

Moving a WordPress site to a new host using admin access and free plugins. Print this and tick as you go.

1. Before you touch anything

- **Confirm you can log in as an administrator on the current site.**
Migration plugins install from the WordPress dashboard, so admin is the access you actually need.
- **Write down the current PHP and WordPress versions.**
Settings and Site Health both show these. Match the major PHP version on the new host.
- **Note the site's total size.**
Uploads plus database. It decides whether a one-click plugin or a manual import is the better route.
- **List anything licensed to a server or a domain.**
Premium themes, page builders, SSL, email, cron jobs, payment gateways, API allowlists.
- **Take a full backup and download it to your own machine.**
A backup that only lives on the old host is not a backup.

2. Prepare the destination

- **Create a clean WordPress install on the new host.**
No demo content, no starter theme, no extra plugins.
- **Match the PHP major version to the old server.**
A large version jump during a move makes it hard to tell what broke and why.
- **Confirm the new host's upload and import limits.**
Some managed hosts cap upload size or write-protect the plugins directory.
- **Get a preview URL or temporary domain from the new host.**
You need a way to view the site before DNS points at it.

3. Move the site

- **Install your chosen free migration plugin on the old site.**
Some hosts publish their own free migration plugin. Check the destination host first.
- **Run the transfer and let it finish without closing the tab.**
- **If the plugin route is blocked, export and import manually.**
Files by file manager or SFTP, database by export and import, then a search and replace on the URL.
- **Verify the row counts and the uploads folder after import.**

4. Test before DNS

- **Load the site on the temporary URL or through a hosts file entry.**
- **Check the homepage, a blog post, a category page and a 404.**
- **Re-save permalinks, then click through the menu.**
- **Submit every form and confirm the email actually arrives.**
Email is the most commonly missed item on a migration.
- **Log in to the admin, check media library thumbnails and plugin settings.**
- **For a store or membership site, place a test order or sign up.**

5. Cut over the A record

- **Lower the TTL on the A record a day ahead.**
A shorter TTL means the change reaches visitors sooner.
- **Freeze content changes on the old site.**
Anything published after the copy will not exist on the new server.
- **Issue the SSL certificate on the new host first if it can be done pre-cutover.**
- **Change the A record to the new server's IP address.**
Change the www record too, whether it is a second A record or a CNAME.
- **Leave the old hosting account active and paid.**
Give it days, not hours. It is your rollback.
- **Watch from more than one network.**
Mobile data and office wifi can resolve differently while DNS settles.

6. The days after

- **Confirm HTTPS works with no mixed content warnings.**
- **Check that redirects and any custom rules survived.**
- **Confirm the site is not blocking search engines.**
Settings, Reading, and the robots file.
- **Watch server errors and crawl reports for a week.**
- **Only cancel the old host once traffic and email have been clean for several days.**

Stuck mid-migration? Gilmedia moves WordPress sites for a living.

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