

How to do Split testing on your WordPress site using Google Website Optimizer

If you are now at a stage where you've read enough about the merits of split testing that you want to want to jump in and try it on your Wordpress site, then read on.

This blog post will walk you through what you need to do to perform an **A/B test** on your WP site.

So what is an A/B test? It's basically another term for "split test" and the premise is that a test is performed on two or more versions of a particular page in order to determine the effectiveness of certain qualities such as page layout, different headline, content, color scheme or pictures etc.

The simplest form of an A/B test is when you have an original page "A" and another version of the original page, "B" which may have a different headline or sales copy. The test is to see which of these two pages convert more traffic based on their design or content.

In addition, you would also have a target page to which you would send all successful conversions which come from either pages A or B. (A simple example of a target page is the "Thank you" page you might send your customers to after they've purchased your product.)

The traffic is randomly split between pages A and B to determine which version is converting better. At the end of the test your data should show which page version had the more favorable conversion qualities.

Below are the components you will need in order to perform an A/B split test on a WordPress site or blog:

1. [Google Website Optimizer Account](#)

This is a free website testing tool from Google which allows you to perform various optimization tests on any website. This is the brains behind your split testing and will allow you to setup different types of tests. For instance if you wish to test 4 different versions of the same page you could easily do that with this tool.

This tool will generate several snippets of javascript code which you will have to insert into the header portions of the web pages you wish to test (including the target page).

In order to be able to use this tool you need a Google Analytics account. If you don't have one simply create a new one.

2. [Google Website Optimizer for WordPress Plugin](#)

This plugin allows you to insert the code snippets from the Google Web Optimizer tool into the header portion of your test and landing pages.

Beware that this plugin is reported to only be supported up to WP version 2.8.4. The good news is that I've tried this plugin recently on one of my test sites (which is running WP 3.1) and it seems to be working just fine but I can't guarantee that your version of wordpress will behave the same way.

There are other plugins you could try but from my experience this is the best free plugin I've seen so far.

Performing the A/B Test

Step 1: Design and create the WP pages for your A/B split test.

To start with you must have created the following pages on your WP site:

- **Original page** - this is the page "A" of your test. eg, an eBook sales page. It is recommended that you choose a page which is already getting some good traffic to it, otherwise you may be waiting for a long time to get enough meaningful data.
- **Variation page** - this is the page "B" of your test and is a variation of A. eg, you might try another headline or different eBook price compared to page A.
- **Conversion page** - this is the page where people will be sent to after a success scenario. eg, a "thank you" page after a purchase of a product or service. The definition of "success scenario" is purely up to you and doesn't have to pertain to making a sale. You could for instance simply want to track how many people click a "more info" link.

After you've created the pages above, copy the URLs of each page and paste them in notepad in preparation for the coming steps.

Step 2: Install The [Google Website Optimizer for WordPress Plugin](#)

After you've installed the plugin make sure that you activate it. Then via your WP admin console go to the edit interface for each page you created in step one and ensure that the following form is visible for each page:

Google Website Optimizer

To use this plugin you must register a [Google Website Optimizer](#) account. It's free.

Enable the Google Website Optimizer support for this page/post.

Control Script

Insert here the **Control Script** provided by the Google Website Optimizer. You must fill this field only if this page/post is your **Original page**.

Tracking Script

Insert here the **Tracking Script** provided by the Google Website Optimizer. You must fill this field only if this page/post is your **Original page** or a **Variation page**.

Conversion Script

Insert here the **Conversion Script** provided by the Google Website Optimizer. You must fill this field only if this page/post is your **Conversion page**.

If you do not see the above form try deactivating all of your WP plugins including this one and then activating each plugin again.

Step 3: Configure the A/B test from your Google Web Optimizer account

- Log in to your GWO account and click on the “**create experiment**” link. You’ll then see the following page:

Google Website Optimizer @gmail.com | Help | Sign Out

Experiments My Account

Website Optimizer > New experiment

What type of experiment would you like to create?

Not sure which type of experiment is right for you? [Learn more about Website Optimizer experiments](#)

A/B Experiment - The simplest way to start testing fast

This method compares the performance of **entirely different versions of a page**. Use it if the points below describe your desired experiment.

- You are able to publish a new page to test against an existing page
- You want to test a new layout or overall look of a page

Multivariate Experiment - The most robust way to test lots of ideas

This method compares the performance of **content variations in multiple locations on a page**. Use it if the points below describe your desired experiment.

- Your page receives more than ~1,000 views a week
- You want to try multiple content changes in different parts of the page simultaneously

Common Questions

- [What kind of experiment is right for me?](#)
- [How do I create an experiment?](#)
- [What information will I need to set up an experiment?](#)
- [Do I need my webmaster's help?](#)
- [What kind of testing can I do?](#)
- [More Website Optimizer help](#)

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Click on the A/B Experiment link circled above.

- The following page will be displayed:

Google Website Optimizer

Experiments My Account

Website Optimizer > A/B Experiment Checklist

A/B Experiment Checklist

Before you start, make sure you complete the following:

- 1. Choose the page you would like to test**
Examples of potential test pages could be your homepage or a product detail page.
- 2. Create alternate versions of your test page**
Create and publish different versions of your test page at unique URLs so that Website Optimizer can randomly display different versions to your users. These URLs could be bookmarked by your users, so after your experiment finishes, you may want to keep these URLs valid.

How many alternate versions should you test?
Generally, we recommend **around 100 conversions per page variation** over the course of your experiment. For example, an experiment with 3 page variations will typically need around 300 conversions before drawing any conclusions.

- 3. Identify your conversion page**
This is an existing page on your website that users reach after they've completed a successful conversion. For example, this might be the page displayed after a user completes a purchase, signs up for a newsletter, or fills out a contact form.

I've completed the steps above and I'm ready to start setting up my experiment.

[« Back](#) [Create »](#)

Set the checkbox and click the **Create** button.

- The following page will be displayed:

A/B experiment set-up: Name your experiment and identify pages

- 1. Name your experiment**
The experiment name will help you to distinguish this experiment from others; your users won't see this name.
Experiment name:
Example: My homepage test #1
- 2. Identify the pages you want to test**
Add as many variations as you like, naming them so you can easily distinguish them in your reports. At least two (including the original) are required. These URLs could be bookmarked by your users, so after your experiment finishes, you may want to keep these URLs valid. [Learn more](#)

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Name: Original | Original page URL: ? ✔ http://example.com/wp/product Page found |
| Name: Variation 1 | Page variation URL: ? ✔ http://example.com/wp/store Page found |

[+ Add another page variation](#)

- 3. Identify your conversion page**
This is an existing page that users reach after completing a successful conversion. For example, this might be the page displayed after a user completes a purchase, signs up for a newsletter, or fills out a contact form. [Learn more](#)

| |
|--|
| Conversion page URL: ✔ http://example.com/wp/thankyou Page found |
|--|

[Continue »](#) [Save progress and finish later](#)

Pick a name for your experiment and fill in the URLs for your pages which you copied

into notepad earlier. Google will check to see if your pages are reachable and if they aren't you'll have to fix this before proceeding. Then click the **Continue** button.

- The following page will be displayed:

Website Optimizer > gwo wp plugin test > A/B Experiment Set-up: Install and Validate JavaScript Tags

Name experiment and identify pages > Install and validate JavaScript tags > Preview and start experiment

A/B Experiment Set-up: Install and Validate JavaScript Tags

Now you need to add the Website Optimizer JavaScript tags to your pages' source code. [Learn more](#)

Who will install and validate the JavaScript tags?

Your webmaster will install and validate JavaScript tags.
Google will provide a link to the installation and validation instructions for you to send to your team. You'll be able to check on the status by returning to this page.

You will install and validate the JavaScript tags
You should be comfortable with basic HTML editing, have access to your web pages, and be able to upload the tagged pages to your server.

[« Back](#) [Continue »](#) [Save progress and finish later](#)

Choose the option where you install and validate the javascript as shown circled above then click the **Continue** button.

- The following page will be displayed:

Name experiment and identify pages > Install and validate JavaScript tags > Preview and start experiment

New A/B Experiment

Step 2: Install and validate JavaScript tags

Change your mind about the installation? You can [go back and send instructions to your webmaster](#).

Once you've pasted each of the JavaScript tags into your experiment pages and uploaded them to your webserver, click "Validate pages" at the bottom of this page so we can make sure everything is good to go.

- 1. Original page: Add your control and tracking scripts**

Original: [http://\[redacted\]](#)

[View a sample source code](#)

Control and Tracking Script: Paste the following script immediately after the opening <head> tag of your original page's source code.

```
<!-- Google Website Optimizer Control Script -->
<script>
function utmx_section() {}function utmx() {}
(function() {var
```
- 2. Variation pages: Add your tracking script to each page**

Variation 1: [\[redacted\]](#)

Tracking Script: Paste the following script immediately after the opening <head> tag of all (1) of your variation pages' source code.

```
<!-- Google Website Optimizer Tracking Script -->
<script type="text/javascript">
var gaq = gaq || [];
_gaq.push(['gwo._setAccount', 'UA-[redacted]']);
```
- 3. Conversion page: Add your tracking script**

Conversion page: [\[redacted\]](#)

Conversion Script: Paste the following script immediately after the opening <head> tag of your conversion page's source code.

```
<!-- Google Website Optimizer Tracking Script -->
<script type="text/javascript">
var gaq = gaq || [];
_gaq.push(['gwo._setAccount', 'UA-[redacted]']);
```
- 4. Publish and validate your pages**

After you add your tags, publish your updated test, variation, and conversion pages on the web. We will check your pages to make sure that the scripts are correctly placed.

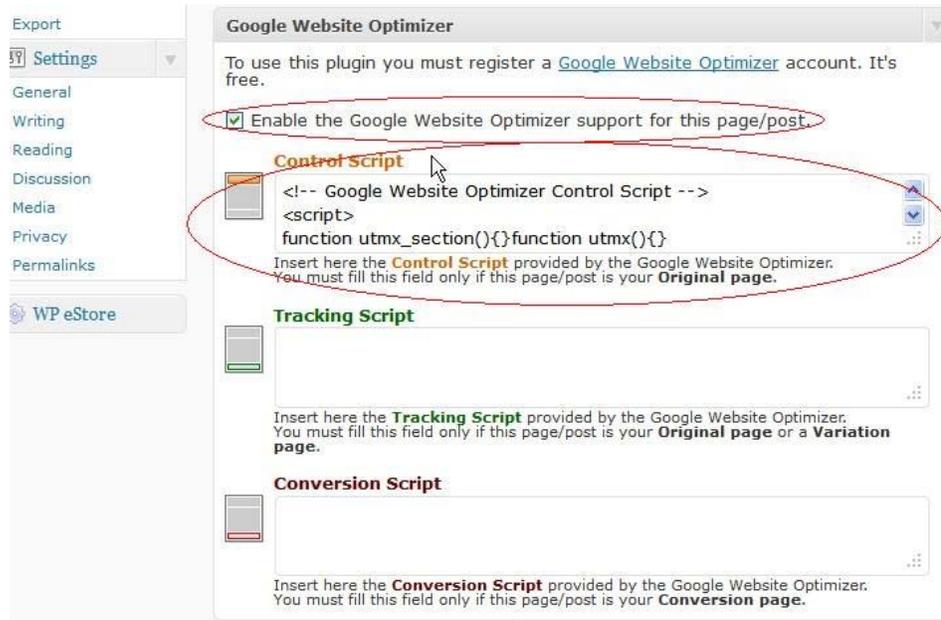
[Validate pages](#) Pages not accessible? Click "Validate pages" anyway. If we can't access something, we'll ask you to manually upload your pages for validation.

This page contains the javascript code which you will insert into your WP pages. Leave this page open and proceed to the next step.

Step 4: Insert the appropriate Optimizer javascript code into your WP pages

- **From WP admin console edit your “original page”:**

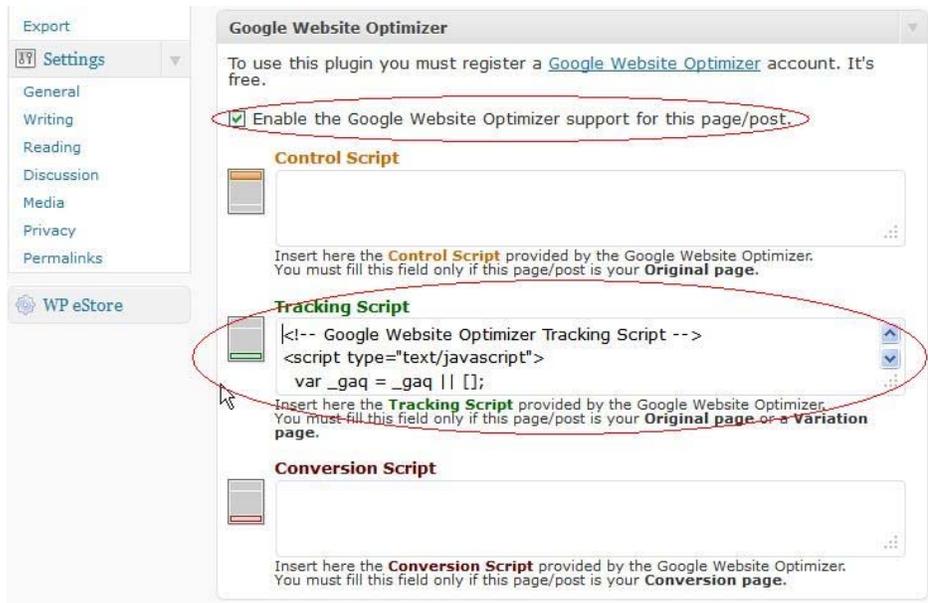
Set the checkbox to “Enable the Google Website Optimizer support for this page/post”. Then insert the javascript from the “Control and Tracking Script” section from the Google Website Optimizer page above into the “Control Script” section of your WP page as shown below:



Save your page by clicking the “Update” button.

- **From WP admin console edit your “variation page”:**

Set the checkbox to “Enable the Google Website Optimizer support for this page/post”. Then insert the javascript from the “Tracking Script” section from the Google Website Optimizer page into the “Tracking Script” section of your WP page as shown below:



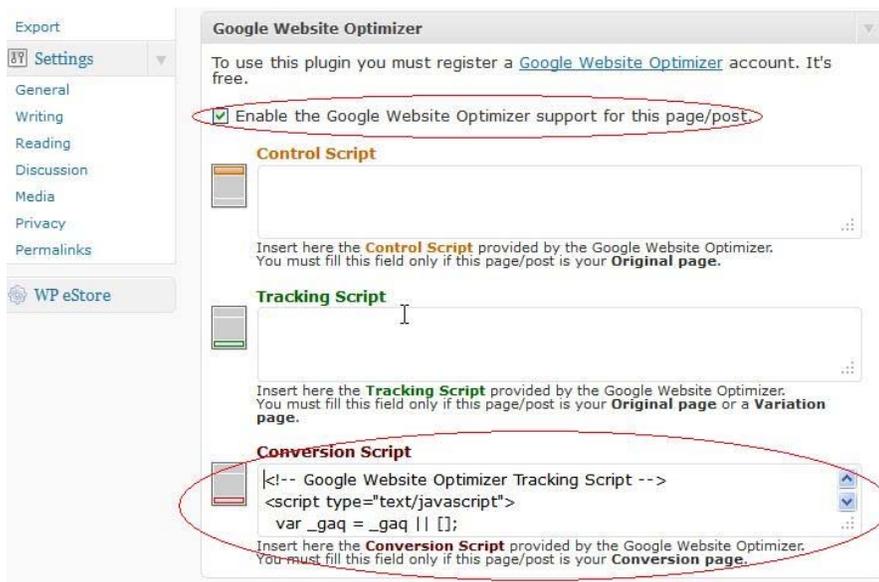
Save your page by clicking the “Update” button.

- **From WP admin console edit your “conversion page”:**

This is your thank you page or something similar.

Set the checkbox to “Enable the Google Website Optimizer support for this page/post”.

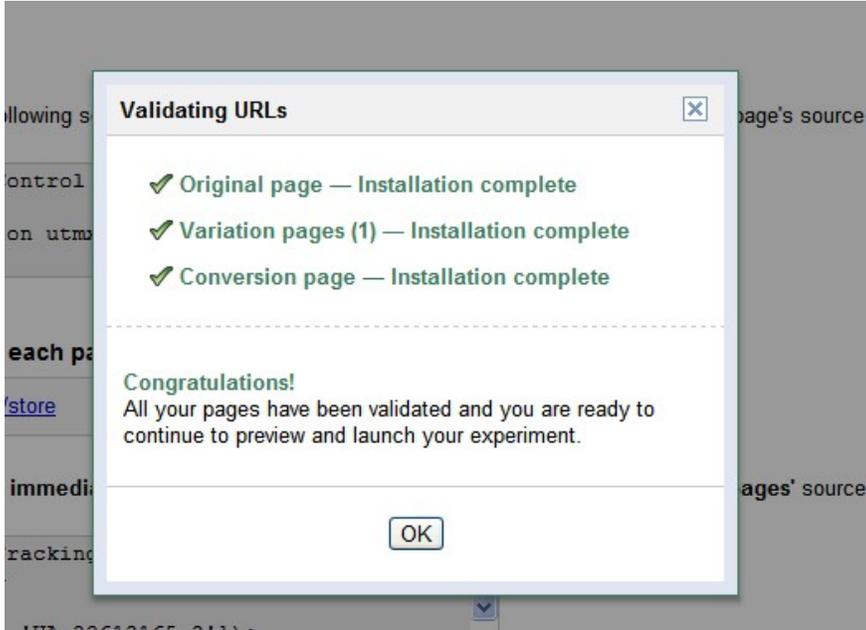
Then insert the javascript from the “Conversion Script” section from the Google Website Optimizer page into the “Conversion Script” section of your WP page as shown below:



Save your page by clicking the “Update” button.

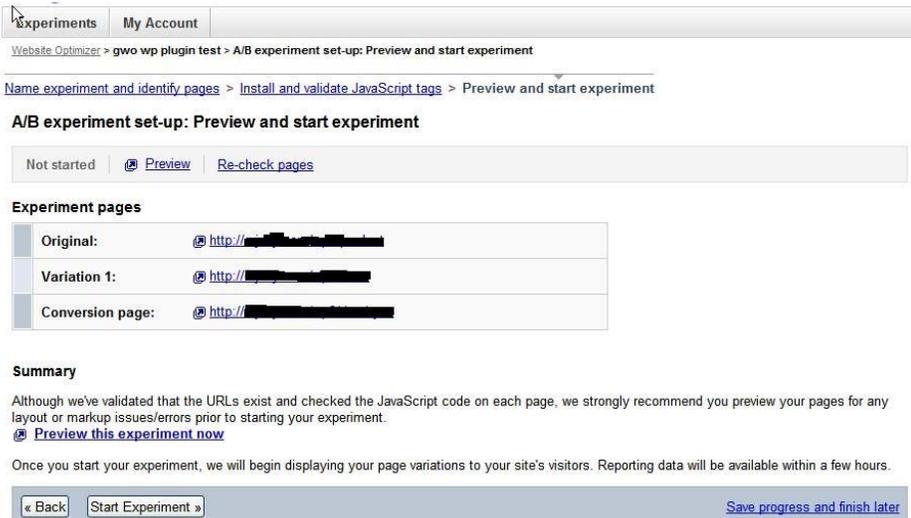
Step 5: Start your test

- Go to your Google Website Optimizer page which had all of the javascript code from step 3 and click on the Validate pages button. If you pasted the javascript code into your WP pages correctly in step 4 you will see the following:



Click Ok and then click the Continue button.

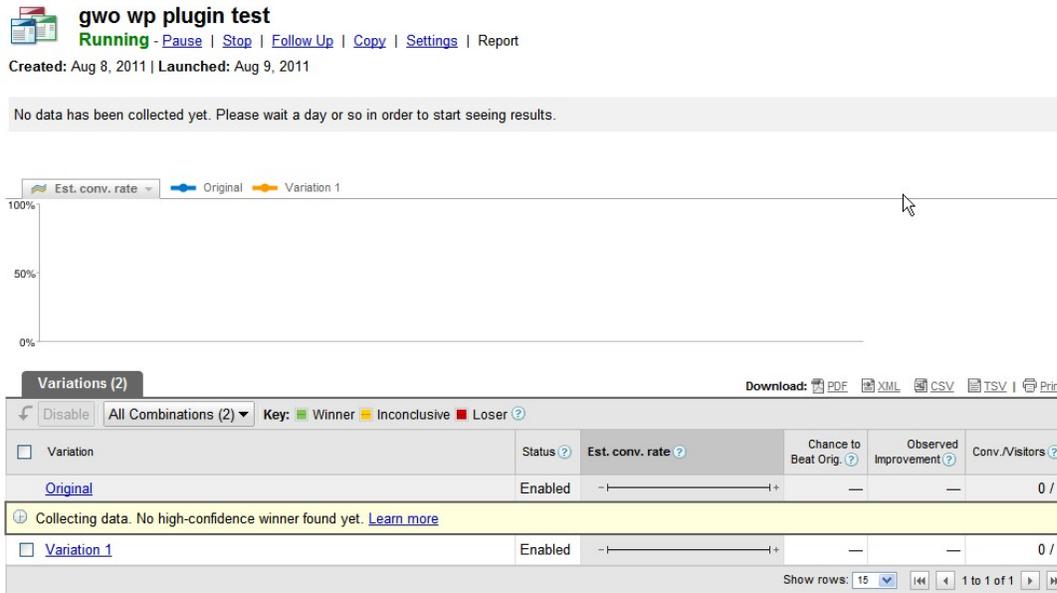
- The following page will be displayed:



Click on the Start Experiment button to start your test. You have now officially begun your split test!

Step 6: Monitor your test

You can monitor your split test via the nice graphic reports which Google provides. They look something like the following:



(Note: Mine just started seconds ago hence there's not much data to speak of yet)

In summary the above will at least get you started with your A/B testing. Split testing requires patience and time so make sure that you are rigorous with your testing.

It is highly recommended that you read the [Google Web Optimization help pages](#) which provide some very handy hints information about split testing.