

The Most

COMPLETE 101+ STEP

WordPress Checklist Ever

Some might say that it's easy getting a WordPress website up and running. And truth be told, it is. But when you're actually creating a new WordPress website from scratch, for a client, well, things tend to get a bit more complicated.

This is the last WordPress website creation checklist you'll ever need.

Today, we're going to give you the Ultimate WordPress checklist. All of the things you need to do get a website fully up and running and ready for launch.

This WordPress checklist is divided into multiple sections, providing a complete list of tasks you need to do for each and every step when planning, building and launching a new WordPress website.

Contents

WordPress Hosting & Infrastructure Checklist	04
WordPress Installation Checklist	09
WordPress Security Checklist	15
WordPress Theme Checklist	19
WordPress Configuration Checklist	21
WordPress Search Engine Optimization Checklist	25
Social Media Integration WordPress Checklist	29
Mailing List Integration Checklist	31
Analytics, Monitoring and Uptime Integration	32
WordPress Performance Checklist	33
WordPress Testing Checklist	35
Website Functionality Checklist	37
Post Launch Checklist	38
WordPress Maintenance Checklist	40
Have You Completed the WordPress Task Checklist?	42

Let's get started!



WordPress Hosting & Infrastructure Checklist

There are [plenty of guides out there on how to install WordPress](#), but here's a quick summary of the essentials:

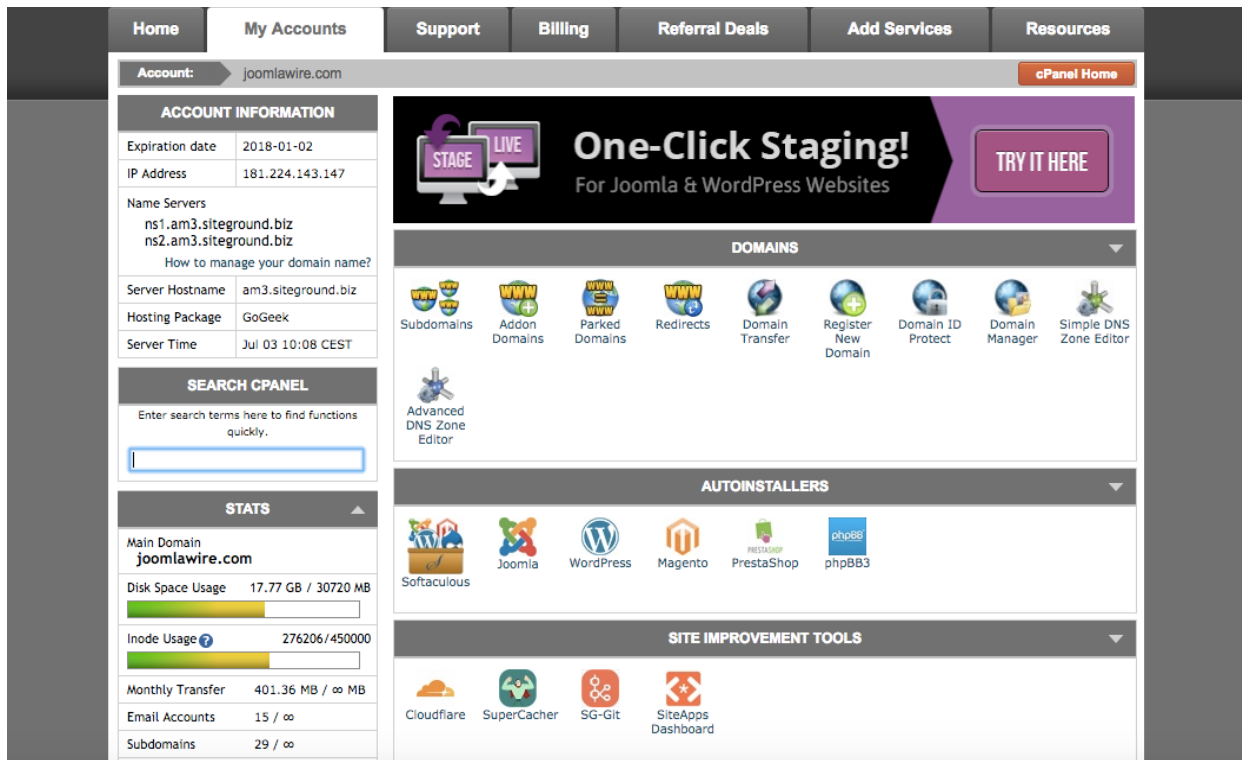
Choose a hosting company for your site. This is something you've probably already done before and is a topic that is debated about without end. [Everybody has an opinion on the hosts they love and hate](#). So I'm not going to delve into that here.



Ensure your hosting meets the minimum (safe) requirements for WordPress. While meeting the minimum hosting requirements is typically not an issue with most hosting services, quite a few sites are still using old, obsolete and unsafe versions of Apache, PHP, MySQL and other software. Make sure your hosting service is running on PHP7 and MySQL v5.6 or greater. Always refer to the [latest WordPress minimum requirements](#) and stay away from any hosts who push you towards other versions.



Buy or get access to your hosting details. Once you've decided and made sure the service is great, buy a hosting plan, or make sure your client has bought this and given you details to access to the cPanel or backend of the host.



cPanel is a popular interface used by many web hosts.



Ensure you also know how to open a support call. You'll probably need this as you deploy your site and need to make changes, plus, it's just good to know in case you have any issues with your hosting, like website downtime or hacks.



Buy a domain or get access to the domain for your website. Whether or not you are the owner, make sure you have access to eventually change the DNS entries for your site when you are about to launch.

Nameservers

Choose your new nameserver type

Nameserver

Make sure you have access to the DNS settings



Create a new domain on your hosting service. When you want to create a new website setup, you'll need to configure a new domain. This is a pretty straightforward process, but you'll need to take note of the following details:

- FTP or subdomain username
- Domain password

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALL PRIVILEGES	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTER ROUTINE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CREATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CREATE ROUTINE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CREATE TEMPORARY TABLES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CREATE VIEW
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DELETE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DROP
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EVENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXECUTE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDEX	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INSERT
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LOCK TABLES	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> REFERENCES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SELECT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SHOW VIEW
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRIGGER	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UPDATE

Assign database user privileges



Create a new database for your website. While reusing databases is possible, it's not recommended. A security breach on one site means the breach can move across your sites, impacting anything else hosted on the same database. Also, create a new database user. Using the same logic as above, you should have a new database user for each different hosted site. Make sure you are not re-using passwords. Grant the database user access to the database – you'll need to attach the database user you just created to the database by granting SQL privileges from the username to the password.

Always use strong passwords. I like using password generators to make it as difficult as possible to brute-force attack. If you don't like that, use long, complex, passphrases (e.g. th1 sisaprettyH@aaRD-passtogue55!)

Once you've done all of the above, make sure you have the following details:

- Database name
- Database user
- Database password
- Database server address



Setup email addresses as necessary. While using generic emails is fine, it's much more professional to use branded emails. Create generic emails as necessary (hello@, info@, support@, ...) and email addresses for team members (dave@, ...). For each email address you create, keep track of the username and password. Remote

access details should be kept handy so you can provide them to the client as part of the project handover.



Store all of the above information in a secure place. All of the information above is quite sensitive so if it lands in the wrong hands you're setting yourself up for disaster. Store the information in a safe place. Password services such as LastPass are highly recommended for this information. Plain text documents on shared drives are a very bad idea.



Change the DNS settings of your domain to point to name servers of hosting service (Optional). At this point, in order to install on the final address of the website, you can point the DNS settings of the domain to the nameservers of the hosting service. This will mean that anybody who hits the domain will actually see the new site. I prefer doing it this way, such that the WordPress installation will not require changes to the URL / address.



WordPress Installation Checklist



[Download the latest installation of WordPress](#) from [WordPress.org](#).

It's always recommended you install the latest version rather than an earlier version of WordPress.



Alternatively, install WordPress using Managed WordPress Hosting.

If you're actually not much into doing things yourself and you'd like to let the pros handle your WordPress installation, setting up managed WordPress hosting is a good alternative. With managed hosting, you typically only have to administer the content of your site while installation, setup, databases, security, backups, updates, performance and uptime monitoring are all handled by your host. Check out our detailed guide to [WordPress managed hosting](#).



Upload the archive file to your domain root folder. Don't uncompress the files on your local drive. Uploading the files individually takes a ridiculous amount of time, compared to uploading just the archive file. Uncompress the WordPress installation to the root folder. Make sure you're actually uncompressing to the root (domain.com), rather than a subdirectory (domain.com/wordpress) unless you have a good reason to do so.



Run the WordPress 5-minute installation. If you haven't already performed the DNS changes you'll have to access the folder through the temporary installation address provided by your web host. If you've changed the DNS settings and they've propagated already, you should be able to [run the install](#) just by hitting the domain name.

Below you should enter your database connection details. If you're not sure about these, contact your host.

Database Name	<input type="text" value="wordpress"/>	The name of the database you want to run WP in.
User Name	<input type="text" value="username"/>	Your MySQL username
Password	<input type="text" value="password"/>	...and your MySQL password.
Database Host	<input type="text" value="localhost"/>	You should be able to get this info from your web host, if localhost doesn't work.
Table Prefix	<input type="text" value="wp_"/>	If you want to run multiple WordPress installations in a single database, change this.

Database settings for WordPress 5-minute install



Follow the WordPress installation steps. This should be pretty straightforward, but make sure you have the details of the database you setup above handy. You're going to need them.



Do not use "admin" as the username for the administrator user. [This is a security risk.](#) Use a name that is easy for you to remember but hard for others to guess. I tend to go for something like as "domdomsuper" for domain.com. Create a strong password for the administrator – this is critical. Your administrator username is going to get bombarded with brute-force attacks. An easy password is a sure way to get your [website hacked](#) in no time at all.



Access your brand-spanking new WordPress installation. Once the setup has been completed, it's time to check out your new website. You're not going to see anything groundbreaking, just the default

WordPress theme, (a cactus on a desk if you're using the latest [Twenty Seventeen WordPress theme](#)) but the fact that I can see a



The Twenty Seventeen default WordPress theme.

working WordPress installation makes me feel good!)



Log in to your administrator account. Once you've completed the WordPress installation, it's time to [log in for the first time](#) to your new site.



Ensure general settings are correct. Go to **Settings > General Settings** and ensure that all of the details are as you would like them to be, particularly the tagline, the email address and the URL of the site. The tagline and name, in particular, are important for SEO

purposes, so ensure you've used the right keywords for your new site.



Ensure other generic settings are good to go. Go to **Settings > General** and ensure that details such as timezone, membership (who can register for your site), site language, date format, time format, and any other settings are as you would like them to be.



Check writing settings and adjust as necessary. Although most times you don't need to change anything here, there are a few tweaks you might want to adjust to suit your preferences. You can adjust Default Post Category, Default Post Format and Default Link Category, you can update the settings to enable posting by email, and change the Update Services.



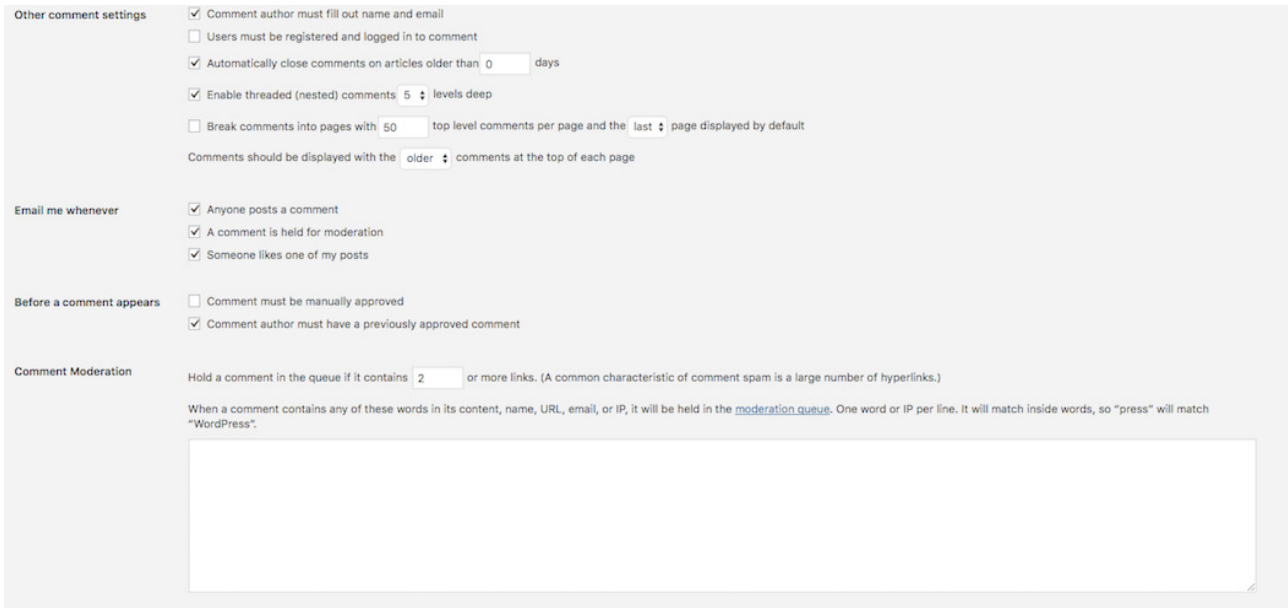
Set front page / reading settings. If you want to change the way your homepage looks, you can make any necessary changes under **Settings > Reading**. Here, you can change whether you show the latest posts on the front page or a specific page. You can change how many posts are actually shown (default is 10) and whether to show a summary of each post or the full text.



Set search engine visibility. If you want search engines to crawl your website, under Settings > Reading make sure that you are not discouraging search engines from doing their thing.



Set comment settings. I recommend taking a look at Settings > Discussions and adjusting the settings to prevent any spamming on your website. We prefer [switching off pingbacks](#) (both inbound and outbound). You can choose to moderate comments (highly recommended), and you can force users to register before commenting



The screenshot shows the 'Comment Settings' section of the WordPress admin dashboard. It is divided into four main sections: 'Other comment settings', 'Email me whenever', 'Before a comment appears', and 'Comment Moderation'. 'Other comment settings' includes checkboxes for 'Comment author must fill out name and email' (checked), 'Users must be registered and logged in to comment' (unchecked), 'Automatically close comments on articles older than 0 days' (checked), 'Enable threaded (nested) comments 5 levels deep' (checked), 'Break comments into pages with 50 top level comments per page and the last page displayed by default' (unchecked), and 'Comments should be displayed with the older comments at the top of each page' (selected). 'Email me whenever' has three checked options: 'Anyone posts a comment', 'A comment is held for moderation', and 'Someone likes one of my posts'. 'Before a comment appears' has two options: 'Comment must be manually approved' (unchecked) and 'Comment author must have a previously approved comment' (checked). 'Comment Moderation' includes a field for 'Hold a comment in the queue if it contains 2 or more links' and a text area for 'When a comment contains any of these words in its content, name, URL, email, or IP, it will be held in the moderation queue'. The text area contains the word 'WordPress'.

Comment settings

(to discourage potential spammers), or close older posts from comments (particularly if your blog is very topical and comments on older topics are bound to be spammy).



Set media settings. Most times no tweaks are necessary here but [check your settings are correct](#) anyway. By default, images are organized by year and month when they were uploaded, though you can opt to disable this.



Choose your desired permalink setup (particularly for SEO). The **Settings > Permalinks** choices you make are [particularly important for SEO](#). We'd recommend choosing the post name option, and then tweak the slug for keywords as necessary in each of your posts. The remaining settings can be left as default unless you have specific reasons to change them.

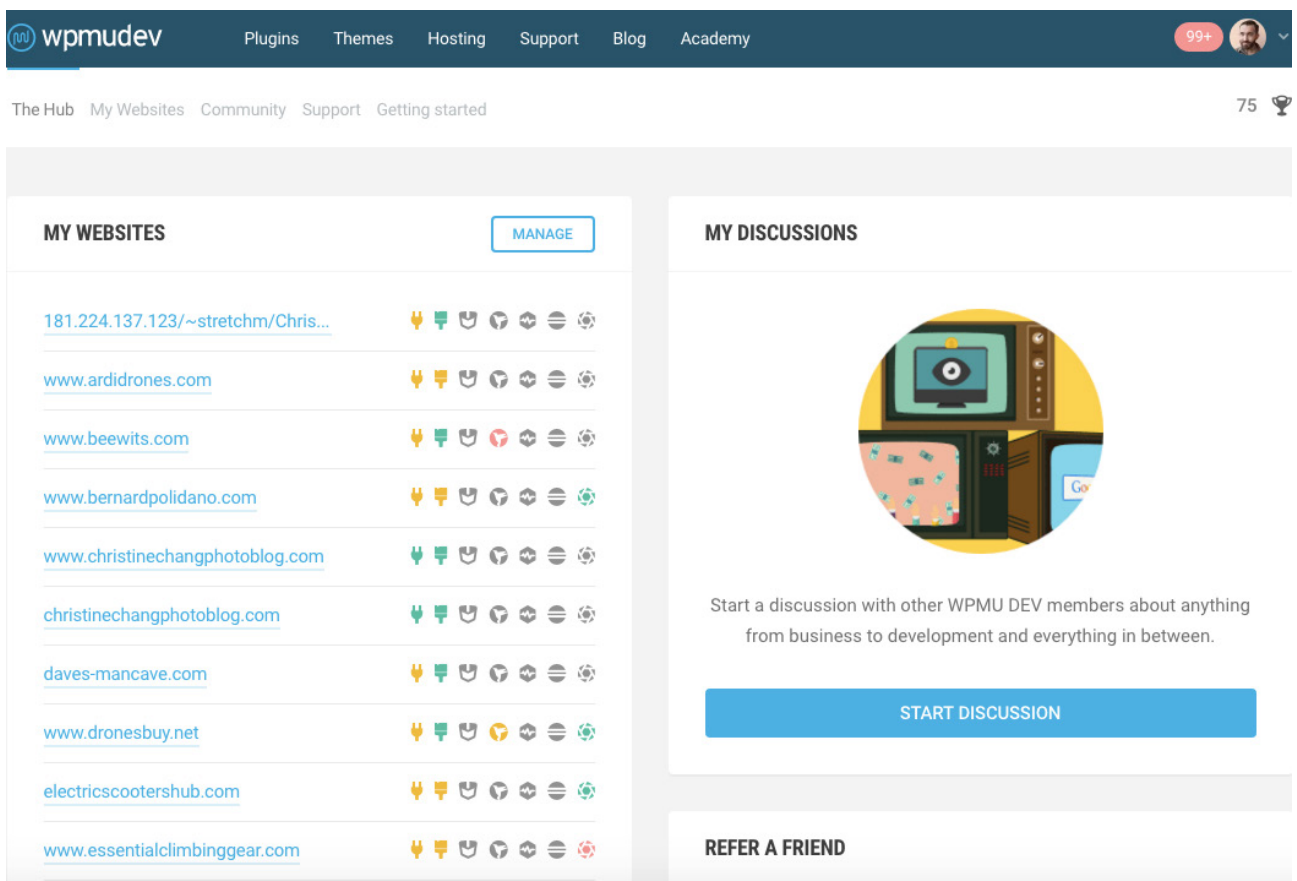


Delete sample content and setup your own welcome post. Most WordPress installations come with some sample content. Remove this to clean up your site and create a short "Welcome to your

website post,” or something similar which your users will see if they come across your site. It’s ideal to mention that your site is still under construction. (P.S. Do avoid the 90s under construction GIFs!)



Setup WordPress maintenance dashboard. Many of the steps below can be simplified if you use a managed WordPress service. WPMU DEV’s own dashboard, The Hub, is one such service that enables you to administer and maintain all of your WordPress installations from the one place. By [installing the WPMUDEV Dashboard plugin](#), you can do much of the regular maintenance required on the site via the dashboard.



Managing WordPress installations through The Hub

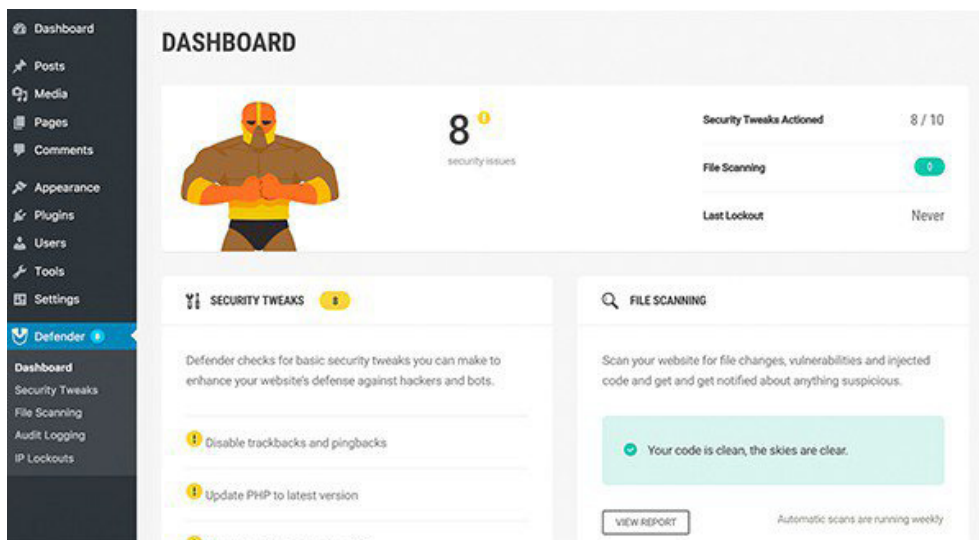


WordPress Security Checklist

WordPress security requires a full-blown exercise, and in fact, we've already written a [30+ item checklist for full-blown WordPress security](#), which we highly recommend you visit and bookmark. In this WordPress checklist, we'll have a look at a few of the basic things you must do for WordPress security.



Install a security plugin. Installing a [good security plugin like Defender](#) is one of the first things you should do when launching a WordPress site. Defender does a great job of making sure your site



Get all the incredible security protection of Defender free on WordPress.org.

is less vulnerable by performing a series of security hardening steps on your site.

Quite a few of the steps below are already covered by Defender.



Make sure WordPress auto updates are enabled. When security issues are discovered, the WordPress Security Team typically releases an update that fixes any vulnerabilities. You should, therefore, check that your wp-config.php file does not contain the following constant, which disables auto updates:

```
1     define( 'AUTOMATIC_UPDATER_DISABLED', true );
```



Update Authentication Keys for your WordPress installation. These keys should be changed every so often, but definitely should be changed after your initial installation. Generate a new set of keys here: <https://api.wordpress.org/secret-key/1.1/>, and then update the settings in your wp-config.php file.



Secure the wp.config file from unauthorized access. It's a good idea to add the following to your .htaccess file to deny any unauthorized access to the file:

```
1     <files wp-config.php>
2     order allow,deny
3     deny from all
4     function
```



Remove the WordPress version. Although this is security by obscurity and it's by no means a strong way to bolster security on

your site, it just makes it that tad harder for somebody to target any vulnerabilities in a specific WordPress version. Add the following code into your functions.php file:

```

1 function remove_version() {
2     return '';
3 }
4 add_filter('the_generator', 'remove_version');
```

Limit login attempts to the backend. Weak passwords are always a bad idea. That's why we've recommended you create a secure password a few lines up. However, limiting brute forcing attempts to the backend is definitely a good idea. After all, you don't want hackers hammering away at your backend. Install Defender to limit logins.



Enable an anti-spam plugin if you've enabled comments. Spam is the modern day scourge. Even with an anti-spam plugin enabled, you're likely to have to clean up a few spam comments anyway. The [Akismet](#) plugin is the recommended way to go.

Enable a backup plan using Snapshot. No matter how much hardening you perform, the likelihood of a breach or, much more likely, an accident, will remain. When this happens, your only savior is going to be the last good backup you've made of your site.

[Snapshot](#), which integrates very nicely with Defender, allows you to make backups and, more importantly, you can back up to the cloud. Remember, if you're keeping your backups on your own server, you might still find yourself in serious trouble if your backup files go missing.



Never download themes or plugins from pirate sites. And never ever download plugins from non-reputable sources or hacking forums / pirate software sites. They will be riddled with malware and will have backdoors with which your site can be hijacked at will. Trust me, it's not worth the risk.



WordPress Theme Checklist



Choose an appropriate theme for your website. [Finding the right theme for your website](#) is a big decision you'll have to make. You need to find something that fits the brand, the functionality you require for your site, your plans for the future, your budget, your theme supplier, whether your client is happy with the choice... If you want to be able to create and customize your own themes, you might want to check out our very own [Upfront](#).



Make sure your theme is mobile-friendly. One of the essential criteria for choosing a theme for your site is going to be its [mobile-friendliness](#). Most of the traffic to your site will probably be coming from mobile for a vast majority of sites. Your theme should not just be mobile-friendly – ideally, it should be mobile-first.



Check how your theme handles responsiveness. Besides mobile-first, your theme should be [responsive](#), i.e. respond nicely to the various sized devices that will be accessing it (extra small – mobile, small – tablet/phablet, medium – desktops and laptops, large – large screens). Your theme will morph depending on screen access, with certain sections or functions hidden or shown according to the size of device accessing the site. You should ensure that you are happy with the responsiveness of the theme and

ensure that the relevant sections are given due importance on the various screen sizes.



Create a child theme site. As part of the development of your website, you're likely going to want to tweak some CSS and make other customizations to your theme as necessary. Rather than edit your site's CSS directly, it's recommended you [create a child theme](#) first.



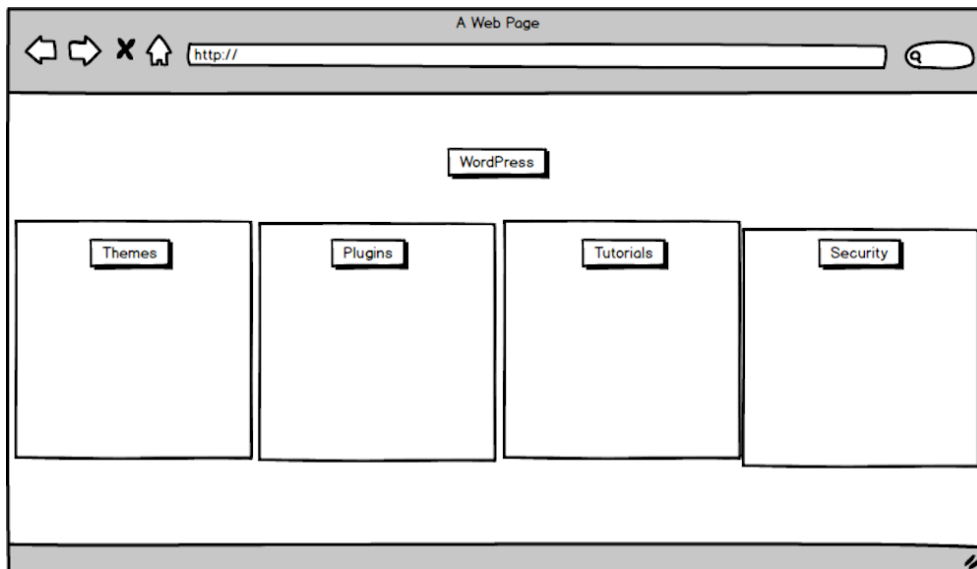
Update your theme with your brand's logo. One of the most basic configurations you'll have to do to the theme is updating the theme with [your brand's logo](#).

5

WordPress Configuration Checklist



Plan your website hierarchical structure. A website structure and hierarchy is important for two main reasons: user experience and SEO. We've already covered in detail [how to architect your website for SEO](#), so do go ahead and read that post. In essence, you should structure your site around the content you plan to publish on it.



Give returning visitors a faster experience when you activate Hummingbird browser cache.



Source your imagery. While written content is going to be an intrinsic part of your website, it's the imagery that will take your website to the next level, so invest accordingly in high-quality images. Whether they are designed, sourced from photographers,

bought from stock photography sites or [downloaded from free stock image sites](#), images are crucial.



Source your content writers. The difference between a website that sells and one that doesn't, comes down to your sales copy. If you're not a professional copywriter, invest in one. These writers know what wording to use, how to embed it in your site in such a way to drastically improve your conversion ratio. Don't skimp here.



Add a contact page. One of the main reasons for the existence of most websites is that they provide an additional point of contact between organizations and their client base or users. Your contact page should be readily accessible and besides an actual contact form, it should provide information to help site visitors get in touch, including phone numbers, physical location and any other forms of communication available, such as social media.



Customize the messages of the contact form. The difference between an amateur and a professional looking website is in the small details. Customizing messages that contact form displays after sending (and other auto messages) gives your website that little edge over most run-of-the-mill websites.



Redirect to a "thank you" or information pages after submission. When a user has made the effort of following your calls-to-action and has tried getting in touch, the least you can do is set their expectations. Follow up a form submission with a redirect to a "thank you" page that helps direct their next action or what they can now expect from you. Of course, make sure you meet any expectations you set.



Add other important ancillary pages. There are a number of pages that should be part of each and every website you create. Although these pages are not particularly exciting, their importance shouldn't be underestimated.

- **About Us.** This is a detailed overview of the organization behind the website. There should be sufficient details here such that somebody who is doing business with the website for the first time can confidently understand who the organization is and what the company is all about.
- **Privacy policy.** A legal requirement in some countries, this page explains to the user what kind of information about the user is collected by the website and what will be done with that information to allay any privacy concerns.
- **Terms and conditions.** Another legally required page, it helps limit your liability, sets the copyright of your site, sets governing laws for the site and references the privacy policy that the website applies.



Add your sales copy pages, services or product pages. You've organized most of your site up to this point, so it's time to start making some money! Your sales copy pages need to be well-thought out, so sales copy is a skill you'll need to acquire. If you don't have the necessary writing skills, hire somebody who does. It might be expensive, but it'll be well-worth it. Specific sales landing pages can either be part of the theme of your site or else you can opt for a specific landing page plugin or service.



Create menus and menu items as necessary. Creating a menu for your site should be part of a long-term strategy for both the UX of your site and its SEO architecture. Once you know what your site structure will look like, only then should you start designing and defining menu items as necessary.



Create a custom 404 page. Turn a frustrating user experience into a positive one by helping the user find the information they were looking for, or providing a contact method so they can get in touch with you.



Configure any WordPress widgets. You'll need to configure any widgets you use for features like archives, recent comments and recent blogs. There might also be widgets that come with your theme or any plugins you've installed.



Install any preferred and necessary plugins. Once you're done with the basics, you're going to have to install a few good plugins to achieve the desired functionality of your site. Choosing plugins should not be taken lightly because they can make or break your site. Always go for trusted and reputable companies and be sure to read reviews.

6

WordPress Search Engine Optimization Checklist



Install an SEO plugin. There are quite a few tools out there, but it's great to have a plugin that guides you through the settings. [SmartCrawl](#) is one, [the SEO Framework is another](#), but there's plenty out there.

SMARTCRAWL

Boost your PageRank and drive more traffic to your site with little effort and simple configuration. SmartCrawl is fast powerful WordPress SEO that works.

THREADS - ASK A QUESTION

Install SmartCrawl today!

- Send sitemap updates to search engines
- Exclude content from being crawled
- Add custom descriptions and titles
- Auto link keywords to any URL
- Automated sitemap creation
- Built-in Moz integration

INSTALL

Download Plugin 2.0

wpmudev/smartcrawl-wordpress-seo

Get SmartCrawl as part of a [WPMU DEV Membership](#)

- 100+ Plugins & Themes including Upfront Theme Builder
- Performance, Security, Uptime, SEO & Backup services
- Unlimited 24/7 Expert WordPress Support



Generate an XML sitemap. Your site's XML sitemap is essentially a search-engine friendly map of the content on your website, which ensures your content is indexed correctly. Your SEO plugin should do this for you.



Log in to [Google Search Console](#) and verify your website. In order to submit your XML sitemap to Google, you'll need to sign up or log in to Google Search Console to verify your website.



Log in to [Bing WebMaster](#) tools and verify your website. Although Bing does not generate as much traffic as Google, it's still got potential to send good traffic your way with the right content marketing.



Fix any errors in Google Search Console. If Google tells you there is something wrong with your site, you should pay attention! Check for any errors and "HTML Improvements" messages be sure you fix them.

HTML Improvements

Last updated Jul 2, 2017

Addressing the following may help your site's user experience and performance.

Meta description	Pages
Duplicate meta descriptions	38
Long meta descriptions	0
Short meta descriptions	24
Title tag	Pages
Missing title tags	0
Duplicate title tags	4
Long title tags	0
Short title tags	0
Non-informative title tags	0
Non-indexable content	Pages
We didn't detect any issues with non-indexable content on your site.	

Fix any errors and HTML Improvements



Use correct headings within your content. Make sure you're using H1 headers for your main keywords, then use keyword synonyms in the rest of your headings.



Use two-fold headlines to improve the number of keywords you are targeting. If you have a primary and secondary keyphrase you want to target, two-fold headlines (a secondary headline following the primary title/headline) allow you to target both nicely.



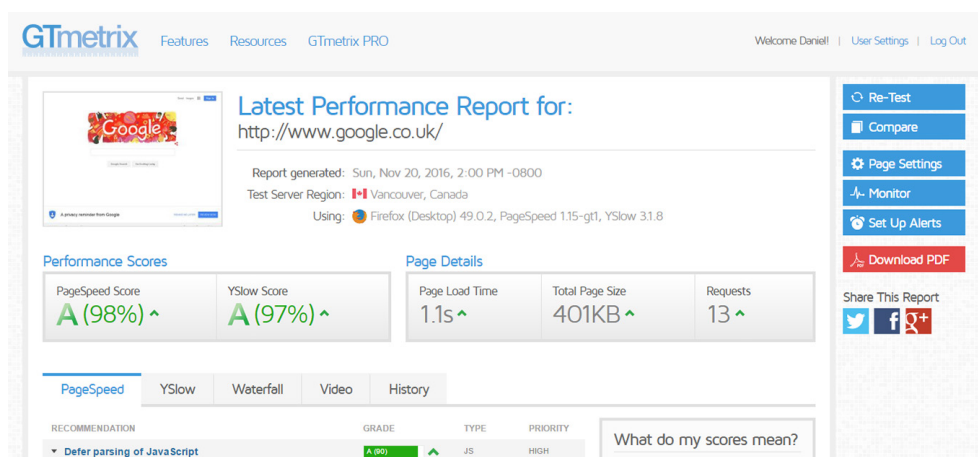
All pages and posts should have unique titles with 70 characters or less. Besides the actual length of the post, you should spend a lot of time creating compelling and emotional headlines for your content. This will help boost your traffic significantly both for organic and social media traffic.



All pages and posts should have unique meta descriptions with 156 characters or less. Well-written meta description can help boost your organic traffic. Create compelling meta descriptions that entice people to click through to your articles.



Set post titles and descriptions manually. It's unlikely automatic titles and descriptions will be enticing, so make sure you're writing as many titles and descriptions manually as possible, even if you have a products website.



GTmetrix offers website performance scans



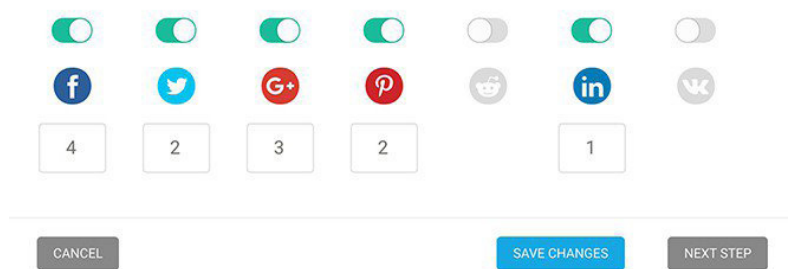
Make sure your WordPress site is fast. You've probably seen this so many times it's coming out of your ears. However, it's true – your site needs to load quickly so your users don't get frustrated and leave. A happy visitor is a loyal visitor. Check out our [Ultimate Mega Guide to Speeding Up WordPress](#).



Social Media Integration WordPress Checklist



Implement a social sharing plugin. As we mentioned a few items up, most of your traffic is going to be coming from mobile. Facebook and other social networks drive a lot of mobile-traffic. Make sure you help it along with a social sharing plugin for your site. Hint: The [Hustle plugin](#) can help integrate your social sharing buttons very nicely.



Hustle's social share settings.



Implement Open Graph (or OG tags). Open Graph tags give both search engines and social networks a better understanding of what your site is about and how it should be displayed. Whether through your theme, through customizations or through a plugin, ensure your OG tags are in place.



Implement [Twitter Cards](#). Just like Facebook OG tags, Twitter OG tags help Twitter figure out how best to display posts shared from your website, so make sure Twitter OG tags are in place.



Push posts automatically to Twitter (optional). If you'd like to push posts to Twitter automatically, you can set up a plugin like as [WP to Twitter](#) to do this. We've also got an [Ultimate Guide to Integrating Twitter](#) into WordPress for plenty more detail.



Customize your Facebook page to match the branding of your website. For consistency's sake, your Facebook page and your website's branding should match, so make sure you update your Facebook page cover image as necessary.



Push posts automatically to Facebook (optional). If you're looking to push your content to Facebook, you can use services like Buffer, HootSuite, and [IFTTT](#).

8

Mailing List Integration Checklist



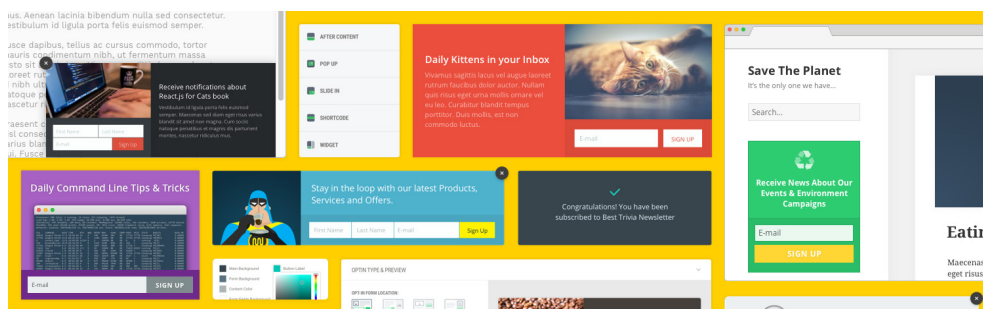
Implement a newsletter subscription form. The [e-Newsletter mailing list plugins](#) is a perfect fit if you're looking to engage with your audience via email such as newsletters or email broadcasts.



Prepare your site for picking up emails. Besides "Subscriber to our newsletter" type widgets, you should [implement multiple mechanisms to pick up as many emails as possible from your website traffic](#). Email is still the number one way to convert website traffic into paying customers.



Use Hustle to create multiple lead magnets. Continuing from the previous point, [use Hustle to create a number of lead magnets](#) (hooks on your site that ask for an email address in exchange for something of value to the visitor) to boost your email subscriber list. Done right, you can convert between 1% to 20% of your website traffic to email.



Create stunning opt-ins, pop-ups and slide-ins with Hustle.



Analytics, Monitoring and Uptime Integration



Add Google or any other analytics service to your theme. If you're a traffic geek like me, you'll probably spend a lot of time poring over each little detail in your analytics, but in order to do that, [you'll need to integrate Google Analytics with WordPress](#).



Install an uptime monitor. [The Hub](#) includes a built-in uptime monitor that sends you an instant email alert if your site goes down.



Monitor your visitors to remove any UX stumbling blocks. If you're serious about conversion, you need to ensure there are no obstacles preventing your visitors from buying your product or service. Monitoring tools like [Hotjar](#) can help you see what your visitors are doing in real-time.



WordPress Performance Checklist



Ensure your page load time is 3 seconds or less. The ideal loading time of any page of your website should be 3 seconds or less. Set this as your benchmark and [do anything you can to achieve that loading speed](#).



Clean up any unused themes, plugins or anything else which you will not be using. Themes that are installed but deactivated can present a performance hit and are a security concern. In fact, you should keep your site as lean as possible for performance purposes. Remove any plugins that are non-essential.

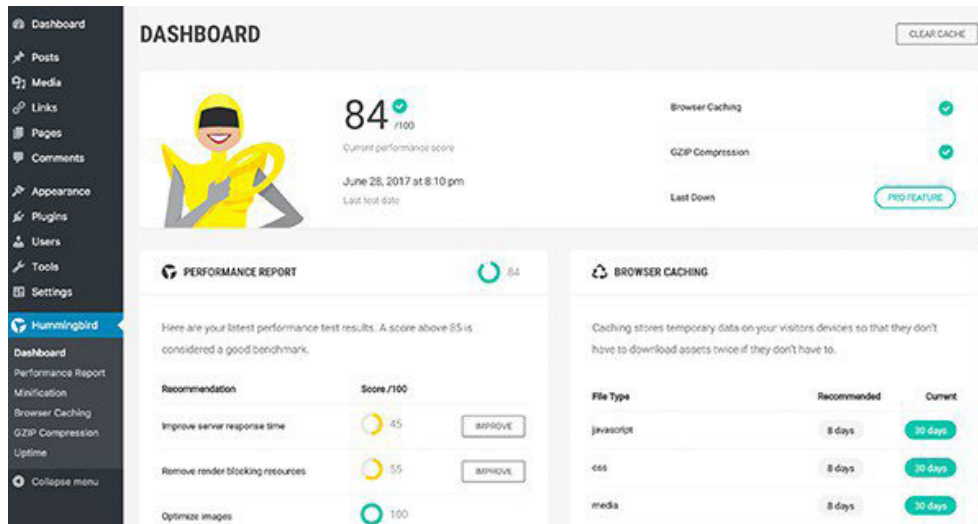


Install a WordPress a caching plugin. A caching plugin is essential to making your website load fast. Hitting the database with tens of queries each time a visitor lands on your site will drag your website's loading speed down. Using [a caching plugin](#) will ensure your site is served faster and your loading speed is seriously improved.



Install Hummingbird to further optimize loading speed. [Hummingbird](#) is another tool that can make your website load faster. It does quite a lot of things under the hood to make your site leaner. A caching plugin + Hummingbird is typically a killer combo for most sites. Using Hummingbird, you can check how quickly your

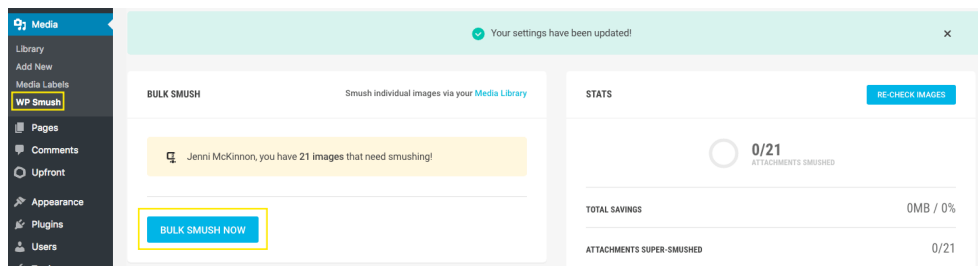
website loads and implement suggestions to make your website faster.



Give returning visitors a faster experience when you activate Hummingbird browser cache.



Install WP Smush Pro to optimize images. [WP Smush](#) works in the background to keep your website's images fully optimized for the web. The plugin has won several commendations from various sites for its ease of use and effectiveness, so jump on the bandwagon and optimize your images for excellent loading times.



Click the Bulk Smush Now button to compress and optimize your images.



Set up a CDN. Besides all of the optimizations suggested by Hummingbird, one of the most important things you'll need to enable is a CDN for your static resources. Since these are your heaviest assets, delivering them to your visitor through a CDN allows them to be served as optimally as possible.



WordPress Testing Checklist



Run a few pages of your site through the W3C Validators. Although a perfectly valid website is not necessary, it's a good idea to remove any obvious and glaring errors.



Check whether you left any [broken links](#) by mistake. Broken links can lead to a bad user experience and negative SEO signals, so strive to remove them completely from your site.



Your website should look great on all browsers. Most especially, your website should look great on the major browsers: Chrome, FireFox, Safari, and Edge. [Browsershots](#) is an excellent tool that can generate a quick snapshot of your website on multiple versions of the major browsers.



Check whether your website has any [accessibility problems](#) and fix them. You'll want to ensure that your site is as accessible to all audiences as possible.



Make sure you have removed any dummy text. Search for any lorem ipsum text or other copy used for testing and delete it.



Proofread the content of your site for any spelling and grammar errors. Spelling and grammar errors show a lack of professionalism. Pass your website's copy through multiple proofs. If you're not a native speaker of the language you're writing in, make sure you hire native speakers to proof your content..



Make sure your contact details are correct. Particularly if you want to rank for local searches, make sure your physical location details are correct, together with names and phone numbers.



Check that images are formatted correctly and have been optimized for speed. We've already recommended that you use Smush to optimize your images for the speed, but you'll need to manually test whether your images are formatted and placed correctly.



Check that audio and video items are correct. Just like with images, check that any audio and video items play correctly and are not linking to draft or old copies.



Check that any assets such as PDFs are correctly linked. If you're hosting resources, assets or are offering downloads through lead magnets, test to ensure that all assets are correctly linked and are being sent on cue.



Any images, files, fonts, themes and other content should be properly licensed. Spare yourself the embarrassment of being publicly called out for using unlicensed resources. Make sure any third party resources you are using on your site are fully licensed for your use.

12

Website Functionality Checklist



Verify that all forms are working and submitting data correctly.

Manually test your forms and make sure that the contact information is being sent to the correct email addresses or databases.



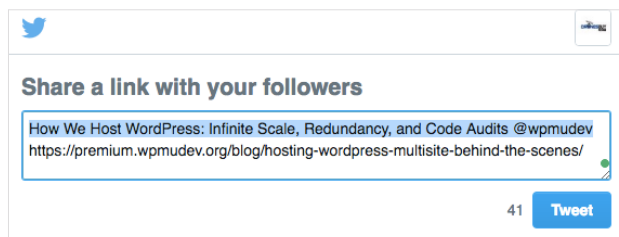
Test that forms are displaying correct messages. Customizing any automatic messages displayed after sending forms can give you that little edge over other websites, but if you choose not to do this, at least make sure that any contact forms are displaying correct messages after submission.



Check that any form or email auto replies are working correctly. If your contact forms will be sending any auto replies, confirm that the correct messages are going out at the right contact point.



Check that all sharing icons are working correctly. Give your social sharing options a trial run to make sure that links are working correctly.



Test your social sharing

13

Post Launch Checklist



Create a website handover document. There's going to be a lot of detail you'll need to hand over to the client (if you have one) when you're done, including database names and users, passwords, and other essential information. Put everything together in a document, ready to be handed over to the client.



Invoice the client. Hey, that's the point of all this work, isn't it?



Add the website to your design portfolio. Because hey, after you've done such a great job on this site you want to get some merit out of it!



Set up a retainer with the client for maintenance updates. Revenue from the website shouldn't stop once the site has launched. You should find ways of charging (at least a small fee) for ongoing maintenance of the site. Don't forget to add the site to [The Hub](#), which will make the maintenance of the site that much easier.



Make a backup of the development site. Don't rely on the client to create and keep backups. Make sure you've taken a [full backup of the launched \(working\) version of the site](#) just in case something goes catastrophically wrong and you need to restore a backup.

Make sure you save any backups offsite rather than on the same server as the live website.



Test the restore of the backup. The proof of the backup is [in the restore](#), so make sure you've tested any backups you've taken on a clean site, and that the restore of the site works fine. Make sure you're able to restore a working site before moving on to the next step.

The screenshot shows a backup management interface. At the top left, a character icon is next to the text "ALL BACKED UP!" and "You're all backed up, David." with a "RUN BACKUP" button. To the right, a progress indicator shows "1.4 GB / 10 GB STORAGE USED". Below this, summary statistics are listed: "LAST BACKUP" (Jun 30, 2017 at 3:04am), "LAST BACKUP SIZE" (180.58 MB), and "SNAPSHOT KEY" (with a "VIEW KEY" button). At the bottom, a "BACKUP SCHEDULE" section shows "Weekly at 3:00am" with a "CONFIGURE" button. A table lists the following backups:

BACKUP	DATE / TIME	SIZE	TYPE
full_backup-1498784406-full-63ee3f28.zip	Jun 30, 2017 at 3:04am	180.58 MB	CLOUD
full_backup-1498179633-full-191bdca4.zip	Jun 23, 2017 at 1:21pm	181.20 MB	CLOUD
full_backup-1497574819-full-cf92cee9.zip	Jun 16, 2017 at 3:04am	174.84 MB	CLOUD

Restore a backup for testing



Clean up your development server and archive the development site backup. Once you've moved on from this specific site, it's time to clean up your server and make way for your next clients.



WordPress Maintenance Checklist

After launching your website, it's a good idea to follow an effective maintenance schedule. Here's a comprehensive list of website maintenance tasks with suggested time frames:

1. Weekly WordPress Maintenance Checklist

- Check that the site is being backed up.
- Update plugins, themes, and software (use [The Hub](#) and [Automate](#)).
- Delete/Trash any spam comments.
- Check and fix [broken links](#) in the content (also check for broken URLs in videos, images, etc.)
- Check and fix [404 errors](#).
- Check forms on the site to make sure they are working properly.
- Make any quick fixes or updates to content requested by users.
- Publish new post(s) to help boost SEO traffic.

2. Monthly WordPress Maintenance Checklist

- Check the site's backup settings.
- Perform a security audit and fix anything that needs fixing (use [Defender](#) to run a scan and generate reports).
- Check page loading speed and fix anything that needs fixing (use [Hummingbird](#) and [Smush](#) to run scans and generate reports).
- Analyse your site's statistics (e.g. use [Google Analytics](#) and [Beehive](#)).
- Generate an SEO report for the site (Use [The Hub's Reports](#) feature).
- Analyse your most (and least) visited pages and note ways to improve these.
- Make any necessary changes or updates to improve web content relevance and accuracy.
- Review the website's visibility in search engine results and [monitor rankings](#) for your main keywords.

3. Quarterly WordPress Maintenance Checklist

- Check the site's backup settings.
- Note any content that needs improving or updating. Perform any necessary quick edits or fixes.
- Update any images or graphics that need updating.
- Update any meta descriptions and titles in articles that need updating.
- Check that popups, forms, and other features are working correctly.
- Check the site's mobile responsiveness.
- Check that the website is still displaying fine for users on all major web browsers and devices.
- Review hosting reports and site uptime logs and address any issues if uptime is less than 99.9%.

4. Yearly WordPress Maintenance Checklist

- Perform a content audit and schedule content for updates.
- Review the site's copyright information in the footer and any references.
- Renew domain name(s).
- Review website design.



Have You Completed All the Items in the WordPress Task Checklist?

As you can see, developing and launching a website takes much more work than you're probably even aware of, so we ensure that you don't miss any of the essential steps.

This checklist covers the basics, so you'll need to add your own steps along the way to take into account any custom features you add to your site.

We hope you find this checklist useful for your next WordPress project!