



Creating an Awesome WordPress Website

Creating an awesome website is no easy task. WordPress makes it easier, but still you need to come up with the style, content and creative ideas. This ebook includes a number of suggestions and guidelines to help you make this a reality.

IN THIS EBOOK, YOU'LL LEARN:

- ➔ **How to get started creating your website**
- ➔ **How to select a great theme**
- ➔ **Guidelines for organizing your website**
- ➔ **Tips for planning out creating great content that will resonate with your target site visitors**



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Creating an Awesome WordPress Website



Creating an Awesome WordPress Site

You have started or are planning to start a WordPress website. You obviously want to create a successful one. So what can you do to create a site that will be awesome?

This can be a challenge. How do you create an attractive site when you are not really a designer? How can you create great content that will appeal to your target user when you are not a great writer? How can you continue to add good content and maintain your website's appeal over time?

There are FIVE things we review in this ebook to help you create a great website using WordPress.

- ➔ Identify your purpose
- ➔ Leverage other people's' creative genius
- ➔ Set up your site navigation properly
- ➔ Plan your content
- ➔ Create compelling content

Let's review each step.

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Identify Your Purpose

First and foremost, you need to identify what the main purpose for your website is. Determining this will help with the other four steps. For example:

- ➔ Are you a business trying to promote your company and products?
- ➔ Are you an individual showcasing your hobbies, talents or personal interest?
- ➔ Are you trying to create an online store to sell products or services?
- ➔ Is your goal to create an online blog or magazine that you will monetize?
- ➔ Are you a non-profit organization, government or educational institution with the objective to promote your cause, let others know what you do or educate others?
- ➔ Are you a web designer or agency that builds sites for clients?
- ➔ Or are you something else?

This is hopefully an easy step if you know what you and/or your organization are all about. Still it is important to consider as you get started planning and implementing your website.

Second, you want to decide **what success looks like** for your website. No question you want traffic to your site. But why? Is it to generate leads, sell products online, promote your cause, offer free services, or simply to showcase your personal interests?

Your main purpose and determining what success is for your site will drive most of the other things you will need to do to build a successful website.



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Next, who is **your target audience**? Even if you don't plan to sell or promote anything, you still need to identify your target site visitors. It is probably obvious, but the more you understand the target visitor of your site, the better you will be able to attract them to your site.

Finally and possibly the more difficult part of step one is to identify your **unique selling proposition**. What makes you different, better or a good choice for your target visitor compared to alternatives? What do you do really well that is appealing to your audience?

For example, let's say your purpose is to promote your local restaurant. Your main objective is to get more people to come in to enjoy the dining experience that your restaurant provides. Answering these four questions could be something like this:

- ➔ Your Site's Purpose: promote your restaurant
- ➔ Site Success: get more local viewers to learn about and come dine at your restaurant
- ➔ Your Target Visitors: all local people within a 25 mile radius
- ➔ Your Unique Selling Proposition: great menu + excellent chef = unique food experience

Write down the answers to these four questions. It will get you started on your way to create a great site.

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Leverage Other People's Creative Genius

OK, so you do not consider yourself very creative. No problem. An easy solution is to select a WordPress theme that leverages the expertise of a creative genius.

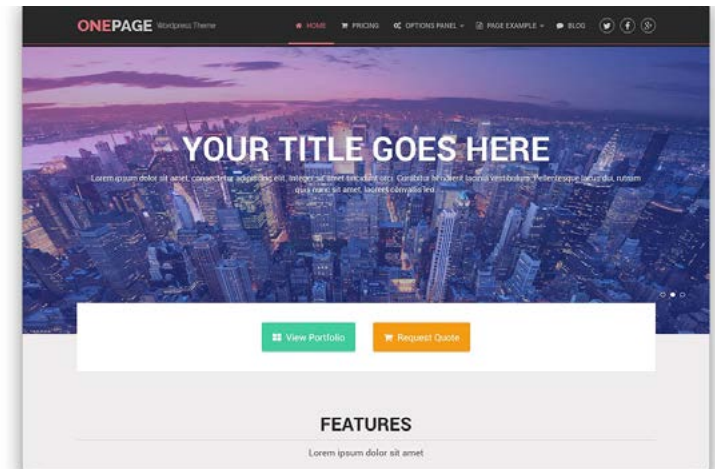
One of the best things about WordPress is that supports themes that can be created by a wide group of designers. Because of WordPress' popularity, there are many creative and talented individuals who have developed attractive and useful themes.

The WordPress theme you choose will create your unique site appearance. The appearance of your website is one way to distinguish yourself, your business or your organization. An attractive website will be appealing to visitors and encourage them to not only visit your site often but to stay there when they do visit.

There are tens of thousands of WordPress themes to choose from. In fact, there are almost too many. So how do you choose a good theme that will really set your site off? Here are a few ideas:

Choose a theme that relates to your website's purpose. Because of the popularity of WordPress, theme developers and providers now focus more and more on specific industries, markets, types of businesses and site objectives. Because of that, you have the opportunity to focus on those themes that align with your goals.

Let's go back to the restaurant example. When reviewing potential themes to use, you would limit your scope to only themes that are designed for restaurants. Doing this will save you tons of time and narrow down your selection to make it easier to choose a theme.



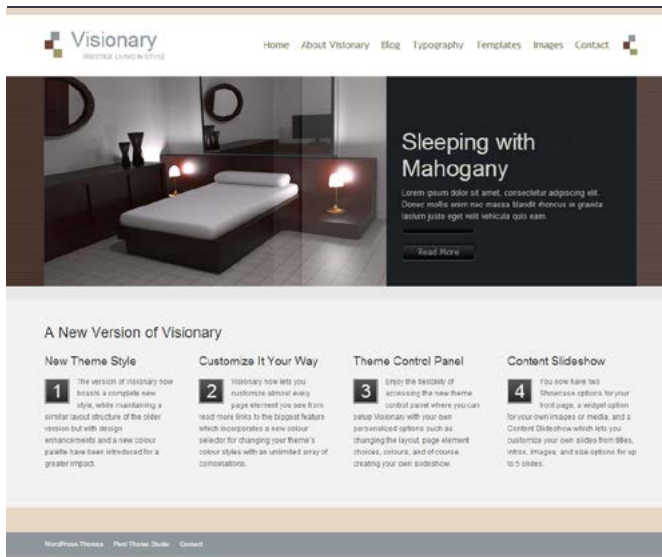
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Always choose a theme that allows you to review a demo. Good theme providers will give you a demo site to check out how a website using the theme can look like. Get a feel for the demo site. Can you visualize using that theme for your site? Does it provide different page layouts that can accommodate different options you may want to use? Does it provide customization options so you can tailor it to your use easily? This can be modifying the color scheme to match your company logo, for example.

Choose an attractive theme. This seems obvious, but not all themes look good or look good to your target visitors. Ideally, get a few users who represent your target audience to view the theme demo and give you feedback on it. If that isn't easy, it can still be useful to have some other people view the theme demo. Make sure you choose a theme that is attractive.

Look to see when the last time the theme was updated. Not all theme providers give this information, but if they do, check out the last time it was updated. Good theme providers will update their theme on a regular basis. WordPress is constantly being updated with new features. Themes that are updated frequently will take advantage of new versions of WordPress. They also solve issues with new WordPress versions that potentially can break the theme. A theme that isn't updated very often or not at all can give you problems down the road.

Keep things simple. Some themes add lots of complex layouts, flashy animations and more. Sometimes you need those options, but most of the time you do not. You want your website to look good without sacrificing usability and simplicity. One key thing to keep in mind: the more complex the layout, the slower your website will perform. When you choose an attractive and simple theme, you get the best of both—good looking and speedy performance.



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Support for mobile phones and tablets. Recent studies have shown that many more users are surfing the web using mobile devices. The old model was to create a second site to cater to these mobile users. But that doesn't make sense anymore. Who wants to maintain two sites? The better approach today is to choose a theme that supports mobile phones, tablets, laptops and desktops equally well. The term that is often used is to designate supporting the full range of devices is a “responsive” website. That means the theme will automatically format the content to fit the size of the device's screen.

Google search rewards sites that support the full range of devices users are using today. Choosing a responsive theme will help you get better search engine results than a theme that only supports laptops and desktops. Therefore, **ONLY** choose a theme that is responsive and supports mobile devices.

SEO friendly. A theme that is not well developed can make it more difficult for your target audience to find your website. Look for a theme that says it is SEO optimized. (SEO means search engine optimized). You want as many of your target audience to find you as possible.

Seriously consider a premium theme. Premium themes do cost money. But it is often worth it. This is because premium themes get updated frequently, provide some form of documentation and offer support when you run into a problem. On the contrary, free themes may or may not get updated regularly, their documentation may be somewhat limited and you usually do not get much support if any. There are exceptions, of course, but a good premium theme will often be less headache in the long the run than a free theme.



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Finding The Right Theme

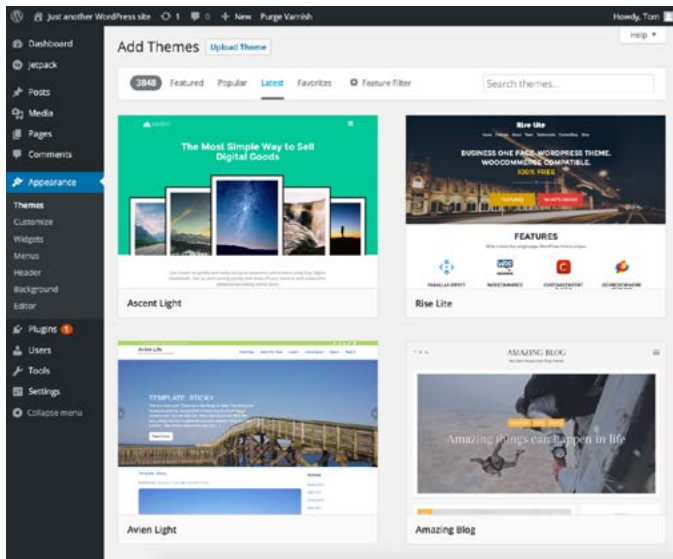
So where do you find a theme? There are a number of ways to choose the right theme for your website.

Good free themes. If you are looking for a free theme to get started, look no further than the WordPress dashboard, where you manage your WordPress website. The dashboard has a theme section which includes a theme browser where you can view themes hosted on WordPress.org. These themes are free to use and they have generally used good coding practices to create the theme. (Some premium theme vendors will provide a scaled down version for you to try at no cost. If you want the extra features, you can easily upgrade to the premium version.)

To use this tool, go to [Appearance > Themes](#) in the WordPress dashboard and click the Add New button. This will bring up the theme browser. Here you can search for the type of theme you are looking for. For example, if we were to choose a theme for a restaurant, simply type in “restaurant” in the search field and click enter. This will bring up a number of themes for restaurants.

One thing we recommend using is the the “Feature Filter.” Go to the layout section and click on “Responsive Layout”. This will make sure you choose a theme that supports mobile devices. Then browse or search for themes until you find one you like. You can preview any theme first by clicking on the Preview button within any theme frame.

Theme providers. If you are open to getting a premium theme, find a good theme provider. Good theme providers work closely with theme developers and insure



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that the themes they sell are good quality. In addition, they often offer search tools to help you to locate the right theme. And when you find a potential theme, they almost always provide a demo of the theme so you can see what it can look like. Some popular WordPress theme providers include [StudioPress](#), [Creative Market](#), and [Pixel Union](#). [WordPress.org](#) also showcases premium themes as well. If you are planning an ecommerce site, it is best to choose a theme that works with your ecommerce plugin, such as WooCommerce.

Install the Theme

Once you choose a theme, you will need to install it. This is pretty easy to do.

Using the theme browser. If you have found your ideal theme through the WordPress dashboard, installing the theme will be straightforward. Each theme in the theme browser has a Preview button. When you find a theme you like, simply click the **Install** button. Once it is installed, click the Activate link.

Using a theme from a theme provider. If you decide to acquire a theme from a theme provider (which can also include free themes), installing the theme is slightly different, but still pretty easy.

Assuming you have downloaded the theme from the provider, you will need to upload it to your WordPress server. This is also done in the **Appearance > Themes** page. Simply click on the Add New button, then the Upload Theme button. This allows you to choose the theme .zip file you downloaded from the theme provider. Simply choose the file, click Install Now. Once the theme is installed, you can preview it and activate it. If you like the theme, click the Activate link. Your new theme will now be in use.



Most themes include documentation. Once you activate a theme, there will generally be a link to its documentation. It is a good idea to review this as it will help you see the available features the theme provides.

Customizing Your Theme

The WordPress dashboard includes a theme customizer. Go to [Appearance > Customize](#) in the dashboard. This brings up your active theme with your content. (If you haven't started adding content, it will show the default WordPress content so you can get an idea of what the theme looks like.)

Theme customization is dependent on the options made available in the theme. Usually you will be able to customize things like the site title and tagline, some color elements of the theme, a header image, background image, the site navigation menu, widgets (like the footer or a sidebar) and the front page (your latest post or a static page).

For example, consider these customizations:

- Site title and tagline – add the name of your business or objective and a tagline that encapsulates your unique value proposition
- Color elements – you will want to match some of the colors of your logo or business color scheme if you have them
- Header image – you may want a unique image on each page so you could leave this blank
- Site navigation menu – once you have created some pages, you can create your menu by selecting various pages
- Widgets – you may want to create a common footer that is used on every page, which can also include links to specific pages of your site



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Now we have a theme selected, installed and customized. Of course, you can come back to the customization page at any time to make more changes.

Extra Customization: Create a Child Theme (for Advanced Users)

If you are planning to do any extra customization of your theme to fit your needs, such as changing the CSS (the stylesheet) of your theme, you will be best served by creating a child theme. (Customizing CSS may be necessary to get changes to the layout your site needs, add new layout options, add new styles, and change colors not supported by the WordPress customization tool.) A child theme isn't too difficult to create and will save you in the long run. Why? If you choose a theme that gets updated and you have customized the theme's CSS, for example, then any customizations you have done will be lost as soon as you update the theme. Creating child themes gets around this problem.

If you are just using the built-in WordPress customizer provided in the WordPress dashboard that we just reviewed, you don't need to do this and you can skip this section. Your customizations are taken into account by the theme and will not be overwritten when you do update your theme to a new version.

Here are the steps to creating a child theme. In this example we'll only look at CSS style changes:

1. **Create a child theme folder.** Themes are stored in your wordpress directory in the `/wp-content/themes` folder/`name-of-the-theme`. Each theme will have its own folder in the themes folder. Create a new theme folder named after the parent theme but slightly different. This new folder will be at the same level as the parent theme folder. Like this:



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```
/wp-content/themes/parent-theme-folder/  
/wp-content/themes/child-theme-folder/
```

2. **Create a child stylesheet.** A stylesheet contains all of the code that is used to determine the design of a website. Name the stylesheet **style.css**. This will need to be located in the child theme folder.
3. **Add this content to the child CSS file.** For your child theme to work, you will need to paste in the following content *at the top* of the stylesheet. The example we are going to use is based off of a made up theme called “dining_pro”:

```
/*  
Theme Name: Dining Pro Child  
Description: A child theme of the Dining Pro theme  
Author: Your name  
Template: dining_pro  
Version: 1.0.0  
*/
```

The most important thing to note is that the template name needs to be EXACTLY like the subdirectory name of the parent theme and it is case-sensitive. The theme name, author and description are what will show up in the WordPress dashboard on the themes page. The version is the version of your child theme.

4. **Make your changes to the local copy of the CSS file.** You will want to make all of your edits to the local copy of the style.css file, which is your child theme CSS. This will prevent theme updates from overwriting your specific changes.

It often helps to have a copy of the parent theme’s style.css file on hand, so you know what changes you will want to make on the child stylesheet.

5. **Upload your modified CSS file to the child theme directory.** This is best done using an FTP or SFTP program like FileZilla or CyberDuck.

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6. **Reference the parent stylesheet.** This is key. The parent theme is the main theme you selected to use. By referencing the parent theme, your child theme will leverage the parent styles along with your changes. It will allow you to update the theme and pick up new features while having custom changes to the child theme you make still work.

The best way to do this is to “enqueue” the child theme to the parent theme. This makes sure both stylesheets are loaded in the correct order by the browser. To do that, you will need to add the following at the beginning of the **function.php** file in the child’s theme directory. The function.php file allows you to change and add features to a WordPress website.

```
<?php
add_action( 'wp_enqueue_scripts', 'enqueue_parent_styles' );

function enqueue_parent_styles() {
    wp_enqueue_style( 'parent-style', get_template_directory_uri()
    . '/style.css' );
}
?>
```

7. **Create an image for the child theme to be seen in the Appearance > Themes page in the WordPress dashboard.** You do this by creating a PNG file 880 pixels by 660 pixels. One option is to download the PNG file from the parent theme. Put your new PNG file in your child theme folder.
8. **Activate the theme.** Once you have made these changes, the child theme will show up on the Themes page. Select the child theme and click the **Activate** button.

(Alternatively, instead of using FTP/SFTP to upload your files to the child theme folder, you can zip them up and install the theme in the same way you install a new theme.)



FileZilla



CyberDuck

Set Up Your Site Navigation Properly

It's important to organize your site so that it is intuitive for your visitors to navigate. If you plan out your site effectively, it helps you to establish what pages you need. To determine your site organization, first review the type of content you need for your site. Consider this:



- ➔ **Home page.** Depending on your main purpose, you can select either a static home page or your latest blog post. Static homepages are good if you are promoting your business, an organization or selling your products online. If your main goal is to promote your ideas and thoughts, or showcase your hobby, you will be better served with your latest post as the home page.
- ➔ **About.** When viewing a site, it helps to know more about the company, the organization, or the individual. Plan on having an About page to give your viewers more insight about you or your organization.
- ➔ **Contact.** You should consider providing your visitors with a way to contact you. This generally requires a contact page, which can be handled with a contact form for visitors to fill out to contact you. Using a plugin like WPForms makes it very easy to add a contact form.
- ➔ **Goal Pages.** Goal pages are those that serve the purpose of your site. If you are trying to inform others about your products, for example, you'll need one or more product pages. A restaurant might need a menu page and possibly a location page to show visitors how to get to their place of business. Evaluate what your target visitor needs to know to learn about, to evaluate, to make a decision, or to take an action. The information they need is what you'll want to consider adding. This will require one or more goal or call to action pages.

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- ➔ **Blog Posts.** Some sites do not require blog posts, but it's something to consider. One way to attract visitors to your site is to provide interesting or meaningful content in the form of blog posts. Even a business that isn't about publishing can benefit from having a blog section on your website.

Creating a Navigation Menu

After deciding on the type of content you'll need, you will want to group that content into logical sections. Each section becomes one of your navigation menu items. The navigation menu is the tool for users to discover pages on your website.

For example, using the restaurant example, we might create a navigation structure like this:

- ➔ Home page
- ➔ Menu
- ➔ Location
- ➔ Blog
- ➔ About Us
- ➔ Contact Us

If you are still unclear what you will need, you can get more insight by showing your navigation menu to a target user or friend. Ask them where would they go on the site to find specific content with this structure. If you see that they are finding some things to be confusing, adjust your menu to be more intuitive to your audience.



Permalinks

Each of your website pages will have unique URL. The base of each page will be your domain name, such as www.yourdomain.com. WordPress helps you to provide a unique URL by automatically creating them based on a specific structure called a permalink. While you can manually change the URL for each page, it is a good idea to set up the structure you want WordPress to use to create the URL.

WordPress gives you six options for the URL structure—five defined structures and a custom one allows you to set up a unique structure:

- ➔ Plain. <http://www.yourdomain.com/?=123>
- ➔ Day and name. <http://www.yourdomain.com/2016/07/15/sample-post/>
- ➔ Month and name (default). <http://www.yourdomain.com/2016/07/sample-post/>
- ➔ Numeric. <http://www.yourdomain.com/archives/123>
- ➔ Post name. <http://www.yourdomain.com/sample-post/>
- ➔ Custom. <http://www.yourdomain.com/<custom>>

The plain and numeric approaches use the post or page ID to create a URL. Both of these approaches are not recommended. While search engines can index pages with unique numbers, they are more effective when the URL is more descriptive of the page. For example, this:

<http://www.myrestaurant.com/about>

is far more descriptive than this:

<http://www.myrestaurant.com/?p=5>



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It also makes it easier for others to know what the page is about, especially if they set a bookmark for the page and wonder what it is about at a later time.

The most popular approach for your permalinks is **Post name**. This structure generates an easily remembered URL that is both visitor and search engine friendly. The post name also works equally well for static pages, such as Home, About and Contact page.

If you are going to publish lots of content, then either the Day and name or Month and name structure will be useful as it will organize your content by the month, day and post name or the month and post name respectively.

There are ten structure tags that you can use for the custom permalink option. The best one to use here is to add the following to the custom field:

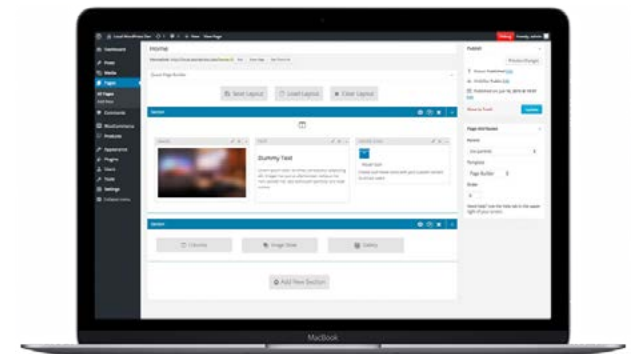
[/%category%/postname/](#)

This will give the URL a category as well as a post name. For example, as a restaurant, you might use:

<http://www.myrestaurant.com/menu/new-menu-items>

<http://www.myrestaurant.com/events/summer-2016>

It is a good idea to stick with whatever method you use. When a search engine indexes your website, it will make note of the URL for each page of your site. If you change this after the fact, it will hurt the traffic that comes from these search engines. You may also have visitors who bookmarked your pages and if you change the URL, they will get an error page instead. That is why it is important to set up your permalinks early on.





Plugin Recommendations

The goal of this ebook isn't to review a lot of plugins, but there are a few that are worth noting.

Once your site is ready, you want to have visitors. The least expensive way to do that is to improve your search engine rankings. **Yoast SEO** is a recommended plugin to help you obtain better search engine results with your website. This plugin uses the best practices to give your website the best opportunity for getting traffic. There is both a free and a premium version of Yoast SEO. We recommend at least get started with the free version to get the help you need driving traffic to your website. Learn more about [Yoast SEO here](#).

Another thing that is worthwhile is tracking the number of visitors to your site. This is especially useful if you use any tools to promote your site, such as an ad campaign. How much traffic did you get from the campaign? Web analytics are the tracking of website visitors, how long they are on the site, what pages they visit and much more. There are a number of available analytics tools you can use, but probably the most popular are Jetpack from WordPress.com and Google Analytics.

Jetpack includes a variety of tools to help you with your WordPress site. Analytics is just one. The biggest benefit of Jetpack is the analytics are shown right within the WordPress dashboard. Jetpack isn't as detailed as Google Analytics, but it is much easier to use. It does require you to have an account on WordPress.com, but that is easy to set up and costs nothing. (If you are using DreamPress, the plugin is pre-installed for you.)

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If you are looking for more robust analytics, look no further than **Google Analytics**. It is free and quite powerful. It can give you quite a few insights that can help you optimize your site. **MonsterInsights** is the premier plugin to enable Google Analytics with your website. All you need to do is install this plugin and enter your Google Analytics account information and you can start tracking your traffic patterns for your website. Learn more about [MonsterInsights here](#). If you do not have a Google Analytics account, you can easily [set one up here](#).

WPForms. WPForms Lite is a third party plugin by WPBeginner that makes it extremely easy to create a contact form on your website. WPForms Lite is the free version; a paid premium version is also available. You can create a variety of forms on your WordPress site using a simple drag & drop builder. Just about every website needs a contact form. There are even some pre-built templates that may be all you need. It works very well on a mobile phone as well as a desktop. We highly recommend it. Learn more about [WPForms here](#).

Plan Out Your Content

One of the more challenging things our users tell us is the difficulty they have creating content. Let's review a few ideas that can help with this important step to developing an awesome site.

What will attract your target users to your site? Consider your unique selling proposition (USP). What topics around your USP would be interesting to your target audience? What would make your content unique?



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One way to help you identify interesting topics to your target audience is to better understand their pain points. What problems do they have that you solve or could potentially solve? For example, a restaurant with a USP of delivering a very creating dining experience, the problem being solved is providing diners with a different but great eating experience and possibly help them get out of the rut at eating at the same establishments too often.

Listing out your target user's pain points related to your USP can help you identify some great content ideas that will resonate well with your target user. Ask new and existing customers questions about what their challenges are and why they chose your solution or why they might choose your solution.

Brainstorm topics that you can write about and organize them. If you are planning on creating a blog (which we recommend), it is much easy to come up with a list of potential blog topics rather than one at a time. By creating a list, you can better organize and group them. This helps you to create unique content with each blog post.

Here are some questions that can help you brainstorm topics:

- ➔ What are all the challenges your users have that relate to what you do?
- ➔ How do you solve your user challenges?
- ➔ What is your real product or service to your user?
- ➔ What is the background of the type of product or service you offer?
- ➔ What are new trends that your industry is experiencing that will be of interest to your users?
- ➔ What do you know about this topic that others could benefit from?

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- ➔ What is the current industry discussion happening about this topic and how can you contribute?
- ➔ What is new and interesting?
- ➔ What are common questions your users have that you can answer?
- ➔ What events are you going to be at or are sponsoring?
- ➔ What issues are you involved in, interested in or are promoting that would be interesting to your readers?
- ➔ What personal interest stories do you have about your business, organization or hobby?
- ➔ If a business, do you have any customer stories that would be interesting?
- ➔ If a business, can you do an employee feature story?
- ➔ Are there local or industry topics you want to share with your visitors?
- ➔ Can you educate your users about issues important to you or your business/organization?
- ➔ Are there any seasonal issues worth reviewing?
- ➔ Can you create a suggestion list that could be helpful to a site visitor?



There are many more questions like these that can help you come up with topics. For example, as a restaurant owner, one might want to create blog posts around these topics:

- ➔ We just introduced a new item on our menu
- ➔ Why our “specific menu item” is so popular with our customers
- ➔ The best drinks for each of our menu items
- ➔ We are hosting a summer bash you will definitely want to attend
- ➔ Our favorite things to do in town
- ➔ Some of our best customer stories

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Schedule Yourself. One idea you might consider is scheduling time to create your blogs and other content. The WordPress plugin called [Edit Flow](#) gives you a calendar view to see when you created content in the past and when you have scheduled time to create new content. If you can, ideally schedule to do one or two blogs per week.

Create Compelling Content

Coming up with a good list of potential topics for blog posts and static pages is a great start. Next is adding the content for each one.

As you get started on a blog post or a new page, it can be helpful to jot down the following:

- ➔ Title of your post or page – what headline will be intriguing and draw your readers in
- ➔ Your unique selling proposition – what makes you unique that is of value to your visitors
- ➔ Problems your target audience has with this topic if any
- ➔ Type of image or video that would add value to your blog
- ➔ Key points you want to make – from these you can create headings

Keep in mind when creating new blogs and pages, to get good search engine results, they need to be at least 600 words and include images or videos. Blog posts that do this will always rank higher than ones with few words and no image.

A good blog post will include an introduction, 3 to 5 key points, and a close. Use this as an outline framework to structure your post.



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For example, if a restaurant has a very popular dish that others may enjoy, the post planning might look like this:

- Title: Why our customers love our chicken tetrazzini
- Our unique selling proposition: We provide the widest range of tasty italian dishes from different Italian regions in the metro area
- Problems target audience has: They are looking for new and tasty dining choices and often get into a rut with the same restaurants
- Image: Photo of the dish
- Key points to make:
 1. We have a master chef
 2. Our recipes are unique
 3. We use only the best ingredients, many that are made fresh or acquired daily

From this, it is much easier to create a great blog than just starting to write cold.

Images and Videos

Blog posts and pages with good images and videos will generally have better search engine results than those without. They are a great item to add to any post or page. Finding good images or videos, however, for your blog posts and pages that do not have copyright issues can be a challenge. Sure you can pay for images from sites like iStockPhoto and Shutterstock. But what if you have budget constraints? And who has the time to take their own photos?

Good news! There are some great websites that offer excellent images that allow you to use them in your website with either no or minimal restriction. Our favorites include:

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- ➔ [Pixabay](#) – over 600,000 free images, vectors, art illustrations, and videos (Creative Commons Zero license)
- ➔ [Pexels](#) – completely free images and [videos](#) you can use (their videos are really unique)
- ➔ [Unsplash](#) – repository of free images to use (Creative Commons Zero license)
- ➔ [Gratisography](#) – free images to use (free of copyright restrictions)

Once you find great images and video to use on your site, the next step is to optimize them.

Optimizing Images

Speed of your website is very important. One mistake new users sometimes make when creating their website is to not optimize their images. Today's images have become larger and larger. Even photos taken with your cell phone can be quite large.

By optimizing your images, you can keep the amount of data that a user's browser needs to download as small as possible without losing quality. This is even more important for mobile devices, which are often downloading websites over a slow network.

The first thing to do is resize your images. High resolution images take too long to download and are not required to display on a mobile display or monitor. You can usually reduce the image resolution without affecting display quality. And you don't need Adobe Photoshop to do it. There are quite a few good online tools to do this, such as:



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<http://webresizer.com/>

<http://optimizilla.com/>

Once you have your images resized, there are a couple of plugins you might want to consider using:

[Adaptive Images for WordPress](#). Resizes and optimizes images delivered to mobile devices, in a transparent and unobtrusive way, so that the total download time is dramatically reduced.

[Lazy Load](#). Only loads an image on the page when it becomes visible to the user instead of having to load all images to display a page at one time.

[DreamSpeed CDN](#). If you want super high performance image delivery, this plugin delivers it. It uploads your WordPress images to the Fastly content distribution network for quick global delivery. This does cost both for DreamObjects storage, which is relatively inexpensive, and CDN charges, but it can be worth it. Learn more about [DreamSpeed CDN here](#).

There are quite a few other plugins you could use. Making images responsive for mobile devices and lazy loading images are two of the best ways to improve image delivery. When looking for a good plugin, check four things:

- ➔ How popular is the plugin by number of downloads relative to other alternative plugins?
- ➔ What is its rating relative to other alternative plugins?
- ➔ How long ago was it updated?
- ➔ Is it compatible with the latest release of WordPress?



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Optimizing Video

Speed is also important when optimizing video. Unless your video is your featured media, it is a good idea to upload your video to YouTube (or Vimeo) and simply add the link to the video in your post. Embedding video links is better because only the link and a starting image for the video are downloaded, not the entire video, when the page is first loaded. Only when the user chooses to play the video is it downloaded.

Embedding a YouTube video is easy. All you need to do is:

1. Upload the video to YouTube (if not already on YouTube).
2. Copy the share link.
3. Paste the share link into your post.

If you want to customize the size of the video, you will need to do it a bit differently. Instead of copying the share link, copy the embed link. Change the embed link with the format below. Replace “w” with the actual width, “y” with the actual height and youtube_url with the actual URL. (Be sure to maintain the aspect ratio the same if you change the height and width size.)

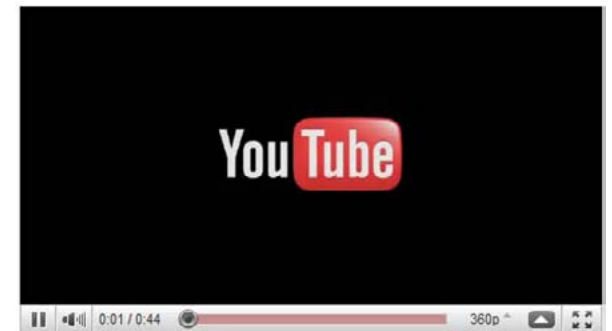
```
[embed width="w" height="y"]youtube_url[/embed]
```

For example, from this embed link:

```
<iframe width="560" height="315" src="https://www.youtube.com/embed/UJNYnE6g9hE" frameborder="0" allowfullscreen></iframe>
```

Change it to (or whatever video size you want):

```
[embed width="560" height="315"] https://www.youtube.com/embed/UJNYnE6g9hE[/embed]
```



If the video is the only content of the post, you'll want to consider these options:

- ➔ Indicate that the post contains video with something like this in the post title: "(Video)". You'll want to edit the word video out of the permalink.
- ➔ Give some context for the video. Summarize what the video is about in the post in a few sentences so the viewer has some idea of whether or not to view it. Downloading on a mobile device takes time. If the video is just part of a longer post, this won't be necessary.

Call to Action

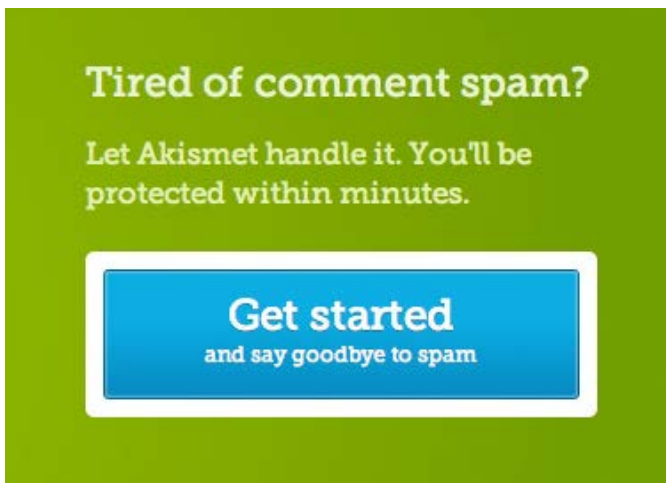
Depending on the post or page, a good call to action, or CTA, can be the best type of close. What do you want your site visitor to do? Add a good CTA to invite this action.

What is a good call to action? Let's consider some examples.

- ➔ Netflix: Join Free for a Month
- ➔ Dropbox: Sign Up for Free
- ➔ Square: Start Selling Today. Get Started.
- ➔ Treehouse: Claim Your Free Trial
- ➔ Uber: Start Riding with Uber. Sign Up.

These CTAs center around a free offer or an invitation to get started. Not all CTAs need to be a free offer, but each does invite an action. And the best actions are simple. There's nothing complex about "get started", "download now", or "subscribe". The simpler you can make the CTA, the better.

Some good blog post CTAs to use:



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- ➔ Invite the visitor to follow you (or your organization) on social media
- ➔ Request the visitor tweet your post
- ➔ Invite the reader to add a comment to your post
- ➔ Suggest the visitor sign up for a newsletter, ebook or other option

Most CTAs use an nice looking button to encourage the reader to take the action. Choose a button that stands out with a simple action invitation. For WordPress sites, there are plugins that make it quite easy to add a good CTA button, such as:

- ➔ [WordPress Calls to Action](#). Provides a visual editor for creating call to action buttons. Also helps you to track CTA conversions.
- ➔ [Tweet This](#). Makes it easy for your visitors to tweet your post.
- ➔ [OptinMonster](#). Great for creating lead capture forms, such as for a newsletter subscription list or to download an ebook.

Conclusion

Whew! We covered a lot of ground here. Creating an awesome website can be a challenge, but if you break it down into bite size chunks, it can be manageable. Therefore, take some time to:

- ➔ Identify your website's purpose
- ➔ Choose a great theme for your site
- ➔ Set up your site navigation properly
- ➔ Plan your site content in advance
- ➔ Create compelling content for your target visitors with good media

Working this approach can help you create an awesome website. Good luck!



About DreamHost

Since 1997 DreamHost has helped individuals, small businesses, entrepreneurs, organizations and developers the world over bring their dreams to life on the Internet. From domain registrations to web hosting and powerful cloud computing services, more than 400,000 customers trust DreamHost to be their online home. Packed with excellent value, DreamHost is a great place to launch a blog, website, or online application.

DreamHost hosts over 800,000 WordPress websites and has developers on staff who contribute to WordPress core development. DreamHost's highly optimized managed WordPress hosting service, DreamPress, delivers exceptional performance, simple management and fanatical WordPress customer support.

Learn more at www.DreamHost.com.



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