



Building a Branch Website using Wordpress

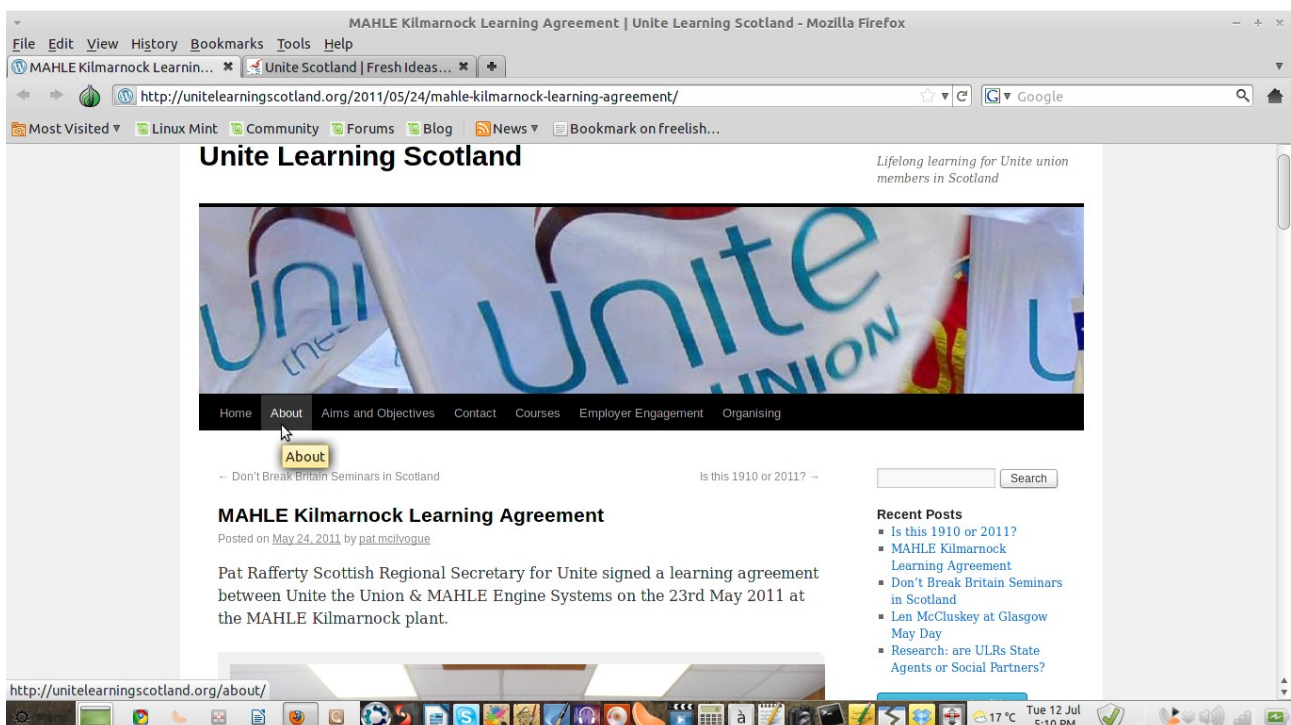
WordPress is a **Free and Open Source (FOSS) Content Management System (CMS)**. It allows you to build websites without having to learn any code. Because it is FOSS, there is a large community of developers. This means the software is kept up to date, and will always be free. There are several other very good FOSS content management systems available, including Drupal and Joomla, but we will use WordPress because it is easy to use, versatile and scaleable. It can create everything from a simple blog to a sophisticated website.

Websites are complicated. They involve databases of content, CSS files with design elements and much more. WordPress makes it about as simple as it can be. It is easy to use, but there is still a lot to learn. This course will cover the basics of getting a site up and running. There is detailed documentation on the WordPress website that you can use for more advanced features.

There are two ways you can use WordPress:

Option 1: Host your site at WordPress.com

Create a site at **WordPress.com** and register a blog. Your web address will be <http://yourunion.WordPress.com>, unless you register a custom domain. Below is an example of a WordPress.com site.



Advantages:

- This is very easy to do. You can set up a website in a few hours, with a minimum of hassle.

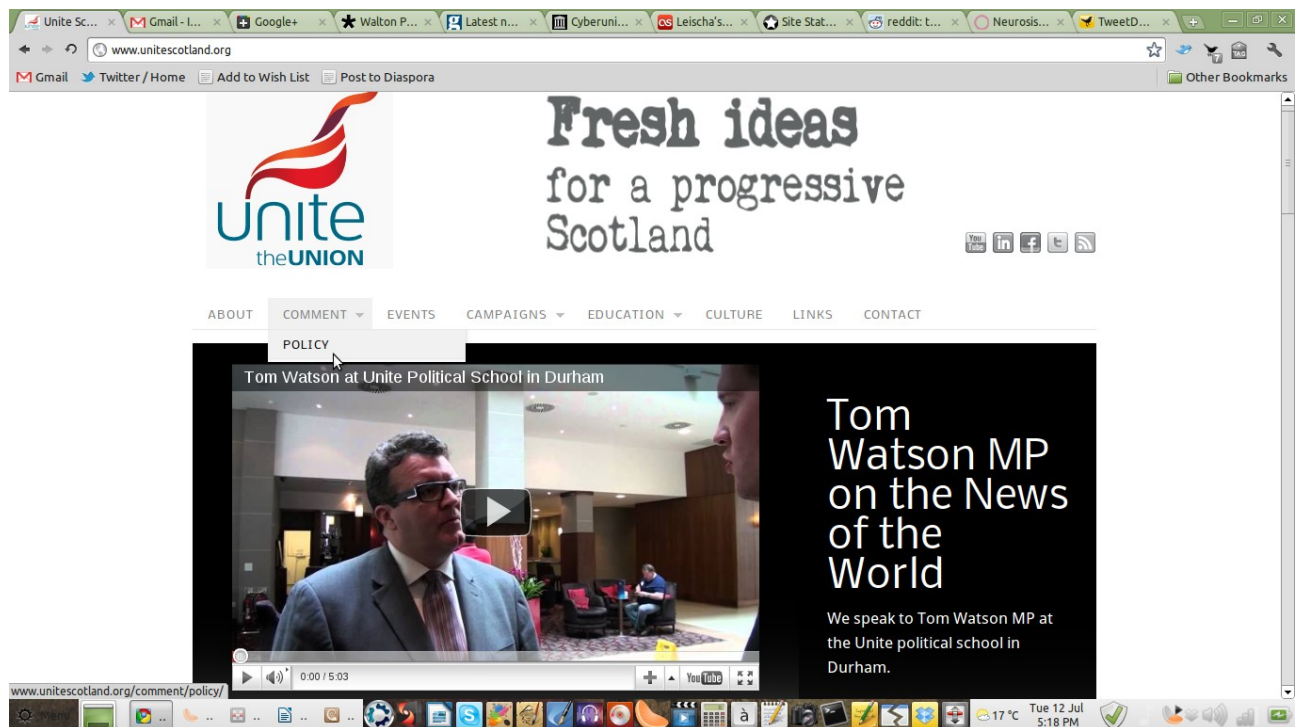
Disadvantages:

- Your site is hosted on the WordPress server. Some companies block WordPress as they consider it social media.
- Your site will be more limited as you have fewer options.

However: it's easy to create a site on WordPress.com and export it later. It is a good place to start.

Option 2: Install WordPress on your own server (“self-hosted”)

Get a hosting account with an Internet company and install WordPress on their servers. WordPress is available at WordPress.org, or you can install it directly through the Control Panel of your web hosting company. Here is an example of a site created using this method:



Advantages:

- You have a tremendous amount of flexibility and control.

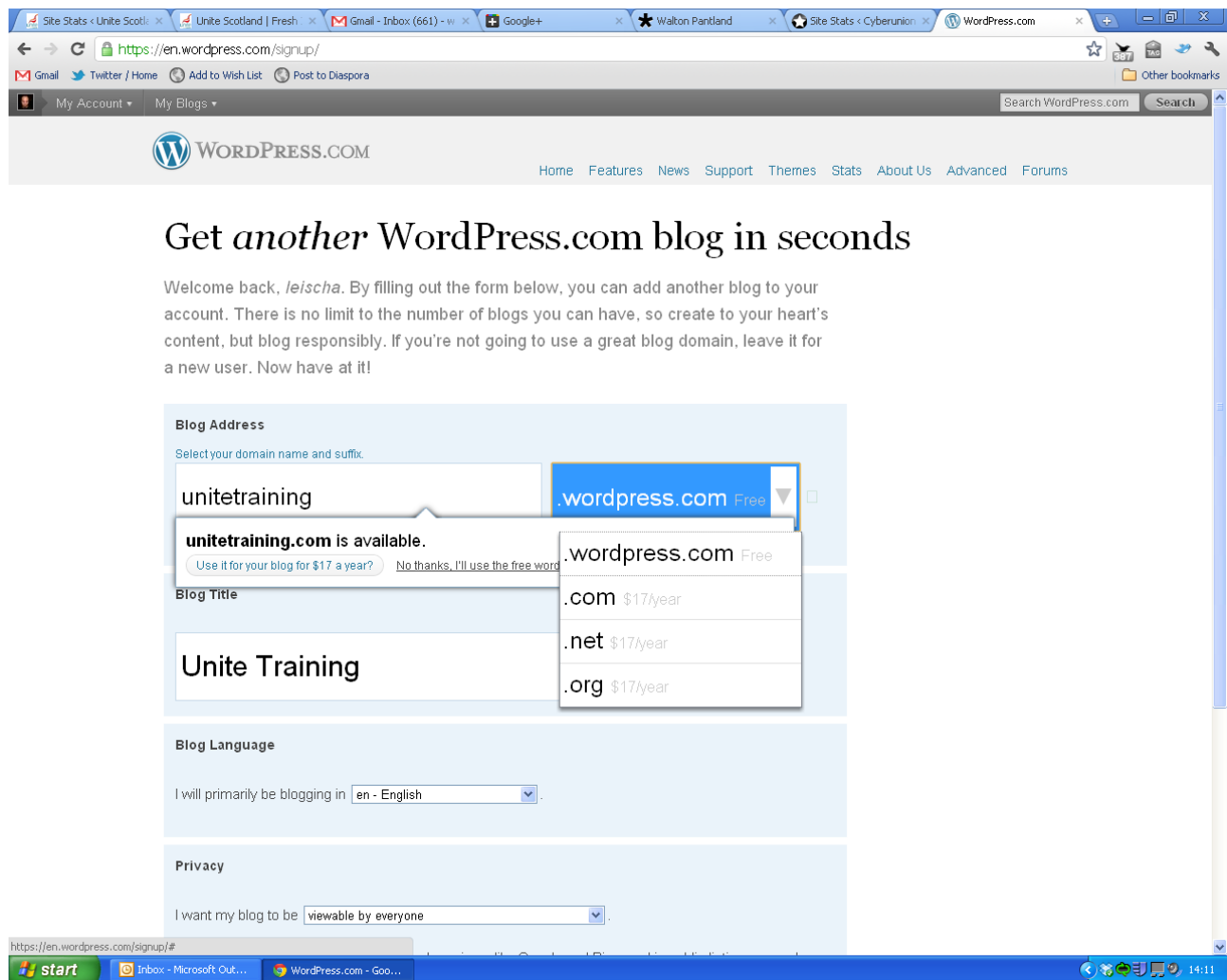
Disadvantages:

- It is more difficult
- You have to pay for hosting.

We will look at both methods during this training.

Method 1: Hosting on WordPress.com

Visit the WordPress.com site and register a blog. It looks like this:



The screenshot shows the WordPress.com signup page in a web browser. The browser's address bar displays <https://en.wordpress.com/signup/>. The page header includes the WordPress logo and the text "WORDPRESS.COM", along with navigation links: Home, Features, News, Support, Themes, Stats, About Us, Advanced, and Forums. The main heading reads "Get another WordPress.com blog in seconds". Below this, a welcome message states: "Welcome back, *leischa*. By filling out the form below, you can add another blog to your account. There is no limit to the number of blogs you can have, so create to your heart's content, but blog responsibly. If you're not going to use a great blog domain, leave it for a new user. Now have at it!"

The registration form consists of several sections:

- Blog Address:** A text input field contains "unitetraining". To its right is a dropdown menu currently set to ".wordpress.com Free". A tooltip message appears below the input field: "unitetraining.com is available. Use it for your blog for \$17 a year? No thanks, I'll use the free word...".
- Blog Title:** A text input field contains "Unite Training".
- Blog Language:** A dropdown menu is set to "en - English".
- Privacy:** A dropdown menu is set to "viewable by everyone".

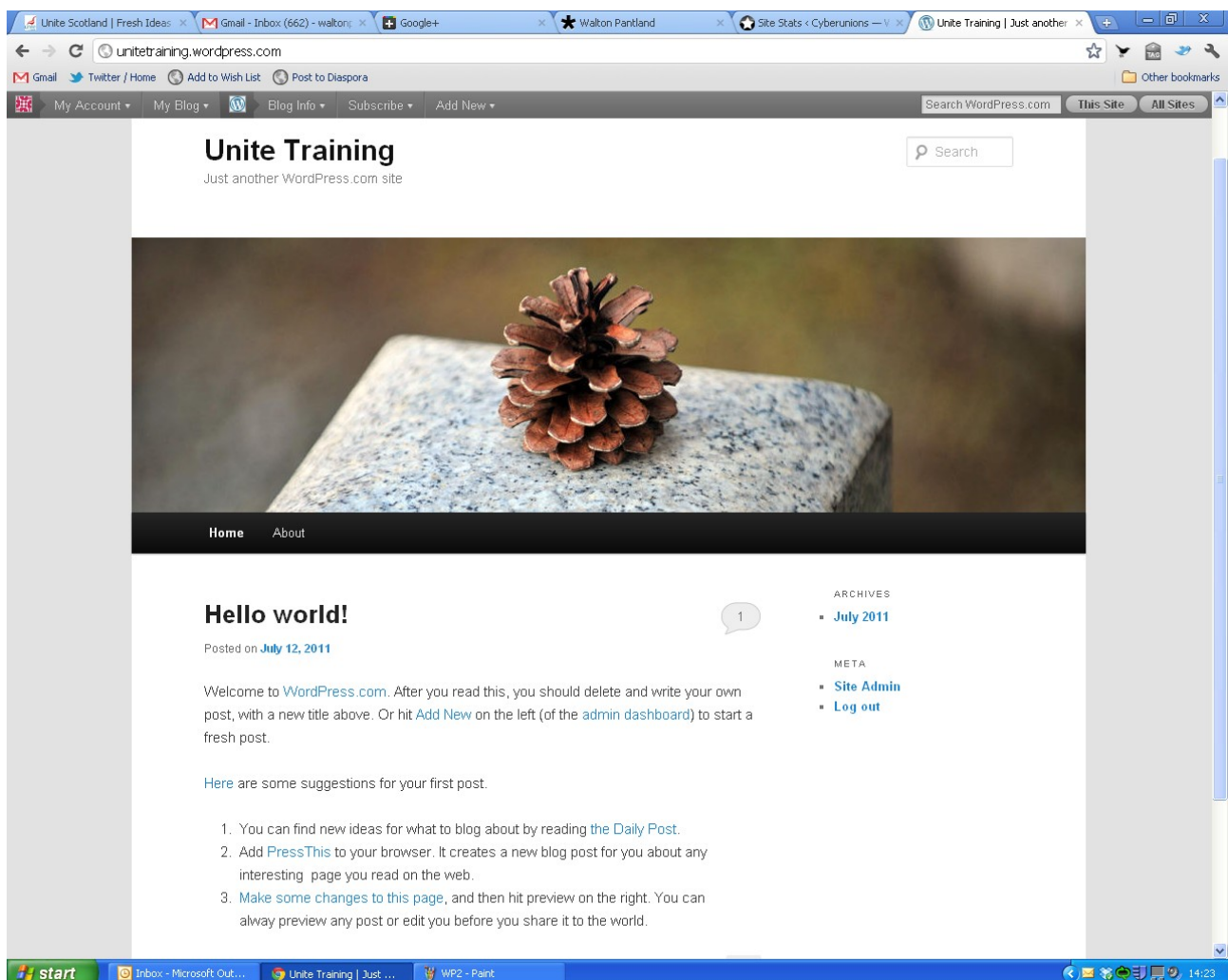
The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the Windows Start button and several open applications, including "Inbox - Microsoft Out..." and "WordPress - Goo...". The system clock in the bottom right corner shows "14:11".

You can choose the free <yourunion>.WordPress.com site, or pay to register a domain. You don't have to decide on this now – you can always upgrade in future.

Once you have created your blog, it will take you to the WordPress **Dashboard**. This dashboard is what you will see whenever you log in to your site, and it's what you will use to design and build your site. The dashboard is almost identical,



Right now your site looks like this:



Everything about the site above can be edited. We will look at that in more detail later.

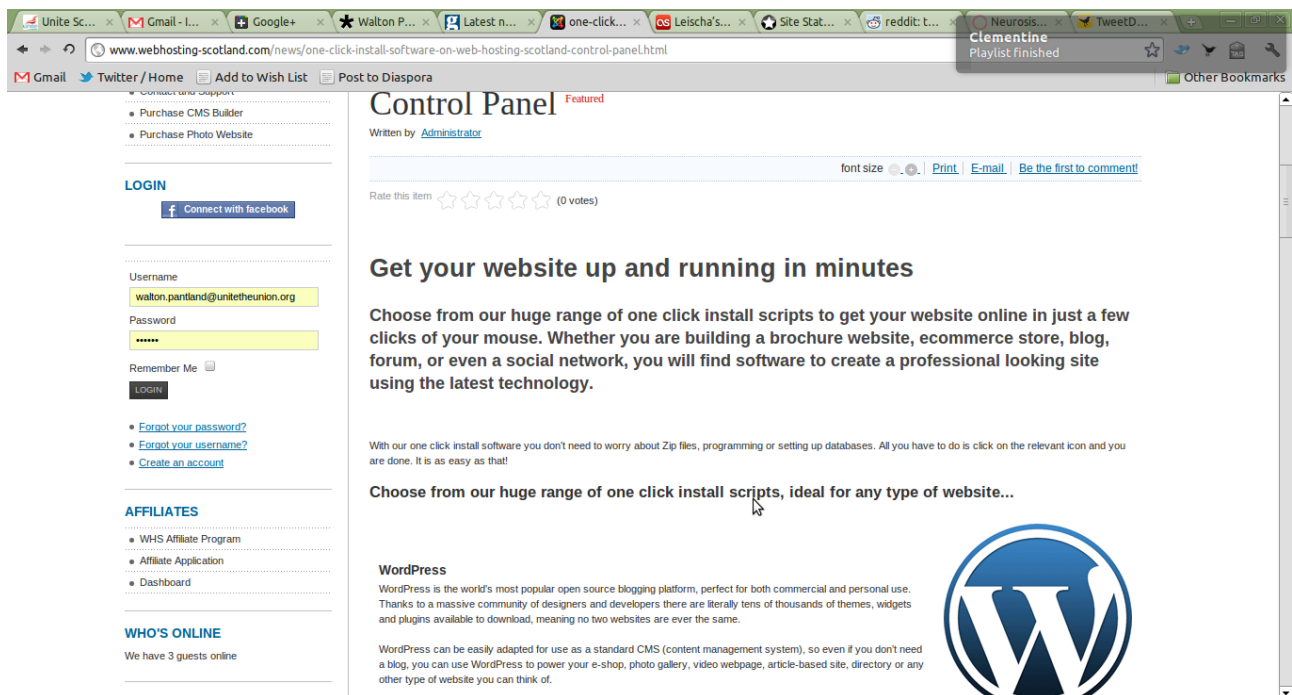
Method 2: Self-hosted WordPress

In this method you find a webhost and install WordPress on a server you control. Your webhost needs to be WordPress compatible, and needs to run a collection of software called a LAMP stack. This stands for:

- Linux
- Apache
- MySQL
- PHP

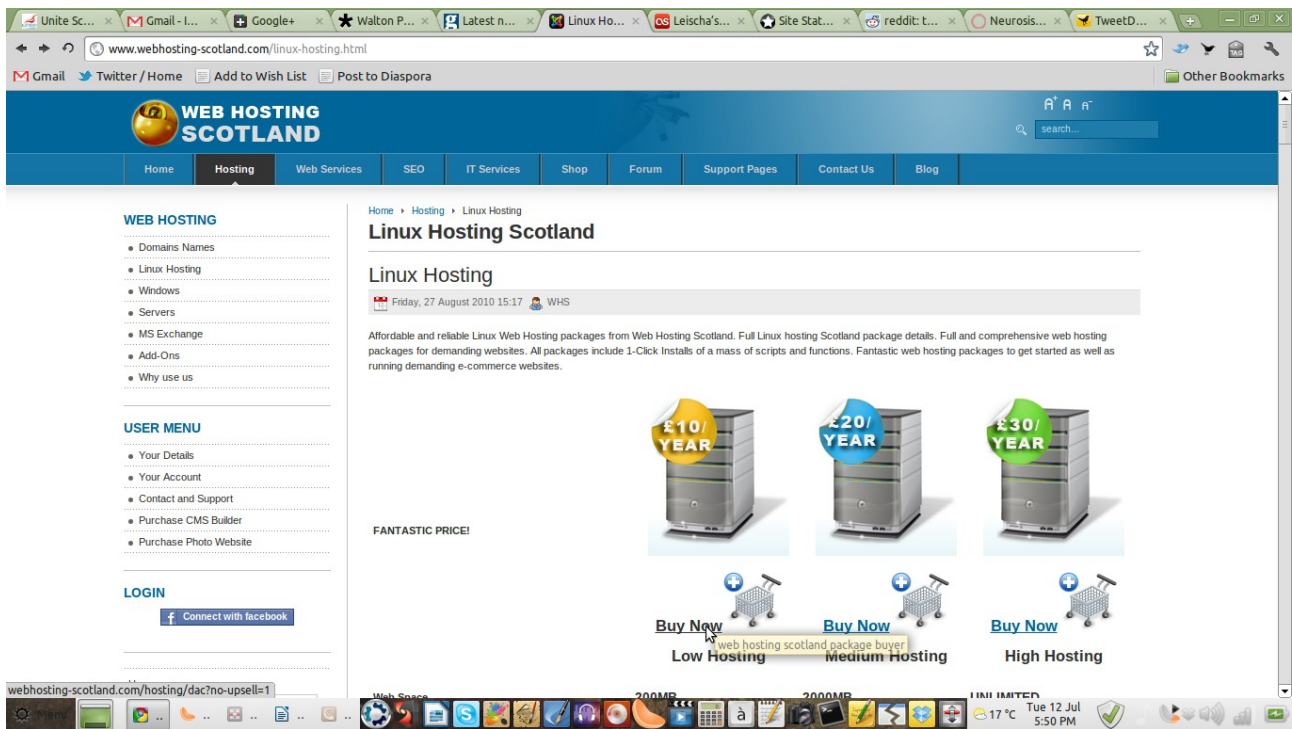
This is less complicated than it sounds, and most websites will tell you right away whether they are WordPress compatible.

This is what you need to look for:



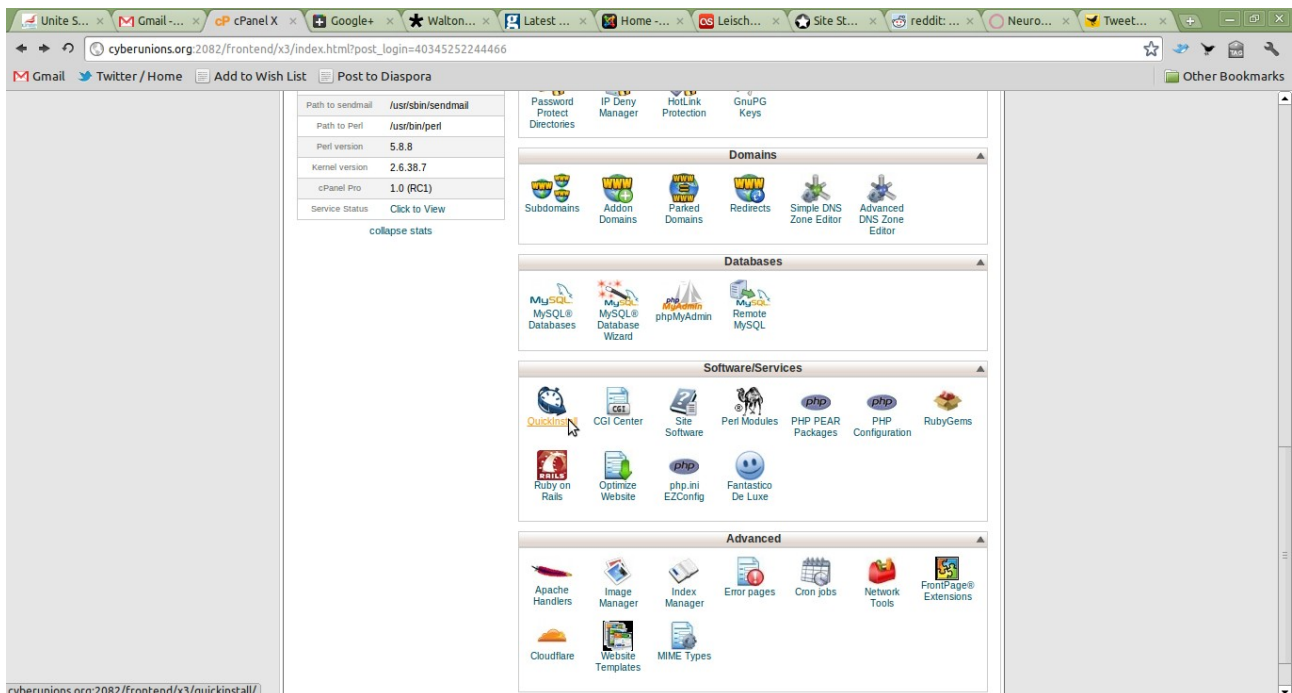
Next you will have to go through the process of registering a domain and buying hosting. This is not very expensive: Domain registration is generally less than £10, and hosting is also fairly inexpensive.

Once you have registered a domain and paid for hosting, it can be several hours before your account is live, so be patient.



Once your site is live, you'll probably see your web hosts admin page. The most common software used to administer websites is **cpanel** – this is probably what your web company will have.

You will probably only have to visit this once. Look for the **Quickinstall** software link. Click through and you will see options for installing software. Select WordPress and click **install**. It should take only a few seconds to install WordPress.



Once this is done, you can access your **Dashboard**.

Logging in to WordPress

Once your site is up and running, you will always log into it by adding /wp-admin to the end of the address, and entering your username and password.

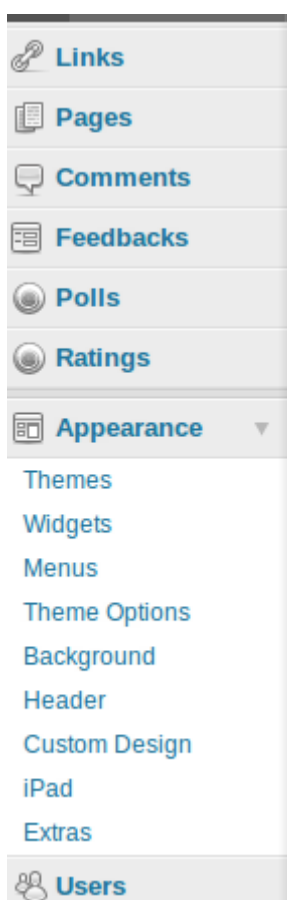
For instance, <http://unitetraining.WordPress.com/wp-admin/> will allow you to log in to the training website.

For this session, log in details are as follows:

Username: unitetesting

Password: Un1t3

Templates



The first thing you want to do is choose a template. This is the basic design of your site. In the WordPress.com version, you get a limited number of templates. With self-hosted WordPress, there are thousands of templates. If you know HTML or CSS you can also edit templates your self.

The WordPress dashboard has a menu down the left hand side. Click on **Appearance** and then **Themes** access the page for building themes.

Once you have chosen a theme you like, you can redesign the different elements of the theme, for instance by adding a background image, adding widgets (more on that later) or making a custom header.

WordPress will specify what size to make the custom header. I use a free program called **Inkscape** (<http://inkscape.org/>) to create headers, but any graphics will do.

This is an example of a custom header created in Inkscape:



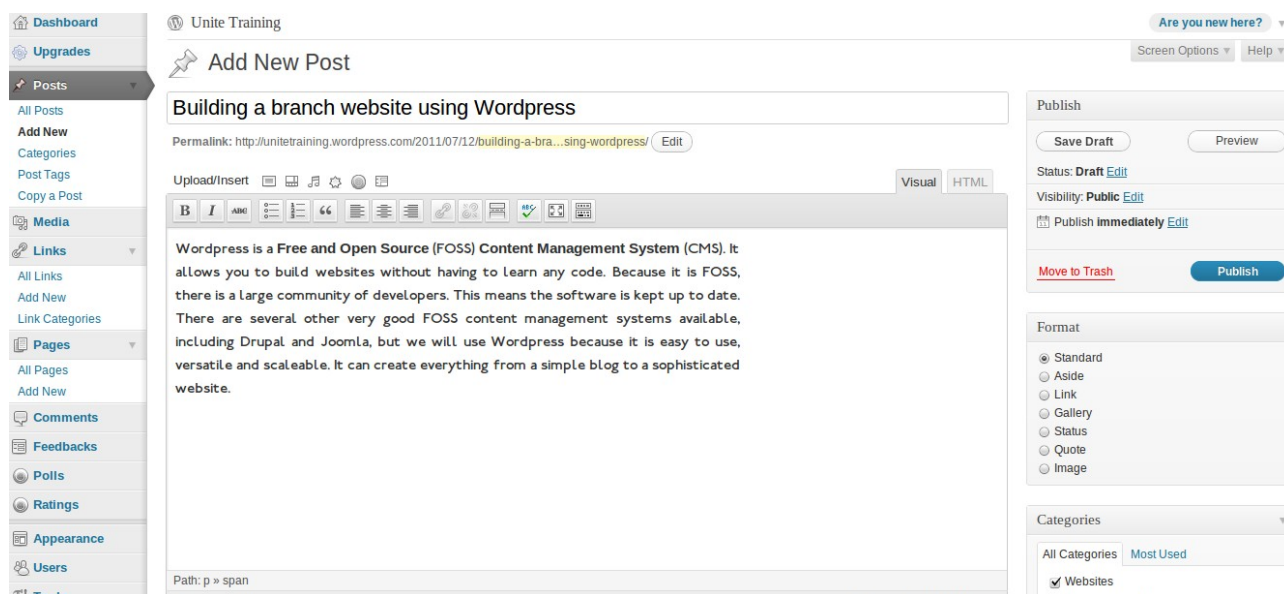
Fresh ideas
for a progressive
Scotland

Creating your first post

Clicking on **Posts** and **Add New** will take you to a page for creating new posts, or articles.

Once you are happy with your post, click **publish** and your new post will immediately become the first article on the front page.

You can also add categories and tags to your posts to help organise them.



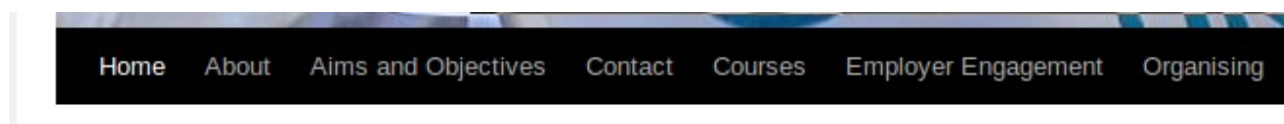
By default, all your posts will go to the front page in chronological order.

Creating pages

It is also a good idea to create **Pages**, which are accessed from a menu bar at the top of the site. The menu bar might look like this:



Or this:



Depending on the template you use. **Pages** are created in a similar way to **Posts**. Just click on **Pages** and **Add New**.

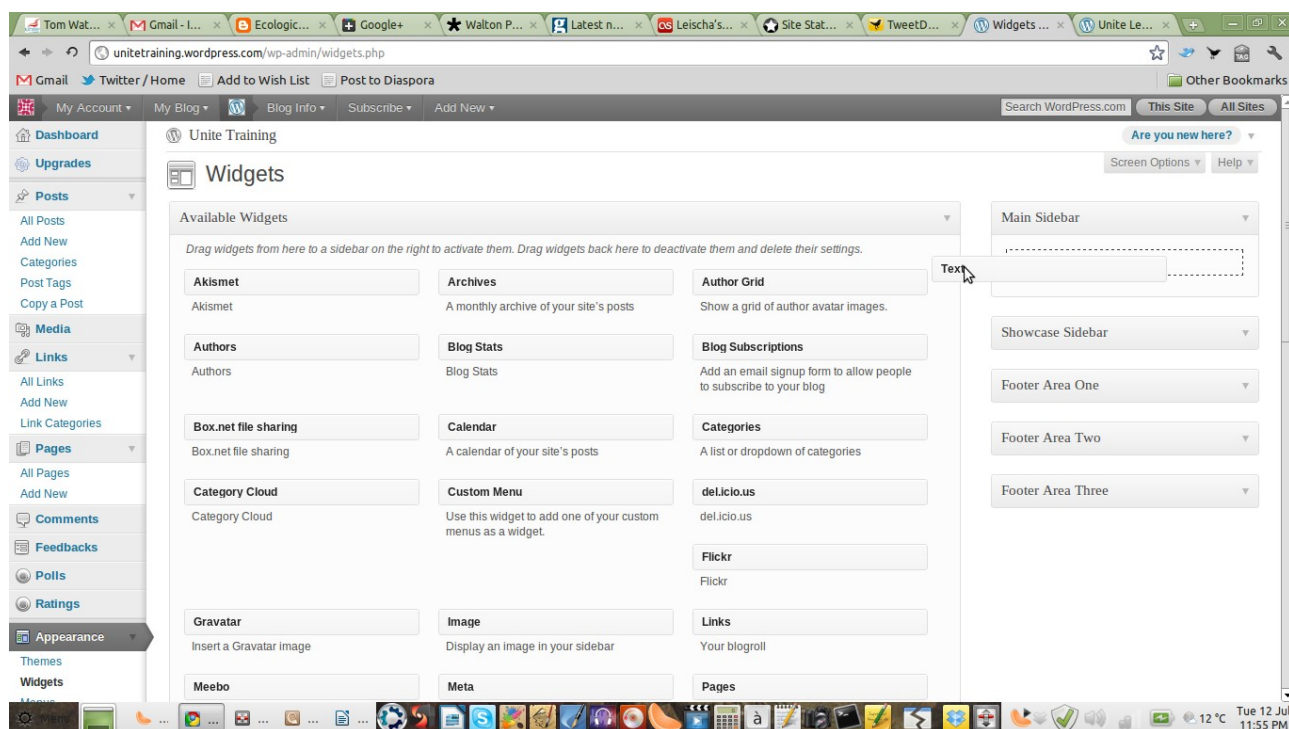
Widgets

Widgets are bits of code that usually go in the sidebar of the site. For instance, this is a twitter widget, displaying the latest tweets from the @UniteScotland twitter feed.

Incorporating social media widgets into your site makes it more dynamic as it is easy for people to interact with you. The widget on the right was created by copying code from the twitter page, and pasting it into a widget box.

To do this, go to **Appearance > Widgets**, and drag a **Text** widget. Move it into the sidebar as pictured below, and then paste in the code you have copied from twitter or any other social media website.

You can do the same with Facebook pages. As you can see, there are many different types of widget available.



Using plugins

If you are using self-hosted WordPress, you can dramatically extend the functionality of your site by using plugins. Plugins are bits of software written by third parties.

See **Dashboard > Plugins > Add new**, and search for key words. For instance, if you want users to be able to easily download your articles as PDFs, search for “PDF”, read the details and select the plugin that seems best. Click “install” and it will be installed automatically.

Most plugins are free of charge.

Some plugins then get their own menu on the left hand side of the dashboard. You can use this to configure them.

Here are some plugins that we find particularly useful:

Akismet: Blocks spam comments

Jetpack: Adds page stats and a number of other features.

Print Friendly and PDF: Optimises your pages for print

RV Embed PDF: Allows you to upload and embed PDF pages on your site

WordPress Mobile Pack: installs mobile themes when the site is viewed from a mobile phone

There are thousands of other themes that can be used to install podcasts, forums and many other features.

This should be enough to get a basic website up and running. There is much more you can do if you take the time to learn it.

Good luck!