

## Using Gadgets on Your Blog

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Adding just the right gadget to your blog can really jazz it up and maximize viewer interest by offering extra information to your visitors. A “gadget”, also known as a “widget”, is a special page element that allows you to add text, images, and unique features in the side bar and footer of your blog.

Blogger offers several gadgets that are fully integrated with their service and are very easy for you to set up without knowing any special code. One of the most popular is a gadget to add RSS Feeds to your blog. This allows folks to automatically be notified when you have a new post. Two other commonly used gadgets include one for adding text and another for adding images. These can be used in tandem to display your picture along with a short bio. Although Blogger can display this information from the data provided in your profile, there is no control over the layout or size of the image and text with this option. By using gadgets, you have more choices as to how these elements will appear.

There are two other gadgets you can add that will be very helpful with enticing viewers to read older posts on your blog. The first gadget is “Blog Archives” and it contains a monthly list of your previous posts. The Archive gadget offers an array of configuration options that let you control how the list appears. There’s even a preview pane to let you see how the list will appear as you select between options. The limitation of this gadget is that it shows older archives listed only by the month instead of the post title.

A way to get around this limitation is to also include another gadget that lists the labels of your posts. You input this information at the end of every new post you create. For instance, if you’re blog is about cooking and you are adding a post that contains a new recipe, then you may simply want to label it “recipe”.

But, there’s a trick to maximizing the use of this information. While it makes a convenient index for your viewers, the label information is also picked up by Google as a keyword that helps them index your page with its search engine. So, if the particular post you are creating would be suitable for two different categories, it’s in your best interest to include both labels. For example, if your post contains commentary on regional cuisine plus a recipe, you might want to include two labels, such as “Southern Cooking” and “recipe”.

Another interesting feature of the labels gadget is that it also shows the number of posts that have that label. Using the above example, you might have twenty posts with a recipe label, but only one or two posts with a southern cooking label. Being mindful of how your label list appears to your viewers could result in more clicks. Remember the limitation of the archive gadget? Folks are not as likely to randomly click on a set of dates just to see if they can find an interesting post. Similarly, folks are more likely to click on a list of regional recipes, even if there are only a few, than on a generic list that contains hundreds. Think like your viewers and you will have more success maximizing on the potential this gadget provides and get more page views on your blog.