

SAFE WORDPRESS UPGRADES

www.bloggingteacher.com

ABOUT WORDPRESS UPGRADES

For all of the benefits of running your own self-hosted WordPress blogs, one of the downsides is that you have to perform regular upgrades to keep up to date with security fixes and latest releases.

Some bloggers get very anxious about upgrading WordPress because of the risk that something will go wrong.

The risk is relatively small, but the impact can be quite large. Nobody enjoys seeing their blog get knocked offline, especially those bloggers who don't have a lot of technical experience in fixing WordPress problems.

This guide is written to help you take the risk and the pressure out of WordPress upgrades and make them a safe, simple part of your blog maintenance schedule. But first a few frequently asked questions:

What is with all these WordPress updates? It seems like a new one comes out every month!

There are two types of WordPress release – major releases, which occur every 6 months or so; and minor releases, which occur as needed to fix critical bugs and security vulnerabilities. For example, WordPress 2.9 is a major release, whereas 2.9.2 was a minor release.

Why do WordPress upgrades cause blogs to break?

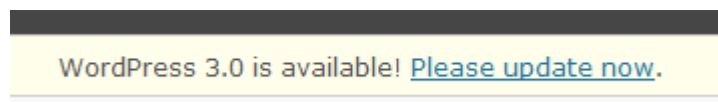
WordPress runs on a huge variety of web hosting providers, and every WordPress blog out there is a unique combination of settings, plugins, and customizations, making it impossible to account for every potential problem that upgrades might cause.

How do we stop WordPress upgrades from killing our blogs?

You can't be 100% certain that an upgrade won't cause a problem with your blog. Instead we **adopt a strategy of risk mitigation** and give ourselves a way to rollback any upgrades quickly and easily so that problems can be investigated.

How can we stay up to date with new releases of WordPress?

There are a few different ways you can make sure you are notified of new WordPress releases. The WordPress admin area will notify you when a newer version is available. You'll see a yellow notification strip at the top of the admin area like this.



If you don't login to your WordPress blog every day you can install the "Upgrade Notification by Email" plugin¹. This plugin checks every day for new versions and will send an email to the blog admin when one is available.

Upgrade Notification by Email	0.4	★★★★★	This plugin is for you if you don't look inside of your Admin Panel every day (for example you have tens of wordpress installations) but still want to have wordpress up to date. After installation plugin will check every day if newer version of wordpress is available and if yes, will send email to blog's admin with notification. By Konrad Karpieszuk.	Install
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Finally you can subscribe to the [WordPress Releases RSS feed](#)², either in your RSS reader or if you prefer emails you can use a service like [Feed My Inbox](#)³ instead. Note that you will also receive other non-release blog posts on this feed as well, so if that bothers you then stick to the other methods mentioned earlier. However if you do stay tuned to this feed you will get plenty of warning when new major versions are nearing release date.

¹ <http://www.bloggingteacher.com/how-to-install-wordpress-plugins>

² <http://wordpress.org/development/feed/>

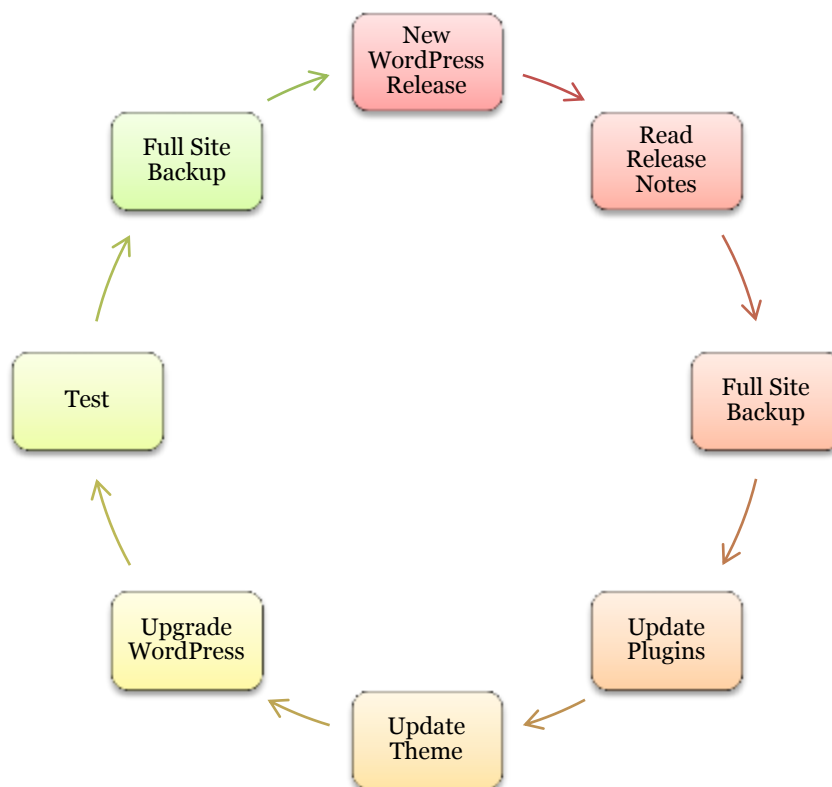
³ <http://www.feedmyinbox.com/>

THE WORDPRESS UPGRADE PROCESS

Whether it is a major release or a minor release the upgrade process is the same. The only difference is the *speed* with which you should perform the upgrade.

My golden rule is to **upgrade to any release that includes a critical security fix immediately**, and do any other upgrade within 1 week of release.

Here is the process that I follow.



New WordPress Release - A new version of WordPress.org is released.

Read Release Notes - Read the release notes for the new version to determine whether it is a major or minor release, and whether it includes any critical security fixes. This becomes the key driver for proceeding with a speedy upgrade, or taking a little more time to verify compatibility of themes and plugins first.

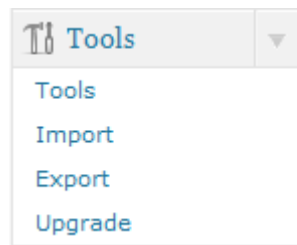
Full Site Backup - Run a full site backup of the blog. I use Backup Buddy for this because it performs a complete backup of the WordPress files and database, and makes it easy to restore the backup if the upgrade goes wrong. Check out my [review of Backup Buddy](#) which includes a demonstration of how to easily restore a blog from the backup⁴.

Update Plugins – Most plugin developers keep up to date with WordPress releases and will update their plugins to maintain compatibility with new versions. You can reduce the risk of a failed WordPress upgrade by making sure your plugins are all up to date.

If the WordPress upgrade is not urgent I will take the time to check each new plugin's release notes as well as their support forums for any potential update problems.

Update Themes – Similar to plugins most theme developers (especially premium themes) will release any necessary updates to maintain compatibility with new versions of WordPress.

Upgrade WordPress – After I have backed up my site and performed any necessary plugin and theme updates I will run the WordPress upgrade. Since version 2.7 the upgrade can be performed from within the WordPress admin area. Simply go to Tools and click on Upgrade.



Click on Upgrade Automatically to start the upgrade.

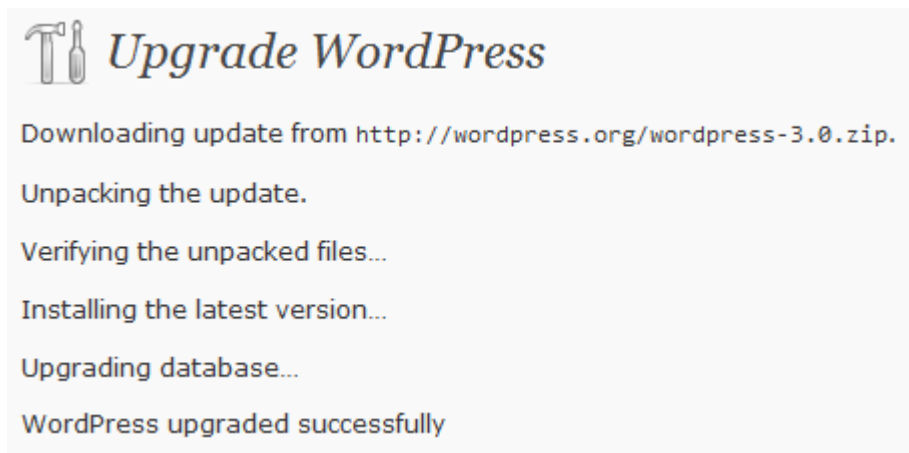
There is a new version of WordPress available for upgrade

You can upgrade to version 3.0 automatically or download the package and install it manually:

[Upgrade Automatically](#) [Download 3.0](#)

⁴ <http://www.bloggingteacher.com/review-of-backup-buddy-wordpress-backup-plugin>

When the upgrade is complete you will see this message.



Test – After the upgrade I will usually perform the following tests:

- Home page displays properly
- 2-3 blog posts each display properly
- Comments area displays properly
- Static pages, especially sales pages display properly
- Contact form works
- Subscription options work
- Login to WordPress admin is successful

If any of the upgrade steps fails, or I find a problem in my testing that I'm not able to quickly fix, I can roll back to the old version of the blog easily using Backup Buddy.

Full Site Backup – When I am satisfied with my testing I take one more full site backup so that I have one for both before and after the upgrade.

Now it is time to get back to blogging and wait for the next release of WordPress!