



The Handbook

Codex

[http://codex.wordpress.org/Combating Comment Spam](http://codex.wordpress.org/Combating_Comment_Spam)

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Combating Comment Spam

Comment spam is a fact of life if you have a blog. Using WordPress, you have not only solid built-in tools to prevent comment spam, there are also a wide range of comment spam protection and defense plugins and methods to choose from.

There is no "one size fits all" method that will protect your comments; spammers use many tactics. Consider using multiple defenses. Remember spammers change the way they attack so you must keep your choices updated.

Disclaimer: The plugins and codes listed are not endorsed by anyone other than the plugin author. No responsibility is taken by WordPress for anything untoward that may occur.

Criteria for listing: For any code to be listed here, it must have already been posted to the [WordPress Support Forum](http://www.wordpress.org/support) (<http://www.wordpress.org/support>) OR to the [Hackers mailing list](#), and then received an independent follow-up message of "works as expected for me without error."

ANY code or links added to this page that have not satisfied the above criteria will be deleted.

Questions about Comment Spam

Why are they spamming me?

Apart from *because they can*, the need to raise page ranking in search engines gives rise to the need to create a lot of links to a web page so the search engine thinks that page is important.

Which is the best plugin?

This is not an easy answer. Spammers use different tactics, and each plugin will use different tactics in response. There is no plugin that will keep you spam-free forever. Comment spammers can download the plugins, see how they work, and figure out a way around them. This is why you should check a plugin author's site for any updates. WordPress makes it easy to find update via the [Plugin panel](#) and the link to the plugin author's website.

I have a problem with a plugin.

Visit the plugin author's site to see if they have already offered a solution. If not, **search the forums first** before posting as the answer may be there.

I have spam appear as soon as I post!

If you do not have comment spam plugins or the [latest version of WordPress](#) (<http://www.wordpress.org/download>) installed, this may happen. [Upgrade](#) or install one of the comment spam plugins and manually delete the comment spam from your [Manage > Comments](#) panel.

I have installed a plugin, and now all comments are sent to moderation.

You very probably have a blank line in your [Spam Words](#) list set in [Options > Discussion](#) panel.

This spam stopping stuff is very useful, is not it?

Yes, it is. Please be sure to drop by the author's page and say "Thanks." They deserve the appreciation and look forward to hearing about your suggestions and

experiences with their work. This will no doubt help to encourage them to continue the development of their plugin(s).

Why is every comment going into the moderation queue?

Go to the [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel and make sure that **An administrator must approve the comment (regardless of any matches below)** is unchecked. With that option selected, all comments are sent to the moderation queue to await approval. Make sure that **Hold a comment in the queue if it contains more than x links** is not blank and contains a number higher than zero. If this value is blank or zero, all comments containing links will be moderated.

If the option mentioned above is unchecked, the link moderation value is higher than zero, and you still have this problem, your [Spam Words](#) list probably has blank lines, punctuation marks, or single letters between the information in the list. There should be spaces between the listed items or each item must be on its own line. If you have done this, then upgrade the comment spam plugins you have installed. If this continues to be a problem, deactivate the comment spam plugins one by one to determine the culprit and contact the plugin author for help.

I have disabled comments, but comments continue to be posted.

If you have unchecked **Allow people to post comments on the article** on the [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel, then you have only disabled comments on *future posts*. To completely disable comments, you will have to edit each past post and uncheck **Allow Comments** from the [Write Post SubPanel](#). Alternatively, you could delete the `wp-comments-post.php` file, or run this MySQL query, from the command line on a shell account, or using [phpMyAdmin](#): `UPDATE wp_posts SET comment_status="closed";`

I have disabled trackbacks, but trackbacks continue to be posted.

If you have unchecked **Allow link notifications from other Weblogs (pingbacks and trackbacks.)** on the [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel, then you have only disabled trackbacks on *future posts*. To completely disable trackbacks, you will have to edit each past post and uncheck **Allow Pings** from the Write Post SubPanel.

Alternatively, you could just simply delete the `wp-trackback.php` file, or run this MySQL query, from the command line on a shell account, or using [PHPMyAdmin](#): `UPDATE wp_posts SET ping_status="closed";`

Default Comment Spam Tools

The following are the default comment spam tools that come with every installation of WordPress.

Number of Links in Posts

To change the number of links in comment posts, which may help stop comment spammers who include dozens of links in their comment posts, you can change the setting for the number of links permitted in a comment.

- Go to the [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel.
- Scroll down to [Comment Moderation](#).
- In the section which covers the number of links in a post, it is set to 2 by default. You could lower to one.

NOTE: Do not set this to zero or leave the field blank. It will send every comment to

moderation -- not the desired effect.

Spam Words

If you encounter a word or phrase that is not in the Spam Words list, you can add it. You can also add the spam words found on the [Spam Words](#) list to the list that comes with your WordPress installation.

- Go to the [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) > [Comment Moderation](#) panel.
- In the [Spam Words](#) textarea box, you can add additional *spam words*.
- Added words are to be on a single line with a single line break after them with no spaces in between the words. If you include a blank line, every single comment will be moderated.
- When a comment contains any of these words in its content, name, URI, e-mail, or IP, WordPress will hold it in the moderation queue.

Comment Blacklist

Included on your [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel is a section called the **Comment Blacklist**. This is a list of words completely blacklisted from your blog.

Be very careful what you add here. If a comment matches something here it will be completely nuked and there will be no notification. These "nuked" comments will not appear on your blog, but they will remain in your database marked as `[spam]`. These `[spam]` comments are being held for upcoming "intelligent" anti-spam features. Plugins like [Spam Nuker](http://www.chrisjdavis.org/2005/03/05/spam-nuker-151/) (<http://www.chrisjdavis.org/2005/03/05/spam-nuker-151/>) can safely recover or permanently delete any comments marked as `[spam]`.

Choose your blacklist words wisely!

Remember that partial words can match, so if there is any chance something here might match it would be better to put it in the moderation box. Blacklisting a word such as `tramadol` will automatically delete any comments containing `tramadol`, `tramadols`, `bigtramadol`, etc. But, blacklisting a word such as `ass` will automatically delete comments containing `ass`, `asses`, `assistance`, `passionate`, `assumption`, etc.

Moderate All Comments

Depending upon the amount of comments and control you want over comments on your WordPress site, you may want to moderate all comments on your site.

In the [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel, check the box next to **An administrator must approve the comment (regardless of any matches below)**.

Pre-approve Comments from Old Commenters

You can also set your [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel options to allow previously approved comments to avoid moderation. Check off **Comment author must have a previously approved comment**.

Block Open and Insecure Proxies

WordPress checks a real-time backlist (currently: [Blitzed Open Proxy Monitor List](http://opm.blitzed.org/) (<http://opm.blitzed.org/>)) to see if the commenter's IP address is listed as an open or insecure proxy. Open and insecure proxy servers are sometimes used by spammers, since that will prevent them from being tracked down effectively. Genuine commenters will rarely, if ever, use an open or insecure proxy to browse your blog, so you can block comments originating from such proxy servers by doing the following:

- Go to the [Options](#) > [Discussion](#) panel.
- Select **Blacklist comments from open and insecure proxies**.

These "blacklisted" comments will not appear on your blog, but they will remain in your database marked as [spam]. These [spam] comments are being held for upcoming "intelligent" anti-spam features. Plugins like [Spam Nuker](http://www.chrisjdavis.org/2005/03/03/mass-delete-15/) (<http://www.chrisjdavis.org/2005/03/03/mass-delete-15/>) can safely recover or permanently delete any comments marked as [spam].

Restrict Comments to Registered Users

If you allow only [registered users](#) to comment, you can restrict comments to only registered users.

- Go to the [Options](#) > [General](#) panel
- Under **Membership**:, select **Users must be registered and logged in to comment**.

Inform Users When Comments are Moderated

When people submit comments, they expect them to appear on your blog immediately. Implementing comment moderation and not telling people will almost certainly result in some people repeatedly submitting the same comment as they think it has disappeared. To prevent this from happening, and to avoid disgruntled and confused readers, inform people that their comment is under review by doing the following:

If you use popup comments, edit `comments-popup.php` and if you do not, edit `comments.php`.

Look for the following code:

```
<p>
<input name="submit" type="submit" tabindex="5" value="<?php _e("Say it!"); ?>"
/>
</p>
```

Change that to the following, adding your own customization:

```
<p>
<blockquote>
Comment moderation is in use. Please do not submit your comment twice -- it will
appear shortly.
</blockquote>
<input name="submit" type="submit" tabindex="5" value="<?php _e("Say it!"); ?>"
```

/>
</p>

Spam Plugins

There are many plugin options to choose from to add to WordPress' built-in comment spam protection.

- [Comment Spam Plugins](#)
- [Captcha Plugins](#)
- [Trackback Spam Plugins](#)
- [Referrer Spam Plugins](#)

Comment Spam Hacks

The following are not recommended for average users. They involve editing WordPress core files. **BACKUP your files first.**

Delete `wp-comments-post.php`

The ultimate end-all solution to your comment spam troubles. This will effectively disable comments and is good for stopping comment spam floods. No one will be able to comment on your WordPress site.

Delete `wp-trackback.php`

The ultimate end-all solution to your trackback spam troubles. This will effectively disable trackbacks and is good for stopping trackback spam floods. This will mean that no one will be able to trackback your posts, so do this after consideration.

Denying access with `.htaccess`

While drastic, you can make modifications in your `.htaccess` file if you are using an Apache server. Check the Internet and [Apache](http://www.apache.org/) (<http://www.apache.org/>) for more information.

Use `nofollow`

The [nofollow](#) attribute is another method used to strip spammers of their page ranks. According to Google, "when Google sees the attribute (`rel="nofollow"`) on hyperlinks, those links won't get any credit when we rank websites in our search results." Under WordPress v1.5, the `nofollow` attribute is automatically added to all links in the comments section.

Resources

- [WeblogToolsCollection - WordPress comment spam stoppage techniques](http://weblogtoolscollection.com/archives/2004/09/15/wordpress-comment-spam-stoppage-techniques/) (<http://weblogtoolscollection.com/archives/2004/09/15/wordpress-comment-spam-stoppage-techniques/>)
- [Podz' Tackling Comment Spam](#)