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A multilingual WordPress site: plugin options, URLs and what Google needs

WordPress & CMS

CODE

RLX-MZ-KB-1700

VERSION

v2026.10.15

COUNTRY · LANGUAGE

Mozambique · English

Interweb Mozambique

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<https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/1700>



The short answer: WordPress on its own has a single language. For a site in several there are **three ways**: a plugin that stores each page in each language, a plugin that translates automatically, or a separate site per language. For most people the first is the safest: the text stays yours, reviewed by you, and Google finds each version at its own address.

The three ways

Way	How it works	Points to weigh
A page-per-language plugin (there are several, such as Polylang or WPML)	Each page has a sister page in another language, linked by a switcher.	More work to write or translate, but the control is all yours. Some have a paid version: read what the free one includes.
Automatic translation on the site itself	A plugin translates the pages for you and shows them at the language's address.	Quick to start. Quality varies: review before publishing. See Translating your website with AI .
One site per language (WordPress Multisite or separate installs)	Each language is a complete site.	More isolation, but more upkeep: updates twice over.

How to choose each language's address

Form	Example	Note
Folder	<code>example.com/en/</code>	The simplest to maintain, with one certificate and one hosting. It is what is usually recommended to beginners.
Subdomain	<code>en.example.com</code>	Also fine; treat each subdomain as a separate site in Google's tools.
Country domain	<code>example.pt</code>	For those who want a site per country. It costs one domain per country.

What Google needs

1

A different address per language. Do not show different languages at the same address, only by cookie or by the browser's language: Google does not see them.

2

hreflang markup between the versions. Good language plugins add it by themselves; check on the page. The full subject is in **Site in several languages or countries: hreflang**.

3

Do not translate only the text. Translate also the page titles, the description, the images' alternative text and each page's address (the "slug").

4

Each page's language inside the HTML must be right. In **Settings > General**, the "Site Language" sets the main language; the plugin handles the rest.

Take a copy before installing the language plugin. It changes the structure of pages and addresses, and undoing it without a copy is hard. See **What to back up before you update WordPress**.

Each language is more content for the server and more database queries. If the site gets slow, caching helps: see **LiteSpeed Cache for WordPress**. And install few plugins: **Installing WordPress plugins**.

Want help deciding between folder, subdomain or country domain? Open a ticket telling us the languages and the countries.

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

[Site in several languages or countries: hreflang and avoiding duplicate versions](#)

[Translating your website with AI: what to review before you publish](#)

[The canonical tag: duplicate pages, www or not, and which address Google keeps](#)

[Subdomain or folder: where to put a blog, a shop or a test site](#)



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