

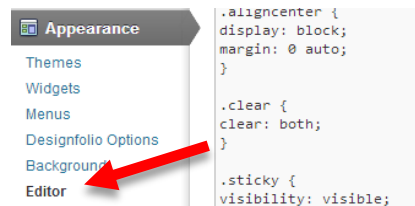
# WordPress – Modifying your site

## 1. Going beyond Theme options

Any theme you download can be *entirely* modified – you can jump in and delete, edit, or add to your theme's PHP and CSS pages and create anything you like. But there are safe ways to go about it and more direct ways that are likely to create inefficiencies at best, and (the more likely) errors at worst. WordPress is a very cleverly designed collection of PHP files that work in a particular way. The WordPress designers know you want total control over your site, and they give it to you, but for things to go smoothly you need to work with their system.

### The tempting but dangerous and wrong path:

Simply go to the "Editor" option under Appearance and select one of the core PHP or CSS files and start coding.



### The safe path to modifying your theme:

#### 1. Find a close matching theme to start with

The first thing to do is to choose a theme that most closely matches your goal so as to minimise the changes you need to make. For example, if you want to create a site that will display your artwork, look for a portfolio theme. If you want to sell shoes, look for a retailing theme. You may find that the best option is to spend \$20 - \$100 to buy a theme and save you a lot of grief. Getting the right theme to start with can save you hours and hours of work.

#### 2. Try playing with the inbuilt theme options

The next port of call will be the theme's options, as discussed in the previous document.

#### 3. Play with the inbuilt WordPress options – Widgets, Pages, Menus, etc.

Most of these options are discussed later in this paper. You can add pages, and add and remove sidebars and footers and headers, and components of them such as calendars, posts, and search boxes.

Note that if you change to another theme after making these WordPress changes, the changes will not be lost. The theme sits above and around them so although their positioning and few other minor things are likely to change, but your choices will fundamentally remain.

#### 4. Install a plugin

Plugins are similar to Widgets in that they both add functionality to your page. However Plugins are generally more complicated than Widgets, and don't always display something in a portion of the page as a Widget does. A plugin may be something that is visible in the page, such as a shopping cart, or it may be something you can't see such as an SEO plugin. The WooCommerce shopping cart plugin is an example of a plugin that totally transforms the look and behaviour of your site. The Plugin comes with a theme, widgets, and completely transforms the look and functionality of your site.

There are over 20,000 plugins in the WordPress database alone, and many, many more on the Wild Web, some free, most paid.

#### 5. Create your own Child theme

You can write your own JavaScript, CSS and PHP files within your own "theme" that sit over the top of every other piece of code, operating as the final actor. We call this a "Child Theme". We

don't touch the original files, and so we can update WordPress and our plugins without destroying our code. Your Child theme can be one or more of:

- a. a CSS file
- b. a functions.php file
- c. copies of the core WordPress and theme files (which you then alter)

See the later handout titled "WordPress – Editing Child Themes and PHP" for instructions.

## 6. Directly altering the theme's or WordPress's core files

As just mentioned, rather than altering the WordPress and Theme files directly, your best approach is to create a copy of them and edit the copies. There's nothing stopping you from editing the core files though. You have complete access to them.

Just remember that you can easily crash your site trying to edit these complicated programs, and if you ever install a WordPress or theme update, the changes you make may be wiped away.

## 2. Installing themes from outside WP site

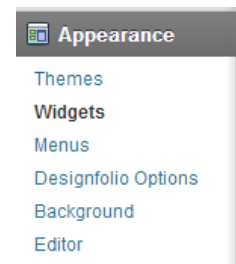
You aren't restricted to the themes that WordPress offer you through their site. You can trawl through the thousands of free or paid templates (which people generally call themes) available on the Web.

All you have to do is download it to your computer, then copy or upload that folder (and not just the contents of the folder) to your /wp-content/themes directory, and then activate it by going to your Dashboard and choosing Admin→Appearance→Themes.

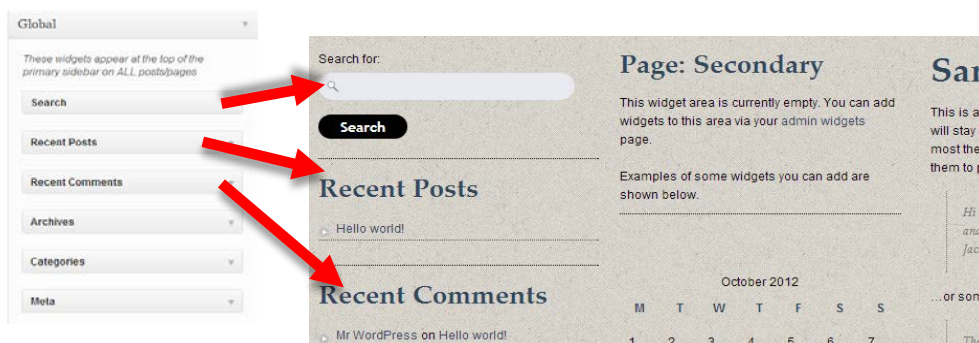
## 3. Widgets

Widgets are little web page tools like calendars, search boxes, and Google maps. They are essentially plugins, but they are classified as widgets because they aren't very powerful and because each is a small, stand-alone object that sit inside a web page.

From WordPress's Widgets page you can drag and drop widgets onto or off your page. The part of your page you drag them to is the "Sidebar". The tricky, and good, thing about sidebars is that they don't have to be on the side of your page. The sidebar can in affect be your main content area.



You'll see that Widgets that appear under "Global" Widgets will match with what you see in each of your Webpage's sidebars. The Global widgets are the default widgets that get plonked on any multi-column page



You can remove Widgets from the Global or other list, and add new ones, simply by dragging and dropping. You can download widgets from the Web if there is something missing from the list that you'd like to have. There are 1000's of free widgets available, which you find by searching for WordPress widgets.

## 4. Adding new Pages to your site

Adding new pages to your site is an easy thing to do, but a WordPress page is not necessarily what you think of as a page.

To add one you simply click the “Add New” menu item under the “Pages” menu item.

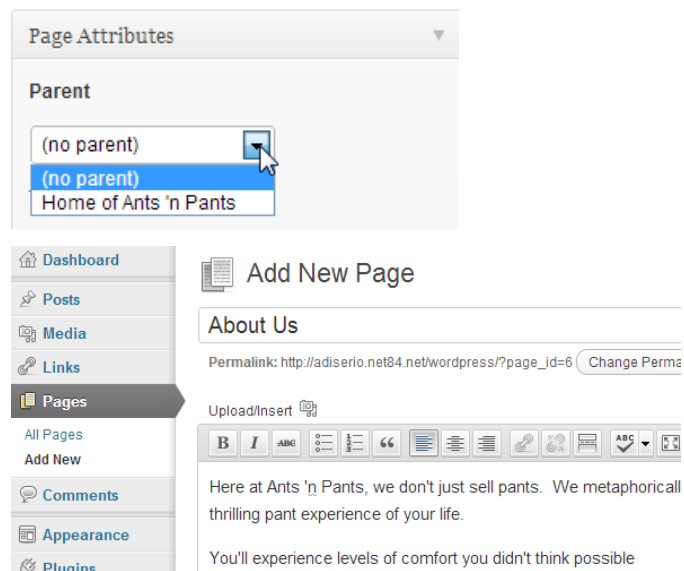
A page that you create is stored within your WordPress database just like a blog post is, not as a PHP or HTML page. In fact, a page is virtually the same thing as a blog. It only becomes a page in the sense we think of as a page when you instruct WordPress to attach the page/post to a menu item.

Still, pages aren’t quite the same as a post. This from the WordPress horse’s mouth:

Pages are similar to Posts in that they have a title, body text, and associated metadata, but they are different in that they are not part of the chronological blog stream, kind of like permanent posts, used to present timeless information about yourself or your site.

After you create a page, you can attach it to a menu item, make it a sub-menu item (so that pages can sit in a hierarchy), insert it inside an existing page, or even sit in a sidebar.

If you choose “No Parent”, the page becomes a separate standalone page:



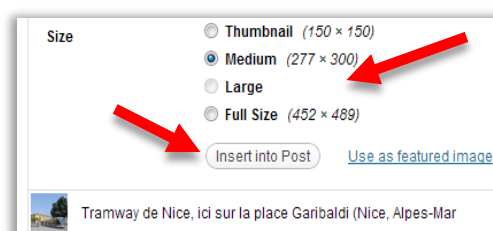
When developing the page, you get a few options for entering your text and images you’ll see a HTML option as well as a text editor.

The text editing options that WordPress open up to your through the Dashboard are a little limited. For total control you have to under the hood a little, but we won't be trying that just yet.

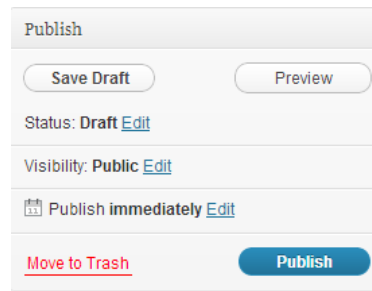
You’ll notice that above the edit bar there’s a link to insert an image, and that the last button on the edit bar opens up another bar with a few more options. You get full control over the text you add here through CSS, and to edit the CSS you need to read about "Child Themes" which is a topic discussed above and in a later paper.



If you click the “Upload/Insert” image button, you get a choice to insert an image into your post but are somewhat restricted with regards the size. Again, it is with Child Themes that you can get more control over.



You'll see to the right a preview and publish button

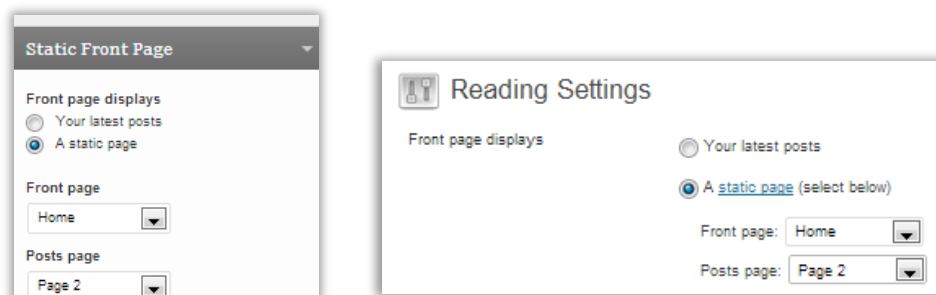
A screenshot of the WordPress 'Publish' meta box. It contains buttons for 'Save Draft' and 'Preview'. Below these, it shows 'Status: Draft' with an 'Edit' link, 'Visibility: Public' with an 'Edit' link, and a 'Publish immediately' button with an 'Edit' link. At the bottom, there is a 'Move to Trash' link and a 'Publish' button.

## 5. Do you want a site without a blog?

There are 2 things to think about here. Sometimes you want to give yourself a particular home page – one that doesn't contain a blog. The other might be that you don't want the default WordPress behaviour of giving you blog capabilities on every page.

### Static Home Page

Giving yourself a home page that doesn't contain a blog is easy. There are two settings to change: first you change your Theme's settings by choosing "A static page" and choosing the page you want (for your Front page"; and second you got to WordPress's "Settings", choose "Reading" and set your site to have a "A static page" instead of "Your latest posts" as the Front Page:

Two screenshots from the WordPress admin interface. The left screenshot shows the 'Static Front Page' settings in a theme's customizer, with 'A static page' selected and 'Home' chosen for the front page. The right screenshot shows the 'Reading Settings' in the WordPress Settings menu, with 'A static page (select below)' selected and 'Home' chosen for the front page.

### No blogs on any page

You'll notice that with most of the themes you install, every page automatically gets a blog at its bottom. WordPress states that "it is possible to remove all or most Posts from a WordPress installation, and thus to create a standard non-blog website".

#### 3 techniques:

1. You may have a theme that sorts it out for you. For example, if you install a Shopping Cart theme like WooCommerce, you will find that all blogs are automatically been removed from all pages. So, your starting point for removing your blog is usually choosing the correct theme. There are plenty of free ones with check boxes for eliminating posts and comments, such as Weaver. The Genesis Framework (theme) makes it easy to remove blogs from every page and has many extra features, but costs \$60.
2. If all you want is a simple page without sidebars, then you're in luck because blogs are by default loaded into the sidebar. A search for "single column" or "one column" themes should help.
3. If none of that settings to turn that functionality off, it comes down to altering WordPress with a Child Theme. As discussed, a Child Theme is a theme that sits atop any other themes you install. You can make Child Theme files that alter the WordPress files or the theme files. A common way to use a Child Theme to get rid of blogs is to edit your site's **single.php** file and/or the **page.php**

files and comment out the call to the function that pulls in the posts, which is `comments_template( )`.

```
<?php comments_template( '', true ); ?>
```

```
<?php //comments_template( '', true ); ?>
```

This site offers some other tips on making your site look less like just another WordPress blog: <http://www.impressivewebs.com/10-wordpress-tips-to-make-your-blog-look-like-a-website/>

This site too gives you some advice on the code you can write to eliminate the sidebar (where the blogs are located):

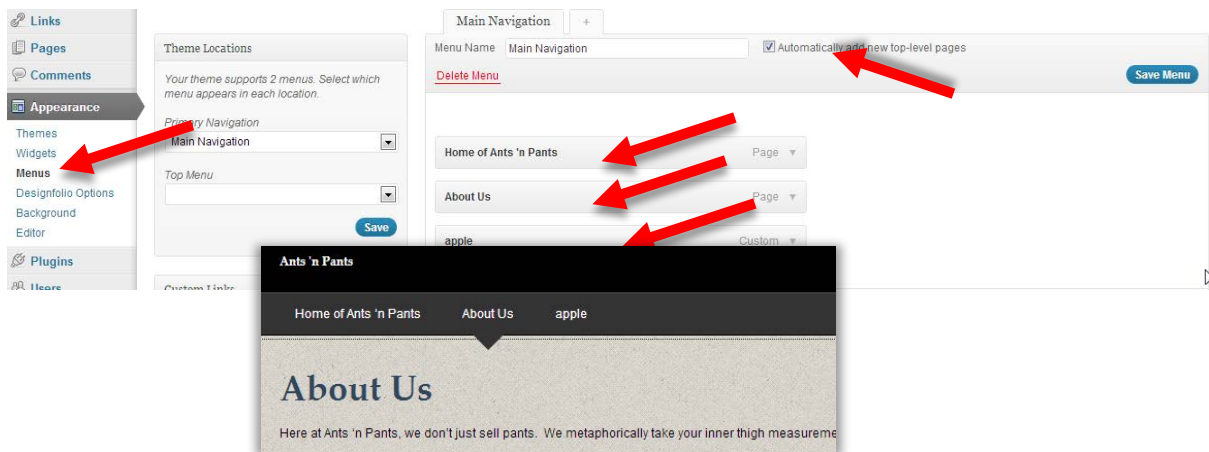
<http://www.expand2web.com/blog/wordpress-custom-page-template-no-sidebars/>

A final tip: You could always use a different web site builder that doesn't start out its life as a blog, such as Drupal or Joomla. While WordPress is more flexible, is the easiest to learn, and has so many free plugins and great user support, Drupal and Joomla (and the myriad other CMSs) have their own advantages. For example:

- Drupal is more suitable for large, enterprise level data intensive sites where stability and security and scalability are crucial, such a government Website.
- Joomla is almost as powerful as Drupal and almost as flexible as WordPress, and may be the best choice for somebody starting out who knows the only thing they want is a forum website, or a static site.

## 6. Modifying the Menu

Your theme will give you a menu by default. You can alter that menu by including or excluding pages that make up your site (and reorder them) or links to external sites. Here a link to the Apple website was included and a tick placed in the checkbox to “Automatically add to new top-level pages”:



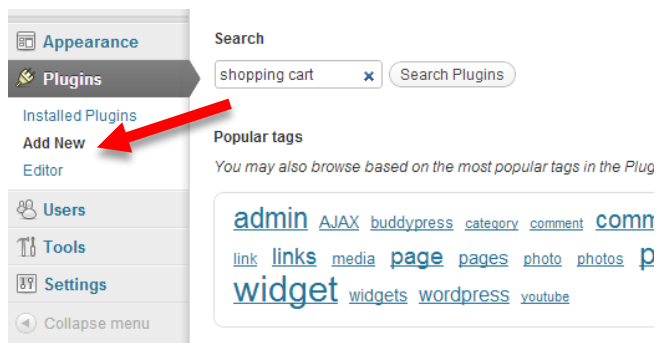
## 7. Changing your Theme

You can switch between themes at any time. Some of your changes won't look quite the same in the new theme's CSS, but fundamental changes such as changes to the page title and the menu options you create, will remain.

## 8. Adding a Plug-in

There are over 20,000 plugins listed on the WordPress site, and many, many others you can find through a general Web search.

The uploading and installation part of the process will be taken care of for you if you use your WordPress page to add the plugin from the WordPress plugin-in database



Alternatively, you can get the plugin from the creator's site, download it, unzip it, and then copy it into the plugin folder that's within the wp-content folder. Once it's in the folder you'll find it in your "Installed Plugins" page, and from there you'll be able to "Activate" it.

How do you find the settings for your plugin once you've installed and activated it? Will you get a menu item, or do you go to the plugins page? The best advice may be to read the instructions before installing the plugin-in. Three possibilities:

1. Under WordPress "Settings". This is the case, with the "Contact Form 7" plugin. This plugin creates a new page that makes it a cinch for your customers to complete a form (such as feedback or a complaint) and have it emailed to you. Once installed, you will see a "Settings" link for your plugin within the "Plugins" page. This plugin also gives you a menu item under WordPress "Settings"



2. Simpler plugins may simply just appear on the Widgets page.
3. Others will get their own menu item. WooCommerce creates more than one menu item. This screenshot shows that the SEO plugin called Yoast will appear in your dashboard in its own menu below the Settings menu.

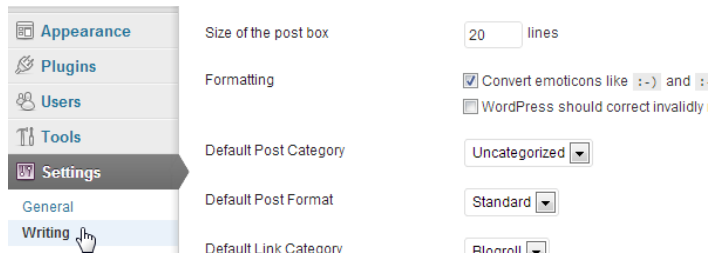
**Note** that an SEO tool like Yoast is one of the essential plugins that a Website builder should always install. It is free (donation-ware) and can achieve things for you like telling Google and Bing about any new pages you create, create tags for Facebook's crawler to understand (OpenGraph), automatically generate an XML sitemap, and edit the robots.txt file.



## 9. Blog reading, writing, and discussion settings

WordPress is fundamentally a blogging tool. There are many useful settings you can play with in the Writing, Reading, and Discussions Settings, including having an email sent to you every time someone comments on your blog, and requiring that some who wants to write on your blog registers with you first. All you have to do is tick a box, and the functionality will be included!

Here for example, you can alter the way the number of lines a blog comment should take up:



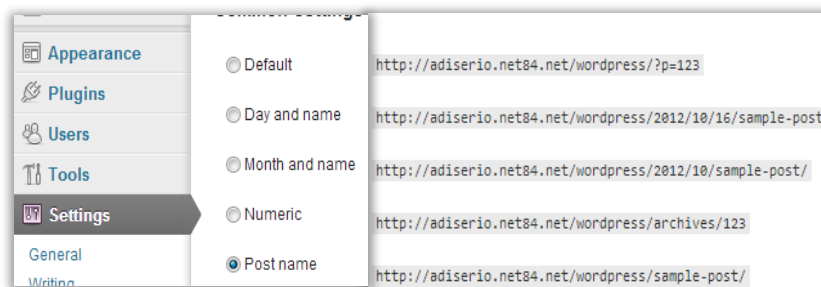
## 10. Changing page URLs

We have already discussed that when you create a new page, such as "Sponsors", you aren't creating an HTML or even PHP page named "Sponsors". You are creating a post. Each post has an id which is a number. That id is used by default as the URL for the page, and looks something like this:

[www.mywordpress.com/?p=6](http://www.mywordpress.com/?p=6)

This is obviously not very descriptive of your page and definitely not what you'd want your customers to see. You can instruct WordPress to use the post name for the page instead, by going to the Permalinks settings.

Doing this doesn't actually change any filenames. It makes entries into the **.htaccess** file (which you may have seen before in your 000Webhost file manager) which creates links to the page/post.



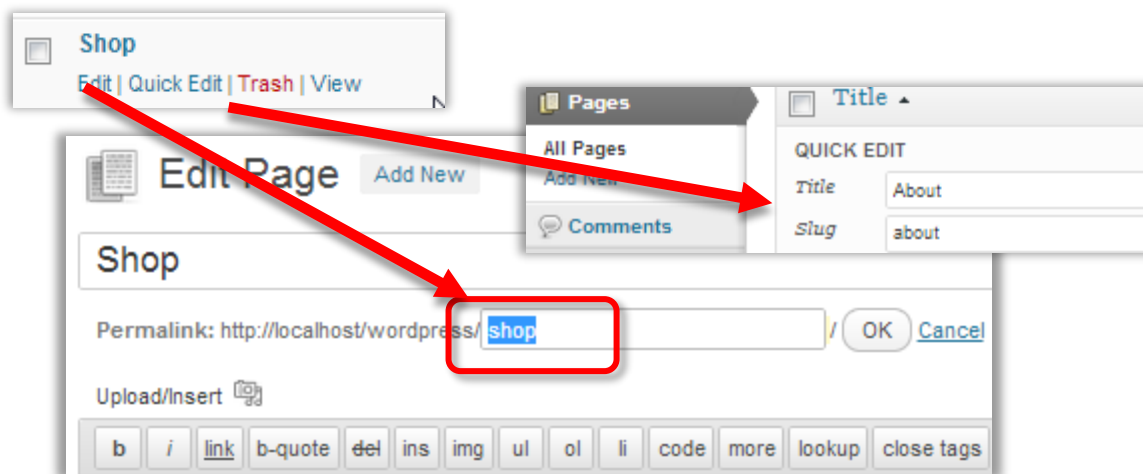
Importantly permalinks can also benefit your search engine optimization since the URL will now contain important keywords that help SE Spiders understand and categorise your site. Remember that the <title> is very important to Google, Bing, and the other search engines.

For a full explanation on permalinks and issues around the .htaccess file (and permissions for that file on GoDaddy and other hosts), visit the WordPress codex site at [http://codex.wordpress.org/Using\\_Permalinks](http://codex.wordpress.org/Using_Permalinks)

It would be better to make these changes while your page is being developed rather than after your page has been live for a while. If you wait, your wonderfully famous site's pages would already have been bookmarked by countless people, and you will break their links by changing the URL. (Although there is a workaround for that too, which you can read about at <http://designisphilosophy.com/24-days-of-wordpress/pretty-permalinks-and-how-to-keep-old-links-alive/>.)

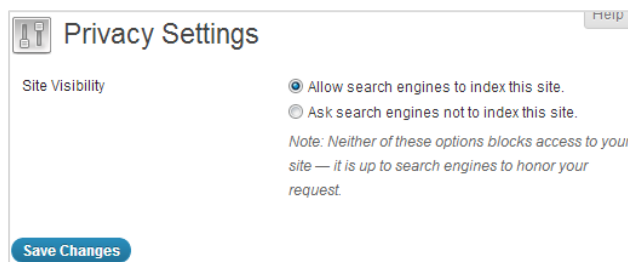


You can also change a page's "Slug". The Slug name, which defaults to the post name, can be changed to anything you like and will be used for the URL. You'll find the slug name by going to a Page's "Quick Edit" settings, as well as at the top of the edit box in the Edit page



## 11. Privacy Settings

One of the advantages of using WordPress for your site is that you end up with a site that is kind to Search Engine bots – they will be able to make sense out of your site and increase the chance that you will appear high in Search Engine results pages.



If you don't want your Webpage to appear in Google or Bing search results (which may be the case if you are still developing the site, or perhaps running a personal blog of some sort), you can do so by altering the robots.txt file that will be sitting somewhere in your WordPress folder. But instead of learning how to write those robots.txt files, you can use an SEO plugin like the one mentioned above to alter it.