Why and when using FTP clients for your WordPress website

FAQ · https://mhthemes.com/support/knb/using-ftp-clients-wordpress/

There are a couple of methods available to you that grant you access to the WordPress files stored on your server. You can use *File Manager* software provided to you by your host, such as cPanel and Plesk. Besides, you can use an application for your computer known as an FTP client.

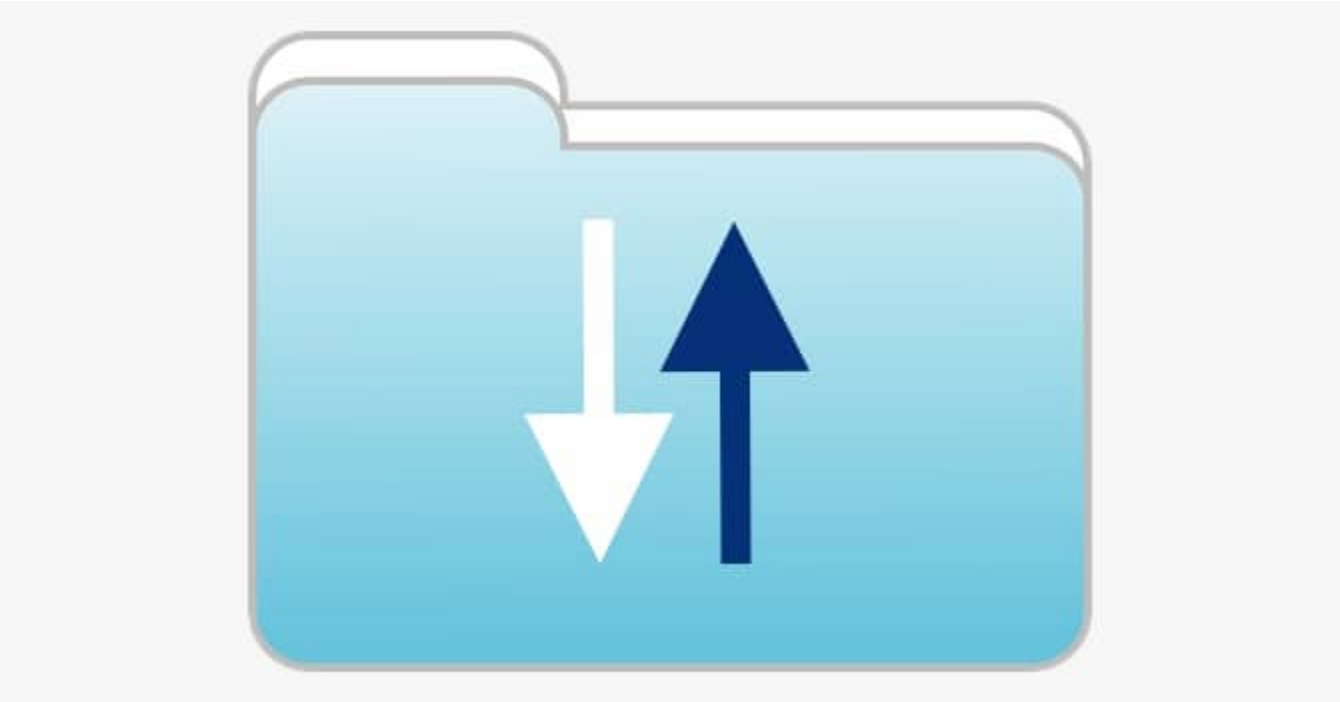


Image Source: Clker-Free-Vector-Images – Pixabay.com / License: CC0 Public Domain

An FTP client, or *File Transfer Protocol Client*, connects directly to your server or web host. It allows you direct access to the files and folders stored therein. This enables you to perform a variety of tasks such as downloading and uploading, renaming, moving or also even changing file and folder permissions (CHMOD). Why would you need to access your files you may be asking? Let's see.

Troubleshooting your WordPress website

In general, if you don't intend on writing a custom WordPress plugin, or making code modifications to your chosen WordPress theme, then chances are you may never use an FTP client at all. Almost every aspect of owning a WordPress website can be handled via the WordPress dashboard (such as uploading / installing WordPress themes or plugins), or your server/host control panel software.

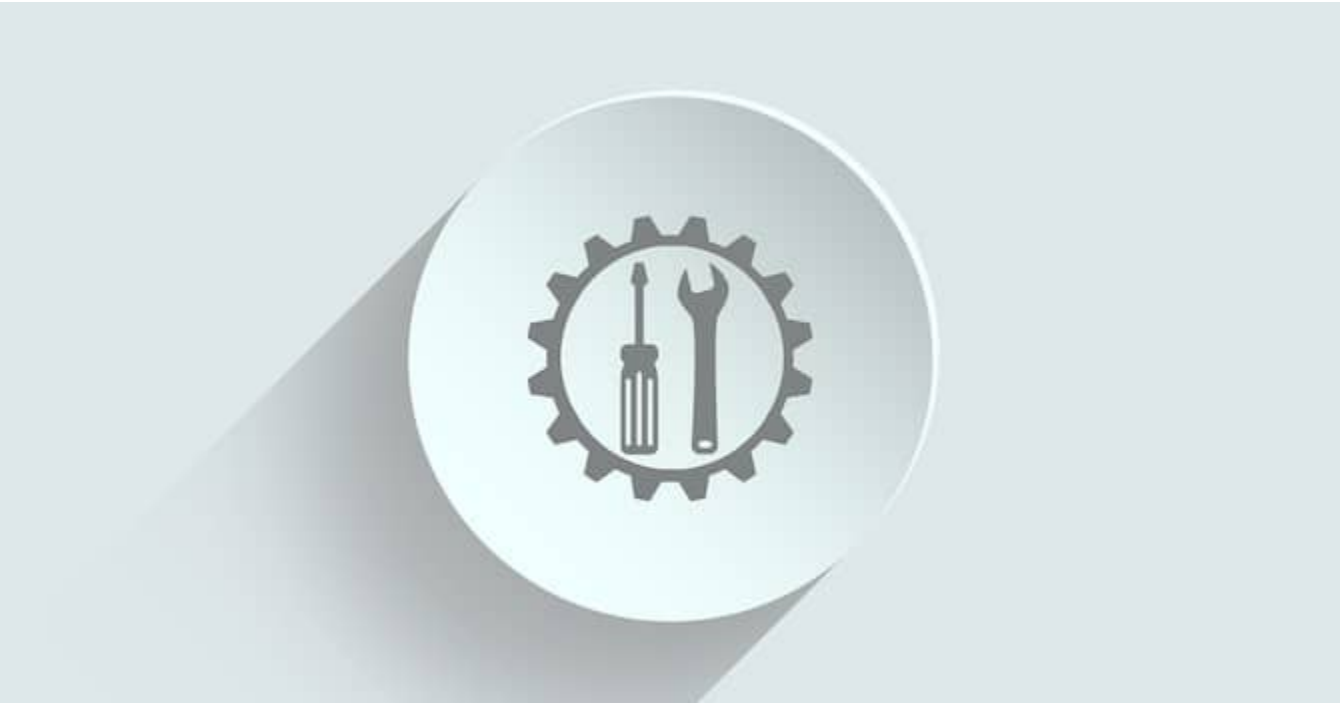


Image Source: ivke32 – Pixabay.com / License: CC0 Public Domain

However, even if you're a casual WordPress website owner, it's good practice to set up and connect an FTP client to your server just in case something should go wrong. Being able to quickly troubleshoot your WordPress installation by opening up your FTP client and connecting to your server could be vital. Especially if your live website is down or experiencing any problems.

Having troubles with WordPress plugins?

You can use an FTP client if you're having issues with a troublesome plugin, or if you are perhaps on the receiving end of a nasty PHP error code. Through FTP clients you can instantly deactivate all plugins on your WordPress installation by renaming the *plugins* folder to something like *xplugins* for example. The plugins folder resides within your WordPress installation folder structure, like so:

```
/public_html/wp-content/plugins
```

Once you have renamed the plugins folder within your WordPress installation folder structure, you can now safely refresh your WordPress website to see if your issues have finally been resolved or take further actions to analyze and solve the issues with your WordPress website.

Locked out of your WordPress dashboard?

Renaming your plugins folder is also a good method to use if you're frozen out of your WordPress dashboard. This scenario is more commonly known as the White Screen of Death and prevents you from taking any further action on your WordPress site. You can also use a similar method if an installed WordPress theme is causing compatibility issues and in case you're unable to deactivate the particular WordPress theme via your dashboard.



Image Source: Unsplash – Pixabay.com / License: CC0 Public Domain

Simply open up your FTP client and connect to your server. Now locate the troublesome WordPress theme and delete it. This is forcing your WordPress website to make use of the default WordPress theme (e.g. *Twenty Sixteen*) instead - which comes with every new WordPress installation by default.

Managing WordPress themes & plugins

Back in the days of black & white photographs and silent movies, WordPress administrators and developers had no choice but to use an FTP client to not only update *themes* and *plugins*, but to even install them! Nowadays you can enjoy luxuries such as integrated theme and plugin browsers with 1-

click installations and 1-click updates, WordPress has come a very long way indeed.



Image Source: StockSnap – Pixabay.com / License: CC0 Public Domain

However, using an FTP client is the failsafe method of installing, updating and removing WordPress themes and plugins that you can reliably fall back on should the need arise. All WordPress themes and plugins that are installed on your WordPress website can be located using an FTP client and browsing to the following locations (may slightly vary depending on your server environment):

```
/public_html/wp-content/themes
```

```
/public_html/wp-content/plugins
```

Free and commercial FTP clients

There are many FTP clients available for you to use, both free and commercially available, for a variety of platforms. Features across the various clients are generally the same. They contain drag & drop abilities and bookmarking capabilities that allow you to save various server connections. This comes in handy if you have multiple WordPress installations to manage. Here is a collection of FTP clients for you to consider, all of which are perfectly capable of handling your FTP needs with ease.



Image Source: Screenshot – filezilla-project.org

- FileZilla (Free): One of the most popular and highly regarded FTP clients available is FileZilla which is a free open-source FTP client for use on Windows, Linux and Mac platforms.
- SmartFTP (Free): SmartFTP is a no-nonsense FTP client for Windows machines that is available to download for free. SmartFTP is a powerful tool which offers many basic and advanced features to reliably transfer files between your local computer and a server on the internet.
- Transmit (Commercial): Transmit is a Mac-only FTP client solution which claims to provide a significant speed boost when transferring files. The software comes priced at $34 per copy, or $19 to upgrade from the previous version and comes with multiple discounts available.
- WS_FTP (Commercial): WS_FTP from *Ipswitch* is a well-renowned commercial FTP client that offers a multitude of features that free clients simply don't. Prices start at $29.95 per license, and more expensive plans are available including support, in case you should ever need it. A 30-day free trial is also available to test this FTP client and check if it meets your requirements.
- FireFTP (Free): Although not technically an FTP client application, FireFTP is an incredible add-on for the Firefox browser. This add-on provides you with a comprehensive FTP solution, directly from within your browser. It is suitable for a variety of different platforms, including Windows, Mac and Linux. FireFTP is available for free in more than 20 languages.
- Direct FTP (Commercial): Created by the well renowned *CoffeeCup* team, Direct FTP is a premium solution suitable for the Windows platform. Justification for the $39 price tag comes in the form of a built-in file editor, and being integrated with their (commercially available) image editing software to provide users with a complete collection of editing tools.

- Free FTP (Free): As the name suggests, Free FTP is a completely free FTP client. It is the younger sibling of the commercially available Direct FTP product listed above that offers simple bookmarking functionality and fast speeds via the easy-to-use user interface.

Conclusion: FTP clients for your WordPress website

If you work with WordPress on a daily basis and are responsible for all the themes and plugins you've installed and running, then you should have an FTP client ready at your disposal. For general regular use, any free FTP client will be more than sufficient for the purposes you will be using it for.

I have my own personal preference in FileZilla, but I have used many FTP solutions in the past, both free and commercial, and I have to say that the differences between the various FTP clients are negligible in the majority of cases. Advanced users will no doubt welcome the features that come with commercial FTP clients, but for everyday WordPress use you can't go wrong with free solutions.