

WPengine®

15 COMMON WORDPRESS MISTAKES AGENCIES AND THEIR CLIENTS MAKE (AND HOW TO FIX THEM)

WHITE PAPER



While WordPress is an incredible content management system, mistakes are commonly made — it's only human. Without making mistakes you wouldn't learn lessons and continue to grow. When it comes to using WordPress, there are some missteps you might be making you were unaware of.

Whether you're a digital agency working on WordPress projects, or a content creator, be sure to read this list of common WordPress blunders so you can become better at using WordPress than ever before, and keep your clients happy with publishing agility.

1 Installing too many plugins

Plugins aren't like Pokémon... you don't want to catch them all.

Think minimal when it comes to installing plugins. While the WordPress repository contains more than 40,000 plugins, you might feel like a kid in a candy store and want to try them all.

But if you install too many plugins, it'll cause your site to bloat and run slower than a herd of snails traveling through peanut butter. (Okay...maybe not that slow, but you get the gist.)

The fix:

Wisely choose the plugins you install, and be sure to uninstall the ones not in use. Ask yourself, is this necessary to the functionality of my client's site (or my site)?

See here for more in-depth tips on [how to pick the right WordPress plugin](#).

2 Not optimizing content for SEO

It's a missed opportunity to publish a piece of content having put zero thought into its SEO. To increase traffic and get your content found by search engines, it's crucial you prepare your written content and images with SEO in mind.

The fix:

Install a WordPress SEO plugin like [Yoast](#) (see this in-depth guide on [how to use Yoast](#)). Yoast will help up your SEO game by giving you helpful tips make your content more likely to rank on Google.

Also, check out this [white paper](#) for some best practices on enhancing the SEO of your images.

3 Neglecting to backup a site

Failure to consistently backup your clients' sites is like spending months writing a novel and never pressing "save" on your valued work. Creating a backup of your work is crucial so you don't lose anything should worse come to worse.

The fix:

Some hosting companies like WP Engine provide [daily automatic WordPress backups](#) so you don't have to worry about doing it yourself. Also, check out these [best backup plugins for WordPress](#).

4 Not changing the default permalink structure

By default, the permalink structure in WordPress isn't optimized for SEO. You'll want to change yours or your clients' site's permalink structure to get better article rankings, which is fairly easy to do.

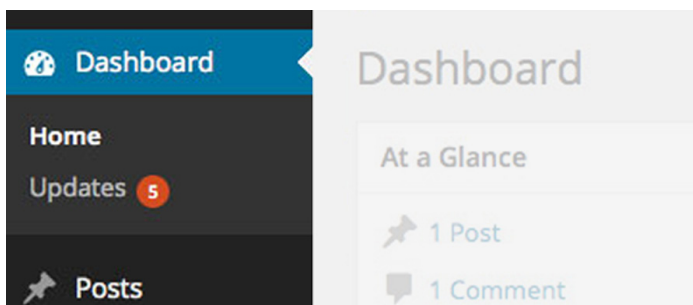
**The fix:**

To change the permalink structure in WordPress, go to Settings -> Permalinks and select “Post name.” If the site has old content, you’ll then want to redirect old permalinks to the new ones. Yoast has an awesome [redirect tool](#) you can use to generate redirects from your old permalink structure to new one.

5 Ignoring WordPress core, theme, and plugin updates

An outdated version of WordPress is like giving a hacker the portal to Narnia, that is, if Narnia was your website.

Plugins, themes, and WordPress sites that aren’t up-to-date present security vulnerabilities — these outdated files are traceable, and basically let the bad guys in.

**The fix:**

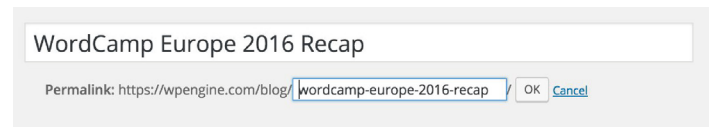
Be sure to keep your client’s plugins, themes and WordPress core up to date. Within your dashboard, next to “Updates” and “Plugins” there will be a number that appears if any of your plugins or WordPress core needs to be updated.

Certain hosting providers, like WP Engine, will automatically update your clients’ WordPress site for you, making your life easier.

For added hardening of your site’s security, check out this list of [best security plugins](#) and this [article on hardening WordPress](#).

6 Changing a post’s URL after it’s been published

It can be tempting to go into an article and change its URL when updating an old blog post or page, but this is something you and your clients should be aware of *not to do*. By changing the post slug, you are breaking all existing links out there. So any old links will lose traffic and present a bad user experience that leads to a 404 error page.

**The fix:**

Before publishing an article, be certain the post slug is the way you want it. In addition, if you’ve installed Yoast SEO, it’ll give you tips for URL optimization, like removing “stop” words and shortening the post slug.

7 Using bad (or no) visuals

Images are imperative to holding the reader’s attention within a text-heavy article. Studies show content with visuals gets [94 percent](#) more views than those without. In addition, the human brain processes visuals [60,000](#) times faster than text. Therefore, you should include images within your content as deemed appropriate to gain readership.

The fix:

If paying for a stock photography membership is out of the question, there are numerous amounts of [free image options](#) out there. [Unsplash.com](#) supplies high-quality, professional imagery, but other options include [Flickr.com](#), and [more](#). Just be sure to [give attribution](#) to the photographer when required.

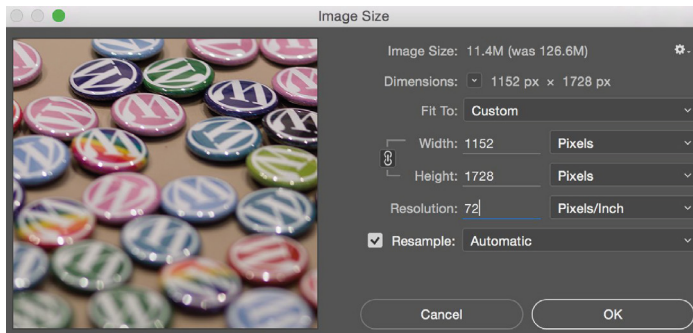
8 Not resizing images for web upload

Images are often the culprit to a slow site and you should seriously consider preparing your images for upload by reducing their size.

This can be done either by using an editor like Photoshop, or a plugin to resize images so they’re not taking up a huge chunk of space and causing your site to run super slow.

The fix:

If you're working in Photoshop, go to Image -> Image Size. Make sure the resolution is set to 72. You'll then want to reduce the width of the image if applicable. 2,500 pixels on the wide side is ideal for displaying images at large on the screen...you can decrease this size to around 600 to 1,000 pixels on the wide side for regular site display. This will reduce the file size drastically, resulting in less bandwidth required to upload images whenever someone visits your client's site.



Always set the resolution to 72 pixels/inch for web upload. If "Resample" is checked, the image's dimensions will automatically be reduced when you adjust the resolution.

Another fix is to use a WordPress plugin that optimizes images for you, like [WP Smush](#).

9 Adding customizations to a parent theme

If you're looking to customize a client's theme, doing so could result in a whole lot of headache if you modify the theme directly.

The fix:

The safest way to edit a theme is with a [child theme](#), which takes the functionality of the parent theme. A child theme allows you to make changes without ruining your original theme's code, ensuring your modifications aren't lost. See here for a useful tutorial on [creating a child theme](#).

10 Failure to use a staging environment

Say you want to test a theme, plugin or custom code on your client's site. It would be unwise to make these changes directly to the live site — your clients won't be too happy when they've found you've crashed their site.

The fix:

Before deploying changes to the live site, the best practice is to use a staging environment to test any changes before going public.

Quality hosting providers like WP Engine offer [free staging environments](#). There are also a number of plugins that enable testing environments, or you can [set one up yourself from scratch](#).

11 Using the default admin username

By default, after WordPress is installed the username is "admin," which is troublesome in terms of security.

Hackers can easily guess that name and take control of your website.

The fix:

During installation you'll be given the opportunity to change the admin name to something else. If you're already past the point of installation and need to change your default username, see here for some tips on [removing the admin account in WordPress](#).

12 Using a weak password

People usually create a weak password because they don't want to forget it. However a good password should be random and complex, not predictable and simple.

The easier your password is for you to remember, the easier it will be for hackers to perform brute-force attacks and guess your password.

The fix:

A strong password should include a minimum of eight characters, an uppercase letter, a lowercase letter, a number, and a special character. Try using a [strong password generator](#) if you need help coming up with a hack-proof password.

13 Failing to be selective about who gets admin privileges

Giving admin rights to just anybody is like giving a kid the keys to your car. It's extremely important that you don't give admin rights to the wrong person. You should only give admin rights to site owners and developers who work with the backend of the website.

The fix:

To change user roles and permissions, you can use a plugin like [User Role Editor](#) or see here for additional information: [User Roles on WordPress](#)

14 Accidentally blocking search engines

Certain WordPress settings can impair your site's ability to be found by search engines. If you're ready for your site to be found by a larger audience, you'll want to ensure that a certain box isn't checked within your Settings to make it SEO-friendly.

Search Engine Visibility Discourage search engines from indexing this site
It is up to search engines to honor this request.

The fix:

To find out if you've made this mistake, from your WordPress dashboard, go to Settings -> Reading. Make sure that the "Discourage search engines from indexing this site" is not checked.

When this selection is checked, it suppresses the site's pagerank, telling search engines not to inspect the site's content. (You'll want it checked if your site is still under development.)

15 Using poor/cheap web hosting

You might want to keep costs low, but using poor hosting for your WordPress site would be like purchasing cheap fuel for a Ferrari. Your WordPress site represents your business, your brand, your portfolio, and so on.

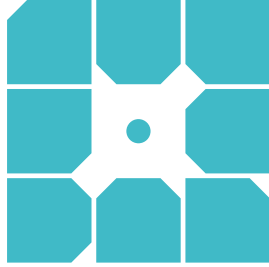
Poor performance and downtime reflects poorly on you and your business and could cost you more money in the long run.

The fix:

You want your hosting provider to be tailored to WordPress. When looking for a hosting provider, be sure that they offer services for caching, uptime, security, amazing customer support, and more.

WP Engine's premium WordPress hosting platform is built and optimized for WordPress. If you're looking to migrate to high-quality hosting, we offer an [Automated Migration](#) plugin for a nearly-effortless transition to our platform.

Check out WP Engine today to see the added layer of benefits you'll get with our [managed WordPress platform](#), and see what [others have to say](#) about the results they've seen since switching to WP Engine's enterprise-grade platform.



About WP Engine

WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites and applications built on WordPress. The company's premium managed hosting platform provides the performance, reliability and security required by the biggest brands in the world, while remaining affordable and intuitive enough for smaller businesses and individuals. Companies of all sizes rely on WP Engine's award-winning customer service team to quickly solve technical problems and create a world-class customer experience. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in Limerick, Ireland, San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, and London, England.

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