

**How to Launch Your Own Website with WordPress**  
**HKS Communications Program**  
**Thursday, February 16, 2023**

***What is WordPress?***

WordPress is a free, open-source content management system (CMS) co-invented in 2003 by then-19-year-old Matt Mullenweg to build and maintain websites. It now commands 63% of the CMS market and is used by 43% of all new websites.

***What can I build with WordPress?***

*Anything!* Originally just for blogs, WordPress has matured into a fully featured CMS that can be used for portfolios, event calendars & registration, podcasts, marketing, e-commerce, and more.

***What makes WordPress so popular?***

Besides being easy to use and extensible, WordPress is also free, open-source software (**FOSS**). This means anyone can download and use the software for any purpose, modify it, and redistribute it, all for free. WordPress is not a commercial entity that will go out of business and take your website with it; the software will be available and updated indefinitely. And you're not locked into a particular host or vendor; you own your content and can take it with you, wherever you go.

***What are the best features of WordPress?***

Two of the most powerful aspects of WordPress are its themes and plugins. **Themes** allow you to change a site's appearance without having to update the content; you can redesign an entire site with just a few clicks! **Plugins** modify the functionality of WordPress, enabling it to fulfill unique needs, such as gating content for paying subscribers, creating short "vanity" URLs, and adding falling snow to your homepage for a seasonal effect.

***What plugins do you recommend?***

These are a few that I install on all my sites:

- **Jetpack:** Made by Automattic, the same company that runs WordPress.com, this plugin adds dozens of features to your site, including a contact form, auto-sharing to social media, a site accelerator, the ability to copy posts, and more.
- **Akismet:** Prevents your comments and contact form from being spammed.
- **iThemes Security:** Prevents your site from being hacked; includes support for 2FA.
- **Yoast:** Optimizes your site for search engines.
- **Redirection:** Lets you change URLs without breaking existing links.
- **TablePress:** Powerful utility for creating tables and importing Excel files.

All the above plugins are free, though most also offer paid, premium versions with additional features. My other favorite plugins can be found at <https://profiles.wordpress.org/kgagne#content-favorites>

***Can I import/export my content?***

Yes! If you have a website somewhere else and wish to move to WordPress, you can import your content. If you decide to move from WordPress to another CMS, you can also export your content.

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Both of these options will preserve your site's content (text and media) only, and not its style and design. But moving a WordPress site from one host to another will often result in a perfect replica!

***Where do I get WordPress?***

There are two kinds of WordPress: [WordPress.com](https://WordPress.com) is a service that will host your site for you; or you can download the software from [WordPress.org](https://WordPress.org) and run it yourself anywhere else. Both are completely free up-front but have different features and requirements—learn more at [GetWP.com](https://GetWP.com):

<u><a href="https://WordPress.com">WordPress.com</a></u>	<u><a href="https://WordPress.org">WordPress.org</a></u>
Free hosting	Self-hosted
Dozens of themes	Infinite themes
Constricted functionality	Support for plugins
Cannot modify PHP code	Customizable code
Secure and backed up	Responsible for own security & backups
1 GB storage	Storage varies — often infinite
Advertisements	Ad-free
Less knowledge needed	Learn by doing

***What does WordPress cost?***

WordPress the software is free, but you still need to pay a **host** to make your site available to the rest of the Internet. DreamHost is a popular and recommended host for WordPress sites, with plans starting at \$5/month. WordPress.com offers a free, limited plan, with optional, paid plans ranging from \$5/month to \$45/month.

***Can you offer me a discount on WordPress.com?***

Absolutely! This promotional code is for new signups only and will offer you a one-time discount of 10%. Your annual plan will renew at the full rate. Enter this code when you sign up: **wphappygK679z** (valid through February 2023). This discount is for Harvard workshop attendees only; please do not distribute.

***Where can I go for help?***

WordPress has a very active and supportive community. If you have questions, feel free to ask online in the free support forums found at [WordPress.org](https://WordPress.org).

If you prefer in-person help, there's a free meetup of WordPress users the last Monday of every month. Visit <https://www.meetup.com/boston-wordpress-meetup/> for more details.

If you need custom development (such as coding or design) on an existing site and have a small budget, I recommend the professionals found at [PressFoundry.com](https://PressFoundry.com). If you need an entire site built from scratch and have a bigger budget, try [DQuinn.net](https://DQuinn.net). I have contracted each of these firms for past projects and have been extremely satisfied with the results.

**Any questions? Contact me at <https://kengagne.com/>**