

# WordPress vs. Joomla vs. Drupal

Ted Altenberg – June 18, 2013

There are scores of articles and discussions debating the pros and cons of these three very popular content management systems (CMS). Many individuals have preferences and/or make arguments for or against one or more of these, but reviewing a number of sources, the following ideas emerge as a consensus:

- WordPress is by far the most popular, with over 72 million websites built using it. (Drupal is a bit under 900,000; Joomla is around 1.7 million.)
  - Drupal and Joomla draw nearly the same number of visitors to their main sites each month, just under 30,000. WordPress? 50 **million!** Joomla! is in use on almost twice as many sites in the top million sites as Drupal, but both are under 3% compared to WordPress' 14.3%. ([www.danshaferblog.com/wordpress-vs-drupal-vs-joomla-graphically/](http://www.danshaferblog.com/wordpress-vs-drupal-vs-joomla-graphically/))
- WordPress is also by far the easiest to install, maintain and use — especially by non-techies. Even folks who want to convince you *not* to use WordPress (WP) will admit it's the easiest; Joomla is “medium hard” and Drupal is “very difficult.”

Several articles raved about how much easier to use Drupal 7 is compared with earlier versions, and that may be the case... but it's still a lot more complicated than WP.

Most of the arguments in favor of Drupal over WP have to do with its flexibility and power, but these are advantages *only* if: A) you really need the flexibility and power, and B) you can afford to pay a developer/programmer to do the work — this is not work for the “regular” user! WP on the other hand is quite accessible and manageable by us regular folks.

For the majority of websites, which do not need a lot of advanced features, WP is really just fine; you only need Drupal or Joomla if you really need the added power and complexity. I have built around 2 dozen WP websites, and I have successfully trained a number of people to add and edit content, including forms, blog posts, etc. as well as text and pictures.

Here's a particular cogent excerpt, from a woman who is a web developer herself:

In general, you will hear that WordPress is more user-friendly and Drupal is more robust. Both assertions are mostly true. WordPress is a dream to administer and easy to customize. It also takes advantage of hundreds of community sourced plugins and themes that work well, look awesome and are free or very cheap.

Drupal is usually employed to build out complex, multi-site systems with fine-grained, user permission/access controls. It too, employs a variety of supported modules that can be enabled by skilled administrators.

As for security, both systems are equally vulnerable. It is not the case that one is more open to hacking than the other. It is simply a matter of diligently maintaining the systems so that plugins/modules and versions are consistently monitored and up-to-date. If a website remains unattended, it will eventually get hacked, no matter the platform.

In recent years, **I have become more inclined to deliver WordPress websites because it really is so much easier for administrators to perform the basic, day-to-day content publishing tasks. And, WordPress is much easier to theme (implement the design layer) in the development phase.** Conversely, there tends to be a higher cost for theming and maintenance with Drupal.

([www.truegoodcreative.com/2013/04/wordpress-vs-drupal/](http://www.truegoodcreative.com/2013/04/wordpress-vs-drupal/))

Here are a few websites I've built using WP (I can list more if you want...):

- [www.pdcersantacruz.org](http://www.pdcersantacruz.org)
- [www.svft.net](http://www.svft.net)
- [www.santacruzacu.org](http://www.santacruzacu.org)
- [www.dwcsc.org](http://www.dwcsc.org)
- [www.ninalutz.com](http://www.ninalutz.com)
- [www.whitestagcrew122.org](http://www.whitestagcrew122.org)
- [www.agoramediaservices.com/](http://www.agoramediaservices.com/)
- [www.santacruzhomeopathy.com](http://www.santacruzhomeopathy.com)
- [www.tedaltenberg.com](http://www.tedaltenberg.com) —but due to a security breach, my site was hacked, and I ended up losing it! Big bummer, but oh well, time to rebuild... Security is an issue I've mentioned, and will discuss more...

### **Additional Resources:**

- An 18-minute video comparing Drupal and WordPress: <http://blip.tv/these-things-matter-to-me/drupal-vs-wordpress-not-that-it-s-about-winning-836227> A bit long, but makes several excellent points about pros and cons of each. Made by a young super geek gal.
- An interesting infographic comparing all 3 CMS: [http://www.webnethosting.net/v7/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/CMS\\_Comparison1.png](http://www.webnethosting.net/v7/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/CMS_Comparison1.png)
- CMS usage statistics: <http://trends.builtwith.com/cms>
- I have bookmarks to hundreds of WP-built sites, and can share some or all of those if anyone is interested. But a great starting place to see what can be done with WP, check out their showcase: [www.wordpress.org/showcase/](http://www.wordpress.org/showcase/). They have quite the impressive lists of users!

### **Sites I visited for this info (in no particular order):**

- [www.computerworld.com/s/article/9219685/Site\\_builder\\_shootout\\_Drupal\\_vs\\_Joomla\\_vs\\_WordPress?pageNumber=1](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9219685/Site_builder_shootout_Drupal_vs_Joomla_vs_WordPress?pageNumber=1)
- [www.rackspace.com/knowledge\\_center/article/cms-comparison-drupal-joomla-and-wordpress](http://www.rackspace.com/knowledge_center/article/cms-comparison-drupal-joomla-and-wordpress)
- [www.linuxforu.com/2012/05/winner-takes-all-wordpress-vs-drupal-vs-joomla/](http://www.linuxforu.com/2012/05/winner-takes-all-wordpress-vs-drupal-vs-joomla/)
- [www.danshaferblog.com/wordpress-vs-drupal-vs-joomla-graphically/](http://www.danshaferblog.com/wordpress-vs-drupal-vs-joomla-graphically/)
- [www.chrisbovard.com/2013/02/06/great-wordpress-versus-drupal-debate](http://www.chrisbovard.com/2013/02/06/great-wordpress-versus-drupal-debate)
- [www.threehosts.com/ratings/comparison-software/wordpress-vs-joomla-vs-drupal.html](http://www.threehosts.com/ratings/comparison-software/wordpress-vs-joomla-vs-drupal.html)
- [www.truegoodcreative.com/2013/04/wordpress-vs-drupal/](http://www.truegoodcreative.com/2013/04/wordpress-vs-drupal/)
- [getlevelten.com/blog/kyle-taylor/wordpress-vs-drupal-users-edition](http://getlevelten.com/blog/kyle-taylor/wordpress-vs-drupal-users-edition)
- [getlevelten.com/blog/kyle-taylor/wordpress-vs-drupal-developers-edition](http://getlevelten.com/blog/kyle-taylor/wordpress-vs-drupal-developers-edition)
- [www.visualatte.com/blog/posts/drupal-vs-wordpress-which-better-what](http://www.visualatte.com/blog/posts/drupal-vs-wordpress-which-better-what)
- [www.webnethosting.net/wordpress-vs-joomla-vs-drupal-cms-popularity-war/](http://www.webnethosting.net/wordpress-vs-joomla-vs-drupal-cms-popularity-war/)
- [3wavesmedia.com/blog/drupal-vs-wordpress-gap-closing](http://3wavesmedia.com/blog/drupal-vs-wordpress-gap-closing)
- [www.bigtunainteractive.com/wordpress-vs-drupal/](http://www.bigtunainteractive.com/wordpress-vs-drupal/)
- [int3c.com/blog/2012/11/why-migrate-wordpress-drupal-drupal-vs-wordpress](http://int3c.com/blog/2012/11/why-migrate-wordpress-drupal-drupal-vs-wordpress)

## Excerpts from a few of the sites I visited:

From [http://www.rackspace.com/knowledge\\_center/article/cms-comparison-drupal-joomla-and-wordpress](http://www.rackspace.com/knowledge_center/article/cms-comparison-drupal-joomla-and-wordpress)

If creating a website for your business is on the horizon, you may be wondering which content management system (CMS) is the best choice for you. Here's a look at three of the most widely-used ones. All three are open-source software, each developed and maintained by a community of thousands. Not only are all three free to download and use, but the open-source format means that the platform is continuously being improved to support new Internet technologies. With all of these systems, basic functions can be enhanced ad infinitum with an ever-expanding array of add-ons, contributed from their respective communities.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution here; it depends on your goals, technical expertise, budget and what you need your site to do. For a simple blog or brochure-type site, Wordpress could be the best choice (while very friendly for non-developers, it's a flexible platform also capable of very complex sites). For a complex, highly customized site requiring scalability and complex content organization, Drupal might be the best choice. For something in between that has an easier learning curve, Joomla may be the answer.

	<b>Drupal</b>	<b>Joomla</b>	<b>Wordpress</b>
<b>Homepage</b>	<a href="http://www.drupal.org">www.drupal.org</a>	<a href="http://www.joomla.org">www.joomla.org</a>	<a href="http://www.wordpress.org">www.wordpress.org</a>
<b>About</b>	Drupal is a powerful, developer-friendly tool for building complex sites. Like most powerful tools, it requires some expertise and experience to operate.	Joomla offers middle ground between the developer-oriented, extensive capabilities of Drupal and user-friendly but more complex site development options than Wordpress offers.	Wordpress began as an innovative, easy-to-use blogging platform. With an ever-increasing repertoire of themes, plugins and widgets, this CMS is widely used for other website formats also.
<b>Ease of Use</b>	Drupal requires the most technical expertise of the three CMSs. However, it also is capable of producing the most advanced sites. With each release, it is becoming easier to use. If you're unable to commit to learning the software or can't hire someone who knows it, it may not be the best choice.	Less complex than Drupal, more complex than Wordpress. Relatively uncomplicated installation and setup. With a relatively small investment of effort into understanding Joomla's structure and terminology, you have the ability to create fairly complex sites.	Technical experience is not necessary; it's intuitive and easy to get a simple site set up quickly. It's easy to paste text from a Microsoft Word document into a Wordpress site, but not into Joomla and Drupal sites.
<b>Features</b>	Known for its powerful taxonomy and ability to tag, categorize and organize complex content.	Designed to perform as a community platform, with strong social networking features.	Ease of use is a key benefit for experts and novices alike. It's powerful enough for web developers or designers to efficiently build sites for clients; then, with minimal instruction, clients can take over the site management. Known for an extensive selection of themes. Very user-friendly with great support and tutorials, making it great for non-technical users to quickly deploy fairly simple sites.
<b>Best Use Cases</b>	For complex, advanced and versatile sites; for sites that require complex data organization; for community platform sites with multiple users; for online stores	Joomla allows you to build a site with more content and structure flexibility than Wordpress offers, but still with fairly easy, intuitive usage. Supports E-commerce, social networking and more.	Ideal for fairly simple web sites, such as everyday blogging and news sites; and anyone looking for an easy-to-manage site. Add-ons make it easy to expand the functionality of the site.

From [www.threehosts.com/ratings/comparison-software/wordpress-vs-joomla-vs-drupal.html](http://www.threehosts.com/ratings/comparison-software/wordpress-vs-joomla-vs-drupal.html)

### WordPress vs. Joomla vs. Drupal

Criteria	Wordpress	Joomla	Drupal
Ease of use	User friendly	Semi user friendly	Difficult
Number of Available Programs to Add Features	High (plugins)	Medium (extensions)	High (modules)
Website Looking	Pretty	It depends on developer's skills	It depends on developer's skills
Website Types	Simple sites	Complex and professional sites	Complex and professional sites

Real Examples of Best Looking Websites Created With WordPress, Drupal and Joomla

Wordpress	Joomla	Drupal
<a href="http://www.webcoursesbangkok.com">http://www.webcoursesbangkok.com</a>	<a href="http://www.unric.org">http://www.unric.org</a>	<a href="http://www.recovery.gov">http://www.recovery.gov</a>
<a href="http://www.quasarsoft.net">http://www.quasarsoft.net</a>	<a href="http://www.superstrands.com">http://www.superstrands.com</a>	<a href="http://www.cliftonhill.com">http://www.cliftonhill.com</a>
<a href="http://www.carolinarollergirls.com">http://www.carolinarollergirls.com</a>	<a href="http://ace.nd.edu">http://ace.nd.edu</a>	<a href="http://www.allisports.com">http://www.allisports.com</a>
<a href="http://designshack.net">http://designshack.net</a>	<a href="http://www.ecogiggle.com">http://www.ecogiggle.com</a>	<a href="http://www.mosquitomagnet.com">http://www.mosquitomagnet.com</a>
<a href="http://intellidogs.com">http://intellidogs.com</a>	<a href="http://www.bulle-communication.com">http://www.bulle-communication.com</a>	<a href="http://jenniferlopez.com">http://jenniferlopez.com</a>
<a href="http://www.thisisyoke.com">http://www.thisisyoke.com</a>	<a href="http://www.thehill.com">http://www.thehill.com</a>	<a href="http://www.mollom.com">http://www.mollom.com</a>

From <http://3wavesmedia.com/blog/drupal-vs-wordpress-gap-closing> (a pro-Drupal site):

When Drupal was still in version 6 there was a significant usability gap between Wordpress and Drupal.

Wordpress was:

1. Easier to install
2. Easier to update
3. Easier to manage
4. Smaller learning curve
5. Superior admin section

Drupal was:

1. Harder to install
2. Steeper learning curve
3. Pain to update
4. Inferior media handling
5. More features
6. More flexible

Ted: They then go on to argue that, with the release of Drupal v 7, this is all changed... But I think the situation is still about the same as described above.

From <http://www.linuxforu.com/2012/05/winner-takes-all-wordpress-vs-drupal-vs-joomla/>:

### **Security**

WordPress is notorious for being the least secure CMS. While this is definitely because it is the most popular CMS, and thus relatively easier to hack, it still cannot be denied that newer security loop-holes are discovered in WP way more often than in either Drupal or Joomla! Furthermore, WP plugins and themes too come with their share of hacks and exploits.

Drupal, on the other hand, seems to be the most secure CMS of the three, with the least number of hacks and exploits, on an average (it was chosen by The White House for its website, after all).

### **Extensibility**

In terms of freely available extensions and templates, all three CMSs come out evenly matched. However, it is in terms of commercial themes and extensions that WordPress wins the race. WP is supplemented by numerous commercial extensions' marketplaces, such as Theme Forest, WooThemes, etc, who specialise in WP extensions. Sadly, the commercial extensions for Drupal and Joomla! stand nowhere in comparison.

### **User base and support**

All three CMSs are well documented and have their own forums. However, when it comes to unofficial support, Joomla! and WordPress take the lead. Just search for "wordpress tips" on Google, and you'll come across numerous blogs and websites dedicated to sharing their expertise on WP, and the same applies to Joomla! Sadly, Drupal doesn't really have much unofficial support beyond the main documentation.

Speaking of the user base, all three CMSs have a loyal following, though WordPress does not have the same level of activity on its forums as the other two CMSs.

### **The verdict**

WordPress is by far the most user friendly and popular CMS of the three. It can be used to run things way beyond blogs, and its popularity ensures that it has a monumental pile of plugins and themes (both good and bad) to its credit.

Drupal and Joomla!, on the other hand, are also in active development and have a dedicated developer community, but do not beat WP in terms of usability.

### **So, who wins?**

If you are designing a website for a not-so-technical client, or are looking for a simple solution to create a website, WP should be your preferred choice. Using Drupal or Joomla for a simple blog will be overkill. If security is a concern, Drupal or even Joomla would be preferred. Along similar lines, if your website is of gigantic proportions (say, over 15,000 pages), Drupal can easily offer the robustness that you need.

On a personal note, I use WordPress for most of my websites, and Drupal and Joomla for some others. While WP gets the task done easily and gives me the time to do better things, Joomla doesn't. Drupal, on the other hand, has not given me any error message yet (and I do not suppose it will, any time soon).

From <http://www.bigtunainteractive.com/wordpress-vs-drupal/> (another pro-Drupal site):

Ultimately, when determining a CMS, please consider the following questions... Is your budget healthy enough for Drupal development as opposed to WordPress? In general, it takes 2 to 3 times as long to develop a Drupal site as compared to WordPress. ...

The major differences between the two are:

- **Theme Market:** WordPress has an amazing theme market for do-it yourselfers. Do not ever buy a Drupal theme! There are amazing Drupal starter themes, such as the Omega Responsive theme, but Drupal development is not the type of project that you can spin a theme off of. It is custom development!
- **Market Share:** WordPress has wide scale adoption and a plethora of plugins that are suitable for smaller websites.
- **Deployment Time:** WordPress is very easy to develop a site from start to finish. WordPress is perfect if you have minimal content types and are building a general marketing website.
- **Content Types:** Drupal supports multiple site stakeholders (admin, editors, logged in users requiring customized content, private groups, etc) [Ted: So does WP!]
- **Admin experience:** Drupal has a cleaner admin experience for content editors [Ted: I totally disagree — and everyone who has tried to work with RdO's current site agrees: it's a beast!]
- **App Development and API Development Projects** Drupal has, in general, more robust features for complex projects. [Ted: Not relevant for relatively simple websites such as RdO.]
- **Site Security:** Drupal has enterprise level security and site scale. Numerous government websites are built of Drupal, with the most famous being [Whitehouse.gov](http://Whitehouse.gov).

From <http://www.webnethosting.net/wordpress-vs-joomla-vs-drupal-cms-popularity-war/>:

**Why Choose WordPress:** WordPress is ideal for Blog Sites. WordPress was first CMS designed specifically for blogging. It has a simple page layout unless customized. The 3 basic parts of the page are the Header, The Footer and the Main Body where the Blog would go. It has a built in Navigational System that automatically generates new links as new pages are created. [Ted: WP can also be used for “brochure” sites such as RdO with great success.]

**Why Choose Joomla:** So you have a business and you want to set up an online storefront. Joomla might be the best application to serve your needs. It runs many components that are created independent from the CMS application, thus they are more capable of handling specific tasks. The installation is a bit more challenging than WordPress perhaps, but the final results will not let you down. You can easily scale your site with a Joomla engine which can run many different components at the same time on the same page of your site.

**Why Choose Drupal:** Choosing between Drupal and Joomla! can be a difficult decision for businesses that need a large scale site. Both are easily scalable with some knowledge and a clear plan. These would work well within a company where you have a competent staff person to take charge of the site and its maintenance.

Joomla! and Drupal functionality allows for many more Components/Plug Ins to be installed on the site. These applications are often built for specific tasks and can be free or purchased from third-party companies. Many of them are fully supported and can be maintained by the company that they were acquired from. This can be handy if your site needs specific hi-end and sensitive content. There are literally thousands and thousands of different add-ons for all of the CMS's, but I have noticed a much bigger community with Joomla!. Joomla! is also internationally recognized as being the most secure in its class.

There are many other metrics apart from these that you can use to compare these CMS's against each other. Each of them have many pro's and cons and some people decide to choose one over the other based on cost, flexibility, effectiveness of use, availability of themes, modules, plugins and various other reason.

From

[www.computerworld.com/s/article/9219685/Site\\_builder\\_shootout\\_Drupal\\_vs\\_Joomla\\_vs\\_WordPress?taxonomyId=169](http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9219685/Site_builder_shootout_Drupal_vs_Joomla_vs_WordPress?taxonomyId=169) (A thorough 7-page article comparing the 3 CMS platforms):

**On site administration:** As I walked through each tool's administration controls, I found the Drupal tools less intuitive but ultimately more flexible and powerful. The converse was true for Joomla: easy-to-understand controls, but limitations kept showing up. WordPress was somewhere in-between: the controls were a little tricky to find, but once you found them, they were very useful.

**On configuring a site:** After pulling together various elements of the site, I rapidly got the impression that, while Joomla is really great for managing content, it has some issues with site configuration that don't exist in WordPress and Drupal.

This is a key issue, because Joomla sites will require more coding to get the site to look and feel the way you want — unless you find the one template out there that matches the vision you want for your website.

**On integrating social networking with a site:** I could not determine the solution to implanting Social Networking Genius in Joomla, so it failed this particular test for me. In Drupal and WordPress, adding social tools was easy: activate the module or plug-in and it worked. In Joomla, this was a much less intuitive prospect.

**On finding support for issues:** This is, for me, a clear draw. If you can't find help on the main sites for WordPress, Drupal and Joomla, then you will almost always find the knowledge you need on a third-party site. These are strong communities that definitely add to the strength column of each CMS.

**Overall conclusion:** After a few days with all three CMS platforms, my observations have gelled into one overarching theme: All of the CMSes are very good, but they currently play to different strengths. If I were to make a recommendation, I would tell a beginner to use WordPress, no question. The themes and plug-ins are diverse and numerous, and this is a very good starter CMS that can scale quite well into a more complex site.

I would recommend Joomla for sites that are a bit more complex and are going to be managed by someone with stronger technical skills. For this type of situation, Joomla is perfect: plenty of extensions, easier to learn and enough templates to make site design worries moot.

If I were building a much more complex site, though, I might turn to Drupal first. Though it's harder to learn, it has much more flexibility to scale a site in terms of complexity. It also has the ability to scale up into very complex sites to be used for a variety of business needs.