



The Handbook

Codex

http://codex.wordpress.org/Managing_Plugins

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Managing Plugins

Plugins are cool bits of programming scripts that add additional functionality to your blog. They offer new addition to your blog which either enhance already available features or add new features to your site.

[Plugins](#) extend the functionality of WordPress. The majority of WordPress users don't require Plugins, or only require a few, such as Plugins dealing with comment spam or customized post listings. Other users enjoy the varied options Plugins provide such as frequently updated weather reports, post word counts, rating systems, and more. Since the choice in Plugins is vast, and chosen based upon the needs of the user, they are not incorporated into the core of WordPress.

WordPress Plugins are designed by volunteers and are free to the public. Plugins listed in the sources below have usually been thoroughly tested and considered "safe". But remember, Plugins are the responsibility of the author and the user, and they are typically works-in-progress as WordPress grows and expands.

Finding Plugins

WordPress Plugins are available from several sources:

- [WordPress Codex Plugins List](#)
- [WordPress Plugin Repository](http://www.wp-plugins.org/) (<http://www.wp-plugins.org/>)
- [WordPress Plugin Database](http://www.wp-plugins.net/) (<http://www.wp-plugins.net/>)
- [Independent WordPress Plugin Resources](#)

WordPress Codex Plugins List

The [WordPress Codex Plugins List](#) lists hundreds of plugins by category, offering the most extensive listing of WordPress Plugins. Click on one of the different categories to see a list of the various plugins. These lists will take you to a page or website featuring more information for use, download, and installation of the plugins.

WordPress Plugin Database

The [Wordpress Plugin Database](http://www.wp-plugins.net/) (<http://www.wp-plugins.net/>) currently offers a wide variety of Plugins available for WordPress. This easy-to-use site categories the Plugins, also. To use the WordPress Plugin Database, click on the category titles and a pop-down list of the Plugins available will appear. Click on a specific plugin for more information. Follow the instructions from there on how to download and install the specific plugin. For general information on installing Plugins, [see below](#).

WordPress Plugin Repository

The official WordPress Plugin Repository features the most popular WordPress Plugins. This is also a development site for authors to test drive their Plugins, so currently, it isn't as user friendly as [WordPress Plugin Database](http://www.wp-plugins.net) (<http://www.wp-plugins.net>). There is a more user friendly listing of the Plugins found within the Repository at [Red Alt WordPress Repository Plugins](http://redalt.com/External/plugins.php) (<http://redalt.com/External/plugins.php>) and a new Plugins directory will soon be available on the [WordPress](http://www.wordpress.org/) (<http://www.wordpress.org/>) site.

Independent Resources

WordPress Plugins are created by volunteers, people who saw a need and came up with a solution. Many needed this solution for their own site, giving you a chance to see the Plugin in action, while others developed the Plugin on behalf of someone else, someone who had a need and they had the time to fulfill it.

WordPress is working hard to ensure there is a main repository for WordPress Plugins so efforts are not duplicated and people can work together to improve their resources. Yet, there are still a lot of Plugins out there available for use that haven't made their way into the core WordPress sites.

To find these Plugins, search Google or Yahoo for "*Wordpress plugins*" and the keywords for your specific needs. If you are looking for weather related Plugins, then type in "*wordpress plugins weather*". If you find a plugin not listed in the two above resources, and you really like the plugin, let the author know and recommend they add their plugin to these resources so others can enjoy their work.

- [BloggingPro WordPress Plugins Category](http://www.bloggingpro.com/archives/category/wordpress-plugins/) (<http://www.bloggingpro.com/archives/category/wordpress-plugins/>)
- [WebToolsCollection's WordPress Plugins and Resources](http://www.webtoolscollection.com/) (<http://www.webtoolscollection.com/>)
- [Mundogeek.net's Plugins para WordPress](http://mundogeek.net/wiki/doku.php?id=plugins_para_wordpress) (http://mundogeek.net/wiki/doku.php?id=plugins_para_wordpress) (Spanish)

Installing Plugins



WordPress Plugins Panel

WordPress offers simple and easy ways of **adding Plugins** to your blog. From the [Administration Panels](#), click on the [Plugin](#) tab. Once you have uploaded a plugin to your WordPress plugin directory, activate it from the [Plugins Management](#) page, and sit back and watch your plugin work.

Not all Plugins are so easily installed, but WordPress plugin authors and developers make the process as easy as possible. We've included more detailed information on how to install Plugins below, as well as some things you need to know before you install.

Thing to Know Before You Install

There are a few things you need to know before you begin to install WordPress Plugins.

Know before you install.

Read through the readme files and web pages, as well as any comments regarding the Plugin on an author's website, before you install. The more you know before you install, the easier the process should be.

Plugins require downloading and uploading to install.

You must be familiar with how to download and upload files and how to use FTP, if required.

Plugins may require modifying WordPress files and templates.

Familiarity with PHP, HTML, CSS, and [CHMOD](#) may be necessary.

Record modifications.

If you make any changes to the WordPress files or templates, make a note of it in the code by using comments before and after the changes, and in a text file saved to your site and on your desktop to remind you of any additions or modifications to your default files or templates. This will help you repeat these in the future if there are any problems with your site.

Make frequent backups!

Some Plugins work independently of your blog's content and files, just adding a little something special to the page. Others require modification of content and files, including changes to your database. Before installing any plugin that will make dramatic changes, backup your database and files.

There are several versions of WordPress currently available, and different Plugins available for the different versions. Be sure and read through the information thoroughly to determine if the Plugin will work with your version. If not, consider [upgrading](#).

Plugin Installation

To install a plugin, the following are the general directions to follow. Be sure and follow the specific instructions provided by the Plugin author. Remember: BACKUP - just in case.

1. Read through the "readme" file thoroughly that usually accompanies a plugin, or the website article from where you found the plugin. It is often helpful to print out the instructions so you can check off the installation steps as you complete them.
2. Upload the plugin to the `wp-content/plugins` folder in your WordPress directory online.
3. Make any changes to templates or files as required by the Plugin instructions including adding Plugin template tags.
4. Activate the Plugin:
 1. Access the Plugin Panel in your Admin Panel
 2. Scroll down through the list of Plugins to find the newly installed Plugin (if not visible, start from the beginning to check to see if you followed the instructions properly and uploaded the file correctly).
 3. Click on the **Activate** link to turn the Plugin **on**.

5. Continue making any modifications necessary from the "readme" file instructions to make the plugin's actions meet your needs.

Hiding Plugins When Deactivated

Some plugins feature tags inside of the template files. If the plugin is not activated, it will "break" the Theme and it may report errors or fail to load. It is therefore imperative to prevent the plugin from being detected in case it is turned off.

To detect if a plugin is installed, you can use a simple `function_exists()` check. The `if (function_exists())` checks for the plugin, and if it exists, it will use it. If it returns `FALSE` or "not found", it will ignore the plugin tag and continue loading the page.

```
<?php
if (function_exists('FUNCTION_NAME')) {
    FUNCTION_NAME();
}
?>
```

This example plugin uses a function called `jal_get_shoutbox()` to print out its contents.

```
<?php
if (function_exists('jal_get_shoutbox')) {
    jal_get_shoutbox();
}
?>
```

Troubleshooting Plugins

If you are experiencing problems with a plugin you installed or one that stopped working after upgrading, the following are the steps you need to take to troubleshoot the plugin:

1. Check that you have followed the plugin author's instructions to the letter.
2. Check that any plugin tags or usage within your [template files](#) are correct, spelled right, and placed in the appropriate place, i.e., within the [WordPress Loop](#) or outside of it.
3. Check that you uploaded the file to the plugins folder under `wp-content`. If you are uploading a new version to replace the old, delete the old version prior to uploading the new one.
4. Check that the plugin has been activated in your [Plugin Panel](#) of your Administration Panels.
5. Deactivate and re-activate the plugin to see if this makes it work.
6. Visit the plugin author's website, typically linked from the [Plugin Panel](#), and look to see if someone else is having the same trouble and an answer has been posted, or a new version released.
7. Contact the plugin author directly via their website or email requesting assistance.
8. Search the Internet for the name of the plugin and the trouble you are having as someone else might have had the same problem and found a fix and posted it on their site.
9. Visit the [WordPress Support Forum](http://www.wordpress.org/support) (<http://www.wordpress.org/support>) and post a clear question about the plugin and the problem you are having and you may get an answer from someone familiar with the plugin.
10. If the problem persists and you cannot seem to solve it, check to see if there are

any similar plugins that you can try instead.

Upgrading WordPress May Break Plugins

Some plugins may become outdated and no longer work with the newer version of WordPress. If you have issues after activating a plugin, deactivate it and visit the plugin's website to see if a newer version is available. Many plugin authors will upgrade their plugins to accommodate the newer version, but some either won't, or their plugin becomes obsolete with the improvements in WordPress.

Plugin Management

Plugins are managed from the [Plugins](#) Panel in the [Administration Panels](#) of your WordPress site. All plugins listed on this screen are found in your `wp-content/plugins` directory. Each plugin has a description of what it does, an author and website to refer to, and a version number. If you do not see the plugin on the list, it is because it is missing the "header":

```
<?php
/*
Plugin Name: Magic Plugin
Plugin URI: http://example.com/magic-plugin
Description: Magic Plugin performs magic
Version: 2.3
Author: Mr. Magic
Author URI: http://example.com/
*/
```

You can add this information yourself by opening the plugin in a [text editor](#) and adding the above "comment", changing the information as follows:

Plugin

Shows the plugin's name, and links to the plugin's website if one is provided. Plugins listed in **bold** are currently active.

Version

The version number of the plugin.

Author

The plugin author's name; links to the author's website if one is provided.

Description

The author's description of what the plugin does.

Action

Allows you to activate or deactivate the plugin.

Activation and Deactivation

If your plugin requires changes to the WordPress code or your template files, you will need to enact or reverse those changes each time you activate or deactivate your plugin. Failing to do this will likely result in errors.

Uninstalling Plugins

While Plugins are very useful, some Plugins just don't meet your needs, or you've stopped using them for some reason, or they just don't work. After deactivating the Plugin stops the Plugin's behavior, they tend to pile up in your **Plugins** panel, making your plugin list long and cumbersome to scroll through. If left there long enough, they might become obsolete with the new WordPress versions and cause problems if you decide to use them in the future.



Plugin Admin Screen

Begin your Plugins housekeeping by visiting the plugin author's site to see if there are instructions on how to **uninstall** the plugin via the **Plugins** panel on the left side of the screen. Some plugins require adding tags and code to your **Template** files while others require modification of the WordPress administration files. Be sure and read through the plugin's uninstall instructions to remove each of these modifications so your site will not have errors when the plugin is turned off.

If no specific instructions for uninstalling exist, then read through the installation instructions to check for modifications, if applicable, and reverse their changes, if implemented. If it has been a long time since you used this plugin, you still might have left its modifications in your template files and forgotten them. Carefully remove them.

To remove a plugin, make sure the plugin is **deactivated** from the **Plugins** panel. Go to your website's `wp-content/plugins` folder (usually with an FTP program) and look for the file name of the plugin you want to remove. Select the file name and delete it.

If have your WordPress site on your hard drive, open the `wp-content/plugins` folder on your site and find the file name of the plugin you want to delete, select it and delete it. This way, if you have to restore or copy your **Plugin** folder to your website, you won't restore the unwanted plugin on your site.

Developing Your Own Plugins

Once you start using WordPress Plugins, you sometimes wonder how you ever got along without them. If you have knowledge of PHP, you can develop your own plugins. You can find more information on developing WordPress Plugins at:

- [Writing a Plugin by Matt Mullenweg](#)
- [Plugin API - Application Programming Interface](#)
- [Adding Administration Menus](#)
- [Creating Tables with Plugins](#)
- [WordPress Coding Standards](#)
- [How to Write a Simple WordPress Plugin](#) (<http://www.asymptomatic.net/archives/2005/02/22/1328/how-to-write-a-simple-wordpress-plugin/>)
- [WordPress Plugins Database FAQ](#)