

WordPress Trouble Map



**When something breaks,
here's what to check -
and what it *means*.**



What Does *This* Error Mean?

500 Internal Server Error

The server ran into a problem that prevented it from showing the page. Often caused by problem code in a plugin or theme, an overloaded website, or a misconfiguration on your hosting server.

WordPress Critical Error

WordPress couldn't load the page, usually because of a problem in the code used to write the theme and plugins on your site. You may get an email telling you exactly which plugin caused the problem, which you can use to investigate further.

Blank Screen

The site shows a blank white page. This is also a WordPress critical error, except that WordPress crashed before it could tell you there was a problem.

DNS Error (“This site can’t be reached”)

This means your domain name isn't pointing to the right server. This can happen if the DNS settings at your domain registrar are wrong or were recently updated, or if you forgot to renew your domain name.

SSL Error (“Your connection is not private”)

The browser can't verify that your site is secure, perhaps because the SSL certificate expired or wasn't installed properly. You'll see a warning that the connection isn't secure.

404 Error (“Page not found”)

Your website is working, but the page you're trying to visit doesn't exist. The link might be broken, or the page may have been moved or deleted.

JavaScript Error

A bit of code that adds interactivity isn't working. Some parts of the site might not behave properly, like opening popups or sliding images. This is usually either due to buggy JavaScript code in a theme or plugin, or a conflict between some of your site plugins.

Narrowing It Down

You can use the following table as a general guide for where to start your search for the problem. It will help you “eliminate the suspects” and save time digging in the wrong area.

There are a few “maybe” cases where it’s possible for this part of the system to cause your problem, but it’s less likely than the other options.

	Domain	Server	Plugin	Theme	WordPress
500 Error	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
WP Critical Error	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Blank Screen	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DNS Error	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
SSL Error	Yes	Yes	Maybe	Maybe	No
404 Error	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
JavaScript Error	No	Maybe	Yes	Yes	Yes

Quick Tests

Here are some harmless steps you can try when your website doesn't seem to be working.

Need instructions? Visit facingyourscreen.com/wp-emergency-toolkit/



Refresh the browser window
(CTRL-R / CMD-R)



Clear your browser cache



Check in a private/incognito window



Try a different browser
(Chrome, Safari, Edge)



Clear your cookies
(will log you out of all sites)



Check your internet connection



Check the Javascript console for errors



Check if you're logged in to WordPress



Try a different device



Ask a friend to have a look

What Do I Do Next?

For each kind of error you might encounter on a website, there are many different possible causes. The answer isn't to learn every single possible problem and solution, but to learn *where* to look for the answers and *how* to narrow the search down to the right one.

You can learn the fundamental skills you need to solve your WordPress problems yourself - skills you can apply to other areas of your life, too!

Here are two ways you can get **expert guidance in troubleshooting**, developed especially for non-technical people who sometimes worry they'll break their website if they click on the wrong thing.

Take the Course

[WordPress Troubleshooting Demystified](#) will teach you to master essential maintenance tasks, troubleshoot common issues, and find solutions to problems without breaking a sweat. By the end of this course, you'll approach your website tasks with newfound confidence, knowing exactly how to handle unexpected complications and keep your website running smoothly.

Get the Coach

Stuck on a WordPress problem and need an extra set of eyes on it? Want to understand your theme and plugins better and gain confidence using the WordPress dashboard? [Book a coaching call with a seasoned WordPress professional](#), tailored to your specific website needs and comfort level.

[Get Started](#) 