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Textpattern

By [Ryan Goodrich](#)

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Textpattern is [content management system software](#) that focuses on the content. It's not quite a CMS, but it's not just a blog engine either. Its users are devoted to the marked separation between content and design, which is the traditional mission of a CMS. A simple backend delights the more technically sophisticated clients, though a high learning curve can be off-putting at first (especially regarding the subject of tags and categories, which seems to be a main criticism of this system). It is both free and open source, and it makes managing content a bit like conducting a symphony. If you have a knack for PHP and like the possibilities posed by Textpattern, then this low-key CMS deserves your consideration.

On the surface, the interface for this CMS is quite simple. However, a variety of features are missing, such as a WYSIWYG editor for [text](#) which forces authors to learn the various commands to format text. A working knowledge of PHP is obviously required to do anything extensive with this application. However, with the right knowledge, the slim-but-focused nature of Textpattern as content management system [software](#) can be well suited for a variety of site types, including:

- Blogs and photoblogs
- Business sites and non-profit organization sites
- Online catalogs
- Download sites and simple portals
- Tutorial, review, news or magazine sites

You can also develop any combination of the sites above. Textpattern handles a variety of content well through PHP, making it an absolute contender on this CMS review site. One handy feature it offers is the ability to import your blog from Movable Type, Blogger, b2evolution and WordPress, and you can specify where you want to place the import – in which section, category and so forth.

Using the sections, you can individualize each portion of your website. Each section can have its own page template for each type of content layout. So, you can have a [portfolio](#) site with a static welcome page and portfolio thumbnails as a portal to a larger gallery, while also posting a news section for your blog-style content.

The creation and use of add-ons through Textpattern is somewhat labor intensive because

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it isn't a simple matter of downloading the plugin from the developer and installing it on your website. To install a plugin with Textpattern, you must copy and paste the "BASE64-encoded wedge of text," an attribute that is found in the header that contains the plugin information. You may also be required to upload images and other files associated with the plugin.

Despite the clunky plugin manager interface, we found quite a few plugins available on the Textpattern website. Their library contains plugins that allow you to embed YouTube videos, improve the administrator interface and even include a shopping cart. With regard to changing your site's theme, or skin, this CMS doesn't offer true support for this function. This means you will be given the forms, pages and style sheets and directions for installing the plugins. You will have to put them together yourself. This could be a major drawback for someone with little-to-no design experience.

Textpattern content management system software is flexible for designers and easy for technical end users. It is XHTML compliant and a Unicode godsend with plenty of plugins and an active community. Though it appears simple and plain, it is actually a system with some real power and versatility behind it if you can learn to master its many functions and controls.

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