

## Our selection

When you type “blog” on Google, more than 3 billion results come up in 0.07 second... in other words it’s pure mayhem. So to make the job a bit easier, here are a few addresses to start your blogosphere search with.

### Larry Ferlazzo’s Websites of the Day

A not-to-be-missed site with an impressive number of English language learning resources which is updated daily.

► [larryferlazzo.edublogs.org](http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org)

### The Edublogger

You will find advice on how to improve your blog and use the tools of the now famous Web 2.0.

► [theedublogger.edublogs.org](http://theedublogger.edublogs.org)

### Nik’s Daily English Activities

A mine of original ideas which can be used with or without a class teacher.

► [daily-english-activities.blogspot.com](http://daily-english-activities.blogspot.com)

### Englishonthe.net

This new blog is the work of Simon Bourn, a New Zealander who has lived in France since 1999. It is also a good example of a blog which is a “showcase” for an online course.

► [englishonthe.net](http://englishonthe.net)

### Lexiophiles

Finally, don’t forget this blog, which is rare in being multilingual with around twenty contributors.

► [www.lexiophiles.com](http://www.lexiophiles.com)

## › blogosphere

# The age of reason

The blog may seem to be a recent phenomenon, but in reality it’s a web oldie. The first attempts appeared on Minitel in 1989. It was ten more years before the first publication systems came into existence (Blogger, 1999) and yet five more before this type of web page could be called “all the rage”. By the start of this decade, everyone was wanting their own blog, with the result that it’s a potpourri of good and awful.

**But what actually is a blog?** Above all it’s a publication system requiring no special computing knowledge, no special software, where everything can be done from any desktop, cybercafé or IT room. This online publication system manages the historical thread of the posts and any comments or reactions. Depending on the system there may be other functions such as forums, chatrooms, or syndication services (RSS).

**With the arrival of Web 2.0, blogs really came of age.** After the turmoil of the early days, some professionals sensed where the future lay by launching corporate blogs as an alternative to the traditional web sites. Another built-in advantage of blogs, which comes from the speed at which they can be updated, is that search engines can index them quickly. So a blog guarantees better immediate visibility, without the need for time-consuming

search engine submission.

**The blogosphere seems to be becoming more rational...** a sort of age of reason! The platforms have coped quite well with the start-up crisis, and the present financial downturn should not affect them, because a blog can be free. For companies it is still a means – with minimum outlay – of getting a slice of the web. Blogs are proving they are here to stay and ought to be taken seriously, yet they still tend to attract techies. That’s reason enough for education to get interested in the blog phenomenon. The tool indeed combines numerous features to suit teachers while at the same time being attractive to students and learners.

**Blogs are still just as easy as ever to administer** despite all the technological progress and their increasing professionalism. With a few clicks, teachers can thus upload large numbers of resources, from text to MP3, plus images and video. At the other end, students/learners, just as easily, can see the content, react and interact. Jeffrey Hill, the general editor of this “Blog Special” EduLettre, who was one of the pioneers of the educational blog (see our interview on the back page), has lost none of his enthusiasm for this empty shell which is crying out to be filled with relevant content!

### Blogs in the teaching of modern languages

This work is published by the Council of Europe and the European Centre for Modern Languages and is available in French and in English. It aims to help language teachers use the potential of the Internet in general, and of blogs in particular, in their lessons. The authors meet this challenge in an interesting and relevant way. For those with keyboard-phobia, reading *Blogs for Dummies* (For Dummies 2008) could be a handy way of starting. *Blogs: web journals in language education*, ISBN 978-92-871-6236-6. (in French) *Blogs dans l’enseignement des langues vivantes*, ISBN 978-92-871-6275-5, also available on line (in Fr and En) [www.ecml.at/mtp2/Blogs/html/BLOGS\\_E\\_pdesc.htm](http://www.ecml.at/mtp2/Blogs/html/BLOGS_E_pdesc.htm)



# 3 questions for Jeffrey Hill

## “The content makes the blog”



Jeffrey Hill has been an English teacher since 1980, working at EM-Normandie since 1991. He was very quick to use the blog as a teaching tool and now manages The English Blog, an award-winning website. Here is how it happened...

### How did you start blogging?

I became interested in blogs when I was doing my MBA in 2004 for which I was studying small business bloggers. It was in order to put on line the interviews I did that I created my first blog. That led to the idea of sharing the resources I came across in my work as an English teacher at the Ecole de Management de Normandie. After a fairly active start, I more or less abandoned regular posts before starting the blog up again in June 2008 (see below). Since then, I keep to the routine of an article per day... but it is often a lot more! The reactions are very positive: it's a way of getting the school known around the world and my students appreciate the synergy between the blog and the lessons, since I use a lot of material from the blog in class.

### Is it time-consuming?

There's no fixed rule about it. A blog can take

a lot of time if you do several daily posts, but 3 or 4 articles a week can be enough. For me it's like a hobby: I read the on-line English-language press every day and that gives me a lot of ideas. Running a blog does not require any particular skill. With ready-made tools, such as Typepad or WordPress (see opposite), you can set up a blog in 5 minutes. Then, it's "simply" a matter of sitting at your keyboard! Of course, if you want a tailor-made blog, that may require knowing something about CSS style sheets, for example, but it is above all the content which makes the blog, along with its distinctiveness and relevance.

### Do blogs have a real impact in class? Would you like more teachers to get involved?

Knowing how to make a blog is a very worthwhile skill for a student, quite apart from the linguistic advantages (individual means of expression, exchange of ideas, search on a specific topic). For teachers, blogs are another educational tool to be used alongside the Internet, video or podcasts. They are a way of communicating not only with the students, but also with other teachers throughout the world. But if teachers cannot devote a minimum of time to their blog, they might as well not bother, there are already too many bad blogs on the web!



### The English Blog ([www.englishblog.com](http://www.englishblog.com))

Created and managed by Jeffrey Hill, this blog won the first prize in the "Edublogs Awards 2008" in the category "Best Individual Blog". Every year, this prize rewards the best dedicated educational blogs on the basis of votes from Internet users. "I began this blog at the end of 2004. Initially it was just a way of sharing the resources I thought would be interesting for my students to learn English. Then, the project grew and

the blog now has more than 1,200 subscribers to the RSS feed with an average of 1,500 page views per day," explains Jeffrey Hill. You should visit it then... particularly since it has an impressive range of links!

## Some advice

# Now, let's blog!

If you are tempted by blogging, here are four sites which, in a few clicks, will host your first steps on the web.

### Edublogs

This free service hosts a very large number of blogs created by teachers, students, researchers or librarians.

► [edublogs.org](http://edublogs.org)

### Blogger

As Google is weaving its web with application[s], it would have been a surprise if it didn't offer a blogging service...here it is!

► [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

### WordPress

Your blog – free – in a few seconds, with customised features selected from an impressive catalogue...this way, please!

► [wordpress.com](http://wordpress.com)

### Typepad

This service is not free, but hosts some well-known blogs, including The English Blog and small and larger companies.

► [www.sixapart.com/uk/typepad](http://www.sixapart.com/uk/typepad)