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# Installing a WordPress theme

WordPress & CMS

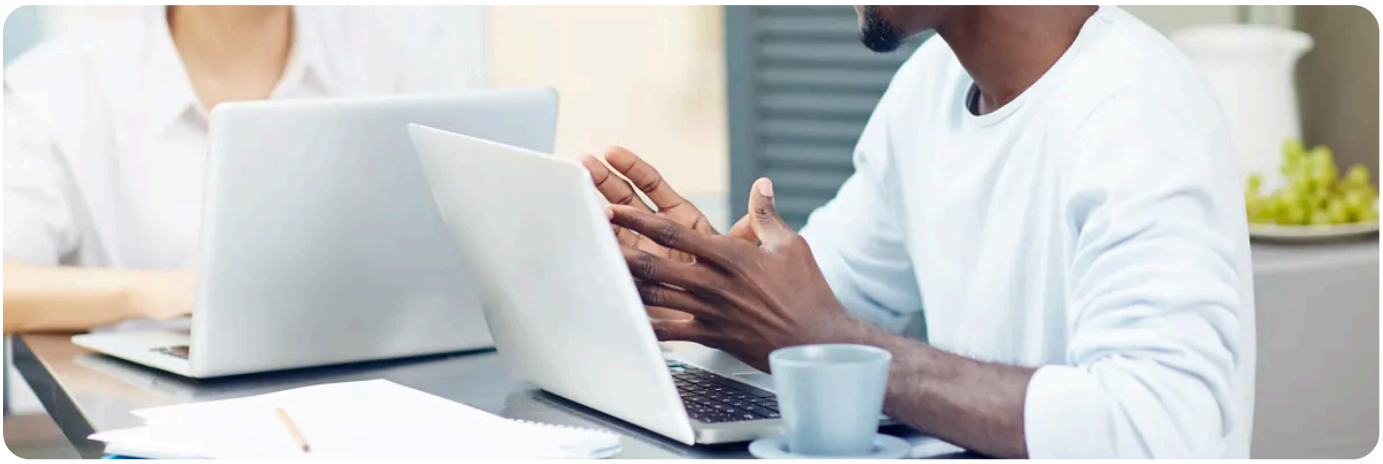
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| RLX-MZ-KB-590 | v2026.09.27 | Mozambique · English |

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# Installing a WordPress theme

WordPress & CMS  Created on **September 27, 2026**  2 min read



The theme decides how the site looks: fonts, colours, width, where the menu sits, how a list of posts is laid out. Your content is independent of it, which is why you can try themes freely without losing anything you wrote.

## From the official directory

1. In the WordPress dashboard, open **Appearance** and then **Themes**.
2. Click **Add New**. The official directory appears, with filters by feature.
3. Hover over a theme and use **Preview** to see how it would look before installing anything.
4. Click **Install**. The theme is now available, and your site is unchanged.
5. Only then click **Activate**. That click is the one that changes the site.

**Install without activating, and preview first.**
The preview shows your content inside the new theme, which is a very different thing from the pretty screenshots on the theme page.

## From a file you were given or bought

1. Save the theme `.zip` on your computer. It has to be the theme file, not the full bundle with documentation and extras that some sellers hand over.

2. Under **Appearance**, **Themes**, **Add New**, use **Upload Theme**.

3. Pick the file and install. If it complains that the stylesheet is missing, you opened the wrong bundle: inside it there is another `.zip`, and that one is the theme.

4. If the theme asks for companion plugins, install those too. Many commercial themes only look like the demo with them in place.

> **A theme downloaded from a sharing site is a real risk.**
> Commercial themes redistributed for free regularly carry hidden code that opens your site to whoever put it there. Buy from the author, or use the official directory.

If the file is large and the upload dies halfway, the size limit is PHP's. See **PHP limits**. Alternatively, upload the theme folder over FTP into `wp-content/themes`: see **FTP accounts and FileZilla**.

## Three things to check before activating

| Check | Why |
|---|---|
| **That you have a recent backup** | Activating a theme touches menus and widget areas. Being able to go back is worth more than any amount of care. |
| **That the theme is maintained** | Look at the last update date. An abandoned theme eventually breaks on a new WordPress release. |
| **That you will get updates** | A theme bought from its author gets updates; a theme copied from somewhere else gets none. |

When you are ready to actually switch, what moves across and what does not is covered in the article on changing themes.

NEED A HAND?

The theme will not upload, or the site went strange after installing it? Tell us which one.

Open a support ticket →

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