Lesson 3: Making a WordPress Website

Chapter 1: Introduction

WordPress is more than just a tool for creating blogs. It’s also a wide-ranging, powerful content management system (CMS)—a platform for building and managing websites of any type.

Blogs are perfect when you want to update frequently, invite interaction from your visitors, and display your content in chronological order.

But if you want more control over where content appears on a page, and within the overall site, a traditional website is often a better choice. Since WordPress can create pages as well as posts, it's as good at making traditional static websites as it is at building blogs.

In this lesson, you'll find out how to organize a WordPress website, create pages, and change the home page from the current blog-style to a static page . . . in short, how to build a full-fledged website.

Is Organization Really That Important?

We'll spend much of this lesson organizing and categorizing our pages. Why?

Well, I believe that more than anything else, visitors are turned off by a poorly organized website—where they have a hard time finding what they’re looking for. While it's important that your site is attractive, most people aren't there for pretty pictures or a captivating design. They have a need that they hope your site can fulfill. And if you don’t quickly satisfy that need, they’ll find another site that will. Hyperlinks and Google have conditioned us to leap here and there quickly, link-hopping our way to the information we’re after.

In my experience, intuitive organization coupled with appealing content are the most important features of a user-friendly website. This lesson will give you a solid background in site organization. We'll work on content-writing and other topics in the weeks to come.
Chapter 2: Organizing and Page Building

The great thing about traditional websites is that you can organize them easily. In contrast, there’s no simple way to set up a blog so visitors can find an entry by its relative importance. That’s because a blog treats all posts equally, placing the newest item on top. But you can organize a single static Web page any way you want, and the page itself will be a part of your larger site structure based on its relationship to other pages.

This structure is a hierarchy, a concept we touched on when we discussed categories in Lesson 2. Because a website’s hierarchy is the basis for the navigation paths visitors will follow, having a logical structure is crucial to a user-friendly website.

To organize our site, we’ll use a structural outline—a visual guide that helps define the site’s organization and the relationships between its pages.

The first step in getting organized is to think about the topics you want to cover. Here are a few ideas I came up with for the Pets to Go site:

• Adoption Information: Fees, requirements, a description of how the process works
• Spay and Neuter Clinic: How this clinic operates and why
• About: Information on the organization’s history and goals
• Contact: How to reach us
• Support: Fund-raising and volunteering information
• Dogs and Cats for Adoption: List of available pets
• Events: Upcoming training programs and meetings
• Rehabilitation and Training: Working with adopted pets and new owners on obedience issues.

If we just took those subjects and threw them together on the website, our guests would waste time looking for the information they came to get. We need to present our topics in an intuitive way, so they’re easy to find.

This is where the outline is useful: It lets us see how our topics relate to one another. Here’s how I used it to organize the site:
Notice how organizing my ideas into a structure also helped me think of more topics to add!

At the top of this chart is the home page. It will serve as a portal, welcoming visitors to the website and providing links to the other pages. Web home pages don't have subpages. On your site’s menu, the home page is displayed traditionally on the left—on the same level as the parent pages. But unlike the parent pages, home, when clicked shows no drop-down list of child pages. It always takes the visitor to the home (AKA front) page of your site.

The first page in the row of parent pages—**Dogs and Cats for Adoption**—is actually the blog page. It's made up of the posts we added in Lesson 2. If we decide to keep this site as a blog, this would become the home page. We'll experiment with that modification later in the course.

As you create a structural outline for your own project or projects, you'll notice that some ideas seem to cluster. That's the hierarchy part of the structure, and it's what will make your site easier to navigate. For the Pets to Go site, we can group several topics under the **Services**
heading. The Services page will have a brief description of each pet program we offer, and a link to each child page that contains more information about each program.

Did you notice which item from the bulleted list didn't make it into the outline? That's right—the Events list. We can list the events in a calendar widget in a sidebar.

Are you ready to create a page for this website? I'll supply the text and the instructions. As you work, think about what pages you could create for your own site or sites.

**Building a Page in WordPress**

Let's start at the WordPress administration menu (the list on the left side of the back end, AKA dashboard). Click **Pages > Add New**.

The Add New Page screen looks very much like the Add New Post screen from the last lesson.

1. Type **About** in the **Enter title here** field.

2. Make sure the tab in the top-right corner of the text box is set to **Visual**. This mode lets you use the editor’s WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get) feature.
WordPress also includes a **Text** tab for people who want to enter content and customize how it’s displayed by using HTML code.

3. Copy the sample text below, and paste it into the text box.

**Sample text for About Us page:**

Pets to Go is a nonprofit, no-kill animal shelter serving the Springfield area. Our mission is to give homeless animals a second chance through our rescue, shelter, and adoption programs.

Founded in 1990, we have a few simple goals: save and re-home cats and dogs, and educate the public about spaying and neutering their pets.

We’re now one of the largest no-kill shelters in the state! Each year Pets to Go helps more than 1,300 cats and dogs find permanent homes.

Where do these animals come from? About 40% are owner surrenders, and the other 60% are animals we rescue from shelters that euthanize.

We have a dedicated staff of 15 (half are part-time). And our 200plus volunteers are our backbone (thank you volunteers and donors!). Many of the rescued animals who come to Pets to Go get more love and attention in our shelter than they've ever known before.

Our shelter continues to grow and improve. Drop by and get to know us better!

4. Click the blue **Publish** button.

5. Then click **View Page**. (It's underneath the **Add New** box near the top of the screen.)
Notice that the page looks just like it will look to a visitor, except for that Edit link. Only the site creator, you, see this—and clicking it returns you to the back end where you can...edit.

Our website’s taking shape. In Chapter 3, we'll dive further into creating and organizing Web pages.

Chapter 3: Organizing WordPress Pages

It's not much of a challenge to organize a website that has only one page! Let's go ahead and create a few more pages so you can see how to fit them into a hierarchy.

We ended Chapter 2 on the "About" Web page. How can we return to the back end? You can click that Edit link we mentioned, or...
Allow me to introduce the incredibly useful admin bar. It's the black row that runs across the top of the screen whenever you're logged into WordPress.

On the left side is the site title (Pets to Go, in this case). Hover (don’t click) your mouse cursor over the title and a menu drops down:

1. If you click a menu item under Pets2go you’ll go at once to any of four important back end screens (dashboard, themes, widgets, menus).

2. The second admin bar link, Customize, opens a screen where you can preview different themes (and customize other elements of your site). We'll explore that feature in the next lesson.

3. The next icon looks like a cartoon dialog box. Click it to open the screen that displays visitors' comments.

4. The + New link displays a drop-down window with shortcuts to open a new page, post, image, or user.

Note: A fast way to move between the back and front end is to click that Pets2go link. It’s a toggle: Try clicking it a few times now.

When you’re in the back end, the Customize link disappears.

We'll be using all these features as you learn more about WordPress. For now, hover your cursor over + New to drop its submenu, then click the Page link. That brings us to another Add New Page screen.

We’ll add a "Services" page that will briefly describe the shelter's programs.

1. Type Services into the title field.

2. Copy the text below these instructions, and paste it into the Page text box.
Sample text for the Services page:
Click a program title for more information.

Adoption
With as many as 50 dogs and cats available at any given time and over 1,300 animals adopted annually, we seek to promote no-kill alternatives through our innovative programs. All of the animals receive full medical and behavioral evaluations, and our staff works with you to help your new pet feel comfortable in its new home.

Animal Rescue and Transfers
Our animals come from a number of places—overcrowded area shelters, surrenders from local families that can no longer care for their dog or cat, and rescue groups throughout the state. We focus on giving homeless, abandoned, and sometimes abused animals a second chance at a healthy, happy life with a caring guardian.

Rehabilitation & Training
While at Pets to Go, animals that have behavioral issues are retrained and rehabilitated to become better companions in their new homes. After the adoption, Pets to Go is always there to help with behavior consultations, "positive reinforcement" dog training classes, and any other advice an adopter may need.

Medical and Spay/Neuter Clinic
Pets to Go’s on-site veterinary team assesses the health of each animal and provides appropriate treatment and vaccinations. In addition, we spay or neuter all the animals, so that more don't end up in shelters.

Volunteering and Foster Care
Pets to Go could not survive without the help of dedicated, caring animal lovers who generously volunteer at the shelter each week. From bottlefeeding motherless kittens, answering phones, and offering foster care
to our special needs animals, our volunteers improve the quality of life for the homeless dogs and cats that are sheltered at Pets to Go.

3. Click **Publish**, and then look at this Web page as a visitor will see it. (Another way to switch to the front end is to click *Preview Changes* in the Publish area on the upper right of the Edit Page screen).

The content of this page could definitely use some editing. The writing has some flaws. We'll fix it in a later lesson when I'll touch on the fine points of writing for the Web.

As you add more pages, you'll learn more about organizing websites. Next up you’ll see how to create a *child page*—remember, that's a page that links to a parent page and provides more specific (or related) information about the parent page’s topic. Parent-child relationships are an important consideration when constructing your site’s hierarchy.

**Creating a Child Page**

In our site outline, I included four child pages under the parent page called Services. We'll add one of those second-level, child pages now.

1. Go up to the admin bar up top, hover your cursor over + **New**, and click **Page**.

2. Type **Volunteers** in the Title box.

3. Copy this Volunteers text below, and paste it into the text editor.

   **Sample Text for Volunteers page:**

   Without our dedicated group of volunteers, Pets to Go couldn't provide such outstanding care for animals. Pets to Go volunteers are involved in almost all aspects of the shelter—providing hands-on care to the shelter animals, keeping the shelter clean, participating in events and fundraisers, and even fostering animals in their own homes.
Our volunteer program lets individuals or groups get involved according to their own interests and talents. The Junior Volunteer program is for teens aged 13 to 15, and the Adult Volunteer program is for ages 16 and older. Both offer an opportunity to work on behalf of the shelter's animals and to make a positive impact on Springfield. Through our Kids' Programs, children 9 to 12 can also help our animals.

If you’re interested in becoming a volunteer, just complete these four simple steps:

1. Submit a Volunteer Application. Click here to download it.
2. Read the Volunteer Handbook (available at the shelter).
3. Register for and attend a Volunteer Orientation. To register, call (555) 5551212.
4. Complete your first hour of service training with an approved Volunteer Mentor.

4. Now we’ll make this a child page under the Services parent page. (Services isn’t yet a parent, but it’s about to become one now.) Go to this Volunteers page’s Page Attributes box – it’s over on the right side, below the Publish module.
5. Click the arrow to open the drop-down menu that says "(no parent)" and select **Services**. This ensures that the Volunteer Program is listed under Services, just as it is in the outline. You just made **Services** a parent page, and **Volunteers** a child of that parent.

(If you don’t see this Page Attributes module over on the right side, first make sure you’re working on a page, not a post. It’s easy to make this mistake if you clicked the **+New** link rather than just hovering your cursor over it to drop its menu. Still don’t see it, even on an Edit Page screen? Open the Screen Options panel (upper right), and check the box next to Page Attributes.)
6. Click **Publish**, then **View Page**.

As you build your own website, you may not want to develop content page by page as we’ve been doing so far. Instead, you might prefer to just create empty pages and fill in the content later. Next, you’ll learn how to create some placeholder pages.

**Adding Placeholders**

After you’ve outlined your website and added a few pages, it can be helpful to create placeholders—pages that have titles and match the outline but are not yet filled with content. Adding placeholders gives you an idea of the overall look of your finished site.

For your Pets to Go site, let’s add the remaining parent pages: "Adoption Info", "Support Us", and "Contact".

For each of these pages:

1. Open the Pages submenu (hover over **Pages** in the back end’s left column), and click **Add New**.

2. Enter the page title (such as **Contact**).

Here’s how the Add New Page screen should look for the placeholder page titled "Contact."
3. Click Publish.

Repeat these steps to add the other two parents.

Now it's time to add placeholders for the remaining child pages. Recall that a child page (also known as a *subpage*) is a page that has content related to its parent page but is one step lower in the hierarchy.

Under **Adoption Info** in our outline, we have two child pages to add: "Fees & Requirements" and "Application Form." For each of these page:

1. Click **Pages > Add New**.
2. Enter the child’s title.
3. In the Page Attributes section, under Parent, open the drop-down menu and click **Adoption Info**.
4. Click **Publish**.

Repeat these steps to add *Application Form* as the second child page of the Adoption Info parent.

Only one set of child pages remains, and they're under the parent page "Services." They are "Animal Rescue," "Spay-Neuter Clinic," and "Rehab & Training."

Try adding these pages yourself. Remember that the **Parent** category for these children will be "Services."

We're currently working with the default WordPress theme, which doesn’t display a menu of pages. Don’t be concerned about that: In the next lesson we’ll switch to a theme that includes a menu, so visitors can see links to all these pages.

**Tip:**
If the child page concept isn't clear right now, you'll understand it after we create our website menu, in a later lesson.

That was a lot of work, but it's making you a WordPress pro! And now you've actually laid out the entire website.

Take some time to catch your breath . . . and proceed to the next chapter when you're ready.

Chapter 4: Changing a Blog to a Website

Just one more step remains. We want to transform our current Pets to Go blog into a traditional Website, but that also includes the blog we currently have. We need to create a new blog page and home page. Currently, the home page is the blog. It contains your pet posts, displayed in
chronological order. When the blog page (also known as the *posts page*) serves as the front page like this, your site is known as a *blog*. That's what we have now. When there's a static page up front, it's called a *website*. So let's make the change. When a visitor comes to your site, the first thing they see will no longer be a list of posts. They'll see our static front page. Presumably carefully designed to be clear, clean, and attractive.

Because we're now going to move the posts off the front page, we need to set up an inside page to hold them. This step may seem a bit inefficient, but it is necessary. So go to *Pages > Add New*. Note that this is *pages, not posts*.

1. Type *Adoptable Pets* in the page title field.
2. Then click *Publish*.

This blog page is going to remain blank for now. In a few moments, you're going to allow it to display the site's most recent posts when your readers visit it. In Web jargon, this is known as a *dynamic page*.

We also need to create a home page. So add another new page (you can probably do this with your eyes closed by now), and give it the title *Springfield’s No-Kill Pet Shelter*.

Next, copy and paste this content into the home page’s text box:

Pets to Go is a nonprofit, no-kill animal shelter serving the Springfield area. Our mission is to give these homeless animals a second chance through our rescue, shelter, and adoption programs.

We were founded in 1990 with a few simple objectives: save and place cats and dogs in new homes, and educate the public about spaying and neutering their pets.

We're now one of the largest no-kill shelters in the state! Each year, Pets to Go helps more than 1,300 cats and dogs find permanent homes.

Pets to Go needs your help in many ways:
ADOPT: Make all the difference in the life or a dog or cat.

VOLUNTEER: Help us save the lives of hundreds of abandoned and unwanted pets each year.

DONATE: Support our life-saving mission.

I won’t remind you to click the Publish button this time.

Creating Links

The capitalized words in the text you just pasted are intended to be links to other pages within the site. It’s easy to create these links in the WordPress text editor.

Let’s make a link out of the word Adopt at the start of paragraph six in this text. First, use your mouse to highlight the word to be linked.

Pets to Go needs your help in many ways:

ADOPT: Make all the difference in the life or a dog or cat.

VOLUNTEER: Help us save the lives of hundreds of abandoned and unwanted pets each year.

DONATE: Support our life-saving mission.

On the editing toolbar is an icon that looks like a chain link. Click it:

And a box appears underneath the highlighted word or phrase.
If you were linking to a page on a different website than your own, you’d type that site’s address into this Paste URL field. But since we’re linking to one of our own internal pages, click the gear icon on the right of the URL box.

This will open a list of your site’s pages.

1. Look for the "Adoptable Pets" page and click it to highlight it.

WordPress automatically inserts the page’s correct Web address to the URL field at the top. (An individual page’s URL is known as that page’s permalink.)
2. Click the **Add Link** button. You'll see the new link (the word *Adopt* is now underlined) in your page:

   Pets to Go needs your help in many ways:

   **ADOPT**: Make all the difference in the life of a dog or cat.

3. Click the **Update** (or **Publish**) button and then click **View Page**. Test your new link by clicking **Adopt**, which should open the "Adoptable Pets" page.

If you want more practice, try linking **Volunteer** to "Volunteers" and **Donate** to "Support Us."

We'll create some other kinds of links later on in the course.

Are you ready to add a blog component to your masterpiece? Let's try it.

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**The Magic Button**

Open the Settings submenu, and click **Reading**.

When the **Reading Settings** page opens, the first section will be titled **Homepage displays**, and **Your Latest Posts** will be selected by default.

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**Reading Settings**

- **Your homepage displays**
  - [ ] Your latest posts
  - [x] A **static page** (select below)

  **Homepage:** [Springfield's No-Kill Pet Shelter](#)

  **Posts page:** — Select —

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1. Click **A static page**.
2. From the drop-down menu next to Homepage, select **Springfield's NoKill Pet Shelter**

3. From the drop-down next to Posts page, click **Adoptable Pets**.

4. To save these edits, click **Save Changes** at the bottom of the page.

To view the new Home page, click the **Site Title** (it will be called “Pets to Go” or whatever name you gave to the site) on the admin bar (the bar along the top). This is a great shortcut from the back end to the home page.

Our blog has turned into a website with a new home page.

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**Pets to Go**

A fictitious website for a class project

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**Springfield’s No-Kill Pet Shelter**

**Pets to Go** is a nonprofit, no-kill animal shelter serving the Springfield area. Our mission is to give these homeless animals a second chance through our rescue, shelter, and adoption programs.

We were founded in 1990 with a few simple objectives: save and place cats and dogs in new homes, and educate the public about spaying and neutering their pets.

We’re now one of the largest no-kill shelters in the state! Each year, **Pets to Go** helps more than 1,300 cats and dogs find permanent homes.

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New home page article

When we add a menu in the next lesson, you'll be able to open the blog page, as well.

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**Chapter 5: Summary**

Congratulations! You've come a long way in this lesson. Pets to Go is now a hybrid website and blog, featuring the best of both worlds! The blog portion now lists pets for adoption in
chronological order, and the static part of the website has a logical organization, so visitors can easily find the information they're seeking.

If you’d rather have visitors arrive first at the posts, it's easy to change: Just return to the Reading Settings page and click the button next to **Your latest posts**.

You’ve done it! Believe it or not, this completes most of the heavy lifting required to build a WordPress website. For the remainder of the course, we'll refine our project. And in the process, you'll learn how to change its appearance, add images, write compelling content, and optimize the site for search engines.

We'll begin the face-lift in the next lesson by exploring how you can improve a Web site's look and feel.