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Generated on 15/11/2026 00:15

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Minifying CSS and JavaScript without breaking the site

Images, Files & Front-End

CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-AO-KB-1406	v2026.10.10	Angola · English

Interweb Angola
RLX Angola, Lda. · Group RLX Holdings
Tax ID (NIF) 500 260 5724 · Commercial registration no. 26464-25/250724

https://www.meu.interweb.ao/knowledgebase/1406

Minifying CSS and JavaScript without breaking the site

Images, Files & Front-End Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



Minifying means taking the spaces, line breaks and comments out of a CSS or JavaScript file so it weighs less. A plugin such as LiteSpeed Cache does it with one click, and **it is also one of the options that breaks most sites**. The gain is usually small (the server already compresses text files) and the risk is a menu that will not open or a form that will not send. So: one option at a time, with a test and with an escape route.

What each option does, and the risk

Option	What it does	Risk
Minify CSS or JS	Strips spaces and comments.	Low. It rarely breaks anything; when it does, it is a badly written file.
Combine CSS or JS	Joins several files into one.	Medium. With HTTP/2 it gains almost nothing. See **HTTP/2 and HTTP/3**. It can change the load order and break themes.
Defer JS	The script only runs after the page has been drawn.	High. Menus, carousels and forms that depend on the script can fail at start-up.
Critical CSS / unused CSS	Generates the CSS for what shows first separately, and loads the rest later.	High. The page can show unstyled for a moment, or with blocks missing.

The safe order, step by step

1. **Take a copy** of files and database first (see **making and keeping your own backup**). If the site matters, rehearse on a test site first.

2. **Measure and write down** the starting point on two pages: a simple one and one with a form or a cart. See **measuring your site speed**.

3. **Switch on one option only**, for example “Minify CSS”, save, and use the plugin’s “Purge All”.

4. **Open the site in a private window** and walk through it as a visitor: the phone menu, the contact form, search, cart and checkout if there is a shop, and login. Test at two screen widths.

5. **If something failed**, switch that option off, “Purge All” and confirm it is back to normal. Only then decide whether to exclude it for that one file (the options have fields to name files to leave out) or give it up.

6. **Only then go to the next one.** Every gain, however small, should come with its “before and after”.

Cannot get into the WordPress dashboard after switching an option on?
Deactivate the plugin by renaming its folder in `wp-content/plugins`, as explained in **disabling plugins, including when you cannot get in**. The site opens again without the optimisations, and then you can reactivate the plugin and switch off the guilty option.

Do not minify twice.
Files whose name already ends in `.min.css` or `.min.js` arrive minified. If two plugins both minify, switch one off.

The gain is elsewhere.
On many pages the images and third-party scripts weigh more than the CSS and JS themselves. Check what the Network tab’s file list shows as heaviest before spending an afternoon on this. Reading the warnings is covered in **PageSpeed Insights warnings explained**.

NEED A HAND?

An optimisation option broke the look of the site and you do not know which? Tell us the address and what you changed.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- LiteSpeed Cache: the first settings →
- PageSpeed Insights warnings explained →

Disabling plugins, including when you cannot get in

Common WordPress errors: white screen, critical error and how to find the cause

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