

JOOMLA! OUTLINE

What website owners need to know before logging into Joomla! to administer their website

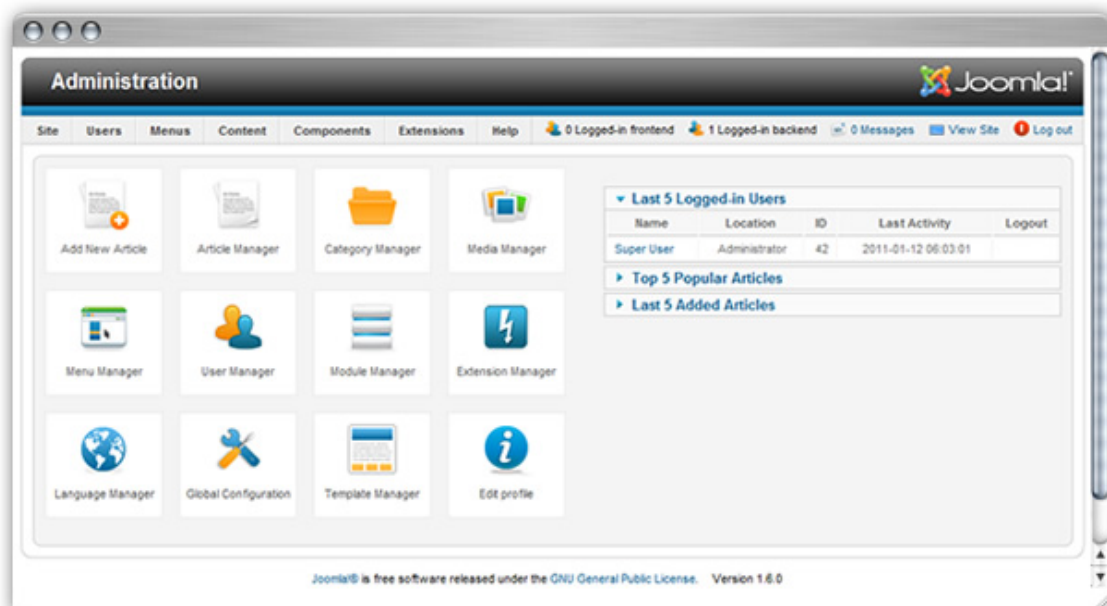
Joomla! is a content management system (CMS) that gives website owners the control to self-manage the content on their websites via an administrative backend. In fact it is the world's leading CMS powering over 2.5% of the entire web!

Joomla! is used by website owners ranging from micro businesses through to large corporations and because of its wide application and its ability to be extended to such an extent, it's a bit more complex than a simple small business CMS.

The Joomla! team have written comprehensive documentation that will help you explore the specifics of each part of the system but there is a lot to know and before you delve into it we've written this outline to give you the basics.

You can find the detailed documentation by navigating to "**Help > Joomla! Help**" from the administrator section of your website. Alternatively you can view the articles at <http://docs.joomla.org/>.

Note if you are familiar with Joomla! but just want to know about the changes in Joomla! 1.6 we have also written an outline covering the changes in the new system.



Accessing Your Joomla! CMS

To access the backend you will need to know the administrator account and password. Usually you will be able to access the administrator's login area from <http://yourdomain.com.au/administrator> (replace yourdomain with your domain name) and login with the details provided by the developer of the site.

The top menu will help you navigate through the administrator section and quick links to the main areas are provided on the homepage.

The way Joomla! works

One of the things that a lot of people struggle with when first using Joomla! is the whole way pages and menus etc are managed. When most people think of a website they think about website 'pages'. So it follows that in the CMS you would simply create a 'page' and when you clicked on the page in the menu, the page would show up. This is not the case with Joomla! and there is a very good reason for it and that is that most websites these days are comprised of more than just simple content pages. For example in Joomla when you view a "page" you could be viewing:

- (a) a page with general website content on the main part of the page (Joomla refers to this as an Article) - say for example an about us page.
- (b) a page with a bunch of different independent blocks on it - say a homepage might have a block that shows your twitter feed, it might have a newsflash section over on the right and an image slider up the top. These are what Joomla! calls Modules.
- (c) it might have some sort of application - something a lot more complex than a simple content page - for example a discussion forum or an image gallery or a business directory. These are generally managed via 3rd party extensions that Joomla! calls Components.

In Joomla! it is **very important** to know that the menus and menu links (the things you click on to get to the pages) are separate from the pages themselves and need to be created independently.

For example in a very simple CMS to create an About Us page, you would just create a new page called About US and it would add the link in the menu and add the page for you to edit. In Joomla! they need to be done as 2 separate steps. Firstly you need to create the About Us article and secondly you need to go into the relevant menu and add a new menu item to link to the article.

This is the part of Joomla! that confuses a lot of beginners and I believe needs to be understood before you log in. There is more information below on the main elements.

Templates

Your template should have already been developed by your web developer. This will tell Joomla what the site looks like and how it is structured. We don't go into too much detail here except to say that generally a Joomla! website will have a main content section in the middle of the page and then have a number of modules around the page that might be used for things like menus, twitter feeds, sliders, search boxes, live chat buttons etc. The location and the look and feel of these elements are all defined in your template.

Articles

If the main part of a page is filled with general content (text and images etc) it will be done as an Article. Every website will have some general content pages (Articles) which you can access by going up to **Content > Article Manager**. This will show you a list of all of your Articles and you can use the New button to create a new one. You can also use **Content > Category manager** to categorise your articles to make them easier to manage. Again this doesn't impact on the menus on the site at this stage it's just about how you manage articles when you have a lot of them (like using folders for documents in Windows).

Components

If the main part of a page includes something more complex than just general content it is most likely a Component. For example it could be a forum, an advanced blog, a real estate listing system, an online shopping catalogue etc. If you mouse over **Components** up the top any installed components will be listed there to be clicked on. There are a few simple inbuilt Components in Joomla! but most complex applications will be handled by 3rd party extensions of which there are thousands available.

Modules

In general, anything that appears on the page in a position outside the main content area (for example a banner up the top, a menu on the left, a login form on the right etc) is a module. To access your modules; navigate to **Extensions > Module Manager**.

To edit an existing module you simply click on the modules name to open the edit module. The settings for each module enable you to set where the modules show up by associating them with a menu item. For example if the module is for a search box up the top you might set it to display on all menu items (every page). If it's a login form just for the members page you might set it to display on a link called 'Members' that you have set up for a members article.

Menu's

As mentioned previously Menus are separate to the actual content of the site. All of your articles and components are there and published but you need a menu to enable the visitor to navigate to them. If you navigate to **Menu > Menu manager** you can see the menus available in your site. If it's a simple site you might just have one called Main Menu. If it is a bit more complex you might have more - for example you might have a top menu with some general links and then on the About Us page you might have an About Menu on the left specifically for that page.

The menu manager is where you add all of the links to your menus and create the menus. However the menu manager is not where you go to control where the menu shows up. Every time you create a menu, an associated module will be created in the module manager and it is in the module manager where you control where your menu appears and the various options to do with appearance.

Conclusion

Hopefully this outline has given you an understanding of how Joomla! works and prepared you for logging in and having a go. Keep an eye on our small business [website design](#) blog [A Website Designer](#) for more info on Joomla! and website design in general.

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