



# Optimizing WordPress Site Speed

For better SEO and user experience.

# ABOUT KIT BLOGS

We create WordPress websites FAST so you can focus on what truly matters – content.

Our top goals are to make your life easier, get your site launched, and cut through the crap-load of information out there so you can hit the ground running on your business (yup, that includes blogging).

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# Optimizing WordPress For Site Speed

Whether you are new to blogging or have been blogging for a long time, there are always things you can do to help your site speed. Not only is site speed important to your readers but it is also a determining factor in ranking for SEO.

By optimizing your site to be fast you will have happier readers and even happier search engines.

## Why Does Your Site Need To Be Fast?

Well, think of it this way – when you go to a site and it doesn't load what do you do?

Leave?

Yup, that's what most people will do. The internet has no patience. Since the lovely demise of dial up (does that show you how old I am?), readers are no longer willing to wait around when there are millions of other resources out there.

So if you have a slow site that people leave right away, this increases your bounce rate (or doesn't even log as a visit). Google and other search engines look at the bounce rate, time on page, and pageviews on your site. They want to know that your site has the best user experience so they send readers your way!

Ranking in search engines in the best and most secure way to improve your site traffic (with [SEO](#)).

Google also may crawl your site less if your site runs slow (it takes up their resources), which means if you make improvements it could take longer for Google to see them! So start NOW!

If you also use [Pinterest](#), there's also a huge chance that if people are clicking on your pins but automatically returning to Pinterest they (Pinterest) will give your pins less priority. So it's alllllll about traffic and user experience!

## How To Test Your Site Speed

There are a few different sites you can use for free to test your site speed. One of the most common is to use [GTMetrix](#) (a second is [WebPageTest](#)). Just enter your domain URL in the search box and it will run a report of the different factors for site speed.

Prepare yourself because a lot of what they will report will look like gibberish unless you are a website developer. But, it will show you where you need improvements and if you need help from someone that CAN decipher the findings ([check out our recommended contacts here](#)).

But keep reading because there may be tools and resources you can use on your own to solve most of the issues that may pop up.

# Methods To Optimize Your Site Speed

There are a ton of ways that you can optimize your site. Unfortunately, there are a million and one things that could cause your site to be slower. Let's look at the most common:

Please remember to back up your site before you make any major changes to your site for optimization!

## Blog Hosts

No blog hosts are built the same!

Choosing a host is a very important decision.

You not only want to choose a host that offers great customer service and an easy interface but you need to understand the difference between the types.

Learn more about [the types of blog hosts and our recommendations here](#).

## Blog (or Website) Theme

Your theme is the look and feel of your blog so you want to choose something that matches your brand and audience.

However, your number 1 goal should be to choose one that is lightweight and fast (which includes some tech-side things like number of HTTP requests).

Below is a list of themes to check out with a small size and small number of requests (too many will greatly slow down your site) – list updated in 2020:

- [Astra](#) (the theme I use and love on all my sites and for most of my [clients](#))
- [GeneratePress](#)
- [OceanWP](#)
- [Neve](#)

Know another lightning fast theme? Share it in the comments at the end of this post for others to check out!

TIP: Once you have added a theme, the theme will upload a bunch of images to your site. After customizing your theme, try to go through your Media library and delete any image you don't need.

## Page Builders

I call this one out because I see so many bloggers using their page builder (like [Elementor](#)) for their posts...no!

First, if you ever decide to change your page builder you will likely have to rebuild every single post you create using a page builder!

Second, using a page builder for your posts can dramatically slow down your site leading to a higher bounce rate and less people reading your blog.

Think ahead to when you have hundreds of blog posts...only use a page builder for pages, not posts!

## Caching

For the less technical people this is somewhat hard to explain. But, let's give this a go:

A page on your site makes a bunch of different requests (processes) to make your page display correctly to your visitor. This takes time to do.

But what if a server can remember all of those requests (processes) and have your page display even faster?

That's exactly what caching does – it basically takes a screenshot of your page rather than process it over and over and over again for every visitor.

Here are a couple of plugins that can help your website cache:

- [W3 Total Cache](#) (free)
- [WP Rocket](#) (paid): this is by far my favorite and I recommend it to everyone. You will see it mentioned more than once on this page since it can do so many things without needing to code!
- [NitroPack](#) (paid): this is a WP Rocket alternative (I have never used it)

A word of warning – when using a caching plugin you will want to make sure to clear the cache when you make any major changes to your site (adding a plugin, etc). This will clear the “snapshot” to ensure your visitors will get the most up to date page displayed (either of these plugins will show you a notification when you should clear your cache).

## Content Delivery Networks (CDN)

This is a lot like caching that we just discussed, but it also allows for greater security and faster loading across the world (depending on the company and where they own servers).

What a CDN does is cache your site on their servers so it can load quicker no matter where the visitor may live.

Setting these up can be a little tricky so feel free to contact a [developer](#) if you are confused. Plus, many [blog hosts](#) partner with [Cloudflare](#) (the CDN I personally use) so can also help!

## Image Optimization

While written content is the master of all blogs (unless you are a vlogger), images are a very important part of this visual interwebs we use (lol).

But having huge images on your site can slow down your site.

Not only do you want to make sure you size your images for the usage, but you also want to compress them down as much as possible without losing image quality (nobody likes a grainy photo!).

Tip: if you use something like [Canva](#), you can export your images at the right size AND make sure to use jpg rather than png wherever possible (the files are smaller).

There are 2 plugins that I have personally used for compression: [WP Smush](#) is completely free and is what I first started with. It compresses your images automatically following upload (though it does have a file size limit – it will not optimize files over a certain size).

My preferred plugin is [ShortPixel](#) (paid).

And you only pay for the images that you optimize (no monthly fee – you purchase a number of images and it's very affordable).

Keep in mind that when you upload an image to WordPress it will make 4+ copies of that image (correct size, thumbnail, etc) that all need to be optimized.

Even after using Smush on a very old site of mine, I ran a test of optimizing the entire media library (yes, you can optimize all your images with a click of a button). Here is the reduction in size of my entire media library:



While I have never used it, I know many bloggers that swear by [TinyPNG](#) to compress images as well before uploading them to their site (which is great for not having another plugin, but it does add an additional step to your process).

## Lazy Loading Images

What a strange name to give this...

Lazy loading just means that your site will display your page before it completes loading of all your images (which can generally take the longest).

There are many plugins out there that can help with this...including [WP Rocket](#)!

## Store Large Files & Videos Externally

Every little bit of weight you add to your site is going to slow it down. But if you think about how bogged down your site will be if you upload massive (or even small) videos to your site, you realize how important it is not to host (save) those files directly on your website.

Here are examples of assets you should store externally:

- Videos
- Digital products (ebooks, opt in downloads, etc)

Yes, you can even load in huge background images from an external source (though depending on your set-up this may or may not help your load time).

For digital files you can use things like DropBox or Google Drive.

For videos, you can always use YouTube (free) or a video hosting service like [Vimeo](#) (who I personally use).

If you are interested in Vimeo, use [this link](#) to get 25% off!

## Avoid Social Feeds

Yes, yes we all want people to follow us on social media and maybe take a peek at our beautiful feeds...but any widgets you place on your site that show your live feed can affect your site speed...a LOT.

So instead try to do a mock image of your feed (screenshot or otherwise) and provide a link or button to follow you. You can update this image regularly or seasonally to match your feed.

## Limiting Plugins

You've heard it before (I'm sure), but the more plugins you have on your site the slower it will be.

We all want our sites to have ALL THE THINGS (myself included – I struggle with this on all my sites), but

If you have a lot of plugins or use your site for multiple uses like a blog, shop, courses, and services, think about separating out your site into subdomains (subdomain. yoursite .com). In case you hadn't noticed, this is how I keep my site speed up on Kit Blogs!

Plus, avoid large plugins or resource heavy plugins like Jetpack, SumoMe, and WooCommerce (though this can be optimized, especially if you place your store on a subdomain).

## Little Improvements Add Up

Here are some other smaller things you can do on your site that don't seem like a big deal, but when you place them all together they can have a huge impact. Here are a few to consider:

- Sliders: these may look great but can really slow down your site. If you decide to keep using them, make sure to optimize your images.
- Gravatars: the built in avatars used for post comments is Gravatar, which is yet another type of resource that must be loaded onto your site. Consider turning this off under Settings > Discussion and deselect “Show Avatars”.
- Ads: yes, this is NOT a small thing, but [ad networks](#) can be HUGE resource hogs. Many SEO experts suggest avoiding joining networks until you reach the levels for Monumetric or Mediavine and then do what you can to optimize.
- Avoid Redirects: Yes, we will all have redirecting URLs from deleted blog posts, moved content, or something else. But the more redirects you have on a site (or on a single URL) the slower your site may become (well the page or post someone is trying to access). There can even be instances where a single URL is redirected multiple times which is bad juju for speed.
- Minify CSS: yup this is jargon but CSS can really bulk up over time (Content Style Sheets) which tells your site what to look like. Another function of [WP Rocket](#).
- Delay parsing of Javascript: ok this is different than CSS – it’s more about the sequence of events when a page is loaded. You will likely see this come up in your site speed test. Another thing that [WP Rocket](#) can handle.

## In Conclusion

Isn’t it annoying how many things can slow down your site? Arg!!

And it can be quite confusing when you see the reports generated on your site. But, take advantage of existing tools or [hire a developer](#) to help you out. Site speed should never be ignored to not only rank in [SEO](#) but improve your readers’ experience.

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# Need Help With Your Blog?

Whether you have suggestions for our next great blog post (or video tutorial) or need help with your blog, click below to get in touch.

[CLICK HERE](#)

