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Child and Parent Themes

A good way of creating your own theme without starting from scratch is to create a child theme. It's a separate style sheet file which calls up the parent style sheet, but then overrides the "parent" theme's style sheet with just the styles that you want to change. This is a good way to go if you don't want to or don't have time to start from scratch.

It is also very helpful to use a child theme to protect your theme from updates. Let's say you're using the TwentySixteen theme and Wordpress ships out another update next year. If they've also updated the TwentySixteen theme, that whole theme folder will be replaced. So you will create a new theme folder for your child theme.

Here are some good tutorials:

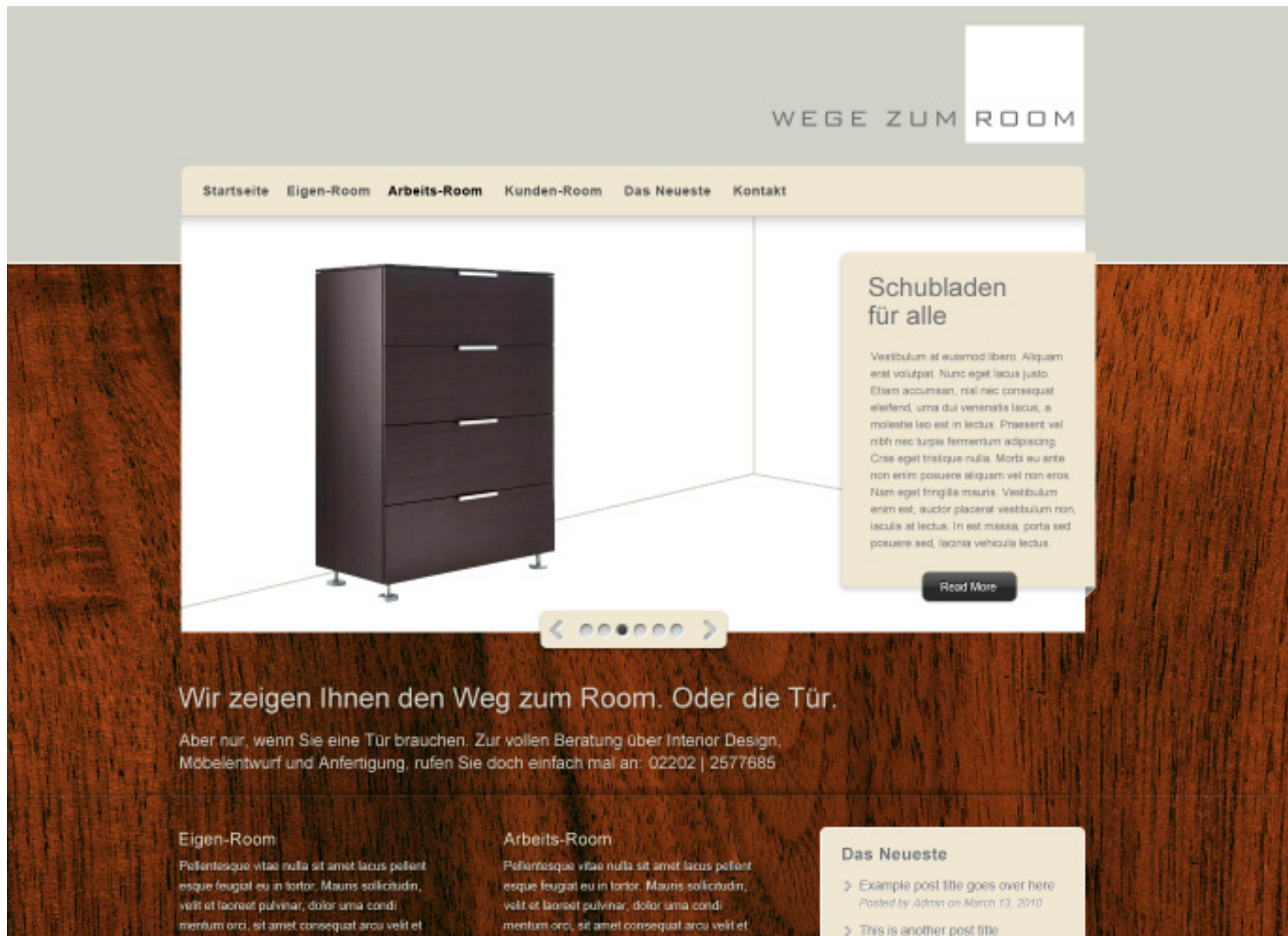
<http://www.webdesignerdepot.com/2011/12/creating-your-first-wordpress-child-theme/>

<http://docs.themeisle.com/article/14-how-to-create-a-child-theme>

A sample of a ready-made theme I have chosen to modify:



and here is my re-design using the structure of the theme:



customization options

If you use approved Wordpress themes, you should be able to avoid problems that come from abandoned themes or unsupported plugins. The customization options are infinite and are only limited by your CSS coding skills.

previewing themes

Preview themes first and make sure they will work with your content. You may have to make adjustments to your content, such as image sizes etc to make them work.

your own theme

You can also create your own theme or create a child theme and install that. You could learn at lynda.com but there are many free online tutorials on how to create your own theme from scratch:

<http://theshaper.com/wordpress-themes-templates-tutorial/>

<http://underscores.me/>

The easiest way to create a child theme:

Use a plugin! There are several plugins out there that automatically create a child theme for you. (Choose just one.)

Child Theme Configurator (can also modify functions, not just CSS = more powerful)

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/child-theme-configurator/>

Simple Custom CSS (just for CSS)

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/simple-custom-css/>

Troubleshooting Themes and Plugins:

Broken themes can create problems, you need to test them first, ideally on your local installation, but these fixes work for both local or remote hosting:

If you install a new theme and it crashes your site (you will just see a white page on your live site) you can switch back to a theme that is working from the Dashboard, and your site will reappear.

If the theme breaks your backend (white screen again), go into your Wordpress install and inside “themes”, rename the theme folder to something like “themenamename_broken” and that will deactivate the broken theme and Wordpress will revert to its default theme, TwentyFifteen.

If your wordpress site suddenly disappears after a plugin update, you can try to rename your troublesome plugin on your server (via FTP) so that Wordpress can’t find it anymore. That will deactivate the plugin and should make your site visible again.