

Starting your Website: WordPress.com

If you've decided to try out a free option first, we'd recommend WordPress.com as the place to start. Here's how to get going:

1. Open a browser window, navigate to <https://wordpress.com/>, and click the big 'Get Started' button
2. Work through the instructions, inputting your email address and selecting a domain name and password, until your site is configured – then hit the 'Create Blog' button
3. Go to your email account and wait for the confirmation email to come through. When it does, open it and click the button that says 'Activate Site'
4. This will open another browser tab or window and go straight to your new site. The first thing it will ask you to do is 'Set Up Your Blog': here you can choose your site title (this can be different to your domain name, if you like). You can also add a tagline if you want one – or remove the default text in the 'Tagline' box if you don't want one. Choose the language you'd like to work in from the drop-down menu, then click 'Next Step'.
5. Now it will ask you to 'Choose a Theme'. Don't worry too much at this stage: you can explore themes in more detail later – it's very easy to change theme. For now, just pick whichever one of the free themes has the most instant appeal for you. Then click 'Next Step' again.
6. Depending on which theme you picked, you may then have some customisations you can make to the look of your site. You might be able to choose the colours of your display, for instance, and/or perhaps to upload an image for the background. The WordPress set-up 'wizard' instructions are very good and will guide you through what you can do. You will see a mock-up of what your site's front page might look like, with a blue bar at the right hand side of the screen allowing you to change various options. Have a play until you've found something you're happy to work with for the time being – don't forget, you're just experimenting at this stage, and will be able to change things as often as you like until you're happy. Once you're happy with your customisations, click 'Save'.
7. Next, WordPress will give you the option of connecting to your Facebook and/or Twitter networks. You can skip this step for now. You can always do it later, and for the time being, you might prefer not to have an audience of your family and friends while you're just learning the ropes and experimenting! Just click 'Next Step' again.
8. Now you can create your first post! Why not start with a simple 'Text' post? Click the 'Text' icon.
9. The next screen you see is your editing pane. This screen will become very familiar to you if you continue to work on WordPress. In some ways, it looks a bit like editing a Microsoft Word document: some of the icons are pretty much exactly the same, and this has been done deliberately to make it easy for you to find your way round. For now, first give your post a title (you could start with something simple like 'Dummy Post Number 1') in the 'Title' box, then click into the larger field to start adding text

to your post. For now, you can just type in some gobbledegook, as you'll be deleting this post later. Then click 'Finish'. WordPress will then very proudly publish your post onto your website, and show you what it looks like in your Wordpress.com dashboard.

10. This dashboard is the 'command centre' for your WordPress.com presence: here you can connect with other blogs as well as manage your own site. Sometime, you might like to have a browse around and see what each button does. For now, click 'My Blog' on the top bar.
11. In the next screen, under the box containing your blog title, click 'Visit Blog'
12. This will take you to the 'front page' of your website: this is what your site looks like to the outside world. You will notice there is a black bar running across the top of the window. This is your admin panel. At the extreme left of this bar, you will see the WordPress icon. Next to that is your site name. Hover over your site name there, and when the drop-down menu appears, click on 'Dashboard'.
13. This dashboard is the 'command centre' for this specific site, also referred to as the 'back end' – this is the bit of your site that no-one else sees. Here you can add content and manage your site. Running down the left-hand side of this screen is your dashboard navigation: it's from this menu that you would normally manage your site. The first time you arrive at this dashboard, WordPress will give you a 'Welcome' information scheme, including a little video. Here's where to start: watch the video, and then go and play with your site. A word of warning: WordPress can be very addictive!
14. If you get stuck at any point whilst working in the back end of your site, look up to the top right of whatever screen you're in. In many screens, here you will find a 'Help' button. Click this to access some really useful instructions and advice, relevant to whichever page you're on.
15. It's worth knowing that WordPress is a huge community of users and developers who are passionate about the platform. It's a friendly and exciting place to be, and if you ask for help, more often than not you will be given it, in spades. For instance, if you ever have a specific problem, you could try a Google search describing your problem: in many cases, you will find that the search returns several forum posts – and answers – where other users have encountered the same question. In the footer navigation of your dashboard, right at the very bottom of the page, you will see a link to 'Forums'. You can click here to access the huge bank of user-driven question-and-answer conversations. Next to 'Forums' on the footer menu, you can click 'Support' to access the huge bank of help-sheet pages and information that has been built up to support WordPress.com users.

Hopefully your confidence will grow very quickly once you get started, and as you learn your way around you may start to have creative ideas about what you could do with your site.

If you'd like to keep in touch with us, you can email Rebecca at rebecca.wincen@gmail.com. We'd love to see what you've created, and will try to help you if we can. Alternatively, you could try visiting the iChurch forum at <http://forum.interactivechurch.org.uk/support-forum/> - even if it's just to say hi (we're a friendly bunch too)!