

<https://theleveragedphd.com/personal-academic-website/>

Personal academic website: how to easily create a quality (and cheap) personal website

- By The Leveraged PhD
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- Personal Branding



Having a personal website gives you control of your content and allows you to reach people who are actively searching for you. Websites are powerful tools for academics (professors, lecturers, adjuncts, graduate students) looking to build their personal brand. You may be wondering why or if you need a web presence and there are many reasons. If you think that anytime in the future you will be searching for a job, wanting to do consulting, sell a book, freelance, or earn side income then you should be establishing your online presence through a personal website. There has never been an easier and cheaper time for you to start building a personal website.

“But what about social media, I have a presence there?” Having a social media presence is important in today’s digital world but you have limited control over who sees your content. Of all the social networks, Instagram has the highest organic reach of any platform and on there less than 10% of your followers will see your updates and content. You never know when a social media network will change its rules or shut down completely. Build a website and you have control over your content.

I believe that to develop a competitive advantage and stand out from the crowd you need a personal brand. If you are going to have a personal brand, you will need a website as the core of your virtual platform.

It might seem overwhelming to think about setting up your own website however today all programs have easy to use drag and position content. You do not need to know a single piece of code to have a fantastic website.

Disclosure: Some of the links in this post may be “affiliate links.” This means if you click on the link and purchase the item, at no extra cost to you I will receive an affiliate commission.

Options to set up your personal academic website

The two most common options are **All-In-One** or **Hosting + Domain + Platform**. All-In-One companies like [Wix](#) make it extremely easy to have your website up and running in a matter of minutes. All you need to do is sign up and use some drag and drop templates to have your

website with multiple pages set up. The disadvantage of all-in-one platforms is the cost. While at first glance they seem cheap because they include a domain, hosting, and software, as soon as you want to do anything other than a few simple pages it becomes expensive quick. Therefore, if you think that in the future you would like to monetize your site (make money from or on it) then I recommend you go the **Hosting + Domain + Platform** route.

Setting up a domain for your personal academic website

You should have a custom domain. While free platforms/domains exist, they create complicated and unprofessional URLs and do not give you flexibility with external integrations, build your own website authority or restrict your ability to make money from your site. On average, when registering a new domain, it should cost you between \$10- \$15 a year. I recommend that you purchase a domain with your actual name (or some combination of it) to build your personal brand.

Wait, back up, what is a domain? A domain is the online address of your website. Just like a physical address it allows people to find you. The domain for this website is *theleveragedphd.com* my personal website domain is *melaniebruce.com.au*.

You can buy a domain through a company such as GoDaddy or Google and then change the DNS setting to point to your host or you can purchase a domain through your site host directly and not have to change any settings (e.g. [Siteground](#) or [Bluehost](#)). If you have a common name then you will have to get creative for your domain as a simple *FirstLast.com* will be unlikely to be available. Take some time to get this right as it is better to not have to change this later. Consider how you will write the domain and how you will explain it verbally. Having to say it is: ‘*First*, underscore, *Last* dot com’ or ‘*First*, *Last*, number one dot com’ is not going to strengthen your personal brand. If your *FirstLast.com* is not available, consider adding your middle name or initial, using just your first initial plus last name or use a word in front such as *TheFirstLast.com* or *DrFirstLast.com*. Say the domain name out loud and write it down with and without capitals to check that it sounds and looks good.

Site Web Hosting for your personal academic website

A host is a company that keeps your website live and possible for others to view. I host all of my websites with [Siteground](#) and I have used [Bluehost](#) in the past. These are the most commonly used hosts by individuals, and companies large and small. I switched all of my sites to [Siteground](#) for better site speed and customer service but either is fine for a simple personal website. Other options include hosting with GoDaddy but I don’t personally recommend them because they are a domain service primarily and do not have the features the dedicated hosting services have. That being said I assume the simple features GoDaddy will suffice for a personal academic website however I cannot talk from experience.

Platform for your personal academic website

If you use an all-in-one then your platform will be part of your site hosting. If you using [Siteground](#) or [Bluehost](#) then the most common route is to use [WordPress](#). It has simple to use click and insert abilities to design your website. You can have your website up and running in 30-60 minutes (depending on how much content you are creating). There are easy to follow tutorials online for everything you want to do, so a quick Google search will allow you to quickly learn new features. I personally use [WordPress](#) on all my sites (including this one). If you want to sell physical products then you can also use a platform such as WooCommerce on all major hosting sites. If you are interested in selling online then you should also check out Shopify (but that is a different post for another time). Let's get back to developing your personal academic website.

Build your content on your personal academic website

1. Create a simple homepage

Visualize yourself and your accomplishments. Your homepage shouldn't be text-heavy. Include a menu with links to your other pages.

2. Create an about me page

Write a brief bio (think elevator pitch) and include a professional photo or two of yourself. If you are struggling with this then you might want to [check out my course designed to help PhDs establish their personal brand](#). The course will walk you through step by step to strategically define, assess, clean, and build your personal brand. Get a free preview [here](#).

3. Create a contact page.

This is important because you've spent all this time building your personal brand, you want people to be able to contact you to hire you, work with you and develop long term relationships. I've been contacted through my contact page for paid speaking gigs so don't skip this page!

Include an email and social media handles. Don't make people work to connect with you by having to search for you – include a hyperlink to your social media sites rather than your handle in text.

Avoid including a mailto email address as is as it is likely to be picked up by spambots. A contact form is the easiest way to avoid spam. If you do want to include your email then you can write it in a way that humans can understand it but not bots. You can write it in a sentence e.g. Email me here: [melanie\[@\]theleveragedphd\[dot\]com](mailto:melanie[@]theleveragedphd[dot]com) While it does mean that users will have to type out your email, as long as it is a simple email it will be worth it so you don't get spammed.

4. Create other pages depending on your personal brand and what you are trying to accomplish from your site such as

- Research

- Teaching
- Service
- Consulting
- Products
- Media/Press Kit
- Work With Me
- Blog

Provide proof.

Embed links to a portfolio of items, YouTube videos of presentations, or PDFs of articles you've written. Don't make it hard for people to find your material.

Humanize yourself

Add your personal interests and passions to build rapport with your target audience. Maintain your professionalism but show your personality and that you are relatable and friendly.

Updating your personal academic website

An outdated website is worse than no website. Now that you have your website set up you will need to maintain it. If you have a basic website then I recommend that you set aside time to update your website a few times a year. I recommend 4 times a year. Use the new seasons as a reminder to check and update your website. When writing anything on your basic website make sure that it will stand the test of time. Don't say later in 2019 in case you don't get back to updating it until 2020.

For more content-heavy websites you will need to update more often particularly if you decide to blog. If somebody comes to your site and sees that your last blog post is two years old, they'll assume the whole site is outdated.

Examples of academic personal websites

Dr. Stephanie Schuttler

MAFALDA DE ARRÁBIDA FARELO

Dr. Helen Kara

DR. KATIE LINDER

TL;DR