flowninja

FREE TEMPLATE

Website migration checklist

42 steps from the first plan to day 90, built from more than 100 migrations we've run.

Before you start

Launch day feels like the finish line, but the expensive problems tend to show up weeks later: a page that stopped ranking, a form that stopped sending leads to the CRM, a traffic drop no one can explain because no one recorded what normal looked like.

This checklist runs from the baseline you take before anything changes to the comparison you run at day 90. Tick tasks off as you go and give each one an owner. Everything you type here saves with the file.

PROJECT

PLANNED LAUNCH DATE

THE FIVE PHASES

01	**Plan & benchmark**	12 to 10 weeks before launch	9 tasks
02	**Audit**	9 to 7 weeks before launch	8 tasks
03	**Build & migrate**	8 weeks to 10 days before launch	9 tasks
04	**Pre-launch QA & go-live**	Final week and launch day	7 tasks
05	**First 90 days**	Day 1 to day 90 after launch	9 tasks

Run it in your project tool

All 42 tasks in a Google Sheet you can copy. Enter your launch date and the due dates fill in, then download it as CSV and import it into Asana, ClickUp, Notion, Monday or Jira.

Copy the template

01 Plan & benchmark

Set goals, owners and a baseline before anything moves.

12 to 10 weeks before launch · 9 tasks

- [ ] 1.1

Define migration goals and success criteria

12 weeks before launch

OWNER

You'll judge every later decision against these goals, and after launch they're how you know the migration worked.

Write down why you're migrating (performance, editing speed, new features, cost) and turn each reason into a measurable target, e.g. "editors publish a landing page without dev help" or "LCP of 2.5s or less on key templates".

Tools: Spreadsheets or equivalent
Read: Mailchimp's Website Migration 101 →

- [ ] 1.2

Establish requirements and constraints

12 weeks before launch

OWNER

Scope creep starts when the team agrees on goals but never writes down the budget, the deadline or what the new site has to do.

List functional requirements, must-have features and limitations (budget, timeline, tech stack, legal and security requirements).

Tools: Spreadsheets or equivalent
Read: Mailchimp's Website Migration 101 →

- [ ] 1.3

Assign an owner to every workstream

12 weeks before launch

OWNER

Unowned tasks are the ones that slip. A name next to each workstream gives every question somewhere to go.

Name one owner per workstream (content, design, dev, SEO, tracking, legal, sign-off) and who approves the launch. A simple RACI is enough.

Tools: Spreadsheets, project management tool

Phase 01 · Plan & benchmark, continued

1.4

Set milestones and pick a launch window

12 weeks before launch

OWNER

A launch on a Friday, or in the middle of a campaign, leaves no one around to fix what breaks.

Break the project into phases with deadlines. Choose a launch day early in the week, outside peak season and campaign launches, with the core team available for the following days.

Tools: Spreadsheets, project management tool
Read: This guide by Asana →

1.5

Choose the new CMS or platform

11 weeks before launch

OWNER

Your team will publish on this platform for years, so its editing speed and its limits become theirs.

Shortlist platforms against your requirements: editing experience, scalability, integrations, security, hosting and total cost of ownership.

Tools: Spreadsheets or equivalent

1.6

Record a performance baseline

11 weeks before launch

OWNER

Without a record of normal traffic and conversions, you can't tell a post-launch dip from a real loss.

Export at least 12 months of data: organic traffic and conversions per landing page, rankings for priority keywords, top backlinked URLs and Core Web Vitals for key templates. Save it somewhere that won't move with the site.

Tools: Google Search Console, GA4, Semrush or Ahrefs, PageSpeed Insights
Read: Google: site moves with URL changes →

1.7

Record an AI visibility baseline

11 weeks before launch

OWNER

ChatGPT, Perplexity and Google's AI features answer questions with cited sources. A migration can change whether those answers cite you, and you'll only notice if you checked first.

Run the prompts your buyers would ask in ChatGPT, Perplexity, Gemini and Google's AI features. Log whether you're mentioned, which pages get cited, and which competitors show up instead.

Tools: Manual prompt testing, AI visibility tools
Read: Google: AI features and your website →

Phase 01 · Plan & benchmark, continued

1.8

Crawl and inventory every URL

11 weeks before launch

OWNER

Old campaign pages, PDFs and pages with backlinks but no nav link are easy to forget and costly to lose. A crawl finds them.

Combine a full crawl with URLs from your sitemap, Search Console, analytics and backlink tools into one master list. Then ask sales, support and partnerships which URLs they send directly, and pull the destination URLs from your ad accounts, email templates and any printed QR codes. Those pages often have no links, no search traffic and no place in the sitemap. This list becomes your content audit and redirect map.

Tools: Screaming Frog, Google Search Console, GA4, Ahrefs or Semrush
Read: Screaming Frog Starter Guide →

1.9

Write the migration plan, including a rollback plan

10 weeks before launch

OWNER

Deciding what happens if launch goes wrong is far easier in week 2 than at 11 p.m. on launch night.

Document scope, owners, milestones, this checklist and contingencies. Define what counts as a rollback trigger and who makes that call.

Tools: Any documentation tool
Read: Mailchimp's Website Migration 101 →

USEFUL RESOURCES · PHASE 01

Further reading

Google: Debug Search traffic drops →
Read it before you take the baseline, so you know which dips are normal.

Search Console: Performance report →
How to filter and export clicks and impressions by page and query for your baseline.

02 Audit

Decide what moves to the new site and where every old URL goes.

9 to 7 weeks before launch · 8 tasks

- [ ] 2.1

Content audit

9 weeks before launch

OWNER

You decide what moves, what gets rewritten and what retires, instead of carrying years of clutter to the new site.

Go through the URL inventory and tag each page keep, update, merge or remove, using traffic, conversions and backlinks from your baseline. Every merge or removal needs a redirect target.

Tools: CMS, spreadsheet, Google Search Console, Semrush
Read: How to Conduct a Content Audit →

- [ ] 2.2

Design and UX audit

9 weeks before launch

OWNER

Shows which layouts and patterns to keep, so the new site doesn't rebuild old problems.

Review layouts, navigation, typography, color and components across devices. Note the patterns that convert and the ones users struggle with.

Tools: Figma, heatmaps, spreadsheets
Read: HubSpot's Guide to UX Auditing →

- [ ] 2.3

SEO audit

9 weeks before launch

OWNER

Lists the SEO equity you have to carry over, plus the issues to fix while the site is open anyway.

Review meta titles and descriptions, headings, URL structure, canonicals, internal linking, structured data, hreflang (if multilingual) and backlinks.

Tools: Semrush, Ahrefs, Screaming Frog, spreadsheets
Read: SEO Audit by Semrush →

Phase 02 · Audit, continued

2.4

Technical and performance audit

9 weeks before launch

OWNER

Old scripts and slow templates are cheaper to drop now than after launch. This audit also sets the speed targets for the new build.

Check scripts, third-party code, hosting and broken links. Measure Core Web Vitals and set targets for the new site: LCP of 2.5s or less, INP of 200ms or less, CLS of 0.1 or less.

Tools: Google Lighthouse, PageSpeed Insights, Screaming Frog, manual inspection
Read: Google: Core Web Vitals →

2.5

Accessibility audit

9 weeks before launch

OWNER

Since June 2025, the European Accessibility Act requires many consumer-facing services in the EU, e-commerce included, to be accessible. A migration is the cheapest moment to fix it.

Test key templates against WCAG 2.2 AA: color contrast, keyboard navigation, focus states, alt text, form labels, heading order. Log issues so the new build fixes them.

Tools: axe DevTools, WAVE, Lighthouse, screen reader testing
Read: W3C: How to meet WCAG 2.2 →

2.6

Integrations and tracking audit

8 weeks before launch

OWNER

Every script, pixel and form connection has to be rebuilt. The ones nobody listed show up later as a broken report.

List every tag, pixel, form, CRM connection, chat widget and automation on the current site, with what it does and who owns it. Mark what moves, what gets replaced and what retires.

Tools: Tag manager, Tag Assistant, Zapier, Make, manual inspection

2.7

Privacy and consent audit

8 weeks before launch

OWNER

Tracking that runs without valid consent is a legal risk. In the EEA, Google also needs consent signals before it can use your data for measurement, ad personalization and remarketing.

Review your cookie banner, consent categories, privacy policy and which tags fire before consent. If you advertise to EEA users, plan Google Consent Mode v2.

Tools: Consent management platform, Tag Assistant
Read: Google: Consent Mode →

Phase 02 · Audit, continued

2.8

Map every redirect

7 weeks before launch

OWNER

A redirect map built in launch week is a rushed one. Build it straight from the audit, while every URL decision is fresh.

For every old URL, set a 1:1 destination on the new site: the closest equivalent page, never the homepage by default. Avoid chains and loops.

Tools: Spreadsheet, Screaming Frog
Read: Semrush redirects blog →

USEFUL RESOURCES · PHASE 02

Key numbers

75th percentile
Core Web Vitals pass when 75% of page loads hit the targets in 2.4

28 days
The window PageSpeed Insights field data covers, so the audit shows the last four weeks

500 URLs
Where the free version of Screaming Frog stops crawling. Larger sites need a license.

10 hops
How many redirects in a chain Googlebot generally follows

Further reading

Google: HTTP status codes and Google's crawlers →
How Google handles redirects, 404s, 410s and server errors.

Google: Specify a canonical URL →
How Google picks the canonical version of duplicate pages.

03 Build & migrate

Rebuild the site and carry over everything search engines and AI crawlers rely on.

8 weeks to 10 days before launch · 9 tasks

- [ ] 3.1

Set up a protected staging environment

8 weeks before launch

OWNER

You can build and test without search engines indexing a half-built copy of your site.

Set up the new platform on staging. Password-protect it or block indexing, and note this setting on the launch checklist so it gets removed later.

Tools: CMS, hosting
Read: Google: block search indexing →

- [ ] 3.2

Rebuild design, templates and navigation

5 weeks before launch

OWNER

This is where the audit findings, including the accessibility and speed fixes, become the new site.

Build templates, components and navigation from the design audit (or the new design, if redesigning). Build to the accessibility and Core Web Vitals targets from phase 2.

Tools: Figma, CMS or site builder

- [ ] 3.3

Start the content freeze

4 weeks before launch

OWNER

Without a freeze, the old and new sites drift apart while content is being moved.

Announce a freeze date to everyone who publishes. Anything urgent goes through the migration team and gets logged so it can be applied to the new site.

Tools: Shared change log

- [ ] 3.4

Migrate the content

3 weeks before launch

OWNER

Content arrives complete, and in better shape than it left.

Move text, images, videos and files per the content audit. Convert images to modern formats (WebP or AVIF), add missing alt text, and check formatting.

Tools: CMS, manual or import scripts
Read: This Finalsite blog →

Phase 03 · Build & migrate, continued

- [ ] 3.5

Rebuild functionality and integrations

3 weeks before launch

OWNER

Everything the old site did, from forms to member areas, has to work on day one.

Set up forms, gated content, e-commerce, member areas, custom scripts and third-party integrations, following the integrations audit.

Tools: CMS, various tools

- [ ] 3.6

Rebuild analytics, tracking and consent

2 weeks before launch

OWNER

Tracking has to work from the first visit, or launch week leaves a hole in every report.

Reinstall analytics, key events, ad pixels and the consent banner. Make sure tags respect consent (Consent Mode v2 if relevant) and conversion events match the old setup.

Tools: GA4, tag manager, ad platform pixels, consent platform

- [ ] 3.7

Implement SEO settings

2 weeks before launch

OWNER

Rankings depend on these settings carrying over, and search engines read the new site through them.

Carry over meta titles, descriptions, headings, alt text, canonicals, structured data and hreflang. Prepare the new robots.txt and XML sitemap.

Tools: CMS
Read: Google: SEO starter guide →

- [ ] 3.8

Make the site readable for AI crawlers

2 weeks before launch

OWNER

AI assistants can only cite what their crawlers can reach and understand.

Decide which AI crawlers to allow in robots.txt (e.g. OAI-SearchBot for ChatGPT search, GPTBot for OpenAI model training, PerplexityBot). Google-Extended is a separate token that controls Gemini training and has no effect on Google Search. Keep key content in the HTML rather than loaded by scripts, and keep structured data and clear headings in place.

Tools: robots.txt, CMS
Read: OpenAI: crawler overview →

Phase 03 · Build & migrate, continued

3.9

Implement 301 redirects

10 days before launch

OWNER

Old URLs keep their value, and visitors land on the right page.

Load the redirect map into the platform's redirect settings or server config, set to go live at launch.

Tools: CMS, server or DNS settings
Read: Semrush redirects blog →

USEFUL RESOURCES · PHASE 03

Key numbers

301 / 308
Permanent. Google treats the new URL as canonical.

302 / 307
Temporary. The old URL stays in search results.

4.5:1 / 3:1
WCAG AA contrast: 4.5:1 for text, 3:1 for large text, buttons, field borders and icons

24 × 24 px
Minimum size for click and tap targets under WCAG 2.2 AA

Further reading

Google: Redirects and Google Search →
Which redirect types Google treats as permanent, and how each one affects indexing.

Google: Common crawlers →
Every Google crawler and robots.txt token, including Google-Extended.

04 Pre-launch QA & go-live

Test everything and keep a way back before you switch.

Final week and launch day · 7 tasks

- [ ] **4.1**

Run full QA on staging

1 week before launch

OWNER

Problems found on staging are cheap and private to fix.

Check every template, link and integration across browsers and devices. Compare the new site against the URL inventory so no page is missing. Re-test Core Web Vitals and accessibility against your targets.

Tools: Screaming Frog, Lighthouse, BrowserStack, manual

- [ ] **4.2**

Test every form end to end

5 days before launch

OWNER

A form can look fine and still fail to reach the CRM. Nobody notices until sales asks where the leads went.

Submit every form. Confirm the lead lands in the CRM with the right fields and source, routing and notifications fire, and the conversion is tracked.

Tools: CRM, GA4, manual

- [ ] **4.3**

Get sign-off and confirm the launch date

3 days before launch

OWNER

The approver signs off on what was tested, and the team knows exactly when the switch happens.

Walk the approver through QA results and open issues. Confirm the date, the launch-day team and the rollback trigger.

- [ ] **4.4**

Back up the old site

2 days before launch

OWNER

Without a backup, a rollback plan is only a document.

Take a full backup of the current site, its content and settings, and its DNS records. Confirm someone knows how to restore it.

Tools: Hosting, CMS export

Phase 04 · Pre-launch QA & go-live, continued

- [ ] 4.5

Lower DNS TTL ahead of launch

2 days before launch

OWNER

A short TTL means the switch to the new site, or back, spreads within minutes instead of hours.

Lower the TTL on the records you'll change at least one old TTL period before launch (if it was 86,400 seconds, that's a full day), and raise it again once things are stable.

Tools: DNS provider

- [ ] 4.6

Launch the new site

Launch day

OWNER

Launch is a short list of settings, and missing one (a leftover noindex, for example) can hide the whole site from search.

Switch DNS, confirm SSL, remove staging password and noindex, publish the new robots.txt and sitemap, and activate redirects.

Tools: DNS provider, CMS

- [ ] 4.7

Run first-hour checks

Launch day, first hour

OWNER

The first hour is the cheapest time to find a broken redirect or a form that stopped sending.

Spot-check your top pages, test a sample of redirects, submit a form, confirm analytics and pixels fire, and check the site is indexable.

Tools: Browser, Tag Assistant, GA4 real-time

USEFUL RESOURCES · PHASE 04

Key numbers

60–900 s
The low TTL range AWS recommends while a DNS change is in progress

24 h
How long Google usually caches robots.txt, so a leftover staging block can linger a day

Further reading

Google: Changing hosting without changing URLs →
The checklist Google publishes for infrastructure moves.

05 First 90 days

Confirm nothing was lost, and catch it early if something was.

Day 1 to day 90 after launch · 9 tasks

- [ ] 5.1

Submit the new XML sitemap

1 day after launch

OWNER

Search engines find and index the new URLs faster.

Submit the sitemap in Google Search Console and Bing Webmaster Tools. If the domain changed, use Search Console's Change of Address tool. Consider IndexNow for faster discovery on Bing and others.

Tools: Google Search Console, Bing Webmaster Tools
Read: This GSC guide →

- [ ] 5.2

Verify redirects and fix broken links

1 day after launch

OWNER

Confirms the redirect map works in production and that no link leads to a dead end.

Crawl your full list of old URLs and confirm each returns a single 301 to the right page. Crawl the new site for broken internal and external links.

Tools: Screaming Frog, Semrush, Ahrefs
Read: Semrush redirects blog →

- [ ] 5.3

Announce the launch

1 day after launch

OWNER

Customers learn what changed, and sales and support can answer questions about it.

Share the launch by email, social and a site banner if needed. Brief sales and support on anything that moved.

- [ ] 5.4

Watch crawl and indexing reports

Daily for 2 weeks, then weekly

OWNER

Shows early whether search engines can crawl and index the new site.

Check Search Console's page indexing and crawl stats reports daily for the first two weeks, then weekly.

Tools: Google Search Console
Read: Google docs on using GSC →

Phase 05 · First 90 days, continued

5.5
Lift the freeze and resume content production

The site starts moving again, and the changes logged during the freeze go live.

Apply everything in the freeze change log, then restart the content calendar.

3 days after launch

OWNER

5.6
Train the team and set governance

The new platform only pays off if editors use it, and use it the same way.

Train editors on the new CMS and document who can publish what, naming conventions and how new pages get built.

Tools: CMS, documentation tool

1 week after launch

OWNER

5.7
Set up ongoing monitoring

You hear about downtime and broken forms from an alert, not from a customer.

Automate uptime, speed and Core Web Vitals monitoring, and schedule regular checks of forms, tracking and broken links.

Tools: Uptime monitoring, GA4, Search Console

1 week after launch

OWNER

5.8
Compare against your baseline at weeks 2, 4, 8 and 12

Traffic often moves in the first weeks after launch. A drop that hasn't recovered by week 8 needs a closer look.

Compare organic traffic, rankings, conversions and engagement rate per landing page against the baseline. Investigate any key page that is still down.

Tools: GA4, Google Search Console, Semrush or Ahrefs

Weeks 2, 4, 8 and 12 after launch

OWNER

5.9
Re-check AI visibility

Confirms AI assistants still mention and cite you for the questions your buyers ask.

Re-run the baseline prompts at around week 4 and week 12 and compare mentions and cited pages.

Tools: Manual prompt testing, AI visibility tools

Weeks 4 and 12 after launch

OWNER

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We can run this checklist for you.

We've run more than 100 migrations, and our website launches run 75% faster.

“Nothing broke at launch, which is absolutely unheard of.”

Jackie McCarthy, Senior Marketing Director at Judi Health

Talk to us about your migration