Disabling All WordPress Plugins Without the Dashboard: From cPanel File Manager, FTP, WP Toolkit or WP-CLI

WordPress Guides · https://www.hyyat.com/en/knowledgebase/disable-wordpress-plugins-cpanel/

The quick fix In cPanel open **File Manager**, go to `public_html/wp-content` and rename the `plugins` folder to `plugins-off`. Everything is disabled at once and the dashboard comes back. Log in, rename the folder back to `plugins`, and activate the plugins one by one on the Plugins screen until the problem returns; that is the culprit.

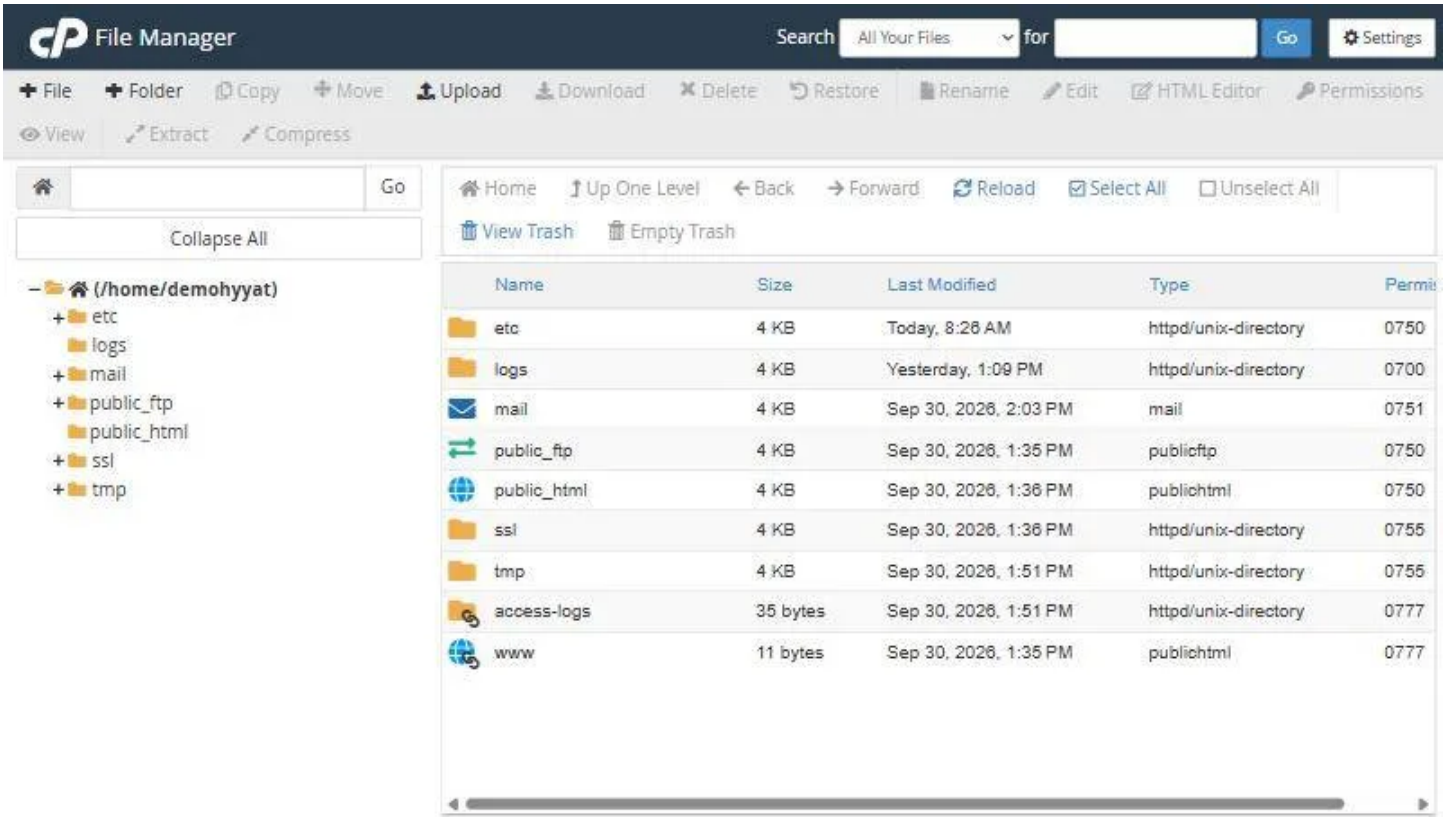
Embedded media: https://www.hyyat.com/wp-content/uploads/2026/11/hyyat-wp-disable-en.mp4?_=1

A white screen, “There has been a critical error on this website”, or a dashboard that will not open after an update. In most of these cases a plugin is to blame, and the first fix is to disable them all at once from outside WordPress.

Before you start: check your email

On a fatal error WordPress emails the admin address about a technical issue, with a **Recovery Mode** link. It opens the dashboard with only the faulty plugin paused, so you can deactivate or delete it. If you got that email, it is the fastest route.

Method 1: Rename the plugins folder



1. **Open File Manager** in cPanel. Full guide: using File Manager.
2. **Open wp-content** inside `public_html`, or inside your site's subfolder.
3. **Rename** right-click `plugins`, choose **Rename**, and type `plugins-off`.
4. **Log in** open `/wp-admin`. It works because WordPress finds no plugins.
5. **Rename it back** to `plugins`. All plugins now show as **inactive** on the Plugins screen.
6. **Find the cause** activate plugins one at a time and load the site after each. The one that brings the problem back is the culprit.

A common mistake: Deleting the plugins folder instead of renaming it. Deleting loses the plugins and their files; renaming is enough and takes seconds to undo.

Disabling just one plugin

If you know the suspect, such as the plugin you last updated, rename only its folder inside `plugins`, for example `woocommerce` to `woocommerce-off`. The other plugins keep working.

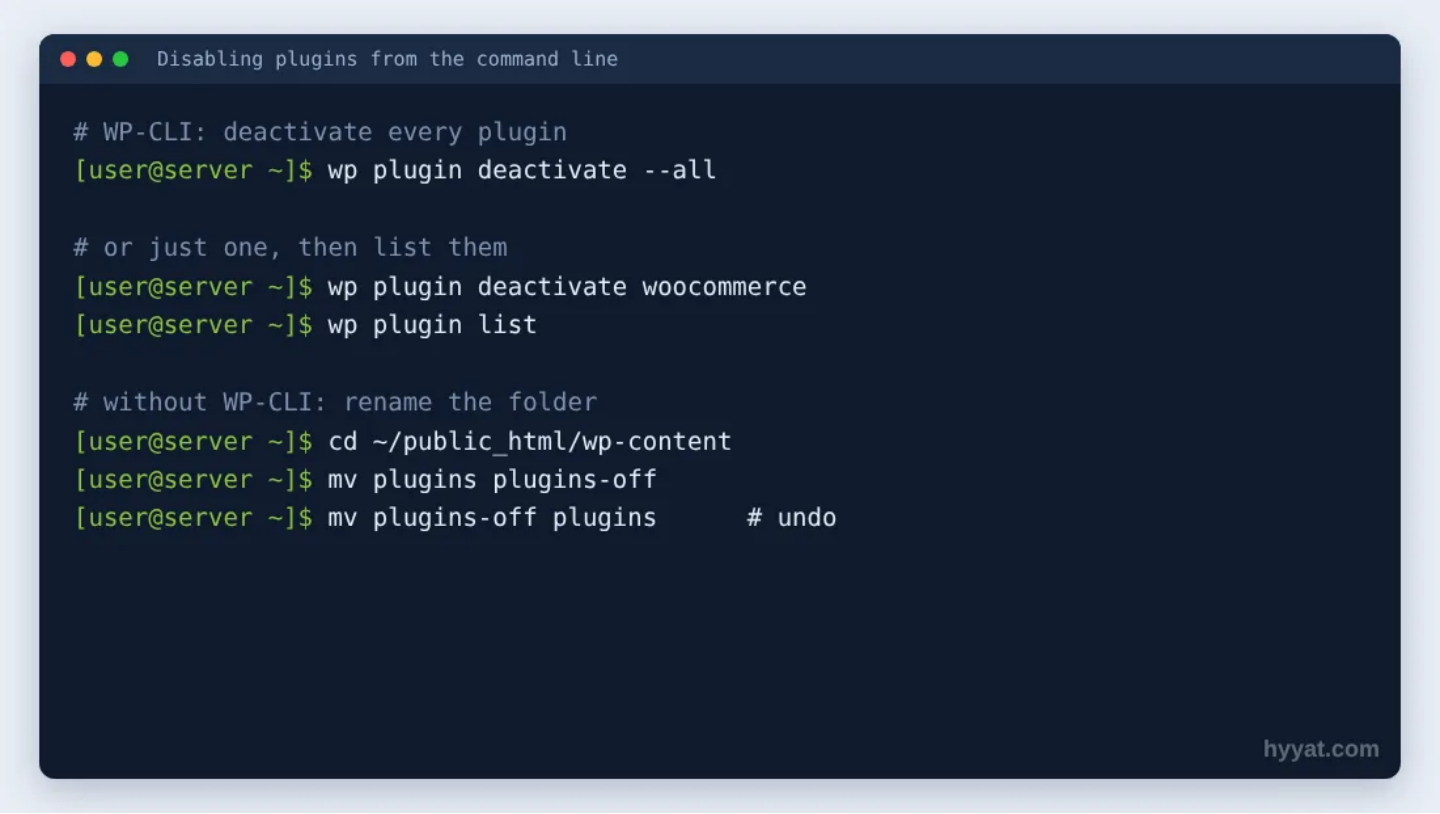
Method 2: FTP

The same steps in a client such as FileZilla: connect, open `wp-content`, rename the folder. Connection details: the FTP guide.

Method 3: WP Toolkit

In cPanel open **WordPress Management**, then your site's card, then the **Plugins** tab. Switch off any plugin there without logging in to WordPress. Why the tool is useful in general: the WordPress Toolkit guide.

Method 4: The command line



Found the culprit. Now what?

Situation	Next step
The plugin needs an update	Update it; if the update fails: the manual update
Two plugins clash	Keep one, or ask both developers

Situation	Next step
It clashes with the PHP version	Contact the developer, or send us a support ticket to check the right PHP version
You still do not know why	Turn on the error log: debugging WordPress

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Our customers asked

Do plugin settings get lost when I rename the folder?

No, settings live in the database. After renaming back and activating, they return as they were.

I disabled the plugins and the problem remains

Then it is not a plugin. Try the theme: rename your theme’s folder in wp-content/themes so WordPress falls back to a default theme, or see the 500 error and memory exhausted.

The site lost its design after disabling

Normal if it was built with a page builder. It returns once you reactivate it.

Do I have to disable them all every time?

No. If you know the suspect, disable only that one.

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