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Categories and tags in WordPress: how to use each without making a mess

Content, Themes & Plugins

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Categories and tags in WordPress: how to use each without making a mess

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The short answer: categories are the blog's big sections (few, and each post fits in one); **tags** are loose keywords, more specific (many, and each post has a few). Using the two as if they were the same fills the site with empty and repeated pages.

Which is which

	Category	Tag
It is like…	A book's contents: chapters.	The index: words.
How many	Few: 3 to 8 on a small site.	As many as make sense, but reused.
Each post has	One (two at most).	Two to five, or none.
Has subcategories	Yes.	No.
Example	Tips, News, Client cases.	cache, backup, e-mail, SSL.

How to tidy up

1. **Plan the categories before you write.** Ask yourself: "What 4 or 5 sections would this blog have?"

2. **Change the default category.** WordPress creates one, "Uncategorized", and puts there whatever you did not classify. Rename it under Posts > Categories and pick the default under Settings > Writing.

3. **Use tags sparingly.** A tag used only once creates a page with a single post. Reuse existing ones and merge duplicates ("e-mail" and "email").

4 **Put the main categories in the menu** if you want them seen: **Menus in WordPress**.

5 **Tidy from time to time:** delete the empty ones and merge the similar.

! **Each category and tag creates a page**
(the archive) that Google can find. Pages with few posts or repeated ones dilute the site: **The canonical tag**. Renaming (and changing the address of) a category that already has links takes care: **The 404 after changing links**.

If you have a shop, product categories work the same way: **Getting a shop found on Google**.

NEED A HAND?

Want help tidying your site's categories? Open a ticket with the address.

Open a support ticket →

SEE ALSO

- **Writing a blog post in WordPress** →
- **Creating and editing pages in WordPress** →
- **The canonical tag: duplicate pages, www or not, and which address Google keeps** →
- **WordPress permalinks and the 404 that follows** →

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TAX NO. (SARS)	943 907 6234
REGISTRATION NO. (CIPC)	2025/667953/07
REGISTERED OFFICE	1111 Olive Street Saint Louis 63101, Missouri, United States
CONTACT	info@mozout.com · +27 78 823 3325 · www.mozout.com
OPENING HOURS	Monday to Friday - 08 AM to 04 PM Saturday & Sunday - Closed

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