

Improve Your Blog's Reach With These 20 Essential Web Utilities

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It turns out, there are a large number of free web utilities useful for improving your blog's effectiveness outside of your blog engine.



Tools 4 Argentina - [Some Rights Reserved](#)

Everytime I come across one of these useful utilities, I bookmark it to my *Blog Utilities* folder. **This folder is my blogger utility belt, full of tools to meet every need when composing blog posts or optimizing my site for bandwidth and speed.**

I've chosen to focus on web utilities as they are quick and easy to use — no installation required. This is not a comprehensive list by far, as I am sure there are many others out there. Let me know what I missed in the comments.

Optimization

The first three tools in this category are all website speed testers, but each offers something different, so I've listed them all.

1. [Web Page Analyzer](#) - This tool is fairly comprehensive and may be the only one you really need for website speed analysis. Includes stats on every file and object downloaded and provides approximate download times for different connection rates.
2. [OctaGate Site Timer](#) - I didn't find this one to be as accurate as the first one because it attempted to download images referenced in my **css** files that were commented out. However, it provides a nicer graphical output that marks when the request was started, when it connected, and the time when the first and last bytes were received. It also highlights 404 errors in red, which is handy for finding missing files or bad URLs.
3. [HttpZip Compression Checker](#) - Use this to check whether files from your website are being served with **HTTP** Compression on or off. Thanks to [Jeff Atwood](#) for pointing me to this one (among others).
4. [Dynamic Drive Online Image Optimizer](#) - if you're hardcore about your image compression, you should check out [Ken Silverman's Utility Page](#). But if you're like me and just want a quick and easy web based utility for compressing images, this is your site. It can convert gif, jpg, and png files up to 300kb. It will also do conversions to other image types and display multiple results at various color levels and compression rates so you can pick the best one for your needs.
5. [Javascript Minimizer](#) - This is an extremely simple tool. Paste in your javascript and click the button and reduce the size of your javascripts.
6. [CSS Minimizer](#) - Just like the Javascript minimizer, but for Cascading Style Sheets.

Statistics and Search Engine Optimization

Get a handle on your web traffic with these sites.

1. [Website Grader](#) - Gives your website a score in an attempt measure its *effectiveness*. Shows your PageRank, meta info, domain info, technoratic stats, etc... It generates a really neat report card for your blog.
2. [Google Webmaster Central](#) - An absolute essential tool for those who care about users finding their site via Google. Especially pay attention to the [Webmaster tools](#) which include Sitemap support.
3. [Google Analytics](#) - A free and full featured analytics package for your blog or website. Add some javascript to your page template and you're in information overload land, but done up with nice charts and graphs.
4. [103bees Search traffic analysis](#) - Unlike other stats packages, this one is focused purely on natural search engine traffic analytics. What are users searching for when they land on your site? This is a nice complement to Google Analytics. And it's free! One caveat is that the script can be slow sometimes, which can play havoc with **css** based designs.
5. [Technorati](#) - It's so obvious, I almost forgot to list it. Register, claim your blog, and find out who is linking to you. You can add a little script to your blog that displays how many other posts link to yours.
6. [Alexa.com](#) - The beauty of this site is that you can easily [compare your website's reach](#) with several other websites on a single graph, thus starting a huge pissing contest.

Spicing Up Your Posts With Images

1. [Wikipedia Public Domain Image Resources](#) - Images can bring a blog post to life. But rather than worrying about receiving a cease and desist letter for misusing copyrighted material, why not use images that are part of the Public Domain? This page is chock full of links to resources for free images.
2. [PicFindr](#) - Despite it's "Oh so Web 2.0" name (must everything end in a consonant plus "r" these days? At least it doesn't have *BETA* anywhere), this tool is really great. It will search a set of free photo sites such as [Stock.xchng](#), for free photographs.
3. [Flickr Creative Commons](#) - Still haven't found that picture that just hits the point you're trying to make? Try the Flickr Creative Commons search engine. Remember, these photos are not public domain. You do need to abide by the license. But for the most part, the licenses are pretty lenient for you to reuse the photos in your own blog.
4. [Open Clip Art Library](#) - Maybe you want your image to be *iconic* rather than *photographic*. Check out this free Public Domain clip art library to find an icon for every occasion.
5. [WP Clipart](#) - Another Public Domain clip art library, though the quality tends to be less than the Open Clip Art Library.

Create and Improve Your Content

1. [Cliche Finder](#) - Try to avoid using too many tired old cliches by running your post through this web based utility.
2. [HallwayTesting.com](#) - This is a fantastic site for basic hallway usability testing. Just submit your URL and real people will post comments with criticisms and praise for your site. The more specific you are about what you want testers to focus on, the better quality the feedback. Try it out.

Syndication

1. [FeedBurner](#) - This one gets special mention because it fits in so many categories. It'll help optimize your bandwidth by serving your RSS feeds for you. Also, it includes a basic free stats package as well as a premium stats package that can replace Google Analytics. FeedBurner can also provide features your blogging platform might not, such as subscribing to RSS Feeds via email.

Special Mention

As I mentioned before, this post is focusing on web utilities. However, these two utilities are so essential, I just had to break my own rule and list them.

1. [Firebug Firefox Add-on](#) - Ok, this breaks my rule as it isn't technically a website, but it is a FireFox browser plugin so it might as well be a website, right? Well in any case, this tool is too important not to mention. It has it all. It can be used to time your websites download speeds, view the underlying HTTP information, measure

the size of each file. Add to that a great Javascript debugger and **CSS** and **DOM** explorer. This is a must have tool.

2. **Windows Live Writer** - I broke my rule again. This tool won't help you write better content, but it'll help you have fun doing it. Also, all the plugins available make it easy to add a little extra oomph to your blog posts by including Flickr images, formatted code, etc...

Again, I'm sure I missed someone's favorite tool here, so please let me know what I missed in the comments. And if you do, let me know which tool you'd remove from this list in order to add yours. I'll try following up at a later time with an improved list.

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