

The Soulful Storytellers' Blog-Building Playbook



Before we begin...

Self-hosted (Wordpress.org) versus Wordpress.com

Wordpress.com is easy to set up, but lacks important functions, even if you buy your domain, so it doesn't end in Wordpress.com. Perhaps most importantly, it makes it very difficult to build an email list.

I recommend self hosting. If you already have .wordpress.com URL, it is possible to change by buying your domain, a hosting package, and then doing some switching on the backend.

What does it mean to self-host?

You buy a hosting package from a company like GoDaddy (who I use) or Bluehost (who I've heard good things about), and this is essentially your rent online. The URL is like an empty room, and the host allows you to set up your things, add a theme, and make your blog your own.

Hosting basically brings your site to life. Without it, the URL is just a web address, the page will say parked courtesy of your host.

The advantages of Wordpress.

You have complete customization of your site. It will grow with you. If you sell things, you'll be able to integrate third-party software like shopping cart systems, member center plugins, and any email service provider.

It's just really flexible. There's nothing you can't do, while other platforms might be easier at first, but they have significant limitations that will hamper your long-term growth.

What about Squarespace?

Squarespace is very easy to use, but does have limitations because you're essentially running your blog on a platform you don't own. It's like renting a furnished house while Wordpress is like owning your own and starting from scratch.

One of the biggest limitations with Squarespace is email service provider. The only one it integrates seamlessly with is Mailchimp. You may want to switch as you grow.

My best advice is to think it through and make a decision for the long term instead of what's easiest now. The learning curve will always be there, so if you want to end up on Wordpress, it's best to just begin with Wordpress and avoid the hassle of switching.

Let's break it down...

Step 1: Pick your domain / URL

If you're building a business centered on you, I recommend using your name because it'll grow with you. Messaging changes! Don't limit yourself.

If you already have a website under an existing domain that's not your name, you can totally keep going with that. You can also buy your name and redirect your old site to your new one.

This is pretty easy and often free, with GoDaddy anyway. You'll have to keep paying for your old domain, but you only need one hosting account.

Step 2: Buy a hosting package.

When you buy your hosting package, you'll usually get a free domain. To get started, the cheapest option is fine. Again, I use GoDaddy and love it, but Bluehost is also highly recommended.

Step 3: Install Wordpress.

Usually, there will be one-click install once you login to your hosting account. Once Wordpress is activated, you can access the backend of your site through www.YourDomain.com/wp-admin.

Step 4: Pick a theme.

ThemeForest (ThemeForest.com) has a ton of nice themes. So does Creative Market (CreativeMarket.com).

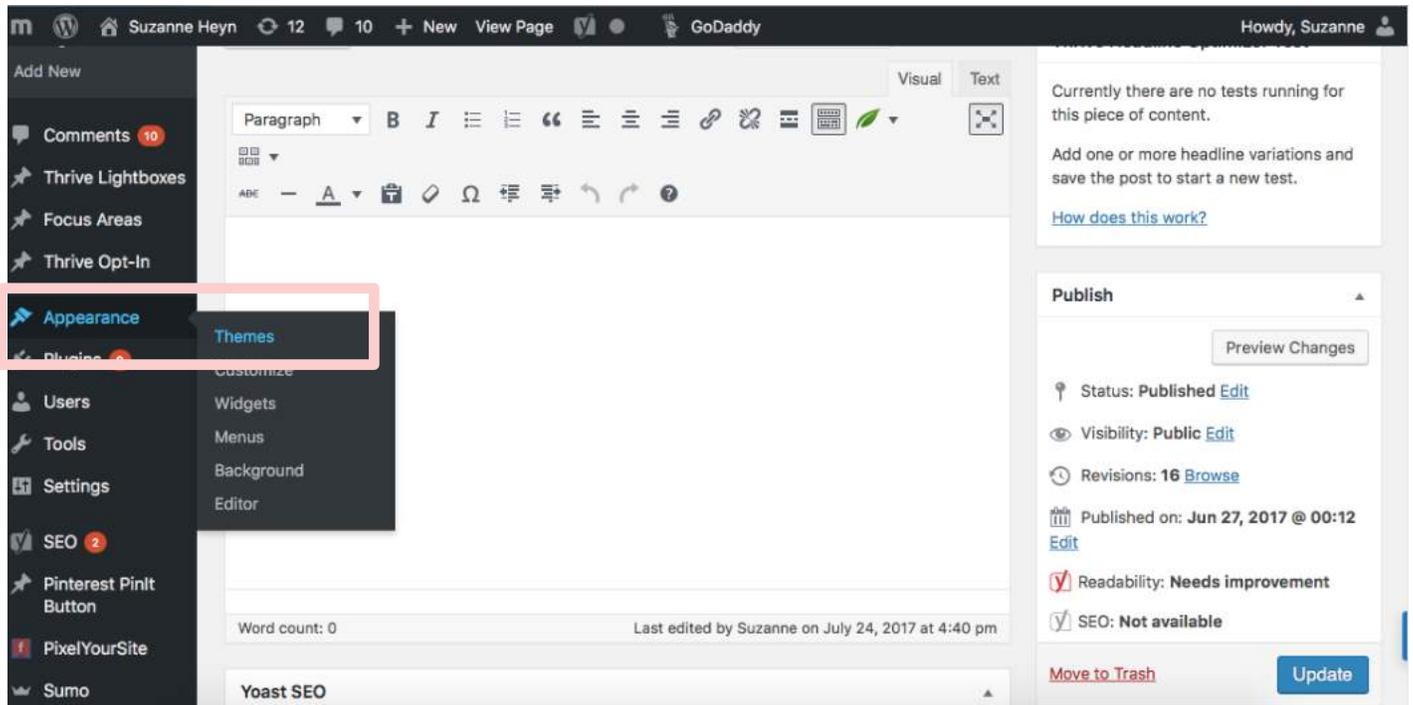
For a more complete package with theme, page builder, and tools to build your email list, Thrive Themes (ThriveThemes.com) or Elegant Themes (ElegantThemes.com) are great, but more expensive. With Elegant Themes, the Divi theme is really popular.

I use Thrive Themes and love its focus on converting viewers to email subscribers. You can literally drag and drop an opt-in form anywhere on your site. Thrive's drag and drop page builder is also amazing and makes it ridiculously easy to create awesome pages.

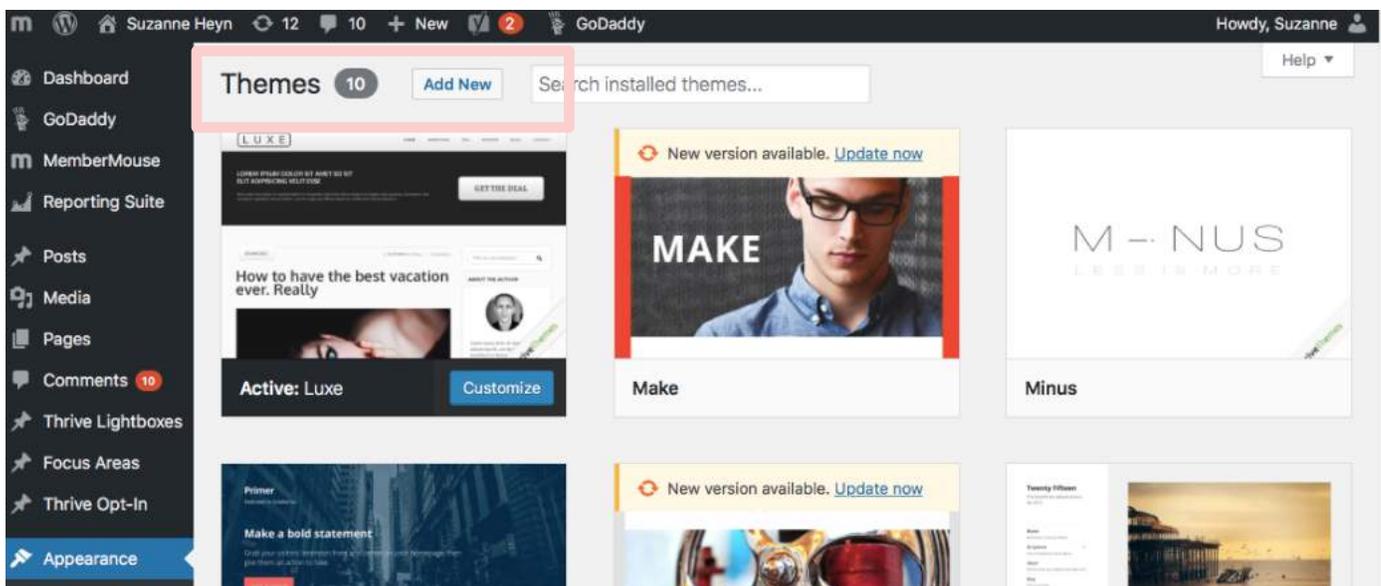
Elegant Themes is, in my opinion, prettier, but I've heard the page builder isn't as intuitive. It could be a great option.

Step 5: Upload Your Theme

Step 1: On the main dashboard, hover your mouse over "Appearance," and click "Themes."



Step 2: Click "Add new" and upload a Zip (compressed) version of your theme file.



Step 6: Select your brand colors, fonts and overall feel.

It's really helpful to choose one to three colors and a few fonts that you'll use again and again for brand consistency. For fonts, it's good to have one for body copy, one for headlines, and one that's an accent font, maybe a little fancier than the rest.

When picking your branding elements, consider the feeling you want to impart to readers, what colors you really like, and how you can differentiate yourself.

For example, a lot of people in the spirituality world use purple, or pink, and that can be great, but color is also a simple way to set yourself apart. Think of Tiffany jewelry and the signature turquoise the company uses.

It can feel boring to have the same look and feel to everything you create, but it's really important. I've come to learn the repetition that feels boring for you is actually an important way of reinforcing your brand feel and values to the people interacting with you online.

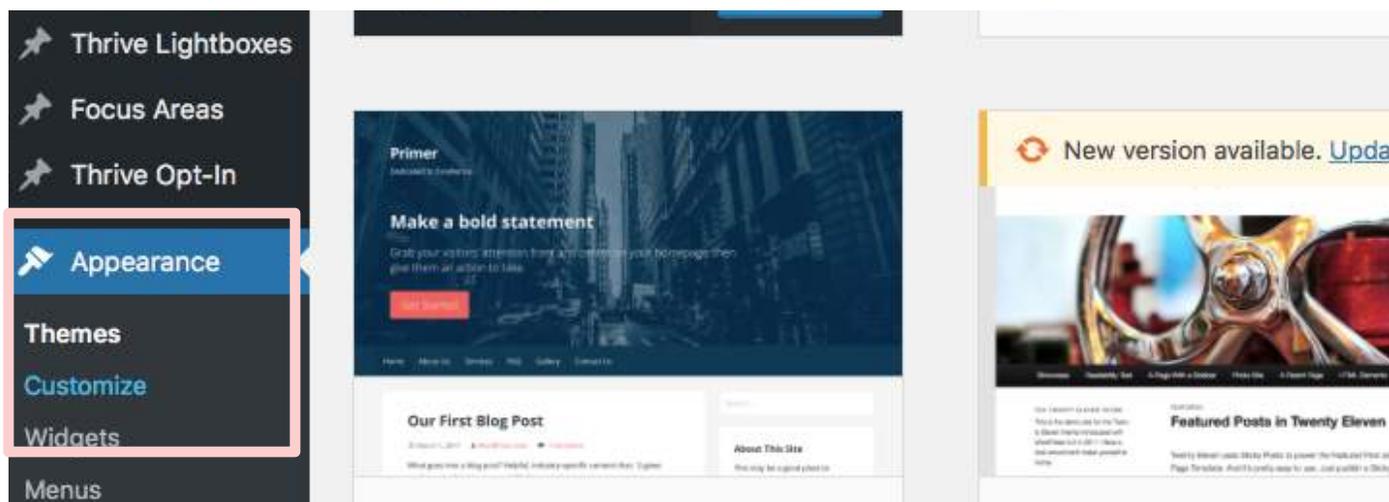
So if you feel like you're endlessly repeating yourself, that's a good thing!

Step 7: Create a header.

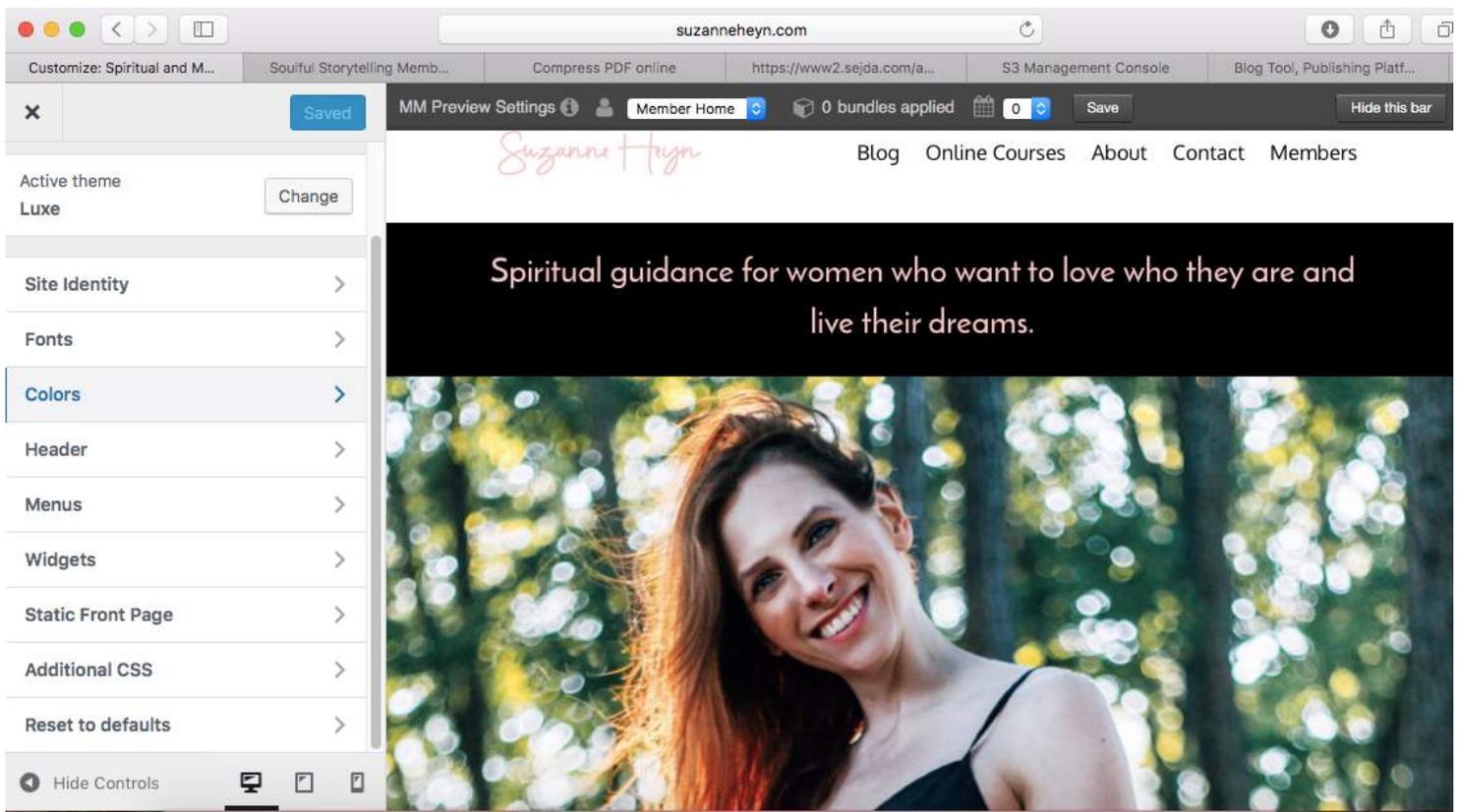
Use the colors and fonts to create a header with a photo of you (can just be a selfie! Whatever you have) and a tagline or something that describes what you do and who you help in one sentence.

Step 8: Customize your theme with your chosen brand elements!

Step 1: From the "Appearance," menu, click "Customize."



Step 2: Click through and explore all the changes you can make to colors, fonts and more. This process also allows you to preview the changes before clicking "save."



Step 9: Add plugins

Plugins add functionality to your site. Plugins are available for everything from adding social share functionality to adding a Facebook Likebox so people can “like” your page right from your website, to so much more.

The number of plugins is mindblowing. Check out the list of plugins in the member center I use on my website to get you started. It also includes screenshots of how to add them to your site. (It's located at the bottom in the bonus section).

Step 10: Create your essential pages

Your top pages are your:

Home page — Introduces you to the reader, explains what you do, makes clear in the first five seconds exactly who you are and what you have to offer. Call to action to download opt-in. Optional blog display of recent blog posts.

About page — Your transformation story. How you help people. Call to action to download free offer at least once, preferably more.

Blog page — Recent blogs!

Contact page — Include information to email you or add a plugin to add a contact form.

If you have any services, it's good to have a separate page for each service, but maybe one services overview page where people can click to learn more about their options to work with you.

You could turn your home page into your blog page, but I think it's preferable to use that space to introduce yourself, explain how you help people, include a call to action to download your free offer, and then a few blog posts if desired.

(Not all themes offer this level of customization, which is another good reason to go with Thrive or Elegant Themes.)

Step 11: Select an email service provider

Mailchimp is good for when you're starting out. It integrates with pretty much every service out there and is free for up to the first 2,000 subscribers.

If you start getting more advanced in your automations, or have multiple lists, you might want to switch down the road, but it's not a big deal to switch.

Aweber is another good service for starting out and offers slightly more sophisticated options, such as the ability to tag subscribers.

Step 12: Add opt-in forms.

Your email service provider will likely have forms that you can create. They'll generate HTML that you can cut and paste into Wordpress (the HTML side, and not the visual editor).

Voila! You're ready to build your list.

Step 13: Create your free offer.

What do you want to offer people to sign up to your list? A good free offer solves an obvious problem for your target audience and ideally paves the way for a paid offer.

Keep it simple! It could be a worksheet, a list of rituals you enjoy, or a short ebook. The best freebies showcase your knowledge in a way that gives your ideal audience a quick win.

Design this in Canva. You can host it on your website, Dropbox or Google Drive — all free options. The important thing is that once you upload, you'll get a link that you can then give to people when they sign up to your list.

Step 14: Link your freebie to your email service provider.

I show you how to do this in Mailchimp in the Week 3 slides. You can also simply add a link to your thank you page.

The downside to this is that if you have a double opt-in, which is when people must click a link to confirm their interest in signing up to your list, then they could access your free offer without actually confirming their subscription.

But, if someone does that, they're not your ideal audience anyway, so maybe who cares?!

Step 15: Blog weekly! And email your latest posts to your list.

You should be all set now with your blog. Congratulations! The work you've done will serve you for years to come!

It can feel scary to start emailing people regularly, but remember — they signed up. They WANT to hear from you!

*Mantra: One step at a time, all your
dreams are coming true!*

Blog Workbook

Let's run through all the decisions step by step to make it super easy.

1. Wordpress or Squarespace (or other)?

2. What is your URL?

3. Which hosting provider will you choose? (GoDaddy and Bluehost are popular ones.)

4. What theme will you use?

5. What do you want people to do when they land on your site? Read your blog? Opt in for your free offer? Contact you for a coaching discover call? Organize your website (especially your home page) to guide viewers down the path you want them to go on. Describe the path below.

5. What will your email service provider be?

6. What will your free offer be? How will you deliver it? (Dropbox, hosted on your website or Google Drive?)

Branding Basics

What words convey the essence of how you want your brand to feel when people interact with your website? Do you want it to feel light and airy? Soulful? Magical?

What is your main color? _____

What is/are your accent colors, if any? (No more than 3 colors total.) _____

Pro tip: For font inspiration, check out those available on Canva. Keep in mind that if you choose a fancy font, Canva doesn't let you upload special fonts unless you have a premium membership. It can be helpful to pick a font already featured.

What will your body font be? (For text such as this, or your actual blog?)

What will your headline font be?

What will your accent font be?

Notes:
