

# Start Learning Joomla!

## Mini Course Transcript

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Start Learning Joomla is a complete introductory Joomla course for professionals. It is designed for a range of skill sets, including new users with no previous CMS knowledge. By combining video, audio and written material, Start Learning Joomla provides new learners with a complete range of training materials, each in its most effective medium.

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## Mini-Course Video 1

In this video, we're going to talk about how best to approach learning Joomla and introduce some basic concepts. We'll also talk about what other material we'll be covering.

In this small course, you'll learn about the basics of organizing content, Joomla sections & categories, modules and template positions, as well as laying your site out with Joomla menus. If you're already familiar with these concepts, don't worry, we cover the basics and move on into much more detail as we progress. And, if you know little or nothing about Joomla, you've come to the right place! We're going to start you at the very beginning and explain everything in plain English.

This course has an associated PDF guide that explains many of the background concepts and terminology in much more detail. It also provides key definitions in straightforward English for all of the terminology used in Joomla and diagrams showing how everything interrelates from your point of view as a Joomla user. It's written in plain English and it's really the perfect mental jumpstart you need to get started understanding Joomla from the user's perspective. It's also a great study aid and a perfect cheat sheet for you later down the road. We also provide transcripts for all of the videos for this course as well.

If you haven't gotten a copy of the guide and transcripts yet, you can get it at the link below. Feel free to pause the video now if you don't already have this material.

<http://www.StartLearningJoomla.com/guide/>

Great, now that you have the guide and transcripts, we'll get start.

First, we'll begin by talking about what you need to be a great Joomla administrator. Then we'll move on to explaining some of the more difficult concepts in Joomla.

As a Joomla administrator, you need to be sure you're well versed on the following things:

- Joomla global configuration
- Joomla core component settings
- Sections and Categories
- Modules
- Templates and Positions
- Menus and Menu Modules
- Building content with the Article Editor
- Managing users and access levels
- Joomla Backups
- How to find and evaluate the best 3rd party extensions
- Testing 3rd party extensions
- Installing, removing and upgrading extensions
- How to get effective support for Free and Paid Joomla Components
- Upgrading Joomla itself
- Testing and working effectively on a live production site
- How to find the best, most reliable free & paid Joomla vendors
- How to break down problems and present them in free support forums

These form the basis for being a good Joomla administrator. No matter how you choose to study, you should focus on developing these core abilities.

In some cases, learning a specific skill from a specific tutorial is necessary, but more often it's a much better use of your time to focus on learning the core concept in conjunction with any how-to tutorial. This is how you can go from being full of questions about Joomla to being a skilled Joomla administrator that can tackle any issue that might come up.

Now, let's move on to some specific topics.

Joomla is broken up into two major pieces, the **Frontend** and the **Backend**. The frontend is what the world sees when they visit your Joomla site. The backend is the administration view. This is where you configure how your site looks, manage users, add articles, etc.

Since we'll be working in the backend quite a lot as we build sites, we'll begin with a useful tip to make things a bit easier as we go through the learning process.

The administration console will log you out if you don't perform any activity for 15 minutes by default. That can be a little annoying if you're just starting out. So let's change that right now.

Let's click on the *Global Configuration*.

And you see under *System*, there is the *Session Settings* section. By default, it's set to *15 minutes*, which is quite short. You may want it this short for a live production site

where you're concerned about security or someone walking up and using your workstation while you're away. For our purposes, and as we learn, we're going to want to set this to a large number so we are not logged out if we leave to review some documentation or take a break from learning.

So you can will simply set it to *9999 minutes*. That will allow you to step away from the computer as you learn Joomla. Later on, you should set this back to a reasonable amount of time once you have a live site in place and need the secure things a bit more.

Given the practical limitations of online video services, we need to begin the next series of topics in the next video. This is where we start to get into some very interesting material.

In the next video, we'll go into a lot of detail on how Joomla organizes content and what roles Sections and Categories play in that. This is a key concept, so be sure you fully understand it before moving on. We will be building off it as we move forward.

## Mini-Course Video 2

In this video, we're going to introduce Joomla and explain the basics of content, sections & categories. If you're already familiar with these concepts, don't worry, we cover the basics and move on into much more detail as we progress. If you don't have the PDF guide for this course, please be sure to download it at the link below before you continue.

- Sections
  - Categories
  - Individual Articles

Joomla uses **Sections** and **Categories** to organize **Articles**. Joomla allows you to organize your site content into sections and further break those sections down into separate categories.

Think of sections as overall functional areas for your site. For example, if your website's function is to provide product information pages, company info, a corporate blog, technical support content, then you would treat each of these as a separate section. This might not perfectly match how your menus are laid out, but simply the major top-level breakdown of your content article.

Categories allow you to break up sections into more detail. For example, your support section may have FAQ articles, how-tos, whitepaper download pages, etc. We would simple create categories for each of these under the Support section.

Joomla doesn't currently support breaking categories down further into sub-categories. You really only get to organize things at 3 levels... Sections, Categories and Articles. While later versions of Joomla will have this functionality in future releases, it's important to get used to breaking up your content in this way right now.

To learn more detail on sections and categories, refer to the *Key Joomla Concepts* section on page 6 of the PDF guide. And, because every site is different, we put together some examples of common site section and category layouts.

You can find these real-world examples in the *Anatomy of Some Example Sites* starting on page 8 of the PDF guide. In this case, the *Start Learning Joomla!* training program uses the third example, the *Local Newspaper Site*, as a basis for teaching how to implement this structure in a step-by-step way over the course of over 90 videos. Each one of these examples can be fleshed out into a complete site, but it's important to start from a clear, logical Section and Category layout before proceeding further down the road of constructing your sites. Since you cannot create subcategories at this time, getting this structure right in the beginning is very important, so take the time to design a logical structure for your content before actually building your site.

In the next video, we'll cover the basics of **Modules** and **Template Positions**. This is where you make the transition from a site with just some plain articles to a modern site with plenty of interactive elements and visual variety across pages.

## Mini-Course Video 3

**Modules** are simply blocks that appear on your website's frontend and perform some useful function for the user. These can be login boxes, menus in any position on the page, banners, who's online, or other similar elements.

You can also find plugins that add additional modules, or even have a programmer build new ones for you if you need something different for your site. We may sometimes need to pay a developer to build something unique for our site, or purchase a great third party extension that handles some critical functionality for our site. For the most common situations, however, Joomla provides the appropriate mix of flexible modules. Learning the theory behind modules and how to use them effectively is a critical skill for Joomla administrators.

In Joomla, Modules are the building blocks for adding lots of interactive functionality for your site.

In our very simple demo site, you can see the area labeled *main menu*. This menu area is actually a module that we've configured to display here in this position on the page. Adding more modules is as simple as going to the module manager and configuring them.

Now that you've seen a module on the page, let's talk about how we got it to display there in the first place. To do that, we need to discuss the basics of templates and positions.

You can use Joomla **templates** to control how your site actually looks to your visitors. Templates are what you would typically call the design of the site. Templates are actually quite flexible in Joomla. Just because a template is responsible for how the site appears, it doesn't mean that every page on your site is going to look exactly the same. In addition to handling the colors, images and overall appearance,

- Your Blog
  - Ads above the content.
  - Related Articles Module
- Customer Support Pages
  - Special support documents menu

**Templates** allow you to place different **modules** in different **positions** on the page. For example, the blog part of your site may have ads displayed above the article or a module showing related articles. These are great for blog pages, but you don't necessarily want to have the same thing on your customer support pages. Those support page may have a special menu for navigating all of your support documents, for example. Joomla's template system is extremely flexible for doing just these sorts of things.

As we just mentioned, different modules can be placed in different parts of your site and in different positions on the page. Joomla allows you to place these modules pretty much wherever you like, as long as your particular template supports it.

There are some common conventions for positions, such as the top, left, right, footer, etc, but each template may support more, or less depending on how it has been designed. Here's how to view what positions are available for your template.

Click *Preview* on the template page.

Let's look at the template positions for the default Joomla 1.5 template as an example. Here we can see various positions are supported.

- Top, breadcrumb, user 2, user 3, right, footer, etc.

In the demo site, we can see that the main menu appears to the left of the content. Suppose we wanted it to appear in the main navigation area instead. It's quite a simple matter to reposition it.

Here, we can see that this template calls the position *User 3*. Why “User 3”? Because that is simply what the developer chose to call it. There are no rules about this, so developers are free to choose whatever makes sense for them. Most good templates come with some kind of documentation to explain the positions and how they work. For your own template, these positions may be called something else completely.

Now, let's go ahead and reposition the menu on the demo site from the *Left* position to the *User 3* position.

To do this, we'll go back to the module manager and reconfigure the main menu module.

Here we see the main menu module and its position, *Left*.

To move it to the new position, all we need to do is select the position and change it from *Left* to *User 3* and click the *save* button here.

Here we can see that the position has been changed to *User 3*.

If we click over to the demo site and click refresh, we can see that the position of the Main Menu has moved from the left position to the *User 3* position, or what this particular template uses for global navigation.

At this point, you might be asking how all of this ties together. How do you build a real site from articles and modules. The answer to this in Joomla is **Menus**. Menus are how you design how your entire site actually works and what modules and content appear on which page. Menus tie the whole system together.

Learning how to use menus to lay out your site can be a little frustrating for new users, but we will explain it in plain English.

## Mini-Course Video 4

Now that you have a good understanding of sections and categories as well as basic Template and module positions, we can dive right into the basics of how to construct menus for your site. If you are still a bit fuzzy on how to structure and organize your content with sections and categories, be sure to review the material in the associated PDF guide.

This particular video is pulled from the 90+ other videos from our Start Learning Joomla video training series. It's meant to be in-context with the rest of the material, but it works well as a stand-alone video and should serve to give you a great overview of how to construct menus for an example site.

We hope you're ready to learn something very important. Here is where Joomla starts to get very interesting. Menus are the skeleton upon which we build Joomla sites. Everything is attached to a menu in some way and it is Menus that determine how people navigate around your site. But In Joomla, menus aren't just about navigation, but also controlling the actual site layout, including what pages get assigned to what URLs.

For our newspaper site example, we want to create a series of simple menus to cover our News topics. We'll expand these further as we develop the site.

Since our site has Local, National and World News topics, we want to create top-level menu items to handle that. We also want to create sub menu items for each category under each section. Let's do that now.

We will go to the *Menu Manager*. Since we want to add items to the top-level menu, we will choose the *Main Menu*. This is the default menu for your site created by Joomla when it was installed.

Let's add **Top-level Menu Items** for each of the sections. To do this, we click on *Menu Items* for the *Main Menu*.

Now, let's create the items. Click *New*.

Now, you're presented with a large list of options. The menu items we're create will be oriented towards **Articles**. Joomla give us a few useful options when point menu items to articles. For our Major News sections, we will choose the *Section Layout* under *Articles*.

By choosing the *Section* layout, we will be able to present the user with a category breakdown so they can drill down further if they like. We know it sounds a bit boring, but we will spice this page up with some useful modules.

So, let's finish setting up the *Section Layout*. First, let's set the *Title*.

This is what will appear in the **main menu**, so we will keep it short. Let's choose "Local News"

The *alias*, again, is for the Search Engine Friendly component, so we can leave it alone for now and let Joomla create it for us.

Because this is a top-level menu item for our site, the *Parent item* is going to be *Top*. If this was going to be a sub menu item, we would simply choose the appropriate parent item instead.

To finish configuring this menu item, let's select the *Section* that we're going to be targeting. In this case, we'll select our *Local News* section.

Below this, you can see some useful Parameters for the page. Joomla gives you a lot of control over how that target page will appear. For now, we will leave the defaults and revisit them later.

Now, let's *save* this menu item and have a look at the site.

You should see a new menu item appear called *Local News* and when you click it, you'll see that it presents a simple list of all of the available categories under the Local News section. And, if you click one of the categories, you see that it can drill down all the way to one of our sample articles.

Now we've created a simple menu for the Local News section and Politics category. Now go ahead and create the rest of the menu items for the Local, National and World News sections. It should look like this:

- Local News
  - Politics
  - Business
- National News
  - Politics
  - Business
- World News
  - Politics
  - Business

Please pause the video and do that now.

Ok, now that this is complete, we have a good working model for a site main menu. We've created menu items that will allow our site visitors to browse our content and reach the article that they would like to read. We'll extend this further as we go.

While this video was written and produced for our *Start Learning Joomla!* video course, it works well here as a stand-alone video for showing you the basics of how to work with menus.

We hope you've enjoyed using this short course to get an overview of Joomla core concepts and have learned how to do some basic things in Joomla. As we mentioned in the first video, there are several other areas to develop if you want to be an effective Joomla administrator.

- Joomla global configuration
- Joomla core component settings
- Sections and Categories
- Modules
- Templates and Positions
- Menus and Menu Modules
- Building content with the Article Editor
- Managing users and access levels
- Joomla Backups
- How to find and evaluate the best 3rd party extensions
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- How to find the best, most reliable free & paid Joomla vendors
- How to break down problems and present them in free support forums

If you are serious about quickly developing your skills as a competent Joomla administrator, or need to share training resources with other members of your team or your clients, we have built a complete program to cover every concept necessary for a Joomla administrator working in a personal or professional context. Our video training program is more than a simple series of tutorials, but a professionally produced teaching program designed to take someone with no knowledge of content management systems through to basic Joomla administrator competence in as little as 1 or 2 days of focused learning. We also teach in plain, simple English so anyone can learn. If you have enjoyed the format and quality of these videos, expect to find the same style and level of production in our full program.

We believe in open source and the free, unhindered access to volunteer-built software. Many people contribute and many more people enjoy the result of the combined effort. The contribution of a great many lines of code from many individual volunteers has produced a powerful, complex and effective content management system, and given us the ability to build great websites. The original pioneers of open source software believe that software should be free, and that training, support and consulting are the best ways to support these efforts. We wholeheartedly agree with this. Joomla supports an excellent and diverse economy of professional trainers, book authors, custom developers and consultants. It is important for new Joomla administrators to consider seeking out professional training and support services from the best resources they can find. In the Joomla world, you have access to good volunteer free content as well as some of the best produced commercial extensions, training, authors and onsite training services in the open source software world.

Our view, and the reason we authored our Start Learning Joomla program, is that the most effective Joomla administrators will know when to choose between free resources

and professionally developed material for their training needs. We saw a need for users like you who wanted a deeper and more effectively planned and executed teaching program than what could possibly produce on a volunteer basis. We encourage you to explore the training material available on Joomla.org and decide for yourself if you have the background to learn with the great tutorials they have put together, or if you need an intensive program like Start Learning Joomla to provide a learning framework for your Joomla education.

No matter what path you choose in learning Joomla, it's important that you follow a certain set of training guidelines for yourself so that you maximize your time and make sure you hit the most important concepts in the right order. Visit the link below to find this simple step-by-step plan. We may have already emailed it to you if you've gotten the PDF guide as well, so check your email for this if you haven't seen it yet. It will help focus your limited training time and keep you on track to learn the most important concepts in the right order in the least amount of time.

There is a collection of great learning resources located there, whether or not you are interested in a professional program. Please take the time to check it out as it will give you a well defined and well researched Joomla learning path.

Thanks for watching and the best of luck on in learning Joomla.