CUTOVER PHASE · TEMPLATE

Website launch checklist

A launch-day checklist for moving a website to a new host or platform: DNS, SSL, email MX, redirects, forms and analytics, with checks for the first day and week.

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Latest version

PROJECT	OWNER	STATUS	LAST UPDATED
[Project name]	[Name, role]	Draft	[YYYY-MM-DD]

How to use this template

1. Start using the checklist at least a week before launch; the pre-launch section has items that need lead time.
2. Assign every item an owner. Tick Done only when the verification has actually been carried out.
3. Pay special attention to the Email section: changing DNS hosts is the most common way a website launch breaks email.
4. Keep the old site running and unchanged until the post-launch checks are complete.
5. Delete items that do not apply (for example e-commerce) and add platform-specific checks.

1. Launch details

Fill in before launch day.

ITEM	DETAIL
Site	www.contoso.com
Old host / platform	
New host / platform	
DNS host and registrar	Who controls the zone and the registrar login
Launch date and time	Choose a low-traffic period, not Friday afternoon
Launch owner	
Rollback approach	Point A / CNAME records back to the old host (keep old site running)

2. Pre-launch (one week to 48 hours before)

Items that need lead time.

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
Lower TTL on A, AAAA and www records to 300 seconds	Lookup shows TTL 300		
Export full DNS zone, including MX, TXT, SPF, DKIM, DMARC and verification records	Zone export saved		
Content freeze agreed on the old site	Editors notified		

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CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
Final content sync to the new site	Spot check of 10 recent pages		
Redirect map complete for every changed URL	Map reviewed against old sitemap and analytics top pages		
New site tested on a staging URL or hosts-file override	Test sign-off		
SSL certificate ready, or automatic issuance confirmed with the new host	Host confirmation		
Remove "noindex" and staging password plan agreed for launch	Launch step listed		

3. DNS

Change only the web records. Record before and after values in the DNS cutover record sheet.

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
Update apex (@) A / AAAA record to the new host	Public resolvers return new IP		
Update www CNAME or A record	Public resolvers return new target		
CAA record allows the new certificate authority (if CAA is used)	CAA lookup		
Do not change nameservers unless planned; if you do, every record is recreated first	Zone compared record by record		
Both apex and www resolve, and one redirects to the other	Browser and curl test		

4. SSL / TLS

Test from outside your network.

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
Certificate valid for apex and www	Browser padlock and SSL test tool		
HTTP redirects to HTTPS on all pages	curl -I on http:// URLs		
No mixed content warnings	Browser console on key pages		
Certificate auto-renewal configured and expiry date recorded	Host dashboard		
HSTS only enabled once HTTPS is confirmed stable	Response headers		

5. Email (MX and mail records)

The website move must not change where email goes. Check these before and after the DNS change.

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
MX records unchanged (or recreated exactly if DNS host changed)	MX lookup before and after		
SPF includes the new web host if the site sends mail (forms, shop orders)	SPF lookup and SPF checker		
DKIM and DMARC records unchanged	TXT / CNAME lookup		
Send and receive a test email from an external account	Delivered to inbox, not junk		
Website form notification emails are delivered	Test submission received		

6. Redirects and SEO

Protect search rankings and bookmarks.

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
301 redirects in place for every URL in the redirect map	Crawl the old URL list; expect 301 to the right page		
No redirect chains or loops	Crawler report		
Custom 404 page works and is monitored	Request a missing URL		
robots.txt allows crawling; noindex removed	View robots.txt and page source		
XML sitemap live and submitted to search console	Search console status		
Canonical tags and page titles correct on key pages	Page source spot check		

7. Forms and integrations

Test every form end to end, including where the data lands.

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
Contact, quote and subscribe forms submit successfully	Test entry for each form		
Submissions reach CRM, mailbox or list as expected	Record found in destination		
CAPTCHA / spam protection works on the new domain	Test submission		
Payment, booking or shop functions tested in live mode (if any)	Test transaction refunded		
Third-party embeds (maps, chat, video) load	Visual check		

8. Analytics and tracking

Confirm data is flowing on day one, or you lose the launch baseline.

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
Analytics tag present on all page templates	Tag assistant or page source		
Real-time report shows visits on the new site	Analytics real-time view		

CHECK	HOW TO VERIFY	OWNER	DONE
Conversion events (form submits, calls) firing	Debug view		
Consent banner and privacy policy work and are current	Visual check; privacy policy link		
Launch annotation added in analytics	Annotation visible		

9. After launch: first 24 hours and first week

Keep the old host until this section is complete.

WHEN	CHECK	OWNER	DONE
+1 hour	Uptime monitoring active on new site		
+4 hours	Check server error logs and 404 report		
+24 hours	Analytics traffic in line with normal; form submissions arriving		
+3 days	Search console coverage and crawl errors reviewed		
+7 days	Raise TTLs back to normal		
+30 days	Decommission old host after final backup		

10. Sign-off

Sign once the launch-day checks are complete.

ROLE	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Launch owner			
Website / marketing owner			
IT / DNS owner			

Approval

NAME	ROLE	SIGNATURE	DATE



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