

# BLOG MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

[www.bloggingteacher.com](http://www.bloggingteacher.com)

## WELCOME TO THE BLOG MAINTENANCE GUIDE

This short guide will show you how to set up a schedule that lets you get all of the maintenance jobs done when they need doing, without distracting you from your important work writing and promoting great content.

It may not be exciting to think about, but taking your blog maintenance seriously and putting in a simple system to keep it up makes a huge difference in the long run.

### What is Inside This Guide?

Inside you'll find an easy to follow list of tasks that bloggers need to perform on a regular basis to keep their blogs running smoothly.

Because all blogs are different this guide is not a one size fits all approach to blog maintenance.

Each task is a recommendation that you should think about and if necessary make any adjustments you think work better for you.

### How to Use This Guide

Implementing this advice means two things:

**Scheduling** – set up a schedule for the daily, weekly and monthly tasks that are described in this guide. Use Google Calendar or any calendar app that will email or popup a reminder for your weekly and monthly tasks. Use your regular to-do list for the daily ones.

**Discipline** – when your schedule reminders appear you need the discipline to action the tasks. Some of the stuff is no fun, but it is important to maintaining a healthy blog so that you don't lose too much time when disaster strikes.

## MAINTENANCE TASKS

These are the tasks that I recommend you regularly perform on your blog. Don't worry about the scheduling yet, just make sure you understand each task and why it is important.

### Check Blog is Online

This one is easy. Simply go to your website at least once a day and make sure it is online.

**Tip:** *You can save time and be more efficient at this if you use a service like [AreMySitesUp.com](http://AreMySitesUp.com) to monitor the site for you.*

Remember to use a different email address than your web host provides you though – if your host server is down and your email goes down with it, how will AreMySitesUp.com email you to tell you?

### Comment Moderation

Log in to the WordPress Admin area and check for comments that are pending approval.

**Tip:** *Don't respond to every comment moderation email you receive during the day. Save them for a specific time of day and batch process them, unless you have a particularly hot discussion going on in one of your posts that you want to keep flowing.*

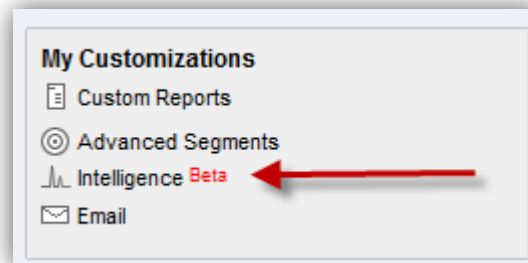
### Comment Spam

No matter how good your spam plugins are they'll sometimes mark a genuine comment as spam. While you're moderating comments have a quick scan through the latest spam comments and approve any real ones.

### Check for Traffic Spikes

You don't want to be a stats addict and check your analytics every single day, but it is good to know if you've suddenly received a big surge in traffic from somewhere.

Google Analytics users can set up an automated alert to email them if traffic increases by a certain percentage from the previous day. You'll find this in the Intelligence section of your site's Analytics page.



## Check Website Stats

You might check some basic stats more often, but at a regular interval you should sit down and take a good, deep look at your site activity to identify trends, opportunities you can leverage, or areas of concern.

***Tip:** Email reports in Google Analytics can speed up the process of checking the basic stats on a regular basis by delivering the reports straight to your inbox at the right time.*

## Check RSS Feed

There are three things to check here.

**Is my feed still working?** Don't be ashamed to subscribe to your own feed. It's not ego, it's just good common sense! Stay subscribed and make sure your new posts are showing up in your feed promptly. If you use Feedburner's email subscription option subscribe to that too.

**Are my calls to action still working?** Anywhere on your site that you've got calls to action for your RSS subscriptions just go ahead and click them to make sure they still direct you to your feed. A broken feed plugin or a change to your theme can easily mess these up, so you want to catch them as soon as possible.

**Is my subscriber count healthy?** A sudden, unexplained drop off of RSS subscribers needs investigating. It might be a sign that your feed is broken in some way, or that your content is not delivering value to your subscribers.

## Check Email Subscription

There are four things to check here:

**Is my email service working?** Once again you should be subscribed to your own mailing list so that you receive all of your own autoresponders, blog broadcasts, and newsletters.

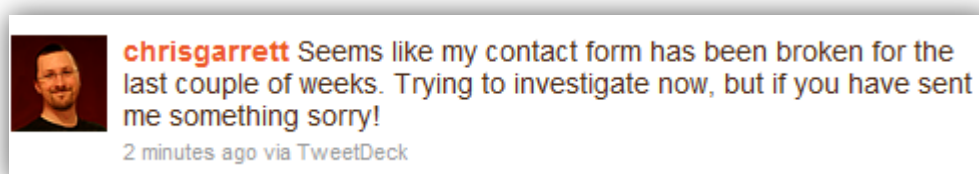
**Are my calls to action still working?** At regular intervals repeat the signup process for your own mailing list to check that it works, and that your welcome messages are still relevant and accurate. Use an alternate email address so you can subscribe, test, and then unsubscribe again until your next test is due.

**Is my subscriber count healthy?** As with your RSS feed a loss of email subscribers could be a sign that your email service is broken, or that your subscribers are not enjoying your emails.

**Are my email analytics healthy?** Use the reports from your email service provider to look for changes in open rates, click rates, and any spam complaints.

## Check Contact Forms

Don't let this happen to you!



Test your contact forms regularly to make sure that important messages from your visitors are not being lost.

## Backup Your Blog

This is one of the most important, but least exciting parts of running a blog. You must back up your blog yourself, and you must do it regularly. You can't rely on your web host to protect your blog with their own backup system.

A WordPress blog has multiple parts to consider for backups:

**The WordPress core files** - As long as you aren't making core file modifications (and you never should) these can be retrieved from WordPress.org at any time, so you don't necessarily need to back these up.

**The wp-content folder** - This folder contains your plugins, theme, and uploads such as images and documents. Because this folder holds all of the unique file content that makes up your blog it is critical to back it up.

**The Database** – The WordPress database contains all of your blog post content, comments, the settings for your site, theme, and plugins, and much more. Like the wp-content folder it is critical that this is backed up regularly. The more often you post, and more comments you receive, the more often you'll want to back this up.

***Tip:** The best plugin I've tested for backups is the Backup Buddy plugin. Read my review of it here: <http://www.bloggingteacher.com/review-of-backup-buddy-wordpress-backup-plugin>*

## Update WordPress

Because of the rapid pace of development in the WordPress community you will be presented with updates at various frequencies for plugins, themes, and the core files.

**Plugins** – WordPress will notify you of updates to plugins when you log in to the WordPress Admin area. Security-related upgrades should be given priority, but other feature-upgrades should be left until you have time to properly prepare by reading about the impact of the upgrade, and backing up your site first.

**Themes** – Most premium themes will have bug fix releases, especially when new versions of WordPress are available. Because these themes often integrate with the database you should always back up your site first.

**WordPress Core** – Incremental upgrades that are security related should be dealt with urgently, whereas simple bug fix upgrades can be performed at the time most suitable for you. Major version upgrades should be prepared for first by checking compatibility with your plugins and theme. All upgrades should be performed only after you have backed up your site.

**Tip:** *Always perform a backup before you update any plugins, modify your theme, or upgrade WordPress.*

## SCHEDULING

Every blog is different, but here are my suggestions for scheduling your blog maintenance. Remember to set up your schedule in a calendar or to-do app so that you are reminded to do these tasks at the right times.

You might not get your schedule optimized first try. Keep tweaking it so that you are performing all of the essential tasks in the most efficient way for your site.

### Daily Tasks

- Check blog is online
- Check comments in moderation queue
- Check comments in spam queue
- Check for traffic spikes
- Database backup

### Weekly Tasks

- Full site backup (Database and all files)
- Check RSS subscription is working
- Check email subscription is working
- Plugin updates

### Monthly Tasks

- Full site backup
- Check web analytics
- Test Contact Form
- Test Mailing List Signup

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