

SHOULD YOU USE WORDPRESS.COM or WORDPRESS.ORG? AND WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

6 QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BEFORE YOU BEGIN BLOGGING

1 Do you want your own domain?

If you don't already own or plan to register a special domain name for your blog, you can host your bog with WordPress.com. All blogs hosted by WordPress.com will follow the naming convention of [yourchosenname.wordpress.com] This makes it pretty easy to get a name approximating, although not exactly matching, your business name.

If your business is named My Widgets – you could create a blog called MyWidgets.wordpress.com.

But what if you want your blog to be named simply MyWidgets.com?

If branding and your business name are crucial to your success, then you should host the blog on your own site, using the blogging software available through WordPress.org. Many web hosting plans feature one click install of WordPress blogs through Fantastico. Check the Control Panel for your site – or check with the web host you are thinking of patronizing – for Fantastico availability.

2 Are plug-ins important to your blogging?

If you've been reading about WordPress blogs, you've probably read a lot about plug-ins. Plug-ins make many day-to-day tasks easier, and they can extend the capabilities of your blog. There are plug-ins to trap and delete spam comments, to make adding YouTube videos a simple cut & paste operation, to add widgets like calendars, to track visitors, to optimize Search Engine rankings – in fact, there are literally thousands of plug-ins.

However, you cannot upload plug-ins to blogs hosted on WordPress.com. Your Admin panel will not even have the Plug-In tab (barring special circumstances, such as a paid VIP account).

If you have researched plug-ins, and there are some you absolutely want to use – you'll need to host your blog on your own site, using WordPress.org's software.

Does this mean WordPress.com blogs will be spam magnets buried by Google? **Absolutely not!** Both spam detection and search engine optimization will be taken care of by WordPress.com itself. You'll trade the ability to customize your blog's spam detection and SEO functions for the freedom of having the WordPress.com organization do the behind the scenes work for you.

3 Do you plan to monetize your blog?

WordPress.com simply does not allow this sort of content on its blogs.

If you plan to add Google AdSense ads, Commission Junction links, ClickBank links or other income generating add-ons to your blog – go with WordPress.org.

There is simply no middle ground here. Remember when you were a teenager, and your parents said, “As long as you live in my house, you abide by my rules.”? Same thing.

If it is **your** blog, on **your** domain – you control the content. If it is hosted on someone else’s domain (WordPress.com) – they control the content.

4 Do you want to customize your blog?

If you enjoy designing, tinkering with, and changing everything you touch – you’ll want to host your blog on your own site using WordPress.org’s software.

WordPress is extremely customizable and flexible. You can take a standard WordPress template and add your own picture in place of the header, alter the colors, add pages, add widgets... In fact, if you can imagine it, you can probably do it with a WordPress blog.

Customization options are much more limited on WordPress.com. You’ll have the choice of many, many templates. But you may not alter the basic layout or design by editing the code.

5 Is simplicity more important to you than hands-on control?

If you don’t want to learn the first thing about the mechanics of blogging, go with WordPress.com. Just open an account and your blog is online. You won’t need to do anything except write posts.

WordPress.com will not only update your blogging software every time a new version of WordPress is released, they will back up your blog hourly – so you’ll never be in danger of losing all your work to a server crash. What’s more, WordPress.com’s servers are built to withstand heavy spikes in traffic. On that wonderful day when your blog is featured on the first page of Technorati or SlashDot – you’ll be up and running smoothly. There’s no need to worry about server outages or excess bandwidth fees caused by sudden, heavier than normal traffic.

If you host your blog on your own web site, you will need to manually keep the software up to date. This is not really difficult or onerous – but it does require diligence and attention to detail.

It is important to keep current with new releases, since they include security updates as well as bug fixes. Fantastico has a One Click update method – but it will overwrite any customizations you’ve made to the blog’s code. So you’ll probably want to use the slightly more cumbersome manual update method. As for backups, your web host *probably* has a backup plan for your web site – but making sure your content is safe is your responsibility.

6 I started out at WordPress.com – am I limited forever to the basic options?

No! You can buy many upgrades that will make WordPress.com behave more like a self-hosted blog.

For instance, you can remove “wordpress” from the name of your blog, and use your own domain name, through a process known as Domain Mapping. This service costs \$10.00 a year. (Keep in mind that, if you use your domain name for email, you’ll mess up your email delivery by pointing the domain to your blog.)

You can buy Custom CSS, making it possible to revamp the code in a standard template.

You can buy additional space on the WordPress.com servers to store large media files, such as video or audio downloads.

Finally, you can move your blog from WordPress.com to another web hosting location by exporting your entire WordPress.com blog to an XLM file and then importing to a new WordPress.org blog. Is it easy? Relatively. Is it foolproof? No.

The larger your blog is, the more content it has, the longer it has been in existence, the more readers who subscribe to it - the harder it is to move. That’s why it is a good idea to decide on your best hosting solution before you begin.

So which is the better choice for me?

There is no easy, one size fits all answer to that question. However, the options are clear:

WordPress.com is a blog hosting service. WordPress.com offers ease of use, low maintenance blogging. It takes the drudgery out of blogging, leaving you free to concentrate on content. Business blogs are welcome at WordPress.com, but making money with your blog is not.

WordPress.org is blogging software. If you use the software, you provide your own hosting solution, i.e., a web site. Because you own the site, you can do whatever you want with it (within the bounds of the law and the terms of your hosting contract, of course). Because WordPress.org software is Open Source, you are free to customize it and make it better fit your individual needs. However, you are on your own – no one will be looking over your shoulder to make sure you don’t make a terrible mistake.

A web host with Fantastico one button install of WordPress will usually cost less than \$10.00 a month. For that price, you’ll also get email, a business identity, and the freedom to grow. If your blog is successful, the revenue generated by programs like Google AdSense may be enough to pay your hosting fees.

At [D Byrne Associates](#), our advice is: **act like the business you want to become rather than the business you are today. Plan to succeed!**