

## **How to Choose Safe, Free Plugins**

Plug-ins are powerful tools that increase the functionality of your website. There are more than 30,000 plug-ins available for Wordpress alone. But how do you work out which ones you need for your website? Here are a few tips to help you find your way through all those options.

### **1. Work out what you want**

Before you start looking at plug-ins, write down what you want it to do. Now is the time to be selective and not go crazy installing plug-ins you don't need. So work out what functions you want your website to have (e-commerce for example), essential marketing tools like SEO, social media sharing, and so on.

It will be helpful to have a checklist of functions and what features you want in a plug-in to help you find the right plug-in or combination of plug-ins to have.

### **2. Do your research**

You can browse through the WordPress plug-in directory, CodeCanyon, Creative Market or other marketplaces that offer free and paid plug-ins. Referring back to your checklist, see which plug-ins look like they might suit your needs. Look for version numbers, when it was last updated, number of downloads and user ratings.

Avoid plug-ins that haven't been updated recently or that few users have downloaded. And be suspicious of a deal that looks too good to be true (premium plug-ins being offered for free), or you could end up downloading malware that wrecks your site or gives access to hackers.

It's also worth checking user forums to see what problems or questions other website owners have had either with the plug-in you're looking at or the functions

you're looking for. This might help you decide between two or three plug-ins that seem to be equally good.

### **3. Test your candidates**

Once you have found some plug-ins that look like they may suit your needs, have a closer look. Most plug-ins will have some screenshots, videos, or demo pages that will allow you to see what they look like. There may also be videos on YouTube, and reviews as well as guides and tutorials.

Even once you have chosen your plug-in, you can install it and run it in a test environment before you upload it to your live site. This way you can see how a plug-in will affect your website, whether it might slow your site down, for example, or if it's not compatible with another plug-in.

Once you're researched, assessed and tested your plug-in, you can go ahead and load it to your website.