



WordPress Bootcamp for Artists

Synergy4 Conference

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From the Top...

Q: What is WordPress and How Does it Work?

A: WordPress a *Content Management System*.

Q: What Kind of Website can you make with WordPress?

A: It can be almost any kind of website.

WordPress a Content Management System

- Content is organized and stored in a database on the web server.
- Related files (images, themes, etc.) are stored on the web server.
- Content is created right within WordPress. No special software needed.

What Kind of Website is WordPress? WordPress can be almost any type of website:

- Blog or Online Magazine
- Image Gallery
- Online Shopping
- Event Calendar & Event Registration
- Private Social Network

WordPress sites can be as simple or as complex as YOU want to make them.

Why WordPress?

	Squarespace	Wix	Weebly	WordPress
Custom Domain	✓	\$	\$	✓*
Free Email	\$	\$	\$	✓*
Page, Storage, or Bandwidth Limitations	✓	✓	✓	✓*
Access to Themes	✓	✓	✓	✓
Full Customization	✓		✓	✓*
e-commerce	\$	\$	\$	✓
Hosting Needed				✓
Transferable to Another Host	Content Exports to WordPress		Transfer to a Weebly Reseller or lose features (blog, galleries)	✓
Ads on Site		\$	\$	
Up-front Annual Cost (Monthly Plans Are More Expensive Annually)	\$144 - \$480+	\$60 - \$300+	\$0 - \$300+	\$0*

*Feature limitations based on hosting provider and plan.

Choosing a provider for your website is an important decision. You need to weigh all the options and costs before entering into an agreement. What is the ideal solution for one artist, is not for the other.

Many of the features touted by other services can be achieved in WordPress either by default or with the addition of a plugin.

Get Started with WordPress

1. **Purchase your domain name.**
2. Select your hosting provider.
3. Read the WordPress user documentation.
4. Decide what features you want on your website.
5. Select a theme and plugins that give you the features you want.
6. Install WordPress.
7. Install and configure your theme and initial set of plugins.
8. Add widgets, menus, and configure other site features.
9. Add your content.

What's in a Name?

- ▶ Free plans give you what are called subdomains:

*barbpolymer.wix.com, barbpolymer.weebly.com,
barbpolymer.wordpress.com*

- ▶ Domains project professionalism and are an extension of your brand.
- ▶ Always purchase your domain.

Free plans give you what is called subdomains – basically your account name is tacked on to the hosts' name:

barbpolymer.wix.com
barbpolymer.weebly.com
barbpolymer.wordpress.com

Premium services may include a domain name with your purchase, but before you buy your domain from them you should confirm that you will retain control over the domain.

The best way to guarantee you keep ownership of your domain is to buy it in advance. Be sure to use an email address that is **not** from the domain but it should be one that you will always have access to.

Once you decide on a service or hosting provider, you will update the *name servers* on your domain registration to point to the new host. Basically, you are telling the internet that if someone is looking for barbpolymer.com, this is where you are going to find it. It's like a street address.

Some domain registrars offer hosting as well as domain registration. You are not

obligated to host your site where you registered the domain.

You can have email at your domain name if your hosting provider provides that service. If not, there are services that provide only email hosting.

Keep the registration record current with your name and email address. ***Do not relinquish control of your domain to a web host or developer. Beware of messages aiming to sell you services you don't need or potentially aim to grab control of your domain. Make a record in a safe place with a record of the domain purchase and make sure to add their domain to the email address book so the renewal notices come through to you. Better yet, set yourself a reminder!***

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Host or Not to Host, that is the Question

What are Hosted Solutions?

Hosted Solutions are companies that host and maintain WordPress for individual clients.

PROS	CONS
WordPress is kept up to date automatically.	Hosting costs may be more expensive than traditional hosting.
Plugins (may be) kept up to date automatically.	If all items are updated automatically, it may cause conflicts and site errors.
Most offer backup services.	May charge extra for email at your domain.

What is the difference between WordPress.com and WordPress.org?

- .com is the commercial hosting, free accounts have a subdomain URL
- .org is the product site – download WP, plugins, themes, documentation and support

Questions to ask a service provider:

- What is included with the hosting – updates, backups, email, custom domain name?
- Will I have access to the server to upload larger files via FTP?
- Will I be able to download backups for safekeeping?
- Will I be able to install plugins and themes myself or do they need to go through your service?
- How much server space? How much bandwidth?
- If I decide to move the site, will I be able to do so?
- If I decide I can't manage the site, can I contract with you do that?
- Do you provide a service to automatically update WordPress so that my site stays secure?
- Do you offer SSL for eCommerce?

Host or Not to Host, that is the Question

What is Self-hosting?

Self-hosting is when you purchase web-server space to host and maintain your WordPress website.

PROS	CONS
Often less expensive than hosted solutions.	Need to select a host with network reliability.
Many hosts offer one-click installers for WordPress.	Need to make sure you keep WordPress and plugins up to date.
Backups on schedule or on-demand.	Make sure you perform regular backups and download them for safekeeping.
Control over email address(es)	You will need to manage creation of email addresses.

Questions to ask a service provider:

- What is included with the hosting – updates, backups, email, custom domain name?
- Will I have access to the server to upload larger files via FTP?
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- Will I be able to install plugins and themes myself or do they need to go through your support staff?
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Seriously – this may sound silly but it is really important. The WordPress Codex is very well written and can answer pretty much any question from the most basic to complex.

<https://codex.wordpress.org/> and https://codex.wordpress.org/WordPress_Lessons

There are other sites that offer some great WordPress tutorials and documentation as well. Here are some of my favorites:

- <http://www.wpbeginner.com/category/wp-tutorials/>
- <https://www.ostraining.com/>
- <https://learn.wordpress.com/> ← aimed at WordPress.com but still valuable
- <https://en.support.wordpress.com/video-tutorials/> / ← aimed at WordPress.com but still valuable

Before you launch into making The Best WordPress Site Ever, grab a free site from wordpress.com or set up a testing site (called a sandbox) in a subdirectory of your hosting account. Use it to learn WordPress, test plugins before you install them on the main site or test themes out before you go live.

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Make a List and Check it Twice

- ▶ Make two lists: Must Have Features and Nice to Have Features
- ▶ Prioritize the lists.
- ▶ Use your sandbox site for testing
- ▶ Lay out your menu

- Divide the features up into two lists: Must Have and Nice to Have
- Ideas for must-have: Image gallery, artist statement page, contact page, news/blog.
- Prioritize the lists. Is any one feature dependent on another?
- Decide on what you can do versus hiring someone to do.
- Use your sandbox site to test features, plugins, and themes.
- Lay out your menu – it will aid in content development. My favorite way? Pencil & paper, whiteboard, or post-it notes on a wall. See it graphically – how your visitors will see it. Identify any pitfalls.

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It's Just a Shirt

- ▶ Are you a ruffled blouse or a plain white T?
- ▶ Free or not to be Free?
- ▶ Use your sandbox environment to test out themes

- Themes are like shirts in your closet – they give your site a different look any time you change them.
- Only download free themes from reputable sources such as wordpress.org or a solid theme developer that offers free and premium themes.
- Many free themes have a Pro (paid) version. It lets you check out the theme before settling on one.
- Use good judgement when shopping for a theme – read reviews, check out the support forum, how often are files updated, how much is the annual license so that you receive updates and technical support?
- Many themes will come with built-in features like sliders, page builders, etc. These extras are nice, but make sure you can update the plugins etc. If not, it may be better to go with stand-alone features that can be updated as needed.
- You can also install theme frameworks and customize the entire site using a combination of a framework and a page builder.
- If you decide against a theme, be sure to remove it from your site. No need to hang on to a theme you are not going to use – it is a security risk.
- Always keep a default WordPress theme in your Themes directory. You can activate it when troubleshooting problems on your site - helps you determine if the issue is only with a particular theme or a plugin or with WordPress itself.

Picking themes is hard – sometimes it is easier to figure out what you don't like, rather than what you do like.

Resources:

<https://www.smashingmagazine.com/2014/12/what-to-consider-when-choosing-a-wordpress-theme/>

<https://wpengine.com/blog/dos-donts-wordpress-theme/>

<https://premium.wpmudev.org/blog/picking-wordpress-themes/>

<https://premium.wpmudev.org/blog/free-wordpress-themes-how-to-choose-the-perfect-theme-for-you/>

Theme providers that I can recommend, but there are other quality theme developers out there. *Caveat Emptor*

- Theme Forest
- YooTheme
- Elegant Themes
- WordPress

Add Accessories to Your New Shirt

- ▶ Plugins are software programs that add features.
- ▶ Evaluate free and premium plugins as you would a theme.
- ▶ Use your sandbox to test plugins and identify any incompatibilities.

Some of My Go-To Plugins

- ▶ Jetpack
- ▶ Yoast SEO
- ▶ WordFence
- ▶ WP Bruiser
- ▶ Widgetkit
- ▶ Shortcodes Ultimate
- ▶ The Events Calendar
- ▶ Woocommerce

Some features of plugins may be obvious – galleries, widgets in the sidebar, ways to display content, etc. Other plugins provide site security, publishing to social media, administrative tools, etc.

Some plugins do many things, but they may not do all of them well. Research and ‘play’. I will often install and uninstall a dozen plugins in a sandbox environment just to find the one I like best.

Again, go back to your Must Have and Nice to Have lists. Look at reviews, support forums, etc. before installing.

Make sure your installed version of WordPress is supported by the theme.

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If you are not using a service provider that maintains WordPress for you, you will need to install it on your account.

Many hosts offer installers for popular programs, meaning you just click an icon, enter some information and click Save.

Don't forget to install your sandbox at the same time! You need a place to work out the kinks.

All Those Fiddly Bits

- ▶ WordPress Settings - they do matter, make time for them
- ▶ Create Categories
- ▶ Create Tags
- ▶ Set up Link Categories and a Links List (optional)

Go through all the settings and make the selections that are best for you (consult the WordPress documentation). Do you want people to register? Comment? Subscribe to your feed? What about the URL format for your content?

Create your categories – you create posts and assign one or more categories to the post. Categories help differentiate different kinds of content – for example, if someone wanted to see anything you'd ever posted about beads, they could use the **Beads** category to find all your posts on the topic.

Create your Tags. Tags are keywords that you can further use to differentiate content and they are a great way to help with Search Engine Optimization (SEO). For example someone could search within your **Beads** category for the *translucent cane* tag.

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Time to Get Dressed

- ▶ Read the install instructions for your theme and plugins
- ▶ Use your hosting control panel to create a backup of your site, including the database
- ▶ Install the theme
- ▶ Preview the theme before you activate it
- ▶ Start configuring the theme options

Work in your sandbox first.

Install instructions are important – if the theme file is very large, you may need to upload the ZIP file to the server and extract the files before installing the theme. Themes with a lot of add-ins may have one large ZIP file that needs to be extracted first, then a subset of files are uploaded to the server.

If your theme has the option to import demo content, it's often a good idea to install it because it lets you see how the various options are used and how they will work. The reason you preview the theme before you activate it is to make sure there aren't any errors being thrown on the site. If you activate it first, and something went wonky, it's a bit of a pain in the neck to undo it.

Many themes have the ability to download a backup of theme settings. This means that you can configure things like colors, fonts, etc. in your sandbox then import the settings file into your live site and keep going.

If there isn't a backup file available, then I recommend taking a screen capture of each settings page to enable you to replicate on your live site faster.

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Adding the Finishing Touches

- ▶ A widget is a section of the website that contains content.
- ▶ Widget positions are usually dictated by your theme.
- ▶ Some types of widgets are added by plugins.
- ▶ You can control which widgets appear on which pages with Jetpack or other plugins.

Widgets can contain content like:

- Facebook or Twitter Feed
- Etsy or Flickr galleries
- Calendar of Events
- Your contact info
- Site categories that link to archive pages of posts
- Image Galleries
- Newsletter sign-up form

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Content is King

- ▶ Pages are for static content or as a container for variable content.
- ▶ Posts are blogging, news, etc.
- ▶ Pictures are content, too!

Use pages for things like artist statements, contact us pages, shipping policies, etc.

Use posts to communicate new information to your site visitors and followers on social media. WordPress generates an RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feed from posts (never from pages). Site visitors can subscribe to RSS feeds and get notifications about new articles via email or an RSS reader. You can also use RSS with newsletter services like MailChimp to automatically construct and send a newsletter to subscribers.

Use a Content Calendar to schedule your publishing of posts and information. You can also set posts to publish in the future. Decide on how often you want to publish new information, and build your content calendar around that.

Pictures are content and are organized in the media library. You want images that load fast, so remember to scale them for Web viewing.



Frequently Asked Questions

Just the FAQs, Jack!



I chose a template for my Wordpress site, and it can be customized. I have changed the things I wanted, but what happens if I change templates?

Do I lose all the custom stuff?

Do I just make a list (or try to remember what I did???) and then have to repeat what needs to be added if the new template doesn't have it already?

What happens to old posts? Do I need to check all of them?

A lot depends on what you have customized and how the template works. For example, if you have a template with a lot of built-in features, when you change templates you may very well lose that customization because the new template either doesn't have the same features OR the features may use a different way of doing things. It is a good idea to take notes on what you have customized, so that when you change templates you can apply similar changes.

Customization like adding CSS styles via the built-in editor may need to be revised to use the the style names from the new template. For example, Template A may use a basic .H2 class name for Heading 2 style, but Template B might use .Heading2, you'd need to change the custom style sheet to accommodate the difference.

Very often themes from a particular developer with use identical naming conventions, making the change to a new theme fairly easy and painless.

Use your sandbox site to test the new template and how it affects the look of your content.



I have uploaded many photos to be inserted on my posts. Once inserted into the blog can I delete them from the media area or will that delete them from the blog?

I need to clean up that area. Do they need to be kept there?

Naming photos - does it matter? How long is too long?

Should I put my name on them some how? Watermarks?

No, you cannot delete the images from the media library as the page or post refers to the media library link for the image.

The images don't need to be kept there but down the road having images stored outside the media library can make it hard to locate the images you want to insert in a page or post. The nice thing about the media library is it gives you the visual reference for the image or file and you don't need to remember the URL location of the file, plus you can upload all your images this way and it creates thumbnails, etc. Much more efficient than trying to have a big folder of random images on your server account.

There are a couple of plugins that let you categorize your images, which is a fantastic way to keep them organized and easy to find.

Filenames should be somewhat descriptive, but not too long. I'd say anything over 12 characters is too long.

A discrete watermark on your images, especially original work, is a great idea. Bettina Welker is a pro at this – go look at her site.

When placing images, don't forget to add alternative text, that's the text that appears when you hover your cursor over an image or can describe the image to a visually impaired person using a screen reader.



I know you can tie all this social media stuff together, but it seems a bit much.

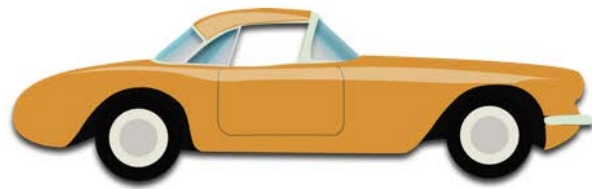
What would be the minimum you would recommend?

At the bare minimum I would recommend that you include links to your Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tumblr or other social media account AND you use a plugin to auto-publish new content to one or more of your social media channels. This way you don't spend hours writing posts, tweets, captions, etc. for your content. It gets published to your website and tells your followers about it immediately, driving traffic to your site.

A step up would be adding widgets to your site that display the content feed from your social media channels (for example, your recent pins on Pinterest or images on Instagram).

If you have a large following on Facebook, then starting an Official Page for your work makes sense. It lets you track how engaged your followers are on your published posts, lets you interact with followers in a controlled manner, and much more.

Let's Look Under the Hood



Question & Answer Time

Let me have it!