

How To Maintain Your Website



When your brand new website goes live, it's easy to move on to other projects and not think much about it until the information gets old or you are ready to give it a refresh. Even if you are actively posting stories and updating content, it's easy to ignore the rest.

But a website is much like an automobile, if you take care of it with regular maintenance, it will give you great service much longer and with fewer major issues.

Here are some basic tasks that you can do, and should do, to keep your website running smoothly.



1. Update your passwords

Your website will be under attack from bots that are trying to access your site. Your first line of defense is having a secure password. More than likely your site had a secure password when it was turned over to you. There is a chance that you may have forgotten it and you reset it with an easy password (password123 anyone?). Change your password regularly and if you have trouble remembering these passwords, use a program like 1Password or LastPass to keep up with them and to suggest secure passwords.



2. Create regular backups of your site

One day your site will go down, and you will want to be ready. If I created your site, there is a plugin called BackupBuddy already on your site. I used it to transfer the files from my development site to your host. I may have made one backup before turning the site over to you. If you have been making regular updates to your content, you need to be making backups as well. And when you make the backup, download it to a remote location of your choice.

On my personal sites, I have BackupBuddy do regular backups on sites with changing content. I download a copy to my backup hard drive which is, in turn, backed up to Backblaze. I also send a copy to Google Drive.



3. Keep your files updated

The core Wordpress files and plugins are constantly being updated and improved. There are feature updates, and there are security updates. Security updates are made when a new vulnerability is identified, and the developer wants to plug it. You need to make sure you have the most secure files in place.

Do you have a premium plugin or theme? If the license has expired, you're not getting updates. Make sure that you have a current license and the plugin is up-to-date. And as always, before you update, make sure you do a complete backup and download the backup file to a remote location. Doing this could save you some heartache.



4. Do your forms work?

Periodically test your forms. They may have broken for one reason or another or the person who was getting the forms has left the company. Check that the right person is getting the right form. You don't want to miss a sale.



5. Delete Comments

I recommend to my clients that they don't accept comments on their website and blog posts. We turn off comments before our client's site goes live but for some reason spam comments still get through. These aren't harmful since they aren't public, but they do take up space on your hard drive. Go through and delete these comments.

If you do accept comments, make sure you are running the Akismet plugin to help manage these comments and filter spam. An alternative would be to let people comment on your Facebook page that is linked to your website.



6. Broken Links

Go to your site and test all the links and make sure they still link to something. If you have a link to another website and it has gone away, you may need to edit your content.



7. Have you looked at Google Analytics lately?

More than likely you have a Google Analytics account, and it is connected to your site. Log into Google Analytics and see what pages people are visiting on your site. Is it a particular blog post? A product page? This information may help you focus your business or at the least, create more of the same content to drive traffic.

Are a majority of your visitors using mobile phones? You may be surprised to know how many are. Make sure that your site is mobile ready so that your visitors can get the info they need and take action.



8. Optimize Your Images

It's easy to grab a stock photo or download one from your camera and add it to a blog post. Wordpress will resize feature images after all. What you don't realize is that large photos are slowing down your site. Before you upload a photo you should optimize it as best you can. Including resizing it to final size and compressing

it when saving as a jpeg. You can use a plugin such as Smush Image Compression and Optimization (<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-smushit/>) to make the file size even smaller. Nothing will drive a visitor away faster than watching a photo slowly reveal itself onscreen.

Not sure how to resize your images? I use Photoshop, but there are cheaper options you can use such as the online Canva.com. There are other downloadable programs depending on your computer platform. GIMP (gimp.org) is free and available for most platforms.

Finally, if you have an image file and you need it converted and optimized, use the website jpeg.io.



9. Add more security

As I mentioned in the first item, Update Your Passwords, bad people are trying to gain access to your site, and we can do more than just change the password. We can add a security plugin. I am a fan of iThemes Security plugin (<https://ithemes.com/security>). With its basic setting, when a bot is trying to brute force attack your website, you can lock them out after a predetermined number of attempts for a particular time. A brute force attack is a trial-and-error method used to obtain information such as a user password. There are other options you can set, and the paid version gives you more. Wordfence (<https://www.wordfence.com>) is another popular plugin.



10. Hire someone to update your site

You may not have the time or energy to keep your site updated and running smoothly, but it still needs to be done. If you can't-do it yourself, consider hiring someone to maintain your website and keep it running smoothly. Someone like me!

A little maintenance will go a long way. If you stay on top of it, your website will give you years of service.

Shawn Wright helps businesses build their website,
build their brand and grow their business.

Contact us to find out more about our services and how
we can help you grow your business.

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