A WordPress Beginner Quick Start Guide

When you first login to your WordPress dashboard, it may seem a little overwhelming, but take your time getting used to each section and you'll be expert before you know it and demanding more functionality (plug-ins) to play with!

The first thing you see is your **Dashboard**. This page includes an overview of your content – pages, posts, comments, etc. You can move the boxes around to suit you – take a look at what you have available to view on your dashboard (for instance, if you have a statistics plugin installed, you may be able to see a snapshot of this on your dashboard page), and move boxes to suit you using your right mouse button – hold that down over the box header that you want to move, then move and drop it to suit.

When there are **updates** available to your plugins and for WordPress, these will show in the Dashboard section too. WordPress highlights these with a number in a circle – telling you how many updates are available.   Click into this section, select the update you want to action, and Update. We recommend that you have a current backup before you do any updates, just in case.

Posts: this is where you add your new blog posts. You can also edit, save as draft, and schedule, as well as delete them (trash).

- To see existing blog posts, go to Posts and choose the one you want to edit from the list.
- To add a new blog post – Posts, Add New
- To schedule a blog post for future publishing, click on Edit next to Publish immediately and set the date and time there. Then click the Schedule button.

Categories: You may want to identify groups of blog posts within categories. You can edit the existing "Uncategorized" category within Posts, Categories and then Edit (mouse-over the category and you'll see an Edit option appear).

The "slug" is simply an internal web-friendly version of the name.

Tags: offer you the chance to further break down a blog post's topics – perhaps best to not go mad with tags, unless they will be useful for your readers.

Links: You might want to offer some links to your readers – perhaps to useful websites, individual web pages, etc. You add them in this section, and you can also create link categories if you wish to provide different kinds of links. If you want to change the name of the default link category, go to Link Categories, mouse-over the Blogroll link so that the Edit option appears beneath, and then click to edit.

WordPress provides you with a number of their links, some may be useful for you, but you may prefer to remove these – go to Links and then you can Delete each that want want to remove (again, mouse-over the link name and you'll see the option to Edit | Delete appear).

Pages: These are what can make your WordPress a website. And as a blog you may like to have additional pages too. You can Add New, enter your title and the content, then place the page under a "parent" so that it offers nested navigation, and set the navigational order.

Remember also to untick Allow Comments if you do not want them (as you'd more likely prefer for a web page).

Comments: This section will list all comments made on your blog posts and offers you the option to approve, reply, edit, spam or trash each.

The following are mostly for info:

Appearance: the Theme is the overall blog design – here you can change the theme to a different "design". You can edit the css stylesheets and the php files for the them in Editor. But we suggest you only delve here is you know what you're doing.

Widgets are what make up the parts of your sidebar(s) and the most usual widgets used are the Search bar, Recent Posts, Categories, Links and Text boxes (within which you can add html such as other links, images, and indeed plain text). The thing to do is have a play with it to see the results of dragging and dropping widgets into your sidebar(s).

Menus offer you the option to create custom navigation – this is a new feature for WP 3.0 and can be a quick way to re-order your menu and more.

Plugins offer additional functionality to your WordPress, and indeed just about anything you might want to do with your WordPress, there will be a plugin that does it, if not a dozen. It's best not to go too mad with these, but worth spending some time considering what you want and then seeing what is available (you can search for new plugins in Add New).

It is always worth reviewing your plugins regularly – more are being developed for our delight all the time. And also whenever the thought of "I wish my website could..." flitters across your mind, go and have a look to see if some wonderful geek has had the same thought.

Users: this section is for when you want to edit a user's information, add a new user, or remove someone.

User roles:
Administraters can do everything
Editors can create and publish pages and blog posts – not just their own
Authors can create their own pages and blog posts
Contributors can create blog posts but not publish them

The other areas of your dashboard are unlikely to be somewhere you want to explore just yet so we'll leave it at that for now. You can always ask and we're happy to help. There is so much that WordPress can do that it is usually best, at the early stages, for new bloggers to know the basics and then take it further as your experience grows.

If there is something specific that you want to do or know, take a look at the Blogmistress website or the JDI Blogging site – many aspects of working with WordPress and blogging are covered there.