

How to Run a Blog Tour for Fiction Writers

by Beth Barany

Many authors wonder how to get more visibility for their books. One way to do this is to run a blog tour. If you discover that you like blogging, and want like to build excitement about a new release or re-release, running a blog tour can help you build visibility to a new audience and make more sales.

What is a blog tour?

Instead of going from bookstore to bookstore and town to town, you go from blog to blog, ideally within a concentrated period. Keep in mind there are no rules. I've run tours that involve one stop a week for 12 weeks, and 30 stops within a month, or 10 stops in two weeks. The trick to designing a blog tour is to determine how much time you want to invest in this promotion activity. If you have lots of time, do a 30-day tour. If you don't have much time or are busy during the week, you can organize a tour of 1 stop per week, like I did the summer I launched my YA fantasy novel, *Henrietta The Dragon Slayer*. As an example, you can see the schedule for that tour here:

<http://www.writersfunzone.com/blog/beth-barany-novelist/blog-tour/>.

Benefits of a Blog Tour

- Get known to more readers
- Get reviews
- Show off your expertise
- Sell books

Important Elements of a Blog Tour

It's true that like anything you do in marketing your book, you need to make decisions about your blog tour.

In my experience of running blog tours for novelists, here are the things to decide **before** you run your tour:

- **Time Period:** Decide how many days, what days of the week (weekends or not; holidays or not) you want to run the tour. Also, know that it take 6-8 weeks to prepare an extensive tour, though only 1-2 weeks for a short tour.
- **Blogger Types:** There are many kinds of bloggers who love, love, love to read and review books, and host writers on their sites. A special breed of bloggers exist and call themselves "book bloggers." They each have favorite kinds of genres to review, with their own rules about what they will or will not feature. In addition to book bloggers, search out experts in your field and subject matter expertise, including bloggers who focus on such topics as writing, freelancing, mommy-entrepreneur sites, independent publishing, etc. Also, it's important to pick bloggers that have a big reach to your audience. One way to see if the blogger has a big reach is to use www.alexacom.com, a provider of free, global web metrics.

To find book bloggers and other appropriate bloggers, Twitter is a great resource. I've compiled many book bloggers in this list here: http://twitter.com/Beth_Barany/book-reviewers.

- **Giveaways:** Giveaways build buzz and excitement, especially when you offer a grand prize giveaway that relates to your book. For example, my client, YA fantasy author Wendy D. Walter, offered a hand-painted gnome and signed copy of her novel as a grand prize for her blog tour. Her YA fantasy features gnomes, among other fantastical creatures, and Wendy is an artist. I've noticed that when you offer a prize not associated with your book you attract lots of prize hounds. While nice for increasing your numbers on social media and mailing lists, these people are probably not potential fans or readers.

To manage your Grand Prize giveaway, I recommend the tool, Rafflecopter.com: A cool tool for having people enter into your giveaway and to randomly pick your grand prize. Hats off to those savvy software developers for creating this free tool.

I also recommend giving away an ebook or physical book at every blog stop. Ask people to comment or answer a question relevant to the blog topic. This helps weed out those prize hounds who just want free things, and helps focus on those people who want something free AND are your potential readers and fans.

- **Writing:** Bloggers on your tour will be used to a few different kinds of guest posts from you. And new variations on the theme are being created all the time. Bloggers like a guest post from you featuring an aspect of your book. They also like to do Q&As, feature an excerpt, and/or a review. Or a combination of the above. If you're really busy, and feel like you don't have ideas, you can offer to do just a Q&A. When we ran a blog tour for romantic suspense author Shannon McKenna that is what she did, and she still had fun answering the questions in unique ways, and also grabbing material she'd already written.

For guest posts, when I work with my authors I help them hone a subject list related to their novel. You can craft your own list of topics. Focus it so that it's easy for the bloggers to pick a topic they know will interest their readers. For example, for Wendy, her list of topics for guest posting was: writing fantasy, about fairies, her Welsh heritage, environmental concerns, and bullying.

- **Review copies:** Know how many hard copies you'd like to give away and if you'll ship them only in the US or internationally. Some authors ship internationally using <http://www.bookdepository.com/>. Also, if you're giving away ebook editions at the blog stops, you'll need your ebook in epub, mobi and PDF formats, to give winners a choice.

During your blog tour, here are few things to keep in mind:

- **Promotions:** During the tour you'll want to share about it! You can share your blog tour stops on Twitter, Facebook Fan page, your blog or site (I recommend having your blog schedule there), yahoo groups, your newsletter, and emails to your fans and readers.
- **Comments:** Participate in your own tour. Bloggers and readers are participating in the tour and want to meet you. Get involved and thank them personally and comment back.
- **Tracking:** Track your social media and sales stats to see what's working and to celebrate.

After your blog tour:

- Thank your bloggers.

- Remind them to post reviews.
- Ask yourself what worked and what you'd like to do differently, if you ran another blog tour.
- Celebrate!

Some authors find blog tours really beneficial and some don't. This really depends on how much you promote the tour and how active you are during the tour, and which bloggers you pick. The only way you'll know what works for you is to experiment. Have fun!

Resources for Finding Book Bloggers

<http://bookblogs.ning.com/> -- A community of readers, bloggers, authors, and publicists.

https://twitter.com/Beth_Barany/book-reviewers -- A list of book reviewers; many book bloggers are on Twitter.

<http://www.bookrooster.com/> -- a community of passionate readers who receive free copies of new Kindle books to read and review

<http://www.stepbystepselfpublishing.net/reviewer-list.html> -- The Indie Book Reviewer Yellow Pages

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



*Award-winning novelist, creativity coach for novelists and book publishing consultant, **Beth Barany**, raves about books, writing, and the ever-changing publishing and book marketing world at her blog:*

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