



The Handbook

Codex

[http://codex.wordpress.org/First Steps With WordPress](http://codex.wordpress.org/First_Steps_With_WordPress)

Version Date

6 August 2005

First Steps With WordPress

Now What?

You've just completed the famous [5 Minute Installation of WordPress](#) without stress or fuss. WordPress is packed with many [amazing features](#). So now what?

Let's take a step-by-step tour through your site and learn about how all the different functions work and how to make your new WordPress site your own.

During the first part of this tutorial, we ask that *you don't change anything within the program*, unless it is part of the tutorial. Just follow these simple steps and soon you will be changing everything.

Starting from the Top

Begin by logging into the [Administration Panel](#). This is the brain behind your website, the place where you can let your creativity explode, writing brilliant prose and designing the best and most lovely website possible. This is where the organization of your site begins - and this is just the start.



View Site Link

From the Administration Panel, from the top of the screen menu choose **View Site**. Like it? Don't like it? Doesn't matter, just look at it. This is where you are going to be spending a lot of time over the next few minutes, hours, weeks, months....

Test Driving Your WordPress Site

Take time to look at the site before you get into the changing of things and figuring out [how all of this works](#), it's important to see how the default WordPress Theme is laid out and works. Consider this the test drive before you start adding on all the special features.



WordPress Default Theme - Kubrick

The layout you are looking at is called a [Theme](#). It is the [Presentation](#) of your website, styling the look of the site. The default WordPress Theme features a blue "header" at the top with the title placeholder of your site. The "classic" WordPress Theme features a

greenish top header. Along the side you will see some titles and links. This is your "sidebar menu". Within the main middle section of the page is the "post". At the bottom of the page is the "footer".

Let's look at the post for a moment. There is a title, and below the title is some information. This is called the *post meta data* and contains information about the post such as the date and time the post was made, the author, and the categories the post is in.

Scroll down the page and notice the bar at the end of the page. This is called the "footer" and for now it says "Powered by WordPress".

Back to the sidebar, you will see different sections with information. Among these you may find a list of [Pages](#), [Categories](#), Archives, Calendar, and [Dates](#). This is part of the menu or navigation panel that people will use to move around your site, visiting posts from different categories or time periods.

It's All in the Details

Take time to notice the smaller details of this web page layout and design. Move your mouse over the title of the article post. Notice how it changes color. This is called a *hover* and anywhere you have a link, most Themes feature a distinctive color or change when you move your mouse over a link. Move your mouse over any of the links in the sidebar. Do they change? Is the change the same? You can change your link hovers to look different in different sections of your page, but typically they should be uniform. Also look at the color of the links. How are they colored to stand out from the rest of the text?

It's important to pay attention to the small design details and where they are placed within the page. In the near future, you may want to change some of these details, like the color of the title in the blue box at the top of the page. If you know that is called the *header* then the changes you would want to make in your style sheet, the file that controls the look of your web page, would be found within the *header* section.

Take a Quick Trip Around

For now you only have one post. It is residing within a page that is laid out as your *home page* or the front page. If you click on the title of the post, it will take you to the specific page for that post. The first page or home page of your site features the most recent posts on your site. Each post title will link to the actual page of the post. Some Theme designers design their *single* post pages to look different from the home page. By clicking on the title, you are taken to another web page that looks different from the home page.



WordPress Default Theme - Single Post Look

Again, in the single post, pay attention to the layout and notice what is now different about the design elements. Is the header different? Smaller, larger, or a different color? Is there

a sidebar? In the default Theme for WordPress, the sidebar disappears in the single post. Look at all the details and take note of the differences.

Posts are usually stored in [categories](#) so you can keep related topics together. Right now you only have one category, but will soon want more. Click on the single category that appears in the sidebar of the home page. You are now in a page that has been generated to display only the posts within that category. Again, take a look at the layout and see how it may be different from the home page and the single post.

Do the same with the **Archives**. You may only have one post, but look at how the pages are laid out. They may or may not change, but look at all of it to see how it all works.

All of these changes are created from only a few files called [template files](#) and you can learn more about how they work in [Stepping Into Templates](#). For now, however, let's get on with how the rest of WordPress works.

Test Drive the WordPress Admin Panels



WordPress Admin Dashboard

Now that you have an idea of how your site looks and what the different layout sections are called, it's time to test drive the [WordPress Administration](#). This is like familiarizing yourself with the dashboard of your new website. In fact, the first page you see after logging in is called [The Dashboard](#).

The Dashboard is a new feature in WordPress v1.5. It helps to keep you up to date on new and interesting bits of information from the many WordPress resources. In the corner it also features a list of the most recent activity you've done on your site.

Across the top of the Admin screen is the main menu, which says:

- [Dashboard](#)
- [Write](#)
- [Manage](#)
- [Links](#)
- [Presentation](#)
- [Plugins](#)
- [Users](#)
- [Options](#)
- [Logout \(name\)](#)



User Profile Panel

The links in the above list will take you to a series of articles that will guide you step-by-step through every aspect of the Admin panels. You're anxious to get started, so for now, let's start with the [Users panel](#).

Click on the **Users** tab. The screen will change and you will see the panel called [Profile](#). This is where you will enter information about you, the author and [administrator](#) of the site. In the next tab called [Authors and Users](#) you can set up more authors. Let's stick with you for right now. Fill in the information and click **Update Profile** when done.

Now, let's look at the powerful feature functions of the WordPress Admin.

Quick Changing the Look



The Presentation Panel

The [Presentation panel](#) allows you to change the look of your site using [Themes](#). Themes are presentation styles that completely change the look of your site. Designed by WordPress users, there are hundreds of themes available for you to choose from. In your Presentation panel, you will see two themes, classic and default. To try this quick-change process, simply select **Classic** and then click **View Site** to see how it looks. Wow, you have another look and nothing else on the site has changed. It's that easy.

Go back to the Presentation panel (**Back button** on your browser) and select **Default** to bring the design back to what you had. To see it again, click **View Site**, and there it is. Honestly, it is that simple.

Writing and Managing Posts

Back in the Admin panel, take a look at the [Write panel](#), and the [Manage panel](#). You can use the tabs under the Write Menu to write posts and Pages. Using the tabs under the Manage menu, you can manage the posts and Pages in your site.

Let's start by making your first test post in the [Write Post](#) tab.



Write Post Panel

If the screen looks a little intimidating, the Codex article on [Writing a Post](#) will take you step-by-step through the process of writing a post. Take a moment to read through the article and post your first entry and then return to this article and we'll take you onto the next step.

If you are in a hurry, then simply fill in the blanks, one by one, in the post beginning with the title and then write a little test message in the post window. This is just for a test, so you can write anything you want. When you are done, click **PUBLISH** below the post entry window and it is done. You will then see a blank Write a Post screen and you're ready to write another one. Go ahead. But do only three to four entries. We have more exciting work ahead of us.

Now that you've gotten a feel for writing posts, you can view your posts by clicking View Site at the top of the screen. Now it's time to get down to the real work.

Planning Session

All good plans come from a good plan. Sounds redundant, but true. If you want to create a good and solid website, you need a good and solid plan. I know it's hard to do, and I know you want to keep poking and playing with this exciting program, but it is time to take a break away from your computer and turn to the old paper and pen. That's right, we're going back in time to when people actually wrote things down.

On a piece of notebook paper (or whatever is laying around) it's time to describe your site. Take five to twenty minutes to come up with a purpose for your site, or better yet, call it your Mission Statement.

Answer the following questions:

1. What am I going to do with this?
2. Who is going to read this?
3. What kinds of information will I be posting?
4. Why am I doing this?
5. Who am I doing this for?
6. How often am I going to be posting and adding information?

Now, compile this information into a paragraph so it looks like this:

This website will be dedicated to X, Y, and Z,
and cover the topics of A, B, and C. The audience will
be _____. I will be adding
posts every _____ about _____.

I am doing this because _____.

Using the Information

From this information, we've gathered a lot of information. We've uncovered information on how you might layout and design your site. If you know your audience is mostly made up of young people under the age of 25, you will probably want a fashionable look ranging from wild colors and crazy graphics to dark foreboding tones. Something appropriate for that generation. If you are providing factual information about a serious subject, then you will probably want a more conservative look where the information is more important than a lot of pop and flash.

You probably already have a design idea in mind, or you will be copying over from your previous site, but take a moment to use this information to reconsider your design, and to see how what you want will work with the WordPress options.

You have also uncovered the possible categories for your site. The topics and subjects you will be covering are listed in your purpose statement. Let's say your purpose statement said,

"The website will be dedicated to providing news and information on computers, web pages, and the Internet and cover the topics of computer tips, web page design, and Internet news."

Your topics are your categories. Write your categories down below your purpose paragraph and notes about your web page design.

Now, what subcategories might be under these topics. Under **Computer Tips**, you might want to segregate them by **Windows**, **Linux**, and **Mac**. Or maybe **Software** and **Hardware**. You can have sub-sub-categories, but let's stop with subcategories for right now. Write these down.

Remember the question about *why* you are doing this? Is it because you have valuable and timely information or knowledge to share, because you want to talk about a subject that interests you, or maybe because you just think it will be fun to do. Why not? Everyone's doing it!

Understanding the timeliness of the information you want to present on your site helps you organize the information on your website. Your website is organized by several different methods. If the date of *when* you posted the information is critical to the success of the page, then having links to your [posts referenced by date](#) is important. If the information itself is more important and timeless, then having your posts [referenced by category](#) is the best choice.

Have you noticed that you are starting to layout your website? If you remember our earlier test drive of your new WordPress website, we examined the sidebar menu. This is the area where your past posts are organized. If you take another look (yes, you can go back to your computer for a moment), you will see the [sidebar is laid out in a list](#) by Archives by date, Categories by category, and may even feature a calendar (turned off in the Default Theme but visible in the Classic Theme).

As you layout your website on paper, consider whether you want both categories and dates, or just one of them in your sidebar. What information you have and how you want to

help the user find the information is critical to your website design.

What Information Do You Want to Share

As you think about what information the user will need to know, you have to consider what information you are willing to share with them. Part of that information may include how to contact you, the purpose of the site, who you are and your expertise, and get to know who you are.

WordPress v1.5 offers a new feature called [Pages](#) which makes the process of presenting this information in an easier fashion. Pages, similar to posts, are most commonly used to present unchanging information such as Pages for **About Us**, **Contact Us**, **Sign Up for Our Mailing List**, and other *static* information. Before creating your [individual Pages](#), you need to think about what information you would like the Page to hold. Write down the possible Page titles and describe the information you are willing to share online on each Page.

Comments

Part of the fun of WordPress is the ability to have viewers leave comments on your site. It creates a dynamic interchange between you and the viewer. Do you want comments on your posts? Comments on posts come in a variety of forums, from *pat on the backs* (*Good job! Like the post!*) to extensive conversations and commentary about the posts turning into long chats. Or maybe you are seeking comments that add to the information you've posted. How you present your comment form, and if you do, invites people to comment.

Comments can also take up a lot of time, responding to them and [moderating them](#). If they are critical to your site, then include them and consider how you want them presented. Go back to your test site, the first post created at the time of installation includes a sample comment. You can even make a few comments yourself on the posts you created. Take a look at how they are laid out and consider how you might want them to look to fit into the design and layout of your site.

When you have reached your decision about how you want to handle comments, take time to read through the [article on comments and WordPress discussion options](#) to help you set those features.

With this basic information, you are ready to return to your computer and start laying out your site and setting it up.

Setting Your Site Up

Before you get to the graphic look of your site, let's do a little more administration to your site to set it up. Consider making your first plugin installation the [Codex and Forum Searcher Plugin](#) (<http://asymptomatic.net/wp/2005/07/20/1765/codex-searcher/>). It allows you to search both the WordPress Codex and [WordPress Support Forum](#) (<http://www.wordpress.org/support>) from your WordPress Administration Panels. Click on one of the search results and the page will open in a new window or tab so you can have the article or discussion open while working on WordPress. This will make your transition to WordPress a much gentler one with information right at your finger tips.

You can also work from this page by clicking on a link with a Right Click and opening the documents in a new window or tab so you can read along as you work on your site.

Let's start with making those categories written down on your list.

Create Categories

In the [Manage > Categories](#) tab, click **Add Category** and fill in the information about your category. Continue to add your *parent* categories, going down the list. Hold off on entering sub-categories until all the main categories are entered.

NOTE: *You can add any new categories any time, but make a note of the fact that categories can be sorted in WordPress in two ways: by name (alphabetically) or by ID number. As you enter the categories, they are assigned an ID number. It is difficult to change this, so if you don't want your categories sorted alphabetically, enter them in the order you want to see them presented on the screen.*



WordPress Admin Manage Categories

When you have the parent categories entered, enter your sub-categories. In the pull down menu for Parent Category, you can select the *parent* to the sub-category you are adding. When you view your categories in the Manage > Categories panel, you will see the categories listed like this:

Computer Tips

- Windows
- Linux
- Mac

Internet News

Web Page Design

- Web Standards
- WordPress
 - - Plugins
 - - Themes

Put Posts in Categories

Let's put some of your test posts into categories so you can see how this works.



WordPress Admin Manage Posts

From the **Manage > Category** panel, click on the tab for **Posts**. You should see the test posts you entered here. To the right are three links that say: **View - Edit - Delete**. Click on **Edit** to edit one of the posts. On the right side of the Edit Post screen you will now see your **Categories**. Choose one of them by clicking in the box next to it. Then scroll down the page and click **SAVE**. Repeat this for your other test posts, putting each one in a different category.

Now view your page by clicking **View Site** at the top of the **Admin** panel. Do you see the categories listed in the sidebar now? Great. If you are missing a category, that usually means that there are no posts in it. This is the default function of WordPress, so not to worry. When you add a post to the "missing" category, it will appear on your web pages. Click on one of the categories and you will be taken to a page for just that category. You should see the posts that went into that category. This is a generated *Category* page.

Now, click on the **Archives** for the month showing. Now you are visiting a generated page of your posts listed in chronological order for this month - well, specifically for today only. Two methods of finding the same information.

Preventing Spam

There is more to think about when it comes to having comments on your site.

Unfortunately we live in a world where [spam](#) is a fact of life. It is recommended that you begin battling the comment spammers with the helpful article, [Introduction to Dealing with Comment Spam](#).

What is Next

You've now done all the basics for your new WordPress website. You know how to write a post, create a category, and how to view your site's information by category and archive. You can start the customization process, and when you are done, don't forget to delete your test posts! Then start writing some wonderful information to share with your new-found public!

Customizing Your WordPress Site

Once you are familiar with how WordPress works, it's time to get creative and start customizing. The tutorial now splits into different subjects that require no order. From here on you can do whatever you want, adding and subtracting, perfecting and scrambling your site at will. The amount of effort you put into the site is now up to you. You can work with

the two WordPress Themes that came with the installation, or seek out another Theme that better meets your needs. You can totally customize all the links and information, or get serious and completely re-design the entire site to do whatever you want. You have the basics, the rest is up to your imagination.

[Finding a WordPress Theme](#)

Look for one that better suits the look you desire on your site.

[Customizing the Look](#)

When you are ready to plunge into the code, you can customize the look and layout of the site through CSS and modifying the Themes (or create your own).

[Enhance Your Site with Plugins](#)

Plugins add function and sometimes fun to your site. There are hundreds of different plugins from adding custom links like related articles to your sidebar to adding weather reports.

WordPress Themes

There are hundreds of [WordPress Themes](#) to choose from. All do basically the same thing but graphically present the information in a myriad of ways. Choose a few that look interesting to you, and meet your audience's needs and your desires, and then test drive them following the test drive instructions above. Click through the whole site, the categories and archives as well as the individual posts to see how the Theme handles each one. The look may be nice on the front page, but if it handles things in a way you don't like on the single post, then you will have to dig into the code and make changes. Not ready for that, try another theme.

If you run into problems, check out the Codex's [Troubleshooting Themes](#) article.

Customizing The Look

If you are familiar with CSS, HTML, and even PHP and MySQL, consider customizing the Theme to your own needs. This is not for the timid, and it is for the informed and experienced. If you want to expand your web page design and development skills, WordPress can help:

- [Using Themes](#)
- [Theme Development](#)
- [Stepping Into Templates](#)
- [Templates Files](#)
- [Blog Design and Layout](#)
- [CSS Overview, Tips, Techniques, and Resources](#)
- [FAQ - WordPress Layout](#)
- [Stepping Into Template Tags](#)
- [Template Tags](#)
- [CSS Troubleshooting](#)
- [CSS Fixing Browser Bugs](#)

WordPress Plugins



Plugin Panel

[WordPress Plugins](#) are also known as add-ons or extensions. They are software scripts that add functions and events to your website. They cover the gamut from up-to-date weather reports to simple organization of your posts and categories. Plugins are designed by volunteer contributors and enthusiasts who like challenges and problem solving. They are usually fairly [simple to install](#) through the WordPress Admin Plugin panel, just follow the instructions provided by the plugin author. Remember, these are free and non-essential. If you have any problems with plugins, contact the plugin author's website or plugin source first, then search the Internet for help with that specific plugin, and if you haven't found a solution, then visit the WordPress forums for more help.

- [WordPress Plugin Repository](http://www.wp-plugins.org) (<http://www.wp-plugins.org>)
- [WordPress Plugins](http://www.wp-plugins.net) (<http://www.wp-plugins.net>)
- [Managing Plugins](#)
- [Plugins](#)

Above and Beyond the Basics

The exciting thing about WordPress is that there are few limits. Thousands of people are using WordPress for blogging and for running their websites. All have a different look and different functions on their sites.

- [Well-Designed Sites Using WordPress](#)

What you do from here is up to you, but here are a few places to take that first step beyond the basics:

- [WordPress Features](#)
- [Working with WordPress](#)
- [Using Pages](#)
- [Understanding the WordPress Loop](#)
- [Troubleshooting](#)
- [Using Permalinks](#)
- [Press It - Post to your site from the web instantly!](#)

Getting More Help

- [Codex Main Page](#)
- [FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Getting More Help](#)
- [Using the Support Forums](#)
- [Troubleshooting](#)