



A Blogger's Guide ~ Essential tips, tools, and resources for bloggers and website owners!

Cheers! ♥

If you're a new blogger or a seasoned one, you know how much work goes into developing and maintaining a website rich in content. The aesthetics of our website, creating a cohesive brand, and the consistent marketing via social media can be challenging. BUT it can be energizing if we have the right tools and information to begin and, hopefully, thrive!

After six years of blogging, I thought I'd put together a Resource Guide with a list of essential tools and resources I use in hopes that it may prove helpful to fellow bloggers – newbies and/or not-so-newbies alike. After all, we're always learning in this form of engagement. ♥

NOTE: *The information contained within is for educational and informational purposes only.*

In this document, we'll look at:

- Web hosting services/Domains
- WordPress.com vs WordPress.org (Hosted vs Self-Hosted)
- eCommerce options
- Creativity and design resources
- Image sources (free and paid)
- Imaging editors/editing tools
- Writing tools
- Purchasing website themes

All titled sources are clickable. The gold-coloured text will take you to sources/resources, as well. ♥

If you're reading this, chances are you have a website or you're thinking about starting one. Perhaps you're still on the fence. If so, I encourage you to pop by my blog post ~ [How to Start a Blog ~ A Complete Step-by-Step Guide to Build a Website!](#) I hope it encourages you to take the leap. Welcome aboard the grand adventure!

[How to Start a Blog ~ A Complete Step-by-Step Guide to Build a Website!](#)



These are resources I personally use and/or value highly. So much so, I became an Affiliate member of many. As an Affiliate, I endorse the products and services I use and love. If you see the value in these products and choose to purchase via my referral links, I may receive a small commission at no additional cost to you. ♥

Web Hosting/Domain Name

Web Hosting

Let's begin with web hosting. In order to have a blog or website, we require **web hosting**. Essentially, this is where our content 'lives' and is stored. It can get more technical, but that's it in a nutshell.

A simple analogy I often use ~ while we think of **web hosting** as the place where our blog/website content 'lives' in the world wide web, **our domain name** is much like the house we build to reside in that world, and **WordPress (Content Management System)** is the tool we use to build our house.

Hosted vs Self-Hosted

If you're like me, you're probably trying to understand the **difference** between **WordPress.com (hosted)** vs **WordPress.org (self-hosted)**. When I started blogging six years ago, I knew very little. The terminology can be a little confusing. Many new bloggers gravitate towards the **Start a Free Blog** articles and choose **WordPress.com**. While that may work perfectly for you, it's essential to know the pros and cons of choosing that path.

There are a few things to consider before you decide which hosting scenario/plan is best for you.

Things to consider:

- Hosting plans/scenarios
- Accessing/Importing Custom Themes
- Monetizing your Website
- Accessing Plugins

You're most welcome to stop by my blog post, [WordPress.com or WordPress.org? Hosted or Self-Hosted?](#) The differences every blogger needs to know.

WordPress.org and WordPress.com

WORDPRESS.ORG VERSUS WORDPRESS.COM

WordPress is a Content Management System. Basically, it's the framework we use to design and build our blog/website. While both hosting scenarios use WordPress, there is a **difference** as to what you'll have access to for website design and functionality.

It's important to know that you're pursuing **the right path based on your long-term goals**. If you're looking to **monetize your blog** and require access to custom **themes and plugins**, then I really encourage you to fully compare the **two hosting scenarios**.

WORDPRESS.COM

[WordPress.com](#) does the hosting for you. If you're just getting started and want to try a free blog you can certainly go with WordPress.com. You can begin with a free account and upgrade as needed. With packages as low as \$3.00 a month, there is something for everyone.

WORDPRESS.ORG ~ BLUEHOST

If you choose the self-hosted route, [Bluehost](#) is the #1 recommended web hosting by WordPress.org. My website is hosted by Bluehost.

Hosting packages are as low as \$2.95 a month and include a **FREE domain name** for one year. Every account features a one-click WordPress installation. Their in-house experts are there to help 24/7.

Also, their help center includes guides, video tutorials, and more. Every website hosted at Bluehost is given a **free SSL certificate**. And they offer a 30-day money-back guarantee!

WP ENGINE

WP Engine has fantastic hosting packages. AND with a WP Engine Plan, you'll get the Genesis Framework & 35 StudioPress Themes for free. We'll cover this below.

The Refined Theme and Market Theme by Restored 316 Designs are included with this promotion. Score! ♥

To learn more visit ~ WP Engine. My website is designed using the Refined Theme.

Domain Name

Your website will require a **domain name**. Bluehost includes a **FREE domain name for one year** with their hosting plans. You can create a new domain or use a domain you already own.

You can also create a **domain name** with WordPress.com.

Your choice of a domain name is an important decision and will depend on many factors. If you're opening a business then maybe your business name will work for you.

For example, I have a business Peace by Piece Puzzles and it was important to me to have my domain name www.peacebypiecepuzzles.com for brand recognition and for SEO (Search Engine Optimization).

You may have noticed my website is my personal name. As an author, designer, and blogger, I branded my services under my name. This corresponds to all my social media profiles. As a sole proprietor, this is ideal for my situation and corresponds to my personal and professional goals.

Ultimately, the decision is yours. It's an important decision and an invigorating one!



eCommerce

eCommerce

WOOCOMMERCE

If you're using WordPress.org or [WordPress.com](#) (requires the Business plan) you can easily create an **online store** with WooCommerce (plugin). [WooCommerce](#) is an open-source, completely customizable eCommerce platform for entrepreneurs. WooCommerce is built on WordPress, the software that runs 26% of the web. It offers much flexibility via hundreds of free and paid [WooCommerce extensions](#).

You can customize **your eCommerce website** whether you are selling physical products, digital downloads, and/or services. I use WooCommerce on my website for digital products!

You can visit their website and view their [extensive features](#) as well as find inspiration and tips for your entrepreneurial endeavours.

SHOPIFY

Shopify is another gem for business owners. Using their platform you can easily build and run your eCommerce store.

Shopify is what I use for my business **Peace by Piece Puzzles** and love the ease of use and intuitive design. I sell physical products and ship globally via **Shopify**. Everything I needed to create a beautiful, fully-functionable online store was at my fingertips. I took advantage of the 14-day free trial and was so pleased after three days I was sold on its use. You can explore all their tools and learn more about their services before you commit.



Creativity and Design

Creativity and Design

We live in a **visual world**. Many followers of my blog are writers, authors, and/or bloggers, AND readers. We share and market our work, and the work of others, through visuals. What grabs our attention? For me, it's images, but a big source of inspiration comes from the typography and graphics. We can create beautiful **marketing designs using unique fonts and graphics**.

** In addition to below, if you're looking for tips and free resources, please feel free to drop by my **Library of Free Resources**. I share design tutorials, graphics, and more. You can view [here](#) and download as many items as you wish. ♥

There are so many fabulous resources to access. I wanted to share my go-to sites for beautiful fonts and graphics (free and paid):

FONTBUNDLES.NET

FontBundles.net is well known for saving customers bundles of cash, but they have gone one step further with their **FREE fonts** section, which includes a brand new free font every week. Yup, FREE! ♥

DESIGNBUNDLES.NET

Design Bundles offer **amazing graphics at fantastic prices**. They have thousands of graphics, templates for business cards, brochures, and websites, logo design templates, etc. They generously offer free fonts every week via Font Bundles. All of their free fonts are available to download instantly, as soon as you sign up for an account. It's quick, easy, and FREE!

CREATIVE MARKET

I love Creative Market! The talent and **creativity** are inspiring. They offer FREE products, but their paid products are worth every penny. I often purchase a Bundle and feel like a kid at Christmas. So many AMAZING products at an affordable price!

DEAL JUMBO

Deal Jumbo is known for its amazing **discounted design bundles with extended license!** From fonts, graphics, mockups, photos and textures, there is something for everyone.

The bundles are huge and can be priced as low as \$3.00. They have awesome freebies too. You can view and download their free designs and graphics [here](#).

CRAFTBUNDLES.NET

*How to access and use Font Glyphs and Swashes in
Windows and Photoshop!*



[Watch via Youtube](#)



Writing Tools

Writing Tools

GRAMMARLY

As a writer and blogger, I love **Grammarly**! I use it for all my blog posts and **writing needs**. Its ease of use is amazing. It's my go-to editor. Grammarly automatically detects grammar, spelling, punctuation, word choice, and style mistakes in your writing.

You simply copy and paste any English text into **Grammarly's Editor**, or install **Grammarly's free browser extension** for Chrome, Safari, Firefox, and Edge. I'm using the Chrome extension as I prepare this document!

The **FREE version** is available or you can upgrade to **Grammarly Premium** which offers over 400 types of checks and features.



Stock Images/Visuals

Styled Stock Images (Free and Paid)

HAUTE STOCK

I love Haute Stock and the easy access to the complete library of **beautiful stock images**. You can become a member and access the library. BONUS: If you subscribe

to their email list, you'll receive free stock images in your inbox every month! Yup, it's true!

STYLED STOCK SOCIETY

Styled Stock Society is abundant with **beautiful images** to meet all your branding needs. You can become a member and access the library. BONUS: If you subscribe to their email list, you'll receive 20 free stock photos immediately. PLUS new freebies in your inbox every month! Seriously, how amazing is that?!

UNSPLASH

Unsplash has thousands of **free images available for commercial use**. It's easy to spend hours browsing through their content. You can also narrow your search using the filters. I've curated images for blogging, such as flat lays, and you're most welcome to have a look and download any and all images. You can see my curated content [here](#).

PIXABAY

Pixabay also has thousands of **free images available for commercial use**. Again, it's so easy to spend hours browsing through their content. Like Unsplash, you can also narrow your search using the filters.

PEXELS

Pexels also has thousands of **free images available for commercial use**. You can also narrow your search using the filters. I've curated images for blogging, such as flat lays, and you're most welcome to have a look and download any and all images. You can see my curated content [here](#).

PIKWIZARD

PIKWIZARD offers **high-quality, free stock photos**. Visit their stunning library of over 1 million stock images and videos. Royalty-free and safe for commercial use, with no attribution required.



Image Editing/Design Visuals

Image Editing/Design

PHOTOSHOP

Photoshop is my go-to graphics editor. Graphics, logos, templates, photo editing, and so much more, Photoshop will do it. It's part of **Adobe Creative Cloud** and you can try it for **free**.

Many people shy away from Photoshop because of its scope. But that's what makes it awesome. With their numerous **Tutorials and User Guide**, you'll be amazed at what you can design. I made the leap years ago and can say it's one of the best design decisions I've made!

I share **design tutorials** via my **YouTube** channel. Feel free to drop by **here!**

PICMONKEY

PicMonkey's online photo editor has all the tools and effects needed for amazing, branded images and designs. It's super easy and they offer a **free** trial. Their intuitive platform allows users to start developing on their desktop app and finish on mobile. Or vice versa! Their mobile app is optimized for finger taps and fast adjustments. You can style beautiful branded graphics for your social media posts.

CANVA

Canva's **online photo editor** also has all the tools and effects needed for amazing, branded images and designs. It's easy to use and it's FREE! You can also trial **Canva Pro** free for 30 days (cancel anytime). ♥



Website Themes and Templates

Website Themes and Templates

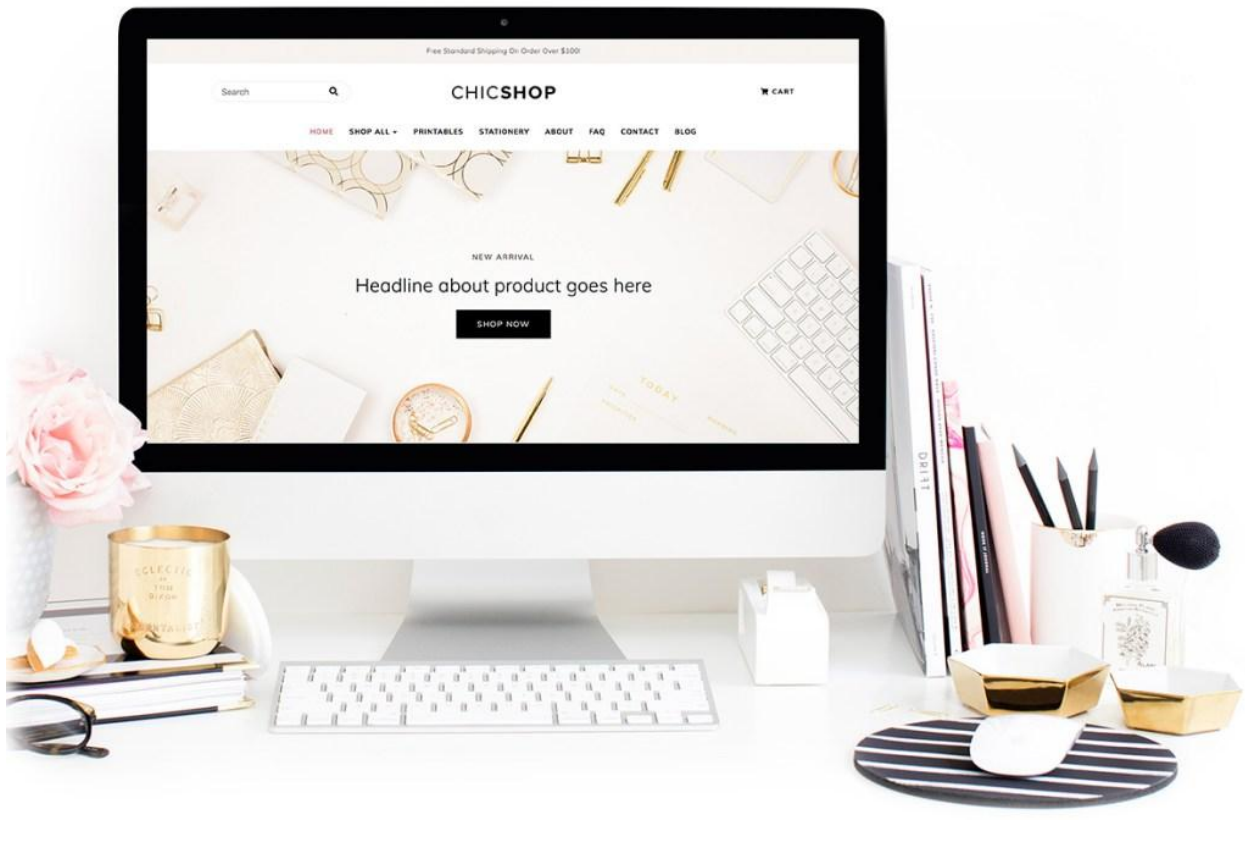
Having a website to be proud of is essential for longevity in business and blogging. Our website is the portal to our content and creations. We want visitors to feel welcome, enjoy their visit, and, hopefully, return.

Having a **beautiful, intuitive website** isn't necessarily expensive. Nope. In this digital age, there are so many resources at our fingertips. There are free themes via WordPress, but you can be limited with customization, features, and options available. Or you may need coding experience. It's doable, yes, but if you're not happy with your website aesthetically and have limited features, you have options elsewhere.

NOTE: To import/upload themes for WordPress, you'll need to be self-hosted with WordPress.org or upgrade to the Business Plan, if you're using WordPress.com.

BLUCHIC

Bluchic is a fabulous source for **beautifully styled feminine WordPress themes** for female entrepreneurs. You can visit their website and browse the numerous themes.



RESTORED 316 DESIGNS

Restored 316 Designs is a fantastic source for **beautifully styled feminine WordPress themes** for female entrepreneurs. You can visit their website and browse the numerous themes. Their support team is fabulous!

I designed my website using the [Refined Theme](#).

STUDIOPRESS

StudioPress offers **world-class Premium WordPress Themes**. All of their themes are built on the [Genesis Framework](#), which makes your site faster, more secure, and more SEO-friendly. My website uses the Genesis Framework!

** With a [WP Engine Plan](#), you'll get the Genesis Framework & 35 StudioPress Themes for free. The [Refined Theme](#) and [Market Theme](#) by Restored 316 Designs are included with this promotion. Score! ♥ To learn more visit ~ [WP Engine](#).

BEAUTIFUL DAWN DESIGNS

[Beautiful Dawn Designs](#) is another fantastic source for **beautifully styled feminine WordPress themes** for female entrepreneurs. You can visit their website and browse the numerous themes!

CREATIVE MARKET

[Creative Market](#) has over 7600 **ready-to-use themes for business and personal websites, landing pages, and blogs**. Their modern, feminine, and professional themes can power eCommerce sites, portfolios, and blogging platforms. You can spend hours browsing and you're sure to find exactly what you're looking for!

MORE SOURCES FOR BEAUTIFUL FEMININE WORDPRESS THEMES ♥

[Adalaine Design](#)

[Elegant Themes](#)

[Creative Market](#)

[Lucid Themes](#)

Bella Creative Studio

Lovely Confetti



I hope this list proves helpful in your blogging and business endeavours. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me via my website [here](#). I love sharing my favourite blogging tools and resources.



Feel free to pop by my website for more blogging tips!

[Social Media and Marketing Tips](#)

[Design Tips](#)

[Blogging Tips](#)

Much joy and continued gratitude to all. ♥



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