

DELIVERY TEMPLATE

Website Launch Checklist

The 78 checks that stand between a finished build and a launch you do not have to apologise for.

Launch problems are almost never mysterious. They are a missing redirect map, a staging site left indexable, an unmonitored form, or analytics that was never verified. This checklist is the run we work through before and after a site goes live, grouped by when each check actually has to happen.

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How to use this checklist

Most of these take under a minute. The ones that take longer are the ones that cause the outages, so they sit two weeks out rather than on launch day.

- 1 **Work the sections in order.** They are sequenced by when the check has to happen, not by discipline. Anything in 'two weeks out' cannot be done on the day.
- 2 **Assign an owner per section,** not per line. Shared ownership of 78 items means no ownership.
- 3 **Never launch on a Friday.** The first 48 hours matter and nobody wants to spend Saturday on a rollback.
- 4 **Keep the redirect map even after launch.** It is the single most useful artifact when traffic moves unexpectedly in week three.
- 5 **Record what you skipped and why.** A deliberate omission is a decision; a silent one is a defect waiting to be discovered by a customer.

SITE	PLANNED LAUNCH DATE	LAUNCH OWNER
	Not a Friday	

THE ONE CHECK PEOPLE ALWAYS MISS

Submit every form on the live site after launch and confirm the notification actually arrives, in the inbox that a human reads. A silently broken contact form can run for weeks, and it costs more than every other item here combined.

Two weeks out

Everything with a lead time, a propagation delay, or a third party in the loop.

- ☐ Domain registrar access confirmed and someone on the team can actually log in
- ☐ DNS TTL lowered to 300 seconds so cutover propagates fast
- ☐ SSL certificate issued and valid for the launch domain and all subdomains
- ☐ Hosting plan sized for expected launch traffic, not average traffic
- ☐ Backup taken of the current live site, and a restore tested rather than assumed
- ☐ Full redirect map built from a crawl of the old site, every URL accounted for
- ☐ Email deliverability checked: SPF, DKIM, and DMARC records in place
- ☐ Third-party integrations reauthorised against production credentials
- ☐ Payment gateway tested in live mode with a real transaction, then refunded
- ☐ Legal pages reviewed and current: privacy, terms, cookie policy, refund policy
- ☐ Rollback plan written down, with the decision-maker and the trigger named

THE REDIRECT MAP IS THE WHOLE GAME

Crawl the old site, export every indexed URL, and map each one to a destination. Anything you cannot map goes to the closest relevant page, never to the homepage in bulk. This single artifact prevents most post-launch traffic loss.

Content and accessibility

- ☐ No lorem ipsum anywhere, including meta descriptions
- ☐ Spelling and grammar pass on every page
- ☐ Pricing correct and matching the sales team's numbers
- ☐ Search works and returns sensible results
- ☐ Open Graph and Twitter cards render correctly
- ☐ Colour contrast passes AA on text and controls
- ☐ Visible focus states on links, buttons, and inputs
- ☐ Error messages say what to fix, not just that it failed
- ☐ Skip-to-content link present and working
- ☐ Every image has meaningful alt text, decorative ones empty
- ☐ Contact details, hours, and addresses correct
- ☐ 404 page exists and offers a route onward
- ☐ Favicon and touch icons present at every size
- ☐ Headings form a logical outline, one h1 per page
- ☐ Keyboard navigation reaches every interactive element
- ☐ Forms have real labels, not placeholder-only fields
- ☐ Video and audio have captions or a transcript
- ☐ Page language attribute set correctly

TEST WITH THE KEYBOARD ONCE

Unplug the mouse and try to complete your primary conversion. It takes three minutes and finds more real accessibility defects than any automated scan.

Technical and performance

- ☐ Core Web Vitals pass on the key templates, tested on mobile
- ☐ Lazy loading below the fold, eager on the hero image
- ☐ CDN active and serving static assets
- ☐ No render-blocking scripts above the fold
- ☐ Mixed content warnings resolved
- ☐ Admin login protected and default usernames removed
- ☐ Automated backups scheduled and confirmed running
- ☐ Staging environment password protected and noindex
- ☐ Database optimised, transients cleared
- ☐ Images served in a modern format at the size they display
- ☐ Caching configured at page and object level
- ☐ Gzip or Brotli compression enabled
- ☐ Console clean of errors on every key template
- ☐ Security headers set: HSTS, X-Content-Type-Options, referrer policy
- ☐ File permissions correct, directory listing disabled
- ☐ Uptime monitoring configured with a real alert destination
- ☐ Cron or scheduled tasks verified on production
- ☐ Error logging enabled and writing somewhere you will look

STAGING IS THE CLASSIC LEAK

A staging site left crawlable competes with the live one and leaks unfinished work into search results. Password protect it, and check that the noindex header is actually being sent rather than just configured.

SEO and redirects

- ☐ robots.txt allows crawling of the live site
- ☐ XML sitemap generated and referenced in robots.txt
- ☐ Titles and meta descriptions unique on key pages
- ☐ No redirect chains longer than one hop
- ☐ Structured data valid on the templates that carry it
- ☐ Analytics installed and firing on every template
- ☐ Search Console property verified for the live domain
- ☐ Old sitemap left available so search engines find the redirects
- ☐ The noindex flag from staging is removed from production
- ☐ Canonical tags correct on every template
- ☐ Redirect map implemented as 301s, tested in bulk
- ☐ Internal links point to final URLs, not through redirects
- ☐ hreflang correct if the site is multilingual
- ☐ Conversion goals and events configured before launch
- ☐ Sitemap submitted in Search Console
- ☐ Pagination and faceted URLs handled deliberately

REDIRECT MAP	OLD URL	NEW URL	TESTED
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

Launch day

In order, with the person who does each one named before you start.

- 1 Take a final backup of both the old and new environments.
- 2 Freeze content changes. Announce the freeze so nobody edits mid-cutover.
- 3 Point DNS to the new environment and watch propagation.
- 4 Confirm SSL is valid on the live domain, including the www variant.
- 5 Remove the noindex flag and confirm the header is gone in a live response.
- 6 Run the redirect tests against the live site, not staging.
- 7 Submit every form and confirm the notification arrives in a real inbox.
- 8 Complete a full transaction if the site sells anything, then refund it.
- 9 Confirm analytics is recording live traffic and goals are firing.
- 10 Crawl the live site and check for 404s, chains, and orphan pages.
- 11 Raise TTL back to its normal value once propagation is complete.
- 12 Tell the client it is live, and tell them what to watch for.

ANNOUNCE THE FREEZE

Content edited on the old site during cutover is content that disappears. One message before you start saves an awkward conversation the next morning.

The first 48 hours, and the first month

First 48 hours

- ☐ Uptime monitor reporting green with no flapping
- ☐ Search Console coverage report checked for new errors
- ☐ Forms and checkout tested again from a different device and network
- ☐ Client asked directly whether anything looks wrong to them
- ☐ Error logs checked twice, not once
- ☐ Analytics traffic tracking roughly to expectation
- ☐ Page speed re-tested under real traffic
- ☐ Any hotfixes documented rather than applied silently

First month

- ☐ Crawl repeated and compared against the launch crawl
- ☐ 404 log reviewed and any missed redirects added
- ☐ Backup restore tested once on the new environment
- ☐ Team trained on editing, with a recording kept
- ☐ Rankings for priority terms compared to the pre-launch baseline
- ☐ Core Web Vitals field data reviewed once it accumulates
- ☐ Handover documentation delivered and walked through
- ☐ Maintenance arrangement agreed, or explicitly declined in writing

BASELINE BEFORE, COMPARE AFTER

Record traffic, rankings, and conversion rate the week before launch. Without that baseline, any post-launch change is an argument rather than a measurement.

We build the systems behind the paperwork

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2014 Founded	850+ Clients served	2,000+ Projects completed	10,000+ Plugin installs
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What we do

WordPress engineering

Custom themes, blocks, plugins, and migrations built to stay fast and maintainable after handoff.

SEO strategy

Technical fixes, topical coverage, and search visibility work measured against clicks, not scores.

Content marketing

Research-led articles and editorial systems your team can keep publishing without us.

Conversion design

Landing pages, service pages, and forms designed around the decision the reader is actually making.

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