

# WordPress

Community Experience Distilled

# WordPress 3.7 Complete

*Third Edition*

Make your first end-to-end website from scratch with WordPress

Karol Król

Aaron Hodge Silver

**[PACKT]** open source\*  
PUBLISHING community experience distilled

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BIRMINGHAM - MUMBAI

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Karol spends most of his spare time making music, training Capoeira, cooking, and drinking wine.

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---

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In his free time, Aaron enjoys developing recipes in the kitchen, being active outdoors, and spending quality time with his family (both human and non human members).

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# Table of Contents

<b>Preface</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introducing WordPress</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Getting into WordPress</b>	<b>8</b>
Using it for a blog or website	8
<b>Understanding the common terms</b>	<b>9</b>
Post	10
Categories and tags	10
Comments	10
Theme	11
Plugin	11
Widget	11
Menus	12
RSS	12
Page	12
Users	12
<b>Choosing WordPress – the reason why</b>	<b>13</b>
A long time in refining	13
Active in development	13
Large community of contributors	13
Amazingly extendable	13
<b>Getting to know the WordPress family</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Digging into WordPress – the features</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Getting familiar with the new feature list since 3.0</b>	<b>16</b>
Learning more	17
<b>Learning more with the online WordPress resources</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Staying updated through WordPress news</b>	<b>18</b>

<b>Understanding the Codex</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Getting support from other users</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Using theme and plugin directories</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Getting Started</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Building your WordPress website – start here</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Using WordPress.com</b>	<b>26</b>
Publishing your first content on a WordPress.com blog	27
<b>Installing WordPress manually</b>	<b>28</b>
Preparing the environment	29
Downloading WordPress	30
Upgrading from an earlier version of WordPress	30
Uploading the files	30
Installing WordPress	31
Installing WordPress through a hand-built configuration file	34
Learning more	37
Installing WordPress through an auto installer script	37
<b>The WP Admin panel</b>	<b>41</b>
Changing general blog information	45
Creating your first post	47
Writing your first comment	48
Retrieving a lost password	50
<b>Getting a Gravatar</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Chapter 3: Creating Blog Content</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>WP Admin conventions</b>	<b>53</b>
Lists of items	54
<b>Posting on your blog</b>	<b>55</b>
Adding a simple post	55
Common post options	57
Categories and tags	57
Images in your posts	59
Using the visual editor versus text editor	65
Lead and body	66
Drafts, pending articles, timestamps, and managing posts	67
Advanced post options	69
Excerpt	69
Sending pingbacks and trackbacks	70
Discussion	71
Custom Fields	72
Working with post revisions	73
Changing the author of the post	75
Protecting content	75
The pretty post slug	76

---

Custom post format settings	77
<b>Additional writing options</b>	<b>78</b>
Press This	78
Posting via e-mail	79
External blogging tools	80
Mobile apps for iOS and Android	81
<b>Discussion on your blog – comments</b>	<b>82</b>
Adding a comment	82
Discussion settings	82
Submission, notification, and moderation settings	82
When to moderate or blacklist a comment	85
Avatar display settings	86
Moderating comments	87
How to eliminate comment spam	88
Getting an Akismet API key	89
Activating Akismet	91
<b>Adding and managing categories</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Chapter 4: Pages, Menus, Media Library, and More</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Pages</b>	<b>95</b>
Adding a page	96
Parent	97
Template	97
Order	98
Managing pages	98
<b>Menus</b>	<b>99</b>
Adding a menu	99
Displaying a menu	102
<b>Header</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>Advanced site customization</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Links</b>	<b>107</b>
Adding a new link	108
Displaying links	111
Managing links and categories	111
<b>Media library</b>	<b>112</b>
Media Manager	114
Adding an image gallery	117
Choosing a post or page	117
Selecting/uploading images	118
<b>Importing/exporting your content</b>	<b>123</b>
Importing content	123
Exporting content	125
<b>Summary</b>	<b>126</b>

<b>Chapter 5: Plugins and Widgets</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Breaking down plugins – what are they?</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Why to use plugins</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Where to get plugins</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>Finding new plugins</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Installing a plugin – the how-to</b>	<b>131</b>
Manual plugin installation	131
Autoinstallation	134
<b>The must-have pack of plugins</b>	<b>137</b>
Backing up	137
Enabling Google Analytics	140
Caching	141
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	143
Securing your site	144
Jetpack	147
Switching to maintenance mode	148
<b>Widgets</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>154</b>
<b>Chapter 6: Choosing and Installing Themes</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Finding themes</b>	<b>156</b>
WordPress Themes Directory	156
Main types of themes	159
Finding more themes	160
<b>Some not-design-related theme basics</b>	<b>161</b>
The structure of a theme	162
Factors to consider when choosing a theme	162
The purpose of the theme	163
Theme licensing	165
Up-to-date themes only	165
Themes that are customizable	166
Themes with responsive structure	166
Support, reviews, and documentation	166
<b>Installing and changing themes</b>	<b>167</b>
Adding a theme within the WP admin	167
Downloading, extracting, and uploading	170
<b>Summary</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Chapter 7: Developing Your Own Theme</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Setting up your design</b>	<b>174</b>
Designing your theme to be WordPress friendly	174
Two paths of theme development	176
Building a theme from the ground up	176
Building a theme with a framework	176

Converting your design to code	178
Examining the HTML structure	178
Examining the CSS	181
<b>Converting your build into a theme</b>	<b>188</b>
Creating the theme folder	189
Adding WordPress content	191
The functions.php file	192
The <head> tag	195
The header and footer	197
The sidebar	200
The main column – the loop	202
<b>Creating templates within your theme</b>	<b>206</b>
Understanding the WordPress theme	206
Breaking it up	207
header.php	207
footer.php	207
The sidebar.php file	208
Your four template files	209
Archive template	210
Single template	211
Page template	212
Generated classes for body and post	214
Other WordPress templates	215
Creating and using a custom page template	216
<b>Making your theme widget friendly</b>	<b>223</b>
Going back to our "static" sidebar	224
Working with functions.php	224
Adding conditional code to sidebar	225
Adding some widgets	227
Further widgetizing options	228
<b>Enabling a menu in your theme</b>	<b>229</b>
<b>Creating a child theme</b>	<b>229</b>
Creating the new theme directory	230
Creating the stylesheet	230
Using your child theme	231
<b>Sharing your theme</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>234</b>
<b>Chapter 8: Feeds, Podcasting, and Offline Blogging</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>Feed basics</b>	<b>236</b>
Feed readers	237
Learning more	238

<b>Your built-in WordPress feeds</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>Adding feed links</b>	<b>239</b>
Feeds for the whole website	240
Feeds for comments	241
Tracking subscribers with FeedBurner	242
Burning your feed on FeedBurner	243
FeedBurner plugin	243
<b>Podcasting</b>	<b>244</b>
Creating a podcast	245
Recording yourself	245
Making a post	246
Dedicated podcasting	247
Podcasting plugins	248
Using a service to host audio files for free	249
<b>Offline blogging tools</b>	<b>250</b>
The benefits	250
The tools	251
Using Windows Live Writer	251
<b>Summary</b>	<b>254</b>
<b>Chapter 9: Developing Plugins and Widgets</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Plugins</b>	<b>256</b>
Building plugins from scratch	256
Plugin code requirements	257
Basic plugin – adding link icons	257
Naming and organizing the plugin files	258
Writing the plugin's core functions	260
Adding hooks to the plugin	261
Trying out the plugin	264
Adding an admin page	264
Adding management page functions	265
Modifying the <code>ahs_doctypes_regex()</code> function	268
Adding hooks	268
Trying out the plugin	269
Testing your plugins	270
Plugin with DB access – capturing searched words	271
Getting the plugin to talk to the database	272
Adding management page functions	273
Trying out the plugin	274
Learning more	275
<b>Widgets</b>	<b>276</b>
Custom tag cloud widget	276
Naming our widget	277
Widget structure	277

---

Widget initiation function	278
Widget form function	279
Widget save function	281
Widget print function	281
Custom widget styles	282
Initiating and hooking up the widget	284
Trying out the widget	284
Learning more	285
Bundling a widget with an existing plugin	286
<b>Shortcodes</b>	<b>286</b>
Shortcodes and the way they work	286
Types of shortcodes	286
Creating a simple shortcode	287
Enabling shortcodes in widgets	289
<b>Summary</b>	<b>290</b>
<b>Chapter 10: Community Blogging</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>Concerns for a multiauthor blog</b>	<b>291</b>
<b>User roles and abilities</b>	<b>292</b>
Super Admin	292
Administrator	292
Editor	293
Author	295
Contributor	296
Subscriber	297
<b>Managing users</b>	<b>297</b>
Enabling users to self register	300
Learning more	301
<b>User management plugins</b>	<b>302</b>
<b>Creating a multisite website</b>	<b>303</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>Chapter 11: Creating a Non-blog Website Part One – The Basics</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>The must-do tasks</b>	<b>309</b>
<b>Static websites</b>	<b>309</b>
The process	310
Building your home page	310
Creating easy-to-grasp menus	312
<b>Corporate or business websites</b>	<b>312</b>
Picking a clean theme	313
Branding elements	314
Good navigation	314
Custom home page	316

Optional slider	317
Meteor Slides	318
SlideDeck 2 Lite Responsive Content Slider	319
<b>E-commerce stores</b>	<b>321</b>
Standard setup	323
Getting the plugin	324
Custom menu for the store	326
Main settings of the plugin	327
Custom container page for the store	328
Adding products	331
Stats – orders, coupons, and reports	335
<b>Summary</b>	<b>336</b>
<b>Chapter 12: Creating a Non-blog Website Part Two – Community Websites and Custom Content Elements</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>Membership websites</b>	<b>337</b>
Taking the simple approach	338
Using membership plugins	339
Taking the free approach	340
Installing the plugin	340
Using the plugin	343
<b>Video and photo blogs</b>	<b>346</b>
Exploring themes for video and photo sites	347
Getting plugins for video and photo sites	348
<b>Social networks</b>	<b>351</b>
Installing a social network	352
Designing your social network	354
Extending the functionality	356
User accounts and activity	356
<b>Introducing custom post types</b>	<b>358</b>
Registering a new post type	359
Adding labels	361
Adding messages	361
Creating book template files	364
Registering and using a custom taxonomy	367
Customizing the admin display	369
<b>Summary</b>	<b>371</b>
<b>Index</b>	<b>373</b>

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# Preface

*WordPress 3.7 Complete Third Edition* will take you through the complete process of building a fully functional WordPress site from scratch. The journey goes all the way from teaching you how to install WordPress, to the most advanced topics such as creating your own themes, writing plugins, and even building non-blog websites. The best part is that you can do all this without losing your shirt along the way. Moreover, once you get some practice, you will be able to launch new WordPress sites within minutes (not a metaphor, by the way; this is as true as it gets).

This book guides you along the way in a step-by-step manner to explain everything there is to know about WordPress. We'll start with downloading and installing the core of WordPress, where you will learn how to choose the correct settings in order to guarantee a smooth experience for yourself and for your visitors. After that, the book will teach you all about content management functionality for your site from posts and pages to categories and tags, all the way to links, media, menus, images, galleries, administration, user profiles, and more. Next, you will find out what plugins and themes are and how to use them effectively. Finally, you'll learn how to create your own themes and plugins to enhance the overall functionality of your website. Once you're done with reading *WordPress 3.7 Complete Third Edition*, you will have all the knowledge required to build a professional WordPress site from scratch.

## What this book covers

*Chapter 1, Introducing WordPress*, explains how WordPress is an excellent software that can run your website (blog or not). It's packed with excellent features and is so flexible that it can really do anything you want, and it has a wealth of online resources. Additionally, it's super easy to use, and you need no special skills or prior experience to use it. Last but not least, it is free!

*Chapter 2, Getting Started*, explains how to install WordPress on a remote server, change the basic default settings of your blog, write posts, and comment on those posts. It will also show you how to work with sites hosted on WordPress.com, which is one of the branches of the WordPress world.

*Chapter 3, Creating Blog Content*, teaches everything you need to know to add content to your blog and manage that content, be it about posts, categories, and comments, or tags, spam, and excerpts.

*Chapter 4, Pages, Menus, Media Library, and More*, explores all of the content WordPress can manage that's not directly about blogging. You can also learn about static pages, menus, bookmark links, the media library, image galleries, and more.

*Chapter 5, Plugins and Widgets*, discusses everything there is to know about finding the best plugins for WordPress and then using them effectively. Plugins are an integral part of every WordPress site's lifespan, so it's more than hard to imagine a successful site that isn't using any of them.

*Chapter 6, Choosing and Installing Themes*, describes how to manage the basic look of your WordPress website. You also learn where to find themes, why they are useful, and how to implement new themes on your WordPress website.

*Chapter 7, Developing Your Own Theme*, explains how to make your own theme. With just the most basic HTML and CSS abilities, you can create a design and turn it into a fully functional WordPress theme.

*Chapter 8, Feeds, Podcasting, and Offline Blogging*, explains what an RSS feed is and how to make feeds available for our WordPress blog. It also explores how to syndicate a whole blog or just posts within a certain category, and how to create your own podcast with or without the help of plugins. Finally, it goes on to discuss offline blogging and how it can speed up your web publishing experience.

*Chapter 9, Developing Plugins and Widgets*, teaches everything you need to know about creating basic plugins and widgets, how to structure the PHP files, where to put your functions, and how to use hooks. It also teaches about adding management pages and adding a widget that is related to a plugin.

*Chapter 10, Community Blogging*, explains how to manage a group of users working with a single blog, which is a community of users. Community blogging can play an important role in a user group or a news website. It also explains how to manage the different levels of privileges for users in a community.

*Chapter 11, Creating a Non-blog Website Part One – The Basics*, explores the endless possibilities of WordPress when it comes to using it to launch various types of websites. The chapter presents the first batch of our non-blog websites and explains in detail how to build them on top of a standard WordPress installation.

*Chapter 12, Creating a Non-blog Website Part Two – Community Websites and Custom Content Elements*, goes through some additional types of non-blog websites and also presents some technical aspects of building them (caution! code talk inside).

*Chapter 13, Administrator's Reference*, covers many of the common administrative tasks you may face when you're managing a WordPress-driven website. This includes backing up your database and files, moving your WordPress installation from one server or folder to another, and doing general problem-solving and troubleshooting. This chapter is the free one available online through a direct download link. Please hop over to our site to get it ([http://www.packtpub.com/sites/default/files/downloads/24070S\\_Chapter13\\_Administrators\\_Reference.pdf](http://www.packtpub.com/sites/default/files/downloads/24070S_Chapter13_Administrators_Reference.pdf)).

## What you need for this book

The prerequisites for this book include the following:

- A computer
- A web browser
- A text editor
- FTP software

Users may like a text editor that highlights code (such as Coda, TextMate, HTMLKit, and so on), but a simple text editor is all that's required.

Users may like to run local copies of WordPress on their computers, in which case they need a server such as Apache and MySQL installed (though WAMP and MAMP would take care of all that for them), but it's also not necessary as they could do the entire thing remotely.

## Who this book is for

This book is a guide to WordPress for both beginners and those who have a slightly more advanced knowledge of WordPress. If you are new to blogging and want to create your own blog or website in a simple and straightforward manner, this book is for you. It is also for people who want to learn to customize and expand the capabilities of a WordPress website. You do not require any detailed knowledge of programming or web development, and any IT-confident user will be able to use the book to produce an impressive website.

## Conventions

In this book, you will find a number of styles of text that distinguish between different kinds of information. Here are some examples of these styles, and an explanation of their meaning.

Code words in text are shown as follows: "For instance, using the `<p>` tags is not necessary in the text editor, as they will be stripped by default."

A block of code is set as follows:

```
// ** MySQL settings ** //
define('DB_NAME', 'wptestblog');
define('DB_USER', 'localdbuser');
define('DB_PASSWORD', '62dcx%^_0hnm');
define('DB_HOST', 'localhost');
```


When we wish to draw your attention to a particular part of a code block, the relevant lines or items are set in bold:



```
<div class="post post-item">
  <div class="post-title">
    <h2><a href="<?php the_permalink(); ?>"><?php the_title();
      ?></a></h2>
  </div>

  <?php if(has_post_thumbnail()) : ?>
    <div class="post-image alignleft">
      <?php echo '<a href="'.esc_url(get_permalink()).'
        >'.get_the_post_thumbnail($post->ID, 'thumbnail').'</a>'; ?>
    </div>
  <?php endif; ?>

  <div class="entry clearfix">
    <p><em>by <?php echo get_post_meta($post->ID, 'book_author',
      true); ?></em></p>
    <?php the_excerpt(); ?>
  </div>
</div><!-- /.post-item -->
```

**New terms** and **important words** are shown in bold. Words that you see on the screen, in menus or dialog boxes for example, appear in the text like this: "To add a new page, go to your WP Admin and navigate to **Pages | Add New**".

 Warnings or important notes appear in a box like this. 

 Tips and tricks appear like this. 

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# 1

## Introducing WordPress

Have you ever wanted to have a website at low cost, without the need to hire a team of developers and designers, without learning advanced PHP, and with almost unlimited extension possibilities? Or maybe you're more about getting into the world of website creation and becoming the next expert? If that's a yes to any of the above questions, WordPress is likely the platform you should look into.

These days, everyone has a good reason to have a website. It's not just large companies anymore. Individuals, families, and small or independent businesses all need to have one. Some individuals and small businesses don't have the financial resources to hire a website development company or a freelance web developer to create a website for them. In short, WordPress is an open source web software application that you can use to create and maintain an online website, even if you have the minimum of technical expertise.

Since it is a web application, WordPress does not need to be installed on your home computer, or any other machine under your control. It can live on the server (a kind of computer) that belongs to your website hosting company. It is also free, easy to use, and packed with excellent features. Originally, WordPress was an application meant to run a blog website, but it has now evolved into a fully-featured **Content Management System (CMS)**.

Actually, at the time of writing, WordPress powers over 60 million websites in total, or in other words, one of every six websites on the internet. And if that's not enough, the newest version of the platform has been downloaded over 14 million times. It seems that joining the team is, indeed, a wise thing to do.

In this chapter, we'll explore:

- The reasons that will make you choose WordPress to run your website
- The greatest advantages of WordPress
- Online resources for WordPress
- The complete list of features in the newest versions of WordPress

## Getting into WordPress

WordPress is an open source blog engine. **Open source** means that nobody owns it, everybody works on it, and anyone can contribute to it. **Blog engine** means a software application that can run a blog. It's a piece of software that lives on the web server and makes it easy for you to add and edit posts, themes, comments, and all of your other content. More expansively, WordPress can be called a **publishing platform** because it is by no means restricted to blogging.

In fact, a number of big (by today's standards) online agencies use WordPress to run their sites. Outlets such as The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, Forbes, and Reuters all use WordPress as the base of their web publishing platforms.

Originally, WordPress was a fork of an older piece of software named **b2/cafeolog**. WordPress was developed by Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little, but is now maintained and developed by a team of developers that includes Mullenweg.

Over the years, the platform has evolved a lot and, even though a massive amount of new functionality got introduced, WordPress still remains one of the easiest to use web publishing platforms out there.



## Using it for a blog or website

There are generally two popular types of websites for which WordPress is meant to be used:

- Normal websites with relatively static content – pages, subpages, and so on
- Blog websites – chronologically organized, frequently updated, categorized, tagged, and archived.

However, as experience shows, these days WordPress is successfully used to run a wide variety of other sites as well, such as

- Corporate business websites
- E-commerce stores

- Membership sites
- Video blogs
- Photo blogs
- Product websites, and more

For those of you unfamiliar with blog websites and blogging terminology, let's take a look at the basics.

Starting your journey, what is a blog? A **blog** is a website that usually contains regular entries such as a kind of log. These entries can be of various types, such as commentary, descriptions of events, photos, videos, personal remarks, tutorials, case studies, long opinion pieces, or political ideas. They are usually displayed in reverse chronological order, with the most recent additions on the top. These entries can be organized in a variety of ways – by date, by topic, by subject, and so on.

One of the main characteristics of a blog is that it's meant to be updated regularly. Unlike a site where the content is static, a blog behaves more like an online diary, wherein the blogger posts regular updates. Hence, blogs are dynamic with ever-changing content. A blog can be updated with new content and the old content can be changed or deleted at any time (although deleting content is not a common practice).

Most blogs focus their content on a particular subject – for example, current events, hobbies, niche topics, technical expertise – or else they are more like personal online diaries.

Originally, a blog was short for **weblog**. According to Wikipedia, the term weblog was first used in 1997, and people started using blogs globally in 1999. The terms weblog, **weblogging**, and **weblogger** were added to the Oxford Dictionary in 2003, though these days most people leave off the "we" part.

## Understanding the common terms

If you are new to the world of blogging (or the "blogosphere," which is a fairly popular expression these days), you may want to familiarize yourself with the following common terms.

## Post

Each entry in the blog is called a **post**. Every post usually has a number of different parts. Of course, the two most obvious parts are title and content. The **content** is text, images, links, and so on. Posts can even contain multimedia (for example, videos and audio files). Every post also has a publication timestamp, and most also have one or more categories, tags, comments, and so on. It is these posts, or entries, that are displayed in reverse chronological order on the main page of the blog. By default, the latest post is displayed first, in order to give the viewer the latest news on the subject.

## Categories and tags

**Categories** and **tags** are ways to organize and find posts within a blog and even across blogs. Categories are like topics, whereas tags are more like keywords. For example, for a blog about food and cooking, there might be a category called **recipes**, but every post in that category would have different tags (for example, soup, baked, vegetarian, dairy-free, and so on).

The purpose and correct usage of tags and categories is one of the more discussed topics among bloggers. Although there are basic guidelines, as the ones presented previously, every blogger develops his or her own approach after a while, and there are no "written in stone" rules.

## Comments

Most blogs allow visitors to post comments about the posts. This gives readers the opportunity to interact with the author of the blog, thus making the whole enterprise interactive. Often, the author of the blog will respond to comments by posting additional comments with the single click of a reply button, which makes for a continuous public online conversation or dialog.

Comments are said to be one of the most important assets for a blog. The presence of a big number of comments shows how popular and authoritative the blog is.

## Theme

The **theme** for a blog is the design and layout that you choose. In most blogs, the content (for example, posts) is separate from the visual layout. This means you can change the visual layout of your blog at any time without having to worry about the content being affected. One of the best things about themes is that it takes only seconds to install and start using a new one. Moreover, there are a number of free or low-cost themes available online. However, you need to be careful when working with free themes from uncertain developers. Often, they contain encrypted parts and code that can hurt your site and its presence in Google. Always look for user reviews before choosing a theme.

## Plugin

WordPress **plugins** are relatively small pieces of web software that can be installed on a WordPress site. They extend the native functionality to do almost anything that the technology of today allows. Just as with WordPress itself, the code within plugins is open source, which means that anyone can build a new plugin if they only have the required skillset. Every WordPress website or blog can work with an unlimited number of plugins (although it is not a recommended approach). The most popular functionalities introduced through plugins include spam protection, search engine optimization possibilities, caching, social media integration, interactive contact forms, backups, and more.

## Widget

In short, **widgets** are a simplified version of plugins. Furthermore, they display a direct, visible result on your blog by using small content boxes (depending on the exact widget you're using, this content can be very diverse). The most common usage of widgets is to have them showcased within the sidebars on your site. Typically, your current theme will provide you with a number of widget areas where you can display widgets (as mentioned, many of these are located in the sidebar). Some of the common usages for widgets are to display content such as categories and tags, recent posts, popular posts, recent comments, links to archived posts, pages, links, search fields, or standard non-formatted text.

## Menus

We need to talk some history to explain what the meaning of menus in WordPress is. Back in the day, WordPress didn't allow much customization in terms of tweaking navigation menus and hand-picking the links we wanted to display. This all changed in Version 3.0, when the new Custom Menus feature was introduced. In plain English, what it does is allow us to create completely custom menus (featuring any links of our choice) and then display them in specific areas on our sites (supported by the current theme). To be honest, this feature, even though it sounds basic, is one of the main ones that has turned WordPress into a fully-fledged web publishing platform and not just a blogging tool. I promise this will all sound much clearer in the upcoming chapters.

## RSS

RSS is an acronym for **Really Simple Syndication**, and *Chapter 8, Feeds, Podcasting, and Offline Blogging*, addresses the topic of feeds in detail. For now, understand that RSS and feeds are a way to syndicate the content of your blog, so that people can subscribe to it. This means people do not actually have to visit your blog regularly to see what you've added. Instead, they can subscribe and have new content delivered to them via e-mail or through a feed reader such as **Feedly**.

## Page

It's important to understand the difference between a page and a post. Unlike posts, pages do not depend on having timestamps and are not displayed in chronological order. They also do not have categories or tags. A **page** is a piece of content with only a title and content (an example would be **About Me** or **Contact Us** – the two most popular pages on almost any blog). It is likely that the number of pages on your blog remains relatively static, whereas new posts can be added every day or so.

## Users

As mentioned in one of the paragraphs above, WordPress is now a complete web publishing platform. One of its characteristics is that it is capable of working with multiple user accounts, not just a single account belonging to the owner (main author) of the site. There are different types of user accounts available, and they all have different credentials and access rights. WordPress is clearly trying to resemble a traditional-world publishing house where there are authors, editors, and other contributors all working together. Even though the possibility to create an unlimited number of user accounts won't be that impressive for anyone planning to manage a site on his or her own, it can surely be a more than essential feature for big, magazine-like websites.

## Choosing WordPress – the reason why

WordPress is not the only publishing platform out there, but it has an awful lot to recommend it. In the following sections, I've called attention to WordPress' most outstanding features.

### A long time in refining

In web years, WordPress has been around for quite a while and was in development the whole time, getting better constantly. WordPress' very first release, Version 0.70, was released in May 2003. Since then, it has had 18 major releases, with a number of minor ones in between. Each release came with more features and better security.

Each major release comes with a codename honoring a great Jazz musician, and this has become a tradition in the WordPress world. For instance, the latest big version (Version 3.7) is codenamed **Basie**.

### Active in development

WordPress is a constantly evolving application. It's never left alone to stagnate. The developers are working continually to keep it ahead of spammers and hackers, and also to evolve the application based on the evolving needs of its users.

### Large community of contributors

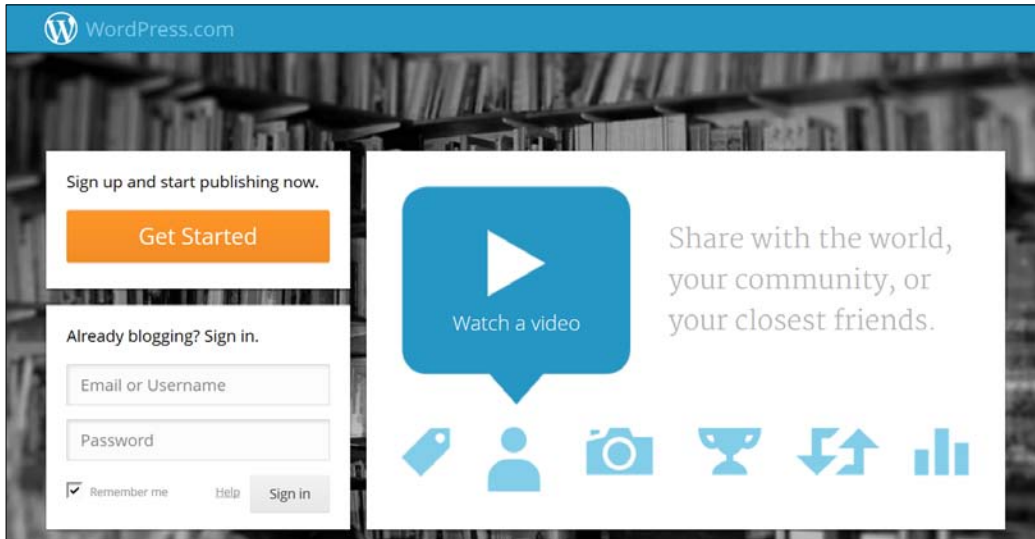
WordPress is not being developed by a lonely programmer in a dark basement room. On the contrary, there is a large community of people working on it collaboratively by developing, troubleshooting, making suggestions, and testing the application. With such a large group of people involved, the application is likely to continue to evolve and improve without pause.

### Amazingly extendable

In addition to having an extremely strong core, WordPress is also quite extendable. This means that once you get started with it, the possibilities are nearly limitless. Any additional functionality that you can dream of can be added by means of a plugin that you or your programmer friends can write.

## Getting to know the WordPress family

WordPress as a platform and as a community of users has evolved in two main areas. The first one is gathered around WordPress.org – the native, main website of the WordPress project. The other is WordPress.com – a platform providing free blogs for every user who wants one.



Essentially, WordPress.org is about developing the platform itself, about sharing new plugins, discussing the technical aspects of WordPress, and being all "techie" in general. WordPress.com (the image above) is a purely community-driven site where bloggers can meet with each other, and publish their content on free blogs based under the `wordpress.com` subdomain.

In *Chapter 2, Getting Started*, we will discuss all of the differences between having your blog on WordPress.com versus downloading the software from WordPress.org and hosting it yourself, but the basic difference is the level of control. If your blog is on WordPress.com, you have less control over plugins, themes, and other details of the blog because everything is managed and made worry-free by the WordPress.com service, which obviously has its pros and cons.

## Digging into WordPress – the features

The following is a detailed list of many features of WordPress:

- Compliant with **World Wide Web Consortium (W3C)** standards
- Unlimited categories and subcategories
- Unlimited tags
- Automatic syndication (RSS and Atom)
- Uses XML RPC interface for trackbacks and remote posting
- Allows posting via e-mail and mobile devices (there are apps available for all major mobile platforms, including iOS and Android)
- Supports plugins and themes
- Imports data from other blogs (Moveable Type, Textpattern, Greymatter, b2evolution, and Blogger)
- Easy to administer and blog without any previous experience
- Convenient, fully functional, and built-in search
- Instant and fast publishing of content – no rebuilding of pages required
- Multilanguage capable
- Allows password-protected content
- Comments manager and spam protection
- Built-in workflow (write, draft, review, and publish)
- Intelligent text formatting via a **What You See Is What You Get (WYSIWYG)** editor
- Multiuser and multiauthor support for user accounts
- Feature-rich **Media Library** for managing photos and other non-text content
- Social media integration capabilities
- Dynamic and scalable revision functionality with post (edit) locking
- Built-in embed functionality through shortcodes
- Advanced **SEO (Search Engine Optimization)** features through plugins and themes

## Getting familiar with the new feature list since 3.0

Since the last edition of this book was published, quite a staggering number of new features have been added to the WordPress software. If you're new to WordPress, this list may not mean a whole lot to you, but if you're familiar with WordPress and have been using it for a long time, you'll find this list quite enlightening.

- Internal linking available through the standard "add link" box
- Inclusion of the admin bar when browsing the blog while being logged in
- Full-screen mode for editing posts and pages
- Custom menus that can be included anywhere in the predefined areas within the current theme
- Faster page load times
- Faster upgrades
- Dropped support for Internet Explorer 6
- Inclusion of the single upload button (with file type detection)
- Drag-and-drop media uploading
- Responsive design of the admin panel (Dashboard)
- The possibility to select custom header images and custom background images from the Media Library
- Improved internationalization and localization features
- Renaming **HTML Editor** in the edit post/page screen to **Text Editor**
- New media manager makes it easier than ever to manage photos, videos, and other media files through a beautiful user interface
- Galleries can be created faster with drag-and-drop reordering and simplified controls
- New welcome screen in the Dashboard
- **High-Dots-Per-Inch (HiDPI)** compatible Dashboard design (also known as Retina-ready)
- Better accessibility for screen readers, touch devices, and keyboard users
- XML-RPC is always enabled by default and supports fetching users, managing post revisions, and searching

- All buttons updated to a modern shape (more rectangular)
- Autosave and post locking, together with the new revisions functionality for easy content editing
- In-line login feature to save expired user sessions
- Automatic maintenance and security updates in the background
- Automatic installation of language files (localization)
- New password meter to help users set secure passwords

## Learning more

If you'd like to see detailed lists of all new features added since WordPress version 3.0, take a look at these links:

- [http://codex.wordpress.org/Version\\_3.1](http://codex.wordpress.org/Version_3.1)
- [http://codex.wordpress.org/Version\\_3.2](http://codex.wordpress.org/Version_3.2)
- [http://codex.wordpress.org/Version\\_3.3](http://codex.wordpress.org/Version_3.3)
- [http://codex.wordpress.org/Version\\_3.4](http://codex.wordpress.org/Version_3.4)
- [http://codex.wordpress.org/Version\\_3.5](http://codex.wordpress.org/Version_3.5)
- [http://codex.wordpress.org/Version\\_3.6](http://codex.wordpress.org/Version_3.6)
- [http://codex.wordpress.org/Version\\_3.7](http://codex.wordpress.org/Version_3.7)

Also, you can read a fully explained feature list at <http://wordpress.org/about/features/>.

## Learning more with the online WordPress resources

One very useful characteristic of WordPress is that it has a large, active online community. Everything you will ever need for your WordPress website can likely be found online, and probably for free. In addition to this, these days we can also find many paid resources and training programs that offer expert advice and training, revolving around many different possible usages of a WordPress site.

## Staying updated through WordPress news

As WordPress is always actively developed, it's important to keep yourself up-to-date with the software community about their latest activities.

If you visit the Dashboard of your own WordPress site regularly, you'll be able to stay up-to-date with WordPress news and software releases. There are widgets on the dashboard that display the latest news and announcements, and an alert always appears when there is a new version of WordPress available for download and installation.

If you prefer to visit the website, the most important spot to visit or subscribe to is WordPress releases. Whenever there is a new release—be it a major release, an interim bug fix, or an upgrade—it will be present under the following link: <http://wordpress.org/news/category/releases/>.

Also, be sure to stay tuned to the main WordPress blog at <http://wordpress.org/news/>.

Some additional resources worth mentioning are:

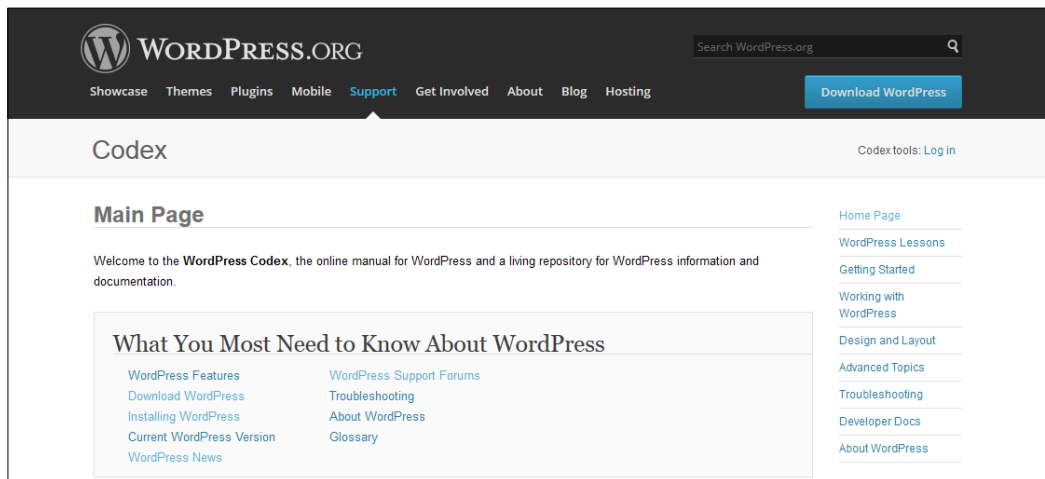
- <http://wordpress.org/>: This is the absolute main hub for WordPress
- <https://wordpress.com/>: This is the main platform for free WordPress blogging
- <http://jobs.wordpress.net/>: This provides job listings for anyone searching for employment in various areas related to WordPress (or anyone searching for WordPress help)
- <http://wordpress.tv/>: This is a great source for top-notch WordPress tutorials, how-to advice, case studies, product demonstrations, and WordPress-related conference presentation recordings
- <http://central.wordcamp.org/>: **WordCamp** is a conference that focuses on WordPress and it takes place a number of times during the year in different locations around the world; this site is the central for the conference

## Understanding the Codex

The WordPress **Codex** is the central repository of all the information the official WordPress team has published to help people work with WordPress.

The Codex has some basic tutorials for getting started with WordPress, such as a detailed step-by-step discussion of installation, lists of every template tag and hook, and a lot more. Throughout this book, I'll be providing links to specific pages within the Codex, which will provide more or advanced information on the topics in this book.

The Codex can be found at [http://codex.wordpress.org/Main\\_Page](http://codex.wordpress.org/Main_Page) (the following screenshot).



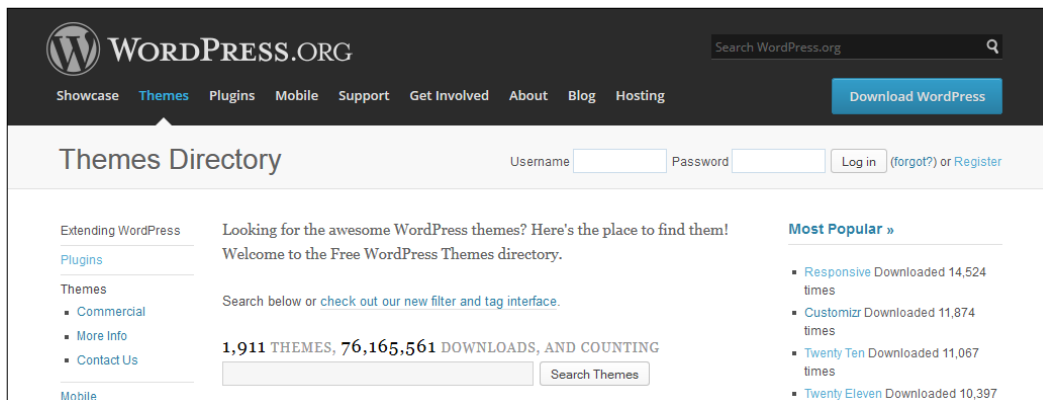
## Getting support from other users

The online WordPress community asks questions and responds with solutions on the WordPress forum: <http://wordpress.org/support/>. That's an excellent place to go if you can't find the answer to a problem in the codex. If you have the question, probably someone else has had it as well, and WordPress experts spend time in the forum answering questions and giving solutions. There's also an **IRC (Internet Relay Chat)** channel where you can get additional support.

## Using theme and plugin directories

There are official directories for themes and for plugins on WordPress.org. Although not every theme and plugin is available here, the ones that are here have been vetted by the community to some extent. Anything you download from these directories is likely to be relatively bug-free. Plugins and themes that you get from other sources can have malicious code, so be careful. You can also see what the community thinks of these downloads by looking at ratings, comments, and popularity.

Additionally, plugins in the **Plugin Directory** are automatically upgradable from within your WordPress Administration Panel, whereas other plugins have to be upgraded manually. We'll cover this in more detail in a later chapter. You can find the **Theme Directory** at <http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/> (the following screenshot) and the **Plugin Directory** at <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/>.



## Summary

Having a website of your own is essential these days, whether you are an individual, a small business, or some other group. This is true whether you are blogging regularly, or just want some accurate static content up on the Internet. In this chapter, we reviewed basic information about blogging and common blog terms for those of you who are new to the concept.

WordPress is an excellent software application that can run your website (blog or not). It's packed with excellent features and is so flexible that it can really do anything you want, and it has a wealth of online resources. Additionally, it's super easy-to-use, and you need no special skills or prior experience to use it. Last, but not least, it is free!

In the next chapter, we will explore the choices and steps involved in installing WordPress and getting started.



# 2

## Getting Started

This chapter will guide you through the process of setting up WordPress and customizing its basic features. You can choose between a couple of options regarding where your WordPress installation will be located. Keep in mind that WordPress is relatively small (under 10 MB), easy to install, and easy to administer.

WordPress is available in easily downloadable formats from its website, <http://wordpress.org/download/>. WordPress is a free, open source application, and is released under GNU **General Public License (GPL)**. This means that anyone who produces a modified version of the software released under the GPL is required to keep those same freedoms, that people buying or using the software may also modify and redistribute, attached to his or her modified version. This way, WordPress and other software released under GPL are kept open source. In this chapter, you will learn how to:

- Create a free blog on WordPress.com
- Install WordPress manually on your web host
- Perform basic setup tasks in the WordPress Admin panel (WP Admin)
- Publish your first content

### **Building your WordPress website – start here**

The first decision you have to make is where your blog is going to live. You have two basic options for the location where you will create your site. You can

- Do it at <http://wordpress.com>
- Install on a server (hosted or your own)

Let's look at some of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these two choices.

The advantage of using WordPress.com is that they take care of all of the technical details for you. The software is already installed; they'll upgrade it for you whenever there's an upgrade, and you're not responsible for anything else. Just manage your content. The big disadvantage is that you lose almost all of the theme and plugin control you'd have otherwise. WordPress.com will not let you upload or edit your own theme, though it will let you (for a fee) edit the CSS of any theme you use. WordPress.com will not let you upload or manage plugins at all. Some plugins are installed by default (most notably Akismet, for spam blocking, and also plugins supporting Google sitemaps, caching, Carousel slideshows, and some social media buttons), but you can neither uninstall them nor install others. Additional features are available for a fee as well. Furthermore, you can sign up for WordPress.com Enterprise and get access to a range of optional plugins. The current list features more than 60 plugins (WordPress.com Enterprise is Available at <http://en.wordpress.com/enterprise/>). This chapter will cover creating a blog on WordPress.com, and you can learn about navigating around the WP admin in the next chapter. However, much of what this book covers will be impossible on WordPress.com.

The huge advantage of installing WordPress on another server (which means either a server that belongs to the web host with which you signed up, or a server you set up on your own computer) is that you have control over everything. You can add and edit themes, add and remove plugins, and even edit the WordPress application files yourself if you want (however, don't do that unless you're confident about your WordPress skills). You'll have to keep your own WordPress software up-to-date, but that's relatively simple, and we'll cover it in this chapter. The only disadvantage is that you have to do the installation and maintenance yourself, which, as you'll see, shouldn't be too intimidating. Moreover, some web hosts provide a one-click or easy-to-use installer, which lets you skip over some of the nitty-gritty steps involved in manual installation.

As I said, in this chapter, we'll discuss how to create a new blog on WordPress.com and how to start working with it on a daily basis. However, if you want to accomplish any of the more advanced topics from this book, you will have to install WordPress on your own server as opposed to using WordPress.com.