Guide to creating and editing an academic profile/micro-site on WordPress.com

Andy Law

andylaw.co | a.j.law@qmul.ac.uk

February 2017

Contents

1 Setting things up

First you need to register your site with WordPress.com

```
> Go to wordpress.com
```

```
> Click ''Get Started''
```

1.1 Front page layout

Unless you want to blog via your site and have this as the landing/home page, you'll want to choose "A welcome page for my site".

```
> For now, choose ''A welcome page for my site'' (you can change it later)
```

1.2 Theme

A note on themes - many of them look great in the previews as a result of a prominent and beautiful stylised landscape photo. Before picking a theme, you need to consider first whether you have or can access any such image.

When thinking about images, you should consider whether you have an image relevant to your profile, e.g. a professional shot of yourself or something that represents your field or specific area of research. You could look for Creative Commons or public domain images online, for instance via Flickr. Always check the license/usage restrictions of any image you find - in order to use something, you may need to credit and link back to the source[1]. If you don't have an image, you need to pick a theme that works - i.e. looks nice - without one. We'll use one with a header image for now - I'll provide links to images you can use.

```
> Select the ''Karuna'' theme for now (you can change it later)
```

1.3 Domain

This is where you choose what your URL will look like. For free WordPress.com sites you're restricted to a subdomain of wordpress.com, which essentially means your URL will be *something*.wordpress.com. You just need to decide what that something is.

For academic profiles, it's common for the URL to reference your name in some form. If you have a fairly uncommon name, it might be possible to just use this as

---

[1]Creative Commons licence types: https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/licensing-types-examples. Public domain: https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/public-domain

is. If your name is more common, you might need to include a middle initial, just use initials and last name, or formulate your name in some other way. Alternatively, you could use something meaningful other than your name, perhaps related to your field or specific area of research, e.g. unbeseemingwords.wordpress.com or academicemergence.wordpress.com.

```
> Choose a URL and see if WordPress has it available
```

1.4   Account type

This page just compares the different types of accounts. All but the free accounts allow you to create your own domain, which means rather than *something*.wordpress.com your URL would be just *something*.com[2].

If you do want to pursue registering your own domain, you'll probably find a better deal through external companies. You can get the WordPress interface on your own site from other companies via WordPress.org (as opposed to WordPress.com). This basically gives you unrestricted WordPress, like the premium and business WordPress.com accounts but usually considerably cheaper. If you wish to do this, you need to sort out two things: (1) domain name registration and (2) hosting. Domain name registration gives you the rights to your unique URL and hosting allows you to put your content (pages, text, images etc) online. It's best to get the domain sorted first (because you can't start putting anything onto a site for which you have no URL!), but many companies make the process easier by providing both. In some cases this might cost more (e.g. if a company is really cheap for domain name registration but not for hosting), but right now a good, cheap option for combined registration and hosting is Namecheap. In order to be able to edit your site with the WordPress interface, just ask whoever you choose as your host to set this up (or tell you how). They should also be able to instruct you on how to make email addresses with your site's URL (e.g. kyler@kylergrey.com).

But for now, we'll focus on setting up a free WordPress.com site. Another limitation of free WordPress.com accounts (and "Personal" plan paid accounts) is the limited amount of customisation you can apply to your theme, but you can still make it look nice with the free tools on offer.

```
> Choose a free account for now
```

1.5   Create your account

Now you need to create a WordPress.com account. If you already have an account, you'll need to set up a new one with a different email address in order to create a

---

[2]You can use other top-level domains (e.g. .com, .org, .net) with WordPress.com. To see which are allowed, visit https://en.support.wordpress.com/domains#available-domains

new site.

```
> Create an account
```

WordPress will now create your site. They'll send you an email asking you to confirm your email address. It's a good idea to deal with this now, as you won't be able to publish any new pages without having done so.

```
> Click ''Continue'' on the current page
```

```
> Verify your email address
```

2 Understanding the settings

2.1 The interface(s)/the admin panel

After being redirected to your new site, you'll get a couple of tips about how to use the menu.

```
> Dismiss introductory tips
```

There are a few different ways to edit your site in WordPress.com. On the current page, you'll see "My Site" in the top left - this will show the menu that just disappeared and provide access to most of the basic editing tools: adding and editing blog posts and pages, changing the theme and editing menus. You can also click on the "Customize" button at the bottom right. This will allow you edit various aesthetic details, ranging from the title that appears in the top left to the fonts and colour scheme. The way I would recommend interacting with WordPress, however, is through the admin panel. This offers the full set of tools to customise settings for your site and add and edit content. You can also access the "Customize" menu from here, which we'll go to shortly. The quickest way to access the full WordPress admin panel is by adding "/wp-admin" to the end of your site name (in the URL bar).

```
> Go to YOURSITE.wordpress.com/wp-admin
```

As you'll see in the left panel, there's a lot you can do. Most of the items in the panel are menus of their own, with sub-items. Daunting! The items you can see are grouped. At the top, you have some fairly general features that you can mostly ignore. The only thing I use it for is site stats, which allow you to see how many hits you're getting, on which pages and basic detail about how people

are reaching your site or where they're going afterwards (if you have hyperlinks to external sites). The second cluster is all about content - pages, images, blog posts and so on - and the third cluster is for settings and site-wide customisation. We'll go through the key aspects of the menu and what they mean later, but for now let's take a look at the "Customize" interface.

```
> Hover over ''Appearance'' in the left panel and then click ''Customize''
```

2.2 The "Customize" interface

The settings presented here vary by theme, but they all cover various global settings that change the look, feel and sometimes content of your site.

By default, when you first select a theme it will give you lots of content types (like widgets) in example pages. These are all useful in different contexts, but you're unlikely to need all of them in most circumstances. So as we go through the settings here you'll be deleting a few things that aren't all that useful for the purpose of academic profiles.

One more thing to note is that you can view the site as though it were a desktop/laptop computer, a tablet or a phone. This allows you to see how "responsive" your website is to the different ways people will access it, i.e. how well it works on different device types. You can do this by clicking on the three icons at the bottom right of the menu on the left. You can leave it on the desktop/laptop setting for now, but you might want to check this out later, or simply test your site on different devices after making any changes.

2.2.1 "Site Identity"

The first option here is to add a logo. I'm going to assume most of you don't have a personal logo, but if you do you can add it here to make it appear to the left of your site title, which is the next setting.

The site title is the name that appears at the top of your site, and also in search engine results and browser tab labels ("*page title | site title*"). For an academic profile, you probably just want this to be your name.

```
> Enter a site title
```

You can optionally add a tagline. The way this appears (placement, font size etc) varies by theme - some look great, others less so. You might want to put in here your discipline or that you're a PhD candidate, for instance. In this theme the tagline appears above the site title, so you might feel the ordering of the content is illogical - it's up to you if you want to include this or leave it out.

```
> Optionally add a tagline
```

Note that below there is an option not to display either the title or the tagline. You might want to do this if you have a logo that contains your name (or brand name) and you don't want that to appear twice (in such a scenario, you should still enter it in the settings to inform search engines and browsers).

You also have the option of adding a site icon, which is the little icon that appears to the left of the page title on the tab label in browsers. Again I'm going to assume most people don't have one, so you can leave this setting for now, but you can come back here to edit it if you wish.

And finally, on free WordPress.com sites you have to credit WordPress in some way via the footer right at the bottom of your site. The default sounds like an advert, so you might want to change it to something more neutral out of the options in the dropdown, like "Powered by WordPress.com".

```
> Optionally change the way WordPress is credited (footer credit)
```

2.2.2 "Colors & Backgrounds"

Here you can adjust the colour palette for your site. You can choose from the various palettes provided and also change the background (currently white) to any colour you like, or alternatively an image. To get back to the palette picker after choosing a background colour, click "Done". To revert to the default colour palette, click "Default". You can leave this for now and you can come back to it later.

2.2.3 "Fonts"

Here you can change the heading and body/base fonts. There is a reasonable but limited selection of fonts available for use on free WordPress.com sites. Again, you can come back to this later to play around and find your favourite combination.

2.2.4 "Header Image"

Unless you have a good quality landscape photo ready, you can take an image from Flickr, which has loads of work available for re-use under Creative Commons licences. As mentioned earlier, you may need to credit (provide attribution to) the creator/author. All three of the images linked below have this requirement. The type of licence indicates the ways an image can be re-used. Flickr currently indicates this below and to the right of images (a screenshot of the section is in figure 1). You can click on the icons or the text link to see the requirements of the licence and its name and short name (e.g. CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, the middle

hyphenated portion of which indicates the re-use requirements). For crediting work, you'll want to know the short name and the URL for the licence. If credit is required, you should ideally link to the work, the author and the licence, but as a minimum you must name the author and link to the licence. For each of the three options below, I have provided the credit text underneath. You'll add this when you get to editing the content of the homepage.
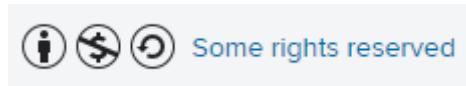

Figure 1: Creative Commons licence information on Flickr

Images of books on Flickr:
- https://www.flickr.com/photos/sociology-at-work/8472769373
  Header image "Sociology textbooks" by Zuleyka Zevallos is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

- https://www.flickr.com/photos/changa19/3657988244
  Header image "it's going to be a long summer" by changa19 is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

- https://www.flickr.com/photos/evonneleif/1474738120
  Header image "Moleskinerie" by Lelf and Evonne is licensed under CC BY-ND 2.0.

To download an image from Flickr, click the download button (a screenshot is in figure 2) and select a size. "Original" is always the highest quality.

Figure 2: the download button on Flickr

```
> Choose one of the images above to download from Flickr (unless you
have your own image)
```

Returning to WordPress, you now need to upload and crop your image. You might want the image to be quite short so that the content below is visible when pages load.

```
> Select ''Add new image'' in WordPress
```

```
> Either drag your file into this box or click ''Select Files'' and open
it
```

```
> Click ''Select and Crop''
```

```
> Adjust the selection box to crop the image as desired
```

```
> Click ''Crop Image''
```

2.2.5 "Menus"

Here you can edit what appears in the two menus available: one for pages and one for social media links (the icons on the top right of your site). You can also edit these from a menu within the main admin interface and it's better to do it once you've created new pages, so you can come back to this later.

2.2.6 "Content Options"

You can ignore this for now, but if you decide to use the site for blogging you might want to come back here to explore the options.

2.2.7 "Widgets"

You can use widgets to add various types of content to different areas of your site, like footers, sidebars on various pages, underneath the header image and so on. I'm going to assume that you don't need these for a small academic profile site, given you won't have many pages and probably no blog posts, and most of the basic widget functions are designed for navigating through content. The main menu does the job for the purposes of a small academic profile site. You might later want to add a widget that brings through your latest tweets or your Facebook or Instagram profiles. If so, come back here later, select an area and click "Add a Widget" to explore the options. For now, you can remove everything.

```
> Click on the first area (''Sidebar'')
```

```
> Click on the first item (''Search'')
```

```
> Click ''Remove''
```

```
> Repeat for the rest of the items in each area (this might take a few
minutes)
```

2.2.8 "Static Front Page"

This is what you set early on, before accessing the admin panel. You can decide whether your homepage should be your latest blog posts (either in full or as excerpts, which you can determine in the "Content Options" menu) or a static page. We're going for the latter. With that option selected, you can also choose which page will be your front page (or home page) and your posts page (or blog page). The defaults are right for most purposes, so there's nothing to do here.

2.2.9 "Testimonials"

If you want to add testimonials using the WordPress template for this content type (rather than using standard text editing on a page), you can come back here to edit a few settings. I'll assume not for now.

2.3 Back to the admin panel

Now that you've customised your site settings, you need to save the changes.

```
> Click ''Save & Publish''
```

When the button changes to "Saved", you can return to the admin panel to check out the remainder of the settings, before moving on to adding content.

```
> Click on the cross at the top left to return to the admin panel
```

2.4 Overlap with the "Customize" interface

As you'll see, under the appearance section many of the options are the same as appear in the "Customize" interface. In fact, some of the links go to that interface. "Widgets" and "Menus" have pages within the admin panel, offering an alternative layout to that within the "Customize" interface. We'll return to the latter later after adding content. The only other setting of interest under "Appearance" is "Themes", where you can switch the theme you're using. We'll leave this for now, but you may want to return to it later to pick whichever theme you like best.

2.5 Plugins

Plugins are useful extensions to the basic WordPress functionality, but you can't add any plugins on WordPress.com sites - you need an externally-hosted Word-Press.org site - so we'll skip past this.

2.6 Users

Under "Users", you can set up accounts for other people to edit your site. I'll assume you'll be the sole editor and skip past this too.

2.7 Tools

Another group of settings that aren't of much use to us.

2.8 Settings

Here you will find more overlap with the "Customize" interface, but also a load more settings.

2.8.1 "General"

Here you can edit the site title and tagline, as per the "Customize" interface, and also the time and date settings. These only really become relevant when creating blog posts, so we'll skip this for now.

2.8.2 "Writing"

Another blog-related group of settings, which we'll skip.

2.8.3 "Reading"

Under this group of settings, you can again edit what goes on the front/home page and how blogging works. You can also decide whether you want Google and other search engines to return your site in search results - I'll assume you do and skip this setting.

2.8.4 "Discussion"

These settings are all about comments, which again are only really relevant if you want to blog on your site. You can also have comments on pages, but this is unconventional so for most purposes you might prefer to disable this (you can do so on individual pages).

2.8.5 "Media"

Here you can change a few settings related to media (in this context meaning pictures, video, audio etc) but the defaults are fine, so we'll skip it.

2.8.6 "Sharing"

Here you can customise the ways people can share pages and posts. The settings here allow you to decide which services appear, what the buttons look like and what types of pages they appear on ("pages", blog posts, the front page etc). The convention is only to have these on blog posts, which I'm assuming are unwanted for now, so the only thing to do here is disable the sharing buttons on pages. However, you can return here later if you do wish to have them showing and want to edit which buttons appear and how they look.

```
> Scroll down and uncheck ''pages'' under ''Show buttons on''
```

The rest of the settings are of little interest, so it's finally time to create some content!

3 Adding content

3.1 Deleting posts

First you should delete a few example blog posts WordPress created for us earlier.

```
> Click ''Posts'' on the left menu

> Click the checkbox to the left of ''Title'' (either)

> Click in the dropdown that says ''Bulk Actions'' and select ''Move
to Trash''

> Click ''Apply''
```

3.2 Editing the homepage

Now onto creating and editing pages, starting with the homepage.

```
> Click on ''Pages''

> Click on ''Home''
```

You can edit pages in two ways: visual or text. Which one you use will probably depend largely on your familiarity with HTML. If you do know basic HTML, it might be best to use the text editor, so that you can see all the formatting

code, minimise the risk of introducing formatting inconsistencies and see/find them should they arise. For now, you can use the visual editor which is similar to Microsoft Word and other what you see is what you get ("WYSIWYG") text editors.

On this page you should add your bio. If you don't have one, use the example below. You'll need to consider whether you want to write your site in first or third person - both are common.

```
> Delete the placeholder text and enter your bio
```

Example bio:

I'm currently a PhD candidate in Astroknitting based at Queen Mary University of London, supervised by Dr Neil deGrasse Tyson and Magda Sayeg. I'm interested in the intersection of astrophysics and knitting. My research explores both how the concepts of astrophysics can inform the practice of knitting and how the techniques passed down through the tradition of knitting can help to solve some of the key issues in contemporary astrophysics.

You can add links and edit text in various ways using the button above the text area. You can also add media using the "Add Media" button - place your cursor where you want the media to appear first.

After you've finished editing, you can preview the changes to check everything appears as expected. After making any final amendments, you need to save your changes.

```
> Click ''Preview Changes''

> Make any final amendments

> Click ''Update''
```

You also need to add credit for the header image if you're using one from Flickr. Check section 2.2.4 for the text.

```
> Add credit for the header image

> Click ''Update''
```

3.3   Contact page

You can also edit the contact page, already created for us by WordPress.

```
> Click ''All Pages'' in the menu on the left
```

```
> Click ''Contact"
```

Here you will see a mixture of normal text and "shortcodes", which WordPress uses for certain types of content, including contact forms. However, you can edit the contact form without needing to understand the code. You should also delete the placeholder text.

```
> Delete the text before the first square bracket
```

```
> Click ''Add Contact Form''
```

Here you can change which fields appear in the contact form and whether they are compulsory or optional. If you hover over a field you will see the "edit" option appear, as well as an option to move the field. The only change I would suggest to make here is to edit the "Website" field to "Subject" and make it a short text field.

```
> Hover over the ''Website'' field and click ''edit''
```

```
> Change the label to ''Subject'' and the field type to ''Text''
```

```
> Click ''Save this field''
```

You can add new fields via the button "Add a new field" at the bottom of the form, but this should do for most purposes.

Lastly, you want to decide where messages go.

```
> Click ''Email notifications'' at the top
```

```
> Enter the email address to which you want messages to be sent and optionally
a custom subject line
```

```
> Click ''Save and go back to form builder''
```

Now you just need to add this to the page - it will automatically overwrite the existing contact form, and you can repeat this process to make changes in the future.

```
> Click ``Add this form to my post''
```

```
> Click ``Update''
```

3.4   Featured images

Unless you specify otherwise, the header image will be the same throughout your website. However, you can have a unique image on each page. WordPress has done this on the example pages it set up by using "featured images". I'm going to assume you want the header to be consistent across pages, so you need to delete this from the contact page.

```
> Scroll down to ``Featured Image'' on the right column
```

```
> Click ``Remove featured image''
```

```
> Click ``Update''
```

3.5   Adding and deleting pages

Now you need to return to the list of pages.

```
> Click ``All Pages'' on the left menu
```

You don't need the about page as the home page serves this purpose, so you should delete it.

```
> Move the cursor over the ``About'' entry, then click the ``Trash''
button that appears
```

Now you need to add a few new pages. We'll do the first here, then you can add others later.

```
> Click ``Add New''
```

From now, the only additional task you have from editing the previous pages is to add a page title, which you can do at the top.

```
> Add the page title ``Conference presentations'' (in title case if you
prefer)
```

You can add your presentations later - for now, copy the following example into the text area.

Example conference presentation:

Lastname, Firstname. 2017. Macro theory and micro practice: intersections of astrophysics and knitting. *Intersectional Approaches to Contemporary Academic Inquiry*. 12 February 2017. Bologna, Italy.

You'll want to check if the page URL is formulated as expected. Underneath the title is a "Permalink". You can get WordPress to regenerate this after creating or amending the page title.

```
> If the permalink doesn't resemble the page name, click ''Edit'' next
to it
```

```
> Delete the contents of the box that appears
```

```
> Click ''OK''
```

On new pages, instead of the "Update" button you will see "Publish". Assuming you're happy with the content, publish your page.

```
> Click ''Publish''
```

You can return to edit pages and add more shortly.

3.6   Back to menus

Now that you have a new page added to the site, you can update the main menu.

```
> Go to Appearance > Menus
```

Under the "Menu Structure" box you'll see the pages/links that are currently in the menu. You can edit these by clicking on the arrowhead at the right side of their respective entries. For now, you don't want a blog and your biography should be on the home page, so you can delete two items from the menu.

```
> Click the arrowhead on the ''Blog'' entry
```

```
> Click ''Remove''
```

```
> Repeat for ''About''
```

You'll then want to add the new page you've created. One the left side of this page is where you can add items to the menu. There are five types of items you can add: pages, posts, testimonials, custom links and categories. You'll probably only be interested in pages for the purposes of your site, but custom links can also be useful if you want to make a link to a specific place within a page or to an external website. The pages section is already expanded.

```
> Check the box next to ''Conference presentations''
```

```
> Click ''Add to Menu''
```

After adding your new page, you can rearrange the menu items as desired by clicking and dragging them around within the "Menu Structure" area.

```
> Optionally rearrange menu items
```

Once you're happy with your menu, you need to save the changes.

```
> Click ''Save Menu'' (either of the blue buttons on the right)
```

You also need to edit the social media menu.

```
> Under ''Select a menu to edit'' near the top, select ''Social Media
(Social Menu)''
```

```
> Click ''Select''
```

First you might want to remove links to any social media profiles you don't have or don't want to link to from your site.

```
> Remove unwanted social media links
```

Then you'll need to edit the URLs of each link to those of your own profiles, e.g. http://facebook.com/*myfacebookprofile*.

```
> Edit the links to link to your own profiles, then save
```

If you decide you don't want to link to any social media, you can switch the menu off by unchecking "Social Menu" under "Menu Settings" and then clicking "Save Menu".

4 Customising your site

Now that all the basics have been covered, you can go ahead and customise your site, adding content and changing settings as you wish. Below are a few suggestions for what to do next.

1. Adjust the following settings:
   - Appearance > Themes (make sure to check the "Customize" interface for new settings after changing you theme)
   - Appearance > Customize > Colors & Background
   - Appearance > Customize > Fonts

2. Add more pages, e.g.:
   - Teaching experience
   - Publications
   - Media appearances
   - If you want a short homepage, separate pages covering your biography (e.g. "About") and your research (e.g. "Research") - the latter could cover side and past projects as well as your main PhD thesis
   - A more traditional CV - either as a webpage or an embedded PDF using "Add Media"

   Remember to update your menu when you've finished adding pages.

   Feel free to ask questions regarding any of the above or anything else WordPress/website-related, either in session or after via the email at the top.