

THE WORDPRESS UPDATE CHECKLIST

10 steps to keep your website in tiptop shape

brought to you by WendyCholbi.com

Updating WordPress doesn't have to be daunting. If you take it step by step, you can safely update your site on your own.

If you're scared that you'll accidentally break something when you update, my [Peace of Mind Program](#) will take care of all your updates for you.

1. Make a full backup. My absolute favorite backup solution is [BackupBuddy](#), but if you need a free option, [Updraft Plus](#) is quite easy to use.
2. Make sure you have your [FTP login credentials](#) handy. If the update process goes smoothly, you won't need them, but better safe than sorry.
3. Navigate to **Dashboard → Updates** (or follow the prompt at the top of your WordPress dashboard) to see what updates are available.
4. Perform all the updates that are available. Unless you have specific instructions from a particular plugin or theme, do your updates from largest to smallest:
 - a. First, update WordPress itself. **Note: Clicking the update button will update you to the latest version of WordPress, even if you're several versions out-of-date.** [Read my guide to leapfrogging multiple versions of WordPress](#) (short version: It's slightly riskier than updating one version at a time, but updating one version at a time requires doing a manual update and replacing files via FTP).
 - b. Next, update your theme if there's a new version available.
 - c. Finally, update any plugins that have new versions (on the update screen, check to make sure that the plugins are listed as compatible with your newly updated version of WordPress -- you might want to hold off on updating plugins that don't meet this requirement).
5. Once your updates are complete, check to make sure that the section on WordPress updates at the top of the Updates screen includes the line "Future security updates will be applied automatically." If it doesn't, you might need to [troubleshoot the automatic updater](#).
6. Check the front end of your site. At a minimum, this means a quick visit to the home page to visually ascertain that everything looks right (menus, widgets, fonts). You may also want to

click on menu items, visit important pages, and test things like contact forms (especially if you updated a contact form plugin), or even [run a search for broken links](#).

7. Visit the **Appearance → Themes** page: Did WordPress add yet another default theme that you don't need? While I do recommend keeping one of the WordPress default themes around for troubleshooting purposes, you don't need more than one. Ideally your themes page will list only two themes (or three, if you are using a parent theme like the Genesis Framework):
 - a. Your active theme
 - b. One inactive WordPress default theme (TwentyTwelve or later)
 - c. If your active theme is a child theme, you will also need to keep its parent theme installed (the parent theme will be listed as inactive).
8. Visit the Plugins page: Did WordPress install Hello Dolly yet again? You can safely get rid of it. This is also a good time to look over your installed plugins and see if there are deactivated plugins you can get rid of, or too many plugins doing one job (for example, if you use the Yoast SEO plugin, you do not need an additional Google XML Sitemaps plugin, because Yoast SEO includes that function).
9. Optimize your WordPress database. I like to do this with the [WP-Optimize](#) plugin, which offers an easy point-and-click interface for getting rid of accumulated post revisions, spam comments, and transient options that can bloat your WordPress database.
10. Make another backup. Now that everything is updated, optimized, and cleaned up, you want your most recent backup to reflect that, not the pre-updated state of your site.
11. Bonus tip because this list goes to eleven: Set up an automated schedule for future backups, if you don't already have one. If you have a schedule, check to make sure it's still active so that future backups will be made automatically.

If the thought of performing these updates on your own fills you with dread, turn over all the updating-and-backing-up stuff to me by [joining my Peace of Mind Program](#)... and never worry about a WordPress update again.