



User Guide

Chapter 9

Blog Page

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Introduction

Blogs have become immensely popular in recent years. This is due in part because blogs offer the ultimate communication medium through which individuals can share information and receive feedback from an audience. Furthermore, the introduction of RSS feeds with blogs has increased its communicative powers since audiences can now subscribe to a blog and receive updates in real-time. There are several ways in which SharpSchool's



Blogs can be utilized in an educational setting:

- **District to Community:** Principals and teachers can create blog pages to discuss school or class related activities with the community.
- **Internal Discussions:** Teachers can set up blogs to carry out internal discussions with colleagues and students.
- **Student Blogs:** students can participate in moderated blogs to discuss activities and class related projects.
- **Event Blogs:** school committees can set up blogs to discuss upcoming or past events.

Blogs and Security

SharpSchool's Blogs offer a secure medium through which teachers and students can communicate with each other and the school community. However, in order to completely benefit from this tool it is important for district administrators and users to understand its security protocols. The most evident challenge in such an open medium of communication is ensuring that inappropriate content is filtered and tracked.

SharpSchool's Blog offers administrators and teachers with the tools needed to guarantee student protection, whilst facilitating constructive communication. Some key tools include, user based authentication, comment approvals and the ability to filter comments by IP address. These tools are detailed further in this manual and it is recommended that blog authors invest some time in familiarizing themselves with blog security.

Key Information

In order to begin managing blogs, you must first log into your site using your Username and Password.

Login

Username

Password

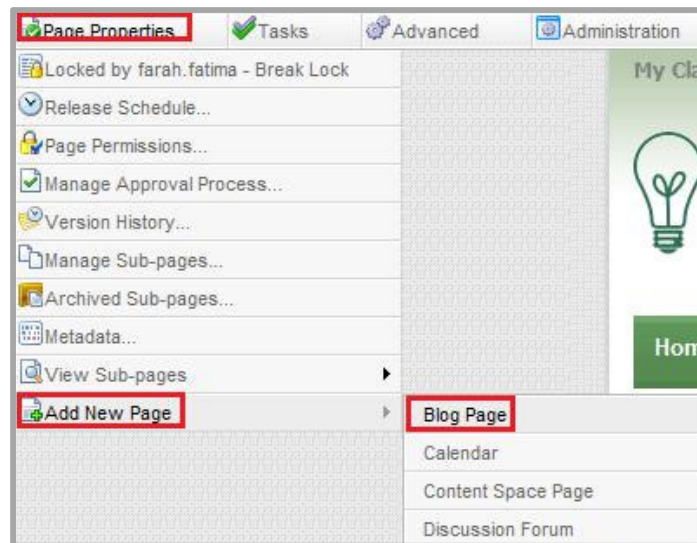
[Signup](#) | [Forgot Password](#)

I. How to Add a Blog Page

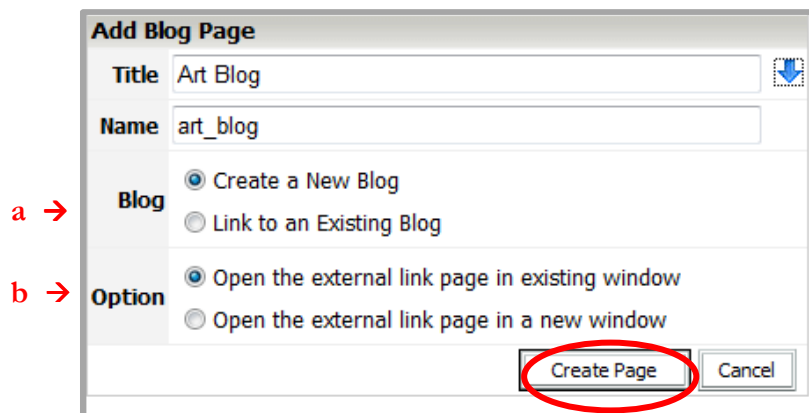


Reminder: The gray tool bar on the top of the page is specific to the page you are viewing. You must first select the parent page under which you'd like to create the Blog Page.

1. To go **Page Properties** in the gray tool bar and scroll down to **Add New Page**. Now click on **Blog Page**



2. The following page will prompt you to name the Blog. After naming the page there are several setup options with the blog:
 - a) **Blog:** where you can select whether to create a new blog to link this blog to an existing one. When linking to an existing blog you will not be able to add posts until the administrator of that blog allows your authoring permissions.
 - b) **Option:** this section will give you the ability to decide whether the blog opens in a new window or an existing one.



3. The resulting page contains 5 areas of content in the blog:
- 1) **Area 1:** the blog posts area
 - 2) **Area 2:** this section is visible only to the administrators of the blog. We will be returning to this area in the following section of this guide.
 - 3) **Area 3:** offers profile information for administrators of the blog
 - 4) **Area 4:** Provides links to the group blogs available on your site
 - 5) **Area 5:** allows users to subscribe to RSS feeds on your blog.

The screenshot shows a blog page layout with five distinct areas labeled on the right side with red brackets:

- Area 1:** The main content area, currently displaying "No posts available." in a white box.
- Area 2:** The "Blog Administration" sidebar, containing links for "New Post" and "Blog Administration".
- Area 3:** The "About Us" sidebar, listing administrators: "Administrator", "mark.zhang", and "Administrator".
- Area 4:** The "Group Blogs" sidebar, listing links for "Student Thoughts", "Principal's Message", "Ms. Smith's Blog", and "Art Blog".
- Area 5:** The "RSS Feed" sidebar, containing links for "Blog Feeds" and "Podcast RSS Feeds".

At the bottom of the page is a footer for "Appledale High" with the address "354 Gladstone Ave., Birmingham AL", phone number "402-555-3535", and fax number "402-555-1212".



Note: at any time the *Sidebar* can be customized.

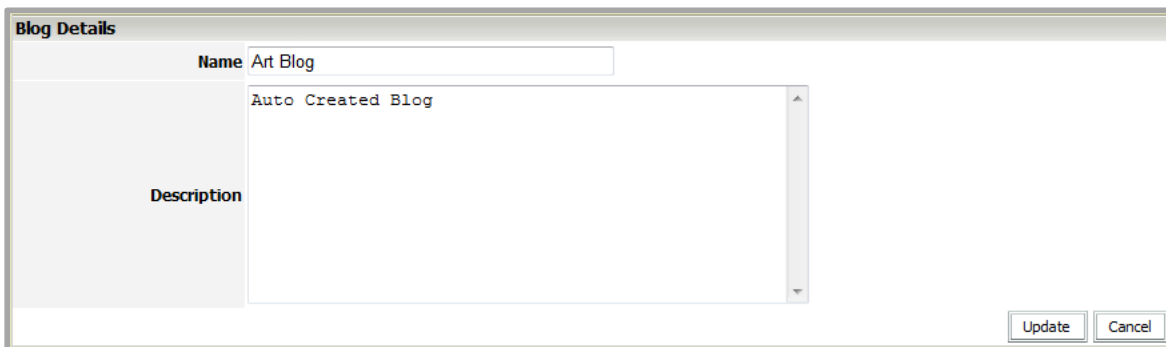
II. Blog Administration

The *Blog Administration* is the backend engine of the blog. This section is divided into 6 main components:

1. **Edit:** this is where you can change the name of blog.
2. **Posts:** give you the ability to create and search posts.
3. **Comments:** allows the ability to filter and search comments
4. **Post Categories:** establishes unique categories for your blog posts.
5. **Configuration:** this section contains all permission, security, podcast licensing and configuration items pertaining to the blog.
6. **View Blog:** provides a final and completed view of the blog

1) Edit Blog

The *Edit Blog* tab allows you to rename the blog, include a description and change the template of the blog.



The screenshot shows a 'Blog Details' form. It has a 'Name' field with the text 'Art Blog' and a 'Description' field with the text 'Auto Created Blog'. At the bottom right, there are two buttons: 'Update' and 'Cancel'.

2) Creating Posts

There are two primary ways in which a post may be added to a blog. First is through the main interface of the blog page where by the New Post link is available on the upper right corner of the page. And secondly, a post may be added via the *Blog Administration* interface.



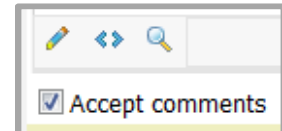
The screenshot shows the 'Posts' tab in the blog administration interface. It has a search bar with the text 'View Posts' and two buttons: 'Search' and 'View All'. Below the search bar, it says 'Posts' and 'No item available.'. In the bottom right corner, there is a green plus icon and the text 'Add Post'.

By simply clicking on **Add Post**, you will be taken to the editing interface of the blog. This section is divided into 2 areas:

1) Create New Post:

In this section, you will be required to fill out details of the blog post, this includes: the **Post Title** (this title will be displayed on the blog page), the **Category** (allocate the post to a topical category), **Tags** (assign key words) and finally author the content of the blog in the **Post Body** section. The **Post Body** section features the same editor that you've used while authoring content for web pages on your site. For a detailed explanation of all the buttons in the editor, refer to Appendix A of the SharpSchool documentation.

Note: the *Accept Comments* field determines whether you wish for visitors to be able to publish comments for posts at all. Deselecting this feature will prevent users from posting any comments.



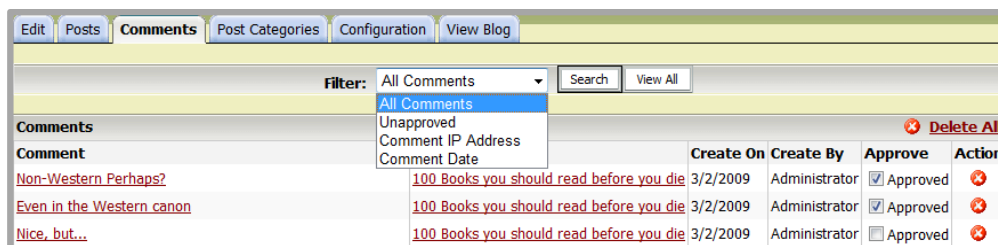
2) Uploading Podcasts:

In addition to content publication, SharpSchool's blogs also features Podcasts. A podcast is a series of audio and/or video files that are made available for download or subscription through an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed.

To upload a podcast, click on ***Browse*** to select a file from your computer. The **Podcast Title** is a title of the podcast as it will be displayed in the Blog menu. For copy right purposes, it is important to indicate the **Podcast License** of your media file. When finished uploading the file, click **Post now** or **Save As Draft** if you wish to complete this blog at a later date.

3) Managing Comments

SharpSchool's Blog feature allows blog administrators to moderate comments made to blogs. This tool is vital in an education setting since it is imperative that all content on an educational site be validated and approved prior to publication.



Comment	Create On	Create By	Approve	Action
Non-Western Perhaps?	100 Books you should read before you die	3/2/2009	Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved
Even in the Western canon	100 Books you should read before you die	3/2/2009	Administrator	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Approved
Nice, but...	100 Books you should read before you die	3/2/2009	Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/> Approved

The *Filter* dropdown allows you to filter comments by status, such as:

- 1) **All Comments** – this view displays all comments and is the default view of the Comments report.
- 2) **Unapproved** – tabulates the comments that have yet to be approved.
- 3) **Comment IP Address** - allows you to search comments by IP Address to find posts made from a particular computer.
- 4) **Comment Date** - shows only the comments made on a particular date.

You can authorize a comment to become public by checking off on in the *Approve* column. You can also delete comments by clicking on the button in the *Action* column.

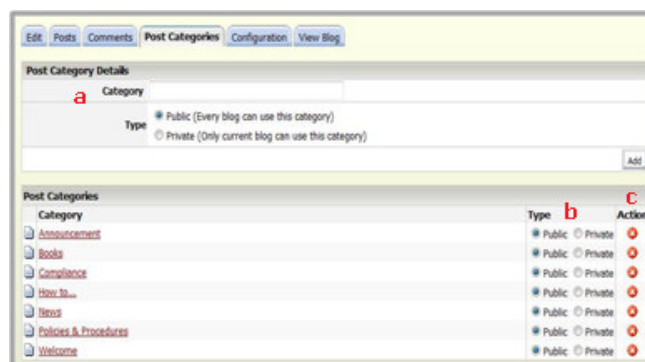
4) Post Categories

Topical categories are useful when publishing blogs since they make it easier for readers to find posts on a particular subject. To create a new category for your blog:

- 1) Simply type in the name in the *Category* field and click on *Add*.
- 2) Categories can be as Public or Private. A Public Category can be used by every blog and a private category can only be used by the current blog.
- 3) Category can be deleted by clicking the button in the **Action** column.



Note: deleting a category does not delete the posts allocated to it. Deleting blog posts can only be performed through the *Posts* tab in the *Blog Administration*.



Category	Type	Action
Announcement	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Books	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Compliance	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
How to...	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Items	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Policies & Procedures	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	
Welcome	<input checked="" type="radio"/> Public <input type="radio"/> Private	

5) Blog Configuration

The *Configuration* tab is the most important section of the *Blog Administration* menu. This section contains house-keeping components for all elements of the blog, such as RSS feeds, permissions, preferences and many more.

The *Configuration* tab is further broken into 5 main categories:

- a) Site Feeds
- b) Permissions
- c) Settings
- d) Sidebar
- e) Preferences

a) Site Feeds

Via the *Site Feeds* tab you have the ability to enable (**ON**) or disable (**OFF**) RSS feeds. The *RSS Content* column allows you to choose how the RSS feed is posted. The entire post can be selected as part of the feed (Full posts) or simply the Post Titles.



Note: it is recommended that Post Titles be used for Blog RSS feeds since this will reduce the loading time for readers.

b) Permissions

The *Permissions* section of the Blog is managed in the same manner as all other SharpSchool modules. There are three essential user roles:

- 1) Administrator: these users have complete control of the blog
- 2) Authors: can only co-author content for the blog
- 3) Browsers: encompasses all users who can only view and comment on the blog but cannot create any new blog posts.



Note: you must include the *Guest* user if you wish the blog to be public.

To add a user under a specific role category, simply click on the **Add** button. In the pop up window, click on the selected user and click on **Add** and then **Ok**. Likewise, to remove a user, simply click on the check off button next to the name and click **Remove**.

Direct Permissions

Direct Permissions refers to users who also have access to your blog, as these may be inherited permissions from a parent page. You can add and remove users from the *Direct Permissions* button in the same manner as the *Roles*.

Actual Permissions

This section refers to all the users within the administrators groups who have access to the blog. You cannot edit the users in the Actual Permissions list since this is controlled by site and/or global administrators.

c) Blog Settings

Via the *Settings* tab, administrators have the ability to make quick and easy changes to the Blog.

This area is divided into 3 main sections:

- 1) **General** - Email Notification can be switched on or off here, and the way time is displayed can be set in Timestamp Format.
- 2) **Post Display** – you can configure the display parameters of posts on your blog.
- 3) **Comments Display** - allows the number of comments displayed to be set. The order of comments can be set to display Oldest First or Newest First.

The screenshot shows the 'Configuration' tab of a blog settings interface. It is divided into three main sections: General, Posts Display, and Comments Display. The 'General' section includes 'Email Notification' (On/Off), 'Locale' (English), 'Content Editor' (Limited HTML Editor/Text Editor with Automatic Linking), and 'Timestamp Format' (2:35 PM). The 'Posts Display' section includes 'Posts to Display' (10) and 'Post Display Order' (Newest First/Oldest First). The 'Comments Display' section includes 'Comments to Display' (All/Recent) and 'Comments Display Order' (Oldest First/Newest First). A 'Save Settings' button is located at the bottom right.

d) Blog Sidebar

You can select or deselect the items you would like to appear on your sidebar of your blog.

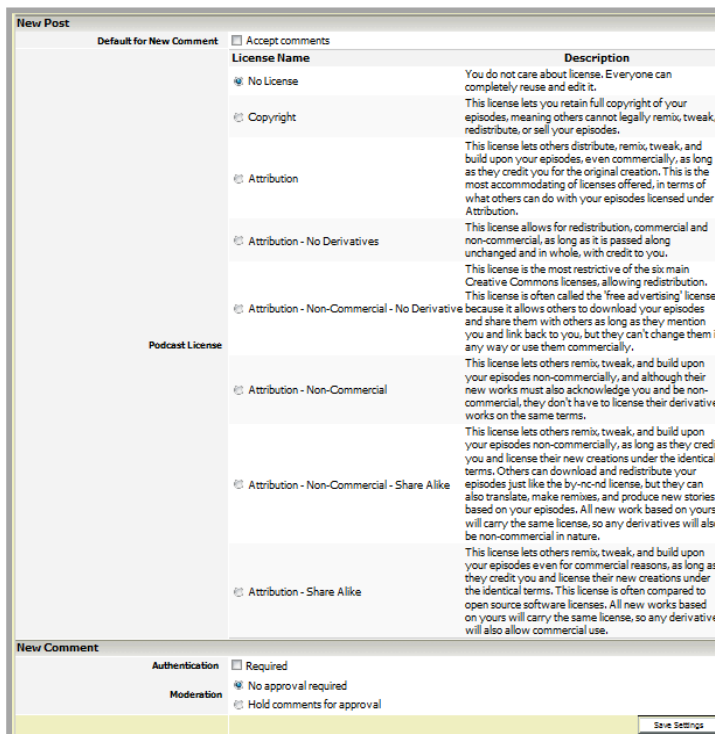
Edit Posts Comments Post Categories Configuration View Blog	
Site Feeds Permissions Settings Sidebar Preferences	
Name	Selected
Blog Administration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
About Me/About Us	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Recent Posts	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Tags	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Archives	<input type="checkbox"/>
Group Blogs	<input type="checkbox"/>
Categories	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
RSS Feeds	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

The screenshot shows a blog page with two main articles. The first article is titled "100 Biggest Libraries in US" and the second is "100 Books you should read before you die". On the right side of the page is a sidebar containing several widgets: "Blog Administration" (with a "Blog Summary" showing 2 posts and 3 comments), "New Post" button, "Blog Administration" link, "Tags" (with "Books BBC" and "100 Library US"), "Recent Posts" (listing the two main articles), and "RSS Feed" (with "Blog Feeds" and "Podcast RSS Feeds" options). A red circle highlights the entire sidebar area, and an arrow points to it from the right with the label "Sidebar".

e) Preferences

The *Preferences* Tab is divided into three main categories:

- 1) **Default for New Comment:** allows blog administrators to post a default setting on all incoming comments into the blog. It is recommended that this option be unchecked since inappropriate comments may be posted on your blog without moderation.
- 2) **Podcast License:** allows you to determine the definition of all the licensing options as well as assign a particular default license for all podcasts.
- 3) **New Comment:** allows the blog administrator to set notifications when comments are made to the blog.



6) View Blog

Gives you a completed and comprehensive view of the blog

