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FREE CHECKLIST

RELEASE WATCH · SITE PREP

# Before the next WordPress release

A one-pass checklist for getting a WordPress site ready for a major core update. Work through it during beta and release candidate, then use the last section on release day.

**4** phases **30** checks Print it or tick it on screen

## 01 During beta

WEEKS BEFORE RELEASE

- [ ] **Read the roadmap and dev notes**
  Flag every change that touches blocks, APIs, or features your site uses.
- [ ] **Install WordPress Beta Tester on staging**
  Pick “Beta/RC only” so you get each beta and release candidate. Never on production.
- [ ] **List every plugin and theme**
  Note version, last update, and “Tested up to” on WordPress.org.
- [ ] **Walk the critical paths**
  Forms, search, login, checkout, booking. Whatever earns money or leads.
- [ ] **Test with the keyboard**
  Tab through menus, forms, and modals. New admin or editor UI can shift focus order.
- [ ] **Make a staging copy**
  Same PHP version, same plugins, same theme as production.
- [ ] **Check your PHP version**
  Compare it with the version the release notes recommend. Plan a host change if you are behind.
- [ ] **Open the editor on your busiest templates**
  Insert custom blocks, save, reload. Watch the browser console for errors.
- [ ] **Turn on debug logging on staging**
  Set `WP_DEBUG_LOG` and read `debug.log` for new notices and deprecations.
- [ ] **Report what breaks**
  Core bugs go to Trac or the Alpha/Beta forum. Plugin bugs go to the plugin’s support page.

## 02 Release candidate

THE FINAL WEEKS

- [ ] **Retest on the latest RC**
  RC is when the code should stop changing. Rerun the critical paths.
- [ ] **Check custom code against dev notes**
  Hooks, filters, and APIs your theme or plugins call. Look for deprecations.
- [ ] **Decide your update timing**
  Release day, or wait for the first minor release on sites with heavy customization.
- [ ] **Chase plugin updates**
  Anything that broke in beta: confirm a fix is released or scheduled.
- [ ] **Review auto-update settings**
  Know which sites will update core and plugins on their own, and when.
- [ ] **Tell clients and editors**
  What changes for them, when the update happens, and who to call.

## 03 Release week

BEFORE YOU CLICK UPDATE

- [ ] **Take a full backup**
  Files and database, stored off the server.
- [ ] **Write down current versions**
  Core, PHP, theme, every plugin. This is your rollback map.
- [ ] **Prove the backup restores**
  A backup you have never restored is a guess.
- [ ] **Pick a low-traffic window**
  And block out time after it to fix things.

## 04 Release day and after

UPDATE, THEN WATCH

- [ ] **Update staging first**
  Then production, once staging passes the critical paths.
- [ ] **Update plugins before or after core, not both at once**
  One change at a time makes the cause of a break obvious.
- [ ] **Clear every cache**
  Page cache, object cache, and CDN.
- [ ] **Smoke test production**
  Home page, a post, the editor, forms, login, checkout.
- [ ] **Check Site Health**
  Tools → Site Health. Fix anything new marked critical.
- [ ] **Verify core files**
  `wp core verify-checksums` confirms nothing was left half-updated.
- [ ] **Watch the error logs for 48 hours**
  PHP logs from your host plus `debug.log` if it is on.
- [ ] **Recheck Core Web Vitals**
  Run PageSpeed Insights on your key templates and compare.
- [ ] **Watch for the first minor release**
  Early fixes usually land within a few weeks of a major release.
- [ ] **Update your notes**
  What broke, what fixed it, how long it took. Next release goes faster.

wp-cli · release prep

```
# Where you are now
wp core version
wp plugin list --fields=name,status,version

# Backup before you update
wp db export pre-update.sql

# After the update
wp core verify-checksums
wp cache flush
```

### Roadmap items are plans, not promises

Features ship only if they are ready in time. Anything still unfinished at beta usually moves to a later release.

Test against the actual beta and RC builds, not the roadmap. That is what lands on your site.

SITE

CORE → TARGET VERSION

PHP VERSION

UPDATE WINDOW

NOTES

Sources: the Make WordPress Core handbook pages on the release cycle and beta testing. The live feature list, schedule, and dev notes are on matthummel.com/wordpress-release-watch, updated twice a day.



matthummel.com

Need a hand with an update? matthummel.com/contact

Track the next release