Plan Your Wordpress Course Platform

This handout contains many of the questions to ask and options to consider shared in the course. Use the arrow to the left of the text to open the section. If you have questions or need further assistance, please get in touch!

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# **Choose Hosting**

## **Web Hosting**

Questions to ask

* How many websites do you need to host?
* Is a free domain name included with hosting fees?
* Is a free security certificate included, sometimes also called SSL (which allows you to safely accept payments)?
* Are there storage limits (how much file storage you have for content)?
* Are there web traffic limits (how much can be downloaded by your site visitors)?
* Is there a backup service included?
* Is there a staging website included (a place where you can test new features/plugins and not mess up your main course website)?
* Do they help with recovery from malware (a website attack by hackers) or are you on your own?

Options to Consider

* [Google Cloud](https://cloud.google.com/wordpress) – Start for FREE, but it’s not free forever
* [Siteground WordPress Hosting](https://www.siteground.com/wordpress-hosting.htm)
* [Nestify (Amazon AWS)](https://nestify.io/pricing/)
* [Learndash cloud](https://www.learndash.com/learndash-cloud/) (If you are planning to use Learndash LMS – LMS Plugin is included, but you may need additional paid plugins to make your site work)
* Additional Options – [https://www.techradar.com/web-hosting/best-web-hosting-service-websit](https://www.techradar.com/web-hosting/best-web-hosting-service-websites)

## **Video Hosting**

Questions to ask

* What is the cost associated to host videos?
* How many videos could you host? Is there a limit to storage size or bandwidth used?
* What is the associated cost?
* Will the service display ads or related content at the end of your videos?
* How easy is it to embed videos from the video hosting service?

Options to Consider

* Youtube – [How to Create a Youtube Channel](https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/1646861?hl=en)
* [Vimeo](https://vimeo.com/upgrade)
* [WP Stateless Plugin](https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-stateless/) – Upload to your site, serve from Google Cloud
* [BunnyNet with PrestoPlayer](https://prestoplayer.com/docs/how-to-use-bunnynet-with-presto-player/)

### Check SSLQuestions to ask

* Does your webhost include a free security certificate, or SSL?
* If not included in your hosting plan, are you able to purchase separately from your webhost?

Options to Consider

* If not provided by your webhost, [read the Forbes article on Best SSL Certificate Services in 2023](https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/software/best-ssl-certificate-services/) and pick a certificate provider.

# **Choose a Domain Name**

Questions to ask

* Is the domain name you want available? Are matching social media URLs also available, if you want to use social media?
* Is it memorable?
* Is it easy to type?
* Does the domain name make it clear what kind of information is on your website?

Options to Consider

* [Cloudflare](https://www.cloudflare.com/products/registrar/)
* [Dotster](https://www.dotster.com/)
* [Godaddy](https://www.godaddy.com/)
* Other Options: <https://www.forbes.com/advisor/business/software/best-domain-registrar/>

# **Choose a Theme**

Questions to ask

* Is there a free version of the theme? Is there a pro version of the theme, and if so what is the cost? Which version works best for you?
* Is it responsive? Does it work on tablets and mobile devices?
* How easy is it to use?

Options to Consider

* [Blocksy](https://creativethemes.com/blocksy/) – So easy to set sitewide colors and fonts, custom post type defaults.
* MasterStudy Starter – Downloads with the MasterStudy LMS Plugin, [view example here](https://masterstudy.stylemixthemes.com/lms-plugin/)
* [Astra](https://wpastra.com/?bsf=11044)
* Explore other options: <https://blog.hubspot.com/website/fastest-loading-wordpress-themes>

# **Choose Plugins**

For all plugins, check the WordPress plugin repository. You want to find out:

* When was the plugin last updated? (avoid anything that’s not been updated within the last year)
* How many people are using it? (More people = more support)
* What versions of WordPress are required in order to use the plugin?
* Is a particular version of php required? What version does your webhost have?
* What languages are supported?

## **LMS**

* [Masterstudy](https://stylemixthemes.com/wordpress-lms-plugin/)
	+ [Documentation](https://docs.stylemixthemes.com/masterstudy-lms/)
	+ [Facebook Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/masterstudylms)
* [LearnDash](https://www.learndash.com/)
	+ [Documentation](https://www.learndash.com/support/)
	+ [Learndash Tips & Tricks Facebook Group](https://www.facebook.com/groups/1020920397944393)
* Other LMS Options

## **Forms**

* [Formidable Forms](https://formidableforms.com/)
* [Gravity Forms](https://www.gravityforms.com/)
* [Other form plugins](https://wordpress.com/go/website-building/the-12-best-wordpress-form-plugins-reviewed/)

## **Block Creators & Page Builders**

### Block Creators

* [Gutenburg Blocks](https://wordpress.com/support/category/content-and-media/blocks/).
* [Stackable](https://wpstackable.com/)
* [Otte](https://wordpress.org/plugins/otter-blocks/)r
* [Other Block Plugin options](https://themeisle.com/blog/best-block-plugins-for-wordpress/)

### Page builders

Not recommended

## **Optimization**

* [Accessibility by Userway](https://wordpress.org/plugins/userway-accessibility-widget/) – This gives course participant control over things like font size and spacing, screen contrast, and gives participants a screen reader.
* [Short Pixel Image Optimization](https://shortpixel.com/products/shortpixel-image-optimizer)– Compresses your images so that your pages load faster. 100 images per month are free
* [WP Mail SMTP](https://wpmailsmtp.com/) – This plugin could make emails you send from your website more reliable.
* [Updraft Plus](https://wordpress.org/plugins/updraftplus/) – This plugin could complete scheduled backups of your website, if your webhost does not do this for you.
* [Enable Media Replace](https://wordpress.org/plugins/enable-media-replace/) – This plugin lets you replace an existing image with a new one… instead of uploading a new one and never deleting the old image. It helps your image library stay smaller over time.
* [Broken Link Checker](https://wordpress.org/plugins/broken-link-checker/) – This plugin helps you find and fix broken links in your website. It does use alot of site resources, so activate the plugin when you want to use it, deactivate when it’s not in use.

## **Security**

* [WP2FA](https://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-2fa/) – This plugin is free for you and your users, and allows you to implement 2 Factor Authentication for your website – where you have to confim it’s you through email or cell phone when logging into a website. This makes your website harder to hack, and ensures that learners are doing their own work.
* [Limit Login Attempts](https://wordpress.org/plugins/limit-login-attempts-reloaded/) – This plugin stops someone from being able to hack into your website by running a program that attempts to guess the password to your website.
* [Malcare](https://www.malcare.com/pricing/) – If your webhost does not offer malware scanning, this plugin will do it for you. It can also keep you up to date on when your plugins need to be updated, and it will let you know if your website goes down for any reason.

## **Extra Customizations**

 [Admin Menu Editor](https://wordpress.org/plugins/admin-menu-editor/) – This plugin lets you reorganize/hide/add things to the admin interface of wordpress.

 [Advanced Custom Fields](https://wordpress.org/plugins/advanced-custom-fields/) – This plugin lets you add custom fields to your website pages. It can let you be more consistent with the specific information you display, for example, on a course homepage or on a lesson. You would then need to alter the page template for that type of page to display those fields.

 [WooCommerce](https://docs.stylemixthemes.com/masterstudy-lms/woocommerce/woocommerce-integration) or Surecart- If you need advanced checkout options, product types in addition to courses (such as face to face training payment or physical products), or payment processors other than stripe/paypal, you may want to consider WooCommerce.

 [NextEnd Social Login](https://wordpress.org/plugins/nextend-facebook-connect/) – Let users login with their facebook or google credentials.

 [Uncanny Automator](https://wordpress.org/plugins/uncanny-automator/)– When something happens in your courses, make something else happen, from sorting users into groups, to sending emails or adding a line to a spreadsheet.

 [AI Engine](https://wordpress.org/plugins/ai-engine/)– Brainstorm, create templates, use speech to text. AI is the new latest greatest thing to play with. 😉