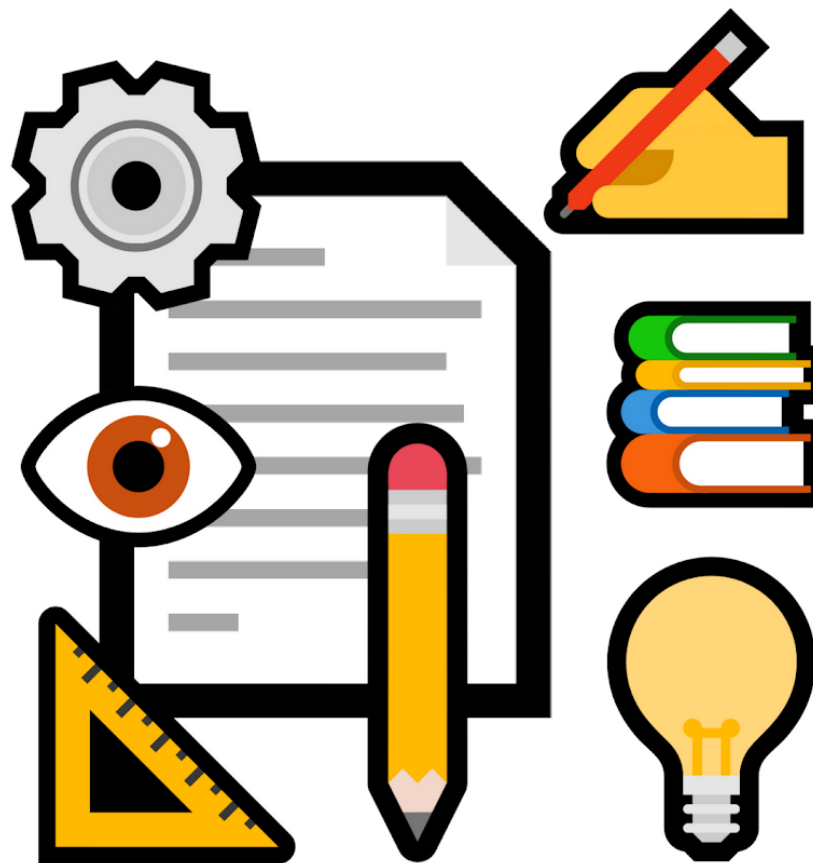


# HOW TO START A BLOG



Complete Guide From Zero Experience  
to 150,000+ Readers Every Month

Originally published at <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/how-to-start-a-blog-from-zero/>

# How to Start a Blog: Complete Guide From Zero Experience to 150,000+ Readers Every Month

If you ever wondered how to start a blog then you're in the right place. This detailed guide goes through every crucial step on your way from blank screen to a lively blog that gets read. We tell it all without pulling any punches! 🙌

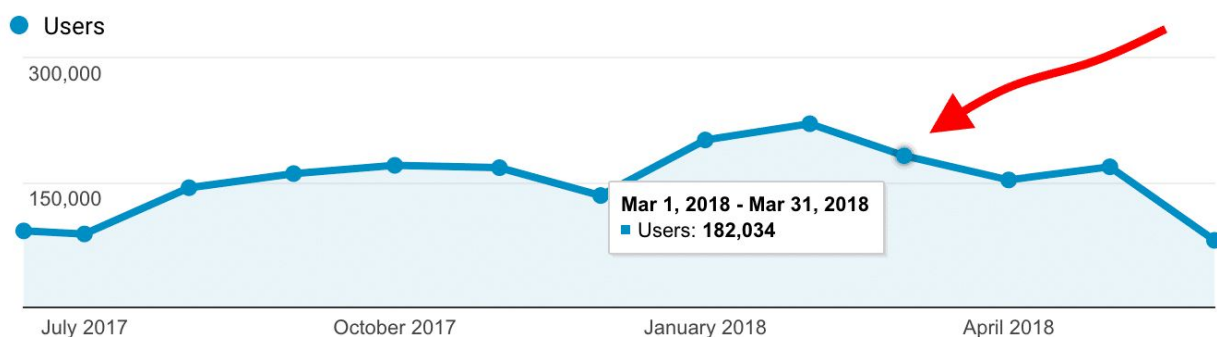
No matter if you want a blog for a business purpose, a personal project, your cute Instagram puppy, or anything in between, this guide is for you. And best of all, the hands-on work will take you only about 30 minutes (plus the time needed to read this guide, duh!). Quite frankly, you'll be amazed at how simple it is to start a blog. 🌟

Once you're done reading this, you'll know exactly what steps to take – what to focus on the most, what to ignore completely, and what actions to take in order to help your new blog take off and attract readers.

But first, why listen to us if you want to learn how to start a blog? 🤔

Several years ago, we were in your exact shoes. We knew that we wanted to start a blog, we had a rough idea on what we wanted to blog about, but we didn't have all the domino pieces lined up conveniently. And forgive me for saying “we” all the time, but it's just that this blog is a group effort with more than one person on the team.

Through trial and error, we've been able to eventually grow our blog to over 150,000 visitors and \$20,000 in revenue each month.



Today, we want to show you how to work towards similar results, and how to replicate our strategies and tactics when creating a blog of your own. This guide summarizes our ~7 years of experience building and growing a blog.

Let's get this thing going!

## How to start a blog – an overview

This is how creating a blog is done, step by step:

*(If you want to read the chapters online, follow the footnotes at the bottom of the page.)*

- 🤔 Chapter 1: **Deciding What to Blog About** <sup>1</sup>
- 📺 Chapter 2: **Choosing the Best Blogging Platform** <sup>2</sup>
- 🛠️ Chapter 3: **Setting Up a Domain Name, Hosting & WordPress** <sup>3</sup>
- 🧩 Chapter 4: **Your Must-Have WordPress Plugins** <sup>4</sup>
- 🔧 Chapter 5: **The Basic Settings That Every Blog Needs** <sup>5</sup>
- 🏠 Chapter 6: **Blog Homepage and Other Essential Blog Pages** <sup>6</sup>
- 💡 Chapter 7: **Coming Up With Blog Content Ideas That People Can't Ignore** <sup>7</sup>
- ✍️ Chapter 8: **How to Write a Blog Post – Step by Step** <sup>8</sup>
- 🚦 Chapter 9: **WordPress SEO – Where to Start** <sup>9</sup>
- 📈 Chapter 10: **How to Promote Your Blog** <sup>10</sup>
- 💰 Chapter 11: **How to Monetize Your Blog** <sup>11</sup>
- 📚 Extra Chapter: **Best Blogging Tools and Guides** <sup>12</sup>

Now, before we start, I should address some of the common objections and questions that most people have about how to start a blog:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/what-to-blog-about/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/best-blogging-platform/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/how-to-set-up-a-blog/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/essential-wordpress-plugins/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/setting-up-a-blog-basic-settings/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/essential-blog-pages/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog-content-ideas/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/how-to-write-a-good-blog-post/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/wordpress-blog-seo/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/how-to-promote-your-blog-and-get-blog-traffic/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/how-to-monetize-a-blog/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/best-blogging-tools-and-guides/>

## FAQ on how to start a blog

Here are some of the most commonly asked questions by people who are thinking about starting a blog:

*“Can I do it all by myself without anyone’s help?”*

Yes.

There really is not much more to say here ... you really can learn how to start a successful blog and then execute on that knowledge by yourself. Plus, the final effect won’t necessarily be any worse than if you had a pro designer or developer on the payroll. The tools have evolved a lot over the years – they’re very user-friendly and easy to grasp nowadays.

*“What do I need in order to get started? Do I need to know how to code?”*

You need a computer and a fistful of dollars. All the other stuff is optional.

There’s no coding knowledge required, no website-owning experience, and no design skills or whatnots.

The reason why this is the case is because of what I mentioned above – we simply have more functional and easier-to-use tools at our disposal.

*“Can I create a blog for free?”*

In a word, yes. But that’s not the best path to take.

While there are blogging platforms out there that allow you to build a blog entirely for free, they do carry a number of limitations:

- You’re stuck with the platform’s subdomain and can’t get your own domain name without paying a fee.
- You’re often not allowed to do much in terms of customization or installing new features.
- Your options to monetize the blog are limited – not all platforms allow you to sell your products or promote other people’s stuff via ads.
- You can be forced to host the platform’s own ads on your site.

At the end of the day, if you instead choose to shell out a modest fee, you can do away with all of the above issues and create a fully functional blog on your own.

*“People say blogging’s dead. Are they right?”*

“Blogging is dead” is something people have been saying for years now. It’s hard to even pinpoint when the phrase appeared for the first time.

There have been a number of supposed killers of blogging. First there was social media, Twitter and Facebook, then YouTube, live streaming services, and who knows what else.

But!

The data says otherwise.

Raw data has one advantage, it doesn’t take sides.

Let me show you two things:

1. According to WordPress.com, more than 400 million people view more than 21 billion blog pages each month. On top of that, users create nearly 90 million new posts and nearly 50 million new comments each month.
2. WordPress – undoubtedly the biggest blog and website engine of them all – now powers more than 30% of all websites <sup>13</sup>. Again, that’s all websites.

So no. Blogging is far from dead.

*“After I learn how to start a blog, can I then turn that blog into a business and make money from it?”*

Yes, of course.

Just look at what we’ve done here with this very blog.

When we started, the blog was making \$0, understandably. But within ~3 years, we’ve grown it to ~\$20,000 per month in revenue.

How does it make money exactly and how have we achieved it? We’ll get to that later on. But let’s just say that it took us some trial and error to get to that level. We try to boil it all down in this guide and present you with a structured, systematic approach.

Without further ado ... the first step to starting your own blog? That would be picking a topic:

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/wordpress-statistics/>

# Chapter 1: Deciding What to Blog About

Figuring out what to blog about / picking a good topic for your blog can be challenging.

Most people find it difficult.

First, there's the challenge of simply coming up with new stuff that you want to write about, which isn't always the most straightforward thing in itself. But then there's also something else lurking in the dark ... self-doubt.

*"I'm not a writer... Why would anyone listen to me... I'm no expert... There are more qualified people writing about this already... I don't know what to blog about..."*

Well, first off, do you need to be a great writer to start a blog?

The answer is no.

People read blogs for a number of reasons, and while being a skilled writer can help, it's no requirement.

Albeit some bloggers do indeed get read because of their unique writing style, it's only a fraction of the market. We just hear about those bloggers more often.

But the iceberg of blogging is much more massive than that. There are people of all different paths of life there and with varying degrees of writing skill.

To an extent, writing skill doesn't matter in blogging.

If you can talk, you can blog.

Also, you don't need to be THE expert in the field (of your topic matter). It helps, but, again, it's not a requirement. Think cooking blogs. You don't need to be Gordon Ramsay to run a successful one. What you do need most of all is some tasty recipes that people enjoy and are able to replicate.

Now, with that said, let me share with you the most important rule of picking a topic for your blog...

## Here's what to blog about:

The only things worth blogging about are the things people are already searching for.

Let me say this another way, you won't "carve out" a fresh new niche all for yourself. Looking for an untapped, completely original topic is a dead end, contrary to popular belief.

It really is simple once you get down to the basic math:

If there's no one already interested in the topic that you want to blog about, you'll have no audience, 0.

But there's also the other side of the coin:

If there is an audience, but you don't feel confident at all blogging for that audience, you will fail anyway.

Therefore, the first order of business:

## Challenge #1: How to pick a blog topic that's right for you personally



The key rule when figuring out what to blog about is to focus on something that you are interested in. And “interested” is the keyword here.

You don't need to be an expert, you don't need to have any special skill regarding the topic, and you don't need to be extremely passionate about it from day one.

What you do need is an honest interest in something. That interest is going to fuel you through the initial months as you write your first posts and get more and more educated about your field.

So do some brainstorming and come up with a list of topics that are interesting to you and that you'd like to learn more about. The author's own curiosity is often enough to carry a blog through its first months of existence.

### The benefits of picking a blog topic that fits you:

- 🐱 You can make a name for yourself in a field that you care about.
- 👥 Connect with likeminded people.
- 🧑💰 Learn or improve your skills.
- 💰 Potentially make money and start a career.
- 🕒 It's going to be easier to create content regularly.

However, be specific here. Don't make your topic something like “cooking” or “cars” or anything similarly broad. The more niche, the better. Although it seems counterintuitive (“broader means

more readers, right?”), starting in a narrow niche is often better. Narrow niches give you specialization and possibly instant audience from day one. Which brings me to:

## Challenge #2: How to find out if there's audience for your future blog



Picking something that you're comfortable blogging about is just one side of the coin. The other is making sure that there's going to be people interested in reading it.

This is where some good 'ol market research comes into the picture. In simple terms, this is where you need to check what else is out there on the web on the topic you've chosen.

Wondering what to blog about? First, focus on the following:

- Are there any blogs in the niche that already cater to similar audiences?
- Are any of those blogs popular enough – with more than 10,000 subscribers?
- Are there any popular Facebook pages on this or similar topics?
- Can you point out at least a handful of influencers in the niche?
- Does anyone advertise in Google when you search for the niche's main buyer keywords?
- Are there any books on Amazon that cover the topic in some capacity and have more than a dozen reviews?
- Are there any people asking questions about it on Quora?

If that's a "yes" on all of the above then you've probably found yourself a good blog topic. But if at least one of them is a "no" then it's back to the drawing board.

"Why?" Well, it's a counterintuitive thing, but in the blogging space, the more blogs there are on a given topic, the easier it is to start another one.

The existence of other blogs is only proof that there are people passionate about the topic. Don't be the sole blogger writing about underwater basketball or something.

One thing you'll probably find out is that even though there's a seemingly infinite number of possible blog topics, it turns out that only a handful of them make sense and are actually of interest to online audiences.

Here's what to blog about – some popular categories of topics:

- Music
- Fashion
- Automotive
- Real Estate
- Beauty
- Travel
- Design
- Food
- Weddings
- Movies
- Photography
- Health and fitness
- Tech
- Business
- SEO and marketing
- Business and money
- Lifestyle
- Pets
- Sports

This is based on data from Google plus factoring in [various research](#) done by third parties. You can do a similar experiment, just google something like: `allintitle:YOUR-BLOG-TOPIC`

💡 PRO TIP: At this stage in your mission to figure out what to blog about, you should probably pick 2-5 blog topics that resonate with you the most, and then further narrow it down to just one based on your overall comfort with it and the size of the potential audience.

## What's next?

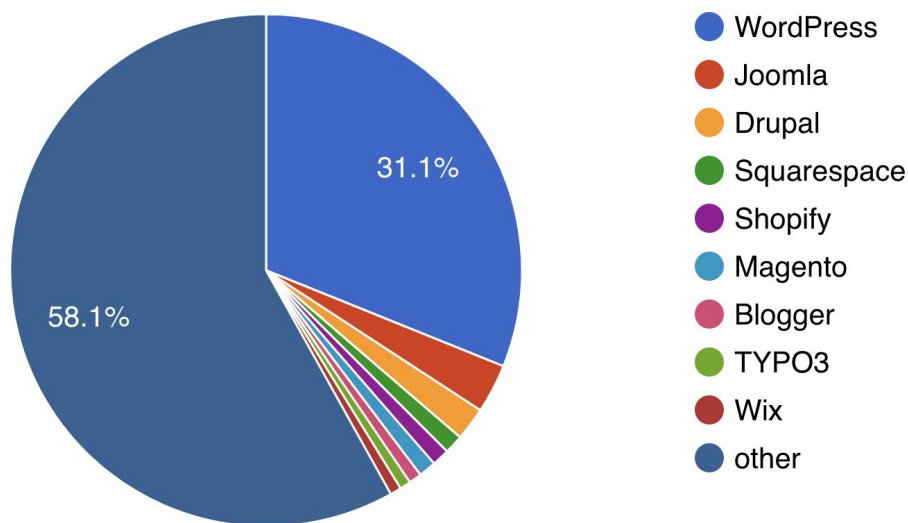
This about sums up our take on picking a good blog topic. I hope you'll find these strategies helpful!

What's next? Time to choose the right blogging platform for your needs.

## Chapter 2: Choosing a Blogging Platform

This is going to be a quick chapter. Even though there's a lot of competition in the market, and we're really spoiled for choice when it comes to platforms/software that can run our blogs, there's only one leader at the top of the ladder – the single best blogging platform to rule them all.

Check out the stats – these are the most popular website and blog platforms on the web (data from July 2018):



**Read: WordPress is used by more than 30% of all websites.** Making it the prime candidate for the best blogging platform award.

Again, that's ALL websites.

- WordPress is nearly 10 times more popular than the no.2 on the list – Joomla.
- WordPress holds 60% of the CMS (content management system) market.
- WordPress is used by some of the biggest brands <sup>14</sup> ... BBC, Wired, Time Magazine, The Rolling Stones, Beyonce, New York Post, Harvard University, Jay Z, all use WordPress to power their websites and blogs.

Some of WordPress' strong points:

- 🆓 **It's free.**
- 🤝 **It's open source.**
- 🦸 **It's powerful and extremely extensible.**
- 🚀 **It's fast.**
- 🛠 **It can be customized to suit your needs hand-in-glove.**

That being said, there's this one confusing thing about WordPress. Namely, its dual nature. Basically, anyone looking for "WordPress" on Google is likely to end up either at WordPress.org or WordPress.com.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/who-uses-wordpress/>

And contrary to what common sense would dictate, those are not one and the same. In fact, they're completely different:

- `WordPress.org` is THE blog engine that we're going to be focusing on throughout the rest of this guide.
- `WordPress.com` is a separate online service. While it's also a solution that you can choose and launch your blog with, the way it's all carried out is much different.

If you're curious to find out what the specific differences between WordPress.org and WordPress.com are, check out this comparison <sup>15</sup>. Let's not get into the details here, though. For now, let's just say that the ".ORG" version of WordPress gives us a lot more possibilities, both in terms of design and functionality, as well as it's going to be cheaper and more fitting for all non-hobby purposes.

To say it another way, if you're looking to learn how to start a blog for a business purpose then the ".ORG" version of WordPress is absolutely what you need.

Now the surprising part:

In order to work with the ".ORG" version of WordPress, you don't actually need to go to the WordPress.org website. Instead, you can get WordPress installed on a web server of your choice and on your custom domain name without having to tinker with any source code. □

Here's how to do that – the actual simplest way of getting a blog launched on WordPress – the best blogging platform available in 2018:

## Chapter 3: Setting Up a Domain, Hosting, and WordPress

The no.1 thing you learn about how to set up a blog is that no blog can exist without a domain name (its unique address on the internet) and a web server (its home on the internet). Then, there's the wildcard – the third element – WordPress!

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/wordpress-org-vs-wordpress-com/>



Picking a domain name is often one of the most fun parts about the whole process of learning how to set up a blog. Picking a host, however, is the exact opposite.

Let's start with the former:

## How to pick a domain name for your new blog

□ **Beginner's note:** What is a domain name?

- A domain name consists of two main parts: your unique domain identifier, and a domain extension. For us, `codeinwp` is the identifier and `.com` is the extension (also known as the TLD). In your case, the former can be any sequence of alphanumeric characters plus hyphens. The TLD you get to choose from a range of pre-existing options – with `.com` being the most popular one. A domain name will usually cost you around \$10-\$15 / year.

...

Cutting straight to the chase, a good domain name needs to have at least three main characteristics:

- 🍏 It needs to be unique and brandable. A good benchmark is to imagine your domain name on the side of your office building. Does it look good there?

- 🏠 It needs to be clear. No weird combination of characters. A simple sequence of 1-3 words is best. You best use your first name / last name only if the website you're building is to grow your own personal brand.
- 📝 It needs to be easy to memorize. If you need to spell it out, it won't be easy to memorize.

💡 PRO TIP: When learning how to set up a blog, a good starting point is to make a list of 3-5 domain names that seem the most sensible and then test them out with friends, family, and coworkers to pick the winner.

With a good idea of what your domain name is going to be, it's time to pick a good hosting platform:

## How to pick a good web host for a blog

The topic of hosting is boriiiiinnng. Like, really.

I mean, once you get down to it, a web server is just a computer that's turned on and hooked up to the internet 24/7, sitting somewhere in a dark server room. There's nothing romantic or "cool" about it. It's just numbers and data being sent back and forth.

With that image in your head, picking a good host for WordPress can be tough, especially once you do some research of your own and get exposed to many a hosting company's promotional materials. Basically, they all promise extremely good performance and reliable service.

The reality, however, can be different.

So without boring you with the details, we've invested a lot in researching the hosting market for WordPress, testing different hosting firms that are out there, analyzing their performance in real life setups, and even surveying users to find what they think about their blog hosts.

If you're interested in getting down to the details of it all, check any of these out:

- 2018 WordPress Hosting Survey – Aka “The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of WordPress Hosting” <sup>16</sup>
- Best WordPress Hosting Providers Compared [By the Numbers] <sup>17</sup>
- Best Cheap Hosting Providers Compared (From \$0.82 / Month) <sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/wordpress-hosting-survey-results/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/best-wordpress-hosting/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/best-cheap-wordpress-hosting/>

- Best Web Hosting for Small Business <sup>19</sup>

If you can't be bothered and simply want me to recommend you a platform already then just use SiteGround <sup>20</sup>. Basically, no matter what kind of tests we do, and no matter what kind of questions we ask the community, it's really hard to come across any negative reviews of SiteGround. They simply know what they're doing when it comes to hosting a WordPress blog.

Plus, a good hosting plan with them – one that will be more than enough to get you started with a new blog – is only around \$4 / month.

## 👉 How to set up a blog: get a domain name, hosting, and WordPress installed all in one go

Okay, so here's the best part:

Even though learning how to set up a blog involves getting three separate pieces of technology aligned – hosting, domain, WordPress – you can actually have it all taken care of in one go, and in a very user-friendly manner.

To make this happen, go to SiteGround – the hosting platform that we recommend based on its positive reviews across the web and our own tests.

Once there, pick a hosting plan. In most cases, the cheapest option – StartUp – will be enough:

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/best-web-hosting-for-small-business/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.siteground.com/wordpress-hosting.htm>

| StartUp                                                                                                                                                              | GrowBig                                                                                                                                                                                                       | GoGeek                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>StartUp</b><br>Crafted for a Great Start with WordPress                                                                                                           | <b>GrowBig</b><br>Crafted for Easy WordPress Growth                                                                                                                                                           | <b>GoGeek</b><br>Crafted for Real WordPress Geeks                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| SPECIAL PRICE<br><b>\$3.95/mo.</b><br>Regular \$11.95/mo.                                                                                                            | SPECIAL PRICE<br><b>\$5.95/mo.</b><br>Regular \$19.95/mo.                                                                                                                                                     | SPECIAL PRICE<br><b>\$11.95/mo.</b><br>Regular \$34.95/mo.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One Website</li><li>10GB Web Space</li><li>Suitable for ~ 10,000 Visits Monthly</li><li>Essential WordPress Features</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Multiple Websites</li><li>20GB Web Space</li><li>Suitable for ~ 25,000 Visits Monthly</li><li>Essential WordPress Features</li><li>Premium WordPress Features</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Multiple Websites</li><li>30GB Web Space</li><li>Suitable for ~ 100,000 Visits Monthly</li><li>Essential WordPress Features</li><li>Premium WordPress Features</li><li>Geeky WordPress Features</li></ul> |
| <b>GET STARTED</b>                                                                                                                                                   | <b>GET STARTED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>GET STARTED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <a href="#">See Plan Details</a>                                                                                                                                     | <a href="#">See Plan Details</a>                                                                                                                                                                              | <a href="#">See Plan Details</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

The next step is where you can register a domain name that you'll use for your new blog:

**Step 1. Choose Plan**      **Step 2. Choose Domain**      **Step 3. Review & Complete**

**Please Enter Your Domain**

☒ Register a New Domain  
☐ I already have a Domain

www.  .com

☒ Domain Registration: **\$15.95/year**

**PROCEED**

Note. Registering a new domain name with SiteGround is \$15.95 / year. If you already have a domain name that you'd like to use, select "I already have a Domain" instead of creating a new

one. Additional steps will be required to hook up that domain name to your new blog. SiteGround will guide you through every step of the way.

After that, you just need to provide your personal info and payment details, and finalize the setup.

When you're done, it's time to have WordPress installed. For that, access your Customer Area and follow SiteGround's official guide <sup>21</sup>.

During the installation process, SiteGround will also let you pick a design/theme for your new blog and have everything set up for you.

## Quick note on finding and changing themes / blog designs

The great thing about WordPress is that you're not stuck with the initial design that you chose for your blog during setup or with the default WordPress theme. You can always come back to this part after a while and install a new theme that's perhaps better-looking or simply follows the modern trends better.

**Either way, you can find new themes at:**

- WordPress.org <sup>22</sup>
- ThemeIsle.com <sup>23</sup>
- ThemeForest <sup>24</sup>
- Elegant Themes <sup>25</sup>
- or any other of the popular theme stores <sup>26</sup>

 Further reading:

- <https://themeisle.com/blog/how-to-choose-a-wordpress-theme/>
- <https://themeisle.com/blog/secure-wordpress-theme/>
- <https://themeisle.com/blog/how-to-change-a-wordpress-theme/>

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.siteground.com/tutorials/wordpress/siteground-wizard-install/>

<sup>22</sup> <https://wordpress.org/themes/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://themeisle.com/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://themeforest.net/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.elegantthemes.com/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/wordpress-theme-shop-directory-2016/>

# Just getting started with WordPress? Here's how to use the interface

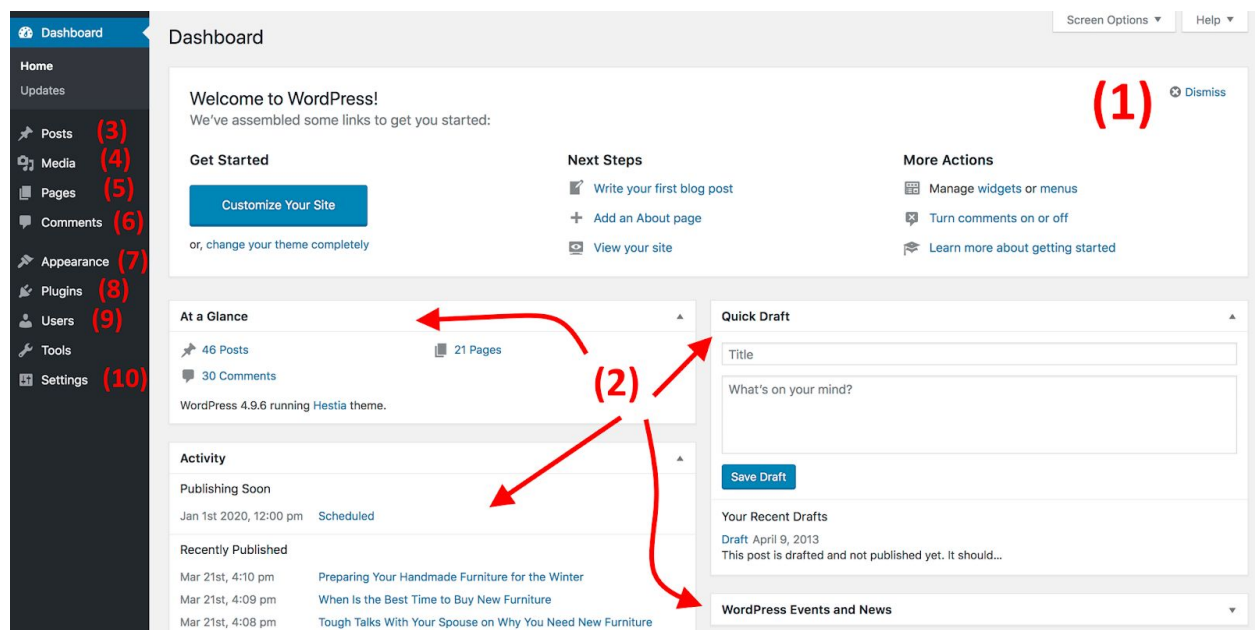
Note. If you're already familiar with the WordPress interface, feel free to skip to the next chapter.

WordPress has evolved quite a bit since its humble beginnings in 2003. What started as a simple blogging platform, is now capable to run any type of website, no matter how big or small.

However, this richness of features can also be slightly problematic for someone who's just getting to know how to set up a blog with WordPress for the first time.

So here's your in-the-nutshell guide through the WordPress user interface and some of the key features:

First off, most of your interaction with WordPress will happen through the admin panel which you can access by going to `yoursite.com/wp-admin`. After logging in, you'll see something like this:



- (1) Welcome message – This is where WordPress points you towards some of the most important areas of the admin panel. We'll be interacting with many of them later on in this guide.
- (2) Some general blocks of info letting you know about what's been going on with your blog recently.
- (3) Posts – this is where you can go to work on your blog posts.

- **(4) Media** – here you'll find a library of all your media (images) that have been uploaded to the blog.
- **(5) Pages** – the interface works very similarly to posts, but meant for your blog's sub-pages.
- **(6) Comments** – this is where you can moderate comments left by your readers.
- **(7) Appearance** – go here to adjust the way your blog looks, e.g. change your theme entirely or customize how certain things are displayed.
- **(8) Plugins** – this is where you can install new plugins.
- **(9) Users** – go here to manage your user account and the accounts of other people who have access to the blog.
- **(10) Settings** – this is where you'll spend the most of your time when setting up a blog – every key setting for your blog can be found here.

I'll cover each of these sections in detail as we proceed through this guide.

## Chapter 4: Must-Have WordPress Plugins

Plugins are what make the WordPress world go around. Essential WordPress plugins is what's going to help you build your site effectively and securely, while also getting the best features out there.

Plugins allow you to add pretty much any type of functionality to your new blog. And, down the line, you'll probably end up installing quite a few to get specific functionality that you want.

But while there are lots of interesting niche plugins, there are also some essential WordPress plugins that every blogger needs. We're talking about things so important that no matter what you're blogging about, these should make your must-have list:

□ **Beginner's note:** What plugins are and how to install them

- A plugin is a third-party extension that adds additional functionality to your WordPress site. This functionality can be something small, like a contact form, or something big, like turning your WordPress site into an e-commerce store.
- To use a plugin, you'll need to install it on your WordPress site. Read this post for more on how to install WordPress plugins <sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/how-to-install-a-wordpress-plugin/>

# Your essential WordPress plugins:

## 1. Yoast SEO <sup>28</sup>

- What it does: Yoast SEO helps you make important search engine optimization tweaks for both your entire site and individual posts/pages.
- Why you need it: Where your blog ranks in search engines like Google has a huge effect on how many visitors your site gets. Optimizing your blog with a plugin like Yoast SEO gives you a better chance to rank higher for relevant keywords and get traffic to your posts. We're also going to be using this plugin in further chapters of this guide, hence you need it to benefit from the guide fully.
- What it costs: The free version is fine for most bloggers
- Where to get it: The easiest method is to go to your WordPress dashboard → Plugins → Add New → type in the name of the plugin (Yoast SEO) in the search box. Then click Install Now and Activate.

## 2. Google Analytics for WordPress <sup>29</sup>

- What it does: Google Analytics provides you with detailed traffic statistics and analytics for your blog. On a more advanced level, it can also help you see how effective certain promotion strategies are. The Google Analytics for WordPress plugin helps you easily implement the free Google Analytics service on your blog.
- Why you need it: Analytics help you learn which parts of your blog get the most traffic, as well as which parts do well and which parts could be improved. Analytics also let you see how your blog's traffic and engagement change over time. In other words, without an analytics solution of any kind, you can't know how effective your promotion strategies are.
- What it costs: 100% free
- Where to get it: Via your WordPress dashboard (same as for Yoast SEO, see above). Then, follow this guide for how to set up Google Analytics for WordPress <sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-seo/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/google-analytics-for-wordpress/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/set-up-google-analytics-in-wordpress/>

### 3. Cache Enabler<sup>31</sup>

- What it does: Cache Enabler uses something called page caching to make your blog load faster and use fewer server resources.
- Why you need it: Cache Enabler can typically cut your blog's page load times in half, which is important because 30% of users want sites to load in under one second, 74% of mobile users will abandon a site that takes longer than 5 seconds to load, and page load times can affect where your site ranks in Google. Yeah, finding ways to speed up your blog is pretty important...
- What it costs: 100% free
- Where to get it: Via your WordPress dashboard (same as for Yoast SEO, see above).

### 4. Wordfence Security<sup>32</sup>

- What it does: Wordfence Security makes a ton of different security tweaks to keep your blog safe from hackers and other exploits.
- Why you need it: Quite unfortunately, WordPress blogs getting hacked is a common thing. In just the first quarter of 2016, Sucuri analyzed over 8,000 hacked WordPress websites. And Google blocks hundreds of thousands of websites every year for malware. At the end of the day, you absolutely must keep your WordPress site secure, and Wordfence Security is the most popular WordPress security plugin, making it one of the essential WordPress plugins.
- What it costs: The free version is fine for most blogs, though there is a Premium version with even more functionality.
- Where to get it: Via your WordPress dashboard (same as for Yoast SEO, see above).

### 5. UpdraftPlus<sup>33</sup>

- What it does: UpdraftPlus is a backup plugin that automatically backs up your WordPress site. You can even have it automatically save the backup to Google Drive or another cloud storage provider.
- Why you need it: Beyond malicious actors (discussed above), there are way more reasons why you might need a backup of your blog. Regular backups are an absolute must – they help ensure your blog's data is always safe no matter what goes wrong.

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<sup>31</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/cache-enabler/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordfence/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/updraftplus/>

- What it costs: The free version is fine for most blogs, though there is a Premium version with added functionality.
- Where to get it: Via your WordPress dashboard (same as for Yoast SEO, see above).

## 6. Imagify <sup>34</sup>

- What it does: Imagify automatically optimizes the images that you upload to your blog by compressing them and, if desired, resizing their dimensions. Compression is a way to reduce an image's file size either without affecting its quality (lossless compression) or with a small reduction in quality (lossy compression).
- Why you need it: Images make up 63% of the average website's file size. By reducing the size of your images, you're able to make your blog load faster. We already covered why that's important when we told you about Cache Enabler – another one among the essential WordPress plugins!
- What it costs: Imagify will optimize ~250 images per month for free, which should be enough for most blogs. After that, you'll need a paid plan starting at \$4.99 per month.
- Where to get it: Via your WordPress dashboard (same as for Yoast SEO, see above).

## 7. Pirate Forms <sup>35</sup>

- What it does: Pirate Forms lets people send you a message via a simple contact form.
- Why you need it: No matter what you write about, people are probably going to want to get in touch with you. A contact form lets them do it without you needing to expose your actual email address on your website.
- What it costs: The free version is fine for most bloggers, though there is an Extended version with more features.
- Where to get it: Via your WordPress dashboard (same as for Yoast SEO, see above).

## 8. Jetpack <sup>36</sup> - Social Sharing + More

- What it does: Jetpack is a multipurpose plugin that adds a ton of helpful functionality. Most notable for this section is its Sharing module which helps you add social share buttons to your site.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/imagify/>

<sup>35</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/pirate-forms/>

<sup>36</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/jetpack/>

- Why you need it: Social share buttons make it easy for your visitors to share your posts on social media. That means your posts can get more visibility and you can get more traffic as a result! And like we said, Jetpack also includes a bunch of other helpful features <sup>37</sup>, which makes us pretty sure you'll consider it one of your essential WordPress plugins for a number of other reasons as well.
- What it costs: The free plan is fine.
- Where to get it: Via your WordPress dashboard (same as for Yoast SEO, see above). Then, read this post for how to set up Jetpack social share buttons <sup>38</sup>.

With these must-have plugins installed and out of the way, it's now time to take care of your blog's basic settings.

## Chapter 5: Basic Settings for Every Blog

Okay – so you're pretty far ahead in this process of setting up a blog. You have a domain name, hosting, WordPress installed, even a theme and some plugins.

So ... what's next?

Here are the basic settings that every blog needs. Take care of those while you prep for launch day:

### Setting up a blog in 10 steps:

#### 1. Choose your permalink <sup>39</sup> structure

Permalinks determine the structure of the URLs on your site, which is important for both helping your blog rank higher in Google and making your website more user friendly for humans.

- How to set permalinks: Go to Settings → Permalinks in your WordPress dashboard
- What's the best permalink structure? Choosing the Post name permalink structure is almost always the best option, unless you have a specific reason you need to use one of the others.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/wordpress-jetpack-plugin/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/add-social-share-buttons-to-wordpress/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/permalinks-in-wordpress/>



A screenshot of the WordPress 'Permalinks' settings page. It shows five radio button options: 'Plain', 'Day and name', 'Month and name', 'Numeric', and 'Post name'. The 'Post name' option is selected, indicated by a blue dot. To the right of each option is a preview of the resulting URL. A red arrow points to the 'Post name' option and its corresponding URL preview.

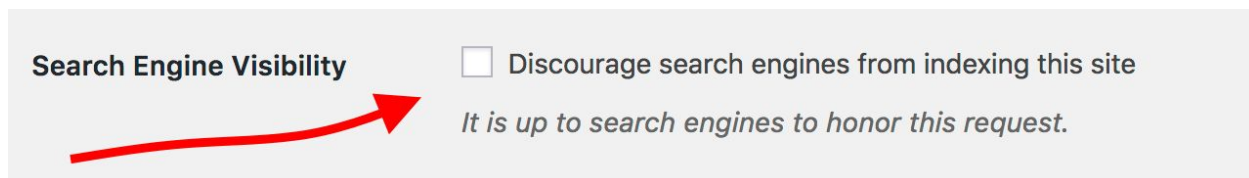
| Option                                     | Preview                                   |
|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Plain                | http://[redacted]/?p=123                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Day and name         | http://[redacted]/2018/06/26/sample-post/ |
| <input type="radio"/> Month and name       | http://[redacted]/2018/06/sample-post/    |
| <input type="radio"/> Numeric              | http://[redacted]/archives/123            |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Post name | http://[redacted]/sample-post/            |

## 2. Make sure your blog is public

WordPress includes a setting that makes it so search engines won't index your blog (the "noindex" tag). While this setting should be turned off by default, because it's so massively important when setting up a blog (and you may have turned it on while building your site and forgotten about it), you should always check to make sure your blog is public when you're ready to launch.

Yes – it might seem silly – but I've witnessed a hundred million dollar startup push its new site design live with a "noindex" tag on it. I was trying to do some research on the company before an interview and googled the name but didn't see their site. Checked the source code and saw the noindex tag. Suffice it to say, it can happen to anyone – so better safe than sorry!

- How to make your blog public: Go to Settings → Reading and make sure the box for Discourage search engines... is unchecked.



A screenshot of the 'Search Engine Visibility' section in the WordPress settings. It shows a checkbox labeled 'Discourage search engines from indexing this site' which is unchecked. Below the checkbox is the text 'It is up to search engines to honor this request.' A red arrow points to the checkbox.

## 3. Configure basic settings in the WordPress Customizer <sup>40</sup>

The WordPress Customizer lets you quickly configure a number of small settings for your blog.

Here's what to make sure you do:

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<sup>40</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/wordpress-customizer-how-to/>

- Set your Site Title and Tagline in the Site Identity tab.
- Add a favicon in the Site Identity tab.
- Explore theme-specific settings.

## 4. Create a navigation menu

A Menu lets you control the links that appear in your site's main navigation areas.

- Why it's important: Until you actually create a menu, the navigation area for your theme will be blank – this isn't a great experience for your visitors! Your site gets much more usable with a helpful navigation structure.
- How to create a menu: Go to Appearance → Menus or use the WordPress Customizer.

## 5. Set up sidebar and/or footer widgets

Widgets let you add content to any widget area on your blog. Usually, this means your blog's sidebar, but many themes also let you use widgets in your footer, as well as potentially other areas.

Not only do widgets let you provide helpful information, but they also help you avoid having weird blank spaces in your theme. And you can even find plugins that add additional widgets.

- How to add widgets: Go to Appearance → Widgets or use the WordPress Customizer.

### Available Widgets

To activate a widget drag it to a sidebar or click on it. To deactivate a widget and delete its settings, drag it back.

|                                                                                     |                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Akismet Widget</b><br><br>Display the number of spam comments Akismet has caught | <b>Archives</b><br><br>A monthly archive of your site's Posts. |
| <b>Audio</b><br><br>Displays an audio player.                                       | <b>Calendar</b><br><br>A calendar of your site's Posts.        |
| <b>Categories</b><br><br>A list or dropdown of categories.                          | <b>Custom HTML</b><br><br>Arbitrary HTML code.                 |
| <b>Elementor Library</b><br><br>Embed your saved elements.                          | <b>Gallery</b><br><br>Displays an image gallery.               |

**Header Right** ▲  
  
 This is the header widget area. It typically appears next to the site title or logo. This widget area is not suitable to display every type of widget, and works best with a custom menu, a search form, or possibly a text widget.

**Primary Sidebar** ▼

**Secondary Sidebar** ▼

**Footer 1** ▼

## 6. Create a backup schedule

In the previous section, we told you that UpdraftPlus is a must-have plugin. Now that you have it installed, it's time to actually set your backup schedule which is an important element of setting up a blog!

- How often should you back up? This depends on how active you are. If you're planning to publish a new post once per week, you can probably back up weekly. But if you plan to publish a new post every day (or get lots of comments every day), you might want to back up daily.

## 7. Configure other must-have plugins

Beyond UpdraftPlus, we also laid out some other must-have plugins. To get the most out of some of those plugins, though, you'll need to configure basic settings.

Here's what to do:

- Follow the Yoast SEO setup wizard to configure basic SEO settings
- Choose where to display your Jetpack social share buttons
- Create an Imagify account to enable image optimizing

## 8. Decide if you want to allow comments

By default, WordPress is set up to allow comments on your blog posts. Most of the time, that's good. But some people like to disable comments.

- The argument for comments: They allow your readers to engage with both you and other readers, which creates more of a community.
- The argument against comments: A large percentage of comments are spam, which can get annoying. It's also hard to build an active comments section.
- Which is right? There's no right answer – but you should decide whether you want to allow comments or not by going to Settings → Discussion.

### Default article settings

- ☒ Attempt to notify any blogs linked to from the article
- ☐ Allow link notifications from other blogs (pingbacks and trackbacks) on new articles
- ☒ Allow people to post comments on new articles

*(These settings may be overridden for individual articles.)*

## 9. Disable pingbacks and trackbacks

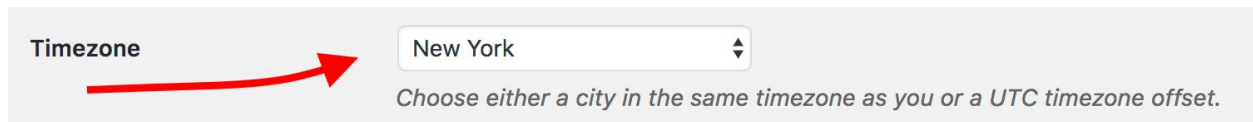
- What pingbacks and trackbacks are: Pingbacks and trackbacks allow other blogs to notify you whenever they link to you.
- Why pingbacks and trackbacks suck: Not only are they not very helpful, but spammers love them, and will happily send heaps of spammy trackbacks and pingbacks.
- How to disable pingbacks and trackbacks: Go to Settings → Discussion and turn off Allow link notifications...



## 10. Set your desired time zone

By default, WordPress uses UTC +0 for its time zone. But if you're in a different time zone, that means WordPress will use different times than your local time, which makes it hard to do things like schedule posts in advance.

- How to set your time zone: Go to Settings → General



Now that you've got those basic settings out of the way, you're ready to move onto the next step of setting up a blog – your core pages!

# Chapter 6: Your Homepage and Other Blog Pages

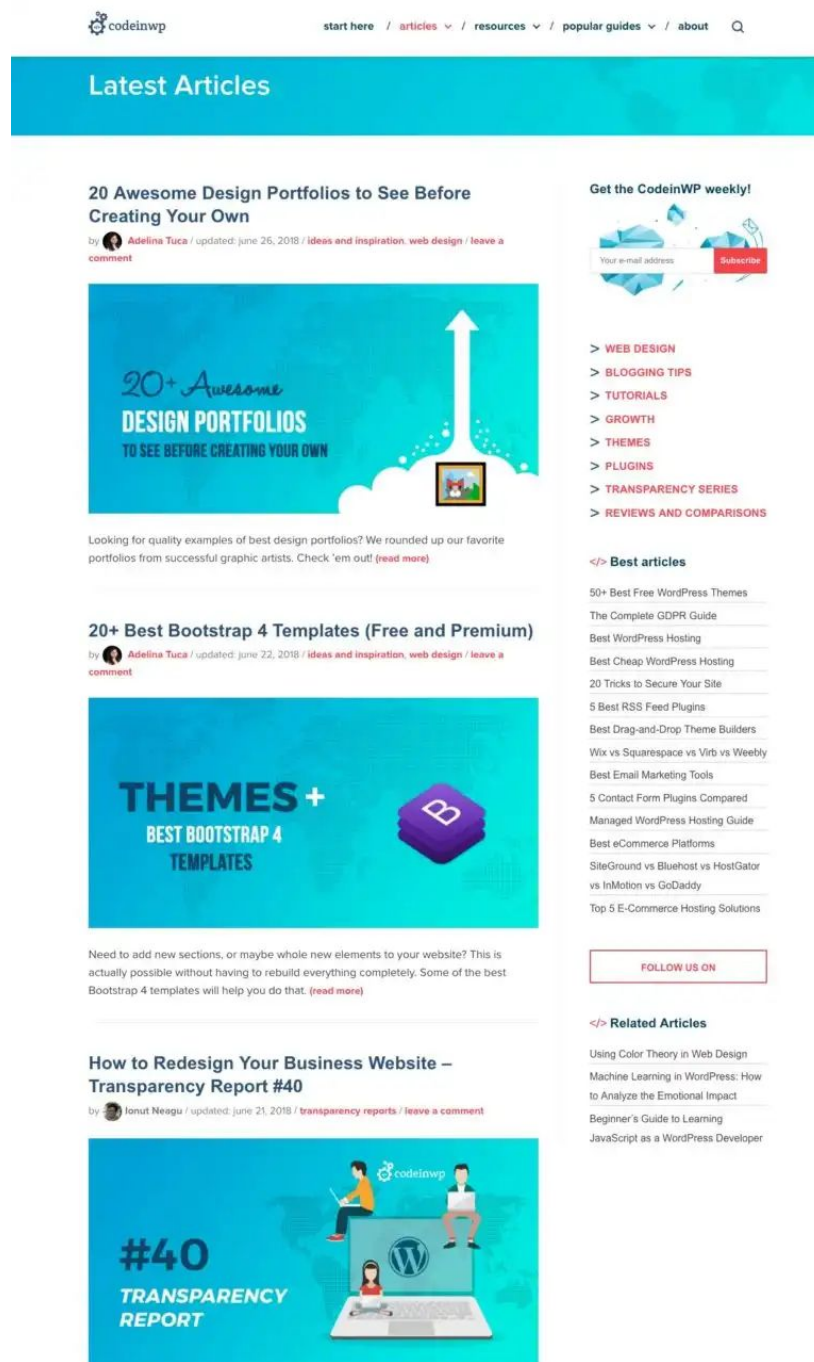
At this point, you're ready to put pen to paper (well, fingers to keys) and start creating some actual content for your blog. We're not talking about blog posts quite yet, though. First, you've got to set up the core blog pages.

These are the static pages that will always be there no matter what. And while they aren't blog posts, they do provide your readers with important information about you and your site.

# Start with your homepage

“A homepage? I’m writing a blog. Won’t my homepage just display my latest posts?”

Homepage blog listing example:



Yeah, that's how WordPress does it by default. And it does work in a pinch – it's not the worst thing in the world.

However, the default blog archive listing homepage does kind of...suck. You can read this post<sup>41</sup> for all the reasons and examples why you're usually better off going with a dedicated homepage.

Creating a dedicated homepage as the first one among your blog pages lets you:

- ✓ Control what first-time visitors see, rather than leaving it up to fate based on what you've published last.
- ✓ Direct visitors to your most important content right away.
- ✓ Build an email list or otherwise promote an offer.

Plus – you can still display your latest posts on your homepage – just make it a *part* rather than the *whole*.

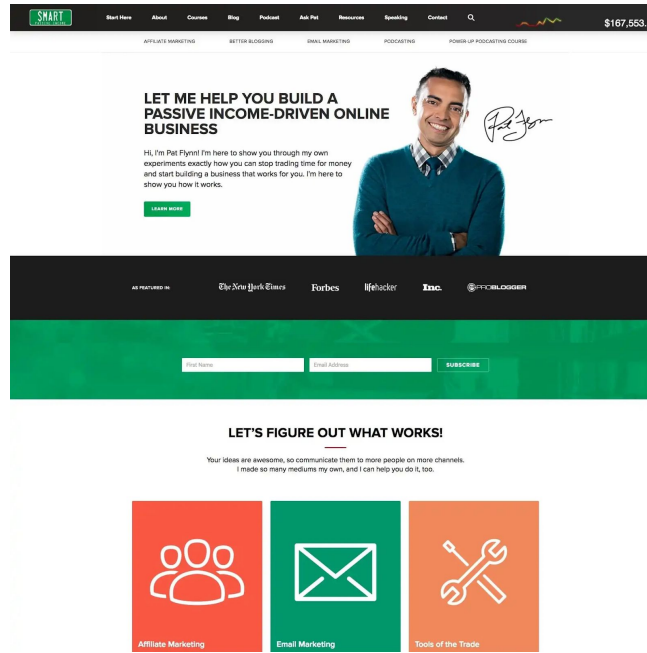
So what should you put on your homepage? While there might always be something specific to your site, these are some core details to consider:

- A clear headline that describes your blog in one or two sentences
- A little bit about you and why visitors should care
- Links to your absolute best content and your other blog pages
- Some of your latest posts
- An email opt-in, if you want to grow an email list

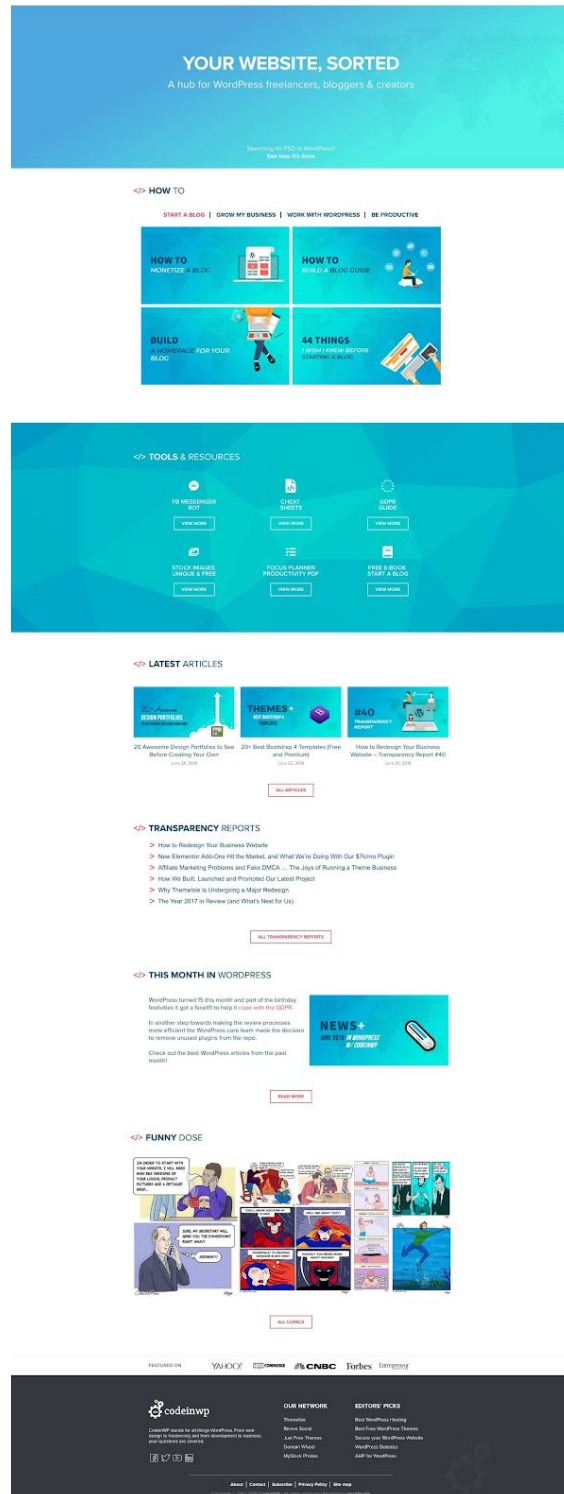
Smart Passive Income is a great example of how to do it right:

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<sup>41</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/blog-homepage/>



Another example; our new homepage here at CodeinWP.com:



Not sure how to create a homepage? You generally have two options:

- Some themes, like Hestia <sup>42</sup>, come with a dedicated homepage template that you can easily edit to make your own.
- WordPress page builders <sup>43</sup> make it easy to create your own custom page using drag and drop.

## Create the other necessary blog pages

Once you check off your homepage, you can move onto the other blog pages. These can usually be a bit simpler – regular pages using the normal text editor should be fine enough.

Again, here are some necessities to get you started, though you might also want to add other pages that are specific to your niche:

 **About** – this one can get a little personal. Tell people about both the blog and your own background so they know what you're all about. Give our about page <sup>44</sup> a look for some inspiration. In case you're wondering, that specific about page was built with Elementor – here's the tutorial <sup>45</sup> (here's another tutorial on how to get the same effect with Beaver Builder <sup>46</sup>).

 **Start here** – this page has become pretty common for blogs nowadays. It gives you another chance to direct readers towards your most popular content. See a good example here <sup>47</sup>. Some bloggers will even combine the About and Start Here pages into one single page, which is also a solid approach.

 **Contact** – Pirate Forms will handle the contact form for you. All you need to do is add some instructions and guidelines. Check out our contact page <sup>48</sup> for inspiration.

 **Blog** – if you create a static homepage, you'll need to create a separate page to display the list of your most recent blog posts. Just create a page called *Blog* and make it display your latest posts by going to Settings → Reading.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://themeisle.com/themes/hestia/>

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/elementor-vs-divi-builder-vs-beaver-builder/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/about/>

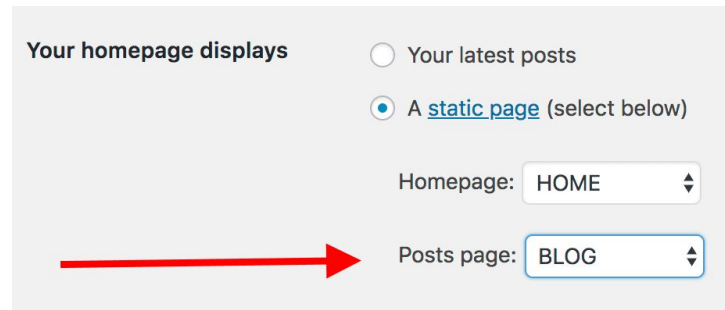
<sup>45</sup> <https://elementor.com/material-design-about-page/>

<sup>46</sup>

<https://www.wpbeaverbuilder.com/how-to-create-a-material-design-about-page-using-beaver-builder-and-hestia/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://expertvagabond.com/best/>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/contact/>



Your homepage displays

☐ Your latest posts

☒ A [static page](#) (select below)

Homepage:

Posts page:

⚖️ **Legal pages** – terms of service, privacy policy, affiliate program disclosures ... all that legal mumbo-jumbo. It's not sexy, but it's important. You can see our ever-so-exciting privacy policy [here](#) <sup>49</sup>.

💰 **Hire me** – while not every blogger will need this one, a good “hire me” page can be the first method of monetizing your blog (we'll talk about more options in the subsequent chapters). The idea behind this page is pretty straightforward – it's a page where you get to showcase your services and tell people why they might want to buy them. Here's an example by Karol <sup>50</sup>.

Once you get your pages all set up, you're ready to start blogging!

## Chapter 7: Coming Up With Blog Content Ideas

Since it's a blog that we're launching here, it's hard to imagine it without a regular stream of quality posts, right? That's why you need some good blog content ideas.

Well, yes, of course. But that's also where the problems start.

The challenge is this:

How do you actually come up with good blog content ideas and on a regular basis?

Do you have to turn yourself into an unnaturally creative person who always has a stream of never-ending ideas up their sleeve? Do you gain these superpowers by getting bitten by a radioactive blogger?

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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/privacy-policy/>

<sup>50</sup> <http://karol.cc/>

AFTER BEING BITTEN BY A RADIOACTIVE BLOGGER  
THIS ORDINARY GUY GAINED THE POWER OF COMING UP WITH THE  
GREATEST BLOG POST IDEAS

HE IS...

## the AMAZING SUPER-BLOGGER



No. Far from it.

The only real skill that you must train yourself in is the skill of paying attention.

Coming up with good blog content ideas isn't really about sitting locked in a cave somewhere and writing pages upon pages of headline ideas, relying only on your own creativity. To the contrary.

To come up with stellar blog content ideas, you need to pay attention to what's going on in your niche, and then act accordingly whenever you notice a "content hole" that needs to be filled.

### Good blog content ideas rule #1:

Like I said above, it only makes sense to write/blog about stuff that people are already searching for.

In other words (and it may sound brutal, sorry), it doesn't matter what you want to write about. What matters is what your audience wants to read about.

Why is that the case?

Well, new blogs have a big obstacle to overcome.

It's an obvious obstacle, but a very serious one. What's worse, many blogs never manage to get over it...

That obstacle is the fact that on day 1 nobody knows that your blog exists. Hence, nobody is going to read it.

So with that, if you decide to only write about your unique, never-before-contemplated ideas, people will never discover your blog.

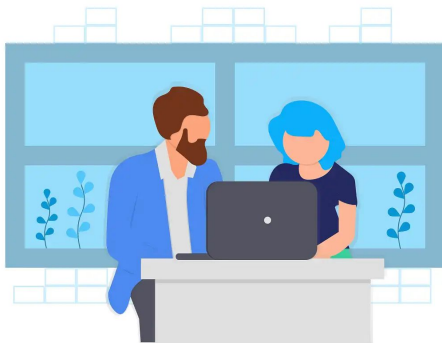
On the other hand, if you decide to go the other way, and instead do your research right – finding out what actual challenges people face in your niche – and then describe your solutions to those challenges, you're effectively 10x-ing your likelihood of getting found.

These days, Google is how most blogs get their traffic (then Facebook, data says <sup>51</sup>). So for you to ever have a chance of getting discovered, your content needs to tackle the problems that people are googling actively. As simple as that.

Now, the best part:



## How to find out what your audience wants to read



There are two distinct schools of thought here:

- Going competition-first
- Going audience-first

The former is about sniffing around and trying to discover what your competition is doing and what sort of content works best for them.

In other words, what your competition blogs about = what you should blog about.

The way you're going to discover this is via keywords.

Keywords are what fuels Google searches. People search using keywords. Your competition creates content that tackles given keywords in hope that their content will be displayed whenever someone searches for those keywords.

What you need to do is insert yourself in the middle of that picture.

Find what specific keywords your competitors use, examine their posts, and then write something better.

Here are the tools you can use to discover what those keywords are:

- Ahrefs <sup>52</sup>
- BuzzSumo <sup>53</sup>
- Serpstat <sup>54</sup>

Look for your competitors' best content and make a list of those posts. Think on how you can write something that tackles the same keywords but is even better. Those are the topics worth writing about in the competition-first approach.

Going audience-first is an entirely different animal.

My favorite tool to use for that is Quora <sup>55</sup>.

Quora is a questions and answers website. As in, people ask questions (there are no limitations; if someone has a question, they can ask it), and other people submit their best answers. Then the community votes on who answered best.

But setting this core purpose of Quora's aside, it's also one of the very few places where you can find out what people really want to learn.

Every question you see there that is related to your niche and the topic of your blog is a great opportunity to write a new blog post about.

Here's why:

- Those are actual real people asking those questions, which means that whatever the topic of the question is, it is something that someone needs help with but hasn't been able to find a solution to yet.
- You can take that exact question, and write a blog post that's all about providing an answer. Then, you can publish an excerpt of that post as your answer directly on Quora and link back to your post for more (great tool for promotion).

To get started, start following all the topics on Quora that are relevant to your niche. Whenever some interesting question pops up, note it down and add it to your list of blog post ideas.

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<sup>52</sup> <https://ahrefs.com/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://buzzsumo.com/>

<sup>54</sup> <https://serpstat.com/>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.quora.com/>

Another thing you can do apart from binging Quora is go back to your competitors' blogs, but now for an entirely different reason:

Go back to those popular posts of theirs again, but this time scroll down to the comments section and note down any interesting questions that people ask in those comments. You will likely find a couple of gems that way as well.

...

In the end, your list of possible blog content ideas doesn't have to be huge. In fact, it's probably better to keep it short, just not to let any interesting idea slip by. I'd say 10 ideas is a good start.

Summing things up:

1. Look up what your competition is doing. See through their content, the keywords they tackle, what's popular on their sites. Make a list of those ideas that you want to cover as well.
2. Look through the questions people ask on Quora. See if you can answer some of them in new blog posts.
3. Look through the comments on your competitors' blogs. See if any of them could be the basis for new blog posts.
4. Compile a list of 10 blog post ideas to start with.

Once you have those, proceed to the next step.



Further reading:

- 20 ways to think up ideas for blog posts <sup>56</sup> – an easily-digestible list of interesting tactics you can use if you're still staring at a blank piece of paper.
- Skyscraper technique <sup>57</sup> – a very popular method that subscribes to the idea of going competition-first and beating them at their own game.
- How to get unlimited, sure-to-work blog post ideas in a non-obvious way <sup>58</sup> – another take on the topic (involves working with your audience directly – good stuff!)

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<sup>56</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/blog-post-ideas-for-wordpress/>

<sup>57</sup> <https://backlinko.com/skyscraper-technique>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/unlimited-blog-post-ideas/>

## Chapter 8: How to Write a Good Blog Post

If you're interested in learning how to write a good blog post then I'm afraid I don't have good news for you...

Crafting a quality blog post can take a lot – a lot(!) – of time.

Let me show you.

Exhibit (a): this post of ours comparing three of the most popular “mega themes” for WordPress – Divi vs Avada vs X Theme <sup>59</sup> took around 16.5 hours to complete. As in, from blank screen, all the way to hitting the “publish” button, it took us 16.5 hours of work. But that one is perhaps a bit extreme, due to its depth and the research that went into it.

That being said, you shouldn't really expect to craft a quality blog post in less than 3-4 hours.

### How to write a good blog post

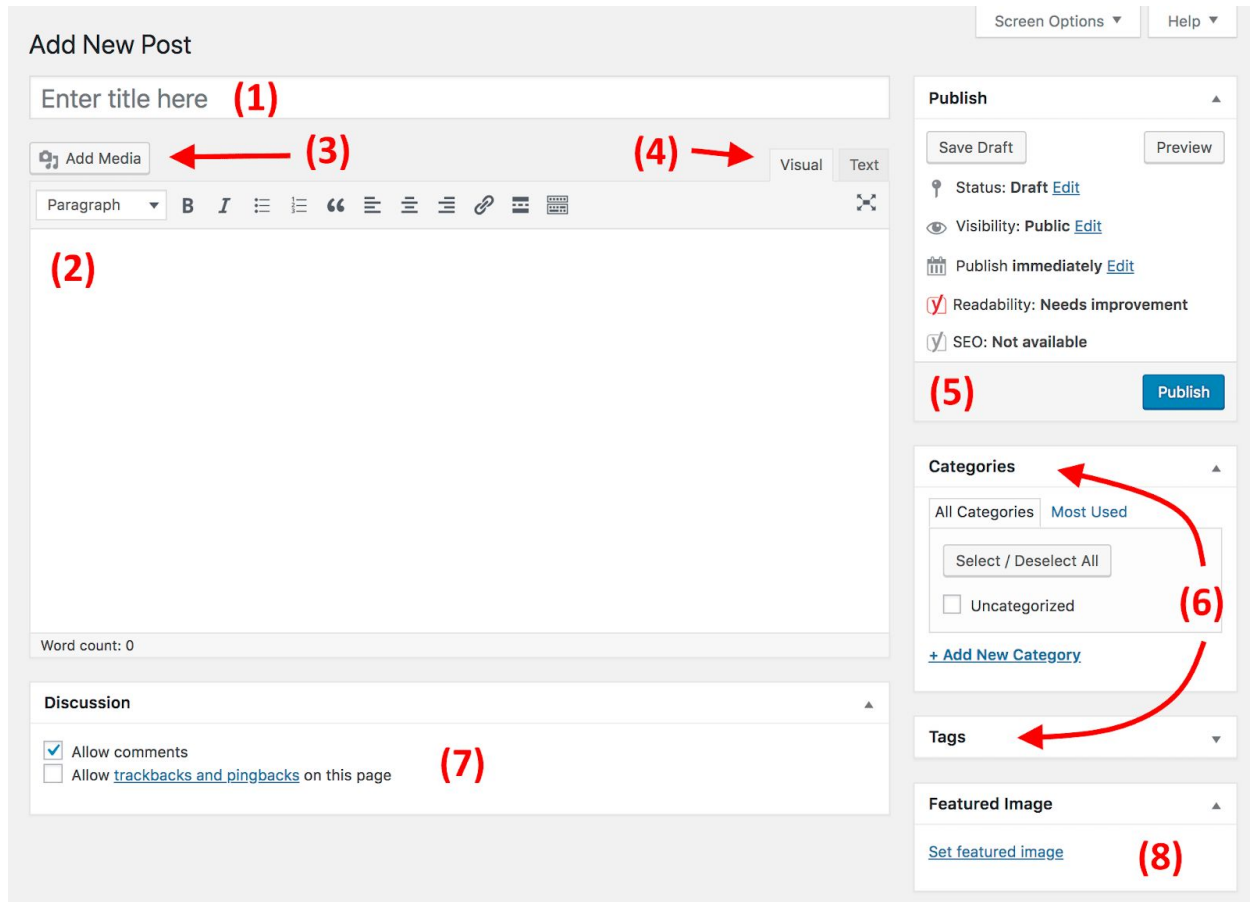
In the following sections, I'll show you what the exact steps are. Here's how to write a good blog post:

□ **Beginner's note:** How to start creating a new blog post in WordPress

After you log in to your WordPress admin panel, click on Posts in the main sidebar menu, and then on Add New. This will land you on a screen that looks something like this:

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/divi-vs-avada-vs-x-theme/>



- **(1)** A place for the headline of your post. WordPress will take that and show it to your visitors right above the body of the post.
- **(2)** The body section. This is where you can write your post. The interface is very similar to MS Word. You get all the basic text formatting features (like bold, italics, aligning text to left/right/center, creating lists, etc.), and you can also upload media to go alongside your text content.
- **(3)** You can add images to your post by clicking this button.
- **(4)** Switch between the Text and Visual editors. Use the former only if you're at least vaguely familiar with HTML code.
- **(5)** The Publish section. This is where the main Publish button is, and also where you can adjust the date of the publication or the post status.
- **(6)** Categories and Tags. You can assign your post to any number of categories and/or tags. It's up to you how you want to organize content on your blog.

- **(7) Discussion.** Decide whether or not you want to allow comments on your blog post. The “trackbacks and pingbacks” setting you can leave unchecked.
- **(8) Featured image.** Most WordPress themes take that featured image and display it somewhere in a prominent place alongside your blog post. Think of it as the image that’s the most representative of your blog post.

You might see other elements in this panel – this all depends on the exact theme and plugins that you have active and the options they offer.

## Step 1: Start with the goal in mind

Every blog post that you publish should have a specific purpose behind it – a goal that you want to further with the use of that post.

I know this might sound a bit “grand” perhaps, so let’s break things down:

First off, you need a content strategy when running a blog. You can’t just begin publishing posts left and right and hope that things will magically happen on their own.

In fact, compiling an actual written blog strategy doubles your chance of success (data says <sup>60</sup>).

But what does that mean exactly, right?

You need to start with your main goal.

A goal for your blog is the answer to the question of “why do you blog?” – a crucial element when figuring out how to write a good blog post.

- Do you want to build a brand in your niche and make a name for yourself?
- Do you want to make money by referring people to products and earn commissions?
- Do you want to sell your own products?
- Do you want to let people know about the latest goings-on within your company, or some events happening nearby?
- Do you want people to visit your brick and mortar business?
- Do you want to generate leads which you can then take and follow up with?
- Or maybe there’s something entirely different that’s on your radar...

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<sup>60</sup> <http://contentmarketinginstitute.com/2014/10/2015-b2b-content-marketing-research/>

Whatever your goal might be, it should always be the underlying reason behind you publishing each individual blog post. Each time you're working on a piece of content, think, "How is this helping me achieve X?"

Take a look at the following example; this is a post of ours comparing the most popular CDN services in the market <sup>61</sup>. There were three main goals that we wanted to achieve:

- Continue building up our brand in the WordPress community by providing an in-depth resource that WordPress pros can benefit from.
- Grow our newsletter.
- Bring additional income through affiliate links.

Check it out, see what you think of that post.

## Step 2: Pick the right keyword

We talked about keywords briefly when discussing how you can spy on your competition – to see what keywords they optimize for when creating content. Well, keyword research goes much deeper.

Each post that you publish should tackle a specific main keyword or key-phrase.

Ideally, that keyword is something that people search for a lot on Google, yet there's not many other posts or sites that compete to provide answers.

You can do keyword research with tools like Google Keyword Planner <sup>62</sup> or KWFinder <sup>63</sup>. I personally enjoy the latter since it comes back with a lot of additional details on each keyword and does a good job of suggesting actual questions that people might have on the topic. It also tells you how difficult it's going to be to earn a good spot for that keyword.

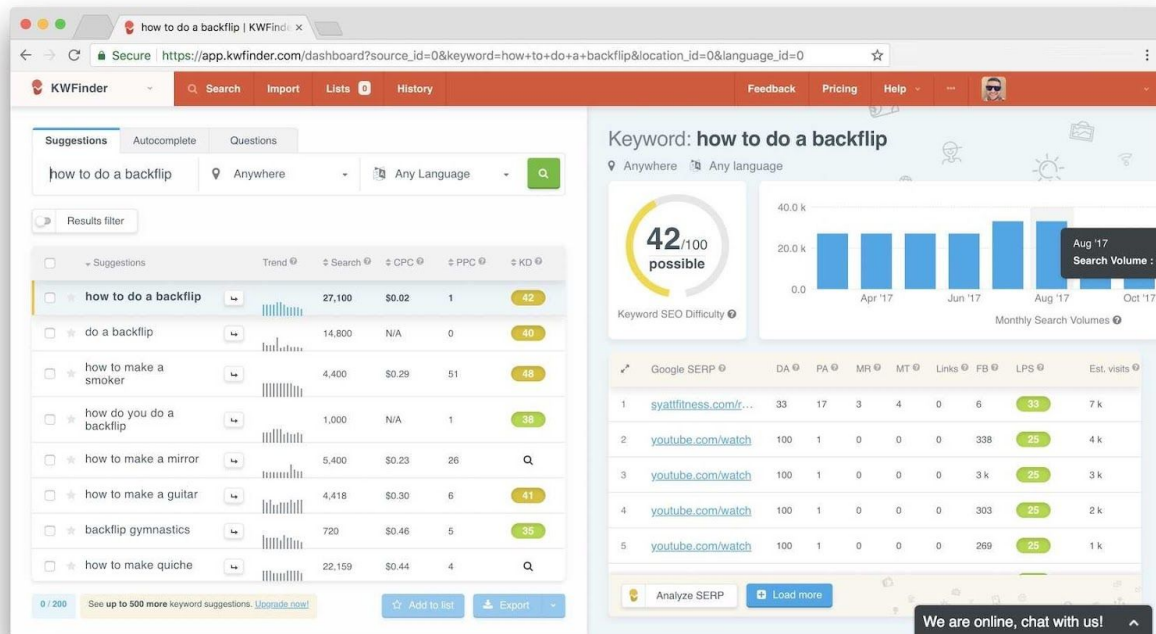
Example screen:

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<sup>61</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/maxcdn-vs-cloudflare-vs-cloudfront-vs-akamai-edge-vs-fastly/>

<sup>62</sup> <https://adwords.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/>

<sup>63</sup> <https://kwfinder.com/>



Every post that you create should have its own focus keyword. Don't duplicate your keywords. You shouldn't have more than one post optimizing for one specific keyword.

### Step 3: Come up with 5 (or more) alternative headlines

At this point, you have the main idea for your blog post mostly crafted. This means that you probably have the headline roughly figured out as well. However, you shouldn't actually settle on a final headline too soon.

Headlines do matter. Like, they really – really(!) – matter. Various research pieces done over the years indicate that headlines account for as much as 80%<sup>64</sup> of any given article's success. While this may sound insane at first, it actually checks out when we look at some of the absolute leaders in the headline game ... BuzzFeed and Upworthy.

Everyone's favorite "I really need to procrastinate right now!" -websites have made it a point to work on perfecting each and every one of their headlines ... to the point of absurd. Rest assured, when you see a headline like, "Which Justin Bieber Hairstyle Are You?" it's no coincidence.

For example, it's been reported that the editors at Upworthy propose up to 25 alternative headlines for every piece of content. That list is then narrowed down to a few final versions which are tested against each other.

<sup>64</sup> <https://moz.com/blog/5-data-insights-into-the-headlines-readers-click>

Why do they do this? What do they know about how to write a good blog post that we don't?

Well, again, they do it because headlines matter.

If your prospective visitor doesn't get excited upon seeing your headline, they won't ever see the rest of your post, no matter how awesome it might be.

So spend some quality time trying to come up with better headlines.

This is quite simple, actually: When you're getting ready to work on your next blog post, don't put your pen keyboard down until you have five alternative versions of your working headline.

Then, once you're done working on the post – once you go through the rest of the steps described below – come back to your headline ideas again and write another round of five new ones – leaving you with 10 alternative headlines in total.

...

Here's an example from this blog. Check out this post <sup>65</sup>. These were the headlines considered:

- Here Are 10 Reasons Why You Should Never Use WordPress
- 10 Actually Good Reasons Why You Should Never Use WordPress
- 10 Totally Legitimate Reasons Why You Should Never Use WordPress
- Why You Should Never Use WordPress: These 10 Reasons Actually Make Sense
- Don't Use WordPress! Here Are 10 Reasons Why

...

Need some help coming up with headlines? Try these tools:

- Content idea generator by Portent <sup>66</sup>
- Blog title generator by SEOPressor <sup>67</sup>
- Blog title generator by Impact <sup>68</sup>
- Hubspot's blog ideas generator <sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/never-use-wordpress/>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.portent.com/tools/title-maker>

<sup>67</sup> <https://seopressor.com/blog-title-generator/>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.impactbnd.com/blog-title-generator/blogabout>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.hubspot.com/blog-topic-generator#/>

- Emotional marketing value headline analyzer <sup>70</sup> (science!)

## Step 4: Prepare the outline

Outlines are crazy useful ... and probably your no.1 lifehack when mastering how to write a good blog post.

And I'm speaking both for myself and everyone else who has ever tried writing anything. Too bold of a statement? Okay.

Still, outlines are great for at least three reasons:

1. They help you clarify your idea for the post. This is where you get to decide what you're going to write specifically.
2. They give your post a better structure. It's easier to see how things fit together when you're looking at all subheads at once. You'll often end up realigning them for more clarity.
3. They keep you in check and make sure that your post doesn't get too lengthy and that you don't go off topic.

An outline doesn't need to be fancy. Even a simple list is good enough. Let me give you an example. Here's a post of ours: MaxCDN vs CloudFlare vs Amazon CloudFront vs Akamai Edge vs Fastly <sup>71</sup>

This is the original outline:

- Explain what a CDN is.
- Server locations.
- Pricing and features available (plus all the unique features that each CDN might have).
- Performance compared.
- The technical setup – what each CDN actually does under the hood.
- WordPress integration.
- Market popularity.
- Conclusion + ultimate comparison table.

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<sup>70</sup> <http://www.aminstitute.com/headline/>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/maxcdn-vs-cloudflare-vs-cloudfront-vs-akamai-edge-vs-fastly/>

## 🧑🔬 Step 5: Do your research

Putting in the groundwork and doing sufficient research before (and throughout) writing a blog post is probably the most overlooked part of the process.

We often trick ourselves into thinking that “I know this stuff! I can write from my head.”

Well, the harsh truth is that there are very few bloggers out there who are read because people actually care about their opinions. Most people care about rather what the content that the blogger provides can do for them.

Or to put it more bluntly: people don’t care about what you think, they care about what’s in it for them.

This basically comes down to one thing – trust.

Before you build sufficient trust, people have no reason to believe anything you say.



Think of it this way, if Christopher Nolan decided to publish a post titled, “Everything I know about filmmaking in 10 simple points” but did so under the name of Joe Doe, no one would care. If he signed his own name under the same post, well, that would probably be trending for like ever!

What I’m trying to say is that you can’t afford to write content based purely on your own thoughts and opinions when you’re just starting out. So this is where hard data comes into the picture.

By researching your topic beforehand and referencing various data points throughout, you’re effectively convincing your reader that they should pay attention to what you’re saying because the information has its grounds somewhere. This is how trust is built and, eventually, how to write a good blog post.

Here’s what you can do specifically:

- Look for case studies done by other bloggers. Use those, describe them, reference them.
- Look for research pieces / studies from reputable sources in your industry. Build your arguments and/or advice based on that data. Reference the data sources in your writing and give people credit.

- Do your own experiments and case studies. Describe them in detail. Don't leave anything out.
- Reach out to experts or influencers in your niche and ask them about a specific problem. Feature their answers in your content; like we did here <sup>72</sup> – 43 bloggers weighed in on their most powerful social media strategy.

All of the above proves to your reader that you know what you're talking about.

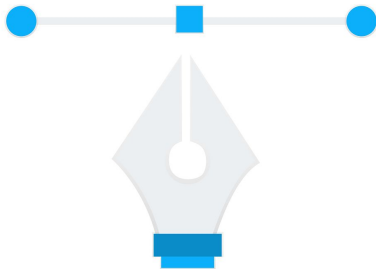
...

Here's an example from this blog <sup>73</sup> – a post on how to optimize your ThemeForest landing page. We did a couple of things in that post:

- we did our own research and analysis,
- we reached out to experts and asked for their opinions,
- we found a lot of examples to help us make a better case.

#### Step 6: "Write → Edit → Proofread"

Although this will lengthen the process of creating a blog post considerably, it will also make the final effect soooo much better. Here's the thing:



How to write a good blog post? Make it a three-step process:

- Write on day one.
- Edit on day two.
- Proofread on day three.

Sounds like overdoing it, but hear me out:

## Writing

First, when you write, you should write only, with no self-correction on the fly. This self-correcting is very tempting. We often feel that fixing our sentences/paragraphs as we write them makes sense. It seems natural, it's what we did when writing papers for school. But this is far from effective!

<sup>72</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/social-media-marketing-strategy/>

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/optimize-themeforest-landing-page/>

The problem with editing as you write is that it stops the flow of ideas, disrupts your creative thinking and makes storytelling harder.

The goal when creating the first draft is to get as many words as possible out, and not to worry about how it all reads. Just write down everything that you can think of that relates to the topic at hand. Don't correct yourself on any of it.

## Editing

Then, once you have the whole draft written, this is when editing can take place. But let things sit. Come back the next day and start working on your draft then, editing it and making it better, tighter.

Here are some additional tips <sup>74</sup> on how to do this right.

## Proofreading

Lastly, there's proofreading – getting all the typos out of the way. This is, again, something that's worth doing after another day of idle time. This break simply allows you to bring some fresh eyes to it, which, in result, lets you notice some new issues.

Personally, the proofreading phase is also where I take care of other looks-related tasks, such as adding images to my post, tuning up the layout (example below), and finally evaluating if what I have in my palm is likely to help me achieve the goal that I set before I ever got started on the post. If not, back to editing.

## Step 7: Repeat

All that's left now is to keep coming back and going through the process over and over again with each consecutive blog post of yours.

There might be nothing sexy about this process, sorry ... there's really no silver bullet solution when it comes to publishing reliable, quality blog posts. It all comes down to regular effort and being conscious of why you want to write a certain blog post and what you can expect from it.

 **PRO TIP:** Create an editorial calendar. To keep your efforts more consistent as you're learning how to write a good blog post, it's a great idea to create an editorial calendar. In its simplest form, this can be very basic. Even blocking off time in Google Calendar is good enough. For more impact, you can experiment with tools like Trello <sup>75</sup> (our favorite) or CoSchedule <sup>76</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/format-wordpress-blog-posts/>

<sup>75</sup> <https://trello.com/>

<sup>76</sup> <https://coschedule.com/>

...

Overall, your task when crafting any blog post is to share information that nobody else shares, or information that people would happily pay for, yet you are giving to them for free.

For example, our first hit on this blog was a post titled *How to Simplify the WP-Admin to Get It Client-Friendly*<sup>77</sup>. At the time, there were virtually no posts on the topic and few people knew this was possible, yet, there were still users looking this up on Google anyway. We noticed this and wrote the post.

## Your turn

This about sums up the topic of how to write a good blog post and also Chapter 8 of our guide on how to build, grow and promote a blog. Here are all the important steps again, in checklist form – should make things easier to follow as you’re going through the motions:

- 📋 Step 1: Start with the goal in mind
- 🔑 Step 2: Pick the right keyword
- 🗣️ Step 3: Come up with 5 (or more) alternative headlines
- 📄 Step 4: Prepare the outline
- 🧑🔬 Step 5: Do your research
- ✍️ Step 6: Write → Edit → Proofread
- 🔁 Step 7: Repeat

## Chapter 9: WordPress Blog SEO – Where to Start

When it comes to starting a blog, you just can’t skip search engine optimization (SEO). In other words, WordPress blog SEO is crucial if you ever want for people to discover your blog.

But don’t worry – it’s not as complicated as you might think. We’ll quickly cover the basics so you can start blogging on the right foot.

Specifically, we’ll talk about:

- 🧑🔬 Keyword research
- 📄 On-page SEO

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<sup>77</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/how-to-simplify-the-wp-admin/>

- 🏠 Site architecture
- 🔑 Link building

## Keyword research – the key to WordPress blog SEO 🧐🔍

Every page and post on your blog should have a target keyword. Every single one!

But how do you know what keyword to target?

The easiest way is one we talked about in one of the previous chapters – simply start with your competition.

Find their top-performing posts by plugging their URL into BuzzSumo <sup>78</sup>, then take the URL of their top post and plug that into Google Keyword Planner <sup>79</sup> (GKP) to see what keywords they rank for.

### Keyword Planner

Where would you like to start?

#### 🔍 Find new keywords and get search volume data

▼ Search for new keywords using a phrase, website or category

Enter one or more of the following:  
Your product or service

Your landing page

Your product category

Before you begin

[How to use Keyword Planner](#)

[How to see your organic data](#)

[Building a Display campaign? Try Display Planner](#)

Competitor's Blog  
Post URL Here

If you see any good ones, steal 'em!

💡 PRO TIP: The “competition” row in GKP refers to paid advertising, not organic rankings, so don't worry about that when choosing a keyword.

- You can check out this guide <sup>80</sup> for more help on finding a proven topic and good keywords for your WordPress blog SEO.

<sup>78</sup> <http://buzzsumo.com/>

<sup>79</sup> <https://adwords.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/practical-seo-guide/#keyword-research>

## On-page SEO: a quick & dirty overview

On-page SEO is the practice of including your keyword (and LSI keywords – words or phrases that are semantically related to each other) in strategic locations on your page. It's important to tell Google what your content is about.

Specifically, you should include your primary keyword in:

- The page title
- The URL of the page
- At least one subheading (H2 or H3) on the page
- At least one image's alt text
- The meta title
- The meta description
- The body content (a handful of times)

...

So, for example, if you're targeting "SEO tips" as your main keyword, your page would be optimized like this:

- Title: "5 SEO Tips to Grow Your Rankings (Fast!)"
- URL: [yoursite.com/seo-tips](https://yoursite.com/seo-tips)
- H2: The SEO Tips That Actually Matter
- Image alt text: "SEO tips for beginners"
- Meta title: "5 SEO Tips to Grow Your Rankings (Fast!)"
- Meta Description: "Looking for SEO tips? These 5 tactics helped us go from 0 to 1,000 daily visitors in less than 6 months!"
- And of course in the content, you'd use "SEO tips" a few times. I recommend at least 3-5 per 1000 words, but don't overdo it, because Google will penalize you for keyword stuffing.

Sounds like a lot to remember, right?

That's where the Yoast SEO <sup>81</sup> plugin comes in! The best all-in-one solution for WordPress blog SEO (and also one of the plugins that we've recommended as a must-have in an earlier chapter).

Yoast reminds you to put your keyword in the right places and warns you if you're doing something wrong. So just make sure you get "all green lights" from Yoast before you publish anything!

Right below your main content block – when editing a post – is where you're going to find the Yoast block, and within it is where you should seek the approval of the almighty green lights 🟢 (example below).



And I really do mean all of those green lights. For instance, the editor here at CodeinWP won't ever approve a post until it's all green. I know this is sometimes a difficult thing to achieve based on what your keyword is, but it really pays off in the long run.

- Check out this guide <sup>82</sup> to learn more on how to go about your on-page SEO.

## Site architecture: structure your site for readers and Google 🏛️

The way your site is set up affects how easily users (and Google's crawler bots) can navigate it.

There are two golden rules to site architecture in terms of WordPress blog SEO:

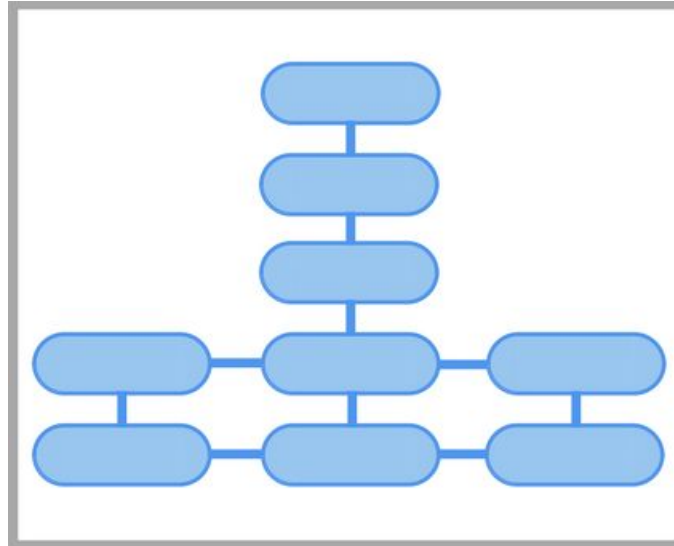
1. Every page should be within three clicks of every other page.
2. Your site should be simple and scalable.

More on those later. First, an example of BAD site architecture (each block is a single sub-page):

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<sup>81</sup> <https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-seo/>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/practical-seo-guide/#on-page-optimization>

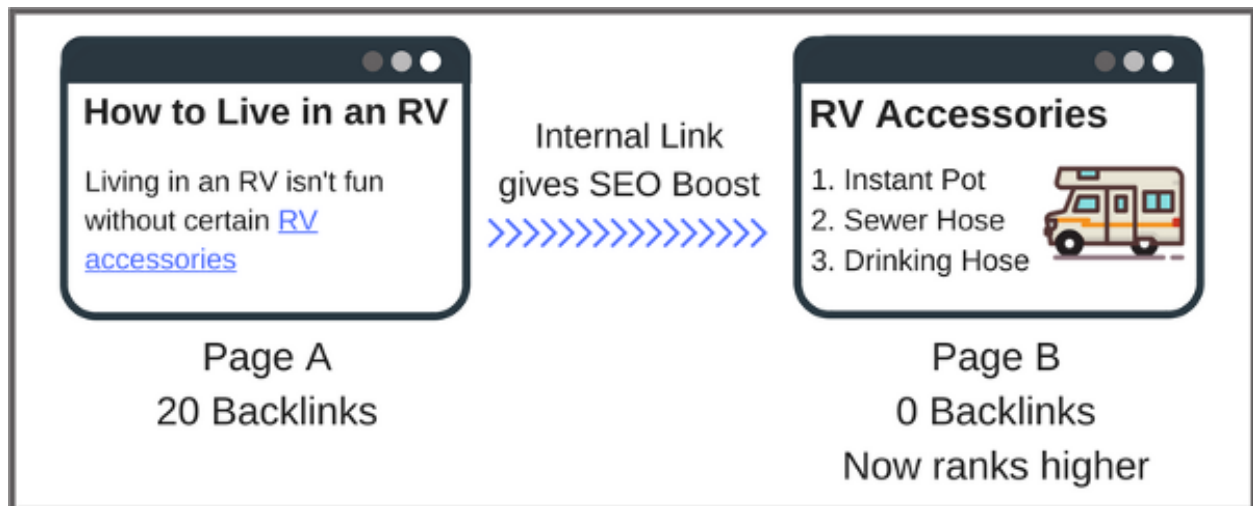


It breaks both rules. It takes as many as five clicks to get to the content (go from the top to the bottom left), and it's not scalable.

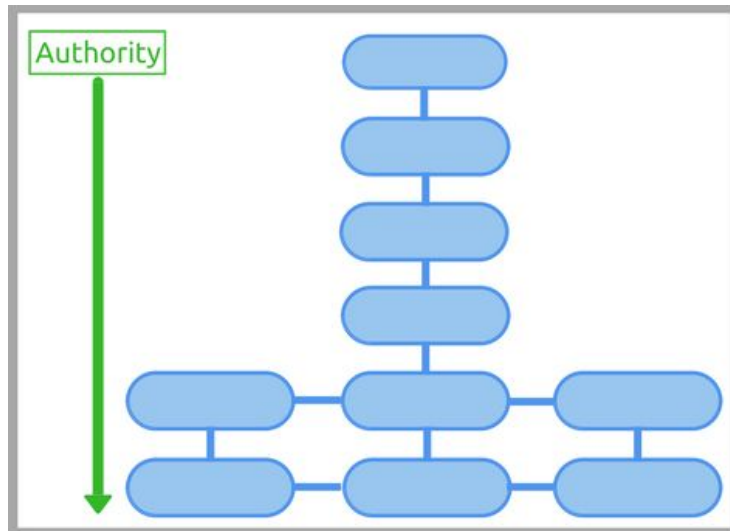
Not only is this poor for navigation, it also hurts your search rankings. Here's why:

Typically, your home page is the most authoritative page on your site. Internal links from one page on your site to another pass some of that "link juice" or "authority" from one page to another. This was formerly called PageRank, but Google no longer uses that term.

Visually, it works like this:

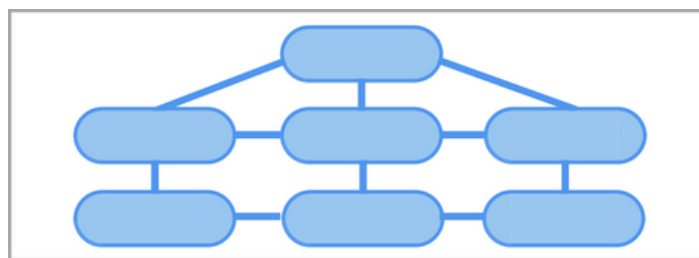


So if you bury your posts deep within your site, you're losing the authority from your home page. Here's another visual:



So your blog posts lose out on that link authority.

Instead, set up your site like this:



Your pages are linked together like a web. These internal links help Google crawl all your pages efficiently, while helping users get around your site. It also spreads around your site's authority, helping all your content rank = that's good WordPress blog SEO.

## How to get started with link building 🔑

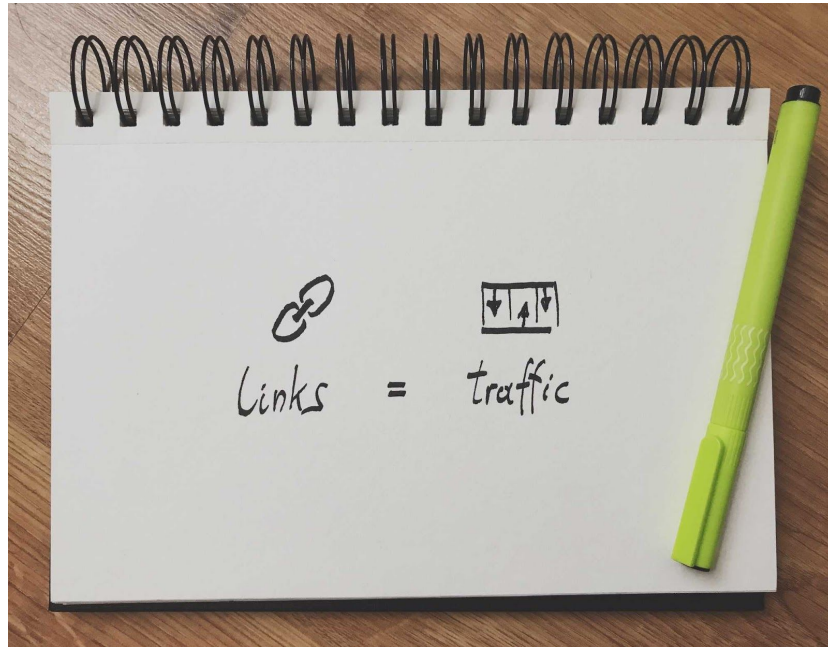
Just as internal links from one of your pages to another passes authority, so too do links from other people's websites to yours.

Actually, links from another website to yours are far more important for ranking your website on Google than internal links. Think of links like votes for Google. The more votes your website has, the better chance it has to rank highly.

However, you don't just want links to your homepage. While they do help, what's more important are links directly to the individual blog posts you're trying to rank.

Matthew Barby, the director of HubSpot, performed a study on their site and found that pages with more links received far more organic search traffic than pages with fewer links.

I would even risk saying something like this:



So you get it – links are important. But how do you get them?

If I were starting from scratch with no connections in a brand new niche, I would start by building relationships with the influencers in the industry.

Not only will these relationships leads to backlinks, but they can also lead to partnerships, help sharing your content, and loads of learning.

To find those influencers, start with Google. Just start searching for topics you're interested in. The top results are typically influencers.

The image shows a Google search interface for the query "beauty routine". The search bar at the top shows the query and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, the search results are displayed. Four red arrows originate from the text "Potential Influencers" on the left and point to the following search results:

- Beauty Routine - Skin Regimen Tips - Refinery29**  
[www.refinery29.com/beauty-routine](http://www.refinery29.com/beauty-routine) ▼  
Whether you've never had a **beauty routine** and want to start, or you think yours needs a little tweaking, this is the ultimate guide to a perfect **beauty regimen**.
- 13 Essentials for Your Beauty Regimen - Women's Health**  
<https://www.womenshealthmag.com/beauty/beauty-routine> ▼  
Jan 20, 2010 - By capitalizing on the tiny biological changes your body experiences around the clock, you can amplify your good looks. Just follow this easy a.m.-to-p.m. beautifying **routine** for head-turning results.
- 12 Beauty Routines You're Doing Wrong | Reader's Digest**  
<https://www.rd.com/health/beauty/beauty-routine-wrong/> ▼  
Dermatologists reveal minor tweaks to your daily **beauty** habits that can save you money and time and result in smoother, younger-looking skin.
- The 10 Step Korean Skin Care Routine – Soko Glam**  
<https://sokoglam.com/pages/the-korean-skin-care-routine> ▼  
Your **skin care routine** is super personal, so it's best to focus less on how many steps you have and more on which steps are right for your skin type.

Get together a list of 10-20 of these people. Follow them on social media, share their content, and comment on their blogs. Do all the things you wish people would do for you.

After that, reach out to them and ask for their feedback on your content. Be genuine about it – talk about how you found them, what you love about their blog, or what you admire about them. The more genuine you are, the better your chances of getting a response.

Once you become better than acquaintances with them, ask them straight up if they'd mention your content on their blog. Make sure it's valuable for their readers, and they'll probably be more than happy to help.

 Further reading:

- Link Building for SEO by Brian Dean <sup>83</sup>. Brian is one of the most respected experts in the link building realm and he certainly knows what he's talking about.
- The section covering off-page optimization <sup>84</sup> in our practical SEO guide.

<sup>83</sup> <https://backlinko.com/link-building>

<sup>84</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/practical-seo-guide/#off-page-optimization>

And that's all there is to it! You now know more about WordPress blog SEO than 80% of bloggers out there. Give yourself a pat on the back!

With all that being said, I do realize that some of this may sound perhaps a bit too simple and too convenient. There doesn't seem to be any secret sauce here, right?

Well, there's no magic trick that's sure to "break SEO," unfortunately. SEO is mostly about doing a lot of little things, and doing them regularly. It really is about showing up and doing the actual work rather than hoping to stumble upon the next killer technique.

This is basically how we built this blog's position in the WordPress niche. We networked with people, commented, reached out to them a number of times, made friends, and so on. This, in time, allowed us to get links and thus improve our search engine rankings.

We talk some more about that in the next chapter, which is all about effective blog promotion, check it out:

## Chapter 10: How to Promote Your Blog

First off, let's be up-front here about one (unfortunate) thing when it comes to learning how to promote your blog...

Scratch that ... this goes way beyond blogs. It works pretty much the same when promoting anything else, really.

It's this:

To make any sort of promotion actually work, you need either of two resources: 🕒 ... 💰

(That's time and money, in case you have emoji disabled.)

There are no silver bullets when it comes to learning how to promote your blog, or, rather, they very rarely occur.

For example, when Medium first got off the ground, lots of people got exposure by moving their articles over to that new platform, and then linking them back to their original blogs.

In principle, the tactic was simple – this was very near to what we could call a silver bullet.

But opportunities like that don't come often, and when they do, you can only take advantage of them for a short while.

So what to do instead? Like I said, either of two things ... or both:

- 🕒 spend time promoting your blog regularly using a couple of methods, each time perfecting your approach,
- 💰 spend money to get blog traffic instantly and hope that it's going to be enough to get the ball rolling.

Neither is perfect. Neither is better. Both have their place, and both can be used when learning how to promote your blog.

So, what do we recommend specifically – as in, what to do to promote your new blog effectively?

Here's the process that works:

## How to promote your blog

### 1. It starts with your content

We've spent a sizable part of this guide discussing how to decide what to blog about, plus how to then come up with specific content ideas. We've done that because your content is the most important asset of your blog.

In other words, no amount of promotion will ever matter if the content itself is not top notch.

Or, to say it yet another way, only the best content is worth promoting.

Basically, if you're promoting the type of content that's not the best on a given topic then you're only losing time and/or money because that thing is never going to rise to the top. There's always going to be someone better, with a better article/study/video/whatnot.

So, again, think content first. If you've really given it your best and you have a *truly* awesome piece of content in your hands, this is when you promote it!

...

Here's an example I mentioned before – our post on how to simplify the admin interface in WordPress <sup>85</sup>. It's not huge, and it's not flashy or anything, but it did tackle a topic that no one knew was a thing, yet was really interesting for people building sites for clients. Other posts that did cover similar topics were not written from the perspective of simplifying the interface, but were rather direct how-tos on the individual tools. Our post followed a different angle and thus was able to resonate better with the readers.

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<sup>85</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/how-to-simplify-the-wp-admin/>

Another example on how to promote your blog from a different blogger. The post <sup>86</sup> generated lots of discussion and attention in the WordPress niche, despite the site being relatively small and not so popular. It presented an interesting opinion, was published at the right time and to the right people.

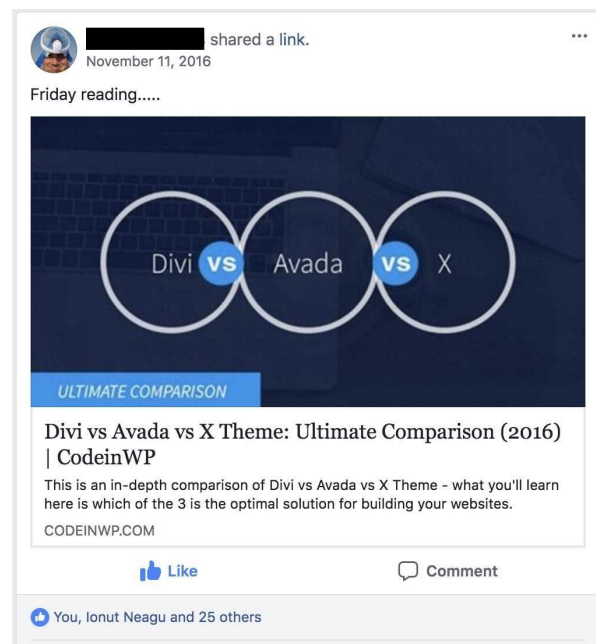
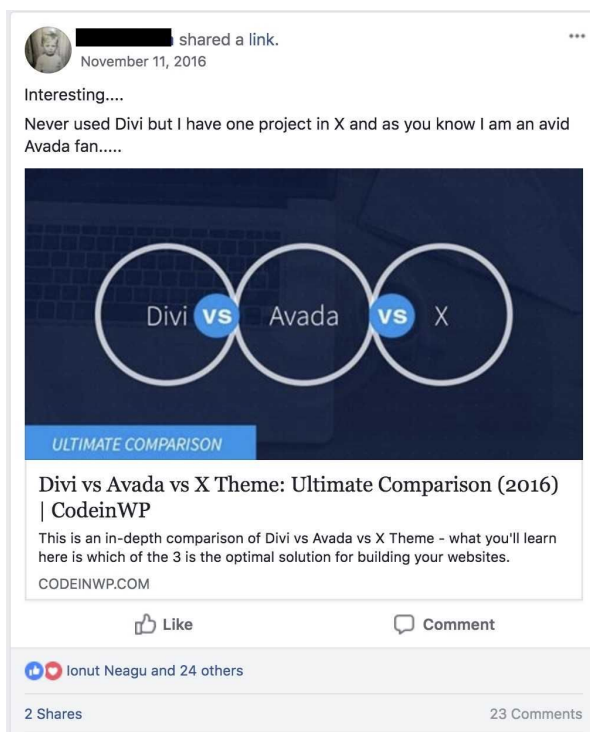
## 2. ABN – Always Be Networking

This rule is just as true when it comes to promoting a blog as it is in any line of business – who you know is just as important as what you know.

Knowing the right people can take your blog post from just another page on the web, to one of the trending sensations of the week, and I'm not exaggerating here.

...

Take this post of ours as an example, it's a direct battle/comparison between the three main mega themes in the market – Divi, Avada, and X <sup>87</sup>. One of the main things we did to promote it was shared it with each theme's community group on Facebook. We knew some of the people there. We shared their content previously, we interacted with them. So when it was us who had something to share, they were eager to check it out.



<sup>86</sup> <http://scottbolinger.com/perspective-on-wordpress/>

<sup>87</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/divi-vs-avada-vs-x-theme/>

These days, networking becomes easier and easier. We have Facebook groups for nearly any topic imaginable, there are forums, subreddits, and so on. Meeting likeminded people really isn't difficult.

Therefore, what you should do first when learning how to promote your blog is join every Facebook group that's relevant to your niche.

- 💡 Start by listening in. Pay attention to the discussions going on, interact with people, start helping them with whatever you can help them with.
- 🗣️ Every once in a while, ask your own questions. Not fake ones, though. I'm talking about some genuine things that you're curious about regarding your niche/blog topic.

With time, you will become known in the group and people will naturally pay attention to what you want to show them as well.

Another thing you can do is join an online course either related to your niche, or on general business topics. Many online courses have a community component to them, usually in the form of an online forum. Interact with people there in a similar manner.

Over time, your network will grow to the point where you will be able to make a "payout" every once in a while by asking people to take a look and possibly promote something that you wrote.

### 3. Do one thing, repeatedly

Your network will come in handy when you want to promote a new piece of your "cornerstone content" – something big that you publish only once in a while, and something that you really want people to see.

However, you can't be asking people to share your content every time you publish anything new. This would make them quite annoyed with you really quickly.

So for regular promotion, it's good to build your own process, which you can reliably execute every time you publish a new post.

The idea is to use that process as a launch pad. Here's what I mean:

1. You begin by promoting every piece of content the same way.
2. Pay attention to the early results coming in.
3. If anything starts bringing in, say, 10x the usual results (more shares, more comments), ramp up your promotion efforts by either sharing with your network or investing more funds in paid promotion.

This sounds great, right, but how to promote your blog exactly – what to do exactly? How to build this promotion process?

There are two main ways: the free route or the paid route.

 **The free route** consists of sharing your own content to different social media channels and bookmarking sites. Think things like Reddit but for your specific niche.

- For instance, in the WordPress space we have ManageWP.org <sup>88</sup>.
- In tech, there's HackerNews <sup>89</sup>.
- For software products there's ProductHunt <sup>90</sup>.
- GrowthHackers <sup>91</sup> for productivity and education.
- Designer News <sup>92</sup> for all-things design.
- And so on.

Find the most popular such platforms in your niche – or the niche directly above yours (if it's too small) – and start building up your profile there. Begin sharing content and also read and vote up other people's content.

 **The paid route** is even simpler. All you need is \$5 a day to promote your posts on Facebook.

Let's not get into how to best do that specifically here, since it's a rather large topic, but the principle is simple:

Research what your ideal audience's demographics are → target them on Facebook directly.

Show them your content, and pay close attention to what sort of results you're getting.

The fact is that we never know what will ultimately turn out to be a popular post. You just can't predict such things.

This is why you need to promote everything equally and then pay attention to what works.

The point of both the free route and the paid route is to start getting even the tiniest bit of exposure for your posts.

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<sup>88</sup> <https://managewp.org/>

<sup>89</sup> <https://news.ycombinator.com/>

<sup>90</sup> <https://www.producthunt.com/>

<sup>91</sup> <https://growthhackers.com/>

<sup>92</sup> <https://www.designernews.co/>

## 4. Important: Double down on what works!

This is the most important step of them all when it comes to learning how to promote your blog.

Once you're doing your day-to-day promotion, perfecting your methods and learning the process, you will inevitably have some posts that do much better than others. It's when something starts getting 10x the shares or comments.

This is the time to double down on your efforts.



- Allocate more budget to promoting the post on Facebook (or start promoting it in the first place if you've only been doing free promotion so far).
- Reach out to your network and show them the post.
- Submit the post to more social networking / bookmarking channels if you haven't already.

For example, what we like to do with posts that start picking up some steam is promote them via Sidebar.io (one of the best tech newsletters out there) and WPMail.me (for WordPress things).

The goal is to make the post go as "viral" as we can. If enough people see it, it will inevitably get to some influencers as well, at which stage it can be shared even further.

Viral posts will also lead to more links coming to your site, and thus more people following those links to check you out.

What you're ultimately looking for are big wins. If some post remains ignored for the most part by your audience then don't try to shove it down their throats repeatedly no matter what. This is not how to promote your blog. Just move on to the next post.

After that, it's your job to keep those people on the site, which brings me to:

## 5. Keep people engaged

40.5% – that's the average bounce rate reported by Mercury.one. Bounce rate stands for the number of people that visit your site only for a second and leave basically immediately upon arrival.

Getting people to visit you is just half the battle...

You also want to keep them on your site somehow, so that they can consume even more content. There are two main ways to do that:

## a) Interlink your content heavily

A good internal linking structure is a hugely underrated thing.

Without good internal links, people won't consume any more of your content than the page they originally came to see.

Aim to include at least one internal link per 250 words of blog post content.

You'll be surprised how effective this can be as you learn how to promote your blog.

## b) Start a newsletter

A professional (or semi-professional but money-making) blog needs a newsletter list.

The idea is that once you convince your website visitors to subscribe to the newsletter, you get to notify them of any new posts that you publish. Great for blog growth.

The difficult part is the convincing.

There are various ways to do that. Chief of them is offering people some free resource in exchange for subscribing.

We've published a whole two-part case study on how we're building our newsletter list on this blog. Check it out here <sup>93 94</sup>.

To run the newsletter itself, you can use platforms like SendinBlue, MailChimp, Sendy or MailPoet <sup>95</sup>. The setup is rather straightforward and can be done in under an hour. The newsletter can be a digest-style message that you send out to your email subscribers regularly.

## The promotion puzzle – a bird's-eye view

Taking all of the above into account, this is what blog promotion is all about:

-  Create content worth promoting.
-  Always be networking – take active part in relevant Facebook groups.
-  Build a promotion process that you can reliably execute every time you publish a new post. Rely on free and/or paid methods.

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<sup>93</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/case-study-part-1-from-0-to-4000-email-marketing/>

<sup>94</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/case-study-part-2-from-0-to-4000-email-marketing/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/mailchimp-alternatives/>

- ✂ Double down on what works! Meaning, allocate more resources to promoting the content that brings in 10x more initial results than your average post.
- 😊 Keep people engaged and on your site. Do this by interlinking your content well. Also start a newsletter.

As you can see, learning how to promote your blog and actually being able to pull it off is not very sexy. It's mainly a combination of doing the same things over and over again, and being no less discouraged each time you get 0 response. The ones who manage to stick with it are the ones who win.

So, what can happen when you do “win”? This is what the next chapter is about:

## Chapter 11: How to Monetize a Blog

Though not perfect, the question of “how to monetize a blog” is often the very first thing that new bloggers ask ... literally on day one of their blogging adventure.

How to start a blog and make money?

Can I quit my job already?

Okay, hold your horses! We'll get to all that. But consider yourself warned, learning how to monetize a blog isn't a one-and-done thing. You will need to put in some serious effort to get worthwhile results.

In this chapter, we have five methods for you – all of them battle-tested ways to monetize a blog:

1. 💰 Affiliate marketing
2. 🧑 Freelancing
3. 🏆 Sponsorships and advertising
4. 🎓 Creating an online course
5. 🛒 Selling a book or product

We'll go through them one by one and explain how to implement them for maximum impact.

# Where to start if you want to learn how to monetize a blog?

The order above is not accidental. If you're figuring out how to start a blog and make money for the first time, we advise experimenting with affiliate marketing first and then progressing to the other methods (should they make sense for your specific business).

Setting out to, say, write a book or create a course right out the gate might be too much. Especially since you haven't yet screened your niche and don't know if people are going to be interested in things like that. In other words, your investment into writing a book or developing a product might go in vain. That's why starting with something like affiliate marketing is usually better – since you can put things in motion in mere minutes.

That being said, please note that you don't have to do everything described here in order to make good income. Sometimes you will get great results from just one or two techniques. Even this very blog takes advantage of just three of the methods described below.

Okay, let's dive in! Here's how to monetize a blog:



## 1. Monetize a blog through affiliate links

Affiliate marketing is the first monetization method on the list because it's generally the easiest to get started with.

First off, what is affiliate marketing?

In simple terms, affiliate marketing is the process of promoting other people's products in exchange for a commission whenever your recommendation leads directly to a sale.

This is all made possible and tracked via affiliate links. Here's what a link like that might look like:

```
http://SOMEPRODUCT.com/?affid=1234
```

Basically it's a standard link, only with the `affid=1234` part added at the end. This is what allows your recommendation to be tracked and then ultimately be tied to a specific sale when it happens.

Commissions are usually in the range of 5%-75% of the sticker price. If it's physical products we're talking about, it's nearer the 5% mark. For digital stuff, even 100% commissions are possible.

The most important part here from the buyer's perspective is that they still pay the standard sticker price, so none of your commission is funded by the buyer.

Now, there are two main puzzle pieces that you need to put in place if you want to monetize your blog through affiliate marketing:

- 📦 which affiliate products you're going to promote,
- 📈 how you're going to promote them.

Therefore, the first order of business, how to find products to promote?

Every niche and market have its own common practices when it comes to the affiliate realm, but generally speaking, if a product has an affiliate program available, it's going to be mentioned somewhere on the company's website. Likely in the footer, or even the main menu.

Here are three golden rules of how to monetize a blog with affiliate marketing:

- 🙋 only promote products that you use yourself, believe in, and know are great
- 🙋 only promote products that you wouldn't be ashamed to promote
- 🙋 only promote products that your audience will enjoy and/or benefit from

Though this might sound simple enough, this can get tricky and especially if your blog is in a niche like personal finance or fitness. There's more than enough products in those niches that lure affiliates in with big payouts, despite being of relatively poor quality. That's why the "personally believe in" and "audience will benefit from" factors are so important here.

An example of what we promote on this very blog as part of our affiliate marketing monetization model:

Since this blog is about all things WordPress it makes sense that some of our readers will be interested in WordPress themes. It just so happens that most premium theme stores have their affiliate programs. Therefore, whenever we mention themes in our posts, we can use our affiliate links to do so.

Here's an example from one such post <sup>96</sup>.

## What can you reasonably expect from affiliate marketing?

Affiliate marketing can be a great source of income when learning how to start a blog and make money, but it all depends on two factors:

- the size of your traffic
- how responsive your audience is and/or how effective you are when promoting affiliate products

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<sup>96</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/best-wordpress-themes/>

With time, your traffic will grow, so let's not worry about this aspect for now. Basically, the sooner you get started with affiliate marketing the sooner you'll see any kind of results coming your way.

When it comes to effective promotion, here are some of the possible ways to go about it. How to monetize a blog:

- review the products you're promoting and use your affiliate links in the reviews; example: Elementor vs Divi Builder vs Beaver Builder <sup>97</sup>
- publish compilation posts (lists), where you discuss a number of products that achieve a certain goal; example: 5 Best Contact Form Plugins for WordPress Compared <sup>98</sup>
- recommend products in how-to posts (of course, only if they help the cause); example: How to Create a Local Search Directory Like Yelp on WordPress <sup>99</sup>

Though affiliate marketing is the easiest and probably the most effective monetization technique that you can use, the devil is in the details of how exactly you run your affiliate promotions.

The core difference between this and, say, putting some AdSense ads on your site is that, with affiliate marketing, it's only you who's responsible for targeting and making sure that the product fits the audience. With standard ads (via AdSense or otherwise), you're basically just renting out the space on your site, and it's the advertisers who need to figure out what to promote, to whom, and how.

What I'm getting at is that placing a random affiliate offer on your site won't work that well. This is why we're using targeted reviews, compilation posts and make those direct product recommendations if and when they fit the topic of a specific tutorial on the blog.

## How to monetize a blog by executing a good affiliate marketing strategy

With the above in mind, let's get into specifics and see how affiliate marketing can be integrated into your blog. Let's imagine that the topic of your blog is wedding planning.

### Example article #1: "10 Tips on How to Cope With Pre-Wedding Depression"

The person reading an article like that probably already has almost everything about their wedding planned out, or at least the key things. For instance, it doesn't really make sense to try to sell them on a wedding location (via an affiliate offer). They already have that.

What does make sense is maybe mentioning that preparing for a dream honeymoon can help cope with the feeling. While the advice given in the post needs to be of high quality and provide

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<sup>97</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/elementor-vs-divi-builder-vs-beaver-builder/>

<sup>98</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/best-contact-form-plugins-wordpress/>

<sup>99</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/create-a-local-search-directory-like-yelp-on-wordpress/>

value in itself, you can also recommend specific trips or travel bureaus and get a cut of the sale if the reader buys anything.

### Example article #2: “How Much Does a Wedding Cost?”

This type of article presents both a huge opportunity but also a huge challenge in terms of monetizing it via affiliate marketing.

First off, the person reading probably doesn’t have anything booked/purchased yet, and they perhaps even expect the author to recommend some solutions.

The challenge is that the person isn’t ready to buy anything either.

They’re just window shopping. So, how to monetize a blog in this scenario? Promoting wedding locations, honeymoon destinations or anything related will not likely work. The author’s best bet is just to recommend further reading on topics like:

- “Why Getting a Jaw-Dropping Dress Is Important (How to Save on Price)”
- “How to Negotiate Service Prices for Your Wedding”
- “How to Save Money on Your Honeymoon Destination”

What you do know now is that the reader is price-conscious, otherwise they wouldn’t be looking up the topic of wedding cost, so you can try to educate them and offer genuine help instead of trying to monetize right away.

You can leave monetization for your other articles – ones where the reader’s intent is more towards buying. For example, a post titled “How to Save Money on Your Honeymoon” can promote a special early-bird deal for a trip.

Apart from looking into how to start a blog and make money by monetizing individual blog posts, you should also aim to get the reader onto your email list and then build a relationship with them through that medium. You can also start building up a marketing automation funnel to make sure that you time your messages just right based on the recipient’s former activity with your newsletter. Though, this is a bit on the advanced monetization side of things.

Even though you’re promoting other people’s products here, understanding the customer journey and intent can help you structure your content better and come up with niche article ideas that might get very few visitors, but can generate big returns.

For example, if you publish a post like, “Bali or Thailand for the Honeymoon,” the reader is likely ready to book a trip, but wants to make sure they’ve picked the right destination. If you publish an informative review/resource on the topic and recommend some good hotels along the way, you can earn a sizable affiliate share no matter what the reader chooses.

The main mistake that bloggers make with affiliate marketing (and classic ads as well) is that they work more for their advertisers than for their readers.

Working for your readers first is the only way to build trust and then make money as a byproduct later down the road. At least this is our approach.

What you really need to do in order to make your affiliate marketing strategy successful is spend time doing research, creating top educational content, and building trust, while only recommending affiliate products where it makes sense and where it actually brings value to the reader. This is how to monetize a blog with affiliate marketing. There are no shortcuts that would work long term.



#### Further reading:

- For a more hands-on guide on how to get started with affiliate marketing on a WordPress blog, read this tutorial of ours <sup>100</sup>. It talks about specific tactics, what plugins to use, and how to set everything up.
- Also, if you'd like to promote WordPress- and design/development-related affiliate offers, we've looked into the best ones in the market in this guide <sup>101</sup>. It should help you pick the best programs to promote.



## 2. Freelance income

Most people who start a blog acquire certain skills...

Things like writing, website design, graphic design, marketing, or even social media management.

These skills can directly relate to online income. All you need to do is use your blog to advertise them.

Sounds perhaps easier said than done, but hear me out:

*Bill:*

*My own income comes from the content marketing and SEO work that I do. When I first started, I was a freelance writer. I got many of my first clients by showing them the articles I wrote on my blog.*

*Since then, I've turned this freelance writing service into a full-fledged content marketing and SEO mini-agency. I have two people who work for me. And I get leads almost every week to my "work with me" page, who come from my blog.*

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<sup>100</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/get-started-with-affiliate-marketing-using-wordpress/>

<sup>101</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/affiliate-programs-for-wordpress/>

*So my strategy is to use great content to attract people who want the kind of content I create. Simple, right?*

You can do the same thing by showcasing your graphic design work, having a beautiful website, or showing off your social media prowess.

If you're ready to dive into the world of freelance work, consider creating profiles on sites like Upwork, People Per Hour, or Fiverr. While you can accept work directly through your blog, if you're just getting started, using these job sites that already have traffic and trust can make your transition easier.

### 3. Using sponsorships and advertising to make extra cash

If you've ever listened to a podcast episode and heard, "This episode is brought to you by...", you've seen sponsorships in action.

Getting someone to sponsor your blog can bring in a serious chunk of cash. However, the only downside is that you usually need a decent audience to get a sponsor. Still, this is something you can have on your radar as you begin building some more authority in your niche.

If this is the route you'd like to take (making money just for writing your blog? Sign me up!) then check out this guide to getting a blog sponsor <sup>102</sup>.

Next, the ever-so-popular topic of advertising. Ads are kind of deceptive when you want to learn how to monetize a blog.

On the one hand, you can sign up to Google AdSense and start running ads on your blogs as soon as right now. But on the other, the time and traffic needed to see any significant earnings from ads is substantial.

So what we actually advise you to do when you're just getting started with a new blog is the following:

Forget about ads.

Only consider running ads once you're getting 1000 visitors a day. Before that happens, ads are only a distraction and detract from your audience's experience with your site.

### 4. Creating an online course

Online courses are hot now and becoming more popular by the day. If you want to learn how to start a blog and make money, they're an effective and honest way to do that.

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<sup>102</sup> <http://www.mackcollier.com/make-money-from-your-blog-get-a-sponsor/>

- Is your blog about cooking? Teach a cooking course.
- Do you blog about bicycles? Run a bicycle repair course.
- Or do you prefer talking about your favorite online game? Make a course about how to be a better player.

For a real-world example, Venu Sanz <sup>103</sup> started a blog about vegan cooking, and she now makes a full-time income (enough to hire others!) from her vegan cooking courses.

## 5. Selling a book or product

Like a course, writing and selling a book (or ebook) is a good way to approach the topic of how to monetize a blog. Of course, it takes a lot of time and you need an audience to sell to, but in the long run, a book is a good way to monetize your audience and help them see you as an authority.

The only difficulty, of course, is ... actually writing the book. Setting aside the pains of writing themselves, there's also the problem of what to put in the book. Ideally, your book should offer some content that's either (a) never before seen on the blog, or (b) providing some convenience to the reader.

In other words, with (b), you can repurpose your blog content and compile it into book form. Though it might sound too simple to be viable, it's what some of the most successful bloggers have been doing for years. For instance, Darren Rowse of Pro Blogger has his ebook titled "31 Days to Build a Better Blog." Under the hood, it's a compilation of a series of blog posts that you can still read for free. The no.1 benefit of the book vs the posts is convenience.

We have a separate guide on this very blog about how to do exactly that – turn your blog content into a book <sup>104</sup>.

The book also doesn't need to be your end product, so to speak. You can sell it to serve as the initial touch point with your audience to then eventually upsell them to your course, if you use both methods!

Alternatively, you can sell physical products and turn your blog into an e-commerce store. If it hits your fancy, check out this guide to create a WordPress store <sup>105</sup>.

The bright side here is that if you're running a traditional business then you probably already have a product to sell, so why not offer it via your new WordPress blog...

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<sup>103</sup> <https://www.venusanzchef.com/>

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.codeinwp.com/blog/wordpress-blog-to-book/>

<sup>105</sup> <https://themeisle.com/blog/how-to-set-up-woocommerce/>

## A final word on how to monetize a blog

While you can start making money today by offering freelance services or busting your butt to find a sponsor, chances are it's going to take some time to ramp up.

When it comes to how to start a blog and make money, the truth is that it's not uncommon for blogs to take at least 6-12 months to see any viable income. So if you don't see cash in the bank right away, don't let that discourage you from continuing to try.

Overall, learning how to monetize a blog is chiefly about trying things out, reiterating, improving and testing. Then, once something starts working, scale it up!

This scaling up can involve trying out new affiliate programs, working on new products or books, introducing new products, trying out new promotional methods, etc.

For instance, one of the things we've been doing across our different blogs (this one, and also Themelsle) is split-testing different promo elements to see which versions perform the best.

Split-testing is a very powerful technique despite the main idea being quite simple... All you do is take two versions of something (can be a button, a sales message, a headline, product image) and run them in parallel until you have enough data to make a decision as to which is better. One way you can do this form of testing is with Google Optimize<sup>106</sup> – what we use. It's free and has more than enough features to satisfy any blogger.

This about sums up our guide on how to monetize a blog! As you can see, it's all a matter of doing a couple of things, but being deliberate about it. There's no accident in how some blogs can make a killing while others struggle to earn anything. Continuous effort.

That's the secret.

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I'm afraid there's no other way to say this ... it's the end of our guide on how to start a blog. If you've made it this far, I have to congratulate you! 🎉🎊

At this stage, you know enough to be dangerous with your new blog! 🗣️

All that matters now is execution. Good. Proper. Execution.

We hope that the instructions from this guide will help you get your new blog off the ground and towards success!

**But that's not all! Here's an extra resource that you might find helpful:**  
**<https://www.codeinwp.com/best-blogging-tools-and-guides/>**

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<sup>106</sup> <https://www.google.com/analytics/optimize/>

**It's a list of more than 50 of the best blogging tools and guides for you to keep growing!**

