

Setting Up A WordPress Blog

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Creating a WordPress Blog

Creating a WordPress blog can seem daunting when you contemplate doing it off of the official WordPress site where you simply point and click your way through the options until it's published.

There are technical installation steps to intimidate you, aesthetic issues to consider, search engine optimization strategies to address and content creation to intimidate you right out of having the blog you've always wanted.

Once you get past your fears and find a good set of tutorials, you'll have the confidence it requires to create a WordPress blog with ease. The first time you do it, go slow and make sure you implement all of the steps.

As you become accustomed to the blog navigation on the dashboard, you'll be tweaking it to your own preferences without hesitation. Before you install WordPress on your domain, consider why you're choosing a blog format over that of a static HTML site.

Some people theorize that Google has a deep affinity for bloggers because of the social elements they provide paired with regular updates. Others simply say a blog is more optimized for search engine spiders, whereas a static site sometimes gets outdated and stale.

Creating a WordPress blog is a good business move for entrepreneurs whose business is online (or even an offline entity that needs an online web presence). Virtually any business model can be supported through the use of a WordPress blog, including affiliate marketing, info product sales, tangible promotions, services, and more!

When you go through this process, you'll need to take it in stages, breaking it down into specific steps along the way. For instance, you'll be

registering a domain, getting hosting, installing WordPress, and then customizing the site to suit your business needs.

As you work more with WordPress, you'll find that sometimes you have some tough choices to make. The wonderful thing about these sites is you have the ability to quickly switch things around, tweaking them for your personal preferences or so that the blog performs better in the search engines for you.

By creating a WordPress blog, you're setting up a home for your brand on the 'net. Don't think that the entire setup has to be done in a day. You can make a blog go live as you customize it and allow your visitors to see the changes along the way.

Don't expect a sudden flood of traffic the day your site goes live. While Google may index it quickly, your content and SEO care-taking strategies are what will pull in a target audience who's ready to listen to what you have to say.

How to Install WordPress

In order to start your new blog, you'll need to first have a domain name and hosting account. Some people simply register a WordPress blog on WordPress.com but the problem with that is that you're then at the mercy of other people.

You don't want to wake up one day and see that your hard work has been deleted by an overzealous moderator of some sort. So host your WordPress blog on your own domain where you have total control.

There are two very different ways you can install WordPress. One requires a lot more technical effort on your part, but is more secure. The other is quick and easy, but some say has vulnerabilities attached to it.

Fantastico is an automated WordPress installation feature usually included in your hosting account if you have cpanel. HostGator is one such company that offers it. It will install the blog for you once you enter a few details to register it.

But while it's an easy install option, some people warn of its ability to be hacked by unethical spammers. Still, for newbies it's a wonderful way to get started so we'll cover that first.

Log into your cpanel and click on Fantastico De Luxe under the Software and Services section – it will look like a smiley face icon. Under Blogs, click the WordPress option and choose “New Installation.”

Choose the domain you wish to install WordPress on from the drop down menu and if it asks you for the directory, leave it blank if you wish it to be on the root of the domain or put “blog” without quotes if you want it located at domain.com/blog.

Grant yourself admin access with a username and password and Click Install WordPress and Finish Installation. Make sure you bookmark the login page so that you'll know where to go whenever you want to manage or post to your blog!

Manually, the install steps for WordPress are a bit trickier. You'll go to WordPress.org and download the software yourself. Unzip the file and follow the install instructions on their site verbatim.

You'll be renaming files, integrating it into your domain, and running the install scripts. It's best if you have an FTP client available for this so that the process goes smoother for you.

Free Versus Premium WordPress Theme

Once your WordPress blog is installed on your domain, you'll begin the job of customizing it for your business. You don't want to leave the default theme intact – it looks unprofessional.

So now you have a choice – do you opt for a free WordPress theme or upgrade to a premium level theme, which you'll have to pay for? If you're brand new to blogging, you might want to stick with the free themes temporarily and then upgrade once you know you're dedicated to keeping the site active long-term.

Others may want to invest in a premium theme right away so that no changes have to be made once the site is underway. To access the free themes, log into your WordPress dashboard and click on Appearances and then Themes.

At the top of the page you can click on Install Themes and choose from the Featured, Newest, Recently Updated – or the option to install your own. You'll find many free WordPress themes online just by Googling for them.

But you have to be careful because nothing is truly free – the providers of those WordPress themes will have some sort of benefit included in the theme, sometimes in the form of an unsavory link pointing from your blog to their own domain.

Premium themes are usually clean and more search engine optimized than the freebies are. You can search for those on Google too and find a myriad of options. If you buy one, download the file to your hard drive and choose the "Upload" option in your blog area. Then extract the zip file so that the theme is available for you to choose.

When you see your new theme options, simply click "Activate" on the theme you prefer. You can swap these out at any time, but it's best to find a good theme and maintain it so that your site builds brand recognition of its own.

WordPress themes vary between crisp and clean to colorful and cluttered. You want to choose something based on your personal preferences, but also keep the reader in mind. Don't choose a theme where the words are hard to read or the colors cause people to click out immediately.

You can also choose to have a custom WordPress theme created for you if you have deep pockets, but a Premium theme will be a great alternative and it won't break the bank. For online marketing, many people like the Socrates option, but it's only one of many, so you'll have to do your homework and find one that's right for you.

Thesis WordPress Skins

While the words theme, templates, styles and skins all have different technical meanings, they're basically used interchangeably by WordPress bloggers who are seeking a new look and layout for their blog design.

Thesis is a WordPress theme that has various skins you can apply to your blog. The theme provides the framework for your blog's mechanisms while the skins provide the look and feel.

The Thesis pack is popular because many bloggers have reported increased SEO benefits once they upgraded to this blog model. There are many skins and layouts you can choose with Thesis WordPress skins, from clean and crisp to more complex by design.

Thesis is considered one of the Premium themes – it's not free. But it allows the new or advanced blogger to customize their creation with as many (or as few) bells and whistles as they prefer.

You can change things easily and quickly. For instance, instead of scouring the 'net for a 3-column theme, you can log in and change your thesis theme from a 2 column to 3-column with a simple click and choice.

With many themes, you're stuck with the font and layout you're given – but with Thesis, you can control how all of these things appear. Install the theme and then pick and choose from a variety of skins to alter the look.

Security is another reason many bloggers pick Thesis. Many free themes are plagued by sneaky SEO that benefits the creator of the theme, but not the end user – but with Thesis, your SEO works for you.

One of the frequent issues plaguing blog users is that they're left vulnerable – sometimes due to the fact that the theme they're using isn't updated to prevent hackers from breaking in and invading the system.

Thesis is a major blog theme brand, and the creators have worked hard to ensure it's kept updated and full of new features that can provide your business a more professional, streamlined site presence.

You can buy Thesis in a single or developer's option. If you have more than one site, you'll want a developer's license. Then if you want, you can find free Thesis skins and premium skins for about \$35 to add to your layout options.

Magazine WordPress Theme

One of the trendy choices for bloggers to use when it comes to layouts is the magazine WordPress theme. It's a little more complex than a simple column layout, but it makes for a professional look.

You don't have to run an online magazine to use the magazine WordPress theme – that's just a way of saying it spotlights a variety of stories on the home page. Many online news sites use a magazine format to allow users to pick and choose among topics and categories by reading a teaser of the story's headline and then being able to click through.

Any blogger can choose a magazine format – it can be used for personal blogs, review blogs, marketing and consumer shopping. You may have a bit more difficulty learning to navigate it as a newbie than you would a simple columned theme, but most premium themes have a tutorial to accompany it.

Aside from the standard magazine theme, there is also a mini magazine theme that can be utilized on your blog, which is built with an image-laden focus on the home page. This would be perfect for those who have products to feature with stunning photographs.

Whenever you have a normal magazine WordPress theme, you're going to have the small preview boxes that preview the most recent posts. And you can either do a text-based, image-based, or mixed preview.

3 Column Versus 2 Column WordPress Layout

When it comes to blogs, you want to showcase several areas at once to your visitor so that you have multiple opportunities to capture their

attention, and they have various choices to make short of clicking out of your site.

While some bloggers like a magazine style theme that offers a multitude of thumbnail sized previews, most bloggers stick with a simple two or three column WordPress layout instead.

The header will always go across the top of the blog, and beneath that you'll need to decide if you prefer a wide column with a thinner second column, or a wide middle column with two thinner columns on either side.

Both have their pros and cons, but there's also something else you can do. There are plug ins that you can use to create columns within your blog posts or pages. These are similar to the magazine or newspaper articles you see in print.

Some bloggers like a two-column theme because it gives them a larger content area to work with. You have more of a focus on text and your message than you do advertisements and images in the sidebars.

The only problem is, if you have a lot of widgets or ads you want to place in a sidebar, only having one is going to make your blog scroll for a very long time. This is where a three-column theme is better.

Most people don't know this, but there are also one column themes (primarily used by photographers) and even four column themes! You might use these with one column acting as navigation, another as a content holder, one for advertisements and the last for a calendar, for example.

WordPress AdSense Ready Themes

There are many reasons to start your own WordPress blog. Some do it for personal journaling. Some do it to promote their product or service in a business manner with a platform that's easy to work with. And many do it for AdSense earnings.

AdSense is an ad-generated form of revenue that you can earn via Google. People pay money to get their ads listed on keyword-relevant sites, and the site owner earns money each time someone clicks through on the link.

So when you run an AdSense blog, your goal isn't to include text links within the blog content, but to bring in targeted traffic that will then click out on the ads strategically placed around your blog.

There are some rules you have to adhere to. You can't ask people to click on your links. You can't place too many ad blocks around the blog. Because it can get confusing, it's best to invest time or money in finding an AdSense-ready WordPress theme.

These themes generally have the ad blocks positioned above the fold. That means the visitor to your site sees them even before they scroll down the page. The theme may be three columns, so that there's an ad block at the top and on both sidebar areas.

Most of the WordPress themes that are ready for AdSense codes are fairly plain in nature. They're built with color schemes that match the Google AdSense ads, but there's no real distinction about the niche.

However, there are niche specific AdSense WordPress themes you can buy, too. For example, you can buy a niche pack of AdSense themes for WordPress that include images in the headers for automotives, fitness, gardening and more.

They're usually not amazing graphics, but the point of someone landing on your AdSense site isn't for them to stick around and enjoy their stay anyway – you want them to click out on a link (because you earn money that way).

Whenever you shop for an AdSense WordPress theme, you want to look for several important qualities. First, it has to be search engine optimized. If the blog doesn't perform in search engines, then the theme choice won't matter.

Next, it has to have strategic ad placement. If the ads are buried, or don't match the theme, you'll want to look elsewhere. And last, you want the theme to look professional. Even though the goal is a click out for revenue, you don't want the visitor exiting out of the site without an ad click because they're so turned off by its appearance.

WordPress Header Tutorial

A WordPress blog theme can be customized with your very own header options. You might have someone professionally design a header for you or plug in a template header you got free or paid for as part of a package.

There are many cool things you can do with headers. To start, let's go over how to change your header initially. You need to know what size the header is. To get the height and width, go into your theme and right click on the header and choose "inspect element."

This will open up a section at the bottom of your screen that shows you the height and width of the image. If you choose a header that doesn't fit, it will throw off the look of your WordPress theme.

You can host the new header on your server. Just log into your cpanel, click on the domain and then on the wp-content folder. Then click on themes, and then the particular theme that you want to alter the header in.

You can click on Images and then headers and upload the new header option that you want to use. Or, if you're familiar with it, you can alter the header file directly in the themes folder.

There are some other neat things you can do with your WordPress header images. You can install the WP Unique Article Header Image Plugin that will show a different header for every page and post that you create!

This type of header will be static for that particular post or page. It won't change. But there are also things you can do to rotate the WordPress header while the visitor is still on the page.

You have the ability to set the changing time. So for example, you might set the header to rotate out every 5 or 10 seconds. Some people don't like this type of rotation because they feel it's a distraction to the content on their blog, but others enjoy the higher technical appeal of it.

You can do this two ways – use a plugin, such as JS Banner Rotate – or learn how to manually code the WordPress blog to do the job for you. This is a much more intensive operation that could be daunting for the newbie blogger.

WordPress SEO Tips

Many online entrepreneurs develop a blog presence online because they've heard about the search engine appetite for blog content. And it's true – Google and other search platforms like frequent content often provided by blog entities.

But creating a blog isn't enough to help you rank high for your niche market. You want to know some solid, evergreen WordPress SEO tips that will help position you ahead of your competitors for traffic in your niche.

Let's start by talking about theme design. The way your theme is created has a lot to do with how the search engine navigates it and ultimately indexes it. Before investing in a theme, make sure that it's search engine optimized.

Some of the work you'll need to do yourself, like ensuring your post and page titles, as well as the bulk of the content, utilizes your niche keywords. You can even use a free keyword tool and download a list of the high volume or long tail keyword phrases to use in each post.

Using keywords in your content isn't quite enough. You have to use them as tags for the post. And then you need to categorize the post so that Google (and your visitors) can easily sort out the topics.

There are some tweaks you can make on your blog to help it be search engine optimized. First, make sure that you set your permalinks for optimal

performance. Log into your WordPress dashboard and go to Settings and then Permalinks.

It defaults to show your blog URLs with non-optimized numbers like this: domain.com/?p=123 – but that URL doesn't tell Google what's on that page. Instead, choose the last option that says custom structure and type this into the space provided: `/%postname%/` so that it makes your URL look like this: domain.com/keyword-phrase-here.

Aside from these little tricks, you can also install some neat SEO-based plug-ins to operate on your blog. Include a sitemap for Google so that navigation is clear for the search engine spiders that visit.

Also install an All-in-One SEO pack that helps your blog achieve the maximum ranking it can from being perfectly optimized for your relevant keyword phrases. By doing these small steps, and posting regularly, your blog will continue to rise in the ranks of the search engine results pages (SERPs).

Creating a WordPress Multi User Blog

You know how Arianna Huffington sold the Huffington Post for a whopping \$315 million? Well, you could shoot for something similar if you want to create a web presence that allows multiple users log in and contribute to the site. Even if you don't want to dream big like a \$315 million sale, you still might want or need to create a multi user WordPress platform. And it's easy to do – even for the complete newbie.

Whenever you create your blog, log into the main dashboard. Click on Users and this is where the magic happens. You'll be able to create as many users on different contribution levels as you want to.

First, click the Add New button at the top of the Users page. Users can't register themselves – you have to manually set it up for them. But this is good because it protects your blog from abuse.

You're going to enter a username and the person's email (make sure they actually have a valid email address because the log in information will be

sent to them there). You'll type in their first and last name and can link to a website if they have one (and if you want it linked from your site).

Set up a password for them that's secure – use a variety of lower and upper case letters, numbers and symbols to protect your blog from hackers. Then make sure the box is checked that says, "Send Password."

Before you click the final Add User button at the bottom, make sure you select the Role of the new user appropriately. You'll want to know the various roles and make sure the new user understands what they'll be allowed to do, too.

A subscriber is simply subscribing to the blog to get notification whenever a new post is created. They are not contributors. A contributor lets others submit blog posts and manage them, but they can't publish them without your approval – you'll have to authorize publication.

An Author role is one that allows the new user to create, manage and publish their blog posts. This way you won't have to go in and manually approve the posts yourself. But it should be someone you trust with the content of your blog.

An Editor can create, manage and publish posts and pages too, but they can also go in and manage other people's posts. This is helpful if you need someone to help you manage the Contributors on your site for publication.

Don't make anyone else an administrator unless you feel like you're both on equal levels of ownership for the blog. And admin can do anything they wish on the blog – including altering your theme.

WordPress Page Versus Posts

As far as content goes, you can create pages or posts (or both) in your new WordPress blog. There are some differences. Let's start with creating a landing page on WordPress and then move onto the management of the other pages and posts.

You may want to create a landing page for your blog, so that whenever someone types in your domain, this is the page they'll see first (as opposed to a blog where the first post seen is always in order from most recent to oldest).

Log into your dashboard and click on Pages in the sidebar. Next, click on Add New. Create the landing page that you want. And publish it. After it's live, go to Settings and then click on the Reading link.

At the top, it will say "Front Page Displays" and this is where you can choose to display "a static page," and it will provide you with a drop-down menu of pages that you can set as the static landing page your visitors will see first.

You can do the same thing with a post if you prefer to make it a post rather than a page. If you do it this way, just make it a sticky post that stays at the top of your blog at all times, rather than showing the reverse chronological order for entries.

Pages typically aren't listed according to any dated order. They sometimes appear in the bar across the top of the WordPress theme. If you prefer, you can add a widget in your WordPress sidebar to display the pages.

To do this, go into Appearances, then Widgets. Drag the Pages widget over to your sidebar wherever you want it to appear to your visitors. And you can create sub-pages for your WordPress blog, too.

Click on Add New to the Pages area. On the right, you'll see an option for Page Attributes. You can assign a Parent page for it. And you can even put the pages in any order you want them to be seen.

Your sub-pages would then appear under the parent page in the URL. So let's say you have an About page on your blog. And under it, as a sub-page, you want a page called Services. Your domain would then look like this: domain.com/About/Services.

You could add more sub-pages below that, so your URL would look like this: domain.com/About/Services/Pool-Cleaning (to use that niche as an example). Whenever someone hovers over your main page in the sidebar or header, they would see the sub-pages branching out.

Best WordPress Plug Ins

A plug in for your WordPress blog is like a little tweak to make your blog perform better (in some cases) or do something an ordinary blog can't do. As an entrepreneur, you'll have different needs for plug ins than someone blogging for pure entertainment reasons.

Before we talk about which plug ins you should consider, you should be aware that plug ins have the ability to mess up your blog, too. One that's not maintained well can have bugs that wreak havoc on your blog.

Luckily, all you have to do is delete or make the plug in inactive, but you first have to know which one is causing the problems. Make sure you stay on top of your blog's performance so that you're aware whenever a problem arises.

Marketers are torn between All-in-One SEO and another similar SEO plug in called HeadSpace2 SEO. You may want to split test these two plug ins on a couple of blogs to see which one you prefer, but both should make your blog rank better in Google than it would without it.

For marketers, you may want to invest in the MaxBlogPress Ninja Affiliate, which not only organizes your affiliate links for you in the dashboard, but it also allows you to cloak links and track clicks from this WordPress plug in.

If you want to manage your ads, images or other media items on your blog, then you may want to get a plug-in like Billboard or Rotating Images, either of which do the job for you.

If you're flipping sites or Squidoo lenses or auctioning off any other items, then you can get the WP Auctions plug in and host auctions right on your blog, without having to fork over fees to a third-party site.

Contact Form 7 is a plug in that lets your blog visitors get in touch with you. It's one of the most popular plug ins being downloaded right now to bloggers around the World Wide Web.

If you have visitors from around the globe, then you might want to install the G8 Translate plug in. It translates your blog into 58 languages so that anyone can visit it – not just English speakers.

Make sure you have a sitemap creator such as Google XML Sitemaps. This helps the Googlebots find their way around your blog, which means they index more pages and posts and you ultimately get more traffic!

There are hundreds of WordPress plug ins out there available to you. Virtually anything you want your blog to do, you can find a plug in that does it – but you have to search!

WordPress Widget Options

Whenever you install a new blog, and you look at it, you'll notice that the sidebar has some default items in it. Yet when you log into your dashboard and look at the widgets, there's nothing showing up in the sidebar.

You can get rid of those default items and leave your sidebar blank just by adding a text widget and leaving it empty. As soon as anything is added into the sidebar manually by you, the default items disappear.

Log into your dashboard and click on Appearance and then Widgets. This is where you can add items into your sidebar area. And you may have more than one depending on the layout of your theme (like one sidebar on each side of the content for a three-column theme).

You'll find a list of 15 widgets you can add to your site's sidebar. First is the AddThis widget. When you drag it into your sidebar, you'll need to customize it to show the social networking sites the way you want them to be shown and then save and close the widget.

The Calendar widget lets you place a calendar on your sidebar that hyperlinks the days when you made a blog post. The visitors can hover over the day and see what the post title is so they know if they want to read it or not.

You can create a Custom Menu in a widget that showcases whatever elements of your blog you want. You can drag the Pages widget over to highlight the pages if you'd rather they show up here than below the Header. You can sort them and exclude certain ones, too.

The Recent Posts widget lets you choose how many posts are shown. It defaults to five. A Search widget will let your visitors search for blog posts based on certain keywords. A Text widget allows you to place text or HTML code (hyperlinked images, for example) in it.

An Askimet widget just tells people how many Spam comments have been blocked. This may deter spammers from attempting to post comments to your blog. The Archives widget lets you create a drop down menu that shows the month and number of blog posts made during that time frame so visitors can see past blog posts.

The Categories widget does something similar. Visitors can see how many posts are in each category and click through to visit them. The Links widget lets you showcase your blogroll and even the rating you give the links, too.

You may want to add a Meta widget so you can log in from the site's home page, or showcase participation through the Recent Comments widget. You can also add an RSS widget for subscribers and a Tag Cloud widget to see what's popular on your site.

The Importance of a WordPress Category

Whenever you make a new post on your WordPress blog, you have the opportunity to categorize it. Some people don't bother, but SEO experts will tell you this is a big mistake.

To add a new category, you can do it from the actual blog post, by clicking Add Category, or you can click on your dashboard by navigating to Posts and then Categories, which takes you to the entire categories page so you can edit and manage all of your categories at once.

Here, you can create a new category and give it a parent category if you want this to work in a hierarchy system, with sub-categories. You'll create the slug (which is the URL version of the category). Depending on the theme you're using, you may want to add a description because some themes show the description while others don't.

You can delete categories here too. If you delete a category, it doesn't do away with your blog post. Instead, it just causes that blog post to return to the default category of "Uncategorized."

Categories help your visitors navigate your website better. Some people truly depend on them to find what they need. Tags help too, but they're a bit different. For instance, let's say you have a vegetarian blog and one category is vegetarian foods.

You can post a blog post about a certain brand of food and place it in the vegetarian foods category. But the tags you use might be the brand name and type of food that it is, such as "Yvess, vegetarian corn dogs."

The only bad thing about categories is if you over do it. If you have a long scrolling list of categories on your site, it can get confusing for your visitors. So it's better to keep them trimmed back, and possibly create sub-categories instead.

Tips for WordPress Image Management

Adding images to your blog makes it come alive. No one wants to land on a content only site – it's boring! So adding images helps break up the text and it adds appeal to your site for visitors.

Whenever you add a new post, you can add an image. (Or freshen up older posts by going back and adding images). Click on the place where you want the image in the blog post.

So if you want it to the left of a paragraph, with the text wrapped around it, click to the left of the first letter in the first sentence of that paragraph. Then next to the Upload/Insert section, click the Add an Image icon (hover over it to see which media icon it is).

A window will open up for you to select the file you wish to add. You can choose from your hard drive, from a URL, or from the media gallery if you want to use an image you've already added to your blog elsewhere.

After it uploads, you'll see a new window open up. Here, you can customize the image a bit. You can add a link to it, to hyperlink the image somewhere else. You can choose its alignment – align it to the left or right of the text (or in the center) so that it wraps around.

You can also choose to resize it to a thumbnail, medium, large or full size. When you add the image, you'll be taken back to the blog post where you can see how it's fitting into the text.

Sometimes, it won't have a border so it will be crammed up against the text. To change anything (including spacing), click on the image and again on the Edit image icon. If you click on Advanced Settings, you can give it some spacing.

Under the Image Properties section, you have the option to give it a border or add some vertical and horizontal space between the image and the text. You can play around with it, but usually a 5 or 10 in the vertical and horizontal spaces works just fine.

When you've finished, click Update and see how the image works within your blog post. You can delete the image by clicking on it and just hitting your delete button on your keyboard.

You can use images in different areas of your blog – in the posts, on the pages, in your header and footer, and also in your sidebar. Just make sure you check the final output to see if it's aligned right and hyperlinked the way you want it before leaving it alone for the public's view.

Maximizing Your Use of WordPress Tags

WordPress tags are very important and are similar to your categories, only they're not necessarily there for navigation purposes. They're more for sorting posts according to topics and identifying your content for search engines and visitors with keywords and phrases.

Tags are more specific than their category counterparts. Categories are broader, but tags dig down deeper to tell you specifically what's inside a particular blog post. Whenever you add a new post, on the right side, you'll see a section that says Post Tags.

You can type in keywords and phrases and separate them with commas. Or, if you've had the blog for a while, just click "Choose from the most used tags" and pick from among your common tag choices.

If you change your mind and want to delete a tag, just click the gray X beside the tag. WordPress recommends an average of 5 to 10 tags be added to each blog post. Not having any isn't good for your search engine optimization. Having too many only confuses the reader.

You can manage your tags from the main dashboard, too. Click on Posts and then Post Tags. You can add tags from there, delete or edit them. On this page you'll see a massive tag cloud, too.

A tag cloud shows you which tags you use most on your site. If you see a tag you want to edit in the tag cloud, click on it and it will let you edit the words and the URL for that tag, too.

Tags and categories are both important to your site's findability and navigation. Don't exclude one for the other – use them in conjunction to give your blog the best SEO boost possible.

What to Include in Your WordPress Sidebar

A sidebar shouldn't be random clutter that you use to fill up white space. In fact, many bloggers (and their readers) love the crisp, clean layout of content with white space cradling it on either side.

But you can't ignore the fact that it's advertising space you could be profiting from when you're running an online business. Especially above the fold, it's important to test out the space you have in your sidebar to see if it can help you turn a profit.

There are five favorite sidebar items that marketers like to use to help the visitor experience and to boost financial rewards as well. You can test a variety of them to see what works better for you.

Social networking badges help you build a following on other places, besides your own website. You might put a "Follow me on Twitter" badge, a FriendFeed badge that shows the latest web 2.0 items from you, or a FaceBook badge that lets people navigate to your profile and friend you.

While social networking might not immediately seem like a revenue booster, the more you're able to connect with your target audience on a friendly level, the more able you are to build a relationship of trust with them and convert them into long term, loyal buyers.

Banner graphics that are hyperlinked with your affiliate URL can help generate revenue instantly. If you're an affiliate, look for an affiliate toolbox page from the product creator (or email them and ask if they have vertical banners or buttons). You can use simple HTML code to show the banner graphic and have it hyperlinked to the product with your affiliate URL.

Images or text that are placed in your sidebar for ad space sold to other marketers is another instant revenue option. But you have to be careful because if a visitor sees an ad, they're assuming it's you who is endorsing this product or service.

Link lists to your other sites can help turn a profit, too. While you may start out as a newbie in the business, your online empire will grow and soon you may have 10-20 websites to call your own. You can link to them in your sidebar and even write a textual description to accompany it.

Widgets that help your visitors navigate or utilize your site can be placed in your sidebar too. Letting them subscribe to your RSS feed, for example, keeps them in tune with what you have to say.

WordPress Video Embed Tutorial

These days, blogs are far from the boring text only sites they were in the past. Now they are multimedia entities, and the hottest media format you can use right now is video! Now even if you're not familiar with how to make videos, or you don't want to be on screen, you can utilize WordPress video embedding options to help create a better experience for your visitors.

If video isn't your thing, then you can just use other people's YouTube videos to post on your own blog. First you want to go to YouTube and type in the keyword phrase for the type of video you want to use.

If you're selling or promoting items yourself, then try to find one where the creator of the video doesn't have his or her URL splashed all over the content. Once you find a good video, click on the Share button below the video.

A section will appear so that you can grab whatever you need – the URL or you can click on Embed and grab the entire embed code for your WordPress blog. After clicking on that, uncheck the box that says, "Show suggested videos when the video finishes."

By unchecking this box, you won't have a string of related videos under the video that you've chosen to be shown on your blog. Having those extra videos means there's additional link leakage to worry about and you want visitors converting for you, not your competition.

Under those boxes, you have the ability to resize the video. Now sizing depends on the theme that you're using. If you have a three-column theme with content in the middle, then you might need a smaller video size than if you had two columns with a roomy content area and smaller sidebar.

It defaults to the 425x349 setting, but you can also choose from 480x390, 640x510, 960x750 or customize it to the width and height of your choosing. After you make your selection, go back up and copy the code to embed it on your WordPress blog.

You want to go back to your blog post and ensure that you're set to HTML, not visual settings for the blog post. Paste the HTML embed code that you copied from YouTube into the blog post.

Make sure it appears to be working correctly after you publish the blog post. Keep in mind that if the video owner ever deletes the video, you'll have to go in and fix your blog post to replace it with another one.

Using WordPress for Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is very enticing because it doesn't require that you create your own products – you're simply profiting off the creations of others. But it's not automatic money, either. You do have some work to do to generate traffic and sales.

The first thing you want to do is register a domain in your niche with keywords anchoring the domain for relevancy. You might not be in the "make money" niche – you might choose to promote fitness products, for example.

Once you get a domain and have reliable hosting, install the WordPress blog onto your domain using Fantastico De Luxe or the long installation method if you're more tech savvy.

You want to get all of the settings in place before you begin adding content, such as the permalinks so that each post has a URL that's search engine optimized. If you have custom graphics or a premium theme, install them prior to content creation as well.

Google might be knocking on your blog door quickly or it may take awhile to find your blog, but you want to have some sort of content for them to crawl and index as soon as possible.

Before you begin affiliate marketing, you need to keep in mind that your blog is going to act as a beacon for visitors in your niche. Those people will be relying on your recommendations, so it's best if you truly identify the products that can fill their needs.

You can promote a variety of tangible and digital products depending on your niche market. You need to get signed up with the affiliate programs at ClickBank, PayDotCom, Share-a-Sale, Commission Junction, and Amazon to name a few.

Start making a list of items you want to promote. Your blog will review and recommend certain products, so you'll want to explain what the product is, why it's a good investment, and how it compares to its competition.

The more personality you breathe into your blog, the better it will convert. A cold blog where the visitors don't get to know the author doesn't build trust with a target audience. You can sometimes get complimentary review products from digital product creators, if you indicate that you'll be reviewing it. But if not, make sure you buy a copy or item so that your reviews are real and unbiased.

A good balance of pros and cons is crucial to the authenticity of your blog. If everything's always rainbows and unicorns and you never find anything wrong with a product, then it will sound off alarm bells to your visitors, who will know you're just in it for a quick buck.

Place banner graphics and text links in your sidebar and rotate them, while keeping an eye on conversion statistics. Have a banner that's horizontal placed beneath your header. And whenever you write a new blog post, make sure you hyperlink to the affiliate product using your affiliate URL.



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