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Essential Elements of Custom Theme Development for Adding Personal Touches to WordPress by [Pamela Jones](#)

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WordPress has emerged as one of the leading and popular CMS (Content Management System). While plugins of WordPress add to functionality, customizing WordPress themes is deemed necessary for building brand identity and making it unique. Custom theme development of WordPress is forte of experienced web designers. However, if you are planning to use WordPress as CMS of your organization then it is desirable to have an idea about essentials of custom theme development.

For custom theme development of WordPress, you need to be familiar with CSS, PHP, HTML, text editor and any standard image editor like Photoshop. For developing a pretty theme you may need to use HTML and CSS tags frequently. As WordPress is based on PHP you need to have basic knowledge about PHP for manipulating or developing a theme. Image editor helps you in designing footer and header. If you are using Photoshop then you can also build a mock theme in it and proceed from there for custom theme development.

It is necessary to learn WordPress codex for theme before beginning with custom theme development. You may start building a theme from scratch or download a blank theme and start editing it as per your requirements. Designers using Photoshop to mock up a theme need to convert the mock up to XHTML and CSS.

After custom theme development, it is necessary to test it to make sure that it is fit for launch. A local server may be required for this purpose. Make sure that the theme you have created with such care is compatible with most popular browsers and their latest versions. While most custom themes respond well with Firefox, you may need to develop a new CSS for making it compatible with Internet Explorer.

Custom theme development of a WordPress may be done by modifying another theme. Such a modified theme is popularly named as Child Theme as it inherits functionality of the parent theme. For creating such a theme a directory is created with the help of a file management application (FTP) and properly formatted style.css files are placed in it.

Building a customized theme for WordPress allows you to provide alternative templates for specific features of site like search result pages and category pages. Developing a theme is intended primarily for adding a personal touch and that contributes in brand building. Styles and template files are separated from system files during custom theme development of WordPress. This helps in easy upgrade without hampering visual presentation.

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