

Introduction to Website Building & WordPress

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Digital Integration Teaching Initiative (DITI)
NCHCW 627: Final Year Project

Dr. Sam Kemp
Spring 2025



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Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

Workshop Agenda

- Understand best practices in website creation
- Analyze WordPress website examples
- Learn how to plan a website
- Learn how to create a website with WordPress
- For more information, see: [Introduction to Wordpress Handout](#)

Handouts and slides are available at:

<https://bit.ly/sp25-kemp-nchcw627-wordpress>



What is WordPress?

- WordPress is a professional **website-building tool** that allows you to build your own website
- It provides a free **domain name** with “wordpress” in the URL, and also has paid versions
- You can use WordPress **themes** and **widgets** to customize your website



Website Building Vocabulary

- **Pages:** The main areas of your website that your audience will be able to navigate in your site's menu. Pages are part of the **structure** of your site.
- **Posts:** Blog or news posts that show up as you publish them. Posts are part of your site's **content**, but they do not form its structure.
- **Domain:** The unique URL that leads to your website.
- **Design:** The aesthetic choices for your website.
- **Navigation:** The way a user moves through your website using menus, buttons, and links.
- **Menus:** The collection of hyperlinked pages used to navigate through a website.



Thinking Critically about Website Building



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Why are you building a website?

- A website is just like a research report or an essay—it needs to clearly communicate its message or purpose to a specific audience.
- Critical first steps in website design are to consider **who** your audience is, **what** they will need to be able to find and do on your site, and **how** they will move through the site.
- It can be tempting to add media and components to a website that don't contribute to the site's message/purpose, but resist this temptation. Going into any site-building platform with a clear idea of what your site needs is essential! Anything unnecessary is likely to be distracting.



Starting Points: Questions to Consider

- *Who* is this site for?
- *Why* would your identified audience(s) visit your site?
- *How* will they find what they need, and navigate around?
- **Accessibility:** How can you ensure everyone, including people with disabilities, can use your site effectively?



Considerations when planning your website

- Structure
 - Audience (Message/Purpose)
 - Content (Posts, Bio, Images)
 - Navigability (Headers, Pages, Menus, Hyperlinks)
 - Accessibility (Color scheme, Readability, Alt text)
- User Experience and Impact
 - Look (Font size, Typeface)
 - Media (Images, Embedded elements)
 - Other Functionalities (Widgets, Buttons, etc.)



WordPress Examples

Explore and evaluate the following faculty and institutional WordPress websites on design, navigation, accessibility, media, content, etc.

Some examples of personal professional websites:

- [Dr. Julia Flanders' website](#): professor
- [Bernard Cornwell's website](#): author
- [Antony Beever](#): author and historian

Navigation menu: How clear is it? How easy is it to use on each page?

Design choices and accessibility: Is the site easy to read and look at?

Audience and user experience: How well-tailored is the site to meet the needs of its audience?



Planning a Website



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Wireframing: Planning your Site

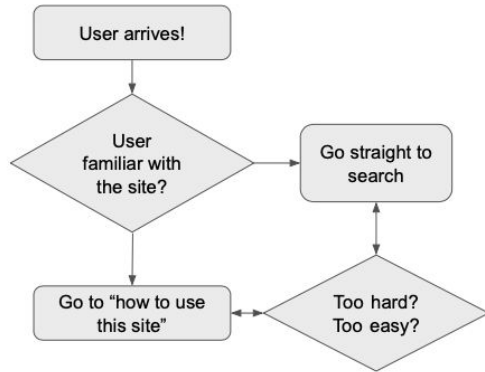
- Some questions to consider as you plan your site are:
 - What is the **purpose** of this site?
 - Who is my **audience**?
 - What **site features** will best support my goals and audience?
 - How can I make my site **easy to use**?
 - How many pages do I need?
 - What content will you include on each page? Where on the page?
 - How do pages relate to each other?
 - What different pathways can users take among the pages?
 - What is most important for your users?



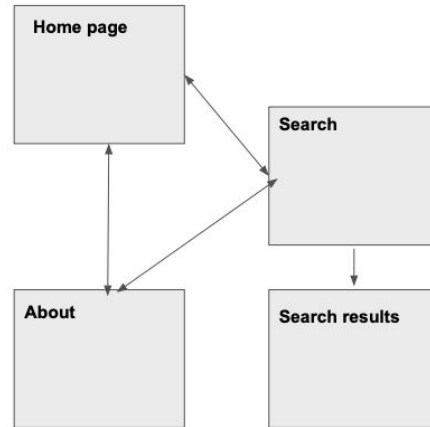
Wireframing

One way to plan a website is to wireframe. Wireframes are rough outlines or sketches for the design and placement of a website's content. They help us imagine how we envision users interacting with our site.

Flowchart



Wireframe



This is an example of a wireframe. (Sourced from [Professor Julia Flanders](#), Northeastern University; slidedeck: "Wireframing and Project Design Processes")



Wireframing tools

These are some Wireframing tools/frameworks that help brainstorm and visualize a website

- MockFlow: <https://www.mockflow.com/>
- Wireframe CC: <https://wireframe.cc/>
- Digital Humanities Toolkit Wireframing guide: <https://dh.sites.gettysburg.edu/toolkit/design/wireframing/>



Website Hosting



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Website Hosting

- WordPress provides free domain names, but they must include “.wordpress.com” at the end of the URL.
- Hosting your own website, through a service like [Reclaim Hosting](#), allows you to have more control over the URL, but it is paid.
- Hosting gives you more control over the capabilities and appearance of your site, but it costs money.



Website Hosting with Reclaim

Reclaim Hosting: is a hosting service designed specifically for educational purposes (that is, for students and teachers to host their own sites). Reclaim tends to be less expensive than other services.

- Reclaim Hosting has very communicative customer support, which can be helpful if issues come up with your site.
- In addition to WordPress, Reclaim also supports many other applications, including Omeka, Scalar, Drupal, phpBB, and Canvas.



Hosting Options

The slides that follow will show how to host a site via WordPress, but once the site is set up, the options will look similar whether you host via WordPress, Reclaim, or some other platform. The main differences are:

- The initial setup for Reclaim works differently. You can see this [tutorial on installing WordPress via Reclaim](#) for more on the setup.
- There are more options in a site you host yourself, compared to the free version hosted by WordPress.



WordPress: Getting Started



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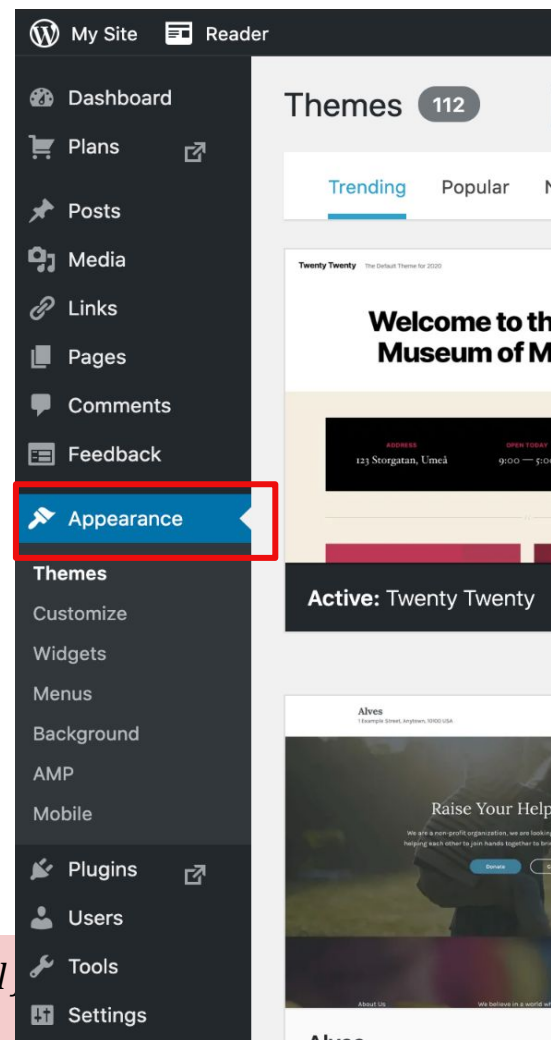
Get Started

- Go to <https://wordpress.com/> and click “**Get Started**” in the upper right corner
- Fill out the “**Create a Site**” information
- Choose a **domain name**. WordPress provides a free domain with “.wordpress.com” at the end of the URL.
- Make sure to select the free version of **hosting** (on wordpress.com)
- After adding domain name, WordPress will ask you to “**choose a theme**” or “**design your own**” (which allows you to create your site from scratch).



Choose a Theme

- **Themes** control your WordPress site's appearance and functionality.
- Depending on the content of your website, each theme will offer strengths and weaknesses. You can try out different options and see what will work for your website (you can change your mind later too, but know that some site contents might break when you change themes).
- To change the theme on your site, go to the left-hand column of your dashboard, scroll to **"Appearance"** and then click **"Themes"**.



Logging into WordPress

For existing websites, the first step to working in WordPress is logging in, either in the administrator account or your individual user account.

To log in to any WordPress site, add this to the site's URL:

[SITE URL]/wp-admin

NOTE: to log in to a WordPress site, you must be an existing user!

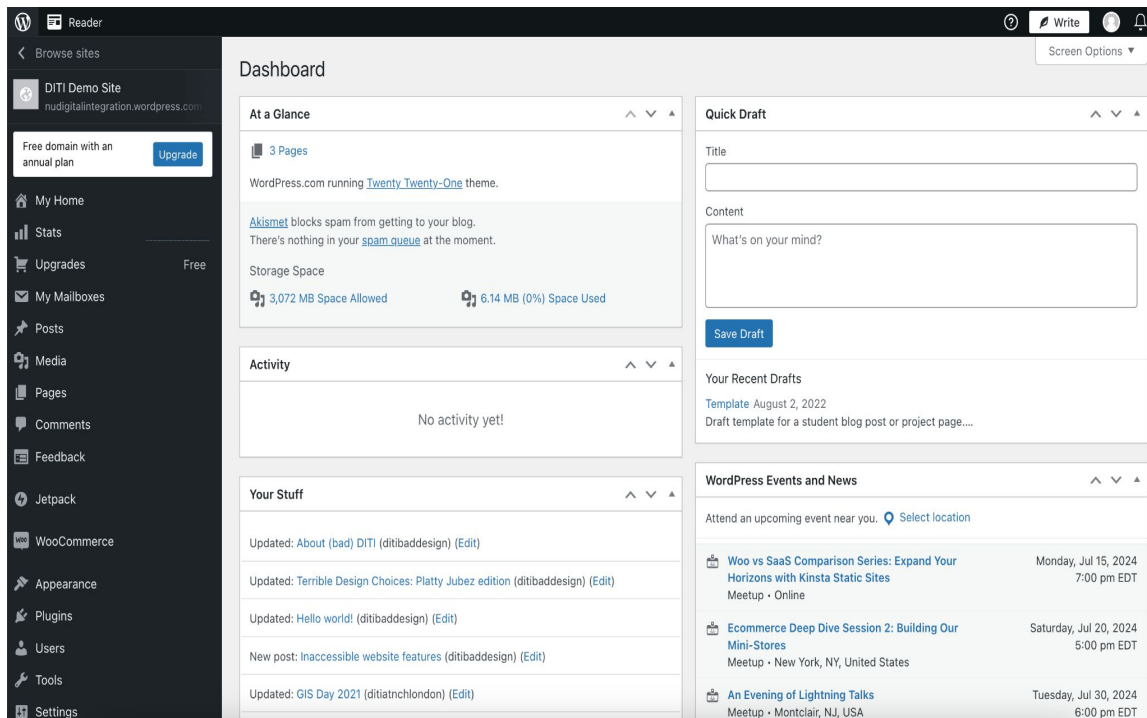


WordPress Dashboard

Once you have logged into WordPress, you are brought to the WordPress Dashboard.

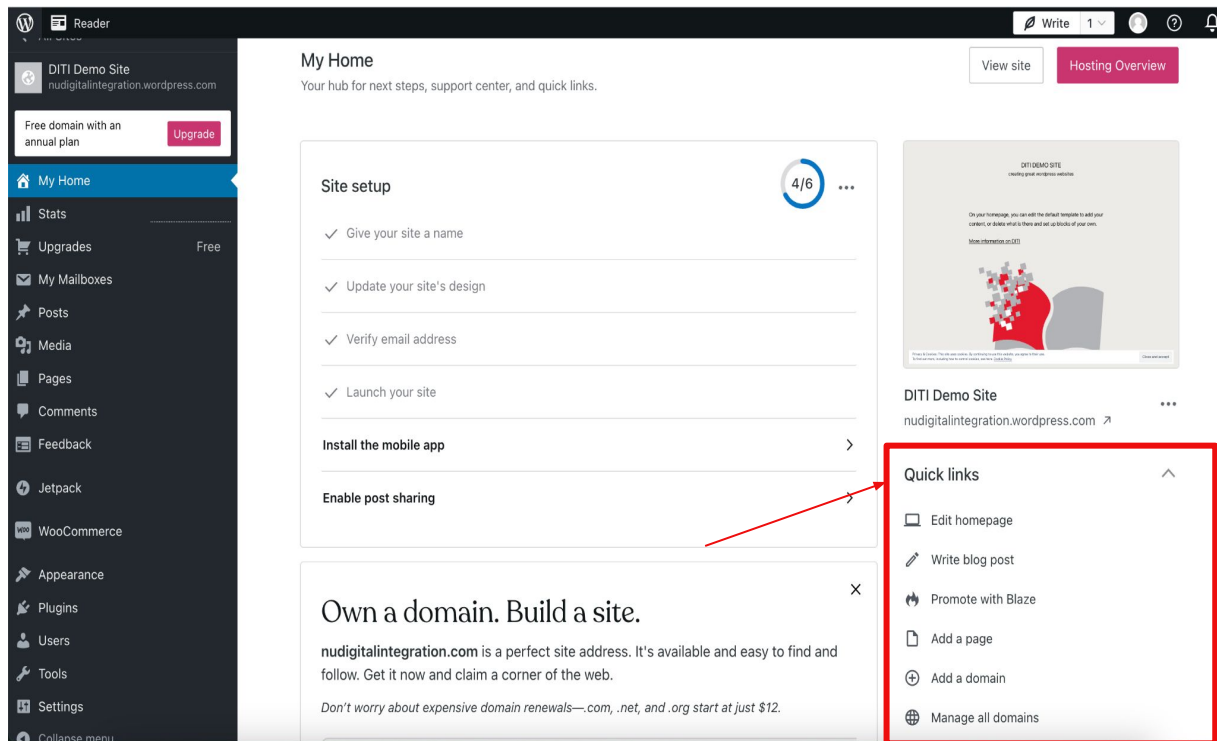
This is the **side menu** in the dashboard, the main way to navigate.

It includes links to all **pages** and **posts**, and information about **users** (where you can update your user profile if needed).



Your Homepage

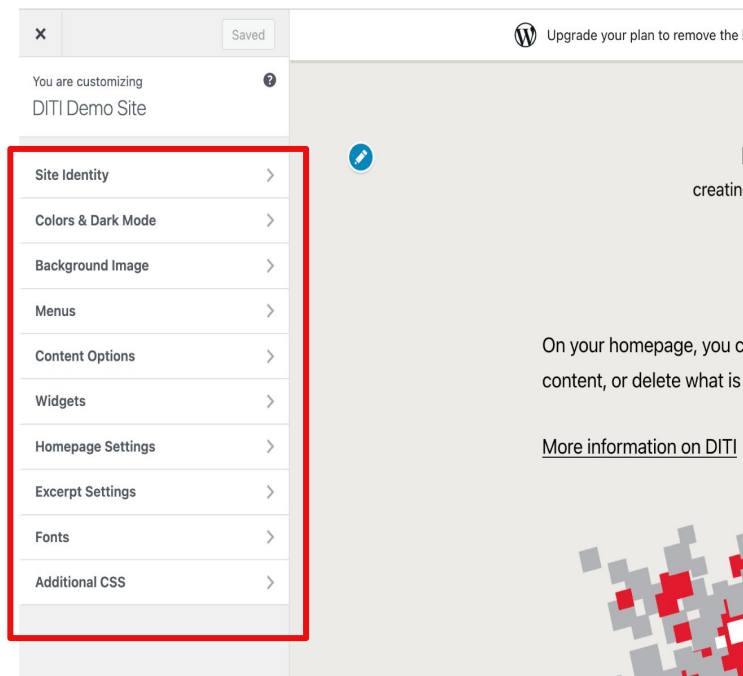
“My Home” page has navigation links on the left, and a useful “Quick links” section on the right with options for editing your homepage, adding a new page, editing your menus, and more.



Customize your Theme

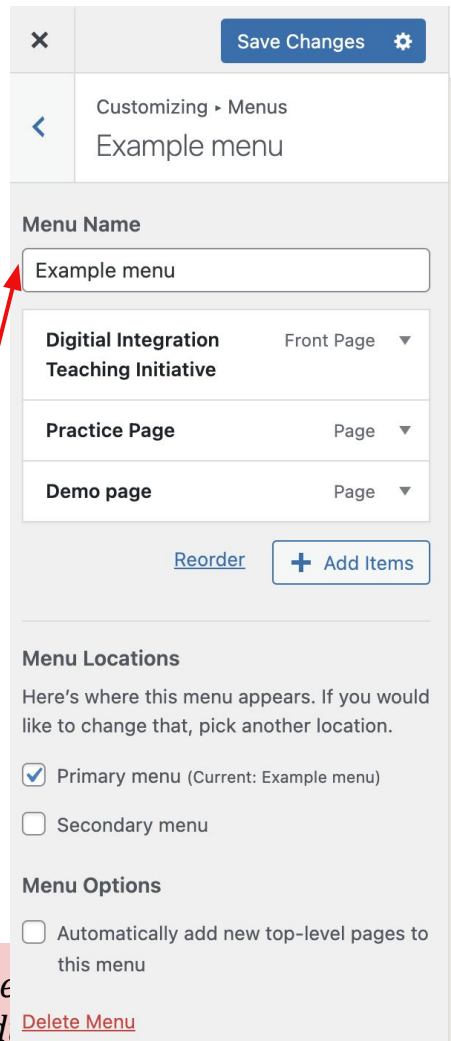
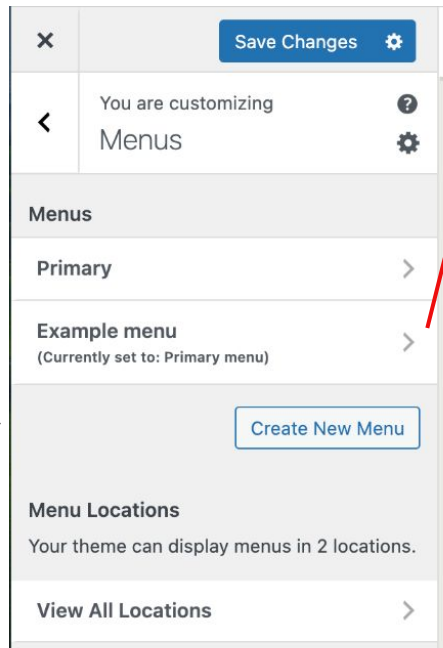
- From the Customizer, you can change your Site Title and Tagline, add Widgets to a Sidebar or Footer, create Menus, change your Homepage Settings, and more.
- In the left-hand column of your homepage/dashboard, scroll to “Appearance” and then click the “Customize”
- More Info:

<https://wordpress.com/support/customizer/>



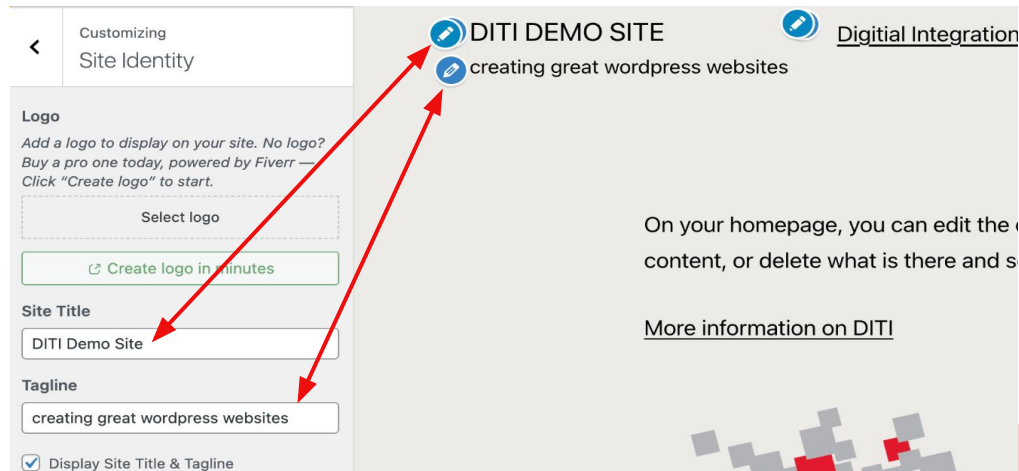
Customize Site Menu

- In the “Customize” page left-hand column, go to “Menus,” which will allow you to add pages, posts, and other content to the site’s menus
 - You can create subsections in the menu by sliding one page under another “parent” page.



Customize Header

- Your website, like all websites, should have a clear identity. The **header** (“site title”) and **subheader** (“tagline”) can help with this. The header is the phrase/name that appears at the top of each page (the subheader, if applicable in your theme, appears below)
- You can change your header in “**Site Identity**” under the “**Customizing**” menu.



WordPress: Pages and Posts



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Website Content: Pages vs. Posts

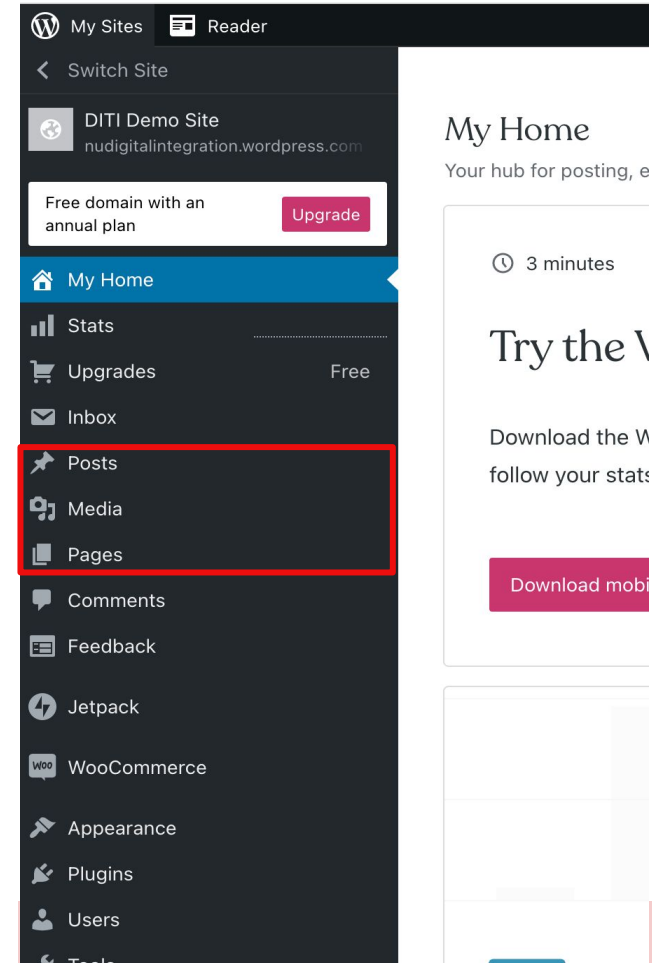
Pages are the static infrastructure of your website, and they appear across your header menu. Pages are content with a fixed location on the site.

Posts are blog or news posts that show up as you publish them, usually in a feed that appears on a page.



Manage Pages and Posts

- Go to the left-hand column of your dashboard.
- Click the “**Pages**” button or the “**Posts**” button.
- You will navigate through your pages and posts using this side menu.

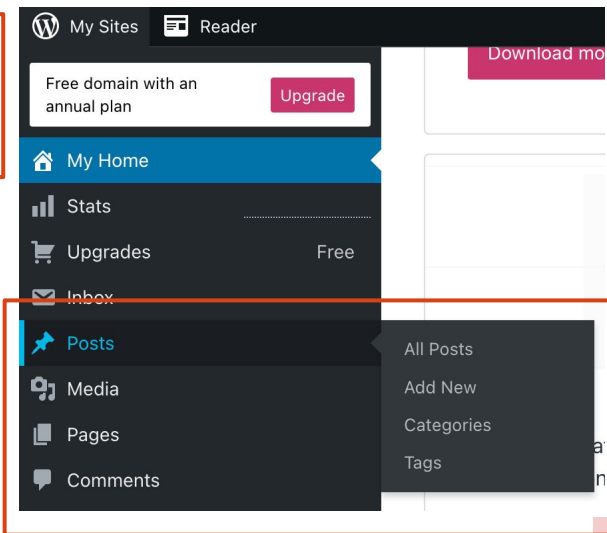
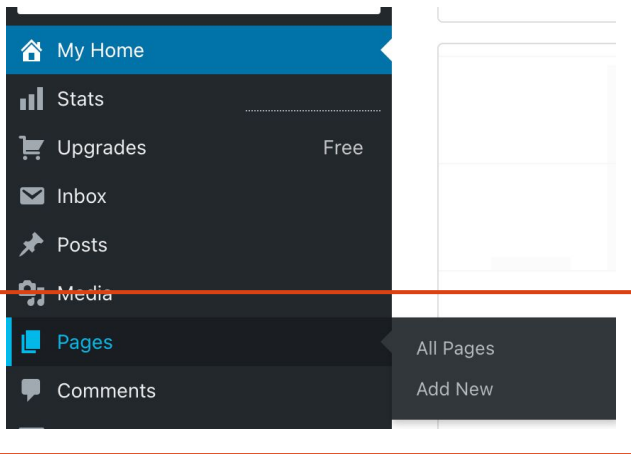


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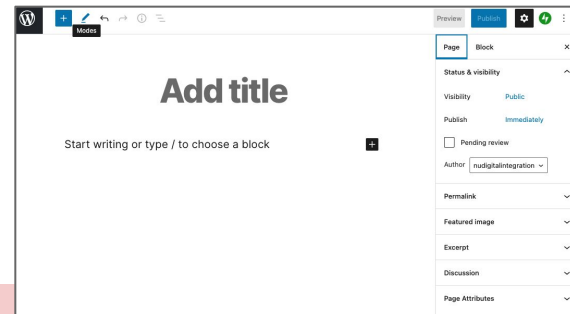
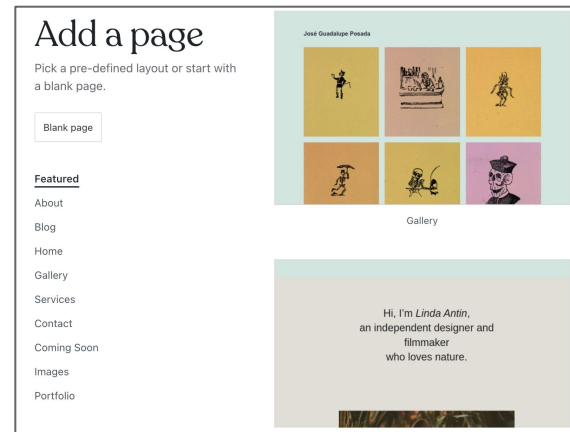
Create a New Page (or Post)

To create a new page, go to “**Pages**” in the left-hand side-menu and click the “**Add New Page**” button. The same works for **Posts**.



Visual Editor (Pages and Posts)

- Creating a new page will open up the visual editor.
- You can pick a predefined layout or start with a blank page.
- This is where you fill in your content!
- You have options to style your content (font size, styles, colors, add images, add links, bullet points, etc).
- You can also use [HTML](#), if you know that. Note that some themes have back-end HTML/CSS that may not allow you to make certain changes.



WordPress: Blocks



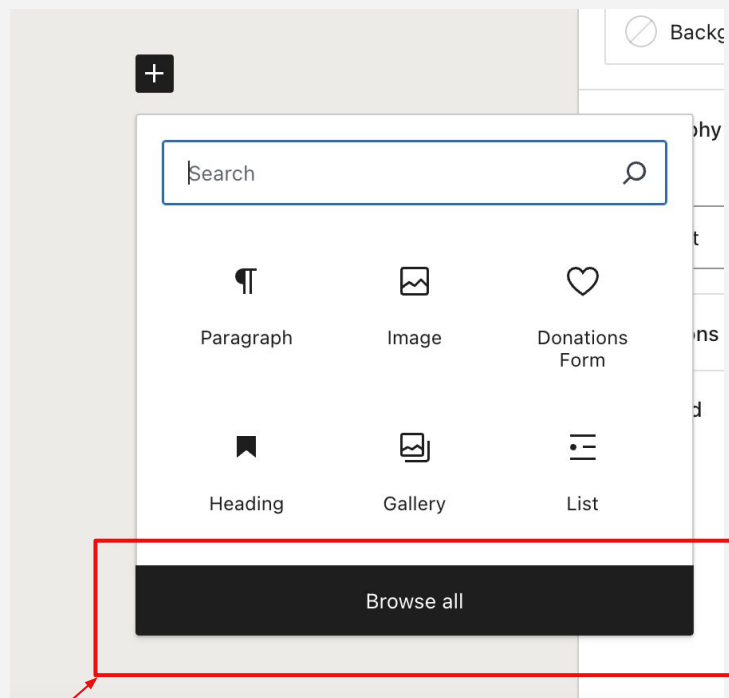
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WordPress Blocks

WordPress pages are organized into pre-formatted sections called “**blocks**.”

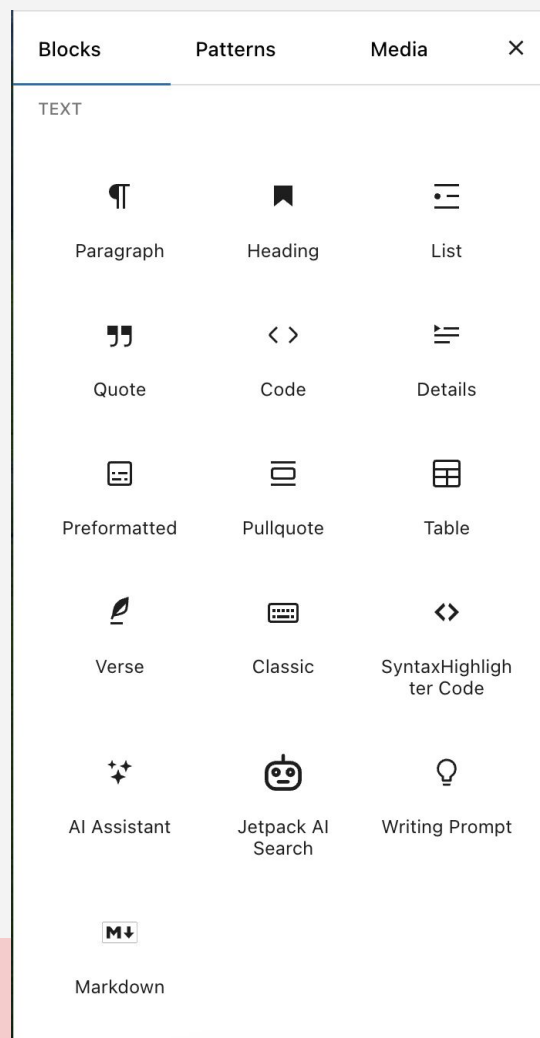
Blocks allow you to manipulate the layout of the page. The different kinds of blocks are organized into categories, including: text, media, design, widgets, theme, embeds, and “crowdsignal.” You can see all of the options by pressing “**browse all**” after selecting the “+” button to add a block



WordPress Blocks: Text

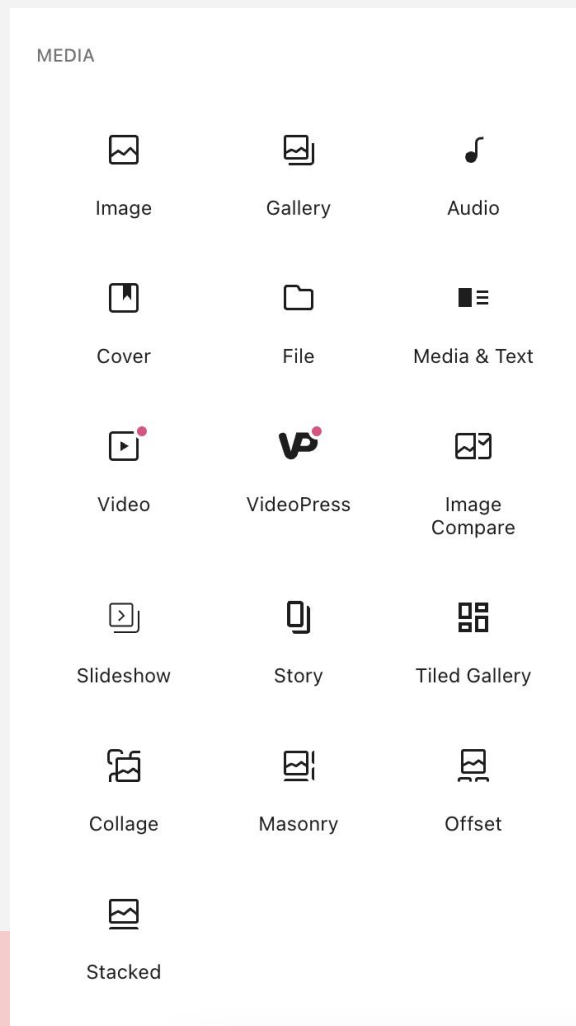
After pressing “**browse all**” you will see the many options and categories for blocks that you can add.

Text blocks let you add headings, paragraphs, and other text elements to your content.



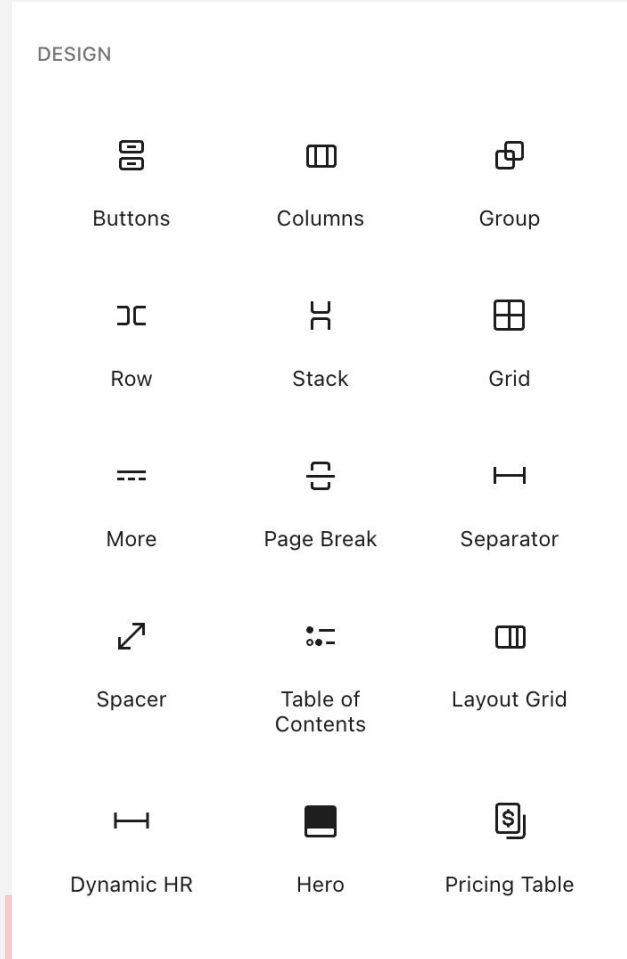
WordPress Blocks: Media

Media blocks let you upload various files to the media library and embed them in your content.



WordPress Blocks: Design

Using the WordPress block editor, it's possible to customize the content layout using design blocks. While this block type doesn't add content, it helps shape how the content will appear to site visitors.

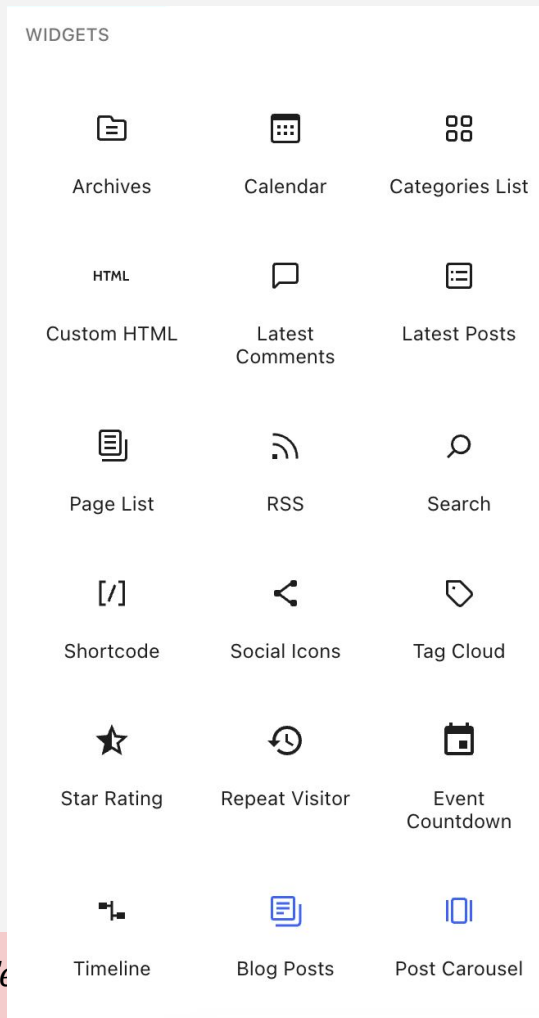


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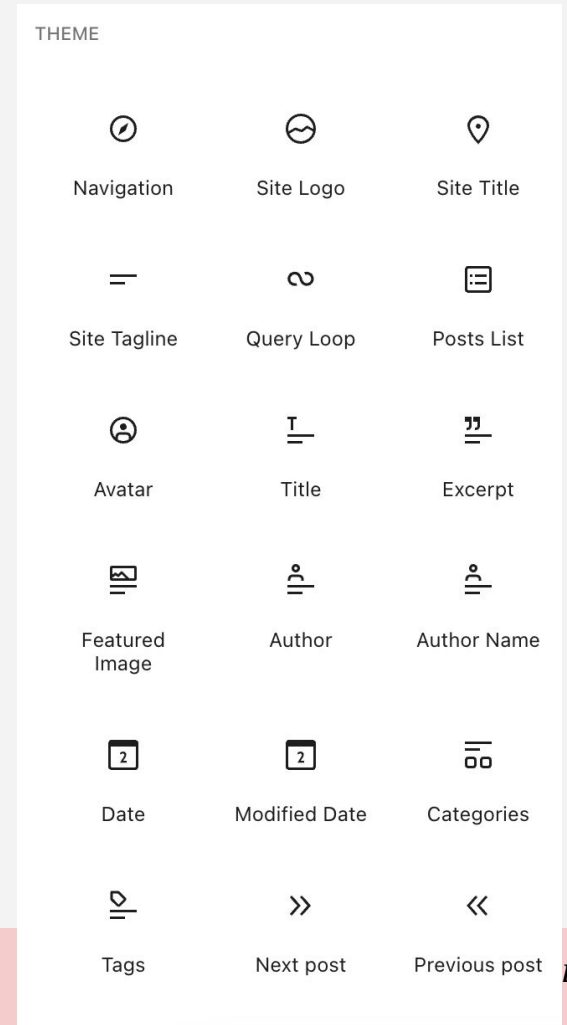
WordPress Blocks: Widgets

Widgets now come as blocks that you can insert anywhere on the page, including the footer and sidebars.



WordPress Blocks: Theme

Most theme blocks are dynamic, pulling in content information like post content, query loop, and post comments and displaying them on the site. Several of them are also essential to display the site identity, including the site logo, site title, and site tagline.



WordPress Blocks: Embeds

The new block editor lets you embed external content by copying and pasting URLs. For example, there's a dedicated block for embedding a video from YouTube.

EMBEDS



Embed



Twitter



YouTube



SoundCloud



Spotify



Flickr



Vimeo



Animoto



Cloudup



Crowdsignal



Dailymotion



Imgur



Issuu



Kickstarter



Mixcloud



Pocket Casts






Reddit



ReverbNation



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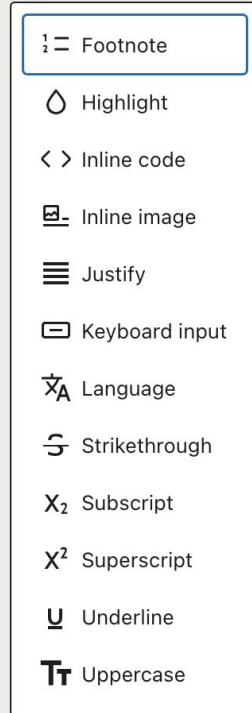
Feel   
during the presentation!

Add text

The default type of block is a **paragraph**. When you add a new paragraph, you will be taken to the editor interface, which allows you to add and edit text in a variety of ways. It looks similar to a word processor, complete with a **menu bar** allowing you to italicize, bold, or otherwise format the text.

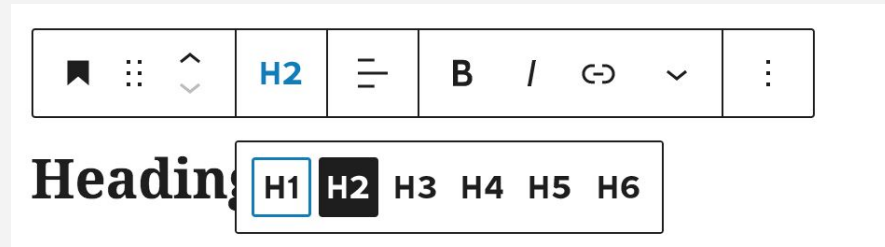


Testing 1, 2, 3

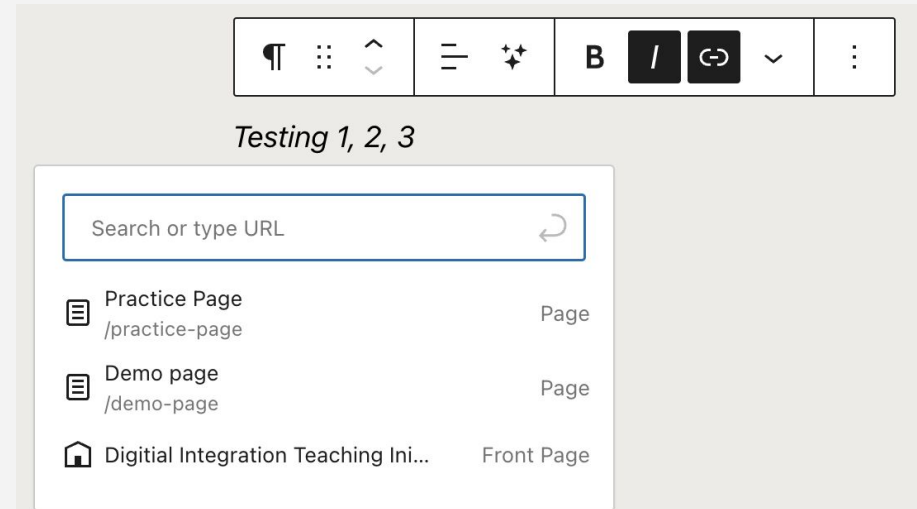


Format

Here are some examples of things that you can format with your blocks. You can choose different levels of headings, bolding text, italicizing text, hyperlinking text, etc. The formatting options available will depend on the type of block you are working on.



A screenshot of a text editor toolbar. The first row contains icons for bullet points, numbered list, decrease indent, H2 heading, center alignment, bold, italic, link, unlink, and a vertical ellipsis. Below this, the word "Heading" is partially visible. A dropdown menu is open, showing options H1, H2 (which is highlighted with a black background), H3, H4, H5, and H6.

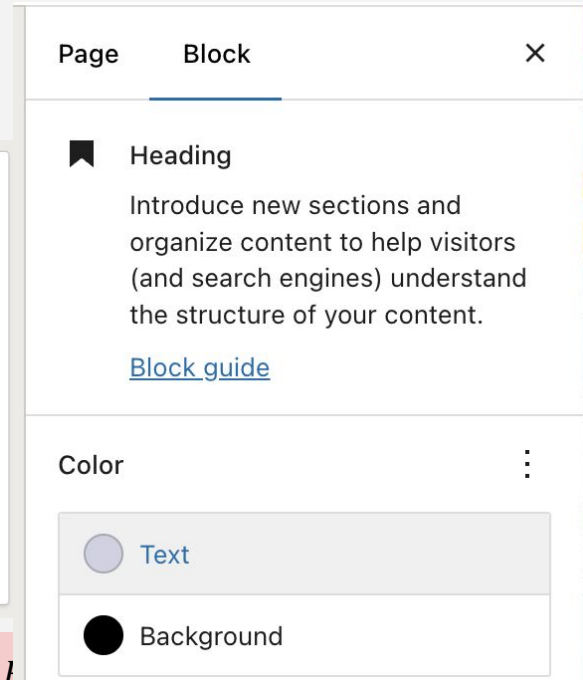
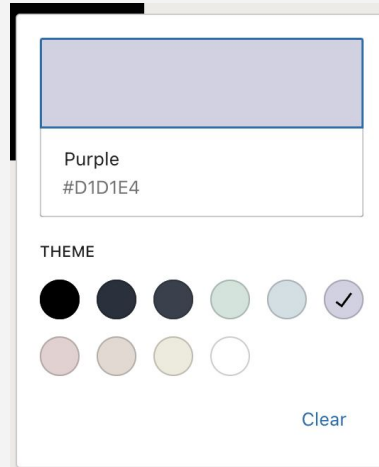
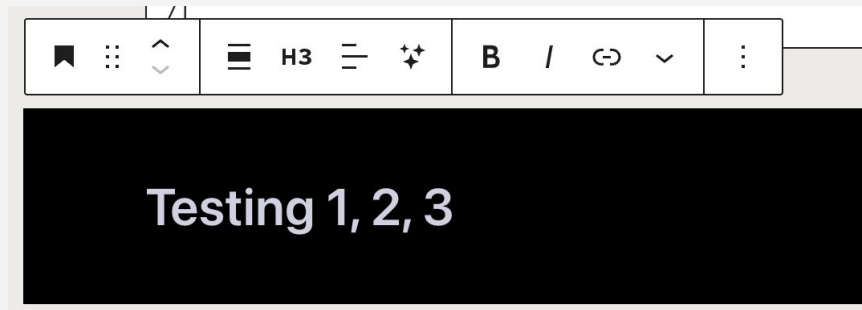


A screenshot of a text editor toolbar. The first row contains icons for text color, background color, decrease indent, center alignment, bulleted list, bold, italic, link, unlink, and a vertical ellipsis. Below the toolbar, the text "Testing 1, 2, 3" is displayed. A dropdown menu is open, showing a search bar "Search or type URL" with a refresh icon. Below the search bar are three items: "Practice Page" with a document icon and "/practice-page" (labeled "Page"), "Demo page" with a document icon and "/demo-page" (labeled "Page"), and "Digital Integration Teaching Ini..." with a house icon and "Front Page".



Format (Cont.)

You can also change the color of your text by navigating to the right hand “**block**” menu. You can select either “text” or “background” under the “Color” subheading within this menu to adjust color as you like.



Add Links

To add links to your content:

1. Select the text you wish to add a link to.
2. Click the “**Insert link**” button in the menu.
3. Add the URL in the link window.

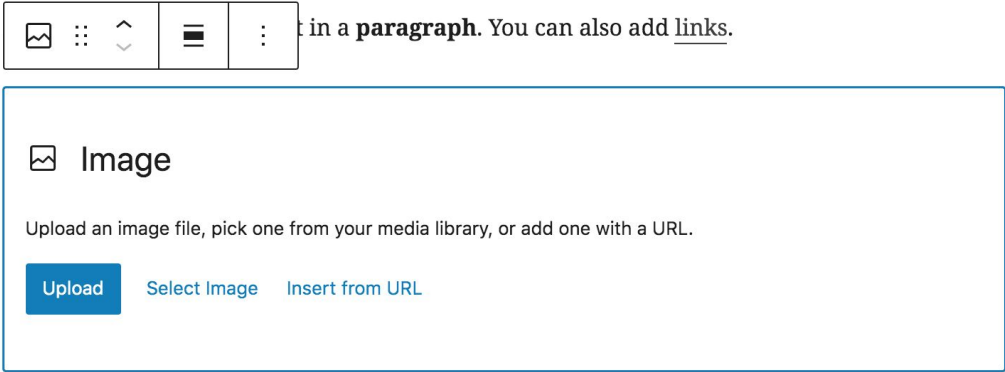


Here you can add some text in a **paragraph**. You can also add links.


A screenshot of a link insertion dialog box. It features a text input field with the placeholder text 'Search or type url' and a search icon. Below the input field is a toggle switch labeled 'Open in new tab'. A red arrow points from the text area above to the input field.

Add Images

If you want to add images to a page or post, you can do so by adding a new block of the type “**Image**.” Then, you can either upload a new image or select one from the library of media files already uploaded to the site. Once you have added images, you can then edit and format them.



in a **paragraph**. You can also add links.

 Image

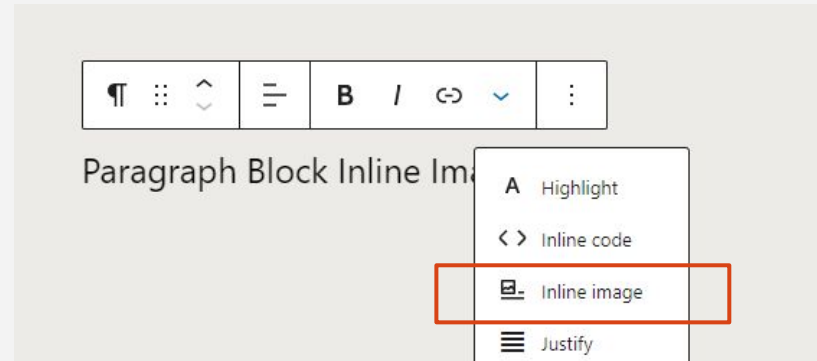
Upload an image file, pick one from your media library, or add one with a URL.

[Upload](#) [Select Image](#) [Insert from URL](#)



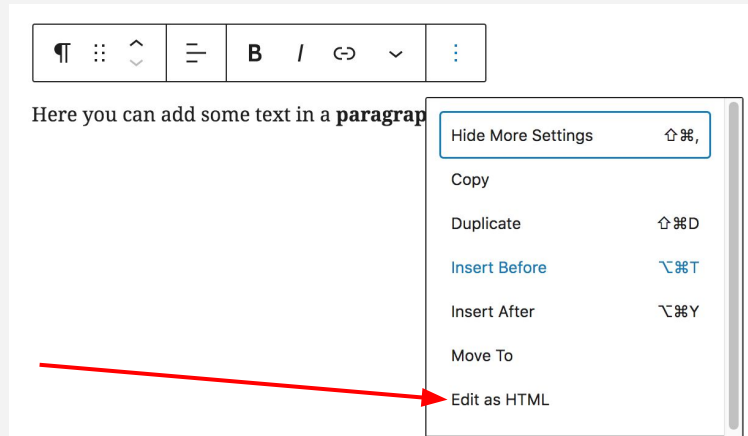
Add Inline Images to Paragraphs

If you want to add images in your paragraph block, you can do so by adding a new block of the type “**Paragraph.**” Then, you can click the down arrow on the block toolbar and select “Inline Image.” You can either upload a new image or select one from the library of media files already uploaded to the site. Once you have added images, you can then edit and format them.



HTML Editor

When you are editing blocks, you can toggle between the **Visual** and **HTML editors** with the “Edit as HTML” button under the three dots for “more options.” The HTML editor is the “back end” version of the website. To switch back, go to the same menu and pick “edit visually.”



Here is the same paragraph in HTML:

```
<p>Here you can add some text in a <strong>paragraph</strong>. You can also  
add <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/URL">links</a>.</p>
```



WordPress: Saving and Publishing



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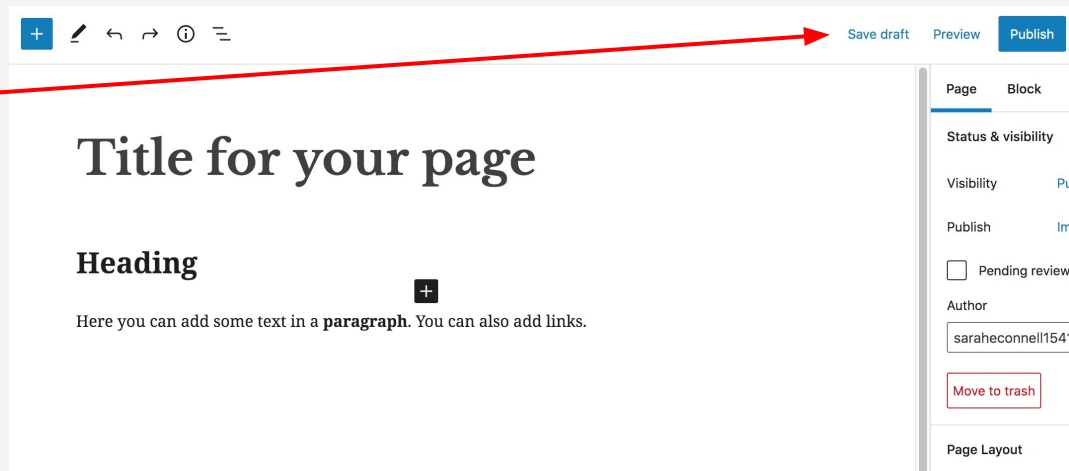
Feel free to ask questions at any point during the presentation!

Save Draft

When you are working, it is very important to save your changes.

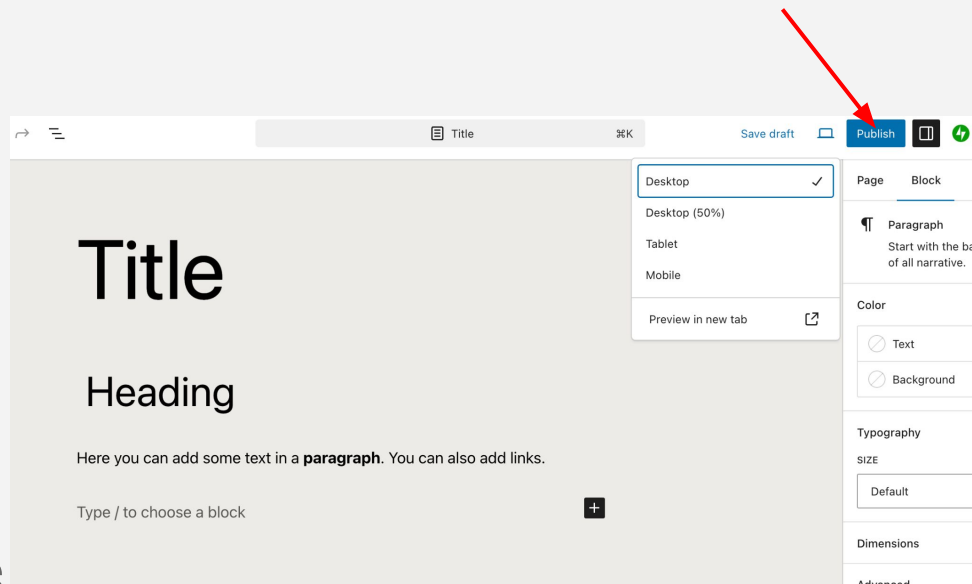
To save your draft, click the “**Save Draft**” button on the right-hand side of the screen.

Saving your page as a draft does not mean that it is visible on the website. Only publishing the page will make it available online.



Preview and publish

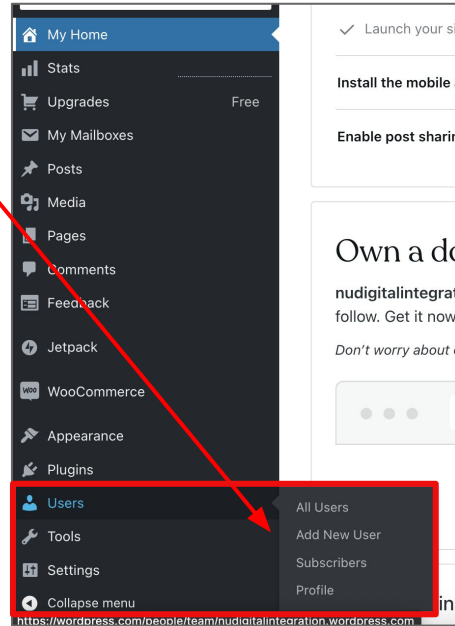
As you are editing your page, it is useful to see how your changes will look on the website itself. You can preview any changes you make with the “**Preview in new tab**” option under the desktop icon on the right-hand side. This will open a new tab in your web browser, showing the page. When you are ready to publish, hit the “**Publish**” button.



Adding New Users

To add new users, select the “**Add New User**” menu option under the “**User**” section.

This will bring up a prompt where you can add people by email and assign each a particular role.

A screenshot of the 'Add team members to DITI Demo Site' form. The form has a title bar with a 'Back' button and the title. Below the title bar, there is a 'Role' dropdown menu set to 'Author'. Underneath, there is a text input field for 'Email or Username' with the value 'sibling@example.com'. Below that, there are two more text input fields with the values 'parents@example.com' and 'friend@example.com'. To the right of these fields, there is a callout box that says 'Use this checkbox to flag users who are not a part of your organization.' Below the input fields, there is a checkbox labeled 'This user is a contractor, freelancer, consultant, or agency.' with an information icon. At the bottom of the form, there is a blue button labeled 'Send invitation'.

User Permissions & Roles

WordPress has specific “roles” that the administrators or super administrators assign to users, each with specific permissions and editing capacities.

Super Admin – access the site network administration features and all other features.

Administrator (slug: ‘administrator’) – access all the administration features within a single site.

Editor (slug: ‘editor’) – publish and manage posts including the posts of other users.

Author (slug: ‘author’) – publish and manage their own posts.

Contributor (slug: ‘contributor’) – write and manage their own posts but cannot publish them.

Subscriber (slug: ‘subscriber’) – only manage their profile.



Useful WordPress Documentation

Here are some helpful pages in the WordPress Support pages:

- [Getting Started with WordPress](#)
- [WordPress Glossary](#)
- [WordPress.com Support](#)
- [Common WordPress Errors \(troubleshooting\)](#)
- [Backing up WordPress](#)



Activity: Your Turn to Explore WordPress



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Activity: Build a Website!

- Login and create a profile for yourself on <https://wordpress.com/>
- Experiment with picking a theme, adding widgets, adding pages/posts, text formatting, adding and moving blocks around, and uploading images.
- Share screen and your work [if time permits]



Website Development Best Practices



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Presentation and Design

- Always remember your audience and think about how you want to represent your identity and your work to that audience.
- Use the “Preview” button to see how your site will appear to your audience.
- **More isn't necessarily better.** You want your website to be easy to navigate, informative, and appealing.
- Pick a theme/format that is **compatible with mobile phones**.
- Design choices should be based on the **content** you are communicating.
- For maximum readability, **use simple fonts and a high color contrast** between text and background color. This is particularly important for

accessibility.

Good

Good

Not so good

Not so good



Accessibility

- Some themes are accessibility-ready
 - Some themes support screen readers and keyboard navigation
- [Use accessibility references](#) to ensure your site has sufficient color contrast
 - Use solid and consistent background colors
- Select fonts that are responsive and can resize automatically for different windows
- Make your page layouts consistent and predictable
 - Keep images and text blocks in similar spots page to page
- Another useful resource: “[Five Steps toward Making your WordPress Site Accessible](#)”



Accessibility Tips: Links and Media

- **Links**

- Use descriptive links ("[the NULab homepage](#)" and not "[here](#)")
- Use bolding or underlining, not just color, to make links visually distinct.

- **Images and multimedia content**

- Include captions and alt text for any images that are not purely decorative
- Include captions and, if possible, transcripts for multimedia content
- Avoid putting text over images; this is usually difficult to read



Accessibility Tips: Interactive Content

- **Interactive site contents**
 - Make sure that all interactive site contents are visually distinct; for example, checkboxes or input boxes should be large and visible
 - Think about how things like mouseovers will behave for those who need to zoom in closely



Accessibility and Markup Languages

- Use appropriate heading levels for the contents in your site; that is, don't use a first-level heading for a third-level section
- If you're editing HTML directly, use the appropriate elements; e.g., don't stick a non-table thing in a `<table>` just to get the formatting to look right
- If you're comfortable working with markup, use the semantic `` tag when, by italicizing text, you mean to emphasize its content (e.g. "I'm going to get those books *right now*"). Use the `` tag when, by bolding text, you mean convey the strength of the content's importance (e.g. "**Important:**").
- The semantic tags can be interpreted by screen readers and used to put audible stress on parts of your content.



How to assess accessibility:

- **Accessibility Checker** (<https://www.accessibilitychecker.org/>): provides a list of specific problems and information on how to fix them
- **WAVE Web Accessibility Evaluation Tool** (<https://wave.webaim.org/>): shows the structure of the web page, with accessibility features and issues flagged
- **Also of interest: Color Contrast Checker** (<https://contrastchecker.online>): lets you enter specific text and background colors and check for readability
- **Natural Reader** (<https://www.naturalreaders.com/online/>) lets you test your site with screen reader technology



Accessibility: Standards & Guidelines

- **WCAG: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines**
 - International recommendations for making web content accessible to people with disabilities
 - All web content should be **perceivable, operable, understandable, and robust**
- **ARIA: Accessible Rich Internet Applications**
 - A technical specification for a specific way to make web pages and web-based applications accessible to assistive technologies
 - For instance, through specific additions to web data structures that communicate with assistive devices



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<https://bit.ly/diti-fair-use>



Resources to Learn More

[Accessibility in Digital Content Handout](#)

[Copyright and Fair Use Handout](#)

[Data Privacy Handout](#)

[WordPress Handout](#)

[HTML Handout](#)



Thank you!

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A special thanks to Professor Julia Flanders for the wireframe examples used in this presentation.

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