

More Than Text: Blogging Beyond The Default Template, Harnessing Web Resources to Do the Work For You.

I. Exhibit A: The Blog

A. Basic Elements of a Blog

1. Header

- a) The title of the blog is often found here, either as text or as a graphic, or a combination of both. In our basic layout, we have text.

2. Body

- a) The body involves the date, the header, the body of the entry, and any extra information such as categories, user who posted on the blog, the timestamp, and so on.

3. Sidebar

- a) Here you find generally whatever you want to add that you'd like to keep permanently on the blog. In general, you will find archives, blogrolls, nowadays the very trendy tag cloud is also found here.

4. Footer

- a) this is generally useless for most people outside of putting a copyright line. often web designers like to put their signature down there, in case someone is so interested in finding out who put together the amazing layout (mine are always amazing, as you might imagine).

II. How Many Licks Does It Take To Get To The Center of a WordPress Layout?

A. So many layouts, so little time?

1. Think about basics

- a) What's the most important part of your blog? Are you going to need a sidebar that can support a long list of blogs/links? Will you want to draw focus to your header by using a large graphic or image? Are you more of a minimalist (like me) and are not so much interested in images than in color schemes and space? You must ask yourself these questions if you want to find the layout that will work with you.

2. I have got it, I want to have an awesome header. Now what?

a) Layout repositories

- (1) <http://wordpress.org/extend/themes/>
- (2) <http://wordpressthemesbase.com/>
- (3) <http://topwpthemes.com/>
- (4) <http://www.google.com/webhp?hl=en#hl=en&q=wordpress+themes&aq=f&oq=&aqi=&fp=SL6zGTdSY8Y>

b) Theme Generators

- (1) <http://www.yvoschaap.com/wpthemegen/>
- (2) <http://wordpressthemegen.com/>

c) Learn HTML, CSS, PHP or hire someone who already knows it

- (1) Sounds a little intimidating, but my boyfriend, who has absolutely no programming skills whatsoever, was able to put together his own wordpress site, learning HTML and CSS in probably a month. He is no professional, but he was able to put this together: <http://www.tobiasfunke.com/>

More Than Text: Blogging Beyond The Default Template, Harnessing Web Resources to Do the Work For You. by Veronica D Paez email: vpaez@nosaround.org phone: 917-287-4635 web: <http://www.nosaround.org/> the example used for this workshop can be found at <http://www.nosaround.org/brooklynblogade>

- (2) There are many web designers out there who would love to make you a layout, just remember that you pay for what you get. You can check out this site: http://www.designquote.net/html/dq_estimate_wizard.cfm it will give you a rough idea of what you might pay. I think, in general, a blog will cost somewhere between 500-800 dollars. Please do not insult web designers by asking for a blog with a custom design for only 100 dollars or less. How many middle of the road guitars cost that little? How much did your TV cost? You will use your blog daily for months, maybe a few years.
- (3) when you approach a designer, make sure you know exactly what you want. let them know that you have thought this through so that when they ask you to explain what you want on your site, you have something more than, “well i want an awesome blog where i can be creative.” (this has been said to me, before) Show up with a plan. It may be difficult to believe this, but...we can't read minds. It's alright to faint, I'm 1/4 doctor.

B. Widgets and Plugins and Themes, Oh my!

1. Widgets

- a) This is the most obvious and easiest way of customizing your blog. A widget is a plugin that is made specifically for the sidebar and which can be moved around without having to edit code. There are several already built into wordpress itself that are readily available.

2. Plugins

- a) These can effect all areas of your blog, from comments to administration, to applying google, these scripts can take your blog to a whole new world.

3. Sounds great, how do I do it?

- a) If you are using widgets that are already built into wordpress, you have to do little more than finding the appearance area of the dashboard and messing around with the widgets.

b) If you want something that isn't on there, such as a plugin or another widget, you will have to upload that via FTP. You can find a searchable directory of them here: <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/> (actually, it seems that in the latest updates of wordpress, you are now able to install them directly from the platform, one less techy thing to worry about!)

(1) this isn't as hard as it seems, if you don't know what FTP means, then you might want to raise your hand. Remember, there are no dumb questions, only dumb people.

III. Easier Than Pulling Teeth

A. Now you know how to make your site go from sad to awesome in just a short time and without much technical knowledge. If all of this is still rather intimidating for you, or just beyond your level of commitment but you still want that end result of über awesomeness, then I would suggest you hire a web designer to do the dirty work for you. It will cost you money, but always remember that it is an investment. A blog is not a one time thing, it will last as long as you want it to last. Hopefully longer than a week.