



Get Your Visitors to Stick!



*How to get your blog visitors to stay longer,
come back and subscribe to your feed*

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Introduction

What does it mean for a visitor to 'stick'? It means that they stay on your site long enough to look around. It means that they read more than one page on your site, find something useful to them, return, comment on a post or even subscribe to your blog.

Sometimes achieving this "stickiness" is next to impossible. Sometimes that's our fault—we haven't really tried to engage our visitors, add value to their lives, start a conversation with them or make it easy for them to subscribe and comment. Sometimes, all it takes is making it easier for our visitors to know what to do "next."

This brief guide will touch on the key ways to improve your blog's stickiness. These are the same steps that have helped many others turn passersby into commenters and commenters into subscribers. Feel free to pick and choose among them to find the ones that work best for you.

Good luck!
Jordan McCollum

MamaBlogga

Create Captivating Content

Yes, I know, “create captivating content” is a rather obvious way to start out. And I also know very well that it’s easier said than done.

But that doesn’t mean that it’s not necessary. No matter what else you do, none of the other steps here will be a permanent fix for your blog if you don’t have real, valuable content.

How do you create captivating content? The first step is to think about your audience. What would they want to read? What would they like to talk about? What do they need to know more about?

Perhaps not every day, but on a regular basis, try to write content that’s “timeless”—something that will appeal to your audience in three hours, three months or three decades. Advice, how tos, and lists are all popular formats for this timeless content.

Once you’ve brainstormed for ideas, be sure to outline the direction your post takes. This will make it easier to write, ensure that you hit all the important points that you want to, and provide structure and coherence.

The structure the outline provides may also work as subheadings within your post, which help to guide the reader and even help people skimming the article understand what it’s about. In this vein, numbered and bulleted lists and bold words and phrases also help draw skimmers into your writing.

Another way to help draw readers into your writing is to create not just one piece of captivating content, but a series.

Use series of posts

If you have an idea for a post that you know will be a very long post or you have several related ideas, turn them into a series of posts on the subject. This helps in a number of ways:

1. You can draw your readers in to reading more of the posts in the series
2. You can write on a topic that interests you at length without boring uninterested readers
3. You get to develop your ideas over a period of time
4. You can turn one idea (or set of ideas) into multiple posts
5. You create more captivating content (and more points of entry to your blog for interested readers)

A series of posts can make it easier to plan and write that captivating content for your blog. I still recommend outlining these important posts. Not every post needs to be so carefully planned, but the posts that you intend to become captivating content should involve more time and thought on your part.

Even if you don’t create an official “series” of related posts, you can certainly look back through your posts to find post related to topics, themes or even words and phrases and link to them in your post, providing more information and value to your visitors.

Table of contents for Mom Blogging A

- [A little advice to mom bloggers](#)
- [Advice to Mom Bloggers: Your own](#)
- [Advice to Mom bloggers: RSS](#)
- [Advice to Mom Bloggers: Headers](#)
- [Advice to Mom Bloggers: Connect](#)

Another technique that can not only help you create captivating content but also help with all aspects of your blog is appealing to a niche.

Appeal to a niche

Why is appealing to a niche so important to your blog? Because by focusing on a niche audience, you automatically think about what your audience wants to read about. It helps you to set goals for your blog, find readers who are interested in what you have to say and focus on a subject, topic and audience.

As I mentioned before, appealing to a niche is also a great way to help you brainstorm to create captivating content. By focusing on what your audience wants to see and read, you're already thinking about what will interest them most.

What, exactly, constitutes a niche? Almost every blog does have some sort of topic, from an Internet marketing blog to a mom blog. But a "niche," which we commonly use to describe a position that you've carved out uniquely suited to you, must be more specific to be truly effective.

If you're an Internet marketing blog, do you focus on contextual advertising, affiliate marketing, news, covering Internet campaigns, or something else? If you're a mom blog, are you a kid-focused mom blog, a resource for mothers (and if so, a resource for mothers to do *what?*), or a fountain of knowledge after raising your brood of 15?

You don't have to fit into someone else's niche if it's not yours. It will feel unnatural to you and to your readers. Besides, if someone else is already doing it, the market may be saturated—and it doesn't need someone who isn't truly passionate trying to edge their way in.

How do you find your niche? There are hundreds and thousands of blogs on every topic. How will you differentiate yourself from all the other blogs out there? Really, how? Think about what audience you want to appeal to, what you're passionate about and how can you add value to your readers' lives. If you want people to read your blog, write about something that will help them.

Become a resource

As you create captivating content designed to appeal to your niche, you will accumulate quite a bit of content on your site. However, don't let that keep you from linking out to other blogs in your niche, or coordinating group blogging efforts such as carnivals, contests and group writing projects. These are all good methods not only to attract visitors and links, but to establish yourself as an authority in your niche. Contests and group blogging efforts are also a way to give back to your readers and point them toward other valuable resources in your blogging community.

One way to become viewed as a resource is to create a comprehensive article on a single subject. Some of the most successful posts like this simply gather advice, lists or quotations from several sources into one post. With a good title (and effective trackbacks), you have an authoritative resource on your site to compliment your original captivating content.

Of course, part of being a resource is the value you add to your visitors. Simply compiling others' thoughts is not enough to establish yourself as a resource. Continue creating your original, captivating content and hope that at some point, someone will quote your posts in the same way.

Make It Easy on Your Visitors

Make it easy for your first-time visitors to stick around. They came to your blog for a reason—either someone they trust linked to you or they saw your page in a search engine. Of course, your blog should already be easy on the eyes, but maybe you have more to offer them than the single post or page that attracted them in the first place. They won't know it unless you tell them.

Make your blog topic obvious

How many times have you arrived at a website and immediately wondered, "What kind of place is this?" Your readers won't have to wonder if you make your blog topic obvious.

If your visitors can quickly see what your site is about, they can self-select easily. If the site really isn't for them (it's a digital photography blog and they don't own a digital camera, for example), that's okay. It's not a reflection on you necessarily. On the other hand, you want people who would be most interested in your topic to be able to identify it quickly and know that they've found more than just a good post—they've found a resource they can return to.

So how do you make your blog topic obvious? Just come right out and say it. Put it in the title element and the description of your blog (not to mention the meta description, which may show up in search engine results). Make it part of your header. Provide an obvious 'About' page to discuss your topic at length. Add a paragraph or feature on your sidebar.

In these examples, even without the names of the blogs, you get a good idea of what they're about:



As you can see, some topics are much easier to describe than others. If your topic requires a lengthy explanation, ponder long and hard to see if you can distill it to a sentence or phrase. If not, find a sentence or phrase that expresses the heart of it (or even part of it) to work into your description, title element, and header. Explain in more depth in your sidebar or about page.

Highlight related and popular posts

Whenever possible, display a list of posts related or similar to the current post. The best place for this list

is at the end of each post. Once a visitor has read through your entire post, it's likely that they're interested enough in the topic to read similar posts.

Also, display your most popular posts prominently so new visitors can see what other people have enjoyed on your site. Most of the time, popular posts are displayed in a sidebar. Popular posts may be determined by number of comments or visits or simply by the author's preference.

Most Popular Posts

[Five Things Moms Do Right](#)
[Popular Parent Bloggers](#)
[Full feeds: the full story](#)
[Advice to Mom Bloggers: Headers](#)
[MamaBlogga Group Writing Project](#)

If you have a large number of posts you'd like to highlight, and most or all of those posts are directly related to the topic of your blog, you could also create a "Top Posts" page to display your most popular or favorite posts. If you link to this page prominently in your navigation, you can easily draw attention to it.

More Posts Like This

- [Let's Change the World!](#)
- [The embodiment of womanhood](#)
- [Fulfillment and faith](#)

By putting all your favorite posts together in one place, you enable your readers to easily find not only your best content, but to get a good feel for your style and topic.

Many blogs also like to feature a list of recent posts in the sidebar, which is also a good way to enable visitors to get a feel for your topic.

Another way to help visitors find posts on the same topic is to use a categorization system for your posts.

Use a categorization system to help readers find related posts

There are lots of systems designed to help readers find related posts in your blog: labels, categories, tags, topics, bookmarks, etc. Pick one or two schemes—preferably the ones your blogging platform uses—and stick with them.

One popular scheme (especially with WordPress-based blogs) is the use of categories and tags. Categories, in general, are used to denote major subject areas of a blog. So a blog about knitting might have categories such as "Yarn," "Works in Progress," "Sweaters," etc. Tags are often used to denote subcategories, such as "basketweave scarf," "green yarn" or "pictures." (Note: important tags can be made into subcategories in WordPress. I recommend using subcategories on recurring themes within categories, such as "Pullovers" and "Cardigans" under "Sweaters.") Lorelle VanFossen of Lorelle on WordPress [links categories](#) to the table of contents of your blog (broad subjects) and tags to the index (individual subjects).

Not sure how to do categorization? Here are some ideas from several blogs:

The SEO's Guide to Beginners

Posted by [mystery_quest](#) on Sun (6/24/07) at 11:03 PM [Business Tactics](#)

Filed under [Miscellaneous Blog Tips](#), [Case Studies](#)

4 Responses to "How to Sell Product"

tagged as [moms search for meaning](#)

Posted in [Fulfillment](#) | [10 Comments](#) »

Category: [Google](#)

Tags: [amit singha](#), [human powered search engines](#), [mahalo](#), [matt cutts](#), [new york](#)

Technorati tags: [group writing project](#), [parenting](#), [motherhood](#)

Labels: [commentaries](#)

posted by Serikhit @ 6:00 AM 12 comments link +

Using a categorization system helps your readers find groups of posts they're interested in. If your readers come across your site from a link or search engine and like what they read, seeing that this post is part of a larger category (or tag or label) can encourage them to click through to read posts on the same topic.

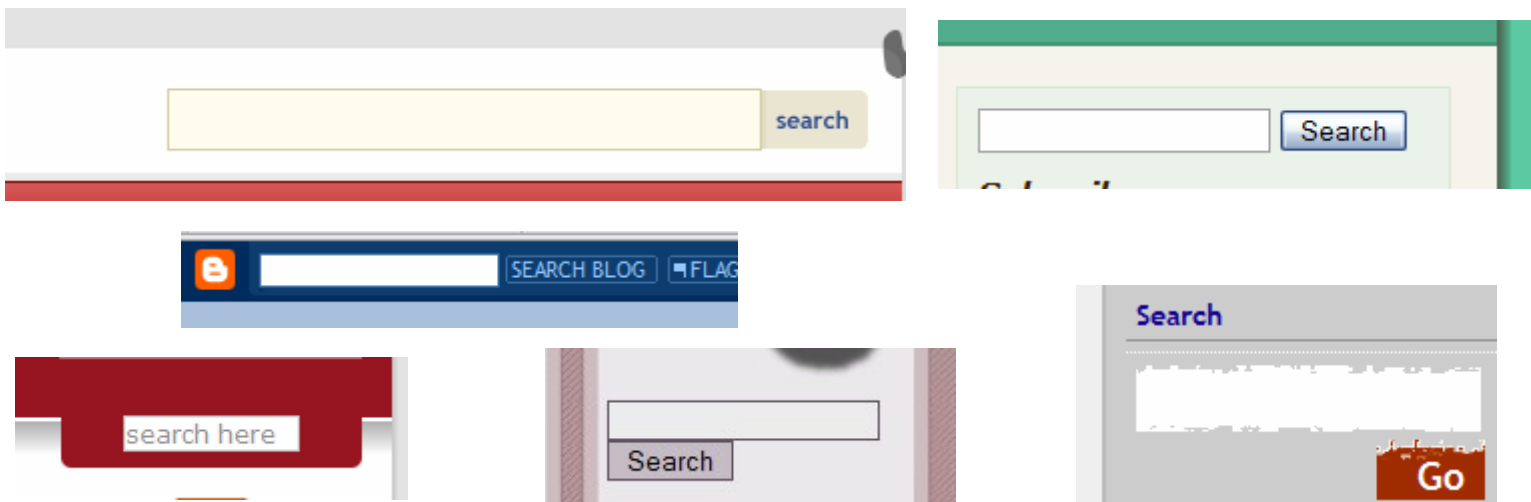
Finally, tags and categories are also useful when you want to reference a group of posts in a single link. For example, if you run a mobile phone blog and have written several times on all the developments in the newest mobile device, you might wish to include a link in your text to the tag, label or category page. That way, in the middle of reading your visitors will know that you have a series of related posts, and they'll be directed to the entire series without having to hunt for links at the end of your article or through your search box.

Offer a search box

That being said, it is absolutely essential to offer a search box on your blog. Not only can your visitors use the box to locate posts on a word or topic that may not be found in your categorization system, but you can use it to find older posts on the same topic as well.

Also, search boxes have come to be a staple on websites. Visitors to your site will expect to be able to search your site if they need to. Usability studies show that people generally think the first text box on a page is (and should be) the search box.

Some blog platforms offer a built in search box, while others have many customizable options for placement and appearance.



If possible, make your search box easy to find, yet unobtrusive. Most blogs feature a search box "above the fold" (in the area of your website visible without scrolling). Placing a search box near the top of the screen on the right hand side usually places the search box in a highly visible position, and a place where people expect to find search boxes, without interfering with your layout and posts.

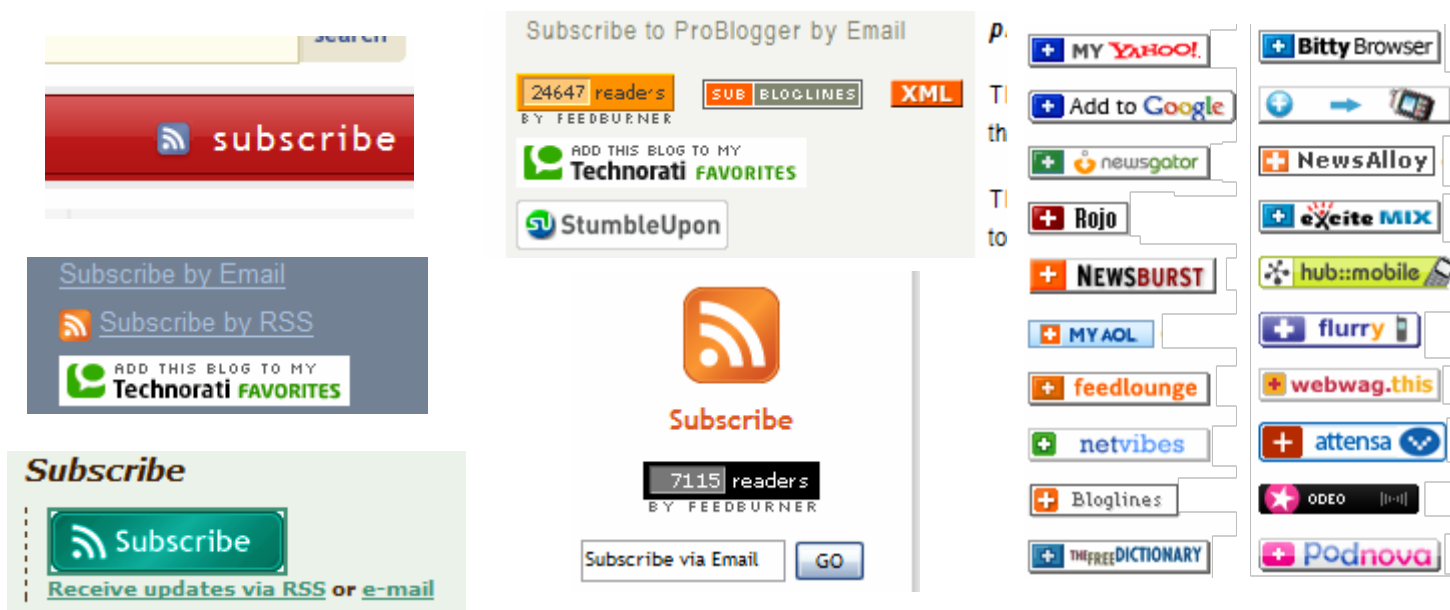
If your blogging platform doesn't have a built in search feature, they most likely offer some alternative method of getting one, such as a plugin or addon.

Call your visitors to action

If you want your visitors to do more than just read your post and leave, tell them. Tell them what you want them to do—and make it worth their while.

Usually the most prominent “call to action” on a blog is the call to subscribe. Subscribers are a valuable metric, and sometimes one of the few goals bloggers have.

To make the call to subscribe prominent, feature a prominent graphic on every page of your blog. As with your search box, don’t make it obtrusive. Usually, a button in the sidebar on every page is sufficient. You can offer a single generic RSS “Subscribe” button, or a variety of “chicklets” featuring the most popular feed readers or sites:



Obviously, you probably don’t want to just slap the graphic onto your template and call it good. Add a few words before or after the graphic(s) to explain what subscribing means (something along the lines of receiving updates delivered directly to your feed reader or email) and encourage your visitors to subscribe.

Also, another popular place for a call to action is at the end of your post text. The “magic sentence” that follows your post strikes visitors at the perfect time to engage them. They’ve read (or at least skimmed) your whole post, so either they’re really patient or they like what you have to say. This is the opportune moment to invite them to receive more posts like this one.

Enjoy this entry? [Subscribe to the full RSS feed or e-mail feed!](#)

The standard form of the “magic sentence” reads like: “If you liked this post, then be sure to subscribe to my [RSS Feed](#).” It simply invites someone who has already enjoyed one of your posts to receive similar posts to read at their convenience.

Finally, when offering the option to subscribe, keep in mind that not everyone uses feed readers to stay on top of their favorite blogs. Many people still prefer to receive updates in their email, so be sure to offer your visitors the option to subscribe via email as well. If you offer this option with an on-page subscription

box, be sure to clearly mark it as a subscription box and not a search box. Confusing your visitors isn't a good way to keep them coming back.

Offer full feeds

While there is some disagreement about the virtue of offering full RSS feeds, in my opinion [the advantages outweigh the disadvantages](#). Many people think that by offering partial or excerpt feeds, subscribers will have to visit their site to read their full posts.

Unfortunately, that doesn't appear to be the case. FeedBurner VP Rick Klau [wrote](#) that FeedBurner, which manages nearly 800,000 feeds at the time of this writing, had "seen no evidence that excerpts on their own drive higher clickthroughs." Or, [as I put it](#):

When someone subscribes to your blog, they are saying, "I like what you talk about; I'd like to read it at my convenience." My convenience, personally, is reading it at the same time *and the same place* that I read all my other blogs. I'm not reading only what you have to say; I wouldn't bother with a feed reader if I only wanted to know when you've posted something new.

In the comments of that post, I received affirmation of my opinion:

"Partial feeds bug me, and I really don't read many of the posts from sites that use them." ([comment](#))

"Partial feeds are a turn-off and I often unsubscribe from them. A good post from a full feed will definitely warrant a click." ([comment](#))

"It drives me NUTS when people don't put the full post in a feed. I read so many feeds I just don't have time to click through on every post unless i want to comment." ([comment](#))

It's your decision in the end, but keep in mind that full feeds are the user-friendly thing to do. Partial feeds don't force people to click through to finish reading your post, and nor do they really protect you from content theft.

Get a Conversation Going

Get people involved in your blog. Most visitors won't stick around for long at a blog that just talks at them. People want to be involved in a conversation. They want to feel that their thoughts matter just as much as yours do.

How can you get your visitors more involved in your blog? Ask a question at the end of your posts. Ask if people feel the same way, have more suggestions in the area or what's working for them. Once you have people interested, you can even admit that you don't know everything—or even anything—about the topic in question. Ask for help.

You are not signed in. You need to be registered to comment on this site. [Sign in](#)

Also, be sure to remove barriers to commenting, like the one shown above. In the same way that you want to make it easy for people to understand what your blog is about and find more of your related posts,

you should try to make it easy for them to join the conversation. If you really want people to say something, don't force them to sign in or leave your site or do long division (simple addition or typing a word as a spam catcher is okay, though).

There are other ways to get people involved as well. You can invite them to share your posts on social bookmarking sites, respond to your posts on their own site, email them to friends or do an interpretive dance about them. Okay, the last one probably won't benefit either you or your reader, but imagine asking for something off the wall like that? I've recently come across a plugin for MoveableType blogs that offers the ability to [comment on a post with video](#). (So maybe the interpretive dance could work out after all!)

Once people start talking back to you, are you set for life? Of course not. Unless your blog is already one of the biggest on the Internet, or you have enough commenters that they carry on conversations with one another, you're still going to want to jump in there and participate in the conversation.

Respond to comments to keep the conversation going

Again, don't just talk *at* your readers, talk with them. In my own experience, I've received more comments when I respond to comments on my blog as well as commenting on others' blogs.

You certainly don't have to respond to every random spammer or troll who happens by your blog. But it's always nice to show your appreciation for commenters. It's especially important (not to mention only polite!) to respond to commenters who ask questions.

A new visitor to your blog has no idea what kind of relationship you have with your readers. To a new reader, you could be a pontiff who extemporizes to the masses, but would not deign to *converse* with them. You could be someone who puts his or her words out there and basically abandons them, never returning to look at an old post or what someone might have had to say. Or you could be someone who is so self-absorbed that you don't even know if your comments are turned on.

But by making it clear that you pay attention to what people say on your blog and that you value their input, you're subtly encouraging others to add their 2¢ to the conversation. You show that you're not better than they are just because you're a blogger (though many of them will be bloggers, too), and that you're interested in what others have to say on the topic. By seeing that you are willing to continue the conversation in the comments or via email, your visitors will form an individual relationship with you. That is the strongest reason why people return to your blog and subscribe.

Another bonus: you might get more post ideas from that conversation with your readers!

Conclusion

There you have it—the tried-and-true, non-gimmicky ways to encourage your visitors to stay longer, read more of your site and become subscribers. Implement this advice as you see fit, and monitor your stats to see if your average visit length, bounce rates and subscriber numbers change. No matter how tried-and-true a solution may be, always make sure that it works for your site and your visitors.

And good luck with getting your visitors to stick!

Appendix A: WordPress Plugins to Make Your Blog Stickier

You certainly don't have to use all of these plugins (you could make quite a mess of your blog if you do!), but feel free to select from among these plugins to find the best ones for your site, topic and visitors.

[Related Posts](#) by Alexander Malov, Mike Lu & Jon Bourne

Use this plugin on post pages to display similar posts that your readers might be interested in.

[Popularity Contest](#) by Alex King

Use this plugin to display your most popular posts in your sidebar or top posts page (and quite a bit more, too.)

[Comment Relish](#) by [Justin Shattuck](#)

Thank your first time commenters for sharing their thoughts with a personable email.

Some type of "dofollow" plugin (see [Andy Beard](#) for a good list of these plugins)

Thank your commenters for participating by eliminating the "nofollow" tag on their comments and giving them real, search engine friendly links from your blog.

[Subscribe to Comments](#) by [Mark Jaquith](#)

Allow your commenters to follow the conversation as it develops, with new comments delivered to their email.

[In Series](#) by [Travis Snoozy](#)

Create an interlinked series of articles, with all the posts in the series listing and linking to all the other posts.

[Ultimate Tag Warrior](#) by [Christine Davis](#)

The most popular post tagging plugin (although tagging is now integrated into the latest version of WordPress)

[Landing Sites](#) by the undersigned

Detect if your visitors are coming from a search engine—and if they are, greet them and display relevant posts at the top of the page.

[Welcome Back](#) by Andrea Micheloni

Greet returning commenters to your blog.

[Subscribe-Remind](#) by Trevor Fitzgerald

Adds a "magic sentence" to your posts to remind visitors to subscribe to your feed.

Appendix B: Movable Type Tricks to Make Your Blog Stickier

You certainly don't have to use all of these scripts and plugins (you could make quite a mess of your blog if you do!), but feel free to select from among these scripts and plugins to find the best ones for your site, topic and visitors.

[Subtocomments](#) by Oscar Hills

Technically a script (as opposed to a plugin), this enables visitors to subscribe to comments on your posts to receive updates on post comments.

[Most Active Entries](#) by Jeremy Smith

Display the entries on your blog that are receiving the most comments/trackbacks over a period of time.

[Removing the "nofollow" attribute from comments](#) by Gothwalk

Movable Type (and TypePad) feature a "nofollow" attribute and a redirect link instead of a direct link to your commenters' sites. Encourage comments by following these steps to fix this.

[Plus](#) by Timothy Apnel (requires [Xsearch](#)) or [Fast Search](#) by Mark Carey

Add a search function to your blog to help visitors find your content faster and more easily.

[Tagging plugins](#)

Supplement Movable Type's native tagging and help your visitors find related posts.

Appendix C: More Resources on Blog Stickiness

These references link to specific posts that helped me while I was gathering information and contemplating the subject matter of this book, as well as subsequent posts on the subject. Just about all of these resources offer much more valuable information, and I highly recommend checking out not only the posts but also the comments to the posts.

[How to Keep First Time Readers to your Blog - Part I](http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/02/27/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-i/)

<http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/02/27/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-i/>

[How to Keep First Time Readers to your Blog - Part II](http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/02/27/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-ii/)

<http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/02/27/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-ii/>

[How to Keep First Time Readers to your Blog - Part III](http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/02/28/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-iii/)

<http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/02/28/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-iii/>

[How to Keep First Time Readers to your Blog - Part IV](http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/03/01/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-iv/)

<http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2005/03/01/how-to-keep-first-time-readers-to-your-blog-part-iv/>

[7 Ways To Get Readers to Stick | Nate Whitehill dot Com](http://natewhitehill.com/7-ways-to-get-readers-to-stick/)

<http://natewhitehill.com/7-ways-to-get-readers-to-stick/>

[Improve Your Blog's Stickiness | Marketing Pilgrim](http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2007/05/improve-your-blogs-stickiness.html)

<http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2007/05/improve-your-blogs-stickiness.html>

[Make Your Blog Stickier | Marketing Pilgrim](http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2007/05/make-your-blog-stickier.html)

<http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2007/05/make-your-blog-stickier.html>

[How to develop stickyness to your blog](http://www.bloggingtips.com/2007/05/23/how-to-develop-stickyness-to-your-blog/)

<http://www.bloggingtips.com/2007/05/23/how-to-develop-stickyness-to-your-blog/>

[Intelligent Design and Stickiness](http://technosailor.com/intelligent-design-and-stickiness/)

<http://technosailor.com/intelligent-design-and-stickiness/>

[WordPress Plugins to Make Your Blog Sticky](http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2007/05/30/wordpress-plugins-to-make-your-blog-sticky/)

<http://www.probblogger.net/archives/2007/05/30/wordpress-plugins-to-make-your-blog-sticky/>

[More Blog Stickiness | Marketing Pilgrim](http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2007/05/more-blog-stickiness.html)

<http://www.marketingpilgrim.com/2007/05/more-blog-stickiness.html>

[Advice to Mom Bloggers: Stick it! | MamaBlogga](http://www.mamablogga.com/advice-to-mom-bloggers-stick-it/)

<http://www.mamablogga.com/advice-to-mom-bloggers-stick-it/>

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