

WordPress and Graphics

Are you ready to add images to your WordPress blog? This tutorial can help you with your decisions on how to use images in your blog before you begin to upload images. Linda talks about placement, colour and resources on finding images for your blog.

Why Use Graphics?

You can be a purist and use text only in your blog. You *can* accomplish this, and if you are a fantastic writer or a famous person, you can gain a lot of readership. But, readers like to look at pretty pictures, and some blogs beg to be dressed up. The issue here is to keep those graphics at a minimum so that your site downloads quickly and easily. And, another issue is to use relevant images so you won't anger your readers with irrelevant images.

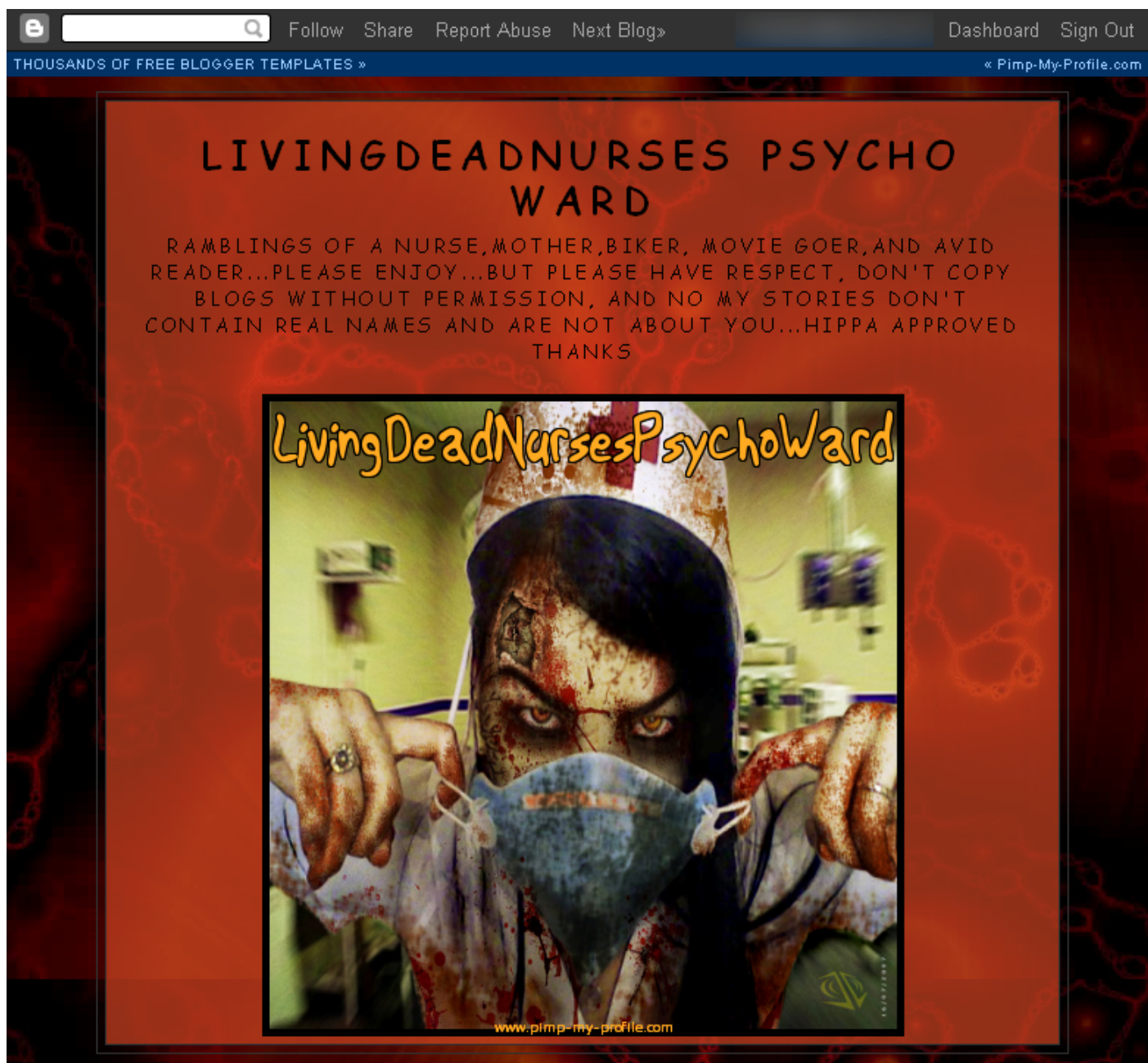
When you use WordPress (WP), even the default layout contains images. Even simple themes such as [Theme Hybrid](#) contain some small images. While these sites can load quickly and easily into a multitude of browsers, the image is what you may need to catch a viewer's eye.

Above the Fold

I worked as a journalist for some years, and my boss was a man after a marketing person's heart. Although the town we lived in contained only 4,000 people, and the paper was the only print newspaper in town, he maintained that a photo placed "above the fold" was the best way to sell ALL the papers he had printed.

"Above the fold" means that an image showed at the top of the newspaper after it was folded and ready for a newspaper stand or box. My boss's preference was a photo of a "kid, a flag or a dog," as those images sold the most newspapers in his situation. Our audience consisted of patriotic farming families, so those images did, indeed, work.

"Above the fold" in a Website consists of that area that a viewer sees when he or she stumbles upon or searches for your site. If you are appealing to patriotic farming families, then you might search for images of kids, flags and dogs. If you plan to appeal to a different audience, then you need to decide how you want to present your site to that audience. Here are a few examples of striking images used 'above the fold' on Web sites and blogs:

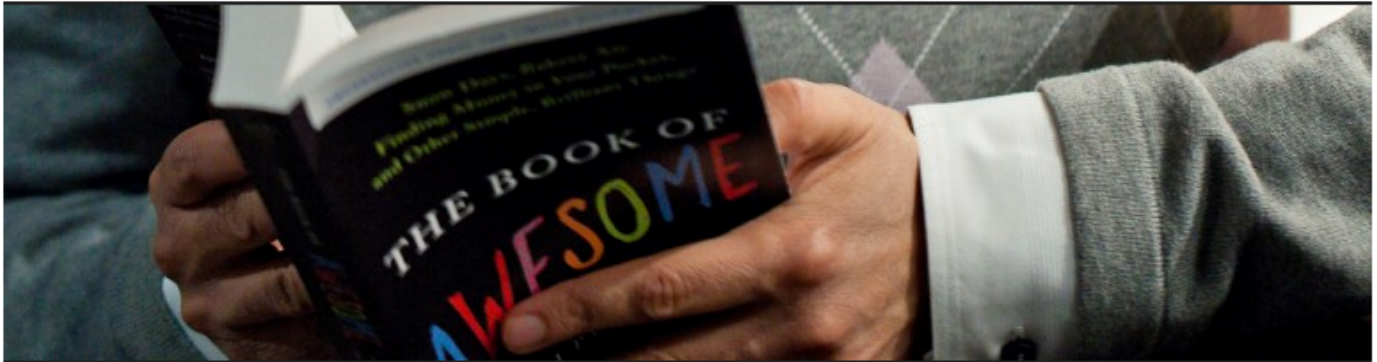


The Google Blogger blog above belongs to a nurse who works in a hospital, not a psych ward. She often feels she's going psychotic from her work, however...and, as a motorcycle-riding mum who loves dogs (she owns eight of them), this image fits her world view at this time. Anyone who might stumble upon her blog at [LivingDeadNurses Psycho Ward](#) might be startled enough to start reading.

The use of the colour red in this site connotes both excitement and dread, as red symbolizes danger and sensuousness. Considering the proliferation of vampire novels and television shows, the blood might appeal to anyone who loves that genre. On the whole, however, this nurse is basically sane and practical. She did a great job in snagging some attention with her graphics, though...

1000 Awesome Things

HOME ABOUT BOOK THE TOP 1000



FEBRUARY 5, 2010

#575 When the guy with a full cart of groceries lets you go ahead because you're only buying one thing



There you are holding a **dozen eggs** behind a guy slow-rolling a fat shopping cart stuffed with frozen pizzas, cases of soda, and piles of produce in plastic bags. But just as your eyes start skimming the **tabloid headlines** and you steady yourself for a long wait, he

peeks back and notices your tiny purchase and offers you the next spot in line.

AWESOME!



[Amazon.com](#) [Amazon.ca](#)
[Barnes & Noble](#) [Borders](#)
[Chapters.com](#) [IndieBound](#)
[Indigo.ca](#) [Penguin](#)

Blog Stats

■ 10,109,143 hits

Search

What is the blog pictured about about? Why, it's about 1000 Awesome Things, based upon *The Book of Awesomeness*! I don't have to read a word to know this, because the blog design – above the fold – tells me everything I need to know about this blog. If you go to the [1000 Awesome Things blog](#), you'll see that each blog entry contains an image. Those images, along with the title of the blog entry, can tell you if you want to read the blog entry or not. The image, in other words, works with the content. Bravo.

Note the repetition of colour and of the book (repeating that image in the viewer's eyes and subliminally in the brain) in the header and in the right column. Tricky, eh? Nice, really. And, the white background

emphasizes those colours and does not detract from the importance of that book. All of this is located "above the fold."

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11 MINUTES AGO

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1 HOUR AGO

Entelligence: Context is the killer application for mobile



23 HOURS AGO

Rumored Windows Phone 7 details surface ahead of MWC launch: Zune-like UI, no multitasking



1 DAY AGO

Is a Core i7-based MacBook Pro strutting its specs in the wild?



1 DAY AGO

Switched On: Mined the gap



DeVry University
National Open House:
Saturday, February 13th
Careers for the 21st Century
Learn how the right education can lead to an in-demand career.
» Roll over for more details
DeVry University Keller Graduate School of Management

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Latest Posts ALL NEWS REVIEWS FEATURES

Engadget's blog doesn't look like a blog, does it? At least, it doesn't look like a blog "above the fold." If you scroll down the page on this site, you'll learn that this blog is a blog, and that the [Engadget](#) publishers use the "above the fold" space to make their blog look more like a magazine.

Note that major stories are listed at the top, under the registration information and above the menu. The menu remains important, and then the other stories and ads in the right column take third place in this hierarchy.

While it is difficult to maintain a colour theme through using photographs, you might hope that those images have something to do with the stories...so, if I'm interested in chimpanzees, I might click on that photo thinking I'll read a story about chimps. Unfortunately, I was disappointed. **While Engadget enjoyed my click-through, I was not entertained by the use of an image that nothing to do with the content.**

A Web site, for the most part, is for the viewers, folks...not for the writer or for the publisher(s). Even if you use your blog for self-indulgent patter, try to avoid pissing off your viewers by using images that have nothing to

do with your blog entry...unless you've already developed a reputation of misleading people in the first place.

While many blogs centre on one topic or one genre of information (such as environmentalism, politics, etc.), other sites use blogs to produce news stories. Here, for example, are three such blogs: [The Guardian](#), [NPR](#) and [Huffington Post](#), in that order:



You cannot read the copy from this distance, as the images are so small...but, this reduction in size can help you look more closely at the images on these blogs and their placements. Which site appeals to you? Which blog would you want to read first?

My original preference was the Huffington Post – even at this reduction, you can read the headline and see who the players are in this story. The Guardian, at left, was my second choice, as the image of the woman is interesting and so is the colourful graphic above her. NPR loses out here. Although I can see that the video contains information about Sarah Palin, two things stop me from reading on (and these are personal preferences): first, Sarah Palin's voice hurts my ears, so I don't want to watch a video about her; secondly, this news at this point is old news today as I write this article.

Now, if NPR put that video above the fold, I might be tempted to click on it. But, I need to scroll down to activate the video and my motivation isn't there for this action. And, to be honest, I didn't click on the Huffington Post article, either, as I had the news on television all day and I know HP's perspective. I know what that article is about and I don't want to waste my time reading it. So, amazingly, the Guardian wins this time, as their image offered "new" news to me, and I was curious.

While your blog may not carry news, this is a lesson in repetition...if you do want to create a news blog, use images of news stories that have not already hit the mainstream media – catch someone's curiosity and you may earn some readership time on your blog.

What Will You Do Above the Fold?

If you get the 'above the fold' concept for blogs, then you may realize that this concept has as much to do with mastheads as it does blog entries. Look around at your favourite blogs to learn more about what you see above the fold on those sites. I'm talking blogs, now – sites that change a lot, thanks to new blog entries.

The nurse site, most of all, depends upon a graphic to pull readers into the page with a static image that serves as the masthead. The 1000 Things blog counts on its masthead image as well as the image in the right column to pull readers in and to make an impression. Beyond this, the other sites depend upon the news in their blog entries to determine the images...and those images, hopefully, have something to do with their current writings.

Taking these examples, perhaps you can learn more about what you want to do with your masthead and your layout. Do you want repetitive images, or an image that absorbs the under page? Do you want to move images along like the cars on a passing train, or do you want to keep images at a minimum? The answers to those questions depend upon your personal preferences. At the same time, you might think about your readers...what do you think will appeal to them?

Whatever it is, make sure those images are clean, crisp and clear. Here's another example:

Frog Bottom Farm

community supported agriculture in the heart of Virginia

[Home](#) [How We Grow](#) [Farm Shares/CSA](#) [Farmers Market](#) [Working at Frog Bottom Farm](#) [Farm News and Blog](#) [Contact Us](#)

Daily Farm Photo: snowbound (no CSA pick-up this week)

Posted by Lisa on December 22, 2009
CSA, daily farm photo, greens, root veggies, the farm / 1 Comment



There's your intrepid Farmer Ali, and there's our greens field all covered in snow. It's really something to behold! We took a walk through the fields yesterday and crossed our fingers that it would begin to melt in time for this week's CSA harvest.

But when Ali headed out to the fields early this morning, he discovered that this foot of snow makes

**It's time to sign up for
our 2010 CSA!**

[Click here for
a registration form.](#)

Recent Farm News

[Daily Farm Photo: snowbound \(no CSA pick-up this week\)](#)

Search

Finding Real Food

[Local Harvest](#)
[Buy Fresh, Buy Local Virginia](#)
[Real Milk](#)
[Eat Wild](#)

Our CSA Partners

[St. Stephen's Episcopal Church](#)
[Ginter Park Presbyterian Church](#)
[Central Montessori School](#)
[Baine's Books & Coffee](#)
[Lynchburg Real Foods](#)

[Frog Bottom Farm](#), located in Virginia, echoes the front page of their Web site in their blog...in other words, the blog looks the same as the homepage on the static site. The green block to the right makes their announcement stand out, and the image shows what's happening in their world at the moment. A record-breaking snowstorm has halted CSA (community-supported-agriculture) shipments this week. But, that doesn't stop this farm family from getting out in the snow.

Now, this site comes almost full-circle to the first part of this story, where a Web site is appealing to families. Only, most of these families are not farmers (Frog Bottom does the farming), and patriotism or politics have nothing to do with what Frog Bottom does...so you won't see flags. But, if you go to this site and scroll down

the page, you'll see luscious images of greens, vegetables and family – this is a family-owned operation and they do a bang-up job with their farming. ADDITIONALLY, they take great photographs.

The nice thing about the use of personal photographs in blog such as this is that those images bring the business down to earth. Personal photographs in this blog tell readers something about the people who run the farm, about what they do, and how they do it. In other words, the images in this blog make this business more transparent.

What makes the Frog Bottom images stand out is the amount of "white space" in the blog...that lack of other images, design elements and other visuals that may detract from the photographs only help to emphasize those photographs more. I know the owners of this farm, and I know that neither one of them has a graphic background...they just know how to live simply, and their Web site and blog reflects their lifestyle.

Do you have a blog that needs some personalization? Are you good with a digital camera? Even if you take some lousy shots, if you have Photoshop or some other graphic program, you can crop a photo, lighten it up and take out red-eye before you use the shot. Take some pride in your images, and it will show in your blog.

Using Stock Photos and Other Resources

If you don't have time to take photographs for your blog, consider using a royalty-free stock photo service. Consider this fact first, though: Even the least expensive stock photography service equates to about \$2 to \$3 (USD) per blog entry, if you use only one photograph. Since I don't want to spend USD \$20 per day or more to illustrate 10 new news stories, I use other resources in addition to stock photographs at [Appomattox News](#). Here are a few examples of things you can do, too, to illustrate your blog:



Virginia Motorists Urged to Stay Off Roads

By Staff Reports on 6 February 2010

VDOT and VDEM urge citizens to stay home, keep roads clear.

FULL STORY →

◀ || ▶

The image above is a stock photograph that I paid for at [iStock](#).



VDH Revises James and Rappahannock River Shellfish Closures

By Staff Reports on 5 February 2010

Large areas previously closed for shellfish harvesting now open.

[FULL STORY →](#)

The image I used to illustrate the story above was taken from [Wikipedia](#), which uses copyright-free images. In most cases, I tell readers that I've taken the image from Wikipedia, sometimes I don't. The best-practices habit is to be transparent about where images come from, though.



Football Party Hearty Snack and Food Ideas

By Susan Burke March on 5 February 2010

Healthy SuperBowl snack ideas, including chili recipe.

[FULL STORY →](#)

The image above was provided by the author's press agent. This means that only a few people will carry this image, and that it is a fresh image for anyone who views it. You can gain access to press images like this if you are a news site, or if your site has enough readers to make the press agent happy about you displaying a photo and article from his or her client(s).



The Crooked Road Listed as 2010 Dozen Distinctive Destinations

By Staff Reports on 5 February 2010

Selection based upon blend of eco-tourism and small-town charm.

[FULL STORY →](#)



While the press release above contained images for news sources, I chose to use a Web picture instead. This image was taken directly from the Web site about the Crooked Road, which I then cropped for size and interest. When I take images from Web sites, it's only when that story is about that Web site and I always link to the site.

NOTE: Take caution here, as many Web site owners might take umbrage at you using their images. In my case, I justify it by stating that the image lends a repetitive note to the story and the connection to that Web site (much like the 1000 Awesome Things site). While no one has complained about using a Web site image yet, I fully expect it to happen at some point...at which time I'll respond by removing the image and replacing it with something similar from stock photos, from press images or from Wikipedia.



VDOT Rallies for Another Major Weather Event

By Staff Reports on 6 February 2010

Updates provided throughout the weekend.

[FULL STORY →](#)



Finally, I use images that are offered to news people or bloggers in general. For instance, the story above is about the recent record-breaking snow storm and it came from the Virginia Department of Transportation ([VDOT](#)). Not only did I sign up at their site to receive press releases (which anyone can do), they offer their images free to anyone who wants to use them. I chose this image, mainly because it was striking and

because I know a good many of the Appomattox News readers are truck drivers. So, this image might strike a chord with many of my readers.

NOTE: I wrote about how to use press releases as story lines for your blog at DMXZone previously in the article, [How to Find and Use Free News and Articles in your Web Site](#). Remember to use press releases only if they relate to your site and to your audience. Now, you also can remember to look for free images to use with those press releases as well.

Conclusion

It's up to you how you want to design your blog with graphics and photographs. You can use a variety of sources for those images or produce them yourself. In most cases, you would use photographs or images to emphasize a story or to relay information about that story. Use those images to connect your readers to the headline and to arouse their curiosity.

In the next article, I'll show you how to change that masthead for most themes, and how to use the Hybrid Theme photopack to personalize your Hybrid theme as well.