

The Student Blogging Challenge

Commenter FAQs

studentchallenge.edublogs.org



The 21st Student Blogging Challenge begins October 7 and we need volunteer commenters! These FAQs explain exactly what a commenter does and how you can register. You can make a big difference in only an hour per week for 10 weeks!

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE ABOUT?

The Student Blogging Challenge is about embracing all of the benefits of blogging -- from learning digital writing skills, and digital citizenship, to developing an authentic audience and connecting with others around the globe.

Since 2008, the free challenge has run twice yearly, beginning each March and October. The next challenge begins October 7, 2018. It will be hosted by teacher and blogger, Kathleen Morris with support from founder, Sue Wyatt, and the Edublogs team.

The challenge is made up of a series of 10 weekly tasks all designed to improve blogging and commenting skills, while connecting students with a global audience.

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

The challenge is open to all age groups (K-12) worldwide, however; it is most suitable for ages 8 to 16. Students aged 18+ may prefer to volunteer as a commenter.

There are three ways to participate:

- 1. Using a class blog:** Teachers and students can participate together as a class. Teachers or students can publish their weekly tasks on their class blog, and/or students can participate by leaving comments on posts.
- 2. Students with their own personal blog:** Individual students can participate by publishing posts on their own blogs and leaving comments on other students' blogs.
- 3. Volunteer commenters:** If you're an educator (or study/work in the field), you can also register to comment on a small group of students' blogs.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A COMMENTER?

One of the most powerful benefits of blogging is the opportunity to have an authentic audience. Students are often more motivated and strive to produce higher quality work when they know someone is reading. The opportunity for feedback or conversation about a piece of work can be priceless too. This happens in the comment section of a blog.

Because hundreds, if not thousands, of students take part in each Student Blogging Challenge, we need a team of commenters to assist and 'be' the audience.

Each week, commenters are asked to visit 5 different student blogs, read the post, and leave a comment. They're also asked to check back to see if the student responded (you can tick a box to receive an email notification of subsequent comments).

Sound like something you could manage? Read on!

WHO CAN BE A COMMENTER?

Commenters register and must be approved to help with the challenge. They need to be involved in some field of education.

Commenters can be:

- classroom teachers
- homeschool teachers
- principals or school leaders
- administrators working in education
- trainee teachers
- retired teachers
- educational coaches or trainers
- university staff working education
- regular bloggers about educational matters
- children's authors who have their own website
- students who have taken part in at least two sets of previous challenges or invited by organizers

WHAT EXACTLY WOULD I HAVE TO DO?

When you register and are approved as a commenter, you will be given 5 numbers. These will correspond to the students you'll visit each week on a spreadsheet (you'll have different students each week).

Each week, you will get an email from Sue Wyatt who will give you the spreadsheet link and any additional tips or reminders.

The weekly commenting process is as follows:

1. Check your inbox for Sue Wyatt's email with the spreadsheet link
2. Check the new spreadsheet each week to find the 5 students you will visit
3. Click on the URLs of your assigned blogs in the spreadsheet and read the new posts
4. Leave the student a comment (see commenting tips below)
5. Contact Sue Wyatt if you have questions or concerns throughout the challenge

COMMENTING TIPS

Sue Wyatt will be able to give you lots of tips throughout the challenge, however, as a commenter, you should keep the following in mind:

- **Be a role model.** This means using correct grammar and spelling. If you're not confident in this area, you could use a free tool like Grammarly to double check.
- **Personalize your comments.** Tell the blogger what you liked about their work and perhaps offer them some feedback for future posts.
- **Feel free to ask questions.** We encourage you to tick the box to be notified of future comments so you can see if students reply to you. Commenting conversations can be wonderful learning opportunities for students!
- **Try to connect others.** One of the main aims of the challenge is to connect students from around the world. *E.g. You might see that Billy has written a post about his love of painting. You might remember that George also wrote about this. Give Billy the link to George's blog and encourage him to visit and leave a comment.*
- **Say who you are.** Either introduce yourself at the start or end of your comment. *E.g. Hi Billy, My name is Mrs. Smith. I'm teacher-librarian from London and I enjoyed reading your new post.*

CAN I VISIT OTHER BLOGS?

While you'll be assigned 5 blogs each week, you certainly don't have limit your commenting to just these blogs.

Sometimes commenters like to go back to visit student bloggers that they've connected with in previous weeks. We have no objections to this. Any support you can give student bloggers is great!

HOW ELSE CAN I SUPPORT BLOGGERS?

If you're active on Twitter we'd love you to use the hashtag #STUBC to share great posts you've come across or encourage people to register for the challenge (as participants or as commenters).

We also have a Flipboard magazine to curate some of the excellent posts that the students publish.

Throughout the challenge, you can send Sue Wyatt any posts that you think should be featured in the magazine. Alternately, Sue can add you as a contributor to the Flipboard if you'd like to do this yourself. If you've never used Flipboard before, it's very straightforward and Sue can tell you what to do.

WHAT WILL I GET OUT OF IT?

This volunteer role is a meaningful contribution to the community. From the comfort of your own home, you can be making a big difference to the lives of students from all around the world.

Being a challenge commenter is a great way to learn about blogging. You might even see how this type of challenge could be used with your own class in future.

Your role as a challenge commenter is even something you could put on your CV to demonstrate your commitment to the global community of students!

WHAT IS THE TIME COMMITMENT?

You are asked to visit 5 blogs each week (although you're welcome to sign up for more if you think you have the time!). The challenge runs from October 7 to mid-December, 2018 (ten weeks).

We recommend you allow about 60 minutes per week so you have time to read each of the 5 posts and write a comment. As a minimum, you'll need at least 30 minutes.

DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT BLOGGING?

No. It doesn't matter if you've never blogged before. As long as you can navigate the internet with some confidence, you'll be good to go.

Leaving a comment is very straightforward. We'll give you more instructions about commenting on different blogging platforms when the challenge begins.

Participating as a commenter can be a great way to learn more about blogging!

WILL I HAVE SUPPORT?

Yes! Sue Wyatt (@tasteach) is our commenting team leader. Sue is the founder of the challenge. Sue has passed the baton on to Kathleen Morris (@kathleen_morris) to run the challenge and is now volunteering to support our commenters.

You'll be able to contact Sue via email if you have questions or concerns.

HOW DO I REGISTER?

We'd love you register and please forward this information to anyone else you know who might be able to volunteer.

The registration form will be on the Student Blogging Challenge website from September 2 (<http://studentchallenge.edublogs.org>).

More questions? Email us.



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