

WordPress for Beginners

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This handout is available online at <http://guides.library.upenn.edu/wordpress>

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Why Use WordPress.com?

- It's free!*
- Themes created by designers can help you create a professional looking site, even if you have no design experience.
- The WP user and developer communities are very active, which means that new enhancements are added all the time and help forums are actively maintained.

Create Your First Site

Head to <http://wordpress.com> and click the orange "Get Started" button:

Sign up and start publishing now.

An orange rectangular button with the text "Get Started" in white, sans-serif font, centered within the button.

Once you create an account, you can use the same login credentials to manage multiple blogs. So, your **Username** and **Password** will be specific to you, while your **Blog Address** will refer to individual sites. You can change all of these later, so don't worry about them too much.

After creating your blog, click the **My Blogs** tab to find your site.

A WordPress site has two parts:

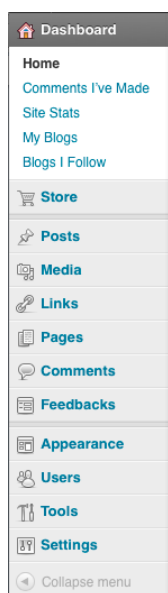
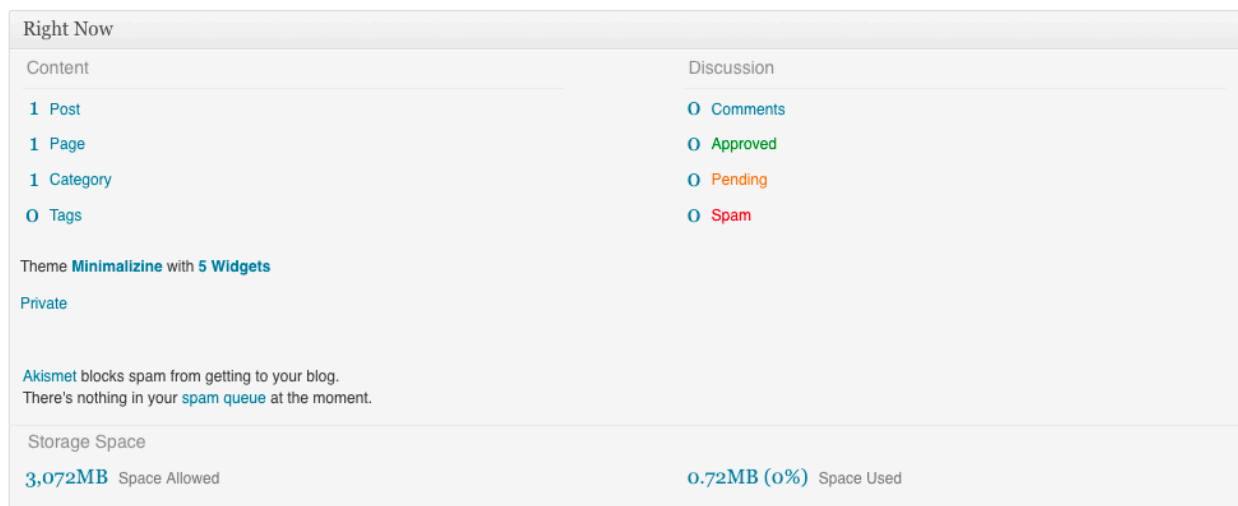
- a front end, which is what the world will see when they visit your URL, and
- a back end (WP calls this your "**Dashboard**"), which is where you will create your content and change your settings.

While looking at the My Blogs page, click on your site's title to open the front end, or click on **Blog Admin** to open your Dashboard. I like to have both open at once so I can see my changes in real time.

You will do all of your editing through a web browser – no software is required.

* WordPress is a "freemium" service, which means that all basic functionalities are free, but premium features (custom URL, no ads, custom design, extra space) are offered for a fee.

When you create a new blog, WP creates one of everything for you, so you should see one post, one page, one category and one comment.



The important part of the Dashboard sidebar is divided into two halves:

- The top half (**Posts** through **Feedbacks**) is related to the actual **content** of your site – your writing, images, links, comments, etc.
- The bottom half (**Appearance** through **Settings**) relates to the **look and feel** of the site, and your **preferences** for how the site works.

One nice thing about WordPress is that these two halves work independently – you can radically change how your site looks without putting any of your content at risk.

Adding Content: Posts and Pages

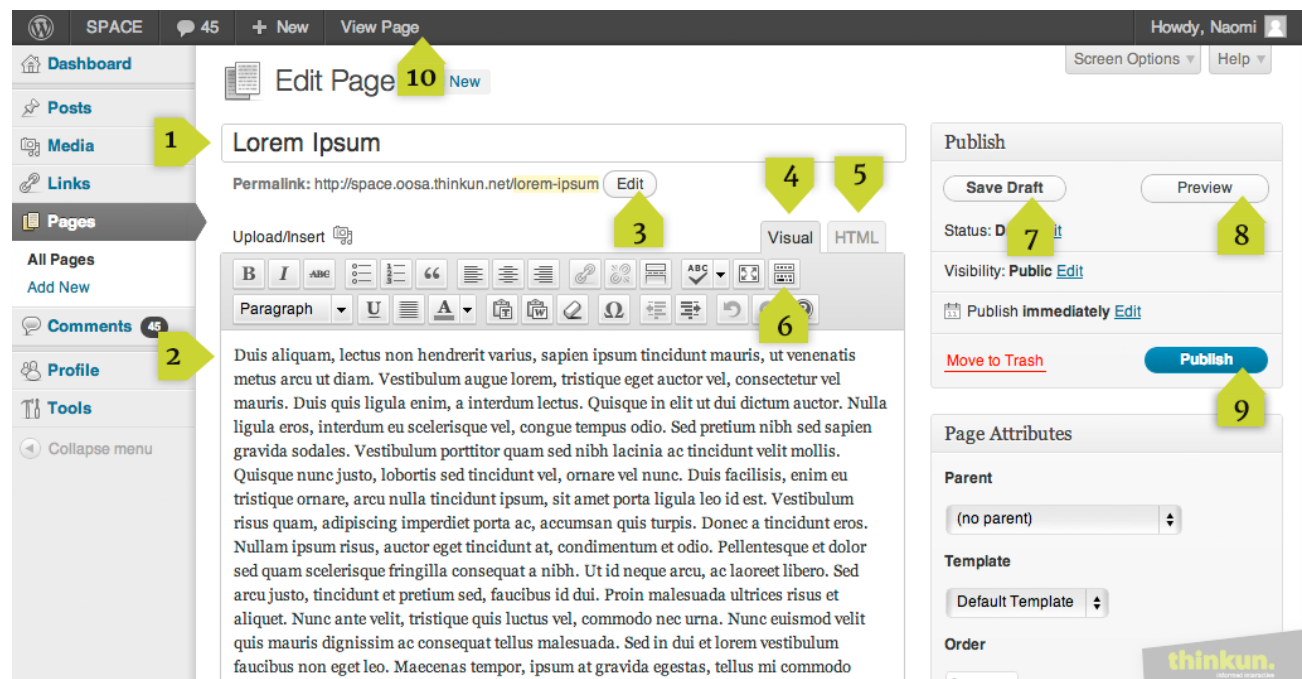
A WordPress site consists of two types of written content:

- **posts**, which are displayed in reverse chronological order, and are associated with a date, author, category and tags.
- **pages**, which stand alone in relation to the other content on the site.

A post is what we typically think of as a blog post, but you can also think of it as an article. Many people who are making their first WP site don't think of using posts for their content because they think of blogs as journals, but many contemporary websites use "blog" style publishing. Think of the *New York Times* website – let's say someone emailed you an

article on school newspapers in New York City public high schools. That article has its own unique URL, but it can also be found on the U.S. section within the Education subsection, or within the N.Y./Region section. The article has a date, so you can see what else was going on at the same time it was published. The article also has a byline, so you can click the author's name to see what else they have written for the *Times*. Similarly, someone may want to view your website's content in different ways. Try to think of a few stories about the people visiting your website. How would someone in your field want to navigate the content? What about a student writing a paper on the topic? Or a potential employer?

The Posts and Pages Editor



Thanks to the folks at Thinkun for this image! See their WordPress Manual at wpmanual.net.

The Editor looks almost identical for posts and pages. Here are the main parts:

1. Title of your post.
2. Body text of your post. The toolbar above gives you standard text formatting options.
3. Edit the URL for your post. WP automatically generates a URL based on the title, but you can go back and change it later on.
4. Visual editor – this is the WYSIWYG (or “what you see is what you get”) version.
5. HTML or Text editor – this allows you to view and edit the HTML code.
6. Kitchen Sink button. This allows you some extra formatting and editing options.
7. Save your post as a draft to come back to later.
8. Preview what your post will look like on the front end.
9. Publish your post. This makes it go live on the site.

Adding Links

WP allows you to create links using existing text. Highlight some text in your editor to create a link. You can choose to Copy + Paste an external URL, or expand the dropdown menu to choose from your existing posts and pages. It is good practice to link to your earlier content, in order to allow viewers to navigate your blog more organically.

Insert/edit link

Enter the destination URL

URL

Title

☐ Open link in a new window/tab

▼ Or link to existing content

Search

No search term specified. Showing recent items.

6 Reasons Your Password Stinks and How to Fix It	2013/06/03
Gadget Day Memories	2013/06/01
WIC iPads in Action @ PennDesign	2013/05/28
Staff Retreat Photo	2013/05/24
Screen Videos LibGuide	2013/05/23
Join us for PhillyDH@Penn – only 25 spots left!	2013/05/20
Staffing Environmental Studies	2013/05/18

[Cancel](#) [Add Link](#)

Adding Media

Click on the **Add Media** button at the top of your editor to add photos and other documents to your site.

Drop files anywhere to upload

Select Files

Allowed file types: jpg, jpeg, png, gif, pdf, doc, ppt, odt, pptx, docx, pps, ppsx, xls, xlsx.

Maximum upload file size: 1GB.

767.7 kB used, 3.0 GB (100.0%) upload space remaining. You can upload mp3, m4a, wav, ogg audio files and increase your available space with a [Space Upgrade](#). You can upload videos and embed them directly on your blog with a [Video Upgrade](#).

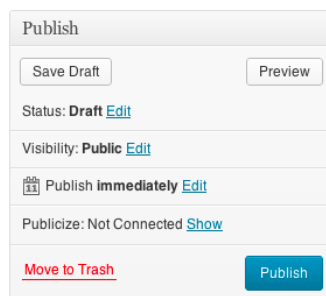
You can add files individually, or drag and drop an entire folder into your **Media Library**. WP will save a copy of the original image in your Media Library. Image files (such as .jpg, .png, and .gif) will display inline. PDFs and Office documents will display as a link for your visitors to download. You can use a third-party tool called **SlideShare** to display PDFs and other documents within the post or page.

If you want to add an image from the web, click on **Insert from URL** on the left side of the Insert Media box. Make sure that you use the URL ending in .jpg, .png, or another photo file extension. Otherwise the link will not work.

To **add videos** from YouTube or Vimeo to your posts and pages, simply copy the video URL (from the address bar – NOT the embed code) and paste it into the editor. WP will automatically detect that this is a video and will embed it. The URL will not look different to you in the editor – the embedding only happens on the front end of your site.

Categorizing and Tagging Posts

Every post will be placed into a **category**, whether you choose one or not. WP automatically creates a category called **Uncategorized** (confusing, I know) – if you do not create and choose other categories, your posts will end up there. **Tags** help your readers identify the topics that you discuss in a post. Typically a post will have one or two categories, and several tags. You can choose to display a **Categories** or **Tag Cloud Widget** to highlight the categories and tags on your site, which gives your viewers a sense of the scope of your blog at a glance. Remember, only **posts** have categories and tags.



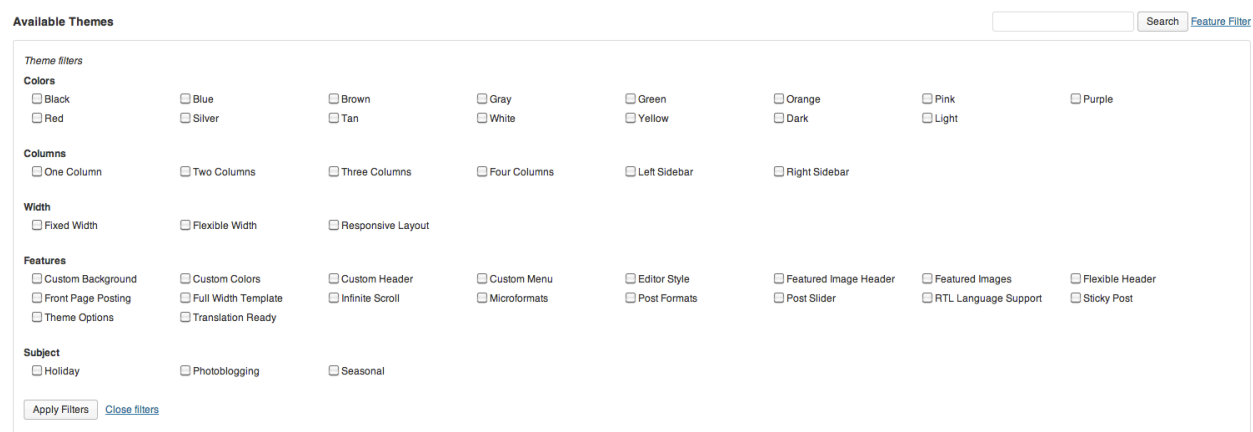
The image shows the 'Publish' sidebar in the WordPress editor. It includes buttons for 'Save Draft' and 'Preview'. Below these, it shows the 'Status' as 'Draft' with an 'Edit' link. The 'Visibility' is set to 'Public' with an 'Edit' link. There is a 'Publish immediately' button with a calendar icon and an 'Edit' link. The 'Publishize' status is 'Not Connected' with a 'Show' link. At the bottom, there is a 'Move to Trash' link and a 'Publish' button.

Publishing Options

On the right sidebar, you can see the different options you have for saving or publishing your posts and pages. The nice thing is that you can move easily in between any of these options – if you published a post and want to make changes you can make it a draft again, if you accidentally trash a post you can recover and publish it, and so on. You can also schedule a post, or make individual posts and pages private.

Choosing a Theme

Your **Theme** makes every design decision about your site: colors, fonts, spacing, formatting, etc. You can search for themes based on keywords, or browse based on colors or functionalities using the **Feature Filter**.



The image shows the 'Available Themes' screen in WordPress. On the right, there is a search bar and a 'Search' button. Below the search bar is a 'Feature Filter' sidebar. The sidebar has sections for 'Theme filters', 'Colors', 'Columns', 'Width', 'Features', and 'Subject'. Each section contains a list of checkboxes for different theme features. At the bottom of the sidebar, there are 'Apply Filters' and 'Close filters' buttons.

Depending on the theme you choose, you may be able to make a few customizations. If you see an additional menu item on your sidebar for **Theme Options**, you have a few extra choices you can make (for example, you may be able to choose a light or dark color scheme). Other than that, the design of your site is mostly set. You cannot change fonts, colors, or other aspects of the look and feel. This can be frustrating, but remember – the WordPress.com themes are designed by professional designers who pay close attention to matching fonts, lining up page elements, etc. If you like using WP but want to have great control over the design of your site, try WordPress.org.

Adding Widgets

Widgets add extra functionality or design elements to your site. Anything extra you see in the header, footer, or sidebar of your site is probably a widget. Examples of widgets include a search box, list of categories, calendar of archives, Facebook Like button, etc. There are over 40 built-in widgets to choose from. You can also add some functionality that is not built in by using the **Text** widget. This allows you to add freeform text or HTML to any of the widget areas on your site.

Changing the Header and Background

Under the Appearance tab, you'll find options to change the **Header** and **Background** of your site. Use the header to add something extra to your site by creating a composite image, or writing your site title in a cool font. Just make sure you check the suggested image size before creating something (the size changes depending on your theme).

Adding Users to Your Site

Click the **Users** tab on the sidebar to see who can post on your site, or to add new users.

Usernames or Email Addresses

Role [Learn more about roles](#)

Message

Caitlin Shanley invites you to follow [PennWIC](#):

Come check out my blog!

(Optional) You can enter a custom message of up to 500 characters that will be included in the invitation.

Users can have different roles, from **Follower** (they have access to your private site) to **Administrator** (they can change all settings on your site), and several options in between.

Important Settings

Spend some time exploring the **Settings** for your site to make sure everything is working the way you'd like it to be.

Some of the settings you may want to look at right away:

- Under **General**
 - Change your **site title** (the title that shows up on each page of your site – not your URL) and **tagline** (that annoying line that says something like, “*Just another WordPress site.*” Change this to something more relevant, or remove it entirely).
- Under **Reading**
 - If you would rather have visitors to your URL land on your About page or anywhere on your site besides your latest posts, change your front page from “**Your latest posts**” to “**A static page.**” Then, choose which page will be the new homepage, and where you want your posts to be displayed (if anywhere – you don't have to use them if you don't want to).
 - Make your site **private** or **unfindable** by changing the **Site visibility**. You may want to make your site totally private while you work on it, and then publish it when you're ready. Or maybe create a private site that is shared only with colleagues or classmates. You also have the option to have a public site that anyone can see, but that is not indexed by Google and other search engines.
- Under **Discussion**
 - **Moderate comments** on your site. Choose how you want to be notified when someone comments, and how much information you want to collect from your visitors before allowing them to comment.

You're Not Alone

The WP user community is very active and vocal. If you have a question about doing something on your site, chances are someone else has already had that question, too. Visit WordPress.com **Support** for tutorials and answers to frequently asked questions, and WordPress.com **Forums** to see what other users are asking about.

Still have questions? Ask us! **Email WIC staff** at wic1@pobox.upenn.edu.