lay shah

The website launch checklist

Five places a new website quietly breaks, and how to check each one.

A new site can look finished and still lose customers in quiet ways. Run these five checks **before launch day, and again after any big change**. Each takes a few minutes, needs no technical skills and works on any website builder or custom site. The example is Leo's café, **Corner Café**, launching **cornercafe.com** (a made-up example).

1 Your contact form actually delivers

A broken form doesn't show an error. It just goes quiet, and you never hear from the customer.

- [ ] From your **phone**, send yourself a real enquiry through every form on the site (contact, booking, order).
- [ ] It should arrive within a minute. Check the inbox you'll actually read **and** the spam folder.
- [ ] Reply to it. The reply should go to the customer's address, not to a "no-reply" address.
- [ ] If the form promises a confirmation ("We'll be in touch within 24 hours"), make sure that's true.

> Leo sends "Do you cater office lunches?" from his phone. It lands in **hello@cornercafe.com** in 20 seconds, not in spam. Pass.

2 It works on a phone, with one hand

Most visitors will see your site on a phone first, often on mobile data.

- [ ] Open the site on your own phone at the normal text size. Nothing should be cut off or need sideways scrolling.
- [ ] **Tap** the phone number: it should start a call. Tap the address: it should open maps.
- [ ] The main button ("Order", "Book", "Get a quote") should be visible without hunting for it.
- [ ] Turn Wi-Fi off and load it on mobile data. If it feels slow to you, it feels slow to customers.

Free speed test: **pagespeed.web.dev** → paste your address → look at the **Mobile** score.

3 Your link looks right when it's shared

People will send your link on WhatsApp and social media. The preview is their first impression.

- [ ] Send your home page link to yourself on WhatsApp. You should see your **business name**, one clear line about what you do, and a real photo or your logo.
- [ ] If you see a blank box, the builder's default text or a random image, set the page title, description and share image in your site's SEO or "social sharing" settings.

Good	Corner Café · Coffee, pastries and office lunch orders · photo of the counter
Needs fixing	"Home" · "Welcome to my new site" · no image

4 Google can find you

A new site is invisible to Google until something points to it. Your Business Profile is usually the fastest route.

- [ ] Add the new address to your Google Business Profile, in its **Website** field. Search for your business on Google, open your profile and edit it from there.
- [ ] Tell Google the site exists. In Google Search Console (`search.google.com/search-console`), add your site as a property, then use **URL inspection** on your home page and choose **Request indexing**.
- [ ] A week later, search for your business name plus your town. Your site should appear on the first page.

5 The domain and accounts are in your name

The cheapest line on the bill matters most. Whoever owns the domain account controls your address.

- [ ] The domain is registered to **your** name and your email, not to your designer's or developer's account. You can log in to it yourself.
- [ ] You know the renewal date, **auto-renew is on**, and the payment card on file won't expire before then.
- [ ] Hosting and business email logins are in your name too. Keep them with your other important passwords. A shared spreadsheet is not the place for them.

Leo's notes: **cornercafe.com** · registered to Leo · renews every November · auto-renew on · card valid to 2028.

Menu names checked 22 Nov 2026. Builders and Google change their menus; if a name has moved, look for the same words in the settings or help pages.

The five-minute version

1 · Form	Send yourself an enquiry from your phone. It arrives in a minute, not in spam.
2 · Phone	Readable at normal size, the number is tappable, the main button is easy to find.
3 · Share preview	Your name, one clear line and a real image when you send the link on WhatsApp.
4 · Google	Website added to your Business Profile, and indexing requested in Search Console.
5 · Ownership	Domain, hosting and email in your name, with auto-renew on.

Want a second pair of eyes before launch?

I build websites for small businesses. These are the checks I run before every launch.

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