

# How to Write Interesting Content for a “Boring” Topic

by [Pratik Dholakiya](#)



If you’re lamenting how “boring” the niche you’re writing in is, take heart ... I’m here to tell that you *can* make it interesting to the right audience.

The secret to making so-called boring source material work is almost shocking in its simplicity.

It’s not *necessarily* about conducting market research, writing style, creating expensive infographics, or the having the right connections.

All of that is very useful in [creating compelling content](#) — I’d even say it’s all *required* — but the essence of “interestingness” stems from one basic content commandment: *Always ask the right questions*.

Don’t buy it?

Malcolm Gladwell can get over [two million people to watch a video about spaghetti sauce](#) by asking one interesting question: Why do brands sell so many styles of spaghetti sauce when they used to sell only one?

Let’s take a look at why this approach works ...

## **There are no boring topics, only boring content creators**

As an experiment, let’s pick a boring topic and see what we can come up with.

How about coffee cups? Boring enough for you? Take a few moments and dig for the right questions that may reveal some interesting article topics ...

- Who invented the first coffee cup and how did they get their inspiration?
- What makes people think they need to drink coffee from a coffee cup and water from a glass?
- When do coffee cup sales rise and what does that tell us about the American public?
- Where are coffee cups made, and why not somewhere else?
- Why are we drawn to novelty coffee cups with phrases like “World’s Greatest Dad” on them?
- How does a coffee cup get all the way from China to the US and still sell for a profit?

See what I did there?

I didn't put a great deal of thought into these, I just asked the traditional "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how" questions, and spent a little bit of time pondering what would make them interesting *to me*.

Apply the "who," "what," "when," "where," "why," and "how" series of questions to your own niche topic, and see what you can come up with.

## Find the questions that your audience is asking

Now let's start mining Q&A sites like [Quora](#) to find out what else people want to know about coffee cups.

A quick search turns up no direct search results, so we can turn our attention to coffee *mugs*. We discover that [people want to know](#) ...

- How they can cook or bake edible mugs
- Whether reusable cups or thermoses are better for the environment
- Where they can find mugs shaped like a stormtrooper's head
- What the best reusable coffee mug on the market is
- What some iconic coffee mugs from TV, movies, and films are

Then we can turn our attention to [Yahoo! Answers](#) to find more questions people care about, like:

- How fast can you accelerate without spilling your coffee mug?
- What's something cool to write on my coffee mug?
- How can you fix a chip in a coffee mug?
- How can you repair a stainless steel coffee mug?

These may seem like incredibly mundane lists to you, but keep in mind, *real people are asking these questions* ... in public. If they're spending their time looking for answers, why not spend yours providing them with them on your own site?

Blogging 101, right?

## 12,000 results later ...

I've found all of this while limiting myself to the terms "coffee cups" and "coffee mugs."

I haven't even addressed the much more broad subject of coffee itself, which I would certainly want to do if I had a client in the coffee mug industry.

I also recommend searching forums, social networks, and other internet "hangouts" to see what kinds of questions people are asking about your subject. This, of course, is where you'd do well to [learn the basics of content marketing research](#).

I hope you're beginning to see the potential for limitless content ideas here.

## Case studies you can use

Okay, so we've shared an interesting hypothetical example, but nobody's actually made a viral post about coffee, have they?

Except, they have.

Let's take a look at a post that went viral as a result of asking the right questions about coffee.

This Cracked.com article called [4 Reasons Why Fair Trade Coffee Is a Scam](#) answers the simple question: "Is fair trade coffee really fair?"

The result? More than 240,000 views and 6,200 likes on Facebook, as well as 547 links recorded by [OpenSiteExplorer](#).

About coffee.

And then there's BuzzFeed's recent article: [18 Microwave Snacks You Can Cook In A Mug](#).

(I swear I chose coffee cups as a subject before I knew about this article.)

It counts more than 250,000 views, 42,000 Facebook likes, 1,000 tweets, and 980 email shares. Undoubtedly it all started with a simple and interesting question about coffee mugs: *Is it possible to cook food in a coffee mug?*

## How "relationship advice" killed Osama Bin Laden

Now let's take a step away from the subject of coffee and turn to a different source: one of the most read blogs on the Internet — The Huffington Post.

Their most popular post of *all time* was emailed more than 18,000 times, shared on Facebook more than 65,000 times, tweeted over 3,000 times, and liked on Facebook *over 253,000 times*.

Surely it was the breaking news that Osama Bin Laden had been killed, or something similarly earth-shattering.

Except it wasn't. It was called [Why You're Not Married](#).

That's it — an opinionated post built to answer a question that a lot of people care about.

No breaking news. No science to back it up (though data-driven content is always preferred). Just the right question, and a compelling answer.

The news that [Osama Bin Laden had been killed](#)?

It received half of the Facebook likes, a third of the Facebook shares, and *one eighteenth* of the emails that the marriage article did.

## Brainstorming tools to help you find your audience

Having trouble coming up with questions that interest you? Here's a few tools and techniques to help you out:

- Use a [random word generator](#) to help cure your tunnel vision.
- List questions as soon as they come to mind. Don't filter them at all.

- You're not doing it right unless some of the questions you come up with are completely absurd. (A bit of absurdity can work for viral content anyway.)
- The best time to brainstorm is when you're having trouble focusing. [This is backed up by scientific research.](#)
- [Still more scientific research](#) suggests that creativity is enhanced when you think about contradictions and embrace paradoxes.

A successful content campaign can start with a simple brainstorming session, and an appetite for asking interesting questions. If a question is interesting to *you*, it's probably interesting to somebody else.

Have questions of your own? Let's hear them in the comments, and don't forget to pass this along if you found it helpful. 😊

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