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Core Web Vitals in plain words

Speed Tests & Core Web Vitals

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Speed Tests & Core Web Vitals · Created on **October 10, 2026** · 3 min read



Core Web Vitals are three measurements Google uses to describe how a page *feels* to the person visiting it: whether it shows up quickly, whether it answers when you tap it, and whether the text stays still while you read. They are Google's metrics, measured in real visitors' browsers, and they feed into what Google calls page experience. They are not a grade for the server.

The three, without the acronyms

Metric	In plain words	Usual cause	Where to start
LCP (Largest Contentful Paint)	How long the biggest visible thing takes to appear: usually the image or headline at the top.	A large or deferred top image; a slow server response; blocking CSS.	Shrink and convert the image; see **WebP**; switch on page caching.
INP (Interaction to Next Paint)	How long the page takes to react to a tap or click. It replaced FID.	Lots of JavaScript, especially third-party: chat widgets, ads, trackers.	Remove scripts nobody uses; defer the rest.
CLS (Cumulative Layout Shift)	How much the content jumps around while it loads.	Images without width and height; ads and banners that push text down; fonts that swap.	Give images dimensions and reserve space for what loads later.

How to see yours, step by step

1. **Open PageSpeed Insights** (from Google), paste the page address and pick the **mobile** tab, which is where most sites fail first.

2 **Tell the two kinds of data apart.** The top panel, when there is one, shows *field data*: real visitors over recent weeks. The panel below is a *lab* test, run now, on a simulated phone. They serve different purposes.

3 **See which of the three fails** and read the list of opportunities the tool offers for that one. Fix the biggest, one at a time.

4 **For the whole site,** use the "Core Web Vitals" report in Search Console, which groups pages by problem. It only appears when the site has enough visits for Google to hold data.

5 **Measure again** after each change, but remember: field data reflects the last few weeks of visits, so it is slow to move. The lab test answers straight away.

The 0 to 100 score is not Core Web Vitals.
The big number in PageSpeed is a lab score; Core Web Vitals are the three metrics above. Chasing 100 eats time and can break the site. The limits Google counts as "good" and "poor" are published by Google on web.dev, and they change: check them there instead of memorising them.

What weighs on it	Does the server matter?
Large images in heavy formats	No: it is content. It sits on your side.
Third-party scripts (chat, ads, trackers)	No: they load from other places.
Time to the first byte of the page	Partly: it depends on whether the page comes from cache or is built again. See **LiteSpeed Cache**.
Heavy plugins and themes	In part: the server only does what the code asks of it.

Useful content still counts for more.
Google itself says a good page experience does not replace relevant content. Use these metrics to remove friction, not as a goal in themselves. And if the site is fast for you and slow for everyone else, the problem lies elsewhere: **fast for you, slow for everyone else**.

NEED A HAND?

Got a Google report you cannot make sense of? Send us the page address and what the tool says, and we will explain what belongs to the server and what belongs to the site.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- Measuring your site speed: which tools, and what the numbers mean →
- Image optimisation and WebP →
- The site is slow: what to measure before you change plan →

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