

The WordPress Hosting Decision-Maker's Checklist & Comparison Guide

Your website is a critical business asset, and your team's time is your most valuable resource. They shouldn't have to compromise their focus to ensure your site remains performant, secure, and supported.

This checklist is designed for decision-makers who want to understand the real-world implications of their hosting choice on their WordPress®^[1] websites.

It will help you cut through the noise, evaluate the factors that affect the total cost of owning and maintaining your business site, and help you identify the solution that best empowers your team to grow your business in a way that prioritizes innovation on your website over tedious server and site management tasks.

Breaking down your hosting options

Before we get into the checklist, let's take a look at some of the factors that go into the total cost of ownership and the differences in how they'll affect a business that's choosing between self-hosting, budget hosting, or managed hosting options.



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Factors to consider	Self-Hosting	Budget Hosting	Managed Hosting for WordPress
Site speed and performance	Entirely dependent on your team's expertise and the quality of your infrastructure. Can be excellent, but will require continuous, hands-on optimization.	Can be unreliable. Performance can degrade due to shared server resources and a lack of advanced optimization features.	High and Consistent. The platform is specifically optimized for WordPress, including advanced caching and integrated CDNs, to ensure fast loading times and uptime.
Security	Your responsibility. Requires your team to implement and monitor everything from firewalls to malware scans to backups on your own servers.	Medium effort. Requires your team to proactively install and manage security plugins and implement best practices to stay safe. You will need to evaluate which security measures your host takes on your behalf and which you'll have to manage.	Proactive and robust. The provider manages enterprise-grade security features, including proactive threat detection, managed firewalls, and daily malware scanning.
Support	None. Your team is entirely responsible for all troubleshooting, and you must rely on internal knowledge or community forums to resolve any issues.	Limited. Support is often restricted to general server problems and is typically not equipped to handle WordPress-specific issues like plugin conflicts.	24/7/365 Expert Support. A team of dedicated WordPress specialists is readily available to assist with a wide range of issues, from performance to plugin errors and updates.
Required Expertise	High. Requires a dedicated, in-house team with expertise in server administration, security, and WordPress development to handle all technical aspects 24/7.	Moderate. Your team must have a solid understanding of WordPress to manage installations, updates, security, and troubleshooting, while the host can handle most server-related issues.	Low. The host handles server management, performance optimization, and security, and helps remedy WordPress-specific issues or interruptions, so your in-house technical experts can refocus their time on innovation.
Each of these factors will affect the total cost of owning, operating, and maintaining your website, which in turn affects each of the business cases that would find the most value in each type of hosting.			
Total Cost of Ownership	Highly variable and unpredictable. Initial hardware costs are low, but the total cost often balloons when considering staff salaries, security incidents, maintenance, and optimizing for the future.	Low initial cost, but may result in hidden costs over time as your team shifts focus to troubleshooting performance issues and integrating third-party plugins and tools.	Predictable, all-inclusive cost. This will result in a higher upfront monthly or annual fee, but that fee covers all essential services to reduce variable costs and provide peace of mind.
Ideal for...	Large organizations with plenty of financial resources and a dedicated IT team to manage complex server configurations, site maintenance, and future innovation.	Hobbyists, small blogs, or businesses with very basic needs that are amenable to hands-on site management and monitoring for potential downtime but require a technical partner for server-side issues.	Businesses that value reliability, security, and team efficiency. Managed hosting is especially helpful for businesses with eCommerce functionality and those that hope to scale functionality or implement future innovations as they grow.

This checklist is a powerful first step toward a more strategic hosting decision. Use these questions to help you determine whether self-hosting, budget hosting, or a fully managed hosting solution is the best choice for your current and future business goals.

Self-Hosting Questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Internal Expertise & Resources: Do we have in-house experts for server administration, WordPress development, and security who can work 24/7?			
Maintenance & Updates: Is our team ready to handle all server and software updates, including new WordPress, plugin, and PHP versions, on their own?			
Performance & Scalability: Can we invest in high-end infrastructure and manage advanced caching and CDNs to ensure optimal performance?			
Security & Backups: Are we prepared to implement and continuously monitor a comprehensive security and a robust disaster recovery plan?			
Cost & Value: Have we calculated the total cost of ownership, including hardware, software, and the salaries of the specialized staff needed for 24/7 maintenance?			
Budget Hosting Questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Internal Expertise & Resources: Does our team have the technical knowledge to manage WordPress, plugins, and themes without dedicated support?			
Performance & Scalability: Are we prepared for potential performance degradation due to shared resources and limited bandwidth?			
Security & Backups: Are we comfortable managing our own security protocols, compliance standards, and backups, knowing these are often not included?			
Support & Troubleshooting: Is our team ready to self-diagnose and resolve WordPress issues with potentially limited support?			
Cost & Value: Have we factored in potential hidden costs for essential features and the time our team will spend troubleshooting?			
Managed Hosting Questions	Yes	No	Unsure
Team Efficiency: Do we want our internal team to focus on content, marketing, and business strategy instead of server management?			
Performance & Scalability: Is consistent performance, guaranteed uptime through an SLA, fast page loading, and a seamless ability to scale critical for our business?			
Proactive Security: Do we value having enterprise-grade security, including SOC2 and ISO 27001:2022 Certification, proactive threat detection, SSL certification, multi-factor authentication, and automated backups handled by experts?			
Expert Support: Is it important to have access to a team of WordPress specialists available 24/7 to quickly resolve issues?			
Predictable Costs: Does a predictable, all-inclusive monthly cost for performance, security, and support sound more appealing than variable costs?			

As your business grows, your hosting needs will evolve. The key is to partner with a provider that both meets your current requirements and can scale with your future success.

If your evaluation points you toward a solution that offers peace of mind, expert support, and a predictable cost structure, we invite you to explore how WP Engine can be a long-term partner on your digital journey!

Get started

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