

KNOWLEDGE BASE · PUBLIC DOCUMENT

Turning on WordPress debug mode safely: WP_DEBUG and the log

WordPress & CMS

CODE

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COUNTRY · LANGUAGE

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MozOut International

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The short answer: when the site shows a white page or a “critical error” without saying why, debug mode makes WordPress **write the error to a file**. You switch it on with three lines in **wp-config.php**. But there is a rule: **switch it off when you finish**, and do not leave errors in view of visitors.

The three lines

Line	What it does
<code>define('WP_DEBUG', true);</code>	Switches on debug mode: WordPress starts recording warnings and errors.
<code>define('WP_DEBUG_LOG', true);</code>	Writes them to the file <code>wp-content/debug.log</code> .
<code>define('WP_DEBUG_DISPLAY', false);</code>	Does not show them on screen, so visitors do not see them.

Step by step

1

Take a copy of wp-config.php. A typing mistake in this file takes the site down.

2

Open wp-config.php (cPanel File Manager) and look for the line that says “WP_DEBUG”. If it exists with the value false, swap it for the three lines above; if not, put the three **before** the line “That’s all, stop editing”.

3

Repeat the problem (open the page that fails) and then open the file **wp-content/debug.log**: the last line usually says the file and the plugin or theme at fault.

4

Read the error and act: **Common WordPress errors**, and if it is memory, **give it more memory**. The server's PHP log is a different one, and complements it: **The PHP error log**.

5

Switch everything off at the end: back to false, and **delete debug.log**.

The debug.log file is public by default: whoever knows the address (`your-domain.com/wp-content/debug.log`) can read it, and it shows paths and plugin names. So: switch the mode off when you finish, delete the file and, if you must leave it on, protect it. Never leave **WP_DEBUG_DISPLAY** true on a site with visitors.

If the site will not even open because of the error, deactivate the plugins first: **Disabling plugins, even when you cannot get in**.

The log does not help and you still do not understand? Open a ticket with the last lines of debug.log (no passwords).

[Open a support ticket](#)

SEE ALSO

[Common WordPress errors: white screen, critical error and how to find the cause](#)

[Where the PHP error log is, how to read it, and the errors you will see most](#)

[Giving WordPress more memory](#)

[Rebuilding the wp-config.php connection](#)



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