



How to Change the Default Language Setting in WordPress

Problems.Consulting

Critical Tweaks Procedures

How-To Guides

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Summary

This guide explains how to ensure a WordPress website's <html> configuration tag is correctly set.

Version Control

Version	Date	Author	Reviewer(s)
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Summary

This guide explains how to set the correct language for your entire WordPress website (e.g., to en-GB for British English). This is a critical step for good Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and ensures your site communicates clearly to both users and search engines.

Why This Is Important

- **SEO:** It tells search engines that spellings like "colour" and "organise" are correct for your chosen region, not misspellings of American English ("color," "organize").
- **Clarity:** It establishes the correct default language for a multilingual or localised site.
- **Consistency:** It helps other plugins, like Yoast SEO, generate correct technical data (JSON-LD) and social media tags.

The Method: Two Simple Steps

This is the correct method for setting the default language setting.

1. In the WordPress admin dashboard, navigate to **Settings** → **General**.
2. Find the **Site Language** dropdown menu, select the desired language and localisation (say **English (UK)**), and **Save Changes**.

That is it. Your website's <html> tag is now correctly set.

Important Considerations (Advanced)

1. **Multilingual Sites:** This method sets the *default* language. For any pages in other languages, you will need to use a dedicated multilingual plugin to set their language attributes correctly.
2. **Sitemaps:** Because this is an edit of the site configuration, although the served pages change immediately, the sitemap's Last Modified date is **not** updated. Consequently, a search engine reliant on the sitemap will not automatically re-assess the pages.

For More Information

This guide is part of the **Critical Tweaks** series, which focuses on small, high impact changes you can make to improve your website. For more guides and articles, visit the Critical Tweaks page on our website.

<https://www.problems.consulting/critical-website-tweaks.html>

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