



Anna Cihlova

Build Your Dream Website: From Idea to Live Site

Website Launch Checklist



Let's face it — your website matters...

But where to begin?



Website is the first impression people get of you or your business. Whether you're selling a product, offering a service, or showcasing your work — **your website is where people go to decide.**

A polished, intentional website builds credibility, reflects your brand, and creates that *"ooh, I like this"* moment that keeps visitors around (and clicking).

But what if you have a business and your site doesn't quite match your vibe? Or maybe you've started building and hit a wall... or you're just staring at a blank screen thinking, **Where do I even begin?**

You're not alone. With allllllll the platforms, tools, and opinions out there, it's easy to spiral into "I'll do it later" mode.

That's exactly why I created this step-by-step guide!

This checklist is made for **creative minds, small biz owners, and entrepreneurs** who want a **website that actually works.**

Here's what we'll cover:

✦ **The Prep:** Get clear on your vision before diving into design.

✦ **The Build:** Bring your brand to life with thoughtful design & content.

✦ **The Launch:** Polish it up, hit publish, and share it with the world.

Each section explains **what to do, why it matters, and how to do it**

— plus I threw in tools, examples, and my favorite shortcuts to help you stay on track!

✦ **Pro tip?** Don't overthink it. Pick your platform, trust the process, and take it one step at a time.

You've got this — let's dive in!



PART 1: PREP & PLAN

Before you dive into colors, templates, and design — let's start with the groundwork. This section helps you get **clear on your vision**, **define your website's purpose**, and **gather all the pieces you'll need**. A little planning upfront saves hours of confusion later and sets you up for a site that feels aligned, intentional, and totally you.



CHECKLIST

PART 1: PREP & PLAN

01 PICK YOUR PLATFORM ☐

Wix, Shopify, Squarespace, WordPress... The options can feel endless. The truth is, most platforms offer solid tools these days. What matters most is choosing one that fits your business needs, tech comfort level, and budget.

✦ **Pro tip:** Explore the platform's templates, try the free trial, look for deals, check the pricing. See what feels right, then go from there.

02 PICK A DOMAIN NAME ☐

Your domain is your digital first impression — so let's make it **memorable, easy to type, and true to your brand**.

Tips for choosing a strong domain name:

- Keep it short and simple (avoid hyphens or tricky spellings).
- Aim for a **.com** if possible — it's the most trusted.
- Use keywords related to your business or niche.
- Make sure it's easy to say and remember.

You can buy domains directly through platforms like Wix, Shopify, Squarespace, or WordPress — most offer step-by-step help to connect your domain easily (no tech skills needed!).

✦ Other popular places to buy domains:

If you're not using an all-in-one platform like Wix or Shopify, you can grab your domain from trusted registrars like GoDaddy or Hostinger. Just make sure your platform lets you connect an external domain.

✦ **Pro tip:** Use tools like Namechk or Instant Domain Search to check if your domain is available — and to see if the name is free on social platforms too!

CHECKLIST

PART 1: PREP & PLAN

03 DEFINE YOUR WEBSITE GOAL ☐

Before you touch a single pixel, ask yourself:

What do I want this website to do? Is it to sell products?

Book clients? Build your brand presence? Share your story?

✨ **Clarity = Confidence.**

Knowing your site's purpose helps guide every decision — from layout to buttons to what you say on your homepage.

04 GATHER INSPIRATION ☐

Design doesn't start on a blank canvas — it starts with inspiration. Collect ideas for what you like and what would visually support what your website is trying to say. Think about how you want visitors to feel — confident? calm? excited?

✨ **Think colors, fonts, imagery, layout — the mood!**

Where to start:

- Scroll [Pinterest](#) boards
- Search [Canva](#) for moodboard templates
- Screenshot sites you admire (even your competitors!)

05 COLLECT YOUR WEBSITE CONTENT ☐

Don't skip this part — content is what brings your site to life!

✨ **Start gathering:**

- Your logo + brand colors
- Headshots or product photos
- Website copy (intro, about, services, contact)
- Testimonials or social proof
- Links to social media or booking tools



PART 2: BUILD & POLISH

With your vision and content mapped out, it's time to bring it all together. In this section, you'll **choose the right template, set up your pages, customize the design, and add your content**. You'll start shaping a website that not only looks beautiful but functions with ease — for you and your visitors.



CHECKLIST

PART 2: BUILD & POLISH

06 SET UP YOUR PAGE LAYOUT



Every great website starts with a solid structure. Think of your layout as the blueprint that guides visitors through your content with clarity and ease.

Here are the must-have pages most websites need:

- **Home:** This is your first impression — make it clear who you are, what you do, and who it's for.
- **About:** Share your story, values, or mission. Build trust.
- **Services / Products:** Clearly explain what you do or sell.
✦ Bonus: Add an **FAQ** if you get a lot of the same questions.
- **Contact:** Make it easy to get in touch. Include a form, email, and/or social links.
- (Optional) **Blog:** If you plan to share helpful content or boost your SEO, having a blog or freebie library can add extra value.

✦ **Pro tip:** Each page should have a clear goal — whether it's to inform, connect, or convert. Use strong headlines, clear sections (like intros, calls-to-action, testimonials, or FAQs), and obvious next steps to guide your visitors.

CHECKLIST

PART 2: BUILD & POLISH

07 CHOOSE YOUR TEMPLATE ☐

Most platforms offer a wide range of templates — from clean, minimal designs to bold, creative layouts. Templates act as the foundation of your website and can be fully customized.

Since you've already outlined your ideal layout, choosing a template becomes much easier. Look for one that aligns with the structure you've planned — something that supports your flow. And don't worry — you can always move, add, or delete sections, and create extra pages or subpages as needed.

✦ **Pro tip:** Choose a template based on layout and structure, not colors or fonts. Those can easily be adjusted later.

08 ADD YOUR CONTENT ☐

Now it's time to fill in the framework with your actual content — headlines, body text, images, and calls-to-action.

- ✓ Write clear headlines that speak to your audience
- ✓ Use images that reflect your brand
- ✓ Don't forget your call-to-action buttons — tell visitors what to do next ("Book Now", "Contact Me", "Learn More")!

✦ **Pro tip:** Less is more. Break up long text, use bullet points, and guide the reader with clear structure.

CHECKLIST

PART 2: BUILD & POLISH

09 CUSTOMIZE THE DESIGN ☐

Swap in your colors, fonts, and visuals. Add your branding to make it yours.

- ✓ Use your moodboard for guidance
- ✓ Stick to 2–3 fonts for consistency
- ✓ Use 1–2 accent colors for buttons, links, or highlights — this keeps things clean while drawing attention where it matters

✨ **Pro tip:** Use free tools like [Coolors](#), [Adobe Color](#), or [Canva Colors](#) to create a cohesive palette that looks great across your entire site.

10 MOBILE OPTIMIZATION ☐

In web design, there's a saying: "**Mobile first.**" Why? Because most users today browse on their phones — not desktops. If your site doesn't look and work great on mobile, chances are, visitors won't stick around.

✨ Think about those frustrating sites where text spills off the screen, buttons are too small to tap, or the menu is crammed in a corner (😞). Don't be that site!

- ✓ Check your site on multiple screen sizes
- ✓ Make sure text is readable and buttons are tappable
- ✓ Use a clean mobile menu (like a "hamburger" icon 🍔 ≡)
- ✓ Ensure images scale properly and nothing looks broken

✨ **Pro tip:** Platforms like Wix have mobile and tablet editors built-in, so you can tweak your layout specifically for phones without touching the desktop version.



PART 3: LAUNCH & SHARE

The finish line is in sight! It's time to turn your hard work into a real, live website. This final stretch covers the behind-the-scenes essentials that make your site searchable, shareable, and seriously impressive — like **connecting your domain**, **polishing up SEO**, **testing** everything, and finally... hitting that **publish** button.



CHECKLIST

PART 3: LAUNCH & SHARE

11 CONNECT YOUR DOMAIN ☐

Now that your site looks amazing, it's time to make it official — by connecting your custom domain. This is what turns your site from *yourname.platform.com/brand* into *yourname.com* — **short, clean, and trustworthy**.

✦ **Pro tip:** A custom domain adds instant credibility and helps build trust with visitors. It's also a must if you want to rank well on Google.

12 SET UP SEO BASICS ☐

Search Engine Optimization (**SEO**) helps people find your website when they search online — and the best part? It's (mostly) free. You just need to make sure to lay a solid foundation:

✓ Page Titles

Each page on your site should have a clear, descriptive title.

This shows up in two key places:

- At the top of your browser tab
- As the clickable headline in Google search results

✦ **Example:** “*Austin Wedding Photographer*” is more of a descriptive page title than just “*Home*”.

✓ Meta Descriptions

This is the short sentence (around 150 characters) that appears under your page title in search results. It should quickly explain what the page is about and entice someone to click.

✓ Favicon (That Tiny Tab Icon)

This is your mini brand mark — the little icon that appears next to your page title in a browser tab. Here, you just need to upload your logo or a simple symbol that represents your brand.

CHECKLIST

PART 3: LAUNCH & SHARE

12 SET UP SEO BASICS



✓ Heading Hierarchy (H1, H2, H3)

Structure matters — for both Google and your visitors.

- Use **Heading 1 (H1)** for your main headline
- **H2** for section titles
- **H3** for sub-points

This makes your site easier to read, boosts SEO, and ensures smoother navigation for users with screen readers.

✓ Image Alt Text

Alt text (short for “alternative text”) is a brief description of what an image shows. It helps visually impaired users understand your content and also helps Google understand what the image is about.

Keep it short, clear, and specific.

✦ Example:

Instead of writing: "Image1234.jpg" ✗

Try: "Golden retriever typing on keyboard" ✓

✦ Pro Tips:

- Use sentence-style capitalization (start with a capital letter, end with a period if it's a full sentence).
- Skip phrases like “Image of...” or “Picture showing...” — just describe the image directly.
- Be concise, but specific. Think: what would someone need to hear to understand what’s in the image?

✓ Keywords (Use Naturally)

Include words your ideal visitors would type into Google.

Use them in your titles, descriptions, headers, and body text — but keep it human. No keyword stuffing!

CHECKLIST

PART 3: LAUNCH & SHARE

13 GOOGLE ANALYTICS (OPTIONAL) ☐

So... what exactly is Google Analytics — and do you even need it? Google Analytics is a free tool that helps you understand how people find your website, what they do once they're there, and where they might drop off.

It's super detailed, great for business owners who want to:

- ✓ **Track traffic** (where your visitors are coming from)
- ✓ **See which pages are performing best**
- ✓ **Understand how users interact with your site** (and for how long)
- ✓ **Make data-based decisions to improve your site**

VS So what's the difference?

- ✓ **Built-in** = simple and visual
- ✓ **Google Analytics** = deeper insights, more control, better for long-term growth 👍

🔧 Using Google Analytics for your website is optional, but setting it up early allows you to start tracking data behind the scenes right away. Just create a free account at analytics.google.com and paste your tracking ID into your platform's integrations or marketing settings.

🌟 **Pro tip:** Want to see how your site performs in Google Search? Connect it to [Google Search Console](https://google.com/search-console/) too — it's also free!

CHECKLIST

PART 3: LAUNCH & SHARE

14 TEST YOUR WEBSITE



Before hitting “publish”, make sure everything on your website works smoothly. A broken link or a typo can quickly turn visitors away. Remember, you only get one first impression.

Here’s what to test:

- ✓ **All buttons and links:** Do they lead to the right pages and sections?
- ✓ **Forms:** Do they submit correctly and send to your email?
- ✓ **Smaller devices:** Does your site also look great on phones and tablets?
- ✓ **Load time:** Does your site load quickly or does it lag?
- ✓ **Spelling, grammar, and typos:** Read it out loud or have a friend review it.
- ✓ **Navigation:** Is it clear and easy to get around?
- ✓ **SEO basics:** Are your titles, descriptions, and headings in place?

✨ **This is your final polish — give your website the love it deserves before you present it to the world!**

✨ **Pro tip:** Ask a friend or two to test the site as if they were your ideal client. What do they love? What feels confusing? How easy is it to navigate?



CHECKLIST

PART 3: LAUNCH & SHARE

15 SHARE YOUR SITE



You did it — your site is ready to go live. Now it's time to put it out into the world and let people know you're here.

🎉 **Hit publish!**

Ways to share your new site:

- ✓ Announce it on your social media
- ✓ Add it to your Instagram bio / LinkedIn profile
- ✓ Send a quick launch email to your audience
- ✓ Update your email signature
- ✓ Drop the link in relevant communities or groups

You've put in the work — now let your website work for YOU!

✨ **Pro tip:** Hit publish even if it's not "perfect." Your website is a living thing — you can (and should) tweak it and grow it over time.

