

Adoption & Foster Care Blogging Tips

Why Blog?

- **Blogging can be a great way to** keep friends and family in “the loop.” For those who get pregnant all they have to do is tell folks they are pregnant. No one asks how it happened and everyone knows that it will take eight to nine months before the baby arrives. However, with adoption it is different. Try telling people you are adopting – it can take an hour just to explain how you even started process. This is where blogging can be especially valuable.
- **Blogging can be a great way to** identify and vent our emotions as the adoption or foster care process unfolds.
- **Blogging can be a great way to** help pass the time while waiting.
- **Blogging can be a great way to** communicate with friends and family while you are out-of-pocket or even out of the country on an adoption-related trip. You can add entries and upload pictures from an internet café or even email text updates from your handheld device to a friend or family member in the U.S. and have them post the updates to your blog. This allows others to feel a part of your journey in real time.
- **Blogging can be a great way to** remember details about the adoption journey. Some families have printed their blog entries and assembled them into a high quality coffee table book.

How to Blog?

- There are many different options or platforms to choose from when creating a blog, including popular choices such as blogger.com and wordpress.com. Many blog platforms have ‘canned’ user templates that non-techy types can set up in 10 to 15 minutes. It is easy to add new entries and upload pictures in order to create updates.

Blogging Do’s

- **Do** update your blog regularly. Granted, this is easier said than done. Life gets busy, you may go six weeks without any significant news on the adoption front or you may just forget about your blog. Unfortunately, people won’t keep checking back if they never see a new post. Try to set a goal of posting a few times a week or even a few times a

month, then do your best to stick with it.

- **Do** be very open in blogging about *your own story*. We're often hesitant to be vulnerable on the internet and much of that is wrapped up in self-image. This doesn't mean you should share sensitive information such as your home address or other identifying information, but rather be honest about how you are (or are not) processing things. Some of the most inspired writing boils down to a summary of the honest (or not so honest) mistakes made along the way and what was learned from them.
- **Do** keep your entries relatively short. Even Aunt Fern isn't going to read a novel length entry about your time at the fingerprinting office.
- **Do** use your blog to not only update people but to educate them as well. Share information, articles and insights that offer new information or provide new perspectives as a way to bring your friends and family along in the journey. But be sure not to be preachy or overbearing.
- **Do** share both sides of your story. Everyone experiences struggles, triumphs and everything in between during their process, so be sure to share all sides of your experience. If you only share the good stuff, people won't truly know what you're going through and how they can best support you. If you only share the hard stuff, people will get depressed and assume you are too.
- **Do** utilize lots of pictures. Many bloggers use at least one picture with each entry. I would find a free stock photos or clip art (be careful not to "steal" copyright protected photos) to illustrate the topic of the entry. For example, one family used a news photo of President Putin giving the "thumb's up" to go along with the entry announcing their final approval and court date. You may also want to consider getting a Flickr (flickr.com) account. This will allow you to give photos differing levels of privacy and choose exactly who can and cannot see them. From a technical standpoint, many people consider Flickr to be the best method of sharing photos on the web. You can find information on the web about how to add a Flickr slideshow to your blog.
- **Do** make up names for children you are fostering. Some people just call them "The boy" or "The girl." This works unless you have two boys or two girls. Some bloggers identify their foster children with personality-appropriate story-book names. This can be a creative approach and shows a little more reverence.
- **Do** consider community/bloggging sites like wordpress.com, blogger.com, and virb.com. (*Note from Matt Donovan: I personally, have been highly anticipating the launch of haylia.com – a site specifically tailored to journaling your adoption story and sharing it with family and friends. The developer behind the project is one of the best.*)
- **Do** share your blog address. Some bloggers send a postcard out to a bunch of friends from their Christmas card mailing list.

Blogging Don'ts

- **Don't** blog about any of the sensitive aspects of your child's pre-adoptive story that he or she has not given you permission to share. Remember, it is your child's story and you are the 'guardian' of that story. Handle it with care.
- **Don't** get stuck in a rut. Share blurbs or snippets updating your progress, but also share photos, video, links to articles, etc. Your readers will appreciate the variety and it will keep them coming back.
- **Don't** disclose the actual names (even first name) or post pictures of foster kids on your blog. It is a breach of their confidentiality rights and is in violation of foster care rules.
- **Don't** disclose (prior to placement) the name or post a picture of the child you are planning to adopt without first checking with your agency. Some adoption agencies are very strict on this matter due to regulations and potential ramifications from foreign governments.
- **Don't** give out too much personal information. Many bloggers do not use their last name or disclose personal information about where they live (other than state or maybe city). Many "strangers" will likely read and comment to your blog, so keep this in mind.
- **Don't** vent too much. There are times when you will no doubt be very frustrated with the process, with your agency, with government officials, etc. It's ok to be honest, but don't use your blog as your personal gripe fest. Remember it's the internet – people are reading.

Thanks to the following contributors: Darren Macdonald, Matt Donovan (donovanhouse.com; adoptivedads.org), Scott McClellan (<http://scottandannie.vox.com/>) and Michael Monroe