

Building a WordPress Blog People Want to Read, Second Edition

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Book Review by Don Arrowsmith  
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This is the perfect book for a newcomer to WordPress. A main drawback of open-source software is the quality of the documentation. While there is a substantial amount of documentation at the WP site, it often seems to lack consistency. And then there's the matter of it being a hyper-linked arrangement of separate pages on a computer screen. For me, it's much nicer to have a printed book for at-a-minute reference.

The sixteen chapters take you from why you would choose WP through installation through getting it up and running and finally to tweaking and extending it. The chapter on installation has especially useful tips on setting the required MySQL database. Chapter 5, "Futureproofing Your Blog" gives many helpful suggestions to help you plan ahead. The middle chapters get to the heart of using your blog: adding posts and making them most usable with tags and categories.

Chapter 11 deals extensively with comments: Why you might want to allow them or not; How to deal with them; Using Akismet to deal almost automatically with 'comment spam'. I can tell you from experience that Akismet will take all of the pain out of that problem.

Chapters 12 and 13 deal with themes and both using standard ones and tinkering with an existing theme to make it your own. Chapter 14 on plugins ends with a list of plugins that no blog should be without. Troubleshooting is the topic of Chapter 15 and includes detailed methods of backing up your content and the importance of keeping your installation updated.

If I had one fault to find for the book, it would be that only in Chapter 16, "Bloggerly Wisdom", does the author truly get into what the title of the book seems to suggest. He concentrates on 'Three C's of Blogging': Content, Consistency, and Community. Implementing his suggestions will be the key to having a successful blog. Almost anyone can have a technically inviting blog with an attractive appearance and good maintenance; The exceptional blog will be one that "people want to read" on a continuing basis.

I recommend this book for anyone who will be starting out with a WP blog. The opinions in this review are those of the author. They do not necessarily represent the views of PACS, its board, or anyone else.