

The Essential WordPress Website Launch Checklist



Ah, there's nothing quite like the day you launch a new website. All the weeks and months you've spent planning, coordinating, organizing, designing and developing are finally finished and it's time to unveil your website—your work, even if it's for a client—to the world.

A launch day should be full of celebration and excitement and the feeling of accomplishment, right? Unfortunately, launch day can also be frantic and hectic—what if you missed something?

Having a Website Launch Checklist is Important

Think about it—pilots and Astronauts use a checklist for every flight. Surgical complications drop 36% when checklists are used for the procedure.¹

So why don't we use checklists as web developers? Good question.



When we use checklists, we are more productive with less stress.

Making a launch checklist allows us to offload the job of remembering a ton of tiny details (all those mental “notes”) and free up mental “RAM.” With the help of a checklist, you can be confident you haven't missed anything important. Most of all, it's a way to make sure your clients have a great experience on launch day. And it's all because you thought of everything.

Check out [The Checklist Manifesto: How to Get Things Right](#), by Atul Gawande.

Creating Your Own Website Launch Checklist

Remember, it should still be *your* checklist.

- A checklist should make your work easier. Don't let the list get in the way.
- Customize your checklist to match your workflow.
- Group clusters of similar items together to speed up the process.

Remember, every checklist is a work in progress.

- You're not going to get it right the first time.
- Checklists are rarely finished. Tweak your list every time you use it.

How to Create Your First Launch Checklist

- The next time you launch a website, write down each step you take along the way.
- Break your list into **Pre-Launch**, **Launch**, and **Post-Launch** sections.
- Group similar items under each section to save time clicking back and forth. **You want to complete the list in order, so make sure the sequence works.**

Elements of a Launch Checklist

We've done some of the work for you and compiled this comprehensive WordPress website launch checklist. Just remember you can add, remove or change any of the items, depending on your workflow or client offerings.

Pre-Launch Checklist

- Remove all *Lorem Ipsum* text
- Proofread site copy for grammar and spelling errors
- All links are working correctly
- Confirm contact details are correct throughout site
- Video and audio items are correct and formatted properly
- PDF files are properly linked and proofed
- 404 page is created or customized
- Old website URLs are 301 redirected to new URLs
- Be sure all required licenses for images, fonts, plugins, etc. are on file
- Confirm client [Gravatars](#) are set up for their email address

Website Design

- Images are correct and have been optimized for the web (resize all large images)
- Site previewed in Chrome
- Site previewed in Firefox
- Site previewed in Internet Explorer
- Site previewed in Safari
- Site previewed in any legacy browsers requested by client
- Responsive design tested at standard phone sizes
- Responsive design tested at standard tablet sizes
- Website favicon is working
- Header (or company logo) is linked to home page

Website Functionality

- Page load time is 3 seconds or less
- All forms are submitting data correctly
- All forms are emailing to correct address
- All forms display correct message or redirection on submit
- Form autoresponders are working correctly
- All external hyperlinks open in a new tab
- Social sharing icons are working
- Social media posting is working correctly

SEO

- All pages and posts have a unique title, fewer than 70 characters
- All pages and posts have unique meta descriptions, fewer than 156 characters
- Pages and posts have fewer than 10 keywords that appear in page copy

Must-Have Plugins

- Install and activate [BackupBuddy](#); complete setup wizard for email notifications and ImportBuddy password
- Install and activate [iThemes Security](#); configure at minimum all High Priority items
- Install and activate [iThemes Sync](#) or connect site from the [Sync dashboard](#)
- For ecommerce sites, install and activate [iThemes Exchange](#)
- Install and activate [WordPress SEO by Yoast](#) plugin
- Install and activate [Gravity Forms](#) or [Ninja Forms](#)
- Install and activate [Pods](#) if using custom post types

WordPress Settings

- General: Confirm Site Title and Site Tagline are correct
- General: Confirm time zone is correct
- General: Confirm admin email address is correct
- Writing: Confirm Default Post Category is correct; if not, create default category
- Discussion: Confirm comment settings and comment moderation settings
- Permalinks: Confirm permalink settings are not Default for SEO purposes

Launch Checklist

For New Sites

- Set up new domain in cPanel
- Set up new database and user in cPanel
- Record new domain and database information into tracking software
- [Restore BackupBuddy backup file](#) in correct web space onto new domain name
- Change DNS on domain to the correct nameservers
- View site to check for display issues
- Check for broken links on links and redirections

For Existing Sites

- Set up new domain in cPanel
- Set up new database and user in cPanel
- Record new domain and database information into tracking software
- Zip and download existing web site with a BackupBuddy backup
- Upload BackupBuddy and ImportBuddy files to web space for domain
- Delete existing web site files
- Restore BackupBuddy file in correct web space onto new domain name
- Change DNS on domain to correct nameservers
- View site to check for display issues
- Check for broken links on links and redirections

Post-launch Checklist

Note: These checklist items will have to happen after the website is live, but not necessarily after the website has officially launched.

Plugins

- Relicense plugins and themes for new domain name; Visit Settings > iThemes Licensing to license iThemes plugins and themes
- Activate site caching
- Check for URL problems on sliders
- Check for missing custom post type icons

SEO

- Turn on Site Visibility in Settings > Reading
- Build first sitemap and ping search engines
- Connect Google Analytics
- Add Google Analytics Tracking ID to iThemes Builder settings
- Activate Google Analytics Dashboard for WP and add Tracking ID
- Connect Google Webmaster Tools
- Connect Bing Webmaster Tools

Management

- ❑ Update Admin Password and save in password management, such as [LastPass](#)
- ❑ Activate and connect [iThemes Sync](#) to manage theme, plugin and WordPress core updates
- ❑ Set up BackupBuddy Remote Destinations for backups
- ❑ Set up BackupBuddy [automated backup schedule](#)
- ❑ Create first backup and send to remote destination such as [BackupBuddy Stash](#); verify it sent
- ❑ Clean up server: Delete old development site, subdomain, database and user
- ❑ Change site settings in Coda; change remote directory, open style.css and functions.php
- ❑ Add new website to your own portfolio ([don't neglect your own freelance website!](#))
- ❑ Get client credit card and [set up monthly website maintenance invoice](#) in payment gateway and accounting software.