

Getting Started with WordPress

INTRODUCTION

WordPress, a free, open-source Content Management System (CMS) runs at least 25% of the websites on the Internet, including millions of blogs and thousands of corporate sites including major media websites. (Of course, professional online publications will normally have IT expertise to customize WP to a high degree so that you might not even realize you're browsing a WP site.) Because of free / low-cost / premium **themes** – which can change the look-and-feel of WP sites easily and **plugins** – which can add functionality that's useful for blogs and media sites, you don't need to know HTML, CSS or PHP or much web design to create a highly customized, functional blog.

From 'amateur' blogs, to freelance journalists, to mid-sized and bigger media websites, WordPress is absolutely a solution you can rely on for the foreseeable future. (Of course, more and more journalistic content is 'surfaced' or found for users by Google, Facebook, Apple News – more on this when we look at web analytics later in the semester, but it's still hosted somewhere – often on WordPress.)

Learning how WP works is something you can put on your resume as a up-and-coming journalist. Getting familiar with the WordPress **Dashboard** – and learning how to post, edit, revise and organize content (with **categories**, **tags** and **sluglines**) will let you understand how to start one blog, or many blogs, to further your student, freelance and professional career.

Today we will create a custom WordPress site that is hosted for free. At the end of the term, we will look at migrating your blog to a low-cost ISP. *(If you happen to have a hosted website somewhere, chances are you can just install WP in your cPanel and go from there. Ask your instructor if this applies to you.)*

We will be looking at both student and professional examples of blogs running WP, including *The Bridge*, which was created by your professor in 2015-2017 with some input from the tech staff at the CUNY Newmark Graduate School of Journalism. *The Bridge* is designed to be simple and effective (and low cost). When you compare it to other CUNY online newspapers, it's certainly provides a competent experience for its readers and student editors. (In fact, after taking this course, we're hoping you can work on *The Bridge* online and grow its features and content.)

LAB ACTIVITY

● Work in pairs. Today, everyone should create a WordPress blog – you can help each other through these steps working with another student.

*****PLEASE CHECK OFF EACH STEP AS YOU FINISH IT DURING OUR IN-CLASS LABS.**

◆ TASK 1: Create a (free) WordPress account

☐ 1) Now open a browser on your computer. (Chrome or Firefox is recommended.)

☐ 2) Navigate to WordPress:

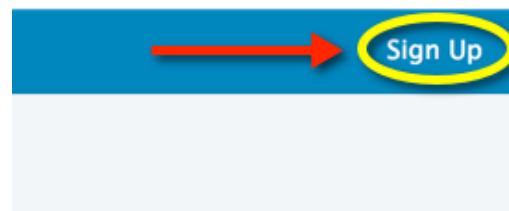
<http://www.wordpress.com>

☐ 3) Click on the **Log In** option located on the top right of the screen.



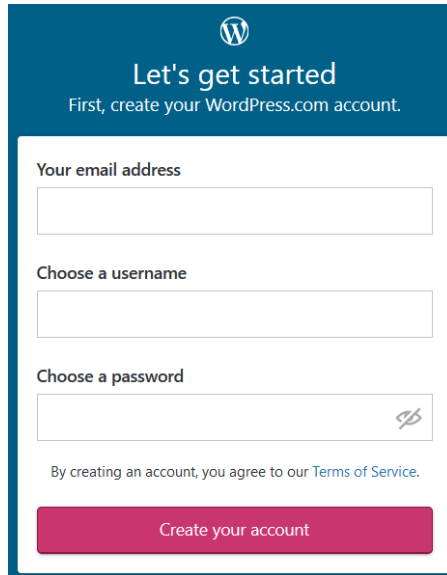
(Screen Detail – Top Right)

☐ 4) Click on the Sign Up option on the top right of the screen



(Screen Detail – Top Right)

☐ 5) You'll see a form like this:



The image shows the WordPress 'Let's get started' sign-up form. It has a blue header with the WordPress logo and the text 'Let's get started' and 'First, create your WordPress.com account.' Below the header is a white form area with three input fields: 'Your email address', 'Choose a username', and 'Choose a password'. The password field has a strength indicator icon. Below the fields is a link to 'Terms of Service' and a pink 'Create your account' button.

❑ *Your email address – Pick an e-mail you check frequently.

❑ *Choose a username – This is for your login to administer your account.

Choose a unique admin **account name**. (You need to choose a login that no one else using hosted WordPress is using – out of millions of users!)

Recommended 'formulas':

[the first initial of your firstname] + [lastname] + 'eng208'

jsmitheng208

-OR-

[the first initial of your firstname] + [lastname] + '208'

jsmith208

-OR-

[the first initial of your firstname] + [lastname] + 'admin'

jsmithadmin

***If your username isn't unique, the sign-up form will give you a message that that account name is already taken. So it might take several attempts to get a unique username.

- ❑ *Choose a password – The WP form will ask you to create a secure password. (Try using a capital letter and/or a special character or two.)

- ❑ **IMPORTANT!** Write down your **account name** and **password** for later.

Of course, your instructor has no access to this information so it's up to you to remember this. *WordPress can let you change a forgotten username / password if you do forget your login credentials.*

- ❑ 6) Click on the **Create your account** button.

- ❑ 7) WordPress will generate some default domain names for your blog, like this:

Let's get your site a domain!

Enter your site's name or some keywords that describe it to get started.

johneng208

Get a free one-year domain registration with any paid plan.

We'll pay the registration fees for your new domain when you choose a paid plan during the next step.

You can claim your free custom domain later if you aren't ready yet. [Review our plans to get started »](#)

More Extensions ▾ .com .net .org .blog .club .co

johneng208.com
Registration fee: \$18 **Free**
Renews at \$18 / year
Our Recommendation
Select

johneng208.blog
Registration fee: \$22 **Free**
Renews at \$22 / year
Best Alternative
Select

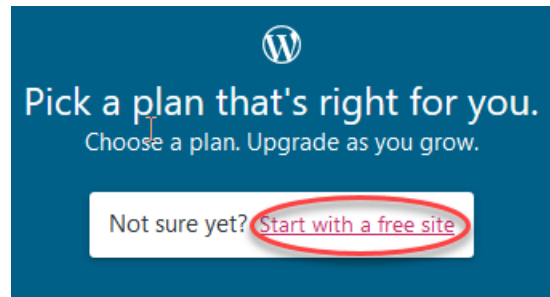
johneng208322150650.wordpress.com **Free** **Select**

johneng208.org Registration fee: \$18 **Free** Renews at \$18 / year **Select**

- ❑ 8) Choose the Free option, which is something like **?????????.wordpress.com** (which is further down the page). Click **Select**.

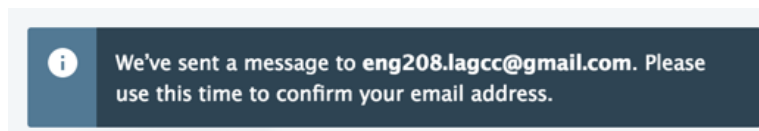
The next screen gives you the hosting options for WordPress accounts.

- ❑ 9) Please locate and **click** on the **Start with Free** option (“Best for Students”).



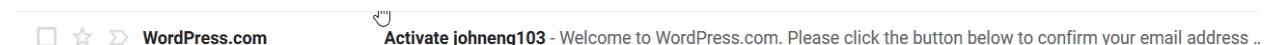
You can migrate your blog to a paid option or to an external ISP later. (We will show you how to do that later in the course.)

Like many websites, WordPress requires you to confirm your e-mail address for new accounts. You will see a message that says you should do this.

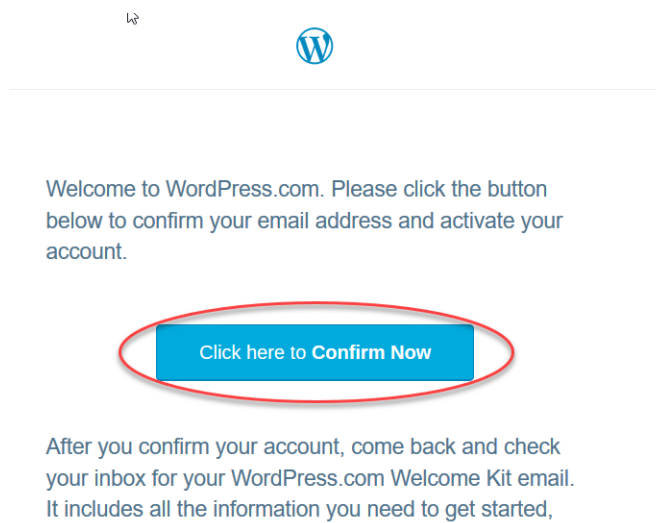


- ❑ **IMPORTANT STEP!** Open a NEW WINDOW (or TAB) in your browser.

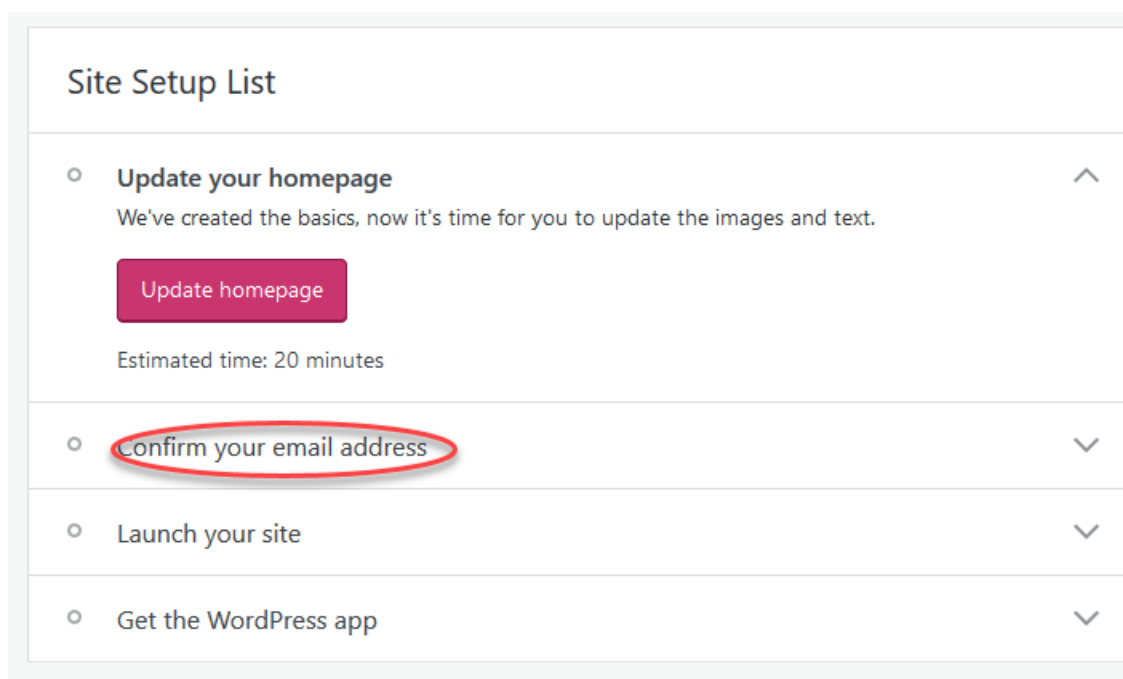
- ❑ 10) Using this new browser tab or window, login into the e-mail account that you used for WordPress, for example, LiveMail or Gmail.



- ❑ 11) Locate the e-mail from WordPress, open it, and click on the **Click here to Confirm Now**.

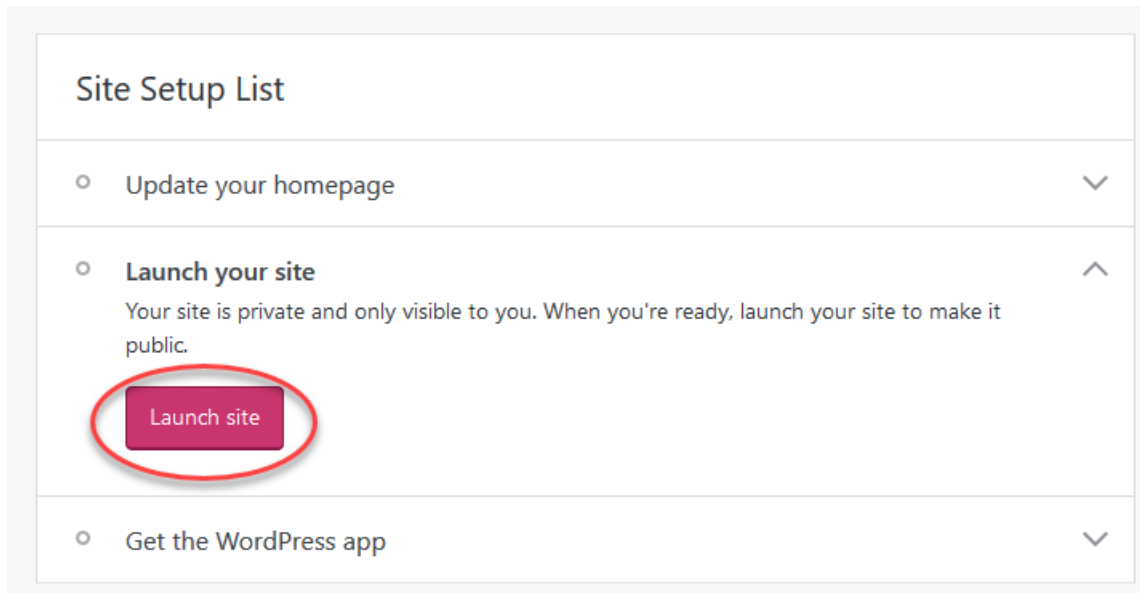


❑ 12) Your new account has a wizard / screen to let you do basic customizing.



❑ **IMPORTANT STEP!** Go back to the original WINDOW (or TAB) with WordPress.

If you see a post or the WordPress Dashboard, you are all set. You have created a blog with WordPress.

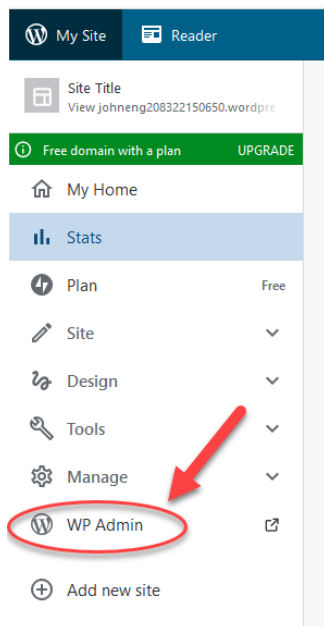


Locate the Launch site option. Click on this button. You will see some 'nag' screens inviting you to change your WP address to a paid option. Ignore this and choose the FREE option (which has a more complicated URL, from above). In class, we will go over this together. DO NOT SIGN UP FOR A PAID ACCOUNT. IT IS NOT NECESSARY!

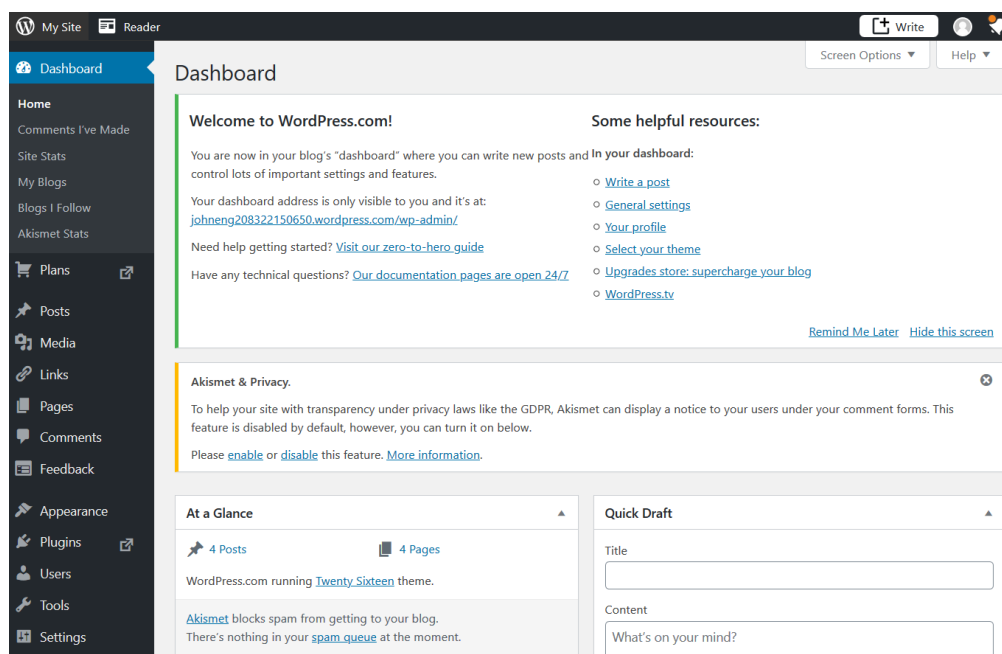
◆ TASK 2: Create a Welcome Post in the WordPress Dashboard

❑ 1) When WP opens, you will see the My Site administrator window. THIS IS NOT THE ACTUAL WP DASHBOARD.

To open the real WordPress Dashboard, click on the WP Admin option pictured below:



Here is a screenshot of the 'real' WP Dashboard. (The way to tell if you are using the 'real' Dashboard is the dark gray menu style.)



TIP:

You can always get to the Dashboard by adding **/wp-admin/** to the web address of your blog, e.g.:

<https://jsmitheng208123123.wordpress.com/wp-admin/>

****Memorize this convention / rule and you can always get to your Dashboard quickly.**

(All WP admins. know how to log in this way – you should too!)

❑ 2) Locate the **Posts** menu option on the left side of the screen. **Click** this option.

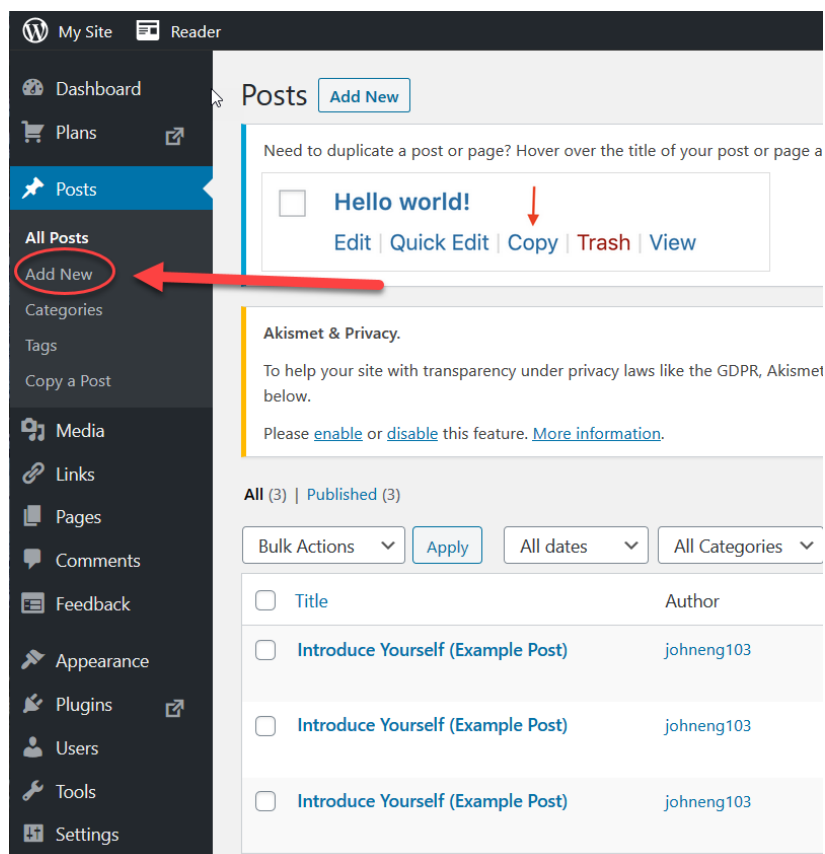
❑ 3) Delete the default posts (there may be more than one) by selecting each post and then the Trash option which appears as you hover over each post.



Note: You definitely won't be doing a lot of deleting in WordPress, but we need to do this to go through the steps to edit, preview and post a new blog post.

● ADDING A NEW POST

You add a new post in WP by locating the **Add New** menu option (or the Add New button) on the Posts page.



❑ 4) Locate and **click** on the **Add New** button next to the **Blog Posts** menu item.

You will now see the edit screen in WordPress – which is called the Gutenberg editor.

This screen lets you do many things with your content. We will get started simply here by writing a few sentences about yourself. (You should make this better at home when you have more time.)

❑ 5) Change the title of your post to Welcome (or similar).

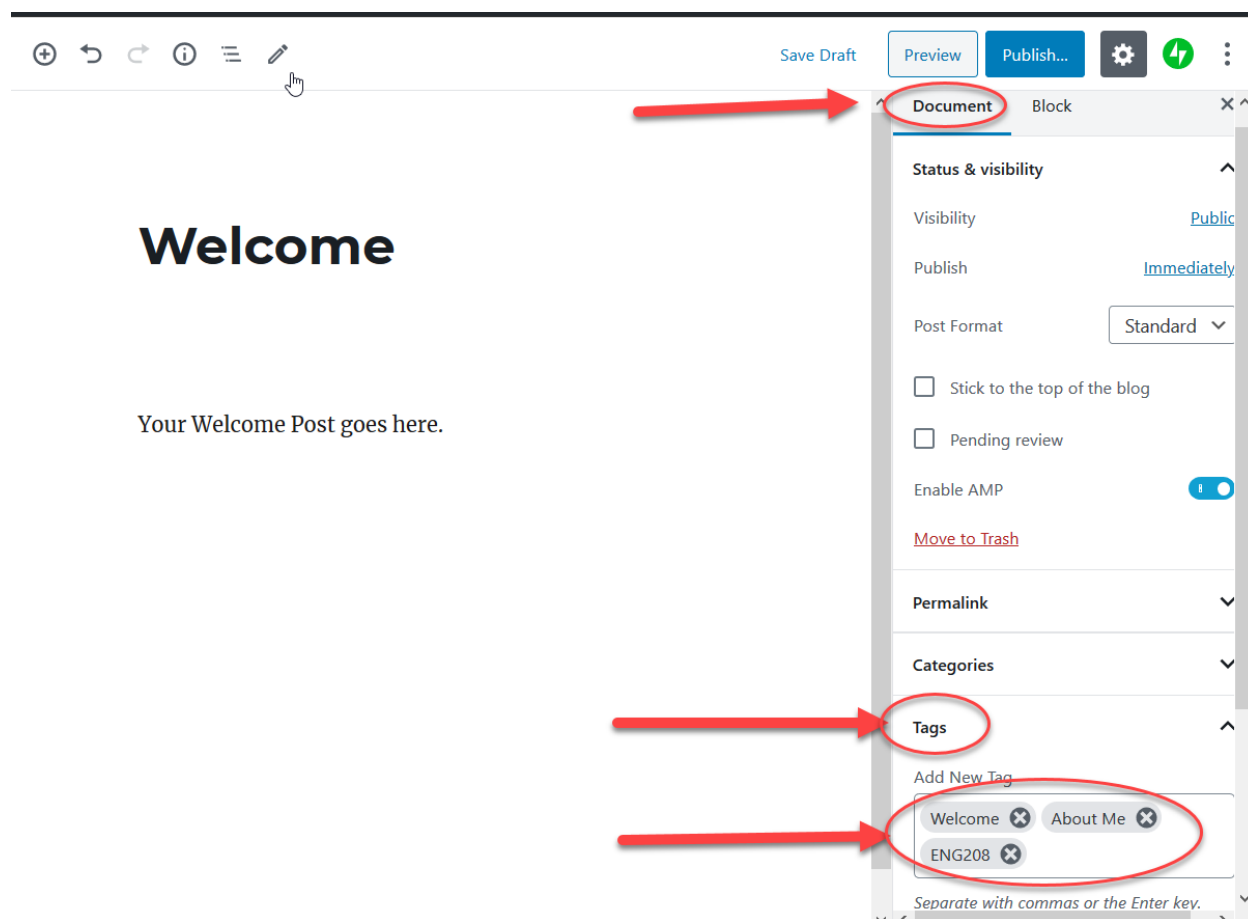
❑ 6) Write about 3 sentences for a Welcome post. (You may tell a bit about yourself and your educational and career plans, etc. Get started now – finish later.)

● TAGGING A NEW POST

One of the important tasks for ‘professional’ blogging is to use Categories and Tags effectively. We will look at how this works at *The Bridge* soon.

For now, get in the habit of tagging your posts. The right side of the edit screen lets you do this.

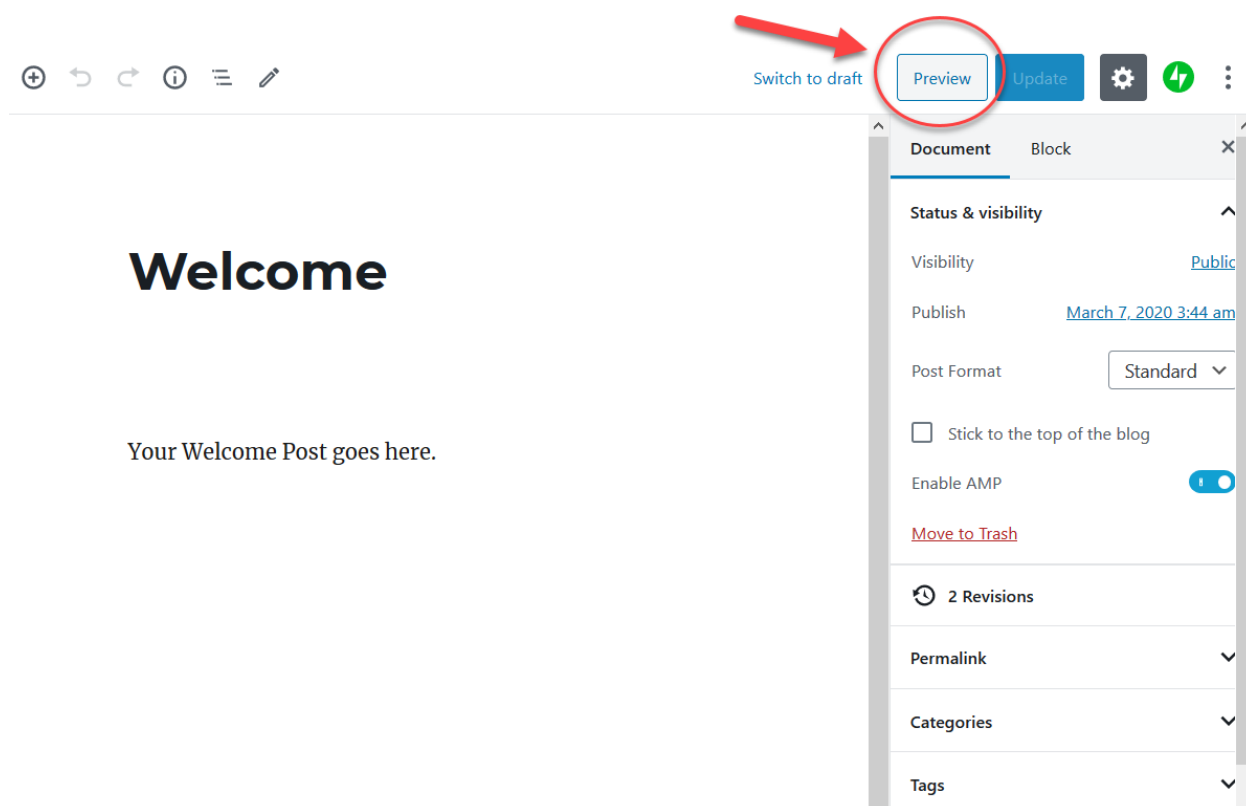
❑ 7) On the right side of the screen, locate the Document tab and click on it. Then you can tag your Welcome post with tags like ‘Welcome,’ ‘About Me’ and ‘ENG208.’



● PREVIEWING A POST

Since we are writing content that is visible to the whole world, it's important to be able to understand how to edit / preview and publish successfully. Many professional bloggers use other tools (like Word, etc.) to write and polish their work before they put into WordPress. We'll think about these ‘digital workflows’ as the semester goes on.

Right now, it's fine to use the WP editor. After you have written a few lines, click on the **Preview** button to preview your work in a browser.



WordPress will now give you the Preview screen.

If you've worked with web content before, you know that it often takes some trial and error to get elements to look right. So previewing content is an important step. Don't worry: you can always edit published content when it's just you. In professional settings (and even on *The Bridge*), there is usually a review step where editors will look at posted content first before it goes 'live.' *As a single user for your blog, you are the site manager, the writer, the editor and the web designer!* In larger settings, these roles would be filled by different people within a media organization.

Larger online publications do not normally do not let writers post new content before it's approved by an editor – this is part of what a 'content management system' (CMS) does to model 'workflows.' For larger sites, there is a 'staging server' where content is reviewed before being published live on a 'production server.' A responsible media organization cannot have its drafts (with possible errors and inaccuracies) shown to users because these incomplete versions could be saved and shared. (The Internet never forgets.)

But don't worry -- for your work WordPress, you can change content as many times as you need to.

● PUBLISHING A POST

Once you are satisfied that your post looks all right, you can publish it.

☐ 8) Navigate back to the **Edit** screen in WordPress.

☐ 9) Navigate Make any needed changes.

Of course, you can edit then preview many times.

☐ 10) Navigate Click the **Publish** button to publish your post. WordPress pulls up options for publishing content. Click **Publish** a second time. Your content should be 'live.'

● VIEW YOUR WEBSITE LIVE

☐ 11) Open a new Private or Incognito browser window.

☐ 12) Navigate to your website.

?????????.wordpress.com

☐ 13) View your website live (outside of WordPress). This is what the world sees.

Some Takeaways:

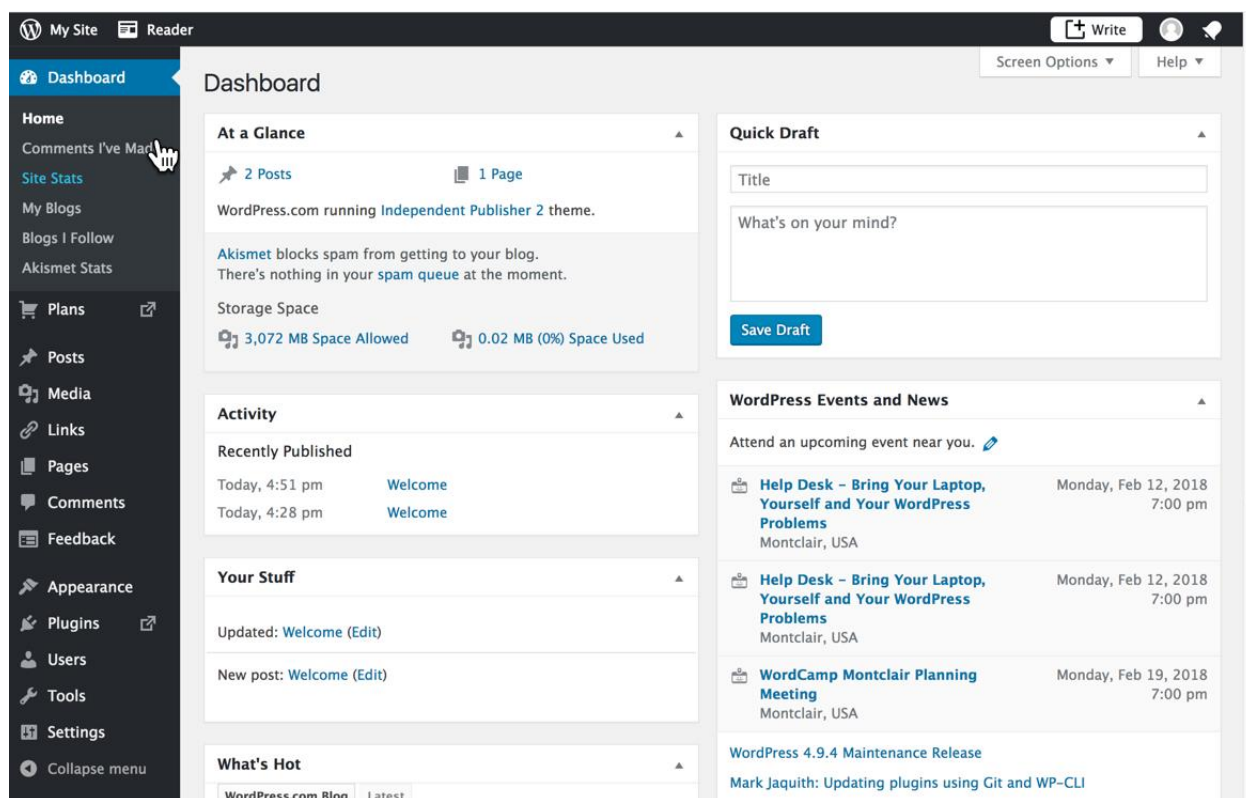
--Although it's possible to 'live blog' an event on your phone, posting live updates from the field, you absolutely need access to a desktop / laptop to control your content effectively in WordPress.

--You need to get comfortable with multiple open windows / tabs in web browsers. Often you'll have many windows open as a blogger.

◆ TASK 3: Exploring the WordPress Dashboard / Changing a Theme

❑ 1) Navigate to the full WP Dashboard.

(Since you are logged in from before, you don't have to log in again. Normally, you would type in your username and password to access the Dashboard.)



❑ 2) Spend ~7 minutes clicking on the menu on the left. (We will see the live version of *The Bridge*, which has much more content to explore.)

During the semester, we will become more familiar with the options in the Dashboard. Right now, you just want understand what it is, how to get to it, and how to find the **Posts** option.

● CHANGING A THEME

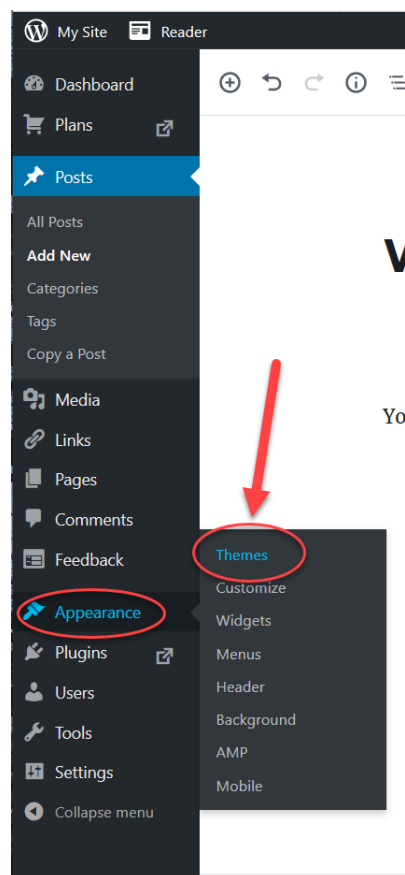
The visual theme in WordPress is easy to customize. There are hundreds of free and for-pay themes. Professional media organization pay thousands of dollars to graphic designers for a custom, branded look-and-feel.

Because WP is all things to all people, however, not every theme will work for an online newspaper or magazine, which is what we will try to model in our blogs for this course.

So make sure whatever theme you choose makes your content look somewhat like an online media website, not a portfolio website for visual artists with a large image across the home page, not an e-commerce website, not something else.

Many themes that you will find are for photographers / visual artists. Try to avoid themes that have a large picture for the background.

There are many FREE WP themes to choose from. We will do this now.



❑ 3) Within the WP Dashboard, locate and **click** on the **Appearance** menu item on the left.

❑ 4) You will see the **Themes** option appear on a submenu.

❑ 5) Spend a few minutes exploring themes.

*Which ones look like online magazines / websites that you have seen?

*Which ones look like personal portfolios? Many themes have a large photo in the middle of the web page. This is not what you want for the look of a blog with long-form journalism.

*Also, you want to avoid themes that have light text on a background. (This is never used on text-based publications and will make your work impossible to print for grading and commenting – so pls. avoid this for our class.)

Remember you want something that will feature text with photos, not just photos.

Some good choices for us are:

Independent Publisher 2

Twenty Twelve

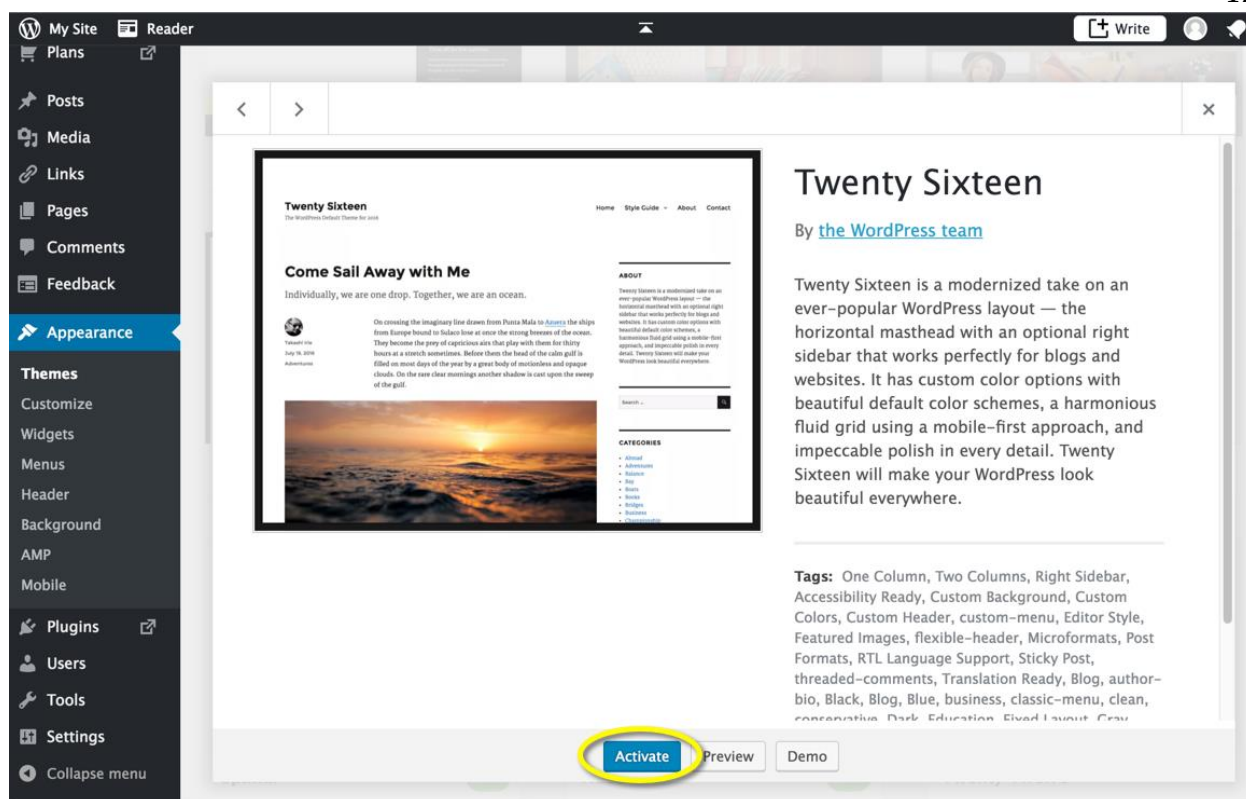
Twenty Sixteen

Libre 2

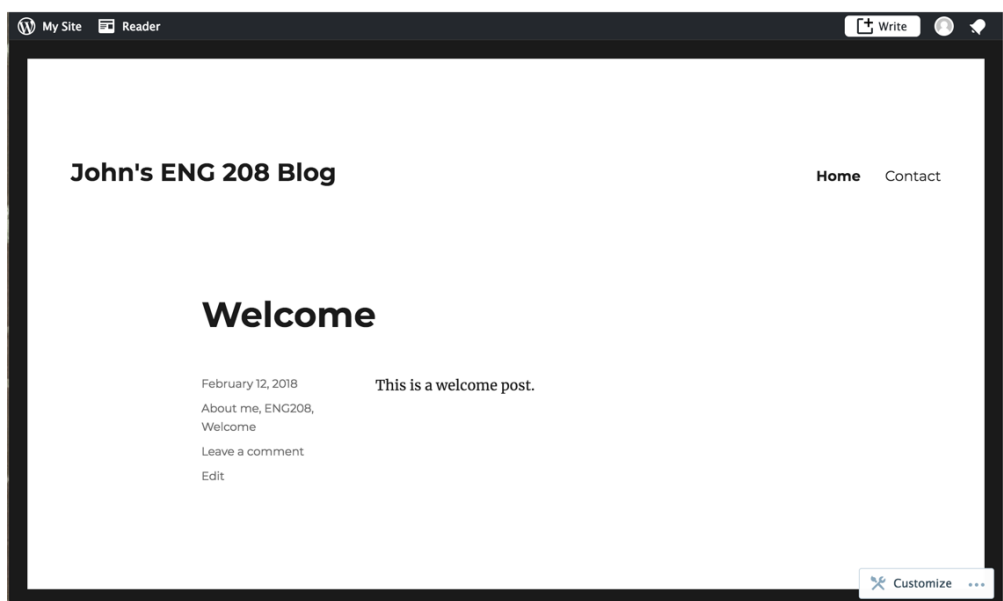
(Ryu)

(We can also use external free themes. Just search WordPress Free Themes for Writers and you will find many choices.)

❑ 6) Select a theme (one of the above is recommend) and click the **Activate** button.



Here is a sample screen of our **Welcome** post under the new theme:



There are many ways to customize most themes. We will go over some of these possibilities together. The best way to get familiar with a theme is to try them out. You will never break anything by testing out a theme!