



Creating a Wordpress Blog

A “blog” is a writing journal on the web. The name comes from “web log,” which was shortened to “blog.” Wordpress is the largest and most popular blogging tool. It is a great place to write because it allows you to share your writings with the world, with a group of subscribers, or with a specific group of colleagues. In higher education, it is an opportunity to share writing behind a firewall and later have the opportunity to share that writing out in a public setting. There are two types of domains used by WordPress blogs: Wordpress.com and Wordpress.org. Wordpress.com blogs are free, so we recommend you start with one of those. If you are using this for a class, the safest way to use Wordpress is to set up a private (not public) blog, with a specific membership list (your enrolled students). Read on to learn how to do that.

Planning

The title of the site is *very important*, so think carefully about that ahead of time. Keep the title as simple as possible, because this title will become part of the blog’s URL (i.e. smithsenglishclasses.wordpress.com or worldlywisdom.wordpress.com). It is possible to change the blog title later, but it takes a little work and it also may reset some of the options you set.

If you want to have a separate blog for each class, name the blog with the course name and section number (i.e. EC101-02).

If you want to have several classes use the blog, you might want to name it something more general (i.e. English for English Majors, Prof. Smith’s English Classes, etc.).

You might also consider creating another blog, a private personal one, in which you can experiment with the various features.

Registration

1. Go to wordpress.com. Click on the “Sign Up” button at the top of the welcome page on the right-hand side.
2. Enter the title of your site as your desired Blog Address.
3. Create a password and enter an email address (where you may be contacted by WordPress, blog readers, your students, etc.).
4. Select the language to be used on your blog.
5. Scroll to the bottom of the page and click the orange button that says “Create Blog.” Don’t click on the “Upgrade” button unless you want to pay for the Premium account of WordPress.
6. The next screen that appears should relay the message “An e-mail has been sent to _____ (the email you provided) to activate your account. Check your inbox and click

the link in the message. It should arrive within 30 minutes. If you do not activate your account within two days, you will have to sign up again.”

7. Open your email and click on the link “Activate Blog” that is provided to activate your account
 - a. If the email is taking time to be delivered, you may start filling in some information about yourself in the space labeled “Update Your Profile!”
 - b. If you find yourself waiting more than half an hour for the email to be delivered, check your Spam Box in your email, or scroll to the bottom of the WordPress page and check that you have entered your email correctly.
8. By clicking the button in your email, a new page should pop up; this is where you will begin to design your blog.

Choosing the Blog Settings

1. Click “Settings” in the left hand sidebar. There is a variety of options. Go to “General Settings”
2. Check the site title and tagline; make sure this is what you want to appear on the site.
3. Change any other general settings that you feel should be altered.

Make sure you click “SAVE CHANGES” at the bottom of each page

4. Next, click “Writing Settings” on the left-hand side of the screen.
 - a. Here you can change the size of the post box, if you want to make it longer or shorter.
5. Click on the “Reading” tab
 - a. A suggestion would be that under the “Enhanced Feeds” check the Categories box to the articles to help users learn the navigation system.
 - b. You may also want to customize the “Blog follow email text” and the “Comment follow email text” to personalize the greeting and build rapport with your students.
6. Now, go to “Discussion Settings”
 - a. You will probably want to change “Email me whenever” section
 - i. May want to remove all checks except for “A comment is held for moderation”
 - b. Scroll to Before a Comment Appears
 - i. Suggestion: initially select “an administrator must always approve the comment”
 - c. Scroll to Comment Moderation: Comment moderation allows you to hold comments that may include words that can generate flame wars.
 - i. Here you can enter a list of words that will be held in the moderation cue. The list should includes words that are allowed in class conversation but the student may be using in an inappropriate way. “Gay” could be a part of another word (ex. “Gaylord”), it could be an appropriate term for discussion, or it could be used in an insensitive or slanderous way. With these words, it is a good idea for the instructor to have them moderated (i.e. held for approval by the instructor).
 - d. Scroll to Comment Blacklist

- i. These are the absolute “bad words” – There is no possible way to make this mistake in typing and the comment will automatically be sent to spam. A list of “bad words” can be downloaded at <http://www.bannedwordlist.com/>
 - e. These two areas need to be filled in if this will be a public site; otherwise they are not terribly important.
 - f. You may also want to change “Maximum Rating” section, depending on the audience.
- 7. Click on “Privacy Settings”
 - a. The preferred setting here is “private” because it protects student anonymity and prevents student work from showing up later in life. Be aware that the Internet Archive (<http://archive.org/>) and other parties save parts of the web and student work can persist on the web even if it is deleted from the blog later. If you want to keep the site private, click the third option bubble which states “I would like my site to be private, visible only to users I choose.”
 - b. If this is a public site, you may want to allow search engines to index the site
 - c. Hit “Save Changes” at the bottom and once the page refreshes itself, click “Invite viewers to your blog.”
 - d. This is where you will enter your student’s email to allow them to look at your private blog.
 - e. For “Roles,” it is essential to give students either author or contributor roles and NOT editor or administrator.
 - f. You may add a customized, more personal message to the invitation if you choose. Remember to click “Send Invitation” when you are finished.

Creating Your Personal Profile and Settings

1. Under “Users” on the left hand toolbar, click “Personal Settings”
 - a. Turn on the proofreading tools; these will give advice to authors as they’re typing.
 - i. Proofreader supports English, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish.
 - b. If you have the time and inclination, you can add “Ignored phrases” here – these will generally be discipline specific terms.
 - c. You may also change your account username or password.
2. Under “Users” again, click “My Profile”
 - a. Add as much information about yourself as you would like (such as your name, location, an “About You” section, and contact information).
 - b. You may also upload photos and links here.
3. Under “Appearance” on the left hand toolbar, click “Themes”
 - a. Recommended themes include Quintus, Retro-Fitted, Vostok, INove, Dusk to Dawn, The Journalist Version 1.9, and Ocean Mist. There are also Premium themes that are only available for an extra charge.
4. Under “Appearance,” click “Widgets”
 - a. Widgets are like the portlets in Gullnet. They are small groupings of items that will appear in your side bar. To add them to your blog, click it and drag it from “Available Widgets” to the Sidebar 1.
 - b. No matter what theme you choose, it is suggested to have the following widgets: RSS, Search, Archives, Authors, Categories, Links, Meta, and Pages.
 - c. This is also where you can add a Twitter feed.

5. Under “Appearance,” click “Header”
 - a. Pick a custom image of at least 1100 x 250 pixels or chose from their sample images (this picture will appear at the top of your blog).
 - b. Personal pictures can be uploaded from your computer and cropped in WordPress.
 - c. You may also personalize the text color of your blog header.
6. Under “Posts” again, click “Categories”
 - a. Here, you might include something such as “Week one” or topics of interdisciplinary categories such as: Free Writing, General Advice or the French Revolution, etc. You will probably find yourself creating new categories as the blog grows.
 - b. Later on when writing, you can link your posts to specific categories to make searching within the blog easier.
7. Under “Media” on the left hand toolbar, click “Add New”
 - a. This allows you to add files of various types, including jpegs, pdfs, doc files, ppts, etc.
8. Now click “Comments”
 - a. Pending comments will be listed here.
 - b. If you have new comments waiting to be moderated, you will see a number to the left of your name icon in the top right corner.

Writing Your First Post

1. Click on your name profile in the top right corner of the screen and click “Manage My Blogs.”
2. Click on the blog that you want to edit, and that will bring up your Dashboard. If this is your first time on WordPress then you will only have one blog available to click.
3. To write your first blog, go to “Posts” on the left-hand side of the screen and select “All Posts.”
4. You’ll find an entry called “Hello World.” This is kind of your “welcome” to WordPress and this is the post you will want to edit.
5. Retitle the “Hello World” post, erase everything in it, and create your first blog post using that empty post.
6. On the top right-hand side under “Publish,” go to “Visibility” and decide if you want the post to be public, private or password protected.
 - a. Public would be something you want the entire world to see. *Remember that if the site is a private one, only the people with permission to view the site will see a public post.*
 - b. Private allows you to share the blog information only with specific readers. Only those who you share it with would be able to see it. You can use this to give private feedback to particular students.
 - c. Making the post password protected allows you to give a password to particular students. This can be used to create spaces for group work, with each group having its own password.
7. Before the post is published, click “Update.” Nothing is published unless you click update.
8. Congratulations! You are now a blogger!