Installing and Customizing Wordpress Themes

Unless you have detailed knowledge of web design programs or programming language, a customizable theme probably is the easiest way for you to manage the content on your Wordpress site.

Browsing Themes
Log into your Wordpress dashboard by typing your address and appending /wp-admin [mysite.com/wp-admin]. Enter your login information, and navigate to the “Appearance” submenu.

You should have Wordpress’s default theme installed automatically following your initial install of Wordpress. You can customize this theme’s arrangement, color scheme, and other cosmetic features, but keep in mind that your site will be very similar to other basic Wordpress pages using the same theme. To really set your page apart, it’s a good idea to look for a them that’s suited to your taste and the kind of content you’re trying to showcase.

Photo-Centric Template

Text-Centric Template
Choosing a Theme

Wordpress offers a variety of free and paid themes. To browse them all, click “Add New Theme” (the location of the button will depend on your version of Wordpress).

Browse through the options. When you find a theme you like, simply hover over its thumbnail and click “Install.” In the window that follows the installation, click “Activate.” From there you can return to the side bar, and return to “Appearance.” You’ll see your new theme there.

Most themes will have a “Customize” button that becomes visible when you hover over them. In this menu you can change your site’s title, adjust the color scheme, and choose a background image, among other choices.

Installing Plugins

One of Wordpress’s best features is the wide variety of free plugins available. Plugins can be used to help you manage your content, make your website run faster, and manage spam to your posts and personal e-mail. Plugins are added the same way as themes - by using the “Add New” feature in the “Plugins” sidebar submenu. Here are some helpful plugins to consider:

1. **Akismet** - This plugin helps filter out spam comments
2. **Captcha** - Requires users who want to leave a comment to solve a simple math problem. This prevents many automated spamming programs from leaving spam comments on your website
3. **Contact Form** - Allows you to embed a customized form that your audience can use to contact you. This is a better choice than posting your e-mail address to your website, which leaves you vulnerable to spam in huge quantities.
4. **Jetpack by WordPress.com** - This plugin allows you to use features on Wordpress.com that otherwise would not be available
5. **WP Super Cache** - Improves your site’s loading speed