**How To Post Writing Instructions**

Section 1: Breakdown of sections included in your How To Article

## **Step #1: Pick a Good Topic and Goal**

Any great blog post starts with a great idea. Your how-to post is no different.

Think about what people in your niche want to learn (and what you can easily explain in step-by-step format). That could be:

* How to tune a guitar *(music or guitar blog)*
* How to edit your writing *(student or writing blog)*
* How to spend less and save more *(personal finance or self-development blog)*
* How to make money from home *(entrepreneurship or stay-at-home-parent blog)*
* How to create a plugin for WordPress *(blogging or web development blog)*

Your how-to post comes with an implicit goal: if the reader follows your instructions, they should be able to accomplish something. Think about your audience — will they want a simple, straightforward goal, or something more complex?

**Do it: Come up with a “how to” idea for your own niche and write it down. Don’t worry about perfecting the title just yet.**

## **Step #2: Work Out the Steps from Start to End**

Before you leap into the writing, you need to work out all the steps of your how-to post. If you don’t do this in advance, it’s easy to miss something out — or to realize half-way through that you should’ve tackled a different topic entirely.

Sometimes, you might have several options — or it might be possible to put the steps in a different order. If so, you can:

* Choose the simplest order
* Start with the easier steps and work up to harder ones
* Flag up particular steps as “optional”

Think of your “how to” post as a recipe with clear instructions at each stage. If you’re struggling to figure out the steps, try working backwards: begin at the end and ask yourself *what comes before that? And before that?*

**Do it: Write down the steps for your how-to. You’ll probably need around 4 — 10 steps. If you have more than that, either join some steps together or consider breaking your post into two parts.**

## **Step #3: Write the Introduction**

Now that you have a plan for your post, you can write the introduction*.* Some people prefer to do this after writing the main body of the post, so if you struggle with introductions, you might want to come back to this step.

Your introduction should:

* Explain what the post is about and what the reader will be able to accomplish at the end
* Give a sense of *why* the reader might want to do this — mention the benefits
* Tell the reader about any prerequisites, if appropriate (such as equipment that they’ll need or knowledge that they should already have)

Don’t get too hung up on writing the introduction — you can always come back and edit.

**Do it: Write an introduction to your how-to post. This might be anything from a couple of sentences to a few paragraphs long.**

## **Step #4: Write Instructions for Each Step**

You’ve already got the steps worked out, so writing the body of the post should be straightforward. Explain each step to the reader — you might want to give a screenshot or photo to show them how things should look as they’re progressing.

There are lots of ways to write the steps. You might like to use one or more of these ideas:

* Include personal experience — explain how *you* did it
* Offer an example at each stage
* Come up with alternatives and suggestions that the reader can use
* Give direct instructions (like the “Do it” sections in this post)

**Do it: Work through your post, writing the text for each step. If you get stuck, ask yourself “how would I explain this to a friend?”**

## **Step #5: Add a Conclusion and Call to Action**

Once you get to the final step, your post isn’t quite finished. You still need to add a conclusion — without this, you’ll be ending too abruptly and you’ll be missing out on the chance to include a call to action.

In the conclusion, you may want to:

* Sum up — explain what the reader should now have accomplished
* Offer suggestions for what to do next, or alternatives to try out
* Encourage readers to actually *follow* the steps, not just read them!

A “call to action” is a copywriting term. It means that you should ask the reader to take some action — ideally, something that ties in with your own goals. For instance:

* If you want more comments, ask readers to “leave a comment below” or “share your experience in the comments”
* If you want more tweets, ask readers to “click here to tweet this post”
* If you want more sales, tell readers “you can learn more about X in my ebook, available here”

… and so on.

**Do it: Write a conclusion to your post. Include a call to action (you may need to stop and think about your own blogging goals at this point).**

## **Step #6: Tweak the Title**

Currently, your how-to post probably has a descriptive title like “How to train for a marathon”. That’s not a bad title — but it could definitely be more compelling.

Here are some easy ways to improve your title:

* Add a number: *How to Train for a Marathon: 5 Steps*
* Add an adjective: *How to Train for a Marathon: 5 Straightforward Steps*
* Add a “who” to the title: *How to Train for a Marathon: Experts Speak Out*
* Make it personal: *How I Went from Couch Potato to Marathon-Runner … And How You Could Too*

**Do it: Tweak the title of your post. You might want to come up with several possible versions and ask friends to choose which they think is best.**

## **Step #7: Edit Your Post**

Finally, it’s time to get your red pen out and edit your post. No-one’s first draft is ever perfect, and a bit of editing can make a huge difference. If you can, let a day go by before you edit your draft — or print your post out so you can edit on paper. This helps you see it with fresh eyes.

When you edit, you’re not just looking for typos. You also want to:

* Check that your post isn’t missing any steps (perhaps get a fellow blogger to try out the instructions)
* Make sure you’ve expressed things clearly: check for any ambiguous or confused sentences
* Watch out for grammatical and spelling mistakes that your spell-checker might not pick up

**Do it: Edit your post, starting with the big picture (checking that you’re not missing any steps) and working down to the details (spelling, punctuation and grammar).**

If you’ve been following all the steps, you’ve now got a finished “how to” post that can become a great piece of pillar content for your blog. (And if you’ve just been reading through, now’s your chance to go back and do all the bits in bold!)