VOLUNTAR IN TRANSILVANIA

How to write a blog post

Hello fellow volunteer! This guide should provide you with a set of useful tools for written expression of any kind of information that needs sharing and passing (mainly in online form). Yep, after reading this (and putting it into practise), you can add it as a skill into your Youthpass section regarding literacy competence!

During ESC project you will be constantly bombarded with a lot of new experiences, wisdom, sensory stimulation, impressions and other kinds of yummy things that can help you and people around you grow. With this guide I would like to invite you to fire them back into the world!!! How? By writing a blog posts, yeeey!

Your posts will be edited and finally posted on the special website called **Voluntar in Transilvania.** This site will serve as a promotion of volunteering experience, but, at the same time, its main purpose is to empower you and give you space and voice. Volunteering is a shared activity and idea, but it is individual differences and personal intimate moments of each and every volunteer that puts this idea into practise and make it various and diverse, so unique.

But your contribution doesn't have to end when your project is finished. You can send us for example story about your life after ESC or your perspective after one year from the end of your journey. By this way you can stay in touch with community spirit of your ESC family as long as you wish. I honestly believe that each of you has something special and inspirational to share in your own way with the words, phrases and images, you like.....

Basic tools:

1   MAGNYFIING GLASS
2   FISHING ROD
3   CRYSTAL BALL
4   SHARP KNIFE
5   UNICORN HORN DUST
6   MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL

*** At the end of manual you can find a short summary of the most important tips!

How to use these tools:

1   Choose a topic/theme and stick to it.

Your message should be as clear as possible. Even when you write about your feelings, thoughts, opinions etc. try to avoid repetition and complex expressions. **Be focused** on one topic or aspect of topic in one post. **Less is more**: try to explain it in a nutshell and leave a space for a reader's imagination and thought processing.

When writing, keep in mind your target audience group- adapt to their style of communication.

2   Create informative heading that catches attention.

Heading should be short, shiny, clear, **original**- but not crazy. You can use emotional adjectives (fun, free, awesome, strange, absolute, essential) and abstract pronouns (love, joy, fact, grow, goal, solitude, belief).

Why, what, who, when, how - these are your best friends to help you create good informative headings. The more you can include them into your heading, the better. Clickbaits are cool but try to use them reasonably, and if possible, avoid them.

Practical examples:

- Promise something to your audience (*Learn how to hitchhike in Romania!*)
- Provoke interest with a question (*Are you ready for your next EVS adventure?*)
- Be pragmatic with How-to form (*How to choose the best EVS project for you: An 8-step guide*)
- Be personal with How-I form (*How I improved my language skills during EVS project.*)
- Be mysterious with Secrets form (*Secrets of Sighisoara pubs revealed*)
- Never fail with Nuber-list (8 Reasons why to volunteer in AUM association.)
- Let's be educative with Guide form (A step-by-step guide to leading a reflection group, An introvert guide how to survive group discussion)
- Be informative with locations (Where to find the best second hands in Sighisoara)

More headings inspiration: https://www.locationrebel.com/blog-post-titles/

Try to write several different **alternative headlines** and then read them out laud. If you need inspiration go to grocery shop and grab some magazine. Try to be clever - you want to attract attention of audience but please don't be like "internet prostitute" whom tries to sell herself at any cost with cliche catchphrases. You can also use **metadescription**: provide a bit of information to supplement the headline.

Use sub-headings inside your post. This will help you to structure your text into categories and keep a good flow of reading and allow your audience to easily navigate themselves through text.

3   Start with writing of draft/mind map to be sure that you won't miss some important point.

Making a plan or **mind map** of the topic you are writing about can help you structure your text. You can make a list of key point and group similar themes into categories and then turn these categories into paragraphs. This can help you **avoid repetition**.

Inspiration is a powerful ability so use it and **get inspired** by what has already been said about your topic. You do not have to know everything, so do your research and find new perspectives on topics. Always double-check your information source.

Do not limit yourself with any dogma: try to **find your own style of writing** and stick with that! If you prefer to write down everything what is on our mind in one single blow, do it! If

you are into detailed analysis of possible expressions, go for it! But always keep in mind that you should use a magical mirror: reflect, edit, rearrange, be self-critical- viz. point 6. in this guide.

4   Structure your text.

According to SEO research, the **ideal blog length** is between 1000 - 3 500 words (Ideal proportion is 2 400 words). For paragraph- 100 - 300 words. But again, this is not to be a dogma- try to keep your post clear, when neccesary use more space but always stick with the point 6. in this guide.

Since our blog is about **sharing**- it is possible to write a long story- but for this you should study some basics of narrative techniques to drag the audience imagination into your storytelling. The truth is, there's no such thing as a post that's too long. Search engines love longer content because they believe that it's in more depth and therefore of more value to the reader.

Start every **paragraph** with a topic sentence, i.e., a sentence that gives off the main idea of that paragraph. Avoid long and complicated Charles Dickens style sentences inside paragraph. While writing, you can use a synonyms dictionary, so that the vocabulary of your text is more powerful. Use your own voice, this will give the text a more personalized and friendly nuance.

More topic sentences inspiration:
https://examples.yourdictionary.com/examples-of-topic-sentences.html

You can create more attractive structure by including other elements of text:

- Between paragraphs use quotations of the most interesting sentences.
- Use list forms (Reasons, Principles, Facts, Lessons, Ideas, Ways, Secret, Tricks).
- Don't be afraid to use just whitespace to separate bigger chunks of text. But always keep your paragraph coherent and do not split one core idea into two separate blocks.

Your post should end with some **conclusion**, call to action or solution for the problem you have discussed. Sometimes, all you need to do is just to summarise what you already said just like in good essays. You can ask audience for some reciprocity- leave a comment, share your post, send you some inspiration or similar story, report about how they applied our guide etc…

5   Use visual tools, design and creativity.

Use a reasonable number of **images** that illustrate what you write and helps you express your thoughts visually. Keep images clear and avoid blurry ones- google how to use and change the resolution. Try to include images with people- dynamic with a lot of action display and smiles. But do not limit yourself just to the photographs- use icons, screenshots charts. etc.

You can highlight the important phrases or words by turning them **bold**. Don't be afraid to use humour, unconventional language; be poetic and playful! Keep balanced ration between informative part and entertainment/visual part.

Use **transition words** to emphasise, conclude, compare and contrast (*as a result, because, due to, therefore, furthermore, probably, while, most relevant, seems like, much as, rather, same as, less*).

Images can be even the main medium of our post: try to learn how to create nice **infographic**. It can be done in power point or any other site with free templates.

Use hand-draw/painted images- scanned or edited with your phone camera. Whatever you do, try to keep all of our visual elements in **one theme** (colour/chroma, dynamic/calm).

Learn how to create free infographic: https://piktochart.com/

or use omnipotent graphic web: https://www.canva.com/

6   Edit what you wrote, be open to changes and opinions of the others.

Finished? **Nope**- go through the whole text again, reformulate what is unclear, change repetitive parts. Stick to active voice: For example, rather than writing "A coffee was ordered," write "The man ordered a coffee."

Try not to hurry, **give your-self a time** to produce quality, well-thought content. Leave your text for a while resting in the corner of your desktop. Then, after one or two days, read it again or give it to someone else to provide you with feedback.

Try to balance these key features:

- Try to write in plain English X Be creative, poetic, go into details.
- Be descriptive and informative X Be personal, emotional and entertaining.
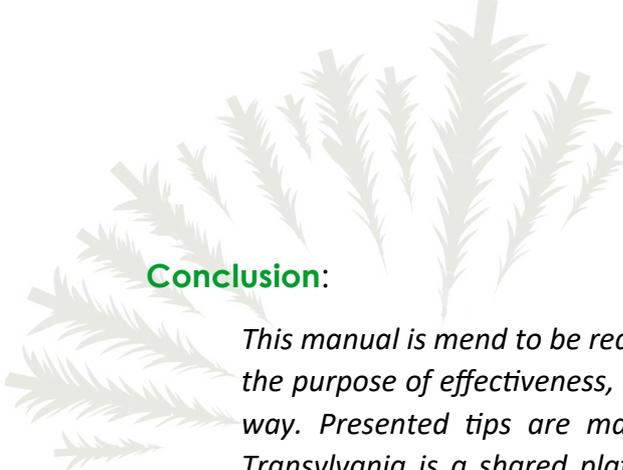
Conclusion:

This manual is mend to be read as ground zero inspiration for writing a blog post. For the purpose of effectiveness, it describes possible tools for writing in quite schematic way. Presented tips are mainly designed for mainstream bloggers. Voluntar in Transylvania is a shared platform for volunteers. Its main purpose is to celebrate diversity of possible expressions of experience with volunteering in Transylvania. For this reason, please do not take these tips as some kind of rules or strict guideline. Stay tuned to your own style of creative expression!

Have a clear purpose when you write.

If you have an idea but it didn't quite flourish yet, do some research.

You can use metaphors and phrases, descriptions, jokes, etc. as long as your writing is clear.

Chose a strong headline. You can create your headline before or even after writing the text.

Proofread, proofread, proofread!

Structure your text into paragraphs / ideas / main points.

Don't put pressure from the headstart, write freely, then optimize and edit until you're happy with the final result.

Good content will be: informative, friendly, useful, inspiring, immersive.

BE VISUAL