LaKeisha Hankins

Step- by- Step Guide to Getting Started with WordPress

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Getting Started with WordPress

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Section One: Getting Ready…

You've heard everyone tell you that you ought to set up your new business site with WordPress. You vaguely know it has something to do with blogging… but what exactly is it?

"WordPress" actually refers to three separate entities…

WordPress – A ***content management system*** (CMS) that allows you to copy-paste and/or easily format text to make it appear in the right places on your website. Saves you from having to learn HTML web coding and CSS data management. Used for sites or blogs.	**WordPress.com** – A ***web-hosting company*** created by the developers of the WordPress content management system. They treat this like a community and encourage you to host your blog as a sub-domain on WordPress.com for free.	**WordPress.org** – Separate from the hosting end of things, WordPress.org provides ***support resources for WordPress users***. Here is where you will find free plugins, blog themes and more.

Only one of these three completely different WordPress types allows you to actually host a blog for free. That is WordPress.com. But should you host your blog there?

Web Hosting

It's not a good idea to create a free blog at WordPress.com if you're planning to monetize your blog content in any way (displaying ads, sending people to your sales page, including affiliate links and the like) – or even use it for business. For one thing, this is against WordPress.com's rules.

If you disregard these rules, you are quite likely to wake up one morning and find out your blog has disappeared off the face of the digital planet, without a word of explanation. And all your hard work has gone up in smoke for some violation that will never get explained.

Your best solution? Host your WordPress blog on your own domain! (Yes, you can absolutely use the WordPress CMS if you don't host your blog on WordPress.com.)

Choosing a Domain Name

I personally use GoDaddy for all my domain name purchases

Be sure, however, to choose a strong Domain name (either your own name, a catchy business name you want to brand, or an easy-to-pronounce-and-remember keyword and/or location based name; for example: "chicagocloggingclub.com"). (Yes, "ccc.com" would be shorter, catchier and easier to brand and remember – but that will only work if you want people *who already know that acronym* to find you.)

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Registering Your Domain Name

Here's another common area of confusion, for people who are new to running their own blog or site: Domain registration.

Your domain is your home on the net. For example, say your name is Janice Williams: You might pay a web hosting company to host "www.janicewilliams.com "for you.

My blog to brand myself is www.LaKeishaHankins.com and my Residual Income blog www.CreateWealthWithLaKeisha.com

Your domain URL (address) sits on your web host's massive server computer. That is it's home. But here's where people get a little confused: The person who registers your domain can either be your web hosting company (e.g. BlueHost), Hostgator or a *separate registration company*. I personally use Hostgator myself.

You don't have to use Hostgator, of course: You can pick and choose any web hosting company. – but whichever one you use, just make sure that the company is WordPress-friendly.

Whichever company you choose, make sure it has **cPanel** (a control panel), and supports **PHP, MySQL5** (or the latest version of MySQL) and **WordPress** – and, finally, that it supports either **Fantastico DeLuxe or Simple Scripts**.

If you can't find the information you need on the sign-up page, look for a "Features" tab:

Bottom line: There are many types of web hosting companies – and not all are ideal for blogging!

Unlimited Domains

If you are planning to host more than one website or blog for your business, do choose a web host that offers unlimited domains: It's better for internet searchability to have each URL (domain address; e.g. "www.whateveryouwant.com") in its own separate domain, rather than as an "add-on" domain or "sub-domain".

If each site is in an entirely separate domain, it can also be transferred, should you ever decide to sell it. (Note: You will have to purchase (register) each new domain name as you add these – either from BlueHost or from your chosen Domain registration company.)

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Most reliable web hosting companies offer one free domain registration with your sign up, so there's no need for a separate registration: However, if your business model **includes multiple domains**, it will definitely be cheaper – after signing up with your web host and letting them register your primary free domain – to register all your other domains with a company such as Dynadot that specializes in domain registration.

A word of caution: Most domain registration companies will offer amazingly cheap web hosting (or even free web hosting). I would not recommend using your domain registration company for webhosting: Often your site will be laced with ads you don't know about or they provide poor support, obscure documentation or frequent "sit down" problems – as well as bandwidth limitations.

(You really don't want to sign up and discover your new web host doesn't have a cPanel, doesn't support the MySQL databasing needed for WordPress, and wants you to upgrade to their $179.95 per year plan because you've exceed your 15mb bandwidth… in the first week!)

By all means use Domain registration companies for **easy multiple and single domain registration** and **inexpensive domain transfers**, however.

Now let's get WordPress installed, and set up your blog…

Preparing to Install WordPress

There are many guides showing you how to set up WordPress using the Fantastico DeLuxe script.

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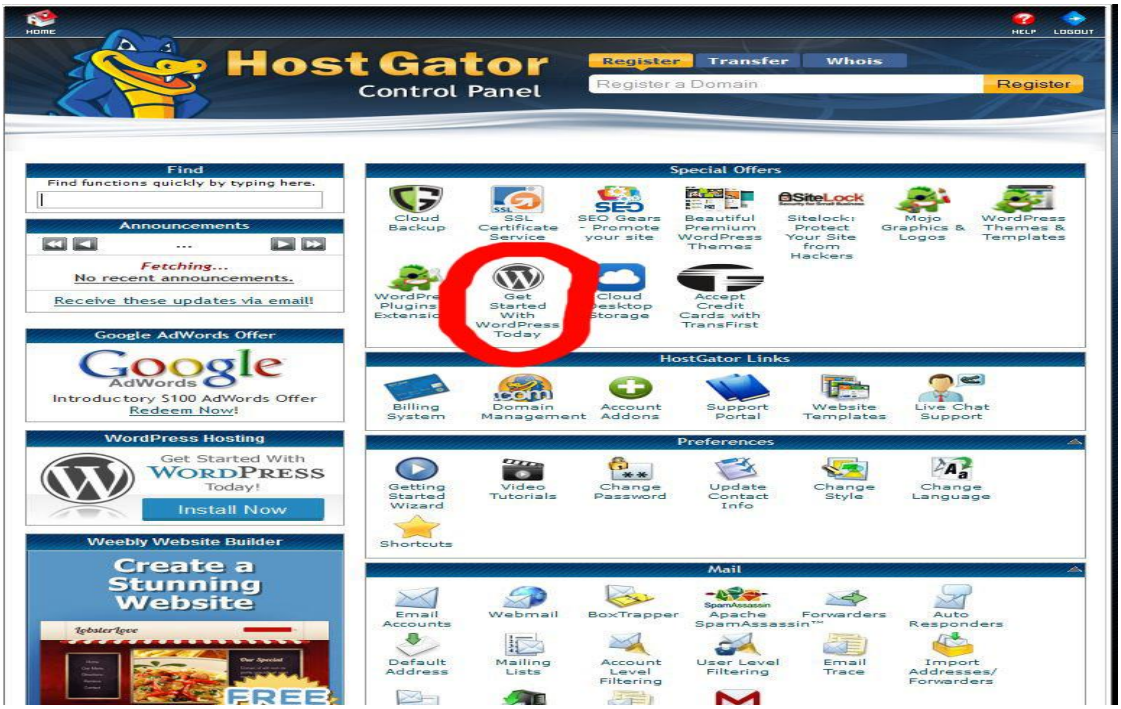
Sign up is easy, and you'll find yourself looking at your cPanel in no time at all. This is what it will look like.



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Login with your username & password that you created during the setup process with Hostgator.

In your cpanel area:

- Scroll down to “Software Services”, click on “Quick Install”.
- Under “Blog Software”, click on “Wordpress”.
- Select “Continue”
- Select the domain name that you want wordpress installed
- Follow the prompts…..Fill out the admin, user name and password information
- Click “Install Now” (this should only take a few minutes)
- Once the wordpress installation is complete, you will be provided with the username & password to log into the wordpress admin dashboard. (www.yoursite.com/wp-admin)

Note: If you run in into an issue don’t hesitate to contact support. They are very helpful. **Hostgator technical department can do a “Quick WordPress Install” for you. Contact them at 1-866-96- GATOR (42867).**

WordPress is now installed and you are ready to start publishing content to your blog.

WordPress Dashboard or Admin panel

What is WordPress Dashboard?

Your WordPress dashboard is your main login area for your blog. It is where you will control all of the settings to your WordPress blog such as updates and changes. (what people will see on the front end of your blog)

Log into your WordPress dashboard using the information you received after the wordpress installation was completed. Example: www.yoursitename.com/wp-admin. You should also have your username and password included in the email from Hostgator.

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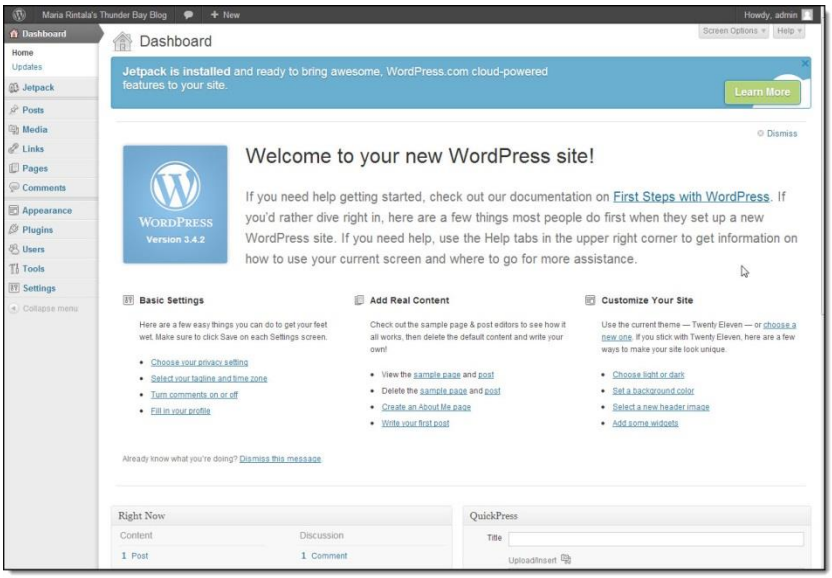
1. You should then see your new dashboard. Ignore all the stuff under the "Welcome" message….



We are only going to use your left-hand, vertical Dashboard controls.

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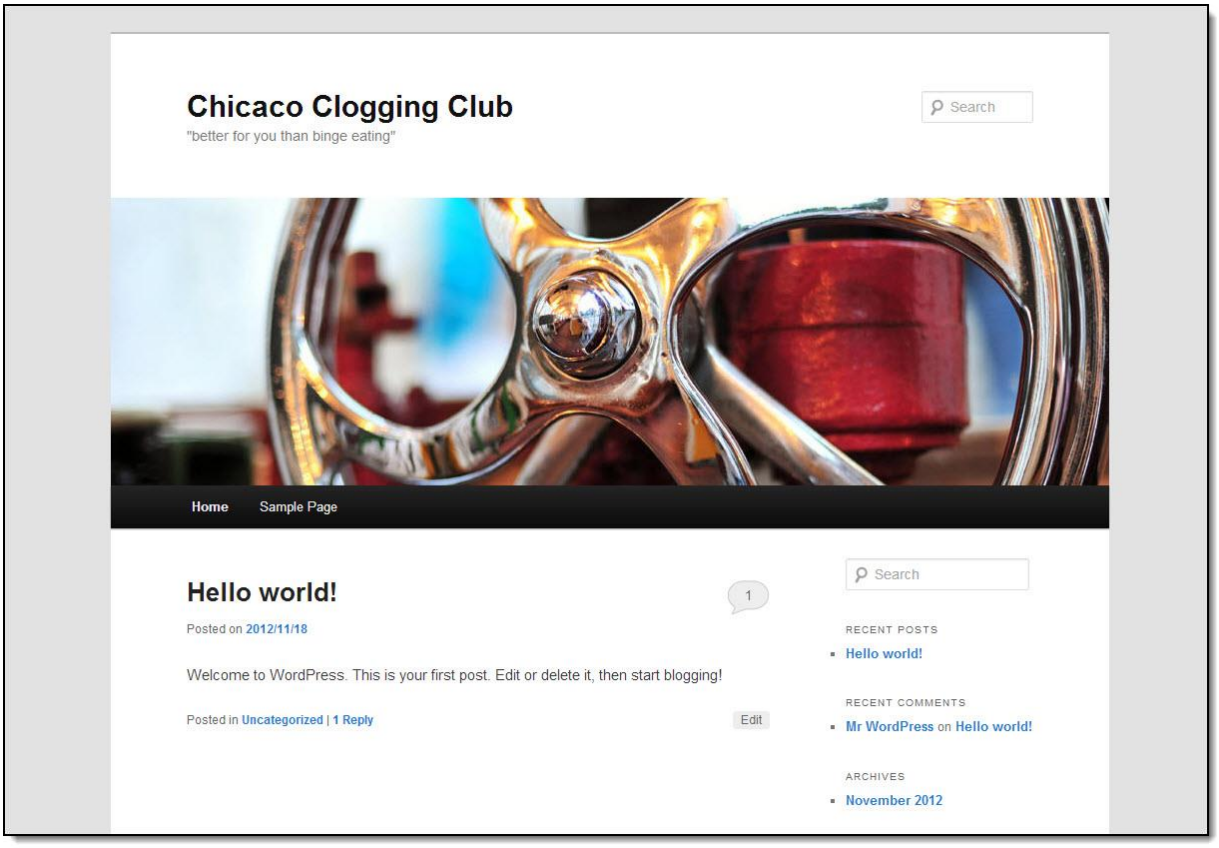
We are going to go through only the tabs where you need to customize data for maximum searchability. First, let's take care of your "Settings" section…

Settings>>General

Select "***General Settings***" from the drop-down list that appears. Now is when you can change your site or blog **Title**, if you wish.

Select your "**Tagline**" – your motto, slogan or a short description of what readers can expect.

(What you input in your Site Title and Tagline is what your readers will see. Like this…)



All of your other default settings in "General Settings" should be as you want them, except for **Timezone**. (You will want to change your UTC code.)

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If you don't know your UTC code, simply press the drop-down button and select your city from the (alphabetical) drop-down list that will appear. Select it, and your correct UTC code will also be selected (but it won't appear until after you've Saved and refreshed).

If you wish, you can also change the way you want the date to appear in your posts from five separate formats…

When you're done altering your general settings, press the blue "Save Changes" button

Settings>>Discussion

Close "General Settings". Go back to your "Settings" tab and select "Discussion".

When your "Discussion" page opens, all you need to do there is click on "***Turn comments on or off***" to toggle this setting to your preference.

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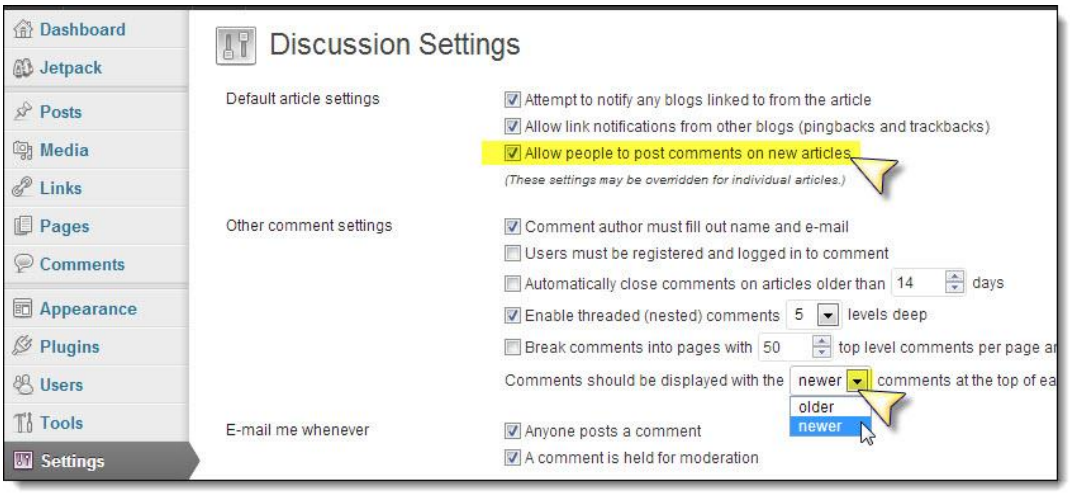


BlueHost has excellent SEO defaults, which you may not wish to change: However, as you can see, it's easy to do so, if you wish. The default is to allow people to comment – simply uncheck it if you want no comments at all.

The only other recommended change: ***Put "Newer" comments at the top rather than "Older"*** (this is what people expect).

Slide on down to "***Avatars***" to set your preferences. I would recommend "Gravatars", if you want peoples' Profile photos to appear; or else "Mystery Man". (Don't bother with the cutesy Wavatars, etc., unless your audience is under twenty.)

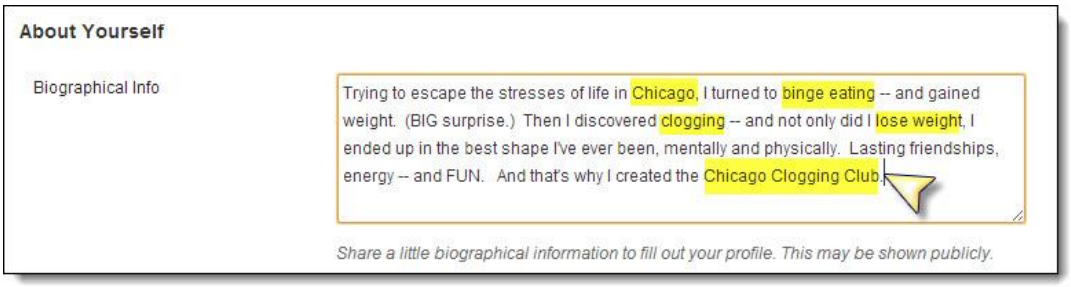
Save your changes!

Fill in your profile. The only two sections you'll want to pay attention to:

1. "***Display name publicly***" – the name you want your public to see.

If you don't want "admin" to appear, select your preferred name from the drop-down list. (N.B.: This ***will not*** change your "admin" username in your log-in box!)

2. "***About Yourself***" -- Fill in short biographical details that you think *would most interest your readers*. (Be sure to include keywords you'd like people to find you with.)



Press "Update Profile" to save.

Settings>>Writing

The "Writing" tab has only one modification you need to make. Slide right down to the bottom of that section and find the Textarea box with the single, solitary, lonely little "pingomatic" ping-back link:

Copy-paste the following list, and add after "http://rpc.pingomatic.com/:

http://blogsearch.google.com/ping/RPC2
http://api.feedster.com/ping
http://api.moreover.com/ping
http://api.moreover.com/RPC2
http://ping.syndic8.com/xmlrpc.php
http://ping.weblogalot.com/rpc.php
http://pinger.blogflux.com/rpc

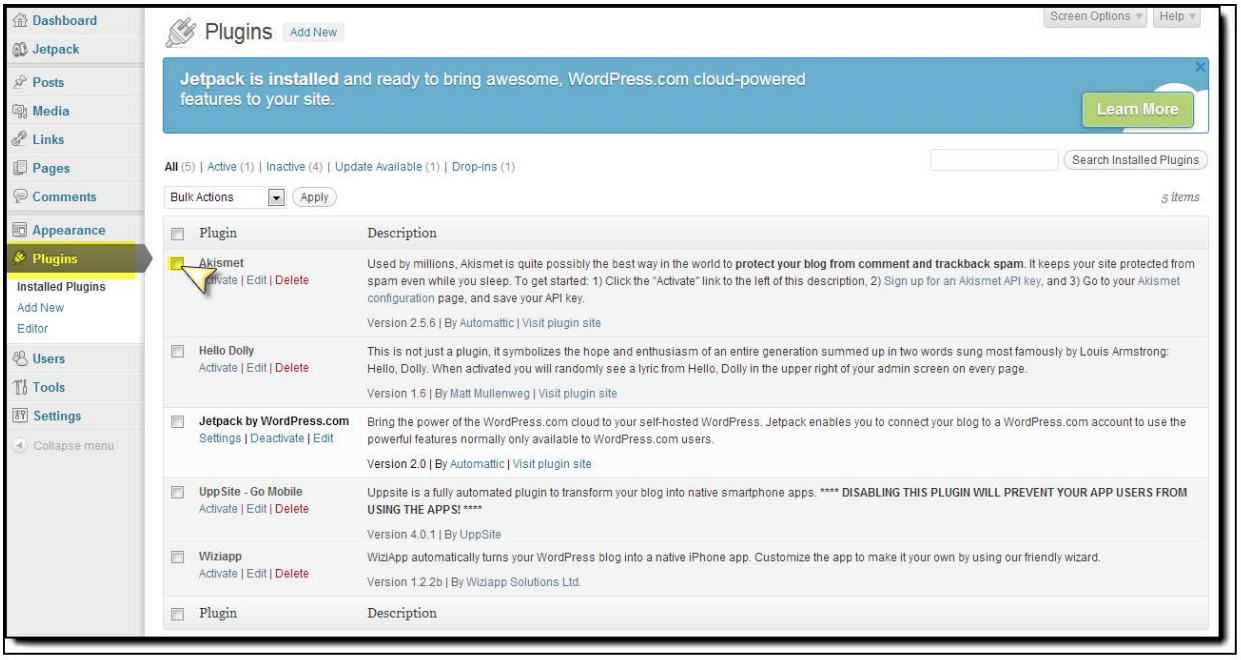
http://rpc.icerocket.com:10080/
http://rpc.technorati.com/rpc/ping
http://rpc.weblogs.com/RPC2
http://topicexchange.com/RPC2
http://www.blogdigger.com/RPC2
http://xping.pubsub.com/ping
http://ping.feedburner.com
http://api.my.yahoo.com/RPC2
http://bblog.com/ping.php
http://blogbot.dk/io/xml-rpc.php
http://blogmatcher.com/u.php
http://bulkfeeds.net/rpc
http://mod-pubsub.org/kn_apps/blogchatt
http://mod-pubsub.org/knapps/blogchatt
http://ping.amagle.com
http://ping.bitacoras.com
http://ping.blogmura.jp/rpc
http://ping.exblog.jp/xmlrpc
http://ping.myblog.jp
http://ping.rootblog.com/rpc.php
http://ping.weblogs.se
http://rcs.datashed.net/RPC2
http://thingamablog.sourceforge.net/ping.php
http://trackback.bakeinu.jp/bakeping.php
http://www.a2b.cc/setloc/bp.a2b
http://www.bitacoles.net/ping.php
http://www.blogoole.com/ping
http://www.blogoon.net/ping
http://www.blogpeople.net/servlet/weblogUpdates
http://www.blogroots.com/tb_populi.blog?id=1
http://www.blogroots.com/tbpopuli.blog?id=1
http://www.blogshares.com/rpc.php
http://www.blogsnow.com/ping
http://www.blogstreet.com/xrbin/xmlrpc.cgi
http://www.lasermemory.com/lsrpc
http://www.mod-pubsub.org/kn_apps/blogchatter/ping.php
http://www.mod-pubsub.org/knapps/blogchatter/ping.php

http://www.newsisfree.com/xmlrpctest.php
http://www.popdex.com/addsite.php
http://www.snipsnap.org/RPC2
http://www.weblogues.com/RPC
http://xmlrpc.blogg.de
http://holycowdude.com/rpc/ping/
http://pingoat.com/goat/RPC2
http://rpc.blogbuzzmachine.com/RPC2
http://rpc.newsgator.com/

Press “Save Changes”.

Plugins

Next, go to your Plugins tab in your left-hand, vertical menu. The only already-installed plugin that you absolutely MUST activate is Akismet, your spam filter.



If you already have an Akismet API key, click on "Activate", then click on "Enter your Akismet API key" and enter it in the Textarea box provided. (If you don't, click on "Sign up for an Akismet API key".)

You'll be given the key – a serial number. In fact, it should already be populating the Textarea box when you Activate it:

Don't add the mobile plugins until you've (later) customized your theme. Once you've got your theme looking the way you want, then you can return and add these mobile plugins, if you wish them activated. Meanwhile, don't overload your blog with plugins. Stick to the essentials. After Akismet, these are:

- All in One SEO Pack
- Google XML Sitemaps
- Theme Authenticity Checker (TAC)
- Sociable (or any other social bookmarking plugin you prefer)
- WP Security Scan

You can find each of these at WordPress.org in its "Plugins" section – right from your Dashboard! Simply Go back to "Plugins" and select the "Add New" tab. Then enter the name of the plugin you wish to find into the Textarea box, and press "Search plugins".

A page will open up: Select your plugin from the choices presented.

Select "Install Now". A page will open up, letting you know if the Install was successful. Click on "Activate Plugin".

Note: That's all there is to it for some plugins. Others will have a "Settings" link or present you with a message such as this one:

Click on the link provided and configure or input settings as instructed. This usually includes:

- Sliding over any advertising to click on “Enable” or “Activate” buttons
- Entering Titles, Descriptions, Summaries as instructed
- Entering hard data requested, such as your Google Analytics ID

Once you are satisfied with your plugins, it’s time to change your blog’s appearance from the default theme to a custom theme that best befits your needs.

Make sure you Save by pressing “Update Options”.

Appearance

To change your Theme, go to the “Appearance” tab in the left-hand, vertical menu and press it. A selection of three basic themes will open up. You can find more themes at the WordPress.org Themes section, or you can purchase a paid Premium Theme such as the highly flexible and easy Socrates theme; but whatever you do, be very careful of indiscriminately downloading and trying “free” themes from randomly-Googled sites. Many of these are laced with hidden code that will undermine or even harm your site.

Let’s start the **SmallBiz**” theme offered in your Appearances screen. A full-screen page will open up, showing you how your blog will look (without your personal data – this is just a Layout example).

If you like it, select “Save & Activate”:

The next page that opens up allows you to thoroughly customize your new SmallBiz theme, as well as watch a video explaining its features. Don’t do this part unless you have some time to go through all the settings and features. It will likely take a little time to tweak your settings, text and colors until you’ve got them the way you like them – until then, the sample text displays.

And if you’re anxious to get started blogging, simply stay with (or go back to and re-activate) the **Twenty Ten** theme or **Twenty Eleven** for now: You can start adding posts right away – and search for the theme of your choice later. (Note that even these basic themes allow you to perform actions like upload a custom Header or pick a new one from the “Appearances” drop-down menu.)

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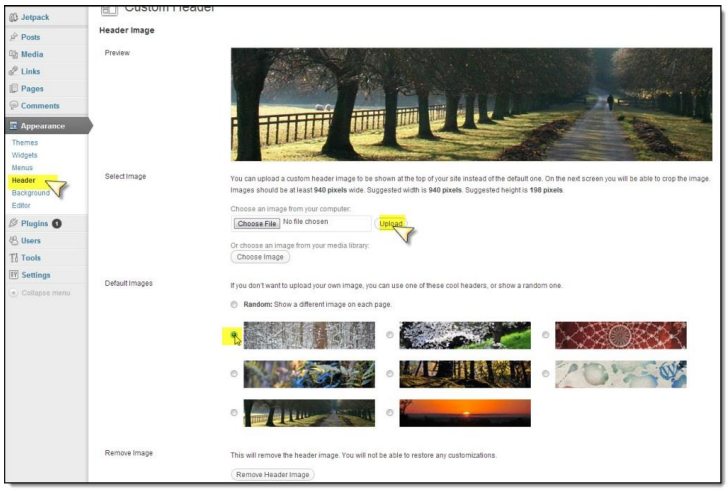
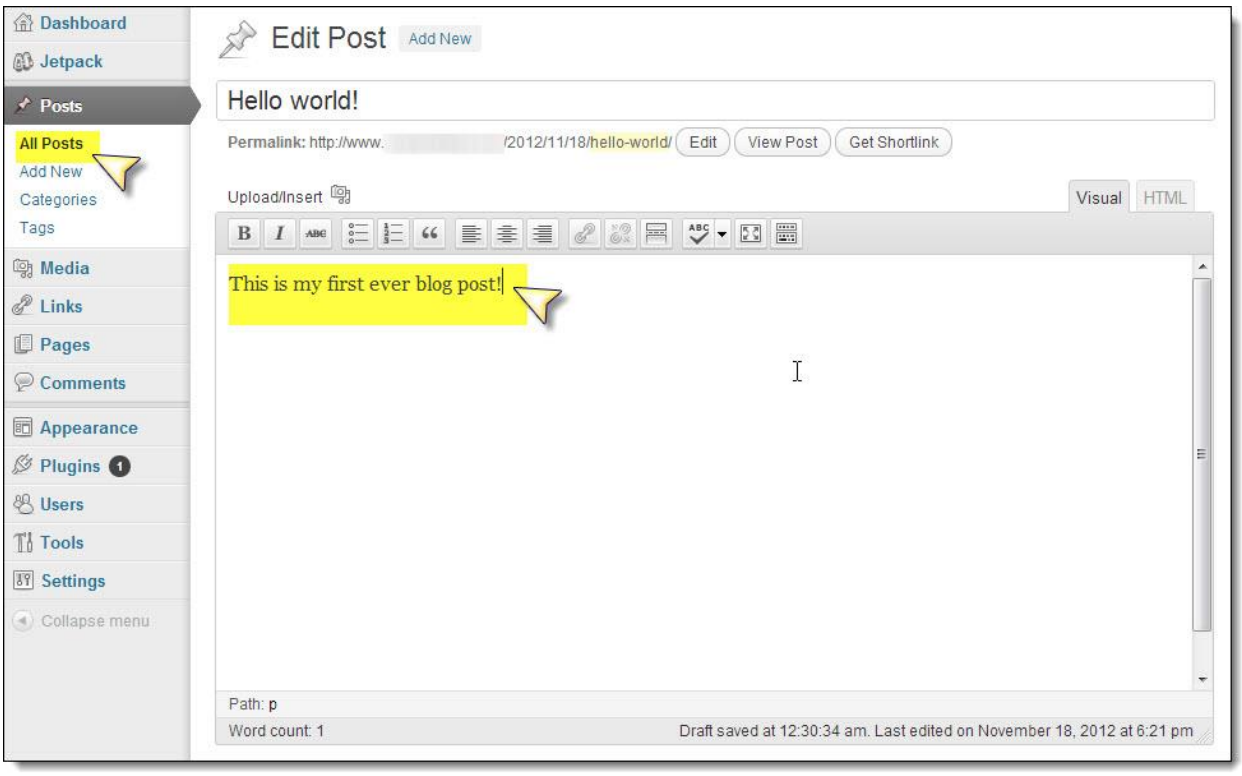


Section Three: Getting to Know Your Blog

The first thing you'll want to do is add a post (and change any default post, if there is one). Go to your left-hand, vertical menu and select "Posts>>All Posts".

The default "Hello World" post will open up. Replace the Title with your own and the text with your own.



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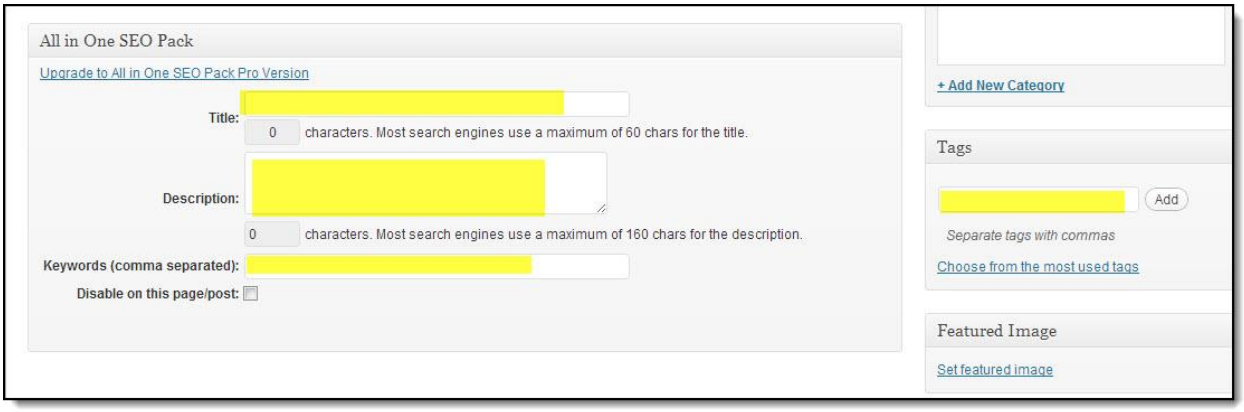
Remember to slide down to your All in one SEO boxes and fill in your blog post Title, Description (less than 160 characters) and Keywords – as well as any Tags you want to flag the article with. This will help your post's searchability greatly.



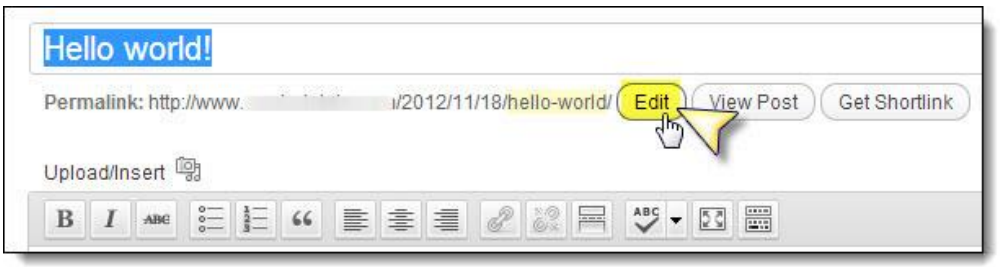
Finally – Press the blue "Update" button on the top, right-hand side of the page.

And that's the basic process in setting up a WordPress blog (except for selecting "Add New" next time in "Posts", rather than "All Posts").

Editing Your HTML URLs

Another thing you may want to do: Edit your post URLs for more searchability. It's a very simple process – just press the "Edit" button and write in your new page URL, exactly as you'd like it to appear.

Before:



After:

(Remember to press the "Okay" button when you're finished.)

Adding Images

Photographs and graphics give your posts (and blog) massively more searchability and eye appeal – so do get into the habit of inserting at least one, per post.

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The best idea for image sources: Take your own photographs. Failing that, only use photographs in the public domain (with public domain licensing) or ask permission to use photos.

(Government websites and Wikipedia are often a great source of public domain photographs: Do still check the licensing, however – sometimes government photos do have licensing restrictions.)

Pressing the "***Add Media***" button will open up a popup allowing you to add photos from your blog library (once you have one), your computer or from another URL, if you have a photo parked on another site. (Do NOT use the latter option if you don't own the site or if you're not directly invited to do so: You might end up inadvertently "stealing" bandwidth from the site owner.)

View your post from the edit buttons, or else from the "View Site" at the top left corner of your Dashboard.

Static Page or Latest Post?

But – whoops! Why does your first page not show the post?

Go to "Settings>>Reading" and change "Front page displays" option from "A static page" to "Your latest posts" by pressing the radio button.

If you'd rather make your first post into a static page (a "Home" page all visitors will see every time they visit your site) keep "A static page" selected, and select the correct post from the drop-down menu

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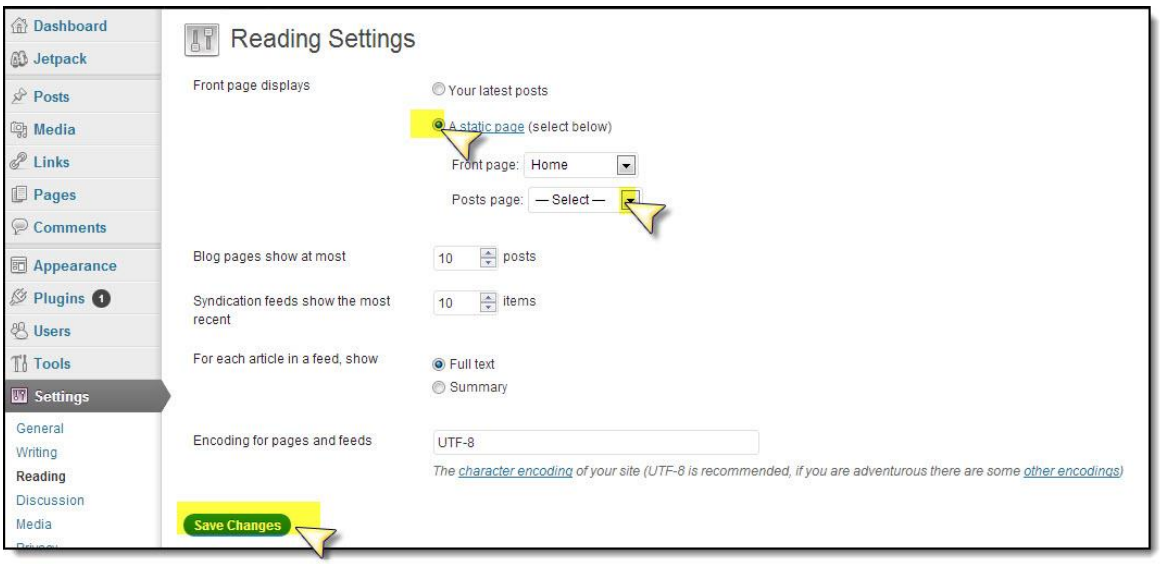
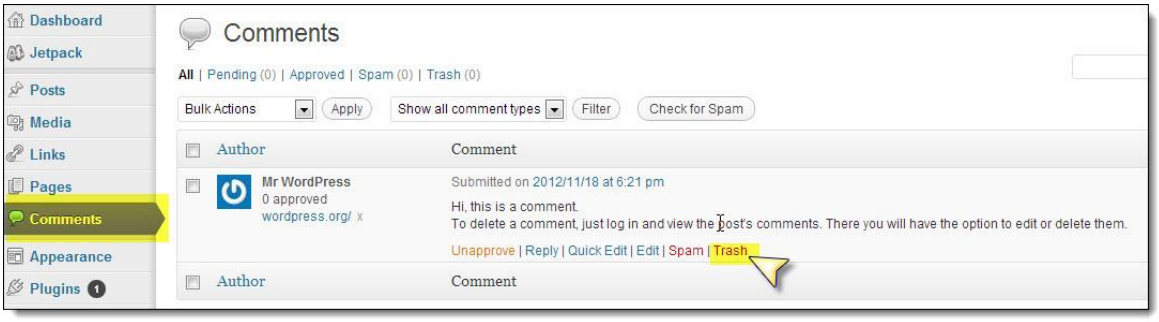


Be sure to “Save Changes”, of course.

Your Comments Section

Your final action for the day: Click on “Comments” in the left-hand vertical menu and delete the “Default” test comment.



“Visit” your post or site, and make sure everything looks the way you’d like it to.

There is, of course, a lot more to learn – such as pre-scheduling posts, adding more plugins, tweaking your CSS, adding audio or video plugins, and more – but get comfortable with blogging and make some posts first, rather than trying to jump from WordPress beginner to expert all in one day.

Happy blogging!

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