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Installing WordPress plugins: where, which ones, and how many

Content, Themes & Plugins

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A plugin is somebody else's code running inside your site with the same rights WordPress itself has. That explains both what makes them powerful and why they deserve care.

Where you install them

1. In the WordPress dashboard, open **Plugins** and then **Add New**.
2. Search by name, or by what you want done. The results come from the official WordPress directory.
3. Click **Install** and, when it finishes, **Activate**. Installing is not enough: until it is activated, a plugin does nothing.
4. If you bought a plugin and were given a `.zip` file, use **Upload Plugin** on the same page and pick the file.
5. Some plugins add a menu of their own; others hide under **Settings**. After activating, look in both places.

The WordPress tool in cPanel, in the **Domains** section, also installs and removes plugins without entering the site. That is handy across several sites, or when the dashboard will not open.

How to pick one

Everything you need is on the plugin's own page in the directory. Five things, and they take under a minute to read.

What to look at	What you want to see
Last updated	Recent. A plugin that has sat still for years is code nobody fixes when a flaw turns up.
Tested up to	A version that covers the WordPress you run. Far behind means the author lost interest.
Active installations	Plenty. Not proof of quality, but proof that other people have already hit the bugs.
Support forum	Questions with answers on them. A forum full of unanswered threads tells you what will happen to yours.
What it asks for	Be wary of a plugin that wants an account on another service to do something simple.

Never install paid plugins obtained for free.
The "unlocked" copies floating around download sites come, more often than not, with extra code inside. It is one of the most common ways people lose a site. See **how to tell if your site has been compromised**.

How many plugins can you have

There is no number. Twenty light, well-written plugins weigh less than three heavy ones. What counts is **what each one does on every visit**, not how long the list is.

What really causes trouble is **overlap**. Two plugins doing the same job fight each other, and the site turns slow or breaks for no visible reason. Keep one of each kind, at most.

Kind of plugin	Rule
Caching	One only. Two caching layers serve stale pages and produce errors nobody can reproduce.
Security	One only. Two of them blocking requests end up blocking each other.
SEO	One only. See **the best SEO plugins and how to choose**.
Backups	One only, and set to run at a different hour from the account backup.
Page builder	One only, and think it through: content built inside one stays locked to it.

Uninstall what you tried and did not keep.
Deactivating is not enough: the code is still on disk and can still be exploited. Delete it properly.

If the site went slow after you added things, the way to find out which is in **the site is slow**.

NEED A HAND?

Installed a plugin and the site stopped opening? We can switch it off from the server side.

Open a support ticket →

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