Remove Special Characters Troubleshooting

Troubleshooting · https://wpfactory.com/docs/special-characters-troubleshooting/

Most problems with Remove Special Characters From Permalinks (URLs) for WordPress come from WooCommerce being inactive, posts that were not re-saved, or old URLs that need a redirect. Work through the symptom below that matches yours. Pro screens are at **Settings > Special Characters** and **Tools > Remove Characters**; the free version has no settings.

Special characters are not removed when I save

Causes and fixes:

1. **WooCommerce is not active.** In the current builds (free 1.1.1 and Pro 1.0.8) the plugin checks for WooCommerce when it loads and stays completely inactive without it, with no warning. Activate WooCommerce, or contact support if your site does not use WooCommerce.
2. **The post has not been saved since the plugin was activated.** Existing slugs change only when the item is published or updated. Click **Update**, or use the Pro bulk tool.
3. **The post was created in one step by an importer or script.** The cleanup only runs when an existing item (one that already has an ID) is saved. Update the imported items once, or run the Pro bulk tool on the published ones.
4. **You are looking at a category or tag URL.** Only post slugs are cleaned; taxonomy term slugs are not changed.
5. **Permalinks are set to Plain.** Go to **Settings > Permalinks** and choose any other structure so slugs appear in URLs.
6. **A cached page shows the old URL.** Clear your page cache and any CDN cache, then reload.

Old links return a 404 error after the URL changed

1. Test the old URL in a private browser window to rule out caching.

2. If it still returns a 404 error, turn on **Force Redirection** in **Settings > Special Characters** (Pro) and click **Save Changes**. See How to Redirect Old Permalinks After Removing Special Characters.
3. If Force Redirection is on and the URL still returns a 404 error, check that the post is published. Only published posts are matched.
4. If the post's slug was cleaned more than once, only the most recent old path is stored, so older URLs cannot be matched. Add those redirects with your redirect or SEO plugin.

A post ended up with an empty or broken permalink

Cause: the slug contained only letters from a non-Latin script (Arabic, Cyrillic, Chinese and so on) or only symbols. The plugin removes all of them and does not transliterate, so nothing was left.

Fix:

1. Open the post and edit its URL slug.
2. Type a slug using Latin letters, digits and hyphens.
3. Click **Update**. A safe slug is kept exactly as typed.

See How to Fix Non-English Characters in WordPress Permalinks before running the bulk tool on a site with non-Latin slugs.

Two posts now have the same URL

Cause: WordPress makes each slug unique before the plugin cleans it. If two slugs differ only by special characters (for example `mug-□` and `mug-★`), both can become `mug` after cleanup, and WordPress then serves only one of them at that URL.

Fix: open one of the posts, change its slug to something unique (for example `mug-2`) and click **Update**.

The bulk tool says there is nothing to remove

The message *You don't have any posts with special characters on permalinks to remove.* means no **published** item has a slug with characters outside a to z, 0 to 9, hyphen, underscore and dot. Drafts, pending, scheduled and private items are not included, and neither are taxonomy term slugs. Drafts are cleaned when you publish them.

The bulk cleanup seems stuck or I never got the email

1. **Check the slugs directly.** Open a few posts that had special characters. If they are clean, the process ran and only the email failed.
2. **Email delivery:** the completion email (subject **Special Characters Removal complete**) is sent with `wp_mail()` to the **Notification Email** address. If the field is empty, no email is sent. If your site cannot send mail reliably, set up an SMTP plugin.
3. **Background requests blocked:** the process starts with a request from your server to its own `admin-ajax.php`. Security plugins, firewalls, HTTP authentication on the site or a staging lock can block it. Open **Tools > Site Health** and look for loopback request errors.
4. **WP-Cron disabled:** if the loopback request fails, the queue is resumed by a WP-Cron health check every 5 minutes. If `DISABLE_WP_CRON` is set in `wp-config.php`, make sure a real server cron job calls `wp-cron.php`.
5. Click **Remove special characters** again. This cancels any queue still running and starts a new one with the posts that still need cleaning.

The Pro menus are missing

- Pro is not active, or WooCommerce is not active (the plugin does not load without it).
- Your user role lacks the `delete_posts` capability. Both **Settings > Special Characters** and **Tools > Remove Characters** require it.

"Sorry, you are not allowed to manage options" when saving settings

The settings page opens for any user with `delete_posts`, but it is saved through WordPress's `options.php`, which requires the `manage_options` capability. Ask an administrator to change the settings.

Still stuck? Our team answers every ticket on the Remove Special Characters support forum. Include your WordPress, WooCommerce and plugin versions and an example URL.



REMOVE SPECIAL CHARACTERS

See every feature and the pricing on the Remove Special Characters plugin page.

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