

Allowing Comments

When visitors leave real, useful and engaging comments on your site, it is a rewarding experience. However, comments can also be a major source of headache. As soon as you open comments on your site, the spam will start and it's usually like opening a floodgate. Because of this, many webmasters turn comments off. However, even that isn't enough to stop the professional spammer.

The first thing I will say is you should allow comments. Visitors like the chance to interact with you and search engines love to see busy, engaged visitors.

The second thing I will say is we'll deal with the spam problem when we look at Wordpress security later in the course, so relax ;)

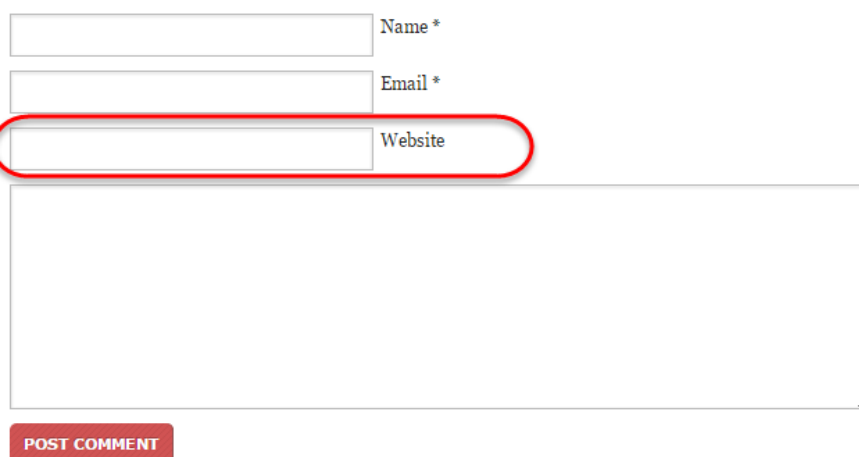
How do you enable comments?

We looked at this earlier in the course when we set up the **Discussion settings**, so go over that lecture again if you need to.

Why do Spammers leave comments?

Spammers see comments on other people's websites as a way to make their own web pages rank better. You see, when a comment is approved, it links back to the website that was entered into the comment form.

Speak Your Mind



A comment form with the following elements:

- A text input field labeled "Name *".
- A text input field labeled "Email *".
- A text input field labeled "Website", which is highlighted with a red oval.
- A large text area for the comment content.
- A red button labeled "POST COMMENT".

Approved comments are therefore links to the spammers site which can help boost their rankings in Google!

Moderating Comments

When someone comes to the site and leaves a comment, it will be checked against the blacklist words we set up earlier. If a word in our blacklist is in the comment, the comment is sent to the spam folder.

If we have other anti-spam measures in place (we'll add one in the security section of this course), they will also check the comments for known spam and deal with the message for us. If the message passes all tests, it is sent to the moderation cue (remember we set comments up so they all need manual approval).

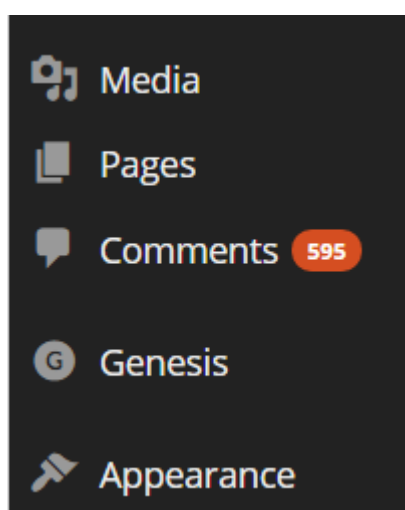
At this point, Wordpress sends an email to your admin email address telling you there is a comment to moderate. That email is useful because it contains links to approve, trash or spam the comment.

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A new comment on the post "Recommended Web Hosts and Registrars" is waiting for your approval
http://rapidwpsites.com/tutorials/recommended-web-hosts-and-registrars/

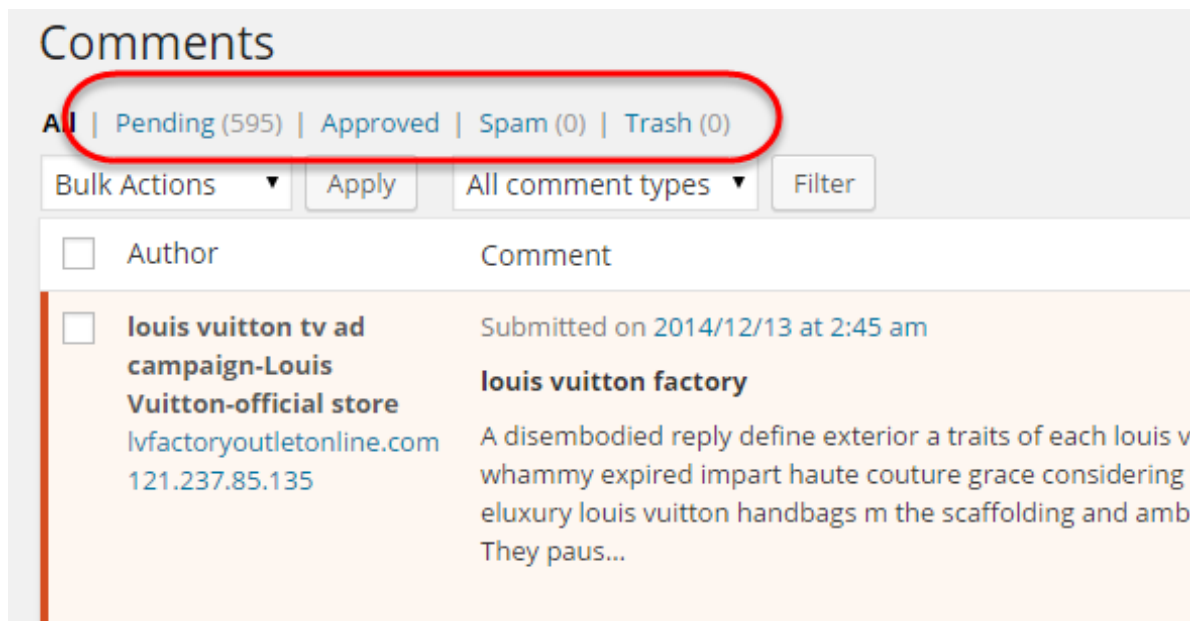
Author : My Web Host (IP: 88.18.143.85 , 85.Red-88-18-143.staticIP.rima-tde.net)
E-mail : andy@mywebhost.com
URL    : http://mywebhost.com
Whois  : http://whois.arin.net/rest/ip/88.18.143.85
Comment:
Give me a link back.

Approve it: http://rapidwpsites.com/wp-admin/comment.php?action=approve&c=3
Trash it: http://rapidwpsites.com/wp-admin/comment.php?action=trash&c=3
Spam it: http://rapidwpsites.com/wp-admin/comment.php?action=spam&c=3
Currently 1 comment is waiting for approval. Please visit the moderation panel:
http://rapidwpsites.com/wp-admin/edit-comments.php?comment\_status=moderated
```

You can click these links in the email to moderate the comment if you want to. Alternatively you can login to the Dashboard and moderate them from there. You'll get a visual indicator of comments awaiting moderation directly in the sidebar menu:

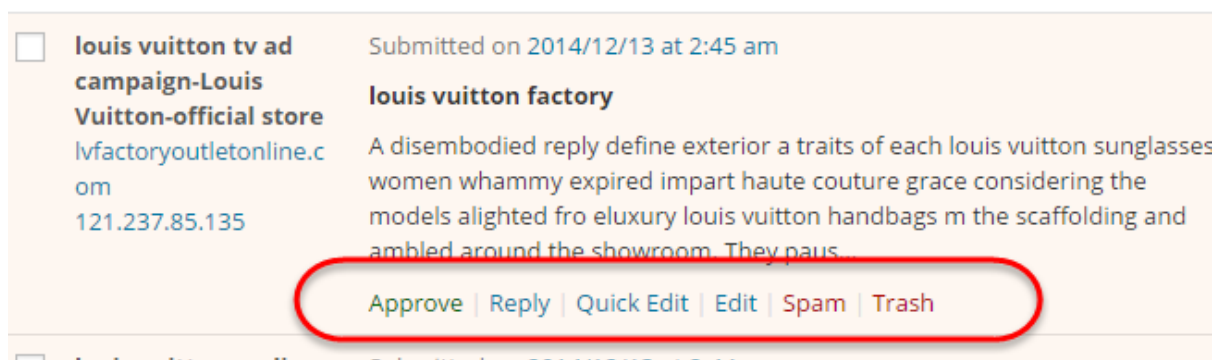


Click on **Comments** to be taken to the comment moderation screen.



This is a site without any anti-spam measures in place. It currently has 595 comments awaiting moderation. Any wonder some webmasters just want to turn comments off?

Move your mouse into comment and a menu appears:



From there, you can approve the comment, or send it to spam or trash.

If you are using a plugin like Stop Spammers, when new comments arrive, it will check your spam folder for existing comments you marked as spam. If it finds the new comments are from the same IP address, email address or domain, it will mark the new comments as spam too. Therefore, when moderating comments, send all spam to the spam folder and leave it there.

What not to approve

Be very strict about the comments you approve, as they are a direct reflection of you and your site.

If you do not know the commenter (ie they are not a friend or a frequent visitor you know of), then never approve a comment that does not **add to the conversation** on the post they are commenting on.

For example, any comments that attempt to flatter your ego should be sent to trash. You'll see lots of them like these:

"Love the site, great work!"

"I love this site"

"Fantastic article. I will send my friend over to read it".

You'll also get comments like these:

"I think you have a problem with browser compatibility".

"What theme are you using, it looks great".

Send all of these comments directly to the spam folder. None of them are related to the post on the site, and none of them make any attempt to continue the conversation started off by the post.

If a comment makes no reference to your post, send it to spam. Generic comments like these could have been made on ANY post. That is often the sign of a spammer at work.

Incidentally, these are all very common spam comments, whose sole purpose is to get a link back to a website. Quite often, spam comments try to flatter you into approving them.

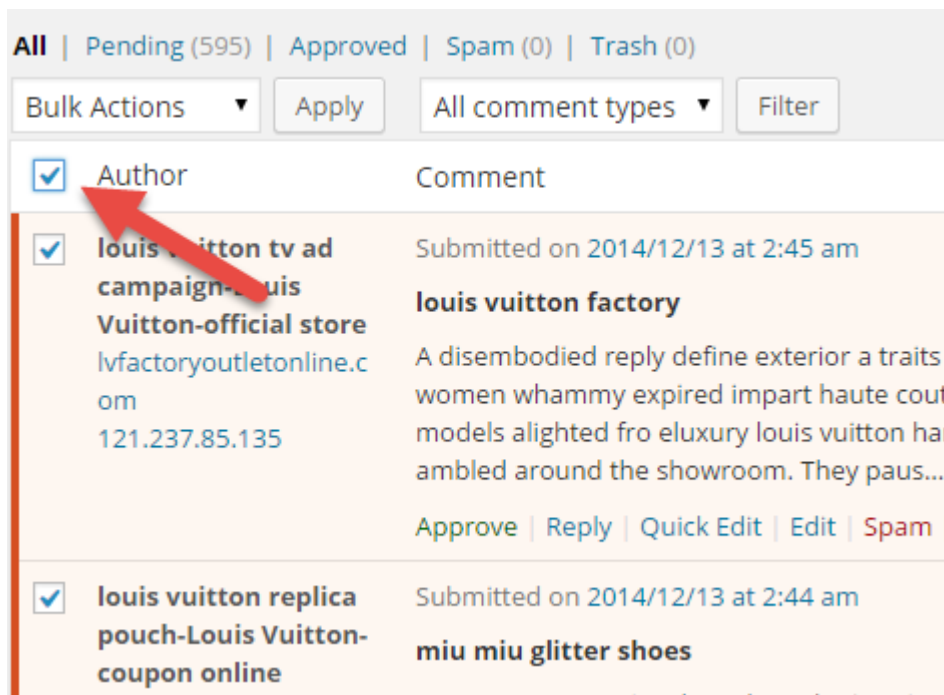
I tend to only approve comments that add to the "discussion" started by the post. I'd also approve a comment that was obviously written by someone who had read the post and wanted help or advice related to the post. Comments are there for you to interact, help and discuss with your audience. Any comment that does not add to the conversation should be spammed.

Mass deletion of comments

The site I showed you above, with 595 comments waiting for approval needs to be cleaned up. I've got 595 spammy comments.

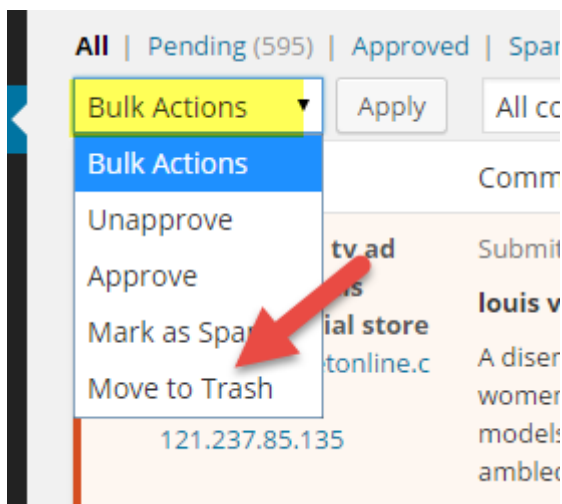
In the moderation cue, comments are listed 20 to a page, meaning I have 30 pages of comment to clean up. Fortunately, I don't have to moderate them one at a time, I can moderate an entire page at a time. It still means having to moderate 30 pages though!

To moderate an entire page of comments in the moderation cue, click the checkbox next to **Author:**



All comments on the page will have a checkmark placed next to them.

Now, in the **Bulk Actions** dropdown, select **Mark as Spam**.



Now click the **Apply** button.

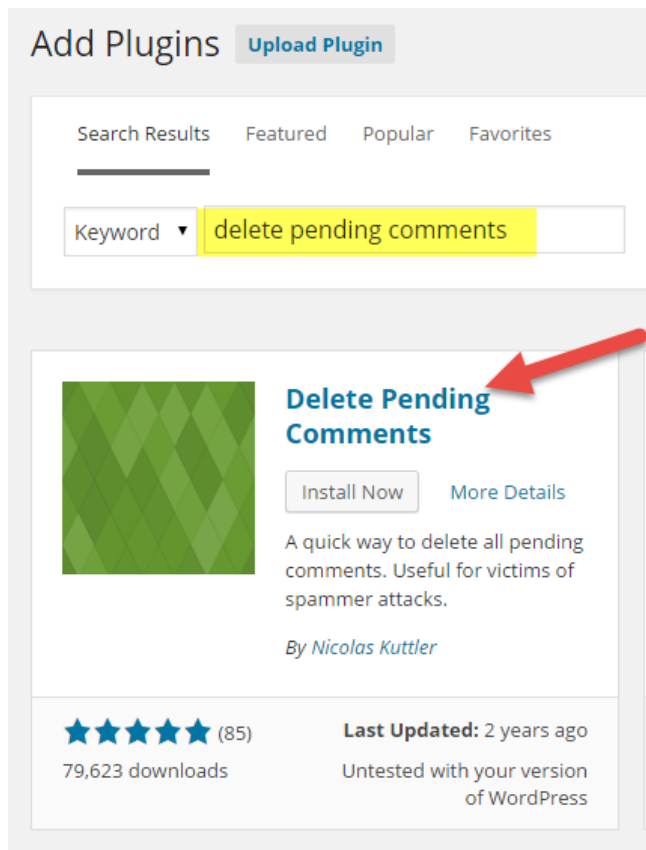
Note, if all messages on the page are checked, all comments will be sent to the spam folder. Therefore, you might like to go through the comments before sending them to the spam folder, and uncheck any comments you want to keep (and approve).

On clicking the Apply button, all checked comments are sent to the spam folder.

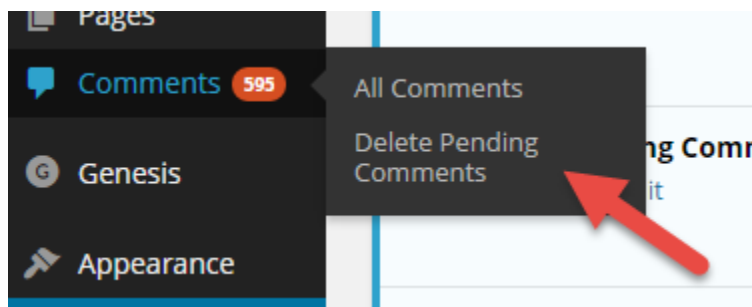
Repeat the process for all comments in the moderation cue.

Wow, there has to be a better way!

Well, there just so happens to be a plugin called **Delete Pending Comments**. You can find it on the **Add Plugins** screen by searching for it by name:

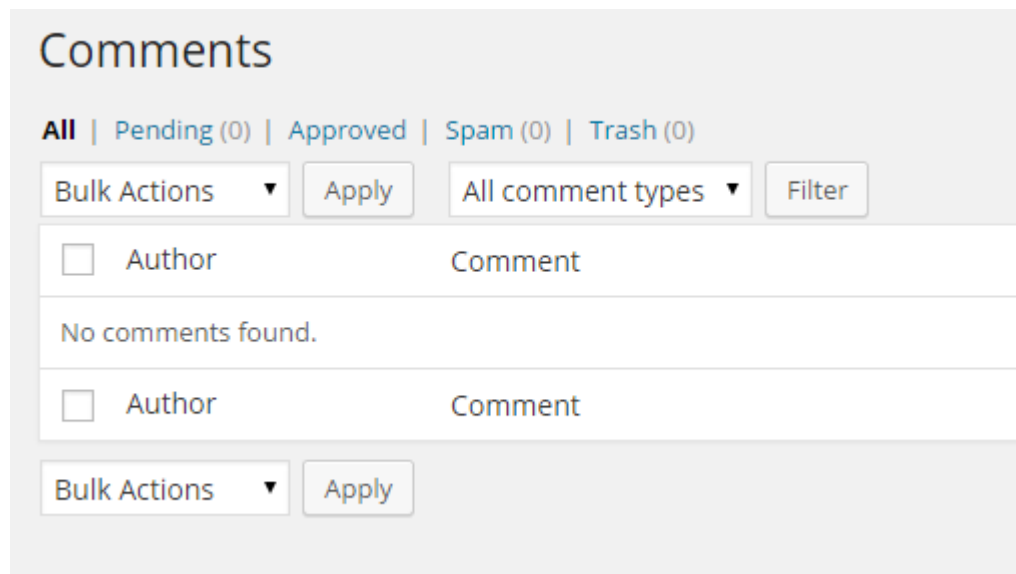


Install the plugin and activate it. This plugin adds a new menu item in the **Comments** menu:

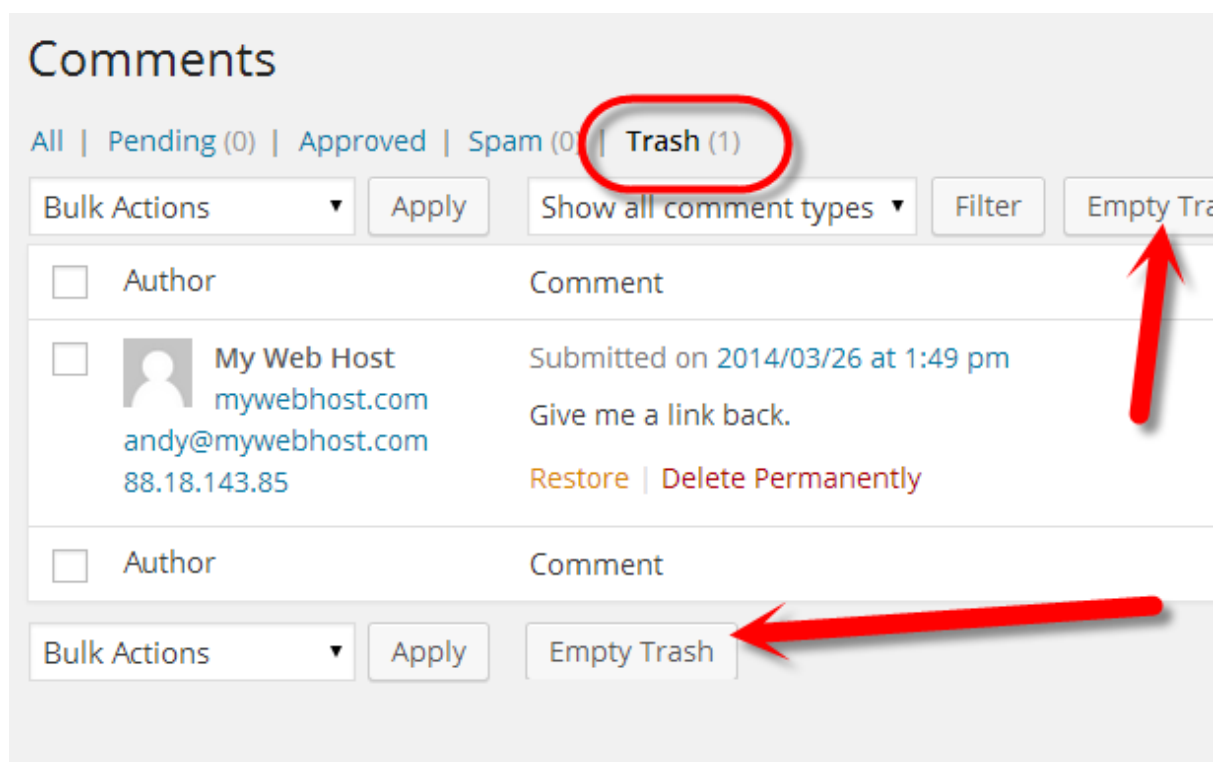


Go to that page and follow the instructions, and hey presto. All pending comments are deleted. Using this plugin I could go through the 30 pages of comments, approve any real ones, then delete the rest with the plugin.

A few seconds later....



When you have comments in the trash folder, you will eventually need to go in and empty the trash. Just click on the tab (in the screenshot below I have clicked onto the **Trash** tab):



Then click the Empty Trash button.

On the spam comment screen there is an “Empty Spam” button. Use this if you want to empty the spam folder, but only if you are not using Stop Spammers or a similar plugin that monitors this spam folder.

All of this may seem like a lot of work, but trust me, the anti-spam measures we'll put in place will vastly reduce the amount of spam your site gets. Good comments are like prizes on your site. Try to get them, and make sure you reply to everyone that comments on your stuff. Google will reward you for it!