

Blogs and Websites Basics

ABOUT THIS CLASS

This class is designed to introduce you to the basic concepts and skills required for starting and maintaining a basic website in the form of a blog.

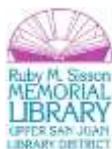
Course Objectives

By the end of this course, you will know:

- ✓ The difference between a blog and a website.
- ✓ The difference between hosted and non-hosted sites.
- ✓ What a blogging platform is and how to choose one for your site.
- ✓ How to choose a template (your blog's appearance).
- ✓ How to post and add pages to your blog.
- ✓ How to avoid making common blogging/website mistakes.
- ✓ Best practices and essential things to know to make your blog/site as successful as possible.

This booklet will serve as a guide as we progress through the class, but it can also be a valuable tool when you are working on your own. Any class instruction is only as effective as the time and effort you are willing to invest in it. I encourage you to practice soon after class. There will be additional computer classes in the near future, and I am usually available for questions during Tech Times on Tuesdays (10am-noon) and Thursdays (3pm-5pm). Feel free to call to verify that Tech Time is happening on the day that you're planning to come.

Meg Wempe, Adult Services Librarian



Blogs vs. Websites

What's the difference between a blog and website?

Blog: A blog (a combination of the term web log) is a discussion or informational site published on the World Wide Web and consisting of discrete entries ("posts") typically displayed in reverse chronological order (the most recent post appears first). Although not a requirement, most good quality blogs are interactive, allowing visitors to leave comments and even message each other... on the blogs, and it is this interactivity that distinguishes them from other static websites.¹

Website: A website...is a set of related web pages containing content such as text, images, video, audio, etc.²

In other words, blogs are one kind of website. A blog features diary-type commentary and links to articles on other Web sites, usually presented as a list of entries in reverse chronological order. Blogs range from the personal to the political, and can focus on one narrow subject or a whole range of subjects.

Many blogs focus on a particular topic, such as web design, home staging, sports, or mobile technology. Some are more eclectic, presenting links to all types of other sites. And others are more like personal journals, presenting the author's daily life and thoughts.

Generally speaking (although there are exceptions), blogs tend to have a few things in common:

- A main content area with articles listed chronologically, newest on top. Often, the articles are organized into categories.
- An archive of older articles.
- A way for people to leave comments about the articles.
- A list of links to other related sites, sometimes called a "blogroll".
- One or more "feeds" like RSS, Atom or RDF files.³

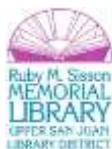
With all of these features, the distinction between a "proper" website (which may or may not include a blog posting structure) and a blog used to be more apparent. However, it is now common for people to use a blog as their website. Free blogging providers, like Blogger (Blogspot) and WordPress, allow you to create multiple pages (like a website) in addition to the main posting structure.

For our purposes today, we'll focus exclusively on blogs, as they are the easiest way to create a simple website.

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blog>

² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Website>

³ http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging



Getting Started Blogging

Whether you are interested in starting a “traditional” blog (centered on timely posts on any topic of your choice) or making a simple website, there are a number of sites that provide free platforms for creating your blog. Thus, the first step is to select a blogging platform. (**Note:** the section below quotes heavily and is adapted from an article on <http://www.bloggingbasics101.com>.)

Hosted vs. Non-Hosted Platforms

The most popular blog platforms are Blogger, Typepad, WordPress, and Tumblr.

When choosing your blog platform, you’ll need to determine whether you would prefer a **hosted** or **non-hosted** blog platform. A hosted platform is one that is housed on the platform’s server. In other words, if you have a Blogger blog, your blog is hosted on the Blogger server; if you have a Tumblr blog, it’s housed on the Tumblr server.

A non-hosted site is a blog that is housed on your own server (usually a third-party you pay to host your site). For example, if you use WordPress.org as your blogging platform, they do not host your blog for you. You will have another company host it. WordPress.org has several companies they work with that will be happy to host your blog.

There are pros and cons to each solution; however, if you are just starting out, you will likely want to begin with a hosted site, as a lot of the “heavy lifting” (in terms of tech requirements and knowledge).

The Pros of having a hosted site (like Blogger or Tumblr) are:

A hosted site makes it extremely easy for you to start a blog and see if you like it without spending a lot of money up front. In fact, Blogger is free. WordPress allows basic blogging for free, and then tiered pricing for more advanced needs.

Hosted sites are generally extremely user-friendly and fairly intuitive (meaning it’s easy to figure out which link to click to do certain tasks like linking or italicizing text).

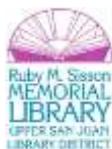
Hosted sites also offer WYSIWIG editors. (WYSIWYG stands for What You See Is What You Get. Most platforms offer a way to type your blog post and see how it will appear when it’s published. They also offer a tab that allows you to see the HTML of your post if you need to see the code.)⁴

Choosing a Blogging Platform

There are a number of blogging platforms, some of which are free and other which charge one-time or periodic fees. The three most prominent platforms for free blogging are:

- Blogger (aka Blogspot [Google])
- WordPress
- Tumblr

⁴ <http://www.bloggingbasics101.com/2009/01/choosing-a-blogging-platform/>



While each platform has unique aspects, all provide the same basic features. Choosing which platform is best for your needs is mostly a matter of personal preference, though for those that already have Gmail/Google accounts, you may wish to look into Blogger, as it is free and tied to your Gmail account, making it just a matter of a few clicks to get started. Of the “big three,” you’ll find that Blogger and WordPress are the most similar to each other. For those starting an actual blog (not a simple website), any of these three will work fine. For those of you wishing to create a simple website, WordPress or Blogger will likely work better than Tumblr (which is a simpler, more blog-centric platform), and, of those two, I think WordPress offers the best features for creating a basic website.

The below examples come from WordPress, though the core features discussed here will be present in any major blogging platform.

[Creating Content and Maintaining Your Blog](#)

Sign-up and Create Your Blog

Once you’ve decided on a platform (or if you’d like to try out different platforms), you’ll need to create an account in order to sign-in and create your blog. Follow the instructions and prompts from the platform(s) to sign-up.

Once you’ve signed up, you can create your blog. This usually consists of selecting a name and URL (web address) for your blog. Here’s how this looks in WordPress:

The screenshot shows the WordPress sign-up process for creating a new blog. It is divided into four main sections:

- Blog Address:** A text input field containing ".wordpress.com" with a blue checkmark icon to its right. To the right of the field, it says "Choose an address for your blog. You can change the WordPress.com address later."
- Name Your Blog:** A text input field containing "My Blog" with a blue checkmark icon to its right. To the right of the field, it says "Choose a title for your blog. It can be anything you like. Fear not, you can change this any time."
- Privacy:** A dropdown menu set to "visible by everyone" with a blue checkmark icon to its right. Below the dropdown, it says "The title, visibility, privacy, writing controls, who can read your blog." To the right of the field, it says "The title, visibility, privacy, writing controls, who can read your blog."
- Thinking about upgrading?:** A table with two columns: "Get the WordPress.com bundle and save some cash." and "Getting the upgrade bundle or upgrade can save you some cash over buying upgrades at a later date." The table lists several options with green checkmarks in the first column and red X marks in the second column.

Get the WordPress.com bundle and save some cash.	Getting the upgrade bundle or upgrade can save you some cash over buying upgrades at a later date.
Free Blog	✓
Custom Name & Mapping	✗
Full Open-Source	✗
No Ads	✗
Custom Design	✗
Analytics	✗

Tip: If you are using this blog for your own website or your business’s website, you may wish to pay for the premium services offered by the platform. These can include a custom URL (for instance **mybusiness.com** vs. the free URL: **mybusiness.wordpress.com** or **mybusiness.blogspot.com**), added storage space (free platforms only allow a limited number of posts and pages), and added services (like more customizable templates).

Choosing a Template

Once you have created an account with your blogging platform, it's time to create your blog. The first step is to select a blog template, which is the physical appearance and organizational structure of your blog. All platforms offer a range of templates to suit your style and preference. Many templates are free, though the more advanced and/or unique ones sometimes come with a fee.

Choosing a template is very important—it's the public image of your site! It should reflect your (or your business's) personality but also be clear and easy to use. Here's how choosing a theme in WordPress looks:

The screenshot displays the WordPress 'Manage Themes' dashboard. At the top, the 'Twenty Twelve' theme is highlighted, showing its preview and a brief description. Below this, a section titled 'Available Themes' displays a grid of various theme preview cards, including 'Minimalize', 'Book Lite', 'Misty Lake', and 'Widely'. Each card provides a visual preview and the theme's name. The interface also includes a search bar and a 'Customize' button for the selected theme.

Most platforms allow you to **preview** themes before you **activate** them (you can usually change your theme later on):



Minimalizine

[Activate](#) | [Live Preview](#) | [Details](#)

Here are some tips for choosing a template:

11 Factors to Consider Choosing a Wordpress Theme or Blogger Template

1. Budget

Wordpress themes and Blogger templates are either free, premium or custom. Free themes cost nothing and are available for anyone to use, anywhere and at any time. That means many people could use the exact same theme. Premium themes typically have a price tag around \$70. Anyone can buy them and use them on their blogs. Custom themes are created by a blog designer for a specific blog. They can cost hundreds or thousands of dollars and are completely unique to the blog they are created for. The first factor you need to consider is how much money you're willing to spend in order to get a unique look and increased functionality for your blog. It's not a certainty that free themes offer the least functionality, but it's usually true.

2. Functionality

Determine how much functionality you want your blog to have. This depends on your goals for your blog. If you want to grow your blog, you'll want a theme that offers flexibility and enhanced functionality. For example, if you want to include ads on your blog but choose a 1-column blog theme, you will have very little choice in terms of where your ads can appear on your blog.

3. Investment on Additional Customization



All blog themes can be further customized from the original version you purchase. You might find a theme or template you really like but later realize the colors or fonts aren't exactly to your liking. This is a change a blog designer (or possibly you, with a bit of CSS research) can make fairly easily. However, the bigger the change, the more it will cost you.

4. Layout

One of the first things you should look at when you're researching Wordpress themes or Blogger templates is the layout. Most blogs are 2- or 3-columns. Some offer standard blog formats with a chronological list of blog posts flanked by sidebar columns, but other blogs use magazine style themes, photo themes, and more. Take some time to review a variety of blog designs to determine which layout style will work best for your blog.

5. Reputable Designer

Anyone can create a blog theme or template, publish it online and offer it for free or for a fee. It can be a hassle to change your blog's theme if you have a lot of content and customization (e.g., Wordpress plug-ins, customized sidebars with widgets, etc.). Make sure the blog theme or template you choose is from a reputable designer with a track record of creating great designs. Doing so ensures your blog theme or template will work correctly and include the best features and functionality.

6. Find Blogs with Designs You Like

A great way to choose a Wordpress theme or Blogger template is to browse blogs and find designs and layouts that you like. Then contact the blog owner and ask what theme or template they use. Often this information is included in the blog's footer!

7. View Other Sites Already Using the Theme You're Considering

If you find a theme or template online that you like, try to find some other blogs that already use that theme and take a look at them. Spend some time clicking deep into the site and testing the functionality from a user's perspective. Don't be afraid to email the theme or template designer and ask for a list of sites using that design. Good designers will be happy to share this information.

8. Design Elements

Consider design elements like color, fonts, and so on before you settle on a blog design. While design elements can usually be changed without much hassle by a person who knows CSS, it can be an additional investment if you need to find someone to help you. Take the time to look at how different heading styles look, how linked text appears, and so on to ensure you're happy with them.

9. Functional Elements

Just as you took time to analyze the design elements in a blog theme or template, you should also take time to analyze the functional elements such as the "Read More" link at the end of posts, text in block quotes, the comments section, sidebar headers, post titles, the "Next" or "Previous" navigation, and so on. Each of these functional elements is very



important to the user experience on your blog. Make sure they work (and look) the way you would want them to on your blog.

10. Read Reviews

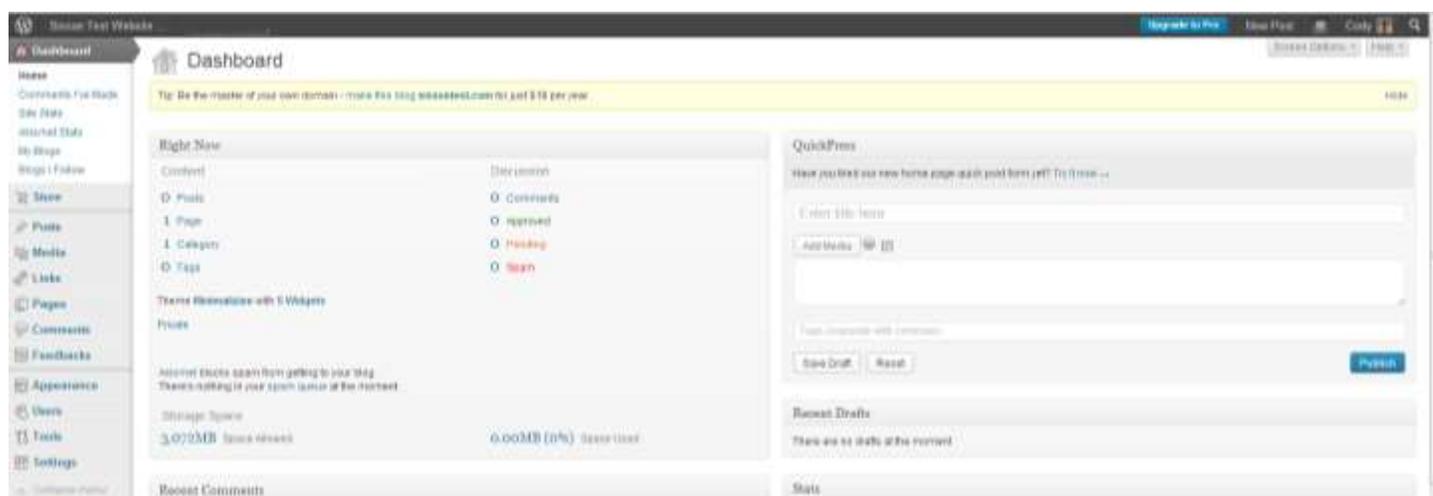
One of the most important steps you can take when you're choosing a Wordpress theme or Blogger template is to take the time to read the reviews other bloggers write about them. If you're considering a theme or template listed in a directory site, check to see if reviews are included with the listing. Take some time to do a Google search on the theme name and designer's name to find out what other bloggers have to say about it.

11. Support

Be sure to find out what kind of support is offered with the theme. Is the designer available to answer questions? Is there a support forum where users help each other? Can you pay a fee to get support when you need it? The best themes offer some way for you to get help when you need it.⁵

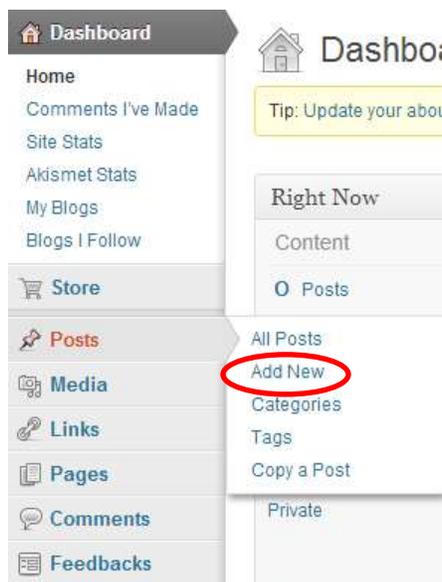
Posting: Using the WYSIWIG

Most blogging platforms have a homepage or “dashboard,” which displays an overview of your blog(s). Here’s how the dashboard looks in WordPress:



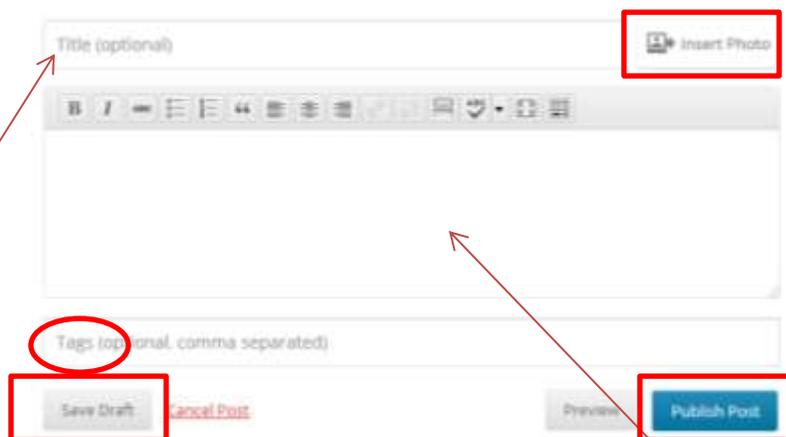
⁵ <http://weblogs.about.com/od/blogdesign/tp/HowtoChooseBlogTheme.htm>

To create a new post, click on **Add New Post**:



You are then directed to a WYSIWYG editor, which stands for **What You See Is What You Get**. This allows you to create a blog post/webpage without having to write in html code (the basic way of creating a website).

WYSIWYG editors tend to look similar across platforms. Here's what the WYSIWYG editor looks like in WordPress:



The **Title** field is for the header (title) of your page/post. Your content is then placed **here**. You can insert a photo or media by clicking the **Insert Photo** button. **Tags** are subject terms, in regards to the content of your post, which you list for better searchability. And you can save a draft to return to later by click **Save Draft**.

Once you're ready to publish your post, click on **Publish Post**.

Tip: If you intend for this to be more of website than a blog, you may wish to disable comments.

Adding Pages

In addition to your blog posts, you will likely want to add additional **pages**. Unlike posts, which are displayed on your blog's front page in the order they're published, pages are better suited for more timeless content that you want to be easily accessible, like your **About** or **Contact** information.

Depending your template and platform, links to these pages may be displayed across the top of the page or in a side bar. There may also be a limit to the number of pages you can create.

In WordPress, to add a page click:



A WYSIWYG editor will then be displayed for creating your page.

Blogging Best Practices

Now that you're up and running, here are some helpful tips for blogging best practices:

Basics: A Few Blogging Tips (from wordpress.com)

Starting a new blog is difficult and this can put many people off. Some may get off to a good start only to become quickly discouraged because of the lack of comments or visits. You want to stand out from this crowd of millions of bloggers, you want to be one of the few hundred thousand blogs that are actually visited. Here are some simple tips to help you on your way to blogging mastery:⁶

- Post regularly, but don't post if you have nothing worth posting about.
- Stick with only a few specific genres to talk about.
- Don't put 'subscribe' and 'vote me' links all over the front page until you have people that like your blog enough to ignore them (they're usually just in the way).
- Use a clean and simple theme if at all possible.

⁶ http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging

- Enjoy, blog for fun, comment on other peoples' blogs (as they normally visit back).
- Have fun blogging and remember, there are no rules to what you post on your blog!

5 Mistakes to Avoid When Starting a Blog (from <http://www.bloggingbasics101.com>)

1. Mistake: Auto-loading music.

Please. I beg you, your readers beg you: ditch the auto-loading music! Auto-loading music is not only annoying and surprising, but it's a bandwidth hog. It makes your blog load slowly. Do you really want to lose a reader because she couldn't wait for your site to load? And if she waits for your site to load, will she be annoyed because she didn't know there would be music, had her speakers on high, and a sleeping husband (or child) right beside her? I can tell you this: She won't be back.

2. Mistake: Using a design with a dark background & light text.

This issue is less about your aesthetic and more about usability and readability. Reading online is harder on our eyes than reading traditional paper. Using a dark background with light text makes it even harder on your readers' eyes.

3. Mistake: Too much sidebar clutter.

A sleek, uncluttered design goes a long way with readers. The less clutter, the more space you have. You can use this white space to help lead your readers' eye toward specific content. Are you proud of your awards, badges, and various trinkets? That's OK, those things are a rite of passage too. You don't have to get rid of them, but why not put awards on their own page and link to it from your main page? You'll trade 20 links for just one link and de-clutter the sidebar. De-cluttering your sidebar eases navigation for your reader as well. When there are fewer items competing for your reader's attention, they'll be drawn to what's important.

4. Mistake: Accidental plagiarism (even with photos).

Very few legitimate bloggers plagiarize on purpose. Most likely a new blogger won't realize what they're doing. Plagiarism applies to using any content that isn't originally yours, whether it's content or photography or music or anything else. I'll be honest and tell you that when I started blogging I would Google a picture, then copy it to my computer and use it in my blog post. That's a big problem because it's the same as plagiarism—even if I cited where I found the picture. I hadn't asked the owner if I could use it, I just did it. If you're new to blogging, take a minute to find out about and understand the issues of plagiarism and copyright. U.S. Copyright Office bluntly says: "Acknowledging the source of the copyrighted material does not substitute for obtaining permission." These links will help you:

I put a Creative Commons license on my blog, but is my material truly protected?

<http://www.bloggingbasics101.com/2008/05/i-put-a-creativ/>

I notice that many bloggers have something on their site telling people not to plagiarize, but how effective is it?

<http://www.bloggingbasics101.com/2007/02/i-notice-that-m/>



A Few More Links for Copyright Information

<http://www.bloggingbasics101.com/2008/06/a-few-more-link/>

5. Mistake: Using “click here” instead of keyword phrases for links.

I advise you to choose your links words carefully. When you are writing a post and need to insert a link, consider how you are going to write that sentence and where you will include the link. For example, which of these is more effective (potential links are underlined)?

If you are interested in hosting a giveaway, please review [my vendor guidelines](#).

My vendor guidelines are available [here](#).

The top sentence is more effective for your audience because it tells them exactly what they need to do. It’s also effective for search engine optimization (SEO) purposes because search engine spiders are looking for unique word strings. Strings like “click here” or even just the word “here” linked to other files or pages are everywhere on the web. Make your pages stand out by being more descriptive with your links. Help the search engines catalog your site effectively.⁷

[Things Bloggers Need to Know](#)

In addition to understanding how your specific blogging software works, such as WordPress, there are some terms and concepts you need to know.

Archives

A blog is also a good way to keep track of articles on a site. A lot of blogs feature an archive based on dates (like a monthly or yearly archive). The front page of a blog may feature a calendar of dates linked to daily archives. Archives can also be based on categories featuring all the articles related to a specific category.

It does not stop there; you can also archive your posts by author or alphabetically. The possibilities are endless. This ability to organize and present articles in a composed fashion is much of what makes blogging a popular personal publishing tool.

Feeds

A Feed is a function of special software that allows "Feedreaders" to access a site automatically looking for new content and then post updates about that new content to another site. This provides a way for users to keep up with the latest and hottest information posted on different blogging sites. Some Feeds include RSS (alternately defined as "Rich Site Summary" or "Really Simple Syndication"), Atom or RDF files. Dave Shea, author of the web design weblog Mezzobluu has written a comprehensive summary of feeds.

⁷ <http://www.bloggingbasics101.com/2009/06/5-mistake-to-avoid-when-starting-a-new-blog/>



Blogrolls

A blogroll is a list, sometimes categorized, of links to webpages the author of a blog finds worthwhile or interesting. The links in a blogroll are usually to other blogs with similar interests. The blogroll is often in a "sidebar" on the page or featured as a dedicated separate web page. WordPress has a built-in Link Manager so users do not have to depend on a third party for creating and managing their blogroll.

Syndication

A feed is a machine readable (usually XML) content publication that is updated regularly. Many weblogs publish a feed (usually RSS, but also possibly Atom and RDF and so on, as described above). There are tools out there that call themselves "feedreaders". What they do is they keep checking specified blogs to see if they have been updated, and when the blogs are updated, they display the new post, and a link to it, with an excerpt (or the whole contents) of the post. Each feed contains items that are published over time. When checking a feed, the feedreader is actually looking for new items. New items are automatically discovered and downloaded for you to read, so you don't have to visit all the blogs you are interested in. All you have to do with these feedreaders is to add the link to the RSS feed of all the blogs you are interested in. The feedreader will then inform you when any of the blogs have new posts in them. Most blogs have these "Syndication" feeds available for the readers to use.

Managing Comments

One of the most exciting features of blogging tools are the comments. This highly interactive feature allows users to comment upon article posts, link to your posts, and comment on and recommend them. These are known as trackbacks and pingbacks. We'll also discuss how to moderate and manage comments and how to deal with the annoying trend in "comment spam", when unwanted comments are posted to your blog.

Trackbacks

Trackbacks were originally developed by SixApart, creators of the MovableType blog package. SixApart has a good introduction to trackbacks:

In a nutshell, TrackBack was designed to provide a method of notification between websites: it is a method of person A saying to person B, "This is something you may be interested in." To do that, person A sends a TrackBack ping to person B.

A better explanation is this:

- Person A writes something on their blog.
- Person B wants to comment on Person A's blog, but wants her own readers to see what she had to say, and be able to comment on her own blog
- Person B posts on her own blog and sends a trackback to Person A's blog
- Person A's blog receives the trackback, and displays it as a comment to the original post. This comment contains a link to Person B's post



The idea here is that more people are introduced to the conversation (both Person A's and Person B's readers can follow links to the other's post), and that there is a level of authenticity to the trackback comments because they originated from another weblog. Unfortunately, there is no actual verification performed on the incoming trackback, and indeed they can even be faked.

Most trackbacks send to Person A only a small portion (called an "excerpt") of what Person B had to say. This is meant to act as a "teaser", letting Person A (and his readers) see some of what Person B had to say, and encouraging them all to click over to Person B's site to read the rest (and possibly comment).

Person B's trackback to Person A's blog generally gets posted along with all the comments. This means that Person A can edit the contents of the trackback on his own server, which means that the whole idea of "authenticity" isn't really solved. (Note: Person A can only edit the contents of the trackback on his own site. He cannot edit the post on Person B's site that sent the trackback.)

SixApart has published an official trackback specification.

Pingbacks

Pingbacks were designed to solve some of the problems that people saw with trackbacks. The official pingback documentation makes pingbacks sound an awful lot like trackbacks:

For example, Yvonne writes an interesting article on her Web log. Kathleen reads Yvonne's article and comments about it, linking back to Yvonne's original post. Using pingback, Kathleen's software can automatically notify Yvonne that her post has been linked to, and Yvonne's software can then include this information on her site.

There are three significant differences between pingbacks and trackbacks, though.

- Pingbacks and trackbacks use drastically different communication technologies (XML-RPC and HTTP POST, respectively).
- Pingbacks do not send any content.

The best way to think about pingbacks is as remote comments:

- Person A posts something on his blog.
- Person B posts on her own blog, linking to Person A's post. This automatically sends a pingback to Person A when both have pingback enabled blogs.
- Person A's blog receives the pingback, then automatically goes to Person B's post to confirm that the pingback did, in fact, originate there.

The pingback is generally displayed on Person A's blog as simply a link to Person B's post. In this way, all editorial control over posts rests exclusively with the individual authors (unlike the trackback excerpt, which can be edited by the trackback recipient). The automatic verification process introduces a level of authenticity, making it harder to fake a pingback.



Some feel that trackbacks are superior because readers of Person A's blog can at least see some of what Person B has to say, and then decide if they want to read more (and therefore click over to Person B's blog). Others feel that pingbacks are superior because they create a verifiable connection between posts.

Verifying Pingbacks and Trackbacks

Comments on blogs are often criticized as lacking authority, since anyone can post anything using any name they like: there's no verification process to ensure that the person is who they claim to be. Trackbacks and Pingbacks both aim to provide some verification to blog commenting.

Comment Moderation

Comment Moderation is a feature which allows the website owner and author to monitor and control the comments on the different article posts, and can help in tackling comment spam. It lets you moderate comments, & you can delete unwanted comments, approve cool comments and make other decisions about the comments.

Comment Spam

Comment Spam refers to useless comments (or trackbacks, or pingbacks) to posts on a blog. These are often irrelevant to the context value of the post. They can contain one or more links to other websites or domains. Spammers use Comment Spam as a medium to get higher page rank for their domains in Google, so that they can sell those domains at a higher price sometime in future or to obtain a high ranking in search results for an existing website.

Spammers are relentless; because there can be substantial money involved, they work hard at their "job." They even build automated tools (robots) to rapidly submit their spam to the same or multiple weblogs. Many webbloggers, especially beginners, sometimes feel overwhelmed by Comment Spam.

There are solutions, though, to avoiding Comment Spam. WordPress includes many tools for combating Comment Spam. With a little up front effort, Comment Spam can be manageable, and certainly no reason to give up weblogging.

Pretty Permalinks

Permalinks are the permanent URLs to your individual weblog posts, as well as categories and other lists of weblog postings. A permalink is what another weblogger will use to refer to your article (or section), or how you might send a link to your story in an e-mail message. Because others may link to your individual postings, the URL to that article shouldn't change. Permalinks are intended to be permanent (valid for a long time).

"Pretty" Permalinks is the idea that URLs are frequently visible to the people who click them, and should therefore be crafted in such a way that they make sense, and not be filled with incomprehensible parameters. The best Permalinks are "hackable," meaning a user might modify the link text in their browser to navigate to another section or listing of the weblog. For example, this is how the default Permalink to a story might look in a default WordPress installation:

/index.php?p=423

How is a user to know what "p" represents? Where did the number 423 come from?



In contrast, here is a well-structured, "Pretty" Permalink which could link to the same article, once the installation is configured to modify permalinks:

`/archives/2003/05/23/my-cheese-sandwich/`

One can easily guess that the Permalink includes the date of the posting, and the title, just by looking at the URL. One might also guess that hacking the URL to be `/archives/2003/05/` would get a list of all the postings from May of 2003. Pretty (cool). For more information on possible Permalink patterns in WordPress, see [Using Permalinks](#).

Blog by email

Some blogging tools offer the ability to email your posts directly to your blog, all without direct interaction through the blogging tool interface. WordPress offers this cool feature. Using email, you can now send in your post content to a pre-determined email address & voila! Your post is published!

Post Slugs

If you're using Pretty Permalinks, the Post Slug is the title of your article post within the link. The blogging tool software may simplify or truncate your title into a more appropriate form for using as a link. A title such as "I'll Make A Wish" might be truncated to "ill-make-a-wish". In WordPress, you can change the Post Slug to something else, like "make-a-wish", which sounds better than a wish made when sick.

Excerpt

Excerpts are condensed summaries of your blog posts, with blogging tools being able to handle these in various ways. In WordPress, excerpts can be specifically written to summarize the post, or generated automatically by using the first few paragraphs of a post or using the post up to a specific point, assigned by you.

Plugins

Plugins are cool bits of programming scripts that add additional functionality to your blog. These scripts are often features which either enhance features already available or add them to your site.

WordPress offers simple and easy ways of adding Plugins to your blog. From the Administration Panel, there is a Plugin Page. Once you have uploaded a Plugin to your WordPress plugin directory, activate it from the Plugins Management SubPanel, and sit back and watch your Plugin work. Not all Plugins are so easily installed, but WordPress Plugin authors and developers make the process as easy as possible.⁸

Congratulations! You've completed the **Blogs & Websites Basics** class. Please take a moment to fill out the class evaluation. Your feedback is *very* important to us!

⁸ http://codex.wordpress.org/Introduction_to_Blogging

