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Richard Tong

Email

Recommended Resources

- **Web Site Hosting Service**

- **Internet Marketing**

- **Affiliate Program**

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Contents

About the Author

John Williams started blogging several years ago and wrote his first book about it in 2005.

John said, "The blog is an ideal way for anyone to use the Internet for sharing their ideas, promoting their services or products or finding and interacting with people that share their special interests."

John's new book is written for people that want to get their blog up and running with minimum effort and expense.

"This ebook gives you an easy-to-follow map that takes you from being a reader of other people's blogs to where you are a confident blog owner and starting to build your own reputation and following on the Internet."

"I help my readers avoid the mistakes that trap so many enthusiastic new bloggers. My explanations are simple, based on years of explaining computer topics to people in ebooks, workshops and over the Internet."

John based his book on his experience and research as well as the many questions he has been asked since publishing the previous book.

John felt it was time to produce a new book which will help almost anyone to take advantage of recent developments and show readers how to deal with the new problems as well.

"You can set up your blog at very low cost and you don't need a lot of time or money, (I'll show you a lot of quality free and low-cost resources).

But, some "free" options can end up costing you much more than you expect!"

"I'll give you the most current information I can and show you how to make your road to a successful and popular blog easier and worry-free."

Introduction

This book is for you, whether or not you have any experience with making web sites and/or blogging.

If you have some previous experience already, that's great.

Don't worry if you haven't, because I believe that this is a very good place to start your blogging adventure.

What is a Blog?

A blog is a "web diary", located on part of a web site, where the owner (the blogger) shares their ideas and opinions in short articles called "posts" with visitors to the site.

The special appeal of a blog is that visitors can comment about what the blogger has written on the same page as the post and the blogger can reply there.

This can start a lively discussion when other visitors add their own comments. Some of the visitors may have their own website and put a link to this discussion on their blog.

This is a major difference between regular web sites and blogs. On a normal website, visitors can only contact the owner of the site by using a contact form which they provide, sending an email or phoning them.

Blogs are controlled by special programs which make it easy to share information, get immediate responses from visitors to the site and encourage them to come back when there is new information.

They were originally mostly used just by people with personal websites. Before long, the commercial potential of blogging became clearer. Now, many large companies use blogs as part of their Internet presence while many individuals have created blogs where they promote their business activities and skills or sell products.

My book will show you how to set up your own blog with many of the features of large, professionally run sites but on a smaller scale. I will include

some information about how you can develop from your first blog toward something bigger.

When you act on the information in this ebook, you will have your own blog. Then, you can:

- Share your ideas and opinions.

- Publicize your services or [products](#)

- Promote a cause you favor, or

- Promote other people's products to get a [commission](#) for yourself from any sales your visitors make.

If you are already using your [computer](#) to visit websites, download files from them and fill in forms, you have all the knowledge you need to get started with your first blog.

You will be able to understand and use this ebook to take the next step.

You might just want to start a blog on a service such as blogger.com where you don't have to be concerned with the actual operating.

But, I will show you how to set up your own web site, put your blog on it and start your blogging adventure which will open a lot more possibilities for you in the future.

All this can be done in simple steps without any special courses or employing someone to do the "hard bits" for you.

I have helped many people of all ages to use the Internet and make their own web sites over several years.

I will explain the few special terms which you will need to know when I show them to you for the first time. They will also be in the reference section at the back.

If you have ever tried to put any kind of web site together before, that will probably be helpful, even if you were not very happy with the results you got.

My focus is to help you put your blog(s) on the Internet and attract people to your web site(s) with minimum [stress](#) and effort.

I test most of my [writing](#) on people that have even less technical knowledge than I have. You won't need a [programmer](#) or even a technical manual beside you as you use this ebook to put your first few blogs together.

If you really want to get in depth about particular items, more information can be quickly obtained through the links and explanations in the reference section at the back of the book.

You won't have to stop reading to check the reference section every few paragraphs as you do with many books promoted for beginners.

Why Blog?

Blogging is an easy way to share ideas and interests with other people, if they are in your country or even on the other side of the world.

Many people use it to promote a cause which they support, or their own business or services.

You can make part of your blog a private area which only members of your family or club can get into. That lets you discuss personal topics or share special techniques which you don't want to make public for whatever reason.

There are many companies which provide this kind of service.

You can, of course, also share your opinions and expertise by going to other people's blogs and replying to material you find there. That may get you some recognition and encourage some people who read what you wrote there to also visit your site.

If the owner of the other blog likes your comment on their page, they may ask you to write a guest article for their blog. This can be wonderful publicity and help you build a reputation which will attract more visitors to your site.

With your own blog, you will draw other people that share your interest in the topic of your blog to comment, spread the word about what you wrote and even connect with you directly to continue the conversation.

If you write about some of your business activities in the blog, you will attract attention from other people in the same sort of business. That may include suppliers that you may not even know about, potential customers and even experts who can help you to improve your success in your business.

Many people have started a blog about their hobby, their pet or some other interest they have. Others have written about their family. Sometimes, this can result in other family members they did not know making contact and starting wonderful long-term relationships.

Because of the vast number of people surfing the Web, an interesting blog on almost any subject is likely to have an audience.

Which Blog System?

There are many ways to create and manage a [blog](#).

In my previous blogging books, I focused on blogging on a Windows system with Wordpress or other programs, or putting a free blog on a site such as blogger.com. Wordpress and blogger.com are still my preferred options.

They are widely used because they are proven, well-supported and are relatively easy for most people to set up and manage.

But, I will also include some basic information about using Wordpress with a Mac system (Snow Leopard) and other blogging options in this ebook.

When you look at the list of names on the wordpress.org website of some of the major companies which use Wordpress for their blogs, you will understand that the potential is huge, if you have the need.

How Long will it Take?

I suggest you take small steps at first if all this is unfamiliar to you.

But, you should be able to set up your blog in whatever way you decide to go within a week at the most.

Some other <u>writers</u> may have told you it will just take a couple of hours. I prefer to tell you what <u>can</u> happen rather than promise you an exceptional result which is likely to end in disappointment.

They are probably focusing just on the time you use to put your site on the Internet. There are several other steps involved when you decide to get your own web site and set up your blog there.. They are really simple but each one takes some time and a few are completely beyond your control.

That takes a little longer than settling for a free blog on a site such as blogger.com, but I believe that it is the best option for most bloggers.

Even if you follow one of the guides which claims everything will be done in an hour or so, you should expect that your site will probably take a couple of days at least before your cousin Henry in another country might actually see it.

What You Need

Making your own blog on the Internet is fairly simple. You probably will find it a lot easier than it might sound right now.

The main block for many of the people I have helped set up their first Internet blog is accepting the *idea* that they can do it without expensive courses or face-to-face instruction.

None of what I will show you, including the computer programs, will take long to understand and begin using. The people that write programs are mostly understanding and helpful.

I will show you as many options as possible.

There are often free and paid options for many of the choices you need to make. Even the WordPress package itself is free to use.

Some of the free ones are very good and widely used.

You can avoid the cost of your own web site and hosting payments by setting up your first blog on a free hosted service like www.blogger.com which costs nothing directly, and means you are also relieved of the need to install the actual blogging programs.

I will also explain why I think some options are better for most people. However, you will get enough detail to go ahead with whatever choices you prefer.

What You Don't Need

You probably have most of the equipment and programs you need to <u>start</u> your blogging adventure on the Internet.

If you have a fairly modern computer, up to five years old, and your Internet connection allows you to download the programs and other files you download now in a time which you are comfortable with, you can start with what you've got.

Many people are using Wordpress 3.4 (the current version when I write this) on Windows XP machines although a few <u>report</u> it runs slower for them than on Windows 7 computers.

You will need a few computer programs, mostly for manipulating files which you put on your blog. Many people already have something suitable and there are usually serviceable free programs if you don't want to buy any right now.

Computer Programs

This list will cover the essentials and some really useful optional programs for different types of computers.

Web Browser. That is a program which you use to visit web sites on your computer. You've got one or more: Internet Explorer, Safari, Bing, Firefox etc.

File Transfer Program. These programs are used to transfer files between your computer and your web site and any other web sites you have permission to put files on. There are the paid programs such as Ws-ftp (Windows) and many free ones like Filezilla. Transmit and Forklift (Mac) are great paid programs. Cyberduck is a good free FTP program for Mac.

Text Editor. You probably have one which came with your computer. Notepad (Windows) may be sufficient. If you don't like the supplied text editor, I suggest Note Tab Light from Fookes Software for Windows, or TextWrangler for Mac from Barebones Software.

Reliable Antivirus protection (Essential). There are some free programs which have good reputations. Whatever you use, make sure that it is up-to-date. I suggest Intego VirusBarrier X6 is a good paid program for Mac, and Avira Free Antivirus is reported as a good free program for Windows.

Malware protection. These programs may be needed to fill in gaps in the protection provided by your main anti-virus program. I noticed some very knowledgeable people were using them, so I do too and never regretted it.

MalwareBytes for Windows has a good reputation.

Graphic Editor. This is used to manipulate the pictures which you use on your blog. There are many good options for Mac and Windows. Make your choice and have some fun.

Windows comes with Microsoft Paint (free) but there is a much better free program. This is based on Paint, but developed by a private group. It is called Paint.net from http://www.get**paint.net**/. This site is the original. I would only download the program from there. Not all sites may be safe.

A good free graphic program for Mac is Gimp. This program is not as user-friendly as most I have used.

My favorite paid graphic program for Mac is Pixelmator. It's very user-friendly and powerful.

Keeping Everything Legal

It's important to be aware of some legal aspects of operating your web site and your responsibilities for all of the material you use on your web site, including your blog.

You need to comply with your country's laws and regulations. But, you must also be aware of potential problems due to the international reach of the Internet.

You can never be completely sure that your material will remain confidential and not distributed or used elsewhere without your permission.

Putting it on your own web site is not completely safe, but you have more control when you run the site yourself. If you put your material on sites owned and operated by other people you may find that their terms of use for that site claims to give them use or even ownership of all the material you put there.

This is usually done so that they can edit comments to remove some material or to fit the available space. But, be aware of what rights you give any site owner by reading their Terms of Use or other information on their site before putting anything there.

Copyright etc.

You must ensure that you only use material (pictures, text, recordings etc) which you are legally able to use on your web sites.

There are many people who have been sued or had their reputations damaged because they used material which they should not have.

Although many sites allow you to put pictures and text on them, you will find that you will probably be responsible if they are someone else's property.

You also need to have some information on your web site or blog about what you allow visitors to do with the material you have there and also what you are allowed to do with any information or other material which you get from them when they visit your web site.

This can be very tricky. You should discuss it with your lawyer or seek [advice](#) from one with experience of legal matters related to the Internet. Make sure that anyone you ask for advice has relevant experience and some knowledge of how you operate your site.

It's worth paying for professional advice. Free advice can be the most expensive in the long run.

Your own Domain or Hosted Blog Service?

This is one of the most important choices you need to consider.

Will you save money by using a service like www.blogger.com where they provide space on their website and also a free blog for your use?

Or, will you pay a little money to set up your own web site and your own blog?

The Blogger service is a popular choice if you want to test the idea of having a blog or you don't want to pay much money up front. Also, you can avoid the need to learn how to set up and maintain something like Wordpress to use your blog.

But, you also need to consider the effect of Blogger's rules on your blog.

Blogger and other companies with similar services provide a variety of designs (themes), which you can use for your blog. They also give you the use of a reasonable amount of space on their site for it.

If you just want to try something out, Blogger and other services like it may be an easy way to do it.

They may have some restrictions which you need to think about before you decide whether or not to put your blog on their site.

They will probably have restrictions about what advertising you put on your blog. But, you can put Google's Adsense advertisements on your Blogger blog (if you are in the United States or the United Kingdom and provided that Blogger and Google approve them.

The appeal which you build into your blog over time will actually benefit the site owner rather than you because the address for your blog will be on their site.

If you decide to move your blog to your own web site at any time in the future, you will find it hard to get your regular visitors to follow you to the new location because the address will be completely different.

If you called your blog "myblog" and hosted it on Blogger's site, it would be at the web address http://myblog.blogspot.com/

If you owned the myblog.com domain name and had a [Blogger](#) blog which you host on your own website, it would be myblog.mysite.com (if you put your blog in a folder other than your main one) or myblog.com.

Blogger is not likely to direct anyone that is looking for your site to your new location after you leave them.

But, you will probably get less benefit from your early work which you put into that blog, in the long-term, than you might have if you started first-up with your own domain name and put your blog there.

Setting up Your Blog with Blogger

Blogger is the most well-known free blog hosting service. It is owned by Google.

This section shows you the basic steps to signing up for your new free blog on Blogger, choosing your template and making your first post.

It is very simple and there is plenty of support with a video and other material about each part of the set-up.
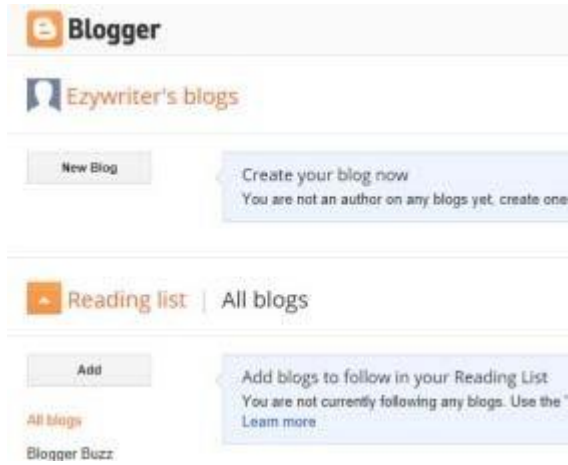
Go to Blogger.com and sign into your Google account.

1. You will need a Google account,to get your blog.

3. Click the "**New Blog**" button.

4 Choose your Theme
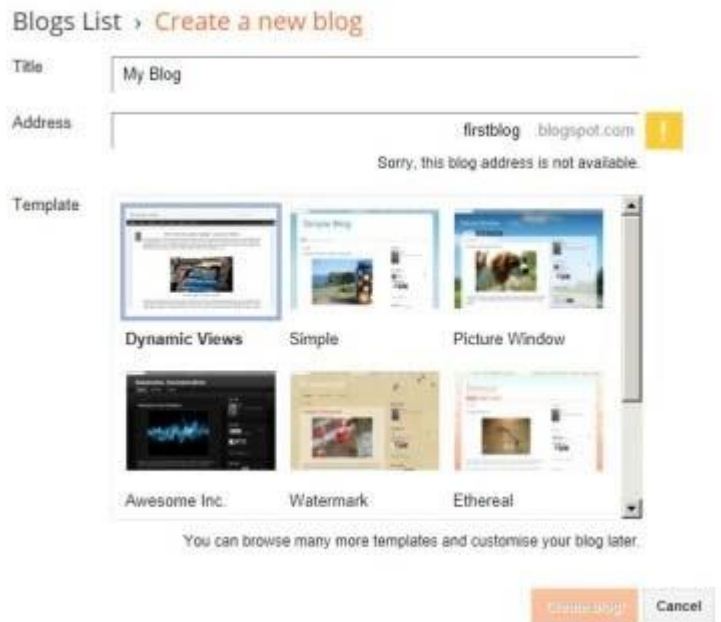
Blogger (Pt 2).

5. Start your first Post.

5.   Edit Your Post.

7.   Confirm Your First Post.

Setting up Your Own Domain

This is the gateway to your own empire on the Internet.

There are many alternatives for getting your space (domain) on the Internet where you will put your blog.

Choosing a Name for Your Web Site.

You need to decide what topic you will focus on in your blog. Do you want to spread a message, share your knowledge or sell your services or products?

To find a name which could work well for your web site, think about the words which people would use when they are looking for information about that topic.

Make a list of those terms and choose one or two you think are most effective. Then, write down a few variations of those terms separately and together which might make good names for your site.

Register Your Domain Name

You need to register a domain name (example.com or example.info) with a Domain Registrar. You pay the Registrar for exclusive use of the domain name for one or more years.

If you decide you want a different domain name, you cannot exchange it – you have to pay to register the other name you want.

I use ikeys.net for all my registrations but there are many Registrars to choose from.

When you go to their site, you can type the name you want into a form which will confirm whether the name is available. I always have a list of half a dozen names, in case the one I want has been taken.

The cheapest service is not always best. Different companies will give different levels of support and other benefits.

The domain name never really becomes yours. You only have the use of it for the period you paid the Registrar. To avoid problems, make sure that you renew at least a couple of weeks before the bill is due. Most registrars will

notify you well in advance or there will be an option to auto-renew when you first register the domain.

Another tip is to make sure that the email address which the registrar has on file for you is one you still [check](#) every day.

Getting Your Space on the Internet.

Now, you need to rent some space on the Internet to put your web site and blog on.

You go to a hosting company and pay them to store your domain on their computer servers.

The next step is to set the DNS, (Domain Name Servers), for your domain to the hosting company [servers](#).

Their systems do vary but you can also ask the support section at your hosting company for help. They usually have very good instructions because they get the same question a lot.

It will take up to two days before the information about your new domain spreads all around the Internet. Some people will be able to see your domain in their web browser hours before other people who use a different Internet Service Provider.

When you can see your [site](#), it will be ready for you to set up your blog.

Installing WP with Fantastico

This is probably the quickest way to install and start using a Wordpress blog. But, I recommend that you don't use it unless you are very stressed by even the thought of using the www.wordpress.org "Famous 5-minute install" with extra notes from me.

You will need the username and password which your hosting company sent you. The username will usually be either one of your email addresses or a made-up name which you use just to enter this web site. The password should be something which it would be very hard to guess.

You might be surprised how many websites are hacked because the owner used something like "password" or "12344321" as their password!

Open a new window in your web browser and type in the address of your website with **/cpanel** on the end of it.

http://www.example.com/cpanel

After the site accepts the username and password which you typed in, the Control Panel for your website will open in your web browser.

It is worth learning a little about using some of the features of the Control Panel but I will just cover those parts which relate to using Wordpress in this book.

Scroll down the page until you find Fantastico with a face like a ball above it.

Open Fantastico and select **Wordpress** from the list on the next page.

Click on **New Installation**.

Click on **Install on Domain**. This lets you put your blog in the /public_html folder where it will be seen by anyone that types in your domain name.

If you want to have something else there, you have to make a directory to put your blog in inside the /public_html folder, If you name the folder **blog**, your blog will be located at **http://www.example.com/blog**

Click on Install in Directory and type **blog** (or whatever you called the folder where you will put your blog) in the [box](#).

AT this point in setting up Wordpress yourself, you choose your Administrator name and password which you will use to log in to the blog's administration area.

Fantastico will set this as Admin and a random password. You should change Admin to something harder to guess as hackers will always try Admin if they ever [land](#) on your blog.

You also have to fill in basic details for your blog such as:

Your nickname: This will appear against the posts you put in your blog.

Email Address: [Visitors](#) will use this to contact you after visiting your blog.

Site Name: the name of your blog. Use something about your blog's topic.

Click Install Wordpress.

When Fantastico gives you the option to have your blog details sent to your email address, always do that. It is simply a way to ensure that everything is okay with your new blog installation.

Then, Click Finish installation when Fantastico tells you to.

Themes For Your Site

A Wordpress theme is a set of files and decorative elements which you can use on your blog.

Some are fairly simple. Others can be complex and give you the means to include pictures, forms, and other benefits which can make it more appealing to your visitors.

You get two themes in your basic free Wordpress package. There are thousands more available from the Wordpress site.

Many companies and individuals produce their own designs which they offer from their websites and/or through www.wordpress.org.

You can get as many themes for you sites as you could ever need for free and many are of professional standard.

There are also many commercial themes which sell well because they have particularly appealing features.

The themes you pay for will be supported to some extent by the companies which offer them.

Some of the free themes are supported to some extent by the designer but please respect their efforts and pay them if you want anything which takes more than an email to fix.

Installing Wordpress on Your Domain

I will give you the bare instructions and include illustrations which you can study.

People who are just beginning with Wordpress find various drawbacks to some writers' instructions

I've tried to give as clear and accurate a guide as I could.

I tested my instructions by following them myself. The install had an error. I was very glad to find I'd typed one character wrongly in one of the datafields. The second run, which just needed the install.php file to be run again, worked fine.

I suggest that you use the 5 Minute Install detailed on the Wordpress site with my illustrations and extra comments. I believe they make the process clearer for people that have not done it before.

If anything in the short version is not clear to you, you can read through the extended version of the install instructions on the same page of the Wordpress.org site.

Note: Some hosting companies have alternatives to CPanel. Most support people at hosting companies will give some advice if you strike trouble or they may have tutorials for their clients to use. Wordpress.org has instructions for some of the most popular web site control panel systems. They are constantly expanding and updating their information. They give you a lot for free!

Keep the compressed version of Wordpress you downloaded from Wordpress.org in case you want to create another blog. Discard the package when a new version of Wordpress is released and has been available for a few days.

Install on Windows

You need a copy of Wordpress, an FTP program such as Filezilla, a text editor program and an archiving (compressing) program such as 7-Zip (free) or Winzip (paid).

Instructions - <u>Read with Wordpress's "Famous 5 Minute Install</u>.

Open a new window in your web browser.

Create Your Database and User

With each domain hosting account, you usually get to have some MYSQL databases where you can store information used by Wordpress blogs and other programs.

You should have each blog on a separate database for security reasons but you can add more than one blog to a database if you want more blogs than your allocated number of databases.

That is not ideal and I won't cover it here.

Go to your Control Panel and look for MySQL databases.

Some versions of the Control panel, including mine, automate this step so that you just click a button and enter the name of the database and the name of the user you want to have for it. If you create more databases, you may use the same User with them as well and/or create new ones just for that database.

If yours does not do that, you click a button to create the database, give it a name and then go back to the previous screen to create a User.

Put the details for your new User in the **Current Users:** heading.

```
 * The base configurations of the WordPress.
 *
 * This file has the following configurations: MySQL settings, Table Prefix,
 * Secret Keys, WordPress Language, and ABSPATH. You can find more information
 * by visiting {@link http://codex.wordpress.org/Editing_wp-config.php Editing
 * wp-config.php} Codex page. You can get the MySQL settings from your web host.
 *
 * This file is used by the wp-config.php creation script during the
 * installation. You don't have to use the web site, you can just copy this file
 * to "wp-config.php" and fill in the values.
 *
 * @package WordPress
 */

// ** MySQL settings - You can get this info from your web host ** //
/** The name of the database for WordPress */
define('DB_NAME', 'database_name_here');

/** MySQL database username */
define('DB_USER', 'username_here');
```

Then, you go back to the screen where you can add that User to your Database.

Note that every entry for a user and database you create will have a shortened version of your system name and an underline (_) in front of it.

If your user is Sally2 and your system is called mysystem, then the entry for Sally2 as a user might be mysy_Sally2.

That's what you need to type in as the user name, not just Sally2.

You will need these values for editing the wp-config-sample.php file before you transfer the Wordpress files to your computer.

Go to http://wordpress.org/

Right-click on the link to open the "Famous 5 Minute Install" in a separate tab (or Window) of your web browser.

Left-click on the "Download Wordpress Version" button.

```
Local site:  C:\Users\John\Downloads\Desktop\
 Desktop
    My Documents
    Computer
        C: (S3A8047D003)
            $RECYCLE.BIN
            0811

Filename            Filesize   Filetype     Last modified
                                ..           6/08/2012 9:03
                                             18/09/2012 10:
 wordpress-3.4.2               File folder   3/10/2012 7:54
```
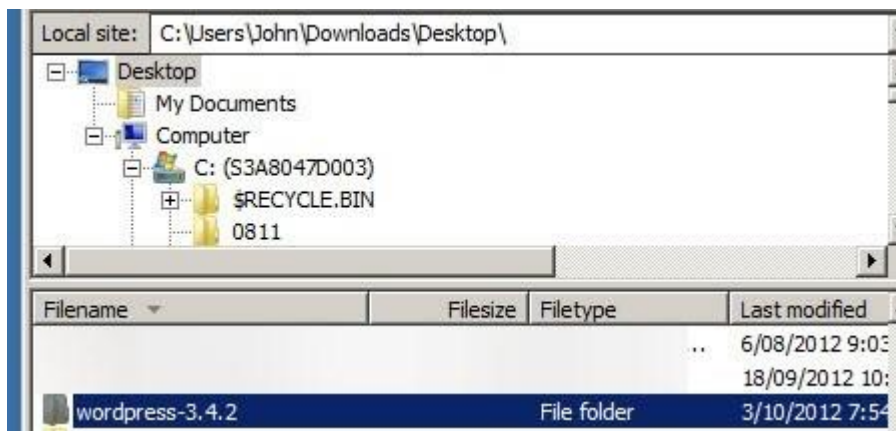
I put it on my Desktop for easy access You can put it in your Downloads area or on a USB stick if you want to use the same copy on other computers.

Expand a copy of the Wordpress file and put it in a new folder on your computer. This will be your blog after you modify some files and transfer all of it to your web site.

Keep the zip file which you downloaded in case you want to create more blogs.

Editing the wp-config-sample.php file

Name ^	Date modified	Type	Size
wp-admin	3/10/2012 7:54 PM	File folder	
wp-content	3/10/2012 7:54 PM	File folder	
wp-includes	3/10/2012 7:54 PM	File folder	
index.php	9/01/2012 4:01 AM	PHP File	1 KB
license.txt	6/05/2012 5:28 PM	TXT File	20 KB
readme.html	4/09/2012 9:23 AM	HTML Document	9 KB
wp-activate.php	14/12/2011 10:45 AM	PHP File	5 KB
wp-app.php	14/05/2012 7:41 AM	PHP File	2 KB
wp-blog-header.php	9/01/2012 4:01 AM	PHP File	1 KB
wp-comments-post.php	11/04/2012 3:21 AM	PHP File	4 KB
wp-config-sample.php	2/11/2010 1:45 AM	PHP File	4 KB
wp-cron.php	10/01/2012 6:02 AM	PHP File	3 KB
wp-links-opml.php	23/10/2010 11:17 PM	PHP File	2 KB
wp-load.php	5/09/2012 6:31 AM	PHP File	3 KB
wp-login.php	27/06/2012 4:53 AM	PHP File	29 KB
wp-mail.php	2/05/2012 11:32 PM	PHP File	8 KB
wp-settings.php	27/04/2012 2:54 PM	PHP File	10 KB

I edit that file in my text editor before I transfer the Wordpress files to the web site.

Save the edited wp-config-sample.php file as wp-config.php

Transfer the files from the Wordpress folder (but <u>not</u> the folder itself) to your website. Put it in the /public_html folder or in a folder inside the /public_html folder if you do not want it to be the first thing which visitors see.

-Check everything.

Ready To Install!

When you are satisfied all the steps have been followed, you are ready to run the automatic Wordpress install.

Open a new window in your Browser and, if your blog files are in the /public_html folder, go to http://www.example.com/wp-admin/install.php Replace example.com with the name of your domain.

Go to http://www.example.com/blog/wp-admin/install.php if your blog files are in the /blog/ folder you created inside the public_html folder.

You will either get a message telling you that the install worked or an error message, probably with some suggestions about what might be the problem.

WORDPRESS

Success!

WordPress has been installed. Were you expecting more steps? Sorry to disappoint.

| Username | Blogman |
| Password | Your chosen password. |

Log In

If your install was successful,
you can log-in to your new blog.!

Privacy   ☑ Allow search engines to index this site.

If there is an option on the set-up screen
to tell search engines about your new blog,
make sure that it is <u>not</u> ticked.

If you get an option on the set-up screen to notify search engines about your new blog, make sure that it is <u>not</u> ticked.

Although you are feeling very happy with your successful set-up,
your blog is not ready to be examined by the search engines.

You want to have:

1. Your specially chosen Theme

2. Several carefully written posts by you,

3. Your legal and About pages.

4. A couple of appropriate pictures and

5. At least a couple of positive comments from visitors who don't seem to be close relatives of yours.

Don't worry too much if the install did not work first time. It may only be a small spelling error or something of that sort.

Computers are very fussy which is important for getting the best results, but it's also a frustration at times.

Wordpress for Mac

People with Mac computers know they have some advantages, but sometimes miss out on things which are produced for the Windows P.C. [market](#).

Fortunately, Wordpress is Mac compatible.

Mac users can use the Fantastico option in the Control Panel of their website to install Wordpress.

Otherwise, they can use their File Transfer program (CyberDuck and Filezilla are free. Transfer is commercial. All are recommended) to upload their Wordpress files.

Which is Better - Free or Paid?

There are many similar services and [products](#) which are available in both free or paid forms.

Which might be the better choice for you is not always obvious.

Free Hosting

If you use a service like blogger.com, which provides you with free web space and also does the maintenance of the programs which your blog uses, you must study the Terms and Conditions under which they provide these benefits to you.

That also goes for any other websites where you get something for almost nothing.

Some sites may claim permission to use any material you put on their site any way they may want to for as long as they like in their Terms and Conditions.

Always check before you sign

There are probably a number of things which you cannot do. Restrictions on anything which might interfere with the site's operation or bring disrepute on to the operators or interfere with other people's use of the service are obviously reasonable.

You probably will have to accept [advertising](#) on your blog which the operator controls and [profits](#) from.

You may still find the deal valuable. That's great.

Free Themes

People who provide free themes have invested their time and other resources into producing them. They may have some demands which give them some indirect return from your use of their work on your blog.

There will usually be at least one link to their website. Sometimes there may be other links to other websites whose owner pays the [supplier](#) of the theme for and you get nothing. I feel that's okay in theory but there is a risk for you

because you do not necessarily know what is being advertised through those links.

Even if you check what they lead to when you install the theme, the supplier can change the website address which they send people to at any time without your knowledge.

I would never de-activate someone else's link in these circumstances. I would just choose and use another theme where there were no links I could not be sure about.

Free Plugins

There are many great free plugins which have earned a reputation for quality and great features.

There have been some which have had hidden traps.

You cannot be sure that a free plugin will still be maintained by the developer over a period of years. That's understandable, but it means that you may at any time find it doesn't work with a new version of Wordpress and some features on your blog may stop working or give unexpected results.

Wordpress

Wordpress itself is free and that's wonderful. But, that means you have to use it as supplied unless you have the financial or technical resources to make changes you want.

If some feature stops working because of changes in the new version, you have to work around it.

You cannot expect that the Wordpress people will accept any liability for any problems which might be caused by the package to your site or business.

Someone who provided a free service or product may stop developing it or start charging for updated versions of it.

All this is fair enough – after all, what would you charge people if you provided them with a package that has the power and support we get for Wordpress?

Quick Tips

These suggestions are unsorted but I felt they had enough value for you to be worth including.

Research and revise: Even if you are happy with every aspect of your blog and the response you get from visitors, always look for simple ways to improve its appeal to visitors. Bloggers cannot expect to hold their audience with just the "same old, same old" because there is so much competition, improved plugins and alternative attractions.

Don't Coast: Your next post needs to be better than the last one even if that won an award.

If you can't write something Good: Don't write to just fill space. Become someone your visitors expect great reading from every time!

Don't Do it all Yourself: Get people you respect or enjoy reading to post on your blog. Maybe they will ask you to post on their blog later. Also, your readers will appreciate the variety of good material.

Don't tolerate Spam: I've seen several blogs in the last week where there are obvious spam posts which are advertising that usually contains nothing about the topic of that blog page. Some of these "comments" have sat on the page for months. Check your blogs every day if at all possible.

Ask Your Readers what they Want: Big companies become bigger by listening to their visitors and customers. They will pay thousands of dollars for feedback from focus groups. You get that free from your visitors right on your site. Acknowledge it, thank them and show that you act on what they tell you!

What Are Pages and Posts?

Posts are your entries which are shown in reverse order on the posts page, distributed in your RSS Feed and create interest among your readers.

Posts always have the date they were put on your blog.

Use the **New Post Button** to post a new entry.

You can also set them up in advance and have them dripped into view through a plugin.

You can have **category pages** which display on those posts which are relevant to a particular category as well as the **posts page** which will usually show a portion of all the available posts you have made to your blog.

Pages are single, static pages which are not tied to a date. They don't have tags or categories. They are where you put important information about one topic.

You are not limited to any particular number of posts or pages.

- 38 -   http://www.ezytodo.com/

When to Update WordPress?

The common wisdom is to install each new version of Wordpress as soon as possible after you learn there is a new release.

But, the upgrade of Wordpress is easy – the effects of introducing a new problem may not be.

When you find out there is a new upgrade available, don't download it until you get everything ready.

Wait a few days to check if the early updaters have had any common problems.

If things seem to be okay, you can start your upgrade.

Back up your Wordpress installations- your databases and files.

Deactivate your plugins.

Install the upgrade on ONE blog.

Check Wordpress.org for a list of plugins which are known to work with the new version.

If all seems to be okay, start activating your plugins one at a time. Start with the ones which were on the list.

When you have the plugins for one blog operating happily in place, you can start installing each of your other blogs. But, keep upgrading the blogs just one at a time.

That's because you blogs will probably have different plugins and themes, so you may find that they don't all accept the new version of Wordpress equally comfortably.

Wordpress.org and Wordpress.com

Wordpress.org is where you get your free [copy](#) of Wordpress.

Wordpress.com is their site which hosts users' Wordpress blogs without a hosting charge.

The free hosting sounds great, but they do charge for a number of optional upgrades. Obviously,

My view is that, even if you don't need any of the paid upgrades, I'll do the extra work and pay the costs for my own domain happily so that I have more control of how I use my blogs.

On your own [web](#) site, you can use any plugin or theme which you decide to use.

You can't use any plugin on Wordpress.com, but they do have similar features to those offered by many plugins. They're just provided in a different way.

Your own site and domain name will cost you an annual amount. Wordpress.com offer domain names for an annual fee as well.

Wordpress.com does not let you use any [theme](#) other than those they provide. They will sell you selected commercial themes which you can then use on your Wordpress.com blog.

There are other differences and some changes may occur to Wordpress.com's Terms from time to time. If you are operating a non-commercial blog, it might be worth watching for announcements from them.

Using Your Blog to Promote You

When you operate your own blog, you have a powerful [tool](#) which you could use to promote yourself or your work.

You have total control of the content.

You can even control or stop any comments on your posts. This is very powerful but should be used carefully. People will understand that you have to defend yourself against hackers, spammers and unfair or inflammatory messages on your blog.

But, if people feel that you are avoiding fair discussion by removing their comments frequently, they will find other ways to get their opinions about you or your material seen on the Internet.

Many writers have promoted their books when they were published and even when they were still being written through their blogs.

Some put extracts or even whole chapters on their blogs. This can be to their disadvantage because some people will take copies.

It's not so bad if a fan copies an extract and becomes more interested in buying the [book](#) when it is finished. Unfortunately, there have been several people who have copied some writer's samples and then used them on their own sites as if they wrote them.

A [writer](#) I know told me that he believed anything he put on his web site would be stolen within minutes and its value to him probably destroyed within a week!

Despite that, there are also many instances where other [writers](#) have built themselves a following which has become an important source of customers and promoters for their work. On the Internet, word-of-mouth promotion is in the form of positive comments on your blog and links from positive posts about you or your work on other blogs.

Of course, many people in other industries and professions have successfully used the power of Wordpress to promote their work as well.

　　　- 41 -　　　**http://www.ezytodo.com/**

There are many themes in all price ranges from free to very high which will enhance your promotion efforts. My view is that low-key works best with most people.

But, you will know what is likely to work in your special area better than I would.

Avatars and Gravatars

Avatars are those small pictures which people post on discussion boards. As registered users of those boards, they have access privileges which let them upload their Avatar to the Forum where it would be automatically placed alongside any post they made there.

The pictures attract the visitors' eyes more to the comments with avayars than to the comments which do not have them. They also "brand" that person's comment which helps others to recognize comments from that particular individual.

After very little time, a lot of people want their own avatars. That's so they can join in the fun.

Not may blogs require people that make comments to register anymore. So, the avatars started to be seen less often.

A free global system was set up where people could register at www.gravatar.com, lodge a copy of their avatar and the email address which they mostly use when they comment.

From then on, their Gravatar will appear next to any comment they make where the blog software is compatible with the Gravatar system.

That has added a lot of color to blogs around the world.

What Makes a Good Blog?

The first and most important quality of any good blog is original, quality content.

If your stuff is all second-hand, you will have to have very good but little-known sources to maintain your audience.

Finding and maintaining them would probably take more effort than writing good content yourself.

Another possibility is to pay someone to ghost-write relevant material for you which you can post under your own name. There is nothing wrong with that – many people do it.

Maybe the best idea of all is to write some good material. That will attract people who have interesting ideas about the topic.

You can then reply to their comments and thank them for adding to the discussion. This attitude will help persuade them to return and contribute more comments or guest posts to your blog.

Treat your visitors well. Reply in the blog to as many of the quality comments you get from visitors as you can.

That can help to build a sense of community which can be a start of fast growth for your blog.

- 44 -   http://www.ezytodo.com/

How to Deal with Criticism and Praise

Some bloggers become unsettled when they are criticized by commenters or even when they find another blog on a similar topic which is more active and getting more responses than their own.

There is no finish line with your blog venture, unless you put one in front of yourself.

You can improve if you set yourself that [goal](#).

Put some time into improving your techniques and reviewing new developments or potential problems in your field rather than just relying on what you have learned years ago.

Look for ideas in blogs and other materials which focus on other topics. Some of the biggest successes have been made by transplanting good ideas to different areas.

One of the biggest problems many people find about keeping their blogs interesting is that they discount what they know as being low value because it is not new.

There are always new people coming into your field of interest and they may never have seen what you have to share with them until they reach your site.

Waiting for Reaction to Your First Blog

Putting your first blog together may seem a battle at the time.

When you start to see activity on your blog, you will probably get a little tense:

Will the response be positive?

Will I get comments?

Will anyone respond?

These are understandable concerns but you should realize that the best thing you can do is to keep adding quality material.

Keeping active will keep your nerves in check.

Preparing new posts will take your focus from the external force (your visitors), to something which you control and have experience of (writing posts).

The main reason for starting on more posts is that they are the main ingredient in your quest to connect with your visitors and attract more.

Practice may not make perfect but it will improve the quality of your future posts. That could be worth a lot to you and your readers.

Good Luck and Great Success,

John Williams

Reference Section

Important Terms

Blog: A "web diary" where the owner (the blogger) shares their ideas and opinions with visitors to their site.

Blogroll: A list of favored links on a blog page. Change it to Valuable Sources for more click-throughs.

Comments: Responses to your posts which appear after your post on the same page. They can be the start of an audience!

Pages: A page on a blog with material about only one topic. Information such as legal disclosures, details of the people or company who produce the blog and how to contact them, links to other sites with information relevant to the topic of the blog would all usually appear on different pages on the site.

Ping: Signal sent automatically to Search Engines to alert them to new content on your Blog.

Platform: Software, such as Wordpress, used to make your Blog work.

Plugin: Software which is designed to add new functions to the blogs it it is uploaded to and installed on.

Posts: An entry in a blog. This will have a title and have the date of publication on it.

RSS: Really Simple Syndication Feed is a stream of possibly shortened version of the posts from a blog which people can subscribe to.

Subscribe Form: Put it on your blog with a privacy guarantee to get visitors to subscribe to your newsletter. Do NOT use "subscribe" on it.

Recommended Programs and Sources.

Note: these suggestions are based on experience and checking with real experts (I'm not that). There are no affiliate links. The sources all give good service or I would not list them.

                   http://www.ezytodo.com/

Most places have genuine sales and the best way to find out about them is to either buy a product and, or just sign up for their email list.

Woothemes http://www.woothemes.com/ provide some great themes and extensions. I got my first couple of their themes free on the cover of a computer magazine – those themes were very useful.

Ithemes http://www.ithemes.com/ Another valuable source of paid themes. They also offer **Backup Buddy** which is a plugin that makes backing up and restoring Wordpress blogs much easier and reliable.

How U.S.A. Govt. Handles web contacts

http://www.howto.gov/

Guidelines and training for US Federal employees regarding web content and dealing with citizens and others on the Internet.

Information Security Policies and Information

USA:

http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/workshops/glb/supporting/thedma.pdf

OECD:

http://www.oecd.org/sti/interneteconomy/informationsecurityandprivacy.htm