GETTING STARTED WITH BUILDER
Meet Builder.

Introducing iThemes Builder, the innovative WordPress theme that operates more like web design software. Unlike other premium WordPress themes, Builder stretches the possibilities of WordPress—allowing you to quickly and easily build beautiful custom websites and blogs in minutes.

Whether you’re a web designer or developer building commercial sites for clients or a business owner managing and maintaining your own website, Builder’s flexibility and functionality means one thing: web design made easy.

This guide presents an introduction to basic Builder concepts and terms, as well as a beginner’s overview on using Builder for the first time. We’ll walk step-by-step through installing and activating the Builder theme, as well as creating your first page Layout and View with Builder.

Let’s get started!

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Part 1:
Basic Builder Concepts and Terms

iThemes Builder utilizes a few key concepts with specific terminology. These “Builder vocabulary words” include:

- Layout Engine (or Layout Editor)
- Layouts
- Modules
- Sidebars
- Views
- Child Themes (and their parent, Builder Theme Core)
- Style Manager
- Styles
- Extensions
- Blocks
The following section is intended to familiarize users with basic Builder concepts and terms. To see examples of the usage applications of these terms and concepts, visit Part 2: Getting Started.

Layout Engine (or Layout Editor)
Builder’s Layout Engine (often referred to as the Layout Editor) provides the framework for designing and creating unlimited custom WordPress page layout structures, all from within the WordPress dashboard. Builder’s Layout Engine creates Layouts.

Layouts
Layouts are page structures composed of the arrangement of page elements, or Modules. Each page on a Builder site can have its own unique Layout structure and arrangement of Modules.

Modules
Modules are page elements that are used to create Layouts. Modules can be added, removed, or easily modified for any number of Layout combinations.

Builder utilizes seven different types of Modules:

- **Content Module** - Adds a place for content from posts or pages to render. Most Layouts will have this module.
- **Footer Module** - Adds a place for the site footer to render. Most Layouts include this module at the bottom of the layout.
- **Header Module** - Offers an easy-to configure header for your site.
- **HTML Module** - Adds a place to add freeform HTML to the Layout; also supports the use of shortcodes and execution of PHP code.
- **Image Module** - Adds a static image to the Layout.
- **Navigation Module** - Adds a horizontal navigation bar. Category and Page navigations are available, as well as custom WordPress menus.
- **Widget Bar Module** - Adds one to five widget locations.

*These modules have additional Sidebar options.

Note: A more in-depth explanation of each individual Module is provided in the section Adding Modules.
Sidebars

Sidebars are a Module option that adds an additional widget location to the Content, Footer, Header or Image Module. Sidebar widths are customized by assigning a width (in pixels) to each Sidebar location.

Sidebars can be added in the following increments relative to the Module:

- 1 left
- 2 left
- 1 right
- 2 right
- Split (1 left and 1 right)

Views

Views harness the power of Layouts by easily assigning individual Layouts to specific parts or pages of the site including:

- 404 – The “Page Not Found” error page
- Archives – Any archive view (category, tag, author or date)
- Attachment – Any attachment (image or other attached file)
- Author – Any author archive view
- Category – Any category archive view
- Date Archive – Any date-specific view (such as year, month or day)
- Home – The front page or home of your site
- Page – Any page
- Post – Any post
- Post Type – Widget content: any widget content entry
- Search – A search result page
- Singular – Any post, page or attachment
- Tag – Any tag archive view
Child Themes (and their parent, Builder Theme Core)

*Child Themes* operate on the foundation of *Builder Theme Core*. *Child Themes* provide specific design details, graphics and typography while *Builder Theme Core* operates in the background to support Builder’s *Layouts*, *Views* and *Style Manager* features.

Builder boasts an impressive *Child Theme Warehouse*, an ever-growing library of Child Themes designed with various features, plugin integrations and niche site considerations.

**Tip:** For more advanced information on *Child Themes* (such as how to create your own custom *Child Theme*), visit [iThemes and Child Themes – Introduction](#).

Style Manager

The Builder *Style Manager* is a plugin for iThemes Builder that provides an easy-to-use interface to adjust basic styling of various site elements. *Style Manager* generates the CSS code and gives a preview of changes in real time to easily assign colors, change fonts, add borders or change spacing specifications for various site components including:

- Background
- Site Font
- Links
- Headings
- Comments
- Basic Module
- Module Sidebars
- Header Module
- Content Module
- Navigation Module
- Image Module
- Widget Bar Module
- HTML Module
- Footer Module

**Tip:** Check out Builder *Style Manager Exposed*, a free webinar replay for an in-depth walk-through of using Builder’s *Style Manager* to customize basic design features of your Builder site.

Styles

Adjustments or changes made by Builder’s *Style Manager* can be grouped and organized into sets or *Styles*. *Styles* can be applied to individual *Layouts*.
Extensions

*Extensions* extend or override the structure and/or style of a *Child Theme* by providing additional code that can change the content, add additional features or modify the styling of the *Layout*. *Extensions* are applied to either a *Layout* or a *View*.

Builder ships with 6 *Extensions* designed for displaying a listing of entries like a Posts page, Category page or an Archive:

- **Featured Image Grid & Showcase** – Displays the featured image in a grid layout with colorbox popup
- **Featured Image Slider** – Displays the featured image and post title of first 6 posts in a custom slider and the featured image, post title and excerpt for the remaining posts
- **Magazine Layout** – Displays the featured image, post title and content excerpt in a grid layout
- **Portfolio Layout** – Displays the featured image and post title in a grid layout
- **Teasers Layout – Image Left** – Displays the featured image (floating left), post title, post meta and excerpt as teasers
- **Teasers Layout – Image Right** – Displays the featured image (floating right), post title, post meta and excerpt as teasers.

**Tip:** For a more advanced explanation and instructions on how to edit *Extension* files, visit the iThemes Builder *Extension Codex* page.

Blocks

Builder *Blocks* operate as a plugin and package tools you need for niche site creation including custom post types, custom taxonomies and any needed custom widgets. Currently, Builder has two *Blocks*—*Church* and *Restaurant*. All Builder *Blocks* have a corresponding *Child Theme* that is provides design details.

**Tip:** Check out this [Builder Restaurant Block walkthrough tutorial](#) to see how *Blocks* work with Builder and its corresponding *Child Theme*. 
Part 2: Getting Started

A Note Before You Begin

Builder Theme operates on self-hosted WordPress sites. Self-hosted WordPress sites are different from sites created from WordPress.com in a number of key ways.

Before you can get started with Builder, you must first have:

- Your own domain name
- Hosting that allows the installation of new themes and plugins
- WordPress software installed on your site

**Tip:** Download the free eBook *Getting Started with WordPress* for a complete overview of using WordPress as a website platform. Visit iThemes’ Quick Steps on How to Get Started for video tutorials on how to get your domain name and web hosting and how to install WordPress on your site.
Downloading, Installing and Activating Builder

Step 1: Login to your iThemes Member Panel.

After purchasing Builder, you will receive a confirmation email including your login details to the iThemes Member Panel where your files are located for download.

Using your username and password, login*.

*Having issues logging in or not seeing your confirmation email? Email sales@ithemes.com.
Step 2: Download and save your theme files.

Once you’ve logged in to the iThemes Member Panel, your files will appear as downloadable links in red. Builder Theme Core (followed by the latest release version number) will be listed first in the list of your Builder subscriptions.

1. Click on the **Builder Theme (Core)** link to begin downloading the zip file. Select a Child Theme to download. *For the purposes of this eBook, we’ll be using the child theme Expansion.*

2. Save these files in an easy-to-access location.
Step 3. Login to your site’s WordPress Dashboard to access your site themes.

1. From your WordPress Dashboard sidebar menu on the left, click **Appearance**, then **Themes**.
2. Click **Upload**.

3. Click **Choose File** to upload the **Builder Theme Core** zip file from your saved location.

4. Click **Install Now**. Builder Theme Core will then begin uploading.
5. Once Builder has been uploaded, click **Activate**.

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**Step 4: Upload and activate your Builder Child Theme.**

1. **Repeat step 3** to upload and activate your Builder Child Theme.

**Step 5: Note Your Site’s Active Theme.**

1. Again from the WordPress dashboard **Themes** tab, click **Manage Theme**.

2. Note that the “Current Theme” will be the Child Theme, with Builder Theme Core listed in your “Available Themes.”
Your “Manage Themes” page should now look something like this:

“Current Theme” is Child Theme Expansion

Builder Theme Core stays listed as an “Available Theme.”
Activating Builder’s Style Manager and SEO (BETA) Plugins

Success! Once you’ve downloaded, installed and activated your Builder Theme Core and a Child Theme, you’ll immediately want to download, install, and activate Builder’s Style Manager and SEO plugins (BETA). To download your plugins, return again to your iThemes Member Panel and login. The steps for downloading these plugin files are exactly the same as Step 2: Download and save your theme files.

Step 1: Download and save the Builder Style Manager and Builder SEO Plugin files.

These two files will be listed in red as “Builder Style Manager – BETA – [version number]” and “Builder SEO Plugin – BETA – [version number].”
Step 2: Return to your site’s WordPress Dashboard to upload and activate the plugin files.

This process should look familiar. See the previous section’s steps 2 - 5 for a more in-depth step-by-step if you need a refresher.

1. Click **Plugins** and **Add New**.
2. Click **Upload**.
3. Click **Choose File**. Select the Builder Style Manager Plugin zip file, and click **Install Now**.
4. Once the file has uploaded, click **Activate**.

5. **Repeat steps 2-4** to upload and activate the **Builder SEO Plugin (BETA)**.
After activating both plugins, click **Plugins** again from the dashboard. Your Plugins page should now include the two new active plugins:

![Plugins page screenshot](image)

**Tip:** Visit this quick video tutorial for information on how to configure and optimize Builder’s SEO features.

For an in-depth overview of Builder’s Style Manager, check out the **Builder Style Manager Exposed** webinar replay.
Configuring Builder Settings

Customize Builder settings by visiting My Theme > Settings from the WordPress dashboard. This Builder Settings page helps you control global settings for Builder. To make working with the options easier, groups of options have been divided into tabs. Each tab is divided into sections that can be collapsed by clicking on the title bar of the section. You can also rearrange the sections by dragging them by the title bar. When you collapse and rearrange items, their arrangement will be remembered.
The Basic Tab

The Basic tab includes a mix of many different kinds of options that can help you quickly configure your Builder theme.

These options include:

- **Menu Builder** - Configures how Builder uses basic menus
- **Analytics and JavaScript Code** - Create settings for web analytics software and add JavaScript code
- **Favicon** - Add/change the small image used next to the title of a site in browser tabs
- **Identify Widget Areas** - Define how Builder identifies widget areas
- **Comments** - Modify comment functionality
- **Gallery Shortcode** - Customize how Builder handles and renders [gallery] shortcodes
- **Theme Features** - Apply settings to Builder’s built-in theme features
- **Widget Content** - Configure how Builder uses the Widget Content editor

Some child themes add custom options in their own section to this tab.

The SEO (Coming Soon) Tab

The SEO tab is placeholder until Builder’s SEO Plugin BETA is officially bundled with Builder. For now, Builders SEO features can be configured from My Theme > SEO & Meta.
The Import/Export Tab

The Import/Export tab allows you to export and import Builder settings, including Layouts and Views. The tools offered here allow you to export settings from or import settings into your Builder theme. This is helpful for transferring specific settings, including Layouts, from one Builder site to another Builder site.

Exports can also be used as a basic backup. Create a full export once you have your Builder theme configured the way you want it and save the export to your computer. If changes are made to Layouts at a later time, you can import the Layouts as you originally had them.

The Site Exports section lists all your current exports. Each time you create an export or import an export file, the export will be listed in the Site Exports section. This allows you to easily keep track of the exports and download them as needed. You can also select to import a listed export. This can be helpful to quickly replace Layouts that have been accidentally modified or removed.

The Export Data section allows you to quickly generate an export.

The Import Data section allows you to import an export that you previously download from this or another site. Once you select the export file and click the Import button, you will be given a series of options that help you import the settings as desired.

Note: The exports created here will only include settings specific to Builder. No WordPress settings, WordPress content or data from other themes or plugins will be included.
Part 3: Your Site’s Blueprint: Creating Your First Layout

With Builder Theme Core, our child theme Expansion, Builder’s Style Manager and SEO plugins now uploaded, we’re ready to create our first Layout. For your convenience (and to see the magic of Layouts), Builder comes pre-loaded with several packaged Layouts.

Referencing One of Builder’s Packaged Layouts

1. From your site’s WordPress Dashboard, visit the homepage of your site by clicking on your site’s name in the upper right-hand corner.
The homepage of your site, styled by the active child theme Expansion looks like this:
2. In the top toolbar of your dashboard, hover over Builder. Three menu options appear, including Edit Layout [Current Layout Name]. This menu allows you to see the name of the Layout being used for this View.

3. With this menu still expanded, click Edit Layout (Right Sidebar).
You’ll now see the Builder’s Layout Engine with the packaged Right Sidebar Layout:

![Image of the Builder’s Layout Engine](image)

Note that the “Right Sidebar Layout” includes Modules in this order:

1. Header
2. Navigation
3. Content with Right Sidebar (Widget location)
4. Widget Bar (with 3 widgets)
5. Footer
4. Return to the homepage of your site to see how this Layout looks with each Module in place.

You should now be able to identify each of the modules in the above order:
Accessing Builder’s Layouts and Views from within the WordPress Dashboard

From the WordPress Dashboard, expand My Theme to see the menu options. Click Layouts & Views.
From here, you’ll see all of Builder’s available packaged Layouts:
Creating a Layout from Scratch

Although Builder includes a variety of packaged Layouts, creating your own Layout is quite easy. Creating your own Layouts allows you to customize the components of your site to your exact specifications.

1. To get started building your first Layout, click **Create Layout**.
2. You’ll now see the **Add New Layout** page:
Layout Settings

1. **Name** - Begin by naming your new Layout. Supply a unique and descriptive name for your new Layout (ex: “My First Layout”).

2. **Width** - Select a width in pixels (Narrow (600px), Medium (780px), Wide (960px) or custom). This width size determines how wide (in pixels) the Layout renders the page:
3. **Extensions** - Note your options for Extensions. For a refresher on how Extensions work, revisit this section. *For the purposes of this tutorial, select “–No Extension.”*

4. **Hide Widget Areas** - Use this option to hide this Layout’s widget areas from the **Appearance > Widgets** editor. This makes it easier to work with other Layouts widget areas. *For the purposes of this tutorial, select “No” for Hide Widget Areas.*
5. **Style** - Once Styles have been created with Builder’s Style Manager, these Styles will populate this dropdown list. Visit the previous [Style Manager section](#) for more information on using the Style Manager to create Styles.
Adding Modules

In order to start building your layout, click **Add Module**.
A dialog box will appear to select from a list of modules to add to the Layout:
The Header Module
The first Module to add to your new Layout will usually be the Header Module.

Select the Header Module and click Add Module. You’ll see an additional dialog box that allows you to modify the Header Module Settings:

By default, the Header module uses the Site Title and Tagline as set in your WordPress Dashboard's General Settings. This module will also wrap the title and tagline in div tags with an exception for the title on a home page view. On the home page, the title will be wrapped in an h1 tag. Specify the Header Module settings with these options:

- **Name** - To help identify widget locations
- **Site Title** - Specify “Show Site Title,” “Use Custom Site Title Text” or “Do Not Show Site Title”
- **Tagline** - “Show Tagline,” “Use Custom Tagline” or “Do Not Show Tagline”
- **SEO** - Recommended or custom settings for tags and divs
- **Sidebars** - Add Sidebars for widgets to the left, right or on both sides of the Header Module
Click the **Save** button. You’ll now see the Header Module has been added to your Layout:
The Navigation Module

The Navigation Module offers a number of different options for adding navigation elements to your Layout. To get the most out of this feature, use WordPress’ built-in Menu Editor to create your menus. For more information on how to use the built-in WordPress Menu editor, visit this video tutorial on building custom WordPress menus.

Once you’ve created menus from within the built-in WordPress Menu Editor, you can then select to use one of the menus in the Builder Navigation Module. The Legacy Menu Types are present as fallback in case you have not configured any menus in the Menu Editor. The Builder Menu types can be configured in Builder’s Theme Settings.

Again from your Layout, click Add Module. Select Navigation and then click Add Module.

Once you’ve added the Navigation Module to your layout, you’ll see the Navigation Module Settings box:
From here, select your setting options:

- **Name** - To identify widget areas
- **Navigation Type** - A populated list of your WordPress Menus or Legacy Menu Types, such as Builder Settings categories, pages or WordPress pages

Click the **Save** button. You’ll now see the Navigation Module added to your Layout:
The Image Module
The Image Module can be used to add a static image to your Layout.

Again from your layout, click Add Module. Select Image and then Add Module.

You’ll now see the Modify Image Module Settings dialog box:

Specify the Image Module settings with these options:

- **Name** - For widget identification purposes
- **Upload Image** - Choose the location of your image file
- **Height** - “Automatic,” “Use a height that preserves the image’s aspect ratio” or “Manual, select a height manually” (to set your own image height)
- **Link URL** - Where the image will link
- **Sidebars** - Widget areas to the left, right or on both sides of the image
- **Style** - If the current active Child Theme provides alternate module styling, you can select your preference for styling, usually “Default” and “Alternate”
Click the **Save** button. The Image Module will now be added to your Layout:
The Content Module
The Content Module adds a place for post or page content to render. Most Layouts will have this module.

Again from your Layout, click **Add Module.** Select **Content** and then **Add Module.**

You’ll now see the **Modify Content Module Settings** Dialog Box:

Specify the **Content Module Settings** with these options:

- **Name** - For widget identification purposes
- **Sidebars** - Widget areas to the left, right or on both sides of the content module
- **Sidebar Widths** - “Narrow,” “Standard,” “Wide” or a custom width in pixels

Click the **Save** button. As before, the Content Module will now be added to your Layout.
The HTML Module
The HTML Module gives you a place to add freeform HTML to the Layout. It also supports the use of shortcodes and execution of PHP code.

Click **Add Module**. Select **HTML** and then **Add Module**. You’ll now see the **Modify HTML Module Settings** dialog box:
Specify the **HTML Module Settings** with these options:

- **HTML** - Add your static HTML, shortcode or PHP code
- **Name** - For widget identification purposes
- **Sidebars** - Widget areas to the left, right or on both sides of the HTML Module

Then specify alternate styles (if desired) from those provided by the active Child Theme:

- **Style** - "Default" or "Alternate"
- **Enable PHP** - "No" or "Yes" – *Enabling this option allows for processing of PHP code inside the module. Always review PHP code if taken from a third party, as it could pose a serious security threat.*
- **Remove Wrapper Div** - "No" or "Yes" – *Enabling this option is only recommended for advanced users as this can cause layout issues if not properly handled. When Builder renders Modules, it wraps the output in a series of divs to keep the Layout structure properly intact and to allow the styling to be properly applied. The HTML Module is unique in allowing the output to be removed from these containing div wrappers. If the "Remove Wrapper Div" option is enabled, the output entered in the HTML input will be output without the wrappers, allowing you to create complex output that breaks out of the Layout structure. It is for this reason that it should only be used by advanced users.*

Click the **Save** button. The HTML Module will now be added to your Layout.
The Widget Bar Module
This Module can contain one to five widget locations.

Click **Add Module**. Select **Widget Bar** and then **Add Module**.

You’ll now see the **Modify Widget Bar Module Settings** dialog box:

Specify the **Widget Module Settings** with these options:

- **Name** - For widget identification purposes
- **Columns** - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – *Each column becomes a widget area.*
- **Column Widths** - Depends on column number selection. *This option controls the percentage of the Layout width that each column receives. There is also a "Custom..." option that allows for custom selection of percentages.*
- **Style** - "Default" or "Alternate" – *Provided by Child Theme.*

Click the **Save** button. The Widget Bar module will now be added to your Layout.
The Footer Module

The Footer Module adds a place for the site Footer to render. Most Layouts will have this Module at the bottom of the Layout, although a Layout does not require a Footer (even if a Layout does not have a Footer Module, the function calls that some plugins and features require that footers are responsible for will be handled automatically by Builder).

Click Add Module. Select Footer and then Add Module.

You’ll now see the Modify Footer Module Settings dialog box:

Specify the Footer Module Settings with these options:

- **Name** - For widget identification purposes
- **Sidebars** - Widget areas to the left, right or on both sides of the Footer Module

Click the Save button. The Widget Bar module will now be added to your Layout.
Congratulations! You’ve just created your first layout.

Click Save Layout:

You’ll now see the new “My First Layout” Layout included in the list with Builder’s packaged Layouts:
Setting Default Layouts

The *Default Layout* is the “blanket” Layout for your site. It will be used for all parts of your site that do not have a specific View (discussed in the next section) or Custom Layout. The Default Layout should always have a structure that will work for any type of content and should always have a Content module.

1. From the **Layouts** list, note the **Default Layout** column.

2. Set your newly-created Layout to **Default**.
3. From the dialog box, click **Set as Default** to confirm:
4. From the top left corner of the WordPress Dashboard under the title of your site, click **Visit Site**. You’ll now see your new Layout applied to the home page of your site, set as the default Layout.

From here, note each of the Layout’s Modules now rendered on the page:
Part 4: Exploring Views: Using Different Layouts for Different Parts of the Site

To get started, let's explore how to work with Builders Views feature.

As mentioned before, Builder allows you to create a wide variety of different site Layouts. The Views feature allows you to apply a specific Layout to different parts of your site, such as the home page, archives and more. The Custom Layout feature that is available in page and post editors allows you to apply a specific Layout to that individual page or post.

1. Return to the WordPress dashboard. From My Theme, click **Layouts & Views**. Select the **Views** tab:
2. Click **Add Views** to begin.

3. From the Add View dialog box, specify the **View**:

   - **404** – The “Page Not Found” error page
   - **Archives** – Any archive view (category, tag, author, or date)
   - **Attachment** – Any attachment (image or other attached file)
   - **Author** – Any author archive view
   - **Category** – Any category archive view
   - **Date Archive** – Any date-specific view (such as year, month, or day)
   - **Home** – The front page or home of your site
   - **Page** – Any page
   - **Post** – Any post
   - **Post Type** – Widget content: any widget content entry
   - **Search** – A search result page
   - **Singular** – Any post, page or attachment
   - **Tag** – Any tag archive view
• **Layout** - Set the rule (“Use this View’s Active Layout” or “Use the site’s Default Layout”) or select from a list of available Layouts.

• **Extension** - Set the rule (“Use the Active Extension” or “Disable the Active Extension”) or select from a list of available Extensions.

*For the purposes of this tutorial, we selected the following:*

![Add View screenshot](image)

• **View**: Category
• **Category**: Uncategorized
• **Layout**: Split Sidebars
• **Extension**: Use the Active Extension

4. Click **Add**. You’ll now see the newly-created **Category** View added:
5. To see the new View applied, return to the Home Page.

6. Locate the “Hello world!” post (the default WordPress first blog post) rendered by the Content Module. Click the “Hello world!” category, Uncategorized.
7. The category page for **Uncategorized** categories now has the **Split Sidebar Layout**, as applied by Views.

Success!

You’ve created your first *Layout* and assigned your first *View*. You’re now ready to start building your WordPress site with Builder.
Builder Resources, Tutorials and Webinars

Helpful tools to expand your Builder skills:

**The iThemes Builder Codex**
A robust hub for Builder training and tips.

**iThemesBuilder.com**
News, releases and tips for the iThemes Builder Community

**The iThemes Customer Support Forum**
A great community resource for learning about Builder from our support team and other customers.

**iThemes.tv**
Live weekly webinars for beginners each Tuesday at 11am CDT.

**iThemes.tv “Getting Started with Builder” Webinar Archive**
The latest replay of the “Getting Started with Builder” webinar from iThemes TV.

**Builder SEO Tutorial**
Offers a brief explanation and overview of optimizing Builder’s SEO features.

**Builder “Style Manager Exposed” Webinar Replay**
Learn to use Builder’s Style Manager to customize basic design features of your Builder site.

**Builder Basics from a Design Perspective Webinar Replay**
Learn best practices for great site designs with Builder.

**WebDesign.com**—your source for premium Builder training including the Beyond the Basics: Builder Premium Training (advanced training for bloggers and web developers).
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