

# What is a plugin?

Gatsby’s plugin layer includes a wide variety of common website functionality that you can drop in to your website. There are many types of Gatsby plugins, including:

- **Integrations, or “source plugins”**. These plugins pull data into Gatsby’s GraphQL layer and make it available to query from your React components. Gatsby has source plugins for a wide range of headless CMSs, databases and spreadsheets, as well as the local filesystem. Here is a guide on sourcing data.
- **Progressive images**
- **Dropping in analytics libraries** like Google Analytics, Google Tag Manager, Segment, Hotjar, and others.
- **Performance enhancements while using CSS libraries**, like Sass, styled-components and emotion. These plugins are *not required* to use these libraries but do make it easier and faster for the browser to parse styles.
- **Other website functionality**, like SEO, offline support, sitemaps, and RSS feeds.

One point of confusion people sometimes have is “when don’t I need a plugin?” The answer is “most things”! As a general rule, any npm package you might use while working on another JavaScript or React application can also be used with a Gatsby application. Even when plugins are helpful, they are always optional.

Feel free to browse and search plugins at Gatsby’s Plugin Library or read the documentation on how to add a plugin.

Advanced use-cases include making your own plugins and either distribute them for fellow Gatsby developers to use or install them locally.