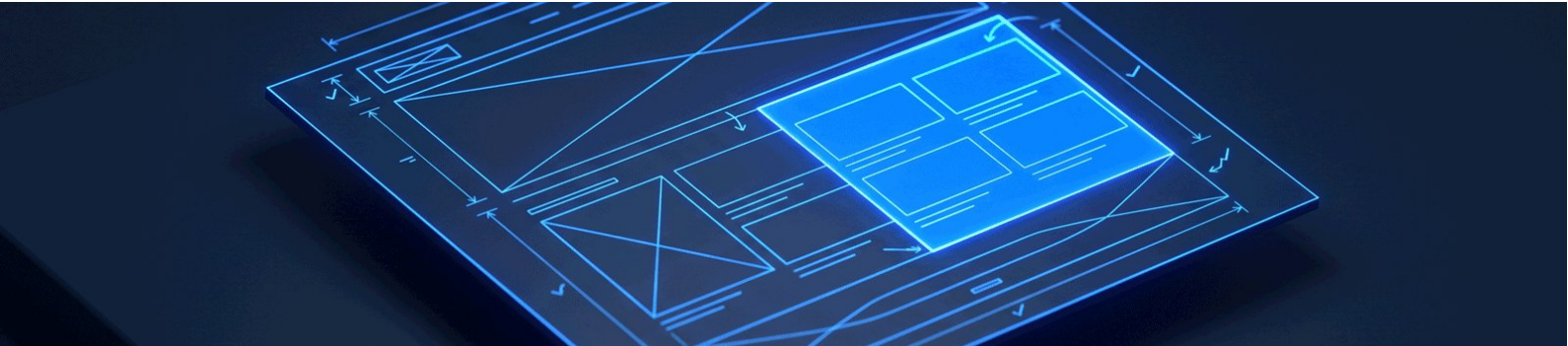




SELF-AUDIT / ABOUT ONE HOUR

The 12 Checks I Run Before I Say a Word About Redesigning Anything

Most websites are not broken in the ways their owners think. They are leaking in three places nobody looks. Here is exactly how to find all three yourself, with free tools, in about an hour.



Before you start

The one rule

Do not fix anything while you audit. Run all twelve checks first, write down every failure, **then** decide what to do. The single most expensive habit in web projects is fixing the first problem you find instead of the most costly one.

You will almost certainly find something in Section 3 that matters more than everything in Section 1. And Section 1 is where everyone starts.

SECTION 01

Speed & Technical Health

Four checks. Roughly 15 minutes. Tells you whether visitors are leaving before they see anything at all.

SECTION 02

The Conversion Path

Four checks. Roughly 20 minutes. Tells you whether the visitors who do stay know what to do next.

SECTION 03

Visibility & Ownership

Four checks. Roughly 20 minutes. Tells you whether anyone can find you, and whether you actually own what you paid for.

Everything you need. All free.

PageSpeed Insights	pagespeed.web.dev . No account needed. Checks 1, 2
Your browser's DevTools	Desktop Chrome, Edge or Firefox. Right-click your site, choose Inspect. Checks 3, 4
A person who has never seen your site	Genuinely the most valuable tool in this document. Check 5
Google Search Console	search.google.com/search-console . Free Google account. Checks 9, 10. If nobody ever set it up for your site, write that down. It is a finding in itself.
ChatGPT or Perplexity	Free tier is fine. Perplexity works without an account. Check 11
Your own logins	Domain registrar, hosting, analytics. Check 12



SECTION 01 / CHECKS 1-4 • ROUGHLY 15 MINUTES

01 Speed & Technical Health

A slow site does not annoy people. It removes them. They are gone before they form an opinion about your business, which means you never see them in any report, and the loss is invisible.

IN THIS SECTION

01 How fast does your site load on mobile?

02 Does the page move while it loads?

03 How heavy is your largest image?

04 Can you explain everything your site loads?

☐ 01 How fast does your site load on mobile?

DO THIS Run your homepage through PageSpeed Insights, **Mobile** tab. If the top says "No data" (common for small sites), read Largest Contentful Paint (LCP) further down. Ignore the 0-100 score.

PASS **LCP under 2.5 seconds**

THE COST The longer it takes, the more visitors leave before it finishes. They were interested enough to click. That is your most expensive traffic.

☐ 02 Does the page move while it loads?

DO THIS Same PageSpeed report. Find Cumulative Layout Shift (CLS). Then load your site on your phone and watch the first two seconds carefully.

PASS **CLS under 0.1, and nothing jumps on your phone**

THE COST A button that jumps as someone taps it produces a mis-tap, not a complaint. They assume the site is broken and leave. You never hear about it.

☐ 03 How heavy is your largest image?

DO THIS On desktop: right-click your homepage, choose **Inspect**, open the **Network** tab. Tick **Disable cache**, reload, click the **Img** filter, then sort by **Size**. Note the top file's size and its format in the Type column.

PASS **Under 200 KB, served as WebP or AVIF**

THE COST An unoptimised hero image is the most common single cause of a failed check 1, and the easiest to fix. A 3 MB photo straight off a camera is not rare.

☐ 04 Can you explain everything your site loads?

DO THIS List every plugin, app or add-on installed on your site. Next to each one, write the job it does. Anything you cannot explain goes on your failure list.

PASS **Every plugin, app and add-on has a job you can name**

THE COST No magic number: tracking and a consent banner legitimately add code. But every add-on is a tax on every page view, and most sites carry a few nobody uses.



SECTION 02 / CHECKS 5-8 • ROUGHLY 20 MINUTES

02 The Conversion Path

These four are free to fix and almost always worth more than the four before them. You are not looking for what is ugly. You are looking for the moment a willing buyer stops knowing what to do next.

IN THIS SECTION

- 05 Can a stranger explain your business in five seconds?
- 06 How many things compete for the first tap?
- 07 How many fields stand between a buyer and you?
- 08 Does any page leave a convinced visitor stranded?

☐ 05 Can a stranger explain your business in five seconds?

DO THIS Show your homepage to someone who has never seen it. Five seconds, then close the laptop. Ask two questions: **what does this business do**, and **who is it for**.

PASS **They answer both, correctly, without hedging**

THE COST This is the highest-value check in the document and it costs nothing. Resist explaining your site while they look. The explaining is the failure.

☐ 06 How many things compete for the first tap?

DO THIS On mobile, without scrolling, count every clickable thing that asks for a decision: buttons, offers, chat popups, newsletter bars. Do not count the cookie banner. In the EU and UK it is a legal requirement, not a design choice.

PASS **One primary action. The cookie banner is compact and does not cover it.**

THE COST Three equally weighted buttons is not three times the chance of a conversion. It is a request that the visitor make a decision you should have made for them.

☐ 07 How many fields stand between a buyer and you?

DO THIS Open your main enquiry form. Count only the fields marked required. Then ask, for each one, whether you genuinely need it before the first conversation.

PASS **Four or fewer**

THE COST Each extra required field costs you some enquiries. Phone number and company size can be asked in the reply, once they are already talking to you.

☐ 08 Does any page leave a convinced visitor stranded?

DO THIS Click every item in your navigation. On each page, scroll to the bottom. Ask: if someone were convinced right here, what would they do?

PASS **Zero pages that end without a next action**

THE COST The About page is the usual offender. It is often one of the most visited pages on a small business site, and it usually ends in nothing at all.



SECTION 03 / CHECKS 9-12 • ROUGHLY 20 MINUTES

03 Visibility & Ownership

The section almost nobody runs, containing the check almost nobody has passed. If you only do one thing in this document, do number 12.

IN THIS SECTION

- 09 Is Google actually holding your pages?
- 10 What do strangers see in your search results?
- 11 Can an AI assistant recommend you?
- 12 Do you actually own the things you paid for?

☐ 09 Is Google actually holding your pages?

DO THIS In Search Console, open **Indexing → Pages**. Compare the Indexed count with the pages you believe you have. A `site:` search count is only an estimate.

PASS **Indexed count roughly matches your real page count**

THE COST A large gap usually means pages are blocked, duplicated, or were never submitted.

☐ 10 What do strangers see in your search results?

DO THIS Search `site:yourdomain.com` and read every blue title and grey description. Look for duplicates, blanks, and anything that reads like a filename.

PASS **Every title unique, written for a human, roughly 50-60 characters**

THE COST This is your advert, and the placement is free. If Google shows a different title than the one you wrote, it decided yours was not good enough. Worth knowing.

☐ 11 Can an AI assistant recommend you?

DO THIS Ask ChatGPT or Perplexity to recommend a business like yours, in your area or category, without naming yourself. Try two or three phrasings, twice each. Answers vary from run to run.

PASS **You appear more than once, and the description is accurate**

THE COST A newer signal, and everyone, including me, is still working out the practices. But the behaviour is real and growing.

☐ 12 Do you actually own the things you paid for?

DO THIS **One:** in your domain registrar's account, whose name is the registrant? (Public WHOIS now hides this.) **Two:** is your hosting account in your company's name, under your own login? **Three:** in analytics, under **Admin → Account access**, are you an Administrator?

PASS **Your company's name on all three, under logins you hold**

THE COST If someone else holds these, you are not a client. You are a tenant. Cannot log in to one of them? That is your answer.

Count your failures

Not your passes. The number that matters is how many of the twelve you did not clear, and which section they clustered in.

One rule before the bands: failed check 5 or check 12?

Treat your result as 3-5, whatever your total. A homepage strangers cannot understand, or a domain you do not own, outweighs everything else on this list.

0-2

Your site is doing its job

Fix the individual failures and leave the rest alone. Do not redesign a working site because it looks dated to you. You are not the visitor, and you look at it far more often than they do.

3-5

Repairable, not rebuildable

The most common result, and the most commonly over-treated one. Many agencies will quote you a full rebuild here. Most of what you found can be fixed in days without touching the design.

6+

The foundation is the problem

At this point patching costs more than replacing, because each fix fights the last one. Worth pricing a rebuild, but get the scope written down as a fixed deliverable before anyone starts.

THE NEXT STEP, IF YOU WANT ONE

I will run these twelve checks on your site and send you the recording.

Fifteen minutes, screen recorded, walking through exactly what I find and what it would take to fix. Four a month, because I am one person and I do them properly.

- You get a video. There is no call attached to it.
- If nothing is wrong, I will tell you that and we are done.
- If something is wrong that you can fix yourself, I will tell you how.

[Request your teardown →](#)

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