

Guide to your first WordPress website

Article by Jerry of [Web Hosting Secret Revealed](#)

A confession: I am a big fan of WordPress. I strongly believe WordPress is the best (and most popular) CMS/blogging platform for any beginners who wish to start a new website. And, expect for the old websites I started since year 2002; I run all my websites in WordPress nowadays.

“How do I start a website?” – This is the most common question I get from my friends and relatives. Back in old times, in order to answer the question, I need to explain about HTML, FTP, database, WYSISYG software like Dreamweaver, and so on.

Not now anymore.

Want to start a website? “Go with WordPress.” – That’s my standard short-and-sweet answer for all.

This long article is meant for newbies who wish to start a new WordPress site or blog. In case you hate to read long articles from your computer screen, I prepared a printer-ready pdf version for this guide and you can download it here.

WordPress Explained

First thing first, what is WordPress? As described in developer’s own words:

“WordPress is publishing software with a focus on ease of use, speed and a great user experience. WordPress is blessed with an active community, which is the heart of open source software.”

“WordPress is a powerful personal publishing platform, and it comes with a great set of features designed to make your experience as a publisher on the Internet as easy, pleasant and appealing as possible. We are proud to offer you a freely distributed, standards-compliant, fast, light and free personal publishing platform, with sensible default settings and features, and an extremely customizable core.”

In layman term, WordPress is an open-source web application that provides a convenient way to create, publish, and manage contents online. WordPress was mainly used as a blogging platform at first but as the software revolt; it is widely used in building and maintaining websites.

If you are into history, read [About Wordpress](#).

Benefits of WordPress

WordPress is free, easy-to-use, features rich, SEO friendly, and most importantly, WordPress is widely supported. The system itself is supported by a huge group of talented volunteers; and there are hundreds of thousands (if not millions) of developers and web designers working 24/7 on WordPress plugins and templates.

I wrote a brief article about why [WordPress is recommended](#) but I don’t think it’s necessary for you to dig out the old stuffs.

What's about WordPress template and plugin?

A WordPress template is the design codes (in css and php files) that decide the outlook of your website/blog; while WordPress plugins are functional codes that provide extra functions to your website/blog.



I'll go into details for each of these at below.

WordPress.org vs WordPress.com

People always confused with WordPress.org and WordPress.com. WordPress.org is all about the software (where you can find supports, documentations and download links on the software); WordPress.com on the other hand, is where you can host a free blog online using the WordPress software. Blogs hosted on WordPress.com will have long URLs like <http://www.myblog.wordpress.com> – just like what you get from Blogspot.com.

WordPress Templates Explained

The beauty of WordPress is that the design of your blog/website is 'seperated' from the backend system.

The appearance of your WordPress blog/website is controlled by a series of files named template or theme. You can modify your blog/website designs easily by editing your files in the template folders (without touching the backend system). Once you get the stylesheets and template files configured, the design will be reflected thru out your blog/website and there's no need to edit the designs on page-by-page basis.

Do I need to create WordPress templates myself?

Yes if you want to; but it's not a must. As a matter of fact, most WordPress bloggers do not create their own blog/website templates. There are plenty of templates available (for free or for an affordable price) online. If this is your first WordPress blog, I would suggest you start by using templates built by others.

Where can I get those beautiful WordPress templates?

A simple search on Google should get you infinite WordPress templates. Alternatively, you can find beautiful templates from WordPress themes gallery sites as well as related blogs.

Some links to get you started:

Official WordPress Website

- [Themes Directory](#)

Related Blogpost

- [25 beautiful WP themes in blogs, gallery, and magazine styles](#)
- [100 excellent free high quality WordPress themes](#)

WordPress Themes Galleries

- [WP Themes 360](#)
- [Top WP Themes](#)
- [WP Theme Designer](#)

Paid Themes Sites

- [Elegant Themes](#)

WordPress Plugins Explained

A WordPress plugin is like an extension on the basic system. Plugins can extend WordPress to do almost anything you can imagine –polls, dynamic listing on related articles, on-site rating systems, images gallery, SEO features, auto-generate XML sitemap... etc.

Similar to WordPress template, you don't have to create your own plugins. Benefit of WordPress – there are plenty of volunteers developing plugins and sharing the codes for free. There are almost infinite number of plugins available online that you can get just about any tasks done with these existing plugins.

More info? [Visit plugin directory at WordPress official website.](#)

Setting up your first WordPress site

You should be able to install WordPress in most hosting providers and personal computers on Unix/Linux system. The latest WordPress version requires PHP Version 4.3 or greater and MySQL Version 4.0 or greater.

Details of server requirements and recommended setup can be found [here](#) but I think 99.99% users should be fine without reading the specifications.

Installing WordPress on local computer

Before installing WordPress, you need a mini-server installed in your computer – something like WAMP should be good enough. When you are done with WAMP (or whatever system you are using on your computer), go [download WordPress installation file](#) and follow the 'Famous 5-Minute Install' guides.

Quoting from WordPress official website (http://codex.wordpress.org/Installing_WordPress)

1. Download and unzip the WordPress package, if you haven't already.
2. Create a database for WordPress on your web server, as well as a MySQL user who has all privileges for accessing and modifying it.
3. Rename the wp-config-sample.php file to wp-config.php.
4. Open wp-config.php in your favorite text editor and fill in your database details as explained in Editing wp-config.php to generate and use your secret key password.
5. Place the WordPress files in the desired location on your web server:
 - If you want to integrate WordPress into the root of your domain (e.g. <http://example.com/>), move or upload all contents of the unzipped WordPress directory (but excluding the directory itself) into the root directory of your web server.
 - If you want to have your WordPress installation in its own subdirectory on your web site (e.g. <http://example.com/blog/>), rename the directory wordpress to the name you'd like the subdirectory to have and move or upload it to your web server. For example if you want the WordPress installation in a subdirectory called "blog", you should rename the directory called "wordpress" to "blog" and upload it to the root directory of your web server.
6. Run the WordPress installation script by accessing wp-admin/install.php in your favorite web browser.
 - If you installed WordPress in the root directory, you should visit: <http://example.com/wp-admin/install.php>
 - If you installed WordPress in its own subdirectory called blog, for example, you should visit: <http://example.com/blog/wp-admin/install.php>

Installing WordPress on web host

If you are planning to run a WordPress website from the beginning, look for a web host that can auto-install WordPress for you. There are plenty (and I really mean P-L-E-N-T-Y) of good web host that supports such easy installation features – why sweat for all the hassles to install WordPress manually?

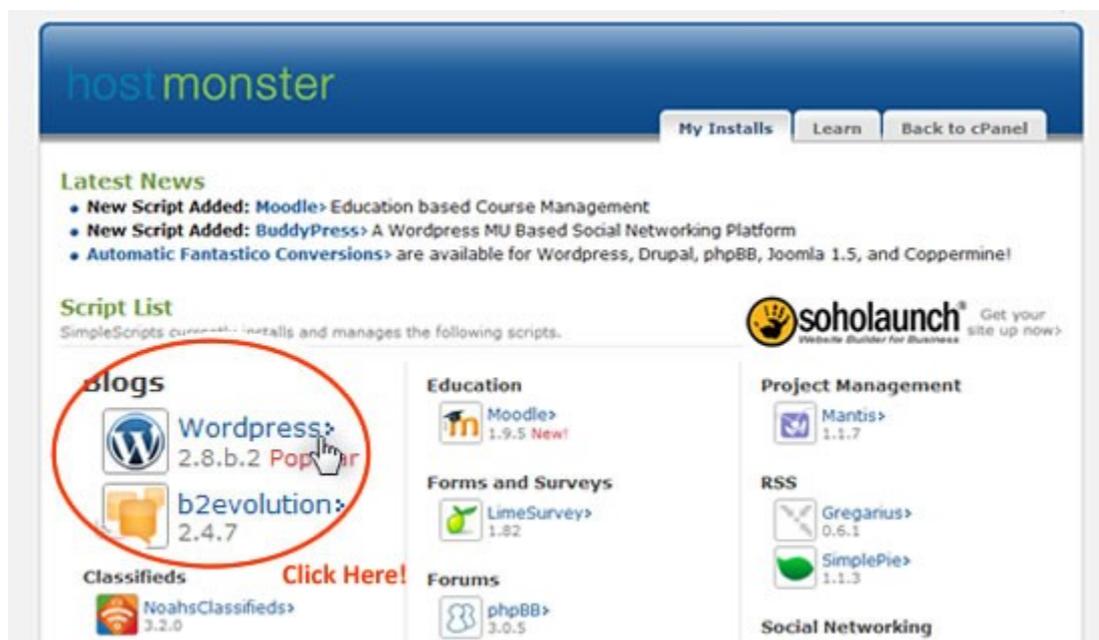
Listed below are some well-known web host that provides auto-installation features via Fantastico, SimpleScripts, or in house program.

Web Hosting Services	SimpleScripts	Fantastico	In House Program
Fat Cow ★			✓
Hostgator ★		✓	
InMotion ★		✓	
BlueHost	✓	✓	
LunarPages		✓	
Web Hosting Pad		✓	
HostMonster	✓	✓	
Pow Web			✓

★ : Recommended web host.

Example: Installing WordPress using SimpleScripts

Installing WordPress (or any other web applications) using auto-install features like Fantastico and SimpleScripts is easy. I'll show a screen-to-screen example here.



Login to your Hostmonster account and go to SimpleScripts main page. Click 'WordPress' to proceed on the installation.

The Wordpress installation page covers a brief intro on the web applications and reveals the latest version supported by the web host. In this case, the supported version is WordPress v2.8.b.2, which is released in late May 2009. Click 'Install Now' to begin setup.

hostmonster

General Information My Installs Back to cPanel

What version of Wordpress would you like to install?
3.5.1 (latest)

Where would you like Wordpress installed?
http://www.hostmonster.com/ / test

Additional Information

Please give your new site a name.
Test Blog on HostMonster
ie. My Site, etc.

Please enter a tagline for your site.
HostMonster
This could be a small caption or catchphrase describing your site.

Advanced Configuration

Generate me an Administrator Login

Automatically create a new database.

Server Requirements

Your server meets all the minimum system requirements for Wordpress.

Legal Information

Script License Agreement

I have read the terms and conditions of the GPLv2 license agreement.

SimpleScripts Terms of Service

I have read and agree to the SimpleScripts Terms of Service agreement.

Complete

Fill in the blank, click 'Complete' to proceed

Automated Script Management. Powered by SimpleScripts.com.
© 2008 SimpleScripts All Rights Reserved

On next screen, you'll be required to input all the necessary information. What's your desired WordPress version? What's your desired site name and preferred tag lines? Do you need additional admin login? Click 'Complete' once everything is set and the auto-installation process will begins.

(Yes, after this everything will just goes auto pilot!)



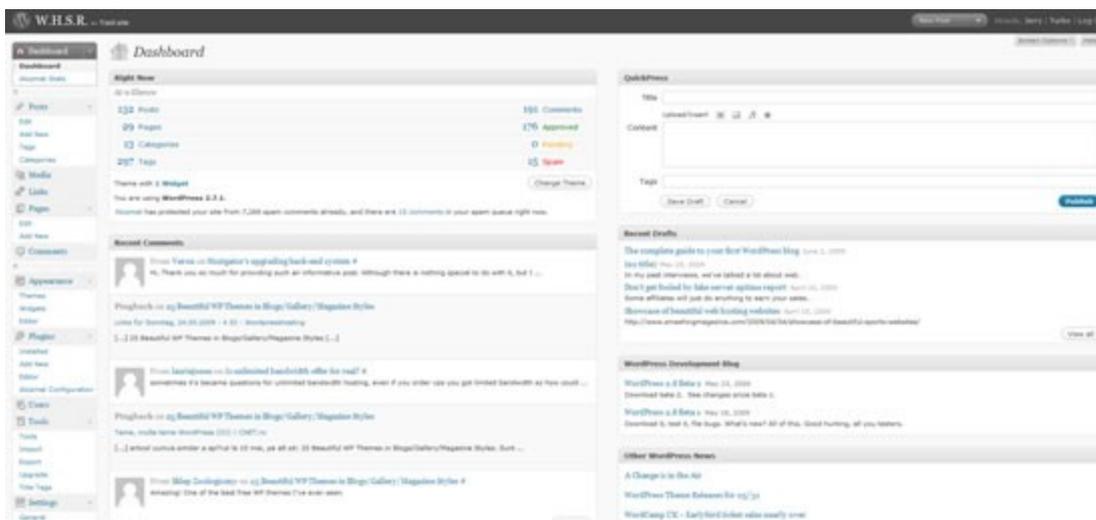
And there you go, a fresh copy of WordPress installed in my Hostmonster account. Note that installation screen might be a little different for different web host (some use Fantastico, some use in house program) but the process is basically the same.

Upon completion, you will be given an URL to login to your WordPress administrator page. In most of the time, it looks something like this: <http://www.exampleblog.com/wp-admin>.

Go to this URL and login with your preset details – there, you are now in the backend of your WordPress site.

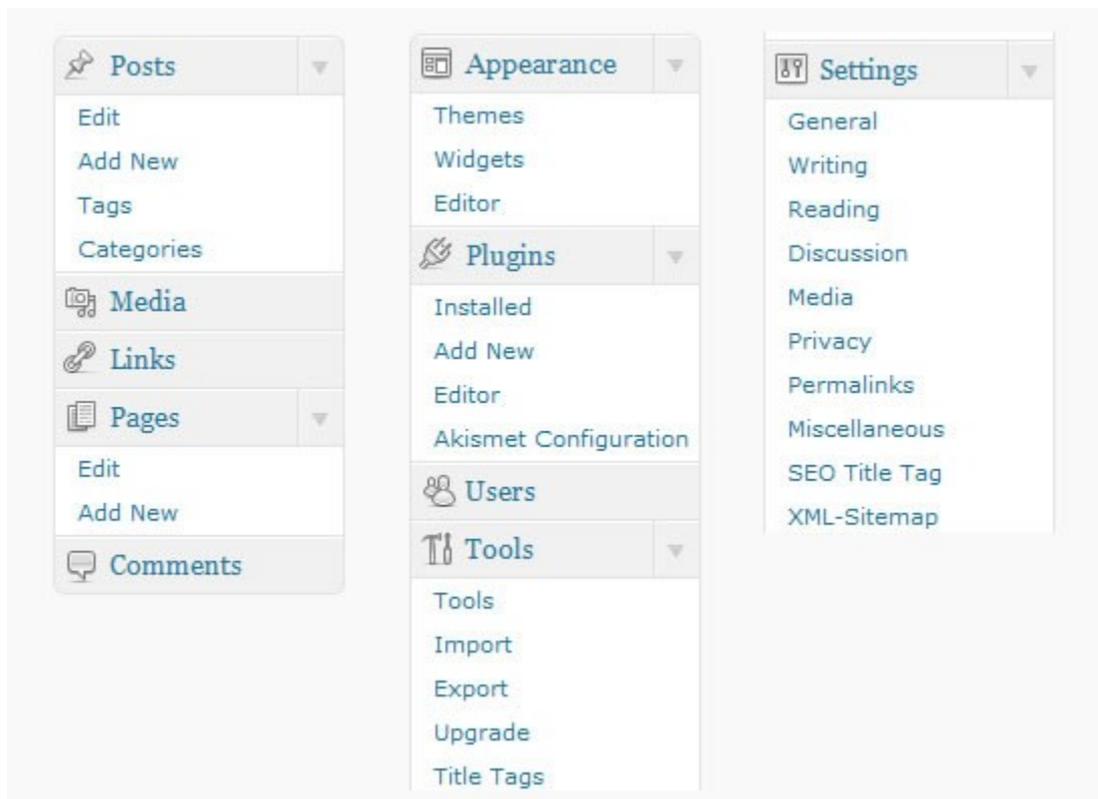
Getting started with WordPress

Here's how WordPress dashboard looks like. Pretty cool isn't?



Publishing a post or page is simple. Click on post, add new, and you'll come to the post page. Write what you want to write for the content and title, select or create the category for the article, click publish to (well) publish, and click save draft if you wish to pause and continue your writing in future. Everything is common sense in WordPress – if you can use a Microsoft Words, I don't see how you can have problem with WordPress. The basic features of WordPress are all included in the control panel sidebar.

See figure below, here are all the features you can work on your WordPress.



Wrapping things up: More Resources

This is a pretty long post and gosh~ I can't believe that I have already spent more than 6 hours in crafting this post. I hope this article helps and of course, there are a lot more to be learned. To wrap up this guide, here's the list of further reading materials.

- [WordPress official lessons](#)
- [WordPress template tags](#)
- [WordPress designs and layouts](#)
- [Getting-started guides for WordPress.com](#)
- [How to perform a manual WordPress installation](#)
- [WordPress beginner Guides and list of useful plugins](#)
- [Getting started with WordPress](#)
- [Using WordPress to manage your web content](#)
- [WordPress tutorials](#)
- [How to start/setup your own blog using WordPress](#)
- [Use WordPress as a CMS \(with loads of handy plugins recommendation\)](#)
- [How to use WordPress as a truly customized CMS](#)
- [23 must see free blogging platform](#)
- [43 ways to make your blog stands out from the rest](#)
- [48 creative ways to use WordPress](#)

Have fun and good luck!

Original post can be found here: <http://www.webhostingsecretrevealed.com/blog-hosting/the-complete-guide-to-your-first-wordpress-site/>