Design Plan For WordPress Beginner Course

By Andrew Watson (andrew@changingway.org), 2010.

For background, see:
http://changingway.org/2010/10/07/wordpress-beginner-course-design-plan/

Rationale

WordPress is a tool for managing web sites. It started as blogging software, but has grown far beyond that. It is used by millions of individuals, and by thousands of organizations. (See WordPress.com and WordPress.org for numbers of individuals and examples of organizations.)

That by itself is not a sufficient rationale for WordPress training in a classroom. Millions of people run blogs or other websites using WordPress without ever attending a course, or even using formal online training. WordPress itself is friendly toward the beginner, and has free online documentation. There are online tutorials and multiple conventional books, from *WordPress for Dummies* on up.

Hence the rationale for this *classroom* training must include *arguments for the classroom*. Such arguments include:
- All the self-paced instruction in the world and on the web is of no benefit to people who cannot focus on it. The classroom does not allow interruptions (except in dire emergencies). This is a learning-friendly contrast to most work (and home) settings.
- Students can ask questions, and the instructor can answer them, in real time.
- Students can learn from each other. They can learn from each other's questions, and from the answers to them. They can also learn by discussing, during the class and in breaks, how other people and organizations are using the various features of WordPress.

A single day of classroom training allows for a substantial introduction to WordPress. A second day, in the form a follow-on WordPress Intermediate class, will be offered. A third day, in the form of a WordPress Advanced class, will be offered in 2011 if students and their employers indicate that there is demand for such a course.

The focus of this Design Plan is the one-day WordPress Beginner course.

Target Population

The WordPress Beginner course is for web-literate adults who will be working with WordPress, but who have yet to do so.

It is more likely that students will be overqualified than underqualified for this beginner course. It may be appropriate and possible to steer overqualified students straight into the WordPress Intermediate course. Typically the Beginner and Intermediate course will be offered on consecutive days. Some students will attend both days, while some will attend one of the two days.

Description

Course length: one day. To be more specific, there will be a morning session and an afternoon session, each of three hours, separated by a lunch break. There will also be a short break toward the middle of each session.

Instructional method: each aspect of working with WordPress (e.g., creating a new post to a blog) will be explained and demonstrated by the instructor, then practiced by the students.

The number of students will be capped in order to allow the instructor to coach students during the practise periods, and to encourage interactivity during the explanation/demonstration period. (A cap of 16 is likely.)

This requires a classroom in which each student has access to a personal computer with a web browser and internet access. It also requires that the instructor have access to such a computer, and that the instructor's computer screen can be projected so that the students can see it.

The instructor will circulate among the class during the frequent hands-on portions. While it is not feasible to check every student's work during every hands-on period, it *will* be possible to check each student's work multiple times during the day.

Materials. Each student will receive a printed handout. This will summarize the material covered, but not in sufficient detail to provide a self-paced course. It will include screenshots corresponding to the demonstration provided by the instructor. The handout will also include some background material.

Links to background material will also be provided on a web page maintained by the course developer. The handout will include the web address of this links page. This address will be the most important line of the handout for students who prefer to read about software on the web than on the printed page.

Objectives

Terminal Objectives

Given a personal computer with browser and internet connection, and following explanation and demonstration by the instructor, the web-literate WordPress novice should be able to use WordPress to, without error:

- publish content, including multimedia as well as text, on a web site.
- publish and reply to comments at the site.
- change the appearance and function of the site using themes.

Enabling Objectives

Given a personal computer with browser and internet connection, and following explanation and demonstration by the instructor, the web-literate WordPress novice should be able to:

- create a WordPress blog with appropriate basic settings (blog title, email address of blog creator, etc) without error, within 12 minutes.
- create a new post to a blog, without error, within 14 minutes.
- comment on a post at a fellow student's blog, without error, within 15 minutes.
- reply to a comment on her own blog, without error, within 10 minutes.
- create a new page (not post) on her own blog, without error, within 15 minutes.
- add a photo (JPG file) to the About page of her own blog, without error, within 15 minutes.
- link from her blog to external web pages (e.g., her employer's website, another student's blog), without error, within 15 minutes.
- change the appearance and function of her blog by editing sidebar widgets for the default WordPress theme, without error, within 15 minutes.
- further change the appearance and function of her blog by switching themes, without error, within 15 minutes.
- embed an externally-hosted (e.g., Youtube) video in a post, without error, within 15 minutes.

These objectives can be cast within the ABCD format as follows.
Audience: Web-literate WordPress novice.
Behavior: differs for each objective.
Condition:

- Personal computer with browser and internet connection.
- Explanation and demonstration by the instructor.

Degree:

- Without error.
- For enabling objectives only: within a specified number of minutes; the number of minutes is at least 10 and at most 15, but this varies from objective to objective.

Evaluation Strategy

Evaluation of whether the objectives are met will take multiple forms.

- Students can assess whether they meet each objective as that objective is covered, and will have the opportunity to ask questions or seek assistance before the class moves on to the next objective.
- Since students will read, post comments to, and link to each others' blogs. As they do so, they will be encouraged by the instructor to discuss each other's work.
- The instructor will visit each student, and her blog, at least twice during the course to verify that the objectives are met.
- A conventional level 1 evaluation form will be completed by each student at the end of the course.

In short, the evaluation strategy involves each student's progress being assessed by a mix of self-assessment, peer-to-peer review, and instructor verification.

Participant Prerequisites

Students must be familiar with a web browser to the level required to read, compose, and send email using a service such as Gmail.com.

It is unlikely that students will fail to meet these prerequisites. What is more likely is that some students will be overqualified, in that they will start the course with some WordPress experience. For these students, the course will serve to fill gaps in knowledge.

Facilitator Prerequisites

A facilitator/instructor for the WordPress Beginner course must be familiar with WordPress to, at an absolute minimum, the level provided by the WordPress Intermediate class. The content of the Intermediate class is as follows.

- Themes, continued: structure and customization.
- Extending WordPress: plugins.
- WordPress and other social media: RSS feeds, posts as tweets, etc.
- Mobile WordPress: clients and themes for smartphones.
- Managing users: who can do what.
- Upgrading the software: WordPress itself, themes, and plugins.

That said, an instructor at this bare minimum level would likely struggle to handle questions from students. It is preferable that the WordPress Beginner Instructor have at least six months WordPress experience.

Deliverables

The first few teaches of the WordPress Beginner course will be delivered by Andrew Watson, the Developer. Before the course is first taught, the following deliverables are due from the Developer.

- This design plan.
- Student handouts in electronic form, ready for printing.

The organization(s) handling marketing and logistics for the course are responsible for the following deliverables.

- Printed handouts, one per student.
- Marketing materials.
- End of course evaluation forms.
- A suitable classroom, with space, computers, and internet connection sufficient for 16 students and the instructor.

Before the course is taught by another instructor, the following deliverable is due from the developer.

Detailed lesson plan for every lesson.

QRDP

The table provides a Quality Rating for the Design Plan.

	Maximum Value (%)	Rating (%)
Rationale: Mission	5	5
Detail	5	5
Format	3	3
Rationale	Subtotal (13%)	13
Target Population: Clarity	5	5
Detail	5	4
Challenges	2	2
Target Population	Subtotal (12%)	11
Course Description: Course length	5	5
Instructional methods	5	5
Materials	5	4
Course Description	Subtotal (15%)	14

Objectives: Number	5	5
Format	5	5
Detail	2	2
Objectives	Subtotal (12%)	12
Evaluation strategy: Detail	5	4
Process	5	5
Thoroughness	5	4
Evaluation strategy	Subtotal (15%)	13
Participant prerequisites: Clarity	5	5
Ranging	3	2
Participant prerequisites	Subtotal (8%)	7

	Maximum Value (%)	Rating (%)
Instructor prerequisites: Minimum standards	5	5
Clarity	5	5
Instructor prerequisites	Subtotal (10%)	10
Deliverables: Thoroughness	5	4
Clarity	5	4
Responsibility	5	5
Deliverables	Subtotal (15%)	13
Total	**Total (%)**	**93**