The Website Handbook

A *female entrepreneur's* guide to creating easy and stunning websites.

Hi there!

Plugins, WordPress, Widgets (Widg-what?)…

If reading any of those words makes you feel overwhelmed or confused … you are in the right place, amiga! Kick your feet up, grab a nice cup of coffee (or green juice!) and get comfy because those stressful DIY website nights are no more.

As a female entrepreneur, I know how your focus is on your business and not spending hours trying to master the technical issues of getting your website launched.

That's where I come in.

I'm Jess, founder of JessCatorc.com and the DIY Website Academy. I created these platforms to help female entrepreneurs (just like you) take control of their website and finally make it without stress or frustration. Whether you want control over how your website looks and be able to update things yourself or investing four figures in a web designer just isn't in your current budget, I am here to help you achieve the stunning website your business deserves.

I'm going to let you in on a secret…

You don't have to be great to get started but you do have to **get started** to be great.

I had actually taught myself WordPress when I was first getting started. Even with previous web and graphics design experience, it seemed like I was in a completely different world! What ended up being hours of watching video tutorials, and reading countless articles and blogs with terms I had never heard of, I really do understand just how overwhelming it can be trying to learn all the ropes yourself.

That's why I am going teach you everything you need to know to get started. From e-books to video guides, I will be there every step of the way! So what are you waiting for? Your new and easy DIY website journey awaits!

**For more information about me, hop over to www.JessCatorc.com!**

Part 1

Domain and hosting

What is a domain name?

Think of your website as the little home that you make for yourself online and the domain name as its house address. Actually, it's exactly that, your "web address." If you think of your own house address, it is unique to you and allows people to find exactly where you are. Following that pattern, your domain name is literally the "house address" for your website and is what will allow people to find you online.

Many people use their personal name or their business name as a domain name. However, sometimes an abbreviation or a clever phrase are appropriate alternatives. Whatever you choose, though, make it memorable!

DOMAIN NAME: IT'S JUST LIKE YOUR HOUSE ADDRESS!
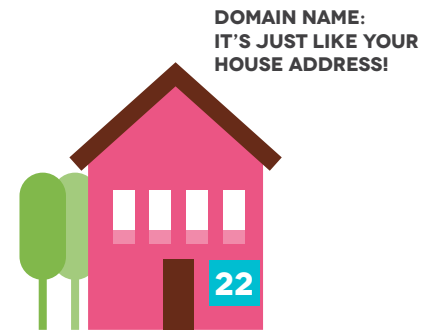
A typical domain name will start with **www.** and end with an extension such as **.com**, **.org** or **.net**, just to name a few. All that you need to do is invent an original name to be sandwiched in between. If you think of my website as an example, in order to find me on the web you would have had to type in the address www.jesscatorc.com. That is my domain name, it's as simple as that!

FAQ #1
I have a long last name, Jess, how do I pick a domain name that is easy and memorable?

A: If you are lucky to have a lovely and long name, try to play around with a variation of it. I have a friend whose last name is hyphenated so she will quite often use her name and the initials of her last name (i.e. MichelleDS) to keep things simple. Remember, the shorter you keep your domain name, the easier it will be for people to remember!

FAQ #2
How do I check if the domain name that I want to use is available?

A: Before falling in love with a name that you've come up with, you need to make sure that it is still available to use. I highly recommend getting the .com extension whenever possible, as this is the most common domain extension and the one people will most likely use when they try to search for your website.
Hop over to: www.instantdomainsearch.com and you will be able to see if your domain name is free for use.

FAQ #3

A: Yes you can! However, as you are just getting started on your wild website journey, I recommend purchasing your domain name from the same provider as your hosting (more on this in the next section!) Doing so will save you time and a whole lot of stress.

What is hosting?

If your domain name is like the "house address" for your website, think of a hosting provider as your Cyberspace landlord.

As there are so many hosting providers available, you are probably wondering how you decide which is the best one for you? To save you hours of searching online and comparing different companies, I am going to give you my top pick that I recommend to all of my clients starting off: Bluehost.

Here's why:

1. Free live support is the most important feature to look for when you are embarking on your first DIY website journey. Just like an awesome landlord, when your website needs fixing you want a reliable landlord that will fix the problem, day or night! With Bluehost, they offer 24/7 live chat support and have a friendly and helpful customer service team ready to serve your needs.

2. The next important element that you need is "one-click Wordress install." With Bluehost, they literally let you install WordPress with just one click! How easy is that?

Bonus: By signing up with Bluehost you also get one free domain name!
Visit: www.bluehost.com and click on "Get started now" to register!
* I am the **biggest** fan of Bluehost and have now become a proud affiliate. This is an affiliate link. :)

FAQ #1

I love that installing WordPress is so easy, but why do you recommend WordPress over websites like GoDaddy website builder, Shopify, or Wix?

A: It's all about control, my friend. Creative control. Technical control. Administrative control. With WordPress, all the control is in your lap. Having this liberty is so important because when you rely on another company to host your website, if they decide to close up in the morning, unfortunately, so will your website! Plus, you also have full control of what your website looks like and what features you want to include (thanks to themes and plugins!) By choosing WordPress through your own hosting and domain name, you won't have to worry about any of this.

FAQ #2

I noticed there is a WordPress.com and WordPress.org, are these the same things?

A: It is important to note that WordPress.com and WordPress.org are actually very different! When you register with WordPress.com, it is very similar to registering with a website maker like Wix or Shopify. Even if you have your own domain with your WordPress.com website, you do not have control over the hosting or have access to customize it like you do with WordPress.org.

Part 2

Themes

What is a theme and how do I use it?

Sticking to our "little home on the Internet" theme, (pun intended :) the best way to explain what a WordPress theme is, would be to say it is like the paint work and exterior decorating of your house. A theme is what makes your website look stunning , all without having to know any coding!

And trust me, there are so many WordPress themes to choose from that you are sure to find one that fits all of your needs.

FAQ #1
I hear a lot of people talking about Genesis, Thesis, Headway… what do they mean?

A: Let's break this down into "yikes I'm not a web developer" terms. Genesis, Thesis and Headway are all "frameworks." This means they are like the structural walls of your house. There are no fancy colours or images included, and if you know how to do carpentry (or in this case, web development) these frameworks won't be of much use to you. The one exception to this, however, is Headway, which allows you to create your website in a drag-and-drop style, without any coding. I personally love and use Headway however I should note, Headway still imposes a bit of a learning curve if you are just starting off. As a busy entrepreneur, we want to keep things as simple and quick as possible for you!

The next option after a framework is a "Parent Theme." A parent theme is the end result of a web developer taking a framework and adding custom functions, colours and code. They take the bare bones and make it look polished and professional.

After a parent theme comes a "Child Theme." (Notice a pattern here?) A child theme is what web developers will create to customize a parent theme without affecting it directly. For example, if there is a new version of your theme available, you can update your parent theme without the customizations that were made to the child theme being affected. It's almost like using sticky tack instead of a hammer and nail to put up a painting in your house. The child theme is the sticky tack. If you take it down, nothing underneath is affected. Don't worry though, as a beginner you won't need to worry about this, but it's always helpful to know. :)

FAQ #2
Now that I know what they are… what is the best type of WordPress theme for a beginner to use?

A: In order to create a website that is not only easy to make but also visually appealing, I would suggest working with a parent theme rather than a framework. By choosing a pre-coded theme you limit the amount of customization needed. This means you will start seeing a stunning website form in a lot less time!

FAQ #3

Ok fine, I'll go with a pre-coded theme.. where do I find them though?

A: My favourite websites to purchase premium themes are these:

www.woothemes.com

www.wpexplorer.com

www.studiopress.com *(Studiopress works off of the Genesis framework and provides lovely themes!)*

FAQ #4

I notice that I have to pay for these premium themes… can I just use a free one?

A: While using a free theme is a great way to get started to learn the ins and outs of WordPress, when you are ready to build your business or personal website I would suggest using a premium theme. It's not that they are necessarily designed better (though they often are), but when you purchase a theme, you will have access to the developers or a customer support team that can assist with any issues that arise. Also, with a premium WordPress theme, you can be more certain of having a theme that is regularly maintained and updated to prevent security loop holes.

Part 3

Plugins & Widgets

What exactly are Plugins and Widgets?
Do I need them for my website?

Let's start with plugins. A plugin is a WordPress add on (similar to an App on a smartphone) that allows you to add an additional function to your website. Believe me when I say that any function you can think of, there is most likely a plugin for it!

Need a Shopping Cart? There's a plugin for that. Need a contact form? Google Analytics? A quote rotator? There are plugins for those too. Just peruse the plugins page on WordPress and you'll see what I mean!

Now for widgets. A widget is a plugin that can generally be displayed on your header, sidebar or footer area. For example, if you created a blog website, you might want to display your most recent blog posts in your sidebar. To do this, you would simply add a "Recent Post" widget to that area.

FAQ #1

I love this! There are so many different plugins that I want to add on my website, is there a limit to how many I can use?

A: While there is no specific limit as to how many plugins you add, you really want to limit yourself to having 15 active plugins or less. The more active plugins you have running on your website, the more it will slow your website down and can also put your website's security at risk.

FAQ #2

Put my website's security at risk? Is there any way I can prevent that?

A: Yes and it is actually a plugin! I highly recommend using the Sucuri plugin (www.WordPress.org/plugins/sucuri-scanner/) as it will scan your entire WordPress website and find any security issues or loop holes. While no website can be 100% secure, every step you take to minimize the risks will help reduce the chances of your website being a target.

Part 4

Planning your website

Planning the look and feel of your website.
What goes where?

Now that you understand the basics of WordPress, you are probably wondering what a header, footer and sidebar are and what you should put in them. Let me tell you:

Header: The top area of your website (usually looks like some form of a banner.) Your main navigation menu will usually be placed in this space (the section that links to pages around your site like Home, About, Contact etc.)

Sidebar: Either the left or right side of your website, and underneath the header. These are optional however, if you have a blog you will most likely want or already have one.

Footer: The space at the very bottom of your website that usually includes your Copyright information, Privacy Policy, and can sometimes even have another navigation menu.

HEADER
SIDE BAR
FOOTER
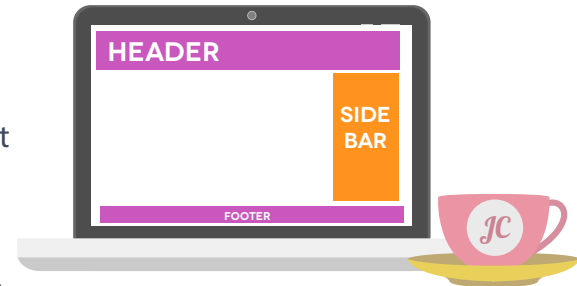
FAQ #1

I am trying to plan what pages I should include in my main navigation menu, is it best just to list all of the pages that are on my website?

A: When it comes to your main menu (the navigation menu that lets people browse the different pages on your website), less is more. By listing every page that is on your website and not deciding what the most important ones are, you risk confusing your web visitors. If you don't direct them precisely, your readers won't know where to go. Plus, a cluttered navigation menu can make your website look messy.

Here are the top pages to include in your website's navigation menu:

Home page: This is by default and will allow visitors (no matter where they are on your website) to be redirected back to the homepage.

About page: The most commonly visited page on a website is your "About" page. As an entrepreneur, you want to show people who you are and what you do. It is absolutely essential to have a link to your About page on your main menu.

Services/Products page: Do you offer services or sell products online? This may be the main reason someone is visiting your website so it is great to list it clear and have it easy to find in the main menu.

Blog: If you have a blog, definitely list it in your main menu! It's such a great way to engage with your web visitors and will also establish your credibility by the posts you create.

Testimonials: If you want people to know how much praise you get for your work, list it and share it proudly!

Contact page: Another essential page! This is a page dedicated to showing how you can be contacted and/or where you are located (if you also have a physical store or office.)

Keep your page titles clear and easy to understand. Having 5-6 links in your main menu is the ideal amount to avoid overcrowding it or listing too many options for your web visitor to see.

FAQ #2 — *What should I put in my sidebar?*

A: The best items to include in your sidebar are:

1. A call to action or opt-in (more on this in the next section!)

2. A link to an important page you are trying to showcase or increase traffic on (i.e. If you have a "products" or "shop" page)

3. If you have the sidebar present on a Blog page, a mini "bio" with your image is always great to help connect your readers to you!

4. Testimonials. If your readers are contemplating whether or not they want to work with you or purchase your products, why not show them just how many happy clients you have who have already done so!

FAQ #3 — *And what about the footer?*

A: Your footer (which is the very bottom section of your website) is a great area to include your Privacy Policy, Copyright information, and any additional links to pages on your website (you can also include the ones in your main navigation menu too.)

Part 5

Opt-ins

How do I use opt-in forms and call to actions?

An opt-in is a form that your web visitors can fill out to give you permission to send them emails. Note: this is **not** spam, this is valuable content on a topic your readers genuinely would like to learn more about in the form of a newsletter.

As an entrepreneur, it is so important to build an email list from opt-ins. This allows you to directly engage with the people who are interested in your message or services and gives you control on what content they see and the messages they receive.

While social media sites like Facebook can be a great tool to build your credibility (i.e. getting Facebook Likes or followers on your business' page), you are at the discretion of another company (Facebook) as to what those followers see. Unfortunately, if you decided to only use one platform to engage with your followers, such as social media, you do not have the same ability to communicate and ultimately convert that list of people into loving clients or customers. To increase your chances of making more sales and getting your products and services out to more people, you need to focus on building an email list.

Sign-up here!

NAME:

EMAIL:

SUBSCRIBE

FAQ #1   *I want to have an opt-in form on my website, how do I get one?*

A: The easiest way to get an opt-in form on your website is by using a plugin. As usual, I will save you having to compare plugins and prices by giving you my personal top two picks:

Magic Action Box: www.wordpress.org/plugins/magic-action-box/
Optin Forms: www.wordpress.org/plugins/optin-forms/

Magic Action Box is free and allows you to create your own opt-in box easily and feature it in your sidebar or even automatically before or after each of your blog posts! Optin Forms allows you to create beautiful horizontal opt-in forms with ease and without the need for coding.

FAQ #2   *Ok, so I know what plugin to get to offer the opt-in but how do I collect email addresses?*

A: In order to build your email list, you should use a web-based email marketing service. If you are starting out, I recommend using MailChimp (www.MailChimp.com) as it is user friendly, easy to work with and free if you have under 2,000 email subscribers! It also allows you to see how many people are opening the emails you send and more. Once you reach over 2,000 email subscribers, there are payment options to best suit your needs from that point on.

Bonus

Your personal Website Planner

Your personal website planner:

We have now come to the last section of this guide! Here you have a guided venue to map out your website. You can organize exactly what you want to showcase on your website in this fun little "cheat sheet."

DOMAIN NAME BRAINSTORMING

Step 1: List as many domain names as you can think of.

1.   6.

2.   7.

3.   8.

4.   9.

5.   10.

Step 2: Select your top 3 options.

1.   3.

2.

Step 3: Check these are available at www.instantdomainsearch.com. If none of the options are available, repeat step 1 and 2. Remember, you want to try to get the **.com** version if you can!

THEME SELECTION

Step 1: List the functions you would like your website to have below (ie. rotating image slider on homepage, full width layout etc.) Browse through the theme websites listed in Part 2 and look for the theme that closely matches those features and design.
Functions I would like:

Step 2: Select your top 3 options and list the links below (so you have them safely stored for future reference).

1.

2.

3.

PAGE PLANNER: PART 1

Step 1: List the pages you would like to feature on your website (ie. Home, About, Services, Contact). To start, these will be the ones that you can display on your main navigation menu.

1.   4.

2.   5.

3.   6.

PAGE PLANNER: PART 2

Step 1: Now that you have decided which pages you are going to create, let's organize the content that you want to display have on each one. This can include your copy, images, and features you may want to have.

Page #1 title:

Page #1 content:

Page #2 title:

Page #2 content:

Page #3 title:

Page #3 content:

Page #4 title:

Page #4 content:

Page #5 title:

Page #5 content:

Page #6 title:

Page #6 content:

The last step

Way to go, you did it! Use this checklist to help keep track of each of the DIY website planning steps and check them off as you go.

SUMMARY: YOUR DIY WEBSITE CHECKLIST

☐ Narrowed my domain name ideas to the top 3 names and checked that at least one is available to use.

☐ Narrowed down my theme selection to the top 3 themes that best match the look, feel, and functions that I want my website to have.

☐ I have decided what pages I want to display on my website.

☐ I have brainstormed what content, images, and other features that I want to use on each page.

Part 7

Thank-you

Thank-you!

You made it to the very end and because of that, I am sending you a virtual "high five"! The fact that you took the time out of your busy entreprenurial schedule (and trust me, I know how busy it is) means a lot to me and I appreciate every bit of it!

This guide was created as an overview to introduce you to the world of DIY websites, WordPress and all of the possibilities that you have with it. Keep an eye on your inbox because every Wednesday you will receive step by step tutorials, my top tips and more! The great news? It's free and always will be!

Creating your first website can feel like a quite a big step but I want you to know that I will be here every step of the way showing you that you **can** do it.

To your easy and stunning website journey,

Jess