

Getting Started with WordPress

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So you've installed WordPress and now you're eager to start posting, but where do you start? I'd recommend the following:

User Details

The very first thing, if you haven't done so already, is to login to the admin area by visiting www.yoursite.com/wp-admin/ (or www.yoursite.com/subdirectory/wp-admin/ if you installed WordPress in a subdirectory). You will be presented with a login screen, input the login details given you at the end of the install process (they should have been emailed to you as well, should you have misplaced them). Assuming your login successful, you should be presented with the WordPress Dashboard (see figure 1). Welcome to the admin area. Now, before you do anything else, select **Users** from the main navigation bar (navbar) at the top. Your profile will be displayed. Update any details you want to, but make sure you put in an email address and type a new (memorable) password in both of the password boxes. Hit **Update Profile** to save it. Right, now you have your login details sorted, carry on.

Categories

Next, click **Manage** on the navbar and **Categories** on the navigation bar below it (subnav). During installation, WordPress creates a default category called **Uncategorized**. Under the **Action** header, for the Uncategorized row (it should be the only one) hit **Edit**. You will be presented with four attributes: Category name, Category slug, Category parent and Description.

Change the **Category name** to whatever you want (might I suggest General as a good choice), this is how it will be displayed on your blog, so capitalise the first letter. Change **Category slug** to the same as Category name, but keep it all **lower case**. **Category parent** is used if you want to create sub-categories, which, as this is your first category, you won't need (and won't be able to set). For future reference, this is useful if you want to make say, a primary category called Film, with sub-categories such as Comedy, Action, Foreign, etc, as you can 'bunch' categories together and control how they're displayed easier. Lastly, there is **Description**. Personally, I rarely fill it in, but if you have more than one author it's useful to let others know what it covers.

Once you've filled these in, hit **Edit Category**. You will be returned to the Categories page where you should see your newly updated category. This is your default category, which is automatically selected for every post you create, hence why General is a good name for the first category. On the Categories page, you will also find the option to **add a new category**. If you can think of other categories you're likely to post in, add them while you're here. Just type in the name, if they're a sub-category, select it from the dropdown list, type in a description if you wish, and hit **Add Category**, easy as that.

Comments

After sorting the categories out, select **Comments** from the subnav. This, surprisingly, brings you to the comments page. Here you can edit or remove any comments posted on your site. WordPress puts one in by default (by Mr WordPress no less) and you can see the the option to edit or delete the comment at the bottom of it. If you just want to delete one comment, that's the easiest way, but to give you a feel for the other features, we're going to do it a different way. Underneath the search box, select **Mass Edit Mode**. Should you wish to make changes en mass, this is the place to do it. You can still edit and delete each comment individually using the controls at the end of the row, but you can also select multiple comments using the check boxes to the left (**tip**: select **Invert Checkbox Selection** to select everything on the screen). Click the checkbox next to Mr WordPress and hit **Delete Checked Comments**. You will be given a warning, select **OK** to delete.

Posts

WordPress also installs a default post when it installs. To see it, select **Posts** from the subnav. You should see a post entitled: Hello World! Now, you have two options, you can remove it by selecting **Delete** at the

end of the row, or you can edit it to make your first post. Deleting it is probably easier, but we're going to edit it, select **Edit** from the end of the row. You will be taken to, essentially, the Write Post screen, in advanced mode (I cover advanced and simple modes in greater detail in **Using WordPress**, another article available for download).



Figure 2

Most of the boxes are fairly self-explanatory, to change the title, for example, edit the text in the Title box. You should see your categories in a column on the right, the category you renamed from Uncategorized will be ticked. To deselect categories, untick the checkbox, to select, tick them, simple as that. In the **Post** box you will see the main body of the entry. Edit this as you would do in a normal word processor, remember to use paragraphs, no one likes reading huge chunks of text. Above this box are **Quicktags**, these are shortcuts to insert HTML tags to style your text. Check out the list below for what they all do, but, generally, you use them by putting your cursor at the start of the text you want to change, then click the Quicktag button. In some instances (such as inserting a link) you may be required to add info via a pop-up window. Then, simply move your cursor to the end of the text you wish to effect and click the same Quicktag (which will now have a / at the front to indicate it is open) again (see Figure 2).

Quicktag Definitions

- str** stands for strong, this is used to make text **bold**
- em** stands for emphasis, this is used to make text *italic*
- link** this is used to insert a link (to another site for example)
- b-quote** stands for blockquote, this is generally used for when you are quoting text from an external source
- del** stands for delete and is used to ~~strikethrough~~ text
- ins** stands for insert and is used to indicate text that has been added (also adds date/time stamp)
- img** stands for image and is used to link to an image
- ul** stands for unordered list, used to created a bulleted list
- ol** stands for ordered list, used to create a numbered list
- li** this is used to indicate a list entry/item in both an ordered and unordered list

- str** stands for strong, this is used to make text **bold**
- code** this is used when you want to quote program code (such as HTML or PHP)
- more** this is a WordPress specific tag used to indicate where you want the text to stop on a listing page and is replaced by a link offering the reader to see more of the article
- page** another WordPress specific tag, used to automatically paginate a long article, wherever it appears it will split the article into two or more pages
- Dict** allows you to search dictionary.com for a word you enter into the pop-up box
- Close Tags** closes of the above that are still open (i.e. do not have a corresponding close tag)

Next we drop down to the **Advanced** section. The two things to worry about here are: Post slug and Edit time. The **Post slug** is important if you're using clean URLs (covered a bit later), but I'd suggest changing it, even if you're not. Simply type in the title of your post, make sure you use **only lowercase** letters and replace any spaces with a dash (-), leave out any special characters or numbers. Next is the **Edit time**, the Existing timestamp (i.e. when the system believes the post was published) is displayed, if you're happy with it, leave it, if not, tick the **Edit timestamp** box and enter a new date and time.

When all that's done, scroll up to the two buttons marked **Save and Continue Editing** and **Save**. The first is basically a preview button, it saves the changes, but if you scroll down to the are below the Advanced section, you'll see a preview of your post (only with in the admin section style). If you select Save, the post will save and then return you to a clean Write Post screen ready for you to create a new post.

Links

Now, in return for all their efforts, do add links to their personal sites to the WordPress links section. Leave them by all means, but it certainly not mandatory. If you wish to remove (or even hide) them, select **Links** from the navbar. The first page you'll see is the **Manage Links** page (see Figure 3). To hide the links you need to toggle their visibility. To do this, check the boxes at the end of the row and click the **Toggle Visibility** button under the **Manage Multiple Links** section at the bottom. You should see the **Visible** column now says No on the links you selected. (Tip: If you wish to tick the boxes for all the links on screen, click the **Toggle Checkboxes** on the far right of the Manage Multiple Links section.)

To delete links, simply select **Delete** under **Action** at the end of the relevant row.

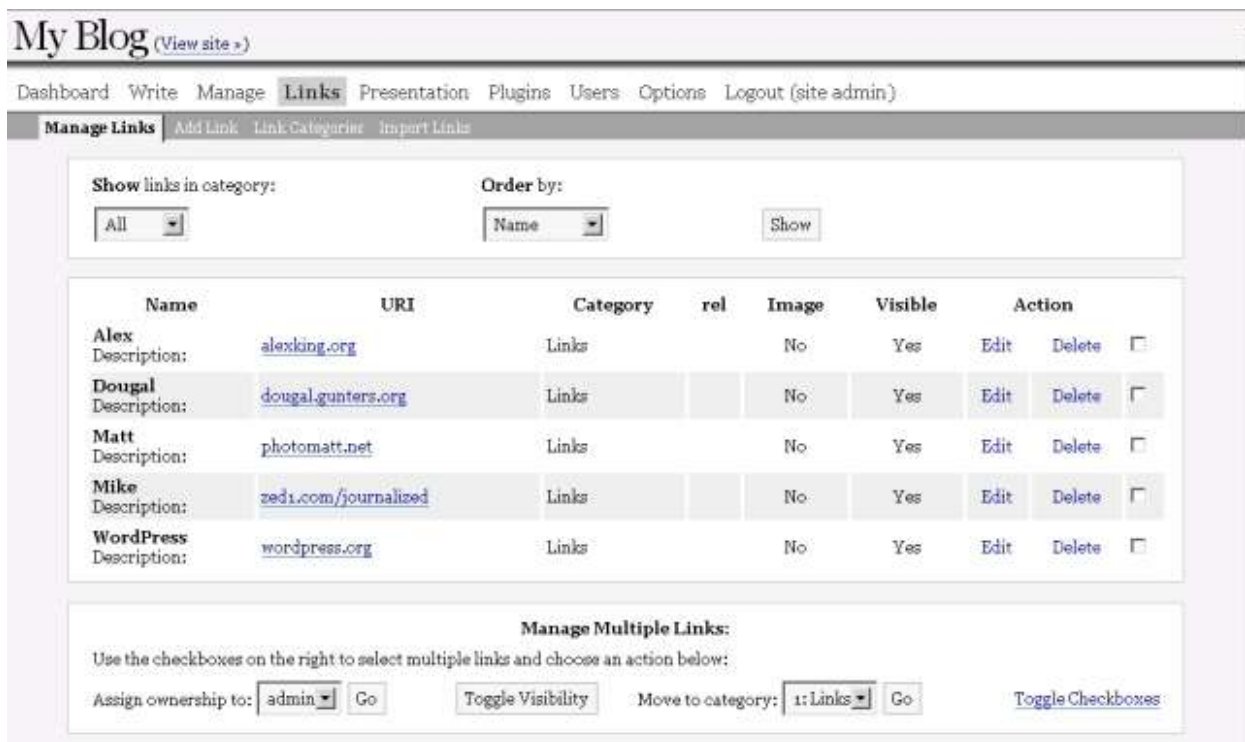


Figure 3

Presentation

New in version 1.5 of WordPress are themes. These are completely independent styles which you can select to change the look of your site. To see what themes you have installed, select Presentation from the navbar. Here you'll be told what the current theme is, and show a list of the other themes currently available. The two themes included as standard are WordPress Classic, a rather ugly thing that doesn't really do Dave Shea justice, and WordPress Default which based on the Kubrick theme by Michael Heilemann.

To change themes, simply hit **Select** at the end of the relevant row (Note: if it says Active Theme, it's already selected). You will be presented with the message **New theme selected** if everything worked.

There are now lots of themes available for WordPress and they're a snap to install, the best place to start is probably the WordPress wiki themes page: wiki.wordpress.org/WordPress_Themes

Options

Lastly I am going to cover the WordPress options. These dictate how your blog will run. To access them, you first select **Options** from the navbar. You will be presented with the general options:

General

Weblog Title

You should have filled this in during install, but it's the name of your blog basically, so, something like: *Roberts Family Blog*

Tagline

A brief, sometimes witty, description of your site, so, for the above example, it could be: *Welcome to the mad house*

WordPress Address & Blog Address

Unless these are wrong, or you have good reason, don't bother to mess with them, they are simply the address of where your blog is.

Email Address

This is the admin address, where things like comments are automatically sent if you select that option.

Membership

Unless you have a community forum where you want random people to sign up and post, I would uncheck the **Anyone Can Register** box. Requiring users to register before posting a comment is a great way to stop spam (and will need the previous option switched on), but it's a pain in the ass so it stops many people leaving comments. I would recommend leaving it off.

I'm going to skip the Date and Time section, play about with them if you want. Next, select **Writing** from the subnav and you will be presented with, surprise surprise, the writing options:

Writing

When starting a post, show

I mentioned this briefly when describing editing a post. Basically, **Advanced** gives you more options, such as Post slug and Edit timestamp. If you just want to write a post, leave it on **Simple**, if you want a bit more control, select **Advanced**, you'll figure out which one best suits you. Personally, I'm a control freak, I like seeing it all and having control over it. To each their own.

Size of the writing box

This dictates how tall the box for the body of your post will be on the Write Post page. The higher it is, the taller the box. 9 usually works just fine for me. Again, tweak to how it suits you.

Formatting

I usually leave both these boxes ticked, one tidies your code should create tags in the body in weird orders (or you forget to close them), the other gives you nice graphic smiley faces in place of :) signs.

Newly registered members

This option limits what new members can do, so if you only want members to post comments, leave it set to **Cannot write articles**.

I'm not going into Writing by e-mail or Update Services here. Now for the reading options (i.e. those that affect people reading your site), select **Reading** from the subnav.

Reading

Show at most (Blog Pages)

This affects how many posts appear on your homepage and in your archives. All down to personal preference. Don't make the number too large though as people will end up scrolling down the page for miles and miles.

Show the most recent (Syndication Feeds)

RSS and Atom feeds are simple text files in XML that people aggregate in a news reader to see if a site has posted new content before/instead of visiting. It's proving popular and WordPress auto-generates a range of standard formats. This setting sets how many posts to include.

For each title show (Syndication Feeds)

This sets whether a complete article or just a summary (the first however many words) appear in the feeds auto-generated by WordPress.

Encoding for pages and feeds

Leave this be unless you have a good reason to change it.

Next, on to discussion options, select Discussion from the subnav.

Discussion

Attempt to notify any Weblogs linked to from the article (slows down posting.)

This option allows pings and trackbacks, basically linking you article to one you link to in it should it have the facility. It's kind of like leaving a comment. I recommend leaving it on.

Allow link notifications from other Weblogs (pingbacks and trackbacks.)

This allows people to post pings and trackbacks to your articles. Nice idea but spammers have been making good use of it and I haven't found a good defence yet, I recommend you leave it off unless you find a sure-fire way of stopping spam.

Allow people to post comments on the article

Fairly obvious.

Email me whenever

These two are fairly obvious, whenever a comment is made, or caught by the anti-spam systems, you can be notified, or not.

An administrator must approve the comment (regardless of any matches below)

This is a great way to stop spam, but if you get a lot of comments, it becomes unwieldy, and people don't get to see their comments immediately, which I certainly don't like, so I'm assuming other people don't.

Comment author must fill out name and e-mail

Stops anonymous comments being made, sort of.

Comment author must have a previously approved comment

Another spam prevention method, a comment will be sent for moderation unless the poster has been approved before.

Comment Moderation

Leave the default at 2 links and put in any spam words you like (a new line for each) in the text box to help limit comment spam. Anything that has more than 2 links and/or a word on the list will be sent for moderation

first.

Comment Blacklist

Same as the moderation box except anything with these words is automatically deleted, never mind sent for moderation. Be care what you put in there.

Next up is the Permalinks section, all about how web addresses are generated on your site, click the **Permalinks** link in the subnav.

Permalinks

Obviously a link to `www.yoursite.com/index.php?12356` makes little sense to anyone, so permalinks allow you to have a more search engine friendly (or, if you have a log, allow you to create a similar linking style so people linking to one of your old posts from your previous site don't end up with an error message). Personally, I recommend the first structure suggestion on the page.

Just copy and past the code into the Structure box and hit **Update Permalink Structure**. If it can, WordPress will create a `.htaccess` file with the rules needed for this structure automatically, otherwise it'll give you a text box with all the instructions you need, just copy and paste into a text file, save it as **.htaccess** and upload to the home directory of your blog.

I'm going to skip the Miscellaneous options section.

Conclusion

And that's pretty much it. You should now have a ready to rumble blog, fully configured and, hopefully, at least some idea what to do. Simply head on over to Write and write a new post, easy as that.