We're done editing, friends! We have official signoff to ship from Andrea!

In WordPress 5.5, your site gets new power in three major areas: Speed. Search. Security.

Speed

Posts and pages feel faster, thanks to lazy-loaded images.
Images give your story a lot of impact, but they can sometimes make your site seem slow.

In WordPress 5.5, images wait to load until they're just about to scroll into view. The technical term is 'lazy loading.'

On mobile, lazy loading can also keep browsers from loading files meant for other devices. That can save your readers money on data — and help preserve battery life.

Search

Say hello to your new sitemap.
WordPress sites work well with search engines.

Now, by default, WordPress 5.5 includes an XML sitemap that helps search engines discover your most important pages from the very minute you go live.

So more people will find your site sooner, giving you more time to engage, retain and convert them to subscribers, customers or whatever fits your definition of success.

Security

Auto-updates for Plugins and Themes

Now you can set plugins and themes to update automatically — or not! — in the WordPress admin. So you always know your site is running the latest code available.

You can also turn auto-updates on or off for each plugin or theme you have installed — all on the same screens you've always used.

Update by uploading ZIP files

If updating plugins and themes manually is your thing, now that's easier too — just upload a ZIP file.

Highlights from the block editor

Once again, the latest WordPress release packs a long list of exciting new features for the block editor. For example:

Inline image editing

Crop, rotate, and zoom your photos right from the image block. If you spend a lot of time on images, this could save you hours!

Block patterns

New block patterns make it simple and fun to create complex, beautiful layouts, using combinations of text and media that you can mix and match to fit your story.

You will also find block patterns in a wide variety of plugins and themes, with more added all the time. Pick any of them from a single dropdown — just click and go!

The New Block Directory

Now it’s easier than ever to find the block you need. The new block directory is built right into the block editor, so you can install new block types to your site without ever leaving the editor.

And so much more.

The highlights above are a tiny fraction of the new block-editor features you've just installed. Open the block editor and enjoy!

Accessibility

Every release adds improvements to the accessible publishing experience, and that remains true for WordPress 5.5.

Now you can copy links in media screens and modal dialogs with a button, instead of trying to highlight a line of text.

You can also move meta boxes with the keyboard, and edit images in WordPress with your assistive device, as it can read you the instructions in the image editor.

For Developers

5.5 also brings a big box of changes just for developers.

Server-side registered blocks in the REST API

The addition of block types endpoints means that JavaScript apps (like the block editor) can retrieve definitions for any blocks registered on the server.

Dashicons

The Dashicons library has received its final update in 5.5. It adds 39 block-editor icons along with 26 others.

Defining environments

WordPress now has a standardized way to define a site's environment type (staging, production, etc). Retrieve that type with `wp_get_environment_type()` and execute only the appropriate code.

Passing data to template files

The template loading functions (`get_header()`, `get_template_part()`, etc.) have a new `$args` argument. So now you can pass an entire array's worth of data to those templates.

More changes for developers

- The PHPMailer library just got a major update, going from version 5.2.27 to 6.1.6.
- Now get more fine-grained control of `redirect_guess_404_permalink()`.
- Sites that use PHP's OPcache will see more reliable cache invalidation, thanks to the new `wp_opcache_invalidate()` function during updates (including to plugins and themes).

- New filters let custom post types associated with the `category` taxonomy have a default term beyond “Uncategorized.”
- You will find updated versions of these bundled libraries: SimplePie, Twemoji, Masonry, imagesLoaded, getID3, Moment.js, and clipboard.js.

Check the Field Guide for more!

There’s a lot more for developers to love in WordPress 5.5. To discover more and learn how to make these changes shine on your sites, themes, plugins and more, check the WordPress 5.5 Field Guide.