

WordPress Intermediate Skills: The Next Steps

Advance beyond basics with essential skills for theme customization, plugin management, and site optimization for WordPress users.

Programming Instructor: David Mitchell • 5 sections • 59 lessons • 20.00h total

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About this course

If you're comfortable with WordPress basics but need to handle more complex tasks, this course addresses the challenges of theme modifications, plugin conflicts, and site performance. Many users find themselves stuck when trying to personalize their site beyond standard options.

You'll learn to explore theme file structures, implement child themes, manage advanced plugins, optimize speed and security, create custom content types, and use introductory PHP and hooks. The course includes video lessons, case studies, and practical exercises to help you apply these skills directly.

Course curriculum

Theme Customization Deep Dive

- **Understanding WordPress Theme File Structure (12m)**
Learn how theme files are organized, including template files and assets, to see what controls your site's appearance.
- **Navigating the Template Hierarchy (18m)**
Discover how WordPress decides which template to use for each page type, helping you target your customizations.
- **Creating and Implementing a Child Theme (25m)**
Step-by-step guide to setting up a child theme so you can modify themes safely without losing changes on updates.
- **Customizing Themes with Child Theme Modifications (18m)**
Apply practical changes using your child theme, from color adjustments to layout tweaks, for a personalized design.
- **Basic CSS Tweaks for Design Personalization (12m)**
Use simple CSS to alter fonts, colors, and spacing, giving your site a unique look without coding.
- **Introduction to PHP in WordPress Themes (25m)**
Get started with PHP snippets to add dynamic content and functionality to your theme files.
- **Practical PHP: Customizing Header and Footer (18m)**
Hands-on exercise to modify header and footer sections using PHP, based on real-world examples.
- **Case Study: Theme Overhaul for a Business Site (32m)**
Walk through a complete theme customization project, applying skills from file structure to PHP tweaks.

Advanced Plugin Management

- **Selecting Plugins for Compatibility and Efficiency (12m)**
Criteria for choosing plugins that work well together and don't slow down your site.
- **Configuring Plugins for Optimal Performance (18m)**
Settings and best practices to ensure your plugins run efficiently without unnecessary overhead.
- **Diagnosing Plugin Conflicts Step-by-Step (25m)**
Techniques to identify which plugins are causing issues and how to resolve conflicts.
- **Troubleshooting Common Plugin-Related Issues (18m)**
Solve frequent problems like white screens, slow loads, and functionality errors from plugins.
- **Using Plugins for SEO Enhancements (15m)**
Configure SEO plugins to improve your site's search visibility and content optimization.
- **Security-Focused Plugin Configuration (20m)**
Set up plugins to protect your site from threats, including firewalls and malware scanners.
- **Plugin Management Tools and Techniques (12m)**
Tools to manage plugin updates, backups, and performance monitoring effectively.

- **Real-World Case: Resolving a Plugin Conflict (25m)**
Analyze and fix a typical plugin conflict scenario, applying diagnostic skills.
- **Advanced Plugin Settings for E-commerce Sites (30m)**
Customize plugins for online stores, focusing on WooCommerce integrations and performance.
- **Automating Plugin Updates Safely (15m)**
Set up automatic updates with safeguards to prevent site breakdowns.
- **Integrating Third-Party Services via Plugins (20m)**
Connect your site to external services like email marketing and analytics using plugins.
- **Documenting and Managing Plugin Support (18m)**
Best practices for keeping plugin documentation and handling support requests.

Performance and Security Optimization

- **Introduction to Site Performance Metrics (12m)**
Key metrics like load time and core web vitals to measure your site's speed.
- **Implementing Caching Solutions for Speed (25m)**
Set up page caching, browser caching, and object caching to reduce server load.
- **Image Optimization Techniques for the Web (18m)**
Compress and format images to improve load times without losing quality.
- **Setting Up CDN Integration in 2026 (20m)**
Connect to content delivery networks to serve assets faster globally, with current best practices.
- **Security Hardening: Essential Steps (25m)**
Apply security measures like two-factor authentication, login protection, and file permissions.
- **Conducting Regular Vulnerability Scans (18m)**
Use tools to scan for security weaknesses and apply fixes proactively.
- **Monitoring Site Speed and Uptime Tools (15m)**
Set up monitoring services to track performance and get alerts for downtime.
- **Case Study: Optimizing a High-Traffic WordPress Site (32m)**
Real example of improving speed and security for a site with heavy visitor traffic.
- **Advanced: Database Optimization (20m)**
Clean and optimize your WordPress database for better performance.
- **Automating Performance and Security Checks (18m)**
Schedule automated scans and reports to maintain site health over time.

Custom Content Structures

- **Understanding Custom Post Types (12m)**
Learn what custom post types are and why they're useful for different content needs.
- **Creating Custom Post Types with Plugins (18m)**
Use plugins to register custom post types without writing code.
- **Managing Taxonomies for Better Organization (15m)**
Set up custom taxonomies to categorize and filter your content effectively.
- **Introduction to Advanced Custom Fields (ACF) (20m)**
Get started with ACF to add structured data to your posts and pages.

- **Adding Custom Fields to Posts and Pages (18m)**
Practical guide to creating and using custom fields for varied content types.
- **Building Custom Content for Directories (25m)**
Design a directory site using custom post types and fields for listings.
- **Portfolio Site Content Structure (20m)**
Organize portfolio items with custom types and fields for a professional display.
- **Using ACF for Complex Layouts (30m)**
Create flexible page layouts with ACF's repeater and group fields.
- **Integrating Custom Fields with Templates (22m)**
Display custom field data in your theme templates using PHP or shortcodes.
- **Case Study: Directory Site with Custom Content (35m)**
Build a complete directory from scratch, applying custom post types and fields.
- **Advanced Querying of Custom Content (25m)**
Write custom queries to display specific content based on custom fields and taxonomies.
- **Displaying Custom Content on the Frontend (20m)**
Techniques for showing custom content in loops and archives on your site.
- **User Roles and Permissions for Custom Content (15m)**
Manage who can create and edit custom content types with role-based access.
- **Backup and Migration of Custom Structures (18m)**
Ensure your custom content survives site moves and backups.
- **Future-Proofing Your Content Architecture (20m)**
Plan your content structures for scalability and ease of management.

Introductory Development Techniques

- **Basics of PHP for WordPress Customization (15m)**
Fundamental PHP concepts needed to modify WordPress themes and plugins.
- **Writing Your First PHP Snippet (18m)**
Step-by-step to creating a simple PHP function for a common task.
- **Understanding the WordPress Hooks System (25m)**
Learn how hooks allow you to modify or extend WordPress functionality.
- **Using Actions to Add Functionality (20m)**
Implement action hooks to run custom code at specific points in WordPress.
- **Using Filters to Modify Data (20m)**
Apply filters to change data before it's displayed or saved.
- **Practical: Adding Custom Hooks (22m)**
Create your own hooks for reusable customizations in themes or plugins.
- **Debugging Techniques for Theme and Plugin Issues (18m)**
Use debugging tools and methods to find and fix code errors.
- **Introduction to Version Control with Git (25m)**
Set up Git to track changes in your WordPress projects and collaborate.
- **Setting Up a Local Development Environment (30m)**
Create a local WordPress installation for testing and development.

- **Using Debugging Tools like Query Monitor (15m)**
Use plugins to monitor database queries, hooks, and performance.
- **Case Study: Fixing a Common Bug with Hooks (28m)**
Walk through debugging and resolving a typical issue using hooks and filters.
- **Preparing for Advanced Development (20m)**
Overview of next steps in WordPress development, including theme and plugin creation.
- **Resources for Further Learning (12m)**
Curated list of books, websites, and communities to continue your development journey.
- **Final Project: Implementing Custom Functionality (35m)**
Apply all learned techniques to build a custom feature from start to finish.

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