What to do when you get a Wordfence alert

A one-page checklist to keep by your desk. Most Wordfence alerts aren't a sign you've been hacked, but a few need acting on quickly. Work down the list.

1. Read the alert

- [ ] Which website is it about?
- [ ] What does it say? Note the plugin, theme or file it names.
- [ ] Is it warning you about a risk, or telling you something has already happened?

2. Sort it

Needs attention soon (within a day or two)

- A plugin or theme has a known vulnerability
- An update is available
- Login attempts have been blocked, or someone has been locked out
- Attacks on the site have increased
- A plugin has been abandoned or removed from WordPress.org

Call your web developer now

- Malware has been found
- Core, plugin or theme files have changed and nobody has updated anything
- There's an administrator account nobody recognises
- The site is on a blocklist, sending spam or redirecting visitors

3. Fix it

- [ ] Take a backup of the site
- [ ] Update the plugin, theme or WordPress version named in the alert
- [ ] No update yet? Deactivate the plugin, as long as the site can manage without it
- [ ] Run a new scan: Wordfence, then Scan, then Start new scan
- [ ] Check that every administrator under Users is someone you know

4. Stay on top of it once the alert is sorted

- [ ] Check for WordPress, theme and plugin updates every week, and back up before you update
- [ ] Two-factor authentication on for every administrator
- [ ] Brute force protection on, locking people out after 20 failed logins
- [ ] Logins with leaked passwords blocked
- [ ] Strong passwords: three random words, or a password manager

5. Don't

- Don't delete files or accounts you're not sure about. Removing the wrong file can break your site
- Don't leave a critical alert for more than a day or two
- Don't switch Wordfence off to stop the emails. Change your email alert preferences instead

Not sure what an alert means? Or would you rather someone kept your site updated for you? We're always happy to help.

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