Sites at Penn State: Getting Started with Using Sites

About Sites at Penn State
Sites at Penn State ([http://sites.psu.edu](http://sites.psu.edu)) allows you to create a site for a variety of purposes, depending upon your needs. Some ways to use Sites at Penn State include:

- **Traditional Blog**: A single author writes posts that display on the Web in reverse chronological order.
- **Multi-Author Course Blog**: Many authors can create posts in a single blog making discussion and commenting easier.
- **e-Portfolio**: A website displaying examples of your work including text, files, video, and images.
- **Website**: A website can be used to provide information about a specific course, personal publishing, research projects, etc.

Create a New Site
You can create multiple sites with the Sites at Penn State tool as long as each site has a different name. To create a new site:

1. Navigate to [http://sites.psu.edu](http://sites.psu.edu).
2. Click the Create a Site button.
3. Type a **site name** in the Site Name: text box. This is the URL for your site: http://sites.psu.edu/SITENAME. Your site name should be descriptive and easy to recall. It cannot contain any special characters, spaces, or capitalization.
4. Type a **site title** in the Site Title: text box. Your visitors will see this at the top of your site.
5. Select Yes or No under Privacy. Selecting Yes will display your site in search engines and in the Sites at Penn State directory.
6. Click the Create Site button.
7. Click the **site URL** to view your site.

Change the Theme
A theme is the predefined design and layout of your site. A gallery of free themes is made available to you using the Sites at Penn State tool; however, the default theme will be applied to every newly created site.

It is a best practice to change your theme, if desired, prior to populating your site. If you populate your site with content such as text, video, images, etc. and then change the theme, some of the content may not display correctly or at all. This may require you to make changes to your site in order for your content to be displayed.

You have the ability to see a Live Preview of a theme populated with your content in order to determine if the theme is right for you. To preview a new theme or change your theme:

1. Select Appearance from the left-hand menu.
2. Browse the gallery of themes.
3. Select the Live Preview link to preview, if necessary.
4. Click the Activate to apply a theme from the preview screen or Cancel button, if necessary.

Customize the Header Image
The default image displayed in the header of your site can be changed if you are using the default theme. Keep in mind that not all themes will display a header image.

The default “Twenty Sixteen” theme’s recommended image size is 1200 by 280 pixels. Only .jpeg, .gif, and .png files can be uploaded. If your image is larger than the recommended size, you have the ability to scale down or crop the image to suit your needs.

To change the default header image, if your theme has one, to an image of your own:

1. Select Appearance on the left-hand menu.
2. Select Header under the Appearance heading.
3. Click the Add New Image button.
4. Select the image.
5. Click the Open button.
6. Click the Upload button.
7. Move the crop box as needed.
8. Click the Select and Crop button.
9. Click the Save Changes button.

Create a New Blog Post
A blog post is typically a short, topical entry. Posts allow you to share your thoughts, opinions, and reflections on any number of topics. The entries will be listed on the page in reverse chronological order.

To create a new blog post:

1. Select Posts -> Add New from the left-hand menu.
2. Type a post title in the Enter title here text box.
3. Type your **post entry text** in the correct text box.
4. Use the formatting tools as desired.

**Insert a Link**
As a web design best practice, it is important to ensure that the text displayed for a link is descriptive. For example, a link to Penn State’s website should be displayed as “Penn State website” and not “Click here” or “http://www.psu.edu.”

Creating sensible link text will provide users with sight disabilities who are utilizing adaptive technologies such as a screen reader with an idea of where they will navigate when the link is selected. See the Penn State Accessibility Web Site at [http://accessibility.psu.edu](http://accessibility.psu.edu) for more information.

Screen reader users are able to open a dialog box containing a list of all the links within a website and jump immediately to a specific link. If all the links are displayed with the full link text or non-descriptive text, it will make it more difficult for the user to know whether or not they want to navigate to that link.

Figure 1: Screenshot of JAWS link dialog box containing 27 click here links.

**To insert a link:**

1. Select the text to be a link.
2. Click the **Link** button in the text editor in the Visual tab.
3. Type the **URL** in the URL text box.
4. Click the **Add Link** button.

**Insert Media**
Adding media to your posts will engage readers and break up large amounts of text. Media includes images, videos, audio, documents, and several other types of files. While images can be inserted into a post, other types of media will be displayed as a link and available for download.

1. Place your **cursor** where you would like the media to appear.
2. Click the **Add Media** button.

**To upload media from your computer:**
3. Click the **Select Files** button.
4. Select the **media** to be uploaded.
5. Click the **Open** button.
6. Type a **title**, **caption**, **ALT text**, and **description**, if necessary.
7. Click the **Insert into Post** button.

**To insert media from the web:**
3. Select the **From URL** tab.
4. Select the appropriate **Image** or **Audio, Video, or Other File** radio button.
5. Type the **URL of the media** in the URL text box.
6. Type a **title** in the Title text box.
7. Click the **Insert into Post** button.

Be aware that if this media is removed from its original location, it will no longer work on your site.

Always ensure you have permission to use the media you include on your site. See Penn State Policy IP05 at [http://guru.psu.edu/policies/IP05.html](http://guru.psu.edu/policies/IP05.html) for more information.

**Embed an Internet Video**
You have the ability to embed a Web-hosted video from sites such as YouTube into a post or page on your website using the URL.

It’s important to keep in mind that if you embed an internet video into a page or post and the video is removed from the original Web page, it will no longer display on your site. It is a best practice to occasionally ensure that the video is still available.

**To embed an internet video:**
1. Copy the **URL** of the internet video.
2. Paste the **URL** into the text editor where you’d like the video to display.

**Add a Category**
Categories are fixed lists of topics, created by the site owner, which can be assigned to blog posts. When creating entries on a course blog, you may be asked to assign a specific category to your posts. Readers can select a category from the sidebar of your posts page to view a list of your entries filtered by that category. Potential categories could include class assignments, professional development, current events, reflections, etc.
To create and apply a category:

1. Click the Categories link on the right-hand side of the Add New Post area.
2. Type the Category name in the text box.
3. Select Parent Category from the drop-down list if you would like to create a sub-category.
4. Click the Add New Category button.

A category can be applied and unapplied to a blog post by checking and unchecking the box next to its name.

Add a Tag
Tags are topic words that can be applied to each blog post to help you search for entries on the same topic across the Sites at Penn State system.

For example, John Smith, the Sociology 100 professor for the Fall 2017 semester, may ask his students to tag their Assignment 1 course posts with the tag SOC100FA12SmithA1 so that he can search for all posts with that tag.

1. Type the tag in the Tags text box.
2. Type a comma.
3. Repeat steps 1 and 2 until all tags have been added to the post.
4. Click the Add button.

Publish a Post
Your blog post cannot be viewed until you have published it. To publish a post, click the Publish or Update button in the Publish pane. You can also save as a draft in the same panel.

Create a New Page
Pages contain static content for your site that does not frequently change (e.g. about me, resume, portfolio, course assignments, contact me, etc.).

You can add text, images, files, and links to a page using the same process outlined in the Create a Post section. To create a new page containing static content:

1. Select Pages -> Add New on the left-hand menu.
2. Add a title, content, tags, and categories to your page using the instructions from the Create a New Post section.
3. Select a parent page from the Parent drop-down list, if necessary.
4. Click the Publish or Update button.

Create a Page for All Your Blog Posts
By default, posts will be displayed on the homepage of your site. If you wish to display your posts on another, single page:

1. Create a blank page.
2. Name it Blog.
3. Click Save.

See the Change the Posts & Blog page section to attach your posts to this page.

Create a Custom Menu
Complete the following steps if you wish to create a menu for your site:

1. Select Appearance -> Menus in the left sidebar.
2. Type a name for your menu in the Menu Name field (e.g., Main Menu).
3. Click the Primary Menu checkbox in the Menu Settings area.
4. Click the Create Menu button.
5. In the Pages area, click the checkbox to the left of each page you wish to use as a menu choice.
6. Click the Add to Menu button.
7. Drag and drop your menu choices (including the Blog page if you created it) in the desired order.
   Menu choices from top to bottom here will appear left to right on your visible menu.
8. Click the Save Menu button.

Change the Posts & Blog Page
By default, new sites are created so that the front page contains your blog posts. If you want to change your settings so that the front page contains a page of static content and your posts all appear on a certain page:

1. Select Settings -> Readings on the left-hand menu.
2. Select Reading on the left-hand menu.
3. Select the A static page (select below) radio button under the Front page displays heading.
4. Select the page to be displayed as the front page of your site from the Front page drop-down menu.
5. Select the page that will display your blog posts from the Posts page drop-down menu.
6. Click the Save Changes button.

When someone visits your site, the new front page will be displayed and your posts will appear on the new posts page. If you do not wish to have a page containing blog posts, simply omit step 5 from the list above and do not assign a page to display posts.
Manage Comments
By default, a blog will only accept comments from Sites at Penn State users. However, you can adjust this and other settings to meet your needs. To change the commenting permission for your blog:
1. Select Settings from the left-hand menu.
2. Select Discussion under the Settings heading.
3. Make your selections.
4. Click the Save Changes button.

Moderate Comments
If a reader comments on one of your blog posts and it is being held for moderation, you must approve the comment before it will display on your site. To approve a pending comment:
1. Select Comments from the left-hand menu.
2. Select the checkbox next to the comment.
3. Select Approve from the Bulk Actions drop-down menu.
4. Click the Apply button.

Comment on Another User’s Blog
1. Select the post’s title within the user’s site.
2. Click the logged in link under the Leave a Reply heading.
3. Log in to the system.
4. Type a comment in the Leave a Reply text box.
5. Select the Notify me of follow-up comments via e-mail checkbox, if necessary.
6. Click the Post Comment button.

Enable Widgets
Widgets are tools or content, such as tag clouds or recent comments, that can be added, arranged, and removed from the sidebars or footer of your site. The widgets that are available depend on your site’s theme. The areas where widgets can be added, such as the sidebar or footer, are also dependent on your site’s theme. To enable a widget:
1. Select Appearance from the left-hand menu.
2. Select Widgets from the left-hand menu.
3. Drag and drop a widget block from the Available Widgets section to the appropriate site section, such as Main Sidebar, to enable the widget.
4. Drag and drop a widget block from the site section, such as Main Sidebar, to the Available Widgets section to disable the widget.

Install a Plug-in
A plug-in is a small program that can be installed into your site that will increase the functionality of the site by adding extra features.

Sites at Penn State offers several pre-installed plug-ins for your site that are deactivated by default. To activate a plug-in:
1. Select Plugins from the left-hand menu.
2. Select the Activate link under the plug-in’s name.

Activate the Jetpack Plug-in
One of the most popular plug-ins installed in the Sites at Penn State system is the Jetpack plug-in. This plug-in adds a large range of additional features to your site including (but not limited to):
- Social networking integration
- Site statistics
- URL shorteners
- CSS editing
- Image gallery formatting

The process for activating the Jetpack plug-in is not as straightforward as activating other plug-ins. In order to activate the Jetpack plug-in, you must have a (free) WordPress.com account. If you do not have a separate WordPress.com site, you can create just an account that can be used to link your Jetpack plug-in to your Sites at Penn State site. To activate the Jetpack plug-in:
1. Select Plugins from the left-hand menu.
3. Click Connect to WordPress.com at the top of the page.
4. Type your WordPress.com username and password, if available.
5. Select the Need an account? button to sign up for a WordPress.com account, if necessary.
6. Click the Authorize Jetpack button.
7. Click the Configure or Activate button for the Jetpack features that you would like to use for your site.

Add Users to a Site
You can add additional users to your blog or site, if needed. For example, a professor of a credit course can add his or her students as authors on the course’s multi-author blog so that students can create their own blog posts on that site.

Also, a department, program, or event site could have multiple administrators which would enable multiple people to have complete control over the site’s content. A site with only one administrator could cause delays in adding, editing, or deleting content should the administrator not be available.
Adding multiple users in this instance can prevent this issue from arising. The following roles are available:

- **Administrator**: an administrator has full ownership of a blog or site and can do everything.
- **Editor**: an editor can view, edit, publish, and delete any posts or pages, moderate comments, manage categories/tags/links, and upload media.
- **Author**: an author can edit, publish, and delete their posts, as well as upload media. Authors cannot manage pages.
- **Contributor**: a contributor can edit their posts but cannot publish them. An administrator must approve a contributor’s post. The contributor does not have the ability to upload media.

A single user or multiple users can be added to your site at one time. If working with students in a credit course, keep in mind that a list of users can be added by copying and pasting the course roster from LionPATH.

To add a user to your blog or site:
1. Select **Users** from the left-hand menu.
2. Select the **Add Users** from the left-hand menu.
3. Enter the **PSUID(s)** in the textbox provided. If adding multiple users at one time, separate the PSUIDs with commas.
4. Select a role under the Select Role heading.
5. Click the **Add User** button.

To remove a user, select Users from the left-hand menu, hover your mouse over their username, and select the Remove link that appears.

### Change Site Settings

The Sites at Penn State tool has a variety of settings that can be changed for any of your sites. You can access the settings area by selecting **Settings** from the left-hand menu. Some of the popular settings within each category include:

- **General**: in this category, you can change the site title, tagline, email address associated with the account, time zone, date/time format, and site language.
- **Writing**: in this category, you can change how emoticons are formatted, and set a default category for all of your new posts, post format, and link category.
- **Reading**: in this category, you can change your posts page, as well as the emails that are sent to new followers of your blog.
- **Discussion**: in this category, you can change the settings for how comments are managed by your account. You also have the ability to create a blacklist so that comments containing specific words, names, URLs, IPs, or email address will be marked as spam.
- **Media**: in this category, you can change the default thumbnail, medium, and large sizes for images inserted into your posts.

### Delete a Site

Users can delete any site for which they are an administrator. Users will be asked if they would like to delete their site permanently and will be required to respond to an automatically generated email message to confirm.

**Note**: Once a site is deleted, the site name (URL of the site) can never be reused in the future. For example, if you create and delete a site with a site name of testing, then the URL http://sites.psu.edu/testing cannot be used again in the future.

To delete a site:
1. Select **Tools** from the left-hand menu.
2. Select **Delete Site** from the left-hand menu.
3. Select the **checkbox** confirming that you would like to delete your site.
4. Click the **Delete My Site Permanently** button.
5. Check your Penn State email account.
6. Select the link within the email to confirm the deletion of your site.