



When you're new to blogging, you don't know what you don't know. And, if you're like me, you spend hundreds of hours on the internet trying to figure out what you need and how to get started. To save you putting all that time into research, I've put together this list of recommended blogging resources. Everything on this list is a product or service I use* or come highly recommended by bloggers I trust. I hope you'll find these recommendations useful.

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Blogging Platforms

[WordPress](#)

If your intention is to monetise your blog, there's really only one platform to use; Wordpress.org. It's also the blogging platform of choice for most serious bloggers today.

It's not the only platform out there. If monetising your blog isn't on your agenda these other platforms might serve your needs:

- [WordPress.com](#) – a free hosted blogging platform
- [Blogger](#) – another free hosted option – owned by Google

Hosting

If you choose Wordpress.org as your blogging platform, you'll need to organise your own hosting service.

There are lots of hosting services out there but if you're just starting out or have a smaller blog, you can't go past [BlueHost](#). I use and highly recommend [BlueHost](#). Use the [BlueHost](#) link to get a special discount offer for Smart Money, Simple Life readers.

[BlueHost](#) – WordPress has been recommending Bluehost for web hosting since 2005. With 1-click WordPress installation, 24/7 support, and a super affordable rate, Bluehost is a great option for building your first website or blog.

Learn more about how to start your own blog with this [step by step tutorial](#).

Blog Design/Themes

There are thousands of themes available for WordPress blogs. No matter what your niche is, the perfect theme is out there.

If you're just starting out, the best advice I can give you is to choose a simple to manage theme and one from a reputable company. Firstly because you don't want to make life complicated when you're getting the hang of blogging and secondly, established companies issue regular updates to cover any new issues that might arise, like updated security.

Here are some theme providers you can trust:

- [StudioPress](#) – secure, beautifully designed, responsive themes
- **ThemeForest** – this is a marketplace with thousands of WordPress themes from many different designers
- [Thesis](#) – a professionally designed WordPress blog theme and template manager – with many options.

Graphic Design Tools

- [**PicMonkey**](#) – Simple to use tool for creating visual content for your blog or social media. This is the one I use.
- [**Canva**](#) – Another online tool that's easy to use and is great for creating graphics.
- [**99designs**](#) – Want someone else to create your graphics, logo or some other design element? Check out the services offered by the thousands of designers at 99designs.

Email Marketing Tools

- [**AWeber**](#) – The email/newsletter management tool I use on my blog
- [**MailChimp**](#) – Very reliable with some great features and the most popular service for new bloggers.
- [**ConvertKit**](#) – Built for professional bloggers.
- [**SumoMe**](#) – An excellent tool to collect email addresses through a variety of popups, hello bars, welcome mats and other innovative tools and the tool I use.
- [**OptinMonster**](#) – A similar tool to SumoMe
- [**LeadPages**](#) – A powerful tool to create landing pages for your blog.

Social Media Management Tools

- [**BoardBooster**](#) - A scheduler purpose built for Pinterest. It's completely brilliant!
- [**Sprout Social**](#) – a tool that manages social media interactions on Twitter and Facebook.
- [**CoSchedule**](#) – A tool for scheduling social media and more.

Other Blogging Resources and Tools

- [Evernote](#) – excellent product for capturing everything from brainstorming to writing blog posts and much, much more.
- [Grammarly](#) - The World's Best Grammar Checker!
- [BuzzSumo](#) – a tool for analysing how well content is being shared on your site (or anyone else's)
- [Easy Digital Downloads](#) – an awesome solution to use from within WordPress if you're selling products from your blog.
- **Delightful Downloads** - A free Wordpress plugin and all you need for free downloads.
- [Google Analytics](#) – a great free metrics and statistics program that enables you to see everything to do with traffic for your blog or website. It's a must have!

Blog Monetisation

There are many ways to make money blogging, from selling products and services to creating your own online courses. Not all of them will appeal to every blogger, especially if you're just starting out, so here are a few ideas to get you started:

- [AdSense](#) – Googles Ad network – one of the most used monetisation strategies for bloggers.
- [Amazon Associates](#) – Make money recommending products from the biggest online store.
- [BookDepository](#) - Make money recommending the online bookstore with over 16 million titles and free delivery anywhere in the world.
- [ShareASale](#) - Join Share a Sale and gain access to a huge range of merchants.

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