

**THE COMPLETE
IDIOT'S
MINI GUIDE[®] TO**

Creating Your Own Wordpress.com Blog

by Clinton Bonner



A member of Penguin Group (USA) Inc.

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WordPress has emerged as the clear choice for bloggers the World Wide Web over. There is a lot to blogging effectively on the WordPress platform, but it doesn't have to be complicated or overwhelming. I want you to be able to comfortably digest this material, understand in clear ways what it means for you and your blogging aspirations, and then use this content as a guide to successfully set up, write, and promote your new WordPress blog. This will be a substance-over-style discussion, as our end goal here is simple: your blog, up and running on WordPress, in a position to capture a thirsting audience. Are you ready?

How to Prepare to Blog on WordPress

Unfortunately, publishing a blog is not quite as easy as writing a post and pressing a publish button. There is an essential, out-of-the-gate question we must answer about your WordPress blog: will your blog be self-hosted, or hosted on WordPress.com?

Self-hosting involves several more steps, which we will cover later, whereas allowing WordPress.com to host your blog is much simpler. However, there are sincere advantages to self-hosting, ranging from the number of *widgets* and *plug-ins* at your disposal, to the ability to monetize your self-hosted site via paid advertisers. But let's start with the simpler choice, allowing WordPress.com to do the hosting for you.



DEFINITION

Plug-ins on the WordPress platform add a specific functionality to your blog. For example, if you want to add the Facebook **Like** button to your blog posts, you would download and install a plug-in that accomplishes this for you.

A **widget** is a plug-in specifically designed for use in your blog's sidebar. For example, if you wanted your Twitter tweets to appear in your blog's sidebar, you would download and install a widget that does this specific task.

Letting WordPress Host Your Blog

Because you are not purchasing a domain name, and since WordPress is hosting the blog for you, you can literally be up and blogging with \$0 out-of-pocket and in a very short time frame. WordPress.com offers a ton of free themes, and scores of very useful and worthy widgets and plug-ins for blogs. So if you are on a budget, and need the simplest way to get going today, choosing WordPress.com to host your site might be the right option for you. Keep in mind that you can always transfer your blog from a WordPress-hosted solution to a self-hosted one at a later date.

Setting Up Your WordPress-Hosted Blog

If you're looking for the path of least resistance, this is it—and it's simple.

1. Go to wordpress.com. Please don't confuse wordpress.com with wordpress.org. The former is for WordPress-hosted blogs, the latter for self-hosted WordPress blogs.
2. Click the **Sign Up Now** button located on the upper right-hand corner, and a quick form will open up for you to fill out.
3. When filling out this form, keep in mind your user name is used in your domain name. For example, if you choose the user name "ilovethe86Mets" then your WordPress blog domain will be ilovethe86mets.wordpress.com, so choose wisely. Be concise, be consistent with your marketing objectives, and be memorable.

After this, follow the instructions on the site to activate your blog. Once your account is activated, choosing your theme is a great place to begin.

Choosing Your Theme

Essentially, the look and feel of your blog is determined by which theme you choose. Carefully consider what type of blog you are creating and choose a theme that supports your vision. Will you be sharing a lot of photos, a.k.a. a photo blog? Will you be featuring video? Will you be aggregating content and need several columns so your readers can sort through various stories? Your theme is the outside of your blog's home; choose a veneer that looks great, and works for your unique needs.

You can access themes through your user dashboard, go to the pull-down menu, **My Blog** (located in the top left-hand corner) then select **Dashboard**. Then, down the left-hand side, expand the **Appearances** menu and select **Themes**. This brings you to your "Manage Themes" page, where you can browse what is available and activate your chosen theme. All you need to do is find the one you love and click Activate.

At this point, if WordPress will be hosting your blog, you may skip ahead to the section titled, "How to Get the Right Look, Feel, and Functionality." However, I highly encourage you to read on about the benefits of self-hosting, and the necessary steps to do so.

Self-Hosting a WordPress Blog

If you want access to the best social applications and have aspirations to monetize your blog via advertisements, you should invest the time and money to self-host your WordPress blog.

When you self-host your WordPress blog, you have access to scores more plug-ins and widgets. Think of it this way: a self-hosted WordPress blog is like an iPhone, you have access to the most “apps” because you are using the premiere mobile device in the world. By self-hosting your WordPress blog, you have access to a library of plug-ins that those who choose to blog elsewhere simply do not. Let’s look at the steps to self-hosting your WordPress blog.

Purchasing and Registering Your Domain Name

Your domain name is your unique web address. For instance, my personal blog on innovation is at everything2everything.com. When choosing your domain name, try to think of keywords and themes that simply make sense and relate to your overall blog. Sites such as GoDaddy.com and NameCheap.com are examples of service providers where you can purchase your unique domain name. On their respective sites, check to see if your unique domain name is available. When you find one you love, go ahead and register the domain. In other words, purchase that unique web address from the service provider you choose.

Selecting a Web Host

To some, this is a cakewalk; to others, it could be the source of hours of frustration and headache. I want you blogging and creating brilliance, not frustrated and annoyed. So before you pay for a *web host*, I highly recommend you visit wordpress.org/hosting/. WordPress itself offers you four hosting partners and each has a one-click installation process specifically for WordPress blogs. Check the pricing on each, as you might pay a small premium for the ease of getting going in just one click.



DEFINITION

A **web host**, such as Hostgator.com, is simply a server that hosts your website and offers everyone on the Internet safe access to your unique domain name.

If you are going to install this on your own, please visit codex.wordpress.org/Installing_WordPress#Famous_5-Minute_Install and follow the instructions step by step. Many web hosts offer set-up assistance as part of their service. Research and pick a web host with the level of assistance you will require to complete the WordPress set-up and installation.

Though the link above also shares this information, it is important to note you will be downloading the WordPress software from wordpress.org. On the right-hand side of the screen, a blue “Download WordPress” button will be present.

How to Get the Right Look, Feel, and Functionality

As we discussed earlier, the way the world sees your blog is like the way your neighborhood sees your home. After you’ve successfully chosen and imported your theme of choice, it’s time to create your static pages and subpages, add functionality and design via plug-ins and widgets, and create a really purposeful and attractive sidebar for your blog.

Creating Static Pages

A blog is naturally something you plan to update quite routinely, so your home page—or what a visitor sees when first coming to your site—is often your newest post, with space to allow comments and feedback. But the rest of the content on your site is, for the most part, going to remain static and not change much over time. Create a page for each macro-offering or service you are looking to communicate. Think about your blog. Beyond the posts you intend to write, what other aspects do you want your audience to easily have access to? Think broad terms here; we will discuss creating subpages later.

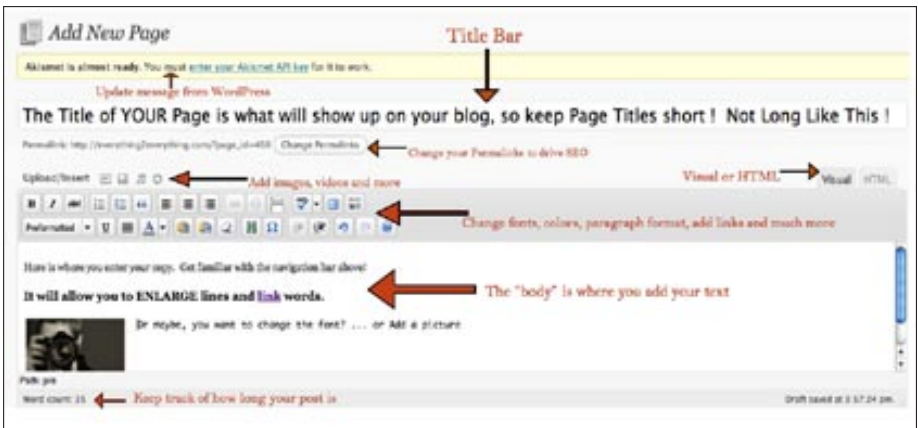
Typical page titles would include: contact, clients, gallery (for photos), bio, pricing, and so on.

On your dashboard, down the left-hand side, you will notice a tab titled **Pages**. Just below that tab, locate **Add New** and click. From there, simply add the title in the long rectangular white box toward the top of the screen. Keep the title of the page concise (unlike my screenshot!) because the title you put in will be what the public sees on your site.

Directly below the title bar, locate and click on the **Change Permalinks** button. Here, select the second option, **Day and Name** and save your settings. This can

have a big effect on search-engine optimization, making it easier for people to find your blog. Later, when you create your first post, do the same exact thing regarding *permalinks*.

If you are working in a WordPress hosted blog, click the “Edit” button in the Permalinks section to manually adjust your permalink. Use hyphens to separate keywords and click “OK” when you are finished.



There is a lot of information and functionality at your disposal, get to know this “cockpit” well.



DEFINITION

Permalinks ensure the title of your page or blog post shows up in the unique URL for that exact page. For example, if you publish a post titled, “I Heart Hairless Cats,” the URL for that post might show up as myawesomeblog.com/i-heart-hairless-cats.

Next, you of course need to add copy or text so that your page isn’t a blank canvass when visitors arrive. The largest section is known as the body. Directly below permalinks, is the body where you add your text, images, and more. I would encourage you to spend some quality time exploring all the options available to you. Notice that as you mouse over the icons, and let the cursor rest, the screen politely tells you exactly what this icon is meant for. The ability to change colors, fonts, add pictures, embed

videos and audio, or simply paste your work already created in Microsoft Word, is all there for you to learn and leverage. Don't be afraid of a lot of trial and error, too. If you're unsure how a certain font or uploaded image will look, try a few times until you are satisfied. To do this, locate the **Preview** button toward the top right-hand corner of the screen. Once you have your page set and you want to see how it will look before you publish it to the world, hit the **Preview** button. A new tab in the same window will open up; click on that tab and have a look.



MINI TIPS

In the **Discussion** section, just below the body, uncheck both **Allow comments** and **Allow trackbacks and pingbacks on this page**, as the need for a reader to comment on a static page simply doesn't exist and can look rather out of place.

The **Publish** button is located directly below the **Preview** button and is typically encased in light blue with white lettering. When you're ready, click **Publish** and the page will be live on your site.

Creating your static pages is not only important, but fantastic practice for creating your first blog post. WordPress is rather smart, as the same exact interface you just experienced creating that static page is replicated every single time you create a new blog post, with minor exceptions. So get to know all the functionality because you're going to use it again and again!

Creating Subpages

Subpages help the readers of your blog find specific important information faster. Imagine you worked for a nonprofit organization and one of your pages was titled "Charities." In this case, it would make perfect sense for you to list several of these charities in the form of subpages. Under the **Charities** tab, subpage titles such as "Habitat for Humanity" and "The Salvation Army" would be logical. This tells the reader exactly where to find this important information while allowing you, the blogger, to showcase it.

First go ahead and create your subpage just like you created your formal pages, with one exception: don't worry about the permalink step. Directly under the **Publish** button you'll see a box titled **Page Attributes**. Here you want to assign a **Parent** page to the page you are currently working on. Click on the drop-down and associate this page with the parent page of your choice.

In the previous example, you might be listing three or four nonprofits you have worked with. In a situation like that, you want to order which nonprofit appears first, second, third, and so on. Simply assign an order number in the **Order** box in the **Page Attributes** section and WordPress will list these for you.

Click on the **Preview** button and have a look. As you mouse over the tab or **Parent** page title, a drop-down menu should emerge directly under the Parent tab which will list, in order, the subpages you just created. When you have all of your subpages in order, and you're satisfied with the preview, press the **Publish** button. Congratulations, your static pages are done!



MINI TIPS

Before you publish a single page, consider creating all your pages and subpages, saving each by clicking **Save Draft**, and publishing them when they are all completed. This way you avoid the site-under-construction look.

I mentioned earlier to not worry about creating a new permalink for subpages as WordPress automatically takes care of this for us. If your subpage is correctly associated with the parent page, your permalinks are all set.

To edit or update an existing page is rather simple. Go to the page you wish to edit, make the necessary edits, and click **Update**, which is now sitting in the place of the **Publish** button.

Displaying Your Pages

This is absolutely a matter of personal preference. To keep this as simple as can be, when you choose your theme you will notice some layouts that showcase the pages horizontally across the top of the page, while others sport the pages vertically down the left- or right-hand side of the page. Choose what you like.

Increasing Functionality Through Plug-Ins and Widgets

Plug-ins and widgets are essential to WordPress blogging and one of the biggest factors in the platform's raging popularity. There are literally thousands of widgets and plug-ins to choose from, so do your homework. We will also talk about the important role of your sidebar and how you can best wield this omnipresent space.

I suggest selecting widgets and plug-ins with these three factors in mind:

1. Does this plug-in or widget add a functionality I really want?
2. Considering my technical skill level, is this plug-in or widget easy to install and operate?
3. Once installed, do I like the way it looks and the user experience it delivers?
With so many to choose from, you don't need to compromise.

Let's be clear, both plug-ins and widgets do one thing, and that is add a specific function to your blog. Widgets are specifically designed for your sidebar, whereas plug-ins can live anywhere. To have an effective WordPress blog, you will want to leverage both. As a suggestion, use widgets where you can, as they tend to be simpler to install. With that said, many plug-ins are equally easy to install, while others call for extensive knowledge of HTML shortcode. You know your comfort zone, so choose wisely.

Once we have a good foundation regarding the use of your sidebar, I'll lay out how to search, download, and install the widgets that make the sidebar come to life.

A Simple and Effective Sidebar

The sidebar represents a fantastic space to give readers a quick snapshot of what your blog is all about, and timely updates you want to communicate. In the sidebar, consider a simple and effective balance that could include:

- **Your social connections icons, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and beyond.** These allow you to sync your social media accounts to your blog so readers can connect with you on the social web. There are several I recommend, including Social Media Widget and SocialGrid.
- **An e-mail subscription icon.** E-mail is still the best way to get a new piece of content out to your masses where you know they will see it. These widgets allow a user to subscribe to your blog via e-mail. I like Feedburner Email Widget because it is simple to install, functions properly, and looks good.
- **A concise and powerful bio.** Yes, you will probably have a page dedicated to your personal bio that is more expansive. But make sure you present a blog-focused biography in the sidebar, and keep it rather high on the actual screen. Daiko's Text Widget is simple to install and quite configurable.

- **Video or a photo of you.** You are seeking to connect with other humans, right? So humanize your blog and get a video, or at least a photo, up on the sidebar. For video I recommend Video Sidebar Widgets because it syncs easily to the most popular video platforms, including YouTube. For photos I recommend Sidebar Photoblog for ease of use.
- **Your social calendar.** If you can benefit from sharing your calendar and upcoming appearances, then you should display it. There are several great calendar plug-ins that are easy to manage and update. Google Calendar Widget is certainly nice for those who already use Gmail.



Your sidebar should be personable, social, and add functionality.

I encourage you to visit convinceandconvert.com, a social media strategy blog that has a remarkably well-done and informational sidebar.

Essential WordPress Plug-Ins

Remember, a plug-in provides a specific function just like a widget, but it's not designed to live on your sidebar. Here are a few of my favorites:

- **Disqus** is a commenting platform with an easy installation process, making your commenting system much more social by allowing readers to participate through their Twitter or Facebook log-ins. There are other great reasons to like this plug-in, but the social media benefits are enough for me to use it.
- **Lijit** is a search enhancer that allows your readers to not only search your blog's content, but your social media content as well.
- **Scribe SEO** is a *search engine optimization (SEO)* dream tool. This plug-in analyzes your posts for search engine performance, then helps you edit by interjecting certain keywords that search engines rank higher, giving your blog more exposure. This is not a free plug-in; pricing plans begin at \$17 per month for this service.



DEFINITION

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is the process of improving the visibility of a website in search engines, such as Google.

- **All-in-One SEO** is your one-stop shop for WordPress search engine optimization. What you need to know is that it has been downloaded over six million times! Use this plug-in.



MINI TIPS

You do not need to be an SEO expert to have good results. Leveraging available plug-ins, setting permalinks, and using words most often searched (keywords) in titles and copy can improve SEO results.

- **Facebook Like** or **Me Likey** both place the now iconic Facebook thumbs-up **Like** button on each of your posts, thereby allowing viewers to share the content on their personal Facebook walls.
- **New Twitter Button** is the official Twitter button allowing viewers to tweet your post, thus exposing it to their entire stream of followers.

- **SexyBookmarks** allows your readers to share your post in dozens of ways, including e-mailing to a friend, voting “up” on Digg.com or other content aggregator sites, and more.
- **WPTouch** automatically transforms your blog so that when readers are accessing it from the mobile web on iPhone, Android, Blackberry, and other mobile operating systems, it looks amazing and functions with incredible quickness. As iPad and other new tablet computers hit the market, having your blog look good and function correctly on all mobile or pad devices will become more and more essential.

Installing and Activating Widgets and Plug-Ins

The process of installing and activating can vary from plug-in to plug-in. Be sure to read all directions carefully.

With that said, let's walk you through a typical installation process.

1. From your dashboard, click **Plugins** toward the bottom on the left-hand side. Keep in mind, if you are allowing WordPress.com to host your blog, Plug-ins do not exist and are only available for those self-hosting a WordPress blog. You will have access to widgets only.
2. Next to an image of a plug, top of the page, locate and click the **Add New** button.
3. Locate the search bar, enter the exact name of the plug-in or widget you wish to install, and click. A new screen should show you the plug-in (you might see multiple options, so use exact language when searching).
4. Click **Install Now** just below the title of the widget or plug-in.
5. You will be asked to enter your FTP user name and password to continue; do so and click **Proceed**. The opening and installation of the widget could take from a few seconds to around a minute and a half (or more) depending on your connection speed and the size of the file you are attempting to install.
6. Below the name of the widget or plug-in, you should see an **Activate Now** button; click that. For some plug-ins, this will be the last step.

7. If this plug-in requires shortcode or further configuration, follow all instructions. If this plug-in is a widget, under the **Appearance** tab on the left-hand side find and click on **Widgets**.
8. Locate the widget you just installed and activated. Sometimes the names don't match exactly, but you should be able to tell which one is which. Click on and drag the rectangular tab into the top right-hand corner labeled **Sidebar**.
9. Add additional widgets as you please. To change the order of appearance, highest to lowest on-screen, simply drag the rectangle tab into the position you wish. For instance, if you want your e-mail subscription sidebar widget to be the uppermost widget displayed on your blog, make sure it is in the top position in your sidebar loader on the **Widgets** screen.

This is not as daunting as it may seem, and the only way to get good at it is by doing it. Like all else with WordPress, do not be afraid of a little trial and error.

What is Shortcode?

Plug-ins on WordPress often require you to copy a bit of shortcode and paste it exactly where they instruct you to do so.



MINI TIPS

Shortcode will look something like:

```
<script type="text/javascript" language="JavaScript" src="http://twittercounter.com/embed/?user name=cb"></script>
```

Because each plug-in is different and will need to be pasted into varying locations, you have to follow the specific instructions. Like all else with WordPress, some will be super easy, while others will require more coding knowledge.

To Deactivate or Delete a Plug-In or Widget

The easiest way to delete a plug-in or widget is in your **Widgets** screen. In your sidebar (top right-hand corner) locate the widget you no longer want, click the small drop-down arrow on the widget itself and, at the bottom, you will see an option to delete this widget. Click **Delete** and the problem widget is gone.

If you want to deactivate a widget, but not delete it, visit your **Plugins** page and locate the unwanted widget; you should see a **Deactivate** option. Click that button and the word should change to **Activate**. Your widget is deactivated.

Blogging on WordPress

Now that your set-up is complete, theme is selected, sidebar configured, and plug-ins are installed and activated, you are ready to blog!

Creating and Previewing a New Post

In your dashboard, locate **Posts** (top left of screen) and click on the drop-down arrow exposing **Add New** and click on it. Now this should look very familiar to you, because WordPress uses the identical interface you previously used to create your Pages. Enter the title of your post in the title box; try to be catchy and concise. Just like creating a page, explore the possibilities here and don't be shy regarding using the **Preview** button on the right-hand side. Try different fonts; add and resize pictures, videos, and links; and simply see how it all looks in preview mode before you publish.

Visual vs. HTML

First locate the two tabs on the top right-hand corner of the main body section, just under the rectangular title bar. You will see two tabs, **Visual** and **HTML**. Stick to visual for almost everything as it is much simpler to create posts without having to know any software code. It will feel and act just as if you were crafting an e-mail, only with more options at your disposal. As you will see later, there are absolutely times when you will need to leverage *HTML* and they typically involve “cutting and pasting” an embed code to share a video, photo-stream, or an audio widget. Beyond those uses, make it easy on yourself and utilize the visual setting.



DEFINITION

HyperText Markup Language (HTML) is the predominant software language for web pages, allowing users to easily embed images and objects, such as a YouTube video player, while allowing for massive customization in regard to page function and style.

Permalinks

Just as before with pages, change the **Permalink** (located below the Title bar) to your second option, **Date and Time**. Again, for search engine optimization reasons, you simply want the words in your blog title in the link itself, and this does exactly that for you.

Trackbacks and Pingbacks

Trackbacks are a way to notify another blogger that you linked something in this post back to their site. You do this by entering the URL (the website name) into the Send Trackbacks to: section. A nice feature of WordPress is that if you link to another WordPress blog in the post, you don't have to take this extra step as the platform automatically does this for you, alerting the other author with what is known as a pingback.

Saving a Draft

In the **Publish** section on the right-hand side, locate the **Save Draft** button. Click it once and your draft is saved. You can always locate all of your posts (saved and published) by simply clicking **Posts** on the left-hand side of the screen.

Scheduling a Post to Publish on a Future Date

Under the **Save Draft** button in the **Publish** section (right-hand side) you will see the words **Publish *immediately* Edit**. Click on **Edit** and a small calendar drop-down will appear. Set the date and time you wish your post to go live and click **OK**. Notice your blue **Publish** button has morphed into a **Schedule** button. Click **Schedule** once and you are all set! If you ever need to change your posting schedule, click **Edit**, make the adjustments, and follow the same steps.

Publishing Your Post

When you are ready, simply click the blue **Publish** button on the right-hand side of your screen. Congratulations, your first WordPress post is live!

Correcting an Error After You Have Published

Go back in to the post you wish to edit and you will notice the blue **Publish** button is now a blue **Update** button. Make the correction or addition and simply hit **Update**. You're all set.

Monitoring Comments and Engaging the Masses

Traditional commenting in WordPress is so simple. On the **Comments** page, you can see comments that were left directly on your blog post. From there you can choose to reply to the comment directly, or unapprove the comment if it was off-color. Remember comments are public, so closely monitor what others are posting on your blog. You can even mark it as spam so WordPress recognizes that user as a spammer and therefore denies them the ability to comment in the future.



MINI TIPS

Beyond replying to the readers who comment on your blog post, locate and connect with them on their social networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn). It's a great way to grow your social audience.

My suggestion to you, especially as you are just getting going, is to comment back to everyone. Even if it's just a simple "thank you" for their contribution, it goes a long way. If you have the time, try to make the reply relevant and add to the conversation. By directly replying through WordPress you can even share links and more, so that comments can really add to the overall discussion on your blog post.

Adding Pictures, Video, and Audio to Your Post

Sometimes you might want to get a bit fancier with your posts by adding pictures, video, or audio. Though you may have already done this creating your pages, it is very good to review exactly how you can add these various types of media to your posts. Let's start with images.

Adding an Image

Locate the **Upload/Insert** section just below the permalink area on the left-hand side above the body. The first icon (next to insert) is for adding an image—click on it.

You'll see a few choices located at the top of the window that opens including **From Computer** or **From URL**.

**MINI TIPS**

Think of your blog post as a blank canvass. Words alone can be effective, but can often be more engaging when high-quality or humorous images are coupled with the copy to make it that much more enjoyable!

If you're using an image located on your computer's hard drive, press **Select Files** button and find the image file you want uploaded from your computer. When you have your image, press **Select** toward the bottom right-hand corner. The image will upload and upon completion you can title the photo, add a caption that will appear under the image, change the alignment (left, right, or center, regarding the positioning of the image), and alter the size. Make sure you click **Insert Into Post** toward the bottom. As always, I encourage you to preview your addition and edit as needed.

If you want to use an image from the web, click on **From URL** and simply add the information you are asked for. An image URL will look like <http://www.gpsa.pitt.edu/bulletins/2010-01-11/donuts.jpg> and it simply represents where on the web this image is located. This way, you don't have to save a ton of images to your computer that you intend to probably only use one time. Images from URLs can be resized after they are inserted by clicking on the image in the body of the blog, and shrinking the corners until you have the appropriate size image.

Adding Video

The icon to the right of the add image icon is **Add Video**. To add video via computer or URL, follow the same steps you would for a photo. However, most times, you will want to embed HTML code so that your blog post can feature a YouTube, Facebook, or Vimeo video; something already uploaded to the web. It's simpler than it sounds. First you must locate the embed code. To practice this, I suggest you go to www.YouTube.com and click on any video. Below the number of views you will see an **<embed>** button; click on it. Code will appear below looking something like this:

```
<object width="480" height="385" ><param name="movie" value="http://www.youtube.com/v/_zNVQ8eqcBc?fs=1&hl=en_US"></embed></object>
```

**MINI TIPS**

Embedding video can add a really rich dynamic to your post and help drive SEO as well. If you are embedding popular or viral videos, you are increasing the visibility of your blog when others search. Just be sure the video has relevance to your blog post!

Copy this code, then come back to the blog post you are creating and click on the **HTML** tab on the right-hand side above the body of the blog (next to **Visual** tab). Figure out where you want this video to appear in the post and simply paste that code into it. As always, click **Preview** to ensure the video embedded properly and in the location you wanted it placed.

Adding Audio

Most times when adding audio into a post, you will be snagging a widget code from a site other than WordPress and pasting it into your post utilizing the **HTML** tab in the same way you would embed a YouTube video. For a great and easy way to add a customizable audio widget to your post visit: widgets.grooveshark.com/make?new.

How to Add a User

A user is an individual granted specific access to your blog. Many blogs have editors, co-authors, or technology professionals who will require access to perform their duties in regard to your blog.

Down the left-hand side of the dashboard, locate the **Users** tab and click it. Locate the **Add New** button toward the top left, and then fill out the form WordPress presents you. This form has you create a new user name and password for one specific individual. Choose which role you'd like to assign the user. There is a little check box that will auto-send this new user an e-mail with his or her credentials, saving you a step. Click **Add User** and the individual will have been added. To remove a user is equally simple. On the **Users** page, check the box of the user you'd care to delete, scroll up to **Bulk Actions**, and hit the drop-down—**Delete** will appear; highlight it and press **Apply**. That's it, the user is history.

Congratulations; if you've followed this *Mini Guide*, even loosely, then you are most likely ready to blog. Let's wrap up with some tips on continual improvement and growing your social audience.

Updating Your WordPress Blog and Growing Your Audience

Even the greatest and most popular bloggers on the WordPress platform continually search for new tools, new plug-ins, and new ways to wow and connect with their masses. You should, too. There are several places to routinely check for updates and additions. I would recommend you continually check in on:

1. **Your dashboard**—WordPress brings the newest plug-ins, the official WordPress blog, and other WordPress-related news right to your dashboard—so keep your eyes peeled. Also, when an update to a plug-in is available, you will see a small circle with a number appear next to Plugins down the left-hand side.
2. **Google**—With so many helpful articles across the Internet, you can search WordPress updates and spend days clicking through the articles. With all searches, be specific, and search for certain functions to improve results.
3. **Social Networks**—A great way to both learn about new WordPress features, and possibly gain new social followers, is to ask your Twitter followers, post to your Facebook wall, and share with a LinkedIn group that you are seeking advice or the best widgets for a specific WordPress functionality. To add to this, follow and frequent twitter.com/wordpress, which is the official WordPress Twitter stream and is a constant geyser of WordPress advice, upgrades, and more.

Growing Your Audience and Influence

You should desire and aim for steady growth of followers and social fans. Go back to your focus: What is your blog about? Now, find where these people are on the social web (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, private networks, existing bloggers, and more) and connect with them. Facebook offers fan pages; not only should you have your own, but you should absolutely **Like** other pages that are relevant in some way to your blog and your audience. Twitter offers TweetChats, that are group conversations headed by a particular group. For instance, in the event and conference world there is a large TweetChat that goes by the name “#EventProfs” that gathers twice a week and discusses new trends, technologies, and opportunities in their exact space. LinkedIn supports groups, and you can join hyper-specific groups where the

other members would probably find your material interesting. In all instances, you shouldn't barge in like a social megaphone, shouting that you have a new post to share. Like all else in life, you've got to converse with individuals within these social constructs and when you have an opportunity to add value or knowledge to a social conversation, do so with authority and a dash of humility and openness.

Guest Blogging and Sharing Content with Popular Bloggers

This is when you author a blog post, but another blogger publishes it on their blog. Guest posting for a well-known blogger can be a fantastic way to grow your own audience. Bloggers, even the best of them, take vacations or run out of fresh ideas to share. If you have a particular blogger you really admire, reach out with a specific idea and perhaps an opening paragraph on how you might present it. It is 100 percent acceptable to politely ask a blogger you admire if they would consider allowing you to guest-post on their blog; just be sure to bring your A game!

Another way to garner exposure would be to directly write a blogger you admire and ask for social support. By this I mean cordially asking an author you respect to share a blog you have posted with their social networks.

Creating, editing, decorating, publishing, interacting, and growing your blog, both on individual post levels and over the long haul, takes dedication, practice, trial and error, and a legitimate commitment of your time. By choosing WordPress as your blogging platform you are equipping yourself with the greatest assets, tools, developers, and potential audience in the world. I wish you the very best of luck in all your blogging endeavors, and I do hope to see you out there in the WordPress blogosphere soon!

Additional Reading

The Complete Idiot's Guide® to Creating a Website

Paul McFedries

978-1-59257-788-0, \$24.95

The Complete Idiot's Guide® to Facebook®

Joe Kraynak & Mikal Belicove

978-1-61564-036-2, \$16.95

The Complete Idiot's Guide® to Grammar & Style, Second Edition

Laurie Rozakis

978-1-59257-115-4, \$16.95