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# ExpressionEngine 2

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## A Quick-Start Guide

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The  
Pragmatic  
Programmers

# ExpressionEngine 2

A Quick-Start Guide



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of ExpressionEngine

*Edited by Susannah Davidson Pfalzer*



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# Introduction

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What started out as a simple publishing tool for recording artist Nancy Sinatra has been cultivated by EllisLab and the community into a robust content management and web publishing system. Over the past six years, ExpressionEngine has seen phenomenal growth, not only in terms of features, flexibility, and extensibility but also in the size of the community of web designers, developers, and marketers who build websites with it. Whether you're building a small site or a large corporate undertaking, ExpressionEngine is becoming the tool of choice. With the release of ExpressionEngine 2, this is a great time to learn ExpressionEngine and become part of this passionate and thriving community.

This book gives you the information and tools you need to begin developing websites with ExpressionEngine. You'll get up and running on ExpressionEngine quickly while learning best practices. You'll learn everything you need to build a basic ExpressionEngine-powered website, and this book lays the foundation you can build on to become an ExpressionEngine expert. We'll get hands-on immediately: throughout the book, I'll show how to build an entire website using ExpressionEngine, and you'll learn the main site-building techniques along the way.

## What's New in ExpressionEngine 2

ExpressionEngine 2 is a large step forward in terms of functionality and platform. The entire application was rewritten using the CodeIgniter PHP framework, making add-on development easier. ExpressionEngine 2 has about fifty new features that help make building websites on ExpressionEngine better than before. Here are a few of the most notable new features:

- Redesigned and more customizable Control Panel interface
- File Manager for easy upload and retrieval of site images and files

- Accessories add-ons that allow you to strategically display content or data in specific parts of the Control Panel
- More easily customizable member theme templates

Chapter 8, *Managing Files and Images*, on page 132 is dedicated to the new File Manager and explores its features and functionality. In the final chapter, Chapter 11, *Extending ExpressionEngine with Add-Ons*, on page 176, you'll learn about all of the different add-on types, including the new accessories.

Those are just the highlights. This book covers everything you need to get started with ExpressionEngine 2. ExpressionEngine continues to evolve. See the *Online Resources* section for ways to keep up to date with the latest ExpressionEngine changes and versions.

## Who Should Read This Book

This book is written for web designers, web developers, and managers of web or interactive teams. To get the most from this book, you should have experience building websites and using content management systems.

To successfully follow along in this book, you should know how to use HTML, how to use CSS (you'll be able to download sample code templates for the example site we'll build), and how to upload files to a web server and set permissions. If you've installed and configured other content management systems or blogging applications, then you should have no problem getting started with this book.

## What's in This Book?

This book is broken up into three parts:

- *Getting Started with ExpressionEngine*: You'll first learn how to install the software and then learn how to make content appear in templates. This part is the appetizer and will teach you the basics of ExpressionEngine upon which you'll build throughout the book.
- *Building Your First ExpressionEngine Site*: This is the main course. Here you'll build, step-by-step, a basic newspaper website in ExpressionEngine. By the time you're finished with this part, you'll

have learned all of the necessary skills and techniques needed to successfully build websites in ExpressionEngine.

- *Digging In*: The third and final part is the icing on the cake. You'll learn some advanced site-building techniques and use one of the biggest new features in ExpressionEngine 2: the File Manager. You'll also learn some advanced techniques you can use to make your ExpressionEngine templates smarter and more flexible. You'll also learn how to optimize your ExpressionEngine website for maximum performance and how to extend the functionality of ExpressionEngine with add-ons (accessories, plug-ins, modules, and extensions).

## How to Read This Book

Depending on your level of experience, the approach you take with the book may differ. Here are some ways to get the most of the material.

If you're new to ExpressionEngine and have never used it before, start with Chapter 1, *Installing ExpressionEngine*, on page 18. You can then comfortably proceed to Chapter 2, *Hands-on Templating*, on page 33 to prepare for the rest of the book. I encourage you to progress through the book in order so you get the most from the information provided.

If you have some prior experience with ExpressionEngine, you can skip the first two chapters and jump right into building an ExpressionEngine website. This process begins in Chapter 3, *What We're Building*, on page 50 and continues throughout the rest of the book. Even if you have built a website with ExpressionEngine before, the techniques and best practices covered may be new or beneficial to you. I encourage you to follow along through the entire site-building process.

For the best experience, the second part of the book should be read straight through from beginning to end. However, you can read the third part in any order that makes the most sense to you.

All of the code, images, and other files needed to build the website in Part II are provided in the downloadable code files. You can find information on how to download the site templates in the following section.

## Online Resources

This book has its own web page, <http://pragprog.com/titles/riexen>, where you can find more information about the book and interact in the following ways:

- You can download all of the static and fully coded templates for the sample site.
- You can participate in a discussion forum with other readers, ExpressionEngine enthusiasts, and me.
- You can help improve the book by reporting errata, including content suggestions and typos.

Also, if you own the ebook, you can click the gray boxes before each code listing to download the code excerpts while building the sample site.

The ExpressionEngine software is just one part of the picture. It's the community of passionate users and helpful developers who make it a reliable platform on which to build a website. Here are some community resources to explore:

- *ExpressionEngine Forums*: <http://expressionengine.com/forums>
- *EE Insider*: <http://eeinsider.com>
- *Devot:ee*: <http://devot-ee.com>
- *ExpressionEngine Wiki*: <http://expressionengine.com/wiki>

My goal with this book is to teach you the basics and inspire you to explore, learn, and build powerful, flexible, and *amazing* websites with ExpressionEngine. Whether you're new to ExpressionEngine or have some experience, we'll take the journey together, and I'll guide you each step of the way.

*Ryan Irelan*

*March 2010*

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