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Something has gone wrong with WordPress: where to start

Errors & Troubleshooting

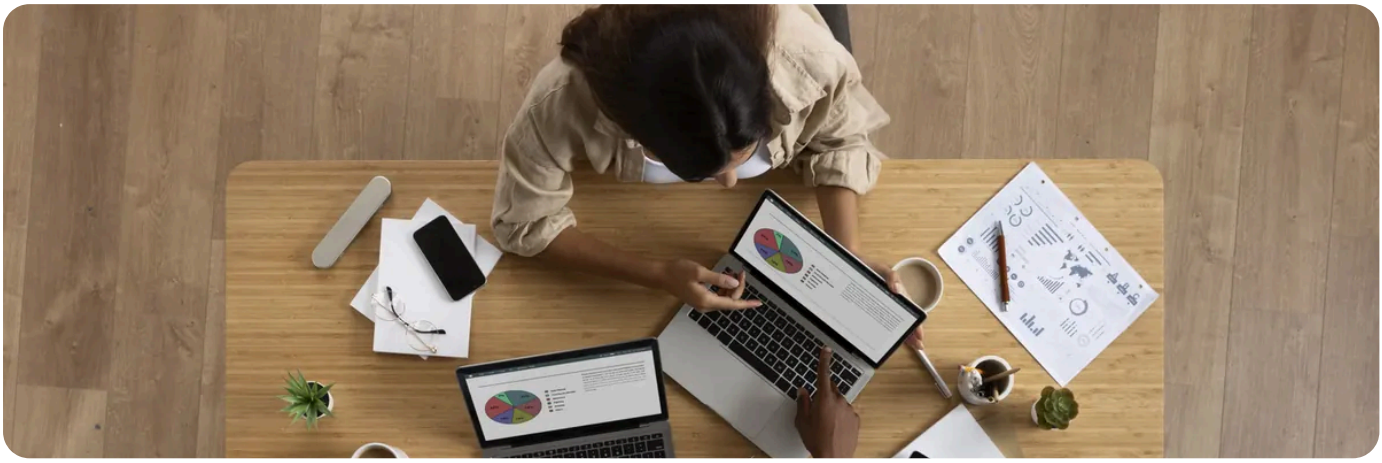
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Something has gone wrong with WordPress: where to start

Errors & Troubleshooting Created on **September 27, 2026** 4 min read



WordPress always breaks in the same half a dozen ways. This page exists to save you the searching: find your symptom in the table and go straight to the article that deals with it.

Three rules before touching anything, whatever the fault.
First: take a backup, always, before the first step (**how to restore your data**). Second: change **one thing at a time** and test after each one. Third: write down what you changed. Nearly every fault that reaches support in a bad state started with five changes in a row and nobody knowing which of them did it.

The site will not open, or opens badly

What you see	Where the answer is
Blank page, or «critical error»	**Common WordPress errors: white screen and critical error**
An error with a number: 500, 404, 508	**Website errors explained: 500, 403, 404 and 508**
403 Forbidden	**Error 403 Forbidden: permissions, .htaccess and blocked IPs**
«Error establishing a database connection»	**Error establishing a database connection: the causes, in order**
I lost or broke `wp-config.php`	**Rebuilding the wp-config.php connection**
I do not know which database belongs to the site	**Finding out which database this WordPress uses**
PHP warnings printed on the page	**PHP warnings showing on your site**

What you see	Where the answer is
Stuck in «scheduled maintenance»	Common WordPress errors, in the `.maintenance` section
The site has never opened since I registered the domain	Registered the domain and it still does not open

I cannot sign in, or there is no padlock

What you see	Where the answer is
`/wp-admin` will not let me in	Cannot get into the WordPress dashboard
The browser says the connection is not secure	No padlock on your site: the causes, in order
My IP has been blocked	How to unblock your IP address and why your IP gets blocked
I want to shut the door properly	Protecting the WordPress login
I want to move the login address	Changing the WordPress login address
I want a captcha on the login	Putting a captcha on the WordPress login
I want the whole site on https	Moving your site to https with Really Simple SSL

It is slow, or it is hitting limits

What you see	Where the answer is
The site drags	The site is slow: what actually makes a difference
Do I need a bigger plan?	What to measure before you change plan and the limits nobody advertises
I cannot upload a large file	PHP limits: memory, time and upload size
Scheduled tasks that never run	Cron jobs
I want to see where the time goes	Monitoring your site performance in cPanel
I want to turn on a page cache	Installing and tuning a page cache

What you see	Where the answer is
`admin-ajax` is all over the access log	admin-ajax eating your resources
«Allowed memory size exhausted»	Giving WordPress more memory
The database is full of rubbish	Cleaning and optimising the database in phpMyAdmin
Scheduled posts go out late, or not at all	Swapping WP-Cron for a real server cron job

The site does not send e-mail

What you see	Where the answer is
Form messages never arrive anywhere	A contact form that actually reaches your inbox
WordPress sends nothing at all, not even password recovery	Making WordPress send e-mail properly, with SMTP and why your e-mail is not sending or receiving
They arrive, but land in spam	SPF, DKIM and DMARC and how to write an e-mail that does not land in spam
I need a mailbox on the domain	How to create an e-mail account in cPanel

I suspect a break-in, or I want to go back

What you see	Where the answer is
The site shows things I did not put there	How to tell if your site has been compromised
I have confirmed it	How to clean up a compromised site
I want yesterday's version back	Restoring a backup yourself and how long we keep backups
I want a copy of my own, off the server	Making and keeping your own backup
I want to wipe it and start again	How to remove WordPress from a domain

The rule that solves half the cases

If you do not know where to start and the site broke **after** something, the answer is nearly always to undo that something. Updated a *plugin*? Deactivate it. Changed the theme? Go back to the previous one. Changed the PHP version? Switch back on the same screen. A site that was fine yesterday and is broken today broke because of something that happened in between, and that something usually has a name.

Before touching what is live, rehearse elsewhere.
That goes double for big updates and theme changes: **a test site before touching what is live**.

Where our work ends and yours begins is written in **how far our support goes**.

And if the site is not broken, you just want it better?
The three with the biggest payback are **turning on a page cache**, **cleaning the database** and **getting e-mail delivery working properly**. If you are building pages, **using Elementor**.

NEED A HAND?

Cannot find your case in this list? Describe the symptom and the address of the page.

Open a request →

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- **Support Policy** →
- **Frequently asked questions** →

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