

A Beginner's Guide to installing Wordpress on your own domain

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Inspired by [Darragh](#)'s recent masterclass on [how to leave comments](#) on other peoples' blogs, and guiding [Scally](#) through the following process yesterday, I thought I'd post a guide on a similar theme to Darragh's - how to get your own webspace and install Wordpress on your website.

Though there are a couple of other downloadable blogging software packages, **Wordpress** is by far the market leader, powering pretty much all self-hosted blogs at the time of writing. From an Irish point of view, almost all the prominent Irish blogs - [Damien](#), [Alexia](#), [Tom](#), [Elly](#), [Twenty Major](#), [Beaut.ie](#), [Sarah](#), [The Chancer](#), [Jazz Biscuit](#), and so on [I wouldn't dare list myself here!] - are built on Wordpress's reliable, stable, and very adaptable blogging software. What's more, even more sites - like [Rick O'Shea](#) or [Casa Casey Courtney](#) - are hosted on the pre-provided [Wordpress.com](#) service, which has a lot of identical features but is not made to be quite as adaptable.

Wordpress is also fantastic for importing blogs you've written elsewhere - so if you have an old [Blogger](#) account, or maybe a [LiveJournal](#), you can import these posts and they'll appear as normal entries within your Wordpress. You can even export posts from Wordpress.com and import them into Wordpress on your own webspace if you like, which is very useful if you're a current Wordpress.com user and want to graduate to hosting your blog yourself. What's more, if you've got your own webspace, you don't have to worry about exceeding Wordpress.com's size limits for attachments to your blog, as you'll have all the space you need to upload files for your posts.

Having your own webspace, meanwhile, has a couple of advantages. Aside from being able to manipulate and tweak software like Wordpress in whatever way you want, you can also enable terrifically handy features like [Google Apps](#), enabling you to enjoy Gmail services at yourdomain.com, as well as using your space as **private storage** for when you're on the go. Think about it - why worry about carrying a USB key or an external hard drive that might be damaged in transit, when you can just upload your files to a web server and retrieve them the next time you're somewhere with the internet - even on your mobile phone? What's more, you can make your site into something of a personal portal - [Elly's site](#) is a good example for this.

So let's get to it - where do you start? Well, the first thing to do is secure your web hosting. For this walkthrough I'm going to use the services of [Register365.com](#), the domain registry arm of [Hosting365](#), for no reason other than they're the web host with whom I'm currently signed up. My current plan - and one I'd recommend to anyone, without any need of disclosure - is the Business Hosting Unix plan, where for €39.99 a year (or €3.99 per month) you get quite a good package for any personal user, including the ability to attach up to 25 different domains to it. Many of the bigger Irish bloggers take their webspace from [Blacknight](#) so have a look at their products too and make an informed choice for yourself.

This (hopefully suitable comprehensive) walkthrough will guide you through the process of:

- [buying the above package in conjunction with your own .com domain name,](#)
- [show you how to set up a MySQL database on which Wordpress will operate,](#)
- [how to finish the Wordpress installation](#) and
- [extend and manipulate Wordpress to appear just as you want it to.](#)

So, let's get going with buying your web space and domain name.

## STEP 1 - BUYING YOUR DOMAIN NAME AND WEBSITE

As stated above, for the sake of this walkthrough I'll assume you want to buy Register365's Business Hosting Unix package. This part is quite easy - the most difficult bit is actually choosing the domain you want to buy! For Irish users, you might want to buy yourname.ie - you'll just need to send on a form of personal ID to the [IE Domain Registry](#) to prove your rightful ownership to the domain. The market for generic domains like .com, .net or .org is far more unregulated and buying one is completely automated, so these are easier to get full control of. If you're looking for a little more inspiration on choosing a domain, try looking [here](#).

For this example, let's say you want to register a domain to host a blog on gaelic games, and you want the address to be **www.lovelyhurling.net**. So let's get to it - go to [www.register365.com](http://www.register365.com) and enter the domain (without the .ie or .com suffix) that you're thinking of buying - so in this case, just enter 'lovelyhurling'!



Fig. 1

(You can click any of the screenshot images in this post to expand them and get a better view.)

From here you can see that while **lovelyhurling.com** and **lovelyhurling.ie** have been taken already, the **lovelyhurling.net** domain is still available! Click on 'Register', and choose how many years you wish to buy it for (incidentally, you needn't worry about having your domain robbed on you before your time is up, by the way; you'll be given adequate notice before your rental of the domain is up).

Next you'll be asked for your personal and billing details, and then be brought to a review screen.

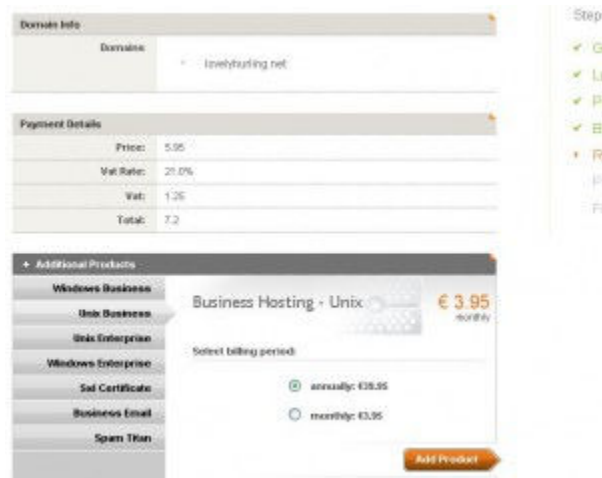


Fig. 2

When you're asked if you'd like to buy any other products, you have your chance to buy your hosting package (if you're buying a package like the one I recommended above) - so in this case, click 'Unix Business' under 'Additional Products', choose your billing period (either annual or monthly) and 'Add Product' to your shopping list, sticking in your desired username at this point.

After this, you'll be asked for your payment details, and then that's it! You now own your own webspace and domain name. Wasn't that easy? :)

Shortly after you finish your transaction, after your payment has been processed (which only takes a few minutes) you'll be sent a few emails. One of these will contain the details you'll need to log into your Control Panel.



Fig. 3

The Control Panel is the place where you can administer your server account and do things like creating new subdomains or MySQL databases - an ability that you'll need now to get your server ready for Wordpress.

## STEP 2 - SETTING UP A MySQL DATABASE

As explained just above, you can set up a MySQL database - as well perform a myriad of other operations - from inside your Control Panel. Don't worry if, when you log into the

Control Panel, most of the icons don't make very much sense to you, as you generally won't need to exercise very many of these functions in your everyday internet existence.

Setting up a database isn't particularly difficult with cPanel (which is the model of control panel that Register365 will, by default, have set up on your server). So before we set it up, I'll explain very quickly what exactly your database is, and what its role will be, hopefully demystifying the whole concept.

To make a long story short, a Web database is a way of storing your data in a location separate to your actual site, so that it's safe from any unauthorised users who might gain unauthorised access to your webspace later on. Hosting companies operate massive database servers, set up for use by all of their customers, which are backed-up almost constantly to make sure no data is lost, and which are made extremely secure so that no hackers should be able to access, corrupt or change any data.

Before you install any web-based Content Management System (or 'CMS' - Wordpress is an example of a CMS), the first thing you have to do is create a database where the CMS can store its actual information - essential data like actual blog posts, without which the software would be useless.

So! Now that you have a vague idea of what a database is, it's time to go creating one. Log into your Control Panel (which you can access either through the link supplied in your email, or by navigating to **www.yoursite.com/login.html**. So in this example, you can just navigate to **www.lovelyhurling.net/login.html** and use the username and password you were provided with (the details marked in blue in Fig. 3 above).

Once you're logged into the Control Panel, choose 'Databases' on the menu bar at the top, roll your mouse over 'MySQL', and then click on the 'MySQL DB Wizard' option.



Fig. 4

The next window that will appear will ask you for a name to give your database, and a description. For the sake of simplicity, name your database 'wordpress'. The description can be a slightly more 'human' description, so you can insert something like "Lovely

*Hurling Wordpress database*" - anything that makes it easier for you to identify what your database is doing.

Note that the name of your database will be given a default prefix, so that your database will actually be named something like **lovelyh\_wordpress** - this is automatically attached to your database by your hosting company, and is there to make sure that your database has a unique name when it's saved on your host's database servers. This is a useful tactic - think, for a moment, if another Register365 customer had created another database the same name as yours - something highly probable when using a name like 'wordpress'. To prevent any issues with incorrect passwords or other such potential problems, your databases will have a prefix to make sure it's individually titled, and guaranteeing that no such problems might occur.

You'll next be asked to create a user, who will have access rights to this database. (A database, like a computer, is only useful if there's a user who can access it!) You can assign the same names to users as you can to databases, so you can call your user 'wordpress' too if you want. Assign a password to this user, making a note of it, and be sure to give the user 'dba' access (i.e. full rights to administer the database in question). Your database username will also be given a lovelyh\_ (or similar) prefix, so a username 'wordpress' becomes **lovelyh\_wordpress**.

Be sure you keep a note of the **database name**, the **username** you assign to administer it, and the **password** for this database user - you'll need all three when you're installing Wordpress.

So your database and user have now have been created. Go back to the 'Databases' menu, and choose 'MySQL' and 'MySQL DBs'. You'll be given a master list of all the databases you've created, as well as a few other general stats about them. The address for your database server will be given here: it will look something like **sql5.hosting365.ie**. Make a note of this - this is the fourth detail of the four that you'll need to get Wordpress up and running.

That's that bit taken care of! Now that you've set up the database, you can press ahead with the final step and give Wordpress the details to access it and finish its installation.

### **STEP 3 - DOWNLOADING, UPLOADING AND INSTALLING WORDPRESS**

Okay - you've done the difficult bits; you've got your domain name and webspace taken care of, and you've created a database that Wordpress is to be allowed to use in saving its content. This, as with the other steps, is quite easy.

As you'll have read above, Wordpress is the market leader in downloadable blog software, and any major blog that's hosted independent of the big servers like Blogger will usually be built on the Wordpress system. It's updated regularly to iron out any bugs and, best of all, it's completely free and notoriously easy to install.

Before I show you that, though, you'll need to make sure you have some way of transferring files to your web server by something called **FTP**, or **File Transfer Protocol**. Now, don't be scared at the acronym; FTP is a very simple concept if you take a few seconds to understand it. If you've ever used Windows Explorer, where the left-

hand side of the window lists your folders and the right hand side lists the files within a folder, then FTP won't be a big change for you. FTP is a system almost identical to this, but instead of viewing files on your own computer, you're merely viewing files on a web server.

Probably the best known free FTP software is **SmartFTP** (download from [www.smartftp.com](http://www.smartftp.com)), although CoffeeCup's **FreeFTP** (<http://www.coffeecup.com/free-ftp/>) does a very similar job and is just as adaptable. If you're not interested in needing to download new software, though, you needn't worry! Just launch Windows Explorer and type the address of your address bar (with the `ftp://` prefix) into the address bar. Windows will ask you for your username and password and voila, you'll be working with your FTP server just like you would with your regular files.

The reason you need to be a little familiar with FTP is because once you've got Wordpress properly configured, you'll need to be able to transfer the Wordpress software onto your webspace, using FTP.

So - let's get to it. Visit [www.wordpress.org](http://www.wordpress.org) and download the latest version of the software - or even easier, just go straight to [www.wordpress.org/latest.zip](http://www.wordpress.org/latest.zip) where the most recent version will be available to download. Save the zip file to your desktop, open it, and take out the 'wordpress' folder - this folder contains everything you'll need. (Be sure that you don't extract the zipped folder as it is, or you'll end up with a folder called Wordpress, containing *another* folder called 'wordpress', which *THEN* will have the files you need.)

Now, open up your Wordpress folder, and inside it you should find a file called **wp-config-sample.php**. Click on this file to open it, tell Windows you want to choose the program with which to open it, and then choose Notepad from the list that pops up. The wp-config-sample.php file should now be open (if not, launch Notepad yourself, then click File, Open, and find wp-config-sample.php within the 'wordpress' folder).

You'll see something that looks like this:



```
wp-config-sample - Notepad
File Edit Format View Help
// ** MySQL settings ** //
define('DB_HOST', 'localhost'); // The name of the database
define('DB_USER', 'username'); // MySQL username
define('DB_PASSWORD', 'password'); // MySQL password
define('DB_CHARSET', 'utf8'); // SQL charset you don't need to change this
define('DB_COLLATE', '');

// Change each 'xyz' to a different unique phrase. You won't have to remember the phrases later
// so make them long and complicated. You can visit http://api.wordpress.org/secret-key/1.1/
// to get keys generated for you, or just make something up. Each key should have a different phrase.
define('AUTH_KEY', 'put your unique phrase here'); // change this to a unique phrase.
define('SECURE_AUTH_KEY', 'put your unique phrase here'); // change this to a unique phrase.
define('LOGGED_IN_KEY', 'put your unique phrase here'); // change this to a unique phrase.

// You can have multiple installations in one database if you give each a unique prefix
$table_prefix = 'wp_'; // Only numbers, letters, and underscores please

// change this to localize wordpress. A corresponding mo file for the
// chosen language must be installed to wp-content/languages.
// For example, (fr_FR) de.mo to wp-content/languages and set $LANG to 'de'
// to enable German language support.
define('WPLANG', '');

/* That's all, stop editing! Happy blogging. */

if ( !defined('ABSPATH') )
define('ABSPATH', str_replace( __FILE__, '' ));
require_once(ABSPATH . 'wp-settings.php');
```

Fig. 5

This is where you'll need to input the database name, username, password, and server address that I asked you to note earlier - each one of these four details will be required within the area highlighted in the screenshot.

- In the field where you're asked for the database username, delete '*putyourdbnamehere*' and enter the full name of your database (including the prefix automatically attached to it - like lovelyh\_ or similar).
- In the next line, where you're asked for the database username, delete '*usernamehere*' and insert the database username (again, include the prefix).
- The next line needs the password you assigned to the database user, so delete '*yourpasswordhere*' and type your password in. (Don't worry, this password will be perfectly safe from prying eyes - though it's no harm to use a password different to your regular one, as you won't be asked to use this password for anything else.)
- In the fourth row, delete '*localhost*' and insert the address of your database server, as noted above (remember? It's the one that looked something like **sql5.hosting365.ie**).

Leave the other two rows as they are, save your changes, and exit the file.

Now right-click on the file and click 'Rename', or just hit F2 on your keyboard, and change the name of the file to **wp-config.php** (i.e. removing the '**-sample**' from the filename). This is what the file needs to be called before Wordpress can recognise it.

You're now ready to upload Wordpress to your webspace. So - here's the big move. Open up your FTP program (again, [SmartFTP](#) is recommended), which will usually have the screen split into two halves, with one half showing the files on your web server and with the other showing files on your hard drive. If you haven't done so already, log into your server using the hostname, username and password that you'll have received in your email (refer to Fig. 3 above - the details are marked in blue on my screenshot).

Now, open the folder that you want to move your Wordpress files into - we recommend the 'home' directory (i.e. the folder named lovelyhurling.net). In the other half of the window, select (but don't open) the 'wordpress' folder - the one in which you saved your renamed **wp-config.php** file.

Select this folder and simply drag it files over into the other half of the window, into the folder on your web server.

It'll take a few moments to upload everything, as you're uploading about 4.5MB of data to your server (that's about the size of a regular mp3). When all the files have finished copying to your webspace, you're nearly there! You can delete the Wordpress files from your hard drive now, although it's a good idea to keep them saved somewhere in case you need to replace anything later on or re-install the software.

Now you're almost done - there's just one last thing to do, and Wordpress makes it *very* easy for you. Simply launch your browser and go to the address of the folder you put the files into, followed by **/wordpress/wp-admin/install.php** - so, if you've put everything into a folder called 'blog', then it's **www.lovelyhurling.com/wordpress/wp-admin/install.php**. You should see a screen like this:



### First Step

Before we begin we need a little bit of information. Don't worry, you can always change these later.

Weblog title:

Your e-mail:

*Double-check that email address before*

Fig. 6

Stick in the name for your blog - '*Lovely Hurling!*' or something similar - and your email address, and proceed. Once Wordpress has finished formatting your database in the way it likes, you'll be shown a screen with your new **admin password**. **Take note of this!** You can change this password almost immediately, but you won't be shown it again, so copy and paste the password elsewhere just for a moment.

You should be given a link to log into your new Wordpress installation - so click it, enter the username 'admin', and the password that you were given (you can paste this in now). Once you log in, go straight to the 'Users' link on the top right hand side, and either set up a new Administrator account for yourself to use, or change the password of the 'admin' account from the one that Wordpress gave you, to something more personal and memorable.

### **Et voila - Wordpress is now installed on your own webspace!**

That's the hardest bit done - you can now click 'Settings' and change the title of your blog and give it a description, and change other things like the time zone your blog is set to, and other things.

From here you can also change the exact address you want your blog to appear at - whether you want your blog to appear in what's called the "home" directory (for example, where the address is just **www.lovelyhurling.com** without needing anything written after it), or whether you want it to live in a separate folder (for example, at **www.lovelyhurling.net/blog**). Go to the Settings menu, and change the Blog Address to wherever you want you blog to be accessed at. **Don't** change the Wordpress Address though, as this refers to the folder where your files are being physically stored.

Now that you have the URL decided on, if you have an older blog and want to import the posts from it, just click 'Manage' on the main menu, and then 'Import'. From here it's quite easy to adopt the posts from any old Blog accounts you might have had - particularly any Wordpress.com accounts you might have had before.

That's pretty much it - just click 'Write' and you can get going with your new posts and spread your word to the world!

### **STEP 4 - EXTENDING WORDPRESS AND INSTALLING NEW THEMES**

Another of Wordpress's massive strengths is the huge userbase around the world, many of whom are constantly working on new themes and plugins that make Wordpress even more adaptable and customisable. So once Wordpress is up and running, it's remarkably easy to extend it by installing new plug-ins; for example, you can download programs to help block spam comments on your blog, to help you embed YouTube videos on your entries, or to help you embed a contact form into a page.

Wordpress's own **Plugins** page, at <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/>, is a comprehensive list of the various add-ons that you can get for your blog. Installing them is easy too - just download the plug-in (which, like the initial Wordpress download itself, will be in .zip form), unzip it, and transfer the unzipped folder via FTP into the **wp-content/plugins/** folder. Once you've transferred it over, you can activate the plugin from the Plugins menu (click the link on the top-right of your screen).

The official **Wordpress Theme Viewer** (<http://themes.wordpress.net/>) has hundreds of shiny new templates - 1310 at last count! - for you to download in a similar way to plugins. You can also refine searches on the site to show only themes that match your criteria, so if you have a mental image of a great blog with an [orange theme and broken down into two columns](#), you can easily search the site to find what you're after. Installation is similar to plugins - just download the theme you want, unzip it, and transfer the unzipped folder (again, via FTP) into the **wp-content/themes/** folder.

That's it - I hope you've found this walkthrough easy to use and that it gives you a good idea of how relatively easy it is to get hold of your own webspace and to host your own blog. If you have any feedback, queries, suggestions, or questions about this blog, or want to ask specific questions about installing Wordpress, just add on a comment to this post and I'll do my best to help you out.

You might also subscribe to the [RSS feed of this site](#) to receive automatic updates when new posts are written, and you can also use an RSS feed of the [comments for this post](#) if you want to keep track of queries that other readers might leave. This entry is also [available as a PDF](#) for you to download and print should you want to do so.

Investing in my own webspace is probably the best investment I've ever made - so give it a try, and you'll see just how liberating it can be to stand on your own two cyberfeet. :-)

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