SSL Certificates

Here at Orange Geek, we provide SSL Certificates as a free service, but what is this exactly? SSL, or Secure Sockets Layer, is a security protocol that is used to secure data between two machines using an encryption. Websites use SSL Certificates to secure data that is shared between a visitor and the server such as credit card, personal, or login information. Some of the signs that a website has an SSL certificate installed on the server are a padlock next to the URL, a browser bar turning green, the https:// protocol, or a secure site seal.

Typically, an SSL certificate is only used on pages that actively collect sensitive information which requires a secure connection. SSL certificates were not as important for websites that primarily consisted of content based material. However, since the online industry is ever evolving, SSL certificates are making more sense for just about any website. Here are some changes in regard to SSL:

1. **SEO Boost:** The SEO boost that websites get when they install an SSL certificate is one of the biggest reasons that a lot of blog publishers have decided to make this change. It does not make a large impact on SEO Google rankings, but every bit counts when trying to bump up a few extra spots on Google.
2. **Increased Speed**: In the past, SSL actually caused load times to increase because of the computational overhead of encrypting and decrypting. This has changed and now it is the new standard for modern browsers to load secure sites faster then insecure sites.
3. **Push Notifications:** Push notifications are similar to a notification you would receive on your mobile device when you get a message or email. Websites can now send out web push notifications; however, the only way to do this without getting hacked is to have an SSL.
4. **Security:** Security is not as important for a content based website but it will make the dashboard and admin more secure as well.
5. **Referral Traffic:** One con to keep in mind is switching to https may slightly decrease referral traffic from your site to non-https sites.

When deciding on whether or not this switch to SSL is right for your website, you may also want to consider your ad network. When running an SSL site, all of its resources need to be SSL compatible including the advertisements. Orange Geek is aware that Mediavine and AdThrive do support SSL sites; however, if you have a different ad provider then these two then you will need to ask them if they support this change.

Steps for Switching to SSL Site

There are a few steps you are going to have to take if you want to have a smooth transition over to an SSL Certificate site.

Talk to your Ad Provider

You will want to check with your ad provider before you decide to install an SSL certificate on your website to make sure they support this. If they do, once it is installed you will want to let them know right away so they can make the necessary adjustments for your ads.

Talk to your Host

In order to install an SSL certificate on your website, this has to be installed on the server by your host. As mentioned above, this service is included with any plan through Orange Geek. You can email contact@orangegeek.com or jason@orangegeek.com to let us know that you would like to have an SSL certificate installed.

Google Tools

If you use Webmaster Tools/Google Search Console or Google Analytics, you are going to want to update the properties and protocols listed in your settings.

Webmaster Tools/Google Search Console

Once the SSL certificate is installed, go to the Google Search Console (Webmaster Tools) and add the https variants. You will need to add all of the variants of your domain:

1. Navigate to your Search Console home page
2. Click **Add a property** and type in the following variants:
   http://domain.com
   http://www.domain.com
   https://domain.com
   https://www.domain.com
3. Click **Continue** and the Site Verification page will open
4. Select the verification method you would like to use and follow the directions to verify that you own the site

You will also want to set your preferred domain to match the one in your general settings of WordPress.

1. Click the site you want to update on the Search Console home page
2. Click the gear icon and select **Site Settings**
3. Under the "Preferred domain" section, select the option that matches the URL in the general settings of your WordPress

Google Analytics

In order to have Google Analytics register hits for your site, you will need to change the domain protocol in your Google Analytics to https. Be aware that Google Analytics stats might take a little while to sync back up once this change is made.

1. Open your Google Analytics dashboard
2. Go to the **Manage** tab
3. Click on **Property Settings**
4. Change the protocol to https