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Premium v. Free WordPress Themes: 5 Reasons to Go With a Premium One

 Posted by [Aaron Manfull](#) •  January 12, 2012 •  [Design , Tips](#) • [2 Comments](#)

PREMIUM V. FREE

While premium WordPress themes are one more expense for staffs moving online, they are generally investments that are well worth the money spent.

WordPress makes it very easy to change the look and feel of your site. With just a couple clicks on the backend of WordPress you can present your site in a completely different way to your audience. Your content remains, it's just the look and feel that changes. While there are a variety of free themes out there for your staff to choose from, here are 5 reasons you need to pony up the \$35-\$70ish and buy a premium theme.

1. **FORUM ACCESS** - You will generally get access to forums where other users who have purchased your theme have asked questions and answers are documented. It's a great way to work through problems. Check out where you're buying the premium theme from though, if they don't have a forum you might want to look elsewhere.
2. **THEME DOCUMENTATION** - Most all premium themes also offer in-depth

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setup documentation and instructions and explain the theme-specific features to you. Again, check to see that the theme you are purchasing does this, if not I'd recommend for you to keep looking.

3. DESIGN FLEXIBILITY - One of the best features of premium themes is that most offer (on a limited basis) ways to easily change things from the color of the site to fonts used. These settings are almost always found in the Theme Options menu item.
4. LESS CODE - By offering users to change characteristics of the site from a theme options menu it limits the time students need to spend with the code. The more time many spend messing with things in the code editor, the higher chance they have of breaking things. For most, less time with code is the major selling point of a premium theme.
5. BELLS AND WHISTLES - Finally, many schools find the free themes a bit limiting in terms of front page design or features such as a featured story area that rotates the top news. Built-in options like this are much more readily available in premium themes.

My recommendation is always to first figure out what kind of content you're going to be able to push to your site and how frequent you're going to be able to update things. Once you figure that out, find a site to fit your needs. Too often schools go the other way around and find a theme they like first. Many times those schools then find there are too many areas for them to update frequently or not enough areas to feature everything they'll be doing.

In my next post next week I'll give you four places I recommend buying premium WordPress themes.

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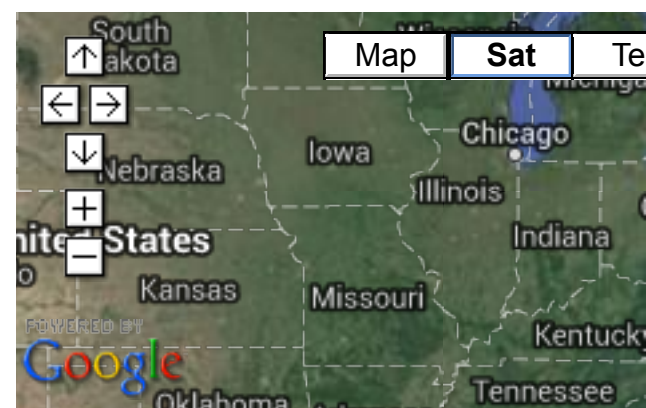
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About

Aaron is in his 15th year of advising student media. He is currently the Director of [Student Media](#) at Francis Howell North High School in St. Charles, Missouri. He is the Journalism Education Association [Digital Media Chair](#) and co-Director of [Media Now STL](#). He created [The Next 26](#) and is a former Dow Jones News Fund National Journalism Teacher of the Year. You can find him on Twitter [@manfull](#). He's a proud father. A transplanted Iowan. And an avid Hawkeye Fan.

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[Bryan Farley](#)
January 16, 2012

For my personal site, I paid for a theme that connects to my photography site. I am still learning how to use everything, but I like the company that provides the theme (Graph Paper Press), and I like my photography company (Photoshelter).

My new wordpress site looks OK. You can see it at [bryanfarleyphotography.com](#). I am still learning how to use plugins so that I can connect my comments from FB and WordPress, but otherwise I am happy with the paid service.



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