

WordPress for Beginners — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into a finished, published self-hosted WordPress.org site. Each section maps to a course module and combines hands-on exercises, fill-in worksheets, and verification checklists. Work through it with your WordPress dashboard open in another tab, and by the end you will have a live, secure website with a customized theme, essential plugins, real content and menus, and an optional basic WooCommerce store.

Getting Started: WordPress, Hosting, and Your First Install

Choose self-hosted WordPress, buy hosting and a domain, install WordPress, and fix the first settings before building.

Worksheet: Site Goal and Setup Brief

Fill in each field to define what this site must achieve and what you are buying. This brief drives every later decision, from theme to plugins.

Primary purpose of the site (blog, business/services, online store, portfolio)

One-sentence description of your business or project

Primary target audience (who they are and what they want)

Chosen domain name (and backup options if it is taken)

Chosen web host and plan, with the monthly price and the renewal price

The single most important action a visitor should take (your primary call to action)

Checklist: Hosting and Domain Selection

- Confirmed I am using WordPress.org (self-hosted), not WordPress.com
- Host offers one-click WordPress install
- Free SSL certificate (Let's Encrypt) included for HTTPS
- Automatic backups and an easy restore included
- A staging environment is available for safe testing
- Checked the renewal price, not just the introductory price
- Domain is short, easy to spell, and has no hyphens or numbers

Exercise: Install WordPress and Fix First Settings

Run the one-click install, then immediately correct the settings that are painful to change later.

- Run the host's WordPress installer with a unique admin username (never admin) and a long, strong password.
- Log in at yourdomain.com/wp-admin and bookmark the URL.

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- Go to Settings then Permalinks and select Post name for clean URLs.
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- Under Settings then General, set your site title, time zone, and confirm the https site address; under Settings then Reading, keep Discourage search engines checked while building.
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Themes and Design: Making the Site Look Right

Install a fast theme, protect customizations with a child theme, and design pages with the block editor or a page builder.

Worksheet: Brand and Theme Decisions

Lock in your visual system and theme choice once so every page stays consistent. Enter exact values and set them in the Customizer or Site Editor.

Chosen theme (e.g. Astra, GeneratePress, Kadence) and why

Primary brand color (hex code)

Secondary and accent colors for buttons and CTAs (hex codes)

Heading font name

Body font name and base size (target at least 16px)

Page builder decision (Gutenberg only, Elementor, or Divi) and reason

Whether a child theme is needed (yes if editing any theme files)

Exercise: Install a Theme and Build a Hero Section

Install a lightweight theme, set your brand in the Customizer or Site Editor, then build the top section of your home page.

- Go to Appearance then Themes then Add New, install a lightweight theme, and activate it.
 - Set your logo, colors, and fonts in Appearance then Customize (classic) or Appearance then Editor (block theme).
 - Create a Home page and build a hero with a headline, one supporting sentence, and your primary CTA button, using Gutenberg or your chosen builder.
 - Before uploading the hero image, compress it (TinyPNG, ShortPixel, or Smush) to roughly under 200 KB and add descriptive alt text.
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Checklist: Design and Safe-Customization Pass

- Lightweight, well-maintained theme installed and activated
- Child theme created if any theme files will be edited
- Logo, colors, and fonts set in the Customizer or Site Editor
- Minor CSS placed in Additional CSS, not in parent theme files
- One page builder chosen and used consistently (not several)
- Every page checked on tablet and mobile views

[] All images right-sized, compressed, and given alt text

Content, Plugins, and Site Structure

Create correctly typed content, build clear navigation, and install one solid plugin per essential job.

Worksheet: Content and Structure Plan

Plan your pages, posts, and navigation before building so the site stays organized and SEO-friendly.
List of static Pages to create (Home, About, Services, Contact, legal)

First three blog Post titles and the main category for each

Blog categories (keep to roughly five to ten broad groups)

Primary menu items in order (aim for five to seven)

Footer contents (secondary menu, contact info, privacy and terms links)

Home page setting (a static page for business, or latest posts for a blog)

Exercise: Build Pages, a Post, and the Menu

Create the right content types and wire up navigation so visitors and Google can find everything.

- Create your core Pages (Home, About, Services or Shop, Contact) using Pages then Add New.
- Publish one blog article as a Post, assign one category, set a featured image, and add an excerpt.
- Go to Appearance then Menus, build a Primary menu of five to seven items, and create a dropdown by indenting a sub-item.
- Set your static home page (or posts page) under Settings then Reading, and confirm the menu is assigned to the header location.

Checklist: Essential Plugin Stack Installed

- [] SEO plugin installed and set up (Yoast SEO or Rank Math), sitemap submitted
- [] Security plugin active (Wordfence or Sucuri) with firewall on
- [] Caching plugin configured (WP Rocket, W3 Total Cache, or LiteSpeed Cache)
- [] Backup plugin scheduled to off-site storage (UpdraftPlus), restore tested
- [] Image compression plugin active (ShortPixel or Smush)
- [] Contact form plugin added and a test submission received (WPForms or Contact Form 7)
- [] Unused plugins and themes deleted, not just deactivated

WooCommerce, Security, and Launch

Stand up a basic store, harden and back up the site, run pre-launch checks, and publish on a custom domain with HTTPS.

Worksheet: WooCommerce Store Setup Sheet

Plan your store essentials before configuring WooCommerce. Complete this for at least your first three products and your store-wide rules. Skip this item if you are not selling.

Product names and prices (first three products)

Product type and variant options needed (Simple, or Variable with size/color)

Payment methods to connect (WooCommerce Payments or Stripe, plus PayPal)

Shipping rules (flat rate, free over a threshold, or live rates) and handling time

Tax setup for your jurisdiction

Return and shipping policy text

WooCommerce-compatible theme confirmed (Storefront, Astra, or Kadence)

Exercise: Harden the Site and Verify Backups

Apply the core security steps and prove your backups actually work before you go live.

- Enable two-factor authentication on your admin account and turn on limit-login-attempts in your security plugin.
 - Force HTTPS by confirming the site and home URL use https under Settings then General.
 - Update WordPress core, themes, and plugins after taking a backup; remove anything unused.
 - Run a backup with UpdraftPlus to off-site cloud storage, then perform a test restore to confirm it works.
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Checklist: Pre-Launch and Go-Live

- Custom domain connected and https with the lock icon confirmed
- Caching enabled, images compressed, and a CDN (Cloudflare) turned on
- Discourage search engines unchecked under Settings then Reading
- All copy proofread and every link, button, and form tested
- Test order placed and then refunded or cancelled (if running a store)
- Titles, meta descriptions, favicon, and social share previews checked
- Sitemap submitted and Google Search Console plus Analytics connected
- PageSpeed Insights run: LCP under 2.5s and CLS under 0.1, then published

Your Action Plan

1. Confirm self-hosted WordPress.org, then buy a host with one-click install, free SSL, backups, and staging, plus a clean domain.
2. Install WordPress with a unique admin username, set permalinks to Post name, and configure the first General and Reading settings.
3. Install a lightweight theme, set your brand (logo, colors, two fonts) in the Customizer or Site Editor, and add a child theme if you will edit files.
4. Choose one page builder approach (Gutenberg, Elementor, or Divi) and build your home page hero with a clear CTA.
5. Create your static Pages and first blog Posts with correct categories, featured images, and compressed, alt-texted media.
6. Build a Primary menu of five to seven items and a useful footer, and set your static home page.
7. Install one plugin per essential job: SEO, security, caching, backups, image compression, and forms; configure SEO and backups first.
8. If selling, install WooCommerce, run the wizard, add products, and connect payments, shipping, and tax.
9. Harden the site (2FA, limit logins, force HTTPS, prompt updates) and schedule tested off-site backups.
10. Run the full pre-launch checklist, uncheck Discourage search engines, connect Analytics and Search Console, publish, and schedule a monthly review.

