Introduction to the Weebly Toolkit for Building Websites

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Objective

The purpose of this workshop is not to teach you how to design or even build a website, but rather to introduce you to a toolkit which non-technical people can use to build one.

At the end of the workshop you should be able to:

- Sign up for a Weebly account.

- Find your way around Weebly.

- Use Weebly for your own project.

- Know where to go find the available help.

- Publish your website for others to see.

Some Definitions

- Website address

- Domain Name

Introduction

These days you don't have to be a tech guru to build your own website. There are a number of options available of which Weebly is one. They each have advantages and disadvantages, features and constraints.

Weebly is a web-hosting service featuring a drag-and-drop website builder. The company was founded in 2006 and hosts over 10 million websites. It is based in SanFrancisco.

Weebly's advantages are:

- It is easy to use ... and you don't have to be technical

- It offers many sophisticated features

- Your website is easy to maintain and change

- Weebly automatically converts your website to a mobile-phone friendly layout for visitors from these devices.

- The basic version is free, but an upgrade version "Weebly pro" which costs a small amount a month offers many useful extra features (see the Extras section later in this workshop).

To use Weebly, you sign up for a Weebly account, create your website using their tools and then publish it.

Weebly hosts your website (i.e. saves it on their computers and lets people access it) at no extra cost.

Getting Started

Develop an initial website plan

The easiest way to design a website is to organise your data into pages organised hierarchically – there is a set of pages at the top menu level and all other pages are underneath one of these.

Think about what pages you want for the top level. You can start with just the main 2 or 3 to begin with because it is really easy to change and re-organise later. For accessibility you want a small number of pages (less than 10) at this top level so it should be the main topic areas of the website.

For each page, note the type of content you want on the page and think if you want to just put that content directly on the page or organise it into a series of sub-pages.
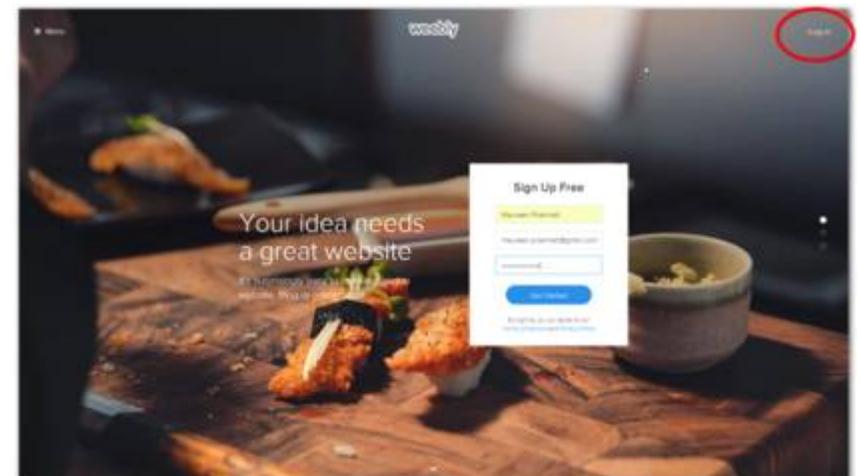
New User - Sign up for a Weebly account

Go to the Weebly website – www.weebly.com

You will be presented with the Sign-up Entry Screen.

Enter your name in the first box and your email address (or Facebook address) in the second box.

Enter a password in the third box. This can be anything and does not need to be the same as your email password.

Click Get Started.

After you click sign-up, you will be asked to enter one of those funny series of letters. If you can't decipher the letters, ask for another set using the button to the left of the arrow.

Click the orange button

You will be asked to enter a title and choose chose the type of site from the drop-down list.

Choose a Theme

When you first start to create your website, you will be asked to select a theme. The theme provides the cosmetics – font style and colour, position of your menus, etc. Pick one that has the type of look-and-feel you want. Weebly has hundreds of themes and they can be easily changed at any time.

Choose your Website address

After you have chosen a theme, Weebly will ask you to choose your unique website address.

Find a name that is representative of the nature of your website, and is not too long or too complicated to remember.

Here, I am using a subdomain of Weebly (i.e, the word "weebly" is part of my address) and my website address will be:

www.maureensproject.weebly.com

If you already have your own purchased domain name (this can purchased from a specialist domain provider such as DOMAINZ) you can use this instead by clicking the button "Use a domain you Already Own".

Many people find it easiest to start with the Weebly subdomain and change this later if they want.
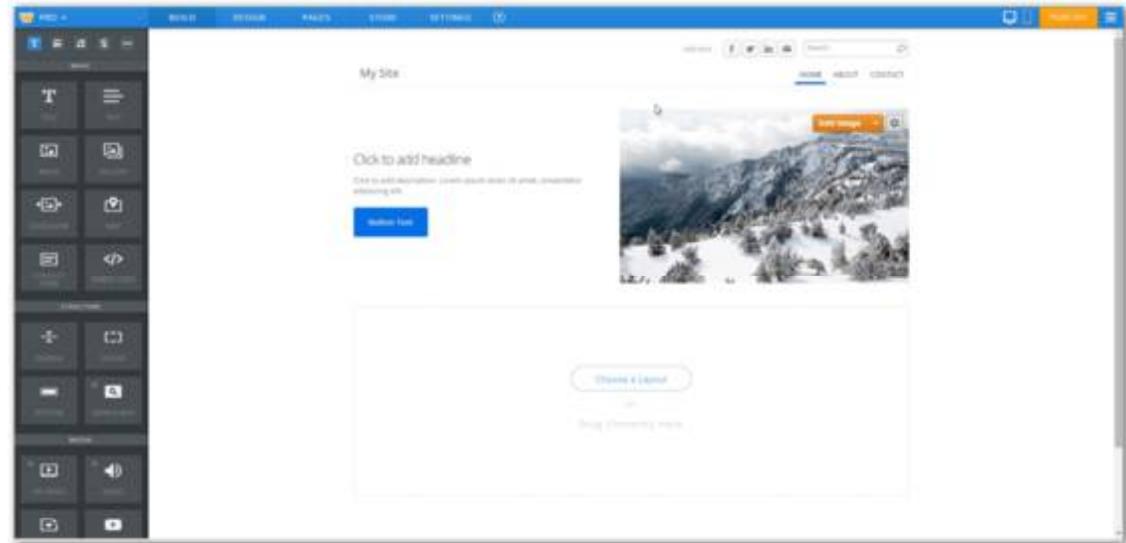
Click Continue.

Adding Content with the Elements Pallette

Your website is a collection of Web pages. Weebly starts you with some default pages and you can add/delete pages or change the name of a page at any time by using the Pages menu item. The Home page is generally the one that users come to first when they access your website.

Your website's top level menu is called its Navigation Menu. In this example, this consists of 3 pages – Home, About and Contact. Clicking on any of the page names will take you to that page.
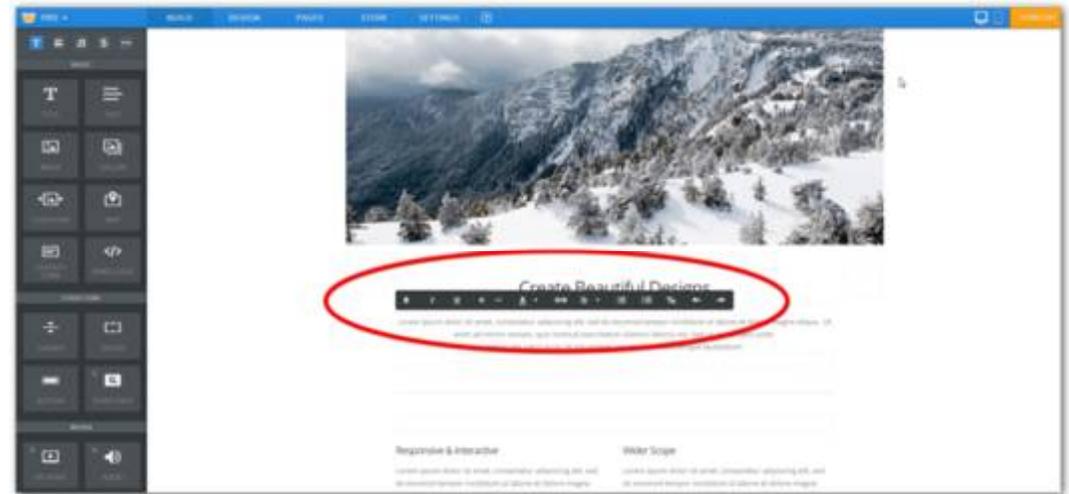
For now, don't worry about the Weebly picture on the page. I'll talk about this in the section called Pages.

To add your own content to a page, you click on an element type from the palette on the left side of your screen, hold down the left mouse button and drag it onto the page. Then you click on the element on your page and add the appropriate content for that element type. Two of the most common element types are text and picture. You add text either by typing it or by copying and pasting it form another source. You can add an image by uploading it from your PC.

When you click on an element, you will see that it is delineated by a light blue rectangle, and there is a red X in the top right corner. Clicking the X will delete the element. Be careful though ..... there is no undo!

If you have selected some text within a text element, you will also see a menu bar on the page which will let you edit the format of the text. Hover your mouse over the items in this bar to see their function

A link to an external website or to a document can be created by selecting a piece of text and clicking the middle button in this menu bar (looks like a sideways figure 8).

As you grow in confidence and expertise, you will be able to add more sophisticated items to your website such as contact forms, google maps, google calendars, you tube clips and photo galleries.

Making your website available to Others on the Internet

Weebly calls this Publishing and you do this by clicking the large orange Publish button at the top right of the screen.

When you publish, Weebly will display a window confirming it has been published. You can click on the link to your website (see the blue URL address) to check for yourself.
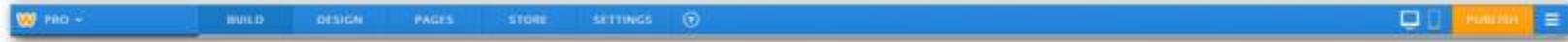
Any changes you make to your website will not be available to others until you publish.

More Weebly Functions – Fine Tuning and Evolving

In addition to the elements palette on the left of the screen, there are a number of functions on a menu across the top of the page.

The **Build** button lets you edit the content of a page, as described above.

Click **Design** if you want to edit your theme (see Design below)

Click **Pages** to change the page type (see Pages below).

Use the **Store** button if you are setting up your website as a commercial store.

If you want to set up a store, you will need to carefully research the costs and the support Weebly offers for online shopping in NZ dollars.

The **Settings** button lets you change some basic details about your website.

Clicking on the button at the far right of this bar (three horizontal bars) will give you another small menu which, among other things, takes you to the Site Stats page. Here you can see how many people have visited your site since the beginning of the month and what are the most common pages they access.

The Weebly help library will be your best friend when you first start, so I'll cover this in the next sesction.
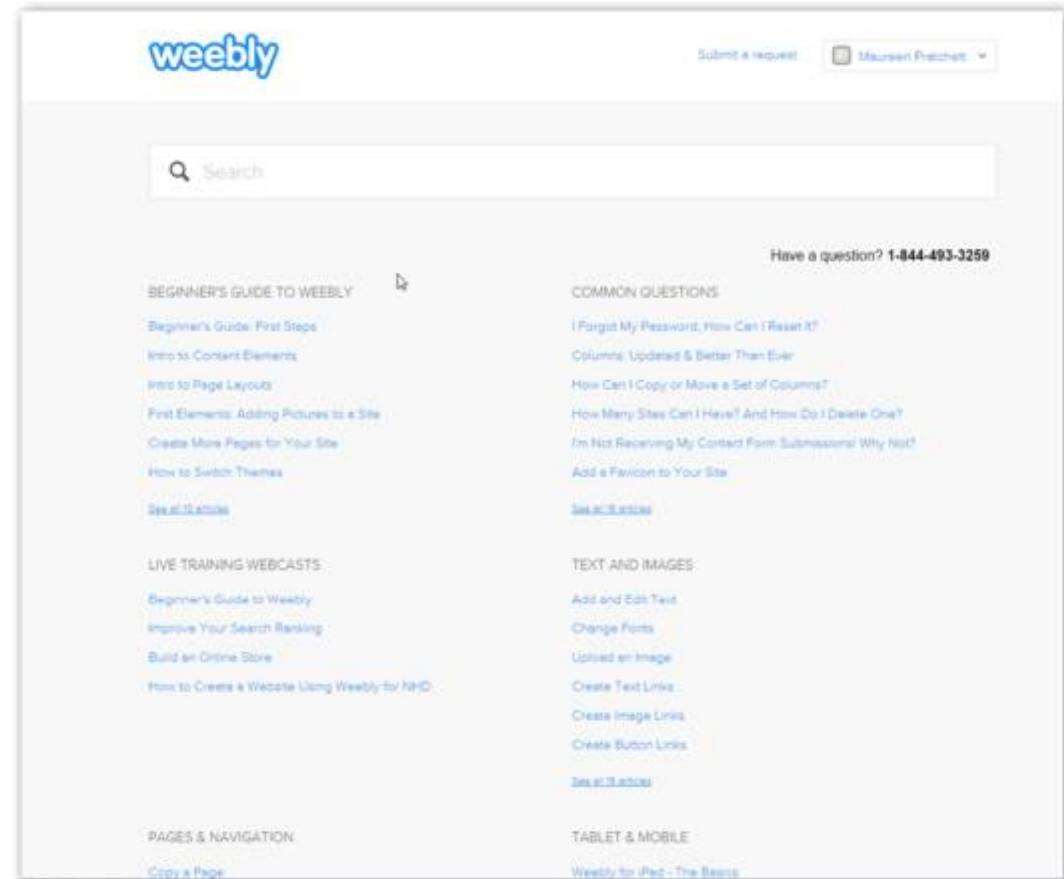
Help

Clicking on the Question Mark at the top will take you to the Support Centre.

The Weebly help articles are extensive. Each is fairly short and concise and many include short videos.

You can search for a specific topic, or scroll through the long list of categories to see what help is available.

Or you can email the Weebly Support team a question ("Submit a Request"). But be warned – if you are not a "Pro" customer, you will not get much online help from them.

Pages

Use this function when you want to add or delete new pages or change some settings for specific pages.

Click Add Page to add a new page. If you have several pages, you can drag the new page to the position you want, including indenting it under an existing page.
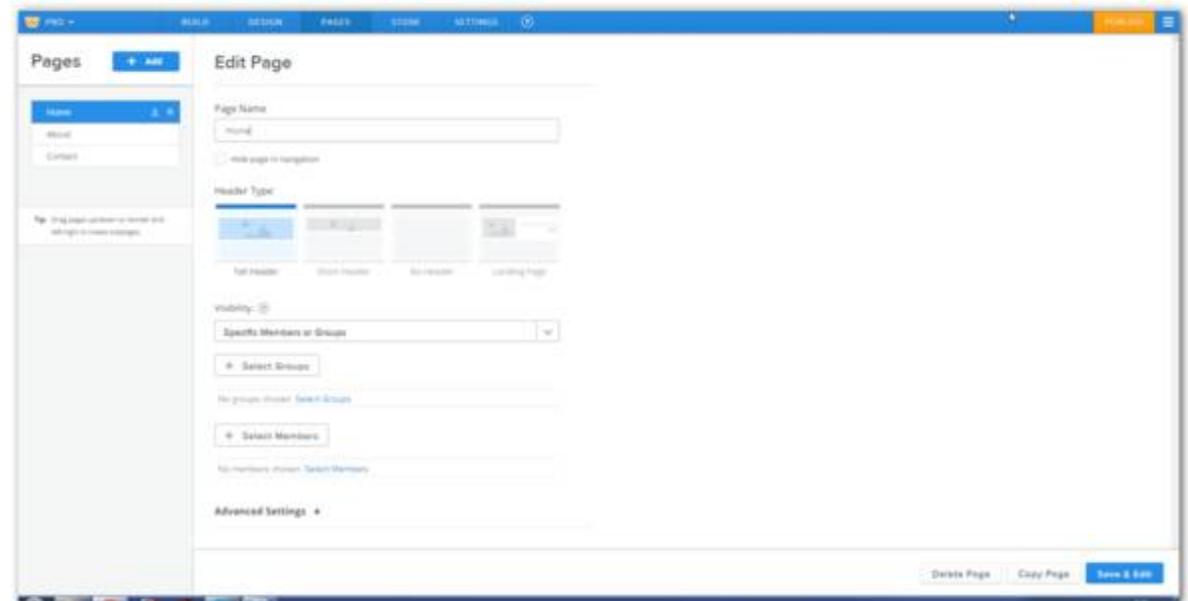
Weebly also gives you the choice of 4 page layout styles and this is where you can choose one of these.

You can also hide your page so it does not appear in the navigation menu. This is useful if you want to use a page for testing things out but you don't want your users to see it.

Three of the page layout styles have header images on them. Weebly will give

you a default image when you first create a page. When you are editing a page, if you click on the image, you can change this to one uplifted from your PC or a non-copyrighted image from the internet. There are settings which will allow you to control which header images are displayed on which pages.

When you create a new page and edit it, Weebly will ask you to select a content layout style for that page.

Check out Weebly help for more detailed information on these and other features.
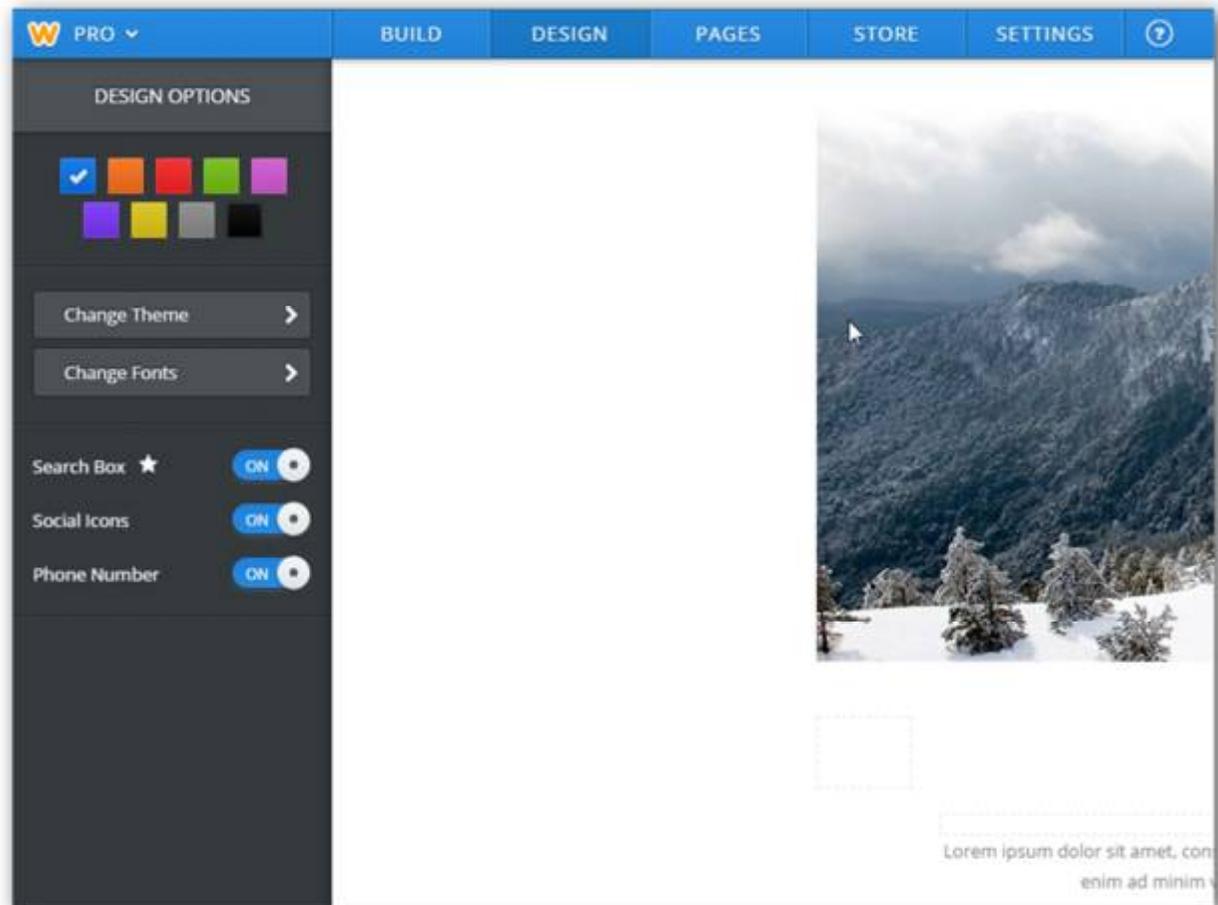
Design

This function gives you choices over the external look and feel of your website. Weebly does this by applying a "theme" to your website. There are hundreds of themes you can choose from.

Some themes have parameters such as fonts or colours that you can change.

Most of the themes allow you to choose whether to display a search box on your site, and whether to include social media icons. These are usually presented in the header of your site.

If you want to see the effect of a different theme, you can chose one and preview it before you save it.

There is no alternative to experimenting here to find the one that best suits your own needs and preferences.
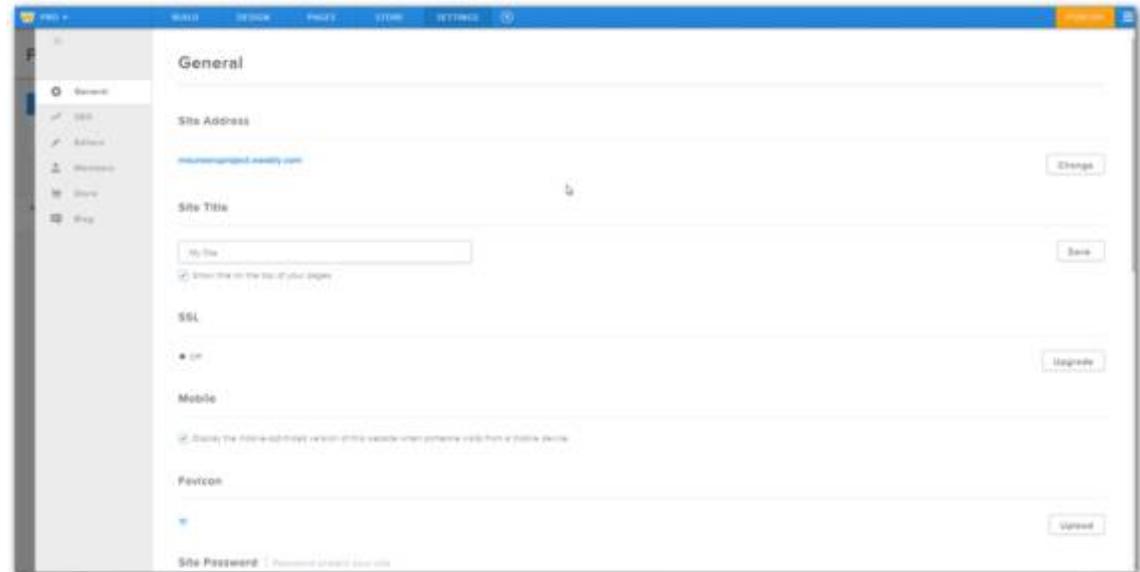
Settings

Use this function to set or change settings that apply to your whole website.

Some examples of the things you can do are:

- Change the name of you website

- Connect to Facebook

- Select whether Weebly displays a mobile-optimised version of your website when someone visits from one of these devices

- Authorise others to edit your site

- Change your password

- Change date and time formats

Again, Help has more information on these and other settings.

The Extras – Weebly Pro

There are many reasons why you might want to sign-up for Weebly Pro. These include:

- Weebly will be more inclined to answer any questions (by email) that you can't sort out through Help.

- Some of the elements only work with a Pro account (eg, search box to make all your content searchable).

- When you nominate editors, with a Pro account you can limit them to nominated pages.

- With Pro you can have password protected pages.

- Some of the elements have larger capacity limits (for example, you can upload larger pictures with a Pro account)

- If you are building forms on your website, you are restricted to 5 form fields in the free version.

- With Pro you can create a custom footer and remover the reference to Weebly in the default footer.

Of course Weebly would very much like you to sign up for Pro, and you will receive several (all friendly) emails encouraging you to do this. In my experience, you should wait for a while to do this as you are likely to be offered a significant discount after a few weeks.

In addition to PRO, Weebly also provides upgrades if you want to use the Member functions or the Commercial (i.e. Store) functions.