

# Website Creation Checklist & Step-by-Step Playbook

This checklist is a practical, printable playbook for launching a website without getting lost in details. Work through each step in order, check items off, and keep the tips nearby. If you already have a site, use the QA and post-launch sections to tighten performance and reliability.

Symbols:  = to do,  = done, \* = pro tip. Keep a single source of truth for links, credentials, and assets (a shared doc or password manager) so you never block on missing info.

# 1) Goals & Planning

- Define the single primary goal (lead gen, sales, portfolio, blog). Write it in one sentence and pin it at the top of your doc.
  
- Identify the audience and their top 3 tasks on your site (find pricing, read a case study, contact you). Rank tasks by impact and frequency.
  
- Draft the site map: Home, About, Services/Products, Pricing, Blog, Contact. Note which pages are optional for v1 (MVP) and which can wait.
  
- \* Pro tip: Use a page hierarchy that mirrors how people think (problem → solution → proof → next step). Each page must have a single, obvious call to action.

## 2) Choose Platform (Builder vs CMS vs Code)

- Pick your build path: website builder (fastest), CMS (flexible), or hand-coded (maximum control).
- If using a builder, shortlist 2-3 templates that fit your goal; check mobile previews on all of them.
- If using WordPress/Joomla, confirm hosting requirements (PHP version, database); list must-have plugins only.
- \*** Pro tip: Decide how edits will happen after launch. Non-technical editors usually do best on a builder or WordPress with a visual editor.

## 3) Domain, Hosting, Security

- Brainstorm 3-5 domain names. Check availability and trademarks. Register the chosen domain and enable auto-renew.
- Select hosting that matches your platform. Turn on free SSL (HTTPS) and daily automated backups.
- Set up DNS: point A/AAAA or CNAME records to your host. Verify with a live DNS checker.
- \* Pro tip: Keep registrar/host logins in a password manager. Use distinct strong passwords and 2FA on all accounts.

## 4) Design & Content Prep

- Define brand basics: two fonts (headings/body), a 3-5 color palette, and button/heading sizes.
- Prepare copy drafts for each page. Lead with benefits, keep sentences short, and add clear CTAs.
- Gather assets: logo (SVG/PNG), 3-5 hero images, 1-2 short videos, and testimonials or case studies.
- \* Pro tip: Write mobile-first. If a headline doesn't fit on a phone, it's too long. Aim for fast scannability.

# 5) Build the Site

## Step-by-Step Build:

- Create the project (builder site / CMS install / code repo).
  - Configure global styles (fonts, colors, buttons, spacing).
  - Build the Home page first; validate the value proposition above the fold.
  - Add core pages (About, Services/Products, Contact) and link them in the header/footer.
  - Implement navigation, breadcrumbs, and a clear CTA on every page.
  - Add forms with clear success messages and error states; send submissions to email + spreadsheet/CRM.
  - Configure SEO basics: titles, meta descriptions, open graph, XML sitemap, robots.txt.
  - Optimize images (compress, proper sizes), lazy-load below-the-fold media.
- \* Pro tip: Reuse components (cards, sections) to keep consistency and speed up future edits.

## 6) Integrations & Analytics

- If selling, set up payments (Stripe/PayPal) and test with sandbox credentials.
  - Connect email forms to your email provider or CRM (tags, double opt-in where required).
  - Install analytics (GA4 or privacy-friendly alternative) and define 3-5 conversion events.
- \* Pro tip:** Add a simple consent banner and a privacy page. Keep third-party scripts minimal to reduce load.

## 7) QA — Pre-Launch

- Cross-browser check: Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge (latest versions).
  - Device check: iPhone/Android phones and at least one tablet. Fix layout shifts and tap targets.
  - Speed/pass checks: Core Web Vitals (LCP, CLS, INP), compress heavy media.
  - Content pass: typos, broken links, alt text for images, readable contrast.
  - Legal pass: cookie consent (if needed), privacy policy, terms, company/footer details.
- \* Pro tip:** Ask two people in your target audience to complete a task (e.g., request a quote) while you observe where they struggle.

## 8) Launch Day

- Remove test pages and noindex tags; submit your XML sitemap in Search Console.
- Switch DNS (if applicable) during low-traffic hours; set a TTL that won't cause long delays.
- Verify SSL after go-live; re-check redirects (http→https, www→root or vice versa).
- \*** Pro tip: Prepare a rollback plan (backup + previous DNS records). Take screenshots before/after for records.

## 9) Post-Launch — First 48 Hours

- Monitor forms, payments, and 404s. Fix issues immediately.
- Check analytics: traffic sources, top pages, and conversion events are recording as expected.
- Ask 3-5 real users for feedback on clarity and trust; note objections and quick wins.
- \*** Pro tip: Tackle tiny fixes daily for the first week; momentum compounds.

## 10) Ongoing Care

Weekly:  Update plugins/themes,  review analytics for anomalies,  add one meaningful content update.

Monthly:  Backup/restore test,  performance sweep (images, unused scripts),  review top keywords and pages.

Quarterly:  Revisit goals and CTAs,  run a mini-usability test,  refresh case studies/testimonials.

\* Pro tip: Keep a changelog. Document what changed and why — future you will thank you.