

Blog Crew
PO Box 123
Cambridge, MA 12345

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Greetings,

We'd like to invite you to join *Between the Bars*!

If you'd like to blog with us, please complete each item in the following checklist in order to get started (the checklist is for your use; no need to send it to us):

___ Read the **Introductory Packet** which explains what Between teh Bars is and how you can use it. Decide if you're interested in writing with us.

*If you'd like to use **Between the Bars**, return the following to us:*

___ Review and sign the **License Agreement**, and send it back to us. We can't publish any materials from you until you've signed and returned it.

___ If you'd like, send us a new **blog post** and a **profile page**! Profile pages are a single 8.5x11 page in which you introduce yourself. You may attach a photo or drawing if you like, add your mailing address, or anything else you'd like to tell people about yourself, as long as it fits on *one page*.

We hope this answers any questions you might have, but if not, don't hesitate to write us.

Kind Regards,

John Moderator Dough



Between the Bars

Human stories from prison

Between the Bars is a blogging platform for anyone in America who is currently behind bars. We'd like to introduce you to this free service, which is supported by the MIT Center for Civic Media.

Before you start, we want to make sure that you're aware of exactly what blogging is and how our service can be valuable to you – but also, what the limitations of our service are. We publish your letters (your own writing, artwork, or photos) that you send to us on the Internet, so that others can see them. Please read this introductory packet and ask us any questions you have before sending any blog posts.

What is blogging?

“Blogging” is a way to publish letters, stories, poetry, or artwork on the Internet. Things published on a “blog” (pronounced like “dog”) can be read by anyone anywhere who has a computer and an Internet connection. For example, your post could be read by someone in Japan, in Europe, or in the same town.

Blogging is different from pen-pal or personals services. Those services only offer you a place to put a brief description of yourself and a photo. By contrast, a blog is a place you can continue to send letters, news updates, new drawings, new stories, and more, which form a timeline or journal. While you can have a “profile” on your blog site (a short introduction about yourself), it's not the main attraction: people come to your blog to see your writing or artwork.



You can have as many posts as you like, and they never need to be removed – they just get pushed onto back pages. On the front page of your blog, a small section (usually the first paragraph or two) of your post appears at the top, and small sections of each previous post appear beneath that. Internet visitors can click “read more” at the bottom of the snippet to read the rest of your post. You can think of it as something like the front page of a newspaper, which has “continued on page A4” at the bottom of the first few paragraphs. Unlike a newspaper, your blog has essentially unlimited space. The newest blog posts are always shown first.

What does it cost?

Nothing, aside from the postage for your letters. If you wish for us to return a photo or blog post, please include a stamped return envelope (and tell us what you want us to return!). But otherwise, no return envelopes are necessary. Please note: we don't keep the hard copies of posts for very long, so if you want something back, please tell us *at the time you send it to us*, or it might have already been recycled.

How can others find out about my blog?

Everyone with an Internet connection can freely access your blog. Internet visitors to your blog can read your posts, and leave comments on your posts. When you sign up, we'll send you your own Internet address (or "URL") which you can share with friends or family so they can access your blog.

Can I set up a profile page, like a pen pal site?

Yes! To set up a profile page, craft a single beautiful page (including an attached photo, if you like) and include a note in your letter explaining that you want this page to be your profile. Profiles can only be a single page, up to 8.5" x 11". You might wish to include your name, your address, a photo, or a brief biography.



How does my letter become a blog post?



When you send us a letter, volunteers and staff use a "scanner" to turn the paper document into images on a computer. These images are then shown on your blog site, and they look just like the letter that you sent us. Visitors to your site can also transcribe your writing (turning it into computer typing), which makes them more accessible, but people always see your own writing first.

Can I get printouts of my blog posts?

We will send you a printout of your first blog post so you can see how it looks. But from that point forward, we won't provide printouts, due to the cost and time required. If for some reason we are unable to publish something you have sent us, we will always tell you and return it to you.

How do comments work?

When people on the Internet visit your site, they can leave comments, or replies, on your blog posts. These comments are visible to anyone, including other visitors to your blog. Periodically (once every 1 to 2 weeks) we will print out any comments you have received, and mail them to you. You may not get comments (not every blog does), but your posts are still there and being read by other people whether you get comments or not. You can also reply to comments people send.

Can I name my blog? Can I set up more than one blog, or blog with other people?

If you'd like to name your blog (for example, to give it a theme), please include a note in a letter to us telling us what you would like your blog to be named. No profanity in blog names, please. Currently, we can only set up one blog site for you, and we only support blogs with a single author.

Introductory Packet
MOST IMPORTANT TO KNOW

What can I send?

You can send us your stories, pieces of artwork, poems, or essays. You're welcome to include photos, drawings, etc. in your posts. But REMEMBER that anything you put on your blog will be visible to *anyone*, including parole officers, the warden, CO's, and your relatives. And everything will be published in your real name.

What shouldn't I send?

We ask you to **never** send us anything illegal, inflammatory, or which might get you in trouble or affect your chances for parole. Here are some guidelines for what we will not publish:

- Never send anything that will get you in trouble.
- Never send personal medical records, criminal records, court documents, mental health evaluations, certifications, or anything of that sort.
Instead: Send a letter describing your experience in your own words.
- Never send in documents written by other people (without their explicit permission), and never include documents with signatures from third parties.
Instead: Get explicit permission from all third party authors before sending in documents written by them, and remove any signatures from people other than you.
- Don't send anything that includes the full names of other people in prison, including both employees and incarcerated people. It's great to tell stories about your experiences in prison, but please respect the privacy of others by using only first names or fake names when you do so.
Instead: Describe your experiences without using other people's full names.

If you send us anything that breaks these guidelines, we will not publish it, and may remove your blog.

Can I get my photos, drawings, or blog posts mailed back to me?

If you'd like us to return any post or photo to you, please include a return envelope and adequate postage to do so, and include a note explaining what you'd like us to send back. In general, we can't send your letters back to you otherwise. We don't hold on to hard copies for very long, so be sure to request returned materials at the time you send them in.

What if I want to remove something I previously sent?

Send us a letter, and say clearly at the top that you want us to remove some blog posts. Tell us the approximate dates and a brief description of the posts that you want removed, and we will remove them as soon as we can.

How can I increase my chances to get connected to other people?

- Be brief.
Visitors are unlikely to stick through a letter longer than 5 or 6 pages; it's better to be closer to 1 or 2 pages.
- Be expressive.
Talk about your experience. Illustrate it. You have lived a unique life, and your experiences are compelling and powerful. The most popular stories tell people on the outside about things that are new to them.
- Write often – but not too often.
One or two posts per week is a good rate. Too much more than that, and readers may become overwhelmed and lose interest.
- When visitors leave comments, respond to them!

When you write a blog post, please consider the following:

- Write as legibly as possible, using dark ink or type on clean paper. This helps the scans come out much more clearly. Fancy handwriting is great, just make sure it's easy to read.
- Don't staple pages together – we just have to remove the staples, and the holes in the paper can jam up the scanner.
- Avoid folding too many times. Normal tri-fold envelope folding is fine, but if the pages get too crinkled, it can be harder to scan.

Other questions?

If you have a question we didn't answer here (or a suggestion), please don't hesitate to write us.

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Between the Bars License Agreement

Background

Between the Bars (“BtB”) is a blogging platform for prisoners. BtB enables prisoners to blog by scanning and publishing letters. BtB aims to provide a positive outlet for creativity, a tool to assist in the maintenance of social safety nets, an opportunity to forge connections between prisoners and non-prisoners, and a means to promote non-criminal identities and personal expression. BtB hopes to improve prisoners’ lives and help to reduce recidivism.

In order to use Between the Bars, you must agree to the terms of this license agreement.

Materials Submissions

“Materials” include anything that you submit to BtB, including but not limited to written or typed letters, works, depictions, or prose.

By submitting Materials to BtB, you are granting BtB a non-exclusive, royalty-free, perpetual, and worldwide license to scan, upload, post, and display your Materials on the BtB website. This license allows BtB to, among other things, copy, distribute, transmit, publicly display, reproduce, edit, transcribe, translate, and reformat the content of those Materials, and/or to incorporate the Materials into a collective work.

By submitting Materials to BtB, you represent and warrant, with respect to all Materials that you submit to BtB, as follows:

- You are the sole author of all Materials, and all Materials are original to you.
- You have the right to submit the Materials to BtB and to grant BtB the rights set forth herein.
- The Materials do not violate or constitute the infringement of any patent, copyright, trademark, trade secret, right of privacy, right of publicity, moral right, or other intellectual property right or other right of any person or entity.
- The Materials, your submission of the Materials to BtB, and the posting of the Materials online do not violate the rights of any person or entity or any state or federal law or regulation.
- The Materials do not contain any threatening, harassing, libelous, false, defamatory, offensive, obscene, or pornographic material, or other material that would violate any other applicable law or regulation.

By submitting Materials to BtB, you acknowledge and agree that such Materials may be posted on the BtB website and made publicly available to anyone who wishes to view those Materials. BtB reserves the right to edit Materials submitted but is under no obligation to do so. By submitting Materials to BtB, you acknowledge that all Materials submitted may be publicly displayed to viewers of the BtB website and that your real name may appear in connection with Materials that you submit. You should not submit Materials that contain private or personal information that you do not want to have displayed or associated with you. You acknowledge and agree that BtB shall have no responsibility, liability, or obligation to you with regard to the Materials submitted, its protection, its use or misuse in anyway whatsoever by any entity, including but not limited to BtB itself.

Communications of prison inmates is regulated. You agree not to submit Materials in violation of any federal, state, or other applicable laws, rules, and regulations, such as those of your institution.

Indemnification

You agree to defend, indemnify, save, and hold BtB harmless from and against any and all claims that relate to or arise from an alleged breach of any representation, warranty, or other agreement set forth

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herein.

Requests for Removal of Materials

If you would like BtB to remove from the BtB site any Materials that you have submitted, BtB will use reasonable efforts to honor your request. To submit a request for the removal of Materials, you must send BtB a Removal Notice. A Removal Notice is any submission by you to BtB with the statement "I hereby request BtB to remove Materials submitted by me to BtB on the following dates: __mm/dd/year__, __mm/dd/year__, etc." Materials previously submitted by you will be removed from the BtB site within a reasonable amount of time of receiving such Removal Notice. BtB reserves the right to retain a copy of all Materials submitted previously despite removal from the BtB site. The Removal Notice should be mailed to the following address:

Between the Bars
Attn: Removal Notice
P.O. Box 425103
Cambridge, MA 02142

Termination of License Agreement

You may terminate your license to us with respect to all of your Materials, at any time by sending a Termination Notice. A Termination Notice is any submission by you to BtB with the statement "I hereby terminate my License Agreement with BtB with regard to materials submitted after today's date of mm/dd/year". All Materials previously submitted by you will be removed from the BtB site within a reasonable amount of time of receiving such Termination Notice. BtB reserves the right to retain a copy of all Materials submitted previously despite termination of this Agreement. The Termination Notice should be mailed to the following address:

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Governing Law and Entire Agreement

This Agreement is governed by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, without regard to the rules of conflict of law that may cause the laws of another jurisdiction to apply. You agree to the sole and exclusive jurisdiction and venue of the federal or state courts serving Massachusetts in the event of any dispute of any kind arising from or relating to this Agreement. This Agreement constitutes the entire agreement between the parties with respect to the subject matter hereof and supersedes and replaces all prior or contemporaneous understandings or agreements, written or oral, regarding such subject matter. If for any reason a court of competent jurisdiction finds any provision or portion of this Agreement to be unenforceable, the remainder of the Agreement will continue in full force and effect.

Your signature below indicates that you have read, understand, and agree to the above.

Signature

Date

Name (print clearly)

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By submitting Materials to BtB, you represent and warrant, with respect to all Materials that you submit to BtB, as follows:

- You are the sole author of all Materials, and all Materials are original to you.
- You have the right to submit the Materials to BtB and to grant BtB the rights set forth herein.
- The Materials do not violate or constitute the infringement of any patent, copyright, trademark, trade secret, right of privacy, right of publicity, moral right, or other intellectual property right or other right of any person or entity.
- The Materials, your submission of the Materials to BtB, and the posting of the Materials online do not violate the rights of any person or entity or any state or federal law or regulation.
- The Materials do not contain any threatening, harassing, libelous, false, defamatory, offensive, obscene, or pornographic material, or other material that would violate any other applicable law or regulation.

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