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# Joomla! Jargon: Understanding the Language of Joomla!

Everything in life has a language of its own. If you want to speak intelligently about a subject, you first need to learn its language. For instance, if you want to talk to someone about baseball, you wouldn't say ''I hit a touchdown over the fence!'' because by doing so you immediately inform everyone within hearing distance that you know nothing about baseball.

Like any other product, industry, hobby, or niche, Joomla! has its own language (a.k.a. jargon). Seasoned veterans are fluent in Joomla! jargon, but if you are new to Joomla!, the jargon can often sound like gibberish.

Glossaries normally come at the end of a book, but understanding Joomla! begins with understanding its jargon. You cannot have a meaningful conversation about Joomla! without using words that are common in the Joomla! language. If you want to understand the rest of this book, you need to have a firm grasp on the meanings of the terms that are used. This list is grouped into the following headings:

❏ **Framework:** Joomla! is more than just a content management system. It is a framework for rapidly building web applications. This section covers terms associated with the Joomla! framework.

❏ **Installation:** This section first explains the difference between an installation of Joomla! and the installation of a Joomla! extension. Then, it covers common terms you will encounter during the process of installing Joomla!.

❏ **Extensions:** This section explains the meaning of the term ''extensions'' as it relates to Joomla!, and then it lists and defines the various types of extensions available for Joomla!.

❏ **Content:** This section defines the specific meaning of the word ''content'' as it is used in Joomla!. Then it covers words associated with content in Joomla!.

❏ **Menus:** In this section, you learn about terms relating to Joomla!'s primary system of navigation: menus.

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❑ **Users:** This section explains the concept of users as it relates to Joomla!. It then defines user groups and access levels and how they are implemented in Joomla!.

❑ **More Jargon:** This section covers more terms within the lexicon of Joomla! jargon.

# Framework

If you spend enough time in the forums or reading Joomla!-related blogs, you will probably see multiple references to the ''Joomla! framework.'' Although Joomla! is a world-class content management system, it goes far beyond traditional content management by giving developers the ability to easily create extensions to perform a potentially infinite number of tasks. The framework is a sophisticated system of code libraries that perform common tasks and tie everything together in Joomla! In fact, the Joomla! CMS is just one of several applications built upon the Joomla! framework.

❑ **Application:** In general terms, an application is a piece of software developed to perform a task or set of tasks. In Joomla!, this is no different, although the word ''application'' has a more specific meaning. An application in Joomla! is a layer in the Joomla! framework, and extensions are built to extend the functionality of applications. The Joomla! package actually has four applications built in: the site application (the front end of your site); the administrator application (the backend); the installer; and an application called XML-RPC, which basically allows other systems to interact directly with the server without the need for a web browser.

❑ **API:** API stands for Application Programming Interface, and it is a set of procedures that programs can use to interact with another program or operating system. Joomla! has an API that enables developers to build extensions that interact with the Joomla! system. This allows for integration of all extensions built specifically for Joomla!, because they all use a common API.

# Installation

Installation is the process of taking a piece of software and setting it up to work on your system. It can also be used to refer to the software once it has been installed (for example, ''I have two installations of Joomla! on my server.) In Joomla!, there are two types of installations: Joomla! installation and extension installation. A helpful way to think about it is to think of Joomla! as an operating system like Windows or Mac OSX, and think of extensions as programs installed on your operating system. You learn how to install Joomla! in Appendix B, and you learn how to install extensions in Chapter 6.

❑ **Sample Data:** Whenever you install Joomla!, you have the option to install sample data. The sample data is a set of preconfigured menus, menu items, modules, components, and content sections, categories, and articles. You learn about the pros and cons of installing sample data in Chapter 7. You can see the installation screen where you have the option to install sample data in Figure 1-1.

❑ **Table Prefix:** The Joomla! database is made up of several tables that store data for a Joomla! installation. When you install Joomla!, you are given the option to set a table prefix, which is basically just a set of letters and an underscore character that precedes each data table name. The default table prefix is `jos_`. For example, with `jos_` as the table prefix, the core content data table would be named `jos_content`.

The benefit of a table prefix is that you can have multiple installations of Joomla! using the same database without the data from installations interfering with each other. For example, your first installation could have a table prefix of `jos_`, and your second installation could use a table prefix of `jos2_`, and their data will not interfere with each other because they will have separate tables.
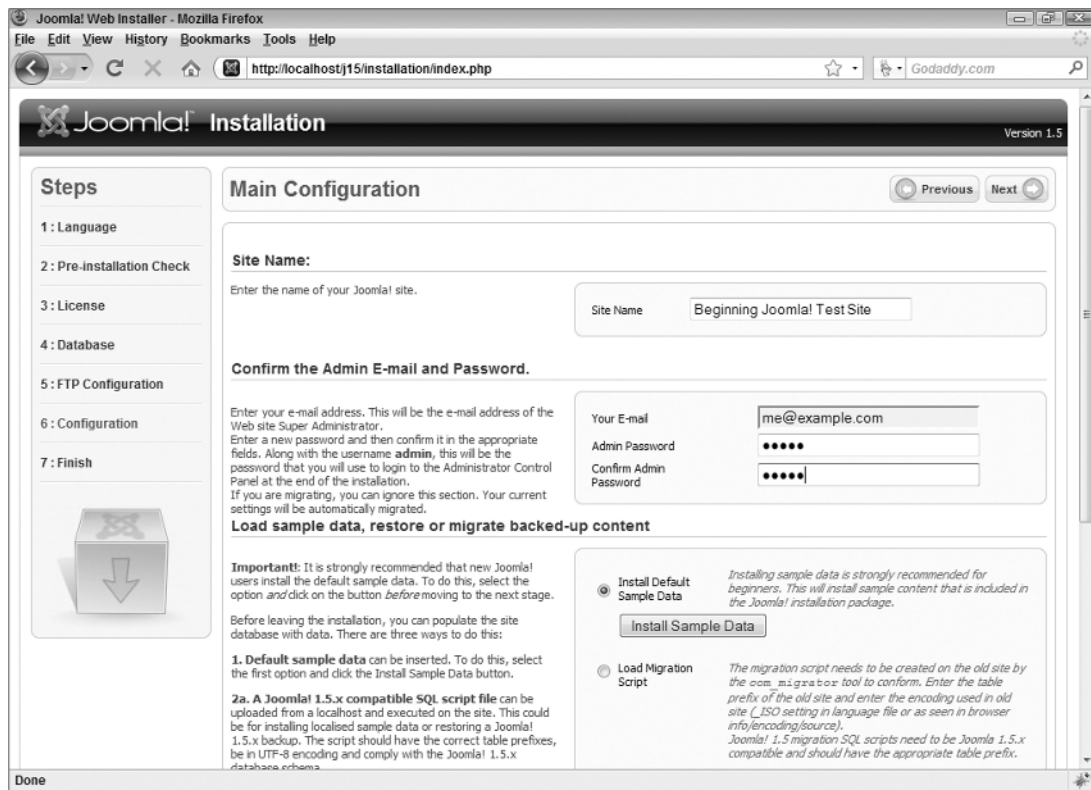
**2**

Figure 1-1

❏ **Installation Folder:** The Joomla! installation application is one of the four applications that come with Joomla!. It is located in a directory named `installation`, and it is automatically launched the first time you access your site after you upload the Joomla! files to your server. After you have installed Joomla!, the system will ask you to remove the `installation` folder because leaving this folder in place causes a security risk for your site.

# Extensions

Extensions are essentially mini-applications that enhance Joomla! by adding new functionality that is not present in the core. Five types of extensions are available for Joomla!: Components, Modules, Plugins, Templates, and Languages. You learn more about extensions in Chapter 6.

❏ **Components:** A component can be thought of as an application within an application. Components are applications built upon the Joomla! framework. Going with the analogy of Joomla! as an operating system like Windows, and components as programs that run on the operating system, I like to think of the Joomla! content component (com_content) as the word processor (like Microsoft Word).

Only one component is loaded in your Joomla! website at a time, and it handles the major tasks that occur on a given page in your site. This is one way in which the operating system analogy breaks down, because in most modern operating systems, you can have several applications open at one time.

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❏ **Modules:** A module further extends your Joomla! site by performing side functions outside of the component. Modules can be used to perform just about any task you can think of. They are typically used to display menus, lists, banners, and other little tidbits of content. I like to think of modules as being like little widgets that perform a simple, specific, necessary task that cannot be handled efficiently by components. See Figure 1-2 to see a typical configuration of modules and the component on a Joomla! page.
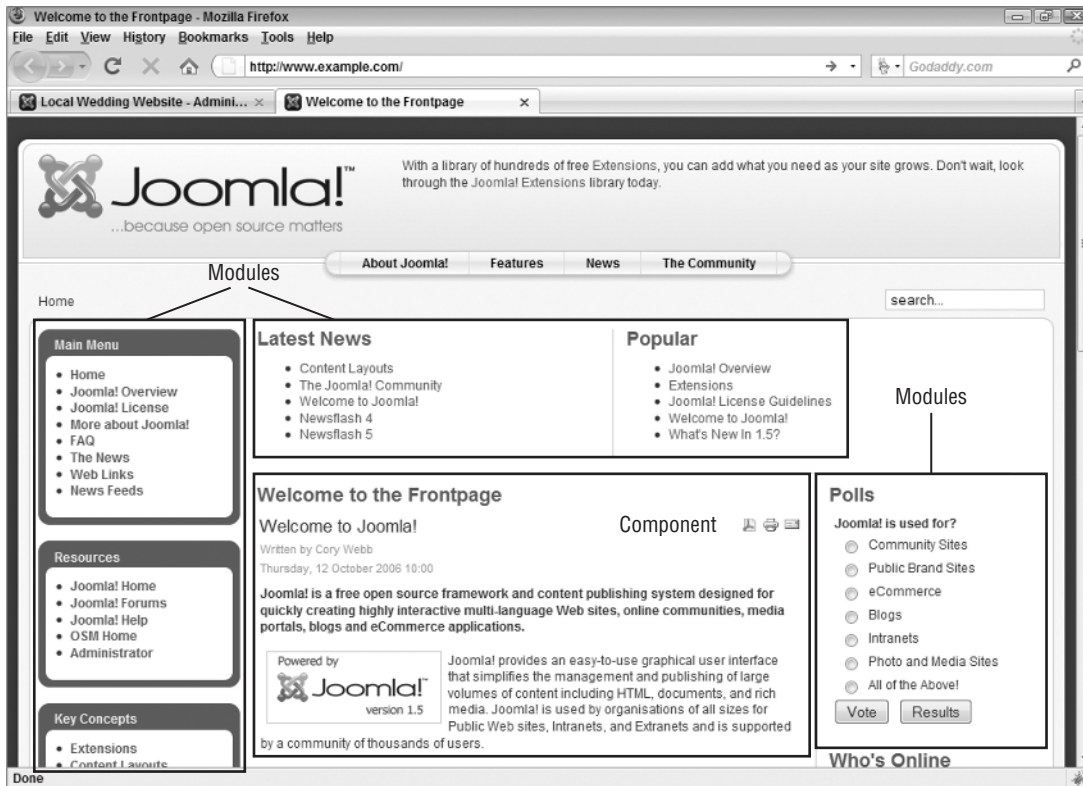


Figure 1-2

❏ **Plugins/Mambots:** Plugins have a variety of uses, but they typically perform a specific function to extend the functionality of a component. For example, the Content – Load Module plugin makes it possible to load a module position within an article. By default, eight different types of plugins are available: authentication, content, editors, editors-xtd, search, system, user, and xml-rpc.

   ❏ **Authentication plugins** are used to enable different methods of authentication for Joomla!. Joomla! comes with four different types of authentication: Joomla! core authentication, LDAP authentication, OpenID authentication, and Gmail authentication.

   ❏ **Content plugins** extend the functionality of the core content component. For example, there is a plugin called Content – Rating that enables a rating system for your articles.

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❑ **Editor plugins** provide what-you-see-is-what-you-get (WYSIWYG) editors (discussed later in this chapter) for entering content.

❑ **Editors-xtd plugins** are used to extend the functionality of content creation in the core content component.

❑ **Search plugins** are used to make components searchable by the core search component.

❑ **System plugins** perform functions that most people will not directly see the results of. They offer tools for making components, modules, and even other plugins more powerful.

❑ **User plugins** can be used to tie Joomla!'s user database to other systems. For example, the bridge between Joomla! and phpBB3 uses a user plugin.

❑ **XML-RPC plugins** load APIs for use with the XML-RPC application.

In Joomla! 1.0, plugins were called ''mambots,'' which was a carryover from the Mambo days. This word is still used occasionally, but since the release of Joomla! 1.5 it has been deprecated in favor of the term ''plugins.''

❑ **Templates:** Many people think of a template as their website, but that is an incorrect way of seeing templates. Templates are used for providing a layout and design within which all of the pieces of your Joomla! site come together.

Here's an analogy that might help. Think of your Joomla! website as a house. It is made up of brick, stone, wood, dry wall, and so on. The template is the blueprint that puts all of those pieces in the most logical locations for what your house needs to be, and it is also the decorations that make your house look nice once it is completely built.

You learn how to build a custom template in Chapter 8.

❑ **Module Position:** A module position is a location within a template that is set aside for containing modules. Module positions normally have names like left, right, top, bottom, header, footer, user1, user2, and so on, but can have any name that the template designer chooses to give them. The name of a module position usually, but not always, corresponds with its location on the page. For example, the left module position can usually be found on the left side of the page.

❑ **Language:** Joomla! is a multilingual content management system, which means that the user interface can be translated into any language using custom language packs. Language extensions can be found for many different languages.

❑ **Core:** Core refers to that basic Joomla! installation without any third-party extensions installed. It is all of the code for the Joomla! framework along with a set of core applications and extensions that come with the Joomla! installation.

❑ **Third Party:** Third party refers to any application or extension that is not part of the core.

❑ **Joomla! Extension Directory (JED):** The Joomla! Extension Directory (JED) is a very valuable resource that lists 3,651 Joomla! extensions at the time of this writing. You can find the JED at `http://extensions.joomla.org`. Bookmark that site, because it will be one of the most valuable resources available to you as you build your website. You can see the JED in Figure 1-3.

❑ **Bridge:** A bridge is code that ties Joomla! to another system. For example, there is a bridge that ties Joomla! to a popular stand-alone forum application called phpBB3. The most common use of a bridge is to tie Joomla!'s user information to the user information in other systems, giving users a single sign-on.
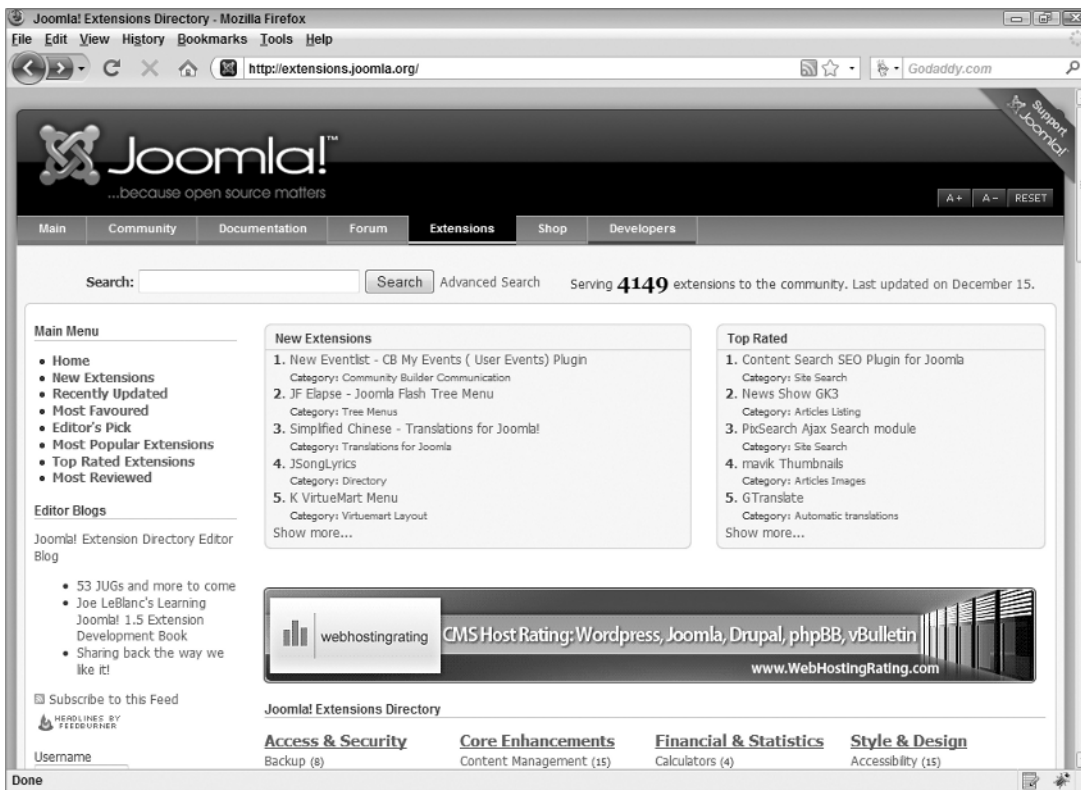
**5**

Figure 1-3

# Content

Technically, content is every piece of text and media that is distributed/displayed via your site, whether in the component, module, plugin, or template. In Joomla!, when someone says content, they are probably referring to the core content component and the articles that are entered into that component and displayed on your site. You learn more about managing content in Chapter 4.

❑ **Sections:** A section is the highest level in the Joomla! content organization hierarchy. Sections contain categories, and categories contain articles.

❑ **Categories:** A category is the second level in the Joomla! content organization hierarchy. Categories are contained within sections, and categories contain articles. At this time, it is not possible to assign the same category to multiple sections, assign multiple categories to a single article, or contain categories within categories.

❑ **Article/Content Item:** An article is the main way that content is displayed in a Joomla! site. Articles can be organized into categories and sections, or they can be uncategorized. The term ''content item'' was used in Joomla! 1.0, but that phrase has been deprecated in favor of the term ''article.''

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❑ **Blog:** In general, the term ''blog'' (short for ''web log'') refers to an online journal usually listed in reverse chronological order and updated on a regular basis. In Joomla!, the term blog refers to a specific style of layout for content sections and categories. Blog layouts can be ordered chronologically or by several other ordering choices available in the component's parameters.

❑ **Front Page:** The front page view of the content component is a blog-style layout. It works exactly the same as the blog layout for sections and categories, but with the front page view you can assign multiple sections and categories. Another distinction is that you must explicitly publish an article to the front page in order for it to display there. It is called the front page view because it is by default the front page of your site when you install Joomla!; however, the system does not require that the front page view be the actual front page of your site. This can be set using the menu manager (See ''Default Menu Item'' in the following section).

# Menus

A menu is a piece of paper, a booklet, or a sign at a restaurant that lists possible food choices for the restaurant's patrons. Now that I know that you're paying attention, a menu in Joomla! is a list of links that direct your visitors to the various parts of your site. You learn more about menus later in Chapter 5.

❑ **Menu Items:** Menu items are the links that make up a menu.

❑ **Item IDs:** The item ID is perhaps the single most important piece of information in Joomla!, because it helps determine when and where modules load, what parameters are used by a component, which piece of a component is loaded, what template is used, and so on. An item ID is automatically assigned to a menu item when it is created.

❑ **Default Menu Item:** The default menu item is a new concept in Joomla! 1.5. In previous versions of Joomla!, the front page of your site could only be the first menu item in the ''mainmenu'' menu. Recognizing the obvious limitations of this approach, the core team (defined later in this chapter) decided to introduce the concept of the default menu item. In the menu manager, you can now set any menu item in any menu as the default menu item, and this menu item will become the front page of your site. There can be only one default menu item for your site.

# Users

A user is anyone who visits a Joomla! site. A user can be a guest or an authenticated user. Authenticated users are users who have a user account for your site and are logged in to the site. These users fall into one of seven predefined user groups.

❑ **User Group:** A user group is a predefined access level group in Joomla! Every Joomla! installation has seven predefined user groups: Registered, Author, Editor, Publisher, Manager, Administrator, and Super Administrator.

❑ **Access Level:** Modules, articles, categories, sections, and menu items can be published for one of three access levels: Public, Registered, and Special. If an item is public, anyone who visits your site can access it. If an item is published as registered, anyone who has a user account can access it. If an item is published as special, only users in the Author, Editor, Publisher, Manager, Administrator, and Super Administrator groups can access it.

# More Jargon

❑ **Content Management System (CMS):** Joomla! is known primarily as a web content management system (CMS). A CMS is a computer application that is built for the efficient organization, management, and presentation of content. A CMS can be built to manage articles, images, audio, video, files, applications, or almost any other type of digital content. Joomla! is a web content management system built for managing web content, such as articles, media, contacts, links, and more.

❑ **Administrator:** In Joomla!, the term ''administrator'' has multiple meanings. Administrator and Super Administrator are two of the seven predefined user groups. These two groups have the highest access level of any of the user groups. Administrator also refers to one of the four core applications (See ''Application'' earlier in the chapter). The administrator application is the back-end application used to manage every aspect of your site. You can find the administrator application at `yoursite.com/administrator`.

❑ **SEF URL:** SEF URL is an acronym that stands for Search Engine Friendly URL. For you web acronym trivia buffs, URL stands for Uniform Resource Locater, but that's the last time this book will refer to it as anything other than URL.

By default, Joomla!'s URLs are not search engine friendly or people friendly for that matter. A URL for an article might look something like this: `http://www.example.com/index .php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3:article-title&catid=5:category-name& Itemid=7`. Did you follow that? Neither will your visitors, and it's not very useful when Google is indexing your site. That's where the SEF URLs come in.

An SEF URL will look something like this: `http://www.example.com/menu-item/5-category- name/3-article-title.html`. This is not only easier to remember, but it is also better for search engine optimization. You can take more control of your SEF URLs with third-party components like sh404SEF, which you can find at `http://extensions.siliana.com/`.

You learn more about SEF URLs later in Chapter 3.

❑ **WYSIWYG Editor:** WYSIWYG is an acronym that stands for ''What You See Is What You Get.'' A WYSIWYG editor is text area with special functionality built in so that you can edit content just like you would in a word processor. This makes adding and editing content easier because it makes it possible to add or edit content without knowing HTML.

Joomla! comes with one pre-installed WYSIWYG editor called TinyMCE, but you can easily install one of the third-party WYSIWYG editor plugins available in the JED. You can set which WYSIWYG editor you want to use in the global configuration or in your user profile in the user manager, or you can choose to use no WYSIWYG editor. Choosing no WYSIWYG editor means you will have to hand-code all of the HTML in your articles.

❑ **Open Source:** When people hear the phrase ''open source,'' the first thing that usually comes to mind is software developed by some sucker who decided to give it away for free. Although this is partially true, open source actually refers to a widely adopted methodology for software development and distribution. Open source software is not necessarily free, although it is usually distributed for free depending on the license applied to the software. The defining characteristic of open source software is that the source code of the software is distributed with the software, and the end user has the right and ability to modify the software's source as he or she sees fit. This methodology opens up the possibility for users of the software to become active participants in the development of the software, and development teams are often spread out all over the world.

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❑ **GNU/GPL:** GNU is a recursive acronym that stands for ''GNU is Not Unix,'' and GPL is an acronym that stands for ''General Public License.'' GNU is an open source operating system built on the Linux kernel, and it has set several standards for open source projects. The GNU/GPL is a license established by GNU under which many open source projects, including Joomla!, freely release their software to the public. Software released under the GNU/GPL may be freely modified and redistributed as long as you abide by the stipulations set forth in the license. The main stipulation is that any derivatives of the software must also be released under the GNU/GPL and a copy of the GNU/GPL must be distributed with the software. You can read the GNU/GPL here: `http://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html`.

❑ **Core Team:** The Joomla! core team is an exceptional group of individuals who have volunteered countless hours to developing Joomla! into what it is today. Everyone who uses Joomla! owes these people a tremendous debt of gratitude.

# Summary

Learning the language is important in any endeavor you undertake, which is why this book starts with a chapter that teaches the jargon associated with Joomla!. This chapter has covered many of the most commonly used words and phrases in the Joomla! community:

❑ Framework

   ❑ Application

   ❑ API

   ❑ Bridge

❑ Installation

   ❑ Sample Data

   ❑ Table Prefix

   ❑ Installation Folder

❑ Extensions

   ❑ Components

   ❑ Modules

   ❑ Plugins/Mambots

   ❑ Templates

   ❑ Module Positions

   ❑ Language

   ❑ Core

   ❑ Third Party

   ❑ Joomla! Extension Directory (JED)

❑ Content

   ❑ Sections

   ❑ Categories

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- ❏ Article/Content Item
- ❏ Blog
- ❏ Front Page
- ❏ Menus
  - ❏ Menu Items
  - ❏ Item IDs
  - ❏ Default Menu Item
- ❏ Users
  - ❏ User Groups
  - ❏ Access Levels
- ❏ More Jargon
  - ❏ Content Management System (CMS)
  - ❏ Administrator
  - ❏ SEF URL
  - ❏ WYSIWYG Editor
  - ❏ Open Source
  - ❏ GNU/GPL
  - ❏ Core Team

Now that you are completely fluent in Joomlese, you can proceed with learning how your newly learned language can be applied to building a Joomla!-powered site. In the next chapter, you learn how to install Joomla!, but before you move on, work through the following exercises to test your understanding of Joomla! jargon. You can find the solutions to these exercises in Appendix A.

# Exercises

1. What is the highest level in the content hierarchy? What is the next highest level?
2. What is the difference between a module and a module position?
3. What are the four applications that come with Joomla!?
4. What is the benefit of having a table prefix?
5. What is automatically assigned to a menu item when it is created?