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Generated on 15/11/2026 00:17

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A website people can install like an app: PWA basics

Images, Files & Front-End

CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-AO-KB-1666	v2026.10.15	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/1666

A website people can install like an app: PWA basics

Images, Files & Front-End Created on **October 15, 2026** 3 min read



The short answer: a PWA is a normal website with two things added: a small file that describes it (the **manifest**) and, if you want it to work offline, a background program (the **service worker**). With that, the browser offers “install”, and the site opens with an icon on the screen, without the address bar. It needs **https**. It is not an app-store app: it is the same website.

The minimum for the browser to offer “install”

1. **The site must be on https.** If it is not yet, see **HTTP or HTTPS**.

2. **Create the manifest,** a `manifest.webmanifest` file in the main folder of the site, with this content (change the names and icons):

```
{
"name": "The full name of your site",
"short_name": "Your site",
"start_url": "/",
"display": "standalone",
"background_color": "#ffffff",
"theme_color": "#d60037",
"icons": [
{ "src": "/icon-192.png", "sizes": "192x192", "type": "image/png" },
{ "src": "/icon-512.png", "sizes": "512x512", "type": "image/png" }
]
}
```

3. **Make the two icons,** square, 192 and 512 pixels, as PNG, and put them at the paths you wrote.

4 **Link the manifest to the page,** inside the `<head>` tag: `<link rel="manifest" href="/manifest.webmanifest">`. On WordPress, a PWA plugin does this for you: check the result instead of trusting it.

5 **Check in Chrome:** F12, the **Application** tab, the **Manifest** section. Errors show up there, with the cause.

And working offline

The manifest only gives the icon and the window without a bar. For the page to open when there is no connection you need a **service worker**: a JavaScript file registered with `navigator.serviceWorker.register('/sw.js')` that decides what to store and when. It is the hard part, because it is code of yours and because it **stores files on the visitor's device**.

What you want	What you need
Just the icon on the screen and a clean window	The manifest and the icons. Nothing more.
Opening without a connection	A service worker, carefully: what it stores has to be refreshed.
To be in the app stores	Something else: a PWA does not appear there by itself.

! **A badly written service worker makes the visitor see the old version of the site forever,** even after you change it. It is the same problem as **Visitors still see the old CSS or logo**, but worse, because the cache is on their device and your server cannot clear it. Start without a service worker and only add one if you truly need offline mode.

On iPhone the installation is done from the share button, with "Add to Home Screen", not from a browser prompt. The site works the same. For heavy sites, start by **making the site lighter**: a slow PWA is still slow.

NEED A HAND?

Want to know whether your site is ready to be installed? Open a ticket with the address and what Chrome showed.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

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- Visitors still see the old CSS or logo
- Core Web Vitals in plain words
- A site that loads on slow mobile data

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