

A G.A.T.E.WAYS JOURNEY PROGRAM



For gifted Year 5 and 6 children with a
love of the digital space and writing

Digital Creators

...or how to become a champion blogger!

G.A.T.E.WAYS is an independent organization offering challenging and enriching activities and experiences to develop and extend highly able children. This *JOURNEY* for both girls and boys will run over four mornings.

Have you heard of Martha Payne and her food blog that started a school lunch revolution in Scotland? What about Jake McGowan-Lowe, young naturalist and published author, who began a blog about bones when he was ten years old? Or Tavi Gevinson, whose fashion blog launched a career in style journalism at the age of twelve? If you've ever dreamt of becoming a famous author – or a famous anything, really – blogging like these young movers and shakers have done is a good place to start! But putting together posts, pairing them with pictures and publishing them is only a tiny part of successfully getting your word out into the online world. This Journey will take you through the nitty-gritty of blogging – content creation, editorial planning, crafting your personal brand, leveraging SEO (search engine optimisation) and collaborating with other bloggers to increase your exposure. Armed with this knowledge you'll be able to use your words to carve out your own corner of the internet, and maybe a slice of fame to go with it!

Session one – Create It!

What is a blog? How do you set one up? How do you navigate the dashboard to important areas such as the privacy setting and comment options? We will begin with a video walkthrough which covers those important areas before moving on to a discussion about existing bloggers we admire. We will be crossing the globe from Canada (Taiya Maddison) to the UK (Tolly Dolly Posh), across to Indonesia (Evita Nuh) and back to Australia (Book Boy) to look at how they achieved success.

With those examples in mind, students will get to writing about their blogging vision. Where does your passion lie – is it climate change, is it girls' education, is it skateboarding, is it gaming? In what niche will you write? What will the blog be called? This concept will then be workshopped with other students before they are tasked to write an 'About Me' page draft. Before the session concludes, you'll come up with potential blog post ideas through mind mapping.

Session two – Grow It!

Okay, you've captured your readers' interest – now you've got to keep it! The best young bloggers who've kept their online presence going over time have posted regularly, but not so much they run out of steam. Can you commit to posting monthly? Every ten days? Weekly? This session, you're going to be re-vamping a calendar to make it blog-friendly, focusing on balancing scheduled posts with leaving room for those flashes of literary brilliance you just HAVE to type up and post on the spur of the moment. You'll also delve into the rabbit-warren-like world of search engine optimisation and learn how to craft your posts to rank highly in search results. Come prepared to get drafting on your favourite idea from the previous session.

Session three – Get It Out There!

Developing your voice is one of the most important parts of establishing your blog. This session you're going to have to decide whether it will be funny or serious, positive or negative, evaluative or narrative in style. And how about length – will you be verbose or concise? Will the language you use be formal or informal? Who will it appeal to? Is one voice 'better' than another? Consider this: does your blogging voice have to be the same as your speaking voice, and does it have to stay the same over time? Today, after nutting out answers to these pressing questions, you'll workshop your draft posts to fine tune your voice and make sure it is hitting your target audience – and develop a toolbox of skills to use when you hit 'the slumps' to make sure you don't leave them hanging!

Session four – Keep It Going!

Virtual parties, blog circles, guest posts, cross-posting - these are just a couple of ways that the blogging community help each other to get their work out to a wider readership! We'll be looking at examples such as 'Teens Got Cents', a multi-contributor blog, and 'Childtastic Books', a mother-daughter blogging team and how to find your blogging 'tribe' to work collaboratively with and maximise your exposure. We'll finish up by exploring the future of blogging. Where is it heading? And can a blogger's skills be used elsewhere in the big, wide world? The short answer, of course, is a resounding YES. Opportunities abound!

Please note: G.A.T.E.WAYS will create a blog to feature the writing which students produce during the sessions. This work will be posted to the blog by G.A.T.E.WAYS or the presenter. In order to maintain anonymity, we will ask the students to create a pen name and supply the document in a format which will be advised during the program.

What to Bring

- A notebook and pencil case with your favoured writing tools
- folder or A4 display book to store handouts
- A small, labelled photograph of yourself; a stamped, self-addressed DL envelope for your report
- A snack (no nut products please)
- a hat (for participants in Term 1 and 4)

Preparation and homework

In preparation for this program familiarise yourself with teen-written blogs. This could be done on a home computer or those accessible at a local library. It would enhance the students' experience if they could come along with an idea of the kind of blog they might want to start or contribute to.

About the Presenter

Karen Andrews is an award-winning multi-form writer, editor, poet and publisher. Her work has appeared in journals and publications throughout the country. She is currently creative director of www.karenandrews.com.au, an established and popular parenting/personal blog and two-time finalist in the Best Australian Blog Awards. Her latest book is 'Trust the Process: 101 Tips on Writing and Creativity' (Miscellaneous Press, 2017). She lives with her husband, two children and two ginger cats in Eltham, Victoria, where she inevitably is working on several projects at once.

