

The Ultimate CSS Variables & Theming Checklist

A practical guide to implementing a robust, dynamic, and maintainable theming system in your web projects. Use this checklist to ensure you're following best practices every step of the way.

Phase 1: Foundation & Setup

- **[] Define Global Variables:** Have you declared your primary theme variables (colors, fonts, spacing) inside the `:root` selector? This ensures they are globally available.
 - *Tip:* Use semantic names like `--primary-color` or `--text-main` instead of `--brand-blue`. This makes your theme more abstract and easier to update.
- **[] Implement Fallbacks:** For every `var()` function, have you included a sensible fallback value (e.g., `color: var(--text-color, #333);`)? This prevents styles from breaking if a variable is not defined.
- **[] Structure Your Variables:** Have you grouped related variables together in your stylesheet for better organization? (e.g., all color variables, all typography variables).

Phase 2: Building Your Themes

- **[] Create a Theme-Switching Mechanism:** Have you defined an attribute or class for theme switching (e.g., `[data-theme="dark"]` or `.dark-mode`)?
- **[] Override Variables for Each Theme:** Have you redefined your root variables within the theme-switcher class/attribute?
 - *Example:* In your `[data-theme="dark"]` selector, `--background-color` and `--text-color` should have new values for the dark theme.
- **[] Apply Base Styles:** Have you applied the variables to your base HTML elements like `body`? (e.g., `body { background-color: var(--background-color); }`).

Phase 3: JavaScript & Interactivity

- **[] Create the Toggle Function:** Have you written a JavaScript function to switch the theme by changing the class or `data-theme` attribute on the `<html>` or `<body>` element?
- **[] Implement Persistence with `localStorage`:**
 - **[] Save User Preference:** When a user toggles the theme, is the selected theme's name (`'dark'` or `'light'`) saved to `localStorage`?
 - **[] Check on Page Load:** Does your script check `localStorage` for a saved theme preference when the page first loads?

- **[] Apply Saved Theme:** Does the script apply the saved theme immediately to prevent a "flash" of the default theme?

Phase 4: Component-Level Theming & Best Practices

- **[] Use Local Variables for Components:** For complex components like buttons, are you using component-scoped variables that inherit from global variables?
 - *Example:* `.button { --button-bg: var(--primary-color); background-color: var(--button-bg); }`
- **[] Test Contrast and Accessibility:** For each theme, have you checked that text has sufficient color contrast against its background to meet accessibility standards (WCAG)?
- **[] Review Cross-Browser Compatibility:** Have you confirmed that your implementation works across all target browsers (excluding IE11 unless a polyfill is used)?