



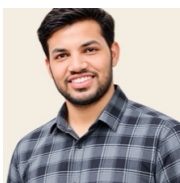
Ritik Namdev

Free Checklist

Redesign SEO Checklist: 21 Checks + an Old-to-New URL Map Template

A new site shouldn't cost you a year of Google traffic. Map every old URL, redirect it, keep the words that rank and watch leads in launch week.

Twenty-one checks for before, during and after a website redesign, plus a copy-paste URL map you can hand to your developer. Follow it and Google can move your rankings to the new pages instead of treating your site like a stranger.



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How to use it

1. Start the URL map at least two weeks before launch. It's the step everyone rushes.
 2. Give the map to your developer as the redirect spec. Nothing goes live until every row has a destination.
 3. Run the launch-week checks daily for 7 days, then weekly for 3 months.
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1. Before you touch anything: take a snapshot

☐ Export every URL on the current site

Google's site move guide says to pull old URLs from your sitemaps, server logs, analytics, CMS and Search Console. A free crawl with Screaming Frog (up to 500 URLs) catches the rest.

☐ Export the last 16 months of Search Console Performance data by page

This tells you which URLs bring clicks. Those pages need a home on the new site, no exceptions.

☐ Export top landing pages and conversions from analytics

Some pages get few Google clicks but bring most of your leads. Protect those too.

☐ Export Search Console's Links report (Top linked pages)

Pages other sites link to carry trust. If they 404 after launch, you lose those links' value.

☐ Save a copy of title, meta description, H1 and body text of your top 20 pages

So you can check the new pages still say what the old ones said.

☐ Write down baseline numbers: weekly clicks, indexed pages, weekly leads

Without a baseline you can't tell a normal post-launch wobble from a real loss.

2. The old-to-new URL map (copy this)

One row per old URL. Every row gets one of three actions: keep, redirect or remove.

URL map (paste into Google Sheets, columns separated by tabs)

old_url	clicks_16mo	backlinks	leads	new_url	action	redirect_type	status_after_launch	notes
https://example.com/services/plumbing.html	1240	8	31					
https://example.com/plumbing/					redirect	301		
https://example.com/about-us	210	3	0	https://example.com/about/	redirect	301		
https://example.com/blog/2019-promo	0	0	0	—	remove	410	no	equivalent page
https://example.com/contact	95	1	40	https://example.com/contact	keep			
—				same URL				

Sort by clicks, then backlinks, then leads. Do the top rows yourself; they are the ones that matter.

Rules for filling the action column

- keep = same URL on the new site (best option, no redirect needed)
- redirect = URL changes → 301 to the closest matching new page
- remove = no equivalent page → let it return 404 or 410
- Never = redirect many old pages to the homepage
- Never = chain redirects (old → older → new); point straight at the final URL

Google says redirecting lots of old URLs to an irrelevant page like the homepage can be treated as a soft 404.

3. While the new site is being built

☐ Keep URLs the same wherever you can

No URL change means no redirect and no move to process. Practical advice: this is the single biggest risk reducer.

☐ **Keep the text that ranks on each money page**

Pretty but thin pages are a classic redesign mistake. If the old page answered the question, the new one must too.

☐ **Keep titles, H1s and internal links to your important pages**

Internal links tell Google which pages matter. New navigation often drops links to old money pages.

☐ **Block the staging site from Google (password protection is best)**

A public staging copy can get indexed as a duplicate of your site.

☐ **Carry over structured data, canonical tags and hreflang if you had them**

These are easy to lose when templates change.

☐ **Test the new site on a phone and in PageSpeed Insights before launch**

Google mainly indexes the mobile version. A slower new template can cost you.

4. Launch day

☐ **Put server-side 301 (or 308) redirects live for every 'redirect' row**

Google recommends permanent server-side redirects for site moves. JavaScript or meta refresh redirects are weaker fallbacks.

☐ **Remove the staging password/noindex from the live site**

The most common launch-day disaster: the live site ships with 'noindex' or 'Disallow: /'.

☐ **Crawl the old URL list and confirm each returns 301 to the right page, then 200**

Screaming Frog's List mode lets you paste the old URLs and see where each lands.

☐ **Submit the new sitemap in Search Console**

It helps Google find the new URLs. Google says redirect warnings on an old sitemap during a move are expected.

☐ **If the domain changed: verify both sites and use the Change of Address tool**

Change of Address is only for domain or subdomain moves, not for path changes or http to https.

☐ **Spot-check 10 top pages with URL Inspection**

Confirms Google can fetch the new page and sees no noindex.

5. After launch: the step agencies skip

☐ **Daily for a week: Pages report, 404s in the not-indexed list, and form submissions**

Fix any missed redirect the same day. A broken contact form costs more than any ranking drop.

☐ **Weekly for 3 months: compare clicks and leads with your baseline**

Google says rankings can fluctuate for a few weeks or more on medium sites. A steady decline after that means something is wrong.

☐ **Keep redirects for at least one year (longer is better)**

Google's guidance is at least 1 year. Practical advice: keep them as long as old links still point at old URLs, which is usually forever.

Sources

- Google Search Central: Site moves with URL changes — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing/site-move-with-url-changes>
- Google Search Central: Redirects and Google Search — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing/301-redirects>
- Search Console Help: Change of Address tool — <https://support.google.com/webmasters/answer/9370220>

- Google Search Central: Block indexing with noindex — <https://developers.google.com/search/docs/crawling-indexing/block-indexing>
- Screaming Frog SEO Spider (free up to 500 URLs) — <https://www.screamingfrog.co.uk/seo-spider/>

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