

WEBSITE BACKUPS & SECURITY



website alchemy

BACKUPS & SECURITY FOR YOUR WORDPRESS WEBSITE

How secure is your website?

Did you know that your website is extremely flexible? It can move and grow alongside you and your business. You can update it and redesign it as you expand without losing all the content and value that you create over time. It is moveable and changeable and with that ability comes the need to manage your security and keep it safe.

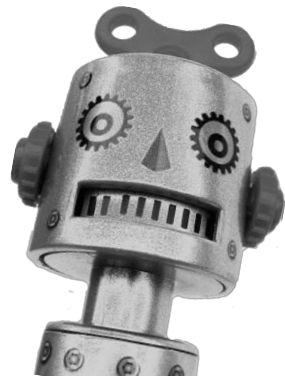
Fortunately this process is relatively painless once you know what you are doing! But it is extremely important – failing to maintain your website will leave it open to vulnerabilities that can be exploited by nefarious spam bots looking to take advantage...

It sounds a bit like a sci-fi novel!

We at Website Alchemy see a lot of people who need their website to be working but who may not have the time, motivation or technical skills to manage their security and updates. We do see problems crop up, so we have created this guide to make it a piece of cake, with lashings of digital sweet treats that contain zero calories.

This is a quick guide that will teach you how to manage your security and updates yourself and if your eyes glaze over at the thought, we can manage your security and updates for you with some extra high tech wizardry to boot. More details about this on Page 12.

Onwards...



PLUGINS & UPDATES

Your website uses WordPress and a combination of third party plugins that gives your website its functionality and in some cases parts of its styling.

Each plugin on your website is probably created by a different developer or group of developers.

The developers of WordPress and the plugins will make regular changes to these tools. The reason for this is to improve their offering over time as well as to ensure the tools are as secure as possible against threats, hackers and malware. They also need to keep the tools current so that they integrate properly with all the other tools! So when there is a WordPress update, all of the plugin developers need to ensure their plugins work with the new version of WordPress.

As you can imagine there are a lot of moving parts in this process and sometimes the interactions between each part may not have been tested.

As a website owner you **it is crucial** to update your plugins regularly so that you get the latest patches and security changes. The process is pretty straight forward (details in the DIY section on page 6).

If you keep old versions of these plugins long enough you will start to encounter security and functionality issues with your website. So keep them updated to ensure your website has the best security possible.

Note: The majority of the website problems we see are caused by plugins that have not been updated!

When it comes to WordPress itself, this should update for you automatically. You will simply be notified once this has happened.



BACKUPS

A backup is a copy of your website or content that can be restored in case there is a problem. It may be because your website has been hacked or that your hosting company goes down. The backup saves all the hard work and customisations that have been added to your website over time... it is really important to have backups that are working!

As well as updating plugins, checking backups and managing storage is something which often gets neglected when it comes to website ownership... and we get it - it is generally quite techy and most people would rather not think about it.

If we have built your website your backups will have been automated when we first set it up. But regardless of who built your website, we suggest reviewing your backups every few months to ensure that everything is as it should be.

The reason for this is that sometimes backups just stop working! We have seen it before and there are many reasons why this may happen, for example; if your website becomes too big or if you change your password to Dropbox or your cloud storage. Sometimes there is no explanation - it just happens.

Unfortunately some website owners only realise their backups have stopped AFTER they lose their website for some reason. This is a nightmare.

To avoid this problem schedule a regular review to check that your backups are working. Ensure also that you are backing up to your server AND to either your hard drive or another Cloud Storage option. Popular cloud options include:

- Dropbox: <https://db.tt/K6Av9fMH>
- Amazon Digital Storage: <http://amzn.to/2CpDzjR>

WHO WILL MAINTAIN YOUR WEBSITE?

In this guide I share with you my process for maintaining WordPress websites so that you can give your website the best chance of a long and secure existence! Do these things and you will lessen your chances of being hacked or losing your precious

website if your hosting fails. I don't talk about SSL Certification or creating strong passwords and usernames - hopefully it goes without saying! But if you think it would add to the usefulness of this guide please let me know.

You have three options depending on your skills and interest:

1. DIY

Perform these tasks yourself (pages 6-10)

2. TEACH ME

Perform these tasks yourself with some training (page 11)

3. DO IT FOR ME

Join the Updates Service and I will perform these tasks for you (page 12)



DIY SECURITY

Once you get familiar with your website most of you will be able to do most of these things yourself.

When managing your own security and maintenance, these are the things to include:

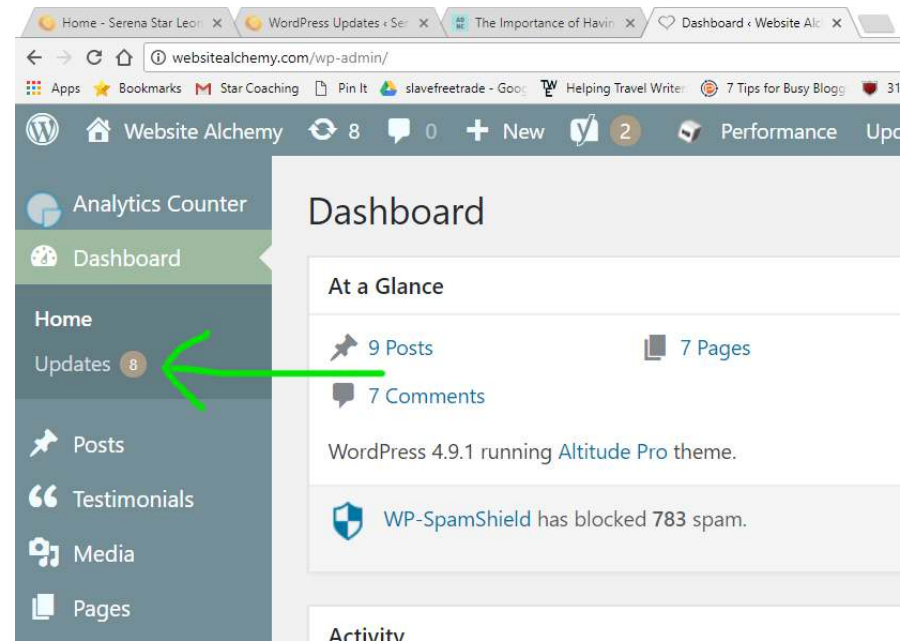
1. Update your plugins at least once a month
2. Update your theme when needed
3. Review your backups once every 3-6 months
4. Check for broken links
5. Review the speed of your website

Updating Plugins:

When you log in to the *wp-admin* area of your website, you will first land in the main Dashboard.

In the top left hand corner you will see the name of your website with the word “Dashboard” below it.

Next you will see “Home” and then “Updates”. Here is the indicator that you have updates which are needed. The number of updates required will show as a number in a little circle like this:



Click on “Updates” and you will be taken to the “WordPress Updates” page. Here you can follow the prompts to update your plugins, theme or WordPress itself. You only need to update the ones that are out of date.

A Note on Updating Themes:

Some developers make customisations to themes that will disappear if the theme is updated. This is rare but it does happen. You will probably have been warned of this by your developer if this applies to you! In this case follow your developer's instructions for updating the theme.

A Note on Updating Plugins:

Updating your plugins and theme is quite a simple process and most of the time you will not run into any problems.

BUT!!!

There is always a BUT!

Sometimes, certain plugins are not compatible with WordPress updates. Or your theme may not be compatible with a part of an updated plugin. In cases like this you may run into the dreaded "White Screen Of Death" which is a blank screen or error message where your website should be. Or there may be other issues which arise with your website's functionality after you perform your updates

This does happen sometimes and prevention is better than cure!



Here are my tips:

1. When you arrive on the WordPress updates page, ensure that the plugin or theme you are updating is compatible with the version of WordPress you are using. It will have an indication underneath the plugin on the updates page. You will be able to check this against the version of WordPress which is also mentioned on the page.
2. I always update my plugins individually so that if something breaks, I know which update caused the error. I keep a separate browser containing the website open and refresh it after each individual update. This ensures I can identify the plugin which conflicts with the website.

Please Note!

Even if you follow the above instructions, you may occasionally run into issues. This is rare but it happens.

If your website breaks, someone will need to log into the website via cPanel or FTP in order to turn off the offending plugin and figure out why it is causing a problem.

This is advanced diagnostics. If you are technically minded you can learn how to do this – but poking around in your FTP and CPanel when you don't know what you are doing can do more harm than good!

If you do face problems with the website beyond what is in this guide, I am here to help. Reach out and I can help you identify what the issue is.

Reviewing Your Backups:

Depending on who set up your website, you may or may not have a Backup plugin installed and working.

I use a great, free plugin called “Updraft Plus”. I find it easy-to-use and reliable. When you install the plugin you will be prompted to connect it to your remote storage account, for example Dropbox. And it will also store another backup on your server.

I also like to have another backup downloaded and stored on my hard drive. This will ensure that if something goes wrong with the servers or remote storage, and your website gets taken down, you will still have a version that you can restore. Triple security!

When reviewing our backups I first check the dates of the last backup on my hard drive, on the server and in the cloud storage app.

I also check the size of the backup – if your website is large with a lot of photos (for example a travel blog) you may find that your website suddenly exceeds the allowed storage space and gets rejected. Or that only the content files get backed up. Once you have done this a few times you will notice if the backup file is much smaller than usual and can take steps to understand why.

The final stage of the DIY process is some things we recommend doing from time to time – perhaps every 6-12 months

Broken Links

Broken links are simply links that no longer work. It may be that you moved or deleted the original page or post – or that even that one letter in the link is wrong. Whatever the reason there are plenty of “broken link checkers” on Google. For example www.brokenlinkcheck.com

Follow the prompts, enter your web address and you will get a list of links that you need to address.

There are also WordPress plugins that provide this service too, some are better than others.

Regardless of how you check for broken links, once you have the report, simply go to each indicated page and update the offending links.

Speed Testing

A Speed Test tests how fast your website is loading. This is possible with third party web apps that analyse the performance of your website. Having a fast website is extremely important for SEO as well as the experience of your website visitors. Here are three that I use regularly to test our client’s websites:

Website Alchemy – Backups and Security

GT Metrix: <https://gtmetrix.com>

Google Page Speed Insights:

<https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights>

Pingdom: <https://tools.pingdom.com>

With each tester, follow the prompts and enter your domain name where indicated. Each application will give you a grade and breakdown of what is causing speed issues on your website. The report includes a list of improvements that you can make. Some items you may recognise as things you can do yourself, but many of the suggestions will be fairly technical - so send the report to your preferred developer and ask them to work through it for you.

If you want my help to improve your website speed, connect with me, and we can discuss which of the updates will give you the best results and make the changes for you...

Email hello@websitealchemy.com

or visit www.websitealchemy.com

If this all seems a bit overwhelming, don't worry, you have options! I also offer one on one training sessions or a comprehensive monthly service where I perform these tasks for you and many more, please read on for more details.



YOU HAVE
OPTIONS!

TEACH ME!

If you are keen to DIY but need more help you can book me for a training session (or two) and I will walk you through the process of managing your plugins, checking your backups and performing speed tests on your website.

The session will be held with live screen sharing via Skype or Zoom and you can record it for future reference if we use Zoom.

Website maintenance tutorials are USD \$69 and run for up to an hour live with John.

Sessions are prepaid: <http://bit.ly/2qZbpC3>

Please email me at hello@websitealchemy.com for further details or payment options.

Discover step-by-step how to:

- Check and download your backups
- Update your website safely
- Test your site for malware and vulnerabilities
- Run speed tests
- Check your site for broken links
- Check if your site is listed as safe with Norton
- Answer any other questions you may have about backups and maintenance



DO IT FOR ME!

For those who want to ensure the best possible security, this option is for you.

With the Backups and Maintenance Service I will personally manage your plugin updates, backup and security tasks for you each month as well as comprehensive security tests every 6 and 12 months.

This service includes:

- WordPress, themes and **plugins updated**
- **Website backups** checked and copies downloaded and stored remotely
- **Website checked** for malware, viruses and vulnerabilities
- **Security plugin scans** (such as Wordfence and Sucuri)
- **Antivirus** listings checked and verified
- **Full website back up test** every 6 months on remote server
- **Full speed test** every 12 months with a report of recommended actions
- **3 hours *Emergency support** (per year).

A report with confirmations and recommendations will be sent to you after each monthly service.

****Monthly Subscription** – USD\$55 per month

<https://bit.ly/2pjFCiJ>

****Annual Subscription** - USD\$550 per year (save \$110)

<https://bit.ly/2q5xa3X>

Terms: **Your 3 hours Emergency support is available if you or someone else breaks your website. I will work with you to resolve the issue, contact support on your behalf if need be or restore your website from the backup. If you require additional hours the rate is \$55 per hour.*

***No refunds, but subscriptions may be cancelled at any time.*



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



My name is John Leonard and I'm a website developer, writer and film maker from Dublin, Ireland.

My wife Serena and I left our lives in Australia in 2012 and while experiencing the freedom of travel, created a business that could be run from anywhere in

the world. We have since travelled through over 35 countries and enjoy the ability to connect and work with dozens of charities and community projects through our passion project Five Point Five.

Through our business Website Alchemy we build beautiful and functional websites for our small business clients. We also write, produce videos and train our clients in website best practice.

Over time we have built a wonderful community of small business clients but many are not technically minded! On several occasions someone would come to me in a panic because their website had disappeared or been hacked. Of course this is a very stressful event for a website owner, and I started to see that all of

these problems stemmed from a failure to update their website plugins over time.

So I found myself on a mission to help our community maintain excellent website security! Some of our clients jumped in and managed it fine by themselves, and others found it too technical and asked me to manage it for them. This is how the program was born.

I now help website owners understand the process and provide services to those who want additional help and peace of mind.

For more info visit www.websitealchemy.com or reach out to me at hello@websitealchemy.com. I will train you or do the work for you - whichever suits you.

I look forward to giving you peace of mind.

- John