19 WordPress plugins developers love

Finding the perfect WordPress plugin can be a bit like trying to find the single typo in a string of code – it can take some time. We've found all of these plugins to be straightforward to use, not too performance heavy on your site, and just downright reliable!

19 WordPress plugins developers love

Finding the perfect WordPress plugin that speeds up site development is a bit like trying to find the single typo in a string of code – it can take some time. And these days, there are so many plugins for different tasks that it can be hard to pinpoint exactly what functionality a site does (or does not) need, and what plugins provide that in an efficient way.

So, how do you know which WordPress plugins to turn to, and which ones will cause more development headaches than they're worth?

In this ebook, you'll find:

- **The essential WordPress plugins for custom development**

- **Reliable plugins for growing your business (or recommending to your clients!)**

- **Simple security plugins for modern best practices**

- **The top WordPress plugins for better site performance**

- **And bonus: a few plugins you might want to avoid!**

Ready to install your new favorite plugin? Let's dive in!

Essential WordPress plugins for custom development

Every developer should be well equipped with a few essential plugins for speeding up site development! Whether you're looking for tools for your workflow or functions to help clients, these plugins help solve development dilemmas without impacting site performance.

ADVANCED CUSTOM FIELDS
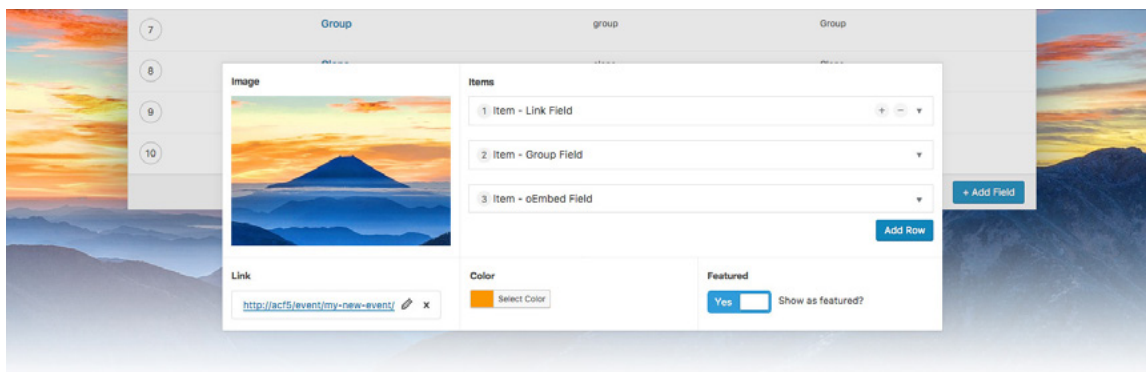
This plugin is a staple when developing custom WordPress sites. It allows you to create new fields for WordPress edit screens, meaning more functionality without increased complexity. Not only can it make your life easier, but also your clients' because they'll be able to edit more of their site right from the editor!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

By using plugins like Advanced Custom Fields to add functionality to the WordPress dashboard, you'll give your clients a lot more power over their own website. Then they won't have to call you for something simple like swapping a link in a blog post!

CUSTOM TAXONOMY ORDER NE

If you're working with custom taxonomy terms for a site, this plugin will allow you to order them with a simple drag-and-drop interface. It even integrates right into the WordPress dashboard, so once you install it, you'll almost forget it's there!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

Custom Taxonomy Order NE performs a simple task in an efficient way. Not only will it make ordering taxonomy terms easier, but the plugin is so lightweight, you won't need to worry about any performance problems.

DEBUG BAR

koop.local #1	PHP 7.0.3	MySQL 5.5.5	Memory Usage 3,708,912 bytes

Queries		
WP Query	TOTAL QUERIES: 12	TOTAL QUERY TIME: 14.3 ms
Request		
Object Cache	SELECT option_name, option_value FROM wp_options WHERE autoload = 'y	
	wp_not_installed, is_blog_installed, wp_load_alloptions	

This plugin adds a debug menu right to the WordPress admin bar, so you'll always know exactly where to start troubleshooting. It shows query and cache information, along with PHP warnings and notices when WP_DEBUG is enabled.

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

This plugin pretty much speaks for itself. With added context for debugging right in the WordPress dashboard, you'll be able to fix sites faster and go live sooner!

ENABLE MEDIA REPLACE

This plugin is a time-saver, especially if you don't like to waste time dealing with images. Instead of deleting, uploading, and renaming new files, you can simply replace them. Bonus: Your clients will also be able to do this on their own, instead of contacting you to replace the feature on their homepage.

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

This plugin provides a ton of value for your clients without impacting site performance or adding to your to do list. That's what we call a win!

SHOW CURRENT TEMPLATE
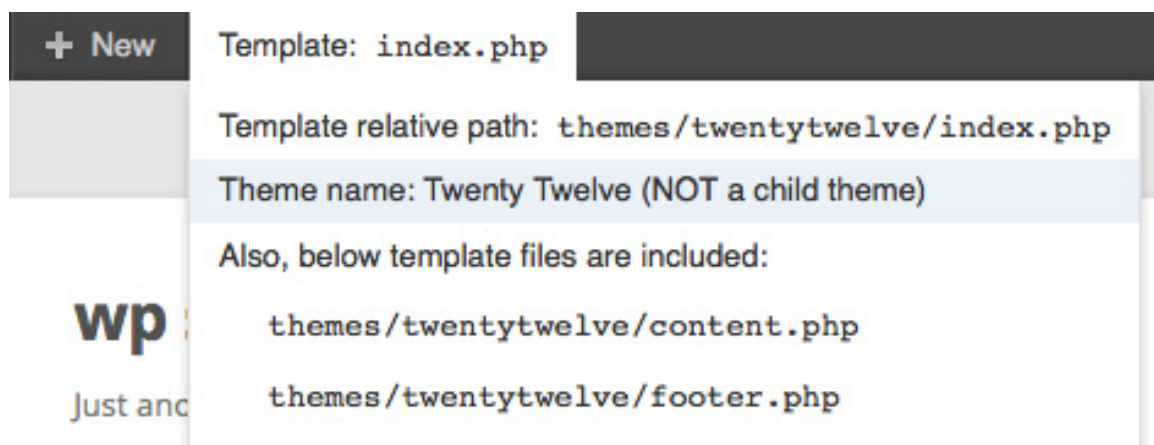
If you're redeveloping a site for a client, this plugin can save the day. It has one simple function: to show the name of the current theme file being used by the site in the toolbar. If you're not quite sure what theme is being used (and your client doesn't know either) this plugin has your back!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

When you're developing a new site version for a client, the last thing you want to do is waste time trying to figure out what WordPress theme you're actually working with. This plugin will remove any uncertainty, so you can focus on solutions, not questions!

THEME CHECK

If you're developing a custom WordPress theme, this plugin will help you make sure it's up to all the latest WordPress standards. It runs the same testing that WordPress.org uses for theme submissions, so you'll know exactly what the pros think!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

Whether you're thinking of actually submitting your theme or just building it out for a client, aligning it with the latest WordPress standards is always a good move. Theme Check makes it possible to do that right from the WordPress dashboard!

WP MIGRATE DB

Need to move your WordPress database? This plugin can help you export it as a MySQL data dump, performs a "search and replace" on URLs and file paths, and more.

*Note: If you're using Flywheel for hosting and Local for local development, you can connect the two instead of manually moving your database around. Using a staging site can also alleviate the hassle of migrating the database!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

If your hosting solution doesn't provide an easy way to move from local development to staging to production, this plugin might be able to offer exactly what you need!

Reliable plugins for business growth

While the majority of WordPress plugins add functionality to sites or help with development, there are also a number of plugins that can help you grow your business. Whether it's collecting data so you can be more informed or collecting email addresses so you can nurture leads, these WordPress plugins are perfect for developers expanding their business (or just for recommending to clients)!

GOOGLE ANALYTICS FOR WORDPRESS BY MONSTERINSIGHTS

Take the guesswork out of your development decisions by displaying your Google Analytics data right in WordPress. By housing everything in the same spot, you'll be able to keep these stats front and center every time you log in to make a change, and in turn, monitor how those changes affect your site traffic.

> " *Use site data to make educated decisions on site testing and changes*

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

Having accessible data can make the difference between guessing what works and knowing what performs. By pulling Google Analytics right into a WordPress site, you'll be able to keep it top of mind!

GOOGLE XML SITEMAPS

Sitemaps are incredibly important for SEO, but not always something you want to manually create. With a plugin like Google XML Sitemaps, it'll automatically notify all major search engines whenever new content is created on the site.

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

When you're all done developing a site for a site for client, include this as a last step when taking the site live! They'll love the SEO boost, and it'll stand out as a great site transition.

HUBSPOT
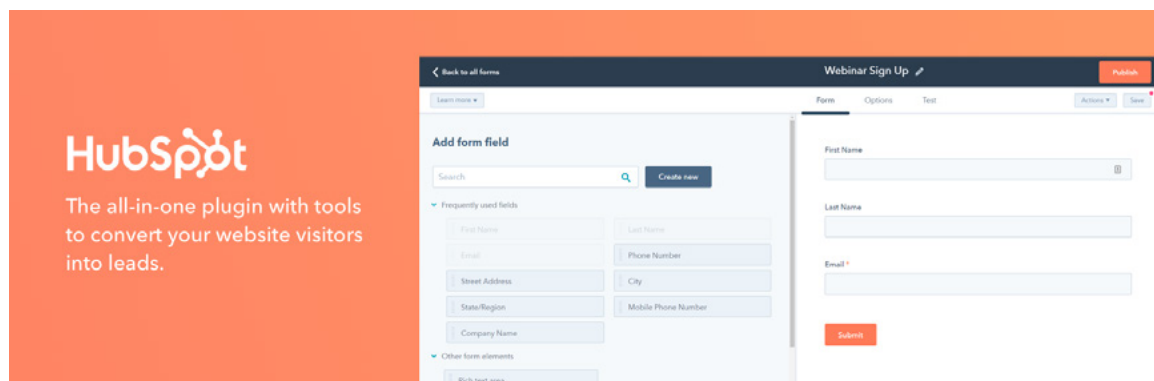
Whether you already use Hubspot or are just getting started with it, their plugin is an incredibly powerful tool for anyone growing a business on WordPress. It'll help you capture new leads with forms and pop-ups, build your email list, and track visitor behavior on your site.

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

Hubspot is a well-known company, and their plugin lives up to the same great standards. It's a fantastic option to help you meet your business goals or to recommend to your clients.

REGENERATE THUMBNAILS

Regenerate Thumbnails solves a simple task that your clients will greatly appreciate. Let's say you're developing a new theme for an existing WordPress site. The client wants a new layout, but also wants to reuse and resize some of the existing images. This plugin will automatically regenerate the thumbnail sizes for images already in the media library. That means neither you nor your client have to do that work manually!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

Revamping old sites for clients can always be a challenge, but Regenerate Thumbnails can help solve one piece of the puzzle in a quick and efficient way.

Simple security plugins for modern best practices

As a WordPress developer, you know that security is no joke. It's why researching reliable themes is important. It's why following the latest best practices is important. Heck, it's probably part of why you thought downloading this ebook was important – to discover trustworthy plugins to install on WordPress sites.

When it comes to security and plugins, there are three things you need to think about:

1. **You should trust every plugin you install to be secure.**

2. **There are some plugins that can help with security concerns, but...**

3. **Security plugins also might not be needed, depending on your WordPress host.**

> *" Following the latest WordPress security best practices are so important*

Before we share our recommended plugins, let's dive into that third point just a little more. An exceptional WordPress host will actually take care of a lot of security tasks for you. Flywheel, for example, handles security at the server-level of your site (meaning you don't need to worry about traditional security plugins). We recommend using a hosting company that does this for you, instead of relying on plugins.

That being said – there are some plugins that can help you with site-level best practices, and they don't conflict with the measures your host has already put in place. We're going to focus on those!

AKISMET

This anti-spam plugin will keep your comments clean and free of malicious content. It checks every comment a site receives to identify whether or not it's spam. Not sure if you actually want it to do all the work? You can still manually mark comments as spam, or approve comments that may have accidentally been flagged.

It also shows URLs in the comment, so you'll be able to catch "hidden" links right away (instead of site visitors accidentally clicking something they shouldn't).

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

Nothing ruins your credibility (or your clients'!) faster than spam. Installing this plugin is a simple and straightforward way to help keep spammers away!

FORCE STRONG PASSWORDS

No matter how many security measures you put in place, it'll all be for nothing if you're using weak login credentials. And while you might know this well, sometimes it's harder to convince your clients to follow the same guidelines. With a plugin like Force Strong Passwords, however, they won't have a choice. This plugins ensures users on the site use complex passwords, the most basic way to keep a site secure!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

Nothing slows down your work like an old client's site getting hacked. With a plugin like Force Strong Passwords installed, you can rest assured that the most simple security concern is taken care of (meaning no malware cleanup on your end).

GOOGLE AUTHENTICATOR

If you're a fan of two-factor authentication, this plugin was made for you! It works with Google Authenticator, QR codes, push notifications, soft tokens, and security questions to help you make logging in a safe and secure practice.

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

If you're concerned about security, the Google Authenticator plugin adds a simple login step that can make a big difference.

GOOGLE CAPTCHA
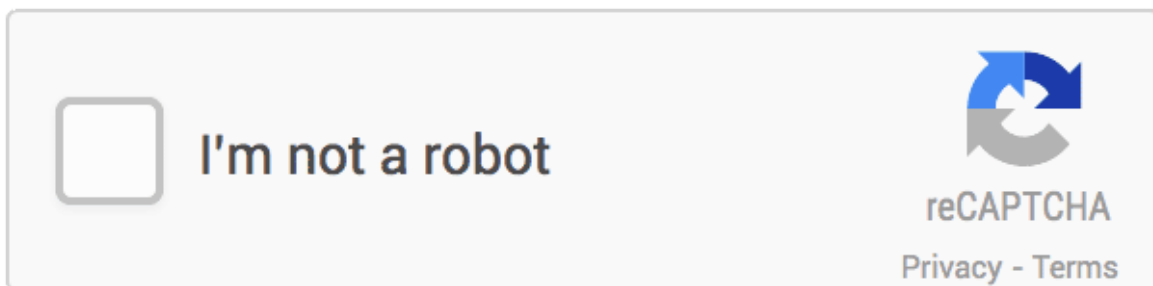
Have you ever filled out a form and had to verify you're not a robot? That's what Google Captcha provides, as an added layer of security for your site forms. By adding this simple, extra check box, you have a much better chance at blocking attacks that try spamming your form.

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

This WordPress plugin is outrageously simple to implement. If you're looking for some intuitive ways to boost security, it's a great place to start!

> **"** *Google provides great security options if you need a solution for your sites*

WPS HIDE LOGIN

It's pretty common knowledge that WordPress sites are accessed by adding /wp-admin to the end of a URL. While using strong login credentials and adding captcha are good measures to stop any attacks on your site, another option is to change the login URL. WPS Hide Login does exactly that, allowing you to change it to whatever URL you'd like!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

This plugin makes it easy to move the login page, without you having to build out all that functionality yourself. It's a great way to ensure your client sites are just a little extra secure!

The top WordPress plugins for better site performance

Site performance is more important than ever, and it usually falls to you, the developer, to make sure everything is in place for a speedy experience. From using the right plugins to building with the best practices to teaching your clients how things work, there are lots of ways you can influence the performance of your site.

Like security, however, there are also lots of ways your WordPress host can help you manage performance. First, you need to know what type of environment your site will be hosted on. Flywheel, for example, gives every site its own resources (no shared environments), which means other sites can't bring yours down. We also implement custom caching settings at the server level, meaning you don't need to install any caching plugins. (They would be redundant to the settings, which could in turn result in worse performance.)

Moral of the story: Know how your hosting company helps your sites performance (or where they may be lacking). That'll help you determine which performance plugins to focus on!

COMPRESS JPEG & PNG IMAGES

Images are often the culprit of many performance woes. If they're not being optimized before getting uploaded to the site, they can drastically increase the load time. Thanks to plugins like Compress JPEG & PNG Images, however, you can decrease file size while maintaining perfect quality!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

This plugin automatically optimizes images when they're uploaded to WordPress, meaning you can set it and forget it while your clients take advantage of it.

REDIRECTION

No one likes a broken link. By installing the Redirection plugin on a WordPress site, you'll give your clients an easy way to send traffic from old URLs to new URLs. It'll result in a better experience for site visitors, and fewer requests for you to fix broken links!

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

This plugin is easy enough to use but powerful enough to do a job well done. By empowering your clients to direct traffic away from broken links and toward functioning pages, you'll help reduce site errors and improve site ranking.

WP ROCKET

This premium WordPress plugin has a whole bunch of features that can help the performance of your site. From lazyload and minification settings to eCommerce and database optimization, it performs a wide variety of tasks without slowing down your site.

WHY IT'S GREAT FOR DEVELOPERS

WP Rocket was created with developers in mind. Not only is the code clean and optimized, but there are tons of hooks if you need even more customizations!

Bonus: 4 types of WordPress plugins to be cautious of

As you're looking at different plugins, there are a few types that we encourage you to use with an extra note of caution. These include:

- **Backup plugins**

- **Caching plugins**

- **Performance plugins**

- **Security plugins**

Why?

> **"** *Your plugins should only increase your site performance, not hurt it*

Your hosting provider might have settings in place around these topics already. For example, brands hosting their websites on Flywheel get free nightly site backups, server-level custom caching and performance rules, and websites optimized for the latest security practices.

While there's nothing inherently bad about backup, caching, performance, or security plugins, sometimes their settings are redundant to how the WordPress site is hosted. And that can negatively impact site performance.

Moral of the story: If you're concerned about site backups, caching/performance, and security, talk to your hosting provider first. This way you know whether these types of plugins are actually necessary or if your site is already optimized for all these awesome features!

Simplify your plugin
needs with Flywheel

Flywheel is a delightful platform that empowers developers to focus on what they do best – building beautiful, functional sites for clients. We make it a breeze to develop WordPress sites, collaborate with clients, and seamlessly offload the finished product, all from the same place – no plugins required.

Stop wasting time on server management, security plugins, caching, and all those other boring repetitive tasks that take your focus away from growing your business. Get Flywheel and get back to doing your best (and favorite) work!

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