

WordPress Permalinks, Feeds and Subscriptions

In this article, Linda tackles some issues that can help others notice your blog through the use of Permalinks, feed and subscriptions.

Building Easy-to-Use Permalinks

WordPress provides Permalinks to help blog writers build a presence that is easy to remember, as Permalinks create permanent URLs to your individual blog posts as well as to your categories and postings. This Permalink acts as your ambassador to your blog, providing a way for other people to find your blog or to find individual postings.

Basically, there are three types of WordPress (WP) permalinks:

Ugly: The default looks like this, where the "N" is the Post ID number:

```
http://yourblog.com/?p=N
```

mod-rewrite "Pretty Permalinks": By using the mod-rewrite or lighttpd, you can produce [pretty permalinks](#). The most common might look like this:

```
http://yourblog.com/category/post-name/  
or http://yourblog.com/year/month/day/post-name
```

PATHINFO, or Almost Pretty Permalinks: The PATHINFO permalink look a lot like mod-rewrite permalinks, by they have /index.php inserted like this:

```
http://yourblog.com/index.php/yyyy/mm/dd/post-name/
```

The easiest way to build a permalink, no matter what you choose, is to use the WP dashboard option of "Settings >> Permalinks". That option opens this window:



Permalink Settings

[Help](#)

By default WordPress uses web URLs which have question marks and lots of numbers in them, however WordPress offers you the ability to create a custom URL structure for your permalinks and archives. This can improve the aesthetics, usability, and forward-compatibility of your links. A [number of tags are available](#), and here are some examples to get you started.

Common settings

- Default `http://writersseminar.com/?p=123`
- Day and name `http://writersseminar.com/2010/04/18/sample-post/`
- Month and name `http://writersseminar.com/2010/04/sample-post/`
- Numeric `http://writersseminar.com/archives/123`
- Custom Structure

Optional

If you like, you may enter custom structures for your category and tag URLs here. For example, using `topics` as your category base would make your category links like `http://example.org/topics/uncategorized/`. If you leave these blank the defaults will be used.

Category base

Tag base

[Save Changes](#)

Instead of being baffled by `mod_rewrite` or `PATHINFO`, you can make a choice about how you want your URLs to be read through a number of choices.

- **Default:** This is the “ugly” URL.
- **Day and Name:** A prettier option, allowing users to identify your post by publication date and by title, which allows for some SEO traction as well.
- **Month and Name:** Another pretty option, with also allows for a little SEO traction with the name of the article or post.
- **Numeric:** You can use the archives category and a post number here.
- **Custom:** This is the best option, in my opinion, to help identify your posts or articles and that allows the greatest SEO traction and searchability. You can use this option to include keywords from your title, your post, etc.

Before I go any further, I want to note something that WP repeats constantly in any one of their articles about permalinks in the [WordPress Codex](#):

NEVER EVER put your site url in the permalinks slot. You must use one of the structure tags, or a combination of tags only.

Now that warning is out of the way, you might wonder what WP means by using structure tags. You can see a sampling of those tags above in the image, where I have a custom structure that reads:

```
/%year%/%postname%.html
```

This structure, filled with two tags that offer the year of publication and the name of the post, looks like this when a blog entry is published:

```
http://myblog.com/2010/writing-your-life-memoir-workshop.html
```

You want to make sure that you end your structure with `%post_id%` or `%postname%` so that each permalink points to an individual post. Additionally, WP mentions that:

For performance reasons, it is not a good good idea to start your permalink structure with the category, tag, author, or postname fields. The reason is that these are text fields, and using them at the beginning of your permalink structure it takes more time for WordPress to distinguish your Post URLs from Page URLs (which always use the text "page slug" as the URL), and to compensate, WordPress stores a lot of extra information in its database (so much that sites with lots of Pages have experienced difficulties).

I add the ".html" at the end, as I'm old school and like to see my posts end in .html – but, this is not necessary. However, I have learned that this .html end does override some category design issues, which may or may not be a problem for you. Here is a list of structure tags to choose from in building your custom permalink, offered by WP:

- **%year%** – The year of the post, four digits, for example 2004
 - **%monthnum%** – Month of the year, for example 05
 - **%day%** – Day of the month, for example 28
 - **%hour%** – Hour of the day, for example 15
 - **%minute%** – Minute of the hour, for example 43
 - **%second%** – Second of the minute, for example 33
 - **%postname%** – A sanitized version of the title of the post (*post slug* field on Edit Post/Page panel). So "This Is A Great Post!" becomes `this-is-a-great-post` in the URI (see [Using only %postname%](#)).
- Starting Permalinks with %postname% is strongly not recommended for performance reasons.**
- **%post_id%** – The unique ID # of the post, for example 423
 - **%category%** – A sanitized version of the category name (*category slug* field on New/Edit Category panel). Nested sub-categories appear as nested directories in the URI. **Starting Permalinks with %category% is strongly not recommended for performance reasons.**
 - **%tag%** – A sanitized version of the tag name (*tag slug* field on New/Edit Tag panel). **Starting Permalinks with %tag% is strongly not recommended for performance reasons.**
 - **%author%** – A sanitized version of the author name. **Starting Permalinks with %author% is strongly not recommended for performance reasons.**

Optional Fields and Issues

You might notice in the image shown previously that you have optional fields to play with, including Category Base and Tag Base. This is where you can build a custom prefix for your category or tag URIs. Foreexample, `/taxonomy/tags` would make your category links look like this:

```
http://yourblog.org/taxonomy/tags/uncategorized/
```

If you leave this blank, WP will use the default. Same with the tags:

```
example.net/wp/category_base/category_name  
example.net/wp/tag_base/tag_name
```

The main issue to using permalinks is when you assign multiple categories to a post. At that point, only one can show up in the permalink. The one that shows will be the lowest numbered category. However, the post would be available through all the categories from the blog as normal.

The same issue applies to using the %tag% filed in your permalink structure.

Learn more about how to manage your categories through the WP Codex [Manage Categories SubPanel](#). One topic that this article does not broach is the SEO factor in developing your categories. Use keywords, when possible. For instance, if you are building a blog based upon gardening, you might use garden terms to label your categories. These categories might contain words such as "annuals, perennials, shrubs," etc.

Shortlink URL

I mentioned this topic in the previous article, and you can build a shortlink URL from your post as you publish. This is a convenient option to using the shortlink services such as [bit.ly](#) or [TinyURL](#). You can [read more](#) about this shortlink service at the WordPress blog.

The shortlink is useful when you want to publicize your blog post in social media tools such as Twitter, which allows only 140 characters. If you wanted to use a long URL in Twitter, you might make it difficult for someone to retweet your message, as the retweet might then carry more than 140 characters.

Feeds and Subscriptions

Although this topic may not seem related to permalinks, you might realize down the road that the URL to your article is difficult to find, or that it does not make sense to someone who is unfamiliar with your blog. WP Codex offers a complete [run down on feeds](#), with information about the feed that WP provides with its format.

When you read this content, you may begin to realize that your feed, no matter what you choose, is read by various options such as categories, tags, or date of publication, for example. In the case of the Web site, Writers' Seminar (<http://www.writersseminar.com/>), I chose to use the basic feed for the site and the full text, which can be chosen at "Settings >> Reading" in the WP dashboard.

This is an exercise, so try it on your own site to see what happens:

1. Take some of the URL examples for feeds from that WP Codex page on feeds and drop one into your browser's address bar to see what happens in your case.
2. In my case, the code for the feed URLs (wp-rss.php, wp-rss2.php, etc.) all redirect to this: <http://writersseminar.com/feed/rss> or <http://writersseminar.com/feed/atom>, and the page only shows what I included in the excerpt for any given blog entry.
3. If you have already built your site and ignored the feed option in the process, you may see a link on your site for "Subscriptions." Click on that link, and you will end up at a page similar to the one for Writers' Seminar:

LaGrange Writers' Seminar

[AUTHORS](#)[EVENTS](#)[NEWS](#)

Meet Thomas Freese at Book Signing in LaGrange

By [Linda Goin](#) on 04/04/2010 | [Edit](#)

[05/14/2010; 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.] Making Wood Jewelry Southwest Style outlines the details and his appreciation of hand crafting in wood.

[FULL STORY →](#)

Writing Your Life Memoir Workshop

By [Linda Goin](#) on 04/13/2010 | [Edit](#)

[05/04/2010; 12:00 pm to 2:30 pm.] Mary O'Dell is leading a new memoir-writing workshop in LaGrange!

Note the arrow above, that shows the subscription service for this site. When you click on that link, you'll see this:



Subscribe to this feed using

Always use Google to sub

Google

Live Bookmarks

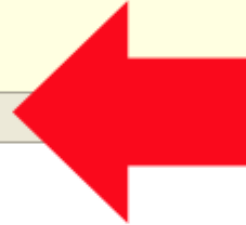
Microsoft Office Outlook

Choose Application...

Bloglines

My Yahoo

Google



LaGrange Writers' Se

For writers in and around the LaGrange, Kentucky area.

[Writing Your Life Memoir Workshop](#)

Tuesday, April 13, 2010 10:53 AM

[05/04/2010; 12:00 pm to 2:30 pm.] Mary O'Dell is leading a new memoir-writing workshop in LaGrange!

[Sheron Coffey to Sign "Hanna Banana" in LaGrange](#)

Wednesday, April 07, 2010 10:09 AM

[04/17/2010; 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.] Get your copy at Karen's Book Barn & Java Stop on Main St.

[Buckner Poetry Group](#)

Sunday, April 04, 2010 10:00 AM

[04/01/2010; 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. 04/08/2010; 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. 04/15/2010; 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. 04/22/2010; 10:00

[Meet Thomas Freese at Book Signing in LaGrange](#)

Sunday, April 04, 2010 6:34 AM

[05/14/2010; 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm.] Making Wood Jewelry Southwest Style outlines the details and his appreciation of hand craft

[La Grange Library Needs Your Help](#)

Friday, March 26, 2010 2:49 PM

KY Senate about to cut current construction grant amounts...

[Region 2 Spring Conference Details](#)

Friday, March 05, 2010 8:31 PM

[03/26/2010 to 03/27/2010.] Spend the day with fellow journalists in the Washington, D.C. area.

[Environmental Writers Chosen for Awards](#)

Thursday, March 04, 2010 2:44 PM

Alabama and Tennessee shine in this year's awards.

[Buckner Poetry Group](#)

Thursday, March 04, 2010 11:00 AM

[03/04/2010; 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. 03/11/2010; 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. 03/18/2010; 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. 03/25/2010; 10:00

[Photos from the First United Conference, Feb. 2010](#)

The arrow above shows the options that readers can use to read your feed, including an option for Outlook, if they use that email service. These are the only options that your readers have to follow you, and some are quite comfortable with those options. To expand your feed options, you might want to use a service like Feedburner (which now is part of Google – and you can read more about how to use Feedburner at this [Google Help Page](#)) or [RSS Mix](#). The latter service combines your feed into one option. But, I like Feedburner, as I can truly expand my writing into full-length pieces for readers who want that option delivered to their mailboxes.

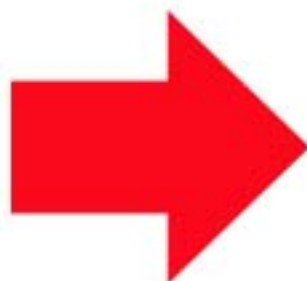
For instance, the online newspaper, Appomattox News, does not have a print version. For some reason, this irks some readers in that area. I have yet to fully educate those readers how to achieve a print version, simply by signing up for the RSS feed. If you go to [Appomattox News](#) and click on the “Subscribe” button, you will be redirected to my [Feedburner feed](#) for that site, where you can read the full newspaper by article, last one posted first, including images.

Appomattox Area News

syndicated content powered by FeedBurner

FeedBurner makes it easy to receive content updates in My Yahoo!, Newsgator, Bloglines, and other news readers.

[Learn more about syndication and FeedBurner...](#)



Subscribe Now!

...with web-based news readers. Click yo



...with other readers:

(Choose Your Reader)

[Get Appomattox Area News delivered](#)

[View Feed XML](#)

Current Feed Content

Surprisingly Unhealthy Foods: What to Choose Instead!

Posted: Fri, 16 Apr 2010 16:00:12 +0000



What to eat? Seems like a simple question can vex even the most savvy eater, especially when trying to make sense of food packaging

Note the arrow above, which points to the email option. When you click on that option, the Feedburner tool allows you to subscribe to your email address, no matter the email service that you use. When you subscribe, the day's news will be delivered to your email box, complete with images (if you allow this option) and full news stories (I selected the full article in the "Settings >> Reading" area of the WP dashboard). This is one way that news blogs can cut on printing costs, especially if they carry a few stories per day.

I could use the shortened teaser option for the feed, forcing the reader to come to my site to read the 'rest of the story' as well. But, since I know that many readers are part of that "digital divide," where they cannot download video and other bandwidth-heavy options, I offer an alternative to the site. If you decide to do this as well, you might want to know that you can add advertising to your feeds at this time.

Note that the person can see what time I posted that last article. The link in the title leads directly to the page where the article resides, too. While this has nothing to do with permalinks, you might notice the URL at the site when you click on that title. This is what it looks like:

http://www.appomattoxnews.com/2010/surprisingly-unhealthy-foods-what-to-choose-instead.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+AppomattoxNews+%28Appomattox+News%29&utm_content=FeedBurner

Ouch! That is a long URL, and one that is not conducive to spreading around on Twitter, for sure. But, you can see that the permalink that I originally built is right there, untouched. For most computer-literate people who want to spread that URL around, they would either use a shortlink service or merely use the permalink up to the question mark shown after the "html" part of that permalink. This is what most of us would hope, at any rate. There's no getting around it otherwise. Additionally, that permalink might create a subliminal message, providing the article title and, at least, the year that the article was published along with the URL for the domain.

Conclusion

Permalinks are an important part of stating who you are and what you are writing when you *begin to build your blog*. Use them wisely in the beginning, as they can be difficult to change down the road. Once Google and other search engines pick upon your blog entries, you don't want to change them. The best you can do in an emergency is use a redirect from that previous URL (see the list below).

Here are some more links to help you design your permalinks:

- [Optimizing WordPress Permalinks](#): Includes a section on how to set up permalinks for Google News.
- [Beautify your URLs with Permalinks](#): A simple and easy-to-understand article. The real value is in the "related posts" listed after the article.
- [How to configure WordPress to create search engine friendly URLs for permalinks](#): This article tackles HTAccess and the ability to set up a redirect from a previous URL.
- [Understanding WordPress Permalinks](#): Another article that provides information on how to 'recover' if you've changed your permalink structure.
- [The htaccess Rules for all WordPress Permalinks](#): If you want to know more about your HTAccess file, read this article.
- [URL Rewriting](#): This article provides a background on the mod_rewrite option.
- [Boost Search Engine Optimisation \(SEO\) using Permalinks](#): An emphasis on what I wrote earlier about using permalinks as an SEO tool.