

Introduction to Blogging

Using WordPress.com

About Me

- Over a decade experience in web development
- Built web sites for LG Canada, Molson Canadian, Freeview, Canadian Standards Association
- Teaching assistant and instructor at Wilfrid Laurier University; internal training at past employers

Course Outline

- Day one
 - brief overview and history of blogs
 - Comparison of available tools
 - Blogging concepts
 - Themes
 - Getting started
- Day two
 - Writing better posts, and best-practices
 - Hands-on
- Day three
 - Advanced topics
 - Hands-on

Early blogging

- First web logs were hand-edited HTML files
- First link-blog was the NCSA's "What's New" report
- Today about 140,000 new sites go up daily!

What's New, June 1993

June 27, 1993

Digital Equipment Corporation is running a [Web server](#) from

The Army Research Laboratory is now running a [Web serv](#)

Information on the [Front Range Consortium](#) is now online.

The [Navy Research Laboratory Advanced Concepts Group](#)

June 25, 1993

A [Web server](#) has been installed at the Centre Universitaire

June 24, 1993

The Institute for Theoretical Physics at State University of I

HyTelnet 6.5 is now online; see [here](#).

If you haven't tried it yet, take a look at the [Web server](#) runn

people interact with one other in a computer-enabled world

Another example of this is the [Gopher server](#) running inside

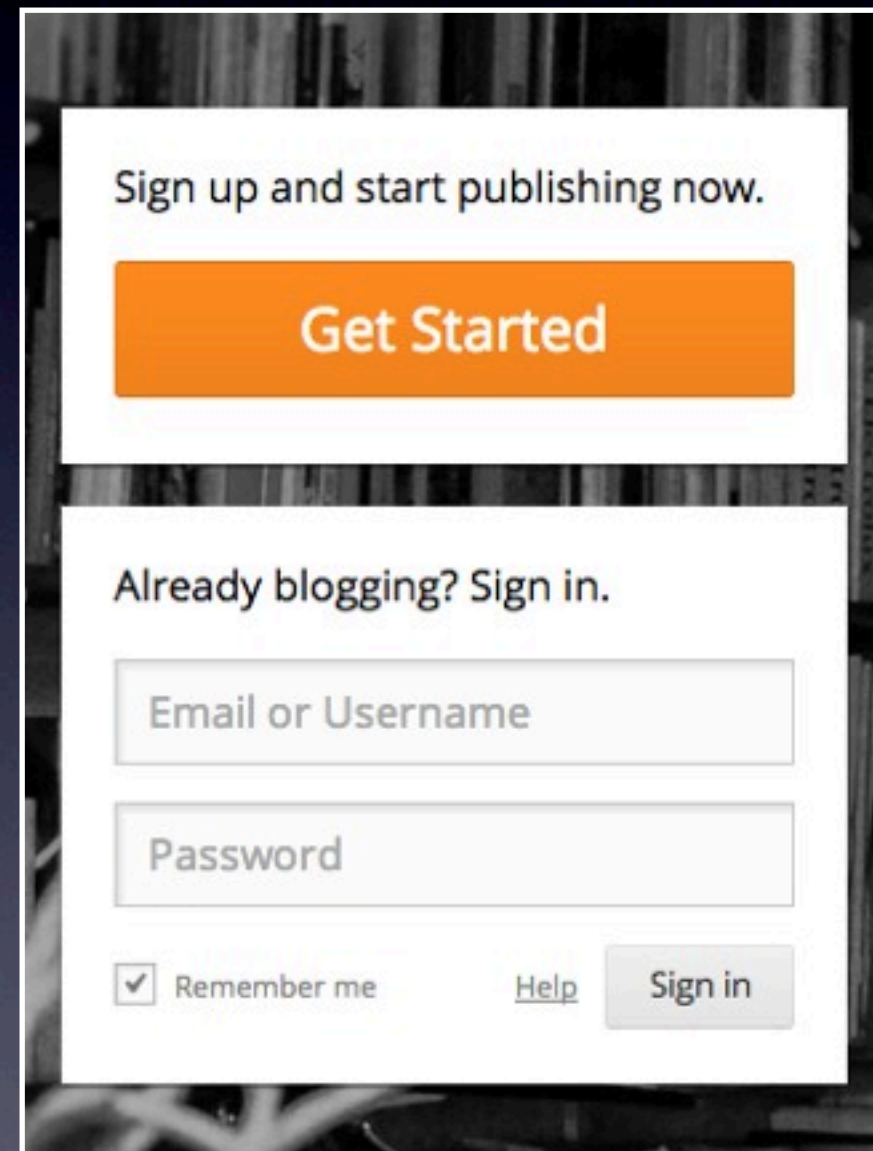
Second Generation

- Blogger launched in 1999
- First mass market blogging tool
- Offered automatic page creation



Current Generation

- Advanced features like social, application development
- Self-hosted, or dramatically simplified software-as-a-service
- Takes advantage of lowered costs



Sign up and start publishing now.

[Get Started](#)

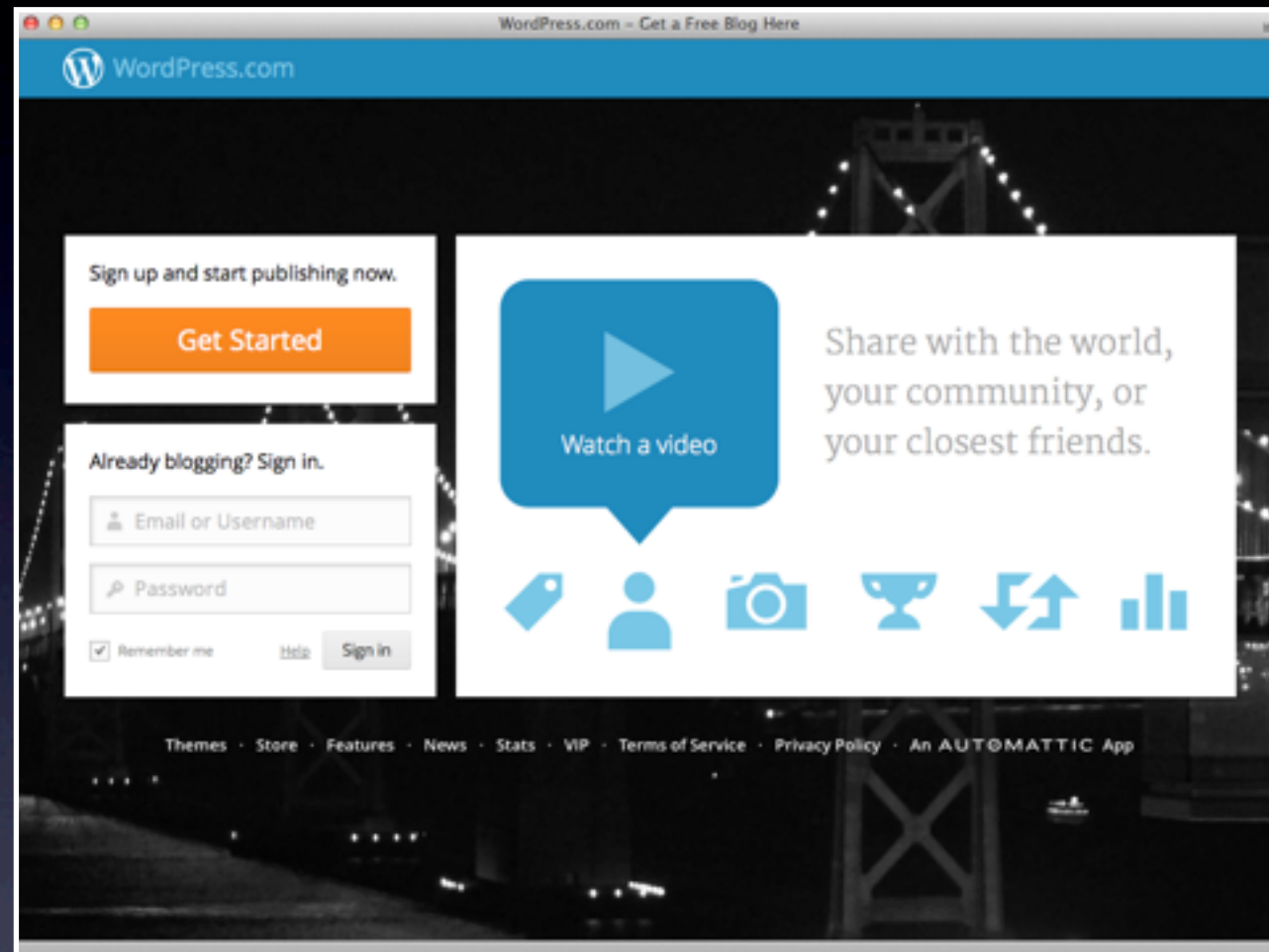
Already blogging? Sign in.

Remember me [Help](#)

Next Generation

- A return to static files, generated by tools
- Uses text files, hosted services like DropBox, or application data (like Evernote or VoodooPad) for source
- Third-generation tools will remain the standard





We'll use WordPress.com

- WordPress dominates modern blogging
- 60 million sites run on WordPress
- WordPress served 3.5 billion pages a month in 2012, expected to be higher in 2013
- Web development shops are adopting it for their clients
- Notable users include Adobe, BBC Americas, Variety Magazine

Wordpress.com v. WordPress.org

- Made by same company
- WordPress.com is hosted for you
- WordPress.org is open source; you run it on your own server

WordPress.com

- Blog appears as “name.wordpress.com”
- Hosting is included, but some features are paid upgrades
- Adds a social network layer
- Can only use official themes and plug-ins

WordPress.org

- Pay for your own hosting (typically \$25-100/year for smaller sites)
- Register your own domain (\$10-30/year)
- Install any theme and plug-in you want
- Allows broader uses, like taking appointments, ecommerce, reviews sites

The Competition

- Tumblr
- Squarespace (or Shopify)
- Drupal
- Jekyll, Octopress, Letterpress, GitHub Pages

But what about...

...Facebook?

- You have little control over appearance
- Only fresh, new content has any prominence
- Company is notoriously heavy-handed and quick to censor

...Twitter?

- Great tool for encouraging conversation
- Good for publicizing new content
- Very short entries (140 characters)
- Volume of posts means it's easy to be missed

...Google+?

- All of the problems of Facebook, with...
- ...less customization, and...
- ...lower usage

Own your own stuff

- Make sure you can import and export from whatever you use in a useful format
- Assert control over what pieces you can

A quick overview of technical and blogging concepts

Web host

- Company with many servers, and a fast, fault-tolerant connection to the internet
- Sell you space on their servers, or allow you to connect your server to the 'net

Domain name

- The human-friendly address of a computer on the internet
- You pick a top-level-domain (TLD) first
- Then find a domain name that is available, short, and memorable
- At WordPress.com, you pick a subdomain
- Domains are purchased from a “registrar”

HTML and CSS

- HTML: Hypertext Markup Language
 - Markup that describes the structure of a web page
- CSS: Cascading Style Sheets
 - Rules that describe how the web page will appear (and behave)

RSS

- Really Simple Syndication
- Offers a way for people to read a blog without visiting the site
- Requires an RSS Reader

FTP

- File Transfer Protocol
- Allows you to transfer files from your computer to a remote server

SSH

- Secure SHell
- A way of connecting to, and working on, a remote computer
- Uses a “Command Line Interface” (think DOS)

PHP and MySQL

- PHP is the programming language in which WordPress.com and .org are written
- MySQL is the database most commonly used with PHP. It holds all the posts for WordPress

Themes

- A collection of files that define the appearance of a blog
- Themes can make subtle changes to how a blog works, making it a portfolio, a magazine, a journal, a slideshow, etc
- WordPress.com has a curated collection of free and paid themes

Plug-ins

- Small programs written in PHP that you can add to a WordPress.org site
- Allow you to dramatically change the behaviour of your site
- Common uses are for advanced forms, SEO, slideshows, managing users

Widgets

- Small pieces of content on your blog that are separate from your main stories
- Common uses are bios, ads, links to popular content

Menus

- Navigation you can customize
- Usually runs across the top or side of your blog
- WordPress will create the basics for you

Featured images

- An image that gets special prominence in your content
- Often appears in the header of a post, as a thumbnail in lists of posts
- You can add as many images as you want to a post, but only one featured image

Pages and Posts

- A post is a timed entry, like a traditional journal entry
 - Used for articles and content that are timely
- A page is content that doesn't change often, and does not appear in your archives
 - Used for things like "About Us"
 - Can also make a page the first thing people see on your site

Categories and tags

- Categories organize your posts at a very high-level
- Tags are simpler, more fine-grained ways of organizing posts
- A clothing store blog might have
 - Categories of sales, new products
 - Tags of shirts, socks, trousers

You're about to set up
your own blog.

The visual language of themes

- Different layouts convey different meanings
- Picking the wrong type of theme can confuse your readers
- Don't get too hung up on picking a theme, though: they're easy to change without losing content

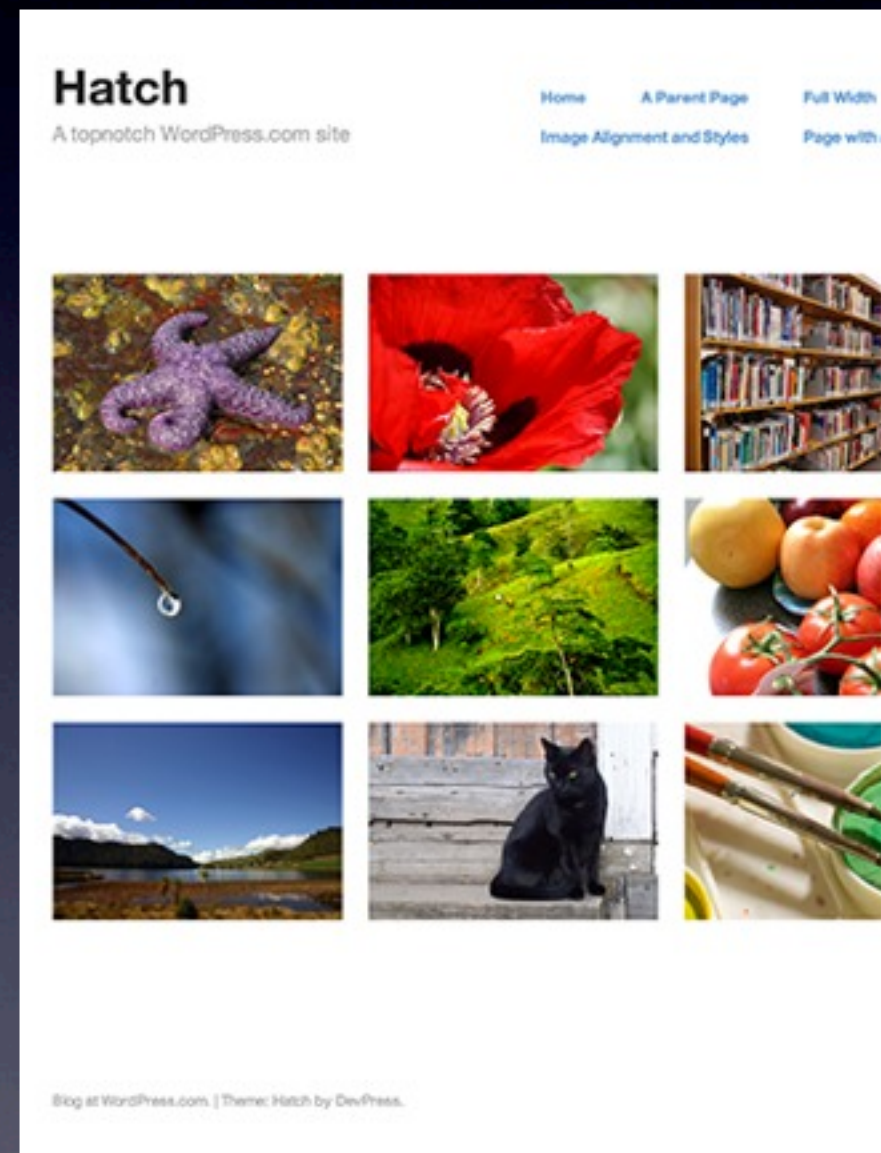
Bloggging theme

- Moves articles front-and-center
- Focus on readability
- Often have special treatment of featured images



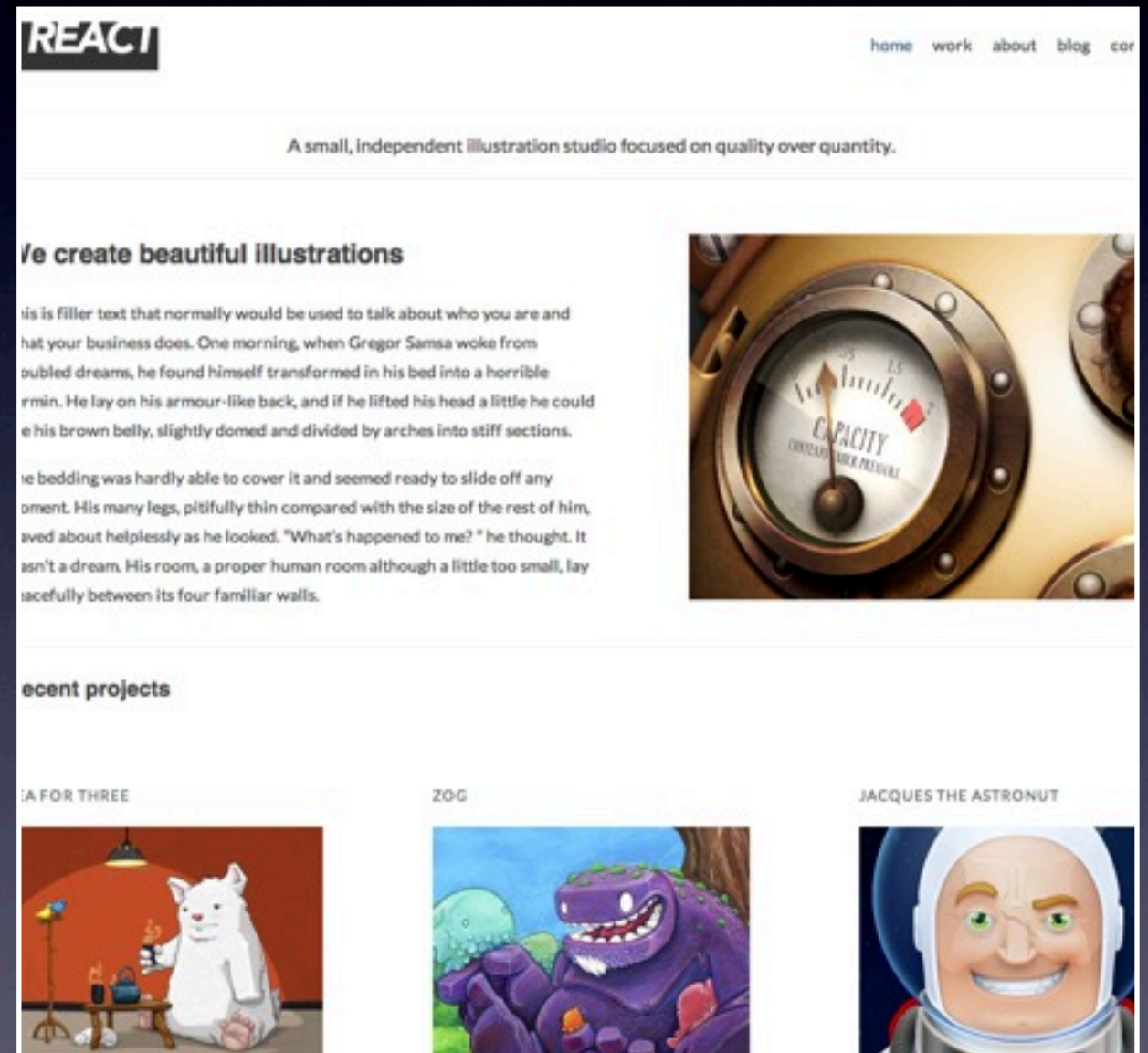
Portfolio theme

- Used by designers, photographers, some small business
- Usually has a grid of smaller images, sometimes with a large leading image



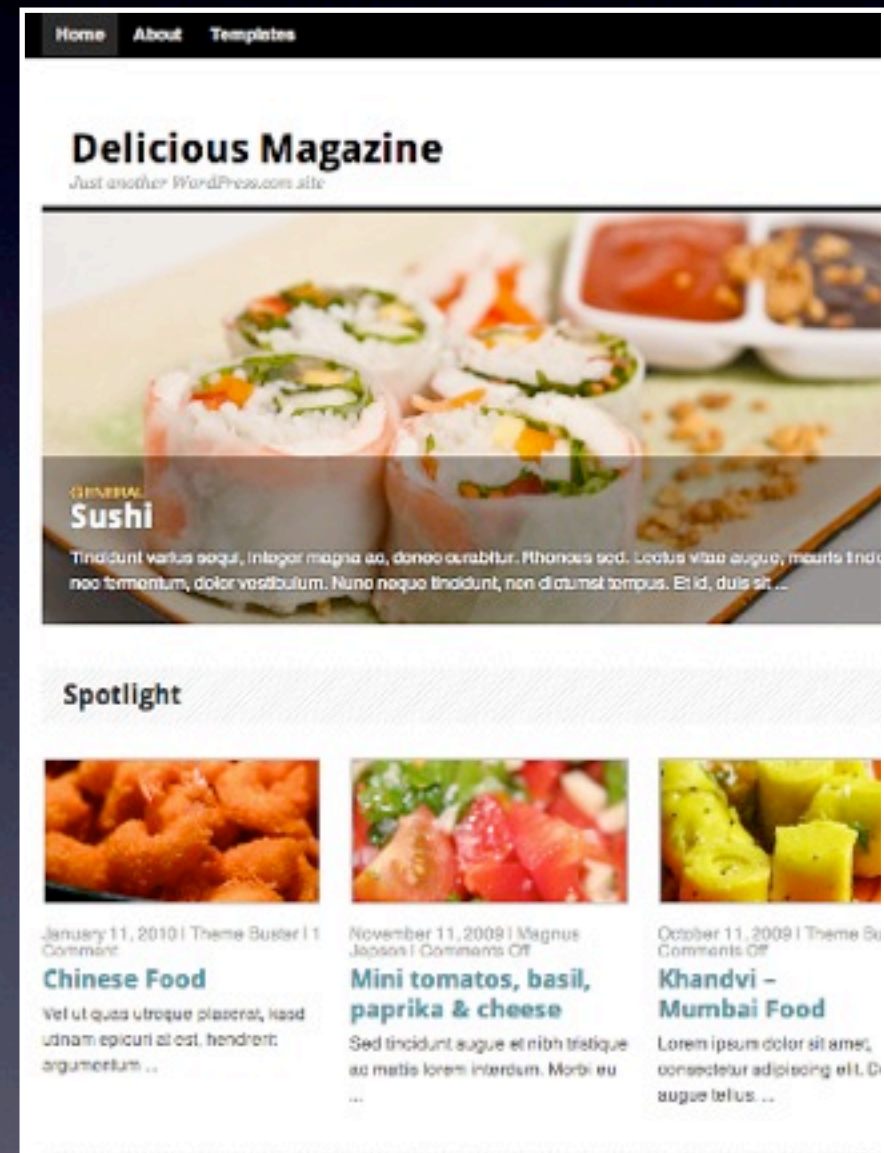
Corporate theme

- Shares many features of portfolio themes
- Has more space for descriptive text on the home page
- Well designed form elements for contact us, feedback
- Blog is secondary



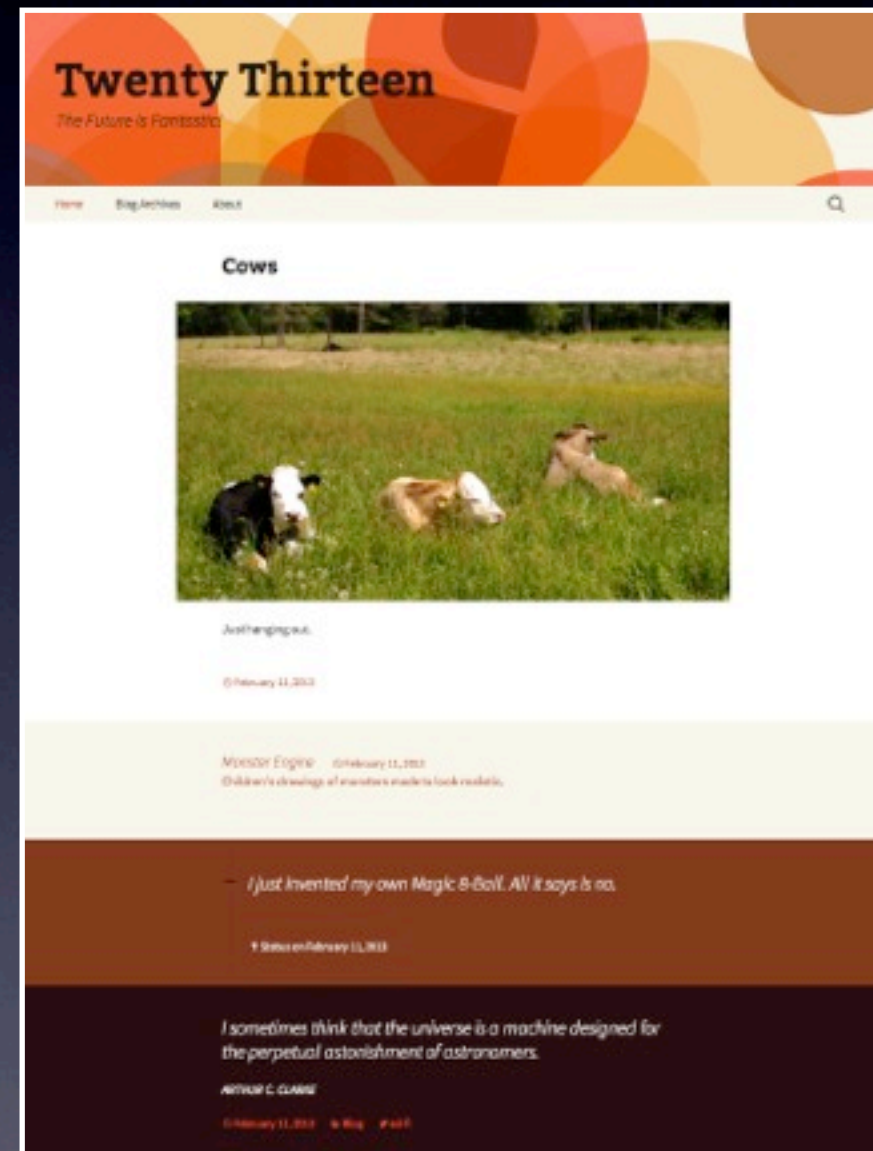
Magazine theme

- Takes cues from the table of contents pages from print magazines
- Featured stories, secondary stories, callouts



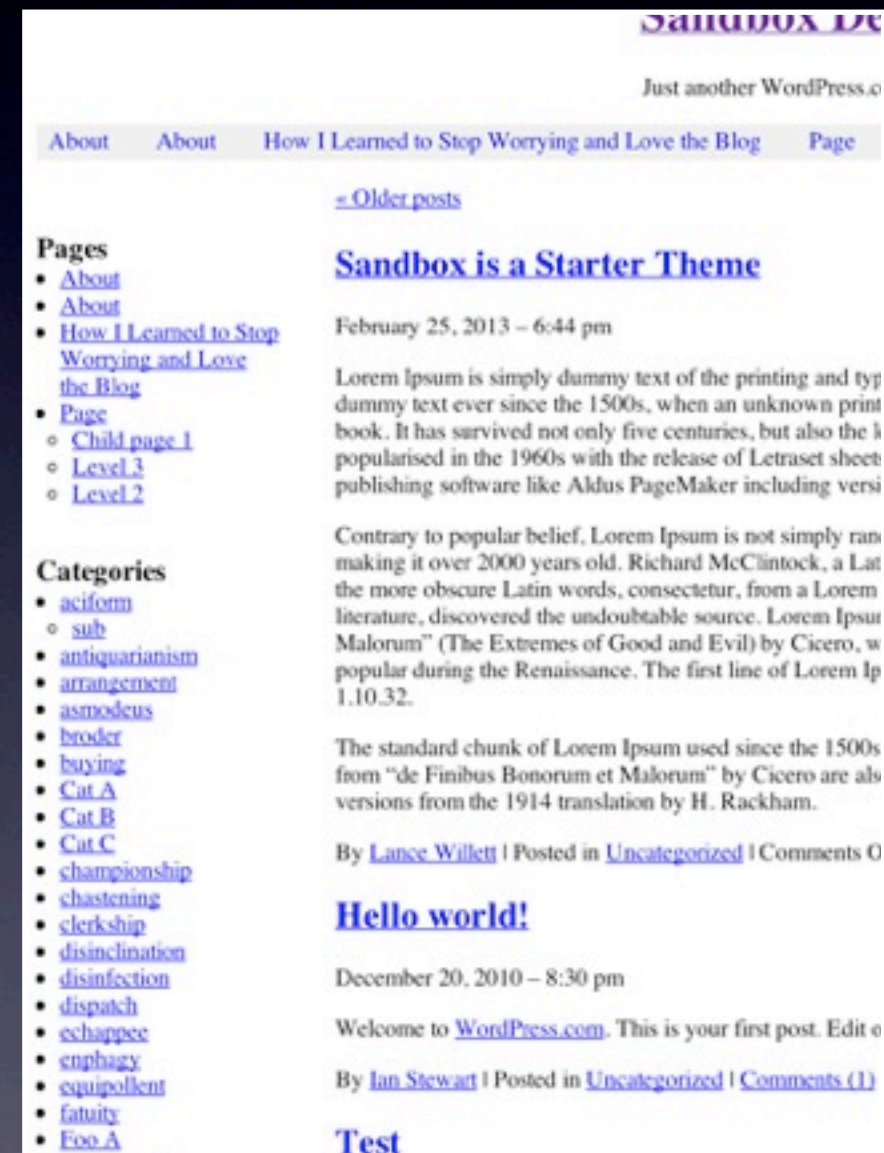
Tumblr theme

- Designed to work like Tumblr
- Takes advantage of “Post Types”
- Intended for sharing multimedia and short text, not long-form writing



Theme frameworks

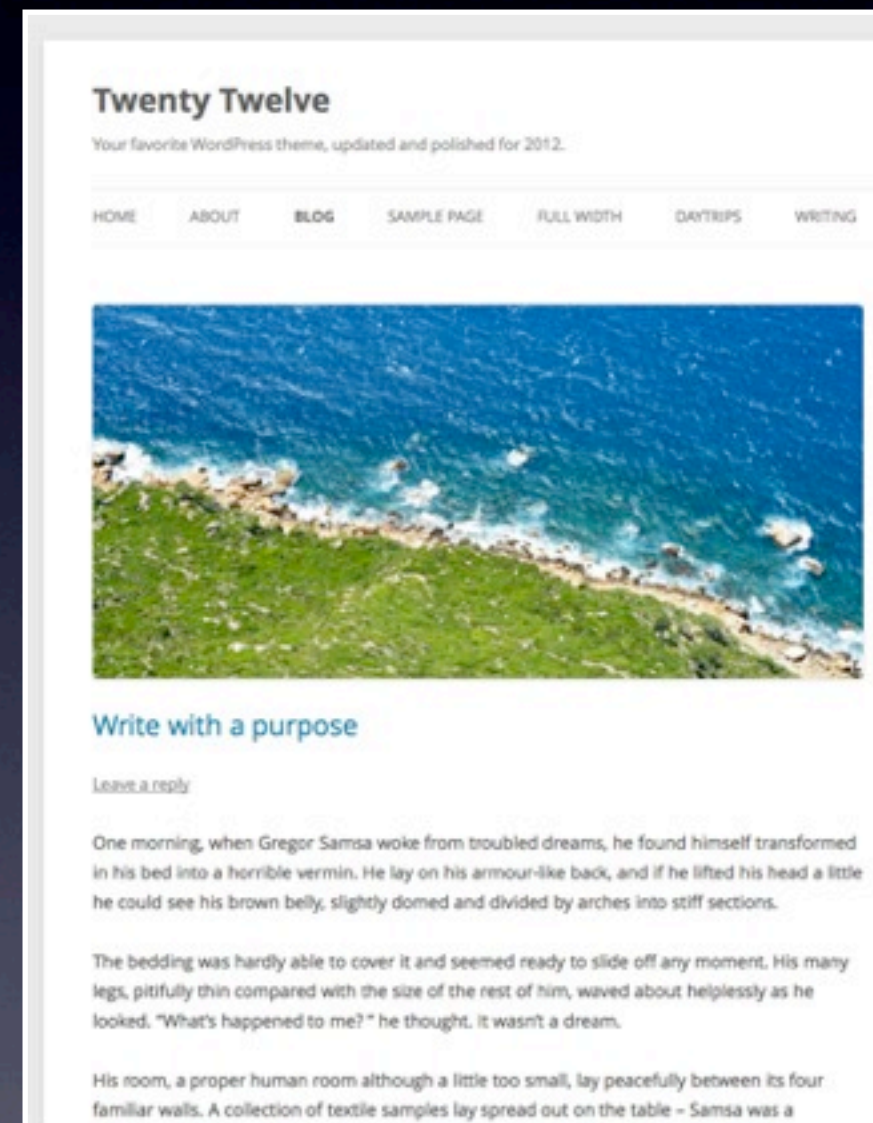
- Starting points for theme development
- Require knowledge of HTML and CSS, WordPress
- Offer the most customization, requires the most work to be usable



The screenshot shows a WordPress blog interface. At the top right, it says 'Sandbox DC' and 'Just another WordPress site'. Below this is a navigation menu with links for 'About', 'About', 'How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Blog', and 'Page'. A link for '← Older posts' is also visible. The main content area features a post titled 'Sandbox is a Starter Theme' dated February 25, 2013, at 6:44 pm. The post text includes a paragraph of Lorem Ipsum and a paragraph explaining its origin. Below the main post is another post titled 'Hello world!' dated December 20, 2010, at 8:30 pm, with a 'Test' link. On the left side, there are two widget areas: 'Pages' with links to 'About', 'About', 'How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Blog', 'Page', 'Child page 1', 'Level 3', and 'Level 2'; and 'Categories' with a list of various category names like 'aciform', 'antiquarianism', etc.

Twenty-Twelve

- Highly customizable
- Tonnes of different page layouts
- Works for a wide variety of types of blogs



- Try and pick the shortest subdomain you can think of, and that makes sense. Abbreviations are OK!
- Use a secure password or passphrase (try <http://passphra.se> for memorable passphrases)
- Write your password down. Consider using software like LastPass or KeepPass
- You can find sample content at bit.ly/oTWOeD
- Don't be afraid to experiment!