

Let's Keep JALT Chapter and SIG Websites Great

(Please use the comments function to suggest new additions or edits)

Who? Following are some tips about filling the office of webmaster.

Use the webmaster office to recruit new volunteers

Let your partner's complementary skills shine

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Update once a month

Nothing to report...

...for chapters

...for SIGs

What? Following are some tips for stuff to put on your website.

Local stuff - Most of this goes without saying...

Other stuff - Things that help JALT as a whole - please post prominently

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Don't let them suffer. Put dying sites out of their misery.

Don't let it look out-of-date.

Who? Following are some tips about filling the office of webmaster.

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Use the webmaster office to recruit new volunteers

Many sites are maintained by officers who have other roles. Sometimes a lack of willing volunteers necessitates this, but it is nevertheless unideal. Webmaster is a perfect spot for new volunteers. Its duties are relatively light and, while important, aren't exactly mission-critical. If the webmaster spot is automatically filled each year, it prevents new volunteers to take on that officer role, bringing in new ideas and energy. Who will be the next President or Coordinator if the entry level positions are covered by the current leadership?

Let your partner's complementary skills shine

Often new members are willing to volunteer, but are hesitant because they lack the skills necessary to do the job. Working together as co-webmasters, training or shadowing are great ways to get over this initial hump. More than likely, new recruits will have some skills complementary to yours: a native Japanese speaker vs your English, a Mac guru vs your Windows, a Twitterer vs your Facebooking.

When? Following are some tips about scheduling webpage updates.

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Update once a month

Update your site at least once a month. It is good to check it at least that often if only to make sure it still looks good, hasn't been hacked, or doesn't have an embarrassing typo that's been lingering for years. It happens.

Nothing to report...

Your group doesn't have anything new this month? Well, that's a different problem, but this is where a web person can help keep a group vital and active. Emailing all the officers once a month asking "Hey, what's new? What can I post this month?" is a good way to help keep things moving and keep everyone in touch between meetings.

...for chapters

If you're a Chapter webmaster and can't think of any local news with which to update, there are many options. Pick a news item from the monthly Board of Directors' Announcement email. Post an upcoming event from a neighboring chapter. If the conference is coming up soon, how about a quick summary of the scheduled presenters from your group.

...for SIGs

If your SIG doesn't have anything to share or report, again that's a different problem. Look at the upcoming Chapter events. Any of them relevant to your interest area? Re-post them. Look around at SIGs from other organizations. Pick up an item from the relevant IATEFL SIG and ask if you can repost it. List and link to recent articles in your area of the field that are available online through Open Access. Be a resource for your members and appear useful to potential new ones.

What? Following are some tips for stuff to put on your website.

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Local stuff - Most of this goes without saying...

- Your group's name and logo
- Your group's mission statement and constitution
- A sign-up form for your email newsletter
- Basic group introduction (at least) in Japanese
- Upcoming event and/or publication announcements
- Previous event reports and pictures
- Samples of previous publications
- Updated list of officers and contact information
- Maps and information for your regular meeting places
- Links to any other presences your group has online (FB, Twitter, etc.)

Other stuff - Things that help JALT as a whole - please post prominently

- JALT logo linked to jalt.org
- JOIN! link to <http://jalt.org/joining>
- Annual International Conference logo linked to <http://jalt.org/conference>

Be sure to...

- Read the [JALT Group Online Presence Guidelines](#). Some information is actually required on official JALT sites. For example, you site needs to identify your group's affiliation and place within JALT (e.g., "Fukuoka JALT is a chapter of the Japan Association for Language Teaching").
- Share information. Be sure at least the president / coordinator also knows the website login information and (if you own a domain) the domain registrar login details.

How? - Following are some methods and tools

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Methods - Best practices

Have a look around - Visit other Chapter or SIG sites from time to time. Steal their best ideas, or send them a friendly email if you notice something they need help with. Visit sites from other similar organizations such as TESOL or IATEFL affiliates.

Avoid conflicts of interest - It can look bad if your site promotes the business interests of individual members or certain companies over others.

Use Facebook, but not just Facebook - Facebook is great, but it's best not to use it exclusively. Not everyone is on Facebook for starters. It is not good for long-term archival. Some schools still frown upon Facebook use by students AND teachers.

Tools - Sites, services and apps - oh my!

Sites and services to build webpages

- Hosting your own HTML/CSS on JALT.org

Advantages

- Complete stylistic freedom
- CSS can accomplish various [effects](#)
- Many sites offer free Javascript and JQuery code samples
- Editing can be done with a wide variety of free WYSIWYG or text editors
- Professional-looking web address that ends with JALT.org
- The fees groups pay stay in the organization
- The website is under JALT control protecting against login/password information loss
- Friendly support group for server issues ;-)
- Backups included in cost

Disadvantages

- Hosting costs your group money
- Editing is not as simple as some other services; website editor must be comfortable with HTML and FTP, possibly CSS and Javascript
- Creation is even more challenging and time-consuming
- No guarantee of quality, see [here](#)
- Difficult to get more than one person doing work, unless you share the password, which is generally frowned upon.
- Drupal (which we use on JALT.org) doesn't have as much useful, beginner level management information out there and there is a lack of a proper admin interface for non-technical users
- Everything is roll your own, so if you want to integrate with Facebook, add a twitter feed or do other stuff, you'll need to get the proper module installed

- Wordpress

Advantages

- Blog like, very simple to use
- Although it is blog software, it also has pages for building regular web pages
- Resizes photos and makes slideshows automatically
- Large community support
- Many [templates](#) with mobile-friendly themes
- If you have a domain name, you can use it, costs (1200 yen/year)
- Backups and upgrades all automatic, never have to think about it
- Can download all data for your own backups, or can export content to other platforms
- Very stable and very fast servers

Disadvantages

- Hosting on the free site has limited themes and limited plugins
- Free version has occasional ads at the bottom of the page although they are exceedingly rare
- No-ad version is 3,000 yen/year.

- WIX
- The *new* Google Sites

Advantages

- Tightly integrated with Google's powerful suite of tools including Drive and Docs.
- Free with no advertisements
- Fully responsive and automatically adjusts to fit all kinds of screens (smartphones, tablets and desktops). Very fast to edit and very fast to get set up.
- An all-in-one solution that makes it incredibly easy to add content, move things around, and work with others. Making a website is similar in difficulty to making a Google Doc
- Very modern-looking, you can choose from a variety of themes and can use the colors of your logo for the overall theme of your site, and to add emphasis to the background of selected sections of your site. Google makes it really easy to do so, as it automatically detects your logo colors and lets you choose one of those colors as the main one for the theme you choose. In the top left corner of your screen, try "edit logo" and "select a color to use for theme". It is worth spending a bit of time playing around with the theme colors until you find one that complements your logo colors and looks great. To add emphasis to the background of sections, hover your mouse over the section and click the section background icon on the left side, then choose from various styles one of which should emphasize the theme color you have chosen.
- It follows the Google Drive quota for storage limits, so offers 15GB of free storage, which is sufficient for most purposes, but can be upgraded to 100GB (for a nominal fee of 250 yen/month) or 1TB (for 1300 yen/month)
- No software or apps necessary to create or edit, everything is in the browser.

Disadvantages:

- No easy way to backup data

- Web addresses look like <https://sites.google.com/view/hijalt2017conference/home> but can easily be shortened by using [Google URL Shortener](https://goo.gl/ajWTH3) (e.g. <https://goo.gl/ajWTH3>)
 - Editing is not currently supported in all web browsers. For example, you cannot edit the site in Safari, but can edit in Chrome or Firefox.
 - No one to contact in case of trouble or data loss
- The *classic* Google Sites

Advantages:

- Free with no advertisements
- Fast to edit, relatively fast to get set up
- Easy; making a website is similar in difficulty to making a PowerPoint presentation
- No software or apps necessary to create or edit, everything is in the browser
- All sites automatically adjust to fit smartphone screens

Disadvantages:

- Not very modern-looking, most templates are "vanilla"
- No easy way to backup data
- Web addresses look like sites.google.com/site/youraddress
- Limited to 100MB of space
- No one to contact in case of trouble or data loss

- Squarespace
- Blogger

Advantages:

- Free with no advertisements
- Easy to create your own banner
- Many free [templates](#) floating around
- Fast to edit, fast to get set up
- Easy to add and manage authors with different levels of access
- Easy; making a website is similar in difficulty to making a PowerPoint presentation
- No software or apps necessary to create or edit, everything is in the browser
- Responsive [templates](#) available
- Coupled with [google domains](#) allows you to get a domain name
- Blogging / updating from a smartphone possible, easy to incorporate photos
- Possible to create templates with CSS
- A wide range of widgets available
- Possible to [integrate](#) Blogger, Facebook and Twitter

Disadvantages

- No control over the look of individual posts and only layout control for pages
- Web addresses, if you don't couple it with google domains, look like xyz.blogspot.com
- Difficult to find English blogs with Japanese search
- Unlike Wordpress, Blogger can't be installed on a separate server

- No one to contact in case of trouble or data loss
- Limited to 20 standalone pages
- 15 GB of free storage, however images smaller than 800x800 (Google+ 2048x2048) pixels do not count toward this limit
- Weebly
 - Advantages
 - Free with no ads
 - Fast and easy to use, very quick learning curve
 - Everything is drag-and-drop in your browser
 - A fairly good range of templates and design features
 - Online support for help etc (though I have never used it so I can't speak to the quality for non-paying users)
 - IOS and Android apps available to manage the site on your mobile device.
 - If you have a domain name already, you can use it.
 - Disadvantages
 - Not a lot of flexibility in page design.
 - No way to backup the site.
 - No way to automate regular updates, lots of cut and paste involved
 - Occasional trouble managing font and color choices
 - Max site size is limited unless you pay
- [HTML5 UP](#)
 - Free templates
 - Customizable
 - Responsive designs for pc, tablet, mobile

Social services

- Facebook - list of Facebook pages of JALT groups and etc [here](#) and [here](#)
- Facebook [pages](#)
- Facebook [groups](#) and [types](#)
- Facebook [events](#)
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Blogs

Some suggestions about blogs in general

- While setting up a blog is a good way to get a place of your own on the web, if you aren't going to be using it regularly, disable comments or have comment moderation. The danger with comment moderation is that you may get requests/queries that you then leave for several months. Not really the best thing.

Don't - Some things not to do

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Don't let them suffer. Put dying sites out of their misery.

If your site hasn't been updated for six months and isn't likely to be updated soon, take it down. Leave the space open for your group. Nature abhors a vacuum. If your group has no site, that creates a real need for someone to fill. Also, for new webmasters, it is often easier to start from scratch than to pick up where someone else left off. Of course taking down your group's site isn't ideal, but it isn't the end of the world either. Current or potential members can find information on your group's page on <http://jalt.org/main/groups>. Fill in the basics there, or even a bit more, and make it informative.

Don't let it look out-of-date.

JALT is always trying to reach out to new members, younger members, ALTs, and others. Much of that work goes to waste if potential members visit a Chapter or SIG site and find something that looks like [GeoCities](#). How your group presents itself reflects on all other groups and on JALT as a whole, and vice versa. We're all in the same boat. Let's make it a pretty boat. If you have a predominantly static HTML-based site, and need an attractive, modern, very customizable template let [Paul Collett](#) know - he can help you get something set up.