WP-CLI search-replace cheat sheet

Change URLs in a WordPress database safely: new domain, http to https, staging to live.

This edits your database directly, and there is no undo. Only run it if you're sure what it will change, and keep a backup you can restore: `wp db import before-search-replace.sql`

The safe order

1. Back up the database

```
wp db export before-search-replace.sql
```

2. Preview the changes (nothing is written)

```
wp search-replace 'https://old.example' \
  'https://new.example' --dry-run \
  --skip-columns=guid
```

3. Run it for real

```
wp search-replace 'https://old.example' \
  'https://new.example' --skip-columns=guid
```

4. Clear the cache

```
wp cache flush
```

Recipes

Move a site to a new domain

```
wp search-replace 'https://old.example' \
  'https://new.example' --skip-columns=guid \
  --dry-run
```

Switch from http to https

```
wp search-replace 'http://example.com' \
  'https://example.com' --skip-columns=guid \
  --dry-run
```

Staging to live, including plugin tables

```
wp search-replace 'staging.example.com' \
  'example.com' --all-tables-with-prefix \
  --skip-columns=guid --dry-run
```

Every site in a multisite network

```
wp search-replace 'old.example' 'new.example' \
  --network --skip-columns=guid --dry-run
```

Export an SQL file instead of changing the database

```
wp search-replace 'old.example' 'new.example' \
  --export=migrated.sql
```

Options

`--dry-run`	Count the replacements, write nothing
`--skip-columns=guid`	Leave post GUIDs alone (live sites)
`--all-tables-with-prefix`	Also plugin tables with your prefix
`--all-tables`	Every table in the database
`--network`	Every site in a multisite
`--url=site.example.com`	One site in a multisite
`--precise`	PHP for every value: slower, thorough
`--export=file.sql`	Write an SQL file, change nothing
`--report-changed-only`	List only what changed
`--regex`	Treat the search value as a regular expression
`--allow-root`	Run as the root user

Before you press Enter

- A fresh backup exists, and you know how to restore it.
- The dry run's counts per table look right.
- `guid` is skipped on a live site.
- Multisite: `--network` for all sites, `--url` for one.
- Afterwards: `wp cache flush`, then check the old URLs with the redirect checker.

Good to know

- **Serialized data is safe.** WP-CLI unpacks PHP-serialized settings, replaces inside them and fixes the string lengths. A plain SQL `REPLACE()` would corrupt them.
- **0 replacements?** The search value must match exactly: `http` vs `https`, trailing slash, the right site in a multisite, or a plugin table outside the default set.
- **No command line?** Plugins such as Better Search Replace do the same from the WordPress admin, but slower on big databases.