WordPress Basics – Preventing Spam

A website is viewable by anyone unless you specify you want it to remain private (we will get into that later in the tutorial). Public websites are vulnerable to spam thanks to tiny programs called bots that cruise around the web collecting email addresses. These bots put the email addresses into a database which then makes it really easy for spammers (our not so favorite people that send spam) to send us emails that don't interest us.

If receiving spam through email isn't enough, other bots are designed to post comments on your site that usually includes a link or two back to their website. **Don't click on the website link you could end up with a virus or become a target for more**

spam.

There are things we can do to prevent the spam, which is what this section is all about. Throughout the tutorial, I will provide pictures of what you will see on your screen. There may be some slight variations depending on versions of WordPress and the extra options you may have installed.

TIP: Have two tabs open in your browser. One that displays the backend of your WordPress account and the other with this tutorial. As you read through these instructions, highlight where you left off with your mouse so you can toggle back and forth between the tabs and not lose your place.

Let's explore the items under the Settings button on the left menu bar.
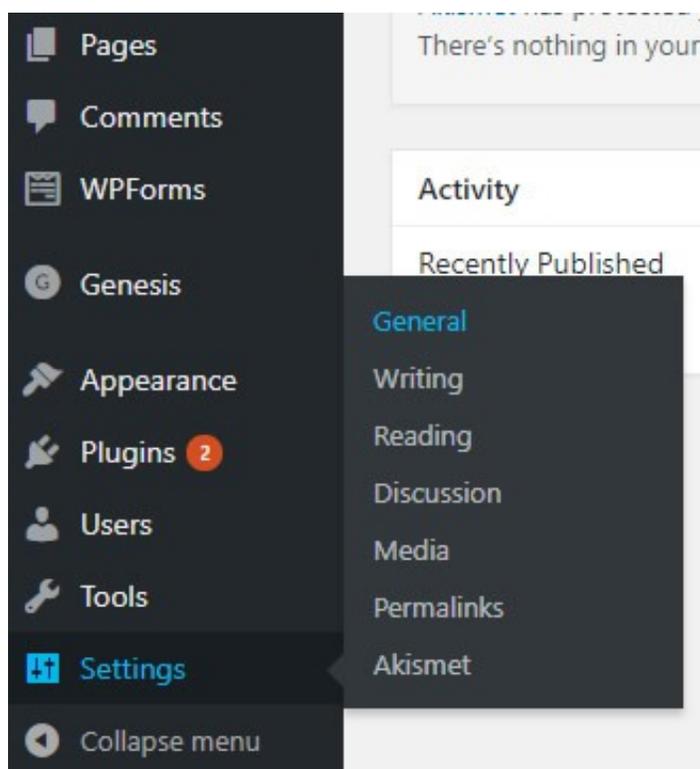
General Settings

Most of the settings on this page are self-explanatory. You can change the title and the tagline as many times as you wish. However, the one item you SHOULDN'T change is the WordPress Address (URL) or the Site Address (URL) fields. Why? Because if you do, this is the one spot where you will break your website.

Now, back to spam prevention.

- Scroll down until you see the word "Membership." If the check box next to that reads "Anyone can register" is checked, uncheck it.

Doing so will prevent spammers from being allowed to become members of your blog. As you learn more about

WordPress, you can check the box later if you decide you want the ability for anyone to become members.

- Tweak the date settings to your liking.
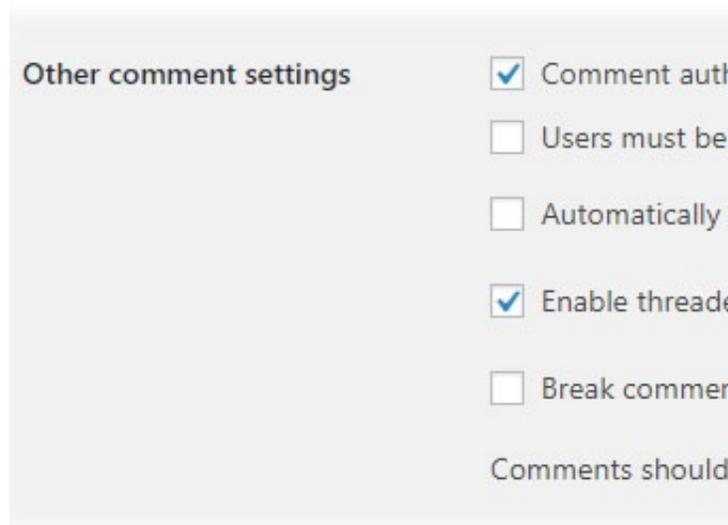- When you are done make sure you click on the "Save Changes" button.
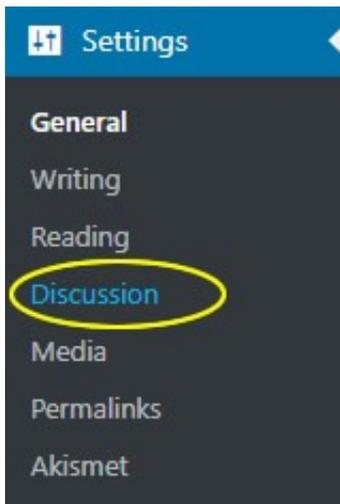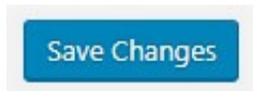
Discussion Settings

You'll notice many checkboxes on this page. Most of them you can select based on your preferences.

If you want to prevent spam and junk comments do the following:

- In the "Other Comment Settings" section check the box next to "comment author must fill out name and email." This will ensure humans are commenting and not bots. Click on the image below to see a bigger image of what should be selected.

Other comment settings

- ☑ Comment auth
- ☐ Users must be
- ☐ Automatically c
- ☑ Enable threade
- ☐ Break commen

Comments should

- ○ Leave the next item, "Users must be registered and logged in to comment," unchecked because under the General Settings I had you set WordPress up so that people can't register.
- ○ Have both options in the "Email me whenever" section checked.

Email me whenever

- ☑ Anyone posts a comment
- ☑ A comment is held for moderation

- ○ Before a comment appears on your site, set it to be manually approved. This will promote discussion on your posts instead of bots having fun linking to junk websites.
- ○ Have fun with the avatars section. Who wants a blank avatar when they could have a funky picture or a goofy monster?

- Don't forget to click on the "Save Changes" button.
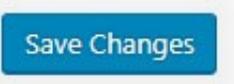
SIDE NOTE: What is the Comment Blacklist?

A blacklist is a list of people who aren't allowed to your party, or in this case, on your site. Sometimes you will get bots posting junk comments that use the same email, website address, or have the same words in them over and over. When you notice a pattern, you add them to the Blacklist section in the Discussion Settings. This will make it so WordPress automatically delete the comment.

The Last Setting for Spam Prevention: Akismet

Akismet is a WordPress plugin that helps prevent spam comments

and emails. It is a free plugin if you are operating a website that doesn't make money. However, if you make money on your website, you need to pay for it. You can choose the amount you pay.
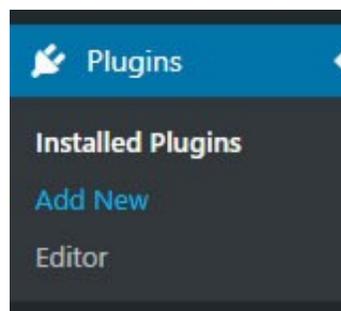
**If you see Akismet under your settings tab, chances are it is already setup for you. Click on Akismet under your settings tab, if

you see statistics similar to the image below, you can skip to the next section of this tutorial.
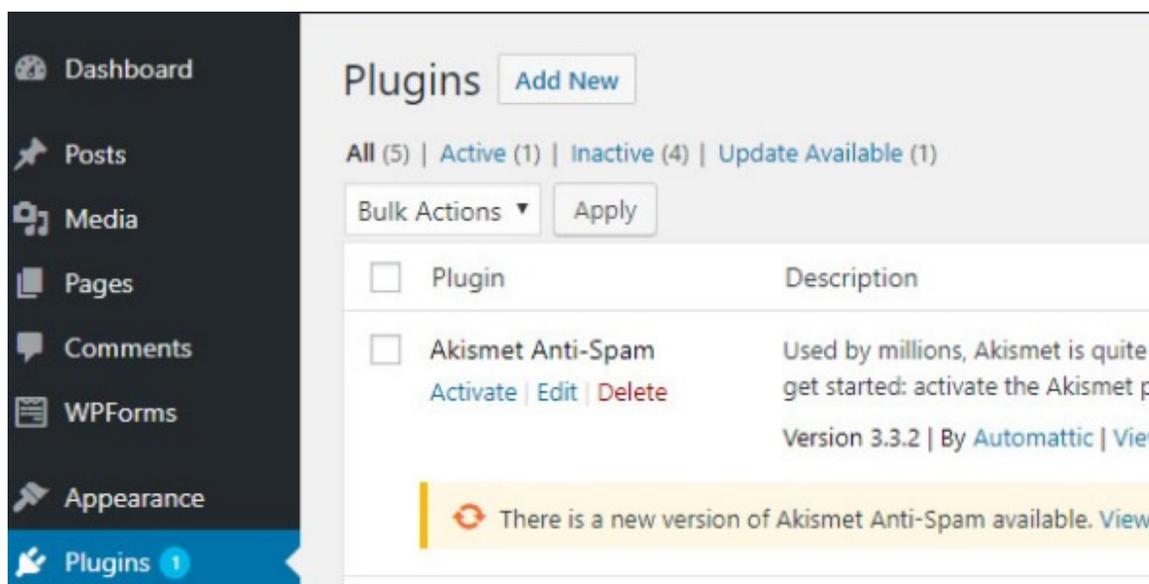

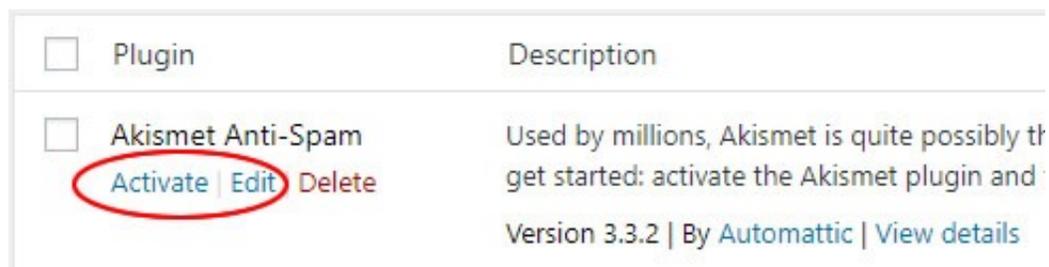If you don't see something like the image above, no problem, it means you must set it up.

- Click on Plugins on the left menu bar.

- You should see Akismet displayed in the main body section to the right of the menubar.

- Click on "Activate" which appears just underneath the title Akismet.

- A window will appear where you sign-up for an API key. Enter your email and a password. Akismet will send you an email with the access key or it may show up on your screen.
- Once you have the API key, you will need to copy and paste into the Akismet settings section (click Setting-Akismet on the left menu.)
- Make sure you click on the "Save Changes" button when

you are done.
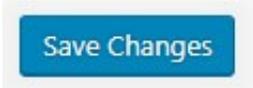
Save Changes

Now that you have your WordPress site setup to prevent spam you are ready to start adding content!

As always, if you have any questions or comments about this tutorial, please don't hesitate to post them below.

This series of tutorials is about Creating a Website with WordPress.