

Getting started with Wordpress WPBakery Page Builder

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WPBakery Page Builder is a Wordpress plugin (add on) that allows a more WYSIWYG way of editing web content. It also allows for construction of complex pages that look good on all devices (i.e. responsive) including phones, tablets, and laptops. Knowledge of HTML is not required. It used to be called Visual composer (VC).

It might seem complicated to begin with, possibly because it is not like anything else you've used. Once you are familiar with the concepts it will become intuitive. I recommend creating a new page to experiment with, you can trash the page when you are done.

[NOTE: this description will become out of date as the plugin develops through time.]

When you create a new item (page, post, event, etc.) you will see the Classic mode editor, which is not so good for pages that look good on phones as well as desktops.

There are big blue buttons that you can use to access the Page Builder which has two modes, Frontend and Backend. The Frontend editor is more WYSIWYG and generally faster, however there are changes you need to make that can only be done from the Backend, such as adding an Excerpt or Categories.

IMPORTANT! Once an item has been edited using the Page Builder it is unwise to use the Classic editor afterwards. Page Builder inserts formatting codes (shortcodes) that are seen within square brackets when in Classic mode, these must be preserved. Careful editing in Classic mode is possible, but in Backend mode you already have access to everything you have in Classic mode.

A possible work flow when creating a new item is:

- 1) Click New Item.
- 2) Switch to Frontend.
- 3) Click the gear in the blue bar, add your page title.
- 4) Add your content blocks.
- 5) Save Draft.
- 6) Switch to Backend to add Excerpt, Categories, and Featured Image.
- 7) Publish.

You can switch between Frontend and Backend at will but you need to save before switching, you can use Save Draft, Publish, or Update. You can do all editing in the Backend if you prefer.

The descriptions below apply to both Backend and Frontend editing.

Rows and Columns

All content is stored in columns within rows. You need to insert a row to start, but if you insert some other content, known as an 'Element', then a row will be created for you. Columns are the mechanism by which we can make sure that content is readable when the page is viewed on a narrow screen like a phone. As the screen is narrowed the columns will be stacked vertically instead of horizontally:

Laptop	row1	→	col1 col2 col3 col4
	row2	→	col1 col2 col3
Tablet	row1	→	col1 col2 col3 col4
	row2	→	col1 col2 col3
Phone	row1	→	col1 col2 col3 col4
	row2	→	col1 col2 col3

To add a row in Page Builder click on a + symbol and when you see the 'Add Element' window click on 'Row'.

Setting the number of columns is different between Frontend and Backend:

In Backend just above a row hover over the icon that looks like 3 rows, then either select a predefined layout or click 'Custom' to enter one yourself.

In Frontend hover the mouse over a row and you will see blue and orange boxes; click the right arrow in the blue box and then click the 'Change layout' icon that looks like three rows.

The theme we are using can have up to 12 columns, and each column can be a different width.

In the editor, just above a row, are three horizontal lines; in the Frontend you will need to hover your pointer over a row to see the word 'Row' with the lines next to it.

You can select columns by as fractions of the width by whole divisors of 12, that is 1/12, 1/6, 1/4, 1/3, or 1/2, for example $1/6 + 1/6 + 1/4 + 1/3 + 1/12$ adds up to 12/12. The number of columns cannot exceed 12 but can be less and you don't need the full width, for example $1/3 + 1/3$ which leaves 1/3 unused.

It is also possible to nest rows within columns and those nested rows can contain columns.

Adding Elements

Click on a + symbol to open the 'Add elements' dialog.

The elements that you may find most useful are Row, Text Block, Single Image, and Image Grid.

Documenting all elements is beyond the scope of this document.

Don't be afraid to experiment, changes you make can always be undone and don't affect anything outside of the page, post, or event that you are currently editing.

Element Controls

Each element has a control bar associated with it, it is green and pops up when you hover over the element.

Move: The compass-like icon on the left is for dragging an element around.

Settings: The pencil opens up the settings for that element. The settings shown depends on the type of element, most have multiple tabs. Many elements have a settings tab called 'Design options' where you can set margins, borders, background color, etc.

Duplicate: Click the icon looking like two pages to make a second copy.

Delete: Click the X.

Media

Wordpress maintains a media library. In order to use an image or a pdf document it must first be uploaded to the library.

The media library can be accessed from the dashboard. Media is stored in folders by month, e.g. 2015/01, which can be viewed separately by clicking 'All dates' in the filter options and choosing a month.

Please, if you add media to the library and decide not to use it make sure you delete it to save disk space. Same applies if you delete a page, post, or event; any media no longer used has to be deleted by hand.

All media should have it's Alt field filled in, imperative for the visually impaired.

In Page Builder media can be added in a number of ways, elements like 'Single Image' and 'Image Grid' are most useful.

Media, once in the library can be used on multiple pages, multiple times. Deleting something from the library will remove it from all pages but will not delete the page elements that contain the media. Each media item has an ID, page elements that reference an invalid (deleted) ID will appear blank but are still looking for the item with that ID which prolongs load time.

Gotchas

None.