10 Things People Get Wrong About WordPress Site Backups

+ 7 LESSONS FOR BACKING UP YOUR SITE
Introduction

Perhaps the topic of backing up your WordPress website doesn’t exactly make you jump for joy. After all, there are many other subjects on running a WordPress site that are much more interesting. We get it.

But that’s probably why so many WordPress site owners believe some risky myths about their site backups.

If you don't get anything else from this guide, we hope you read this: Properly backing up your site with the right tools is one of the simplest and most valuable things you can do right now that will almost certainly pay huge dividends down the road.

In this guide, we’ll unpack the reasons to get website backups right and what could happen if you get it wrong.
What Exactly is a WordPress Backup?

A WordPress backup is essentially a copy of your WordPress website at any point in time. Similar to backups of your computer, phone, or hard drive, a WordPress website needs a backup to capture changes and additions to the files that make your website function.

A WordPress backup is a fully functional copy of your WordPress database and files. If your website becomes corrupted or lost for any reason, having a backup of your entire site will allow you to immediately bring the website back to a point in time before it crashed or was compromised.

A WordPress website is comprised of a database and many, many files. The files that comprise your WordPress site consist of the WordPress core installation files plus a WordPress database with your site’s unique content, such as the contents of your posts and pages. Additionally, a WordPress website has files that operate your themes and plugins. These files are usually stored in the public_html directory on the web server that runs your website.

If you haven’t properly backed up your website and your data is hacked, lost, or corrupted, you’ll be left with nothing but a blank slate to start over with. You’ll have no other option than to start rebuilding the entire site from scratch. As you can imagine, that would be a nightmare scenario for almost every WordPress site owner.

But that’s where WordPress backups come into the picture to save the day and give you a better night’s sleep. A backup copy of your WordPress site will save you a lot of time, energy and frustration if the worst should happen and your entire site is lost or corrupted.
What Does a WordPress Backup Do?

A WordPress backup makes a copy of your website’s files and database with a timestamp so you know exactly when the backup was taken.

No matter which backup technique you choose to utilize, a WordPress backup takes all of the data from your site files and database and puts them in a secure location, commonly called a “remote destination.” A WordPress backup tool should also allow you to schedule backups to run automatically so you don’t have to remember to run them on your own.

Then, depending on when your most recent backup copy was made, your site can be instantly restored to that point no matter what has gone wrong with it. The best WordPress backup tools have these qualities:

- Are easy to use and “just work”
- Are built with the needs of WordPress websites in mind
- Copy all files needed to fully restore your WordPress site, not just the database
- Automatically run backups of your website, behind the scenes, so that you don’t need to think about it or remember to do them manually

There are several techniques you can use to backup WordPress, and we’ll dive into them in just a bit. If you’re like most people, you’ll probably want to use the easiest and most effective WordPress backup tool available. If you’ve never given much thought to backing up your WordPress site on a regular basis, you’re probably wondering why it’s such a vital step. After all, will the time it takes to keep your website backed up be worth it?
Why Do I Need a WordPress Backup?

You need a WordPress backup for a few important reasons you may not have considered before. Let’s cover the reasons why WordPress backups are so vital.

First off, let’s cover why it’s so important to have a backup plan for your WordPress website. Here are a few reasons you need a backup of your site.

1. Just like backing up your computer or phone, your website also needs a backup. Files on your computer or phone could potentially be lost, and the same is true for your website’s files. Your website’s files reside on a server, but these files can easily be deleted or lost entirely, so you’ll need a backup of all the files necessary to run your website.

2. Your website faces security threats and data loss risks. The truth is, WordPress websites can be an easy target for hacks or security breaches if certain security measures are not implemented. A hacked website could mean permanent changes or corrupted files that make it impossible to get your website back … if you don’t have a backup. Additional risks include malware, server crashes, bad commands, and of course, user error.

3. WordPress, by default, doesn’t have a built-in backup mechanism, so you’ll need to find a backup solution. WordPress is arguably the most powerful Content Management System (CMS) in existence today, but the software relies on users to take care of certain website management tasks, like updates, security … and backups.
• Your host’s backup may not be enough. Some hosts provide backups for your websites, so you think you’re covered. But these backups may fall short because they’re not actually designed specifically for WordPress websites. Host backups may lack the frequency, control or customization options you need. You may also have to rely on a support tech to manually restore your website if something goes wrong, costing you valuable downtime.

• Most websites change frequently, so backups need to happen frequently. Changes to your website include everything from new or updated content (like new blog posts or pages), purchases (if you run an ecommerce site), comments, new users, image or file uploads, or even version updates to your plugins, themes or WordPress core. Some of these changes may happen in the background, so you’ll want to capture all of them with frequent backups in case you need to revert back.

• Before running updates to your themes, plugins and WordPress core, you need a backup. Keeping your website’s software up to date is a very important security best practice because version updates to your themes, plugins and WordPress core often involve security patches. While most developer test backward compatibility before pushing updates, it’s also always a good idea to run a backup before updating anything in case something breaks.

• Backups are like insurance for your website. You may not think of it this way, but your website has a substantial monetary value, based solely on the time you’ve spent building, editing and maintaining it. In fact, we came up with a formula, much like your insurance company does on the “replacement” value of a car or house, and called it the Content Replacement Calculator.
When you employ a robust WordPress backup plugin such as BackupBuddy, you’ll be able to fully restore the most recent working version of your website prior to an attack.

And you can do it all within a few clicks.

Of course, you’ll want to resolve the issue that caused the breach as well, so that it doesn’t continue to happen. That’s where a WordPress security plugin steps in.

But imagine the hours of work that you’d need to put into rebuilding your entire website from the ground up, in the case that it was completely lost. Not to mention, all of the revenue you’ll lose during the time your website isn’t functional.

A properly stored WordPress backup completely solves these often inevitable and devastating problems.

But it’s not just hackers or malicious attacks that a website backup can save you from.

Have you ever downloaded, installed, and activated a new plugin that immediately caused a site-wide conflict? When this happens, often your entire WordPress site will come crashing down and you won’t know exactly how to get it back up.

A WordPress backup again solves this problem by allowing you to restore your site to its former glory within a few moments. Talk about a stress reliever.

**Did you know:**

• In 2021, every single day, over 33,000 individual websites are broken into by hackers.

• And according to statistics, over 70% of all WordPress installations are vulnerable to hacks and malicious attacks.

• If a hacker is able to compromise your site, it may become so corrupted that you won’t be able to recover it. And that’s where the importance of backing up your website will become the most apparent.
10 Things People Get Wrong About Backing Up Their WordPress Site

Unfortunately, there are some common myths about WordPress backups that desperately need to be dispelled.

When you look up the definition of the word “myth,” you’ll see that it reads as such:

“A widely held but false belief or idea.”

Most myths are most often spread by well-intended people who think they are giving you the truth about a subject. If you’ve heard one of these myths from someone else in the WordPress community, let them know about this guide!

Let’s dive into some of the most common things people get wrong about WordPress backups.
The most common misconception about WordPress website backups is that the WordPress core software automatically runs backups to your site. This idea stems from the fact that a lot of the most popular website builders, such as Wix and Shopify, do have automatic backups.

However, WordPress is a content management system, unlike the other website builders. And when you first download and install WordPress onto your server, it has no automatic backup functionality whatsoever.

What it does have is an export feature where you can access the XML file that contains all of your:

- Pages
- Posts
- Comments
- Custom fields
- Categories and tags

However, the XML file doesn’t give you the ability to do a full site restore because it doesn’t contain all of the site backup data needed to reconstruct it from the ground up.

While other WordPress backup plugins only backup the WordPress database, BackupBuddy backs up your entire WordPress installation, making sure you have a copy of all your WordPress website files.

Too many WordPress site owners have made the mistake of thinking that, if their WordPress database is backed up on that local workstation, they’ll be able to fully restore their site if something major goes wrong.

Unfortunately, that belief is yet another myth people get wrong about WordPress website backups.

If you only have your database backed up, it’s simply not enough.

A database backup, whether it’s a simple native WordPress export or one that’s much more complex, will only contain the content of your site. In other words, you’ve only saved the words you’ve written on the site, but nothing else.

Remember, a WordPress database backup is only intended to save the written content of your site. But if your entire site goes down, you’ll need a lot more than that to get it up and running again.

If your WordPress backup doesn’t include the entire site and all of the files therein, it’s not good enough.
3. "My Web Host Has My Backups Covered"

This one is not completely inaccurate. The fact is that some, although definitely not all, WordPress website hosts offer backup solutions. The real question is, can you really afford to put your entire site in the hands of your site host?

Keep in mind that if the problem is your host’s site, you won’t be able to use the backups that they were storing for you.

The fact is that you don’t have any control over how your site host handles their backup protocols. When you need to gain access to your backup, you really don’t want to be dependent upon them.

Think of a host site backup as your absolutely last resort when it comes to backing up your WordPress site. It’s definitely not the backup version you want to count on when things go unexpectedly wrong.

Questions to ask about your web host backups:

- Do you know for certain that their backup solution will do what it needs to do, when it needs to do it?
- What if your site goes down at 2 am and you can’t contact your host to get the help you need?
- What is the exact process for restoring the backup?
- What if the entire reason you need access to your site’s backup is because of a problem with the host?
4. "I’ll Never Need a Backup"

Backing up your WordPress site is a lot like carrying a disaster insurance policy. Of course, you hope that you’ll never need to use it. But when that unexpected tragedy does in fact strike, you’ll sure be glad that you invested a little time and money into a policy that will completely cover your disaster situation.

Almost every WordPress site owner who believed that they’d never need a backup to their site has eventually reached a place of understanding their error.

For some, losing their website was the end of their WordPress business.

In general, people rarely want to believe that something bad could happen, until it happens. And if that bad thing is a crashed and destroyed WordPress website, the only way to solve it is with a full backup.

As a responsible WordPress site owner, you need to be proactive.

After all, servers fail, hackers succeed, updates crash, human error is still a thing. You know, bad stuff does happen.

And it’s not difficult to be prepared for when it does.
5. "I’m Not Going to Break My Site"

Perhaps you’ve been building and maintaining WordPress sites for 10 years. You’ve never crashed one because of human error, and you don’t believe there’s a way you could ever make such a rookie mistake with your veteran status.

But even the most experienced WordPress veteran should know that sometimes, these things aren’t in your control. You can do everything right with your site, have it fully secured with a WordPress security plugin, keep all of your code tight and your plugins and themes updated, and still be blindsided by an unexpected and tragic event.

For example, that new plugin you just downloaded? Do you know for certain that it won’t cause a major conflict when you activate it?

Are all of your security protocols as current as they need to be at all times?

Don’t wait to be proven wrong simply because you believe that you’re doing everything right. One of the biggest keys to WordPress site security is understanding that you need to protect your site from a lot more than just your own mistakes.
6. "Hackers Don’t Care About My Site"

New WordPress site owners are often under the impression that hackers are only targeting major websites, such as Chase Bank or Delta Airlines. They think that, because their site only pulls in a few hundred visitors a day, there could be no way that their site is appealing to hackers or under the threat of malicious attacks.

But the truth is actually quite the opposite. In fact, it really doesn’t matter how under-the-radar your site might be. Any hacker would love to sink their fangs into it, because it contains valuable data that they can hijack.

And hackers are fully aware that the smallest WordPress sites are the ones with the worst security protocols.

In fact, there’s a very good chance that a bot is trying, right now, to gain unauthorized access to your site. If you want to see for yourself, all you need to do is install the free version of the iThemes Security plugin, set it up on your site, and start paying attention to the logs.

What you’ll quickly begin to see is:
- Hackers are trying to log in to your site using stolen or cracked usernames and passwords
- Robots are hunting for malicious code and racking up 404 errors

It’s quite eye-opening when you see for yourself how much your site is under constant attack. This is the biggest reason you absolutely need full WordPress site backups.
7. "Well I Backed Up Once, So I’m OK"

If you’ve fully backed up your site in the past, congratulations! You are clearly aware of the importance of WordPress website backups.

Now try doing a little test. Go into your site backup files and check to see what date your backups were made. How much has your website changed since that backup date?

Do you have an eCommerce site with daily transactions that need to be backed up every few minutes? If so, a backup that’s even just a week old will not bring the most current version of your website back up if it ever crashes.

Additionally, ask these questions:

- Is my last backup older than my latest content?
- Has my content changed since my last backup?
- Can I afford to invest what will be required to replace lost content?
- Can you recreate all the content?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, you need a better backup plan. It’s critically important to run backup copies regularly, depending on how often your site changes. If you add new blog content every week, make sure the site is backed up accordingly.

If your comments section is busy every single hour, then you should have a fresh backup copy at your fingertips on an hour basis.

Make sure that your backups are scheduled consistently and automatically, depending on how often there are changes to your site. It’s far too easy to lose track of time and miss a month’s worth of site backups right before something bad happens.
Actually, there is a lot of truth to this common myth. But not in the way you may think.

If you decided right now that you wanted to manually create a full and complete backup of your WordPress site, you’d be in for a lot of work.

It’s doable, but we certainly wouldn’t recommend it.

However, when you use the WordPress BackupBuddy, creating backups is as simple as a few clicks. You really will have your backup protocols running within a matter of a few minutes.

And with BackupBuddy, you’ll be able to schedule your backups based upon your desired protocols and site use. After they’re scheduled, they’ll happen automatically until you change the settings.

And the entire process couldn’t be simpler. With BackupBuddy, you’ll never again need to worry about running your WordPress backups.
9. "A Single, Local Backup is Plenty"

A local backup is a backup file that is stored on the same server as your website. While this method of storing your backups may be a default setting for many backup solutions, there are several important reasons to not store backups locally.

- Since a local backup is stored on your site, it doesn’t offer protection against a crashed server or a broken site.
- There’s a good chance that if your website gets damaged, your local backups will be also damaged.
- If your site gets hacked and you lose access to your website, you also lose access to your local backup files.

While having a single and local backup copy of your WordPress site is a good step, it’s definitely not the best policy. After all, when somebody puts all your eggs into a single basket, the story never seems to have a good ending.

And none of us want unnecessary trouble.

Most WordPress site owners make the mistake of storing the backups either on their local server or even on their own personal workstations. Unfortunately, it could crash, get stolen, or you could end up dumping coffee on it during a day when nothing else seems to be going right!
In such cases, say goodbye to your site backups.

Remember that backups are only as secure as the hardware that stores them. If you have hardware issues, your computer crashes, or an external storage device is damaged or stolen, you’ll lose your backups or they could become compromised.

Because of this danger, if you decide to store backups locally, it’s vitally important to also save them in more secure locations, such as a secure, off-site remote destination. Your WordPress backup strategy isn’t complete without a secure, off-site place to store your backup files, called a remote destination.

A remote destination is a secure, off-site place to store your website’s backup files. A Remote Destination is usually cloud-based, meaning your files are housed on a network of remote servers in order to ensure data redundancy.

Data redundancy occurs when the same piece of data is stored in two or more separate places. Redundancy is especially important when it comes to storing backups (of your phone, digital photos, computer, and website) as you don’t want to ever risk losing your backup files. That’s where Remote Destinations come into the picture.
10. A Backup Is Just for Catastrophic Website Disasters

Catastrophic website failures may not happen to each one of us every day. But they do happen to someone every day.

Even if a catastrophic WordPress failure isn’t coming your way any time soon (and we sure hope it isn’t!), there are other ways that WordPress backups can be tremendously helpful for everyday uses.

Such as:

- Did you accidentally and permanently delete an image? A site backup allows you to restore individual files
- The BackupBuddy restore feature makes it as simple as possible to transfer entire sites to new hosting accounts. Many developers use the restore feature to build new websites locally, then transfer them over to a web server
- BackupBuddy can scan your entire site for malware, repair your database, and a lot more. It really is more than just a backup program
To wrap up this guide, here are a few lessons we’ve learned when it comes to WordPress backups in our 10 years of backing up millions of WordPress sites.

We actually built the BackupBuddy plugin back in 2010 because we lost our own website and had to completely rebuild it ... twice. You can read the whole origin story of BackupBuddy now that we can finally talk about it without crying: From Server Crashes, Tacos, and Coffee: The Birth of BackupBuddy.

Back then, WordPress didn’t have any backup solutions, so we built BackupBuddy so that no one would ever have to go through what we did: 120 hours—3 entire workweeks—lost on site failures.
1. **Backups allow a good night's sleep.**

A backup allows you to rest at night knowing that if anything does happen to your site, you have an easy restoration process. Here’s a story that illustrates the point, told to us by a customer:

“I remember one client who had a WordPress site that generated new content multiple times a day. They called me one Thursday to let me know the site had “problems.” Sure enough, the server’s hard drive had failed and, at the time, I had been relying on the hosting company’s backup capability. This proved to be a poor choice because the backups the hosting company created were only on a weekly basis and took place on Sunday. So not only did I have to struggle getting the backup from the hosting company restored, (at one point there were three copies of the same site on the server), but I had to chase down all the content that had been written on the site that week.

Enter **BackupBuddy**. BackupBuddy provided the ability to schedule both full site backups as well as a basic database backup whenever I want so that I can almost guarantee I’ll never have to scramble to find content or wrestle with site reconstruction projects when something goes wrong with my WordPress sites.”
2. Simply having a WordPress backup isn’t enough. You need to be able to use the backup for whatever situation presents itself.

Simply having a backup is not the important part of the equation. If you can’t schedule and make backups 24 hours a day, but if there’s no easy way to get the data out of the backup or to restore the site quickly, the security a WordPress backup provides is wasted.

When deciding on your backup solutions for your WordPress site, you need to take three factors into consideration:

1. Can I quickly restore my complete site in just a few seconds?
2. Can I recover an individual file from the backup in just a few moments?
3. Can I transfer my site to a new server, domain and/or location at the drop of a hat?

If you can answer yes to all three of these questions, then you have a quality backup solution. For WordPress sites, you will be hard pressed to find anything coming close to the power of BackupBuddy. In addition to answering yes to those three questions, BackupBuddy can do so much more.
3. The process of making a backup doesn’t have to slow down your server or take up your valuable time.

It is surprising how many people we’ve talked to over the years who say they do not have the time to do backups on their site. They claim they are too busy and backups take too much time. We have even heard people tell me that they don’t do backups because when they start a server backup during working hours they slow everything down in the office and co-workers get mad at them.

Over the years we have learned that we need to make our WordPress backup solutions work FOR us and avoid putting ourselves in situations where the WordPress backup solution makes US do the work.

Two rules of WordPress backups are:

1. Always schedule backups to occur automatically so forgetting isn’t an option.
2. Take advantage of “slow” times on your site to make your backups. (Even if that means 3am on a Sunday morning.)
4. Knowing when you need a backup is not a difficult decision if you follow these simple rules.

- Rule #1 – All content (posts, pages, and “things you write in the WordPress admin area”) are stored in your WordPress database. If you write a post, you need a database backup. If someone makes a comment or makes a purchase, you need a database backup to capture that change.
- Rule #2 – A full (complete) WordPress site backup must include plugins, themes, files on the server, or additional folders that may or may not be part of WordPress. Any time you upload a new theme, add/update a plugin, modify the functions.php file of the theme … you need a full site backup.

If you follow these two rules you will NEVER be left with lost content when something goes wrong with your WordPress site.
5. Choosing a storage location to use for WordPress backup files is not as important as choosing how many locations to use for your backups.

One of the worst things we can hear about WordPress backups is that they are stored on the same server as the website. The usefulness of a backup goes to almost zero if it is stored in the same location as the site it is backing up. In fact, simply sending that backup to one other location may not be the best solution either.

Here’s a scenario that may be all too familiar:

You have an important client that is about ready to launch their brand new website you built for them. The morning of the launch, their hosting company is having trouble. So you quickly go to grab the backup files so you can transfer the site to a new server, but Amazon S3 is down for maintenance because Netflix got hacked. Now there is no way to get a copy of the backup files and you are at the mercy of other companies.

Having WordPress backups stored in multiple locations, even physical copies of the backups on hard drives, can make the difference between successfully navigating the storms of a broken site and sitting around waiting for hosting company’s support tickets to be answered.
6. **WordPress backups can help you make steady, recurring revenue if you build websites for clients.**

If you build websites for clients, WordPress backups can become a part of a WordPress maintenance plan for recurring revenue. WordPress maintenance services include things like backups, updates, security and much more.

A tool like iThemes Sync Pro can help you generate and send WordPress maintenance reports to clients to show clients the value of what you do.

In addition, a WordPress backup does not have to be a virtual storage of bits and bytes on some cloud storage device. It can be a physical deliverable in an ongoing contract with a client. For many freelance web developers, the idea of a physical deliverable as part of a milestone-based contract can be very foreign.

A physical copy of a backup can also serve as an easy method of keeping the communication channel open between the client and the developer. Many freelancers have stated that they find it difficult to stay in touch with clients after the initial development/design finishes.

Having the ability to physically mail a client a “monthly” backup to the client along with a short letter about the status of the site (data points, basic analytical stats, etc.) can keep that communication line open. We heard about one client who had no clue what to do with the backups but he kept them all in order on a shelf in the office and he admitted that it made him feel safe that at any time he could grab the latest copy of the site and take it with him.
7. Most people don’t realize they need a WordPress backup until they need a backup.

What is one of the primary purposes of having insurance? Car insurance exists to financially protect in case of an accident. Life insurance exists to provide for those that remain in case of something happening to the insured.

Business insurance policies exist to protect the continuance of a business in case something outside of normal operations occurs. In all these cases the key term is “in case” something happens. Therefore, would it not make sense that a website carries some sort of “insurance policy”?

Don’t be someone who finds out they need a WordPress backup when it’s too late!
Now that these common backup myths have been debunked, it’s time to get serious about your backup protocols. And if you haven’t figured it out by now, the answer is the BackupBuddy plugin.

For only $80 per year, you can:

- Run backup protocols on 1 WordPress site
- Get 1 year of plugin updates
- Get 1 year of ticketed support
- Get 1GB of BackupBuddy Stash storage space

That’s a ridiculously low price to pay for the security of knowing you’ll never lose your website. With just a little effort, you can make sure your WordPress website is safe and protected with backups that run like magic.

Get BackupBuddy Today!