some errors which could occur.

Here are the three most common problems experienced when attempting to upload a new template:

Error codes when uploading a new template to a blog with many widgets

If your existing template has many different widgets in place, you may receive an error code when attempting to upload an XML file, or save the pasted contents of a text file.

I cannot be certain why this happens (in theory Blogger should be able to handle the deletion of many widgets at once!) though I can offer some advice on how to deal with this problem.

You need to delete most (preferably all) widgets from your layout through the Page Elements section of your dashboard. This may be time consuming, though attempting to shortcut by deleting the widget codes from your template will almost certainly result in more errors!

While it is possible to retain the widgets present when uploading a new template, the procedure is more complicated than the methods described above. We will cover this method in full detail in Chapter 4.

The message "Your template could not be parsed as it is not well formed"

There are two possible reasons for receiving this error message:

You may have copied the contents of an XML template and pasted as regular code (this method does not work to upload templates in XML format).

In this case, check the format of the template from the Blogger template designer's page. If stated that the download is in XML format, you need to follow the steps above to upload this as a complete file.

If pasting the contents of a text file (or when copying template code from the designer's website), you may not have copied the entire code, or some existing code from your previous template may be left behind.

In this case, repeat the process being careful to copy the entire code for your new template, and highlight all existing code in your old template before replacing with the new code.

The "Your template is invalid because the tag 'b:section' appears inside of the tag 'head'" message appears when uploading a new template.

This message appears where the designer of a Blogger template has optimized the template for SEO using a title tag switch which is now invalid.

Unfortunately this problem is a little more difficult to solve!

For the solution, you will need to edit the Blogger template using a text editor (I prefer [Notepad ++](#)).

Open your XML template file with your text editor, and find this section of code:

```
<b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == "item"'>
<b:section id='titleTag'>
<b:widget id='Blog2' locked='false' title='Blog Posts' type='Blog'>
<b:includable id='comments' var='post' />
<b:includable id='postQuickEdit' var='post' />
<b:includable id='main' var='top'><title><b:loop values='data:posts'
var='post'><b:include data='post' name='post' /></b:loop>
<data:blog.title/></title></b:includable>
<b:includable id='backlinkDeleteIcon' var='backlink' />
<b:includable id='feedLinksBody' var='links' />
<b:includable id='backlinks' var='post' />
<b:includable id='status-message' />
<b:includable id='feedLinks' />
<b:includable id='nextprev' />
<b:includable id='commentDeleteIcon' var='comment' />
<b:includable id='post' var='post'><data:post.title/></b:includable>
</b:widget>
</b:section>
<b:else/>
<title><data:blog.pageTitle/></title>
</b:if>
```

Replace this entire section with the following code instead:

```
<b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == &quot;index&quot;'>

<title><data:blog.title/></title>

<b:else/>

<title><data:blog.pageName/></title>

</b:if>
```

Save the file once you have edited this code, and then upload using the appropriate method for the template format, as described above.

Hosting your own template images

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, some Blogger template designers require you to host any template images on your own servers.

This may seem like hard work, but there are benefits of hosting template images yourself:

- You are assured of complete control of your template images

- Your template will not malfunction because of the designers bandwidth limitations, or because images are deleted
- You will be able to modify and change template images if deciding to customize your template in the future.

If you are required to host your own images, you can first upload the new template to your blog, and then change the URLs for images in the template code afterwards. This is the preferred method, as you will be able to see gaps where template images should appear.

Uploading images to your own hosting account

The images for your blog template are usually provided in the download folder for your template.

If you already have a web hosting provider, you can simply upload your template images to this hosting account.

However, for those who don't have access to a web host, there are many free services which you could use to host your template images. Here are some of the services I recommend:

- [Photobucket](#)
- [ImageShack](#)
- [ImageBam](#)
- [Flickr](#)
- [Picasa](#)

As you upload each image, make a note of the URL location (or copy this to a text file for easy access) along with the name of each image.

Replacing image URLs in your Blogger template

There are no hard and set rules to replace the entire image URLs in your template, so here I will explain my personal method.

1. Open up the Edit HTML page in your Blogger dashboard and check the "expand widget templates" box. This ensures you can access all image locations in one sitting.
2. With a list of all the image names and their corresponding URLs to hand, use the search function of your browser to locate each image name (e.g.: image1.jpg, header.gif) in turn, replacing the present URL for each image with your own hosted image location.
3. After each replacement, preview your template to ensure the image appears in its correct place.
4. Once all images have been replaced, do one final check before saving your template.

Now that all of the image URLs are replaced, your Blogger template installation is complete!

Chapter summary

In this chapter, we have explored:

- Three things you should know before uploading a new template
- The difference between template file types
- Basic installation methods for new Blogger templates
- Troubleshooting template uploads

By now you should have a sound understanding of how to upload a third party template to your blog.

So let's move on to the next chapter where we'll learn some advanced techniques of uploading a new template which will offer you much more control over the installation process and make the transition virtually seamless for your readers.

Advanced installation methods

In this chapter, we'll look at some advanced techniques of Blogger template installation including: how to maintain your existing widgets; how to tweak your template to perfection, and how to change templates seamlessly, so your readers will barely notice the change until it's already complete.

Previously, we've looked at how to install a new template using standard methods. However, these methods have some drawbacks: we cannot retain existing widgets; image URLs will need to be altered (where required), and any other template tweaks will be made after the initial installation.

In this chapter, I will share some of the techniques which I use to install Blogger templates professionally, ensuring an almost seamless change of theme which is beneficial for you and your blog readers.

Four Steps to a Complete Blogger Template Upload

To change your template on an existing blog while retaining all widgets involves four major steps:

1. Create a test blog
2. Upload your new template to the test blog
3. Transfer widget templates from your existing blog to the test blog
4. Transfer the modified template with widgets intact to your existing blog.

Using this method ensures you will not receive any error messages when uploading the finished version of your new template to your existing blog. It does take more time and modification of template code, but the finished result is well worth the effort it involves!

Let's go over each of these steps in order.

Step 1: Create a test blog

Each time I want to try out a new template or modify code from a template, I make use of a **test blog**.

Using a test blog ensures your existing blog will not be affected when you are experimenting or altering some aspect of your template code. Once you have finished work on your template, you can safely upload the modified version to your blog.

Blogger allows us to create and use as many blogs as we would like (within parameters of fair use, of course!). This means we are allowed to use a test blog (or two) for experimental purposes.

How to create a test blog

Log in to Blogger and view the main dashboard where you will see a list of your existing blogs and links to the main pages of their individual dashboards.

Click on the link which says "Create a blog". On the next page, you will be prompted to provide the Blog*Spot URL for your test blog, and also to name it:

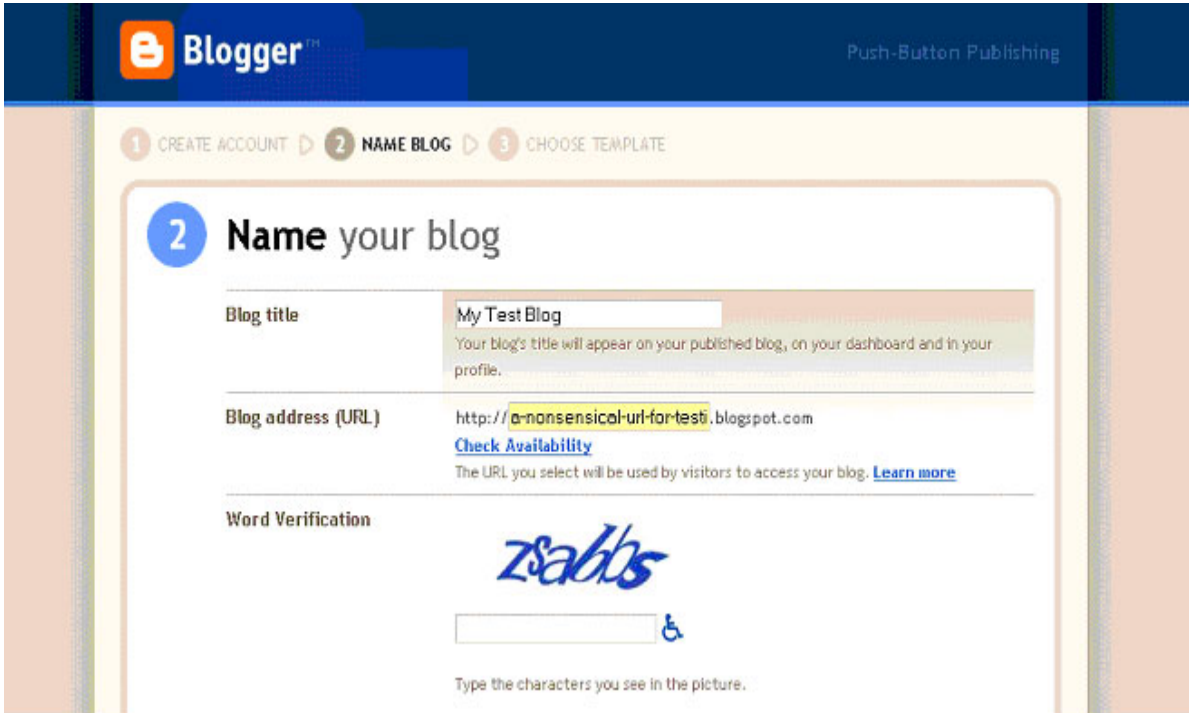
The image shows the Blogger 'Name your blog' setup page. At the top, there's a blue header with the Blogger logo and 'Push-Button Publishing' text. Below the header, a progress bar shows three steps: 1. CREATE ACCOUNT, 2. NAME BLOG (which is highlighted), and 3. CHOOSE TEMPLATE. The main content area is titled '2 Name your blog'. It contains three sections: 'Blog title' with a text input field containing 'My Test Blog' and a tooltip explaining that the title will appear on the published blog, dashboard, and profile; 'Blog address (URL)' with a text input field containing 'http://a-nonsensical-url-for-test.blogspot.com', a 'Check Availability' link, and a note that the URL will be used by visitors to access the blog; and 'Word Verification' which features a CAPTCHA image of the word 'Zabbs' in a stylized blue font, a text input field, and a small blue icon with a white 'b'.

Figure 45: Creating a test blog

For your blog title, choose something which will help you recognize this easily as your test blog (to prevent you accidentally accessing the wrong dashboard).

For the Blog*Spot URL, I would advise you to use something nonsensical: a random string of letters and numbers perhaps, which you doubt anyone else would want to choose as their own blog URL. Your test blog will only be used for testing purposes, so there is no need to a blog URL which is valuable for search engines or visitors.

Once you have chosen an available URL and completed the word verification, click the "continue" button.

Don't spend too much time choosing which default template to use for your test blog! In a few minutes' time we will be changing this to the template you have downloaded for use in

your main blog instead! Simply click "continue" to get through to the page where you can create your first post.

Add some filler posts

To ensure your template will be correctly displayed (and so we can fix any problems before updating your main blog template) you will need to write a couple of "filler posts" for your test blog.

Filler posts are more effective when they contain at least a paragraph or two of test. To save typing out this content by hand (and wasting time) you may want to consider using Lorem Ipsum text. You can generate as much Lorem Ipsum as you need using [the generator on the Lorem Ipsum website](#).

Here is a paragraph of Lorem Ipsum filler text which you could copy and paste as filler text for your test blog:

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipiscing elit. In eu felis auctor tellus condimentum dapibus. Curabitur nec orci sed lectus sollicitudin lacinia. Quisque ut erat et tortor venenatis dignissim. Quisque nec nisi. In hac habitasse platea dictumst. Phasellus molestie, neque ut adipiscing ullamcorper, tortor ipsum fringilla velit, sed lacinia elit lectus eu nibh. Sed eget turpis ac elit consequat volutpat. Pellentesque fermentum. Donec dolor eros, euismod vel, vestibulum eget, adipiscing sed, ante. Sed condimentum erat eu velit. Aenean enim ligula, semper eu, pellentesque non, venenatis lobortis, felis. Nulla quis felis. Nullam dignissim pretium libero. Morbi quis sem. Sed sagittis quam nec turpis. Donec ullamcorper lorem vitae dolor. Duis aliquet.

Once you've pasted some content to the body of your posts, finish off with a title and a label or two. Then hit the publish button.

Repeat this process again to pad out your test blog with a few filler posts which will help you ensure your template will look appropriate when uploaded to your main blog.

Change some settings for your test blog

When using a test blog, there are some settings and set-up configurations we should consider ensuring our test blog serves its purpose well.

Unless you are using a test blog to demonstrate something to your readers (or the general public), you may prefer this to be hidden from Google search results, Blogger's updates on the main page, and from your Blogger profile page.

First of all, click on the Settings tab in the dashboard for your test blog. Choose "No" as the option for "Add your blog to our listings" and "Let search engines find your blog":

Add your blog to our listings?No 

A Listed blog may be linked to from Blogger.com, such as the Blogger home page, Blogger Play, and Next Blog. If you select "No" your blog will not appear in these places, but it will still be available on the Internet. This blog will still be displayed on your profile unless you hide it. [Edit displayed blogs.](#)

Let search engines find your blog?No 

If you select "Yes" we will include your blog in Google Blog Search and ping [Weblogs.com](#). If you select "No", everyone can still view your blog but search engines will be instructed not to crawl it.

Figure 46: Removing your test blog from Blogger's listings

This will ensure Blogger adds "no-index" tags to your blog template which prevents it from being index by search engines; included in the Weblogs directory, and other publicly available directories.

Once you have saved these settings, go back to your main dashboard and click on the link to edit your profile (in the top right corner, below your profile image).

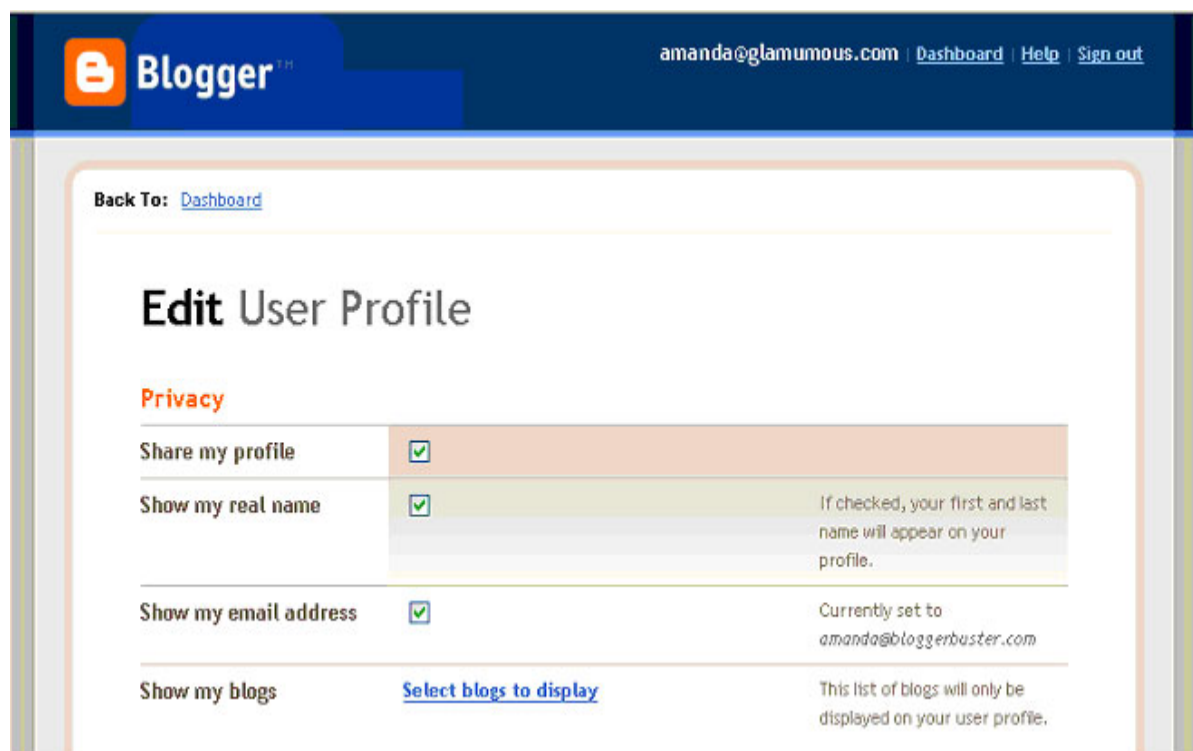


Figure 47: Remove this test blog from the list of blogs in your profile page

On this page, click on the link which says "Select blogs to display", which will take you to a list of all the blogs associated with your account. Deselect your test blog and save these settings to ensure your testing area will not be available for the general public to see.

With all this complete, you now have a private, working test blog which you can use as your experimental playground for all your template needs.

Step 2: Upload your new blog template

At this point, the only widgets present in your test blog should be a profile widget and an archives widget (which are added to all new blogs by default).

Be sure not to add any more widgets at this point! You should leave the Profile and Archives widgets in place for now, even if you don't usually feature these widgets in your blog. These widgets will act as a reference point when we transfer widgets over from your existing blog.

Assuming you have already downloaded your new Blogger template, you should now upload this to your test blog using the method appropriate to its type:

If you have downloaded the XML file for this template, upload this as a complete file using the "browse" and "upload" buttons on the Layout>Edit HTML page of your dashboard.

If you have copied the text file for this template, you will need to replace the code in the scrolling box on the Layout>Edit HTML page of your blog, and save.

Refer back to Chapter 3 for full instructions for each method.

Error codes?

Provided you have followed upload instructions correctly, you should not receive any error messages at all.

If you do get a Bx-code or other error message, review the steps you have taken to upload to see if you have made a mistake.

In the event of further unsuccessful attempts, try refreshing your browser or wait a little while and try once more. Blogger may be experiencing technical difficulties (which you could check by referring to the Blogger status page), or your browser may require a clean cache to proceed.

You may also want to check with the template designer (or read comments left by others on the template download page) to see if there is an inherent problem with the template.

One final check!

Once you have uploaded your template, take a quick look at your blog to see how the new template looks. By the time we have finished with this method, your test blog will look almost exactly like your main blog instead!

Step 3: Transfer widget templates to your test blog

This is the trickiest step, but with a little preparation, care and patience you can ensure this step will not cause problems!

For this step, we will transfer the widget templates from your existing blog template to your new one. The widgets themselves will not be transferred, just the code which will be used to display them.

In other words, once we transfer the widget templates, the widgets themselves will not appear; instead they will act as placeholders for the widgets when the completed template is transferred to your main blog.

Prepare widgets in your existing template first!

If at all possible, you should try to move all widgets in your existing template to one widget section (i.e. the sidebar). Doing this ensures it's much easier (and less time consuming) to copy the widget code from your existing template to the new one.

This is just temporary! Once we have finished adding the widget templates to your new Blogger template, you can move them around again to other sections of your layout.

Move all of your existing widgets to one section of your layout from within the Page Elements section of your dashboard, and be sure to save the changes before proceeding to the next step.

Access the template code for new and existing templates

For this part of the installation, you will need to have the Layout>Edit HTML page for both your existing blog and your test blog open at the same time.

If your browser has tabbed navigation enabled (e.g.: Firefox, IE7), you could have each page open in a separate tab and simply switch between them.

If you access the internet using a browser which doesn't support tabs, you will need to have two browser windows open in order to complete this step.

Copy the widget codes from your existing blog layout

Firstly, we need to copy the widget codes from your existing template.

Ensure that you have not checked the "expand widget templates" box! We want the widget codes to be compact as this ensures they are much simpler to copy.

The easiest way to locate the widget codes we need to copy is to perform a browser search for the following term:

```
<b:widget id=
```

The first instance of this term will be the header widget which will look something like this:

```
<b:widget id='Header1' locked='true' title='My Blog Name (Header) '
type='Header' />
```

Ignore this widget (as we don't need to edit the header section in any way. Instead, continue searching for the next instance of your search term.

Provided you have temporarily moved all widgets to the sidebar in your template, you should find a list of your widgets all together in the sidebar which will look like this:

Edit Template

Edit the contents of your template. [Learn more](#)

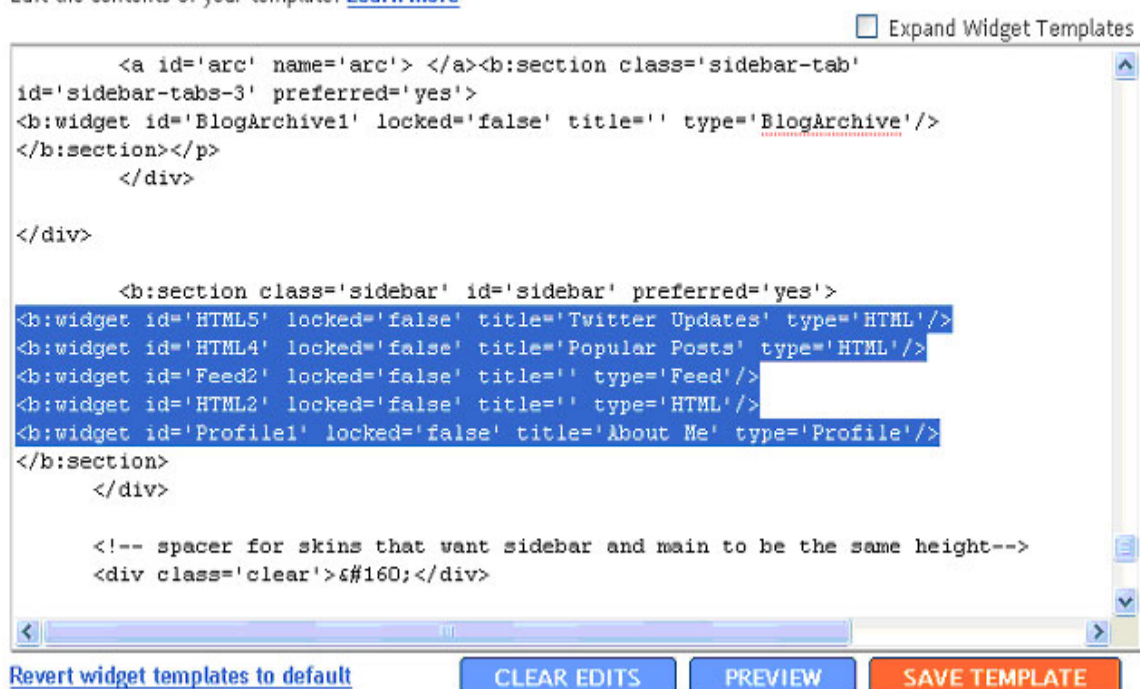


Figure 48: Highlight widget codes in your Blogger template

As you can see in this example, I have highlighted all of the lines between the opening `<b:section...>` and the closing `</b:section>` tags.

All of these lines begin with `<b:widget id=.`

In your own template, highlight all of the lines which begin with `<b:widget id,` being careful not to highlight the `<b:section>` lines.

Then using the "copy" function of your browser, **copy all of these lines to your clipboard.**



For most browsers, you can use the keyboard shortcut CTRL+C (this is CMD+C for Mac users) to copy text to your clipboard.

When you have copied all of these lines to your clipboard, switch over to the Edit HTML page for your test blog.

Copy the widget codes to your test blog

At this point, you should have the entire widget template lines from your existing blog copied to your clipboard.

On the Edit HTML page for your test blog, you need to search for the following lines:

```
<b:widget id='BlogArchive1' locked='false' title='Blog Archive'
type='BlogArchive' />

<b:widget id='Profile1' locked='false' title='About Me' type='Profile' />
```

The easiest way to find these is to search for the term "Profile1" using the search function of your browser.

Highlight both of these lines, like this:

Edit Template

Edit the contents of your template. [Learn more](#)



- [Revert to Classic Template](#)
- [View Classic Template](#)

Figure 49: Highlighting widget code lines in the template

While these lines are highlighted, use the "Paste" function of your web browser to replace these with the lines from your clipboard.



For most browsers, you can use the keyboard shortcut CTRL+V (or CMD+V for Mac users).

At this point, you should preview your template. This helps ensure you have copied the widgets over correctly. If you have accidentally omitted code, you would receive an error message at this point.

If everything appears to be normal, you can proceed to save the template of your test blog. You will be asked if you want to delete the Archive1 and Profile1 widgets. It's perfectly safe to confirm this, and should not result in an error code or message.

If instead you receive an error when trying to preview or save your template, click the "Clear Edits" button and begin the process again, being extra careful when copying and pasting the lines!

Step 4: Upload this customized template to your main blog

This is the final part of the foolproof installation method, and is much simpler than the previous step!

Copy the HTML code from your test blog's template

While we could download the XML file, I find it much simpler and easier to copy and paste the template code from the test blog to the main blog.

Here is what you should do:

1. Ensure you have the Edit HTML page for both your test and existing blogs open in tabs or browser windows. **Do not tick the "Expand widget templates" box for either template.**
2. Switch to view the Edit HTML page for your test blog's template.
3. Place your cursor somewhere in the box which contains the template code. Then use the "select all" function of your web browser to highlight all of the code inside this box. You can use the keyboard shortcut CTRL+A (CMD+A for Mac users) if you prefer.
4. Use the "Copy" function of your web browser (CTRL+C or CMD+C) to copy all of the HTML code to your clipboard.
5. Take care to highlight and copy the entire HTML code which is contained within the scrolling box!
6. Once you have copied all of the code from your test blog, you can switch back to your existing blog's template page.

Paste your new template to your main blog

When viewing the Edit HTML page for your existing blog, you should again highlight all of the code using the "Select all" function of your browser. **Be sure you have highlighted all of the existing code!**

Paste all of the code from your clipboard into the scrolling code box. Then preview your blog.

You should see that all of your existing widgets are displayed in the layout, and receive no error messages. If everything appears to be correct, you can proceed to save your template.

However, if you receive an error message and are unable to preview, you should go back to the beginning of this step and try again.

Once you have completed this step correctly, you have successfully uploaded your new template, and have retained all of your widgets during the change!

Move widgets back into position

Now that you have successfully copied all the widgets over and installed your new template, you can go to the Layout>Page Elements section of your dashboard to move your widgets to different locations.

Many non-standard Blogger templates have additional areas where you can place widgets; you may want to experiment with widget placement in these new areas.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, we have looked at advanced methods of uploading a new template which offer more control over the finished design and ensure a seamless transition from one template to another.

The techniques we have covered include:

- Creating a test blog
- Transferring widgets from one template to another
- Troubleshooting template errors
- Uploading the finished design to your main blog

Now that we have fully explored the methods of uploading new Blogger templates, let's look at some basic customizations which can ensure your blog is unique.

Chapter

5

Customize your Blogger template

If you have successfully uploaded a new Blogger template or have chosen to customize your existing template, you'll probably want to tweak elements of the design to make your blog unique.

In this chapter, we'll look at some simple techniques to customize your Blogger template which will add a personal touch to the overall design. The techniques we will look at in this chapter are:

- How to add your logo to the header section
- Changing the color scheme
- Using background images

These simple customizations ensure your blog is **visually memorable** and that the style complements the content of your posts.

Afterwards, we will look at other online tutorials which explain how to add even more functionality that ensures your design will be unique.

Add your blog's logo to the header

Having a unique logo for your blog will instantly set your design apart from that of other bloggers. A logo creates impact, and is one of the most memorable features of any great blog design.

Most Blogger templates will display your blog's title as a text link wrapped in H1 tags. However, Blogger allows us to replace this simple text link with a clickable image instead.

How to upload your logo

The easiest way to replace your blog's title with a clickable logo/banner is to modify the header widget in your layout.

Go to Layout>Page Elements in your blog's dashboard and click on the "Edit" link in the header widget.

On this page, you can upload your blog's logo from your computer, or choose the online location for your image if this is already hosted elsewhere:

Configure Header ? Help

Blog Title My Test Blog

Blog Description

Image

☒ **From your computer:**

Browse...

☐ **From the web**

Placement

☐ Behind title and description

☒ Instead of title and description

☐ Shrink to fit

Image will be shrunk to 660 pixels wide.

CANCEL **SAVE**

Figure 50: Uploading your logo to the header widget

Check the option to use your image instead of the title and description in order to make your logo clickable.

Once you have uploaded (or linked to) your image, this will display as a preview in the editing page. You can then proceed to save your widget and view the overall appearance of your logo in your blog.

Considerations for logo size

If your image is wider than the space available in the header section, you should check the box which says "shrink to fit". This ensures your logo and fits the header area perfectly.

Different templates have different widths for the header section. This should be indicated on the editing page for your header widget. Be aware that if your logo is smaller than the space available, the logo will display at the actual size.

Blog Title: Need to Test

Blog Description:

Image: ☐ From your computer: ☒ From the web:

Placement: ☐ Behind title and description ☒ Instead of title and description ☐ Shrink to fit

image will be shrunk to 400 pixels wide.

Maximum width available for header image

Figure 51: Work out the maximum width available for your logo

In the example above, there is 400px of space available in the header section. Your own template may provide less or more space for a custom logo image.

Change the color scheme of your template

Changing the color scheme of your new Blogger template is a simple yet effective method of personalization and branding.



If you have a distinctive logo for your site, you may prefer to change the color scheme to match the colors of this logo.

Using the fonts and colors menu

Some Blogger templates are configured for colors to be changed through the fonts and colors menu. You can access this by going to Layout>Fonts and Colors when logged in to your blog's dashboard:

Posting Settings Layout View Blog

Page Elements Fonts and Colors Edit HTML Pick New Template

Choose a color for Page Background Color

Colors from your blog

Colors that match your blog

More colors

Edit color hex code

Revert to template default

Shuffle blog colors

Figure 52: Changing colors through the Fonts and Colors menu

On this page, you can locate areas of your template whose colors can be altered in the left hand side of the menu.

Then you can click on a color from the right hand side of the menu, or even choose your own hex colors by typing these into the box on the far right.

You can preview these changes in the area beneath this menu, and click on the "Save Changes" button once you are happy with the changes you have made.

Changing colors by editing your blog's HTML code

Some Blogger templates require you to alter the color scheme manually, by editing the color values in the template's HTML code.

This is not as simple as changing the color scheme through the Fonts and Colors menu. Rather than have a description of the area you need to change, you will need to locate the appropriate section in the HTML code of your template.

How to change the hex values for colors in your blog template

To change hex color values within the template's code, you need to go to Layout>Edit HTML in your blog's dashboard. It shouldn't be necessary to check the "expand widget templates" box.

The hex values for each color in your template will be contained in the `<b:skin>` section of your template.

Edit Template

Edit the contents of your template. [Learn more](#)

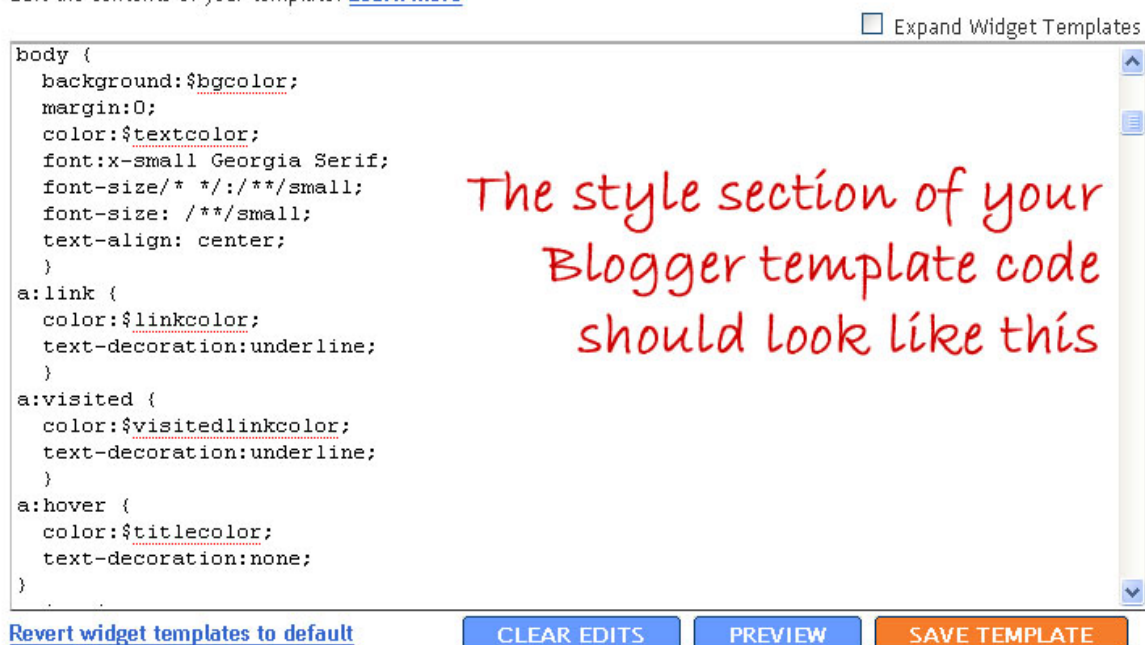


Figure 53: Screenshot demonstrating the style section of a Blogger template's HTML code

You will need to locate the unique style statement for each section of your template in order to change the color values for this area.

For example, the style for the header section is usually found in the statement beginning with `#header`, while sidebar titles may be in an area which begins `.sidebar h2`.

In the `<b:skin>` section of your template, a statement for a background color will appear like this:

```
background: #000000;  
  
or  
  
background-color: #ffff00;
```

While the statement used to define a font color may appear like this:

```
color: #000000;  
  
Or  
  
font-color: #ffcc00;
```

The hex value in each of these examples is represented by the phrase which begins with a hash symbol, such as

- `#000000` (black)
- `#ffffff` (white)
- `#ff0000` (red)

Each hex value begins with a hash symbol (`#`) and is followed by a six digit code which is made up of numbers and the letters A-F.



In Chapter 8, you can find color charts for the most commonly used hex values which help you find the hex values you need at a glance.

You should change these hex values in your Blogger template to reflect the colors you prefer to use for your own design. Be sure that each hex value begins with the hash symbol and is followed by the correct six digit hexadecimal code.



Important Note: The style statements for sections of the template differ in name and syntax between different templates. If you are unsure of the section name you need to configure, take a look at your blog's source code and search for a recognizable phrase. When you look at the code surrounding your phrase, you should see the name or class of the section (e.g.: `<div id="name-of-section">` or `<div class="sidebar">`).

Useful color scheme resources

Here are some useful online resources which can help you find the perfect color scheme for your blog design:

[Adobe Kuler](#)

A flash based interface with options to publish and share your color schemes.

[ColorSchemer Gallery](#)

Includes thousands of pre-made color schemes, and a forum where you can ask advice about the best schemes for your design.

[Copaso](#)

This is my favourite online color scheme generator. It features a scratchpad where you can create and store your color schemes, and even a tool to extract colors from images.

Add a background pattern/image to your blog

A prominent trend of web design is to use an image or repeating pattern for the main background of the page.

There are different methods you could use to add background images to your blog, depending on whether you require:

- A repeating pattern
- An image which repeats only horizontally or vertically
- A static background image (which does not move when readers scroll down the page)

These are the background styles we will refer to in this chapter.



To use any image as a background for your blog, you will need to upload this to an image host.

Ensure you have the URLs of your background images to hand. You will need to use these when adding the relevant style code to your Blogger template.



You can use your free [Picasa Web Albums account](#), which you are entitled to as a Google account holder.

If you have registered an account with Picasa, a link to your account will be displayed in your Blogger dashboard (usually in the sidebar, or in the footer section of you are logged in through Blogger in Draft).

If you have not yet registered a Picasa account, you can do so by visiting the [Picasa home page](#).

Let's go through the different methods of adding background patterns and images to your Blogger template.

Add a repeating pattern to the background

A repeating pattern is one which is repeated both horizontally and vertically across the whole background of the page.

To achieve this affect, you will need to use a tileable image which creates a patterned effect. You can find hundreds of free tileable images from these sites:

- [Squidfingers](#)
- [Repeat X-Y](#)
- [Background City](#)

Once you have found your ideal tileable image, upload this to your preferred image host and note down the URL of your image.

Now we need to edit the HTML code of your Blogger template to add this image as a repeating pattern to the background.

Here are the steps you should take:

1. Go to Layout>Edit HTML in your Blogger dashboard.
2. Locate the CSS statement for the "body" property in your template code. It should look something like this:

```
body {  
  
    background:$bgcolor;  
  
    margin:0;  
  
    color:$textcolor;  
  
    font:x-small Arial, Sans-Serif;;  
  
    font-size/* */:/**/small;  
  
    font-size: /**/small;
```

```
text-align: center;

}
```

3. We need to edit the line which I have highlighted in red. Please be aware that this may not look exactly the same in your own Blogger template! If you are unsure, look for the line in the "body" statement which begins with "background". This will be the line we need to change.
4. You should replace the line in red with the following line instead, where (url-of-your-background-image) corresponds to the URL of your background image, where it is hosted with your image hosting provider:

```
background: url(http://url-of-your-background-image);
```

5. Then preview your blog to see the effect this has on the appearance of your blog.
6. If you are happy with this effect, you can proceed to save your template.

Add a pattern which repeats across the top or side of your blog

Sometimes you may prefer to add a pattern which repeats only across the top edge or side of your blog.

The method for this is very similar to the one described above. But rather than allow the image to be repeated across the whole background, we add a statement after the URL of the background image which determines the direction of the repeat.

To repeat the image **horizontally** across the top of the page, we use "repeat-x", like this:

```
background: url(http://url-of-your-background-image) repeat-x;
```

To repeat the image **vertically** down the page, we use "repeat-y" like this:

```
background: url(http://url-of-your-background-image) repeat-y;
```

Again, you should preview the changes you have made before saving your template.

If you would also like to see a color in the portion of the page not covered by the pattern, you can add the appropriate hex value for your color before the URL of your image, like this:

```
background: #ffcc00 url(http://url-of-your-background-image);
```

Using a larger, static background image

This method adds a larger background image which stays in place even when the reader scrolls down the page. The code required for this to work is quite different from the "shorthand" codes we have used for the previous repeating patterns.

For a fixed background image, it is better to use a large image which covers most of the space available in a browser window. This style of image is often known as "wallpaper".

Here are some useful resources for web-compatible background images:

- [Wallpaper Base](#)

- [Wallpaper Seek](#)
- [Wonder Backgrounds](#)

As before, you will need to download your preferred background image, and host this with an image host before adding this property to your template.

Properties required for a static background image

To use a fixed background image, we need to define the following background properties separately, rather than as one statement:

- **background-color:** The color of the background which is not covered by the image
- **background-image:** The URL of the background image to be used
- **background-repeat:** Whether the background should be repeated, and in which direction
- **background-position:** The position in the page where you would like the image to appear. This can be top, middle or bottom for vertical alignment, and left, center or right for horizontal position.
- **background-attachment:** This declares whether the background image should scroll with the page. Defining this as "fixed" ensures the background doesn't move with the page (the default is "scroll").

Here is an example of style code used to define all of these properties:

```
background-color: #ffffcc;

background-image: url(http://lh3.ggpht.com/amandafaz/RqC5MZ8V9aI/AAAAAAAAAMk/
bTAmjR2czl4/s144/sunset.jpg);

background-repeat: no-repeat;

background-position: top center;

background-attachment: fixed;
```

This example code would add a fixed, non-repeating background image at the top of the page, with a yellow color where the image ends.

Adding style code for a fixed background image to your template

To add a static background image to the body of your Blogger template, you will need to replace the line for the background property with full declarations which should span a number of lines.

The easiest way to achieve this is to use the example above as a template, substituting the values for the colors, image URL and alignment of your own preferences.



Be sure to replace only the background: \$bgcolor (or similar) within the body section of your template! Removing other lines in the body section can affect the fonts and other styles of your template.

To guide you, here are some "before and after" screenshots of how I added a fixed background image to the template code of a test blog.

Edit Template

Edit the contents of your template. [Learn more](#)

☐ Expand Widget Templates

```
/* Use this with templates/template-twocol.html */
body {
  background:$bgcolor;
  margin:0;
  color:$textcolor;
  font:x-small Georgia Serif;
  font-size/* */:/**/small;
  font-size: /**/small;
  text-align: center;
}
a:link {
  color:$linkcolor;
  text-decoration:underline;
}
```

The default "body" section with regular background properties

Figure 54: Before adding the new background properties

Edit Template

Edit the contents of your template. [Learn more](#)

☐ Expand Widget Templates

```
/* Use this with templates/template-twocol.html */

body {
  background-color: #ffffcc;
  background-image: url(http://lh3.ggpht.com/amandafaz/RqC5M28V9aI/AAAAAAAAAMk/bTAmjR2cz14/s144/sunset.jpg);
  background-repeat: no-repeat;
  background-position: top center;
  background-attachment: fixed;
  margin:0;
  color:$textcolor;
  font:x-small Georgia Serif;
  font-size/* */:/**/small;
  font-size: /**/small;
  text-align: center;
}
a:link {
  color:$linkcolor;
  text-decoration:underline;
}
```

The Body section featuring customized background properties for a fixed background image

Figure 55: After adding the code for a static background image:

Learn more about using backgrounds in your Blogger blog

In this section, we have touched on the basic principles of applying background images to your Blogger template.

Here are links to some useful tutorials from Blogger Buster which can help you learn more about applying backgrounds to areas of your Blogger template:

- [Styling sections of your blog with borders and backgrounds](#)
- [How to use background images](#)
- [Add rounded corners and background color using CSS](#)
- [Background styles for the Minima template](#)



For more information about styling backgrounds, W3C schools provides a useful [web backgrounds reference page](#) with "Try It Editor" pages where you can experiment with different properties in action.

Other useful customizations

If you would like to take your customizations a step further, you may wish to take a look at some of these tutorials which can add extra functionality to your new Blogger template:

[Create a three column Blogger template](#)

This tutorial may be useful if your chosen design does not include a second sidebar

[Add extra widgets to your blog header](#)

Many bloggers like to add extra widgets beside their blog header (such as a search box or navigation buttons). This tutorial offers an easy method to achieve this.

[A calendar widget to replace the date header](#)

Here you can learn how to replace a regular date header with a calendar icon.

[Segment the footer with three columns](#)

In this tutorial, you can learn how to divide a wide footer section into three widgetized columns.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, we have explored some basic methods of customizing your Blogger template, including:

- How to add your logo to the header section
- How to change the color scheme

- How to add background images to your design

These methods are suitable for both third party and standard Blogger templates, and help assure you that your blog design is unique!

Now that we have optimized the design of our Blogger template, let's take a look at methods of optimizing the code of our template for the benefit of readers and search engine spiders.

Chapter

6

Optimize your blog loading time

So now you have a great new design for your blog; all the widgets you need are in place, and you've personalized your design with a unique logo and complementary color scheme. At this point, there are several tweaks you could apply which will make your template perform even better...

In this chapter, we will explore methods you could use to optimize your blog's page loading time. Not only will this be of benefit to your readers, it will also help search engines index your site more quickly.

Tips to help your blog load more quickly

Blog readers can be quite impatient. Ideally your blog pages should load within a few seconds through all connection types to prevent potential readers becoming impatient and moving onto another site instead.



The aim of a fast-loading blog is to ensure your pages load in a reasonable time for all connection types.

While you may think your blog loads quickly when viewed on your own computer, be aware that your visitors may be using different (and possibly slower) connections to access your pages.

Those using dial-up will undoubtedly be used to slower page loading times than visitors who have DSL access. You should also consider that search engine spiders need to access your site and can index pages much more quickly when a site is optimized for speed.

Find out how quickly your site loads

One of the best tools I have found for understanding page loading time is [Web Optimization's web page speed report](#).

This tool is very easy to use: simply type your blog's home page URL into the text box, and hit the "Submit Query" button:

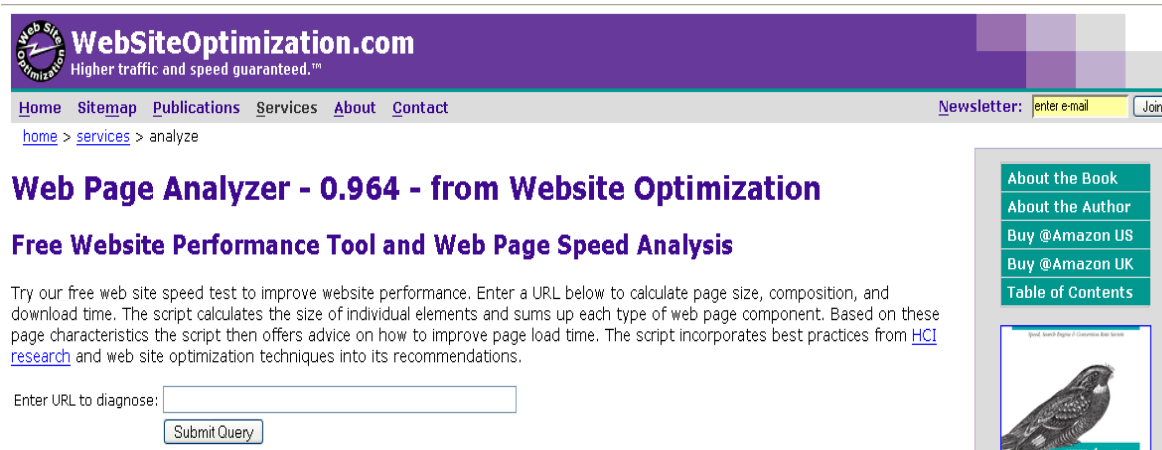


Figure 56: Query your blog's loading time with WebSiteOptimization.com

It does take a few minutes to parse the information from your website, though once the page has loaded, you will see loads of useful information about your site.

Now I admit that the information in this page can seem quite intimidating! This service is generally aimed at experienced webmasters who understand the technical details of HTTP requests, external objects and so on. The section we are most interested in is the "Analysis and Recommendations" which will look something like this:

Analysis and Recommendations

- **TOTAL HTML** - Congratulations, the total number of HTML files on this page (including the main HTML file) is 2 which most browsers can multithread. Minimizing HTTP requests is key for web site optimization.
- **TOTAL OBJECTS** - Warning! The total number of objects on this page is 66 - consider reducing this to a more reasonable number. Combine, refine, and optimize your external objects. Replace graphic rollovers with CSS rollovers to speed display and minimize HTTP requests.
- **TOTAL IMAGES** - Warning! The total number of images on this page is 41, consider reducing this to a more reasonable number. Combine, refine, and optimize your graphics. Replace graphic rollovers with CSS rollovers to speed display and minimize HTTP requests.
- **TOTAL CSS** - Caution. The total number of external CSS files on this page is 5, consider reducing this to a more reasonable number. Combine, refine, and optimize your external CSS files. Ideally you should have one (or even embed CSS for high-traffic pages) on your pages.
- **TOTAL SIZE** - Warning! The total size of this page is 1112674 bytes, which will load in 181.78 seconds on a 56kbps modem. Consider reducing total page size to less than 30K to achieve sub eight second response times on 56K connections. Pages over 100K exceed most attention thresholds at 56Kbps, even with feedback. Consider [contacting us](#) about our optimization services.
- **TOTAL SCRIPT** - Warning! The total number of external script files on this page is 17, consider reducing this to a more reasonable number. Combine, refine, and optimize your external script files. Ideally you should have one (or even embed scripts for high-traffic pages) on your pages.
- **HTTP SIZE** - Caution. The total size of this HTML file is 24997 bytes, which is above 20K but below 100K. With a 10K ad and a logo this means that your page will load in over 8.6 seconds. Consider optimizing your HTML and eliminating unnecessary features. To give your users feedback, consider layering your page or using positioning to display useful content within the first two seconds.
- **IMAGES SIZE** - Warning! The total size of your images is 323051 bytes, which is over 30K. Consider optimizing your images for size, combining them, and replacing graphic rollovers with CSS.
- **SCRIPT SIZE** - Warning! The total size of external your scripts is 486443 bytes, which is over 8K. Consider optimizing your scripts for size, combining them, and using compression where appropriate for any scripts placed in the HEAD of your documents.
- **CSS SIZE** - Warning! The total size of your external CSS is 11389 bytes, which is over 8K. Consider optimizing your CSS for size by eliminating whitespace, using shorthand notation, and combining multiple CSS files where appropriate.
- **MULTIMEDIA SIZE** - Congratulations, the total size of all your external multimedia files is 0 bytes, which is less than 4K.

Figure 57: Analysis and recommendations for page loading time

At a glance, we can see which areas of our blogs require some tweaking in order to load more quickly:

- The sections highlighted in **green** are the areas of the site which have optimal performance, and do not need to be changed.
- The sections highlighted in **yellow** are not critical, but could be optimized for better loading times.
- Those sections highlighted in **red** demonstrate areas which really slow down page loading time, and are top of the list for immediate optimization!

If all of these sections display in green and yellow when using this tool, you have little to worry about in regard to your page loading time. However, if most of these sections are red, you are advised to make some changes to your blog, or potentially lose readers due to excessive loading times!

Ideally, we need to work towards a page loading time of under 8 seconds using a 56k dial-up connection (page loading times will be much faster for DSL and T1 connections).

To achieve this optimal loading time, we need to *try* to follow these guidelines:

- The overall size of the page should not exceed 80kb
- Use few external Java Scripts
- Try not to display many images on each page, both in your posts and blog template
- Aim for the smallest file size possible for your images
- Reduce the size of your CSS (style) section wherever possible!
- Make few HTTP requests (in other words, aim to have scripts, images and any other external elements on as few servers as you can!)

This may seem like a lot of work, and if you are new to blogging or web design, it may also seem bewildering!

Rather than focus on each factor in great technical detail, I'm going to suggest 6 useful methods you could use to reduce your blog loading time dramatically:

1. Remove any widgets/scripts you don't really need
2. Reduce images in your layout
3. Reduce the file size of your images
4. Simplify your CSS
5. Optimize the placement of scripts/widgets in your template
6. Limit the number of posts displayed on your front page

Remove any widgets/scripts you don't *really* need

Unofficial Blogger widgets and Java Scripts can add some great interactive elements to your layout. Unfortunately, each different widget/script you use will need to be referenced from a different server (known as HTTP requests), and will slow down page loading time.

Take a look at all of the widgets and scripts you use in your Blogger layout:

- Do you really need to have each and every single widget?
- Does each widget offer some value to your readers?
- Would your readers really notice (and complain) if you removed a few of these widgets/scripts from your layout?

If you answered "no" to these questions in regard to some of the scripts you use, you should consider removing them from your template altogether.

I know that widgets can make your blog prettier, but consider the impact on your page loading time: you could be losing precious readers if these slow your page down!

Reduce the number of images you use in your layout

Loading externally hosted images is another high contribution to your page loading time. So if you use a lot of image-based buttons; feature many image widgets in your sidebar, or use a template which is heavily image based, try cutting down on these to see if this may help your blog load more quickly.



Bonus Tip!

If you *really* don't want to reduce the number of images you use in your template, you could host these with Blogger instead of an external image host.

To do this, create a new blog post, and upload all of the images you would like to use to this post. These images will then be hosted on one of Blogger's image servers.

Preview your post, and right click on each of these images. You should be able to copy the image location, which you can use to replace the image URLs in your template code.

Using this trick reduces the number of HTTP requests for your images: all of the images you use will be hosted by Blogger, rather than a completely different host. This can have a dramatic impact on your page loading time, especially as Blogger's servers are hosted by Google (which in theory should be one of the most stable hosts in the world...)

Reduce the file size of your images

Another method of reducing the impact of images on page load time is to reduce the file size (not actual size) of all images used (whether in posts or layout).

Many image manipulation programs allow you to optimize images for the web, which reduces the overall file size (in bytes and kilobytes) of the image.

You may also like to try using an [online image optimizer](#) to reduce the size of your images. There may be some loss of quality (especially for larger images) but on the other hand, your overall page loading time will be reduced.

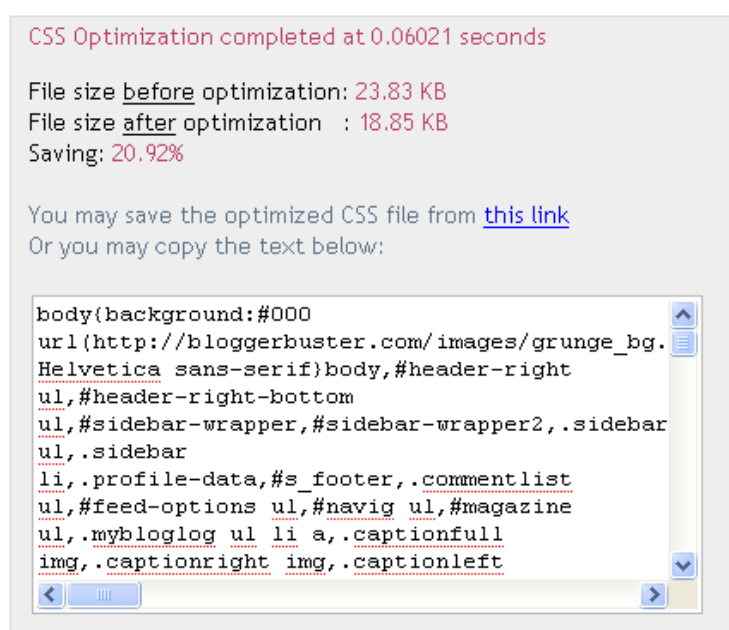
Simplify your CSS

The CSS section of your Blogger template takes up a lot of the overall file size of your blog pages. This is because each element of your `<b:skin>` (or `<style>` for those using classic Blogger templates) is featured on a separate line. There is a lot of unnecessary "white space" (page breaks, indentations and spaces) and possibly HTML comments.

By eliminating unnecessary white space and HTML comments, you can reduce the overall size of your blog pages. However, doing this can make it difficult to edit the style section afterwards!

If you would like to improve page loading time by optimizing the style section of your Blogger template, here is the easiest method you could use:

1. Copy all of the code between the `<b:skin>` and `</b:skin>` tags in your blog's HTML code (for classic template users, this is the section between the `<style>` and `</style>` tags).
2. In a new browser window or tab, visit the [CSS Optimizer website](#), and paste your style code into the "direct input" box.
3. Click the "Optimize" button (there is no need to check the box which says "do not remove line breaks").
4. The next page will offer your optimized style code inside a text box, along with data of how much this has been compressed.



5. Copy all of this code to your clipboard.
6. Replace all of the existing code in your Blogger template (between the `<b:skin>` or `<style>` tags with this optimized code.
7. Preview your template to ensure your template displays properly with these modifications, and finally save your template.

Optimize the placement of scripts/widgets in your template

There will undoubtedly be some externally hosted widgets and JavaScript's you would like to keep in your layout. To improve the impact these have on blog loading time, you can move these towards the bottom of your template code.

Move slow loading widgets to your right-hand sidebar or the footer section of your blog. This will ensure that your blog content will appear before these scripts begin to load, so visitors can appreciate your posts while the page continues loading.

Reduce the number of posts which appear on your front page

Each post which appears on your home page will add to the overall file size and loading time of your blog.

Even if you only display summaries of your posts on the home page, the entire HTML code for your posts will be visible in the source code. This is because the post summary hack hides the main part of the post using the "display: none" tag.

When choosing how many posts to display on the home page, you should consider the general length and style of your blog posts.

- If you write around 5-600 words for each post, using few or small images (and infrequent multimedia), then 5-7 posts would be optimal to display on your home page.
- If you write much longer posts; use many images, or video in posts, any more than 3 or 4 posts would slow down the loading time of your blog.
- On the other end of the scale, if your posts are generally short with few (if any) images, you could probably display 10 or more without affecting page load time.

To change the number of posts which can be displayed on your blog's home page, go to Settings>Formatting while logged in to your Blogger dashboard. The first option enables you to choose how many posts are displayed on the front page:



Figure 58: Change the number of posts which appear on your front page

By choosing to display less posts on your home page, you can ensure your blog will load more quickly.

Have these changes improved your blog's loading time?

Once you have made all these changes to your blog, you will probably notice a visual difference in your page loading time. You may also want to check exactly how much faster your site loads now by [performing your speed check again with WebOptimization.com](http://WebOptimization.com).

Don't worry if you still see some red warnings after optimizing your site: it's almost impossible to perfectly optimize any form of blog! What we're hoping for here is an improvement of page loading time, and so long as you've made some improvements, you're on the right track.

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, we have learned how to gather information about blog loading time, and methods which can be used to make pages load more quickly including:

- Removing unnecessary widgets and Java Scripts
- Optimizing images present in the template
- Compressing CSS code
- Reducing the number of posts displayed on the home page

When considering how to reduce blog loading time, the main thing to consider is reducing the amount of code and files which are used in your blog's mark-up.

Removing (or optimizing) as much unnecessary JavaScript and images as you are able; reducing the number of posts displayed on the main pages, and optimizing the style section of your blog's template code will certainly help your blog to load more quickly.

This is beneficial for new visitors who may become impatient while waiting for large pages to load, and is also a key aspect of optimizing your blog for search engines (as spiders are able to crawl your content more quickly).

In the next chapter, let's look at methods we could use to optimize our Blogger blogs for search engines by adding and modifying template tags to offer more information about the content of our blogs.

Chapter

7

Optimize your template for search engines

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of making a site relevant for search engines and searches. By making small changes to your Blogger template, you can help your site rank more highly in search engine results which naturally attracts more visitors to read what you have on offer.

Blogger templates are not naturally optimized for search engines. Alt and title tags are not present in the default mark-up of templates, but these tags can make all the difference to how well your site ranks in search engine results.

In this chapter, we'll look at the ways your Blogger template may be improved for search engines, which will assist the ranking of your blog in major search engines.

URLs, Title and Meta Tags

These are often considered the three most important components of search engine optimization, and can be easily optimized for Blogger powered blogs.

Your Blog's URL

Whether you are posting on a Blog*Spot sub-domain (e.g.: yourblog.blogspot.com), or have chosen to use the custom domain feature (e.g.: www.yourblog.com), it is advantageous if the URL of your site reflects the nature of your blog.

Choose your blog's URL wisely, and if possible ensure this contains a keyword or two which is relevant to your content.

If you are writing about cats, for example, a URL such as "thedogsdinner.blogspot.com" will do you no favors with Google. This is because the URL contains no keywords relevant to your blog's subject matter.

Instead, you could choose a URL like "thecatwhiskers.blogspot.com" or some other URL which includes keywords like "feline", "miaow" or other relevant words.

Make Optimal Use of Title Tags

The `<title>` tag is a very important feature of any website, and is displayed most in search engine results.

In Blogger templates, a title tag is generated for each page of your blog (including the main, archive and post pages), which differs depending on the actual title of the page.

The title tag is called in your template like this:

```
<title><data:blog.pageTitle/></title>
```

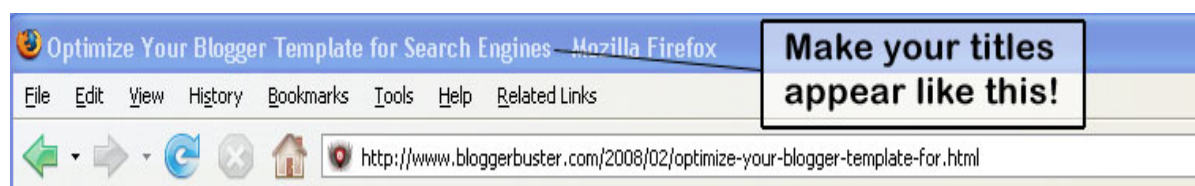
Your home page will only feature the actual title of your blog, whereas post pages will feature your blog title, plus the title of your blog post.

When writing titles for your posts, you should bear this in mind to ensure your titles are keyword rich which will help your posts be indexed more easily by search engines.

Try to place the most important keywords close to the beginning of the title, as many search engines limit the number of characters which are used in titles, both in their listings and in search results.

The Blogger "Swap Title hack"

One effective method of optimizing the post titles in your Blogger template is to apply the "swap title" hack.



This customization ensures your post title appears first in the page title, instead of your blog's name. Using this method, search engine spiders are more likely to find relevant pages from your blog, and your pages may rank higher in search results.

How to add the "Swap Title Hack" to your blog

The "Swap title hack" is very easy to apply and can be achieved in just a few steps:

1. Go to Layout>edit HTML in your Blogger dashboard.
2. Search for this tag: `<data:blog.pageTitle/>`
3. Replace this tag with the following:

```
<b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == "index".'>
<title><data:blog.title/></title>
<b:else/>
<title><data:blog.pageName/></title>
</b:if>
```

4. Save your template! (See, this is an easy hack!)

Once you've changed this tag, you'll see that on post pages, the default *[blog name] page title* format for your post titles in the browser window will be replaced solely by your post title instead.

Meta Description and Keyword Tags

Many SEO experts argue that meta description and keyword tags are being depreciated in search engine results. Google for example, generally ignores the meta description tag and generates its own description.

However, many search engines do still make use of these tags so it can be useful to include them anyway.

Meta description and keyword tags are not automatically generated for Blogger templates. Since we have full access to the HTML mark-up of our Blogger templates, we can add these manually below the title tags.

One important consideration you should understand before adding meta description and keyword tags is that **search engines look for different descriptions and keywords for each page of your site**. If you simply add these to your template in the commonly accepted form, the same content will be distributed across all pages of your site, which search engines may well regard as spam.

So here's the trick: **only use these meta tags for your home (main) page!**

This is easily achieved by wrapping your meta description and keywords in **conditional tags** which will then only appear on your main page.

For example, if I was writing a blog about cute cats, I could include meta description and keyword tags like this:

```
<title><data:blog.pageTitle/></title>
<b:if cond='data:blog.pageType == "index"'>
<meta content='Cute cats and fluffy kittens for feline friends.'
name='description' />
<meta content='cute, cat, kitten, fluffy, feline' name='keywords' />
</b:if>
```

The parts highlighted in bold are those tags which prevent the data between them from being generated for the item and archive pages, so you can be sure not to spam search engines with repeated descriptions and keywords for your blog.

The example above could be used as a basis for adding your own meta description and keywords, by simply changing the values to those which are better suited to your blog.

Optimizing your blog's title heading

Headings offer search engine spiders useful references about your content when indexing your site. You will probably be aware of the hierarchy of heading tags, which ranges from <H1> through to <H6>. Of these, the <H1> tag is considered the most important. In Blogger templates, the H1 tag would usually contain the title of your blog.

Blogger allows us to upload an image to the header section, which can either be used as a background image, or instead of the regular title and description text.

Those who choose to use an image **instead** of the title and description will not have the H1 heading tag present in their template. So if your blog title uses keywords which would be relevant to search engine results, you would be missing out on an important factor of SEO!

Luckily, this can be easily remedied! Provided you are using an image instead of the title and description in your template, you can add a few lines of code to insert hidden H1 tags around your blog's header image.

Adding H1 tags to the header image for SEO

Go to the Layout>Edit HTML section of your Blogger dashboard, and ensure you have checked the "Expand widget templates" box.

Look for the styling code for the H1 heading in the `<b:skin>` portion of your template. This **may** look something like this, though there are variations across different templates:

```
#header h1 {
margin:5px 20px;
padding:45px 20px .25em 10px;
line-height:1.2em;
text-transform:uppercase;
letter-spacing:.2em;
font: $pagetitlefont;
}
```

Within this portion of code, you need to add the following line:

```
display: none;
```

Here is how this could appear when added to the style declaration above:

```
#header h1 {
margin:5px 20px;
padding:45px 20px .25em 10px;
line-height:1.2em;
text-transform:uppercase;
letter-spacing:.2em;
font: $pagetitlefont;
display: none;
}
```

Next, you will need to add the `<h1>` heading tags within the header widget. For this, you will need to locate the following section of code:

```

<b:if cond='data:useImage'>
<b:if cond='data:imagePlacement == "REPLACE"'>
<!--Show just the image, no text-->
<div id='header-inner'>
<b><h1>Your Blog Title</h1><a expr:href='data:blog.homepageUrl' style='display:
block'>
<img expr:alt='data:title' expr:height='data:height'
expr:id='data:widget.instanceId + "_headerimg"' expr:src='data:sourceUrl'
expr:width='data:width' style='display: block'/>
</a>
</div>
<b:else/>

```

You'll notice that I've added the H1 heading (highlighted in bold) where it should appear in the template code. As we have set the style of the H1 heading to "display: none" the H1 heading is present in the HTML mark-up of your blog pages, but the title itself is not visible to the casual viewer.

This technique ensures that your blog's title will still be indexed as effectively as if you had used the image as a background instead. Furthermore, by adding this H1 heading manually, you could even expand on your title slightly with a short description which contains keywords relevant to your blog content.



If you use an image as the background to the title and description, or do not use an image in your header at all, you don't need to worry about this issue, as the H1 heading will already be present in the mark-up of your pages!

Allow search engines to find your blog!

One important factor of optimizing your blog for search engines is to ensure spiders are able to index your blog!

The easiest way to check this is to look in the settings of the Settings>Basic section of your Blogger dashboard. Close to the bottom of the page is an option to "Let search engines find your blog". You must set this to "Yes" if you want your site to be crawled and indexed by search engines.

If you have mistakenly set this to "No", Blogger will add a "NOINDEX,NOFOLLOW" Meta tag to your blog mark-up, like this:

```

<meta content='NOINDEX,NOFOLLOW' name='robots' />

```

Such a tag will prevent search engine spiders from ever indexing your site.

This may seem obvious to most of you, though you'd be surprised how many people have not checked this setting!

Optimizing Links in your Blogger Template

Before we get into the intricacies of optimizing links in Blogger templates, let's get back to basics!

SEO experts universally agree that link text is one of the most important factors of optimizing a link. Link text is the word or phrase which is used as a link in text links, like this:

```
<a href="#">This is Link Text</a>
```

The easiest way to optimize text links is to ensure the value of the text link tells the regular reader (and also search engine spiders) a description of where the link will lead to.

You can apply this technique to any manually created links in your blog, whether this is in your blog posts or links within your blog template (for example, links to important pages). Search engine spiders will reference the keywords contained in the link text more easily, while readers will prefer the experience of having a full description of where the links will lead to.

Using titles in your links

Links can be optimized even further by adding titles within the anchor tags, like this:

```
<a href="#" title="This is title text">An example of link text</a>
```

The "title" of an anchor link should be exactly that: a descriptive title which explains something about the link. Titles offer even more information about the link to search engine spiders. Furthermore, when a reader places their cursor over a link with a title in the anchor tag, the title will appear in a small box to provide a visual description.

If you use this technique for all manually created links in your Blogger blog, both search engine spiders and regular readers will notice the difference too!

Applying these techniques to your Blogger template

These techniques are easy to apply to any manually created links in your blog template. But what about your blog title, link lists and labels which use code generated by Blogger specific tags?

Even though such links are not generated by regular HTML anchor tags, there are methods we can use to optimize them by using keywords which are relevant to your blog, and by adding title tags.

The methods you can use are slightly different, depending on the link you wish to optimize. So I'll go through the most prominent links you may wish to optimize in your own Blogger template with instructions on how these links can best be optimized for search engines and accessibility.

Your Blog Title/Home Page Link

In Blogger templates, your blog's title in the header section provides a link to your blog's home page. By default, this is displayed as a regular text link (featuring your blog title as the link text), though you can also opt to use an image instead of the blog title.

Your blog title is one of the most important factors of SEO. You need to ensure this is well optimized to enable your blog to rank highly for related keywords in search engine results. Whether you use regular link text as your blog title, or choose to use an image instead, you can still ensure this link is well optimized and adequate to your blog's SEO requirements.

Optimizing the header widget

The widget code for your blog header contains two distinct sections of code: one for instances where link text is used to display your blog title (and link to your home page), and one which generates the correct code for when an image is used instead.

If you are using regular text to display your blog title, you'll discover that it's very easy to optimize this link. Simply go to Layout>Edit HTML in your Blogger dashboard, check the box to expand the widget templates, then locate the following section of code:

```
<!--No header image -->

<div id='header-inner'>

  <div class='titlewrapper'>

    <h1 class='title'>

      <b:include name='title' />

    </h1>

  </div>

  <b:include name='description' />

</div>

</b:if>

</b:includable>

<b:includable id='title'>

  <b:if cond='data:blog.url == data:blog.homepageUrl'>

    <data:title />

  <b:else />

    <a expr:href='data:blog.homepageUrl' title="A Link Title
    Here"><data:title /></a>

  </b:if>

</b:includable>
```

The text which I've highlighted in bold red is additional code which I have added to the template in order to give this link a title.

You can optimize this title by using descriptive keywords which are relevant to your blog subject. For example, if you are writing a blog about blogs, and your blog title is "The Cat's

Whiskers", you could use a link title such as "The Pussy Cat Lover's Blog" to provide adequate reference for search engines and readers alike.

If you are using an image instead of your blog title, you will need to locate a slightly different area of code and can optimize the link in two different ways:

```
<b:if cond='data:useImage'>

  <b:if cond='data:imagePlacement == "REPLACE"'>

    <!--Show just the image, no text-->

    <div id='header-inner'>

      <h1 style="display: none;">Your Blog Title</h2>

<a expr:href='data:blog.homepageUrl' style='display: block' title="Link
Title Here">

  <img expr:alt='data:title' expr:height='data:height'
expr:id='data:widget.instanceId + "_headerimg"' expr:src='data:sourceUrl'
expr:width='data:width'
style='display: block'/>

</a>

</div>
```

You'll notice that I made two changes in the code above: the first is to add `<h1>` tags just before the link tags, which ensures there is a reference to a first class title within the blog template (when using an image instead of the textual title, this is omitted from the template code).

By including the style reference, `"display:none"` this means that the H1 tags are referenced by search engine spiders, while not being displayed in the visual make-up of the template.

The second change is the same as the previous example, adding a link title inside the anchor tags, to ensure optimization for search engines and readers. As before, this also makes the link title appear when your cursor hovers over it.

Optimizing Labels Lists

In "new" Blogger layouts templates, you can add an optional "Labels" widget to your blog's sidebar. This widget lists all the labels you have used to categorize your blog posts.

Since we do not have direct access to each label link in this list, you may imagine that it is impossible to add link titles to these links. Fortunately by adapting the code slightly, we **can** still add appropriate titles to these links!

If you have added a label widget to your blog, you can look in your template code to find this section:

```
<b:widget id='Label1' locked='false' title='Labels' type='Label'>
```

```

<b:includable id='main'>

  <b:if cond='data:title'>

    <h2><data:title/></h2>

  </b:if>

  <div class='widget-content'>

    <ul>

      <b:loop values='data:labels' var='label'>

        <li>

          <b:if cond='data:blog.url == data:label.url'>

            <span expr:dir='data:blog.languageDirection'>

              <data:label.name/>

            </span>

          <b:else/>

            <a expr:dir='data:blog.languageDirection'
expr:href='data:label.url' expr:title='"Read
more posts filed under " + data:label.name ' rel='tag'>

              <data:label.name/>

            </a>

          </b:if>

          <span dir='ltr'>(<data:label.count/>)</span>

        </li>

      </b:loop>

    </ul>

    <b:include name='quickedit' />

  </div>

</b:includable>

</b:widget>

```

As before, the code I added to make these labels more optimized for search engines is highlighted in bold red.

You will notice that I have referenced the titles for each label link using this formula:

```
expr:title='"Read more posts filed under " + data:label.name'
```

As the link to each label link is generated by widget tags, we cannot add the code for each link title individually. Instead we need to use the section of the widget code which is used to generate the title as an expression, along with more descriptive link text.

Furthermore, you will notice that I added "rel="tag" to the anchor link code. This is because Blogger labels can be used as tags which are referenced by Technorati and other sites to collect and collate information about a blog's content.

Optimizing Link Lists

Link lists can be optimized in a similar way. If you already have a link list present in your blog, simply find the expanded widget template for your link list widget which should look something like this:

```
<b:widget id='LinkList1' locked='false' title='' type='LinkList'>
<b:includable id='main'>

<b:if cond='data:title'><h2><data:title/></h2></b:if>

<div class='widget-content'>

  <ul>

    <b:loop values='data:links' var='link'>

      <li><a expr:href='data:link.target'
expr:title='data:link.name'><data:link.name/></a></li>

    </b:loop>

  </ul>

  <b:include name='quickedit' />

</div>
</b:includable>
</b:widget>
```

Once again, I have added some extra code in red to show how the links in this list may be optimized with titles.

If all of the links in a particular link list are those of friends' sites, you may also wish to add the tag rel="friend" to the anchor link code. Similarly, if all the links in this list reference your other sites or social profiles, you may prefer to add the rel="me" tag instead. Either of these tags may be added to the code like this:

```
<li><a expr:href='data:link.target' expr:title='data:link.name'
rel="friend"><data:link.name/></a></li>
```


These "rel" tags establish relationships between your blog and other sites, which is useful for those interested in the [Social Graph API](#) and for those who wish to link all their profiles using sites such as [Ziki](#) and [OpenID](#).

Optimizing Images in your Blogger Template

Images may also be optimized for better visibility in search engines, and also as a mechanism for adding extra keywords to your content.

How Search Engines See Images in Your Site

Search engine spiders can only see the textual elements of your site; images are virtually invisible to them, unless you use ALT and TITLE tags to add unseen detail which can be read (and understood) by search engines.

Alt (Alternative Text) Tags

ALT tags are of particular importance in optimizing images in your blog, as these specify "alternative text": a description of the image which would appear if images are disabled in the reader's browser and provide accessibility information for disabled readers. Many search engines view alternative text for images as an important aspect of the mark-up in web pages, and the strength of your site may be penalized if many images do not have ALT tags in place!

Alternative text appears within the image tags, like this:

```

```

Title Tags

TITLE tags give the image a title, providing information of what the image is **about**. This will be displayed if you hover your cursor over the image.

Title tags also appear within image tags, and are constructed as follows:

```

```

Both of these tags are considered essential elements in the tags of websites, so it is important that you optimize your Blogger powered blog to reflect this.

Optimizing Images in your Blogger Template

The most important (and often overlooked) image in your blog template is the header image or logo.

If you use a header image in place of the title and description for your Blogger blog, the default template tags provide the title of your blog as the "alternative text" like this:

```
<img expr:alt='data:title' expr:height='data:height'  
expr:id='data:widget.instanceId + "_headerimg"'
```

```
expr:src='data:sourceUrl' expr:width='data:width'  
style='display: block'/>
```

You can find this section of code by checking the "expand widget templates" box as this is contained within the widget which displays your blog header.

Unfortunately, **Blogger does not automatically provide a title for the header image.** Luckily, it is very easy to add a title to the image tags, simply by adding the required code:

```
<img expr:alt='data:title' expr:height='data:height'  
expr:id='data:widget.instanceId + "_headerimg"'  
expr:src='data:sourceUrl' expr:width='data:width'  
style='display: block' title='The Title of your Image' />
```

If you have manually added any other images to your Blogger template, you should also add title and alternative text for these images. You can find image tags in your template easily by using your browser's search function and searching for `img`.

Adding ALT and TITLE Tags to Images Contained in Widgets

Many Bloggers choose to add images to their sidebar using a "Picture" widget. Again Blogger adds "alternative text" to your image which is generated by the title of the widget itself.

It is possible to add a title to the image, and also change the alternative text (if you prefer).

The following section of code is an example of how a picture widget would appear in your Blogger template:

```
<b:widget id='Image1' locked='false' title='My Picture' type='Image'>  
<b:includable id='main'>  
  <b:if cond='data:title != ""'>  
    <h2><data:title/></h2>  
  </b:if>  
  <div class='widget-content'>  
    <img expr:alt='data:title'  
      expr:height='data:height'  
      expr:id='data:widget.instanceId + "_img"'  
      expr:src='data:sourceUrl'  
      expr:width='data:width' title='Your Image Title' />  
  </div>  
</b:includable>  
</b:widget>
```

```
<br/>

<b:if cond='data:caption != ""'>

    <span class='caption'><data:caption/></span>

</b:if>

</div>

<b:include name='quickedit' />

</b:includable>

</b:widget>
```

I have added a title to the image, which is highlighted in red.

Changing the alternative text for the image is a little different. You will need to change the following section in the widget code:

```
img expr:alt='data:title'
```

To say something like this instead:

```
img alt='Alternative Text of your Image'
```

This replaces the default alternative text with that which you have specified.

If you add an image in an HTML/JavaScript widget, or as part of a Text widget you can add ALT and TITLE text manually inside the image tags without having to edit your template code. Simply open up the editor for your widget (either in the Layout>Page Elements section of your dashboard, or by clicking the wrench icon displayed in a blog page) and add the relevant code to the HTML mark up of your widget.

Optimizing Images in Blog Posts

Like most Bloggers, I upload images to my posts using the image upload button. This adds the correct code to my blog post without having to code the whole thing by hand!

But Blogger does not optimize the image tags!

When you use the image upload feature, ALT text is added to the image tags, but nothing is contained inside it **so it may as well be blank!**

You can see this at work in the following example where the missing alternative text is highlighted in red:

```
<a onblur="try {parent.deselectBloggerImageGracefully();} catch(e) {}"
href="http://bp3.blogger.com/[...]/A_Picture.jpg">

</a>
```

While it won't do any harm to have no value to the alternative text (that is, to define `alt=""`), it won't do your blog any favors either!

The best way to remedy this is to add your own alternative text between the two speech marks, which will be displayed for visitors who block images or use text-based browsers to read your site.

As in all of these examples, you can add title text to the image tags in your blog posts too, simply by adding the appropriate code.

After optimizing the example above, the code would appear like this:

```
<a onblur="try {parent.deselectBloggerImageGracefully();} catch(e) {}"
href="http://bp3.blogger.com/[...]/A_Picture.jpg">
</a>
```

Chapter Overview

In this chapter, we have learned about methods you can use to optimize your Blogger template for better ranking in search results, including:

- Optimizing URLs, title and Meta tags
- Ensuring links are search engine friendly
- Adding Alt and Title tags to images

Using the techniques outlined in this chapter should help your blog rank more highly in search engine results for keywords related to your posts.

Rather than spam search engines with keywords which are not relevant to your content, focus on a few specific keywords that you think people will search for to find the information contained in your posts.

This will help new readers discover your blog posts, and may also help improve your Google Page Rank over time.

In the final chapter of this eBook, we will look at Blogger template resources which will offer useful advice and inspiration for your unique blog designs.

Blogger Template Resources

In this chapter, you will find links to useful online resources for all your template needs!

Free Blogger template providers

These sites offer free Blogger XML templates for you to download.

[BTemplates](#)

This is the ultimate directory of Blogger XML templates. At the time of writing this post, BTemplates features over 200 free Blogger XML layouts for free download, contributed by many different designers from the Blogger community.

Templates are organized by theme, style and also by tags which makes it very easy to search for the style of template you prefer.

[Blogger Templates](#)

One of the oldest and best known Blogger template resources, which also features useful customization articles for Blogger.

Templates are organized by category, and there is also a search function to help narrow down your preferences.

[Blog and Web](#)

Blog and Web provide an excellent array of Blogger templates which have been converted from popular Wordpress designs.

This site is written in Spanish, though you can easily [translate the page you are reading using Babelfish Translator](#) if you need to.

[Blogging Tips](#)

Features a wide range of free Blogger templates and Wordpress conversions.

Zona Cerebral

Zona Cerebral features some of the most beautiful free Blogger templates I have ever seen. This site is also written in Spanish and can be translated quickly using [AltaVista's Babelfish translator](#) if necessary.

Jackbook

Jackbook provides a range of Blogger templates which have been converted from existing Wordpress templates.

Blog Crowds

A wide variety of well-designed Blogger XML templates are available on this useful blog resource site.

Final Sense

Final Sense probably has the largest collection of Blogger templates available.

K2 Modify

Some excellent designs to be found on this Blogger hosted resource site. The template used by K2 Modify is available for download, which is probably one of the best this site has to offer.

Suck My Lolly

Some beautiful, quirky and feminine designs are to be found on this site. Many include customizable header images so you can add your own blog title to the design.

Gisele Jaquenod

Gisele's designs are beautiful, feminine and unique!

GosuBlogger

GosuBlogger converts and creates Blogger XML templates. Be sure to visit to see some truly [unique](#) designs.

BlogU

Annie has created some beautiful Blogger templates for free download. Here you will also find some very useful articles about blogging with Google Blogger.

Aborregate

Here you can find some beautiful and unique Blogger templates of all design styles.

[Free Blogger Skins](#)

A collection of free Blogger XML skins which are easily viewable on the home page.

[Fresh Blogger Templates](#)

A great selection of Wordpress conversions, many of which can be seen on the front page of this site.

[e-Blog Templates](#)

A directory including more than 130 free Blogger templates available to download.

[Gecko and Fly](#)

Fans of Gecko and Fly's Classic Blogger templates have converted these to XML format which you can download from this site.

[Our Blogger Templates](#)

A range of Blogger XML templates in different colors and styles (formerly Dzelque.blogspot.com)

[Free XML Blogger Templates](#)

Template-Godown's site features both original and Wordpress conversions for Blogger XML users. This site is updated regularly with new templates for you to download.

[Blogger Templates](#)

FriedClyde's site includes collections of beautiful Blogger designs from many different sources.

Blogger Template Collections

Here you can find articles which showcase free Blogger template downloads:

[101 excellent Blogger XML templates](#)

[50 more beautiful Blogger templates](#)

[70 fresh and modern Blogger templates](#)

[40 Best Two Column Blogger Templates](#)

[10 Unique Blogger templates](#)

Blog Design Showcases

Find inspiration for your own customizations and Blogger template designs by taking a look at these design showcases.

Showcasing Blogger Designs

- [50 more fabulous Blogger designs to inspire you](#)
- [54 unique and inspiring Blogger templates](#)

Showcasing Blog Designs in General

- [45 Excellent Blog Designs](#) (Smashing Magazine)
- [45 More Excellent Blog Designs](#) (Smashing Magazine)
- [We Love WP](#) (Showcasing Wordpress blog designs)
- [60+ Unusual Blog Designs](#) (Noupe)

Inspirational Design Resources

- [CSS Beauty](#)
- [Best Web Gallery](#)
- [CSS Mania](#)
- [Web Crème](#)
- [CSS Elite](#)
- [Design Shack](#)
- [Inspiration Folder](#)

Useful Cheat Sheets

Here is a selection of links to printable “cheat sheets” which you can reference for assistance when customizing your Blogger template design:

- [CSS Cheat Sheet](#)
- [HTML Cheat Sheets](#)
- [CEDesign \(A simple yet excellent resource!\)](#)

HTML color codes

Here are charts of the most commonly used Hex color codes for reference when changing your blog's color scheme:

000000	000033	000066	000099	0000CC	0000FF
003300	003333	003366	003399	0033CC	0033FF
006600	006633	006666	006699	0066CC	0066FF
009900	009933	009966	009999	0099CC	0099FF
00CC00	00CC33	00CC66	00CC99	00CCCC	00CCFF
00FF00	00FF33	00FF66	00FF99	00FFCC	00FFFF
330000	330033	330066	330099	3300CC	3300FF
333300	333333	333366	333399	3333CC	3333FF
336600	336633	336666	336699	3366CC	3366FF
339900	339933	339966	339999	3399CC	3399FF
33CC00	33CC33	33CC66	33CC99	33CCCC	33CCFF
33FF00	33FF33	33FF66	33FF99	33FFCC	33FFFF
660000	660033	660066	660099	6600CC	6600FF
663300	663333	663366	663399	6633CC	6633FF
666600	666633	666666	666699	6666CC	6666FF

666600	666633	666666	666699	6666CC	6666FF
669900	669933	669966	669999	6699CC	6699FF
66CC00	66CC33	66CC66	66CC99	66CCCC	66CCFF
66FF00	66FF33	66FF66	66FF99	66FFCC	66FFFF
990000	990033	990066	990099	9900CC	9900FF
993300	993333	993366	993399	9933CC	9933FF
996600	996633	996666	996699	9966CC	9966FF
999900	999933	999966	999999	9999CC	9999FF
99CC00	99CC33	99CC66	99CC99	99CCCC	99CCFF
99FF00	99FF33	99FF66	99FF99	99FFCC	99FFFF
CC0000	CC0033	CC0066	CC0099	CC00CC	CC00FF
CC3300	CC3333	CC3366	CC3399	CC33CC	CC33FF
CC6600	CC6633	CC6666	CC6699	CC66CC	CC66FF
CC9900	CC9933	CC9966	CC9999	CC99CC	CC99FF

CCCC00	CCCC33	CCCC66	CCCC99	CCCCCC	CCCCFF
CCFF00	CCFF33	CCFF66	CCFF99	CCFFCC	CCFFFF
FF0000	FF0033	FF0066	FF0099	FF00CC	FF00FF
FF3300	FF3333	FF3366	FF3399	FF33CC	FF33FF
FF6600	FF6633	FF6666	FF6699	FF66CC	FF66FF
FF9900	FF9933	FF9966	FF9999	FF99CC	FF99FF
FFCC00	FFCC33	FFCC66	FFCC99	FFCCCC	FFCCFF
FFFF00	FFFF33	FFFF66	FFFF99	FFFFCC	FFFFFF

Glossary

AdSense: Google's marketing program which allows web publishers to earn a revenue stream from their websites and blogs.

See <https://www.google.com/adsense/> for more information and to sign up for your free AdSense publisher account.

ALT Text: ALT text (Alternative Text) is used in web pages to provide alternative text where an image cannot be displayed.

Anchor Link see *Hyperlink*

Anti-Layout: A style of layout which breaks the normal conventions of blog design. Usually includes multiple columns and a different layout style for the home page.

Classic Blogger Templates: This style of template is HTML based, whereas *New Blogger Templates* (see below) are coded using XML. It is not possible to use widgets in Classic Blogger templates, and the tags used to parse and display content are vastly different.

Copy and Paste: To copy text (or files) from one document to another.

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets): CSS stands for Cascading Style Sheets. Styles define how to display HTML elements.

In Blogger, CSS is usually embedded in the head section of the blog template.

See also *External CSS*

Default Templates: This refers to the selection of templates available directly through Blogger. There are currently 27 default templates on offer in a range of styles and colors.

<div>: A <div> is a block level HTML element which can be used to add structure or group a section of content.

Blogger templates make extensive use of <div> sections to define the header, main post area, sidebar, footer and other elements of the layout.

Error Codes: Sometimes you may receive an error code or message when editing your Blogger template. These error codes usually begin with bX- followed by an alphanumeric string.

Footer: This is the section right at the bottom of the blog layout. Often bloggers place copyright notices or links to important blog pages.

Hex Color Codes: Web colors are usually defined using Hex color codes. Hex, short for hexadecimal, is a base 16 numbering system, which mixes letters and numbers (0-9 then A-F), so that a three digit number (in this case numbers between 0 and 255) can be expressed as a two digit number. Hex values can be used to represent the RGB values of colors. These numbers appear as 6 digit (or 6 place) values, with each 2 digits representing the Red, Green, or Blue values.

Headings: In web pages, headings are defined using heading tags. These range from <h1> (largest) to <h6> (smallest) in order of authority.

Home Page: The "index" page of your blog; this is the first page visitors will see when typing your blog's URL into the web browser.

Hosting: The service of hosting a site on the Internet making it viewable for other users on the Internet.

HTML: HyperText Markup Language is the most common computer language used to create hypertext documents (web pages). It provides a means to describe the structure of text-based information in a document — by denoting certain text as links, headings, paragraphs, lists, and so on — and to supplement that text with *interactive forms*, embedded *images*, and other objects. HTML is written in the form of tags, surrounded by angle brackets.

HTTP Request: Web pages may contain content which is hosted on different servers. Each piece of content referenced in the mark-up of that page creates an HTTP Request to the URL referenced in the code.

Hyperlink: The text you find on a Web site which can be "clicked on" with a mouse. This in turn will take you to another Web page or a different area of the same Web page.

JavaScript: A client-side script language that can be embedded into HTML pages to create interactive elements. Many widgets available for Blogger use JavaScript to add interactive elements to your blog's design.

Layout: The overall structure of your blog's design which may include the header, sidebar, posts and footer section.

Layout Tags: These are HTML based tags which are present in the Blogger template. These tags are used to process content and display it in published blog pages.

Lorem Ipsum: A Latin-based fake placeholder text used in printing and website design in place of English in order to emphasise design elements over content.

Meta Tags: Tags inserted into documents to describe the document. These are used to identify the pages by both browsers and search engines, and are not visible in the design of the web page.

New Blogger: Refers to the revised Blogger platform and XML based templates. New Blogger templates are coded in XML (as opposed to basic HTML) and feature drag and drop layouts so widgets can be moved dynamically.

Niche Blogs: Blogs whose content is focused on a specific subject. Blogger Buster, for example, is a niche blog about using the Google Blogger platform.

PageRank: A score from 0-10 that represents how popular a web page is based on Google's link analysis calculations.

Post: An individual blog entry.

Post Page: A single page used to display an individual blog entry.

SEO: Search Engine Optimization is the practice of designing web pages so that they rank as high as possible in search results from search engines.

Search Engine Spiders: Spiders or crawlers are actually software that is sent out by the search engine to find all of the content in the site, following html text links, and gather information for the search engine database.

Sidebar: The area of a blog (or webpage) which appears to the side of the main content area. In Blogger templates, the sidebar usually contains widgets and other extraneous content.

Style Sheet: A web document containing style definitions (CSS).

Technorati: An Internet search engine which tracks blogs and ranks them according to the number of inbound links. See <http://www.technorati.com>.

Third Party Templates: These are blog templates which are not provided by default by Blogger. Instead, these templates are created by non-affiliated blog template designers.

Title Tags: These HTML tags are placed in the <head> section of web pages (and blog templates) and are used to define the title of the page as it appears in the web browser.

Widgets: Dynamic scripts or content sections which can be moved around the blog layout using drag and drop functions.

Widget Tags: HTML tags specifically used for widgets within the Blogger template mark-up code.

XML: Short for eXtensible Markup Language. Widely used system for data format which allows designers/developers to create their own customized tags. Blogger templates are composed of XML code.

Index

A

Aborregate.....8, 11, 18, 86
About the author.....v, 101
Anchor links.....76, 78, 80, 93

B

B Templates.....15, 27, 85
Blog
 Home page 19, 64, 69, 70, 72, 76, 77, 87, 93, 94
 Loading time.....iv, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70
 Optimization.....ii, 3, iv, 13, 27, 29, 38, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84
 Post pages.....11, 19, 21, 72, 73, 95
 Settings.....iii, 44, 45, 46, 69, 75
Blog and Web.....5, 15, 17, 24, 29, 85
Blog oh Blog.....17
Blog*Spot.....43, 71
BlogCrowds.....7, 9, 14, 19, 35, 36
Blogger Beta.....29
Blogger Buster.....i, iv, 62, 94, 101
Blogger Buster.....
 Forum.....iv, 57
 Templates by.....95
Blogging Tips.....85, 101
Brian Gardner.....14, 24, 26

C

Calendar widget.....62
Cheat sheets.....v, 88
Classic Blogger.....67, 87, 93
Color
 Color codes.....v, 89, 94

Color scheme 2, iii, 21, 24, 52, 54, 55, 57, 62, 64, 89
Hex values.....55, 56, 59, 89, 94

D

Default Blogger Templates.....1, 2
Design trends.....2, 3, 4, 13, 31
 Business.....3, 24
 Corporate.....ii, 13, 24, 26
 Dark.....17, 19, 22, 29
 Minimalist.....13, 15
 Ornamental.....20, 21, 22
 Professional.....3, 9, 20, 24, 25, 26, 27, 42
 Showcases of.....4, v, 17, 30, 31, 33, 87, 88
Deziner Folio.....15, 17, 19

E

EBlog Templates.....21, 28

F

Feedback.....i, iii, iv
Firefox 47

G

Gisele Jaquenod.....86
Glossary.....ii, v, 93
Googlei, ii, 44, 71, 73, 84, 86, 93, 94, 95, 101
 AdSense.....27, 29, 93
 Page Rank.....84

H

Hosting.....ii, 33, 39, 40, 59, 94
Image hosting.....40

I

Images.....
Alternative text.....81, 82, 83, 84, 93
Background images.iii, 20, 33, 52, 57, 59, 60,
61, 62, 63, 74
Logo...2, iii, 13, 14, 33, 52, 53, 54, 62, 64, 81

J

Jackbook.....8, 10, 12, 19, 20, 21, 30, 86
JavaScript.....68, 70, 83, 94

L

Labels/categories.....76, 78, 79, 80
Layout i, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 16, 24,
27, 31, 33, 34, 36, 38, 46, 47, 51,
52, 54, 55, 58, 66, 67, 68, 72, 74,
77, 78, 83, 85, 93, 94, 95
Footer....4, 14, 18, 19, 26, 28, 62, 68, 93, 94
Header.2, iii, 4, 15, 16, 18, 24, 26, 27, 29, 33,
40, 48, 52, 53, 54, 56, 62, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78,
81, 82, 86, 93, 94
Magazine style.....i, 4, 11, 12, 31
One column.....14, 17
Three column...i, 9, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 31, 62
Two column.....i, 4, 6, 7, 14, 18, 87
Lorem Ipsum.....44, 94

M

Mashable.....13
Mizake26

N

NDesign Studio.....24

O

Optimizing....ii, 3, iv, 13, 27, 29, 38, 63, 64,
65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 76, 77,
78, 79, 80, 81, 83, 84
CSS.....iv, 66, 67
Images.....67

Links.....iv, 76
Page loading time.....66
Titles.....72

P

Photoblog.....4, 14, 15, 17
Probblogger.....24

S

Search engines.i, iv, 43, 44, 45, 63, 64, 70,
71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79,
81, 84, 94, 95
Spiders/bots..i, 63, 64, 70, 72, 73, 75, 76, 78,
81, 95
Seo
Keywords....71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 81, 84
SEO 38, 71, 73, 74, 76, 77, 95
Ser Turista.....14, 17

T

Techcrunch.....13
Technorati.....13, 80, 95
Template.....
Background...2, iii, 17, 20, 22, 24, 33, 52, 56,
57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 74, 75
Borders.....62, 83, 84
Collections of.....v, 87
Demonstration.....ii, 33
Error codes.....iii, 38, 46, 93
Format of.....ii, 31, 32, 33, 39
Free templates.....31, 33, 101
Installation of.ii, 32, 33, 34, 40, 41, 42, 47, 50
Layout ii, iii, 13, 15, 24, 27, 33, 34, 36, 38, 46,
47, 51, 52, 54, 55, 58, 66, 67, 68, 72, 74, 77,
78, 83, 85, 93, 94, 95
One column.....14, 17
Optimize images.....67
Pattern.....iii, 33, 57, 58, 59
Text file.....33, 35, 38, 40, 46
Three column.....14, 19, 20, 62
Troubleshooting.....i, ii, 38, 41, 51
Two column.....14, 18
XML file..ii, 33, 34, 35, 38, 46, 50, 85, 86, 87,
93, 94, 95
"Your template could not be parsed"....34, 38
Template tags.....
Heading tags.....52, 73, 74, 75, 77, 78, 94

Meta.....iv, 14, 71, 73, 75, 84, 94
 No-follow.....75
 No-index.....75
 Swap title hack.....72
 Title tags.....iv, 71, 72, 73, 76, 81, 82, 84, 95
 Test blog....ii, iii, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 49,
 50, 51, 61

W

Web Design.....20, 57, 66
 Web Designer Wall.....20
 Widgets.i, ii, iii, iv, 7, 13, 14, 15, 18, 32, 33,
 34, 35, 38, 42, 46, 47, 48, 50, 51,

62, 64, 66, 67, 68, 70, 82, 93, 94,
 95

Link list.....76, 80
 Transfer widgets.....iii, 42, 46, 47, 51

X

XFN annotations.....80
 Xml ii, 33, 34, 35, 38, 46, 50, 85, 86, 87,
 93, 94, 95

Z

Zip file 34
 Zona Cerebral.....16, 24, 25, 86

About the author

Amanda Fazani is the writer behind [Blogger Buster](#), where she writes about the Google Blogger platform and occasionally releases Blogger template designs.

She is also a regular writer at [Blogging Tips](#), one of the web's leading resources of advice for bloggers. Amanda has previously written [The Cheat's Guide to Customizing Blogger Templates](#): a free eBook which offers down to earth advice for those learning to customize their Blogger blog designs., and is also working on "The Blogger Book" which will be published towards the end of 2008.

Amanda lives in the UK with her husband and children. When she can be persuaded away from the computer, she enjoys watching horror films and reading supernatural thrillers.



Please visit Amanda's main site, www.bloggerbuster.com to learn more about Blogger and also to see the free templates and resources available to those using the Blogger platform.