Mambo Quick Start Guide

Written by MamboHut

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Introduction

The following is a brief introduction to the Mambo Content Management System. Use this guide to quickly get to grips with the basic operation of Mambo, and as a reminder of how to achieve common tasks. Once you get the hang of the basics, it is recommended that you familiarise yourself with some of the more advanced features detailed in the official documentation, so as to get the most out of your website. Text presented in bold is just to highlight key words or points, and to help you scan quickly through the document.

This guide assumes that you already have Mambo installed on your web server. For information about how to install Mambo, see the official documentation and the forums on the Mambo website (http://www.mamboserver.com http://forum.mamboserver.com, and http://help.mamboserver.com).

Basic Principles – Important!

Before you can understand how to operate Mambo, you need to understand the basic principles that underlie the system. If you skip this section, you will probably have difficulties later on.

As a 'Content Management System', Mambo is about organising your website *content*. This means you have to think about your website in terms of the content structure, rather than the end result (the web pages). The actual 'look and feel', or theme of your website is completely separate from the content – the colours, fonts, alignment, positioning, etc. are all governed by the *template* you apply rather than being built-in to your content. Thus, by assigning a different template to your website, you can give it a completely different look and feel without having to amend any of the content.

Creating a template is a fairly technical exercise (but not too difficult) which requires some knowledge of XHTML and PHP. If you don't know anything about those two languages, you are probably better off using one of the many freely-available open source templates – or hiring a professional to design a template for you according to your requirements, or in line with your existing 'corporate image'. For details on *how to install and apply a template*, see appendix A at the end of this document (you might not need this if someone else has already set up the system for you).

After you have chosen and installed a template, you can begin to work on the content. Your content can be organised into *sections* and *categories*:

Sections are containers that hold one or more Categories.

Categories are containers that hold one or more Items.

Items are the articles that make up your actual website content.

For example, if you were a financial advisor who wanted to publish articles that give advice about different investment options, you might have a *section* called 'Investments', containing *categories* such as 'Life Insurance', 'Savings', and 'Stocks and Shares'. Within the 'Life Insurance' category, you could store various *items* relating to that category, such as 'Endowments', 'Annuities', etc.

To add a new article to your website, you will have to assign the article (or *item*) to a **category**, and the category to a **section**. This means that you must think carefully about what sections and categories to create *before* you start adding content. It is possible to move things into different categories and sections after you have created them, but it is much easier and less time-consuming to think about and define your content structure first, and *then* add your items.

After you have defined a section, added a category to it, and added an item to the category (details on how you actually do this in Mambo come later), the item will not be visible in your website unless you **publish** it. This is handy, because it means you can store content in your website which nobody can see until you are happy that it is ready for general release. You can also specify in Mambo that an article be published on a particular date in the future, and expire on another date – which allows you to control the release of time-sensitive information.

Even when a section, category, and item are all 'published', you still need a way for your visitors to **navigate** to the content they want. This requires you to build a **menu** system, and link your content to it. Your menu system does not *have to* exactly reflect the structure of your sections and categories, although this is usually the easiest way to do it. The section/category/item structure is mainly there for *your* benefit as the administrator. The visitors to your website will see your content by means of your menus, so these are like a controlled 'window' into your content.

To summarise then, as an administrator, you build and view your website's content in a hierarchy of **sections**, **categories**, and **items**. When you are happy with your content structure, you create **menu** items, and link these to your content. A menu item can point to a section, a category, or directly to an item. Where a menu option links to a container (ie. a section or category), the end user will be presented with a list of the items contained within that section or category when they select that menu option, as well as any introductory content you may define for that section or category.

Logging in to Mambo

To access your Mambo administration control panel, use your website address (or the full address of the folder in which you have installed Mambo) followed by '/administrator'. For example, if your website address is www.mycompany.com, to access Mambo you would normally type: www.mycompany.com/administrator. This brings you to the Mambo login page, which looks like this:

Figure 1 – Mambo Administration Login Screen.

Note: *It is possible to apply a template to the administration program as well as to the website itself. If someone else has installed Mambo for you, they may have changed the way the screens look – so the screenshots shown in this document might not look identical to your system. Even if this is the case though, the functions illustrated should still be available to you, and the general principles of how the system works will be the same.*

Type in your user name and password, and either press the 'enter' key or click on 'Login' to enter the Mambo Administration home page. The home page gives you easy access to all of Mambo's functions. You can return to this page at any time by clicking on the 'Home' menu option in the top left corner (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Mambo Administration Home Page.

Creating a Section

The first thing we are going to do is **create a section** – that is, a general, high-level subject which will later be divided into categories. To create a new section, click on the **Section Manager** icon on the home page, or select the option from the 'Content' menu, as illustrated in figure 3.

Figure 3 – Accessing the Section Manager
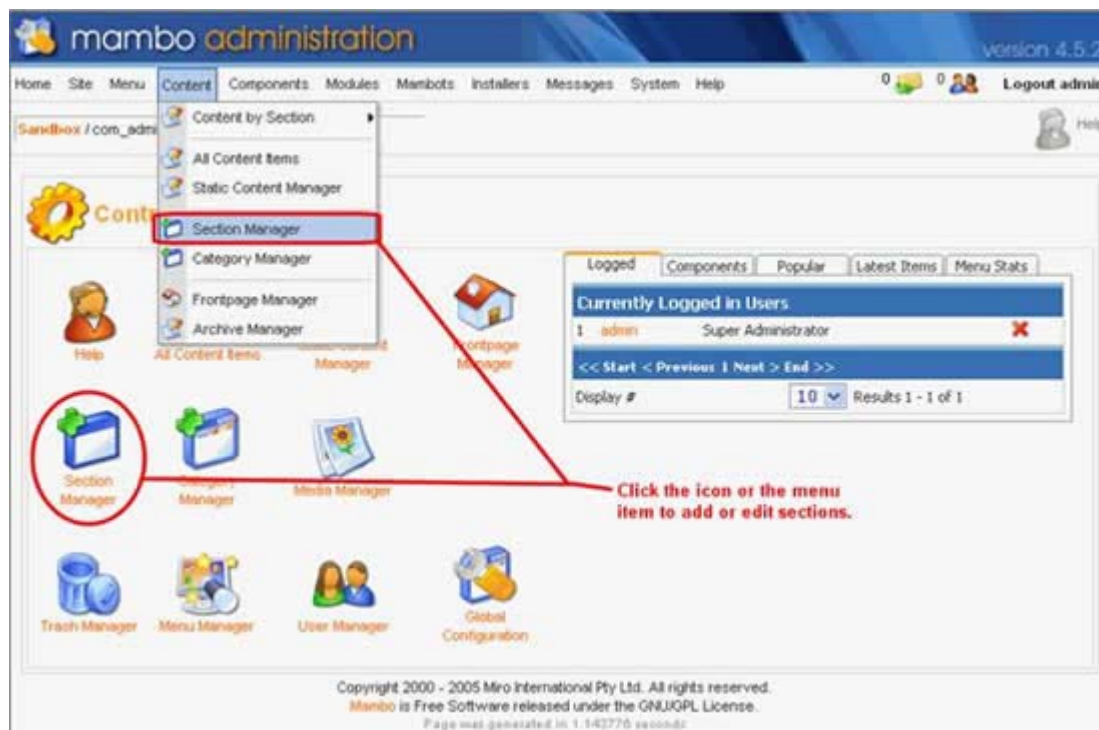
This will take you into the 'Section Manager' screen, which allows you to add or edit sections. In the example shown in figure 4, there is already a section called 'The News', and one called 'Newsflashes'. If you wanted to edit either of those sections, you would just click on the orange link (or alternatively, check the box next to the link, and then select 'Edit' from the toolbar). To create a new section, just click on the 'New' toolbar button.

Figure 4 – The Section Manager

This will take you into the **section editor**. Whenever you enter an editor like this in version 4.5.2, the main menu disappears (including the option to return to the home page, which might be disconcerting for some!). Don't panic though – there is a good reason for this. Whenever you enter an editor, the item you are editing is **'checked out'** to you. This means that if there are other users who are also allowed to access the administration tool, they will not be able to edit an

item while you have it checked out.

In order to check an item back in (and therefore make it available for editing by any administrator), you need to either click on the 'save' toolbar button (if you want to keep your changes), or the 'cancel' toolbar button (which will discard your changes). Once you click on one of these buttons, the main menu will magically re-appear. In previous versions of mambo, you were able to just jump straight to another menu item, and this meant that the item you were editing would be left checked out – and unvailable for others to edit.

The section editor allows you to enter a *title* and *name* for your section, and any introductory text you wish to add. The 'title' is intended as a short word or two which can be used as the text for menus or lists, whereas the 'name' can be slightly longer and can be used as the heading for the page. You can use the same text for both the title and the name if you want.

You can also specify an *image* to associate with the section. Images can be uploaded using the *Media Manager* – see the official documentation on the Mambo help website (http://help.mamboserver.com) for more information on how to do this. The 'Image Position' option allows you to specify whereabouts on the page your specified image (if any) should appear. For now, we can ignore this and the other options on this page, and move onto the 'description' area which is the large grey box at the bottom of figure 5 (it might not be grey on your system – it depends on your template).

Figure 5 – The Section Editor

The 'description' area allows you to **describe the contents of the section**. Remember that the contents of a section will be one or more categories, and when the end user (a visitor to your website) sees this description, it will also be accompanied by a list of the categories within the section.

The description area actually makes use of a third party (ie. non-Mambo) component, known as an **HTML Editor**. Mambo allows you to use any one of a number of different HTML editors, but the recommended one, and the one illustrated here, is called **Tiny MCE**. This editor produces HTML code which is compliant with international standards as set by the World Wide Web consortium. Don't worry if you don't know what that means, but just be aware that it is possible you might see a slightly different editor to the one shown here.

If an HTML editor does not appear on your system, you will need to install and/or activate an editor. Mambo comes with Tiny MCE already installed, but for some reason not activated. For details on **how to activate the Tiny MCE editor**, see appendix B.

You can use the toolbar area at the top of the description box to **modify the format of your description** – to add bold, italics, bullet points, etc. The 'Styles' dropdown box lists all of the pre-defined style settings that have been set up for the

template you are using. The effect this has on the selected text could be anything from changing its colour, to changing its size, to adding a background image, and many other settings. There might not be any styles available to you, but if there are, you can highlight some text and select a style to apply to that text.

Next to the 'Styles' dropdown box is another dropdown which allows you to **specify the type of information that you are writing** – for example you can specify that the selected text be formatted as a main heading, or a sub-heading, or just the text of a paragraph. The manner in which these options affect your text depends on the settings of the template. The other options in the toolbar are very similar to the types of options that you get in most word processors, so their operation should be reasonably familiar to you. You can click on the question mark icon for more help if you need it. (See figure 6.)

Figure 6 – Tiny MCE HTML Editor
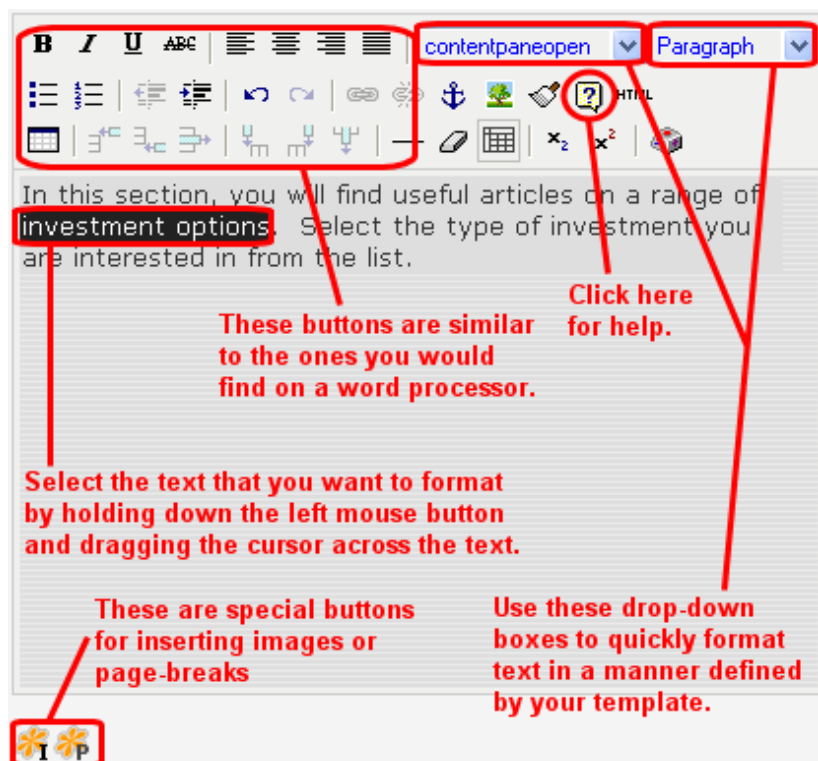
When you have finished creating or editing your section, click on the 'Save' toolbar button at the top-right of the screen to save your work. This will take you back to the Section Manager, as shown in figure 4 above. Note, you can also use the **'Apply'** toolbar button to save your work without leaving the editor (this is a new feature in version 4.5.2).

Creating a Category

Creating a category is almost identical to creating a section. From the home page (figure 2), you can select the 'Category Manager' icon, or alternatively, access it through the 'Content' menu (see figure 3).

The category manager looks very similar to the section manager, although there are a couple of extra options: you can filter down to a particular section, and you can move a category to a different section (see figure 7).

Figure 7 – The Category Manager

When you click on the 'New' toolbar button, or on a link for an existing category, you enter the **Category Editor**, which is (as you may have guessed by now) very similar to the Section Editor (figure 5). In fact, the only difference is that you also have to specify which section the category should be assigned to.

Creating an Item

The next thing to do is to **create an item** – that is, an article of content that fits into one of your categories. To do this, you can either go to a section via the 'Content by Section' option in the 'Content' menu (which will then take you to a list of all items in that section – you can filter down further by category if you wish), or simply click on the 'All Content Items' icon on the home page or in the 'Content' menu (which will take you to a list of all items in all sections – you can then filter down further by section and/or category if you wish).

Figure 8 – Accessing the Item List
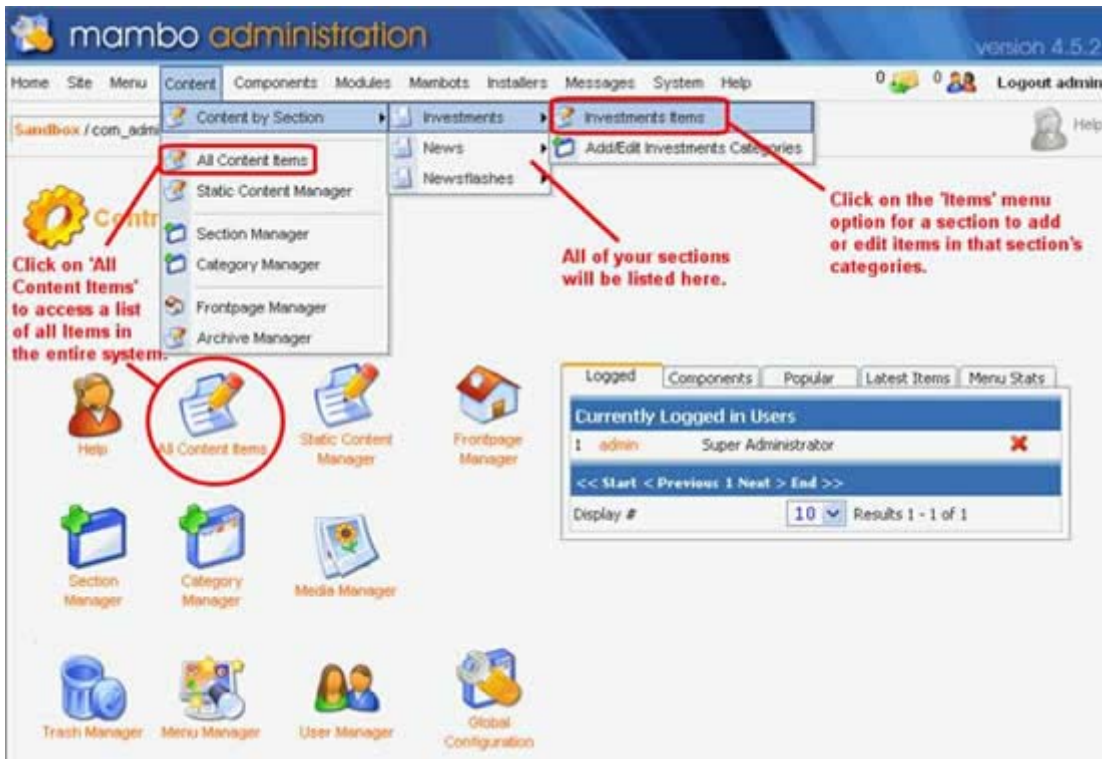
To avoid confusion, it is recommended that you use the 'Content by Section' menu system to access your items most of the time – it will then be clearer which items you are looking at, especially when you have a lot of items. The item list appears as shown in figure 9 (note: if you access the list via the 'All Content Items' icon, you will have an additional drop-down list available to filter down to a particular section).

Figure 9 – The Item List

When creating or editing items, you have a few more options available to you than for sections and categories. As you can see in figure 10, the *item editor* contains *two* HTML editors. This allows you to break up your content into two parts if you wish: an introduction, and the main article. Splitting up your content in this way enables you to present all of the items in a particular category in the style of a '**Blog**' or *journal*.

A **Blog** (short for 'weblog') is an increasingly popular way of presenting information or articles that are updated on a regular basis – for example news or press releases. Instead of a simple list of links to the different articles, you present a title and an opening paragraph or two along with a link to the full article. This helps your website's visitors to scan through the articles on offer and select the one they want to read. The opening paragraph can be the first paragraph of the article, or a summary of what the article is about – a teaser, to encourage the user to click on the link to the main article.

If you don't want to use the blog method, you can just enter all of your content in the first HTML editor, and leave the second one blank.

Figure 10 – The Item Editor

The tabbed dialog box on the right provides extra options for controlling this content item. Figures 11 to 14 explain the first four tabs. The final tab will be explained in the next section (Building a Menu – figure 15).

Figure 11 – Item Editor: Publishing Tab

Figure 12 – Item Editor: Images Tab

When you want to use one of the images in your content, use the special 'mosimage' button at the bottom left of the HTML Editor (see figure 6). This will just insert the text into your content – is a placeholder which instructs Mambo to insert the next image in the list of content images at that location. The image won't be visible in your content until you preview the website.

You can use as many times as you like: each time the placeholder is encountered, Mambo will just take the next image on the list – so make sure the images in the list are in the correct order by using the 'up' and 'down' buttons. If you have read appendix B below, or Netshine Software's Mambo Glossary, you might recognise that mosimage is an example of a 'mambot'.
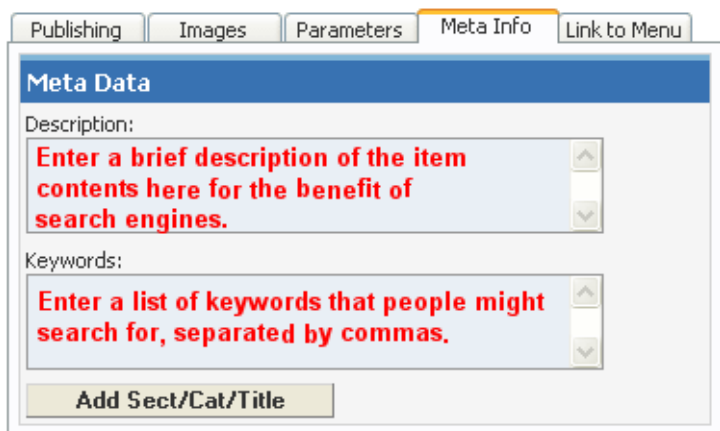
Note: You can also use the 'Media Manager' to upload and organise images into folders if you wish. The 'Sub-Folder' dropdown box at the top of the images tab allows you to 'drill-down' into the folder you require.

Figure 13 – Item Editor: Parameters Tab

Many of the settings on the parameters tab can be set at a global level (by selecting the 'Global Configuration' icon on the home page), but they are also presented here so that you can override the global settings for this particular item if you wish. Version 4.5.2 has added a couple of extra options to this tab, but they are not very important at this stage.

Figure 14 – Item Editor: Meta Info Tab

Building a Menu

Now that we have built some structured content, we need to provide our end users with a way of accessing the information they want. To access your content, the user will need to be given a **menu** of options to choose from. A menu can be thought of as a collection of buttons that lead your website visitors to your content items.

In Mambo, you can have more than one menu, but for the purposes of this quick start tutorial, we will concentrate on the **main menu**, which is where you will most likely want to provide most of your menu items. The way in which the menu is displayed is determined by the template and/or the module related to the menu – at its simplest, this could just be a series of text links that lead to your content; a more complex arrangement could allow for multiple cascading menus and sub-menus (although this would require the template designer to use a 'client-side' programming language such as javascript).

The simplest (but somewhat restrictive) way to add a link to an item, is to use the final tab in the dialog box on the item editor.

Figure 15 – Item Editor: Link to Menu Tab
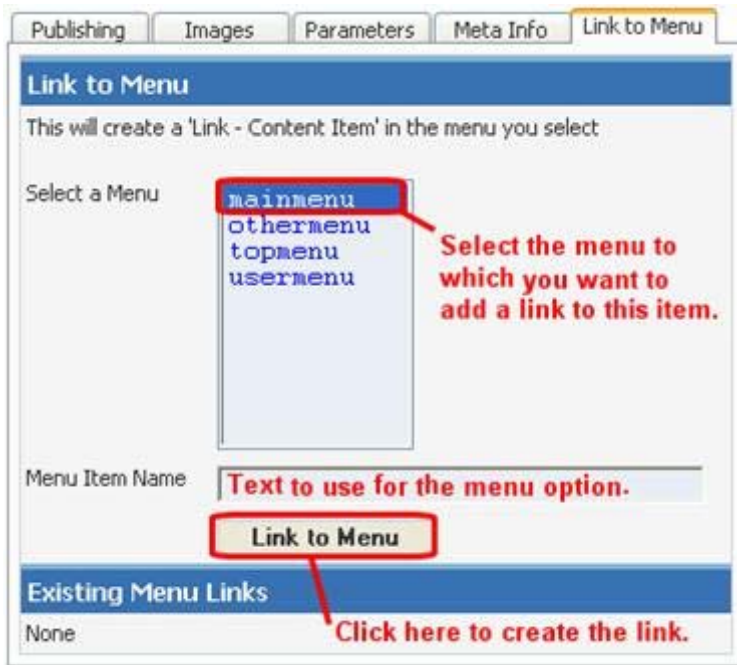
An alternative (and more flexible) way of adding menu options is to use the **menu manager**, by selecting 'Main Menu' from the 'Menu' menu (if that makes sense!) See figure 16.

Figure 16 – Accessing the Main Menu Manager
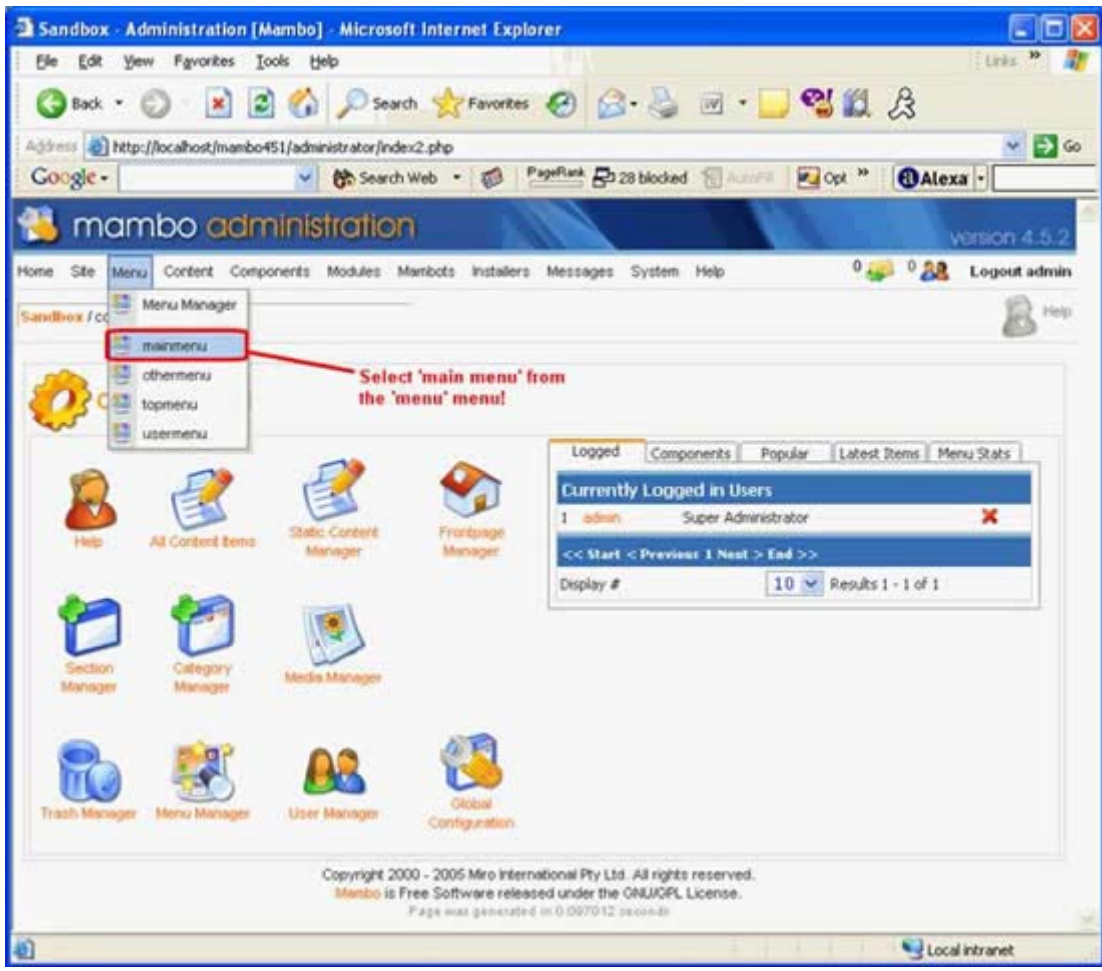
This takes you to the *menu manager* for the *main menu*, which looks and behaves very similarly to the section and category managers, as you can see in figure 17.

## Figure 17 – The Menu Manager for the Main Menu

When you select to add a menu item, you are taken to the **menu editor**, which can be a little confusing because there are so many options. The most important ones are highlighted in figure 18.

Figure 18 – Adding a Menu Item: Step 1

When you click on 'Next' or on one of the links, you will be presented with another screen which allows you to specify additional information such as the name of the menu, which content item to link to, and whether to open the linked content in a new window or not. The exact options presented will depend on which type of menu you selected in the first step, but figure 19 shows what you will get if you choose to link directly to a content item.

Figure 19 – Adding a Menu Item: Step 2
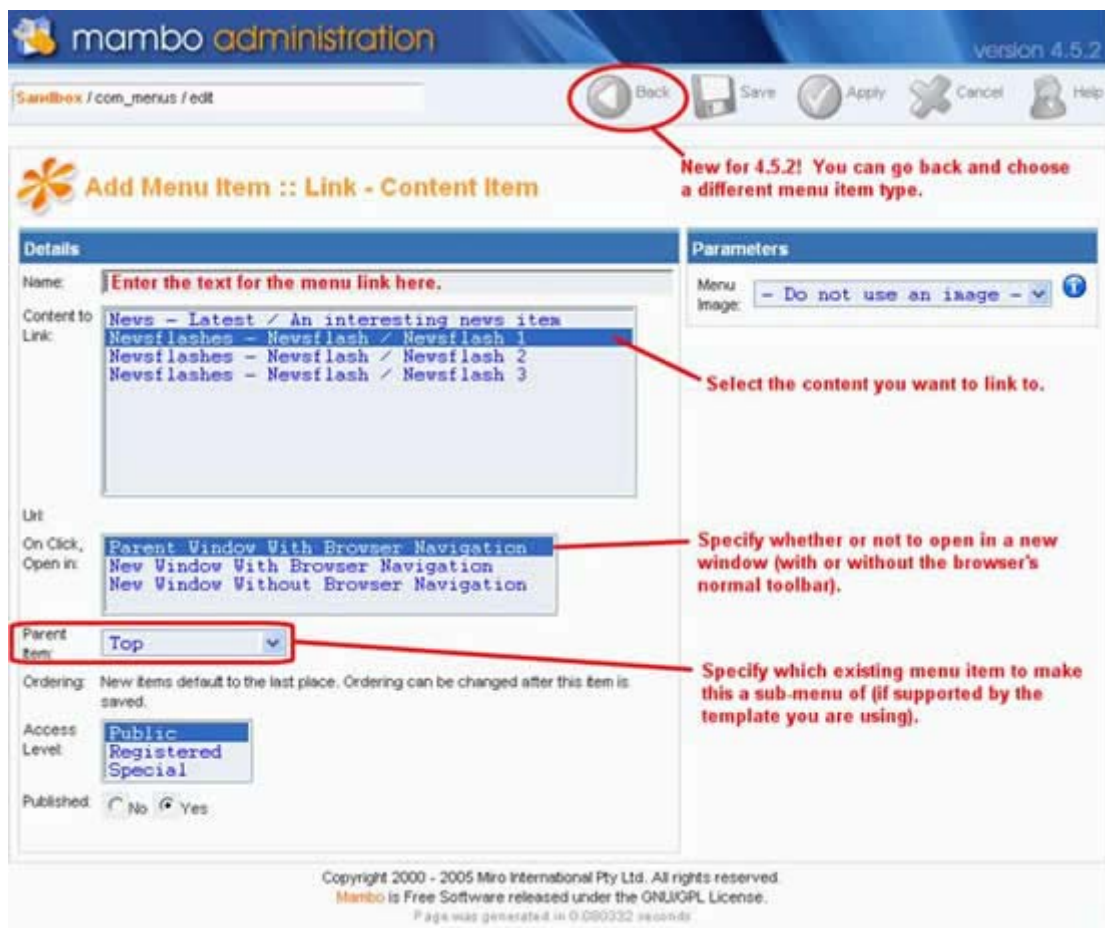
The 'Parent Item' dropdown box lists all of your existing menu items, and allows you to specify one as the 'parent' of this menu item. This is only of use to you if your template includes a hierarchical menu system – this usually involves using a script, and may not be supported in some free Mambo templates. The effect is that you can have sub-menus appear when the end user hovers over or clicks on the 'parent' menu item.

Now, when you **preview your website**, you will see your new menu option which will take you to the content you specified. See figure 20.

Figure 20 – Previewing Your Website
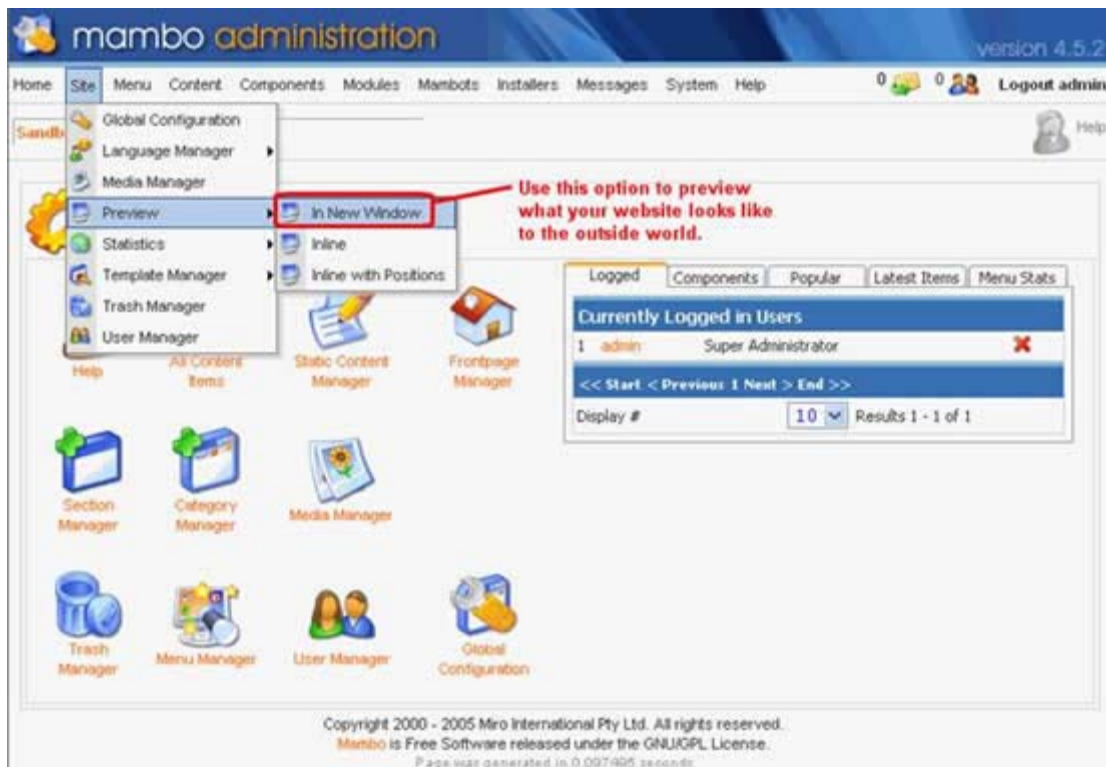
This should give you enough information to begin working with Mambo. There are many more features and options that are beyond the scope of this quick start guide. Please see the official documentation on the Mambo help website: http://help.mamboserver.com for more information.

If you have any feedback or constructive criticism about this tutorial, please send an e-mail to: mambo@netshine.co.uk.

Appendix A – Installing a Template

If you are setting up Mambo yourself, one of the first things you will need to do (after installing Mambo itself), is to decide on a template for your site. There are many free templates available for Mambo, and installing and applying a new template is quite straightforward.

Mambo templates are usually supplied in the form of a .zip file – which is like a compressed folder containing the information needed to recreate several files. To install a new template, save the zip file on your computer – somewhere where you can find it easily. Then access the *template installer* through the 'site' menu, as shown in figure a.

Figure A – Accessing the Template Installer
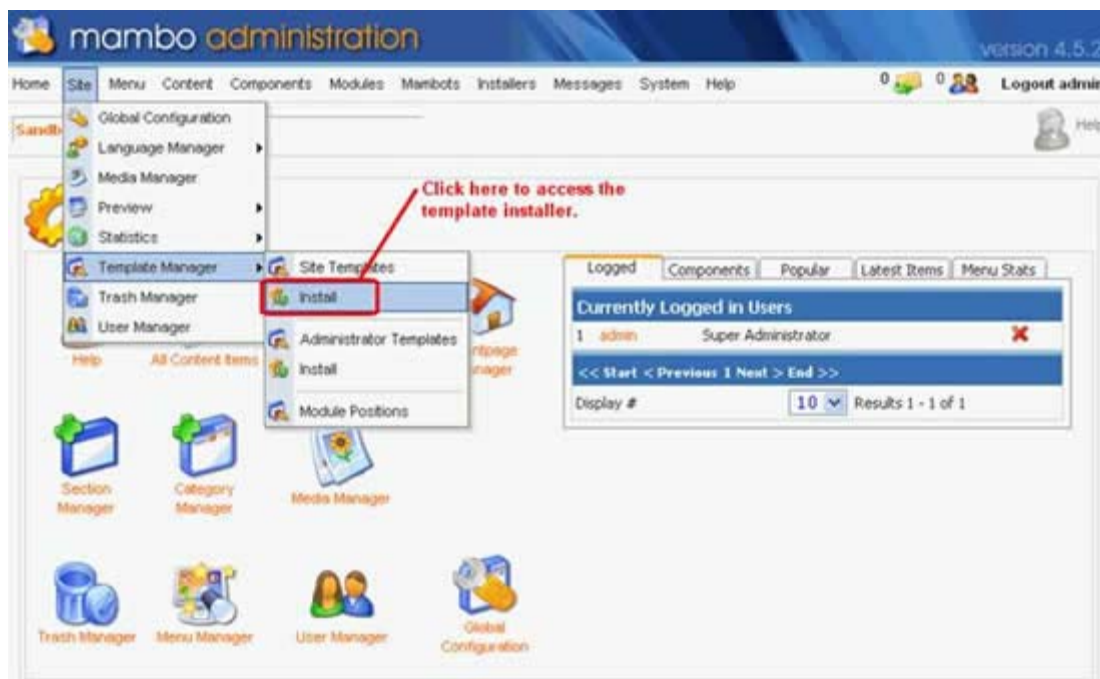
Then, just point to the zip file, and click on 'Upload File & Install' to install the template, as shown in figure b.

Note: *Installing a template does not automatically apply that template to your website; it just makes it available to you. You can install many different templates if you like, and you can even specify a different template to each menu item if you want. There is even the possibility of allowing the end user to choose the template for themselves, from a choice of those that you have installed (by using the 'template chooser' module – although this is beyond the scope of this guide).*

Figure B – Uploading and Installing a Template Package
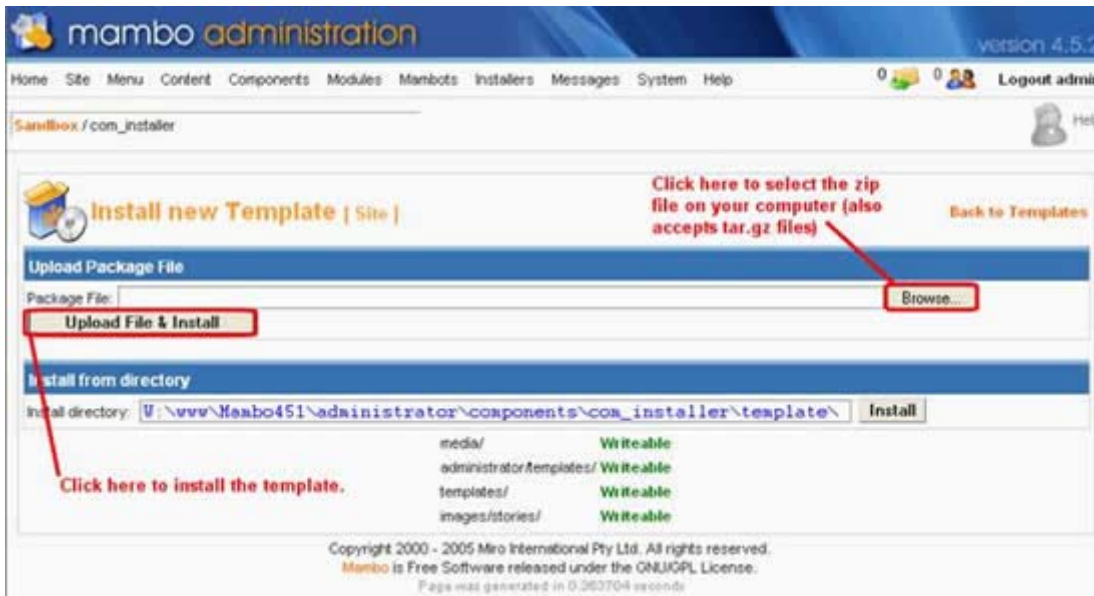
In order to **apply a template** to your website, you need to access the template manager. You can do this by clicking on the 'Back to Templates' link at the top right of the screen shown in figure b, or through the 'site' menu as shown in figure c.

Figure C – Accessing the Template Manager
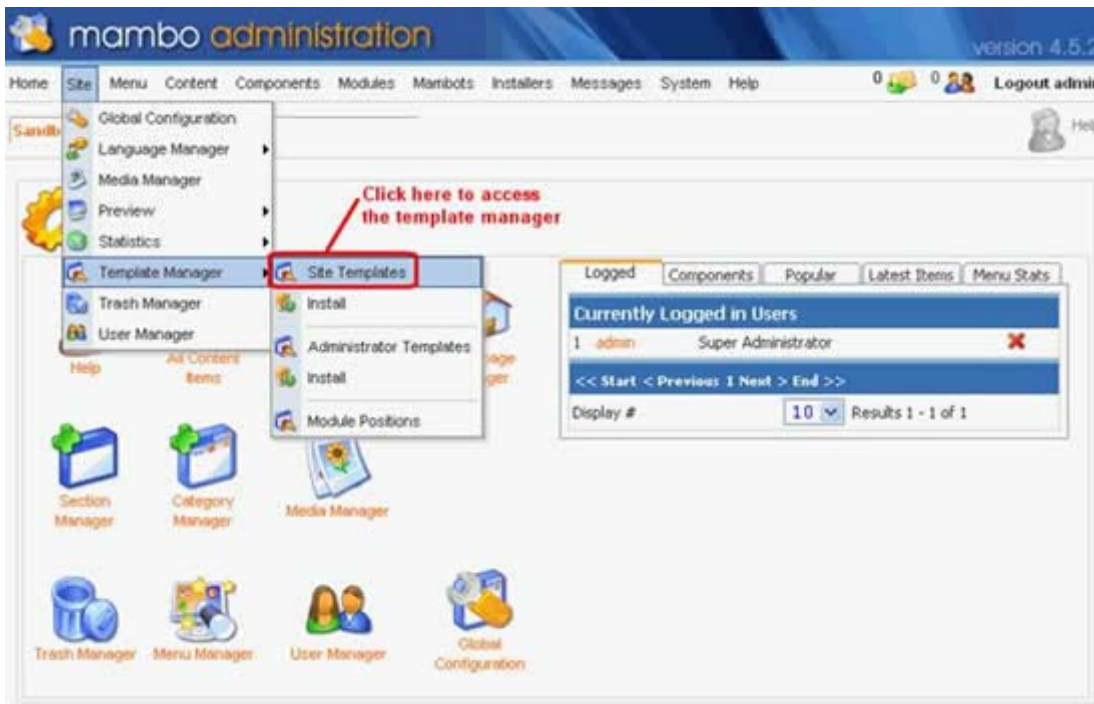
In the template manager, you can select a template to apply to the entire website, or to a particular menu option – as shown in figure d.

Figure D – Applying a Template

If you choose to *assign* the template to a particular menu option, you will be presented with a list of menu options to choose from when you click on the 'Assign' toolbar button. Select the page you want, and click on 'Save' to apply the template to that page only. When you select *default*, a green tick will appear next to the selected template, and any pages which have not been assigned their own template will use the selected one.

Appendix B – Activating Tiny MCE

When you first install Mambo, the Tiny MCE HTML editor will already be installed, but you cannot use it until you make it the active editor. It is also a good idea to set the editor to 'advanced mode' – because this will give you more options for formatting your text.

To activate Tiny MCE, select 'Site Mambots' from the 'Mambots' menu – see figure A. This will take you to the 'Mambot Manager' (figure B).

Figure A – Accessing the Mambot Manager

'Mambot' is short for 'Mambo Robot' – it is the term used to describe any program which intercepts Mambo as it tries to output something on the screen. In the case of Tiny MCE, the mambot inserts the javascript code for the HTML editor into the page that Mambo produces.

Strange as it may seem, there is a 'No WYSIWYG Editor' mambot listed, and this by default is the published editor. In order to activate Tiny MCE, you have to 'unpublish' the 'No WYSIWYG Editor' mambot, and publish the Tiny MCE mambot.

Figure B – The Mambot Manager
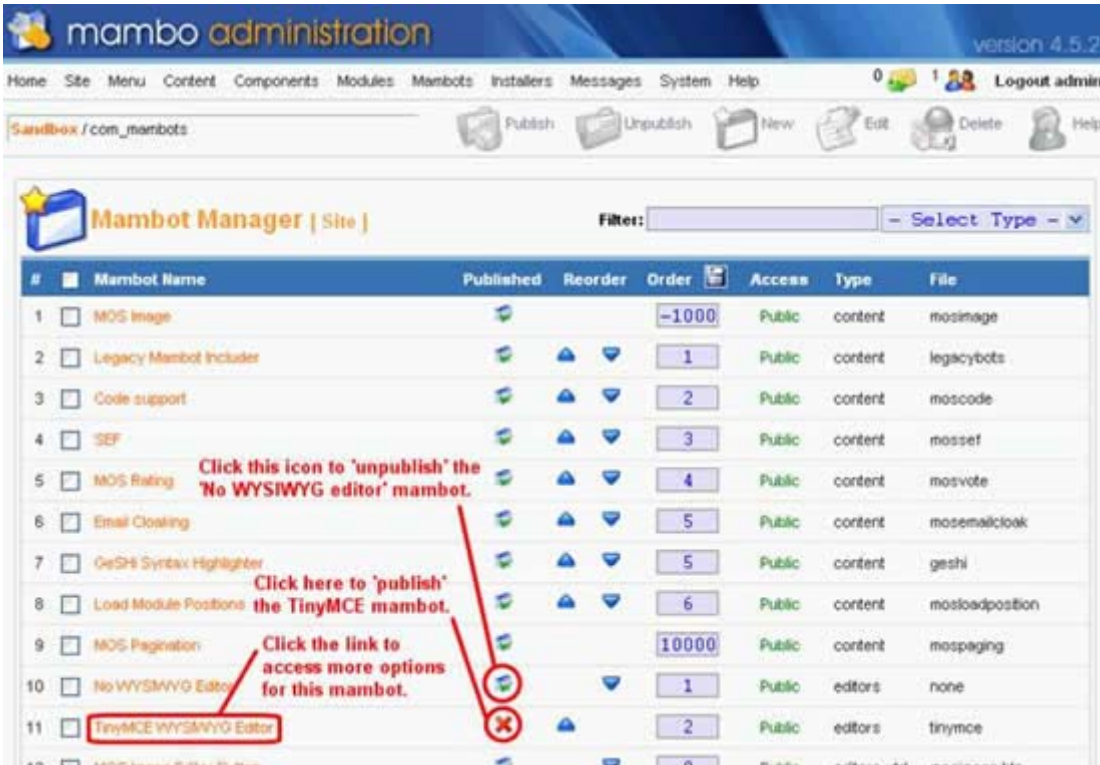
To set the editor into 'advanced mode', click on the link for the editor on the 'Mambot Manager' list, then select 'Advanced' from the 'Functionality' dropdown box on the right hand side of the screen (under 'Parameters'). Click on the 'Save' toolbar button, and you're done – see figure C.

Figure C – The Mambot Editor
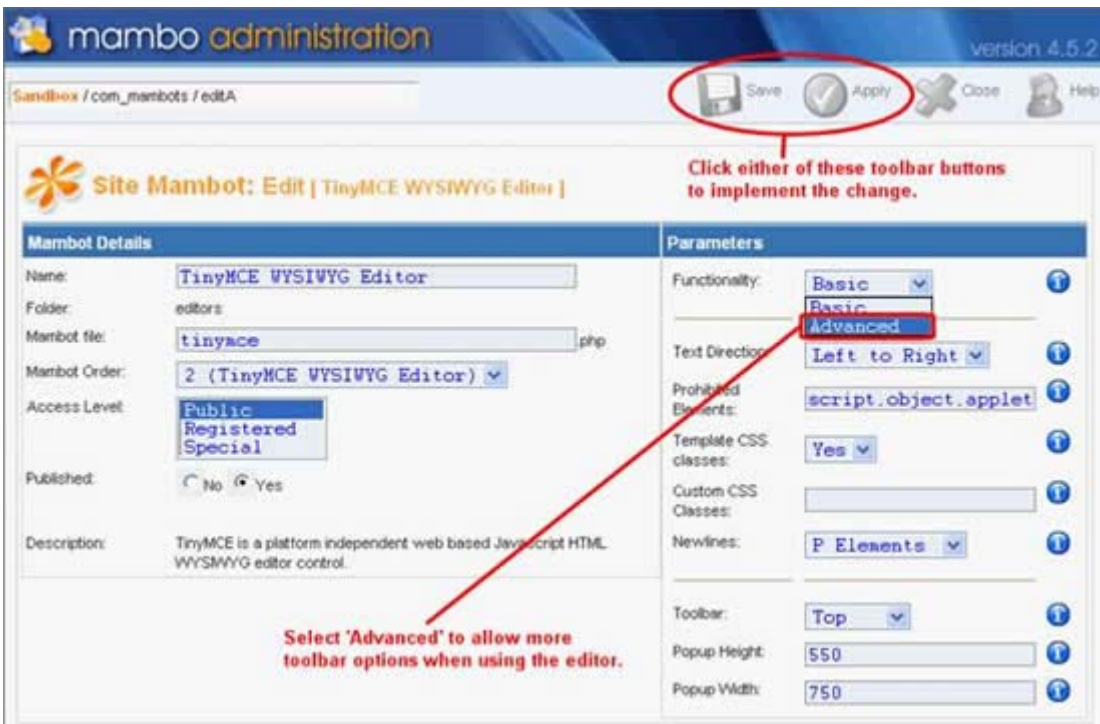
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Comments

This should be downloadable.
Written by Guest on 2005-08-14 03:17:46

Brand it all you like, but this should be a downloadable PDF file.

We can wish…

This should be downloadable 2
Written by tkwoods26 on 2006-03-17 22:13:41

I agree totally this should be downloadable. It would help for all the newbies that are clogging the mambo server

forums. They should also make it easier to find for the people just starting. Try including it with the software.

it should be automatic downloadable
Written by davidrdunbar on 2006-07-31 02:37:54

in fact, it should automatically know that i need to know its downloadable, and then download it.

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