

Set up your first free website

There are many websites available across the web that allow you to create a whole website for free, without any knowledge of scripts or coding.

Think that sounds too good to be true? Well it is almost as simple as that. The catch is if you want to add more features to your website, want to use a custom domain name, or if your website traffic (number of views) increases and you need to 'rent' more bandwidth to cope with it. That's when your 'free' website starts to cost money.

There is one simple rule to remember when creating a free website which could help you avoid problems in future:

Never buy your domain name from the same website/company/platform that hosts your free website.

If you want to create your free website at Wordpress.com but you want to use your own domain name rather than the one they provide (e.g. mysiteforme.co.uk instead of <http://mysiteforme.wordpress.com>) then buy your domain name from a different website.

Wordpress will give you the option to buy a domain name through them. In fact they will point it out to you at every opportunity, but don't.

If you know what you want to call your website, go to a domain name registration website and see if the domain name is available to buy.

Domain names are often cheaper through these websites too. You will see that some of them offer website hosting as well, but they don't offer a free site build service.

Buying a domain name

Go to one of the domain name registration websites and use their search box to search for the domain name you want to buy.

(For example only: namecheap.com, Co-operatives UK Internet Services, 1-2-3-Reg.co.uk or Names.co.uk).

The search results will show you a list of extensions/suffixes for your chosen name and whether they are available:

Popular Extensions [Show Extensions Only](#)

	mysiteforme.com	Taken	Whois
	mysiteforme.net	Available	\$10.69/yr
	mysiteforme.info	Available	\$2.99/yr Limited Time!
	mysiteforme.org	Available	\$9.69/yr
	mysiteforme.biz	Available	\$9.69/yr
	mysiteforme.co.uk	Available	\$4.99/yr
	mysiteforme.us	Available	\$6.99/yr
	mysiteforme.xxx	Available	\$78.88/yr NEW TLD!

Additional Extensions

	mysiteforme.mobi	Available	\$7.99/yr
	mysiteforme.co	Available	\$12.88/yr Limited Time!
	mysiteforme.cm	Available	\$98.00/yr
	mysiteforme.me.uk	Available	\$4.99/yr
	mysiteforme.org.uk	Available	\$4.99/yr
	mysiteforme.me	Available	\$8.99/yr
	mysiteforme.tv	Available	\$24.99/yr

[Search All Extensions ...](#)

[Add to Cart](#)

From this list you can see that 'mysiteforme.com' is not available but that all other suffixes are.

It is usual practice to identify your organisation using the domain name suffix e.g. for a UK company you might use .co.uk or for a UK charity you might use .org.uk.

If your website is for your own personal use you might even want to use the suffix .me or .me.uk, or .info or .net.

If the domain name you want is not available at all with a sensible suffix, try changing it slightly, for example, by using hyphens: my-site-for-me.

When you are happy with the domain name you have found, you might also want to buy popular variants. If you want to use .co.uk you might also want to buy .com, .info and .net so that they can't be used on another website unrelated to yours (but with the same domain name apart from the suffix).

(The prices here are listed in dollars as the list is taken from Namecheap.com, a US website).

NB: if your organisation is a co-operative you can buy a .coop domain name from Co-operatives UK Internet Services. The suffix .xxx has recently been created for use by adult websites.

You might also want to compare a couple of different domain name registration websites to see which one is the cheapest for the suffix you want to buy as they do vary.

Managing domain names

If you buy your domain names through one provider, you are allowed to move them to another provider at any point except within 30 days of the renewal date (terms vary).

You might have bought your domain names through a company that was running a special offer and the price the following year may be much higher than a competitor, so remember to check at least a month before the renewal date to see if you want to move them.

To move a domain name you need to open an account with your new provider, then follow the instructions from both your new and current providers' instructions to move the domain name. It is a simple process and can take from one to 48 hours before the domain has fully transferred – you need to be aware of this as it might affect the availability of your website during that period.

Creating a free website

There are lots of websites, or platforms, where you can create a free website. Wordpress.com is one of the most popular and flexible with plenty of free themes and widgets to choose from. It is also one of the easiest to use.

Others include yola.com, weebly.com, 1and1.co.uk, moonfruit.com and Google's gbbo.co.uk. If your website is for a UK organisation you may prefer to use a platform with a .co.uk suffix (not important if you will be using your own domain name).

Another caveat to remember is that whatever you build on one of the free platforms, stays on that platform. You will not be able to 'pick up your website' and move it to a different host, should you want to.

If, for example you:

- Want to move to a cheaper host as your visitor numbers or amount of media mean you have to buy more bandwidth or storage.
- Want to move to a cheaper host as a special offer runs out or prices go up without warning for services you've chosen to pay for.
- Want to add features such as e-commerce (although Wordpress.com has a limited e-commerce widget).
- Become established and want a developer to build you a bigger/better/more specialised website.
- Learn how to code or to use Wordpress.org (where you download a content management system), design your own site and upload it to a host of your choice.

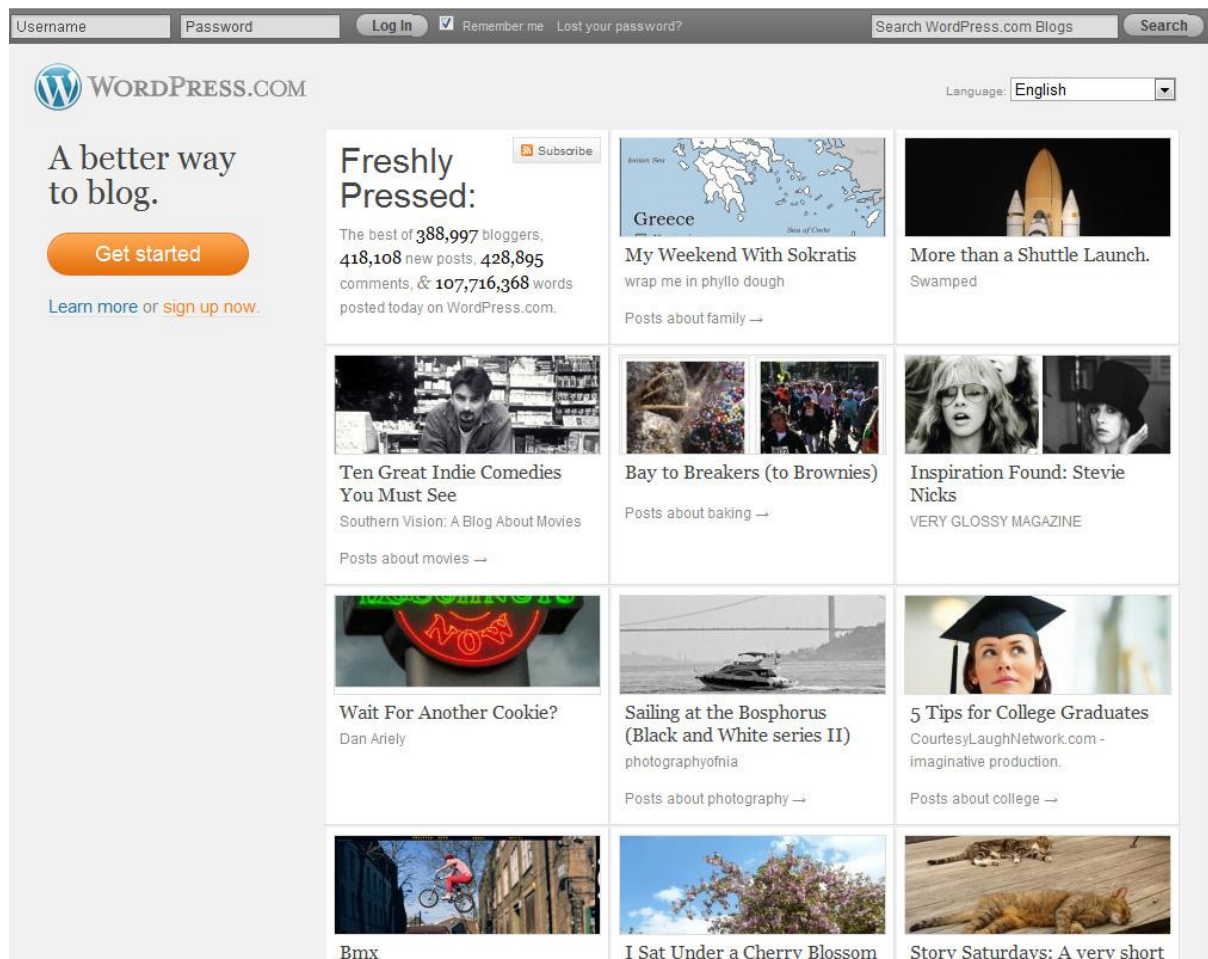
It might be that these will not happen to your website and you will never need to move it.

Either way, a free website is a good place to start.

Create your site

We're going to use Wordpress.com as an example.

Go to <http://www.wordpress.com>



Wordpress.com is possibly more commonly associated with blogging but you can create a whole website with static pages plus all the features also available on a blog.

Click the 'Get started' button.

Get your own WordPress.com account in seconds

Fill out this one-step form and you'll be blogging seconds later!

Blog Address

Free
▼

Choose an address for your blog. Don't worry, you can change this later.

If you don't want a blog you can [signup for just a username](#).

Username

Your username should be a minimum of four characters and can only include lowercase letters and numbers.

Password

Confirm

Great passwords use upper and lower case characters, numbers and symbols like !"\$%&'&()*.

Password Strength

E-mail Address

Follow our blog to learn about new themes, features, and other news.

We'll send you an email to activate your blog, so please **triple-check** that you've typed it correctly.

What language will you be blogging in?

en - English
▼

Your selection here will determine which language to show menus and settings in.

Thinking about upgrading?

Grab the WordPress Value Bundle and save some cash.

Free Blog	✓	✓
Domain Name & Mapping	✓	✗
10GB Space Upgrade	✓	✗
No Ads	✓	✗
Custom Design	✓	✗
VideoPress	✓	✗
\$99 <small>per year</small>	Free	

You agree to the [fascinating terms of service](#) by submitting this form.

Upgrade →

Create Blog →

Save 40%!

Grabbing the upgrade bundle on signup can save you some cash over buying upgrades at a later date.

For more information on each upgrade, hover over the name for an explanation of the feature.

1. The first thing you need to do is to think of a unique name for your website.

When you enter the website title ('Blog Address'), Wordpress might ask if you'd like to buy the domain name (if it is available). Click 'no thanks'. You can change the domain name later if you have bought, or are going to buy, your own from a domain name registration company.

2. Your username is the name that will be displayed when you write a blog post on your website or leave a comment on someone else's blog within Wordpress. It does not need to be the same as your website title.

3. Use a reasonably complicated password so no one else can get in to your account.

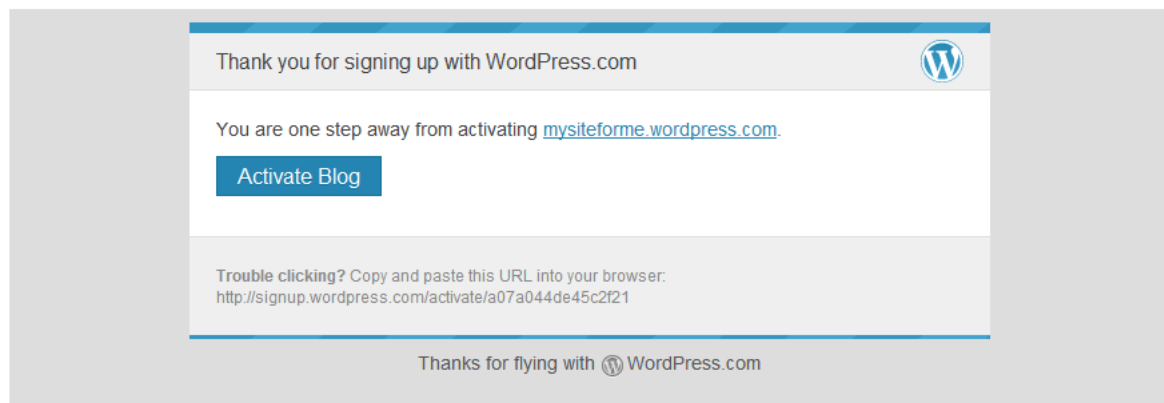
4. Make sure you type your email address correctly as you will receive an email to activate your new website. If you forget your password you will also need your email address to be able to re-set it.

5. Click 'Create Blog' (you do not need to upgrade at this point, you can do this later on if you decide it is necessary).

While you are waiting for your activation email to arrive, you can fill out your profile details on the next page.

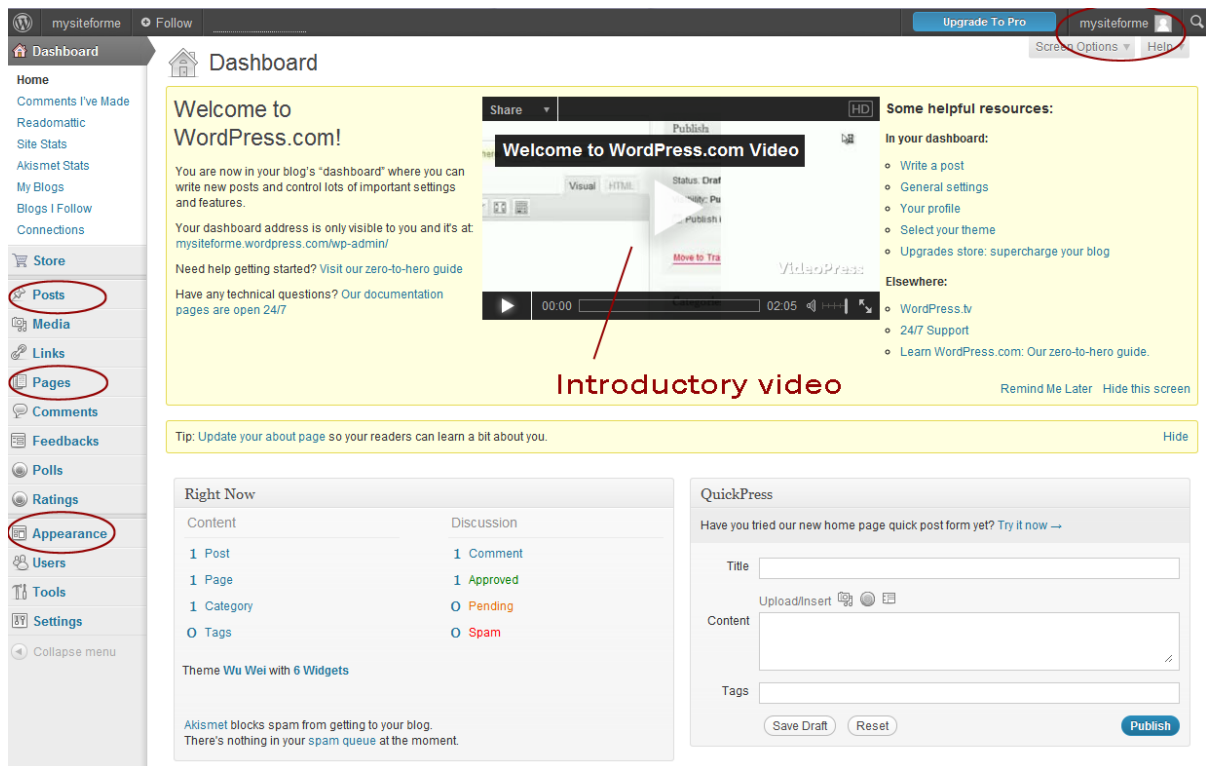
Put in as little or as much detail as you want to share with other people online.

Next, check your emails to see if you have received the activation email:



Sender reply address says do not reply. ✕

Click 'Activate Blog' to activate your Wordpress account. You will be taken straight to your new dashboard on Wordpress.com.



Your dashboard will initially display an introductory video – watch this but beware the layout of buttons on the grey bar at the top of the screen in the video is a bit out of date! Alongside it are a host of useful links on how to get started.

When you have explored the video and links, click ‘remind me later’ or ‘hide this screen’.

1. You can access your personal profile via the link in the top right hand corner of the screen. You can create more than one blog or website on the same account and if you have more you will see them listed in the drop-down here.
2. In the navigation on the left hand side of the page, ‘posts’ will show you the list of **blog posts** on your website.
3. ‘Pages’ will show you the list of static **web pages** on your website.
4. ‘Appearance’ contains links to change the look and feel of your site to a huge range of free and paid for templates. Under here you can also add widgets to your site, and create and add a navigation menu which will turn your site from a blog into a more traditional website.

Changing the appearance of your website

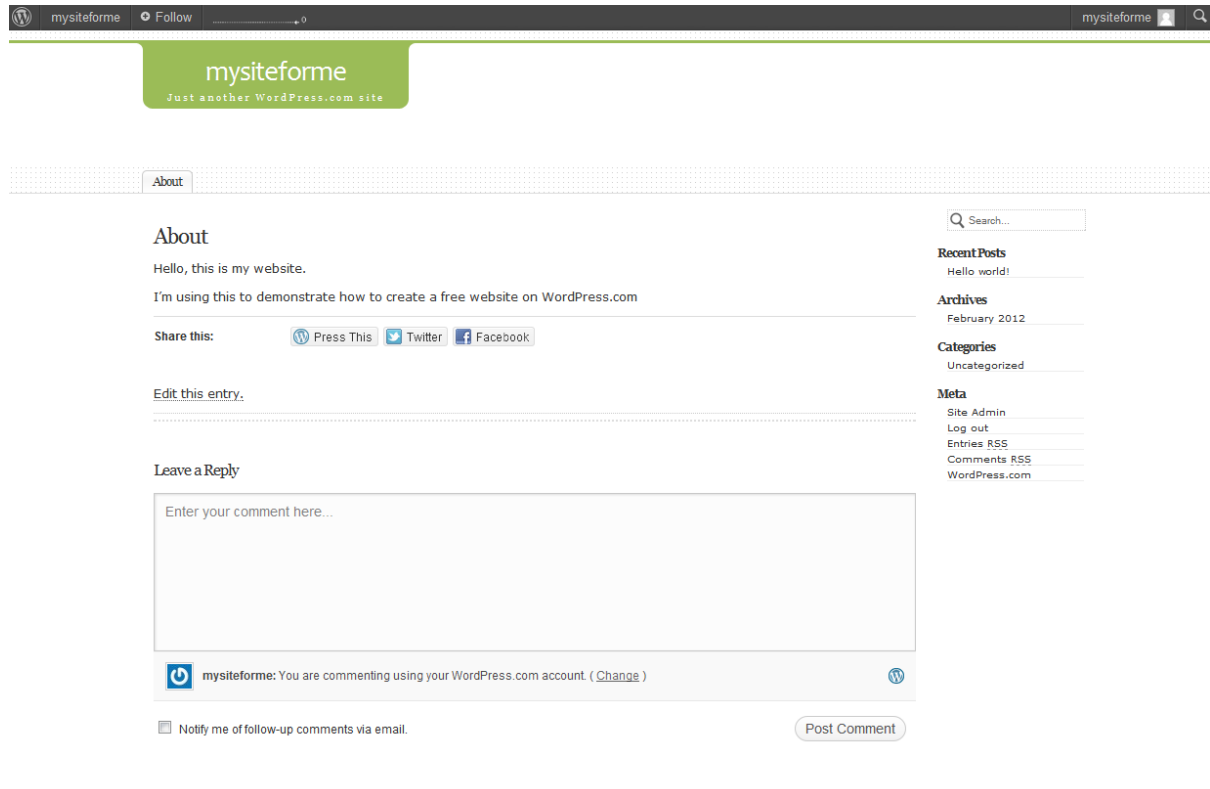
Click ‘Appearance’ on the left hand navigation and select ‘Themes’ from the drop-down list.

There are usually between 100 and 200 different themes available so you could spend a long time looking for one you like!

To make it a bit more complicated, the themes have different characteristics too – some let you upload an image for your header, some let you change the colour of the background or the whole design, some you can change the number of columns. Some will be better suited to blogs and some will be better for websites.

Browse the themes on the page. They all have a 'preview' link beneath them which will bring up a pop up window so you can see what your site would look like wearing that theme (to shut this pop up window down, click the cross in the top **left** corner on the pop up).

For now, choose one you like the look of, preferably that has two or three columns. We're using one called 'Under The Influence'. Click 'Activate'.



This theme allows you to change the colour scheme of the site. Under 'Appearance' on your dashboard, choose 'Theme options'. Here you can change the colours on the page, change the font size, the width of the columns and website and state how big any images should be.

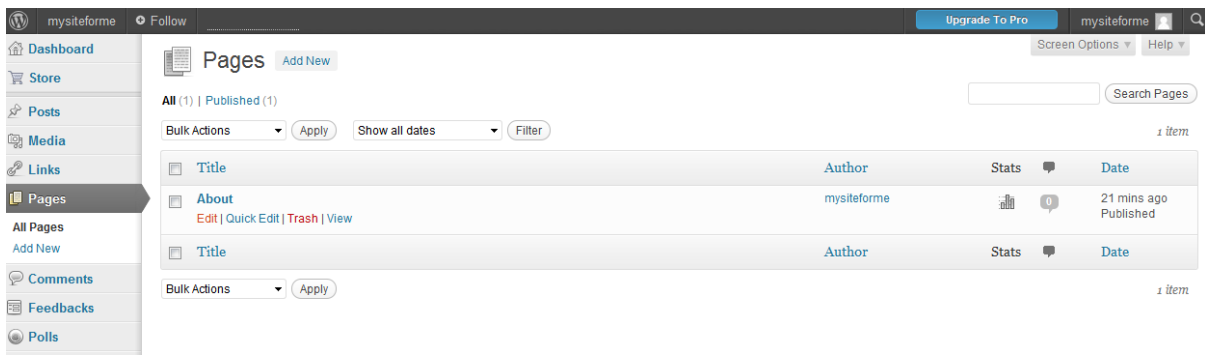
Also under 'Appearance' is 'Background' – click on this to either set a colour for your background or to upload an image for the background of your website. This doesn't always work well with many themes and I am not going to add one for 'Under The Influence'.

Other themes let you alter the number of columns, change the header image or upload one of your own and other features. It depends which one you choose.

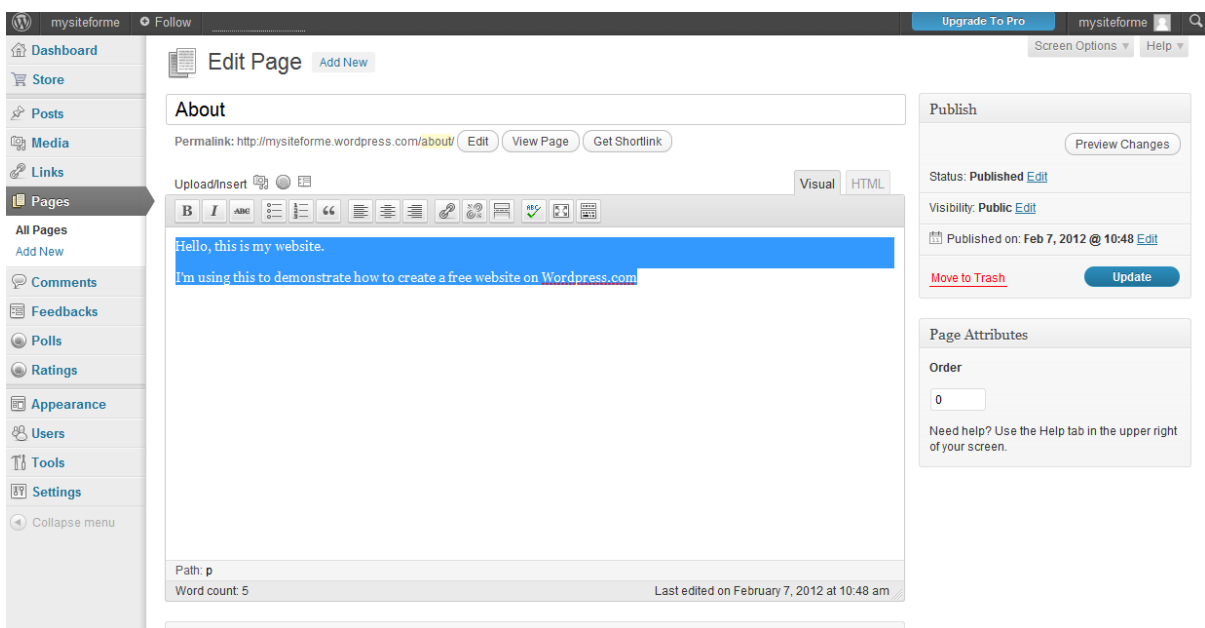
Creating web pages

Your website will need some content pages – click on 'Pages' and select 'All Pages' on the left hand navigation.

There is one page already here that Wordpress has added for you. It is your 'About' page – most websites have one so you can keep this and edit it to describe your organisation, company or website.



Hover your mouse over the page title 'About' and four options will appear – click 'Edit'.

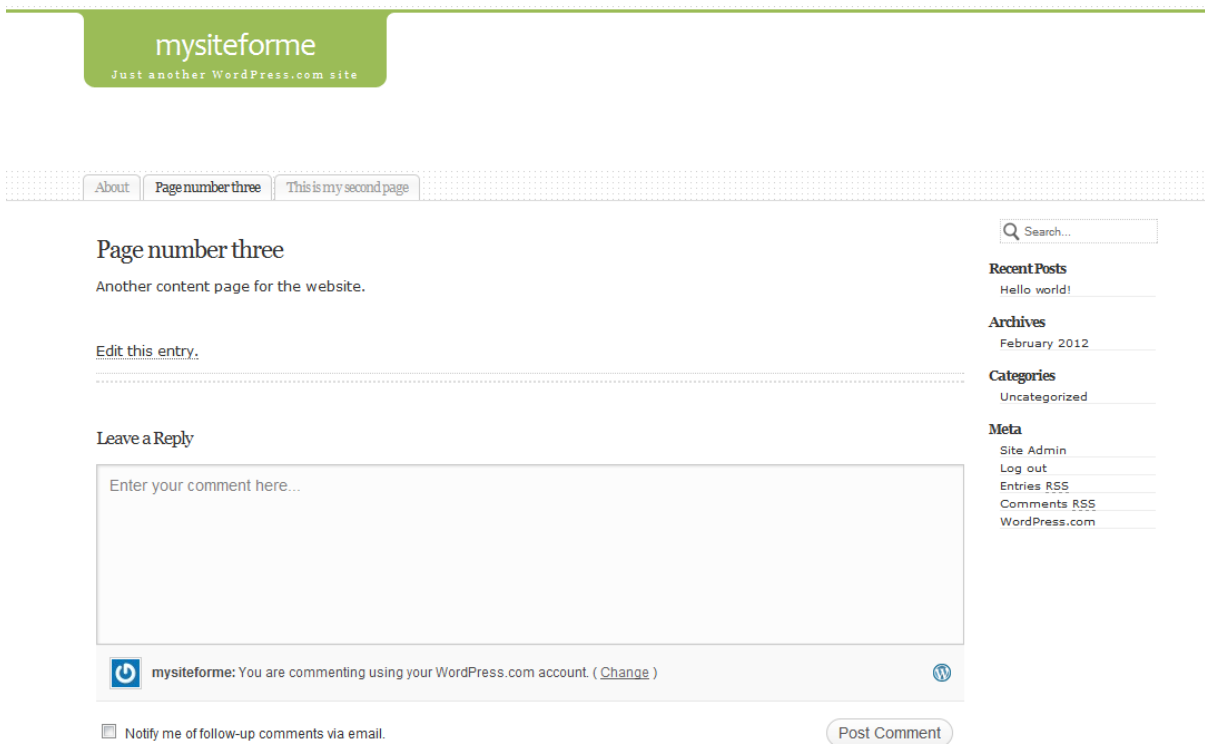


Enter the text for your 'About' page into the centre box. This is a WYSIWYG editor (What You See Is What You Get) and you can format the text using the icons at the top of the box.

When you have finished editing the page, click 'Preview changes' on the right hand side. Your website will open in a new tab or window.

Adding new pages:

1. Go back to the browser tab open with your dashboard and click on 'Pages' to bring up the list.
2. Next to the title 'Pages' at the top of the page is an 'Add New' button. Click this to add a second page to your website.
3. Enter the page title and the content below, then click 'Preview' to see your new page in a new tab. Back on the dashboard tab you can click 'Publish' when you are happy with the page. You can edit pages at any time.
4. Go back to 'Pages' and add a third page.

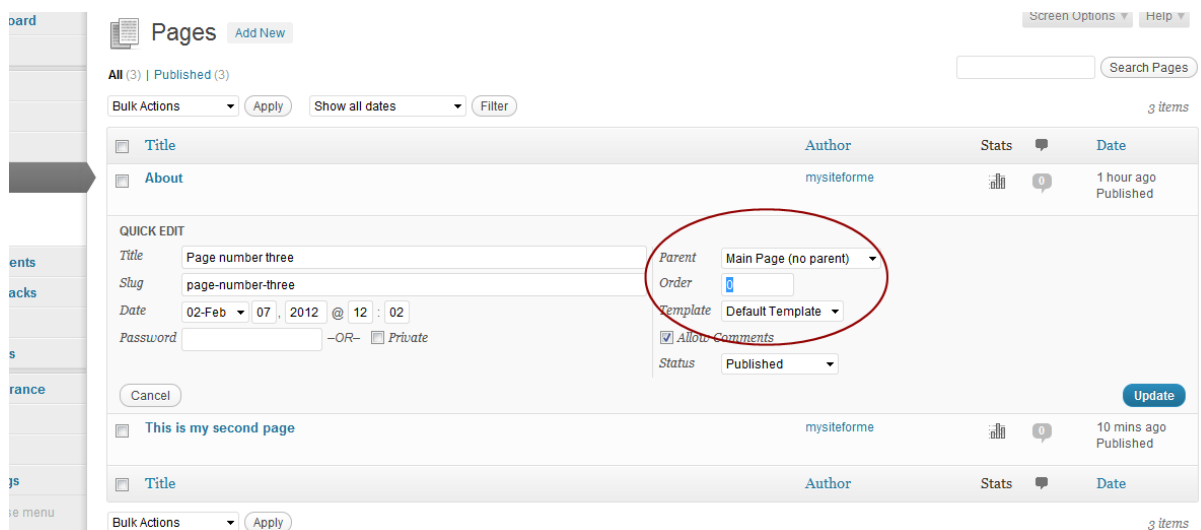


As you can see on this website, the third page has appeared in front of the second page so the order will need to be changed.

NB: not all themes have tabs or links to pages across the top of the website – skip to creating a menu section.

1. To change the order of these tabs, go back to your dashboard and select 'Pages'. You will see that page number three will be in second position underneath your original 'About' page. Wordpress will slot new pages in from the top as you create them.

2. To change the order, hover your mouse over the title of page number three and click 'Quick edit'. A series of fields will drop down:



3. In the box for 'Order' enter the true number of the page. So for the last page this will be '3' so it appears third in the list. Also here is the option to change the page's parent i.e. you can put it

underneath another page so it appears as second-level navigation instead of at the top level with all the other pages. Click 'Update'.

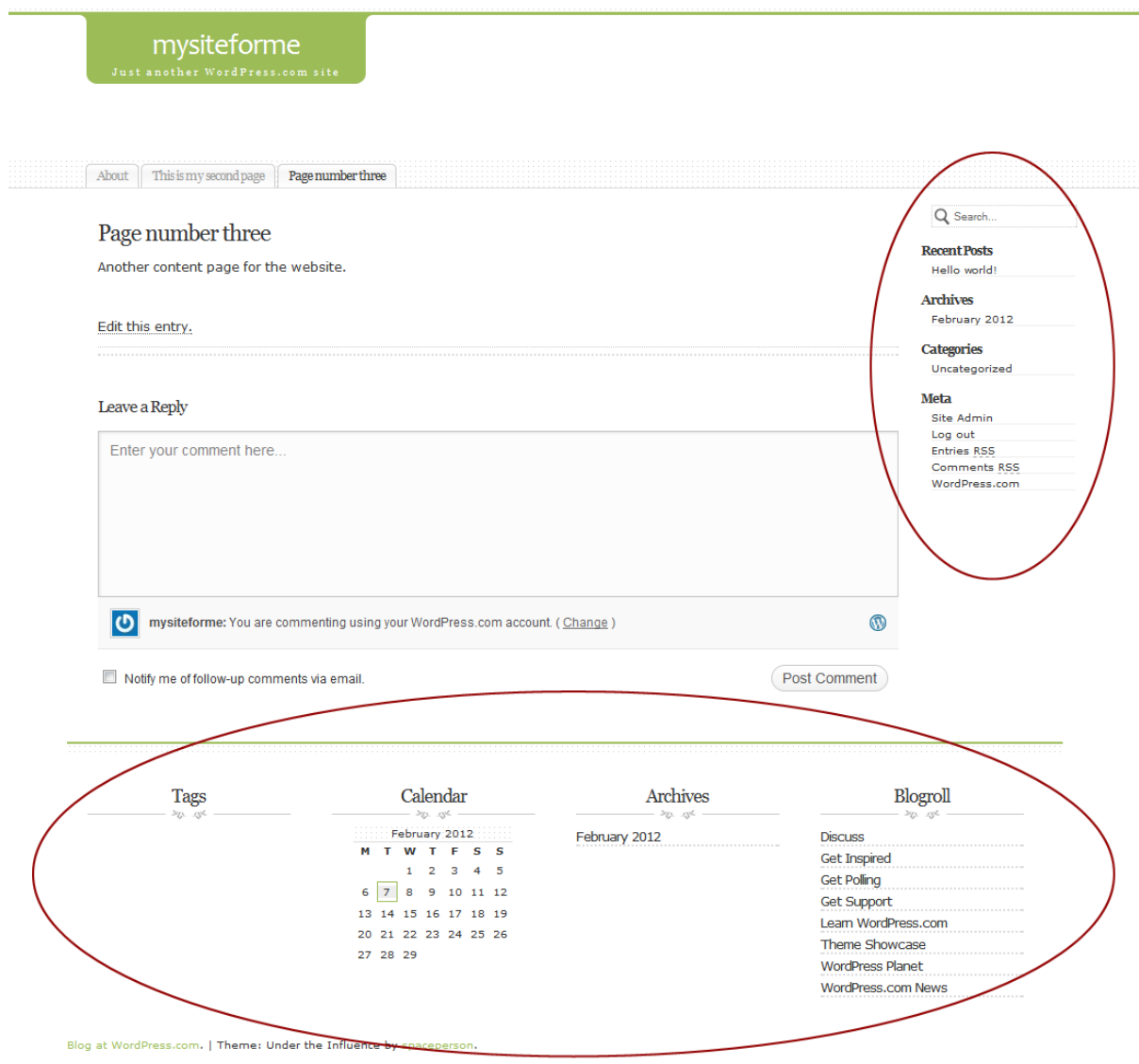
4. Do the same for the second page but add a '2' in the box.

5. View your site again and you will see that the pages on the tabs have changed around.

NB: If you still have a second tab open displaying your website, you can go back to this and use the 'F5' key on your keyboard to refresh the page and display any changes.

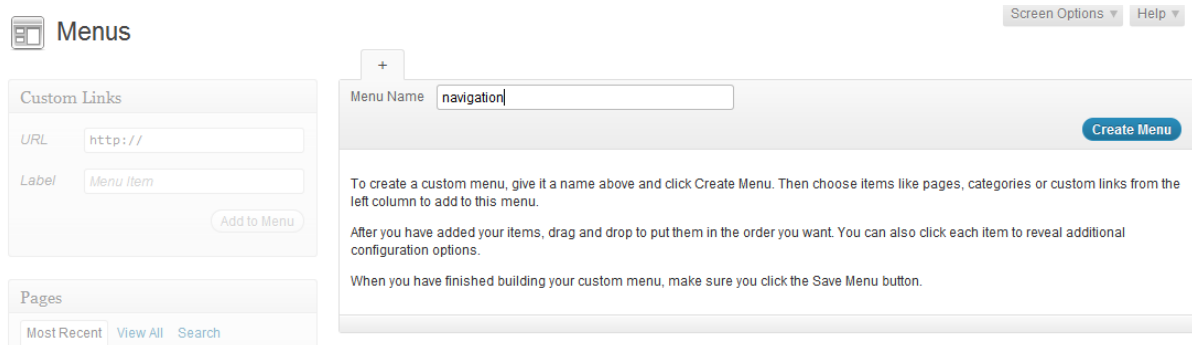
Creating a navigation menu

All the features in the right hand and bottom areas are widgets. They can be added, changed or taken away. Your navigation menu will also be one of these widgets.

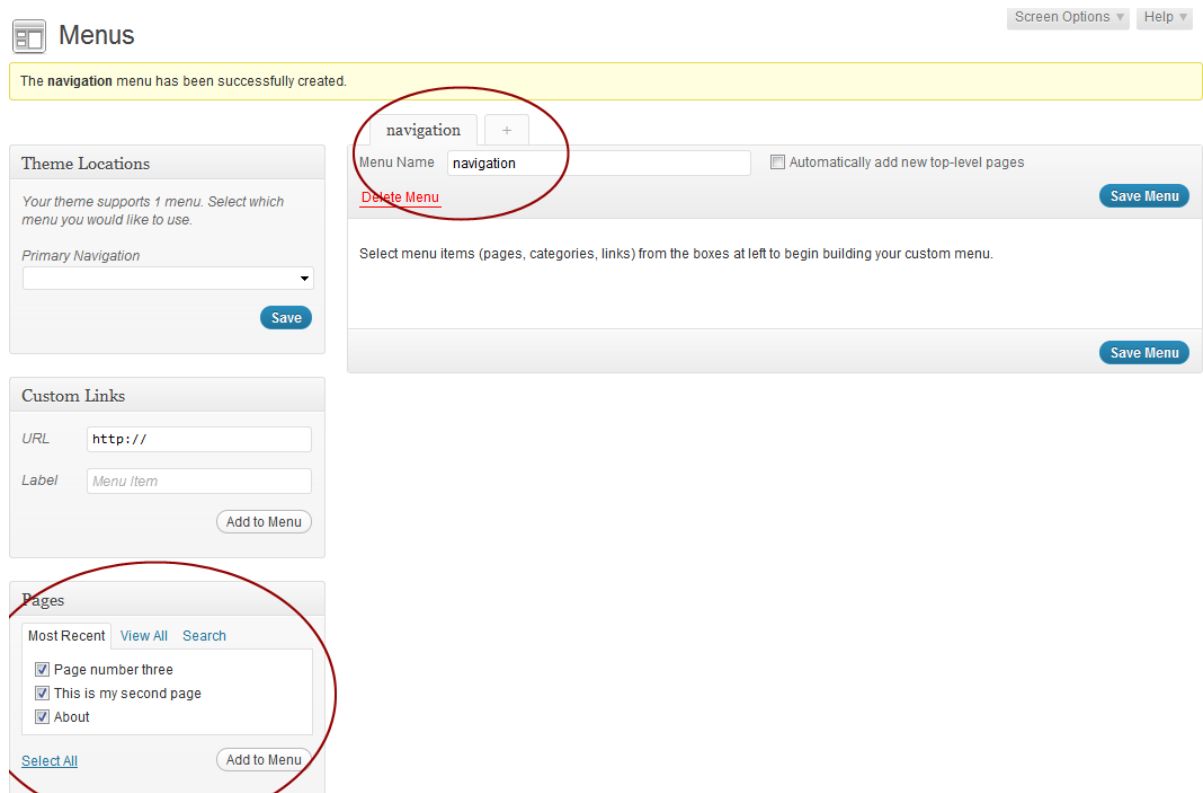


1. Under 'Appearance' click on 'Menu'.

2. Enter the name for your new menu in the Menu Name field. This one is called 'navigation':



3. Click 'Create Menu'. You will see your new menu appear as a tab in the top right hand area on the page.



4. Add pages to your menu by ticking them in the 'Pages' box then clicking 'Add to menu'. You can change the order of page in the menu simply by dragging them up and down the list.

5. Under 'Appearance' now click on 'Widgets'. You will see a list of the available widgets in the middle of the page, and the ones currently used on the right of the page under 'sidebar'.

6. You can move widgets to and from the sidebar by dragging them. You can also change their position in the list.

7. Drag the 'Custom menu' widget on to the sidebar at the top of the list. Once the widget is in position it will open and you can select which custom menu you want to use (currently there is only one 'navigation').

8. If you want a title for your navigation list, add it to the Title field. We've called this one 'Pages'.

9. While here, we will also change the name of the widget that displays blog posts to 'Blog' so that it is distinguished from the other web pages on the website. Click on the arrow on the widget and it will open, displaying a 'Title' field.

10. This theme also has room for widgets in the footer; to add these, click on the arrow next to one of the footercell boxes and drag a chosen widget into the space. We've added the Flickr widget to the footercell mid left.

11. Return to the browser tab displaying your website and click F5 to refresh the page. You should see your new menu in place plus any other widgets you have added.

About

Hello, this is my website.
I'm using this to demonstrate how to create a free website on WordPress.com

Share this: [Press This](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#)

[Edit this entry.](#)

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

mysiteforme: You are commenting using your WordPress.com account. ([Change](#))

Notify me of follow-up comments via email.

- Pages**
[About](#)
[This is my second page](#)
[Page number three](#)

Blog
[Hello world!](#)

Archives
[February 2012](#)

Categories
[Uncategorized](#)

- Meta**
[Site Admin](#)
[Log out](#)
[Entries RSS](#)
[Comments RSS](#)
[WordPress.com](#)

<p>Tags</p>	<p>Flickr Photos</p> <p>More Photos</p>	<p>Archives</p> <p>February 2012</p>	<p>Blogroll</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">DiscussGet InspiredGet PollingGet SupportLearn WordPress.comTheme ShowcaseWordPress PlanetWordPress.com News
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You can remove more widgets from the right hand column if you don't want them there. If you are not going to include regular blog posts then you will want to remove 'archives' and 'blog', and possibly categories if you are not using these for your static web pages.

If you prefer, you could move the 'Meta' (and change its name) to the footer area of the page, so all that remains in the right hand column is your website navigation.

Changing the tag line

Just underneath or next to the blog title will usually be a tagline (some themes won't display these).

To change the text in the tag line or to leave it empty, click on 'Settings' in the left hand navigation on your dashboard. You will go to 'General settings'. The tagline is the second line down on this page.

From here you can also change the email address that notifications are sent to, and the title of the website (although you cannot change the address of the website unless you add your own domain name).

Using your own domain name

If you have already registered a domain name with another website, you will need to log into your account on that website and 'point' your domain to the Wordpress.com servers. This is so the servers can add your domain to your website.

1. Log in to your domain name provider (namecheap.com, 1-2-3-reg.com etc.) and go to your account. Select the domain name you want to use for your website and go into its settings.
2. Each website will be different but in your account there will be a tab or link to change nameservers or DNS settings.
3. Where it asks for custom DNS (domain names servers) or lists the ones it is currently using, change these to the following and save:

NS1.WORDPRESS.COM
NS2.WORDPRESS.COM
NS3.WORDPRESS.COM

If you get stuck don't be afraid to search your domain host's website for help or assistance on 'changing name servers' or 'using custom domain name servers' as they will all have some help facility available. You may even find links on your account page to take you through step by step.

The changes may take several hours to register.

1. Go back to your Wordpress account and under 'Settings', click 'Domains'.
2. Add your domain name into the box on the page. You will need to include the 'www' at the front e.g. www.mysiteforme.co.uk
3. If the changes have not completed with your domain name host you may get the following error message listing the DNS that Wordpress can see for your domain. If so, wait a few more hours for it to go through.

Domains

Someone (maybe you?) already registered mysiteforme.com, but the domain is not pointing to WordPress.com.

If you do not own this domain, you could register mysiteforme.me, mysiteforme.org, mysiteforme.net, mysite-forme.me, mysite-forme.com.

I own this domain. Help me fix it!

Currently the nameservers for this domain appear to be:

72.52.169.34
72.52.169.35

Using the DNS tools provided by your domain registrar, remove any existing nameservers and add the following:

NS1.WORDPRESS.COM
NS2.WORDPRESS.COM
NS3.WORDPRESS.COM

Then come back here and try again. It may take several hours for our system to recognize the changes.

If you need more information, see our [Mapping an Existing Domain support guide](#).

I changed my domain's nameservers. Try adding my domain to my blog again. »

4. If your change is successful your domain name should change on your website in about an hour although sometimes it can take longer.

5. When you go back into 'Domains' under 'Settings' you should have a choice of two website addresses – your new domain and your old Wordpress.com address. Select the one you want to use.

Get in touch with Communities 2.0:

0845 474 8282

Email: communities2.0@walescooperative.org

Twitter [@Communities2_0](https://twitter.com/Communities2_0)

Facebook [Communities2.0](https://www.facebook.com/Communities2.0)

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