FREE CHECKLIST EVERY STEP FROM DOMAIN NAME TO GO-LIVE

Website Launch Checklist for Small Business

Most website problems start before the first page is built. Work through these five phases in order and you'll avoid the mistakes that cost small businesses time, money and sometimes the whole website.

THE FIVE PHASES

Do them in order. Each one sets up the next.

1. **Plan** — Goal, customer, keywords, pages
2. **Foundation** — Domain, hosting, email, logins
3. **Build** — Platform and who builds it
4. **Pre-Launch** — Legal, analytics, testing
5. **Launch** — Get found, then the first 30 days

Don't skip page 3. One setup mistake can lock you out of your domain, email and every account tied to it.

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PHASE 1 PLAN

Plan before you spend a dime

A website without a plan is just an expensive brochure. Answer these first.

- [ ] **Define the one main goal**
  Calls, bookings, sales or leads. Every page should move visitors toward it.
- [ ] **Map your pages**
  Start with Home, About, Services and Contact. Add only what your goal needs.
- [ ] **Describe your ideal customer**
  Who they are, what problem they have and what they need to hear to trust you.
- [ ] **Decide who writes the content**
  Missing content is the number one reason website launches stall.
- [ ] **List 5–10 target keywords**
  The words customers actually type into Google, not industry jargon. Add your city if you serve a local area.
- [ ] **Gather your brand assets**
  Logo, colors, fonts and real photos of you, your team and your work.

PHASE 2 FOUNDATION

Own the land and the building

Your domain is the address and your hosting is the building. Make sure both are yours outright.

- [ ] **Choose a domain name** — JustAskDomains.com
  Short, easy to spell and easy to say out loud. Get the .com if you can.
- [ ] **Register it in the business owner's name**
  Not your webmaster's, not your designer's, not your nephew's. Whoever's name is on it owns it.
- [ ] **Choose your hosting** — ThatOneHosting.com
  Confirm it includes an SSL certificate, daily backups, email and real human support.
- [ ] **Set up a professional email**
  you@yourbusiness.com builds more trust than a free email address on your business card.
- [ ] **Store every login in a password manager**
  Record the registrar, hosting, email and website admin, plus who has access to each.

BEFORE YOU TURN THE PAGE Which email did you use to sign up for your domain and hosting? If it ends in your new domain name, read page 3 before you go any further.

THE MISTAKE I SEE MOST

Don’t lock your keys in the car

Someone registers a domain, then uses an email on that same domain to sign up for everything else. One failed card or missed renewal and it all falls like dominoes.

1. **The domain lapses** →
2. **Its email stops working** →
3. **Password resets go nowhere** →
4. **A stranger buys it and gets your resets**

THE FIX

- [ ] Use an **outside email** (Gmail, Outlook or another domain) for your registrar and hosting
- [ ] Turn on **auto-renew** and keep a backup payment method on file
- [ ] Use an **authenticator app** for two-factor login, not just email codes
- [ ] Make it the **recovery email** on Google, Facebook and other key accounts
- [ ] Register for **multiple years** and turn on the registrar lock

PHASE 3 BUILD

Choose for where you’re going

- [ ] **Pick your platform**
  Use the comparison below.
- [ ] **Decide who builds it**
  DIY, a freelancer or done-for-you.
- [ ] **Get it in writing**
  Cost, timeline, revisions and who owns the site.

	WORDPRESS	WIX / SQUARESPACE	CUSTOM HTML
Best for	Businesses that plan to grow	Very simple sites	One-page or static sites
You own it	Yes, move it to any host	No, it stays on their platform	Yes
Design freedom	Nearly unlimited	Limited to their templates	Unlimited, needs a developer
SEO control	Full	Basic	Full, set by hand
Ongoing cost	Hosting + optional plugins	Monthly fee that rises with features	Hosting only
Upkeep	Updates, or managed hosting handles them	Handled, but you’re locked in	Every change needs a developer

3 QUESTIONS TO ASK ANY WEBMASTER

1. Will the domain, hosting and site be in my name, with my own logins?
2. What happens to my site if we stop working together?
3. Who handles updates, backups and security after launch, and what does it cost?

PHASE 4 PRE-LAUNCH CHECKS

Check it all before anyone sees it

- [ ] **Add your legal pages**
  Privacy policy, terms, and a cookie notice if you use tracking or ads.
- [ ] **Install analytics**
  So you can see what's working from day one.
- [ ] **Cover the SEO basics**
  A unique title and description per page, alt text on images.
- [ ] **Test on a real phone**
  Most visitors are on mobile. A resized browser isn't the same.
- [ ] **Submit every form yourself**
  Confirm the message lands in the right inbox.
- [ ] **Run a speed test**
  Use Google PageSpeed Insights. Compress large images.
- [ ] **Check the small details**
  Favicon, a helpful 404 page and a social share image.
- [ ] **Click every link and button**
  Menus, footer, phone numbers and email links included.
- [ ] **Proofread out loud**
  Typos and wrong phone numbers cost trust and customers.

PHASE 5 LAUNCH & THE FIRST 30 DAYS

Launch day is the starting line

- [ ] **Connect Google Search Console**
  Submit your sitemap so Google finds your pages.
- [ ] **Claim your Google Business Profile**
  Local customers often see it before your site. Link the two.
- [ ] **Update every listing**
  Social profiles, directories, email signatures and print.
- [ ] **Confirm backups are running**
  Find the latest one and know how to restore it.
- [ ] **Set an update schedule**
  Plugins, themes and content need regular attention.
- [ ] **Review analytics at day 30**
  Which pages get visits, and is your main goal being met?

RATHER SKIP THE CHECKLIST? From the domain name to launch day and beyond, I can handle every box on this list for you, or help with just the ones you'd rather not tackle alone.

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