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.**

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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:
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:

Click on the A/B Experiment link circled above.

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The following page will be displayed:

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

The following page will be displayed:

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:

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:

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

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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:

  ![Google Website Optimizer](image)

  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.