Beta WordPress Blog Application Administrator Guide

Center for New Media and Citizen Engagement (CNMCE)

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Getting Started with Your WordPress Blog

Blogs are communication tools. Whether seriously professional or personal and light-hearted, the basic goal of a blog is to encourage a robust community exchange of ideas and opinions. Anything, from major policy decisions to the placement of a new button on the home page, is open to discussion, analysis, and voting. Blogs provide a fresh approach to gathering citizen feedback, and they offer federal employees and the public a new way to influence government decision-making.

The term "blog" is short for web log. It is an online journal or newsletter that is posted on a website, allowing ready access to the general public. Blogs typically contain reports and comments on topics of interest to the author, and are usually written and posted using software specifically designed for the purpose. This software permits authors to create either static informative Pages, which change very rarely, or more dynamic Posts, which are often regularly updated.

Posts are normally shorter than Pages, have strings of reader comments associated with them, and are presented in reverse chronological order – newest first. They may include hyperlinks to other websites, and media, such as photos or video clips. Depending on the goals, blogs can consist mostly of Posts, or have just a few Posts but lots of comments and discussion. They can have just three or four static Pages, or hundreds. The choice is yours.

Blog Management Tips

Some simple tips for starting out:

- The blog "owner" is frequently the System Administrator as well as the main author. Others can be given administrative and authoring privileges (see *Roles*, page 14).
- Familiarize yourself with the Administrative Panel, also called the **Dashboard**, which is the main access to all the control features (see *Logging In,* page 3).
- Comments should be reviewed at least daily, if not more often, for moderation.

- The standard, out-of-the-box Front Page comes set up as a static information page. You can simply replace the sample instructions with your own text, or you can change the page to a "Post-and-comment" page in the **Reading** screen under **Settings** in your Dashboard (see *Reading* page 14).
- Have a focus group provide feedback on your blog before going public.
- Include a **Contact Us** function (see *Appendix D*, page 19) that allows emailing the System Administrator directly. The email responses generated should be monitored and answered regularly. Add this function to the pre-defined *About Page* or create a new page.
- Develop an outreach plan. Find creative ways to announce your blog and generate interest.
- Go to Webcontent.gov to learn more about setting up and managing blogs.

Blog Content Tips

- Make your headlines snappy.
- Know what you want to say.
- Write to get the reader's attention.
- Develop a consistent style and tone.
- Include interesting links to other web pages that are contextual to your Posts.
- Try to keep Posts relatively short (250-300 words).
- Use subheads to provide visual breaks in long Posts.
- Use inserted media to enhance your Pages and Posts (see *Media* - Add pictures and video to your Posts, page 10)
- Draft your content in a word-processing application (for automatic grammar and spell checking), edit it carefully, and then copy-and-paste a final version into the blog.

  TIP: *You can minimize format translation problems by first copying your draft into a simple text editor (such as Windows Live Writer, Blogo, WordPad, or Notepad).*

The following pages provide detailed basic information necessary to initiate and begin to manage your blog. Links to many sources of more detailed information on a wide variety of topics can be found in, *Appendix E: Useful Links,* page 21.

TIP: *Control-click on any link or cross-reference to jump to it.*

URLs, Themes/Templates, Plug-Ins, and Upgrades Caution

Because this is a multi-user installation of WordPress, your blog shares a set of pre-installed plug-ins with others. Therefore:

- Your URL will look like this: *http://blog.citizen.apps.gov/yourblogname/*
  At this time, the URL is fixed once the product is provisioned. Future releases may offer more flexibility with Vanity URLs.
- You can choose to activate or deactivate any provided plug-ins, but you may not add new ones.

  TIP: *Please suggest new, interesting plugins at our Release Blog*
- You may not install WordPress upgrades. This must be done at the host level.

  TIP: *If you see the message "A new version of WordPress is available! Please update now" ignore it. Installation of updates MUST be done at the host level.*
- If you have a technical or functional question regarding the blog product or have a suggestion to make, use our Online Help Forum.

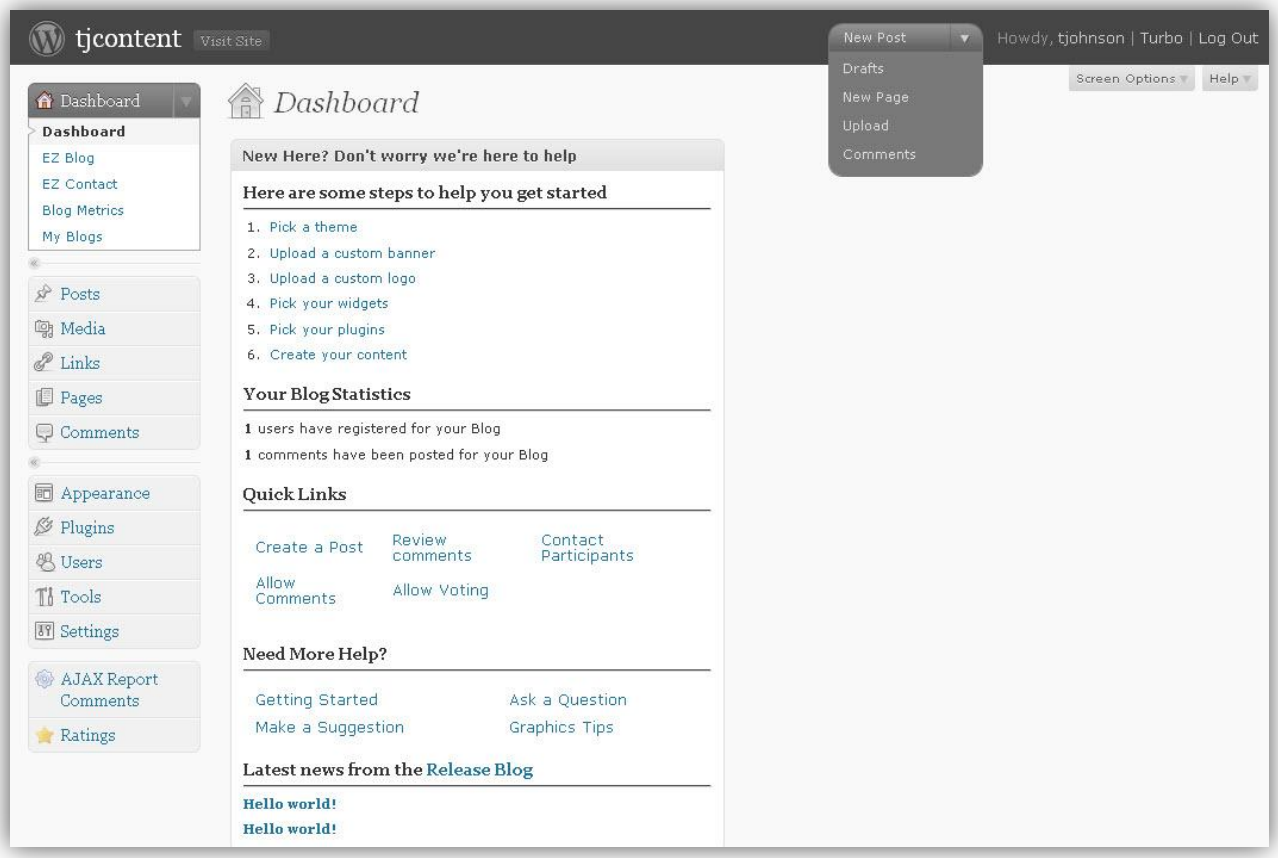
  TIP: *Submit your question at Blog Help.*

Logging In

The first page has a **Log In** link. Use your APPS.gov NOW (a.k.a. Apps Now) provided account information to log in as the Site Administrator. This allows you to control all the available settings of your site. After logging in, click on the **My Account** button to access the **Dashboard**. This is the gateway to screens that control and/or monitor all of the blog's functions.

TIP: *You must **log out** when leaving your blog to prevent others with access to your computer from making changes to your settings.*

Dashboard

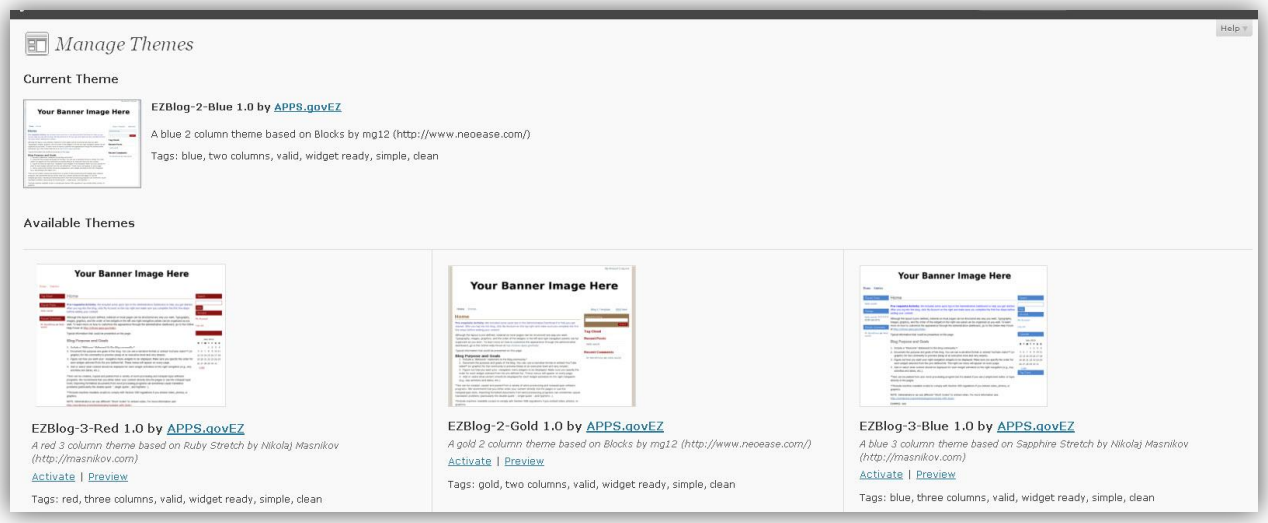


The Center for New Media and Citizen Engagement (CNMCE) team's custom **Dashboard** features a menu in the center work space that begins with **Steps to Help You Get Started**—six links to the first screens you will need. Pick your favorite theme, upload a custom header and/or login logo, activate your preferred plugins and widgets, and then start adding your own content. There are also links to the Post and Comment moderation screens, the site statistics, **Online Help Forum,** and an explanatory **Release Blog**. Other areas with links:

- The **header** at the top shows the name of your blog and a visit site link to your blog's main page, a drop-down menu of frequently used tools, and a link to your profile (shown as user name). There is a Screen Options dropdown menu, which can offer various things depending on what screen you are in, and a Help tab, which opens a contextual help menu at the top of any screen.
- The **footer**, at the bottom, has a link to the *About Page.* You cannot rename or delete this page because it is part of the template. New pages can be added to your blog but not in the footer.
- The **main navigation** menu on the left side of the Dashboard has icons that open menus with links to all of the administrative screens (see *Left Navigation Menu* on page 7 for more detailed information).

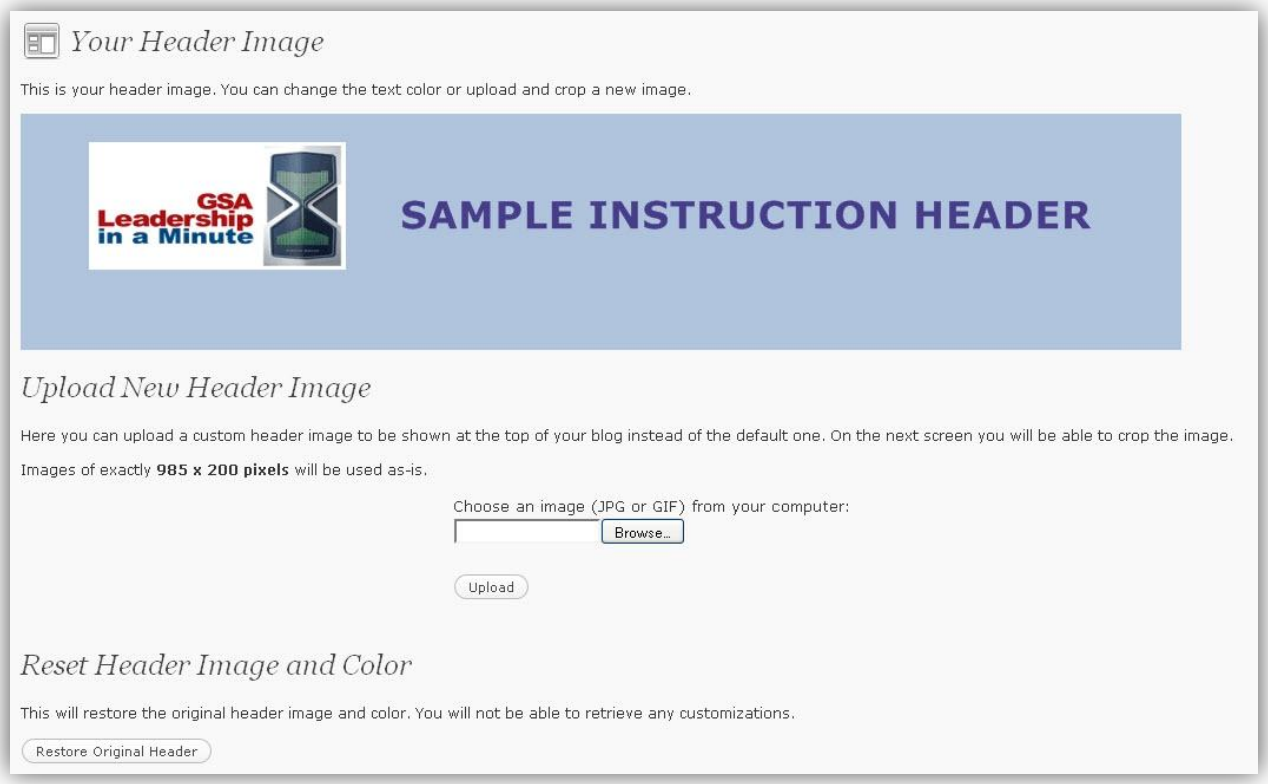
Steps to Help You Get Started

We'll begin by exploring the first six steps.



Pick a Theme

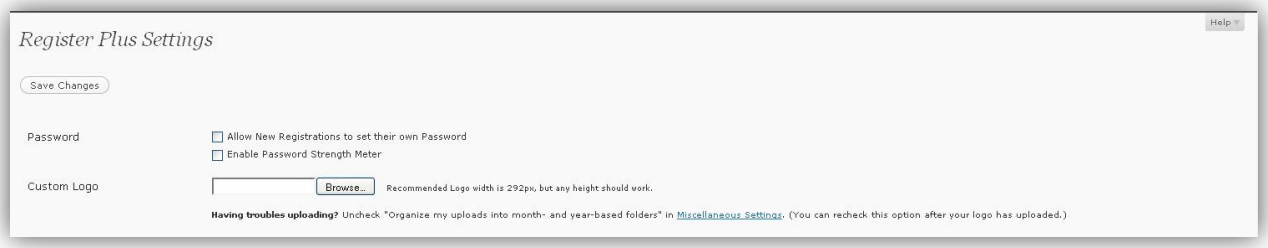
Choose either a two- or three-column theme and a color option. Click on a theme to see a preview. If you like it, **Activate** it at the upper right of the preview screen.



Upload a Custom Banner

Here you can upload your own header artwork to be displayed at the top of your blog. Choose an image from your computer by clicking **Browse** and select **Upload**. Your image will appear at the top of this screen in preview mode. Choose whatever part of the image you want to use as the header and select **Crop Header** to activate. Visit your site and you should see the new header now.

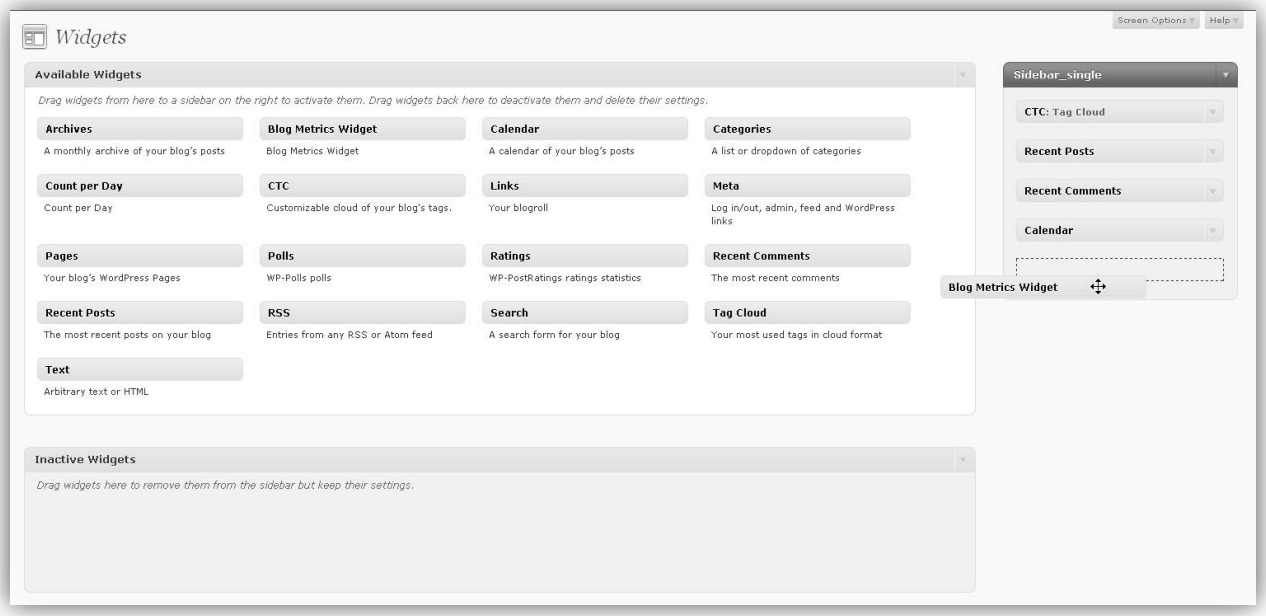
TIP: *Custom uploaded artwork must be 985 x200 pixels or else it will be automatically cropped.*



Upload a Custom Logo

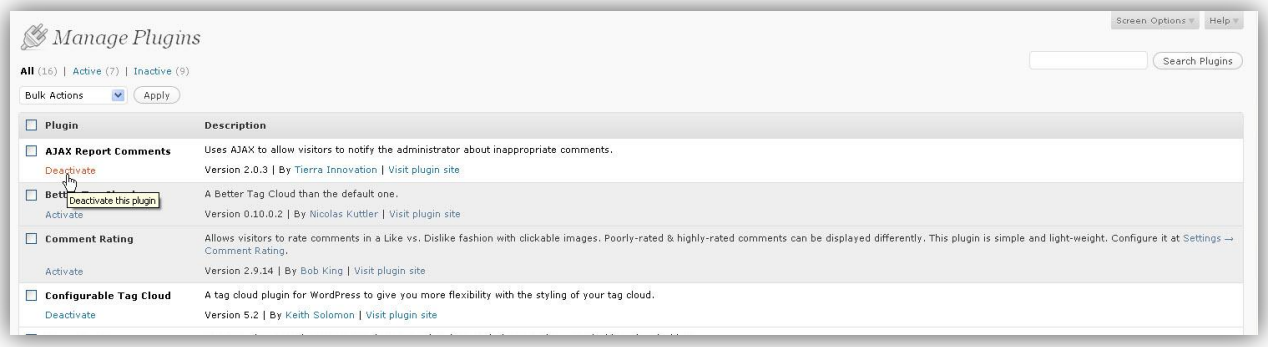
This link takes you to the **Register Plus** plugin screen, which contains a feature that allows you to load your own logo for the login page. Choose an image from your computer by clicking **Browse** and **Save Changes.** You will have to logout and then login again to see if the image appears.

> ***TIP:*** *If you upload your own login logo, the width should be sized to 292 pixels and any height should work.*



Pick Your Widgets

Widgets are mini-applications that add features to the sidebars of your blog. Drag them to the sidebar to activate them, and click on the arrow on each widget to set any adjustable parameters. Dragging them to the Inactive Widgets window deactivates them but saves their settings.



Pick Your Plugins

This link takes you to a list of available plugins. They offer a wide range of extra functionality, such as comment rating, adding links to social media sites, gathering additional site traffic information, or

uploading YouTube videos. Familiarize yourself with what they do and activate or deactivate them as you choose.

Create Your Content

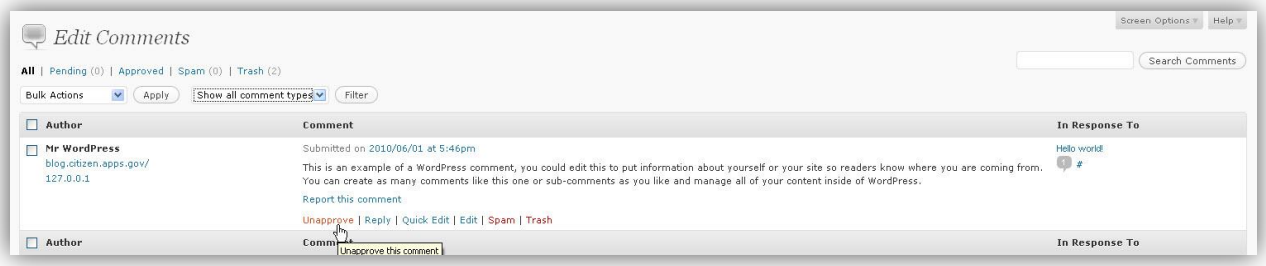
Clickable options in the **Edit Pages** window appear when you mouse-over them, or you can open any pre-defined page by clicking on its name. You can then view the pages, edit or delete copy (or entire pages), and enter and format new text.

Quick Links

The five links under this heading allow you to open some key administrative pages without using the left navigation menu.

Create a Post

This opens the **Edit Posts** window. You can create new posts, and also approve, disapprove, or edit existing posts.

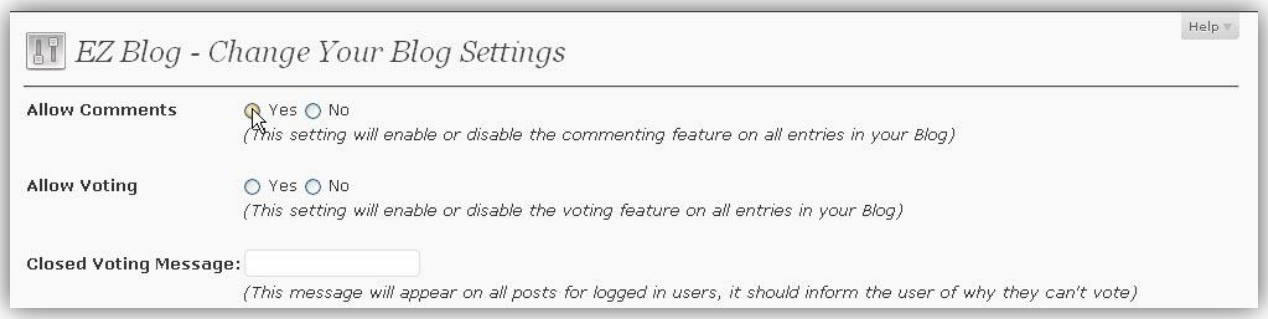


Edit and Review Comments

This opens the **Edit Comments** window. You can approve, disapprove, reply to, or edit comments, and also mark them as spam or send them to the trash.

Contact Participants

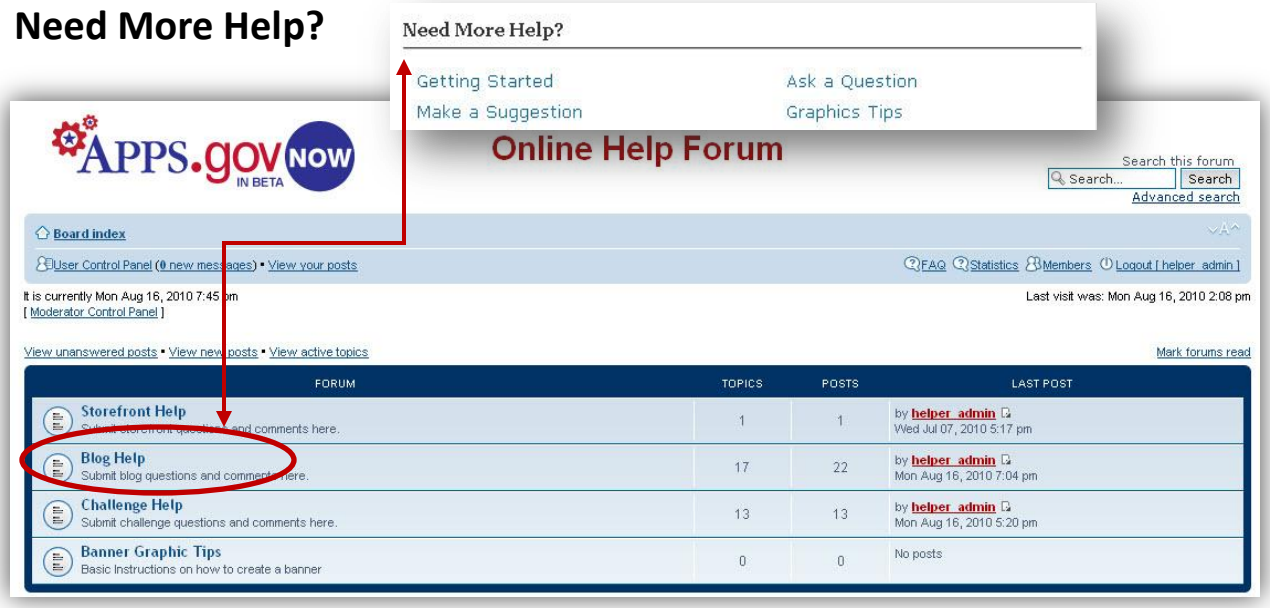
The **EZ Contact** window allows you to send email to individual users or to multiple users simultaneously.



Allow Comments/Allow Voting

Both links open the EZ Blog screen. You can allow/disallow comments and voting, and also create a message that will appear when voting has been closed.

Need More Help?



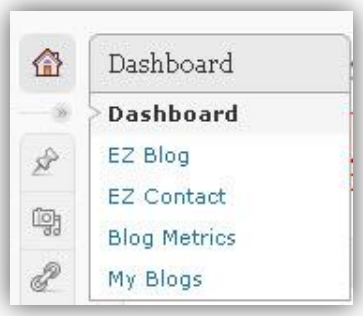
The links under **Need More Help?** all take you to various areas of our **Online Help Forum.** It is your best source for platform-specific information.

There are FAQs for the storefront, as well as for the blog and challenge tools. There are tips for getting started and how to create banner graphics. You can also post questions for our technical staff to answer and make suggestions for future improvements.

Left Navigation Menu

Now that you are familiar with the basics, we'll go in descending order through the links in the Dashboard's main menu in more detail.

Dashboard

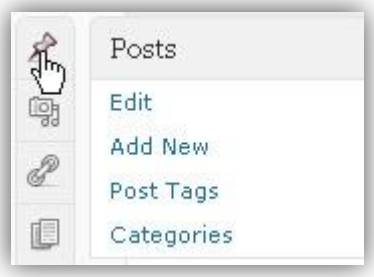


The Dashboard dropdown menu has five links. The **EZ Blog** and **EZ Contact** links have been covered under *Quick Links* on page 6.

Blog Metrics presents counts of such things as number of authors and posts, comments, word counts in posts, posting frequency, etc.

My Blogs shows a list of all your active blogs.

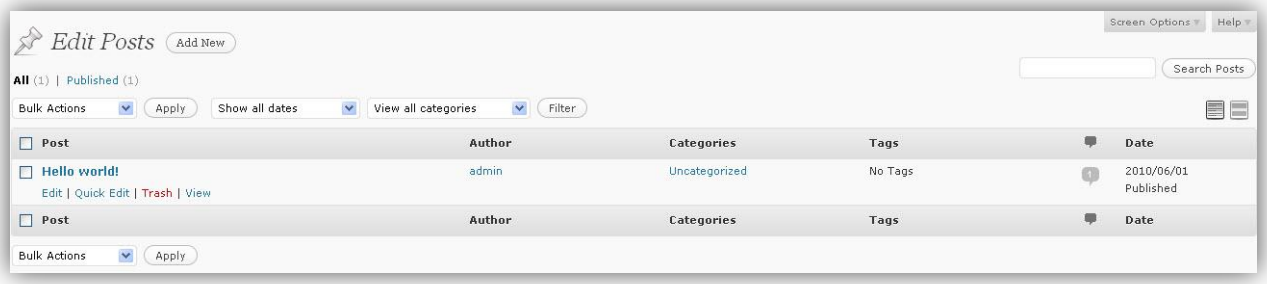
Posts (Dynamic Content)



Posts are the content that will generate reader feedback and discussion on your blog. Writing engaging content takes practice. Ask questions of your readers to get them involved in active and lively discussion in the form of comments or mail. Be sure to include links to other resources.

Posts are usually grouped in categories to keep related topics together.

- Posts display in reverse chronological order on your home page.
- Posts usually have comment fields beneath them.



Edit

This screen presents a table listing all Posts, beginning with the newest. **Screen Options** allows you to choose which columns are visible. You can select Posts by clicking, by checking their individual boxes, or choose all by checking the box at the top of the table. Mouse-over any Post to reveal editing options.

- **Edit Individual Posts** is essentially the same as the **Posts: Add New** screen. The only difference is that the button to save your work is called **Update Post** instead of **Publish**.
- The **Quick Edit** link is an in-line edit that allows you to change the following items: *Title, Slug, Date, Author, Password or Private page box, Parent, Template, Order, Allow Comments, Allow Pings, and Status*. Click **Update Post** to save the edits or **Cancel** to abort.
- The **Trash** link allows you to move a post to the trash. This action can be undone.
- **View**: This action presents the Post as it appears in a single Page view on your blog.
- **Bulk Edit** allows the fields *Author, Parent, Template, Comments Allowed, Status, and Pings Allowed*, to be changed for all selected Posts. Click the **Apply** button to execute a Bulk Action. Click **Update Post** to save the edits or **Cancel** to abort.

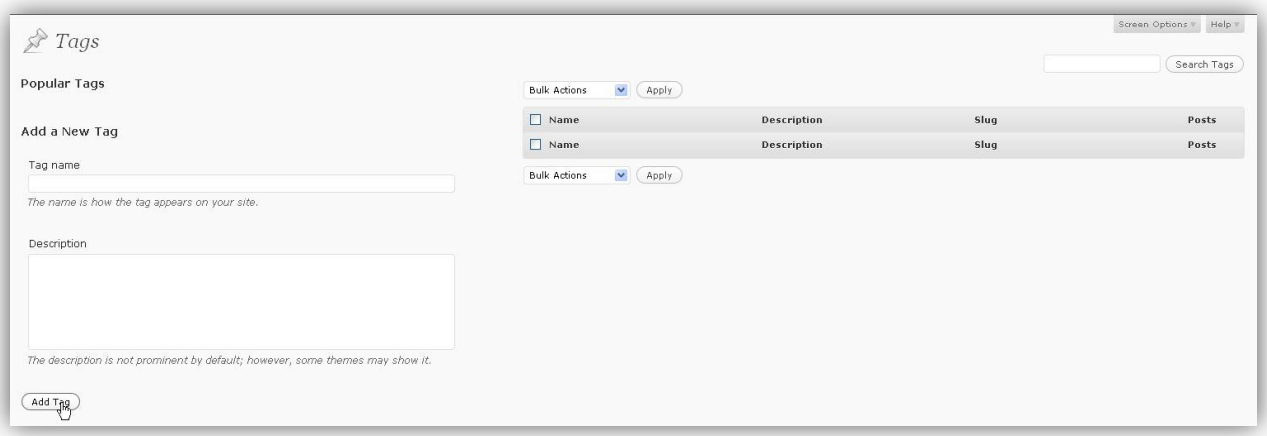
  TIP: *When a Post (or a Page) is deleted, everything that is tied to it is deleted also. This includes comments, post meta fields, and terms associated with the Post.*

Add New

To write a Post:

- Give it a title. Avoid using the same title twice, as that will cause problems.
- Choose either **Public** or **Private** view mode.
- Assign an existing category, or create a new one; add tags if desired (see *Post Tags,* below, and *Categories,* page 10).
- Add trackbacks and pings, if desired (see *Discussion*, page 14).
- Save as a draft/pending review rather than immediately publishing if you prefer. To return to your drafts later, visit **Posts: Edit** in the menu bar and select your post from the list.
- To schedule a post for publication on a future time or date, click **Edit** in the Publish area next to the words **Publish immediately**. Change the settings to the desired time and date.
- When you are ready, click **Publish**.

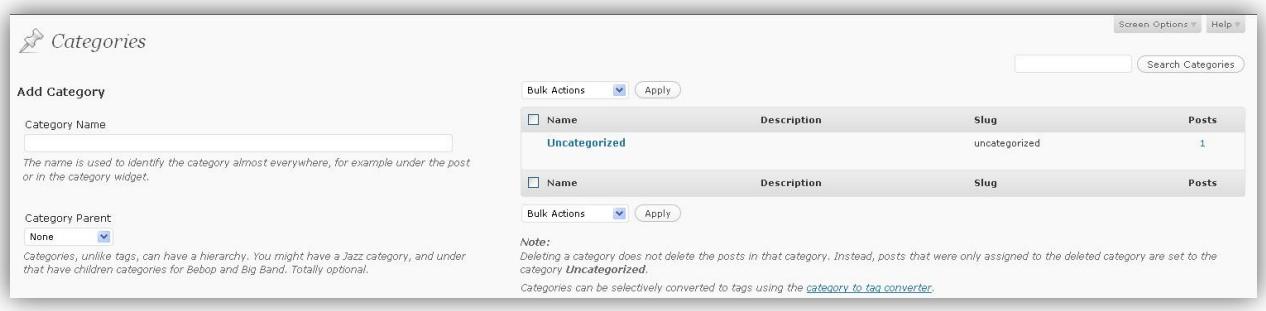
You can view your posts by clicking the **Post** tab on the Dashboard.



Post Tags

Tags are keywords you can assign to each post. They are micro-categories for your blog, similar to including index entries for a page. Posts with matching tags are linked together when a user clicks one. Unlike categories, tags have no hierarchy, meaning there is no relationship from one tag to another. But, like categories, tags aid user access to information on your blog.

- The **Tags** screen allows you to add, change, or delete tags.
- Tags are displayed under each Post that has been assigned tags.
- A User can click on a tag link, and see an archive page containing all relevant Posts.
- Multiple tags can be selected for deletion.
- A search option allows you to find tags for editing or deletion.
- Tags can also be added in the **Posts: Add New** screen.



Categories

A category is a general classification for Posts. Posts may be assigned one or more categories (the default is "Uncategorized"). Categories are used to sort your Posts into groups and subgroups, aiding site navigation.

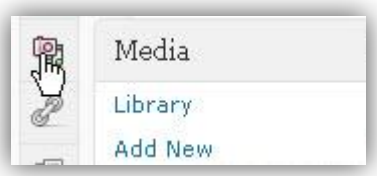
- The **Categories** screen allows you to add, edit, and delete categories, as well as organize your categories hierarchically.
- A new category may be assigned to a **Category Parent** to establish a hierarchy within the category structure. (Using automobiles as an example, a hierarchy might be Car>Ford>Mustang).
- Each category name must be unique, regardless of hierarchy.
- Categories are shown in two different places on your blog:
  1. As links in the **Category** section of your right sidebar.
  2. Displayed under a relevant Post.
- Multiple categories can be selected for deletion.
- A search option allows you to find categories to edit or delete.
- Categories can also be added in the **Post: Add New** screen.

To change the category assigned to a Post:

- Go to **Posts: Edit**, find the post you wish to recategorize and click **Quick Edit**.
- In the **Categories** section select the new category and click **Update Post** to save the change.

TIP: *Deleting a category does not delete posts. They just revert to the default category "Uncategorized". You can also convert categories to tags—they will appear in the "tag cloud" if that feature is activated.*

Media - Add pictures and video to your Posts



The term "media" encompasses images, video, recordings, and files that can be uploaded and inserted into the content when writing a Post or Page.

- Always upload media into the **Media Library**.

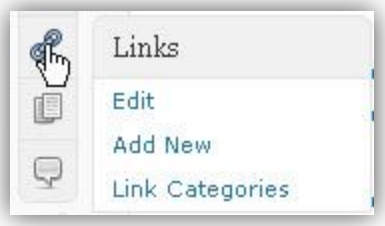
TIP: *Use the **Browser** uploader in the **Add New** screen if you encounter challenges with Flash uploader.*

- Uploading into the **Media Library** will store the picture on the server.
- The **Media Library** screen allows you to edit the title, caption, or description, and delete or view previously uploaded Media.

  TIP: *For 508-compliant Alt Text, the caption field MUST describe the image. It is your responsibility to ensure that uploaded media is 508-compliant.*

- Click Save all changes to save edited media uploads.

Links



WordPress allows you to store a set of external links, also known as your blogroll. These links can be put into categories, imported, exported, added, deleted, and edited. The link categories themselves can also be added, deleted, and edited.

Under **Links,** the **Add New** screen handles the creation of new links to outside web sites.

- Links can be automatically associated with images.
- Links can be rated on a scale from zero to ten.
- Links can be categorized to aid in navigation but, unlike Posts, they have no hierarchy.
- Each link category name must be unique.

The **Edit** screen allows you to:

- Select links to edit or delete.
- Update and refresh any field entered in **Add New**.
- Select multiple links for deletion.
- Use a variety of search and filtering options.

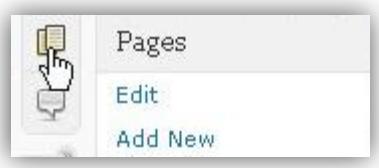
TIP: *For more detailed information on managing links, go to http://codex.wordpress.org/Links Manager.*

RSS Feeds

WordPress content is also automatically converted into something called an RSS feed. RSS stands for Really Simple Syndication. Once someone subscribes to the feed, any new content will be sent directly to them, eliminating the need for a website visit.

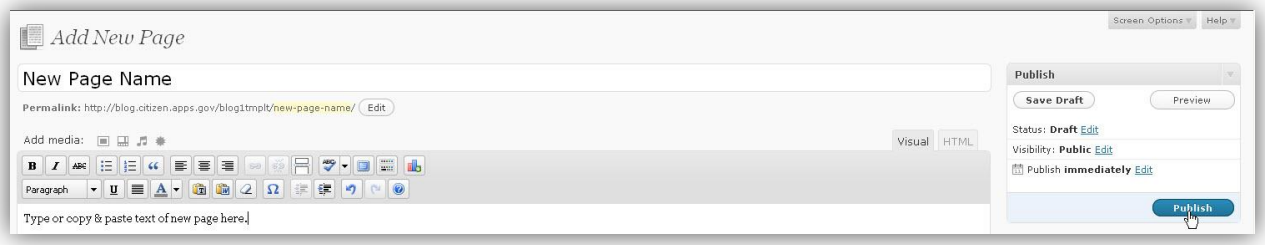
You can add text, audio, images, logos and video to a feed. The feed is indexed, and each item is identified by a link to the content on your site. Most RSS feeds include a title for the link and a description of the content.

Pages (Static Content)



A Page presents "static" content that will seldom change—usually information about yourself or your site that will stay applicable. Pages can organize and manage any amount of content. In addition to a *Home Page*, a site will typically have at least one other page, often called *Entries*, and at least one link in the footer to an *About Page.* You could include *policy content* under a separate heading on this page (see *Appendix B and Appendix C , pages 17-18).*

- Pages cannot be grouped into Categories or be assigned Tags.
- Pages are not displayed with the Posts, but are displayed individually (like any tab on a website).
- Pages are not files. They are stored in your database just like Posts.



Add New

The **Add New Page** screen allows you to create new Pages. You can title the page, and add text and media (images, video, recordings, etc.) if desired.

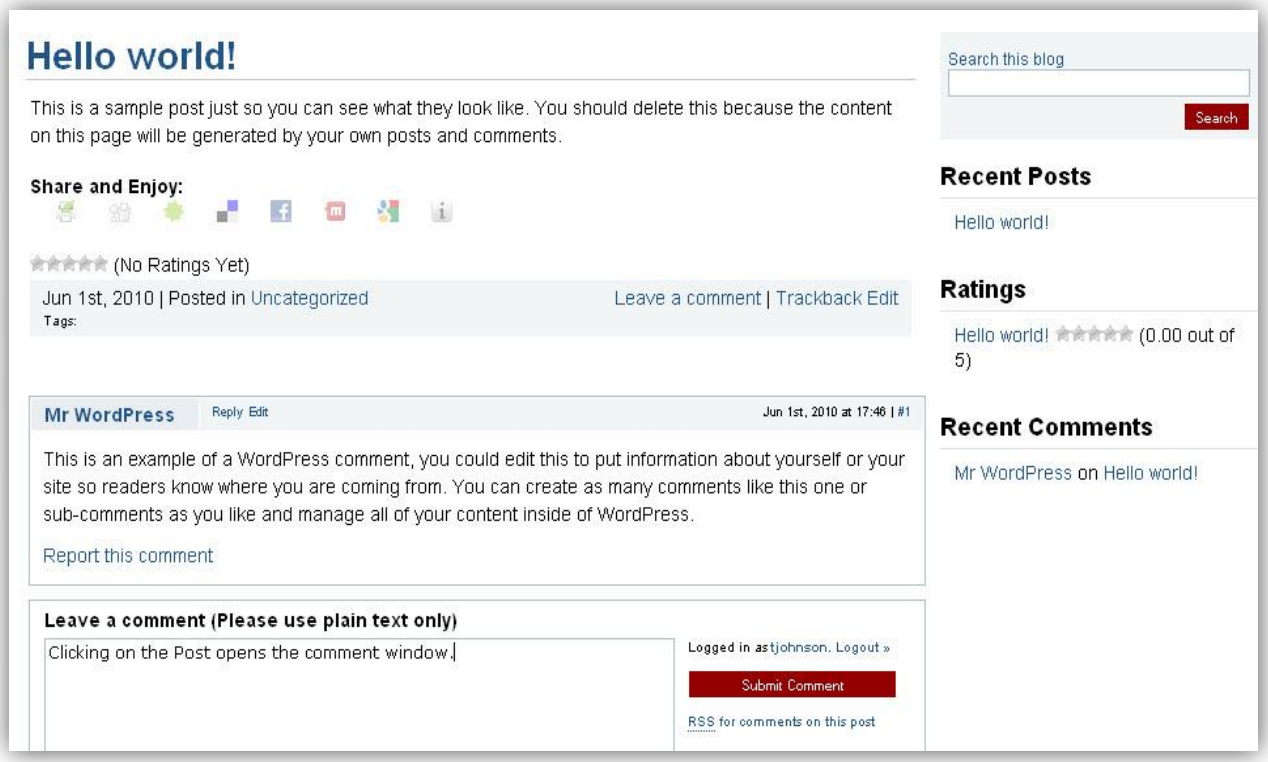
Edit

The **Edit Pages** screen brings up a table that lists all Pages, beginning with the most recent. **Screen Options** allows you to choose which columns are visible. Several actions are available. First, **Select** one or more Pages by checking their individual boxes, or choose all by checking the box at the top of the table. There is a roll-over button that reveals editing options.

- **Bulk Edit** can change the *Author, Parent Page, Template, Comments Allowed, Status, and Pings Allowed* fields for all selected Pages. Click the **Apply** button to execute a Bulk action. Click **Update Page** to save.
- **Quick Edit** is an in-line edit tool that allows you to change only: *Title, Slug, Date, Author, Password or Private page box, Parent Page, Order, Template, Allow Comments, Allow Pings, and Status* for a single selected Page. Click **Update Page** to save edits.
- The **Trash** link allows you to move a post to the trash. This action can be undone.
- **View:** This action displays a Page as it appears in a "Single Page" view on your blog.

You can also add a new page from this window by clicking the **Add New** button at the top.

Comments - Reader Feedback



Comments are user responses to Posts. Clicking on a Post opens the comment window. Readers can offer thoughts regarding the post's content, links to other resources, or generate discussions.

Comment moderation allows you to approve comments before they appear on your site. Moderation can filter spam and unacceptable language, and can limit the number of hyperlinks permitted in a comment. You can also choose a setting that allows any commenter with a previously-approved comment to bypass moderation.

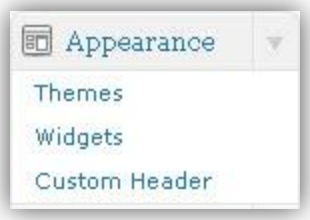
Comment moderation controls are in the **Settings: Discussion** screen (see *Discussion*, page 14).

Edit Comments

In the **Comments** screen:

- You can edit and delete, as well as mark comments as spam.
- Comments that are awaiting moderation can be marked as approved/unapproved.
- Previously approved comments can be unapproved.
- Multiple comments can be selected simultaneously so bulk actions can be performed.
- You can see the number of comments approved or awaiting moderation.
- You can search to find specific comments.

Appearance



These screens control your blog's look. All have been discussed earlier in this guide, except **Current Theme Options**.

Themes open the **Manage Themes** window (see *Pick a Theme*, page 4).

Widgets are discussed under *Pick Your Widgets* on page 5.

Custom Header is discussed in *Upload a Custom Banner*, page 4.

***NOTE:** The **Editor** function is disabled because this is a multi-user installation of WordPress MU, and certain theme-editing function might affect other blogs.*

Plugins

As discussed in *Pick Your Plugins* on page 5, clicking **Installed** takes you to a list of available plugins. You can decide which ones you want and activate or deactivate them as you choose.

Users

A user account is automatically set up when someone registers. You have several tools available to manage these accounts.

- The **Authors and Users** screen lists all users and allows you to change their roles (see below).
- The **Add New** screen allows the creation of new User Accounts, and also allows you to assign a role.
- The **Your Profile** screen allows editing of information related to a User Account.
- **User Registrations** lets you set a default role for new users.

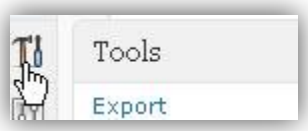
Roles

The **Roles** feature is designed to give a blog owner the ability to control what users can and cannot do in the blog. There are several places where roles can be assigned. The **User Registrations** panel allows you to assign a default role to newly-registering users, and roles can also be set through dropdown menus at the **Authors & Users** or **Add New** panels.

Users can be assigned the following roles:

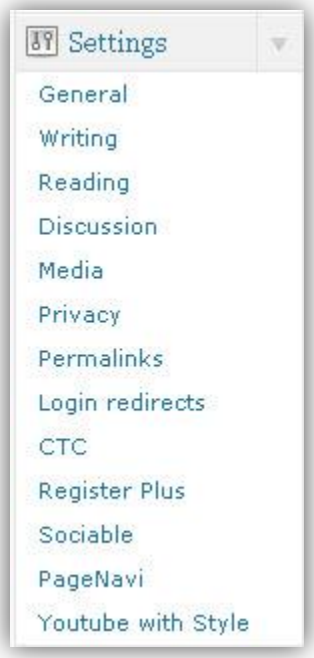
- **Administrator**: access to all the administration features.
- **Editor**: publish posts and manage their own and others' posts.
- **Author**: publish and manage only their own posts.
- **Contributor**: write and manage their own posts, but not publish.
- **Subscriber**: read comments/make comments/receive e-mail newsletters (if that option is made available), etc.

Tools



When you click the button on the **Export** screen, WordPress will create an XML file that can be saved. This format, WordPress eXtended RSS or WXR, will contain your posts, pages, comments, custom fields, categories, and tags. Once you've saved the download file, you can use the Import function on another WordPress blog to import it.

Settings—Configuration



Settings contain tools that define your blog as a whole: how your site behaves, how you interact with your site, and how the rest of the world interacts with your site. The following screens control these settings.

General: Controls the basic configuration of your site: your site's title and location, and how dates and times are calculated and displayed.

Writing: Controls the interface with which you write new posts. It features settings for the size of the 'post box' in the **Write Post** screen, the default Category, the default Link Category, and remote posting options.

Reading: You can decide if you want Posts, or a static Page (default), displayed as your blog's front (main) page. You can also adjust how many posts are displayed. In addition, you can adjust RSS feed features to determine how the information from your site is sent to a reader's web browser or other applications.

Discussion: Controls settings concerning moderation of incoming and outgoing comments (see *Comments-Reader Feedback*, page 12). There are also controls for linkbacks (pingbacks, trackbacks, and backlinks), and the circumstances under which your blog sends you email about site details. **Trackbacks** are a way to notify websites when you publish an entry that references them. When you send a trackback, a link with a short excerpt of your entry will appear on the referenced website. Trackbacks are like mini letters of recommendation or a way of tracking who is saying what about what you wrote. **Pingbacks** allow notification of an entry just by posting its permalink (see below) directly in the content of your blog entry. No special trackback link is necessary. If the site has pings enabled, a link with a brief sampling of the text around it will appear on their blog. **Backlink** is the term search engines use for links that point to your blog.

Media: The **Media** screen allows you to define linking options for images, documents, and other media files, and to specify the default maximum dimensions (in pixels) allowed for images inserted into the body of a post.

Privacy: This screen allows you to choose to block your blog's visibility to search engines, while still allowing it to be seen by normal visitors.

Permalinks: Permalinks are permanent URLs that link to your individual weblog posts, as well as to categories and other lists of weblog postings. They are automatically created when anyone posts or

comments. They will continue to point to a specific blog or forum entry after it has passed from the post page to the archives. Custom URL structures for your permalinks and archives can be created using the **Permalinks** screen.

Login Redirects: Controls which page users are sent to after login.

Blog Metrics: Allows you to select either the full stats or the standard deviation view.

CTC: Control all aspects of your Configurable Tag Cloud here.

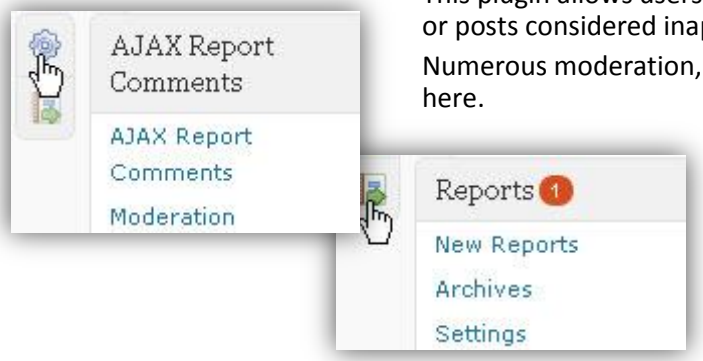
Register Plus: This offers features that allow you to customize the registration process.

Sociable: This panel allows you to choose which social media tools will appear on your site.

PagiNavi: Allows you to enter links that will take users to specific places in your site.

Youtube with Style: Set the maximum dimensions of a video window here.

AJAX Report Comments & Reports



This plugin allows users to notify site administrators of any comments or posts considered inappropriate.

Numerous moderation, reporting, and archiving options can be set here.

Basic Maintenance Tips

- Check your feeds and contact pages regularly to make sure they work.
- Make sure that your About info is updated and filled out.
- Check the bottoms of the pages. They can sometimes appear to be working properly while there is an error at the foot of the page.
- Check regularly for outdated or broken links.
- Review comments at least daily.

Appendix A: Home Page Content Suggestions

Pre-requisite Activity: We included some quick tips in the Administrative Dashboard to help you get started. After you log into the blog, click *My Account* on the top right and make sure you complete the first five steps before adding your content.

Although the layout is pre-defined, material on most pages can be structured any way you want. Typography, images, graphics, and the order of the widgets in the left and right navigation panels can be organized as you wish. To learn more on how to customize the appearance through the administrative dashboard, go to the Online Help Forum at http://citizen.apps.gov/help/.
Typical information that could be presented on this page:

Blog Purpose and Goals

1. Include a "Welcome" statement to the blog community.*
2. Document the purpose and goals of the blog. You can use a narrative format or embed YouTube videos** (or graphics) for the community to preview (keep at an executive level and very simple).
3. Figure out how you want your navigation menu widgets to be displayed. Make sure you specify the order for each widget selected from the pre-defined list. These menus will appear on every page.
4. Add or select what content should be displayed for each widget activated on the right navigation (e.g., key activities and dates, etc.).

*Text can be pasted from your word-processing program but it's easiest if you use a simple text-editor or type directly in the pages.

**Include machine-readable scripts to comply with Section 508 regulations if you embed video, photos, or graphics.

NOTE: Administrators can use different "Short Codes" to embed video. For more information see: http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/youtube-with-style/.

EXAMPLE: Go to Add a Short Code

Registration and Submission Process

Keep this simple. Briefly explain that each user needs to register and sign the *Privacy Policy* before engaging in the process. If you want to enforce a *Terms of Participation Agreement,* briefly explain that here and include content in the footer. [Sample content is already provided in these footer links to help kick start your activity - review, edit or delete the page].

In addition to requiring basic information such as name and email address, Administrators can use the *Register Plus* feature under *Settings* in the *Administrative Dashboard* to select a variety of pre-defined information fields, or to create additional custom fields.

Timeline

Provide a calendar of events or a timeline that outlines key activities or phases. You can add the Calendar widget to a navigation menu to document and display key events.

Appendix B: Sample Terms of Participation

This is a sample Terms of Participation Agreement that you could add to your blog. Please review, edit and/or replace it with your own organization's terms. Include it on the *About Page* under a separate heading or create a new page. If you create a new page, it cannot be added as link in the footer.

Standards of Conduct

Our Terms of Participation are intended to support open discussion while ensuring a respectful exchange of ideas. Submissions may be reviewed against these Terms (moderation) before being posted. Ideas or comments will be removed from the site by staff if they include any of the following:

- Threatening, slanderous or obscene language;
- Personal attacks;
- Discriminatory language (including hate speech) based on race, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion or disability;
- Sexually explicit material and other material that would violate the law if published here;
- Ideas or comments that promote services or products (non-commercial links that are relevant to this web site are OK);
- Repetitive posts (for example, if you submit the same idea multiple times);
- Embedded media, such as videos (but hyperlinks to such media are OK);
- Spam or undecipherable language (gratuitous links will be viewed as spam);
- Copyright infringement; or
- Identifiable personal information (e.g., social security numbers, postal and email addresses, phone numbers).

In general, agencies may: approve ideas; reject ideas if they violate the terms laid out in this document; or move ideas to an off–topic community if they do not violate these terms but are considered to be off-topic (see below). However, in some rare cases, agencies may also choose to directly edit text in order to redact any Personally Identifiable Information (PII) (e.g., your social security number) that may be included. Agencies will not use this editing capability to alter the substance of ideas submitted.

Comments that contain PII will be removed, but not the original ideas that they are posted under.

Copyrighted Materials

Copyrighted materials may not be used or reproduced without permission. It is the responsibility of all parties posting materials on <SITE NAME> to ensure that such material does not violate other parties' proprietary rights and does not otherwise violate law or applicable policy. We reserve the right to delete or make inaccessible files that contain such material. <SITE NAME> is not responsible for any errors in material provided on the site, and shall not be liable for any damages of any kind arising from the use or incorrect or proprietary material.

Off–Topic and Duplicate Posts

To ensure a focused and constructive discussion, moderators reserve the right to move ideas which are "off topic" or do not address some aspect of the dialog, to the Off-Topic community. Topics that are considered off-topic include but are not limited to discussions of policy issues not directly addressed by this initiative.

A registered user can flag an idea or comment as "off topic" or inappropriate. This will alert moderators to review it.

Prior to submitting an idea, please search the site for similar ideas. If two or more virtually identical ideas are posted, a moderator may merge the separate submissions into a single statement of the idea to keep comments on the idea together.

Information Collected Under the Paperwork Reduction Act

The Paperwork Reduction Act requires that agency information collections minimize duplication and burden on the public, have practical utility, and support the proper performance of the agency's mission.

The collection of information for the APPS.gov NOW tools and its rating (voting) functionality were approved on February 1, 2010, by the Office of Management and Budget and assigned 3090-0288.

Questions

This Terms of Participation statement may be amended or modified in the future. To ask questions or express concerns, please contact: **[add name, email, and phone number, etc.]**

Appendix C: Sample Privacy Policy

This is a sample Privacy Policy that you could add to your blog. Please review, edit and/or replace it with your own organization's policy content. Include it on the *About Page* under a separate heading or create a new page to post this information. If you create a new page, it cannot be added as link in the footer.

We are committed to ensuring the privacy of our users. You can browse and search this site as an anonymous user, without logging in, but you must register by creating an account (through submission of a valid, working email address) to post, comment, or vote. Only your username will be visible on the site. Your e-mail address will not be displayed or shared with anyone outside the government site administrators, *unless you opt to allow other participants to contact you via e-mail.*

Information Collected and Stored Automatically

When you browse, read pages, or download information certain technical information (listed below) is automatically gathered and temporarily stored. This information never identifies who you are. It is used exclusively to analyze general site traffic patterns to make the site more useful to participants. The U.S. government does not collect, disseminate, or maintain this information.

- IP addresses, which are the locations of computers or networks on the Internet;
- The types of browsers and operating systems used to access the dialog tool;
- The date and time of visits to the dialog;
- The pages visited; and,
- The address of Web sites from which our visitors link to the dialog.

We do not gather, request, record, require, collect or track any user's Personal Information through these processes, and they are only reported in the aggregate as statistics.

If You Provide Personal Information

The information you enter in any profile page is not validated, so you can enter whatever you like. Profile information may be visible to other visitors to the site.

If you choose to provide us with personal information—such as filling out a Contact Us form and submitting it through the website—the information will only be used for the specific intended purpose. We never create individual profiles.

It is our policy not to make Personal Information available to anyone unless it is required by law or as otherwise described in this policy. We do not sell, rent, exchange or disclose any information about our site visitors, nor is the data regarding email addresses exported for any reason other than if required by law or to track down repeated abusive behavior on the site.

If you voluntarily provide a Zip Code, it will only be used to generate aggregate user metrics, and will not be associated with any Personally Identifiable Information.

NOTE: *We recommend that you NOT include identifiable personal information (especially Social Security numbers) in any posts or comments.*

This is not a privacy act system of record. Your comments and ideas will not be stored under or retrieved by your email address by the U.S. government users.

Cookies

A persistent cookie is a piece of data stored by a user's browser that helps a Web site or service such as this Storefront to recognize that user's unique computer, and thus to "remember" you on return visits. You can remove or block cookies by changing the settings of your browser.

APPS.gov NOW uses an optional persistent cookie in this tool to recognize returning participants. This enables revisiting the site without having to log in.

No personal information is saved, nor can this cookie be used to track user activities across other websites.

Links to Other Sites

This Web site provides links to other government and non–government Web sites as a service to our users. Once a link to a different Web site is followed, a user's actions are no longer subject to this

Privacy Policy, but are subject to the privacy/security policies of the owners/sponsors of the outside Web site(s).

Children's Privacy

Because we care about the safety and privacy of children online, we comply with the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 (COPPA). COPPA and its accompanying FTC regulation establish United States federal law that protects the privacy of children using the Internet. We do not knowingly contact or collect personal information from children under 13. Our site is not intended to solicit information of any kind from children under 13.

Internet Security

For site security purposes and to ensure that this service remains available to all users, this web application employs a number of generally accepted security programs to protect the security of the infrastructure, to monitor network traffic, and to identify unauthorized attempts to upload or change information, or otherwise cause damage.

Changes to this Policy

We will revise or update this policy if our practices change, or as we develop better ways to keep you informed about them. You should refer back to this page often for the latest information and the effective date of any changes. If we decide to change this policy, we will post a new policy on our site and change the date at the bottom. Changes to the policy shall not apply retroactively.

Questions

This Privacy Policy statement may be amended or modified in the future. To ask questions or express concerns, please contact: **[add name, email, and phone number, etc.]**

Appendix D: Contact Us

The easiest approach for collecting questions, technical problems, compliments, and recommendations is to create a clickable "mailto link" that will automatically open a user's email client and insert your email address (or designated other) into the TO section. Please review, edit and/or replace it with your own content. Include it on the *About Page* under a separate heading or create a new page. If you create a new page, it cannot be added as link in the footer.

For example, add:

<a href="mailto:YourEmail@YourSite.gov">

You might also list key contact information for personnel handling specific functions such as:

- Blog Moderator(s) – who reviews the comments on the actual dialog/blog topic(s);
- Information Specialist(s) – who might handle the email submissions;
- Sponsoring Agency;
- Office that handles public inquiries;
- Webmaster for handling technical problems;
- Accessibility issues regarding 508; and
- Name of person handling the "press".

Appendix E: Useful Links

Here are some useful links that provide tutorials, functional guidance and best practices for creating and maintaining blogs.

http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/wmu/newmedia/blogger.shtml

USA.gov's own source for a variety of useful information, including best practices, for federal bloggers.

http://lorelle.wordpress.com/

Lorelle on WordPress is an excellent site for blogging tips. Useful information on a WIDE range of topics.

http://codex.wordpress.org/First_Steps_With_WordPress

WordPress' own guide through the elements of their blogging tool.

http://www.problogger.net/archives/2006/09/26/how-do-you-manage-your-blog-blog-administration/

Good forum for blogging administration information exchange.

http://9rules.com/

9rules is a good example of a blog "gateway" site. Such sites track and link to many blogs simultaneously through a single location. Powerful content search tools.

Appendix F: Section 508 Compliance Checklist for Blog Administrators

This is a 508 policy compliance checklist. It is your responsibility to ensure your blog(s) are 508 compliant.

§ 1194.22 Web-based intranet and internet information and applications.

(a) A text equivalent for every non-text element shall be provided (e.g., via "alt", "longdesc", or in element content).

(b) Equivalent alternatives for any multimedia presentation shall be synchronized with the presentation.

(c) Web pages shall be designed so that all information conveyed with color is also available without color, for example from context or markup.

(d) Documents shall be organized so they are readable without requiring an associated style sheet.

(e) Redundant text links shall be provided for each active region of a server-side image map.

(f) Client-side image maps shall be provided instead of server-side image maps except where the regions cannot be defined with an available geometric shape.

(g) Row and column headers shall be identified for data tables.

(h) Markup shall be used to associate data cells and header cells for data tables that have two or more logical levels of row or column headers.

(i) Frames shall be titled with text that facilitates frame identification and navigation.

(j) Pages shall be designed to avoid causing the screen to flicker with a frequency greater than 2 Hz and lower than 55 Hz.

(k) A text-only page, with equivalent information or functionality, shall be provided to make a web site comply with the provisions of this part, when compliance cannot be accomplished in any other way. The content of the text-only page shall be updated whenever the primary page changes.

(l) When pages utilize scripting languages to display content, or to create interface elements, the information provided by the script shall be identified with functional text that can be read by assistive technology.

(m) When a web page requires that an applet, plug-in or other application be present on the client system to interpret page content, the page must provide a link to a plug-in or applet that complies with §1194.21(a) through (l).

(n) When electronic forms are designed to be completed on-line, the form shall allow people using assistive technology to access the information, field elements, and functionality required for completion and submission of the form, including all directions and cues.

(o) A method shall be provided that permits users to skip repetitive navigation links.

(p) When a timed response is required, the user shall be alerted and given sufficient time to indicate more time is required.

Note: All customers (system administrators) should work hand-in-hand with the CEP technical team (CTT) to help ensure that blogs are Section 508 compliant. Please inform the CTT if you detect any non-compliant features. http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?FuseAction=content&ID=12#Web