Website launch SEO checklist

Use it before the new site goes live, on launch day, and in the weeks after. Most launch problems come from settings left over from the test site.

Start here: the 10 steps that matter most

If you only have an hour or two, do these first. The full list, with how to check each one, follows.

1. Give every page its own title
   No two pages share a title; each says what the page offers, usually with the brand at the end.
2. Set canonical tags
   Each page has a self-referencing canonical with the final, https address.
3. Set up analytics and Search Console before launch
   Analytics recording on all pages; Search Console verified for the final domain (a Domain property covers http, https, www and non-www).
4. Remove every noindex left from the test site
   No noindex in robots meta tags, X-Robots-Tag headers or CMS settings on live pages.
5. Replace a test robots.txt
   robots.txt allows crawling of public pages and lists the sitemap.
6. Serve one version of the site over HTTPS
   All three other versions redirect with a 301 to the main one, in one step.
7. Redirect old addresses if this replaces an old site
   Every old address with traffic or links redirects to its closest new page.
8. Submit the XML sitemap
   Sitemap submitted in Google Search Console (and Bing Webmaster Tools) and listed in robots.txt, with only live, canonical, 200 pages.
9. Test every form, phone link and payment
   A test enquiry from a phone and a computer arrived; tap-to-call works; payments go through.
10. Watch Search Console's page indexing report
    Every "not indexed" reason reviewed weekly; real problems fixed.

How to use this checklist

Every step has a priority (**Start here**, **Important**, **When you have time**), who usually does it (**You** or a **developer**) and a rough time. **Done when** says what finished looks like, **How to check** tells you how to confirm it yourself, and **Common mistake** is the slip we see most. Tick the box when a step passes its check.

Steps marked with a free tool can be checked in seconds at rrwebservices.com/tools/. Sources are numbered at the end; every fact was checked against them on November 9, 2026.

Your score: _____ of 22 steps done Date: _____

Before launch: pages

1. Give every page its own title

Start here · You · 1–2 hours

Google uses the title element most often for the title link. Unique, descriptive titles help people pick your page.

Done when: No two pages share a title; each says what the page offers, usually with the brand at the end.

How to check: Crawl the test site, or run key pages through the SEO Health Dashboard.

Common mistake: Every page titled “Home | Brand” from the template.

Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard Source 2

2. Write a description for each key page

Important · You · 1 hour

Google may use it as the snippet when it describes the page better than the text does.

Done when: Key pages have a unique description of about 1 to 2 sentences.

How to check: The SEO Health Dashboard shows length and duplicates.

Common mistake: The same description site-wide.

Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard Source 3

3. Use one H1 and headings in order

Important · Developer · 30 min

A clear outline helps readers, screen readers and search engines.

Done when: One H1 per page, then H2 and H3 without skipping levels.

How to check: The SEO Health Dashboard shows the outline.

Common mistake: Headings used to make text big.

Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard

4. Write alt text for meaningful images

Important · You · 1 hour

It describes images for screen readers and image search.

Done when: Content images have descriptive alt text; decorative ones have alt="".

How to check: The Accessibility Checker lists images without alt text.

Common mistake: Alt text stuffed with keywords.

Check it free with the Accessibility Checker

5. Add structured data for the business and page types

Important · Developer · 2 hours

It tells search engines and AI tools what each page is.

Done when: Organization or LocalBusiness on the homepage; Service, Product, Article or BreadcrumbList where they fit; no errors.

How to check: Use the Schema Generator’s check or Google’s Rich Results Test on each template.

Common mistake: Markup for things not visible on the page.

Check it free with the Schema Generator

6. Make sure main content is in the HTML

Important · Developer · 30 min

Google renders JavaScript but recommends server-side or pre-rendering, since not all bots run it.

Done when: Main text and links appear in View Source.

How to check: The Render Analyzer compares raw and rendered HTML.

Common mistake: Content loaded only by client-side scripts.

Check it free with the Render Analyzer Source 6

7. Set canonical tags

Start here · Developer · 20 min

They tell Google the preferred address when the same page can load at several.

Done when: Each page has a self-referencing canonical with the final, https address.

How to check: The SEO Health Dashboard shows the canonical.

Common mistake: Canonicals pointing to the test domain, or all to the homepage.

Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard Source 8

8. Check the site is fast on a phone

Important · Developer · 1–2 hours

Google's Core Web Vitals call a page "good" at Largest Contentful Paint up to 2.5 seconds, Interaction to Next Paint up to 200 milliseconds and Cumulative Layout Shift up to 0.1, measured at the 75th percentile of visits.

Done when: Key templates meet those numbers in a lab test on a mobile profile.

How to check: Run PageSpeed Insights on each template; the HTML & CSS Analyzer finds heavy code.

Common mistake: Testing only on a fast office computer.

Check it free with the HTML & CSS Analyzer + Minifier Source 7

9. Check accessibility basics

Important · Developer · 1 hour

Labels, contrast and keyboard use affect real visitors and legal risk.

Done when: No errors for missing labels, contrast or names on buttons in key templates.

How to check: Run the Accessibility Checker on each template.

Common mistake: Leaving it until after launch.

Check it free with the Accessibility Checker

10. Set up analytics and Search Console before launch

Start here · You + developer · 30 min

You need the first days of data to spot problems.

Done when: Analytics recording on all pages; Search Console verified for the final domain (a Domain property covers http, https, www and non-www).

How to check: Open a page and see it in analytics in real time.

Common mistake: Verifying only the www or only the non-www version.

Source 1

Launch day

11. Remove every noindex left from the test site

Start here · Developer · 10 min

Test sites are often set to noindex. If it stays, the new site disappears from Google. Google also says a noindex in the original HTML can stop it from running your JavaScript.

Done when: No noindex in robots meta tags, X-Robots-Tag headers or CMS settings on live pages.

How to check: Run the homepage and a few templates through the SEO Health Dashboard.

Common mistake: A CMS "discourage search engines" setting still ticked.

Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard Source 6

12. Replace a test robots.txt

Start here · Developer · 10 min

A test site's "User-agent: * / Disallow: /" blocks the whole site from crawling.

Done when: robots.txt allows crawling of public pages and lists the sitemap.

How to check: Open yoursite.com/robots.txt; run the Robots.txt Validator.

Common mistake: Disallowing CSS or JavaScript files Google needs to render pages.

```
User-agent: *
Disallow: /cart/
Disallow: /account/

Sitemap: https://www.example.com/sitemap.xml
```

Check it free with the Robots.txt Validator Source 5

13. Serve one version of the site over HTTPS

Start here · Developer · 30 min

http://, https://, www and non-www should all end up at one address, so links and signals aren't split.

Done when: All three other versions redirect with a 301 to the main one, in one step.

How to check: Type each version in the browser; the .htaccess Analyzer checks redirect rules.
Common mistake: Redirect chains (http to https to www) or mixed content warnings.
Check it free with the .htaccess Analyzer

14. Redirect old addresses if this replaces an old site

Start here · Developer · Varies

Old addresses keep their links and bookmarks only if they redirect.

Done when: Every old address with traffic or links redirects to its closest new page.

How to check: Use the Website migration checklist.
Common mistake: Sending everything to the homepage.
Check it free with the .htaccess Analyzer

15. Submit the XML sitemap

Start here · You + developer · 15 min

It helps Google find all your pages, especially on a new site with few links.

Done when: Sitemap submitted in Google Search Console (and Bing Webmaster Tools) and listed in robots.txt, with only live, canonical, 200 pages.

How to check: Search Console's Sitemaps report shows "Success" and the number of pages found.
Common mistake: A sitemap full of redirects, noindex pages or test-site addresses.
Source 4

16. Test every form, phone link and payment

Start here · You · 30 min

A broken contact form costs leads from day one.

Done when: A test enquiry from a phone and a computer arrived; tap-to-call works; payments go through.

How to check: Send real test submissions and check they arrive.
Common mistake: Forms still sending to the developer's test inbox.

17. Check social sharing previews

When you have time · Developer · 20 min

Open Graph tags control the title and image when a page is shared.

Done when: Key pages show the right title, description and image when shared.

How to check: The SEO Health Dashboard checks Open Graph tags.
Common mistake: Every share showing the test site's placeholder image.
Check it free with the SEO Health Dashboard

18. Request indexing of the most important pages

When you have time · You · 15 min

It can speed up the first crawl of key pages.

Done when: Homepage and main service pages requested with URL Inspection.

How to check: URL Inspection shows the page as indexed after a few days.
Common mistake: Requesting hundreds of pages one by one instead of fixing the sitemap.

The first month

19. Watch Search Console's page indexing report

Start here · You · 20 min a week

It shows which pages aren't indexed and why.

Done when: Every "not indexed" reason reviewed weekly; real problems fixed.

How to check: Search Console, Indexing, Pages.
Common mistake: Panicking about pages that are meant to be excluded, like redirects.
Check it free with the GSC Data Interpreter

☐ **20. Fix 404 errors and broken links**

Important · Developer · 1 hour

Broken links waste visits and crawling.

Done when: No internal links to missing pages; old addresses with traffic redirected.

How to check: Search Console's not found list and a crawl of the site.

Common mistake: Redirecting every 404 to the homepage.

Check it free with the .htaccess Analyzer

☐ **21. Compare traffic with the old site (if there was one)**

Important · You · 30 min

A drop in clicks to specific pages shows what went wrong.

Done when: Clicks for the top 20 old pages compared before and after.

How to check: Upload a Search Console export to the GSC Data Interpreter.

Common mistake: Judging after only a few days. Allow a few weeks.

Check it free with the GSC Data Interpreter

☐ **22. Check real-user speed once data arrives**

When you have time · Developer · 1 hour

Core Web Vitals in Search Console come from real visits and take time to appear.

Done when: Core Web Vitals report reviewed; poor groups of pages fixed.

How to check: Search Console, Experience, Core Web Vitals.

Common mistake: Optimizing the lab score only.

Source 7

Sources (checked November 9, 2026)

1. SEO Starter Guide, Google Search Central
2. Influencing your title links, Google Search Central
3. Control your snippets in search results, Google Search Central
4. Build and submit a sitemap, Google Search Central
5. Introduction to robots.txt, Google Search Central
6. Understand the JavaScript SEO basics, Google Search Central
7. Web Vitals, web.dev
8. How to specify a canonical URL, Google Search Central