Moving a WordPress Blog Using CPanel

How to move your blog from one server to another

About The Author

Brian Stephens has worked in technology based industries for more than 30 years and is very used to putting together operational instructions and procedures that are easy to follow and implement.

Visit A Good Time is Blog Time for a summary of the required steps to move a WordPress blog from one server to another using only CPanel to complete the process from start to finish.

CPanel is not the only option for moving the directory files and associated databases but it is one method that is fairly straight forward and easy to implement.

An alternative for transferring the directory files across is to use a FTP program to move the files from the original server to a new one via a personal computer. This method can be easier if the files are large and likely to create a .zip file that is too big to upload as a single file. The FTP method is not however detailed in this eBook.

There are many different arrangements available for CPanel and no guarantees of success using this method for every different arrangement. Ultimately the responsibility for ensuring all files and databases have been properly transferred and configured lies with the user, but this method has been used successfully on numerous occasions.

It is recommended that before starting any transfer process that all files and databases are backed up. It is also recommended that before shutting down the original server account, that the arrangement on the new server has been thoroughly checked and tested.

This eBook can be shared and distributed via any appropriate media available providing it is kept fully intact and is not changed or modified in any way. It also should not be used for commercial purposes or made available for sale.

It is intended to be a free source of information to help people move their WordPress blogs in a trouble free manner.

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Moving the Files to Your PC

Back up your databases and posts to a suitable location before starting.

Creating a .zip File Using Cpanel's File Manager

Log into Cpanel using your normal user name and password for the account that is going to be moved to a new location.
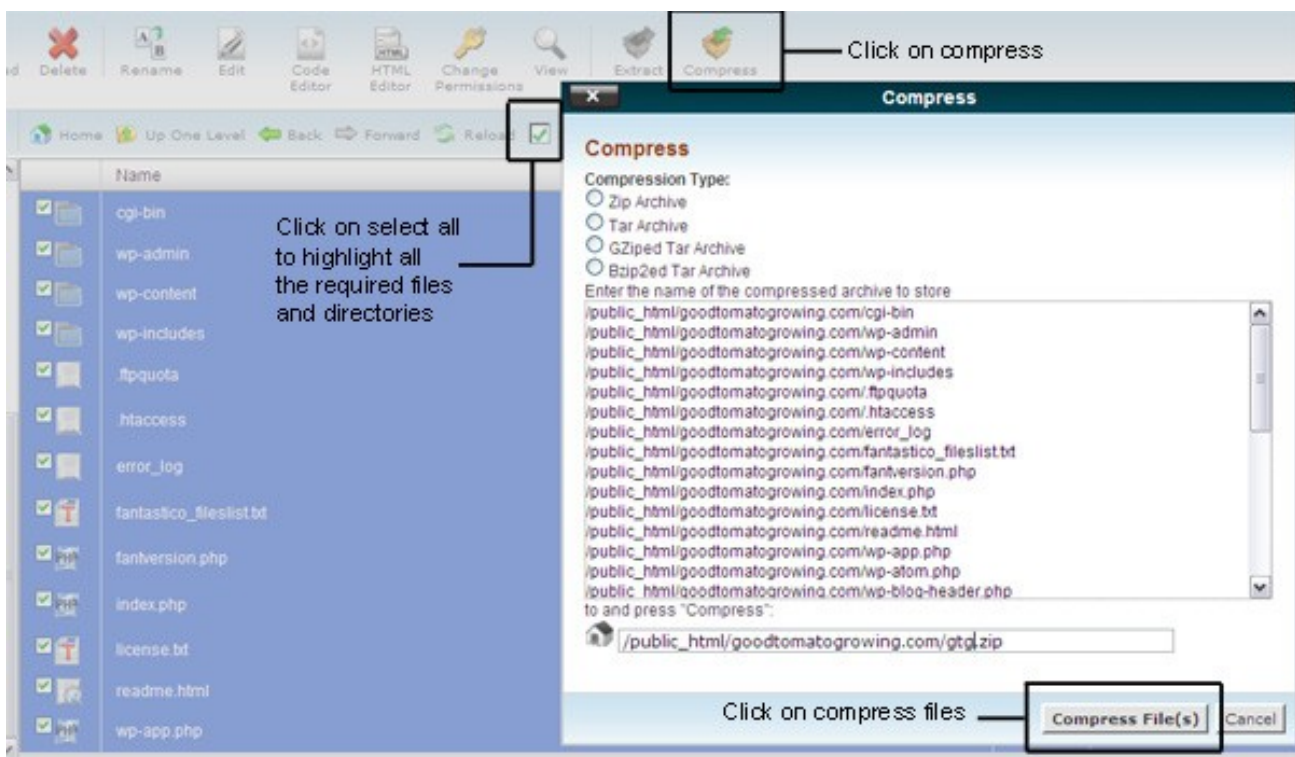

Locate the 'File Manager' and click on it to go to your blog directory. Navigate to the files you want to transfer.

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Ensure that the directory containing the files you want to transfer is selected, then click on 'Select all'.
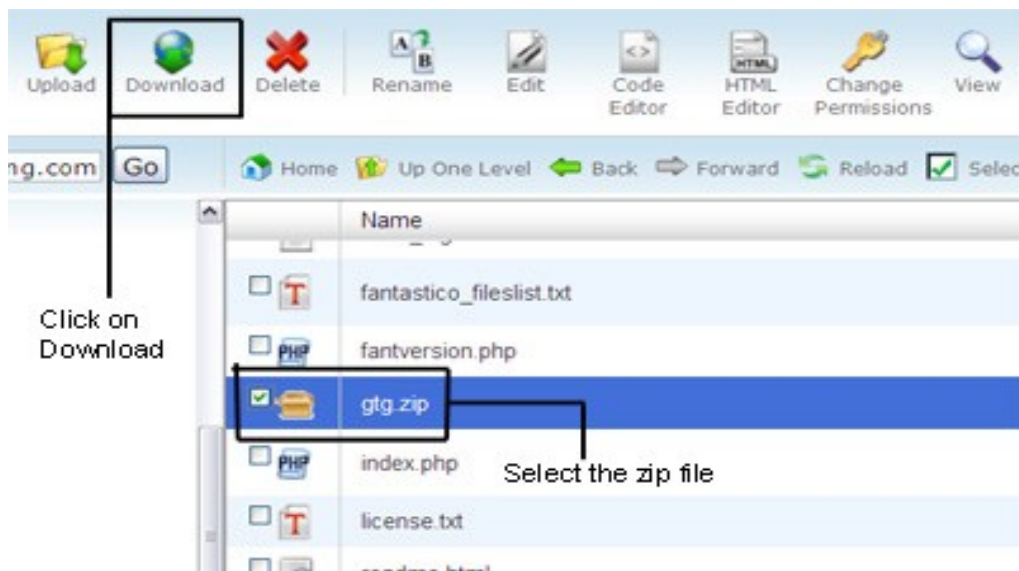

With all the required files and directories highlighted, click on the 'Compress' icon. All the files to be compressed will be presented in a table. If you are happy you have all the required files, click on 'Compress File(s)' at the bottom of the table.

Note: you can change the file name to something of your choice in this screen if required.

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You will be shown a list of the
compressed files and will note that the .zip file
you just created is now listed in the directory that you
just compressed.

Check the box next to the .zip file to select it, then click on the 'Download' icon. A browser box will open. Click on 'Save File' and then OK. The file will then download to your PC, just make sure you know where the file is saved to so that you can recover it later.

While you are in this directory, go and look for the 'wp-config.php' file, click on the box next to it and then select 'View' from the main menu at the top of the screen. Make a note of the database name under the section – 'define 'DB_Name'. It will be in the form 'username_wrdp*' where the * is a number.

You can now close the 'view' screen and the 'File Manager' screen and go back to CPanel.

The next step is to create a back up of the database.

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Creating a Database Backup

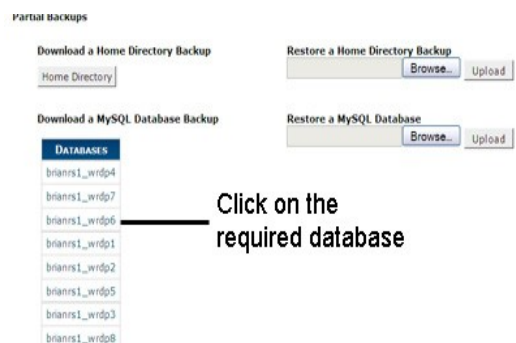In CPanel locate the 'Backups' icon and click on it.

You will see a list of databases, click on the one you identified earlier when you viewed the 'wp-config.php'. This will open a browser box.

As with the .zip file just click on 'Save File' and then OK.

The file will now download to your PC and as before just make sure you know where it is being saved to so that you can recover it later.

That is it for the old server, you can now close that CPanel down.

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Copying the Files to the New Server

Uploading the .zip File

This procedure assumes that you have created an account for your new server and have a CPanel set up ready to populate the directory structure for your blog. You will either have done this using a primary account or as an add on domain to a primary account.

Open up CPanel and locate the 'File Manager' icon, click on the icon and navigate to the directory where you want to upload the files (you may want to check 'show hidden files').

Ensure you have the correct directory highlighted and then click on 'Upload'. A browser screen will open and you just click on the 'Browse' button, navigate to the .zip file you downloaded earlier, select it and click on 'Open' to start uploading the .zip file. This may take a few minutes, when it is 100% complete you can go back to the 'File Manager' screen.

Note: you will see a message at the top of the 'Upload' screen advising of the maximum upload size. If your .zip file is larger than this number then the upload will fail. To get over this you need to use your 'Windows Explorer' to break the .zip file into separate chunks that are smaller in size (this is where using 'ftp' may be easier). Breaking the zip file into smaller chunks isn't difficult, just extract all the files on your local PC and find a suitably sized directory to remove from the .zip file. Move it to a different location and zip it up in its own right. Then re-zip the remaining files to create a smaller file which can be uploaded.

You will need to remember where the directory you moved out was located, because when you upload that directory it will need to be put back in the same location on the server.

When you have the .zip file uploaded, check the box next to it and click on 'Extract'. You will get an 'Extract' box, check the directory route is correct and then click on 'Extract Files'. The directory structure should be exactly the same as it was on the original file server, if it is not then you need to move the directories and files until they are.

If you had to break up the zip file, just repeat this process for the remaining uploads required.

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When you are happy with the structure you can delete the .zip file(s) off the server.

As you can see this process is just the reversal of the compress and download you did in the original 'File Manager'.

Restoring the Database Backup

Locate the 'Backups' icon in CPanel and click on the icon to open the screen.

Ignore the 'click on the required database' this graphic is just for illustration of the screen.

Use the 'Browse' button under the 'Restore a MySQL Database' heading to navigate to the database file you downloaded earlier, it will be in the form 'wrdp*.sql.gz' where * is a number. Select the file and click 'Open'. Then click on "Upload". The file will be restored to the new server and you will get a restore screen showing you the database name e.g.

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Establishing a
Connection to the Database

All the files of the database and the directory structure should now be in place including the .htaccess file from the original server. But there is likely to be a problem when trying to view the blog using a temporary address URL.

A temporary address to view the file on the server is usually in the form http://123.456.789.10/~user1. Where the IP address is that of the new server and the user1 is the CPanel user name.

Initially the most likely problem will be a message saying 'Error establishing a database connection'. This is because no user has been assigned to the database.

Adding a New Database User

Assuming you are logged into CPanel go find the 'MySQL Databases' icon and click on the icon to open the screen. You need to create a temporary user, so scroll down to where you see 'Add New User'.

Enter a user name, it can be anything you like, but there are a limited number of characters available.

Then enter an easy to remember password in each of the boxes, and click on 'Create User'.

After that click on 'Go Back' from the new screen that is created.

A new user will be added and listed above the Database name.

Now you need to add the user to the database. So click on 'Add' then at the next screen check 'All Privileges' and 'Make Changes'. In the new screen click 'Go Back' and check the new user is listed as a 'Current User'.

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Updating the 'wp-config.php' File

Now you need to use 'File Manager' to locate the wp-config.php file. Locate the file in the main directory, check the box next to it to select the file. Then click on 'Code Editor' in the main menu.

This is an example of what you may see:

    define('DB_NAME', 'user1_wrdp1');

    define('DB_USER', 'user1_name1');

    define('DB_PASSWORD', 'abcd1234');

    define('DB_HOST', 'localhost');

The database name is very important; it must have your new CPanel user name in the first part. So update the part before the underscore, but don't change anything after the underscore. Example:

    define('DB_NAME', 'user1_wrdp1');

Equally important is to now replace the user name and the password with the ones you created for temporary use earlier, e.g.

define('DB_USER', 'user1_tempnam');

    define('DB_PASSWORD', 'myPWAssign');

Save the changes at the top right of the screen and then click on 'Back to File Manager'.

Now when you try and use the temporary URL, you will probably see a 404-error, this basically means the URL has not been found. This is because the wp-options tables call the pages by the domain name not the temporary URL.
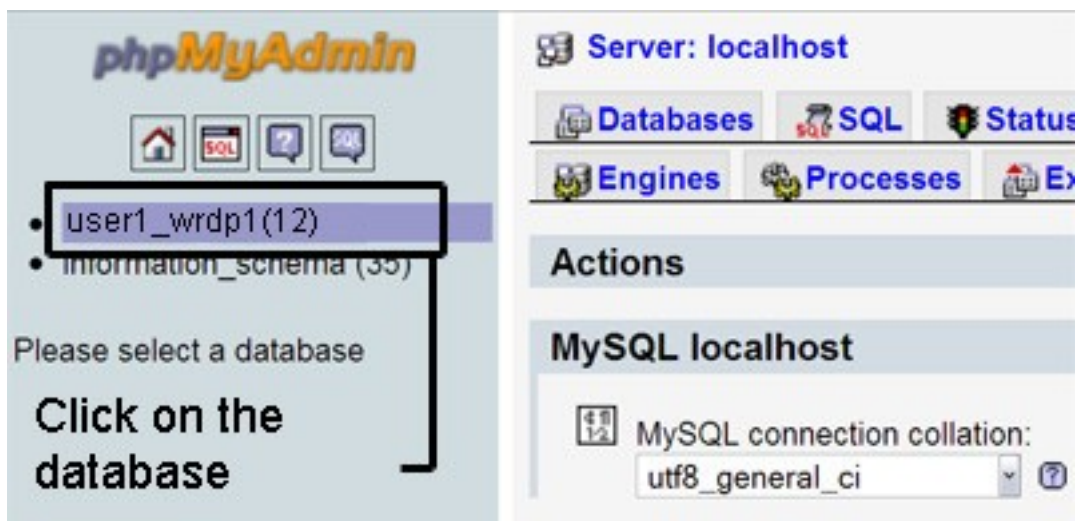
In order to view the pages, you need to change the wp-options tables, noting that they will need to be changed back again once you know the site is working correctly.

Changing the 'wp-options' Tables

In CPanel find the 'phpMyAdmin' icon and click on it to open the screen.

Click on the database to go to the tables. Find wp_options and click on the icon shown.

Now you need to find the 'siteurl' and 'home' fields. They should be on pages 1 and 2 respectively, you can scroll through the pages using the < or > buttons at the bottom of the page.

Click on the 'pencil' to edit them to the temporary URL file name. Click on the 'Go' button at the bottom of the page to save the changes.

While you are in this screen, on page 2, you should update the upload_path to reflect the directory structure of the new server. There may also be other fields that will require an update, so if you find you have a problem at a later date you can check to see if the problem is being caused by an incorrect directory path defined in this module.

With the 'siteurl' and 'home' fields renamed to the temporary URL you should now find that all the posts load OK. You should expect limited functionality in this view, but if you are at the point where you can see the site and it's posts, then you can be reasonably confident that the site will work properly when using the correct domain name and has been redirected by changing the named servers.

Tip* - the .htaccess file can also cause problems if incorrectly defined, if you experience problems you may need to check with your host if the format used works on their server.

Now go back and rename the 2 fields to their permanent domain name and save the changes. Once changed and saved, you can just close the screen.

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All that's left to do now is to change the named servers to point at the new host server. This is done via your domain registrar company and how it is done is very much dependent on the company you have registered your domain with.

They should provide the information and support on changing named servers to let you know how it is done.

Useful Resources

The procedure detailed above was used to move several blogs from a HostGator 'Baby' account to a HostGator 'Aluminum' account. Both of which have CPanel available as a part of the package.

Other than the potential difficulty of a large zip file, the process, once the stages were identified, was relatively straightforward. This procedure provides the detail for each stage which should aid a trouble free move. But it is always a wise precaution to ensure everything is fully backed up before starting and to ensure the site is working as best as you can before redirecting named servers.

Leaving the old account intact until you are 100% sure the move has been successful is also recommended. Worst case scenario is that you can simply redirect your site back to the original if a problem is identified that you are struggling to resolve.