

Building a Basic WordPress Site

Do you need to create a digital portfolio for a class? Do you want to make a website for your club? Every student at ODU can have one personal WordPress site and can create additional sites for courses or organizations. This manual is going to guide you through the steps of building a new website.

Required materials: A computer and internet access (Computers are located in the Perry Library Learning Commons)

**Four-part process:
Access → Create → Add → Customize**

Part 1: Accessing your student WordPress profile

Step 1: Follow this link <https://wp.odu.edu/wp-login.php> to visit your WordPress Profile

Step 2: Sign in using your ODU MIDAS ID and password

Part 2: Creating your new WordPress site

Every student at ODU can have a personal WordPress site and create additional sites for courses or organizations.

Step 1: Click  ["Manage My Sites"]. "Manage my Sites" is located on the side menu bar.

Step 2: Type your site address in the white box.

The only characters allowed in the site address are lowercase letters a-z and the hyphen.

Tip: Consider including your name in the site address.

Example:

[https://sites.wp.odu.edu/](https://sites.wp.odu.edu/johnsmith-portfolio)

Step 3: Click  ["Create New Site"].

Your new site will appear under the "My Other Sites" heading.

Part 3: Adding a new page to your WordPress site

Pages are an essential element of a website. Some standard pages are "About Me," "Resume," and "Assignments."

Step 1: Mouse over  ["My Sites"] and click  ["The Site You Want to Edit"] to access the site's dashboard. "My Sites" is located at the top left corner of your screen.

Step 2: Mouse over  Pages ["Pages"] and click  Add New ["Add New"]. "Pages" is located on the side menu.

Step 3: Click  Add title ["Add Title"] and name your page.

Tip: Titles should be short and descriptive.

Step 4: Add a "block"

WordPress pages are built in "blocks," such as text/paragraphs, pictures, and files.

To write a paragraph

1. Press the "Enter" key and mouse over the text cursor.
The text cursor is the blinking vertical line on your screen.
2. Click  Start writing or type / to choose a block ["Start writing or type/to choose a block"] and start typing your paragraph.

To upload an image or file

1. Press the "Enter" key and mouse over the text cursor.
2. Click  ["New Block" icon] to add a new block.
3. Click  Search for a block ["Search for a block"] and type "image" or "file."
4. Click  ["Image" icon] to upload an image or  ["File" icon] to upload a file.
5. Click  Upload ["Upload"] to search your computer for a specific image or file.

Step 5: Click  Publish... ["Publish"] to publish your new page to your WordPress site.

Step 6: Repeat steps 3 - 5 to add more pages.

Part 4: Customizing your WordPress site (Optional)

Choosing a theme or selecting a static homepage can make your website stand out and look more professional.

Step 1: Choose a theme

1. Click  Appearance ["Appearance"] to directly access the themes. "Appearance" is located on the side menu bar.
2. Click  Change ["Change"].

3. Browse themes and mouse over your favorite one.
4. Click **Live Preview** [“Live Preview”] for a preview of your website with the new theme.
Tip 1: “Dyad” is a good theme for first-time WordPress users.
Tip 2: Make sure your theme includes a menu bar so that people can easily navigate your website.
For example (a menu bar in “Dyad”):

ABOUT ME **ASSIGNMENT 1** **ASSIGNMENT 2** **RESUME**

5. Click **Activate & Publish** [“Activate & Publish”] if you like how the theme looks.
If you do not like how it looks, you can repeat steps 1.1-1.4 to try another theme.

Step 2: Select a static homepage

Displaying a homepage on your website can orient your readers and help them navigate your website. You can select any page as your site’s homepage. Many students choose their “About Me” page. (Refer to “Part 3: Adding a New Page to Your WordPress Site” if you need help making a new page.)

1. Mouse over  **Appearance** [“Appearance”] and click **Customize** [Customize] to access your site’s customization menu.
2. Click **Homepage Settings** [“Homepage Settings”].
3. Select **A static page** [“A static page”] under the “Your Home Page Displays” heading.
Select this option by clicking the white circle.
4. Click **— Select —** [“Select”] under the “Homepage” heading.
You will see a list of all of your site’s pages.
5. Click the title of the page that you wish to set as your home page.
6. Click **Publish** [“Publish”] to save changes.
7. Click  [“Exit” icon] to exit the customization menu and view your site.

Done

Congratulations! You have built a basic WordPress site. Check out the recourses below if you need additional help or if you want to customize your website even more.

Additional Resources

WordPress.com support page: <https://en.support.wordpress.com>

ODU WordPress guidelines: <https://www.odu.edu/ts/wordpress#tab52=1>

ePortfolio tutorials: <https://www.odu.edu/success/programs/eportfolios/tutorials#tab89=2>

ePortfolio assistance: <https://www.odu.edu/success/programs/eportfolios/resources>

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Rationale

According to Pawlowski and Johnson, rhetorically effective instructions are written with sensitivity to “the purpose of the instructions, the intended audience, and the context in which the manual is used.” The rhetorical situation influences the content, design, and language choices. For this assignment, I wrote a simple instruction manual on how to build a WordPress website.

The general purpose of any instruction manual is “to familiarize the user with the product and/or to guide the user through a series of steps that lead to the completion of a task” (Pawlowski and Johnson). The purpose of my instruction manual is to guide Old Dominion University (ODU) students through the four-step process of building a basic WordPress site. The content and language choices were shaped by the purpose of my instructions.

The instruction manual contains a title and introduction which explicitly state the purpose and specific outcomes. The overview functions as an abbreviated table of contents, and the user can quickly see how to accomplish the main objective. Each step is purpose-driven, and I included several tips to help the user build a better website. For example, I wrote “Tip: ‘Dyad’ is a good theme for first-time WordPress users.”

The language I used conveyed the purpose of the manual. I phrased the titles as gerunds to “convey a sense of process” (Farkas). For example, the title of my instructions is “Building a Basic WordPress Site” and the first subheading is “Part 1: Accessing your student WordPress profile.” The wording of individual steps are direct and “utilized the imperative mood”

(Pawlowski and Johnson). For example, instead of writing “the white box is where the site address should go” I wrote “Step 2: Type your site address in the white box.” This imperative is clear and action-oriented.

The intended audience of this instruction manual is students at Old Dominion University (ODU). Pawlowski and Johnson suggest considering the audiences’ familiarity with the topic and comfort level toward the task. Since students at ODU are expected to be able to navigate Blackboard and ODU Gmail, I made the assumption that the user is somewhat familiar with computers and comfortable learning new online tasks. The average twenty-year-old college could probably build a basic WordPress website with little or no instruction. However, some students at ODU may be less comfortable with computers. For example, senior citizens are allowed to audit classes at ODU for free. I wanted to create an instruction manual that almost any student at ODU could use. I based the content and design choices on the intended audience.

From the introduction to the conclusion, the content of the manual is specifically crafted for ODU students. The introduction mentions that there are computers at the Perry Library Learning Commons, and distances learners are required to have computers and reliable internet access. The first step asks the user to follow a link to the ODU WordPress login. Lastly, there is a list of additional resources at the end of the document, and one of the links directs the user to ePortfolio assistance for ODU students.

The design choices I made were influenced by my audience. Alignment “creates hierarchy and structure” (Pawlowski and Johnson). The layout of my instructions allows experienced users to quickly scan the steps for specific topics, while less experienced users can easily follow and understand the individual steps. According to the lecture on document design, the font should be darker than the background (Richards). Since I was creating the instructions

for ODU students, I chose a light grey background and dark blue font. Additionally, the light grey background enhanced some of the screenshots. For example, step 2 of part 2 reads “type your address in the white box.” In the screenshot that follows the step, the white box jumps out of the grey background

Context is defined as “the temporal, social, technological, and cultural situation surrounding the creation and use of the instruction manual” (Pawlowski and Johnson). For this assignment, I wrote a three-page instruction manual for ODU students. Hypothetically, students would be able to access the document through the ODU website. The design and language choices were shaped by the context.

The instruction manual had to be under three-pages. This constraint influenced my design choices. Instead of using large screenshots, I took small screenshots of every item that the user had to click. I imbedded the screenshots within the line of text to eliminate white space and show the user what each item looked like on the screen. For example, a screenshot of a blue button with a paintbrush and the word “appearance” communicates more effectively than the written command “click ‘appearance’.”

The language that I used included terminology that most users within the context of 21st century America would understand. For example, I did not define commands such as “click,” “mouse over,” or “press the ‘enter’ key.” However, I defined the word text cursor as “the blinking vertical line on your screen” because it is a less common term. However, I wanted to be sensitive to users coming from different backgrounds. I tested the rhetorical effectiveness of an early draft by asking both a 21-year-old user and a 59-year-old user to follow the instructions. It was much harder for the older user to understand some of terms and steps, so I tried to use simpler words and break each part into easier steps.

Students at ODU may need to use make a WordPress site for a course or organization
However, the technological context of the instructional manual goes deeper than a simple
assignment. In this digital age, internet literacy and establishing an online presence is becoming
increasingly important.

Works Cited

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