Creating a School site with Joomla

In this chapter you will learn:

- How Joomla can meet the specific needs of a school website
- What is the best way to organize the content structure for a school website
- What are the best and most reliable extensions to use
- What extensions are available to extend the site
- How can I get a school site up and running quickly and easily

I actually started my Internet career as the technology coordinator for a small school in Vermont almost 10 years ago. One of the things I was responsible for, of course, was the school website. When I think of the time and effort that could have been saved had a CMS like Joomla being available back then it makes me realize how lucky schools are today. I wonder how many realize that such an astonishingly powerful tool to build a website is available for virtually free.

There is one problem with choosing Joomla to setup a school website. These types of sites tend to be medium to large in size. One of the defining characteristics of Joomla is that it is very powerful and flexible, but can be quite time intensive to setup. This leads us of course to this chapter, hopefully an extensive guide to creating and setting up a school website using the Joomla CMS.

Joomlashack School Shack Pack

If you want to save your self a good few hours trying to setup your school site, you can get an entire Joomla installation that was used for this chapter and forms the basis of the Joomla site being demoed at <u>demotemplates.joomlashack.com/school</u>. We like to call these our Shack Packs.

As part of this School Shack Pack the Joomlashack team spent **many** hours creating the sections, categories, navigation and "filler" articles for a small to medium sized school. We also installed and configured all of the extensions and components that are used in the demo and are in this chapter.

You can visit <u>www.joomlashack.com/shop/home.php?cat=4</u> to purchase this installable Joomla configuration complete with initial content and components.

Why do you need a school website?

A school perhaps is the perfect organization suited towards having a comprehensive website. As I have mentioned elsewhere, 20th Century websites were about one-way communication between the website and the readers. In the 21st century Web 2.0 world websites need to be about interaction and two way communication. What makes a school website interesting is that there are very clearly defined stakeholder groups each with their own needs with respect to this communication.

One thing I find, especially among school administrators, is a knee-jerk reaction to this proposition of two-way communication. Anytime I have suggested, for example, the ability for students to add comments to pages, that has been the immediate reaction of "we couldn't

possibly do that, students would just be posting trash". Basically the reaction is one of fear end of loss of control. Or perhaps a suggestion of posting student work is immediately met with the reaction of privacy concerns. In a nutshell I have found that school organizations have looked at websites as potential areas of liability rather than a tool to enhance the learning process. Bear in mind as you read this that I am an experienced teacher and administrator. I am aware of some of the pitfalls, but also a firm advocate of the huge potential of a rich school website.

What is unusual perhaps about a school website is that there is a clearly defined body of content and also different groups you need to get to it. The key to a successful school website is having different paths to this information based on the user group. Let's look at these groups and their needs.

Students

Sometimes students are relegated to a lesser user on a school website. This is a critical mistake, not only our students the group most invested in the school (it's their education off to all), they also the group most likely to adopt Web technology.

Student's lives frequently revolve around three areas academics, athletics and activities. Students need easy access to these areas of the site. There will also be key information that the school wishes to make sure is easy to find, such as guidance or graduation requirements.

Students are probably primarily a consumer of information on the website. As mentioned above a healthy website should also have mechanisms for interaction.

Teachers and Administrators

A school website can make a huge difference in the way a teacher can communicate and educate. The list is endless, for example publishing course notes, homework, events and for the more adventurous (with appropriate security) class grades.

The biggest challenge for teaches is that adding the web to their toolbox can be overwhelming. Always busy, they need time and help from the IT staff to help them successfully use it. There will be early adopters and those that will probably always struggle, but critical to implementing a successful school website will be a commitment to professional development for the teaching staff.

Parents

The third leg of the stool that is a successful school is the parents. A brief look through research on the topic will tell you that the school which is able to engage the parents into its community is one where the students are more successful. To that end the website can be a powerful tool to achieve that engagement.

The initial goal should be to make a website as sticky and useful as possible for the parents. Principal's blog, e-mail news, calendars of events and student work only examples of things that would keep parents coming back to the site. Ultimately the goal is to have parents contributing to the site initially focusing on early adopters and those already involved such as parent associations.

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What features do we need on a school site?

With over 1600 extensions available on the official Joomla extension site it's very easy to add everything and the kitchen sink. There are even specialized components for lunch menus! However a key consideration for a school website is security, some components are not 100% secure and care should be taken with which ones are chosen.

What follows is a discussion of potential solutions to common features for a school website. Please bear in mind that this list is not a guarantee of security. School webmasters that are using Joomla should subscribe to the security boards at the official Joomla forum.

http://forum.joomla.org/index.php/board,372.0.html http://forum.joomla.org/index.php/board,267.0.html http://forum.joomla.org/index.php/board,296.0.html

In no particular order a brainstorm of common functionality/extensions might include:

- User registration
- event calendar
- downloadable documents
- polls
- staff directory
- e-mail newsletter
- RSS
- Forms
- site map

We will look at each of these in 10 at the end of the chapter, consider options, and then briefly explain one possible solution.

Let's not get too far ahead of ourselves however, assuming you've just installed Joomla fresh out of the box onto a Web server that's look at a few of the steps needed to get your site into shape.

If you need help how to find Joomla and install it I have two excellent tutorials:

www.compassdesigns.net/joomla-blog/joomla-tips/find-out-how-to-download-joomla.html www.compassdesigns.net/tutorials/joomla-tutorials/how-to-install-joomla-1.5.html

Downloading and installing the template

Currently Joomlashack's free templates are available for download in our forum (figure .1): <u>http://www.joomlashack.com/component/option.com_smf/Itemid,183/</u>

Registration takes a few seconds and then you'll be able to download the template instantly.

The free template used in this chapter can be found at: www.joomlashack.com/component/option,com_smf/Itemid,183/board,76.0

▽ <u>Free J</u>	pomlashack Products		
	Free Joomla Templates Support for our free Joomla templates. <i>Child Boards: <u>Free Downloads</u></i>	450 Posts in 134 Topics	Last post on February 26, 2007, 12:25:14 AM in <u>Re: User modules in Nova</u> by <u>bconverse</u>
6	Free Components & Modules Free Components & Modules released by the Joomlashack Team Child Boards: Free Downloads, Flexible Login Module Help, X-Cart Intelicontact Integration, IntelliJoomla, Flash JPG Rotator Help	49 Posts in 8 Topics	Last post on Today at 11:20:41 AM in <u>Re: problem with changin</u> by <u>Wayne</u> <u>McGowan</u>
	Free Theme Kits Free kits to customize your Joomlashack template <i>Child Boards: <u>RubiCraft</u></i>	0 Posts in 0 Topics	Last post on January 25, 2007, 09:24:32 PM in <u>Re: RubiCraft - A free W</u> by <u>Barrie</u> <u>North</u>

Figure .1 Free Joomlashack Products

Installing the template is a relatively easy process. Go to your Joomla administrator control panel (admin CP). Use the admin cp menu to navigate to the template installer utility:

Admin CP > Installers > Templates - Site

Use the "Upload Package File" option to browse to your downloaded template and then click on the "Upload File and Install" button.

You should get a message telling you the template was installed successfully. The next steps are a little bit more involved. To configure the module positions you want and the main horizontal navigation

Module positions

The *education* template has eight available module positions. You can see the module positions at any time by going to www.yoursite.com/index.php?tp=1. Looking at this template we can see the following.

To position your modules (e.g., main menu, login, syndicate, polls) in the various template positions, you set the "Position" parameter in each module. Figure .2 shows the available positions on this template.

- **inset**: reserved for search module
- **top**: reserved for horizontal "extended" menu
- left: left vertical column, not reserved.
- **right**: right vertical column, not reserved.
- user1: Left column between main content and footer.
- user2: Middle column between main content and footer.
- user3: Right column between main content and footer.
- footer: Footer

Most of these are pretty generic in their potential use. Two however were placed with specific in mind. The inset module location is really intended for a search box. The top module location is intended for a horizontal navigation.

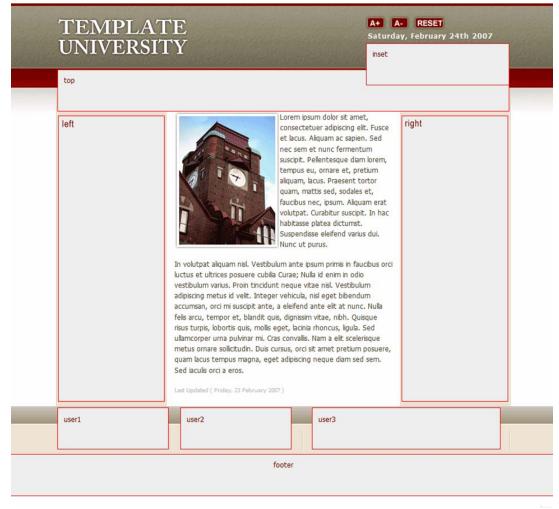


Figure .2 Available Module Positions in Education Template

Search box

If you will be using the text search module on your template (and for a school site you really should be), navigate to your module listing page if you aren't already there:

Admin CP > Modules > Site Modules

Find the module titled "Search". Tick the box next to its name and click the "Edit" button at the top right-hand side of the page.

From the "Position" parameter dropdown menu, select "inset". In the "Module Class Suffix" parameter type a hyphen (or dash) followed by the word "search" so it looks like this "**-search**" without the quote marks.

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ome Site Mer	u Content	Components	Modules	Mambots	Installers	Messages	Syste
Joomlashack E com_modules / e		mplate Demo) - School /				
Site	Module	e: Edit [S	earch]				
Details							
Title:	Search						
Show title:	O No	O Yes					
Position:	inset						
Module Order:	1::Sear	ab at					
		cn 💌					
Access Level:	Public Registe Special						
Published:	O No	• Yes					
ID:	15						
Description:	This more	dule will display	y a search l	box			
Parameters							

Figure .3 Search Module Parameters

Save your changes.

The main horizontal dropdown menu

A website for a large organization such as a school is likely to have lots of sections, categories and content articles. That makes it an ideal candidate for drop-down navigation. It's a simple effect where rolling over a link shows sub navigation.

	A+ A- Wednesd search		RESET February 28th 2007 Go
ts School Events	Staff Directo	ory	Joomlashack Menu
n School 🔥	3	Take	Template Typography
Lorem ipsum dolor sit am		Wha	About Joomla
consectetuer adipiscing e		Sho	
et lacus. Aliquam ac sapie nec sem et nunc ferment		91	Template Tutorial
suscipit. Pellentesque diar	- 000 (Contrast		Module Locations
tempus eu, ornare et, pr		0	Joomla License Guidelines
aliquam, lacus. Praesent t quam, mattis sed, sodales		0	Spongebob Squarepants
faucibus nec, ipsum. Aliqu volutpat. Curabitur suscip babitasse platea dictumst			Vote Results

Figure .4 Example Menu Dropdown

Many options exist to achieve this effect using JavaScript. However there are big problems with this approach. JavaScript links are more difficult to navigate if you are not using a browser, or have JavaScript turned off. This has big implications for our website's accessibility (viewers using screen readers for example) and for search engine optimization (search engine spiders).

It might not seem that a school website needs to worry about SEO. I don't think that's quite accurate though, we want our content to be well indexed by search engines so that people seeking information can find it easily.

The solution to JavaScript is to use pure CSS to get the same effect. On a screen reader or with JavaScript turned off these links will look like a simple flat list:

- <u>Academics</u>
 - <u>Science</u>
 - <u>Mathematics</u>
 - Foreign Language
 - <u>History/SS</u>
 - <u>Fine Arts</u>
 - <u>English</u>

To achieve our goal we need to do two things.

First we need to setup the main menu so that the links we want to drop down. This is easily done by setting the parent item when we create the menu. Figure 5 shows an example for the science link to the science category.

Details		Parameters	
lame:	Science	Menu Image	- Do Not Use -
ategory:	All Categories Academics / English Academics / English News Academics / Fine Ats Academics / Fine Ats Academics / History/SS Academics / Mathematics Academics / Science	Page Class Suffix Back Button	Use Global
	Activities / Chess Club	Page Title	
RL:	index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=19<emid=72	Page Title	O Hide 💿 Show
	Top Home Academics	# Leading # Intro	1
arent em:	- Foreign Language - History/SS - Fine Arts	Columns	2
	- English Athletics - Football	# Links	4
rdering:	1 (Science)	Category Order	No, order by Primary Order only
ccess evel:	Public A Registered Soecial	Primary Order	Default 💌
ublished:	○ No Yes	Pagination	Auto 💌
	O NO O TES	Pagination Results	O Hide O Show

Figure .5 Submenu Item Parameters

Once we have gone through all of our sections in category's, setting the appropriate parent items as we go, our main menu should look something like figure 6.

					*т	he 1st Pu	ublish	ed item in thi	s Menu (m	ainmenu] is the default `Home page	for the site
#		Menu Item	Published	Rec	order	Order		Access	Itemid	Туре	CID
1	H	lome	1			1		Public	1	Component - Front Page	10
2	A	Academics			-	2		Public	26	Blog - Content Section	4
3		L Science	-		-	1		Public	72	Blog - Content Category	19
4		L Mathematics	-		-	2		Public	73	Blog - Content Category	18
5		L Foreign Language	-		-	3		Public	74	Blog - Content Category	15
6		L History/SS			-	4		Public	75	Blog - Content Category	17
7		L Fine Arts			-	5		Public	76	Blog - Content Category	16
8		L English			•	6		Public	71	Blog - Content Category	13
9	A	Athletics	9		-	3		Public	41	Blog - Content Section	5
10		L Football	9		-	1		Public	38	Blog - Content Category	22
11		L Volleyball	9		-	2		Public	37	Blog - Content Category	25
12		L Track and Field	9		-	3		Public	36	Blog - Content Category	26
13		L Hockey	2		-	4		Public	35	Blog - Content Category	27
14		L Basketball	9		-	5		Public	43	Blog - Content Category	21
15	A	Activities	9		-	4		Public	46	Blog - Content Section	6
16		L Community Outreach	9		-	6		Public	42	Blog - Content Category	28
17		L Band	2		-	16	1	Public	44	Blog - Content Category	24
18		L Student Council	2		-	25		Public	45	Blog - Content Category	23
19		L Yearbook	8		-	26	1	Public	40	Blog - Content Category	29
20		L Chess Club	5		-	29		Public	39	Blog - Content Category	30
21	S	Students			-	5		Public	51	Blog - Content Section	7
22		L Administration			-	1		Public	54	Blog - Content Category	40
23		LTeachers			-	2		Public	53	Blog - Content Category	41
24		L General Info			-	3		Public	52	Blog - Content Category	38
25		L Guidence			-	4		Public	55	Blog - Content Category	39
26		L FAQ's	2		-	5		Public	56	Table - Content Category	7

Figure .6 Example of mainmenu with child menu items

The second step involves a slightly different process depending on what version of Joomla you are using. Joomla will allow you to show and menu either as a table or a flat list. In Joomla 1.0 it is not possible to have parent/sub menu links as a flat list, it's only allows it as a table. This oversight has been fixed in Joomla 1.5. There is an easy solution however, you just need to download and install a third-party module called extended menu. We are going to assume we are working with Joomla 1.0.

If you are using a free template you will need to grab an install a copy of this module. http://extensions.joomla.org/component/option.com/mtree/task,viewlink/link/id,163/Itemid,35/

If you are working from the complete Joomlashack Shack Pack this third-party module is all ready included and configured.

Once you have downloaded the module, you can install it using the module installer. Use the admin cp menu ...

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Admin CP > Installers > Modules

The installer interface is the same as the one you used to install the template. This time, browse to the extended menu module zip file you just downloaded, select it, then click the install button. You should get a successfully installed message.

Configure Extended Menu Module

Navigate to your newly installed extended menu module:

Admin CP > Modules > Site Modules

Look for the module with the title "Extended Menu". Tick the checkbox beside its name and click the "Edit" button at the top right-hand side of the modules page, you will find a very big list of parameters.

Extended menu is very powerful, but that makes it also quite tricky to make sure your parameters are set correctly. Figure 7 shows a screenshot of the parameters. Carefully examine the screenshot showing the correct setting for what we want to achieve.

Once you have set the main menu up with all the parent/sub links and set up the extended menu parameters you should have a menu that will drop down. Its using the advanced CS that's in the template files. You don't need to worry about that, we did all the hard work for you!

Don't forget to unpublished the original mainmenu module.

Let's now take a detailed look at perhaps possibly the most important part of setting up a complex site like this, how to set up the site structure, or in terms of Joomla, the sections, categories and navigation.

Parameters	
Menu Class Suffix	
Module Class Suffix	
Enable Cache	⊙ No ○ Yes
[source]	
Menu Name	mainmenu
Source Type	Menu
Source Value	
Show Section	Default 🗸
Show Category	Default 🗸
Show Content Item	Default 💌
Order	Ordering (Asc.)
Default Itemid	
[style]	
Menu Style	Flat List
Menu View Plugin Name	
Show Menu Icons	No
Expand Menu	🔘 No 💿 Yes
Expand Until Level	
Maximum Depth	10
Hide First Entry	⊙ No ○ Yes
Show Parent	⊙ No ○ Yes
[split]	
Parent Menu Item	
Begin With Current Item Level	⊙ No ○ Yes
Begin With Level	
Split Menu	
Menu Count	1

Figure .7a Extended menu parameters

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Enable Query Cache	⊙ No ○ Yes
[output]	
Parse Access Key	Strip Markup
Link Title	⊙ No ○ Yes
Level Class	Default 💌
Active Menu Class	Both
Element Id	⊙ No ○ Yes
Enable Menu Template	⊙ No ○ Yes
Template Name	menu.html
[images]	
Indent Image	None
Indent Image 1	- Use Default -
Indent Image 2	- Use Default -
Indent Image 3	- Use Default -
Indent Image 4	- Use Default - 🛛 🔽
Indent Image 5	- Use Default -
Indent Image 6	- Use Default -
[horizontal spacer]	
Spacer	
End Spacer	
[select list]	
Select List Submit Text	Go
Hide Submit Button	Never
[misc]	
Resolve Itemid By Content Item	⊙ No ○ Yes
Current/Active Item Highlighting	Smart - Itemid Or Other 💌
Current Item Duplicates	Convert To Active
Access Keys	
Exact Access Level	⊙ No ○ Yes

Figure .7a Extended menu parameters

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Organizing your content on a School Website

It is important that you understand some of the basics of how Joomla organizes its content and the structure it uses. If you haven't already, make sure you read through the chapter on this. You can also find a version on the Compass Designs website:

www.compassdesigns.net/tutorials/joomla-tutorials/a-beginners-guide-to-organizing-yourcontent.html

As previously mentioned the different groups, students, parents and teachers to a certain extent represent paths to the same core content of academics, Athletics and activities. There will be a lot more going on in each user group's area, that this structure will form the core of our school website.

As we think about our site design, we will try and use the following principle, designed to try and manage a large site with lots of contributors

Each group/person will have a single main page on the site that is theirs. So whether it's Mr Hardy's English class, the Guidance counselor or the varsity basketball team, we'll try and have a one to one relationship between people and pages.

One of the main reasons we are doing this is to distribute content generation. This will solve two problems. If more people are involved in the content of the site, more people will use the site in huts in its chances of success. Additionally it means that one person is not responsible for generating huge amounts of content, usually the technology coordinator or Webmaster this means that that role becomes one more off being a gatekeeper rather than having to create the whole site.

Using the English department as an example, let's examine how we can set up a page.

How goal is to have a departmental page that will show the various classes/courses, have a link to that page and then show some news about the department.

The concept here is that each course will have its own page. This enables teachers to have meaningful input into what is on that page. Thus the site organization here is:

Section = Academics Category = English Page 1 = Freshman English - Mr Hardy Page 2 = Sophomore English - Mr Stevenson Etc

We then create a **blog** link to a **category** in the **mainmenu**. In this example, we also make it a child link of Academics to enable the dropdown menu.

This will show all the content articles in the English category as a blog, that is, with the introductory text shown and a link to read more. It's important that in our link parameters, we have some key settings, shown in figure .8.

# Leading	1
# Intro	4
Columns	1
# Links	0
Category Order	No, order by Primary Order only 🔽
Primary Order	Ordering 💌

Figure .8 English Menu Link Parameters

Here we have # Intro set to 4. This means that there will be four articles with the introduction text show. In our case, for 4 years of English. The way I am setting this up you would make this number equal to the number of classes/courses.

We only have one column, though you could change that, and no articles shown as links. I have also set the order to be ordering. This means that I can control the order of the articles by going to the Content Manager and adjust the article order using the reorder function, circled in red in Figure .9.

Content Items Manager	[Section: Acade	mics]	_			English	Filte	 Select Aut er: 	hor - 💌
# 🔲 Title	Published	Front Page	Reorder	Order 🔚	Access	ID	Category	Author	Date
1 🔲 Freshman English - Mr Hardy	1	×	-	1	Public	29	English	barrie	18/02/07
2 Sophomore English - Mr Stevenson	1	×		2	Public	28	English	barrie	18/02/07
	<< St.	art < Previou	s TNext> E	nd >>	-				
	Dis	play # 30	V Result	s 1 - 2 of 2					

Figure .9 English Category Article Order

The English category page is shown completed in figure .10.

The first area of text under the Department header "The English curriculum" is the category description. We are using this so we have content on the page before the course descriptions. This could be as long or as short as needed. This is created by editing the category itself: **Content > Category Manager > English** in this example. An additional step is also required to show it. We need to go the menu link for this page: **Menu > mainmenu > English** and set **Description** to **show**.

I also wanted to have news for each department (e.g. English). There are a couple of ways you could do this.

You could have all the news articles in the **English** category. The way we have the link parameters set up they could "overflow" and appears as links below the main content. You would of course have to set the **# Links** value to a positive number and you would be constantly adjusting the article order in the content manager.

	thletics Activities	Students	School Events	Staff Directory	The category
Academics Menu Science Mathematics Foreign Language History/SS Fine Arts English Hot Academic News • Freshman English - Mr Hardy • Sophomore English - Mr Stevenson • A Rose by any Other Name • Physics is a Blast! • Fibonacci Forum	of all abilities. All stud students are introduct non-fiction. Students are expecte complete a significant the school's approved guidelines. Students can monitor classroom for the dura components of Englisi offered for those stud are interested in explo	ents are requir ed to a variety d to write boti research pape research guide their own pro- ation of the yes at classesall stu lents who wish oring specific ar ish - Mr Ha sed on a comp	ed to earn six credits of literature such as in creative and analyt incorporating a vari which is based upo gress through the year. Class discussions idents are expected to go beyond the s eas of literature or v rdy	ing, speaking, and think s in English to graduate. In novels, short stories, play: ical essays. Each year eve ety of sources and adherin n the Modern Language A ear as all assignments rema and cooperative learning a to participate fully. Electi tandard departmental red rriting.	s, poems, and any student must ing to the format of ussociation in on file in the ire important ve courses are A single content item
A Rose by any Other Name	Last Updated (Sunday, 18	bsed on a con 8 February 2007)	parison of selected		A single content item nt's life.
atest School News	What People Are	Reading	About This	Site	
 Student Council Representat Typography Freshman English - Mr Hardy Sophomore English - Mr Stevenson A Rose by any Other Name 	on • Joomlashack • Privacy Policy • Joomla! License • Typography • Welcome to You		Joomla, an op visual look and created by Jo The site has s might use and configuration This entire sit	example of a School web en source cotent manage i feel is a special free scho omlashack. everal key Joomla compor i has been set up with co for a high school. e is also available as a spec e at Joomlashack.	ment system. The ol Joomla template nents that a school ntent as an example

Figure .10 English Department Page – A Joomla Category

If you have news articles more often, you might want to use a strategy as I did here. I created a new category, **English News** and then made a Latest News module and set it to load in the left column. Now stories that are submitted will automatically be shown dynamically with no effort from the webmaster. Sounds good to me!

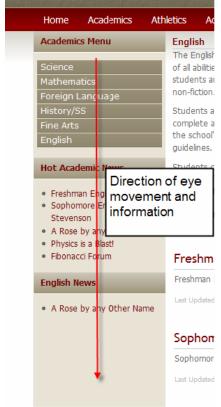
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It should be easy to see how this structure can be extended to other parts of the site. Here would be two examples, sports and administration.

Section = Athletics Category = Basketball Page $1 = 9^{th}$ Grade Girls Page $2 = 10^{th}$ Grade Boys Etc

Section = Administration Category = High School Team Page 1 = Mrs P Rincipal Page 2 = Mr V Ice Principal Etc

Setting up the left column



Looking at the basic page again, in this example the English department, we've actually carefully chosen what is in the left column, here shown in figure .11

The top menu, "academics menu", contains links to all the departments.

The next module is showing links to articles that during the academics section. This means from a hierarchical point of view these links are the next level down from the academics menu.

The third module is showing news from a specific department, in this case English. It can be thought of as the next level down in the informational structure.

The effect of this for the site visitor is to present them with a continuum of information starting from a broad level and going down to a narrow one. Studies that track eye movement on websites have shown that a visitor will tend to start in the top left, so the movement of the eye down the page matches a changing organization from broad and narrow. A technique like this is important for usability.

Let's take a look at each of those modules in turn.

Academics menu

If you are using only a default Joomla installation you would have to create a new menu and then insert links to you each category that you wanted. The problem with this approach is that it is not dynamic, if you add a new category you have to remember to go and add the link. You would also have to adjust what pages the module appeared on as we will see in a second.

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There is also another big problem with this approach. You will end up with two sets of links to each and category, one in the horizontal navigation, and one in the left-hand sub navigation. The problem is that Joomla decides what settings and parameters to have for a page, for example with the two had optical titles as links, by the parameters set in the **menu link**. With two sets of links to each page Joomla will become a little confused and it will be difficult to get the page is laid out as you want them to.

A much better approach is to use a third-party module called extended menu. If you are using a free template you will need to grab an install a copy of this module. http://extensions.joomla.org/component/option,com_mtree/task,viewlink/link_id,163/Itemid,35/

If you are working from the complete Joomlashack Shack Pack this third-party module is all ready included.

Once installed you will have a new module called extended menu. We used that one for a main horizontal menu, we actually need to use extended menu to achieve the drop down effect with pure CSS rather than JavaScript.

We need to make a few copies of this module, one for each section. This is very easy to do, just select the checkbox for the extended menu module and then click copy.



Figure .12 Copying the initial Extended menu

Note in figure .12 a filter is used for all of mod_exmenu to make it clearer. You will then have a new module as shown in figure .13.

ne	Site	Menu Content Components Module	s Mambots Installers M	lessages	System	Help			0	<u>ا چ</u>	88	Logout ba
oml	lasha	ck Education Template Demo - Schoo	I / com_modules		Publish	Unpublish	Сору	Delete	~	dit	P New	Help
C	٦.		Module Copied	[Copy of	fExten	ded Menu]	top	5	~	mod_ex	menu	
		Iodule Manager [Site]	Module Copied	[Copy of	f Exten	ded Menu]	top	0	Filter:	mod_ex	kmenu	8
¥	_	Iodule Manager [Site]	Module Copied Published		f Exten	-	275	osition		mod_ex	kmenu Type	
¥ 1					er Order	Acce	ss P		Filter:		Туре	

Figure .13 First copy of Extended Menu

Open up that module and change the name to academics menu and then do the process again for each of our sections. You should then have off a dozen or so copies of extended menu as we can see in figure .14

e	Site	Menu Content Components	Modules Mambots Installers M	essage	es S	ystem	Help			0	🥪 1	Logout
om	lasha	ick Education Template Demo -	School / com_modules		Put	blish	Jnpublish	Cop			3 Edit	New He
F	1	Iodule Manager [Site	9]						- Select Posi		_	menu
_	_	Module Name	Published	Peo	rder	Order	Acce		Position	Filter: Pages	ID	Туре
		module nume	T distrotte d	neo	luci	oraci		.33	FUSILION	luges	10	Type
1		Academics Menu	2	neo		1	Pub		left	Varies	75	mod_exmenu
						1		lic				
1		Academics Menu	P		•	1	Pub	lic	left	Varies	75	mod_exmenu
1 2		Academics Menu Activities Menu	9 9		•	1	Pub	lic lic lic	left left	Varies Varies	75 77	mod_exmenu mod_exmenu
1 2 3		Academics Menu Activities Menu Athletics Menu	2 2 2		•	1 2 3	Pub Pub Pub	lic lic lic lic	left left left	Varies Varies Varies	75 77 76	mod_exmenu mod_exmenu mod_exmenu

Figure .14 Category Menus with Extended Menu

The next part is a little more complex. We will need to go into each module in turn and carefully select the right settings to achieve the effect we want. Using the academics menu as an example your settings should be as shown on the next page. The key settings are circled in red in figure 15; the rest can be left as default when it is copied.

Note that we have set what pages/items we want this module to appear on by selecting the menu links on the right-hand side of the screen. You can select multiple pages by keeping the control button pressed.

Details		Pages / Items
Fitle:	Academics Menu	Menu Item Link(s):
Show title:	O No 💿 Yes	All
Position:		None
Iodule Order:	1::Academics Menu 💌	Unassigned Blank Menu for Links Privacy Policy
Access Level:	Public A Registered Special	Blank Menu for Links School Events Blank Menu for Links Private Login Blank Menu for Links Sitemap
Published:	○ No ⊙ Yes	mainmenu Home
D: Description:	75 This Extended Menu module displays a menu in a flexible way. Please visit de.siteof.de for more details. To use this module don't forget to publish it (and probably unpublish the default mainmenu module).	mainmenu Academics mainmenu - Science mainmenu - Mathematics mainmenu - Foreign Language mainmenu - History/SS mainmenu - Fine Arts mainmenu - English
	(If you like this module please consider a donation.)	mainmenu Athletics mainmenu - Football
Parameters		mainmenu - Volleyball mainmenu - Track and Field mainmenu - Hockey
Menu Class Suffi	-	mainmenu - Hockey mainmenu - Basketball mainmenu Activities
Module Class Sut	fix	
Enable Cache	No ○ Yes Yes	
[source] Menu Name		
Source Type	mainmenu 💌	
Source Value	Menu	
Show Section	Default	
Show Category	Default	
Show Content Ite		
Order	Ordering (Asc.)	
Default Itemid		
[style]		
Menu Style	(Flat List	
Menu View Plugir	Name	
Show Menu Icon	No	
Expand Menu	O No O Yes	
Expand Until Leve		
Maximum Depth	10	
Hide First Entry	No ○ Yes Yes	
Show Parent	No ○ Yes	
[split]		
Parent Menu Item	Academics	
Begin With Currer	No O Yes	
Begin With Level		
Split Menu		
Menu Count	1	
Enable Query Ca	O No ○ Yes	
Loutout 1		

Figure .15 Extended Menu parameters for departmental menu

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The Footer and a Hidden Menu

There are many occasions on a website where you will want to generate links to content without necessarily having a published menu. For example, it's universally recognized that if you are trying to drive traffic to your site from a specific place, you need a unique landing page to do it. Examples:

- Google AdWords/PPC
- An email you send out about something
- A unique ad you have placed in a magazine/site

If you have invested in this you definitely don't want to just send them to your homepage (Google will even penalize you for it). So, what I do is make a static content item with relevant information and create a hidden menu link to it. This strategy will significantly improve your ROI.

In the context of a school website, this might be links from other schools/district websites. The technique I will describe here is one I have called the "hidden menu". I'll apply it to the footer of this site, shown in figure .16

Co	pyright 2007	Your High School	Sitemap	Privacy Policy	Private Login

Figure .16 Education site footer menu

Now, you might ask why you would not just make the footer menu a plain old Joomla menu published in that module location. Well, as you can see from the image, we have some text in the module as well. You can't do that with a menu very easily, so are using a custom html module.

The first step is to create a menu, I'll call it Blank Menu for Links. We then add links to that men to whatever we need, in this case a few static content items and our sitemap.

Menu Manager [Blan	k Menu for Links]				Max L	evels 10 💌 Filter:	
# 🦳 Menu Item	Published F	Reorder	Order 🔚	Access	Itemid	Туре	CID
1 Privacy Policy	\$	-	1	Public	57	Link - Static Content	22
2 Private Login	\$	△ マ	3	Public	59	Component - Login	15
3 📃 Sitemap	\$		5	Public	69	Component - Joomap	41
	<< Start < I	Previous 1	Next > End >	>			
	Display	# 30 🔽	Results 1 -	3 of 3			

Figure .17 Links in the Blank Menu

We then make sure the actual module for this menu is unpublished (we won't use it) and create a new user/custom module in the module manager.

To that module, we add the text and html we need for our footer module, figure .18.

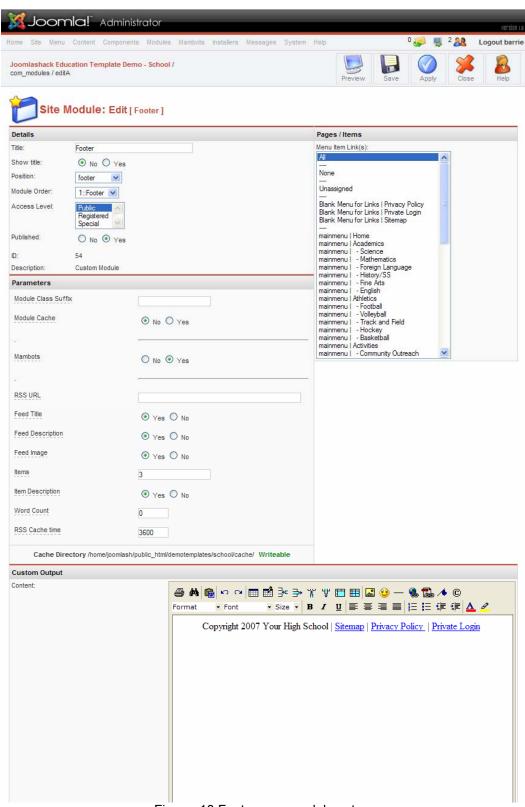


Figure .18 Footer user module set up

Note that I am using WYSIWYGPro here, so your editor will differ slightly.

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To find the URL's for the links we need, we just head over the menu item we creater a few moments ago. Let's take the Privacy Policy as an example.

tion Template Demo - School / com_menus	Parameters	Save	Apply	Close	Help
	Parameters				
	r aranneter s				
Policy	Menu Image	10	D. N. III.	(222)	
Policy (Privacy Policy)			Do Not Use	-	
p?option=com_content&task=view&id=22<emid=57	Unique temid				
Indow With Browser Navigation		C) № © Y	'es	
F Ni Vi	Policy (Privacy Policy) hp?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=57 Window With Browser Navigation Vindow With Drowser Navigation Vindow Without Browser Navigation the Login hap	Policy (Privacy Policy) hp?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=57 Unique Itemid Vindow With Browser Navigation Vindow Without Browser Navigation te Login	Policy (Privacy Policy) hp?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=57 Vindow With Browser Navigation Vindow Without Browser Navigation te Login	Policy (Privacy Policy) hp?option=com_content&task=view&id=22<emid=57 Window With Browser Navigation Window Without Browser Navigation tet Login	Policy (Privacy Policy) hp?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=57 Window With Browser Navigation Window Without Browser Navigation Ite Login

Figure .19 Getting the URL from a menu item

Here you can see the URL to create the link with. Note that its advisable to NOT include the http://www.yoursite.com but to just include the URL starting from the index.php. This makes it more transferable.

Adding Basic Functionality to your School Website

At the beginning of this chapter, we brainstormed a list of possible functionality we would like our site to have. Let's examine each one in turn and see what options are available.

User Registration

One of the most powerful features of Joomla is that is allows several layers of permission. At the most basic these are:

- Guests
- Users
- Administrators

When setting up a school website, you will need to think a little about the needs and size of your school, and how you want these user groups to interact with the site. Lets take a few examples:

• A small school

If we have a few people responsible for adding content and don't want much student interactivity, we might use the following structure:

- \circ Guests = Parents and Students
- \circ Users = teachers

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 \circ Administrators = webmaster

This structure allows information to be made available only to the teachers. It would also allow them to easily submit content that could then be approved by the webmaster.

• A medium school

If we want to get more involvement from students in the site, we might move them up a level.

- \circ Guests = Parents
- Users = teachers and Students
- \circ Administrators = webmaster

This structure allows more involvement and interaction between the teachers and students behind a private registered security wall. For example, teachers and students could easily share work using a document management extension like Docman. It would also allow them to easily submit content that could then be approved by the webmaster.

• A large school

If we want to have significant involvement from all stakeholders in the school community, we might use:

- \circ Guests = Public
- Users = Students, teachers, parents
- Administrators = webmaster

This structure is one that intends to leverage the website o increase communication between all the groups. It opens the door for such projects as a student digital portfolio that can be shared privately online with parents, teachers and peers.

Note to illustrate the differences, I have used the size of the school as a delineator. One could just as easily replace with "desire to adopt web technology".

Events Calendar

There are two main event calendars that have been developed for Joomla and are available from 3rd party developers.

- <u>Events Calendar/JEvents</u> <u>forge.joomla.org/sf/frs/do/viewRelease/projects.jevents/frs.events.jevents</u> 1 4 0
- <u>JCal Pro</u> <u>dev.anything-</u> <u>digital.com/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=3&Itemid=53</u>

Both of these calendars are solid choices for a school. In our demo we used JCal Pro, but there was no compelling reason.

We have added a link to the calendar component in the main horizontal menu that leads to a full page calendar, shown in figure .20.

er	nplate Dem	10	Thursday, March O1st 2 search					
Ho	ome Academi	ics Athletics	Activities S	Students Sch	ool Events Sta	ff Directory J	oomlashack Menu	
Th	ursday, March 01, 20		Nonthly View Flat Vie		View Categories Sea			
-				March 2007			April 2007	
	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
8	February 2007	February 2007	February 2007	February 2007	1	2 Student Council Meets	3	
9	4	5	6	7	8	9 Student Council Meets	.10	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16 Student Council Meets	17	
11	18	19	20	21	22 Chess Club	23 Student Council Meets	24	
12	25	26	27	28	29	30 Student Council Meets	31	
	Today	Ban	2	General	22	Sports		

Figure .20 Full page display of JCal

Also we added the **latest events** module in the right column on the home page. Both of the calendars described above have this module.

Downloadable documents

- A school website is likely to have a lot of documents that might be in PDF form available for easy downloading. Examples might include: Course descriptions
- Meeting minutes
- Hard copy of newsletter
- Hard copy of forms
- Student work (digital portfolio perhaps)

There are two main extensions for Joomla that give the potential for document management.

- <u>DOCMan</u> <u>http://forge.joomla.org/sf/frs/do/viewSummary/projects.docman/frs</u>
- <u>ReMOSitory</u> <u>http://www.remository.com/index.php?option=com_remository&func=fileinfo&id=431</u>

Both are good extensions, but at the time of writing, Docman has not had many updates in the last year. It has even developed a bug where its configuration file deletes itself and a 3rd party module has been developed to fix this problem; <u>DocMan Repair Module 1.0.0</u>.

Although Docman is probably better suited to pure document management, as opposed to file downloading like Remository, we have decided to go with Remository for this installation.

Polls

Basic poll functionality is built into the default installation of Joomla. There is nothing more to do here than craft the questions and post the poll to what pages you want it to be on through the module settings.

Remember that you can make multiple polls so each area can have its own.

Staff directory

For medium to small schools, this is probably most easily achieved through the core Joomla contacts component. That is the approach that has been used on our demo site. You can see it in action here:

demotemplates.joomlashack.com/school/index.php?option=com_contact&catid=42&Itemid=63

Education ^{Femplate Demo}						Thursday, March 01st 2007 search		
Home	Academics	Athletics	Activities	Students	School Events	Staff Directory	Joomlashack Menu	
taff Dir	ectory - Admini	istration						
				Position		Phone	F	
Name				POSICION		FIIONE	Fax	
	gers			Principal		559.555.7329	FdX	
Name Mark Ro Nick Ter					incipal		Fax	

Figure .21 Default Joomla directory/contacts component

For larger schools, you might want to consider using a more complete directory component. There are a few available; my recommendation would be Mosets Tree available at <u>www.mosets.com</u>. It's priced (at time of writing) at \$99.

E-mail newsletter

An e-mail newsletter is a very important part of the school website. Schools often push out newsletters to any of the stakeholder groups, students, teachers or parents. Being able to migrate this traditional paper-based communication to electronic e-mail can mean big cost savings for the school.

If you have visited www.compasseddesigns.net you will have seen I have an extensive review of some of the new sets options available:

www.compassdesigns.net/joomla-blog/joomla-reviews/joomla-email-newsletter-review.html

The e-mail components reviewed included:

• <u>Letterman</u>

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- <u>Anjel</u>
- Yanc
- <u>MosListMessenger</u>

One newsletter component that was not available at that time, but has since become my preferred choice, is Acajoom. Two of the reasons I have grown to like this particular newsletter component is its ease of integration into the Joomla registration process and that it can be upgraded to a version that has an autoresponder.

Acajoom comes in three versions:

• Acajoom News

The basic free component that allows all the usual email newsletter features.

- Acajoom Plus A commercial upgrade that adds autoresponder functionality
- Acajoom Pro A second commercial upgrade that allows autogeneration of emails from post a Joomla content article.

For a school website, the most basic free version is good enough for our needs.

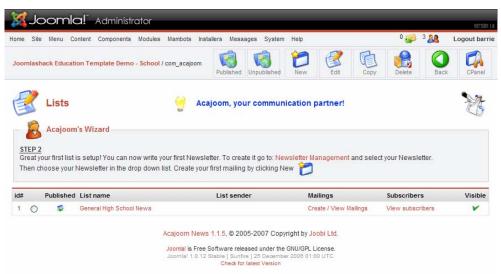


Figure .21 Free Acajoom News component

Here you can see an initial list. With a component such as Acajoom, you can make lists for all sorts of things. Each club could have one, faculty meeting announcements, parent newsletters, snow alerts. The list is quite endless.

Should you want to add the functionality in the upgrades, you can get <u>Acajoom Plus at</u> <u>Joomlashack</u>.

RSS

Another tremendously useful feature of Joomla is its ability to work with RSS (Real Simple Syndication)

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Joomla has two main functions. One is that it can provide an RSS off content from the website; secondly it can display RSS feeds from other places.

In demo we have the syndication button on the homepage in the left column. In Joomla RSS syndication comes from content that is in the homepage. To provide content from other categories deeper in the site a third-party component would have to be used. For our purposes the target audience is probably site visitors that want to use RSS to get latest news. For that syndication of the homepage only will be adequate.

Displaying an RSS feed has interesting possibilities for a school site. Imagine a scenario of a school district with perhaps half a dozen schools in it. Each school and the school district itself could have a website, maybe even powered by Joomla, and each site could be feeding RSS feeds to be published on the others. So an example of what this might look like would be a school website showing news from the district's website, all automatically without any extra effort needed.

On our demo site we have shown the feed capability not with the RSS feed that would loaded in the main column, but too small a feeds that loading modules on the right column. These can be found in the Joomlashack menu, one is from the official Joomla.org RSS feed, and the other is Joomlashack's own RSS feed.

Cemplate Demo			search	rch 01st 2007 Go
Home Academics Ath	hletics Activities Students	School Events	Staff Directory	Joomlashack Menu
Template Typography About Joomla	Joomlashack			(2 🔶
About This Template	Who is Joomlashack?			
Template Tutorial	We are a team of designers, dev	elopers and technicians	in the Joomla commu	inity. We combine
Module Locations	expertise in eye-catching graphic	layout with modern w	eb design standards b	uilt into one of the most
Joomla License Guidelines	powerful open source content m	nanagement systems in	the world.	
Joomla template designs and custom web services.	our team are members of various Goals and mission	s official Joomla Working	Groups.	
• Flash Rotator Updated to	Goals and mission			
2.0	Together, we represent a team community. We specialize in help	이 같은 것이 있는 것이 것이 많이 많이 없는 것이 없는 것이 없는 것이 없다.		
RubiCraft	powerful content management s		in a second s	
Nova - A Smooth and	You don't need to pay a fortune		5. C2.35	
Clean Joomla! Template • New Joomla Template:	\$24.95 and all of them are built t			2007 templates start at
Aqualine	Validate to XHTML and	CEE standards		
• iDev Affiliate Component	Are optimized for SEO	COO Stalluarus		
for Joomla	Are designed according	to usability best-pra	octices	
 Two Free Templates for Joomla 1.5 	Meet federal accessibilit			
Lush Template and Flash				

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So these links circled in red are all generated dynamically. If the news changes on the other website these links will be automatically updated.

Forms

A form is an absolutely critical part of a website, any website. As discussed, key to a successful website is opening up the flow of communication between the organization and the site viewer.

Joomla includes on basic as part of its installation a simple **contact us** form. If you want to get visitor input for anything else, you will need to install a form extension.

There are a few major candidates:

- <u>FacileForms</u> www.facileforms.biz/component/option.com_docman/task,cat_view/gid,89/Itemid,96/
- <u>Phil Taylor's Phil-A-Form</u> www.phil-taylor.com/Joomla/Components/Phil-A-Form/
- <u>perForms</u> <u>performs.jext.info/</u>

FacileForms is very powerful, but quite complex to set up, and Phil-A-Form is a commercial component. For this application, we would recommend performs. Besides, we use it ourselves at <u>www.joomlashack.com</u> and are a great advocate of the "eat your own dogfood" philosophy!

Performs is simple to use, but more than adequate for most sites. There is an excellent quick tutorial at the dev site; jext.info/content/view/9/20/

Sitemap

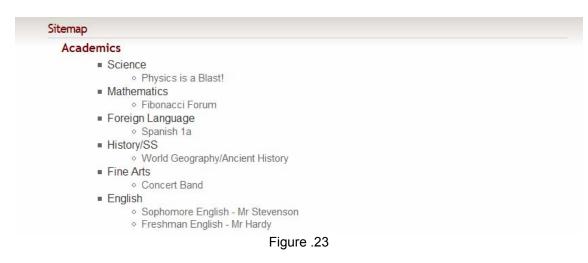
A sitemap is a very important part of the website, especially a larger one like a school. Usually it contains links to all pages that are in the website.

To generate this by hand would be monstrously time-consuming, but again this is where the dynamic nature of a CMS like Joomla saves the day. There are a two main third-party sitemaps that are installable extensions.

- <u>Joomap</u> <u>developer.joomla.org/sf/frs/do/viewSummary/projects.joomap/frs</u>
- <u>samSiteMap</u> developer.joomla.org/sf/frs/do/viewSummary/projects.samsitemap/frs

We elected to use Joomap, mainly for its simplicity and its more widespread use. As shown in the demo, it will produce a sitemap as shown in figure .23.

Creating a School Website with Joomla



Extending your school website beyond the basics

If you want to extend your Joomla powered school website, we have set up a forum at <u>www.joomlashack.com</u> especially for school webmasters to meet and swap ideas and get help with problems.

Registration is free and you can find it at: www.joomlashack.com/component/option,com_smf/Itemid,183/board,74.0

There are also some specific Joomla extensions especially for schools at the Joomla extension site:

extensions.joomla.org/component/option,com_mtree/task,listcats/cat_id,1852/Itemid,35/

- Joomla LMS
- <u>E-Portfolio component for Joomla</u>
- School Lunch Menu Component

Appendix A: Joomlashack School Shack Pack

Introducing the **Joomlashack Shack Pack for Schools!** Our <u>team of Joomla experts</u> has been hard at work creating a complete turnkey Joomla website that you can install in seconds and **save hours of work**. Some of the steps included:

- Research and review of the needs of a schools, college and universities.
- Creating a suitable content organization (sections and categories), site map and navigation
- Sought out the best and most reliable extensions
- Installed and configured them all to work together, with Joomla and with the template
- Wrote an <u>extensive 30+ page Joomla tutorial specific to schools</u> of what we did, and more importantly why we did it.

We bundled the result together with some great extras for you to get started with your site:

- A complete installable Joomla package including components and content. Exactly as you see in the our <u>Joomla School website demo</u>
- A high quality free school Joomla template designed by Joomlashack
- A coupon for 50% off one of our <u>commercial Joomla templates</u>
- Our own popular 80 page Joomla users manual
- A <u>free forum for Joomla users in schools</u> to come together and talk about their own needs and successes

The School Shack Pack includes:

- Joomla
- Email Newsletter
- Calendar
- Forms
- Sitemap
- Document Manager
- Extended menu for a pure CSS drop down navigation
- Basic ideas for content to get you started
- Four free use templates designed for schools

This whole site will install on your server in a few easy clicks. We think that this service is exactly what you need to get started with Joomla. Think of it as the ultimate beginner's kit. Thousands of hours of Joomla expertise and experience squeezed into a single downloadable file.

If you need a host, you can get <u>two free months hosting from Rochen</u> for your new school web site, details on purchase. Also available from <u>Dreamhost is Free hosting for 501 (3)'s in the US</u>.

Get Yours today!

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