

How Experts Cover Breaking News with a Live Blog

What is a live blog? A visual timeline of an ongoing event, a live blog captures key developments through images, videos and social media posts, as well as editorial commentary and analysis.

Live blogging is especially suited for the kinds of situations that unfold over a longer period of time and require capturing a variety of perspectives on what is happening.

Because they are dynamic, interactive and continually updated, live blogs provide greater value to readers than traditional news articles. More and more news organisations are using live blogs to reach wider audiences, to increase the transparency of the traditional news-making process, to increase engagement, and even to generate new streams of revenue through blog syndication.

If you're new to live blogging, we've gathered some tips from some of the top live blogging professionals. In particular, we'd like to thank [Paul Bradshaw](#), who runs the MA Data Journalism and MA Multiplatform and Mobile Journalism at Birmingham City University and authored the book [The Online Journalism Handbook](#), for sharing his insights.

Be relevant – ensure your live coverage provides value

The networking nature of live blogging is one of its most distinguishing qualities. That is to say, while you cover breaking news or an event, any number of individuals or media agencies may be blogging

and/or covering it too – as well as watching it on TV. Prior to dedicating the time needed to make a good live blog, it's important to ascertain whether or not your coverage will provide value and be able to capture an audience.

One way to accomplish this is to see what syndicated content is being shared in your ecosystem. This should give you a good idea of what other agencies collectively feel is relevant news for your followers. In addition, making use of Live Blog's [analytics feature](#) will reveal, especially over a period of time, what kind of stories attract readers and keep their attention.

Be accurate – make certain you post verified facts

It is of the utmost importance that you publish accurate, verified information. Therefore, you must be careful when the live event you're covering features disputable facts or different perspectives of events. This particular problem is common during [elections](#), when anyone and everyone can have an opinion. In these cases, it's critical to establish procedures which allow you to verify that what is being said is actually true.

Similarly, if you happen to be covering volatile situations such as demonstrations, riots, or something similar, you will find any number of varying perspectives about what is happening and why. These circumstances put you under pressure to confirm the hard facts surrounding the situation.

In both cases, having a reliable reporter or reporters who can conduct the necessary research and provide you with accurate information is usually the best option. If you don't have your own reporters, once again we recommend that you consult the syndicated content within your ecosystem to find out which information a variety of sources agree upon and choose to publish.

Differentiate yourself – provide your audience with rich insights

A common live blogging mistake – and one that will leave your blog with little to no value – is to simply make a note of what is occurring. Many other coverage providers are doing exactly this, so you should give special consideration to filtering, aggregating, and posting only the most insightful content. Together with this curated content, provide some analysis on what is happening. Some questions to consider are: why is this information important or not important? What insights does it provide for the topic that you are writing about?

It's also a good idea to supplement your live coverage and analysis with multimedia. Adding multimedia enriches the quality of your coverage. Some examples of this come in the form of audio, video, or social media.

Socialise – encourage your audience to participate

Finally, given their instantaneous nature and multimedia structure, live blogs are the perfect opportunity for you to interact with your viewers, so make sure that readers are able to comment and share. Not only will they feel more connected and involved in the experience, but they will also provide you with additional content and inspiration.

For instance, comments encourage readers to return to a site to follow a discussion or debate. By paying attention to what people are saying, you will gain insight into the quality of your blog as well as your editorial strategy, and this can be used to develop future blog topics. You may also be able to incorporate direct user feedback in real time, including eyewitness reports or accounts of what other news agencies and sources of information are reporting.

Pro Tips: Blogging insights from a newsroom insider



Süleyman Artiisik, online editor and dpa-live product manager at dpa, Germany's largest press agency, has [five tips for live blogging coverage](#) that keeps readers coming back for more.

Speed is your friend

Live blogs are well suited to situations where it's just about getting the facts across rather than going in depth on a topic. For me there's no faster journalistic format than live blogging.

Every event deserves its own playbook

At dpa, we usually meet as a team about a week before an event we're planning to cover and put together a script that we want the reporting to follow. Here you really have to think in terms of pure storytelling, from the opening scene to the dramatic arc of how an event plays out, and structure the blog so that you're building suspense, one post at a time.

Creativity is key

For me, the multimedia aspect is one of live blogging's main differentiators. Something we appreciate about Sourcefabric's Live Blog is that it makes it easy to include multimedia. Also, all of our reporters use the Live Blog mobile app, which we use especially for photos.

Learn from every device and format

Live blogging is TV without the live image. Mobile devices were once called second screens but today we have to think mobile-first. At dpa, we optimise our live blog coverage for mobile users, meaning shorter, snappier text – a maximum of two paragraphs. And we create our own graphics in-house.

Source from your networks

My tip for covering live events is to create Twitter lists related to your topic – and start following them.