



Lesson #1

Tools of The Blog Theme Developer Trade

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Welcome To Blog Theme Bootcamp

Hi there! I am so glad to work with you over the next few months. We have lots of ground to cover so we need to jump right into the lessons quickly. In case you didn't know, my name is Lynette Chandler and I'll be covering the Blog Theme Bootcamp part.

You probably know what's in store for you but let's just do a quick run down anyway so you can have an overview of exactly what you'll be learning (and doing). It's going to be so much fun and, if you already work on WordPress, you'll be able to put your new skills into action immediately.

In the beginning, we will be going back to the basics so these lessons may be slow for those of you who are more experienced with web site or WordPress development. This is done so that anyone with the most minimal of experience can follow and start their Tech Based Training business.

If you're an advanced student, hang on. The good stuff is heading your way. In the mean time do give the beginning lessons at least a brief review because I'll be sharing tips and tools that makes the work easier, faster and whole lot more enjoyable. After all, this is part of what I do every single day. Anything that allows me to work faster, quicker and easier means more billable hours and less headaches.

This lesson (and probably many of Blog Theme Bootcamp lessons) will be longer, on average, I'd say they could be longer than the actual Blog Evangelist lessons. It's not a battle of length but simply because we will learn many new terms and concepts that I'd like to take time to explain fully.

This also means some lessons, will be light in the homework department because you need to take time to absorb these terms, concepts and new language – yes you'll be literally learning a new language. Don't worry it's all good. Your clients will think you're a technical wizard by the time we're done.

Blog Theme Bootcamp Segments

There are four distinctive segments to the boot camp with many lessons inside of each.

Segment 1

Setting Up WordPress – we'll go through setup the manual way. I'll also show you how you can set up WordPress on your own computer so you can develop themes offline.

Segment 2

Learning the basics of PHP – it is much easier than you think especially if you already have some HTML knowledge.

Segment 3

Building your own theme – You'll learn how to transform a static HTML template into a beautiful WordPress theme. There'll be a mock HTML template you can pick up to make into a theme if you wish.

Segment 4

Making your theme better – You'll discover little commands you can write into your theme so WordPress will behave more like a content management system and other advanced theme tweaks.

**Whew! That's a lot of learning.
We better get started...**

Setting Up WordPress: Tools of The Trade

Every web developer has tools that they use every single day to complete their work. Some of these tools are a requirement, some are good to have.

Sidebar

Notice I said developer not designer. Maybe it's psychology, maybe not. I prefer to think not. Here's why.

A web designer creates beautiful things – the visuals.

You may need to work with a web designer when developing a static HTML template or graphics.

A developer makes the design come alive by moving beyond HTML, making the site interactive. It requires planning, logical thinking and problem solving. From now on, you're a developer.

If you are new to web development I highly encourage you to use the tools I'll be suggesting so it is easier to follow along. They are all *free*.

If you're experienced and like the tools you use, by all means use what you feel most comfortable with. Just bear in mind that some screen shots and step-by-step examples will be specific to the tools that I use.

Here's what you need

- A plain text editor with built in FTP – I use [PsPad](#) and recommend you do to.
- [Firefox](#) with the following plugins:
 - [Firebug](#) – can't live without this. Must have. This particular plugin requires Firefox 3.
 - [ColorZilla](#) – very useful, in particular when matching color to client's existing logo or site
 - [Web Developer](#)

- [IE Tab](#) – Must have to switch between IE and Firefox quickly to check for compatibility
- A [web host](#) or web server with MySQL and PHP installed (I'll explain these shortly)
- Simple graphics editor – all lessons assume graphics are outsourced or obtained from clients. But sometimes you still need to crop or resize pictures. I use both [IrfanView](#) and [Paint.NET](#)

Why Firefox?

Simply because it's a whole lot easier to develop in Firefox. I know for some of us, Firefox has given you nothing but grief. I used to think that way but because Firefox has so many wonderful plugins to make development faster and easier, it's worth it. Also, it is much, much easier to develop in Firefox and add fixes for IE than the other way around. Stick with me and you'll soon find you won't want to develop in anything but Firefox.

More About Web Hosts And Web Servers

Before you can develop anything for WordPress, you first need to find some where to put it. This is called 'hosting'. When building static HTML web pages using FrontPage or Dreamweaver, all you needed was your browser. Your computer can recognize an HTML file and automatically open it in your browser when you double click on it.

But WordPress is built on PHP. The browser alone does not have the capability to run a PHP file. If you try to open a PHP file by double clicking on it, your computer will likely ask you to associate it with a program because that's really what PHP is – a program.

In addition to that, WordPress also requires a database. The database stores all the information such as:

- Your users
- Your blog posts
- Your blog settings
- Your blog name etc.

All three, Wordpress, PHP and the database work together to display the page. WordPress tells PHP what to do, how and where to display a page, the PHP engine executes those commands, assembles the page, pulling information from the database to fill the page.

Because of this, in order to develop a WordPress site, you need either one of two things:

- A web host with PHP and database (MySQL brand name) installed
- Install PHP and the MySQL database on your computer

Which Is Better?

Generally, I prefer to install PHP and MySQL on my computer when developing new themes or adapting a static theme into WordPress because it saves me from having to log in to my web host, wait for upload and download just to see every little change I make. It also allows me to work off line away from online distractions.

Ultimately, it is up to you because eventually, you will have to set up the blog on a web host for your clients so it is accessible on the Internet. You may prefer to just develop everything online.

We'll go through both so you will be well equipped to handle both and work the way that suits you best.

Homework!

1. If you don't have them already, download the tools mentioned, install them on your computer. I've used these tools for many years and can say with certainty they don't contain malware.
2. New to HTML? I highly recommend you to pick up a little bit of HTML because you will definitely need it. Take some time to review the basics. A great place to begin is W3Schools.

Coming Up Next ...

In our next lesson, we will get into the details of obtaining a web host, and installing a web server on your own computer.

Note: The web hosting here is for your own development or website purposes. Not how to build your own web hosting company so you can host your client's sites.

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