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OPcache in PHP: what it does, how to switch it on, and why edits do not show

PHP & Development

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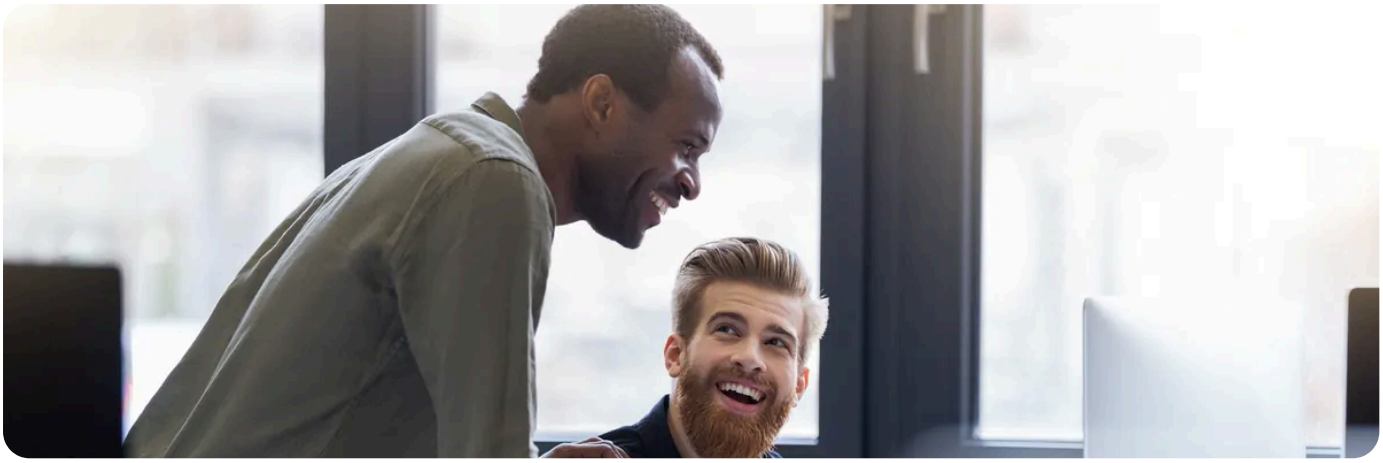
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OPcache in PHP: what it does, how to switch it on, and why edits do not show

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Every time someone visits a PHP page, PHP reads the code files and translates them into an internal format before running them. **OPcache** keeps that translation in memory and reuses it, so later visits skip that work. Here it **exists but ships switched off**: you switch it on in `Select PHP Version`. It helps mostly when the code is large, such as an application with many files or a WordPress loaded with plugins.

Switching it on and confirming

1. In cPanel, open `Select PHP Version` (the **Software** section) and pick **the version the site uses**. Every PHP version has its own list of enabled extensions.
2. Open the **Extensions** tab and tick **opcache**. The general steps are in **switching a PHP extension on or off**.
3. Confirm with a file containing `<?php phpinfo();` in the site folder: a section called **Zend OPcache** should appear. Delete the file straight afterwards.
4. Measure again. The gain shows in the response time of pages that do *not* come from the page cache. See **high TTFB**.

What to expect, and what not

Situation	What OPcache does
A site with a well-set page cache	Little: most visits never reach PHP. See **LiteSpeed Cache**.
Pages that cannot be cached (shop, members area, dashboard)	A lot: every visit runs PHP, and reading and translating the code is saved.

Situation	What OPcache does
A large application (framework, shop)	Quite a bit: it has many files to read on every request. See **getting a Laravel application running**.
A slow database	Nothing. OPcache only deals with the code, not the queries. See **slow queries**.

Why my changes do not show

With OPcache on, PHP keeps the code and only checks again whether the file changed every so often (the interval is `opcache.revalidate_freq`, which the PHP documentation gives as a few seconds by default). So an edit may take a moment to appear. If a long time has passed and you still see the old version, the cause is rarely OPcache. Check, in this order:

1. **The browser cache.** Private window, or Ctrl+Shift+R. See **clearing the cache: the browser's, the computer's, and the site's**.
2. **The site's page cache** (the plugin, or a service in front). Run "Purge All".
3. **Did you edit the right file?** The site folder may hold another copy, or a child theme may take priority.
4. **Only then OPcache.** To rule it out, untick the box in Select PHP Version, repeat the test and tick it again. If the difference disappears, OPcache was the culprit, and you can keep it off while you work on the code.

Do not leave it on for a site you are coding every minute
without allowing for the delay. Many developers switch it on only in production. And if a plugin or an application generates PHP files and runs them straight away, old code may be seen for an instant.

It is an accelerator, not a cure.
If the site is slow because of heavy images, too many plugins or a slow query, OPcache does not fix it. See **what actually makes a difference on a slow site**.

NEED A HAND?

Switched OPcache on and it does not show in phpinfo, or the site got worse? Send us the address and the PHP version.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- Switching a PHP extension on or off in Select PHP Version
- High TTFB: where the server time goes
- Viewing and adjusting your PHP configuration
- Hosting plans and what each includes

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