ICON KEY
- Valuable information
- Activity
- Shortcuts
- Links
- Additional information

Creating Your Own Blog with Edublogs

Purpose

Understanding how to create and use a blog is important for becoming familiar with new Web 2.0 technologies.

In this tutorial you will learn how to:

1. Create an account
2. Navigate the Wordpress menu system
3. Make your blog secure by restricting permissions for posting
4. Add a post
5. Add a page

Software Needed

Web Browsers

Prerequisite Knowledge and Skills

Before beginning this tutorial please make sure that you have completed the Netvibes tutorial.

Overview

- Getting Started
- Restricting Permissions for Posting and Protecting your Blog from Spam
- Adding a Post and Page

[back to top]

Lesson 1: Getting Started

http://learnerblogs.org/ is a site where students can set up blogs

In this lesson you will learn how to create an Edublogs account. When you create an Edublogs account you will have access to two different Web 2.0 technologies. You will have a Wordpress blog (Wordpress is the open source software you will use for your blog.) You will also have a Wikispaces wiki. In this tutorial we will only focus on creating and maintaining your Wordpress blog. Edublogs is not the name of the blog software. Edublogs provides a service. They let you host your blog on their site and their interface does all the behind the scenes work to set up your blog. For example, Wordpress is already installed on their server and they can automatically set you up with space and a database to host your blog.

Activity 1: Creating an Account

In this activity you will set up your Edublogs account. You will need a valid email address to set up this account. Also, you will not only get a blog (using Wordpress software) but you will also get a Wikispaces wiki.

1. Go to http://edublogs.org/

2. Click on "**Sign up for FREE**".

3. On the new sign-in page you will need a valid email address because they will send your password to that email address.

4. Enter in a username and email address. Answer the security question and then click **Next**.

5. On the next screen you will notice that your username will be the default domain for your blog URL. You may change this if you wish.

6. On the sign-up page make sure that you :
   a. enter a blog domain
   b. enter a title for your blog
   c. **CHECK "NO"** in the box next to the sentence "**I would like my blog to appear in search engines like Google and Technorati, and in public listings around this site**"
   d. choose **Teacher** for the blog type
   e. choose your language

7. Next- check your email for the address you used to sign up for your Edublogs account. You need to click on a link to confirm that you want to create an account.

8. After completing step #7 you will receive an email to your account. It will contain your username and password for your Edublogs account.

9. Type in your username and password to log in.

10. Edublogs is actually a hosting service that uses WordPress as their blog software. WordPress is open source software and can actually be installed on your own server.

11. Once you log in, click on the **Your Dashboard** link to enter the Dashboard.


Activity 2: Navigating the Wordpress Menu System

Edublogs uses Wordpress as their blog software. Wordpress is used by many free sites that let you easily set up your own blog. (e.g., Uniblogs). Also, you can run Wordpress off of your own school server and have more control over access to the blog.

1. Log in by using your username and password. Wordpress menu panels will appear on top. Below we have explained the menu and sub-menu options in Wordpress.

**Dashboard** (The main menu is called the Dashboard)
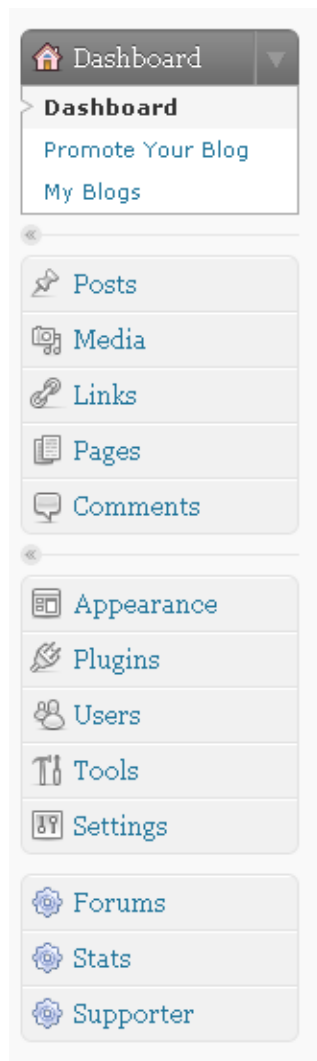
The Dashboard panel is a list of menus. The Dashboard is like the menu bar in Word or PowerPoint. The main difference is that when you click on the word in the menu bar -instead of a drop-down menu appearing - you will see a new menu bar appear below the main bar. (see image below). You need to access the Dashboard to make any changes to your blog. These changes could include: adding a post, adding a new page, adding subscribers, changing the look of your blog, or even deleting a comment. (These are just a few of the functions.) You will also be able to check the latest activities in your blog (ex. new comments, posts, and blog stats.). **If you are logged into your blog you can always access the Dashboard by clicking on the Site Admin link on your blog.**

Posts
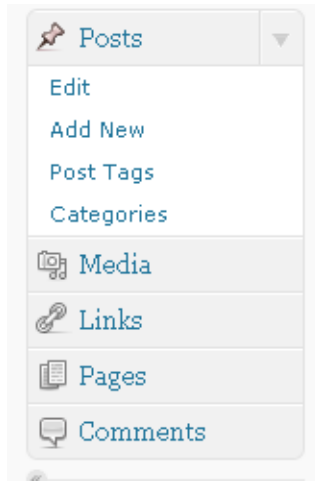
You can create or publish a post using the **Posts** sub-menus. **Posts** are writings that are added to the top of the main page. As they are published other posts will move down and when they drop off the front page you can get to them using the Archives links, category links or at the bottom of the blog will be a link to 'Previous Entries'. If you want readers to be able to comment on what you have written--be sure to check the box Allow Comments under the Discussion box. You can also use this menu to view, delete, or edit an existing post. This would also include changing the category you've assigned to a post.

Media
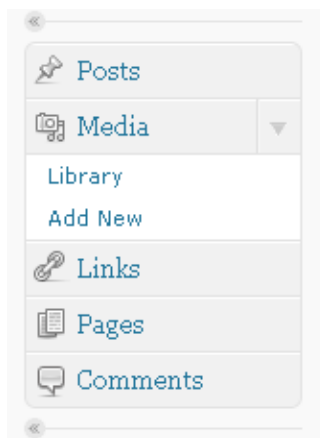
All media files, such as images, video, audio and documents, that you've ever uploaded to posts or pages are listed in your media library.

This is where you can manage all existing media files or upload new files (**Media > Add New**) directly to your blog without having to start a new post.

You can also use this option to delete Media previously uploaded to your blog. Multiple Media objects can be selected for deletion. Search and filtering ability is also provided to allow you to find the desired Media.

Links
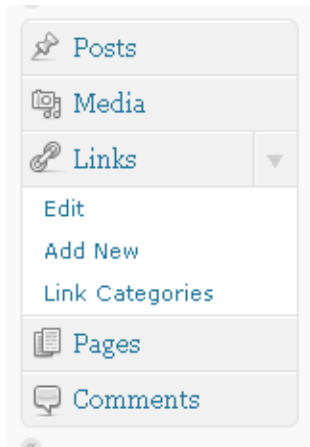
You can add links to your blog using the Links menu. You can also edit or delete any existing links and/or create and edit link categories. Multiple Links can be selected for deletion. Various search and filtering options allow you to find the Links you want to edit or delete.

Pages
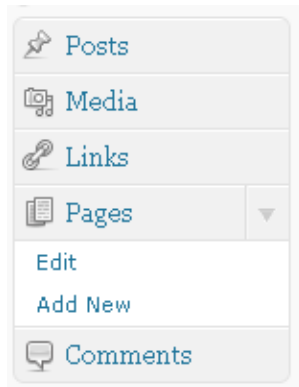
You can create pages using the **Page** menu. You might create a new **page** called "About Me". Readers can then learn more about the author of the blog (you). Pages are generally static information such as an About Me page or a page that stores your syllabus. You can also use this option to view, delete, or edit an existing page. This would also include changing the category you've assigned to a page.

Comments
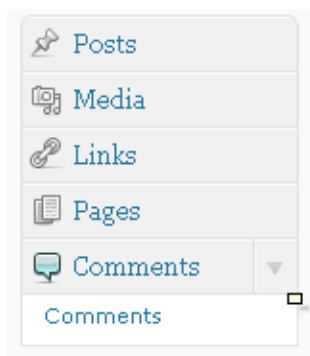
Use the **Comment** menu to edit, delete, or approve a comment that is awaiting moderation or that has already been posted. You can mark a comment as spam by clicking on the Spam option. You can also view the post related to the comment or defer moderation until later.

Appearance
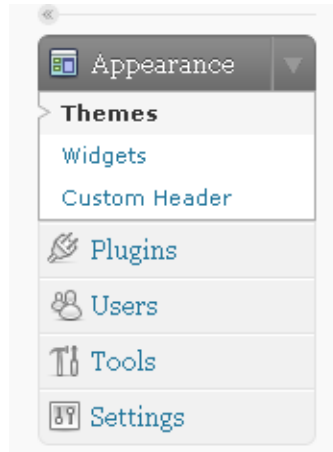
Using the **Appearance** menu you can select the theme for your blog from the available themes. Depending on the theme that you chose you may also be able to make adjustments to your header image and color.

> **Themes**: Use this option to choose the theme for your blog.
>
> **Widgets**: Use this option to arrange your sidebar with different widgets. A widget is an object or component in a graphical user interface (GUI). Many believe that widget is short for "window object". You can attach a widget such as Google Search into your Sidebar.
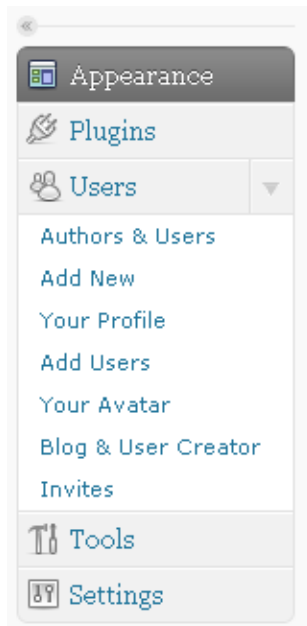>
> **Custom Header**: This option is only available on certain themes. Use this option to edit the image and color of the header which will appear on the front page of your blog.

Plugins
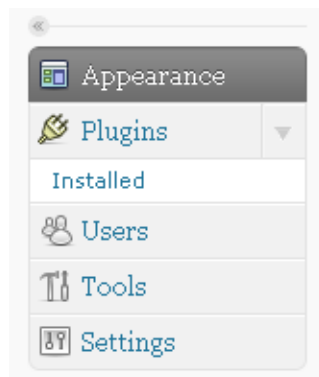
You would only need to use this menu if you wanted to add a plugin to your blog. The plugin can expand the functionality of your blog. They may, however, require **a lot** of trouble-shooting.

Users

You can add users to your blog. This is how you can control membership. Do not add anyone else as an administrator to your blog. You can also change your contact information and password in the **Your Profile** sub-menu.

Tools
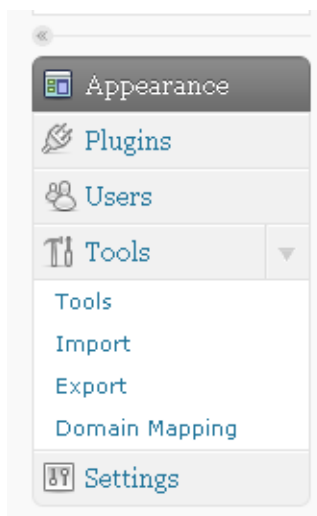
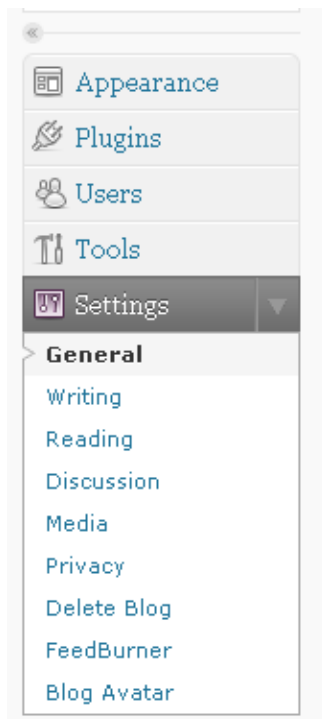The following are the options that are available to you under the **Tools** menu:

Tools: Use this option to enable Gears or to get the Press This bookmarklet.

Import: Use this option to import some posts or comments in another system into your current blog.

Export: Use this option to create a XML file for you to save to your computer.

Domain Mapping: Use this option to map a domain to your blog so that it appears at yourdomain.com instead of at yourdomain.edublogs.org. You will need to own the domain you want to map to in order to use this feature.

Settings

You can select different options on writing, reading, privacy, and so on. The following are the options you will be using frequently:

General: Use this option to change the title of your blog, e-mail address, and date and time.

Writing: Use this option to change the size of the post box, formatting, default post category, and default bookmark category.

Reading: Use this option to change the front page displays and the number of blog pages shown.

Discussion: Use this option to change some of the settings for an article. For example, you can allow (or not allow) people to post comments on the article. You can also ask the comment author to fill out name and e-mail before the comment appears. You can also prevent comment spam by using comment moderation and comment blacklist. Type in any words that you feel are inappropriate then the comment moderation will hold the comment in the moderation queue. The difference between comment moderation and blacklist is that the blacklist will delete the comment which contains the words you typed in. For example, if you typed in "porn" in the comment blacklist, any comments which contain the word "porn" will be automatically deleted.

Media: Use this option to change your media settings.

Privacy: Use this option to change the blog visibility. Make sure to click on "**I would like to block search engines, but allow normal visitor**" so that you can prevent the attack of spam.

Delete Blog: Use this option to permanently disable your blog.

Feedburner: Use this option to redirect traffic for your feeds to a Feedburner feed you have created.

Blog Avatar: Use this option to upload an image which will be visible across your blog.

[back to top]

Lesson 2: Restricting Permissions for Posting and Protecting your Blog from Spam

You can add other users to your blog as subscribers so that they can comment on your blog. There are different levels of security in terms of managing comments posted by others. You should **ALWAYS** moderate the comments to your blog by requiring that all comments are approved by the administrator before posting. You can also up the level of security by changing your settings so that only members can post comments. The drawback to this is that the users would need an edublog account. In this lesson, you will learn how to restrict permission for posting and protect your blog from spam.

Activity 1: Restricting Permissions for Posting

1. Go to **Users**> **Add New** tab on your menu.

2. Type in the user e-mail address (make sure that you are using the email they use for their Edublogs account.) Select **subscriber** in the **Role** option to allow the user to post writing on your blog.If you only allow members to post comments then all subscribers can post (you can still require that their comments are approved.) Anything above subscriber can create posts. (You may want that for a classroom use.)

3. In order to remove a particular user from the list,select **Users > Authors and Users**. Find the username you want to delete from the list, check the box next to the username, and click on **Remove**.

Activity 2: Protecting your Blog from Spam

1. Go to **Settings**> **Discussion** tab on your menu.

2. **Check the boxes as designated in the image below.**

3. Go down to **Comment Blacklist** and type in any words you want them to be blocked. The comments will be automatically deleted when they contain a word on the blacklist. For example, you type in "porn" in the blacklist, any comments containing the word "porn" will be deleted. Click on the **Save Changes** button.


[back to top]

Lesson 3: Adding a Post and Page

A post is something that is supposed to be updated regularly while a page is something that stays static over time. A good example of a post would be a weekly assignment. A course syllabus would be a typical example of a page which will remain unchanged during the course.

Activity 1: Adding a Post

1. Click on the **Post menu** and click on **Add New**.
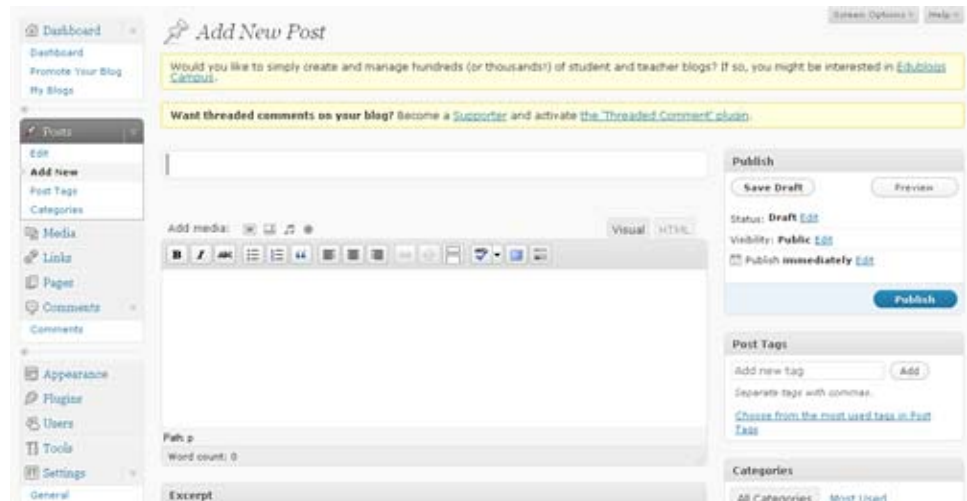
2. Add a title and text. Use the formatting toolbar which is similar to the one used in Word.

3. After completing your writing choose the category you want associated with your post by checking the box next to that category. You can add a new category by clicking on **Add New Category** link and typing in the blank field and clicking **Add**.
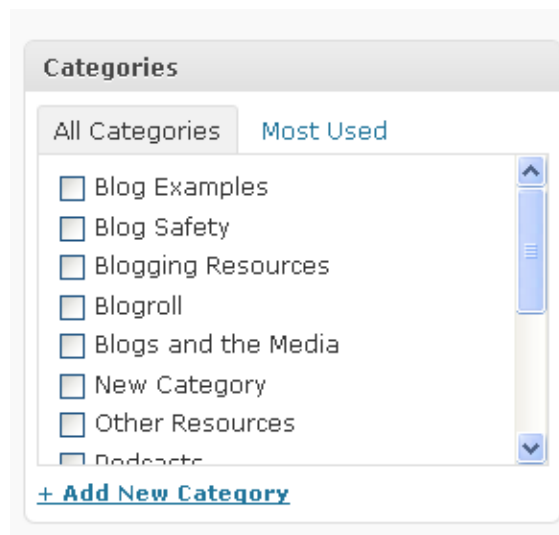
4. If you would like to publish your post click on the **Publish** button. If you want to save your post and not publish it so that you can finish it later then click on the **Save Draft** button.

5. After publishing you can check your posting by clicking on **View post** in the new bar at the top. It will show you the latest publishing on your blog. Or you can click on the **Preview** button under Publish.

6. You can upload an image by using the **Add Media** option. The first icon is for adding images, the second one is for adding videos, the third one is for adding audio, and the last one is for adding any other type of media. Click on the first one to add an image. Click on **Select Files** and search for the file you want to upload. Add a description of the image for alternative text and then click on the **Insert Into Post** button on the bottom.

Add an Image

From Computer   From URL   Media Library

Add media files from your computer

Choose files to upload   **Select Files**   Cancel Upload

You are using the Flash uploader. Problems? Try the Browser uploader instead.

After a file has been uploaded, you can add titles and descriptions.

7. If you wish to make some changes on your post go to **Posts > Edit**. Select the post you want to change by clicking on its title. The post will appear and you can make any necessary changes.

Edit Posts

Would you like to simply create and manage hundreds (or thousands!) of student and teacher Campus.

Turn off these helpful tips here. But why would you do that! :)

All (15) | Published (15)

Bulk Actions ▼ (Apply)   Show all dates ▼   View all categories ▼   (Filter)

☐ Post	Author	Categories
☐ **My First Podcast**	msuedtech	Podcasts
☐ **Welcome to the Blogging Workshop**	msuedtech	Workshops Offered
☐ **Edublogs Presentation and Tutorial Part 1 and 2 -PDF**	msuedtech	Blogging Resources, Presentations

Activity 2: Adding a Page

1. Adding a page is pretty similar to adding a post. Click on **Page > Add New**. Follow the same process as you did in the **Activity 1** (Adding a Post).

2. If you wish to make some changes on your page go to **Page > Edit**. Select the page you want to change by clicking on its title.

[back to top]

Wrap Up:

Using a blog can be very helpful to teachers and students. It is important to keep updating your blog on a regular basis. More advanced tips can be found in edublogs.org support forums.

Go Back to Tutorials
http://edutech.msu.edu/
online/811.htm