

# *Database Lesson / Introduction to phpMyAdmin*

[\(Introduction to phpMyAdmin #2309\)](#)

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When you build your WordPress site, write posts, or create pages, you constantly interact with the database. What does it mean, and how can you access this data? Let's dive in.

## **Lesson objectives**

- Understand the difference between your site's files and database
- Explore your site's database using the phpMyAdmin UI
- Get a basic understanding of the structure and tables

## **What's a database?**

Almost all the content that you (and your visitors) create on a WordPress site is stored in a database. Posts, pages, comments, taxonomies, custom posts, theme customizations, user details—none of these is a standalone file. Rather, they are written to and read from a database that WordPress created during the installation.

Explaining how databases work is beyond the scope of this lesson, but it might be helpful to think of them as sophisticated spreadsheets; each table consists of columns and rows. Columns represent data keys, while rows represent the individual values.

For example, the table named `wp_posts` holds all your posts. Every detail of every post is listed as a row in this table, divided into columns that represent the relevant information: The post title is listed under the `post_title` column, the content is under `post_content`, and so forth.

Since the database is ~~a file that's~~ stored and managed along with all other files on your hosting provider's server, you can access it, browse around, and even modify the data.

### Important

The database is perhaps *the most critical* part of your site, and you should only modify it if you have sufficient knowledge.

Think of this lesson as a “look but don't touch” introduction.

## Access the database

To view your database, you need database management software. Most hosting companies offer a browser-based tool called phpMyAdmin, which we'll be using throughout this lesson. If you don't have access to your host's dashboard or prefer to explore the database via the WordPress Admin dashboard, use [SQL Buddy](#), or another [plugin](#) such as Advanced Database Cleaner or WP-Optimize. Don't forget to deactivate and delete the plugin when you're done, to avoid potential problems.

From your hosting dashboard, open cPanel and select **Databases > phpMyAdmin**.

If your hosting company uses a different management platform, check the documentation resources to find how to access phpMyAdmin.

Click on the database's name on the left menu. What you see are all the tables that comprise your WordPress site.

If you have more than one database, and the name doesn't give a hint to which site it belongs, visit the WordPress Admin dashboard:

1. Navigate to **Tools > Site Health**.
2. Click the **Info** tab, scroll down, and click on **Database**.

3. Locate the line **Database name** and return to phpMyAdmin.

## Exploring the tables

Let's inspect two of the most important tables found in every WordPress database:

- The **wp\_options** table stores information about your site's settings. Each row in the table represents a specific setting, including themes and plugins.
- The **wp\_posts** table stores your posts, pages, and custom post types. Each row in the table represents a single post.

### wp\_options

Click on **wp\_options** and look at the two middle columns. The **option\_name** column stores the keys (**siteurl**, **blogname**, **blogdescription**, **admin\_email**, etc.) while the **option\_value** column stores the respective value.

These correspond to the details you set in your Admin's **Settings > General** screen: For example, **siteurl** is the web address that appears as **WordPress Address (URL)**, **blogdescription** is the site **Tagline**, etc.

### wp\_posts

Now click on **wp\_posts**. This table contains many more columns, yet each corresponds to a familiar UI element in the Post Editor. Here are a few examples:

- The **post\_title** column is where you'll see the titles of all your posts.
- The **post\_type** column indicates if this is a post, page, or other type of content.
- The **guid** stores the post URL.
- The **post\_status** indicates if it's a draft or published.

## Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning, the database is *a critical* part of your site, and you should only modify it if you have sufficient knowledge. If you want to optimize, clean, or modify it—whether you use phpMyAdmin or a [plugin](#)—make sure you

know what you're doing and have a backup and recovery solution in place before you start.

 To learn more, visit the [Beginner WordPress Developer](#) Learning Pathway, specifically the lesson titled, [The WordPress database](#).