

Ultimate Website Launch Checklist

This practical checklist is designed for anyone ready to build their first custom website using HTML. It helps users avoid common technical pitfalls and ensures the final product is fast, responsive, and search-engine ready. Use this list before you write your first line of code and keep it open until you hit "publish."

Phase 1: Setup & Structure

- **Install a proper code editor.** Download Visual Studio Code or Sublime Text to ensure syntax highlighting and error detection.
- **Organize your local files.** Create a root folder named `my-website` containing an `index.html` file, a `style.css` file, and an `images` folder.
- **Generate the HTML skeleton.** Use the `!` shortcut in VS Code to create the standard `<!DOCTYPE html>`, `<html>`, `<head>`, and `<body>` tags.
- **Link your stylesheet immediately.** Confirm that `<link rel="stylesheet" href="style.css">` is placed correctly within the `<head>` tags.
- **Plan your content hierarchy.** Outline which headings will be `<h1>` (only one per page), `<h2>`, and `<h3>` before writing the actual text.

Phase 2: Coding & Design

- **Use semantic HTML tags.** Ensure you are using `<nav>`, `<main>`, and `<footer>` instead of generic `<div>` tags for better accessibility.
- **Set a responsive viewport.** Verify that the meta viewport tag is present in the head section so the site scales on mobile devices.
- **Optimize image file sizes.** Compress all photos using tools like TinyPNG before saving them into your images folder to keep the site fast.
- **Add descriptive Alt text.** Write clear descriptions for every `` tag to support screen readers and search engines.
- **Check contrast ratios.** Ensure text colors stand out clearly against background colors for maximum readability.

Phase 3: SEO & Business Logic

- **Write a unique Title Tag.** Create a compelling page title under 60 characters that includes your main topic.
- **Draft a Meta Description.** Write a summary under 160 characters that encourages users to click from search results.
- **Verify header sequence.** Confirm that you haven't skipped levels (e.g., jumping from `<h1>` directly to `<h3>`).
- **Integrate analytics.** Paste your Google Analytics tracking script into the `<head>` section if you plan to track visitor data.

- **Add a clear Call to Action.** Ensure your contact information or primary business goal is visible within the first few seconds of scrolling.

Phase 4: Pre-Launch Testing

- **Test on multiple browsers.** Open your `index.html` file in Chrome, Firefox, Safari, and Edge to check for layout breakages.
- **Inspect on mobile view.** Use browser developer tools (F12) to simulate different screen sizes and ensure the layout adjusts correctly.
- **Click every single link.** Verify that all internal navigation links work and that external links open in new tabs if intended.
- **Validate your code.** Run your HTML and CSS through the W3C Validator to catch any syntax errors you might have missed.
- **Connect your domain.** Update DNS settings at your registrar to point to your hosting provider (like GitHub Pages or Netlify) and verify the SSL certificate is active.