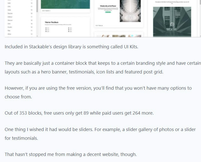
WP Stackable review (Can you completely avoid page builders with this?)

Blogging

Stackable, aka WP Stackable, is a Gutenberg plugin that makes it easier for you to build professional looking websites without having to use a page builder or write custom code in PHP (yuck).

It's a new paradigm. People want fast website. People want the ease of building a no-code website. People want to do all in the Gutenberg editor.

UI Kits



Included in Stackable's design library is something called UI Kits.

They are basically just a container block that keeps to a certain branding style and have certain layouts such as a hero banner, testimonials, icon lists and featured post grid.

However, if you are using the free version, you'll find that you won't have many options to choose from.

Out of 353 blocks, free users get 89 while paid users get 264 more.

One thing I wished it had would be sliders. For example, a slider gallery of photos or a slider for testimonials.

That hasn't stopped me from making a decent website, though.

Everything's customizable

The great thing about WP Stackable is that everything is customizable.

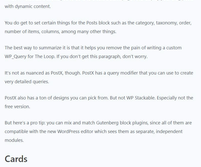
That's great because it means that you can always change the colour of the element to fit your WordPress theme, or change the background photo of a hero section, or create a tall length button, etc.

In other cases, you can also create multiple columns of the same item. For example, if you run a great business and have a lot of testimonials, you can create multiple columns of testimonials so you can showcase all of them.

Notable design elements

Let's talk about what I REALLY loved about this Gutenberg plugin.

Button

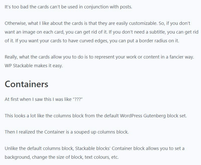


Buttons are pretty important design element to have after your content. People need something to click to go further down the funnel.

I found the button to be really good and comprehensive with its layout options, design customizations

The rest of the options are mostly style customizations such as colours, layout, hide on desktop/tablet/mobile and more.

Posts



Here's the thing. If you use a static page on WordPress, by default, you can't list your blog roll.

What WP Stackable allows you to do is to create a static page AND display your blog posts with dynamic content.

You do get to set certain things for the Posts block such as the category, taxonomy, order, number of items, columns, among many other things.

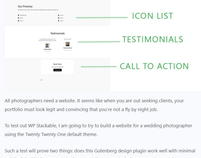
The best way to summarize it is that it helps you remove the pain of writing a custom WP_Query for The Loop. If you don't get this paragraph, don't worry.

It's not as nuanced as PostX, though. PostX has a query modifier that you can use to create very detailed queries.

PostX also has a ton of designs you can pick from. But not WP Stackable. Especially not the free version.

But here's a pro tip: you can mix and match Gutenberg block plugins, since all of them are compatible with the new WordPress editor which sees them as separate, independent modules.

Cards



Cards are a pretty good way to feature various things on your website.

It's too bad the cards can't be used in conjunction with posts.

Otherwise, what I like about the cards is that they are easily customizable. So, if you don't want an image on each card, you can get rid of it. If you don't need a subtitle, you can get rid of it. If you want your cards to have curved edges, you can get a border radius on it.

Really, what the cards allow you to do is to represent your work or content in a fancier way. WP Stackable makes it easy.

Containers

At first when I saw this I was like "???"

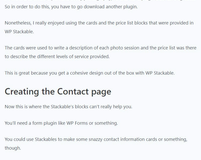
This looks a lot like the columns block from the default WordPress Gutenberg block set.

Then I realized the Container is a souped-up columns block.

Unlike the default columns block, Stackable blocks' Container block allows you to set a background, change the size of block, text colours, etc.

The fact that you can put a background or borders on it allows you to create a visual separation that tells the user that this is a unique section.

Let's build a new website



All photographers need a website. It seems like when you are not seeking clients, your portfolio must look legit and convincing that you're not a fly by night job.

To test out WP Stackable, I am going to try to build a website for a wedding photographer using the Twenty Twenty One default theme.

Such a test will prove two things: does this Gutenberg design plugin work well with minimal training? And it also proves whether or not the premade designs are up to scratch.

The website should have a home page, portfolio page and contact page. Simple.

Creating the Main Page

I used a bunch of design elements to make the front page including Icon List, Icon, Testimonial, Call to Action and Header.

They made an OK front page. It told the potential client what the business was about and the testimonials section was useful in establishing the business's record. It's too bad, as I highlighted, that there's no slider function on the testimonials.

It's definitely nothing pro-level, but it was REALLY quick. I estimate that if I had to make a pro website using a child theme, it would take 10 times as long.

Creating the Portfolio page

The Portfolio page was a bit more of a disappointment because the Stackable plugin doesn't come with a gallery.

One of my biggest gripes with WordPress's gallery block is that it does not allow you to click on your images to see it in full resolution

If I wanted to create a portfolio of my photography, I'd also like a plugin that has a lightbox. So in order to do this, you have to go download another plugin.

Nonetheless, I really enjoyed using the cards and the price list blocks that were provided in WP Stackable.

The cards were used to write a description of each photo session and the price list was there to describe the different levels of service provided.

This is great because you get a cohesive design out of the box with WP Stackable.

Creating the Contact page

Now this is where the Stackable's blocks can't really help you.

You'll need a form plugin like WP Forms or something.

You could use Stackables to make some snazzy contact information cards or something, though.

Is it useful for bloggers?

Yes, it is.

One of the things that every blogger should do is internal linking.

With the Post block, you can include nice looking links to the rest of your blog automatically and easily.

For example, on the bottom of your article, you could add a Post block that automatically populates articles with the same tags or category.

You'd have to do this manually every time unless you create a template that has it automatically.

If you sell courses, you could also use buttons to create a call to action. That can help you get your viewers through your funnel. As I said, the button is GREAT because it's very customizable.

What WP Stackable can't do

WP Stackable isn't able to edit headers or footers that a page builder like Elementor can.

If you had PHP skills, then sure, you could go do your own thing with header.php and footer.php.

At the end of the day, WP Stackable is really a way to improve the design of the page or post by putting up fancy cosmetic stuff.

Your theme still still have major sway over the design of your pages. For example, using Twenty Twenty One meant that I couldn't completely get rid of the header. There'd be blank space on top even if I removed all menus and the site title and description.

There's also fonts and colour schemes that your theme will determine. Luckily, Twenty Twenty One allows you to tweak the background colour so you can match the theme background to the UI Kit.

If your theme didn't allow easy tweaks through the customization menu, though, then you're out of luck. You'd have to write some custom CSS.

Verdict

WP Stackable's design options are great because they allow you to get websites out fast and they make good looking websites easy.

This is especially true if you are already familiar with the Gutenberg block editor.

But let's remember that while it might triumph a page builder in convenience, it has certain limitations including being tied to the theme's styles, footer and header. You can't use Stackables to modify these key elements.

It does have certain strengths and weaknesses. For example, I found its competitor, PostX, to have better post blocks and sometimes I had to use WordPress's core blocks to achieve what I need.

So I guess what I am saying is that Stackables is good, but you should be aware that it might not be a one-stop solution. You might need to complement it with other plugins or some custom work in PHP (yuck).