

One of the biggest advantages of using WordPress is the ability to choose and install plugins to extend the functionality of your website. Various plugins can be used to add extra functionality around social media, analytics, security, marketing, membership and subscriptions, performance optimization, SEO, and so on. These plugins can help you get more out of your website and make it more dynamic. Maybe you would like to add a map or a contact form to launch a multilingual website, build an e-commerce site, or increase the speed of your site with caching. All of this can be achieved with the right plugins.

Plugins Directory

You can view all the thousands of plugins available when you visit WordPress.org and browse through the Plugins Directory. While all of the plugins mentioned are free and available in the WordPress.org Plugin Repository, they may also have premium versions available at a cost that provide more functionality.

Adding a plugin

To add a plugin, navigate to Plugins in the WordPress dashboard and select Add New. This will open up on the featured page, and you can view the most popular plugins, recommended plugins, and a favorites tab. When you are ready to find a suitable plugin, use the search function at the top right of the page. If you type SEO, for example, the repository gives you a list of plugins based on your search.

Evaluating a plugin

Now, let's discuss what to look for when choosing a plugin. Let's compare the three top plugins. There are four important things to take note of. Firstly, the star rating. That refers to feedback from customers who installed the plugin. Secondly, when it was last updated, this indicates it is actively being supported and worked on. I would suggest avoiding plugins that have not been updated in a long time. Thirdly, active installations. This indicates a popular and well-supported plugin. Lastly, compatibility. Make sure the plugin is compatible with the latest version of WordPress. When you click on more details, you will be able to see how well-supported a plugin is. There is also an area for frequently asked questions and a place to read reviews.

Installing and activating a plugin

Let's search for a different plugin as an example of how to install and activate a plugin. We will go ahead and search for a forms plugin. There are various options, for example, Contact Form 7, Contact Form by WP Forms, and Ninja Forms. I will go ahead and install Contact Form by WP forms and once installed, you have to click on Activate. Then, it's time to set up the plugin. And when your plugin is set up, it's a simple task using your block directory to add the form wherever you wish. Please note that you can also easily add a new plugin by uploading a zip archive of the plugin from your local computer. Many premium plugins can be downloaded outside the WordPress Plugin Directory.

Deactivating and deleting a plugin

If you want to stop using a plugin, go to your plugin section and click on Deactivate. Once deactivated, you will have the option to delete the plugin permanently.

Troubleshooting

But what happens if you experience a plugin conflict? There are two main ways to identify plugin conflicts on your site. Number 1: manually deactivate plugins and then test them individually to find the plugin causing a problem. Number 2: use a troubleshooting plugin, for example, Health Check and Troubleshooting. But remember to install well-built plugins and use the four criteria we discussed earlier.

Conclusion

Plugins are amazing tools to add extra functionality to your site and I trust you will find the right ones to meet your needs.

Practical

Use WordPress Playground below and complete the following steps:

1. Create a Contact page.
2. Install and activate the WP Forms plugin.
3. Create a basic form.
4. Add it to your Contact page in the same way as any other block.
5. View it on the front end.