Speed Up Your WordPress Site

It is all fun and games until it takes 2-3 minutes to load a single website. When that happens it is clear that it is now time to fix or customize your WordPress website. So what can you do to speed up your currently existing website.
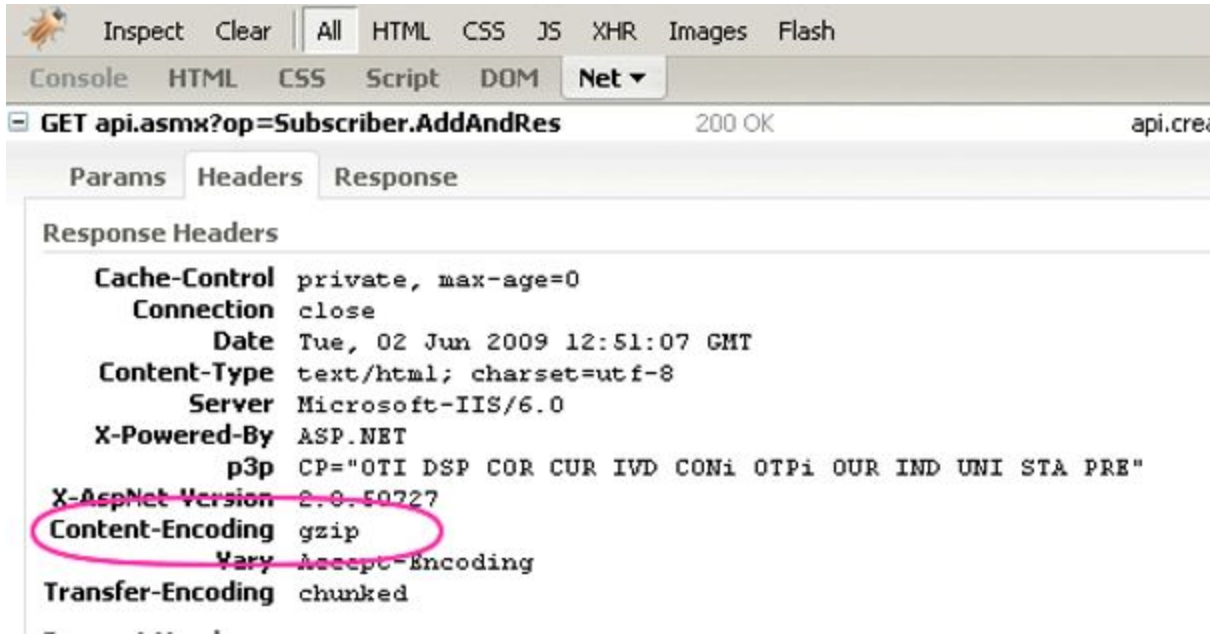
1. **Deal with your Plugins**

Regardless of what any "plugin" developer tells you... EVERY plugin you use on your site slows down your site. Now, to be fair, many plugins are well designed and will have almost unnoticeable effect. Other plugins will add hundreds of milliseconds to your load time (now multiply that by number of plugins on your site).

So what can you do?

Every 4-6 months you should go through your plugin list and do a mini-audit. What is a mini-audit?
   - Do you no longer use a plugin?
   - Is a plugin underperforming?
   - Is the plugin calling deprecated functions?
   - Are there new plugins that perform the function better?

2. **GZip Compression**

Gzip is a compression that makes all your files smaller and faster to transfer to a browser's computer. Normally you can accomplish this by using the W3 Total Cache plugin and checking the GZip compression check box but you can also use some code that goes in your *.htaccess* file (so you would need to be using Apache.

```
<ifModule mod_gzip.c>
mod_gzip_on Yes
mod_gzip_dechunk Yes
mod_gzip_item_include file .(html?|txt|css|js|php|pl)$
mod_gzip_item_include handler ^cgi-script$
mod_gzip_item_include mime ^text/.*
mod_gzip_item_include mime ^application/x-javascript.*
mod_gzip_item_exclude mime ^image/.*
mod_gzip_item_exclude rspheader ^Content-Encoding:.*gzip.*
</ifModule>
```

See the following snipts:

Enable GZip in htaccess -
https://snipt.net/wpstudio/enable-gzip-in-htaccess-file-f3780b3a/
Enable GZip in Apache -
https://snipt.net/wpstudio/enable-gzip-on-apache-servers-f07ea85a/
Enable GZip in Nginx -
https://snipt.net/wpstudio/enable-gzip-on-nginx-3fb60724/

3. Shrink Your Images

This is important that you keep the SIZE of your image… not the dimensions but the file size. You can either use a plugin like Smush.it to do this for you or you can use an image editor to manually perform the resizing or even use an image optimizer tool to optimize all your images.

4. Cache Your Stuff

You need some sort of caching to enable your server to send files to visitor's computers as fast as possible. Using ANY caching option is going to be better than not doing any caching.

5. Make Your Scripts Sit in the Corner

The way a webpage is displayed on your visitor's browers is by starting at the top of the file and going step-by-step until it reaches the end of the file. This means that if you have loaded up your < head > section with a TON of scripts, nothing else gets loaded until all the scripts finish loading.

Yes you can check and see how many of the scripts can handle **asynchronous loading** so that they won't block the loading of the page, but you'll probably find that its much easier to move the scripts to the bottom and the CSS files to the top.

6. Customize High Traffic Pages

Spend some time figuring out which are your highest traffic pages/posts/content. Ones you find your highest traffic pages, start customizing the speed. Make sure you don't have any unnecessary scripts running on those pages, all images are optimized, etc.

7. **Get Rid of the Junk**

If you have lots of post drafts/edits/saves it will eventually drag down your website because its forcing your WordPress Query to sort through TONS more post entries than it actually needs to sort through. WP_POST_REVISIONS in the wp-config.php file.

8. **Pingbacks are sooooo old school**

Pingbacks and Trackbacks are not really used much anymore and are more often than not used by gray hat sites trying to eke out tiny bits of SEO. So I suggest you turn them off completely.

9. **Minify Your Code**

Remember that browsers don't really care what the code looks like…. and every single white space in your source code take a little bit of time to load into your visitor's browser. So minify it to gain just a little speed. You can even use a plugin like https://wordpress.org/plugins/bwp-minify/ to do the minifying for you.

10. **Optimize Your Database**

BackupBuddy and other tools can help you optimize your database and keep it running as smooth as possible. Remember that older WordPress sites will accumulate junk in the database over time (old plugins, themes, settings, etc.)

11. Be careful of External Scripts

We are not talking about scripts being pulled from CDNs or Google's script server…. but rather code/scripts used for Facebook or Youtube. Remember that every time you embed a video or use a social sharing plugin or even social comments, you have to be careful how long its taking to load all those scripts (ESPECIALLY from Facebook). Think if there is a way to accomplish the functionality WITHOUT require scripts to load.

This should be a good reminder to also consider using a CDN to serve your scripts/images/etc from a server that's faster than your webhost.

12.   If All Else Fails…

Maybe you just need to switch to a better web host.   :)