

Seven things every site owner should know about WordPress 7

WordPress 7 shipped on May 20. The update is real, it is safe to take, and there is no fire. These are the seven changes worth knowing about before you log in tomorrow morning.

1. The Command Palette (⌘K / Ctrl+K) is the change you will actually use

Press ⌘K on a Mac, or Ctrl+K on a Windows machine, anywhere in the admin. A search bar opens. Type a few letters of the thing you want to do (users, permalinks) and the matching screens appear. Arrow down, press Enter, you are there. If you have used the same shortcut in Slack or Notion or any modern code editor, it will feel familiar within ten seconds. Stop trying to remember where things are buried in the menu; just remember what they are called.

2. AI Connectors is a settings screen, not a feature

Settings → Connectors lets you store an AI provider's credentials once. From then on, any plugin that uses AI on your site reads from there instead of asking for an API key. Think of it like the SMTP screen — credentials live in one place, every plugin reads from there. If you are not already paying for OpenAI, Anthropic, or Google, you can skip this screen entirely. The screen is not going anywhere; come back to it the day a plugin you want to use asks for it.

3. The "Modern" admin colour scheme is the new default

Your dashboard will look different tomorrow morning. Nothing has moved. New default colour scheme (called Modern), refreshed typography, small fade animations when you click between screens. Posts is still where Posts has always been. Every keyboard shortcut still does what it did. If you preferred the old look, switch back at Users → Profile → Admin Colour Scheme, where "Fresh" is still in the list.

4. Visual Revisions finally shows you what changed

Open any post's Revisions screen and you now see two versions side by side with the differences highlighted. Modified text is highlighted yellow, deletions in red, additions in green. A timeline slider at the bottom walks through every save. The conversation that used to be "I think someone changed the second paragraph last week, can you check" becomes a thirty-second look at the timeline.

5. Appearance → Fonts is the page that replaces a plugin

Appearance → Fonts is the dedicated screen where you upload a font file or pick from the curated library, and the font is available across your site. If you have a fonts-only plugin installed (Use Any Font, Google Fonts Typography, one of the others), the next monthly maintenance pass is when you replace it with the built-in page and remove the plugin. Fewer plugins is fewer things that can break.

6. PHP 8.3 or higher is the version check you do once a year

WordPress will still run on older PHP versions, but anything below 8.3 will surface a "your site is at risk" warning in the dashboard. Log into your hosting account, find the PHP version setting (PHP is the engine WordPress runs on), and raise it to 8.3 or higher. Most hosts let you do this in two clicks. If you do not know how, your host's support chat will walk you through it.

7. Real-time collaboration was pulled twelve days before launch

The feature that would have let two editors work on the same page at the same time was removed on May 8. The published reason was a cluster of engineering problems: race conditions (two writers saving the same edit at the same instant), load on the server, memory on long editing sessions. The team tested it, found the cases where it fell over, and pulled it back into the lab. That call does not usually make the headlines. It should. The feature will land in a future release.

The 14-day safe-upgrade checklist

The rule for any major WordPress release is the same: back up first, update on a non-publishing day, have a way to roll back. Walk through this checklist over fourteen days. Tick each line as you complete it. Most sites finish the actual update in under fifteen minutes; the surrounding days are the discipline that keeps it that way.

Day 1 — PHP version check

- Log into your hosting dashboard and find the PHP version setting
 - If it shows anything below 8.3, switch it up to 8.3 or higher
 - Reload your site in an incognito window and confirm everything still loads
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Day 2 — Full backup

- Take a hosting-provider snapshot if your host offers one (the one-click kind)
 - If your host does not offer snapshots, run an UpdraftPlus or BackWPup backup manually
 - Download the backup file to your own computer so it does not only live on the server
 - Note the date and time of the backup somewhere you can find it next week
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Days 3 to 5 — Test on a staging copy

- Clone your site to a staging environment (most hosts have a one-click staging option)
 - Run the WordPress 7 update on the staging copy, not the live site
 - Open every page type on the staging copy: home page, a blog post, a contact form, and a shop page if your site has one
 - Try to log in, write a draft post, upload an image, publish it — confirm the basic workflow still works
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Days 6 to 8 — Fix anything the clone surfaced

- List any plugin or theme that misbehaved on the staging copy
 - Check each one for a WordPress-7-compatible update from its author
 - If a plugin has no update and has been abandoned, find a replacement before you touch the live site
 - Re-run the staging update after each fix to confirm the issue is resolved
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Days 9 to 10 — The production update

- Pick a low-traffic window (early morning, weekend, your own non-publishing day)
 - Take a fresh backup of the live site immediately before starting
 - Update WordPress core first, then plugins, then theme, in that order
 - Load the front page in an incognito window and click through the same pages you tested on staging
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Days 11 to 14 — Four-day health confirmation

- Check the dashboard each morning for any new warning notices
 - Check the Site Health screen at Tools → Site Health and resolve any new red items
 - If you are already paying for an AI provider (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google), set it up at Settings → Connectors. Otherwise, skip — come back when a plugin asks for it
 - Press ⌘K (or Ctrl+K) and use the Command Palette as your only way of getting around the admin for one full day, to build the muscle memory
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