



Lesson #38

Frequently Used Plugins

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Introduction

The beauty of WordPress is in it's plugins. Plugins make each WordPress site unique. With a very healthy developer network, there is no shortage of plugins. Inside the WordPress plugins database is a huge list – like to think of it as an eBay of plugins. You'll be hard pressed to not come up with something each time you look. But outside of that, there's also a big market of closed source or private plugins that are for sale too.

Some members have requested a segment on plugins that we commonly use. So here's this special report. Please bear in mind, WordPress evolves very quickly. It is not uncommon to find some popular plugins being built into WordPress as newer versions come out.

A good example of this was the WordPress Automatic Upgrade plugin which is now built in since version 2.7, making the plugin obsolete. While I will do my best to update this list, keep in mind some of these will no longer be valid by the time you read this.

Also, in any given situation, there are probably another dozen plugins that do the same thing. This is not meant to be a comprehensive listing, merely what are my choices to do the job.

With that in mind, let's get started.

Spam Control

Whenever there's a WordPress blog, there will be spam. That's why, if you put up a WordPress blog, be sure to develop it. If you leave it dormant, you'll find it becomes a breeding ground for spam. Even if it's a site that you have never promoted or linked to these insidious bots sniff them out anyhow.

My favorite plugin for spam control used to be SpamKarma 2, but that project is no longer being developed or maintained. It still works but like an untended garden, I've noticed some spam starts getting through now. So I've switched to Akismet. Please keep in mind that [Akismet](#) is technically not free for blogs or

sites that earn over \$500 or corporations so you might want to keep that in mind and advise your client accordingly.

Force FeedBurner Use

FeedBurner can be great, but if you forget to change the feed URL in your theme header or anywhere else, people will be led to WordPress's default feed and so you lose out on some of your stats because some people are using the default feed and some are using your FeedBurner feed.

To force all feeds in WordPress to [FeedBurner](#), I choose FeedSmith. Simple, to the point and easy. Make sure you have burned a feed over at FeedBurner first.

More Flexible Excerpts

WordPress has a built in tag for excerpts – the `_excerpt` but you have to admit it is lacking some. You cannot change the length of the excerpt, images and any HTML is ignored and you can't change the ellipses (...) to something more meaningful like 'Click here to read more'.

For this, my favorite plugin is [Advanced Excerpt](#). There's only one problem with this plugin you still can't put in text like "click here to read more". But I like it because you can select which HTML markup to keep and which to ignore in your excerpts.

If the text link is important to you, try [Post Teaser](#) instead. I actually started using Post Teaser first but then it was not being updated and now it seems like the developer has updated it again.

I expect this is one of those plugins that will eventually be built into WordPress but until it is, you have these choices and plenty of others too.

Encourage Further Reading

When you finally get people on your site / blog, you want to try to keep them around longer so they can get to know you better. There are many things you can do of course, one of it is to make suggestions of other content that a reader might be interested in. For this, my long time favorite is Related Posts.

Recently, I also came across [WP Recommender](#) which claims to be more intelligent because it tries to take into account the user's browsing history to analyze visitor behavior over time. Sounds interesting.

Use PHP In Posts & Pages

Sometimes, you want to be able to insert PHP code inside your posts or Pages. Maybe you want to greet a logged in user and display their name, maybe you want to use a WordPress tag inside your posts. By default this is not possible but you can force it using plugins.

[RunPHP](#) and [Exec-PHP](#) are two that I commonly use. They both work so I've no preference between them, but sometimes one runs on a web host not on another, depending on the setting so that's why I have these two handy.

Media Players

It's hard to find sites that don't use some media these days be it audios or videos. For audios and podcasts, the popular one is podPress. It seems it can handle some video too.

Since I use more video on my sites, my choice is [Viper's Video Quicktags](#). It helps me put up my own videos quickly and also YouTube, Vimeo, Viddler, Flickr, Spike, Veoh and other videos. [WP YouTube](#) is another good one if your client likes to post YouTube videos.

Better Way To List Authors

The list_authors tag is great and has many options but it's still lacking in a few areas. For example, you cannot filter people out by ID or by role. That's one of the reasons I had [List Authors Plus](#) plugin built. And needless to say it is my favorite

☺

This plugin can also sort authors by posts and all the stuff that the native list_authors tag can do.

Writing Code In Posts

This is not running PHP in your posts. Sometimes you want to give people some HTML or other code inside your posts so they can pick up an affiliate link or badge you created. You can use <textarea> for that but it doesn't always work out right. To solve it, use [WP-Syntax](#).

This will display your code neatly and you can even customize the colors and the frame so it looks good on the site.

Hiding WordPress Dashboard For Registered Users

This is a common request especially if you're planning to turn WordPress into a private area where you deliver your info product or a membership site. The problem is, by default, WordPress directs users to the dashboard after they log in. Certainly not what you want.

There is a plugin that can do this but I've not had that much success with it because of user roles, but you may want to check out CYC or [Customize Your Community](#) plugin. Another you can try is [Theme My Login](#).

Membership Site

Talking about using WordPress as a membership site, this is perhaps the hottest question. The simplest is probably [WP Wishlist](#) or [Memberwing](#). If you'd like to suggest a more hands off option to your client which allows you to 'outsource' this, you can also check out [MemberFlow](#) which is one of my services.

Remove Comments Nofollow

Why penalize people who give genuine comments? Turn off nofollow with [Nofollow case by case](#) or [NoFollow free](#)

Allow Non-Registered Users To Submit Posts

There's a lot of talk about how great guest posts are. I love having guest posts and being a guest blogger it really does work. On the other hand, having people register on some blogs is a pain. While registering is not difficult, it's a hurdle that people have to jump over. If you want to open your blog up to allow anyone

to submit a post but keep the submission process simple, [TDO Mini Forms](#) is the one to use.

Conclusion

The plugins you use really depend on the habits of the blogger and also what the site is being used for. That's why for each of my own sites, the list of plugins is different and so it will be for you. Hopefully you found a few helpful ones in here that would help you quickly find the plugin that you need to do the job.

Next Lesson...

Have you heard of child themes? What are they and how do you use them? That's what we will talk about in our next lesson.

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