

Get your WordPress site ready for next semester

Can you believe it? The semester will be winding down in a couple of weeks. If you're using WordPress as a tool in your class, now is a good time to think about a strategy for resetting your website for the fall semester (or the next time you will teach the course). Chances are that if you're using WordPress your teaching practice is deliberately public in one way or another. You may even have students taking part in conversations on your class site. These scenarios are important to take into account when preparing your class for the next semester. Are there changes you need to make to course materials or site structure? Are there student contributions that need to be saved? Are there conversations that need to be archived and deleted before the next cohort of students begins submitting assignments? If you are going to be using your WordPress site again, the steps below will be helpful as you prepare for the new semester.



EXPORT A BACKUP

Regardless of whether your WordPress site is for course materials, conversations or both, it is a good practice to export a copy of the site at the end of each semester. Doing this ensures that you can access that older version of the site if necessary. It is a safeguard in the unlikely event that something catastrophic happens to your class materials, or if you need to revisit details about student work in the class after the semester has ended. [You will find instructions on how to export on the WordPress website.](#)

CLEAN UP POSTS, COMMENTS OR REPLIES

Remove or move content from your site that doesn't need to be there for the new semester. You can send posts and pages to the trash if they need to be pruned away, or discard them

forever if you're ready to commit to a cleansing purge. You also have the ability to unpublish posts and pages if you want to reveal pieces of your course incrementally throughout the next semester. Unpublishing a post or a page puts it in "Draft" status until you are ready to "Publish" and make it public again.

If you have forums configured in your WordPress site, consider whether or not it is important to clean up old conversations before the new ones begin. Is there value in having new students see older conversations? Will you reuse your discussion prompts? The answers to these questions will depend on your class and how you choose to facilitate discussion.

MAKE PAGE EDITS THAT ARE FRESH IN YOUR MIND

Edit pages and information you have identified to be updated sooner rather than later. You might forget to do it if you wait until after a long break. I know this sounds obvious, but I've put this step off before in my own class and wished I hadn't.

ARCHIVE YOUR SITE AND MAKE A COPY

Not everyone will need to do this step. There are times when an entire course needs to be copied into a new WordPress site so the old one can be deactivated. Deactivating a site will keep the entire site intact and make it unavailable to anyone trying to access it while they are browsing on the web. Creating a copy of a WordPress site and archiving the old site is a solution if you want to overhaul your class website, but maintain an old version of the course for reference. It also enables you to change the URL to your class website to reflect the semester in which it is/was used. This process is similar to copying a course into a new shell in Blackboard, and it is something we can help with here at UAF eCampus.

NEXT STEPS: CREATE A PLAN FOR RAMPING UP YOUR COURSE FOR NEXT SEMESTER

Once you've cleaned up your site from the current semester, take notes about what else you need to do before the new semester begins. You don't want to forget that great idea you had for a new assignment, or the new section you wanted to build based on some student questions last semester. Note these things now so you don't forget them when you're ready to sit down and continue work on your course.