The Web Vocabulary

BASIC TERMS IN WEB DESIGN AND WORDPRESS EXPLAINED

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Introduction

HAVING A BETTER KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT'S WHAT WILL BOOST YOUR CONFIDENCE BUILDING YOUR OWN WEBSITE...

When you're going to start building your own WordPress-Website, or managing your already existing site, chances are you don't know half of what everything actually means and you feel overwhelmed by all the technical terms. It's true you don't need to be a professional web designer or programmer to manage your own WordPress website, but to have even a slightly better understanding of how your website works and to know what certain words or terms actually mean, will definitely help you in doing so!

1. The Ground Work

Behind every website you see there's a shitload of code that most of you probably don't even want to know about, let alone understand what it does. The good news is that you don't need to, when building your own website in WordPress. But having a basic knowledge of how a website is built and why it looks the way it does, will give your more confidence when going at it yourself.

domain A domain is the name, or the address, of your website. Like for instance bright-idea.de. Whether your domain ends with .de, .com, .net is up to you to decide. Once you have thought of a good domain name for you website (try and make it as short and simple as possible), you can check if it's available get it registered.

URL The terms URL (Uniform Resource Locator ;-) and domain are often used to describe the same thing. There is a small differnece though. A URL incorporates the domain name, along with other detailed information, to create a complete address (or "web address") for every single page of your website. When our domain is bright-idea. de, the URL of our homepage would be https://bright-idea.de. The URL of our services page would be https://bright-idea.de/services. In WordPress, this is also referred to as a permalink.

hosting The website itself, which consists of the software for your WordPress installation, and all your files and images, needs to 'live' somewhere on a server , a computer connected to the internet allowing visitors to access your website. That is called 'hosting'. When your hosted website is ready, it needs to be connected to your domain, so that people actually see your website when they want to visit your page.

HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) A website is nothing more than a collection of code. The actual content of a website (paragraph text, headlines, lists, images et cetera) consists of HTML-elements in a certain order. A basic HTML element is a bit of code that describes how that particular piece of the web page it's on is formatted. It's nothing more than some text surrounded by 'tags'. For instance a paragraph of text looks something like this in HTML:

<p>This is a random piece of text, to explain how HTML works. As you can see there's a 'tag' at the beginning and at the end of this small parapraph.</p>

If you dare to dig in deeper, check out https://html.com/

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) are used to define the look and feel of a website. If what's in the HTML-code determines WHAT content is on your site, CSS-code determines HOW it all looks. For every element on your website, the styles (size, colors, spacing et cetera) are stored in one or more CSS-files. Want to find out more?
Check out https://www.cssbasics.com/

* When using a Content Management System like WordPress, you don't need to write this yourself, but in most cases you do have the possibility to add little snippets yourself in so called Custom CSS fields.

CMS (Content Management System) is a programming tool for managing a site's content. It allows non-programmers to build a website themselves. Using a CMS generally makes it easier to change the design or function of a site independent of the site's content. It also (usually) makes it easier for content to be added to the site for people who aren't designers.

WordPress WordPress is by far the most popular tool when it comes to building websites. It's user-friendly, highly customizable and easy to manage. You can tweak your WordPress site to your heart's desire.

theme A theme is a collection of templates and stylesheets used to define the appearance and display of a WordPress website. There are countless WordPress themes available, either for free or paid. Each one comes with a different design, layout, and features. A user needs to choose the one that suits their taste and requirements for their website.

back end The back end of a website is the part hidden from view of regular website visitors (as opposed to the front-end, being the actual website visible for everyone). If you need to edit your site, you do this in the back end, which generally includes the information structure, applications, and the content editors on the site. To edit your WordPress website, you need to log in to the back end - or WP admin, as it's often called in WordPress.

plug in Plug-ins are a way to extend the functionality of a website without having to redo the core coding of the site. While so many people use WordPress, a lot of plugins are available (free and paid). They can be easily downloaded and activated in the WordPress back end.

page builder A page builder is a plug in that adds a <u>drag-and-drop system</u> to your website. Page builders are a great and easy way to quickly add and edit your website's content, by simply dragging pre-defined blocks of content in the right place.

page template A <u>pre-designed page layout</u> for website pages, that you can use as a 'blueprint' when you create pages for your website. You can use a different template for each page, or use the same basic template each time you create a page, so that you have a consistent foundation.

javascript (short: JS) A programming or scripting language that allows designers to create interactions on a web page. Historically it was used for form validation, but now it's used for <u>special visual effects</u> and the ability to load new content without having to reload the whole page. You probably don't have to deal with javascript whatsoever, but just know that it's used quite a lot on your WordPress site ;-)

2. Website Anatomy

A website consist of many different parts. Before you start working on the layout and design of your own site, it's good practice to get comfortable with some foundational elements of a website structure...

header A website header is located at the top of each page of the website. The header typically looks the same on each page and typically contains a logo and menu (or navigation).

navigation Most website have a menu, or navigation at the top of the page. Typically this is a list with links to the main pages of a website, that help users determine where they want to go from wherever they are at on the site. This is also called the primary navigation or main menu. Secondary navigation can be used for helpful links to social media, or links to actions such as logging in or conmtact e-mails.

horizontal menu navigation where the menu items are displayed 'in line', from top to bottom.

vertical menu navigation where the menu items are displayed stacked, from top to bottom.

dropdown menu a menu that reveals itself when a user rolls over a primary navigation item, showing a list of child pages (so named since they stem from the parent pages. For instance, you could have a parent page called 'Products', with child pages called 'Books', 'Magazines', 'CD's' & 'LP's'). Dropdown menus are a great way to organize your navigation.

hamburger menu or mobile menu a menu that reveals itself when a user clicks on a symbol, typically three horizontal lines, stacked like a hamburger...hence the name ;-). A menu like this is often used for small, mobile devices because there's not enough space to display the entire navigation.

desktop menu a normal, conventional display of the menu, which would fit for normal desktop, or laptop computers. So basically, when we have a primary navigation, it can be displayed as a desktop menu (large screens) or a mobile menu (smaller screens).

homepage A homepage is the main page of your website, basically the 'cover page'. It's usually the most unique page on your site, giving visitors a quick impression of you, your brand and what you have to offer. Typically, a homepage also guides users to other important information or pages on your website.

landing page A landing page is the page where a visitor first enters a website. This can be the homepage of course, but a seperate landing page is often created to lead a certain targeted audience to specific information, usually in connection with an advertising or marketing campaign.

post The back end of a website is the part hidden from view of regular website visitors (as opposed to the front-end, being the actual website visible for everyone). If you need to edit your site, you do this in the back end, which generally includes the infor

blog A blog is a collection of stories, news items which are called posts in WordPress. Basically it's like a digital newspaper or magazine. Some websites essentially ARE a blog, on other websites the blog is only a part of the whole thing.

post A post in WordPress is a bit different than a regular page. Posts were designed to serve as (news) stories to create a blog. The main benefit is that they can be easily categorized, filtered and sorted on date, theme or author. Nowadays posts can also be used for other things, like for instance products that you offer on your website.

section A section is a certain part of a page on your website. You can have a page layout, that has different sections stacked on each other.

links or hyperlinks allow website users to get from one web page within your website, to the next. This is called an internal link. An external link will lead the user to a differnet website. You can also link to a different section on the same page, this is called an anchor link. Furthermore a link can be set to open or download a document, like a PDF for instance, or to open the user's e-mail program to write an e-mail to the linked e-mail address. Text links are typically highlighted in some way, using color to make the words stand out from 'normal' copy or making the text look like it's in a button. Links ideally should have some sort of hover state to indicate its clickability.

hover state is the slight animation, like a text link or button changing its color, that is triggered when a user rolls their cursor over a link.

call to action or CTA. This a visual element, typically a button, asking users to complete an action, like <u>subscribing to a newsletter, buy something or download a document</u> for instance.

sidebar A sidebar is a <u>seperate section of a website to highlight specific information</u>. It usually appears in the same place on every page, like your header. You often see sidebars on the right hand side of the page layout, next to the 'regular' page content, but they can also appear somewhere at the left, top or bottom of a page.

footer Similar to the header (and optionally a sidebar) the footer stays the same page to page, but it appears at the very bottom of every single page of the website rather than the top. A footer is typically a very structured section of the site that serves as the <u>last opportunity to get various information to your site visitors</u>. Sometimes it's structured very simple, with only copyright information. Sometimes more elaborate, including the menu again, adding several (social media) links or call to actions.

search bar A search bar is typically located in the upper right-hand corner of the website's header. It is usually noted by the word "Search" within a form field, or includes some sort of magnifying glass icon. Here, users can type in a word or phrase they're looking for more information on and then be taken to a results page listing website pages that may have related content within them. This functionality is helpful if your site contains lots of information and content and you want to offer users a way to look for specific information without having to browse through your entire site.

3. Screens & Browser

Your website will be displayed on many different devices, from desktop computers and laptops to tablets and smartphones. On top of that, there is quite a variety of internet browsers that one can use, like Chrome, Safari, Firefox and so on. Let's look at some basic terminology...

browser Refers to the program a website visitor is using to view the website. Most known browsers are Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari and (unfortunately ;-) Internet Explorer.

pixels Pixels are basically digital units (dots or squares) that make up text, graphics or images on a screen. The higher the number of pixels a screen can show, the sharper and more detailed the image quality is.

screen resolution The number of pixels a screen can show, both horizontally and vertically. A common resolution for instance, is 1920 x 1080, meaning it can display 1,080 pixels vertically, and 1,920 pixels horizontally.

screen size This is the actual, physical size of a device, often measured in inches. A MacBook laptop can have a 15" screen, or monitor, whereas an iPad has 10". If both devices have the same resolution (number of pixels that can be displayed), the images on the smallest device are displayed sharper. We call this pixel density.

viewport Viewport size refers to the visible area available to a webpage inside a browser, minus the browser interface (such as address bar, tool bar etc.).

responsive design A website design that adjusts to the screen it's being viewed on– desktop, tablet or smartphone. The basic idea of responsive design is that the layout of a web page will be re-arrangered, and elements such as text and images will change sizes, to fit different screen sizes, or viewports.

breakpoint Rules for responsive design, are set in CSS. Rules for each individual element can be set according to a certain breakpoint. A breakpoint is a certain value (typically the width of the viewport in pixels) after which a new set of rules should be applied by the browser. That way you can say for instance, when the viewport is smaller than 1024px, this headline should be displayed smaller.

cache Caching is the process of your web browser saving your website data temporarily so it doesn't need to download it each time. This is pretty common and it makes sure that your website loads faster for returning users. When you're still developing your website though, you might sometimes notice that some changes you've made, are not visible (yet). When this happens you need to 'clear the cache' of your browser, so that the next time you 'refresh' the page, the latest version is visible to you.

404 page A page users get sent to, when a page doesn't exist. It's usually due to someone reaching a page that has been deleted or they mistyped the URL.

SEO or Search Enigine Optimization helps search engines like Google understand the information on your website in order to rank higher in organic search results.

analytics Used for monitoring website visitor numbers and much more besides, analytics provides 'numbers and graphs' style statistics to show you how well your website is performing. The stats provided can also show you where your website visitors are coming from. Most-used and well-known is Google Analytics.

4. Web Design & Layout

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When it's time to actually create and design your web pages, you will run into quite some terminology that you're not familiar with. In order to make the most of your designing efforts, it's important to know what you're dealing with. Here are some terms you most likely will be using a lot...

heading Titles and subtitles. On a website, you can define six levels of headings, h1 to h6. These tags have a hierarchy (h1 being the 'most important, down to h6) that is recognized by search engines and screen readers.

hex color On websites, each color used is represented by a six digit number. It looks like this: #000000 (which is the hex code for black ;-). Like in graphic applications, such as Photoshop or Canva, you will be able to pick colors in the back end of your Wordpress website, using their hex code.

hover color is an alternative color for when a user 'hovers' over a link, or button, with a mouse. The text or button will change to the color you set here.

opacity The amount of transparency of an element. values for opacity can be set on a scale from 0 to 1, 0 being 100% transparent (i.e. not visible ;-), 1 being just a solid color. An opacity value of 0.7 gives an element 30% transparency.

font A collection of letters & glyphs/symbols. In web design, web fonts are used, which are specially formatted versions of a font. Some of these are available for free (in can be picked from a list in your WordPress backend), like Google Fonts. Others are only available for you to use when you buy them.

font family is a collection of fonts, all in the same style. Typically, a font family consists of different weights of the same font.

font weight according to which font family you've selected, several weights are available for that font. For instance light, regular, bold, black et cetera.

font size The size of the font in your web design, usually measured in pixels. You can set different sizes for different text elements, such as headings and paragraphs, to create a visual hierarchy. Font size is a very important factor for your web design and you always consider it thoroughly.

font-style In CSS, the font style refers solely to whether a font is italic or not.

font format or text transform alternative ways of the use of capital letters. Besides regular, you can choose: Capitalize, UPPERCASE, lowercase.

line height sets the space between lines of text.

letter spacing sets the spacing between letters. You can use positive values like so: Letter spacing or negative values like so: Letter spacing.

margin Margin is the space around a certain element in your layout. between the border and the next element of your design. Think of the space outside the border and between it and the other elements. This is all the margin. Margin goes around all four sides of the content and you can set the margin for each side.

padding Whereas margin creates space on the outside of an element, padding creates space INSIDE an element. This is the space between the element and the border. Like margin, padding can be set individually for left, right, top and bottom.

image size The width and height of an image, measured in pixels. An image can have a size of 640x480px, meaning its width is 640 pixels and its height is 480 pixels. It's important to consider your image sizes before you put them on your website. Its ideal size depends on where/how the image is used. A small image of 300x300 will look blurry and unsharp if it's set to cover an entire screen, for instance.

file size The size of an image or document, like a PDF, measured in kilobytes (kB) or megabytes (MB). Should ideally be as small as possible, to not negatively affect the time a browser needs to load your page.

full screen When a web page, or a section of that page, takes up the entire space of the viewport.

full width When an element such as an image or a paragraph, in the layout of a web page, stretches across the entire available space. it's width is always 100%.

fixed width When an element such as an image or a paragraph, in the layout of a web page, has a specific width in pixels or a percentage of the available space.

JPG or JPEG The most commonly used image format in web design. Best for photography and detailed images. A jpeg is made out of pixels.

PNG Also made out of pixels, but it can be be used for images with transparency (or without background). When there aren't any transparent in your image, just use jpg format when you save an image (smaller file size!).

SVG An image format suitable for display on the web, based on math, not pixels. SVG is a vector image meaning it's indefinitely scalable and will always be displayed sharply and detailed. It's best for graphics & logos.

icon A simplified graphic of an object or concept, such as an envelope graphic to represent e-mail.

favicon Favicons are tiny (generally 16x16 pixels, though some are 32x32 pixels) icons displayed in the web address bar in most browsers next to the web address. This can be you logo or rather a simplified version thereof.

slider A animated way of displaying parts of content (text, images or videos) in a certain order.

accordion The accordion is a graphical control element comprising a vertically stacked list of items, such as labels or thumbnails. Each item can be "expanded" or "collapsed" to reveal the content associated with that item. There can be zero expanded items, exactly one, or more than one item expanded at a time, depending on the configuration.