A “How-To” Guide to Website Blog-Building
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1. Types of blogs
   a. Traditional “diary” format – blogspot.com, etc
   b. Comprehensive “website” (“CMS”) – Not just a collection of postings

2. What makes a “Blog As A Website” so special?
   a. Requires less technical knowledge of website technologies (HTML, JavaScript), CSS)
   b. No special software needed on our PC – you can work on your blog/website from any PC, Mac or tablet (even a mobile device), anywhere/anytime you have an Internet connection and a browser.
   c. High level of flexibility, easy to change look and feel without rewriting the site
   d. Many built-in tools to provide high levels of functionality
   e. A lot of people using similar tools (WordPress, Joomla!, Drupal) means that finding help is easy. For volunteer/organizational websites (societies, etc) this makes it less painful when webmasters change.
   f. Easy for multiple people to collaborate on the site at the same time. Assign responsibilities for distinct sections, etc.

3. Popular Blog-building technologies/Tools
   a. Also referred to as Content management Systems (CMS)
   b. WordPress
   c. Joomla! (“All together”)
   d. Drupal

4. Technical requirements of the hosting service
   a. Php scripting language – available on most hosting services
   b. MySql database – available on most hosting services

5. Technical requirements of the webmaster (you)
   a. A basic understanding of php programming is helpful (see below), at least to be able to mimic existing code in order to make changes/customizations
6. Most of the formatting (fonts, colors, etc) is handled via CSS style sheets. The more you understand this the more you will be able to change
7. Using the tools: programming requirements
   a. Drupal: Very flexible, lots of add-ons available, seems to always need some
      programming of the Php code. Good for complex, high-powered sites that have a
      programming staff. Used by a number of commercial sites.
   b. Joomla!: Highly flexible, many common facilities are built-in, others are
      available, able to be setup with little or no Php programming.
   c. WordPress: Very flexible, lots of free/cheap add-ons (themes, widgets), little
      programming in either Php necessary, lot of users and support forums, articles and
      books.

8. Templates
   a. This where your site gets its “character” and cohesiveness. Each of the blog tools
      has many templates available, either for free or at low cost. With a little php and
      CSS editing you can take the templates that you find and “tune” them to your
      needs. Differences between themes include the number of columns, layout of
      widget areas, and colors/images.

9. The “Home Page” or “Front Page”
   a. Makes the blog look more like a traditional website than a blog diary
   b. Control over layout (number of columns, which articles span across columns, etc),
      images (logo, …) and special content (news feeds, links to other sites)
   c. Menus and links to the rest of your site

10. Features, plug-ins, modules, etc.
    a. These extend the capabilities of the blog system beyond what is provided by its
       writers. Usually are well-supported and maintained. Some themes come with
       more features “built-in” than others
    b. Photo Albums, user login systems, RSS feeds, breadcrumbs, lists of “popular”
       articles, “Search” boxes

11. Hosting a blog: Doing the setup work yourself or letting the hosting service do it
    a. All three can be hosted on any webhosting service, so long as it provides Php
       scripting and MySql databases (pretty much all services provide these).
       i. Download the software to your PC or Mac
       ii. UnZip/unStuff it
       iii. ftp files to a folder on your hosting service
       iv. May need to edit some of the files to provide specific database information
       v. Run the installation/setup script program on your site to do the rest of the
          setup work, including database setup
       vi. Sounds simple, but doesn’t always go well!
b. Use a hosting service (maybe even the one you already have) that specifically supports the blog system you are interested in.
   i. They will have entirely automated setup scripts available from their control panel. Look for “SimpleScripts” – this is the easiest to use and the most foolproof process, but not all hosting services use it.
   ii. These services also take care of updates to the blog software that are periodically released.
   iii. Services that cater to the blog/CMS user community also tend to have support people that are knowledgeable about them and can answer your questions (via a chat box in most cases) and also provide a knowledgebase with important information and FAQs.

c. Each of the blog systems has user forums that are monitored by the developers and other experienced users, and provide an important means of supporting your use of their code. But remember – it’s all free, so sometimes the response might not be as quick as you’d like

12. First steps after getting it installed
   a. Setup a test site to use for experimentation. Try various themes to get a feel for how they arrange information on the pages.
      i. Experiment with adding “dummy” articles, moving them around on the pages
      ii. Setup a website “home page” - the process is different for each of the blog systems, but an important aspect of making the blog look like a traditional website. Decide what content you want on the home page, and what you want on the “inside” pages (including blog and feedback posts)
      iii. How do you want the content of the pages/articles “inside” the blog (ie, not on the Home Page) organized via navigation menus?

13. Walk-through Examples with WordPress
   a. Screen shots of installations
   b. Screen shots of initial sites
   c. Marked up screen shots showing layout
   d. Changing the content:
      i. Creating articles
      ii. Adding widgets (RSS feeds, etc.)
14. Resources for more information
   a. There are a lot of information sources, support forums, and tutorials on the sites of each of the blogs (WordPress.org, Joomla.org, Drupal.org). Do a search on Google or Bing for help, search YouTube for videos. Check out publishers’ websites (O’Reilly, Peachpit, etc.) for articles and book excerpts.
   b. User group organizations in some cities
   c. www.lynda.com – high quality online training
   d. www.dzone.com – quick reference cards, lots of other developer resources
   e. Good books include: