# Piling *is a blogging process that involves active reviewing, revisiting and reorganizing tagging practices on one's content. Within an ELGG network such as AU Landing, this includes blog posts, files, photos, bookmarks, podcasts, and videos. Piling also involves the active review and reflection of tag clouds (both one's own and others), tagging categories, and blog rolls, and Twitter hash-tags.*

Blog posts that involve piling offer details into the decision-making process bloggers engage in while classifying posts using tags, selecting posting categories, or creating keywords within the posts. Blog posts that involve the piling process also include reflections on impressions and experiences of the use of tag clouds for one’s own and for others’ blogs. In addition, piling includes the decisions of re-tagging different content differently depending on where it resides and the purposes it serves in various contexts.

During each course, students sporadically use piling strategies on their blog posts. Tags tend to be used to describe the names of courses, for example, or the assignment name, or the purpose for the post, perhaps. Thus, at the early stages, piling is hit-and-miss, random, and largely disorganized. Students seldom perceive the need for anticipating the need for revisiting and tapping into their own personal blog post archives at a later time. Thus, a crucial task of educators is to encourage learners to perceive their learning artifacts as valuable in future, as potentially part of e-portfolios for the end of the program, as a legacy for later review.

**Piling Activities**

**In the Tag Clouds**

With this activity, students are asked to examine three tag clouds of three blogging experts to describe the types of tags used, and to identify patterns of use. Which tags are more prominent? Which Tag Clouds make more sense to you? Why? Which tagging strategies would you like to emulate for your blogging? How do the tags for photos, files, and blog posts differ?

**Blog Rollovers**

In this activity, students explore the blog-rolls and bookmarks of five different bloggers. How are these experts’ blog-rolls and bookmarks organized? Click-through a few of the links from each of the blogs you have selected. What does the content from these blog-roll and bookmark links indicate about the bloggers’ interests? Reflect on how you might use blog rolls and bookmarks in future on your own blog.

**Transitioning from Piling to Setting**

The transition between piling and setting is gradual. For example, after about a year of blogging, I began to become more proactive about how I organized the posts. I began to realize that there were two different functions of tags: those tags that made my own navigation easier for easier retrieval and review, and those tags that organized the posts into a more coherent structure others can make use of. At this point, I began to reflect on the reasons for needing to re-visit and revise older posts. It was largely prompted by a need for major house-cleaning – the posts needed to be migrated to another server. I spent some time reviewing my posts, and the notions of both piling and setting emerged as blogging processes. Another major motivator was the need to draw together learning artifacts for my summative portfolio review, in which I needed to demonstrate that I acquired specific competencies.

Upon examination of my tags within the AU Landing, (by looking at the Tag Cloud from my dashboard) I realized that the Tag Cloud I have seemed all over the map - more than 100 tags had been used, and most of these have been re-used for courses. It prompts me to consider culling some of these less descriptive tags such as *draft*, or *exemplar*, or *MODEL POST*, and impose a more rigorous, organized structure that reduces the clutter. But how? How are other bloggers within the Landing using tags? Are they as haphazard and randomly assigned as mine?

I begin looking around, and considered expert bloggers’ tagging activity based on Tag Cloud, blog rolls, and Twitter hash-tags. Experts’ setting strategies tend to be much more refined and more descriptive. Instead of a smattering of different tags, experts commonly re-use a few common tags in many of their posts. There are a few larger tags easily identifiable in their Tag Clouds. I would like to emulate this practice and simplify my own Tag Cloud for easier retrieval and re-use.

I have noticed, though, that I had used similar tags, with slightly different wording - kind of confusing and messy. For example, I use blogging, edublogging, edublogs, blogs, blogging...a lot of variations. So I will definitely want to re-name these basic concepts using more generic tags, such as ACADEMIC BLOGGING - perhaps I should use capitals for tags that in WordPress would serve as categories.

**Content Tagging Review (after at least 6-8 months of blogging)**

1. What do you plan to use your blog posts and files for in future? (For example, you might need the content later for your e-portfolio, resume, assignments in later courses, or for Independent Study Courses.)
2. How do you plan to use tags to make retrieval of your posts and online content easier?
3. How do you think others might want to review your content? How does this influence how you use tags?

 **Setting**

Blog posts that involve active identification, sorting, comparing and analysis of one’s own and other bloggers' data sets such as dashboards, followers, collections, bookmarks, blog rolls, tag clouds and home pages. In general, setting strategies involves the use of blogs for information retrieval, coordination and monitoring, aggregation and amplification.

**Reflecting on Personal Setting Strategies**

How can I become a more effective blogger? How am I using the coordinating tools to optimize information retrieval, aggregation and amplification? For example, by looking at my Dashboard on the Landing, I can make an evaluation of how well I have set up the widgets for use within the online learning environment. I notice that the external RSS feed and the Twitter channels are set up but inactive. I don't use the dashboard for those features, as I use Google Reader and TweetDeck to manage the feeds and tweets. Oftentimes, I reflect on how I had used the dashboard in the past, and how I have been recently using it. By examining the differences, I can re-evaluate the layout, and customize the dashboard in view of recent use, removing and adding widgets to reflect what I require now, or in anticipation of what I will likely need in future (in advance of an upcoming project, presentation, assignments, etc.)

***Exploring Setting Strategies of Expert Bloggers***

How are expert edubloggers using Word Press and categorizing their blog posts? For example, [Terry Anderson](http://terrya.edublogs.org/) and [George Siemens](http://www.elearnspace.org/blog/) have WordPress blogs. How are they using tags and categories?  One observation is that Terry Anderson makes use of specific categories that many student bloggers could also adopt for use as tags in their own edu blogs: *PLEs, Personal, and Educational Social Software*.  George Siemens makes use of certain categories I would like to use as popular tags within a learning community or group blog: *presentations, conferences, technologies* (ie. Twitter and FaceBook). Useful tags include *Technologies, Tools, Trends, Blogging, and Uncategorized*.

**Setting Activities**

**Reflections on the Online Learning Setting**

*Reflect on the decisions made about what posts or content remains limited to your peers and your instructor, and what content has been made public.*

How were photos and files organized over time? What are your reasons for following others, and creating follower/followed by collections? How did you customize your own dashboard over time? Take a look at your overall online activity – what tools are most commonly used? Which are rarely used?

**Managing Information Overload**

What are your impressions of the Activity, Wire and Collections features? Have you used them to manage the flow of incoming information? Have you made use of the dashboard to reduce overload? In what ways have these tools helped? How are others using these tools?

Have you limited your notifications to just peers taking courses with you? Or are you following a wider group of participants? How might your notifications change once you finish taking the program?