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High TTFB: how to find where the server response time goes

Slow Site & Server Load

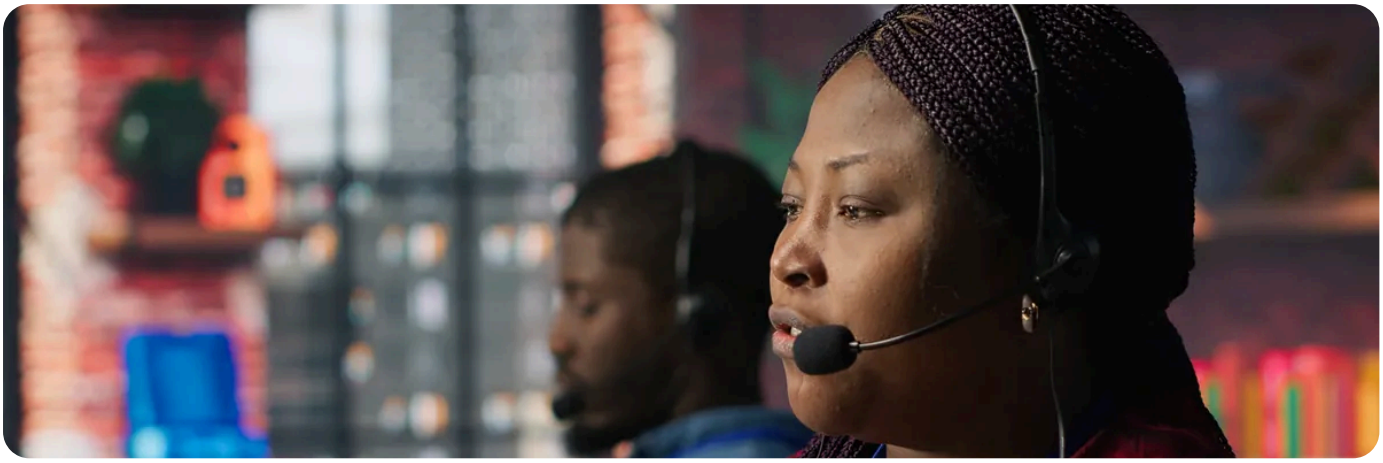
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High TTFB: how to find where the server response time goes

Slow Site & Server Load Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



TTFB (*time to first byte*) is the time from the request to the arrival of the first byte of the reply. If it is high, **the page is slow to start**, and everything after it (LCP included) is pushed back. But the number bundles several waits: resolving the name, connecting, negotiating HTTPS and, last, the server building the page. Only the last one is "the server's". Separate them before blaming anyone.

Step 1: separate the waits

1. In a terminal (on your own computer), run it three times: `curl -o /dev/null -s -w "dns %{time_namelookup} connect %{time_connect} tls %{time_appconnect} first-byte %{time_starttransfer} total %{time_total}\n" https://yourdomain.tld/`.

2. Each number is cumulative. To get how long each part took, subtract the previous one from the next. The server's wait is **first-byte minus tls**.

3. Keep the middle of the three measurements. One proves nothing.

Part	If it is large, it points to
dns	Name resolution: the DNS provider or your resolver. See **fast for you, slow for everyone else**.
connect minus dns	Distance to the server, or a slow network on the measuring side.
tls minus connect	The HTTPS negotiation. Rarely the cause.
first-byte minus tls	**The server building the page.** This is what the next steps deal with.

Step 2: if the wait is the server's

1. **Does the page come from cache?** Request it twice in a row. On a WordPress site with LiteSpeed Cache, the `x-litespeed-cache` header should say `hit` on the second. If it always says `miss` or does not appear, the page is rebuilt on every visit. See **the first LiteSpeed Cache settings** and **cache rules**.

2. **Is there a chain of redirects?** `curl -sIL https://yourdomain.tld/` shows each hop. Every one adds a whole request. Reach the final address in a single one.

3. **Slow database queries.** Pages with lists, searches and filters come first. See **slow queries: how to find them**.

4. **Heavy plugins, or calls to outside services** inside the page itself (an API that takes its time). Switch them off one at a time and measure. See **what eats CPU on a website**.

5. **An old PHP version.** The same page runs faster on a newer one. See **changing your PHP version without breaking the site**.

6. **Internal tasks in the middle of a visit.** In WordPress, WP-Cron runs when someone visits. See **admin-ajax eating your resources**.

A good TTFB on the home page proves nothing about the others.
The home page is almost always cached. Measure the page people complain about, signed in and signed out, and a search or product page.

Accept that the first visit is always slower.
It is the one that builds the cache copy. What counts is the second onwards. If visitors mostly land on the first (fresh content every hour, say), consider warming the cache. See **installing and tuning a page cache**.

NEED A HAND?

Separated the waits and first byte is still high with the cache working? Send us the numbers from the three measurements and the address.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- Measuring your site speed: which tools, and what the numbers mean
- The site is slow: what actually makes a difference
- The site is slow: what to measure before you change plan
- How to fix a slow LCP

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