

# Introduction to Website Building & WordPress

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Dr. Sam Kemp  
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# Workshop Agenda

- Learn how to create a website with WordPress
- Understand best practices in website creation
- Analyze WordPress website examples
- Learn how to wireframe (plan) a website

Handouts and slides are available at:

[UPDATE GITHUB LINK WHEN FINISHED]



# Today's Activity: Planning a Website

- Your goal is to create your own website wireframe and prepare for building your website
- Use this workshop to start planning, wireframing, and building a website on WordPress
- This wireframe will serve as a roadmap and help as you make your WordPress website for this class. Wireframing will remain a useful skill for making professional websites or publishing other public-facing materials in the future



# 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:** These are the main areas of your website that your audience will be able to navigate in your site's menu
- **Posts:** These are blog or news posts that show up as you publish them.
- **Domain:** Your domain name is the unique URL that leads to your website
- **Design:** The aesthetic choices for your website, including colors, font, embedded media content, and more.
- **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. Menus are usually located at the top of a website or on the left or right side of the webpage.



# 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?





# Starting Points: Questions (cont.)

- **What is the purpose** of this site?
  - How can you communicate this clearly in the site's content and design?
- **Can *everyone* use your site effectively?** Is it accessible on mobile devices, and to people with disabilities?
- How can you make **smart design choices** to enhance the site's
  - Look
  - Navigability
  - Functionality
  - Accessibility



# Planning your website (overall considerations)

**Audience** (Message/Purpose)

**Content** (Posts, Bio, Images)

**Navigability** (Headers, Pages, Menus, Hyperlinks)

.....

**Accessibility** (Color scheme, Readability, Alt text)

**Look** (Color scheme, Font size, Typeface)

**Media** (Images, Embedded elements)

**Other Functionalities** (Widgets, Buttons, etc.)



# WordPress Examples

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

- <https://madisonwaldron.WordPress.com/>
- <https://jordanwlai.WordPress.com/>
- <https://juliaflanders.wordpress.com/>
- <http://www.cameronblevins.org/>
- <https://dsg.northeastern.edu/>



# Website Components to Analyze

- **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?
- **Widgets and buttons** - Do they make sense on the site?
- **Mobile site** - Compare the site on your phone vs. your computer
- **Communicating the purpose of the site** - Can you tell why this site was created?
- **Do all the hyperlinks actually work?** What about the buttons?

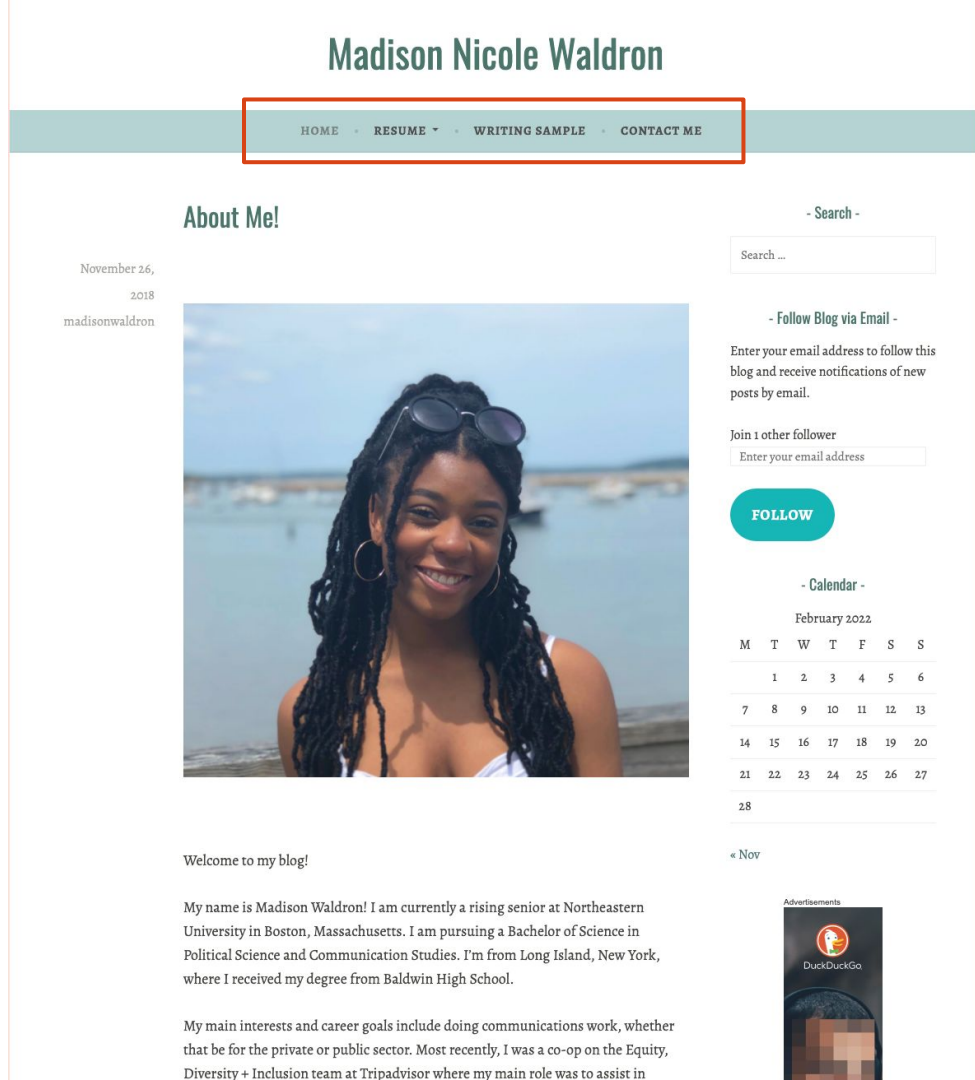


# Example: Student Website

- Objective: Student Portfolio for Professional Use
- Navigation: Pages/subpages [parent-child page]
- Media: Photo
- Design: Search, Calendar, Follow Blog Widgets



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# Activity: Wireframing



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# Wireframing: Planning your Site

- Before most people create websites, they create **wireframes**. Wireframes are rough outlines for the design and placement of a website's content. They also help us imagine how we envision users interacting with our site. Some questions to consider as you make a wireframe are:
  - What is the **purpose** of this site?
  - What are the **essential components** I need to get this point across?
  - Who is my **audience**?
  - What **site features** will best support my goals and audience?
  - How can I make my site **easy to use**?



# 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/>
- DH Wireframing:  
<https://dh.sites.gettysburg.edu/toolkit/design/wireframing/>





# Wireframe Examples:

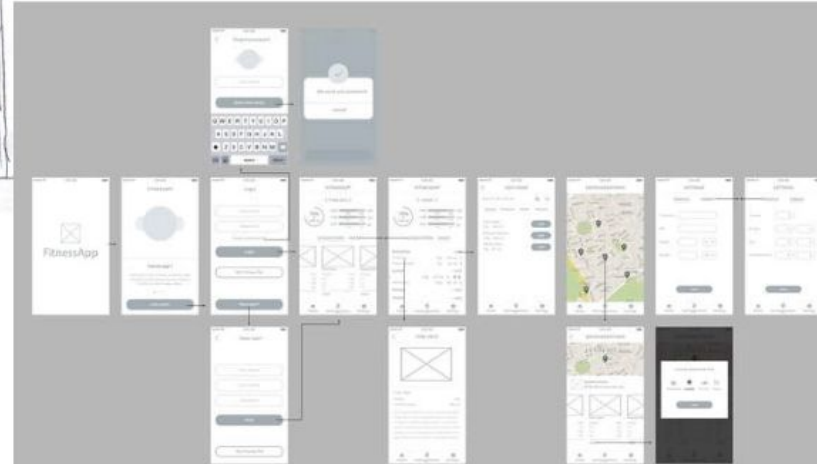
Wireframes help us plan and anticipate:

- **The Design**
  - the *aesthetic choices* (colors, font, etc.)
- **Layout of Individual Pages**
- **Site Navigation**
  - The menu organization and hierarchy
- **User experience**



Wireframe examples sourced from [Professor Julia Flanders](#), Northeastern University; slidedeck: "Wireframing and Project Design Processes"

## Both fine!



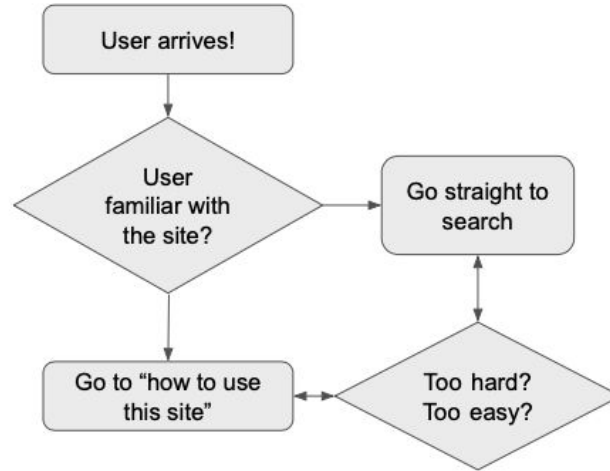
# Interpreting Wireframes

## Let's Discuss!

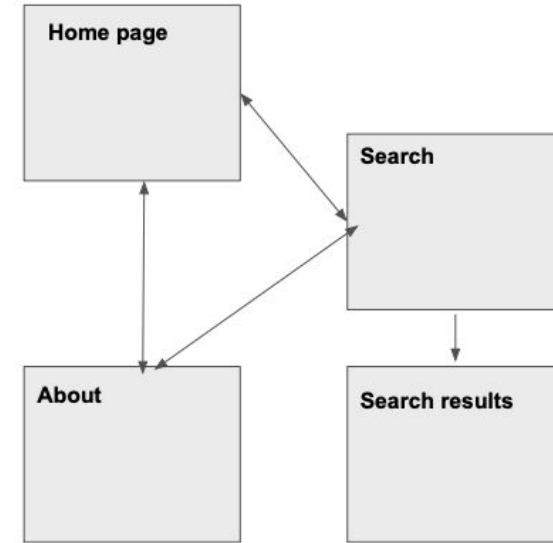
Take a look at the image.

- What's going on here?
- How do these two illustrations relate to one another?
- What do they have to do with design, usability, and user experience?

Flowchart



Wireframe



Wireframe examples sourced from [Professor Julia Flanders](#), Northeastern University; slidedeck: "Wireframing and Project Design Processes"



# Activity: Make a Wireframe!

Pull out a sheet of paper and a pencil!

Take 5 minutes to draw a quick sketch of what you think your website should look like for this class. Consider:

- How many pages do you need?
- What content will you include on each page? Where on the page?
- How do pages relate to each other?
- What is most important for your viewer (images, media, or text)?

This will affect the design of your website.



# Building Websites using WordPress



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# Website Development Best Practices

- 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*



# WordPress Demonstration



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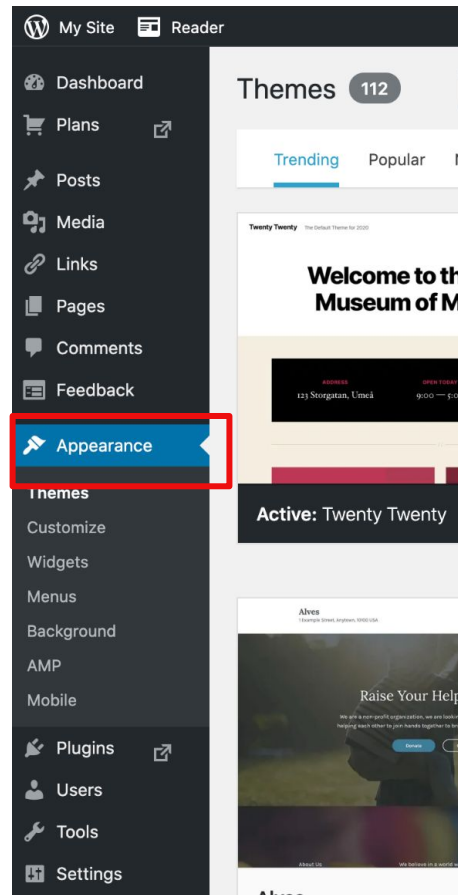
# Get Started

- 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.
- Use an email that you associate with your professional identity
- Make sure to select the free version of **hosting** (on wordpress.com)
- After adding domain name, WordPress will ask you to **select a theme**.



# Choose a Theme

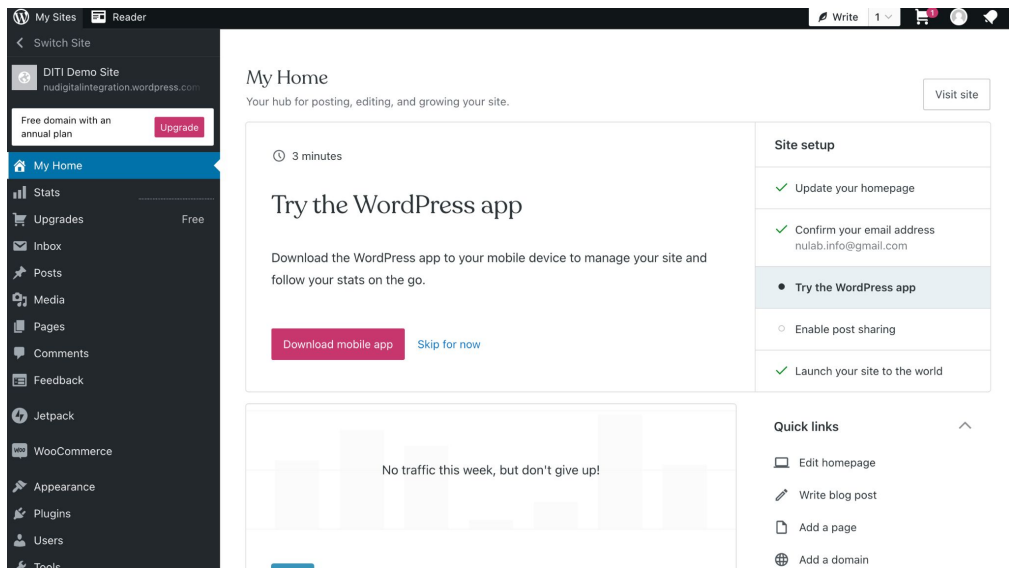
- **Themes** control your WordPress site's appearance and functionality.
- Depending on the content of your website, each theme will offer strengths and weaknesses. You can try out different options and see what will work for your website (you can change your mind later too, but know that some site contents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





# 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.



# Website Content: Pages vs. Posts

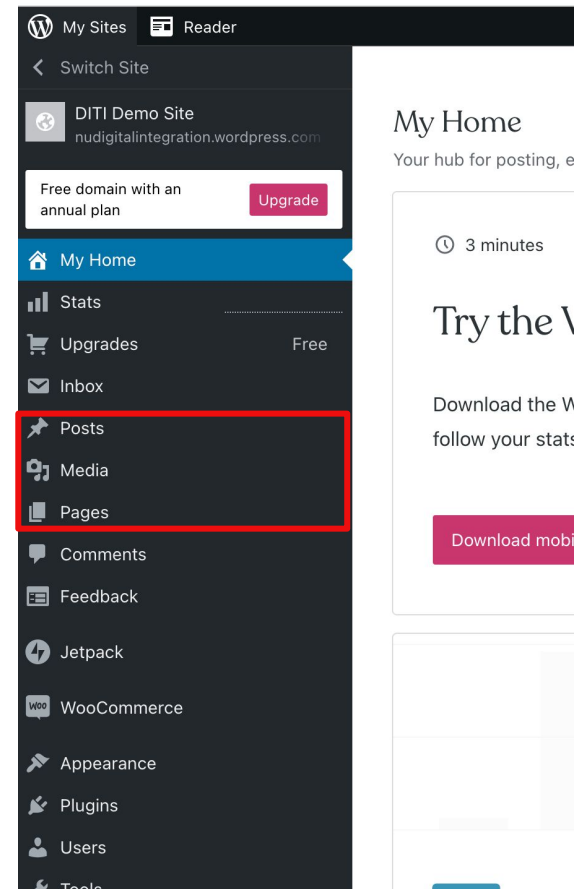
**Pages** are the static infrastructure of your website, and they appear across your header menu. Pages are content with a fixed location on the site.

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



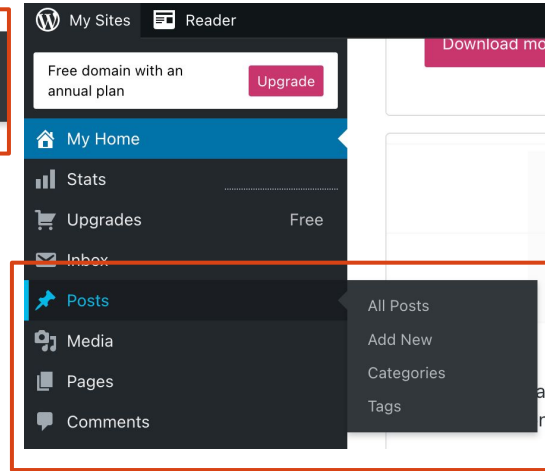
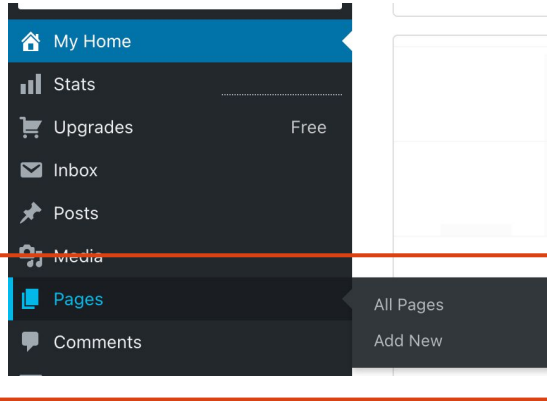
# Manage Pages and Posts

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



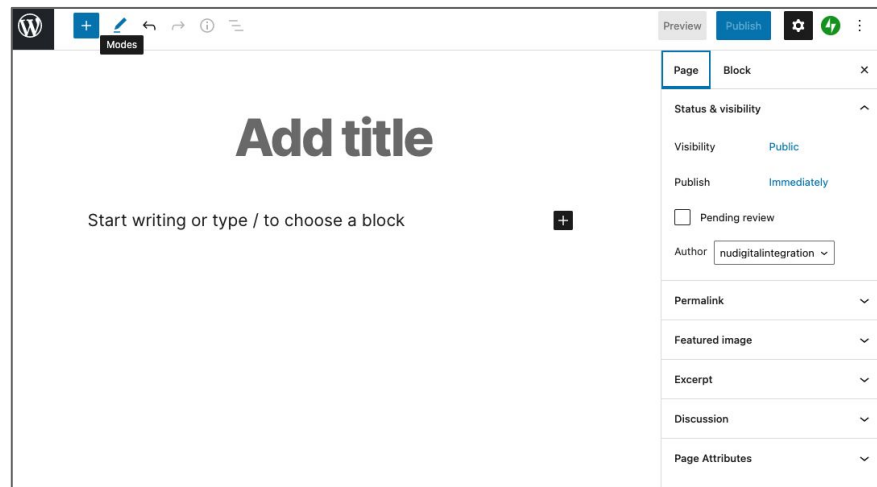
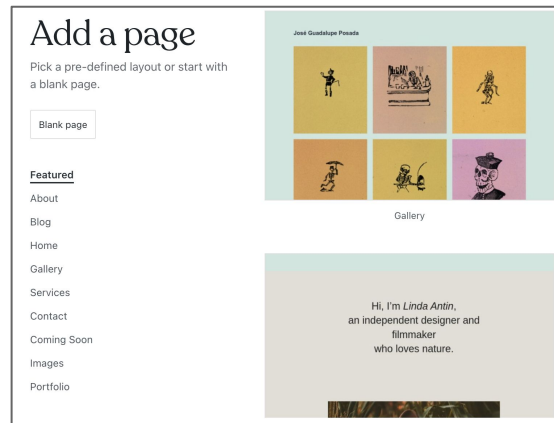
# Create a New Page (or Post)

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



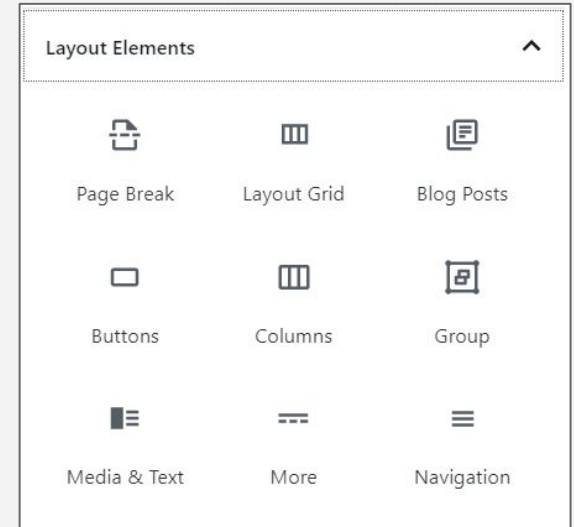
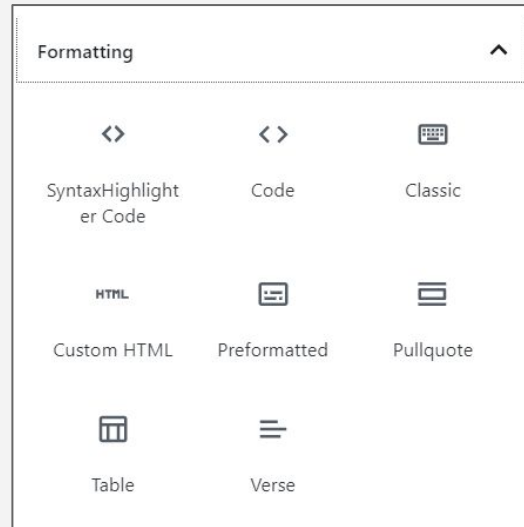
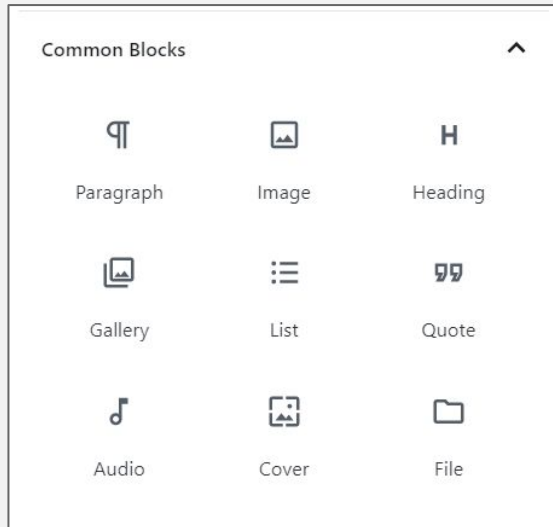
# Visual Editor (Pages and Posts)

- 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.



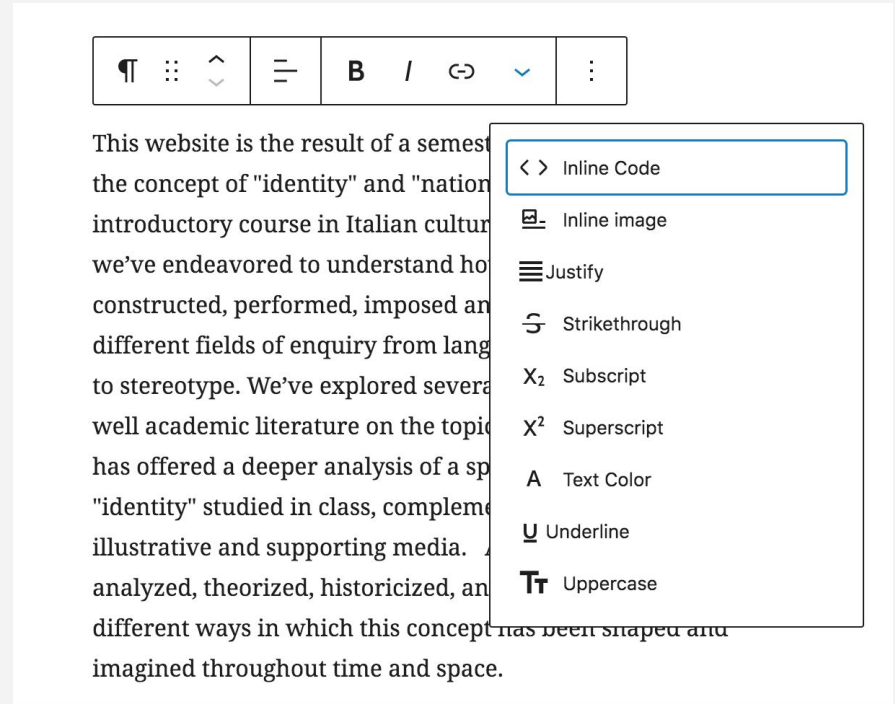
# About WordPress Blocks

WordPress pages are organized into pre-formatted sections called “**blocks.**” Blocks allow you to manipulate the layout of the page. These include:



# 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.

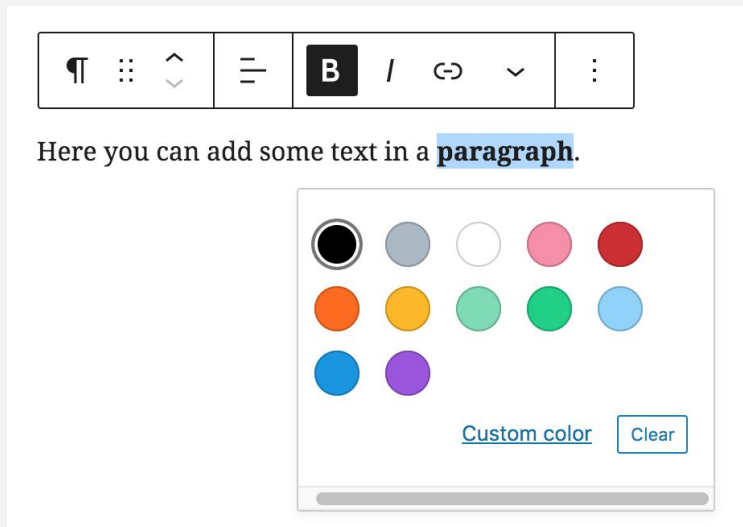


The screenshot displays a text editor interface. At the top is a menu bar with icons for paragraph alignment, bulleted list, numbered list, bold, italic, link, and a dropdown arrow. Below the menu bar, a paragraph of text is visible, starting with "This website is the result of a semester...". A dropdown menu is open, showing options: "Inline Code", "Inline image", "Justify", "Strikethrough", "Subscript", "Superscript", "Text Color", "Underline", and "Uppercase". The text in the background is partially obscured by the dropdown menu.

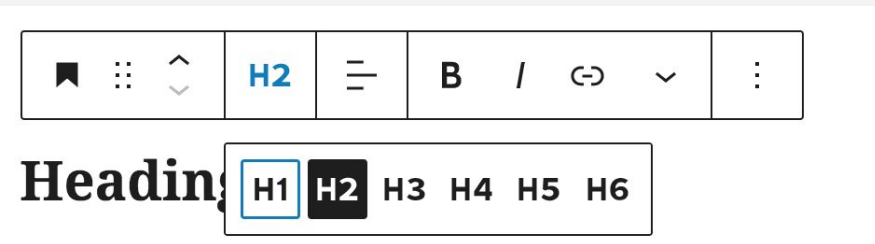


# Format

Here are some examples of things that you can format with your blocks. This includes choosing different levels of headings and changing the color of your text. The formatting options available will depend on the type of block you are working on.



A screenshot of a text editor interface. At the top is a toolbar with icons for text alignment (left, center, right, justified), bulleted list, numbered list, bold (B), italic (I), link, unlink, and a dropdown menu. Below the toolbar, the text "Here you can add some text in a **paragraph**." is displayed, with the word "paragraph" highlighted in blue. Below the text is a color picker dialog showing a grid of 12 colored circles (black, grey, white, pink, red, orange, yellow, green, light green, blue, purple, and light blue). At the bottom of the dialog are the labels "Custom color" and "Clear".



A screenshot of a text editor interface. At the top is a toolbar with icons for text alignment (left, center, right, justified), bulleted list, numbered list, bold (B), italic (I), link, unlink, and a dropdown menu. Below the toolbar, the text "Heading" is displayed. To the right of the text is a heading selector dropdown menu showing options H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6. The H2 option is currently selected and highlighted with a blue border.

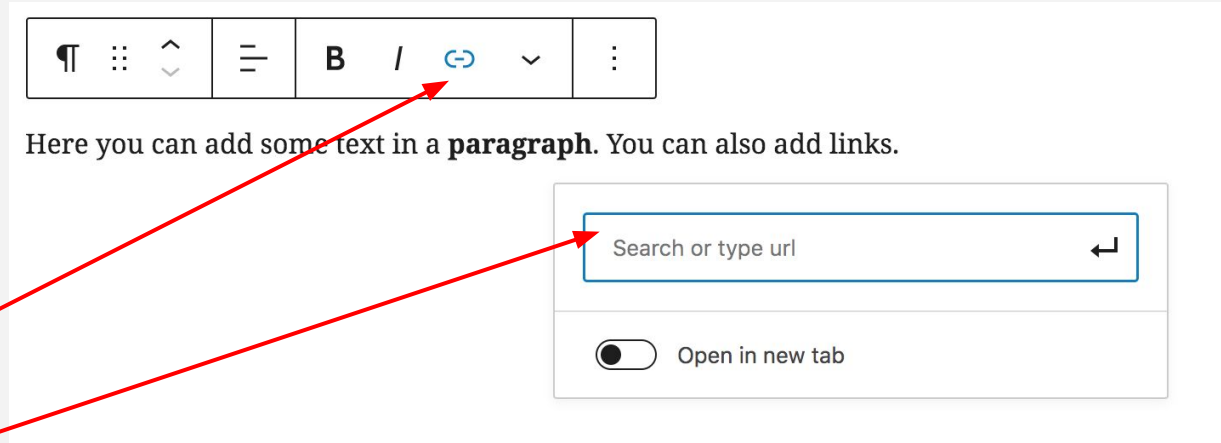




# Add Links

If you are interested in adding **links** to your page, you can easily do that by:

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



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

The screenshot shows a text editor interface. At the top, there is a menu bar with various icons. The 'Insert link' button, represented by a chain link icon, is highlighted with a red arrow pointing from the second step of the list. Below the menu bar, there is a text input area with the placeholder text 'Search or type url'. A red arrow points from the third step of the list to this input field. Below the input field, there is a toggle switch labeled 'Open in new tab'.

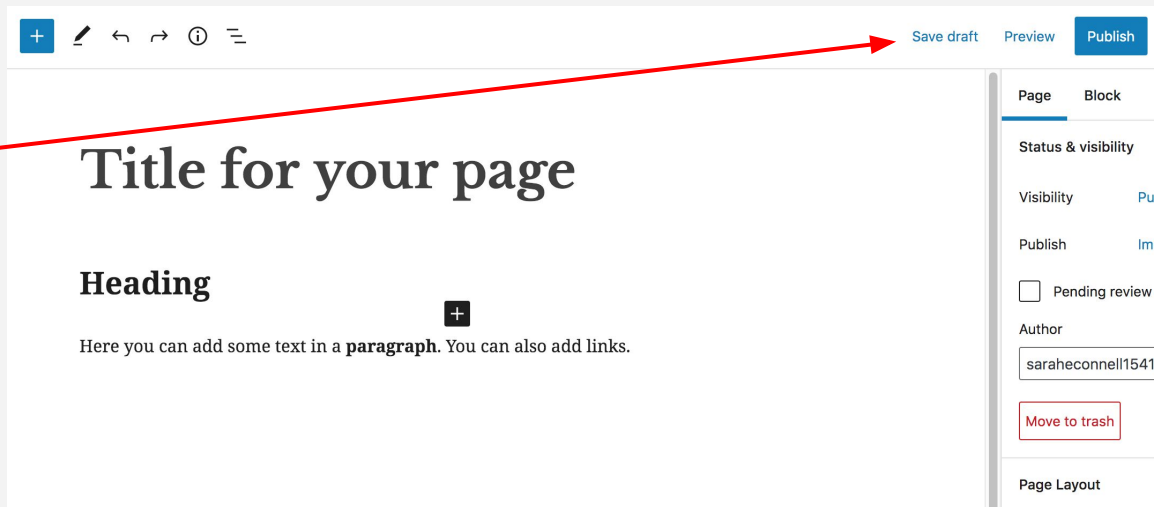


# Save Draft

When you are working, it is very important to save your changes. It is generally best practice to have only one person working on a page/post at a time to ensure all changes are saved.

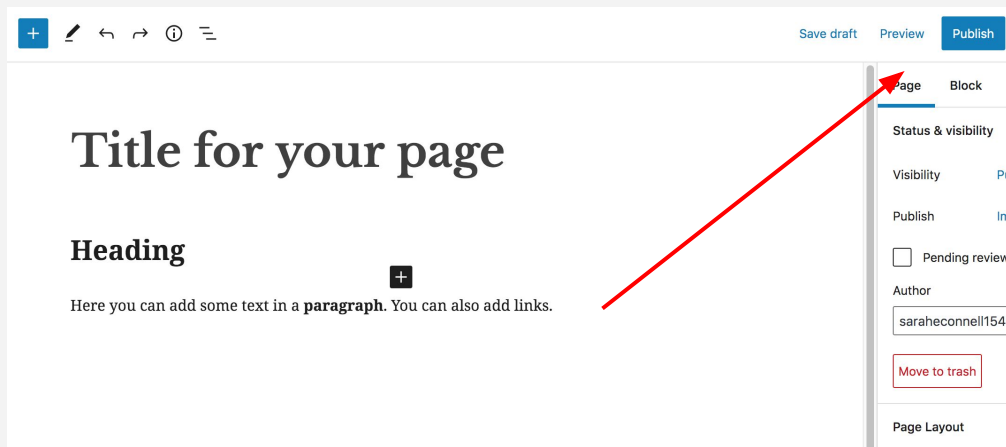
To save your draft, click the **“Save Draft”** button on the right-hand side of the screen.

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**” button 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.

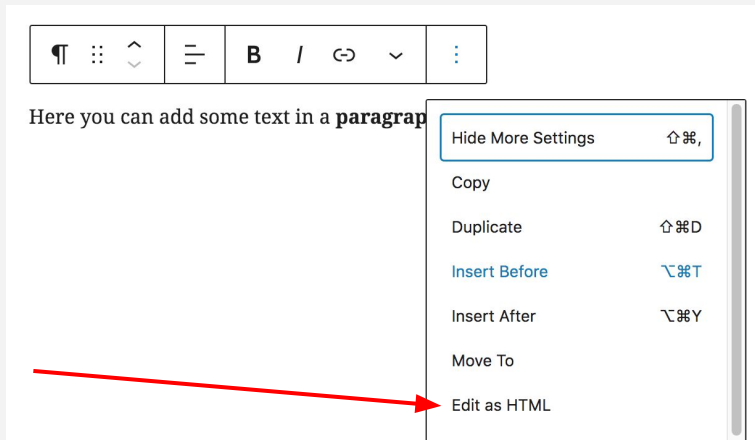


# HTML Editor

When you are editing blocks, you can toggle between the **Visual** and **HTML** editors with the "View 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."

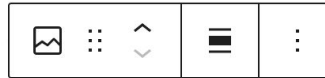
Here is the same paragraph in HTML:

```
<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>
```



# Add Images

If you want to add images in your document, 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

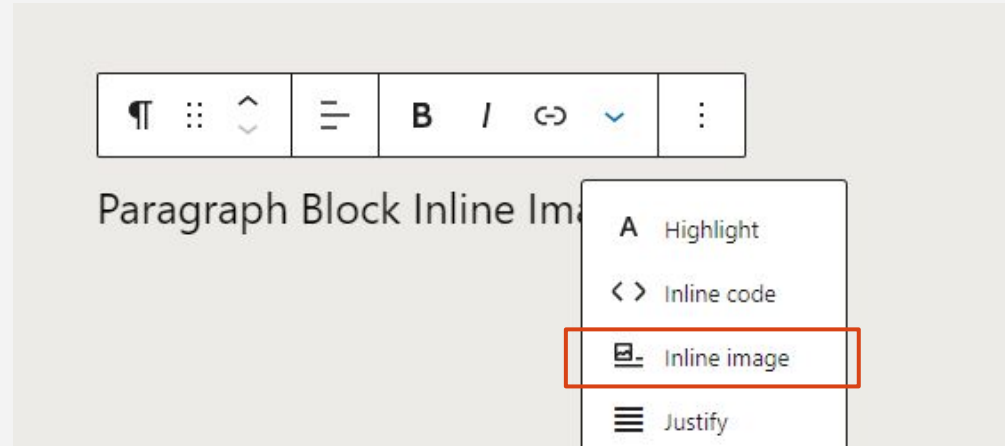
Select Image

Insert from URL

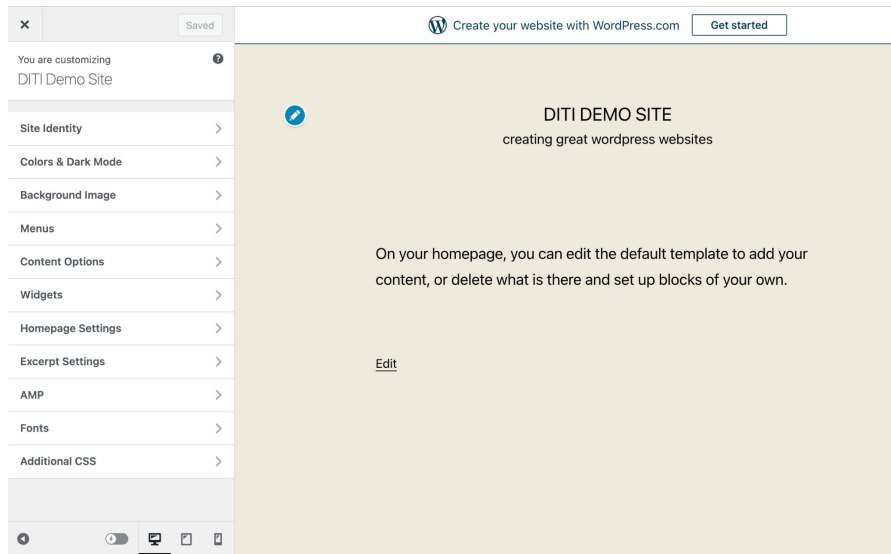


# Add Inline Images to Paragraphs

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.



# Customize your Theme

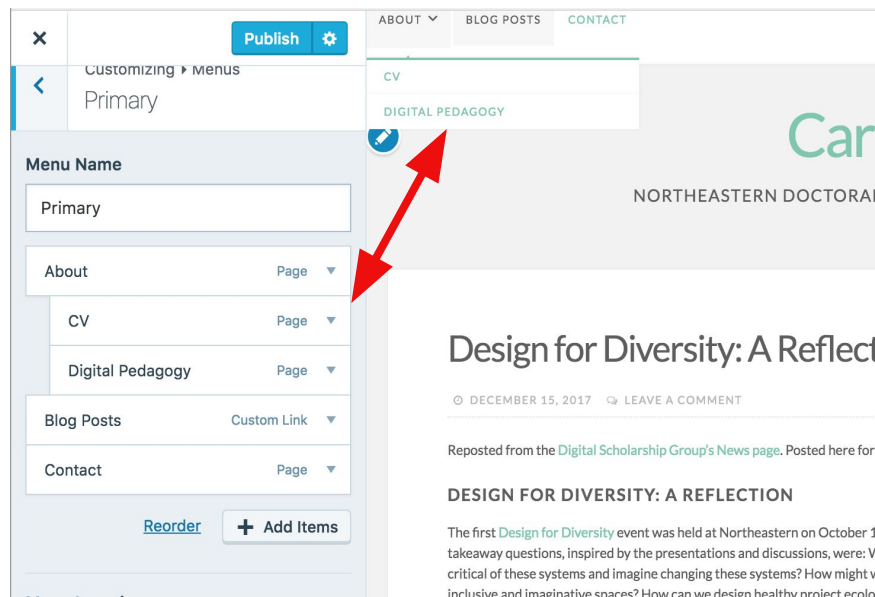


- The Customizer is where you will go to take your site's Theme to the next level.
- From this section, you can change your Site Title and Tagline, add Widgets to a Sidebar or Footer, create Menus, change your Homepage Settings, and more.
- In the left-hand column of your homepage/dashboard, scroll to **"Appearance"** and then click the **"Customize"**
- More Info:  
<https://wordpress.com/support/customizer/>



# Customize Site Menu

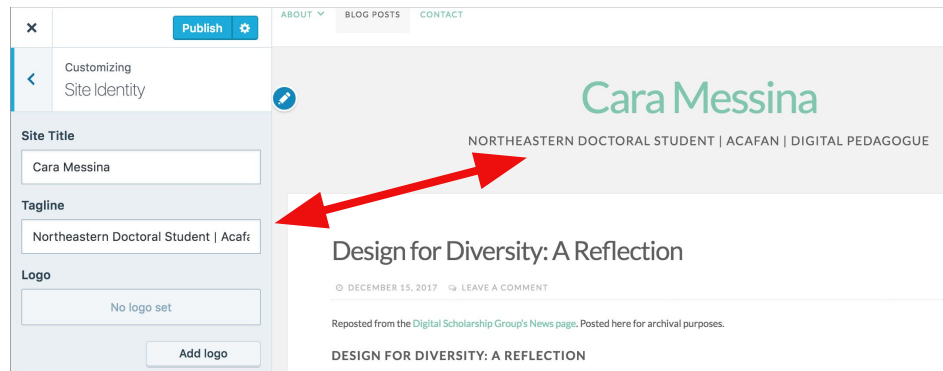
- In the “**Customize**” page left-hand column, go to “**Menus**,” which will allow you to add pages, posts, and other content to the overhead menus
  - You can create subsections in the menu by sliding one page under another “parent” page.





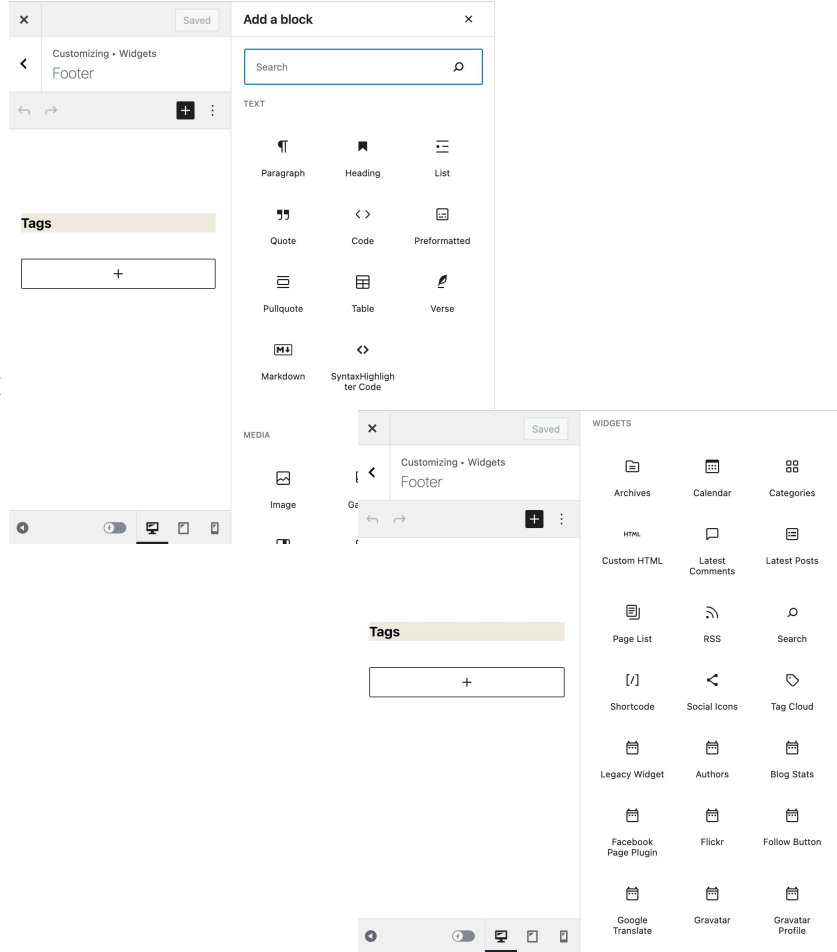
# Customize Header

- Your website, like all websites, should have a clear identity. The **header** and **subheader** 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 “**Customize**” menu.



# Add & Customize Widgets

- **Widgets** are small applications and components that appear in different places on your WordPress site
  - For example, a “Footer” widget will appear at the bottom of your website across the different pages. The widgets you put in “Sidebar” will appear in the sidebar.
- You can add any block to your site’s widget areas or use the classic Widget options.
- Add widgets by clicking the button under “**Appearance**” on the homepage or on the “**Customize**” page.
- More Info: <https://wordpress.com/support/widgets/>



# 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]



# Thank you!

If you have any questions, contact DITI at [nulab.info@gmail.com](mailto:nulab.info@gmail.com)

Sign up for DITI office hours! <https://calendly.com/diti-nu>

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

Slides and handouts available on Github: <https://bit.ly/sp23-Kemp-wordpress>

