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The best SEO plugins for WordPress and how to choose one

SEO & Marketing

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The best SEO plugins for WordPress and how to choose one

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An SEO plugin gathers, in a single panel inside WordPress, the technical settings that help search engines understand your site: titles, descriptions, sitemap, structured data and indexing rules. It saves you editing code for every page.

What it does not do is usually the part that decides the outcome. It is worth starting there, because that is where the disappointment comes from.

> **Installing the plugin is not doing SEO.**
> It tidies the house; it does not bring visitors. Those stay outside, and they stay yours: choosing the words people actually search for, writing content worth reading, earning links from other sites, and having a fast, stable site. No green score inside WordPress replaces any of that.

What an SEO plugin handles for you

Feature	What it does
Titles and descriptions	The text Google shows for each page, instead of whatever the theme invents
XML sitemap	The list of pages you hand to search engines, kept up to date on its own
Structured data	Markup that says whether this is an article, a product, an FAQ or a local business
Indexing and canonical	Which pages enter the index, and which version of repeated content is the official one
Redirects and 404s	Catches addresses that stopped existing and sends them somewhere sensible
Social sharing	The image and text that appear when someone pastes the address into Facebook or WhatsApp

The five worth looking at

All have a free version and all cover the essentials. The difference is less about the feature list and more about how much the panel talks in your ear while you write.

Plugin	Who it suits
Yoast SEO	People starting out. The interface walks you through it and documentation is everywhere. Some extras sit behind the paid version
Rank Math	People who want a lot in the free plan. In exchange the panel has many options, and on a simple site that can be more than you need
All in One SEO	Companies, businesses with a physical address, and shops. Guided setup, but full local and shop SEO need a paid plan
SEOPress	People who already know what they want and run several sites. Plenty of technical control, less hand-holding
The SEO Framework	People who prefer the technical SEO to work quietly, with no traffic lights or scores blinking at them

! **Features move between versions.**
What is free today may be paid tomorrow, and the other way round. Before deciding because of one specific feature, check the plugin's own page that it exists in the current version.

Optimising your SEO with Yoast, in practice

Yoast is the most used of the five, and also the one most people get lost in, because the panel suggests so much. This is the order that pays, page by page, and it leaves the rest out.

1. **Write the key phrase first.** One phrase per page, the one a person would genuinely type into the search box. Without it, the plugin's analysis has nothing to compare against.
2. **Deal with the title and the description.** In the Yoast box under the editor, use the preview to see how it reads as a result. Say what the page is and where, and do not repeat the site name three times.
3. **One main heading on the page**, with subheadings in order. That is what gives the text structure, for readers and for indexing.
4. **Link to your other pages.** A page nothing links to stands alone. Yoast flags those as orphaned.

5. **Write the alternative text on images.** It describes the image. It is not the place to repeat the keyword.

6. **Look at readability and then decide.** It is writing advice, and there are texts where ignoring it is correct.

7. **Leave the orange dots alone when they make sense.** Green is not the goal; the goal is the page answering the question of whoever arrived.

Configure once, not on every page.
Title templates, what does and does not enter the index, and the sitemap are set once in the plugin settings and apply to the whole site. That is where the work pays off.

The rule that avoids most of the trouble

Never two SEO plugins at once.
Both try to control the same things, titles, sitemap, canonical, structured data, and WordPress ends up receiving contradictory orders. The result is unpredictable and hard to diagnose. Pick one, and switch off the equivalent features in anything else you have installed.

This applies to themes too: some themes ship their own title and description fields. If you install an SEO plugin on top, turn that part of the theme off.

The paid versions, and whose they are

All of these plugins have a paid version, and every one of them is bought **from whoever makes the plugin**, not from us. We neither sell nor resell any of them, we do not issue licences and we have no access to your account there. For most sites the free version is enough; the paid one starts to pay off when a lot of content changes address regularly.

What depends on us, not on the plugin

Speed, uptime and a valid certificate are things search engines look at, and no plugin fixes them. They live on the hosting side:

1. **An active SSL certificate.** A site on http with no padlock loses visitors before it earns them: **what an SSL certificate is and why it matters**.

2. **A site that opens fast.** A caching plugin helps, but the plan counts too. If the site is slow and you cannot see why, tell us.

3. **Backups.** Working on SEO means working on addresses. Before reorganising links, know how to go back: **how to restore your data with JetBackup**.

No WordPress installed yet?

It installs in a few clicks from cPanel, and the plugin comes after: **how to install WordPress in a few clicks**. If the site already exists elsewhere and you want to bring it over, see **how to generate the zip and sql files to migrate a WordPress site**.

How far we go.

We install WordPress, keep the server fast and fix anything that belongs to the hosting side. Configuring the SEO plugin, choosing keywords and writing the content is your work, or your agency's: the line is drawn in **how far our support goes**.

NEED A HAND?

Site is slow and you suspect the plugin is not the problem?

Ask us to look →

SEE ALSO

- Being found on Google: Business Profile, Search Console and the basics
- The site is slow: what actually makes a difference
- How to install WordPress in a few clicks
- What Yoast SEO is, and what it actually does
- The first Yoast SEO settings to get right

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