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### WordPress Child Themes:

- What are they and why should I care?
- How do I create one?
- How does it help make my life easier?

### What is a WordPress Child Theme?

Put simply by the WordPress Codex: *“A WordPress child theme is a theme that inherits the functionality of another theme, called the parent theme, and allows you to modify, or add to, the functionality of that parent theme.”*

### How to create and use a child theme in 4 easy steps:

1. Select and install the “Parent” theme you would like to base your site and what you will be modifying for your site structure
2. Download all of the “Parent” theme files to your computer using FTP and then create a new empty folder called “Parent Theme Name-child”
3. Create a new style.css file and save it in the new child theme folder and put the following at the top of the CSS file
  - a. 

```
/*
Theme Name: Your Theme Name Here
Theme URI: http://YourDomainName.com/
Description: Description of the site you are building
Author: Your name here
Author URI: http://YourPersonalWebsite.com
Template: twentyten [THE MOST IMPORTANT LINE SPECIFYING ORIGINAL
FILES LOCATION]
Version: 0.1.0
*/
```
  - b. 

```
@import url("../parenttheme/style.css"); [THE FIRST LINE OF YOUR STYLESHEET]
```
4. Go login to the back end of your WordPress website and go to Appearance > Theme and simply activate your new child theme and you are done.

### How does a child theme make my life easier as a developer / designer?

Three simple words...SOURCE STAYS INTACT. Using a child theme means that if you want to make any changes to the design and formatting of your website can be done WITHOUT TOUCHING ANY OF THE ORIGINAL SOURCE. You can add new templates to your site, write new functions for your functions.php file add new style and completely override ANYTHING in the original theme simply by copying the original file and saving it in your child theme folder and not changing the name. Doing so will automatically load your child theme file in favor of the original source.

Why is that such a big deal? Updates. Theme authors are always releasing upgrades to their themes, especially premium providers like WooThemes, Kreisi and Elegant Themes to name a few. If you use a child theme properly you can make all the design customizations and functionality additions you can think of and when the update is released to the original simply overwrite the parent theme, no customizations lost and new functionality added.

Simple. Awesome. Efficient.

### **Next Steps:**

There is really no limit to how far you can go with the child theme process. Once you get good an comfortable how the override system and style sheets work you can branch out and start experimenting with Hooks, Filters, Templates and Functions. You can build just about anything you can dream up. The key is doing it in a way that helps you be a smarter developer by keeping your upgrade and update process as reliable and lightweight as possible.

### **Child Theme Resources:**

- WordPress Codex Article: [http://codex.wordpress.org/Child\\_Themes](http://codex.wordpress.org/Child_Themes)
- How to modify wordpress themes the smart way: <http://themeshaper.com/modify-wordpress-themes/>
- Introduction to child Themes: <http://op111.net/53/>