



Website Maintenance – Self Managed

If you choose to manage website maintenance yourself you should be aware of what Website Maintenance involves by reading the below and watching the video tutorial on how to do your own maintenance.

Why do I need to maintain my website – wasn't it built well enough to begin with?

Your Website doesn't exist in a static environment so although it was stable, secure and reliable at the point at which it was handed over to you but it's unlikely to remain that way without regular work.

The Apache server which hosts your website is frequently updated, the SQL database which stores all the tables of information for your website is also patched regularly and you won't even be aware of these things happening but they happen to ensure the security and stability of the underlying platform.

At the next level up you have WordPress (which is really like an operating system) and this is open source so it's vulnerable to exploitation. WordPress often release security updates in response to identified attempts to exploit a weakness and to keep their platform secure and stable. Each time WordPress is updated all the Plugin authors have to review/test and potentially update their plugins to ensure compatibility with the new version of WordPress. What they don't test is compatibility with each other.

While all this is going on you also have robots who are scanning the internet for sites which they can hack and when they find them the site becomes compromised. Best case is that the site is simply offline, worst case is that content is published via your site which is not yours, or attempts are made to capture your user data.

Hence the need for maintenance.

How often do I need to run maintenance?

Monthly at a minimum. More often if:

- You have a very high profile site with lots of visitors
- You make daily updates to your site
- You have a very complex site with lots of plugins
- Your site is business critical





What if I forget to do Maintenance one month?

As soon as you remember get on to the job, it can be done anytime. The longer the window between maintenance jobs then:

- The more risk that you have plugins in conflict and something on your site has already failed
- The more work you have to do in terms of updates which may mean some visible downtime on your site, rather than small incremental updates which are virtually unnoticeable.
- The more risk your site has become insecure and has been compromised or your backups have failed
- But you might be lucky and there could quite well be no visible negative impact – just don't be lulled into a false sense of security by this.

How long does Maintenance take?

Broadly give yourself an hour, but the time required is impacted by the size and complexity of your site plus the speed of your internet connection so it could be a lot longer.

Ok so what does Maintenance look like?

I've created a video tutorial to take you through all aspects of website maintenance and I'd encourage you to watch that, but in brief follow these steps:

Initial Website Review

Site Links – check all your outbound links to other sites. Broken links create a poor user experience, undermining trust in your site, they're annoying and unprofessional. Broken links are also penalised from an SEO point of view

Page Load – Open all the **Page** on your website and just give them a quick once over – do they look ok, did they load as expected, are the most recent blogs there, are all your images in place, everything normal. Don't check all your **Posts** this is too time consuming and you would only do that if you had a problem.

Menu's/Footers – Check your Menu and Footer and Bottom bar since these appear on all pages. Are they current, correct, all links working?

Sidebar – If you use a Sidebar anywhere check that it's functioning correctly, eg displaying most recent blogs or Instagram feed, sized correctly, looks good.





Forms – You should check any forms used to capture visitor information, contact forms, mail chimp etc, order forms, bookings or shop functions. These are really critical to your site's value so it's worth taking the time to check them every monthly.

Maintenance Activities

You'll need to login to WordPress to perform these activities from your Dashboard. I would suggest doing this late at night or early morning or whenever you expect your site will have the least amount of traffic to minimise the chances of anyone noticing an outage.

Backups - Click on Settings > Updraft Plus to access your backup too. You will do 2 things:

1. Check that scheduled backups are running and you can see your last 2 backups there to restore from
2. Run a backup of your entire site before updating WordPress and/or your Plugins. Depending on the size of your site and the your internet connection this could take between 20 minutes and 2+ hours.

WordPress – Check your version of WordPress to see if there is a more recent version available. Don't update if there is a new Beta version, wait until that version is live and you're prompted to upgrade. If there is a more recent version you should upgrade.

Plugins - Check all your plugins and upgrade those that have newer versions available. This should ensure they remain compatible with WordPress and hopefully each other. If you update each individually it's usually a quick and seamless process that your users won't notice. There is more risk that a user of your site will see an error or maintenance message if you do a bulk update.

Brute Force attacks – Check **Loginizer** – check to see if there any been any Brute Force attacks and if so blacklist those IP addresses to prevent them connecting to your site in future. If you have someone known to you who's struggling to get their password entered correctly you have the option to whitelist tem too.

These are the basic maintenance tasks now completed





Final Website Review

Now that you've finished all your updates you need to quickly repeat your initial checks and make sure everything looks good and is functioning correctly.

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Page Load – Open all the **Page** on your website and just give them a quick once over

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Mobile - Just have a quick look at things on Mobile too and make sure after all the updates everything is still behaving correctly on mobile view.

That's everything you need to do at a minimum to keep your site secure, reliable, stable and performing optimally. If you run into any problems, conflicts with plugins or you have any questions please don't hesitate to get in contact with me.

Penny

Penny@HummingbirdDesign.com.au

04050 989 830

