



GUIDELINES

22/10/15

BACKGROUND

MyHeart provides access to a range of content including stories, fact sheets and blog posts in the Beat, written by authors recognised as experts in their field.

This document provides guidelines on writing blog posts aimed at young people aged 13 -22 with childhood heart disease and their family members. It explains how blog posts should be structured and provides a template used for blog posts approved by HeartKids.

1. DEVELOP A CLEAR PURPOSE FOR THE POST

Readers should be able to easily identify the main purpose of the blog post in the opening paragraph. It is useful to think in terms of the reader's goals, for example: 'why does a heart kid or their family member need to read this blog post?'

Their potential answers may include:

- To understand what is happening in the broader community of people like me.
- To understand the progress of medical research and activity in relation to childhood heart.
- To understand my condition better so I can communicate effectively with my doctors and other health professionals.
- To understand the trade-offs and choices of action I can take to address an issue.
- To understand what options are available to me.

2. DETERMINE THE CONTENT OF THE POST

2.1 Include information to help users make decisions or take actions if appropriate.

Blog posts should include essential information only - what will help a young person or their family member make a specific decision or take a specific action?

A large amount of information can be overwhelming, focus should be placed on what can be done to alleviate the problem rather than on the problem itself.

Information should be action-oriented whenever possible, presented in terms of actions that can be taken by a heart kid or family member.

2.2 Strategise around the emotional impact of the text.

Writers should be aware of potential emotional reactions to the amount or nature of information that may affect motivation to continue reading and/or act upon the information provided. Writers should remember that young heart kids aged 13 to 22 and family members will not view information objectively, but through an emotional lens.



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Writers should recognise and limit “worry-producing” content. Some tips to avoiding negative reactions to information include:

- Qualifiers should be used such as “for most people” or “sometimes”.
- Information that is unavoidably negative should be tempered with statements concerning positive coping or encouragement. For example:

“While this may be challenging to accept, it is important to know that many people with (condition or outcome) are able to manage this challenge and lead happy, productive lives.”

- Occasionally, acknowledging a negative reaction is appropriate and can assist with removing blocks to reading and information intake.

3. USE A PLAIN WRITING STYLE

Writers should be conscious of writing style. Traditional medical writing with lots of jargon can be hard for people to understand. If you want people to use the information, write in plain language.

- Paint a picture for your reader - analogies and metaphors help express concepts and processes.
- Sentences should be short and constructed in simple, active voice: Noun, verb, adjective or adverb.
- Use present tense whenever possible.
- Bullets should be used in place of long blocks of text.
- Use pictures and simple diagrams whenever possible to express a term, process, or concept.
- Use the second-person narrative (“you”) when appropriate.
- Simple, everyday words should be used in place of technical jargon.

4. USE A TEMPLATE AND ORGANIZE THE CONTENT IN A WAY WHICH IS CLEAR

The organisation of content is critical to reader comprehension. The following template for HeartKids blog posts lays out information for users in a way that helps HeartKids understand. Although this format can vary from one blog post to another, it may help to follow this template:

The HeartKids Blog Post Template

1. Read this article NOW. . . (attention-grabbing headline)

What is the headline?

Write a strong title, it needs to be accurate and clear as well as grab people’s attention

2. This blog post is about. . . (introduce the topic)



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What is the TOPIC?

You need to capture young people's attention with the introduction.

The beginning text should provide a context for the information/opinion, clearly identifying the topic.

3. "What You Need to Know" (bullet summary of content)

What is the CONTENT?

Structure the blog post with sub-headings.

4. Summary Paragraph

What is the TAKEAWAY?

What are the key points you want to make?

5. Do you want more information?

Where can I learn more?

It may be helpful to provide a link to additional information.

6. Where does this information COME FROM?

Research suggests that audiences use this information to determine credibility and trustworthiness of the information. This includes the author's credentials and sponsorship.

5. FIND PICTURES AND GRAPHICS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE UNDERSTAND

Pictures are the best way to communicate information to most audiences. Anatomical diagrams should show where the anatomy is located in the body by showing the anatomy within an outline of the body.

- Anatomical diagrams should be simple and easy to read.
- Any images you supply should not be encumbered by copyright restrictions.

HEARTKIDS AUSTRALIA

Blog Posts on MyHeart should also adhere to the following guidelines:

Any images used must be provided with the full knowledge and consent of the photographer or illustrator or owner of the intellectual property. Any photos of people must be provided with the consent of the subject(s) unless provided as a stock image for which rights have been purchased.

Where blog posts are kindly provided by a third party, HeartKids Australia agrees to credit the contributor.

Contributors submit their copy in the knowledge HeartKids will review and edit it before making the content live.