

WordPress Meetup Activity

Diagnose and Fix: Debugging WordPress for Site Owners

60 minutes · Beginner–Intermediate · Browser only

What You Will Be Able to Do

■ **Identify** - common error types and what triggers each

■ **Use** - Site Health to catch issues before they become emergencies

■ **Isolate** - plugin and theme conflicts without affecting live visitors

■ **Fix** - a Critical Error using the File Browser

■ **Reset** - permalinks and .htaccess to cure 404 errors

■ **Know** - when to call your host vs. fix it yourself

What You'll Need



A modern browser - Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari



An internet connection - Playground downloads WordPress on first load



That's it.

Site Health - Your Early Warning System

1. playground.wordpress.net in a new tab.
2. Go to Tools > Site Health.
3. Status tab: Critical (red), Recommended (yellow), Good (green). What would you do with a Critical item?
4. Info tab: click "Copy site info to clipboard". This is what support teams need when you ask for help.
5. Read any Recommended item. Note the issue description and the suggested fix.

Site Health at a Glance

Status tab	Critical / Recommended / Good items with descriptions and suggested fixes.
Info tab	Copy site info: PHP version, active plugins, WordPress version, server details.
Background checks	WordPress runs health checks automatically and emails critical issues to admin.
No plugins required	Built into WordPress core since version 5.2 (May 2019).

Plugin and Theme Conflicts

1. playground.wordpress.net/?plugin=health-check (Health Check pre-installed).
2. Go to Tools > Site Health > Troubleshooting tab.
3. Click Enable Troubleshooting Mode. A green notice confirms you're in it.
4. Check Plugins > Installed Plugins: all plugins deactivated for your session only.
5. In the right panel, expand Available plugins and click Enable next to each plugin one at a time - this is the isolation workflow.
6. Click Disable Troubleshooting Mode when done.

Critical Errors - Trigger, Read, Fix

1. Go to Plugins > Installed Plugins. Activate Hello Dolly. Then go to Tools > Plugin File Editor.
2. Select Hello Dolly from the dropdown. The plugin file opens.
3. On line 1, add: `this_is_a_syntax_error`. Click Update File.
4. Click Visit Site. The Critical Error screen appears.
5. Click the Sidebar icon (top-right toolbar) to open the panel. Click the File browser tab.
6. Navigate to `wp-content > plugins > hello.php`. Remove the line 1 error. File Browser auto-saves.
7. Reload the site. Error is gone.

In Playground: fix via File Browser directly

On a live site: use recovery email link or FTP

Quick Fixes Every Site Owner Should Know

404 errors after migration

Settings > Permalinks > Save Changes - regenerates .htaccess and flushes rewrite rules.

Changes not showing

Hard refresh: Cmd+Shift+R (Mac) or Ctrl+Shift+R (Windows). Then clear your caching plugin.

Stuck maintenance mode

Delete the .maintenance file in your site root via hosting file manager or FTP.

Call your host when:

"Error Establishing DB Connection", disk quota full, or 50x errors that persist after plugin deactivation.

Debrief + Discussion

- 1 What was your go-to first step when something broke before today? How does Site Health or Troubleshooting Mode compare?
- 2 Which of the four quick fixes surprised you most? Which one will you use first?
- 3 Could you use Playground to safely reproduce an issue before contacting your host?

Today you used Site Health to read your site's diagnostics, isolated a plugin conflict without affecting visitors, triggered and fixed a Critical Error, and learned four quick fixes - all without a developer, hosting access, or touching a live site.

Resources + Next Steps

Site Health Screen - Official docs for the built-in Tools > Site Health	https://wordpress.org/documentation/article/site-health-screen/
Common WordPress Errors - Advanced Administration Handbook	https://developer.wordpress.org/advanced-administration/wordpress/common-errors/
Health Check & Troubleshooting Plugin - Free plugin that adds Troubleshooting Mode	https://wordpress.org/plugins/health-check/
Troubleshooting Plugin & Theme Conflicts - Learn WordPress lesson	https://learn.wordpress.org/lesson/troubleshooting-your-site-plugin-and-theme-conflicts/
Support Forums - Free community help for any WordPress issue	https://wordpress.org/support/forums/
WordPress Playground - Your zero-risk sandbox for testing and reproducing issues	https://playground.wordpress.net



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