



WORDCAMP KC 2018

Troubleshooting Common WordPress Errors

Kristin Falkner, Freelance WordPress Developer

www.kristinfalkner.com | kristin@kristinfalkner.com | Twitter: @KristinCodesWP

What I'll Be Covering



GENERAL TIPS

A brief overview on things to pay attention to to trace the source of your problem



SPECIFIC ERRORS

Specific error messages and approaches on how to solve the error if you come across it



BEST PRACTICES

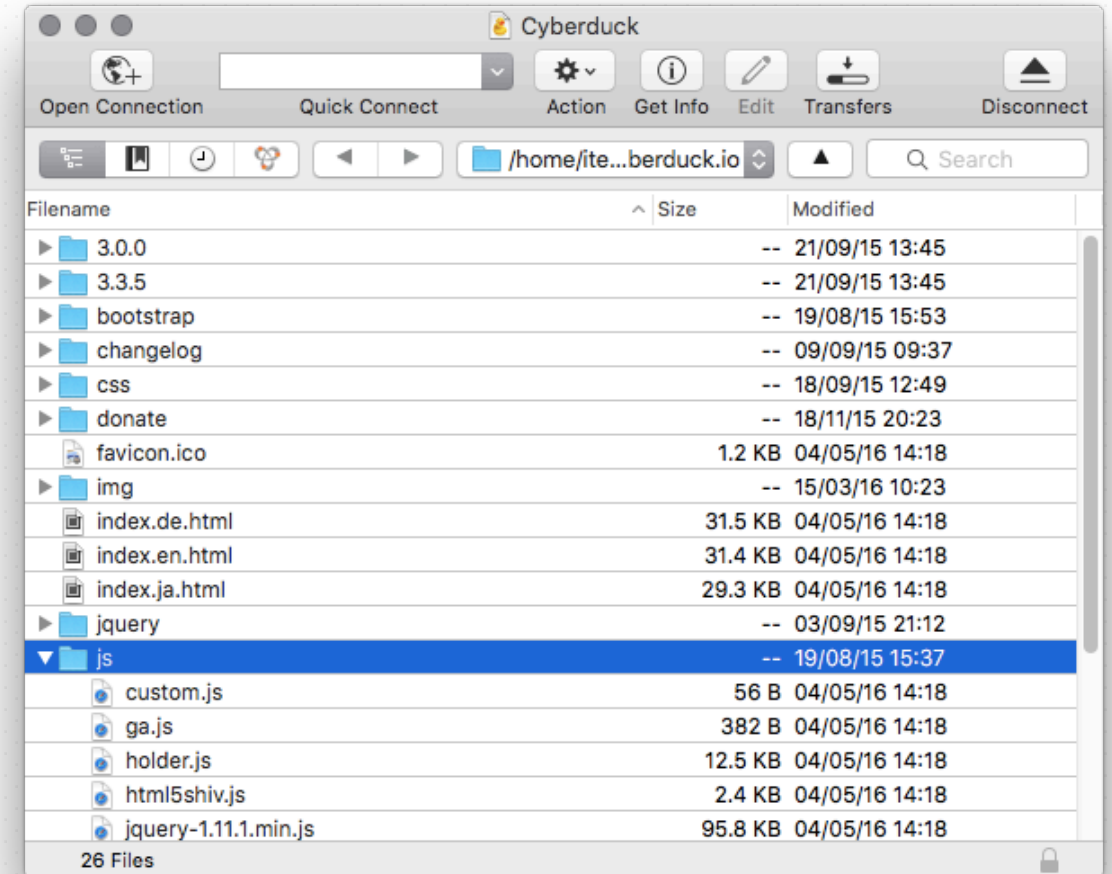
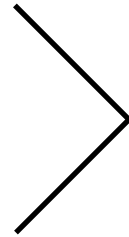
General guidelines for working with your WordPress sites moving forward to minimize errors in production



What You'll Need To Troubleshoot

To troubleshoot many common WordPress issues, you will need access to your site's files, preferably through something like FTP or SFTP, but you could use a web interface for a File Manager, if need be. DO NOT rely on the built-in WordPress editor.

Popular FTP/SFTP Programs: Transmit (Mac only), Cyberduck, WinSCP



“My site just suddenly broke, but I didn’t touch *anything*.”

If nothing on your site or server changes, your website will not just suddenly stop working. A problem arises from a cause. Did you update your theme? Did you update a plugin? If you haven’t touched your site, reach out to hosting support to confirm there isn’t a hosting issue. If you need developer assistance, knowing the last steps taken before the issue happened can save a lot of time.



Hey, Those Words Mean Something: The “Read Your Error Messages” Story

With the exception of the PHP white screen of death, most errors trigger a helpful message that identify what the error is. They may even call out the problematic plugin, file or issue.

Pro Tip: See an error message you don't recognize? Google probably does. Copy and paste it if you get stuck.



Make Sure It's Not Just a Cache Thing

Are you hosted somewhere with built-in caching? WPEngine? Flywheel? Other WP Managed hosting? Or running something like WP Rocket or WP Super Cache or another caching plugin? If you're making site changes and not seeing them reflected or similar, try clearing your site cache. Your browser also can cache site assets so you can try using an incognito window or clearing your browser cache, as well.



Take a deep breath.
It's all going to
be okay.

People tend to panic and spiral out when their site is having problems. However, most WordPress issues are easily fixed so just take a deep breath.



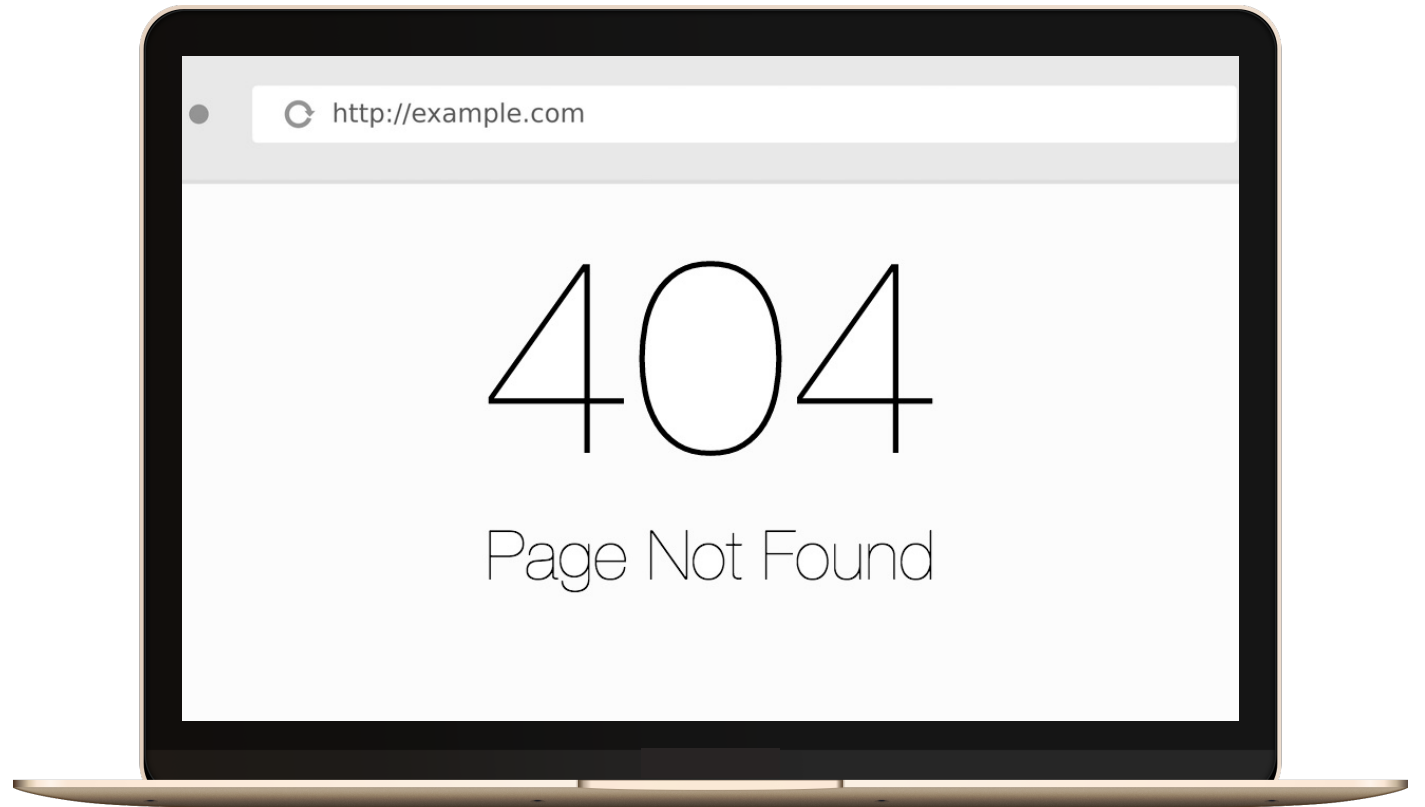
404 Not Found: All Subpages

THE ISSUE

Your website homepage is working but clicking to any subpage is triggering a 404 error. Your pages are in the backend... what gives?!

THE SOLUTION

Go to Settings > Permalinks and resave your permalinks.



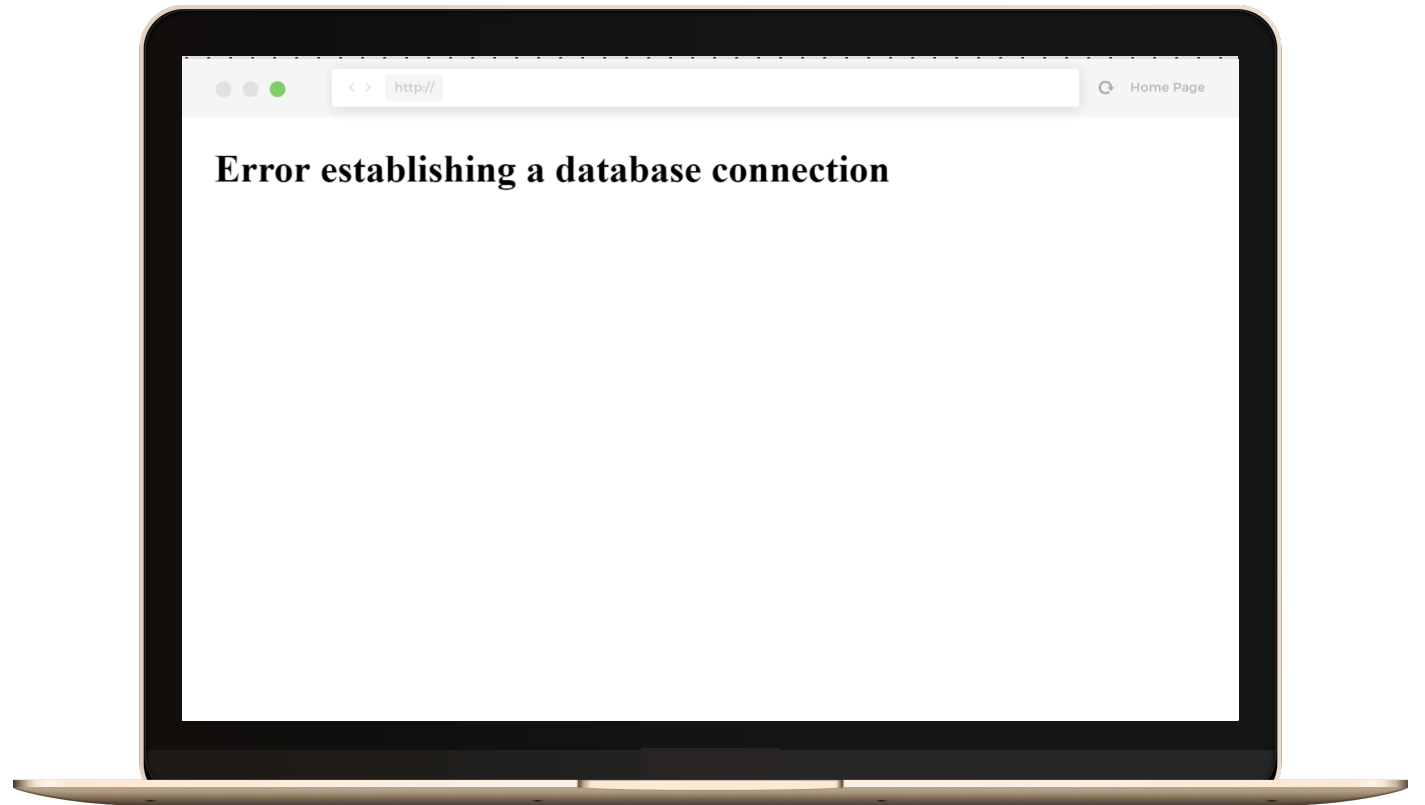
Error Establishing Database Connection

THE ISSUE

None of your site is accessible and all anyone sees on any page is this error message.

THE SOLUTION

Check your database settings in your wp-config file. Check with your hosting company to see if they are having MySQL server issues.



Syntax Errors

All of these errors will display with a start of “Syntax Error: [details on error]” They typically do include filename. Most commonly they are triggered by copying & pasting code from the web into your theme and either there is an inherent issue in the code or you missed part of the code snippet or similar. However, they can occasionally be caused by a plugin or theme update. The error message provides a clue on where to look.

Cutting corners to meet arbitrary management deadlines



Essential

Copying and Pasting from Stack Overflow

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*The Practical Developer
@ThePracticalDev*

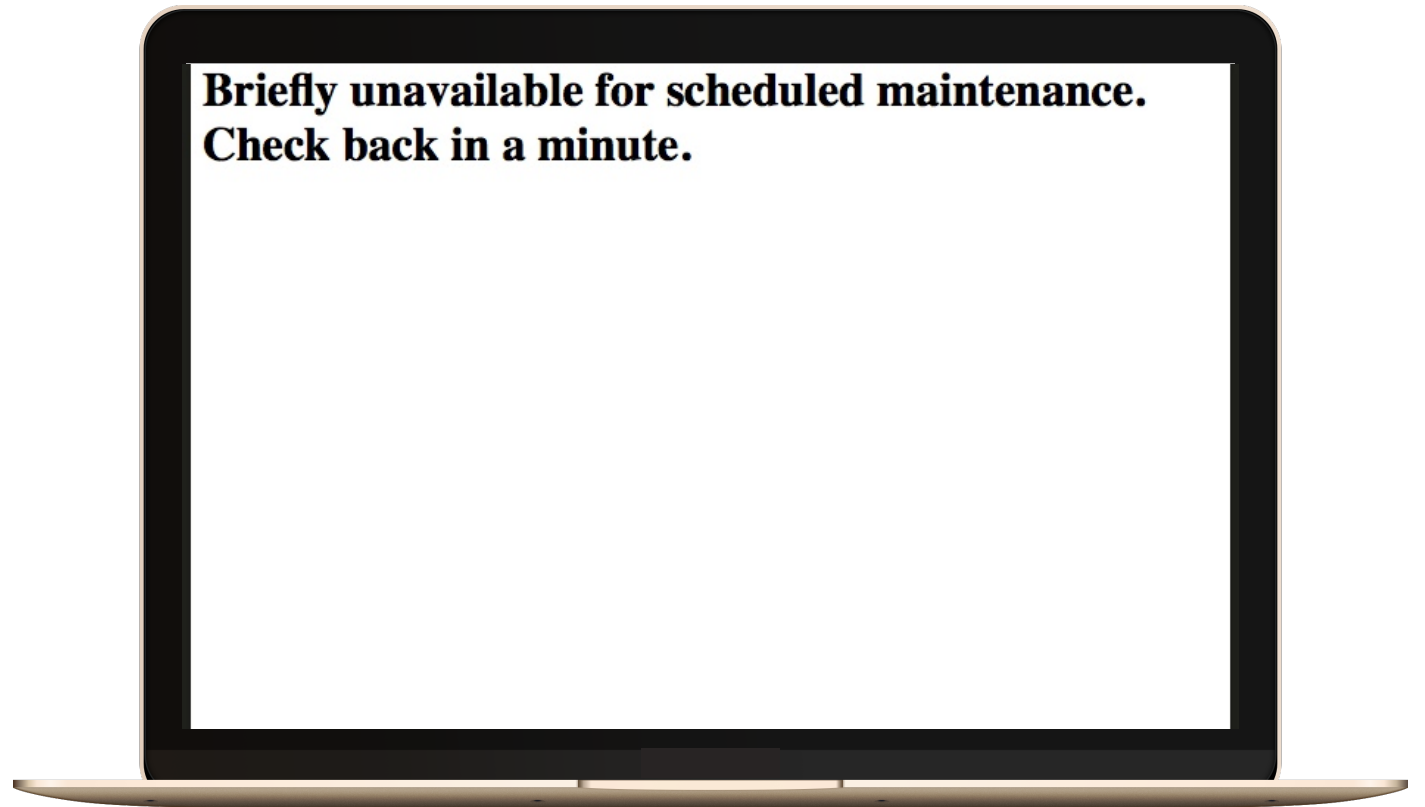
Stuck in Maintenance Mode

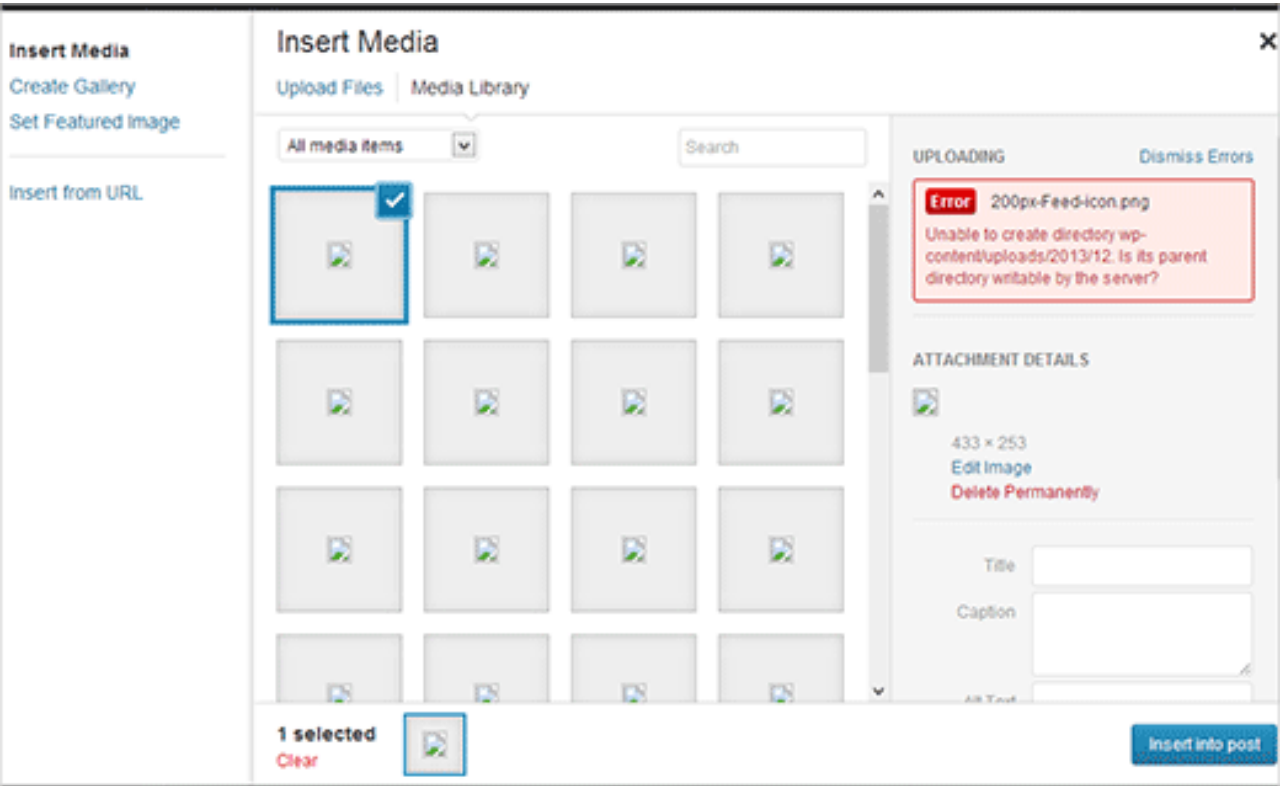
THE ISSUE

Your site is displaying a maintenance message but you're not doing any maintenance.

THE SOLUTION

Delete the `.maintenance` file from your site install's root directory.





Cannot upload media files or broken images

Every time you try to upload media to your site, you get a permission denied error.

SOLUTION:

The permissions of your uploads folder may need to be adjusted on your host to be writeable (744 permissions or 755 if still having issues.) Contact your host for assistance on changing folder permissions, if necessary.

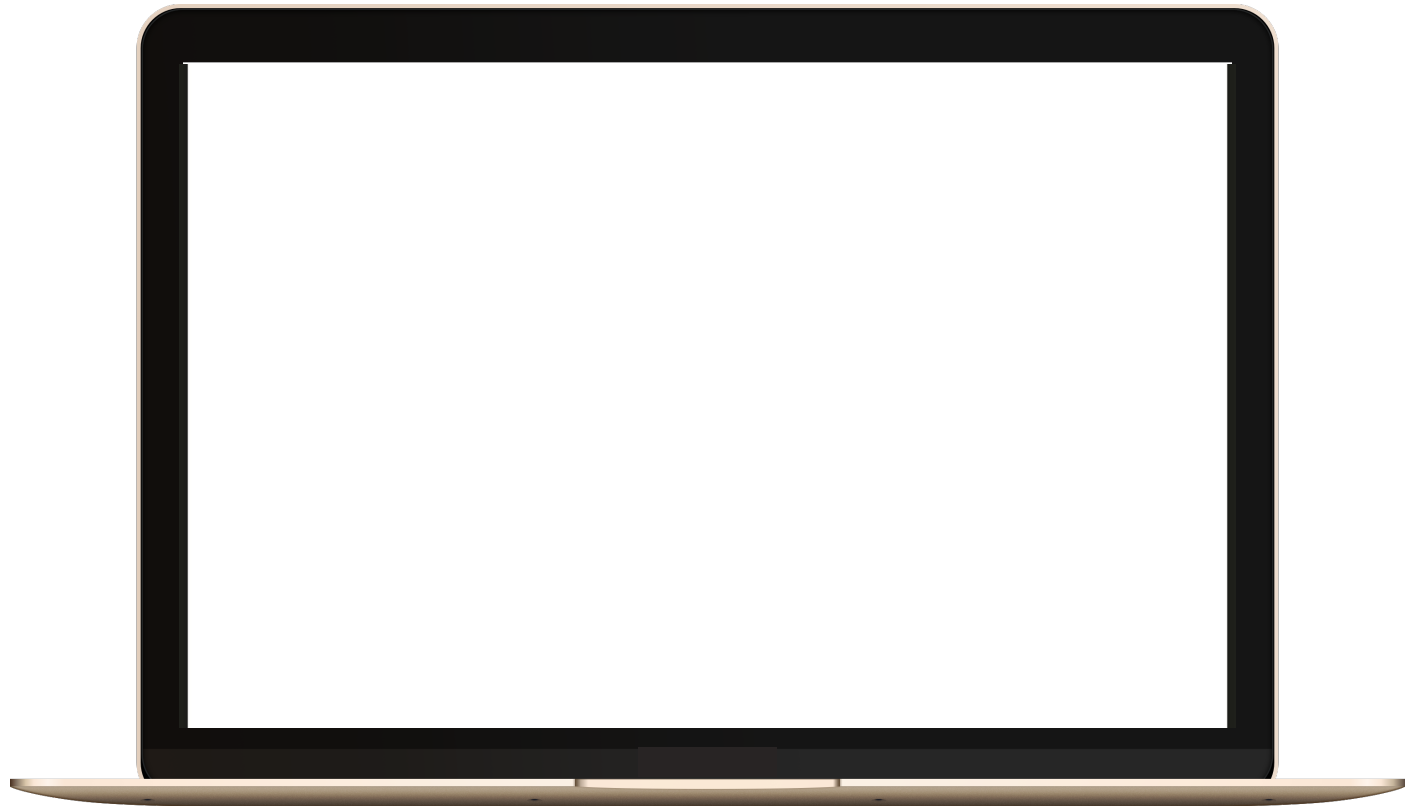
PHP White Screen of Death

THE ISSUE

Your site is displaying... nothing. A complete white screen of nothingness.

THE SOLUTION

Almost always caused by PHP code errors or memory exhaustion. Try deactivating all plugins, increasing memory limits or turn on WP DEBUG.



Increase WP Memory Limit

Symptoms your memory limit may need to be increased: memory exhaustion error messages, white screens of death, 500 server errors.



EDIT WP-CONFIG.PHP

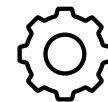
Before the “That’s all – stop editing” line, place:
`define('WP_MEMORY_LIMIT', '128M');`



EDIT .HTACCESS

If editing the wp-config.php value doesn't work, you can edit the .htaccess file in your root directory and place:

`php_value memory_limit 128M`



EDIT PHP.INI

If you're still not having any luck, you may need to locate and edit your php.ini file and look for the memory_limit setting to adjust there.

Addressing Plugin Conflicts

Plugins can be the source of many WordPress errors and there are a few steps to dealing with it. If you know the specific plugin, you can easily remove and replace. However, if you need to identify, here are good steps to take.



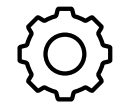
DEACTIVATE ALL PLUGINS

If you have admin access, you can select all your plugins and choose Deactivate. If you don't, you can rename plugins folder to plugins_old via sFTP/FTP.



ENABLE THEM ONE BY ONE

Once all plugins are deactivated, you can enable them one by one until you find the source of the issue.



REPLACE OR REMOVE

Once you've located the problematic plugin, you can replace with an alternative that does the same thing or remove altogether.

Using wp_debug

The built in wp_debug option is great for finding issues that are present that aren't enough to take down your site but ultimately need to be fixed, in addition to tracking down the source of any stubborn issues. WP_DEBUG should not be used in production environments. Enable WP_DEBUG by opening your wp-config.php file and looking for the WP_DEBUG line and change "false" to "true" then reload your site.

HOW TO ENABLE DEBUGGING [↗](#)

By default, WordPress debugging is turned off, so to enable it, open **wp-config.php** (tip: make a backup copy of this file that you can revert to later if needed) in the root of your WordPress installation and look for this line:

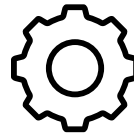
```
define('WP_DEBUG', false);
```

Replace that line with the following:

```
// Turns WordPress debugging on  
define('WP_DEBUG', true);
```

BEST PRACTICES

Ideal WordPress Set Up



LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Exists on your own computer

STAGING

Another install on the same server set up as the production environment.

PRODUCTION

Nothing happens here before it happens elsewhere.

Local WordPress Environments

Local WordPress environments exist on your individual computer, do not require an internet connection to access and are great testing grounds for your site.



DESKTOP SERVER

Super simple to get up & running, there is both a free and a premium version.



LOCAL BY FLYWHEEL

Pretty simple to get up & running with a variety of server configuration options. Free to use, but you will get marketing emails.

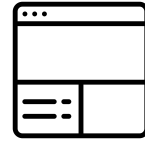


OTHER

You can use something like MAMP or XAMPP or Vagrant. Wealth of info online about getting up & running but definitely for more advanced users.

WordPress Backups

Think of it like an insurance policy in case things go really wrong.



HOST-BASED BACKUPS

Some hosts have WordPress backups as part of their plan, such as WP Engine, Flywheel and similar.



BACKUP PLUGINS

I really like the simplicity of VaultPress. There are plenty of others like BackUpBuddy and UpdraftPlus. If possible, I'd recommended storing backup off your hosting server.



LAST RESORT

If you do not back up your site and you need a backup, you can try reaching out to your hosting company.



T H E X E N D

ANY QUESTIONS?