

OFFICIAL PLUGIN DOCUMENTATION

Social Proof

WordPress Plugin

Display views, followers, and shares on blog posts with live-incrementing counters.

Version 1.0.0 | GPL v2 License
Developed by Instant Web Tools, LLC
<https://instantwebtools.co/>

1. Overview

The Social Proof plugin adds a lightweight, fully customizable social-proof bar to every WordPress blog post. The bar displays real-time counters for views, followers, and shares, encouraging visitor engagement and building trust through transparent activity metrics.

1.1 Key Features

- Automatic view tracking — increments once on each page load
- One-click Follow button — visitors boost the follower count in real time
- One-click Share button — opens a Facebook / X (Twitter) picker and records a share
- Configurable bar position: top, bottom, or both ends of the post
- Fully toggleable counters — enable or disable views, followers, and shares independently
- Seed (base) numbers — prime each counter with a starting value before real activity begins
- Auto-formatted numbers: 1,200 → 1.2K, 1,500,000 → 1.5M
- Zero external dependencies — no jQuery, no npm, no build tools
- Theme-inheriting design — inherits colors via CSS `currentColor`; no hard-coded brand palette
- Nonce-secured AJAX — all button actions are CSRF-protected
- Data stored as standard WordPress post meta — no extra database tables

1.2 Compatibility

Requirement	Minimum
WordPress	5.0 or higher
PHP	7.4 or higher
Browser support	All modern browsers (Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge)
jQuery	Not required

2. Installation

2.1 Manual Upload

Follow these steps to install the plugin manually:

- Download or copy the social-proof folder.
- Upload the entire social-proof/ folder to your server at:

```
/wp-content/plugins/social-proof/
```

- Log in to your WordPress admin dashboard.
- Navigate to Plugins → Installed Plugins.
- Locate Social Proof and click Activate.

2.2 File Structure

The plugin ships as a single directory containing four files:

File	Purpose
social-proof.php	Main plugin file — PHP logic, admin settings page, AJAX handlers
social-proof.css	Minimal styles; inherits theme colors automatically
social-proof.js	Vanilla JavaScript for AJAX follow/share interactions (~1 KB)
readme.md	Plain-text quick-reference file

Note: The plugin does not create any database tables. All data is stored using the standard WordPress `post_meta` API.

3. Configuration

All settings are managed from a single page in the WordPress admin panel:

WordPress Admin → Settings → Social Proof

3.1 Settings Reference

Setting	Options / Range	Default	Description
Bar Position	top / bottom / both	both	Where the widget bar appears relative to post content
Show Views	Checked / Unchecked	On	Toggles the views counter on or off
Show Followers	Checked / Unchecked	On	Toggles the Follow button on or off
Show Shares	Checked / Unchecked	On	Toggles the Share button on or off
Base Views	Integer ≥ 0	1200	Seed view count shown before any real views are recorded for a post
Base Followers	Integer ≥ 0	340	Seed follower count shown before any real follows are recorded
Base Shares	Integer ≥ 0	85	Seed share count shown before any real shares are recorded

3.2 Understanding Base (Seed) Numbers

Base numbers are the values displayed on a post before any real visitor activity has occurred. Once a visitor views or interacts with the post, the stored count for that post begins incrementing from the base automatically.

Example: If Base Views is set to 1200 and a post receives its first real view, the counter updates to 1,201. On subsequent views it continues from the stored value, not the base.

Note: Base numbers apply globally. Each post inherits the configured base value until it has been individually incremented. Changing a base value will only affect posts that have not yet been viewed or interacted with.

4. How It Works

4.1 Counter Behavior

User Action	Trigger	Method	Post Meta Key Updated
Page load	Automatic on every load	Server-side (PHP)	<code>_sp_views</code>
Click Follow	Visitor clicks heart icon	AJAX (no page reload)	<code>_sp_followers</code>
Click Share	Visitor clicks share icon	AJAX (no page reload)	<code>_sp_shares</code>

4.2 Data Storage

Counters are stored as WordPress post meta. Each post has three individual meta entries:

Meta Key	Stores
<code>_sp_views</code>	Total view count for this post
<code>_sp_followers</code>	Total follower count for this post
<code>_sp_shares</code>	Total share count for this post

Values are accessed and updated using the standard WordPress functions `get_post_meta()` and `update_post_meta()`, keeping the plugin fully compatible with all caching and backup plugins.

4.3 Number Formatting

Large numbers are automatically abbreviated for a cleaner display:

Raw Value	Displayed As
0 – 999	Raw number (e.g., 85)
1,000 – 999,999	One decimal K (e.g., 1.2K)
1,000,000+	One decimal M (e.g., 1.5M)

4.4 Share Flow

When a visitor clicks the Share button:

- The share counter increments immediately via AJAX.
- A modal overlay appears offering two share destinations: Facebook and X (Twitter).
- Clicking a network opens the respective sharing URL in a new tab.
- The modal is dismissed by clicking outside it, clicking the × button, or pressing Escape.

4.5 Follow Flow

When a visitor clicks the Follow button:

- The follower counter increments immediately via AJAX.
- The button is disabled for the remainder of the session to prevent multiple follows.

- The button receives the `sp-active` CSS class, allowing themes to apply a visual confirmation state.

5. Security

5.1 Nonce Verification

Every AJAX request from the Share and Follow buttons includes a WordPress nonce generated with `wp_create_nonce('sp_action')`. The server-side handler verifies this nonce using `check_ajax_referer()` before processing any request. Invalid or missing nonces result in an immediate rejection.

5.2 Input Sanitization

All inputs received by the AJAX handler are sanitized before use:

Input	Sanitization
<code>post_id</code>	Cast to integer with <code>(int)</code>
<code>type</code>	Validated with <code>sanitize_key()</code> ; must be 'followers' or 'shares'

5.3 Output Escaping

All dynamic values rendered in HTML output are escaped using the appropriate WordPress functions: `esc_html()` for displayed counter values, `esc_attr()` for HTML attributes, and `rawurlencode()` for URL parameters passed to sharing services.

5.4 Admin Capability Check

The Settings page is registered with the `manage_options` capability, ensuring only administrators can view or modify plugin settings.

6. Front-End Assets

6.1 CSS (`social-proof.css`)

The stylesheet uses CSS `currentColor` and `color: inherit` throughout, meaning the widget automatically adopts the text color and link color of the active WordPress theme. No theme-specific overrides are required.

Key CSS classes:

Class	Element	Notes
<code>.sp-bar</code>	Wrapper div	Flex container; border, padding, margin defined here
<code>.sp-item</code>	Each stat span	Inline-flex; contains icon, count, and label
<code>.sp-btn</code>	Follow / Share	Full button reset; inherits font and color
<code>.sp-btn.sp-active</code>	Clicked state	font-weight: 600 applied
<code>.sp-count</code>	The number	font-weight: 600; tabular-nums
<code>.sp-label</code>	Text label	opacity: 0.75

Class	Element	Notes
<code>.sp-bump</code>	Count animation	Scale keyframe animation on AJAX success
<code>#sp-picker</code>	Share modal	Fixed overlay; z-index: 99999

6.2 JavaScript (social-proof.js)

The script is vanilla JavaScript with no dependencies. It is enqueued in the page footer (`in_footer: true`) and localized with the WordPress AJAX URL via `wp_localize_script()`, exposed as `SP.ajax_url`.

The script uses a single delegated click listener on document to handle all button interactions, keeping the footprint minimal.

6.3 Asset Loading

Both the CSS and JS files are enqueued only on singular post pages (`is_singular('post')`), so they do not load on archives, pages, or the homepage.

7. Developer Reference

7.1 PHP Functions

Function	Description
<code>sp_defaults()</code>	Returns the array of default option values
<code>sp_options()</code>	Returns merged saved + default options from <code>wp_options</code>
<code>sp_inject_widget(\$content)</code>	Hooked to the <code>_content</code> ; wraps post content with the bar
<code>sp_render_bar(\$post_id, \$opts)</code>	Builds and returns the HTML bar string
<code>sp_get_count(\$post_id, \$type, \$base)</code>	Reads a counter from post meta; falls back to base value
<code>sp_increment(\$post_id, \$type)</code>	Increments a counter in post meta by 1
<code>sp_format_number(\$n)</code>	Formats an integer to K/M abbreviated string
<code>sp_handle_action()</code>	AJAX handler for follow and share button clicks
<code>sp_enqueue()</code>	Enqueues CSS and JS assets on singular post pages
<code>sp_admin_menu()</code>	Registers the Settings → Social Proof admin page
<code>sp_register_settings()</code>	Registers the <code>social_proof_options</code> option with WordPress
<code>sp_sanitize_options(\$input)</code>	Sanitizes and validates admin form submissions

7.2 AJAX Endpoint

Action: `sp_action`

Available to: Both authenticated (`wp_ajax_`) and unauthenticated (`wp_ajax_nopriv_`) users.

POST parameters:

Parameter	Type	Description
action	string	Must be <code>sp_action</code>
nonce	string	WordPress nonce (<code>sp_action</code>)
post_id	integer	ID of the post being interacted with
type	string	Either <code>followers</code> or <code>shares</code>

Success response:

```
{ "success": true, "data": { "count": "1.3K" } }
```

Error response:

```
{ "success": false, "data": "Invalid request" }
```

7.3 Option Storage

All settings are stored in the WordPress options table as a serialized array under the key `social_proof_options`. Use the following to retrieve programmatically:

```
$opts = get_option( 'social_proof_options', [] );
```

7.4 Post Meta Keys

Meta Key	Type	Description
<code>_sp_views</code>	integer	Total views recorded for this post
<code>_sp_followers</code>	integer	Total follows recorded for this post
<code>_sp_shares</code>	integer	Total shares recorded for this post

All meta keys are prefixed with an underscore (`_`) to mark them as private/hidden in the WordPress admin editor.

8. Changelog

Version	Date	Notes
1.0.0	March 2026	Initial release — views, followers, and shares widget with admin settings

9. License

Social Proof is licensed under the GNU General Public License v2 or later.

```
https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl-2.0.html
```

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10. Support & Credits

Social Proof is created and maintained by Instant Web Tools, LLC.

Resource	URL
Website	https://instantwebtools.co/
Plugin URI	https://instantwebtools.co/