



WordPress as a Content Management System

www.WPasaCMS.com



Copyright © 2008 | ithemes.com



Table of Contents

- Introduction
- Basics
 - + What's a CMS?
 - + What's WordPress?
 - + 5 Benefits of Using WordPress as a CMS
 - + Getting Started
 - + Who Can Use WordPress?
 - + Search Engine Optimization
 - + Easy Menu Navigation
 - + Integrated Blogging
 - + Expand Your Site with Plugins
- Resources
- Showcase
- Themes
- About



Introduction:

You need a website.

You need to be able to update it yourself.

You need it yesterday.

You need WordPress.

It's not just for blogs anymore. It can be a fully functioning content management system, letting you build and manage your site without breaking the bank. If you can use Microsoft Word or set up a Facebook account, you can use WordPress for your website.

WordPress as a CMS: It's quick, easy and cheap.

We like WordPress. We think you should, too.



Basics:

The basics to help you understand why and how to use WordPress as a content management system for your website:

- What's a CMS?
- What's WordPress?
- 5 Benefits of Using WordPress as a CMS
- Getting Started
- Who Can Use WordPress?
- Search Engine Optimization
- Easy Menu Navigation
- Integrated Blogging
- Expand Your Site with Plugins



What's a CMS?

A content management system (CMS) is software that makes it easy for non-techies to organize and manage web content.

That's big, because it makes maintaining and updating a website simple and affordable.

Once upon a time updating a website meant passing off your polished and perfected writing to a programmer who would convert it into a mishmash of computer lingo, often unintentionally skewering some of the finer points of style and layout ("You wanted a new paragraph where?"). The process was slow and painful for everyone involved, not to mention expensive.

Nowadays, thanks to the advent of WYSIWYG editors ("What You See Is What You Get," like the Bold and Italic functions in Microsoft Word) and content management systems, you don't need a degree in computer science to update a website. If you can successfully send an e-mail, you can update a web page. Of course CMS's can range from free, open source software to enormously expensive custom-designed solutions. Of course we recommend using WordPress, which is technically a blog system but can easily be used as a CMS to run websites.

A CMS is an enormous boost to the small business or organization that doesn't have a massive tech budget.

It simplifies the process and puts the website back into the hands of content creators, allowing you to spend more time on what really matters—your content.



What's WordPress?

WordPress (<http://www.wordpress.org/>) is an open source blog software package that works exceptionally well as a content management system. It makes it easy for anyone to set up, manage and maintain a website—without having an advanced degree in geekery.

- First off, since WordPress is open source, it's free. That's always a bonus.
- Since it's open source it also has a thriving community of developers constantly improving the software and creating plugins to expand the software.
- WordPress lets you create pages (stand alone content) and posts (time-driven content) to build out the content of your site.
- You can also easily manage your site's look and feel with themes. These are custom designs for your site that control how everything is laid out and organized.
- The software is highly customizable, so you can use it for just about anything.

See page six to learn more about how to get started building a WordPress-powered content management system.



5 Benefits of Using WordPress as a CMS:

1. Cheap or Free

Using WordPress for your website means it's cheap or free. WordPress itself is free, a theme is easily under \$100 or even free and you save loads of money (compare the cost of template vs custom design - <http://ithemes.com/custom-web-design-versus-template-web-design/>). Haven't you heard? Stingy is in.

2. It's That Easy

If you've got any computer savvy, WordPress is easy to use. If you can send an e-mail, use Microsoft Word or set up a Facebook account, then you can use WordPress. And normal use doesn't run the risk of mucking up the design. It's website creation for non-techies.

3. Do It Yourself

With WordPress you enter the Do-It-Yourself world. No more waiting for and paying a programmer to fix a tiny error, saving you time and money.

4. Many Users, Many Places

WordPress is online and offers multiple users, which means you're not the only one who can fix something in a pinch and you can access it from anywhere. Which means if you've got Internet access in Tahiti, you could work from there. That also means your important site is backed up on a secure server with multiple redundancies, not some high school kid's laptop.

5. Climb the Search Results

WordPress also makes it easier to optimize your search engine results. That means your site is more likely to land on the first page of Google results, which means people are more likely to find you.



Getting Started:

You can do quite a bit with a website powered by WordPress. So let's do it.

WordPress can manage several types of content for you, including Posts, Pages and Links.

- Posts are your basic time-driven content and are used for standard blog entries.
- Pages are basically posts that aren't time-driven—they're added to the menu and serve as the basic meat of your site.
- Links are just that—links. This can be handy for a list of recommended services or helpful sites.

Make the Big Decisions

Before diving in you need to sit down and make some big decisions. If you don't think things through now, you may end up regretting it later. The biggest thing to figure out is what you actually need your website to do. What kind of content do you need to manage?

- Do you need posts? (Maybe you don't need one of those fancy blogs, but do you need a news section?)
- How many pages do you need?
- Will those pages have a hierarchy? (Do you just have five pages, or do you have a dozen pages where some will be filed under others?)
- What do you want to feature on the homepage? (This could be basic intro text that doesn't change or it could be your latest news or it could be highlights from within your site)

These are the kinds of questions you need to answer. Basically you're trying to figure out what you need from your website. Once you have that sorted out, it's easier to find a theme that offers what you need.



Getting Started:

Pick a Theme (Or Have One Designed for You)

Once you know what you need it's time to pick a theme that can meet those needs. While it'd be ideal to find a theme that works perfectly, keep in mind that it's pretty easy to switch themes. So don't stress out over finding the perfect theme. It's OK to try out a few different themes and see which one fits better.

Here are a few things to consider as you pick a theme:

- How is the menu handled? Will it easily display the number of pages you need or handle the hierarchy your site will require? If you've got a fair amount of hierarchy a drop down menu might be a must (see pg. 14).
- Is what's front and center on the theme's homepage what you want front and center on your homepage?
- Is your theme widget ready? If so, you can pop sidebar items in and out with ease. If not, it gets trickier. Be sure to test a theme to make sure it's actually widget ready—some themes, especially free ones, say they're widget ready when they're not (very annoying).

Install WordPress

Next you need to download and install WordPress. Don't worry, it's a pretty straight-forward process. But it can be intimidating, so we've got a few tutorials that can make it easy (Visit WPasaCMS.com and look for the Video Tutorials under Resources).



Getting Started:

Put Your Site Together

Once you've picked and installed a theme, it's time to build your site.

- Basic details like your site's name and tagline can be added under Settings.
- Go to Write: Page (or Write a New Page from the Dashboard) to start adding pages to your site. While editing a page look under Advanced Options for Page Parent and Page Order to change the hierarchy and order of your pages.
- If you're using a blog (or a news section) go to Write: Post (or Write a New Post from the Dashboard) to start populating your site with content.
- Under Design: Widgets you can customize the sidebar or feature areas of your theme.

Keep it Maintained

Once your site is up and running you just have to keep it going. Update your news or blog frequently, change out features or highlights and keep your static content up to date.

Updates are a breeze, thanks to WordPress, which means you can spend more time on your content and less time pretending to be a techie.



Who Can Use WordPress?

The short answer is anyone. WordPress is a pretty powerful system and it can easily be customized for your needs. There are themes specifically designed for all sorts of scenarios, including blogs, mini-sites, online stores, photo galleries and more.

A WordPress site can work well for just about anyone:

- Small businesses & corporations
- Service-oriented companies like plumbers, real estate agents, car dealers, etc.
- Consultants, freelancers & coaches
- Schools, nonprofits and churches
- Bands, artists and creative professionals

IThemes.com has a diverse collection of themes that can meet just about any need, but there are also more specific themes available:

- E-Commerce: If you need an online store, Ecommerce Themes has themes that offer fully functional online stores: (<http://ecommercethemes.com/>).
- Photographers: ShutterThemes offers themes specifically designed for photographers (<http://shutterthemes.com/>).
- Real Estate Agents: Real Estate Themes has themes designed with real estate agents in mind (<http://realestatethemes.com/>).



Search Engine Optimization:

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is all about optimizing your website's position in search results. Many books have been written about SEO and websites are dedicated to it. It's big business—and it should be.

Showing up higher in search results (like when you go to Google and type in a phrase or keyword) usually means more traffic and more business. Which is another reason why using WordPress as a content management system is a good idea. WordPress is especially well suited for boosting your site's rank in search engines

How SEO Works

SEO is part science and part art. The SEO experts figure out what search engines look at when they rank websites. Then they figure out what can be tweaked to improve a site's rank in the results. Some SEO tactics are of questionable value and others are borderline unethical, but the mainstream of SEO thought is simple, basic improvements that will boost your rank in search engine results.

It's usually simple things like figuring out keywords for your site and then putting those keywords in the right places. Those right places include the title bar (the text that shows up at the top of your browser), any headers, headlines or bold text on a page, and the meta data (helpful information in a page's code that is not visible in a browser).

It's really not rocket science. What search engines do is look at a page and try to figure out what's the most important thing on that page. For a page to be the number one search result for something like rocket science it better have the words "rocket science" and other important keywords in key locations on the page. Otherwise it's probably not really about rocket science.

Good SEO is about recognizing the same thing for your site. So if you're in the rocket science business, you'd probably have keywords like rocket science, rockets, propulsion, physics, NASA, booster, missile, etc. And you'd want to use those words in your headlines and other important places on your site.



Search Engine Optimization:

Good SEO is about recognizing the same thing for your site. So if you're in the rocket science business, you'd probably have keywords like rocket science, rockets, propulsion, physics, NASA, booster, missile, etc. And you'd want to use those words in your headlines and other important places on your site.

How WordPress Works for SEO

Out of the box, WordPress is SEO-friendly. It puts important information in the right places by default, so as long as you fill in the appropriate information, you'll have a good start in the search engine rankings.

But there are also a number of extra steps you can take to optimize your search engine rank, many of which are either built in to WordPress or easily managed with plugins:

- **How to Make Pretty Permalinks** (<http://ithemes.com/pretty-permalinks-can-help-you-in-the-search-engines/>) - Permalinks are the direct urls to your content and optimizing how those links appear is good SEO.
- **Easy SEO: Google Sitemaps Generator** (<http://ithemes.com/easy-seo-google-sitemaps-generator-plugin/>) - This plugin creates a sitemap, which is a widely adopted standard among search engines, and helps improve your search rank.
- **How to Add Meta Tags** (<http://blip.tv/file/694847>) - This video tutorial explains how to add meta tags, which are information embedded in your site's code that tell search engines what type of content you have.
- **Include Your Main Keywords in Your Title Bar** (<http://blip.tv/file/694845>) - This video tutorial explains how to easily add your website's keywords to your title bar for another SEO boost.
- **Maximizing Local Search** (<http://ithemes.com/local-search-is-what-matters/>) - Local search is important for many businesses and organizations, so be sure to take steps to optimize your ranking for local searches.

Using a platform like WordPress and a theme that builds on WordPress's SEO-friendly features will move your site to the top of the search results.



Easy Menu Navigation:

One of the reasons WordPress works so well as a content management system is because it manages and updates menu navigation for you. As you add pages to your site, they're also added to your site's menu. Not only can you add pages to your site's menu easily, but you can also give those pages hierarchy and easily create a multi-tiered website.

But even better is that many themes offer drop down menu navigation—just like the menus on this site: roll over a menu item and the options appear below. This makes it easy for users to navigate a multi-tiered site and find the information they're looking for. But it also makes it easier for you to keep your site well organized and easy to navigate—without needing to know the coding that makes drop down menus work.



Integrated Blogging:

One of the benefits of using WordPress as a content management system is that first and foremost WordPress is blogging software. That's what it was designed for. Which means it's perfect for managing consistently updated content.

You may be thinking that your website doesn't need a blog. But you might want to reconsider. Blogging is a great way to set yourself up as an authority in your field.

But even if you decide not to have a traditional blog, the blog functionality is still useful. It doesn't have to power a blog in the strictest sense—it can power any type of consistently updated content:

- News updates
- Press releases
- Feature articles
- Newsletters
- Portfolios

WordPress takes care of all the details, organizing your content chronologically and categorically. So not only can WordPress handle the static pages of your site with ease, but it can also add the muscle of a full blown news section, making it easy for you to keep your site up to date.



Expand Your Site with Plugins:

Another bonus of using WordPress as a content management system is plugins. The basic WordPress software can be complimented with a host of plugins that can add new features. Plugins come in all shapes and sizes and offer just about any functionality you can imagine.

- Want to add a map to your site and plot each of your news articles on a map? Try GeoPress.
- Want to show blog posts that might be related to the one a user just read? Try Related Posts.
- Want to add a full-featured photo gallery? Try NextGen Gallery.

WordPress offers a directory (<http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/>) of several thousand plugins and we point to more resources on WPasaCMS.com to help you find helpful plugins.



Resources:

Visit WPasaCMS.com for a one-stop resource for everything “WordPress as a CMS,” including posts, articles, videos, how-to’s and more—whatever will help you use WordPress as a content management system.

How To's

Find links to a wealth of how-to's, including getting started, basic use, advanced tweaks and using WordPress for specific cases (i.e., running a magazine, church website, portfolio, static site, etc.).

Video Tutorials

Find links to all kinds of video tutorials, including how to install WordPress, how to get started, how to optimize WordPress and some fun extras.

Plugins

Plugins are an easy way to expand the functionality of WordPress. WPasaCMS.com lists the top 7 most useful plugins, as well as links to other helpful plugin lists.

Visit WPasaCMS.com for the latest resources.



Showcase:

We're not making it up. More than a few sites use WordPress as a content management system. Some of those high-profile examples include:

- Ford Motor Company: Global Auto Shows (<http://autoshow.ford.com>)
- Particletree (<http://www.particletree.com/>)
- Moon (<http://www.moon.com>)
- Andy Roddick (<http://www.andyrodick.com>)
- Vitamin (<http://www.thinkvitamin.com>)

For more examples of websites that use WordPress as a content management system, visit WPAsaCMS.com.





Themes:

The key to making WordPress work as a content management system is a good Theme. You can download a free simple CMS theme at WPasaCMS.com.

Visit iThemes.com for even more CMS theme options.

WANNA SWEET DISCOUNT?

Purchase one of our Premium WordPress Themes or our ALL IN ONE Theme Package and we'll give you a 25% discount until December 31st, 2008. Enter the following promotional code: `wpcms08` and we'll hook you up with the discount. It's that simple!





About:

This PDF resource and the site WPasaCMS.com were created by iThemes Media as a way to promote, yes, WordPress as a full-fledged content management system.

Simply put, we love WordPress. We've designed a number of WordPress themes and helped numerous clients get on the web with WordPress, allowing them to leverage its ease of use and unique features that make it a search engine favorite to market their businesses online.

Although WordPress is most popularly known as a blog platform, we believe it's also a robust, flexible way to create and manage websites.

We believe in WordPress so much we even used it to build WPasaCMS.com.