



# 24 HOURS TO



BUILD YOUR  
AUTHOR WEBSITE

ABIGAIL CARTER

# **24 Hours To Build Your Author Website**

**By Abigail Carter**

## **COPYRIGHT PAGE**

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# INTRODUCTION

For many writers and authors, the term “author platform” sets their teeth on edge since it is consistently touted as the only way to successfully promote their book. An author platform is essentially the combination of an author’s website, social media pages, Amazon Author Central pages, and whatever other presence an author may have either online or otherwise. Essentially anything that connects authors to their readers is part of an author’s “platform.”

An author’s website, therefore, is a large part of this platform because it provides the anchor for all social media activities an author may undertake, becoming a home base that all social media links back to.

And yet many authors still don’t have a website. This is certainly understandable given the perceived complexity of setting one up.

This guide is meant to make the process of setting up a website as painless as possible and will hopefully allow those jaws to unclench as the mystery behind the author website is revealed.

Much of the advice here comes from trial and error as I embarked on my own journey of creating an author website, something that now has become a passion, a therapist, an outlet for much of my creative output, and often a starting point for many of my larger projects.

Have fun building your site and don’t let the technology scare you.

Best,

Abigail Carter  
Chief Marketing Officer  
[Bibliocrunch.com](http://Bibliocrunch.com)

PS: This guide began as a series of blog posts on the Writer.ly blog (now indiepubchat.com).

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>I. Creating a Website</b>                   | <b>1</b>  |
| A. Choosing a Web Platform                     |           |
| B. Choosing a Hosting Service                  |           |
| C. Finding a WordPress Theme                   |           |
| D. Setting Up WordPress                        |           |
| <b>II. Creating a Blog</b>                     | <b>13</b> |
| A. Set Your Blog as Your Home Page             |           |
| B. Your First WordPress Blog Post              |           |
| C. Creating Graphics for Blog Posts            |           |
| D. Nine Tips for Writing Compelling Blog Posts |           |
| <b>III. Finding Your Audience</b>              | <b>26</b> |
| A. Ten Steps to Find Your Audience             |           |
| B. Creating Social Media Profiles              |           |
| C. Managing Social Media Profiles              |           |
| D. Finding an Audience outside the Internet    |           |
| <b>IV. Conclusion</b>                          | <b>38</b> |

# I. CREATING A WEBSITE

## A: CHOOSING A WEB PLATFORM

By now most writers know they need to “build their platform” and that a key component of doing so is creating an author website, but it can be completely intimidating. Many writers avoid doing so because they don’t know where to begin.

Building an author website can entail quite a learning curve, but when you understand some basics, the veil will be pushed aside and perhaps it won’t seem quite so daunting. This guide is meant to help you to get going, even if it’s only to create a very simple website.

There are several options when it comes to choosing which system you are going to use. [Here is a great chart](#) that shows them all very concisely. You may not fully understand the differences, so here is my quick rundown of the most popular types.

### **WordPress**

WordPress is far and away the most versatile platform you can find. The best part about using WordPress is that there are a whole bunch of “plugins” available for WordPress. Plugins are like little apps that you install and activate on your WordPress site and they soup up your site. Adding a plugin is akin to fixing up a hotrod with shiny new rims, a booming sound system, and a snazzy paintjob.

Because new plugins are being developed every day, it means that you can adjust and modify your site and this will make it better able to grow with you as your website needs change, and trust me, they will change. You can add and remove plugins that allow you to do a zillion things, like rotate your book covers in the sidebar with links to purchase them, get stats on your visitors, or set up your site for mobile viewing to name just a few. The downside is that WordPress is not very intuitive out of the box and can have a bit of a learning curve. But once you have it, it’s a snap.

The other great thing about WordPress is that there are literally thousands of themes (some free, some cost money) that are all predesigned by professional designers so you don’t have to hire one. They often come preloaded with plugins, so they take the legwork out of figuring out what plugins you need.

WordPress can be a little tricky to a newbie, in that there are two flavors of WordPress: WordPress.com and WordPress.org. WordPress.com is the “easy” version that is quick

to set up but only comes with a limited number of plugins. So just when you hear of a great new plugin that would be perfect for your site, you discover you have no way to install it. That is when most people learn the hard way that there are really two WordPreses. WordPress.org is a little trickier to set up initially because you need to find a company that will host it for you, but it is much more scalable in the long run. You will have to be prepared to pay a nominal cost for hosting your WordPress.org site (\$50-80 per year). I will go over hosting sites a little later.

### **Tumblr, Blogger, Wix, Typepad, Movable Type, Squarespace**

It's actually possible to bundle all the other website platforms together. These platforms are all very easy to use and set up, and most have beautiful, clean templates. But the templates are limited, so your site often winds up looking like a whole lot of other sites out there. The other problem is that they don't always have the versatility of plugins that allows you to add features, limiting customization and their ability to grow with your changing needs in a website.

The good news with these sites, however, is that there are no hosting costs and they are either free or of nominal cost. The payoff is that a custom URL (i.e., iamamazing.com) is not always possible (or there is a fee). You will be stuck with a URL like iamamazing.blogger.com. Also, because your site is being hosted within these platforms, they may place restrictions on your content. They can even delete your blog without warning.

In short, WordPress is like going to an ice cream sundae bar full of a zillion toppings that you get to sprinkle on top yourself, and the rest of the platforms are like a McDonald's sundae. You know exactly what you are going to get every time.

Yup, I just compared WordPress to an ice cream sundae. I'm THAT good! Crushed Oreos, anyone?

For the rest of this section, I am going to concentrate on setting up a WordPress website. Just a point of clarification, WordPress allows you to set up a website. Within your website, you may have a blog (blog, short for web log, is a place where you post your writing on a regular basis). A lot of people talk about their "blog" by which they essentially mean their "website" that happens to contain a blog.

## **B. CHOOSING A HOSTING SERVICE**

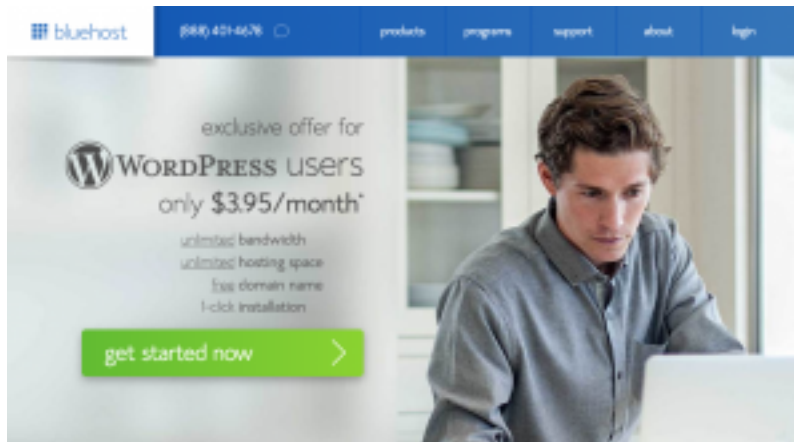
Several website platforms (certainly WordPress) will require that you host your own website, meaning that you have to find a server (essentially a large computer that stores files) for all the files to live. Otherwise, no one will be able to see your website online. In selecting a web host, you are basically paying for a little slice of their server where all



your website's files and databases will be housed. Most host providers now have pretty easy methods for setting up WordPress (and other platforms) automatically, so don't let all the big technical words scare you.

There are two types of hosting that will apply to author websites. The least expensive is "shared hosting," where you are sharing server space with a bunch of other websites (though this is invisible to you). The other type is "managed hosting," where you have your own server. This is fairly costly, which is why this is mostly used for enterprise-type or heavy traffic sites. The sites below are all shared hosting sites and all have an automatic WordPress install feature.

**BlueHost** (plans start at \$3.95/month)



This service appears on almost every "Best of" WP hosting list out there for being inexpensive, having good tools for managing your WP site, and for having responsive 24/7 customer service. Monthly price includes a free domain name.

**DreamHost** (plans start at \$8.95/month)



DreamHost has been around for a while and is a great option for shared hosting with its own control panel for managing your site, free domains, and 24/7 customer service. They have consistently great reviews but are a little more expensive than BlueHost.

**SiteGround** (plans start at \$3.95/month)



This service is best for new sites and authors who don't expect tons of traffic to their site or need ecommerce. It offers a similar array of great services for a reasonable cost.

Check all these services out and go with the one you feel most comfortable with. Don't let the hosting part of the website setup scare you off. You will be surprised how easy it is to install your WordPress site (it only takes a few minutes).

## **C. FINDING A WORDPRESS THEME**

As I mentioned above, I am concentrating on setting up a WordPress website. One of the reasons for this is the dizzying array of themes available to choose from.

There are so many WordPress themes out there, in fact, it can be overwhelming when it comes to choosing one. There are several things to look for in a WordPress theme. More than once, I have plunked down good money on a theme, only to discover it was missing a key element, like top navigation, which caused me to ultimately abandon it. Here are a few things that are essential in a theme:

### **1. Menus**

You need a place where people can find all your pages (about, contact, events, books, etc.). Some themes will put these at the top (where most people will look for them) and some put them on the left side (where less people will find them). Some themes are one-page themes and don't have any way of adding pages to the site, or have a menu at the top that links to places lower on the same page. I avoid the one-page sites because they are difficult to deal with if you want to grow your site, and can be difficult for people to find what they are looking for.

### **2. Social media links**

Again, I like these to show up somewhere near the top of the page where people will see them. You want people to be able to share your blog easily. When you are viewing a template demo, be sure to look at the individual post pages, as well, to see that the social links show up in a place that makes sense, either at the top of the post or the bottom or the side. Make sure they are visible. Also look for the ability to show your latest tweets if you're a Twitter user. This is a great feature but can be added later with a plugin, so it's not crucial.

### **3. Clean design**

I'm a traditionalist and prefer black text on a white background. This is the easiest to read and is calming. If your site looks too cluttered, it will make people uneasy and they

will click away more quickly than if the site is restful and minimal. When in doubt, always go with a more minimal template.

#### **4. Customizable**

Some sites are more customizable than others. A lot of the demos will allow you to see the site in a variety of color combinations. Try them all out. Play around with the demo as much as possible and try to figure out what you will be able to change about the design and what you won't. The more you can customize, the better. But be careful, some of the templates that do everything have steep learning curves. Some templates are easier to use from the back end (meaning the WordPress admin panel where you will configure all your plugins and add your posts) than others. Try and at least look at screen shots of what the admin panel in the back end of WordPress looks like. This will give you a clue as to how complex the template may be.

#### **5. Contact page**

Many themes now come with a Contact page set up like a form. These are great because it means you don't have to post your email address, which search engine spiders can use to find you and send you spam email.

#### **6. Theme options**

Look for the ability to add your own logo, change theme colors, add favicons (those little images that show up in the tab of your browser and give visual clues about your site), infinite scrolling, footer text, etc.

#### **7. Responsive theme**

This means that the page will shrink or grow depending on what device it is being viewed on. It will be bigger on a laptop and smaller on a tablet or phone. Given that people are viewing your blog on all sorts of devices, this is a great feature.

**A note on viewing theme demos:** Be sure to click on all the links in the demo, especially the "Features" link. They will show you what each of the different types of pages will look like, will show you the typography, and what all the titles, bullets, lists, and comments will look like. Some themes give you a whole range of fun add-ons, like the ability to create pull quotes (those quotes that show up in boxes or in bigger text within the main body of the blog post).

#### **A selection of great WordPress themes for authors**

If you Google “WordPress Themes” you will likely be overwhelmed with all the sites that sell WordPress themes. If you are starting fresh, I usually click on the “Best of...” or “Top WordPress themes” just to narrow it down. I warn you, though, I have spent hours—hours!—looking through WordPress themes. It can be quite addictive. Below, I have listed a few of my favorite themes for authors. They are clean, simple, and fairly easy to use. The first in the list are Premium themes (usually around \$40-\$60 to purchase) and below that are Free themes.

**Note:** Choosing your theme is the fun part!

### **Premium themes (paid)**

#### **Chita**

This design has the main navigation on the left hand side, so not my ideal, but it’s a clean design. The orange highlights can be changed to whatever color you like. Cost: \$40

#### **Pilcrow**

This one has small navigation at the top and is very clean and simple. It’s one of the latest “scroll-type” designs, where you scroll down to see everything. It has three preset color schemes that you can see if you click the little tools icon on the left side of the page. Cost: \$35

#### **Blogify**

Again, this one is very clean and simple. The social sharing is very subtle at the bottom of the page. There are lots of options to customize. Cost: \$35

#### **Lit.er.ary**

A nice theme with many options for changing colors, preset templates for selling books, and several different blog templates. Cost: \$40

### **FREE themes**

#### **Orion**

Very clean and free, but I’m less keen about the social links that come with this one.

#### **Clean Retina**

Also a nice, clean, free theme. They have a Pro version that offers a lot more customization for \$31.50. This makes the free one a good starter theme with the ability to go Pro as you grow your site.

### **Fruitful**

Another free theme. Very clean and simple and easy to set up.

## D. SETTING UP YOUR WORDPRESS WEBSITE

Okay, so you've chosen a **Web Platform**, a **Hosting Service**, and a **WordPress Theme**. Now you need to put all these pieces together to create a real live website, but how?

### 1. Set up a domain name

You will begin with your hosting service. Set up an account with the hosting service of your choice. Often with these services, the first thing you will do is set up your "domain name." A domain name is the URL to your site (authorname.com). The hosting service will prompt you to enter the domain name that you desire. Be prepared to have a few chosen since the domain name of your choice may not be available. Prepare for this by typing in the domain name you want into your browser and see if a website comes up. If it doesn't, then you have a shot.

**A note on choosing a domain name:** Many authors make the domain name the name of their book (i.e., prideandprejudice.com), but this can be limiting later on when you write another book. A better option is to use your name if possible (yourname.com or yournameauthor.com). It's best to build your platform around you as an author rather than around a particular book, as you will then have to create a website for every book you write (I made this mistake, and trust me, two websites are not easy to maintain).

### 2. Set up WordPress within your hosting service

Most hosting services have an easy way to set up WordPress. Based on the three hosting companies I recommended earlier, here are quick links to their instructions for doing this:

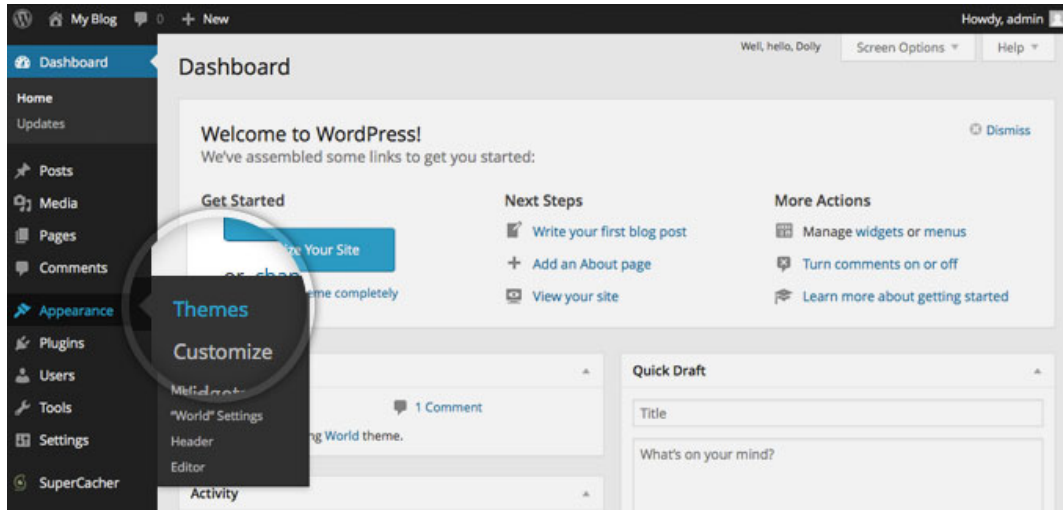
**BlueHost** – includes a video and written instructions with screen shots.

**DreamHost** – instructions for their "one click" install. Here is their [instruction "Wiki"](#) for how to do it.

**SiteGround** – easy-to-follow instructions for each step of the install.

Be sure to keep your new WordPress username and password handy for logging back into your site later.

Hopefully installing WordPress was straightforward and you are now looking at a page that looks like this:



[SiteGround](#) has wonderful instructions on how to install a theme, so rather than giving you the blow-by-blow here, I will let them do it.

### Tip for installing your WordPress theme:

Make sure when you download your theme, you leave it in its filename.zip format. WordPress needs the theme to be in its .zip form to be able to upload it. When you download the theme, put it somewhere easy to remember (I put stuff like this on my desktop) for quick retrieval.

### 3. First steps with your WordPress site

To get to your website's new WordPress "Dashboard" (see preceding screenshot), you will need to log into your WordPress site. You will need to do this each time you want to make changes to your website or write a blog post.

- Logging in: You will log into your site using a URL that looks like this: <http://example.com/wp-admin> where "example.com" is replaced with your domain name. Use the username and password you created when installing WordPress with your hosting service.
- Dashboard: this is the first screen you will see every time you log in to your site. This will be the place where you will see an overview of all the action happening on your site: latest comments, latest posts, etc.
- If you hover over the title of your site in the top left hand corner, you will see a link called "View Site." Click this to see what your site looks like. It will be very



basic and have a “Hello World” first blog post as a placeholder. Don’t worry if you don’t like how it looks. There will be lots of changes that you can make very quickly and easily.

### **So let’s take a look at your Dashboard:**

Here is an overview of each menu item that appears in the black bar on the left side of the page:

#### **Dashboard:**

The dashboard is where you can see a general overview of your blog. You’ll see the latest comments and links to your site and quick-submit new posts.

#### **Posts:**

This is where you come to add a new post, along with modifying categories and tags for posts. The posts section is where you will do the majority of the work on your website if you are maintaining a blog.

#### **Media:**

Here is where you can view any media (music, images, videos) that you’ve added to posts or pages. You can view all the images in your media library and edit any of the captions, alternate text, links, and more in this panel.

#### **Links:**

Here you can look at all the links you’ve added to your blog, make edits, and manage them.

#### **Pages:**

Pages are different than posts. Pages show up as links (usually at the top of your website). For example, “About” or “Contact” are pages where the information doesn’t change very often. This tab allows you to add new pages and manage existing ones.

**Note:** If you add a page, you will also have to ensure it gets added to your menu. More about that later.

**Note on Homepage vs. Blog:** Some authors will choose to make their blog the same as their homepage, so that the first thing you see when you land on their website is their latest blog post. If you do not intend on writing a blog, then you will need to create a page and call it “Home” (the usual name). This will be a page where you feature your book, and perhaps your bio, but the page doesn’t change very often.

#### **Comments:**

This tab allows you to monitor all comments being posted on your blog, filter comments as spam, delete comments, and approve comments on your blog.

**Appearance:**

Here is where you customize the look and feel of your blog. You can edit everything from the theme of your blog to the header and footer. Each theme will have different options and things you will be able to customize, so you may have to play around a little and try different things to find colors, page configurations, and titles that you like. For me, this is an ongoing process and is easy to change, so don't worry too much if it's not perfect right off the bat. There is a lot of trial and error that goes with managing a blog.

**Plugins:**

Plugins are features that you can add to your blog that don't come standard with WordPress or the theme you've chosen to use. Here you can discover and install new plugins and delete or deactivate ones in use. Plugins enable you to add a whole array of functionality to your site, from statistics monitoring to social media sharing. Many plugins are specifically designed for authors to allow them to sell books easily. [Here is a great list of plugins for authors.](#) Plugins are the reason you have been persuaded to get WordPress, so take advantage.

**Users:**

This section allows you to manage everyone who can log in and post on your blog, identify administrators, see who subscribes to your blog, and more.

**Note:** I strongly suggest setting yourself up with your own user account (other than "Admin") and then delete the Admin user account. Hackers are notorious for attempting to hack into WordPress sites through the Admin login since it comes as the default user with each new WordPress install.

**Tools:**

The tools section allows you to import or export your content (say if you had a previous blog, or you wanted to back up old content), look at post ideas, and more.

**Settings:**

This area allows you to manage the basics of your site, such as your time zone, format of the writing sections, and basic feature modification.

## II. CREATING A BLOG

### A: SET YOUR BLOG AS YOUR HOMEPAGE

Assuming you want to have your new website open to your blog posts, you will need to ensure your new site is set up to do this. To be sure it is, click on the name of your website in the top left hand corner of the Dashboard. If you see the “Hello World” post as the first thing, you are good to go.

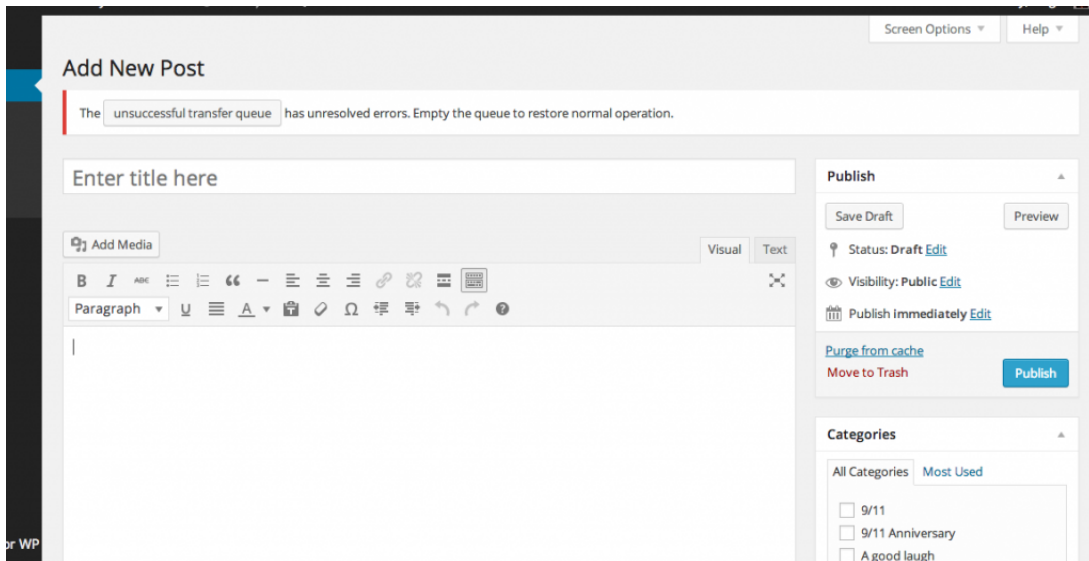
#### **Don't want your blog as your homepage?**

If you don't want your blog to be the first thing someone sees when they come to your site, follow these instructions:

1. From the left side navigation, click Page -> Add New.
2. Give the new page the title “Home” and then click the “Publish” button on the far right side.
3. From the left side navigation, click Appearance -> Customize.
4. This will open a new menu. From the left side of this new menu, click “Static Front Page.” There will be two options. Front page displays: Your blog posts or static page. Click static page. A dropdown will appear and should show the new page you just created called “Home.” Select this from the dropdown.
5. You will need to then go into the new “Home” page that you created and add whatever content you want to be on your homepage.

### B: YOUR FIRST WORDPRESS POST

Getting used to the WordPress posting menu can take a little practice. Not everyone finds it intuitive. Here is the “Add New Post” screen:



## 1. Write a title

Click on “Enter Title here” and type your blog post title. There is a lot of wisdom out on the Internet about how to title your blog posts to attract the most readers. Lists are very popular (“5 tips to . . .” or “10 things you need to know about . . .”). I won’t go into a lot of that here, but [CopyBlogger](#) is a great website for how to write great blog posts.

## 2. Formatting options

If you hover over each of the symbols at the top of the post screen, they will tell you what they are. I have indicated in the image below where your blog title goes, where the post goes, and the arrow shows where the formatting options are. If you can’t see the lower row of symbols when you first open “Add Post,” click the “Toggle Toolbar” symbol.

You will see in the top right hand corner of the post window two tabs: “Visual” and “Text.” Visual allows you to see your post \*almost\* the way it will appear once it’s published. Not everything will be the same, however. There will often be extra spaces that don’t appear in your post window but that do appear in your Preview. This will just take practice to go back and forth and fix the little formatting issues that crop up. The “Text” menu is for people who know a little bit of HTML. If you do and you have extra spaces, you can go in and find them in the HTML code and remove them that way. It can be handy to see the code to understand exactly what’s going on, but no worries if you don’t know HTML. Just stick to the “Visual” tab.

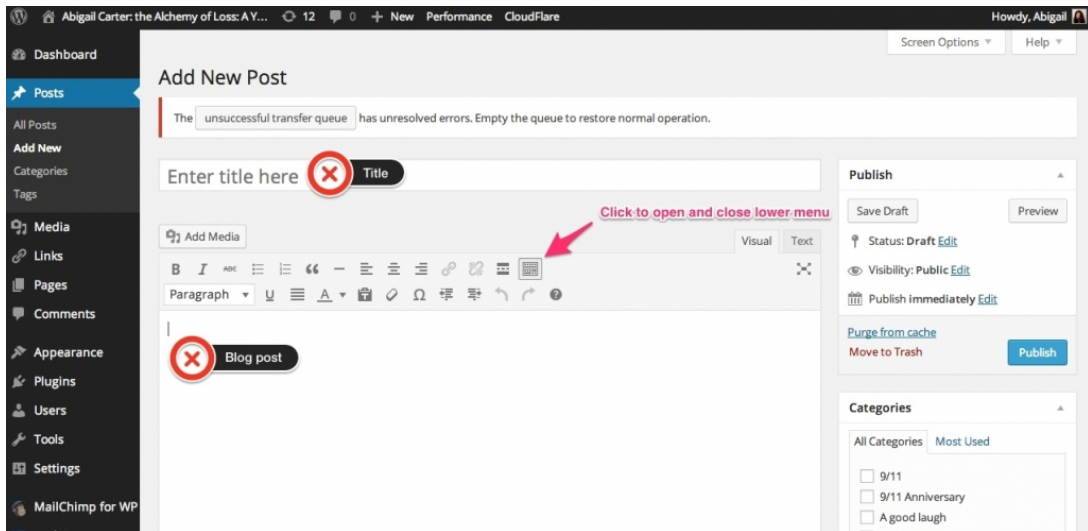


Figure 1: Add New Post Screen

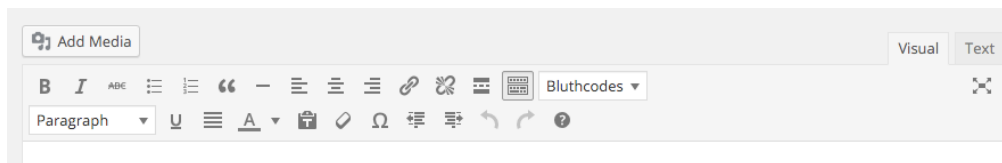


Figure 2: Close up of formatting bar and Add Media button

In the next image, I have used each of the formats that are available with most templates. Some templates have additional formatting tools. Try them all out, and then click “preview” in the top right corner to see what they all look like. You don’t have to save the post.

POSTED BY ABIGAIL ON APRIL 29TH, 2014

Here is a sample of all the tags:

**This is a sample of bold**

*This is a sample of italics*

~~This is a sample of strikethrough~~

Here is a bulleted list

- Item 1
- Item 2
- Item 3

Here is a numbered list

1. This is item 1
2. This is item 2
3. This is item 3

Here is a blockquote:

*It is perfectly okay to write garbage—as long as you edit brilliantly.*  
- C.J. Cherryh

Here is a horizontal line

Left aligned text

Centered aligned text

Right aligned text

Click the chain link symbol to add a [hyperlink](#). If you need to remove the link, click the chain link symbol that looks broken.

This is what the "read more" tag looks like:

Using the styles in the paragraph menu:

1. Paragraph looks like this.

2. Address looks like this

3. Pre looks like this

4. Heading 1

5. **HEADING 2**

6. **Heading 3**

7. Heading 4

8. Heading 5

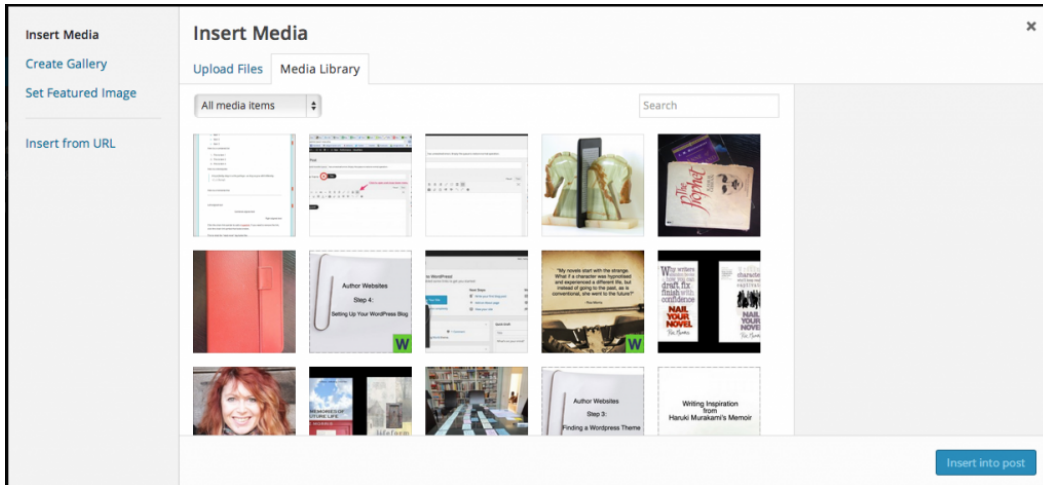
9. Heading 6

Keep in mind that each template will have different style settings so these styles will vary with each template.



### 3. Add Media

Above the formatting menu you will see the “Add Media” button. Begin by placing your cursor in the spot that you would like your image to appear. Click the “Add Media” button, just above the formatting bar. This is the screen you will see:



Sometimes you will want to add an image that is already in your media library. You will see each of those images as thumbnails under the tab “Media Library.” Next to that is a tab called “Upload Files.” Most of the time you will click this link, which will prompt you to either drag and drop your photo, or select a file from your computer or cloud files. There are various options you can set for your photo:

#### Set the caption:

This will create a caption that will appear below the photo.

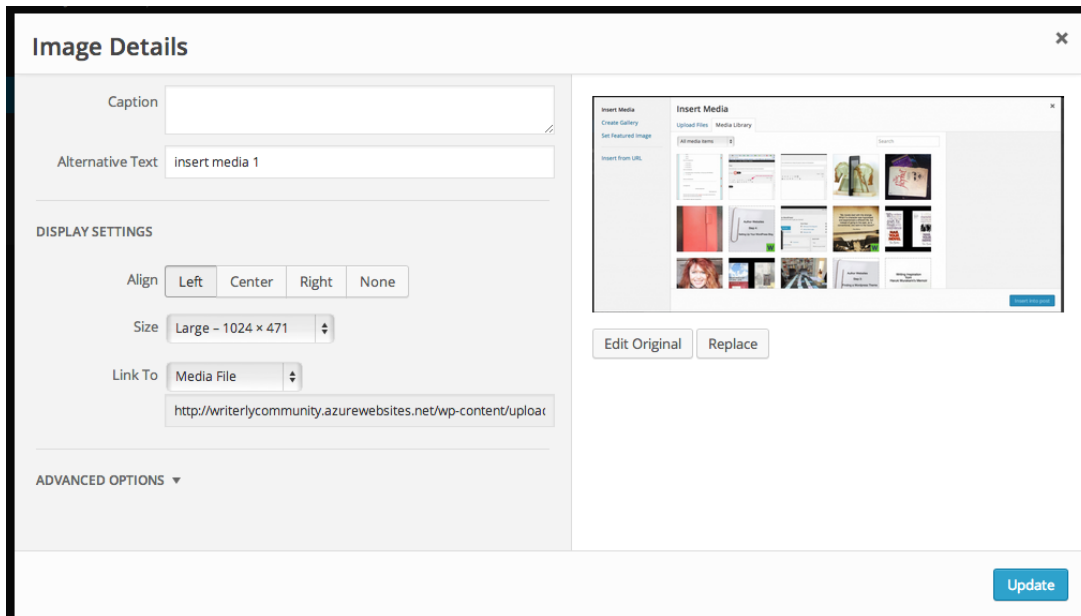
#### Set the alternative text:

This is text that will appear if someone hovers their mouse over the image. It’s a nice habit to set the “alt” text, as it is very helpful for people who are blind and who access the Internet using voice software.

#### Display settings

- **Alignment:** You can set your image to align left, center, or right.
- **Size:** WP will usually preset your image to the “medium” size, but you can make it smaller, or larger, or use the original size of the image.
- **Link to:** Here are the options and what they mean:
  - o **Media file:** This will link your photo directly to the image on your WordPress site.

- **Attachment page:** This will create a link within your WordPress site so that when a person clicks on the image, they will be taken to a page with the largest version of the image and nothing else.
- **Custom URL:** This is where you can set your image to link to another site. Add the URL in the box below the dropdown.
- **None:** This will make your image unclickable.

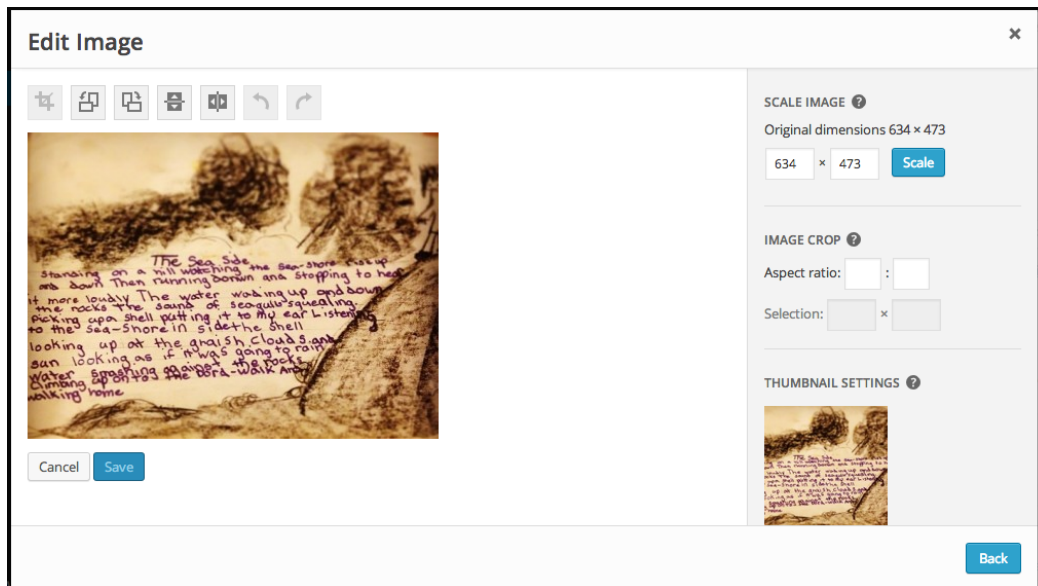


There is also an advanced menu. Here you can get an image to open in a new browser tab or add CSS styling to your image. CSS stands for Cascading Style Sheets and these style sheets are used by browsers to tell them how you want your web page to look. Adding CSS styling is an advanced feature that requires a fairly intimate knowledge of HTML, a lesson for another time.



## Editing your image

Under the image, you will see two buttons: “Edit Original” and “Replace.” They are both self-explanatory, but in the Edit Original menu, you can flip, rotate, crop, scale, and set which sized images you want to make the changes to.



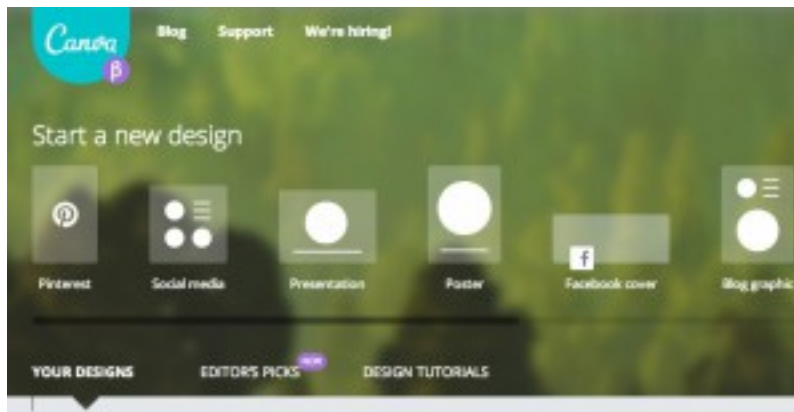
Hopefully, I haven't overwhelmed you with information. The trick is to play around and see what happens when you click different things. If you get stuck, just do a Google search on your problem. There are thousands of links and videos out there to help you. And like anything, with practice, this will become easier and easier.

## B. CREATING GRAPHICS FOR BLOG POSTS

It's well known by now that adding graphics to blog posts is always a good idea because sharing of blog posts happens via the images associated with them (think Facebook and Pinterest). Often I find images I want to use on the Internet, and include them by linking them back to the site I found them on and adding a credit in the photo's caption. Of course, you will need to email the owner of the image and get permission to do this.

But sometimes you want to add something unique or create a personal logo for your site. It used to be that you had to muddle over Photoshop, which to the untrained can have a steep learning curve and is a costly program for many (even with the \$20 per month rental of the Adobe suite of programs). Thankfully, there are several new sites that make creating graphics incredibly easy and are free or charge nominal amounts for upgraded images or fonts. Here's a rundown:

### Canva



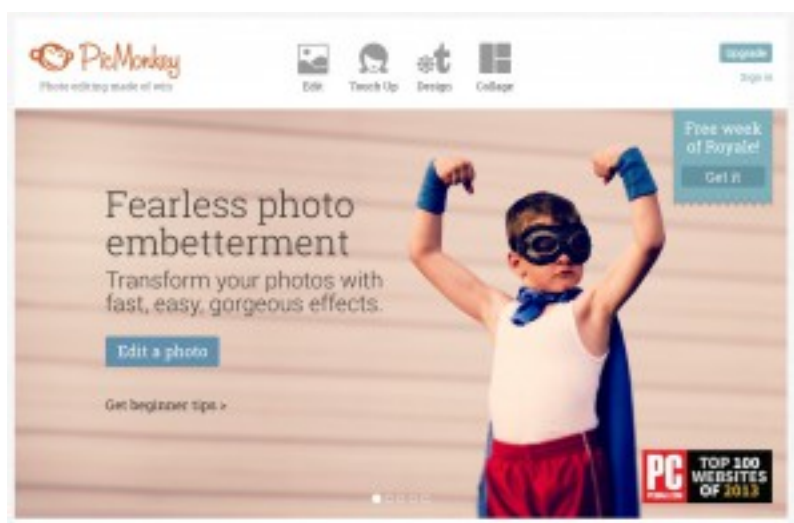
Canva makes creating banners for websites and social media incredibly easy by having preset templates using the exact sizes you will need for each of the big social media sites. There are a huge array of predesigned borders, ribbons, backgrounds, fonts, and whatnot that you can use to create images that look like they have been professionally designed. You can create custom sizes and add them as logos to your WordPress blog, or create featured images for each blog post you write. Using images in your blog posts is highly recommended as your posts will be more likely to be shared on social media if they contain an image.

## [Pixlr](#)



This advanced photo editing tool (Pixlr Editor) allows you to do almost all the things you might do in Adobe's Photoshop, including adding text to photos. There are also two easy photo enhancing apps (Pixlr Express and Pixlr-o-Matic) that allow you to add tints, borders, and effects to any photo easily and quickly.

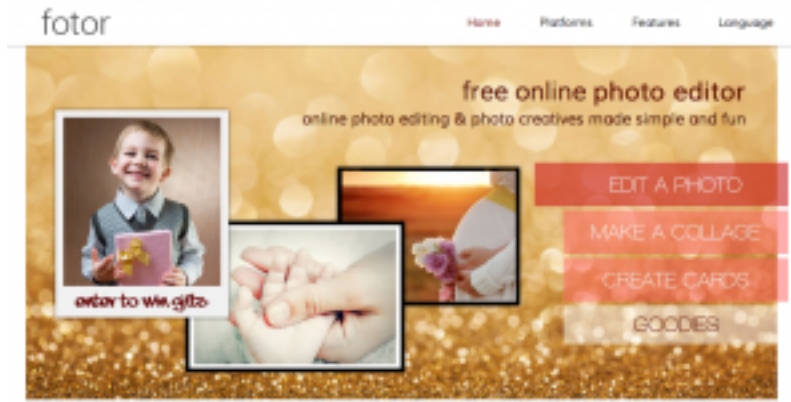
## [PicMonkey](#)



Like Pixlr, PicMonkey allows you to enhance photos in numerous ways, including adding text to images and a whole bunch of airbrushing options (get rid of those wrinkles!). It is

also a great app for creating banners. You can create real life items like tags and pillows with your graphics and there is a collage option for combining several photos into one.

## Fotor



Another photo editing tool, this one is quite simple. You can add tints, text, borders, touch-ups, etc. There is also a collage tool and an easy way to create social media banners. A trick: Create a banner for Facebook or Twitter, download it, and then use it as a banner for your WordPress site.

## C. NINE TIPS FOR WRITING COMPELLING BLOG POSTS

As an author, you may be wondering what the heck to write about and how to find your new audience and begin actually building your “author platform.”

First, you need to write some compelling blog posts. Here are some tips:

### 1. Show, don't tell.

In my experience, many of the same qualities that make good writing also make for good blog posts. My most read posts are the ones where I show rather than tell. [Here's an example of a post where I remain “in scene”](#) and [here is an example of one where I tell the story rather than showing it](#). The first one brought me way more traffic than the second one did because people are able to see themselves in the story and thus respond to it more intimately. But there will be times when you have to use the second style as I did when you are giving an update on what you are up to. Both have their place.

### 2. Remove the date on your post.

This is becoming more and more the norm because bloggers want to reuse existing material. Removing the date is an easy way to make content seem fresh. I am on the fence about this because I have written about personal stuff for a long time. If I repost about an old boyfriend and it doesn't have a date, my new boyfriend may read it and think I'm cheating on him (this is a “for instance”—I would never cheat 😊). But if you have content that is more generic and timeless (the true meaning of an “evergreen” post), then it makes sense. It just depends on what you write about. Further on this, I highly recommend getting the WordPress plugin “Tweet Old Posts,” which you can set up to automatically tweet your older posts on a regular basis. This is a great way to keep posting content and get more people to your site.

### 3. Write about your book's topic.

A rookie mistake of many author blogs is that authors often write about their writing process on their blogs, thinking their audience will be interested. But you want your book's readers to read your blog, and most of them won't be interested in your writing process. They want information about the book. The trick then is to find topics within your book to write about: a location, a character's profession, or an object of interest in your book are all compelling topics. If your story takes place in Italy and you write about it, then people interested in Italy might find your post and want to read your book.

### 4. Make the blog posts personal.

Readers want to know about you (though not necessarily about your writing process). You can write about why your story takes place in Italy for instance, especially if it's because you had an experience there. Tell an intimate story about that experience and you will have a great blog post. Another timeless, popular blog post: take a photo of your writing desk. For some reason, many readers find this fascinating.

#### **5. Post questions within your posts and request answers to be posted in the comments.**

This is a great way to encourage engagement with your audience. This works especially well if you have a compelling or controversial point to make. You can encourage others' opinions. You can also ask advice and get feedback on small writing samples. Which leads me to the next tip . . .

#### **6. Post new writing.**

Even small excerpts of writing can entice readers to become excited about your forthcoming project. You can get some great feedback (if you ask for it) this way while engaging your audience at the same time.

#### **7. Keep your posts short.**

The general wisdom is to keep your posts between five hundred and seven hundred words. I break this rule consistently and I seem to get away with it, so it's not a hard and fast rule. If the writing is compelling and draws readers in, the length won't matter. At least, that's what I keep telling myself.

#### **8. Write in lists.**

If you are writing posts, lists are a great way of getting lots of information across quickly. People can browse the list (notice I have list "titles" bolded which makes for easier scanning) and get your point. These posts are often shared since they are quick and easy to read. That said, many of my posts are narrative, which is not conducive to list making.

#### **9. Write what makes you happy.**

In the end, like most of my writing, I don't have a ton of control over what comes out. Often I am writing to work through a personal conundrum, and the posts just spill out. But I write about grief, so I can get away with that. In the end, what I write is from the heart, and that comes through. That authenticity is what keeps my audience coming back to my site and reading my posts. We each have a talent that draws readers to our work; the trick with the blog is to let that talent shine.

## III. FINDING YOUR AUDIENCE

Assuming you are now writing compelling blog posts, you should have an immediate audience, right? The truth is, it takes time to build an audience for your author website. Here are ten tips for finding that audience.

### A. TEN TIPS TO FIND YOUR AUDIENCE

#### 1. Determine who your audience is.

The most crucial step in building an audience is to understand who your audience is before you go looking for them. Usually, your audience will be people who are interested in either the type of genre you write or your subject matter. You may write romance, in which case romance readers will no doubt be your audience. Here is a list of criteria you might use to determine your audience:

- Book genre
- Book subject matter
- Age and gender of people who might read your book
- Locations where they might congregate (conferences, etc.)
- What they are passionate about

#### 2. Figure out where your audience hangs out.

Once you understand a little about your audience, then you can go in search of them. I write about grief, so my first step might be a Google search on “widow blogs,” “grief blogs,” “grief and loss,” etc. Through those searches, I will find blogs, forums, conferences, and other sites that cater to grieving people who might find my words helpful. Be specific in your searches. And you don’t necessarily have to connect with each and every one. To find the sites you mesh with most, pay attention to the look and feel of their blog or website and the kinds of content they are posting. Does it speak to you? Do you want to get to know the author? Can you think of ways in which you might be able to help each other? Remember building an audience is about quality, not quantity.

#### 3. Engage your audience one person at a time.

It is always much better to build a personal connection with people who may be interested in reading your books than it is to buy a list of people who might not be all that interested just to get your numbers of site visitors or Twitter followers up. Once you have found a group of blogs that you personally connect with, comment on their blog posts, retweet their tweets, share their Facebook posts, offer words of

encouragement, and offer your subject matter expertise to help them out whenever possible. Give, give, give. That way, when it comes time to ask them to read or buy your book, they will be more willing to do so. The best part about these connections is that they often spark ideas for more blog material as you begin to discover new facets of a subject that you didn't know about, or you can answer questions and become a trusted authority by writing about issues and ideas that haven't been covered by others.

#### **4. Get involved with your community in real life.**

I teach memoir writing every year at [Camp Widow](#) (which is awesome despite how it might sound) and connect with over three hundred people who would be perfect readers of my book. I get to talk to them one-on-one and develop a relationship with them. The Camp Widow community is growing, which in turn helps my audience to grow. Attending conferences, teaching about your subject matter, or even participating in online forums are all great ways to connect in real life.

#### **5. Ask for help from your audience.**

Once you've built some close ties to your audience, select one or two people who you've connected with most closely to become your "street team." Ask them if they will help you spread the word about your work, become beta readers (early readers who can give you feedback on your work) on your next project, interview you on their blog, etc. You can reward them with free books, add them in your acknowledgments, and interview them on your blog.

#### **6. Be authentic.**

Some ways of being authentic in what you write and how you conduct yourself online:

- Be approachable.
- Write in a way that exposes your vulnerabilities.
- Ask questions of your audience, seeking answers from them.

You will immediately become more likable than if you are just trying to sell your book all the time or writing in a way that hides your true self. If you come across as being too perfect, your audience won't be able to relate to what you write and may begin to distrust you. Authenticity draws empathy from people and you will find that your most shared work will be the posts that cut to the bone the deepest and are usually the hardest to write. This will require you to trust your audience, which in turn will inspire trust in you.

#### **7. Don't overshare your blog posts.**



It is possible to tweet, Facebook, Google+ your posts ad nauseam until people turn off in one way or another. Share your posts a few times once you have written them and then stop. If the post is well written and authentic, the sharing will happen organically. There are a number of [syndication sites](#) out there that make it easy to share your posts the moment you've written them. I have also mentioned the WordPress plugin "Tweet Old Posts," which is a good way to keep old material circulating, just don't overdo it.

### **8. Use lots of links to other sites in your posts.**

The more you can cross-pollinate your posts, the better. The blogs you link to will see your links and be curious about your site. And be sure to comment on as many target blogs as possible. It used to be (way back in 2008) that commenting on others' sites was pretty much the only way to gain traffic. I think we tend to forget that commenting is still a pretty formidable way of gaining readers. Don't forget to include your link in your comment.

### **9. Write posts on timely topics.**

Get your voice heard in timely and possibly controversial topics. Have an opinion and don't be afraid to state it clearly, even if it is controversial. If possible, find other blogs to write for that have a wider audience than your own. Be sure to include links back to your own blog, so that your new audience can discover you and your work.

### **10. SEO**

For me, SEO (Search Engine Optimization) is like a bad word that can illicit one of those headaches behind my eyes. Basically, it is the process of adding keywords to your posts to help the search engines find your content when someone searches on that keyword. This is a good thing since it means that people will click on the link to your site and you will gain a new reader.

I never really knew how to add these keywords and hoped that just having some good words in my title and post would do the trick, but they are not really adequate. You really want the keywords to show up in the code at the top of your page, which is a little more of a challenge.

But I was happy to discover the WordPress plugin "Yoast SEO" that takes the pain away a little. This plugin creates a menu at the bottom of each page where you write your blog post, so you can make sure the title, keywords, and URL all match. It will then give you a green, yellow, or red light telling you if you have good SEO for your post.

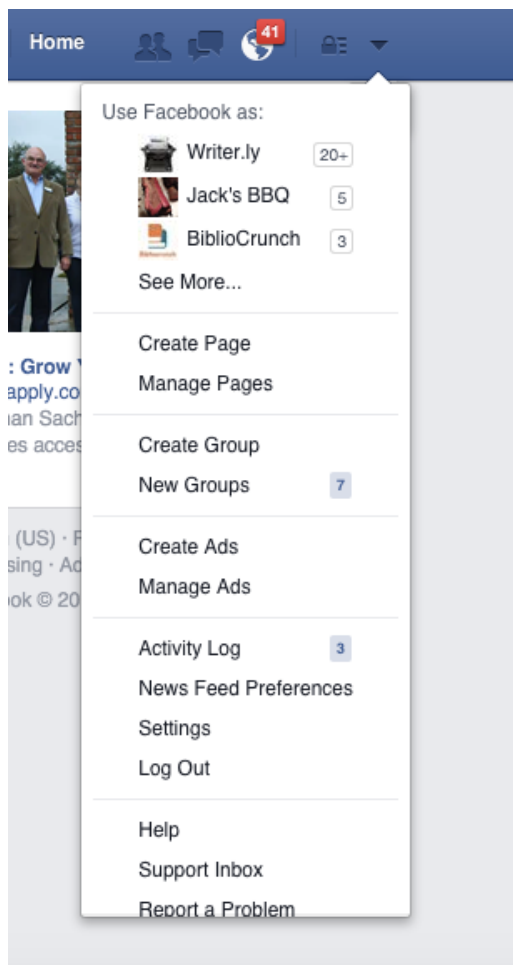
Concise titles that are clear and searchable are always a good idea and using keywords in your material also enables your posts to pop up in searches. Do a search on your subject matter and see if your posts show up. If not, what does, and what titles do they use? Take some clues to update your post titles and keywords.

## B. CREATING SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES

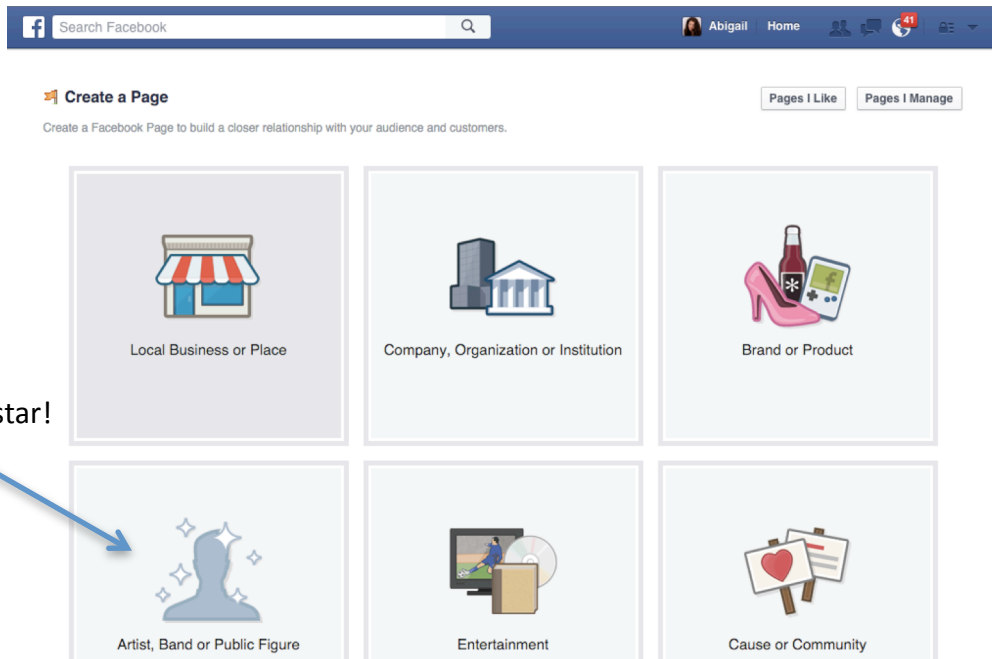
If you haven't already created any social media pages for your "Author Platform," now would be a good time to do so, in order that you will then link them to your new author website. The following is a quick overview at creating author pages on a variety of social media sites.

### Facebook

1. Click on the tiny arrow in the top right hand corner of the page.
2. Click "Create Page."



3. Click on the “Artist, Band, or Public Figure” box. (Please don’t tell me you are not one of these, because you are!)



You are a star!

4. Choose “Author” from the dropdown list and then enter your name.

**Artist, Band or Public Figure**

Have a profile? [Learn more](#) about letting people follow your public updates.

Choose a category

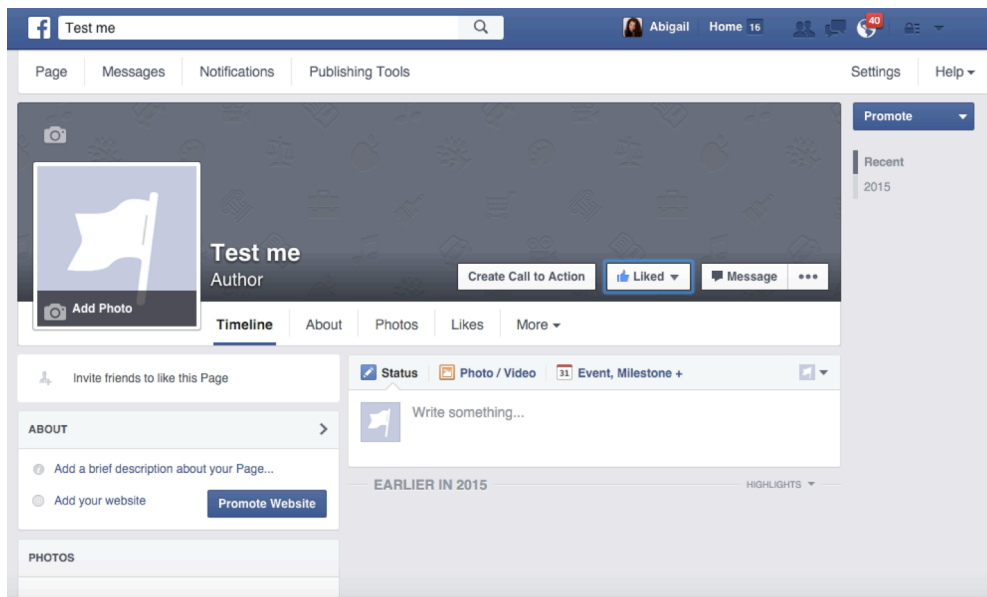
Name

By clicking Get Started, you agree to the [Facebook Pages Terms](#).

**Get Started**

5. Follow the prompts to fill out all the info about your page. Keep in mind, this is your “Author” persona, which is a little different than your personal one. Write what your page is about (i.e., Jane Doe, the author of “A Really Great Book” about . . .”).

6. Add your website URL and then create your Facebook URL (i.e., <http://www.facebook.com/Yournameauthor>).
7. Add your profile picture (a nice photo of yourself or your book cover).
8. Add your new page to your list of favorites to make it easy to link to later.
9. Select an audience that you would like to see your book (location, age, gender, etc.)
10. Add a cover image (the image that goes across the top of the page behind your small profile photo) by clicking the camera icon in the top right corner.



11. Invite your friends to like your new page. Add photos, links, descriptions, etc.

## Twitter

1. Navigate to Twitter and sign up for an account.
2. You will have to decide on a Twitter username, which will become your "handle." Try to make it as short as possible. If you can use your first name and last name, that is ideal. If not, figure out a handle that will endure over time, that

will be easy for your readers to remember, and that perhaps pertains to you as an author or to one of your books.

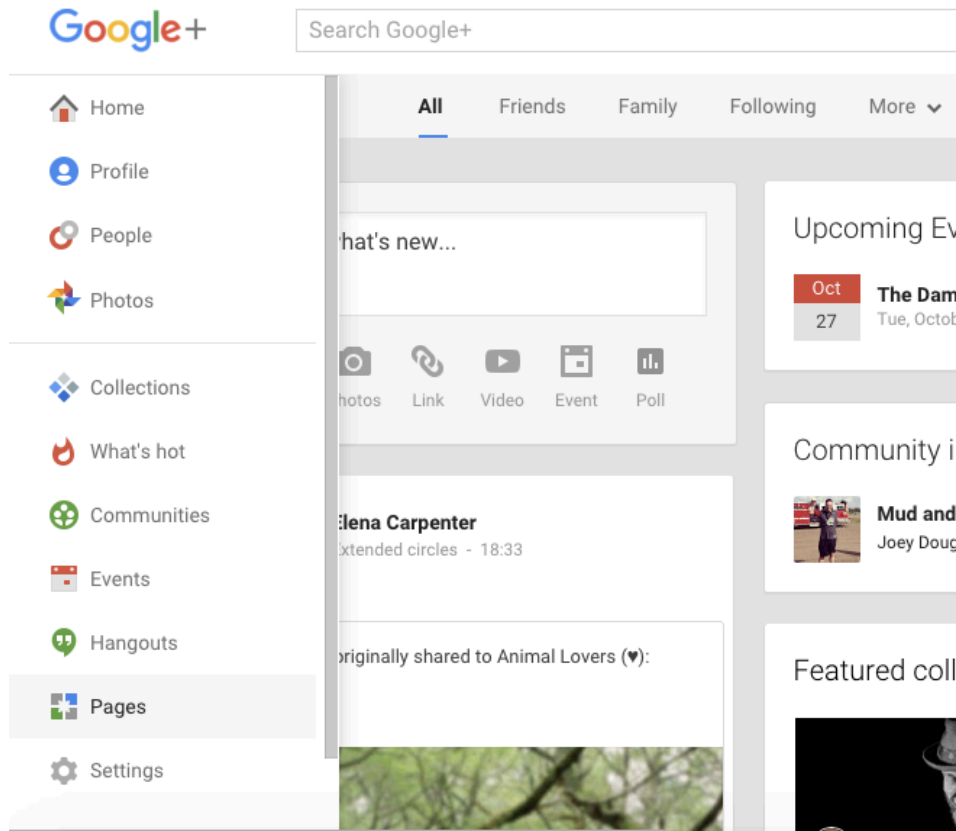
3. Write your bio. You only have 160 characters, so again brevity is the name of the game. Try to use as many keywords as possible, and even add a # in front of the word so your bio will come up in searches. Add a link to your website and/or Author Central page on Amazon.
4. Add a profile image. It will need to be 400 x 400 pixels. Use an author photo if you have one.
5. Create a header image. This will need to be 1500 x 500 pixels and can be a composite of your book covers, a logo made of your name, or inspiration for your book if you don't yet have a cover. To make a header, try [Canva.com](https://www.canva.com). They make creating graphics for social media super easy.
6. Create your customized Twitter background by going to Settings -> Design. Here you can change colors and add images to your background.

## **Pinterest**

1. Navigate to [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com) and set up an account.
2. Begin by creating a Board. As an author, creating boards strategically can offer some great benefits. You can lure readers in using images of your book's inspirations, information about yourself, book covers, etc. Some great ideas for author Boards include:
  - a. About Me – Link it to the About me section of your website. You can share images of your writing desk, pets, book covers, etc.
  - b. Writing – Links to any writing that you may have out on the web: articles, essays, etc.
  - c. Inspiration – Here you can add links and images to whatever might inspire your characters and settings for your books. It's a great place to keep your research.
  - d. [Here's a list of Pinterest boards to follow](#) if you are a writer.

## **Google +**

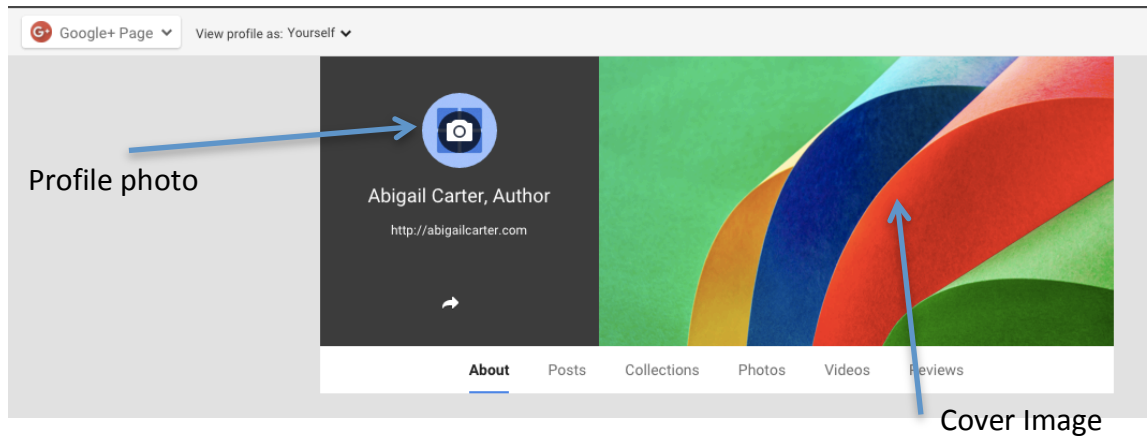
1. Go to [plus.google.com](https://plus.google.com) and either log in or set up a Google account.
2. From your home menu in the left corner of the page, click "Pages." This will take you to the Google "My Business" section where you can create a "Brand Page."



3. Click “Add” Brand page.
4. Fill out the form:

5. Verify your account (either by text message or email).
6. Click “Manage Page.”
7. Click the red Edit button in the top right corner.
8. Click “Change Cover” to change the cover image (1240 x 700 pixels).

9. Click the circle above your page name to add a profile photo.



10. Next, you will need to add info to the following sections:

- a. **People** – Set who will be able to see your page. Here you can make your page private and only viewable to people you have in your circles.
- b. **Story** – Give your page a tagline and a quick intro.
- c. **Contact Info** – Select the way in which people can connect with you (email, phone, address, etc.).
- d. **Links** – Add your website and links to other websites that interest you.
- e. **Communities** – Here you can discover a wide range of communities that you can then link to. They may be communities that pertain to your book topic or personal interest or writing craft.

## C. MANAGING SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILES

Okay, so now you have a bunch of social media profiles. How on earth will you have enough time to add your posts to them, keep up with people who respond to you on social media, share articles and interesting web pages with your audience, grow your audience using social media, and still have time to write?

If you are trying to manage two or more social media profiles at once, it can be overwhelming, but there are a couple of magic tools to help you do this:

### [HootSuite](#)

Hootsuite is a social media management tool that allows you to manage all your social media accounts and schedule posts across all your social media channels.

Hootsuite supports the following social networks: Twitter, Facebook (profile, page, and group), Google+ (page), LinkedIn (profile, group, company), and WordPress. Using Hootsuite applications you can add additional networks, like Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo, Reddit, Flickr, VK, Tumblr, Foursquare, and several more. Using some of these apps comes with an additional cost.

You provide Hootsuite with all your social media accounts and then through a dashboard you can see them all at once. From the dashboard, you can schedule social media posts, you can respond to people who have commented or tweeted on your posts, you can favorite others' posts, you can see statistics on your social media following and results on how your posts have been viewed and responded to.

When you schedule your posts, Hootsuite will automatically determine the ideal time to send the post, based on how many other posts are in the queue and their own statistical algorithms.

Hootsuite also features the "Hootlet" which is a plugin for your browser so that when you come upon a webpage that you would like to share with your audience, you can do it with one click. You can choose to share it right away or to add it to the scheduled posts in your queue.

**Cost:** Free for linking up to three social media networks. If you need more, then you need to upgrade to Pro for \$9.99 per month.

## [Buffer](#)

Buffer is a content management tool that allows you to share content across all your social media channels. Buffer has fewer integrations and features than Hootsuite.

**Buffer** supports the following social networks: Twitter, Facebook (profile, page, group), LinkedIn (profile, page), Google+ (page), and Pinterest (for a fee).

Similar to Hootsuite, Buffer allows you to connect all your social media profiles and pages and schedule posts into the future (and they can determine best times for sending them). There is also a browser plugin.

Unlike Hootsuite, Buffer allows the use of other automation tools, the most prolific being IFTTT, which has thousands of "recipes" that allow you to do things like add Instagram photos, WordPress posts, LinkedIn posts, etc. to your Buffer queue. Buffer also works with another tool, Zapier, for doing much the same thing.

**Cost:** Free to link one account to each social media platform. If you have both an author page and a personal page in Facebook, you will have to choose just one. If you want to



add more social media pages, then you need to upgrade to “Awesome” for \$10 per month.

## **D. FINDING AN AUDIENCE OUTSIDE THE INTERNET**

Of course, we can never underestimate the power of meeting our audience in person in the real world. Here are some ways to connect:

**Business Cards** – probably obvious, but business cards are the easiest way to spread the word about your book. Get them printed with your book cover on one side and then your name, email, and webpage URL on the other. I highly recommend [Moo.com](http://Moo.com) for producing beautiful cards. They have an interface that allows you do create them yourself online.

**Bookmarks** – These tend to be better if you have more than one book. You sell one of your books and leave a bookmark with information about the other book(s) inside.

**Your book** – Don’t forget that you should always include your website information in every book you produce. Ask for reviews on Amazon. Provide your social media information as well.

**Conferences** – And by conferences, I don’t mean writer’s conferences. The conferences you should be going to are conferences where you will meet your readers. It may be a conference in your genre (sci-fi or mystery) since you will find your readers there. If you don’t write in genre, then you will need to get creative. Do you write about travel? Perhaps a travel conference. Or a medical one. I write about grief and loss and attend a widow’s conference where I teach as well.

**Speaking** – It may be that your book has made you an expert in a subject. Find places where you can talk about or teach on your subject. This may be conferences, company meetings, or small organizations and nonprofits that specialize in your topic.

**Volunteering** – It may be that there is a nonprofit associated with your topic. Find out if there is a local chapter and volunteer. It’s a wonderful way to get involved, and you will meet and often be of great benefit to the people involved.

**Bookstores/Libraries** – Are obvious places to ask to have a reading. Find out and visit in person the people who set up author readings. Find a creative way to set up a reading that ties your topic into a theme. I paired with a local psychic medium to do readings since my book involved a psychic. It was hugely popular.

**Writing groups/writing retreats/writing organizations** – Although the people you meet at these events may not be your readers, some of them may become valuable supporters of your work. The connections you make at these groups often lead to connections with bookstores or other venues where you may be able to showcase your work. Most writers are happy to help other writers to be successful.

## IV. CONCLUSION

Hopefully, you now have a live, working author website. Feel free to experiment and play with your site, but just be sure to always back up before you do (yes, there's a plugin for that, which I highly recommend).

The more you utilize your site, the more it will become a home base for all communication with your audience. It can really be a wonderful way to connect to your audience and I have made many friends (live ones!) through my site as well.

But don't be afraid to ask for or hire help if you don't feel up to the task. Bibliocrunch.com is a great place to start. Post a job looking for someone to help you create your author website and professionals on Bibliocrunch will bid on your job.

We, at Bibliocrunch, want to make sure that you publish the best book possible.

### **Wondering who we are?**

Bibliocrunch can help you find the professionals you need to take your work to the next level. And all within your personal budget!

BiblioCrunch helps connect authors with the book publishing professionals they need to publish a high-quality book. Members of our exclusive community of industry professionals have worked for some of the largest publishing houses in the world, including Simon & Schuster, Penguin Random House, and HarperCollins. Bibliocrunch has been featured in *Publishers Weekly*, *MediaBistro*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Library Journal*, *The Columbia Review*, and *GigaOm*, among other press outlets.

It's easy to get started. Just create an account and post your publishing needs and desired budget. Sit back and wait for the proposals to pour in. Then choose the best match for you and your project.

By leveraging our community of rated and reviewed editors, cover designers, proofreaders, conversion specialists, marketers, publicists, and enhanced ebook experts, you'll be able to publish the best book possible.

If you would like more one-on-one assistance, Bibliocrunch also offers a VIP service that will guide authors through the publishing process—from start to finish. So go out there in the world with your book. Good luck!

Abigail Carter  
Chief Marketing Officer,  
[Bibliocrunch.com](http://Bibliocrunch.com)



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- 1) [Bibliocrunch.com](http://Bibliocrunch.com) to connect with trusted professionals to help guide you through the publishing process
- 2) [Learnselfpublishingfast.com](http://Learnselfpublishingfast.com) for our full video course series
- 3) Find us on [Facebook.com/Bibliocrunch](https://Facebook.com/Bibliocrunch).
- 4) Find us on Twitter [@Bibliocrunch](https://twitter.com/Bibliocrunch).
- 5) Our weekly chat for authors called [#indiechat on Twitter](https://twitter.com/indiechat)
- 6) Find us on [LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/bibliocrunch) to connect with like-minded authors
- 7) Live in NYC? We have a Meetup that gathers once a month.  
<http://meetup.com/selfpub>