

This guide is about how to set up a subscription facility on your blog using Feedburner. People who are new to blogging or bloggers who are confused by feeds will find it useful.

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INTRODUCTION

If you want people to visit your blog you need to help them.

- First of all you need to activate a feed for your blog.
- Then you need to offer your visitors a subscription facility - so they can remember where to find you again and/or get your content sent to them every day.

Below I look at how you help people subscribe to your blog and analyse your blog traffic., but first some context.....

What is a web feed?

- Feeds are how you get your data to other people.
- Feeds contain either a summary of new content from a site or the full text and images
- Feeds are what people use to subscribe to your blog.
- Feeds mean people know when you've published new content. Readers/subscribers are fed the latest copy from your blog as soon as its published or whenever you say, without having to visit your blog
- Feeds are operated by virtually all [news websites](#), [blogs](#) and [podcasters](#).
- Feeds are what power up all the various widgets that you see on blogs.
- Feeds can be syndicated using a service, like [Feedburner](#), which collects the feed from your blog and sends it to your subscribers to read - either in a feedreader (like [Bloglines](#) or [Google Reader](#)) or as an e-mail.

*Feeds are a way for websites large and small to distribute their content well beyond just visitors using browsers. Feeds permit **SUBSCRIPTION** to regular updates, delivered automatically via a web portal, news reader, or in some cases good old email. Feeds also make it possible for site content to be packaged into "widgets," "gadgets," mobile devices, and other bite-sized technologies that make it possible to display blogs, podcasts, and major news/sports/weather/whatever headlines just about anywhere.*

[Google - Feed 101](#)

PLEASE NOTE: I'm going to use Italics for the proper names of all services or products (such as **Bloglines** and **Feedburner**) to distinguish these from generic names (such as feeds, blogs and podcasts).

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What are the feed formats?

The two main web **feed formats** are [RSS](#) and [Atom](#).

As it is older, 'RSS' is frequently used as a generic term to refer to feeds irrespective of type. RSS 2.0 support for enclosures led directly to the development of [podcasting](#).

Atom was developed because of problems with some aspects of RSS feeds. Many podcasting applications, such as iTunes, support the use of Atom 1.0. Blogger uses an Atom feed and all site feeds are published in Atom 1.0 format. However, if you add ?alt=rss to the end of any site feed URL, you can get the same feed in RSS 2.0 format.

FeedBurner can apply services to source feeds of the following formats:
RSS 0.90, 0.91, 0.92, 0.93, 0.94, 1.0, 2.0, and Atom.

I want people to read my blog - what is syndication?

Web syndication usually means making the web feeds from a site available so that other people can be provided with a summary of any content which has been recently added to the site - such as the latest news or blog post or forum posts.

There are various sites which can help you syndicate your blog feed. One of these is **Feedburner**.

If you choose to 'burn your feed' with **FeedBurner**, it will check your blog feed for updates approximately every 30 minutes. Then, when it detects changes in your original feed (ie new content), then those changes are read into **FeedBurner** and the updates are passed through to the **FeedBurner** "burned" version of your syndicated content.

What is a feed reader?

There are more than 2,000 different types of [feed readers](#) - which are used to read the content produced on blogs.

Other names for feed readers are **news readers** or **aggregators**.

In order to contain the amount of e-mail delivered to an inbox, people who read a lot of blogs often use a feed reader to read blog.

Very few new posts on blogs are delivered as e-mails to my Inbox. I read a lot of blogs and I subscribe to [Bloglines Beta](#) to read them.

I've also tried [Bloglines](#) and [Google Reader](#) - but I had problems with the latter and switched back to Bloglines and then upgraded to the Beta version.

I always advise bloggers to offer options for both feedreaders AND e-mails as everybody's preference varies - and your aim is to make it easy for people to read your blog.

I want people to read my blog - how do I activate my feed in Blogger?

If you want other people to be able to subscribe to your blog first of all you need to activate your feed.

According to the poll on my [Blogging for Artists](#) site, over 60% of artists use **Blogger** for their blogs. So what follows mainly focuses on how to activate your feed in Blogger – which means making it accessible to other people. However, some of the comments apply to all bloggers irrespective of which platform they use.

Similarly, most of the instructions apply irrespective of which feedreader or email subscription service you want to use – because this bit is about making your feed accessible

This is [the Blogger Help page for Feeds and Syndication](#).

In **Blogger**:

- go to **customize** and find the settings tab
- click on the **site feed tab** - this is the help page for [How do I change my site feed settings?](#)
- **Blog Posts Feed**: Decide what you want your blog feed to do - options are None, Short or Full.
 - A short feed means that only a set number of characters are sent in the feed. Somebody reading has to click to see more. If you have your feed set to None then this is (a) useful if you don't want your blog found and (b) means you can't offer a subscription service!!!
 - I have a short feed because (a) I tend to have long posts and (b) because my blog gets scraped on a regular basis by spam blogs and a short feed helps to stop this happening.
- **Blog Comment Feed**: Decide what you want to do about the feeds for Comments and per comment - again the options are none, short, and full. Remember that some people like to follow discussions in blog comments and/or get answers to questions posed. I have both of mine set to full.
- **Post Feed Redirect URL**: If you want to burn your post feed using [FeedBurner](#), or used another service to process your feed, you need enter the full feed URL here. Blogger will then redirect all post feed traffic to this address and [Feedburner](#) then notifies all the feedreaders it does business with and the blog post appears in those feedreaders.
- **Post Feed Footer**: Decide whether you want anything in the footer for your feed. This is where you enter the code if you use ads or other third-party feed additions.
- **Basic tab / Let search engines find your blog?** You also need to make sure that you have activated the search engine facility. When you select "Yes" Blogger includes your blog in [Google Blog Search](#) but also pings [Weblogs.com](#) when you publish new content. This allows feedreaders to pick up new content.

What is Feedburner?

[Feedburner](#) was set up in 2004 and can provide weblog owners and podcasters and other web-based content publishers with the ability to

- manage and customise their **RSS feeds**,
- track usage of their **subscribers**
- offer **advertising** (optional)

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FeedBurner is the leading provider of media distribution and audience engagement services for blogs and RSS feeds. Our Web-based tools help bloggers, podcasters and commercial publishers promote, deliver and profit from their content on the Web. [About Feedburner](#)

In June 2007, **Google** bought Feedburner for a rumoured \$10 million - which in 3 years is not a bad return on investment! As a result there is now **a Feed 101 page** on the **Google** support website.

How to burn a feed using Feedburner

You can [Watch a short movie](#) (3:14, 4.6 MB, no audio) about how to burn or you can read the following.

- This page explains about [publishing your blog using Feedburner](#).
- There are also handy QuickStart guides for [Blogger, WordPress, TypePad, or MySpace](#). These walk you through the easy process of turning your blog content into a feed-friendly format. They do it rather better than me.
- You start by putting your blog URL into the 'menu line' on the home page of *Feedburner*. You don't need to know the URL for your blog, the process will tell you what's available.
- You set an account with *Feedburner* at the same time as you begin to burn a feed - so you'll need to have decided on a **user name** and **password** in advance. You'll be asked to say what these are when you start to burn your feed.
- Don't forget to publicise your new feed facilities on your blog and any other websites you have! Read this page for [how to promote your feedburner feed using Blogger](#)

How to set up Feedburner as an email service

- You can also [set up Feedburner as an e-mail service](#) and include a *Feedburner* e-mail subscription widget to your blog. This is how to do it in different types of blogging software:
 - [Blogger or Typepad](#)
 - [Wordpress](#)
- **Don't forget to make your subscriptions service easy to find on your blog.** I notice them in the most peculiar places on some people's blogs. I have stats at the top of my right hand column and then subscription services BEFORE anything else. My subscriber numbers started to climb as soon as I put these two together at the top of the right hand column. I also have a subscription service included in the blog footer element. If anybody has taken the trouble to read through a week's blog posts then I want to make sure they get the opportunity to subscribe!
- If you get stuck, you can also ask for more help in the [Feedburner Forums](#)

How to track your feed traffic

You can track all of your **feed traffic** - including people who have subscribed in feed readers and never visit the site - by changing the feed redirect in **Blogger** (on the **Settings/Feed tab**) to include the **Feedburner feed address**. Blogger will then redirect all post feed traffic to this address.

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It will look like this.

Post Feed Redirect URL

```
http://feeds.feedburner.com/nameofblogaccount
```

When I did this for the first time, I was rather surprised by the jump in numbers! The only problem then is if the Feedburner site goes 'down' (very rare) - in which case you then need to switch back temporarily to the conventional feed address.

Tip: When you type the feed address into the **Post Feed Redirect URL** text field, do make sure you type in your entire feed address including the "http://" portion.

What is a feed count? What does it count?

You can add a **feed counter** (or **feed count chicklet** as *Feedburner* calls it) to publicise your circulation statistics directly on your blog (or anywhere else you can post HTML). You can also change what it looks like.



This is what mine looks like it's the icon right at the very top of the right hand column of my blog [Making A Mark](#). I only show readers/subscribers NOT page views/web hits in the stats at the top of the right hand column. See below as to why.

FeedBurner's subscriber count is based on an approximation of how many times your feed has been requested in a 24-hour period. Subscribers is inferred from an analysis of the many different feed readers and aggregators that retrieve this feed daily. Subscribers is not computed for browsers and bots that access your feed.

Feedburner

If you want a feed count then go to the *Publicise* tab in **Feedburner** and select the *Feedcount* option.

- This provides more information about how to change colours and styles for your counter and then gives you the html code. Make sure you select the right type of Blog software.
- When you 'save' your input you activate the feedcount.
- You then need to include the html code in an html widget in the Blogger side column.

How to monitor your feed traffic

Most of you have probably already got a stats service on your blog - however you can also look at your blog stats on Feedburner. Check out the *Analyze* tab. This is the [FeedBurner Stats Overview and FAQ](#) and you can read more about them [here](#). You can also use other statistical software for website traffic.

More Tips

Tweak your feed

Feedburner provides some [publishing tips here](#).

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How to get a site for a specific label

Can I get site feeds for specific **labels**? - tells you what to do to if the blog you read is using labels and also has site feeds enabled. You can then pick and choose which topics you want to subscribe to. The format for **label feeds** is this: <http://blogname.blogspot.com/feeds/posts/default/-/labelname>

How to cope with people who scrape your feed Feed

Blog scraping provides content for **Splogs**. (A Splog is a spam blog) Two tips:

- Use **Google Alerts** to check for scraping. Then consult [Theft of blog content and what to do about it](#) (on Blogging for Artists) or [Copyright – Resources for Artists](#) for a range of tips on what to do next
- If this has happened to you try setting your site feed to 'short'. My experience was that it usually stops it (for a while) and seems to help a lot to reducing it to relatively minor levels.

More information

FREE Publications about Blogging for Artists

You can find more publications like this available as a FREE pdf publication to print out on the [Blogging for Artists](#) section of [Making A Mark Publications](#) on [my website](#). They are mainly updated and revised versions of posts about blogging on my website. Also try consulting my site [Blogging for Artists – Resources for Artists](#)

Making A Mark: other posts about blogging

I regularly post about blogging and website matters for artists on my blog Making A Mark – try taking a look at these categories of posts - [blogger](#), [blogging](#), [web analytics](#) and [website matters](#)

Links:

- [Feedburner](#)
- [Feedburner 101](#)
- [Feedburner Blog](#) - links to help pages for all the tabs in Feedburner
- [Google - Feed 101](#)
- [Blogger Help - Feeds and syndication](#)

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You can find more 'Making A Mark Guides' with advice on sketching, blogging and the art business on the portfolio or publications websites listed on the right.

Portfolio Website: <http://www.pastelsandpencils.com/>

Publications Website: <http://www.makingamark.co.uk>

Art Blog: <http://makingamark.blogspot.com/>

Travel sketchbook blog: <http://travelsketch.blogspot.com>

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