

DEVELOPING THE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS) WITH WORDPRESS

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Abstract

Learning Management Systems are simple web based applications for providing the learning experiences outside the classrooms. LMSs are widely used by corporate to extend training to their employees. The LMSs are also provided by profit-motive organisations in the form of paid-online courses. Public educational institutions are mainly not providing LMS experience to its learners by thinking it is very expensive. In reality, any individual who has basic knowledge and skills in using computer can develop a LMS easily on WordPress. This is a demonstrative paper on developing a LMS with WordPress.

INTRODUCTION

WordPress (WordPress.org) is a free and open-source content management system (CMS) based on PHP & MySQL. Features include a plugin architecture and a template system. It is most associated with blogging but supports other types of web content including more traditional mailing lists and forums, media galleries, and online stores. Used by more than 60 million websites, including 33.6% of the top 10 million websites as of April 2019, WordPress is the most popular website management system in use.

WordPress was released on May 27, 2003, by its founders, Matt Mullenweg and Mike Little. To function, WordPress has to be installed on a web server, either part of an Internet hosting service like wordpress.com or a computer running the software package WordPress.org in order to serve as a network host in its own right. A local computer may be used for single-user testing and learning purposes.

Wordpress is a flexible online blogging platform that allows users to post content to the web using their computers or mobile devices. WordPress allows for both novice and experienced bloggers to easily participate in the process by providing a variety of templates that could be selected for novice users. (Deb Kim, 2012)

WordPress in Education

Scope of educational blogs and websites are on the increase with the expansion of general blogging. Hence WordPress is being used for a number of educational purposes. The WordPress sites can be effectively managed and used by Administrators, Teachers, and Learners. Some of the uses of WordPress are given below.

1. Blogs: Blogs are regularly updated websites usually run by an individual or a small group. WordPress is a wonderful blogging tool. Teachers and learners can utilize this to set up a blog for various purposes. While teachers could set up different blogs to host a virtual classroom, learners can use that as their central location for information regarding upcoming assignments or download notes. Learners on the other hand could set up a WordPress website as their personal project space where the team members can gather for sharing ideas and brainstorming. Brilliant learners can also use a WordPress blog for sharing their thoughts, various linguistic and artistic talents to the public.

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2. **Communication:** Teachers often use a blog for communicating with the parents and learners. By updating information regarding class schedules, assignments and posting comments; parents are kept in the loop and both are therefore updated with their children's school activities.

3. **Virtual Classroom:** A website having systematically organised learning modules and feedback systems can really turn into a virtual classroom. A website has no limit in bringing varieties of learning aids and experiences which may include audio, video, animations, simulations, interactive feedback systems etc.

4. **Sharing Lesson Plans and Resources:** The power of team teaching is also possible when teachers teaching at different institutions join as a team and contribute to the websites. Thus teachers get to have various lesson plans, teaching ideas, etc. Teachers may get feedback on their materials from others so that he can improve.

5. **Integration of Multimedia:** WordPress allows embedding various types of files with a post. A blogger can easily integrate different media including photos, animations, videos, audio clips, presentations, quizzes or embed such items from other websites and portals. By integrating suitable media to a post, learning modules become highly engaging and interactive and thus leads to the concept formation.

6. **Show casing the Portfolio:** An individual teacher can maintain a WordPress site to show case his works and achievements through which the public may know him. This will also be a better way to tell about him to the recruiters, interviewers etc.

8. **Sharing of Resources:** Teachers always search for better ways of sharing resources to their learners in the form of lecture notes, study materials, reference books and articles etc. Earlier everything had to be physically shared. At present teacher has multiple choices to do so. Sharing of resources on an online page and sharing its URL (when a teacher constantly do so, learners will already be aware of his web address and look at it frequently) will be a better way than sending everyone separately. The web page may have a discussion board too for a live discussion on the topic shared. WordPress makes all these very easy to all even without the knowledge of basic coding.

Creating a WordPress Site

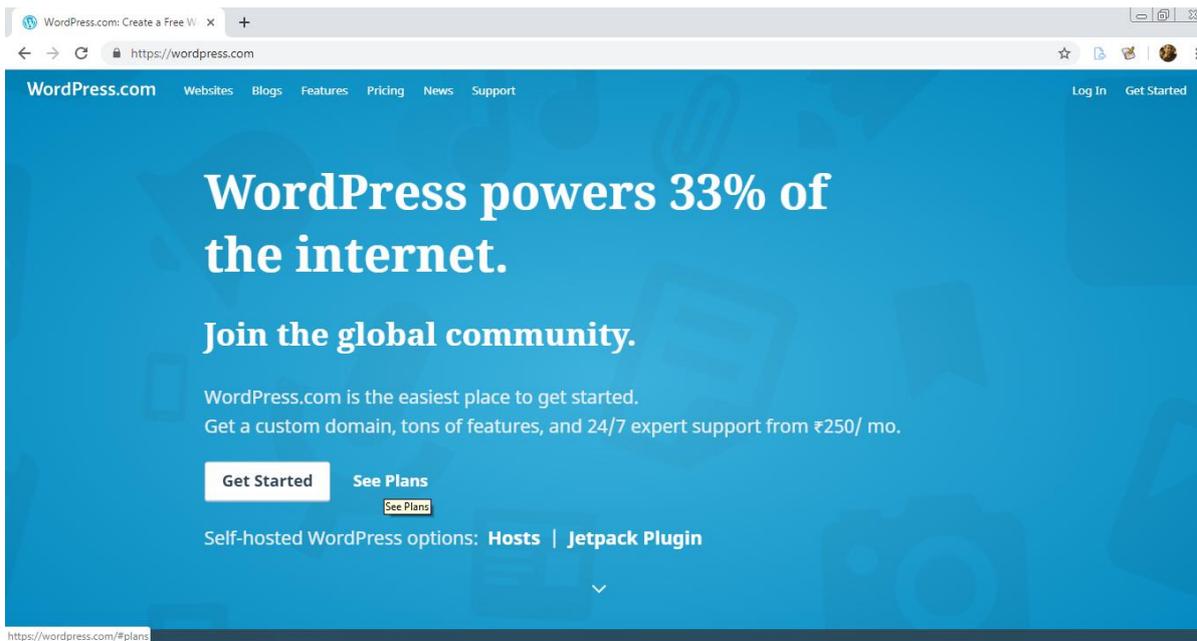
A WordPress website can be created either offline by installing WordPress application in our electronic gadgets or online. Again it can be done totally free with a free subdomain of wordpress.com or can be installed at our web server and associate with a new or existing domain. In all the cases, creating the website is easy and same.

WordPress offers plenty of web templates, i.e. Themes available under free and paid categories. WordPress websites are quick to install and customize to our needs and contents. To meet our custom needs, there are numerous plugins available in WordPress list.

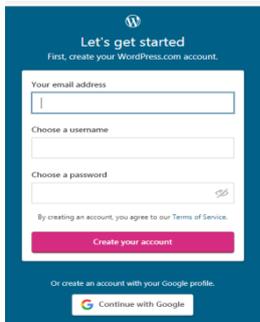
Here, I wish to give my readers a demonstration to design a WordPress free website. I shall show the steps of choosing a theme, installing some useful plugins, and creating and editing the posts.

Step 1: Create an Account

To create an account with WordPress, one may visit www.wordpress.com, follow get started.



WordPress offers various paid plans as well to start a website with or own domain if we already had no hosting plan and domains. It is given at <https://wordpress.com/#plans>



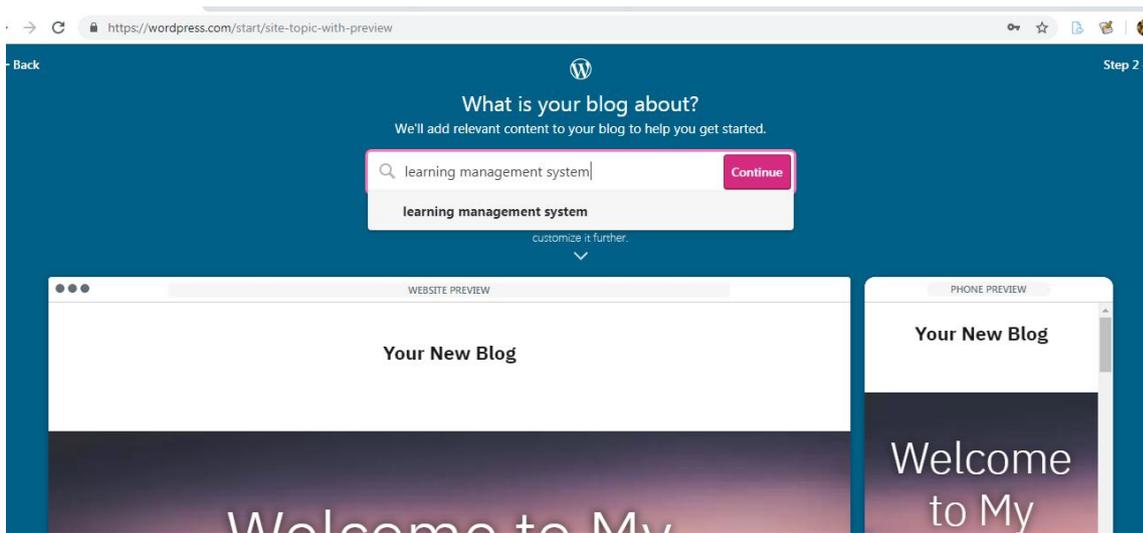
WordPress free website will be created at a subdomain of wordpress.com, i.e, www.our-username.wordpress.com Note to worth that upgradation to own domain or migration to our hosting server other than wordpress is possible at a later stage also.

Follow the 'Get Started' and create an account having a user name and password.

Login with the new user name and password. If one wish to have more than one website at WordPress, there is no need of creating separate accounts, instead multiple sites can be created by a single user.

Step 2: Creating a website:

We may start with the 'Create site' or 'Add new site' option from the side menu bar. Then click on the start new option on the next page.

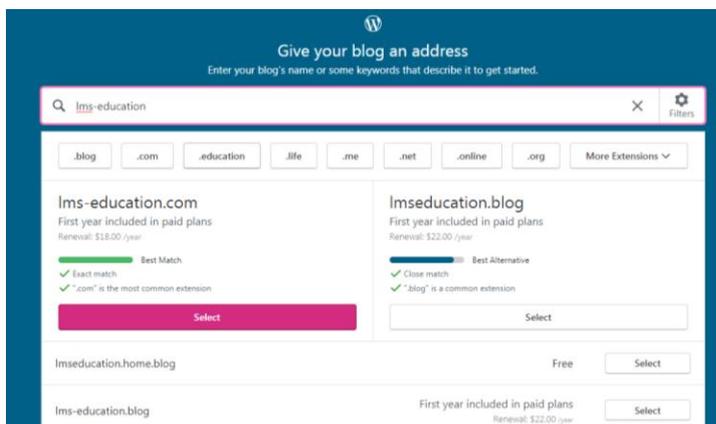


We can enter what is our blog all about in the given text field. The WordPress will display how the website will fit into the wide screen and of a mobile gadget. This information can also be changed / customized later. So we may proceed by clicking 'Continue' button.



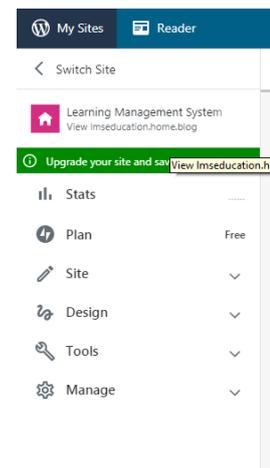
We can now choose a name for our website or blog. Here I have chosen the name 'Learning Management System'. On next window, we may choose a style and 'continue' to proceed.

Then we have to choose a domain name for the website (eg. google.com). An appropriate domain name shall be chosen and this address must be easy to remember for the users as it is the web address. When we create a free website here, we will be given our name as a sub-domain to wordpress.com (eg. naseerali.wordpress.com)



Here we have an option to use free domain or paid domain. Here I have tried to search lms-education. It then displays the available domain addresses below.

Now, lmseducation.home.blog is available for free. We



the 'select' that address and proceed. On the next page, we may proceed with the 'start free website'.

Now on the left menu our web domain is displayed. We can click on that. Then we can start editing the website. Here, we have options to create 'pages' and 'posts'. A page is needed when we anticipate its need and display various information on that page. Example: 'about', 'contact' etc.

Posts can be very useful to share information as easy as sharing a post

in facebook or WhatsApp.

We can now create the required pages first. The title and content of the pages can be fixed later also.

If we need to use media including images, videos etc in our website, we can add it by clicking 'media' under 'site' menu.

Step 3: Customizing the website for our requirements

By default WordPress has chosen a design (template or theme) for our website. This may not be found suitable for us. Hence we can customize the design and other web information by clicking the options available under 'Design'.

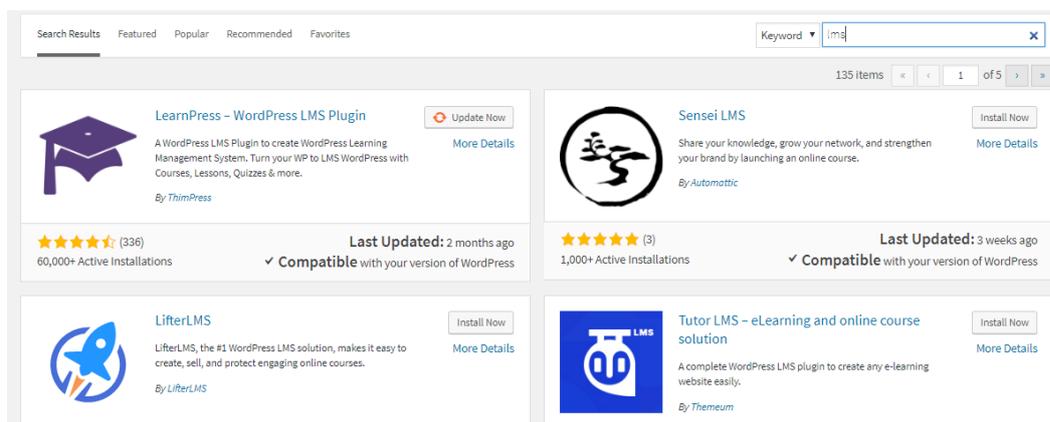
We may first choose a suitable 'Theme'. There are both 'free' and 'premium' themes. The free themes may also be good for our basic needs. Premium themes will have advanced features. Here we are using the 'karuna' theme.

After selecting the theme we can 'customize' the theme. We may first start with the 'site identity'. The 'site title' will be the one which is displayed on every page as the title. Here we provide "Learning Management System" as the site title and "Enhancing the Learning Experience" as the tagline.

Similarly the other options including menu, home page settings, widgets, colours, layout etc. can be customized easily.

We have various 'plugins' that we can install for our various needs in our website. This option is available under the tools menu. (tools > plugins)

Now we may search for the plugin 'lms' and find different plugins available. We have to choose a better one to install and activate it. The review selection can be made by seeing the number of active installations and rating.



Similarly other requirements can be met by finding appropriate plugins and activating it.

After installing relevant WordPress plugins and making customizations, the website is now looks like below.

Advantages of Learning Management Systems

Learning Management Systems are having lots of benefits in the technology lead education system. Learners are happier to engage with electronic gadgets than any other activities. So an effective LMS created systematically and providing the properly designed contents sequentially will definitely have its impact on the learners' understanding. Major advantages are given below.

- 1. Organizes learning content:** LMS provides the sequentially arranged easy learning modules in the proper order. Our target groups can find all useful learning materials supplied by their educators at one place.
- 2. Access Unlimited:** The access to the LMS is not limited. As per the educators' choice, learners can be set to use the site for learning without any limit.
- 3. Any Time, Any Where:** Learners can continue learning anytime and anywhere since the learning is done online. Access is not limited to any specific place.
- 4. Easy to Track Progress:** The learners' progress can be easily checked by the administrators (teachers). So the learners who are not using the LMS can be identified by the teachers.
- 5. Feedback:** Since assessment (tests, quizzes etc.) are the part of LMS, these can be used after different modules. It gives immediate feedback to the learner. Remedial contents may also be added to provide additional support to the learners.
- 6. Assessment:** Assessment can be done through LMS by incorporating a test at the end of a course or module.
- 7. Cost-effective:** LMS is very cost effective in nature. The effort is one time in developing the contents and arranging it and the same can be utilized for the long run with some modifications whenever is required.

CONCLUSION

The learning management systems are effective tools for the learning in this scenario. Most of the institutes are wishing to have their own LMS to provide varied learning experiences and support to their learners outside the campus. The wrong notion of 'high cost' is the major

force which retard the institutes from establishing a LMS. The WordPress can be used to develop a LMS by anyone who is just a computer literate without cost effectively.

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