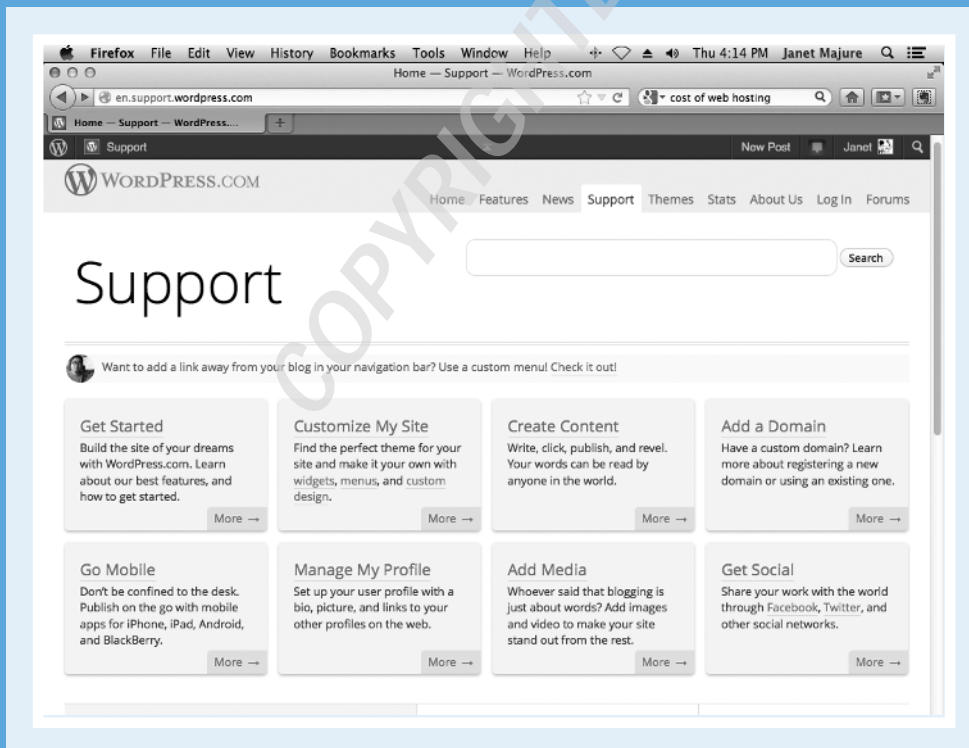


# CHAPTER 1

# Planning Your WordPress Site

WordPress is the platform of choice for new blogs, and increasingly it is the software chosen for websites of many different descriptions. WordPress lets you get your message out quickly and easily while giving you all the control you want.



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# Understanding WordPress and Blog Terms

Learning a few WordPress and blog terms before you dive in makes the process of learning the software and starting your website easier. Terms in this section arise again and again. These terms generally apply regardless of whether you host your own blog or use the WordPress.com hosting service. They are also pertinent even if you use WordPress to run a static website, meaning the information published on a site rarely changes. Terms that seem abstract now become clearer as you develop your site.

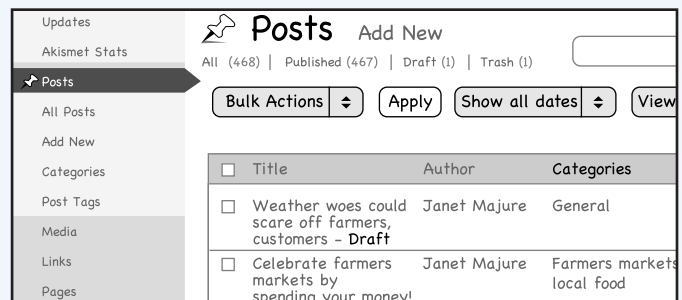
## Blog versus Static Site

The term *blog*, which merges the words *web* and *log*, came about when software advances made it possible for nontechnical people to easily publish information to the World Wide Web. Although blogs typically publish posts in reverse chronological order and allow for reader interaction, WordPress also lets you create *static websites*, or sites that have fixed content and are not interactive.



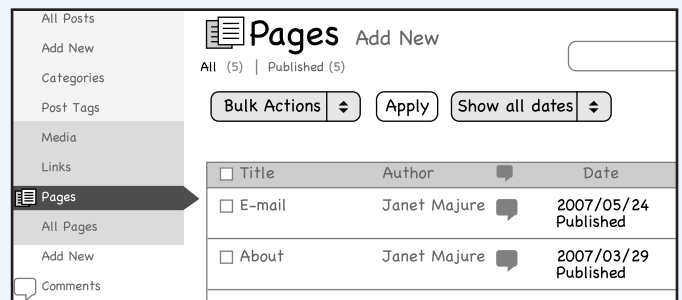
## Posts and Posting

Each entry in a blog is known as a *post*, and the usual presentation of posts is with the newest entry at the top of the screen. *Post* is also what you do. That is, you post a new post to your blog. Posts usually follow a standard visual style, although WordPress offers alternative post formats for specific kinds of posts, such as posts that highlight a quotation.



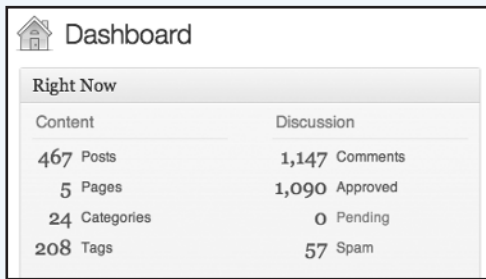
## Pages

Think of a website as a collection of web pages, with each web page having its own content. With WordPress, the running blog page typically — but not always — is the home page, which usually displays the most recent posts. Themes provide page templates to display posts by category and to display an individual blog post with its own web address. You can have static pages, too. The most common static page on websites is an About page that explains the site to visitors.



## Dashboard

The WordPress Dashboard is the online but behind-the-scenes control panel from which you create and modify your website. A *panel* is a display screen in the user interface. The Dashboard differs a little between the .com and .org versions of WordPress. “Get to Know WordPress Types,” later in this chapter, describes those versions. The Dashboard main features are a left-hand navigation menu bar and a set of *panels* with information and links.



## Permalinks

A *permalink* is the permanent link to a specific post or page. If you host your WordPress installation, WordPress gives you options on what your permalinks look like, which may make it easier for search engines to find your post.



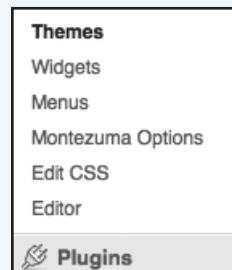
## SEO

SEO is an acronym for *search engine optimization*, and your interest in it depends on the purpose of your blog. SEO aims to improve your site’s ranking in search results by search engines such as Google. A higher ranking leads more search engine users to find your site. SEO relies partly on making generous use of searched-for words.



## Themes and More

Other terms you need to know are *themes*, which refer to the sets of files that determine the overall design of your site; *widgets*, which give you options for presenting information; and *plugins*, which you can add to a self-hosted WordPress installation to add functionality. WordPress offers flexibility as to the content of your site’s menus, your theme’s options, and more.



# Choose a Blog Topic

You can choose anything as your blog topic, but doing some research may help you identify the topic that you will love to write about and that readers will look for. In general, the more focused your topic, the greater your success in attracting readers. Even if you do not care about getting a large audience, you will spend less time trying to figure out what to write on your blog if you have consistent subject matter. You also may discover that you learn more about your topic the longer you blog. Consider different approaches before you decide.

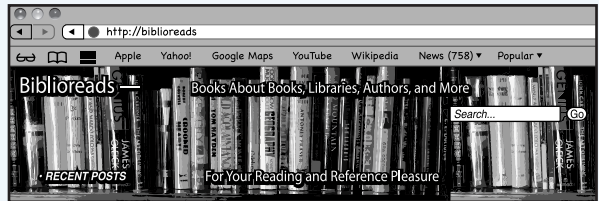
## Expertise

If you are an expert in some field, your knowledge could make an excellent blog topic. By writing about your area of experience you will have plenty of content and confidence, and you may be able to use your blog to attract business and advertising.



## Hobby

Perhaps you have a hobby that you avidly pursue and continue to learn more about. This, too, is a good subject for a blog. Fellow hobbyists may look to you for ideas and advice, and they can offer ideas and advice in return.



## Business

A blog is a great way to keep in touch with your customers and to attract more customers. It is like a newsletter, only easier. As with a hobby, you surely have plenty of content to offer readers, whether news about products, special offers, or holiday hours.



## Scattershot

One option is not to choose a topic at all and simply write your blog as you might write a diary. This unfocused, or *scattershot*, approach is fine as long as you are content to attract a small audience. Only a few people, by virtue of their fascinating lives or captivating writing styles, can write a scattershot blog and attract a large number of readers.



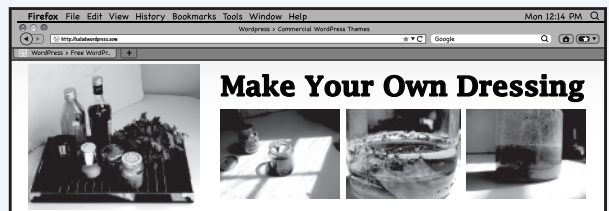
## Focused

The more focused your topic, the easier it will be for search engines to find it. A focused blog also has greater potential to generate advertising revenues later, if that is one of your goals.



## Useful and Entertaining

Whatever topic you choose, you will get more readers if your blog is useful or entertaining — or both. As you narrow your list of possible topics, think about which ones give you the greatest opportunity to be helpful or engaging. Those may be your best bets.



## Competition

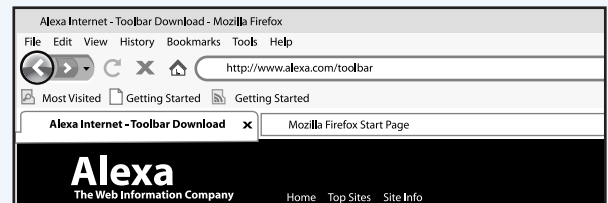
If you are unconcerned about developing an audience or if you want your blog to focus on your personal life, you need not worry about competition. For other subjects, however, check out the competition before you settle on a blog topic.



## Research the Competition

You can get clues as to what is being written about and what is popular at these websites:

- <http://wordpress.com/tags>: See the most popular recent *tags*, which are like keywords, on WordPress.com blogs.
- [www.alexa.com](http://www.alexa.com): Search for websites on your topic, and Alexa lists them and their traffic ratings.
- [www.technorati.com](http://www.technorati.com): Click **Top 100** or **Tags** to see the 100 most popular blogs among Technorati users and most popular tags.
- [www.stumbleupon.com](http://www.stumbleupon.com): Sign up with this service, select your topic of interest, and then *stumble*, which takes you to blog post after blog post on that subject.
- <http://google.com/blogsearch>: Search on a topic to find existing blogs and blog posts on the topic.



# Plan Your Blog's Content

Your blog will be easier to create and maintain and easier for readers to follow if you plan your content before you start blogging. By planning ahead, you can give your blog a consistent approach that works for you, your content, and your readers. The word *content* refers to whatever you publish on your website. Aspects to consider include everything from writing style to visual presentation. WordPress gives you considerable flexibility to change, but you will be well served to consider these factors just as if you were publishing a book.

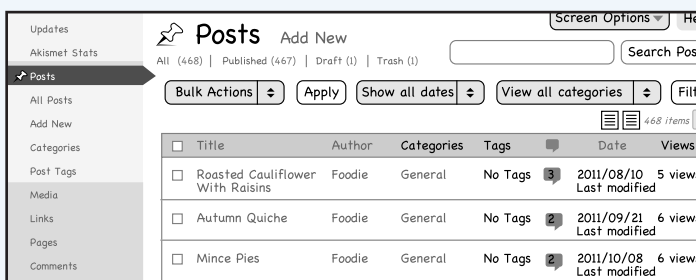
## Words, Pictures, or Both?

Your choice of having content that is word heavy, picture heavy, or a balance of words and pictures affects not only the appearance of your blog, but also how you spend your time preparing your posts. Give thought now as to what medium best expresses the ideas you want to share.



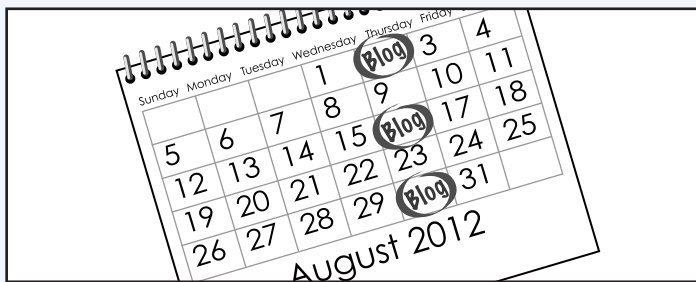
## Consider Post Length

Although there is no ideal length, there may be an ideal length for you and your blog. Having a somewhat predictable length for your posts enables you to know how long it may take to write a post, and lets regular readers know how much time to allow for reading. You can break up long subjects into a series of posts.



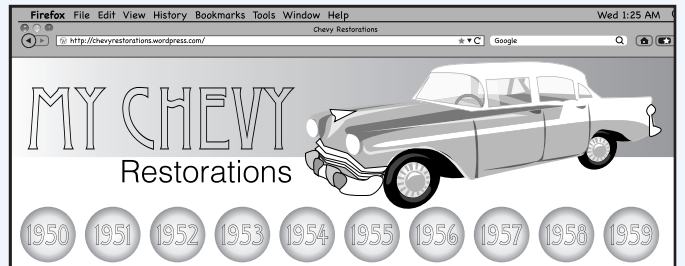
## Consider Post Frequency

Some bloggers post multiple times a day; others post once a week. Your blog's topic and your time constraints may dictate how often you can post, and that is fine. *More* is not necessarily better, but *predictable* is definitely better!



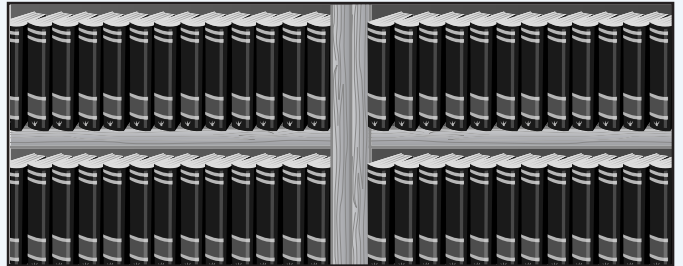
## Make Your Blog Stand Out

After you study other blogs in your subject area, ask what will make your blog unique, aside from its being written by you? If your topic is broad — cars, perhaps — yours will stand out better and be easier to plan if you narrow the subject to, say, restoring Chevrolets from the 1950s, or reviewing late-model, two-seat sports cars.



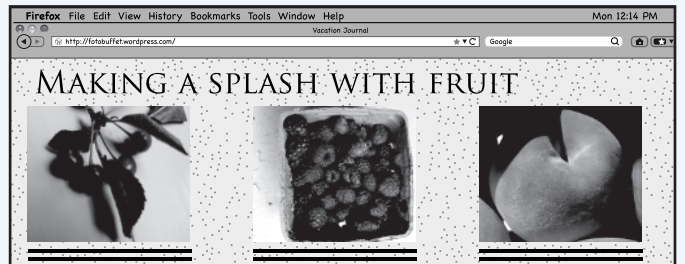
## Make Your Blog Accurate

Even if you are an authority in your subject area, you need to check your facts and, where possible, link to your sources. Yes, you can find popular sites that use dubious information, but if you want credibility with most readers, you need to get your facts straight. Include fact-checking as part of your content plan.



## Suit the Content to the Subject

If your blog is about sculpture or carpentry or any other highly visual subject, you need to have pictures. Podcasts are desirable on an interview blog. Make sure you have the equipment you need for the media you plan to use. If your blog is about grammar or creative writing, you can probably skip buying a top-flight digital camera.





# Research Blog Titles

If you do not take care in naming your blog, you may find down the road that your choice does not serve you well. It may duplicate the name of an existing blog, or you may decide you want to get a domain name and find that a website with your blog's domain name already exists. You also want to avoid using a trademark as your blog title. Various strategies can help in your search for a memorable title that reflects your blog's content.

## Blog Title versus Domain

Your *blog title* generally appears across the top of your blog's front page. A *domain name* is the part of a web address that includes *.com*, *.net*, *.info*, or one of the other domain name extensions. You can read about buying a domain name in Chapters 2 and 3.



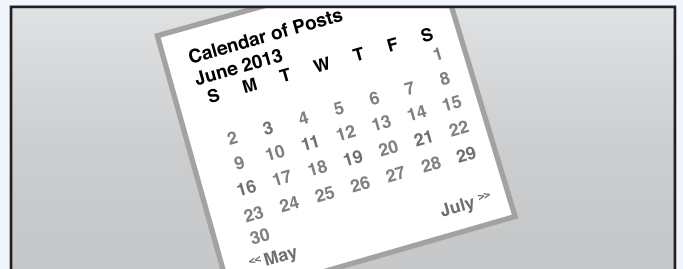
## Corresponding Names

It is helpful for the blog title and domain name to match, or at least to correspond, so that people can find you more easily. If you want to name your blog *In My Opinion*, it would be wise to see whether a domain such as *inmyopinion.net* or *imo.com* is available.



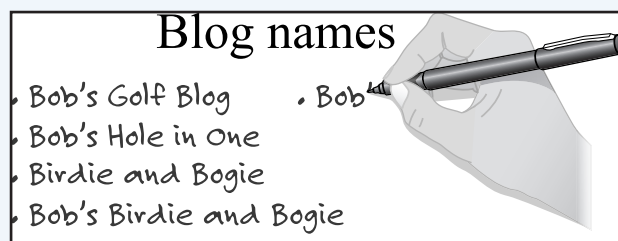
## Consider the Long Term

If you are going to keep your blog private or are certain that you do not want to develop a significant audience, the blog title makes no difference. Most people start blogs, though, because they want to be heard. If you are one of those people, then consider the advice on these pages.



## Brainstorm Names

Your blog topic is the place to start your search for blog titles. Write as many words and phrases as you can think of associated with your topic. If you have a personal blog, you may simply want to use your real name. But even your real name may not be as unique as you think, so write down many options. Narrow the options to a dozen or more and then see whether another blog uses those names.



## Try for a Unique Name

Increase your odds of having a unique blog title by:

- Typing your proposed title into the Google blog search engine at <http://google.com/blogsearch> to find blogs that use your title in full or in part.
- Typing your proposed title in your browser's address box followed by **wordpress.com**. For example, you could type **mythoughts.wordpress.com** to see if a WordPress.com blog by that name pops up.
- Typing the proposed title in the address box followed by **blogspot.com**, as in **mythoughts.blogspot.com**.



## All the Good Names Are Taken!

So many sites are on the web these days that it may seem that all the good names are taken, but forge ahead. You can try alternate spellings, whimsical expressions, or combinations of your name and your interest. If you can make the title memorable and easy to spell, all the better. You also can try tools described in the following section, "Research Domain Names," to devise a good blog title.



## Avoid Duplication


If someone else has a website with your preferred title, you can still use it, but it is a bad idea. Besides the potential for legal conflict if someone decides to trademark the title, the bigger issue is that readers may get your blog and the other site confused.

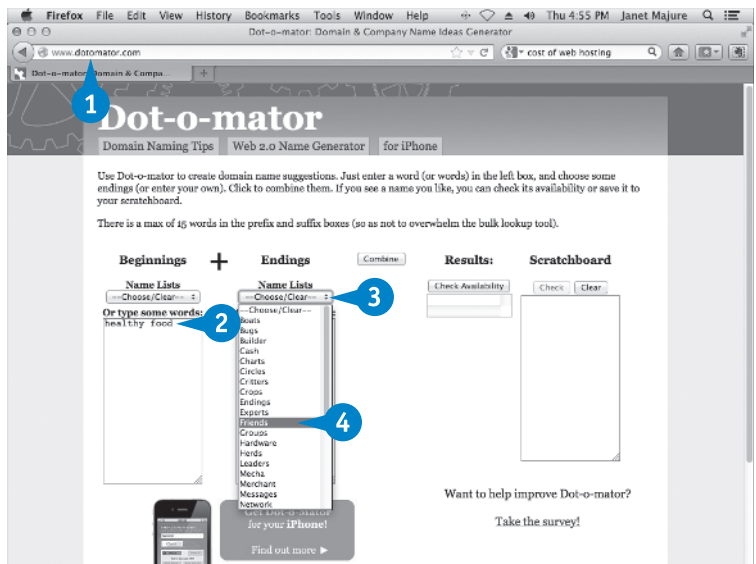


# Research Domain Names

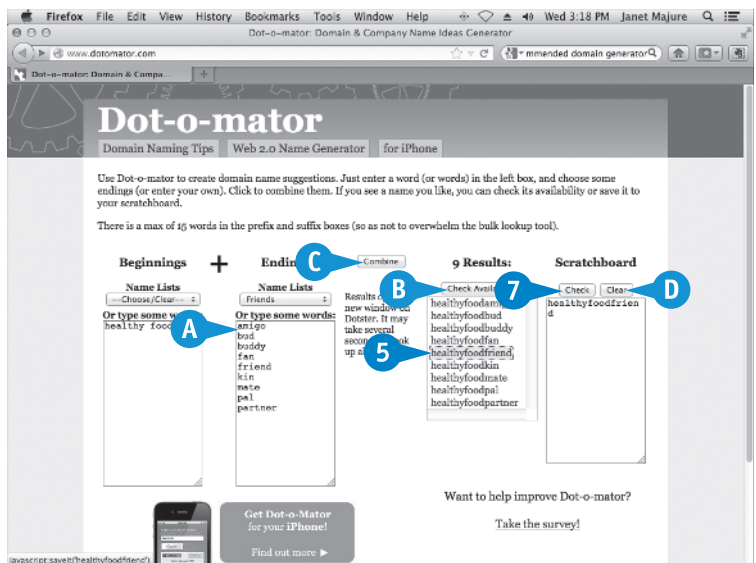
By researching domain names before you commit to a blog title, you can avoid the frustration of being unable to match your domain to your title. A few websites provide good brainstorming tools to help you. Most of these sites also link to pages where you can buy and register a domain, and they can advise you whether the name of your choice is available for purchase. However, you do not need to buy a domain name right away. Instead, you can use options described in Chapters 2 and 3.

## Research Domain Names

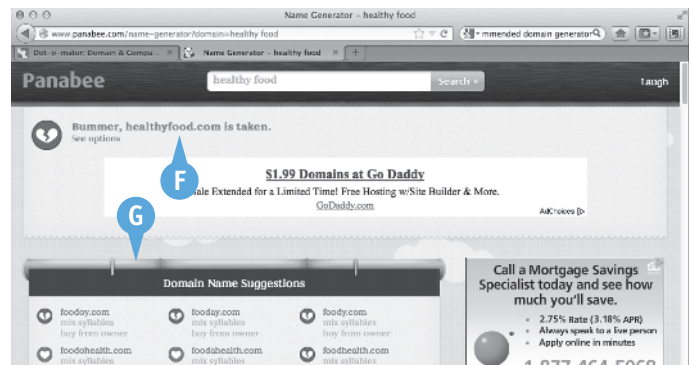
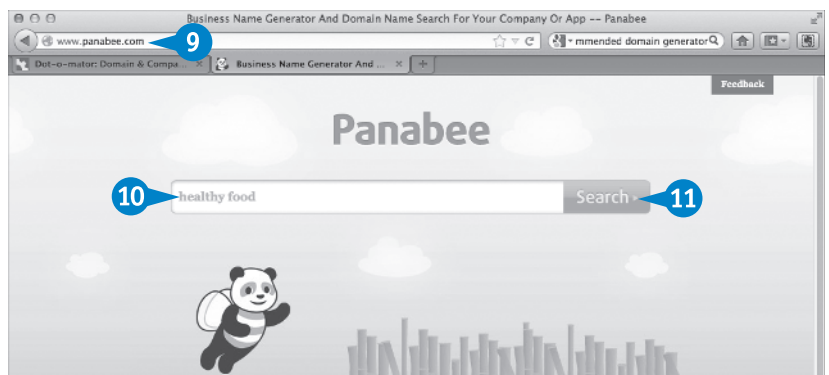
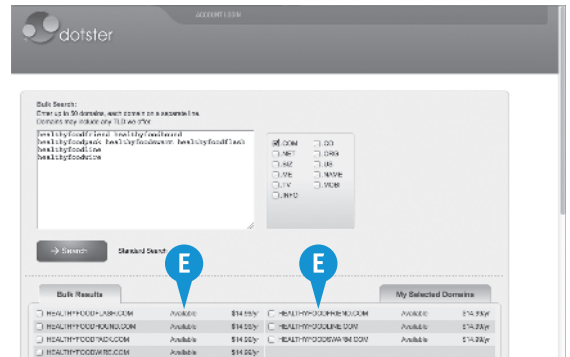
- 1 In your web browser, go to [www.dotomator.com](http://www.dotomator.com).
  - 2 In the Beginnings box, type a few words that describe your blog idea.
- Note:** This example uses *healthy food*.
- 3 Click the drop-down list .
  - 4 Choose a category of endings.



- A Endings related to the category appear.
  - B Suggested domain names appear.
  - C If a results list does not appear, click **Combine**.
- 5 Click a name that interests you.
  - D The name appears under Scratchboard.
- 6 Repeat Steps 2 to 5 until you have several potential domain names.
  - 7 Click **Check**.



- E** A separate window operated by Dotster opens and displays availability of domains related to the names you chose.
- 8** Record the available names you like for future reference.
- 9** Type **www.panabee.com** in the address bar.  
The Panabee home page opens.
- 10** Type two words related to your blog topic in the search box.
- 11** Click **Search**.
- F** Availability of a domain combining your words appears.
- G** A list of other suggestions and their availability appears.
- 12** Record the names you like for future reference.



## TIPS

### If I see a name I really like on these sites, should I go ahead and buy it?

You can, but in the long run you may be happier if you buy your domain registration through the web host you eventually choose. Doing so makes life simpler and potentially could save you money. Also, be assured that these sites do not have exclusive rights to sell the names they suggest to you.

### Are there other sites that help with researching domain names?

The sites in this section are two of several such sites. Another good one is [www.bustaname.com](http://www.bustaname.com). Each of these sites has a slightly different approach to name generation, which is why it is handy to try more than one. Others include [www.nameboy.com](http://www.nameboy.com), [www.namestation.com](http://www.namestation.com), and <http://impossibility.org>.

# Think Ahead about Passwords

Making a password plan now will make life easier as you go about setting up your WordPress site, because chances are you are going to need multiple usernames and passwords before you are done. You may use some all the time, such as your site's logon information, but you may use others less often. You, of course, are too smart to use the same password for all situations, right? If not, plan to start using different ones now.

## What Not To Do

Remember first what not to do: Do not use easily guessed words such as your spouse's or child's name, the word *password*, your license plate number, widely used combinations (such as qwerty or 123456), or any word in the dictionary spelled forward or backward. Also, do not put your password on a sticky note on your computer, and do not use the same word on multiple sites.



## Choosing Passwords

Numerous strategies exist for choosing passwords. The basic approach is to choose a memorable phrase such as "My country tis of thee," use the first letters of the phrase's word — *Mctot* — and add numbers and special characters to get something like *\*Mctot!1*. The longer the password, the better. Have four or five passwords ready before you start your WordPress experience.



## Saving Passwords

Experts agree that having your computer or browser remember your password for you is generally a bad idea because the bad guys are good at cracking those bits of software. The most secure plan is to *remember* your passwords, but that is not possible for many of us. Although there is some debate, the idea of writing them down and putting the list in a safe place is considered more secure than doing any of the items on the what-not-to-do list.



# Get to Know WordPress Types

Whether you are setting up a WordPress blog or are using one set up by someone else, it is helpful to understand that WordPress comes in multiple flavors. They range from the relatively simple WordPress.com and basic WordPress.org installations to the enterprise-scale WordPress.com VIP and WordPress.org MultiSite options. After a quick look at each, you can get more detail on the focus of this book in the next two sections, “Look Closer at WordPress.org” and “Look Closer at WordPress.com.” One nice feature is that you can choose one version and change to another later with few problems.

## WordPress.com

WordPress.com is for individuals and organizations that like the WordPress ease of use and flexibility but do not want to concern themselves with details of hosting a website. If you skip some options, you can operate a WordPress.com site for no money.

The image shows the text ".com" in a bold, 3D-style font. The letters are dark grey with a blue outline and a slight shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The period is a small square.

## WordPress.org

WordPress.org offers the greatest degree of flexibility and options for its users. It does, however, require a willingness to be involved at least on a low to moderate level with such website details as arranging for hosting and keeping software up to date.

The image shows the text ".org" in a bold, 3D-style font. The letters are dark grey with a blue outline and a slight shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance. The period is a small square.

## WordPress.com VIP

The WordPress.com VIP service is aimed at large-scale websites, such as those of CNN and Dow Jones. It is expensive and not the service for beginners. This book does not cover operating a WordPress.com VIP site.

The image shows the text "VIP" in a bold, 3D-style font. The letters are dark grey with a blue outline and a slight shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

## WordPress.org MultiSite

As the name implies, WordPress.org MultiSite is intended for running a network of websites. It uses the same software that you use for running a basic WordPress.org installation but is considerably more complex to operate. If you work for a large organization such as a public school system, your school may be running a WordPress.org MultiSite installation. This book does not cover installing and operating such an installation. If you are a user at such an organization, the information here for WordPress.com users generally applies to you.

The image shows the text "MultiSite" in a bold, 3D-style font. The letters are dark grey with a blue outline and a slight shadow effect, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

# Look Closer at WordPress.org

WordPress.org lets you take advantage of *open-source* software, meaning you — or anyone — can download it, use it, and change it, generally for free and with few restrictions. It has been around since 2003 as a program for self-hosted blogs, and this book uses versions 3.3.1-3.5. With WordPress.org you can customize all you want. Those customizations of everything from appearance to function usually are simple to create or install. WordPress.org websites also are known as *self-hosted sites*, because the trade-off is that you also have to take more responsibility for site management.

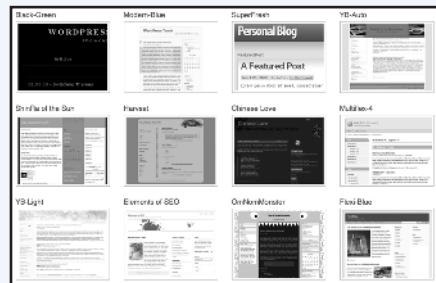
## Hosting

With a WordPress.org installation, you need to find and engage a web host as well as a site name. If you plan a small site with low traffic, you may be able to operate it on your Internet service provider's site for no additional cost. More likely, you may seek out a host that caters to small site operators or one that provides automatic installation of WordPress.org software.



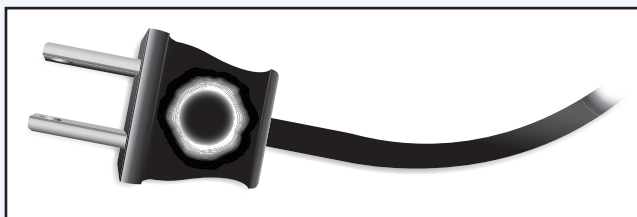
## Appearance

Your WordPress.org site can look just about any way you want it to look. You can choose among some 1,600-plus themes that meet WordPress.org requirements — and many of them provide for further customizations. Most are free. Commercial sites that require a fee and often provide more support also are available.



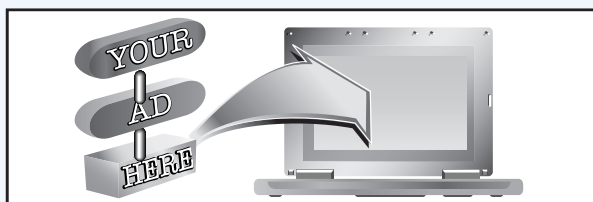
## Plugins

*Plugins* are program-like extensions that work with WordPress to add functionality. You can have as many as you want on your self-hosted WordPress blog. Plugins, which are discussed in many places in this book, let you add innumerable functions, such as providing translation of your website, improving security, or linking to Facebook. Plugins let you make your site your own.



## Advertising

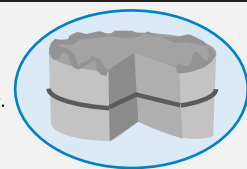
With a self-hosted WordPress blog, you can publish zero to endless amounts of advertising. It is up to you. You can try the full range of Internet advertising media, from links that pay commissions when people purchase a product to pay-per-click ads, such as those provided by Google.



## Business

You can use your self-hosted WordPress website to sell your own products or services without restriction, other than restrictions in law or in your web host's rules. Sell real estate, hand-made candies, computer advice, or whatever your business has to offer, and you will not have an issue with WordPress.org.

Di's Desserts  
At Di's Desserts, we source the finest organic ingredients, then make each dessert with homemade care and pride. See our gallery of cakes for your next special occasion.



## Cost

You pay nothing for your WordPress.org operating software. For a self-hosted site, you most likely will need to pay for a web hosting, which can run as low as \$3.50 a month. Sometimes, your web host will provide one free domain registration when you sign up for hosting. If not, you may pay from a few dollars and up to buy a domain.



## Support

In the spirit of WordPress's open-source development, support likewise is free and open source. That is to say, WordPress.org does not have staff to answer your questions. Many, if not most, answers can be found either in the WordPress.org support pages, called the *Codex*, or in the WordPress.org forums.



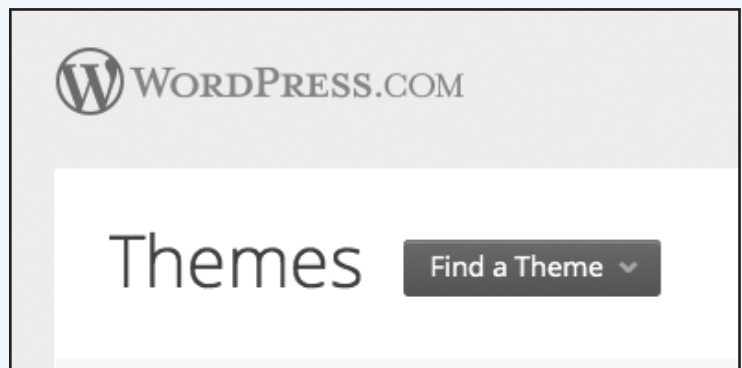


# Look Closer at WordPress.com

With WordPress.com as your blog host, you can start blogging within minutes. The user interface is simple and similar to that of self-hosted WordPress.org blogs, but WordPress.com handles updates and maintenance and has staff to answer questions. WordPress.com developed as the hosting business of the people who started WordPress.org. The trade-off of giving WordPress.com the management duties, however, is that it has limitations that may or may not work for you. Also, although the hosting is free, you may choose options that do cost money.

## Appearance

WordPress.com offers about 220 themes, and they are good ones. About 20 percent of them are *premium* themes, meaning you must pay for them. If you want to customize your theme by editing the *Cascading Style Sheets*, or *CSS*, you must pay an annual fee. With a self-hosted WordPress blog, you can choose among countless free themes or purchased themes, or create your own.

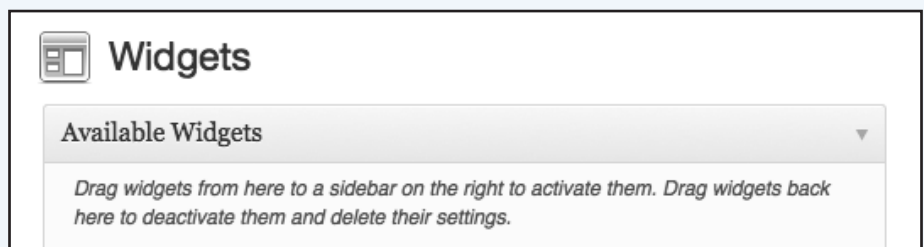


## Widgets

Although WordPress.com, unlike self-hosted installations, does not let you add plugins, it has many more widgets than self-hosted blogs. A *widget* allows you to

arrange sidebar

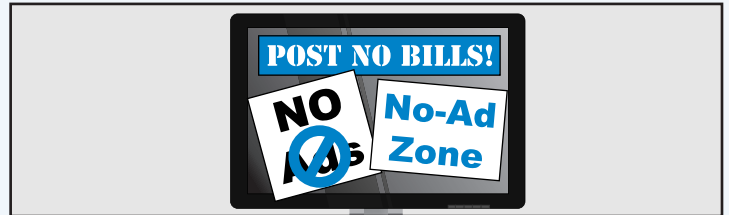
information without writing code. The additional widgets at WordPress.com provide the same functions as similar plugins. The downside is that you have fewer options and that the widget panel can get a little cluttered.



## Ads

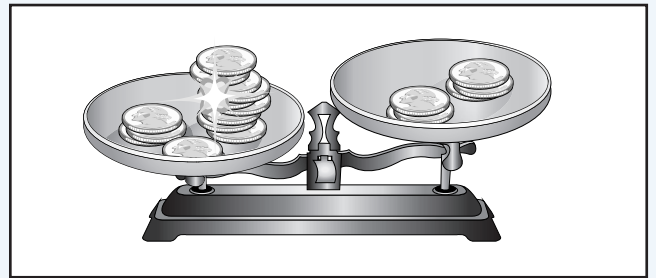
At WordPress.com, the blog host itself occasionally posts ads on your blog, unless you pay a no-ad fee. Also, WordPress.com does not allow most types of ads, including Google AdSense, and only allows *affiliate ads* — those that pay you a commission when someone buys by way

of a link on your site — under special circumstances. WordPress.com offers WordAds to allow some, but not all, bloggers to make money on their WordPress.com sites.



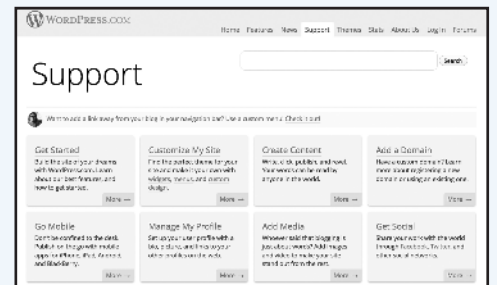
## Cost

It costs nothing to publish your blog at WordPress.com. You may, however, decide to pay fees for a variety of options. Among them are options to eliminate their ads, buy a domain name, and edit the *Cascading Style Sheets*, or CSS, which set such styles as color and type face for your site's appearance. You also can pay to post videos — a cost absent from independent blogs — although you still can embed videos from sites such as YouTube.



## Key Differences: Support

WordPress.com has a clearly written support section, redesigned in 2011, plus forums and a contact form for support. The support documentation for WordPress.org blogs is the Codex. Written by WordPress volunteers, its quality gets better all the time, but it is inconsistent. At WordPress.org, no support contact exists except for the forums, but they are excellent.



# Sign Up at Gravatar.com

By signing up at Gravatar.com, you create a profile that promotes your online identity. Gravatar is a globally recognized *avatar*, which is an image that you associate with your e-mail address and that appears when you write a blog post or comment on someone else's blog. You can use a personal photo, your business or site logo, or some other image that you want associated with you or your brand. Although you are not required to have a Gravatar, it adds to the personal touch that makes WordPress popular.

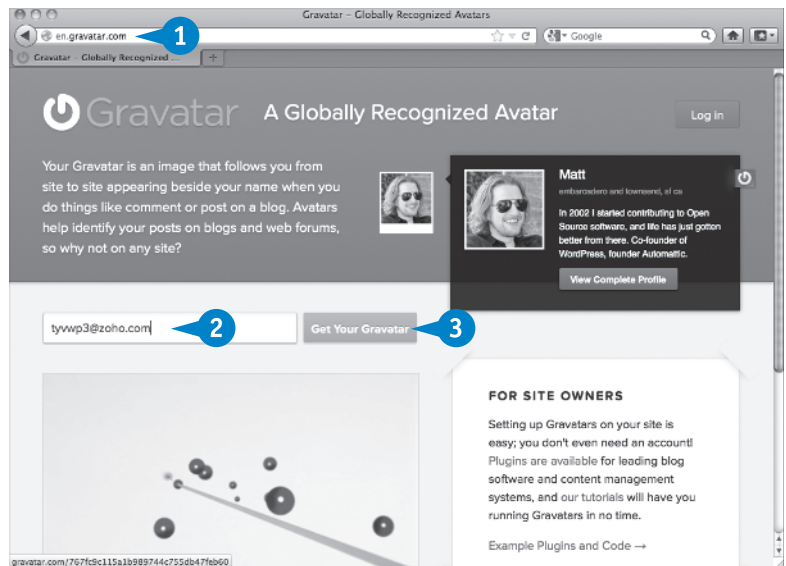
## Sign Up at Gravatar.com

1 In your browser, go to <http://en.gravatar.com>.

**Note:** You can type <http://gravatar.com>, and the browser may take you to an address that presents the site in your language, such as <http://es.gravatar.com>, the Spanish-language version of the site.

2 Type your e-mail address.

3 Click **Get Your Gravatar**.



A confirmation screen appears.

### Confirmation email sent!

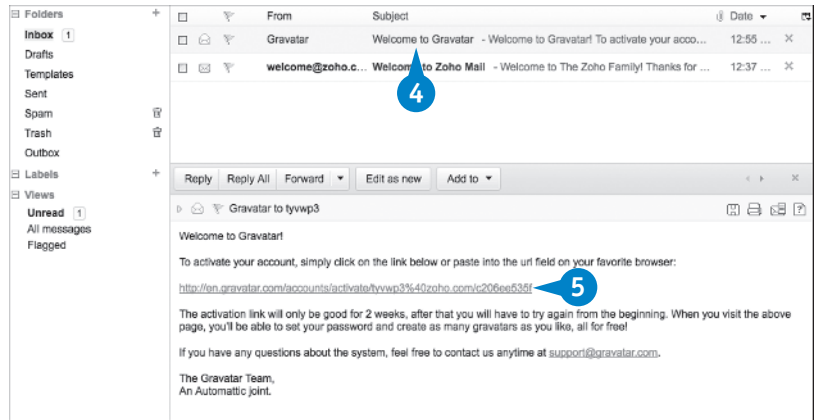
We've sent an email to [tywp3@zoho.com](mailto:tywp3@zoho.com).

In the email you'll find a link that when clicked on will bring you back to the site so you can set your password and start using Gravatar.

If for some reason you do not receive the activation email, contact us and we'll do our best to get you back on track.

**PLEASE check your junk/spam folder before contacting us, as it is very common to have email delivery problems because of automated filters.**

- 4 In your e-mail inbox, open the message from Gravatar.
- 5 Click the activation link.



- 6 Type a username.
- 7 Type a password.
- 8 Retype the password.
- 9 Click the check box ( changes to ) to agree to the terms of service and privacy policy.
- 10 Click **Signup**.

### Finish creating your account by choosing your finishing touches!

Choose your Gravatar username, using only lowercase letters and numbers. This will be used in your profile page address, so choose something other folks might recognize you as. As an added bonus you will be able to log into WordPress.com using this username! Finally choose a password, and once we make sure that your username is available for use you'll be all set! **Please only use lowercase letters and numbers, no spaces or punctuation**

Email: tywvp3@zoho.com

Username:   **6**

Your Username will be permanent, choose wisely.

Password:  **7**

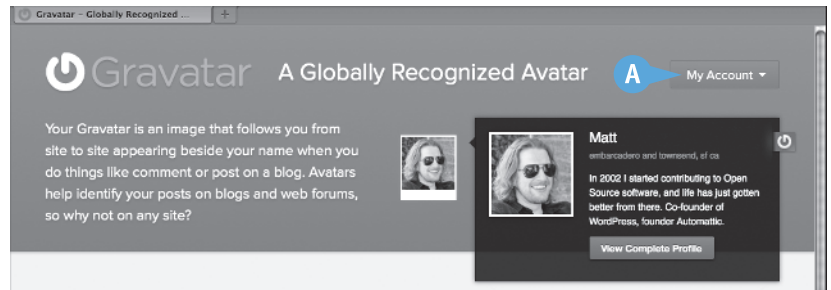
Password (again):  **8**

**9** I have read and agree to Gravatar's terms of service and privacy policy.

**10**

The Gravatar home page appears in your browser.

- A The presence of the My Account button shows you are signed in to the site.



## TIP

### I am signed up, but how do I add an image with my membership?

You can add an image or images by clicking **My Account** and then selecting **Manage My Gravatars** from the pop-up menu. A new window appears with a link that says *Add one by clicking here!* When you click that link, Gravatar takes you step by step through the uploading process. Other items on the account menu let you add profile information for public view, such as favorite links or a brief bio about yourself.

