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WordPress shortcodes: what they are and why one breaks your page

WordPress & CMS

CODE

RLX-AO-KB-1668

VERSION

v2026.10.15

COUNTRY · LANGUAGE

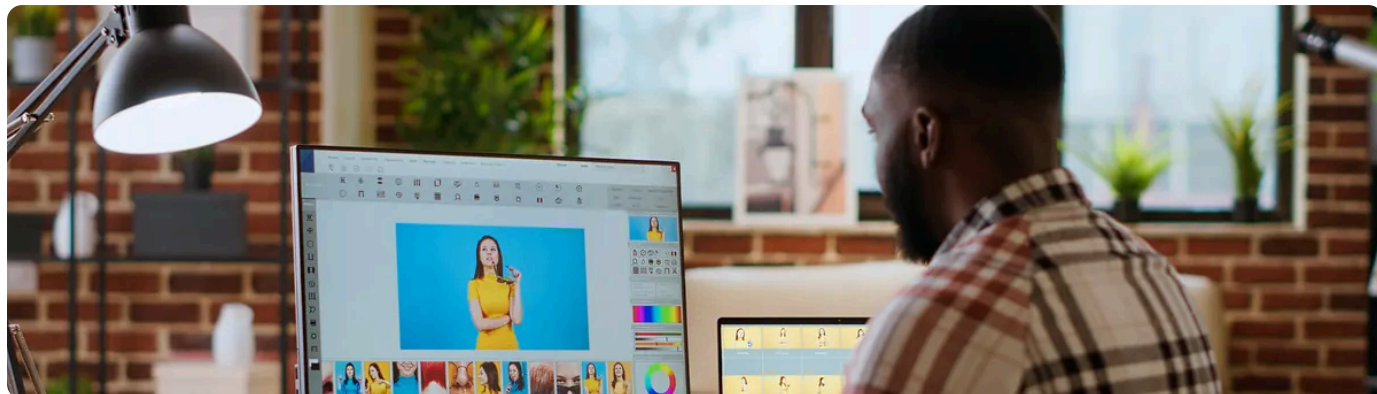
Angola · English

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Tax ID (NIF) 500 260 5724 · Commercial registration no. 26464-25/250724

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The short answer: a shortcode is a word in square brackets, like `[gallery]`, that WordPress swaps for a bigger piece (a gallery, a form, a table). When something goes wrong, either the shortcode's **raw text** appears on the page, or the piece does not show. Almost always it is the plugin that handled it, which was deactivated or deleted.

The format is `[name attribute="value"]`. WordPress brings a few of its own (the image gallery and the caption, for example) and each plugin can add its own. You put them in a page or post, in the editor's "Shortcode" block, or in a text block of a sidebar.

What you see, and what to do

What you see	The most likely cause	What to do
The text <code>[name ...]</code> on the page, as is	The plugin that handled this shortcode is deactivated, was deleted, or the name was misspelt.	Activate the plugin (see the list in Installing WordPress plugins) or delete the shortcode from the page.
The piece does not show, but there is no strange text	The shortcode is inside a block the editor "protected", or the attributes are damaged.	Put it in a "Shortcode" block of its own, and check the quotes.
It shows but an attribute is ignored	The quotes became "curly" when copied from a word processor.	Type the quotes by hand, straight ("), in the code editor.
The page goes blank after adding it	The shortcode's plugin has an error.	Deactivate that plugin without the dashboard: Disabling plugins . See also Common WordPress errors .

How to place a shortcode where the editor will not

In a theme file, PHP shows the result of a shortcode with `echo do_shortcode( '[name]' );`. Editing the theme calls for care: see **A plugin or a snippet of code**.

Beware of shortcodes copied from an unknown site. A shortcode only does what the plugin that handles it allows, but a careless plugin can show what it should not. Use only the ones from plugins you installed from sources you know.

The most useful trick: before you deactivate or delete a plugin, look through your pages for its shortcode names. In the “Code” view, search for the text `[name]`. If one is in use, the page will show strange text as soon as the plugin goes.

A page shows a raw shortcode and you cannot tell which plugin it belongs to? Open a ticket with the page address and the text that appears.

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

[Installing WordPress plugins: where, which ones, and how many](#)

[Disabling plugins, including when you cannot get in](#)

[Common WordPress errors: white screen, critical error](#)

[Creating and editing pages in WordPress](#)



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