

// GROWWP.IN PERFORMANCE GUIDE

The Free WordPress Speed Checklist

A practical, step-by-step checklist to fix TTFB, set up proper caching, and pass Core Web Vitals — written for real shared hosting conditions, not theoretical benchmarks.

TTFB Fixes

Caching Setup

Core Web Vitals

Hosting Tips

1. Reduce Server Response Time (TTFB)

TTFB is the foundation of your Core Web Vitals score. Work through these in order — each one compounds on the last.

CACHING

- ☐ **Enable full-page caching** using LiteSpeed Cache (free, best if your host runs LiteSpeed) or WP Rocket.
- ☐ **Enable object caching** (Redis or Memcached) if your hosting plan supports it.
- ☐ **Never run two caching plugins together** — they conflict and can slow the site down instead.

SERVER & PHP

- ☐ **Upgrade PHP to 8.1 or 8.2** from cPanel → MultiPHP Manager. Backup first.
- ☐ Confirm **OPcache is enabled** on your hosting (ask support if unsure).
- ☐ Test the site on a **staging copy** after any PHP upgrade before applying it live.

DATABASE

- ☐ Remove old **post revisions** and expired transients using WP-Optimize.
- ☐ Delete **spam and trashed comments** in bulk.
- ☐ Take a **full backup** before running any manual database query.

TTFB RANGE	RATING
Under 200ms	Good
200ms – 600ms	Needs Improvement
Above 600ms	Poor — fix urgently

2. Set Up Caching Correctly

A caching plugin installed with default settings only gets you halfway. Configure these manually for real gains.

- 1 **Enable page caching** and set cache lifespan to 10 hours or more for content that doesn't change often.
- 2 **Enable browser caching** for static assets (images, CSS, JS) — usually a toggle inside your caching plugin.
- 3 **Exclude logged-in users and WooCommerce cart/checkout pages** from page cache to avoid showing stale data.
- 4 **Enable minification** for CSS and JS, but test the site after — some Elementor widgets break with aggressive JS minification.
- 5 **Preload the cache** after clearing it, so the first visitor after a cache clear doesn't get a slow load.

Common mistake: Assuming a CDN alone fixes TTFB. A CDN speeds up static file delivery, but if your origin server is slow, dynamic pages generated by PHP still load slowly. Fix the server first.

QUERY CHECK

- ☐ Install **Query Monitor** temporarily and find which plugins fire the most database queries per page load.
- ☐ Remove plugins with **duplicate functionality** — e.g. two SEO plugins running at once.
- ☐ Deactivate **unused plugins** entirely rather than leaving them installed but off.

3. Pass Core Web Vitals

Once TTFB and caching are handled, these three metrics decide your page experience score.

METRIC	GOOD TARGET	WHAT IT MEASURES
LCP	Under 2.5s	Time for the largest visible element to load
INP	Under 200ms	Responsiveness to user interaction
CLS	Under 0.1	Visual layout stability while loading

LCP (LARGEST CONTENTFUL PAINT)

- ☐ Compress the hero image to **WebP format** and keep file size under 150KB.
- ☐ Add **fetchpriority="high"** to the main hero image tag.
- ☐ Avoid lazy-loading the first visible image on the page.

CLS (LAYOUT SHIFT)

- ☐ Always set **width and height attributes** on images and embeds.
- ☐ Reserve space for ad units before they load — don't let ads push content down.

INP (INTERACTIVITY)

- ☐ Defer non-critical JavaScript so it doesn't block the main thread.
- ☐ Limit third-party scripts (chat widgets, extra analytics) to only what's essential.

AdSense note: Ad scripts load after TTFB, so a slow server delays ads twice as much as regular content. Fixing server response time helps both SEO and ad performance together.

4. Test, Verify, Repeat

Speed work isn't a one-time task. Re-check after every major plugin, theme, or content update.

TOOLS TO TEST WITH

☐ PageSpeed Insights TTFB + CWV

☐ GTmetrix Waterfall

☐ Chrome DevTools Network tab

☐ Search Console Core Web Vitals report

RETEST AFTER

☐ Installing any new plugin

☐ Switching or updating your theme

☐ Adding new ad units

☐ A PHP or hosting plan upgrade

Rule of thumb: If TTFB stays above 400ms after caching, PHP upgrade, and database cleanup are all done, the bottleneck is your hosting plan itself — not your configuration.

Want the full walkthrough?

Read the complete step-by-step guide with code snippets and hosting comparisons.

growwp.in/how-to-reduce-wordpress-ttfb