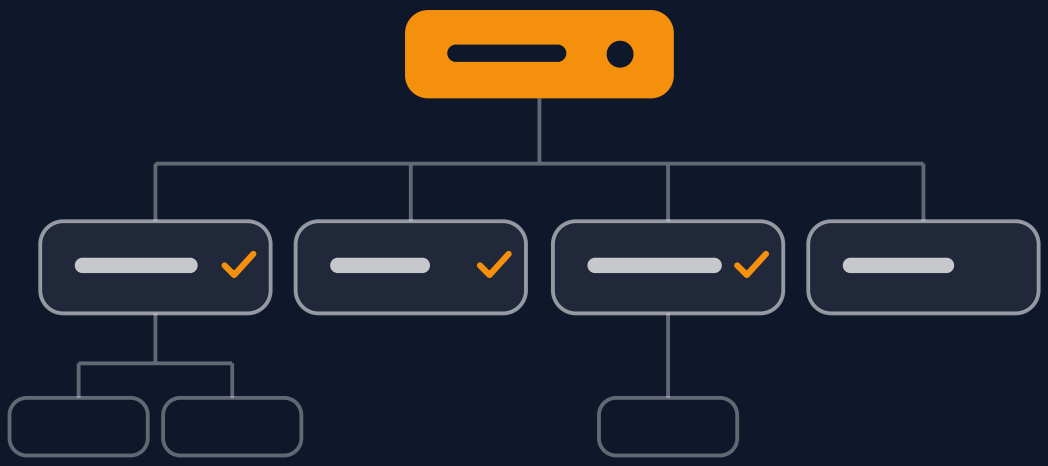
Search Boss

FREE GUIDE

UPDATED NOVEMBER 2026 · WITH FILL-IN WORKSHEETS

Website Planning Guide

Plan a small-business website that does its job. Work through eight steps, from goals and pages to budget and launch, and finish with a brief you can hand to any developer.



BEFORE YOU START

How to use this guide

This guide walks you through planning a website for a small business, whether it's your first site or a redesign. It is written for owners and managers, not developers. You don't need any technical knowledge.

Each of the eight steps has a short explanation and a worksheet. Fill in the worksheets as you go, by hand or in your own notes. When you finish, the one-page project brief (page 25) pulls your answers together. You can hand it to any web designer or developer, which makes quotes easier to compare and projects easier to run.

Last updated: November 2026. Search engines, tools and laws change often, so check anything you rely on.

Contents

→	The eight steps at a glance	3
1	Decide what the website must do	4
2	Know your customers and their questions	6
3	Plan your pages	8
4	Gather your content and photos	10
5	Choose features and tools	12
6	Set the look and feel	14
7	Domain, hosting and platform	16
+	Build these in from day one: search, security, privacy	18
+	Accessibility: what to ask for	19
8	Budget, timeline and who builds it	20
✓	Launch checklist	22
✓	After launch: keep it healthy	24
→	Your one-page project brief	25
A–Z	Glossary and sources	26

OVERVIEW

The eight steps at a glance

Work through the steps in order. Each one makes the next easier, and decisions made early (like goals and pages) save money later.

1

Decide what the website must do

Pick one or two main jobs, such as getting enquiries or taking bookings, and decide how you'll count success.

2

Know your customers

List who visits, what they need to find out, and the words they use.

3

Plan your pages

Sketch the sitemap: the pages you need and how they connect.

4

Gather content and photos

Decide who writes what, collect real photos and reviews, and plan your legal pages.

5

Choose features and tools

Separate must-haves from nice-to-haves. Every extra feature adds cost and upkeep.

6

Set the look and feel

Gather your brand assets and examples of sites you like, and put readability first.

7

Domain, hosting and platform

Choose where the site lives and make sure your business owns every account.

8

Budget, timeline and who builds it

Understand what drives cost, compare quotes fairly, and agree a timeline in writing.

SEARCH BOSS TIP

Start your content early. Writing page text, choosing photos and collecting reviews is the work owners most often underestimate. Begin Step 4 while you are still deciding on design and platform, and your launch date is far more likely to hold.

STEP 1 OF 8

1 Decide what the website must do

A website is a tool for your business. Before you think about colors, pages or platforms, decide which job it has to do and how you will know it is doing it.

Pick one or two main jobs

Most small-business websites have one main job. A few have two. Choose yours from the list below, or write your own. If everything is a priority, nothing is.

Main job	What to count	Where to see it
Get enquiries	Quote or contact form sends, clicks on your phone number or email link	Google Analytics (set up as key events)
Take bookings	Bookings made online	Your booking tool, plus Google Analytics
Sell online	Orders and revenue	Your shop platform's reports
Answer common questions	Fewer repeat questions by phone and email	Your own count, before and after launch
Back up word of mouth	New customers who say they checked your site first	Ask: "How did you hear about us?"

IN PLAIN ENGLISH

Key event: an action on your website that you have told Google Analytics matters to your business, such as sending your quote form. Google Analytics used to call these "conversions." **Search Console** is Google's free tool that shows how often your pages appear in Google Search and how often people click them.

Write down where you are today

Note your current numbers before the new site goes live: enquiries per month, bookings, sales, or calls. Without a starting point you can't tell whether the new site is doing better. If you have no website yet, your starting point is zero, and that is fine.

WATCH OUT

"More traffic" is not a goal on its own. A hundred visits from people who can't use your service are worth less than five from local customers ready to buy. Count the actions that bring in business.

WORKSHEET 1 · STEP 1

Your goals and how you'll measure them

Fill this in by hand or copy it into your own notes. Your answers feed into the project brief on page 25.

1. In one sentence, what should the website do for your business?

Example: "Bring in quote requests for kitchen remodels from homeowners in our area."

2. Your main jobs, what you'll count, and your numbers

Main job	What we'll count	Where we'll check	Today	Target and by when
1				
2				
3				

3. What is the one thing a new visitor should do on your home page?

Example: request a quote, call, book, or view your services.

4. What does a good enquiry look like? What would you rather not receive?

5. Who will check the numbers, and how often?

☐ Monthly ☐ Every three months ☐ Other: _____

Tip: ask for key events and Search Console to be set up before launch day, so the numbers start counting from day one.

STEP 2 OF 8

2 Know your customers and their questions

People visit your website to answer a question or finish a task: “Do they cover my area?”, “Roughly what will it cost?”, “Can I trust them?” A site that answers those quickly wins the enquiry.

Describe who visits

You don’t need detailed “personas.” For each main type of customer, write down who they are, where they are, what they want, and what worries them before they get in touch. Most small businesses have two or three types, for example homeowners and property managers, or new and returning patients.

List their top questions and tasks

The best source of questions is your own inbox and phone. Write down what people ask before they buy, and what they ask most after they buy. Then list the tasks they come to do: request a quote, check opening hours, find directions, book, pay, download a form.

Where to find real questions	What to look for
Your emails, calls and messages	Questions people ask before booking or buying, and the exact words they use
Your staff	The questions they answer every week
Your reviews and competitors’ reviews	What people praise, what they complain about, what surprised them
Google Search	The “People also ask” questions and related searches for your service
Search Console (if you have a site)	The searches that already bring people to your site

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR SEARCH

Google’s own guidance is to create helpful, reliable content made for people rather than for search engines. Pages that clearly answer your customers’ real questions, in their words, do that naturally. You don’t need to repeat keywords over and over; Google calls that keyword stuffing and treats it as spam.

WORKSHEET 2 · STEP 2

Your customers and their questions

Describe up to three customer types, then list the questions and tasks your site must handle.

1. Your main customer types

Customer type	Where they are	What they want	What worries them
A			
B			
C			

2. The questions they ask most (in their words)

Put a star next to the ones your site must answer on the first page they land on.

3. The tasks they come to do

Example: request a quote, check hours, book, pay an invoice, find directions.

4. Why do customers choose you over others? Use their words if you can.

STEP 3 OF 8

3 Plan your pages

A sitemap is a simple diagram of your pages and how they connect. Drawing one before design starts is the cheapest way to get the structure right.

A typical small-business sitemap

Home
What you do, who for, where, and the main next step.

Services (one page each)
A separate page for each service people search for, with details, proof and a clear next step.

About
Who is behind the business, experience, credentials, real photos.

Work, reviews or case studies
Proof that you deliver: real projects, real customers, with permission.

Contact or quote
Form, phone, email, hours, and service area or address.

FAQ
Answers to the questions from Worksheet 2 that don't fit elsewhere.

Add only what you need: **location or service-area pages** if you serve distinct towns and have something specific to say about each; a **blog or guides** section if you will keep it up; and **legal pages** such as a privacy policy.

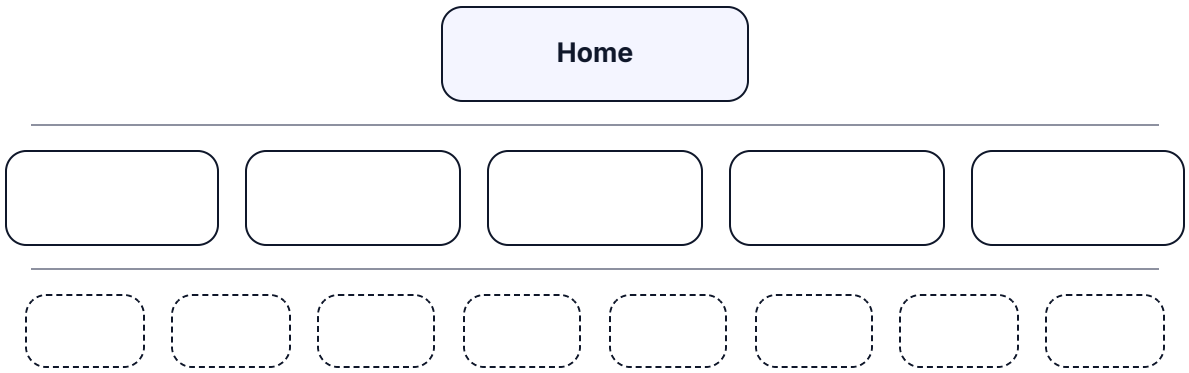
Rules of thumb

- **One clear topic per page.** A page that tries to cover every service ends up answering none of them well.
- **Keep important pages close to the home page,** reachable from the main menu, so people and search engines find them easily.
- **Use clear menu labels** such as "Services" and "Contact." Clever names make people guess.
- **Use short, readable web addresses** made of words, with hyphens between them, for example */services/kitchen-remodeling*.
- **Redesigning?** List every page of your current site first. Pages that bring visitors need a matching new page or a redirect (see page 23).

WORKSHEET 3 · STEP 3

Your sitemap and page list

Write a page name in each box. Add boxes or cross them out as needed. Then list each page with the main question it answers.



Page list

Page	Web address	Main question it answers	Main next step
Home	/		

STEP 4 OF 8

4 Gather your content and photos

Content is the words, photos, videos and documents on your site. It does most of the selling, and preparing it is usually the slowest part of a website project.

Decide who writes what

You know your business best, so even if a copywriter helps, plan to supply the facts: services, price ranges if you show them, areas served, your process, and answers to common questions. Agree early who writes, who checks facts, and who approves.

What every key page needs

- A headline that says plainly what the page is about and who it's for.
- The details a customer needs to decide, in short paragraphs with subheadings.
- Proof: reviews, photos of real work, qualifications, memberships you actually hold.
- One clear next step, such as "Request a quote" or "Book online."

Photos

Real photos of you, your team, your premises and your work build more trust than stock images. Use photos you own or have the right to use, and get written permission before showing customers or their property.

Content collection checklist

- [ ] Logo files (ideally vector: SVG, EPS or PDF)
- [ ] Brand colors and fonts, if you have them
- [ ] Service descriptions
- [ ] Business details: hours, phone, email, address or service area
- [ ] Photos of your work, team and premises
- [ ] Reviews and testimonials, with permission
- [ ] Team bios and qualifications
- [ ] Answers to frequently asked questions
- [ ] Prices or price ranges, if you will show them
- [ ] Privacy policy (and terms, if needed)

⚠ WATCH OUT

If your site collects personal information, even through a contact form, tell visitors what you collect and why, usually in a privacy policy. Rules differ by country and state, so check what applies to you.

WORKSHEET 4 · STEP 4

Page brief

Fill in one copy for each important page (home and each service page at least). Copy this page as often as you need.

Page name

Web address

Who is this page for?

The main question it answers

Key points to cover (in order of importance)

What searchers might type to find this page

Use your customers' words, not industry jargon.

Proof to include

Reviews, photos, results, credentials.

Photos or video needed

Who supplies them, and by when?

Main next step (button)

Written by / approved by

STEP 5 OF 8

5 Choose features and tools

Features are the things your site does beyond showing pages: forms, bookings, payments, maps and so on. Each one adds cost to build, and many add a monthly fee or regular upkeep.

Feature	Questions to answer first
Contact or quote form	Which details do you really need? Who receives the emails, and what happens if they land in spam?
Click-to-call and email links	Which number and inbox? Are they answered during the hours you show?
Online booking	Do you already use a booking tool? Does it need to sync with your calendar?
Online shop or payments	How many products? Who handles shipping, taxes and refunds? Which payment provider?
Map and directions	Do customers visit you, or do you visit them? Show a service area if you travel to customers.
Reviews	Where do your reviews live today? Showing a few real ones with permission is often enough.
Newsletter sign-up	Will you actually send one? Which email tool will you use?
Live chat	Who answers, and when? An unanswered chat box can do more harm than none.
Blog or guides	Who will write, and how often? An abandoned blog looks worse than no blog.
More than one language	Who translates and keeps each version up to date?
Analytics and cookie consent	Which visitor data will you collect, and do your visitors' locations require consent first?

SEARCH BOSS TIP

Launch with the must-haves and add the rest once you see how people use the site. For every third-party tool (booking, chat, email, payments), make sure the account is in your business's name, not your developer's.

WORKSHEET 5 · STEP 5

Features: need, nice or no

Tick one box per feature. Add the tool you already use, if any, and anything your developer should know.

Feature	Need	Nice	No	Tool you use now	Notes
Contact or quote form	☐	☐	☐		
Click-to-call / email links	☐	☐	☐		
Online booking	☐	☐	☐		
Online shop / payments	☐	☐	☐		
Map and directions	☐	☐	☐		
Reviews shown on site	☐	☐	☐		
Newsletter sign-up	☐	☐	☐		
Live chat	☐	☐	☐		
Blog or guides	☐	☐	☐		
More than one language	☐	☐	☐		
Analytics + cookie consent	☐	☐	☐		
Members or client login	☐	☐	☐		
	☐	☐	☐		
	☐	☐	☐		

Systems the site must connect to

For example your CRM, accounting, booking or email software.

STEP 6 OF 8

6 Set the look and feel

Good design helps people find what they need and trust what they see. It should fit your brand, but its first job is to be easy to read and use, especially on a phone.

Design for phones first

Plan for visitors on phones as well as computers. Google uses the mobile version of a site's content for indexing and ranking. Make sure your designer shows you phone layouts, not just desktop ones, and that the mobile site has the same important content as the desktop site.

Readability beats decoration

- **Text size and contrast:** body text should be comfortable to read without zooming, in a color that stands out clearly from the background.
- **Clear buttons:** they should look like buttons, say what happens ("Request a quote"), and be easy to tap.
- **Real photos and plain words** over stock images and slogans.
- **Consistency:** the same menu, colors and button styles on every page.

Bring examples

The quickest way to explain what you want is to show it. Collect three websites you like and three you don't, and note *why* in each case. They don't need to be in your industry. Also note anything your brand already has, such as a logo, colors, fonts and photo style, so the site matches your signage, vehicles and printed materials.

> ⚠ **WATCH OUT**
>
> Pale grey text, text over busy photos, auto-playing videos and pop-ups that cover the page all make a site harder to use. Low-contrast text is also an accessibility problem (see page 18).

WORKSHEET 6 · STEP 6

Design brief

Your designer will use this to understand your taste and your brand before sketching anything.

1. Websites you like, and why

Website address	What you like about it

2. Websites you don’t like, and why

Website address	What doesn’t work for you

3. Three to five words that describe your business

Example: friendly, local, reliable, straightforward.

4. Brand assets you already have

- [ ] Logo
- [ ] Colors
- [ ] Fonts
- [ ] Brand guidelines
- [ ] Professional photos
- [ ] Video

5. How should a visitor feel after a few seconds on your home page?

STEP 7 OF 8

7 Domain, hosting and platform

Your domain is your web address. Hosting is where the site's files live. The platform is the software the site is built and edited with. All three should be in your business's name.

Your domain

Register it in your business's name, in an account you control. As the registrant, keeping its contact details accurate is your responsibility. Turn on auto-renew so it can't lapse, and if a developer registers it for you, make sure it's in your name from the start.

Choosing a platform

There is no single best platform. Ask your developer why they recommend one, and what it would take to move away from it later.

Type	Often a good fit for	Things to weigh up
Website builder (e.g. Squarespace, Wix)	Simple sites you want to edit yourself, with hosting included	Monthly fee; limits on custom features; moving away later can mean a rebuild
WordPress (self-hosted)	Flexible sites with lots of content and add-ons	Needs regular updates for the core software, themes and plugins; you choose and pay for hosting
Shopify or similar	Shops where selling online is the main job	Monthly fee, plus payment processing and any paid apps
Custom-built	Specific features or performance needs	Higher up-front cost; make sure the code is documented and handed over

Hosting and HTTPS

Choose hosting that is fast, backed up and supported. Your site must use HTTPS (the padlock in the browser); certificates can be free, for example from Let's Encrypt.

> ⚠ **WATCH OUT**
>
> Ownership problems are hard to untangle later: a domain registered to a former supplier, or an analytics account nobody can log in to. Use Worksheet 7 to make sure your business owns every account, and give others their own logins rather than sharing yours.

WORKSHEET 7 · STEP 7

Accounts, access and ownership

Record who owns each account. **Never write passwords here**; keep them in a password manager.

Account	Provider	Owner (login email)	Others with access	Renews on
Domain registrar				
Hosting				
Website admin				
Business email				
Google Analytics	Google			—
Google Search Console	Google			—
Google Business Profile	Google			—
Bing Webmaster Tools	Microsoft			—
Booking / shop / payments				
Email marketing				
Social media				
Design files and photos				—

- [ ] Two-step login (multi-factor authentication) is turned on for every account that offers it
- [ ] Domain and hosting are set to auto-renew, with a payment card that won't expire soon

ALONGSIDE EVERY STEP

Build these in from day one

Search basics, security, privacy and accessibility are far cheaper to include from the start than to fix after launch. Ask your developer how each item will be handled. Accessibility has its own page next.

Search basics

- [ ] **Every page has its own title and description.**
  A unique, descriptive page title, and a short summary that may appear under it in search results.
- [ ] **Headings and links describe their content.**
  Links should be real links with words that say where they go, not “click here.” Google can generally only follow links built as standard HTML links.
- [ ] **Images are compressed and described.**
  Web-sized files, descriptive file names, and alt text for meaningful images.
- [ ] **The site can be found and indexed.**
  An XML sitemap is set up, and the finished site isn’t blocked from search engines. A test (“staging”) version should be password-protected so it stays out of search results.
- [ ] **Search Console and Google Business Profile are set up.**
  Both are free. A Business Profile helps customers find your business on Google Search and Maps.

Security and privacy

- [ ] HTTPS on every page
- [ ] Two-step login (MFA) on admin accounts
- [ ] Automatic backups, stored off the server
- [ ] A plan for software updates
- [ ] Spam protection on forms
- [ ] Cookie consent where your visitors’ location requires it

BUILD IN FROM DAY ONE

Accessibility: what to ask for

An accessible site can be used by people with disabilities, including people who use screen readers, keyboards or screen magnifiers. It also tends to be easier for everyone to use.

The international standard is the W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Version 2.2 is the current standard; WCAG 3.0 is still a draft. We recommend asking for **WCAG 2.2 level AA** in writing.

- [ ] Text has enough contrast (at least 4.5:1 for normal text)
- [ ] Every meaningful image has alt text
- [ ] Everything works with a keyboard alone
- [ ] You can always see which element has keyboard focus
- [ ] Form fields have visible labels and clear error messages
- [ ] Videos have captions
- [ ] Pages use real headings in a logical order
- [ ] Buttons and links are big enough to tap

The legal side, briefly

In the US, the Department of Justice's guidance explains that businesses open to the public must make their websites accessible to people with disabilities under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In the EU, the European Accessibility Act has applied since 28 June 2025 to certain products and services, including e-commerce; service businesses with fewer than 10 employees and under €2 million in turnover are exempt. Check which rules apply where your customers are.

How to check

Automated checkers, such as the accessibility audit in Google's free Lighthouse tool, are a useful start. But the W3C points out that evaluation tools can't determine accessibility on their own; they can only assist. Also try your key pages with a keyboard only, and with your phone's built-in screen reader.

> ⚠ **WATCH OUT**
>
> Be wary of plug-ins or "overlays" that promise instant compliance. In 2025 the US Federal Trade Commission finalized an order requiring one provider, accessiBe, to pay $1 million over claims that its plug-in could make any website compliant with WCAG.

STEP 8 OF 8

8 Budget, timeline and who builds it

Website prices vary because projects vary. Knowing what drives cost helps you budget and compare quotes fairly.

What drives the cost

- Number of pages and unique page layouts
- Whether you supply content or need it written
- Custom features and integrations
- Selling online
- Moving an old site, with redirects
- Extra languages or revision rounds

Ongoing costs to budget for

- Domain renewal
- Hosting or website builder plan
- Paid themes, plugins or apps
- Business email
- Maintenance: updates, backups, fixes
- Content updates and new pages

Timeline

Plan → content → design → build → test → launch → improve. Late content, slow feedback and mid-project requests are common causes of delay, so agree dates, feedback owners and revision rounds up front.

Comparing quotes

Give every supplier the same brief (page 25), then check what each quote includes:

- [ ] Number of pages and layouts
- [ ] Content writing and photos
- [ ] Search basics and analytics set-up
- [ ] Accessibility level (e.g. WCAG 2.2 AA)
- [ ] Training to edit the site yourself
- [ ] Support period after launch
- [ ] Ongoing costs, listed separately
- [ ] Who owns the site and accounts

⚠ RED FLAGS

A guarantee of first place on Google (Google's advice: if someone guarantees that, find someone else), no written quote, or vague answers about who owns the site. Our free **Web Development Best Practices** guide has a scorecard of questions to ask.

WORKSHEET 8 · STEP 8

Budget, timeline and decisions

Fill in what you know. Ranges are fine; a supplier can help with the rest.

Budget range for the build

Monthly or yearly budget for upkeep

Key dates

Milestone	Target date	Why this date?
Content ready		
Design approved		
Site ready for testing		
Launch		

Who decides?

Role	Name
Final decision maker	
Day-to-day contact	
Writes or approves content	
Edits the site after launch	

Quotes received

Supplier	Price	Ongoing costs	What's missing or unclear?

CHECKLIST

Launch checklist

Work through this with your developer. Tick each item when it's done, not when someone says it will be.

Before launch

- [ ] Every page proofread, with prices, hours and contact details checked
- [ ] Every form tested: the message arrives, in the right inbox, not in spam, and the visitor sees a confirmation
- [ ] Phone and email links work on a real phone
- [ ] Site checked on at least one phone, one tablet and one computer, in more than one browser
- [ ] Every page has its own title and description
- [ ] A helpful "page not found" (404) page is in place
- [ ] Privacy policy (and cookie consent, if needed) in place
- [ ] Google Analytics installed, with key events set up and tested
- [ ] Backups set up, and a restore tested

Launch day

- [ ] Domain pointed to the new site, and HTTPS working
- [ ] All versions of the address (with and without "www", http and https) lead to one version of the site
- [ ] **Search engines are no longer blocked.** Test sites are often set to "noindex"; make sure the live site isn't
- [ ] Redirects from old pages are working (redesigns only)
- [ ] Site verified in Search Console and the XML sitemap submitted
- [ ] Forms tested again on the live site
- [ ] Website link updated in your Google Business Profile, social profiles and email signature

First week

- [ ] Search Console checked for errors in the Page indexing report
- [ ] Analytics shows visits and key events coming in
- [ ] Broken links and “page not found” errors fixed
- [ ] Customers told about the new site

FOR REDESIGNS

Keep what’s working: redirect map

If your current site already gets visitors from Google, changing web addresses without redirects can lose them. A **redirect** automatically sends people and search engines from an old address to the new one. Google recommends permanent (301) redirects when pages move for good, and advises keeping them for as long as possible, generally at least a year.

- List every old page: use your current sitemap and the Pages report in Search Console’s Performance section.
- Match each old page to its closest new page. Avoid sending everything to the home page.
- After launch, update links inside your own site so they point to the new addresses directly.

Old address	New address	Tested

ROUTINE

After launch: keep it healthy

A website is never really finished. A short, regular routine keeps it secure, accurate and useful. If someone else looks after the site, agree who does each item.

Every month

- [ ] Software, plugins and apps updated (or confirmed done by your provider)
- [ ] Latest backup confirmed
- [ ] Every form sent as a test, and the message received
- [ ] Search Console checked for new errors or messages
- [ ] Key events in Google Analytics compared with last month and with your goals from Worksheet 1
- [ ] New reviews answered, on Google and elsewhere

Every three months

- [ ] Prices, hours, services, team and photos still accurate
- [ ] Pages checked with PageSpeed Insights, and anything slow followed up
- [ ] Broken links checked and fixed
- [ ] Who has access to each account reviewed; remove people who have left
- [ ] One page improved using customer questions you've heard recently

Every year

- [ ] Domain, hosting and subscriptions renewed, with costs checked
- [ ] Privacy policy and other legal pages reviewed
- [ ] Accessibility checked again, especially after design changes
- [ ] Goals revisited: is the site still doing the job you set in Step 1?

SUMMARY · HAND THIS TO YOUR DEVELOPER

Your one-page project brief

Copy your key answers from the worksheets. Attach the worksheets for detail.

Business name

Contact person and email

What the website must do (Worksheet 1)

Who it's for and what they need (Worksheet 2)

Pages (Worksheet 3)

Must-have features (Worksheet 5)

Content: who supplies what (Step 4)

Look and feel (Worksheet 6)

Domain and platform (Worksheet 7)

Budget range and launch date (Worksheet 8)

Requirements

- [ ] Our business owns all accounts
- [ ] WCAG 2.2 AA
- [ ] HTTPS
- [ ] Search Console + Analytics set up
- [ ] Redirects from old site
- [ ] Training to edit
- [ ] Written quote and timeline

REFERENCE

Glossary

Alt text
A short text description of an image, read aloud by screen readers and shown if the image can't load.

Backup
A copy of your site's files and data that can be restored if something goes wrong.

CMS (content management system)
The software you use to edit your site, such as WordPress or a website builder.

Core Web Vitals
Google's three measures of real visitors' experience: loading speed, responsiveness and visual stability.

DNS
The system that connects your domain name to the server where your site and email live.

Domain
Your web address, such as yourbusiness.com. You register it through a registrar and renew it to keep it.

Google Analytics
Google's free tool for measuring visits and actions on your site.

Google Business Profile
Your free business listing on Google Search and Maps.

Hosting
The service that stores your site and delivers it to visitors.

HTTPS
A secure connection between the visitor and your site, shown by the padlock in the browser.

Indexing
When a search engine stores a page so it can appear in results.

Key event
An action you've told Google Analytics matters, such as a form being sent.

MFA (multi-factor authentication)
Logging in with a second step, such as a code from your phone, as well as a password.

noindex
An instruction that tells search engines not to show a page in their results.

Redirect (301)
An automatic, permanent forward from an old web address to a new one.

Responsive design
A layout that adapts to any screen size, from phone to desktop.

Search Console
Google's free tool that shows how your site appears and performs in Google Search.

Sitemap
Either a planning diagram of your pages (Step 3) or an XML file that lists your pages for search engines.

Staging site
A private test copy of your site, used to check changes before they go live.

WCAG
The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, the international standard for accessible websites.

Sources and further reading

Every fact in this guide was checked against these official sources in November 2026.

1. Google Analytics Help: Conversions vs. key events
2. Search Console Help: About Search Console and What are impressions, position, and clicks?
3. Google Search Central: Creating helpful, reliable, people-first content and Spam policies
4. Google Search Central: Mobile site and mobile-first indexing best practices
5. Google Search Central: SEO Starter Guide and URL structure best practices
6. Google Search Central: Link best practices and Image SEO best practices
7. Google Search Central: Introduction to robots.txt and Block indexing with noindex
8. Google Search Central: Site moves with URL changes and Redirects and Google Search
9. Google Search Central: Do you need an SEO?
10. Google: Google Business Profile and Guidelines for representing your business
11. W3C: Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 and WCAG overview
12. U.S. Department of Justice: Guidance on Web Accessibility and the ADA
13. European Union, Your Europe: Services, goods and their digital accessibility
14. W3C WAI: Selecting web accessibility evaluation tools · Chrome for Developers: Lighthouse
15. U.S. Federal Trade Commission: FTC approves final order requiring accessiBe to pay $1 million
16. ICANN: Registrants' Benefits and Responsibilities
17. Let's Encrypt: Free TLS certificates · CISA: Multifactor authentication
18. European Union, Your Europe: Online privacy: how to use cookies on your website
19. web.dev: Web Vitals · Google: PageSpeed Insights

Search Boss

WANT A HAND?

How Search Boss can help

Search Boss builds websites and does SEO for small businesses. If you'd like help with any part of this guide, from planning to launch and beyond, send us your brief or tell us what you need. We'll reply by email with a free quote, and you'll have a written quote before any work starts.

Get a Free Quote

searchboss.co/contact · contact@searchboss.co

1. **Tell us about your business** and what you need: a new website, SEO, or both. Your brief from this guide is a great start.
2. **We reply by email with a free quote,** in writing, before any work starts.
3. **You decide** whether to go ahead. No pressure.

Web development

SEO services

Site maintenance

Free SEO Checklist

Free Web Development Best Practices

All free resources

About this guide

Last updated: November 2026. This guide is general information, not legal, financial or technical advice for your situation. Search engines, tools and laws change often; we checked the facts in this guide against official sources in November 2026. No one can guarantee search rankings, traffic or sales, and this guide doesn't either.

© 2026 Search Boss · searchboss.co · LinkedIn