

The Ultimate Guide To WordPress Plugins



WPengine



TORQUE

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Introduction

WordPress is awesome because of its ability to easily extend and expand its functionality through plugins.

WordPress plugins are bits of software that enable you to easily add different functionalities to your websites—from maps, to charts, to contact forms, to backup functionality, and more—either automatically through the WordPress dashboard or manually by downloading the zip file directly (this usually requires some familiarity with FTP).

There are more than 40,000 free plugins, which have been downloaded more than a billion times.

Many plugins can be found in the WordPress plugin directory—these are usually free to use and are voluntarily contributed by WordPress developers. There are also paid, or premium, WordPress plugins that are not usually included in the WordPress directory. Often times, free plugins in the directory offer a premium paid version that includes more robust functionality.

While WordPress comes with a lot of built-in features out of the box, plugins can let you add a little extra oomph. If there's something you want that isn't natively included with WordPress, chances are there's a plugin for it. Snowflakes on your website for the holidays? Check. Want the local weather displayed on your site? Check. Want to share new music with your site visitors? Yes, there's even a plugin for that.

Plugins, for the most part, are great. But before you install a WordPress plugin on your site, it's important to make sure it's compatible with the most current version of WordPress and that the plugin is free from security issues. Similarly, be sure to update your plugins regularly. When a plugin update is available, an alert can be found in the WordPress dashboard.

With more than 40,000 free plugins currently available in the directory alone, deciding on which ones to install on your site may seem daunting. That's where we come in. This ebook provides an overview of the best and most useful WordPress plugins for everything from ecommerce to live chat, and everything in between.

The recommendations in this ebook are based on personal experiences, research, stats, and overall popularity as seen in the WordPress plugin directory. Without further ado, here is Torque's ultimate guide to WordPress plugins.



Chapter 1: Graph and Chart Plugins

Graph and Chart Plugins

By Jonathan John

Charts make extensive amounts of data digestible at a glance. We use charts for presentations and PowerPoints, but how many times do you see one in a blog post? Not nearly enough.

The misconception that is most likely responsible for the lack of charts on the web is the idea that charts are very difficult to create on a website. But this simply isn't true, there are numerous external plugins that do the job quite nicely. You might even end up finding it easier than chart building in Excel.

WordPress Charts



10k+ active installs



Don't let the markedly obvious plugin name fool you—WordPress Charts is one of the best plugins in its niche. This plugin allows you to create six different types of HTML5-based charts: line graph, bar graph, pie chart, radar chart, polar area, and doughnut graph.

Each type is fully customizable, and can even be animated. Not only is this plugin powerful, but it's also extremely lightweight. When minified and gzipped, the chart.js is only 4.5 KB—great news if you're looking to save on loading times.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-charts/>

Visualizer



10k+ active installs



Visualizer is even more powerful than WordPress Charts, with support for nine HTML5 based chart types: line graph, area chart, bar graph, column graph, pie chart, geo chart, gauge chart, candlestick chart, and scatter chart.

The plugin also comes with some handy documentation that explains how to create, edit, and clone your Visualizer charts.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/visualizer/>



Chapter 2: Backup Plugins

Backup Plugins

By Jonathan John

Not too long ago, I was trying to fix a problem with my site in cPanel's File Manager. I don't clearly remember what the problem was, only that I wasn't very good at fixing it.

While messing around inside of File Manager's darkest recesses, I accidentally deleted my site. No, really, I deleted my blog. That was roughly 500 hours of hard work down the drain.

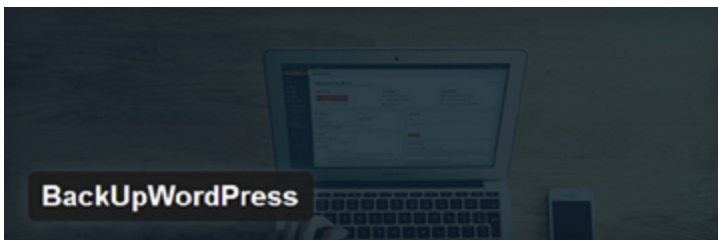
The good thing, however, is that two days prior to my colossal mess-up, I installed a plugin on my blog that automatically backed up my site every 24 hours. With the latest backup in hand, I headed over to my hosting provider's live chat service, and had everything up and running in less than two hours.

Had I not installed the backup plugin, the story would have been very different, and probably would not have ended so happily. The moral of this story? Always have a backup plugin installed on your site.

BackUpWordPress



200k+ active installs



BackUpWordPress's main selling point is its simplicity and ease of use, not its wide array of options. It was developed specifically for the average blogger in a shared hosting environment.

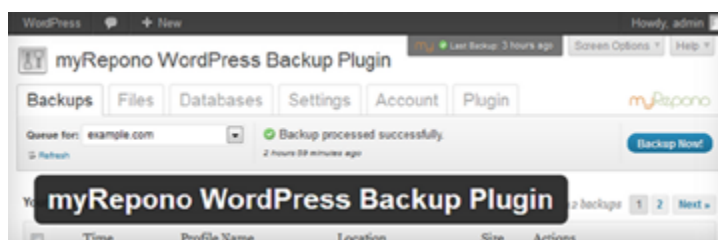
It has no learning curve, almost no manual setup is required. Simply select the backup schedule you want (once every 12, 24, 48, etc. hours) and decide whether or not you'd like the plugin to send backup files to your email address.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/backupwordpress/>

myRepono



3k+ active installs



myRepono isn't exactly a free backup solution, but it's about as close to it as you can get. The plugin is actually part of a commercial website backup service that happens to offer WordPress integration.

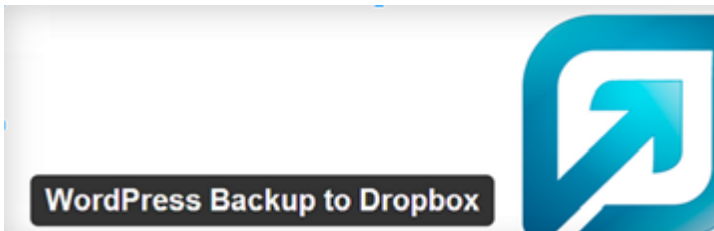
It costs a negligible \$0.02 per day (that's \$7.30 per year), and even gives you \$5 free credit the first time you download it. You can customize your backup schedule from as often as once every hour or as rarely as once a month. Although it doesn't come with the option to send backups to an email address, you can view and download backups using other file management tools.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/myrepono-wordpress-backup-plugin/>

WordPress Backup to Dropbox



100k+ active installs



As the name suggests, this plugin will send your WordPress installation's backups to a specified Dropbox account.

Once you authorize your Dropbox account with OAuth, WordPress Backup to Dropbox will start sending backups at the desired day, time, and frequency. You can also specify certain files or directories that are not to be included in the backups.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-backup-to-dropbox/>

XCloner



70k+ active installs



XCloner is a unique backup plugin with one important feature that differentiates it from the rest: the ability to load the backups it takes using its xcloner.php restore script.

Other backup plugins usually don't have that ability. Apart from that, however, XCloner is pretty basic with no extra bells or whistles.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/xcloner-backup-and-restore/>

BackWPup



400k+ active installs



BackWPup is simple and easy to setup. That's why I chose to use it for my blog. This plugin was the one responsible for not letting 500 hours of work go to complete waste.

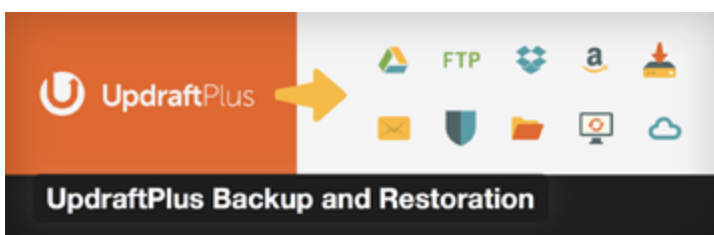
You can send backups to several different locations, including your server, Amazon S3, and your email address.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/backwpup/>

UpdraftPlus



500k+ active installs



UpdraftPlus Backup and Restoration for WordPress is one of the most versatile backup plugins. It allows you to send your backups to several destinations: Amazon S3, Google Drive, Dropbox, email, and many more.

Like XCloner, it also allows you to directly restore backups... with one slight change: UpdraftPlus supports one-click restoration. You can set multiple schedules depending on the type of backup, file, or database. You can also choose which files are to be backed up.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/updraftplus/>



Chapter 3: SEO Plugins

SEO Plugins

By Marie Dodson

For many, maximizing the traffic on your WordPress site is a major part of running an online business. Equally as important is the ability to measure and analyze this traffic for insight into marketing tactics.

There are several options available for improving and tracking your Search Engine Optimization (SEO), with some more costly and time consuming than others. Plugins offer a simple and effective way to improve your SEO and obtain useful analytics along the way.

All in One SEO Pack



1M+ active installs



All in One SEO Pack provides a bundle of support tools for SEO, XML Sitemap, and Google Analytics. In addition to offering compatibility with most plugins, this is the only plugin to provide SEO integration for WordPress ecommerce sites.

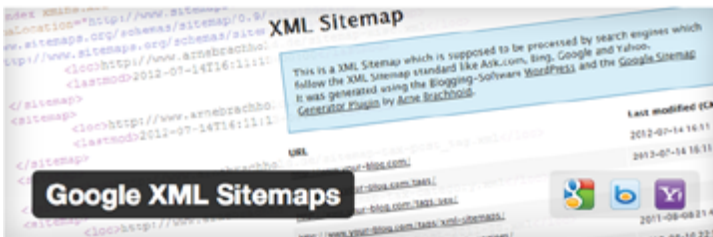
All in One SEO Pack automatically generates metadata tags and optimizes your titles for Google and other search engines. The plugin is perfect for beginners and advanced users alike because of its automatic features and customizable capabilities.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/all-in-one-seo-pack/>

Google XML Sitemaps



1M+ active installs



Google XML Sitemaps is a simple and effective plugin that helps search engines better index your blog. Supporting a variety of WordPress-generated pages and custom URLs, it has easy configuration, and is perfect for generating a special XML sitemap to make your site more searchable.

A notable feature of this plugin is that it notifies all major search engines each time you create a new post.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/google-sitemap-generator/>

Yoast SEO



1M+ active installs



Yoast SEO goes above and beyond to provide systematic instructions for improving your SEO. Its user-friendliness guides you through the process of adding metadata, selecting keywords, and easily adding "nofollow" tags.

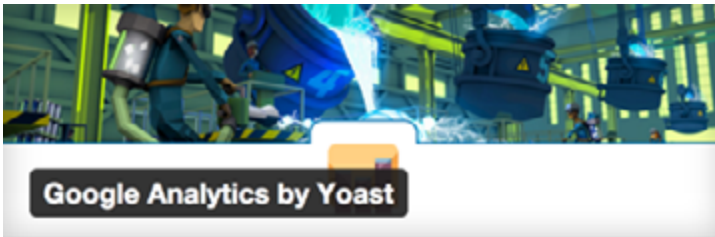
It also offers a page analysis to ensure you're not forgetting any small details; such as effective image tagging. It includes a slew of other features to ensure your posts possess the qualities that search engines love.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-seo/>

Google Analytics for WordPress



1M+ active installs



Google Analytics for WordPress is an intuitive plugin that allows users to easily track their WordPress site.

The plugin provides extended metadata for greater tracking capabilities—such as views per author and category, and overall pageviews. It uses the asynchronous Google Analytics tracking code to provide the fastest and most reliable tracking.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/google-analytics-for-wordpress/>

Google Analyticator



400K+ active installs



Google Analyticator is the first plugin to display Google Analytics directly to your WordPress dashboard.

It allows you to view Google Analytics right inside your WordPress dashboard. This plugin includes several dashboard widgets for easy access to performance details in the admin and on your blog.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/google-analyticator/>



Chapter 4: Security Plugins

Security Plugins

Marie Dodson

The success of WordPress, along with its pervasive use and open approach to creating new plugins and themes make it a growing target for hackers.

WordPress, as a platform, is secure, but there are still vulnerabilities that can leave your site exposed. Fortunately, there are ways to minimize potential security risks and improve site security. WordPress security plugins are an effective option when it comes to securing your site.

Akismet



1M+ active installs



Akismet is the most popular spam or comment moderator plugin. Each comment on your site automatically runs through Akismet to determine whether or not it's spam.

Akismet protects your site from attacks made in the comment portion of your site, commonly known as spam. This plugin is included by default in all WordPress builds and comes automatically activated in all WordPress.com-hosted websites.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/akismet/>

iThemes Security



600K+ active installs



iThemes Security, formerly known as Better WP Security, detects, protects, and secures your site in more than 30 different ways. This leading security plugin provides a range of features that will secure your site and protect you from advanced and common security attacks.

One notable feature lies in its ability to effectively conceal security vulnerabilities, protecting your site from potential attacks.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/better-wp-security/>

Wordfence



600K+ active installs



Wordfence offers a suite of security features to give your WordPress site optimum security. This plugin arms your site with a complete firewall and antivirus package—providing comprehensive protection. It also has the ability to block (high-risk) countries.

A notable feature of Wordfence is its extended portability that enables mobile logins. This free plugin also has the ability to verify and repair your core theme and plugin files, regardless if you have backups enabled or not.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/wordfence/>

BulletProof Security



100K+ active installs



BulletProof Security offers bulletproof protection for your WordPress site. It protects against a range (XSS, RFI, CRLF, CSRF, Base64, Code Injection, and SQL Injection) of different hacking attempts.

This plugin is website-performance optimized due to its makers' core belief that optimization is equally as important as security.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/bulletproof-security/>

All In One WP Security & Firewall



200K+ active installs



All In One WP Security & Firewall detects and protects your WordPress site against security attacks. This plugin takes a risk-reduction approach where it constantly checks for vulnerabilities and enforces the most current WordPress security practices.

All In One WP Security & Firewall provides systematic guidance to help keep your site's security and firewall up to date, without breaking your site. This plugin is notable for its user-friendly interface and overall functionality.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/all-in-one-wp-security-and-firewall/>

Acunetix WP Security



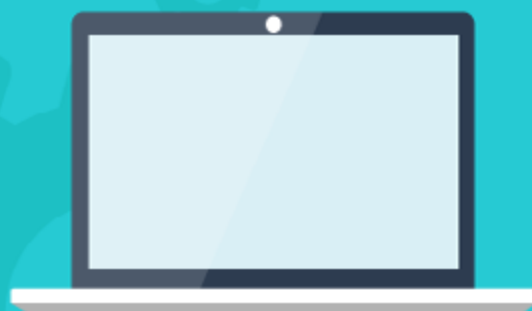
100K+ active installs



Acunetix WP Security helps secure WordPress installation and provides guidance for optimizing site security.

This plugin ensures that your passwords, database security, file permissions, and more are not vulnerable. If a vulnerability is identified, the plugin will provide corrective actions.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-security-scan/>



Chapter 5: Shortcode Plugins

Shortcode Plugins

By Jonathan John

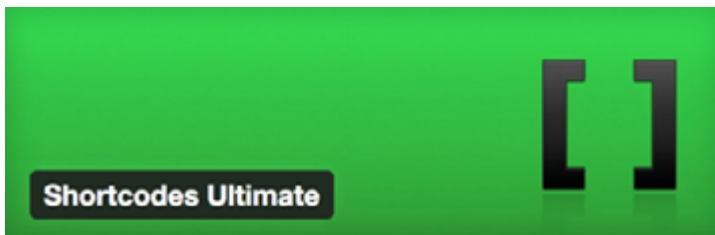
There are few things that have the ability to extend a WordPress site's functionality like a good package of shortcodes. Without shortcodes, most users would have to install more plugins, each with a single function (e.g. one plugin for pricing tables, another for toggles, another for tabs, etc.).

That said, shortcodes aren't always available as native functionalities in a theme (particularly if you've gone with a free one). If such is the case with your website, you may want to install a shortcode plugin.

Shortcodes Ultimate



400K+ active installs



Shortcodes Ultimate offers a library of more than 50 shortcodes to create buttons, boxes, sliders, responsive videos, and more. The plugin also comes built with a Shortcode Creator that allows you to quickly and easily code your own custom shortcodes.

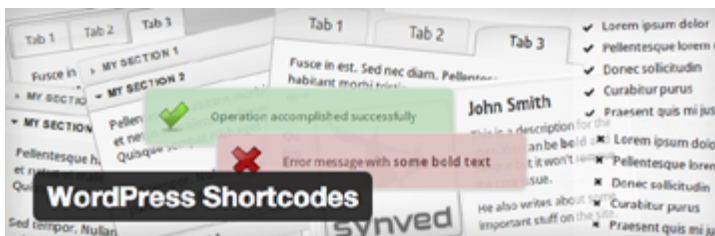
Just in case you're looking for an extra punch, the developers offer a premium add-on with 15 additional shortcodes for \$25 (a bit pricey, but the shortcodes are pretty useful). A second add-on, Additional Skins, gives you 60-plus skins for the plugin's shortcodes for only \$15.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/shortcodes-ultimate/>

WordPress Shortcodes



10K+ active installs



WordPress Shortcodes supercharges your website's capabilities with search engine and speed optimized shortcodes.

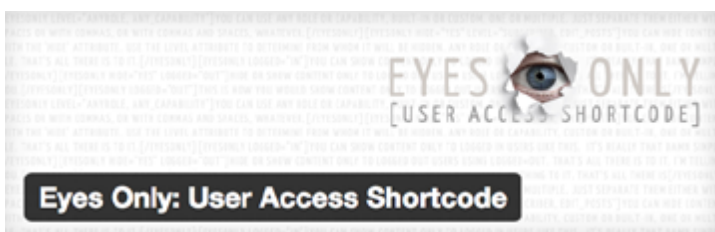
Although only 26 shortcodes are included in this package (as opposed to the previous item on the list, which has nearly double), each shortcode is coded with quality. Not only is it SEO and speed optimized, but the plugin also allows you to set parameters and conditions to get the most out of it.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/synved-shortcodes/>

Eyes Only: User Access Shortcode



3K+ active installs



Although Eyes Only isn't really a full package (it only has one shortcode to its name), I had to add it to this list because the function this shortcode gives is so rarely found in other packages.

What is this glorious function? Well, I'll tell you (if you haven't guessed from the title already). It allows you to hide any portion of a post or page's content. You can set it to be viewable only by users who have certain roles (administrator, subscriber, editor, etc.), specific usernames, membership in a custom user group, or logged-in status.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/eyes-only-user-access-shortcode/>

ClearCode Shortcode Library

100+ active installs



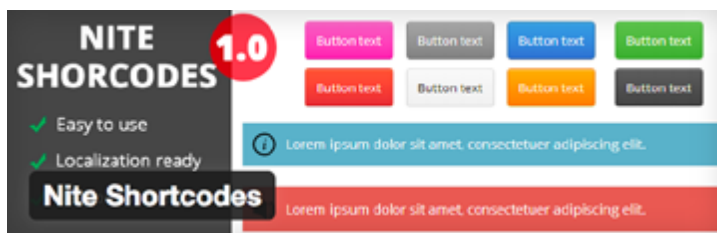
ClearCode Shortcode Library is a full suite of 29-plus shortcodes with unique functions. All of these shortcodes are exactly what ClearCode, a web development studio, use in their WordPress builds. This plugin will significantly extend your abilities.

On the WordPress.org description page, the developers have included a detailed description of what each shortcode does and how to use it in a post or page.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/cngann-shortcodes/>

Nite Shortcodes

200+ active installs



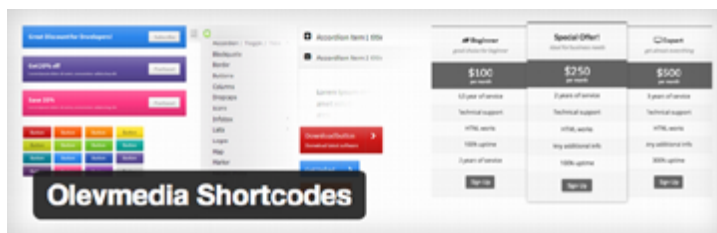
Buttons with various styles, tabs and toggles, multiple column structures, alert boxes, and much more become possible after the installing and activating Nite Shortcodes.

The shortcode editor built into the plugin is a breeze to navigate, with preset options that make inserting commonly-used shortcodes super quick.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/nite-shortcodes/>

Olevmedia Shortcodes

10K+ active installs



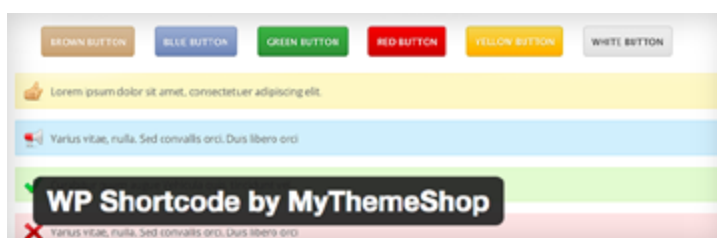
If you're looking for ease of use, head on over to Olevmedia Shortcodes. When you install and activate this plugin, it automatically adds a neat little button to the post editor's toolbar, which when clicked provides you with a convenient visual shortcode generator.

Olevmedia Shortcodes includes 20 shortcodes, each with responsive displays.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/olevmedia-shortcodes/>

WP Shortcode by MyThemeShop

70K+ active installs



One of the big players in the premium theme niche, MyThemeShop is known for consistently producing top-quality WordPress products with top-notch coding.

Their free plugin, WP Shortcode, is no exception. Highly functional (over 24 shortcodes), stylishly designed, and easily navigated, this plugin is one that is well worth a second glance.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-shortcode/>



Chapter 6: Tooltip Plugins

Tooltip Plugins

By Jonathon John

Tooltips are a fantastic way to present a significant amount of info in an extremely concise manner. Used in moderation, they are sure to boost reader engagement on your blog.

In case you're unfamiliar with the term, a "tooltip" is a little popup that appears when a user hovers his or her cursor over or clicks on a particular icon or a highlighted word or phrase on your site. They're mainly used to display explanatory text that not every reader will need to go through (hence the name "tooltip")—for example, to define a word of jargon or a little tip of basic information relevant to the text or webpage at hand. Tooltip plugins can help you easily gain this functionality on your site.

CM Tooltip Glossary



4K+ active installs



CM Tooltip Glossary is an excellent tooltip plugin with great functionality. From its name, you should be able to guess this plugin's top selling point is its ability to create a glossary of tooltips, rather than just inserting random ones without having any real way of keeping track of them.

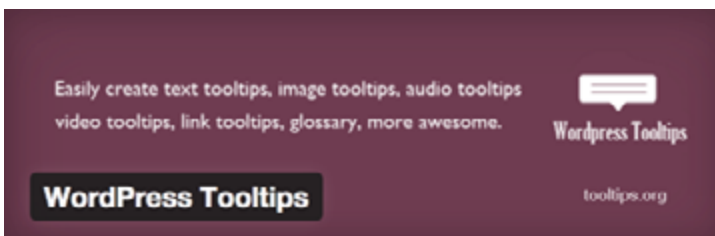
The standard design for CM Tooltip is an underline to highlight a tipped word or phrase, and a nondescript pop up with a solid color background. Its design is quite plain, which isn't necessarily a bad thing considering that readability is important in tooltips.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/enhanced-tooltipglossary/>

WordPress Tooltips



2K+ active installs



Next on our list is WordPress Tooltips. This is a powerful little plugin that gives you a great deal of customization ability and options for your tooltips.

Beside having the same glossary functionality that CM Tooltip Glossary features, WordPress Tooltips also allows you to add multiple types of content to each tooltip: text, images, links, videos, radio, and MP4 are all possible (careful, though, overboarding on too many types of content in your tooltips could be a real put-off to your readers). Seven preset color schemes and nine trigger methods are also available to choose from in this nifty plugin.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-tooltips/>

Simple Tooltips



8k+ active installs



Simple Tooltips is exactly that: an incredibly simple yet effective way to add tooltips to your site. To create a tooltip, all you need to do is add the class "tooltips" to the targeted HTML element. The tooltip content will be taken from the title attribute.

Due to its focus on simplicity, Simple Tooltips doesn't come with a whole lot of functionality apart from a few customizable color settings. It's a great choice if you need basic tooltips without too many bells and whistles.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/simple-tooltips/>

Responsive Mobile-Friendly Tooltip



2K+ active installs



Responsive Mobile-Friendly Tooltip is a versatile and intuitive tooltip plugin. The plugin's responsiveness allows it to control the maximum width value of the tooltips when viewed on wide and narrow screens.

The plugin adds a shortcode to your website, which is used to create each tooltip. The shortcode is available for use, right from a little icon in the post editor's toolbar. So there's little you have to do other than adding the tooltip content.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/responsive-mobile-friendly-tooltip/>



Chapter 7: User Role Plugins

User Role Plugins

By Jonathon John

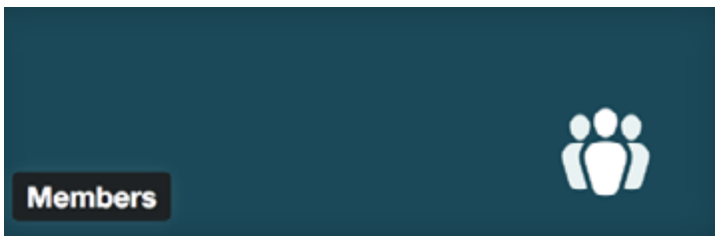
Do you manage or edit a large online publication powered by WordPress? Do you have several writers contributing to your site at any given time? Does your online business involve registering numerous WordPress accounts for users? If you answered yes to any of those questions, then this list of plugins here is a godsend.

If you've been struggling to manage those many WordPress accounts, trying to find the perfect balance of permissions and restrictions for each user, plugins can help you do just that: edit the roles of different types of WordPress accounts to allow or deny them access to specific pages.

Members



100K+ active installs



Members is far more than just a simple user role editor. Not only does it allow you to create, delete, and edit various roles and their capabilities, but it also comes with four other features.

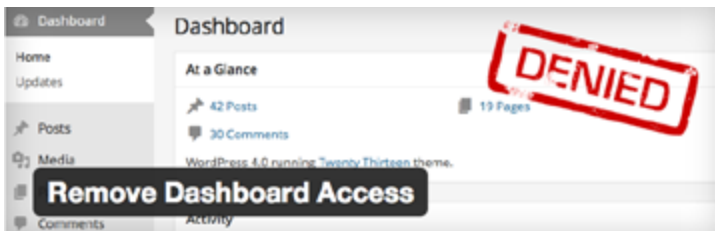
You can restrict view of your website's actual content by user role, create shortcodes to deny access to certain pages, insert a login form widget into your sidebar, and even make the site completely private.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/members/>

Remove Dashboard Access



20K+ active installs



Remove Dashboard Access is a plugin that allows you to remove access for certain user roles to the entire dashboard and everything in it. The users will only be allowed to view and edit their own profile.

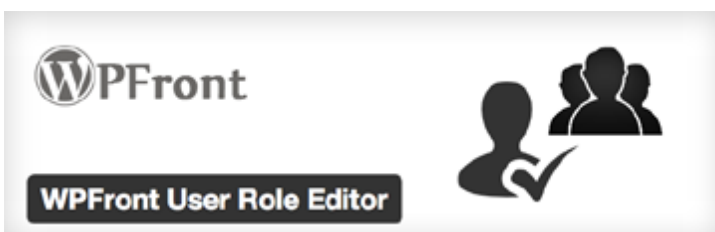
However, you can also choose to disallow access to the profile page. If that option is enabled, then a customizable redirect URL comes into play. When a user tries to access the dashboard, he or she will be redirected to a webpage of your choice. You can also choose to display a custom message on the login screen.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/remove-dashboard-access-for-non-admins/>

WPFront User Role Editor



40K+ active installs



WPFront User Role Editor is the highest rated plugin on this list with a 5-star rating from 33 reviewers. That's for good reason: while it isn't the most powerful plugin in its niche, it is one of the simplest to navigate.

You can create, edit, rename, clone, and manage the capabilities of roles. You can also change the default user role when a new account is registered.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wpfront-user-role-editor/>

User Role Editor



300K+ active installs



User Role Editor is the most popular plugin in this section. All of the basic role editing functions are built in.

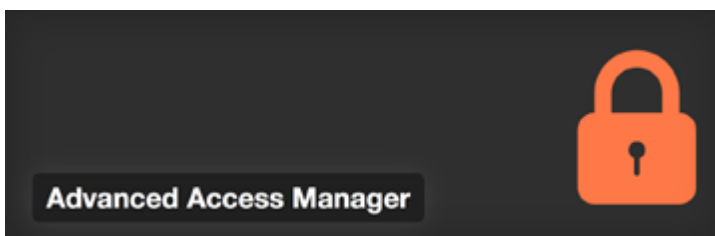
Like Members, it provides a shortcode that you can insert into a post or page to restrict view of the content to a specific user role and allows you to regulate view of certain types of content to users.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/user-role-editor/>

Advanced Access Manager



50K+ active installs



Advanced Access Manager is a very powerful plugin. With it, you can create, edit, delete, or manage capabilities of various user roles, but you can also control what your front-end visitors see as well.

You can deny access for both registered users and front-end visitors to certain posts, pages, or media files. The activity of each user is also tracked, so you know when someone logged in or out.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/advanced-access-manager/>



Chapter 8: Map Plugins

Map Plugins

By Jay Hoffman

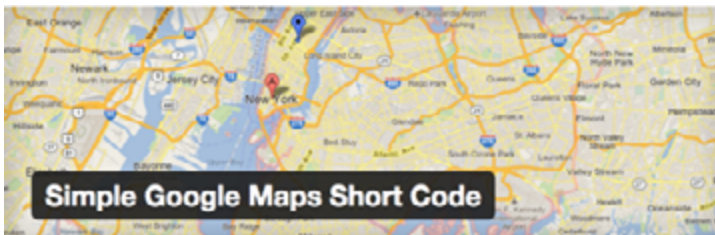
Maps are one of those things that make the web great. They allow you to provide directions, context, and a good amount of information about your business, all in a single interface.

But for WordPress there are a lot of different options for the simple task of placing an interactive map on your site—big, medium, and small. Map plugins are an easy way to add this functionality to your website.

Simple Google Maps Shortcode



10K+ active installs



Simple Google Maps Shortcode is one of the most compact implementations of static Google Maps. Activating the plugin gives you access to the `[[pw_map address]]` shortcode.

Simply add the shortcode to your site with the address of your map, and an optional width and height, and you'll see a Google Map on any post or page. Like so:

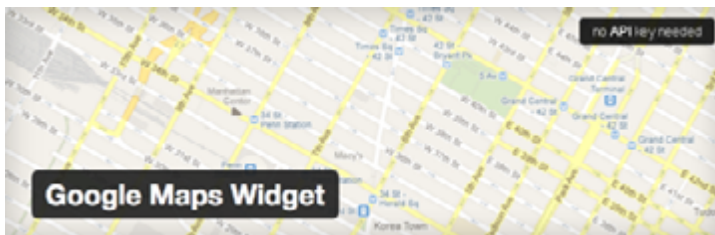
```
[pw_map address="4 Pennsylvania Plaza New York, NY 10001"
width="50%" height="200px"]
```

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/simple-google-maps-short-code/>

Google Maps Widget



90K+ active installs



If you like a little more control and customization for your Google Maps then Google Maps Widget is probably the way to go.

To increase the performance of your site, maps are shown on your site with a small and quick loading thumbnail—which clicks through to a fully-interactive, drag-enabled, and customized Google Map in a mobile-friendly lightbox. Maps can be added to any widgetized sidebar on your site, or using a function.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/google-maps-widget/>

Maps Marker Pro

70K+ active installs

ratings not available



If you're looking for a fully robust maps plugin for WordPress, and don't mind shelling out a few bucks, then Maps Marker Pro is the way to go. Rather than simply relying on Google Maps, this plugin integrates with several different services to offer an extensive list of options and functionality.

Maps Marker Pro allows you to create two map types. The first is a "marker." This is your more standard option, which displays a single location on a map. The second is a "layer." Layers can have multiple markers clustered together, shown across a map of the entire world. There are also a couple of extra features that come bundled with the layer option.

<http://www.mapsmarker.com/>



Chapter 9: Slideshow Plugins

Slideshow Plugins

By Jonathon John

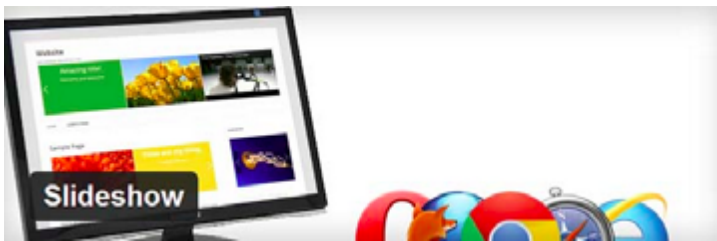
As the web becomes more visual, the quality of the images on your blog and the ways you display them become increasingly more important. You only have a couple of seconds to grab the attention of your visitors, and cool, high-quality images are one of the best ways to draw people in!

In recent times, the method of choice for many WordPress sites is a good old slideshow. For an easy way to add a slideshow to your site, slideshow plugins are a preferred and effective option.

Slideshow



100K+ active installs



Slideshow is one of the most popular WordPress slideshow plugins. You can create as many slideshows as you like (using a mix of text, images, and videos from YouTube), and it's responsive and works across all devices.

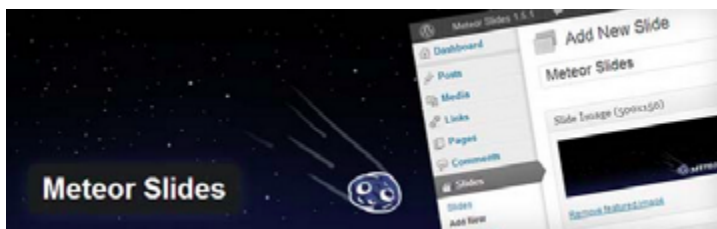
In addition, you can change the background styling between light and dark, and you can run multiple slideshows on the same page. Getting slideshows into your pages is as easy as adding shortcode. If you prefer, you can add php code directly to your theme or use a widget.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/slideshow-jquery-image-gallery/>

Meteor Slides



90K+ active installs



When it comes to the number of transitional styles available in one plugin, Meteor Slides and its whopping 20 options are hard to beat. The plugin boasts a clean interface that is incredibly simple to use.

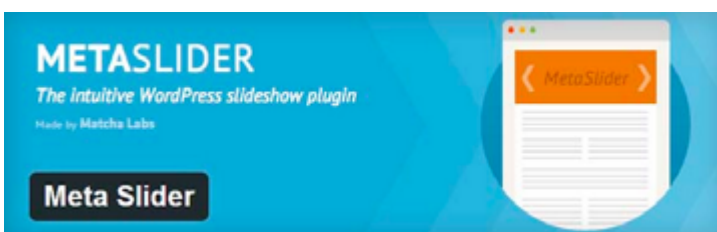
Slides can be added to posts or pages using shortcodes, to the theme using php code, or directly in a widget using the Meteor Slides Widget.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/meteor-slides/>

Meta Slider



600K+ active installs



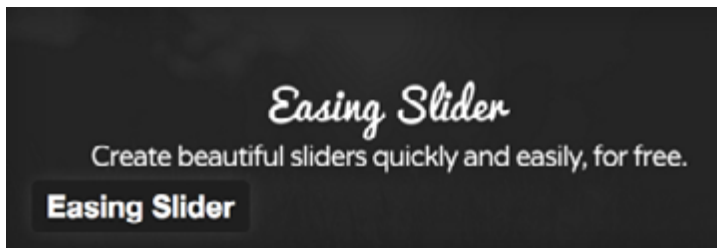
Meta Slider is another very popular slideshow plugin. This one comes pre-packed with four slideshow types: Nivo Slider, Flex Slider, Coin Slider, and Responsive Slider. Each of which is fully customizable to suit your needs.

You can change dimensions and colors, as well as add captions and destination URLs to each image. Like most slideshow plugins, Meta Slider's slideshows are mobile responsive.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/ml-slider/>

Easing Slider

90K+ active installs



Easing Slider “Lite” creates a nice looking slideshow, though the UI is a little awkward to use. If you want the plugin to create more than one slideshow, you will have to upgrade to the pro version.

The customization options are limited to only a few transitions (slide and fade), changing dimensions, next and previous arrows, pagination icons, and automatic playback. It’s a simple plugin that serves its purpose.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/easing-slider/>

Smart Slider 2

20K+ active installs



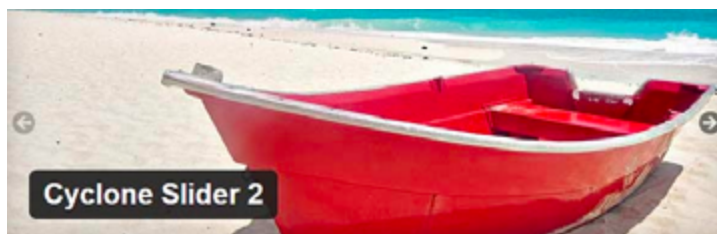
This is a relatively new slideshow plugin, but it’s already actively installed on more than 20,000 websites. The free version is loaded with plenty of customization options and features you usually don’t see.

It might seem like a minor point, but giving users the ability to choose the style of arrows the slider uses is a nice touch—and one that this plugin has. It shows how much thought and effort the plugin author has given to accommodating the needs of the people using the product.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/smart-slider-2/>

Cyclone Slider 2

70K+ active installs



Cyclone Slider 2 is user-friendly and includes a well-designed admin area, with features and options in all the places you’d expect. The slideshows are responsive by default, but you can change the settings if you prefer a fixed width across all devices.

You can also apply different transitions to each image. This impressive plugin also generates a live slideshow preview in the admin area.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/cyclone-slider-2/>

Soliloquy

90K+ active installs



Of all the slideshow plugins I tested, this one is the easiest to use. It takes just a few seconds to create a slideshow and embed it on a site. The output is quite nice as well.

The customization options in the Lite version are very limited, but you can use custom CSS to make it your own. Similarly, upgrading to pro brings more customization options.

<http://wordpress.org/plugins/soliloquy-lite/>



Chapter 10: Audio Player Plugins

Audio Player Plugins

By Jonathon John

You never truly understand the significance of an audio player on your website until you actually need one.

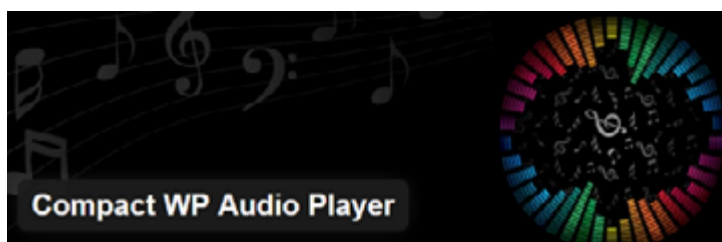
Take me, for instance. The concept of audio player plugins had never crossed my mind (although considering the number of podcasts I listen to I probably have used at least one or two in the past) until I needed to embed some audio files on one of my websites.

If you find yourself in a similar situation, there are several audio plugins out there to help you get an audio player up and running on your website.

Compact WP Audio Player



40K+ active installs



Compact WP Audio Player is a lightweight plugin (I believe this is where the "compact" part of the name comes into play). With that in mind, don't expect it to come with any magical features.

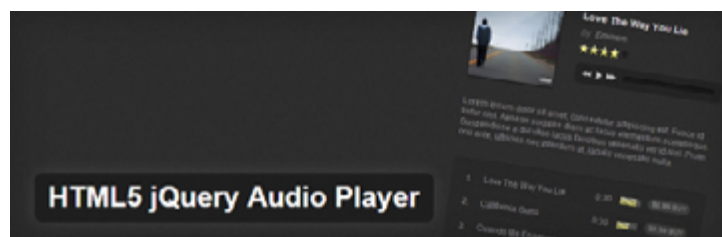
In fact, the only thing you can change in the plugin settings page (located in Settings >> SC Audio Player) is whether or not front-end users are able to play multiple audio files at once.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/compact-wp-audio-player/>

HTML5 jQuery Audio Plugin



9K+ active installs



When I first tried the plugin, I didn't understand its lesser popularity because HTML5 jQuery Audio Plugin seemed to have a lot more functionality than Compact. For instance, to add an audio file, you'll head over to HTML5 Player >> Manage Songs, where you can either upload or add links to MP3 or Ogg files. There are also options to add rating, artist, and title information, plus a cover image.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/html5-jquery-audio-player/>



Chapter 11: Lightbox (Pop Up) Plugins

Lightbox (Pop Up) Plugins

By Jonathon John

Lightboxes are one of the oldest and most popular functionalities of plugin-extended WordPress media management. Whether you're a freelancer trying to make your portfolio more appealing to clients, or a restaurant owner trying to entice new customers with mouth-watering pictures of your delicacies, your website can benefit from a lightbox plugin.

Due to their popularity, there's a seemingly never-ending list of lightbox plugins at the WordPress.org plugin repository (and even more premium ones outside of it). Let's take a look at some of the most popular.

Responsive Lightbox by dFactory



100K+ active installs



Responsive Lightbox by dFactory is a mobile-optimized lightbox plugin that enables you to add overlay effects to your WordPress images and picture galleries.

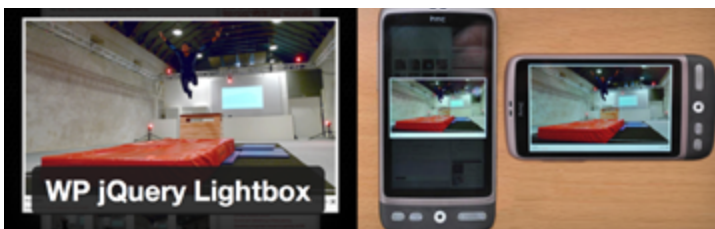
Different lightbox scripts are included—SwipeBox, prettyPhoto, FancyBox, Nivo Lightbox, and Image Lightbox—and you can choose which one you'd like to use on your website. Not only does this plugin have the ability to add the lightbox effect to images, but it can also apply to YouTube and Vimeo video links as well.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/responsive-lightbox/>

WP jQuery Lightbox



100K+ active installs



WP jQuery Lightbox is a simple alternative to more complex lightbox plugins. With lightweight functionality and minimized scripts, WP jQuery Lightbox is faster and better-built than many other available options.

Founded on the lightbox-to-jQuery port by Warren Krewenki, this plugin provides translation-ready files, a thorough options panel, and optional auto-boxing for your image and gallery links.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-jquery-lightbox/>

Lightbox CSS3



3K+ active installs



Independent of Javascript and jQuery, CSS3 Lightbox uses only browser-native CSS3 functions to display beautiful lightboxes. This makes for much faster speeds on mobile and desktop devices alike.

Clearly, this plugin is in its infant growing stage and I wouldn't be surprised to see a sharp spike in downloads in the near future.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/css3lightbox/>

Lightbox Plus Colorbox



200K+ active installs



Lightbox Plus Colorbox is a result of a cross between Jacob Moore's MIT-licensed Colorbox and Dan Zappone's lightbox plugin. The two make an efficient duo: in one plugin, you get all the functionality of a colorbox plugin (image expansion with Ajax), plus that of a nifty lightbox plugin (overlay lightboxes for images, galleries, videos, forms, and external content).

The jQuery multi-tool has a super-simple user interface. Within a few months, Zappone plans to update the plugin with a full rewrite in line with WordPress' coding standards—don't worry though, the current version works fine with the latest WordPress version as well.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/lightbox-plus/>



Chapter 12: Live Chat Plugins

Live Chat Plugins

By Marie Dodson

Customer support is essential for a healthy business growth; it bolsters referrals, attracts new customers, and keeps current customers happy. Support comes in all shapes and sizes—phone, email, ticket platforms, and Twitter, just to name a few.

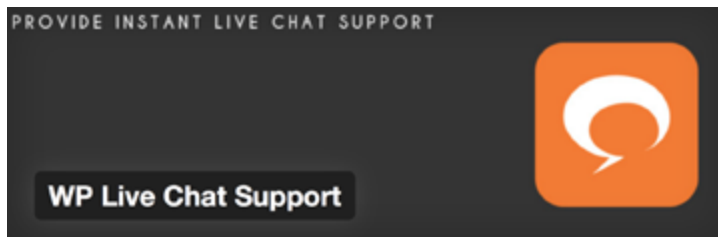
One of the more popular forms of customer support is live chat. Live chat solves problems in real time, in a efficient and cost-effective manner. Efficiency is increased in that representatives can manage multiple chats simultaneously. In addition, these conversations can be saved and later used for support training or further analyzed to gain valuable insights on how to improve your product or service.

Live chat plugins are a great option for easily installing live chat support on your website.

WP Live Chat Support



10K+ active installs



WP Live Chat Support was developed specifically to create and manage live chats on your own server; this means no third-party server required. The free version boasts lots of useful features, including an easy-to-use interface for admin and visitors, desktop notifications, customizable chat boxes, and more.

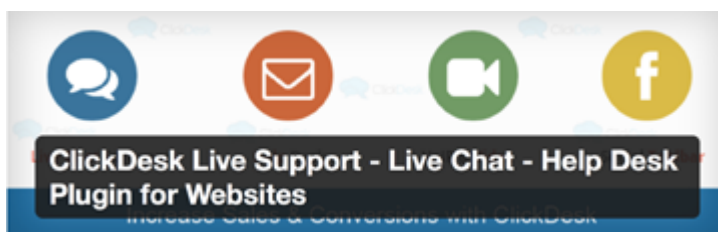
The pro version offers a more robust collection of features including unlimited access to historical chat records, a fully customizable live chat experience that even allows you add your company logo to the chat window, unlimited live chat, world-class support, and more.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-live-chat-support/>

ClickDesk Live Support



10K+ active installs



ClickDesk features advanced chat queueing, 24/7 support, and is fully compatible on mobile devices. In addition to live chat, this plugin offers VoIP and video chat. Social toolbar integration gives visitors direct access to your Twitter and Facebook, allowing them to "follow" and "like" directly from the chat widget.

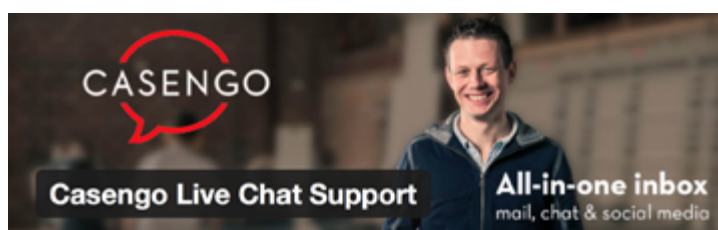
ClickDesk is fully customizable, easy to install, and extremely fast. ClickDesk pricing plans start at \$19.99 per month for the Lite version, which includes unlimited chats, Gtalk IM, widget customization, and more.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/clickdesk-live-support-chat-plugin/>

Casengo Live Chat



2K+ active installs



Casengo is free and fully functional. It allows you to add live chat functionality directly to your website—quickly and easily.

Its core features include simple setup, Facebook integration, multi-channel support, hybrid messaging, and more.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/the-casengo-chat-widget/>

Tidio Live Chat



5K+ active installs



Tidio is a live chat plugin designed specifically for the WordPress community. It's easy to install, and features a clean interface with modern and highly customizable colors. The widget supports 140 languages, and has integration with Zendesk, GetResponse, and MailChimp.

As a pro user, you'll be granted unlimited access to Tidio's features for \$10 per month.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/tidio-live-chat/>

Zopim Live Chat



50K+ active installs



Zopim is the most popular live chat provider, used by more than 150,000 businesses around the world and is available in more than 40 different languages. The free version features a highly customizable chat widget and a user-friendly dashboard that lets you easily monitor site activity and manage chats.

With advanced analytics right in the dashboard, you can get quick insights into visitor flow and usage patterns. Zopim has four different pricing plans—free, basic, advanced, and pro.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/zopim-live-chat/>



Chapter 13: Contact Form Plugins

Contact Form Plugins

By Syed Waseem Abbas

The customer is king. This universal mantra holds true even today. Customers are the backbone of a company—and for that reason, your services and products should always be accessible to them. Today, having a website is an essential part of providing this support.

Additionally, because the customer is king (or queen), he or she might want to be able to contact your company directly with questions and comments. You should be prepared for this because if you don't treat your customers accordingly, they may leave your site and never return. That is why you need to have a contact form for your website. Fortunately, there are several contact form plugins to help you get the job done.

Contact Form 7



1M+ active installs



This is one of the most commonly used plugins to develop contact forms. The best advantage of this plugin is its flexibility and customizable abilities. Contact Form 7 supports CAPTCHA and Ajax submission.

If you're familiar with HTML, you can easily customize this plugin to suit your needs by using a simple markup. This plugin also facilitates the use of Akismet filtering, which minimizes your chances of getting spammed.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/contact-form-7/>

Contact Form Maker



20K+ active installs



This is one of the most simple contact form plugins for WordPress. It's based on a simple, yet efficient backend interface and provides unlimited tools to use within the contact form. You can also create various fields that will be incorporated into emails—including date, time, email, and text area.

One of the best advantages of this plugin is that you can make code-level changes in the program with relative ease—thus adding extended customization to the interface. It also supports standard CAPTCHA and ReCAPTCHA functions.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/contact-form-maker/>

Contact Form by BestWebSoft



300K+ active installs



Contact Form is a very user-friendly plugin, with a straightforward setup. To get the plugin up and running, simply activate the plugin, and insert this simple shortcode: `bestwebsoft_contact_form`.

By using this plugin, you can choose where you want to send incoming messages, without defined user or email restrictions. You can also give the option of attaching a file within the form. There is a pro version of this plugin available, which allows you to make further customization and behavioral changes to the contact form.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/contact-form-plugin/>



Chapter 14: Ecommerce Plugins

Ecommerce Plugins

By Al Davis

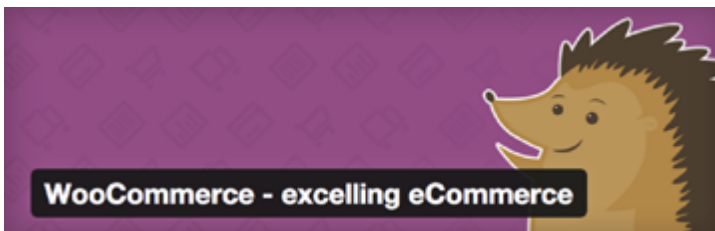
WordPress took off as a business tool shortly after plugins were first introduced in version 1.2, back in 2004. The inclusion of plugins was important for a couple of reasons. Most notably because it allowed third-party developers (whether that be an individual or a company) to develop add ons to WordPress, for both personal and business sites.

From a business perspective, this was a huge development, as, prior to 2004, WordPress was still seen as a personal blogging tool with no real business application. Sure, you could build a marketing or brochure site, but you really couldn't do much more than that. WordPress ecommerce plugins enable businesses to do more and more with their sites to help attract (and capture) customer information, and eventually equip them to sell online.

WooCommerce



1M+ active installs



WooCommerce is a leading ecommerce plugin and features a suite of tools to help you build and run your online business.

Out of the box, WooCommerce offers a slew of different features: PayPal standard gateway, payment options such as cash on delivery (COD), check and bank transfer, Google Analytics, ability to customize to fit your store needs, basic shipping options, ability to add premium extensions for options such as FedEx, UPS, USPS, and others, inventory management, reporting, compatibility with any WordPress theme, and much more.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/woocommerce/>

Cart66 Lite



4K+ active installs



Originally launched in 2008, Cart66 (originally called PHPurchase) was one of the first ecommerce plugins available exclusively for WordPress. It has evolved from its humble beginnings to a sophisticated plugin that features a cloud-based, managed hosting solution within its offering.

Features of this product are similar to the aforementioned plugin, but include a few differentiators. It sells services and digital products via Amazon S3 integration, and offers affiliate platform integration.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/cart66-lite/>

Shopp



7K+ active installs



Shopp, like Cart66, also launched in 2008 as one of the first ecommerce options for WordPress. Today, Shopp is free to use, and is developed and maintained by a community of volunteers including Jonathan Davis, the head of web design and development studio Ingenesis Limited.

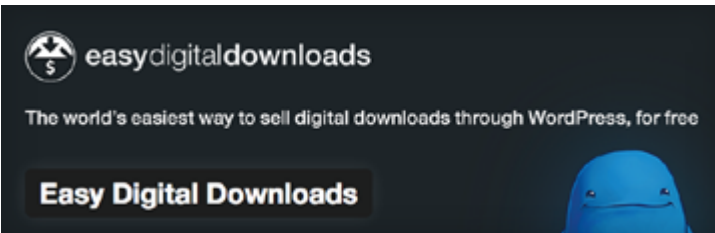
Shopp has long been considered a very stable plugin and includes a suite of API tools among its defining characteristics. Shopp is a free plugin, though there's also a premium version available, which includes a premium support model.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/shopp/>

Easy Digital Downloads



40K+ active installs



Easy Digital Downloads is one of the 60-plus plugins developed by coding guru Pippin Williamson. As the name suggests, this free plugin is designed for selling downloadable products.

This is the go-to plugin if you are looking to sell digital products, such as eBooks, whitepapers, music, or any other product that would be exclusively available as a download. Among its more common attributes, users can also leverage more unique features: user purchase history and ability to redownload files, integration with major gateways such as PayPal and Stripe, multi-lingual support, and email newsletter integration.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/easy-digital-downloads/>



Chapter 15: Ad Management Plugins

Ad Management Plugins

By Brandon Yanofsky

A popular way to monetize a WordPress blog is through display ads. These usually include banner ads provided by affiliate networks or display advertising platforms (such as Google AdSense). If you have one or two ads on your site, it may be easy to insert the ad with a text widget. But if you have multiple ads on your site, it can be difficult to manage without a dedicated ad management plugin.

WordPress Ad Widget



20K+ active installs



The WordPress Ad Widget plugin is a simple, barebones ad management plugin. There are not many options, and no ad management dashboard. But if you don't need anything special, it makes displaying ads on your site quick and simple.

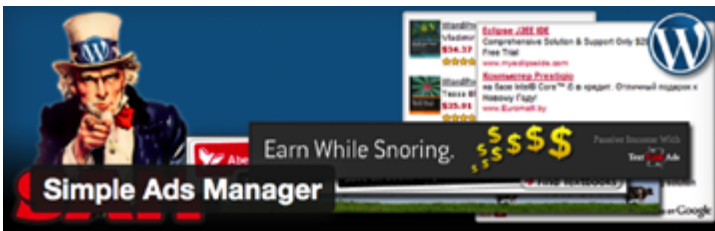
The plugin adds two new widgets for you to use in your sidebar. The first is a widget to display HTML or JavaScript ad code. This is great if you are using Google AdSense or another ad network and receive a JavaScript code you need to insert. The second widget is used for image ads. These are useful for when you receive an image and a link (such as from an affiliate network). The widget lets you upload the image and then specify a URL to link the image to.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/ad-widget/>

Simple Ads Manager



20K+ active installs



Simple Ads Manager gives you more options and functionality than you'll find in WordPress Ad Widget. Instead of simply uploading ads to a widget, you now have an interface to upload ads with.

The main element in Simple Ads Manager is the Ad Place. Each Ad Place is a group of ads that you can upload and place on your site, either through a widget, a shortcode, or by adding PHP code to your theme. You can also assign each advertisement a weight. Ads with a higher weight will be shown more frequently.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/simple-ads-manager/>

AdRotate



50K+ active installs



AdRotate has similar functionality to the Simple Ads Manager plugin. It also lets you schedule ads. So if you know certain ads perform better at certain times, you can schedule those ads to only appear at that particular time then show a different ad during the off hours.

You can also specify how ads rotate. You can either show one ad at a time or you can have the ads rotate at a predefined time, such as every few seconds.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/adrotate/>



Chapter 16: eLearning Plugins

eLearning Plugins

By Emily Schiola

The global eLearning market is on the rise. This is unsurprising considering, if done correctly, it makes education and training more affordable and convenient.

WordPress makes providing online education easier than ever through the use of eLearning plugins. These are perfect for teachers, educators, and students.

Put online courses directly into your blog, add a grading feature, and send certificates to your students with plugins that are easy to install and use.

CoursePress



3K+ active installs



The title says it all, CoursePress adds online courses to your site with a beautiful interface. It features everything you need including the ability for students to upload and download content, create discussion boards, and even create quizzes.

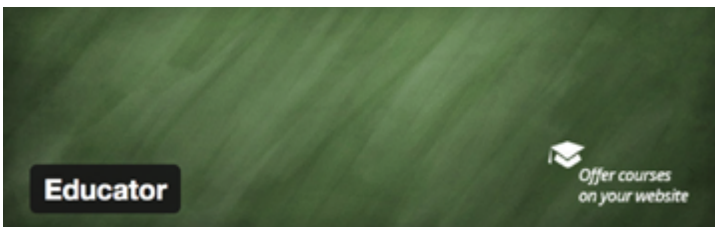
You can even decide if you want to offer paid or free courses and have a place to compile all your grading.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/coursepress/>

Educator



1K+ active installs



Educator allows you to quickly view quizzes, student progress, and members. It supports PayPal, cash, and check payments so your courses can be accessible to more people.

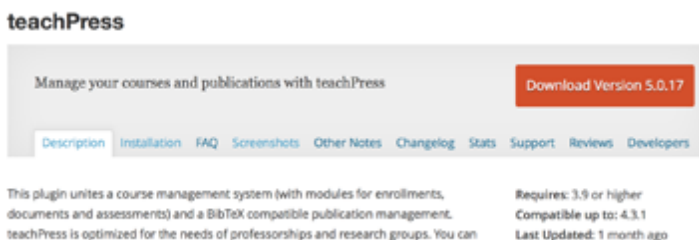
One of the most interesting features is the ability to add lecturers who can upload and provide educational material so you don't have to write up everything from a guest or provide all the coursework yourself.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/ibeducator/>

teachPress



5K+ active installs



teachPress supports seven languages so you can teach people all over the world. The plugin provides integrated modules for enrollment, assessment, and documents all in the same place.

teachPress allows you to add a course menu to your dashboard so you can quickly access and edit any courses. Similarly, you can create a course just like you would with a blog post.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/teachpress/>

StudyPress



50K+ active installs



Create an unlimited number of courses, lessons, and quizzes with StudyPress. You can have multiple teachers contribute to the learning material and integrate glossaries and tags to make things easier for students and teachers. The most useful feature is its ability to integrate with BuddyPress—allow students and teachers to chat with each other, ask questions, and share thoughts.

With these tools, you can teach, learn, and share ideas all through your WordPress site. Your courses, grading, and quizzes will all be in one place so you can make money selling courses or let people access them for free.

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/studypress/>



Authors

Plugged In Authors

Thanks to all of our writers! These articles originally appeared on www.torquemag.io. All ratings and download numbers as provided by the WordPress plugin directory are fluid and change regularly.

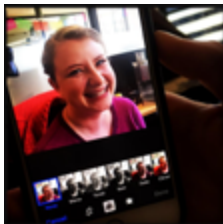


Al Davis

<https://twitter.com/adavis3105>

When not at his day job in the hosting industry, Al teaches WordPress at a Toronto college and also does corporate WordPress training. As a freelance web developer, he is always busy building sites on the WordPress

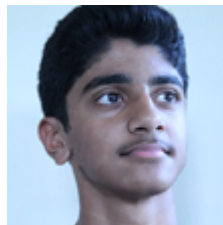
platform. All this leaves him very little time to ride his Harley and watch NFL football.



Emily Schiola

<https://twitter.com/ESchiola>

Emily is an editorial assistant at Torque Magazine! She loves good beer, bad movies, and cats.



Jonathan John

<https://twitter.com/jrjohnwrites>

Jonathan John is a WordPress enthusiast and freelance blogger. He loves comparing WordPress plugins and themes, sharing the latest Automattic news, and helping non-techie's get the most out of the world's

favorite CMS.



Waseem Abbas Syed

<https://twitter.com/sewabs>

Waseem is currently working as Community Manager and Writer for Envira Gallery. He is also a WordPress problem solver and active member of the WordPress Community. Besides work, Waseem is

addicted to exploring new places, meeting new people and eating loads of food. He loves traveling in his free time and plans to become a professional traveler once he retires!



Brandon Yanofsky

<https://twitter.com/Byanofsky>

Brandon is a WordPress developer and founder of WP Radius, a premium WordPress support and maintenance provider.

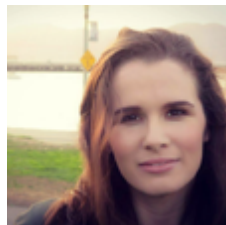


Jay Hoffman

https://twitter.com/jay_hoffmann

Jay is a WordPress developer hailing from NYC. A WordPress enthusiast with an eye for front-end development and design, he has been working with WordPress since 2006, and currently works for Penguin

Random House. A few years ago, he founded Tidy Repo, a curated list of the best and most reliable plugins from around the web, and has since open sourced the project.



Marie Dodson

<https://twitter.com/Mdodson12>

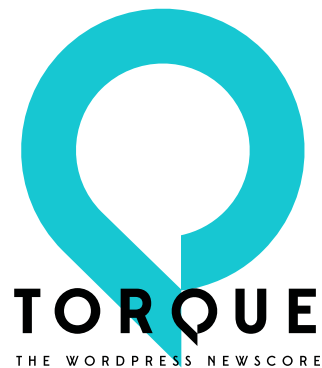
Marie is the editor at Torque Magazine. She enjoys reading good books, meeting new people, and traveling.



Doctor Popular

<https://twitter.com/docpop>

Doc is an illustrator and musician in SF. He laid out this fine little ebook. Isn't it lovely? Please do not ask Doc for any medical advice. He is neither a Doctor nor Popular.



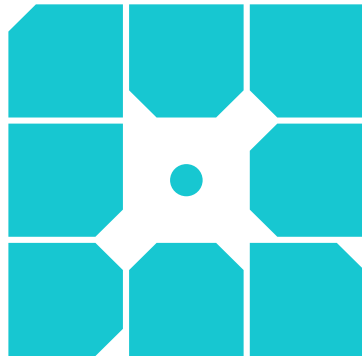
Torque Magazine

Torque is a news site featuring all things WordPress. We are dedicated to informing new and advanced WordPress professionals, users, and enthusiasts about the industry. Torque focuses primarily on WordPress News, Business, and Development, but also covers topics relating to open source and break-through technology.

Torque made its debut in July 2013, at WordCamp San Francisco, and has since produced valuable content that reflects the evolution of WordPress, both as a platform and a community.

Torque is a WP Engine publication, though maintains complete editorial independence.

<http://torquemag.io>



WP Engine

WP Engine is a leading SaaS content management platform for websites and applications built on WordPress. The company powers thousands of websites and apps built on the WordPress platform delivering a fast, reliable and secure web experience. All levels of users including bloggers, marketers, SMBs and large corporations rely on WP Engine's platform to keep their websites up and running. The company's exceptional customer service team specializes in quickly solving technical problems, and creating a world-class customer experience ensuring that each user's WordPress site continues to perform at its full potential.

Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas and London, England.

<http://wpengine.com>

