

# Creating a Web Presence in Just One Hour

## Before You Begin

Creating a web site has become simpler than ever before, and requires no technical expertise. Before creating one, however, it's important to understand your online goals, audience, and the time commitment involved. Pre-published writers, for instance, have different needs than PROs who are actively submitting manuscripts, or published authors who are seeking to establish a fan base.

### Questions to ask yourself in each stage of your writing career:

- What is the overall goal of my site?
- Who is my target audience?
- What is my goal for search engine rankings?
- What about design, tone and content?
- How much time and effort do I need to invest?

Take a moment and answer the above questions so you can be prepared to start creating your web presence!

### Web Presence Goals Cheat Sheet

	<b>PRE (Just starting out)</b>	<b>PRO (Actively submitting)</b>	<b>PAN (Published author)</b>
<b>Web goal</b>	Get comfortable	Get professional	Build fans and sell books
<b>Target audience</b>	Friends, family, RWA	Agents, editors	Fans, industry professionals
<b>Design, tone, content</b>	Experiment. Be kind	Focus on writing. Be professional	Genre-focused design. Content for fans
<b>Time &amp; effort</b>	Your choice; remember you should be writing	Minimum necessary; you should still be writing	A lot, get help from a web professional and/or your fans

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## Blog vs. Web Site

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### What is a blog? What's the difference between a blog and a web site?

"Blog" is a shortened version of "Web-log". A blog is a web site that is set up to be updated frequently as the blog owner or authors add new 'posts' via an easy-to-use content management tool that requires no technical expertise.

All blogs are web sites; not all web sites are blogs.

**Here's the little secret not many web masters want you to know.** If you obtain a free blog from a company such as Wordpress.com, you can set it up as a plain vanilla web site, with a few pages, pictures, and anything else you could want. You'll still have all the advantages of the easy-to-use content management tool, which means you can update your content yourself - as frequently or infrequently as you like. There are dozens of professional-looking designs to choose from, and you don't have to pay a cent.

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## Creating Your Web Site

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There are many ways to build a web site, and many companies that let you have them for free (they get paid by advertisers). We recommend Wordpress, and will be using it in our examples today, because in our experience it has the easiest to use interface, a broad range of features, it doesn't insert any advertising on your public-facing web site, and it's free.

The following steps will be discussed in much more detail during the presentation, with examples and demonstrations. This is meant for reference only.

The first thing you need to decide is the name for Wordpress username. If you choose "EmmaClair" your website will be <http://emmaclair.wordpress.com>.

Write your username and password here for future reference:

1. Obtain a Wordpress.com web site at <http://wordpress.com/>
2. Go to your control panel at <http://yourname.wordpress.com/wp-admin>
3. Write a Home page by selecting "Write" then "Page".
  - a. Type "Home" into the title area.
  - b. Write anything you want in the Page area for now - you can edit it later.
  - c. Click "Publish".
4. Click on "Settings" (at the far right of the control panel), then "Reading".
  - a. In the "Front Page Displays" area, select "Static Page".
  - b. Select from the dropdown menu next to "Front Page" the Home page you just created.
  - c. Scroll down and click "Save Changes".
5. See the pages already on your web site by clicking "Manage" then "Pages".
  - a. Right now you should have two pages: Home, and About.
  - b. Click the word "About" in the list of pages to edit that page.
  - c. Edit the About page and click "Save" before moving on to the next step.
6. Choose a Theme in the "Design" section of the control panel.

- a. Remember you can change this as often as you'd like.
7. Check out your new web site!
    - a. Open a new browser window (leaving the control panel window open) and type in `http://yourname.wordpress.com/`
  8. Continue adding pages and editing your site.
    - a. To switch back and forth between the control panel and your web site, hold down the ALT key (or Apple key if you're on a Mac) and press the TAB key until the correct window is selected. Release.
    - b. If you make a change in the control panel, and it's not showing up on the web site, you may need to click the Refresh button (or Ctrl-R on your keyboard) to force the change to appear. If that doesn't work, confirm that you hit "Save" or "Publish" in the control panel.
  9. Experiment. Be unafraid.
    - a. Make mistakes! *Click on everything* and allow yourself to mess up spectacularly; that's the best way to learn, and a lot less frustrating than trying to get everything perfect the first time out. Think of this site as if it's a very rough, hideously ugly first draft of a novel. You might clean it up, or you might toss it and start over afresh, but you'll learn a lot.

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## Maintaining Your Website

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While it's true that you can *create* a site within an hour, it's also important to set aside time in the future to keep it updated. How much time you spend depends on the stage of your career.

The most important thing about maintaining a website is meeting expectations. If you claim on your home page that you're going to have a monthly contest, then please be sure and have a monthly contest. If you promise to post a sneak peek of your new story on September 1<sup>st</sup>, then mark your calendar for that day! The schedule of your updates is up to you, and you can always re-adjust expectations as needed. What kinds of things can you update your site with?

**PRE:** Remember, this is your time to experiment with your web presence. Here are a few ideas for keeping your site fresh:

- "Back of Book Blurbs" for new manuscripts that you have completed
- Contest finals
- Speaking engagements
- Any writing honors you receive
- Blog/journal about your writing journey

**PRO:** Remember to think of your audience – you are trying to "sell" yourself to editors and agents. Many of the "PRE" items apply, but remember to always keep your tone professional.

**PAN:** Keeping your website up-to-date is extremely important at this stage in your career. If the content on your website isn't kept fresh, people will not be tempted to visit regularly. Your fans want to see:

- News about book releases
- Edits to your backlist as new stories arrive
- Sneak peeks into new ideas you're working on
- Contests
- Other ideas include info about your personal life, such as pictures from your latest trip or a diary of your gardening endeavors.

## More Information

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Visit [www.michellemcginnis.com](http://www.michellemcginnis.com) to learn more about:

- Domain Name – what is it? How to get one? How much should you spend? Do you need one?
- Search Engine Optimization – how to get your website to appear at the top of the search rankings
- Gmail – Emma and Heather’s favorite email program
- Google Analytics – how to track who’s visiting your website

### Tip! Track Yourself Online ("egosurf")

Google: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) - type your name in quotation marks (ex: "Michelle McGinnis")

Google Alert: [www.google.com/alert](http://www.google.com/alert) - track yourself (or anyone else!) [use quotation marks for an exact match – ex: "Emma Clair"]

### Not sure what a techy term means? Look it up here:

Google: [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) – type in "define:" immediately followed by the word or phrase you’re looking for (ex: "define:WYSIWYG editor")

Urban Dictionary: [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com) – great for new terms such as "twitterverse" and "tweeple"