

My WordPress Installation Checklist

Written by [Jim Wright](#)

The more I use WordPress, the more I like it. And, I'm not alone.

In round numbers, it's estimated that 20% of websites run WordPress. That's well over 50 million websites!

The main benefit of that popularity is that WordPress gets a lot of attention from developers, and that means we enjoy an almost unlimited variety of configurations, options, themes, and plugins.



While I've worked with many different WordPress websites, I've noticed that regardless of the final design of the website, frequently I find myself going through the same first steps following an installation. These steps have now become my WordPress Installation Checklist.

This is not meant to be a comprehensive installation guide, but instead, a look at my common first steps when installing WordPress.

So follow along as I share my WordPress Installation Checklist with you.

1. Admin Account

One of my favorite things about WordPress these days is how easy it is to install.



Most hosting companies now have automated One-Button installation procedures to make it super easy.

But as easy (and tempting) as it is to keep clicking "Next" and moving on, there is one thing you absolutely need to change during the installation process: the Admin Account.

Admin Account	
Admin Username	<input type="text" value="admin"/>
Admin Password	<input type="password" value="pass"/>  <div style="background-color: #f4a460; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Bad (18/100)</div>
Admin Email	<input type="text" value="admin@kickontheweb.com"/>

The first thing I do as part of my WordPress installation routine is to change the default Admin Username.

Hackers LOVE when people don't change this — it makes it so much easier to hack into accounts when you know the account's login name. Then, all they need is a list easily obtained by typing "most common passwords" into a search engine, and ... well, you get the idea.

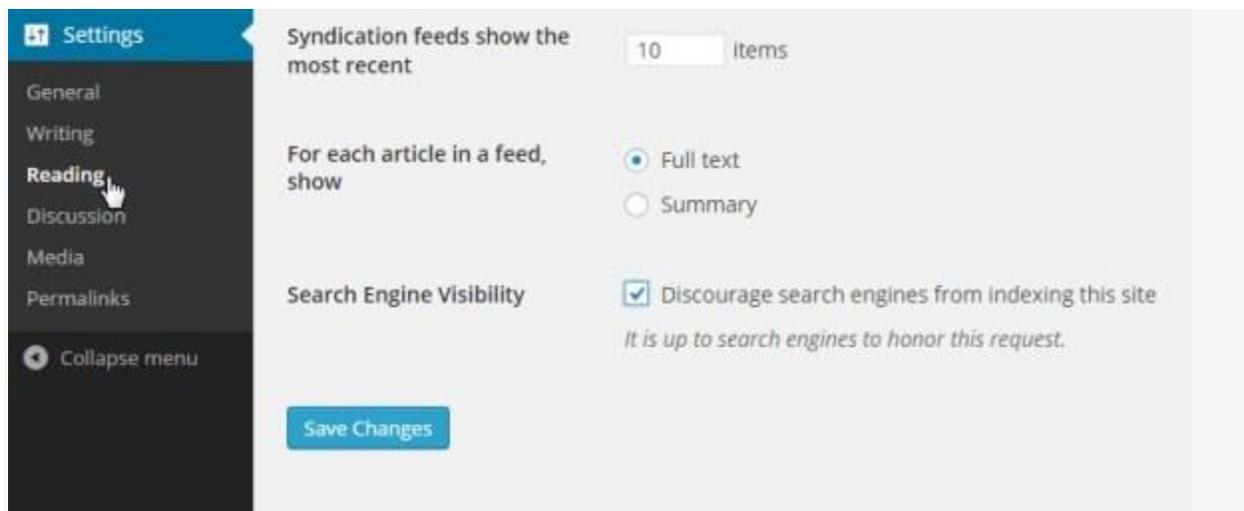
The default Admin Password also needs to be changed. Many hosts will include a [password quality](#) indicator (as shown above), and in many cases, passwords with a quality score less than 50/100 will be rejected and you'll have to try again. I always aim for 100/100.

Last but not least is the Admin Email address. This is the email address WordPress will use to send Admin notifications, but more importantly, if you ever forget your password, this is the email address the system will use to help you reset your password. If this email isn't set, or doesn't exist, it will make it much tougher to retrieve a lost password. (Of course this has never happened to me!)

2. Under Construction

While you're first building your site, adding pages, and moving things around, one of the things you don't need (at this stage) is to wind up in the Google Index with incomplete pages, changing navigation, and general untidiness.

Fortunately, WordPress has an easy fix for this — a Search Engine Visibility field.



You'll find it in "Reading," under "Settings."

All you need to do is click the box to "Discourage search engines from indexing this site," and your site will politely ask visiting search engines to come back another day — when your house is in order.

Just remember to un-check this box when you go "Live."

3. Pick a Theme

The next thing I do is install my WordPress theme.

Although a basic WordPress installation already includes several themes, I have a theme I like to work with and that's the one I install.

Since the theme you choose gives your website much of its look and feel, this is often a very personal choice. I use Tom Usborne's [Pro Framework](#), but there are an incredible number of good options available, both free and paid, as well as many designers who can create a custom theme for you.

Generally speaking, paid themes will usually be of a higher quality and be more robust, but as with many things, it's best to do your homework.

4. Clean Out the Clutter

This is an often-skipped step, but the next thing I do is to get rid of clutter.

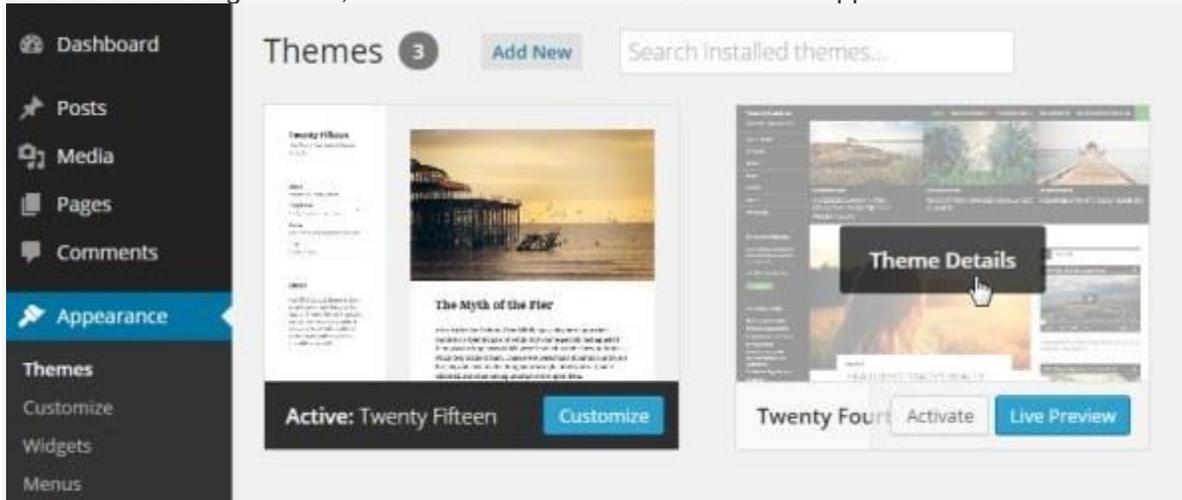
And by clutter, I'm referring to existing, default, or unused pages, posts, comments, plugins, and themes.

Here are a few important reasons why I do this:

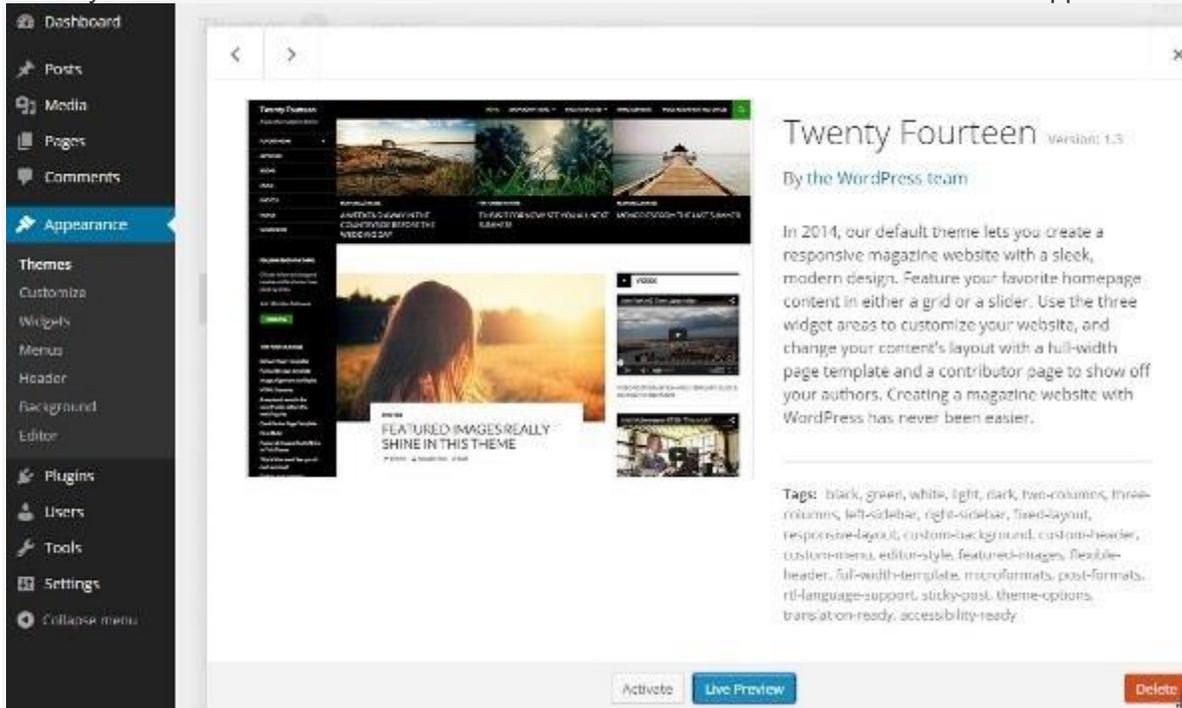
1. Any default content (sample pages and comments) on your site becomes part of your site's content — even if this default content isn't accessible through your navigation, it's still findable through search.

- Unused and out-of-date plugins and themes are often **exploited by hackers** if security vulnerabilities should be discovered in them.
- Clutter is clutter, and can slow things down. Site-load speed is one of the factors used in determining where you rank in search results. Lean sites tend to load faster, pleasing both Google and your readers.

To remove existing themes, click the “Themes” menu item under “Appearance.”



Hover your mouse over an unused theme and click the “Theme Details” button that appears.



In the bottom right-hand corner, click the “Delete” button, and the theme will be removed.

To remove unwanted plugins, navigate to the “Plugin” menu ...

Dashboard | Posts | Media | Pages | Comments | Appearance | **Plugins**

Installed Plugins
Add New
Editor

Plugins [Add New](#)

All (2) | Inactive (2)

Delete ▾ Apply

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Plugin	Description
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Akismet Activate Edit Delete	Used by millions, Akismet is quite description, 2) Sign up for an Akisr Version 3.0.4 By Automattic View
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hello Dolly Activate Edit Delete	This is not just a plugin, it symboliz of your admin screen on every pag Version 1.6 By Matt Mullenweg View
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Plugin	Description

Simply select the plugins you want to delete, select “Delete” from the drop-down menu, then click “Apply.”

Note: If the plugins are active, you’ll have to deactivate them first. You can find the “Deactivate” option in the same drop-down menu. Once they’ve been deactivated, you’ll be able to delete them. To delete unwanted content, navigate to “Pages,” “Posts,” or “Comments,” depending on which you want to delete ...

Dashboard | Posts | Media | **Pages**

All Pages
Add New
Editor

Pages [Add New](#)

All (1) | Published (1)

Move to Trash ▾ Apply All dates ▾ Filter

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Title
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sample Page
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Title

Bulk Actions ▾ Apply

The process is similar to deleting plugins ... select the page you want to delete, select “Move to Trash” from the drop-down menu, and click “Apply.”

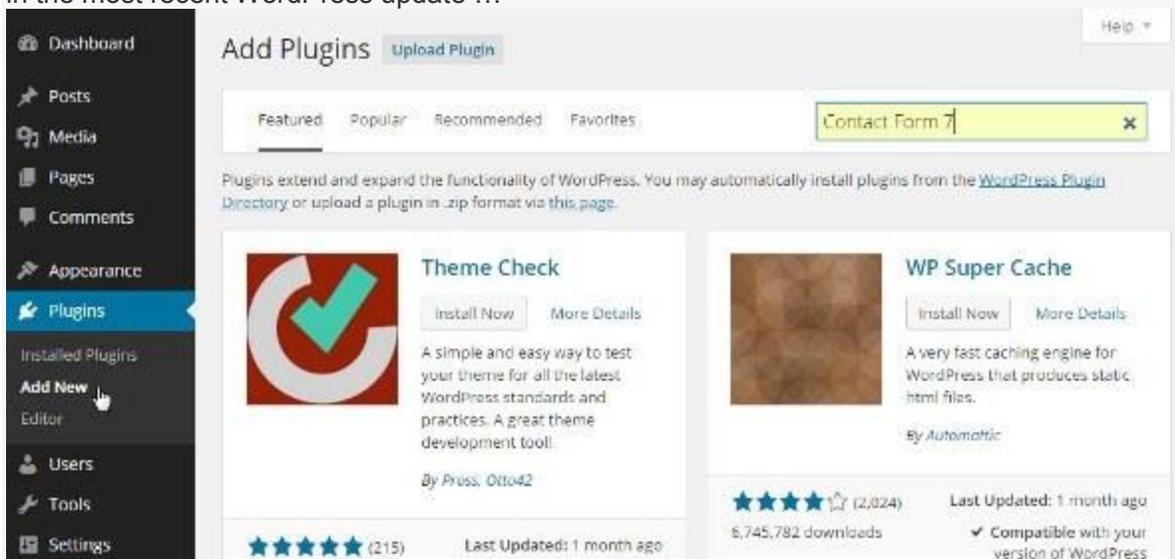
5. Make it Yours

Now that my theme is installed, and the clutter removed, my next step is to install my “Go-To” plugins.

Much like themes, plugins can be a personal choice — especially since there are many different plugins that offer the same functionality.

For example, there are many different contact form plugins available, but I always use Contact Form 7.

Click “Add New” under the “Plugins” menu to see the new-look “Add Plugins” interface. This is new in the most recent WordPress update ...



The screenshot displays the WordPress 'Add Plugins' interface. On the left, a dark sidebar contains navigation options: Dashboard, Posts, Media, Pages, Comments, Appearance, Plugins (highlighted), Installed Plugins, Add New (with a mouse cursor), Editor, Users, Tools, and Settings. The main content area is titled 'Add Plugins' and includes an 'Upload Plugin' button. A search bar at the top right contains the text 'Contact Form 7'. Below the search bar, there are tabs for 'Featured', 'Popular', 'Recommended', and 'Favorites'. A text box explains that plugins extend WordPress functionality and can be installed from the 'WordPress Plugin Directory' or uploaded as a .zip file. Two plugin cards are visible: 'Theme Check' (by Press, Otto42) with a 5-star rating (215 reviews) and 'WP Super Cache' (by Automatic) with a 5-star rating (2,024 reviews) and 6,745,782 downloads. Both cards have 'Install Now' and 'More Details' buttons.

Type what you’re looking for in the search box and click search ...

Search Results **Featured** Popular Recommended Favorites

Keyword

1,553 items 1 of 52



Contact Form 7

[Install Now](#) [More Details](#)

Just another contact form plugin. Simple but flexible.

By Takayuki Miyoshi

★★★★☆ (2,491)
23,349,324 downloads

Last Updated: 1 month ago

✓ Compatible with your version of WordPress



WP Contact Bank - Contact Forms Builder

[Install Now](#) [More Details](#)

Contact Bank is an ultimate form builder wordpress plugin that lets you create contact forms in seconds.

By Tech Banker

★★★★☆ (46)
164,384 downloads

Last Updated: 2 days ago

✓ Compatible with your version of WordPress

Once you find it, click “Install Now.”

- Pages
- Comments
- Appearance
- Plugins
- Installed Plugins
- Add New
- Editor

All (1) | Inactive (1)

Bulk Actions

<input type="checkbox"/>	Plugin	Description
<input type="checkbox"/>	Contact Form 7 Activate Edit Delete	Just another contac Version 4.0.3 By T
<input type="checkbox"/>	Plugin	Description

Bulk Actions

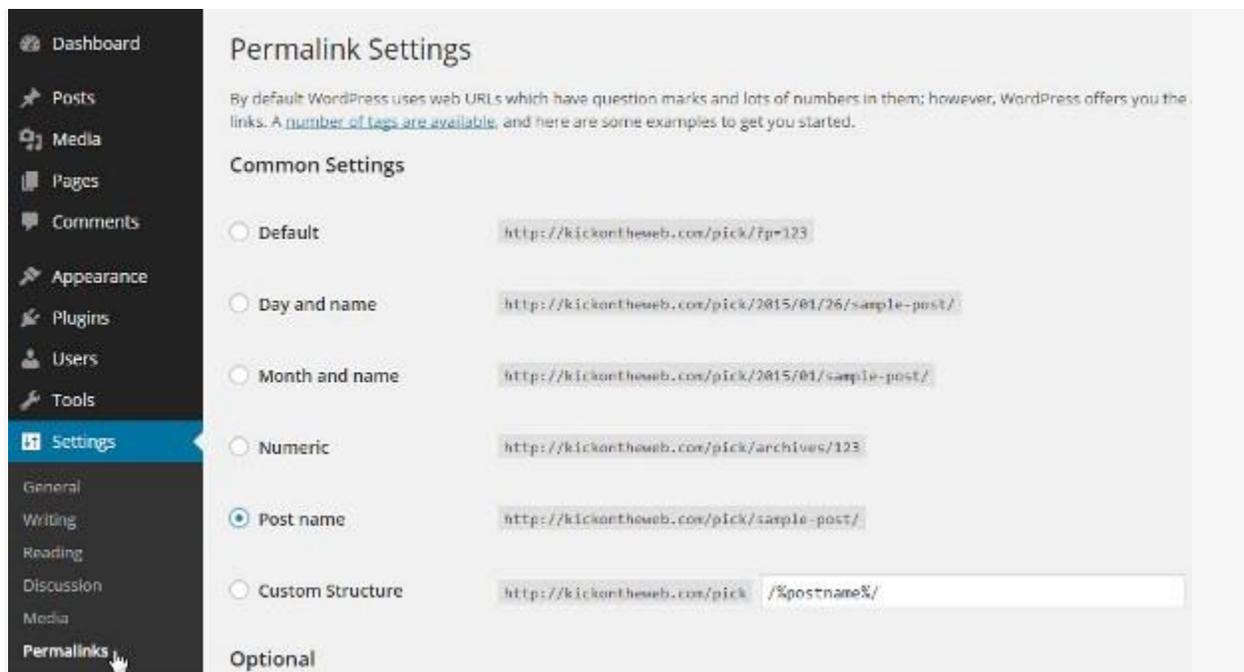
You will have the option to activate the plugin following the install, but if you close that window and miss the opportunity, just navigate back to the Plugins menu, and activate it from the Plugin list.

6. Search-Engine-Friendly URLs

There’s one last thing I like to do before I dive in and get to work adding content and creating my site: setting up [search-engine-friendly](#) URLs.

While this sounds complicated, WordPress again makes it easy!

Just click the “Permalinks” option in the “Settings” menu ...



The WordPress default setting (appropriately enough) is “Default.”

Search-engine-friendly just means that the URL will have words in the link rather than random numbers and characters.

If you can't decide between the different options, just select “Post Name,” and you're done.

Already Have Your Site? No Problem

If your website's been up for a while and you're reading this and thinking, “Oh, no ... I missed this,” don't worry — it's not too late!

Although it is better to deal with these items on day one, all of these actions can be performed at any time — it's just easier (and often less trouble) to handle them from the beginning.

For example, if you didn't change the Admin Account during the installation, you can't really change it as I described above. However, you *can* do this: log in and create another account, giving it full administrative privileges, then log out and log back in using the new account credentials, and then delete the existing Admin Account.

So if your website is already online, no worries — you can still make these changes.

Now You Can Get to Work

Although we're still technically in the beginning stages for setting up our WordPress website, the above points are the ones I always complete first, and serve as my start-up WordPress Installation Checklist.

To summarize, they are:

1. Change the Admin Username, Password, and Email

2. Discourage search engines (via the Search Engine Visibility field) from indexing my site until it's ready
3. Pick a theme
4. Clean out the clutter
5. "Make it Yours" by installing "[Go-To](#)" plugins
6. Change URLs to be search-engine friendly

If you have any questions, please leave them in the comments below, and I'll do my best to answer them.