



Programming, publishing,  
and promoting  
your WordPress plugin



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Building a WordPress plugin is a fantastic way to improve your development skills, get involved in the WordPress community, and be recognized as an expert in the field. (Plus, who knows, you might just even make an extra buck or two from it!)

Whether you're starting from square one or you're ready to get the word out, this ebook will help you program, publish, and promote your WordPress plugin. Let's get started!

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## Programming your plugin

The first step, obviously, is programming your plugin! Depending on what you're trying to build, that could take quite a bit of time, but we'll cover the basics of what you need in order to have a fully functioning plugin.



***Be careful that you don't use the name "WordPress" in the name of your plugin.***

To build a plugin, you'll need a name (Perfectly Practical Plugin), a PHP file (perfectly-practical-plugin.php), and a plugin header (this tells WordPress that your file is a plugin).

Note: Be careful that you don't use the name "WordPress" in the name of your plugin – you won't be able

to publish it to the WordPress Plugin Directory if you do. It will also be rejected if you include the name of a trademarked product or if your plugin starts with the name of another plugin.

For the plugin header, at the very least, it needs to contain your plugin name. But if you're serious about publishing and promoting your WordPress plugin, you might want to include a few other things, such as:

- **Plugin Name:** The name of your plugin.
- **Plugin URI:** The home page of your plugin, if you build a website for it.
- **Description:** A brief description of your plugin. Think of it like a Tweet, and keep it less than 140 characters.
- **Version:** The current version number of your plugin.
- **Author:** Your name, and if anyone helped you build it, their name, also.
- **Author URL:** Your website, or social profile.
- **License:** The short name of the plugin's license. ([You can find more info about that here.](#))
- **License URI:** A link to the license.

You'll place this information at the top of your PHP file. Altogether, it'll look like:

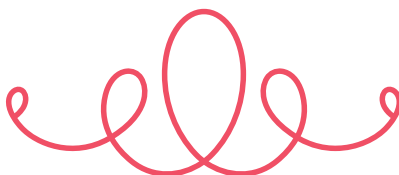
```
<?php
/*
Plugin Name: WP Plugin Template
Plugin URI: http://fyaconiello.github.com/wp-plugin-template
Description: A simple WordPress plugin template
Version: 1.0
Author: Francis Yaconiello
Author URI: http://www.yaconiello.com
License: GPL2
*/
```

Once you get this file set up, you're ready to program your plugin! To accomplish that, you might use WordPress plugin hooks, template tags, and any number of other techniques. For more information, check out the [WordPress Plugin Developer Handbook](#).

Once you're finished with development, it's time to publish your plugin to the [WordPress Plugin Directory](#).

## Publishing your plugin

The first thing you need to have in order for WordPress to accept your plugin is a Readme.txt file. It contains all of the information related to your plugin and is what WordPress uses to generate pages for your plugin on the WordPress Plugin Directory (like the Description, Installation, and Screenshots tabs).



The format for the Readme looks like this:

```
=== Plugin Name ===

Contributors: yourname
Donate link: http://yoursite.com
Tags: business, directory
Requires at least: 4.3
Tested up to: 4.3
Stable tag: 4.3
License: GPLv2 or later

License URI: http://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-2.0.html
A simple description
== Description ==
A longer description with a
- list

- of

- features
== Installation ==
This section describes how to install the plugin and get it working.
1. Upload ['plugin-name'](link-to-github.zip) to the '/wp-content/
plugins/' directory

2. Activate the plugin through the 'Plugins' menu in WordPress
== Frequently Asked Questions ==
= Is this a cool plugin? =
Yes
== Screenshots ==
1. Desktop view
2. Mobile view
== Changelog ==
= v1.0.0 =

* Initial release
```

## Changelog and versioning

It's important to keep the version number of your plugin up to date so, if nothing else, users can be notified when there are updates to it. Updating the changelog is as simple as adding a new entry to the changelog section in the Readme file. There are a few different outlooks on versioning and what should constitute as a major or minor release; we recommend consulting the [Semantic Versioning 2.0.0 site](#) for reference on that.

As an example, let's say you ship your plugin at version 1.0.0. Then the next day you fix a little bug or add a little functionality that you forgot when you first published the plugin. Before you'd deploy the plugin to the WordPress directory (more on how to do that later), you'd update the changelog section in the Readme file to something like this:

```
== Changelog ==  
= v1.0.1 =  
  
* Fix a thing that allows users to do a thing  
= v1.0.0 =  
  
* Initial release
```

Last, you need to update the version number in the plugin header from your PHP file. So instead of Version 1.2, now it might be Version 1.3.

## Submit to WordPress.org

With a Readme file in place and extensive testing done, you're ready to submit the plugin to WordPress! This is the easiest part of the whole process. Simply go to [Add Your Plugin](#), log in with your WordPress account (or create one), and fill out the short form.



## Add Your Plugin

Currently there are 100 plugins in the review queue, 73 of which are awaiting their initial review.

### Submit your plugin for hosting

Note that the plugin name you submit here will become the URL of the plugin in the directory. The name is not changeable later, so check your spelling and be sure that you get this form correct!

For example: "Demo Plugin Name" will become <http://wordpress.org/plugins/demo-plugin-name>


Plugin Name (required)

Plugin Description (required)

Plugin URL (required; must be a link to a ZIP file of the working plugin that includes a [completed readme.txt](#))

Send Post »

Take the time to write a lovely description, and then drop the link to your plugin in a ZIP file in the last field. Using [GitHub](#) for plugin development makes it really easy to have a publicly available ZIP.

 **trevanhetzel** / **smooth-directory**

Unwatch 1

Star 0

Fork 0

Code

Issues 0

Pull requests 0

Wiki

Pulse

Graphs

Settings

A simple and flexible WordPress business directory plugin — Edit

23 commits

1 branch

4 releases

1 contributor

Branch: master

New pull request

New file

Find file

SSH git@github.com:trevanhetze

Download ZIP

Once you submit the plugin, sit back and wait! (It could take a couple days to be approved.) You'll get an email with information on the new SVN repository if it's accepted. Which brings us to the next step - deploying!

## Deploy with SVN

Once the plugin is accepted, it's still not live yet. You have to actually upload the files to the SVN repository WordPress provides you with. If you've never used SVN before, don't worry. [Their article](#) walks you through getting logged in through the terminal pretty quickly. Basically, you create a folder on your computer, check out the SVN repo, copy your plugin files into the newly created /trunk folder, and push it back up.

You could do this through the terminal each time you need to deploy a change, or you could use a handy tool called [Ship](#). It works like a charm and automatically deploys to the SVN repo whenever you tag a new release in GitHub. If you're using GitHub (which, again, you should be) we highly recommend this free service.

For the best deployment process and maintainability, it's important to use releases or tags whenever you deploy.

Just as you update the version number in your plugin file and changelog, you should also be issuing new releases in GitHub. It's actually required to do this in order to use Ship.

Finally, once you get signed up with Ship and select your repo to hook up to it, you can deploy your first release (make sure the name matches the release name in GitHub). After that, as long as you fill in the form under the WordPress Details heading, Ship will just deploy whenever a new release is issued in GitHub.

## Screenshots and banner images

Displaying screenshots of your plugin is super important to help people visually see what it looks like and to give them an idea of how it works. These screenshots will show up on the WordPress Plugin Directory page and when a user adds a plugin on their site through the Plugins page.

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***If you've never used SVN before, don't worry!***





Banner images aren't as important as screenshots, but they make your plugin look a little more impressionable. The banner image is the big image that's shown at the top of the WordPress.org plugin directory page.

To get these images to show, you have to place them in the /assets directory of your SVN repo. Unfortunately, you can't use Ship for this (as it only deploys the /trunk folder), so you'll have to consult [this article](#) again to get logged in to your SVN repo.

To keep things simple, stick to naming your screenshots screenshot-#.png (where “#” is the number). Doing it this way allows you to easily reference the images in the Readme to give them a description.

```
== Screenshots ==  
1. Desktop view  
2. Mobile view
```

For example, the description “Desktop view” from the Screenshot section in the Readme will match up to screenshot-1.png in the /assets folder.

For the banner, you actually need two versions of the same image - one for normal screens and one for retina screens. The names of the banner images should be banner-1544x500.png and banner-772x250.png.

That's it! Once your plugin is accepted and live in the WordPress plugin directory, it's time to start getting the word out about your awesome new plugin.

## Promoting your WordPress plugin

Promoting your plugin doesn't have to take a lot of work. Sure, if you really start to enjoy it or really want to make a profit, you can get into some pretty advanced marketing techniques. But for the average developer, some basic (and super quick) additions to your workflow could make a big difference for your plugin.

Let's explore some easy ways to market your WordPress plugin.

### Update your social profiles

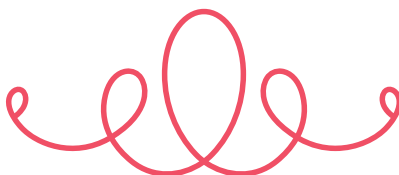
Do you have a Facebook or Twitter? LinkedIn or Instagram? If yes, let your network know what you just created! Those people already follow you, so they're highly likely to care about your plugin. As you're finishing up development, you can share sneak peeks to build some hype, or you can share demo links once you're finished to get real users testing your plugin. Not only will your followers enjoy it, but you'll have the opportunity to get some early feedback.

### Write a blog post

If you enjoy writing, consider drafting up a blog post about your plugin. You could explain what it does, why you wanted to create it, and even go into the process a bit. This is something that's easy to link to, so it's easy to share with friends, family, and influencers. Plus, anyone interested in the plugin will greatly benefit from such a detailed write-up of what it is and what it does. And if it's high quality enough, you'll get some major SEO brownie points to help more people find your plugin!

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***Promoting your plugin  
doesn't have to take a lot  
of work.***



### **Post on Dribbble and Behance**

Much like social media, [Dribbble](#) and [Behance](#) are great for sharing your plugin with your network. The benefit here is that your network on these sites consists solely of other designers, who (I'm guessing) are most likely your target audience. This is a great opportunity to gather feedback and discover what works well and what doesn't. And if your plugin is a hit, you might just turn some of your followers into customers!

### **Create a video tutorial**

The more resources you can provide about what your plugin is and how to use it, the more people will enjoy it and be willing to share it to their own network. A video tutorial is a great way to do this, as it shows functionality and acts as a great resource for people to come back to when they're using your plugin.

### **Know your features**

Whether it's for your product page, an email, or even something as small as a tweet, you'll want to have some standard copy that you use when talking about your plugin. Think: what would the description of your plugin be? Make sure to include things like:

- **A short 1-3 sentence summary**
- **Basic functionality**
- **Customizable features**
- **The cost**
- **Whether any upgrades are available**
- **The level of support you'll offer**
- **Any unique features**

### **Provide killer support**

Hopefully you were planning on doing this anyway, but providing great resources to help customers troubleshoot issues can actually help your marketing efforts. Create an FAQ page, provide outstanding documentation, and consider offering some level of support for your plugin.

The better your plugin is, the more likely your customers will be to promote it for you. And word of mouth marketing is one of the best strategies you can have. If you strive for quality, a piece of the marketing puzzle will fall right into place.



***If you strive for quality, a piece of the marketing puzzle will fall right into place.***

These basic marketing techniques are quick, simple, and are really only small adjustments to your workflow. Doing these things are easy ways to get your plugin noticed and help you find your first handful of clients.

If you'd like to continue on the marketing train, however, there are some "advanced" techniques that can really help skyrocket your plugin. (I say advanced, but I promise, they're easy too!) If you're ready, head to our [full guide to marketing WordPress products](#).

### **Good luck!**

As you can see, there are many different methods that you can use to program, publish, and promote your WordPress product. To be successful, just keep your ideal customers in mind, and focus on quality over quantity. Then, it'll all fall into place!





## Want more WordPress guides?

If you're ready to start a new side project, you might enjoy some of our other guides, such as:

- [How to add a sticky back-to-top button on your website](#)
- [How to customize your Genesis child theme](#)
- [WordPress API basics: What it means and how to use it](#)
- [How to make your WordPress site's performance out of this world](#)
- [The ultimate guide to managing 50+ WordPress sites](#)

Or, check out [The Layout](#), a daily online design publication brought to you by [Flywheel](#). The Layout covers topics like why your WordPress site gets hacked (and how to protect it), the latest design trends, or how to know when it's time for your agency to grow. Our goal is to give you thought-provoking articles every day that show you the next step for your business, improve your process, and inspire your designs.

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