

Step 4: Teach Quality Commenting Skills

by Sue
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April 28, 2014

Welcome to the fourth step in our free professional learning series on **class and student blogging!**

The aim of this step is to:

1. Explain how comments are used on class blogs.
2. Explain how to teach students quality commenting skills.

Click on a link below to go to the section you want to work on:

1. [Why comments are important on class blogs](#)
2. [How comments work](#)
3. [Examples of comments on class blogs](#)
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 - [Reasons why you should teach quality commenting](#)
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6. [Commonly asked questions about comments](#)
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WHY COMMENTS ARE IMPORTANT ON CLASS BLOGS

Comments are an important part of your class blog. Comments allow students, and other readers, to engage in discussions, share their thoughts and connect with your class blog.

Comments transform your blog from a static space to an interactive community.

Important parts of the blogging process include encouraging students to:

1. Read other students' posts.
2. Comment on other students' posts.
3. Write posts in response to other students' posts.

It's amazing how even just a few comments can make student realise they are writing for a global audience — for many it is incredibly motivating.

Must watch video

Make sure you watch [The Possibility of Student Blogging](#) by [Andrea Hernandez](#) and [Slivia Tolisano](#).

This video provides an excellent explanation of the blogging and commenting process, impact of quality blogging on student literacy and the importance of writing as part of a global audience.

Remember discussions in comments are important for reflective learning . Comments that challenge or suggest alternative options encourage you to reflect, revise, evaluate and review your thoughts.

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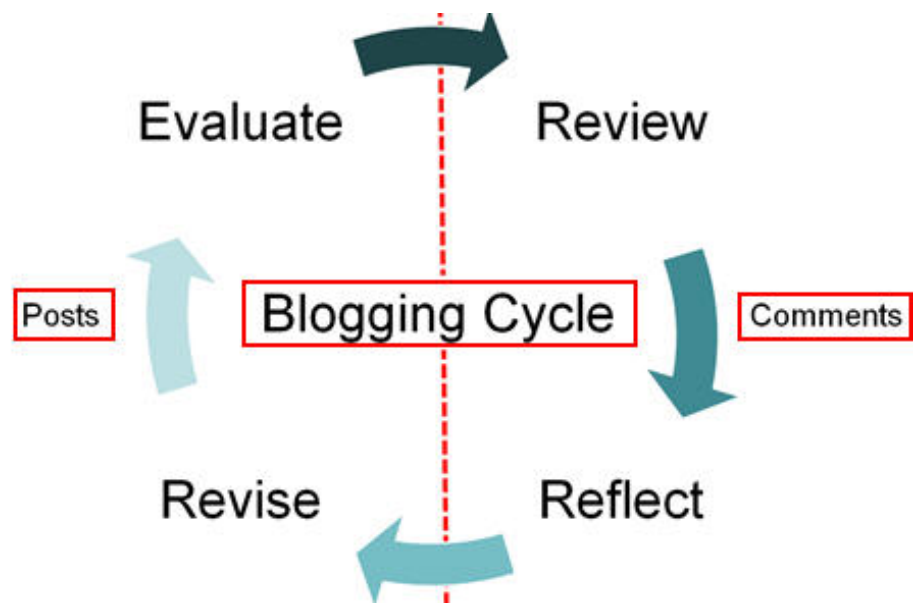
HOW COMMENTS WORK

By default, comments are enabled on all newly created blogs, and a comment form will appear at the bottom of posts and pages where readers can respond to what you've written.

Approved comments are displayed under the individual post or page. You just click on the post title or the comment link to read the comments.

Threaded comments allow readers to reply to other comments inline/nested which encourages better discussion and responses.

Here is an example of a threaded comment on a post:





Brendan Murphy

February 5, 2013 at 10:10 pm

Comment



I only wish I could get comments. Yes, I blog as a reflection, but also as an exploration. I want someone to tell me if they agree or disagree. I was my ideas to be challenged. It's the best way to learn and grow.

[Reply](#)



Sue Waters

February 6, 2013 at 8:18 am

Threaded Comment



Hi Brendan

Comments can be a challenge. As Scott McLeod highlights the online participation rule indicates that only about 1% of readers actively comment. Building a strong blog community does help and some styles of writing are more likely to receive comments.

But saying all that I think it is considerably easier to engage commenters nowadays than when I first started blogging. We now have a considerably stronger, and larger, educational community and communities like ETMOOC can really help educators connect and support each other.

[Reply](#)

Refer to the following support documentation for more information:

- [Comment moderation.](#)
- [Approving comments.](#)

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EXAMPLES OF COMMENTS ON CLASS BLOGS

Here are examples of comments on class blogs to check out how educators use comments on class blogs:

1. 4KJ @ Leopold Primary School [Idioms](#)
2. 4KJ @ Leopold Primary School [Multiplication and Arrays](#)
3. Mr Salich's Class [The Mathlete Show: "Who is Better – Messi or Ronaldo?"](#)

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HOW TO ADD A COMMENT

To leave a comment on a post just:

1. Click on the heading of the post you wish to comment on or the "comment" link at the top or at the bottom of the

post.

2. Scroll down the page to the comment form or click on **Reply** (to reply to a specific comment).
3. Enter your name and email address – your email address is hidden and only the blogger sees it (*If you are logged into your Edublogs account you won't need to add these details*).
4. Write your comment.
5. Enter the anti – spam word.
6. Select the '**Notify me of followup comments via e-mail**' if you want to be notified by email to comments by other readers.
7. Click "submit comment"

The image shows a 'Leave a Reply' form with the following elements and annotations:

- 1**: Points to the 'Name' input field containing 'Miss D'.
- 2**: Points to the 'Email' input field containing 'missdclass@gmail.com'.
- 3**: Points to the 'Comment' text area containing the text: 'Hi Sue', 'Thanks for explaining how to set up a class blog. It really helped.', 'Can you explain how to use categories to publish posts on different pages on the blog?', and 'Miss D'.
- 4**: Points to the 'Website' input field containing 'ports leg'.
- 5**: Points to the 'Post Comment' button.

Additional form details include: a 'Notify me of followup comments via e-mail' checkbox at the bottom left, a security word 'ports leg' in a box with a picture below the website field, and a note: 'Your email address will not be published. Required fields are marked *'.

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TEACHING QUALITY COMMENTING SKILLS

This following section on teaching quality commenting skills is adapted, with permission, from [Kathleen Morris's post](#).

Kathleen teaches at [Leopold Primary School](#) in Australia. This is her sixth year blogging with students. Kathleen writes a [blog for educators](#) about technology integration, educational blogging and global collaboration ([@kathleen_morris](#)). She was inspired to refine her teaching of commenting by the wonderful [Linda Yollis and her third grade students](#).



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REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD TEACH QUALITY COMMENTING

If commenting skills are not taught and constantly reinforced, students will limit their comments to things like “I like your blog!” or “4KM is cool!”. While enthusiasm is high with these sorts of comments, students are not developing their literacy skills or having meaningful interactions with other members of the blogging community. Conversations in the comment section of a blog are such rich and meaningful learning experiences for students. Conversations begin with high quality comments.

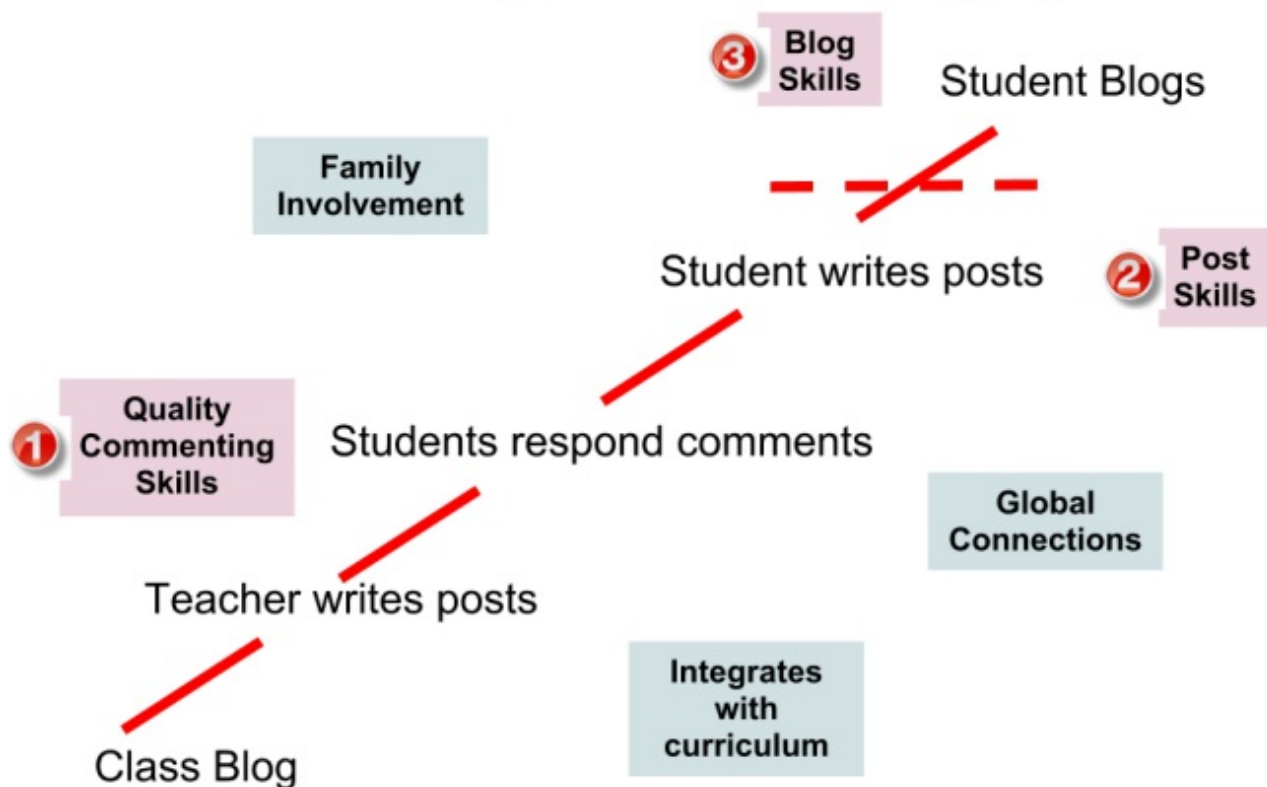
Blogging is an authentic avenue for developing student literacy skills. When you invest the time in teaching, modelling, revising and promoting high quality writing of comments, students can make great gains in their overall literacy development.

Check out [improvements in student literacy skills through commenting here](#).

Set your standards high from the start and reap the rewards!

Almost all educators who blog well with their students use the following scaffolding approach:

Scaffolding your student blogging



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HOW TO TEACH QUALITY COMMENTING

Kathleen teaches commenting skills through:

1. Modelling and composing comments together with students on the interactive whiteboard.
2. Teaching students about the “letter” format and editing process during writing lessons.
3. Giving examples of a poor/high quality comments and having students vote whether the comment should be accepted or rejected. Check out her [Sorting blog comments activity](#).
4. She spends 10 – 20 minutes of her daily literacy block on whole class blogging.
5. Getting students to work on composing a quality comment with a partner.
6. Emailing parents and encouraging them to write comments on the blog with their child.

Kathleen and her team teacher partner, [Kelly Jordan](#), invests a lot of time focusing on teaching her students how to write ‘quality comments’ and helping students to understand what quality comments means.

Teaching quality commenting, with constant reinforcement, and setting high standards increases your students literacy skills which provide a good foundation for when you move them onto writing posts on the class blog or their own student blogs.

The strong emphasis on developing quality commenting skills is an important reason why teachers like [Kathleen Morris](#), [Kelly Jordan](#) and [Linda Yollis](#) achieve great results blogging with their students.

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ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPING STUDENT COMMENTING SKILLS

Here’s a list of activities you can use to develop your student commenting skills:

1. Watch this video by Linda Yollis’ students about leaving quality comments.

Check out [Nicolas Weiss’s Leaving High Quality Blog comments video](#) for quality commenting explained for high school students.

2. Create a commenting guideline poster

Create your own commenting guideline poster or facilitate a collaborative discussion with students to create a poster together. Display your poster in the classroom and send it home to share with parents and caregivers.

Check out [4KM & 4KJ @ Leopard Primary School commenting guideline poster](#) here.

Remember don’t use others’ work without permission and acknowledgment.

3. Create a commenting guideline for your blog

Facilitate a collaborative discussion with your students to create your own commenting guidelines.

Here are some examples of Commenting Guidelines to look at:

1. Mrs Hammon’s Class Blog [Commenting Guidelines](#) (Grade 3)
2. Huzzah’s [Commenting Guidelines](#) (Grade 5/6)

Remember don’t use others’ work without permission and acknowledgment.

Refer to [Step 2: Set up pages](#) for more information on pages.

Alternatively, you could get your students to create their own videos on writing quality comments.

Watch [this excellent Comments video](#) shared by Andrea Hernandez made by a 5th Grade student.

4. Develop a quality comment evaluation guide or rubric

Linda Yollis's class uses a point system for evaluating comments. A one point comment is a general comment that doesn't add much to the conversation and a two point comment is a good comment that adds something to the conversation.

Check out Linda Yollis's [evaluation guide and how she teaches commenting](#) to see if you want to set up a quality comment evaluation guide for your class.

An alternative option used by some teachers is a commenting rubric. You can check out [Langwitches's Commenting Rubric here](#) and read [Langwitches's advice on teaching commenting skills here](#).

5. Get your students to practice commenting

Publish a blog post about commenting and what you define as a quality comment and then have your students practice leaving a "quality" comment on the post.

Check out Kathleen Morris's [Mini Lesson Ideas](#) for some modeling points and comment lesson ideas.

6. Get your students to practice commenting using the paper blogging method

Paper blogging is a hands on interactive way of introducing students to writing posts and comments using paper and post-it notes.

You'll find a detailed explanation of [how to paper blog with your students here](#). You'll find an [example of using paper blogging activity with students here](#).

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COMMON QUESTIONS WE'RE ASKED ABOUT COMMENTS

Here's answers to commonly asked questions we receive into Edublogs Support:

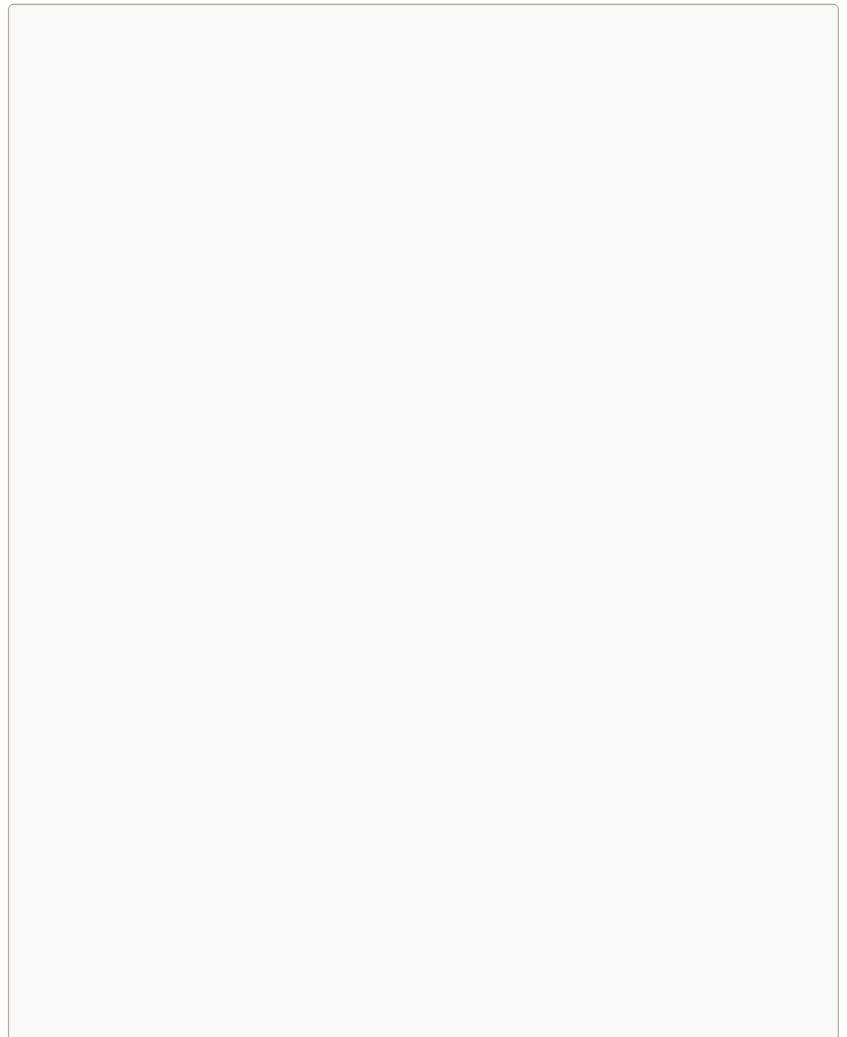
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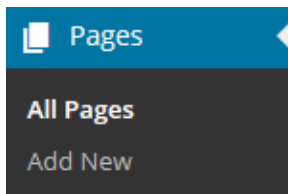
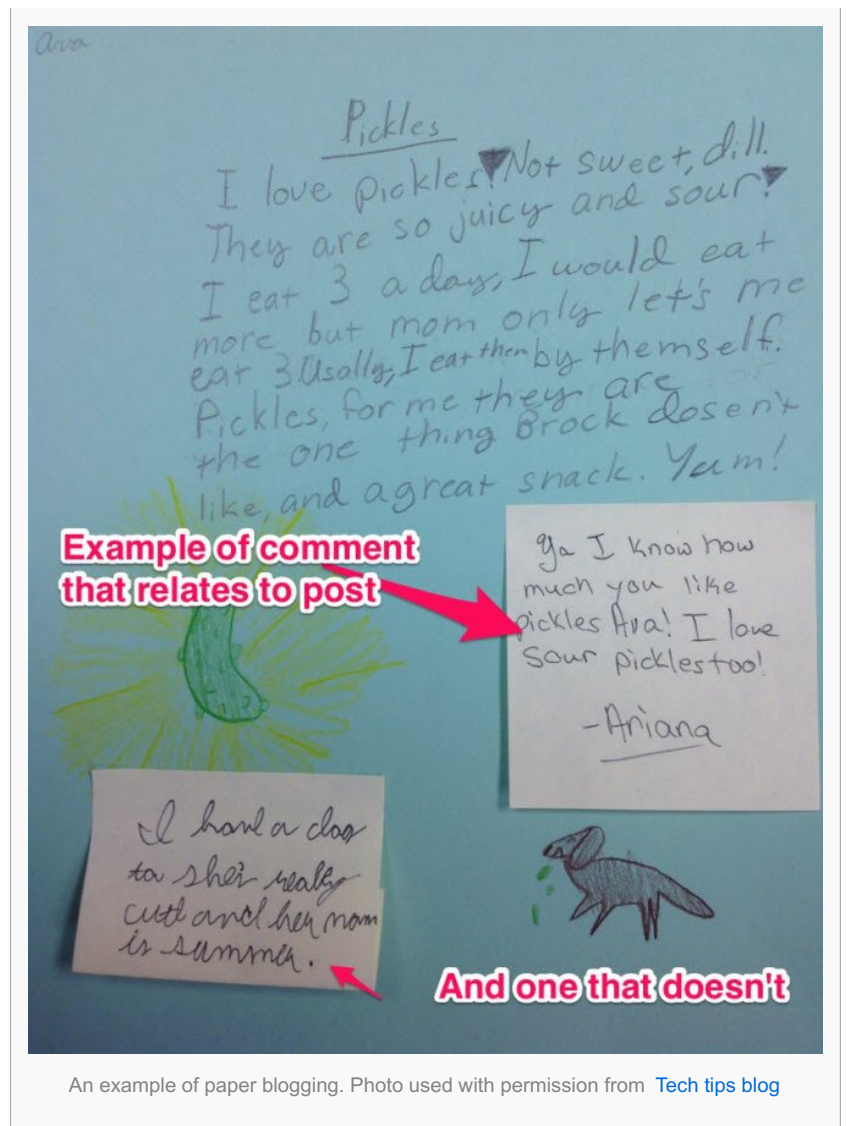
1. HOW DO YOU DISABLE COMMENTS ON PAGES?

Most Edublogs themes support comments on pages and by default comments are enabled on pages.

You can disable comments on pages using Quick Edit as follows:

1. Go to to **Pages > All Pages**





2. Locate the post or page you want to disable comments on.
3. Hover over it's title to bring up it's action menu.



4. Click on **Quick Edit**, deselect 'Allow Comments' and then click on **Update**.

The image shows a screenshot of a WordPress post editor. On the left, there is a 'Categories [more]' list with checkboxes for 'Assignments', 'Blogging Activity', 'Class News' (checked), 'Minecraft', 'Minecraft', 'Students' (checked), and 'Amanda' (checked). Below this is a 'Private' checkbox. On the right, there is a 'Tags' field containing 'Blogging'. Below the tags, there are two checkboxes: 'Allow Comments' and 'Allow Pings', both of which are unchecked and highlighted with a red box. Below these are 'Status' (set to 'Published') and 'Format' (set to 'Standard') dropdown menus, and a 'Make this post sticky' checkbox. An 'Update' button is located at the bottom right.

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2. WHY WON'T COMMENTS DISPLAY ON PAGES?

Most Edublogs themes now support comments on pages however there are a few themes that don't.

If the theme you are using doesn't support comments on pages, and you would like this feature, then you will need to use an alternative theme.

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3. How do I make comments display on my homepage?

Traditionally comments are designed to be displayed under a post and you view the comments by clicking on the post title or the comments link. It is done this way because posts can have 100's of comments and displaying them directly under a post on the post page can make it hard to read the content.

However, there are a few themes like P2 and ReTweet that display comments directly under posts on the blog post page. These types of themes work well where the posts are short; they work well for Discussion type blogs.

The alternative is to add the Recent Comments widget to the sidebar.

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4. How do I remove the option to add email address to comments?

By default, any one leaving a comment must leave a valid name and email address.

If the 'Comment author must fill out name and e-mail' is deselected in **Settings > Reading**, any visitor can leave a comment and isn't required to enter an email address. Please note readers will still see the name and email address option on the comment form; but the email address is no longer required to submit a comment.

This option is often used when teachers don't want students to use their email address.

Learn more about [Discussion settings here](#).

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5. How do you stop the "Posting comments too quickly" message?

Comments allow your readers to add feedback to your posts and pages.

Unfortunately if all your students are submitting comments at the same time to a class blog on your school computers they may see " 'You are posting comments too quickly. Slow down.' message and they might lose their comments.

This happens because the computers on your school network use the same IP address and Edublogs, which is powered by WordPress, has comment throttling.

Find out how to [prevent the posting too quickly message here](#).

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WHAT NOW?

How did you go? We hope this has helped get your commenting started and the information has helped!

Leave a comment below with a link to your blog and let us all take a look!

Also feel free to leave any questions you are having (or tips/advice) as well.

Or go to [Step 5: Adding Widgets !](#)

You are posting comments too quickly. Slow down.
