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Generated on 28/10/2026 10:52

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Uploading large files in PHP: upload_max_filesize and post_max_size

PHP & Development

CODE	VERSION	COUNTRY · LANGUAGE
RLX-MZ-KB-802	v2026.10.10	Mozambique · English

Interweb Mozambique
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Tax ID (NUIT) 401 191 607 · Legal entity no. (NUEL) 105 045 974 · Economic activity code (CAE) 62022

https://www.meu.interweb.co.mz/knowledgebase/802

Uploading large files in PHP: upload_max_filesize and post_max_size

PHP & Development Created on **October 10, 2026** 3 min read



To upload a big file through a form, two values have to be high enough, and **the second has to be larger than the first**: `upload_max_filesize` (the size of each file) and `post_max_size` (the size of the whole request). If you raise only the first, the upload keeps failing, often without a single message.

The limits that count

Value	What it limits
upload_max_filesize	The size of each uploaded file.
post_max_size	The size of everything the form sends. It must be larger than the one above, so the rest of the form fits too.
memory_limit	Should stay above post_max_size, because PHP handles the request in memory.
max_execution_time and max_input_time	On slow connections a big file takes a while to arrive. If the time runs out, the upload is cut.
max_file_uploads	How many files can go in a single request.

Raising the values

1. In `Select PHP Version`, **Options** tab, raise `upload_max_filesize` and `post_max_size`, keeping the second higher than the first.

2. If it is for one application only, put the lines in a `.user.ini` in its folder. See **where to set each value**.

3. Check what is now in force. A file with the line below, opened in the browser, shows both values. Delete it afterwards.

4. If the application has a limit of its own (WordPress shows its own on the **Media** upload screen), that is the lowest one and the one that counts. See **raising the WordPress upload limit**.

```
<?php echo ini_get('upload_max_filesize'), ' / ', ini_get('post_max_size');
```

Right limits, upload still failing

Symptom	Likely cause
The progress bar reaches the end and then it fails	The time ran out (max_execution_time or max_input_time), or the account's space ran out.
An error with only some files	The application refuses certain file types. Look at the type, not the size.
An error while saving the file	The destination folder lacks write permission, or the account's space has run out.
Works in your tests and fails for visitors	Their connection is slower and the time runs out before the file arrives.

The silent failure.
When a request goes past `post_max_size`, PHP throws away everything it received: the application sees an empty form, with no error at all, and answers "no file selected" or just returns to the same page. If an upload "does nothing", this is the first value to check.

Some limits sit outside PHP.
If your domain goes through a service such as Cloudflare, that service also caps the body of each request, and the cap depends on its plan. And the account's space has to be enough for the file.

For very large files, skip the browser.
An SFTP transfer can be resumed and does not depend on these limits. See **SFTP instead of FTP**. For files your visitors upload, an application that splits the file into chunks is more dependable than pushing the limits to the extreme.

NEED A HAND?

Raised both values and the upload still fails? Tell us the page and the size of the file.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- PHP limits: memory, time, upload size and the one that fails silently →
- Raising the WordPress upload limit →
- php.ini and .user.ini: where to set a value →
- SFTP instead of FTP →

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