

# CMS

## WordPress – plugins, widgets and themes

Piotr Fulmański

Wydział Matematyki i Informatyki,  
Uniwersytet Łódzki, Polska

9 grudnia 2015

# Table of contents

# What are plugins?

Simply speaking: *plugins are small scripts files with executable PHP code) that allow us to include new functionality in our WordPress site functionality — functionality that is not available or enabled by default.* We can use WordPress out of the box however, in this case WordPress itself only offers the absolute essential range of features – the ones that are useful to everyone.

At the same time, the platform provides a straightforward way of expanding the abilities of our site by introducing **plugins**.

The idea is simple, if we want our site to be able to handle a specific and new task, we need a plugin for that.

# Where to get plugins?

One of the best place to go for WordPress plugins is the official directory at

<https://wordpress.org/plugins/>

The steps for installing a plugin are quite simple:

- 1 Find the plugin.
- 2 Install and activate it.
- 3 Configure and/or implement it (if necessary).

There are two ways to get the plugin into our WordPress installation:

- Autoinstallation from within the WP Admin.
- Install manually.

Autoinstallation is the recommended method of dealing with plugin installation.

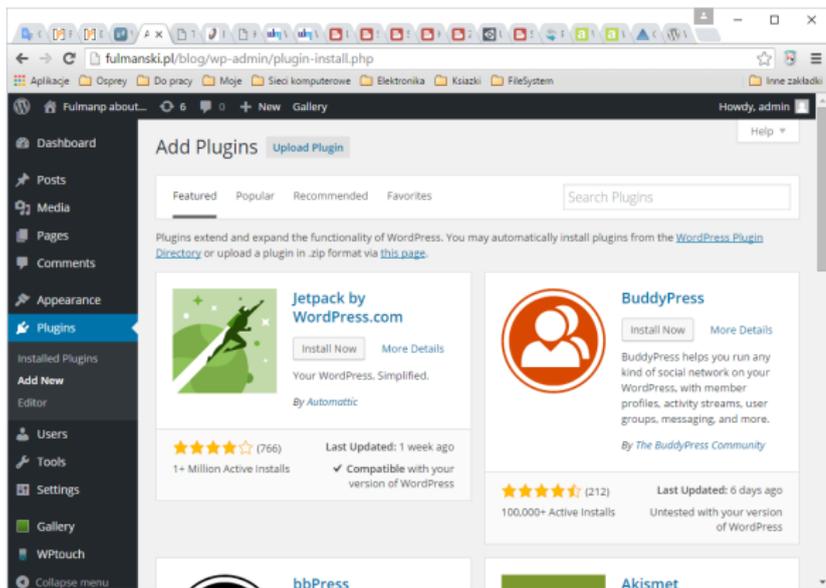
- 1 Navigate to **Plugins | Add New** and search for the plugin you want to install.
- 2 If everything is fine we can proceed by clicking the **Install Now** button, and we're done installing.
- 3 The next screen we see will invite us to activate the plugin.
- 4 Configure the plugin.

# Installing a plugin

## Manual plugin installation

To install a plugin manually, you must start by downloading the plugin archive. At this point, if our server is set up correctly, you'll be able to upload the ZIP file directly by navigating to **Plugins | Add New**, press **Add new** button and next press **Upload Plugin** button.

# Install standalone WordPress version

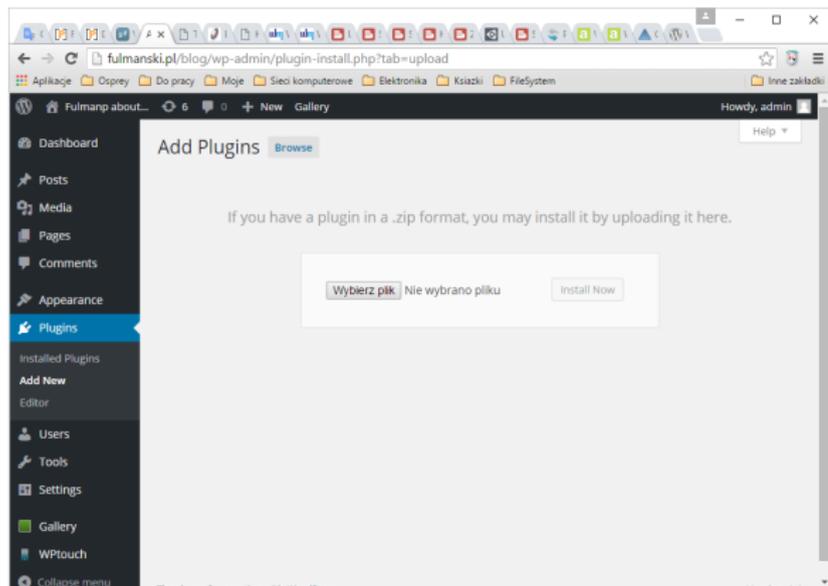


The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the WordPress 'Add Plugins' page. The address bar shows the URL `fulmanski.pl/blog/wp-admin/plugin-install.php`. The page title is 'Add Plugins' with a sub-tab for 'Upload Plugin'. The left sidebar contains navigation links: Dashboard, Posts, Media, Pages, Comments, Appearance, Plugins (highlighted), Installed Plugins, Add New, Editor, Users, Tools, Settings, Gallery, WPTouch, and Collapse menu. The main content area has tabs for 'Featured', 'Popular', 'Recommended', and 'Favorites', along with a search box labeled 'Search Plugins'. Below the tabs, there is a text block explaining that plugins extend WordPress functionality and can be installed from the [WordPress Plugin Directory](#) or uploaded as a .zip file. The featured plugins are:

- Jetpack by WordPress.com**: 'Your WordPress. Simplified.' By Automattic. It has 5 stars (766), 1+ Million Active Installs, and was last updated 1 week ago. It is compatible with the current version of WordPress.
- BuddyPress**: 'BuddyPress helps you run any kind of social network on your WordPress, with member profiles, activity streams, user groups, messaging, and more.' By The BuddyPress Community. It has 4.5 stars (212), 100,000+ Active Installs, and was last updated 6 days ago. It is untested with the current version of WordPress.

At the bottom of the page, the top of two other plugin cards are visible: 'bbPress' and 'Akismet'.

# Install standalone WordPress version



If this automatic uploader doesn't work, we can do this in the following way:

- 1 First extract the ZIP file we downloaded so that it's a folder.
- 2 Using your FTP client, upload this folder inside the `wp-content/plugins/` folder of our WordPress installation. You should be able to see some plugins in that folder that WordPress came with and also `hello.php` file.
- 3 Go to the WP Admin and navigate to **Plugins**. You should see your plugin plugins on this page. Just click on the **Activate** link in the box with your plugin.
- 4 Configure the plugin.

Some plugins are perfectly operational right after activation while others require some additional tuning up. Here are the three most likely scenarios:

- We may not have to do anything. Some plugins simply change the way WordPress does certain things, and activating them is all we need to do.
- We may have to configure a plugin's details before it begins to work. Some plugins need us to make choices and set new settings.
- There may not be a configuration page, but we may have to add some code to one of our theme's template files.

Widgets are one of the native mechanisms in WordPress. Their main purpose is to provide us with an easy-to-use way of customizing the sidebars and footers of our site with the addition of extra content. Even though the most common placement of widgets is indeed the sidebar, the only actual rule is that a widget can be displayed inside a widget area. And a widget area can be anywhere a theme developer wants it to be. Common widgets contain:

- A monthly archive of blog posts
- A clickable list of pages
- A metadata box (containing log in/out links, RSS feed links, and other WordPress links)
- A tag cloud
- A block of text and HTML
- A search box, and so on

These days, most themes are widget-enabled with one or more widget areas available for use. To control the widgets on our new website, navigate to **Appearance | Widgets**

# Choosing and installing themes

There are many places to go for WordPress plugins but we can start at <https://wordpress.org/themes/>

# Choosing and installing themes

A WordPress theme is actually a collection of files in a folder. There are no special or unusual formats, just a few requirements for those files in the theme folder. The only requirements for a folder to be a valid WordPress theme are as follows:

- It should have a `style.css` file and an `index.php` file.
- The `style.css` file must have the basic theme information in its first five lines

There can be a number of additional files that we'll find in some theme folders. Don't worry if you download a theme and its directory structure looks very different from other themes. Some theme developers decide to go with their own structure in order to provide some extra features and a more customizable environment.

# Choosing and installing themes

Again, as for plugins, we'll have the following two choices, as we had when adding new plugins:

- If the theme we want is in the WordPress theme directory, and if our server is set up properly, we can add the theme directly from within the WP Admin.
- If either of those two conditions are not met, we'll have to download, extract, and then upload the theme by hand.

# Choosing and installing themes

## Adding a theme within the WP Admin

We can add a theme directly from within WP Admin if we've chosen a theme from the WordPress theme directory, if we're using a current-enough version of WordPress, and if our server settings allow.

- 1 First, navigate to **Appearance**, and then select **Appearance | Themes** and press **Add New** button.
- 2 Other steps are quite intuitive and similar to plugin installation process.

fulmanski.pl/blog/wp-admin/themes.php

Aplikacje Coprey Do pracy Moje Sieci komputerowe Elektronika Ksiazki Filesystem Inne zaklady

Fulmank about... New Gallery Howdy, admin Help

## Themes 6

Add New Search installed themes...

Update Available



Active: Twenty Eleven [Customize](#)

Update Available



Azul Silver

Update Available



Update Available



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the address bar displaying `fulmanski.pl/blog/wp-admin/theme-install.php`. The browser's address bar also shows several folders: Aplikacje, Coprey, Do pracy, Moje, Sieci komputerowe, Elektronika, Ksiazki, and FileSystem. The browser's tabs include "New" and "Gallery".

The main content area is titled "Add Themes" and includes an "Upload Theme" button. Below the title, there are tabs for "Featured" (selected), "Popular", "Latest", and "Favorites", along with a "Feature Filter" icon. A search box labeled "Search themes..." is positioned to the right of the tabs.

The left sidebar contains a navigation menu with the following items: Dashboard, Posts, Media, Pages, Comments, Appearance (highlighted in blue), Themes, Customize, Widgets, Menus, Header, Background, Theme Options, Editor, Plugins, Users, and Tools.

The main content area displays several theme preview cards. The first card is for "BirdFIELD", featuring a green field with yellow and pink flowers and a circular text overlay. The second card is for "Identity", featuring a dark background with a mountain landscape and a circular portrait of a man. The third card is for "AR", featuring a blue background with a white text overlay.

# Choosing and installing themes

Download, extract, and upload the theme by hand

- 1 The manual installation procedure starts once we have the theme downloaded to our computer, so let's get the theme's ZIP file.
- 2 Upload the ZIP file through the WP Admin by navigating to **Appearance | Themes**, press **Add new** button and next press **Upload** button.
- 3 If the previous step doesn't work, continue with the following steps to extract and upload the theme files.
  - 1 Do the extraction or unzipping manually the downloaded ZIP file so that you have the theme folder on your desktop.
  - 2 Upload the themes folder to your WordPress website. Go to the `wp-content/themes` folder. You' should see some themes folder in here already – these are the themes that come pre-installed with WordPress.
  - 3 Now, when you go to **Appearance** in WP Admin, the theme will appear.
  - 4 You can click on **Live Preview** and **Activate** just as if you'd added it from within the WP Admin

You should know

- xxx