



# WordPress Must Use (MU) Plugins

While researching Custom Post Types I found a little known technique to ensure plugins are installed and run regardless user interaction.

The idea is that the [Must Use Plugins](#) will be active by default and administrators will not be able to remove them from the admin Plugins GUI, making the must-use directory the perfect place to put code that must run to make the installation work, possibly like CPT and other customization plugins that we want/need to run independent of the theme we use.

Must-use plugins are not perfect. For all the advantages that they offer, they also have several disadvantages that may render them less useful than you first thought

- **Advantages**

- MU Plugins are always-on
  - No need to enable via admin
  - Administrators and users cannot disable them other than by deleting the plugin from the directory manually
- Can be enabled by uploading file to the mu-plugins directory, No login necessary
- PHP loads Must-Use plugins in alphabetical order ***before normal plugins***, meaning API hooks added in an mu-plugin apply to all other plugins

- **Disadvantages and Caveats**

- Plugins in the must-use directory will not appear in the update notifications nor show their update status on the plugins page
  - You are responsible for learning about and performing updates to these plugins
- WordPress only looks for PHP files right inside the mu-plugins directory, and not for files in subdirectories
  - You may want to create a proxy PHP loader file inside the mu-plugins directory that loads all the plugins your must-use plugins
- [Activation hooks](#) are not executed in plugins added to the must-use plugins folder
  - These hooks are used by many plugins to run installation

code that sets up the plugin initially and/or uninstall code that cleans up when the plugin is deleted

- Plugins depending on these hooks may not function in the mu-plugins folder
- You should test all plugins specifically in the mu-plugins directory before being deployed to a live site