How to Create a Blog with Blogger

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With the advents in technology, teachers of the twenty-first century have felt the necessity to renew themselves in order to adapt to the virtual environment, which the young adult learners of today are quite familiar with. The changing ways of education have also contributed to the need to improve teaching methods in and outside of the classroom. This paper aims to cover the basics of how to create a weblog, or blog as it is generally referred to, which could be used for various educational purposes (e.g. giving feedback to written assignments, providing extra listening practice material for the learners, or simply communicating with the learners outside the class). Since this was a hands-on presentation, illustrations constitute a significant percentage of the paper.

The Baby Steps

Go to http://www.blogger.com

Figure 1

Create your account by clicking on the "Create your blog now" button, colored in orange.

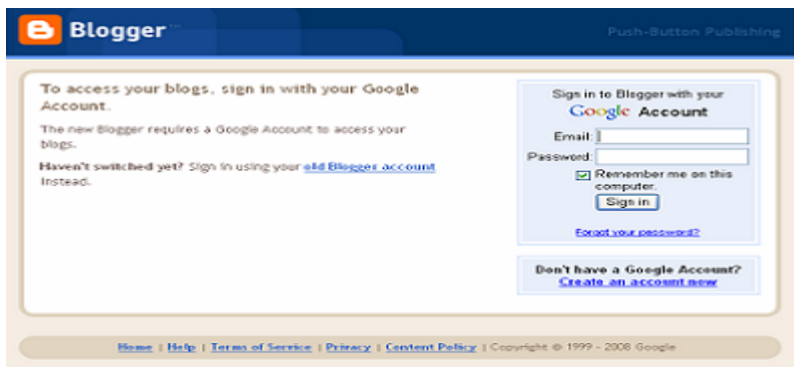**Figure 2**

Sign into your account.

Figure 3

Choose a blog title (this name will appear on the header of your blog page) and a domain name (this is going to be the web address that others will type to see your blog). You can always change these names later; however, changing especially your domain name is not recommended, as your readers may not be able to find your blog if you do not inform them about this change.

Figure 4

Choose a template for your blog (you may change your template later if you want).

Figure 5

Write your first entry. The "Posting" tab will open automatically at this step. Later, whenever you want to post an entry, you may use this tab. Do not forget to add a title, which may serve as your permalink (permanent link; by clicking on the title you will be able to see your post as a single page on the web) in many templates. Publish your post. Now, your blog is complete.
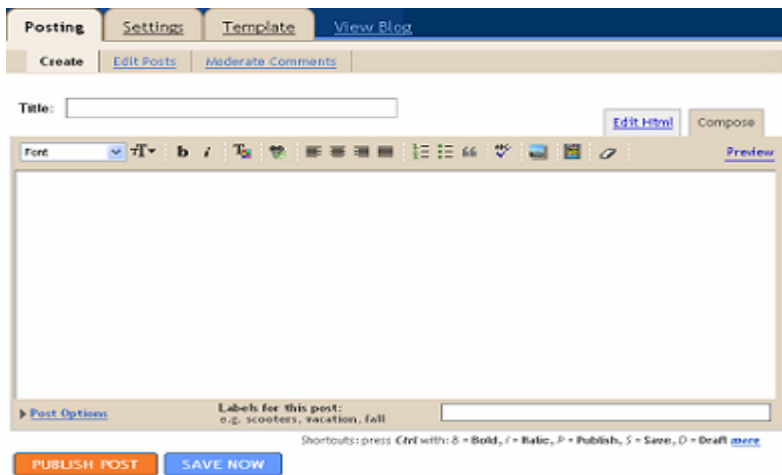
Figure 6

A Few More Details

Adding Pictures, Audio and Video Files

By clicking on the "Picture" icon, you can add a picture from your computer or from the web. By clicking on the "Video" icon, you can add a video from your computer.
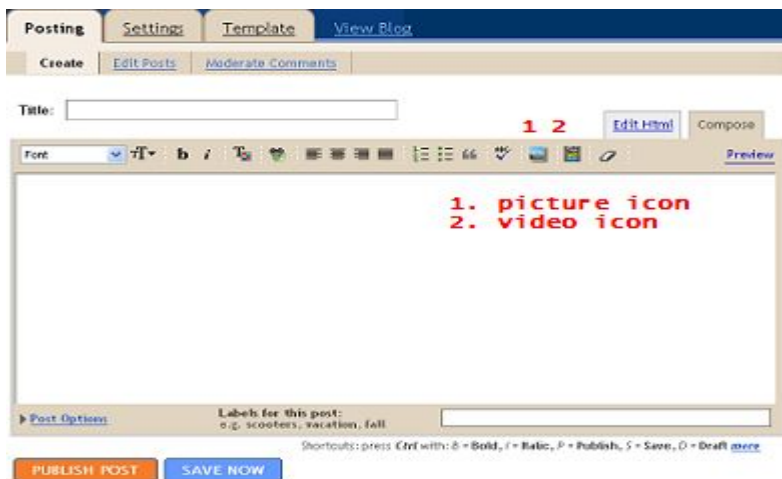

Figure 7

If you would like to upload audio or video files from the web, then you should copy and paste the "embed" code of the relevant file in the "Edit HTML" tab. Unless protected, these codes are often available on the websites that provide audio / video sharing options underneath the files you would like to publish.

How to Add Color and Hyperlinks

Select the text that you would like to color, or turn into a hyperlink with your mouse or using SHIFT + LEFT / RIGHT ARROW

Click on the "color" icon and choose the color you want / Click on the "hyperlink" icon and insert the link you would like to give into the dialog box (without the http:// part).
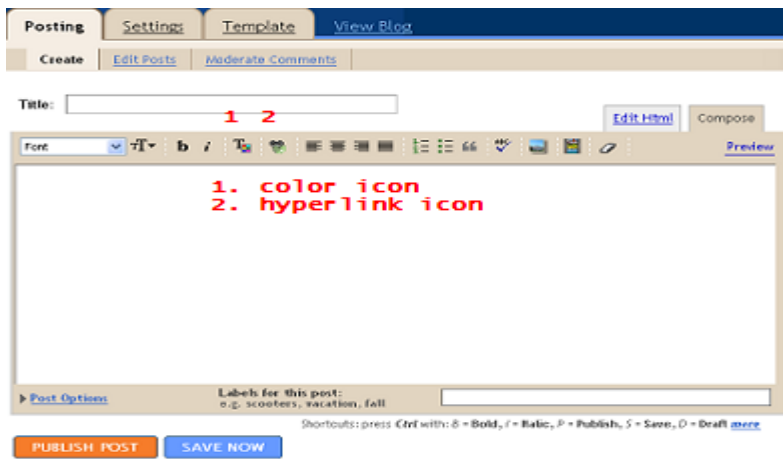
Figure 8

How to Moderate Comments

You may need to moderate comments since there might be spam comments, or you may wish to control your learners' comments. You can find the comment moderation setting on the "Settings | Comments" tab. If you activate "comment moderation", you will come across comments awaiting moderation on your dashboard.

Figure 9

You can also moderate comments through email if you enter a notification address. This does not change your settings and it is optional. In other words, you can always moderate comments on the Blogger interface.

Layout

Blogger's layout options are easy to use and will let you arrange items on your page without requiring a knowledge of HTML or CSS, through the Layout | Page Elements tab.
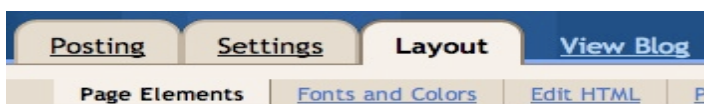
Figure 10

By clicking on the element you want to move and by dragging and dropping the item where you want it to be, you can customize the layout of your blog.

Figure 11

You can also add new elements by clicking on the "Add a Page Element" link. This will open a pop-up window.

Figure 12

Getting Your Learners Involved

In order to involve your learners in the class-blog project, it is best to hold a session to get them familiarized with the basics of blogging. You may need to publish a "blog manifest" to set your rules; or still better, you may decide on the rules together during your blog session. However, before this, they need to be invited to become a member of the blog. As the person who has started this specific blog, you have automatically become an administrator. Your learners, when they accept your invitation, however, will become authors only. If you would like to do so, you may assign some of them as administrators later.

Figure 13

Under the "Permissions" tab, you will find the "Add authors" link below your user name. Click here and enter the email address of the person you would like to invite in the dialog box that appears. If the invitee does not have a Google account, Blogger will direct him/her to associate the email address with Google accounts.

When the invitation is accepted, log in to your account and go to the same tab again. You will see the invitee has become an author.
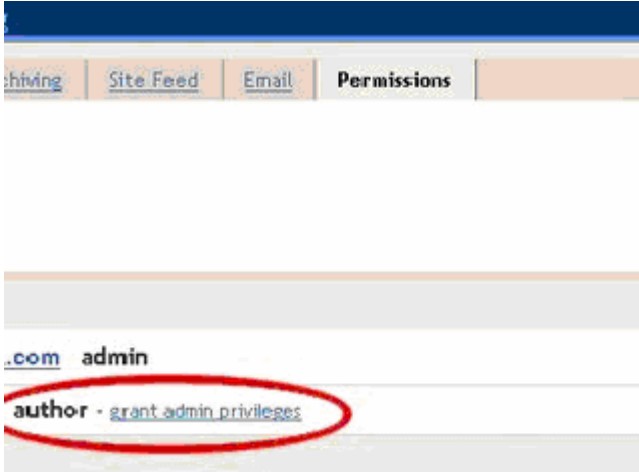
Figure 14

From now on, the other authors you have invited may contribute to your class blog by posting entries, adding audio / video files, or pictures. They may comment on posts, too. However, they will not be able to change the layout, moderate comments, or modify what other authors have published. Only the person who has the administrator privilege will be able to do these.

Born in Ankara in 1980, **Başak Ağın** (agin@metu.edu.tr) holds a BA in English Language and Literature, and an MA in British Cultural Studies. She worked for Turkish Land Forces Command (2003-2006) and Ankara University, TÖMER (2006-2008) before she joined METU, DBE as an instructor. She lectured at Ankara University, DTCF, for one semester (2007-08 Spring) and took part in the LANCELOT project as an online teacher trainer. Her fields on interest are CALL and medical translation.