

The small business website checklists

Four checklists for hiring someone to build your site, checking the one you already have, and knowing what you actually own. Nothing here needs any technical knowledge, and none of it takes more than ten minutes.

1. Is this quote fair?
2. The ten-minute website check
3. What do you actually own?
4. Nine questions before you hire

CHECKLIST 1

Is this quote fair?

Five questions any honest quote can answer. Ask them of everyone, including me.

1 What exactly is included?

Page count, revision rounds, who writes the copy, and whether the technical basics that let Google read your site are in scope.

2 What happens after launch?

Who fixes a broken contact form on a Friday night, and what does that cost?

3 Who owns the domain, the hosting, and the code?

Get the answer in writing, whatever it is.

4 Can I edit my own content?

Changing your hours shouldn't require someone else's calendar.

5 What's the three-year total?

The build, plus monthly fees, plus the changes you already know you'll want.

CHECKLIST 2

The ten-minute website check

Run this on the site you already have. Most items take under a minute.

- ☐ **Open your site on your phone, on cellular data**
Count the seconds until you can read something. Past five is your headline problem.
- ☐ **Look at the browser tab**
Does it say your business name, or does it say "Home" or "My Site"?
- ☐ **Click every social icon in your footer**
Confirm each one lands on your account, not the platform's.
- ☐ **Read your own footer**
Copyright year, business name, phone number.
- ☐ **Search Google for your business name**
Read the two lines under your link the way a stranger would.
- ☐ **Send yourself a message through your contact form**
Then check whether it arrived. Forms break quietly and often.
- ☐ **Check who owns your domain**
Not who built the site. Who owns the address.

CHECKLIST 3

What do you actually own?

Your website is three separate things. You can own one without owning the others.



Your domain

Log into the registrar account where it lives. If you can't, or you've never had a login, that's your answer.



Your hosting

Is the account in your name and on your card? If your developer bills you for it, you have an arrangement, not an account.



Your code

Ask where the repository is and whether you have access. There should be a link, not a vague answer.



Your email

If it runs on your domain, it follows your domain. Confirm you can log into what manages it.

The one that matters most

Own everything except the domain and you're in real trouble: your reviews, rankings, bookmarks and printed cards all point at an address you don't control. It should be registered in your name from day one.

CHECKLIST 4

Nine questions before you hire

The question isn't the hard part. Knowing what a straight answer sounds like is.

- 1 Can you show me two sites you've built?
- 2 Who will actually do the work?
- 3 What exactly is included?
- 4 What do you need from me, and by when?
- 5 What happens when I don't like the first version?
- 6 Who owns the domain, the hosting, and the code?
- 7 Will I be able to change content myself?
- 8 What happens after launch, and what does it cost?
- 9 What if you're unavailable partway through?

Watch how they answer, not only what they say. Someone who gets defensive at question five is showing you week three of the project.