

Using AI in your WordPress dashboard

Facilitator Guide

Overview

Topic	Using AI in your WordPress dashboard
Duration	60 minutes
Audience	Content creators and site builders — no coding required; Beginner to Intermediate
Prerequisite	None — participants need only a browser and a free API key (instructions provided)
Environment	WordPress Playground (playground.wordpress.net) — no account or local install needed
Materials	Device with a modern browser and internet access; a ~300-word draft blog post prepared before the session using any AI chatbot

Version note: Steps were verified against WordPress 7.0 (released May 2026) and the AI plugin (by WordPress.org Contributors) in WordPress Playground in May 2026. The AI plugin updates frequently — experiment names, settings paths, and available features may change between plugin versions. Run through the activity yourself the day before your event to catch any UI shifts. Plugin changelog: wordpress.org/plugins/ai/#developers

Learning Objectives

By the end of this activity, participants will be able to:

- * **Set up the WordPress AI plugin in a Playground environment and connect it to a free AI provider API key.**
- * **Use at least three AI-assisted writing tools inside the WordPress block editor (such as title generation, content resizing, and alt text generation).**
- * **Enable and test AI-powered comment moderation in the WordPress admin.**
- * Evaluate which AI experiments are useful for their specific content workflow and explain why they would or would not enable them on a real site.
- * Distinguish between features that are stable and enabled by default versus experiments that must be opted into, and explain what that distinction means for site owners making production decisions.

Green / bold = beginner entry point. All participants can achieve the first three objectives. Parts 4 and 5 build toward the intermediate objectives.

Pre-Activity Preparation (send to participants before the event)

Ask participants to complete one step before arriving at the session. Include this in your event reminder or invitation:

For participants: Before the session, open any AI chatbot (ChatGPT, Google Gemini, Claude, or another of your choice) and ask it to write a 300-word blog post on any topic you like. Copy the output and keep it somewhere easy to paste from (a notes app, a text file, or just leave the chatbot tab open). You will paste this into WordPress during the activity. No WordPress account or installation is needed before the session.

Why this matters: The AI plugin's writing tools work best on existing content. Participants who arrive with a draft post ready can move through the experiments faster and compare AI suggestions against their own writing in real time. Participants who do not prepare can write a quick paragraph on the spot, but the experience is richer with a full draft.

What Participants Need

- * A device with a modern web browser (Chrome, Firefox, Edge, or Safari)
- * An internet connection

- * A free Google Gemini API key from aistudio.google.com (click Get API key) — no credit card required. OpenAI and Anthropic keys also work if participants already have them. The AI plugin is provider-neutral: it works with any supported provider.
- * The WordPress Playground URL: playground.wordpress.net — no account or install needed. Load this in a browser tab before the session starts to confirm it works on your venue's network.
- * A ~300-word draft blog post prepared using any AI chatbot (see Pre-Activity Preparation above).

Note: Playground uses WebAssembly to run PHP in the browser. First load may take 20 to 30 seconds on slower connections. Test everything at your venue before the session.

Facilitator Setup Notes

- * Run through the complete setup flow yourself before the session (Parts 1 through 5 below). The setup takes 5 to 10 minutes. The flow is: Playground → enable Playground sidebar and select the latest WordPress RC → Settings > Connectors (click Install on the AI plugin, then install your provider and paste API key) → Settings > AI (toggle Enable AI on, then enable experiments). Know where every settings screen is before your participants do.
 - * The AI plugin is in active development and updates frequently. The morning of your event, install it fresh in Playground and confirm the experiment names match this guide. Plugin changelog: wordpress.org/plugins/ai/#developers.
 - * Prepare a shared demo API key as a backup for participants who could not get their own key before the session. A Google Gemini free-tier key works. Set a daily usage limit in the Google AI Studio console before sharing it with a room.
 - * For the Comment Moderation experiment (Part 4), you will need at least one test comment. Create a test post, publish it, and leave a comment on it before the activity begins. A comment with mild negative sentiment works well for a live moderation demo.
 - * Playground runs entirely in the browser tab. If a participant closes or refreshes the tab, the environment resets. Warn participants at the start: do not close or refresh the Playground tab during the activity.
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Part 1: Setup (15 minutes)

Everyone opens Playground and works through the setup flow together. Walk the room through each step on a projector or shared screen. Keep a live Playground tab visible as you narrate.

Open WordPress Playground

1. Open playground.wordpress.net in a browser tab. WordPress loads in the browser — no installation or account required. Playground auto-logs you in as admin and takes you directly to **Dashboard**.

Select a WordPress Release Candidate

2. In the Playground toolbar, click the Playground icon to open the Playground sidebar. Under **WordPress version**, select the latest Release Candidate (RC). Playground reloads with the selected WordPress version.

Install the AI Plugin

3. Go to **Settings > Connectors**. Click **Install** next to the AI plugin. The plugin installs and activates automatically.

Connect an AI Provider

4. Go to **Settings > Connectors**. Click **Install** next to your chosen provider (Google, OpenAI, or Anthropic). An **API KEY** field expands inline. Paste your API key into that field.
5. Where to get a key for each provider:
 - * **Google Gemini (recommended — required for image generation):** aistudio.google.com — free, no credit card required. Sign in with a Google account, click Get API key, create a key, and copy it.
 - * **OpenAI:** platform.openai.com/api-keys — requires a paid plan. Sign in, go to API keys, and create a new secret key.
 - * **Anthropic:** console.anthropic.com — requires a paid plan. Go to API keys in the console and create a key.

Enable AI and Verify the Experiments Panel

6. Go to **Settings > AI**. At the top right of the page, toggle **Enable AI** to On. The individual experiment toggles become active. You should now see the full Experiments panel — setup is complete.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Part 1 is the most variable part of this activity. API keys, network speed, and plugin download timing can vary by participant. Build in a couple of extra minutes here. If anyone is stuck, have them use your shared demo key and keep moving. No one should be blocked past the 15-minute mark.

Part 2: Image Generation and Editing (5 minutes)

Image Generation must be enabled before use — it is not on by default. First enable it in Settings > AI, then try it here as a warm-up before the main experiments tour.

Enable Image Generation

1. Go to **Settings > AI**. Find **Image Generation and Editing** and toggle it on. Return to the post editor.
2. Go to **Posts > Add New Post**. Before pasting the draft content, add an Image block: click the + inserter and choose **Image**.
3. In the Image block toolbar, click the **AI Generate** button (it may appear as a sparkle or wand icon). Type a short image prompt — for example, 'a calm workspace with a laptop and coffee cup' — and click Generate. An AI-generated image appears in the block.
4. Try the edit function: with the image selected, look for an **Edit with AI** option in the block toolbar or sidebar. Enter an edit prompt — for example, 'make it look like a watercolor painting' — and apply the edit.

☐ **Facilitator tip:** Image generation depends on the connector provider — Google Gemini supports it, but Anthropic and OpenAI API keys may not. If a participant's Generate button is greyed out or returns an error, have them check their provider or use your shared Google demo key. Once the image is generated, walk through Edit with AI together. This is a good moment to discuss prompt engineering: the more specific the edit prompt, the better the result.

Part 3: Editor Experiments (30 minutes)

The core of the activity. Participants enable all nine Editor Experiments and work through them using the draft blog post they prepared before the session.

Enable all Editor Experiments

1. Go to **Settings > AI**. Under **Editor Experiments**, toggle on all nine experiments using the individual switches or click **Enable all**. Settings save automatically — no Save Changes button needed. Return to the post editor.
2. Go to **Posts > Add New Post** (or reopen the post you started in Part 2). Paste the ~300-word draft blog post you prepared before the session into the post body using the Paragraph block. If you did not prepare a draft, write two to three sentences on any topic now.

Title Generation

3. Click in the **Add title** field at the top of the editor. Look for an AI suggestion icon (sparkle or wand). Click it to generate title options based on your post content. Select the title you prefer, or edit the suggestion.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Title Generation is often the fastest experiment to grasp. Ask the group: 'Does the suggested title match what your post is actually about? What would you change?' This starts a useful conversation about AI as a draft-starter rather than a final answer.

Excerpt Generation

4. In the Document settings sidebar (click the document icon in the top right), find the **Excerpt** panel. Click the AI Generate button next to the excerpt field. Review the suggested excerpt and edit it if needed.

Meta Description Generation

5. Still in the Document settings sidebar, look for the **Meta Description** panel (added by the AI plugin). Generate a meta description from your content. Note: if your site has an SEO plugin installed (such as Yoast SEO or Rank Math), the AI plugin integrates directly with it — the meta description field appears inside the SEO plugin's panel rather than as a separate item.

Content Classification

6. In the Document settings sidebar, find the **Categories** and **Tags** panels. Look for an AI suggestion button in each. Click to generate category and tag suggestions based on your content. Accept or reject each suggestion individually.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Content Classification works best when the site already has some categories and tags defined. In a fresh Playground install, the AI can only suggest terms — they may or may not match existing taxonomy terms. On a real site with an established category structure, this feature is more useful. Worth naming this for the group.

Content Resizing

7. Select a paragraph of text in the post body. In the block toolbar that appears, look for the AI icon. Try at least two of the three options: **Shorten**, **Expand**, and **Rephrase**. Compare the result to your original text.

□ **Stretch goal:** Faster participants can try selecting different paragraph sizes and comparing how Shorten and Expand behave on a short paragraph versus a long one. The AI applies different heuristics depending on content length.

Content Summarization

8. Select all the text in your post (Ctrl+A / Cmd+A works inside the block editor). Look for the AI Summarize option in the block toolbar. Generate a summary of the full post. Note how

the summary differs from the excerpt you generated earlier (Excerpt Generation targets search-result snippets; Content Summarization produces a prose overview).

Alt Text Generation

9. Click the image you generated in Part 2 (or upload a new image to the post). In the Image block sidebar, look for the AI Generate button next to the **Alternative text** field. Generate alt text, then read it carefully. Does it accurately describe what is in the image? Edit if needed.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Alt text is both an accessibility requirement and an SEO signal. This is a good moment to connect to the SEO Foundations activity if your group has done it: "Descriptive alt text helps screen readers understand the image and helps search engines index your visual content." The AI-generated text is a starting point, not a final answer — always review it for accuracy.

Review Notes

10. In the post editor toolbar (top bar), look for the AI or Review button. Click **Review Notes** to run a full analysis of your post. The plugin reads your content block by block and adds inline Notes with suggestions for Accessibility, Readability, Grammar, and SEO. Read through several notes to understand what kinds of suggestions the AI makes.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Review Notes is one of the more powerful experiments. Give participants two to three minutes to read the notes before moving on. Ask: 'What did the AI catch that you would not have thought to check? What suggestion do you disagree with?' This surfaces the right conversation about AI as an assistant, not an authority.

Refine from Notes

11. After reviewing the Notes, look for the **Refine from Notes** option in the post toolbar. Click it to apply the AI's suggested edits automatically. Compare the before and after by opening the post Revisions (Document settings > Revisions).

□ **Facilitator tip:** Refine from Notes pairs directly with Review Notes: review first, then apply. Point out that participants can review, disagree with some suggestions, and still run Refine from Notes — the AI applies what it can based on the notes that remain. Revisions let you undo any change you do not like.

Part 4: Admin Experiments (5 minutes)

Two experiments that operate at the site admin level rather than inside the post editor. Enable Admin Experiments in Settings > AI before this section.

Enable Admin Experiments

1. Go to **Settings > AI**. Confirm **Enable AI** is still On (top right). Under **Admin Experiments**, toggle on **Comment Moderation** and **Abilities Explorer**. Settings save automatically.

Comment Moderation

2. Go to **Settings > Discussion**. You should see a new AI Comment Moderation section. Review the available options (toxicity threshold, sentiment analysis settings). Enable moderation.
3. Go to **Comments** in the admin sidebar. If you have a test comment (from the facilitator setup step), you will see an AI score or moderation status next to it. Show the group how the AI flags and scores a comment.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Comment Moderation is most useful for high-traffic sites with comment sections. Ask the group: 'If you run an active blog or community site, would you want AI moderating comments automatically, or would you want to review each flag yourself?' There is no right answer — this is about surfacing the tradeoff.

Abilities Explorer (brief demo)

4. Go to **Tools > Abilities Explorer**. This tool lists all the abilities registered via the WordPress Abilities API (introduced in WordPress 6.9). Browse the list to see what kinds of actions are registered on this site.

□ **Facilitator tip:** Abilities Explorer is developer-facing: it is for plugin and theme authors who want to inspect what capabilities and actions are registered on a site. Most participants in a users-focused meetup will not need this day-to-day, but it is worth a two-minute look so they know it exists. If someone in the room builds plugins or themes, they will find it immediately useful.

Part 5: Discussion and Wrap-Up (5 minutes)

Discussion questions:

1. Which experiment was most useful for your actual content workflow? Which one would you turn on right now if this were your real site?
2. You needed an API key from an external provider to use these features. What does that mean for you as a site owner in terms of data, cost, and control?
3. After today: is AI-assisted writing something you want to build into your process, use occasionally for specific tasks, or skip entirely? What changed your thinking, if anything?

The win: Today you set up the WordPress AI plugin from scratch using the Beta Tester workflow, connected it to a free API provider, and worked through twelve AI-assisted features inside a real WordPress editor. You know which experiments are stable versus experimental, how to enable and disable them individually, and what tradeoffs to consider before turning them on for a live site. That is a meaningful foundation for making AI decisions as a WordPress site owner.

Next steps for participants:

- * [WordPress AI plugin \(wordpress.org/plugins/ai\)](https://wordpress.org/plugins/ai)
- * [WordPress AI Team handbook \(make.wordpress.org/ai/handbook\)](https://make.wordpress.org/ai/handbook)
- * [WordPress Beta Tester plugin](#)
- * [Google AI Studio — free Gemini API key \(aistudio.google.com\)](https://aistudio.google.com)
- * [Abilities API — developer documentation \(developer.wordpress.org/apis/abilities\)](https://developer.wordpress.org/apis/abilities)
- * [WP_Clue AI News — community newsletter tracking WordPress AI developments](#)

Background: What the AI Plugin Is Built On

Understanding a bit of the underlying architecture helps you answer participant questions.

- * **Provider-neutral design** — The AI plugin does not lock you into one AI service. You choose your own provider (Google, OpenAI, Anthropic, or others) and connect via API key. You can switch providers at any time by updating your key in Settings > Connectors.
- * **WP AI Client** — Introduced in WordPress 7.0 (released May 2026), this is the standardized way WordPress core and plugins communicate with AI services. The AI plugin uses this interface.
- * **Abilities API** — Introduced in WordPress 6.9. Allows plugins to register discrete 'abilities' — specific AI-powered actions — that other plugins and themes can discover and invoke. The Abilities Explorer experiment in Part 4 is a UI for browsing these.
- * **Experimental by design** — The Experiments architecture is intentional: the plugin ships features as opt-in experiments while the team gathers feedback, then promotes stable ones to default-on features over time. This is why Image Generation is a stable Feature and everything else is behind a toggle.

Coming Soon: Type Ahead — an inline writing suggestion feature that predicts the next sentence or phrase as you type — appeared in earlier previews of the AI plugin but is not present in the current UI. It may be re-introduced in a future version. If participants ask about it, let them know it was removed from the active experiment list and may return.

Sources

All URLs verified as of May 2026. Check before running the activity.

1. [WordPress AI plugin — wordpress.org plugin page](#) — Official plugin listing. Includes install instructions, changelog, and support forum.
2. [WordPress AI Team handbook — make.wordpress.org/ai/handbook](#) — Authoritative source for AI team decisions, architecture, and roadmap. Primary reference for background section.
3. [WordPress Beta Tester plugin](#) — Official plugin for accessing WordPress beta and RC builds. Source for Beta/RC Only channel guidance in Part 1.
4. [Google AI Studio — Gemini API](#) — Free-tier API access for the Gemini model family. No credit card required. Verified free as of May 2026.
5. [WordPress Abilities API — developer documentation](#) — Official WordPress developer documentation for the Abilities API (introduced in 6.9). Source for Abilities Explorer background.
6. [WordPress Playground](#) — Browser-based WordPress environment using WebAssembly. No installation or account required.
7. [Make WordPress AI — weekly team updates](#) — Source for current development status and experiment roadmap.