



B R I E F I N G P A P E R

AI Tools & WordPress

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Note: WordPress 7.0 releases 20 May 2026. This paper will require review post-launch.

Summary

AI tools have become a normal part of WordPress work over the past year. Free options have displaced paid ones in several categories, most visibly in image generation. WordPress 7.0, releasing 20 May 2026, introduces a native AI layer that changes how plugins connect to AI services. Its effects will take time to show up in practice, but the structural shift is real. This paper covers where the tools stand now and what the 7.0 release actually means.

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Content & Copywriting

Writing is where most people see results quickest. Claude and ChatGPT are the two tools that have stuck, and at this point the choice between them comes down to how you work rather than what they can do. Claude holds up better across longer, more specific briefs and tends to stay consistent in tone. ChatGPT is more versatile day-to-day: stronger on structured output, better connected to other tools, and useful for things like keyword clustering, content calendars, and comparison tables.

Both have free tiers worth using before paying for anything. Purpose-built tools like Jasper and Copy.ai are still around for short-form marketing copy and ad creative, where their templates save time, but they add less to longer editorial work.

The shift worth noting is not which tool to use but how they fit in. AI as a first drafter, with editorial judgment applied after, has become the working assumption rather than the experiment.

Search & SEO

Rank Math AI and the Semrush Writing Assistant are the two tools most embedded in WordPress SEO work. Both run inside the editor rather than as separate applications, which is where they earn their place.

Rank Math generates meta descriptions, title tags, and schema markup, with Content AI flagging heading and keyword gaps in real time. For an established site with a lot of pages to optimise, it is one of the better uses of AI time available. The core plugin is free; the AI credits are cheap. Semrush's Writing Assistant scores content against readability, SEO, and tone targets as you draft. It is more capable but only makes sense if you are already paying for Semrush.

ChatGPT works well for early-stage keyword research: generating seed lists, exploring intent, grouping topics. It is not a substitute for a proper SEO platform when precision matters, but for initial thinking it is quick and costs nothing.

AI content can rank. Generic content rarely does, regardless of how it was written. The quality of the brief and the editing afterwards matter more than the tool.

Image Generation

This category looks very different to 2024. Midjourney was the standard recommendation for most of last year. It no longer is.

Where to start now

Google Imagen, free via Gemini, covers most practical WordPress image needs. Photorealistic outputs are strong, and its text-in-image accuracy is better than anything else available right now,

which matters for poster-style graphics, thumbnails with overlaid copy, and anything involving readable text in the image. For most use cases, it is the sensible starting point.

DALL-E, built into ChatGPT, is the path of least resistance for anyone already using that platform. No separate tool, no new workflow to learn. It handles specific prompts reliably and has improved a lot since earlier versions. Practical for headers, social content, and illustrative imagery.

Midjourney

Midjourney still does one thing better than the alternatives: images where mood and aesthetic quality are the priority over literal accuracy. Editorial-style work, cinematic imagery, anything where you want the picture to feel considered rather than generated. That niche is real.

Outside that, the case for it has weakened. No free tier. The Discord workflow is still the main interface for many features despite the web app. Customer support has been a recurring issue. Worth trying if free options are not delivering on a specific creative brief, but not a default starting point any more.

Adobe Firefly

Firefly's main strength now is Generative Fill in Photoshop, where it slots into an existing editing workflow rather than replacing it. As a standalone image generator it has been overtaken. If you are already in the Adobe ecosystem it earns its place; if you are not, there is no particular reason to seek it out.

A reasonable approach: start with Imagen or DALL-E. If neither meets the brief for a specific type of image, then look at what a paid option adds.

AI Inside WordPress

Several AI capabilities are now available directly inside the editor, without switching context.

Jetpack AI Assistant

Added as a block in the editor. Handles drafting, summarising, tone changes, and translation from within the dashboard. Included with Jetpack up to usage limits, paid tiers for heavier use.

Rank Math AI

Covered in the SEO section, but the integration point is worth flagging separately. Suggestions appear in the editing panel as you work, rather than in a separate tool.

Elementor AI and Divi AI

Both page builders now have AI embedded in the interface. Elementor AI works in the text widget; Divi AI generates section layouts from a prompt. Useful for quick iteration and layout thinking. Output quality varies.

WooCommerce Product Descriptions

A handful of plugins, including some from Automattic, can generate product descriptions in bulk. Useful when writing entries individually is not practical. Output tends to be generic and should always be reviewed before going live.

AI is becoming ambient inside WordPress, surfacing where needed rather than requiring a separate step. That direction accelerates with 7.0.

Chatbots and Automated Support

Tidio and Crisp are the two most commonly used chatbot options in WordPress. Both can handle FAQ-level queries automatically, with a human able to take over when needed.

Tidio's Lyro layer is trained on site content and existing FAQ material. The free plan is useful; Lyro AI starts at around 25 pounds a month. Crisp runs on a knowledge base you build out, with a cleaner interface and a similar price point for AI features.

Neither is especially complex to set up. The one thing worth being clear on: visitors should know they are talking to an automated system, not a person.

WordPress 7.0

WordPress 7.0 ships on 20 May 2026. It is the biggest structural release since Gutenberg in 2018. Most of the coverage has focused on editor features, but the more significant change for anyone thinking about AI is underneath those.

A shared AI layer

Before 7.0, every plugin connecting to an AI service built its own plumbing. Separate API credentials, separate abstractions, nothing shared. WordPress 7.0 introduces the WP AI Client, a core PHP library that gives plugins a common interface for talking to AI providers. The Connectors API sits alongside it, handling credential storage and provider selection at the platform level through a new Settings screen in the admin.

In practice: you configure one AI provider once, and all compatible plugins use it. Switching from OpenAI to Anthropic, or adding a provider, becomes a settings change rather than a development task. Official plugins cover OpenAI, Google, and Anthropic. Community providers exist for OpenRouter, Ollama, and Mistral.

The Abilities API and MCP Adapter extend this further. They give AI tools a structured way to understand a site's content and available actions, which opens the door to AI assistants that can interact with a WordPress site directly, without custom integration work for every plugin combination.

Other changes worth noting

Block-level Notes let teams leave feedback on specific blocks inside the editor, attached to the content rather than in a separate document or chat thread. Visual Revisions show version history as

a visual diff in the content layout rather than a code comparison. Both are improvements to the editorial workflow that should have existed sooner.

The admin dashboard (Posts, Pages, Media) has been rebuilt for the first time in over a decade. The Site Editor adds a Breadcrumbs block, an Icon block, video backgrounds, a flexible Grid block, per-block custom CSS, and a Fonts page. PHP 7.2 and 7.3 support is dropped; 7.4 is the new minimum, 8.2 or higher is recommended.

Real-time collaboration

Multi-user simultaneous editing was the headline feature coming into 7.0. It was pulled from the release on 8 May after a database architecture problem was identified that needed more time to fix properly. Block-level Notes cover some of the same ground. Full collaborative editing is expected in a later release.

What this means in practice

The 7.0 AI infrastructure is a platform bet, not a feature launch. Plugins need time to adopt the new APIs before the centralised configuration and shared AI capabilities become something you actually notice. For most sites, day one of the 7.0 update will look much like the day before it. The change is in the foundation.

This paper was written the week before the 7.0 release. The ecosystem impact is necessarily speculative at this point and will need revisiting once adoption is visible.

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This paper will be updated following the WordPress 7.0 release.