

bbPress Complete

Rhys Wynne



Chapter No. 1 "Getting Started with bbPress"

In this package, you will find:

A Biography of the author of the book

A preview chapter from the book, Chapter NO.1 "Getting Started with bbPress"

A synopsis of the book's content

Information on where to buy this book

About the Author

Rhys Wynne is a web developer and Internet marketer originally from Colwyn Bay, North Wales, though now based in Manchester. Rhys has over seven years of commercial experience in developing websites, the majority of which have been built in WordPress. Rhys has over three years of experience in developing bbPress websites, and has released a number of plugins both for free and for commercial use. One such plugin, WP Email Capture, has been downloaded nearly 100,000 times.

Apart from Internet technologies, Rhys is a keen football fan, supporting his hometown team of Colwyn Bay, and he also enjoys traveling and photography.

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bbPress Complete

bbPress Complete is a comprehensive guide to bbPress, a forum management plugin for WordPress. This book will help you in creating, managing, and growing forums, as well as expanding bbPress' functionality and integrating it with your current WordPress site.

What This Book Covers

Chapter 1, Getting Started with bbPress, discusses the history of WordPress and bbPress and how to install bbPress as well as troubleshoot common installation problems. You will finish this chapter and log into your forum for the first time.

Chapter 2, Taking Your First Steps with bbPress, discusses how to set up both WordPress and bbPress so that your forums display them as you want. We will also learn how to create, modify, and delete posts and forums.

Chapter 3, User Management in bbPress, covers how to create and modify your user profile as well as manage other users on your forum. There will also be an overview of user roles on the forum as well.

Chapter 4, Extending bbPress Using Plugins, covers how to expand bbPress' functionality with a selection of plugins for bbPress and WordPress. Topics covered in this chapter include a guide on setting these plugins up as well as questions to ask yourself before installing new plugins and before finishing off with a guide to common bbPress functions, so that you can begin coding on your own.

Chapter 5, Adding bbPress to Your WordPress Theme, covers how to integrate bbPress into your WordPress theme via the widgets and menu functions. Also, we will cover making your template bbPress ready using the WordPress' templating system as well as creating a forum-specific sidebar.

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Getting Started with bbPress

bbPress, which is a popular forum management plugin for WordPress, is relatively simple to install and run. However, if you are not familiar with the WordPress installation environment, it could be a bit daunting. This chapter will serve as an introduction to bbPress and will guide you through the installation of bbPress onto your WordPress-based website.

By the end of the chapter, you will have an understanding of bbPress and will have learned the following:

- What bbPress is, its history, and why it is popular
- The prerequisites for installing it – what you need to have on your website before installing bbPress
- How to install bbPress
- How to log in to the administration area of bbPress

What is bbPress?

bbPress is a template-driven forum management plugin built to be used with WordPress. It is designed to be a light plugin, with additional features being added through extensions known as plugins should you want more functionality.

Forums have been around for almost as long as the Internet and are a great way for people with similar interests to connect over the Internet. Examples of the types of sites that can benefit from a forum include:

- Community websites such as local news portals, where members can discuss pressing issues
- Computer software that requires an area to provide technical support

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- Clubs, such as sport clubs or youth clubs
- Educational websites, where students can get extracurricular support

Forums can be a lot of work to get started but can eventually become a valuable asset to your website and often will drive a lot of traffic to it. Furthermore, forums can also be a great asset to your online presence, building a community around your services.

A brief history of bbPress

bbPress was created when the co-founder of WordPress, *Matt Mullenweg*, was frustrated with the forum management software that ran the official WordPress support forums after a hosting upgrade broke them. Due to this, a WordPress-based forum software was proposed and coded. On December 28, 2004, new forum software was rolled out to the official WordPress support forum; this was later released as bbPress v0.7.2.

Originally, for most of its development, bbPress was a standalone piece of software with its own database tables and was a fork (making a copy of the code and starting independent development on it) of WordPress's source code. This meant that it was relatively stable, but as bugs were discovered in WordPress, it became harder to maintain. With the release of bbPress 2.0 on September 12, 2011, a decision was made, that bbPress 2.0 would change from being a standalone piece of software to a plugin for WordPress. This generated a few problems; one in particular was that many plugins were designed with early versions of bbPress, and are now incompatible with bbPress 2.0 and many others are no longer maintained. However, an entire library of WordPress plugins was now available from within WordPress.

Today, the project is maintained by the bbPress community and owned by the WordPress Foundation, a charitable organization founded to maintain the interests of open source software. Ownership of the project was given to the WordPress Foundation by Automattic, a commercial development firm, on September 9, 2010.

Benefits of using bbPress

There are many pieces of software that can manage forums, so why should you pick bbPress? Many reasons exist, but here are a few of the key reasons:

- It is **free**, meaning you never have to pay a penny to use the software.
- It is **open source**, meaning that all code associated with the software is available for you to download and modify.
- It is a **community project**, rather than having a small team of developers working on the project, a large number of people can be working on it, from commercial developers to hobby programmers.

- It is **light**. Out of the box, it can be seen to be lacking features, but it has relatively little code to run the forum, which makes it faster and more secure than many of its competitors.
- It is **extensible**. There are over 100 dedicated bbPress plugins currently released adding functionality to your site. Furthermore, many WordPress plugins are also compatible with bbPress.
- It is **modular**. When you install bbPress, it creates all the pages you need, meaning you're ready to run your forum straight away. However, if you decide you don't want to run a bbPress forum anymore, deleting the plugin will not break the rest of your site.
- It **runs on WordPress**, which means that if you use WordPress to run your website, your site will have a familiar look, as coding templates and plugins in bbPress are very similar.

If you wish to see examples of what you can create in bbPress, bbPress keeps examples of quality, active forums that run on their software on their site. You can see this list at <http://bbpress.org/about/examples/>.

Have you decided to use bbPress then? Great! Let's get started!

Prerequisites for installing bbPress

At the time of writing in March 2013, bbPress 2.2.4 requires a Linux server with the following to run:

- PHP Version 5.2.4 or higher
- MySQL Version 5.0 or higher


It is also recommended that a server has Apache with `mod_rewrite` installed; however, this is not a necessity. Don't worry too much about these requirements as an e-mail to your web host, or any potential web host should give you this information. However, many Linux-based web hosts run these services as standard.

At the time of writing, the requirements for bbPress are exactly the same as WordPress, so if you are running the latest version of WordPress, you can run bbPress.

Installing WordPress

The final prerequisite for bbPress is WordPress. As bbPress is a plugin of WordPress, you need to have WordPress installed and running on your server before activating bbPress.

This book assumes you already have WordPress installed; however, if you haven't gone through WordPress's *Famous 5-Minute Install* article, which you can read at http://codex.wordpress.org/Installing_WordPress.

 Many hosts provide a one-click installation service for WordPress. I would recommend that you do not go through this process. Often, the versions of WordPress on this service are one or two versions older than the current version, leaving you open to possible security exploits.

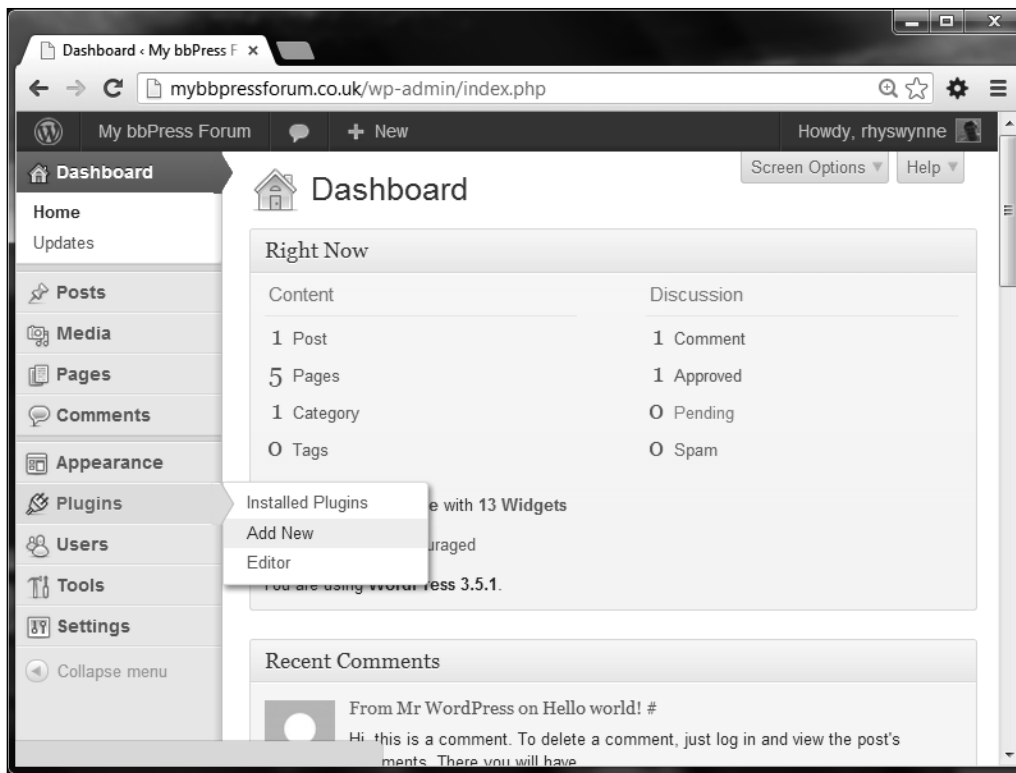
Installing bbPress

As bbPress is a WordPress plugin, we will need to install it like a plugin. Thankfully, this is relatively straightforward and there are three ways to install plugins, which are described as follows:

Method 1 – downloading and installing the plugin from the WordPress repository

The following are the steps to be performed for downloading and installing the plugin from the WordPress repository:

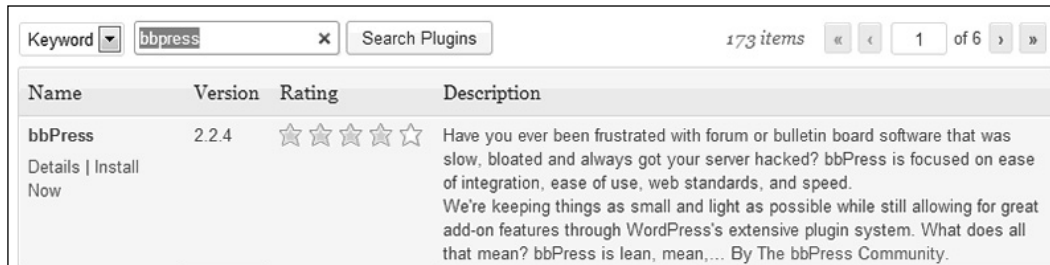
1. In your WordPress installation, visit your login page, which will look similar to <http://www.yourwordpressdomain.com/wp-admin/>. Log in with your username and password, and you will be taken to the WordPress Dashboard.



On the **Dashboard** screen, down the left-hand side, you should see a menu titled **Plugins**. If you hover over **Plugins**, a pop-up menu should appear, with one of the options being **Add New**. Click on this option.

You will be taken to a screen that has a search box. This will allow you to search the WordPress plugin repository for any plugin that is present within it. As bbPress is a WordPress plugin, we can find bbPress using this method. Type in bbPress and click on the **Search Plugins** button.

From here, you should see a list of plugins returned in the search for bbPress. One will be the proper **bbPress** plugin. It should be fairly obvious; however, it looks similar to the following screenshot:

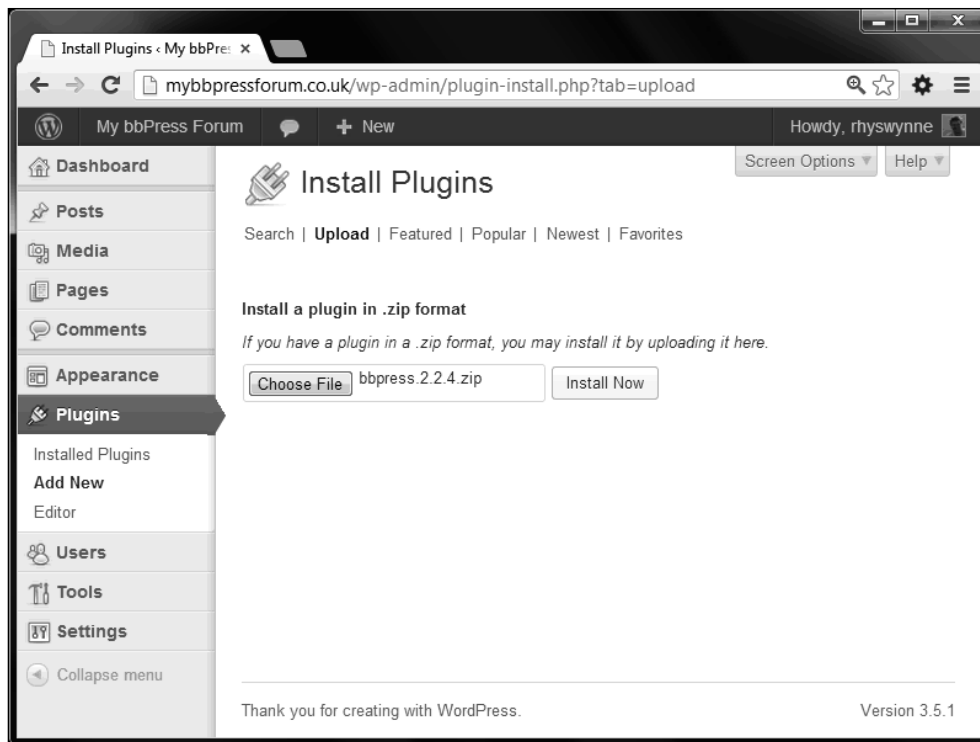


2. If the plugin name is **bbPress**, and its author is **The bbPress Community**, you have found the correct plugin! Click on the **Install Now** link beneath the plugin name, and the plugin will be installed.
3. If the installation is successful, you will be given two options: **Activate Plugin** and **Return to Plugin Installer**.
4. If you click on **Activate Plugin**, the plugin will be activated.
5. Alternatively, if you click on **Return to Plugin Installer**, you'll be taken back to the Plugin Installation Screen. From here, click on **Plugins** in the left-hand menu, search for **bbPress** in the list, and click on **Activate** to activate **bbPress**.

Method 2 – uploading a ZIP file of bbPress to WordPress

The following are the steps to be performed while uploading a ZIP file of bbPress to WordPress:

1. Visit the URL <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/bbpress/> and click on the **download** button; you will download the latest version of **bbPress**, which you should save to an easy-to-find location, such as the desktop.
2. Then, log in to your WordPress administration site, and in the left navigation hover over **Plugins** and select **Add New**; you should be taken to the **Add New Plugins** screen. Along the top, you should see a link called **Upload**; click on this, and you're taken to the upload screen shown in the following screenshot:



3. Click on **Choose File**, and then navigate to where you saved the bbPress .zip file. Make sure the ZIP file's name is in the box (as seen in the preceding screenshot), and then click on **Install Now**. If successful, you will be given the choice to activate the plugin as described previously.

Method 3 – uploading the unzipped bbPress plugin via FTP

This method is the trickiest, and it will be well worth trying it at least once so you're familiar with the installation process.

Before beginning with this installation method, you'll need the following:

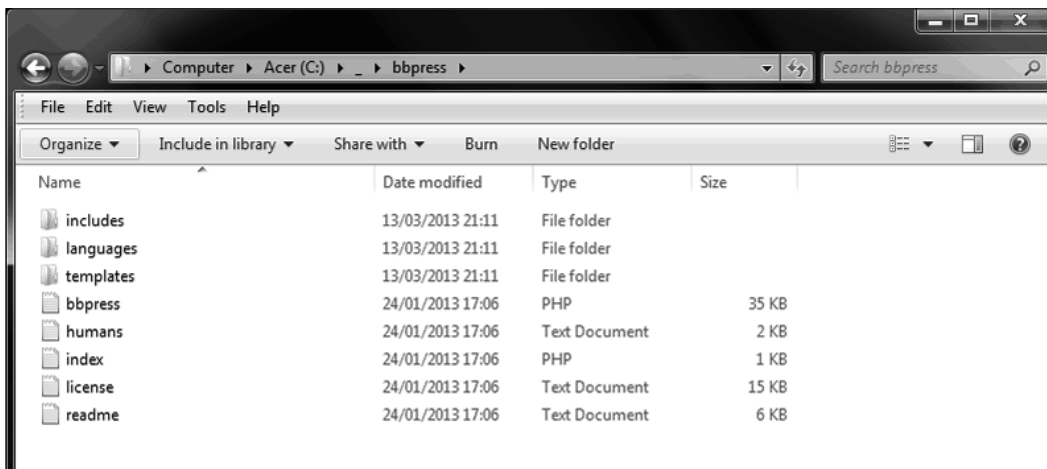
- A **file transfer protocol (FTP)** program such as FileZilla, available to download for free at <http://filezilla-project.org/>.
- The FTP address for your website
- Your FTP username
- Your FTP password

You should have received these details when you signed up for your hosting package; however, if you don't have them, speak to your host and they will provide these details.

The following are the steps to be performed while uploading the unzipped bbPress plugin via FTP:

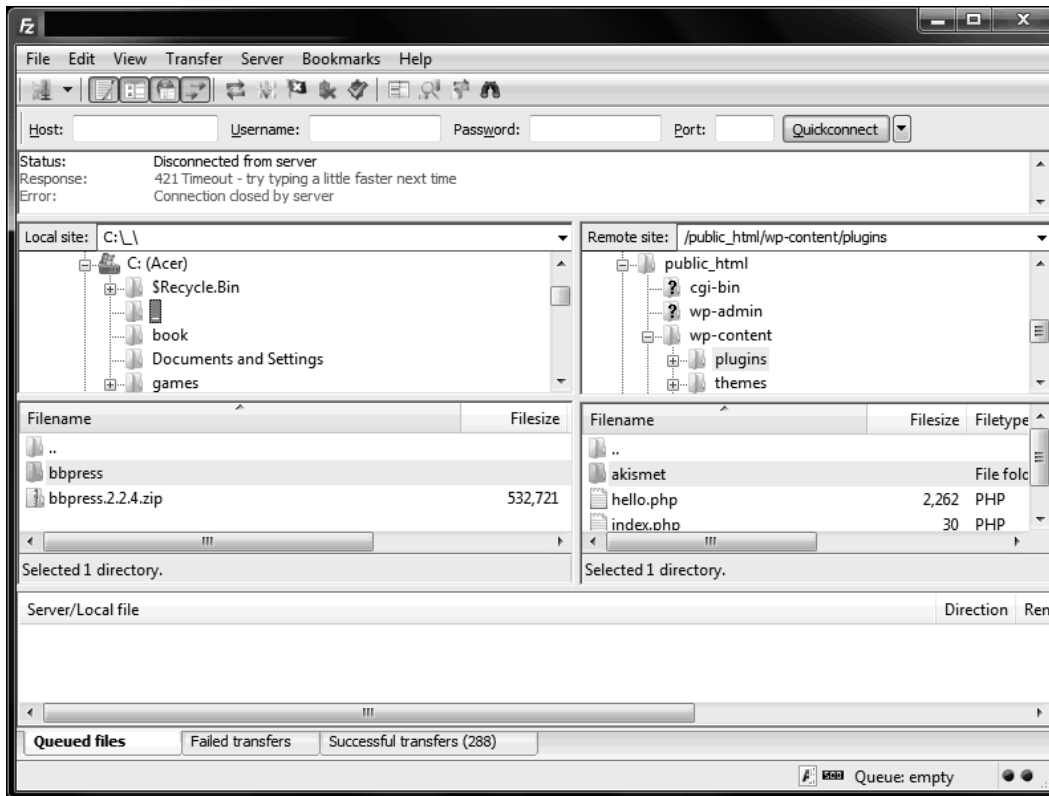
1. Visit the **bbpress** plugin URL, <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/bbpress/> and download it to an easy-to-find location.
2. Head to that location and find the `bbpress.zip` file.
3. Extract these files to a folder named `bbpress`.

You should have a folder now with the following files inside it:



4. Download and install FileZilla.

When you open Filezilla, you should be presented with a screen similar to this:



5. In the **Host** textbox, type in the FTP address for your website.
6. In the **Username** and **Password** fields, type in your FTP username and FTP password, respectively.
7. Ignore the **Port** field and click on **Quickconnect**.
8. In the left window of the screen will be the files on your computer (**Local site**), and on the right-hand side will be your server navigation (**Remote Site**).
9. In the **Local site** window, navigate to the folder that contains the bbPress folder, which you extracted earlier. When found, navigate to the **plugins** folder in the **Remote site** window. This will be located in the **wp-content** folder, which will be in the folder where WordPress is installed.
10. Drag the **bbPress** folder into the **plugins** folder, and when fully copied over, log in to your WordPress Dashboard and click on the **Plugins** page. If **bbPress** is listed among the plugins, click to activate it.

If you notice three more menus appearing in the sidebar – **Forums**, **Topics**, and **Replies**, congratulations, your installation of bbPress was successful!

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Troubleshooting installation problems

Installations should go fine, but nothing is perfect. Here are a few common installation problems and the solutions for them:

- **There isn't a menu titled Plugins!**

If you don't have a menu titled **Plugins**, your account with which you log in to WordPress isn't the administrator of your site. There will be a login with the level "administrator", every WordPress site requires one. Speak to anybody who could have had access to your site, for example designers, as to what the administrator login could be.
- **Dialog box asking FTP details on clicking Install Now?**

Depending on how your host has set up your server, you may not have the ability to install plugins over **hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP)**, which is the method of installation that WordPress uses to install plugins. However, it does have a backup method, which requires you to authorize WordPress to install the plugin on your behalf. To do this, you will need three pieces of information:

 - The FTP address for your website
 - Your FTP username
 - Your FTP password

All of that you can obtain from your host. Repeat the installation process, and then type in your FTP address, username and password into the relevant textboxes, and the installation should continue as normal.

- **White screen on installing and activating the plugin, and the site doesn't work. Help!**

Most of the time when installing plugins, there aren't any issues. However, there are occasionally conflicts that occur. For security reasons, WordPress usually hides these conflicts but displays a blank white page instead. The only way to fix this is to log in to your server through FTP and delete the **bbPress** plugin, which will automatically remove it from the site. To do this, perform the following steps:

 1. Log on to your FTP server (as described in the *Method 3 - uploading the unzipped bbPress plugin via FTP* section) and navigate to the /wp-content/plugins/ folder.
 2. Select the `bbpress` folder and right-click to delete it. Then, return to your WordPress administration page and go to the **Plugins** page.

You should see the following message appear in red:

The plugin `bbpress/bbpress.php` has been **deactivated** due to an error: Plugin file does not exist.

You will have to reinstall **bbPress**, but before activating the plugin, deactivate all other plugins that you have running on the site. One by one, activate each plugin until you activate the one that breaks your site again. This will be the plugin that is conflicting with your site; either find a fix or find a replacement for that plugin.

- **My question wasn't answered here:** Luckily, there is a dedicated bbPress forum available, where people can answer questions to issues you are having. Many people volunteer to provide help on these forums. You can visit them at <http://bbpress.org/forums/>.

Summary

Congratulations! You have taken the first step in activating your bbPress forum. By now, you should have an idea of the benefits of using bbPress to run your forum along WordPress. You should also be competent in installing bbPress on any WordPress installation. It may be confusing for the first time, but the more number of installations you do, the easier it gets. You can also spot common issues that could be affecting your site.

In the next chapter, we will look into setting up forums for you, encouraging people to register, and how to create, edit, or delete posts.

Where to buy this book

You can buy bbPress Complete from the Packt Publishing website:

<http://www.packtpub.com/bbpress-complete-comprehensive-guide/book>

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