

# Introduction to WordPress and Collaborative Building

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**Northeastern University**  
*NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks*

Break into  
assigned groups

# What is Wordpress?

Wordpress is a professional **website-building tool** that allows you to build your own website, provides a free domain name, and installs plugins and themes to customize your website. There are other website-building tools, such as Wix. We are using WordPress because it is often used for blogging and for academic purposes. Being familiar with Wordpress is an important skill because Wordpress often favors text-heavy content and has features for blogging, tagging, and categorizing.

Examples of Northeastern websites (which use Wordpress):

- <https://dsg.neu.edu/>
- <https://cssh.northeastern.edu/english/>
- <https://des4div.library.northeastern.edu/>

# Choosing Domain Names (5 minutes)

Before we create a group WordPress, I first want you to discuss a **domain name** you would like to use. In order to choose your domain name, you and your group should brainstorm and collectively come up with a name that relates to your topics and interests. Give enough time for every group member to pitch ideas and elect a name democratically that is both compelling and best reflects your group.

*If you would like to change your domain name, you can do it by going to “Domain” in the menu screen, clicking your domain name, and filling out the new domain name.*

# Getting Started

To get started, choose **one** person in the group to follow these steps:

- Go to <https://wordpress.com/> and click “Get Started” in the upper right corner
- Fill out the “Create a Site” information
- Enter your groups’ **domain name**. Wordpress provides a free domain with “.wordpress.com”
- Follow the rest of the steps

The image shows the WordPress Site Editor interface. At the top is a blue header bar containing the WordPress logo, 'My Site', a 'Reader' button, a 'Write' button, a user profile icon, and a help icon. On the left is a sidebar with a 'Site Title' section showing 'testingwebsiteeeee.wordpress.com', a green 'Free domain with a plan' banner with an 'UPGRADE' button, and a list of site management tools: 'View Site', 'Stats', 'Activity', 'Plan' (labeled 'Free'), 'Manage' (with sub-items 'Site Pages', 'Blog Posts', 'Media', 'Comments', 'Feedback', each with an 'Add' button), and 'ADD NEW SITE'. The main content area displays a celebratory message 'Your site has been created!' with confetti, followed by a 'Your setup list' section showing a progress bar at 2/9. The list includes 'You created your site' and 'You picked a website address' (both completed), and 'Give your site a name' (in progress) with a 'Do it!' button. A 'Help' icon is in the bottom right corner. Three red arrows point to specific areas: one to the top header bar labeled 'Menu/Header', one to the left sidebar labeled 'WordPress Site Dashboard', and one to the user profile icon labeled 'Your User Settings'.

My Site Reader

Site Title  
testingwebsiteeeee.wordpress.com

Free domain with a plan UPGRADE

View Site

Stats

Activity

Plan Free

Manage

Site Pages Add

Blog Posts Add

Media Add

Comments

Feedback Add

ADD NEW SITE

Menu/Header

WordPress Site Dashboard

Your site has been created!

Now that your site has been created, it's time to get it ready for you to share. We've prepared a list of things that will help you get there quickly.

Your setup list 2/9 Hide completed

✓ You created your site

✓ You picked a website address

○ Give your site a name Do it!

Give your site a descriptive name to entice visitors.

Estimated time: 1 minute

Your User Settings

## Anatomy of a WordPress Site Editor

# Adding Group Members

In order to add the other group members on your groups' WordPress, follow these steps:

- On the Dashboard (left side menu), scroll down and click "People"
- Click "Invite" (which should be over the person who made the WordPress' name)
- Enter in your group members' emails and make sure the Role is "**Administrator**" for each group member
- Group members, accept the invite so that you should have access to the WordPress page

WordPress dashboard interface showing the "People" section in the left sidebar and the "Team" management area in the main content.

**Left Sidebar:**

- My Site
- Reader
- Feedback (Add)
- Testimonials (Add)
- Portfolio (Add)
- Plugins (Manage)
- Import
- Personalize
- Customize (Themes)
- Configure
- Sharing
- People (Add)** (highlighted with a red circle)
- Domains (Add)
- Settings
- ADD NEW SITE

**Main Content Area:**

Team Followers Email Followers Invites

Team (1)

**+ Invite** (highlighted with a red box)

**caramartamessina**  
@caramartamessina  
Admin

WordPress logo

Help icon (?)

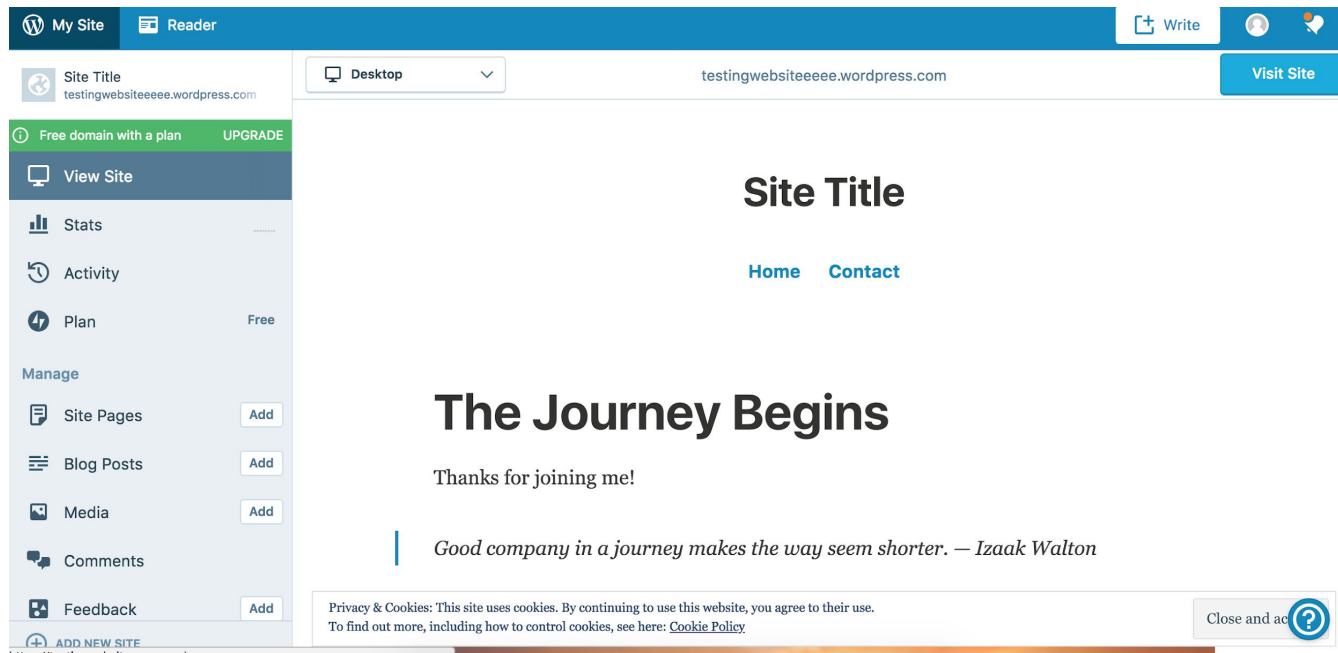
Visual for Adding Group Members



# What Can WordPress Do?

# Your Dashboard

Once you have all been added to the site, you will be brought to your website's **dashboard**. This is where you can add new posts and pages and customize your WordPress.



The screenshot displays the WordPress dashboard for a new site. The top navigation bar is blue, featuring the 'My Site' and 'Reader' tabs, a 'Write' button, and user profile icons. Below this, the site's name 'Site Title' and URL 'testingwebsiteeeee.wordpress.com' are shown, along with a 'Desktop' view selector and a 'Visit Site' button. The left sidebar contains a menu with options like 'View Site', 'Stats', 'Activity', 'Plan', 'Manage', 'Site Pages', 'Blog Posts', 'Media', 'Comments', and 'Feedback'. The main content area shows the site title 'Site Title' with 'Home' and 'Contact' links, followed by the heading 'The Journey Begins' and the text 'Thanks for joining me!'. A quote by Izaak Walton is displayed below. At the bottom, a privacy and cookies notice is visible, along with a 'Close and accept' button.

My Site Reader Write

Site Title testingwebsiteeeee.wordpress.com Desktop testingwebsiteeeee.wordpress.com Visit Site

Free domain with a plan [UPGRADE](#)

View Site

Stats

Activity

Plan Free

Manage

Site Pages [Add](#)

Blog Posts [Add](#)

Media [Add](#)

Comments

Feedback [Add](#)

[+ ADD NEW SITE](#)

## Site Title

[Home](#) [Contact](#)

## The Journey Begins

Thanks for joining me!

*Good company in a journey makes the way seem shorter. — Izaak Walton*

Privacy & Cookies: This site uses cookies. By continuing to use this website, you agree to their use. To find out more, including how to control cookies, see here: [Cookie Policy](#)

Close and accept



## Manage



Site Pages

Add



Blog Posts

Add



Media

Add



Comments



Feedback

Add



Plugins

Manage



Import

## Personalize



Customize

Themes

## Configure



Sharing

# Choosing a Theme

The first way to customize is to choose a **theme**. A **theme** is your WordPress' particular appearance. In the left-hand column of your Dashboard, scroll to "Customize" and then click the "**Themes**" button.

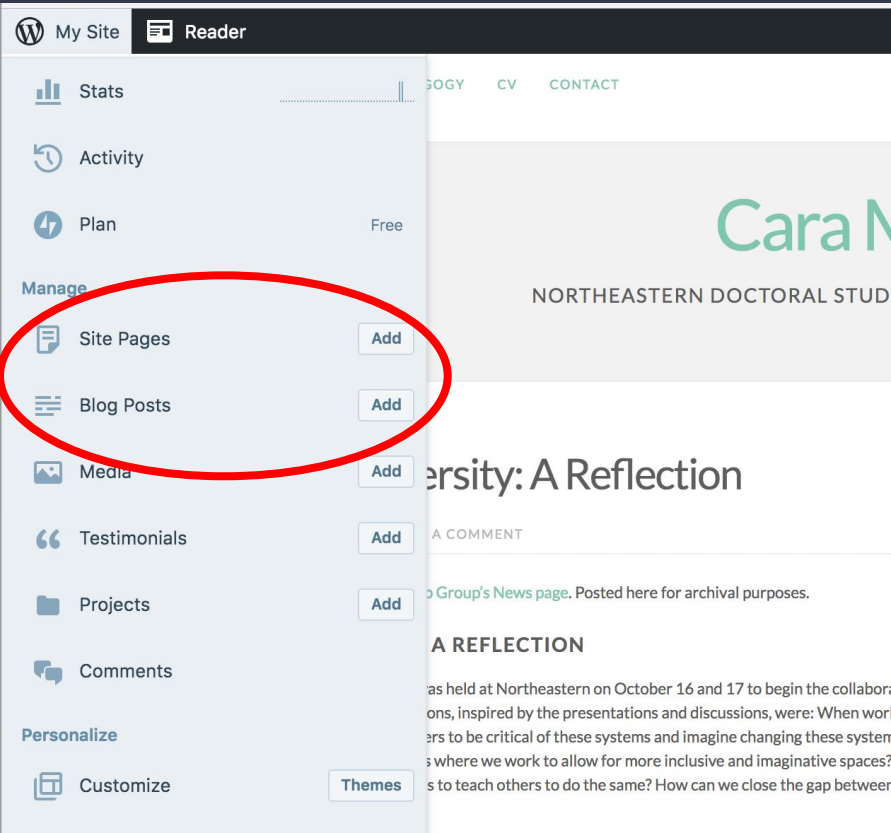
With your group, take a few minutes to go through the Themes. Depending on the content of your website, each theme will offer strengths and weaknesses; themes provide descriptions for how they can be used. You can play around with the different options and see what will work for your groups' website and what you are all imagining.

# Website Content: Pages vs Posts

**PAGES** are the static pages that appear across your header. Typically, this will be your groups' "About Us" page or your contact form.

**POSTS** are your blog posts that show up as you publish them. For example, as you are researching more about your topic and submitting assignments based on that research, you would probably post them

# Add Posts and Pages



Go to your Dashboard and either click the **“Add”** button next to Site Pages or the **“Add”** button next to Blog Posts (depending on what you want to add).

This is where you fill out your content! They provide you with options to style your content (font size, style, colors, add images, add links, bullet points, etc.).

# Collaborative Blog Posts and Pages

WordPress will not allow you to edit posts/pages at the same time. When you write together and/or receive feedback, first establish **guidelines** together.

- What does helpful feedback look like?
- What roles will each person be taking on? (editor, first draft writer, researcher, etc)
- What will the deadlines be should particular steps in the writing/designing process?

If you are planning on doing **collaborative** writing, I recommend using **Google Docs** or a similar platform.

# Blog Post Categories

The screenshot shows a blog editor interface. At the top, there's a dark blue header with the title 'Blog Post Categories'. Below the header, the editor has a top bar with 'History', 'Settings button' (indicated by a red arrow), 'Preview', and 'Update' buttons. The main content area shows a blog post titled 'for Diversity: A Reflection' with a rich text editor. On the right, the 'Post Settings' sidebar is open, and the 'Categories' section is circled in red. This section shows 'Uncategorized' as the selected category and an 'Add New Category' button. Below it, the 'Tags' section shows 'archive' and 'design for diversity' as existing tags. The bottom of the editor shows a word count of '1536 WORDS'.

Your blog posts may have different **categories**. Since you are creating a group digital archive site, you might have different content that can be categorized. You can create categories and also make an entire page dedicated to those categories!

- Edit your blog post
- Click the settings button (top right corner)
- Click “Categories and Tags”
- Add your category or, if the category exist, click it

# Customize Your WordPress



# Customize Menu

Once you choose a theme, you will be brought to the “Customizer,” which is a bar on the left-hand side that shows you the changes you would like to make on your site. You can get back to this “Customize” menu by clicking “Customize” on your Dashboard.\*\*

The screenshot shows the WordPress Customizer interface. On the left is a sidebar menu with the following items: 'You are customizing Cara Messina', 'Need help setting up your site?', 'Site Identity', 'Colors & Backgrounds', 'Fonts', 'Header Image', 'Menus', 'Content Options', 'Widgets', 'Homepage Settings', and 'Theme Options'. The 'Published' button is at the top of the sidebar. The main area displays the site's header with the name 'Cara Messina' and the subtitle 'Northeastern Doctoral Student | Acafan | Digital Pedagogue'. Below the header are four social media icons. A red arrow points from the text 'Customize' in the paragraph above to the 'Customize' button in the site's navigation bar. The navigation bar includes a 'Customize' button with a pencil icon and links for 'About', 'Blog Posts', 'Digital Pedagogy', 'CV', and 'Contact'. The 'About' section is currently selected, showing a bio for Cara Messina.

**About**

Cara Messina [she/her] is a second year doctoral student focusing on Writing and Rhetoric in [Northeastern University's English Department](#). She is currently plowing – well, crawling at a brisk pace – through her Comps Exams on [Digital Pedagogy](#), Rhetorical Genre Studies, and Mixed Methodologies in Writing Studies. In her first year at Northeastern, she held the position of Director of Research at the Writing Center where she led NuRig – the writing center research inquiry group – to collect data about [how clients and consultants articulate their understanding of the work done in writing centers](#). She has taught First Year Writing and Advanced Writing in the Disciplines. She currently works as the Coordinator for the [NULab](#) at Northeastern as well as the Research Associate for [Design for Diversity](#), an IMLS-grant funded national forum project, at Northeastern's Digital Scholarship Group.

Her pedagogy and overall values center around transparency, documenting and valuing process, subverting normalized cultural and social narratives, vulnerability, collaboration, justice, and cross-disciplinary conversations. In her classroom and her research, she incorporates Digital Humanities (especially [#transformDH](#) conversations), Writing Studies, Fan and Media Studies,

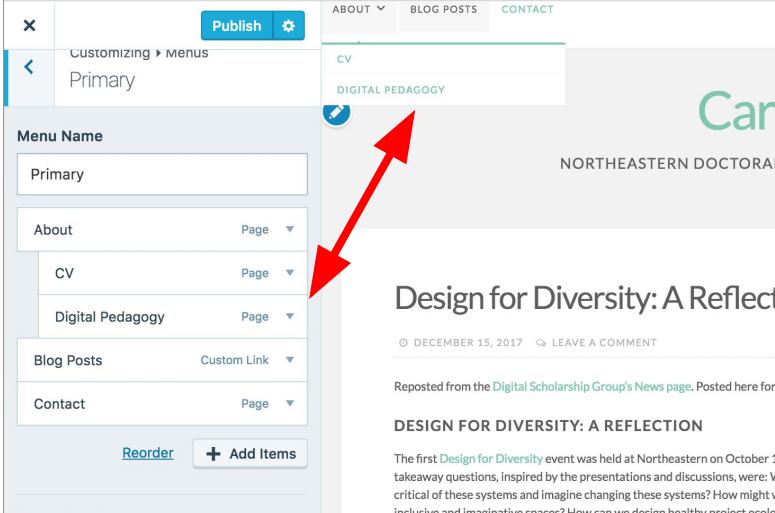
\*\* Depending on your theme, some of your customization options will change.

# Site Menu

Once you have content, you want to make sure it is accessible to your potential audience.

Go back to your “Customize” menu (in the Dashboard under Customize).

In the “Customize” menu, go to “Menus,” which will allow you to add pages, posts, and other content to the overhead menus. You can even create dropdown menus by sliding one page under another page.



The screenshot displays the WordPress Customizer interface for editing the site's primary menu. On the left, the 'Menu Name' is set to 'Primary'. Below this, a list of items is shown with dropdown menus to select their type: 'About' (Page), 'CV' (Page), 'Digital Pedagogy' (Page), 'Blog Posts' (Custom Link), and 'Contact' (Page). At the bottom of this list are 'Reorder' and '+ Add Items' buttons. On the right, a live preview of the site header shows the menu items. A red arrow indicates the 'CV' item from the list being dragged to a position under the 'About' item in the live preview, demonstrating how to create a dropdown menu.

ABOUT ▾ BLOG POSTS CONTACT

CV

DIGITAL PEDAGOGY

Car

NORTHEASTERN DOCTORAL

## Design for Diversity: A Reflection

○ DECEMBER 15, 2017 ○ LEAVE A COMMENT

Reposted from the [Digital Scholarship Group's News page](#). Posted here for

### DESIGN FOR DIVERSITY: A REFLECTION

The first [Design for Diversity](#) event was held at Northeastern on October 1 takeaway questions, inspired by the presentations and discussions, were: V critical of these systems and imagine changing these systems? How might v inclusive and imaginative spaces? How can we design healthy project ecol

# Categories as Pages

Remember how you can categorize specific blog posts? You can make a particular blog post **category** its own **page** and put it in your menu. For example, you might have an “Archive” as a main menu and then several different categories as the drop down menu.

In the “Menu” section, when you go to “Add Item,” look for “Categories.” Then, click the plus sign and drag it where you would like!

For a thorough look at how to make a category into a page, follow along with this site: <https://en.support.wordpress.com/category-pages/>

# Header

Your website, like all websites, should model a “brand” of some kind. The **header** and subheader can help with this. The **header** is the phrase/name that appears at the top of each webpage, like the menu (the subheader, if applicable in your theme, appears below)

You can find the ways to change your header in “**Site Identity**” under the “**Customize**” menu.

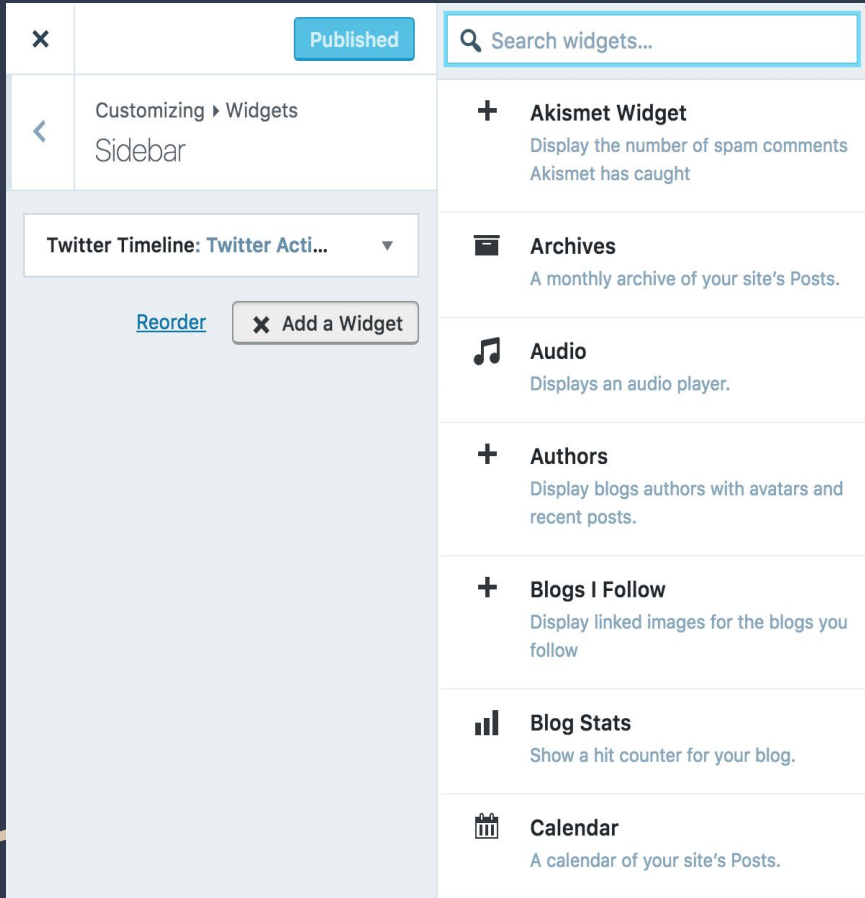
The image shows a side-by-side comparison of a website's header. On the left is the WordPress Customizer interface for 'Customizing Site Identity'. It includes a 'Publish' button, a 'Site Title' field containing 'Cara Messina', a 'Tagline' field containing 'Northeastern Doctoral Student | Acafi', and a 'Logo' section with 'No logo set' and an 'Add logo' button. On the right is a preview of the website's header. It features a navigation menu with 'ABOUT', 'BLOG POSTS', and 'CONTACT'. Below the menu, the name 'Cara Messina' is displayed in a large green font, with the tagline 'NORTHEASTERN DOCTORAL STUDENT | ACAFAN | DIGITAL PEDAGOGUE' underneath. A red arrow points from the 'Site Title' field in the customizer to the 'Cara Messina' text in the header preview. Below the header, a blog post titled 'Design for Diversity: A Reflection' is visible, dated 'DECEMBER 15, 2017' with a 'LEAVE A COMMENT' link. A note at the bottom states: 'Reposted from the Digital Scholarship Group's News page. Posted here for archival purposes.' The page title 'DESIGN FOR DIVERSITY: A REFLECTION' is also shown at the very bottom.

# Widgets

**Widgets** on WordPress are small applications and components that appear on your WordPress site in specific areas across your website.

For example, a “Footer” widget will appear at the bottom of your website across the different pages. The widgets you put “Sidebar” will appear in the sidebar. You might attach your Twitter feed to your website, or a “Contact Us” section.

Think about what information you want to be presented to your audience, where you want it to be presented, and if you want it to be centered, off to the side, across your website, and more.



# Keep in mind—

- **Always remember your audience and think about how you want to represent your groups' identity and the feminist movements to your audience.**
- Don't overload your website with widgets; you want your website to be easy to navigate, informative, and appealing
- For questions you have, there are probably YouTube videos or written tutorials to provide an answer; make sure to look up the correct WordPress version
- Model **feminist practices** as you communicate with each other. Ask permission when changing someone's work, use active listening, check in with each other, listen to and *care* about each other's ideas, and make democratic design and writing choices.

# Group Work

For the rest of the class, discuss with each other how your group will model feminist collaborative practices collaboration.

- Brainstorm guidelines for collaboration. How can your group model the feminist practices used in your movements? If you are interested, FemTechNet's manifesto may help inspire you:  
<http://femtechnet.org/publications/manifesto/>
- Brainstorm potential roles. These roles might change as the semester goes on, but it's helpful to start this discussion. What are each member's strengths and skills? How can you use these strengths and skills?
- Explore some of the features on WordPress and begin imagining the overall structure of the website

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