

Instantly speed up your WordPress site

One of the most resource hungry ways of creating a website is WordPress. With its multiple CSS, JavaScript and PHP files and a heavy reliance on calls to databases a WordPress site can easily become bloated and slow. Web masters who use WordPress need to look at how they can decrease their website's page load speeds. Here is how.

How do I find out how fast my website is the first place?

To see how your site is performing and to get a list of recommended changes I would start with looking at "Site Performance" within the Labs section of your Google Webmaster Tools.

To check out your site on spec you can also install Google's page speed plug-in for FireFox here <http://code.google.com/speed/page-speed/download.html>. This site within Firebug (also required) and gives a page a score out of 100 along with what you need to improve.

Before we get started, a word of warning. If you decide to make any changes to your site you must make a back up to cover yourself in case anything collapses. It literally takes a couple of minutes to do and will save you some serious heart ache!

Bring multiple files in to one

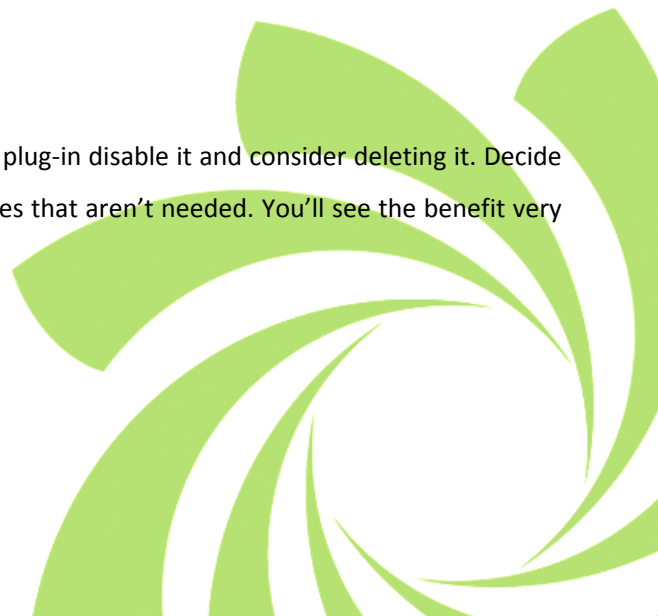
Every single item on a page generates a separate request to the web server, this includes the HTML page, the CSS page(s), JavaScript, image etc. For example, every plug-in has a PHP file, and a lot have their own CSS and JavaScript files and each one must then be called before the page can be loaded. To reduce the number of requests look at collating all the CSS in to one CSS file and all the JS in to a single file as well.

Install WP Super cache

This plug-in will create a HTML cache of your pages so repeat visits don't require WordPress to call the server for the PHP files WordPress is built around. In their own words "This plug-in generates static html files from your dynamic WordPress blog. After a html file is generated your web server will serve that file instead of processing the comparatively heavier and more expensive WordPress PHP scripts." The plug-in can be downloaded here <http://wordpress.org/extend/plugins/wp-super-cache/>

Disable or delete unused plug-ins

Some plug-ins can have a ton of scripts and code so if you're not using a plug-in disable it and consider deleting it. Decide which plug-ins are necessary for your site and then do-away with the ones that aren't needed. You'll see the benefit very quickly.



Remove dynamic social media icons

Do you really need that dynamic social media icon that shows the number of time it has been shared, bookmarked or forwarded? Every time your page loads the icon calls home to update the figure often noticeably slowing down the page. Your best approach is to use static images that allow people to share your ideas but don't have to call home.

Use excerpts on your home page

Rather than showing all the content of your 10 most recent blog posts on the home page with all the text and images (and the load times that come with that), display snippets to make sure only a small amount text is shown and no graphics. This will noticeably speed up your home page's time instantly. To display an excerpt on your home page, edit the index.php replacing...

```
<?php the_content(__( ' (more...) ' )); ?>
```

With...

```
<?php the_excerpt(__( ' (more...) ' )); ?>
```

Optimise your database

Like your home PC's hard drive, as your database grows it can start to become a bit messy and need the equivalent of a defrag. You can choose to do this manually using phpMyAdmin using the 'Optimise tables' option or install this plug-in to do it for you <http://yoast.com/wordpress/optimize-db/>

Reduce the size of your image files

The web works fine at 72dpi you don't need to push it up to print quality 300dpi. Super glossy hi-res images are lovely to look at but they can take an age to load, especially if you have a lot on one page. The reality is you don't need eye bleedingly hi-res images on a website and lower res images are just as effective.

