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Profitable Blogging: Lesson #5

Essential Wordpress Plugins for Your Blog

Welcome to lesson #5 of your profitable blogging course.

We're really moving along nicely now.

Today we're going to finish off setting up your blog, before moving onto writing articles and promoting your blog in the coming days.

One of the coolest things about Wordpress are "plugins".

A plugin is essentially a little "bolt on" to your main blog, which adds extra functionality.

So, to give you some examples, there are plugins which add social media buttons to your blog posts, or plugins that help your site to load more quickly, or plugins that will insert advertisements into your posts so you earn money.

The list of plugins is almost endless, and if you want a certain feature on your blog then there's almost certainly a plugin that will do it.

Over the years I've tested out literally hundreds of plugins. Throughout this time I have continually "tweaked" my list of "must-have" plugins, replacing less effective ones with better releases.
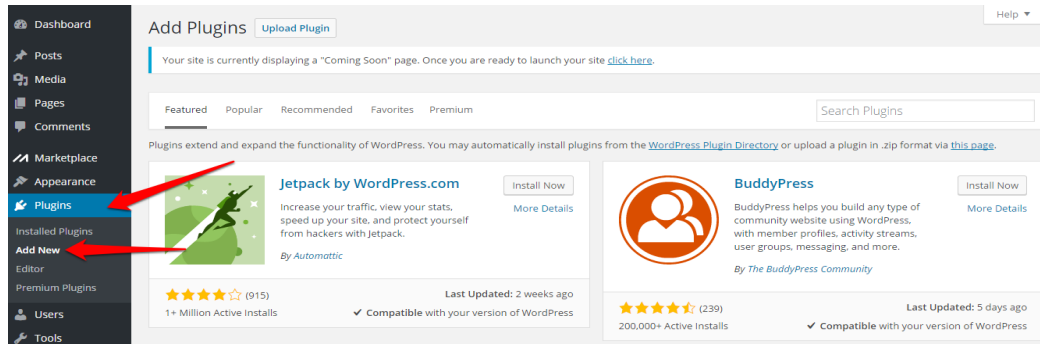
This means that my list of essential plugins has derived from over a decade of trial and error, building and launching all manner of blogs.

It represents dozens of hours of trial and error - and I'm about to give you that very same list for free...
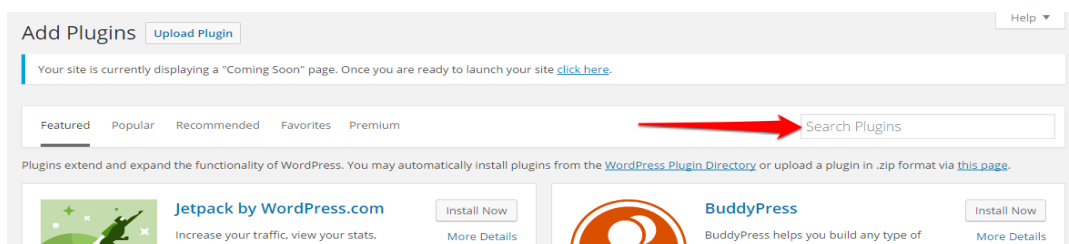
Free Vs Premium Plugins

Here's the good news: 99% of the plugins that I use cost nothing. All you need to do is decide on which ones you want, then install them easily on your blog. The process is simplicity itself...

Within your Wordpress control panel simply navigate to "Plugins", then "Add New".

You'll find a search box at the top.

Simply search for the name of a free plugin, then click the "Install" link. Once installed, just "Activate" it and you're all good. Once you've done the process once you'll realize its simplicity itself, and that it takes just moments to install a plugin.

Simply repeat the process to install all the different plugins you'd like and you're away.
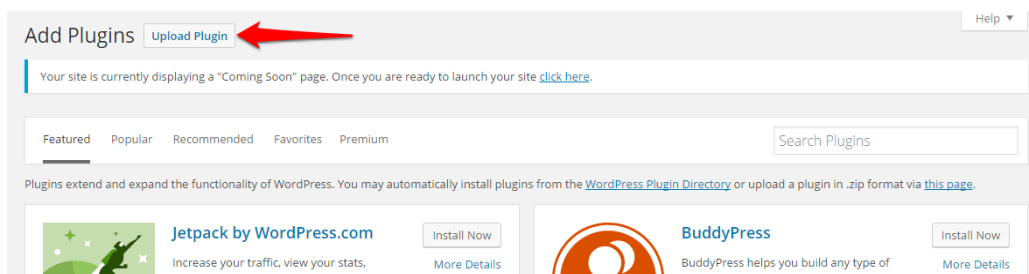
[As a word of warning, each plugin can slow down your site a little bit, so try not to go overboard and install hundreds - I'd stick to the list below in an ideal world as they're the minimum I use, and they're all tested to be as quick as possible].

Premium themes are a little different.

They cost money, but only one or two are would I would consider "essential".

To install a premium theme you'll need to follow a similar process to installing a premium theme. That is to say that you'll want to download it after purchase, unzip it, find the file name of the plugin and then upload this to Wordpress manually.

Fortunately its easy to do. Just go to "Plugins", then "Add New", then "Upload Plugin". Select the folder and you're good to go.

My Essential Wordpress Plugin List

OK, so with all that out of the way its time to reveal my own personal list. I update this over time, so you can feel confident that the list below is completely up-to-date and contains everything you need to know.

For each plugin you'll find its name, together with a brief description of what it does and why I use it. That way you can quickly "pick and choose" the best plugins for your needs.

Akismet

Spam blog comments can be a major issue when you're running a blog. Akismet helps to deal with this, automatically deleting junk comments so you don't have to worry about them. A massive time saver.

Autoptimize

Making your website load quickly is critical to a good user experience. Autoptimize is one of the best plugins I have found for speeding up your site so that it loads quickly for your visitors.

Broken Link Checker

There's nothing more frustrating than clicking a link in a blog post only to find that it doesn't work any more. Broken Link Checker automatically searches through all the links on your blog, and alerts you to any that don't work any more. That way you can easily correct or delete them, and so maintain a top-quality visitor experience.

Compfight

Possibly the best way to add images to your blog posts. This plugin allows you to search through a host of images which can be freely used on your site, and will even add the copyright images automatically if they are required.

Compress JPEG & PNG Images

One of the biggest elements that slows down websites is unnecessarily large images. This plugin is the very best that I've found for reducing the file size of photos without reducing the quality. This service will run through all the images on your site, making sure that they load as quickly as possible.

Contact Form 7

Some premium themes come with a contact form built in, but not all of them. If yours doesn't, then Contact Form 7 is the best that I've found to quickly add a simple "contact us" form to your site.

Easy Social Share Buttons for Wordpress

When people share your content on social media you get more visitors. And more visitors means more money for you! Over the last few years I've tested dozens of alternatives, as many load *very* slowly indeed. This one of the perfect compromise between speed and power, and gives you all sorts of options for the styling and placement of your sharing buttons.

Google Analytics

Track your visitor numbers by signing up for a free Google Analytics account and then installing this plugin. You'll be able to watch your visitor numbers increase over time, which is a very motivating factor when growing a new blog!

Optimize Database after Deleting Revisions

When you're writing a blog post, Wordpress saves every single version. Every time you click "save", a new copy is added to your database. This is handy because if you make a mistake you can roll back to a previous version. The downside is that after you've published your post you might have dozens of copies filling up your web hosting account and slowing down your site.

This handy little plugin deletes these unnecessary revisions to keep your site running smoothly.

Pretty Link Lite

If you're going to make money as an affiliate you'll want to add all manner of affiliate links to your posts. Many of these look pretty ugly, but pretty link makes them attractive. Even better, Pretty Link also tracks the people who click on your affiliate links so that you can see which programs are performing best for you.

Install it now and we'll use the plugin in a future lesson.

Privacy Policy

Google likes each website to have a privacy policy. Visitors also like to know what data you're gathering and how you plan to use it. But writing a privacy policy is no easy task. That is unless you have this plugin. Simply fill in a few boxes, click the button and your blog will now have a professionally-designed privacy policy ready for action.

Search Meter

One of my favorite plugins of all is "Search Meter". It does something very simple, but very powerful. Whenever someone uses the search box built in to Wordpress, this plugin keeps a record of what they searched for.

Why is this so useful? Simply because when visitors keep on searching for a certain subject then you'll know for certain that its of interest to them. This makes it a perfect topic to cover on your blog.

If you ever run out of ideas for things to write about, simply consult your Search Meter dashboard and you'll be presented with all manner of suggestions based purely on what real humans have been looking for on your site.

Shortcodes Ultimate

Shortcodes Ultimate is a simple yet powerful way to add all sorts of cool formatting to your blog posts. You can add colorful buttons, quotes, bullet points and more to take a boring "text only" blog post to a beautiful work of art. Not only do such posts look great, but they also help to increase visitor satisfaction.

Subscribe to Comments Reloaded

One of the real keys to success when it comes to blogging is building a thriving community around your site. An integral part of this is commenting. Typically, when someone leaves a comment on your blog they simply move on, never to be seen again.

However this plugin allows people to "subscribe" to the comments section of a particular article. In this way, they're alerted as new comments are added, and are encouraged to come back to your blog again.

That means this plugin is great from a user-perspective and for generating additional traffic and brand awareness for you.

Thrive Leads

This is the only premium Wordpress plugin on the list - but it's one I strongly suggest. [Thrive Leads](#) is the ultimate plugin for collecting email subscribers for your newsletter. As your list grows, so you'll have ever more people to email whenever you publish a new blog post.

[Thrive Leads](#) makes it super-easy to build attractive opt-in forms, to test out different text and

colors, and so find the options that lead to the most subscribers for you.

I suggest you grab a copy today and we'll discuss exactly how to use it in a future lesson.

UpdraftPlus

When you're putting your life and soul into building a new blog the last thing you want is to lose all your hard work. While it's unusual, I have personally seen situations of people installing a new plugin, or updating their theme, only for their blog to mess up. Of course, there's also always a risk that a blog could get hacked, or your web host could have a problem.

UpdraftPlus is the highest-rated service for backing up your blog, so that if the worst happens, you can quickly re-install it with just a few clicks of your mouse.

W3 Total Cache

W3 Total Cache aims to make your blog run as quickly as possible. Bearing in mind that Google has openly stated that they take site speed as a ranking factor, a faster site means more potential visitors, as well as a better user experience. This plugin is known as one of the very best, and can make a remarkable difference to your loading time.

Wordpress SEO

We'll talk more about getting traffic from the search engines in a future lesson. For now just appreciate that this plugin is the best solution around for making your blog "SEO-friendly" and should be considered essential for all bloggers.

So that's the list.

Follow the steps given earlier to find and install each of these plugins, then activate them.

The first time you do it this may take a few moments but you'll soon be adding new plugins in the blink of an eye!

I'll see you in lesson #6 to talk about content, and how to write articles that stand the very best chance of getting you lots of traffic (and earnings!).