Importing your existing site into Spark AI

Spark AI Website Builder · https://www.aeserver.com/support/importing-your-existing-site-into-spark-ai/

> *Moving a WordPress site you already have onto AEserver hosting*

Read this first

Spark AI's AI Agent, Quick Edit and Site Assistant only work on sites that were built through the AI Website Builder onboarding and use the compatible theme. An imported site keeps all its own content, design and plugins and runs perfectly on our hosting - but it won't have the Spark AI tooling.

So decide which you actually want:

YOUR GOAL	WHAT TO DO
Keep my existing site exactly as it is, on better hosting	Import it - follow this guide
Get a fresh AI-built site with Spark AI features	Don't import. Use Spark AI to build new, then copy across the content you want to keep
Keep my content but get a modern design and AI editing	Build with Spark AI, then move your posts across using WordPress's Tools → Import

If you're not sure, talk to AEserver support before you start - it's much easier to decide now than halfway through.

Before you begin

- An active AEserver hosting account with WordPress installed
- Admin access to your current site
- Access to your current host's control panel or FTP
- A complete backup of your current site
- Access to your domain registrar, for the DNS change at the end
- Two to three uninterrupted hours

Do this during your quietest hours, and **leave your old site running** until the new one is verified. Nothing about this process touches your existing site - if anything goes wrong, it's still there.

Option 1 - Let us do it

AEserver offers a migration service. Contact support, give us access to your current hosting, and we'll handle the whole move, including large or complex sites, then tell you when it's ready to review.

This is the right choice if your site is business-critical, unusually large, or you'd simply rather not. It's also the only option that reliably achieves zero downtime.

Option 2 - Migration plugin

The easiest DIY route. Works well for sites under 512 MB.

Export from your old site

1. Log in to your current WordPress site.
2. Install and activate **All-in-One WP Migration**.
3. Go to **All-in-One WP Migration → Export**.
4. Click **Export To** and choose **File**.
5. Download the `.wpress` file when it's ready.

Import to AEserver

1. Log in to your AEserver WordPress installation.
2. Install and activate the same plugin.
3. Go to **All-in-One WP Migration → Import**.
4. Choose **File** and select your `.wpress` file.
5. Confirm when it warns you it will overwrite the current site.
6. Allow it to update your permalink structure when prompted.
7. Log in again using your **old site's** credentials - they came across with the import.

Duplicator is a good alternative if you hit the size limit - it produces an archive plus an installer file that you upload to `public_html` and run from your browser.

Option 3 — Manual migration

Works at any size. Needs a bit of confidence with cPanel.

1. Take the files and database from your old host

1. Download your entire WordPress directory over FTP, or zip it in File Manager and download that.
2. In phpMyAdmin, select your database, click **Export**, choose **Quick** and **SQL**, and download the file.

2. Upload the files to AEserver

1. Open File Manager in your AEserver cPanel and go to `public_html`.
2. Remove the default WordPress installation.
3. Upload your files and extract them.
4. Check `wp-content` arrived intact - that's your media, theme and plugins.

3. Create and load the database

1. In cPanel, create a new MySQL database and user, and give the user all privileges on it.
2. Write down the database name, username and password.
3. Open phpMyAdmin, select the new database, click **Import**, choose your `.sql` file and click **Go**.

4. Point WordPress at the new database

Edit `wp-config.php` in File Manager and update four values:

```
define( 'DB_NAME', 'your_new_database_name' );
define( 'DB_USER', 'your_new_username' );
define( 'DB_PASSWORD', 'your_new_password' );
define( 'DB_HOST', 'localhost' );
```

5. Update your URLs, if the domain changed

1. Install **Better Search Replace** and go to **Tools → Better Search Replace**.
2. Search for your old URL, replace with your new one, and select all tables.
3. Run it as a dry run first and check the results.
4. Untick the dry run and run it for real.

After the migration

Work through this before you touch DNS:

- Every page loads and looks right
- Images and media display
- Navigation menus work
- Contact forms submit and the emails arrive
- Users can log in
- Checkout works, if you have a shop
- The site looks right on a phone
- No broken links

Then finish the setup:

1. **Permalinks** - go to **Settings → Permalinks** and click Save Changes. This fixes most 404 problems on its own.

2. **SSL** - install a free Let's Encrypt certificate from cPanel, then update both URLs under **Settings → General** to `https://`.
3. **Email** - create your mailboxes in cPanel and install **WP Mail SMTP** so form notifications deliver reliably.
4. **Backups** - set up UpdraftPlus on a schedule.
5. **Updates** - update WordPress, plugins and themes, then re-test.

Switching your domain over

Only once everything above checks out:

1. Log in to your domain registrar.
2. Update the nameservers or A record to point at AEserver — support will give you the values.
3. Allow 24 to 48 hours for DNS to propagate.
4. **Keep your old hosting active** throughout, so visitors reach one site or the other rather than nothing.
5. Watch the site for a few days before cancelling your old plan.

Troubleshooting

PROBLEM	CAUSE AND FIX

White screen or database connection error	Credentials in `wp-config.php` are wrong, or the database didn't import. Check both, including the table prefix.
Site loads but has no styling	URLs still point at the old domain. Run Better Search Replace.
Images missing	`wp-content/uploads` didn't transfer completely, or permissions are wrong — 755 for folders, 644 for files.
404 on everything except the home page	Go to Settings → Permalinks and click Save Changes.
Can't log in	Use your old site's credentials. Clear cookies and try again.
A plugin stopped working	Deactivate all, reactivate one at a time. Some need re-licensing after a move.
Site is slow	Clear caching plugins and optimise the database. Check the PHP version matches your old host.
Forms don't send email	Install and configure WP Mail SMTP.

Common questions

Will I lose data?

Not if you follow the steps. Your old site stays untouched throughout — it's your safety net.

Will my search rankings suffer?

No, provided you keep the same domain and your URLs don't change.

Can I test before going live?

Yes — use a temporary URL, or edit your computer's hosts file to preview the migrated site before switching DNS.

Can I add Spark AI to my imported site later?

Not to the imported site as-is. Spark AI needs the AI Website Builder onboarding and the compatible theme. You'd need to build a new site with Spark AI and move your content into it. Support can advise on the best approach for your situation.

Every site is a bit different. If you get stuck at any point, contact AEserver support — or ask us to run the migration for you.