



How to Launch a WordPress Website

Free Guide + Checklist



The Ultimate WordPress Checklist

INSTALLATION

- Select a hosting provider.
- Set up your domain name.
- Install WordPress.
- Install a CDN.
- Install an SSL certificate.

THEME

- Choose a responsive theme.
- Create a child theme.
- Customize it.

PLUGINS

- Install the HubSpot WordPress plugin.
- Install Rank Math.
- Install WP Rocket.
- Install iThemes Security.

CONTENT

- Establish categories, tags, and any custom taxonomy.
- Configure permalink settings.
- Add posts and pages to your website.

OPTIMIZATION

- Add internal links.
- Add forms.
- Compress images.
- Analyze your content.

MAINTENANCE

- Back up site periodically.
- Update software, theme, and plugins.
- Fix broken links.



Your Go-to WordPress Checklist

WordPress is a powerful CMS to build, customize, and launch a website quickly and easily. It's designed for a range of users, from first-time website owners to experienced developers and agencies.

This quick checklist is our way of helping you have the smoothest, most efficient set-up, no matter your experience level with building a website. It's also designed to help you wherever you are in the development process. Already have a complete website and are just waiting to hit "Publish"? Use the one-page checklist to make sure you've fully optimized your site. Haven't even installed the WordPress software yet? No problem! Read past the checklist for detailed explanations and recommendations for each step of your website launch.

We've included helpful HubSpot articles throughout the checklist in case you want to deep dive into any step.

We hope this helps. Happy building!

Introduction

Since its launch in 2003, WordPress has evolved into a multi-purpose content management system with thousands of **plugins**, **themes**, **hosting providers**, and other companies and individuals working to support and extend the platform. Its extensibility and ease-of-use empower millions of business owners and other users to create a website that works for their needs.

Here's how you can do the same in 22 easy steps.

Throughout the guide, you'll find recommendations for hosting providers, themes, plugins, and other tools and services that can help you enhance your site.

Free WordPress Training Course

Learn everything you need to know about how to get started on building a WordPress website for your business, from setting up your domain all the way to making your website both functional and beautiful.

[Take the free course](#)

WordPress Training Course

Learn how to build a WordPress site with Elementor

1. Select a hosting provider.

The **hosting provider** and plan you choose affects your website's health, speed, reliability, security, and more.

When evaluating your options, consider your budget and must-haves. Do you need an SSL certificate? Daily backups? A particular amount of bandwidth? With a list of must-have features, you can choose the provider and plan that best meets your needs.

Web Hosting Provider Recommendations:

[Nexcess](#)
[Cloudways](#)
[Elementor Cloud](#)

2. Set up your domain name.

Your **domain name** is how your visitors are able to locate your website on the Internet. It's also a crucial part of your brand identity.

Some hosting providers offer domain registration as part of their hosting packages. Others don't. If your hosting provider doesn't offer domain registration or doesn't have a domain name you like, you can purchase one from a **domain registrar** and link it to your hosting account.

Domain Registrar Recommendations:

[Domain.com](#)
[GoDaddy](#)
[HostGator](#)

3. Install WordPress.

Once your hosting and domain name is set up, you're ready to install the WordPress software. Some hosting providers offer one-click installation. If yours doesn't, you can install it locally on your computer or remotely using cPanel or an **FTP client** like FileZilla.

For step-by-step instructions, check out our guide [How to Install WordPress](#).

4. Install a CDN.

A **content delivery network (CDN)** is a distributed system of servers designed to deliver web content as quickly as possible to end users.

Some hosting providers include a CDN service in their packages, but others don't. Luckily, there are several free **CDN services for WordPress**. In addition to providing a global server network, the best services will provide caching abilities, image and video optimization, and minification of CSS, JavaScript, and HTML. All of these features will improve the load time of your website.

CDN Recommendations:

[Cloudflare](#)[Jetpack Site Accelerator](#)[W3 Total Cache](#)

5. Install an SSL certificate.

An **SSL certificate** establishes an encrypted link between a web server and a browser in order to keep visitors' sensitive information safe as they read your content, submit forms, and make purchases on your site.

Many hosting providers include an SSL certificate with their plans and will handle the setup process for you, which is ideal. If not, you'll have to purchase one from a Certificate Authority (CA) and install it yourself.

For step-by-step instructions, check out our guide [How to Get an SSL Certificate in WordPress](#).

CA Recommendations:

[Let's Encrypt](#)[Comodo](#)[SSL for Free](#)

6. Choose a responsive theme.

Since mobile has accounted for approximately half of web traffic worldwide since the beginning of 2017, it's essential that your website is responsive. Fortunately, WordPress offers hundreds of responsive themes.

In addition to a responsive design, a theme should provide the design, layouts, and functionality you want. For example, you may want a theme with a variety of layouts or its own theme builder.

You can check out some of the best responsive themes for free and for businesses for inspiration.

Theme Recommendations:

[Astra](#)[Kadence](#)[Avada](#)

7. Create a child theme.

Creating a child theme is an important step before you begin customizing. The greatest advantage of creating a child theme is that you'll be able to update your theme without losing all your customizations.

For step-by-step instructions, check out our guide [How to Create a WordPress Child Theme](#).

8. Customize it.

Installing a WordPress theme will automatically change the design of your site. But using the default settings will risk your site looking like any other site on the internet using that theme. Customizing it will also ensure your website is consistent with your branding.

There are multiple options for customizing a WordPress theme. If you have coding experience, you can add custom CSS to your child themes' stylesheet. Alternatively, you can use the built-in WordPress Customizer to edit the colors, header and background images, menus, widgets, and homepage settings. You can also use a **page builder** to customize even more components of your theme.

Page Builder Recommendations:

[Elementor](#)[Divi Builder](#)[Beaver Builder](#)

9. Install the HubSpot WordPress plugin.

The **HubSpot WordPress plugin** integrates your site seamlessly with HubSpot CRM. This allows you to manage contacts, follow leads, track conversions, build email newsletters, engage with site visitors via forms and chat, and more. Additionally, the dashboard and analytics allow you to continue making informed decisions while growing your business.

Why We Recommend:

To grow your leads and customer base on your website, you need a plugin that smoothly syncs with a powerful CRM. The HubSpot WordPress plugin is the best tool for the job because it's easy-to-use, codeless, and completely free.

[**Get the Free Plugin**](#)

10. Install AIOSEO.

AIOSEO is a powerful and user-friendly plugin for improving website rankings. The plugin's Setup Wizard will automatically recommend the best SEO settings for your website, and its SEO analytics module will show you the keywords you rank for, your sitemap status, and any indexing issues. Rank Math also provides or supports sitemaps, schema, knowledge graph, local SEO, and more.

Why We Recommend:

Local and small business owners who rely on online searches for sales and revenue need a plugin that simplifies all the tasks related to WordPress SEO. Rank Math does exactly that, allowing users to easily optimize their on-page SEO, generate XML and video sitemaps, create and manage redirects, and more.

11. Install WP Rocket.

WP Rocket is a web performance plugin designed to speed up your website in just a few clicks. In addition to offering cache preloading and **GZIP compression**, WP Rocket enables users to minify and combine CSS and JS files, lazy load images, eliminate render-blocking JavaScript resources, and schedule automatic database cleanups.

Why We Recommend:

WP Rocket is designed not only to speed up your loading time but also to improve your overall website performance. What sets WP Rocket apart from other web performance plugins is that it begins working right out of the box once it's installed and activated on your site.

12. Install iThemes Security.

iThemes Security makes it easy to secure your WordPress website against hackers and other security threats. It stops automated attacks on your login page, scans for vulnerable plugins and themes and automatically applies security patches, blocks bots and spiders, backs up your database, and provides tips to address any detected vulnerabilities.

Why We Recommend:

iThemes Security is easy to install and set up even if you have zero cybersecurity background. It also provides dozens of features for proactively identifying and eliminating vulnerabilities and responding to threats.

13. Establish categories, tags, and any custom taxonomy.

Taxonomy is a way of grouping posts together based on their relationship. In WordPress, the default taxonomies are categories and **tags**, but you can create a custom taxonomy as well. This type of organization can help visitors find related content on your website. It can also help search engines to understand your website's structure and the content it contains, which will improve **SEO**.

It's a good idea to add some categories and tags before you begin creating content. This will help you shape your content strategy and site structure. You can always add more later.

14. Configure permalink settings.

Permalinks are the permanent URLs of the posts, pages, categories, and other archive pages on your website. Common settings are day and name, numeric, and post name, although WordPress does offer the option to create a custom URL structure.

Since permalinks that use the name of your posts are easy for both humans and search engines to understand and share, they're ideal for SEO.

15. Add posts and pages to your website.

Now it's time to actually add your content. In WordPress, you can create posts, pages, and custom post types. Whatever type of content you're creating, incorporating keyword research, using a grammar and spelling tool, and adding images can help attract and engage your visitors.

16. Add internal links.

Providing links to related content within your posts and pages will help both search engines and readers understand the relationship between the content on your site. This will make it easier for readers to navigate your site and for search engines to find all the content you own on a particular topic. Internal linking can therefore increase the chances of visitors staying on your site longer and of ranking for keywords associated with the topics you cover.

You can add internal links manually or use an [SEO plugin](#) to automatically provide internal linking suggestions.

Internal Linking Plugin Recommendations:

[AIOSEO](#)[Yoast](#)[Link Whisper](#)

17. Add forms.

To optimize your content for leads, you can add **forms**. Web forms such as **contact forms**, surveys, shipping forms, registration forms and quizzes can be used to gather lead information, collect payments, survey customers, and more.

A forms plugin can help you create beautiful, customized forms and embed them anywhere on your WordPress site. Best of all? Most can be used with the HubSpot WordPress plugin as the CRM behind it so you can easily manage your contacts, segment them into lists, and see every interaction they've had with your website.

Forms Plugin Recommendations:

[Gravity Forms](#)[WPForms](#)

18. Compress images.

Compressing your images is one of the easiest ways to increase your page load times. Reducing your images' file sizes in this way reduces their "weight," which ultimately helps your pages load more quickly.

There are a variety of **image optimization plugins** you can use for this purpose. In addition to allowing you to compress images through lossy or lossless compression, this type of plugin will allow you to optimize your images in other ways, like changing their file formats and enabling lazy loading.

Image Optimization Plugin Recommendations:

[Smush](#)[EWWW Image Optimizer](#)[TinyPNG](#)

19. Analyze your content.

Analyzing your content is an important step in content creation and site maintenance. This data lets you know what's working and how to improve it.

An analytics tool can help you monitor and audit your content's performance, and provide insight into your audience's behavior. This can help you determine how well your SEO efforts are paying off, which authors on your site are writing content that is meeting your goals, and even what time to post content.

Analytics Plugin Recommendations:

HubSpot WordPress Plugin

MonsterInsights

20. Back up site periodically.

Having a website backup with all your data is essential to get your website up and running in case of an emergency, like a security breach, malware issue, or human error.

While most hosting companies offer automated website backups, some don't. In that case, you can either [manually backup your WordPress site using cPanel](#) or use a [backup plugin](#).

Backup Plugin Recommendations:

BlogVault

Backup Buddy

UpdraftPlus

21. Update software, theme, and plugins.

Outdated core software, themes, and plugins leave sites vulnerable to hackers and other **WordPress security issues**. They can also hurt the user experience.

Since WordPress developers regularly release updates with functionality enhancements and additional security measures, it's essential you install these updates manually as soon as possible or auto-enable them.

Some hosting providers offer automatic updates. If yours doesn't, you can use a site management plugin.

Site Management Plugin Recommendations:

WPMU Dev

Easy Updates Manager

ManageWP

22. Fix broken links.

Broken links can impact your site's user experience and SEO rankings. Finding and fixing them is an important task for maintaining the health of your site. You can do so manually, or use a tool to help.

Link Checker Recommendations:

W3C Link Checker

Broken Link Checker by WPMU Dev

Conclusion

Once you've completed these steps, you'll be ready to launch your WordPress website. You should take the time to celebrate this major accomplishment — but don't forget that managing and optimizing a website is an ongoing process. The continued investment will mean more traffic, leads, and growth for your business. Good luck!

Get HubSpot for WordPress

Capture, organize, and engage web visitors with free forms, live chat, CRM (contact management), email marketing, and analytics. Easy to use and no coding necessary. Built natively into WordPress.

Grow easier. Grow faster. Grow better.

[Get Started](#)

