



Lesson #43

# Keeping Themes Compatible With Latest WordPress Versions

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## ***Staying Up To Date***

As a designer for WordPress, one of the important things you should do is subscribe to developer RSS threads or make it a habit to drop by once in a while to see what the WordPress Devs are up to. These are two places.

<http://wpdevel.wordpress.com/>

<http://comox.textdrive.com/pipermail/wp-hackers/>

The down side is, the conversations can get highly technical quickly. I'm not asking you to learn everything but they are certainly a good source of information when things go wrong especially with new releases and bugs.

If you decide all that is way above your head, at least subscribe to the WordPress [development blog](#). When a new version comes out, clear some time in your calendar to study in particular what is new.

Most of the time, new stuff will not affect your themes at all but sometimes they do. Developers may phase out old template tags or introduce new features that users won't be able to take advantage of unless you, the designer add it to the theme.

Also, when you're checking out and template tags in the Codex, pay attention to notices and warnings that say a particular tag is deprecated. You can also check out [this list](#). That means the tag will eventually not work as new versions are rolled out. It is not immediate as the Devs have built in 'backward compatibility' so it will continue to work for a few more versions. But if there's a newer tag, use the newer one, don't use the one you are familiar with.

## ***Known Updates***

In this lesson, we will touch on a few known updates that you should work into your clients' sites. It is not a complete list and will likely change over time. The problem with WordPress is, the developer communication is pretty active, not so designer communication. To keep up to date of the latest updates, join our

mailing list at [TechTrainingHall.com](http://TechTrainingHall.com). You will get more than just WordPress design news, but also technical issues that will help you in your business.

## **Updating Themes Is Good Business**

You may be thinking you don't want to bother with the updates. Most of your clients are one off or the project is already done. Or you use a premium theme that is supported and already updated.

That may be true, but the fact is, if you use a premium theme version 1, you finish a client project and 6 months later version 1.1 is released. Your client is still using the old version.

Contact the old clients to suggest an update or upgrade task for you. Explain to them what new features they will get if any, 'sell' them the upgrade and update. Too many service providers focus on new projects, new clients. But when times are slow and new clients hard to come by this is a great way to keep everyone working and get money in.

In my experience, old clients are more likely to say yes to your suggestions than someone whom you've never worked with. It also shows your client you are at the top of your game and care about them, even if the ultimate result is a selfish one.

## **Image Align**

This issue has been out there for a while, since WordPress 2.6 and it should technically be fixed on the latest themes. But some theme designers, particularly the free ones get too busy and don't get the chance to update it. When your client is using an older theme or a complain their images don't obey the align options when they post, it's probably because the style sheet needs to be updated with the following codes.

```
.aligncenter,  
div.aligncenter {  
    display: block;  
    margin-left: auto;
```

```
        margin-right: auto;
    }

    .alignleft {
        float: left;
    }

    .alignright {
        float: right;
    }

    .wp-caption {
        border: 1px solid #ddd;
        text-align: center;
        background-color: #f3f3f3;
        padding-top: 4px;
        margin: 10px;
        /* optional rounded corners for browsers that
support it */
        -moz-border-radius: 3px;
        -khtml-border-radius: 3px;
        -webkit-border-radius: 3px;
        border-radius: 3px;
    }

    .wp-caption img {
        margin: 0;
        padding: 0;
        border: 0 none;
    }
```

```
.wp-caption p.wp-caption-text {  
    font-size: 11px;  
    line-height: 17px;  
    padding: 0 4px 5px;  
    margin: 0;  
}
```

That will make WordPress align images according to the author's settings when the upload and post an image. It will also make format it nicely when there are captions present. You are of course free to edit the colors and all that.

If that is already in the style sheet and the image is still not aligning properly, check that the theme doesn't originally have an image align in your stylesheet. If there is old code that aligns all images in posts automatically, those sometimes have to be removed in order for this to take effect.

## Security Keys

Since version 2.5, WordPress introduced a secret key. In 2.6 and 2.7, they added 4 more security keys designed to better secure the information stored in user's cookies.

While WordPress will work without this, I highly suggest you add this in your update list. Besides, it's easier to sell security issues to clients. This is not fool proof against hacking, but it will help make it harder for others to crack and gain access of user accounts.

Adding this couldn't be easier and only takes a minute.

**Step 1:** Visit the [security key generator](#) – you don't have to use this. You can simply type in random letters, numbers, characters but I find it a lot easier to use the generator. It will spit out 4 lines for you. Copy them all.

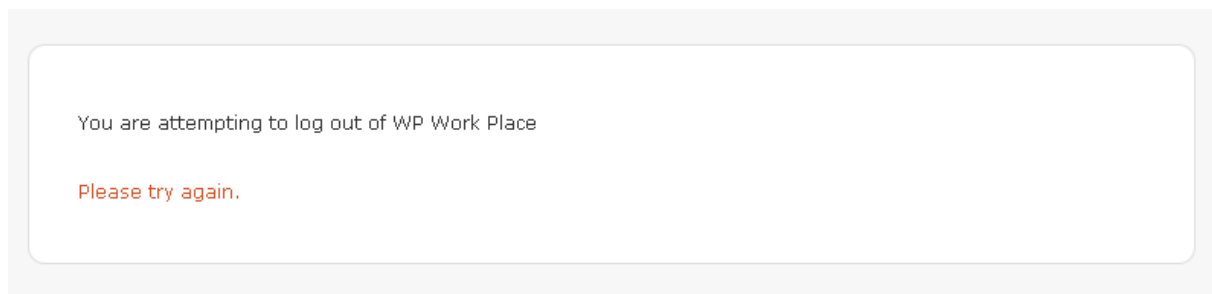
**Step 2:** Open up wp-config.php. Paste it in here. You can put it right under the rest of the 'define' commands.

```
<?php
// ** MySQL settings ** //
define('DB_NAME',
define('DB_USER',
define('DB_PASSWOR
define('DB_HOST',
define('DB_CHARSET
define('DB_COLLATE
define('WP_POST_REVISIONS', false);

// You can have multiple installations in one dat
$table_prefix = 'wp_'; // Only numbers, letter
```

## Login/Logout

You may have noticed this on some WordPress powered sites – maybe your clients'? Sometimes, when you click a logout link while you're out and about in the site (not in the admin panel), you'll get a nasty notice like this.



When you click try again, it'll take you back to the post. This is because of the security key – nonce\_key. Don't ask what it is ;- ) what it tells us in this case is, we should edit our theme.

In the past, what some theme designers did to help usability was to add login and log out links in the theme. Because there was no login or logout tag then, what designers did was simply use a link like this.

<http://localhost/wordpress/wp-login.php?action=logout>

But that link doesn't work anymore plus, since WordPress 2.7, there are new template tags to display the login/logout URLs and you can even redirect users after they login or logout.

In your theme, where the bad logout link is, change it to:

```
<?php echo wp_logout_url( $redirect ); ?>
```

if it's a login link, use this.

```
<?php echo wp_login_url( $redirect ); ?>
```

You can replace \$redirect with '<http://yourredirecturlhere.com>'. You can also use the wp\_loginout tag. See [this page](#) for more details how that works.

## Comments Template

Since 2.7, comments template also changed considerably. A big update/overhaul. I've always found the comments template very confusing so this is a change in the right direction, making it a lot easier for theme designers to style comments and add fun stuff like Tweetbacks (using a plugin) too.

Because there are so many changes and the comments.php template is rather complex, to update this template file, the easiest route is to copy the complete contents from the latest WordPress default theme into your theme's comments.php.

If your theme has fancy comment designs you may need to re-work those color and design changes in. Usually it's simple stuff.

The great thing about doing this is, if your theme doesn't yet support comment author avatars and threaded comments, doing this will automatically add avatars and threaded comments into your theme.

That's two updates in one simple sweep. Sweet.

## Custom Taxonomies

I must admit, I've never really got used to tags or taxonomies. This is new as of WordPress 2.8, I've not dived into it yet and you probably don't have to do this, but here for information. This here's a [good article](#) on what and how to use custom taxonomies.



So these are the major, most apparent updates as of WordPress 2.7, 2.8. I'm sure there are tons more. Keep your eye on the Codex template tag page for new template tags or deprecated ones. Stay tuned to popular designer or plugin developer blogs like [Yoast](#) and of course [mine](#) ;-)

## **Next Lesson...**

What happens when you are asked to give an existing WordPress blog a brand new design? How do you test the design out without breaking your clients' sites? We'll talk about the different ways you can handle this next time.

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