

WordPress.com

Today's to-do list

We will look at WordPress.com and build a simple website.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this session, you will

Identify the differences between the two WordPress platforms.

Be able to create a basic WordPress.com site.

Understand the uses and limitations.

So what is it?

There are two different versions of WordPress, a hosted version that works on a similar model to Wix/Squarespace and a self-hosted version that allows you to create custom sites with all kinds of clever functionality.

43% of the websites currently on the web are built or powered by WordPress. It is the most powerful, flexible, and functional builder of all the platforms. **WordPress is an open-source platform. That means that anyone can see, study, modify and create for it. It means it can be used for any purpose and shared with others.** It is an ethos that has encouraged developers to create brilliant things and created a community where everyone is welcome. Open Source = Free.

A bit of History

WordPress was created off the back of a system called b2/cafelog. When it first started in 2003 it was designed to be a blogging platform. It was very basic, very simple. You probably wouldn't recognise it as the mega platform it is today.

In 2004 the first incarnation of the plugin architecture was created. It allowed users to create their own functionality for the platform and share it between themselves. At that time the blogging industry was closing its doors and making itself less user-friendly. The big hitter back in 2004 was Moveable Type, never heard of it? Very few people have, although it does still exist. It's based on a Linux system and is more designed around the coding fraternity and takes more technical knowledge to get the best out of it.

The changes Moveable Type were making to its licensing terms forced a lot of its users to go in search for different platforms to express themselves.

WordPress 1.2 was picking up users at a rapid rate with its flexible, stable, easy-to-use features all available at minimal cost or free. The more popular the platform became; the more functionality was developed and the more powerful a tool it grew into.

By 2008 WordPress had become the platform we would recognise with short codes, the admin interface, and built-in plugin installation. By 2010 we had WordPress 3.0 which brought us closer to the CMS platform we have today. E-commerce was introduced along

with updatable themes, customiser and automatic updates. By 2013 WordPress was responsive and offered an alternative to developing separate mobile sites.

In 2018 WordPress 5.0 was released. It was a huge overhaul to the platform and introduced the Gutenberg editor that we are currently using.

What's so good about Gutenberg?

For old-school WordPress users, the introduction of Gutenberg jarred against everything they had known and loved about WordPress. Once you get your head around it, **it is a super easy, adaptable way to create attractive and editable layouts without the need to code.** It opened up WordPress to a new generation of users and expanded its reach even further.

In its 20 years in use, WordPress has gone from a simple-to-use blog platform to an adaptable CMS through to a fully-fledged, ever-evolving web-build platform.

What's the difference between .com and .org?

As we mentioned earlier, there are two versions of WordPress. WordPress.com which is what we are going to focus on today. And WordPress.org which we will look at in detail next week.

WordPress.com is a kind of WordPress Lite. It is a great place to start out if you aren't that great with hosting and domains and you want something powerful but with someone to help along the way. You are more limited to themes and functionality but as the Block editor evolves there are still plenty of things you can do.

It is important to understand the differences between the two versions as setting up each one has a slightly different set of steps and they offer slightly different things.

Features WordPress.com

Fully hosted

Security and maintenance is done for you

Limitations on plugin features and themes

To create a site just create an account and select a plan

No access to core files

Free > \$25 a month

Some functionality requires plan upgrades like back-ups and SEO

E-commerce only with a paid e-commerce plan

Basic core install is provided.

Features WordPress.org

Self-hosted

Security and maintenance are done by you.

Fully customisable

Requires a hosting account and domain.

All core files are editable for complete control.

\$100 upwards depending on theme, hosting and plugins.

Most plugins have free and premium versions.

E-commerce is free.

You will need to create your own install.

Both versions have a similar admin and block editor so you can create your posts and pages in the same way. The dashboard, plugin and text editors all look the same too.

So now we know the basic differences, let's make a start and create a site.

The Basics

To begin with we need to create a free account. Get online and go to

<https://wordpress.com/start/user>

We need to add an email address and create a username and a password.

You can get a free domain name on a paid plan, and connect a domain you already have but for now we can skip that part.

Select a plan depending on what you want to be able to do. You can upgrade at any time. For now, we want to start with free.

Next, it's going to ask you what you want to do, for now, either of the first two will do.

Activity One

Let's get a basic site set up.

We want to choose a theme – let's go with Archeo- pick some colours and add some basic text. Click on the W icon in the top left and explore the Design Editor.

- Edit site design
- Change the header and paragraph text and save it
- Explore the Editor

Activity two

Create some pages, and explore the different elements in the blocks.

- Create a bio page with text in different formats
- Create a gallery page and experiment with image blocks and galleries
- Create a slideshow page using the slideshow block
- Experiment with the AI block and ask it to create some content

Coming up soon to extend these skills

Next week we will look at WordPress.org and expand your knowledge on the bigger platform.

Don't forget

Make sure you complete and submit your workbooks. Once you do you will get a copy of your completed workbook and links to download a copy of today's notes and slides.

Today's session page in your learner dashboard has a useful links document that will cover all the tools, resources and articles we have discussed in the session and some useful guides and articles to take you further.

Make sure you revisit your FABs and set yourself some goals specific to today's session.

Extra help

If you need any help with anything from today's session feel free to message me in the WhatsApp group. If you have any other issues or problems related to the course or the tools speak to Andrew and Irfana, they are here to help you.

Up next

See you tomorrow for Communication in your Research and practical session.