

WordPress Tutorials

First Steps with WordPress

Let's take a step-by-step tour through your WordPress site and see how the different functions work and how to make your new site your own. During the first part of this tutorial, please don't change anything within the program unless it is part of the tutorial. After following these steps, you'll soon be changing everything.

Test Drive 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 your WordPress theme is laid out and how it works. Consider this the test drive before you start adding on all the special features.

The layout you are looking at is called a WordPress Theme. It is the appearance of your website, styling the look of the site and the framing of the content. The WordPress theme features a "header" at the top with the title and tagline for your site. Below this is your Menu. Along the side you will see some titles and links. This comprises Widgets. Within the main middle section of the page is the content area. 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 the date the post was written, then the body of the post, and finally some information about the post. This is called the post meta data and contains information about the post such as the category assigned to that post.

Back to the sidebar, if you have one, you will see different sections with information. Among these you may find a list of Recent Posts, Recent Comments, Archives, Categories, and links to the Administration Screens, Log Out, and RSS feeds. This is part of the menu or navigation Screen that people will use to move around your site, visiting pages or 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. In the "Front End" of your website move your mouse over the title of the article post. Notice how it changes colour. This is called a hover. Most Themes feature a distinctive colour or underline 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. Also look at the colour of the links. How are they coloured or underlined to stand out from the rest of the text?

Observe 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, such as the colour of the title at the top of the page. If you remember that it is called the header, then you will know to look within the header section of your style sheet (the file that controls the look of your web page), when you want to make changes to it.

Take a Quick Trip Around

On the News page, if you click on the title of the post, it will take you to the specific page for that post. The news page of your site features the most recent posts on your site. Each post title will link to the actual page of the post.

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 colour? Is there a sidebar?

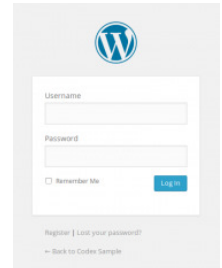
Posts are usually stored in Categories and/or Tags so you can keep related topics together. Initially you probably only have one category, but will soon want more.

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.

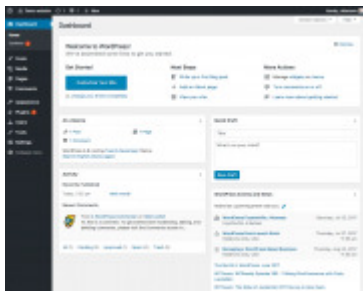
Test Drive the WordPress Administration Screens

Log In

Begin by logging into the "administration area" or the back end of your website. Visit your site's login page by placing "wp-admin" after your domain name in the address bar (e.g. <http://example.com/wp-admin>). You can also place "login" after your domain. Some themes provide a "login" link or form on the front end as well. Now log into WordPress using your username and password.



Start at the Top



After logging in you are on the main Administration Screen called the Dashboard. 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.

At the top of the screen is the area called the "toolbar." Click on the link that is your site name. This will take you to a view of your new WordPress 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!

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 backend of your new website. In fact, the first page you see after logging in is called the Dashboard, a collection of information and data about the activities and actions on your WordPress site.

The Dashboard 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 accomplished on your site.

On the left side of the screen is the main navigation menu detailing each of the administrative functions you can perform. Move your mouse down the list and the sub-menus will "fly out" for you to move your mouse to and click. Once you choose a "parent" navigation section, it will open up to reveal the options within that section.

The various menu items are as follows (dependent upon your login category you may not see all of these) :

- Dashboard
- Posts
- Media
- Links
- Pages
- Comments
- Appearance
- Plugins
- Users
- Tools
- Settings

You are anxious to get started, so for now, if you are a site administrator, let's start with the Users Screen.

Click on the Users tab. The screen will change and you will see the Screen called All Users that shows a list of all your users; from here you can add or change existing users and authors accounts.

In the navigation menu, click on the Your Profile menu choice. This is where you will enter information about you, the author and administrator of the site. Fill in the information and click Update Profile when done.

Now, let's look at some other powerful features of the WordPress Admin.

Quick Changing the Look

The Appearance Screen

If you have more than one theme installed, the Appearance, Themes Screen allows you to change the look of your site using different Themes. Themes are presentation styles that completely change the look of your site. Your first theme would have been custom designed by Equestrian Website, who can also provide additional themes for your website. In addition to this there are other sources of themes. – by searching the Internet, you will find that there are hundreds of themes available for you to choose from.

In your Appearance Screen, you will see a list of currently installed themes. To quickly change the theme, simply click on the Activate button under one of the themes listed, then click on your site name in the top toolbar 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 Appearance > Theme Screen and click the Activate button under the original theme to bring the design back to what you had. To see it again, click your site name in the toolbar, and there it is.

Writing and Managing Posts

Back at the Administration Screen, take a look at the Posts Screen. You can use the tabs under the Posts Menu to write and manage your posts. Let's start by making your first test post in the Add New tab.

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 the Publish button that is to the right of 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 post. Go ahead. But do only three to four entries. There's more exciting work ahead!

Now that you've gotten a feel for writing posts, you can view your posts by clicking your site name in the toolbar on top of the screen. Now it's time to get down to the real work.

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 forms, from pats on the back (Good job! Like the post!) to extensive conversations and commentary about the posts. Or maybe you are seeking comments that add to the information you've posted.

Responding to comments and moderating them can also take up a lot of time.

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.