

JOOMLA! UPGRADE MANUAL



A GUIDE ON HOW TO UPDATE YOUR JOOMLA! WEBSITE, AND THE DETAILS TO CONSIDER BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER THE PROCESS.

A Joomla! Upgrade helps you keep your website operational in terms of security, usability and performance. This is a very important process that every business has to take into account sooner, rather than later, to ensure that their website is still at its best.

The world of Content Management Systems (CMS) is constantly evolving, and users are very often not fully aware of the changes that apply to their own websites.

Web Foundry is a digital agency, that specialises in Joomla! based websites and custom applications, our team has helped hundreds of businesses to upgrade their websites – we are used to the process and we would like to help you.

It goes without saying that different businesses have very different websites which have their own peculiarities to take into account when the necessity for an upgrade comes up.

Since we have dealt with this situation many times before, we thought it was time to share our experience with fellow users who might need some help figuring out all of this.

All we need from you now is to sit back, relax and get to know more about Joomla! upgrades without the headaches.

★ YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY READ THIS MANUAL IF...

You are a Joomla! user and your version is no longer supported or you wish to get the latest update for your website to be able to get the most out of Joomla's functionalities.

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This is the first step of the process, including the most basic questions you need to answer before starting anything.

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What is the architecture of your website? Which extensions are linked to it? This section is a guide on how to assess your own website, so you can plan the upgrade process properly.

4 THE SKILLS YOU NEED

Each change will involve a particular set of skills. This section will cover the list of skills needed to apply the changes to your website.

5 OUR RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Carefully chosen by our team, this list of resources might help you get further information on a particular matter.

1 PRIMARY CHECKLIST

Before we start, we need to make sure you are fully aware of what the upgrade process entails. A Joomla! upgrade involves quite a few steps and is very specific – in other words, you can't apply the same process to every single website needing one. So, as a starting point, let's have a look at the three main questions you need to answer.

1. WHICH VERSION OF JOOMLA! ARE YOU RUNNING?

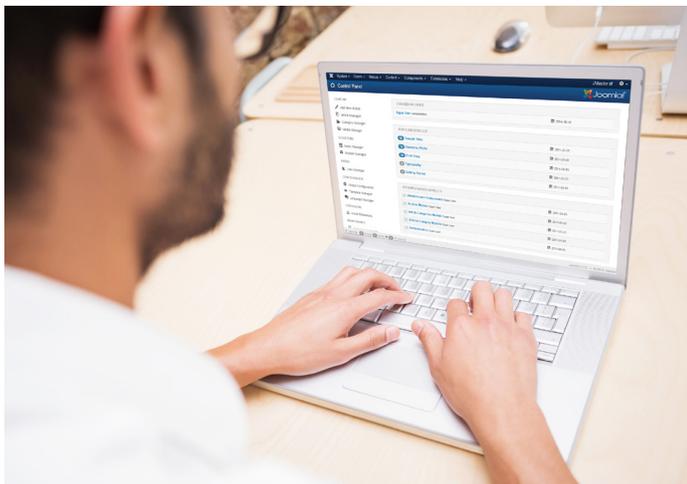
How to check that: Go to the back end of Joomla and once you are on the control panel, click on System and then, System information. You should be able to find it next to 'Joomla! Version'.

2. WHAT VERSION DO YOU WANT TO UPGRADE TO?

When you know which version you are currently running, you can work out what kind of upgrade you need (please note that this subject will be covered in the next section of this factsheet- meanwhile, please visit this page to know your 'upgrade type')

3. DO YOU HAVE THE ADMIN PASSWORDS AND FTP DETAILS FOR YOUR WEBSITE?

What is FTP? FTP or File Transfer Protocol is a network protocol that enables the transfer of data from your computer to the host, which, as its name suggests, hosts your website and make its display on the Internet possible.



★ AND THEN?

Once you are able to answer all of these, consider yourself as the proud owner of the access keys to your Joomla! upgrade! However, this is only the first step and there is a particular distinction to be made between a Joomla! upgrade and a Joomla! migration. This is what we are going to talk about in the following section.

2 UPGRADE VS MIGRATION

Although we commonly speak about Joomla! upgrades, there is a difference between an upgrade and a migration.

Joomla! has had 3 release cycles so far, with their three respective versions, 1.5, 2.5 and 3.0. Around them, a lot of minor versions were released, and at the time of writing, the latest version is 3.4. What this basically means is that each time a new version is released, the older ones become increasingly insecure and out of date, until they aren't supported at all.

In a nutshell, here is what it means to do an upgrade or a migration:

In both cases, the process can be a bit daunting – more so for the migration than the upgrade. Depending on how old the starting version is, you will have a certain amount of aspects to change on your website. The older the starting version is, the more likely it is that you will need to make major changes to your website so it can run on the latest version. Note that there is a high chance that you need to rethink your website entirely to meet the new website standards.

The difficulty of the two processes is fairly different and there are risks to consider. Among the most annoying ones, there is a possibility to have a broken website which might need a lot of changes (sometimes the website needs to be entirely rethought) to be fully functional again.

So, upgrade? Migration? Which one is for you?

Whether you need to proceed to an upgrade or a migration, each of them needs particular attention. Now that you know which one needs to be applied to your website, it is time to find out what skillsets are needed to start upgrading your Joomla! version.

UPGRADE

When you need to update your Joomla! version which belongs to the same release cycle as the latest version available.

e.g. upgrade from version 1.6.5 to 1.6.6.

MIGRATION

When you upgrade your Joomla! version from a different release cycle to the latest version released.

e.g. migration from version 1.5 to 2.5.

CONSULTANCY SERVICE

Web Foundry offers a consultancy service for its clients in order to help them shape their upgrades into a simple and clear process. We are here to provide the most relevant advice and help you plan your project, all while identifying the potential risks in advance so you don't have to worry about bad surprises.

3 WEBSITE ASSESSMENT

Your website is like a building. It was designed according to a plan and it has an architecture where we can find different parts having a particular use.

A website's architecture was conceived in a way that it reflects a certain aesthetic format, as well as technical aspects which make it functional for users.

Fortunately, Joomla! takes care of most of the functionality thanks to extensions. These extensions are 'add-ons' that usually save you from building your website from scratch with an outrageous amount of custom coding! However, in return, your role is to make sure those extensions are still active, secure, and updated, so that they can still 'do the job'.

In a Joomla! website, you can find two types of extensions:

1. CORE EXTENSIONS

Core extensions are built-in with Joomla! when it is downloaded, they handle the basic architecture of the website. They are essential and make the whole website functional.

2. THIRD PARTY EXTENSIONS

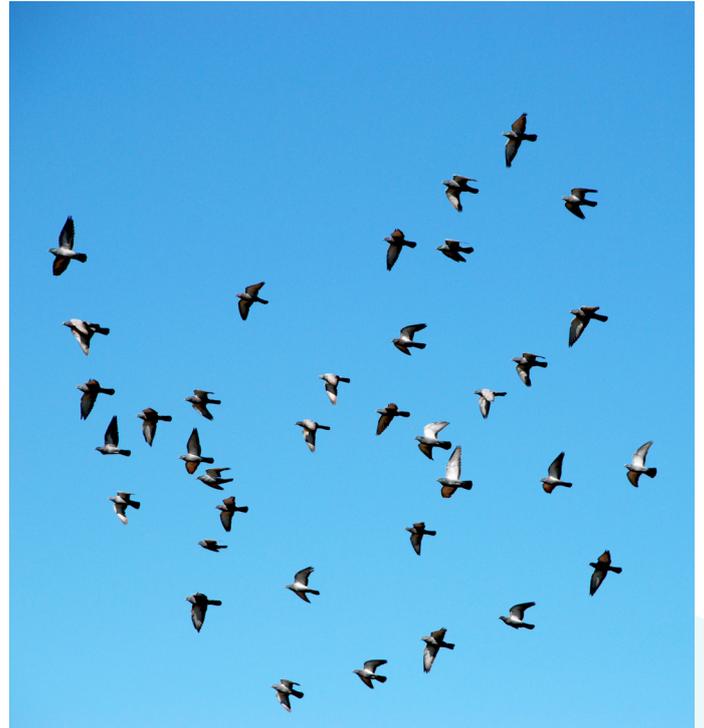
Third-party extensions can be found in the Joomla! Extensions Directory, they provide extra features, on top of the basic ones provided with the CMS.

So, when you are thinking of upgrading, these extensions might need some adjustment according to one or another version of Joomla!, especially if they are custom extensions, which means that they were tailored for your website and in that case, it is up to you to add the changes.

It is exactly the same process for templates, which form the basis for the design and layout of your website, and it is also possible to add your changes to them. In other words, any custom aspect of your website needs attention.

Once you have addressed the technicalities, it is very common to realise that your content is now out of date. It is essential to adapt your content so that you can still have the right balance between what you can read and how it is presented. Any user going on your website will be looking for something, and the key is to make this something appear very clearly, and formulate it in a way which will give an answer to the user's need.

Also, let's not forget about the server level requirements involved as well:



UPGRADING

Upgrading doesn't only mean changes on the website itself, the server requirements can change from one version to another. You can find the current requirements for the latest version of Joomla! [here](#).

PHP

PHP (or Hypertext Preprocessor) is the programming language which powers Joomla! so using the latest version is recommended to get the most of the Joomla! software. Note that if the PHP version installed on your server doesn't at least meet the minimum requirements for the version of Joomla! you're installing, it won't run at all.

★ WHY IS THIS SO IMPORTANT?

New versions mean new features, and the key is to adapt all the surrounding aspects to make it all work. The stakes don't only involve functionality, they are also about security. Using unsupported versions of Joomla! is a risk: your website will be vulnerable to bugs and will show signs of instability. Moreover, it is possible to find scripts on the web which allows hackers to easily exploit vulnerabilities in old versions of Joomla! (it applies to old extensions as well).

4 THE SKILLS YOU NEED

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

How is this upgrade going to be conducted? Do you know the process to follow to maximise the effectiveness of your upgrade?

In every project, you will always need to focus on the task to be achieved: there are unplanned problems that may arise during the upgrade process, different options have to be considered so that you don't get stuck in the middle of your project.

SERVER SIDE SUPPORT

Can you handle the maintenance linked to your server requirements? Is your server flexible, properly specified?

On the technical side, it is not uncommon to have to deal with server requirements during the process. Sometimes, the new version of Joomla! is not compatible with some host providers and there might be a need update your PHP code to make sure it meets the server requirements.

FRONT END SKILLS

Are you able to adapt your visual content and presentation of your website after the upgrade? Can you handle the bugs?

Since changing the version of your website might involve consequences to your template, you may have to consider changing the whole of your website, or just look for a similar template which will be supported by the new version. That being said, changing the template is likely to need some work on images as well (formatting, resizing, etc.).

CONTENT MANAGEMENT

If after the upgrade you realise that your content is no longer relevant, can you manage the changes to ensure SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) is taken into account?

Content always matters. Re-thinking a website is sometimes a good opportunity to improve / replace any content that might have lost its relevance through the years. We also know that content is key in terms of SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and that there are specific practices to apply to be sure your website gets on the first page of Google!

RESTORATION AND BACKUP

Do you know how to get a copy of your current website? Have you thought of ways to go back to a previous step, in case the upgrade doesn't go as planned?

The main thing to do is to make sure that whatever happens, you still have your current website saved somewhere. You need to extract all the data related to your website and store it somewhere safe during the upgrade.

DESIGN

Is your website still reflecting the idea you're trying to convey? Is it up-to-date for all kind of devices? [Click here](#) to see what a responsive web design is.

Now, what do you think of your current website? Is it looking a bit old-fashioned? Maybe it is time for a new design which will be supported by portable devices such as phones and tablets. Having a responsive website is now an essential factor in reaching potential customers and Google rewards responsive websites with improved rankings.

HOW WEB FOUNDRY CAN HELP YOU

Web Foundry's Joomla! expertise could help you go through the whole process of an upgrade or migration without you having to deal with any problems that may occur. Do you need help with something in particular?

Our team will plan everything for you from start to finish. We are specialised in providing responsive, secure and technical solutions to make sure your Joomla! website is at the top of its game. Our team can handle your project and anticipate the technical and design changes involved in an upgrade. Here are some benefits you would get by working with us:

LOWER THE RISKS

If you are not familiar with the upgrade process, let us help you. We have worked with Joomla! since its very first release and we know the software – and its complexities – like the back of our hand.

KEEP FOCUSING ON YOUR CORE BUSINESS

Leaving your project with our specialist team will enable you to keep doing what you do best, while we take care of the rest.

'NO SOONER SAID THAN DONE'

We work well, we work fast. We will reduce the time of your website's transition and will make sure you get the best results as soon as you need.

5 OUR RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

JOOMLA WEBSITE MANUALS

- 🔗 [Upgrading Versions](#)
- 🔗 [Planning for Mini-Migration - Joomla 2.5 to 3.x](#)

RELATED BLOGS

- 🔗 [Steve Burge's blog](#)
- 🔗 [Brian Teeman's blog](#)
- 🔗 [Ronni Christainson \(Red Component\)](#)

JOOMLA MAGAZINES

- 🔗 [Last Chance to Upgrade from Joomla 2.5 \(June 2015\)](#)
- 🔗 [Why Migrate? And Then... How? \(December 2014\)](#)

USEFUL EXTENSIONS (TO ASSIST THE PROCESS)

- 🔗 **SP Upgrade**
 - Paid download
 - Easy to use
 - Migrates everything with no exception (core data and extensions)
 - Supports upgrades and migrations from 1.5 to 3.x
- 🔗 **J2XML**
 - Free download
 - Easy to use
 - Only migrates articles, users and weblinks
 - Enables to import / export them with / into an xml file
 - Supports upgrades and migrations

Thank you for reading, we hope the notions of Joomla! upgrades and migrations are clearer to you. If not, it would be a pleasure to tell you more around a coffee-or two.

Drop us an email at hello@web-foundry.co.uk and we'll see what we can do!

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