

WPengine®

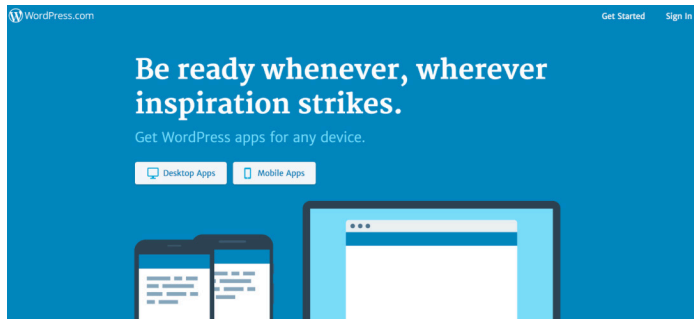
WORDPRESS.COM VS WORDPRESS.ORG —WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

WHITE PAPER

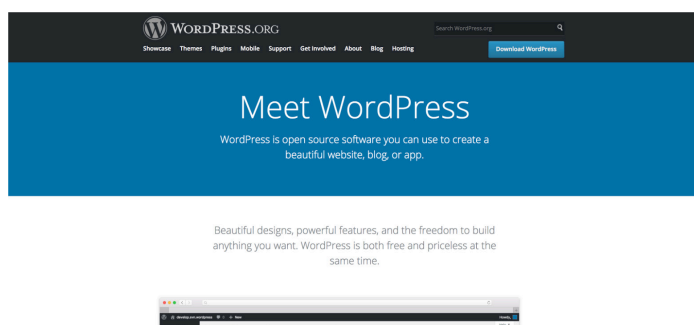


Upon starting a WordPress website, you've probably stumbled into the slightly confusing fact that there are two different versions of it: *WordPress.org* and *WordPress.com*.

If you're a beginner or just wondering why in the world there are two flavors of WordPress, read on to get a further explanation of how these two differ (and best use cases for each).



WordPress.com's home page



WordPress.org's home page

The Difference Is In The Hosting

The key difference between WordPress.org and WordPress.com is who's **hosting** your site. With **WordPress.com**, hosting is done by WordPress itself. From security updates to site backups, site maintenance is conducted in-house for you.

On the other hand, the **WordPress.org** software is downloaded and then must be self-hosted on a server. Self-hosting requires technical expertise, but there's also the option to pay a hosting provider to handle these tasks for you.

While choosing a quality hosting provider can be costly, it will ensure your site can scale to meet traffic influxes, as well as remain secure and optimized to perform exceptionally. This is important if your website is a source of income and not just a simple blog.

So at this point, you're probably wondering why WordPress created two versions of itself — one that's self-hosted and one that isn't. There has to be a use case scenario for each, right?

Renting (WordPress.com) vs. Buying (WordPress.org)

A little bit after WordPress' inception in 2003, WordPress co-founder Matt Mullenweg realized that there were users who didn't want to have to worry about keeping their site up to date.

That's why WordPress.com was invented; bloggers could solely blog, and not have to worry about the technical aspects of maintaining a website.



WordPress.org = owning a puppy, WordPress.com = renting a puppy

Think about it this way — **WordPress.org** is like adopting a puppy. It's very easy to adopt a cute puppy, but once you have that animal as a pet, you have to take care of it...take it on walks, feed it, make sure it gets proper vaccinations, and so on. Just like owning a puppy is your responsibility to take care of, having a site on WordPress.org brings more responsibility (like site maintenance) to keep it up to par.

On the other hand, **WordPress.com** is like calling Uber's UberPUPPY service to deliver puppies. You can play with these puppies whenever you want, but raising them is not your responsibility. A WordPress.com site is similar — you don't have to worry about adding on responsibilities in regards to handling updates, backups, and security. It's done in-house for you.

What's Your Flavor?

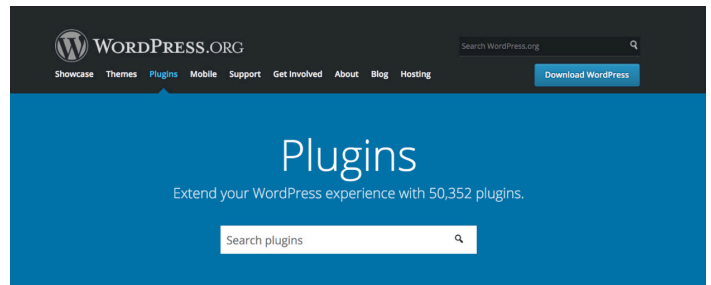
WordPress.org = *plugins allowed, self-hosting fees, maintenance required, fully customizable, some technical expertise required*

WordPress.com = *no plugin integrations, free (with option to pay for Business plan), no maintenance required, limited in customization, easy to use*

If you're an enterprise or storefront business, or just looking to achieve complete customization with your website, WordPress.org is the way to go.

Although it does require some technical skill to start, you can still hire a developer and hosting provider to build and maintain your site for you.

WordPress.org is also fully extendable and can pretty much be melded into any type of site you want it to be. But once you enter these waters, there comes the responsibility of site maintenance. That's the trade-off — while WordPress.org comes with added



The WordPress.org Plugin Repository allows you to add new functions to your site with 50,000-plus free plugins.

responsibility, you also reap the benefits of a fully customizable CMS.

Because of WordPress.org's open source nature and the fact that it's a downloadable piece of software, it can be 100 percent customized to do whatever you want with it. Want to build a robust ecommerce store? There's a plugin for that. How about developing virtually any application with the WordPress backend? That's possible with the [WP REST API](#). There's an endless slew of things you can do with WordPress.org's open source software.

On the contrary, with WordPress.com, you have less control over your site. This can be good if all you want to do is create content, showcase your business, or display a portfolio without having to worry (or pay) for the technical aspects of site maintenance.

While it's free to use WordPress.com, there's also an available [.com Business plan](#) that allows you to get the best of both worlds, including added versatility with themes, the ability to choose a custom domain, and the ability to install certain plugins.

Other Pros and Cons

To recap what we've already discussed, **WordPress.com** is feature-limited (no plugins, no custom code), but saves you money and time through in-house hosting and site maintenance.

WordPress.org can be integrated with virtually any application, thus requiring technical expertise and added fees for self-hosting and developer costs.

Here are just a few other ways WordPress.org and WordPress.com differ.

Monetization

WordPress.org - There are unlimited ways to [monetize your site](#) through the .org version. You can integrate any ad program you want without limitations or fees from WordPress (unless you're paying for a premium plugin, which can also have benefits through added features).

WordPress.com - Ads on .com are limited to WordAds, the official WordPress.com advertising program for Premium and Business plans; only sites with a mapped domain can apply. If you're on a free or personal plan, you must have high traffic and the appropriate content to apply.

Analytics

WordPress.org - Can be used with any analytics program you want; you have the option to install one of many different WordPress analytics plugins to gain further insights to how your site is performing and make informed decisions. Some hosting providers even offer [built-in analytics](#) so you can directly see inside your WordPress dashboard how your content is performing.

WordPress.com - Comes with built-in analytics (Jetpack), but cannot be integrated with Google's tools unless you pay for a Business plan.

Theme Support

WordPress.org - There are no restrictions regarding which theme you use; you can tailor themes the way you want, or even create one from scratch. Genesis is a popular theme for many developers that comes with a framework already built in place.

WordPress.com - There are 165 available themes to choose from on the free plan; through the Business plan, you have the option to pay for premium themes, however tailoring these themes to your exact preferences is limited in functionality.

Ecommerce

WordPress.org - Can be integrated with many ecommerce solutions; WooCommerce, a popular WordPress plugin with 25 million-plus downloads, is one of the leading [ecommerce solutions](#) for websites that provides a complete suite of tools for vendor businesses.

WordPress.com - Not a good option for ecommerce because it has a strict sales policy. Through the Business plan, users can pay to enable ecommerce on their site, however it is still limited compared to WordPress.org.

Domain

WordPress.org - You'll need to purchase your domain elsewhere and then link it to your site. Domains are inexpensive to purchase and without "wordpress" in the URL, it's better for SEO.

WordPress.com - Your website will run on a subdomain from WordPress.com (e.g. [www.mywebsite.wordpress.com](#)); with paid plans, you can upgrade to a non-WordPress domain name, which is better for attaining higher search engine results.

SEO

WordPress.org - This is the better option for SEO. You'll get access to many SEO plugins (like Yoast) which can help you improve the SEO of your content to rank higher in search engines. In addition, boosting page load times on your WordPress website can tremendously impact SEO in a good way. There are also a ton of SEO-friendly themes to choose from on WordPress.org.

WordPress.com - There's no access to SEO plugins on WordPress.com. You will need to register a domain to remove the "wordpress" from your URL to enhance SEO. Also, with the .com version, you won't be able to access the Google Search Console. Themes on WordPress.com are not very SEO-friendly, however, one plus is that you can create a sitemap so your website is accessible to search engine crawlers.

Security

WordPress.org - It's up to you to secure your site. The hosting provider you choose can vastly improve the security of your site with automatic updates that contain the latest security patches, as well as conduct automatic backups and security monitoring. To further harden your site, see [15 Ways To Harden The Security Of Your WordPress Website](#).

WordPress.com - While WordPress takes care of security, you still must take security precautions, like using a strong password, using 2FA, and being vigilant about what user roles you assign.

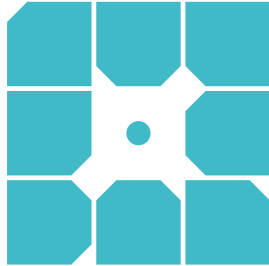
Final Thoughts

By now, you should have a better understanding of how WordPress.com and WordPress.org differ. The best way to truly understand the differences is to try them both out for yourself.

You'll likely find that with **WordPress.org**, you have greater control and flexibility over design and functionality. But, just like a puppy, you'll have to nurture your site by doing things like making sure all of your components (i.e. themes, plugins, core) are kept up to date to avoid any security incidents. While site maintenance is your responsibility, you can take the heavy lifting off your shoulders by investing in a [digital experience platform](#).

WordPress.com is a fun tool for beginners. They've also developed an app that lets you access your website or blog on the go. While customization and monetization are limited, you'll relax knowing all you have to do is create content while WordPress.com takes care of site maintenance for you.

The choice is up to you, but hopefully this article has cleared up any confusion you might have had regarding the two flavors of WordPress.



About WP Engine

WP Engine powers amazing digital experiences for websites and applications built on WordPress. The company's premium managed hosting platform provides the performance, reliability and security required by the biggest brands in the world, while remaining affordable and intuitive enough for smaller businesses and individuals. Companies of all sizes rely on WP Engine's award-winning customer service team to quickly solve technical problems and create a world-class customer experience. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in Limerick, Ireland, San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas, and London, England.

www.wpengine.com

