Troubleshooting the 'White Screen of Death' Error in WordPress

As a website develops and grows, updates are made, and changes take place, every so often you may come across an error that you will need to look into to move forward. WordPress sites unfortunately, are not immune to this, but there are a few basic errors that are more common than others. One of these is known throughout the WordPress community as the 'White Screen of Death,' which is just that, a white screen when you go to your site. Fortunately, this is often caused by two main elements of your site: your Theme, or a Plugin. The White Screen of Death looks like this:


Impressive, isn't it?

There are a few great ways to test and correct this right from your cPanel account! Here is how this issue can be addressed:

1. Login to your cPanel account.

2. From cPanel, scroll down until you find a section labeled 'Files' and then select the icon labeled 'File Manager' and select to go to your home (public_html) directory.

3. From the public_html directory navigate to the directory your site is in that is causing errors, and from there, navigate to the 'wp-admin'' folder.

Note the error_log file is going to be generated wherever the php script is executing from. This could be from the wp-content/plugins folder or something similar.
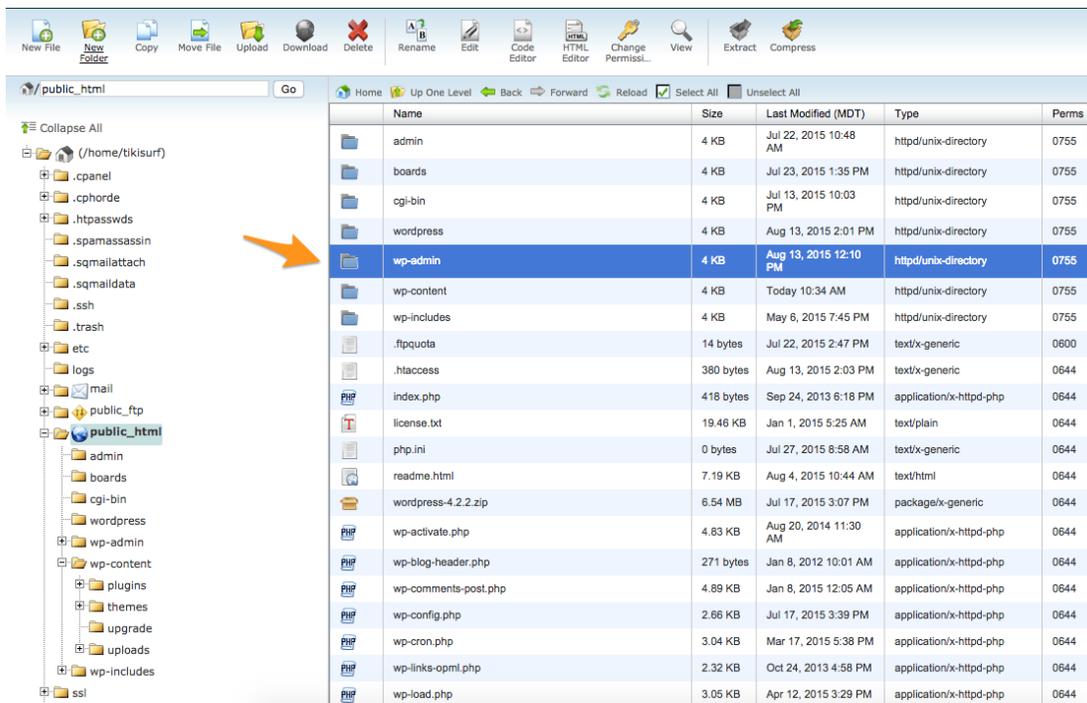
4. Once inside the 'wp-admin' folder, scroll down on the right until you can find the 'error_log' file. Select the file once to highlight it, then select the 'View' tool from the top of the File Manger toolbar.

5. Viewing the error-log, to the left will be a list of dates, indicating the time which the error took place, with the most recent errors being on the bottom of the list. To make sure the current error is on the bottom, go back to your site and refresh the page a few times, which will generate the error again. (This will need you to open the 'error_log' file again to get an updated version.) Some errors may go off the page, depending on their length, scroll over to the right as needed to see the error. What we are looking for is an error type, followed by the directory path of the error. Observe the 'error_log' page below:

Once finding the error, I found the file path. In this case, it shows that there is a problem with my current theme! To change this so I can have access to my site again, I'll need to change the theme from my Database. Once the Theme has been reset and I have access to my Dashboard, I can then proceed to delete the old theme and install a new updated version of that theme, or I can choose to install a new theme.

6. If the error you viewed from your error_log file indicated a plugin, and not the theme, then you will need to disable the plugin mentioned. This can be done in one of two ways: By deleting the plugin folder mentioned error, or renaming the plugin folder. Both of these are done From the File Manager. Return to the File Manager, and rather then selecting the 'wp-admin' folder as we did for the error log, navigate into the 'wp-content' folder.
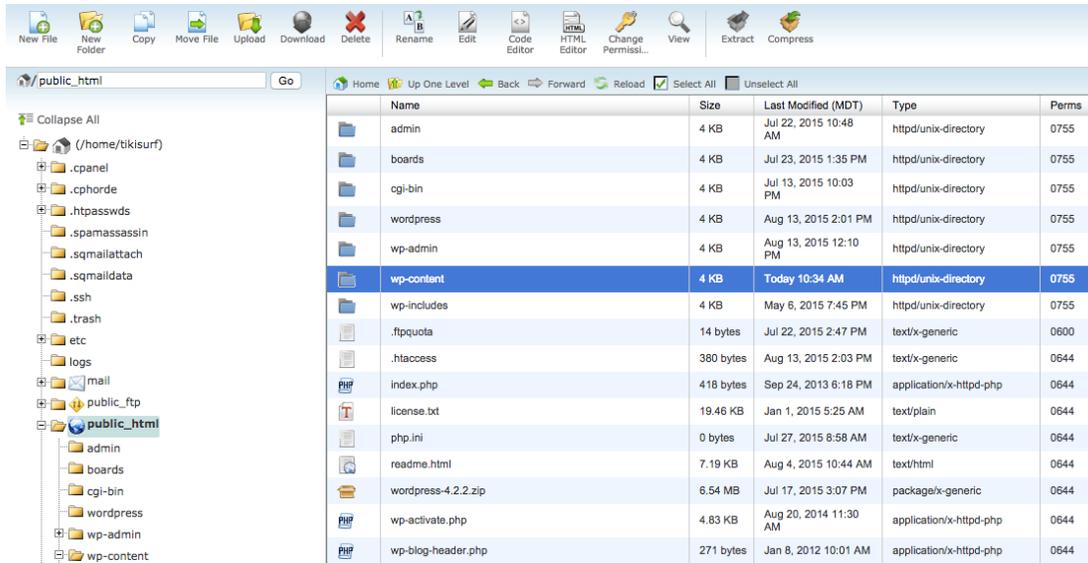
7. Once there you will want to select the 'Plugins' folder.
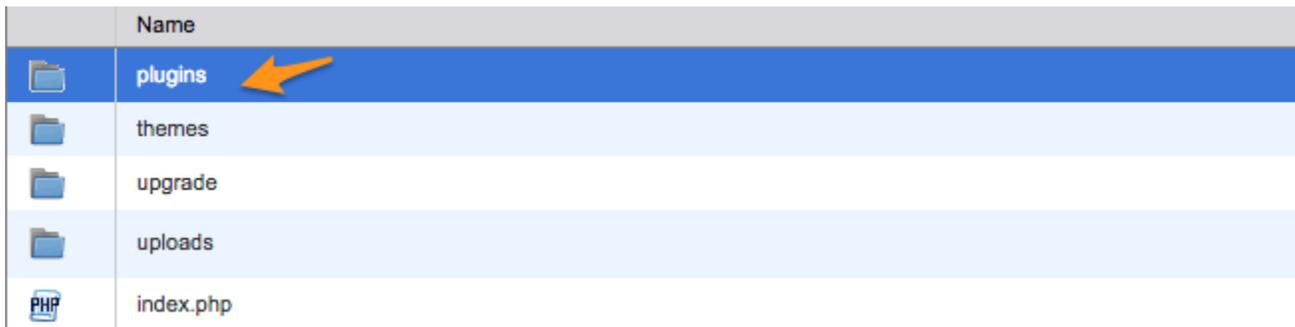
8. The Plugins folder will contain all of your installed plugins for the site. Select the Plugin your error log showed was causing issues, then select either the 'Delete' or 'Rename' tool in the File Manager toolbar. Once the plugin has been renamed or deleted, you should now be able to go view your site again. This issue may have been caused by the plugin no longer being supported by a theme or WordPress version update, which will require you to either find a more updated version of the plugin, or you will need to research a different plugin that is supported with similar features to use.

Note If you are unsure which plugin to rename/delete, you can disable all plugins by going back to the 'wp-content' folder then renaming the entire 'plugins' folder.**

If these changes still don't bring your site back, it may be caused by a deeper issue, and at this point, I would suggest contacting a WordPress developer, or wordpress.org for more information on advanced troubleshooting techniques with this issue.

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