Social Media for Crafters and Artists

Covering the Basics of the Social Web

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Introduction: History of the Social Web for Crafters

I use stitchery as seduction. The desire to touch a textile and the need to connect with the work in a physical sense is a metaphor for the Internet's promise of community. *Playing False by Sharon Boggon, describing how women represent themselves on the web through their craft*¹

Social media and the social web can be intimidating. They sound so modern and high-tech, as if social media is something completely new. In actuality, it's not. It’s just a new way of doing old things. Specifically, it’s a new way of communicating, sharing, and networking.

Even in the stone age, families and friends sat around the campfire sharing stories and telling tall tales late into the night. Tribe members gathered together to work on projects like hunting, preparing food, making clothing, and building shelter.

As industry made obsolete our reliance upon our community to provide the basics, social groups continued to find common interests around which to gather, like sewing, knitting, barn raising, and weaving.

Yet, our need to gather together to share common interests has not waned. Communities of crafters and artists from sewing societies and knitting groups to quilt guilds, scrapbook circles, and writing groups, gather regularly around the world.

¹http://inaminuteago.com/exhibitions/pastexhibits/playingfalse.html
Some of the first online groups on the Internet were crafters and artists. UseNet and Bulletin Board Systems (BBS) groups popped up early on, bringing together hobbyists and professionals on UseNet groups like alt.sewing and rec.crafts.textiles. Instead of trying to find an expert to answer a question, a crafter could post a note on the discussion groups and get an answer from the other side of the planet, sometimes within a few minutes.

In 1978, CompuServe was one of the first Internet networking communities offering email and live chat access. In the early 1990s, their moderated forums were the first social network groups on the web, bringing together like minds to discuss their hobbies and business interests. Hundreds of thousands joined these discussion groups, creating them on the fly. Crafters and artists jumped on board quickly to form a variety of sewing, knitting, crochet, paper crafts, quilting, and other groups, trading stories, sharing pictures, and exchanging how-to tips and techniques.

In May of 1994, less than a year after the birth of first web pages (called home pages), Sue Traudt realized that there was no collective resource for quilters and started Quilt.com. Around the same time, the email list KnitList arose out of the UseNet groups, sharing knitting information, tips, and techniques around the world. In 1998, the first online knitting magazine, KnitNet, began publishing on the web. DeviantArt followed a couple of years later showcasing original user-made artwork.

Blogs brought a new found freedom for sharing crafting enthusiasm and expertise. No longer was sharing of beautiful knitted scarves or hand sewn quilts limited to emails, discussion groups, or forums. Crafters and artists could now have their own websites and build communities around them!

Craft and artist bloggers were challenging each other to competitions, supporting each other to excel in their craft, and creating new online communities and social interaction.
In 2006, Stephanie Pearl-McPhee, the **Yarn Harlot** (http://www.yarnharlot.ca/), already a popular author and knit-blogger, challenged the online knitting community to the 2006 Knitting Olympics. Participants would start a challenging project during the opening ceremonies of the Winter Olympic Games in Turin, and complete the project by the closing ceremonies. Almost 4,000 knitters accepted the challenge.

When Burda Style magazine added a patterns section to the magazine in 1952, it changed the clothing and sewing industry forever. As one of the first western magazines published in the Soviet Union and China, creating an online version was natural in 1999. In 2007, they took it a step further and created BurdaStyle.com, a branded social network online, attracting fans from around the world to share copyright-free patterns, videos, photographs, techniques, and to build a wide variety of textile-based communities, combining old-fashioned crafting with modern technology.

While small knitting and crochet groups existed, husband and wife Casey and Jessica Forbes wanted to bring together fiber artists from around the world and build an online community. They wanted to also help professional crafters to improve their business skills and techniques - for free. What better way than with an active social network?

In 2007, Ravelry was born, becoming “the Internet tool to help the typical needle-wielder navigate through the woolly wild.” In 2010, Ravelry had more than one million members from around the world.

This all made sense. If you wanted to reach out beyond your community to connect with other knitters, sewers, scrapbookers, stampers, crocheters,

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painters, mod podgers, or more, the Internet and web opened doors wide to relationships around the web.

Knitting was no longer restrained to Continental or English. One could learn from across the globe how to do Western, Eastern, Combination, and Finger knitting. They could see how artists in Australia create their own vision with crazy quilting, or how Israelis and others, limited in their fabric selections, used wood, plastic, metals, and other non-traditional materials in their art quilts. Instead of saving up for a vacation in Japan to learn Shashiko quilting, YouTube videos showed them the process step by step.

As the popularity of the craft television channels grew, so did web offerings like YouTube Channels, like ThreadBanger\(^3\) which introduced sewing, knitting, and DIY tips and trends for today's youth, focused on handcrafting and sustainable arts and crafts.

Early critics of the web envisioned a new form of couch potatoes, people hunched over their keyboards before glowing screens of data streaming into their brains. Instead, people found themselves in more face-to-face meetings because of their web relationships than they would have ever had otherwise. Meetups became the quintessential in-person meetings for groups and social events. Sites like Meetup.com offered people a way to quickly find events and activities in their area, taking their conversation from the virtual to the real world.

By 2006, this concept of online social interaction and community building became known as social media. The tools that have been used for years were suddenly known as social media tools. Instead of forums, blogs, and

\(^3\)http://www.youtube.com/user/ThreadBanger
discussion groups, new jargon arose from the "Web 2.0" movement such as social bookmarking, social networking, wikis, podcasts, social news, content management systems (CMS), video sharing, and microblogging.

As if simply to confuse things, they were branded names that often became nouns: Twitter, Facebook, Delicious, Ning, Technorati, StumbleUpon, YouTube, and Flickr. What was once a simple way of finding friends online became foreign and intimidating for those finally ready to enter the world of the social web. Choices became confusing and complicated, which brings us to why you need this book.

**Why Read This Book?**

It’s my job to help you understand how social media works for crafters and artists. This book was originally published for crafters but has been expanded to include artists of all different types. You’ll learn how you can keep the campfire spirit alive on the web and find new friends and relationships passionate about the same things.

Yes, there are many articles and websites to help you through the process of uncovering the gems in the social web experience. Most of these are aimed at professional business people, the artistic crafter tends to travel the same landscape by a more circuitous route.

This book is designed as a workbook and to-do list to help you on your journey through the social web. I’ve broken down the steps for each of the most popular types of social media tools and publishing platforms to give you an overall view of how they work and how they might best serve you.

My goal is to help you save time and energy, guiding you to the right online groups and communities that best serve you and your craft, online communities and members providing the inspiration, motivation, and supportive community you need and can rely upon.

Being part of the blog community is the best benefit. I have met and/or communicated with many other knitters through my blog. I enjoy the opportunity to express myself and start conversations with others about things I care about.

Renee of A Good Yarn, Minnesota Knitting Guild
Why Should You Embrace the Social Web?

Why should you embrace the social web? Have you given it much thought?

How about the fact that this is where the conversation is happening? The fact that this is how and where the social connections are being made? This is the future and the future is now.

According to the latest Technorati State of the Blogosphere report⁴, hobbyists are the largest demographic of the social web and blogosphere, representing 64%. Other statistics might surprise you.

- 51% blog for the pleasure and for personal reasons.
- 74% say they measure the success of their blog according to their level of personal satisfaction, not monetary gain.
- Two-thirds of bloggers are male.
- 79% have college degrees and 43% have graduate degrees.
- 31% of respondents agreed blogging and social web interaction had positively impacted their social life. Over 36% of hobby bloggers agreed.
- Over 38% said they enjoy the attention blogging and social media brings them.

The social web isn’t new. It’s just a continuation of your real life interactions and relationships in a new way. Interaction with people today often happens through the web, connecting more frequently than they did before with easy integration into their lifestyle. Where we once wrote letters and post cards, we replaced those with

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⁴http://technorati.com/blogging/article/state-of-the-blogosphere-2010-introduction/

Quilting is about piece by piece, knitting is row by row, embroidery is stitch by stitch. Each of these activities involve big things being made from small pieces. The same process can be applied to life online.

Blogs are built post by post. Communities are built conversation by conversation or person by person. To make a quilt, you build it up block by block over a long period of time.

There are times when you curse the thing, and other times you are enthusiastic and energised, the thing twists and turns under your hands, but overall the project is gradually shaped into something.

Life online and blogging using social media now overlay my studio practice, and life is the richer for it.

Sharon Boggon, Founder PinTangle and Stichin’ Fingers
phone calls, and today, we use the social web for the same purposes.

Matt Mullenweg, the founder of WordPress, one of the most popular web publishing platforms, describes it best. “Technology is best not when it replaces human interaction but when it augments it.”

The social web is your experience, however you define it. It’s your world. You choose how much or how little to give and take from it. You choose what news to share with others, how to share it, where to share it, and what that sharing consists of, be it words, photographs, video, audio, or graphics.

The social web includes the tools you use to access it, some you might already be using. Your email mailing lists, blogs, online communities, forums, social bookmarks, sharing spaces, and social networks are all a part of your social web experience.

Crafters are creative souls. While you may tend to spend a lot of time alone, you want and need that social connection to recharge batteries, get new insights and a fresh perspective, and stay connected with the world outside of your imagination.

The social web opens that door. But never forget that you control what passes through.

Social media isn’t about adding to your workload or time pressures. It’s about reaching out and tapping the most valuable resources out there, ones often not found in your own community.
Top 10 Reasons to Get Involved in the Social Web

1. **The social web gets your creating juices flowing.** Blogs and social networks are excellent sources of inspiration and motivation.

2. **Creativity and energy are contagious.** Participating in blog carnivals, forum challenges, competitions, contests, and just being around energetic and enthusiastic people will increase your own creativity and energy. They're catching.

3. **You get more done.** There is something about writing it down and sharing it with the world to reinforce a personal commitment. Blogging and relationships through online communities keep you on track and eager to get the projects done so you can show off and brag a little.

4. **You create a public document of the process.** By sharing your progress along the way, you can track the process as well as the time line, giving a sense of visible accomplishment. If you ever need to prove you own the design, your public progress of the path toward completion can be used as proof.

5. **To make friends.** How simple is that? Not just local friends, but friends around the world. There is a sense of teamwork as you connect with others who challenge, motivate, and inspire your creativity. You learn you are not alone in your creative endeavor.

6. **You get help.** Can’t figure out a pattern? Don’t know what that button is on your sewing machine? Wonder which yarn to use for that sweater pattern? Your craft community can be a never-ending resource for help.
7. **You help others.** Do you know how to do something well? Why not share your talents and skills with others eager to learn from you?

8. **Online meetings often turn into face-to-face meetings.** Repeated research shows that those active in social media tend to meet up with their online friends more often than not. Through barcamps, meetups, tweetups, unconferences, and other social networking experiences, they continue the conversations they started online.

9. **You contribute.** One of the greatest things you can do is give back to the community. There are many opportunities to give back through events and fund raising, but there are also precious moments when your comment, tip, or shared technique can provide a light bulb moment for another.

10. **You get to share and brag.** It’s no fun to craft in a vacuum. Bragging and sharing is the number one reason for participating in the social web. Through blogs, forums, Facebook, and other social media tools, you can showcase your beautiful work and get the recognition and support you deserve.
Now that you understand what you are missing by not fully engaging with the social web, it's time to get started on your path through the maze of social media tools.

We'll begin the journey by helping you take the first steps with calm clarity, knowing exactly what you need to take the first steps. We'll talk about how to create your online identity, and offer tips and guidelines for protecting yourself online.

**What Do I Need to Be Social on the Web?**

The social web is the interactive side of the Internet. Social media tools are used to connect to that social web, wherever and whatever it may be. While you can hit Google or Bing and find online communities of crafters and plunge in, it helps to start the process prepared.

To be social on the web, you will need:

1. **A mission and a plan of action.** What are you really interested in learning or doing? Do you simply want answers to your questions? Do you want to get involved with a group? Do you want to be challenged to push the boundaries of your craft? Do you want to meet new friends online or off? How do you want to share your crafting experience with others online? The more focused your initial mission, the more specific your plan of action can be.

2. **A good sense of humor.** The web is a crazy place. There are good people, bad people, and stupid people, just like in the real world. Bring your sense of humor and some common sense.
3. **Patience.** Learning how to use the social web is not complicated. Odds are you are already participating in some way. Still, it takes a while to learn the ins and outs of each online community and the people involved. Just remember, it’s no different from real life.

4. **Time.** Beginning your foray into the social web can be time consuming as you uncover more and more interesting things, new patterns, techniques, and tools. It’s easy to get lost in all the information. Come ready to spend a lot of time at first, but know that you will quickly learn how to actually save time and spend less time on the web and more time with your craft.

5. **The Right Tools:** To experience the social web, you will need:

   a. **Email:** Gmail, AOL, and Hotmail are among the most popular free email accounts. Consider having one of these to use for social interaction and preserve your private email for trusted people.

   b. **Web Browser:** While most use Internet Explorer or Safari because their computer came with it, branch out and play with the open source Mozilla Firefox or Google’s Chrome. They support tons of extensions and add-ons that make cruising the social web much easier.

   c. **Mobile Apps:** If you have a mobile phone, iPad or other mobile device, check the various web apps they offer for web browsing and social network access.

Before you step out onto the social web, you will need to decide who in the online world.
Who Are You Online?

Before you venture out into the world of online adventures and the social web, it helps to be clear about who you are online.

Though many treat the social web like they treated their call signs or handles on CB Radios in the 1970s, think twice before choosing to become sewingchick42. The modern social web frowns upon such nicknames and anonymity. People want to know you, the real you, not the funny name you hide behind.

In the social media industry, words like trust, transparency, and authenticity are often tossed around. This means that the web is a highly social and visible environment. People want to connect with other people, with real lives and real names.

There are times when you may want to protect your privacy, and there are ways to do that. You can use a made up name that sounds real, Sally Sewlots or Daniella Darning, or use your initials such as LorelleV or JDSmith.

Some crafters create an anonymous identity that describes their craft passion. Yarn Harlot is a great example, as are Knit Purl Gurl, Lazy Gal Quilter, Knitting Mama, and Crazy Aunt Purl.

Think about your online personality. Do you want to be the expert, the one people turn to for advice, instruction, and guidance? Then give your username a real life connection. If you want to stay the lost face in the crowd, then be knittingchicken90.

Create a Knowable Profile and Avatar

When you create a blog or sign up for a social media network or forum, you will be asked to fill in your profile. It usually consists of a picture representing you and a brief description of yourself and your interests.
Part of the trust and authenticity comes from providing enough information for readers and community members to get to know you. Remember: they want to know what you know.

You don’t have to share your resume, birth date, birth place, number of cats, dogs, and fish - and children and grandchildren - or any other personal details. Share enough to let people get a sense of you and your expertise, and then participate in a way that backs it all up.

When you leave a comment on a forum, blog, or social networking site, an avatar usually accompanies the post. This is your visual identity on the web, a way people can quickly identify and recognize you in the midst of the busy stream of conversation online.

You do not have to use a picture of yourself. Some use a closeup of their eyes. Others showcase their logos, interesting graphics, hobbies or special interests, children or grandchildren. You choose the image that you feel most represents your online identity and personality.

Many avatars are generated from the images added when registering for profiles or through sites like gravatar.com, a free service that associates an avatar image with your email address. Sites with gravatars enabled automatically use those images.

Avatars can be as small as 16 pixels to as large as 128 pixels square. When you upload your image to your profile or Gravatar, the image should be square and a minimum of 150 pixels wide. This will allow room for the image to be resized without distortion.

Protecting Yourself and Your Privacy Online

Protecting yourself online is no different from protecting yourself in the real world. You shouldn’t say bad things about your boss that might get you fired. You shouldn’t shout your social security number on street corners.

You already know these things, but something happens in the very personal experience that can be the social web. People forget that what they say and do on the web is public and permanent.

Here are a few tips for protecting yourself on the web.

☐ If you shouldn’t say it in public, don’t say it online.

☐ Never share your username or password.

☐ Use a complicated password with capital letters, numbers, and punctuation.

☐ Choose your social network carefully. Be selective about the members of your social web circle.

☐ Learn to read URL/Addresses on the web. You might think you are on google.com but a one letter typo can land you on a malware site. Look at a link address before you click.

☐ Use updated firewall and virus protection.

☐ If you do not know the sender, don't open or click any links, be it email, Facebook, Twitter, or otherwise. Delete it.

☐ Avoid sharing photographs of your home or office with a clear address, especially with mentions of vacations or time away. Share your location, just keep it vague unless you really want to be found.

☐ If it looks suspicious or too good to be true, it usually is.
Avoid installing toolbars and “extra” programs when installing software.

Think before acting. When you hit publish or submit something to the public web, you are responsible for the consequences of that message, and it can be held against you in some courts of law.

So how did I learn how to tat? Did I sit at my grandmother’s knee and watch her for hours - nope. Did I head to my local library and check out every book I could find on tatting - nope? Did I sign up for a class at my local tatting store - they don’t even exist.

I sat in front of my laptop and watched videos on YouTube!! That is social media at work.

I was able to learn a completely new skill in the comfort of my own home in my PJ’s and bunny slippers.

...Social media for me is not only about expressing my creativity. It’s about connecting to people and companies both right in my own back yard to around the world.

Christine, guest blogger on Pannos-Winzeler Marketing News
http://www.pannoswinzeler.com/blog/
Building Your Social Web Plan

Now that you know your online identity and the benefits of online communities and blogs, it’s time to create your social media plan. Ask yourself the following questions.

- What do I want to get out of my online activities?
- Do I want to get information and not participate?
- Do I want to learn from others?
- Do I want to teach others?
- Do I want to be a part of a community?
- What do I have to offer a community?
- What do I want to get from a community?

Choosing Your Social Web Experience

Depending upon the answers to those questions, here is a quick outline of your social web experience options. Each is described in greater details in the chapters that follow.

Mailing Lists
Email lists have been around since the beginning of the Internet. While some are private, using a mailing list web program to maintain, most use Yahoo! or Google Groups, where members receive and respond via email, and can track and search the conversation on the group member web pages. Mailing lists tend to be small, offering a familiar way to correspond and build relationships.

Blogs
A blog can be your home base, the place people can find and contact you. There are many types of blog publishing platforms, free and paid. Blogs allow you to create your own community beyond the limitations of other social networking sites. Blogs are the most flexible of web tools, with infinite ways to connect with the social web.
Forums
Forums are online discussion groups where people of like minds and interests gather. There are as many forum communities as there are craft types and derivations, and not all are suited to all personalities. These are communities where people spend a lot of time sharing their projects, learning from each other, and often creating close relationships and support groups.

Social Bookmarking Sites
When you visit a web page or site you like, you may want to preserve the link so you and others can come back to it later. You can save it as a bookmark on your browser, or share the link with others through social bookmarking sites. Many social bookmarking sites offer discussions about those shared links, encouraging greater community involvement and relationships. Examples are Delicious, Digg, StumbleUpon, and Reddit. Most bookmarking sites feature voting or peer sourcing, a form of crowd sourcing, as members vote the links up and down with their recommendations and comments.

Social Networking Sites and Groups
You may know the names of some of the most popular social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Ning, BigTent, Yahoo, Bebo, LinkedIn, Meetups, and Ravelry. They are hosts to online communities, helping you find connections and build relationships through their tools and services. Some are open to the public for viewing, while others are closed memberships, requiring application and approval before gaining access.

Social Sharing Multimedia Sites
Social sharing multimedia sites allow the sharing and hosting of photographs, graphics, audio, and video files. Flickr allows sharing of photographs. YouTube hosts videos for sharing. Slideshare hosts slideshow presentations. Ustream and Stickam stream live video.

[Blogging] has connected me with local people who I've actually met in the flesh. I'm planning a fall driving trip in which I will meet and stay with a dozen or more bloggers in Colorado and New Mexico. It's provided an additional common element with one of my friends, who has become a closer friend because of our shared blogging experience. Seeing and reading about what others are doing inspires me creatively.

Chris of Stumbling Over Chaos of the Minnesota Knitter's Guild
In general, these are sites that create community around multimedia. What do all these services have in common? They bring social interaction to multimedia content.

**Which Social Path Should You Choose?**

Just as there are many crafts to choose from, there are many social networks and communities to choose from. Some are independent, and some are hosted on branded social networks and services. Which do you choose?

The next chapter outlines some of the different paths you can take in creating your social web experience, leading you to the online communities that will best serve your needs, and help you connect with others, building relationships that can last a lifetime, even in the virtual world.

**Creating the Social Web Plan**

Think of this as a strategy session. A plan of action. Your plotted route to your social web experience. It begins by understanding that you already have a community.

Communities are everywhere, offline and on. On the web, communities form around specific sites, like-minded groups, or individuals.

As an individual on the social web, you have questions you wish to ask and answers to offer to others. With experience, you know where to go when you need help with your craft. On the web, you become a resource offering tips and techniques. In time, you become a focal point for your own social network and online community.

If you are active in any way on the web, you have a community.
Identifying Your Current Social Web Community

Use the following form to make a list of how you are involved with people online already.

Mark yes or no if you are currently using the social media tool, then describe your level of participation. Are you active? Do you engage with only a few people or many? Do you contribute and have discussions through this tool, or do you tend to lurk (watch)?

List all the various online groups you are involved with and the level of your involvement. Do you have favorite bloggers? Favorite resources for help and educational information? Places you take online classes? What about individuals? Who are the specific people or groups you connect with frequently? List them, too.

Some of these may be unfamiliar. Don’t worry. Just list the social media tools you use currently.
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<tr>
<th>Y/N</th>
<th>Social Media Tool</th>
<th>Level of Participation</th>
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<td>Email/Mailing Lists</td>
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<td>Blogs You Follow</td>
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<td>Classmates.com</td>
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<td>Ancestry.com</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pinterest</td>
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</table>
Did you learn a little about the networks and communities you are currently a part of? These are part of the social web many of us take for granted, not realizing that they are indeed communities.

This form is not a complete list of every social network you should join. This is a list of the most popular social media sites you may be already involved with. Are there crafter communities within these social media tools and networks? Indeed there are. Do you know how to find them?

Though you may not be aware, you have already taken the first step in finding those online crafting communities. You’ve had a question about what fabric is right for a certain pattern, what glue should you use when sticking plastic and metal together, or perhaps how to do a specific lace, knitting, or crochet pattern, and turned to the web for answers. You’ve already figured out how to search, but there are so many resources to tap into for more answers, and the potential to build relationships while you discuss your favorite crafting philosophies or for those answers.

Now it’s time to get involved with the communities that can best serve your creative habits consistently. In other words, it’s time to move from lurker to participant.

**Getting to Know You, Getting to Know All About You**

When it comes time to introduce yourself to your new online community, it helps to get to know the community a little better.

Is there a favorite blogger you enjoy reading? Check out their *About* page to learn more about who they are, why they blog, and how they work their craft. Read a few of their posts to learn more about what
they have to offer and how they like sharing and connecting with others. Then ask them a question.

It’s easy to just write a comment that says thank you or something polite, but bloggers and forum participants aren’t looking for a pat on the back. They want conversation. They demand feedback. They love interaction. Give it to them.

If you like what they’ve done, tell them, and tell them why. If you don’t think that’s the right choice or you have a better idea or advice, offer it. It’s not wrong to challenge their point of view. Don’t you enjoy people giving you something to think about or shedding fresh light on the subject?

Blogs and forums can be like informal parties, where everyone shows up in their comfy clothes to hang out and philosophize about life, the universe and everything. Kind comments are welcome but opinions are graciously encouraged.

A community can easily form around a blog. Through comments, links, and discussions about what the blogger is doing, a community is formed.

Forums and mailing lists are no different. Study, watch, and learn how their social interaction works. Do they welcome open discussions or are they more careful and cautious? Do they let just anyone in, or are they more selective?

The key question to ask yourself is, “Is this a group of people I want to be friends with?” In other words, would you invite these people into your home for tea and cake?
Take incremental steps, both small and large, to ease your way into a community. Ask why someone recommended that tip or technique. Don’t challenge, just ask to understand better. Many will leap at the opportunity to share more in depth information and detail. If you find a question you can answer, do so. If it makes you feel more comfortable, say you are new here to lighten the responsibility, but jump in and share. The odds are that they will welcome you.

Check the forum or group for a “Welcome Newcomers” or “Introduce Yourself” section, and do so. Explain who you are, what your hobbies and interests are, and what you want to learn and what you have to offer. Don’t sell yourself or your craft, just let them know you’re there, eager to participate, and that you have something worthwhile to share.

If you wish to participate fully and be an active member of the community, it helps if they know who you are and what you do well. For example, while Sally can tell Sarah that Jane is the perfect person to ask how to hem a pleated skirt, only Sally and Sarah know of the recommendation. If Sarah asked in a forum, and Sally recommended Jane as an expert at hemming pleats, everyone watching would know that Jane is the go-to person for hemming pleated skirts.

A reputation is formed by exposure to a community. If you want that kind of reach, you need to expand your social network into these online communities.
The Art of Being Picky About Your Friends

There are communities everywhere. As we’ve described, they are found in being on a specific social network site through your personal connections, or through forums, mailing lists, blogs, Facebook, and a variety of web interaction platforms.

While this is exciting for those eager to find a lot of cool people to connect and hang out with, it doesn’t help the busy crafter to make a decision. Enter social curation, the art of being picky about your friends and the information you are exposed to.

In the early days of the web, the score card for websites and forums was the visitor counter. While these could be easily faked, people found visitors counts were bragging rights toward popularity. Today, the visitor counter has been replaced by the number of followers and friends, or, in Facebook terminology, the number of likes you have.

These numbers are worthless.

Honestly, how can anyone know and value 24,938 people? Over a million? How does one keep up with that many lives and activities? It’s impossible. And we know it.

Social curation is the process of being more selective and realistic about those numbers.

In the social web, friends and followers mean people you may or may not know who are your fans. Facebook’s Like is a quasi up and down vote of popularity. People interested in what someone has to say online and tracking their online activities because they find value in it.
Prune down the number of people and the inflow of information. It begins by being selective in the first place, then culling down the unwanted connections on a regular basis.

Start with the social web communities that best serve your needs, not everyone that had an option to sign up. Cull this down to the ones that serve your needs best, keeping you informed and inspired.

On hosted social media communities like Twitter and Facebook, follow those who best provide you with the information, educational and social experience you want and need. I’ll share with you how to streamline the flow of information so it won’t overwhelm you.

The key is to curate and manage your social connections, not let them become a giant time sink. Managed right, they help you spend more time on your craft.

**What Kind of Community Are You Interested In?**

If you are currently not active in an online community, what kind of group would you be interested in? One that is active with lots of discussions? One that offers teamed or competitive project making? One with experts answering questions? Or one where you can hang out and get to know individuals, and feel like you are a part of something special?

The following chart looks at the different traditional social media tools and networks to fit different personalities and online goals. These are not requirements but examples of your options that match your specific personality and goal.

The *reach* is the broadcast coverage that best matches that particular personality/goal. Is it one-to-one or one-to-many? Is it broadcast to a few or to many? Is it about forming personal relationships or a lot of connections? How intimate of an experience are you looking for in your online social experience?
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personality/Goal</th>
<th>Reach</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent/Personal Network</td>
<td>One-to-one</td>
<td>Email Discussion Groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Very personal</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
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<td>Blogs</td>
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<td>Google for answers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Social Network (professional crafter)</td>
<td>One-to-many</td>
<td>Email Discussion Groups</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Medium personal</td>
<td>Twitter</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Build a few close</td>
<td>Facebook</td>
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<td></td>
<td>relationships plus followers and friends</td>
<td>Google+</td>
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<td>LinkedIn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Social Network</td>
<td>One-to-many and many-to-one</td>
<td>Self-hosted blog with forum</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal to impersonal</td>
<td>Ning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Build few to many close</td>
<td>Google+</td>
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<td>relationships plus followers and friends</td>
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<td>Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Communities</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In coming chapters, I’ll outline the specific benefits and pros and cons of each of the different social networking platforms and communities.
Social Media Interactive

Techniques

The following are some tips for interacting with social media tools, networks, and services, be they Twitter, Facebook, forums, blogs, or discussion groups.

☐ **Say Something Intelligent:** What you publish on the web says a lot about who you are and how you think. If you don’t sound intelligent or say something intelligent, you’re wasting everyone’s time, including your own.

☐ **Ask Something Intelligent:** While there really is no such thing as a dumb question, there are some dumb things people say. Respect people’s time and patience and ask intelligent, well-thought out, and complete sentence questions.

☐ **Add to the Conversation:** If you can’t add to the conversation, say nothing. The interactive nature of the social web is what the “social” is all about. We want your input, your thoughts, feelings, or story. We want to know what you think and how. We want to talk to you. Make it easy for us.

☐ **Write Timelessly:** We’re all looking for answers. Those answers could be published yesterday or 10 years ago. When you answer a question on the web or provide a tip or technique, write not just for the person who needs the help now but for those who need the help 10 or 20 years from now. You never know who or when you will be helping someone with what you publish.

☐ **Keep it Short and Sweet:** In general, most online community interaction is concise. While you may feel
inclined to ramble or rant on a blog post or forum, don’t. Publish it on your own site. Most social web tools feature a word or character count limitation, forcing you to keep it short and sweet. Where there are no such limits, get to the point fast anyway.

- **Say Thanks and Mean It:** In general, thank yous are considered a waste of time in response to blog and forum posts by just anyone passing by, however, appreciation isn’t. Running forums and blogs can seem like a thankless job, so when someone goes out of their way to be helpful, take a moment to show your appreciation. If they’ve helped you resolve a problem or answer a question, then it’s natural to thank them. Even better, if they have a donate button, send a few dollars their direction as encouragement to keep the site active.

- **Be Clear and Specific:** Posting a topic on a forum that says, “Help Needed. Going Crazy Trying to Do This!!!!!!!!!!!” isn’t helpful. Members have no idea what you are talking about, so the right experts can swing in to rescue you. Title the topic very specifically to attract the right people and response to you quickly. Be very specific in the post with your question, not rambling on with the back story but getting to the point. Name what is wrong and be specific with the errors and issues you are having. The more helpful the information you provide, the faster you will get the help you need.

- **Have fun!** Yes, there are a lot of rules. Yes, there are jerks on the web, just like in real life, but there is also joy, compassion, excitement, and creative energy flowing through the digital landscape. Walk through it with a smile on your face and laughter in your heart.
If It Ain't Yours, It Ain't Yours: The rules of life don't change on the web. If it isn't yours, don't take it. If you need permission, get it. If it doesn't feel right, don't do it. If you spot a wrong, report it.

Selling Sucks: To quote Chris Brogan, leading social media consultant and author of the New York Times bestseller Trust Agent and Social Media 101, when you meet someone “you don’t expect them to put their tongue down your throat! That's not how social media works.” It tends to work more like comedian and actor Eddie Izzard describes soft sell advertising today. If you bring the hard sell, being pushy and arrogant, you will be rejected.

Respect and Play Nice: Liz Strauss of Successful-blog.com and SOBCon, the Successful Online Business Conference, states clearly on her blog, play nice. That’s her complete comment policy. People get it, fast. They understand the rules of the sandbox. You have to respect the other kids.

Everything You Do and Say on the Web is Your Resume: Treat what you publish and share on the web as your resume. Make sure it speaks well of you. Those words, photographs, video, etc., are your representatives. Once they are out there, you can’t take them back.

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6http://chrisbrogan.com/
7http://sobevent.com/
Where is the Conversation? A lot of conversations on the web will start on one blog and continue on another or in the blog’s forum. Or on Facebook then continued on their blog. Or on a blog and continued on Facebook or Twitter or elsewhere. With so many ways to communicate and interact, how do you follow the conversation? In general, follow this guideline:

- If it starts on the blog, keep it on the blog.

- If someone links to the blog post, go to the source to have the conversation unless the commentary about the original post is worth responding to.

- If the topic starts on a social media or microblogging service, keep it there until there is enough reason to take it off to something that will allow more extensive and in-depth conversation.

- If you move the conversation from the source, include a link to the source.

Choose Your Battles: It’s easy to forget you’re having a private conversation in a public place on the web. If someone makes you angry, pause and wait. Maybe they said it with love, but you are reading it in anger. Maybe they meant it as constructive criticism and it came out wrong. It happens to everyone. Don’t publish in anger. There will always be trolls, fishing for negative energy. Allow time to be your wise advisor. Once published, you can’t take it back, so publish with care.
Do You Need Permission to Link? You do not need permission to link to someone’s published content or to include their site or social media account in your blogroll or link resource list. You do need permission to use their content beyond the limits of Copyright Fair Use.

Understand Copyright Laws and Limitations: In general, if it isn’t yours, you can’t call it yours or publish it on your site without credit and citation. If you wish to quote someone or use an image or video, check their copyright policy. Typically, the rules are:

- Embedding (including links to the original source) of video images are acceptable.
- Use of copyright free or Creative Commons licensed images with the appropriate permissions are permitted as long as they are credited with the name of the author and the source link.
- Use of published words are acceptable as long as the quoted material does not represent the entirety of the published content. Typically, 200 words or 10% or less is considered acceptable. A citation link crediting the source and author is required.

Cussing and Swearing NOT: While there are some informal forums with a low-key attitude about swearing, few permit impolite or abusive language. While the web feels like an open space to be free and liberal, be respectful and polite.

Read the Manual: All social sites and services have rules and regulations called policies or terms of service. Read them. Thoroughly. These are your guidelines. If you break them, they can boot you out. Many are helpful guides, too, helping you understand
how to participate and join in with the community, making the transition faster and easier.

- **Be Bold. Experiment:** You’re a crafter. You’re an artist. Be bold. Be creative. Experiment. The social web is ready for those who boldly go where no one has gone before. They embrace the enthusiastic and energetic. Risk. Jump off the cliff. Show us what you can do and we will all applaud and be honored.

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Many publishing platforms feature language filters which “blep” out disrespectful words if enabled.

“Comment moderation” is another feature that allows the site administrator or moderator to hold back a comment or post until it has been approved, another way of protecting readers and members from inappropriate or unwanted content.

If a comment of yours has been held for moderation, the blog or forum should inform you. If it hasn’t been released within a reasonable period of time, contact the administrators.

Much of this filtering is automatic. To avoid being caught by the filters or moderation, include no more than two links in the comment or forum post and limit or do not sign your comments.
Incorporating Social Media Into Your Day-to-Day Life

Using social media tools doesn't have to be difficult or time consuming. It’s actually easier than you think to incorporate it into your lifestyle. Here are some tips to help you integrate some of the most popular social media tools into your life.

- **Tweet and Facebook throughout the day**: Twitter and Facebook are excellent ways to let people know where you are and what you are doing throughout the day by sending status updates.

- **Announce the day's plans in the morning.** At the end of the day, let the world know if you met those goals.

- **Stuck in traffic?** Let friends and fans know so others in your community might detour around it.

- **Attending a special event?** Tell the world and invite them.

- **Find something interesting on the web?** Share the link, video, or pictures with your friends and fans.

- **While many talk about what they eat,** why not share what was so special about the meal. Was it beautifully prepared, tasted wonderful, made by someone special, your first experience at the restaurant?

- **Planning a new project?** Share your notes and thoughts on what you want to create via your blog, Facebook, or in your online group. People love supporting your creative endeavors and cheering you on, and some might have a thought or two that would make the process easier.

Social Web Strategist and founder of the Successful Online Business Conference (SOBCon), Liz Strauss checks her tweets and blog's comments on a train in the Netherlands.
Share the progress of your project. People love watching a project evolve, learning from the process and offering words of encouragement. It also keeps you focused and on track, meeting your own self-appointed deadlines.

Share photographs. There are many ways to share photographs of your projects and adventures. You can do so quickly through your blog, Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, or other photography sharing service. Many online groups and forums permit uploading of images for sharing, too.

Capture your experiences in video. Most cell phones and cameras have a video mode. Film your craft projects and adventures and share them through your blog, YouTube, Facebook, or other video sharing services.

Have a rant? We all get frustrated with our tools, software, computer, projects, and daily life. If you’ve got a rant, go for it. Frustration can be both educational and entertaining, and sometimes it helps to get it off your chest. Many times people and companies will respond, helping you to resolve the issue fast. Rant wisely, not viciously, and you might find a new community of people who agree with you.
Building a Blog as Your Resume

A blog is today’s online business card and resume. It is your placeholder on the web. Your home base.

A blog is another term for website. The official definition of website is a collection of web pages. A blog is a collection of web pages, with the content displayed in reverse chronological order. The term website has come to represent a static or non-blog format, but a blog is a website and a website can look static while still being run through a blogging content management system.

What differentiates the two is that a blog features content in a reverse chronological order, the most current information at the top. Content is organized with categories, your site’s table of contents, and tags representing your site’s index words.

Blogs can be personal, but most aren’t. They are simply a publishing platform. You can choose what your blog looks like and the content that it publishes.

At a minimum, it must provide information on who you are, what you do, your general geographic location, and tell us how to contact you.

At a maximum, it may be filled with educational and informative information you want to share with others. It may be used to document a project, brag about your efforts, teach, share, sell, connect with friends and family, and show off pictures and video.

Some people use a blog for themselves, by themselves, building a community around what they publish. Others team up with friends or family to blog together. Some add a forum and other forms of interactivity to...
build a bigger community with the aim of procuring contributions via the members.

There are clever craft bloggers turning their passion into delightful resources to explore. The CraftFail blog\(^8\), a take off on I Can Has Cheezburger Network’s FailBlog, allows people to submit craft failures from “not-so-friendly Amish Friendship Bread” to “Bearded CraftFail.” The irreverent look at crafting struck a nerve. “Hey! I resemble that!”

Its parent blog, Dollar Store Crafts\(^9\), takes Heather Mann’s passion for crafting cheap at the dollar store to new heights with great ideas like using stamping techniques to turn blank paper into trendy wrapping paper, using cassette tapes to make a retro lamp, or the novel use of a week-long vitamin kit into a portable gourmet salt, pepper, and seasoning kit.

PS I Made This\(^10\) calls itself a “movement” and “call to action to re-imagine, reuse & reinvent,” focusing on the “if you see it you can make it” principle of do-it-yourself crafting. Whipup.net presents tips and techniques for “refashion clothing” and DIY craft projects for the green trend.

Craft Test Dummies\(^11\), featured recently on The Martha Stewart Living Show, takes crafting one step further with craft news, reviews, projects, and stuff for kids as well as adults. Recent projects include using green and glitter fabric spray with heart-shaped paper doilies to create a four-leaf clover t-shirt for St. Patrick’s Day, a review and comparison of water brushes for painting, and extensive reviews of all kinds of craft products.

Your blog represents you and your interests, whatever they may be. They can be rambling or focused. It’s up to you.

\(^8\)http://craftfail.com/
\(^9\)http://dollarstorecrafts.com/
\(^10\)http://psimadethis.com/
\(^11\)http://www.crafttestdummies.com/
What Kind of Blog Do I Need?

There are two types of blogs: hosted and self-hosted.

Hosted Blogs

- Hosted blogs are usually free and available from blog hosting services like WordPress.com and Blogger.com, or from other blog networks.
- Hosted blogs are perfect for someone who wants nothing to do with the code, tweaking, or digging under the hood. They want it to work, work now, and stay working.
- Hosted blogs are perfect for those who wish to write, share, and journal their experiences.
- Your domain name is usually a subdomain name combined with the host’s domain name such as lorelle.wordpress.com or deirdradoan.blogspot.com.
- Hosted blogs typically offer a variety of free website designs, themes, or templates and limit what types of code and customization you can use on the site.
- Some limit your ability to use advertising or direct monetization on the blog. Check the terms of service before registering with such sites.

Self-hosted Blogs

- Self-hosted blogs are not free. WordPress is free, but you must find hosting through a web host and either install the blogging program yourself or use one they provide through their hosting options. The monthly fees run from USD $8.00 to hundreds of dollars a month, depending upon your site’s needs. Unless you

The real value of having a blog is you are immediately opened up to the world of everyone else’s blogs, which I find so much more fascinating. Secondarily, the creative release/avenue that I don’t have with my ‘normal friends’ is wonderful. There is a very laid back, no-pressure attitude among bloggers. You blog when you feel like blogging. We all have lives outside of yarn and everyone knows that.

Deb of Wound Too Tight - Minnesota Knitter’s Guild
are planning a heavy traffic site, avoid spending more than $20 a month for your site.

☐ If you love code and taking things apart and putting them back together, go self-hosted.

☐ Self-hosted blogs allow you to control what’s on it, how it looks, and what plugins and add-ons you want to add. It’s your blog your way.

☐ A self-hosted blog requires a higher level of technical ability or reliance upon others to set it up and keep it maintained and functioning right.

Which Blog Hosting is Right for You?
Many very successful arts and crafts bloggers use free hosted blog services. They just want to blog and focus on their art. They don’t want to mess around with advertising, marketing, or delve into the code. They want someone else to worry about bandwidth and hackers.

Others want more control. They want to dig into the design and tweak, or create their own original web design. It’s an extension of their workshop and they want to literally own every pixel, learning new programming languages and software to bring it all together.

We recommend you start with free blog hosting through services like WordPress.com. Most new bloggers start one to three blogs before they feel like they “get it right” and stick with it. So take advantage of the free blogs to test the waters and see if this is something you want to continue.
What Do You Need to Blog?

To begin the process of building your blog, you will need the following.

☐ **Email Address.** If you are self-hosting your blog, your web host may provide you with email addresses. If you are on a hosted blog service, get a friendly free email through Gmail or a similar email service. Many get a specific email for their blog and online community activity, bringing it all to one spot while protecting their personal email addresses for other correspondence.

☐ **A site name or blog title.** This is the name of your site. It is not your domain name/URL, just whatever you are going to call it. It can be your name or have your name featured in it such as “Beth’s Sewing Battles” or a descriptive title like “Sewing Battles Bashed Here.”

☐ **Based upon your name or the blog title, brainstorm domain names.** Don’t be dismayed to discover that the domain name you want is taken as a dot com address. Consider using .net, .org, .info, .biz, or the popular new .me. There are online services to help you if you need it.

☐ **About page bio.** Now that you know who you are online, you can create a profile page on your About page on your blog. It is a summary describing who you are, what you do, and why you blog, and usually

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I hate blogs. Why do I hate blogs? They seem arrogant, and pointless, and desperate. I dislike the sort of people I feel probably write blogs. And then, I met a blogger. And she is awesome, and I consider her a friend, and enjoy reading her blog. It has helped me to accept the blog... thing.

But still, why a blog? Why for me? Self-promotion. At some point, I’m going to start selling some of my knitting (on etsy) and my patterns (on ravelry), to defray some of my fiber-related expenses.
features a picture of you and your cat(s). Don’t all crafters have cats?

- **Contact page info.** If you want to be found and contacted, you need to fill out a contact page with information on how people can take the next step to contact you directly to hire you, buy a product or service, or get an answer to a tough question. You can tell them what you will or will not answer, and list the various options to contact you using email directly, a contact form, Twitter, Facebook, comments, phone, or two cups with a string.

- **Content: What are you going to publish?** Before you begin your blog, write at least five articles or posts. If they do not come easy, maybe your topic is off base and you need to rethink things. If you write 25 articles on the subject, then you’ve clearly got something to blog about.

- **Categorize your content.** Your categories are your blog’s table of contents, guiding visitors to related content on your site and sending a clear message as to what you blog about. In general, you should have no more than 12 categories, with a minimum of 10 posts in a category before creating it.

- **Get familiar with photography, graphic, and video editing software.** Many crafters aren’t happy with just writing or adding a few pictures. They want to get more. While most cameras come with editing software, many crafters aren’t happy with just writing or adding a few pictures. They want to get more. While most cameras come with editing software, many crafters aren’t happy with just writing or adding a few pictures. They want to get more.

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**TIP - EMAIL ADDRESSES:**

Avoid displaying your email address on your site. Use a contact form to protect your email address from evil doers and make it easy for people to contact you.

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Blogging combines several interests into one task. It requires technical know how, creativity, and content that inspires me. While I’ve included some knitting, quilting is my preferred craft. Read Why I quilt. While my blog has yet to reach my full vision, it serves the purpose of bringing my creativity activities together. Really, it is all about me. If its all about me, why do I want others to read my thoughts? I believe in the power of groups to spawn creativity. Not long ago, I participated in a quilt class that last 6 months. In this class, I learn a lot from the instructor. However, I learned even more from my peers. Now the blogs that I read inspire me to create. I want to be apart of that creative energy.

Creative Quilt Girl

http://www.creativequiltgirl.com/2006/02/can-you-find-my-blog/
software, consider upgrading to a more powerful version or switch to one of the popular programs such as Adobe PhotoShop, Corel PaintShop Pro, Picassa, or open-source GIMP for photo editing, and iMovie, Apple Final Cut, Windows Movie Maker, or CyberLink PowerDirector.

- **Set goals.** Your blog is your creative play field. If you don’t set yourself some goals and a plan of action, you will quickly lose interest. You can set goals such as getting a certain number of visitors, or set goals more in line with your creative interests such as a blog post every week tracking your progress with your latest crazy quilt.

- **Use an editorial calendar.** An editorial calendar is a year plan for your blog. Note all the seasons and make a plan for what you would like to feature on your blog to honor Valentine’s Day, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Independence Day, birthdays, anniversaries, whatever dates you honor in your life. Plan out seasonal content, maybe making holiday projects in anticipation of the holidays. Think about article series, taking your readers through a project or tutorial step-by-step across days or weeks. The more planning you do, the more prepared you are for blogging.
How Do I Write a Blog Post?

Writing a blog post or article is as easy as writing in a word processor. Today’s blogs are easy to use, require little or no programming or access to code, and include powerful multimedia features to easily include videos, photographs, and audio.

A successful blog is a focused blog, covering one to three key subjects such as sewing for home and family, or, if you are truly inspired and want to mix it up, knitting, chocolate, and cars.

The more focused the topics, the faster you can build your community as the site becomes a source for ideas and projects. In between those you can blog about life, the universe, and everything, but keep focused on the key purpose and intent of the blog.

Here are some tips to help you write your blog posts.

- **Write in short paragraphs.** Long blocks of paragraphs are hard to read, so think “one point = paragraph” rather than the traditional “one thought = paragraph.”

- **Put links in HTML anchor tags.** Use the hypertext link to embed links in your blog posts instead of a link dump, when links are just pasted into the article such as [http://lorelle.wordpress.com/2006/04/10/what-do-you-do-when-someone-steals-your-content](http://lorelle.wordpress.com/2006/04/10/what-do-you-do-when-someone-steals-your-content) They are hard to read, and look ugly and distracting. In HTML, a properly formed link features the link to the article or site, a description of the link destination (called the title selector), and the anchor text or words the link wraps around:

  This &lt;a title="Example of a link to something worth sharing" href="http://example.com/post-title/">article on writing links</a> is worth a read....
Which generates the link in readable text as:

This article on writing links is worth a read....

☐ **Use headings.** Headings are section titles that break up your post content into readable sections. They are set with `<h2>`, `<h3>`, `<h4>`, or `<h5>` HTML headings, decreasing in size. They pull the reader through the content and lead them through the process.

☐ **Write articles, not letters.** Letters can have flourishes, be written in crayon or paint, and you can have some fun with smilies and colors. These don’t translate well to the visual web page for reading. Avoid too much use of bold or italic, font changes, all caps, and other “font bling” to dramatize what you are writing. Historically, great novelists never needed such tricks, nor do you. Let your words tell the story. And remember, WRITING IN ALL CAPS IS CONSIDERED SCREAMING ON THE WEB. Use them only if you are shouting.

☐ **Edit, Edit, Edit, Edit.** Remember, the web is not written in pencil, it’s written in ink. When you hit publish, you are responsible for it. Make sure what you publish on the web has a quality and sense of timelessness to it. Yet, you can always edit the content at any time, changing the words, fixing things, updating, or even deleting it. It’s your content, you own it, do with it what you will, but know you are responsible for it.

☐ **There are no rules for post length.** While many “experts” will tell you that the shorter the better, research has shown that if the content is worth reading to the end, readers will read it, no matter how long it is.
What Do I Blog?

While the rule of thumb says it’s your blog, you can do whatever you want, I don’t recommend that policy.

Your blog is you. It is about you, for you, and by you. It’s your playground, your canvas. However, while your blog is about you, it is most importantly about your readers.

You can blog without a community, without any thoughts or concerns about who will find your blog. Part of sharing means paying attention to the needs of others.

Remember your mission, your purpose for wanting to get involved in the social web. You have something worth sharing with others, so share it. Your passion and excitement about what you want to share will attract others to you, maybe not immediately, but in time.

A blog isn’t a PhD thesis or encyclopedia. It’s a collection of short stories and articles. Write short stories about your craft with tips and techniques, or just show off your work as it moves through the process or in a showcase.

Here are some tips on what to blog about and how.

- Tell your story. How did you start with your craft?
- Share stories of the lessons you have learned from others. Who mentored you? Who influenced your art? Share their stories and the lessons you learned.
- Film yourself working on your craft. Set up a camera on a tripod and record videos of your work. Talk about what you are doing as you do it.
- Find yourself challenged by a project? Share your frustration and ask the community to help you figure it out.
- Did you solve something? Share the solution with your readers.
- How do you find motivation and inspiration? Take pictures and share the stories of how you move through your life finding tidbits of inspiration.
- Do you travel as part of your crafting? Share your trip.
- Do you take classes, attend conferences, teach classes?
- Share gift giving ideas, tips, and patterns.
- What blogs and websites are important to you and your work? Tell their stories and link to them, helping others find them and the resources they offer.
- Holidays and seasons are prime times to blog. Write about how they influence you, seasonal craft projects, and offer suggestions to others on what they can craft.
- Do you make something others could also easily make? Show them how, offering a pattern or step-by-step instructions.
- Have you found helpful videos, links, or resources? Share them with your community so they can enjoy your found treasures.
- Are you involved in a few craft forums or discussion groups? Have a favorite Facebook Group? Share how your group works and promote it to your readers to encourage others to join.

Look for opportunities to inspire, to motivate, and connect with people through your craft.

Many crafters blog about their family and family, work, and personal issues. While this is excellent for creating a personal atmosphere, take care in naming names and getting a little too personal. Many will use anonymous names for their family
members such as daughter one, son three, or use names like Sunshine, Dancer, or Shining Star.

In spite of what many believe, a blog is not by default a diary. It is a method of sharing online and having easy interactivity with others. Write timeless and respectful content and share your passion freely.

How to Interact With Other Bloggers

If you want to get the conversation flowing on your blog, start it on others.

Comment on other craft blogs. Share your enthusiasm and support for their projects and offer a few tips of your own. Blog about what other craft bloggers are doing, bragging on their work, and getting their attention as well.

Blog Comments

Blog comments are one of the most exciting, and frustrating, aspects of blogging. Bloggers wait for them patiently, those few words of validation that someone is reading. It's a slap in the face when the first comments are spam.

Spam comments are a plague on the web, as are email spam and other things that clog up the Internet pipes. Mostly created by spambots, computer programming scripts, or by humans paid low salaries to break through the barriers many use to keep spammers out. On an average day, there can be millions of spam comments compared to a few hundred thousand legitimate comments. Luckily, there are tools like Akismet.com to help us combat this plague.

Don’t take spam personally, nor comments. Treasure the precious ones, and be patient and kind with the bad ones. Even if they didn't quite make their point, hosted a few

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12http://lorelle.wordpress.com/2006/08/07/how-not-to-comment-on-comments/
misspelled words, give them credit as they took time to read and comment on your blog. Show your appreciation.

**Trackbacks: Hey, I Blogged About You!**

When you link to another blog in your post, a *trackback* link and the text around it will appear in the comment area on their blog, letting them know automatically that their post is being mentioned on another blog.

Trackbacks appear in posts, so link to the post, not the blog itself. When you see a trackback from another blog in your blog comments, check out what they’ve written about you and thank them.

**Blog Carnivals**

Blog carnivals and competitions among blogs is a popular craft blogging activity. Blog carnivals have a specific theme such as CraftSocial and CraftCritique’s popular holiday and seasonal crafting carnivals or CraftCritique’s Earth Day Carnival that challenges crafters to submit entries created from recycled materials, “upcycling,” to celebrate the planet Earth.

Participating bloggers sign up in the blog comments or through a form to announce their intention to participate. The host blog showcases the list, exposing your blog to others. Many participants will share that list on their own blogs, helping you reach an even wider audience. Blog carnivals and competitions are strong community builders and great motivation as they build relationships by connecting many bloggers together that might not normally meet.

Recent blog carnival highlights include the frequent seasonal blog carnivals with BlogFire is a Bloggers Guide of Artfire, a group for professional handcrafters, and they host many carnivals with unique topics such as love and glass, “ding dong ding dong” on bells, candy, and “The Last Hurrah.” Crafting a
Green World has a long tradition of blog carnivals focused on sustainable and recycled craft projects.

In February 2011, the annual One World One Heart carnival produced by A Whimsical Bohemian blogger, Lisa Swifka, attracted almost 900 participating blogs. Unfortunately, the event was touched by the tragedy as one of their participants had their home burned to the ground. Many moved quickly to help their fellow crafter by gifting her crafting supplies as a spontaneous part of the social event.

This is just one of the many examples of the incredible compassion and passion found in around many craft bloggers.
Building Facebook Connections

Facebook has become the next generation in communication and community. Designed originally for college students to build relationships online, it has morphed into the “must have” platform with more than 500 million active users and a high rate of return with more than 60% of active Facebook users logging in daily to share their status, links, photographs, videos, and more with friends, families, and colleagues.

In the simplest terms, Facebook is a microblog and online messaging platform. When you sign up, you create a profile and begin to connect with friends, letting them know what you are doing and sharing your activities with them.

For the most part, Facebook is used for families and friends to stay connected as they leave home and travel. Try tracking down family members, forgotten school friends, and those formerly within your close circle of connections as you learn the intricacies of Facebook. From there, seek out experts and professionals in your craft field, adding them as friends, or “liking” their pages to keep up with their activities.

Facebook also offers a number of additional tools and features to spread your ideas and branding. Here are some tips to help you maximize your Facebook pages as a social media tool to build relationships and strengthen the ones you have already.
**Facebook Pages**

Use public Facebook pages to keep your friends and fans up to date with your activities. Users can “like” these pages to receive updates in their news feed as new content is published.

Think of these as a new form of email, a quick way of letting people know what you are doing. Share projects you’re working on, brag a little, and share lessons you’ve learned to keep them informed.

**Facebook Groups**

Facebook Groups are the social networking playground of Facebook. You can create your own or join others, connecting with groups of like-minded people, like you would in a forum or online community.

With Facebook Groups, you can connect family members together, send and receive email notifications from the group, chat live with each other, and follow the group conversation.

Facebook now offers privacy controls to control who can join the group and what information they can see. Check closely to ensure the right people have access to the right information in your group.

Groups are great ways of creating a simple online community. Their form and structure is not as sophisticated as online forums and blogs, but they still provide interactivity among like minds.
Remember to Post Frequently
Whether you use a private Facebook profile or a public Facebook page to keep friends and fans in the know, it's important to share your thoughts on what you are working on often. This keeps the flow of information going and keeps the conversation active. You can include a few words, a link to an article you found published or interesting, a photograph, video, or other content you wish to share.

Use the Facebook Timelines and News Feed Filters
Facebook News Feed Filters and Timelines give members the ability to track the activities of their favorite people and the ones they connect with the most. This cuts down the stream of activity to only the people and topics you most want to focus on.

The News Feed is in the center column of your home page, constantly updated by the people and Pages you follow on Facebook.

To set it, on the top, next to Top News, choose Most Recent and click the dropdown arrow next to it. Click Edit Options. Choose “Show Posts From” and change the setting to “All of Your Friends and Pages” or whatever setting you wish.

If you wish to be even more specific, you can choose which accounts to see or hide, narrowing it down to a specific few. You can change these settings at any time.
More Facebook Tips
Here are a few more tips for getting the most out of your Facebook community.

- Monitor your Wall with the news feed of your friends and do more than “like” something. Comment on what they posted. Increase your interaction beyond clicking a thumb up button.

- Offer resources and tips to your Facebook crafting group in the form of links, tutorials, videos, and short articles, or ask them questions to get the conversation flowing.

- Publish the status of your projects as you progress toward completion. Enjoy the support your community provides as they cheer you on.

- Make announcements of events, classes, and local activities you are interested in, recommending, or attending.

- Reconnecting with lost friends can be exciting and energizing, rediscovering your past relationships and connections. Use Facebook to look up classmates, former co-workers, and even family members you haven’t connected with for a while and see what they are up to. You never know where these re-connections can lead.

- Create a family or friend group so you can bring those relationships closer together.

- Friend people you admire in your craft industry. With their news stream added to your news feed, you bring them literally into your home to learn from.
Facebook Craft Groups

The following is a list of just a small sampling of the many Facebook groups involved in crafting.

- Bramcost Publications - Vintage Sewing, Crochet, Knitting, Millinery
- Caron International Yarn for Knit and Crochet
- CraftBits
- CraftEdu.com
  [http://www.facebook.com/craftedu](http://www.facebook.com/craftedu)
- Craftster
  [http://www.facebook.com/craftster](http://www.facebook.com/craftster)
- CraftStylish
- Crochet
- Crochet
- Dollar Store Crafts
  [http://www.facebook.com/dollarstorecrafts](http://www.facebook.com/dollarstorecrafts)
- HOOKERS Crochet & Knitting Group
- Hot Off The Hook Crochet
  [http://www.facebook.com/HotOffTheHookCrochet](http://www.facebook.com/HotOffTheHookCrochet)
- Hoxton Knitting Group
- Keepsake Quilting
- Knitting Divas
- Lazy Girl Designs Quilting and Sewing Patterns
  [http://www.facebook.com/lazygirl](http://www.facebook.com/lazygirl)
- Oh My Crafts!
- Paper Crafts Magazine
  [http://www.facebook.com/papercraftsmagazine](http://www.facebook.com/papercraftsmagazine)
- Quilting Club
  [http://www.facebook.com/quiltingclub](http://www.facebook.com/quiltingclub)
- Quilting
- Scrapbook Chicks
- Scrapbook Mania
- Scrapbooks Etc.
  [http://www.facebook.com/scrapbooksetcmagazine](http://www.facebook.com/scrapbooksetcmagazine)
- Singer Sewing Company
- Tatting
- The Big Knitting Group
- WoodWorking
Twitter: Tweet the World

Twitter is similar to CB Radios in a text format, a little mini-blog-meets-instant messaging. Updates are limited to 140 characters, called *tweets*, suiting cell phone and mobile publishing platform limits. This means that all content consists of short, concise statements.

Much like Facebook, where “likes” lead to continued updates from pages, Twitter users have *followers*, those who want to keep track of others’ activities.

*Tweets* can be posted publicly for all followers to see, or sent between Twitter users to hold a semi-public conversation. These messages are informally referred to as “at replies” represented by the symbol @. A typical at message would be:

```
@lorelleonwp Great topic in your latest post on blogging. Is this really the future?
```

Those following either the sender of this tweet and @lorelleonwp would see this mention in their stream of updates.

Twitter is an amazing resource for fast broadcast messaging, giving users a chance to ask open-ended questions and get responses from many people, not just one.

```
Looking for advice on the best yarn to use in a knitting machine. Suggestions?
```

Anyone who knows the answer, or knows the person who might know the answer, can respond openly.

```
@lorelleonwp Have you talked to @machineknittingexpert about yarns? She knows her machine knitting stuff.
```

Twitter offers private messaging between members called *direct messaging* or DMs. In order to direct message someone,
they must be following your tweets. They are created by putting the letter D in front of the message, omitting the @ symbol.

D lorelleonwp You going to the meetup tonight in Portland? Can I get a ride?

If you find a tweet you really like, you can broadcast it to your followers through retweets.

RT @lorelleonwp You can never have too many friends, or too many bobbins! @Verla

Retweets (RT) are the “viral” aspect of Twitter as a social media tool, spreading messages across multiple networks and groups on Twitter.

When you retweet a tweet, your followers will see the tweet. If someone retweets your tweet, their followers will see your tweet. Twitter and many Twitter applications will feature the retweet count of the number of times a tweet has been retweeted. The more retweets, the further the spread of your message.

Twitter offers the ability to block retweets from specific people, welcome by many tired of seeing non-stop retweets from people they follow and little original. To block their retweets, go to the Twitter account profile for that person and click the retweet button next to the Follow button. When colored gray, anything the person retweets will not appear in your timeline.

While Twitter users tend to be fairly young and professional, a growing number of crafters are beginning to enjoy Twitter as a way to connect with a more diverse demographic, using it to build...
new relationships and attract new members and readers to their groups and blogs off Twitter.

**Twitter Tips**

Twitter is about communicating, but it’s a combination broadcast medium combined with a Peeping Tom vibe. While you can see everything that your followers say publicly, as they can see your tweets, it’s an open platform so everyone can see what you have to say and what your followers say. Never forget that once it is out there, there is no complete delete.

The following are some basic tips for using Twitter.

**Follow Well**

Be very intentional in choosing the people you follow on Twitter. It’s easy to follow everyone, but you can easily get overwhelmed with the tweet stream. While some Twitter users publish 1-5 tweets a day, others publish dozens. If you have more than a 100 people you follow, those numbers add up.

Twitter really isn’t a numbers game. How can you know 12,530 people? Choose people you know, trust, and respect, just as you would the relationships in your day-to-day life.

If what they tweet is off topic, of no interest, or boring, unfollow them, keeping your focused on those who bring value to your online experience and life. If they spam you with commercial content, inappropriate links, etc., report them as spam and Twitter will take care of them if enough people report. If someone truly offends you, you have the option of blocking them quickly and easily.
Tweet Well
The ones who enjoy Twitter the most are the ones who know how to tweet well.

☐ Say something intelligent and original.

☐ Remember *everyone* is watching and anyone can and will respond.

☐ Play nice and have fun.

☐ Don’t RT everything, only topics of special interest to you and your fans.

☐ Don’t tweet quotes. Many will look up quotes to publish just to keep their tweet stream active. Say something original that others can quote and RT.

☐ Treat it like a conversation. Tell them how your day is going, what you’re involved in, what frustrates you, something that got you excited - it’s a group conversation so keep the group informed.

☐ Listen. Sometimes what you read can be worth more than what you say, just like in a real conversation.

Twitter is About Connecting Not Selling
While many people can increase their sales and business by using Twitter, Twitter is about connecting and communicating, about sharing your thoughts, activities, and expertise.

If you post something with a blatant sales pitch that offends, you will know fairly quickly as people will unfollow or tell you how much it bothered them

Offer knowledge, ask questions, provide support, and building relationships on Twitter will be much easier. If you are a professional, it can lead to business, but connect first, sell last.
Use Twitter Lists to Control the Twitter Stream

If you follow a lot of Twitter users, you can easily become overwhelmed with the life stream of activity. Twitter offers Twitter Lists, an option to create a list of people you follow separate from the main stream.

You can set up a list of people who are experts in a specific area, such as knitters, and if you like lace making, you can add another list for lace makers. This reduces the noise, allowing you to focus on specific groups of Twitter members.

Understanding the Power of the Hashtag

With no flow or continuity except the chronological stream of tweets, and no way of creating relationships with specific content, hashtags were developed. Within a tweet, often at the end, you may see a hash or pound sign with a combination of letters.

@lorelleonwordpress Check out what is going on at Sew Expo this year in Puyallup. #sewexpo

Using Twitter search or a search engine, you can search for all mentions of “sewexpo” and track the conversation about that particular topic. Most conferences and meetings today have a custom hashtag for event participants to use to track the event’s activities and comments. When people talk about a specific brand, they will often create a brand hashtag such as #bernina or #pfaff for fans of these items to track the information and the customer service reps monitoring the social web to spot when they are being talked about.

Hashtags are used with hot topics on Twitter like games or current events. Many use hashtags to report on and track emergency or disaster news and information such as
hurricanes, earthquakes, and fires. During the recent uprising in the Middle East, hashtags such as #egypt and #tunisia provided easy tracking of the news stories and information coming out of those areas.

Using hashtags for tracking, social viral games are fun with some interesting twists such as #januarywish for people sharing what they wish for in the month of January; #isturnedoffby sharing what turns you off in people; #ff or #followfriday thanking those who’ve helped you over the past week; #hiring to denote a job announcement; and fun ones like #movieoneletteroff. The latter was a game where people changed the names of movies by one letter to create a new and totally different movie title such as Paws for Jaws.

#movieoneletteroff You could hear the howls and screams from the local SPCA. It was the horror of attacking PAWS.

For crafters, use hashtags to represent your craft and find others talking about your craft such as #knit, #crochet, #scrap, #machineknit, or #spinning.

**Follow Trends**

Worldwide Trends is a Twitter feature to keep you updated on what the “trending topics” are on Twitter. For those who enjoy tracking the latest news and trends, this is a fun feature to watch.

Many crafters participate in local or worldwide fund-raisers and non-profit activities, making blankets, quilts, hats, socks, and other handmade items to benefit victims and survivors. Following Worldwide Trends can alerted you and your group to natural or manmade disasters, wars, or other events in which you can actively engage and offer your services.
Many worldwide trends are social interactive games on Twitter using the hashtags as mentioned above. Many find them to be a break from their day-to-day routine and great brain stimulators.

**Use a Third-Party Twitter Application**
While Twitter has finally improved their site, making it easier to use, if you want to really control your Twitter experience, access Twitter through a third-party application, software designed specifically to access Twitter. These often have better features and tools than Twitter currently offers.

Popular Twitter Apps include TweetDeck, Tweetie, Hootsuite, and Twitter’s official apps for Blackberry, Android, and iPhone offer extra features such as tracking multiple accounts, multiple searches (of keywords or hashtags), and other improvements over using the Twitter web page.

**Why Use Twitter?**
I’m often asked by many, including crafters, why they should use Twitter. True, Twitter isn’t for everyone, but it is a fast and easy way to connect with others and keep them informed as to what you are doing. With the 140 character limit, it takes seconds to scan a list of tweets from your friends and associates, and you can tweet from any mobile device, helping you keep up with friends, family, and fans with a few finger clicks during the day.

Does it provide a deep and meaningful opportunity for relationships? Some say yes, but mostly, it’s a way to broadcast your information to as many people as possible in a short time - if they are paying attention.
Crafting Tweeters

Here is a quick sampling of some Twitter users sharing their craft passion.

- Anna Roberts (silverleaf79) on Twitter http://twitter.com/silverleaf79
- APD (ErmaKnits) on Twitter http://twitter.com/ErmaKnits
- CAGW (cagw) on Twitter http://twitter.com/cagw
- Craft Critique (CraftCritique) on Twitter http://twitter.com/CraftCritique
- CraftGossip (craftgossip) on Twitter http://twitter.com/craftgossip/
- Danielle Hunter (OhioDanielle) on Twitter http://twitter.com/OhioDanielle
- HandmadeNews (HandmadeNewsorg) on Twitter http://twitter.com/HandmadeNewsorg
- Kristi Schueler (fiberfool) on Twitter http://twitter.com/fiberfool
- nicbridges (nicbridges) on Twitter http://twitter.com/nicbridges
- Sandra (bijouxboutique) on Twitter http://twitter.com/bijouxboutique
- susan robin sorrell (creativechick) on Twitter http://twitter.com/creativechick
- Topacio (TopacioKnits) on Twitter http://twitter.com/TopacioKnits
Google+: Professional, Visual Social Network

Google+ is Google's social media network. When you sign up for a Google account like Gmail or Google Drive, you are automatically part of the Google Network and a Google+ member. To access Google+ look for the 9 block quilt in the upper right corner of any Google app and click it to reveal all of the Google products, including Google+.

Like Facebook, Google+ is a social network that encourages sharing of content and multimedia. The current demographics represent mostly highly educated, web-savvy professionals, especially those with science, academia, technology, and web jobs and interests.

Google+ is highly visual as well as contextual. The sharing of photographs is popular as well as images with text sayings over them to inspire or amuse. Some photographers have gained world-wide acclaim by their early adoption of Google+ and its integration with Picasa, the image hosting and sharing cloud-based service. Most Android phones upload images automatically to Picasa and Google+ ready for instant sharing on the web and the social network.

Many are using Google+ for their blogging platform as well as image and status updates, writing posts in the simple and easy-to-use interface.

Two things set Google+ apart from most social networks. The first is its Circles. When following a person, you add them to a Circle of your own
making, naming it anything you wish. You may have circles for Friends, Relatives, your community, Writers, Knitters, Science, Blogging, whatever you wish. No one knows which circle you've added someone to. On the left menu, you can quickly click a circle to restrict the stream of information to those in that circle. You can send out a status report, post, or image to only those in your Knitting circle.

Google+ also has Communities. These go further than circled groups to behave more like chat groups and forums. The Knitting Lodge is one of the most popular knitting Communities with over 6,500 members and 10,000 posts. There are huge communities for fan clubs such as Doctor Who with 115,000 members, and science groups such as the Science Community with nearly a half million members.

Anyone can create a Google+ Community. It may be public or private, and by invitation only. Discussion areas maybe set up to group discussions by specific topics of interest. It's a fabulous, free online community service great for clubs, schools, classes, groups, and like-minded folks.

Google is still developing Google+ and all their web apps, especially when it comes to social media. Currently, your Google+ profile is a critical feature of search engine results for yourself and your website and social media membership. Your Google+ profile, once verified, actually improves your ranking in the search results. This makes Google+ ideal for professionals and businesses.
Pinterest has gained popularity with crafters around the world. The demographics of Pinterest is mainly homemakers, students, and highly visual web users, and crafters make up a good portion of the more than 70 million users.

Pinterest is a visual bookmarking social network. It is a place to share online images to preserve them for yourself or share them with others. The images, known as Pins, may be categorized on customized and themed Boards for any topic. You may collect images of quilts, tatting, sock knitting, or antique Chinese tea pots.

Many hobbisters and crafters use Pinterest as a visual scrapbook, collecting images from around the web and found through other Pinterest members' Boards and recommendations.

Pinterest offers a drag-and-drop browser extension that integrates into your web browser's bookmark toolbar or the right-click menu. Find an image you want to preserve, click the Pin It button to save it to the board of your choice. They also offer a mobile app to pin on the go.

To find other Pinners, use the dropdown menu on the navigation bar to filter Boards by category, finding those interested in the same things as you.
Joining Forums and Groups

There are thousands upon thousands of online forums and groups for crafters, covering everything from felting to decoupage. We’ve included a good resource listing of a variety of popular online forums and groups, but let’s begin with some guidelines to help you maximize your experience in such communities.

Forums are intended to be social places, places for high levels of social interchange. Accordingly, proper manners are critical to ensure an open place for sharing.

Most forums are free but require registration. Choose a username that matches your own, or something that describes your interests. Some forums rarely have members using their real name. Instead they call themselves by a name that quickly lets others in the community know their speciality such as knitting25years or quiltingforever. While in general it is wiser to be you, the real you, consider following the username format of the group.

To begin, look for a spot in the forum to introduce yourself. Like other online forums and groups, don’t sell them but give them some reference into who you are and what you do, and what you specialize in. You can usually include a link to your blog or other online reference.

Forums are divided by subjects and topics. Every forum has its own unique structure, with some offering structured categories to narrow down topics by interest. Others are
looser, featuring generalized sections with a free-for-all attitude.

A forum is made of sections that include forum posts. A discussion from a post is called a thread.

Before leaving a comment or question, study the structure carefully and choose the category of topics that most meet your needs. Search through the forum to find out if someone has already asked the same question. If you need more information, ask on that post.

Many forums have daily or weekly topics in addition to normal discussions. Look for these as a way to participate and contribute to the topical discussions.

If you are a professional crafter, some forums have a special section for commercial work and listings.

**How to Choose the Right Forum or Discussion Group**

Remember those times you walked into a group and felt immediately out of place. You will find some online forums and discussion groups are the same. You know in a heartbeat that this isn’t your group.

Others are immediately welcoming and comfortable. Sometimes it’s obvious, a clean site, welcoming topic areas, topics of interest to you. Sometimes it’s just a feeling. Trust it.

The right forum for you is one that serves your needs. It features people with active imaginations and energy akin to yours.

It could be a busy and active group with a lot of offline as well as online activities. Or
maybe it’s slower moving, more to your pace.

Ravelry is a very popular social network and online group designed specifically for yarn fans. As it has grown in popularity, other textile subjects are now open for discussion.

Ning is currently one of the largest social networks hosting groups of all kinds. A group can be formed and hosted on Ning, creating their own “home” online with forums, news areas, and other social sharing and communication features. Ning Groups can be private or public.

I’ve included some popular Ning groups in our Social Networking Groups by Genre list.

If the group changes or doesn’t meet your needs, don’t feel like you have to hang in there. You can, bringing new life to the group, but consider looking elsewhere if the group isn’t meeting your needs. Or start your own!

**How Do Forums and Discussion Groups Work?**

Here are some things you need to know specific to online forums and discussion groups.

**Moderators:** Moderators are the forum administrators, managing the back end of the forum, sometimes promoting the conversation, and usually controlling the members. There are different levels of authority a member may have in a forum, usually earned with time and active participation, which can lead to a moderator role. These levels are usually designated with a title or icon. These are the people you turn to for help and advice on the forum.

**Post Signatures:** While some forums permit huge signature blocks with images and links, others are more restrictive...
about such branding and space wasters. Check the guidelines for the rules on signatures.

**Controversy Welcome:** Controversial discussions are usually welcome, in the spirit of open discussions, but not for angry rants and meanness. In general, topics covering religion, politics, and other topics which can light fires rather than calm debates, are not welcome.

**Disruptive Members:** Every once in a while, someone will go off on a rant or step out of line. It’s natural. A supportive community can usually handle it through the moderators or through self-policing. Even if they are targeting you, let the moderators handle it. If someone steps out of line, you can usually flag the forum post if the program permits, or bring it to the attention of the moderators. It’s their job. Let them handle it.

**Tips for Online Forums and Discussion Groups**

- Many forums and discussion groups support outside events and activities. Look for an announcement section to keep informed as to when the next events are, online and off.

- Forums and discussion groups are places of high interactivity. Ask questions. Answer questions. Share your tips, techniques, and updates on your projects.

- Participate in group activities such as challenges or competitions.

- Photographs and videos are often uploaded elsewhere in the forum rather than on the forum post itself. Learn how that process works and how to link to the multimedia content, and announce when you’ve shared something.

- While tips and techniques are often the most popular topics, philosophy can excite a group. Don’t just ask
how, ask why. Encourage people to share the history and memories of how they learned their technique, and why they learned to do it that way. The stories can often be more interesting than the technique itself.

- Support fellow members in the group. If you see they are struggling with an issue, craft related or personal, contact them privately or publicly and offer help and encouragement. You can’t fix everyone’s problems, but knowing someone cares is often just the right touch they need.

- Don’t be afraid to share off-forum content such as links, news, and videos. These are not totally closed rooms. Show off treasures and goodies from outside to bring some fresh air.
Social Networking Groups by Genre

This is just a small sampling of the many social networks and online groups for crafters. Check with each to read their membership policies and terms of service.

**Sewing**
- It.Sewing http://groups.google.com/group/alt.sewing/
- Stich'n Bitch Knitting Groups and Clubs http://stitchnbitch.org/
- Sewing Gifts On Time Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/SewingGiftsOnTime/
- How-to-Make-Sewing-Pattern Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/How-to-Make-Sewing-Patterns/
- Fit Snobs Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/Fitsnobs/
- SGOTs_Sewing Bee Site Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/SGOTs_SewingBeeSite/
- Sew What’s New on Ning http://sew-whats-new.com/
- Sew and Share http://sewandshare.ning.com/
- Needleworking : Needleworking http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Needleworking/
- PatternReview Discussion Board http://sewing.patternreview.com/cgi-bin/sewingclasses/board.pl
- Sewing Discussion at Sticher’s Guild Sewing Forum http://artisanssquare.com/sg/
- SewingForum.com http://sewingforum.com/forum/
- Everything Sewing http://everythingsewingforum.net/
- Historical Sewing Forum http://historicalsewingforum.com/

**Quilting**
- Barn Quilting http://barnquilting.ning.com/
- CQForNewbies: Crazy Quilting for Newbies http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CQForNewbies/
- CQembellishers: Crazy Quilting and Arts of Embellishment http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CQembellishers/
- Crazy Quilting International http://groups.yahoo.com/group/crazyquiltinginternational/
- The Quilter Community http://www.thequiltercommunity.com/
- QuiltersBee http://www.quiltersbee.com/
- Quilts Your Way Forums http://www.quiltsyourway.com/forums/

A blog doesn’t happen in a vacuum. It isn’t me, hiding behind the virtual wall of my Mac laptop. If anything, it drives me out into the public for social events and activities. It also gives me a fantastic excuse to connect with those I’ve met online in the real world as I travel. The fact that I can share my blog link with other artists online or with my card in person and make new friends has been an unexpected thrill.

Chains of Hearts - embellishers and needle work
http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/ChainsofHearts/
Southern Cross Crazies
http://au.groups.yahoo.com/group/southerncrosscrazies/
Stitchin Fingers http://stitchinfingers.ning.com/
Quiltropolis http://quiltropolis.com/
Quilt With Us http://quiltwithus.connectingthreads.com/
Triangle Modern Quilt Guild http://trianglemodernquilts.ning.com/
AAartquilt: African American Art Quilters Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/AAartquilt/
African American Quilters Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/africanamericanquilters/
Machine Quilting Professional Group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/Machine_Quilting_Professional/
CyberQuilters Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/CyberQuilters/
Quilt-Talk Yahoo Groups - http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/quilt-talk/
CrazyQuilters Yahoo Groups
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/crazyquilters
Quilters Bee Yahoo Groups
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/quiltersbee/

Knitting
Ravelry http://ravelry.com/
KnitList http://groups.yahoo.com/group/knitlist/
UK Hand Knitting Association http://www.bhkc.co.uk/
Angel Yarns Knitting Forums UK http://www.knittingforums.co.uk/
The Knitting Guild Association http://www.tkga.com/
Knitting Daily http://www.knittingdaily.com/
The Knitting Guild Association (TKGA) - http://www.tkga.com/
Men Who Knit - Men’s knitting online community -
http://www.menwhoknit.com/community/
Knitting Machines Enthusiasts Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Knittingmachines/
Townsend Socks Knit Along
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TownsendSocksKnitAlong/
Knit Happy Forum http://www.knit-happy-forum.com/
Knitting Forums http://www.knittingforums.com/
Knitting Social Network http://www.knitting-network.com/

Crochet
Ravelry http://www.ravelry.com/
Lacemaking: bobbin lacers, tatters, hardangers, and crocheters
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/lacemaking/
Thread Animals Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/threadanimals/
Crochetlist http://groups.yahoo.com/group/crochetlist/
Crochet Talk http://groups.yahoo.com/group/CrochetTalk/
Crochet Partners http://groups.yahoo.com/group/crochetpartners/
Tapestry Crochet http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TapestryCrochet/
Felting
Thread Animals: Bears and Animals from Thread and Fibers
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/threadanimals/
Needle Felting Group http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Needlefelting/
Flat Needlefelting Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/FlatNeedlefelting/
WoolnFriends: Needle Felting Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WoolnFriends/
Wet-felting By Hand Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/WetFelting-by-hand/

Scrapbooking
Layouts Idea Exchanges http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/Layouts/
Scrapper's Challenge
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/ScrappersChallenge/
Computer Scrapping Group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/computer-scrapping/
Cricut Lovers Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/cricutlovers/
Paper Scraphouse Group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/pspscraphouse/
Stamping Scrapbookers Group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/stampingscrapbookers/

Lacemaking Tatting
Lacemaking: Bobbin, tatting, hardang, and crochet group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/lacemaking/
Celtic Tatting Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/CelticTatting/
Needle Tagging Group http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/needle_tat/
Technical Tatting for Serious Tatters Group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/technicaltatting/
Tatting - stitchin fingers
http://stitchinfingers.ning.com/forum/topics/tatting-1
InTatters - Welcome to InTatters http://www.intatters.com/
NeedleArtist and Crafters (Tatting)
http://needleartistandcrafters.ning.com/

Needlepoint/Embroidery
Finding Embroidery Designs Group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/Finding_Designs/
Omas Creations: Machine Embroiderers Group
http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/OmasCreations/
Needleworking Group http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Needleworking/

Beadwork/Jewelry
Jewelry Making Forum
http://www.jewelrymakinghq.com/jewelry_making_forums.htm
Making Jewelry Design Forum
http://www.beading-design-jewelry.com/jewelry-design-forum.html
Beading Daily http://beadingdaily.com/
Bead Unique U Yahoo Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/beaduniqueu/
Woodworking Crafts
Family Woodworking http://familywoodworking.org/forums/
Fine Woodworking Knots Forums http://forums.finewoodworking.com/
Lumberjocks Woodworking Forums http://lumberjocks.com/forums
Router Forums http://www.routerforums.com/
Sawmill Creek Woodworkers Community
http://www.sawmillcreek.org/forum.php
WoodWorkWeb - Woodworking Community
http://www.woodworkweb.com/community.html
WoodNet.net Forums http://www.woodnet.net/forums/
WOODWEB's Architectural Woodworking Forum
http://www.woodweb.com/cgi-bin/forums/
Woodworking Talk Woodworkers Forum
http://www.woodworkingtalk.com/
Woodworking.com Forum http://woodworking.com/forum/

General Crafts
Bags to Brag About - http://dir.groups.yahoo.com/group/bagstobragabout/
Art Hobby Craft Creative Network http://arthobbycrafts.ning.com/
Ning - Craft forum
http://www.craftsforum.co.uk/showthread.php?20761-Ning
UK Craft forum http://www.craftsforum.co.uk/group.php
ArtFire.com http://www.artfire.com/
deviantART http://www.deviantart.com/
MyArtSpace http://www.myartspace.com/
Exploring All the Social Web
Options

There are so many social web networking, bookmarking, and sharing sites out there. Today, Facebook, Twitter, and a select few others rule, but others will take their place one day.

Here are a few of the many branded social media sites and services for you to explore. Read through their policies and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page to learn about how these groups operate and what they expect from their members.

Reddit
Reddit is a combination social bookmarking site and online community. Members submit links and comment on link submissions, often resulting in a more active discussion that the link itself.

Reddit members tend to be very outspoken and smart. There are communities within communities passionate about their link recommendations. Many Reddit discussions lead to fund raising, activism, and other community efforts, including world events such as wars and natural and man-made disasters.

Reddit is divided into a very diverse set of categories, with fun groups like funny, todayilearned, wtf, trees, and adviceanimals, and practical groups like politics, worldnews, and many hobbies. There is an active group for knitting, sewing, crochet, quilting, and all types of crafts.

To find a Reddit group for your craft, you can use metareddit.com or subredditfinder.com to narrow your search.
Delicious
Delicious was one of the earliest social bookmarking sites on the web. People around the world would submit their favorite or fascinating site links with their comments. Many educators and researchers continue to use it, as do students.

While discussions on the link submissions are not as active as Reddit, the collections of links are invaluable resources.

MySpace
As a blog host and community, MySpace was a haven for not just the young, but for musicians, artists, and crafters. Today, most of them have moved their blogs off MySpace or closed their site, moving onto WordPress.com, Blogger, and Facebook. Currently, the future of MySpace is up in the air. If investors or buyers can be found for MySpace, enthusiasm may return.

LinkedIn
LinkedIn is a professional network, a veritable online resume service. LinkedIn Groups connect like-minded professionals together for discussions and educational opportunities.

Professional crafters use LinkedIn to host their public resumes and profiles, highlighting their accomplishments. There are a few knitting, sewing, quilting, textile, and other craft groups, but most of these are professional networks or commercial manufacturers and designers.

Some craft associations and guilds have groups on LinkedIn. As more and more crafters use LinkedIn, expect to find more informal groups develop.
StumbleUpon
StumbleUpon is a social networking site with peer-to-peer sharing and socializing. It is considered a “discovery engine,” a search engine driven by voting on submissions and community interaction, similar to Reddit and Delicious.

Members write up microblog submissions of link recommendations. The community votes on them with a thumb up or down, automating the “word of mouth” referrals of the submissions. Members can comment on the submissions similar to a forum or discussion board.

StumbleUpon seems simple but is heavily used by those who enjoy discovering treasures on the web and sharing them. The service is simple and easy to use, and has become a generator of a lot of traffic to the most popular link submissions.

Popular craft channels include:

- Hobbies  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/groups.php?supertopic=Hobbies
- Home/Living  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/groups.php?supertopic=Home/Living
- Arts and History  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/groups.php?supertopic=Arts/History
- Knitting/Crochet  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/knittingcrochet
- Craft Revolution  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/craft-revolution
- The Business of Craft  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/business-of-craft
- Knitting  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/knitting
- Scrapbooking  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/scrapbooking
- Yarn P*rn  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/yarn-prn
- Quilting  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/quilting
- Wood Turning  
  http://www.stumbleupon.com/group/wood-turning
Classmates (MemoryLane.com)
Classmates.com was a social network for finding former classmates and staying in touch. It recently recreated itself as MemoryLane, a social and entertainment site with newsworthy historical events, retro news and entertainment. While it doesn’t offer much for craft fans, it is a popular source of networking and inspiration.

Bebo
Bebo is considered the second best social network in the world. Focused on the United Kingdom, it has a growing fan club in the United States and elsewhere. It offers the same social networking features as similar sites, with the ability to share photos, videos, etc.

Meetup
Meetup.com continues to be the driving force in event promotion and registration. As a member, you can create your own profile page that tracks events by geographic location or interest.

Group members can discuss and plan events to connect with each other offline.

Many clubs, groups, associations, and conferences use Meetup to publicize their events. Search by keyword to find events and groups in your area.

Orkut
Orkut is gaining ground internationally as a popular social networking site. Like most social networking sites, you can connect with friends, join groups, find those who share your interests, and create an online scrapbook of photographs.

Orkut is now owned by Google and login is through your Gmail and/or Google Account. Orkut features a wide range of
communities including Hobbies and Crafts with many international contributors. Unfortunately, with the easy access through Google and few controls, there are only a few serious craft groups.

- Scrapbook Tips and Tricks
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=43234420
- Crochet & Tatting Lovers
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=58636142
- Cross-stitch
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=3505
- Cross Stitch
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=7875
- Frivolite(Tatting)
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=12411914
- Knitting knerds and geek girls
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=134027
- Knitting/crocheting/felting
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=721731
- Scrapbook - Scrap Memory Store
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=12002923
- Scrapbook album
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=1578260
- Scrapbook sneakers
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=24984169
- Tatting Lovers
  http://www.orkut.com/Community?cmm=58645090
Sharing Multimedia on Social Media

With a blog or a channel on YouTube, you can create your own craft television show!

Many crafters are sharing their tips, techniques, and projects through video, slideshows, and other multimedia publishing methods. For them, their craft doesn't stop with the thread and glue gun but goes off into the wilds of the digital world.

Photo Sharing

While most blogs permit uploading and storage of images as part of the blog content, many like to just share photographs of their crafts beyond their blogs. Flickr, Facebook, Photobucket, SmugMug, Pinterest, and Picasa are the most popular services.

On these services, you can upload images and arrange them in “albums” or collections, grouping like or related images together.

Once uploaded, tagged, and categorized, the service will offer a way for you to link or embed the image or collection into your blog, Facebook, forum, etc. You can find these links and embed codes under “Share” buttons or options. Follow the instructions to quickly publish the images for your friends and family.

Copyrights: By International Copyright Laws, when you publish or share your original content (images, video, audio, words) on the web, you are still the copyright holder and you set the terms for the usage of that content. Please include a clear definition of your copyright policy, outlining what is acceptable or not for other people’s usage. Please see CreativeCommons.org for more information.

Remember: If you copied when you were in school, you got into trouble. If you copy on the web, you can get into bigger trouble. Respect the creative rights of the world’s creative folks.
Here are some tips for sharing photographs and graphics on the web:

- Unless you’ve set up your camera for the proper web settings, edit images to the proper size and resolution before uploading to the web.

- Preserve originals on your computer, portable or cloud server backups. Edit copies to resize and prepare them for uploading to the web.

- Name images prior to uploading in a way you can easily identify them and track them. An image file name of AFD34503865.jpg is trackable, but not easily recognizable. The file name sally-smith-sunshine-quilt-for-mother-2010.jpg is much more helpful.

- Keep uploaded image widths restricted to the most popular widest width of screen monitors and resolution. Currently, it is 1280 pixels.

- Keep published image widths no wider than the column width of the published area, such as the width of the content column on your blog or the width of the Facebook Wall area. Typically, it is no wider than 600 pixels.

- For images on blogs and Facebook, keep image file sizes near or below 100K. For portfolio and graphic work where you want high resolution and quality, keep the image sizes to no more than 1 megabyte max.
Use thumbnail versions of the images in blogs with the option to click on the image to see the larger size. This speeds up web page loading and gives readers the option to “zoom” in for more detail if they are interested.

If you are using WordPress, choose the Attachment option to allow viewing of the large or original image on a WordPress post of its own, so people can comment on the image, not just the article it is attached to on the blog.

On the web, there are three standard image types. JPGs are for high quality images. GIF are for low quality images and those with transparent backgrounds, usually used for graphics, not photographs. PNG are used for graphics with and without transparent backgrounds, and for low to medium quality images.

Use a graphics program that will allow you to control the exported image to manage the compression rate, size, and export image file type easily.

**Video Sharing**

Video can be hosted on blogs and websites, but they can have large file sizes. If popular, videos consume a lot of bandwidth when watched. To counter this, many use video sharing sites to store and share their videos, using embed or link codes to feature the video on their blogs, Facebook, Twitter, or other social media networks.

YouTube is the most popular video sharing social media site. Members can upload up to 15 minutes of video for free. A YouTube channel is your personal playground on YouTube. Once registered with YouTube, upload your first video and it
will appear on your channel. You can customize the look and feel of the page hosting your videos, and share that page with friends and family so they can see all of the videos you create.

Other video sharing sites include Vimeo, DailyMotion, VideoPress from WordPress.com, Blip.TV and Viddler. Many are free up with limitations.

Most video cameras come with basic video editing programs. However, for advanced features like text overlays, arrows, animation, and video editing features, consider free or paid software programs like the popular iMovie, Sony Vegas, Final Cut, Adobe Premiere, Corel Video Studio or Windows Movie Maker.

If you feel comfortable working with online programs and applications, you can also consider free web services for basic video editing such as JumpCut, Videoegg, MovieMasher, or Kaltura.

**Video Sharing Tips**

In today's mobile world, it's easy to capture photographs and video with cell phones. While adequate for friends and family, if you wish to make more professional looking video to share with friends and fans, consider the following tips.
Use a tripod. The more stable the camera, the less shake and clearer the picture.

Watch the light. Video doesn’t respond well to harsh or high contrast light situations. Look for shade or evenly lit spots to stand or work in.

Incorporate video into your day-to-day life. Some of the most popular videos are serendipitous, captured in the moment as you travel, work, or play.

Captions, text overlays, and words help explain things when necessary. However, they are not a replacement for poor communication.

The most popular video file formats are MOV, MPEG and AVI. Additional file formats you may come across include WMV, FLV, MPEGPS, and WebM.

The most common video dimensions include:

- 320 x 240 (low resolution/mobile)
- 640 x 480 (4:3 Aspect Ratio)
- 1280 x 720 (HD 16:9 Aspect Ratio)

Most recommend exporting in WMV, MOV, or MPEG format using H.264 compression. Experiment with different options to discover what file settings work best for you.
Video and Audio Craft Podcasts

Many crafters turn to video and audio to showcase their work and tell their stories, and share their tips and techniques. Published randomly, it’s a helpful and vital way of publishing and sharing.

Podcasting is a multimedia form of publishing, creating audio or video tutorials and episodes. The key difference between a podcast and other published content is the difference between a regular scheduled television program and a special.

A podcast is an audio file, usually published on a regular schedule, using RSS feeds for syndication with iTunes, Zen Podcasts, or other media players. Many podcasters call their podcasts “shows”, keeping with the entertainment presentation style and schedule.

Podcasts are another way of building a strong online community and audience. Crafters are highly visual people, so video podcasts are extremely popular, and, if done right, are excellent to help guide the viewer through a particular process.

The following are video and audio podcast samples from around the crafting industry. Some of these are popular and updated regularly. Others were stopped for a variety of reasons, but they still hold valuable interviews, tips, and techniques.

Instructions on how to subscribe to a specific podcast are found on their websites. In general, you will need to have a sound card and speakers on your computer for listening through your browser, or an MP3 player or other portable device.
Quilting
Alex Anderson Quilts Podcast
http://www.alexandersonquilts.com/podcast/
Bonnie McCaffery http://www.bonniemccaffery.com/wordpress1/
Canton Village Quilt Works http://cvquiltworks.blogspot.com/
Daily Lineup QuiltersTV http://quilterstv.com/
Driven To Quilt The Podcast for Today's Quilter: Home
http://driventoquilt.com/
Hip to Be a Square Podcast http://www.hiptobeasquarepodcast.com/
Kaye Wood http://www.kayewoodtv.com/ktv/
Mirkwood Designs Adventures in Creativity!
http://mirkwooddesigns.blogspot.com/
Nonnie's Quilting Dreams http://nonniequiltingdreams.wordpress.com/
Patrene's Quilters Creative Talk Radio
http://patsloan.typepad.com/quiltershome/
 Patchwork and Pacifiers http://patchworkandpacificers.wordpress.com/
QNN TV: Quilting Television on the Internet http://www.qnntv.com/
Quilt Cabana Corner http://quiltcabanacorner.podbean.com/
Quilt Out Loud http://www.quiltoutloud.com/
Quilted Cupcake http://quiltedcupcake.blogspot.com/
Quilting The Kaye Wood Way http://www.kayewood.com/blog/
Quilting with Rosie Radio
Quilting...for the Rest of Us http://www.quiltingfortherestofus.com/
Quilts 'n Kids http://quiltsnkids.wordpress.com/
Simple Arts Blog and Podcast http://simplearts.com/blogs/
Simply Quilts: Home & Garden Television
Stash Resolution http://stashresolution.blogspot.com/
Sterling Fiberarts http://sterling-fiberarts.com/sterling2/
The History Quilter Podcast http://historyquilter.podbean.com/
The Naked Scrapper
http://www.podfeed.net/podcast/The+Naked+Scrapper/9150
The Off-Kilter Quilt http://offkilterquilt.podbean.com/
The Pioneer Quilter http://pioneerquilter.com/
The Quilt Show http://www.thequiltshow.com/
The Quilter's Notebook http://quiltnotebook.wordpress.com/
Within A Quarter Inch http://withinaquarterinch.wordpress.com/

Scrapbooking
Scrap Time with Christine Scrapbooking Video
http://www.scraptimeca.mevio.com/
Scrapbooking Scrapbook Podcast http://www.scrapbooktalkradio.com/
Scrapbooking Video Tutorials http://www.paperclipping.com/
Scrapbooks, Rubber Stamps and Crafts OH MY!
http://www.divacraftlounge.com/
SCRAPcast http://www.scrapcast.com/
Crochet
Crochetville Podcast http://www.crochetville.org/forum/
The Crochet Crowd http://thecrochetcrowd.com/

Knitting
Cast On — a podcast about knitting http://cast-on.com/
Destiknit the Podcast http://destiknit.podbean.com/
Getting Loopy: An Interactive Fibercast by Mary Beth Temple http://gettingloopy.com/
KnakedKnits http://www.knakedknits.com/
Knit Picks Blog Podcast http://www.knitpicks.com/
Knit Science http://knitscience.podbean.com/
Knit Views A Podcast of Knitting Reviews http://www.knitviews.com/
KnitCast with Marie Irshad http://www.knitcast.com/
Knitty Gritty Videos http://www.diynetwork.com/topics/knitting/index.html
Let’s Knit2gether YouTube Channel http://www.youtube.com/user/letsknit2gether
Ready, Set, Knit! http://readysetknit.yarn.com/
Spin Control knitting and spinning crafts podcast http://spincontrolpodcast.com/
Stash and Burn Podcast All Things About Knitting http://www.stashandburn.com/
The Knitmore Girls Podcast http://knitmoregirls.blogspot.com/
The Savvy Girls Knitting Podcast http://www.savvygirls.ca/
YarnCraft http://yarncraft.lionbrand.com/
Yarnspinners Tales's Podcast http://yarnspinnerstales.com/

Beading and Jewelry Podcasts
Bead Java Handcrafted Beads and Jewelry Podcast http://www.blogtalkradio.com/bead-java
Read and Bead http://readandbead.blogspot.com/
Hardwood Video Podcast http://www.youtube.com/user/harwoodpodcast
Sewing
Grandma’s Sewing Cabinet http://grandmassewingcabinet.com/
GreenStitch: Sustainable sewing, knitting, and textile work
http://greenstitch.libsyn.com/
Stitching n Junk http://mrxstitch.libsyn.com/
Sew Chick: Art Quilt Adventurer http://sewchick.blogspot.com/
Sew Forth Now http://sewforthnow.blogspot.com/
Sew On TV http://www.sewontv.com/
Sew Stitch Create! http://www.sewstitchcreate.com/
Silly Chick Designs http://sillychickdesigns.blogspot.com/
Stitch It! Podcast http://stitchitpodcast.com/
The Material Mama Podcast http://materialmama.typepad.com/
ThreadBangerger D.I.Y Fashion & Style video podcast
WholeLottaSinger’s Blog http://wholelottasinger.wordpress.com/
YouTube TreadleLady’s Channel
http://www.youtube.com/user/TreadleLady

Woodworking, Woodcrafts, and Workshop Work
Matt’s Basement Workshop http://mattsbasementworkshop.com/
The Wood Whisperer http://thewoodwhisperer.com/
High Rock Woodworking http://www.highrockwoodworking.com/
Logan Cabinet Shoppe Podcast
http://www.logancabinetshoppe.com/podcast.html
Woodworking Online Podcast
http://www.woodworkingonline.com/category/podcast/
The Renaissance Woodworker
http://www.renaissancewoodworker.com/category/podcasts/
Sandal Woods - Fine Woodworking http://sandal-woodsblog.com/
Splintered Board Podcast http://splinteredboard.com/
Stu’s Shed Woodworking Podcast by Stuart Lees
http://itunes.apple.com/podcast/id258495998
Woodsmith Podcast
http://www.woodworkingonline.com/woodsmith-podcast-store/
Woodworkers Resource http://www.woodworkersresource.com/
Upper Cut Woodworks
http://uppercutwoodworks.com/tag/woodworking-podcast/
WoodworkWeb Woodworking Videos
http://www.woodworkweb.com/woodworking-videos.html
DIY Home Improvement Podcast by The Handyguys
http://www.handyguyspodcast.com/
Crafts in General
Craft Cartel http://craftcartel.com/
CRAFT CRAFT Video Podcast
http://www.channels.com/episodes/show/12667504/
Craft Culture Podcast: A Podcast for Crafty Thinkers
http://craftculture.danido.com/
CRAFTCAST: with Alison Lee http://www.craftcast.com/
CraftSanity http://craftsanity.com/
Crafty Chica Podcast http://craftychicapodcast.blogspot.com/
CRAFTY GEMINI http://www.craftygemini.com/
CraftyPod http://www.craftypod.com/
Craftzine DIY Projects Magazine, Podcast, Videos http://craftzine.com/
Curbly DIY Design Community http://curbly.com/section/CurblyVideo
Hello Craft http://www.hellocraft.com/category/podcast/
I Can’t Believe I’m - video classes and video podcasts
http://www.icantbelieveim.com/
iMake http://www.imake.gg/imakepodcast
Museum of Contemporary Craft Podcast

Now as I think about the impact of taking that first step off the cliff into the unknown world of blogging, I see so many rewards. I found a new credibility in myself and around the artist community. I found inspiration and motivation unlike I’d ever felt before, touched by so many lives online. And I found a renewed sense of self-confidence through the supportive online community. I felt a part of something.

Deirdra Doan, Dollmaker and Artist
Taking the Virtual to the Face-to-Face

Through involvement in the social web, most people connect face-to-face more often. How?

Before the web, if you belonged to a group or association, you had options of meeting weekly, monthly, quarterly, locally, regionally, or nationally. The same meeting schedules are available to many online groups, plus more.

Begin by monitoring the offline activities and events of the forums and groups to which you belong. Are they having regular meetups, conferences, barcamps or other gatherings?

For national or international online groups, do you know how many members are in your community? Why not ask, inviting them to participate in a discussion about gathering locally. Why not have a crafty lunch meetup or show and tell social?

From the small group gathering for lunch to conferences with hundreds or thousands of people, social events today are promoted on the web with easy access through meetup social networks, Facebook groups, forums, online groups, Tweetups (Twitter invitation meetups), and community calendars.

The keywords to look for when looking for online events are meetup, unconference, barcamp, camp, social, or tweetup.
Meetup.com

Meetup.com is just one of many online tools for organizing events and group meetings. Meetup is free to participant members, charging groups a fee for promoting their events, allowing for easy announcements and registrations as well as dialog between event organizers and participants. Members can use their profile and event pages to organize and track the various groups they belong to and their activities, getting email reminders, requests, and information.

Recent changes in how Meetup is structured\(^{13}\) brought a rash of complaints. While Meetup has long been a popular event management service, some groups are switching to other services, promoting their events through their forums or groups or using BigTent.com and GroupSpaces, both fairly new online event models. Check these for events near to you as well.

Social Membership Groups

Not all membership craft groups have an online presence. Now that you have taste of the power of the social web, why not work with local craft groups, knitting clubs, quilt guilds, sewing associations, and others to help them find a place on the web.

Many groups’ memberships are aging rapidly, challenged by the task of finding new members to keep the enthusiasm and energy thriving. The social web opens up many opportunities for members to recruit and network with others, not just bringing in new members but permanently preserving their skills for history.

\(^{13}\)http://theconfessionsofacraftaholic.wordpress.com/2011/01/28/my-thoughts-on-meetup-and-other-things/
**Unconference/Barcamp**

A popular conference for the tech industry is described as an “unconference” or “barcamp.” These are informal gatherings where people attend a themed social event without an agenda. Participants offer their talents and expertise to the crowd and the rest of the participants sign up for the topics of interest to them. While it sounds like confusion and anarchy, with the right group the event is often considered a more enjoyable experience. It also offers members a chance to share their expertise with others, lifting leaders up from within the group.

**Galleries, Showcases, Craft Fairs, and Bazaars**

Many crafters enjoy seasonal or special events where they can gather as a group to show off their craft. Understanding the power of the social web as a marketing tool, the online community can easily promote their special exhibit or event to their audience.

Many of these events are used as fund-raisers or showcases, giving crafters a chance to make money, often donating part or all of the proceeds to a worthy cause.

It’s not just a chance to meet in person, it’s a chance to do a grandiose show and tell.

**Think: Helping Others**

The social web is a great place to learn how to help others, from projects associated with natural or manmade disasters to the many groups and online projects to make caps and blankets for children in hospitals or shelters. You aren’t just crafting for yourself or your business, but helping to make a difference in the lives of others.

Online social groups do a lot of goodwill work for others, using the power of their virtual reach to connect with needy groups.
and individuals worldwide, helping people in countries far beyond where we would normally travel or where we even know there was a need.

Check with your favorite online group or forum on charity projects they may be currently involved with. If they aren’t, why not do some research and suggest one of your own?

There are many online groups for crafters creating for others. The Daily Knitter offers an extensive list of charity organizations looking for knitting projects\(^\text{14}\). Dana of CraftsNScraps has a long list of quilting charities links to help quilters give more\(^\text{15}\). We All Sew from Bernina offers “Sew to Serve,” a listing of charity projects of all types for sewers and crafters\(^\text{16}\).

It’s a way to participate and give from the comfort of your home, and another way to connect personally with others online and off.

\(^{14}\)http://www.dailyknitter.com/charity.php

\(^{15}\)http://www.craftsnscraps.com/links/quilting/quiltingcharities.html

\(^{16}\)http://www.weallsew.com/sew-to-serve/
What’s Next

Now that you have the tools in place and understand how to use them, it’s time for you to start blogging, tweeting, facebooking, and socializing on the web.

If you are a professional crafter, get *Social Media for Your Crafty Business*\(^{17}\) and *Making a Great Blog: A Guide for Creative People*\(^{18}\) by Diane Gilleland of CraftyPod.com and the CraftyPod Podcast.

The WordCast Network, a multimedia site for bloggers and web publishers, released an extensive series of articles designed to help crafters find their way in the blogging and social web. Highlights included:


Many local craft groups are realizing the importance of social media, for themselves as well as their members. Get involved to help bring this book and your expertise to your fellow members, and learn how they are using the social web, too.

\(^{17}\)http://shop.craftypod.com/socialmedia
\(^{18}\)http://shop.craftypod.com/great_blog
Glossary

**Avatar:** A visual icon representing a user in an online community or social media site.

**Blog:** A content management system used to publish content in reverse chronological order on the web. Based on the term "weblog," a combination of "we blog."

**Blogging:** Process of managing and publishing content on a blog. Once was considered an alternative name for online journaling.

**Blogroll:** Also known as *Links*, they are found on the sidebar of a blog. A blogroll is a list of recommended site links, encouraging visitors to explore similar and related sites.

**Browser:** A program used to access and interact with web pages. Examples include Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Apple Safari and Internet Explorer.

**Categories:** Overall topics for a blog, a table of contents grouping the content into specific topics.

**Chat rooms:** Similar to instant messaging, chat rooms allow community members to have conversations -- not only one-on-one, but as a group as well.

**CMS:** Content Management System, a program that manages published content on the web such as on a blog or website.

**Creative Commons:** A popular and optional copyright licensing framework offering easy-to-use forms to create the appropriate copyright policy for your site and creative work.

**Ecommerce:** The selling of products on the web, specifically from a website.

**Embed:** Including a video, audio, or other multimedia file from a website within your own content, which usually consists of a link or block of code to be pasted into a blog post.

**Fair Use:** A recognized standard for content usage *without the permission* of the copyright holder. Usage must include the citation (link) to the source and not consist of more than a small portion of the whole. A web standard is to copy no more than an excerpt, not to exceed 10% of the work or 200-400 words. Copyright holders should define their limits for Fair Use in their copyright policy.

**Flash:** Adobe’s proprietary program designed to create movies and animations on the web.

**Followers:** Made popular by Twitter, people who choose to receive updates you post.

**Forums:** Discussion publishing platforms that may accompany blogs or websites for member interactivity.

**Friend:** A user of a social media site who has mutually connected with you to share information.

**Hacker:** Once a word that meant criminal activity on software or a website, today it represents someone exceptionally proficient in coding and programming.

**Hashtags:** Keywords marked by a # symbol to track topics on Twitter and other social media sites.

**Instant messenger:** One of the more popular forms of communicating online, instant messages help group members have real-time conversations.

**Like:** Popularized by Facebook, a means of showing one’s support for a post or media work, often recognized by a thumbs-up symbol. Likes are now used outside of Facebook, and actions taken on the Like are reported on your Facebook account.
**Meetup:** A real life gathering of an online community for networking and education.

**Microblogging:** The process of publishing content on the web with a restriction by character length, often fitting within 140 characters, restricted by mobile phone requirements.

**Monetize/Monetization:** The term for adding money-making features to your blog, such as advertising or ecommerce.

**Open Source:** Computer software, applications, or content for which the source code is free and available to the public. Often used to describe things that are given away free on the web.

**Permalink:** The link to a specific web page’s URL. In blogging, it is the link to the post or article. WordPress and other publishing platforms use pretty permalinks to describe a link that looks readable, such as

```
example.com/2011/this-is-a-post-about-dogs/
```

to

```
```

**Reblog:** The process of sharing or "reblogging" a post from another site on WordPress.com, now adopted by other blogging and microblogging services and communities.

**Retweet:** Reposting another Twitter user’s tweet to your followers.

**Scraper:** A person or program that copies blog and website content and uses a portion or the entire thing on a different site, often with the intention of monetizing the content without permission, violating copyrights.

**Tags:** Keywords used to describe a post. A blog’s index words.

**Troll:** A person harassing others on a social network or committing acts of aggression or defacement of websites.

**Tweet:** A short message containing 140 characters or less sent via the Twitter website, Twitter third-party application or mobile app.

**Tweetup:** A social event with announcements and invitations generated via Twitter only.

**Unconference:** An informal conference that has no defined agenda.

**URL:** Address of a web page, usually beginning with http://.

**URL Shortner:** TinyURL, Bit.ly, and t.co (Twitter URL Shortner) are examples of services which take long web addresses and shorten them into an abbreviated form such as

```
bit.ly/wc23042/
```

making them readable and easy to fit into microblogging platforms such as Twitter.

**Vlog:** A contraction of the term “video blog” - a diary-style video popularized by users of YouTube.

**Widget:** Also called a gadget, an add-on to your blog or website. A block of code providing additional functionality.

**Wiki:** A website that is continuously collaboratively edited, the most famous example being Wikipedia.

**WordPress:** Open source publishing platform. The most popular blogging and content management system on the web. There are three versions of WordPress hosting, self-hosted (WordPress.org), hosted (WordPress.com), and managed (like WPEngine.com).
Who is Lorelle VanFossen?

Lorelle VanFossen is one of the top bloggers in the world, publishing over 1900 articles a year across numerous blogs. She is the host of the popular WordPress Lorelle on WordPress, providing WordPress and blogging tips for bloggers of all levels.

She is an Adjunct at Clark College in Vancouver, Washington, and Portland Community College in the Portland, Oregon, area, teaching the world's first, full-credit WordPress college course in multiple degree programs. She recently worked with Clark College to revamp the entire web development degree program to make it work with the modern and evolving web.

Lorelle is the author of one of the first books on blogging, Blogging Tips: What Bloggers Won’t Tell You About Blogging, and popular guest and co-host on many podcasts.

She speaks as a keynote at many WordCamps, blog and corporate events, and provides consultancy and training for groups and agencies around the world. She’s also been known to occasionally impersonate the WordPress Fairy Blogmother.

Lorelle began blogging and web publishing since 1993 with Taking Your Camera on the Road, one of the oldest websites on the web. She’s been a long time contributor to Blog Herald, BlogFlux, Blogger and Podcaster Magazine, WordPress Podcast, WordCamp Report, ProBlogger, WordCast, Bitwire Media productions, Making My Life, Stories of Our Journeys, Life on the Road, Outdoor and Nature Photography, Shutterbug, Photo Techniques, The Mountaineer, Jerusalem Post, New York Times, CNet,
Phenomenal Women of the Web, and Weblog Tools Collection.

Lorelle comes from a long line of self-reliant, artistic, and crafty ancestors. She began studying calligraphy, paper marbling and paper crafts as a teenager. Learning tatting from her 93 year old grandmother-in-law, she ran out of things to decorate with the 17th century handmade lace, turning to quilting and doll making. She balances a life heavy in technology with a variety of traditional crafts, gardening, and the occasional woodworking project.

Traveling full-time for 20 years, Lorelle is on the road via recreational vehicles, planes, trains, subs, boats, skis, motorcycles, bicycles, and automobiles. She currently resides just outside of Portland, Oregon, on a small tree farm in the foothills of the Coast Mountain range with her Renaissance man, 2 cats, deer, elk, and a 120 gallon fish tank stuffed with freshwater fish.

**Credits**

**Photo Credits:** Library of Congress; Quilting Group Drews Creek, West Virginia; Members of Dan Baptist Church Quilting Group; Quilt Club, Marion Post Wolcott.

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Thank you

Thank you so much for your support of this book and all my endeavors. If you enjoyed this book, please buy one for a friend or family member.

If you would like to learn more about blogging and blog writing, my book, *Blogging Tips: What Bloggers Won’t Tell You About Blogging*, is still in print. In it, you will learn:

- How to define your blog’s purpose.
- How to build your blog’s plan and editorial calendar.
- Understand the basics of blog design.
- Learn more about writing interesting and attention-getting content.
- Develop your blog writing style and voice.
- Learn how to encourage your readers to respond.
- Learn how to write with keywords and search terms to help your blog be found.
- How to deal with spammers, scrapers, and other nasties on the web.
- Learn how to improve SEO with podcasts, video, and other multimedia.
- Understand how to avoid blog burnout.
- How to use your blog in response to disasters, emergencies, or accusations.
- Learn how to respond to copyright violations.
- Learn your rights as a blogger.

To order your copy, visit

[http://lorelle.wordpress.com](http://lorelle.wordpress.com).