



An introduction to blogging

What is a blog?

A blog, short for weblog, is a page on the Internet that contains regularly updated content displayed in reverse chronological order. Individual articles on a blog whether video, audio, pictures or text are called “blog posts,” “posts” or “entries”. The activity of updating a blog is “blogging” and someone who keeps a blog is a “blogger.”. Some bloggers choose to collaborate with friends and together open a multi-authored blog, while others open their own blog.

Types of blogs

Weblogs differ in the type of content they contain. Some bloggers choose to post a combination of text, video and photos, while others may only use one type of media such as video (vblog), photos (photoblog) or audio. A blogger can publish original writings, videos, pictures or ideas, or can use content that is available and written by other people to comment on. There are millions of blogs out there in all shapes and sizes and there are no real rules on what and how to post.

The blogosphere

Opening a blog is easy and does not require any technical background. The ease and the availability of free hosting tools have contributed to the popularity of blogs as a tool for self-expression. Links are what bind weblogs together. Through links, one can reference the topic that is being discussed, discover new content through others’ links, follow a discussion and direct people to pages of interest. Bloggers often read, quote and link to each other. This contributes to the creation of communities of bloggers. Bloggers campaigning around a subject collectively can have stronger effects than a blogger blogging on his own without interacting with others.

Blogs provide differing and diverse points of view that are not available in the mainstream media. They also provide first hand information that the mainstream media have often come to use as resources for their own articles.

Blogging and journalism

Many young professionals such as journalists, writers, photographers as well as students use blogs as a way of practicing their skills and getting challenged by the comments their readers leave. Indeed, blogging has become common among journalists worldwide who open their own blogs as it is a cheap and easy way to reach a wider audience and to write informally about the subjects they choose to and without editorial interference. Blogging is also a good way of connecting with others who have similar interests.

How do I open my own blog?

There are many hosting software available on the Internet, which allow one to open a blog in roughly five minutes. The free international ones include WordPress and Blogspot and they now also support the Arabic language. There are some that are particular to the Arab world such as Maktoub and Al Bawaba.

In general, you can open a blog by registering in one of the hosting websites, filling in some personal details, choosing a blog title and a username and password. You would then choose a design for the blog and the option of incorporating several features such as adding a blogroll which is primarily a list of links to other blogs and sites of interest.

However, opening a blog does not end at this stage. You must read other blogs, link to sites of interest and other communities of bloggers. You can start searching for blogs by using some blog specific search engines such as: blogsearch.google.com and technorati.com. Communities of blogs usually congregate around specific topics such as literature or art. It is also common to find blogs from a specific country aggregated blogs under one website. A group of Lebanese bloggers have opened a community blog that lists all the Lebanese bloggers and blogs writing about Lebanon, whether in Lebanon or abroad: <http://lebanonaggregator.blogspot.com>.

A blog should be updated regularly. Some bloggers choose to update daily (sometimes with more than one post per day) while others may do it weekly or even monthly. Ideally, try to find a rhythm where you can update regularly without feeling burdened. In general, a regular pace helps you get it out there and contributes to building stronger ties with its readers, whether they are other bloggers or general internet users. The more you are active on your blog, the faster it will get out there.

Blog hosting tools

WordPress

<http://wordpress.com>

WordPress in Arabic

<http://ar.wordpress.com>

Blogspot

www.blogspot.com/

Arab blog hosting tools

Maktoub.com

maktoob.com

Jeeran

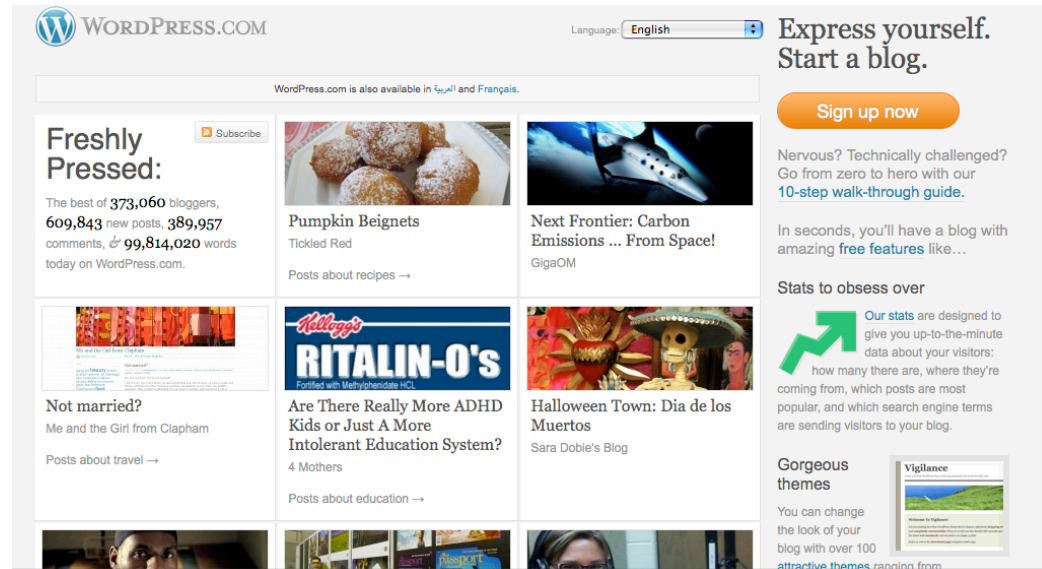
www.jeeran.com

Al Bawaba

blogs.albawaba.com

A Step by Step guide to opening a blog on WordPress

WordPress supports a number of languages. This guide takes you through the process of opening one up in English. To begin the process, first visit WordPress's site <http://wordpress.com> and press the orange button 'sign up now'.



The screenshot shows the WordPress.com homepage. At the top left is the WordPress logo and the text "WORDPRESS.COM". To the right, there is a language selector set to "English" and a navigation menu. Below the header, there is a banner for "Freshly Pressed:" with a "Subscribe" button. The main content area features a grid of featured blog posts:

- Pumpkin Beignets** by Tickled Red: Posts about recipes →
- Next Frontier: Carbon Emissions ... From Space!** by GigaOM
- Not married?** by Me and the Girl from Clapham: Posts about travel →
- Are There Really More ADHD Kids or Just A More Intolerant Education System?** by 4 Mothers: Posts about education →
- Halloween Town: Día de los Muertos** by Sara Doble's Blog

On the right side, there is a prominent orange "Sign up now" button. Below it, text reads: "Express yourself. Start a blog." and "Nervous? Technically challenged? Go from zero to hero with our 10-step walk-through guide." Further down, it says "In seconds, you'll have a blog with amazing free features like..." and "Stats to obsess over" with a green arrow icon. At the bottom right, there is a section for "Gorgeous themes" with a thumbnail for the "Vigilance" theme.

You will be then be directed to the page below where you will need to fill in your details and press the 'next' button.

Get your own WordPress.com account in seconds

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

WordPress.com is also available in العربية and Français.

Username
(Must be at least 4 characters, lowercase letters and numbers only.)

Password

Confirm
Use upper and lower case characters, numbers and symbols like !"\$%&^(in your password.

E-mail Address
(We send important administration notices to this address so **triple-check** it.)

Legal flotsam I have read and agree to the [fascinating terms of service](#).

Then pick a title for your blog. This can be the same as the wordpress account or different.

Blog Domain
(Your address will be **domain.wordpress.com**. It must be at least 4 characters, lowercase letters and numbers only. It cannot be changed so choose carefully!) You may later choose to use your own domain name, such as myblog.com, through [our domain mapping upgrade](#).

Blog Title
The blog title can be changed at any time.

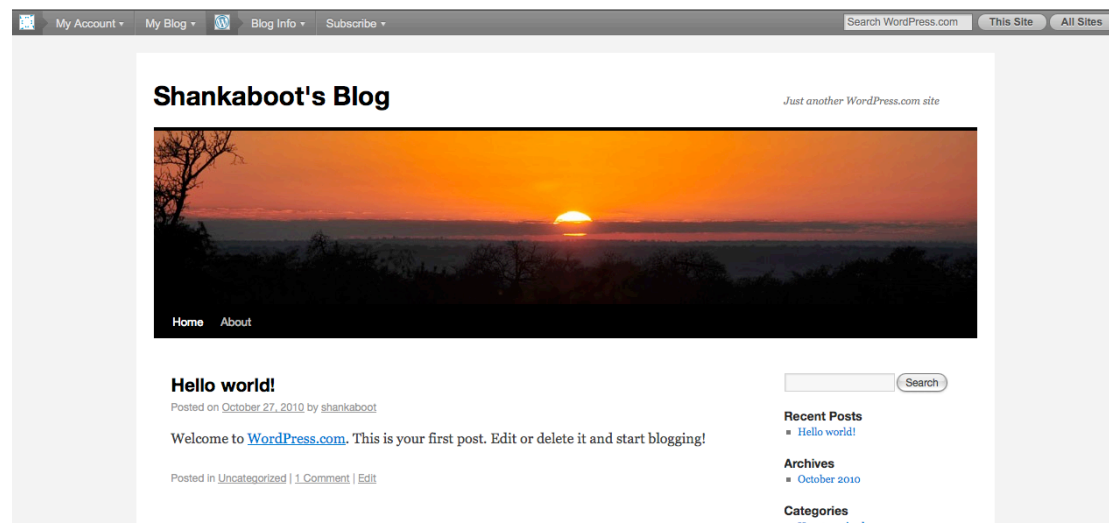
Language What language will you be primarily blogging in?

Privacy

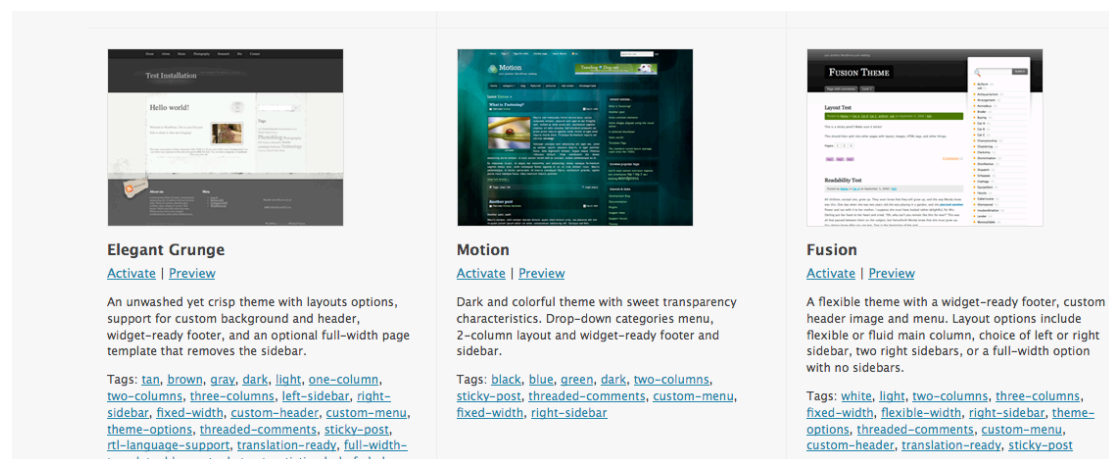
- Public:** My blog should appear in search engines like Google and Bing, and in public listings around WordPress.com.
- Block search engines:** Only allow normal visitors.
- Private:** My blog should be visible only to users I choose.

Signup →

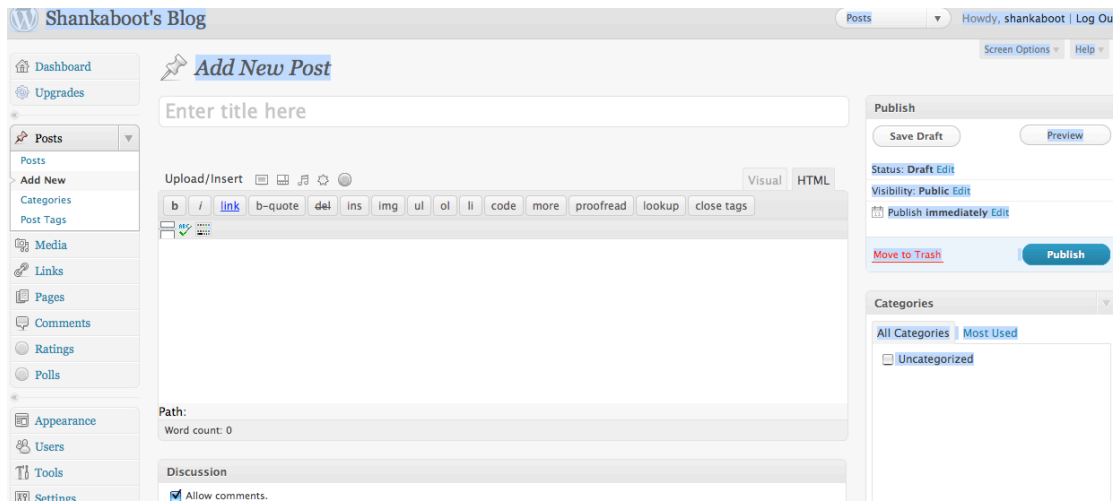
Now, WordPress will send you an email asking you to activate your blog by pressing on a link. The link will direct you to a page where you will need to sign in to your blog for the first time. The default blog will look like this.



However, you may want to personalise your blog and get it to look the way you want it to. Go to 'My blog' button on the top right of the page and press on 'Dashboard'. There you can add new posts and features as well as change the theme of your blog. Start off with picking a new theme and style for your blog that suits you. There will be a number of choices available for you at Wordpress.

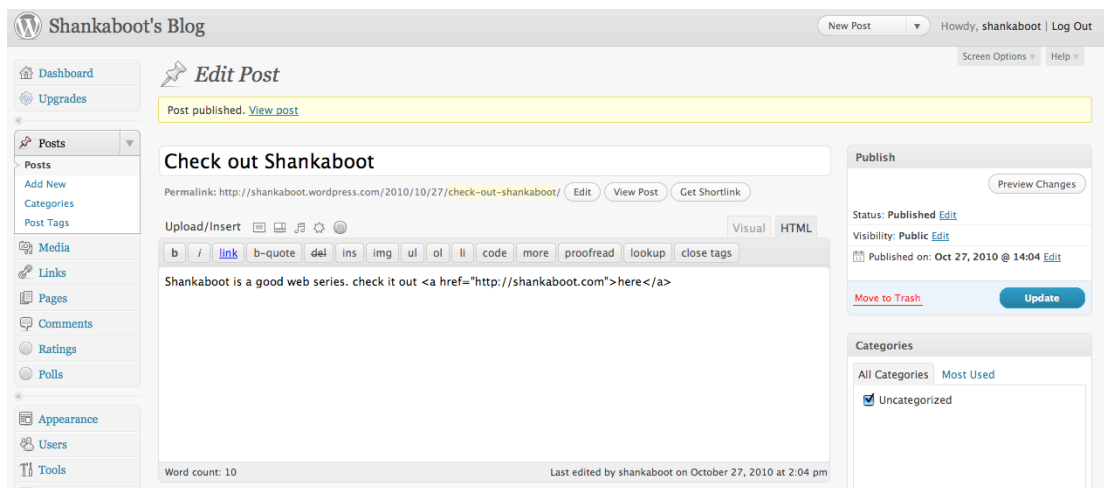


Once you have picked your theme, it's time to write your first post! Go back to the dashboard and click 'new post', a button available on the top right hand side of the page. Add a title for you post and the content in the bottom space. Press publish once you finished it. To see what your post looks like, you will have to go back to the front end of your blog (the public page which users will see). You can do this by clicking on the title of your blog. In our case, it is 'Shankaboot's blog' which can be found on the far top left of your page near the WordPress logo.



Hyperlinks

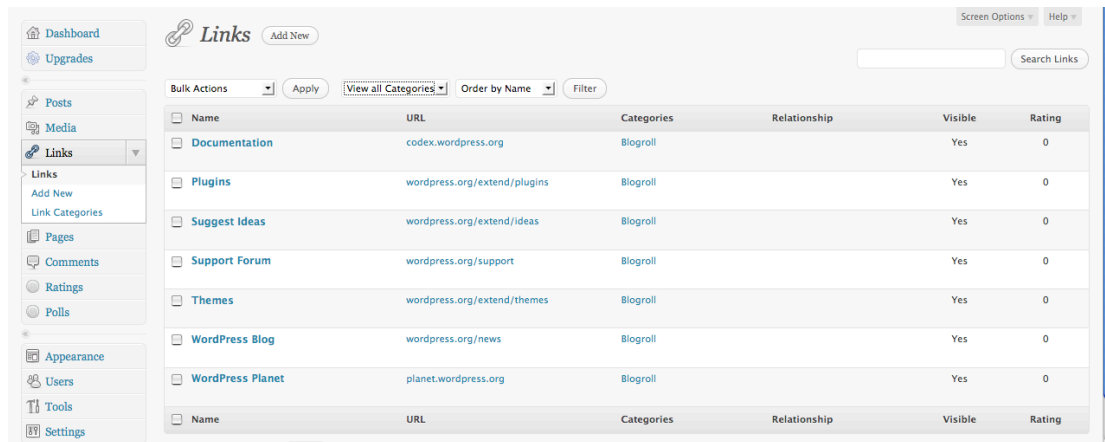
A hyperlink is essentially a URL embedded within a webpage. Hyperlinks are pieces of text, usually blue and underlined, that direct the reader to another page once clicked on. To add one to your post, you need to highlight the word or sentence you need to link to and press link. A HTML code will show up where you highlighted which you just ignore. Press publish and go to your blog page to check it out.



Blogroll

A blogroll is a list of blogs you choose to feature on your site. This is one method by which a blogger creates context for his blog, by listing other blogs that are similar to his/her own, or blogs the author thinks are interesting or of relevance to visitors. A blogroll is placed separately from a specific article and displayed on the side of the page in a list.

To create a blogroll, go back to the dashboard and click on the links button located on the right hand side panel. You will see a list of links there that WordPress has already placed by default. You can delete those if you wish to and add others by clicking ‘add new’ next to the Link icon.



You will then be directed to a page that allows you to put the URL of the blogs or pages you want to link to. You can also create a title for each blog. This could be something you make up such as ‘my favourite blog’ or the actual name of the blog or site you want to link to. Once you have created the blog, added a blog roll, written a post and used hyperlinks, you may congratulate yourself and continue blogging!

