

What is WordPress?

And How Does It Actually Work?

Complete Beginner's Guide — 2025 Edition

Free to Use

No Coding

Beginner
Level

Updated
2025

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PART 1 · UNDERSTANDING WORDPRESS

1

What is WordPress?

A plain-English explanation for absolute beginners

WordPress is a **free, open-source tool** that lets you create any kind of website — blog, business site, portfolio, or online store — without knowing a single line of code. It was first launched in **2003** by Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little as a simple blogging platform. Today it has evolved into the world's most powerful and widely-used website-building system.

Think of it this way: building a website from scratch is like constructing a house brick by brick. WordPress is like using a ready-made home kit — the foundation, walls, and roof are already there. You just arrange, decorate, and customise it the way you want.

■ Key Fact

Over **43% of all websites on the internet** are built with WordPress — including small personal blogs, major news portals like TechCrunch and BBC America, and Fortune 500 company websites.

<p>■ 100% Free Software WordPress itself costs nothing. You only pay for hosting and a domain name.</p>	<p>■ 10,000+ Themes Choose from thousands of free and premium designs. Switch your look in minutes.</p>
<p>■ 60,000+ Plugins Add any feature you want — SEO tools, contact forms, online stores, and more.</p>	<p>■ SEO Friendly Clean code structure that search engines love. Add an SEO plugin and rankings improve.</p>
<p>■ Full Ownership Your website is 100% yours. You are never locked into any platform.</p>	<p>■ Huge Community Millions of users worldwide. Endless tutorials, forums, and expert help available.</p>

2

WordPress.com vs WordPress.org

The difference that every beginner must understand

This is the single most confusing thing for beginners. There are actually two completely different products that share the same name. Understanding the difference is critical before you build your site.

Feature	WordPress.com	WordPress.org
Hosting	Included (you pay)	You choose your own host

Cost	Free to paid plans	Free software, pay for hosting
Customisation	Limited on free plan	Complete — full control
Themes	Limited selection	60,000+ themes available
Plugins	Restricted	60,000+ plugins, all available
Monetisation	Paid plans only	Full freedom from day one
Best For	Casual hobbyists	Serious bloggers & businesses

■ **Did You Know**

This guide uses **WordPress.org** — the self-hosted version. It is the recommended choice for anyone serious about blogging, business, or earning from their website. When people say 'WordPress', they almost always mean WordPress.org.

3

Why 43% of the Internet Runs on WordPress

The real reasons behind WordPress dominance

WordPress did not become dominant by accident. There are very specific reasons why it beat every other platform — and understanding them helps you appreciate why you are making the right choice.

■ **It is completely free**

The core WordPress software has always been free. No licence fees, no subscriptions, no lock-in.

■ **Incredibly flexible**

Blog, e-commerce, news portal, membership site, directory — WordPress handles every type of website.

■ **Open source ecosystem**

Thousands of developers worldwide contribute themes, plugins, and improvements constantly.

■ **SEO-ready out of the box**

WordPress generates clean, semantic HTML that search engines can easily crawl and index.

■ **Massive support community**

If you get stuck, someone has already solved your problem. WordPress forums and communities are huge.

■ **Professional results**

From solo bloggers to enterprise companies — WordPress scales from a single blog to millions of daily visitors.

PART 2 · HOW WORDPRESS ACTUALLY WORKS

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Step-by-Step: How WordPress Works

From domain name to live website — the complete flow

Here is the complete picture of how WordPress works, broken down into seven simple steps. By the end of this chapter you will understand the entire process from buying a domain to publishing your very first piece of content.

1

Buy a Domain Name

Your domain name is your website's address (e.g. yourname.com). You buy it from a registrar like Namecheap, GoDaddy, or directly from your hosting provider. Cost: approximately ■800–■1,200/year.

2

Get Web Hosting

Web hosting is the server where your website's files live. For beginners, shared hosting from Hostinger (from ■99/mo), Bluehost, or SiteGround is ideal. Most hosts offer a free domain for year one.

3

Install WordPress (One Click)

Most hosting providers include a one-click WordPress installer in their control panel (cPanel). You fill in your site name, admin email, and a password — and WordPress is installed in under 2 minutes.

4

Log In to Your Dashboard

Visit [yourdomain.com/wp-admin](#) and log in. This is your website's command centre. Everything — content, design, plugins, settings — is managed from here.

5

Choose and Activate a Theme

Go to Appearance → Themes → Add New. Install any free theme (Astra, Kadence, or GeneratePress are top picks). This controls your site's entire visual style — fonts, colours, layouts.

6

Install Essential Plugins

Plugins add features. Install Rank Math for SEO, LiteSpeed Cache for speed, Wordfence for security, and WPForms for contact forms. That is all you need to start.

7

Create Content and Go Live

Write your first blog post (Posts → Add New) or create a page (Pages → Add New). Hit Publish and your website is instantly live on the internet. Anyone in the world can now visit it.

5

The WordPress Dashboard

Your website's control panel — a complete tour

After you log in at [yourdomain.com/wp-admin](#), you land on the WordPress Dashboard. The left-hand menu is your navigation panel. Here is what each section does:

Menu Item	What It Does
Dashboard	Overview of your site — recent activity, quick stats, at-a-glance info.
Posts	Create, edit, and manage all your blog articles. Set categories and tags.
Pages	Create static pages — Home, About, Contact, Privacy Policy, etc.
Media	Your image and file library. Upload photos, PDFs, videos.
Comments	Manage reader comments on your posts. Approve, reply, or delete.
Appearance	Themes, menus, widgets, and the customiser to style your site.
Plugins	Install, activate, deactivate, and update all your plugins from here.
Users	Add co-authors, editors, or admins. Manage who can do what on your site.
Settings	Control your site title, tagline, URL structure, time zone, reading options.
Tools	Import/export content, health check, and other utility functions.

■ Pro Tip

The WordPress Block Editor (called Gutenberg) is your content writing tool. It works like Google Docs — type your heading, add paragraphs, click the + button to insert images, videos, tables, or buttons. **No coding, no design skills needed.**

6

Themes — How Your Website Gets Its Look

Understanding WordPress themes and how to choose the right one

A **theme** is a collection of template files that controls every visual element of your website — the header, footer, fonts, colours, page layouts, and overall style. Switching a theme is like repainting your house: all your content stays exactly the same, only the appearance changes.

Theme	Why Choose It	Cost
■ Astra	Most popular free theme. Ultra-lightweight, 2M+ users, ideal for beginners.	Free + Pro
■ Kadence	Beautiful modern design with great performance. Excellent for blogs and business.	Free + Pro
■ GeneratePress	Extremely minimal at under 30KB. Loved by developers and SEO specialists.	Free + Pro

■ OceanWP	Versatile and WooCommerce-ready. Highly customisable for any website type.	Free + Pro
■■ Blocksy	Built for the block editor. Stunning templates and fast loading times.	Free + Pro
■ Hello Elementor	Blank canvas theme from the makers of Elementor. Pairs perfectly with Elementor.	Free

To install a theme: Dashboard → Appearance → Themes → Add New. Search by name, click Install, then Activate. Your site instantly updates its look.

7 Plugins — The App Store for Your Website

What plugins are and which ones you actually need

Plugins are add-ons that extend WordPress functionality. Think of them as apps on your smartphone. You start with a basic phone, then install apps for the exact features you need. There are **over 60,000 free plugins** in the official WordPress Plugin Library.

Plugin	What It Does	Cost	Priority
Rank Math SEO	Search engine optimisation — titles, meta, sitemaps, schema	Free	Must Have
WPForms Lite	Drag-and-drop contact form builder	Free	Must Have
LiteSpeed Cache	Full-page caching and speed optimisation	Free	Must Have
Wordfence Security	Firewall, malware scanner, brute-force protection	Free	Must Have
UpdraftPlus	Automated scheduled backups to cloud storage	Free	Must Have
Smush	Image compression and lazy loading for faster pages	Free	Recommended
MonsterInsights	Google Analytics dashboard inside WordPress	Free	Recommended
WooCommerce	Full-featured online store functionality	Free	If needed
Elementor	Visual drag-and-drop page builder	Free+Pro	Optional

■■ Important

Golden rule: Only install plugins you actually need. Too many plugins slow down your website and can create security vulnerabilities. Start with the 5 Must Have plugins above. Add more only when you have a specific need.

PART 3 · GETTING STARTED & COMMON QUESTIONS

8

Is WordPress Difficult to Use?

An honest answer from someone who has built 200+ WordPress sites

Honestly — **not at all**. If you can use Facebook, send a WhatsApp message, or type in Microsoft Word, you can use WordPress. The initial setup takes maybe one to two hours on your first day. But once it is set up, writing and publishing content is as natural as typing a document.

Task	Difficulty	Time Required
Installing WordPress	■ Very Easy	5–10 minutes (one-click)
Choosing a theme	■ Very Easy	15–30 minutes
Writing a blog post	■ Very Easy	Depends on content length
Installing plugins	■■ Easy	2–5 minutes each
Customising design	■■ Easy	1–3 hours total
Setting up SEO basics	■■ Easy	30–60 minutes
Creating an online store	■■■ Moderate	Several hours
Advanced custom development	■■■■ Advanced	Ongoing learning

Thousands of people who are not technical at all — teachers, doctors, homemakers, students, shop owners — run successful WordPress websites every single day. The tool is never the barrier. **Starting is.**

9

WordPress vs Other Website Builders

How does WordPress compare to Wix, Squarespace, and others?

There are many website builders available today — Wix, Squarespace, Webflow, Weebly. So why do so many professionals still choose WordPress? Here is an honest comparison:

Feature	WordPress	Wix	Squarespace
Cost (basic)	■99–■200/mo	■350+/mo	■600+/mo
Full control	■ Yes	■■ Limited	■■ Limited
Plugin ecosystem	■ 60,000+	■ Limited	■ Limited

SEO capabilities	■ Excellent	■■ Good	■■ Good
E-commerce	■ Full (free)	■■ Paid only	■■ Paid plan
Ownership	■ 100% yours	■ Platform	■ Platform
Learning curve	■■ Moderate	■ Very easy	■ Easy
Scalability	■ Unlimited	■■ Limited	■■ Moderate

■ **Did You Know**

The biggest advantage of WordPress over Wix or Squarespace is **full ownership**. With Wix, your website lives on their servers under their rules. With WordPress.org, your website is completely yours — you own every file, every byte of data.

10

Frequently Asked Questions

Real questions from real beginners — answered honestly

Q. Is WordPress completely free to use?

A. The WordPress software itself is 100% free. You pay for web hosting (from ~\$99/month) and a domain name (~\$900/year). Everything else — themes, plugins, the software — can be free.

Q. Do I need to know coding to use WordPress?

A. Absolutely not. Thousands of non-technical people — teachers, homemakers, shop owners — build and run WordPress sites every day without writing a single line of code.

Q. What is the difference between WordPress.com and WordPress.org?

A. WordPress.com is a hosted platform (like Wix) with limitations. WordPress.org is the free, self-hosted software that gives you complete control. This guide covers WordPress.org.

Q. How long does it take to set up a WordPress website?

A. The basic installation takes 5–10 minutes. A simple blog with a theme and essential plugins can be ready in 1–2 hours. A fully customised site may take a weekend.

Q. Can I make money from a WordPress website?

A. Yes. Common monetisation methods include Google AdSense (display ads), affiliate marketing, selling digital products, sponsored posts, freelance services, and running an online store with WooCommerce.

Q. Is WordPress good for SEO?

A. Excellent. WordPress generates clean semantic HTML that search engines love. With a plugin like Rank Math, even beginners can implement advanced SEO without any technical knowledge.

Q. How secure is WordPress?

A. WordPress core is very secure when kept updated. The main risks come from outdated plugins, weak passwords, and poor hosting. Using Wordfence, strong passwords, and regular updates keeps your site safe.

Q. Can WordPress handle a large website with lots of traffic?

A. Yes. WordPress powers massive websites with millions of daily visitors. The key is good hosting, caching plugins, image optimisation, and a CDN for very high-traffic sites.

Q. Should I use a free theme or a paid theme?

A. For beginners, start with a free theme like Astra or Kadence. They are professional, fast, and fully featured. Upgrade to a paid theme only when you have specific design needs that free themes cannot meet.

Q. What is a WordPress plugin and do I really need them?

A. A plugin is an add-on that adds features to your site. You need a few key ones — for SEO, speed, security, and forms. Do not install too many; 5–8 essential plugins is the ideal starting point.

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Final Thoughts & Next Steps

You now have everything you need to begin

WordPress is one of the most powerful tools on the internet — and the best part is that it is accessible to everyone, not just developers and tech experts. Whether you want to start a personal blog, promote your small business, build a portfolio, or launch an online store — WordPress is the best place to start.

■ Did You Know

"I have seen homemakers turn their cooking blogs into full-time income sources on WordPress. I have seen local shop owners generate more walk-ins through a simple site than through paid ads. The tool is never the barrier. Starting is." — Rahul Kumar, WordPress Expert

■ Read the next guide

Go to growwp.in and read the complete step-by-step guide to installing and setting up WordPress.

■ Pick your theme

Install Astra or Kadence — both are free, fast, and beginner-friendly.

■ Install the 5 essential plugins

Rank Math, WPForms, LiteSpeed Cache, Wordfence, UpdraftPlus.

📄 Write your first 10 articles

Publish 10 quality posts before applying for Google AdSense. Aim for 800+ words each.

■ Set up Google Analytics

Use MonsterInsights to track visitors. Knowledge of your audience drives your growth.

■ Submit to Google Search Console

Submit your sitemap so Google starts indexing your pages as quickly as possible.

"The best time to start a website was a year ago. The second best time is right now."

About the Author

Rahul Kumar — WordPress Expert & Full-Stack Web Developer with 10+ years of experience. He has built over 200 WordPress websites for clients across India and internationally, ranging from personal blogs to large e-commerce platforms. Rahul writes beginner-friendly guides because he believes anyone, regardless of technical background, should be able to build a professional website. His work has been cited by 50+ blogs and publications.

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