WordPress

Reference Guide for Students

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Introduction

Within the university's WordPress environment, TU students can create and manage individual/personal websites. As a self-contained web publishing platform, WordPress is a comparatively easy way to showcase your interests, education, ideas and accomplishments on the web. This document is intended to orient students to Word Press basics. Other resources include:

- OTS Student Computing Services (www.towson.edu/scs) for personal assistance and questions

- Lynda.com online tutorials (www.towson.edu/lynda) for comprehensive video tutorials

- General WordPress print and video tutorials on the web

Log In

1. From your preferred web browser, open **wpstudents.towson.edu** to access your landing page.
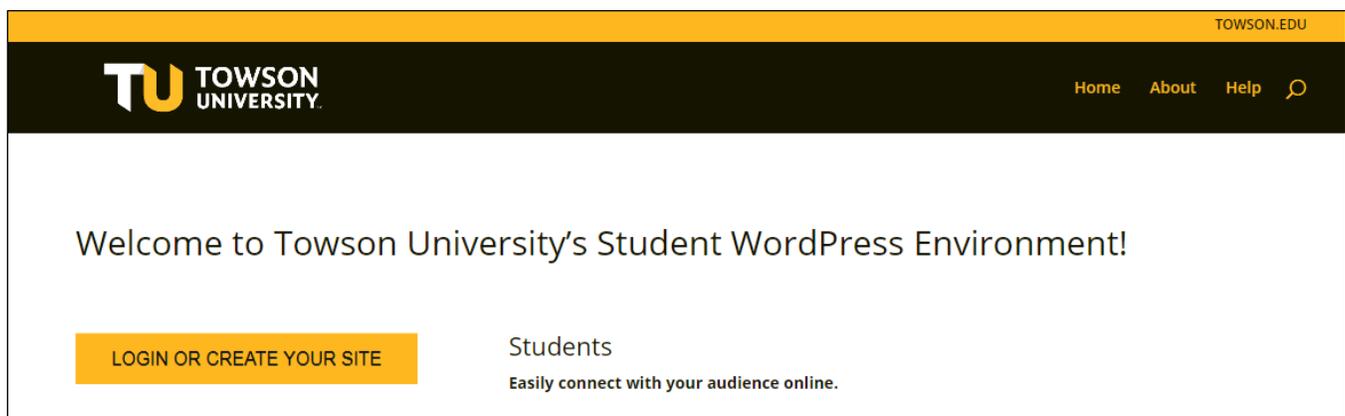

Figure 1

2. Click the blue **Log in with Towson University NetID** button. Then on the **Towson University Authenticated Login** page, enter your username and password and click **Login**.
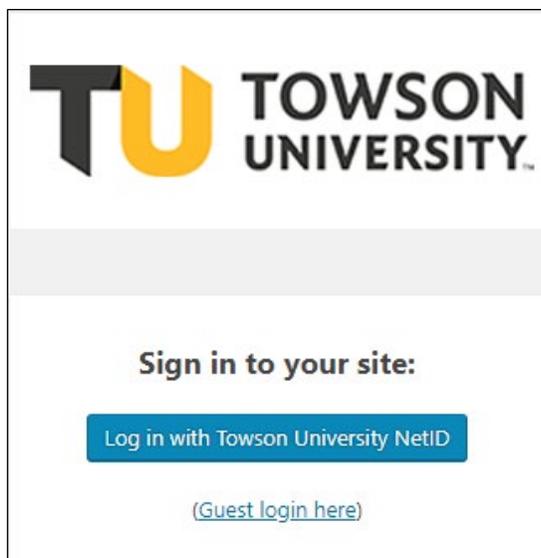

Figure 2

3. Enter your **NetID** and **Password** in the login page and click the **Login** button.

4. You will be directed to the WordPress Dashboard.

Log Out

1. When you are ready to Log Out of WordPress, hover the cursor over your name in the upper right corner and click **Log Out** on the drop-down menu.
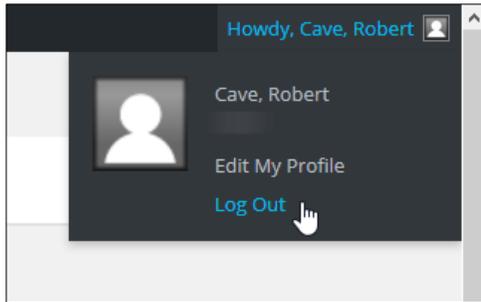
Figure 3

2. Close the subsequent page or close your web browser to complete the process.

Dashboard

The WordPress Dashboard is your main control panel. In the header bar at the top of your Dashboard, WordPress displays the name of your site ("Student Blog Template" in the figure below). Clicking this name is one way to open your homepage. To return to your Dashboard from your homepage, hover over the site name and click **Dashboard** on the drop-down menu.

Figure 4

Dashboard Menu Options

On the left side of your Dashboard, WP displays the menus you will use to manage your site and develop your pages.

Hovering over each of the main menu items displays a submenu with related options. Clicking a menu item displays the related tools and controls in the larger area to the right of the menus. The main menu options are:
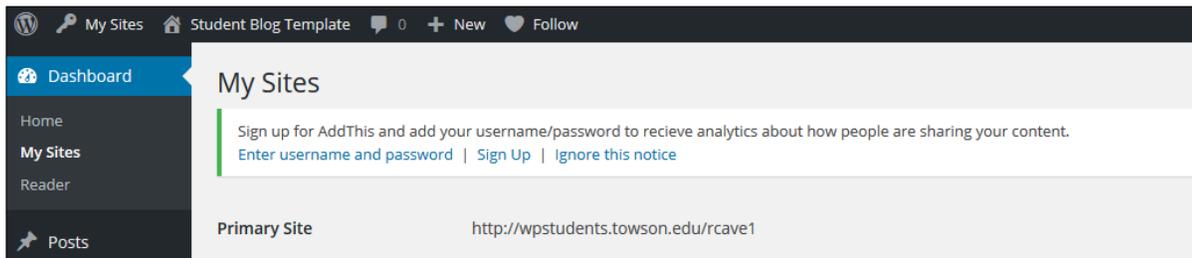
Dashboard	This will display your Dashboard Home showing summary info for your site.
Posts	If you decide to include a blog in your site, this is where you can create a new Blog Post and update your Categories and Post Tags. By default, for new sites the blog features are turned off.
Media	This is where your uploaded images, documents and files are stored. From here, you can browse through your media library, as well as edit and update the files.
Links	You can add links here to be displayed on your site. These links are usually displayed within a Widget.
Pages	This is where you create and maintain all your Pages.
Comments	You can manage all your Comments within this section, including replying to comments or marking them as spam.
Appearance	This is where you control how your site looks. You can choose a new Theme, manage your Widgets and Menus, and even edit your site theme files.
Plugins	Plugins extend the functionality of WordPress. Here, you activate and deactivate Plugins.
Users	This section lists all the existing users for your site. Here, you can add and remove users, as well as manage user roles.
Tools	This section gives you access to various tools. Here, you can also import content to your WordPress site or export all your WordPress content to a file (creating an offline backup of sorts).
Settings	This section contains most of the configuration tools for your site. Here, you can configure your site name and tagline, available fonts, site visibility and much more. In most cases, once your site is setup, there is little need to change the settings in this section.
Subscriptions	If you allow visitors to subscribe to your site, this is where you can manage their access.
Collapse menu	At the bottom of the menu you will see a link called Collapse menu. Clicking this will hide the menu and simply display their icons instead. Click the small arrow icon again to expand the menu.

Note: Occasionally when you install a Plugin, it will add its own configuration or setup page. These pages usually appear within the Tools section, the Settings section or a completely new section at the bottom of the menu.

Toolbar

The WordPress Toolbar provides convenient access to some of the more-commonly used WordPress features. When you are logged into WordPress, you will see the Toolbar across the top of your site. The Toolbar will not display unless you are logged-in, so it will not be visible to your site visitors.
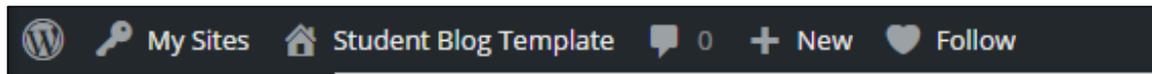
Figure 5

The Toolbar allows you to quickly access the following commonly used features:

WordPress icon	Links you to the WordPress website for support and community forums
My Sites	Drops a menu providing access to your site(s)
Name of site	Drops a menu providing access to various site editing features
Comment icon	Allows you to view and moderate all comments on your site
New	Drops a menu for quick creation of posts, media, links, pages and users
Follow	Adds the current site to your **Followed Sites** list on the **Dashboard**

Posts Versus Pages

WordPress is built around two general content types: Posts and Pages. **Posts** are typically blog entries—regularly-updated articles listed in reverse-chronological order. **Pages** are used for more static content that never changes or changes infrequently.

Visiting Your Site

1. From your Dashboard, hover over **My Sites**, hover over the name of your site in the drop-down menu, and then click **Visit Site** in the fly-out menu.
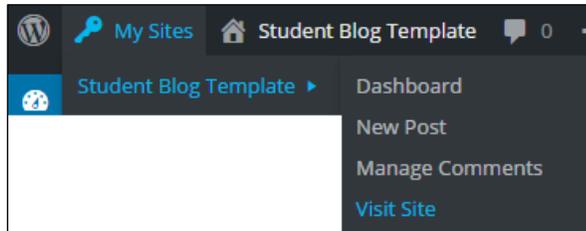

Figure 6

2. Alternately, you can hover over the name of your site and then click **Visit Site** in the drop-down menu.

Developing Your Site

TU has provided a default template (based on the WP theme *Author*) to serve as a starting point for your site, but you are free to choose a different theme (from a collection of over 300) if you wish to better express your individuality or content area (more on this topic below). The default template contains four pages that you can thoroughly customize. But, you may easily add or remove pages and features to suit your own goals, content and organization preferences. The areas of your template are defined below:

1. **Title** – The title of your page and your site; for a portfolio, you will probably make this your name.

2. **Subtitle** – Useful for displaying additional descriptive information, such as your major, motto or special skills.

3. **Home** – Hyperlink to your Home/Welcome page.

4. **About Me** – Hyperlink to your About Me page—perhaps a good place for your resume or bio.

5. **Updates** – Hyperlink to your Updates page.

6. **Portfolio** – Hyperlink to your e-portfolio page.

7. **Site Search Widget** – This widget enables visitors to search your site for a key word or phrase.

8. **Subscribe by Email Widget** – This widget enables visitors to receive an email alerts when you post.

9. **Edit** – Click this button to get into Edit mode for a page and add content.
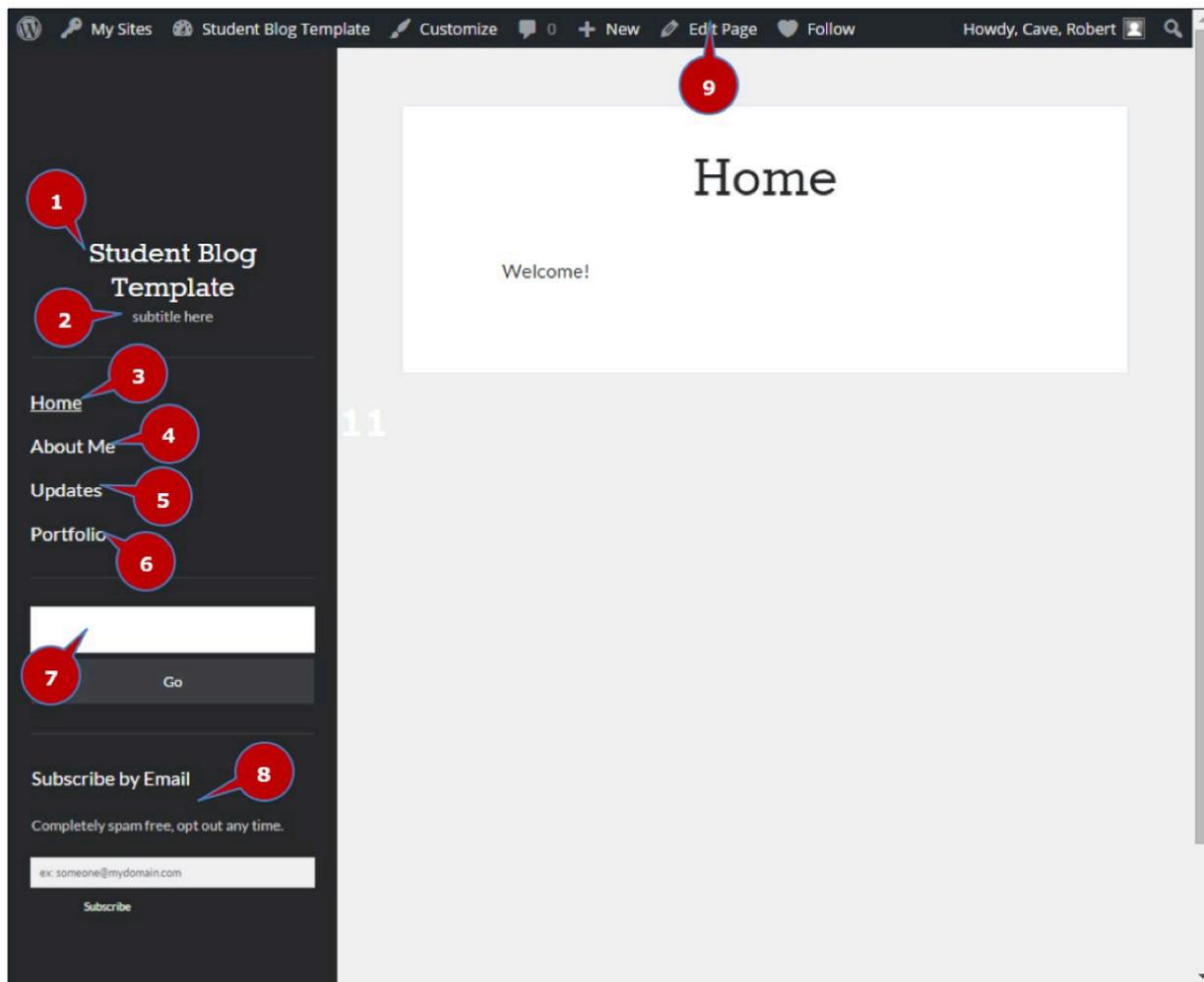
Figure 7

Your Home Page

Your Home page can include whatever content you want your visitors to start with—perhaps a brief bio and a statement of your site's purpose. You can also include links and images. We suggest that you keep your Home page simple; remember that you can add a lot more content on the other pages of your site.

To begin editing from your Home page, click **Edit Page** on the Toolbar (Number 9 from the previous section) to open the **Edit Page** tools.

Adding Content with the Visual Editor

You can use the visual editor (pictured below) to enter content into your Page or Post. As you add content, the visual editor will expand to show all of it.
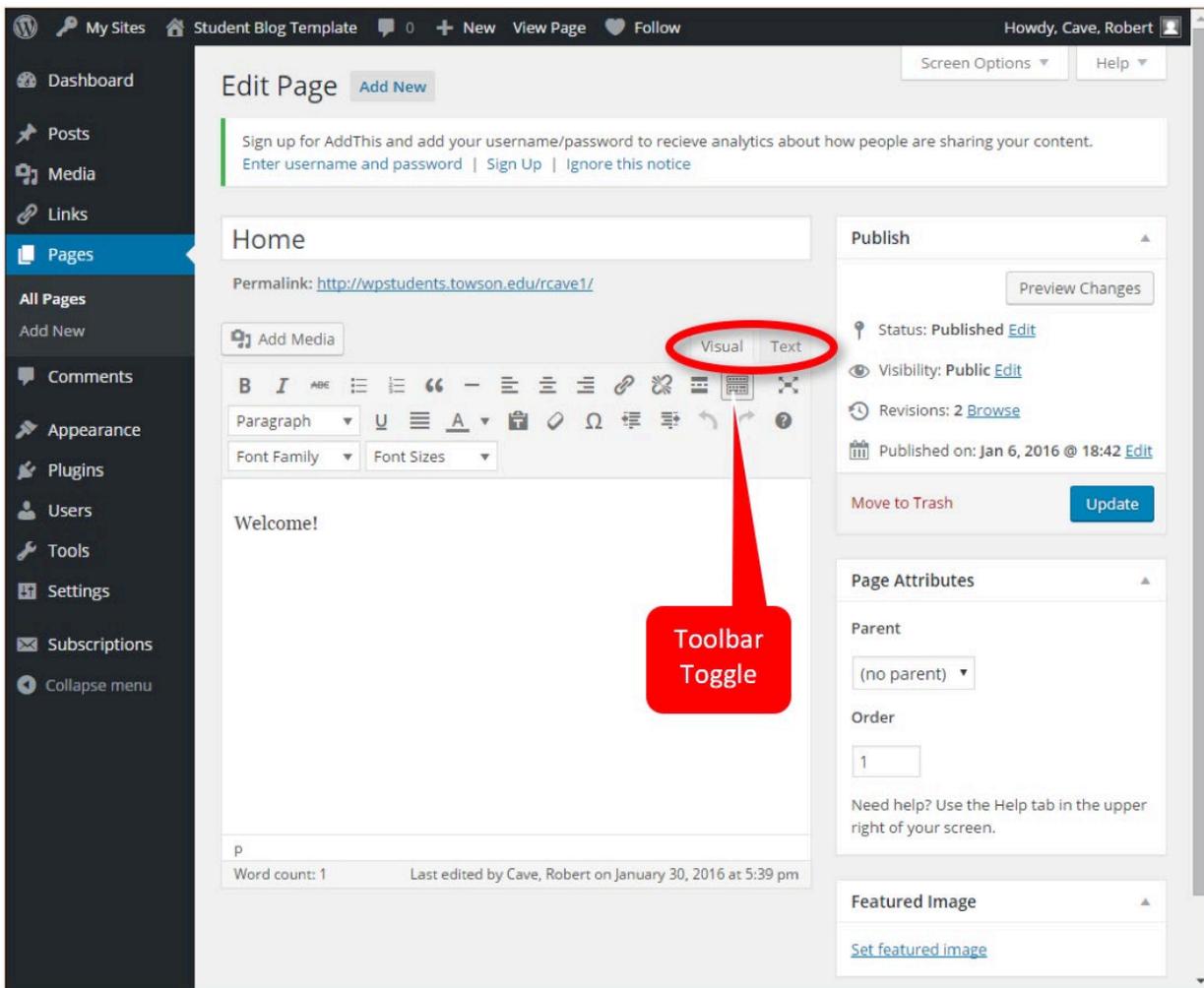
Figure 8

At the top of the editor there are two tabs (circled on the above image), **Visual** and **Text**. Selecting Text will enable you to view and edit the HTML code that makes up your content. For those with HTML experience, this can be a useful tool for tweaking the format of your content. If you are not familiar with HTML, we recommend that you not use it until you have gained more experience.

At the top of the editor, there are numerous formatting tools. Clicking the Toolbar Toggle button will show or hide a second line of tools.

The Edit Page toolbar buttons perform the following functions:

Add Media	Upload and insert media such as images, audio, video or documents
B	Bold text
I	Italicize text
ABC	Add a strikethrough to your text
≔	Bulleted List – Create an unordered (bullet point) list
≔	Numbered List – Create an Ordered (numbered) list
"	Blockquote – Make a quote stand out; your selected theme will determine how this looks
—	Insert a horizontal line into your page
≡	Align text to the left edge of the page
≡	Align text to the center of the page
≡	Align text to the right edge of the page
🔗	Insert/edit link – Create a link to another page or website. You must first select the text or image that will represent the link before the tool will become active.
✂	Remove link – Remove the link from the selected item.
▦	Insert Read More – Insert a Read More tag into your post. Most blogs display only a small excerpt of a post; visitors click 'Read More' to display the remainder of the post. When you insert a 'Read More' tag, everything prior to the tag will display initially. This tool is chiefly used for blog posts, rather than pages.
⌨	Toolbar Toggle – Shows/hides the second row of formatting tools on the Edit Page toolbar.
⤢	Distraction Free Writing Mode – Shows/hides all page elements other than the editing box and toolbar.
Paragraph ▼	Style – Assign a text style to the paragraph in which the cursor is presently located. The appearance of styles is determined by the selected theme.
U	Underline your text
≣	Justify – Align text to both the left and right edges of the page. (Be careful, this can diminish the readability of your content.)
A ▼	Text color – Change the color of text. (Make sure that there is adequate contrast between the text and the background.)

📋	Paste as text – Copying and pasting text from other sites or applications might produce format problems due to hidden codes within the copied text. The **Paste as text** tool will remove these hidden codes before pasting. Once selected, the **Paste as text** tool remains active for all pastes until you click it again to turn it off.
⬭	Clear formatting – Removes all formatting (e.g. bold, underline, text color, etc.) from the highlighted text
Ω	Special character – Used to insert special characters not easily accessible via the keyboard (e.g., ¼, ½, ¾, ©, em-dash, en-dash, ö, etc.)
⬚	Decrease indent – Remove one level of indentation
⬚	Increase indent – Indent text by one level
↩	Undo – Undo your last action
↪	Redo – Redo your last action
❓	Keyboard shortcuts – Displays a list of keyboard shortcuts that you can use in the Visual Editor
Visual Text	Visual/Text – Switches between the Visual Editor and the Text editor. Selecting Text will enable you to view and edit the HTML code that makes up your content. For those with HTML experience, this can be a useful tool for format tweaking. If you are not familiar with HTML, we recommend that you not use it until you have gained more experience.

Among the available keyboard shortcuts, you may find the following particularly useful:

To	On a PC, use	On a Mac, use
Insert a line break	Shift+Enter	Shift+Enter
Copy the selected text or image	Ctrl+C	Cmd+C
Cut the selected text or image	Ctrl+X	Cmd+X
Select all text	Ctrl+A	Cmd+A
To undo the last action	Ctrl+Z	Cmd+Z
To redo the last undo	Ctrl+Y	Cmd+Y

Adding Media

"Media" includes images, audio, video and documents. Once you have uploaded your images and files to your Media Library, it is easy to insert them into your page or post. To add an image to the current page (i.e., the page open in Page Edit):

1. Click to place the cursor where you want the image to appear; WP will display a flashing vertical line.

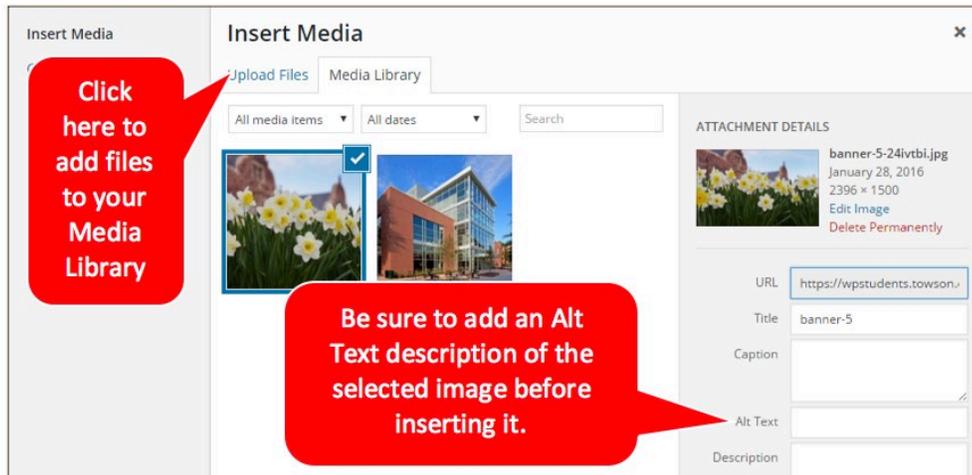2. Click the **Add Media** tool on the toolbar; WP will display the Insert Media dialog (pictured below).

Figure 9

If the image you want is present in your Media Library, follow the steps below under **Inserting an Image**. If the image is not yet present, first follow these steps for uploading a file:

1. Click the **Upload Files** tab at the top of the Insert Media dialog.

2. Either drag the desired file from an open folder on your desktop and drop it in the dialog, **OR**
   Click the **Select Files** button, navigate to the appropriate folder and double-click the desired file.

Inserting an Image

1. Click on the thumbnail of the image you wish to insert; WordPress will display a check mark in the top right corner of the thumbnail.

2. Click in the **Alt Text** box in the Attachment Details area and enter a text description of the image. For example, you might enter *photo with white and yellow tulips in the foreground and Stephens Hall in the background*. The point of this text is to make the image accessible to visually impaired visitors via a screen reader. The other boxes in this area (described below) are optional, but adding Alt Text is a standard practice for responsible web publishing and a great way to show your professionalism.

3. Click the blue **Insert Into Page** button to return to the page editor and see your photo in place.

The Attachment Details area of your Media Library displays the following information for the selected image:

- **File name, date and dimensions**

- **File URL** — displays the location of the file

- **Title** — displays as a tooltip when the cursor hovers over the image in the browser

- **Caption** — displays beneath the image; appearance is determined by the selected theme

- **Alt Text** — displays when the browser can't show the image; it is crucial for visually impaired visitors using screen readers

- **D**escription — usually displays on the attachment page for the image, but how this is used is determined by the selected theme

- **A**lignment — controls the placement of image: left, center or right

- **Link To** — determines what content/page will open if a visitor clicks on the image; the Media File setting will cause the image to open in its own browser window

- **S**ize — controls how large the image will display on your page; options include Thumbnail, Medium, Large and Full Size

Positioning, Editing & Deleting Images

There are several options available for adjusting the position and text wrapping properties of an image.
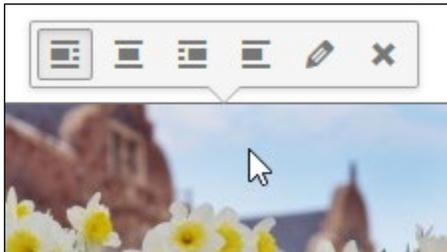

Figure 10

1. On the Edit Page, click on an inserted image. WordPress will display a small toolbar above it.

2. By clicking one of the alignment (first four) buttons—left, center, right and none—you can change the alignment of the inserted image.

3. By clicking the **Edit** (fifth) button, you can change the image properties (described under Attachment Details above) or even replace the image with another.

4. By clicking the **Remove** (sixth) button, you can remove the image from your content. But, it will still be available in your Media Library for use elsewhere.

Figure 11

5. When you click on an image in your Page or Post, you will also see **resizing handles** at the image corners. To resize your image, simply click and drag any handle.

Saving and Publishing Content

After making changes to a page, you must save and publish the page to make it visible to the world.

1. To save from the **Edit Page,** click the **Update** button located in the **Publish** section on the right side of the screen.

2. The changes you have made are now updated on your site. You may click the **View Page** link at the upper left to view the changes.

3. Click your browser's **Back** button to return to the editing screen.
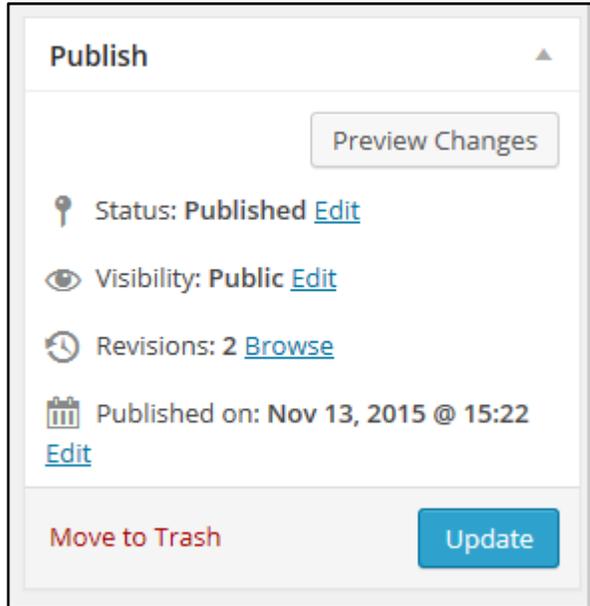

Figure 12

4. If you want the page to be publicly viewable, make sure Visibility is set to Public **AND** follow the steps in the **last section** of this document to make your entire site live.

Adding More to Your Site

Thus far, we have described how to create a basic page with formatted text and images. But with WordPress, you can go well beyond basic.

Adding Links

To your page, you may easily add links to another page or website.

1. In Edit Page, enter and select the text (or insert and select the image) on which you want visitors to click to open a different page or website.

2. Click the **Insert/edit link** button in the editor toolbar to open the **Insert/edit link** dialog.

3. Enter the URL (address) to which you wish to link the selected text or image. For example, to link to Student Computing Services, you would enter **http://www.towson.edu/scs**
   OR
   click on one of your own pages in the existing content area at the bottom of the dialog.

4. Click the **Add Link** button. This will close the dialog and return you to Edit Page.

5. Click the **Update** button in the publish section of the Edit Page window.

Setting a Featured Image

Some themes allow you to specify a Featured Image for your Page. How these images are displayed is determined by the selected Theme. To specify a Featured Image:

1. Open a page in Edit Page.

2. Click **Set featured image** in the Featured Image area (bottom right).

3. If necessary, upload the image you wish to use, otherwise select an existing image from your Media Library.

4. In the bottom right corner, click **Set featured image**.

5. Click **Update** in the Publish area of Edit Page.

6. Click **View Page** to see your changes.

Adding an Image Gallery

A **Gallery** is a great way to present multiple images. WordPress organizes your content in a table of thumbnails linked to their full-sized counterparts. However, it bears noting that the storage capacity (or quota) of your WordPress account is only 500MB. If you wish to include dozens (or more) of high-resolution images, we recommend that you store them in separate cloud-based storage (e.g., Flickr, OneDrive, Google Drive, etc.) and link to them from WordPress.

1. Open the page in Edit Page to which you want to add the Gallery.

2. Click an insertion point in the content area where you want the Gallery to appear.

3. Click the **Add Media** button to open your Media Library.

4. Click on **Create Gallery** in the area to the left of your images.

5. Click to select each image you wish to include. If necessary, you can upload files at this point by clicking the Upload Files tab.
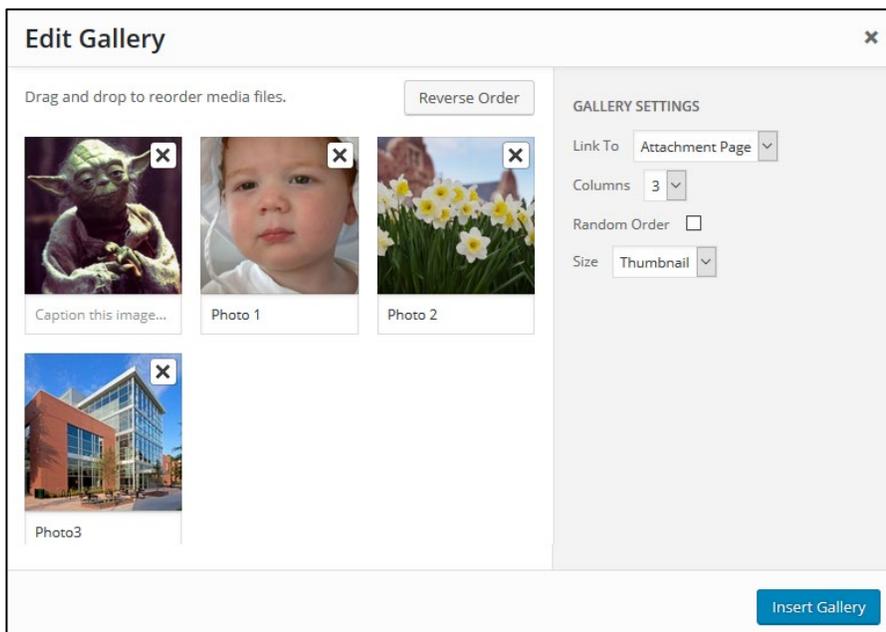

Figure 13

6. Click the green **Create a New Gallery** button in the lower right corner of the window. This will open the **Edit Gallery** window (pictured here).

7. Click **Insert Gallery** in the lower right corner of the window. Your pictures have now been added in a gallery format on the body of the page.

Edit the Image Gallery Settings

To make changes to your Image Gallery from the Edit Page page, follow these steps:

1. Click anywhere in the gallery on the **Edit Page** to display a toolbar with two-buttons (edit and close) over the gallery.
2. Click the **Edit** (pencil) icon to open the Edit Gallery dialog.
3. Click on an image and make your changes in the **GALLERY SETTINGS** pane to the right.
4. You may do any of the of the following:
   - **Reorder** – Click and drag an image to its new position.
   - **Delete** – To remove an image, click the **X** that appears in the top right corner of the image.
   - **Link To** – This determines what will happen when the thumbnail image is clicked. *Media File* will open the full size image in the browser window. *Attachment Page* will open the image within one of your WordPress formatted pages.
   - **Columns** – Specifies the number of columns to use when displaying your thumbnail images. Ultimately, this will be depend on your Theme and how wide your page is. If you find the gallery isn't displaying properly after changing this number, you may need to change it to another number.
   - **Random Order** – Click this checkbox to display your images in random order.
   - **Size** – Specifies the size of the image to use in your gallery.

5. Make sure to create Alt Text for each image. Click on a thumbnail and add a description in the **Alt Text** field on the right side of the dialog. This is required for accessibility purposes. We recommend that your Alt Text begin with "photo of" or "image of" as screen readers do not necessarily identify the type of object they encounter.
6. Click the **Update Gallery** button in the lower right corner of the dialog.
7. Click the **Update** button on the right side of the screen to update the website.
8. Click **View Page** and click on an image.

Widgets

Widgets are independent content elements that can be placed in left/right sidebars or other areas allowed by your selected theme. There are many widgets available, but the default student theme includes two: **Subscribe by Email** and **Search**. To browse other widgets from your Dashboard, hover over Plugins, then click Widgets on the flyout menu.

Subscribe by Email Widget

The S**ubscribe by Email** widget gives site visitors the option to automatically receive email updates from your site when you add new posts. To customize settings for the **Subscribe by Email** widget:

1. From the Dashboard menu, hover over **Appearance** and then click **Widgets**.
2. The active widgets will be located on the right side of the page under the heading **Sidebar** or **Footer.**
3. Click on the down arrow next to **Subscribe by Email** to display available options.
4. If you do not want viewers to receive an email confirmation when they subscribe, select the

5. **Auto-opt In** setting.

6. Click **Save**.

Note: Further customization is available through the Subscriptions menu on your Dashboard.

Customization Options

For the currently active theme, clicking the Customize button allows you to update settings while previewing your changes. Until you click the Save & Publish button, only the theme preview window is updated, not the theme on your live site.

1. From your Dashboard menu, hover over **Appearance** and then click on **Customize** in the flyout menu. WordPress will display your site with a right side menu for customization.

2. Click on **Site Identity** to configure the options below:

   - **Site Title** – This is will be the main title of your website and will show at the top of every page.

   - **Tagline** – This can be your major, motto or special skills/interests.

   - **Site Icon** – The Site Icon is used as a browser and app icon for your site. Icons must be square, and at least 512px wide and tall.

3. Click on **Front Page** to configure the option below:

   - **Static Front Page** – Defines whether the front page is static or displays your latest posts.

4. Click on **Avatar** to upload an avatar image.

5. Click on **Logo** to upload a logo.

6. Click on **Social Media Icons** to add your social media URLs and display icons on your page.

7. Click on **Menus** to change menu locations.

8. Click on **Widgets** to add, remove or change Widgets.

9. Click **Save and Publish**, then the X to get out of the sidebar.

Plugins

Plugins extend and expand the functionality of your WordPress site; and, there are more than 300 to choose among, including Google Maps, forms, tables, and wikis.

Adding a Plugin

1. From your Dashboard menu, click on **Plugins**. The default view for the plugins page shows all available plugins.

2. To add a plugin to your site, simply click the **Activate** link under the plugin you would like to use.

Note: Depending on the plugin, you may have to configure additional settings. Activated plugins will show a different background color within your list of plugins. If there is an update available for an activated plugin, its background color will change and show a red vertical bar.

Removing a Plugin

1. On the Dashboard menu, click **Plugins**.

2. Navigate to the plugin you would like to remove and click the **Deactivate** link beneath it.

Making Your Site Live

1. From the Dashboard menu, hover over **Settings** and click **Reading** in the flyout menu.

2. In the **Site Visibility** section, select one of the following options according to your preference:

   - **Allow search engines to index this site** – allows your site to be added to web search indexes.

   - **Discourage search engines from indexing this site** – your site is still visible on the web, however it sends back code to direct search engines to ignore your site.

3. Click **Save Changes**. Your site is now live.