



The Handbook

Codex

http://codex.wordpress.org/Using_Themes

Version Date

8 August 2005

Using Themes

Before the advent of Themes, WordPress generated content using a single file, `index.php`, and files to support comment display and submission. A single style sheet controlled the presentation. All other pages, including the category and archive pages, were generated by passing parameters to the `index.php` page.

The new Theme system provides two convenient features.

Physically Separates Components

The new WordPress modular [template files](#) system provides a method to define separate physical [PHP](#) files for the different components of your WordPress site. This allows creation of unique designs and functionality for many special pages, such as [category archives](#), [monthly archives](#), and the individual entry pages.

Quickly Change Layout and Design

It allows users with appropriate permissions to quickly change the layout of the entire site by uploading a new theme and essentially flipping a switch in the admin panel.

The old method of generating pages will still work. If you are [upgrading from v1.2 or v1.2.1 or v1.2.2](#), **you can continue using your existing design**. Keeping your older design will not prevent you from adding additional themes and easily switching between designs.

What is a Theme?

Fundamentally, the WordPress Theme system is a way to "skin" your weblog. Yet, it is more than just a "skin." Skinning your site implies that only the design is changed. WordPress Themes can provide much more control over the look *and presentation* of the material on your website.

A WordPress Theme is a collection of files that work together to produce a graphical interface with an underlying unifying design for a weblog. These files are called [template files](#). A theme modifies the way the site is displayed, without modifying the underlying software. Themes may include customized template files, image files (`*.jpg`, `*.gif`), style sheets (`*.css`), custom [Pages](#), as well as any necessary code files (`*.php`). For an introduction to template files, see [Stepping Into Templates](#).

Themes are a whole new ball game. Let's say you write a lot about cheese and gadgets. Through the innovative use of the [WordPress Loop](#) and [template files](#), you can customize your Cheese category posts to look different from your Gadgets category posts. With this powerful control over what different pages and categories look like on your site, you are limited only by your imagination. For information on how to use different Themes for different categories or posts, see [The Loop in Action](#) and [Category Templates](#).

Get New Themes

- [Official WordPress Theme page](http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/) (<http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/>)
- [Codex WordPress Theme List](#)
- [WordPress Theme Viewer](http://themes.wordpress.net/theme-viewer.php) (<http://themes.wordpress.net/theme-viewer.php>)

- [WordPress Theme Gallery](http://www.bloggingpro.com/wordpress-theme-gallery/) (<http://www.bloggingpro.com/wordpress-theme-gallery/>)
- [How to Blog's List](http://blogging.typepad.com/how_to_blog/2005/03/comprehensive_1.html) (http://blogging.typepad.com/how_to_blog/2005/03/comprehensive_1.html)
- [Alex King's WordPress Theme Competition](http://www.alexking.org/blog/2005/02/27/wordpress-theme-competition/) (<http://www.alexking.org/blog/2005/02/27/wordpress-theme-competition/>)
- [WRC: 1.5 Themes List](http://wrc.os42.com/?page_id=151) (http://wrc.os42.com/?page_id=151)
- [WordPress Index and Theme Builder](http://www.redalt.com/Tools/builder.php) (<http://www.redalt.com/Tools/builder.php>)

Theme Announcements

- [Web Tools Collection](http://weblogtoolscollection.com/) (<http://weblogtoolscollection.com/>)
- [Blogging Pro WordPress Themes Category](http://www.bloggingpro.com/archives/category/wordpress-themes/) (<http://www.bloggingpro.com/archives/category/wordpress-themes/>)
- [WordPress forums](http://wordpress.org/support/forum.php?id=5) (<http://wordpress.org/support/forum.php?id=5>)
- [How to Blog's Comprehensive Theme List](http://blogging.typepad.com/how_to_blog/2005/03/comprehensive_1.html) (http://blogging.typepad.com/how_to_blog/2005/03/comprehensive_1.html)
- [Alex King's WordPress Theme Competition](http://www.alexking.org/blog/2005/02/27/wordpress-theme-competition/) (<http://www.alexking.org/blog/2005/02/27/wordpress-theme-competition/>)
- [WRC: 1.5 Themes List](http://wrc.os42.com/?page_id=151) (http://wrc.os42.com/?page_id=151)

Using Themes

WordPress supplies two themes in its distribution for your initial use. You can switch between these two themes using the admin panel. Themes that you add to that directory will appear in the [Administration Panels](#) > [Presentation](#) as additional selections.

Adding New Themes

There are many themes available for download that will work with your WordPress installation.



Presentation Theme Panel

If the theme that you are installing provides instructions, be sure to read through and follow those instructions for the successful installation of the theme. **It is recommended that theme developers provide installation instructions for their own themes**, because themes can provide special optional functionality that may require more steps than the basic installation steps covered here. If your theme does not work after following any

provided instructions, please **contact the theme author for help**.

To add a new theme to your WordPress installation, follow these basic steps:

1. Download the theme archive and extract the files it contains. You may need to preserve the directory structure in the archive when extracting these files. Follow the guidelines provided by your theme author.
2. Using an [FTP client](#) to access your host web server, create a directory to contain your theme in the `wp-content/themes` directory provided by WordPress. For example, a theme named **Test** should be in `wp-content/themes/test`. Your theme may provide this directory as part of the archive.
3. Upload the theme files to the new directory on your host server.
4. Follow the [instructions below](#) for selecting the new theme.

Selecting the Active Theme

To select the active theme for your site:

1. Log in to the WordPress [Administration Panels](#).
2. Select the [Presentation](#) subpanel.
3. From the **Select** column in the table, click on **Select** for the theme you wish to activate.
4. To view the new look, click **View Site** at the top of the Panel's screen.

Your selection should immediately become active.

Creating Themes

If you are interested in creating your own theme for distribution, or learning more about the architecture of themes, please review the documentation regarding [Theme Development](#) and [Designing Themes for Public Release](#).

Theme Files

The following are the files typically included within a Theme.

- [404 Template](#) = `404.php`
- [Archive Template](#) = `archive.php`
- [Page Template](#) = `archives.php`
- Comments Template = `comments.php`
- Footer Template = `footer.php`
- [Header Template](#) = `header.php`
- Links = `links.php`
- Main Template = `index.php`
- [Page Template](#) = `page.php`
- Popup Comments Template = `comments-popup.php`
- Post Template = `single.php`
- Search Form = `searchform.php`
- [Search Template](#) = `search.php`
- [Sidebar Template](#) = `sidebar.php`
- Stylesheet = `style.css`

Moving from 1.2.x to 1.5

For details on upgrading WordPress and your WordPress Theme from v1.2 to 1.5, see: [Upgrade 1.2 to 1.5](#).

Theme Tools and Other Resources

These tools and resources will aid you in creating and/or enhancing themes.

Layout

- [Blog Design and Layout](#)
- [Stepping Into Templates](#)
- [Customizing Your Sidebar](#)
- [Good Navigation Links](#)
- [Next and Previous Links](#)
- [Styling Lists with CSS](#)
- [Creating Horizontal Menus](#)
- [Dynamic Menu Highlighting](#)
- [Troubleshooting Layouts](#)
- [WordPress Index Builder](#) (<http://www.redalt.com/Tools/builder.php>)
- [Photoshop Template for the WordPress Default Theme](#) (<http://www.wateronlydries.com/?p=158>)

Templates and Template Tags

- [Template Files](#)
- [Stepping Into Templates](#)
- [Stepping Into Template Tags](#)
- [Template Tags](#)
- [Developing WordPress Themes](#)
- [The Loop in Action](#)
- [Template Tag Layout in simple to read form](#) (<http://guff.szub.net/wordpress/template-tags/>)
- [Anatomy of a WordPress Theme](#) (<http://boren.nu/archives/2004/11/10/anatomy-of-a-wordpress-theme/>)
- [Templates and the is functions](#) (<http://boren.nu/archives/2004/10/16/templates-and-the-is-functions/>)

Tools and Resources

- [Designing Themes for Public Release](#)
- [Know Your Sources](#)
- [Validating a Website](#)

- [Finding Your CSS Styles](#)
- [CSS Fixing Browser Bugs](#)
- [WordPress Design Sandbox Article](#) (<http://elasticdog.com/2004/11/wp-design-sandbox/>)
- [Working On CSS and the WordPress Theme \(using a sandbox\)](#) (<http://www.cameraontheroad.com/index.php?p=594>)

Colors, Graphics, and Fonts

- [Kubrickr - Changes Default Theme Header Images](#) (<http://www.redalt.com/Tools/kubrickr.php>)
- [Header Graphics](#) (<http://www.digitalwestex.com/gallery/index.php?cat=6>)
- [Creative Commons Images](#) (<http://creativecommons.org/image/>)
- [Image * After - Free Stock Image Library](#) (<http://www.imageafter.com/>)
- [Stock.xchng - Free Stock Image Library](#) (<http://www.sxc.hu/>)
- [Playing With Fonts](#)
- [Developing a Colour Scheme](#)
- [Colr.org - For Finding Colors in an Image](#) (<http://colr.org>)
- [I Like Your Colors](#)