WordPress Multisite:
What is it, how to set it up, and the pros and cons.

What Is WordPress Multisite?

- Multisite is a single install of WordPress – one database, one copy of every theme and plugin.

- You can run many (hundreds, thousands) of sub-sites off of a single multisite.

- Only network admins can install themes and plugins, add sites, and upgrade.

- Uploads are kept in separate subfolders in the /wp-content/uploads/sites/, with each subfolder named for the site ID (i.e. /wp-content/uploads/sites/3/). The folder names may vary with older installs.

- In the database, each site has its own set of tables, with the site ID in between the table prefix and the table name (i.e. wp_3_options).

- The users and usermeta tables are not duplicated. The following new tables are also added: blogs, blog_versions, site, and sitemeta.

How To Set Up Multisite

- Instructions vary per host (with some hosts, you just click a button to activate).

- Manual setup:

    - In your FTP program, edit wp-config.php.

        - Before the line **/* That's all, stop editing! Happy blogging. */**

        - Add the line **define('WP_ALLOW_MULTISITE', true);**

    - In WordPress, deactivate all plugins.

    - Go to Tools > Network Setup.

        - Set a network name and click Install.

Create a Network of WordPress Sites

Welcome to the Network installation process!

Fill in the information below and you'll be on your way to creating a network of WordPress sites. We will create configuration files in the next step.

Network Details

Sub-domain Install

Because your install is not new, the sites in your WordPress network must use sub-domains. **The main site in a sub-directory install will need to use a modified permalink structure, potentially breaking existing links.**

Server Address

The internet address of your network will be ▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉▉.

Network Title

Test Multisite Sites

What would you like to call your network?

Network Admin Email

test@example.com

Your email address.

Install

Sidebar

- Dashboard
- Posts
- Media
- Pages
- Comments
- Appearance
- Plugins
- Users
- Tools
  - Available Tools
  - Import
  - Export
  - **Network Setup**
- Settings
- Collapse menu

How To Set Up Multisite

- Follow the instructions to edit your wp-config.php and .htaccess files.

- Log in again.

Create a Network of WordPress Sites

Enabling the Network

Complete the following steps to enable the features for creating a network of sites.

> **Caution:** We recommend you back up your existing `wp-config.php` and `.htaccess` files.

1. Add the following to your `wp-config.php` file in `/home/█████████/public_html/` **above** the line reading `/* That's all, stop editing! Happy blogging. */` :

```
define('MULTISITE', true);
define('SUBDOMAIN_INSTALL', true);
define('DOMAIN_CURRENT_SITE', '██████████.com');
define('PATH_CURRENT_SITE', '/');
define('SITE_ID_CURRENT_SITE', 1);
define('BLOG_ID_CURRENT_SITE', 1);
```

2. Add the following to your `.htaccess` file in `/home/█████████/public_html/` , **replacing** other WordPress rules:

```
RewriteEngine On
RewriteBase /
RewriteRule ^index\.php$ - [L]

# add a trailing slash to /wp-admin
RewriteRule ^wp-admin$ wp-admin/ [R=301,L]

RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME} -f [OR]
RewriteCond %{REQUEST_FILENAME} -d
RewriteRule ^ - [L]
RewriteRule ^(wp-(content|admin|includes).*) $1 [L]
RewriteRule ^(.*\.php)$ $1 [L]
RewriteRule . index.php [L]
```

Once you complete these steps, your network is enabled and configured. You will have to log in again. Log In

How To Set Up Multisite

- You need to decide if you want subdomains (default) or subdirectories.

  - Subdomain: http://site1.example.com/test-page

  - Subdirectory: http://example.com/site1/test-page

- Subdomains are strongly recommended - better supported and less likely to cause conflicts.

- Set up wildcard subdomains at your host or DNS provider (the 2nd entry below, with the asterisk). If you are using cPanel, you may need to add the wildcard in the subdomain panel as well.

Type	Host	Value	TTL		
A Record ▼	@	111.111.111.11	Automatic ▼	✓	✗
CNAME Record ▼	*	example.com.	Automatic ▼	✓	✗
CNAME Record ▼	www	example.com.	Automatic ▼	✓	✗

Using Multisite

- Go to My Sites > Network Admin from the admin bar of any site to access Network Admin area.

- Go to Sites > Add New to add a new site.

- Go to Settings > Network Settings to control things like registration, welcome email, upload quota, and allowable file types.

- Network Enable themes to allow any sub-site to use them.

- Network Activate plugins to force activate them on all sub-sites.

Some Useful Multisite Plugins

- **WordPress MU Domain Mapping:** for adding other domains to sub-sites

  - https://wordpress.org/plugins/wordpress-mu-domain-mapping/

- **Multisite Plugin Manager:** for restricting plugin activation on sub-sites

  - https://wordpress.org/plugins/multisite-plugin-manager/

- **NS Cloner:** for fully duplicating a sub-site

  - https://wordpress.org/plugins/ns-cloner-site-copier/

Pros of Multisite

- **Faster upgrades.** There's only one upgrade panel for the whole install and only one copy of each theme and plugin.

- **Faster theme and plugin installs.** You only have to install a theme or plugin once, although you usually still have to activate and configure sites individually (unless the plugin has network-wide settings).

- **Faster site builds.** It's faster to add a new site, or clone a site, than to do a separate install.

- **Centralized user accounts.** You can use the same user login for multiple sites. It's the same username, and if you change your password, it affects your login for all sites.

- **Control.** You can control all the technical stuff while giving other people restricted admin access.

Cons of Multisite

- **Security.** A multisite is arguably more vulnerable than a standard install. If a Network Admin account is compromised, all sites can be accessed.

- **Difficulty.** There's a higher learning curve to set up and maintain than with a normal WordPress install.

- **Compatibility issues.** Some plugins are incompatible with multisite.

- **Limitations.** All sub-sites on a multisite install use the same IP address. SSL certificates may not work on mapped domains.

- **Customizations.** If you edit a theme or plugin file, it affects all sites on the network using that theme or plugin (for better or worse).

Cons of Multisite

- **Migrations.** Migrating a single site into a multisite, or migrating a site out of a multisite into its own install, are technical and time-consuming tasks. I've tried a couple of plugins and they didn't work well. Manually migrating a site out takes me less than an hour now, but it's been after a lot of practice.

- **Hosting requirements.** Multisites typically take more resources (memory, disk space, database size) than a standard install. You need a host with adequate resources, and not all hosts even support multisite.

- **Scaling.** If your multisite gets too big, you may run into scaling issues, particularly with your memory usage and database size.

When Should You Use Multisite?

- Lots of sites (i.e. 10+)

- You use a lot of the same themes and plugins

- You really know what you're doing

- If you're building client sites and catering to a specific niche (i.e. restaurants, real estate)

When Shouldn't You Use Multisite?

- Only a few sites

- Very different themes and plugins between the sites

- You're not confident in technical skills (or don't want the added stress)

- Need SSL for sub-sites

- Clients who need high level access (i.e. database, FTP)

- Strong chance of being extracted into single site installs in the future

THANKS!

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