Writing tutorial
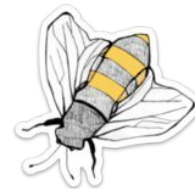
Using blogging and great documentation to grow your open source project
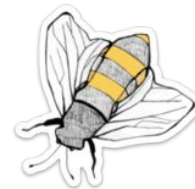
@aspittel

Roadmap

1. How to start
   a. My story
   b. What works
   c. How to pick a theme
2. Content
   a. Picking post topics
   b. My writing process
   c. Tips for creating solid content
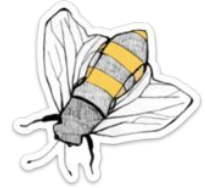3. Gain an audience
   a. Social media
   b. Crossposting
   c. SEO

10:30-11:00 Break // 12:15 Lunch

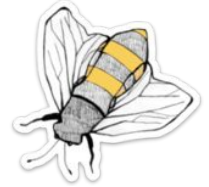**We'll do Q&A and a Worksheet after each section!**

First, introduce yourself to the people at your table!

My Story...

Disclaimer

You do not need to follow all of this advice, you can be as serious or as casual about blogging as you want. Be reasonable with yourself! Writing one blog post is better than writing zero blog posts.
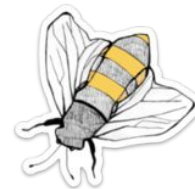
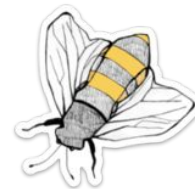# Examples of Blogging and Great Documentation Helping Projects!

- React + Overreacted.io
- Gatsby
- Babel
- Pandas
- Vue
- TrackingJS
- Twilio
- Azure
- RedHat

Goals for writing

- Bring people to your project

- Convince them to use it

- Teach people how to use your project

- To grow your personal brand/establish yourself as an expert

- Build a community

- Can be a source of income eventually
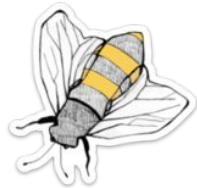
- To learn new things

- For yourself!

Naming things

Naming things is hard both in programming and outside of it

Options

- Use the name of the project
- Use your name
- Come up with something fun/witty
- Think about SEO

Target audience

- Who do you want to read your writing?

- How do you write in a way that will appeal to them?
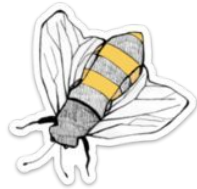
- Have one person in mind you're writing to

How will you pitch yourself to your audience?

- You don't have to be an 10x expert, but why are you writing about what you're writing about?

- Who are you, what are you passionate about?

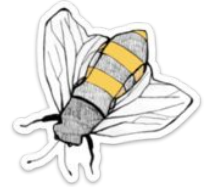- People like stories, integrate them even into technical content

DEV
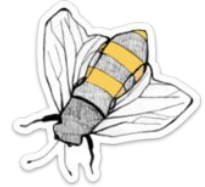
DEV

Coming up with a topic

Think of three problems your audience has, and write posts to solve those three problems!

Have a Concrete Topic at First

- Become the go-to person on a very narrow topic

- Maybe have a challenge for yourself

- Do research on what works, look at your own content and what does well and other people's

- Think about a year from now: will you still have enough to write about. Are you taking on too much too soon?
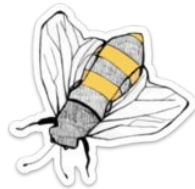
Content Types

- Blogs
  - Your own site
  - DEV
- Documentation
  - Sphynx
  - Vuepress
  - Gatsby
  - Your repo
- Other types of content
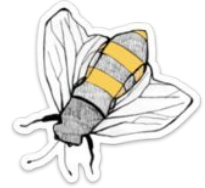 - Video
  - Podcast
  - etc...

Blogging Platform

- Don't build a blogging site until you know you like blogging, it's a big time sink
- Once you do, I love Gatsby, also Ghost, Jekyll, Hugo, etc.
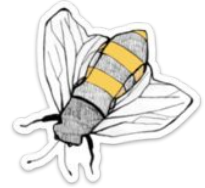- Think about hosting prices!

Making time for Content

- Everyone's life looks very different
- Batching!

Any Questions?
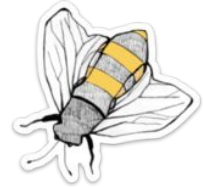
Worksheet 1: Starting Out

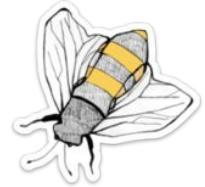alispit.tel/blogging-worksheets/sheets/ws1.html

Part II: Content

What to write about?

- Getting started guides

- Demo projects

- Common stumbling points

- How to integrate with other technology

- How to use in a business context

- Things you struggled with along the way

- Your story

- Something you Googled a bunch and couldn't find an answer for
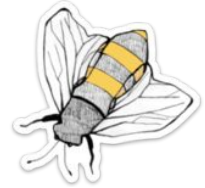
- Ask your audience!

Don't worry about being 100% unique and revolutionary

Write down topics as you think of them, not when you're trying to write
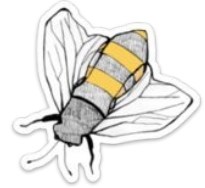
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Are you experienced enough to write about x topic?

Yes!
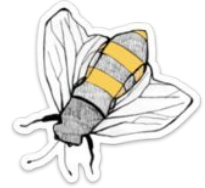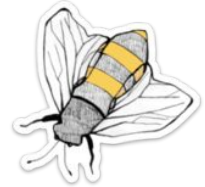
Tips for Titles

- Be catchy but honest: make sure you're giving a good representation of what's in the post

- People like numbers in titles (lists work well)

- Talk about the problem you're solving

- Don't be too boring

- Jokes are good

My Writing Process

1. Topic brainstorming
2. Keyword research
3. Write demos
4. Super rough outline
5. Fill in headers
6. Revise, revise, revise
7. Grammarly
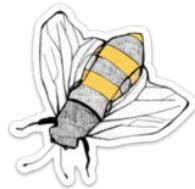8. Hemmingway Editor
9. Add in multimedia

Advice for content

- Break up walls of text, people don't want to read an essay

- Add multimedia to appeal to different learners (code snippets, images, lists, visualizations)

- Break into sections

- Write to your audience

- Add in the **why** and where to learn more

- Cite your sources
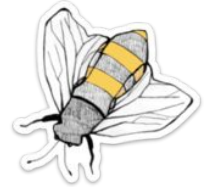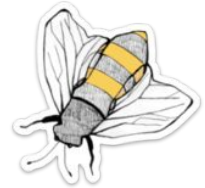
- Run your code samples!
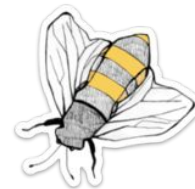
What if you mess up?

It 👏 happens 👏 to 👏 everyone!
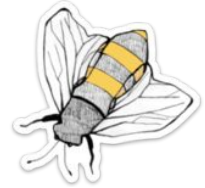
Q & A

Worksheet 2: Content

alispit.tel/blogging-worksheets/sheets/ws2.html

Part III: Building an Audience
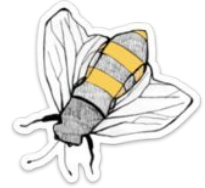
Don't rely on just one source!!!

Social Media

- Pinterest
- Instagram
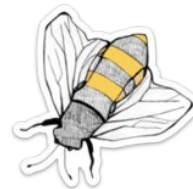- Twitter
- Quora
- Reddit
- Hacker News

Grow on Twitter

- Twitter Chats (#DevDiscuss and #CodeNewbie)
- I had goals for myself at first
  - 2 top-level non-promotional tweets (tips/funny stuff)
  - 1 promotional tweet
  - 1 promoting someone else's content
- Make tweets skimmable, add emojis and spacing.
- Hashtags can kind of work at first, but most viral tweets don't have them. Would be a minimalist if you use them outside of events.
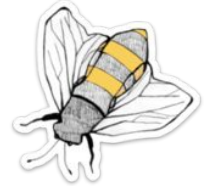- Engage! Don't go in one direction!

SEO

- Keywords
  - Low competition, lower volume at first
  - Keywords Everywhere, Mangools, Ahrefs
- Domain Authority
  - Backlinks through social media
  - Quality content that answers multiple questions
  - Don't give medical advice
- Site quality
  - Time on site
  - Site speed
  - Accessibility
  - Lighthouse testing!
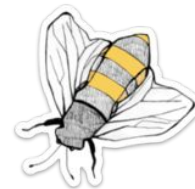
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Email List!

- Only thing you own and there aren't algorithm changes
- Have a lead magnet/newsletter/some offer for subscribers
- Tinyletter is free, Mailchimp under a certain number, Buttondown allows Markdown, ConvertKit has a ton for bloggers if you want to get fancy

Cross Post!

- Use a canonical url
- Post to DEV!
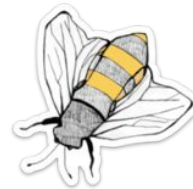- It'll get more eyes on your post

Build Hype!

- Tease that something's coming
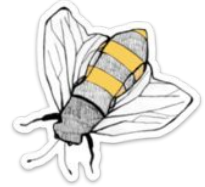- Share sneak peeks
- Branding can be helpful here

Consistency

Make sure your audience knows what they're going to get and when.
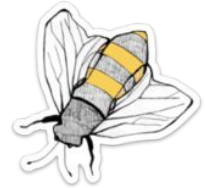
Consistency looks different for everyone!

Dealing with H8Rs

- It's rough! Don't be hard on yourself if you have a difficult time navigating it
- Find a support system who understands it
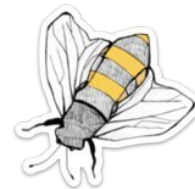- Screenshot and delete
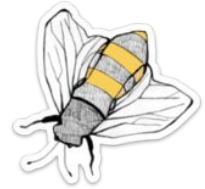
DEV

Q & A

Worksheet 3: Building an Audience

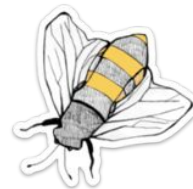alispit.tel/blogging-worksheets/sheets/ws3.html

General Q & A

Show me your posts!

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Get some stickers!