

How to Start a Blog

The Beginner's Guide to Successful Blogging



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How to Start a Blog

The Beginner's Guide to Successful Blogging

Have you ever asked yourself how to start a blog?

You may have been hearing that starting a blog is so complicated but we're here to convince you that creating a successful blog is not as daunting as many people think.

In fact, by following the **step-by-step** instructions in this guide, you will be able to set up and make your own blog, avoiding pitfalls and missteps that hinder some novices (**no technical skills needed**).

Ready? Let's get to it!

Five easy steps to starting a blog:

- Choose a blogging platform
- Pick a domain name
- Get a web hosting account
- Install blogging software and set up a blog
- Select a blog design and layout



Choose a blogging platform

At this stage, you'll need to determine the type of blog management platform/tool you want to use. We recommend that you set up your blog on one of the self-hosted platforms. But before you make the decision, let us describe each option.

When it comes to starting your blog you have the following options: free, freemium and self-hosted (recommended) platforms.

Free platforms

For many new bloggers, the availability of free blogging platforms such as Blogger or Tumblr is tempting. Of course, there is one big benefit, it's free. But you need to understand that having a blog name in this form — yourname.blogspot.com or yourname.tumblr.com, is the sign of an inexperienced beginner who likely won't be taken seriously.

By keeping your blog on a free platform, you let the platform own your name. You'll be subject to their rules and restrictions, they may limit or prohibit ads on your blog, or they may even place their own ads on your blog. If you're serious about blogging, you'll want to move away from this option. tions: free, freemium and self-hosted (recommended) platforms.

Free platforms

Freemium means you'll have a trial period before you have to start paying (costs vary from \$5 to \$30 per month). Several platforms are available. One of the most popular is TypePad. This platform focuses on ease of use for writing, but **customization options are limited** and it lacks certain features of value to bloggers.

By default, your TypePad blog name will look like this: yourname.typepad.com. It's not always the best option if you're trying to build the name and brand for your blog. However you could point your own domain (purchased through any domain registrar) to a TypePad blog.

Self-hosted platforms

Self-hosted platforms allow you to run a blog on your own domain. Aside from following your domain registrar and web hosting company's rules, you're fully in charge of your blog and its contents.

You have number of choices when it comes to a self-hosted blog system (also called Content Management System or CMS). The most popular is Wordpress.org.

This blog option is called self-hosted because you will use your own web hosting space and name for your blog. It normally costs \$4 to \$8 per month for the web space (hosting account), depending on the company you choose, and \$12 to \$15 per year for the name (domain). The actual CMS is usually open-source and free.



One of the best and most well-known self-hosted content management systems (CMS) is WordPress.org, powering 25.4% of all websites in the world and responsible for over 76.5 million blogs, which is recommended by 99% of the [blogging experts we've surveyed](#)

Although we mentioned some free blog-hosting options, the best course of action is to own your blog, especially if you will be using your own copyrighted material (articles, drawings, photos, etc.). Pay a small amount of money every month, about the same as a Starbucks coffee, and you will build your own equity. If you plan to sell products, services, music or anything else via your blog, then paid hosting is the best way to go. Many hosting providers can help you maintain an ecommerce blog.

To get your new self-hosted blog started, you need to decide on two important things: a domain name and a web hosting provider. *We highly recommend Bluehost that powers over 2 million websites worldwide and only for our visitors, they offer a special deal that includes a FREE domain name.*

Pick a domain name

Your domain name will be the name by which you will be known online, no matter what niche you choose. It's the unique address of your blog on the Internet. Your domain will be yours as long as you continue paying the annual fee (\$10 to \$15 for a .com domain).

Users who know your domain/URL (uniform resource locator) can simply type it into their browser's address bar. Others will be able to discover your blog through search engines such as Google and Bing, so you definitely need to find a unique moniker.

Your domain name may be the highly popular "dot com" or it may be country or niche specific. From .us (United States) to .co.uk (United Kingdom) and from .guru (yes, for life coaches) to .sport (for sports related domains), these top level domains (TLDs) are added to any domain name in order to point to their location. The general rule is to go for a "dot com" domain, but some of the other extensions can work. For example "dot net" or "dot me."

In the end, it's about being memorable, so if a different extension or country code helps you be memorable, then break the rules!



Get a web hosting account

After choosing a domain name, selecting reliable hosting services will be one of the most important decisions you make. To a great extent, the functionality and performance of your blog will depend on your hosting provider. The host makes sure your blog is available 24/7 to potential readers and it's where your files are stored online.



Most hosting companies also offer domain registration services. Some people keep their domain name with the registrar company, separate from the hosting account. We recommend keeping it all under your hosting account for hassle-free management and maintenance.



[Web Hosting Providers reviews](#)

The wrong web host can cause many problems with your blog. Just imagine choosing a mobile company that has no reception. Your web host is a major piece of the puzzle to maintaining a successful blog, therefore, it's crucial that you choose a reliable provider.

Install blogging software and set up a blog

Now it's time to get your domain name and web hosting account, and create your new blog. Below you will find our recommended hosting provider — Bluehost. We were able to negotiate a special price only for FirstSiteGuide visitors, so feel free to use it. Also, if you get stuck, we included step by step instructions to help you with the process.

[Start Setting Up a Blog >](#)

Step by step blog set up instructions

This section provides detailed information to help you sign up for web hosting account and set up a WordPress blog. We also included screenshots of the pages that you need to go through.

Step One

Use this [link](#) to get the special deal from Bluehost. Then click the "Get Started Now" button.





Step Two

You should start by selecting your plan. If this is your very first one, you should go with the basic one – at least until you explore your options. The one called plus should be able to cover all your needs once you get your blog going, and you should consider the pro version once your popularity skyrockets.

	basic	plus most popular	pro
	normally \$2.99 \$2.95* per month	normally \$10.99 \$4.45* per month	normally \$23.99 \$13.95* per month
	select	select	select
websites	1	unlimited	unlimited
website space	50 GB	unmetered	unmetered
bandwidth	unmetered	unmetered	unmetered
performance	Standard	Standard	High Performance
included domains	1	1	1
parked domains	5	unlimited	unlimited
sub domains	25	unlimited	unlimited
email accounts	5	unlimited	unlimited
email storage	100 MB per account	unlimited	unlimited
marketing offers	—	\$200 included	\$300 included
	select	over \$24/yr in extras select	over \$180/yr in extras select
		1 SpamExperts	2 SpamExperts
			1 SSL
			1 Dedicated IP

Step Three

Your domain name has an important say when it comes to the future success of your blog, so you should take your time to come up with something new. Just type in a desired domain in this “new domain” box and BlueHost will show you whether it’s available or not. If not, it will provide you with a list of similar names for you to choose from.

new domain
Help me get my free domain!

.com
(e.g. domainname.com)

transfer domain
I want to use an existing domain

(e.g. domainname.com)

Note: Bluehost will provide you the information you'll need for transferring your domain.

Step Four

After you pick out your domain name, BlueHost will take you to the registration page where it will be required from you to fill in your personal info including the billing data. A couple of minutes is all you need.

account information
All fields are required unless otherwise noted.

First Name

Last Name

(optional) Business Name

Country

Street Address

City

State

Zip-Code

Phone Number Ext.

Use an international number

*Email Address
*Your receipt will be sent to this address.

Step Five

Pay additional attention to your hosting options. Obviously, the 12 month package has the lowest price, but the other two are great when you want to make a long term investment. You can feel free to uncheck the rest of the boxes – you can always get them later when you find them necessary.

package information

Account Plan Basic 12 month \$4.65/mo Basic 24 month \$3.45/mo Basic 36 month \$2.95/mo

Hosting Price \$5340 (\$4.45 for 12 months)

Setup Fee Free

Primary Domain Registration Free

Domain Privacy Protection - \$0.99 per month
More information

Site Backup Pro - \$2.99 per month (Billed to end of hosting term)
More information

Search Engine Jumpstart - \$2.99 per month (Billed annually at \$35.88/yr)
More information

SiteLock Security - Find - \$1.99 per month (Billed annually at \$23.88/yr)
More information

Comodo PositiveSSL Bundle - \$3.33 per month (Billed annually at \$39.99/yr)
More information

Savings \$5448 (50% off)

Total \$5340

payment information

Pay by credit card, or see more payment options

Credit Card Number 

Expiration Date 01 / 2016

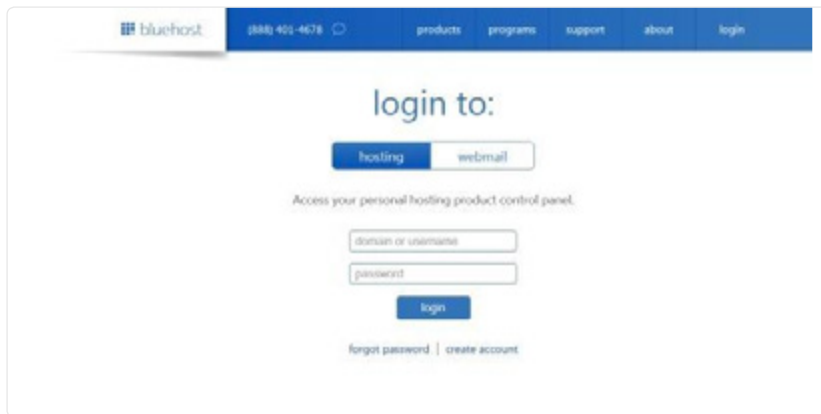
Signature/CVV2 Code

Provide code for instant verification. Example



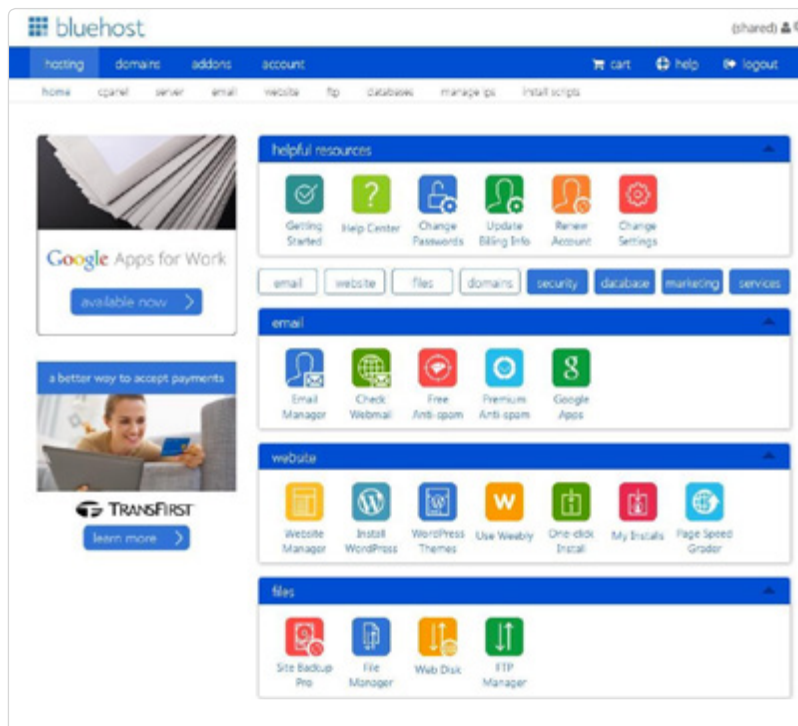
Step Six

After you check that terms and regulations box, you're ready to log in. Visit BlueHost's homepage and you'll be able to see their login button in the upper right corner. Type in your domain/username and your password.



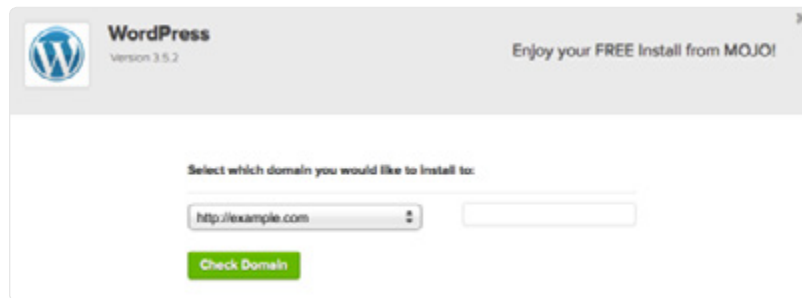

Step Seven

Once you're logged in, you're ready to install WordPress. Under the website section, you should be able to see a WordPress icon.



Step Eight

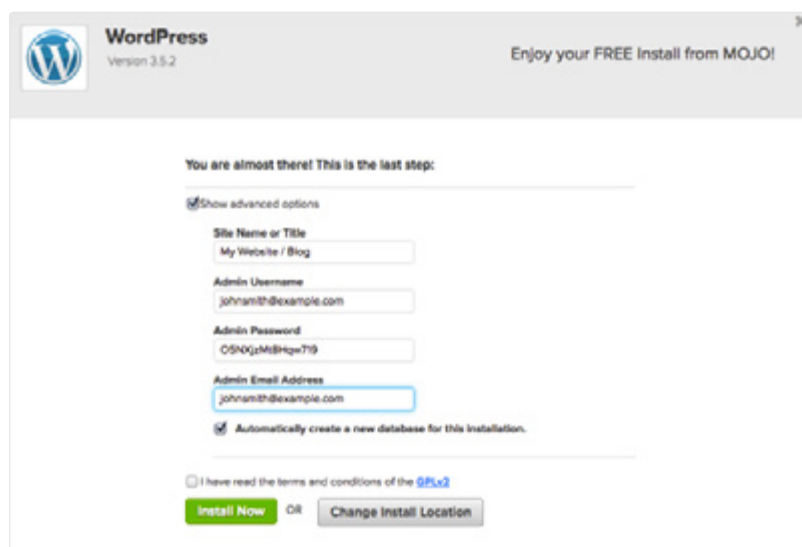
Once you click install, BlueHost will take you to a short WordPress description, after which it will be required from you to check your domain name.



The screenshot shows the WordPress installation interface. At the top, it says "WordPress Version 3.5.2" and "Enjoy your FREE Install from MOJO!". Below this, there is a heading "Select which domain you would like to install to:". There is a text input field containing "http://example.com" and a "Check Domain" button.

Step Nine

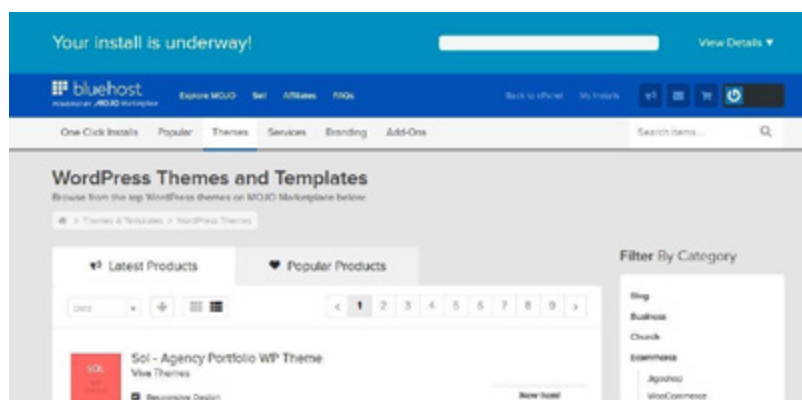
If you check their "show advanced options" box, you'll be able to type in your username, site title and password, but you should be aware of the fact you can change either one of them later, other than your username.



The screenshot shows the WordPress installation interface with the heading "You are almost there! This is the last step:". There is a checkbox for "Show advanced options" which is checked. Below this are several input fields: "Site Name or Title" (My Website / Blog), "Admin Username" (johnsmith@example.com), "Admin Password" (OSN0zMI8tqw719), and "Admin Email Address" (johnsmith@example.com). There is also a checkbox for "Automatically create a new database for this installation." which is checked. At the bottom, there is a checkbox for "I have read the terms and conditions of the GPL v2" and two buttons: "Install Now" and "Change Install Location".

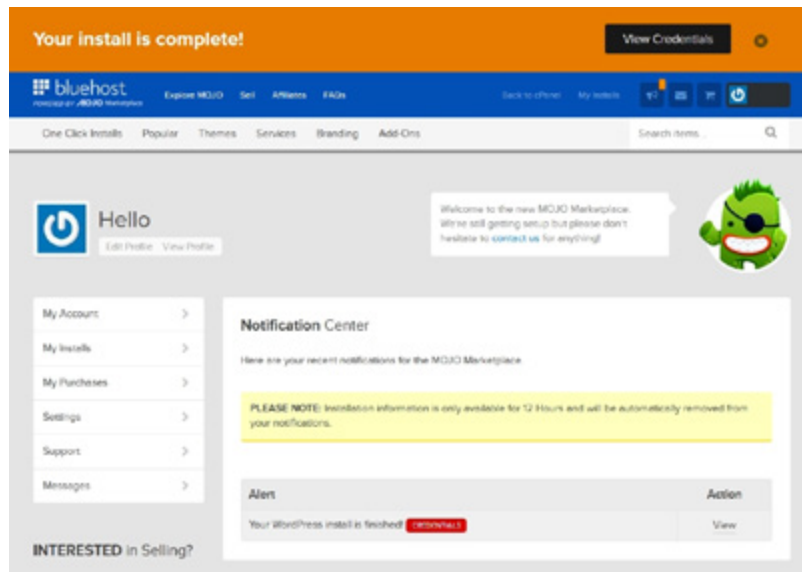
Step Ten

Once you check and double check every letter you have entered, click "install now" and the installation process will begin



Step Eleven

Once your installation is complete, you will receive an email about your credentials, after which you can browse through various themes and templates in order to find the one according to your needs.



If something is still unclear, perhaps [our step-by-step video will be helpful](#) when making your own WordPress blog, so check it out.

Should you need any help with the set up process, we will be happy to assist you, free of charge. Just contact us.

Select a blog design and layout

After Wordpress is installed, the first thing your blog needs is a face (design and layout). The design of your blog can be easily changed with the [Themes](#). The default theme that comes with your WordPress blog installed is Twenty Sixteen — while it's a good starter theme, you could select a theme that is more unique to your blog and compatible with your niche. Choose a theme that looks great, but also works for your unique content needs. Your readers will first notice the overall appearance of the blog, before even taking a look at the content.



Action steps

Once your installation is complete, you will receive an email about your credentials, after which you can browse through various themes and templates in order to find the one according to your needs.

1. Read the description

Most themes come with a short description of features and functionality. By reading it, you should have a rough idea if the theme matches your needs and how customizable it is.

2. Preview the theme

Preview the theme to get an idea of the overall look and layout.

3. Check the ratings

Popular themes will have star ratings that are visible in the preview and under theme details. They should give you a clear idea how good the theme is.

4. Check for responsiveness

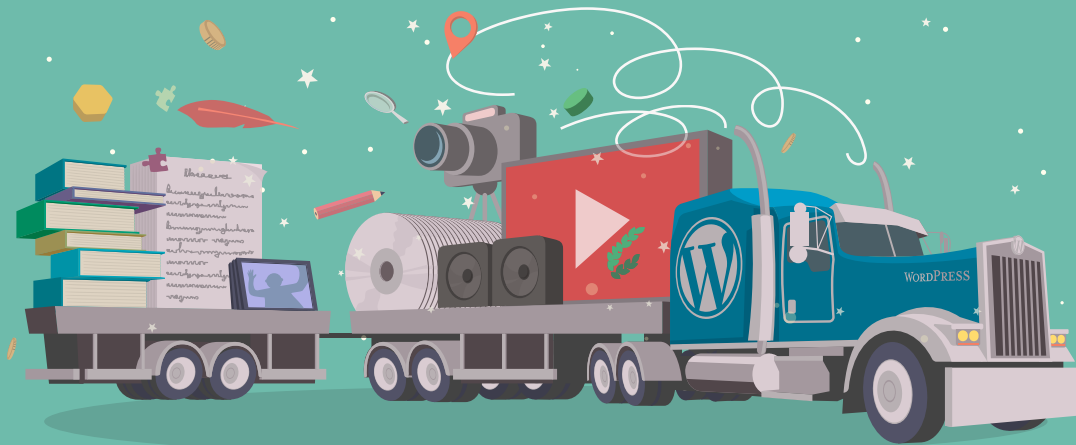
Aim for a responsive design that will work on desktop browsers and mobile devices. This is recommended by Google.

If you find a theme that takes your breath away, cool down. Once you install a theme you like, don't be surprised if it doesn't look quite right. Your theme is just a skeleton of your blog. To make it appealing, you'll have to fill in content (text, photos, videos, etc.).

Conclusion

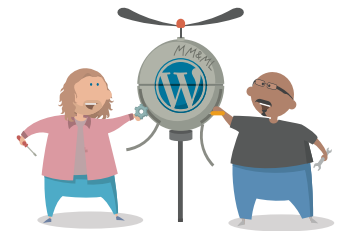
Congratulations! Now you have your own domain name, hosting space and your blog is set up. Next, you will need to get familiar with the Wordpress dashboard, learn how to make desired changes to your blog, start your content creation and promotion in order to become a successful blogger.

Learn How to Use Wordpress



About this guide

In this guide, we will take a closer look at managing your WordPress blog. You will learn how to customize your blog, make design and layout changes, create your first post or page and much more.



The Wordpress front and back ends

The WordPress platform consists of two areas: your blog's front end and back end. The front end is what your visitors will see when they come to your blog. Many of the tasks performed in the back end will be visible on the front end, such as theme customizations, plugin functionality enhancements and content publication. There are also actions that can be performed by you and your visitors directly from the front end of the blog, including commenting and social sharing.

The back end, known as the WordPress dashboard, allows you to fully manage your blog's content, community, functionality and design. It is accessible only by users who you designate and assign an account on your blog. In order to access your WordPress dashboard, you need to type: `example.com/wp-admin` in the address bar of your browser and log in using your WordPress username and password.



[View dashboard screenshot](#)

Navigating the dashboard

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (4:03)

The Dashboard is the center of blog administration. It consists of three main parts: left side menu, top toolbar and middle section.

The left-hand column of your WordPress dashboard is where you'll find all of your admin options and where most of your creative effort will be focused. This column includes menu options for each of the following functional areas:

Updates

Find updates to the WordPress platform along with plugins and themes you have installed.

Posts

View all posts (blog content), add a new post, view and create categories, view and create tags.

Media

View your media library (images, documents and other file uploads) and upload new files.

Pages

View and add new static pages to your blog.

Pages

View and add new static pages to your blog.

Comments

Comment manager where you will approve or delete new comments on blog posts and pages.

Users

Manage users, add new users and update your WordPress profile (name, password, and details).

Tools

Tools to import and export content to and from your WordPress blog.

Settings

Edit general blog settings, writing settings, reading settings, discussion (comment) settings, media settings and permalinks (URL formatting for your blog).

In addition to the general menu items in the left hand column mentioned above, you'll also find menu options for plugins you have installed. Depending on the plugin's purpose and coding, it's settings can be added to any standard menu (posts, pages, comments, appearance, plugins, users, tools or settings) or as a new menu item anywhere in the left-hand column.



Major versions of WordPress get released every **152** days on the average



22 % of WordPress sites are running on the latest version of WordPress

WordPress 4.x is used by 81.1 % of all WordPress websites, while **WordPress 3.x is still used by 18.2 %**

Appearance

Manage themes, customize your blog design (dependent upon theme), manage widgets, manage menu items and edit your blog's header (dependent upon theme).

Plugins

Find updates to the WordPress platform along with plugins and themes you have installed.

A closer look at each area of a dashboard

Updates

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (1:06)

WordPress, like any popular CMS, releases both minor and major updates to their platform in order to introduce new features, fix bugs and increase security. In the past, you would be given the choice to update to the latest version of WordPress through your Dashboard using a one-click install process or by downloading the latest version and installing it yourself.

For anyone who has WordPress 4.3 or above, updates to the core WordPress platform are automatically installed on your website. You are still responsible for updating your plugins and themes when updates become available. If you don't want WordPress to automatically update the core of their platform, you can find directions on how to configure automatic updates in the [WordPress Codex](#).

Posts

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (5:15)

The Posts menu allows you to control the new content you add to your blog. Blog posts are published on your blog in descending order (newest first). In the Posts menu, you will find the following options:

All Posts

A list all of your posts in the dashboard. You can use the listing to quickly edit single or multiple post categories, tags, status, author and ability to comment.

Categories

View all of the categories your posts are listed under, edit them and add new categories.



50-60% is WordPress' share of the global CMS market – making it the most popular CMS of them all

Add New

This is where you go to add a new post to your blog.


Tags

View all of the keywords your posts are tagged with, edit them and add new.



17 posts are published **every second** on WordPress sites around the world

Media

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (1:42)

The Posts menu allows you to control the new content you add to your blog. Blog posts are published on your blog in descending order (newest first). In the Posts menu, you will find the following options:

Library

View all of the media uploaded to your WordPress blog.

Add New

Add new media to your WordPress blog.



37 million global Google searches for "WordPress" are made per month

Pages

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (3:09)

Pages provide static content or information to the readers. Standard pages that WordPress bloggers use include: About, Contact, Advertise, Products, Services and Resources. The following options are available on the Pages menu, you will find the following options:

All Pages

A list of all pages in the dashboard. You can use the listing to quickly edit single or multiple pages' status, author, parent, template and ability to comment.

Add New

Add new pages to your blog.



on the entire web use WordPress

Posts vs. Pages

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (1:41)

Your blog content will be displayed in pages and posts. While they have similarities, they serve different purposes and have different behaviors.

They both have the following in common:

- A title/headline and specific content.
- Meta information (author, date of publishing, etc.).



8 of the top 100 blogs according to Technorati are managed with WordPress

- They can be added, deleted, updated or edited.
- They will be available for everyone or only a limited number of users based on your choice of settings.
- They can contain anything from plain text to media-rich content (video, audio, photo, links, etc.).
- They can be altered or extended via plugins.
- What sets posts and pages apart:
- Pages are generally not a part of your main blog's content. For example, if you have a travel blog, you would write posts about your latest travels. You would reserve pages for things that relate to you and the blog, such as a page with information about you or a page with a contact form to contact you.
- Posts are part of your main blog's content. They will show up as new entries within your blog and your RSS feed (Rich Site Summary is a web feed used to distribute information from your blog to subscribers.) Pages will only be displayed when you link to them directly and never within your RSS feed.

Comments

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (1:36)

The Comments feature is the best way to manage reader interaction. It allows readers to add comments on the topic, ask questions and provide feedback. It allows you and your readers to stay engaged with the community and interact around your specific niche market. Both blog posts and pages can accept comments. Most WordPress themes come equipped with comment layout functionality. However, it is up to you to engage with your readers and encourage them to leave comments on your blog. Check for new comments regularly. Approve them promptly and reply to them as needed.

In the Comments section, you will have the ability to moderate comments, including approving them, marking them as spam or deleting them entirely.

Appearance

 [Watch a quick demo](#) (2:20)

This menu is where most of the activity of changing the design and layout of your blog will take place. Here you can search for and install new themes and make additional customizations to your blog's header image, colors and background.



22% of new domains in the US are run with WordPress



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