

WPengine®

THE IMPORTANCE OF SSL SECURITY

WHITE PAPER

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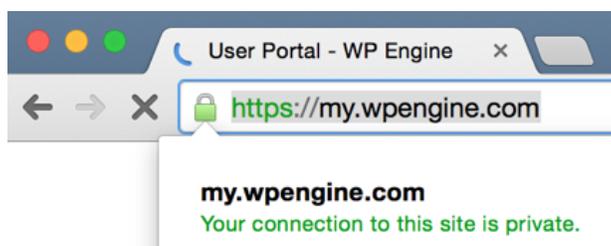
Securing your WordPress site is imperative. It builds customer confidence and trust, and can improve your site's search rankings. One component to help keep your site locked down is SSL (secure sockets layer). In this white paper, we'll look at what SSL is, why you should consider it for your site, the SEO implications, key use cases, and how to obtain an SSL certificate.

What is SSL?

SSL stands for Secure Sockets Layer. It's a technology that encrypts all of the information sent to and from your site; meaning private data your visitors share with your site stays private.

How do I know if a site is secured by SSL?

It's simple. If the web address starts with HTTPS as opposed to HTTP, then that site is protected by SSL (that "s" stands for security). There's also a nifty little lock icon next to the URL that indicates a site is protected. If you use Chrome, the lock icon is green and looks like this (a grey lock indicates that a site has mixed content, meaning some pages are protected by SSL):



Interesting. Why should I consider SSL?

SSL ensures that hackers cannot see or intercept the data your users share on your site. Essentially, it creates a secure tunnel between the browser and the web server. It also verifies that your site really is who it claims to be, and it's not an imposter. So, if you're buying something from Amazon.com an SSL certificate verifies that you're really sharing your data with Amazon.com, not some bogus site that's going to steal your info.

Sounds great. Should I have SSL on my site?

If you have an ecommerce site or any site where you collect sensitive data, like credit card or financial information, usernames and passwords, or addresses and phone numbers, it's strongly recommended that you have an SSL certificate to validate your site's identity and encrypt all information sent to and from your site.

Ok. Well, how much of my WordPress site should be secured by SSL?

That's up to you. However, WP Engine gives you the ability to use SSL only on certain pages of your WordPress installation or to use it on your entire site via the SSL options within our user portal. For example, if your WordPress installation is running WooCommerce, an online shopping cart system, you may want to only secure the checkout page where payment information is entered. You might also secure the account login, and any account URLs, since the user's login credentials and private address information will be entered on those pages. But you also have the option to use SSL on your entire site if you desire.

You mentioned SEO; what's SSL got to do with that?

Having SSL protection on your site also improves your site's Google search rankings, as [Google penalizes sites lacking an SSL certificate](#) or with a certificate that is improperly set up. That means if your sites are protected by SSL, they rank higher than non-secure sites.

There are some nuances, however, to get the most SEO bang for your SSL buck.

It's important to ensure all elements of your site use HTTPS. That includes widgets, JavaScript, CSS, files, images, and your content delivery network (CDN). Also, you must use 301 redirects to point all of your existing HTTP URLs to HTTPS (which is done automatically if you secure URLs via the settings in the WP Engine user portal). If you don't, you won't get the SEO bonus that HTTPS promises. [There is a very helpful piece on Moz.com](#) that offers a ton of tips to help you get the most SEO bang for your SSL buck.

So, SSL will alleviate all of my security concerns, right?

Wrong. SSL is not a magic bullet for site security. Yes, having an SSL certificate on your site protects data coming to and from it, but it is not an all-encompassing security solution. It's best to think of it this way: SSL ensures a secure connection for data in transit, not data at rest. For additional site security, it's important to secure the servers that store the data that is shared with your site. Information Security Consultant Scott Helme wrote a great piece about this topic [here](#). And as a managed platform, WP Engine provides extra layers of security for our customers to ensure a highly secure WordPress experience, including real-time security threat detection, security audits, code reviews, and automatic security patches.

SSL USE CASES

Now that we've covered SSL 101, what are some of the key use cases for SSL? Let's take a look at some of the most common uses and what types of sites get the most benefit from SSL protection.

Ecommerce Sites

Probably the most common use case for an SSL certificate is an ecommerce site. Why? You want to show your shoppers that the information they share with your site is secure. An SSL certificate encrypts sensitive information like credit card numbers and personal identifiers such as addresses, phone numbers, and more. And having that little lock symbol next to your URL is a sign that your customers can trust sharing their information with you. When buying online,

trust is key, and SSL builds trust. In the world of ecommerce, lack of trust almost always results in lack of sales.

Government Sites

The White House recently announced that all federal websites and web services will be [required to run on HTTPS](#) come December 2016. Under the mandate, all public-facing federal government web sites must implement HTTPS.

"The American people expect government websites to be secure and their interactions with those websites to be private. Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) offers the strongest privacy protection available for public web connections with today's internet technology. The use of HTTPS reduces the risk of interception or modification of user interactions with government online services," the U.S. government's Chief Information Officers Council wrote.

Financial Sites

By nature, financial services sites deal in volumes of sensitive information. Using an SSL certificate ensures information that should be kept private stays that way. Customers don't trust their financial data to a site that can't guarantee it's protected. SSL provides that guarantee.

While those are three of the most common use cases for SSL security, you can probably make a strong case for adding it to your site as well.

SSL From WP Engine

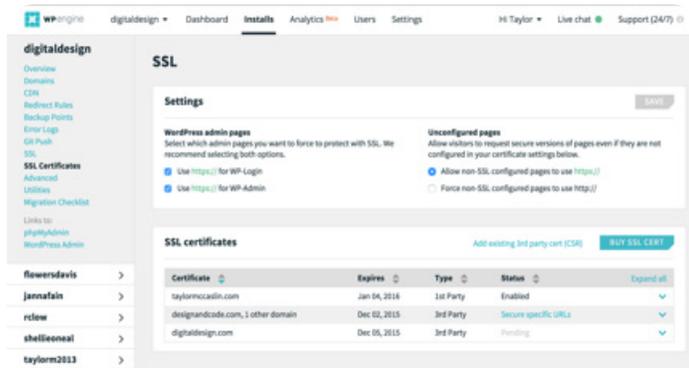
Here at WP Engine we make securing your website with SSL simple and fast. We have created a streamlined process that allows you to do everything you need through our user portal.

WP Engine offers two options for adding SSL security to your website:

- A Standard SSL certificate for one domain is \$49 per year
- A Wildcard SSL certificate covers one domain plus all subdomains for \$199 per year
- Both options of SSL certificate automatically renew after 12 months using the credit card on file in the user portal

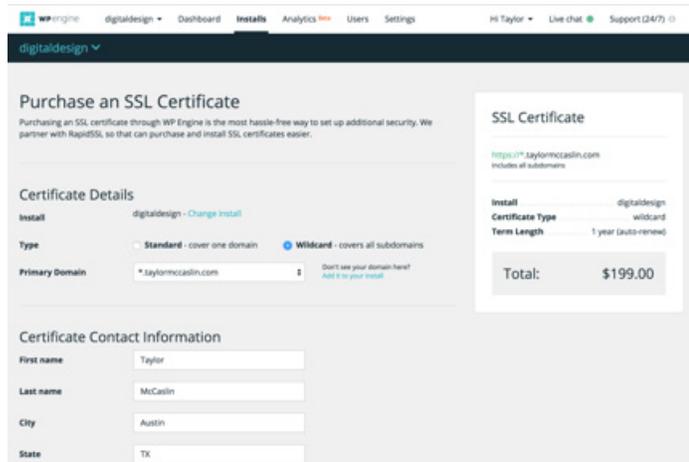
Dashboard Improvements

We recently updated our dashboard, which now exposes more details about your SSL certificates, such as domains covered, expiration dates, and the status of certificates. We've also simplified the settings and made them even easier to understand. No matter what kind of certificate you choose, our new dashboard makes it clear what is happening with your certificate and what action, if any, is needed from you.



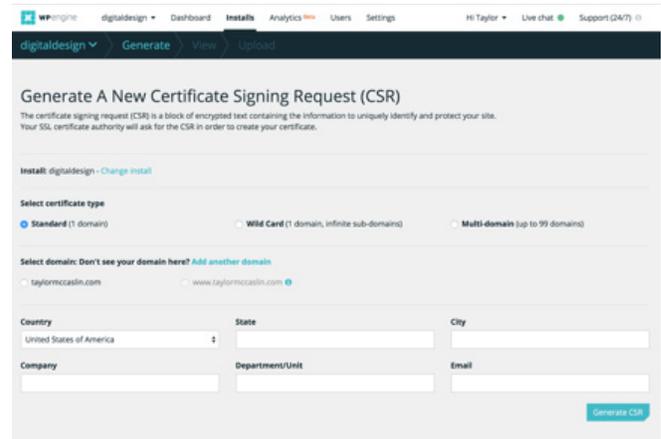
First-Party SSL Certificate Purchase Improvements

In April, we made first-party SSL purchase available to WP Engine Personal plan customers. And recently, we made the purchase flow even easier to use. We've also put more safeguards in place to make sure you purchase the right kind of SSL certificate.



Third-Party SSL Configuration Tool

Previously, if you needed to configure a third-party SSL certificate you would have opened a support ticket, which was time consuming and painful. We now have a third-party SSL configuration tool in the user portal. This tool makes generating a CSR (certificate signing request) easy. It also helps you upload your certificate files to WP Engine to be installed by one of our knowledgeable Support Team members. Throughout the process you can track your certificate with the new dashboard. Please note third-party SSL certificates are only supported on WP Engine Professional plans or higher.



Securing all URLs with SSL

When securing your site with SSL, the final step is to tell WP Engine which URLs you'd like to server over HTTPS. Our dashboard provides you an option to secure all URLs on your domain with SSL. This option is recommended for non-technical users, because it's as simple as selecting "Secure all URLs" in the SSL dashboard.



Doing this tells our platform to automatically serve HTTP page requests secured with HTTPS. One important thing to note when you choose this option is to ensure you are not using any force SSL plugins, because force SSL plugins can cause redirect loops. We recommend using the settings we provide in the SSL dashboard as they work server side and have been tested extensively with our platform.

SSL FAQs

Here are some questions we commonly hear from our customers who are examining whether to add an SSL certificate to their site:

Q: Do I need to change my CDN configuration to make it work with SSL?

A: Yes, if you have CDN configured, you will need to [open a support ticket](#) to have our support team enable SSL on your CDN.

Q: I have WooCommerce; do I need to do anything special?

A: Yes, ensure that you do not have any force HTTP/HTTPS settings turned on in the WooCommerce plugin, and instead set those force paths through the SSL options on the SSL page in your my.wpengine.com user portal.

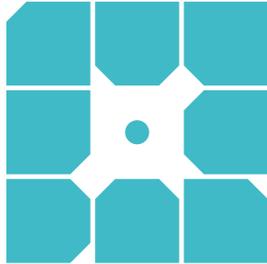
Q: Should I buy a WP Engine SSL certificate?

A: WP Engine offers the ability to purchase a certificate directly from us, to simplify the installation, management, and renewal of your certificate. If you prefer to buy a certificate from a third-party and are on a Professional or higher plan, you may install it via your my.wpengine.com user portal.

Q: How do I buy an SSL certificate from WP Engine?

A: You can learn more about how to purchase an SSL certificate from WP Engine in [this helpful support article](#).

Now you know a little more about SSL and how to ensure your customers have a secure connection to your site. Here at WP Engine, your site's security is of the utmost importance to us. If you have any questions regarding SSL or WordPress security, please [reach out to the WP Engine Support Team](#).



About WP Engine

WP Engine is a leading SaaS content management platform for websites and applications built on WordPress. The company powers thousands of websites and apps built on the WordPress platform delivering a fast, reliable and secure web experience. All levels of users including bloggers, marketers, SMBs and large corporations rely on WP Engine's platform to keep their websites up and running. The company's exceptional customer service team specializes in quickly solving technical problems, and creating a world-class customer experience ensuring that each user's WordPress site continues to perform at its full potential. Founded in 2010, WP Engine is headquartered in Austin, Texas and has offices in San Francisco, California, San Antonio, Texas and London, England.

