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Replacing old addresses in a WordPress database without breaking it

WordPress & CMS

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Replacing old addresses in a WordPress database without breaking it

WordPress & CMS Created on **October 15, 2026** 2 min read



The short answer: when you change the site's address (a new domain, or from http to https), WordPress keeps the old address in **thousands of places** in the database: in page text, images, settings. Swapping them needs a tool that respects "serialized" data. **A hand-made SQL REPLACE can break the site**; use WP-CLI or a proper plugin, after a backup.

Why not by hand

Method	Does it work?
Editing page by page	Only for very small sites.
An SQL REPLACE (phpMyAdmin)	**No.** Much data is stored with the length of the text written inside it (serialized). Swapping the text without fixing the length breaks the whole setting.
WP-CLI: `wp search-replace`	**Yes.** It understands serialized data and lets you see what would change first.
A search-and-replace plugin	Yes, if you have no SSH. Choose one that handles serialized data and has a "dry run".

With WP-CLI (SSH), step by step

1. **Take a backup of the database** and the files: **What to back up before you update**.

2. **Rehearse without saving,** in the WordPress folder: `wp search-replace "http://old.com" "https://new.com" --skip-columns=guid --dry-run`. It shows, per table, how many swaps it would make.

3 **If the numbers make sense,** repeat the command without **--dry-run**.

4 **Repeat for the variants** of the address (with and without www, http and https), one at a time.

5 **Clear the cache** and open the site: **LiteSpeed Cache**. Look for broken images or the mixed content warning: **Mixed content**.

Leave the "guid" column as it is

(hence **--skip-columns=guid**): GUIDs identify each post for feed readers and should not change. And do not run the swap without a backup: there is no "undo". To change the site's own address (not what is in the content), see **Changing the WordPress site address**.

The full case, from one domain to another, is in **Moving WordPress to a new domain**. If you do not have WP-CLI, see **WP-CLI over SSH**.

NEED A HAND?

Prefer that we do it with you? Open a ticket with the two addresses (the old and the new).

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Moving WordPress to a new domain without losing anything** →
- **Changing the WordPress site address, and what breaks when it goes wrong** →
- **Mixed content after moving to HTTPS: the padlock that will not turn on** →
- **WP-CLI over SSH: updating and fixing WordPress from the command line** →

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