How to write a blog post (and create awesome post outlines)

Last Updated / Reviewed: Jan 10th, 2023
Execution Time: *~1-3 hours*

Goal: To create blog post outlines that will enable you to write better content and make your writing process easier and more streamlined.

Ideal Outcome: You and everybody in your content team will develop an efficient process that will enable you to create high-quality content that attracts users to your website, regardless of your business niche, until your servers crack and die of over exhaustion.

Prerequisites or requirements:

- It is recommended to have some keyword research knowledge so that you can clearly establish the target keyword for your blog posts. You can check this SOP to learn how to research and select relevant keywords for your website.

Why this is important: The content on your website helps you rank better on search engines, provides users with the information they need, and can convert them into

clients. Content creation is time-consuming, but preparing an outline ensures that your time is well spent. An outline is extremely important because it makes your content more effective, high-quality and consistent. In other words it doubles your chances of hitting the bull's eye with every piece of content you publish.

Where this is done: In your browser, Google Docs, Google Sheets and 3rd party apps.

When this is done: Whenever you need to create a new blog post.

Who does this: Anyone who creates content for your company and doesn't want to get fired over bad content.

❑ Environment setup

1. Get access to the tools you will need to create the outline (no need to purchase anything, but you may need to register for a free trial):

    a. Buzzsumo
    b. Sumo Headline Generator
    c. Readability Test Tool
    d. Moz Title Tag
    e. Sumo Power Words
    f. CoSchedule Headline Analyzer

2. Open this outline file and make a copy. You will be able to use this for every blog post.

3. Open the Popular Content Analysis Worksheet

❑ Define your objective & your main keyword

Before getting started with any blog post, you need to define your goal, as well as your main keyword and searcher intent.

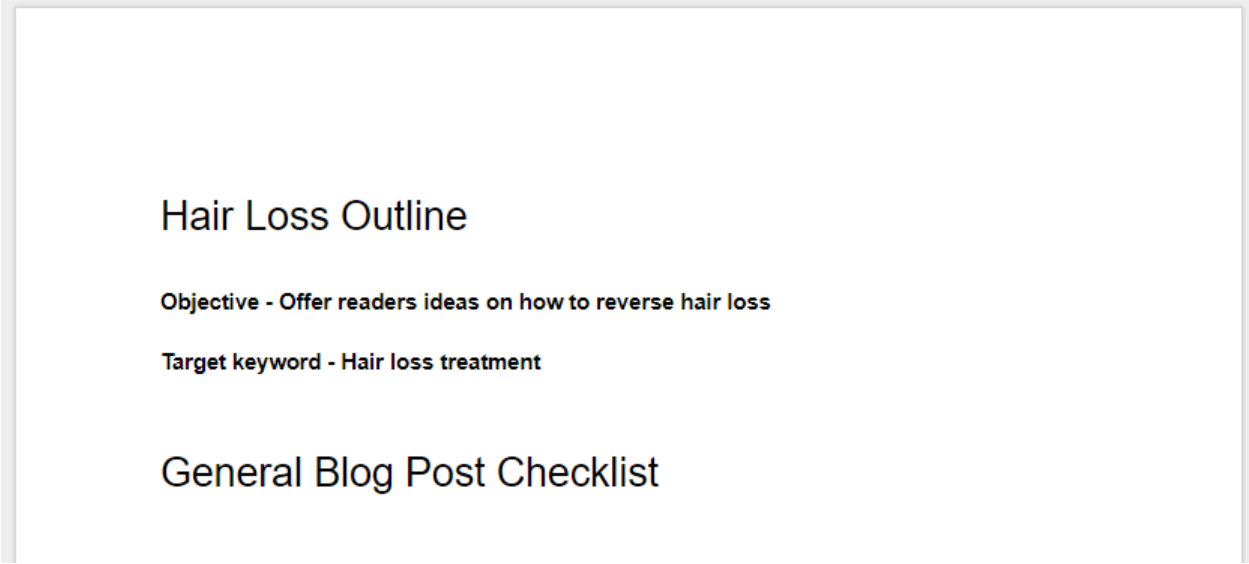
For the purpose of this SOP, we will explain the process of creating an outline for a blog post about hair loss treatments.

1. Name your copy of the outline according to your blog post topic. In our case we will use the name “Outline - Hair loss”.

2. Fill in the “Outline [blog post topic]” heading with the topic of your blog post. Under the second heading “General Blog Post Checklist” you will see a general checklist which you can use for all your blog posts, regardless of the topic.

3. Write down your objective: what users will get from reading your blog post.

4. Write down your target keyword. If you don't have one, check this SOP to learn how to research and select relevant keywords for your website.

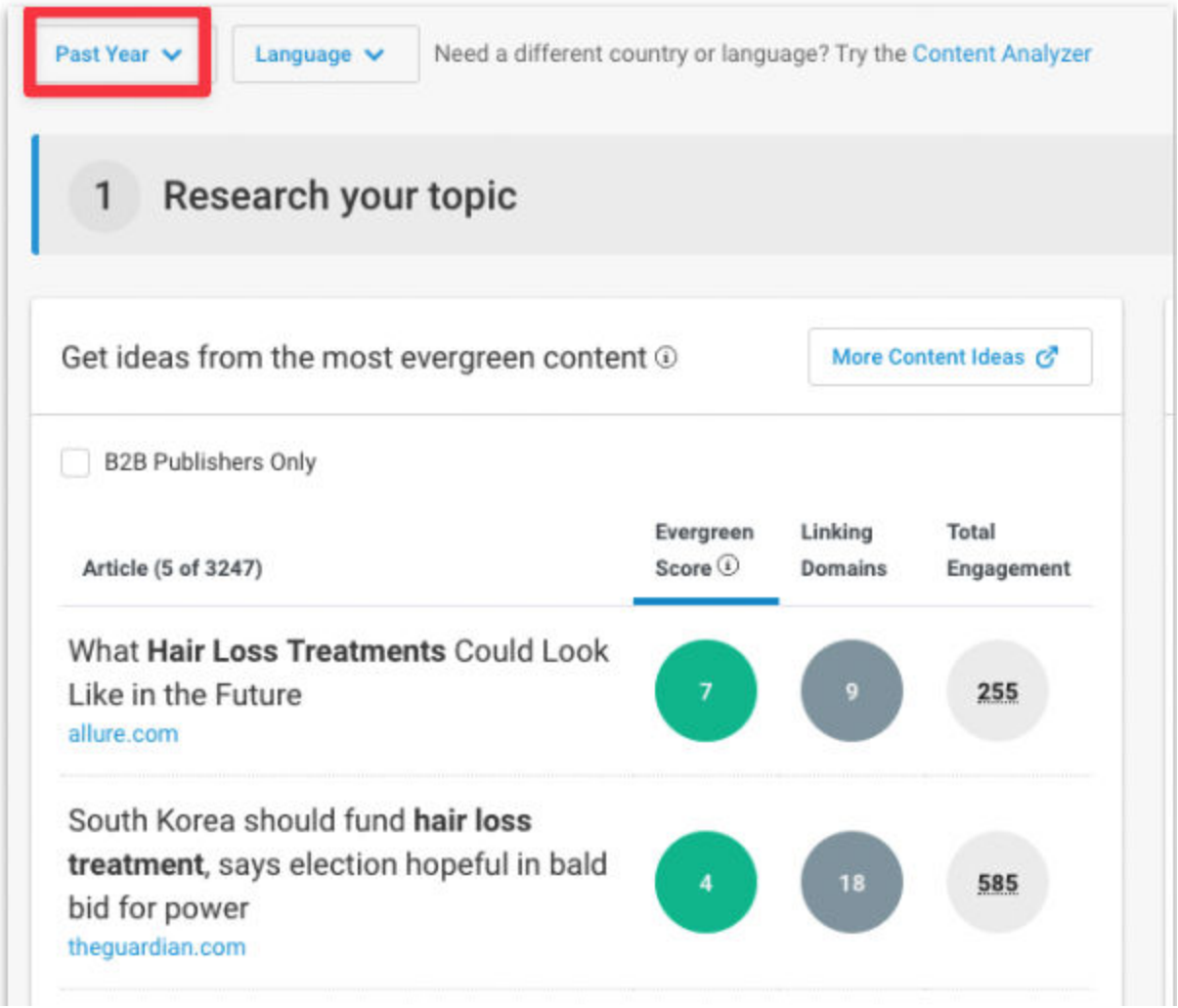


❑ Most popular content analysis

For the purpose of this exercise we will use "hair loss treatment" as the main keyword.

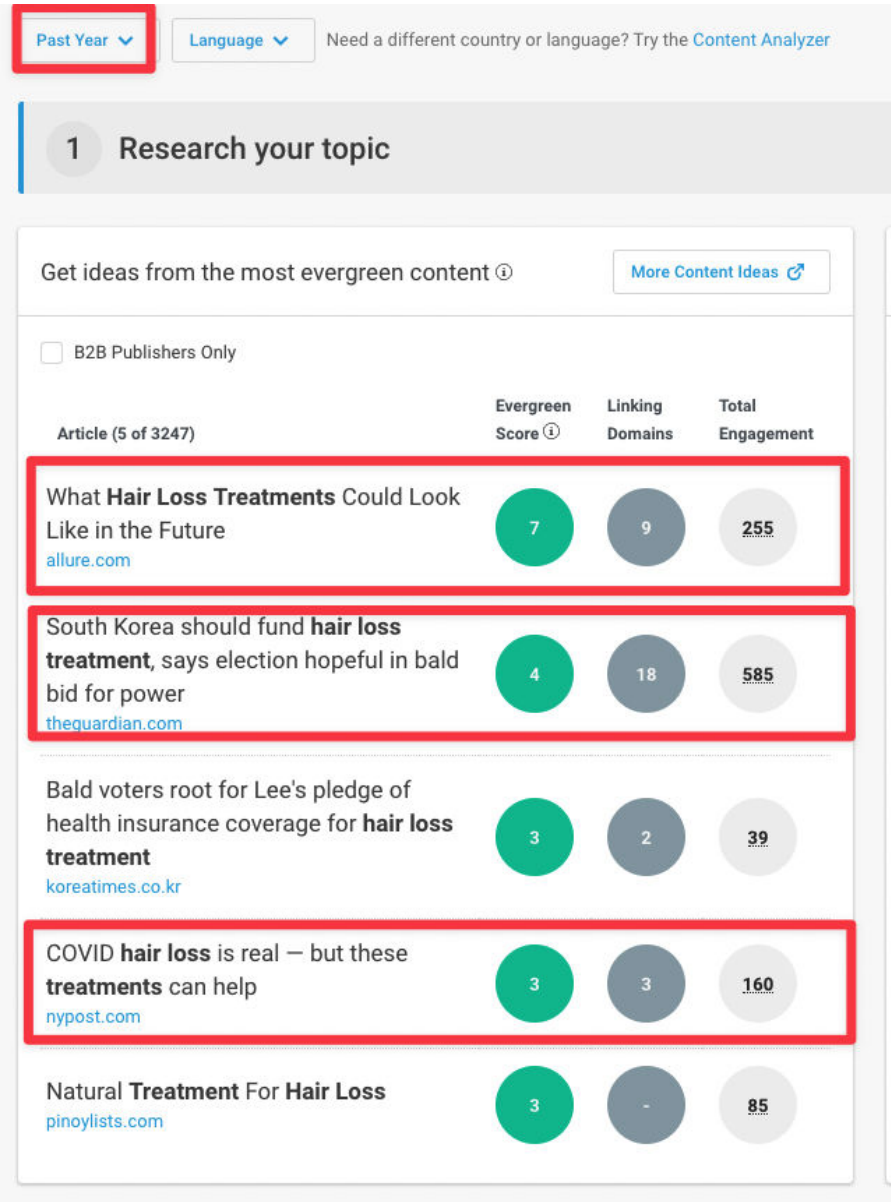
1. Open Buzzsumo and type in your keyword, as shown in the picture below.

a. Highlight content that has the most engagement in the past 1 - 5 years.



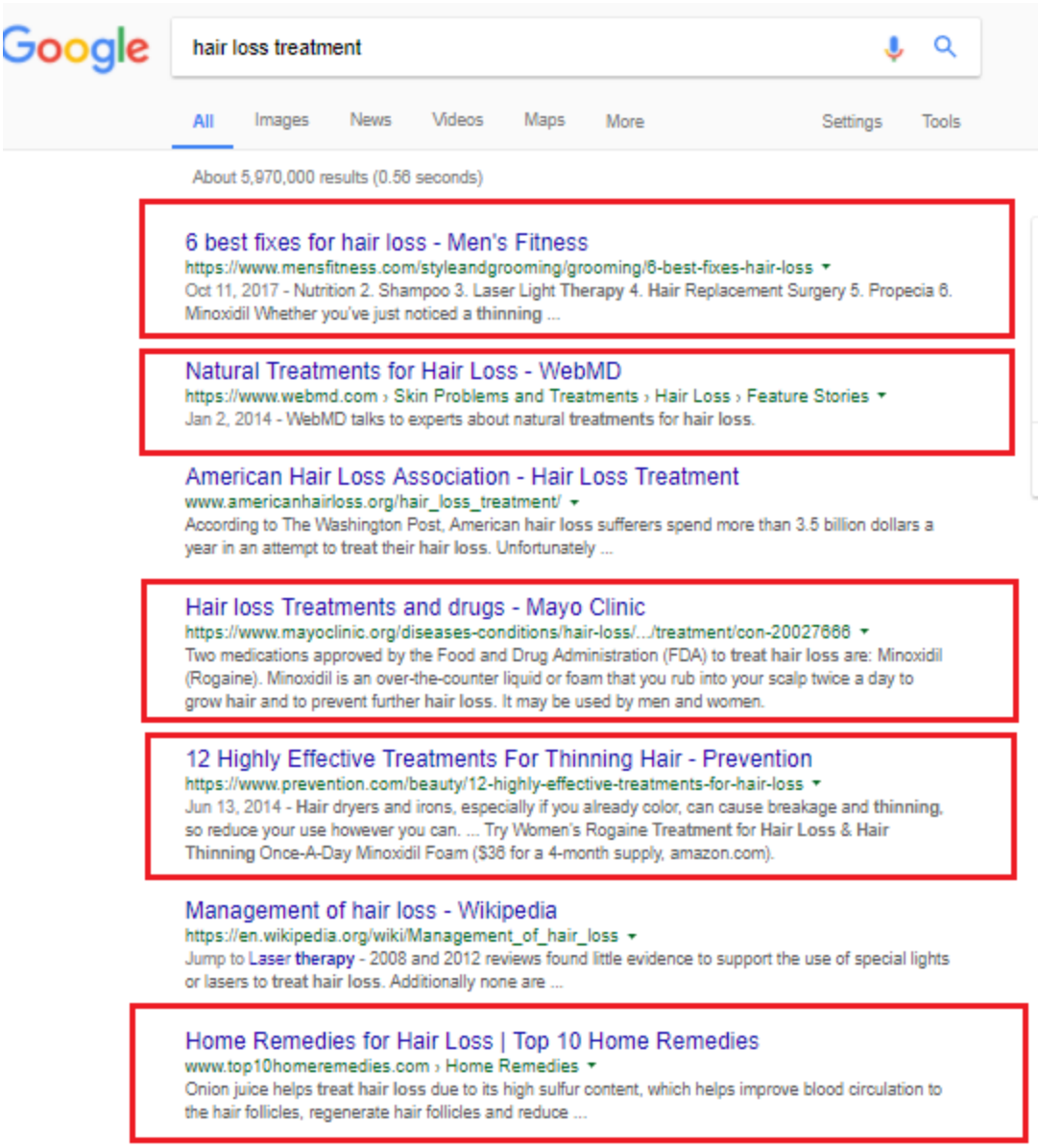
Note: Finding popular content more than 1 year ago requires a premium plan.

b. Right-click the top 3 relevant links and open them in new tabs.



2. Open Google in incognito mode (CTRL + SHIFT + N) and type in your selected keyword.

    a. Again, you need to select the first 5 **relevant** results. Which means that we will cut out the American Hair Loss Association homepage, because it's not really a blog post and, obviously, we will cut out Wikipedia.



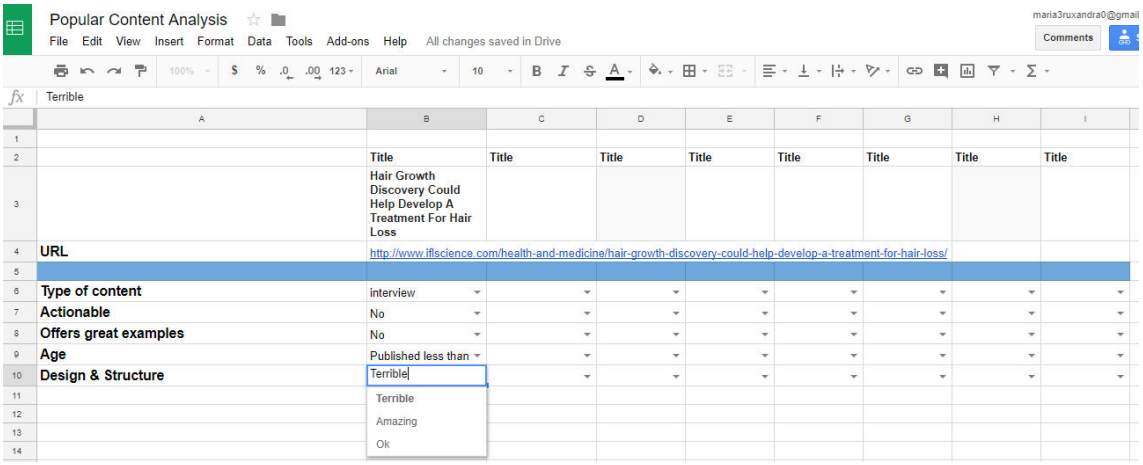
b. Right-click each result of the 5 ones you have selected and open each of them in a new tab.

3. Once you have read the 8 articles, open the Popular Content Analysis Worksheet and fill it in, as shown in the picture below.

a. Fill in the titles and the URLs to your selected articles. Analyse how these titles are written. As you can see below, most of them include the keyword,

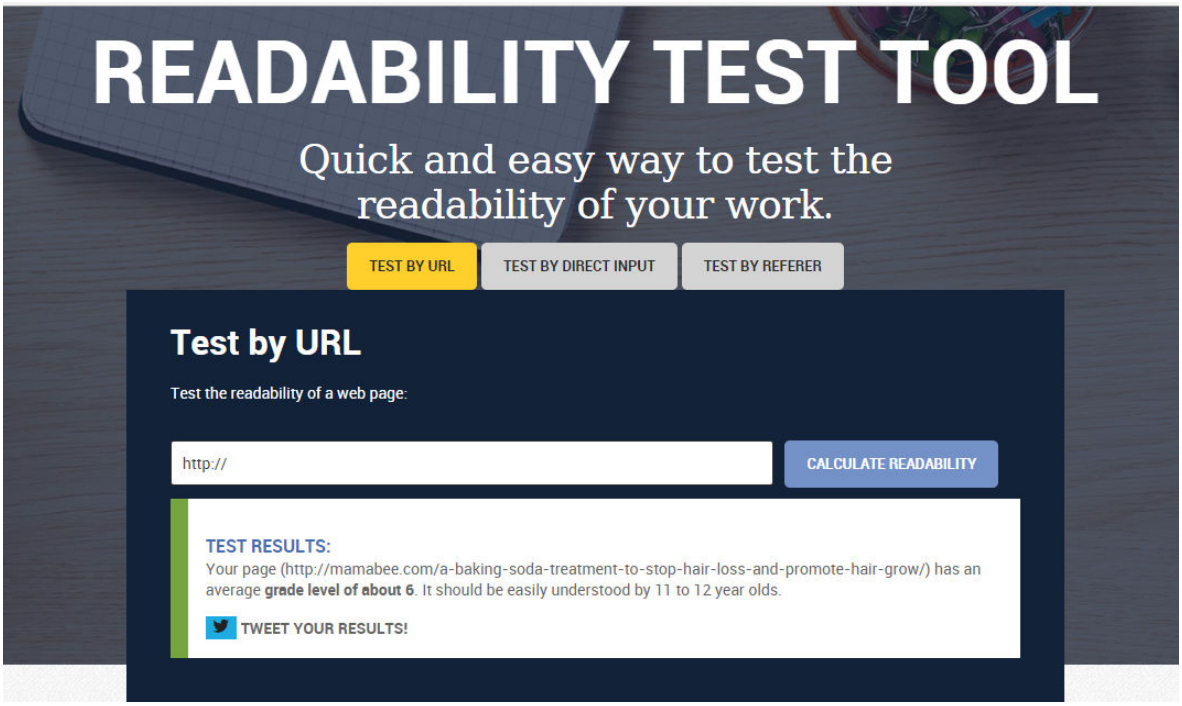
as well as other powerful words or phrases - the **promise of a solution** (“hair growth”, “strengthen hair”, “fixes”, “remedies”), **active verbs** (“stop”, “turn off”) and **data** (“discovery”, “6 fixes”, “12 treatments”). Keep these characteristics in mind for now.

b. Analyse the text of each article and select an option from the list as shown below:



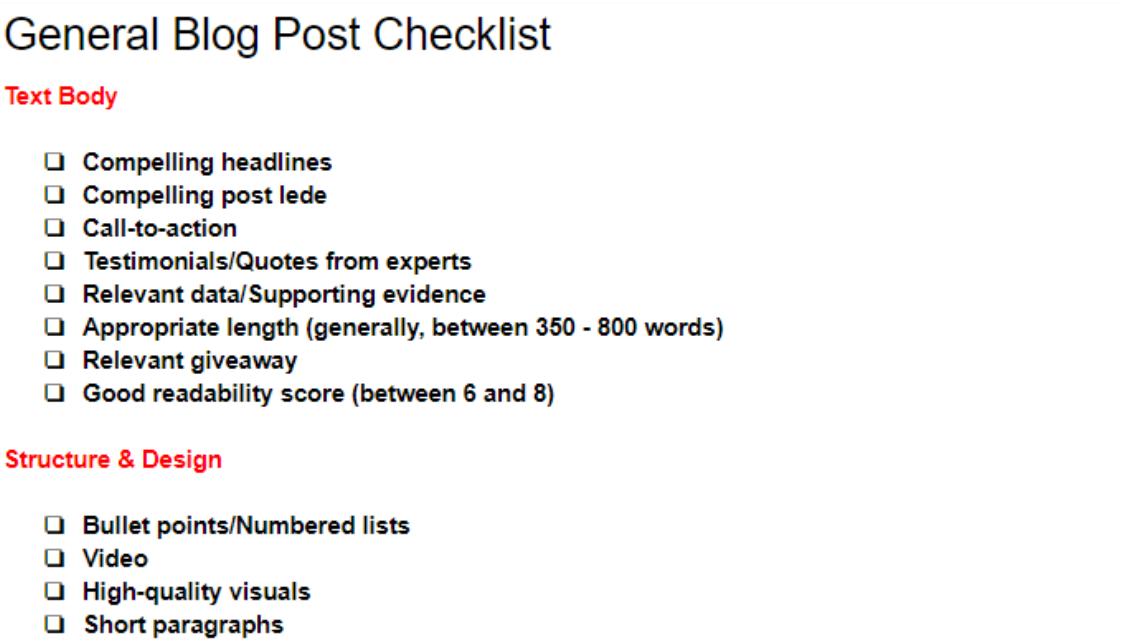
c. If you want to assess how easy-to-read these articles are, there is a great tool you can use. Open Readability Test Tool. Paste the URL of an article there and check its readability score. As you can see in the picture below, the “Baking soda hair treatment” article got a grade level of 6, which means that it can be understood by 11 to 12 year olds. You want to keep

the readability score of your articles somewhere between 6 and 8.



4. Compare these articles with the checklist you can find under the “General Blog Posts Checklist” heading in your file and see how many of the characteristics they have. You don’t have to spend your youth (and possibly afterlife) checking

all of them, just do this for 1-2 articles to understand how the checklist works.



General Blog Post Checklist

Text Body

- ❑ Compelling headlines
- ❑ Compelling post lede
- ❑ Call-to-action
- ❑ Testimonials/Quotes from experts
- ❑ Relevant data/Supporting evidence
- ❑ Appropriate length (generally, between 350 - 800 words)
- ❑ Relevant giveaway
- ❑ Good readability score (between 6 and 8)

Structure & Design

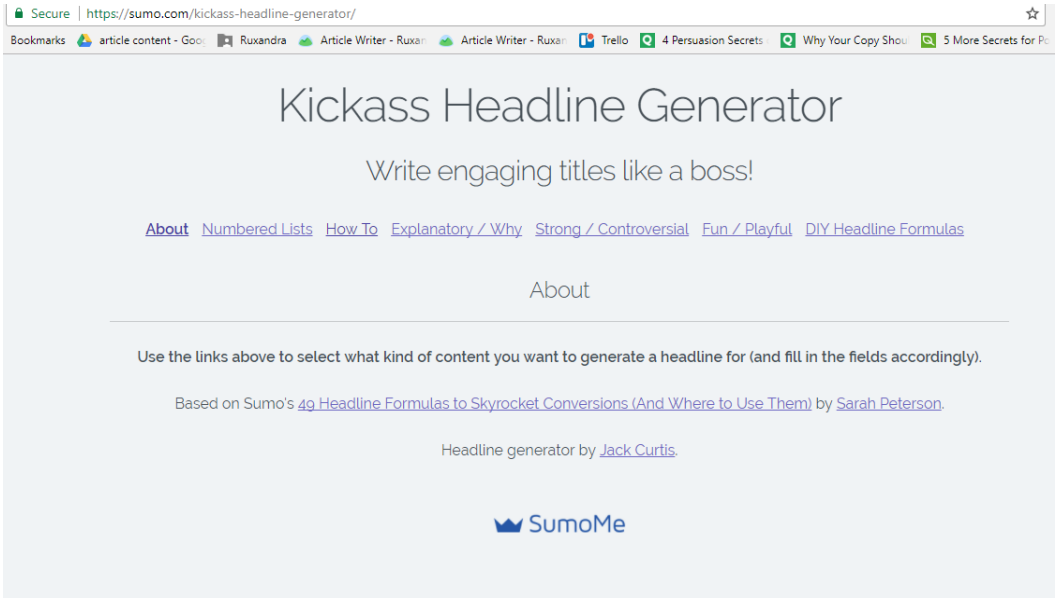
- ❑ Bullet points/Numbered lists
- ❑ Video
- ❑ High-quality visuals
- ❑ Short paragraphs

❑ Write compelling headlines

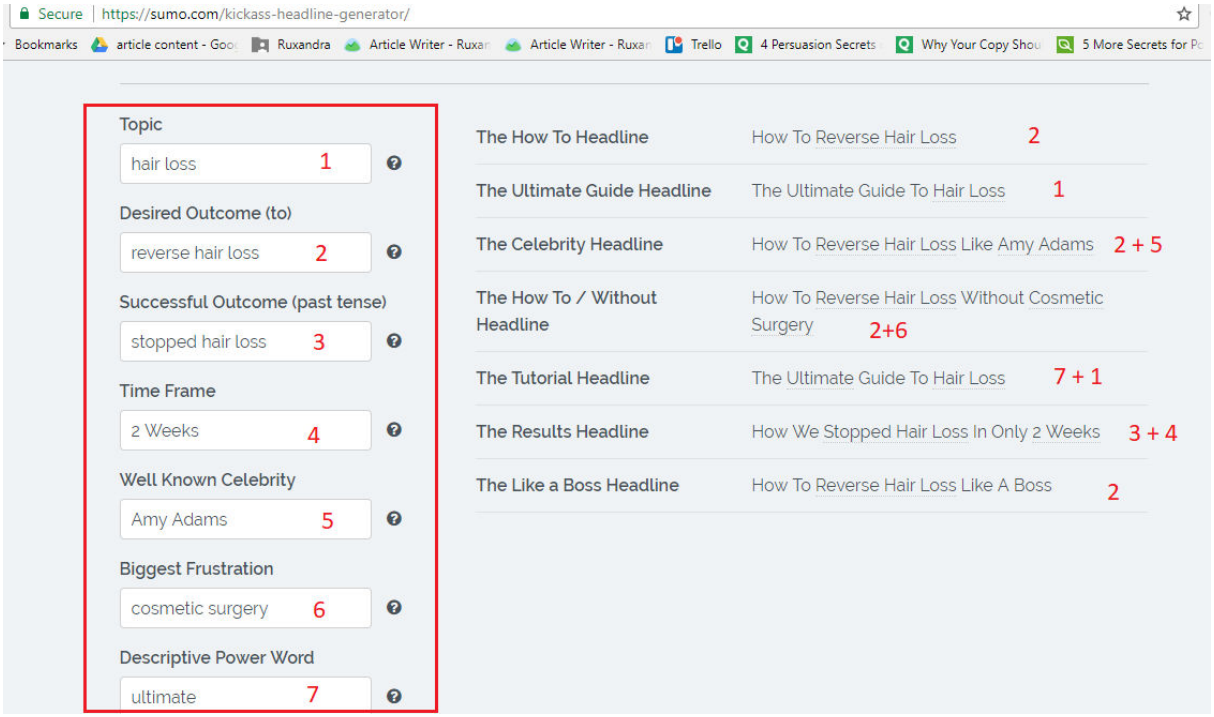
After analysing (and criticizing) what your competition is doing, it's time to think about the headline of your blog post and make it better than the ones you have just read.

1. In this step you will write between 10 and 20 variations of headlines for your post.

a. **If you need some inspiration**, you can use the [Sumo Headline Generator](). For the purpose of this exercise, we will go with “how to” type.

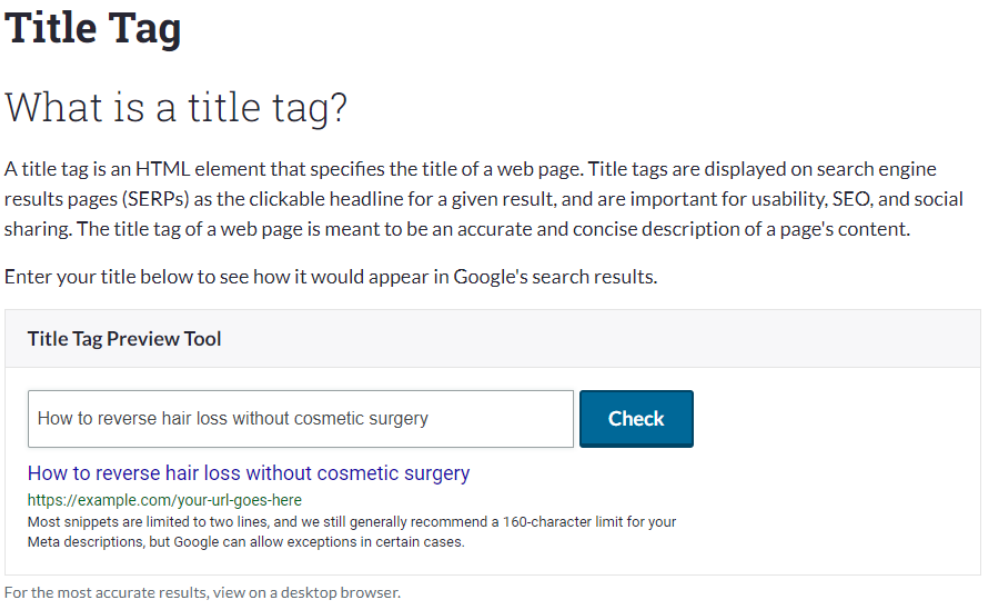


b. Fill in the boxes. The image below shows you what goes where after that. It is very important to fill in **ALL** the boxes because the app comes with pre-filled examples. If you don’t pay attention, you may get “How to reverse hair loss like Vin Diesel”, for example. That would be unfortunate.



c. Remember that this tool offers you inspiration. Don't take all the headlines as great suggestions, **select the ones that make sense**. E.g. Would you read an article called "The Ultimate Guide to Hair Loss"?
d. Repeat this step for other categories of content that may apply to your blog post.

2. Once you've got your 20 headlines, it's time to check how good they are.
   a. Open this tool to check the length of your title. Ideally, your title should be under 65 characters. Otherwise it can get cut off on search results.



   b. Besides the appropriate length, a good headline should have some of the below characteristics, which you can also find in your file, under the "General Blog Post Checklist" heading, section "headline"
      - Numbers, stats or data
      - Written in second person
      - Target keyword present
      - Communicates clearly what the blog post is about
      - Power - words present (check this article to get a list of super -useful power words)
      - Active verbs

3. Take a look at your headlines and compare them with the checklist. For example, the “How To Reverse Hair Loss Without Cosmetic Surgery” has 4 of the 6 characteristics. Do this for all of your headlines and select the best 10 of them.

- ❑ Call-to-action
- ❑ Testimonials/Quotes from experts
- ❑ Relevant data/Supporting evidence
- ❑ Appropriate length (generally, between 350 - 800 words)
- ❑ Relevant giveaway
- ❑ Good readability score (between 6 and 8)

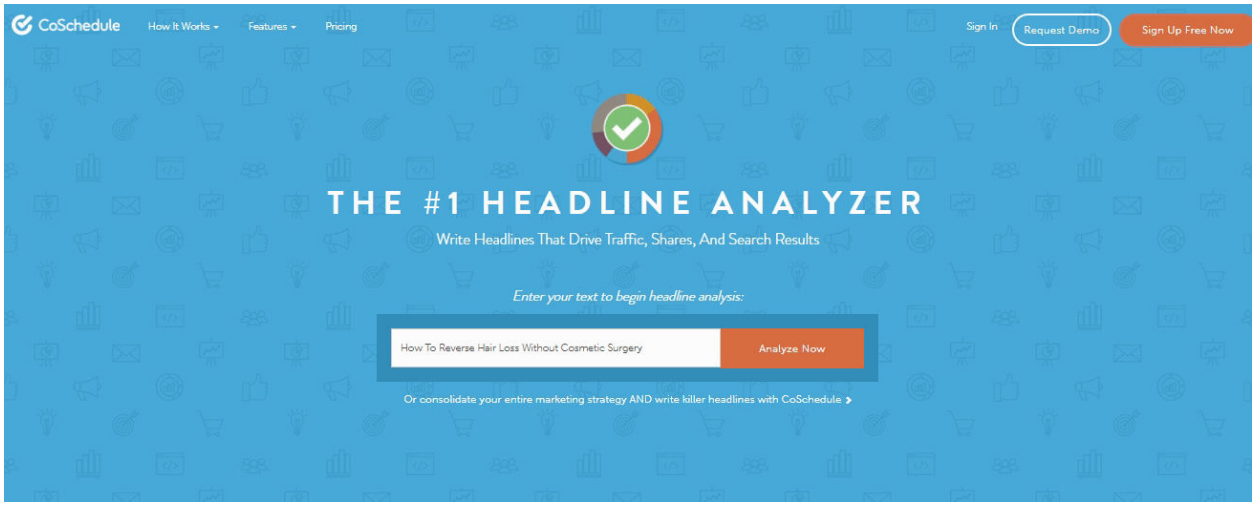
Structure & Design

- ❑ Bullet points/Numbered lists
- ❑ Video
- ❑ High-quality visuals
- ❑ Short paragraphs

Headline

- ❑ Numbers, stats or data
- ❑ Written in second person
- ❑ Target keyword present
- ❑ Communicates clearly what the blog post is about
- ❑ Power - words present (check this article to get a list of super -useful power words)
- ❑ Active verbs
- ❑ Under 65 characters

4. Open CoSchedule Headline Analyser and test the 10 headlines you have selected. For example, the “How to reverse hair loss without cosmetic surgery” got a score of 68 out of 100, which is neither bad, nor great.



5. After you have tested all of your headlines, select the top three ones.
    a. Improve them according to the checklist and CoSchedule suggestions and aim to score over 70 with them.
    b. Re-test the improved headlines with CoSchedule tool
    c. Pick the headline with the best score

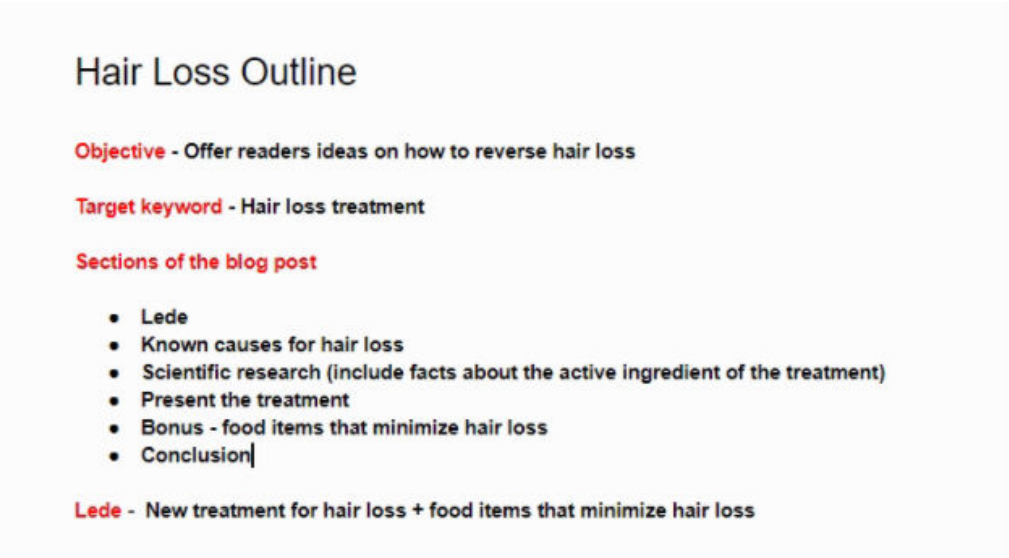
❑ Complete the outline

Now that you've got a title, it's time to complete the outline.

1. Go back to your outline file and decide which will be the sections of your post. In our example, these sections will be the following, under "Hair Loss Outline" heading:
    a. Lede
    b. Known causes for hair loss
    c. Scientific research (include facts about the active ingredient of the treatment)
    d. Present the treatment
    e. Bonus - food items that help minimize hair loss
    f. Conclusion

2. Write what the lede of your post will focus on. A good post lede meets the following criteria:
    - **Is specific** - explains exactly what your post is about
    - **Contains a teaser** - E.g. "You are going to find out how the best hair loss treatment works and, as a bonus, what superfoods you need to eat to reverse hair loss. One of them may not taste like cherry pie, but it works.".
    - **Short and crisp** - 1 - 2 sentences, but no fluff. Right to the point, tangible and interesting/funny/creative.
    - **Contains the keyword and data/numbers**

3. In this example it will be a lede focused on a new treatment that has shown great results in fighting hair loss + food items that minimize hair loss.



Hair Loss Outline

Objective - Offer readers ideas on how to reverse hair loss

Target keyword - Hair loss treatment

Sections of the blog post

- Lede
- Known causes for hair loss
- Scientific research (include facts about the active ingredient of the treatment)
- Present the treatment
- Bonus - food items that minimize hair loss
- Conclusion

Lede - New treatment for hair loss + food items that minimize hair loss

4. If you want to make your job easier, plan your content further.
    - Write down in your outline the concepts that a user needs to understand in order to understand your post and aim to define them. In this example, it should be “hormones that cause hair loss”, “ how active ingredient X works”
    - Follow a basic Q&A structure in your text body. Establish the questions a user might have and aim to answer them in your post.
    - Go from broad to specific. Talk about the problem in general, then go deeper and deeper. This way you make sure that the users understand

your post.

Concepts to define - "hormones that cause hair loss" "how active ingredient X works"

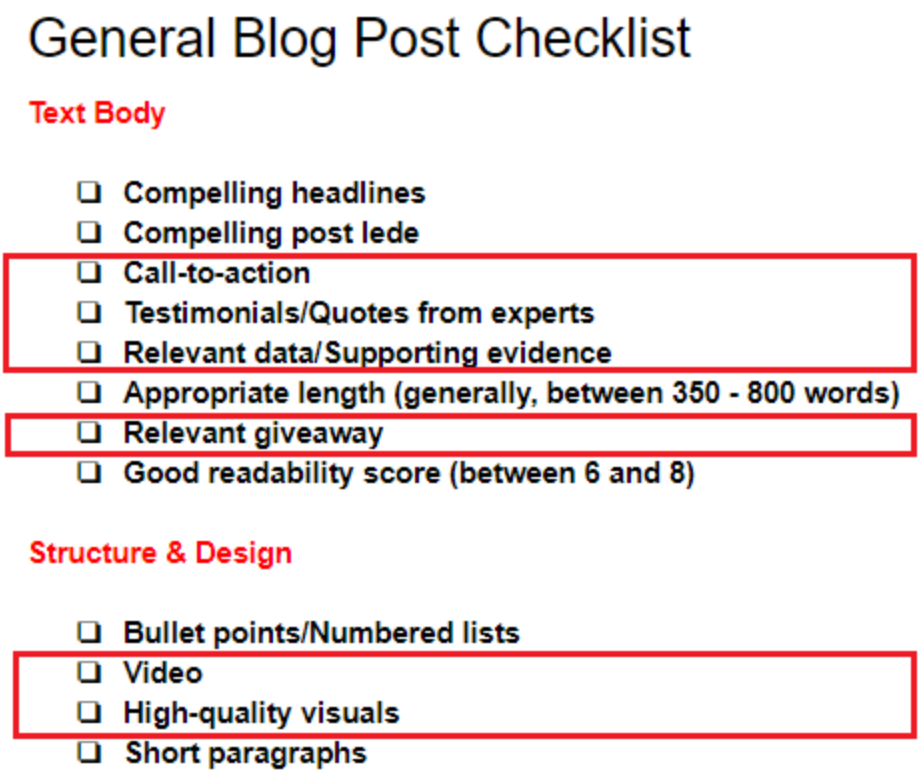
Q&A :

- ***What causes hair loss?***
- *Testosterone.*
- ***How?***
- *By doing this.*
- ***How can I fight it?***
- *With this treatment.*
- ***How does it work?***
- *It uses active ingredient X like this.*
- ***How effective is it?***
- *Experts say that/ Our clients say that.*
- ***What else can I do to stop hair loss?***
- *Eat this.*
- ***How does this help?***
- *By doing this and this.*

Broad ⇒ Specific
Hair loss cause ⇒ hair loss in men ⇒ hair loss caused by testosterone

5. Before starting to write your post, take a look over the checklist. Write down what you can add to your post to make it better than anything you have found. In this example, there are a couple of things we can add. The checklist is a great tool

that gives you ideas about a blog post.

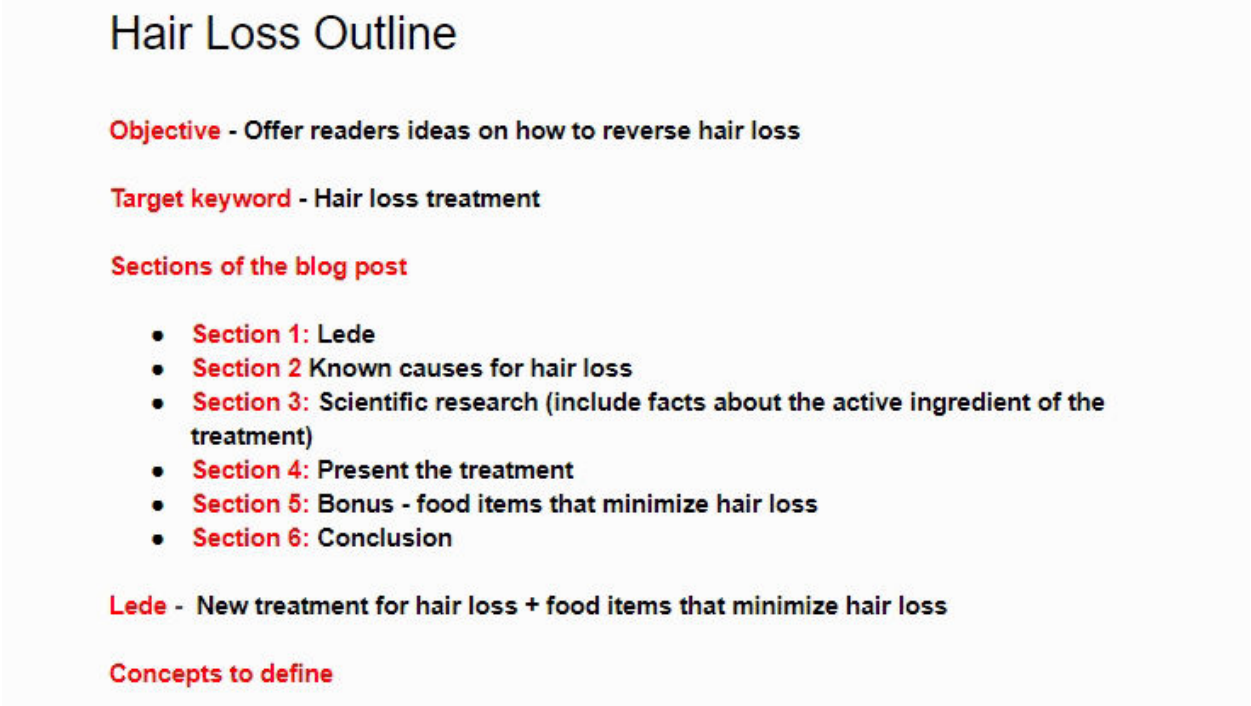


As you can see from the image above, we can add to the blog post outline the following:

- A call-to-action (E.g. To try a free sample of this new product)
- Testimonials (E.g. A client who has tried the product and has experienced the results)
- Giveaway (The food items good against hair loss)
- Video (E.g. How to use the product video)
- High - quality visuals (E.g. Before/After pictures of people who have tried the product)

6. Before you finish with your outline, decide where every information in the “Concepts”, “Q&A”, “Broad ⇒ Specific”, and “To add” will go based on the

"Sections of the post", as shown in the picture below:



Hair Loss Outline

Objective - Offer readers ideas on how to reverse hair loss

Target keyword - Hair loss treatment

Sections of the blog post

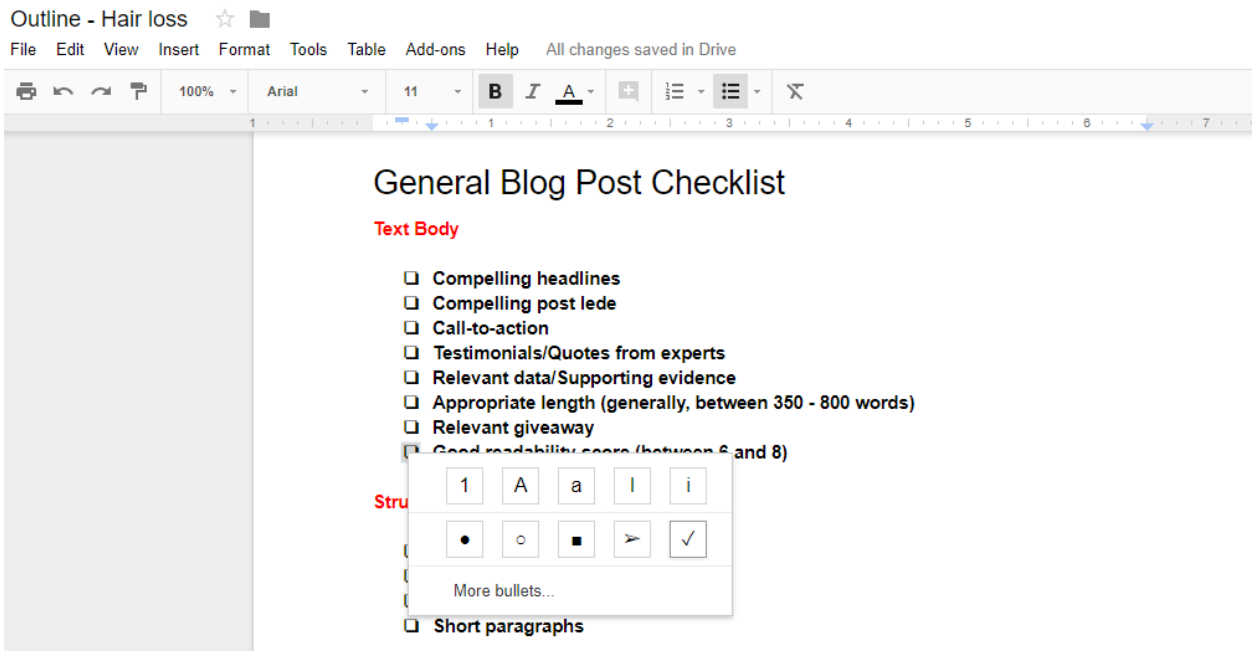
- Section 1: Lede
- Section 2 Known causes for hair loss
- Section 3: Scientific research (include facts about the active ingredient of the treatment)
- Section 4: Present the treatment
- Section 5: Bonus - food items that minimize hair loss
- Section 6: Conclusion

Lede - New treatment for hair loss + food items that minimize hair loss

Concepts to define

❑ Review your outline

This is the final step before you start writing your blog post. For this step, all you have to do is go at the bottom of your file, where you have that checklist, and right-click on the bullets to add a checkmark where your blog post outlines meets the requirements of great blog posts.



For some of these characteristics you will need to firstly write the text (readability, length). But it's a good idea to have them in mind before starting to write.

That's it. Now you have a kickass outline to use every time you need to create a blog post better than any other on the same topic. Use it wisely and may the Force be with you.