

How WordPress Plugins Affect Your Site Load Time

A plugin can simply be defined as a software that helps to add functionality or features to a WordPress website. The good thing is that you do not need to know any code to use a plugin. There are thousands of free plugins, with some having an option of upgrading to premium. There are also some that are absolutely commercial. While plugins do add functionality to your WordPress site, having too many of them can also become problematic. In this article, we will look at how WordPress plugins affect site load time:

In order to understand this concept, we will look at various plugin aspects that actually determine your site's speed.

Plugin complexity

Plugins do introduce extra code. Simple plugins may not affect site speed, while complicated plugins with a ton of functionality might slow down your site. If a plugin's code is poorly written, it will literally bring the site to a crawl. Plugins that perform complex operations should do them off server.

Plugin type

The plugin type will affect your site's speed. There are plugins that will add a lot of load on your site database, while others depend on external resources. The latter are going to take a long time to perform an action, even if the resources are quite fast, contributing to slower site speed.

Plugin functionality

What a plugin does will affect your site's memory footprint. If a plugin creates a lot of objects, your site's load time and performance are bound to suffer, especially if you have a small hosting package. While some plugins like image optimization, cache, database and security plugins do enhance performance, some will only worsen it. Usually, plugins that are not geared towards your site's front end may not impact site loading time much. Those that add HTTP requests affect your site's speed as they will request additional JS or CSS files.

Plugin database queries

There are plugins that make a lot of database queries, which could hugely impact site performance. A plugin that will track page views or post views is likely to store a value in the database every time a page is loaded. The server is therefore bound to make additional requests for that value on every loaded page. This results in a site that loads slower.

All in all

Extra plugins could result in other issues like code conflict and a compromise on site security. Sometimes, even deleting plugins does not mean that the database tables and options are deleted. This could lead to a cluttered database that could impact your site's loading speed.

While the common advice is to use as few plugins as possible or to use a maximum of 10, the truth is that the quality of the plugin is what determines this choice. You could use even over 30 plugins, provided that they are well-coded and their functionality doesn't involve procedures that use a lot of your site resources. It is important to note that sometimes, using some "heavy" plugins is unavoidable. In this case, the best way forward is to get a larger hosting package.

This way, your site's performance stays within the range that Google likes, and you can continue to rank high in search results.