Website pre-launch checklist

koalati

Basics

- [ ] **Every page loads correctly and in a reasonable amount of time.**

  If a page won't load or display an error message, the problem needs to be remedied as soon as possible.

  If you don't know what is causing the problem, try typing the error message in a search engine. If that doesn't pan out, you might want to start looking at logs on your web server or web hosting management panel.

- [ ] **The purpose of the website is immediately clear when opening the homepage.**

  The favicon is the icon that appearsin your web browser's tab when the website is open. It helps visitors recognize your site in the tab bar when they have multiple tabs open.

  Your website should have a distinct and good looking favicon that matches your website's brand and colors.

- [ ] **The website has a working favicon that matches the brand.**

  The favicon is the icon that appearsin your web browser's tab when the website is open. It helps visitors recognize your site in the tab bar when they have multiple tabs open.

  Your website should have a distinct and good looking favicon that matches your website's brand and colors.

  > https://realfavicongenerator.net/

- [ ] **The 404 (Not Found) error page matches your brand and contains link(s) to the website.**

  For users, landing on an error page is frustrating enough. Make sure that you the error message is clear and easy to understand, and provide any additional guidance you can to help improve their experience.

  Also, keep in mind that a touch of humor can go a long way for error pages, as long as you stay on-brand.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/improving-dreaded-404-error-message/

Navigation

- [ ] **The logo in the header links to the homepage.**

  Website logos should link to the homepage. This is a longstanding web convention, so users are used to this behavior and actually expect it.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/homepage-links/

- [ ] **Every link in the navigation works as intended.**

Look for empty, broken, or missing links in your website's navigation. Links that lead to another page than the one indicated by their label should also be fixed.

> https://www.deadlinkchecker.com/

- [ ] **Dropdown menus and mega menus work as intended.**

  If your navigation contains dropdowns or mega menus, make sure they work correctly on every type of page.

- [ ] **The menu button opens the navigation when it is clicked or tapped.**

  A menu button is often available on mobile versions of websites to give users access to the navigation.

  Please note that hidden menus should be reserved for mobile versions. Even on mobile versions, you should try to reduce the number of links and display them as visible links whenever possible.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/hamburger-menus/

- [ ] **The search feature provides appropriate results or suggestions.** ***(if applicable)***

  If your website offers a search bar, make sure it works well.

  Here are a few pointers that might help test your search bar:

  - What types of content can appear in the search results? *(pages, articles, events...)*
  - Is the body of my content searchable, or only the title?
  - Do special characters and capitalization affect the search results?
  - Does spacing and punctuation affect the search results?

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/search-visible-and-simple/
  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/site-search-suggestions/

- [ ] **The search feature indicates clearly when no results are found.** ***(if applicable)***

  For users, not finding what they were looking for is frustrating enough. Make sure that you have clear text, and provide any additional guidance you can to help improve their experience.

Content

- [ ] **The content is formatted into easily scannable chunks, with short paragraphs, (sub)headings, lists, etc.**

  Content should be easy to scan by users, so that they can understand the main points of each section without reading it in its entirety. This can be achieved by:

  - Splitting your content into chunks.
  - Using headings and subheading
  - Highlighting keywords
  - Using bulleted and numbered lists
  - Adding visual support and examples.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/chunking/

- [ ] **The content for each page starts with the most important piece of information.**

  People do not read carefully online: they start reading and quickly scan a page for the content they are looking for. Placing the most important piece(s) of information at the beginning of a page or article helps visitors figure out if the page contains the information they want, and provides it to them much more quickly.

  Even though writing content this way might reduce the amount of time a user spends on your page, it is much more beneficial for them.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/inverted-pyramid/

- [ ] **Every piece of the content serves a purpose: there is no filler content.**

  Long introductions and filler text in your articles and page content make it more difficult for your users to get to the information they are looking for. You should cut filler content completely, sticking instead to:

  - the informative content that your users are looking for;
  - the information they need to understand the context of the page/article.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/blah-blah-text-keep-cut-or-kill/

Interactive elements

- [ ] **Every link on the website works as intended.**

  Every link on the site should:

  - Work as intended:
    - Regular links should open a different page.
    - Anchor links should scroll to the desired part of the current page.
    - Phone links should open the phone app with the desired phone number.
  - Contain a label that clearly defines what it links to
  - Opens in the right context:
    - Most links should open in the current tab
    - Some links may be opened in new tabs to help the users.

  Every single link on your website should be tested

  > https://www.deadlinkchecker.com/
  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/better-link-labels/
  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/new-browser-windows-and-tabs/
  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/link-promise/

- [ ] **Audio and video players do not start automatically on page load.**

  Unless the media is the main feature of the page and users want and expect it to play automatically on page load, audio and video elements should not start playing on their own when the page loads.

  However, muted video backgrounds and banners are acceptable if used in a reasonable way.

  > https://developer.chrome.com/blog/autoplay/

- [ ] **In-page tabs work as intended, and each tab's content matches the tab's label.** *(if applicable)*

If your site contains sections with tabs, you should make sure that:

- Clicking a tab opens it as intended.
- The current tab is clearly highlighted in the tab bar.
- Inactive tabs clarly show that they are clickable.
- Tab labels are short and easy to scan.

> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/tabs-used-right/

- [ ] **Carousels/slideshows are working as intended.** *(if applicable)*

If your site contains carousels, you should make sure that: There are strong visual cues telling the users that there are multiple items.

- Users can navigate back and forth with ease on all types of devices.
- Items are prioritized to show the most relevant items first.
- They do not auto-forward on mobile
- They do not auto-forward too fast on desktop.

> https://www.nngroup.com/videos/carousels-websites-mobile-apps/
> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/auto-forwarding/
> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/mobile-carousels/

- [ ] **Information that only appears on hover is adapted on touchscreens such as mobiles and tablets.** *(if applicable)*

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> https://www.nngroup.com/videos/carousels-websites-mobile-apps/
> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/auto-forwarding/
> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/mobile-carousels/

Responsive and browser support

- [ ] **The entire website looks and works as intended on Google Chrome (on desktop)**

You should look at every page in Google Chrome, ideally at multiple different desktop resolutions, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

> https://caniuse.com/
> https://gs.statcounter.com/
> https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] **The entire website looks and works as intended on Firefox (on desktop)**

You should look at every page in Firefox, ideally at multiple different desktop resolutions, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

> https://caniuse.com/
> https://gs.statcounter.com/
> https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] The entire website looks and works as intended on **Microsoft Edge** (on desktop)

  You should look at every page in Microsoft Edge, ideally at multiple different desktop resolutions, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

  If you have already tested on Google Chrome, chances are there won't be any issues, as Chrome and Microsoft Edge are both built on top of the same base: Chromium.

  > https://caniuse.com/
  > https://gs.statcounter.com/
  > https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] The entire website looks and works as intended on **Safari** (MacOS)

  You should look at every page in Safari, ideally at multiple different desktop resolutions, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

  If you don't have a Mac, you can use a service like BrowserStack to test with real Mac devices through your web browser. BrowserStack is a paid service *(not affiliated with Koalati)*, but it is free for open source projects.

  > https://caniuse.com/
  > https://gs.statcounter.com/
  > https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] The entire website looks and works as intended on an **iPad** (iOS Safari)

  You should look at every page on an iPad, both in landscape and portait mode, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

  If you don't have an iPad, you can use a service like BrowserStack to test with real iOS devices through your web browser. BrowserStack is a paid service *(not affiliated with Koalati)*, but it is free for open source projects.

  > https://caniuse.com/
  > https://gs.statcounter.com/
  > https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] The entire website looks and works as intended on an **iPad Pro** (iOS Safari)

  You should look at every page on an iPad Pro, both in landscape and portait mode, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

  If you don't have an iPad Pro, you can use a service like BrowserStack to test with real iOS devices through your web browser. BrowserStack is a paid service *(not affiliated with Koalati)*, but it is free for open source projects.

  > https://caniuse.com/
  > https://gs.statcounter.com/
  > https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] The entire website looks and works as intended on an **iPad Mini** (iOS Safari)

  You should look at every page on an iPad Mini, both in landscape and portait mode, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

If you don't have an iPad Mini, you can use a service like BrowserStack to test with real iOS devices through your web browser. BrowserStack is a paid service *(not affiliated with Koalati)*, but it is free for open source projects.

> https://caniuse.com/
> https://gs.statcounter.com/
> https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] **The entire website looks and works as intended on an iPhone (iOS Safari)**

You should look at every page on an iPhone to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

As there are multiple types of iPhones with different resolutions and different iOS Safari versions, it is up to you to determine which versions you will support. Testing on all iPhones that support the latest version of iOS Safari is a good place to start.

If you don't have an iPhone, you can use a service like BrowserStack to test with real iOS devices through your web browser. BrowserStack is a paid service *(not affiliated with Koalati)*, but it is free for open source projects.

> https://caniuse.com/
> https://gs.statcounter.com/
> https://www.browserstack.com/

- [ ] **The entire website looks and works as intended on an Android mobile device (Chrome + Samsung Internet)**

You should look at every page on an Android mobile device, ideally on both Chrome and Samsung Internet, to make sure that there are no visual issues and that every feature works as intended.

As there are multiple types of Androids with different resolutions and different browser versions, it is up to you to determine which versions you will support.

If you don't have an Android device, you can use a service like BrowserStack to test with real Android devices through your web browser. BrowserStack is a paid service *(not affiliated with Koalati)*, but it is free for open source projects.

> https://caniuse.com/
> https://gs.statcounter.com/
> https://www.browserstack.com/

Design

- [ ] **The photos and images on each page convey relevant information.**

Adding images might make for a better looking page in some cases, but if those images do not help the users get the information they are looking for, they are likely to ignore them completely.

Removing these unhelpful images will make the page easier to scan and read for users, and it will also reduce the weight of your pages (leading to faster loading speeds).

> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/photos-as-web-content/

- [ ] **Clickable elements have clear visual indicators indicating that they can be clicked.**

Just because you know something can be clicked does not mean your users will.

Signaling clickability with visual cues, and using these cues consistantly throughout the website is essential to give your users a good navigation experience.

> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/clickable-elements/
> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/guidelines-for-visualizing-links/

- [ ] **The icons used on the website are either standard and immediately recognizable, or are accompanied by a text label.**

  Icons are a great way to help users find things easily, and to make an interface more minimalist. However, your users' understanding of icons might differ from yours.

  To prevent confusion, all icons used should either be a well-known standard for your target demographic, or accompanied/replaced by a text label.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/icon-usability/

- [ ] **Visited links are displayed in a different color or style in order to look "used".**

  Users can get confused if a link they have previously visited does not appear different than an unvisited links. This can lead to users going in circles on your website and getting frustrated.

  Clearly identifying visited links by making them look dull and washed out helps users understand that the link leads to a page they have already visited before, which leads to a better navigation experience.

  Visited links can be styled using the `:visited` CSS selector.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/change-the-color-of-visited-links/
  > https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/CSS/:visited

Forms

- [ ] **Every form asks for as little information as possible.**

  Filling in a form is hard work for users.

  With every field you remove from a form, you increase the chances that users will complete it. That means: **less fields = higher conversion rate**.

  Remove fields which collect information that can be: -derived in some other way,

  - collected at a later date
  - simply omitted.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/web-form-design/

- [ ] **Forms are presented in a single column.**

  Forms containing multiple columns can be disorienting and harder to comprehend, which makes it slower for users to fill. Sticking to a single column is easier for users to understand, and allows them to develop a certain momentum while filling the form.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/web-form-design/

- [ ] **Required fields are marked as such in every form.**

  Marking form fields as required by using adding an asterisk or "(required)" to the label helps users understand which information they have to fill before they submit the form. This helps prevent the frustration users experience when they

submit a form with missing information.

> https://www.nngroup.com/articles/required-fields/

- [ ] **Labels are close to the fields they describe.**

  If labels and their inputs are too spaced out, it can be difficult for users to understand which label describes which field.

  Make sure that the labels are visibily closer to the fields they describe than to other fields.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/form-design-white-space/

- [ ] **Labels, hints and instructions are not displayed as placeholders within the fields.**

  To maximise readability and ease of use for all users, a field's label, hint and instruction text should be displayed above or beside the field. Using placeholders to display information about the field other than a default value is more likely to be confusing than helpful.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/form-design-placeholders/

- [ ] **Related fields are grouped together in longer forms.**

  If multiple fields are related, they should be grouped together under a label describing their commonality.

  For example, *First name*, *Last name* and *Date of birth* fields could be grouped under a "Personal information" label, while *Email*, *Phone number* and *Address* fields could be grouped under "Contact information".

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/form-design-white-space/

- [ ] **Each field uses the right type and size of input for its expected value.**

  - Text inputs and dropdowns should be sized appropriately for the length of the text they will contain. `<input>` fields should use the `type` that correponds to the data that they must contain (ex.: `email`, `date`, `password`, `url`, `month`, etc.
  - Radio buttons should be used instead of dropdowns when there are 2-3 options.
  - A checkboxes should be used instead of a toggle switch when the change isn't occuring immediately.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/web-form-design/
  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/toggle-switch-guidelines/

- [ ] **Fields with requirements or limitations have their instructions clearly explained under the field's label.**

  When the requirements for a field aren't explicitely stated, the users have to submit the form blindly before error messages provide them with the requirements they have failed to respect.

  By stating the requirements explicitely under the field's label, your users will know exactly what type of information must be entered.

- [ ] **Error messages provide clear indications of what is incorrect and of how it can be fixed.**

  Make sure that the requirements that aren't respected are reiterated in the error message, and that the user can easily find and correct the issue by reading the error message.

Error messages in forms are placed right next to the field containing the error.

Placing all of the error messages at top of the form might be easier, but it often leads to users being confused about which field is incorrect, and having to find where that field is within the form.

When the error message is placed right next to the field it is related to, users can easily see the error and correct their input in the adjacent field.

Forms display or redirect to a success message when they are submitted.

It should be clear to users when their form submission has gone through successfully. The most common ways to do this are as follows:

-Hiding the form and displaying a success message in its place.

- Redirecting the user to a success page.

Form submissions trigger some sort of communication to the person responsible for the website or the form.

For contact forms and other forms of the sort, form submissions should send an email, a text message or a spreadsheet/CRM automation to indicate to the people running the website that a user has submitted a form and is waiting for a response.

It should be easy for the people running the website to understand which submission was made through which form, in order to understand the context surrounding a form submission.

Social

Every page has an `og:image` meta tag with an image that represents the page/article.

The `og:image` meta tag defines the image that appears when a page's URL is shared on social media (ex.: Facebook, Twitter, etc.). Every page should have an `og:image` to make sure they look good and attract people when shared on social media.

Ideally, each page that is likely to be shared should have its own image that represents the content of the page.

If time and budget is limited, you can use the same image for every page, but know that making a custom image for each page is likely to improve your click-through rate on social media.

Your `og:image` should have a ratio of 1.91:1, and a minimum resolution of 1200x630.

These images can be automated using a service like Bannerbear (not affiliated with Koalati).

> https://ahrefs.com/blog/open-graph-meta-tags/
> https://ogp.me/

Every shareable page has an `og:title` meta tag with the page/article's title formatted for social media previews.

The `og:title` meta tag defines the title that appears when a page's URL is shared on social media (ex.: Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

If there is no `og:title`, the `<title>` tag's text is used instead. However, you should preferably add an `og:title` that is shorter and better optimized for social media previews instead of relying on the page's regular title.

The `og:title` should have around 40-60 characteres at most. It is therefore recommended to leave your branding (ex.: site name) out of it.

> https://ahrefs.com/blog/open-graph-meta-tags/
> https://ogp.me/

- [ ] **Every shareable page has an `og:description` meta tag with a short and appealing snippet describing the page.**

  The `og:description` meta tag defines the description that appears when a page's URL is shared on social media (ex.: Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

  If there is no `og:description`, the `<meta name="description">` tag's text is used instead. However, you should preferably add an `og:description` that is shorter and better optimized for social media previews instead of relying on the page's regular description.

  The `og:description` should complement the `og:title` and be no longer than 1-2 short sentences.

  > https://ahrefs.com/blog/open-graph-meta-tags/
  > https://ogp.me/

- [ ] **Every shareable page has an `og:url` meta tag with the page's canonical URL.**

  The `og:url` defines the main URL (also known as canonical URL) for your page. This is especially useful when a page is reachable from many different URLs, or when users are likely to have query parameters in the URL they share. Social media sites will use the canonical URL you provide instead of the specific link provided by users.

  > https://ahrefs.com/blog/open-graph-meta-tags/
  > https://ogp.me/
  > https://ahrefs.com/blog/canonical-tags/

- [ ] **The website's footer contains links to the brand's main social media accounts.**

  Users expect your contact, newsletter and social media information to be present in the footer of every page. Make sure you add the links to all of your main social media accounts in there so that users don't have to search for them.

  > https://www.nngroup.com/articles/footers/

Accessibility

- [ ] **Pages use `<h1>` - `<h6>` heading tags to organize the structure of the content.**

  Heading tags allow screen reader users to navigate through your page more easily by creating a natural hierarchy within your content.

  H1 tags should only be used once: for the page's title or main point. H2 and other subheadings should be used to describe sections and sub-sections of the page's content.

  H3 should only be used after H2 tags, H4 after H3, and so on. Skipping levels will lead to confusion in both users and search engines.

  > https://www.w3.org/WAI/tutorials/page-structure/headings/
  > https://usability.yale.edu/web-accessibility/articles/headings
  > https://webaim.org/techniques/semanticstructure/

- [ ] **Every image that conveys information or context has an `alt` attribute that describes its content.**

Alternative text on images help screen reader users understand your pages.

When writing alternative text for your images, you should always take into account the context in which the image appears. Your goal should be to give screen reader users the same level of information as other users get to read and see on your page.

> https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/
> https://accessibility.psu.edu/images/alttext/

- [ ] **Every decorative image has an empty `alt` attribute.**

  Empty `alt` attributes indicate to screen readers that an image is only present for decoration and visual effect.

  > https://webaim.org/techniques/alttext/#decorative

- [ ] **Every page can be navigated logically and interacted with using only the keyboard.**

  Many users rely on keyboard navigation to interact with your website.

  You must ensure that every part of your website can be consumed and interacted with without using the mouse.

  - Make sure the tab order is logic and chronological.
  - Make sure every custom widget and element can be interacted with via standard keyboard shortcuts.
  - Make sure that every focusable element has a clear and consistent indicator when it is being focused.

  > https://webaim.org/techniques/keyboard/
  > https://www.w3.org/WAI/perspective-videos/keyboard/

SEO (Search Engine Optimization)

- [ ] **Every page has a `<title>` tag with a title that is optimized for SEO.**

  The `<title>` tag defines the title of the page. Search engines will use this to display your page in search results.

  Page titles should:

  - be around 50-60 characters long;
  - be written for humans: make it snappy, descriptive and interesting;
  - contain a keyword you want the page to appear in searches for;
  - be descriptive of the page's content;
  - be unique within your website.

  > https://ahrefs.com/blog/title-tag-seo/
  > https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag

- [ ] **Every page has a meta description with a short description that is optimized for SEO.**

  The `<meta name="description">` tag defines the description of the page that search engines use to display your page in search results.

  Page descriptions should:

  - be between 50-160 characters long;
  - be written for humans: make it snappy and interesting;
  - contain the keywords you want the page to appear in searches for;

- be descriptive of the page's content;
- be unique within your website.

> https://ahrefs.com/blog/meta-description/
> https://moz.com/learn/seo/meta-description

- [ ] **Every page has a simple URL that is easy to read and understand.**

Make your URLs easy to read for people, and search engines are likely to understand them as well.

Stay away from numbers, and instead use words that describe that match the page title or that describe the page's content.

Bad example: `https://www.yoursite.com/blog/195220431`.
Bad example: `https://www.yoursite.com/article-title-goes-here`

> https://moz.com/learn/seo/url

- [ ] **Every page's loading speed is within 1 to 3 seconds.**

The loading speed of a web page is one of the most important factor for SEO **and** for user experience. Each page should load within 1 to 3s, ideally towards the lower end. Make sure your most important and visited pages load as fast as possible.

Many different things can be done to speed up the loading speed of pages, and there are many tools and resources available to help you optimize your website. Take a look at the resources below as a starting point.

> https://moz.com/learn/seo/page-speed
> https://developers.google.com/speed/pagespeed/insights/
> https://gtmetrix.com/