How To Start Your Own Blog Using Wordpress.org

So you think you want a blog, huh?

Blogging is one of the easiest ways to display creative content on the web and can be a great tool for meeting new people who share your interests. If your blog becomes super-popular, you may be able to gain income from advertising revenue! You can also use blogging software to create easy-to-update websites for a company or organization. If you have a great idea for what you would like to blog about, and you would like to start a flexible, customizable blog using free software, this tutorial is for you!

Before you begin your blogging adventure, you will need…

- ❖ An email address
- ❖ A method of making online purchases (credit or debit card)
- ❖ Basic web browsing, software installation, and file editing skills
- ❖ Perhaps some patience

If you are worried about your computer skills or level of patience, you might consider starting a blog using a free web service such as Blogger.com or Wordpress.com. Your blog will be up and running just as fast as if you were creating a new email account, but your blog will have some design and content limitations. However, these free blog services are very user friendly and popular and can be a great option even for the tech savvy.

Step One: Purchase a Domain Name

In order for your visitors to find your blog, you will need a simple url that signifies your place on the Internet. You will typically need to pay a yearly fee in order to register the domain name of your choosing.

Domain names can be purchased from a number of different registrars. Popular choices with competitive prices include:

- ❖ NameCheap.com
- ❖ RegFly.com
- ❖ 1and1
- ❖ GoDaddy

Each domain registrar offers a different price and different services, and some providers offer specials at certain times. Yearly fees for these options range from 10 to 40 dollars.

You should browse each of these services and research others to select one that meets your needs and price range. Follow the website's instructions to purchase your domain name.

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Things to note:

- Some domain registrars offer discounted rates for a ".net", ".us", or other domains rather than the traditional ".com"
- Your domain registrar will ask if you would like "WhoisGuard." If you do not opt for this security service, your home address may be accessed in association with your website. If you do select WhoisGuard protection, your domain registrar will suppress this information. If you decide you need WhoisGuard protection, this may be an additional yearly fee. However, some domain registrars offer complimentary WhoisGuard protection for a certain period of time.
- In the next step, you will have to purchase hosting space to store your website's data: some webhosts also provide name registry services. This can save you time and trouble, but may cost more than more popular domain registry options.

Step Two: Purchase Hosting Space

If the domain name is your blog's mailing address, then your web host is your plot of land. You will need to purchase a place for all the data and files that create your blog to live.

Like domain names, there are countless different web space providers that will sell you some of their space to use. You will typically be charged a monthly fee for this space. Fees can be as low as 6 dollars a month, but pricing is based on how much data your blog requires. If your blog becomes quite popular, you might need to upgrade your package or switch providers to one that can handle a heavy data load.

Wordpress.org has recommended a few web hosting services that support their software:

- ❖ Bluehost
- ❖ DreamHost
- ❖ MediaTemple
- ❖ Laughing Squid

Investigate your options and purchase some space before moving on to the next step.

Things to note:

- ❖ Some hosting services offer easy, 1-click Wordpress installation. If the rest of this tutorial looks daunting, you might consider using Bluehost or Dreamhost for your blog.
- ❖ Your web data may be held in a physical data warehouse, or it may be stored in the "cloud." This difference may impact potential information security, site stability, and the price tag.

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Step Three: Direct Your Domain Name To Your Hosting Space

If you are using one service to provide you a domain name and another to host your webspace, you will need to make sure these two services can "talk" to each other. You can typically do this by changing the nameserver settings from the control panel of your *domain name service* (ie GoDaddy or Namecheap).

Your Domain Name Server (DNS) settings will most likely default to use the DNS provided by your domain name service. You will need to override this default and instead select the DNS settings specified by your *web hosting service* (ie Bluehost or Laughing Squid). Most likely, your web hosting service will indicate what primary and secondary nameservers you will need to use and your domain name service will provide instructions on how to change this.

Things to note:
- ❖ If you opted to use the same provider for both your domain name registry and your web hosting, you can most likely skip this step.
- ❖ The process for changing your DNS settings will be different depending on what domain name service and web hosting service you selected. You may need to consult the Help or FAQ sections to find specific instructions for your services.

Step Four: Download the Wordpress.org Software Script

Wordpress.org is a free, open source tool that provides the "bones" of a blog or website as well as a web interface to update your site easily.

In order to begin developing your blog, you first need to download a small software package from Wordpress.org. You can do this easily by visiting this web page: http://wordpress.org/download/.

Things to note:
- ❖ Make sure you save this software package somewhere you will be able to find it! In the next few steps, you will need to access this folder and edit some of the files it contains.

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Step Five: Set up a MySQL database for your blog

Wordpress.org software is designed to work with a relational database management system called MySQL. For each blog you would like to host on your site, you will need to set up a MySQL database to keep your blog files organized and accessible within your webspace.

Your webhost should provide information on how to set up a MSQL database. You will be asked to indicate a database name, database username, and database password.

Please refer to your webhost's FAQ or Help section for specific instructions on how to set up your database

Step Six: Edit your wp-config.php file

The Wordpress.org software that you downloaded in step 4 is a very generic script that can be used by anyone – that is why it is so easy to download and set up! However, in order to begin your blog, you will need to change a small portion of the script so that Wordpress will associate this particular download with your particular webspace. You will do this by pointing Wordpress toward your newly created MySQL database.

Things to note:

- ❖ This is an important step; accuracy is crucial! If you make errors, you will not be able to continue with steps 8, 9, and 10, and will have to backtrack to fix them. Take care!
- ❖ The Wordpress script contains notes to help you edit this file. They are helpful, but not always accurate. For example, the script will tell you "99% chance you won't need to change this value." It is still possible you need to change this value, and it is better to check with your webhosting FAQ and other tutorials before leaving the value alone.
- ❖ Some webhosts will change your MySQL database name, username, and password by adding a string of characters to the front of each. It is best to check on your webhosting control panel for these values instead of entering the terms you selected.

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Editing your wp-config.php file, continued…

1. First, locate and unzip the Wordpress software file you downloaded in step 4.
2. Open the Wordpress folder and look for a file named wp-config-sample.php. Open this file with a text editor (TextEdit on a Mac, Notepad on a Windows computer)
3. Scroll through this text file and look for a section of the code that looks like this:

   ```
   // ** MySQL settings ** //
   define('DB_NAME', 'database_name_here'); // The name of the database
   define('DB_USER', 'username_here'); // Your MySQL username
   define('DB_PASSWORD', 'password_here'); // ...and password
   define('DB_HOST', 'localhost'); // 99% chance you won't need to change this value
   ```

4. Make the following changes to this section of the code
   a. Replace 'database_name_here' with the database name of the MySQL database from Step 5
   b. Replace 'username_here' with the username name of the MySQL database from Step 5
   c. Replace 'password_here' with the password for the MySQL database from Step 5
   d. Replace 'localhost' with your **database host name.** You will most likely need to find this value from your webhosting control panel. Look for cues such as "Host Name" and if you are having trouble, check the Help or FAQ section.
5. Save and rename this file as:

   wp-config.php.

Step Seven: Upload the Wordpress.org software using FTP client

Now that you have edited your Wordpress script, you need to upload the Wordpress folder to your webspace using an FTP client. You will need to download an FTP client to your computer first if you don't already have this software installed.

Some free FTP clients include:

❖ Filezilla
❖ Cyberduck
❖ WinSCP

Once you download the FTP client, you will need to establish a connection between the client and your webspace. To make this connection, you will need the following information:

❖ Server name – available from your hosting service
❖ Username – the MySQL username you set up in Step Five
❖ Password – the MySQL password you set up in Step Five
❖ File path – available from your hosting space

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Things to note:

- ❖ Again, accuracy here is important. If you are having trouble establishing a connection, check your spelling and settings with those provided by your hosting service.
- ❖ Your hosting service will probably suggest you use a secure FTP server for your connection. Check to make sure that you select the proper server type and port number.

Step Eight: Visit www.yourdomainname.com/wp-admin/install.php

After you have uploaded your Wordpress script to your website, you need to set up a username and password to access your blog. Substitute "yourdomainname" for the domain name you registered in Step One and visit

www.yourdomainname.com/wp-admin/install.php

This will bring up a page asking you to create a username and password.

Things to note:

- ❖ If this page fails to load, you may need to backtrack through this tutorial to correct mistakes. Start by repeating steps six and seven, making sure all of the values you entered are correct.
- ❖ In some blog themes, your username will be displayed publicly with every post. Keep this in mind when you select a username!
- ❖ While it is important to keep track of all of your usernames and passwords for these different steps, your Wordpress login and password will be used every day when you want to update your blog!

Step Nine: Visit www.yourdomainname.com/wp-login.php

You now have a blog address, a hosting space to hold your blog data… the works! Now visit:

www.yourdomainname.com/wp-login.php

You will be asked to log in using your username and password from Step Eight. Once you log in, you will have access to a web tool that will allow you to add content to your blog and customize its appearance! Bookmark this url to make updates in the future.

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CONGRATULATIONS!

You are the proud new owner of a shiny new blog.

Now that the hard stuff is out of the way, you can now add excellent content to the web easily and quickly.

You might want to begin by visiting some of the resources below to begin customizing and updating your space on the web.

More Resources

Wordpress.org set-up help

- ❖ **Wordpress.org installation instructions** - http://codex.wordpress.org/Installing_WordPress
- ❖ **Simmons College Wordpress.org info** - http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/library/wikis.php
- ❖ **Set-up Tutorial** - http://www.thesitewizard.com/gettingstarted/wordpress1.shtml

Customizing your blog

- ❖ **First Steps with Wordpress.org** - http://codex.wordpress.org/First_Steps_With_WordPress
- ❖ **How to install a theme** - http://codex.wordpress.org/Using_Themes
- ❖ **Wordpress.org Lessons -** http://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Lessons
- ❖ **Free Wordpress.org Themes** - http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/
- ❖ **More Free Themes** - http://www.wpdesigner.com/category/free-wordpress-themes/
- ❖ **Wordpress.org Help Sheet** - http://wpcandy.com/teaches/the-wordpress-help-sheet
- ❖ **Wordpress.org Advanced Help Sheet** - http://wpcandy.com/teaches/the-advanced-wordpress-help-sheet

Other blogging platforms

- ❖ **Blogger**- http://codex.wordpress.org/Installing_WordPress
- ❖ **Wordpress.com** - http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/library/wikis.php
- ❖ **Typepad** - http://www.thesitewizard.com/gettingstarted/wordpress1.shtml