



**How to Build a
Better Blog Than
Your Competitors**
2017 BLOGGING REPORT

TrackMaven

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CREATING A MORE SHAREABLE BLOG IS EASIER THAN YOU THINK.

Our latest research provides a prescription of specific best practices to build the ultimate shareable blog.

This report doesn't just give you vague suggestions — it dives into the the components of over 65,000 blog posts from September 2015 to August 2016 to surface specific best practices for successful blogging.

IN THE REPORT, WE ANALYZE:

- Industry-wide trends in blogging output and impact;
- How to optimize your posting schedule;
- Best practices to increase blog shareability.

Use these best practices to craft blog posts that give you an advantage over your competitors, attract new audiences, and win more customers.

HOW BLOGGING HAS CHANGED

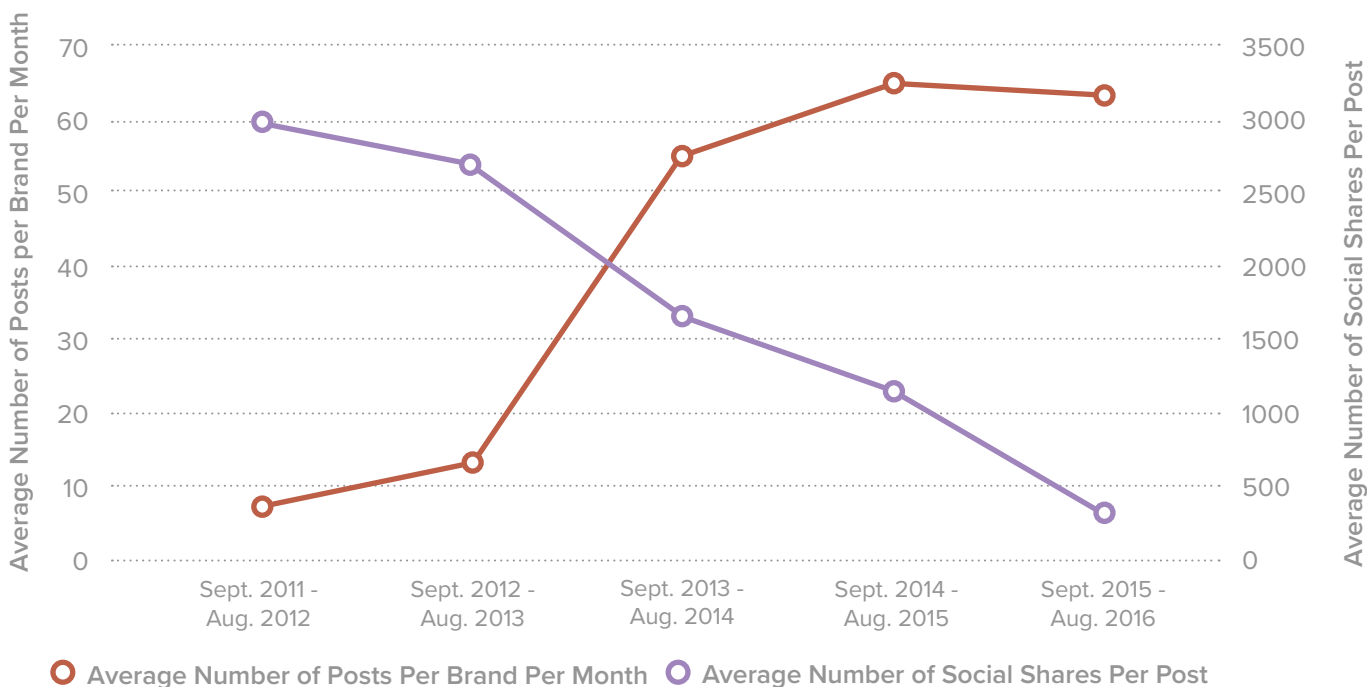
FIRST, LET'S LOOK AT THE CONTENT LANDSCAPE YOU'RE UP AGAINST, AND WHY MARKETERS ARE GETTING LESS OUT OF THEIR BLOG POSTS.

We examined publication data for blog posts over the last five years to find out how blogging and blog sharing has changed. The results are staggering.

Over the past five years, the average number of blog posts published per brand per month increased by 800 percent. Across the same time frame, the average number of social shares per post (including shares from Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest) decreased by 89 percent.

Marketers are producing more blog posts, but losing the distribution power and reader interactions provided by social sharing.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF BLOG POSTS PER BRAND PER MONTH VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER POST (SEPTEMBER 2011-AUGUST 2016)

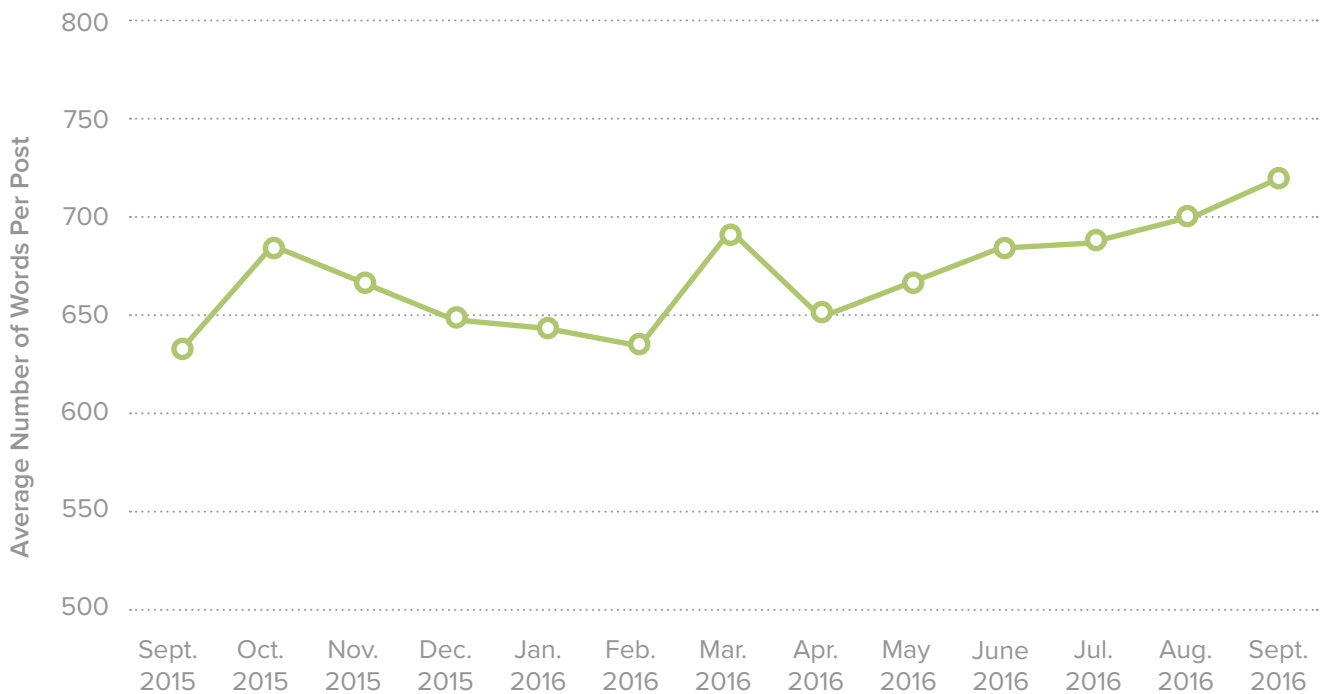


HOW HAS BLOG LENGTH CHANGED OVER TIME?

Just over the past year, the length of blog posts has changed from an average of 639 words per post in September 2015 to an average of 718 words per post in September 2016.

Brands aren't just producing more posts — they are producing longer posts.

**AVERAGE NUMBER OF WORDS PER BLOG POST BY MONTH
(SEPTEMBER 2015 - SEPTEMBER 2016)**



HOW TO CREATE A MORE SHAREABLE BLOG POST

The rise in content production and increased competition for readers' attention means it's becoming even more important to create shareable blog posts.

THE BEST TIME TO PUBLISH YOUR BLOG POST

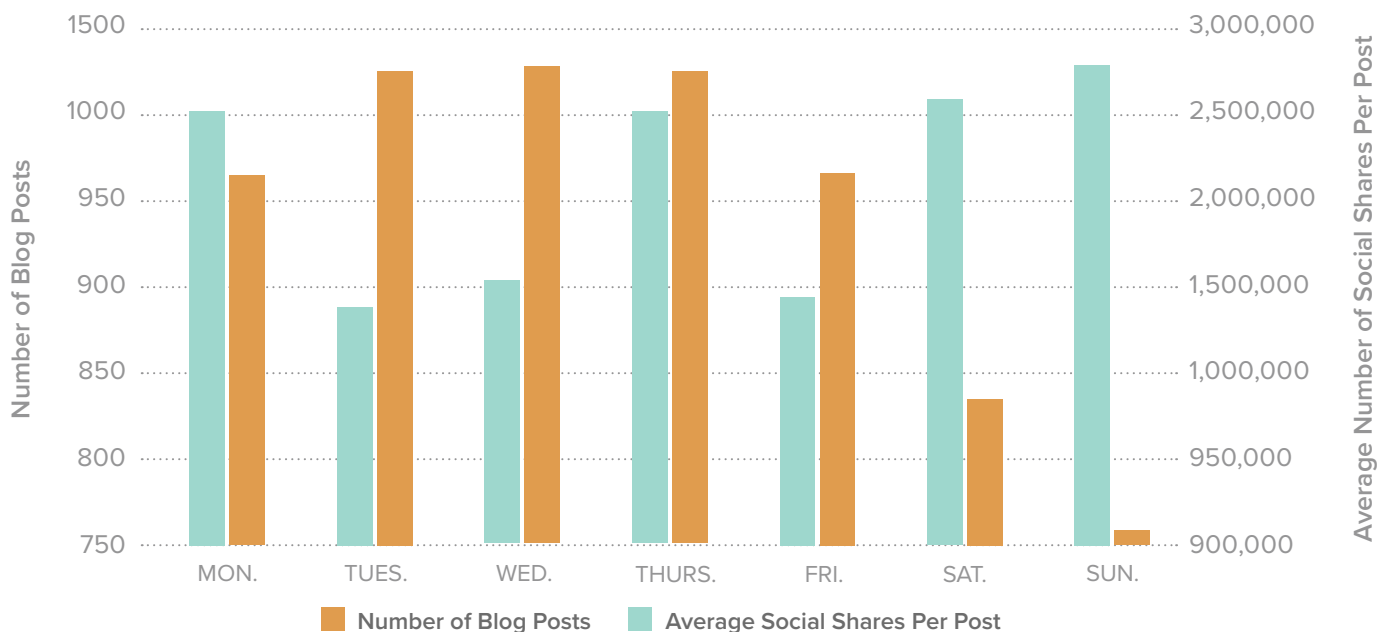
Timing matters when it comes to posting on your blog.

You want to avoid busy times, when a lot of brands are posting to their blogs and there is increased competition for readers' attention. Instead, focus on the days and times that have proven to get posts the most attention and shares, so you can reach an even larger audience.

What's the most competitive time to publish your blog post?

The most competitive day of the week to publish your blog post is on Wednesdays and the busiest time of day is 12 noon EST. That's when the most blog posts are published. Sunday is the least popular day of the week and 2 a.m. EST is the least popular time of day to publish blog posts, and therefore the least competitive.

NUMBER OF BLOG POSTS AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER POST BY DAY OF THE WEEK

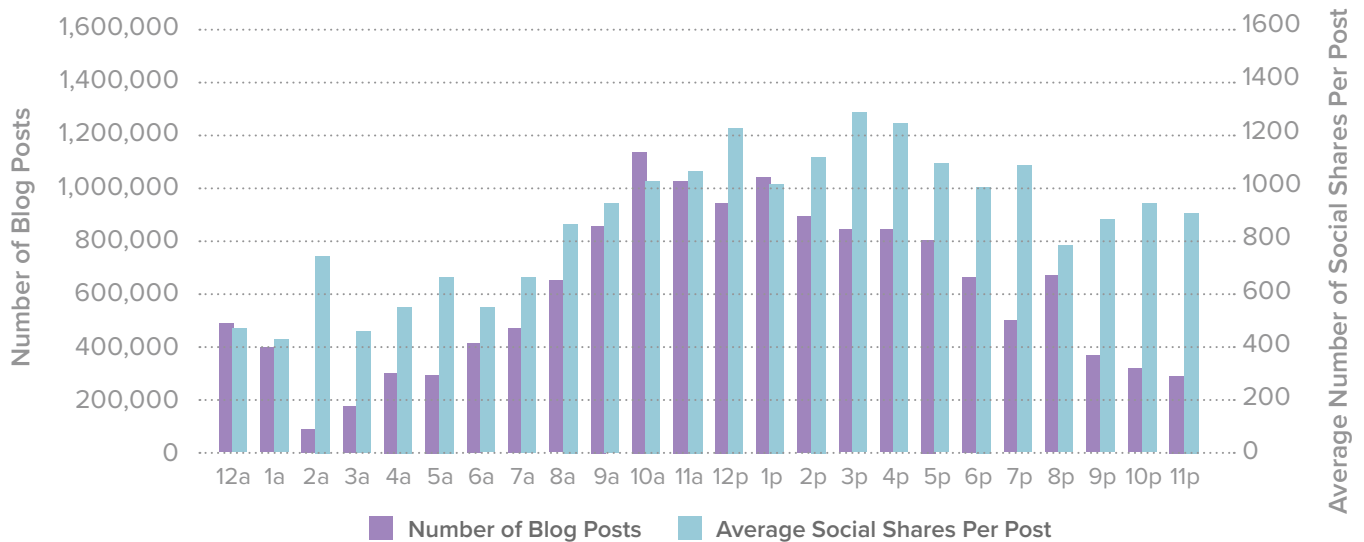


THE BEST TIME TO PUBLISH YOUR BLOG POST

What's the best time to publish your blog post?

The best day of the week to publish blog posts is Sunday, and the best time to publish is at 3 p.m. EST. Blogs posted on Friday or at 1 a.m. EST receive the fewest social shares.

NUMBER OF BLOG POSTS AND AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER POST BY TIME OF DAY (EST)



HOW TO CREATE THE BEST TITLE FOR YOUR BLOG POST

Creating an effective title, or headline, for your blog post is crucial to its success. Your blog post's title appears on your website, is picked up by search engines, and is shared out on social media.

What makes up an effective title? We found best practices for length, punctuation, pronouns, and more that you can use to improve your blog titles.

BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG TITLES: Length

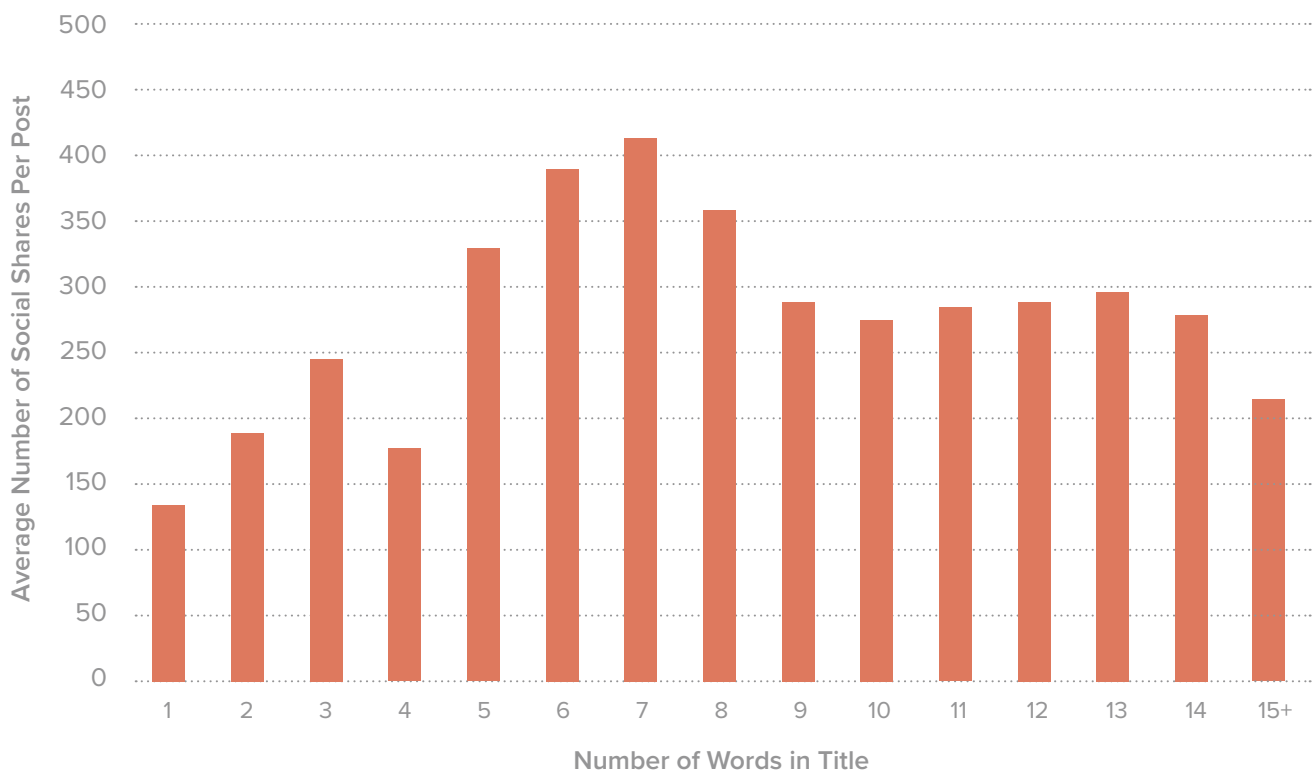
Although it's a common best practice to keep blog titles short enough so they don't get truncated by Google search results, do you really know what length performs best?

To find the optimal length of a blog post title, we examined two metrics: number of non-space characters and number of words.

Takeaways:

- **The optimal blog title length is seven words**, which averages 412 social shares per post. In terms of character count, the optimal number of non-space characters is 41.
- **There is a definite peak for the optimal length of a blog title**, with only a little bit of wiggle room. Before and after seven words, the average number of shares per post decreases.

NUMBER OF WORDS IN BLOG TITLE VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER POST



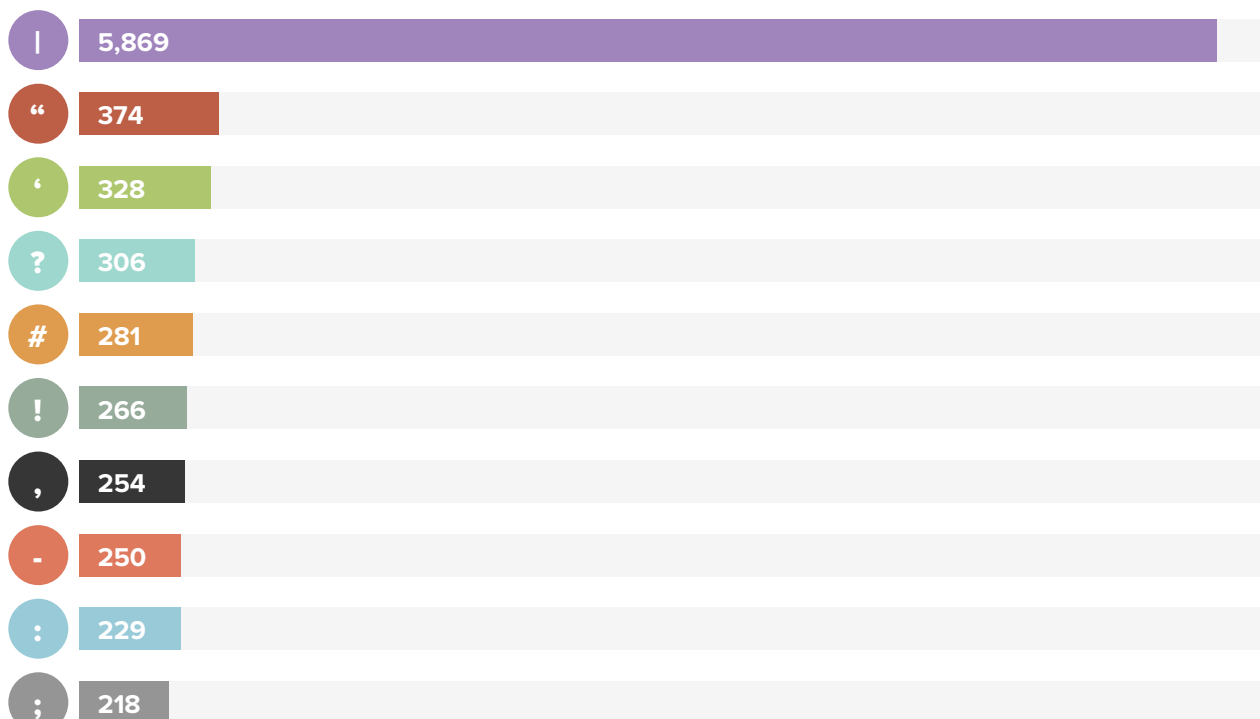
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG TITLES: Punctuation

Punctuation is used in blog titles to add information, intrigue, emphasis, and more. We surfaced the top 10 best-performing punctuation marks in blog titles based on average social shares. Here's what we found:

Takeaways:

- **The vertical bar is by far the highest performing punctuation mark in blog titles**, with an average of 5,869 social shares per post. Vertical bars can often be seen in titles to divide the headline from the name of the company, as can dashes. If you have a choice, use a vertical bar.
- **Quotation marks — both double and single quotes — are top-performing punctuation marks in headlines**, ranking second and third in our list.
- **Using questions in titles is correlated with more social shares than exclamation marks**, with question marks ranking fourth in terms of average social shares, followed by the hashtag symbol and exclamation marks.

TOP 10 PUNCTUATION MARKS IN BLOG TITLES BY AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER POST



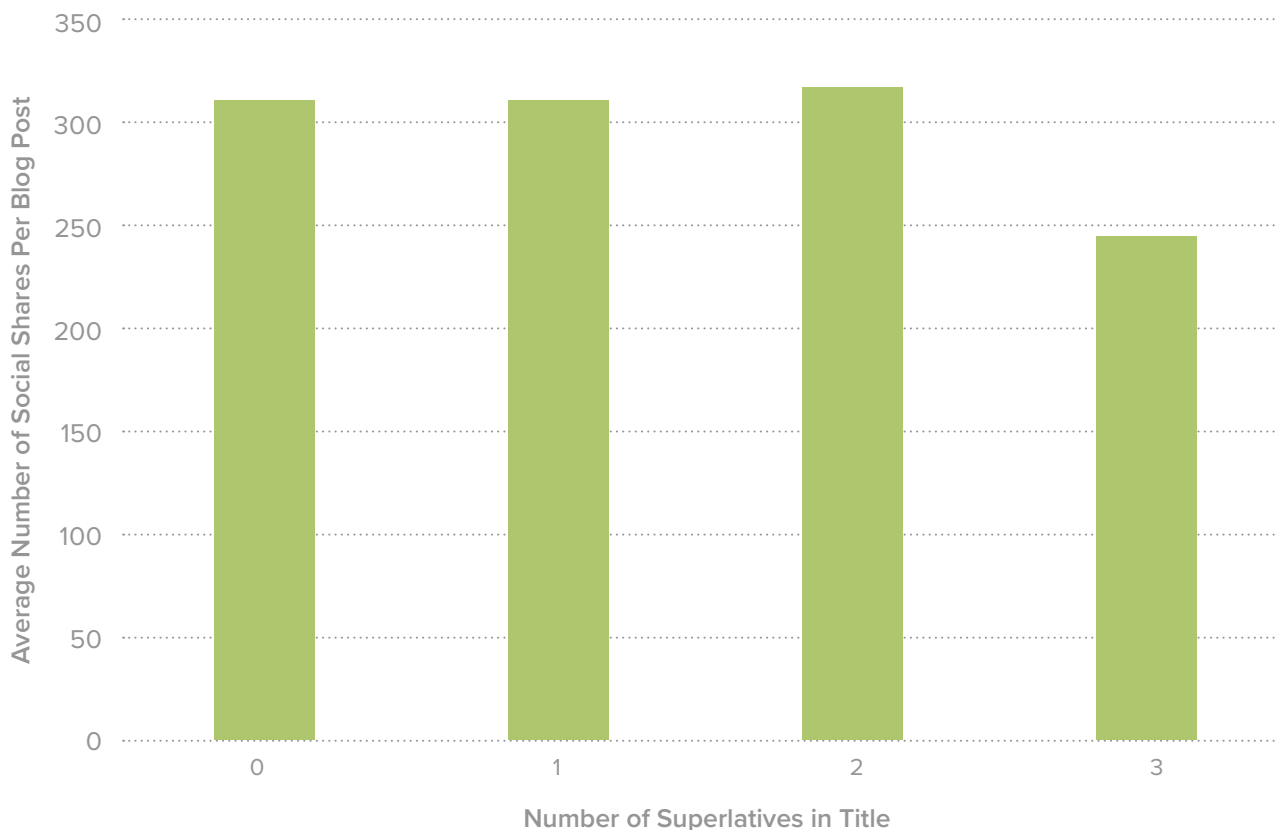
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG TITLES: Superlatives

A superlative is an exaggerated or hyperbolic expression. To find out if using dramatic language helps or hinders blog performance, we examined how the number of superlatives in a blog titles affects social shares.

Takeaways:

- Adding exciting or dramatic language boosts the shareability of a blog to a point — but don't overdo it. **Using two superlatives in a blog title is best**, with an average of 317 social shares per post.

NUMBER OF SUPERLATIVES IN BLOG TITLE VS.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



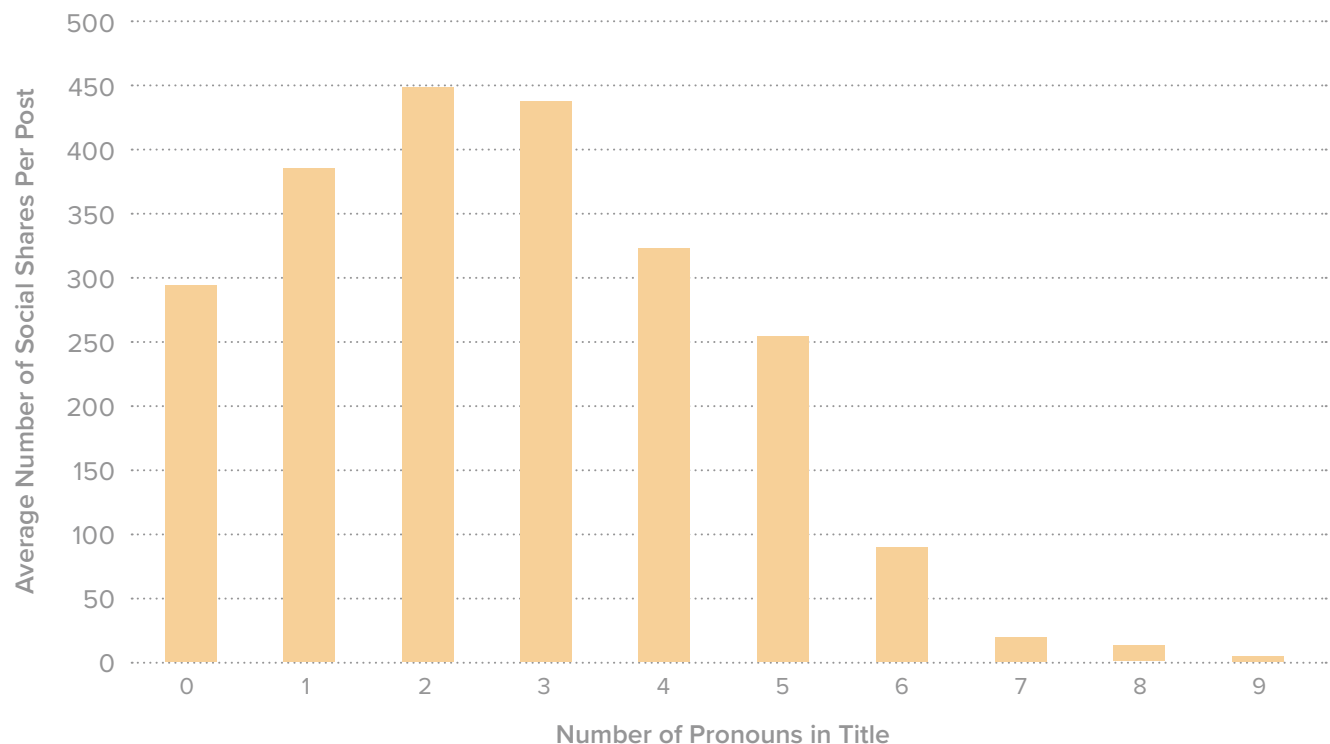
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG TITLES: Pronouns

Our analysis of top performing pronouns in blog titles reveals a few interesting insights. We looked at all versions of pronouns, treating different capitalizations, conjunctions, and those with adjacent punctuation as unique pronouns.

Takeaways:

- **Blog posts with two pronouns in the blog title get the most shares,** with an average of 446 social shares per blog post. Adding more pronouns is correlated with a drastic decrease in social shares.
- **Use the second person in titles.** The best performing pronoun is “Yourself,” with an average of 1,253 social shares per blog post. Use of the second person is consistently correlated with increased blog shareability, with six out of the top 10 pronouns being in the second person.

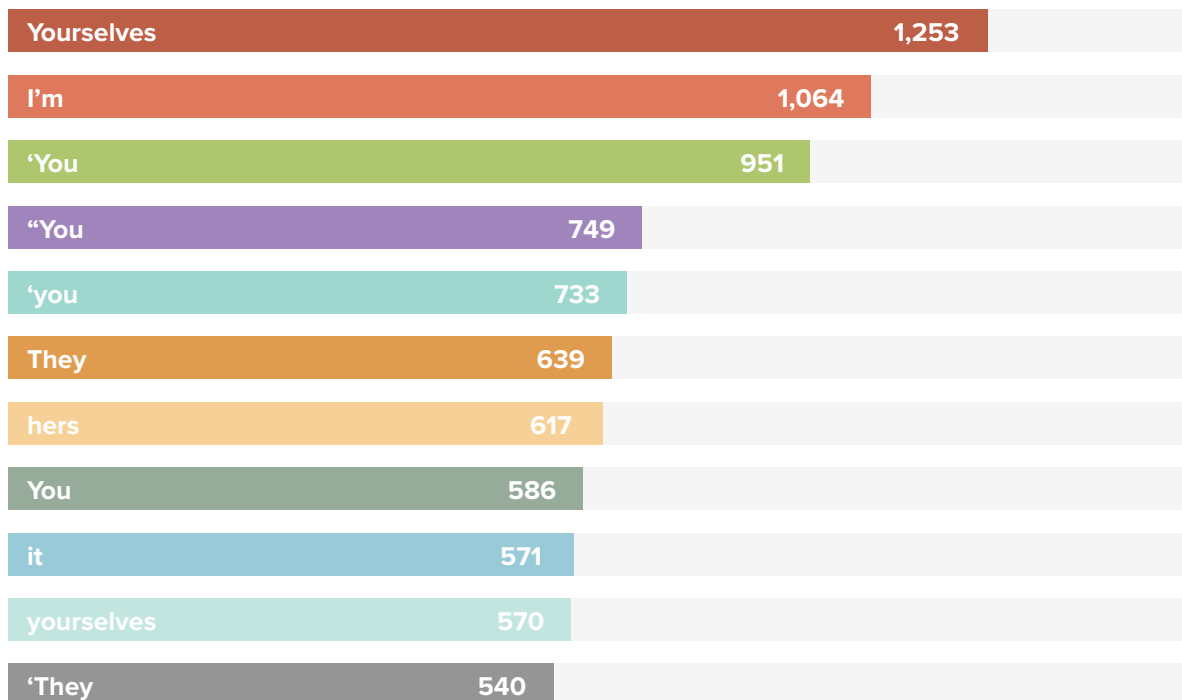
NUMBER OF PRONOUNS IN BLOG TITLE VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG TITLES: Pronouns

- **Use quotes in titles.** Three of the top five best performing pronouns have quotation marks associated with them. This finding is significant because it suggests that using the second person in blog titles is most effective when quoting an individual. It is also consistent with our analysis of the best performing punctuation in titles, which ranks double and single quotes as second and third in terms of average social shares per blog post.
- **Using all caps doesn't work.** As seen in the appendix, where we share the full results of our pronouns analysis, pronouns in all caps consistently rank low in terms of average social shares per blog post.

TOP 10 BEST PERFORMING PRONOUNS IN BLOG TITLES BY AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER POST



HOW TO CREATE THE BEST CONTENT FOR YOUR BLOG POST

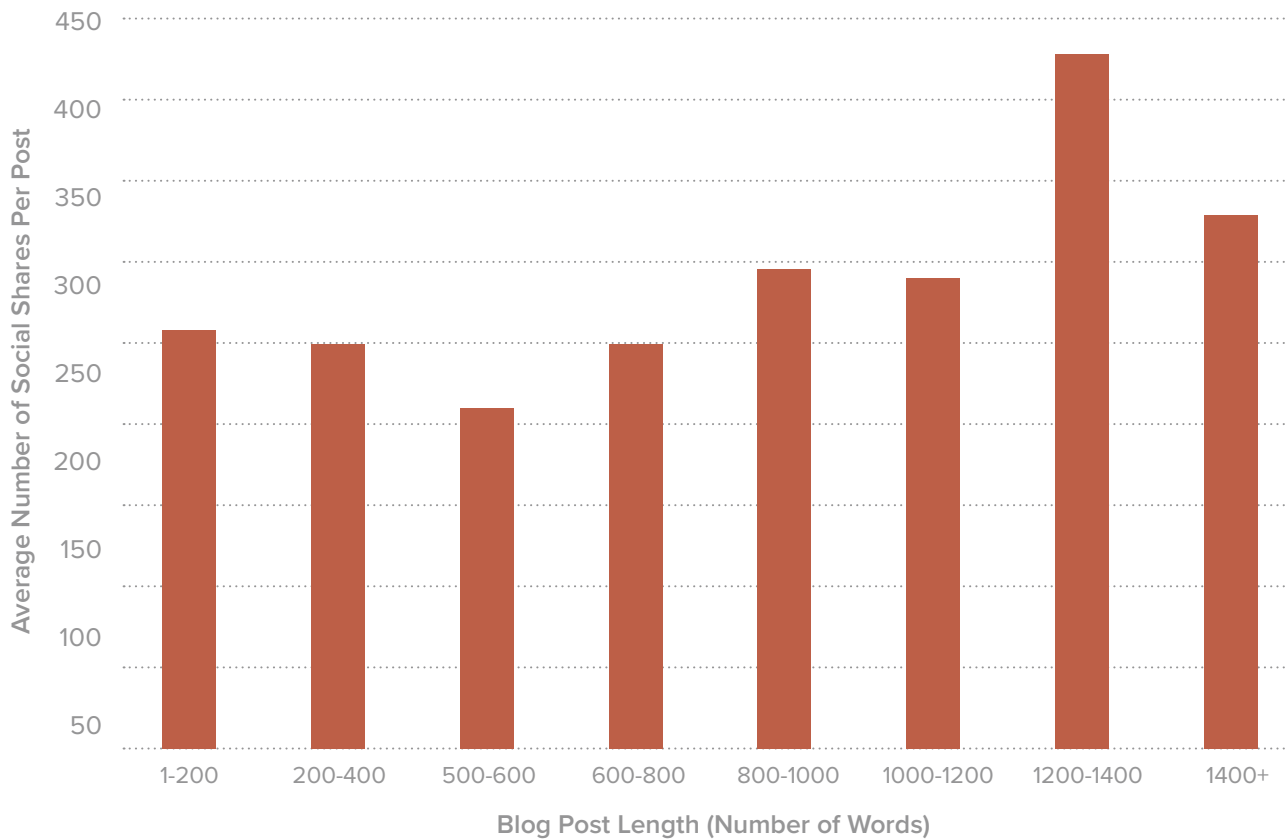
The title serves as the hook to get readers' attention. But it's the meat of your content that's going to convince them to continue reading and ultimately share.

BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Length

We know the length of blog posts is increasing, but how does this affect shareability?

As it turns out, longer blog posts tend to perform better. Posts that are 1200 to 1400 words long perform best, with an average of 428 social shares per post.

BLOG POST LENGTH (NUMBER OF WORDS) VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST

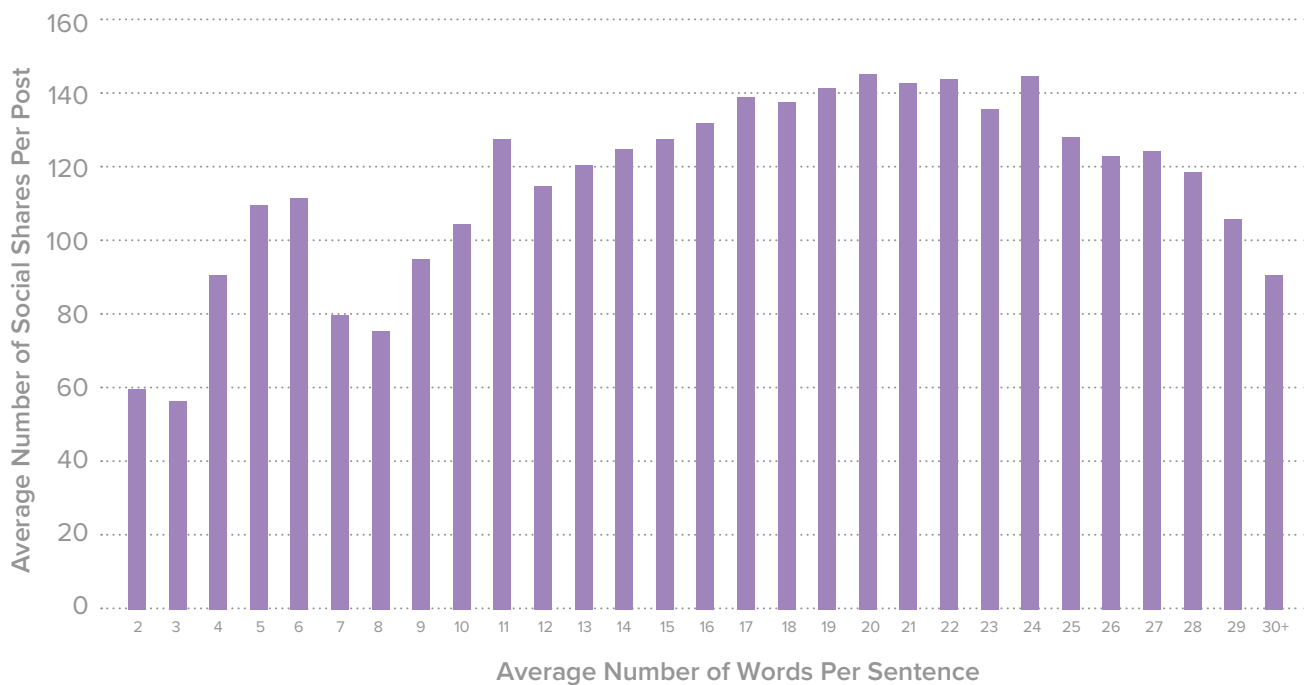


BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Sentence and Paragraph Structure

Let's break down blog post length into structural bites, focusing on the optimal length for sentences and paragraphs that make up the body content.

Blog posts that average 20 words per sentence perform best, with 145 average social shares per post. There is a definite bell curve in our results, revealing that extremely short or long sentences on average should be avoided.

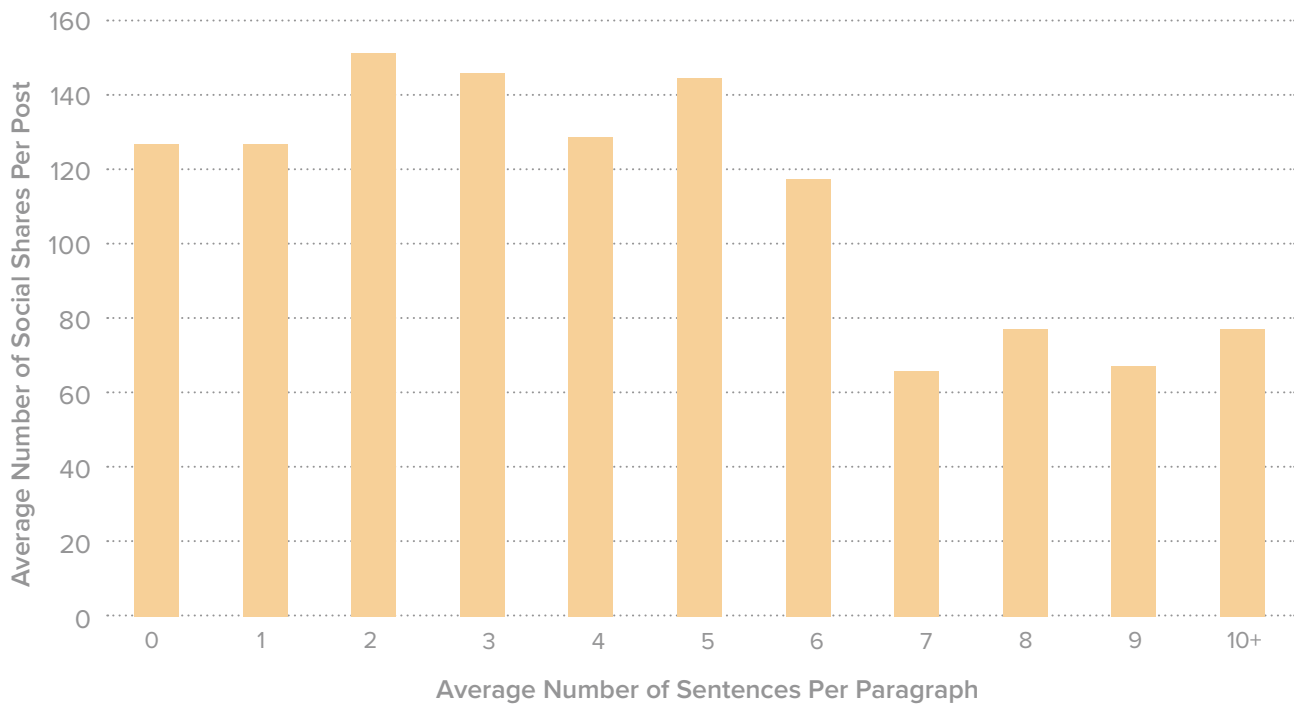
NUMBER OF WORDS PER SENTENCE VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Sentence and Paragraph Structure

In terms of paragraph length, blog posts with short paragraphs get shared more often. **Blog posts with paragraphs that contain two sentences on average perform best**, with an average of 151 social shares per post.

NUMBER OF SENTENCES PER PARAGRAPH VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Readability

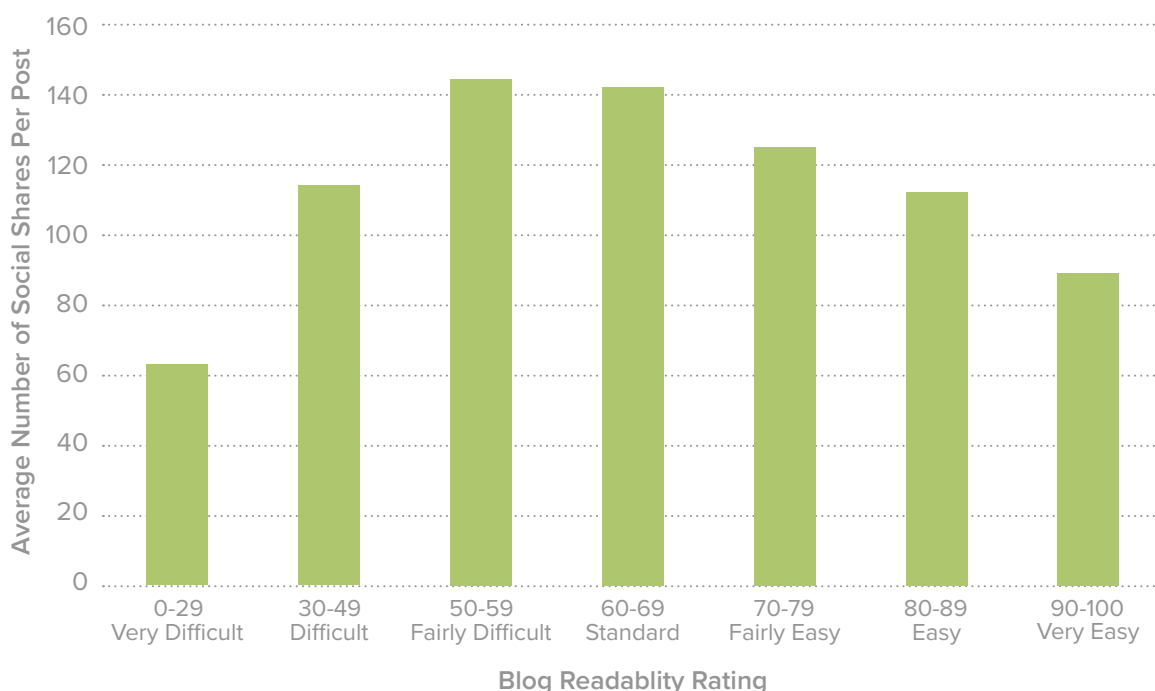
Two key factors in blog shareability are the language you use and how consumable your content is for readers. In essence, you need to focus on readability.

To analyze readability best practices for blog posts, we used the Flesch readability formula to score blog posts. Flesch scores on a scale from zero to 100 as follows: very difficult (0 to 29), difficult (30 to 49), fairly difficult (50 to 59), standard (60 to 69), fairly easy (70 to 79), easy (80 to 89), and very easy (90 to 100).

Takeaways:

- **Aim for content that is fairly difficult to standard to read.** Blog posts with a fairly difficult readability score perform best, with 144 average social shares per post. Blog posts with a readability score of standard are a close second, with 142 average social shares per post.
- **Avoid publishing content that is difficult to read.** Blog posts with a readability rating of very difficult perform the worst, with an average of 64 social shares per post.

READABILITY RATING VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



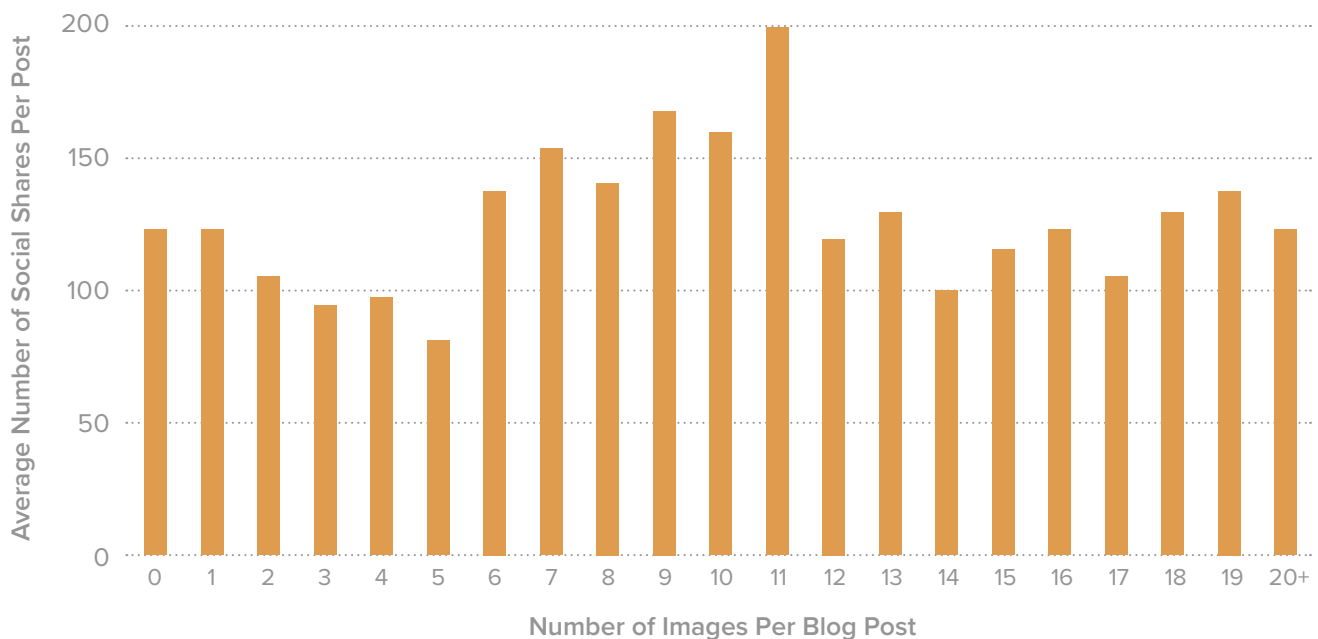
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Images and Videos

Using images and videos can make your blog post more interactive and interesting to readers. Here are some data-backed best practices for using images and videos in blog posts.

Takeaways:

- **Include media content in your blog posts — but exercise moderation.** Blog posts with 11 images perform best, with 200 average social shares per post. Blogs with eight videos perform best, with 506 average social shares per post. But blog posts with too few or too many images or videos are shared less often on average.

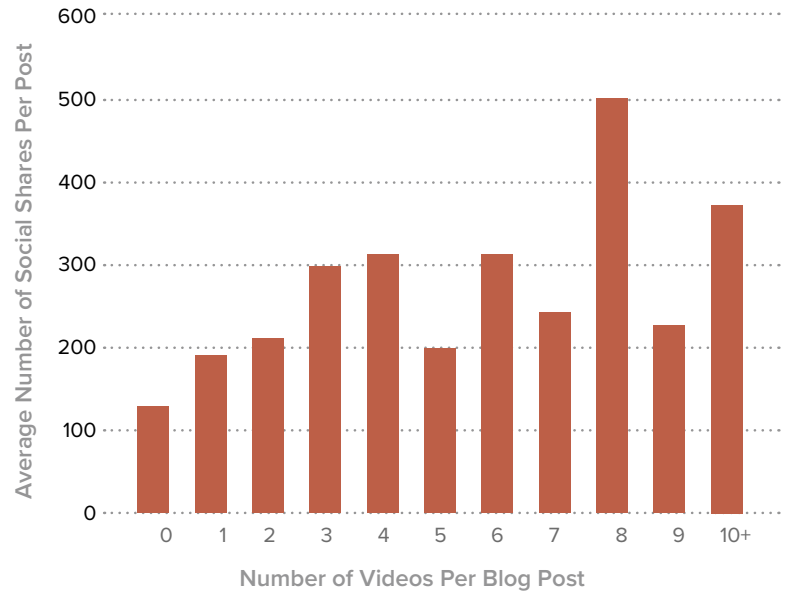
NUMBER OF IMAGES VS.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



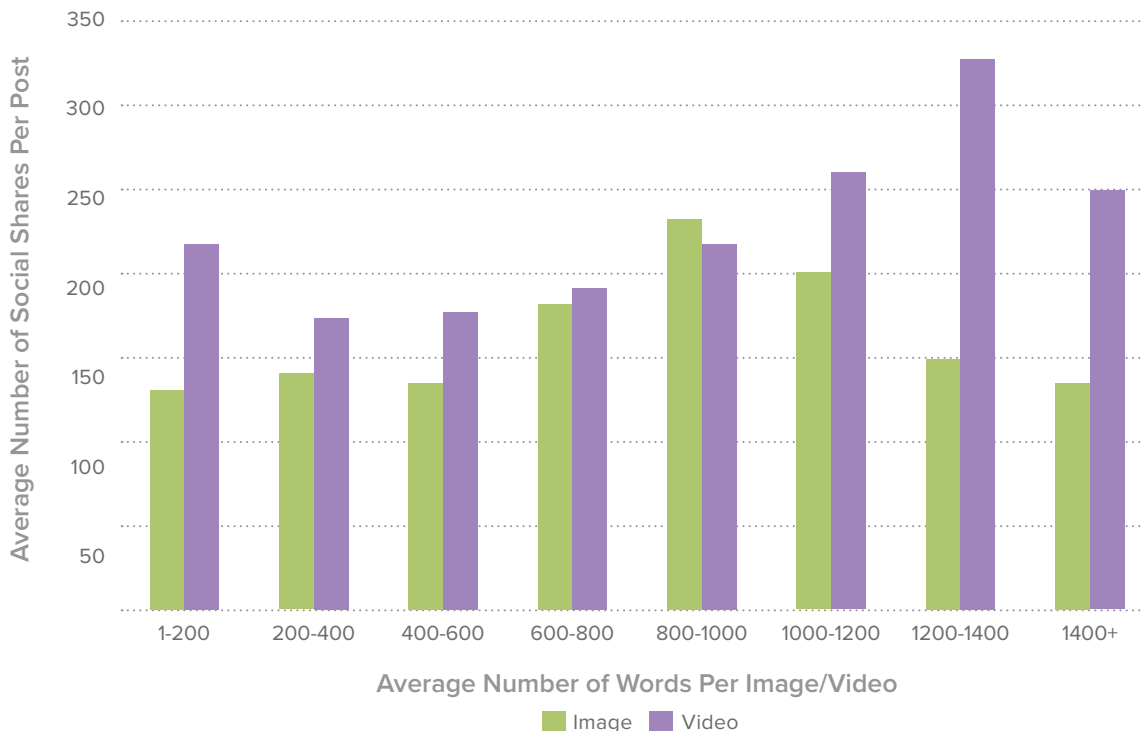
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Images and Videos

- **The optimal distribution of images in content is different from that of videos.** Blog posts with 800 to 1000 words per image perform best, with 233 average social shares per post. On the other hand, blog posts with 1200 to 1400 words per video perform best, with 326 average social shares per post. Put differently, blog posts are more shareable with more written content per video than per image.

NUMBER OF VIDEOS VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



NUMBER OF WORDS PER IMAGE/VIDEO VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Punctuation

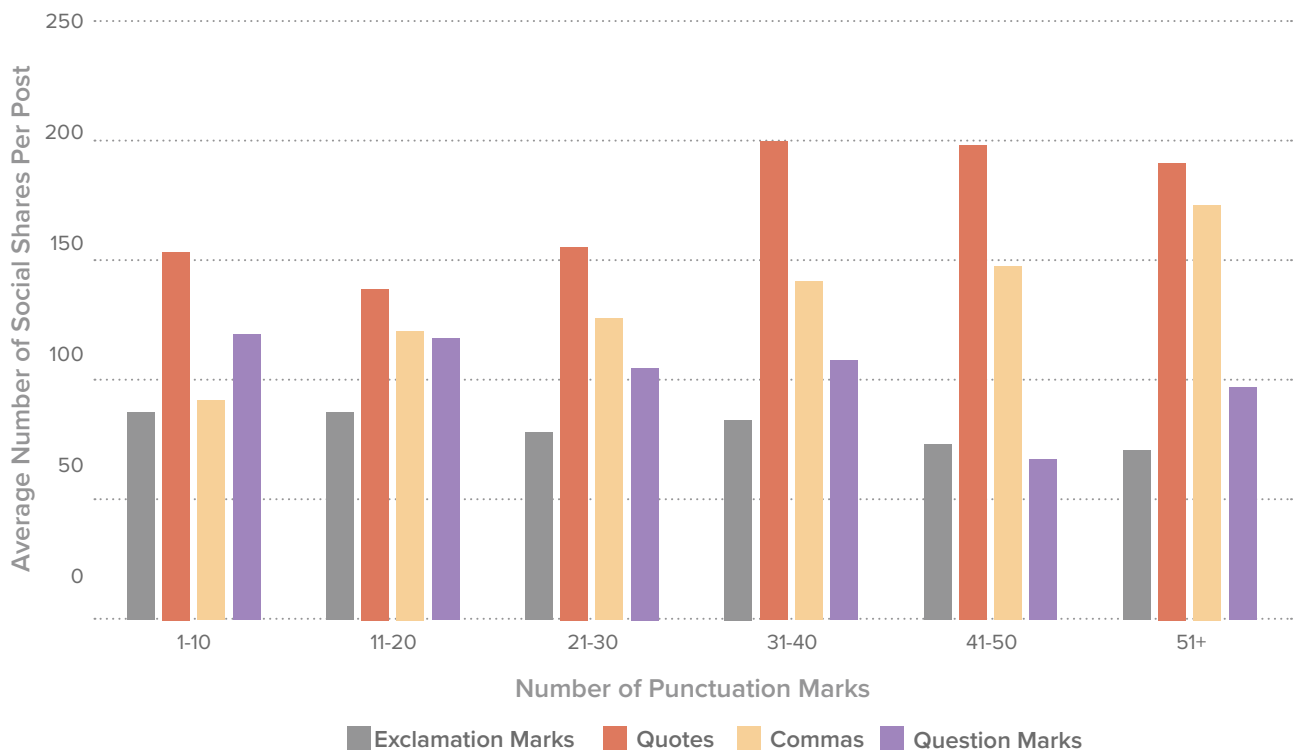
Proper punctuation is an integral part of any good blog post. Even Victor Hugo needed to stop his sentences at some point.

How and when you use them, however, is what we looked for in our research, examining the use of quotes, exclamation marks, commas, and question marks.

Takeaways:

- **Blog posts with quotes have the highest social shares.** Blog posts with 31 to 40 quotes perform best, with 200 average social shares per post, followed closely by blog posts with 41 to 50 quotes, with 198 average social shares per post.

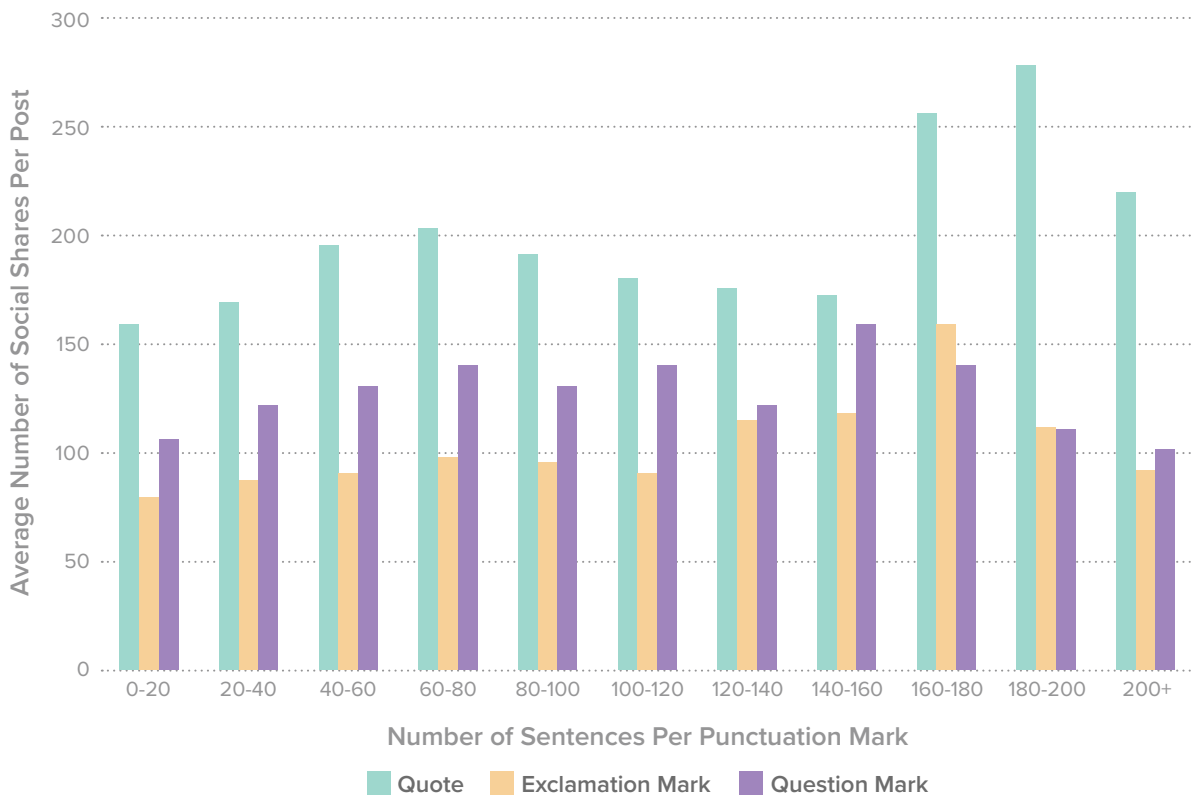
NUMBER OF PUNCTUATION MARKS VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Punctuation

- **When using question marks and exclamation points, less is more.** Blog posts with one to 10 exclamation marks or questions marks perform best, with 87 and 120 average social shares per post, respectively.
- **Punctuation density matters.** For each punctuation mark, there are definite correlations between density and shareability. Blog posts with 180 to 200 sentences per quote, 160 to 180 sentences per exclamation mark, and 140 to 160 sentences per question mark perform best.

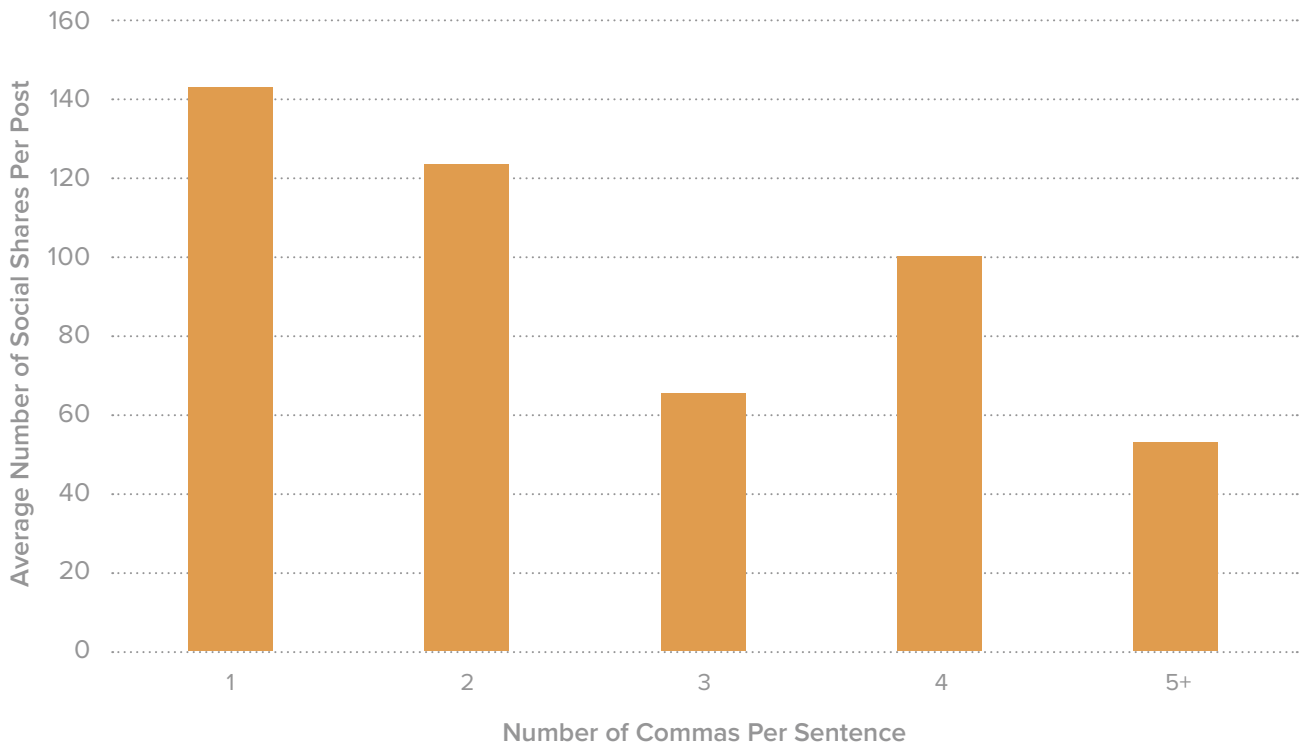
NUMBER OF SENTENCES PER PUNCTUATION MARKS VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Punctuation

- **Blog posts with an average of one comma per sentence perform best**, with 143 average social shares per post. For commas, we switch around the density measurement to look at the optimal number of commas per sentence. This finding is in keeping with the results of our readability analysis (Page 20). Put differently, simple sentences are correlated with greater shareability.

NUMBER OF COMMAS PER SENTENCE VS.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



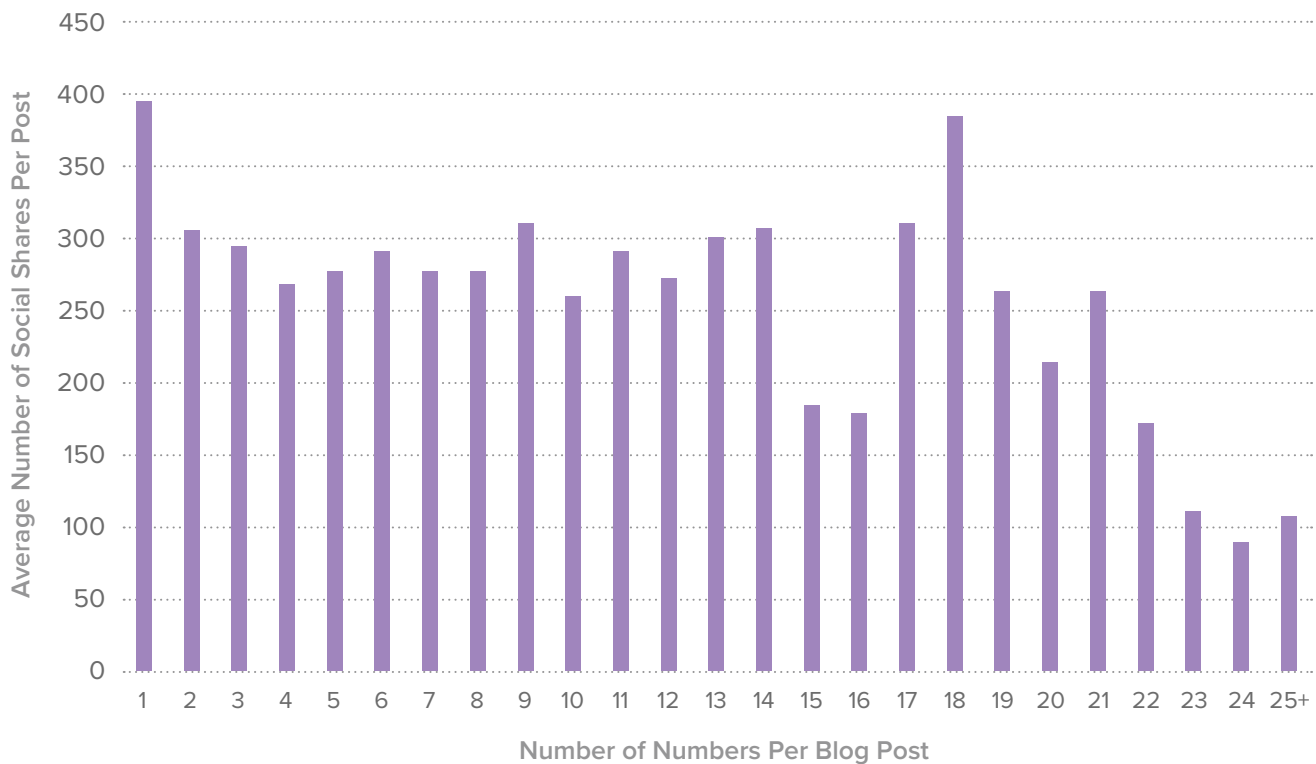
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Numbers

Using data to back up your argument, particularly quantitative data, can strengthen your content. Let's look at how incorporating numbers into your data, both arabic numerals and written out, impacts the shareability of your blog post.

Takeaways:

- **Blogs that have one number perform best**, with an average of 395 social shares per post.
- **Don't go overboard when it comes to including quantitative data in your post.** Overall, the use of more numbers in blog posts is negatively correlated with social shares.

NUMBER OF NUMBERS VS.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



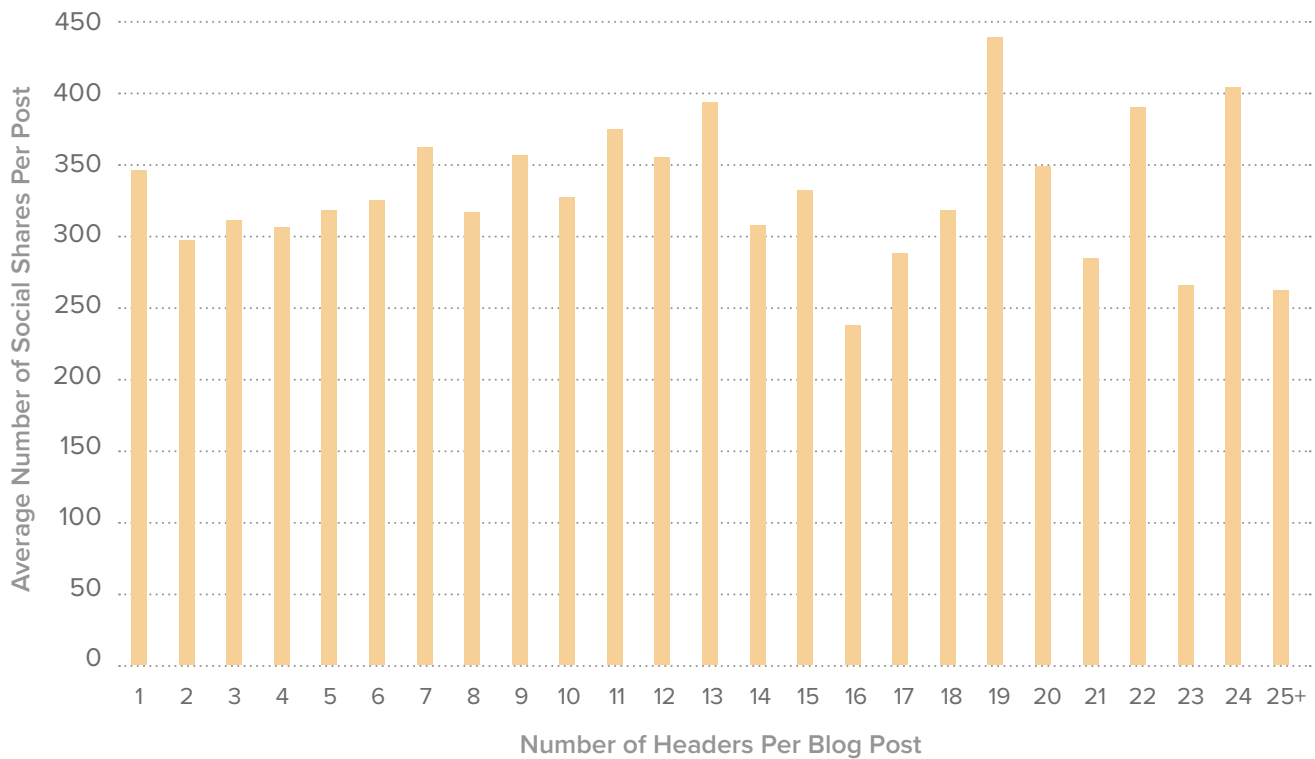
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Headers

Headers make a blog post more scannable and improve your page’s search ranking by contributing to SEO. But how many headers should you use per post and how should they be distributed throughout your content?

Takeaways:

- **The number of headers used in a blog post doesn’t really matter.** Posts with a wide range of headers all have about the same average number of social shares.

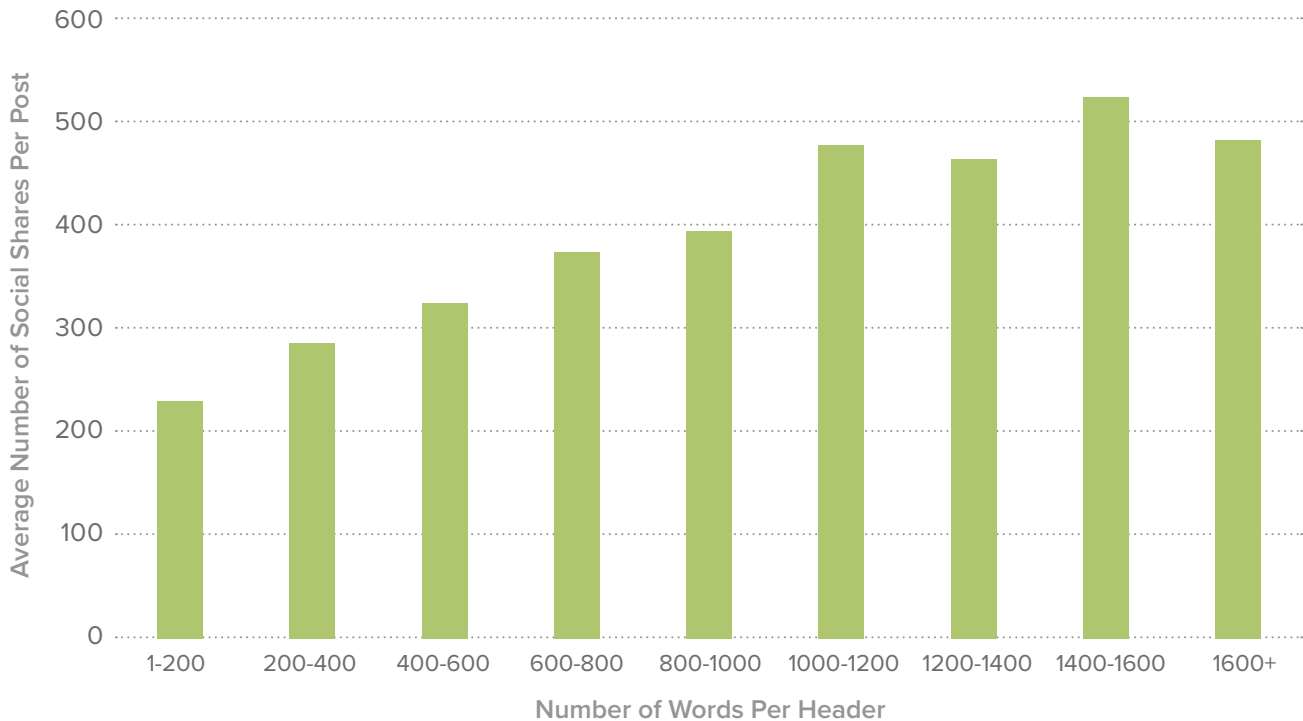
NUMBER OF HEADERS VS.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Headers

- **The blog length to header ratio significantly impacts performance.** Blog posts with a higher ratio of words per header get shared more often on average. Blog posts with 1400 to 1600 words per header perform best, with 522 average social shares per post.

NUMBER OF WORDS PER HEADER VS.
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



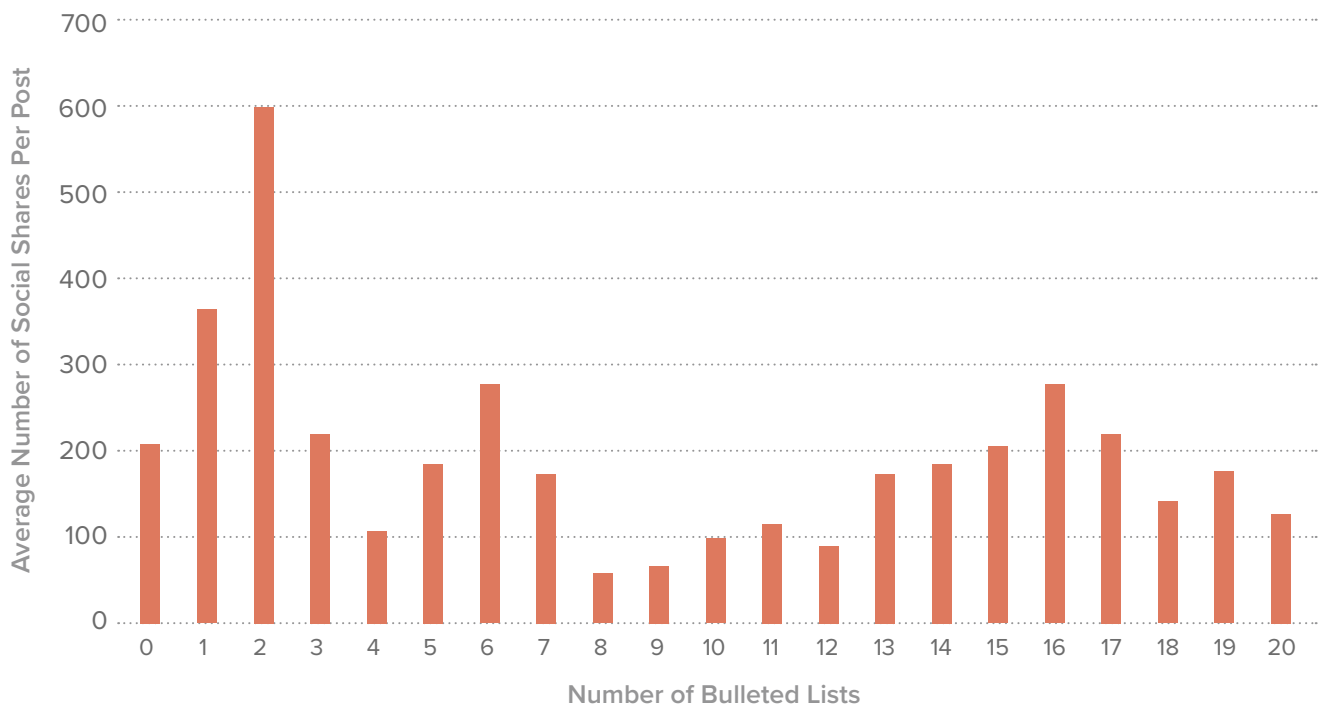
BEST PRACTICES FOR BLOG CONTENT: Lists

Adding lists to your blog can help with **SEO** and user experience by making information more scannable. But just how many lists should you use?

Takeaways:

- **Blogs with two lists perform best**, with an average of 601 social shares per post.
- **No lists at all can be better than too many lists.** For the most part, blogs with no lists perform better than blogs with four or more lists.

NUMBER OF BULLETED LISTS VS. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SOCIAL SHARES PER BLOG POST



APPENDIX: Best Performing Pronouns in Blog Titles

Pronoun	Average Social Shares Per Post
Yourselves	1253
I'm	1064
'You	951
"You	749
'you	733
They	639
hers	617
You	586
it	571
yourselves	570
'They	540
Yours	505
Herself	475
We	474
Them	472
It	459
Yourself	456
Their	444
Itself	442
'This	437
Your	436
Me	426
Himself	407

Pronoun	Average Social Shares Per Post
ourselves	386
Themselves	381
He	376
themselves	375
them	370
US	367
himself	365
Him	363
they	349
yours	341
you	340
His	339
Ours	333
he	322
herself	322
she	321
My	319
Thee	318
I	315
his	313
She	307
him	301
her	297

APPENDIX: Best Performing Pronouns in Blog Titles

Pronoun	Average Social Shares Per Post
your	293
its	287
Her	284
Its	284
we	281
Our	280
yourself	274
they're	274
their	266
You're	262
me	257
itself	247
you're	232
our	227
"They	217
us	215
Thou	209
Ourselves	204
myself	197

Pronoun	Average Social Shares Per Post
my	191
that's	182
"She	175
THIS	168
YOU'RE	154
YOU	153
IT	145
"This	143
HE	112
'Your	111
ME	91
WE	60
thee	55
OUR	53
thysself	51
ITS	20
u	19
y'all	18

METHODOLOGY

For blogging frequency and sharing, TrackMaven pulled data on more than 18 million blog posts, covering more than 1.9 trillion social shares on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest. For blog post-specific metrics, we examined more than 65,000 blog posts from September 2015 to August 2016, covering more than 20 million social shares on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Pinterest.

TrackMaven

Prove your content is working.

Prove the impact of your marketing efforts with clear, uncomplicated marketing analytics.

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