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A blank page in PHP: how to see the error

PHP & Development

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A blank page in PHP: how to see the error

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A white page means PHP **hit a fatal error and is set not to show it**. That is the right setting for a public site, which is why the error exists but you do not see it. The answer is not to make the error appear to everybody: it is to go and read it where it is recorded.

Reading the error, in order of effort

1. **Look for the error_log file.** By default PHP writes to a file called `error_log` in the folder of the script that failed. In the File Manager, open the site folder and the application folders, sort by date and open the newest. The last line is usually the answer.

2. **Check cPanel's log.** The **Errors** tool shows the site's most recent errors. See **where the PHP error log is and how to read it**.

3. **If you find nothing**, show the error for a minute. Create a `.user.ini` in the folder with the two lines below, wait a few minutes, reload the page, **and delete the file straight afterwards**.

```
display_errors = On
error_reporting = E_ALL
```

If you have a command line (see **the cPanel Terminal**), `php -l file.php` checks a file for syntax errors without running it.

What is usually behind it

The last line of the log says…	Cause	Go to
Allowed memory size … exhausted	The request used more memory than the limit.	**Memory exhausted**

The last line of the log says…	Cause	Go to
Maximum execution time … exceeded	The script took too long.	**Execution time**
Call to undefined function	An extension is missing on this PHP version.	**The missing extension**
Parse error / syntax error	A typo in the code: a bracket, a semicolon.	Fix the line it names, or restore the file's previous copy.
Cannot redeclare / Uncaught Error	Two plugins or files defining the same thing, or code that does not fit this PHP version.	**Changing the PHP version**

If the white screen is a WordPress one, it has its own route: switch on debug mode in `wp-config.php` with `define('WP_DEBUG', true);` , `define('WP_DEBUG_LOG', true);` and `define('WP_DEBUG_DISPLAY', false);` , and read the `wp-content/debug.log` file. See also **common WordPress errors**.

A detail that misleads: there is **one error_log per folder** where PHP failed. The error from an admin page may sit in a different file from the site root's, so look inside the subfolders too, such as the administration area's.

Never leave display_errors on for a public site.
The messages show file paths and sometimes database connection details. Switch it on to read the error, and switch it off the next minute.

Did you change something just before the page went white?
A new plugin, a PHP version, an edited file: undo that single change first. Often the problem disappears and reading the log can wait.

NEED A HAND?

Seen the log and cannot make sense of the message? Send us the last line of the error_log and the page's address.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

Where the PHP error log is, how to read it, and the errors you will see most →

- Common WordPress errors: white screen, critical error and how to find the cause
- PHP warnings showing on your site: what they are
- Website errors explained: 500, 403, 404, 508

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